

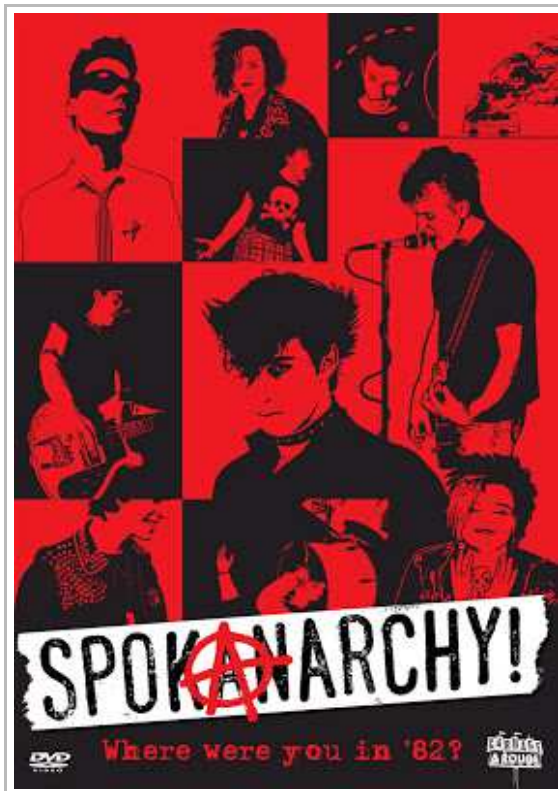
# FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

MONDAY, JUNE 3, 2013

## DVD Review: SpokAnarchy!

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Images from the Internet



### Spok@narchy!

By David W. Halsell, Erica K. Schisler, Jon Swanstrom, Heather Swanstrom, Theresa Halsell and Cory Wees  
*Carnage and Rouge*  
80 minutes, 2011 / 2012  
[www.Spokanarchy.com](http://www.Spokanarchy.com)  
[www.MVDvisual.com](http://www.MVDvisual.com)

Like many small city in the late 1970s and '80s, a punk rock culture grew. Be it Phoenix or Akron, the scenes started off scattered and became arguably more cohesive in an us vs. them stance than some of the more populated and larger scenes, such as New York, Boston, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Starting in 1978, this springboard scene could be described in the isolated urbania of Spokane, Washington.

I'm totally in favor of *all* of both the centers and outposts to have oral histories of local scenes, in either book form or film, and it's

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### About Me

Robert Barry Francos  
Currently living in Saskatoon (email at RBF55@msn.com for address). From 1977-88, I used to publish a print version of a music magazine in New York called FFanzeen, which dealt with the wide-ranging independent music scene. I also photographed many bands from the period (and since). Now I write this blog, and have a column at jerseybeat (dot) com (slash) quietcorner (dot) html. And the beat goes on.

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good that Spokane can be included in the ever growing market of such a chronicle.

Like many autobiographies of musicians, most scenes follow a similar path: a band tries to find a venue for their original music in an area that caters to cover bands, and either the place appears organically or the group finds its own space, which becomes the home-away-from-home for its followers. For Spokane, it was Moe's Body Shop, where bands like the proto-punk/new wave Sweet Madness led to the harder Vampire Lezbos and Social Bondage.

The scene grows with fanzines and flyers, and individual dress codes for that (anti-)social group, with everyone working together against the local government who tries - and eventually succeeds - to shut venues down. And just when things are going good in three to four years, drugs make their way in - usually heroin to replace the pot and booze - and the group of musicians and fans alike fall apart and most scatter, destroying the scene from the inside out.

This documentary clearly shows that Spokane also followed that organic process, and it is dutifully and sometimes painfully laid out for those of us who did not live there during these halcyon days. Spokane was as an important center in the Northwest, equaling the more well-known Seattle, where alternative (not punk, as it would mistakenly be called) would break out a decade later.

There are two areas of this doc that I question, as I feel it is lacking, one picky, and one aesthetic. First, they appreciatively give the names of everyone interviewed from the scene, and there are over 30, according to the dust jacket. It is quite amazing the array people they managed to reach from that scene for this documentary, and kudos for it.

However, because this is not a nationally known scene where everyone knows of, say, a Patti Smith or Joey Shithead, it is onus of the documentarian to give the context of the people being preserved. For example, if under the name caption they could have stated which band the person was in, or even the affiliation such as "fan" or "flyer artist," that would have helped enormously. It's a bit egocentric to think that everyone would or should know. Given that, for a few musicians, there will be a clip with the name to connect with the talking head. Heck, it's been 30 years since some of this has gone on, and seeing an interview now and an image from then doesn't always make the connect when you add on the years.

The other thing I felt lacking was a demonstrative statement of what made this scene unique. As I stated at the beginning of this review, the trajectory of this scene, even though the bands have gone through their own location filters, it is hard for an outsider to tell exactly what makes Sweet Madness, say, any different than The Fast, in New York. I kept waiting to hear about that distinctiveness.

Now a lot of that is forgiven because of the clips of the bands from back then, which are priceless. The music is great and worthy of recording. I'm just sorry it was only clips (though some are extended), and would love to have the full music videos included as extras. Fortunately, some could be found on YouTube, which I have been enjoying.

[Jersey Beat magazine](#)

[Life and Blog of Gary Pig Gold](#)

[Lethal Dose by Donna Lethal](#)

[Blitz! Magazine: Mike McDowell](#)

[Tom Bingham's blog](#)

[G-Mole: Bruce Farley Mowat](#)

[Suburban Voice: Al Quint](#)

[Blog of Lance Strate of General Semantics / Media Ecology Association](#)

[Who Really Cares blog of Craig Davison](#)

I actually remember some of these bands during the days I published FFanzeen (1977-88), and actually have some (not many) in my collection. The music was exciting, and despite their isolation (as remote as one can get in a relatively modern technological society, even pre-Internet), they fit in well with the scenes from around the country (note that touring as a concept for indie bands from smaller cities was not yet totally a given, as it would be when the hardcore scene started to flourish by the mid-late 1980s, as it were.

There are many extras here without being overly long, which is nice, including a few films about some of the people involved in the scene, four nice outtakes, and a slideshow of fanzines and flyers images.

There was a Spokane punk days retrospective in 2009, whereas New York didn't have one until 2013. Well played, Spokane!

**Bonus videos:**