They Shoot Movies

A Study In Movie Magic

Reflexive Spectacle and the Ethics of Uncertainty in *They Shoot Movies, Don't They?****

Introduction

In the age of mediated reality, the boundaries between fiction, documentary, and performance have grown increasingly porous. *They Shoot Movies, Don't They?* occupies this liminal space, existing not as a film about filmmaking, but as a cultural experiment in media reflexivity. What makes the project uniquely powerful is not merely its content, but the **audience response archive** it generated during its broadcast on the Independent Film Channel (IFC). This chapter examines that response archive as a living document of collective disorientation, emotional projection, and cultural self-examination—revealing as much about contemporary media consumers as it does about the film itself.

The Film as Meta-Performance

They Shoot Movies, Don't They? presents itself as a documentary following a failed filmmaker, Tom Paulson, spiraling into isolation and ultimately suicide. Yet from its earliest scenes, it employs the conventions of self-aware performance—blurring lines between authenticity and contrivance. The camera lingers too long, the confessionals feel rehearsed, and the mise-en-scène carries the sterile texture of controlled chaos.

In traditional mockumentary form, the audience expects parody. What they receive instead is **emotional bait**—an authentic-seeming depiction of mental illness, career failure, and existential unraveling. This choice engages not satire, but **the weaponization of ambiguity**, evoking Baudrillard's notion of simulacra, where representation no longer reflects reality but replaces it (Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1981).

The Archive as Text

The IFC response archive serves as an unfiltered mirror to this ambiguity. Dozens of emails, letters, and messages reveal a public gripped not just by the content, but by the **uncertainty of the content's status**: Is Tom Paulson a real person? Is he dead? Is IFC complicit in a suicide? The very act of *not knowing* became the engine of emotional engagement.

Responses fall into several dominant categories:

- **Certainty of Reality**: Many viewers believed Paulson was real. One wrote, "I cried for two hours after it ended. I felt I had watched a real man's life collapse."
- **The Recoil of Realization**: Others vacillated, describing the moment they "Googled the name" or "watched it again to check for clues," revealing their instinctual need to classify narrative as either true or false.
- **Moral Outrage**: Some accused IFC of exploiting a vulnerable subject for entertainment—an ethical reversal that reveals the audience's emotional investment and their belief in the stakes of what they had seen.
- **Artistic Reverence**: A smaller but significant group celebrated the work as "more real than real," evoking parallels with Andy Kaufman, Lars von Trier, and Charlie Kaufman.

These letters are not passive responses but **active sites of epistemological crisis**, each articulating a viewer's confrontation with the breakdown of genre, truth, and authorship. In essence, the archive becomes a **chorus of destabilized subjectivities**—the Greek tragedy not unfolding on screen, but within the viewer.

Viewer as Co-Conspirator

One of the most ethically fascinating components of the response archive is the sense of complicity it engendered in the audience. Multiple viewers noted feelings of guilt, voyeurism, or even "murderous detachment," suggesting that watching Paulson's decline felt like participating in it. This is a direct echo of Walter Benjamin's anxiety over the "aestheticization of politics" and the passive consumption of trauma in modern media.

In *They Shoot Movies, Don't They?*, the camera never blinks. But the audience does. And in that blink—between belief and disbelief—lies the emotional rupture.

Media Reflexivity in the Postmodern Age

If *Spinal Tap* mocked rock documentaries, and *Blair Witch Project* blurred horror with lo-fi realism, *They Shoot Movies* weaponized **documentary affect** to question the very premise of representation. The character of Paulson is not just a failed filmmaker—he is a **spectral double** for the viewer, trapped in a media system where truth is inaccessible and meaning is mediated through performance.

The archive responses reinforce this postmodern trap. Many viewers express not just confusion but **self-doubt**. They begin to interrogate their own feelings, their own expectations, their own roles as spectators. This is a radical departure from traditional audience reception. As scholar Linda Hutcheon writes in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, "Irony is not only in the text—it is in the gap between what we expect and what we receive."

Conclusion: A Mirror, Not a Movie

They Shoot Movies, Don't They? is less a film than a **trapdoor**—a carefully constructed performance that ensnares its viewers in ethical, emotional, and cognitive uncertainty. Its audience response archive is its true legacy: a text as revealing as any monologue, more dramatic than any climax. In these reactions, we see a society attempting to navigate the collapse of reliable narratives, and a media landscape that has trained us to doubt even our most visceral responses.

The project anticipates not just reality television, but **deepfake culture**, **influencer authenticity**, and **algorithmic manipulation**. It is prescient not only in form, but in function: it destabilized the viewer, and made them wonder whether the truth is knowable—or even necessary. In that sense, it is not just a film about the death of a filmmaker, but about the **death of certainty itself**.

Works Cited

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by Tom Wilson

On August 23rd 2000, "They Shoot Movies Don't They - The Making of Mirage" aired for the first time ever. The good folks at Bravo /I.F.C. chose to air it on the DVTheater strand. During the movie they ran a strip across the screen asking viewers to react after the movie. What follows is that reaction. Truly an example of **Art Intimidating Life.**

This Is How Bravo/IFC Promoted the Movie
(It's *fair and accurate reporting*, if you ask us)

They Shoot Movies, Don't They? is a voyeuristic look at first time director Tom Paulson and the movie he wrote called Mirage. Frank Gallagher is the documentarian whose camera waits and watches as Paulson navigates through a jungle of investors, colleagues, friends and family, searching for money to finish his film. They Shoot Movies, Don't They? offers a line-blurring examination of what one might give up, in order to succeed.

Of all the movies listed for reaction on Bravo/IFC's web site, "They Shoot Movies, Don't They - The Making of Mirage" was by far the most reacted to movie. **Ten times** more reactions than the next closest movie.

The Reaction

AT 12:48 AM EASTERN TIME THE MOVIE ENDS

Was it real??? I can't tell...
Thu Aug 24 12:58 AM US/Eastern 2000

Did he really die? I hope not.
confused

I loved it
Thu Aug 24 1:01 AM US/Eastern 2000

However, i think we were watching a film rather than a documentary. There are explicit rules when filming a documentary, all were broken here. Way too many edits, at seemingly the worst places. As soon as dialogue picked up, or anger took over, the subject would ask for the film makers to stop. They seemed all to willing to do so. The lighting and makeup also give it away for me. All in all I loved it, and I hope I am correct on my assumptions.
Gerald Pots
[redacted]

"They shoot movies don't they?"
Thu Aug 24 1:02 AM US/Eastern 2000

Another "Blair Witch Project". I don't believe a word of it. Just hype to fuel the cash flow. I will not be seeing the movie "Mirage".....if one actualy exists.
Mike

They Shoot Movies-Dont They?
Thu Aug 24 1:03 AM US/Eastern 2000

Fascinating. Truly reality based programming. I found myself gripped to watching this documentary. And also a truly tragic tale.
Tom
[redacted]

Joke
Thu Aug 24 1:06 AM US/Eastern 2000

I don't for a single second buy that this was real. But, IF (and it's a great big IF) it is true, then how pathetic for all concerned. The man (ficitonal or otherwise) had no dignity in death. I found the film insipid and pathetic.
Ron

reaction to dvtheater
Thu Aug 24 1:07 AM US/Eastern 2000

That was awesome.Really powerful shit.Yet another example of why IFC is some of the best stuff on tv.Please keep up the great programing.
Justin Miami,Florida
Justin Brezner
[redacted]

Some people have "sucker" written on their foreheads..

Thu Aug 24 1:09 AM US/Eastern 2000

...or they work for the studio. If you believe this movie was a real documentary, then you are a complete dolt.
It was really good, however. The mirror relationship between the life of the main character of "Mirage" and Tom's life was very Baudrillard. Very postmodern flick all around. It's a huge cynical take on Hollywood and a shot at its values, which isn't all that uncommon, but it doesn't valorize the whole romantic "starving artist in his garret" thing, which is a difficult balance to strike.
brendan

Ron
Thu Aug 24 1:09 AM US/Eastern 2000

How insensitive you are
Sharon

they shoot movie.....
Thu Aug 24 1:10 AM US/Eastern 2000

if it was documentary it didn't carry the day. I liked it as a film. I thought it described the way some artists (or wouldbe artists) are driven.I know about this first ahnd from working on a couple of indies with some friends of mine. Thank you IFC. FORREST
FORREST A JONES
[redacted]

They shoot movies don't they
Thu Aug 24 1:10 AM US/Eastern 2000

I really enjoyed it. I wish it had a happier ending though.
Ed Messina
[redacted]

Got my attention 1/4 way into the film.
Thu Aug 24 1:11 AM US/Eastern 2000

Documentary? Mockumentary? Either way, it grasped my attention and was a very interesting piece. With all these "real life" TV shows and voyueristic urges in the world of film/Television entertainment, I guess you could say it fit right in. As for the "rules" of shooting a documentary.. Since when did you have to follow rules to shoot anything? The rules of yesterday are suppose to be broken today. If they aren't, we wil be stuck with the same old crap again, and again and again. History doesn't need to be repeated anymore.
A Film/video student not from the east or west coast
[redacted]

Re: The Movie "They Shoot Movies, Don't They?"
Thu Aug 24 1:12 AM US/Eastern 2000

I thought it as other films shows the cold blooded and callused side of the business of making movies where the artistic vision gets sacrificed. I found it more than a little coincidental that the film "Mirage" that he was making was about failure and that he considered himself a failure by his in-ability to get the money to finish his vision. But very compelling.....raw emotional drama with fair measure of honesty. I hope a measure of his vision endures through the final cut. Can't wait to see the movie!! james
James
[redacted]

dv theater
Thu Aug 24 1:12 AM US/Eastern 2000

i am surprised this movie was shown, although i support ifc's right to show it. i am opposed to government censorship of any kind, but i do believe with the right to show this film comes a responsibility to anticipate predictable, undesirable outcomes. this film encourages others who may confuse fame with notariety to follow this directors' example: ifc may then have blood on their hands.
george heath jr.
[redacted]

They Shoot Movies Don't They?
Thu Aug 24 1:12 AM US/Eastern 2000

Great documentary. We most definitely can get too focused and as a result end up putting some reason and logic aside.
I would like to know what happens to the film--will it end up making money in the end?
I believe there is a fine line between the most successful and people like Tom. Indeed, Tom may have become a highly successful filmmaker if he had endured.
Toward the end Tom was unreasonable in his requests from freinds and business associates. Would anyone disagree with that?
Maybe he took his life to make a statement of, "Here's your money--that's all you all wanted, and you got it. Life shouldn't be about money."
Mark Jacobs
[redacted]

I Cried
Thu Aug 24 1:13 AM US/Eastern 2000

....and I'm still crying. Only to a deaf man could

I say more.
Bennie, in Texas
[redacted]

POWERFUL= THEY SHOOT MOVIES DON'T THEY
Thu Aug 24 1:13 AM US/Eastern 2000

CAUGHT THE DOCUMENTARY MIDWAY THROUGH AND IMMEDIATELY CAUGHT UP. POWERFUL FOOTAGE TO SEE A HUMAN HIT ROCK BOTTOM. HARD TO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD THE MONEY IN HIS POCKET AFTER GOING TO THE CASINO. STRANGE THING,OUR FASCINATION WITH THE MATERIAL, MAN SELLING HIS SOUL=FRIENDS, FAMILY, SPOUSE) FOR HIS QUEST TO BE RICH AND FAMOUS THROUGH HIS ART AND THEN FAILING AND SEEING SUICIDE AS THE ONLY POSSIBLE RESPONSE. STRANGE THING ABOUT MYSELF? FIND A PERSON'S FAILURE AND SUICIDE AS FASCINATING ENTERTAINMENT.
GEORGE FOX
[redacted]

They shoot movies don't they
Thu Aug 24 1:13 AM US/Eastern 2000

I don't know if it was real or not, but this is a great example of quality filmmaking made outside of Hollywood and the networks. Bravo!
Alex

Tearing the soul out of a filmmaker
Thu Aug 24 1:14 AM US/Eastern 2000

Wow. I'm in the embryotic stages of making a film and seeing this man's ultimate journey in film and in life makes you think about why we do what we do and what is the real driving force behind who we are. It seems that he killed himself and also would have been able to pay the Ari guy so that

shows you how confused and at one with his decision he was. as a documentary it all sense but what a shitty way to get somebody's soul into your camera. I can't really think of anything else to say. I don't want to see the film if and when it comes out only because I'd feel like a sadistic voyuer and probably would'nt take away anything from the film but I would be trying to figure out the man behind the camera and I'm not sure I need to look any further than the documentary for that. P.S. could you loan me 40 grand so I can make my film, I'd do just about anything, include let you film my demise and then solicit a reaction via the internet, SICK FUCKING BASTARDS
Nate Cohen
[redacted]

The maker of mirage.
Thu Aug 24 1:15 AM US/Eastern 2000

If the documentary wasn't real, then as a film, it was rather shallow in its message of hopeless futility -- to end one's life because one cannot attain an honest vision of their "painting" on film is almost an absurdity. One could merely take up painting instead, or sculpture. A more expressive, evolved scenario could have developed instead where the filmmaker (Tom) realizes the emptiness of the external world, and ultimately realize that his film is forever inside himself -- beautiful, eternal, personal, only visible to himself. And be content with that. If on the other hand the doc was real, then how tragic a story.. to have tried so hard, yet given up so easily.
J. W. Singleton
[redacted]

Good movie - I think
Thu Aug 24 1:16 AM US/Eastern 2000

This is a really interesting film to watch about films and what it takes to make them. The guy was

going crazy but you couldn't tell until the end when they show what he looked like at the start. I'm pretty sure the end was fake, and they were trying to get people interested in seeing 'Mirage,' but everything up to that point was great. So I'm pretty sure I liked this, unless the ending is actually real - then I think it's pretty twisted to show this - and if so, when does the film they were making come out? If it doesn't get into theatres IFC has an obligation to show it, and the guy that made all the money off this film should be sued.
Peter Bradshaw
[redacted]

they shoot movies
Thu Aug 24 1:16 AM US/Eastern 2000

Interesting blurring of reality and fiction. I have to believe it was fiction, but at the beginning I had no idea. Still some doubts. My former acting coach was in it. But they used her real name. So I don't know. Seemed like an accurate portayal of the process to live the dream of an indy filmmaker. Having been a friend on the receiving end of a pitch, it was credible. Ultimately... hmm. total fiction. But, if you look hard enough, I am sure there is a real Tom who died for his dream on the cold unforgiving pavement of Hollywood Blvd.
rod dubitsky
[redacted]

untitled

Thu Aug 24 1:19 AM US/Eastern 2000

...very touching...but by going through the maze you set up to get me here and give my review i feel the profound feeling it gave me slipping away...thank you very much for allowing me to define your film for the public instead of basking in its wonder in the private confines of my mind...
trelk
[redacted]

Garbage
Thu Aug 24 1:19 AM US/Eastern 2000

I don't know what is more pathetic; the fact that we're supposed to believe this guy really killed himself or that he did it in 1996. If it was 1996 it seems Tom and all of his friends were caught up in some sort of fashion vortex. Not to mention the director cutting away on his 3/4 inch machine. I thought this was DV theatre.
I think the real message here is not how sad Hollywood is it's how sad people trying to get into hollywood attempt are. They try to cash in on current trends but maintain this holier than thou attitude.
One final thought. The movie producer was really believable. Not because of his cliched dialogue. He was believable because he was sitting in front of a bookcase. Nice Touch.
George

Average
Thu Aug 24 1:22 AM US/Eastern 2000

It became quite obvious a few minutes into the film that it was a mockumentary and that the main character would eventually meet the ending of the very character he was trying to save through funding. It was not bad, nothing special, but by no means terrible. I would hate to say that it needed more realism, but it did, nor do I wish to sound like someone from this film with an opinion, but there were several scenes that could have used less rehearsal and more spontaneity. Regardless, a film was made. Most people don't even do that anymore.
Yeoman Johnson
[redacted]

They Shoot Movies (and Directors) Don't They?
Thu Aug 24 1:23 AM US/Eastern 2000

Provocative, intrusive, quasi-real life drama and disturbing. The obsession of such a single minded, desperate pursuit with the real risk of life ruining failure is both engaging (as we all at some level have "been there") and frustrating. The theme has been played out on many stages before for skaters, dancers, actors, entrepreneurs and others who sacrifice social life, personal time and resources and often the friendships and relationships of those around them as the strive to attain some personal goal or perhaps the idea of the pursuit of a goal(s). The question is not is this right or wrong but how do we develop a rational perspective that allows us to fail, at times, and still thrive. Hopefully the viewers will pause and reflect on the message in the documentary (and "Mirage") and take a moment to think about it's message for everyone's life. Actually, I think the movie "Mirage" is actually

the documentary-a Kafka-esque twist on what is cinema and what is real life.
Ray Lamont
[redacted]

They Shoot Movies, Don't They
Thu Aug 24 1:25 AM US/Eastern 2000

Congratulations! This is an interesting film on MANY levels. I liked the idea of almost building a relationship between the actor/film creator and the documentarian/narrator. Both characters were so relentless in their pursuit of their own dream. Of course, that is what this film is about, right?
K. M. New Orleans,LA.
KM

"They Shoot Movies, Don't They"
Thu Aug 24 1:27 AM US/Eastern 2000

I don't know what to think. Beauty and pain. Beauty from pain. Whether the story is true or not doesn't matter. The emotion is true. The thought is true. What makes life worth living? Where does the individual draw the line, and say, "I will go no further."? When does the art become more important than the artist, if it does at all? Life reflected in art reflected in life and so on. They can't be separated. Thank you for the film.
Ian
[redacted]

Dope!
Thu Aug 24 1:28 AM US/Eastern 2000

A commendable piece of work. I found myself laughing one moment, and tortured the next. The scene with "Ari" is hilarious, and the producer character is most effective. The films ending is with such sour-ness, not a clear indictment of the hollywood system but a DEFINITE indication as

such. A fine effort.
The DV format shows to be quite effective. Most heartening.
Oh yeah... and I heard somewhere that "some people" thought that Spinal Tap was a real band too. *sheesh*
Dankenstein
the [redacted] (or) *the* [redacted]

A Sham
Thu Aug 24 1:32 AM US/Eastern 2000

The documentry film that i just watch was not believable and the documentry left me with another notch of 'suspect'. Trying to take a page from the Blair Witch Project. I have not researched the facts and when you do a web search on Tom Paulson, the name is as common as John Smith, so any truth has not been found by myself. I am not buying that buffalo web page as as facts. As soon as the actor "Tom" pointed a gun to his head, that second I realized that the entire film was a joke. I am not saying that this story never took place, I am saying that the documentry is false. I believe this because they did not show Tom killing himself. Why not???, why not show the actual shot to the head? Moreover, I saw nothing in Tom's behavior that would make me think he could kill himself; and I found it interesting that his love interest, whatever her name was, was not brought up once after she left Tom, it was as if Tom did not even have a single feeling for her. All downhill too fast. not believable, not even plausible. The only good thing about the film, aside from the hollywood is brutal message trying to be beatin out is that it did peak my interest enough to let IFC know that I am not a brainless movieviewer who will believe anything. That is my take, and i am out!
Farrell
[redacted]

"They Shoot Movies, Don't They?"
Thu Aug 24 1:35 AM US/Eastern 2000

Coming from an OUTSIDER of Hollywood, I think some of these comments are a little cynical. Which, if I am not mistaken, the movie did touch on a bit. Fiction or Non-Fiction, it is obvious that a lot of hard work went into this film. That is the REAL beauty. Fuck everybody and celebrate quite a victory!
KM
[redacted]

The Making of Mirage
Thu Aug 24 1:35 AM US/Eastern 2000

You've got to be kidding me. NO ONE had a clue as to how alienated Tom was becoming? Frankly, I'm pissed off and appalled at the lengths Mr. Gallagher felt he had to go. By deciding to keep the cameras rolling at the same time he must have undeniably been viewing (as I had) the deterioration of Tom's emotional constitution (from unconfident to fragile to unstable) without thinking to intervene (either on or off camera) makes me wonder "how amazing did he think the appeal of this documentary would be?" But, I don't even mean to single out the director. I'm sure any one of the people following Tom around until his last day in Vegas could have seen that something in his demeanor had darkened dramatically. The last vestiges of a dying civilization were not being captured on film here (not that that would make this sort of outcome acceptable, but possibly plausible?) -no, only a twenty-seven year old man attempting to make a movie (good, bad or ugly), and now he's dead? The truth is stranger than fiction and much more horrifying.
M Rosenblum
[redacted]

So what if it's not real. . .
Thu Aug 24 1:38 AM US/Eastern 2000

it made me think. About success. About failure. And what I might do if my ultimate dream doesn't come true.
That, to me, speaks volumes.
So all of you quasi-intellectual filmmaker wanna-bes out there should really start considering what appeals to real live people in real live audiences, rather than what's usually done (or not) in documentaries and films.
Joy
[redacted]

Engaging
Thu Aug 24 1:39 AM US/Eastern 2000

I found myself captivated. I didn't get to see the movie from the beginning, but was initially interested because of the DV part and my interest in film making. Congrats to IFC for putting this on, and to the filmmakers for an "interesting" (smile) film and for being able to pull me away from the final episode of Surivor. Inspiring me to do more of my own DV projects.
SCOTT
[redacted]

You missed the point George!
Thu Aug 24 1:41 AM US/Eastern 2000

I think the real message here is not how sad Hollywood is it's how sad people trying to get into hollywood attempt are. They try to cash in on current trends but maintain this holier than thou attitude.
No. The truly miserable ones in the film are the "producer" characters who think they got it all figured out. They are the ones who ultimately "cash-in" on any trends.
Look at how compromised and spineless the system is that he (Tom) is up against. That anyone is up against for that matter.
Dankenstein
the [redacted] (or) *the* [redacted]

There are two distinct possibilities.
Thu Aug 24 1:44 AM US/Eastern 2000

1: (The most probable supposition) This was a smart, Michael Moore-ish satire on the hollywood industry and how it drives crazed individuals even crazier. Case in point: The Hollywood Buffalo site is way too one-sided in its opinions and accusations and fails to provide a neutral backstory on the real events leading up to the "suicide" of the real Paulson. Plus the note by the straight-out-of-Altman's-ThePlayer-producer which says "Ironically, I believe this will provide us with the happy ending we are looking for" is too sadistic for even a souless individual like that.
2: The documentary was a shoddy self-parody which did break too many of the rules. And one more point: Anyone who kills themself over their art isn't affecting its quality but rather enacting a myth around it which gives it a more attractive sheen.

Can you imagine Ron Fricke shooting himself if he couldn't make "Baraka" or Coppola shooting himself if they wanted Stallone to play Don Corleone? On second thought don't answer that! But in either case I feel the need to say that killing oneself for one's art is both selfish and self-satisfying.
Damien Ruud
[redacted]

"They Shoot Movies, Don't They
Thu Aug 24 1:44 AM US/Eastern 2000

Congratulations! Doing a great job. I hope all goes well. This project is obviously more creative and developed than any of these ignorant comments. Hope you come to the Crescent City so I can by the director a drink.
Ray Marrone
[redacted]

The Desperate Filmmaker Project
Thu Aug 24 1:51 AM US/Eastern 2000

I watched the film, not really knowing what it was (but assuming that it was a real documentary about the making of a film)... within 10 minutes or so, I was captivated, completely identifying with Tom and admiring his devotion to making a work of art that he really believed in (even at the expense of losing his girlfriend over it). However, I must say that the "suicide" scene couldve been done much better (remember Heather Donohue's tearful scene at the end of Blair Witch? now that was powerful and believable)... it wasnt long enough, or anguished enough, and when he supposedly killed himself, I knew I'd been had (not that there's anything wrong with that). I mean, obviously this

wouldve been a major news story (since it wouldve been captured on film). I think it wouldve been better to have him ALMOST do it, then back down, screaming in anguish. If it had been done that way, I would probably be writing this review, saying "holy cow, is Tom ok??" So you had me for most of the film, but you lost me in that last five minutes. Still, a very commendable job, my compliments to the chefs!! RIP TOM!! ;)
Aguirre the Wrath of God
[redacted]

"They Shoot Movies, Don't The
Thu Aug 24 1:55 AM US/Eastern 2000

To all involved in making this film, a best friend and myself sat 3,000 miles away drinking champagne to celebrate a friend's hard work and success. My friend, Susan, does not even know anyone involved. My brother, Ray, who has walked out of 85% of the films he has attempted to watch, sits here and hopes for people to understand how important this can be to someone or anyone. Please don't miss the message by focusing on the flaws. Then , we all become HOLLYWOOD!
-- (KM)
[redacted]

Km
Thu Aug 24 2:08 AM US/Eastern 2000

Your taking this much to hard
Pete & Sandi

what's it all about
Thu Aug 24 4:45 AM US/Eastern 2000

"They Shoot Movies..." raises some interesting issues about film making and "Documentaries" despite itself. As the story begins the

film-makers do a good job creating a realistic document and much of that authenticity is due to the video camera and the shooting style it allows. In many ways the effect is simple to achieve. Most of us are already familiar with the language of video cameras and instantly absorb the images on their own terms. Informal and immediate, the scenes evoke a sense of realism not unlike the home movies that appear in the story. Although, I suspect the inclusion of "Tom's" home movies had a more sentimental intent as "films", they have a curious effect on the "documentary" itself. Aside from their weight as personal objects, they wind up adding to the story's authenticity because they ARE film. The video images take on more urgency simply by contrast. As the story develops, straightforward interviews and banal scenes of chinese take-out, make a convincing claim to realism. But eventually something has to happen and this is were the facade begins to show cracks. As the emotions of the characters intensify the scenes suddenly seem false. Portraying sudden anger or desperation realistically is difficult at best, and these are the moments were staging peaks through. The effect is sublime. We may not be able to put a finger on it but something seems wrong; reactions are too intense or too subdued by tiny amounts, but they are enough to break the spell. I don't believe that creating a realistic document is the film maker's sole intent, but by invoking this conceit, one must account for its effect on the story. It becomes clear that Tom is living his movie "Mirage", a story of failure, but the document itself ultimately rings false. It is simply not believable that Tom would kill himself. The tidy wrap up at the end explaining his motivation for suicide is too little, too late. Maybe, if we had been able to see some "actual" moments from "Mirage" as an additional contrast, and we left Tom alive, having lost all his money, posessing a film that no one wanted to see, questioning his own perseverence, we might wonder about our own fears of reaching. We might begin to understand a new form of story telling that uses "reality" to convey meaning in a way that

conventional movies cannot. As it is, the ending smacks of "poignant drama", hollywood style. The conclusion is so contrived, the fiction so glaring, it overshadows any underlying meaning. Granted, it's a SAD ending, but that notion could only serve to stir up cynical jokes about independent films. What might have been a provocative work, raising questions about factual versus fictional narratives, and their ability to afect us, is instead a somewhat conventional narrative told in unconventional terms.
L Blanco
[redacted]

AT 5:47 AM EASTERN TIME THE MOVIE ENDS

couldn't stop watching
Thu Aug 24 5:49 AM US/Eastern 2000

thought it was fantastic. I couldn't leave the room. Didn't want to miss anything. Very unnerving. catches our fears as artists but works as riveting entertainment as well (if a little masochistic to watch). Helps to prove (along with movies like celebration and the last broadcast) that DV works as it's own film medium. i know a few people who'd love this movie. I hope to get them to watch it. very interested in seeing what this group's next project is.
Josh Gordon
[redacted]

Surreal So Real
Thu Aug 24 5:54 AM US/Eastern 2000

Captivating. Enthralling. Poignant. "Blair Witch project" take off, or cinema verite - no matter:

it worked. Sadly, I never "liked" Tom enough to
care if he "did it" or not. But the film hooked us
all, and for that I salute you, Frank. I hope all
my wannabe Hollywood friends see it! I do hate
this town and all it stands for...
Diana
[redacted]

Much like "Dropping Out"
Thu Aug 24 5:56 AM US/Eastern 2000

This docu is much like the movie "Dropping Out"
Written by Kent Osborne (Movie Lounge) and he was
also the star. His bro Mark (More) directed it. I
think someone is ripping someone else off. :)
Josh
[redacted]

got me on the computer to find out
Thu Aug 24 6:09 AM US/Eastern 2000

good film.....wanted to see clips from Mirage
had me for most of it
jay
[redacted]

Reality Vs. Fiction
Thu Aug 24 6:23 AM US/Eastern 2000

Reality verses Fiction: the line is all but gone now. I just hope films like this don't distroy the small market for real documentry films.
Still, I thought it was quite effective. I should just be a little more careful what I put on when I can't sleep at 4:15sm on a Thursday morning. It almost made me want to give up on my own screenplay ambitions, but only for a moment.
Mark Hecht
[redacted]

they shoot movies, don't they?
Thu Aug 24 6:27 AM US/Eastern 2000

Like most other posters here, I thought it was great, and was taken in by the 'mock-doc' up to the point where things started to get a little too emotionally 'acted' (also, the smoothly amoral lucifer-esque Joe Mantegna-looking producer character was just a touch too on-the-nose to believe, although very enjoyable to watch) The bit at the end where the vultures come in to finish the film reminded me of Armistead Maupin's 'Maybe the Moon'. All in all, a great concept, terrific movie; as they say at the exit polls "definitely would recomend!"
Nick Jameson
[redacted]

THE DAY AFTER

was it real
Thu Aug 24 9:49 AM US/Eastern 2000

I thought the docu. was great but I had trouble finding out if it really was a docu. a few of the people looked like they were acting but other times it seemed real. the end in the motel room in vegas I felt my heart drop when the gun came out I could feel where tom was coming from, but in a sence he was his film, he wrote that story about himself and the charecter killed himself in the end and so did tom so thats very weird.
DENNIS
[redacted]

waiting to see and hear the gunshot
Thu Aug 24 9:54 AM US/Eastern 2000

I was in bed when this came on, ready to fall asleep, but couldnt until the final credit ran, though I liked the film, it was amazing for me to see the ammount of credits at the end, and some of the names involved....I gotta also admit, it had me hooked on believing the whole thing, until that smoking producer guy came along-but the thread lasted up until the suicide scene-was I watching someone about to blow his brains out, or was I watching a film-either way I felt affected-but this producer actor guy-I had some buddies who made a film called reindeer games a few years back, before the affleck thing, and the one thing that ruined their film was one bad actor with a small part, it's amazing what 1 unbelievable actor

can do to a film, anyhow, kudos, and cant wait for the next one guys!
andy
[redacted]

Nicely done.
Thu Aug 24 10:27 AM US/Eastern 2000

I like the structure and the pacing of the film, well done. Though I thought the lead actor sometimes, was a little overwrought, coming off as forced brooding, and it broke me out of the suspension of disbelief. And that chain smoking producer was too much of a charicature, the film really stacked the deck too much. But, the wife, and the friend who was going to match funding with 40K were well played.
((pete))

"They shoot horses don't they"
Thu Aug 24 11:46 AM US/Eastern 2000

Looking for a quick fix of insomnia, I figured a little low bud indie would do the the job. Not this night. I watched the whole shebang and what more could you ask for at 2.00 A.M. This film actually tricked me in my mid-night stupor and certainly entertained me. The lead was very good despite the fact that he dressed like a used car salesman.
J.R.

