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presenteren

YOUNG @ HEART



Een film van Stephen Walker

synopsis

YOUNG@HEART, een grote hit op de filmfestivals, is een hartverwarmende en verrassende film over een popkoor dat moderne pop- en rockmuziek zingt. Van Sinéad O'Connor tot Nirvana, de smaak van het koor is breed. Bijzonder: de gemiddelde leeftijd van de zangers en zangeressen is 81 jaar.

De Britse regisseur Stephen Walker schetst in deze documentaire de dagelijkse gang van zaken van het koor en van zijn leden. De repetities en de uitvoeringen met dirigent Bob Cilman, maar ook het leven in een verpleegtehuis en het omgaan met de alom aanwezige dood. Uiteraard is er veel muziek: tot het repertoire van het koor behoren nummers van onder meer Coldplay, Sonic Youth, The Ramones, David Bowie, James Brown en The Talking Heads.

Rock 'n Roll never dies en dit koor is daar het levende bewijs van!



Young @ Heart

109min./ 35 mm/ kleur/ Engels gesproken/ USA 2007

Nederlandse theatrale distributie: Cinemien
Belgische theatrale distributie: ABC Distribution
DVD uitbreng: Homescreen

cast

Regie
Producenten
Uitvoerend producent
Fotografie
Montage
Geluid
Camera
Visual effects
Titelontwerp

Stephen Walker
Sally George
Hannah Beckerman
Edward Marritz
Chris King
Mark Mandler
Mike Hodder
Alexis Haggart
Matt Curtis



regisseur stephen walker

Stephen Walker heeft 23 films voor verschillende televisiestations gemaakt (waaronder BBC en Channel 4), zoals: *Hiroshima, A Day that shook the world* (in 2004 genomineerd voor maar liefst drie Emmy's, waaronder die voor beste regisseur en beste cinematografie, en winnaar van de Emmy voor beste muziek, winaar van de National Geographic Cine Golden Eagle Award), *Faking it: Punk to Conductos* (Winnaar van de Montreux Rose d'Or 2003, van de International Press Prize Award, van de BAFTA 2003 en genomineerd voor de Grierson Award voor beste documentaire in 2003) en *Hardcore* (genomineerd voor de Grierson Award 2001).

de pers

A film of incredible humour and pathos about the sobering realities of life and death.

The Times

It sends you out of the theatre transformed. I'd even call it life-affirming.

Newsweek

We want those wonderfully people to go on singing forever.

Los Angeles Times

Their humour is so genuine and their enthusiasm so infectious, it would seem impossible for an audience not to be swept away.

Variety

Young@Heart tells an irresistible story with verve and skil.

The Hollywood Reporter

in zijn eigen woorden

When my wife and producing partner, Sally George, first mentioned something about an American rock chorus of old age pensioners called YOUNG@HEART, my immediate reaction was to run. A few days later, in October 2005, I was dragged kicking and screaming to the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith where the chorus were on tour with their show *Road to Nowhere*. Then something extraordinary happened.

Eileen Hall, a British-born 93 year-old ex-GI bride, stepped up to the microphone and yelled out the opening lyrics to *Should I Stay Or Should I Go?* by The Clash. The audience – mostly in their twenties and thirties – gasped in astonishment as she belted out the song at full throttle, backed by the chorus. The words took on a whole new meaning. She was singing, not about relationships, but about life and death. I was hooked. Here was a film I just knew I had to make.

I'd always wanted to make a film about old age and here was a wonderfully unusual way to do it. We decided to make the film a mix of actuality documentary and highly stylised music promos – songs like *I Wanna Be Sedated* by The Ramones which we set in a nursing home (it has to be seen to be believed!). By March 2006 we found ourselves in Northampton, Massachusetts filming YOUNG@HEART rehearsing a series of new songs for an upcoming show.

I Feel Good

I knew I was in for something different when, with what seemed an almost perverse sense of irony, the chorus's director, Bob Cilman, picked Stan Goldman and Dora Morrow to begin work on James Brown's *I Feel Good*. Stan, aged 75, suffers from spinal stenosis, which means he can barely walk, while Dora is an 83 year old great-great grandmother. It was immediately striking how Bob, a mere spring-chicken at 53, treated everybody in the chorus with professional toughness. This is no karaoke act, but a highly disciplined group of singers who bring something unique to rock 'n' roll music.

Striptease Granny

Over the next few weeks, I found myself acquiring 24 new grandparents – except they were nothing like any grandparents I'd ever seen before. There was Eileen Hall, easily the most flirtatious 93 year old I'd ever me (she even tried it on with my sound recordist!), and it was no surprise that one of her star turns in the chorus was a striptease act which she began at the age of 71 and continued with terrific success until she was 90. There was Steve Martin, a 78 year old ex-Marine who worked out three times a week, drove a 130 mph Chrysler convertible and did a brilliant solo of Springsteen's *Dancing in the Dark*.

Sex... "takes longer and you have more fun!"

From the beginning I wanted the film to provide a strong sense of intimacy with the contributors and Steve rewarded me in spades when he offered to let me interview him virtually stark-naked in the shower in order to explode a few clichés about old-age sex. "Hell no", he told me, "It gets better! Takes longer and you have more fun!" .

Very quickly, I learned to be on the lookout for such hazards when filming old people, one of which was the sheer volume of cake, cookies and chocolate I was made to consume every time I turned up at somebody's house to film. I became adept at eating whilst simultaneously operating my Z1 camera.

But there were far more serious hazards. In the course of filming, two YOUNG@HEART members died. One of them, Bob Salvini, was a former member who had returned after a period of ill health to sing the Coldplay song, *Fix You* as a duet for the show. He died on the day I was due to film him rehearsing the song at his nursing home. Within hours of his death, the chorus were due to perform in a local jail before an audience of prisoners. They did, and one of the scenes over the whole six weeks I will never forget was the moment when they sang Dylan's *Forever Young* as a tribute to their former colleague.

Exactly four days later, the second chorus member, Joe Benoit, died. I had interviewed him just a week earlier when he described to me how he had undergone six bouts of chemotherapy over four years, enough to kill most people. His cancer was supposed to be in remission. It wasn't. Joe was a true star, a man who had ignored his doctor's advice again and again in order to go abroad on tour with YOUNG@HEART. Singing was in his blood, and his version of U2's *One* (which sadly, even after six months of trying, we were never able to clear) was a triumph. His voice had astonishing range and power which, in retrospect, seems even more remarkable given how ill he must have been.

The big night

Despite the shattering impact, the chorus wanted to celebrate, with music, the memories of their two friends. We threw everything into the show, almost breaking the budget in the process: five cameras, all linked by talkback, a complex lighting rig, a 24-track sound mix. It was worth every penny.

Standing ovation

The result was both extraordinarily moving and exhilarating to witness, and to film. The 800-strong audience also caught the spirit that night, not least in the standing ovation they gave to the chorus's final song, an exuberant rendition of the Allen Toussaint 70s R&B hit, *Yes We Can Can*.

Perhaps more than any others, those lyrics summed up the attitude of this remarkable group of people who may be old in body but refuse to grow old in spirit. By the end, I was almost looking forward to being 80 years old.

Stephen Walker, 2006.