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MOVIE REVIEW | 'AIR GUITAR NATION'

Ready to Figuratively Rock and Pretend Roll

By MATT ZOLLER SEITZ
Published: March 22, 2007

"You can't hold a gun if you're holding an air guitar."



Shadow Distribution
David "C-Diddy" Jung competes in "Air Guitar."

That Cheech and Chong sentiment is the manifesto of this documentary's title subculture, in which pantomiming aspiring rockers compete for the right to represent their country in a global championship based in Oulou, Finland. The movement, such as it is, aims to unite a war-torn planet in musical fantasy and to *rawwwwwk!* — but not necessarily in that order.

It sounds like the premise of a reality show. Sure enough, according to news releases, this breezy 82-minute movie is descended from an aborted VH-1 series overseen by Magical Elves Productions, the makers of "Project Runway" and "Last Comic Standing." Stylistically, it's nothing special, apart from its T-shirt-ready freeze-frames and lucid, playful editing (by Conor O'Neill). Like "[Spellbound](#)," "[Murderball](#)" and other competition documentaries, it's a valentine to underdog dreamers: "[Rocky](#)" gone basic cable.

But the movie's wild performances and droll humor are tough to resist. So are its obsessive yet self-mocking heroes: the Los Angeles-based actor David Jung, who performs as C-Diddy, who has a kung phooley stage persona and wears a Hello Kitty pouch like a warrior's breastplate; and the New York writer-musician

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Dan Crane, a k a Björn Turóque, whose parched wit and jackhammer performance style suggest [Bill Murray](#) trapped in the body of Sid Vicious. Mr. Crane also wrote and sang the closing credits theme, a garage band anthem that lodges in the brain like a fishhook.

"Air Guitar Nation" is rated R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian). It includes profanity and some adult (if not necessarily mature) themes.

AIR GUITAR NATION

Opens today nationwide.

Directed by Alexandra Lipsitz; director of photography, Anthony Sacco; edited by Conor O'Neill; music by Dan Crane; produced by Dan Cutforth, Jane Lipsitz and Anna Barber; released by Shadow Distribution. At the Angelika Film Center, Mercer and Houston Streets, Greenwich Village. Running time: 82 minutes.

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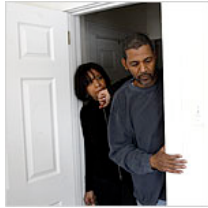
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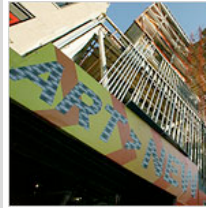


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