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FEATURES

- Full-length documentary: A Good Band Is Easy To Kill
- 17 full songs of Beulah in concert
- 20 deleted scenes with footage from every stop of the tour

Beulah: A Good Band Is Easy To Kill

By Shoegaze99

Disc Details:

Video:	1.33:1
Anamorphic:	No
Audio:	• Dolby 2.1 Stereo
Subtitles:	N/A
Runtime:	99 minutes
Rating:	NR
Release Date:	August 2, 2005
Production Year:	N/A
Price (MSRP):	\$14.95
Released by :	Music Video Distributors
Region:	Region Free



Beulah was a great band. That I have to say "was" is unfortunate indeed. Thankfully, fans of the band – and fans of music docs in general – were left with this nice parting gift.

A Good Band Is Easy To Kill is an 89-minute tour documentary chronicling what turned out to be among the final 30 days or so of one of indie rock's most enjoyable little bands, the consistently good Beulah. It's a doc that is clearly a must watch for fans of the band, and which should be of some interest to indie rock fans in general. It offers us a peek at what it's like to be on the road with a band trying to get its break, making it worth watching for most aspiring musicians.

QUOTES

"A Good Band Is Easy To Kill is an enjoyable watch, entertaining without resorting to manufactured MTV/VH1 style drama, and almost always highlighting the music in just the right way."

"As good as Beulah was, they never caught on with people. That's unfortunate. And this doc should prove that point."



Some brief background on Beulah for you music aficionados: Beulah is an energetic, poppy indie band from the West Coast. Affiliated with the Elephant 6 Recording Co. syndicate of bands early in their career (The Apples In Stereo, Neutral Milk Hotel, The Olivia Tremor Control, etc.), they churned out four really

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fun albums – *Handsome*

Western States, *When Your Heartstrings Break*, *The Coast Is Never Clear* and *Yoko* – before calling it quits in 2004. If you dig Pavement, The Beatles, The Apples In Stereo or indie rock in general, any one of these records is worth picking up.

So on to **A Good Band Is Easy To Kill** ...

What we have here is a click under 90 minutes following Beulah around during a 30-day tour of the United States and Canada (plus a wealth of bonus material; more on that later), peering into their tour van banter, watching them fail and succeed on stage, and looking in as they interact with their fans in a very personal way.

For ardent music fans, the first minute may come as a shock. Miles Kurosky, Beulah's frontman, well, has not great things to say about Bob Dylan. He pretty much says that he's better. Very bold words for a band that never quite made it, maybe, but once given the context of the 90 minutes to follow, it settles into place. Kurosky's comments come from his frustration with being unable to get that lucky break and his belief that first and foremost, passion is what music is about.

But I forgot the Dylan comment pretty quickly and settled into the doc. You will, too.

In the opening minutes, we are presented with a band getting ready for the road. We watch them play their first show together in some time. Hop in a van. Take to the road. Play another show. A frustrating show. And move on. They swap banter in their tour van.

They have sound problems at a club. They look at porn magazines. They pretty much come off as some young guys in a cross-country van trip together. Which is what they are.

A Good Band Is Easy To

Kill is a pretty intimate look at their experience, watching as they suffer the frustration of the road. At one point, they invite some kids too young to come to their show in for a soundcheck, giving them the personal show of their lives. At another, a Canadian fan invites them to his place for an after show shindig. All is



well until he drunkenly decides to bash America for no discernable reason, so the band – not at all mindless flag wavers – clears out, leaving the fan sorry he insulted his guests. At yet another, a show that looks doomed, organized in a shitty hall by an inexperienced young girl, turns into gold. All in all, very nice glimpses into their experience. Some of them very compelling indeed. If this is the work of first-time filmmakers (the Internet Movie Database lists only this title for director Charles Norris), a promising career in docs is ahead.

