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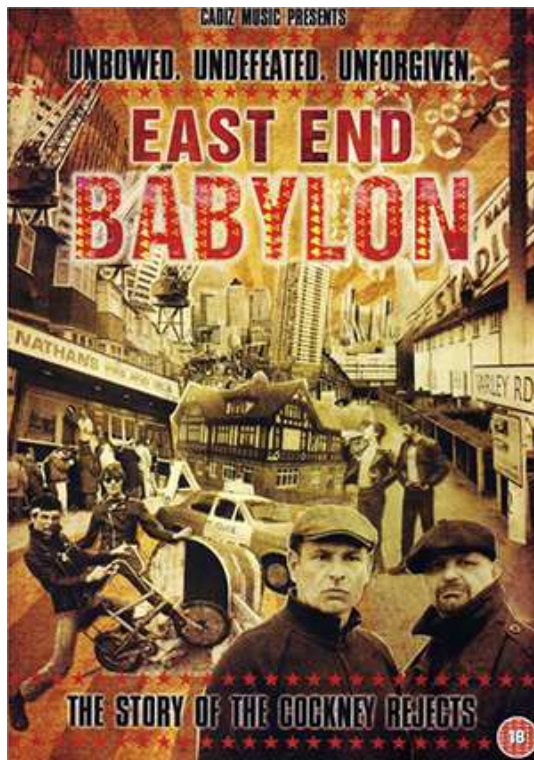
East End Babylon: The Story Of The Cockney Rejects

by Nolando

Published on 11-04-2013 09:43 AM

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Released on: Nov. 5th, 2013

Dir. by: Richard England

Starring: Jeff Turner, Nick Geggus, Vince Rierdan

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The Movie:

I'll admit to being a big fan of The Cockney Rejects, for a number of reasons but mostly due to my brief time as a skin. I got the anger, I understood the attempt at some kind of soulful connection with oppression and poverty but much of the Oi! music speaking to that was, to me, just bad punk rock. But as I listened to more of it the gems really started to shine, thanks to a high watermark of mediocrity. And one of the bands that stood out as being one of the most fun music was The Cockney Rejects. So adding in their die-hard passion for West Ham Football and a pretty good sense of humor combined with an all-out type of approach I was rather hooked. So I was stoked to see a feature-length documentary on them come to light.

East End Babylon attempts to detail the rambunctious, controversial, whirlwind career of this band and capitalizes on their current standing as they continue to tour and release albums. The story begins with some history of West Ham, especially during the London Blitz, with most of the information coming anecdotally from the brothers Mick Geggus and Jeff Turner's mother. The hard-knock-life of their environment thus established the story quickly turns onto their lives growing up in a cramped household and how they came upon the idea for a band.

Using their gift of gab and basic audacity the lads are soon signed on to EMI, thanks to Sham 69's Jimmy Pursey producing, primarily. But being just barely 15 years old the Rejects have a bit of a time with it all. Their own words describe it best here and their anecdotes are quite entertaining and colorful. They next move on to detailing the band's love & support for West Ham football and, after their side won the Cup in 1980, they covered the team's theme song *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles* and made it into the charts for the second time in their very young career.

But with that song they also stoked the fires of "firm violence," varying football club supporters who at the time seemed to dominate London headlines with their passion and drunken violence. This led to an extremely harrowing and nearly-deadly encounter at a Birmingham gig which really shook them up. Due to that proximity to violence and love of football the band was thus lumped in with all of the worst of it by the British press, gaining a notoriety as a British (neo-Nazi) Party band which they very much stood against. But it was enough to get them blacklisted even worse in their home country and while they're

still angry about it they realize how much they heaped upon themselves, too.

Some criminal charges (GBH) get leveled against them and while they get out of that it pretty much stops the band in their tracks. Members leave, new paths are pursued (release two metal albums pretty much killed them off), and they all drift back off into their own lives. But then, a few years later, one of their songs gets featured in a TV ad for Levi's and, suddenly, people like Joe Strummer are coming out in support of them and other popular bands start touting them as a reference. With that wind in their sails they reform, find some new members and head off on international tours where they prove to be incredibly popular. The film closes on this note, detailing their legacy and what the Rejects mean to so many people.

Video/Audio/Extras:

This DVD is presented quite well in widescreen (16:9). Audio options come in a very robust 5.1 Surround option and a 2.1 Stereo Digital version and both are well suited to the material - although, as a fan, I wanted this as loud as possible. It's a fairly well-balanced track (both options) but the 5.1 only suffers from far too much bass on a couple of the newer band tracks featured in two of the extras and on the DVD menus. But otherwise it's very well done. French, Spanish, German and Italian subtitles are available but it would've been nice to have English since some of the Cockney accents are a bit hard to understand in the film.

An ample amount of extras fill out this disc and are welcome additions for fans of the band and/or for fans of the film wanting just a little bit more:

East End Babylon - Promotional material for their newest album (6 min.)

Where the Hell Is Babylon? - A bit of the story behind one of their bigger songs (2:57)

Canvey Island - Another new song about their version of Coney Island and the times they had there as a family (4:30)

How Many Rejects? - They manage to get the original bass player's (Vince Rierdan) signature onto a jersey hanging in a pub but have quite a time getting it hung back up properly; includes Benny Hill chase music, too (4:15)

It's Alright? - More from the interview with new guitarist Tony van Frater (1:10)

Tour Memories - More stories about the old days and being on the road (11:16)

Back To the Start - The brothers interviewed about public school and life in that part of London at that time (4:34)

Bridgehouse Stories - Visiting the site of the former famous club and telling more stories (12:40)

Reject Acoustic Set - A video from Oct 10th, 2010 at the new Bridgehouse (16:54)

Jeff Turner at West Ham Workingman's Club - Sort of a one-man show or "An Evening with.." wherein Turner covers much of the same ground as the documentary (17:08)

Silvertown - Another new song rounds out this impressive extras set (3:56)

The Final Word:

An honest and well-rounded look at one of not just punk's seminal bands but the spirit embodied by The Cockney Rejects. Unwavering in their attitudes but reflective enough to understand and give that turbulent time some context East End Babylon does a fantastic job of encapsulating a time & place, showing where poverty and violence meet you can get some really great punk rock. The founding members of the band still wear their local pride on their sleeves and stand defiant, bloodied & unbowed, but in their sincerity Mick says it best with the line, "We are our audience and they are us. There's no rockstar bullshit."









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Mark Tolch - 11-04-2013, 07:21 PM  Reply

Cool, man! I don't think that I even knew this was coming out.

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