A Clever Film
Thu Aug 24 12:12 PM US/Eastern 2000

Both my wife and I were completely taken in by this ultra-clever and convincingly executed movie. Only until the absolute very end did I grasp what

was going on, including the delicious use of the word "mirage." I was emotionally engaged with the characters to a degree greater than anything I've seen on TV in years. It's really fun to be captivated by a movie.
-- ()

They Shoot Movies
Thu Aug 24 2:26 PM US/Eastern 2000

When are you gonna show it again? I missed the very beginning but couldn't stop watching to the very end. Is it real? If it is are you going to show Mirage?
nic
[redacted]

I'm glad I'm not the only one
Thu Aug 24 2:35 PM US/Eastern 2000

A bout of insomnia caused me to stumble upon this film as well. And I bought it until the gun came out -- then I liked it even more.
I thought "Tom" was excellent.
Some of the stereotypes were a bit much and the office sets were questionable -- but as for some characters overacting -- I just assumed they were frustrated actors, and after all, cameras were rolling.
CTG

Had me up until 2:30am
Thu Aug 24 2:48 PM US/Eastern 2000

Mockumentary or not, I have to admit I was completely fascinated with the plight of Tom Paulson. And it fooled me until I did some research on the internet this morning. I went to bed with chills. Probably one of the darkest movies I've seen in ages. No pseudo wannabe Hollywood sophisticated cynicsm here. The movie was excellent.
Tim Ramage
[redacted]

Where was the DV
Thu Aug 24 5:02 PM US/Eastern 2000

I did watch the whole thing, and enjoyed it... BUT, I was thoroughly didapointed that it had nothing to do with DV, instead it was all about 3mm. I thought that this was supposed to be DV Theater not 35mm Theater. Did he shoot this film in DV or what? I am a LOW BUDGET film maker that uses a Canon XL-1 miniDV Camcorder and EditDV / After Effects editing software on a G-3 Macintosh and I was really hoping to see something on this type of film making.
Michael Trout
[redacted]

further thoughts on The Desperate Filmmaker Project
Thu Aug 24 5:32 PM US/Eastern 2000

After reading all of the other reviews of the film, I think its obvious that the suicide scene was badly flubbed. It looks like at least 90% of us were hooked like fish, believing that it was "real", until that scene, in which the hooks fell out of most of our mouths. As I stated in my earlier comments, I think the better route wouldve

been to have him ALMOST pull the trigger... I keep thinking of Mel Gibson's unforgettably powerful attempt at suicide in the first Lethal Weapon, with tears running down his face, as he jams the gun further into his mouth and groans, his eyes wide and realistically pained... I still get chills every time I see that scene. Maybe you couldve had him, at the last second, fire the gun a few inches away from his face. Then you couldve shown him afterwards, nervously talking about how close he had come to doing it. If it had been done that way, I would probably STILL think it was real.
And I must agree with the people who complained about the chain-smoking producer... its not that a character like that isnt believable (after all, looking at the low quality of today's films, I have no doubt that most producers are not really film fans, and would rather be bowling than watching movies). But the actor played it a little too broad, and I did have the first feelings of it not being "real" when he was on. However, most of the actors did an admirable job, and all in all, I would give the film 4 out of 5 stars, and that in itself is quite a recommendation. I look forward to IFC's future DV projects!
Aguirre
Aguirre, the Wrath of God
[redacted]

Hook line and _almost_ sinker...
Thu Aug 24 6:21 PM US/Eastern 2000
It had me going, until the coincidences added up to be too much to be believable - "Mirage" - a story of a guy who pursues his dreams, but ends badly. The movie being picked up by the very cynical movie writers who had already been interviewed.
Nonetheless, a job well done -
-- (Jayson)
[redacted]

wow, i was fooled

Fri Aug 25 12:26 AM US/Eastern 2000

I picked this movie up midway through and I spent all day today feeling depressed that this guy did what i did. a very clever idea. i really enjoyed this!
Sean McVeigh
[redacted]

Made me look
Fri Aug 25 12:47 AM US/Eastern 2000

I too was caught up in the "documentary." Only at the end, with the gun, did I see what was going on. Still, it was late here on the East Coast and I wasn't THAT sure that it was fiction and not fact. Only after spending some time in the search engines and at my old alma matter's--and "Tom's" (SIU)-- web site was I able to go to bed and get a decent night's sleep. Kudos to film makers and kudos to IFC for providing the perfect forum for its viewing.
Scott

Decent
Wed Aug 30 3:03 PM US/Eastern 2000

I figured it out right about when he was pitching the story, but that aside, I liked it. The very end, with the gun, bothered me. I didn't like having to see it. Felt too Blair Witchy, the ending. I thought it was believable until then.
Chris Brogan
[redacted]

Oh my.
Sat Sep 9 3:45 AM US/Eastern 2000

I've been had! Did'nt know anything about the film til' I watched it here on the web. Strangely, I worked with an individual on a film who was marching down Tom's path... so certain elements of the film rang true.... Crossing and recrossing lines in documentary process. Shivers down my spine! Great job.
EBM

REALLY '96?
Wed Sep 13 7:35 PM US/Eastern 2000

Was this film really made in 1996? Everyone looks like they're from 1986. Mainly their hairstyles. And that includes the director. And whats with his earring? I would've stayed behind the camera. It was a very good film though. And I was fooled. So it's fake. Although I would've liked it better if it was real. Good performances.
(doug lussenhop)
[redacted]

They shoot movies....
Fri Sep 22 4:26 AM US/Eastern 2000
I am relieved to find out that this was not a documentary. I'm a psychiatrist working in an ER, suicidality and suicide attempts are by far the most frequent presentations to my service. I thought about this film for a long time be-cause I couldn't understand why a 'documentarist' would leave a person so clearly suicidal alone in a room with a video camera. I can't remember if they knew about the gun. I came up with a lot of possibilities: that it was a mockumentary, ,that the 'documentarists' were cynically taking a pose of non-intervention to get a spectular end to the movie, that they were dirt stupid... Whoever wrote the script happened upon an idea psychiatrists have long known. A high proportion of completed suicides involve a collusion between the dead person and the people closest to him/her at the time. The survivors collude not out empathic atunement; except rarely in cases chronic, painfull, debilitating disease; but out of their inability to tolerate the suffocating demands made on them. This explains, at least partially, the tremendous guilt su[redacted]ence. Very good work. Thank-you.
-- [redacted] (Amy)

Not real huh?
Tue Sep 26 5:16 PM US/Eastern 2000

For all of you bozo's who have some notion that this movie is not real...WHAT ARE YOU THINKING!! Tom is dead and those filmakers killed him. One of you... just one of you... give me a sliver of fact that says that this is not real and that Tom is not dead. Where do you get the nads to intrude on this with your self righteous, know itall, psuedo intellectual garbage. This is the problem today. The media is so full of crap that when something real leaps up to slap you in the face you treat it as if it were some Speilberg ride at Disneyland. WAKE up!! Marvin Dobson hollywood-buffalo.com
Marvin Dobson

Almost, but not quite
Sat Nov 4 2:39 AM US/Eastern 2000

I finally got a chance to watch the all contreversial mockumentary. In my opinion it was good, up to the point where the pseudo death scene had tainted the film as a whole. The death scene's ambiguity was remenicent of the blair witch and man mogul. The actors were convincing and so were the alleged film makers, but towards the end the main character grew weary and tired. He began to become a two dimensional presence which led to the almost predictable ending. All in all, it was almost but not quite.

J.S. Olivas

They Shoot Movies
Mon Nov 6 4:32 PM US/Eastern 2000

This "documentary" works on so many levels. Dramatically it was involving and revealing. It also surprised so many people into thinking it was real. I'm still surprised that my neighbor had to ask me if Tom actually killed himself. Thematically, I think there was much to think and meditate upon. Even the theme of how far a documentary can intrude into someone's life was well done. I would highly recommend this film to anyone, but especially to those of us who watch a lot of independent films that are off-beat.

[redacted] - Charles Castelli

Mr. Olivas' Comments
Sun Nov 26 11:42 PM US/Eastern 2000

Though your comments are well taken, they apply more to what suicide is supposed to be like rather than what it is actually like. Suicidal people tend to be very two dimensional. They see themselves as essentially futureless, and the past is held rigid within a single, excrutiatingly painful interpretation. That interpretation fuels hostility, and powerlessness. The only option percieved as left to them is violence. The violence is directed at other people, it is incidental to the suicidal person that they take their own life. Again, suicidal people don't see themselves as having a future that can offer anything but more humiliation and pain. That's what we see play out. That's why it's predictable. The only hope in intervening is to give some time and space for new interpretations and new options to develop. The bottom line is that if someone wants to die, they will. You can only save someone's life over a short period of time, if even that. So the suicide scene is pathetic
and empty, just like real life suicide scenes.

Amy

They Shoot Movies
Thu Nov 30 8:07 PM US/Eastern 2000

This "documentary" works on so many levels. Dramatically it was involving and revealing. It also surprised so many people into thinking it was real. I'm still surprised that my neighbor had to ask me if Tom actually killed himself. Thematically, I think there was much to think and meditate upon. Even the theme of how far a documentary can intrude into someone's life was well done. I would highly recommend this film to anyone, but especially to those of us who watch a lot of independent films that are off-beat.

Charles Castelli

You Know After Some Time Has Passed
Tue Dec 5 6:13 PM US/Eastern 2000

Hats off to IFC. Name one other “film channel” that peaks this kind of intellectual interest in their programming? I first reviewed and reacted to “They Shoot” after it aired back some time ago. I got an e-mail recently announcing that “They Shoot” is going to be broadcasted again. Although at this time, I do not think I will go out of my way to see it, but I wouldn’t mind watching it again. During the time of my watching “They Shoot” I had a chance to watch the documentary “20 Dates” and for some reason I keep mixing the two in my head. Maybe because of the producer scenes in both. Very funny stuff when you analyze the two documentaries “producer scenes”. There must be some underlying truth to what “a-holes” producers can be. I recommend “They Shoot” I do not know if I take it for face value but the acting is good, you almost believe that this was a documentary and believable right up till the end.

Farrell

ATTENTION !!! Jim Wankowski and Marvin Dobson
Tue Dec 5 7:15 PM US/Eastern 2000

Attention:
Jim Wankowski and Marvin Dobson.

I want to help you guys. This is crazy stuff and I do not want Paul's suicide exploited

any longer. I am the man to do all the grunt work. I can petition and protest many cable companies throught the united states Leeting those cable companies know that Bravo and IFC are unsuitable mediums. I will start a groundswell of hate against Bravo, they will wish they never aired that piece of junk documentary.
How nice of me? of course, but I need one little thing from either of you.
I need one copy of a certified death certificate for Tom Paulson or whatever his alias is, stating he committed sucicide with a handgun.
By now I am sure the wind is blown out of your sails, but since you believe in Tom, why don't you contact the Clark County (Nevada) corners office where Tom died and request a copy of that death certificate. Then send me a copy of what you get. Then scan it and put it on the buffalo site. If you say this Tom Paulson shit is true then back it up, otherwise close your fucking trap!!!!
So why am I asking for proof? because it's all bullshit. You do not have any proof because this bullshit never happened. It's entertainment. All you are doing is generating interest in this entertainment. A diversion of marketing. You fools. I am pretty sure that you are employees or are in conjunction with Bravo/IFC.
As for my proof that it didn't happens is your lack of proof that it did. so go fuck off Wankowiski?
You know I hate feeling like the spoiler, like when I told the kids that Santa Claus didn't exist; like when I am telling the people that you are bullshit, John Paulson is bullshit, the documentary is bullshit, (yet entertaining). Yeah, I am informing them of your crap, but at the same time I am setting straight the people who are naive enough to believe this. I'm at my wits end with reality. Should I let people know I think your full of shit, or should I allow them to reach that conclusion on their own???
I am more frightened that people do believe this. That's scary. I hope you get those people's e-mail address, bunches-o-money to be made selling those people real estate in Antartica.

[redacted]

Dec 20th Screening

David Holzman Lives!!
Thu Dec 21 12:49 AM US/Eastern 2000

Astonishing versimilitude! I was 98% taken in when I saw the second half of the first screening several months ago. The 2% that was not taken in hung primarily on my faith in human nature, that no one would distribute the documentary of such an unvarnished tragedy without more humanizing context--truly a testimony to the razor's edge irony with which the piece limns this death of a film salesman."David Holzman's Diary" for the millennium--Bravo!!

Aaron Edison
[redacted]

shoot dont they
Thu Dec 21 1:25 AM US/Eastern 2000

I came in late in the game. did all this truly happen? Someoen please let ,me know. He didn't really kill himself did he?

j
*jay_* [redacted]

Do they really shoot movies?
Thu Dec 21 1:25 AM US/Eastern 2000
I just saw the film and was shocked by it. Although, it makes me want to see his movie and see his vision. I wonder if his film really could step up to the bat. It seems that a lot of people didn't like it and were not as moved as he was. Personally I think he had lots of opportunities to get the film out and did not take them. I think he could have set it back for a while. Go back to work and build more budget. I don't wish that anyone takes this kind of road. Just beacuse it doesn't happen right away you should give up. This is what being an indie is all about. Believing in you project and seeing it through. If it was easy, everyone would be doing it.

Samantha Evans
[redacted]

A Powerful Film I'm not sure how to respond to.
Thu Dec 21 1:27 AM US/Eastern 2000

Voyeurism. Sadism. Filth. Disgust. Genius.
THEY SHOOT MOVIES is all of those things, and more. It touched ground on so many points (at least to me anyway) As someone who would like to get into film, it's frightening what some people will go to make a film, and protect the "integrity" of that film. To me, the thought that maybe we're all failures if our lives were recorded and broadcast to the world. Anyhow. I'm still not sure how to react. I'm utterly compelled to it, yet in a lot of ways, this is watching a human hit rock bottom for entertainment value. I guess this culture hasn't moved that far from the Roman times, where we'd cheer on Gladiators to kill one another. An excellent film, despite the fact that it's utterly twisted my emotions.

Matt Jordan
[redacted]

Good Documentary
Thu Dec 21 1:28 AM US/Eastern 2000

We all go through so many failures in this life and often we think about taking our own life when we do fail. But Tom was a spoiled brat. He had won the money and he could easily have let go of the movie at any time. What he tried to do was live his movie through the documentary, because he knew the movie he had made probably would never be that successful. This guy was obsessed with being a success and for the first time in his life he was confronted with failure and did not know how to handle it.

AB
[redacted]

They Shoot Movies...
Thu Dec 21 1:29 AM US/Eastern 2000

Great movie! I've never written in praising a movie before, but this one just really hit me...the reality of it!!! Borderline genius; the interplay between the two movies that were actually trying to go on at the same time. I'll be going on to theyshootmovies.com after this to see what else there is! Wicked!! James Elliott Brooklyn, NY

James Elliott

they shoot anything dont they
Thu Dec 21 1:33 AM US/Eastern 2000

A little to real... he didnt win the money...no way...Hard to believe no friend or girlfriend could get him to shelve it for a while. Like she said..."you'll get yours no matter what happens".Arent you glad the poor clueless golfer who removed the bmw badge from his steering wheel for the struggle effect gave you a definitive ending? He knew he couldn't finish his film...but he wanted to give some meaning and purpose to his efforts. A man who has never failed in his life had to succeed for your documentry. Fxxx You. You dealt him the last hand and he was forced to play it out. HE WAS A WINNER. YOU ARE THE LOSERS.

THOR
[redacted]

They Shoot Movies
Thu Dec 21 1:37 AM US/Eastern 2000

It was a disturbing documentary and/or an excellent fake. But even if it was a "dramatized documentary" it was superbly done. As a documentary filmmaker I was drawn in from the beginning, through suspected that there was some acting going on - especially with the girlfriend's long monolog - But nevertheless the show was compelling. It seems it may share something in common with the Blair Witch - I think the tip-off to me on the faux documentary aspect was the epilog of the involvement of the two people in the making and writing of "Mirage." And if it took that long to finalize my skepticism - hats off to the filmmaker!

Ted
[redacted]

On 2nd thought, not a failure
Thu Dec 21 1:43 AM US/Eastern 2000

Caught the movie half-way. Didn't even know a thing about it, not even the title. (great title BTW - loved the original horses movie, so dreadfully true to human experience, will, and sorrow). Couldn't resist watching it as I myself "studied" and love filmmaking. Well, obviously it's atrocious to think this really happened, but then again, on 2nd thought, one has to admit that to do Tom justice: he knew he had something in him that needed to be said, and he did what he felt he had to do. Looking at it from our viewpoint in 2000, he just didn't know he had to die to make his point heard and his vision out there. He didn't know he had to be an "actor" as opposed to a director. God, if he/she/it is around, is said to have his/her/its mysterious way, and point A: Tom is not a failure (he had the money granted by his/her/its Excellence at Las Vegas). Point B: he made one of the most clearest point ever about the fear of losing or winning, which was his main subject matter - as well as the horrible pathway to filmmaking for most of us. And, as I watched the "climax" of the film, I had to be sure that it HAD to be a "movie-within-a-documentary", but cautiously was framing out his body with my hand extended, just in case things went out of hand with truthful matters. Obviously, just like with the mystery surrounding Andy Kaufman, against all odds, I'd like to be proven wrong, taken advantage of, and that both Andy and Tom are having, somewhere on a down to earth location, the last laugh. Hats down to all involved. I am not suspicious in any way, just like any other audience - as mentioned by producer - I want a happy ending.

Suzel Bertrand
[redacted]

They Shoot Movies....
Thu Dec 21 1:45 AM US/Eastern 2000

Incredible...real or not! In reality things don't always have a silver lining. This movie shows the other side of the spectrum and I don't think that the writers were pessimistic in doing so. They Shoot.. is a story about being passionate and the reality of failure. We are all close to failure in our endeavors. It is passion that keeps us going.
The human spirit is stronger than anything that can happen to it.
Joe Portolese Brooklyn, NY

Joe Portolese

Mirage..it certainly was.
Thu Dec 21 1:48 AM US/Eastern 2000

Ah yes a bit of a dark twist on Spinal tap...and a little bit of A Star is born....as in the end who is filming who...who is taping who..whoa.. dude is that a camera in yer pants ?..or are you just gald to film me? No one seemed to ask why the lad didnt sell his flash ride,

Im sure he could have gotten a few majik beans and finished his art. A supoib film in a sea of prefab dreck. Orson Wells would approve Im sure.

VONORN
[redacted]

odd
Thu Dec 21 1:50 AM US/Eastern 2000

And here I thought artists were supposed to die broken and alone, starving for the recognition of kindred spirits. I hope my illusions aren't shattered! I just don't know WHAT I'd do!! Seriously, the melodramatic ending was all that I objected to. It's interesting to suggest that the camera's presence influences the ending, sort of an artist's Heizenberg paradox, but the Tom character was never enough of a performer to make his final scene believable. If Tom were one to crave the spotlight, I also think the message would become more universal, incorporating the nature of other artists and their necessary roles and interactions. My 1/2 cent. Loved the movie on the whole, at least enough to be thinking about it. Nice job.

Scott
[redacted]

on 3rd thought...
Thu Dec 21 1:51 AM US/Eastern 2000

Ah oui, Mirage... then hats off to Frank Gallagher! Great, great, great. Actually reminded me of "Man bites Dog" a Belgian film also titled "C'est arrive pres de chez nous". Excellent stunt!

Suzel Bertrand
[redacted]

To everyone who thinks it's fake
Thu Dec 21 1:55 AM US/Eastern 2000

This film has no disclaimed claiming that this is a work of fiction at the end (even FARGO had that). This is the real deal...no joke. I think people are avoiding the frightening reality of it all by say "The Tom Character"

Matt Jordan
[redacted]

anachronism? plot holes?
Thu Dec 21 2:01 AM US/Eastern 2000

Great movie. Ok, gotta get skeptical now. Why does everyone look straight out of 1987, yet he "died in 1996"...hairstlyes, clothing, computer equipment, flatbed editing, etc? Also, why not sell your Beamer, Tom? Also, the script of "Mirage" too closely parallels the real story of Tom's quest/ultimate failure/suicide... it feels too neat to me. But, it got me thinking and it got me to log-on tonight... that's a big credit to your movie right there...
congratulations MAWK

Mark Duplass
[redacted]

More "They Shoot Movies..."
Thu Dec 21 2:02 AM US/Eastern 2000

I wrote several times when I first saw the film, and after watching it again I wanted to see what other people thought. I am struck by several things: (1) the continued confusion about the 'mocku-' vs 'docu-', -mentary. I think that if it's a 'mocku-' then the writers should win some sort of big and meaningful award. If it's a 'docu-', then IFC should be thanked for having the balls to air it. Also if it's a 'docu-' it marks a point in time where the well-founded tenet of nonintervention venerated in nature documentary, has come to human documentary. This is the sympathetic harmony to American interpersonal isolation. My only question is: Are the documentarists really so far "advanced" that they can live with themselves? (2) The urge to view this suicide as dying for Art. That's just infantile. Clearly he died, as is said early in the film, because he is afraid to fail...or to succeed. This suicide is the result of what psychiatrists call: narcissistic injury. It is unimportant. (3) The degree of upset around the real, not real question. My work involves suicidal people, and the families of people who have suicided. IFC has presented an accurate portrayal of the masturbatory nature of the vast majority of suicide attempts and successes. What is the problem?

Amy

[redacted]

self-fulfilling prophecy
Thu Dec 21 2:19 AM US/Eastern 2000

That was pretty harsh to sit thru. I totally commend Jeff for wanting to fulfill his own dreams, but at the same time, it seems that he never knew when to cut his losses. As soon as I figured out that this wasn't meant to be a comedy, I felt that things were going to get a lot worse before they got better. I had a feeling that he was going to kill himself in the end...Jeff wasn't going to change his film or compromise for anyone and you could just see him downward spiral. Reality bites and sometimes you do what you gotta do. Yeah, the movie would probably have sucked if he signed it over to the distributor to finish...but he would have had a little self-respect left and wouldn't have owed all those people money. He could have made a better movie next time. Jeff was living in a "Mirage"...and so I think that was an apt title for his movie. Usually, an audience will want to watch a story about a man confronting his demons (failure, success, etc...), pulling thru it, overcoming his fears and learning something about himself in the process...not slide further into depression and debt and suicide. It doesn't surprise me that no one wanted to buy this movie. "Mirage's" ending obviously reflected Jeff's thoughts of suicide...and when he wouldn't change the ending of the film, I kinda felt like he was walking right into his own destiny. Although it was very hard to watch Jeff implode, the movie was very compelling and I'd like to think we could all learn something from his story.

