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Hard Core Logo Review

by [Christopher Zabel](#) on December 31, 2012 in [Comedy](#), [Reviews](#), [Screenshots](#)



[Hard Core Logo \[Blu-ray\]](#)

Hugh Dillon, Callu...

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Hard Core Logo is a riff on the Canadian Punk scene circa the 1990s, much like *This is Spinal Tap* was a send-up of Hard Rock in an earlier era. That summation probably does some disservice to *Hard Core Logo*, as the movie starts out as a comedic take on Punk and ends up in much more serious emotional ground than a pure comedy such as *Spinal Tap*.

Hard Core Logo is a subtle and sophisticated take on the bonds within a band, while also spoofing the music scene it so lovingly portrays. It's a black comedy at its heart that goes beyond the confines of simple mockumentary and that is where its true strength lies.

Hard Core Logo is a fictional Vancouver Punk band that was semi-successful in the 1980s, led by the dynamic talents of its lead guitarist, Billy Tallent (Callum Keith Rennie), and charismatic front man, Joe Dick (played by actual Punk singer Hugh Dillon). Think a poor man's version of The Clash from Canada.

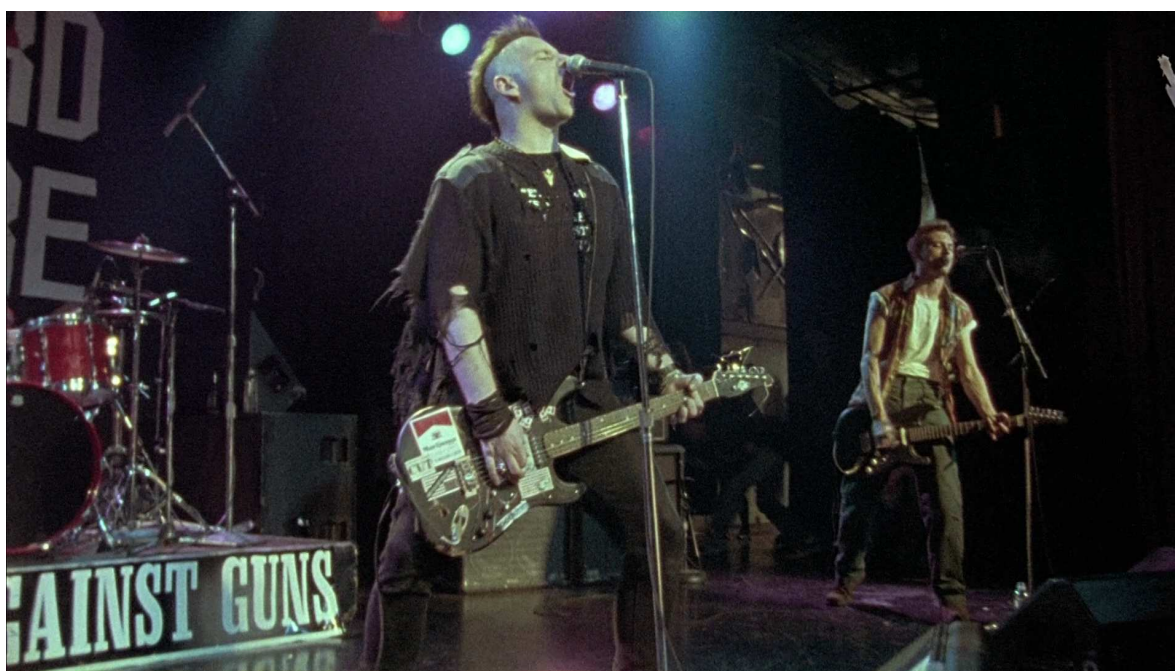
The movie is supposedly a documentary following Hard Core Logo's reunion tour in 1995, five years after they broke up. There are two other band members, Pipefitter and John

Oxenberg (John Pyper-Ferguson), but they are used as comedic background material most of the time. *Hard Core Logo* is all about the relationship of Billy and Joe Dick, childhood friends that grew up together in the band.

As the band makes its brief tour across the small Punk clubs in Canada, the movie portrays the turbulent friendship between Billy and Joe, particularly as Billy mulls an offer to accept a position within Jenifur. Jenifur is a very popular and successful major label band that Billy has gigged with on occasion and he thinks they will offer him a permanent position in the band. Joe Dick, by far the less talented member of the duo, knows that Billy leaving for Jenifur will permanently kill Hard Core Logo. As he wryly notes, he is getting older and doesn't see much for himself beyond being in Hard Core Logo. It's around that issue the movie entirely pivots, and goes from dry comedy to a darker and more emotional place.

