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Capone clutches his 24 box sets while pleading to Kiefer, 'I TRUST YOU TO KILL ME!'

A few months back, I read an insightful profile of/interview with Kiefer Sutherland in Rolling Stone (I believe he was on the cover of that issue). It struck me before I'd committed to reading the piece that, despite being a fan of his for as long as I could remember (and a faithful, never-missed-an-episode fan of "24"), I knew virtually nothing about the guy or his life. The article spent a disproportionate number of column inches discussing Sutherland's affiliation with a rock band called Rocco DeLuca & The Burden and a documentary made about his travels with the band as their road manager on a brief European tour.

The author went on to describe Kiefer's activities on behalf of the band, including countless radio and television interviews, carrying their equipment, and most remarkably, handing out tickets on the streets of Dublin for an embarrassingly undersold show mere hours from start time. As I'm prone to do, I became fixated on seeing this film (the title, I Trust You to Kill

Me, comes from one of the band's songs), more as a fan of Sutherland's, hoping to get more of an understanding of the man than any interest I had in the band. But not knowing where to begin searching for a copy, I wrote off ever having a shot at viewing this film. But the damn thing kept popping back into my head every few weeks, because I was so utterly convinced the film would be good.

Skip ahead several months to last week, when out of nowhere, an invitation arrived to one of three press events set up in three cities (not Chicago, however), where the film will be screened, with Sutherland and the film's director Manu Boyer doing Q&As after the screenings. I wrote back to the kind and generous woman who sent the invite, begging for a screener, and two days later it landed in my mailbox. I don't know his/her name, but there most definitely is a Film God.

I Trust You to Kill Me not only works on its pure entertainment merits, but it offers a truly fascinating look inside the mind of an almost-40-year-old veteran actor who is experiencing the greatest level of fame he will probably ever have and his attempts to act like a 20-something, possibly for the last time. At one point, director Boyer asks Sutherland why he is letting him film some of his more private moments on this rock n' roll adventure. Sutherland doesn't have an answer, but he is clearly considering the question. The answer seemed obvious to me: he's letting it all be filmed as evidence that it all really did happen, so he can look

back 10 or 20 years later and say, "Look what I did." It never comes across as a narcissistic endeavor; Sutherland might just be a little afraid of getting old and going through a pre-midlife crisis. Welcome to the club, my friend.

Nothing in the documentary would mean very much if the band were no good. They are, in fact, quite good--unpolished, but still tight and epic sounding. DeLuca's voice reminds me of a harder-edged Jeff Buckley, wounded and angry but with a delicate side to it as well. If my memory serves, every time we hear the band, they are playing live (meaning, we never actually hear how any of their studio tracks sound; they do apparently have an album out now). But that's okay, because the band comes to life outside the studio, and the live footage of them is excellent. Sutherland recently formed a record label, bent on signing artists and not taking away any of their creative freedoms or integrity. And once you get to know a little about DeLuca and his temperament, you kind of understand why such a label is necessary for him. But his dilemma is understandable. He wants complete artistic freedom and all he has to do to get it is align himself with one of the most famous men on television.

Before the band even finished recording its record, Sutherland wanted to take them on the road in Europe during a break from shooting "24." (For those who care, since the tour takes place in late December 2005 through early January 2006, I'm guessing the break in

filming is coming at about the halfway point of last season.) One of the coolest things about this film is seeing Sutherland on the set of "24" talking to fellow cast and crewmembers about how nervous and excited he is about the tour. Watching him slip in and out of Jack Bauer mode is wild.

Once the tour begins, a couple things become very clear: being rich and famous does not necessarily mean you're qualified to be a tour manager, and when Kiefer Sutherland drinks, he does so with much conviction. Each gig presents a unique set of nightmares for Sutherland and the band. Club owners show up late to open up the venue for setting up, leaving everyone literally standing in the cold. Sound problems seem to be a constant issue. Ticket sales are suffering in some towns. But no matter where this troupe lands, Sutherland seems willing to suffer any humiliation if it means getting a few more butts in the seats at these shows. The sequence in which Sutherland is literally going bar to bar, person to person in Dublin handing out free tickets is so hard to watch, because most of the people he approaches don't believe it's actually him. A typical exchange:

"You look familiar."

"I work as an actor."

"What's your name?"

"Kiefer."

"No..."

"Kiefer Sutherland."

**"No...you're Jack Bauer!"
"Or that."**

What's particularly humorous about these repeated encounters is that Sutherland seems overwhelmingly shy. Even when he's hanging with the band, he seems like a bit of an outsider who seems desperate to be included in the fun. And that brings us back to the drinking, and an incident captured beautifully by the camera crew of a drunken Sutherland diving into a fully decorated Christmas tree in a London hotel lobby. It's the funniest thing I've ever seen an actor do, and for those few unguarded seconds, Sutherland is the cool kid in the room. I'm not implying that Sutherland is drinking as a way to get closer to the band (I get the sense Sutherland has had a few drink in his life before meeting Rocco and Co.), but he does get a lot more relaxed when he's loaded. Again, welcome to the club, buddy.

I never got a sense that Sutherland was behaving differently because there was a film crew always around. I got more a sense of that from the band, actually. Seeing Kiefer scramble to check out of a hotel room on time after sleeping late or trying to find his cell phone don't exactly scream out "ego trip" to me. Other than the shots of him on the "24" set, Sutherland never seems particularly interested in being pampered or glamorous. He recognizes his strange role with this band, which is to stay behind the scenes, making sure all the gigs line up right...unless he is needed to step to

the foreground and be their spokesperson and one-man publicity generator. As the band travels from London, Dublin, Reykjavic, and Berlin, it's Sutherland that must go on the chat shows or call into radio stations for quickie interviews (mostly to talk about him and "24"), but always with the ultimate goal of plugging the group.

There is plenty of great live footage here of Rocco DeLuca & the Burden, so as a document of a newbie band finding its way in the world, the movie works well. But I Trust You to Kill Me captures something I'm fairly certain it never intended to: one of the most famous men in the world out of his element. Maybe I'm being naive. Perhaps Sutherland is far more calculating than I'm giving him credit for, but I don't think so. Here, he comes across as someone who is well aware of his talents and his fame, and is willing to either suppress or invoke these things when necessary. He recognizes that, at some point, his role with this band will be lessened (a funny postscript confirms this), and he's okay with that. He seems like a man in transition, not quite willing to give up his youthful party dreams but well aware that his newfound mega-stardom will mean that such behavior will not go unnoticed.

I Trust You to Kill Me is a music documentary like no other. In fact, it defies many of the conventions of films chronicling a band by spending so much time NOT chronicling the band. The film works just as well as a snapshot profile of an actor who you actually feel pretty good about finally coming into his own and raking in

the big bucks. I doubt you'll look at Sutherland the same after seeing this film, and that's a good thing. You might see him for what he really is: human. Oh, and for regular readers of Hercules' columns on "24," naked Mandy does not appear anywhere in this film. But there is a strange human-sized rabbit lurking around this film that might be her. Hmmmm...

- *Capone*