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Record Maintenance

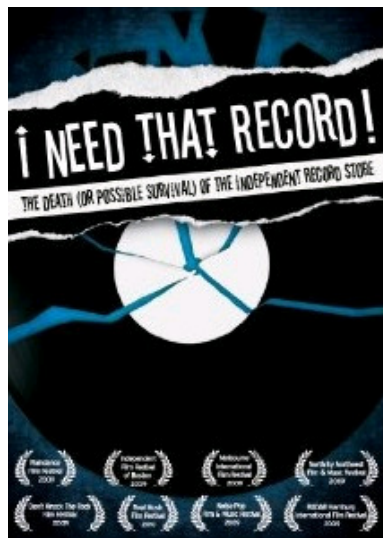
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REVIEWS: I NEED THAT RECORD! - [DVD]



TITLE: I Need That Record! - [DVD]
The Death (Or Possible Survival) Of The Independent Record Store
LABEL: MVD/See Of Sound/Creative Commons
DATE: 06-27-10

REVIEW BY: Bill Adams

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Now Playing: 'Crimson And Clover' by Joan Jett and The Blackhearts

As a lead-off discussion about Brendan Troller's documentary, *I Need That Record!*, a bit of conjecture is required – it only to balance or temper the opinions expressed in the film. Ten years into the new millennium, and there's no arguing that record stores of every stripe – both the indies and the chain conglomerate stores – are beginning to feel the pinch of annually depleting record sales. Simply said, records do not seem to be selling so well anymore – but how can that be? People are still listening to music, and trends seem to exhaust themselves faster now than ever before in history. With such rapid and self-evident consumerism occurring, how can the numbers be going down? The answer is simple: what's happening to the music business now is simply a matter of consumer frustration and dissatisfaction. Why? Well, that's a reasonable question easily answered: the music industry's parallel drives of greed and panic caught up with it, and the spontaneous assertion of power that the independent music community exerted in the early Nineties (which saw Sonic Youth become elder statesmen and Nirvana become the biggest band in the world, briefly) further accelerated the erosion of music's value in the marketplace.

You blinked – didn't you? Look at it this way: when Nirvana exploded in the early Nineties, they brought the thriving underground kicking and screaming into the mainstream, thereby ostensibly leveling the playing field in the music business from a two-tiered structure ('indie' and 'mainstream') to one. Suddenly the disparate groups of potential fans were all feeding at one trough instead of two so both David and Goliath were trying to draw notice and fanfare from a unified audience. That made things more competitive, but then the internet and pulled the playing field out from everyone. At that point, music seemed to be a community-driven interest and became a quality-driven one. Suddenly, it didn't matter how big or small you were, all that mattered was the quality of your songs and no amount of diamond-encrusted promotion would save you. Of course, this threatened the major label way of life because the big boys make more on the here-today-gone-tomorrow bands (they have a habit of defaulting on contracts, you know) than on the much smaller stable of tried-and-true producers under their umbrella.

At the exact same time, while the music industry was reeling from the internet, the rest of the world was beginning to feel the pinch too. Since the ground fell out from under Ronald Reagan's daydream nation around 1988 or '89, the United States (and the rest of the world, by extension) has suffered an unprecedented series of economic recessions that have caused the public (including patrons of the arts) to tighten their belts so far that they've begun to find new ways to get what they need. In the case of music, the solution was the internet; suddenly the mainstream method of floating a few good singles per record in a glass of forgettable tripe wouldn't cut it anymore, and understandably so; who would want to pay extra for the packing material they get their goods in? Because of the dismal economy, the music industry's greed and a low level of good product per unit, the public reverted to a singles-centered marketplace and the internet provided a medium with which to cut the grass easily. At that point, everyone would line up to support the arts

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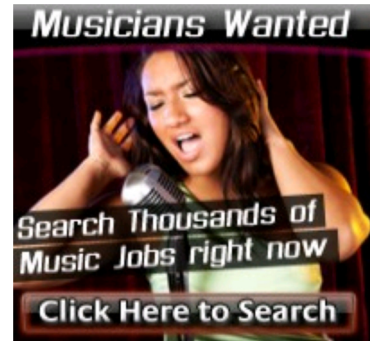
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