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## Hard Core Logo – All Access Edition (Blu-ray)

by Ian Jane

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Director: Bruce McDonald  
 Cast: Hugh Dillon, Callum Keith Rennie, John Pyper-Ferguson, Bernie Coulson  
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The Movie:

### **Hard Core Logo**

Bruce McDonald's *Hard Core Logo* is a faux documentary film made in 1996 that follows the exploits of the Vancouver based hardcore punk band of the same name. Lead by vocalist/guitar player Joe Dick (Hugh Dillon) and made up of lead guitarist Billy Tallent (Callum Keith Rennie), drummer Pipefitter (Bernie Coulson) and bass player John (John Pyper-Ferguson), when we meet up with them they've been defunct for half a decade. Billy has gone to Los Angeles and found some success temping in a major label band called Jenifur while Joe has been doing acoustic gigs here and there. When Joe's idol, an aging British punk singer named Bucky Haight (Julian Richings) has both his legs blown off, he gets the band back together for a benefit show.

The show goes well and with some renewed energy, the guys figure they might as well ride this wave and so they all climb into a rundown van and set out on a five date mini-tour across the western provinces. Of course, this isn't going to go well, and before you know it Pipefitter is complaining about everything, John is off his medication and writing strange things in his notebook (which gives the movie the skeleton on which to hang the flesh of its story), Billy's making promises he can't keep and Joe Dick is acting like... a dick.

One of the more believable movies ever made about a touring band, *Hard Core Logo* succeeds on a few key characteristics, the first of which is Hugh Dillon's lead performance. Having served his time at this point in his career as the front man of The Headstones (Renne's character wears a ring in the movie with that band's logo on it), he knows his way around a stage and handles himself with complete believability in front of a crowd and in front of a microphone. The fact that he does the actual vocals on the songs in the movie also helps out here a lot. The rest of the cast are also solid, with Rennie turning in work just as solid as Dillon's and both Coulson and Pyper-Ferguson adding interesting dynamics to the band unit.

McDonald, playing himself, interjects his odd sense of humor throughout the movie and the story moves at a good pace. He and the other members of the crew float in and out of the frame not quite randomly but edited cleverly enough to convince us that is the case. The music feels authentic and it works in the

context of the story being told. References to McDonald's other movies will be apparent to fans of his earlier films (Highway 61 and Roadkill are both mentioned by name at Bucky Haight has a band aid on his finger that will be of interest to Highway 61 fans) and a few fun cameos from the likes of Joey Ramone, Joey Shithead, Art Bergmann and Terry David Mulligan all help to keep this feeling like something that actually could have happened at one point.

Some interesting commentary in the film applies to the Canadian music industry, with Billy Tallent wanting to make it in L.A. and continually getting screwed by his manager and with the band having to travel long distances between small towns to play shows big enough to make a buck at. The film also deals with the inevitability of aging, of having to consider giving up on something you don't want to give up on and with the changes that come to people because of it. There's a lot of very effective black comedy in the film that keeps it amusing to watch while it all builds towards an unexpected yet somehow completely appropriate conclusion. McDonald's penchant for road movies and love of rock n roll have rarely come together so perfectly as they do here and aided by such a completely capable cast, the movie turns out to be a nasty, spit in your face grubby little gem of a film.

## **Hard Core Logo 2**

Not really the type of movie you'd expect there to be a sequel to, given how the first one ends and all, Hard Core Logo 2 takes place approximately fifteen years after the events in the first movie. The film introduces us to a woman named Care Failure, vocalist for the band Die Mannequin. Having made loads of money after the first film, Bruce McDonald has gone to work on TV projects and bigger pictures – The Pilgrim, a western that connected with America's religious right being the prime example. But since that's declined since its star was caught indulging in something he should not have, he's now turned his camera on her in hopes of capturing some of what made the original film such a success. But why her? Because Care claims to be possessed by the spirit of Joe Dick.

Bruce packs up immediately, leaving his wife and kid for the road with only his bizarre neighbor, a Wiccan artist named Liz (Shannon Jardine), along to serve as his crew. She works the camera while he takes a sort of Michael Moore/Werner Herzog on camera approach to his latest subject. Together they head to rural Saskatchewan where Bucky Haight (Julian Richings) is helping Care cut her new album and her manager, Mr. Bitterscotch (Paul Shull), keeps tabs on things. When Bruce shows up on the scene he starts to wonder if, based on her behavior, Care is legitimately possessed by Joe and if Joe

hasn't possessed her so that he can take care of some unfinished business?

A very different film from the first, McDonald gets some respect for putting so much of his life into this movie – it is, in many ways, as much about him and his career as it is about Care Failure channeling a substance abusing punk rock ghost. Where it is similar to the first movie is in its use of music to push the film along and to really keep the pace going – it does this well, Die Mannequin's various tracks filling the soundscape of the movie with a very pleasant sense of chaos and unpredictability.

Failure's screen presence isn't quite as inimitable as Dillon's was before her but she handles the material well and does a good job here. McDonald is also amusing in his part. He's got loads more screen time here than he did in the first film and he does a good job of keeping us guessing as to what is 'the real Bruce' versus 'movie Bruce.' Throw in a scene stealing supporting role from Julian Richings reprising his role (really the only actor to do so) from the original and the film turns out to be pretty well cast. McDonald manages to make a not so subtle but somehow appropriate Sid And Nancy reference too. And hey, Turbonegro are on the soundtrack.

