



Shared Darkness
A Communal Life in Film and DVD, Examined



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The Undagrind



This entry was posted on 7/22/2007 12:14 AM and is filed under [DVD Reviews](#).

Ahh, what to make about *The Undagrind*, a gritty little documentary which bills itself with solemnly introduced title cards as being about “struggle and respect,” then cuts to a g-string-clad dancer shaking her butt cheeks and executing a stripper’s split? Every trend spawns its own particular wave of hackish aspirants, of course, but seemingly none quite so much as the inner city rap craze, at least recently.

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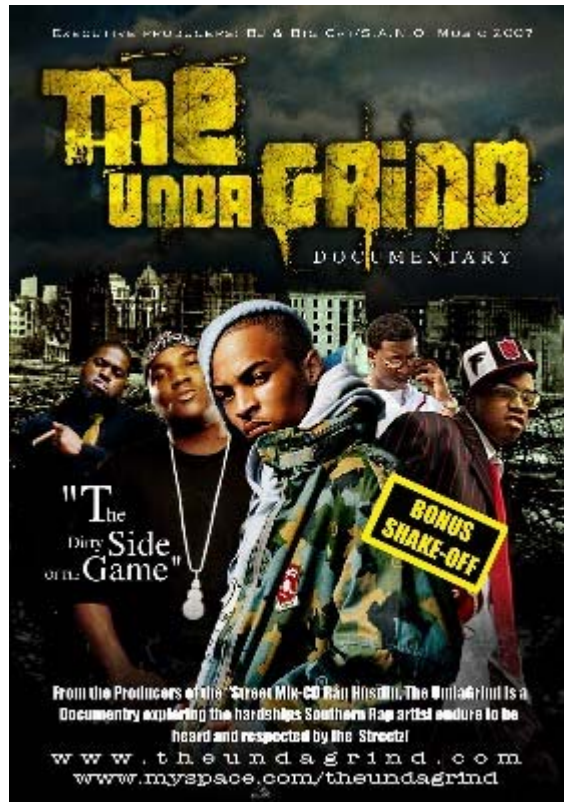
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Directed (read: pieced together) by BJ Orr, *The Undagrind* isn't a documentary in any sort of traditional or even loose sense, which is to say that it might attempt to explain or illuminate a trend, issue or person. Its back cover text claims the movie explores the hardships that rap artists endure while they battle to be heard and respected "on the streetz," but **this meandering, skull-numbing collection of footage seems assembled in totally random, haphazard fashion.** There is literally no reason or rhyme to be found, apart from several of the couplets that some rappers drop in freestyle. It's true that there are a good number of interview snippets here, with artists popular and unknown alike — folks like David Banner, Three Six Mafia, Young Jeezy, Slim Thug, Lil' Scrappy, PSC, the Ying Yang Twins, Juvenile, I-20, Frasier Boy, Gucci Mane, Poo Baby and 2 Live Crew's Luke Skywalker, aka Luther Campbell. But there's zero contextualization, the bits are often extremely short and the inane ramblings run about 9:1 over any legitimate insights (**sample inspiration: "You gotta walk before you crawl, and you gotta crawl before you run,"** says a gent named Hustla, slapping the blacktop and peddling copies of a self-produced CD). Vincent Phillips, president of BME, is a notable exception, providing a bit of edifying on-the-fly history with respect to the track laid by underground regional rap artists.

Some of the underground show footage could conceivably be interesting to aficionados, but it's not introduced or set up at

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all, leaving one to draw their own conclusions about what comes from where. **This is an awful exercise in air-quote filmmaking, plain and simple, a bunch of home video-style footage strung together in crass fashion.** And there's nary a sense of irony when an associate producer from a radio station where an on-air rap battle is being held (and maybe even the movie's associate producer, Trey Dungy?) is billed onscreen with the moniker "ass. producer."

Housed in a regular Amray case, *The Undagrind* is presented in 1.33:1 full screen, with Dolby digital 5.1 surround sound audio mix. The disc's sole supplemental extra? Well, **I wasn't really sure what the cover tag "bonus shake-off" really meant, but that would be 12 minutes of booty-wobbling and quaking, performed for cash in front of a crowd by a quartet of bikini-clad girls.** Seriously. I don't know whether that's the best or most objectionable thing about this trough-scraping disc, but I do know that I need to go take a shower, like, right now. I see this movie, perhaps not so strangely, getting some run from the same crowd who purchase volume after volume of [Extreme Chickfights](#). For more information, one can visit the movie's eponymous web site. Oh, right... if that's too big a word, umm... just type in *The Undagrind*, followed by .com. **F (Movie) C- (Disc)**

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