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#### FEATURES: RECREATING THE MAGIC OR TAKING A GOOD NAME IN VAIN?



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Now Playing: 'Do It Or Die (Hard Core Ground Control mix)' by Die Mannequin

Some readers will say that this review comes a bit late (the film was released with a limited theatrical run on December 4, 2010), but the truth is that it took me this long to screw up courage to see *Hard Core Logo 2*. Why? Well, it's simple; *Hard Core Logo* is one of only four Canadian movies which I would say absolutely deserve inclusion in the canon of truly great cinematic titles (if you're curious, the other greats are Michael Moore's *Canadian Bacon*, Clement Virgo's *Rude* and Sarah Polley's *Away from Her*) that everyone should see, regardless of nationality. *Hard Core Logo* is a classic, and I know I wasn't the only one who thought so; critics were generally positive on the film's release, a band called Pez renamed itself Billy Talent (after guitarist Billy Tallent – played by Callum Keith Rennie) and there was at least a small international reaction when the U.S. distribution rights ended up being purchased for United States showing by Quentin Tarantino's Rolling Thunder company. Not only that but, since its release in 1996, enthusiastic fans have quietly hoped that director Bruce McDonald would somehow find a way to revisit the characters from the film; be it with a sequel or a prequel – it was getting desperate enough that those fans seemed willing to take anything.

When word went out that a sequel had been made, my first reaction was simply, "Fans wanted anything, and 'anything' is precisely what they've got here."

I questioned the legitimacy of the film, I mean, at the end of the first one, *Hard Core Logo*'s frontman, Joe Dick, commits suicide on camera – that alone would make a run-of-the-mill sequel near impossible. So what would the alternatives be? My skepticism turned to revulsion when I heard that one of the principle plot points in *Hard Core Logo 2* was supposed to be that a different lead singer from another band claims to be possessed by the ghost of the singer. As plot points go, this is about as contrived as it gets; effectively subbing a singer in because Hugh Dillon (who, after *Hard Core Logo* has built a fairly awesome career in film and television) was too busy to reprise his role seems like it would be the only reason required to not make this movie. Something about the whole idea of making this sequel just seemed desperate and, with a special place in my

**ARTIST:** Recreating The Magic Or Taking A Good Name In Vain?

A *Ground Control* Editorial looking at the diminished return of *Hard Core Logo*'s second coming  
**DATE:** 05-18-12

**WRITER:** Bill Adams

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heart already held for *Hard Core Logo*, I just wasn't sure I wanted to witness a film which had no choice but to be a diminished return.

As it turns out, that everyone is aware *Hard Core Logo 2* is going to be a diminished return turns out to be an initial plot point which helps to get the movie moving. In this film, Bruce McDonald (who once again reprises his role as the Director, both on camera and off) is set up as having utilized the first *Hard Core Logo* film as a springboard for his career; fifteen years later (which is accurate), and the filmmaker is living comfortably in Hollywood making religiously-backed television until the star of that show runs into trouble with the law and forces McDonald to look into other employment opportunities. Surreptitiously enough, that's when a phone call comes into his office outlining the strange case of Die Mannequin singer Care Failure who has a breakdown on stage and now claims to have been possessed by the spirit of Joe Dick. Seeing the opportunity to salvage some of his career, McDonald returns to the Great White North to track down Failure and see what all this nonsense is about.

...And then the film gets softer on the plot front. Narrated by McDonald but featuring little in the way of actual dialogue, much of *Hard Core Logo 2* runs like a book on film or a radio play which happens to have a visual component in that viewers are offered images of what McDonald is talking about via his monologue, but they aren't given any real connection or relationship between that audio and the video. That design goes precisely against the nature of the first *Hard Core Logo* movie, which was a mockumentary but still developed the characters and their motivations in the film meticulously; there is no attempt made to connect with the audience, the movie just meanders along developing a storyboard but adding no color to it.

The pallor with which the film is treated makes it easy to dismiss some of the other shortcomings of the film as well as the opportunities it misses. For example, in spite of the fact that it would have been very simple to re-introduce HCL drummer Pipefitter into the plot here [*he was last seen as a grip on one of Bruce McDonald's other films after the end of Hard Core Logo according to the post-scripts included as the credits rolled at the end of Hard Core Logo—ed*], the only returning character from the first film is 'punk rock icon' Bucky Haight – this time in the roll of the producer for Die Mannequin's third album, the one they need to be "a hit" so they don't get dropped by their label – and while actor Julian Richings doesn't do a pitiful job of reprising his roll (an actor can really only be as good as his script), it isn't enough to even come close to saving the film because the character's motivation for even being involved is very muddled. Worse, the members of Die Mannequin (including Failure) are rendered as little more than voiceless cardboard cutouts on-screen here; while the singer gets a couple of good lines in and mugs menacing-ish half-assed Courtney Love-isms whenever the camera is pointed at her, the other bandmembers are basically silent and seem to only be present here as the unpleasant bi-product of the film needing to be about a band. By the end, when the rudderless storyline finally collapses out of exhaustion, nothing is resolved and nothing has been discovered about Care Failure, Joe Dick, Bucky Haight or Die Mannequin or where the plot may have been intended to go so, rather than allow this mockery to continue, Bruce McDonald is accidentally shot in the head. There is some niggling existential denouement after that (apparently, Bruce made this film to entertain himself and the one other guy who occupies his nook of the afterlife), but it's all reasonably inconsequential; on some level, those who entertain the idea of watching *Hard Core Logo 2* already knew it wasn't going to be good and they're not surprised by the end.

So with the obviously high desire for a continuation of the *Hard Core Logo* franchise in mind, those who see this sequel will find themselves asking why, with such a high desire and expectation, Bruce McDonald would release a farce like this. Was the money right? Maybe, but it's also possible that *Hard Core Logo 2* exists and is so poorly done is because it is little more than a reactionary measure. Kevin Smith once said that *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back* was written, directed and filmed the way it was for the express purpose of making dogged supporters of his cinematic franchise sick of the characters – and one has to wonder if Bruce McDonald didn't take a similar page for the *HCL* sequel; he made a lackluster effort (bad film and, unlike its predecessor, no brand new music; the soundtrack focuses on Die Mannequin's last album which is now a few years old) to deter fans from asking for more. It might work – *HCL 2* is just bad enough to turn a lot of people off of the franchise – but those who want to believe that Bruce McDonald hasn't lost his ability to direct should check out *Trigger*, the screenplay which was supposed to be the sequel to *Hard Core Logo* and was supposed to star Hugh Dillon and Callum Keith Rennie but, when schedules didn't permit, was rewritten and released in 2010 starring Molly Parker and Tracy Wright with a cameo appearance by Rennie as Billie Tallent and with Hugh Dillon drawing a 'Producer' credit.

**Film:**

[www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hard\\_Core\\_Logo\\_2](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hard_Core_Logo_2)

**Album:**

The soundtrack for *Hard Core Logo 2* is out now. Buy it here on [Amazon](#).

