

Friday, May 4, 2007

### **Have no fear. Underdog will be here.**

The Underdog movie will not be a cartoon. (Image from U.S. Genome page.) Although we did not name our blog after the pill-popping canine, the references were to be expected. This summer, our blog gets some free promotion -- or demotion, as the case might be -- with Underdog, the Movie, due out August 3, 2007. The film is from the Disney G-rated label, which has tended to be long on talent and short on depth for its features that I have seen. (On the other hand, Bambi had an animal compassion message to warm my vegetarian heart.) If only Underdog, the Movie would carry such surprise, dark reinventions of its characters as Jack Nicholson's whacked-out Joker and Danny DeVito's never-loved Penguin in Batman films. A crazed and complex Underdog addicted to his energy pills would do the trick, but then the G-rating would be lost. However, the G-raters do not seem to mind violence to a point; violence, yes, but drug abuse, no. On the one hand, a G-rating means massive self-censorship. On the other hand, the perpetually G-rated Wizard of Oz got away with promoting opium's sleep-inducing benefits, spectacular casting -- except that the casting of this and most other films from that time did nothing to overcome race-based prejudice, and the problem still continues today, although it has improved much since 1939 -- that included a wicked witch who later hawked coffee on television, and music that even some jazz greats would later reinterpret. In fact, a talent of the caliber of conceptual artist and juxtaposition master Joseph Kosuth can create an artistic masterpiece that still passes the filter of the G-rating censors. Some of my own moving image interests are linked here. As to the Underdog label, it well describes what we do, fighting tirelessly for individuals and small entities against overgrown opponents and overgrown laws. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Jon's news & views at 00:15

Jon -

I don't know whether or not you've seen Kirby Dick's documentary, "This Film Is Not Yet Rated," about the MPAA's movie-ratings system.

(Info from IMDB here: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0493459/>)

(Wikipedia entry here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/This\\_Film\\_Is\\_Not\\_Yet\\_Rated](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/This_Film_Is_Not_Yet_Rated))

Getting information about the MPAA's film rating system from "This Film Is Not Yet Rated" is a little like getting information about guns in American culture from Michael Moore's "Bowling for Columbine," but it still provides a very interesting look into what Dick alleges is the arbitrary decisions made by MPAA film raters, how the raters are unrepresentative of the average American parent-with-small-children, the raters' lack of expertise in child psychology, the way raters treat violent content worse than sexual content (and within sexual content, same-sex treated worse than opposite-sex content), the unnecessary secrecy involved with the rating system and how it is designed to protect both the ratings system itself as well as films produced by major studios (at the expense of independent films). I don't know anything about the MPAA's rating system other than what I've seen in the movie, so I can't tell you whether they provide an accurate or fair take on the MPAA's rating system. That said, I absolutely recommend the film as a great look at one opinion on the MPAA's rating system, even if I don't know enough to either endorse or condemn its content.

Anonymous on May 4 2007, 11:03