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## DVD Review: 'Oil City Confidential' - A Julien Temple Film

By Richard Marcus, BLOGCRITICS.ORG

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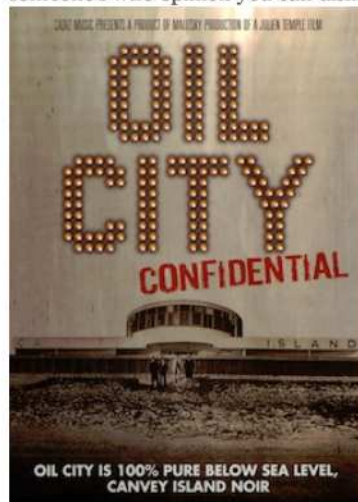
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When people talk of the genesis of punk rock they usually refer to bands like Television, The Ramones, The Sex Pistols, and The Clash as being at the forefront of the movement. Sometimes, it seems like the music sprang from nowhere, as if all of a sudden people like Richard Hell, John Lyndon and Joe Strummer came up with the idea out of thin air. While these bands and individuals were vital to the genre's success and their role in its history can't be denied, there were others who laid the groundwork for what would become punk. Iggy Pop and the Stooges, The New York Dolls and the recently deceased Lou Reed are the names mentioned most frequently as being their inspiration.

A new documentary by acclaimed director Julien Temple, *Oil City Confidential*, distributed in North

America by MVD Entertainment Group, tells the story of a band whose contributions have largely been forgotten, but who probably had just as much influence on the punk scene as any of those mentioned above, Dr. Feelgood. Temple has made a career out of charting the history of British punk through a series of documentary movies including *The Great Rock and Roll Swindle*, about the Sex Pistols and *The Future is Unwritten* about Joe Strummer, so he's not someone's who opinion you can dismiss lightly.



While a version of Dr. Feelgood continues to exist and tour today, it was the original line up and the period between 1971 and 1977 which concern us and Temple's movie. However, Temple does more than just focus on the story of a band and rock and roll, he creates the context for both their birth, character, success and failure. Employing the band's original guitarist, Wilko Johnson, as a kind of tour guide and oral historian, Temple sets the stage for their beginnings by taking us back to the land of their birth, Canvey Island. Thirty miles east of London in the

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county of Essex, Canvey Island is located offshore in the Thames River. While a type of holiday resort for Londoners in the early part of the 20th century, 1936 saw the construction of the first oil terminal in the region and since then refineries and terminals have sprouted up like boils until they now cover the landscape.

So when the band formed in 1971, the smokestacks of gas refineries and the huge oil storage tanks dominated the landscape. As the oil business loomed large in the life of those from Canvey Island, so Canvey Island loomed large in the development of Dr. Feelgood. In order to establish what the island meant to these four guys and how it figured in the character of the band, Temple spends a portion of the movie telling us the history of the island.

Using archival footage dating back to pre-WW II we learn the island had a wild reputation. It was a place where you went to do things you wouldn't do back home. Loose women, booze, gambling - almost anything went on Canvey Island. In 1953, the below-sea level island suffered its worst recorded disaster when it flooded, killing 58 people, and forcing a great deal of the population to be evacuated. The flood hit the tourists areas, including the amusement parks and holiday camps, hardest as they were closest to the Thames. Following the flood a new concrete flood wall was built. As a result the island now closely resembles pictures you see of fortified beaches in France during WWII as its completely surrounded by concrete.

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