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How *Made of Stone* Explains the Stone Roses and the Death of Rave Culture

By Michael Cryer Wed., Dec. 11 2013 at 4:30 AM
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Everything is 20 years ago. Or so goes the cyclic, feedback-loop that is pop culture.

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Apparently, it was 20 years ago for The Stones Roses when they formed in the mid '80s, citing '60s psychedelia as a primary influence (in 1967, 20 years before The Stone Roses formed, another notable band from England began their best album with the line "It was 20 years ago today . . ." And so it goes.

Yeah, I know, who cares if The Stone Roses' last album was released 20 years ago? Filmmaker Shane Meadows cares, that's who. His recently released documentary 'Made of Stone' celebrates The Roses' 2012 resurrection and subsequent supporting tour. As far as music documentaries go, it's really good. Or as Happy Mondays' Shaun Ryder might quip, the film is: "Good, good . . . double good."

Made of Stone isn't a time capsule, and it isn't a hackneyed biopic that explores the inner emotional lives of the band members either. Thank God. It's basically a concert film that starts with a press announcement about The Roses re-grouping. The film then documents the band's rehearsal -- which is just as entertaining as any of their live performances -- and then follows the band from a free show at Parr Hall, a tiny 1,000-seat venue, to increasingly larger shows, culminating in a final outdoor concert at Heaton Park for two shows of 75,000.

For the uninitiated, The Stone Roses were at the center of England's "Madchester" scene in the late '80s and early '90s. Other notables were the Charlatans UK, Inspiral Carpets, Happy Mondays and James. If that doesn't help, just think Oasis, but better. Much better. Or, if you haven't seen it, the film *24 Hour Party People* does an excellent job describing the debauchorous culture surrounding Factory Records and Manchester nightclub The Hacienda, where house music, raves and these bands got their start.

In the film, Roses frontman Ian Brown succinctly and accurately describes The Roses: "We try to combine the melody of the '60s stuff with the energy of the punk stuff." What emerged from that combination is groove-oriented, jam-based and always danceable. The Stone Roses and their friends started as garage bands and then added heart, which means you feel good while you listen, and sometimes you might even feel good for several minutes after you've listened. Imagine.

Back in the day, The Roses were the self-proclaimed "best band on the planet." And, for a brief time, in the late '80s and early '90s, maybe they were, though most Americans were too busy consuming grunge to notice. That is until the rave culture inspired by the Madchester scene filled American clubs with kids waving glow sticks and wearing giant pants.

Let's not think about the ends, though. They're too embarrassing. Let's consider the means. The groove and mood created by the Roses and their cohorts feels innocent even if the lifestyle surrounding the music was anything but. It's the same kind of innocence that drove the hippie ethos during the '60s, and the kind of innocence that was commodified by commercial rave culture in the '90s.

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