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Air Guitar Nation

(Documentary) A Magical Elves production. Produced by Dan Cutforth, Jane Lipsitz, Anna Barber. Executive producers, Kriston Rucker, Cedric Devitt. Co-producer, Tim Sullivan. Directed by Alexandra Lipsitz.

By [RONNIE SCHEIB](#)

With equal measures of showmanship, patriotism and irony, hundreds vie at NYC's Pussycat Lounge for the East Coast Division of the first-ever nationwide air guitar championship for the right to eventually represent the U.S. at the world championship. Meanwhile, back in Finland, the current world champ frets that the influx of Americans could corrupt the form's purity. Alexandra Lipsitz's often hilarious documentary (with almost everyone in on the joke) won the audience award at SXSW and is spawning a cult following that could snowball in release.

Faces contorted, bodies vibrating, fingers gripped convulsively around non-existent strings, contestants get one minute apiece to practice their art. Actor David "C-Diddy" Jung uses a kung fu style to advance to the finals at the Roxy in Los Angeles. There, he manages to defeat the West Coast faves as well as the New York runner-up, Dan "Bjorn Turoque" Crane.

In Finland, C-Diddy faces some fierce competitors, not least Bjorn Turoque, who never lets a little thing like losing hold him back.

Though the Intl. Championships have been held since 1996, it is not until 2003 that Americans have joined the fray. National costumes range from a basic white toga to silver lame to nothing at all.

Lipsitz's docu trips along with a straight-ahead, brisk tone that validates this seemingly nutty activity -- "airness," as it turns out, involves not simple imitation like lip-synching, but mastering a mystical, abstract that transcends simulation.

At the same time, the admitted ridiculousness of the endeavor is lost on no one, and indeed constitutes much of the appeal of air guitar -- supposedly nobody can merchandise it because it doesn't exist. It's possible, though, that Lipsitz's documentary could provide, ironically, a stepping-stone toward commercialization.

Tech credits are fine, Conor O'Neill's editing particularly sharp in the performances.

Camera (color, DV), Anthony Sacco; editor, Conor O'Neil; music, Dan Crane; sound, Keith Garcia, Douglas Carney. Reviewed at Tribeca Film Festival (Midnight), April 30, 2006. Running time: 78 MIN.

With: David "C-Diddy" Jung, Dan "Bjorn Turoque" Crane.

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