

"Hit So Hard has no shortage of hooks."

VARIETY

"Strikingly intimate."

Billboard

"Unexpectedly poignant."

The New York Times

"Devastating."

MOVIE LINE

"Heartbreaking."

SPIN



"Raw, unflinching."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

"Madly articulate and informed front-seat observations."

THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

"No ordinary rockumentary."

indieWIRE

"Must see!"

THE *Hollywood* REPORTER

HIT SO HARD

Hole's Classic Lineup Reconnects at Documentary Premiere



Onetime Hole band mates Courtney Love, Eric Erlandson, Melissa Auf der Maur and Patty Schemel were together for the first time in 13 years last night for the premiere of the new rock doc *Hit So Hard* at New York's Museum of Modern Art. "The film represents a really tough time in our band," bassist Auf der Maur told *Rolling Stone*, "and it's an incredible survival story about Patty."

Rolling Stone

HOLE TAKES NEW DIRECTORS!

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HIT SO HARD REVIEWS

"Describing the parabolic ups and downs of the career of Hole drummer Patty Schemel, tricked-up docu *Hit So Hard* features never-before-witnessed tour documentation recorded on Schemel's own Hi-8 camera, including her extended stay at the digs of band frontwoman Courtney Love just before Kurt Cobain's suicide. This recently recovered ace-in-the-Hole footage is supplemented by helmer P. David Ebersole's newly shot interviews, presented in split-screen or apportioned in brief bursts. Pic benefits from the percussionist's plainspokenness, and should attract grunge curiosity-seekers in theatrical and tube play." *VARIETY*

"A raw, unflinching look at Schemel's hard-knock life." *WALL STREET JOURNAL*

"Necessary viewing for any Hole fan. The footage was ample and intimate -- scenes of Schemel passed out in her hotel room after shooting heroin, Love moshing backstage at Lollapalooza with the Offspring's Dexter Holland and, most eerily, Love at home with Kurt Cobain and Frances Bean. It's heartbreaking." *SPIN MAGAZINE*

"*Hit So Hard* links one milestone of Schemel's survival to another with a caustic grace lent by the subject herself: Alcoholic at age 12. Out, tormented lesbian at 17. Junkie by her early 20s. On and off the wagon numerous times by her late 20s. A homeless, crack-addicted, music-industry exile by the end of the '90s. It's all there in the open, backed up with fascinating, never-before-seen archival footage featuring Love and her husband Kurt Cobain." *MOVIELINE*

"This pull-no-punches portrait of the hell-and-back life of Patty Schemel is no ordinary rockumentary. Told from the point of view of one band member, *Hit So Hard* takes an unprecedented inside look at one of the most crucial and controversial groups of the 1990s, with up-close-and-personal home-video footage of life offstage with Courtney, Kurt Cobain, and the band. The archival footage, shocking and disorienting in its intimacy, helps tell the story of the band's rise to fame and the forces that led to its dissolution." *INDIEWIRE*

"Anybody who listened to Hole during their peak knows that the band was dominated by frontwoman Courtney Love. Her personality was so outsized and her voice so big and distinct that there was little room for anybody else in the band to really shine. But Hole were an incredibly efficient rock machine, and a lot of that was because of the savage precision of drummer Patty Schemel. Drummers tend to get short shrift in any band (save for iconic singularities like Keith Moon, John Bonham or Neil Peart), so it's about time that one of the more talented members of the time-keeping fraternity gets the attention she deserves." *MTV*

"Schemel's story is compelling on its own, but the solid storytelling and intimate access of *Hit So Hard* make it a document of an era as well." *AUSTIN CHRONICLE*

"Best of the (fest). Ebersole wins you over with his unexpectedly poignant portrait." *MAHNOLA DARGIS, NY TIMES*

Killer Lifestyle

Patty Schemel doc 'Hit So Hard' remembers living and dying in the 1990s

BY CINDY WIDNER, FRI., MARCH 11, 2011

Now that the Eighties revival, which camped out in the pop-cultural landscape for far longer than the real decade lasted, is winding down, it appears it's time to start excavating the pendulum swing that followed. There's already been at least one attempt to resurrect Doc Martens, not to mention the slight uptick in (ironically? oh yeah: irony!) page-view-friendly mainstream-media retreads of playlists from the barista glory days. Odds are it's only going to snowball from here.

