

KISS

KISS Loves You

MVDV4648

Grade: ★★★★★

In the mid-'90s, when not a whole lot was happening with KISS, filmmaker Jim Heneghan began a study of the KISS phenomenon from a whole new perspective: that of the fans.

With lenses wide open and no preconceived notions, Heneghan, formerly of the punk band D Generation, follows the proliferation of tribute bands and unofficial conventions that tried to fill the void for nostalgic obsessives longing for a return of '70s-era KISS. They got their wish in 1996, when KISS put on the makeup and reunited.

But, for many of the subjects of "KISS Loves You," it didn't work out as they'd hoped. Take KISS tribute band leader Bill Baker, for instance, and how he lost his unlikely friendship with a bankrupt Ace Frehley after the reunion. Or the kid who, at the age of four, gave his idol Paul Stanley a plaque, only to find it discarded years later.

Funny, and often heartbreaking, "KISS Loves You" is a fascinating study of blind devotion and greed. The flowing narrative is full of failed relationships, broken dreams and flawed heroes, and is told with subtle humor but also great warmth and humanity.

Interviews with Dee Snider and former Dictators' front man Dick Manitoba give a sense of the impact KISS had on popular music. And there's a ton of extras, including outtakes, Super-8 film of KISS in Stockholm and extended footage of the famous 1996 KISS press conference, where the band announced its triumphant return.

Unassuming and honest, "KISS Loves You" answers the famous Johnny Rotten question: Ever feel you've been cheated?

— Peter Lindblad