

Another Rainy Saturday

A (mostly) music blog, based in Seattle.

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January 10, 2012 by [Chris](#) | Comments Off

Film review: SpokAnarchy!



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Most punk scenes that are the subjects of documentaries often focus on the bands that became successful and brought prominence to their respective scenes (like Dead Kennedys in San Francisco, X and others in Los Angeles, The Ramones, et al in New York). What makes *SpokAnarchy!*, a new documentary that makes its Seattle premiere on Thursday at SIFF Uptown, so engrossing is that it doesn't follow that pattern.

Few bands featured in *SpokAnarchy!* toured outside of Spokane, and none became break-out sensations, but the profile of the cohesion of this particular scene, and its struggles with authority in a conservative, Eastern Washington city, are fascinating to watch throughout its 80 minute running time. Tellingly, the touring van for Vampire Lezbos caught on fire during their first tour outside of Spokane.

Early in the film, the participant interviewed don't talk about seeing themselves as part of a scene, but feel like outsiders from the mainstream of Spokane and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Reagan's America. One of the first zine publishers didn't make many friends by publishing the names of alternative girls he wanted to sleep

with in his zine. Eventually, a more cohesive scene builds and mostly sustains itself.

When the retromaniacs began retelling the story of grunge breaking through in Seattle, those writing the history talked a lot about Seattle's isolation from the rest of the Lower 48, and that was discussed in SpokAnarchy! as well. An artist who was prone to public nudity and shocking his crowd talked about not knowing who GG Allin was, for example. Another whose band first played at the former armory showed a bit naïveté from only knowing the building was a teen center that hosted all-ages shows, not making the connection it also stored tanks prior.

A show at the armory to promote a boycott of firearms helped start an antagonistic relationship with the powers that be in Spokane. One example was when the club the punks in the town created, from a converted auto garage, was hassled by the fire department for not having a defined door for exit. It's a garage, we can open the garage door and everyone can be out in two seconds, they argue futilely. No, the requirement was to have a door they can exit individually.

The fights with authorities and nervous parents afraid their children were falling in with the wrong crowds, while not helpful, weren't what led to the inevitable undoing of the punk scene in Spokane, though. That was largely its own fault, with a lot of punks developing heroin habits, often to the surprise of bandmates.

The people who were featured in *SpokAnarchy!* lived to tell plenty of great stories and eventually got the last laugh. They're still here and Ronald Reagan is long gone.

{Spokanarchy! plays on Thursday, January 12 at SIFF Cinema at 9pm ([tickets available here](#)) and at the Grand Illusion from February 10 through Feb. 16. The SpokAnarchy! soundtrack record release party is on Saturday, January 14 at Radar Hair and Records and features music by Bonnevillie Power and Social Bondage, plus other guests, \$3, 8pm.}



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Chris Burlingame is the editor of Another Rainy Saturday.

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