

REVIEWS

DVD

SOUND CITY



[RCA]

Dave Grohl's directorial debut centers on the titular studio—the defunct Southern California facility where Nirvana cut *Nevermind* and countless other artists did some of their finest work—but that's not really what this film is about. On a micro level, it's about “the Neve,” an analog recording console purchased by Sound City's owners in 1973 for the then-princely sum of \$75,000. If Grohl and his buddies—an impressive cast that includes Tom Petty, Neil Young, Rick Rubin, Stevie Nicks and even Barry Manilow—are to be believed, the enormous contraption is the answer to all of man's problems. The Neve will ease hunger, cure sickness and, more importantly, give you a killer live drum sound.

The Neve worship and Sound City story are interesting enough, and Grohl's participants—particularly the studio's charming former owners and staff—paint the place as something special. It was a dump, but it brought out the best in people. Really, though, Grohl is interested in what's “real,” and for most everyone interviewed, that means analog gear and live instruments. The rise of Pro Tools led to Sound City's demise, so the attitude isn't surprising, and while there's a case to be made for purism, Grohl risks sounding like a luddite. Only Trent Reznor gets a digital pass—he doesn't use technology as a “crutch,” Grohl says—and yet when Paul McCartney shows up for a closing jam, one can't help but remember what sonic explorers the Beatles were. Given the chance, wouldn't they have used computers? Then again, if they'd booked Sound City, they'd have bashed out something great. —Kenneth Patridge

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