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SpokAnarchy!

One needn't hail from the great state of Washington to find something interesting in the site-specific rockumentary "**SpokAnarchy!**," but it definitely helps. More than the punk-rock music on display, the film describes what life was like in the 1980s for outcast kids and young adults in cities as far off the beaten path as Spokane. In the days before MTV, CDs and the Internet, countercultural change in the Pacific Northwest could best be described as glacial. Or, so it seemed to kids who preferred the Ramones and Sex Pistols to the Seattle Seahawks, hunting and top-40 radio. If a Mohawk, dog collar and green hair could still attract attention in New York and L.A., imagine the reaction to punk fashion and uncloseted gays in flyover country. "SpokAnarchy!" couldn't have been made if a critical mass of like-minded young people hadn't been reached in Spokane, the largest city between Minneapolis and Seattle, and some prescient filmmakers weren't there to record it. Although classified as punk, the music produced by the growing number of bands also showed the influence of such acts as Devo, Talking Heads, B-52's, Led Zeppelin and, of course, Black Sabbath. Police tried in vain to shut down the movement, but it took hard drugs, booze and a desire to make it in L.A. to put a dent in the scene. "SpokAnarchy!" locates the survivors and interviews them about the experience of growing up weird and unwanted in Spokane. Much time is devoted, as well, to an anniversary reunion of the bands and scenesters, held a couple of years ago. Like every other town its size, Spokane has grown more culturally diverse and the mainstream has expanded to include all sorts of things once considered freaky. There's lots of music in the documentary and a visit to a museum dedicated to the art, publicity material and music of the period covered.

– Gary Dretzka