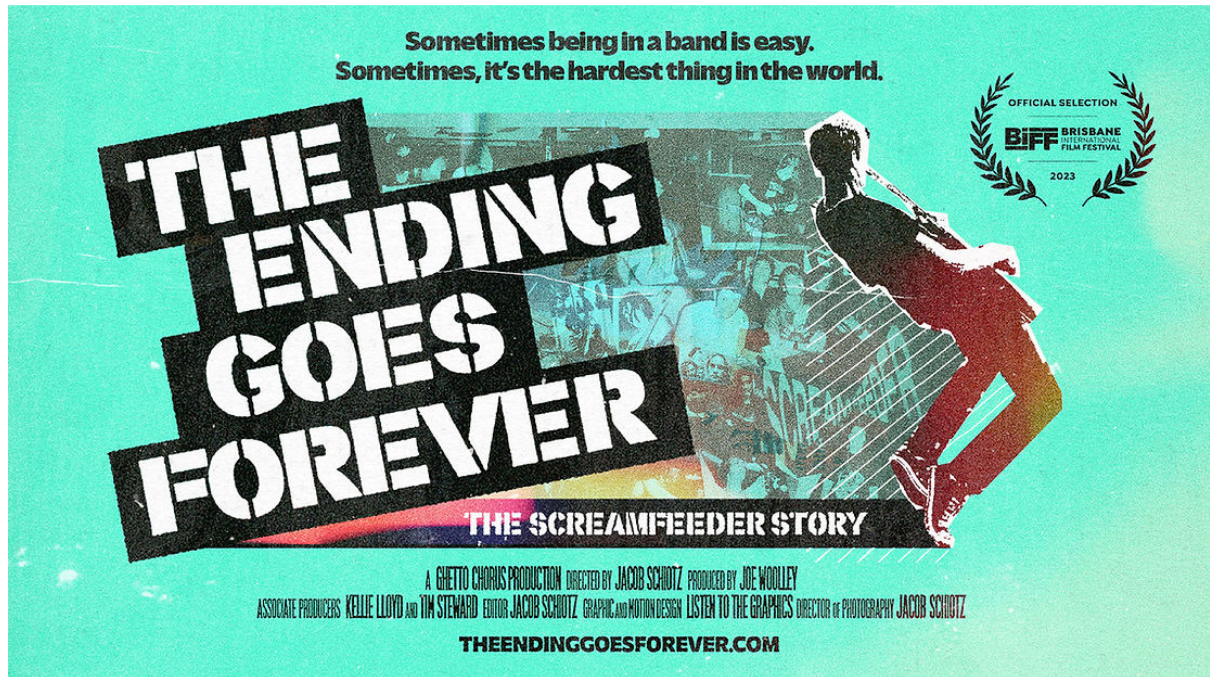


THE ENDING GOES FOREVER – THE SCREAMFEEDER STORY: FILM REVIEW



MANY OF US WRITERS LIKE to borrow/paraphrase in every possible context – even if, or especially if, we have never read him – Tolstoy’s line that all happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. To which the unspoken addition is, there’s not that much to say about the happy ones, better then to focus on the disasters.

While Tolstoy predates Behind The Music-style documentaries and even (just) the formation of the Rolling Stones, his aphorism seems to hold true for those commissioning or writing about music docos: everybody knows that the happy or settled and long lasting is easily explained and far less interesting than the myriad paths of destruction offered in the unhappy.

That the truth is unhappy bands tend to be unhappy for the same reasons: imbalances or absence of power, money, respect, success – and that tale can be just as boring in the end – doesn’t really matter. Give us Motley Crue over U2, dive into the fallout from The Band rather than the holdouts of the E Street Band. Blood on the floor!

Which presents as an immediate problem for a documentary about Screamerfeeder, a group which has existed for more than 30 years, lost only one member along the way – and that was 28 years ago – while adding a “new kid” who’s still there 24 years later, and returned from a nine-year hiatus to release more albums, play more shows and, well, continue to exist. Happily.



(Tim Steward and Darek Mudge)

Rather than fight this then, *The Ending Goes Forever* – which is structured conventionally and presented with few visual tricks by director/cinematographer/editor Jacob Schiotz – mostly eschews conflict and focuses on what lies at the heart of the band: connection and collaboration. Firstly the connection between founding member, Tim Steward and fellow songwriter, Kellie Lloyd, and then between the band and its home town, Brisbane.

Steward, who moved to Townsville from north London in his teens, finding himself a punk/post-punk obsessive island in a sea of non-more-mainstream rock ‘n’ roll, and Lloyd, whose “ticket out of Toowoomba” was film school and hard-core punk band, Krud, meet when she offers to make a film clip for his now-Brisbane based band, The Madmen, and follows up by offering space in her share house for rehearsals. Her joining the band, which will change its name to Screameater, almost seems inevitable in a community centred around alternative radio station 4ZZZ, the Orient Hotel, and the defiant idea that you don’t need to move to Sydney or Melbourne to do good things or be somebody.

It is that home-centric example and communal spirit that elevates Screameater to a level of influence even though they will never follow the likes of neighbours Powderfinger, Custard and Regurgitator onto major labels, chart hits and big tours.

Non-Queensland musicians like Magic Dirt’s Adalita Srsen and Something For Kate’s Clint Hyndman, alongside Powderfinger’s Ian Haug, pop up to speak of both the support and the inspiration they found. Tim Rogers of Sydney’s You Am I gushes warmly, as do various Brisbane media identities, while Screameater’s late-arriving and much younger second guitarist, Darek Mudge, says that when he joined in 2000 he wasn’t necessarily a fan but found he already knew their songs just by existing in Brisbane.

Love is all around.



(Kellie Lloyd and Dean Shwereb)

Even the one moment of internal conflict which saw original drummer Tony Blades booted (amusingly, via a fax from Steward saying “Dear Tones, I don’t wanna rock with you anymore.”) because he didn’t want Lloyd singing her songs, ends on a note of generosity decades on with Blades (who was replaced by Dean Shwereb) saying kicking him out was the best thing as he would have been “the wall” blocking her creative growth as a songwriter.

The flipside to this nice story told nicely is that complex and difficult moments in the band’s life get fudged or downplayed, whether it is how they managed financially, external personal relationships, and the collapse of an arrangement with an American record company days before what could have been a career-defining tour that included an appearance at the nascent South By Southwest, or the depth of feeling from all four members before and after Steward and Lloyd put the band into hibernation in 2005.

Something meatier would not have gone astray. But maybe band and director take their cue from the attitude shown in the film’s opening scene, at a 2021 rehearsal for what will be a new album.

The overlaid text says “A week before recording is due to start, they are clearly not ready”, confirmed by Lloyd who asks that filming stop because “I don’t feel the slightest bit prepared”. Filming doesn’t stop and Lloyd doesn’t grumble, instead declaring “right, let’s nail this motherfucker and move on”.

It’s not Russian but I suspect Tolstoy, who once said that music is the shorthand of emotion, would understand.



The Ending Goes Forever screens in Brisbane, Five Star Cinemas, New Farm, on February 3, and has its Melbourne premiere at ACMI, Federation Square on February 3, and its Sydney premiere at Palace Norton Street, Leichhardt, on February 8 – both followed by a Q&A with producer Joe Woolley, Kellie Lloyd and Tim Steward.

<https://www.bernardzuel.net/post/the-ending-goes-forever-the-screamfeeder-story-film-review>

February 1, 2024