Mike Shahan
[redacted]

They Shoot Movies, don't they?
Thu Dec 21 2:20 AM US/Eastern 2000

Is it just me, or have the lines blurred so much now that life and art are completely interchangeable, indistiguisheable, fungible? If it's Art, then - damn! - it is so true. If it's Life, then -damn!- that's Art... Sharon
Sharon

Filmic Darwinism
Thu Dec 21 2:23 AM US/Eastern 2000

So I'm watching...and I'm all in. Like most folks here. Well here's all you need to know about me; I didn't cry at the end, I cried when Ari said he hated the film. And I'm willing to bet that's true for anyone else out there who went to film school and then spent years in New York (or wherever) killing themselves for people who looked and behaved like 200

pounds of condemned veal stuffed into grey suits. Survival of the shit-est. After 8 years I left them to it...they deserve each other. Funny, I'm not sore about being taken in (I was all there until he plugged that lamp in by the chair). I'm sore about being reminded of all the things I had worked so hard to forget.
Lisa
[redacted]

The most powerful film I've seen in a long time.
Thu Dec 21 2:30 AM US/Eastern 2000
Real or not, this film in particular moved me very much. I felt like I was right there with Tom just before he pulled the trigger, and it was very scary. I could really relate to Tom's feelings of wanting to be true to his artistic dream at all costs. I think there comes a point in every artist's life where you simply can't do anything else but what you feel you're called to do. You can't go back to flipping burgers or working in a factory just to get by. You have to live as an artist or nothing at all. What I don't really understand is why he felt he had to take his own life when his goal was within reach. He finally had the money he needed and then some, but for some reason that wasn't enough for him. The movie may not have been his perfect vision, but it would have been complete, and that's a great accomplishment in itself. Many great directors and writers have had to struggle against these same constraints starting out, and they make a few films that don't reflect their original intent. But they don't end it there. They build on the experience, and whatever revenue they can get back from it, and move on to do what they really want. If Tom killed himself because his film was not perfect, then he was doomed from the beginning. Even the best things in this world have flaws.
IFC is my favorite film channel in part because they have the guts to show something like this without passing judgment as to its controversial nature. Keep up the good work, IFC. Keep taking us to the edge.
Lori Way
[redacted]

Astounding!!
Thu Dec 21 11:07 AM US/Eastern 2000

I hope, however, that someone is in the process of turning the tables on director Frank Gallagher. I would like to see how he is coping with the aftermath of the tragedy that he and his crew facilitated. The ultimate irony of course is that Gallagher has made a brilliant film and Tom, who couldn't, is dead. On the brighter side, do you think Adele is still single?
Carmine from NYC

Life Goes On

Thu Dec 21 11:39 AM US/Eastern 2000

Like the unnecessary dramatic/murderous twist in Dancer in the Dark, the silly finale of this movie took away from what had been a very interesting examination of an actual situation. I do not know why filmmakers that have riveting, real material find the need to falsify it for the sake of trying to add some weightiness to their story by adding the very Hollywood element of death to situations that do not need them. I have several friends that are filmmakers who have poured their life into their films only to have them fail or remain unfinished, or both. This is a heartbreaking thing to watch and for 95% of the film I thought that it portrayed the struggle to get a movie made with unbelievable accuracy. Unfortunately, it took an easy, shmaltzy way out in the end rather than dealing with the more interesting possiblities of where when goes from there.

Matt

The Hollywood Wannabe Project
Thu Dec 21 12:41 PM US/Eastern 2000

I didn't see it from the very beginning, but it was pretty well done. The performances of Ari and Tom's brother were good, but his girlfriend and the chain-smoking producer were straight out of Overacting 101. And if it was real, they would have actually shown his brains hitting the wall.

Glen

mirage
Thu Dec 21 4:48 PM US/Eastern 2000
did mirage ever make it into the theaters? i'd like to see it although i think i already have.
erica
[redacted]

Why write you own death plan?
Thu Dec 21 6:57 PM US/Eastern 2000
I saw the documentary and wonder? "Why has suicuide become such and option?" Especially with those unwilling to compromise. Essentially, movie making is all about making money. It seems to me that so many artist get caught up in making art rather than making a product that is going to generate some kind of profit, income etc. Otherwise why do it. This point of view is coming from an artist who have been painting for more than twenty five years. I think Tom never understood this. Thus leading me to believe that the whole thing was planned from the beginning. Artist have longed for a platform to state their position and this artist was no different. To bad, the world goes on. Bob

Bob Brown
[redacted]

Similarities
Thu Dec 21 9:35 PM US/Eastern 2000

I don't think I'm the only one wondering if I was hosed on this. The plot of Mirage was almost exactly the same as They Shoot Movies, Don't They? If I was hosed, GREAT JOB; if I wasn't hosed my sympathies to Adele.

Arnold
[redacted]

They shoot horseshit, don't they
Fri Dec 22 4:26 AM US/Eastern 2000

To all viewers -

Thanks for your comments re my 1st flick. You guys are certainly a lot more articulate than those mall rat market research groups. More gullible, too, of course, but hey - one thing hollywood teaches you is you can never have everything. One thing does bother me. Not one of you wouldbe artistes seems to mind the title. Which means my producers are sticking with it. What's with you? Mirage is clearly the superior product label.
See ya at the movies -T Paulson

joel homer
[redacted]

Ari Comment
Fri Dec 22 7:46 PM US/Eastern 2000

That's the only time I cried too. He was so catch-22'd.
Amy

frank gallagher is a genius
Sun Dec 24 3:40 AM US/Eastern 2000

'They Shoot Movies' is absolutely phenomonal. The talented actors (so convincing, so perfected), that had people sitting on the edge of their seats, sincerely rooting for "Paul." The way director Frank Gallagher approached this project is absolutely mezmorizing; the long-lost art of story-telling is evident from beginning 'til end---the sign of a true genius! Multi-faceted, emotionally developed and layered....it almost makes you wonder if "Paul/Hollywood" are metaphors for things that most of us don't want to take the time to ponder (but unknowingly ended up there). Allegory or not, this is probably the best thing that has been put on our plates in a long, long---LONG time, and we have to hail the genius behind it! Thank you!

Jeff Lampton
[redacted]

After May 23rd screening

They shoot movies...
May 24 1:21 AM US/Eastern 2001

What a great piece of art!!! Ironic that this was actually made b-4 Blair Witch, yet not shown untill recently??!! Keep up the good work! I wanna see "Mirage"... hope someone jumps on this bandwagon, cuz' this could be huge!!!! Let's see the entertainment industry prove this wrong... distribute this! Give funding to Nobody Productions! Let's see what else they are capable of

The County
[redacted]

Loved It!
Thu May 24 1:32 PM US/Eastern 2001

After the film was over I spent over an hour on the internet trying to find out more about it (at first I thought it was real). Amazing! I regonized the guy that played Tom Paulson from a roll he played in modern day version of the "Prodigal Son" put out but The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1991.

Adam

Lame argument segments/poor acting
Thu May 24 3:30 PM US/Eastern 2001

The dynamics during the arguments over money are so far off you would have to be an idiot to think that this was anything more than a cheap Blair Witch wannabe. The chance that they would document a guy making a movie about a loser who kills himself and then actually have the guy live out the lame plot is so far fetched that it makes one's head spin. The acting? Uggh.

Big Techs
[redacted]

An additional 2 cents
Thu May 24 3:45 PM US/Eastern 2001

Without a doubt, the trailer park players seen every day on "Jerry Springer" do a more believable job than the hacks in this one. There is your next talent pool if anyone gives you funding again. I think a documentary of this doc. should have been done, no, I take that back - "American Movie" pretty much covered myopic, misguided ineptitude just fine. I can understand how those Friday night movies on "Skin-emax" get made; horny old producer at a titty bar decides to throw some cash at the silicone bimbos in the hopes of a constant booty supply but this... Oy. Who is financing this stuff and how do I find them? And yes, I can do better. I just choose not to. Nyahhh!!

Big Techs
[redacted]

They Shoot Movies
Thu May 24 12:28 AM US/Eastern 2001

It's remarkable that these people came up with this very dark, very clever and very accurate portrayal of the Industry in this format, long before inferior products like Blair Witch made so much money out of nothing. This is something! Why hasn't it gotten more attention? Well, I guess that's what the film so acutely points out: follow a real dream, follow something of quality in today's world and you're doomed. Very powerful. Good luck to all these talented people in the future

scarlet
[redacted]

WORDS FOR THE MANY FILM MAKERS

Thu May 24 12:36 AM US/Eastern 2001

My Name is Christian - I had just watched the Doc "They Shoot Movies, Don't They". I feel bewildered mentally and spiritually - I cryed my soul out. A few word I try to remember "It's all just a movie - who lives - who dies - who triuphs - who suffers. Don't get wrapped up in the movie. Try to concentrate on the beam of light behind the film. That's the real Show"

Christian mendez
[redacted]

Tom Paulson doesn't really exist!!!!!!!
Thu May 24 12:48 AM US/Eastern 2001

Trust me on this one...I make films, and I know some people over at IFC...this is NOT REAL FOLKS!!!!! It is a MOCKUMENTARY! Though I'm glad to see so much emotion evoked and Frank Gallagher, I'm sure, is tickled pink, but seriously...get a hold of yourselves!!! This is a gimmick flick - a shock/novelty pic that's suppose to simply manipulate emotion a la "Blair Witch". I'm beginning to think that 'Marvin Dobson' may be an alias for Frank Gallagher. If indeed I am wrong...take a break Marvin. You're starting to scare all of us!

Leon
[redacted]

they shoot movies

i loved it to death....and then the end, i wondered in shock if this was real and got on the net and discovered that it seems to have been a fabrication ala BLAIR WITCH. well done anyway.... HAS ANYONE RECORDED THIS CAN I BUY A COPY FROM SOMONE OUT THERE??????????

[redacted]

He gave them what they wanted
Mon May 28 7:29 PM US/Eastern 2001

Whether or not Tom Paulson is dead, one out of 2 movies he produced was a resounding sucess.

[redacted]

To: [redacted]
OH-
I found your documentary to be an inspiration. I'm going to college now for computer animation / film making, and thanks to Tom Paulson, and your documentary, I've been motivated to become more unconventional, than I had originally planned to be, with my film making. I want to make films that'll retain the audiences interest, but be %100 original, as Tom tried to do with Mirage. Thank you for having the courage to show such a documentary to the world.
You are the greatest,
Sincerely,
Tony Sharp
[redacted]

WWW.THEYSHOOTMOVIES.COM

To: [redacted]
i ca ..tom's plight is not foreign to me or many people i suppose. one doesn't have to label oneself an artist (acting, scripting) to realize once we pass certain stages in life...guess what? that is what we have been doing all along. it becomes an existential dream..why carry on...why try...why care? what the hell! by the time the film concluded i was madly and deeply in love with tom. he was me.... i him. his plight...the plight of humanity. the difference was he took it seriously. maybe we should take a lesson from him. the film scared the shit out of me. it is so real. thank you,
ed frazier...austin, texas
[redacted]

To: [redacted]
i on e. it was amazing!!! i didn't believe

it was real, it was so good. when is IFC running it again?
Aaron Pugliese"
[redacted]

To: [redacted]
I wa ent from 4:15 am to 6:00 am EST today.
This movie should have never been shown. It is a major disrespect to Tom Paulson and to his family and friends. There is a line that should not be crossed... you have crossed it.
William Elliott Jaeger
[redacted]

To Frank Gallagher: (I hope).
Dear Mr. Gallagher,

I have just finished watching They Shoot Movies, Don't They on IFC. Beyond amazing!!
In all honesty, I don't want to sit here and kiss your ass (BUT, you had to bust your ass to make it, and you deserve it).
Is there anyway I can have a conversation with you one (Not to seem too forward, or like a grade-A asshole), but I have been developing a spec that is a lot like yours (in theme), and my friend and I are looking to direct it ourselves.
And I have NEVER seen anything like your film, (except for the one that is constantly playing in my head),
Anyway, thank you for your time...thank you for putting your heart and soul on the line and getting your vision to the world.
Jeff Lampton
Milwaukee, WI

Sub
To: [redacted]
Fra
I think that this film should be required viewing by every person who "gave up" at one time or another. This was a difficult movie to watch..which is why it is so good. I am not sure to this day if this was a documentary or not..I'm not sure that I want to know. If it wasnt...every one involved should be nominated for every available award.If it was.....well I am at a loss of words.. I saw the

film by chance on I.F.C. and not the whole movie...about 3/4 of it I am 39 and divorced twice with 3 kids from 2 marriages..I have overcome more than I care to mention..in fact it would make an interesting film..but know one would believe it,,,This film..to me..represented the struggle and aggrevation that we all face in our homes and our professional lives...how we
mingle them is all that counts....IF we do it well we win..if we dont.....well, our guy didnt handle it to well now...did he? I am fowarding to you payment for 3 copies of your film...I would be honored for yoour signature on the cases thanks again
David
[redacted]

Su [redacted] ssholes
To: [redacted]

"Cutting edge" apparently means "deceptive"., you lying hollywood faggot assholes. It was easy enough to believe (in a state of 'suspended disbelief') that two dimentional shits shus as Tom really exist. The closer to the end the closer to the farthest reaches of the juvenile's immagination that wrote this piece of shit, simple-minded morality play. Sold his baseball cards to go to Vegas, did he. HACK. YOU BUTTFUCKING HACK. And the narrative "he won the money" is "deus ex machina" as old as the oldest Ancient Greek drama; simply put it's only so because that's the way it was written.
You cocksuckers. I object to your wasting my time with presenting this as a documentary. You simple minded talentless shits obviously lack the capacity for anything other than theft. Look foreward to your continuing careers as professional street cocksuckers, no doubt in full drag, deluding only yourselves and other faggots.
vincitorex <[redacted]>

Sub
To: [redacted]

I never saw anyone kill themselves before until I saw this. It made some things clear for me and no I know that things don't have to be so hard all the time and they can end. I sort of didn't want to write you, but I guess i did. not to make you feel guilty or something, but because, what you did affected what I'm doing, and we have a connection now. I guess I'm even part of the story a little.
[redacted]

Kudos
Had to say that I liked the film better (that's "even better") the second time I saw it. The producer character is marvelous. There are so many minor touches that are perfect, that I couldn't list them. I haven't read the rants, and anybody who wonders if it's real obviously misses it, but I really like that this film is Mirage. Then again, maybe I read that wrong.

[redacted]

P. S. I wasn't all that thrilled about the visuals on the
IFC interview, but I'm assuming that was IFC, not you.

Nobody,
Loved the film on IFC last night and need a copy to show my friends at the Drama dept. of University of Washington. Please send me information on purchase as soon as possible....
Thanks again for such a wonderful story that for once focuses on a sad truth in life .... it is so often tragic.
Kiren Olson
[redacted]

They Shoot Movies...
Man. What the hell was that?! My accolades to whoever put this together. Very powerful shit. After it ended, I spent 15 minutes trying to figure out what the hell I was just subjected to. I wish you the best of luck. This, and Blair Witch are definitely the "new narrative". Congrats on being the pioneers in the genre! Did you get YOUR "forty thousand" yet?

Derek Tutschulte
[redacted]

To: nobody@theyshootmovies.
I've just been to the "they shoot movies don't they" website. And I must
confess that i've been a fan since the begining. I saw it last night....and
about twice in the last 6 months. Nice work...I don't buy any of it as being real...but I like most of what you communicate. this is the third time I have written this email. I had previously stated all the things I thought you had did wrong and what you film should

have really emphasized...but who the fuck am I? I'm a jealous filmmaker because you had the forethought to position and differentiate yourself....nice! I hope to be in the can in several months and then look to kick your ass in the video arena :-0 anyway...it's money..talk it up...but get that goddamn DVTHeater Icon of the fucking screen...it fucks up your film...we all know it's IFC..tell 'em to fuck off

Marcus Russell
Big Hit Productions
[redacted]

They Shoot...
I saw your film last night, stumbled onto it on IFC, did not see the beginning... Please, I really need to know whether that was satire (that is, fiction - and if this is the case, I congratulate you) or documentary (that is, if a man really died in the making of your film, which I sincerely hope is not the case). Will you clarify?

Jim Stubenrauch
Associate Editor, Production Focus
American Journal of Nursing
Lippincott Williams & Wilkins
345 Hudson Street, 16th Floor
10014
[redacted] phone
fax
[redacted]

They Shoot...

I teach a course on documentaries at NYU. When I got home from my class last night I channel-surfed into your movie about five minutes after it started. I was instantly hooked. I've watched friends run up debt making movies and it's not pretty. Only at the very end when Paulson turns the camera on himself did I realize I'd been fiendishly suckered.... Well done. Please tell the IFC that they f'd up placing their DV theater logo in the right had corner where it obscured all your chyrons.... Gook luck with future endeavors.

Thomas Powers
[redacted]

Mirage

Toms story is a tragic, yet all too familiar tale in this voyeuristic and detached world that we live in. Money is GOD and unfortunately we all fall prey to its pursuit, whether we destroy ourselves in obvious ways or those unseen. I don't know what Toms motivation was and won't pretend to but I assume it had to do with success/prestige/money. If you've had to work for a living, you understand that human life is cheap. The workers produce the product while the "investors" maximize their profits. It's not too hard to understand why seeing the demise of another human being (whom you do not know) is entertaining. At least it's not you being killed by the powers that be. Human compassion is an oxymoron because there is no profit in it. So what's the outcome? Well, the rich get richer and those with vision and talent face unbeatable odds. It's that simple, or that complex. Is the struggle worth it? It must be or we would all be mindless robots producing the same crap without vision. This is just my humble view, feel free to disagree, and rage on, in the spirit of Tom.

Grant Shepherd
[redacted]

WORDS FOR THE MANY FILM MAKERS
My Name is Christian - I had just watched the Doc "They Shoot Movies, Don't They". I feel bewildered mentally and spiritually - I cryed my soul out. A few word I try to remember "It's all just a movie - who lives - who dies - who triuphs - who suffers. Don't get wrapped up in the movie. Try to concentrate on the beam of light behind the film. That's the real Show"

Christian Mendez

hey guys,
i too caught the ending...uh...could my reaction say more. very real up till the ending...all to real. i wouldn't have wanted to see the final act.
Jason Truong
[redacted]

Another letter
I was TOTALLY sucked in by this film. My friend, Ted Ramsey, had given me an unmarked VHS tape about a month ago and said, "You gotta see this film. It's about an independent filmmaker."; and that's all. No warning or nothing.

I had a couple of hours of free time today, and decided that I had better finally watch it so that I would have an answer next time Ted asked about it. I was riveted! I have been involved in the independent filmmaking scene in many capacities. As I was watching this "true story", I was identifying with Tom all the way. When his

actress/girlfriend left with her support, I swear I said to myself, "Typical."

I kept repeating to myself, "THIS is why I do not want to produce! I'll stick to directing." Rodney Lee seemed to be himself, mugging whenever the camera is on (meant in the most flattering way); and I actually thought, "My God! I didn't know that Marty used to work as a studio guy! He must have got bored with his desk job and decided to sell meat."

The red flags for me were that I couldn't believe that some of those people allowed cameras to be around (loan officer, etc.); why didn't he sell his cards earlier; and why didn't he sell his Beemer (before the cards, even!). Even though these questions made me wonder, it never took me out of the reality. I was just questioning this guy's, and those people's motives.

The desperation of the Vegas trip was totally believable and didn't sway me one bit. I was in with this thing through and through. When the gun came out, I was SHOCKED! What was this guy thinking? I'm an egomaniacal megalomaniac myself, and even though I may fail at my worst moment, I wouldn't have it in me to rid the world of my comeback. "Oh God. I hope they don't show him shooting himself . . .", as I continued to watch without blinking.

The realization that he HAD the money really made me feel sorry for this individual. I could no longer identify with him, and wrote him off as a loser. It was such a sad and tragic story though, . . . as well as a fantastic documentary! I felt emotionally drained.

I phoned Ted immediately and told him that it was the best thing that I had seen in a LONG time. I ranted for quite a bit about the production, the accurate depiction of Hollywood, and the tragic story, . . . until that uncomfortable time when he realized that I thought that it was real. I could tell by his hesitant reaction to my comments, that maybe I wasn't getting it. He confessed, . . . and then I wanted to kill you!

Type to you later,

Mark, Sr.

e-mail

Where can I get this article in non-html format?

By the way, I don't know if you're connected to the movie or anything, but if

you are...fantastic job. I was completely convinced that this was real until this email.

Matt
[redacted]

[redacted] wrote:

Although there is a constant need to produce more intriguing stories for the sole purpose of money and ratings, and that most of these stories are fabricated to capture the imaginations of our "eager culture" I find it hard to believe that you would send out such a repulsive email egging people on to watch what is a very serious issue in our society and culture today turn into a some kind of televised freakshow. I find that you have sunk to an all time low in both television and the human condition. I understand the desire to communicate the idea of how horrible it is for a fellow brother or sister to take their own life, but by the tone of this email and and the suggestion that this will be a fascinating rather than saddening event, I do not feel that you are doing any good for the evolution of the human condition, which I would hope to be to inspire people to live happily and take care of our own.(meaning everyone,).You may point out that I do not have to watch such a disgusting broadcast and I will not, but the mere advertising of this event is horrible enough. I am a little angered by this advertisement but it is little in my comparison to my sadness. Thank you for pointing out that society may still be intrigued by a public viewing of such a terrible crime against humanity. It helps me to understand that we must work harder to build a better and brighter future in which all of us may retain a sense of hope and delight in this fragile existance we call life and that we must work even harder to help those that are struggling. Despite what I have learned from your email I am still repulsed by the fact that you have sent it out in the first place. Please refrain from sending any more revolting advertisements that not only corrupt but destroy faith, hope, creativity and imagination. yours truly. Jason

----------Then we responded----------

We have taken you off the mailing list for the movie. We never ever wish to sadden anyone. Please see a response from our last airing.

I am relieved to find out that this was not a documentary. I'm a psychiatrist working in an ER, suicidality and suicide attempts are by far the most frequent presentations to my service. I thought about this film for a long time be-cause I couldn't understand why a 'documentarist' would leave a person so clearly

suicidal alone in a room with a video camera. I can't remember if they knew about the gun. I came up with a lot of possibilities: that it was a mockumentary, that the 'documentarists' were cynically taking a pose of non-intervention to get a spectular end to the movie, that they were dirt stupid... Whoever wrote the script happened upon an idea psychiatrists have long known. A high proportion of completed suicides involve a collusion between the dead person and the people closest to him/her at the time. The survivors collude not out empathic atunement; except rarely in cases chronic, painfull, debilitating disease; but out of their inability to tolerate the suffocating demands made on them. This explains, at least partially, the tremendous guilt survivors often experience. Very good work. Thank-you.

Nobody Productions

Press

Beacon News 12-19-2000
Ex-Auroran's film blurs reality, fiction
By Michele Wiedmann
SPECIAL TO THE BEACON NEWS

Encore Wednesday: Work got surprising reaction after its first telecast

When Aurora native Tom Wilson headed for Hollywood 13 years ago to pursue his dream to become an actor, he believed he was willing to give up everything in pursuit of that dream. In an surrealistic twist, Wilson has directed and starred in his first film, a "mocumentary" about a firsttime director who gives up everything — including his life — in order to successfully launch his first film.

At 10:30 p.m. Wednesday, They Shoot Movies, Don't They? — The Making of Mirage will have an encore showing on Bravo's Independent Film. Wilson's film was first broadcast in September, when it garnered more viewer responses than any other IFC film.

In the spirit of The Blair Witch Project, the film blurs the line between reality and fiction. During the initial broadcast of the film, IFC invited viewers to visit their Web site to react to the film. The responses from the viewers proved that Wilson had succeeded — many viewers thought that they had really witnessed the director's death.

"The responses were overwhelming," said Wilson from his Los Seliz, Calif., home. "More than 30 percent of the viewers believed the film was real, and another 30 percent didn't believe it was real, but loved it anyway."

According to information on the film's Web site, reactions to Wilson's film numbered more than those of all other IFC-aired films combined.

Wilson, 39, a 1977 graduate of West Aurora High School, hopes that this first film serves as a stepping stone for further projects. He already has a sequel to his movie in the works, and has been working on a script that he hopes to will become a major motion picture.

"I found that I'm better at promoting my movies than I am at promoting myself," he said, explaining his turn toward producing his own films as opposed to trying to act in someone else's. In a bold step toward that goal, Wilson has started his own production company, Nobody Production Company, which produced They Shoot Movies, Don't They.

Revealing the sense of irony that was obviously at the heart of his film, Wilson revealed his company's tongue-in-cheek motto: "Nobody Cares." Wilson expressed excitement at having his movie broadcast to more than 30 million IFC viewers. "I think it's great," he said. "Little films often have the potential to make big points, and apparently, with all the responses that we received, I think this one did. "It's sort of a coup that IFC chose to pick up our film and run it. We are deeply indebted to them."

Wilson, who met and married Adele, a "rare native of Hollywood,", maintains close contact with the Aurora community, and regularly visits friends and family in the area.

"I get home as often as I can to see everyone. After living out here for so long I need to get back to the Midwest now and then to remember where I came from," he said.

Beacon News 12-19-2000
Author:
E-mail: [redacted]
Date: 1
Subject: Aurora man blurs lines?... please!!!

Message:
In an effort to promote their documentary, "They Shoot Movies Don't They?" the people at Nobody Productions have once again duped a news outlet. The idea that "Tom Paulson" was not real and played by an actor named "Tom Wilson" is preposterous. Tom Paulson is real. He is just like you and me. Don't let this shameless self promotion sway you. Comparing it to the Blair Witch... please. They Shoot Movies was obviously shot long before that hackkneed crap. As usual the guilty always leave clues behind. They can't help themselves. Do the math. If someone graduated in '77 how can they be 39. Come on middle america wake up before it's to late and TV becomes incapable of raising our children!!

Beacon News 12-19-2000
Author:
E-mail: [redacted]
Date: 1
Subject: Re: Aurora man blurs lines?... please!!!

Message:
I have just received a call to go online and read your article on "They Shoot Movies, Don't They?". I am surprised at how few news organizations actually check their facts before going to print. You are the 5th news outlet, that we know of, who have been duped by "Tom Wilson". Since August he has had 4 other newspapers do the "local boy makes movie" story on himelf. This man claims to playing director, Tom Paulson (can't even get the name right and has mistakenly took the monikor of our executive producer, Tom Wilson) in our film. Tom Paulson died in 1996. How do I know all this?
I am the director of "They Shoot Movies, Don't They?"
CHECK YOUR FACTS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
go to www.theyshootmovies.com

Author:
E-mail: [redacted]
Date: 1
Subject: Re: Aurora man blurs lines?... please!!!
Message: How typical of the Beacon to get a story so important SO WRONG!!

While Tom Paulson still lives in our hearts and minds, 'Tom Wilson' is out trying to capitalize on a tragedy. For the facts, go to: www.hollywood-buffalo.com
Shame on you, Beacon, for not taking the time to get the REAL story.

College paper

SIU alum's film to air on TV
Marleen Troutt
Southern Illinois Daily Egyptian

While riding "The Silver Bullet," a metallic bus that shuffled Tom Wilson between his $81 per month trailer at Carbondale Mobile Homes and campus, the SIUC grad never dreamed his final destination would be Hollywood.

At first no one wanted his mock-documentary "They Shoot Movies, Don't They? - The Making of Mirage," which airs for the third time at 10:30 p.m., May 16 on the Independent Film Channel (IFC). The mockumentary follows the life of struggling filmmaker Tom Paulson sloshing through the maze of Hollywood investors and colleagues to finance his film, "Mirage." Wilson, besides producing, co-wrote and co-

starred in the film with long-time friend Frank Gallagher. In the film, Paulson is driven to commit suicide, hounded to the end by Gallager's character, the intrusive documentarian.

When Hollywood fish didn't take the bait, Wilson and Gallagher rethought their promotional strategy. Instead of telling producers it was a fake documentary, they let them believe it was real. They sent copies of the film with contrived press clippings attached to Paulson's obituary and about 40 offers poured in.

"We never once told anyone it's real, people just believe," Wilson said. "I would just tell them, 'It's as real as it gets.' It's half-truth, half-not. It's semantics because I mean it's as real as I can make it. There are a million people making movies and I had to find a way to get up the ladder."

Gallagher met with a public relations bigwig he would not name, but who was the publicity mastermind behind "The Blair Witch Project," Spike Lee's flicks and "Forest Gump." Wilson could not meet with the promoter because Tom Paulson, the character he played, had died. "He gushed over the film," Gallagher said. "He kept going on and on about how scenes were shot, the metaphors we had built in and all the things we were hoping people would get, he got. He was in love with it."

