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Last Shop Standing: The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of the Independent Record Shop - Deluxe Edition

[Video Watchdog](#) // Unrated // April 23, 2013

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 Review by [Tyler Foster](#) | posted April 28, 2013 | [E-mail the Author](#)

In 2009, UK author Graham Jones wrote [Last Shop Standing: Whatever Happened to Record Shops?](#). Jones drew on his experience working in the industry as a label representative, recounting his experiences going from shop to shop trying to get them to pick up stock of the latest albums and witnessing the decline first-hand. By 2011, however, the outlook for some mom-and-pop record stores -- the ones that were left, anyway -- was starting to improve. The invention of Record Store Day and recognition by the industry that some people still buy physical albums have helped to lift stores out of the doldrums. In early 2012, Jones and director Pip Piper shot interviews with record store owners and vendors around the UK, turning the book into a 60-minute documentary with the more optimistic subtitle *The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of the Independent Record Shop*.

I'm not much of a record collector myself, but any film geek likely has an independent video store struggling in the same way these record stores are struggling, and the appeal is pretty much the same: smart owners and employees who are passionate about their wares, ready to drop a boatload of knowledge and experience on anyone who happens to walk through their doors. Although Jones provides some bits of information in his interview clips, Piper mainly allows the experiences and memories of the shop owners and musicians (including Johnny Marr, Richard Hawley, and Paul Weller) to drive the picture, encouraging that special friendly electricity when one discovers that hole-in-the-wall store that just speaks to them. If a good record shop is defined by a sense of community, *Last Shop Standing* does a great job of recreating it.

At the same time, Piper and Jones don't skimp on the history. The middle of the film focuses on the way the industry shot itself in the foot when it came to record shops. As described by the subjects, the music industry went from dropping off boxes of free records at shops with the equipment to contribute to chart numbers to trying to crush vinyl overnight. It may be common knowledge that the CD led to vinyl's demise, but it's fascinating to hear how much of that was the industry itself trying to kill its own technology in order to make way for the next big thing. In turn, the compact, mass-availability nature of CDs led to electronics stores and even supermarkets stocking CDs -- one shopkeeper says at one time they were running to the supermarket, buying the CDs, and reselling them at the same price, just to force customers into the shop -- which crippled the people most interested in selling music.

Thankfully, there is light at the end of the tunnel. In particular, Piper and Jones are enthusiastic about Record Store Day, fueled by hundreds and hundreds of exclusive singles and EPs created by bands comprised of people who first learned about music in independent record shops. Admittedly, the situation is not all sunshine and roses. One 100-year-old record shop is shown going out of business in the middle of the documentary, and despite Piper's best efforts, there's no way to fairly paint the resurgence of music lovers in record stores as more than a promising development -- there's no telling how long it will last. Even so, that upbeat attitude is all part of the film's overall philosophy. This isn't a sob story about record stores, it's a warm and loving tribute.

The DVD

Simplicity is always appreciated when it comes to modern DVD cover design, although *Last Shop Standing* might downplay itself a little too far, without a single photograph or still from the film itself appearing on the case. The front is simply a picture of a record collection from the side, and the back is nothing but text. It's a little bland, and might leave some viewers unsure if they're picking up an actual documentary feature or some other kind of supplement to Jones' book. The disc comes packaged in a transparent eco-friendly Amaray (thinner plastic, no holes), and there is no insert, nor any art printed on the reverse of the sleeve.

The Video and Audio

Last Shop Standing gets a basic 1.85:1 anamorphic / Dolby Digital 2.0 presentation on DVD. Although the film was funded by Kickstarter and shot on the cheap, it's been handled well in its transfer to home video, where the usual suspects (aliasing, banding, artifacts) are all kept at bay. Audio is mainly just talking heads and the occasional rock song, generally from an era before 5.1 audio, so it sounds just fine. It helps that all the content on the disc only barely crosses two hours. No subtitles are provided, but closed captions are available for those whose televisions support them.

The Extras

Two short supplementary clips, which play like "bonus chapters" to the movie, are included first. **"The Rebirth Continued"** (4:35) is a short follow-up video with further comments by Graham Jones, although those who "stay through the credits" will recognize half of this clip, shot at Pie & Vinyl, from the very end of the documentary. **"Shop Talk"** (6:29) is a reel of the shopkeepers telling stories from their years behind the counter.

The rest of the extras consist of **extended interviews** with the celebrities interviewed in the film (Johnny Marr - 25:31, Paul Weller - 4:38, Jo Good - 6:16, Richard Hawley - 12:12, and Billy Bragg - 7:26), plus a bonus all-new interview (Sid Griffin - 8:32). It's almost a shame, watching some of these performers fondly reminiscing about record stores, that the documentary wasn't expanded to 80 minutes to accommodate some of this material.

An **original theatrical trailer** is also included.

Conclusion

Recommended. This short, sweet little look at a crucial aspect of the music industry is energized by the

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love and passion of the record store owners and musicians interviewed, and the disc really sweetens the deal with almost 80 minutes of additional interviews that fans should enjoy watching.

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Andy Chirchirillo · Oakland, Maryland

Thank you for bringing my attention to this doc. If we lose record stores we lose a lot.

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