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Loudquietloud: A Film About The Pixies

By John Anderson (Variety.com)

A Stick Figure production in association with Cactus Three. (International sales, Cactus Three, New York.) Produced by Steven Cantor, Daniel Laikind. Executive producers, Pax Wassermann, John Krasno, Krysanne Katsoolis, Julie Goldman, Caroline Stevens. Co-producers, Janet Billig, Matthew Galkin, Jonathan Furmanski, Kelley Deal. Directed by Steven Cantor, Matthew Galkin.

With: Charles "Black Francis" Thompson, Kim Deal, David Lovering, Joey Santiago.

The influential alt-rock-punk band the Pixies is profiled in intimate, affectionate detail in "loudQUIET loud," a concert-reunion road movie that lacks the necessary backstage melodrama needed for crossover success, but will undoubtedly create nationwide art-house exposure and a small craze in college towns.

Pic is targeted at the already initiated, but directors Steve Cantor and Matthew Galkin deftly resolve one often glaring problem with tribute documentaries -- making those who might not care do so.

With one opening title, "loudQUIETloud" establishes why the viewer should give a rap about a group first formed in 1986, and which broke up in 1993. "I was just trying to rip off the Pixies," Kurt Cobain is quoted as saying, about Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit." For any audience remotely interested in pop culture, "a film about the Pixies" thereafter becomes required viewing.

The Pixies' members -- lead singer-songwriter Charles "Black Francis" Thompson; lead guitarist Joey Santiago; bassist-vocalist Kim Deal, and drummer David Lovering -- have all pursued other avenues in the years preceding their 2004 reunion tour: For Black Francis, it's been the band Frank Black and the Catholics; for Deal, the Breeders; for Santiago, scoring films; for Lovering, a magic act.

One of the film's more poignant sequences and a terrific example of Cantor and Galkin's economic and evocative filmmaking, is the crosscutting between male band members as they all shave their once hairy heads down to a fashionable, baldness-disguising burr. It also reinforces the sense that the Pixies is a big, pop Barcalounger, a place to relax in approaching middle-age, as the members express little love for an act that dissolved in acrimony 11 years before.

Other than a drug-addled drum solo from Lovering that prompts a confrontation with his bandmates, the film has very little high drama. Still, the pic includes a great deal of inspired music and a solid perspective on art and tension.

Pic looks splendid, the sound is first-rate and numerous cameras provide a prowling appraisal of the band.

Camera (color, DV), Jonathan Furmanski, Paul Dokuchitz; editor, Trevor Ristow; original music, Daniel Lanois; supervising sound editor, Eric Offin. Reviewed on DVD, Los Angeles, April 21, 2006. (In Tribeca Film Festival -- Showcase.) Running time: 82 MIN.

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