But the ruse had to end. "I did all right with all of the questions until I was asked how Tom and I met," Gallagher said. "I could feel my face getting redder and redder and then I just said, 'You know what, I can't do this anymore. It's not real.'"

After several subsequent slammed doors, Bravo's IFC purchased the rights to "They Shoot Movies" in 2000, and aired it on the Independent Film Channel first in August and again in December. It received 6000 comments by viewers on the channel's website www.ifctv.com after the first air, more than any other film critiqued on IFC's website. Many people who wrote said IFC had "blood on their hands" because viewers believed it was real.

"This movie should have never been shown," William Elliott Jaeger wrote. "It is a major disrespect to Tom Paulson and to his family and friends. There is a line that should not be crossed. You have crossed it."

Wilson's own website, www.hollywood-buffalo.com, shows a tombstone with Paulson's name and slams the unsavory media for showing such trash. "If you can't beat 'em, you've got to join 'em and beat 'em," Wilson said. "You can really fool people just by playing with reality a little bit." After graduating from SIUC with a bachelor's in business administration, Wilson, an Aurora native, sold office furniture in Chicago and peddled solar energy in Austin, Texas, before spending the last 13 years as a stage actor and producer in Los Angeles. He won awards from Drama-Logue a now defunct L.A. theater newspaper. For his film, he was able to use the best stage actors in Hollywood because he knew them personally. "Good actors don't get picked for television shows, so they

weren't working," Wilson said. "That was the beauty. No one had ever seen them so I could do a fake documentary."

Wilson summed up the purpose of the film with one line from the movie. "They teach us in film school that the camera never lies, but does it ever tell the truth?"

Wilson's film and the deception surrounding it all help to emphasize points about reality TV, the role of the camera, the Hollywood substructure and media's role in our personal lives.

"As soon as you put a camera in someone's face you're not getting reality anymore," Wilson said. The pair said they watched five million documentaries, looking for the "is this for real?" feel. Though the filming finished in 1992, it took five years to edit as both Gallagher and Wilson worked on other projects. Since it aired, Wilson has had offers to make real documentaries, but he prefers fiction. He spends most of his time writing and is working on a follow-up to "They Shoot Movies" and a western entitled "Sloppy Joe." He's also busy promoting "They Shoot Movies" and wanted to spread the word at the University.

"I want people to know that SIUC alumni are out here thinking, we're out here working on things," Wilson said. "And I want people to watch the damn thing." But Wilson seemed most concerned as to the whereabouts of a certain bus. "What happened to the Silver Bullet?" Wilson kept asking. "It's probably rotting in a junkyard down there somewhere. I'm gonna come back and buy it."

LA TIMES
Tuesday, May 22, 2001
Film Gives Another Dose of So-Called Reality
Television * Coyly marketed 'Mirage' looks like a documentary and ends with a suicide that appears real but isn't.

By BRIAN LOWRY, Times Staff Writer

An aspiring filmmaker allows a documentary crew to follow him as he pursues his dream to make a movie. Unable to secure financing he becomes increasingly frustrated and morose, before--in a final desperate act that he films himself--taking his own life. Reality? No, but consider it a sign of the times--from increasingly bizarre "reality" television series to "The Blair Witch Project," which sucked in many people with its documentary style--that more than a few TV viewers believed it was all true when "They Shoot Movies, Don't They? . . . The Making of Mirage" was first televised on the Independent Film Channel.
"This movie should never have been shown," one irate viewer posted on the IFC Web site. "There is a line that should not be crossed . . . [and] you have crossed it."

Several others duped by the film were less outraged. One labeled it "powerful," and a would-be filmmaker dubbed the movie "an inspiration." Some visiting the Web site were suspicious ("Was it real? I can't tell," wrote one), while a third group recognized that the movie was not a documentary, though even some of them admitted the epiphany didn't occur until the end.

"If you believe this movie was a real documentary, then you are a complete dolt," one viewer posted. "It was really good, however."

"They Shoot Movies, Don't They?"--which will be repeated this week on IFC--was written, produced and directed by two actors, Tom Wilson and Frank Gallagher, who have primarily worked in local theater. The two were surprised to discover interest among potential distributors waned when the project, shot on a modest budget, was presented as a work of fiction, until they coyly began describing the film as being "as real as it gets"--their way of skirting whether the production was in fact a documentary until people had seen it.

The two began sending the film out with a bogus obituary, and Wilson didn't attend meetings so as not to destroy the illusion that the ill-fated filmmaker, Tom Paulson, died in

1996. "When you drop the bomb, about 50% say 'You [expletive], and the other 50% say, 'That's great,' " said Wilson, who plays Paulson. Wilson said he didn't necessarily have a statement in mind with the movie, which was produced in the early 1990s--before the current wave of unscripted television hit--rather using filmmaking as a backdrop because it was a subject near his heart. "You write what you know," he said. Still, it's notable how many people accepted they had watched a documentary that ends with the central character committing suicide, a moment discreetly left off screen. At the end, the documentarian (played by Gallagher) briefly appears, saying he does not feel responsible for what transpired. Gallagher understands the ambivalent response once the secret was revealed. "As a documentary, I love it," he said. "As a movie, it's OK." Among those fooled was Harry Clein, the veteran publicist who oversaw the "Blair Witch" marketing campaign. "There were certain things that seemed very real about it," said Clein, who admits to being angry when informed the movie was fictional. "I guess what interested me was [the idea] that Hollywood had driven someone to suicide." Clearly, the lines between fiction and nonfiction have blurred, and several films have explored the depths to which purveyors of entertainment will plunge. A case in point would be "Series 7," Daniel Minahan's recent independent film, which was shot in the style of a fictional TV series, "The Contenders," where the contestants must kill each other. Yet even though "Blair Witch" cultivated what Clein called "a little bit of this ambience of reality," he worries about misleading an audience or the media. "You can't put it out there as a real thing in any way, shape or form," he said. "I don't think anyone should see it believing it was real. . . . It takes away from their artistry."

IFC has already televised the film twice as part of its "DV Theater," a showcase for low-budget movies made using digital video. The film has not been identified as a documentary or drama, leaving viewers to speculate about its authenticity. "That's really how you have to watch," Gallagher said. "That impact really comes if it's a surprise to you." Kelly DeVine, IFC's supervisor of acquisitions, said the channel bowed to the wishes of the filmmakers by not labeling the film and hoped it would provoke the sort of

strong response that it did among viewers, many of whom joined the movie in progress. "It really did cause quite a shudder," said DeVine, who was also taken in when she saw the movie. "People were quite taken aback." IFC paid the producers a modest fee that doesn't come close to covering the budget for rights to televise the film over a three-year span. Wilson is still hoping to find someone to distribute the project on video or theatrically, and he and Gallagher are developing a dark comedy inspired by their experience with the project, about a documentary filmmaker who fakes the ending of a movie by implying the subject committed suicide. According to Gallagher, at times the filmmakers' experience uncomfortably mirrored what transpired in the film. Wilson began exhausting his credit cards to finance production, while Gallagher spent a year editing the film--until family and friends began to worry about him.
"They Shoot Movies" even sat dormant for a time until the two decided to revisit it. "The reality TV and all this other stuff sparked us to finish [the film], because the timing seems to be right," Gallagher said. "It's come to a point where my feeling is whatever I watch on TV, I can't buy it." * "They Shoot Movies, Don't They? . . . The Making of Mirage" will be shown Wednesday at 8:30 p.m. on the Independent Film Channel, repeating that night at 1:30 a.m.
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The Great TV Guide blunder of Dec 2000

They Shoot Horses, Don't They?
121 min.
Sydney Pollack directed this superbly acted drama centering on a 1932 dance marathon at a seedy ballroom. Jane Fonda heads a strong cast. Robert: Michael Sarrazin. Rocky: Gig Young (his Oscar performance). Alice: Susannah York. Sailor: Red Buttons. Ruby: Bonnie Bedelia. James: Bruce Dern.

Cast: Susannah York, Red Buttons, Bonnie Bedelia, Jane Fonda, Michael Sarrazin, Gig Young
Rating: PG
Content: Adult Themes
Category: Movie, Drama
Director: Sydney Pollack
Release Year: 1969

Show times

Date	Time	Channel
Wednesday, 20	8:30 PM	59 IFC
Thursday, 21	1:30 AM	59 IFC
Tuesday, 2	2:45 PM	15 SHOW

We had nothing to do with this!

Tuesday June 5, 04:28 AM

Hollywood gives thumbs down to fake critic

By Arthur Spiegelman

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) - David Manning was a film critic only a Hollywood studio could love -- he always said what you wanted him to say. If Siskel and Ebert gave two thumbs up to a movie, David Manning would give three.
If he sounds too good to be true that's because he is. Over the weekend, Newsweek exposed Manning as a fake made up by someone in the advertising department of Columbia Pictures.
Columbia, a unit of Japanese electronics giant Sony, promised a full-scale investigation followed by "appropriate action." In short, heads may roll.
Meanwhile, all of Hollywood seemed to have one question and one question alone about the embarrassing discovery made by Newsweek reporter John Horn: why did someone at Columbia bother to invent a friendly critic, when he or she could have reached out and touched someone real?
"You don't need to make up quotes in this town. They've got 'Quote Whores' who will do that for you. There are plenty of people who like everything they see and like to see their names in the paper," said Time Magazine film critic Richard Schickel.

HOLLYWOOD AGREES
It was a sentiment echoed across town, not least of all at Columbia where executives were shaking their heads and using words like "stupid" to describe the Manning stunt.
Leonard Maltin, the film critic for the "Entertainment Tonight" television program, said, "I laughed because it was absurd on so many different levels. There already seems to be no shortage of people to give studios the quotes they want and the studios have no compunction about quoting the most obscure film critics in America."
One studio recently was reported to have called "critics," asking them if they would be willing to say certain nice things about their films that could run in the advertisements.
But according to Newsweek, the beautiful part of David Manning was that you didn't even need to call him. He gave a string of recent Columbia films gushingly positive comments on the spot without being asked.

Rave reviews attributed to Manning included calling Australian actor Heath Ledger of "The Knight's Tale": "this year's hottest new star!" and describing Rob Schneider comedy "The Animal" as "another winner!"

Sony Pictures Entertainment, the parent of Columbia Pictures and movie-making arm of Sony pulled ads that quote Manning, who was described as working for the Ridgefield Press in southwestern Connecticut, a real weekly paper with a circulation of 6,500 and no regular film reviewers.
"We buy capsule reviews from Newsday and I don't think they liked those films as well as David Manning did. We got a call from a Columbia executive apologising and assuring us that action will be taken," said the paper's publisher Thomas Nash.
Nash added, "At first we were amused then we started to get irritated by all the attention."
Los Angeles-based film critic F.X. Feeney says the studios often want to boil a critics' words down to adjectives like "thrilling" followed by three dots.
"My first reaction was to laugh but then I realised that this is so disrespectful. I write carefully and don't get blurbed but certain critics fall into the trap of being quotable. It is important for critics to be careful and not be a branch of the publicity business."
But as critic Maltin recalled, sometimes it doesn't matter what you say. "Many years ago I reviewed a film in which the star was hyped as 'the new James Dean.' I was very careful and said as for his being the new James Dean, I would have to wait and see more of his work. The ad quoted me as calling him '...the new James Dean'. All you need is three dots."
Time critic Schickel said that despite Manning's lack of existence he did agree with his assessments of Ledger as a hot new star and "The Animal" as a winning film.
Maybe Manning has a future after all in Hollywood.

Sony executives suspended over fake film critic

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) - Sony Pictures Entertainment has disciplined two advertising executives for their roles in creating a fictional film critic whose ecstatic appraisals were used to promote films released by Sony's Columbia Pictures studio, Daily Variety has reported.
According to company insiders, Josh Goldstine, senior vice president of creative advertising, and Matthew Cramer, director of creative advertising, were rebuked and suspended without pay for 30 days, the entertainment trade paper said in its Friday edition.
Meanwhile, Sony was hit on Thursday with a class-action lawsuit brought by two moviegoers who claimed they were duped into seeing "A Knight's Tale" by the glowing review blurbs attributed to the bogus but obliging critic, David Manning, Variety reported.
Sony Pictures Entertainment and its Columbia Pictures studio are units of Japanese electronics giant Sony. Manning, who had been billed as a reviewer for the Ridgefield Press in Connecticut, was exposed as a fabrication by Newsweek magazine last weekend.

The two named plaintiffs in the lawsuit, Omar Rezec of Los Angeles and Ann Belknap of suburban Sierra Madre, California accused Sony of deliberately deceiving consumers and violating the state Business and Profession Code, Variety said.
Damages were not specified, but the suit, filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, seeks repayment for the millions of U.S. moviegoers who bought tickets to four Columbia films on the basis of phony David Manning blurbs used to promote them.
According to Variety, Goldstine was promoted to his position only last November and oversaw all marketing efforts except publicity for Columbia. Cramer created the quotes attributed to Manning,which were used in numerous ads for Columbia's "Hollow Man," "Vertical Limit," "A Knight's Tale" and "The Animal."
Cramer is understood to have come up with the name as a sly wink to his old college chum, David Bradley Manning, who, like Cramer, graduated from the University of Southern California in 1992, Variety said.
In a statement by the studio, worldwide marketing head Jeff Blake said that new "checks and balances" had been created to "ensure the accuracy of quotes contained in future advertising campaigns" and "to prevent this from happening again."
Martin Hersam, a managing partner at the Ridgefield Press, told Variety that unlike the irate moviegoers, his company has no plans to pursue legal action against Sony for the fabrications.

Ray Carney Film Prof at Boston University
Ray Carney, Prof. of Film and American Studies
General Editor, The Cambridge Film Classics
Author: The Films of Mike Leigh; The Films of John Cassavetes; etc
Director of the Film Studies Program and Graduate Admissions

Tom,

Read your piece. Wonderful. And sad. And typical. And profoundly revealing.

I respect your "ownership" of it, but if you wanted to give me permission to do so, I would love to post it on my web site in its entirety. If you don't feel comfortable with that, that's OK too.

If you receive this and were able to let me know by tomorrow AM (Friday), I could probably do it that day; otherwise, it would have to wait until after firecracker day. Let me.

I wish you well.

Ray

Aint it cool News

There's A Suicide On IFC Wed. Night!!

Hey, everyone. "Moriarty" here with some Rumblings From The Lab. I'll tell you the truth... I don't really like Tom Paulson. I almost feel bad saying it now that he's dead. Almost. I'd feel worse if I lied and said that he was a good filmmaker who caught some bad breaks, or if I soft pedaled just because of a choice he made.

MIRAGE looked like a piece of junk. I don't think it was ever going to work. In some ways, this is an interesting companion piece to Chris Smith's brilliant AMERICAN MOVIE. If you want to program an interesting Wednesday, rent AMERICAN MOVIE and COVEN, watch them back to back, then tune in for THEY SHOOT MOVIES, DON'T THEY? - THE MAKING OF "MIRAGE" on IFC.

There's a reason I respect Mark Borchardt. He never gave up. I've never seen a guy who the odds were more definitely stacked against, either. Mark was woefully short on everything but bullshit, and still he somehow managed to finish his film. There's something beautiful about that, and no matter what anyone says... he's a filmmaker. He made a film. You can't take that away from him, no matter what you think of the movie.

Tom Paulson, on the other hand, is a quitter. As THEY SHOOT MOVIES documents quite clearly, he was crushed by the responsibility of producing his independent project MIRAGE. I think the pressure was doubled because he agreed to let Tom Wilson and Frank Gallagher shoot the process of him making his film. That's a microscope you're putting yourself under, and when things went wrong for Paulson, he turned out to be too weak to deal with it.

Make no mistake... if you tune in to see the film, you won't see Paulson actually kill himself. He did it off-camera. I would hope that Wilson and Gallagher would have stopped Paulson if he'd tried to hurt himself in front of them. I don't think they're responsible for his death. I think he made a sad, cowardly decision, and after living in Los Angeles for ten years and working my ass off to make my own dreams come true, I know how bad things can get. I've seen some real hard times. But none of them are worth anything if I don't eventually make my own movies, and there's no way I'm checking out until I get that chance. Watching the end of this film and listening to Paulson's whiny deterioration into self-pity and guilt, I genuinely felt no sorrow for him. As a result, I can't say I really liked anything about THEY SHOOT MOVIES, or that I would recommend you tune in to see it on Wednesday at 8:30 or 1:30 the following morning. It's a long haul with a largely unpleasant character making a film I don't think was going to be any good. I think this film is largely being sold on the promise of watching Paulson kill himself.

There's something vaguely distasteful about sitting around waiting for his meltdown, though, and in the end, I'd say you should only tune in if you are helpless to your own curiousity.

By the way... this has already shown a few times on IFC, which is how I've seen it, and there's a fairly healthy debate on the merits of the film and its place in the current glut of reality programming on TV and in theaters going on around the web in various places.

After you've visited some of those other sites, come back here and let's hear what you have to say about what may be the year's most morbid publicity stunt to date. Oh... and if you have to ask in the Talk Backs if I "get the joke"... then believe me... I do. And I don't like it a bit.

"Moriarty" out.

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx replys to Moriarity at Aint it cool News xxxxxxxxxxxxx

2001-05-23 21:07:10
From: Jobriga3
Subject: I get the joke!
Comment:
...and the bartender says, "I was talking to the pig!" Ho ho, I kill myself.

2001-05-22 06:38:09
From: BobaFettsEvlTwin
Subject: me first
Comment: Isn't a movie about the making a bad movie worthwhile. After all it teaches you how not to make a movie

2001-05-22 06:58:50
From: SimianSidewalk
Subject: Was the necessary
Comment: first these guys are guilty of ripping off Blair Witch, The last Broadcast, and simialr films. Secondly how many suicides have happened in Hollywood due to careers going nowhere or disappearing altogether. This is what is dangerous about fake documentaries. Bob roberts was obviously fake becuse we would have heard about this guy running for office. Best in Show, waiting for Guffman, and Spinal Tap were too funny to be real. But when you go into the Blair Witch areayou get into trouble. Blair Witch worked because it felt real but you knew it wasn't. This film seems like it plays more real than not. So peoplesee the film, think it's real and become inspired by the filmmaker who killed himself. That leads to others who can't deal with the pressure who decide to film their decline to become famous. Sure that may not happen but how many

people went to Burrketsville thinking there was a Blair Witch lurking around. Now the next film they are planning is about filmakers faking the ending to a movie to show the filmaker commiting suicide. Something tells me these guys have no original ideas and they are washed up already. So when reports of their suicides come in do we believe them or not.

2001-05-22 07:17:54
From: Zitoman
Subject: Publicity Stunt
Comment: If you can't be remembered as a famous film maker you might as well be remembered as a self destructive artist. At least this way he never really slips into oblivion ya know? (I say that with out humor I'm serious and empethetic to the situation)

2001-05-22 07:57:24
From: Chris Waffle
Subject: Moriarty...
Comment: Don't you get the joke? Oh wait, I guess it's me.

2001-05-22 07:57:55
From: Soichiro
Subject: Cheap, cynical stunt.
Comment: To make a film like this and present it as reality is sad and degrading to the soul, and exploitative in the worst possible way. Some will see it out of a sick, sadistic fascination -- do we really need to encourage that kind of depravity? Some will see it and be truly saddened and shocked...and then feel totally betrayed when they discover the truth. Either way, there's no point to be made here, no redeeming quality. At best, it's a pseudo-snuff film; at worst, it's another step down the staircase into nihlistic cynicism, and oh boy are we short on that these days. Read the LA Times article linked above and catch the stench of opportunism rising off of these filmmakers. There's no evidence of real artistic passion here, just a couple of amateur wannabe filmmakers who are more than willing to piss all over their art and plumb any depth for a few minutes in the spotlight and a movie deal. The sad thing is that these guys are probably heroes to a million other wannabes just like them. And the idea that it's better to go out this way than to stick around and work at your craft is sad beyond words. That's the message this film is conveying, no matter how they rationalize it. It's like making an anti-kiddie porn film featuring kids having sex -- your words say one thing but the images tell the true story of your intentions. "Art" like this is not art at all, or rather, art of the worst kind, disingenuous and dishonest. I can't believe that anyone who really cares about cinema or is serious about filmmaking would support a lie as base and exploitative as this. "Blair Witch" is one thing because it was always presented as "real" but with a wink...but this is over the line, and as someone who loves tasteless humor and who's as cynical as they come, even I'm repulsed. By supporting and publicizing this material, Moriarty has lost a

great deal of respect and credibility in my eyes. It's not an outrage, and it's not something that I would ever want to ban or suppress...it's just sad and crass in a very mundane and cheap way, and I would have liked to have thought that Moriarty and AICN would have too much genuine love and respect for cinema to support something that...I don't know, just seems to go against the things that make me love film and feel good about being an artist. It's just kind of disappointing, I guess.

2001-05-22 09:56:03
From: NatefromSanFran
Subject: our reactions are why they did it...
Comment: I don't think this movie is the end of Civilation, people. So there is a gimmick/hook in the movie, lots of movies have them and this one is just different. So once that novelty wears off, the film will have to stand on it's own merits and then we'll see if it's worth bashing. Its not the filmmakers responsiblity to spoon feed you Art, they have a right to try to mindf*ck you. If I were a writer/filmmaker I would think that my goal, to take you somewhere you've not been. I actually think it's good to not be given such formulaic tripe that a 9 year old could tell you what is going to happen in the next act. So just remember, it's All Right to feel discomfort at certain ideas, but that doesn't mean you should suppress expression of those unpopular ideas (i.e. without Evil, how does Good know what NOT to do?). As long as no one is immediately harmed by them. (if someone is going to kill themselves, they'll FIND an excuse so don't blame the filmmakers) Andy
Kaufman used similar deceptions during his career. He was the king of the "wink" (only we never even got the wink). People still debate which of his antics were the "real" Andy. I think Kaufman did it right, since his material still holds up.

2001-05-22 11:01:14
From: JoeStokowski
Subject: do you get the joke, moriarty?
Comment: i'm sorry. i can't help myself.

2001-05-22 11:11:14
From: pedant
Subject:
Comment: Moriarty, depression and suicide are more often caused by an imbalance in brain chemistry than by some flaw in the victim's personality. It is quite beyond their control. I know that this particular suicide was fictional, but consider that many readers of this site are likely to have attempted or contemplated suicide at some time in the past. How do you think they will feel to be faced with your bigoted victim-blaming as they read words like "quitter", "weak", "cowardly", "whiny", "unpleasant", and "self-pity"? Suicide is something like the #8 killer in America, and depression is projected to be the

#2 cause of death by the year 2020. I don't think that bigotry against those whose brain chemistry differs from yours is going to curb this trend.

2001-05-22 11:22:56
From: MordorTourist
Subject: "quitters"
Comment: Normally, I enjoy your columns, Moriarty, and shake my head when people attack you in a talkback. This is different, even in this faux-documentary. Suicidal people are generally suffering from a malady of some sort, usually depression... which is a chemical imbalance in the brain. How do I know? I spent 3 weeks in a hospital for depression, and still see a therapist. I didn't attempt to kill myself, but I certainly kicked it around, and that is not my standard M.O. Understanding that Paulson is a fictional character doesn't really justify feeling contempt for a person that very well couldn't see any other way out. Or, you could be just fishing for a discussion, in which case I was rather enthusiastically hooked. Regardless, I will try to catch "They Shoot Movies..." at my first opportunity, because like most Americans, I'm a sucker for a smart marketing campaign.

2001-05-22 13:55:08
From: cine99
Subject: Stuff like this is why I'm considering another career
Comment: Anyone else feel this way sometimes? I mean... I'm 23, and for about 8 years now I've wanted nothing more than to write and direct films. I just returned to college to get a bachelor's in film, and as I take more courses in philosophy, history, art, etc., I'm thinking of either switching to one of those majors and maybe becoming a professor, curator, or... who knows, writing a book on one of those subjects. The reason? I don't know... I guess it's shit like this. Everyone in hollywood and most of the people you meet in film school have no interest in anything except for film... strike that, they are actually soley interested in furthering their own careers and becoming millionares and star-f--king. I mean... if you never get to make a film... who the f--k cares? There are a lot of other interesting subjects to study or work in. When the hell did film and pop culture become the end-all be-all for every deranged person seeking fame and fortune on this planet? Some of them are only slightly more sane than the people who wind up on Jerry Springer. Making a movie like this is an abomination. Sure, I think one should be able to make it... but it's the whole culture of film that surrounds not just hollywood, but the independents as well. When you go to film school, which I have before, you see people like the guys who made this film in abundance. Anyone else agree that the film industry in general is reaching new heights of intellectual and spritual shallowness? Does anyone in Hollywood care about anything except for Hollywood anymore? Do they actually read books there anymore? I don't know... just rambling... not sure lately if I even want to bother getting into this rat race anymore.

2001-05-22 14:56:19
From: Lily Drop
Subject: crap... and to cine99
Comment: Geez, thanks a lot Blair Witch. Now we get to wallow in all of the knock-offs. The whole point of this movie seems to be an "I gotcha!" to the people who believe it's real. And since that has been done before as recently as Blair Witch (not to mention the War of the Worlds radio broadcast), what is the point? Does this film offer anything other than shock value? To me, it's a pointless yawner.**** I know exactly what you are talking about, cine99. I was recently in a Blockbuster looking for a good movie to rent. I couldn't find *anything*, and it had been over a month since I had been to rent a movie. I would never be able to go to a book store or music store and not find something to buy. It's just an example of how Hollywood's commitee-factory-test-audience way of making films has done nothing but create crap to sell sequels and happy meals. It's so disheartening, because I love the art form of movies. It's so sad that in a given year I might want 100 different books, 30 cds, but maybe only want to see 1 or 2 movies. I guess it's just me, though; Hollywood seems to be doing pretty well.

2001-05-22 14:56:47
From: Kabouter Plop
Subject: Cine99 ...
Comment: I guess that Hollywood really made a business out of filmmaking. That's why so many movies are formula pics and remakes of popular things. Aside from a few guys with more power than God (Spielberg, Cameron) you're just a cog in the machine ... But if you got celluloid in your blood, don't give up, beg borrow and steal if you need to but make those movies, make them for yourself, your parents, little crippled Timmy ... And if there is not enough celluloid in your blood you can write and paint or just scream your art at this uncaring bitch that is our world ... why ? Because sombody has to do it ...

2001-05-22 16:12:01
From: TheRealMoriarty
Subject: Pass The Baby, Please
Comment: Y'know, Jonathan Swift wasn't really a baby-eater, and I don't really think people who commit suicide are "quitters." In this case, I think the character in this mockumentary is poorly written and not very well performed, and I felt the film trivialized what is typically a horrible place for someone to find themselves, trapped in a depressive cycle. I have lost people close to me to suicide, and I certainly don't find it trivial. In this film, it is, though, and I guess I didn't properly convey my contempt for the film with the piece I wrote.

2001-05-22 16:40:14
From: Jesus O' Reilly

Subject: Jesus, Moriarity
Comment: Remind me not to let you give the eulogy at MY fucking funeral. "He drank too much, no one liked him, I'm pretty sure he was gay...ah, fuck this dead quitter and let's hit the buffet! Drinks are on the dead man!" I mean, dude.

2001-05-22 17:49:03
From: EddieDane
Subject: Why don't we judge it on it's artistic merits?
Comment: Most of the criticism I'm seeing here is about the film's moral responsibility or the fact that the filmmakers wanted to be famous. I'm not seeing a lot of reasonable comments about whether or not the film is any good. It should be judged on artistic merits, not moral ones.

