

[The Stone Roses: Shane Meadows' documentary about Manchester band preaches \(beautifully\) to the choir](#)

February 11, 2014. 8:23 pm • Section: [Entertainment](#)



The Stone Roses: Made of Stone will be screened as a fundraising co-presentation between the Calgary International Film Festival, Sled Island and the Calgary Underground Film Festival at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Globe Cinema. Visit calgaryfilm.com for more information.

Early on in Shane Meadows' loving documentary about mercurial Manchester band, The Stone Roses, we see a sequence of the now middle-aged act rehearsing their jangly hit Waterfall. Secreted away in a hall, the band is preparing for their much ballyhooed 2012 comeback. While the song certainly holds up and Meadows shoots it all in gorgeous black and white, it's initially as exciting as you might expect a rehearsal to be. So Meadows helps them along. The edits get quicker. He starts to use multiple split screens. Soon, it all plays like a beautifully shot music video.

It's one of many indications that Meadows is not approaching his subject with anything close to an objective eye with *The Stone Roses: Made of Stone*. He admits as much when telling how his "favourite band" called him out of the blue to suggest he make the documentary. When Meadows arrives at the secret rehearsal location and sees that a band member has left him a fairly banal handwritten note about moving the drum kit, he says he's going to save it in his scrapbook.

Cinema-verite purists could certainly make a good case that Meadows, whose past films include the drama *This is England*, drops the ball on what is an undeniably fascinating story about the band's hype-fueled rise, staggering fall and eventual arrival as one of history's most cult-worshipped coulda-beens. They would probably balk at the scene where a grim-faced Meadows turns to the camera to tell us that he plans to stop shooting after a reunion gig goes awry and festering, 20-year-old tensions seem to rise to the surface. After

all, he tells us, the last thing the band wants during such a stressful period is a camera stuck in their faces. It's a weird dynamic for those used to a journalistic, story-at-all-costs attitude from our non-fiction filmmakers.

So enjoyment of Meadows' documentary, which screens Thursday as a fundraiser for the Calgary International Film Festival and Calgary Underground Film Festival, will be best appreciated by fans of The Stone Roses. This may sound like an achingly obvious point. But this isn't always the case with music docs. You don't have to be a fan, for instance, of Jandek's nightmarish noise to be drawn in by the mystery of his identity in the brilliant 2003 film *Jandek on Corwood*. You don't have to appreciate the guileless strains of outsider singer-songwriter Daniel Johnson to get wrapped up in the harrowing 2005 documentary *The Devil and Daniel Johnson*. But appreciation of *The Stone Roses: Made of Stone* is completely, 100 per cent, unequivocally dependent on whether you share Meadows' worshipful attitude towards them.

The filmmaker doesn't exactly ignore their troubled history, which is told in a patchy manner in between modern shots of the reunited band in action. But he makes no real attempt to delve too deeply into a cautionary tale of egos run amok and how sudden fame can lead to dysfunction. The Stone Roses could have been the biggest band in the world, we're told. They made a classic record. Then they fought: with their record company, with their management, with their own fame, with each other. Then they made a mediocre sophomore record and imploded. Most of this is told vaguely through press clippings, old home movies and some extraordinary live footage from the early 1990s. We even see a hilariously awkward interview that comes before the band released their near-perfect 1989 self-titled debut, where a hapless journalist struggles to get singer Ian Brown and guitarist John Squire to string together at least one coherent sentence.

In the end, it's pointless to criticize Meadows work for what it isn't. Clearly, he meant it to be a love-letter to his favourite band. He succeeds. By the time we see a marathon, 15-minute performance of *Fools Gold* as part of the act's triumphant reunion show at Manchester's Heaton Park, the lines will have long been drawn. Either you'll be as wide-eyed, worshipful and enthralled as the filmmaker or you will have tuned out long ago.



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