

# ARTS

## Review *Hard Core Logo 2* is mock n rolling



KATHERINE MONK, POSTMEDIA NEWS | Apr 13, 2012 10:00 AM ET | Last Updated: Apr 12, 2012 6:45 PM ET  
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Look out, she's possessed by the spirit of Joe Dick! Oh Alliance wait, that's how Care Failure always looks.

### 2.5 stars

The original *Hard Core Logo* is now considered something of a cult classic, so ramping up for another rock 'n' roll road movie more than a decade later could have been a problem — especially since the first revelled in the filth and loathing of untamed youth.

The fact is, Bruce McDonald — the auteur director behind the 1996 adaptation of Michael Turner's novel about a disintegrating Vancouver punk band — is a little long in the tooth for all that piss and vinegar. He's been there. He's done that. And so have we.

So why go back? It's an interesting question, but fortunately one that sits at the very heart of *Hard Core Logo 2*. The cynics among you might think the whole premise is just a cash grab, but those suspicions will evaporate in the first five minutes of watching this dream-like weave of images and poetic voice-over.

The whole quasi-vérité caboodle opens with McDonald speaking to us, the viewer, directly. He's in a nostalgic reverie thinking about the arc of his life and career in the wake of the first *Hard Core Logo*. He tells us the onscreen suicide of lead singer Joe Dick (Hugh Dillon) helped him make a name for himself in the industry, and even if it seemed a little parasitic to use someone else's death to make your film seem more important, this character called Bruce McDonald seems perfectly OK with being a scumbag.

If you didn't see the first film, it was framed as faux documentary. McDonald played a non-fiction director following a band called *Hard Core Logo* as they crossed the country gigging, and finally, imploding. McDonald always played the inquisitor and objective observer in the piece, but in *Hard Core Logo 2*, he assumes the starring role as the film circles back on itself — a film, about a film, about a dead-end narcissist.

As the faux McDonald tells us in the introduction, he hasn't thought about Joe Dick in ages. Comfortably content in Laurel Canyon, making heaps of money on a serial TV show about a wandering pilgrim, the mock McDonald has sold-out. And he's happy about it. Yet, when he gets an odd message from an amateur filmmaker with a special interest in Wiccan ritual, his glitzy lifestyle takes a turn, and veers into the frigid landscape of a Canadian winter.

The lead singer for Die Mannequin, Care Failure, says she's possessed by the spirit of Joe Dick. Believing there may be cinematic gold in those psychotic breaks, the Wiccan fan contacts Bruce in the hopes of collaborating on a film together. To make a needlessly complex story short, McDonald ends up following Care Failure and her band in the dead mid-winter as they record an album.

That's about it. The only other scraps of bona fide plot include a thread of romance as Care and her boyfriend break up, and the simmering tension between Bruce and Bucky Haight (Julian Richings), the only original character outside McDonald to return for Round 2.

Without a roller coaster of events to give the movie narrative momentum, things seem to move a lot slower than they really are. Scenes of McDonald floating in a murky pool or dancing in the retro ballroom are evocative and have a Godardian gestalt, but they do not accelerate the story. The same is true for the characters. They don't seem to move or transform. So much that the movie feels fixed, in every sense of the word.

Yet, for those with an affinity for McDonald's freehand sketches, *Hard Core Logo 2* proves sufficiently compelling to keep us watching — even if it's more like a drifting in and out of sleep thing.

It's not easy making films that refuse to crawl into a recognizable box, but *Hard Core Logo 2* does just that. In true punk fashion, McDonald spits in the face of traditional narrative as he explores his own role in the industry of mythmaking.

For many, it will be boring and incomprehensible. But for the adventurous and the patient, *Hard Core Logo 2* is easily the most courageous thing McDonald has ever done.

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