2001-05-23 06:19:23
From: TectorGorch
Subject: PAULSON & HIS KIND
Comment: Its nice to look at this Talkback- weed through the BS and see some kindred spirits. I consider myself a refugee from the Film Industry. I launched out of film school on a lucky break and was able to fall in with a rather famous filmmaking family because the son was my school roomate. I learned under his Father for a couple of years then put some money together and headed for Wilmington, NC to do my own film. Unfortunately for me I hit the ground with a 35mm camera instead of DV. We were shooting on the water and a Hurricane turned our way. We took what we had, shot a bunch of stuff out at sea before the Cane hit and put what we had together for festivals. That's where I ran into a rat bastard like Paulson. A prick doing it for the wrong reasons- to get famous. These no-level film maker wannabes are leeches and the worst kind of human. They lay in wait not wanting to do good work or tell good stories but wanting to get rich and famous so they can dump their girlfriends and impress their old classmates. This "Poulson" sucked me into a documentry film that ironicaly was about a filmed suicide. The more I worked on it the more I saw some bad motivations and the more contrived the "suicide" looked. Finding out what I was thinking by getting one of my "friends" to rat me out the "Poulson" executed an elaborate and stupid plot to get me out of the film and discredit me completly. It worked. I tried to work in TV, but soon quit that. Luckily I have a good education which allows me to have a good Junior Executive job while I write a novel, but I understand what kind of prick this guy- and these "dcoumentarians" seem to be.

2001-05-23 09:03:38
From: cine99
Subject: Nice to see some people who get what I'm saying...
Comment: When I posted up there, I thought people would think I was a pretentious ass or something, but it's nice to see others understand. I don't feel 'above' anyone or anything at all. It's just a general feeling of tiredness that I get when I hear or meet guys like the

people who made this. My old boss... he has a business that makes film equipment. When I went to buy one of his dollies, we got to talking and liked the way I sounded and figured I had some experience, so he asked me if I wanted to work for him while he was preparing his first independent film to be made in the summer. So I did... and at first it was cool. I felt like I was doing something... like an apprenticeship. He was 39 with a wife and child, graduated from NYU film school in the 80's, and probably, because of the business and the wife and kid, he got sidetracked. Now he was making his statement. Anyway, long story short, I read the script, and it was terrible, but I just couldnt tell him. When I saw how his friends with really good jobs in film were trying to tell him that parts of it were not that good, he just balked at their stupidity and wouldn't listen, so... good thing I never told him. The guy seemed intelligent, but then I saw that he was just another 'film-guy' with money to burn and nothing to say. It was a really ham-handed story about film school. Self-discovery, teen sex in dormitories... yawn. So... I struggled for months with what to do... we went through casting in NY... and it was terrible. I couldnt believe how many beautiful girls willing to do anything for a part came to this audition. How earnestly they read his inane dialogue... amazing. Anyway, know I said I'd make this long story short so... the time for shooting(I'd be sound mixer and assistant editor) came nearer and nearer. Everyone was telling me this might be a step to something better, blah, blah, blah.. you know the routine. But... the way the script was and the way that guy acted and treated everyone around him, I couldnt go through with it. I got the hell outta there and went back to school, which is where I am now. I already have an associate's from a film school called Full Sail, but after seeing that there's not much to do here in NJ nor people to meet, I'm going to USC. Right now I'm doing general ed. in community college and I'm a little scared because it seems that I enjoy philosophy and art history a helluva lot more than I enjoyed my previous attempts at enjoying film school. (I also did one of those summer production workshops at USC - the universal studios one)But... anyway, this and some other things are what is prompting me to consider a career in a more straightforward academic field. Good luck to anyone who reads this and understands what I'm talking about... and if you feel like e-mailing me, go ahead, I'd love to talk some more about this stuff. And one more thing... to the person who said that thing about having celluloid in your veins and not caring about the assholes... I'm trying, believe me. LOL, might sound stupid, but today I'm watching all the old Spielberg movies that first got me interested in moviemaking. Jaws, Raiders, Close Encounters. Havent watched them the way I used to ever since I got into this filmmaking stuff.

2001-05-23 12:19:10
From: cripster
Subject: background?
Comment: Hey Moriarty, how 'bout some background info? I started reading this article and I had no idea what you were talking about ... like there was a paragraph or two missing from the beginning of the piece.

2001-05-24 20:29:44

From: SethShandor
Subject: I agree with cripster...
Comment: It's like he posting a story about a story were already supposed to know about. I had to really look around and hunt to figure out what the hell he was talking about... and after all that, I didn't care! But, please, Moriarty, a little more set-up next time huh... (and I don't get the Independent Film Channel so it took me a while to figure out what the hell "IFC" meant too...

Nov 23rd Screening

Letters to theyshootmovies.com
Post Nov 23rd 2001 screening

Subject: Predictable and I think a lie.
Date: 54:12 -0500
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Thi itch 3 for I am convinced it is a lie. I would like to never see it again. I want to see a death certificate!
Richard E Walston

Subject: Your "Film"
Date: Fri, 23 Nov 200
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
I just Movies, Don't they?" on IFC.
You guys S U C K! :-)
It wasn't until the very end, when I the $50,000 win was revealed, that I realized it was a mocumentary, and even IMDB.com didn't help when I looked up the film "Mirage". Then I found this site and my suspicions were confirmed. As I look back, some of the acting was a bit over the top, but some scenes (with Tom and his financier) were VERY good.
I hate you guys! (nice work). :-)
Mike

Subject: No Subject
Date: 4:06:00 EST
From: [redacted]

To: [redacted]
Wh IFC? I caught it at the last five minutes.
Thanks

Subject: Tom
Date: :00:28 EST
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
I ju he film....did Tom really kill himself
in 1006...I have to know.
Please e-mail me back.
K.

Subject: w o w !
Date: Fri, 23 Nov
Fro [redacted]>
To: [redacted]
...i e version on IFC of 'they shoot movies...'just two
sessions of most of the film. you got me pardner... hook,line and sinker...well done,
lads !!
best regards,
nobody famous [with a story]

Subject: Paulson
Date: Fri, 23 Nov 2001 17:19:26 -0
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
OK...
Phil Olsman
Namslo Productions, Inc.
2051 Stanley Hills Drive
Los Angeles, California

[redacted]

Subject: We need more of this.
Date: :08 EST
From: [redacted]

To: [redacted]
"Th ...You people are GREAT . Thank you. One hell of a stocking-stuffer. Usually I just rant at the tv....now I'm my first letter to tv. Thanks again.
Gregg Bratt

Subject: Stocking stuffer
Date: :00 EST
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
hoot Movies..VISA? CHECK?
[redacted]

Subject: They Shoot
Date: Fri, 23 Nov 0
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
Guys
After ten years in the biz as a non--union PM and 1st AD and directing one feature myself (The Vineyard for New World) and being eaten for lunch a thousand times and spit out as chewed up hamburger I can definitely relate to this film. Of course I knew is was a mocumentry because the first thing EVERYBODY does that hits Hollywood is to "sell-out" what your artistic vision is verses "what they what." If you want to eat and pay the rent you have to sell out, period. The real Hollywood story (as I'm sure you know) is you can't even make it even when you sell out.
On your story and video, very well done, congratulations. I hope you get enough money to pay your expenses until your next one. Good luck.
Regards,
Bill Rice

Subject: They Shoot Movies
Date: Fri, 23 Nov
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
I'd li They Shoot Movies, Don't They?". How should I do this?

[redacted]

Subject: G.F.M
Date: Fri, 23 Nov 2001 19:
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
Hey,
Just viewed you movie on IFC...GREAT FUCKEN MOVIE!!!
Loved it,
Derik P. Madrid
38415 Jacaranda Dr.
Newark, CA 94560

Subject: You almost had me~
Date: [redacted] :11 EST
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Go [redacted] film on IFC today Friday, November 23,
2001 in my living room near Seattle, Washington. it was disturbing to say the
least you had me at the end of the film (you had me yelling at the TV screen,
"DON'T!, DON'T! " to the disjointed, on-screen, hotel phantom,
last-breathed-TOM) as well as about an hour and a half afterwards when it dawned on me
that your documentary was a hoax. okay. All is fair in love war and film.
You made an indelible mark in film-making: a "snuff docudrama."
And fooled a lot of film goers, addicts and mongers like me. Which is what we
like. plus an avant guarde style that had turned modern film making on its head.
Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Subject: that movie
Date: Sat, 24 Nov 200
From: [redacted]
To: "[redacted]>
I saw [redacted] ni
was the most fascinating documentary I have seen in a long time.
Jaime m. morgan

[redacted]

Subject: Enjoyed your mockumentary
Date: Sun, 25 Nov 2001 19:36:03 -0800

From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
Did t [redacted] al?
When will you be showing it again on TV? Very powerful.

Subject: Mirage
Date:
Mon, 26 Nov 2001 20
Fro [redacted]>
To: [redacted]
I w [redacted], quite interesting. Can you please tell me if its a true story?
Did the guy actually commit suicide?
Thank You,
Greg Boyle
[redacted]onal
[redacted]

From: "Richard" <decadence1@r...>
Date: Fri Jun 1, 2001 1:41 pm
Subject: Review: they Shoot Movies Don't They?
'They Shoot Movies Don't They?' is a documenatary about
a filmmaker Tom Paulson who is making a film called Mirage. We see
the highs and hopes and lows such as Tom's girlfriend Adele leaving
him as the stress takes its toll.
It is a fly on the wall look at his efforts to secure
much needed funding to bring his film to release. As with so many
directors over the years his film Mirage is constantly at risk from
predators who would be happy to provide a little investment if only
he'd agree to relinquish control over the film to them.
We become unsure of whether we are seeing an actor
playing a part or taking an actual glimpse into someone's life. It's been
done before, Peter Fonda was doing it back in 1969 in Easy Rider but
rarely have we seen it with such such shocking imagery. As every good student of cinema knows, independent films are welcomed with open arms by the Hollywood establishment and the closed studio system is a distant memory. Here we see the reality is
very different, watching potential financiers tell Tom they
LOVED his work and they'll call him. And then do not.
For every so-called independent filmmaker with a long
proven track record who has people queing up to invest in their
latest efforts, there is another doing the rounds at Sundance and other
gatherings trying to get anyone to take a look at his little
showreel. For Tom it ended tragically, we see him end his struggle
with life and Hollywood near the end of the film by taking a gun

to his head. The Blair Witch-esque film (this film was begun before Blair Witch) keeps the illusion tangible. Is it real? No, as reported in the LA Times the story is not. Perhaps, someday it shall be.
The end credits included a quote from Francis Ford Coppola complimenting them on their project. I'd like to think he enjoyed it as much as I did. http://www.theyshootmovies.com/next.htm order a copy or you can view clips with a fast Internet connection. Either way it'll be time well spent.
-- Richard Beirne

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

[redacted] wrote:
@Nobody Prods.,

On Dec 2, 2001, I answered in an email that >>Tom had "won $50,000" in Vegas that same night -- enough to repay his chief debtor, and it was this detail that-after hanging up the phone-lingered in my mind as a bit "de trop" as the Frenchman says. Unless someone is clearly demented, one does not "off “oneself with that kind of liquidity.<<
Well, I have changed my mind.
Being a melancholic person who is taking antidepressants, but also highly functional and competent with NO psychotic symptoms to speak of, and having well over $50M, I contemplate suicide all the funking time. I just figured you had to be crazy TO DO IT!
Not so. I have been reading "The Noonday Demon: An Atlas on Depression" by Andrew Solomon (*The National Book Award winner in non fiction for 2001) that suicides are not necessarily insane people when off themselves. Nor are they even diagnosed as depressed. Read the Chapter on "Suicide;" it is fascinating, e.g. some have shot IV's of "peanut butter" into their veins—Now THEY are nuts!)
Anyway wanted you to know that I changed my mind.
Now I believe that Tom had his reasons and I respect them. But still am so glad it was "just a movie"
Yours sincerely,
Jules
(Julia Clinch)

RE: In a message dated 12/2/01 5:55:05 AM, [redacted] writes:
Jules,
Thank you for your response to my kudos for your film: they shoot movies In reply to your query, "One question: how did you figure it out an hour and a half later?" Yes, Frank(ly), you had me going for some time until realized I was being "had." I told my beau, * (who called shortly after the viewing) about your film and

filled him in on some details* including that Tom had "won $50,000" in Vegas that same night -- enough to repay his chief debtor, and it was this detail that-after hanging up the phone-lingered in my mind as a bit "de trop" as the Frenchman says. Unless someone is clearly demented, one does not "off "oneself with that kind of liquidity.

2nd Los Angeles Times article

PERSPECTIVE
Hollywood's Eternal Riddle
As the movie 'Echo Park' so excellently pondered: Are you an actor, writer or musician if no one is paying you to ply your trade?

By BRIAN LOWRY

Maybe it was a relatively new commute to work that takes me past the Glendale Freeway interchange labeled "Echo Park" almost daily. Or maybe it was too many desperate e-mails over the years from self-described actors and writers, either railing against "the system" that denies them entry or talking about the next "job" from which they will derive no income. Maybe too it was a recent interview with Eriq La Salle, who, after cashing in fabulously thanks to his role on "ER," said, "The big secret that a lot of people don't understand about most actors is that if you are really true artists, you'll do this for free." Although I have no doubt that is the case for many who have that luxury, including perhaps La Salle at this stage, it seems a pretty safe bet that given the choice, most of his brethren would prefer some tangible compensation. All these threads lead in the same direction, toward a question I am no closer to answering today than when I first saw the movie "Echo Park" at the time of its release in 1986--namely, when is an actor, writer or musician really an actor, writer or musician, especially if no one is paying them to ply their trade? That was, in a nutshell, the underlying theme of "Echo Park," a gentle, bittersweet film whose title played off its geography by following the exploits of a group of people living--figuratively and literally--just outside of Hollywood.
Written by Michael Ventura and directed by Robert Dornhelm, it holds up quite well, so much so it should almost be required viewing for anyone who gets off a bus from

Poughkeepsie anticipating a date with stardom. "Echo Park" has some memorable comments about how to properly address these aspiring actors and writers, both delivered by Susan Dey, playing a single mother and sort-of actress who takes a job stripping to pay the bills. Nearly every character really wants to be doing something else, including Dey's next-door neighbor, an Austrian bodybuilder-personal trainer with Schwarzenegger-esque ambitions; and her new roommate, a pizza-delivery guy/songwriter, portrayed by Tom Hulce, who is too sheepish and self-critical to discuss his hoped-for career. Asked if she's an actress, Dey's character muses, "I try to act. I want to. I go to classes, but is that being an actress? ... If it isn't, then no, I'm not. I have plans, but does having plans make me an actress, an artist, whatever?" Later, Hulce expresses his contempt for those in their shared predicament: "I am so sick of all of the people in this town who are poets or screenwriters or actresses, when we're all just delivering pizzas, every last one of us." Dey, more optimistic, protests that he's being unfair. "I
love that everybody is really an actress, really a singer—after they get off work at the bank. The waiter is really writing a play. Dream on." In the years since, I've often thought about those lines. Yet despite the fact that I was not long out of college myself then and knew many more waiters writing plays and bank tellers who went out on auditions, nothing much appears to have changed--including the toll exacted by doing one thing while dreaming of doing another. Of course, those who have broken into the big time, like La Salle, can breathlessly discuss their craft in philosophical terms. By contrast, a bit more pragmatism is necessary for the majority who carry trays several hours a day to underwrite what amounts to a hobby. For this contingent, acting, as I think Robin Williams once observed, is a career in which your job is finding a job, and the actual work is the vacation. The fortitude that goes into that hunt can be truly awe-inspiring, occasionally to the detriment of personal relationships when those committing untold hours to achieving their breakthrough tell a loved one who doesn't secretly want to play Hamlet or Juliet, "My job is important too." More than once, no doubt, a significant other has ignited an argument by replying, "I'm sorry, but what has your job paid for around here lately?" Not surprisingly, Hollywood's presentation of this dilemma skews toward the brighter side of attaining fame and fortune. In mainstream fare, at least, plucky heroes and heroines usually come to happy endings, from the welder by day/dancer by night in "Flashdance" to last year's "Glitter," a vehicle for Mariah Carey. If tragedy plays a part in these stories, it's generally of the "A Star Is Born" variety, with protagonists seduced and done in by the aftermath of success. In that respect, the most notable aspect of last year's cinematic mishmash "Mulholland Drive" is the film's willingness to subvert those stereotypes with a vision of the Hollywood dream-turned-nightmare, although director David Lynch's cavalier sense of story structure (translation: the film doesn't have one) has resulted in this point being lost on many who staggered out of the theater. Beyond such fictional works, the last few years have brought an entirely new wrinkle to the pursuit of celebrity in the form of so-called "reality television," providing enough success stories to keep dangling a very large carrot in front of people who never leave home without a resume and head shot tucked under one arm. Colleen Haskell, for example, parlayed her participation in the original "Survivor" into a co-starring role with Rob Schneider in last year's movie "The Animal,"

which seems like more of an ordeal than eating bug larvae. Few survivors of unscripted series have fared as well, but the thousands who line up at each open audition suggest that hope springs eternal. Moreover, a strain of this programming genre has played directly to those for whom gaining admission to the entertainment business is an objective. Home Box Office's "Project Greenlight," for example, has chronicled the travails of a fledgling screenwriter-director who earned the right to have his screenplay produced in exchange for allowing a documentary crew to capture the process. A whopping 7,300 scripts were submitted via the Internet before Pete Jones was chosen, although many who have viewed the series may question what exactly he has won over the long haul. Even closer to the off-the-bus fantasy were ABC's "Making the Band" and the WB network's "Popstars," both unscripted concepts devoted to the creation of made-for-TV pop acts (a new boy band and girl group, respectively) after trailing hopefuls through the auditions--a conceit that E! Entertainment Television took to its own logical extreme with the self-explanatory "Vegas Showgirls." **Although a fair amount has been written about the inside perspective provided by "Project Greenlight," a less celebrated but perhaps more telling look at an aspiring filmmaker played last year on the Independent Film Channel. In that production, the director lets a ocumentary crew tail him as he pursues his dream to make a movie until--after running out of money--the depressed protagonist takes his own life. Granted, "They Shoot Movies, Don't They? ... The Making of Mirage" was actually a work of fiction produced and directed by two actors, Tom Wilson and Frank Gallagher, but many of those who stumbled upon the low-budget, slyly documentary-style production came away convinced that what they had seen was real--including even a few**

entertainment industry pros who screened it. That reaction came as little surprise to Wilson, who maxed out his credit cards to finance the project. "You write what you know," he said last year, when IFC first televised "They Shoot Movies," leaving viewers to wonder about its authenticity. Hollywood and its surroundings, of course, will always provide a beacon to those who harbor the goal of stardom in one form or another (Canadian production hubs Vancouver and Toronto are equally legitimate destinations for actors these days, but that's another story), and no amount of discouragement will dampen their enthusiasm. Beyond the lure of riches, there is the simple hunger to perform that La Salle spoke of--a point exemplified by "A Chorus Line's" key number, "What I Did for Love," laying bare what impels many to chase rainbows with no pot of gold at their end. Then again, perhaps that's as it should be. As always, very few will make it. The rest can ultimately call themselves whatever it takes to remind or convince them that they are really a writer, really an actress, and really living just a few freeway exits from the "Hollywood" we still imagine in big block letters. Like the lady said, dream on.

* * *

Brian Lowry is a Times staff writer.

Post April 17th 2002 showing

Alllison Fine wrote:
Please send me a copy of They Shoot Movies, Don't They? Just want to say this was brilliant! I am a screenwriter and did not get that it was a "mockumentary" until the very end when his girlfriend was talking on camera and I noticed her makeup was professional, not the usual street makeup a person might wear or no makeup as is usually the case! Once I noticed the pro makeup job I had to piece back over the film and marvel at the amazing job you did. Congratulations. If I ever pick up a camera this is the sort of work I want to do. Hope you get more showings. If there is a way to get a video tape of the film please let me know.AVFine1303 E. University Blvd. Box 20673Tucson, AZ 85719
Being oneself is an acquired taste.

[redacted] wrote:
n IFC... if your doc was real, it was very entertaining, albeit sad. if that documentary is truly fake, then you have created the most realistic mockumentary I've ever seen--and that is hard to do. i absolutely love docs that are hard to determine

whether they're real or fake--i.e. andy kaufman's "I'm from Hollywood" (maybe i'm wrong, but I sensed that you paid homage to that film in "they shoot movies.").
i'm a maker of wacky documentaries, too, and would love to share my work with you; if you're interested pass along your mailing address.congrats on a damned good movie--riviting.
regards,
jensen rufe

Alan Meeker wrote:
I do not ever remember being so caught up so fast in a movie while channel surfing. I was immediately hooked. The ending gave me a shock and a loathsome feeling I have never had watching movies for 37 years. I stood up saying. This can't be real, this can't be real, no fucking way is this real. I was spooked guys. Finally, I searched the web and soon found the truth from reliable news sites and even an interview from one of the co-creators. I found the truth and am even more amazed. I've never before sent any communication, fanmail, letter etc. etc. regarding a movie. Doubt I ever will again. I can't imagine anyone outdoing this. Geeeez you guys have balls; big brass creative balls.
Alan Meeker
Fort Worth, Texas

A. Barba wrote:
If it wasn't for imdb I would have thought this doc was real. Thank you IMDB

[redacted] wrote:
e vain of "American Movie." I love how the movie is it's own analogy. It was very well written and the dry deadpan acting helps sell it. You guys are great. What other projects have you done? This was the best way to use DV, very creative. I hope to see you guys get a budget to do something on film. I don't like video and your use of it kept me interested enough to watch and enjoy!!!!
Ralis

I just finished watching the documentary style movie of Mr. Paulson's efforts to get his movie finished. I don't see how the Galager(sp?) film crew couldn't know that there was some sort of increased pressure on Mr. Paulson as his financial problems came to a head. I am deeply disturbed that Mr. Paulson took his own life. I am ashamed to have had a public view on such a private moment. I read some of the comments regarding this documentary and frankly after having seen in on IFC, I don't think I should have been able to see it. I don't know how to summarize my feelings except to say that this film disturbed me. This was not entertainment to me. I'm sorry for all of Mr. Paulson's friends and family that must deal with this on a long term basis. I'll say a prayer for Mr. Paulson and all of you.

[redacted]

To FOT,
Today, April 16, 2002 I was surfing through my satellite guide and was curious about the film "They Shoot Movies, Don't they?". I clicked on to the station and immediately recognized Tom Paulson from a part he had played in the LDS church's version of "The Prodical Son". It was for that reason alone that I stayed to watch. I must admit I was horrified at the ending of the documentary and to realise that someone lost their life. I have just been sick about it all day. It is very much exploiting the entire family's privacy. I ...can't seem to find the words. Just know that my heart aches for the family amd the loss of a human being.

[redacted]ge" been completed yet? I would like to support Tom by viewing it.

[redacted] wrote:
[redacted]k! How can you release a movie like that? People will believe it's true, just like i did at first! I suggest you don't have this movie shown any longer.

[redacted] wrote:
[redacted]? I thought it was brilliant!
Harvey Kivel

[redacted] wrote:

[redacted] wrote:
[redacted] your movie last night on IFC. I see a lot of people who left you messages on your website are calling this a "Mock"umentary. Was this movie a true documentary or was it scripted? I'm very interested in knowing. It's a great movie either way.
Thanks,
Mark

This series of correspondance took place post 4-18

Robert Landergren wrote:
I saw your film on IFC last night, and I was fascinated by it until I realized what it was. Let me put this as simply as possible - it's no great feat to hook an audience if you lie to them. It's like someone taking the subway to the finish line of a marathon - it will look and sound like a victory, but it won't be. You're obviously a talented filmmaker, and I hope someday you make a film that works within the contract implicit between an audience and a filmmaker. It's too bad you lacked the self confidence to say up front that this was a mock documentary, because as a story it would have worked on it's own terms. The reason your film elicited such a strong response is because you violated the trust that audiences have given to real documentary filmmakers, of which I am one. Some rules are meant to be broken, but this isn't one of them.
Robert Landergren

Frank Gallagher wrote:
Nobody's perfect

Tom Wilson wrote:
Frank
I don't have his e-mail. Maybe you can pass this on to him for me.
Tom

Mr. Landergren
Your tempered eloquence and simple points are truly appreciated. But let me put this as simple as possible. Santa Clause isn't real and the Easter Bunny was a cruel adult joke. I'm not quite sure when I realized these two facts but I do know that upon learning the truth of the matter I somehow weathered the disappointment. To this day I still feel it is ok to perpetuate these two myths for the enjoyment and entertainment of our youth.
We chose to not define our movie as a mock documentary. It was... is... and always has been a movie. Not once was anyone told otherwise. We chose the documentary style to tell our story and yes.... as you noted, it does work on it's own terms. Thank you for your input.
Also I would be interested in seeing one of your documentaries... I'm sure they are balanced, factual and free of any editorialization on your part.

Best of Luck
Tom Wilson

**xxxx

Demian Entrekin wrote:
How to say it? Here's one try: your film represents a rough-cut crystalline encapsulation of our post-modern world. Alienation. Reality. Unreality. Self-reflexivity. Desperation. A man sets out after his dream, to make a film about failure, that no one will support, and he becomes his own movie. Which story is the real story? He makes a film about a guy who swims against the tide, and in so doing, swims against the tide himself. Does the film change the experience because of it's intrusive eye? It's almost an absurd question. Does the camera show the truth? Who can say? I know Tom, though I never met him. I know that when you dare to dive into the system, any human system, and don't understand the awesome power it has, you run the risk of your life. Where else could it end? In Las Vegas, of course, where the blur between on-stage and off-stage is impossible to detect. I think it was Philip Roth who said that in America, it is very hard to create fiction, because reality is so hard to compete with. I admire your own fearless dive into the system and hope you know when you're in the current and when you're against it.
Demian Entrekin
Oakland, CA

Jeff Yoshimi wrote:
Kudos on your flick. I totally bought it. Completely. Unbelievable. Everybody in the entire cast was utterly convincing. The comparison with Blair Witch is an insult. Blaire Witch sucked. For the record, I didn't know it was a mockumentary and I give it an A+. I am MORE impressed having discovered the truth...

I saw your movie on IFC the other night. It was amazing.
What formats do you sell it in? Do you have it on DVD?
Tim Anderson

Dear Nobody,
I find it confusing when you say that your film is "based on a lie". Was your film all true? Did Tom really kill himself? The part about him actually winning in Vegas was glossed over rather quickly. And the parallel between "Mirage" and his actual life seemed too conveniently similar. If this was indeed perfect serendipity, you still left me wondering. Either way your film is very intriguing.
Thanks for your time and continued good luck,
Barry Dresner

From IMDB
Manos-6
New Jersey
Date: 31 March 2002
: Best Mockumentary of All Time

"Wow" was the only word I could think of after watching this movie. I had seen a DirectTV preview for a show called DV Theater, and was interested, as I like to do my own movies with friends, and hope to direct one day. The description intrigued me, so I sat down and watched it. I had no idea, going into it, what it was going to be like. So, onto the movie: Tom Paulson has just finished shooting his film, and now must put it through post-production. I don't want to ruin anything for anyone, so I'll just say... he gets put through a lot of you-know-what trying to get it done. I was so mesmerized by Tom and really wanted to see if he would succeed. The ending was amazing and powerful, and leaves the viewer dumbfounded at how the Hollywood system can affect someone. Of course, at the time, I thought it was a real documentary. It wasn't until I went onto the film's site that I found out that wasn't so. I was amazed that the director was able to pull off such a convincing story, and Tom's performance was incredible. As soon as you can, get to the film's web site, and get a copy of this movie. You will not be disappointed, especially if you hope to be in the film business one day.

