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Circle Jerks: My Career As A Jerk

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Circle Jerks: My Career As A Jerk – A Film by David Markey (MVD Visual www.mvdvisual.com)

With band and documentaries suddenly exploding into life with a slew of releases, it was only a matter of time until one appeared that I'd crawl over broken glass to watch and fight a village hall full of pensioners in order to get a row front seat, and 'My Life As A Jerk' is that film. It's the story of the thirty year history of the band told in their words via probing, disarmingly honest and often brutally truthful interviews with Keith Morris, Greg Hetson, Zander Schloss, Lucky Lehrer and Earl Liberty (all interviewed separately, which should tell you everything you need to know about the

likelihood of the band ever hitting a stage together again) that explore the minutia of the band, the relationships that fuelled and fired their creativity and drive, their gradual ascension in the punk and alternative music scenes, the truth about their ever evolving sound, the reasons for the bands multiple disintegrations and reformations, and why after more than thirty years, the Circle Jerks finally came to a grinding halt. The interviews are peppered with live footage of the band, footage which shows what an incredible live force they were throughout their career, and the whole film paints a tantalisingly real and forthright picture of a punk rock band overcame adversity and did things their way only to fall apart just as they were about to capitalise on their decades of hard work. There are however, a few problems with the film. The bands impact on the LA and global scenes is only discussed briefly in fleeting interviews (seriously, they're almost blink and you'll miss them moments) with Brian Baker, Henry Rollins, Greg Graffin, J Mascis and Lisa 'Frontier Records' Fancher, and personally I'd have liked to have seen longer, more probing interviews about the Jerks with more scene luminaries, which would have put the bands place within the punk rock scene into context, creating a more reliable image of it, one that didn't rely solely on the recollections of the band members themselves. But as the film is about the band itself, seen from their perspective, I can understand the omission of such an afterthought. Apart from some ex-members not being featured (Chuck Biscuits, Keith Clarke, Kevin Fitzgerald etc.) which I guess was down to them not wanting to be a part of the film, the only other problem, from my perspective, is the way in which the death of founding member, Roger Rogerson is handled, as the film skips over it in less than two minutes, and the only person who seems upset by what happened is Greg Hetson. Maybe it wasn't an important moment for the band, or maybe it was just too painful to discuss, but the way it's handled seems almost cold and slightly dismissive. Those criticism aside, 'My Career As A Jerk' is a powerful, absorbing study of what and who made one punk rocks most incendiary band tick, and the story of band that never quite fulfilled their potential or achieved everything they should have. Recommended... **Tim Mass Movement**

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