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"A sinister cabal of superior writers."

Music DVD/CD Review: Sid! By Those Who Really Knew Him



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"...But that's what the Pistols were all about. One of them had to be a casualty to make the myth work, and Sid was only too willing to do it."
— Steve Severin (Siouxsie And The Banshees)

So many rock lives have ended prematurely that we seem to take it for granted anymore. The headline seems to be written before the body is even cold:

Michael Jackson: "Tragically taken on the eve of his great comeback."

Kurt Cobain: "The price of fame was just too great."

Jimi Hendrix: "Flew too high."

What we tend to lose sight of with the glare of fame is that these were real people, who lived real lives. There were parents, siblings, childhood friends, and more who all cared about them. Try telling a grieving mother that her 27 year-old son "died for rock and roll." How ridiculous.

Sid! By Those Who Really Knew Him is the least exploitative document of the life of Sid Vicious (Simon Ritchie) that I have seen. Featuring

interviews with Severin, Jah Wobble (PIL), Vivien Westwood (SEX clothing shop), Malcolm McClaren (Pistols manager), Dave Vanian and Rat Scabies (Damned), and Viv Albertine (Slits) among others, this is a documentary that gives a lot more background to the legend than is customary.

Jah Wobble tells a chilling story of walking into the Ritchie house and finding Sid and his mother "banging up" speed together. There are also a number of respondents who allude to his intelligence, although that is something Vicious certainly downplayed publicly.

Sid! does not break any real new ground, as the story of his life is pretty basic: Punk rock poster boy joins the Sex Pistols, the most infamous band in England. After they break up on their only US tour, he kills his girlfriend (accidentally or not), then overdoses at the age of 21. It is a sad and tawdry tale, but a lot of people have made a lot of money off of it over the past 30 years. So don't expect the canonization to go away any time soon.

Sid! By Those Who Really Knew Him gets it right thanks to the cooperation of people who were actually there. And who actually cared about him.

In addition to the DVD, the package also includes a ten-song live CD, recorded on September 30, 1978 and featuring Arthur "Killer" Kane and Jerry Nolan of the New York Dolls backing Sid up.

There is also a nice biographical booklet from author Mark Paytress included.

In comparison to all of the fast-buck products available out there concerning the life and death of Sid Vicious, this is one of the better packages I have come across.



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