I do have some minor quibbles. I could have used a better degree of coherency – the documentary is structured not quite as a narrative, but rather as a series of anecdotes – and something to impart upon me, the viewer, the weariness 30 days on the road must entail. On the first point, a sense of *journey* is never fully imparted on the view, which is unfortunate, being that slogging around the country in a van has got to *suck*. Musical montages tried to get the second point across, sometimes successfully, sometimes not.



None of this is to say the documentary fails. It doesn't. **A Good Band Is Easy To Kill** is an enjoyable watch, entertaining without resorting to manufactured MTV/VH1 style drama, and almost always highlighting the music in just the right way. Low budget as this is, it's shot well, never looks amateurish, and always

conveys a sense of place (as much as random clubs in random cities possibly can ... which is half the *point* when it comes to the loneliness of touring). The doc focuses on a lot of the little moments that are likely to be what the members of the band most remember from the tour, and in that respect it works like a charm.

All in all, **A Good Band Is Easy To Kill** is a really good tour doc, better than I expected from a band of Beulah's modest success level. As good as Beulah was, they never caught on with people. That's unfortunate. And this doc should prove that point.

A Bounty Of Extras

Okay, yeah. Wow. You're not supposed to get this much extra stuff. I mean, you're really not supposed to get this much extra stuff. Not from what is presumably a small time production.

There are no less than 20 deleted scenes here, all of the same quality as the main feature in both production values and content. *Plenty* of stuff. More than generous. Lots of very worthy scenes to see. I love extras, and this was great. (I should note that I had menu problems on a Norcent player in this portion of the DVD; see below). Kudos to the filmmakers for this bounty.

Even better is the concert footage. This is where fans of the band can prepare for a wet spot in their pants, because we're talking *17 full length live songs* available here as extras. In other words, the equivalent of a full live CD or concert DVD here for your viewing/listening pleasure, *as a DVD extra*. That's just fantastic any way you slice it and worth the price of admission alone. Hell, I would have gladly shelled out \$15 or so just to get this much concert footage/sound from the band.



Look, it's simple: The bonus features on this DVD are *outstanding*. Dig them. Love them. Etc. Etc. They easily make this disc worth the price.

The Tech Specs

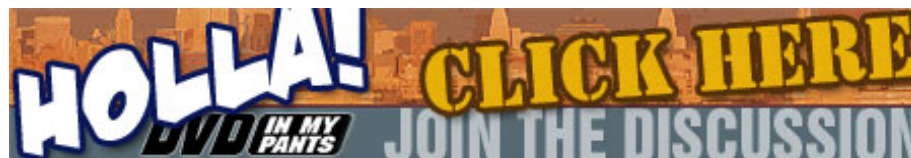
There's no raving to be done about the picture quality here because, well, that's not what this film is about. It's not the Matrix, but it sure as hell isn't home video quality, either. The DVD looks just fine, likely exactly as intended, and that's good enough. It is, after all, a small road doc. The sound is swell. The music comes across nice and will sound great on your home entertainment system. No complaints. Fans will love playing the live tracks just to hear the music. Finally, the menus are laid out nicely and are very easy to navigate, always crisp and clear. All in all, a very good production from a small group o' folks.

A quick note worth pointing out: I had some problems with this DVD. It stuttered on a Samsung player, a Norcent player scrambled the menus into an unreadable mess on one occasion and would not recognize it at all on another, and an Xbox, which generally has no DVD problems to speak of, was never once able to recognize this disc. This may well

have been a bum disc and not a production problem – I don't know – but if you have a temperamental DVD player, it might not like this disc. (My PC DVD-ROM seemed to read the disc without any issues).

The Final Word

A Good Band Is Easy To Kill does a nice job peering into the world of an indie band on the road, offering up good music, great anecdotes and solid production values. It's not going to rock your world with revelations about life on the road, but if you're a fan of the scene, it will no doubt entertain. No Beulah fan should hesitate in picking this up, and most independent rock fans should consider this something worth purchasing. The folks at Further Down Films did a nice job with this, all while highlighting a very worthy band. Some DVD tech issues aside, a hearty thumbs up. At \$14.95, this is a bargain.



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