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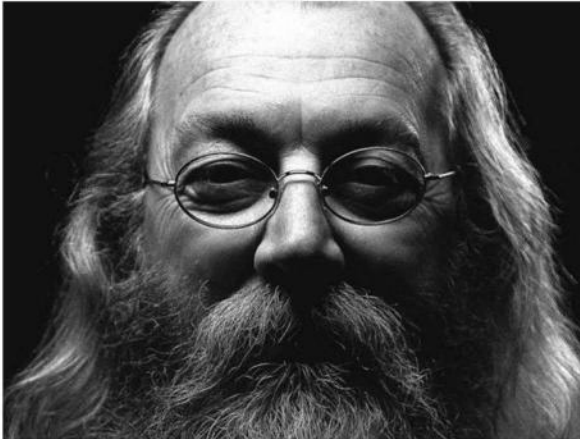
Bulletin Board

Timely and Award-Winning Documentary Art of The Prank Premieres at the New Jersey Film Festival on Sunday, January 29!

The Beginnings of Fake News? Andrea Marini's Timely and Award-Winning Documentary Art of The Prank Premieres at the New Jersey Film Festival

By Al Nigrin (Open Post) - January 23, 2017 9:38 am ET

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Andrea Marini's Timely and Award-Winning Documentary *Art of The Prank* Premieres at the New Jersey Film Festival on Sunday, January 29!

Here is the interview I conducted with Joey Skaggs and *Art of The Prank* Producer Judy Drosd and Director Andrea Marini:

Nigrin: Your film *Art of the Prank* is about Joey Skaggs who is both an artist and a professional prankster. As this documentary follows his escapades and performances, it offers a simultaneously funny and very alarming look at the propaganda and disinformation fed to the unsuspecting public every day by the mainstream media. Given the plethora of fake news being generated by the Russians and others it would seem that your film is very timely. Do you agree and please tell us more about your film and how it came to be.

Drosd: Joey's work over the last fifty plus years has remained amazingly timely from decade to decade, which is why we all—director & producer Andrea Marini, producer Judy Drosd, protagonist Joey Skaggs, and the numerous other producers and technical people who worked on the film, felt it was a good time to make the movie. Now, given our political climate and the explosion of fake-news-for-profit, which has been changing the political landscape around the world, his work has become off-the-charts timely. If we're ever going to live in a world

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where “truth” lives up to its actual definition, “being in accordance with fact or reality,” rather than what it has become—just information constructed to achieve a desired outcome, we all need a healthy dose of skepticism and a major lesson in media literacy. Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, and evaluate media such that we are better able to understand the complex messages we receive from television, radio, Internet, newspapers, magazines, books, billboards, video games, music, and all other forms of media. Joey’s work brings this message home in a visceral way. People see the fallacies and weaknesses of the media first hand as they watch Joey develop as an artist who creates fake realities and promotes them to the media who are always hungry for good stories. Joey explains in his own words more about his work below.

Andrea and Joey met at the exact moment in time when Joey was ready and willing to be filmed as he created and perpetrated a new media hoax. He had been requested to do this repeatedly over the years, but had declined. In Andrea, he saw a young enormously talented filmmaker with an approach, vision and commitment he totally related to. Andrea began filming Joey the instant they met—as Joey was organizing a demonstration against our corrupt financial institutions in New York City.

Skaggs: I’m a fine artist and I also use the media as a medium, meaning that I create plausible social, political and satirical fake realities and promote them to the news media, thereby reaching the general public. These are “guerrilla” theater performances, where I create elaborate scenarios incorporating advertising and public relations techniques. My work is done in three stages, the first being the “hook”, where I conceive and execute the action. The second is the “line” where I document where the story is going, i.e., I follow it through the media channels. And the third is the “sinker” where I reveal that the story is a fabrication of my imagination and then document how the media deals with having been “had”. Do they attack me? Trivialize me? Dismiss me? Or examine the issues that inevitably reveal their short-comings—their need to be first, their lack of competence, their willingness to forgo good journalism to get a salacious story.

