

Hooked (Eclectic DVD, NR)

Contributed by Jim Campbell
Tuesday, 31 January 2006

The reason I call it one-sided is because of how narrow a net Ahlberg cast to recruit his interviewees. Among the dozens of men interviewed for the documentary, not one woman—let alone very few minorities—made in into the film. The men profiled all seem to fit a specific mold: sexual predators.

Buy this DVD

Eclectic DVD is releasing Hooked, Todd Ahlberg's voyeuristic look into the world of gay men cruising for sex online. The film, originally released in 2003, is an interesting, if not one-sided look into the lives of several gay men as they log on to get off.

The reason I call it one-sided is because of how narrow a net Ahlberg cast to recruit his interviewees. Among the dozens of men interviewed for the documentary, not one woman—let alone very few minorities—made in into the film. The men profiled all seem to fit a specific mold: sexual predators.

Each of the men interviewed all came up with the same slogan: "If I am online, I am looking for sex—now!" While they each go into their own versions of how they cruise, why they cruise, when they cruise, and how many they cruise, they each eventually end on the same note: It's just sex. They were looking for sex in large quantities, not quality.

The film deals with a large number of issues concerning online cruising, like what a good profile can mean to you; the needless act of conversation; the rise and fall of self-worth; loneliness and the single guy; sexual addiction; and the possibility of violent acts. When discussing addiction, the film took a serious turn and profiled a man actively dealing with his online affliction. A friend of his told him to get a cat. The man did and recalled the time his cat laid on his chest and purred. He confessed that this was the first time in his life that he ever felt love. The story was intended to be endearing, but came off kind of creepy.

In fact, Ahlberg seemed to highlight only the pros of the highly addictive craze, barely giving any attention to the negative attributes. As the throng of clean-cut men talked about how much they enjoyed the thrill of the kill, Ahlberg rarely asked about the dangerous physical and emotional effects of their actions.

There is much more to this subject matter than what Ahlberg investigated. What about people that meet through the Internet and actually become couples? What about people who contract HIV through the high number of partners they encounter? What about lesbians—where do they meet other women online? What about heterosexual men and women—are they immune to the online obsession? While Ahlberg's intentions may have been sincere and good-hearted, he managed to profile only the smallest sliver of a very large and diverse cake. Unfortunately, this raised more questions than it answered.