Hard Core Logo is a very subtle mockumentary, that will find its fans amongst music lovers that know the trials and tribulations of the Rock lifestyle for the average band. One doesn't really need to be a fan of Punk music per se, the emotional themes in the film go beyond any specific genre. The last act turns very dark and provides a shock to the viewer accustomed to simple music spoofs.

Movie ★★★★★



VSC has presented *Hard Core Logo* in 1080i resolution, a curious choice for a movie shot on 16mm film. Thankfully the interlaced presentation does not affect the picture quality and aliasing does not rear its ugly head. The packaging claims the restoration was supervised by director Bruce McDonald. Running 92:10 minutes, the main feature is included on a single BD-50 with its sequel, while being encoded in AVC at very modest parameters. *Hard Core Logo*'s aspect ratio is 1.78:1, its intended framing.

Hard Core Logo was an independent production from Canada released in 1996 and one shouldn't really expect it to look like a major Hollywood feature. The rough grain and smeared detail reflect an aesthetic choice as much as a budgetary decision, for the faux documentary is shot in the style of so many music documentaries. Expect to see a number of shots in black-and-white, particularly for the solo interviews when the subject matter is supposed to be more serious. At times the picture has little visible resolution beyond a DVD, though the increased resolution of Blu-ray does provide some benefits to the grain structure.

The transfer is completely untouched by digital tools, with a lack of edge enhancement or filtering to denigrate the filmic quality of *Hard Core Logo*. It appears as exactly as it was filmed, in raw 16mm footage with uneven grain. While this disc will never win any beauty awards, the picture is totally faithful to the original film.

My criticisms lie mainly in the sub-par video encode, in which it introduces a number of compression artifacts handling the coarse grain and dense contrast at times. Another problem is the regular occurrence of minor dirt on the right edge of the print. The problem does not show up all the time, but select scenes have an odd haze of dirt which appears to have been on the lens during filming.

Video ★★☆☆☆

Hard Core Logo features a well-done and compelling 5.1 mix. In fact, if VSC had provided this Blu-ray with a lossless sound option, it would have deserved a perfect rating. The only soundtrack option is a 5.1 Dolby Digital soundtrack at 640 kbps. That is disappointing for a movie entirely devoted to the music scene as the band tours across Canada. The frequent live performances are recorded very well and the lossy option does its best to retain the full fidelity of the songs.

The sound mix presents a fairly wide soundstage across the front channels, while using the surrounds to bolster the score and other subtler effects. The live Punk music comes across loud and clear as the subwoofer channel gets into the action. The instrumental score and background music is an eclectic use of various genres. One hears the use of the sitar and other unique sounds that provide a respite from the high-energy Punk music between scenes. SDH subtitles are provided for *Hard Core Logo*.

Audio ★★★★★

A smattering of special features have been provided for *Hard Core Logo*, though this double-feature set also includes its sequel, *Hard Core Logo 2*, as a main attraction. What it lacks in quantity is made up for by quality. What some collectors will enjoy is the solid steelbook packaging of this new Blu-ray.

Audio commentary with director Bruce McDonald, Actor Hugh Dillon and screenwriter Noel

Baker – An entertaining and informative commentary in which Bruce McDonald contributes the most salient information. Worth checking out for the film's fans or fans of the Punk scene in Canada, as the participants share anecdotes from behind the scenes in an easygoing and sometimes boisterous manner.

Hard Core Logo "Who The Hell Do You Think You Are?" music video (2:20 minutes in SD) – An actual music video performed as an homage/parody to the Beatles' A Hard Day's Night.

Excerpt from the book Bruce McDonald's "Hard Core Logo" By Paul McEwan – Eight pages of actual text from Paul McEwan's book, an academic critique of the movie released in 2011. It presents some interesting food for thought and breaks down the major themes in the movie, in a very readable style.

Original Theatrical Trailer (01:43 minutes in SD) – The movie's original trailer looks to have been taken from a dated source.

Extras ★★★★★

Full disclosure: This Blu-ray was provided to us for review. This has not affected the editorial process. For more information on how we handle review material, please visit our [about us](#) page to learn more.



Definitely rough on the grain
@ 1:45



Getting groomed @ 3:05



Black levels are solid @ 5:11



Album cover waiting to
happen @ 5:24



Working hard for the money
@ 7:28



Black levels strong @ 11:55



Lunch @ 17:03



Adding style in the absence of color @ 17:45



Wintery fruit stand @ 21:39



So many caption possibilities @ 28:56



Little bit of detail in the profile @ 30:09



Band slow mo @ 33:35



For 16mm, it's a generally sharp image @ 40:09



Another album cover possibility @ 41:20



Nice close-up @ 56:52

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About Christopher Zabel

Christopher Zabel has been a movie aficionado since his collegiate days at Florida State University.

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