Since nostalgia rarely comes without a heaping dose of revisionism, most of these sweet remembrances of the decade that kicked off with *Slacker* and ended in



Kurt Cobain, Frances Bean Cobain, and Patty Schemel

Hit So Hard: The Life & Near Death Story of Patty Schemel

Tuesday, March 15, 9:15pm, [Alamo Ritz 1](#)

Friday, March 18, 7pm, [Vimeo](#)

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Y2K hysteria fail to note that it also saw the coining of the term "heroin chic" and, like the Sixties, perhaps more than its share of rock & roll overdoses.

Also notable in its absence, despite its ground-zero formation and subsequent commercial and critical success, is any mention of Hole, the band that presented to a generation of girls the feminist id on a radio-friendly platter.

That erasure is doubtless at least partially due to frontwoman Courtney Love's uncute-ifiable rage (and later, her aggressive, moneyed weirdness), the band's unabashed ambition, and its failure to abandon pop structures and standard musical technique in a milieu that at least superficially disavowed traditional modes of power and fame. They were a little bit riot grrrl, but they were a whole lot rock & roll.

"This is an important band," says P. David Ebersole, director of *Hit So Hard: The Life & Near Death Story of Patty Schemel*, the doc about the drummer at the center of the Hole maelstrom. "Why make a movie about a drummer in her band if you're just going to slag on Courtney Love like everybody else? I think she's important. And Hole are really important."

In some ways, the timing of *Hit So Hard* couldn't be more perfect. Structured around Schemel's Hi8 footage from those dark and heady times, the film hews closely to her biography, touching on her early drumming and drinking (ages 11 and 12, respectively), her coming out, and her central role in the Northwest music scene before unflinchingly recounting her path from being Hole's most crucial and well-known drummer to drug addiction, homelessness, and recovery.

Schemel's story is compelling on its own, but the solid storytelling and intimate access of *Hit So Hard* make it a document of an era as well. The drummer lived for a while with Love and her late husband, Kurt Cobain – with whom Schemel was very close – and Ebersole includes here previously unseen (and very sweet) footage of the two with their young daughter, Frances, as well as backstage and concert footage. For fans, much of that footage might put a lump in your throat. Ebersole and husband/co-writer Todd Hughes wisely make use of the love and respect Schemel engendered, interspersing interviews with her family and bandmates, including Love, Nina Gordon (Veruca Salt), Kate Schellenbach (Luscious Jackson, Beastie Boys), and Schemel's hero, lesbian folksinger Phranc. Sarah Vowell, whose book *Radio On: A Listener's Diary* quintessentially mapped the role of radio in 1990s culture and politics, is also on hand with her full quiver of insight and wit.

And yet, the focus never strays from Schemel, fascinating and important in her

own right. "If you stay focused on Patty's story, the movie told you what could and couldn't be in it," says Ebersole. "We have lots of other footage that potentially has some kind of celebrity aspects to it. There's one scene that we didn't use where they all go out to dinner with Michael Stipe in Tokyo. Ultimately the beat was never really about Patty; the beat was about, 'Hey, look, we can throw these celebrities in our movie!' Once we really got focused on the idea that it was a movie to tell what Patty went through and what her journey was, everything [we included had to relate to] that."

Without being moralistic, or even really cautionary, *Hit So Hard* inevitably travels to a dark place, one that drew the eyes of an MTV nation, and one at the center of Schemel's world: In 1994, in the space of two months, Cobain committed suicide and Hole bassist Kristen Pfaff overdosed on heroin. The reactions of the film's participants as they recount that time is one of the most affecting parts of the movie, and one for which Ebersole avoids gratuitous exploitation.

