FILM CAPSULE: Sound City (Grohl, 2013): USA

Description

ernational Film Festival.

Reviewed by Larry Gleeson. *Sound City,* a documentary by Foo Fighter Dave Grohl and former Nirvana band mate, delivers an upbeat, up-tempo roller coaster ride through the legendary Van Nuys, Calif. Studio City started in 1969 by Joe Gottfried and Tom Skeeter.

Studio City would come to serve as the launching pad for the commercial rise to stardom of Fleetwood Mac, Nirvana, Credence Clearwater Revivial, and Rick Springfield to name just a few and would come to its subsequent obsolescence as the digital age was ushered in with great fanfare. A vital point is made along the way that while yes music can be engineered solely from a software program it canâ??t allow for the soulful expression of the musicians who actually play musical instruments to create a product.

Sound City was a hole-in-the-wall studio that became home to legendary rock-n-roll bands from Bachman Turner Over Drive to grunge rockers Nirvana due in no small measure to a massive, hand-made, mixing board console, one of only four in the world. The sheer size and scope of the â??Neveâ?? is impressive and, in some respects, itâ??s a major force of the film. I liken it to Kubrickâ??s monolith in his landmark film *2001: Space Odyssey*. Those who touched the monolith evolved spiritually and, in my opinion, the same case can be made for those musicians who played together and were recorded with the Neve.

Those interviewed for the film often felt their time there was very special and that digitizing music lacks the more soulful, human approach to live studio recording with your band mates. Itâ??s not to say that digitizing music is the Armageddon. Itâ??s more to say that solely digitizing music sets it apart from the original source. The film touches lightly here. The more commonplace reaction is Mr. Grohl being full of himself telling the story of the Neve from his personal viewpoint and for not being a little more objective. But really, his story is history.

Grohl also recorded on the Neve with Nirvana and breathed life back into a decaying Sound City before itâ??s ultimate demise. He eventually purchased the Neve, restored it and invited musicians to come and play with his band, The Foo Fighters, including Sir Paul McCartney.

In some respects I felt privileged to sit and watch Grohlâ??s story of the Neve unfold. He used a plethora of archival material including rare footage, telling still photographs and present day testimonial from former Studio City employees and from rock legends that included Stevie Nicks, Mick Fleetwood and Neil Young. In addition, Springfield met his future wife there while others left a piece of their heart there.

And, along the way Grohl, provides some fundamental rock-n-roll basics about the drummerâ??s role as the backbone of any given band and the acoustical effects Sound City provided to accentuate this. The film closes with Grohl housing the Neve in his own studio jamming.

Curiously, an outtake comes across the screen with no sound with a memorial tribute. I felt this choice quite unnerving and called to mind the cut-throat win at all costs music business and the sometimes fatal outcomes for those who pursue the Muse. Warmly recommended especially for those who have a cursory interest in the music business and the history of rock-n-roll.

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