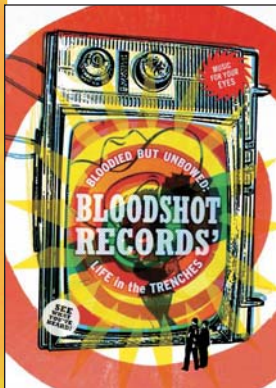


DVDs...

Bloodied But Unbowed

Bloodshot Records' *Life In The Trenches*
Bloodshot



The tenth anniversary of the right-wing Fox News Network has been much ballyhooed in the press of late but there's a more auspicious milestone that's also worth celebrating this year; the twelfth birthday of Bloodshot Records, the indie insurgent roots-rock label based in Chicago. Not that twelve year

anniversaries necessarily rank in importance with nicely rounded-off landmarks like a neatly encapsulated decade, but the company's honchos no doubt figured since nobody paid much attention two years ago, they might as well milk their fortunes whenever opportunity presents itself.

Indeed, *Bloodied But Unbowed* makes up for lost time, cramming over three hours of promo videos, live performances, short-form documentaries and various other visual treats into what may well be the most self-congratulatory DVD ever made. Nevertheless, the seemingly endless back-slapping and self-indulgence never comes across as excessive (almost never anyway) despite an entire feature devoted to the company's origins, another featuring their artists' ruminations about the label, yet another replaying a local music show marking Bloodshot's ten year celebrations, and, for good measure, footage of the label's annual barbeque at the SXSW music festival. Indeed, the self-deprecating tone and unswerving irreverence that's so inherent to their core identity consistently comes to the fore, preventing things from ever getting too reverential.

Those qualities are also evident in the 30-plus individual music videos that form the essence of this set; a collection of disparate artists and performances that belie the widely held notion that Bloodshot is purely a roots-rock/alt-country collective. Indeed, for every Johnny Cash or Hank Williams wannabe like Wayne Hancock (his wonderfully revealing "Thunderstorms & Neon Signs" may be the best song Hank never wrote), there are modern pop prodigies such as the Detroit Cobras and neo-punk veterans like Graham Parker, Sally Timms and Jon Langford (whose "Nashville Radio" seals the stylistic bonds). Even those artists who purport to tow the line seem inclined to veer off-course. Hence, Bobby Bare's Jr's "Lets Rock and Roll" is anything but. Likewise, Split Lip Rayfield may build their sound on backwoods instrumentation (banjo, mandolin, washboard bass), but when they exhort the virtues of "More Cocaine Please,"

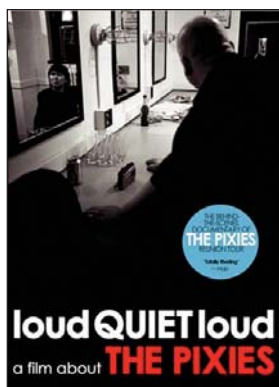
they're clearly taking their own twist on tradition.

The lesson learned is that while Bloodshot earned its kudos for fostering soon-to-be cult faves like Ryan Adams, Robbie Fulks, Alejandro Escovedo and the Old 97s, ultimately, it's the obvious devotion to their more off-kilter artists that provides the true stamp of their signature sound. Indeed, it's understating the case to call *Bloodied but Unbowed* a mere primer. It is, in fact, a bigger lesson on the way music ought to be made.

—LEE ZIMMERMAN

Pixies

LoudQUIETloud: A Film About the Pixies
Music Video Distributors



Few of their fans would have ever predicted the regrouping of the Pixies, one of the most mercurial bands of the late '80s; a group many claim opened the door for Nirvana and the grunge generation of the early '90s. Even fewer would have predicted that they'd be able to retrace

that signature style. It's a proposition that still sounds shocking — menacing, malevolent melodies pierced by torrents of jagged guitar and stuttering rhythms, all underscored by leader Black Francis' nihilistic pontificating. Internal dissension caused the band to split a scant five years after its first recording — the superb *Surfer Rosa* — and a mere three years after its major-label breakthrough, the dazzling *Doolittle*.

Their animosity cast aside, a tentative Pixies reconciliation resulted in a 2004 tour that found the band as potent as ever. *LoudQUIETloud: A Film About the Pixies* shows opposing views of this perpetually conflicted outfit and its retooled presence in the new millennium. A revealing, intimate portrait of the band's diverse personalities, it lives up to its title in ways that are more than musical. Between various concert clips from their recent reunion gigs, the four musicians lay bare their inner souls, a tack that makes them decidedly less intimidating to their fans and, one supposes, to one another. Reminiscent of the candid, off-the-cuff style that marked those other great "rockumentaries," specifically, the Rolling Stones' *Gimme Shelter* and Bob Dylan's *Don't Look Back*, it provides a candid look at the normally reserved bandmates and the often times mundane aspects of their backstage existence.

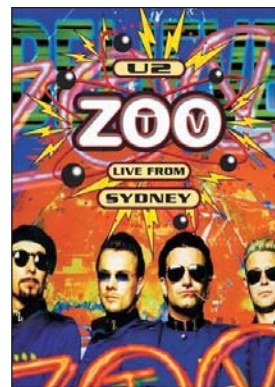
Ultimately, *LoudQUIETloud* finds the band shedding their enigmatic veil, and emerg-

ing as an ensemble occupied by four far more conciliatory individuals, their infamous in-fighting now tempered by the passage of time. By allowing themselves to reveal their own humanity and accessibility, The Pixies, circa 2004, demonstrate that while they might have mellowed, they didn't have to do so at the expense of either their passion or their purpose.

—LEE ZIMMERMAN

U2

Zoo TV Live From Sidney DVD
Island



Sometimes it's hard to distinguish between show biz shtick and genuine spectacle. At times, watching *Zoo TV Live From Sidney*, a new DVD that captures U2's landmark stop on their 1993 Zoo TV world tour, it's difficult to determine on which side of that fine line Bono and Company come down on. Light years removed

from the concert captured on *Live From Red Rocks*, it finds the band giving full vent to their conceptual designs. At the time, they were filling stadiums with an over-the-top theatrical presentation that included banks of monitors, elaborate visuals and a stage set that threatened to dwarf the four musicians that stalked it. While the band itself was at a creative peak — the fact that the quartet performs without the usual array of supporting players speaks volumes about their virtuosity — it's the effects and sheer magnitude of their stage show that vie for your attention. An excellent re-mastering of the original analogue video makes the images pop, bringing a sharpness and definition that comes strikingly close to digital quality. Likewise, the 5:1 surround sound brings a presence rarely attained in concert videos.

Still, for all the special effects and breathtaking visuals, it's U2's perennial classics that provide the sharpest focus; trademark anthems such as "New Year's Day," "Angel Of Harlem," "Bullet The Blue Sky," "Where The Streets Have No Name," "Pride (In The Name of Love)" and "With Or Without You" bring the searing impact of U2's catalog front and center. Early on in the set, Bono — clad in black leather and wearing his trademark sunglasses — proclaims "We're going live to the planet tonight... Let's hope this shit works!" It worked well, but ultimately, for all the added accoutrements, it's the music that still matters most.

—LEE ZIMMERMAN