"The sequences about Kurt really play back to the issue of how dangerous the world was," he says, "and how Patty was so close to those who did not make it through. So it resonates. Similarly with Kristen. It was like, well, now it's a double whammy that two people you were so close to didn't make it through. It made it so that you almost had to tell their part of the story to have the Patty story make sense. The movie culled itself."

Hit So Hard doesn't shy away from Love's notoriety or the feminist ambivalence around her and her persona; Gordon, Schellenbach, and Vowell offer madly articulate and informed front-seat observations on Love's persona and how it was received. "It was unavoidable not to be honest about the chaos of working with Courtney Love," Ebersole points out. "It's all over the footage, and everyone talks about it, and Courtney talks about it herself.

"But the balance of that for us," he continues, "is that we don't feel like people talk often enough about how wicked bright and talented Courtney is. We felt like how do you make a movie about the drummer of Hole without reminding people that all of that noise about Courtney's sort of tabloid life is distracting from the idea that she actually also is really powerful and has something to say?"

The film is unflinching when it focuses on the controversial end of Schemel's tenure in the band, during the making of its third album, *Celebrity Skin*. The process by which the band was purposely divided and conquered, with the drummer losing out, provides an unexpectedly fascinating look into the icky politics of the record-label recording studio.

Partly because of that controversy, and partly because the world still sees great woman drummers as a rarity, if not nonexistent, the movie spends some time making sure the viewer knows just how good Schemel is, and the credits feature a roll of great woman drummers past and present.

"There was a kind of public perception about *Celebrity Skin*, that perhaps something happened where Patty couldn't hack it," explains Ebersole "We just felt like, once we had done our research, that that was 100 percent not true. The idea that she had gotten kicked off of that record because of drugs was also not true."

That departure also marked the beginning of Schemel's hardest downward skid, one that ended with her crack-addicted and homeless under a bridge – "totally wearing a homeless windbreaker" and a ball cap, as Love recalls Schemel saying when her former bandmate called to ask for money. Something made her send her home movies off for safekeeping with her father before she fell, probably the same thing that made her live to tell the story.

Schemel now lives with her wife and has a dog-care business – "working with animals is totally a lateral move," she says in the movie – but she also teaches girls to play drums and volunteers at Portland's Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls. Ebersole explains the importance of her legacy: "There's the beat that Phranc says earlier about being gay, about how people say, 'Oh, it's a big liberal world now and everything's okay and let's not bring it up and you gays, you're just complaining about your situation.' I think there's a parallel to that about the idea of female rock stars and musicians. You can say there's nothing important about specifying that Patty is a woman drummer, and yet it is necessary to keep talking about it. There are not enough women getting recognized or being given that ability to sit in that seat."

Hit So Hard: The Life & Near Death Story of Patty Schemel

World Premiere, 24 Beats Per Second

Tuesday, March 15, 9:15pm, Alamo Ritz 1

Friday, March 18, 7pm, Vimeo



Features

“Hit So Hard” Creates Hole Reunion: “We’re Here Because Patty’s Alive”

by Bryce J. Renninger (March 30, 2011)

In summer 2007, Hole drummer Patty Schemel came to her friend P. David Ebersole with a suitcase full of Hi8 tapes she shot over her years with the band. Along with images of Hole members Eric Erlandson, Melissa Auf der Maur, late bassist Kristen Pfaff and Courtney Love, Schemel’s camera documented the family interactions of Love, her



Courtney Love and Patty Schemel reunite for the screening of "Hit So Hard." Director P. David Ebersole talks about the film. [Photo Credit: Brian Brooks/indieWIRE]

husband Kurt Cobain and daughter Frances Bean. Ebersole, who lives around the corner from Schemel and met her through mutual friend Joe Mama-Nitzberg, told her, “I think you have a movie in this.” Shortly after, Schemel asked Ebersole if he’d be interested in making the film with his producing partner/husband, Todd Hughes.

