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Here Comes Your Band: The Pixies Take Tribeca

By Michelle Orange (The Huffington Post)

[loudQUIETloud](#), the documentary about the reunion tour of the revered rock band The Pixies, made its New York City premiere last night. The film has been hitting the festival circuit so hard its mileage could rival that of the wary quartet it follows on their 2004 trek through the United States and much of Europe. Directors [Steven Cantor](#) and [Matthew Galkin](#) were perhaps as relieved as the members of The Pixies (Charles Thompson, AKA Black Francis, AKA Frank Black, Kim Deal, Joey Santiago and David Lovering) when their first concert in 12 years was an overwhelming success: people still care about The Pixies. A lot. Recently a [goofball video](#) made by two Israeli girls doing interpretive bop to The Pixies 'Hey' was number one on youtube.com. An [oral history](#) of The Pixies was released last month and they are playing Europe again this summer. More important than just caring: people will still pay to see them.

My semi-educated guess is that [loudQUIETloud](#) refers to the trademark structure of a Pixies song (or was that quiet-loud-quiet--insert hipster sigh here), one that was parroted by bands that (insert bigger hipster sigh here) went on to greater fame; Kurt Cobain's quote about just trying to rip off The Pixies opens the film. The title is also a succinct timeline for the band itself, which broke up in 1992 after generating four albums and enough adulation to sustain the band through its 12 years of dormancy, while Black and Deal pursued new projects, Lovering discovered card tricks and Santiago went domestic. They're loud again in 2004, and if you missed the tour there's footage to prove it.

Cantor and Galkin intersperse concert footage with that of the individual band members, and, rarely, the band relaxing together. "Relaxing." See, The Pixies broke up for a reason, and although each one of them is reduced to stuttering and shrugs when they're asked to cough it up, it's painfully clear that the simplest interactions are still remarkably loaded. Thompson has no problem opening up to a practically drooling Rolling Stone reporter about his coy hopes for a new Pixies record (after all, he announced the band's break-up on a radio show, without informing...the band), but it hasn't happened yet, and I'm guessing it's because he's never actually run the idea by...the band. What makes the band, and this film, so intriguing is the way that supreme awkwardness is set against their undeniable synergy onstage. They sound so good, better than you could hope.

After an ill-advised week in which I watched documentaries about [The Ramones](#), [The New York Dolls](#), and [Mayor of Sunset Strip](#), I was convinced that the music business was the most depressing, ass-kicking enterprise in the world, especially for those who actually, you know, grow up. Before the reunion, Santiago was picking up odd jobs as a session musician, Thompson was continuing his prolific solo career, Deal, whose mid and post-Pixies band The Breeders brought her solo cult-cachet, was one year sober and deeply embedded at the craft table in her mother's home, and Lovering (why is it always the drummer?) was cultivating his magic act, as well as his persona as the weird guy looking for loose change on the beach. The reunion was not without its glitches (Deal lunges for her iPod when she spaces on a song during rehearsal; Lovering's drug issues cause some tension), but its ultimate triumph is a joy to behold: it seems to be exactly what each of them needed, and exactly what their fans needed as well. One of the film's loveliest payoffs involves Santiago's struggle to finish scoring a documentary while on the road with the band; eventually Cantor and Galkin's cameras find each of The Pixies pitching in to help, offering riffs, vocals, and the odd maraca toss.

Cantor and Galkin don't succumb to timid hagiography or overblown sentiment, they managed to put any overweening fandom aside and craft a compelling, sweetly observed portrait of one of rock's most lauded and confounding bands at what could easily be (mis)construed as a low ebb in their lives and careers. Watching a generously larded Thompson retreat from a blistering show into the tour bus, where his daily affirmation tape is waiting ("I am cute. People like me.") it struck me: I am old. Holy shit am I old. It felt OK though; if The Pixies can get old I can too.

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