



The Dungeon Masters

Director: Keven McAlester, USA, 2008, 93 minutes

Inside the beige walls of a Middle-American convention centre, a dream of honour, adventure, and Wagnerian passion burns in the hearts of three different people. Director Keven McAlester (nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for his film on Roky Erikson, *You're Gonna Miss Me*) returns with *The Dungeon Masters*, a journey deep into the world of Dungeons and Dragons.

Scott aspires to greatness, whether it's through a cable access show called *Uncle Drac's Magical Clubhouse* (which is just as awful as it sounds) or his unpublished fantasy novels. Elizabeth, whose persona of a dark elf requires the laborious application of full-body makeup, drifts between bad relationships and dead-end jobs. Richard, reunited with his adoptive son and the gamers he has feuded with for the past twenty years, must reconcile with his own emotional inadequacy. All three are bound up in their raw need for something bigger, something better. Something, conversely enough, more real.

Filmed with extraordinary attention by cinematographer Lee Daniel (*Slacker*), *The Dungeon Masters* is not another gawk at a subculture of freak and geeks, but an honest look at what Pulitzer-prize winner Ernest Becker called the "immortality project." If all of human civilization, from God to LOTR (That's Lord of the Rings, for the uninitiated), is a defense mechanism against death, the need to become part of something heroic is not only normal, but necessary. As Scott says, "A lot of the world is very gray, there's a lot of people out there, but where is the greatness?" The struggle to

find happiness and, more importantly, meaning becomes an epic quest all on its own. Richard, leading his gamers into an unknown adventure, describes it as "A solitary imperfection in an otherwise perfect void."

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Keven McAlester was born in New Haven, Connecticut; grew up in Dallas, Texas; and graduated from Harvard University. The resulting confusion led to stints as a newspaper editor, underground deejay, and amateur ornithologist before he began making films. *The Dungeon Masters* is his second feature. His first film, *You're Gonna Miss Me*, won the jury prize at AFI's Silverdocs festival, and was nominated for Best Documentary at the 2006 Independent Spirit Awards. His other recent work includes "Seven Plus or Minus Two," a short film installation now showing at the Akademie der Kuenste, Berlin; and music videos for Spoon, the New Year, and Caroline Polachek of Chairlift. He's also currently producing a documentary by director Rory Kennedy for HBO. He lives in Los Angeles and New York.

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