

[THREE NAKED PYGMY WOMEN DANCE IN A HOTEL ROOM. IN FRONT OF THEM, AN ANGRY CANADIAN ADDRESSES THE CAMERA]

ANGRY CANADIAN: We've been in the Congo for three days, and there's a growing dissent in our group...other people in the group want to pursue other stories...one guy in our group is obsessed with getting a Pygmy porno. This is not what we came here for! We came here for the fucking dinosaur!

"The Vice Guide to Travel" is not a travel guide. Produced by and featuring the founders of the raunchy, anti-PC Vice Magazine, this feature-length DVD documents the far-flung travels of a motley crew of 20-something Americans and Canadians.

The Vice promos promise "the planet's most dangerous and weird destinations." Newspaper headlines provide the dangerous: a gun bazaar in Osama's backyard; the radioactive ruins of Chernobyl; and Rio's "City of God" *favelas*. Bottom-rack tabloids provide the weird: the decaying remains of an Aryan utopia in rural Paraguay; and the jungle lake which holds Nessie's Congolese cousin (the "dinosaur" of the introduction).

Don't count on the DVD for helpful hints on visiting these places yourself. Visiting Pakistan's tribal areas, for example, requires that the plucky correspondent call in a personal favor between his Pakistani-born mother and the province's ruling governor. Even the more accessible areas would be hard to find with the vague information provided by the correspondents, who spend most of their trips lost, drunk, scared, or some combination thereof. That said, the Vice Guide does provide its own off-beat travel ethos--go ahead, drink that hallucinogenic jungle-brew!

But at the same time, we do learn that the dark corners of the world are both more and less dangerous than expected. No segment embodies this better than the one starring Trace Crutchfield, a man as blond-haired, blue-eyed, and square-jawed as his name suggests. Crutchfield begins his trip to Rio by visiting government officials and white collar experts who describe the senseless violence of *favelas* in patronizing tones.

Donning pressed khakis, blue blazer, and double-Windsor tie, Crutchfield then takes an extended tour of "the most dangerous *favela*" made famous by the eponymous

Hollywood hit “City of God.” Guided by a local and met by friendly faces at every corner, Crutchfield and his camera crew are soon invited to a rave sponsored by a drug and an intimate birthday barbecue. The dance party begins at midnight and the Vice crew dance to *baile funk* until sunrise. The birthday barbecue starts a few hours later, with meat looks so that you can almost smell it through the television. Over cold beer, Crutchfield’s guide defends the *favela*: “They say a lot of fake things outside...we have a good people down here, you know what I mean?” Crutchfield agrees, but then asks “Isn’t this the same street the gunshots were on?” His guide sheepishly agrees, and both men laugh it off with a second helping.

As charming and disarming as Crutchfield may be, Vice fails miserably in all attempts at politics. Certain correspondents entertain the delusion that they are important and groundbreaking journalists. I beg to disagree: C-list celebrity-hood and scoffing references to "mainstream media" are not enough to make you a legitimate news source (SEE "BLOGGERS"). A discussion of Arab-Israeli politics between generates some choice insights from Hipster demigod Spike Jonze:

- Who's the Hezbollah?
- It's really heavy.
- It's fucked.
- These ideas and problems and, you know...world crises seem so huge.
- That old woman said that if an American comes, she'll drink his blood? Gnarly!
- There's no way to, like, put a period on it. Like, we don't have an endpoint for it, you know what I mean? It's going to go on forever."

I appreciate the enthusiasm, but in the future, try skimming the "mainstream media" before you start "improving" it with your travel stunts.

In a moment of brash overstatement typical to Vice, the DVD’s box promises “a revolution in the business of going places, doing things, and telling people about the places you went and the things you did.” While not a revolution, this DVD provides a fresh model for being in foreign places, something along the lines of “politically ambitious gonzo tourism.” We might not all be ready for a vodka-fueled hunt through Chernobyl for mutant boars, but it won't actually kill us to occasionally take the path (much) less taken. You never know—there might be great barbecue.