

Curb Enthusiasm Episode 17 Transcript

00;00;00;05 - 00;00;03;08

Emily Weidenhof

Welcome to Curb Enthusiasm. I'm Emily Weidenhof.

00;00;03;15 - 00;00;04;28

Sal Garro Jr.

And I'm Sal Garro Jr.

00;00;05;00 - 00;00;10;08

Emily Weidenhof

Our guest today is a filmmaker, avid cyclist, and transportation enthusiast.

00;00;10;10 - 00;00;18;10

Sal Garro Jr.

Through his organization Streetfilms, his documentaries have amassed millions of views, showcasing sustainable transportation projects in cities all over the world.

00;00;18;12 - 00;00;23;14

Emily Weidenhof

It's our pleasure to welcome Clarence Eckerson Jr. to the show.

00;00;23;17 - 00;00;31;09

Emily Weidenhof

Welcome, Clarence! So excited to have you on the flip side of the camera than you usually are.

00;00;31;12 - 00;00;35;02

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Yes. It's good to see that you guys made it to a second season.

00;00;35;05 - 00;00;35;29

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah.

00;00;36;02 - 00;00;45;04

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

You know, most TV shows, only 20 to 25% get a second—a renewal. So that's pretty impressive these days, right?

00;00;45;09 - 00;00;48;08

Emily Weidenhof

Nice, nice. And, what do you, how do you feel about the, the, new setup?

00;00;51;25 - 00;00;56;12

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Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

The setup looks good. I like, you know, everything, it's good. It's good, It's definitely...

Emily Weidenhof

Great. Great. Your, your, approval matters. So that means a lot.

00;00;56;14 - 00;01;00;12

Emily Weidenhof

So, tell us, what is Streetfilms?

00;01;00;14 - 00;01;05;13

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Well, Streetfilms, I have been doing since the mid-2000s,

00;01;05;16 - 00;01;23;00

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

and it's just lots of video documentation and shorts about transportation all around the world: bicycling, walking, open space, transit,

00;01;17;07 - 00;01;23;00

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

whatever you can think about in the transportation sphere, you know, that's where I am and what I'm doing.

00;01;23;02 - 00;01;32;09

Sal Garro Jr.

And when you reflect on all the bike infrastructure that you've run over the years that you've seen evolve, are there any that stand out as kind of your favorites in New York City?

00;01;32;12 - 00;01;50;27

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Well, you know, it's interesting because there are some people that are so negative from outside of the United States, especially, that they don't like center-running bike lanes. But I actually enjoy them a lot. And I think there's some really good places where they work, you know, they're oh, you got to have them right along this...

00;01;50;29 - 00;01;54;05

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

So, I like center-running bike lanes here, you know.

00;01;54;07 - 00;01;58;24

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah. What are, what are some that, what are some great center running examples?

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00;01;58;27 - 00;02;16;29

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Well, you know, when you approach the bridges here, you have to have center-running bike lanes. And so, it's vital in New York City, you know, it might not be the test case from the Netherlands. Copenhagen. Oh, we would never do it that way. But you know, you can't get to the Queensboro Bridge without a center running bike lane.

00;02;16;29 - 00;02;17;12

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

So, I mean, Delancey is a really good one.

00;02;19;12 - 00;02;23;10

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah, one we just upgraded a little bit recently to help with the.

00;02;23;13 - 00;02;23;16

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

You fixed the hump!

00;02;23;16 - 00;02;25;06

Emily Weidenhof

Yes. Yeah.

00;02;25;08 - 00;02;27;08

Emily Weidenhof

And more, and more to come there.

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

My shoulder did not like that

00;02;27;11 - 00;02;28;05

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah.

00;02;28;07 - 00;02;32;15

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

For many years, and now it's of course being fixed. But that's not the only reason why it was fixed.

00;02;32;15 - 00;02;33;27

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

But yeah.

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah.

