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Pip Piper
Pip Piper: Last Shop Standing [DVD]Last Shop Standing [DVD] (2013)
Blue Hippo Media

Reviewer Rating:
3.5

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Published on June 14th 2013There has been lots and lots of talk about why the independent record store is dying. Articles have focused on this factor, or that factor, but there really hasn't been a concise piece studying the drop off. One reason for this is probably that there is no one reason for the decline of the record st.



There has been lots and lots of talk about why the independent record store is dying. Articles have focused on this factor, or that factor, but there really hasn't been a concise piece studying the drop off. One reason for this is probably that there is no one reason for the decline of the record store. But, by being so scientific, we end up without any explanation at all, even an imperfect one. Cleverly, *Last Shop Standing*, an official Record store day film and based off the book of the same name, traces the rise, fall, and resurrection of the independent record store in the UK by focusing on a few main factors.

Last Shop Standing understands that brevity is it's strength, so it rips through the story in about an hour, giving 20 minute each to the rise, fall, and re-birth. It's a trip to see shop owners, mostly older people, talk about the 70's and 80's when record suppliers would drop off hundreds of albums for free just to drive up sales numbers. It's also a trip to hear that some albums would fly out the door at ten per hour. The documentary spices itself up by including interviews with musicians including Johnny Marr, Paul Weller, Billy Bragg and others, and it's wild to see how excited they still get to talk and be inside record stores.

The documentary then shifts to the record store's decline. Interestingly, in the UK, supermarkets (as opposed to Best Buy or Walmart in the USA) sell a great quantity of albums at deep price cuts, which the documentary blames for the decline of independent store record sales. Although the piece makes a good argument based on facts, it seems to omit two important reasons. First, it doesn't focus on the concept of downloading hurting record stores sales, which certainly is a huge factor. Also, it doesn't mention that many record stores are owned by miserly cretins that hate everything about life. But, on the converse, the record store owners here are unique and sometimes wacky people, that all seem genuinely friendly. While it might not be a 100% accurate portrayal of the average record store clerk, it is wild and a lot of fun to meet all these interesting characters that spend their days surrounded by slabs of vinyl, including a mother and son pair, as well as a guy that literally jumps in excitement at the suggestion of certain records.

The documentary's strongest point is the conclusion where it mentions the rebirth of the record store. It's smart in that it doesn't say that "record stores are okay and will be around forever," but it does show the hope and excitement of the new wave of record stores. Most interestingly, is that this seems to be the first solid explanation and description of how new record stores will survive-not as moldy old shops with stacks of Perry Como records, but rather, as happening spots of culture and mini-venues that host shows. It's a risky time, but it's also an exciting time.

The deluxe edition comes with the full interviews of the above musicians, including a full half hour with Johnny Marr, which really beefs up this set. No story could talk bout all the aspects of record shops, but *Last Shop standing* does an excellent job of making a compact explanation with some real characters inside of it. Let's hope the story isn't over yet.

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