Duff Smith's editing is rock solid throughout and it definitely helps to give the movie a rhythm all its own. The picture, like most of McDonald's output, has a uniquely Canadian feel to it not just in terms of location and setting but in dialogue as well. There's a sense of national identity permeating much of the film as characters take advantage of one another and one up each other in the nicest way possible. It's amusing to watch and clever in its execution. As to who is really screwing who, that's up to each viewer to decide but there are different layers to all of this but it takes us to places you will not expect and for that it's definitely worth checking out. It's a strange movie, one that will not in the least bit appease those looking for more of the same kind of thing he gave us with the first picture, but it's smart, well made and thoroughly interesting.

Can't get enough Bruce McDonald in your life?  
[Read our interview with the man here!](#)

Video/Audio/Extras:

Hard Core Logo looks pretty good (comparatively speaking, at least) presented here in AVC encoded 1.78.1 widescreen and in high definition, though it is presented in 1080i. Detail is considerably improved over the past DVD release from Miramax and colors look nice and natural if a bit faded. The film has always been fairly grainy looking and that carries over to its Blu-ray presentation but this is as it should be. Detail and texture are quite improved over the DVD in every way you would want them to be but not

at the expense of the movie's rough and tumble roots. It still looks like the 'shot on the fly documentary' it purports to be, so expect plenty of softness. Skin tones look good, there are no problems with noise reduction or heavy filtering and compression artifacts are never much of an issue. The second film is more colorful and was shot on digital video, so it has a fairly different look to it but it translates nicely to Blu-ray offering solid detail and nice color reproduction. It's presented in AVC encoded 1080p.

The only audio option for the Hard Core Logo is a Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround Sound mix, there are no alternate language options or lossless audio options provided. Optional subtitles are provided in English only. While a DTS-HD track would have probably kicked all kinds of ass given how much great music is used throughout the movie, but the sound quality is nevertheless quite good here. Levels are well balanced, the dialogue is clear and easy to understand and the 'live' footage feels and sounds like live footage. The same qualities apply to the sequel as well, though given that it's a newer film it not so surprisingly has a bit more depth and surround activity to it.

The main extra for Hard Core Logo is a commentary track with actor Hugh Dillon, director Bruce McDonald and writer Noel S. Baker. McDonald has the most to say here but all involved pull their own weight and share some interesting stories from the road. The movie's unexpected ending is given an explanation and we learn how some of the cameos came to be, what it was like shooting so much of the movie on location on the west coast of Canada and quite a bit more. If you've seen the movie before give this track a shot – it's informative and interesting, as a good commentary should be, but maybe not so surprisingly given McDonald's persona, it's got a good sense of humor behind it as well though it does periodically get confusing when the participants sometimes talk over each other.

Additionally the disc includes a music video for the Hard Core Logo track Who The Hell You Think You Are (which is a funny A Hard Day's Night parody) and a trailer for the feature. There's also an excerpt from writer Paul McEwan's critical analysis of the movie included here along with menus and chapter selection.

The extras for Hard Core Logo 2 start off with a featuring Bruce McDonald and musical director Simon Less. This track is interesting in that it's basically done with McDonald 'in character' with Less playing the interviewer – so it's sort of 'in on it' for lack of a better term. At the same time, there's a lot of interesting information in here about how Die Mannequin came on board, the shooting locations used in the movie, the music that appears in the film and the experiences that occurred while making the picture.

Also interesting is the nineteen minute featurette that is made up of onset footage and cast and crew interviews including input from McDonald himself who talks about working with his producer, Die Mannequin's involvement and the importance of the Danceland location. There are also a few Blu-ray bonus interviews on the disc including one in which McDonald spends eighteen minutes elaborating on various points (some of which are already covered in the featurette and commentary, some of which are not), a five minute piece with producer Rob Merilees and four minutes with Die Mannequin's front woman, Care Failure. Julian Richings also gets seven minutes in front of the camera to talk about his involvement in the picture.

Rounding out the extras for HCL2 are a theatrical trailer, some menus and chapter selection. Both movies are included on the same 50GB Blu-ray disc that's housed inside some pretty slick looking steelbook packaging.

### The Final Word:

The original Hard Core Logo is a bit of a classic, a great mix of road movie philosophizing and touring band on the road slice of life insanity all rolled up into one very effective package. The sequel? Definitely worth seeing, but not as good. VSC's Blu-ray isn't perfect and the first film could have used a little more restorative work but otherwise the presentation is good. Even if there isn't any lossless audio, the nice selection of extras helps to make up for it.

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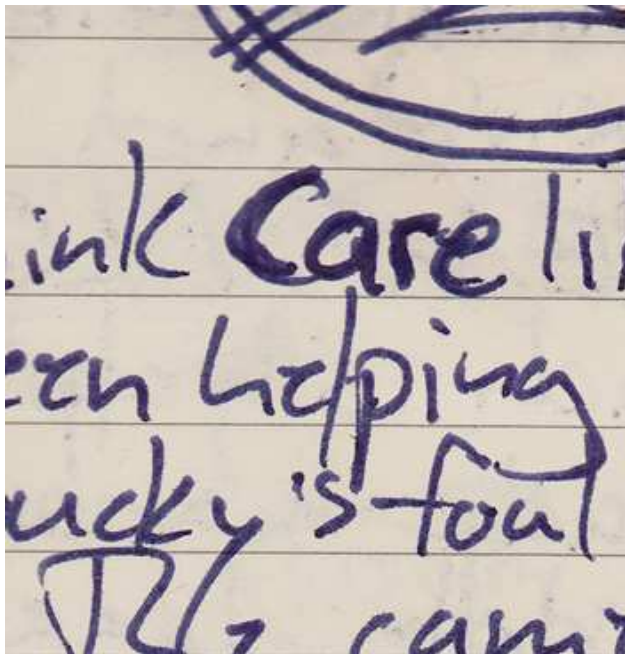


















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