These three stages constitute the total performance. I’ve been able to create news headlines, even front page news headlines, for over 50 years, having repeatedly fooled not only the same networks but in many cases, the same newscasters. I do this to not only point out misuse of power, but also to bring attention to issues I believe are important. I am able to garner attention for these issues relatively inexpensively and quickly. I attack hypocrisy, social injustice and the status quo in a way that allows me to reach millions of people on an international scale. I do

my best not to break the law, although when you offend people they would love to see you incarcerated. I always reveal the truth, which differentiates me from what hustlers and scammers do. My objective is not just to go "ha ha, I got you." But to have the audience have a revelation and go "ah ha! I believed that, what else did I believe that's not true?" There's a huge media literacy component to my work. And I have an ethical code and criteria. I never take money and I try not to break the law.

Marini: We are fed with fake news every day from all sorts of media. And what I've learned in the past 4 years in making *Art of the Prank* is that one should be more responsible and not trust everything we read in the newspapers or see on TV. I also believe that the internet made this even worse since the information comes very quickly from all sorts of media and people love to see and share sensational stories.

In an ideal world the media would be more responsible, however, I don't see this as happening, especially on a large scale, therefore (unfortunately) it's our job to fact-check.

Nigrin: What does Joey think of Donald Trump who some could argue is also a prankster and a conman?

Skaggs: My take on politics in general is expressed in this Huffington Post piece I penned:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joey-skaggs/when-dogs-ruled-the-world_b_9823784.html.

Donald Trump is a masterful manipulator of the uninformed and the ill-informed. And he's in a powerful position to take advantage of not only the all-believing, unsuspecting people who elected him, but the majority of Americans who did not vote for him. It really shows the hypocrisy of what our democracy has become. I think one should easily differentiate between what Donald Trump does and my artwork. The little word with the most meaning is "intent". My ambition is to raise consciousness.

Nigrin: Andrea does a masterful job of interweaving fascinating archival footage with interviews of Joey? How did you know about Joey and how did you get together to make this film?

Marini: Thank you! It means a lot to have your work appreciated especially when you took on a big challenge like this film. Cutting back and forth like that doesn't always deliver in a film, it can actually turn out to be a big distraction, but we (the editor Emanuele Muscolino and I) selected the best hoaxes to include in the film by always keeping in mind what kind of film I wanted to make and to never get lost.

I encountered Joey's work 5 years ago, when I was working with a producer in Italy, he put us in contact, and since the very first time we met it took a lot of stamina to get to where we are today. It was and still is an amazing journey.

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Nigrin: Are there any memorable stories while you made this film or any other info about your film you can rely to our readers?

Marini: There are so many anecdotes and every time I stumble upon some footage that didn't make the final cut of the film it brings back a lot of good memories.

However, let me tell you this, since the very beginning of the production, I told Joey that I wanted to tell the story of his career by following him doing another hoax, he is a true artist and I always respected that, therefore I was willing to wait for the epiphany to come.

The memory of him coming up with the idea for his latest hoax is still very vivid.

He is constantly thinking about something and there is always something that bothers him, but one day, as we were driving and talking like every other day, something triggered his imagination and he started to put the dots together of something that was scattered in his mind.

I'm amazed by how that random car ride turned out to be the spine of the film.

I can't tell you about the hoax, I am sworn to secrecy...although it's all in the film!

Here is the trailer for *Art of the Prank*:



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The short film *Cavities* will precede *Art of the Prank*. Here is more info on this screening:

Cavities - Michael Chan (Los Angeles, California)

A troubled 16-year-old reconnects with his mother after he returns home unexpectedly. 2016; 25 min.

Art of the Prank - Andrea Marini (Winter Park, Florida)

Joey Skaggs is both an artist and a professional prankster. As this documentary follows his escapades, it offers a simultaneously funny and very alarming look at the propaganda and disinformation fed to the unsuspecting public every day by the mainstream media. Skaggs' work is as relevant today--if not more so--as it was when he launched his artistic hoaxes 50 years ago. Audiences are inspired to question the very core of their beliefs. 2016; 82 min. With a Q+A session by Joey Skaggs!

Sunday, January 29, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.

Voorhees Hall #105/Rutgers University

71 Hamilton Street, New Brunswick, New Jersey

\$12=General; \$10=Students+Seniors; \$9=Rutgers

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Information: (848) 932-8482;

www.njfilmfest.com

Jimmy John's of New Brunswick will be providing free food prior to all New Jersey Film Festival Screenings!



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