Entertainment

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Abstract
This is a film review of *Entertainment* (2015), directed by Rick Alverson.

Author Notes
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Entertainment (2015)  
Directed by Rick Alverson

*Entertainment* tells the story of a travelling comedian (Gregg Turkington) whose life seems to be spiraling into depression and worse. The character of The Comedian is actually based on Turkington’s alter ego character, Neil Hamburger, who does stand up comedy through a nasally pitched voice while sweating profusely, and throwing out “what” and “why” jokes.

Travelling through the California desert, The Comedian dresses up in a cheap tuxedo, drenches his hair with ‘sweat’ and performs his act at small bars and motels at night while filling his days touring demoralizing tourist attractions (e.g., the airplane graveyard). After each show, he calls his estranged daughter and leaves her voice mail messages about how well his career is going: she never calls him back. We never really know if she actually exists.
The Comedian’s onstage persona is surly and alienating, his jokes cruel and crass, and his daytime travels are filled with alien landscapes and dead-end attractions. The Comedian is the epitome of the dead dream. When he finally gets to perform at a big gig for a celebrity birthday, it too is filled with third rate actors. That is when The Comedian finally loses all hope. Entertainment, if it has a purpose, is filled with loneliness, despondency and no expectations. The Comedian has no delusions about his persona; he is reviled and repugnant. But he continues doing his job and makes us feel empathy towards this man. Perhaps we are the ones living with false hope. Perhaps there is no deliverance for any of us. We just continue to entertain dying dreams in a dying landscape.