IMDb user comments for
They Shoot Movies, Don't They? (2000)
Page 4 of 9
Comments index for They Shoot Movies, Don't They? (2000)
thebeckerman
Jamaica, NY
Date: 25 April 2002
Summary: A very realistic-appearing documentary about the degrading chase for money involved in independent film making.
It was pretty gripping, and I wasn't sure when it was done if it was a documentary or a mockumentary. I actually thought it was probably for real. Throughout I kept thinking, what is this madness that makes a person who has no particular vision and no particular thing to say so certain that it is important that his film get done, while most of us, with more to say than "Paulson", never get to get films done? Meanwhile, of course, the joke was on me, but very well done. So I guess they really did have something to say.

July 2002

Carl Ayala wrote:

Much like your documentary. I suppose that the documentarians could have have hoped for a happy ending, but when a man who has proclaimed that he is desperate and when everyone has turned him down, you should have realized that it was taking a turn for the worst and gotten out. The mans life ended in front of your camera. What the hell were you thinking? I know that his death will haunt you forever, no matter what you say. The man went to Vegas to help finance his movie. Were you really that blind or stupid? I think the answer is that you should be sued and jailed for aiding in a suicide. There is nothing to be gained from this documentary and it is being distributed by the worst source for independent media available. I canceled my subscription to IFC after viewing your documentary. Everyone knows that Sundance is better and hence they have chosen not to air it. I suppose that IFC is so desperate they will now take any piece of garbage to get ratings. Whereas you have succeeded in being disturbing, you have also succeeded in producing more trash for people to hang themselves up on. You have exploited and destroyed the life of a man, and I hope you get what you want so you will always be reminded where you got it. I'm certainly glad that there are people like you so others can be reminded what they should avoid in their lives. Stop airing your your documentary, it's nothing more than a glorified dragged out snuff film.
Pleasant dreams gentlemen, I hope that you receive many more emails like this so that you'll get the hint.
Carl Ayala

carol
Northern California
Date: 2 July 2002
Summary: So good, I was ready to send flowers
to Adele.
Truly worth the time to watch (experience). This film provided the equivalent of "not able to put it down" for a book. By the end, I found my palms clenched, I was leaning forward on my chair, ready to write a check myself, and damn thankful I do not work in Hollywood-but I am glad these folks do. Great performances throughout, great character development, truly convincing.
Bravo Tom, Frank et al.

[redacted] wrote:
WAS HOOKED.BUT A FILM DIRECTOR ISN'T SURE HOW TO GET THE SOUND WORKING ON A CAMERA? YOU ALMOST HAD ME.VERY ENJOYABLE THOUGH.

GLENN L.HAND

[redacted] wrote:
r the first time and was not fooled. Guess I had seen Dadetown. The question is why fake documentary? I still prefer The Big Picture for a good laugh at Hollywood.
Don

[redacted] wrote:
tching your movie on IFC. I was so shocked because I thought it was real. I think it's a mockumentary but I'm not sure. Is it real or not?

Jensen Rufe wrote:
Just wanted to drop a line and say that I stumbled across your documentary late one evening on IFC and absolutely loved it. Just loved it. My question for you is: Where are you located, what is your next project, and would you be willing to look at my resume and/or a portfolio of my own documentaries?
Regards and congratulations,
Jensen Rufe

[redacted] wrote:

If so, the juxtaposition at the end of the credits is uncanny:
"www.theyshootmovies.com"
Followed by..."In loving memory..."
Exploitative beyond measure. Did you know?

Roy Kissin wrote:

As an ex-indie filmmaker who lived Tom's life but with a different ending, I'd like to order a copy.
TELL ME HOW.
Roy Kissin
PS: Nice job… I almost bought it. In fact, I did buy it until about 5 minutes after it ended. Then I went, "Hey, wait a second…"

[redacted] wrote:
that was the reacation you wanted or if you just wanted a reaction, it matters not. i loved film til i saw yours. it enlightens nothing, no matter what francis ford may have said. worse, i believe you knew/know this, thus i end as i began you fucking scumbag. eagerly awaiting your reply, you balless wonder,
jefferson cabell mcnair

[redacted] wrote:
s it a TRUE STORY. At the end it was legit, that was actual footage of Tom getting ready to shoot himself? I thought it was, but the again I still can't believe it. He had the money, why off yourself? Because the one guy said the movie was no good. Anyway, I just wanted to know if it was real.

Raleigh Macklin wrote:
Great film. It rang so true, I put it in my list of the top 100 films of all time. I find only a couple of flaws in the believability: 1 - the $40,000 investor was too human2 - in the screening room, not one second of Mirage was shown Then again, is this really the honest documentary it appears to be? I really don't know, but I'm going to try to find out. I wish I had waited for the standard disclaimer at the end of the credits! I'll catch it next time. You could tell me... Is this a Blair Witch Project sort of thing? Is this available on DVD? How do I order?

steven wrote:
Hi Frank,I am a bit confused by your documentary They Shoot Movies, Don't They: The Making of Mirage.Did the maker of the film Mirage, kill him self? It seems like you left off when the story begins. The aftermath of his death, his wife, his car, his 50K?? What happened...or was it all some hoax?Give me the real deal!Steven Todorovich
Society of Politics

President
Poli/Sci/Sr.

steven wrote:
HOLY SHIT DUDE!!!!!! It WAS A HOAX!!!!! I LOVE IT!!!!!! YOU GUYS ROCK!!!!!! I SAY PUSH THE ENVELOPE TO THE LIMIT....CRASH THIS FACADE OF HOLLYWOOD/TV/FILM...BRING THE WHOLE DAMN SYSTEM DOWN!! I LOOK FORWARD TO MORE OF YOUR STUFF... IF YOU EVER WANT TO MAKE A POLITICAL HOAX STORY, PLEASE CONTACT ME...IM A GRADUATE STUDENT MAJORING IN POLITICAL SCIENCE...I'M ALMOST DONE...AND MY SPECIALTY IS INT'L POLITICS AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHIES. YOU GUYS ROCK!!!Steven Todorovich
Society of Politics
President
Poli/Sci/Sr.

David Salinas wrote:

After watching the movie last night, I went to bed chilled to the bone. I was depressed and angry with the cold blooded Documentary producers. Now knowing the depressing ending, I watched it again this morning and was even more saddened and mad by this emotionally wrenching 'documentary'. A visit to the website has convinced me that I was simply 'taken' to a real life experience by very clever and innovative movie makers. I would like a copy of this movie in both videocassette and DVD movie to pass on to friends . WOW, this was the biggest emotional experience from a movie I've ever had!
David Salinas

Carol Moore in DC wrote:

i thought it was real....the begging for money was embarrassing i had to leave the room...and killing self after winning $50000 WHAT DOES IT MEAN....and then i had to search all over the internet to find out it really was a movie...WHAT A HOOT...

carol the playwright musical comedy who did grassroots politics the whole time she lived in LA and might have been a big screen writer if when the big star called about a treatment I sent she'd answered her only phone contact "HELLO" instead of "LIbertarian Party Office." :-)
"Libertarians!?!? Ugh, no, no, no...."
http://www.carolmoore.net

Larry Cuocci wrote:

As a screenwriter, novelist, memoirist, photographer, and as a human being I was appalled at the ending to your film. The director, Frank-- or anyone in his crew -- should've made an effort at an intervention to try to save Tom from an obvious approaching suicide attempt. That your movie was a mockumentary (never acknowledged on the screen) does not excuse you from the responsiblity of showing all filmmakers as callous low-life scum unable to exercise a bare minimum of humanity. John Irving in writing about the film industry refers to characters he'd met (in search of legitimate producers) reminding him of the styrofoam cups and other garbage that litter construction sights. After viewing your movie I am forced to the conclusion that Indie filmmakers are destined for the landfills as well. Shame on you.

savage craig wrote:
Never before have I felt compelled to write a letter like this before,but I've gotta tell you guys,you're frickin' geniuses!I was so taken in by the whole thing,I couldn't get to sleep until I did further research about the project/Tom.I'm a cop,so the back story was really digging at me and damn if you didn't cover all the bases!I went to the website,the "Mothers"site and even to IMDB,it took me awhile to find the truth,but you got me!You definitely have put together a masterpiece and I truly have nothing but the utmost respect for what you've accomplished here.Although I spent most of the morning praying for the poor boys'soul,I can honestly say I will recommend this movie to EVERYONE,(which I have all day),and I'll let them figure it out.You've instilled in me,a new desire to complete my own unfinished projects and although I truly believe that I'll never be able to reach the artistic heights that you have,it will be something that I will strive for.You are the "Goal Post"!Thank you!!!!!Craig Savage

Ryan Speck wrote:

Well, truthfully, you had me fooled... Very well done, no doubt about it. It's really something of a masterpiece and, movie or no, it's still fucking moving and mildly eerie. And that backlighting of Tom in the suicide scene is fantastic... When's the next movie? And who's behind hollywood-buffallo.com? Strange.
Ryan Speck

Elmer Spratling wrote:
Hello,
First and foremost, was this "documentary" fact or fiction. If it was fact, then it was a really sad situation. If it was fiction, then it was a really well acted movie. The performances, if they were in fact performances, were far better than the whole "Blair Witch" thing. A lot of those were stiff and unconvincing. I was totally drawn in by the these people and the events. Whether it was merely a well conceived "mockumentary" or was in fact a inside look at an actual persons rollercoaster ride from ultimate promise to complete despair to last exit, I was riveted by it. I still would really like to know if these event actually took place and if Tom Paulson really exsisted.
Elmer Spratling

Dennis Decker wrote:
Did Paul really kill himself or is this a mocumentary. I watched the movie this past SAT on IFC twice and I'm still not sure. I've read that he did and I've read that he didn't. Could you please tell me? Denny

Lance Baxman wrote:
Is this going to air on IFC again? I saw it this weekend. Need to see again. This was haunting, and it pissed me off cuz I found out it was not real. Excellent job.
Lancer

----- Original Message -----
Fro
To: [redacted]: Saturday, July 27, 2002 7:09 PM
To

I am starting off in the film industry and saw the program scheduled on IFC and thought it would be good for me to watch (not knowing about Tom's demise). I am sick to my stomach now. I couldn't believe what I was watching. Up until Tom went to Vegas, I was relating to him. I could see what was going on in his head and I was expecting him to get a grip after losing all his money. But just the opposite happened. Undeniably, the movie is getting reactions. I believe some things are a taboo and this is definitely one of them. Two things you did bother me and that is why I am writing this email. One, when

you were interviewing his wife, she said something that was a big red flag for you to stop the documentary. She said that Tom wouldn't talk anymore unless the camera was rolling. At that point, you became a factor in his suicide. You are partly responsible for what happened. At that point, you committed to your movie and Tom (subconsciously) committed to you. He felt like his real failure would be not completing the documentary the way most people would have expected it to end and therefore he couldn't back out now. Everyone would be watching. You should have backed out. The point of a documentary is to give the public a look a something real without interfering with what is going on. You interfered and it cost a life. This is not a documentary. This is a TLC version of "Faces of Death". The second thing you did wrong was make the documentary after all. Their is nothing to learn from this except that you shouldn't have made the movie. Nobody should ever make anything like this for any reason. This is not art or self expression, nor inspirational. It is only controversial, which doesn't make is right. Controversy is "free advertising" and you have taken advantage of that freedom, willingly. You could have been a respected filmmaker. I respected your work for the first hour or so. You can bring to the screen someone's emotional state and help the audience see what you see. It's a shame that there isn't a moral bone in your body. My friends don't understand why I won't go to strip clubs with them. My wife says she probably wouldn't mind because it's "a guy thing". I believe her, but the reason I don't go is the same reason you shouldn't have produced this film. Respect. Of course I would love seeing naked women with some friends, but I know deep down inside my wife's soul, she would feel insulted and hurt, even though she won't admit it. I won't do that to her. I chose to forgo my pleasure for her pain. You should've done the same. I hope for some strange reason this is all a joke. If it is not, may God help you. I don't know how you can sleep at night... and I hope you don't. You don't deserve it.
Forrest Hicks

Forrest Hicks wrote:
If anybody is reading these messages, I must say that this is the most brilliant thing I have ever witnessed in my life. Absolutely believable. You guys are geniuses. You can tell from my previous message that I was deeply disturbed by this film because I thought it was real. You deserve and Oscar for that. I can't believe the actors abilities to make me believe them. You say this is Hollywood. I say this is what Hollywood should try to be. Make me believe in something. I am setting up my friends to see this like I did. I am emailing them links to the two websites that are up promoting the film and then the one with his friends fighting for his dignity. All I can say is it is a ride. 4 hours ago when I got done watching it on IFC, I was sick to my stomach and now I am elated to find out Tom isn't dead or even exist and that I had been had in the biggest way. I am totally inspired and amazed now. I think I'll even tape it for my wife and tell her how much I hated it after what happens to Tom and so on. What next? You didn't fake the Faces of Death did you? Forrest

[redacted] wrote:

I know., I know, you are probably saying ....just another dope who wants a self doc someone who thinks he has something important. but i really am special. so therefore a doc would be a great thing. so cmon give me a shot what do you say when can we start?

[redacted] wrote:
ld like to do a doc. i have a great story to tell going back to my days in prep school (friendly with a major directors son) and leading up till the present. i have a colorful and interesting life, and have met and known all types of people, from regular to very powerful.

steven wrote:
Hello Again Frank, Dude, I'm watching your docufilm for the second time on IFC!! I want to give MEGA KUDOS the cast!! The actors are ALL OSCAR CALIBER!!! The last scene with Ari and Tom in Ari's office is KILLER!! This has to become part of my DVD collection...is it available on DVD? Dude...this move not only indicts the film industry/media...it indicts our entire value system...Its funny...I get mad every time I see it...I get mad at the world for accepting the crap that the "powers that be" dish out! Where is the outrage!!?? Where is the damn revolution!!?? Have you won any awards for this...has the cast won any awards? Ah fuck the awards...you dont need em...you know you ROCKED!! You Rocked em all!! I'm sorry...I don't mean to get obsessive about it all..but your docufilm has sparked something in me...something that says the injustice going on in the world must be curbed...and our value system must focus away from money and greed(Enron, Worldcom, etc) and towards humanity! FUCK!!! I need to go for a walk! Take care...keep pushing the envelope! Steven Todorovich
Society of Politics
President
Poli/Sci/Sr.

[redacted] wrote:
se clue me into Mirage, and the Documentry a little. I am a novice. And there are connections between the movie and the Doc., that i know nothing about
Thanks
CK

todd squad wrote:
I saw your film on IFC and was touched/scared/moved/changed by it. I recently quit a great job at the largest media company in the world in order to make my own films. People had a similar reaction to me as with Tom "What are you thinking?". I was hoping that the ending would be happy and serve as a justification for me. When I saw that he

killed himself, I had to ask, am I on this path? Have I thrown away everything I had in order to destroy myself? For me the answer is so far no. I thank you for giving me the impetus to ask myself the question. I am going to be teaching film at a local university and I would like to show your film to my class as an example of super documentary as well as to inform them about the truth of the Hollywood system. Being a teacher funds are limited. I wanted to ask if you could donate a copy of your film for my class and I wanted to ask if you have any more footage of the very telling insights granted by talking to the Hollywood Insiders.
Thank you
Todd Simpson
Professor
Struggling Film Maker

todd squad wrote:
Amazing, again im having that shock reaction. It was all fake? Brilliant! Im stunned. I had no indication watching it that it was fake. It felt so real, so visceral. The acting was out of this world. I had no idea these people were actors. Wow. Are you pulling my leg here? I even saw a web site devoted to keeping your film from being released. http://www.hollywood-buffalo.com Is this site just a promotional tool? Really? Fake? Im astounded. But yes, I now more than ever would like to show the film in class. There is no way the students will be able to tell it is fake unless I tell them. I will of course tell them, but only after they have had time to react to is a documentary. Brilliant work. What let you to this idea? What a concept. The studio writer and the execs were also mind blowingly real. Were these real people or actors as well? The tone is so solid throughout the picture. That must have been tough to maintain. Again Wow. I cant wait to see your next picture.
Well done.

[redacted]

From IFC Rant
Lady Brett
07/31/2002

My God...I saw the movie this weekend. I thought it was a "mockumentary"but there's a website out there that supposedly was created to protestthe film. According to http://www.hollywood-buffalo.com, "They ShootMovies" was based on ACTUAL events (real suicide). If you check outwww.hollywood-buffalo.com/Shirleysplea.htm, Paulson's "mother" (and Iuse quotes, because this could just be one hell of a publicity stunt)pleads with Grammercy not to distrubute the film. My fiancee and I were shocked when the end credits for the film ran like a real documentary; usually in "mockumentaries" the credits roll like fictional films, with cast, crew, etc. I'm confused. Could someone please tell me

what the hell is going on? If the Tom Paulson in this film was a real person who really committed suicide I would like to know.

IFC Spotlights "The Biz" Sept 2002

Airing: Various Dates/Times

Article by: Ron Foley MacDonald

November's IFC theme is films about films. The making of films. The watching of films. And practically everything in between. In one fabulous week, six major features will reveal all the magic, heartbreak and glory of the film business: the backroom deals, the endless illusions, the wild ambitions and the ultimate triumph of the seventh art of the cinema.

Anchored by two undeniable classics by world-class directors, November 18 to November 25 will see these films in prime-time evening slots. Beginning with Giuseppe Tornatore's Oscar-Winning sentimental favourite Cinema Paradiso and ending with Robert Altman's corrosively funny landmark The Player, the six films use the watching and the making of films as metaphoric storylines for the state of our modern world. Ranging from the inertia, betrayal and backbiting of the American Hollywood Studio system (The Player), to the energy, hopes and desperation of the English-Speaking Indie Filmmaking circuit (The Heck With Hollywood, They Shoot Movies, Don't They?), to the hardscrabble struggle of Iran's Contemporary Cinema (Close-Up) to the lushness of European Movie traditions (Lisbon Story and Cinema Paradiso), this month's offerings reveal the richness of today's world cinema culture.

While Altman's caustic expose The Player reveals a darker side of the realities of contemporary filmmaking with its vicious portrayal of a producer (played with poisonous precision and poise by Tim Robbins) who gets in over his head responding to a pesky scriptwriter, most of the other films in the series take a more hopeful tone. Cinema

Paradiso looks fondly back on a rural Italian film circuit that profoundly shaped the vision of a future filmmaker. Lisbon Story, by legendary German director Wim Wenders (The Buena Vista Social Club, The American Friend, Wings of Desire), uses the narrative device of a search for a missing director to examine one of Europe's most historic and graceful cities.

Acclaimed Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami uses his film Close-Up to tell the true tale of an Iranian con-man who, claiming to be a filmmaker, fooled a whole town into showing up for some chaotic auditions, skillfully examines how movies provide some of the necessary illusions everyday people need just to get by. They Shoot Movies, Don't They and The Heck With Hollywood show how the dream of actually making a film can alternate between a dark nightmare and unrestrained ecstacy as projects inch forward and backward through the tortures of development and financing. And these six films are just the beginning of November's wealth of cinema-about-cinema offerings. Included through the month are screenings of films on the pioneering Soviet filmmaker and theorist Eisenstein (His Master's House)and Hollywood legend William Wellman (Wild Bill: Hollywood Maverick). The edgier aspects of cinema are explored in portraits of famous

avant-garde film artists such as Andy Warhol (Chuck Workman's Andy Warhol: Superstar) and Man Ray (Man Ray: Prophet of the Avant-Garde). Other styles and approaches to the world of the movies are revealed in Peter Wintonick's award-winning examination of documentary and reality (Cinema Verite: Defining the Moment) and in Adam Simon's feature The American Nightmare which looks at New World horror film directors such as Cronenberg, Romero, Craven and Carpenter.

There's even some serious Canadian stories in the series. Manic Manitoba director Guy Maddin (Archangel, Tales of Gimli Hospital) gets the full 'making-of' treatment during the production of his film Twilight of the Ice Nymphs in Waiting For Twilight. And the career of pioneer feminist filmmaker and founder of the National Film Board's famous Studio D, Kathleen Shannon, is also featured in a self-titled documentary by award-winning Newfoundland director Gerry Rogers. From Asia to Europe to North America, movies about movies are a growing cinema phenomenon. For those with a passion for movies, it's a rare chance to look at the inside workings of a mysterious and somethimes impenetrable industry. For the workers in the trenches who are already involved in various forms of the film, television or entertainment industries, movies about movies provide the same effect as a visit to a house of mirrors where each reflection never quite shows reality as we know it. Whether its a flattering, distorted or perplexing picture, movies about movies almost always reveal the magic we associate with the cinema.

Subject: Documentary ???
Date: ST
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
I sa ntary it is an intimate and controversial masterpiece. Your subject touched my heart in a profound manner I can never forget him. It really causes the industry to examine itself, and the viewer to question to question what he or she is being mind fed. As a documentary it is absolutely the best acting and casting I have ever seen. The only scene which caused me to think of acting was the scene when Tom's girlfriend spoke about the intrusion and dysfunction the camera brought into her life. I will definitely purchase a copy of your film and I will ask my husband to recommend it to his students at NYU. Which one is it documentary or mocumentary?
Wenmarita Cheltenham

Fri, 21 Feb 2003

Subject: To Mr. Gallagher
Date: Fri, 21 Feb 2003
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
I don , but I'd sure like it if Mr. Gallagher somehow read this e-mail. I just saw They Shoot Movies on IFC, and so I went on to the website

after. The page of viewers comments is really interesting. The movie itself never turned out to be what it was, however loosely, "intended to be," because the film's main guy self-distructs, and that wasn't part of the plan. Yet, so many perceive it as being a "piece of work." Indeed, by it's existence, it is a work of art. A piece of work. Sure. But some suggest Mr. Gallagher contributed to Mr. Paulsen's demise. Yeah, ok. I agree with that, too. Sure.
But look at it this way. If when a scientist, in simply observing an atom, literally effects the behavior of the atom, then he is guilty only of being a human being trying to study and observe something. To perceive. Mr. Gallagher set out to make a "piece of work," and came out of it as much an observer as any one who has seen the film.
To release it was to lay out a staggering piece on Americana. He wanted to track the beginnings of a golden boy's first romp into what many had thought would be a major-league Hollywood career, and he wound up showing us the ugly Rockwell painting in the attic that nobody talks about. He couldn't choose for it to wind up like that.
Yup, it's on T.V., and it has been sent there by a distributor. So it's a "piece of work." Lauded, criticized, placed on the resume, whatever. And it's Gallagher's thing.
Yet it cannot be ignored that when this thing's seen, the guy gets both bashed and glorified, though all that really happened was that he made a movie that nobody thought would end up the way it did. What a limbo.
It's honestly just a thing to witness. To observe. Ya know, to perceive.

Dave Bachman
Brooklyn, NY

Subject: Paul docu.
Date:
Thu, 20 Feb 2003 02:43:08 -0800 (PST)
From:
Gre [redacted]>
To: [redacted]
Wha
I became suspicious because of a lot of the acting. It is hard to pinpoint, but there was something that just seemed fake about almost all of the acting. It was well done, but of a lower caliber than that found in other movies. The people had to act like they were super real, but in trying to do this they kind of exposed the whole thing. The way they came across is the way that I am sure I come across when I am trying to lie to someone&#65533; just convincing enough to be believed, but only for a while. Some of the logic of the movie didn't really match up all that well&#65533; the camera crew supposedly was following the main character all the time, which was in accordance to the contract he signed. So why was there a separate interview with his girlfriend? Shouldn't they have been with Paul instead of her? One of the other main things, perhaps the most major thing of all to me, was the producer character. I thought he was simply

unbelievable. First off, I am uninclined to believe that a guy with his personality would even agree to an interview to begin with. His time is money, and what the fuck does he care about some guys making a documentary? Then there was the fact that he had a freshly-lit cigarette /every/ time they cut to him talking. It was like "So, how do you feel about this guy Paul?" "Well, I'll answer that, but let me light a cigarette." (Cigarette lit). "Okay, this is how I feel about him." "Well, how do you feel about the movie industry?" "That cigarette was no good" (Puts out cigarette). "I'll answer that, but let me light another cigarette." (Lights new cigarette). Another give-away point was the investor's argument with Paul toward the end. I simply do not buy the idea that this businessman would allow
Paul to bring a camera crew into a serious meeting. I would like to see this happen in real life, no matter what the circumstances. It is not professional, and businessmen would not go for it. Then there was there very unrealistic argument in which Paul acts incredibly peculiar and keeps yelling at the guy who he should be very ingratiating with. Another main bit that gave it away to me was the psychology involved in the characters&#65533; the people in this movie where just slightly unrealistic in their thoughts and motivations. If you want something to work you try and try again. It is incredibly rare that you succeed on your first attempt. Someone like Paul would have to understand that, unless he somehow miraculously /never/ came in second once in his life. His baseball achievements didn't automatically happen because he was born of sacred Almighty Baseball-Master blood; he had to work to get as good as he was. He had to practice. He had to come in second or third, and keep at it until he was good. This is something that just about everyone,
no matter how shallow, learns when they are young. His character in the movie seems to have little in common with who he was when he was younger&#65533; like he just woke up one day with this crazy dream and coincidentally forgot every life experience he had lived through before, crazily thinking that he would be the ultimate film maker just, just... just /because/. There were a lot of little things that tipped me off. I could go more into it, but it really doesn't matter because you all know these things, anyway. Plus, what do you care if I know, anyway? Are you going to mail me an official medal for being clever? There is no point in me writing this, I guess I am just excited because I see something that not everyone seems to. Good job, however. I happened to run across this show while channel-flipping and it held my attention all the way to the end. I was as entranced with what was going on as I was with the the fabulously 80's hair styles and clothing. Tell me, how is it that the 80's survived so long into the late 90's where you filmed this? I was amazed when I saw when this film was made. I was sentient back in 1997, and I have absolutely no recollection of those haircuts and clothing being around, except on certain people I occasionally saw at diners and such. Good job, anyway. Let me know when my special medal of honor is in the mail.
Best,
Gregory Scott

???

certainly hope you are happy with yourselves. After watching "They Shoot Movies" I was intrigued to say the least by the short life of Tom Paulson. But of course curiosity got the best of me. I needed to find out more. This being the information age all I had to do is a few strokes on the keyboard to find the reel truth. After reading some of the clippings posted on your site about Tom Paulson it made sense that someone that talented with nowhere to go but to the top would kill themselves. As is the case with many young gifted people. However I still felt something was missing. More research (after about 7 minutes) and I found what I was looking for. I would like to congratulate Mr. Wilson as well as Mr. Gallagher for a very thought provoking film and the ability to stir up so much shit. I couldn't believe how many viewers responded when the film was first shown. Also the continuation of the cover-up is very amusing IE Hollywood Buffalo. How long do you plan to continue this charade? Do you plan to tell all the people who believe Tom Paulson really existed. What can we expect from you in the future. Do you have any thing in the works at this time. Again I just want to say job well done. You have fooled allot of people but then again if you would have been upfront about the fictionality of the film I don't think it would have ever been aired. Best regards !!!!

