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loudQUIETloud Movie Review

Pixies film tones down the insights

By Ty Burr

Boston Globe
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As rock 'n' roll survival stories go, the Pixies are particularly cheering. Beloved by a hardy cult and ignored by the mainstream during their 1986 to 1993 heyday, the noisy foursome from Boston laid down the floor plan for alterna-rock that Nirvana and other bands would sell to the masses like processed cheese. Even Kurt Cobain admitted that with "Smells Like Teen Spirit," "I was basically trying to rip off the Pixies."

So by the time the inevitable reunion rolled around in 2004, the pump had been well and truly primed. To the band's shock, the shows sold out instantly, and audiences were reverent, loud, and surprisingly young -- kids who heard Pixie dust in the DNA of everything they listened to.

It's the rare happy rock 'n' roll ending, but "loudQUIETloud: A Film About the Pixies" does next to nothing with it. Directed by Steven Cantor and Matthew Galkin, the 85-minute documentary takes a torpid, fly-on-the-wall approach, providing little context, few insights, and not enough music.

For instance: The Pixies' break-up back in 1993 arose from long-simmering tensions between songwriter/lead singer Black Francis (a.k.a. Frank Black) and bassist Kim Deal, but the subject is barely broached by the film, and when it is, guitarist Joey Santiago -- filling the George Harrison peacemaker slot -- simply says, "You put four people in a room for five years, there's going to be tension."

Similarly, Kim Deal's experience with her twin, Kelley, in the post-Pixies band The Breeders left a scarred trail of drug abuse and powerful recordings, but even though Kelley comes along on the tour to keep her sister flying straight, the filmmakers seem too awe struck to press the matter.

There's irony in the fact that these former firebrands are now (mostly) sober family folk, with cute kids they talk to from the road via iCamera. It's certainly a jolt to see the Buddha-sized Black recite daily affirmations before going to bed -- this after unleashing his psychic demons on stage in venerable numbers like "Gouge Away" and "Where Is My Mind."

Other ironies seem to pass by unnoticed. The directors talk to a sweet, geeky teenage girl who idolizes the group (we later see her playing with her own garage band) and is thrilled to meet

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LOUDQUIETLOUD INFO

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Movie Type
Special Interest

★ ★ ★ ★

Running Time
82

Directed By
Matthew Galkin, Steven Cantor

Cast
David Lovering, Frank Black, Kim Deal

Year
0000

MPAA Rating
NR

them after a show . That she's separated from the Pixies by a locked chain-link fence (before they climb into their waiting limo) says all sorts of accidentally profound things about alt-rock then and now.

``loudQUIETloud" -- a good description of the band's sound, incidentally -- is too much the fan document to spoil the fun with larger surmises. Even a fan, however, might prefer the excellent, recently released concert DVD ``Pixies: Live at the Paradise in Boston" to this tepid behind-the-scenes experience.

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