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## DVD & Blu-ray Reviews

# Dexter Romweber – Two Headed Cow (2011)

This is one bizarre tale of an alternative rocker.



Published on December 8, 2011



## Dexter Romweber – Two Headed Cow (2011)

**Featuring Dexter Rombeber and Crow; special appearances by Jack White; Chan Marshall; Neko Case; Exene Cervenka; The Sadies; Mojo Nixon Skid Roper and others.**

**Chapters: Flat Duo Jets; The Darkside; First Tour; 5-Legged Dog; Muscle Shoals; Lost; Violence; Old Soul; Show Time; Fitting In; Neko Case Tour; Credits Director: Tony Gayton**

**Studio: Cape Fear FilmWorks/ MVD Visual MVD5259D [11/22/2011]**

**Video: 4:3, Black And White & Color**

**Audio: English PCM Stereo**

**Extras: Dexter On BET; Dexter At Silverlake Lounge; Dexter On Z-TV**

**Length: 90 minutes**

**Rating: \*\*\*\***

Often a musician is referred to as an inspiration, a true original and to everyone's surprise is embraced by a destiny of relative obscurity. Dexter Romweber could be one of these. With his band The Flat Duo Jets, he exploded on the fertile Athens, Georgia (R.E.M., B 52's) alternative rock scene. Their self-titled debut and sophomore release, *Go Go* and *Harlem Baby* were auspicious. Despite regular output and live performance, the mystery of the career dissipation is perplexing. *Dexter Romweber Two headed Cow* attempts to explain it.

As we are introduced to Romweber, he is performing manic rockabilly on the *David Letterman Show*.

Voiceovers by Jack White, Chan Marshall and Neko Case describe their awe of his music. Case's description of "hardcore Americana" defines the essence of Romwell's vision. A southerner, he was influenced by Delta blues, and rock and roll. So begins the fragmented, haunting tale of Dexter Romweber. The documentary was shot in two pieces, seventeen years apart (the director ran out of money) that examines the frenetic performer in two different eras. Perhaps a character would be a more appropriate description of Romwell. He was an assimilator of fifties rock and roll, naming his band after a Gene Vincent guitar. His goal was to create a way to reinvent rock and roll for a modern era. He wanted to be the artistic outlaw like Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, Herman Hesse, Rimbaud and Baudelaire. The infusion of road excesses sparked the dangerous undercurrents of Romweber and his band.

The two "separated" films juxtapose a modern aged rocker (filmed in color) reminiscing about the high energy power trio (with ferocious drummer "Chris "Crow" Smith). The Flat Duo Jets (in black&white). Romweber's bitter recollection of a band mate's malfeasance is touching. There are numerous performance highlights, including a nice boogie woogie piano version of "Sea Cruise", and a duet with his mother of "You Don't Know Me". He is disconnected with the buoyancy of rock and roll, as a darker element inhabits this tortured soul. The result is a social drifter who will play for a crowd of three people. He seems bemused by the adoration of musicians like Case, who takes him on tour.

In some ways, the final scene attempts to visually express the eclectic bizarre imagery of this film. Romweber and drummer Crow come across a ceramic two-headed cow that induces them to sing an insipid dirge. The narrative of the movie is unsettling and meandering...just like its subject. The spirit of the artist is captured, but a linear appraisal of his life is not. This award-winning documentary is not easy to watch, but that is a good thing. A bonus feature "Dexter On BET" showcases his rockabilly guitar brilliance as an up-and-coming jazz player.

Tony Gayton (*Hell On Wheels*) delivers an unflinching portrayal of a true musical rebel.

—Robbie Gerson

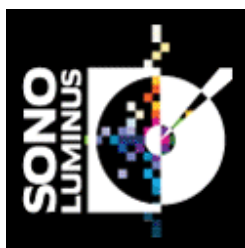
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