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THE BACKSLACKPING WITH MEDIA- A DOCUMENTARY

STAR WARS MEETS THE WORLD'S MEDIA!!



THE BACKSLACKPING WITH MEDIA

A STAR WARS/cross culture/media documentary-“a documediamentary”- by %20

“Behind is loaf slaps by the medium”

**BEHIND THE
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JONES SAGA****Reviewed by Scott Weller**

Don't worry, your AFICIONADO editor isn't slowly losing his mind, and his computer's spell check facility hasn't gone into meltdown mode yet, either-THE BACKSLACPKPING WITH MEDIA is a unique, experimental film documentary within the realms of the STAR WARS universe, and was sent into me by the project's ambitious, deliberately eccentric and shadowy (in a nice way) instigator/ creator mysteriously known as %20-who may very well become the "Neo" of the STAR WARS Fan Universe!! Basically, it's a tour de force examination of the world's varying multimedia and its reaction to the STAR WARS SAGA- in particular the 2005 release of EPISODE THREE: REVENGE OF THE SITH. Now, you ask, there has previously been quite a few fan related compilations of footage with regards to certain films and aspects of the saga, from individual cast members to behind the scenes material, but what makes this so special and worth watching-well, this is a serious, and also not too serious, study into the way that the media not only exploits its audience, sells a product to them, then uses the product to their own advantage, but also how it can make itself look darn silly at the same time, especially with regards to how they perceive the legendary saga and its multi – audience section fan base.

In general, the media clearly consumes REVENGE OF THE SITH in every way possible, and in some ways its vice versa, too, as a skillful LUCASFILM, though in a different, but equally intriguing way, goes to work with its own highly skilled media control and saturation in showing how important the STAR WARS saga is to people, but also, more importantly, how, as a company wanting to survive and go into other projects, it really does need the fans to come out and support George Lucas in the final legs of his film's fairytale journey. And STAR WARS is sooo big in itself it's clear to me that it's an entity in its own right, equally capable of devouring anybody who loves it or

despises it-though I hate the term, it still remains an unstoppable juggernaut of a *brand*. There's also the chance through the documentary to see how Lucas himself has deliberately changed his own STAR WARS history- of the story, the characters and some behind the scenes moments- to suit his own needs by the time of completing SITH, sometimes not always for the good.

An intriguing indictment of both the strengths and the negatives of the world wide press, THE BACKSLACPKPING WITH MEDIA also shows how dangerously manipulative it can be when its to its own advantage (especially the obvious culprit of Rupert Murdoch's TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX, whose media wings, along with several other major corporations, have effectively spread and captured the world-SITH being the perfect example of publicizing their release rights owned movie through their various large power base/conglomerates (including their flagship SKY TV company)). Then there is the intriguing way that REVENGE OF THE SITH would be seen by certain aspects of the media as a sly attack by George Lucas on the George Bush presidency of the time and the affect his rein had on the world in general (this is an interestingly edited segment from %20, showing how the media have used STAR WARS to their own advantage, though also not bothering to do any research on the subject *at all*-unable to consider the fact that the original script for STAR WARS back in 1974 had a plot that talked about an evil Emperor and his minions that was written in reference to the way dictators can take over so easily, given the right conditions, and that it was also an observation of the then corruption of the then Nixon US administration. SITH's story relevance in 2005, and the way that's the film's certain political nuances are picked up on and used by the press, proves fascinating to see evolve).

The sheer amount of clips from all over the world put together in this documentary is enough to make any fan, especially of the Prequel Saga, want to see this, but once past the first twenty minutes or so, you'll soon realize just what an imaginative piece of work %20's

presentation is. Watching this documentary, it's equally amazing in a *so easy it's plain to see* way how there are so few good *in television* interviewers out there in the world-the amount of dumb questioning and "chit-chat" throughout the installments reaches new heights of inanity and moments of absurdity, but at the same time it's really a kinda banal fun watching it and the way it escalates through the skillful, and with a thematic continuity, editing.

Though its nice to see when presenters actually do like STAR WARS, its even worse when you get those ones who really don't give a damn about it and who clearly can't be bothered, literally sleepwalking through their efforts and forgetting their job positions and the huge salaries they're being paid to be clued up on the subject matter they're talking about!! Yes, I know we're in a world where we should be tolerating other people's viewpoints on STAR WARS (even if they're wrong. Ha ha!!) but when you see someone who hasn't even bothered to try and watch it interviewing key people about the films, its sometimes just too embarrassing and cringe inducing for words (and its always painful to see someone like David Letterman or Ed Regis who clearly haven't got a clue about STAR WARS, probably beyond the original 1977 movie release, interviewing someone like Ewan McGregor or Hayden Christensen) -there are quite a few moments when watching these media guys "work" will generate the feeling of a huge chunk of bile being severely caught in your throat!!

As well as the press itself, those aforementioned and highly varied sections devoted to all manner of topics within the STAR WARS universe are equally well developed and prove intriguing, not just on the final film's arrival in cinemas but also the kind of emotional/cathartic release that it would generate-completing the nearly thirty year cycle of the series evolution.

