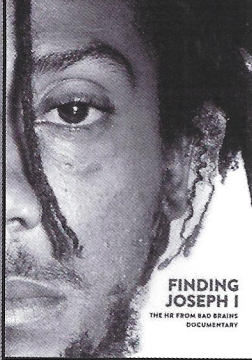




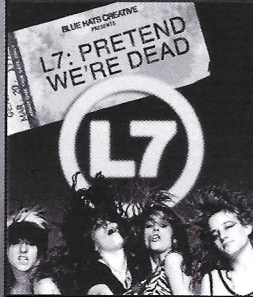
**"FINDING JOSEPH I: THE HR FROM BAD BRAINS DOCUMENTARY". (MVD)**



Anyone who seen the Bad Brains "A Band In DC" documentary in 2012 could not have failed to observe the decline of lead singer Paul "HR" Hudson's mental health over time. In fact throughout the course of that documentary (including the archive footage) he very often appears erratic and irrational, then just as you begin to believe there may be something

amiss he comes out with some intellectual wizardry that restores all faith. To my knowledge, no one has really sought to examine the man that is Paul Hudson and he exists within Punk Rock almost as an enigma. With Bad Brains being as revolutionary as they were, HR's conduct, and to a lesser extent the other members of the band, has in part gotten a pass. In my mind, "Finding Joseph I" is a film that's been waiting to get made for a long time, but it's taken a gutsy director named James Lathos to bring it to fruition! Much of the early parts of the documentary revisit the well-trodden history of the Bad Brains formation and their time as both DC and NYHC stalwarts, but the footage of their early gigs is just so damn powerful that, rest assured, it may be viewed many times over without the risk of going stale. In the opening interviews with HR its apparent how cohesive and clued up he appears to be once more. This caught me on the hop, given how bad things looked last time we checked in to his world (we are later afforded a rationalization for this perceived return to good health). His brother and band mate Earl Hudson is a key component to HR's story. As his brother, Earl knows him better than most and provides an insightful analysis on what makes HR tick, careful not to condescend or put forward anything less than a complex hypothesis of his alleged disorder. The opening of the film discovers HR living in an abandoned warehouse in Baltimore, before it tracks his lifelong journey and development in an attempt at explaining how he ended up there. Along the route, there is of course plenty of music, but also religion, alienation, homelessness and violence. All imaginable angles are measured, nothing gets romanticised, and the film is all the better for it as it handles the sensitive issue of mental illness with tact and diplomacy. I am pleased a project like this exists and having watched it several times over, I have pointed many others in its direction. It's a stunning piece of work that taps into the Punk Rock psyche in ways not frequently imagined in the past. **(MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP: 203 WINDSOR ROAD, POTTSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, PA 19464, U.S.A.)**

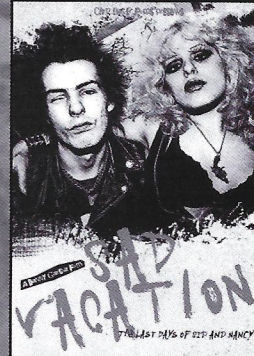
**"L7: PRETEND WE'RE DEAD". (MVD)**



I came of age in the later 80's and early '90's and remember L7 all too well. I saw them live in a supporting capacity on one occasion too and a powerful bunch they were. L7 kind of trailed behind the bigger guns of the Grunge era in commercial terms, yet in so far as authenticity was concerned they were looked upon with consid-

erably more favour than many. This in part can be credited to L7's pre-major label days, as members of the Punk underground, having released records on Epitaph and Sub Pop and, in Suzi Gardner's case, appearing as a guest vocalist on Black Flag's "Slip It In"! In short, they had credentials ... you could say all their papers were in order! The L7 story is born in the Punk houses of Silver Lake, Los Angeles, mid 80's, when Cock Rock and Poodle Metal were taking hold of the Sunset Strip. Despite Metal flourishes in their sound, L7 were quick to identify themselves as being from the Motorhead vein and not the Poison one! Their first real brush with recognition came on a visit to Seattle where they forged a bond with Sub Pop. In opposition to what was happening down in Los Angeles, Seattle appeared more progressive and was already generating volumes of bands that looked more to Black Flag or The Stooges than Motley Crue or Faster Pussycat and L7 fit that bill just about perfectly. The film traces their expansion through the Grunge era, MTV, Lollapalooza, big budget tours and so forth. Much of this is familiar to my eyes and I recall the footage from the first time around, including their appearance on The Word. What's more interesting are the subsequent years, their commercial decline and how each member of the band came to terms with it. This has not been over-documented in the past and it filled in the gaps for me on their story. There're break-ups and make-ups, self-financed releases, poverty and of course the obligatory reunion of 2015. Its not unorthodox stuff by any means, but I enjoyed the ride. I did feel a little let down by the director's decision not to include any present-day visual interviews with the band members and instead settling on audio voiceovers. Also, as much of the content is pulled from over 100 hours of home video footage, it can get a little excessive in places, at times doing little to drive the story forward. There's only so much shaky backstage footage you can watch before it begins to get a little tiresome. That said, the clips of Nick Cave partying on the tour bus are bloody funny! "L7: Pretend Were Dead" is a decent documentary that is worth seeing at least once, but its one of those classic cases where the music is far more interesting than the story behind those who made it. Be sure to check out the abstract film by Krist Novoselic "L7: The Beauty Process" included here as a DVD extra. **(MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP: 203 WINDSOR ROAD, POTTSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, PA 19464, U.S.A.)**

**"SAD VACATION: THE LAST DAYS OF SID AND NANCY". (MVD)**



With a couple of well-informed Punk documentaries on Johnny Thunders and The Clash under his belt, Danny Garcia now tackles the age-old quandary of Nancy Spungen's murder and the role Sid Vicious may or may not have played in it. I can't say I was overly enthused about this one at first, given the familiar ground of its subject matter, but then Danny Garcia is no

run-of-the-mill documentarian and it shouldn't have come as much surprise to discover him taking a more innovative approach to what is perhaps the most infamous of all Punk fables. Garcia sidesteps the hyperbole and opts to for a non-judgemental exploration of events surrounding the death of Nancy and the prelude to the night in question. In much the same manner as his previous works, he singles out those he believes hold the most credibility to provide in-depth analysis and deliberation on how Spungen's death may have went down. Leece Childers, Walter Lure, Cynthia Ross, Bob Gruen and Howie Pyro amongst a cast of many others, bring forth a broad range of scenarios that quickly turn what many considered an unambiguous case into something more gripping. Consulting those who were resident at the Chelsea Hotel on the night of October 12th 1978, Garcia also utilises recently unearthed Grand Jury documents to piece together an accurate timeline of proceedings. "Sad Vacation" makes the effort to elucidate the human side of Sid and Nancy and endeavours to illustrate the couple as something other than nihilistic junkies. Their upbringings and lives prior to Punk Rock are touched upon, in particular Spungen's abnormally high IQ level and Sid's pre-heroin characteristics, both of which bring a lot more into focus. The film successfully dispels the myths and to an extent presents Sid and Nancy as victims of circumstance. Garcia doesn't downplay the violent elements of their relationship however, and their inclination towards self-harming is broached on numerous occasions. Danny Garcia is fast becoming a filmmaker of merit and with "Sad Vacation: The Last Days of Sid And Nancy" he submits some solid counter arguments to a story often considered an open and shut indictment. **(MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP: 203 WINDSOR ROAD, POTTSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, PA 19464, U.S.A.)**