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00;02;33;29 - 00;02;54;22

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

The next time I get to ride over it in you know a few months, my shoulder's probably going to be like I approve of that. But yeah, I mean, you know, there's a lot of good things that can be done with the center running bike lanes that I think that, you know, we got poo-pooed, you know, over the years, like, you know, look at Washington DC has a couple of really good center running lanes.

00;02;54;24 - 00;03;09;12

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

So, I—I am, that's one thing I like about New York City, that we are open to different things, even if it's not supposed to be what the other bicycle-friendly experts would tell us to do.

00;03;09;15 - 00;03;24;05

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah, well, we're certainly big enough that we need a pretty diverse set of, of, solutions to kind of make, yeah, make more walkable and bikeable city, kind of overall.

00;03;24;07 - 00;03;35;16

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah. So, we want to talk a little bit about 34th Avenue, a corridor that is near and dear

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Yes.

Emily Weidenhof

to you as a local resident.

00;03;53;26 - 00;03;59;11

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Yes. I live about 200ft off of it. My apartment building is.

00;03;59;13 - 00;04;30;03

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah. So this is a 1.3-mile Open Street. That has been so successful that we've continued to evolve the design and added shared streets and plazas along, you know, particularly centered around the six schools that run along that corridor. And you've done some amazing videography there and kind of captured every moment, night and day, winter, summer.

00;04;12;00 - 00;04;34;01

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

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And as you may know, I've, I am right now in the middle of putting together a full, hour-long documentary that looks at 34th from the beginning, and with COVID, to right up until now, and including the, you know, the street being renamed Paseo Park. And so there's a lot of really cool stuff going on. Always, Always

00;04;34;03 - 00;04;50;15

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah. And, what are you seeing on 34th Avenue and, the kind of school connection that it's building, and how does that compare to some of the other school streets that you filmed and, and, visited?

00;04;50;17 - 00;05;12;21

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Well, you know, I've been to Paris, and I've documented that very well in a, schools, schools, Streetfilm. And, you know, it there, It's amazing. It's just, you know, hundreds of schools. And not only do they, you know, they usually do a two-step process. They'll kind of do what we do with, you know, bollards and paint and planters and maybe concrete.

00;05;12;23 - 00;05;37;06

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

And then they come back after the residents are like, "We love this." And they break pavers and bio swales and just, just doing everything like that, you're just like," wow, they're putting a lot of money into this." So, you know, it's not what Paris is doing, but it's similar to the first design. And it's really what has made 34th Avenue work over the years.

00;05;37;08 - 00;05;37;22

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

You know, I mean,

00;05;37;22 - 00;05;39;08

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah.

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

it's.

00;05;39;10 - 00;06;02;25

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

It's like the thing that got people using it early on was like once kids started going back to school, and then they, the, originally the hours were 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and then DeBlasio was convinced to start at 7 a.m., and that is really when 34th Avenue is at its best, is when the kids are arriving and, and, being picked up in the afternoon.

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00;06;02;27 - 00;06;16;14

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

It's just fun to watch and, you know, even Janette Sadik Khan, I invited her out, and I did a little short film with her a couple of years ago. And she, you know, she, she was like giggling. So, you know, you guys are doing the right thing there.

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah.

00;06;16;17 - 00;06;38;00

Sal Garro Jr.

So, in the context of the documentation that you've done, the Paris School Streets initiative, and just from the perspective of parents, I'm curious, you know, what your, experience is with dismissal and pick up, and what some takeaways are from Paris School Streets that you think we can really benefit from when it comes to that time, when families are coming to pick up the children.

00;06;38;02 - 00;07;01;01

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Well, I'm lucky because my son goes to school at PS 212, which is on 82nd Street, right smack dab in the middle of 34th Avenue. And, you know, he was going to school before COVID, and it was always a kind of tough time to get to school. You know, you had traffic on, all around. You had lots of people still driving, dropping their kids off.

