

AROUND (2008)

Category : DVD REVIEWS (A-C)

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Directed by DAVID SPALTRO

Review by PHIL ALLELY



[Released by](#)

[Running Time: 95 minutes](#)

[Rating: NR](#)

[Color format: Color](#)

[Audio/Subtitles: English](#)

[Region Code: 1, NTSC](#)

[Aspect Ratio: Widescreen 1.78:1](#)

[16:9 Enhanced: Yes](#)

[Special Features:](#)

[Trailer Online: Yes](#)

...AROUND is a gem of a picture that has made a few big splashes on the independent movie festival scene, making first time writer and director David Spaltro a man to watch out for and one that will find his next piece of work easily saleable.

Based on Spaltro's own real life experiences, this is a comic drama of very decent caliber, looking at the young Jersey native Doyle Simms and his tempestuous family life. Being a trouble maker from a young age, it seems inevitable that Doyle would seek any opportunity to leave his family home (shared with his mother and sister after a marital split) and head to New York for a place at film school.

Told in a semi documentary style, narrated by the lead actor, we follow Doyle as he embarks on his epic and inspirational journey from small town life to one in the big smoke. All starts well as the young man joins the course he wishes, studies hard and strives to reach his filmmaking goals. Well maybe not as simple as that, there are a few hurdles along the way.

The biographical nature of the film shines through in some scenes, especially where Doyle's mother chastises his decision to leave her and pursue his dreams, his encounters with authority figures and his various relationships/friendships that he makes and loses along the way.

The title stems from a comment made during the movie, when Doyle is asked if he lives nearby and simply replies 'around'. The reason being that during his early studies we watch Doyle slip away from his hard work, becoming disillusioned by the pretentiousness of his fellow students, lose his student grants, lose his accommodation and subsequently begin living in his own form of cheap rent controlled living. This comes in the form of sleeping and washing in the train station and joining the

many other unfortunates who do the same. Picking up some very insightful bits of street philosophy along the way.

This is where the film gains its humor from, seeing how Doyle adapts to his new found life of poverty, the friends he meets, people he encounters and the lives he touches along the way. Due to the intimate story, well filmed set pieces and fast-moving style you never seem to dwell too long on the sadness of Doyle's life and the danger he could be in when living like he does, you instead revel in the minor successes he makes along the way.

It's interesting to see him enjoy his dead end jobs, watch him romance a co-worker and stand up to her abusive boyfriend, we also savor the way he converts others to see life through the rose tinted glasses he seems to. If you've ever wondered how people can make themselves into a better person or pick themselves up when life has knocked them down, then this is the tale for you.

Doyle has a bleak at times life, but it is filled with little victories, he uses multiple credit cards to support his education fees, he saves his few dollars of restaurant staff pay and rents an apartment, tutors foreign speakers in English, eventually wins the heart of Allyson (even helping the aspiring actress get a job) and finds his inspiration to make his long overdue film.

Spaltro seems to have put his whole heart and soul into this picture, which is no mean feat considering it was made seemingly using his own many credit cards and used pretty much the same re-dressed set for as many scenes as possible