



## Jodorowsky's Dune Discussion Guide

Director: Frank Pavich

Year: 2014

Time: 90 min

**You might know this director from:**

N.Y.H.C. (1999)

### FILM SUMMARY

**JODOROWSKY'S DUNE** pays tribute to a great mind of the contemporary art world, a borderline madman and a visionary well ahead of his time, and his unborn filmic dream. After two successful films, Alejandro Jodorowsky set out to create a screen adaptation of Frank Herbert's popular sci-fi novel "Dune." Nothing quite like this had been done in 1974, when Jodorowsky and producer Michel Seydoux began putting together an all-star team. Not a single shortcut was taken. But when the production was presented to Hollywood, the reaction fell short of expectations, and the project hit the ice.

With contemporary interviews with Jodorowsky, Seydoux, and the actors and artists who sacrificed heart and soul in the name of one man's ambitiously spiritual vision, **JODOROWSKY'S DUNE** presents an inspiring picture of an artist's quest to stay true to his craft. Additional footage of the remarkable acting crew and mind-boggling props provide further evidence of Jodorowsky's brilliance. Both heartbreaking and uplifting, the film contemplates whether there is any space for true artistic greatness in the mainstream market. In the words of Jodorowsky, "This system makes us slaves."

Though too big for its time, Jodorowsky's vision set a precedent for future films, and its impact can be cited in many Hollywood blockbusters. Jodorowsky may have not been able to make his **DUNE** back in 1975, but his steadfast devotion to art did reach the world and continues to resound throughout Hollywood studios.

## FILM THEMES

Jodorowsky is an artist in the truest sense, doggedly devoting his life to his craft. Even if his visions never come to life, the greater picture is altered forever.

### ARTISTIC AMBITION

“We will change the world!” Is there a higher mountain Jodorowsky could have attempted to scale? A stranger to sacrifice, he yearned to create a cinematographic god, to free humanity from the trappings of the mind, to fashion a sacred ground where young people could plant their feet and gaze at the world, hallucinating without a single tab of LSD. His aspirations were gigantic and encompassing, his vision magnificent. Jodorowsky compiled an all-star team and took no shortcuts. Stopping short of nothing, Jodorowsky is a living example of artistic potential that is allowed to strive limitlessly toward a vision, regardless of whether that vision ever sees the light of day.

### ARTISTIC MADNESS

“There is no great genius without a mixture of madness,” said Aristotle. The jury is still out on whether Jodorowsky is a sane genius, an artistic madman, or a bit of both. An intense guru and a self-declared prophet who compiled a cult of spiritual warriors in the mid-1970s, Jodorowsky’s fervency, brilliance, and steadfast devotion to his artistic vision were wildly apparent in JODOROWSKY’S DUNE. Recounting the events from 40 years earlier, his voice quavers with passion, his body pulses with emotion. If madness means being wholly committed to translating the mind’s vision into concrete material, then a madman he is.

### ARTISTIC HOLLYWOOD?

For Jodorowsky and Seydoux to receive support from mainstream Hollywood men for their otherworldly sci-fi film, their idea would need to take a technical approach. So they detailed the costumes, camera angles, zooms, props, locations, actors, and soundtrack producers. But ultimately, being scared of the spiritual and metaphysical aspects of the script, and even fearing Jodorowsky’s mind, Hollywood studios withheld the big bucks. They could not compare his vision to anything else, and thus, the silver screen offered no place for this pure form of art.

### ARTISTIC HEARTACHE

Watching Lynch’s DUNE at the cinema, Jodorowsky stated, “Like an ill person I came to the theater.” Having faced multiple heartbreaking rejections from Hollywood in the mid-1970s, to know that another director had received financial support to execute his personal dream was gutting. The suffering was permanent, something Jodorowsky still carries to this day. Humiliated, heartbroken, abandoned by his dream, the failure of DUNE is an artistic injury deep in his heart. When Lynch’s DUNE fell short of Jodorowsky’s vision, redemption appeared briefly, only to be replaced by the heartache of a misplaced dream.

