



MicroFilmmaker

Film Critiques



Final Film Critique:
D.I.Y. or Die:
How to Survive as an Independent Artist

Director: Michael W. Dean
Expected Rating: PG-13 due to adult art
Distribution: Music Video Distributors
Budget: \$5,000
Genre: Documentary
Running Time: 55 minutes
Release Dates: December 1, 2005
Website: <http://www.diyod.org>
Trailer: <http://www.diyod.org>
Review Date: August 15, 2006
Reviewed By: Kari Ann Morgan

Final Score: 8.3

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Do-it-yourself. This term is no longer merely limited to home improvement projects. With the continual increase of newer, cheaper, and more easily accessible equipment, a growing number of people are becoming filmmakers, photographers, musicians, and performers. And while a few of them strive solely for fame and recognition, most of these independent artists adhere strongly to the do-it-yourself (DIY) principle.

Just what is the DIY movement? Part of it is based in the old adage, "if you want something done right, do it yourself." Microfilmmakers and DIY artists don't have the money to pay people to get things such as publicity, promotions, and production done, so they do most of it themselves (which they usually prefer doing anyway). But the biggest attraction for the DIY movement is the fact that because you're doing everything yourself, no one can tell you what to do. You make all of the creative, financial, and professional decisions; there are no company reps telling you what you can and can't do, and no industry bigwigs taking your projects and changing them to make them more "marketable". While it can be financially limiting, there is a tremendous freedom in DIY.

In his documentary, *D.I.Y. or Die: How to Survive as an Independent Artist*, Michael W. Dean (author of [The \\$30 Film School](#), and featured in this [month's interview](#)) explores the pros and cons of the DIY movement, what it really involves, and most importantly, how DIY artists can survive. Consisting of interviews of over two dozen singers, performers, painters, sculptors, musicians, photographers, filmmakers, and other artists well-known in the indie community, *D.I.Y. or Die* takes you into the inspiring world of what is at the heart of being an independent artist.

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Michael W. Dean
Filmmaker
*Dean explains the basics of the
DIY movement ...*



John John Jesse
Painter
*...and talks with artists about how
doing-it-yourself works for them.*



[Received a 9.5 in
October Issue](#)

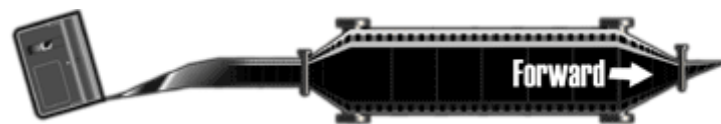
Content

On IMDb, I came across a user comment that is the most appropriate description of *D.I.Y. or Die*: "This movie is not 'Making Art for Dummies.' This movie is more appropriately 'Go Out and Make Some Art, You Dummy!'"

This film is meant to inspire as well as instruct, and it does both quite well. The only explanatory narration occurs at the very beginning, when Dean explains the origins of the DIY movement, as well as its basic characteristics and goals. The rest of the movie is made up entirely of interviews with various artists discussing different aspects of the DIY process. This setup is helpful, because Dean begins by giving us the bare, objective facts about the DIY movement, then steps back and lets the artists tell what it really means; first comes the encyclopedia definition, then the real-world application. The interviews flow well from one to the other, and are interspersed nicely with clips from the artists' performances. The film ends with the words "Now go make your own movie!!!", which perfectly sums up the purpose of the entire film: you've seen what others have been able to do... now go do it yourself.

Visual Look

The visual look of the film is fairly basic and straightforward, using mostly a tripod setup. The whole feel of the film is personal and passionate, with most of the artists being filmed in their studio, apartment, or office. There are also some nice touches throughout the film that illustrate its DIY characteristics: a few scenes begin with Dean synching up the shot by using his hands as a clapper (a very effective substitute when you don't have a clapper!); also, in several places, the mic and its stand are set up on the floor right in front of or next to the artist. However, rather than detracting from the overall quality of the film, these things enhance the personal and independent nature of the work.



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