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KISS: KISS Loves You (DVD)

KISS Loves You is a film by Jim Heneghan that began back in 1994 when the mighty KISS was no longer considered at the top of their game and the bands popularity in the mainstream was at its lowest. No longer was a mass frenzy surrounding their activities but instead it was left to the hearts and minds of their most ardent fans as some sort of underground legion when it came down to it. By 1994 KISS had long taken off their signature greasepaint and was very well established as a killer Hard Rock band without it to help them along but of course the tide of music changes like the weather and by this time in this decade the Grunge Movement was in full sway. It seemed as without those remaining loyalists and remnants of the once proud KISS Army that no one really seemed to care about KISS anymore. As a lifetime fan I found this film interesting because like many of these loyalists KISS had never really lost much of their appeal to me, and just because something is not shoved down your throat every minute doesn't mean it has died a quiet death. The film takes you back to these years before the bombastic reunion of the original four members of KISS and follows the lives of those people who loved them very much. It takes you inside the rehearsal rooms and on the stages of some of the bands who believed in KISS so much that they formed tributes to them and as result became rock stars in their own towns and brought the KISS show that was no longer done by legends right to them. We follow the bands Dressed To Kill and Strutter who were actually two groups that seemed to consist of interchanging members at one point in their lives. Given this was 1994, a KISS tribute band was not as commonplace as it is today and while there might be hundreds to choose from now there are only a select few who do it properly. The bands presented during the movie did a great job both visually and musically and were to be commended for some of this early initiative.



We follow Bill Baker who was apparently quite close with ousted KISS axe slinger Ace Frehley; Bill shows off memorabilia and trinkets that he received from the musician and he also fronted his own Frehley tribute band since he even resembled him in some fashion. Baker speaks of the closeness and the admiration of the work Ace did and how the musician was cut off by KISS who continued without him, yet when the band reunited in 1996 this closely tied friendship of theirs ended as if it had never even existed. The once glowing words turn to those of questions and eventual disinterest in the goings on that he once lived for. The KISS tributes also speak of how the climate changed for them when the originals returned and how the once regal KISS conventions that offered fans a place to get everything they ever sought became KISS run enterprises where you got what they wanted you to have for a high price. There is one segment where we find Gene and Paul actually raiding a vendor booth as he apparently had possession of a few costumes illegally. I never thought I would see actual members of the band doing that as opposed to their staff people. I felt the film worked on a number of levels in showing the scene behind the scenes of the tribute acts and their interactions with each other and the fans, as well as how it showed a lot of the convention footage and what went on there. At times it paints a slightly negative picture of the band and how they operate in today's world but we need to remember that this is a business after all and sometimes the decisions to keep a business sound are on the tough or cold side. The film is primarily for those KISS fans that have been long time followers of the group as some of the circumstances discussed will be very familiar to them and perhaps those who can enjoy a solid documentary about a unique band and their more unique fan following. I really don't see newer KISS fans enjoying it all that much except for a chuckle at just how diehard many of the Old School fans actually are.

Bonus Features: 90 minutes of outtake footage, uncirculated 8mm film (silent) of KISS performing in Stockholm 1976, extended 1996 reunion press conference footage, "Beyond Vaudeville" KISS Spectacular Program (a New York Public Access TV show).

*** I loved the extended footage as it offered a longer look into some of the things we saw on the film. There is a great public access television spot that interviews some of the people we saw in the film also and some fairly decent super 8mm film that while silent is worth getting the chance to enjoy. The extended reunion press conference video was a great reminder of how special it felt when the original band had decided to reunite in full makeup and spectacle once again.

Added: December 7th 2007**Reviewer:** Ken Pierce**Score:** ★★★★★

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