



how to be POPULAR

HOW TO BE POPULAR

A SHORT FILM BY JOHN DILLEY

by Abbey Miller

Oh the internet. It's amazing what you find when you make a quick break from Facebook. No, I'm not talking about porn, I'm talking about the hilarious short film, 'How to Be Popular' by director John Dilley. I came across the trailer in the height of my productivity on YouTube and I was so drawn in, I was going to BUY the fifteen minute movie. Yes, you heard right, I was actually willing to purchase media in 2009. I read on to find out that the movie was based on an article by Deirdre Dolan for the New York Times Magazine and after tirelessly combing the inter-web for a torrent file, I decided to just contact the production company myself. Not only were they cool enough to set me up with my very own shiny new copy of the DVD, but they got me an interview with the mastermind behind my coveted piece of indie pie.

AM: So what made you decide to get into directing?

JD: It was actually a slow moving process. I've always been sort of a movie dork. When my parents got a VCR that was a big deal, so when we'd go to the video store I basically tried to rent everything





that had an interesting looking cover. Probably not the best way to chose movies, but it was just always a part of my childhood. Then sometime in middle school my friends and I started making our own movies. How many movies we made depended on how much fake blood we had.

AM: *So you work with a film collective called Kontent Films, how did you get hooked up with them?*

JD: Luck mainly! Just a series of lucky coincidences. At Sundance they played my short film Little Failures before Mark Decena's feature Dopamine. He took a liking to me because we are both from San Francisco. I just kept seeing him around and then when Kontent got going he sort of threw my name out there.

AM: *So what is Kontent all about, and why did you want to work for them?*

JD: Well the kind of straddle the line between film making and Ad production. The people who started it up actually have backgrounds in advertising. I guess they figured out that people who really care about film making really care about quality and bring new ideas, so it works out for everyone involved. Its a Utopian set up really, I'm working for people who want me to be my absolute best. If they get offered a job that isn't what Kontent is about, then they politely turn them down.

AM: *So lets talk about this short film How To Be Popular. It was absolutely hilarious and based of an article in the New York Times Magazine right? How did you come across the article and and what provoked you to create the film.*

JD: Yeah, in 2001 my friend read the article and thought it was really funny and passed it on to me. It was funny and serious at the same time. We

ended up spending the weekend talking about it and trying to imagine what the kids that were quoted in the article looked like, ect. It seems like such a trivial thing to us, but to these kids its really serious. I just thought it could adapt so well into a movie, why not do it. The process was sort of slowed down because it took me nearly 2 years to track down Deirdre Dolan to get permission to do it, but once we did I was really excited.

AM: *Lots of movies and countless book focus on the subject of "popularity" and with kids in that age group. Why do you think that is?*

JD: Because so many people have gone through it. We were all insecure and awkward. I guess now its distant enough for us to laugh about but still close enough to strike a nerve. Maybe I'm behind the curve, but a couple of my friends just sat me down to watch Freaks and Geeks, and I couldn't believe how funny it was. Its probably best I saw it after I made the movie, because I would have just given up - there is no way anything can be as funny as Freaks and Geeks.

AM: *Your other film, Little failures also dealt with kids in this age group... why the focus?*

JD: I really wasn't aiming for that, it was really more of a coincidence. I really wanted to do How to Be Popular but because it was so hard to get permission to do it, it went to the back burner. So I went on to make Little Failures. I was sort of motivated by my little sisters. There was a lot of them in the story, and I was 21 at the time so I was still close enough to my teen years that I still needed to get some demons exorcized.

Because of mounting interest, you can now catch HTBP @ vimeo.com/howtobepopular

