"Sid & Nancy" a unique romance in the midst of the punk culture

By PETER DUNN

What makes "Sid & Nancy" different from other rock "docudramas" is not so much its theme. It is about Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen, about punk rocker and groupie, and as such cannot completely avoid the punk rock scene in which their relationship developed; but however much punk rock is at its inception was radically different from any previous form of rock music, this film's uniqueness does not stem so much from that difference as it does from the unusual way in which it presents its subject matter. Alex Cox, who previously made the bizarre but amusing "Repo Man," has ignored the usual conventions of the "docudrama" by making his film more than a corporate dream sequence and extremely stylized shots in the film, both atypical of the punk rock scene of its main characters. Whereas group and its history are little more than a backdrop to the enfolding romance between the two main characters. It seems the "docudrama" genre, which make what most "docudramas" try to present an emotional romance, the punk culture tried to rebel against any activity considered normal — Sid even refused at one point to have sex with Nancy because it is a remnant of the free love, hippie era — and romance certainly seemed part of the upper-crust culture against which the punks were rebelling. And yet, although Sid and Nancy's relationship is in no way presented as a normal romance, it is unquestionable that the two are actually in love. Cox turns the two into Juliet and Romeo figures, lovers locked in a destructive race toward death.

More than its presentation of a love story is a culture where one would believe a love story could never evolve, "Sid & Nancy" is about the punk culture, but it is even more odd that this film should present that punk culture in a sympathetic manner. Punk culture tried to rebel against any activity considered normal — Sid even refused at one point to have sex with Nancy. The story of Sid and Nancy is relatively well known. Sid Vicious was the bass player for the British punk rock group, Sex Pistols. He lived up to his name, being known for his violence and for taking after journalists with bicycle chains and guitar. He was not a terrific good musician, taking hours to learn a simple tune, but was defiantly dynamic on stage. Nancy Spungen was an American groupie who met Vicious in London, and the two eventually became lovers and partners in later addictions. When the Pistols broke up in 1977, Sid and Nancy moved to New York where they tried to establish a solo career for Sid. In 1978 Nancy was stabbed to death in their hotel room and Sid arrested for her murder. Five months later, he was acquitted. Cox is least a drug overdose. This brief summary does not even begin to describe the whole story of what "Sid & Nancy" is about. The film deals hardly, if at all, with the story of the Sex Pistols: the group and its history are little more than a backdrop to the enfolding romance between the two main characters. It seems odd that any romance at all could have evolved from the anarchistic, selfish, and destructive punk culture, but it is even more odd that this film should present that romance in a sympathetic manner. Punk culture tried to rebel against any activity considered normal — Sid even refused at one point to have sex with Nancy. The story of Sid and Nancy is relatively well known. Sid Vicious was the bass player for the British punk rock group, Sex Pistols. He lived up to his name, being known for his violence and for taking after journalists with bicycle chains and guitar. He was not a terrific good musician, taking hours to learn a simple tune, but was defiantly dynamic on stage. Nancy Spungen was an American groupie who met Vicious in London, and the two eventually became lovers and partners in later addictions. When the Pistols broke up in 1977, Sid and Nancy moved to New York where they tried to establish a solo career for Sid. In 1978 Nancy was stabbed to death in their hotel room and Sid arrested for her murder. Five months later, he was acquitted. Cox is least a drug overdose. This brief summary does not even begin to describe the whole story of what "Sid & Nancy" is about. The film deals hardly, if at all, with the story of the Sex Pistols: the group and its history are little more than a backdrop to the enfolding romance between the two main characters. It seems odd that any romance at all could have evolved from the anarchistic, selfish, and destructive punk culture, but it is even more odd that this film should present that romance in a sympathetic manner. Punk culture tried to rebel against any activity considered normal — Sid even refused at one point to have sex with Nancy because it is a remnant of the free love, hippie era — and romance certainly seemed part of the upper-crust culture against which the punks were rebelling. And yet, although Sid and Nancy's relationship is in no way presented as a normal romance, it is unquestionable that the two are actually in love. Cox turns the two into Juliet and Romeo figures, lovers locked in a destructive race toward death.

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