

STILL PUSHING PINEAPPLES

UK 2025
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DIRECTOR	KIM HOPKINS
PRODUCED BY	MARGARETA SZABO
WRITER	KIM HOPKINS
CINEMATOGRAPHY	KIM HOPKINS
EDITOR	LEAH MARINO
COMPOSER	TERENCE DUNN
COSTUME DESIGN	ANNA KESTEVEN

SYNOPSIS

Documentary following the daily life of Dene Michaels, sole remaining member of 1980s pop group Black Lace, as he struggles to maintain a career performing live, write a new hit song, care for his elderly mother, and fulfil her dream of one last trip to Benidorm.

REVIEWED BY SAM DAVIES



AGADDO THE RIGHT THING Dene Michaels

It would be easy, like shooting pineapples in a barrel, to mock Dene Michaels, the one man left out there keeping the Black Lace show on the road. As the authors/perpetrators of 'Agadoo' (not to mention 'The Hokey-Cokey', 'Superman' and 'Gang Bang'), the serial novelty hit-makers are often written about as among (pop) history's greatest monsters. And we find Michaels' present-day career, as captured here by director Kim Hopkins, at an ebb so low it barely registers on the Alan Partridge Scale. If 'Agadoo' is still big, the gigs, personal appearances and Christmas light switch-ons are not just getting smaller but approaching vanishing point.

Instead, Hopkins' approach is one of fly-on-the-wall restraint, creating a portrait of Michaels that has more in common with kitchen-sink realism than the cheap set-ups of reality TV or *Little Britain's* gleeful punching down at the proles. It shows an ageing man struggling to look after his elderly mother, and to resolve the conflict of paying the bills as Black Lace when he would simultaneously like nothing more than to leave it behind for something more credible. At times *Still Pushing Pineapples* wavers between being bleak and bleakly funny: Michaels wants to sign off with one more big Black Lace novelty hit, but his attempts to get an AI to work some algorithmic magic on his own half-formed

lyrics are unlistenable. Michaels' long-standing manager culls him from his client list in an email – which tries to soften the blow by promising he'll blame it on invented health issues. At times it's simply bleak: Michaels and his mini entourage mourn the derelict state of Blackpool on one visit, a portrait in passing of northern England in chronic decline.

Mortality haunts the film's corners: Michaels visits the grave of Black Lace founder Alan Barton, and the other founding member, Colin Gibb, dies during the course of filming. (Michaels himself didn't join the band until 1986, two years after 'Agadoo'.) Michaels' 89-year-old mother is determined to make one more trip to Benidorm, the scene of his 1980s glory days, leading him to risk her health driving her there in a camper van when her doctors have ordered her not to fly. Hopkins intercuts their joy on arrival with home video of Michaels and his mother in Benidorm four decades earlier. Like her non-judgemental framing of the audiences at Michaels' gigs, it's a moment that sets aside any musical snobbery to acknowledge simple, shared happiness. Michaels' career may trap him in a giant pineapple suit (as the one visual metaphor Hopkins allows herself makes very clear), but that joy is his pay-off.



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