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## **An Awe-some DOORS Doc**

*Alex Deleon, Berlin, March 10, 2009*

*The halfway mark of the festival peaked for me last night with Tom DiCillo's slam-bang DOORS documentary "When You're strange", by far the best rocku-docu this writer has ever see*

*It's hard to believe that this iconic acid rock group which has left such a permanent legacy, both musical and historical, was only around for some 54 months, until lead singer Jimmy Morrison died of an overdose in Paris at age twenty-seven, essentially putting an end to the dazzling Light of their short-lived Fire. Oliver Stone's 1991 feature "The Doors" starred Val Kilmer as Morrison and Meg Ryan as his devoted and long suffering girlfriend Pamela Courson, whereas Tom DiCillo's new DOORS documentary stars Jim Morrison as Jim Morrison, Pamela Couson as Pamela, Ray Manzarek as Ray, Robbie Krieger as Robbie, and John Densmore as Densmore ... in other words, it's real -- one hundred percent real, and For Real. Just to make sure that nobody tries to accuse DiCillo of faking any of the footage or situations seen in the film a lead-in title advises viewers that NO ACTORS WERE USED IN THIS FILM.*

*Very important in the DiCillo version is the fact that while Morrison is, for obvious reasons, the main character of this historical drama, this is not just a film about Jim Morrison -- it's the story of the Doors as a group and the socio-setting of their comet-like rise and demise. Most interesting is the way Morrison's relations with the other group members are shown and, in fact, the way they themselves are shown. Robbie was trained as a classical Flamenco guitarist and never used a pick! He had almost no electric guitar experience before becoming a Door and, overnight, one of the most respected lead guitarists in the business. I was particularly impressed by the creativity of John Densmore's groundwork drumming -- shown in many shots from many different angles as never seen before. This was truly a group with every member making a key contribution. Many of the best known songs were written by Robbie, but unlike the Beatles who credited compositions to individual group members, all Doors songs were credited to the Doors as a whole. I have always been a great fan of Doors music, but this film aroused in me something like deep respect for them as a creative group of extremely young me with principles.*

*One of the selling points of this freshly minted film revealed just last month at Sundance, is that it uses all new DOORS footage recovered from various sources, (including key footage shot by Morrison himself as a small fiction film, out in the desert --which bookends the DiCillo doc), but the more important point is the way Mr. DiCillo has put this footage together to recreate the truth behind the myths and legends. As far as Morrison is concerned it is greatly to Dicillo's credit that his film is neither a hagiography --trying to depict Jimmy as a saint --nor is it a demonography --as there are undoubtedly people out there who would prefer to think of him as a devil possessed twistö-freako psychopath. As the director himself puts it, Jim Morrison was a highly talented but also a highly troubled human human being, and this is what I wanted to show -- the person behind the myth. The alienated relationship with his father is particularly important and is conveyed in the film with a few deft strokes. While Jimmy was raising hell on stage his father, a high ranking*

*naval officer, was commanding a warship in the Viet Nam war. The music is not "the only thing", but it's all there. Having myself directly experienced the age of the Doors in L.A., and having even had a certain personal contact with Morrison at UCLA back then, all I can say is that I am amazed at how DiCillo has gotten it all down and gotten it all RIGHT in an immensely rich, round, firm, and fully packed ninety minutes. I will probably have more to say about this picture when I see it again, but for the moment all I can say is that I am in awe --it was AWE-some, and then some!*

*Oh yes, some people have complained about the voice over narration supplied by director DiCillo himself. I for one, was not the least bit distracted, but then I was so deep into the picture's content, blood and guts, that the narration could have been in Chinese. At any rate, says, DiCillo, his own narration was a desperation last-minute measure and he is hoping to have a professional actor such as Johnny Depp do the voice-over in the near future. Personally, I couldn't care less --in fact, I would love to hear the voice-over in Chinese ... a Chinese translation of Morrison's poetry --What have they done to the Earth ..??? --Daddy, I wanna Kill You --Mama, I wanna ... FOOCHOWYOU!*

**ALEX, BERLIN, FEBRUARY 10**