

side shots film blog

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DVD Review: Sid! by Those Who Really Knew Him

by Brad Cook

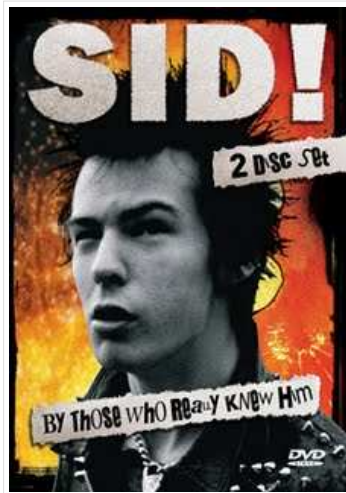
"If someone had to be the cartoon of punk rock, it might as well be Sid. He was pretty good at it," Siouxsie and the Banshees bass player Steve Severin says during this documentary. He later comments: "One of [the Sex Pistols] had to die to make the myth work, and Sid was only too willing."

That about sums up Sid Vicious, who, unlike other rock stars who died young, barely had a chance to build much of a body of work before succumbing to a heroin overdose in early 1979. If he was around today, I imagine he'd be horrified by the toys, t-shirts, and other paraphernalia immortalizing his brief but violent existence. Punk was supposed to be the antithesis of all that, but like everything else human beings have ever undertaken, it managed to create a lot of haves and have-nots, with plenty of people more than happy to make a quick buck off the proceedings.

Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren was one of those people, and his comments during this film show that he still has little regard for Sid, other than as a means for making money. The other surviving Pistols, except bass player Glen Matlock, don't show up for reasons that are never explained, leaving a variety of people associated with the early punk movement in the UK - Severin, Jah Wobble, Rat Scabies, and others - to try and put Sid's life in context. As with any famous person, contradictory views come out; the film runs such comments one after the other, leaving us with a multi-faceted portrait.

Of course, the prevailing attitude is "Sid was an out-of-control idiot destined to die young," a sentiment that I tend to agree with. One of his friends says that his bad boy reputation was just an image, but Sid engaged in plenty of anti-social behavior off the stage, and he never showed much inclination toward anything intellectual in any of the interviews he gave. The only prominent song he ever wrote was the creepy "Belsen was a Gas," and his rendition of "My Way" is notable simply because it's a brilliant melding of his and Sinatra's no-nonsense attitudes, despite the many obvious differences between the two of them. (Yes, I realize Paul Anka wrote the lyrics, but Sinatra is the guy who made the song famous.) If you've never heard it, don't worry: an accompanying CD, "Sid Live," includes ten tracks from a September 1978 concert, including "My Way."

Bonus features on the DVD are scant: the trailer for the main attraction



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Mark Paytress, who wrote the book "Vicious: The Art of Dying Young." No matter how you feel about Sid, the film and the booklet, when taken together, offer insight into someone who would have been a nobody in any other era but who managed to be in the right place at the right time to smash a cigarette butt in the eye of rock 'n' roll. All art forms need a cigarette butt in the eye every now and then, just to keep them honest. That was Sid's role.

2009, Not Rated, 86 min.

Directed by: Mark Sloper

Producer: George Pavlou

Starring: Sid Vicious, Nancy Spungen, Jah Wobble, Steve Severin, David Vanian, Malcolm McLaren, Viv Albertine, Ron Watts, Glen Matlock, Rat Scabies, Caroline Coon, Vivienne

Released by *MVDvisual*



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