



## Review: "Dirty Country"

By JOE LEYDON

Milkhouse Prods. production in association with D.C. Prods. Produced by Todd Hansen, William Kruse. Executive producer, Dan Satorius. Co-producer, Stu Pollard. Directed by Joe Pickett, Nick Prueher.

If "Dirty Country" finds the audience it deserves, look for Larry Pierce -- an affably raunchy country music singer-songwriter based in Middletown, Ind. -- to become a cult-fave phenom. Helmers Joe Pickett and Nick Prueher make a token effort to include other offbeat acts in their overview of music and musicians not ready for FCC-regulated radio. But Pierce gets most of the screentime, and performs the most hilarious songs, in a seriocomic docu that could prove surprisingly popular as theatrical and homevid fare.

Pic intros Pierce as an assumingly down-to-earth, middle-aged family guy who works in an auto parts factory. He also moonlights as a "Dirty Country" singer who records in his garage (where he also gives concerts), sells tapes and CDs at truck stops and specializes in twangy tunes with such cheerfully vulgar titles as "I Like to Fuck," "She Makes My Peter Stand Up" and "Let's Get Something Straight Between Us." The lyrics are every bit as blunt (if not blunter), but Pierce croons them with such picking-and-grinning insouciance that they're inexplicably engaging, almost sweet. His dirty little secret: Most of his compositions are, no kidding, love songs.

While following their subject over a period of years, Pickett and Prueher fortuitously are in the right place at the right time to record temporary setbacks -- Pierce is forced into early retirement from his factory job after 30 years -- and serendipitous upturns.

In a stranger-than-fiction twist that recalls the straight-faced lunacy of a Christopher Guest mockumentary, Pierce's songs are "discovered" and instantly embraced by members of -itis (pronounced "eye-tiss"), rowdy pop-rock-punkers with their own style of spirited vulgarity. Indeed, the rockers are so impressed that they visit their idol in Middletown, where they are warmly welcomed by Pierce, his family (including the singer-songwriter's enthusiastically approving mom) and friends.

One thing leads to another, and Pierce eventually agrees to join his new friends for his first concert tour. As -itis lead singer Mark Rodio explains: "He's a little bit country, we're a little bit rock 'n' roll. We're like the Donny and Marie of perverted music."

To place Pierce in context of sorts, Pickett and Prueher include mini-profiles of other exuberantly filthy musical entertainers, including piano man Dr. Dirty, proto-rapper Blowfly and the party-heart band Doug Clark's Hot Nuts. The filmmakers also interview music historians and sociologists who, to their credit, maintain some semblance of seriousness while discussing the American tradition of robustly raunchy musical performers on the fringes of the mainstream -- a tradition, it should be noted, Pierce proudly upholds.

Tech values are more than adequate, but the sound mix works best during climatic concert scenes.

Camera (color, DV), Pickett, Prueher; editor, Matt Ehling; music, Craig Soderberg, Larry Pierce; sound, Darin Heinis. Reviewed at Nashville Film Festival (competing), April 23, 2007. Running time: 70 MIN.