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Hubert Selby Jr.: It/ll be Better Tomorrow ★★★

(2005) 79 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Hubert Selby, Jr. (1928-2004), the idiosyncratic (note the punctuation in the film's title) but influential author of such novels as *Last Exit to Brooklyn* (1964) and *Requiem for a Dream* (1978)—both made into films—is the subject of Michael W. Dean and Kenneth Shiffrin's 2005 documentary, which combines archival footage, stills, interview excerpts (including some with Selby himself) and narration (by Robert Downey, Jr.) to present a solid account of the writer's life and persuasive appreciation of his work. Looking at the obstacles Selby struggled to overcome, especially in terms of his health (including alcohol abuse and drug addiction), as well as the passion with which the author approached not only his writing but life in general (demonstrated by his outspoken antipathy towards the Bush administration), the film features a number of notable commentaries—from directors Uli Edel and Darren Aronofsky and actors Ellen Burstyn and Jared Leto, to admirers and collaborators such as Lou Reed, Henry Rollins, and Richard Price—all of whom help illuminate Selby's significance as an artist. And the fact that an episode of *The Simpsons* (an excerpt is included here) was titled *Last Exit to Springfield* proves that Selby's cultural influence extended beyond the literati. DVD extras include over three hours of audio interviews with Selby, Edel, and literary critic and radio host Michael Silverblatt. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

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