



## Loudquietloud: A Film About the Pixies

### Review

by Joe Viglione

This is a well-deserved documentary film on the Pixies, though a bit ostentatious in its premise. The band is one of the greats that emerged out of the 1980s Boston scene, but the opening quip calling them "one of the most influential bands of all time" is the kind of overreach that takes away from the fun, and a philosophy that holds this elegant — and at times gorgeous — production back. What should be an important addition to their musical catalog quickly evaporates into a DVD fanzine — not a bad thing in itself, but not the type of vehicle that will recruit many new fans or beg repeated plays. *Frank Black* (aka *Black Francis*) doesn't have the presence of a *Willie "Loco" Alexander*, a huge Boston cult figure who is a most intriguing and captivating character. As the first artist to perform at the Boston Tea Party, and later as a member of the *Velvet Underground*, *Alexander* has the "street cred" that would make a mere phone conversation compelling. Watching *Black Francis* engaged on the telly about the ego conflicts with *Kim Deal* is hardly as enlightening as, say, *Ralph J. Gleason* presenting a legendary 1965 *Bob Dylan* press conference. Therein lies the problem: *David*, *Kim*, *Joey*, and *Frank* (or is it *Black*?) are not *John*, *Paul*, *George*, and *Ringo*, nor does this film contain the supreme irreverence of *A Hard Day's Night* or *Help!* And just as one Boston area WZLX disc jockey asked on-air, in all seriousness, "Lennon, McCartney, Harrison, and Starkey? Who is this *Starkey* guy?," few people on the planet could ever find the missing Pixies link, *Charles Thompson*. This film is not for the masses, but for Pixies fans, a cult that loves the sound and wants the music, and it's the music here that is the most powerful thing. Sadly, there's just not enough of it. The personalities don't jump off the screen, so the home movie's best footage outside of the snippets of music are some of the sights — the band recording in Iceland, a hotel front in Chicago. The DVD becomes as frustrating as the group's breakup.

You can't put bald ego on tape and expect to find the magic. The magic with the Pixies has always been the music — not their looks, not their persona — but simply the sound they blasted from the stage of the Rat in Boston way back when. Gee, if only if only that fantastic set was what was inside this DVD case. *Kelley Deal* wielding a camera and asking a woman why she's there is supposed to be ironic. "My daughter *Kim*'s in the Pixies; I'm here to see her." The home movie is great stuff, *Kelley*, of course, and being the woman's daughter is as well. But wouldn't it have been more fun to see mom running the camera and a great *Breeders* song appear from out of nowhere? Now, had these drawn-out moments been edited down and dropped into one of the many Pixies music videos out there — for example, the December 15, 1986, appearance at WJUL (now WUML) in Lowell, MA, or the Los Angeles footage from October 30, 2004 — this project would have taken on lots more meaning and historical importance. There is a cool 16-page black-and-white booklet with commentary from directors *Steven Cantor* and *Matthew Galkin*, but what they fail to note is that many of the bands that the Pixies influenced, with the exception of *Nirvana* and perhaps a handful of others, never reached the level of *Roxy Music*, *the Cars*, *R.E.M.*, or other latter-day pioneers that the *Velvet Underground* spawned. *The Cars* inspired many more bands than the Pixies, for example, and a quirky documentary on those personalities would be more entertaining. Without *the Cars* there would be no "Every Breath You Take" from *the Police*, arguably their greatest hit. Without the Pixies there's a very good chance *Kurt Cobain* would have still made his mark. The filmmakers do nothing here to dispute that, which renders *Loudquietloud: A Film About the Pixies* a great concept that misses. The group — and these filmmakers — need to borrow the *Barre Phillips Live in Vienna* DVD (on the same label, Music Video Distributors) to see pure genius, and a simple interview with more value than egos continuing to get in the way of the creation of intriguing sounds. One would think after

all these years they'd get it.

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