Subject: Wow!
Date: Thu, 20 Feb 2003 01:49:11
From: "Ta [redacted]>
Reply-To: [redacted]
Org
To: [redacted]
Dea ,
Wow!
I just finished watching "They Shoot Movies, Don't They?" on IFC. It was incredible. I sat and read the credits very closely searching for the name of an actor to prove that Tom Paulson was just a figment of someone's imagination. The credits thanked the town of Massena, NY. My hometown. This intrigued me further, so I immediately logged onto the internet to check out the story. I was so relieved to see I had been sucked in by your story.
The performances were great. I bought it hook, line, and sinker. I absolutely loved it, and I'll be watching it again tomorrow at noon.
Thank you again for a fantastic movie.
Tammy Alexander

Subject: your sick
Date: Wed, 19 Feb 20
From: [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
Your inutes back i spent watching this film on IFC. The only clue i had that this was a fake is when the camera guy left his equipment in the hotel room in NV. Yea-right your going to let a 40,000 camera in a hotel room when it takes

only 2 seconds to take it with you. Gee i wonder if your next film will be any good. This movie was a one-trick-poney.

Subject: Thank you
Date :45 EST
rom:
To:
Tha
and good job.
~Mitchell~
Damn good job. Congrats.

Subject: Just saw the movie.....
Date: :14:54 EST
Fro
To:
..... very compelling. I unfortunately missed the first 15 minutes, but I hope to catch it again at a later date.
I felt so bad towards the end because I unfortunately saw a glimpse of his downfall coming after he sold his baseball cards. When he was driving to Las Vegas, I kept thinking, "No, not Vegas." However, I was totally surprised when he did take his life. I for sure thought that had gambled the money away and that was the reason for what he did. But then, at the end when it was revealed he had $50,000, I thought "Why? Why do such a senseless thing when you have the means to finish your project?"
I'm sure that it was a very painful experience editing this project due to your closeness with the subject. I thought for sure that it was going to truly happen; that Tom would get the funds and finish his movie.
I am glad this documentary was made. Even though it ended badly, it gives me renewed spirit to carry on with my project. I know it has been 6-7 years since he took his life, but I send my condolences and prayers to his wife.
James Foard

Sent ot hollywood-buffalo.com
Folks: Below is a reprint of an email I sent the so-called producers of "They Shoot Film..."
I completely agree that its explotation.
Thanks
john j bruno (jb)
Line producer, New York City
Sirs:
Ive worked in independent film for almost 20 years. A few years back, I co-wrote and produced a film with two longtime friends. They sunk about $200,000 each into it and we went over budget - unavoidable, as Ive been a

line producer for years, and the things that came were unavoidable.
Anyway, I kicked in about $20,000 at the end, and friends and family of the director kicked in money.
The movie, as my partner shot it, had flaws. There was a basic inability to connect with the lead - partially because the director shied away from the love story that was important to understanding who he was. Forget that. The point is, this very rational, very intelligent, very knowledgeable guy - my partner - would not hear from me, my DP or anyone else close to him - all in the business - what was wrong with the film.
Not only that, but he insisted on borrowing more money to reshoot not the scenes that were a real problem, but something he wanted changed.
I saw so much of him in Tom. As a line producer who has worked closely with a lot of indie filmmakers,Tom was way too real.
I have to say, all the doc "non-intervention" stuff aside, someone should have seen where this was going. I did - I said somewhere near the end "the only thing left for this guy is to kill himself." Im very sorry I was right. Someone should have directed this guy to a therapist.
The real problem I have is its a relatively sophmoric documentary. The writing and editing at the end - after he's dead - is clumsy at best, and amateurish at worst. There isnt a film student who couldnt have done just as well. IF the guy doesnt kill himself at the end, I seriously doubt you get a sale. So, and this is mean, but so be it - you lucked out at Tom's expense. And let me tell you - a little "dedicated to" at the end doesnt make it right. I certainly hope that his girlfriend is seeing some of the profits of your film.
In case you're curious, the film says nothing about art. As I said, I have been there before, and its about mental illness, pure and simple.
John Bruno
NYC

Great movie guys – is it real or fake?
Dan Kaplow
Head of Production

[redacted] Phone
[redacted]

Is the film real?
Date: [redacted] :11:55 EST
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]

I watched your film They shoot movies, don't they and I have to say that it was an excellent piece. I enjoyed that movie so much, however, I, like others, wonder if this is a true documentary of events that led someone to take their life, or is it just a great film. Please let me know, thanks,
Patrick Love
Las Vegas, NV

Subject:
Mockumentary?
Date: Fri, 21 Feb 2003
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
I rec [redacted] s, Don't They? I enjoyed it, and was pissed off at the same time. Pissed at Tom Paulson, mind you - Not Frank Gallagher as I see many of the comments on the website for the film portray. I found the site through comments made about the film on the IMDB, and it is there I was shocked again. It wasn't real. Well, "not real" in the sense of it being a documentary. However, as I look through the site for the film, I have failed to find the closer I need to find out if indeed the film was a "real" documentary or fabricated as a mockumentary. I would appreciate any information you could give to me, or where I could find more information about this facinating film.
Steven C. Smith

Subject: Tom-ifc
Date: Sun, 23 Fe
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
God
David Perrin
NYC

Subject: viewers comment
Date: [redacted]51:22 -0500 (EST)
Fro [redacted] a Phillips)
To: [redacted]
hell [redacted] ents to say, i really enjoyed, the movie or the efforts of Tom Paulson to engage himself in striving to create films. I am beginning to wonder tho the ending was expremely sad, if just being in a for real settting, dealing with impromptu responses to real life situations isnt the way sometimes movies should go. I have to say, i really felt I was visiting with family, friends, and the responses, reactions were real. I fetlt I was right there. I am going to Thank You for filming life, as it really is with people, places and things in the real world, Thank You again.

Subject: ah, the allure of snuff films...
Date: 32:55 -0800 (PST)
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
... b c brains on the wall scene? i really need having that next layer of skin removed to reveal our despicable nature as human beings. how about something on organ harvesting next?

Subject: Startling..
Date: 9:45:53 EST
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
..to f after watching it was, 'I would not want to be the filmakers of this documentary'. That must some serious, heavy guilt on these guys. While a very sobering and riveting piece of filmaking..the fact that is was real (I think) and it was somebody's real life unraveling before the viewer's very eyes, the viewer has nothing to do with it--however, the film makers of this film do. I feel bad for Tom, but he obviously had deeper issues than just a feeling of failure about making a film. I feel sorry for him. As irrational and cold as Hollywood is, and as guilty as the documentary makers must be feeling, Hollywood and the filmaker's did not take this man's life--he did.
p.s. I still have suspicions. Did Tom really take his life here? Can you show me some sort of proof? Hollywood loves to play tricks on people.
T. Houliter

Subject: Ohhh I get it now..
Date: 0:06:41 EST
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
a ta Jane Fonda, "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?" Nice gag..the joke on us I guess. That's cold.
T. Hourigan
Kansas City

Subject: The Film
Date: Mon, 24 Feb
Fro [redacted]>
To: [redacted]
I re on't They. After the first viewing, I had no clue that it was a mockumentary. Yet I'm kind of glad that was the case because I now have two different reactions to the film: one before and one after knowing it was not a true story. Either way, I have nothing but positive comments for the film. One thing I thought was completely ironic about the film, was that many people who thought it was true were pissed off, while those who knew praised it. On the other hand, the distributors who knew it was fake wouldn't back it, while the distributors who thought it was real were

willing to back it. It really makes you wonder about the difference in opinion among the film distributors and the film audience. The film also touches on this topic as well.

To: <[redacted]>
To
I just recently saw the documentary “they shoot movies”. As a budding documentary filmmaker, I was extremely engrossed not only in the storyline, but in the direction of the film itself. However, after seeing the ending, I was shocked that the director chose to release this film. My condolences to the family of Tom and hope that some legal action can come from this.
Goood luck
-manny

Subject: Re: ah, the allure of snuff films...
Date: [redacted]:20:34 -0800 (PST)
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
than [redacted] ting 'movie'. rage on. a new fan..
mike lang

Subject: Re: Just saw the movie.....
Date: [redacted]:28:27 EST
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
I ha [redacted] great work. Despite it being fiction, I have to tell you when I initially wrote the email right after seeing the movie, I truly did think it was a real story. I missed the first 15 minutes, so if there was any kind of disclaimer at the very beginning, I didn't see it.
I don't feel stupid at all for thinking it was a "real" documentary. In fact, it's because of this that I feel a little in awe of you. I don't know if I would have felt the same way if I had known the truth, but to be honest, I'm glad I didn't know at the time. I definitely found the story much more believable and compelling than "Blair Witch" and I can see that film giving you inspiration to do this work.
It wasn't until I read emails you had posted from some other viewers that I began to have doubts about the story being factual. I just thought, "Well, I'll be damned," with a smile on my face. My other thought was "God, they must think I'm a moron to fall for this." I'm sure there have been many others like myself that thought the same thing after seeing "Shoot", but I'll bet their reaction to the truth was a lot more.....abusive than mine.
Anyway, I'm in the very early pre-production stages on my own documentary, as well. And yes, it is a real documentary. Nobody dies & nobody begs for money (except me, but I'm not on camera doing that). It is my first project ever, and I'm very excited about

it, esp. since I've been working in television promotions/production for about the last 10 years. I finally got tired of hearing people like Tarantino, Robert Rodriegez and Kevin Smith say, "If you're going to make a movie, just do it." So far, the only hold up has been getting permission from the corporation who's product would be featured in it. If you want to know more, I'd be more than happy to pass it onto you. Maybe you could provide me with some information I don't know about. I'm also planning on attending a seminar next month being held in Hot Springs, Arkansas about the film industry (How to make your movie, get your funding, ect.) I'm hoping to learn something that I will need to know and will help my project get off the ground. Again, great work and thanks for replying to my email.
James Foard

Subject: death record
Date: 43 EST
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
I ca Paulson 1969 - 1996 can you tell me where i can find legal record of this person?

Subject: OK, I'm flummoxed
Date: Fri, 28 Feb 2003 18
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
But t lm a mockumentary, as IFC's programming info. blurb (via AT&T digital cable) states? The film's "official" website is chock full of vitriol on the part of Mr. Dobson, and as far as acheiving the goal of "blurring the line" between art and reality, all involved seem to have succeeded. I say seemed to as it'd be quite a feat to manufacture all the supporting materials at the site, if the film were in fact a representation of the truth. Is Tom Paulson alive and well and laughing at us? The only reason I have to think so are the aforementioned blurb and one little piece of dirt I googled out of the Internet's muck. This was a link to Craig Lachman's website, where he lists on his resume a credit in the film as a supporting actor. So, have we (the public) been conned, in the sense of viewing your film as reality when in fact it is not? I do see and acknowledge the "blurred line" concept, in as much as the film probably portrays very closely what Tom experienced in his Hollywood career. With his hopes of completing the film falling, perhaps this top secret mockumentary made up for those failures (financially, artistically), or at least that's what I'd like to think. However, an authoritative answer from the source would help me out here. Is Tom still walking amongst the living? thanks, and congratulations on the interesting film.
Steve
PS - on a side note, do you guys feel slighted by the fact that "American Movie" seems to have garnered more critical attention?

Subject: Change your WHOIS info for hollywood-buffalo.com

Date: Tue, 4 Mar 2003
From: "M >
Reply-To:
Org
To: >
Gu
You did an awesome job... as a producer myself, a friend of mine called me up, devastated after seeing this movie, begging me to record it on the next showing on IFC and watch it. (Particularly after seeing me try to get productions off the ground.) Anyway, you may know this, but your WHOIS for the hollywood-buffalo.com web site lists "Nobody Productions" as the Registrant/Owner. I'd recommend putting it under a different name to keep this thing going. (Sorry, my background is Internet publicity for Fox Television.) Really, really excellent job all though. Just a hint of "elaboration of a bad liar" on the web presence, but don't let that comment take away from the genius of the overall concept. I'm quite impressed...
R.I.P. Tom
Mark

Wed 16 April 2003 (one run)

Date: 36:28 EDT
Fro
To:
As a f a writer and a composer I found your documentary on the IFC extremely disturbing....seems almost like the documentary end of making the film pushed him as much as making the film...does that make any sense?.....Maybe he wanted to kill himself and you just gave him a platform...should have had more drug use and whores it would have been better...more rock and roll...hey maybe I'll call you when I feel like I'm at the end of my rope...I think i maybe worth at least 6 months to a year...and I use more drugs and know more whores....SEX sells..he should have brought a whore to blow that weaselly studio dude ...Mr.40,000...I would have told that dude to kiss my ass thanks for the cash.....tom should have

Subject: I am not ..
Date: 42:19 EDT
Fro
To:
Cra know what it's like to struggle...that guy just took it the wrong direction...and I wonder why did you let him do that?...didn't you know he had a gun?.....I have to eat now..your movie makes me wanna quit creating....you make artists look like a bunch of desperate freaks...I hope never look so stupid..I'll bet that blonde feels good now about leaving him...of course it has been a few years and she got hers huh?...J*

Subject: confusion

Date: 48:02 EDT
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
.I ju now sure my thoughts and feelings have been written in vain....good luck..J*

Date: Wed, 16 Apr DT)
Fro [redacted]>
To: [redacted]
Hey
I watched your documentary last night (they shoot movies). I was very interesting. However, to use the death of another to gain profit is (in my opinion) imoral. I liked the character (tom), but to actually put a camera in his face as he takes his life, is like, dr. korvorkian. Where was his support? That's show biz! Anything for a buck. You guys and the whole hollywood mess can go take a giant leap at a rolling doughnut.
John Klink
Fallbrook, Ca.

Date: 6 EDT
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
I wa to actually view the rough cut advance screening of Tom Paulson's "masterpiece." Believe me when I tell you, the world of film is better off without Mr. Paulson around. He was a crappy director and deserved to die. Good riddance.
Anonymous @ Major Hollywood Studio

2 from "Dennis and Chris"

Date: Wed, 16 Apr 2003 09
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
I saw time and had not heard about it or Tom. My condolences go out to his family and friends in what must have been a real tough time after his untimely death. Up until the moment he brought out the gun, I enjoyed the movie.. although, enjoyed is probably not the correct word. I enjoyed Tom, and his demeanor... who wouldn't want to watch a man apparently achieving his dream? We all like to get a glimpse, however skewed, into other folks "real" lives.. it is the voyeur in us. Of course, after learning the sad ending of Tom and the fact that the film was ultimately released, with no thought to the family or friends of Tom... made me quite saddened. I can't believe that anyone would go see the bastardized version of his vision, meaning after that blood sucking, souless, cancer-stick-suckin producer from "they shoot movies don't they" took it over. I will never see "mirage". I think that to do so after what happened would be completely wrong. And, my theory is that... aside from

his obvious depression, loss of his longtime girlfriend, and no backing from friends... Tom took his life to push what little of his vision from "mirage" came through in "they shoot movies don't they", knowing that HIS vision of "mirage" would only be seen through the documentary that was made about his endeavor. I hope that , since it's been a few years since this unfortunate incident, that you and his family have had som healing. Anyway... my 2 cents. Peace.

[redacted]

Date: Wed, 16 Apr 2003 10
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
alrig y shoot movies dont they" was not a documentary... and that tom paul wilson, was in fact an actor portraying tom paulson. uhhhh thanks for fuckin with people... you idiots. jeezus. how bout a little of your own "stop exploiting people for hollywood" mentality here. now that i know it was mockumentary, the film sucked, in my opinion. brilliant in its idiocy... so , another big FU to the people out there trying to deceive and manipulate innocent folks, for their own financial gain... burn in hell, bitches

After the Last Screening 7-31-03

I have to say I am a little mixed by any attempt to stop the distribution of this film (or people seeing it), my step-dad hung himself so I can relate to this subject.
Tom was a sick individual and I believe that anyone who kills themselves had the seeds of mental illnes sowed a long time ago. I was utterly shocked by the movie expecting a "project greenlight" sort of movie.
If anyone feels that this crew filming this documentary was in any way responsible - I hink need to get some therapy themselves.
This film could help other people.'

I feel for the loss felt by everyone at FOT.
--Scott Stevens
Oakland, CA (I graduated from Waubonsie Valley High School in Aurora, IL)

I got suckered - NICE!
--Scott Stevens
Oakland, CA (I graduated from Waubonsie Valley High School in Aurora, IL)

Date: Fri, 01 Aug 2003 01:25:57 -040
From: "Keffer Church Ministries Inc." [redacted]

To: [redacted]
Is it [redacted] gas or is that a lie by the film makers?

Subject:
I have to know
Date:
Sat, 2 Aug 2003 15:03:17 -05
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
Was [redacted] kill himself? I got that he did in the show, but all the rhetoric on your web site is making me think that maybe it was all made up. Either way I am buying the tape, this was the most bizarre experience. Picture the ending of "Sixth Sense" time a million. It kept me up that night in complete shock!

Folks,
Was this real? I caught this movie on IFC last night and frankly had a very sleepless night. I have also been very distracted at work today. Again, was this real? Did Tom Paulson commit suicide? If he did, my thoughts go out to Adel and his family.
Regards,
Danny Broderick

[redacted]

Subject: Film
Date: Fri, 1 Aug 2 [redacted] T)
Fro [redacted]>
To: [redacted]
Hey
I just saw your movie and was very very impressed. Speaking as an amateur writer & DV filmmaker who often takes himself WAY too seriously, this was therapeutic for me to watch. I'm not saying I would ever kill myself over a video, but I do consistently beat myself up over stupid, little things. So, I guess I'm trying to say thank you. I hope every film student in the country sees your movie.

Subject: Get a real job!
Date: Fri, 01 Aug 2003 0
Fro [redacted]>
To: [redacted]
Yo [redacted] IFC must be made up of a bunch of total assholes! They list your movies as a documentary when clearly it's bull, the acting is extremely poor, the whole premise of the film to anyone who knows anything about Hollywood is

so armature, you should get a refund from the halfass film school you went to, because aside from this "rip off" it's your last picture.
I guess you'll feel that any press is good, but you are part of the problem with Hollywood today, everyone in for the quick buck, the rip off, the con, that I like many other true film people, just don't go to movies anymore. I watch the good movies made by real Men/Women, not faggot earring geeks like you. Maybe your next project should involve the line..., "would you like fries with that sir?"
What really pisses me off is that the listings for the IFC says a documentary, not a mockumentary, and that is were I draw the line. Is that the only way you can "sell" this armature piece of shit! By lying to the general public. Sure this one works, but like Blair Witch, it will be you last, because you have no original ideas, and you film effort proves it. Get a real life and give up you pipe dream, go smoke you pot and dream of a future you'll never have, I have more creative ideas written down that I am developing, it is so good to see more money wasted and commercial crap like your "They shoot movies don't they?", It should be "The should shoot the director agreed."
Regards,
Craig Tamboia
Real movie fan!!!!!!!!!!!!and much more creative!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!1

Subject: is this real
Date: Fri, 1 Aug 2003
From [redacted]>
To: <[redacted]
Pleas [redacted] or non fiction. I'm a doc producer by trade and I'm either totally impressed with your fiction about doc production or blown away by the doc. Where is the proof that this is real. I tried So. Illinois, Chicago Tribune, The Beacon, Variety, and the hollywood reporter but was unable to get confirmation. Frank Borres

Subject: They Shoot Movies Don't They
Date: Fri, 01 Aug 2003 06:
From: Rile[redacted]>
Reply-To: [redacted]
Org
To: [redacted]
Exc [redacted] ear that Tom was headed down that path with or without you filming the story...
Signed,
Riley G Matthews Jr

Subject: some website told me to send this to you
Date: Fri, 1 Aug 2003
Fro [redacted]>
To: [redacted]

To whom it may concern:
"They Shoot Movies, Dont They?" is a classic example of the exploitation taking place in America today. Should you choose to distribute it, know that I for one, will not be one of your patrons. it was an ok movie though.
Mike K.

Subject: Just saw the film...
Date: 15:55 EDT
Fro [redacted]
To: [redacted]
I ju entary on Tom Paulson on IFC. I didn't have any background on your film or Tom Paulson so I had no idea what I was getting myself into. Wow. I was shocked at his apparent suicide on film. Disturbing. After the film I got online and did a search on "Tom Paulson" to find out more about him and his work and, consequently, death. After reading the FOTS site (among others), and coming to a full understanding of what happened, I am very sorry I watched your film. Tom's, mother had it right when she referred to your company as "bottom feeders." You along with others, and yes, Tom himself drove him to that desperate decision. You should have shelved the film after his suicide. You decided not to. Now you're going to make money on it. That is reprehensible. I'll make a mental note to avoid any other "Nobody" Productions films.
Sincerely,
Blake Senseman

http://www.**indiewire**.com/biz/biz_030801buzz.html
SLEEPING PATTERN: As someone who's been known to clock in 12 hours of sleep after a particularly hard day, I'm fully behind Tom Wilson's "Sleep Across America" project. Wilson, one of the filmmakers behind "They Shoot Movies, Don't They?" (currently airing on IFC) has decided to turn his sleeping skills into a film. It's not as boring as it might sound.

Wilson got several corporate sponsors to back a trip during which he sleeps his way across this great country in an effort to raise awareness about sleep disorders. Wilson clearly doesn't have any problems with his sleep patterns: In a Winnebago "sleep mobile," he curled up on a plush mattress while a driver made his way from California to New York. The rule was that they could only travel while Wilson was asleep (usually about 7-10 hours per night). Along the way, a crew got 15 hours of footage of the trip, from promotional appearances to a sleep technicians' conference to Wilson's skilled napping. Wilson and his Nobody Productions now plan to create a 90-minute film, "Sleep Across America," that will be a doc-fiction hybrid. For details, visit http://www.sleepacrossamerica.com.

by Wendy Mitchell and Eugene Hernandez



In January of 2006 the DVD went out to the public. Reviews came in…

They Shoot Movies, Don't They?... The Making Of Mirage (Special Edition) - Nobody Productions, distributed by Golhil Home Media

Michaels Movie Mayhem

Tagline: *They Shoot Movies, Don't They?* is a voyeuristic look at first time director Tom Paulson and the movie he wrote called Mirage. Frank Gallagher is the documentarian whose camera waits and watches as Paulson navigates through a jungle of investors, colleagues, friends and family, searching for money to finish his film.

We gaze through the lens of Frank Gallagher as he relentlessly documents Tom Paulson's attempts to get distribution for his finished film project, *Mirage*. The film opens with Frank Gallagher filling in the background on Tom Paulson. While in college, a major knee injury destroys Tom's promising professional baseball career. This leads Tom to enroll in the film department as a lark. Here he writes, shoots and directs a short film about baseball, *On My Milky Way.* The film's showing at a film festival lands Tom a development deal with Universal. He is driven to create a film that he believes in, without the strings and control of the studio. After 3 years of frustration, Tom severs his position at Universal to pursue his dream project, *Mirage*. Using his own funds, Tom completes and wraps the shooting on his first feature film, on time and within budget. The ever-present documentary crew now follows the process of making that dream a reality. With a distribution deal in place, Tom and editor Craig Higgins work to finish a rough-cut within a 2-week deadline, in pursuit of $80,000 needed for post-production. As Tom visits the distributor after delivering the rough-cut, we learn that not all is well. The distributor is not happy with the results, but offers to get the picture finished, if Tom grants total control of post-production. Not willing to see his dream remolded by others, Tom sets off to find other funding sources.

The documentary now reveals the realities of independent filmmaking and distribution. Interviews with film producer Adled Davies and screenwriter Tony Colt are sprinkled throughout, keeping the viewer grounded in the business of Hollywood. Meanwhile, Tom



pursues means to acquire the matching funds promised by his friend and successful businessman, Ari Barak. We are given glimpses into Tom's inner thoughts and dreams with interviews of Adele, his girlfriend of over 3 years, along with candid moments of Tom captured by the ever-present camera. Even as the odds seem to stack up against him, Tom is determined to find the needed support.

How far will Tom travel in pursuit of finishing his project? In true voyeuristic fashion, we invade such personal moments as the strain on Tom's relationship with Adele. We are provided a gritty, and at times uncomfortable, exposure to the "sausage-making" business of Hollywood vs. the artistic pursuit of a dream. What sacrifices or compromises is Tom willing to make as time begins to run out? Suffice it to say, the documentary camera of Frank will let us know...

To quote Tom Wilson (producer of *They Shoot Movies, Don't They?)*, "They teach us in film school that the camera never lies, but does it ever tell the truth?" Time for a little truth, *They Shoot Movies* is not a true documentary. However, it is not necessarily a "mockumentary" ala *Best in Show* (2000), *Bob Roberts* (1992), *Waiting for Guffman* (1984), or even *This is Spinal Tap* (1984). Nor is it necessarily a "pseudo-documentary" the likes of *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), or *Incident at Loch Ness* (2004). However, it is closer to the latter group, in that it is presented as a documentary. *They Shoot Movies* has the feel of an actual documentary such as *The Sinister Saga of Making 'The Stunt Man'* (2000) or *The Battle of Brazil: A Video History* (1996). That *They Shoot Movies* is convincing as a documentary has caused quite a controversy with many viewers and reviewers. For this reviewer, this is one of its main strengths.

Both Frank Gallagher (the real director of *They Shoot Movies)* and Tom Wilson (producer and the actor playing Tom Paulson) said they watched "five million" documentaries, looking for the "is this for real?" feel, and it shows! The film is extremely convincing as a documentary, thanks to the editing and acting (much of it improvised by fellow L.A. theatrical actors and friends). Frank and Tom capture a true documentary "manipulative presentation", what to show (nostalgic montages, quite reflective moments, etc.), how to present it (music, voice-over, etc.), and when to reveal (heart-tugging incidents, high emotional scenes, etc.). The use of gifted, yet unknown actors, is a major plus, providing a convincing aura of a reality. The inclusion of footage that would never see the light of day in a Hollywood production (due to lighting issues, framing, sound dropouts, boom-mikes, etc.) furthers the ambiance of a documentary where second and third takes are just not possible.

Nevertheless, does it work as a drama? Definitely! It is true drama, more so than most "reality shows". Shows that are mostly "scripted" beforehand and afterward. True emotions are evoked, whether it is apathy or aversion to certain characters. One is easily pulled in to the trials and tribulations of Tom Paulson as he fights for his dream and dignity. One even feels guilty for being reluctant voyeuristic witnesses to some of the more personal and troubling events portrayed. An original score by Sean Gourley and Curt B. Walheim, that is both fitting and at times haunting, enhances the experience.



The true strength of the film is its multi-layered presentation. It is a stark portrayal of the business of making films, especially Independent films in the world of Hollywood. One experiences how the media can easily manipulate one's perceptions of reality, whether that media be documentaries, news, drama, commercials, Reality TV, or a combination thereof. Moreover, *They Shoot Movies, Don't They?* is engrossing human drama.

I feel that *They Shoot Movies* has earned a place in the canon of Independent films exploring the business and art of filmmaking that includes: *Pipe Dream* (2002), *Hollywood North* (2003), *Day for Night* (1973), *The Player* (1992), *State and Main* (2000), and *Full Frontal* (2002).

The DVD

Video: 4:3 Quality is quite good considering the original source (Beta SP -- pre-HDV)

Sound: Dolby Digital Stereo Quality is very good

Extras: 2 Audio Commentaries: The Making of *They Shoot Movies, Don't They* and a "Top Secret Commentary Track" (both with Writer/Producer/Star Tom Wilson, Director Frank Gallagher, and actress Adele Baughn). The latter reveals the old adage that "life imitates art".

