

## Exit through the Gift Shop

A review by Tom Sims

It is self-dubbed “The World’s First Street Art Disaster Movie.” And when the film first started, I watched the images of two-bit graffiti “bombers” and rolled my eyes expecting that this destructive, ugly lot of sorely misdirected painters would be glorified. But the director quickly focuses on the crème de la crème of street artistry in a quirky, engaging, and funny look at this underground world. How underground, you ask? The director’s “street” name is Banksy, and his appearance throughout the film is in shadows with disguised voice.

“Exit through the Gift Shop” starts with an oddball filmmaker named Thierry Guetta, who started as a filming enthusiast then turned his obsession toward filming street artists, eventually to documenting the work of elite street artists. He had reached new heights by filming the work of Shepard Fairey, the man responsible for the Obama image of “Hope” that permeated the last presidential election. During the filming of footage a number of years back, Fairey was in the midst of branding his face based on an illustration of wrestling celebrity Andre the Giant with the one-word tagline “Obey.” You’ve seen the artwork, you’ll recognize it during that part of the film.

But it wasn’t until Guetta was contacted by mega-celebrity street artist Banksy that he felt he had reached the pinnacle of his filmmaking endeavors. Banksy did something he had never before—allowed Guetta to follow him into his underground world of pop street art. What Banksy didn’t know is how terrible a film editor Guetta was. The result: Banksy took the footage captured by Guetta and turned it into “Exit through the Gift Shop.”

Rhys Ifans a British actor who appeared with Hugh Grant and Julia Roberts in “Notting Hill” and in an offbeat film entitled “Danny Deckchair” narrates the film. Sundance was first to host “Exit through the Gift Shop” to a standing room only crowd at Sundance this year. There is some speculation that parts of the film are more “mockumentary” than documentary (that is, “put on”), but this does little to detract from the film.

And no it has not played in New Jersey (yet, anyway...). But I’m always on the prowl for the members of the Cape May Film Society! I’ve already contacted the distribution representative to host the NJ Premiere. Stay tuned! And if you’re not a member of the Film Society, why not? Call me at 609-884-6700 to learn how you can support our filmmaking educational outreach to students and at-risk youth.