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Nic Brown's Blood Curse

Film Reviews: I Need That Record (2007) - By Josh Samford

Posted on Wednesday, June 02, 2010 @ 19:26:10 Mountain Daylight Time by Duane



There is a point made in *I Need That Record* that I find interesting for we as a culture. The film focuses on many aspects of the music business, but

points out the importance of music in all of our lives. No matter your walk of life, no matter where you live or what you do music is an integral part of your life. No matter who you are, chances are you are a fan of music in some form or another. From New Guinea to New York, there are few people who don't find music either soothing or expressive of their personality. I have found myself condemning online profiles in the past where people have listed "music" as one of their interests because it seems as non-descriptive as listing "breathing" or "sleeping". Music is a part of ever culture and there are very few of us who would proclaim to have a distaste for it. With *I Need That Record!* filmmaker Brendan Toller shows us that although we all have a love for music, there are others who have an insatiable drive for it. From the crazy fans to the artists who are at odds with the commercial entities that control the business, the resounding theme is of musical passions and the inevitable loss of culture by corporations driving out the independent record stores. It calls upon its

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audience to take action because truthfully only we can help save our own culture.

Detailing the music business as we know it now, from its inception during the early part of the twentieth century, *I Need That Record!* shows how the music business has been corrupted and the inevitable effect that it has had on independent retailers. From the controversies involving payola, where radio stations have been paid by major labels to promote their select artists, to the rising cost of CD's simply because an artist grows in popularity. *I Need That Record!* confronts the music industry head on and throws out accusations that we have all known from the past, but does so in a manner that attacks them with facts. Rather than running their businesses with fair attitudes towards the fans, the film charges that these companies have been purposefully gouging their prices and hurt the fans as well as the local record shops that try to compete with the major outlet stores (called Big Box stores, ie; Wal-Mart, Best Buy, Barnes & Nobles, etc.) who mark their CD's below cost in order to lure in customers who will purchase other items which will make up the difference. The film is a searing indictment on the record industry like few that have come before it.

I Need That Record as a documentary is certainly an opinionated piece. From the outset it is obvious to the viewer that this isn't going to be a documentary that looks to get inside the mindset of corporate entities or give them a break on any issues. Although I have never been a fan of blatantly opinionated documentaries, as they are so often films that use opinions in place of facts rather than presenting facts and allowing the audience to make their own decision, I have to say that *I Need That Record* presents an opinion that I have held for many years. Featuring a cast of independent music celebrities, no punches are pulled in this documentary when it comes to accosting the music industry executives who control much of what we hear. Described as a roundtable of nearly elderly old men, the choice for what we hear comes from the financial greed rather than an interest in new or interesting ideas. This is a concept that

should be self evident to anyone who listens to an FM radio station and hears the same song two times every hour. With the insane amount of media that is released on a yearly basis, for a hand full of artists to get 99% of our attention it seems ludicrous.

If there are any problems with the project, it does unfortunately come from that lack of a neutral perspective. With so many people raging against what is perceived to be fascism or corporate greed, the documentary comes off as the rantings of a younger person. Although I myself am still rather young, I remember my teenage years and discovering that MTV was the enemy. I remember ranting on about corporations and the lack of talent in pop culture, but there comes a time when you realize that you don't need these outlets in order to find good music. Especially in this new modern age, where MySpace music profiles and YouTube searches can lead you to many new and interesting paths. The film ultimately works best when it reveals its statistics about the music industry and the effect that it has had on the indie music store culture. Unfortunately the combination of online piracy and corporate CD prices going through the roof has lead to an astonishing number of these stores closing. This has happened in many aspects of American life, as Wal-Mart continually grows and takes over local supermarkets or Best Buy puts to bed local electronics stores. These stores, which are shown to have developed highly personal relations with their customers are closing down and destroying an entire subculture. This is the most heart breaking aspect of *I Need That Record*, as these personal relationships can never be replaced through the digital realm.

Although it isn't perfect, the film asks questions and presents a great number of interesting factoids for those interesting in the music industry. It features a great number of artists such as Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth, Ian Mackaye of Fugazi and Mike Watt of The Minutemen all exacerbating on the state of independent music and the suppression of new voices. A great film for music lovers and those interested in the underside of the industry.

You can read more about the project on its
official website at
<http://www.ineedthatrecord.com> or you can
simply pick up at the many local outlets
that should have it available!

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