

Sound City Review

- Meredith Piela

“The following three weeks changed my life forever,” said Dave Grohl, at the beginning of his documentary, "Sound City." Grohl was talking about his visit to the famous Sound City Studios, a recording complex in Van Nuys, California, where he and the rest of his former band, Nirvana, recorded their breakthrough album, Nevermind, in 1991. The documentary, written by Mark Monroe and produced and directed by Grohl, tells the fascinating story of the recording studio, from its early days until its closing in 2011. The studio included a unique recording console designed by Rupert Neve, and its acoustics gave the music a large and powerful sound, perfect for rock and roll. Many of the biggest acts went to Sound City to put their music on tapes, starting with Neil Young's album, "After the Gold Rush," in 1970. After that, artists such as Fleetwood Mac, Tom Petty, Elton John, Santana, Johnny Cash, and the Grateful Dead created albums there. Unfortunately, the studio's trademark Neve console was sold when digital technology became the industry standard in the late 1990s. Fortunately, Dave Grohl later purchased it. The film includes interviews with many of the technicians and artists who worked at Sound City, and it also shows how the rise of digital recording technology has changed the music business and affected the way many musicians work.

I had been aware that Fleetwood Mac had produced records at Sound City, but I didn't know that the band got their start there. It was interesting to see how Mick Fleetwood, Stevie Nicks, Lindsey Buckingham, and everyone else formed together to make one incredible band. I was also fascinated by the fact that Rick Springfield had recorded several songs at Sound City, including his biggest hit, "Jessie's Girl." Lastly, even though I am not a fan of Nirvana, their recording of the song "Cut Me Some Slack," which featured the remarkable Paul McCartney, blew me away. This documentary was exceptional, and it helped me understand what music production is like. The film gave me a more complete picture of the persona of Dave Grohl, and proved to me that he is much more than the crazy drummer of Nirvana and the Foo Fighters. I truly enjoyed this film, and encourage all music lovers to see this movie.