

Awesome; I Fuckin' Shot That!

USA 2006, 90 min.

Director: Nathaniel Hörnblowér (aka Adam Yauch)
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This self-proclaimed, authorised bootleg was shot by fifty of the greatest fans of long-time New York hip-hoppers, the Beastie Boys – and boy does it ever show! Blurry, shaky shots and ugly hi-8 outlines abound. The editing's mad – with most shots lasting under a split second and colourisation effects used mercilessly.

But what may be a film purist's worst nightmare is pure pop culture fantasy for the rest of us. From its faux opening title to its backstage warm-down, this multi-POV project jubilantly archives the last stop on the band's "Challah at Your Boy" tour. It was shot on 9 October 2004 in Madison Square Garden.

"You can do whatever you want, just keep shooting," the gung-ho head fan tells the rest before they position themselves throughout the Manhattan venue. Whether on stage or in the back row, the fans dutifully shoot the Beasties (Mike D, Ad Rock and MCA), as well as Mix Master Mike and rapper Doug E Fresh. They record other fans, diverse Garden staff and celebrities, including rapper Run DMC and actor Ben Stiller.

"All right, everybody, get excited. You're going to get on the DVD," one cameraman pipes as he circulates. Such natural sound snippets



are carefully woven into a slick concert soundtrack that – unlike the visuals – was clearly in the hands of professionals.

Maybe this music documentary is so...awesome...because it's not what it seems. Though the cameras are in the hands of fifty fans (plus some savvy mini-DV shooters), ultimately the band are the ones who synthesized it all. Director "Nathaniel Hörnblowér" is not really the eccentric Swiss filmmaker the band pretends he is, but none other than Beastie MCA, aka Adam Yauch, who's directed many of the band's music videos.

Intoxicated by the hometown crowd's adrenaline, the rapper/director clearly lays images over familiar sound. He's got a good eye for gestures, especially those that are ecstatic (a female fan lifting her arm as she dances) and irreverent (a cameraman records his urinal visit).

Hörnblowér/Yauch isn't afraid of pixels or imperfections. He often zooms in way too closely or distorts with colour and solarisation effects. Things get downright psychedelic the deeper into the concert the viewer goes. In one section, he even uses vibrating shots (that others would have tossed out) as an effect.

Awesome is more than a celebration of the amateur eye in the age of bootlegs and piracy. It's a creator-fan love fest. In "An Open Letter to NYC", the Beasties tell "Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens and Staten [Island]" that "since 9/11 we're still livin'/And lovin' life...". They get serious, too, even after staging a hilarious disappearing and reappearing act for their sold-out crowd. They dedicate their last song, "Sabotage", to George W. Bush.

Shout outs go to supervising editor Neal Usatin and editors Michael Boczon and Remi Gletsos.

Angelike Contis