00;07;01;04 - 00;07;25;09

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

You know, there'd be people double-parked, there'd be buses stuck. There would be a lot of families like, you know, uncomfortable. And now that, you know, now that we have 34th Avenue Open Street, it really is such a relaxing atmosphere to get to school. And, you know, you see, parents, I remember before we'd kind of be jammed on the sidewalks, like it was not fun.

00;07;25;09 - 00;07;40;24

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

I mean, people don't realize, like a lot of people complain, like, "well, why do you need the Open Street? You've got the sidewalks." It's like, well, when you have in, you know, a 20, 25-minute period before and after school when you have people crammed in there, it's not fun. And some of the sidewalks are not in great shape either.

00;07;40;26 - 00;08;26;14

Emily Weidenhof

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Yeah, absolutely. And, you know, Open Streets is so important for those critical dense pick-up and drop-off times that you're mentioning, but also for my kids, during the pandemic, our school playground was under construction. So the school had an Open Street, which was a complete lifeline to be able to have outdoor play space. So that continues to be a big reason for, for, an Open Street; schools that either have construction or the, you know, the number of schools that don't actually have access to a play yard or a roof or any kind of outdoor space. Anyone with a kid knows, you know, getting outside and getting some energy out is

00;08;26;14 - 00;08;30;17

Emily Weidenhof

so critical to being able to learn during the day.

00;08;30;20 - 00;08;49;27

Sal Garro Jr.

Yeah. I think one of the benefits of, one of the many benefits of, Streetfilms is just kind of seeing is believing. You know, like a lot of the work that we do is a matter of showing the public what's possible. And I know that, you know, when I drop off my kids at school, and they, you know, we're all crowded, and I've got my cargo bike up there too

00;08;50;03 - 00;09;03;21

Sal Garro Jr.

A lot of them are curious about the bike, and they ask questions about it, and they want to know. And I will often point to Streetfilms and say, " You know, you should take a look at what they're doing in Paris." And it's, it's really wonderful stuff that we have that resource available.

00;09;03;23 - 00;09;38;28

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah. And that's something that's so interesting and beneficial from your films is that you're often filming while you're on a bike. And so you really explain and walk people through not only the experience, but then you're really pointing out and educating kind of all the different pieces of the design to help, not only the public advocate for these kinds of improvements, but also help the designers understand how different cities are using the different elements and bringing them all together to help shape these improvements for pedestrians and cyclists.

00;09;39;00 - 00;10;07;09

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Well, you know, part of the reason why I had to have surgery, you know, I was doing this back in the, you know, late 90s, all through the 2000s, 2010s. And, you know, back then,

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cameras weighed two, three pounds. And, you know, it was tough to keep the cameras steady. So, that was additional like, you know, oh, I got to, you know, I always, what I always would see was that, you know, no offense to DOT or any designers, but I started seeing like, you know, I started doing this in 2005.

00;10;07;12 - 00;10;31;07

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

I would see, you know, press releases or news stories about, “hey, this is our new bike lane or this is our new plaza.” And they would show pictures of nobody in them. It was like they were proud of the design, or they would take the pictures before they let people on it. And I was like, no, you gotta show this in use, because then people are just going to say, “nobody's using the bike lane.

00;10;31;08 - 00;10;52;11

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Nobody's enjoying it.” So that was like one of my things early on. I was like, you've got to show it being used. And even if that meant you had to wait around till lunch, you know, you can't be, you have to show people out at lunch or, or going on a special occasion or an event. So that really helped, I think, convince people that these were all good things that we should be investing in.

00;10;52;13 - 00;11;15;24

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And also shows the kind of dynamism and how these spaces are really flexible and can do a lot of different things, which is, you know, so much of the work, Sal, you do with programming is thinking about how these spaces can be relevant to so many different groups during so many different seasons. Yeah.

00;11;15;27 - 00;11;40;08

Sal Garro Jr.

Absolutely. We see it for the streets, you know.

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Yeah.

Sal Garro Jr.

When people recognize when you, you know, make an area a pedestrianized zone, and they can go out and have fun without worrying about, you know, cars being in the street. They can kind of have a safe, exciting, wholesome childhood. And, and, really experience their neighborhood in a different way, various types of programming going on.

