



FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 2010

## I Need That Record! The Death (or Possible Survival) of the Independent Record Store: Review

Every since buying a turntable it has been a tradition of mine to head out to the record store every weekend. I drag my fiancée along - God bless her - and peruse through the endless racks of vinyl lining the store. While she's flipping through the pages of the latest Cosmo magazine I'm debating whether I should throw down \$10 for a used copy of Pink Floyd's *Ummagumma*. There's something about the record store which makes it incredibly endearing. In an age where you can find literally any album in any condition for dirt cheap prices, many still choose to make the trek to the record store in hopes of finding exactly what they're looking for. For me, I love the idea of never knowing what I might find. It forces me to open up my horizons and take chances on albums I may not normally listen to. Sure, I could hop on Ebay and buy a lot of Bob Dylan albums for a low price, but where's the fun in that impersonal and incredibly boring experience?



*I Need that Record!* presents the plight of the record store . It connects on deep emotional levels to those who own record stores and to those who simply love music. While the emotional connections run rampant, it covers a wide base of horizons with well researched factual information. The documentary focuses on the music industry as a whole while encompassing all the major events that have led us to where we are now including the major labels greed, payola, big box stores and the internet. *I Need that Record!* is a documentary which will leave you unnerved and

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longing to make a trip out to your local record store.

The documentary showcases a handful of small record stores who have been forced to close down for a myriad of reasons. The film maker gets us up-close and personal with the owners of these stores and the emotional connections they have attached to them. The overriding theme which all of these owners touch on is the sense of community. Customers aren't merely dollar signs to the record stores, instead they're humans who may become friends. One owner asks the question of what employee of Best Buy or Wal Mart is going to recommend a Hawkwind *Space Ritual* live? It's this kind of personal touch which makes the record stores so important. World renowned linguist and super-genius Noam Chomsky even chimes in on the importance of the mom and pop shops which lend themselves to a community. The big box stores simply can't offer this. One customer eloquently gives his point-of-view on his favorite record store closing, "It's like your best friend moving away to a far away land, and you just can't buy a plane ticket to go find him."

Even though the personal connections are the heart and soul of this film, the film maker realizes there have been countless events which have culminated to the current crisis we are facing. Without going into too much detail of his actual argument, the greed of major labels is one of the most prominent. Straight Edge king Ian MacKaye even makes a handful of appearances and arguably gives the most informative and insightful views on why things are so wrong. As an owner of the indie label Dischord Records, MacKaye has a fine understanding of the costs of producing an album. He mentions that a CD costs around eighty cents to make including the packaging, minus the costs of recording which may cost around \$3,000. He barks at the absurdity of major labels promotional costs which is often times more expensive than the actual recording of the physical product. This is one of the many reasons why the industry is in shambles today.

One of the finer moments of the documentary is a 1999 debate between master rapper Chuck-D and Lars Ulrich of Metallica. Chuck-D enforces the opinion that the power is shifting away from the account/lawyer driven labels and is moving towards the people. He notes that many people will continue to buy music after downloading it on Napster. Lars doesn't refute the point that people may still buy the album after downloading it for free, but he doesn't agree with the power shift. Lars ultimately believes

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that if the file sharing public has all the power they too will have the same greedy intentions as the labels. Moving forward eleven years, it's fairly evident to see who was sitting on the right side of the fence with that debate.

WHERE CLASSIC ROCK AND MODERN ROCK MEET

*I Need that Record!* is a finely produced documentary that covers a wide base of topics which ultimately bring us to the current plight of the record store. The factual arguments are well thought out and informative, but this film will win you over with the conversations with the record store owners themselves. It's impossible not to feel a deep connection with these quirky owners, but even being a group of odd-balls, their stories ring loud and true.

Grade: A+

POSTED BY JEFF AT 1:25 PM

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4 COMMENTS:

 Ruralgurl said...

Wow. I have to see this.

While I did not own it, I was the manager of the flagship store in a tiny indie chain that went to crap when the owner finally sold out. I certainly can attest to the emotional side of the story; my life has never been the same since the day that store was sold. I still miss it.

4:24 PM

 Sean Coleman said...

Looks like this is a must-see. Thanks for posting as I had not heard about this documentary.

8:00 PM

 YourZenMine said...

I'll have to look out for this on DVD, it's definitely a must see.

But I don't know if I agree with you about the debate on "the power of the people". Sales of recorded music continue to plummet, even with the ability to buy music online. Once the public got the idea music could be free, the public shared music with a fine disregard for the artist. People like YourZ and Mine(self) who insist on buying music so the royalties go to the artist no matter what, are rare. Or

so I've found. There used to be a tax on blank cassettes (remember them?) which went to a central fund for artist royalties to offset the likelihood that people would tape albums. How about a tax like that for mp3 players and blank CD/DVDs?

The ridiculous amounts record companies spend on promotion usually isn't a direct reflection of the artist's talent, but often directly reflects future sales. Sad but true.

12:19 AM

 Jeff said...

Ruralgurl - Sorry to hear that. Without my local record stores there would be a major void in my life.

Sean - Considering I'm a sucker for the record store, it didn't take much for this doc to win me over, but it was really well produced. Although I didn't mention them, even the extras are great. I definitely recommend getting your hands on it.

YourZenMine - I'm all for artists being compensated for their work. I just have an issue with the current system, because it clearly is no longer working. I don't know exactly what the fix is - although I have my own little utopian ideas which are probably un-realistic - but I think there has to be some major change and the people are demonstrating their views by exploiting the system. Given the power of the internet there is no doubt that many people will continue to download illegally regardless of the changes that would possibly happen, but I think the industry can do a better job of bringing us music.

3:39 PM

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