

APPLICATIONS CLOSE 18 NOVEMBER.

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Art of the Prank (Revelation Perth International Film Festival)

Travis Johnson

Year: 2015

Rating: NA

Director: Andrea Marini

Cast: Joey Skaggs

Festival

Revelation Perth international Film Festival

Released: July 7 - 17

Running Time: 82 minutes

Worth: \$16.00

Filmink rates movies out of \$20 – the score indicates the amount we believe a ticket to the movie to be worth.

“ ...an affably angry individual who is fighting back against what he sees as pervasive institutional evil...”

You may not know Joey Skaggs, but odds are good you've come across his work, whether you knew it at the time or not. The irreverent art prankster has been doing his thing for decades now, sticking his middle finger up at the mainstream and the media through a series of audacious performances that blur the line between political act and public nuisance. Director Andrea Marini builds a broad look at Skaggs' life and career around his latest project, a fake documentary designed to provoke reactions to issues concerning genetically modified crops, the military-industrial complex and Hawaiian sovereignty (Skaggs likes to spread a wide net). But is there space for a guy like Skaggs to operate in the 21st century, where the online world makes fact-checking so quick and easy?

Well, yes, to be blunt – we're just as credulous as we ever were, and the voracious content demands of the 24 hour news cycle means that due diligence is often abandoned in favour of timeliness – fertile ground for Skaggs, who since the late 1960s has convinced all manner of highly respected news organisations the veracity of such oddball ephemera as brothels for dogs, a celebrity sperm auction, and a portable confession booth for political delegates too busy to go to church. He does all this with the help of a small army of volunteer co-conspirators – writers, artists and actors who share his disdain for the middle of the road. Marini interviews a number of these, many of whom have worked with Skaggs for years and profess undying loyalty to their leader, noting that any journey with Skaggs, no matter how absurd the central conceit, is an adventure into creativity, comedy and anarchy.

Marini approaches Skaggs' irreverence with reverence, and it's hard not to get caught up in it all. Skaggs himself comes across as an affably angry individual who is fighting back against what he sees as pervasive institutional evil and corruption with the tools at his disposal, a hippie Quixote hoaxing monolithic media windmills. There are hints of dissatisfaction here and there – Skaggs, long a resident of New York and Hawaii, now lives in Kentucky for family reasons and is none too happy about it – but the film by and large prefers to lionise.

And why not? After decades working under various noms de guerre to further his plots, Joey Skaggs deserves a little time in the sun, and *Art of the Prank* is a fitting tribute.



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