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It Ends Well if You Don't Die: 'Bob and the Monster'

By [Jedd Beaudoin](#) 17 October 2013

Alcoholics Anonymous literature describes the path its members should take in telling their stories both at meetings and to each other as “[disclosing] in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now.” In many ways that’s the path that Keirda Bahruth’s examination of rocker-turned-addictions counselor Bob Forrest takes.

In the ‘80s Forrest led one of the smartest bands to emerge from the Los Angeles’ music scene, Theloniou Monster. As a lyricist he took on white flight, made us laugh with “Sammy Hagar Weekend”, and broke our hearts with his ability to be both smart and tender. The Monsters rubbed elbows with the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Jane’s Addiction. Critics compared Forrest to John Lennon and the band to the Rolling Stones.

Young Bob was a smart kid with bad acne and some dark family secrets. He loved Lenny Bruce and craved heroin. He shot up for the first time with Los Angeles music legend Top Jimmy, and spent the next umpteen years in and out of rehab, knocking on death’s door and pissing off those closest to him seemingly every chance he got.

As the arrests piled up and the cash ran out, Forrest hit the skids. He kicked junk in jail cells and slept on the streets. Then, things changed. Somehow—and to the film’s credit there’s no attempt to explain something so simple and yet so difficult to convey—Forrest opted for long-term sobriety and found his second life calling.

There’s plenty of typical rock doc stuff: Footage of Bob and The Monster tearing it up during the

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Bob and The Monster

Director: Keirda Bahruth

Cast: Bob Forrest, Anthony Kiedis, Flea, Courtney Love, Dr. Drew Pinsky
(US DVD: 1 Oct 2013)

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band's heyday, rocker friends such as Anthony Kiedis, Flea, Angelo Moore, Norwood Fisher, and Courtney Love are on hand to help tell the story, as are many of the musicians who played in Thelonicus Monster. There's behind-the-scenes footage of the group on tour, living a double life in which the members publicly declared sobriety but privately struggled to keep their heads above the addiction line. There are moments when you feel embarrassed for the Bob Forrest of the past and others when you feel angry with him, as well.

But our esteem for him builds as he attempts to piece his life back together, taking a job at a small Los Angeles eatery (where he worked alongside Circle Jerks/Black Flag frontman Keith Morris), beginning to write songs again, and building a relationship with his son. Eventually Forrest meets jazz saxophonist Buddy Arnold, himself a recovering addict with no fewer than two prison stints behind him, and discovers a passion for helping musicians who are still suffering from addiction.

What's arguably most remarkable is the knowledge and compassion that Forrest brings to his profession; he's not content to be a recovering alcoholic and addict who carries the message of recovery to others. Rather, he's a tireless explorer of how addiction is being treated by the medical community. There is, for example, a rise in acceptance of using prescription drugs to treat narcotics addiction, something Forrest and other specialists are less than happy about.

His approach to treatment is controversial for reasons that become evident in the film, but his passion is undeniable and even infectious.

There are plenty of surprises in this film, and while Bahruth doesn't glamorize the wild and crazy years of the early '80s in Los Angeles and the wreckage it brought with it, she's not keen to condemn those who couldn't know where their paths were leading them. That's a hard distinction for some filmmakers, but one she handles capably. This is not just another film about the ever-popular tortured artist effect, nor is it an attempt to make Forrest a saint. Instead, it's honest, sad, funny, and true.

The DVD release features commentary from Forrest and director Bahruth as well as a "Making Of" claymation featurette and none disappoint.

Rating: 
Extras rating: 

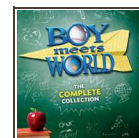
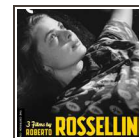


Jedd Beaudoin is an award-winning writer and broadcaster. He holds an MFA in creative writing (fiction) from Wichita State University and hosts Strange Currency six nights week for Wichita Public Radio. His writing has appeared in No Depression and The Crab Orchard Review as well as at websites such as Ytsejam.com and Amazon.com.

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