00;11;40;10 - 00;12;01;11

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Emily Weidenhof

Hey, listeners, we hope you're enjoying this episode of our podcast. For those of you who are as enthusiastic about transportation and planning as we are, we'd like to hear from you. You can submit topics and questions that you'd like us to cover at [NYC.gov/CurbEnthusiasm](https://www.nyc.gov/CurbEnthusiasm). And now back to our conversation.

00;12;01;13 - 00;12;11;06

Emily Weidenhof

So, what are some of your favorite pedestrian and cyclist improvements that you're seeing in London right now?

00;12;11;08 - 00;12;41;05

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Well, London is really big on not only bicycle lanes and bike, bikeways. They used to call them bike superhighways, but now they've turned that down to some other different options. And they're doing the same thing with something called Low Traffic Neighborhoods. LTNs for short. And they're also renaming those a little bit. But essentially, a Low Traffic Neighborhood is you take a grid of streets, and you find a way to keep the traffic on the exterior of that neighborhood.

00;12;41;07 - 00;13;02;12

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

And that's called a boundary road. And the boundary road, the boundary road is designed so that it will take this traffic. But a lot of people are complaining that live on the Boundary Road, "Well, you know, I don't want the traffic," but the truth is, is when you look at the studies that have been shown, the, the traffic within the neighborhoods reduces greatly.

00;13;02;14 - 00;13;21;11

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

But the traffic on the boundary roads does not. It's either the same or it dips just a little, but it seems like there's so much more traffic because inside of these Low Traffic Neighborhoods, there's almost no, no cars, no nobody driving. And that sounds a little weird. Like, how can that be? But,

00;13;21;15 - 00;13;43;17

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

within these Low Traffic Neighborhoods are all kinds of traffic treatments, including automated enforcement, chicanes, you know, everything that you—we have all the same things going on here in New York, but they use them all in concert together to keep all the traffic from being cut through. They call that route running there too.

00;13;43;24 - 00;13;52;03

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Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

And, but they're, they're great. They really are. And I really think, I hope that you guys are going to be able to do some more here in New York.

00;13;52;05 - 00;14;12;08

Sal Garro Jr.

So when you're in Europe, I'm not sure how your conversations come into play. Like, are you reaching out to folks ahead of time to arrange for these conversations? Do you know who exactly you're speaking to? Because you had so many wonderful conversations, you went on to talk about LTNs, and I'm curious if you had any story that stood out to you for the new folks that you met overseas.

00;14;12;11 - 00;14;46;08

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Well, I think one cool thing about Streetfilms is that I've always stuck to and it wasn't planned. But it's the way it always works out, is that if I go to a place to document or see what's going on, it ends up usually being like one third of the people I talk to are elected officials, and one third of the people are advocates, and one third of the people are random, Like people I may run into or somebody may introduce me to. And so, I feel like I get a good, you know, perspective from a lot of different angles and a lot of different experiences.

00;14;46;11 - 00;14;55;07

Emily Weidenhof

Are there other, more specific things that you've filmed internationally that you would love to see New York City bring to our streets?

00;14;55;09 - 00;15;18;19

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

One of my new favorite places is Ghent in Belgium. And, you know, they've done a lot by kicking out the automobile or making it hard to get through the city through their traffic circulation plan. So, if you want to go to one section of the city over here and you live over here, you can't drive through; you have to go around.

00;15;18;22 - 00;15;37;22

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Every intersection is redesigned, so you can't just do that. Or there's also traffic enforcement there as well. And that's just done with signs. You know, there's a few signs and maybe of 2 or 3 planters, and then you, as a driver, know: Okay. I can't go through there. But they've done a lot because they haven't done a lot of bike lanes.

