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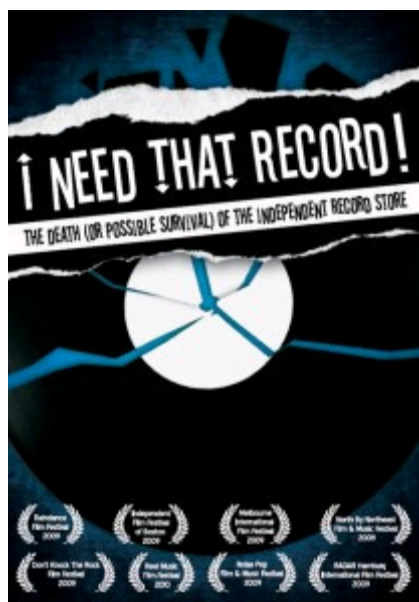
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[I Need That Record!](#)

The Death (Or Possible Survival) Of The Independent Record Store MVD

Brendan Toller has delivered an incredibly heart-warming, saddening yet important documentary which, as the title suggests, offers (a well balanced) portrayal of the demise of the independent record store in America, which I'm confident is a story that is mirrored across other nations and communities.

With a important cast of contributors from Ian MacKaye to Thurston Moore to Noam Chomsky and others adding weight to the argument and authenticity of this body of work, of why the 'mom and pops' store is integral to the fabric of communities and the music industry as a whole, Brendan Toller focuses predominantly on the people behind some of these stores who have had to shut their doors due to predominantly corporate greed and changing times. One interviewee says from the onset, these stores used to be a place much like comic stores were for comic nerds, independent music stores are for music nerds; passionate about music and not transfixed on music sales alone(although obviously an important part of any business). These stores offer a meeting point, a home from home and more importantly a place where like minded and people who are care about music for the right reasons can share their lives. The closure and loss of these stores however has greater impacts on culture and society.

The documentary traces the rise of the corporate retailers pushing these independent stores to the point of extinction as well as how major record labels have battled and never quite grasped the importance of their customers. More importantly the evolution of the music industry from digital and mp3s, corporate radio, file sharing and poorly managed resources have all added to the plight of the major record label and further removed themselves from fans of the music they are meant to be serving.

The film also reveals how major record labels have not invested in artist development, looking always for the quick buck such as the formulaic boy/girl group trend of the 90's, manufacturing pop artists for short term profits which in the long term hurt the entire industry. More importantly in the US in 1996 the Telecommunications Act opened the door or monopolies of the radio space, obviously the emphasis here is on Clear Channel. In addition, payolas and how the government continues to turn a blind eye to continued transgressions by the major record labels have lead to a lack of consumer choice.

The emergence of MTV, Borders and Hot Topic and eventually the internet have all made competition fierce, maybe too many independent stores relied on the good old days instead of innovating to change with the times? But these big box stores now account for 65% of retail sales; Wal-Mart has 20% of the market. It is argued that this is changing culture with these corporate entities demanding changes in the actual product

which in turn means consumers lose their independence of choice; however the harsh reality is we are all to blame in supporting these models by saving a little bit of money.

The addition footage of archived material and interviews with of mp3.com and Napster as well as the RIAA post 9/11 piggybacking on the Patriot Act further show the lack of foresight of the major record labels in dealing with change and instead of innovating and embracing change have always sought legal action and alienated music consumers.

The varying contributors all talk about a sense of community and space, and although some of it is based perhaps on nostalgia, searching for and holding a cd or vinyl offered a experience that has not been replicated by the digital space and social media. However the facts are that over 3000 independent stores have closed in the last decade.

Are there real alternatives in this day and age? Well Dischord Records represented by Ian Mackaye has been offering a blueprint now for 28 years; offering affordable but highly demanded products (for example selling seven thousand Minor Threat CD, vinyl and tapes)and have always managed to keep records and live shows below the price big box retailers offer, who instead raise prices based on artists performance. New independent stores do still emerge (as Brendan talks to young new owners) and some who have been forced out of their shops have taken to the road to sell their wares (although this has not compensated for the loss of fixed place or community) offering signs of encouragement, but will their passion alone be enough to sustain their ventures?

There are in truth a number of issues, intelligently touched on during the 77 minutes of the film, and the clever use of montages and old footage, live interviews and impassioned and intriguing characters develop the sense of the cultural changes and death of community.

This film sits at the top of my list in highlighting the ongoing and dramatic changes in the musical landscape which resonates further into corporate greed, social and cultural changes. The DVD in addition is filled over two hours of interview extras with: Thurston Moore, Mike Watt, Ian MacKaye, Lenny Kaye, Patterson Hood, Glenn Branca, Pat Carney, and Legs McNeil and is available on July 27th.

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