

PIXIES' NEW DECIBEL RANGE



Written by Kevin Harper, Contributor

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For all my love of rock history, I surprise myself when I realize that I have never really investigated the Pixies beyond the major hits ("Cactus" and "Wave of Mutilation"). So, when the opportunity to review their first-ever DVD LoudQUIETloud: A film about the Pixies, I decided that this would be my proper entry point.

From this perspective, the film works.

It is a documentary about the grunge originators' reunion tour in 2004, with live footage from the various dates interspersed throughout. It is not a retrospective history of the band since only a little bit of information is provided about the band. Rather, directors Steven Cantor and Matthew Galkin paint a picture of a highly influential band with middle-aged members who are still plagued by demons.

There are some moments reminiscent to Spinal Tap, such as drummer David Lovering's career as a magician prior to the reunion, but more tender focus is given to bassist Kim Deal's struggle to remain sober while on tour after years of alcohol abuse.

I did wish that the directors were less stingy with the concert footage, as spellbinding performances of songs like "Where Is My Mind?" and "Here Comes Your Man" are cut short to make way for more interviews. As a relative newcomer, this left me with the desire to run out and buy their albums, but I can imagine longtime fans getting irritated with the tactic.

That said, the footage of the band on tour is more interesting and revealing, with surprisingly candid insight into the group's continually troubled dynamic with each other and within themselves (accentuated by an original score by Daniel Lanois that attempts to elevate the film above the standard "concert film").

Deal's struggle with sobriety is a major focal point as she brings her sister (and Breeders bandmate) Kelley on the tour to keep her from drinking. By contrast, Lovering develops an addiction to tranquilizers while on tour and faces scrutiny from frontman Black Francis and lead guitarist Joey Santiago, both of whom became family men after the Pixies broke up.

The film leaves the viewer with a warm impression of the band that appears to consist of the most down-to-earth musicians to ever spawn a subgenre of such rebelliousness. A quote from Kurt Cobain precedes the film who notes that he was trying to rip off the Pixies when he was writing the seminal "Smells Like Teen Spirit."

There isn't a lot at stake in the film since the group reunited mostly for financial reasons and showed little sign of wanting to record new material.

"We don't talk very much. Not because we don't like each other, but because it's just the kind of people we are," said Francis as he summed up the band.

The film leaves the viewer with an honest depiction of a band and its implosive nature that still results in explosive music.

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