00;15;37;24 - 00;16;13;09

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Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

There's not a lot of, like, infrastructure, but it's the same way with the LTNs in London. You can save a lot of money on having to build high-class bike infrastructure. If you re-manage the traffic to not be—going through because you know, when you're in London, when you're in Belgium, when you're on some of these streets, there's nothing that's there's not even like a bike glyph on it, on the, on the road or there's no even directional sign like you're riding on a bicycle route number 17, you just are riding because you're riding safely, because there's nobody else around in a car.

00;16;13;09 - 00;16;14;17

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

You don't feel threatened.

00;16;14;20 - 00;16;28;16

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

What happens is you've got these people on the street and, you know, these are people walking to the grocery store or walking to school or biking to the park, and they're all trips that would have probably been done by car before the Low Traffic Neighborhoods.

00;16;28;19 - 00;16;56;00

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

And, you know, and like I mentioned again, Ghent is great with this because they don't spend a lot of money on bicycle infrastructure. They just make it safe to bike everywhere because they have reined in the car. They have a traffic circulation plan so you can't drive from one point the city to another without going, you know, in circular motion, staying on the outside highways or, the, their on their version of boundary roads.

00;16;56;03 - 00;17;05;05

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

And one place that's the best place in North America by far to visit is Montreal. I love Montreal.

Emily Weidenhof

Absolutely, love it. lot. Yeah.

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Have you both been to Montreal?

Sal Garro Jr.

Yeah, Absolutely. It's beautiful there!

00;17;05;07 - 00;17;05;27

Emily Weidenhof

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Yeah.

00;17;06;00 - 00;17;08;11

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

I go every year and,

00;17;08;13 - 00;17;09;19

Emily Weidenhof

Amazing. Open Streets.

00;17;09;23 - 00;17;30;18

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Amazing Open Streets, amazing pedestrianization downtown.

Emily Weidenhof

Yes.

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Lots of culture, lots of art. There's so many things going on, you don't even have to plan. Like, oh, got to go to this museum this day, and we're going to walk—no. You just leave your hotel, and you find out what you're going to do that way.

00;17;30;20 - 00;17;45;09

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah. And, something you have highlighted, and you see a lot in your filming of Montreal, is just all of the greening. They really work in greening to a lot of their cycling infrastructure, a lot of their pedestrianization.

00;17;45;12 - 00;18;17;01

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Yes, daylighting. They have a lot of daylighting there. They have a lot of neck downs. They have so many intersection treatments where they'll put trees or nice shrubs, or there's bioswales along the sides. And they'll cut off traffic by using these ornate designs. They have school streets there, are a few really cool school—the one school street I really love in Montreal is this one that they have giant toadstools.

00;18;17;03 - 00;18;21;23

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

So that's like their form of, you know, a bollard, but it's, you know, eight feet high.

00;18;21;25 - 00;18;24;21

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah.

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00;18;24;23 - 00;18;48;12

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

So, they do so much. Well, and, you know, their bicycle infrastructure is great. They're a place that's also sometimes they have two-way lanes, sometimes they have one-way lanes. So they do what works, you know, they're not sticking to this, like, oh, I'm going to build a bike lane. You know, you can't do two-way.

00;18;48;12 - 00;18;51;25

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

No, no, no, no. You know, so like, you know, do what works.

00;18;51;27 - 00;19;09;01

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah. And culture does also really factor into how people use their streets. So sometimes it is an incrementalism to really get the culture to shift over time. That's just as kind of critical as the design itself.

00;19;09;07 - 00;19;09;25

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Yeah.

00;19;09;27 - 00;19;11;07

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah, yeah.

00;19;11;09 - 00;19;34;26

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

And then, you know, there's things like car-free parks! Which I yeah, I mean, I, I still remember the first meeting we had with Councilman Stephen DiBrienza, who was, which was Bill DeBlasio's seat, and he was the first Councilperson to sign on to a three-month summer trial car-free phase. And then it took us to get all the council members around the park.

00;19;34;29 - 00;19;54;03

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

And this is like, you know, the late 90s. And now to think that, you know, there's nobody, probably even the most, you know, want to drive through person through the park. There's probably almost nobody who would agree we should open up our parks to cars again. So, things have come a long way.

