

Art of the Prank at Revelation Perth International Film Festival

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Joey Skaggs.



WAY before those *Jackass* man-children went on their years-long parade of juvenile pranks and stunts, there was Joey Skaggs.



The polar opposite of that loud, brash and obnoxious ragtag team of envelope pushers, Skaggs is a quiet, likeable fellow who put more thought and effort into one prank than what was put into a whole series of *Jackass*.



While Johnny Knoxville and his crew's horseplay leaned more towards pain and self-mutilation for guffaws, Skaggs was more interested in using his humour to satirise the media.

Art of the Prank chronicles Skaggs' best work; time and time again he adopted different personas and duped journalists and respectable news outlets into thinking he ran a brothel for dogs, a celebrity sperm bank and was a priest with a portable confessional booth on a bicycle (Portofess).

He exposed a lack of research and accuracy in reporting, which is still as relevant now as it always has been, particularly with the 24-hour media cycle and the push to publish online as soon as possible.

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Intercut with archival footage of the cheeky prankster's handiwork is Skaggs' latest and most elaborate art.

He gathers a few of his fans, followers and friends (aka co-conspirators) to film a miniscule budgeted fake documentary in hopes of getting it on the film festival circuit.

The insight into the ups and downs of bringing together the ultimate artful prank is the most fascinating aspect; as is why everyone is driven to partake.

So many people put so much effort into this prank and for what gain? There is no financial reward and minimal fame; merely the chance to be part of something.

One vital question that lingered for me that remained unanswered was about Skaggs' income; his aim is not to profit but to have a laugh and make a point, so where does he get the money to fund these pranks?

And what does he do for work between pranks?

The doco dips into his personal life, moving from his New York haven to life with his frail mother away from like-minded artists and envelope pushers, which illustrates his desire and hunger for these pranks, much like an artist craves that creative outlet.

Amusing and surprising, *Art of the Prank* serves as a reminder to journalists to double-check their contacts because you never know when you are being Punk'd.

THE ESSENTIALS

Art of the Prank (M)

Directed by: Andrea Marini

Starring: Joey Skaggs,

Four stars

Review by Julian Wright

Screens as part of the Revelation Perth International Film Festival,
July 7-17