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DIG FOR FIRE

New doc reveals Pixies are people, too

By Eric Kohn

In the breathless universe of rock 'n' roll mythology, bands tend to either gain momentum with time or vanish from public awareness. The Pixies managed to achieve a little bit of both. The Boston-based quartet achieved mild success from the late-1980s through the early '90s, blending punk-inflected anger with soothing melodies. Kurt Cobain famously credited the group as his inspiration, which was enough to boost record sales for years; when the band reunited for a world tour in 2004, diehard rockers felt a spiritual renewal.

Filmmakers Steven Cantor and Matthew Galkin gained intimate access to the group during this time, and the resulting documentary, *loudQUIETloud*, shows it. Following each individual member, Cantor and Galkin manage to demystify the holiness associated with the music by humanizing its creators. The tone is resoundingly passive but necessarily so: It seems as though the members of the Pixies unloaded the bulk of their anger a decade earlier, and the music is hardly more than a flashback.

All four bandmates have moved on but not to great acclaim. Lead singer and guitarist Charles Thompson (aka Frank Black) has slipped in solo projects while simultaneously building a family. Joey Santiago, lead guitarist, is also balancing dad duties alongside freelance film composition. Bassist Kim Deal spends her time reveling in newfound sobriety, recording tracks for her band The Breeders and nuzzling with her supportive partner. The saddest face is drummer David Lovering, who turned to magic shows for his post-Pixies employment and appears to suffer from an addiction to Valium.

The band is relatively complacent about their own estranged relationship. The general sense is that even if dark times have passed, the future holds lame prospects. When the film isn't busy filling in random narrative details with distracting title cards, the story unfolds in pure verité. It's the right method to illuminate how disinterested the band members seem to be with each other. Fortunately, their musicianship hasn't dwindled, and footage from the tour is mercifully preserved. The filmmakers showcase a number of performances, with classic tunes like "Wave of Mutilation" and "Hey!" receiving their well-earned attention. If the pacing slows down occasionally, the gorgeous set pieces restore energy. There's no need for coherent conflict in *loudQUIETloud*, since inspired music tells the story best.

Release party Nov. 9. The Glass Lands Gallery, 289 Kent Ave. (betw. S. 1st & S. 2nd Sts.), Williamsburg.