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The Devil Went Home and Puked Robert Pollard's Rock Show Rockathon/MVD Visual

It's been five years since Robert Pollard disbanded Guided by Voices. Since then, he has continued his legendarily prolific songwriting, releasing scores of records both as a solo artist and as the integral member of a variety of recording collaborations. While some of this post-GBV output has been very good, the large shadow of his former band continues to hang over him, and any conversation about the latest Pollard record inevitably leads to the question of, "How does it compare to the classic GBV stuff?"

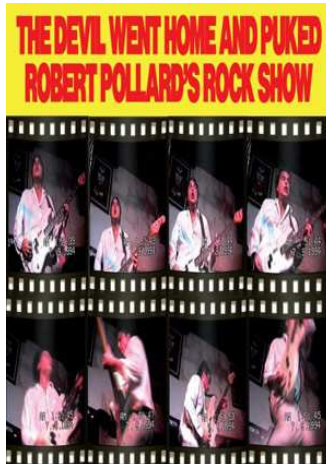
Perhaps as a nod to the fact that he will never fully be done with Guided by Voices, and maybe also as a way of trying once again to set the proverbial record straight, Pollard has assembled *The Devil Went Home and Puked: Robert Pollard's Rock Show*, a DVD film that examines the entirety of Pollard's musical career, with a particular focus upon the GBV years. While the title implies that the DVD might be a sequel to 2001's *The Who Went Home and Cried*, a DVD film that chronicled bassist Greg Demos' final concert with GBV, *The Devil* is billed as a "video collage" and consists of live footage, music videos and assorted behind-the-scenes ephemera mashed together with nary a trace of a narrative or readily apparent direction.

But while it might lack clear progression and organization (in that sense, it does treat the term "video collage" with utmost sincerity), Pollard fans will likely take interest in at least a handful of moments in the hour-long film. Occasionally, a full-length live performance, such as an early version of GBV rarity "Pantherz," will come as a true revelation, and it's a nice treat to see footage of Pollard recording vocal tracks for GBV's *Same Place the Fly Got Smashed* album. Also noteworthy is footage of the "classic" GBV lineup performing "Pimple Zoo" during soundcheck at Dayton's Hara Arena and clips from an interview with former GBV drummer Kevin Fennell.

At times, however, it takes a bit of patience to get to these good bits, which are often surrounded by split-second, super lo-fi concert clips, inside joke footage of Pollard's friends and even video of longtime Pollard associate Rich Turiel stumbling through a local Boston television newscast. While these parts might entertain hardcore Pollard devotees, for others, they're likely to be a bit of a bore. It's also hard for the casual fan to follow the film, which jumps back and forth chronologically at a breakneck speed and gives little, if any, context for the scenes.

Ultimately, *The Devil* is a celebration of Pollard's rock show through the years. By positioning the Guided by Voices clips among footage of Pollard's solo tours and videos from side-project group Circus Devils, the film seems to emphasize the idea that Pollard and GBV are one and the same. Indeed, even the GBV footage supports the notion that the band was Pollard and whoever else was there at the moment, as numerous GBV line-ups are showcased, and no single line-up makes more than a handful of appearances throughout the film. While some, including the aforementioned Fennell, will argue that GBV was at its best when it took on the guise of a more democratic unit, *The Devil Went Home and Puked* makes Pollard's position on the matter fairly clear. With that in mind, this DVD is not a Rosetta Stone to unlocking any Pollard mysteries, and it's not a biographical account or analytical survey of Bob or GBV. Instead, it's more of a lighthearted, haphazard way of reliving some GBV memories, which might be just what you'd expect from the title.

Ron Wadlinger



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