Theatrical Trailer for *They Shoot Movies*

Opening Trailers: *Lost Empires* (1986), *The Jury* (2002), and *Bellydance Performance Ensemble With Suhaila* (can be skipped by selecting the menu button)

DVD SAVANT

They Shoot Movies, Don't They?
Goldhil
2000 / Color / 1:33 flat full frame / 87 min. / Street Date January 24, 2006 / 19.98
Starring Adele Baughn, Anadel Baughn, Jerry Feifer, Jack Hamblin, Stacey Havener, Craig Lachman
Cinematography Curt B. Walheim
Production Designer
Art Direction Foster Johnson
Film Editor D.C. Douglas, Frank Gallagher
Original Music Sean Gourley, Curt B. Walheim
Produced by Frank Gallagher, Craig Lachman, Curt B. Walheim, Tom Wilson
Directed by Frank Gallagher

Reviewed by Glenn Erickson

Savant tries to stay clear of independent filmmakers asking for their DV films to be reviewed, as it's difficult being blunt and honest when you're rooting for the underdog. **They Shoot Movies, Don't They?** is a documentary about the desperate cons and ego-crushing defeats that go into trying to make it big in independent filmmaking, and even when it isn't entirely convincing it touches on a number of great topics: The nature of 'reality' video and the reality of altruism, ambition and cluelessness in Los Angeles.

That last paragraph is sort of a sneak, because **They Shoot Movies, Don't They?** is a bit of sneak as well. It's not a documentary but a very good mock-documentary, shot on Beta-SP late in the 1990s. It followed the enormous mock-umentary horror film *The Blair Witch Project*, with which it has many similarities, and made its impact on the Independent Film Channel, reportedly becoming one of that cable outlet's most talked-about features. The notoriety probably related to whether or not the events in the film are true - the film never fesses up to its fictional roots. Even in the disc commentaries the producers are in no hurry to admit that the picture is a put-on. In these days when outrageous lies and obvious fakery in Television and reality are accepted by the public at face value, I don't doubt that most casual viewers of **They Shoot Movies, Don't They?** are completely fooled.

Synopsis:

Frank Gallagher's docu camera follows aspiring filmmaker Tom Paulson, who has 'ankled' a stalled position at Universal and invested his savings in a personally motivated movie called *Mirage*. With the picture finally filmed, Tom is unable to secure finishing funds or a distributor without ceding creative rights, and reluctantly enters a deal with a business manager that requires him to find $40,000 on his own. He's eventually reduced to asking friends and his own actors for handouts, but that's only the beginning of his humiliating descent.

They Shoot Movies, Don't They? purports to be the inside story of the downfall of an ambitious independent filmmaker, whose final fatal year happened to be the subject of a documentary cameraman. As such its credits are sort of a tangle, with the fictitious main character being played uncredited by one of the producers. All of the other actors are more or less playing themselves, pretending to have a relationship with the "main-man" Tom Paulson.

The film gives a 'reality format' gimmick a real workout and benefits from a number of unexpected angles. First, it's not the simple "boo, it's real, no it's not - or is it?" phony reality game of *The Blair Witch Project*, which in Savant's opinion fully exploited and exhausted the potential of "believing" in fake reality video -- anyone still thinking that hand-held cameras capturing events in a home movie fashion create some kind of perceptual reality needs to go soak their head. [1] **They Shoot Movies, Don't They?** is about people desperately trying to make it in Hollywood, which is basically the culture fairy tale of our age, worshipped by every dreamer on the planet. Tom Paulson gets a taste of an easy tinseltown job and gets the bug to break free and shoot his own 'personal' film called *Mirage*, which looks to be about a guy *desperately trying to make it in Hollywood, the culture fairy tale of the age.* Tom makes his movie but comes up short when it's time to sell it - the Phillistine majors tell him its worthless and only offer to take it on if he reliquishes control. That's when docu filmmaker Frank Gallagher begins to record what he can of Tom's miserable odyssey, as the filmmaker tries to scrape up matching funds. He has only a limited time to take advantage of the only offer he can get to finish his film his way, from a friend who believes in him, not his movie.

As we see Tom pitch pals and relatives for money and the camera directly confronts his girlfriend's growing discontent, **They Shoot Movies, Don't They?** becomes kind of a reality cinema *Citizen Kane*, analyzing Tom Paulson's personality. Even though Gallagher's camera follows him from office to office and watches him cringe as his expensive investor screenings go unattended, what we're really seeing is Tom being dissected, illusion by illusion. His pride dwindles with his bank account until the only thing he can bring to meetings is the fantasy of being a "winner," which is of course the theme of the movie he has made. The film is a dog that nobody wants to see because it honestly expresses Tom's dilemma - he just wants to 'make it big' and fails. Tom's editor says that the film doesn't work because Tom hasn't told a story - it has no connectivity and the audience doesn't care about the hero. Disinterested distributors say the same thing, that *Mirage* lacks the phony wish-fulfillment fantasies that people really want to see.

Tom's personality is hollow - when he's pressured he lamely repeats his feel-good mantras about being a winner, the spirit that helped him when he was a baseball player with a recognized talent to nurture. As a salesman of dreams he comes up woefully short ... when the "actor" playing Tom Paulson starts to drone on in mock self-confidence and shaky assertions of purpose, the mock-umentary becomes sort of a *Death of a Salesman*. The ending is brutally honest - the problem is always Tom's. Total commitment to a 'movie dream' can be devastating when the dreamer is revealed to be shallow and empty.

Stepping out one level of fake reality, we get to Frank Gallagher's "documentary", which does a better-than-average job of faking a docu shoot of supposedly unrehearsed events. The camera keeps rolling when Tom's girlfriend has a long pause in one of her monologues (ooh! it's powerful!). Frank eavesdrops on an important argument through a closed glass door. The camera follows Tom into reception rooms, where people look at the lens, or ask that the camera be turned off. [2] As Tom's whining, squirming, and pleading with his fed-up investor becomes a shouting session, the camera retires, waits in the hall and then sneaks back in fairly convincingly.

This is of course all fakery, as many of the interviewees try too hard to affect guileless 'fresh' responses to questions. People always speak to the topic at hand and in general do a lot of emoting. Much of this is excused by the presence of the docu camera but some is not. Documentarians are helped and hindered by the fact that many people are flattered to have a camera stuck in their faces, allowing them to become stars playing themselves. Two whole generations of young people have thought about how best to appear nonchalant when and if a camera appears, to the extent that kids exiting movie premieres have pre-prepared blurbs ready for the news cameras. Also, Gallagher's camera always finds plenty of light for a pleasing image, and never misses a key moment or decisive turning point in Tom's life story. When Tom 'sneaks' away to Vegas, the camera is right there.

To its credit, the film doesn't have Tom completely ignore the docu camera. He actually tries to hit up Frank Gallagher as a potential investor. No sale, of course. The film's big dodge occurs when the docu camera is left unattended in Tom's room, so that he can document his final words on his own, essentially directing and filming a suitable "reality" ending to match the "fictional" ending in his movie *Mirage*. This confected trick is similar to the gag seen in more than one story about a front-line newsman. A dead cameraman's

porta-pak falls just-so, and just happens to record the key battle image for a concluding freeze-frame.

The kicker is that these gags could be ten times as obvious and many viewers would still "believe" what's being put in front of them. [3] This is why the filmmakers have credence when they claim that a huge number of viewers on the Independent Film Channel were completely convinced that **They Shoot Movies, Don't They?** is real. The supposedly hip audience for alternative film is apparently as gullible as any other group.

The filmmaker's mockups of industry trade paper articles are quite convincing. That they're able to use Universal's name as part of their deception is an interesting legal problem that I'd like to see addressed - when he saw those real names, Savant wondered for a moment if he misread the package copy.

Goldhil's DVD of **They Shoot Movies, Don't They? ... the Making of Mirage** looks good for being shot on Beta SP; the attractive camerawork helps when Gallahger by necessity must cut away to generic shots of Hollywood streets, etc. The sound is also uniformly clear, an aspect of the picture that again should be taken as a giveaway that it's not a real documentary. [4]

The packaging is careful not to call the film a documentary. The tagline is "A true story based on a lie" and the back-cover text calls the film a "... shocking 'reel' story unlike anything you have ever seen before." Very astute. The movie's extras aren't listed on the packaging, although there's a blank space indicating that they were left off, perhaps on purpose.

The film has two filmmaker's commentaries. One is a general discussion of the film in which the director and his pals do a certain amount of teasing about whether the film is real or not. That's too bad, because the picture has good qualities beyond that issue, and people in general don't like to be laughed at while being fooled - even Orson Welles, the instigator of the most famous "reality radio" fiasco, realized that being notorious as a *Faker* isn't the perfect career move, even if it does get you to run the toy trains at RKO. A second track has the same filmmakers tell us the history of trying to get **They Shoot Movies, Don't They?** released as a film, which is definitely educational. Tom Paulson's escapades are nothing compared to what happens in real life. There is also a promo trailer. It is somewhat interesting that the film was a big hit on the Independent Film Channel, but is not associated with their logo in its DVD release.

The Goldhil disc starts with a lengthy series of previews that can be skipped by hitting the menu button.

On a scale of Excellent, Good, Fair, and Poor, *They Shoot Movies, Don't They?* rates:
Movie: Good and conceptually Very Good
Video: Good
Sound: Very Good
Supplements: two producer commentaries, promo trailer

Packaging: Keep case
Reviewed: January 30, 2006

Footnotes:

1. And, although it's a completely unoriginal statement, it can't be repeated often enough: Reality programming has more or less ruined 90% of what appears on television, from dramatic shows to news broadcasts. It ain't real unless it's "fake real."
Return

2. When casino guards in Las Vegas ask that the camera be turned off the moment Frank accompanies Tom to a roulette wheel, we believe that it's true 100%!
Return

3. Reality TV -- essentially, fake reality and bald lies masquerading as reality -- has almost completely eroded the concept of 'believability.' When an average American believes in ghosts, flying saucers, impossible conspiracies and political hogwash, they're really saying they believe in everything and nothing ... they no longer have a reaction to information from the outside. This gap makes the concept of 'absolute belief' -- unquestioning adherance to a faith, or the pronounements of a church -- all the more essential for some. I'm surprised people still believe in concepts like gravity or tooth decay. They certainly don't believe in money any more -- our 'reality' media says that everything is affordable and should be consumed now, and our 'reality' government can keep inventing money to prop up a national economy that by all logic should be bankrupt three times over.
Return

4. Although we never see any of the film-within-a-film *Mirage*, we do see Tom and his uncooperative, unhelpful editor (unfair!) screening his 35mm cut on a Steenbeck editing table. One problem - although we hear the soundtrack playing, only a picture reel is loaded on the machine - there should be no sound.
Return

DVD BEAVER

Image quality has some decided weakness stemming from, I assume, its limited production roots. But the transfer is non-progressive - no subtitle options, scattered audio, but its good to hear 2 separate commentary tracks which seemed to me to be a bit redundant but definitely help put an alternate spin on this hypnotic documentary. I suppose a release like this is more intent on the content/message than the presentation. It's a riveting film to be sure - I was reminded of ***Chris Smith's American Movie*** (1999), but certainly much darker. We certainly recommend seeing it…

Gary W. Tooze

DVD TOWN - By Justin Cleveland (January 18, 2006)

I've had wonderful success in my critical career working with independent filmmakers and releases. My reviews of More and Breakfast with Hunter were eye-opening

experiences for me and I was glad to pioneer their exposure to the world. Not to get too metacritical, but when I received a solicitation for a “mockumentary” about the filming of an independent feature, I was hooked. I was more than happy to look at a movie that would amalgamate “American Movie” and “Waiting for Guffman.”

This is like both of those… and something completely original. The story tracks Tom Paulson, a man who has succeeded in everything in life, despite some minor setbacks. He was highly recruited to play baseball out of high school, turned a tragic injury (that prevented him from going pro) into a new career in film. Rather than work in a frustrating studio system, Tom Paulson sets out on his own to make an independent feature film entitled “Mirage.” The documentary takes up the story after Paulson has nearly completed his film and is shopping for a distributor and a few more bucks to put the finishing touch on the movie.

We get to witness the story of a man in decline. Paulson has never experienced failure before and as the pressures mount, his ability to cope and stay positive are tested. His relationships fall apart; he begs and pleads for money from friends and family, driving wedges with every stop. As the failures mount, and reality sets in that he will likely be unable to finish the project that he envisioned, Tom makes a decision that gives the film its name.

Instead of being a simple documentary, “They Shoot Movies, Don’t They?” takes on a metacritical perspective, commenting on the very nature of documentary film construction, the role and impacts the crew has on the scenarios which they record, and the studio system that releases movies (and decides what isn’t seen). Some interesting ideas are expressed about the movies we see. “They Shoot Movies” is more akin to “The Blair Witch Project” in form and structure (though thankfully without the whiny girl and shaky camerawork) than a traditional documentary. The facts behind the movie do not detract from the arguments that it makes regarding the blurring line between fact and fiction.

Some people will feel cheated after watching “They Shoot Movies.” Others will feel like they’ve entertained an interesting premise. After viewing it, I’m somewhere in between those extremes. I like the concept of blurring fact and fiction to make a point, but would have liked to see it done a little differently. Though I wasn’t precisely sure what was going on during the documentary, there was a sense of unreality that permeated the feature that distracted me and didn’t allow me to buy completely into the film’s premise.

That having been said, the movie forced me to reevaluate the way I look at documentary films. There are some fascinating concepts that come up that film scholars should use in their evaluation of the documentary medium, particularly the idea that anything called a documentary is inherently true. If the exposure of the fabrication of “A Million Little Pieces” teaches us nothing else, we should know to take a skeptical, critical perspective to anything posing as the truth as we ourselves attempt to discern reality.

Overall:
I’m still not sure how I feel about this movie. While it is a fascinating, gripping portrait,

and brings up awesome questions about documentary filmmaking, the fact that you're being played with is pervasive and annoying. And yet, I liked being screwed with. I watch "Blair Witch" with full knowledge of the farce; I plan on doing the same with "They Shoot Movies." It is definitely worth a viewing.

JWR Reviews

It's All Gone Tom Stone

Mirage, *n* - an optical effect that is sometimes seen at sea, in the desert, or over hot pavement.

The ecstasy and the agony of independent filmmakers plying their craft in the shadow (however hazy) of Hollywood is convincingly, if melodramatically, captured by Frank Gallagher in his film about the making of the film.

"Who decides what people aren't seeing," bemoans director/writer/producer Tom Paulson as door after door of financiers (notably Ari Barak, whose tough-love investment protocol seems built more on three-dollar bills than shrewd business practice), friends and family are eased close or slammed shut. His life's work, *Mirage*, has been shot but requires eighty large to finish post production. Self-financed up to that point (Paulson made a bundle by doing nothing at Universal Studios for several years—a good company man), Gallagher and his tireless crew follow the hapless independent for weeks as he tries to cobble together the cash, but ends up losing his editor (Craig Lachman) and girlfriend Adele Baughn, yet both filmmakers bring their stories home.

The notion of winning and losing, from Paulson's injury-truncated career on the field of dreams to putting solo on the carpet, to rolling the dice of destiny in a different sort of Mirage, set up the film's strongest metaphors. All business, no-interest-in-art producer, Aled Davies reinforces the "truth" about the movie industry in a number of intercuts that hammer home his passion-lite, cash-rich point of view: "It's a business … no deeper level"—the bane of *vrai artistes* everywhere.

That jaundiced notion is nicely balanced by screenwriter wanabe Tony Colt who also laments money as motivator but wouldn't mind getting one big cheque rather than a lot of little ones for her efforts.

Strategically inserted visual aids including James Dean and the *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* canvas and a hosing down of the Hollywood Walk of Fame complements the original guitar-laden score of Sean Gourley and Curt B. Walheim, which more than makes up for some voice-over muckiness and occasional off-focus shots.

More importantly is Paulson's stated goal to take "my painting and put it down on film." Ah ha! All is revealed, because the two art forms are so completely opposed to each other (one frame, versus thousands), that the filmmaker's failure is totally

comprehensible and, er, deserved. (Note to newcomers: Mixing your arts can often have the same result as mixing beverages …. If only careers could start with the *second* film!)

Still, there's much to savour in Gallagher's work. The near freeze-frame reaction from self-proclaimed "Ice Queen, Princess Bitch" Adele after blurting out "Maybe you know something I don't," is worth the price of admission alone. JWR

by S. James Wegg
(01/28/06

"The film's critique of a cold Hollywood said nothing new."

Reviewed by Dennis Schwartz

This Frank Gallagher directed, written, edited and produced pseudo-documentary most likely emulates David Hotzman's Diary and follows the marketing practices of Blair Witch.

It tells of 27-year-old aspiring filmmaker Tom Paulson, a college baseball player with pro offers until he blew out his knee and turned to film, who financed his own film in 1996 entitled Mirage with the $250,000 he earned from Universal on a three-year development deal but needs $80,000 before wrapping it up. Tom is also the subject of Frank Gallagher's documentary, making for a film within a film, who shoots him as he tries to finish editing the film and raise the money needed. It pretends to give us an inside look at the challenges the indie filmmaker is faced with and how difficult it is to get a film made and released. Hollywood is viewed as basically an unfeeling and calculating business with art being secondary, where both the money people and filmmakers say you must go with the flow--if the backer wants a happy ending, then you must compromise to get your film made. In other words, if the backers don't think they can make money they won't invest. The running theme throughout is that Hollywood decides what people don't see, believing they know best what they want to see.

Tom's obsession with making the film is followed by examing the strain he's under in trying get the film made. It takes a look at his relationship with actress girlfriend Adele Baughn, who will at one late point leave Tom because the film becomes more important to him than their relationship. The narrative then becomes fixated on Tom's attempts to raise money through a movie industry executive friend Ari Barak, who agrees to come up with half the dough needed if Tom can match him by a due date. This comes about after a distributor backs out when Tom refuses to cede control of his film. It then gets even more heavy-handed and melodramatic, as it shows how the once easy-going Tom loses his dignity by begging friends and relatives for money when he can't match Ari's offer. When told by his would-be

backer and his editor that his film, about a guy bored with life who chucks it all to follow his dream despite the risk of failure, is not good, Tom can't face the music that he not only can't raise enough money to finish a film about failure but that it has also turned out not to be what he wanted. It leads to a shocking twist ending, as Tom shows how deeply he's been affected by this setback and how far he's willing to go to settle things. His extreme reaction to the crisis is what makes the film controversial.

Warning: spoiler to follow.

For those viewers not sure whether or not the film was fiction, it has a greater intensity than for those who realize it's a "mockumentary" and can take it all in stride. The film's money men try to keep it alive that it's all real by even maintaining a website. It might also relieve some viewers to know that Tom Paulson in actuality was played by executive producer Tom Wilson. The film's critique of a cold Hollywood said nothing new and said it in a leaden way, and when one realizes it's not a real documentary the acting also becomes problematic. It might work to greater effect for those suckered into believing what they were seeing was true (Hey, isn't that the way Hollywood usually operates!).

REVIEWED ON 1/4/2005 GRADE: C+

Dennis Schwartz: "Ozus' World Movie Reviews"

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http://www.sover.net/~ozus

Interesting reviewer analysis on Dennis Schwartz:

In his review, reviewer Dennis Schwartz (Rottentomatoes.com) says of They Shoot Movies Don't They? - "*It leads to a shocking twist ending"*
And he gives They Shoot Movies Don't They? a higher rating than the following movies...
THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY?
ANDROMEDA STRAIN, THE
DOCTOR ZHIVAGO
THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI
E.T. THE EXTRA - TERRESTRIAL
FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS
GOOD WILL HUNTING

In his review, reviewer Dennis Schwartz (Rottentomatoes.com) says of They Shoot Movies Don't They? - "*It leads to a shocking twist ending"*
And he gives it a rating equal to the following movies...
ALIEN
ALL ABOUT EVE
BONNIE AND CLYDE

BOTTLE ROCKET
BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID
THE GRADUATE
MIDNIGHT COWBOY
SCHINDLER'S LIST
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?

**xxxx

all 450 other films on the channel, combined. Watching the protagonist of this film is like watching a man climb the highest peak and turn to get his picture taken, only to see him slip and tumble all the way down... while the documentary cameras are rolling all the way. The almost inevitable finale of this film will make your jaw drop, and cause you to rush for the DVD extras as soon as the film is over—to give you some explanation for what you just saw... some *justification*. If you are an aspiring independent filmmaker, stop reading this review and go rent this movie now. The rest of you looky-loos can keep reading.

The film follows Tom Paulson, who has basically been a golden boy all his life: He was a hotshot baseball star until he was sidelined by injuries in college. Instead, he decided to study film, and made a student film that was so good he was signed with Universal straight out of college. He did well at Universal, but was stuck in the system, never allowed to actually do anything. Finally he quit, with his nest egg of savings, to follow his dream of making his own film: *Mirage*.

When we meet Tom, *Mirage* has wrapped, having been funded entirely out of Tom's own pockets. The problem is, Tom's pockets are now empty, and he needs some $80,000 for post-production costs. Tom's Midas touch now seems to turn things to ash, as first his distribution deal falls through (which he thought was a done deal), and he finds himself increasingly desperate to raise the funds.

Cameras follow Tom into hotshot producers' offices (where he is either belittled, cut down, or politely ignored), into banks (who won't give him a loan), and repeatedly back to his businessman friend Ari, who offers him half the money, if he can raise the other half in a set amount of days. As the deadline ticks closer, you can't help but cringe as Tom gradually loses his girlfriend Adele, his composure with his editor (a GREAT scene of two creative minds butting heads), and his dignity, as he grovels to his friends (and even the documentary filmmaker!) for help. Without giving it away, like I said, Tom's spiral to rock bottom will disturb you.

Now let me say this: The finale of the film may shock and upset you. I certainly was alarmed. And now I say this: Finish the movie, THEN looks at the extras and listen to the commentary on the film. *They Shoot Movies, Don't They?* is like the best reality TV: You are sucked in against your will, because real life (or in this case "reel" life) is often much more interesting than fiction.

DVDDUDE.com

They Shoot Movies, Don't They? is a very difficult film to classify. Its marketing suggested that it was a documentary. However, it many fictional aspects caused some to label it a "mockumentary," but even that title isn't quite fitting because it suggests that this film is making fun of something, which it isn't.

Perhaps the most fair assessment would be to call They Shoot Movies, Don't They? a drama told in documentary style. The fact that the film never steps out of the character of

a documentary allows it to deliver a stronger commentary about its subject then perhaps possible if it were told as a traditional narrative.

They Shoot Movies, Don't They? is the story of Tom Paulson, filmmaker. In college, Tom was on track to become a professional baseball player, until a knee injury took him out of the game. Needing a new direction, he chose filmmaking. Except for his injury, Tom is the sort of guy who gets all the breaks. When he played ball, he won. When he made a student film, it garnered the interest of Universal Studios, who immediately put him under contract.

Unfortunately, Tom discovers that "being under contract" generally means a lot of waiting, rather than filmmaking. Fed up with it, he quits his job and pours all of his savings into an independent film called "Mirage." They Shoot Movies, Don't They? begins with the cast wrap party and then follows Tom through post-production.

The crisis at the heart of the "documentary" is that Tom has run out of money to complete the film and must plead for additional funding. For Tom, failing to complete the film is simply not an option, because he's never failed at anything in his life (at least, so he says). However, there are problems in his quest for funds almost right from the beginning. People who read the script want to take creative control and make changes, people who see the film don't understand it, and no one wants to give Tom any money.

Further complicating things is the documentary itself. Tom becomes obsessed both with the film crew and his own film to the point where he refuses to talk unless he's on camera (and then, he only wants to talk about his film). This puts a strain on his relationship with his girlfriend, friends and business associates.

The question, never really spoken, is would Tom be pushing so hard and become so desperate if he were not under a microscope? Documentaries are supposed to observe life, but how much do they influence their subjects? At one point, Tom's girlfriend poignantly observes that regardless of how things turn out for Tom, the documentary crew will get their film, and not only that, but they will have the luxury to pick and choose what story they want to tell.

They Shoot Movies, Don't They? is as rough and raw as any independent film, yet on all of the points I described above, it is compelling and engaging. There is, however, yet another level to the film that is worth discussing, however to do so requires going into spoiler territory. They Shoot Movies, Don't They is an excellent example of independent filmmaking and I recommend it. Having said that, if you don't want to know any more details, then please skip down to the Video section (then come back and read the rest of the review after you've seen the film).

The most powerful aspect of the film, for me, really begins to surface in the last 40 minutes. As his financing deadline looms, it appears that Tom won't be able to raise the money to complete Mirage. More importantly, however, is that all of the reactions to the film suggest that it simply isn't any good. Even the editor winds up quitting over creative differences. Although in denial at first, Tom slowly begins to realize that failure is

quickly becoming inevitable: either he will fail to complete the film, or he will fail by having finished a lousy movie.

In the final moments, Tom takes all of the money he's raised so far and makes trip to Las Vegas . This seems like a foolish mistake made by a desperate man, but I think it was a calculated mistake. On some level, Tom realizes that an unmade bad movie might be viewed as less of a failure than a completed one. If Mirage is never finished, at least he can say that he tried everything and no one will ever need to know how bad his film really was.

Going to Vegas is his attempt to seal his fate. And then the unthinkable happens: he wins. He now has the money to make the film. For the first time, Tom fully comprehends the implications of finishing Mirage and how much more of a failing that will be than simply not coming up with the money. What's worse is that this documentary will clearly show that everything wrong with the film lies squarely on Tom's shoulders -- no one else wanted it made, but he did it anyway.

The decision Tom makes, though shocking, is an illustration of the dangers of getting exactly what one wishes for. Tom describes Mirage as being about a man who fails at life. That almost describes Tom, except that when it came right down to it, he failed at winning.

Video

They Shoot Movies, Don't They? was shot on video, and is therefore fairly low quality. However, that was part of the intent. This is supposed to look like a low budget, rough documentary. Because of this, color tones are bad and often over saturated, contrasts are clipped and there's a lot of noise in the image. Some digital compression artifacts pop up from time to time.

Although there was an intentional attempt at low-quality, the "mock" nature of the film does tip its hand, so to speak, when you consider that even the darkest scenes always manage to have just enough light to illuminate the subjects.

Audio

The audio, in a 2.0 mix, is nearly as low-tech as the video. However, as with the cleverly strategic lighting, the sound design is also a bit of a giveaway for the film, as the microphones always seem to be perfectly in place to catch every important line of dialog. Still, these little "tells" really don't diminish the experience of the film and, in fact, you'd pretty much have to be looking for that sort of thing to spot it.

Special Features

There are **2 commentaries** and a **trailer** on this disc in the way of special features.

Both commentary tracks features writer/producer Tom Wilson (who also plays Tom Paulson), director Frank Gallegher, and actress Adele Baughn. In the first track the

filmmakers remain rather coy with the "is it real or is it fake" nature of the film, but otherwise do a pretty decent job of discussing their intent behind the story and the many reactions the film has generated.

The second track is a bit more serious and really focuses in on the nitty-gritty of getting an independent film distributed (and some of the stuff they talk about actually makes the fictional events of the film seem tame by comparison).

Bottom Line

They Shoot Movies, Don't They? is a fascinating character study. Tom Paulson begins as a happy-go-lucky pretty boy, and as the documentary wears on, his facade is stripped away to reveal an empty shell. Along the way, the film raises some interesting questions about the subject of reality filmmaking and the effect it has on the subjects being filmed. I liked this film and recommend it.

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