There's a refreshing new spin within the way %20 has edited the subject matter clips- such as favourite characters, the importance of the series title crawl, STAR WARS own unique theme-ology and the way it has influenced and inspired the fans (going back on the series roots

and exploring things that have been touched on before, like the way Joseph Campbell had influenced Lucas's work), Hayden Christensen's feeling of empowerment in wearing the Vader suit for the first, and final, appearance of Darth Vader (the lynchpin for EPISODE THREE, and now, since the arrival of the Prequels, of the whole six film saga itself), John Williams music, overseas interviews (the Japanese talks with Hayden are sometimes scary, sometimes hilarious!! And Hayden's facial reactions to the questions are equally priceless), sex and censorship in STAR WARS, the involvement of women in fandom (unlike a lot of earlier sci-fi, this saga has never been just for the guys!! And Amen to that!!), Rick McCallum's always enjoyable over hyping the films in a way that whips up fan frenzy to new heights each time, the Skywalker Ranch press launch, the definition of GEEK, the gazillions that everyone predicts will be made on its then impending release, to the 12.01am EPISODE THREE screenings to riotous, enjoying the moment fans, and the intriguing hunt for the pirateers who ripped the film off as it was being released!!

Just on it's own merits of both fun and fear, the 501st Stormtroopers film section shows wave after wave of Imperial troopers, of all ranks and types, walking out of a convention area-for a few seconds its fun to see them all but then, once the line keeps going and going and going and going, it becomes a bit scary and the power of STAR WARS really starts to get you thinking!!

Away from the fandom element, amongst the many other rare clip treats are Nick Gillard and Hayden appearing on a US breakfast show, GOOD MORNING AMERICA, and doing some fun lightsaber fighting with the general public, a lot of CANNES film festival material where EPISODE THREE received it's European premiere, and the aforementioned Japanese interview footage and the main cast (Hayden and Ian McDiarmid and Lucas press call/talk), and a classic Mark Hamill interview in which he wrongly names Hayden Christensen as Christian Haydensen-absolutely priceless!!! There's so much more, that I'll leave you to discover it all...

There also some fascinating inter-cutting of SITH clips from a version of the film that was given Chinese subtitles-how the film was perceived there shows intriguing and highly different sensibilities from the rest of the rest of the world and in regards to the cross cultural landscape ...

With 48 chapters in all (with extra material being added onto the website viewing version of the documentary), what's brilliant about TBWM is that you can watch it one go if you're brave enough (and it's an epic three hours and twenty three minutes!!), or for an equally pleasant wander of total enjoyment you can dip in and out of various chapters and watch from there-each experience through the documentary is a different and intriguing one, almost scientific – you may feel like a guinea pig caught in a wheel in an Orwellian “Who's watching the Watchers?” moment!! Or you might feel like you're in a giant Petri dish- being bombarded with all this fast paced interlinking clips to test your psychological reactions!!

The kaleidoscoping/montage effect of the first viewing may prove distracting and highly annoying at times to viewers. Equally, the footage and sound quality of the total presentation is of varying quality, so there are parts when its jars, but that is unavoidable as %20 has gotten hold of the clips from such a wide variety of sources, but it doesn't seriously detract from the enjoyment of watching it, but you must stick with it...it's worth your patience. Like the DVD cover sleeve that represents it, TBWM can be seen as so much to so many-an amazing viewing experience, a mysterious and baffling, hidden warning message experiment, a psychedelic mixture “trip” of images in a style that's very Oriental in it's design ethic, or you might find it just completely unwatchable!!! The choice is yours!!

As well as us die-hards, I think non fans will equally enjoy watching TBWM; especially anyone taking part in multi media studies analysis-there's enough material on display here to fill twenty theses!! It's the kind of experimental film-making in itself that I think George Lucas would love-in some ways it's an extension of his early USC film

school days short LOOK AT LIFE, but with the visual, live action media format at a faster and more intense, almost to overload, level. It's a shame that LUCASFILM sent back %20's preview DVD unwatched-I think it would have garnered some intriguing interest from them and would have been enjoyed for what it was by both Lucas and someone of the likes of Rick McCallum if they had been shown it- hopefully, over time, its popularity will be established and they will eventually see this intriguing cornucopia...

Early criticisms by the fans on sites such as ORIGINAL TRILOGY.COM towards TBWM have been, I feel, a little bit unfair (some citing it as a waste of time and effort with such great footage)- I think some of the fans seeing it for the first time were unsure of what they were going to watch- though it's intriguing to see how comment has improved for the better more recently...in my opinion, THE BACKSLACPKPING WITH MEDIA is definitely an intriguing and important new entry into the exploration of the STAR WARS mythos and it's worldwide effects...

AFICIONADO REVIEW: Fascinating and infuriating in equal parts, this is an obvious labour of love by determined film-maker %20 into the joys and horror of the media world's response to STAR WARS and, in particular, EPISODE THREE. You may need some Alka Seltzer occasionally in watching it, but it's a fascinating documentary experience that's definitely worth your perusal time. 9 out of 10

For more information on the project, head over to %20's site:

http://www.noneinc.com/tBSWM/tBSWM_FAQ.html

There's now an online version of the documentary which can be viewed directly from the FAQ (chapters section) and the whole DVD can be downloaded too, alongside a one minute introduction video:

http://www.noneinc.com/tBSWM/tBSWM-Video-ArchiveOrg/Thee_Backslacpkping_With_Media-Chap_00-PlayCont.html

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