After collecting and digitizing the footage, Ebersole slowly amassed interviews. (“Patty very gingerly opened the door for us.”) These include auf der Maur, the rest of Hole, Love, Erlandson, Schemel’s mother, various music industry players and a variety of women rockers. The film that resulted, “Hit So Hard,” seamlessly weaves Schemel’s life into what the New Directors/New Films programmers call “anything but a sanitized VH1 hagiography.”

The archival footage, shocking and disorienting in its intimacy, helps tell the story of the band's rise to fame and the forces that led to its dissolution. The story also chronicles Schemel's lifelong struggle with addiction, marks her place in the pantheon of female drummers and rockers and—through a precious story told by her mother—tells how she came out.



"Hit So Hard" director P. David Ebersole introduces his film this Monday at MoMA in New York. [Photo Credit: Brian Brooks/indieWIRE]

Monday evening at New York's Museum of Modern Art, the band reunited after not being together in the same room for more than a decade. After pushing the screening back by nearly an hour due to two of the band members' late arrivals (bassist auf der Maur quipped, "Now you all know what it felt like"), Ebersole described the press line as a "maelstrom of attention," the special moment he could only hope for in putting together this film.

Ebersole said he was a big fan of Hole's breakout album, "Live Through This," but neither he nor Hughes considered himself a part of the grunge scene.

"There was a lot of education involved," Ebersole said. "We didn't know anything about Schemel's earlier bands or earlier scenes. The bands that were mentioned, we might have heard their names before but never their music. That gave the film a really strong perspective; it's not insiders making this movie. When we interviewed, we would get longer, more complete explanations of everything.

"We started easy, throwing Patty softball questions," he said. "She immediately wanted to tell her larger story. We'd ask her about her current dog business and she started talking about it in terms of recovery. We'd show her concert footage and ask her what that show was like and she'd talk about how high she was."

Schemel's emotions evolved as they continued the project. "When we started shooting her in 2007, she was two years' sober," Ebersole said. "She was afraid and embarrassed, ambivalent toward Hole and unsure if she was ready for forgiveness."

The film's final act sees the demise of Hole as a band, after Schemel was asked not to play on the album "Celebrity Skin." The film portrays producer Michael Beinhorn as the orchestrator of her exit; during the screening, Love—who, like the rest of the band, was seeing the film for the first time—yelled at the screen several times when Beinhorn came on screen.

At the post-screening Q&A, Love said she worked with Beinhorn producer on her last album: "He's still a Nazi." She then asked Schemel if she would have left the band over the rift if they weren't all a part of Gen X, obsessed with authenticity and individuality. The question was clearly rhetorical, a chance for Love to think out loud and to begin understanding what happened between them all.

While Ebersole clearly appreciated the audience's rapturous response, he was just as pleased by the reactions of those closest to the material. "It was a relief to show it to Patty's brother and have him say 'You hit it right on the head,'" Ebersole said. "Having the band members witness the breakup from Patty's side, I think that was an incredible opportunity.

"The film was a part of their healing process," Ebersole said. "All up to the point of what happened last night, they had not talked about those issues for 10 years. As Melissa [auf der Maur] said, 'We're not here for Hole, we're here because Patty's still alive.'"



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Hole at New Directors/New Films

Hole made it to the Museum of Modern Art in New York Monday evening for the debut of director P. David Ebersole's New Directors/New Films doc, "Hit So Hard." Courtney Love, Melissa Auf Der Maur (right), Eric Erlandson and drummer Patty Schemel had their first reunion in 13 years for the film, which is a "pull-no-punches portrait of the hell-and-back life of Schemel." The film includes some amazing early footage of the band as well as late Nirvana frontman, Kurt Cobain. "I had this [footage] in the closet and sent it to [Ebersole]," Schemel told the audience following the screening. "We watched it and he said that it was a great story and said, 'can we do something with this?' and I said, 'sure,' and then I said, 'take good care of this and go tell my story...'"