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The Pixies - loudQUIETloud: A Film About The Pixies

"loudQUIETloud: A Film About The Pixies" DVD review by Todd E. Jones



"loudQUIETloud: A Film About The Pixies" DVD

Review by Todd E. Jones
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Pixies were fundamental in forming the definition of independent alternative music in the 1990's. Signed to 4AD, Pixies earned a massive following and unwavering critical respect. Kurt Cobain (of Nirvana) and Thom Yorke (of Radiohead) stated that the music of the Pixies were a salient inspiration. The psycho-rock of their "Surfer Rosa" and "Come On Pilgrim" became essential for fans, as well as building blocks in their discography. Their massive success peaked when they released, "Doolittle". The album included the classic songs, "Hey", "Debaser", "Here Comes Your Man", and "Monkey Gone To Heaven". The movie, "Pump Up The Volume" included "Wave Of Mutilation (UK Surf)" version. The song, "Where Is My Mind" was featured in the film, "Fight Club". After their last album ("Trompe Le Monde"), Pixies disbanded. Lead singer, Black Frances pursued a solo career as Frank Black. Kim Deal already had a side band called The Breeders. Along with her twin sister (Kelly), Kim Deal found major success when The Breeders released the single, "Cannonball" (from the "Last Splash" album). After a decade, Pixies reformed and began touring. Filmmakers Steven Cantor and Matthew Galkin (known for the reality show "Family Bonds") jumped at the opportunity to document their reunion, rehearsals, and tour. This footage evolved into the absorbing documentary, "loudQUIETloud: A Film About The Pixies". Both fans and band members dramatically changed since the early 90's. Unintentionally, the documentary reveals the obscurity of the Pixies. Ultimately, the film truly exhibits how the band is more than just the sum of their parts. Alone, each member is a shockingly normal human being. Together, the Pixies are a truly captivating force in music.

"loudQUIETloud: A Film About The Pixies" only focuses on the reunion and tour of the Pixies. The story is basically about four people, who have grown to be strangers. Can they pick up where they left off? Can they still rock? Unfortunately, the documentary includes little to no footage of the band's past glory. The true popularity and success of the band is stated, but not exposed. The omission of music videos, past live performances, and archive interview footage perpetuates the normality of each band member. Living in Oregon, Black Frances (known as Charles) is a married stepfather. Guitarist extraordinaire,

Joey Santiago is a loving father & husband who became a successful film composer. Living in Ohio, Kim Deal is a recovering addict who engrossed herself in family. The oddest member, Dave Lovering (drummer) appeared to be the most normal member in the 90's. Looking scruffy and homeless, Lovering has become a magician and a lover of metal detection. The scene of him walking on the beach with a metal detector is awkwardly amusing. The members of the band have grown apart and become so completely different from each other. Their differences are so glaring that it is difficult to believe that they were once in one of the most successful and influential alternative bands. The first Pixies rehearsal captures their parallel evolution. Together for the first time in a decade, the band plays "Hey". Although it is an obvious practice attempt, the chemistry of the members and the strength of the song remain. Since they have not listened or played Pixies' music in a decade, they must re-learn the songs. Kim's anxiety is especially poignant. Not only is she struggling with sobriety, she is consumed with the pressure to fulfill the fan's expectations. As the film progresses, the viewer begins to root for their delicate victory.

The film's flow is formed by intertwining the strident live performances with the quiet, personal moments of the band members. Like the film's title, "loudQUIETloud" travels from tender, awkward moments to thunderous moments and back again. During the initial viewing, the live performances stand out and the softer scenes become a major contrasting element. An excellent live band, Pixies prove that they still can rock well. They perform their classic songs like, "U Mass", "In Heaven", "Where Is My Mind", and "Gouge Away". The live performance of "Caribou" is exceptionally moving as the scenes of traveling are weaved within the live footage. "U Mass" still sounds fresh. During "Something Against You", an intoxicated Dave Lovering keeps drumming even when the rest of the band stops. Unfortunately, tracks like "Debaser", "Is She Weird", "Gigantic", and "Mr. Grieves" were not included. This void is filled by the exceptional live footage of "In Heaven", "Vamos", "Cactus", and "Gouge Away". During the band's final show of the tour, their performance of "Hey" symbolizes the band's redemption as well as their musical bond. Some brief footage of their past accentuated their connection. Their catalogue is so extensive and powerful that the DVD package cannot include all of their shining moments.

The normalcy of rock idols brings the band members to a human level. This double edge sword may take away the band's mystery, but it forces the viewer relate to each member. After multiple viewings, an appreciation of the subtle moments forms. Pixies are just normal people whose work happens to be rock stars. As sisters, Kim and Kelly Deal share an eerie twin bond in their own world. The insanity behind Black's lyrics is in a glaring contrast to his simple life in Oregon. Basically, he is building a house and enjoying his role as a stepfather. As he rides around in a Dodge Caravan, his image of being a rock star is changed to a mature middle aged musician. Joey appears to be the coolest and levelheaded one. He seems to be the most musically successful. In contrast, Dave Lovering is featured as a psychotic eccentric mess. Dependant on drugs and coping with his father's death, Dave starts out as a mess. At the end of the film and the tour, the whole band finds redemption through their music. They do not write or record any new songs. They only tour and play the classics. The power of these classic songs chains each member together. As regular people, they do not talk or even have anything in common with each other. After all of these years, do they need to be rock stars? Still, rock stars are people too, just like you and me. Even though the Pixies are normal people, when they are together as a band, the fans still worship them. As a band, they are redeemed rock stars who lived up to their fans expectations.

The handful extra features are truly interesting. The commentary by the directors and the editor is extremely informative. They add a unique perspective to the film. Living out their dreams, the filmmakers tell the story of how they were fans who became filmmakers making a documentary of their favorite group. They were two genuine fans who wanted to get free tickets to the shows. The 16 page booklet has some interesting reading material and pictures. The extra scenes offer humorous and entertaining tidbits. The odd yet inspired composer (Daniel Lanois) of the documentary is shown creating the film's score. The interview with Steve Albini is an insightful yet deserved cut scene. Unnecessary in the film, the scene is definitely an essential part of the bonus features. Kim's ex-husband, Mr. John Murphy makes an appearance with a myriad of Pixies promotional relics. Although a somewhat extensive segment, this footage not only displays how the band connects with their past, but also their family and friends. In one of the bonus features, Kim Deal is in a store and the clerk asks her if she ever heard of The Breeders. Even though there are only a few bonus features, the content is bountiful.

Pixies were once shrouded in mystery. Even though they did interviews and were well-known, their music, Black's lyrics, and the imagery accentuated the enigma of the group. Vaughn Oliver's artwork in the band's album covers were a powerful contribution to the band's mystery. The Pixies documentary, "loudQUIETloud" uncovers the mystery of the group. Although the reveal of their normalcy is somewhat disappointing at first, their human aspects make the viewer relate to the band in a totally new way. A shocking fact is that they have always been somewhat detached as a band. They never did talk or socialize together. When they are together as musicians, they create a magnificent force of rock music. The documentary is entertaining for both fans and newcomers of Pixies. Like the music of the Pixies, the documentary, "loudQUIETloud" proves that a band can still rock and be surprisingly normal people. Even though the band's puzzle is solved, a new one is formed. How can such a normal group of detached people rock so hard? The inscrutability of the band's songs are never discovered or even discussed. As people, Pixies are just human beings. One mystery remains. The riddle of their music will forever be unanswered. Due to the music, the Pixies will be shrouded in a beautiful mystery.

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