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DVD REVIEW: I NEED THAT RECORD

This documentary is a must-see for fans of music everywhere. Brendan Toller's film examines why more than 3,000 independent record stores have closed over the last decade but, in so doing, delves into a story of corporate greed, sanitization of music and social disintegration.

Through interviews with record store owners as well as names such as Minor Threat's Ian McKay and Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth, this film gets to the heart of the problem in an engaging and informative style. Looking at everything from the effects of Payola, to Wal-Mart and the impact of technology on how we consume our music, Toller unearths some startling statistics. Did you know that only around 50% of all recorded music is available on CD while some of the larger stores not only price Mom and Pop stores out of the market but also dictate what choice you have on the shelves - thereby sanitizing stock towards a middle-American image of what is 'acceptable?'

It seems that as the rich get richer and stores are shut down communities are pulled apart as social interaction and inclusion is replaced by faceless conglomerates and the isolation of Internet shopping.

Coming from a post-punk / new wave / hardcore perspective many of the faces here may be unknown to hip-hop fans, but their musings are relevant across the board. Raising questions such as the false claim that vinyl is dead as a format, the effect of mainstreaming the airwaves, and the MTV effect - this film is relevant to any music consumer, regardless of your preferred genre. In fact this documentary raises societal questions that can be extended beyond the record store and into any small business scenario - be it the closing of local cafes to the wave of supermarket shopping that has eroded the personal interaction of small stores in favor of price and convenience. The problem being that once we decide we no longer need local, community based, amenities they close forever and a piece of history and community is lost.

Available for 90s days through local record stores before a wider July 27th release date this 77 minute documentary could change how you see your music consumption and how you may have been misled by the big music companies to actually have less choice and lower quality product. But more than this it paints a picture of wider societal isolation and erosion that many are turning a blind eye towards. As the DVD case reads, "fat cats or our favorite record stores? You decide."

Long-overdue, 'I Need That Record' is a must-see film for 2010.

- Tom Clover