



Tha Undagrind Documentary

Rating: 4/10

The Undagrind is ostensibly a documentary about the struggle to get a record deal, hustle a mixtape, promote a club, and basically make it in the rap game. Unfortunately the film, which is focused on the hip-hop culture of the South in general and of Atlanta specifically, mostly comes across as a disjointed effort with little direction, next to no narrative flow, and sometimes-indecipherable audio. It's too bad, really, because the subject is an interesting one.

Near the beginning of The Undagrind there is a lightning-quick segment in which the history of Southern rap is run through; names like Outkast, Geto Boys, Master P, and UGK are mentioned as role models of success. But the film quickly veers back into apparently unrelated segments of a fight at a studio, a ridiculous Lil' Scrappy photo shoot with masked gunmen and girls, and advice from smalltime promoters and businessmen. Luminaries like David Banner and Slim Thug show up for all-too-brief interviews in which they dispense some basic but very valuable wisdom about the industry, such as understanding publishing percentages. DJ Drama also provides some expert insight as to the incalculable value of mixtapes in a time when record execs don't pay very much attention to demos.

Elsewhere Tha Undagrind's cameras follow female MC Skandalis as she stalks the nighttime streets of Buckhead, Atlanta to hawk her mixtapes in another interesting segment. She admits that most of the guys she approaches are out to get her number, but she slyly manages to turn this to her advantage and make a few hundred bucks on a good night. As if to counter this brief moment of street feminism, a "bonus shakeoff" is included as bonus piece, in which women compete in an ass-jiggling competition to win cash prizes in front of a screaming crowd. Sure, it's just kids having fun, but the situation feels slightly menacing as the jeers of the men looking on - things like "I'm gonna stick my dick in your fat pussy" - rain down on the women. Overall, this documentary is a real disappointment, cobbled together in the hodgepodge style of many of the weaker releases in the Southern rap genre.