00;19;54;06 - 00;20;07;12

Emily Weidenhof

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Yeah, and you've seen a lot of change over time. What are some of the, the kind of biggest shifts, maybe both in New York City streets, but also just in the, in the media landscape?

00;20;07;15 - 00;20;25;21

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Watching the Broadway evolution that's been great. And I also I Summer Streets is one of the best things ever. And you guys have really lengthened it and expanded it, and hopefully, more days at some point in the future. But you know, now we can go all the way to the George Washington Bridge.

00;20;25;23 - 00;20;28;22

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah. And more boroughs

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

And more boroughs.

00;20;28;25 - 00;20;47;08

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

More dates for those events. So, yeah, I mean, you know, I still remember my favorite story. So I went to Cyclavia in 2007, made this film that's been watched millions of times. 'Bogota, Cyclavia,' that's all I called it, the film, you know, back then, it was just call it what it is, not to come up with a fancy title.

00;20;47;10 - 00;21;19;05

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

So, it's been used all over the world, and I put it out at the end of 2007, and there were so many cities trying to do Cyclavias. And then in 2008, Portland, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and San Francisco's story is even more incredible because Mayor Gavin Newsom, he was mayor back then, the, the San Francisco Bike Coalition would have a meeting with them every month trying to get a Cyclavia Open Street, and each month they would table it, they're like, "this sounds great.

00;21;19;07 - 00;21;35;04

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Let's try, let's try, let's try next month. Let's talk more about it. Let's get more evidence." And then the San Francisco Bike Coalition, for their next meeting, they're like, we're just going to show you the film, this film that... And they, that was what that was it. It was all they needed.

00;21;35;10 - 00;21;35;23

Emily Weidenhof

It was your Film.

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00;21;35;23 - 00;21;38;19

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Once they saw the film, they were like,

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah.

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

let's do it. So

00;21;38;22 - 00;21;40;24

Emily Weidenhof

Awesome.

00;21;40;26 - 00;22;03;29

Sal Garro Jr.

I did want to quickly ask about your creative process, because I know that Streetfilms is often a mix of your footage from the point of view of a cyclist on a bike, and then also your on-street interviews on having those conversations. So I'm wondering how much of this is prepared ahead of time, like do you storyboard, or do you let the stories that you hear when you're interviewing people kind of guide what the final film will look like?

00;22;04;01 - 00;22;29;29

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

I generally don't like to overprepare, number one, it's hard. But then, of course, on the backside, then you got to put together the story without flow. So, you know, storyboarding and that is good for some people, but I just find I like it to be more spontaneous. So, you know, if there's a bike event, I know I'd interview somebody from DOT about Summer Streets and then just talk to people.

00;22;30;01 - 00;22;53;27

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

I kind of let it play out. And, you know, one, one story I'll say is that, that when I was in Copenhagen 2010, I was walking around with Gil Penalosa and we were doing stuff on the Open Streets and the pedestrianization, the business areas and car free, and he just walked around with me. He's my favorite person to ever film with because every time is such a fun time.

00;22;53;27 - 00;23;19;29

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

And he's indefatigable. Everybody says that about me. He gets me tired, you know?

Curb Enthusiasm Episode 17 Transcript

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah.

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

So, there was this one time when we were by a fountain and, you know, the street was filled with a few people coming here and there, but, you know, it wasn't overly crowded. So, we just started interviewing him. I just started interviewing him. And for some reason, we didn't know this, but it was graduation day, so I'm interviewing him.

00;23;19;29 - 00;23;35;05

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

And all of a sudden, all the screaming, yelling, these kids are diving into this fountain. And he was, you could, we both looked at each other, it was like we didn't even have to say a word. Like, let's just keep rolling. And he walks over there, and I'm filming him and the kids are talking to him, and like "We just graduated!"