**“Movies are an art more than an industry. It’s the search of the human soul.”**

Alejandro Jodorowsky

**“You can’t have a masterpiece without madness.”**

Michel Seydoux

**“I was searching for the light of genius in every person.”**

Alejandro Jodorowsky

## FURTHER DISCUSSIONS:

1. Have you read "Dune" the novel or any other of Frank Herbert's science fiction works? What is your experience with sci-fi novels?
2. Have you seen any of Alejandro Jodorowsky's films? If so, were you a fan? If not, are you now interested in seeing his work?
3. If Jodorowsky and team had received financial backing from Hollywood in the mid-1970s, do you think they would have been able to see DUNE through to completion?
4. Are you more of a spiritual or a scientific individual?
5. Have you ever seen a film that lived up to the book it was based on? Do all films based on books fall short of the original story?
6. Jodorowsky describes his pain while entering the cinema to watch David Lynch's DUNE, and then his successive elation at Lynch's poor adaptation. Have you ever wished for someone else to fail because you were not able to succeed? Is this an instinctive human reaction or something we have learned?
7. Do you believe Jodorowsky is more of a sane or insane individual? How does madness assist and/or destroy art?
8. Are you a fan of science fiction? What practical lessons are intrinsic in science fiction?
9. What, for you, was the underlying message of the film? Of Jodorowsky?
10. Alejandro Jodorowsky has spent the majority of his adult life in Paris, France. Why do you think French culture attracts such artistic and spiritual people?

## NOTES:

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## FILM FACTS:

- Director Frank Pavich was a fan of Jodorowsky's films. Knowing that Jodorowsky's film version of *Dune* was completely storyboarded but was never filmed, Pavich was determined to tell the story. After contacting Jodorowsky's agent, he received an email from Jodorowsky himself. Pavich was initially terrified to open the email, and waited an entire week before reading it. In the email, Jodorowsky invited Pavich to his home in Paris to discuss the project.
- Alejandro Jodorowsky was born in Chile in 1929 to Jewish-Russian immigrants. From an early age, he was interested in theater, particularly miming. He moved to Paris at age 23, where he founded the Panic Movement of performance artists. From 1960, he divided his time between the French capital and Mexico City, where he directed his first and second feature films: "Fando y Lis" and "El Topo."
- Jodorowsky founded a therapeutic practice he referred to as psychomagic, in which art, Eastern philosophies, mysticism, and psychotherapy are combined to heal emotional problems.
- *JODOROWSKY'S DUNE* won a number of awards including a Silver Scream Award at the Amsterdam Fantastic Film Festival and an Audience Award at the Catalanian International Film Festival. It was also nominated for a Golden Camera Award at Cannes in 2013.
- Film producer Michel Seydoux is the president and chairman of French football club, Lille OSC.
- French artist Jean Giraud worked under the pseudonyms Moebius and Gir, a reflection of the division he experienced within himself at age 3 when his parents divorced. He is famous in France for his Western comic series "Blueberry."
- "Dune" was written in 1965 by American author Frank Herbert and is the world's best-selling science fiction novel. Herbert was commissioned in 1959 to write a magazine article on sand dunes in Oregon then took 6 years to write and research what became "Dune." Initially rejected by 20 publishers, the novel was not a bestseller when it was first released, but went on to attract fans over time. Herbert was one of the first science-fiction writers to address ecology in his work, and he also grappled with the differences between sanity and madness.
- In 2013, Alejandro Jodorowsky released his first film in 23 years, "The Dance of Reality." In this autobiographical look at director Brontis' life, Jodorowsky's son who was cast to play Paul in *DUNE* plays the protagonist. Filmed in his hometown of Tocopilla, Chile, Jodorowsky's wife, Pascale Montandon, worked as the costume designer, and two of his other sons appeared along with Brontis. The film received a standing ovation when it was screened at Cannes.

## WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. Share the film with others. Consider inviting some people over to watch and discuss the film and Jodorowsky's message.
2. Read one of the many books written by Alejandro Jodorowsky to better understand his genius. A couple of titles include "Where the Bird Sings Best" and "The Spiritual Journey of Alejandro Jodorowsky."
3. Look outside of Hollywood for interesting tales and artistry, such as in B-movies and other documentaries!
4. Watch "The Dance of Reality," Jodorowsky's first film in 23 years, released in 2013.

## We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

**Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.**