



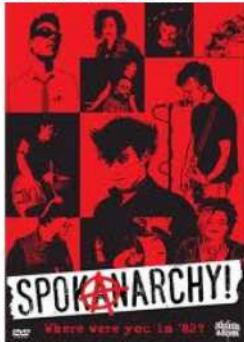
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SPOKANARCHY DVD

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Kicking against the hicks. Documentary on 1980s small town punks from Spokane, Washington. Punk's real revolution. OUT 12/11/12

It probably true to say that punk music's initial blast only happened in a few concentrated hotspots, served up and enjoyed by an intellectual elite. London and Manchester in the UK. New York, Boston and San Francisco in the States. As punk's shock waves began to spread perhaps its associated ideas about freedom of expression, DIY and challenging the status quo were felt more keenly by residents of smaller towns and cities, those cultural backwaters where being strange or dressing odd was more likely to get you a beating on a Saturday night than admiring glances. *Spokanarchy* tells the story of how a group of like-minded people in one small town in America took inspiration from punk to create their own environment back in the 1980s. It tells of how that scene developed and of the lasting effects on the survivors.

Spokane, Washington is a small, physically isolated city in the Northwest of America. It's described in the film as the "largest hick town" in the US. In the late 1970s into the 1980s no touring bands stopped there, local bands such as there were only played rock or disco covers. It's against this backdrop of cultural conservatism where a few key people starting making their own punk-inspired music mainly as a way to keep themselves sane and entertain their friends.

From the small acorns of Charlie Schmidt's studio and Jan Gregor's band Sweet Madness, we get to see via screened interviews of how this small punk scene grew to encompass artists, fanzine writers, film makers, skaters, as well as becoming a home for the marginalised sections of the community. A place where gays would feel welcome, a place where people could express themselves, and let their freak flag fly.

In the film there's an impressively large roll call of bands – Sweet Madness, The Teenagers, The Pop-Tarts, Terror Couple, P-P-Ku, Vampire Lezbos, Blunt Rapture, M'na M'na, Social Bondage and Bastard Fuck being just a few. The film goes on to tell of how venues and art spaces opened, how they battled with the establishment, the press, the cops and at one point the NRA.

As with many of the best musical scenes, things don't last forever. People move away, grow up, get bored or move on. One of the sadder sides of the film shows how the relatively harmless use of drink and pot gives way in some cases to the use of heroin, leading to years of addiction for some and death for others. Though elsewhere the long lasting, positive effects of DIY culture become apparent with many of the musicians still active musically today. Bizarrely there's even an appearance of that YouTube cat that plays the keyboards.

Whether or not the music made by these bands is any good, whether it stands the test of time is besides the point. What matters is the fact that they took a stand against narrow-mindedness, blandness and limiting expectations. It's ironic then that the current wave of career punks seem so bland and uniform in comparison. Do make an effort to see this film, it's inspiring, heart-warming, sad in places but funny at times too. Anyone with even the slightest interest in punk music should see this film.

[Click here for the Spokanarchy website.](#)

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Rating 8/10

Written by: Duncan Fletcher on 11/12/2012.



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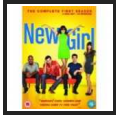
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