

Self-importance at core of Grumpy

REVIEW

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Windsor moviemaker Marshall Sfalcin is a self-important, self-centred, self-deluded, pompous and argumentative jerk. Who loves his grandmother very much.

At least, that's the impression a viewer might get from *The Rise and Fall of the Grumpy Burger*, Matt Gallagher's engrossing documentary on his long-time friend.

The unusual title comes from Sfalcin's ambition to create a based-on-a-true-story epic movie about his grandfather's local empire of burger joints.

According to Sfalcin, the Hi-Ho restaurants and their flagship menu item — the oversized Grumpy Burger — were the very first examples of the fast food industry in history.

But what becomes apparent about Gallagher's documentary is that it's less about Sfalcin's cinematic efforts and more about Sfalcin himself.

With Sfalcin constantly on camera, we're privy to his every foible and flaw. From his straight-faced comparison of his burger flick with the Bible, to his megalomaniacal behaviour on set, to his haranguing of friends and family to join his ill-fated no-budget movie projects.

But under Gallagher's lens, Sfalcin is never less than interesting. And though some scenes make him reek of loserdom, other scenes cast him in an endearing light.

Like Sfalcin, Gallagher's film has a tendency toward the haphazard. There's a semblance of a story arc regarding the burger movie, but that seems to lose direction as Sfalcin's intentions with the project spiral into disarray.

Also, Gallagher purposefully includes elements to remind the viewer that what they're seeing isn't exactly reality.

We hear Gallagher urge Sfalcin not to acknowledge the camera. In another instance, Gallagher makes Sfalcin re-enter a room in a more cinematic manner. Later in the film, Gallagher's voice intrudes again to wonder what's the point of the film we're watching.

Footage is edited together with little regard for when it was recorded, resulting in sudden changes in season as well as in Marshall's appearance.

It's another sign of Gallagher's hand in creating a reality rather than merely showing reality.

But Windsor audiences will surely get a kick out of how Gallagher presents our city. At one point, as Sfalcin labours without enthusiasm at one of the blue-collar tile-laying jobs that pays his bills, he says in voiceover about Windsorites: "They're all excited in Windsor, if you're shooting something, because, you know, it makes them feel important."

You can't help thinking the same words apply to Sfalcin and his attempts at moviemaking.

★★★★/5