



Scott Shuffitt

Scott Shuffitt: Brick and Mortar and Love [DVD] Brick and Mortar and Love [DVD] (2013)

MVDvisual

Reviewer Rating: 4

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*Published on August 8th 2013* Brick and Mortar and Love acts as a US companion to the UK's Last Shop Standing. While Last Shop focused on the increasing challenge for a particular group of UK record shops, Brick and Mortar and Love zooms in on one notable shop, ear X-tacy in Louisville, Kentucky, and pays particular notice to th.

*Brick and Mortar and Love* acts as a US companion to the UK's *Last Shop Standing*. While *Last Shop* focused on the increasing challenge for a particular group of UK record shops, *Brick and Mortar and Love* zooms in on one notable shop, ear X-tacy in Louisville, Kentucky, and pays particular notice to the shop owner John Timmons.

The crux of the film is that after 25 years in business, ear X-tacy is pleading to the community to help them stay in business. While that is a temporary solution, the store ends up moving to a smaller location. Again, Timmons pleads to the community. While some people react with sympathy and support, the second press release causes anger in some members of the community and all of a sudden, ear X-tacy ends up the target of numerous angry patrons and competitors.

Quite cleverly, director Scott Shuffitt seeks out some of the anonymous commentors that criticize the shop with extremely harsh words on Facebook. As is expected, when interviewed in person (the interviews seem to be voluntary and not Geraldo-style surprise interviews) the harsh critics retain their central argument, but surround it with limitless qualifiers and become much more meek and understanding than their ire-filled typing would have the viewer believe. One fellow is just a young man who argues that because he is broke, the store is unfairly guilt-tripping him when he can't even help himself. The other is a smug little snot that runs a competition retro-toy store that you just want to smash in the face every moment that he speaks but know you shouldn't because violence is wrong, but still want to anyway.

The value in the documentary is that it raises the question: How much of a duty does a community have to keep local stores in business? Is the onus on the consumer to sacrifice his or her own money to keep these businesses afloat, or is the burden on the business itself to compete and adapt or get out of the arena? Wisely, the documentary doesn't answer the question. However, it does do an excellent job of focusing on Timmons and several store employees, making the question both economic and human.

The film could have focused more on what makes ear X-tacy so special. Although Timmons talks about why *he* likes it (he's the owner), we get little interaction with actual customers. Is it that the store hosts shows? Is it the staff? Is it a hangout spot? Is it the selection of rarities?

The documentary culminates in a benefit that some larger name musicians, including the Watson Twins, play to keep the store in business. Of course, I won't reveal the result, but whether or not this one store survives isn't the documentary's sole message. How much effort does the consumer own in keeping independent record stores open? Are these consumers, or more like members of an elite club?

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