00;23;35;08 - 00;23;51;29

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

And it's like, there's so much spontaneity that you miss out on if you're not just flexible. Yeah. So, I, that's, basically my answer is that I just try to be in the moment because you'll get so much more than if you plan for it. You know.

00;23;52;01 - 00;24;05;00

Emily Weidenhof

So Streetfilms, for a very long time, was kind of the only name in the game. And now we see a whole kind of ecosystem of, of urbanists, with, with cameras. What does that look like over your career?

00;24;05;00 - 00;24;35;14

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Well, it's kind of funny because, you know, for probably since that Bogota film all the way through the late 2010s into right up to about COVID, it was me and a guy named Bicycle Dutch. We would be flip-flopping who had the most views, and I'm great, great friends with him. I love him, and I thought that when the innovation of the iPhone, editing software, and YouTube and Vimeo, I would say all the time, I was like, well, I'm not going to be popular much any longer because now everybody can do it.

00;24;35;17 - 00;24;51;03

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Curb Enthusiasm Episode 17 Transcript

And it really took until around COVID, when I think a lot of people were sitting around like, I can go on and document my cities. You know, I can see what's going on. I can be the voice for my country or my city. And, you know, it's good to finally see that happen.

00;24;51;03 - 00;24;51;23

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah.

00;24;51;26 - 00;25;10;21

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Sadly, that's come at my expense a little bit because, you know, I used to be one of the top people for the longest time. And now, I mean, I tell people if I'm in the top 50 mentioned, I'm happy about it now. But you know, it's good. You know, we need to see new perspectives that way. I don't have to travel.

00;25;10;23 - 00;25;32;29

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

People can have their favorites. People can see the newest stuff faster. So, it's all good, you know? It's all good stuff. I'm friends with a lot of these people that are doing it. John Simmerman, who does Active Towns. Oh, The Urbanity from Montreal, Mark Wagenbuur for Bicycle Dutch, The Bruntletts, who are also in the Netherlands.

00;25;32;29 - 00;25;52;16

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

So, you know, I love all of them. And there's not any kind of rivalry between a lot of these people. There might be between others that I don't know. But like, I just want to see the world change. I want to see people learn more. I want people not to have to spend money to go places just to get their experience.

00;25;52;19 - 00;26;02;00

Sal Garro Jr.

So Clarence, something we ask all of our guests is, what do you think is one of the biggest breaches in, of transportation etiquette?

00;26;02;03 - 00;26;25;01

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Well, this one really drives me crazy. It's people using their cell phones on the train or on the bus without having earbuds in. And I just am dumbfounded. Like, I don't want people to know what I'm listening to. I don't understand how that is, how personally people could do that.

00;26;25;04 - 00;26;30;19

Curb Enthusiasm Episode 17 Transcript

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

We're New Yorkers. I thought we were better than this. So yeah, that really drives me crazy.

00;26;30;22 - 00;26;37;25

Emily Weidenhof

And finally, what are you most enthusiastic about for the future of transportation?

00;26;37;28 - 00;26;46;03

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Well, I'm enthusiastic that we have a new mayor and we have a new DOT commissioner, so the sky's the limit.

00;26;46;06 - 00;27;12;17

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

That's exciting to see. Like, what are the possibilities that are we going to have? Going forward? And so that excites me. I'm excited that there's new blood, new thinking, maybe new funding, maybe more, you know, bike parking, maybe more unique routes, maybe some. Another thing, it looks like it's going to be great is I really want to see more bus-only lanes

00;27;12;19 - 00;27;17;17

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

I think the bus lanes could be a really big item here going forward.

00;27;17;20 - 00;27;39;26

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah, definitely. Well, we are so grateful for your time. On the other side of the camera. And certainly, Streetfilms, will fuel the future of transportation. All the amazing work you've done to kind of share what everyone is doing so we can all learn from each other and do more of it.

00;27;39;28 - 00;27;48;07

Clarence Eckerson Jr. (Streetfilms)

Yeah. And I love highlighting the things I really get excited about by you guys doing. So, I can't wait to see what else we are going to be doing in the next few years.