



Various Artists SpokAnarchy!

SpokAnarchy! is a feature-length documentary about the punk rock and new wave movement that took place in Spokane, WA during the '80s. Even if you're unfamiliar with the bands or have never even heard of Spokane for that matter, it's an engaging story told by a seemingly unending source of the scene's survivors. Many of the characters in the movie are still connected in some way to making art or music, or staying punk at heart at the very least. There's not much in the way of punks-gone-square, which lends a lot of legitimacy to the story being told.

MVD Visual 2013

Posted Sept. 16, 2013, 11:06 p.m.

SHARE THIS CONTENT



ADVERTISEMENT

The film does a good job of chronicling the penetration of punk and new wave into the Spokane community; going back as far as 1978, when the word of new and exciting music began spreading across the country, influencing young people in small towns and rural areas all across America. For Spokane it was perhaps a quicker infiltration than other locations, as it was the only stop for touring bands between Minneapolis and Seattle. By the time the early '80s had come around, Spokane had budding scene. Young punkers melded with the older art crowd at venues like The Armory, Moe's, and 123 Arts, where bands like **Sweet Madness**, **Strangulon**, **Pop Tarts**, and **Vampire Lezbos** would play. As well, there were a plethora of zines with titles like *Spokane Sado*, *Wave Scenario*, and *First Church of Card Tables and Occasional Masturbation*; that helped spread the gospel of the Spokane youth underbelly. There was even one barber in town that would do "punk haircuts."

There are tons of interviews with the people from the time period; many of whom were in bands, made zines, or were very simply, just there. There doesn't seem to be any pretentious attitudes coming across, like you oftentimes find in punk documentaries. Rather they seem to be fairly grounded people with little discretion

MORE BY VARIOUS ARTISTS

Various Artists

[Toys That Kill/Future Virgins - split](#)



200

WORDS OR LESS

Pairing Toys That Kill and Future Virgins in a single record, this Drunker Sailor 7" teams up bands that have released some of my favorite records of 2011 (Western Problems) ...

Various Artists

[Loma Prieta/Raein - Split](#)



With the recent

resurgence in the archetypal screamo sound popularized by Gravity Records in the late '90s, few bands remain as true-to-form as Loma Prieta. Grandiose post-rock guitar lines, the ...

Various Artists

[Closure / Moloch - Split EP](#)



for holding things back. The interviewees talk openly about pre-AIDS sexual exploration and drug and alcohol abuse. When asked to sum up the Spokane punk scene, Pat Smick of **The Jet Boys**, says, “Bad crank and cheap beer...I guess.” In fact there seems to be an impressionable focus on the drug use; surmising that heroin was responsible for the demise of the once thriving scene.

At one point in the film Jan Gregor of **Sweet Madness** says, “People started calling us punks. We wouldn’t have thought we were punks. No one would listen to us and think we were punks. But Spokane thought we were punks...and we caught shit for being punks.” And this is when you come to the realization that *SpokAnarchy!* is this is the story of a scene that could happen in any small town. Small towns tend to be fairly conservative and repressive to youth culture that’s not associated with religion or high school sports. As Tim Cridland (AKA **Zamora The Torture King**) says in the film, “If you’re weird in a small town, you suffer for it.” It’s that kind of oppression that pushes frustrated youth to create an alternate scene. This aspect lends the film a familiarity that many viewers can, at least to some extent, identify with.

Oftentimes documentaries of this nature suffer from not having enough actual video footage, and instead rely on zooming in and out on the same stationary images repeatedly. Thankfully the makers of this film were able to round up a bunch of archived material. Surprisingly there is a lot of video documentation of live bands and parties, and some old news broadcasts that really helps move the film along, keeping you engaged throughout. Even old answering machine messages are used effectively.

Documentarians have a tendency to rewrite history in a way that helps convey the message they are trying to get across. But there’s no inkling of falsification going on here. Perhaps some personal accounts are exaggerated a bit due to the length of time that’s passed but that’s natural and ultimately doesn’t affect the overall story. If anything, *SpokAnarchy!* feels a bit aimless at times. There seems to be some musical genre confusion and the timeline gets a little muddy, but oddly enough it works; effectively echoing the Frankenstein-like conglomeration that made up the Spokane scene in the ‘80s.

8.0 / 10 — **Nathan**

See also

<http://www.spokanarchy.com/>



WORDS OR LESS

closure and moloch sit on diametrically opposed sides of the same scene in the same country. They share in the metal/hardcore scene within the UK and they manage to bring ...