



Director: Dave Travis

I will not hide my love and admiration for the Meat Puppets, The Minutemen and Redd Kross; so when I heard about the DVD release of Dave Travis' documentary *A History Lesson Part 1*, I practically had a Harry Knowles-esque orgasm. Culled primarily from concert footage shot in Los Angeles in 1984, Travis (a mere teenager at the time) carefully documented a sadly overlooked era in the evolution of punk music. The story goes that Travis jury-rigged a home VCR through a battery belt (the first consumer camcorder, the Betamovie BMC-100P, had just been released) and made his way into various mosh pits around Los Angeles to shoot this seminal footage of a rarely-recorded period in music history — how he pulled this off without damaging his equipment is a modern day miracle.

The concert footage recorded by Travis does not look pretty — what else would you expect from VHS recordings? The sound quality is even worse than the images, but who the hell cares? The bands that Travis documented surely did not give a flying fuck about what their live performances sounded like. What Travis does document — and what really matters — is the sheer energy of the shows; and the vantage point of the camera puts the audience right in the perfect position to watch the bands.

Travis logged hundreds of hours of Los Angeles area punk shows, and interviewed many of the band members as well, thus documenting the early years of west coast “psychedelic” punk rock. Divided into four distinct sections, *A History Lesson: Part 1* features unedited concert footage from its four subjects: the Meat Puppets from Arizona, the Minutemen from San Pedro, and Twisted Roots and Redd Kross from Hollywood.

When Travis shot the Meat Puppets footage (May 5, 1984 at Perkins Palace in Pasadena, CA), the strange SST band was in the midst of some drastic musical changes. The Meat Puppets had just released their psychedelic country-tinged sophomore release, *Meat Puppets 2*, which was a stark departure from their 1982 noise-riddled punk debut, *Meat Puppets*. *A History Lesson Part 1* features two songs (“Melons Rising” and “Saturday Morning”) from *Meat Puppets* and one track (“Lake of Fire”) from *Meat Puppets 2*.

The Minutemen released their seminal third LP, *Double Nickels on the Dime*, in 1984. D. Boon died in 1985, ushering a all too quick end to The Minutemen. Travis' footage of The Minutemen, shot at two shows (at the Olympic Auditorium and Cathay De Grande) captures the band at their absolute pinnacle. *A History Lesson: Part 1* features five songs (“History Lesson – Part II”, “Jesus and Tequila”, “#1 Hit Song”, “Martin’s Story”, and “The Big Foist”) from *Double Nickles* and one song (“Bob Dylan Wrote Propaganda Songs”) from their second album, *What Makes a Man Start Fires?*

Redd Kross were teenagers from Hawthorne, CA who may have been gigging with punk bands at the time but their rock star persona's were already apparent when Travis filmed their performance at the Pomona Valley Auditorium in June 1984. This incarnation of Redd Kross is an extremely rare one; stalwarts Jeff and Steve McDonald are joined by Vicki Peterson (The Bangles) on lead vocals — this was her only live show with the band — and Vicki's brother Dave Peterson on drums. *A History Lesson Part 1* features very unique renditions of three early Redd Kross songs (“Janus, Jeanie, and George

Harrison", "Linda Blair", and "Annette's Got the Hits").

The fourth band — Twisted Roots — I know absolutely nothing about. (I guess I was too immersed in the east coast punk scene at the time.) The original lineup featured Paul Roessler (The Screamers), Kira Roessler (Black Flag), and Pat Smear (The Germs); by 1984 the band featured Paul Roessler, Dez Cadena (Redd Kross, Black Flag, The Misfits), Kurt Markham (Overkill) and Maggie Ehrig. *A History Lesson Part 1* features three songs ("Never Was", "Mommy's Always Busy in the Kitchen", and "Love Your Friends") that were recorded in May 1984 at the Music Machine.

The unedited live performances featured in *A History Lesson Part 1* should be enticement enough to fans of any of these four bands. The concert footage of these four bands during this time period is extremely rare, thus negating any complaints about the extremely poor sound and image quality. Travis' candid and quirky interviews with members of the four bands lends *A History Lesson Part 1* some additional value, though I cannot claim to have learned anything new about any of the bands.

A History Lesson: Part 1 is now available on DVD from [See of Sound](#).

Rating: 6.5/10



Topics: [News](#), [Reviews](#) | [View Comments](#)

Add New Comment

Optional: Login below.

Showing 0 comments

Sort by Popular now [Subscribe by email](#) [Subscribe by RSS](#)

Trackback URL

[blog comments powered by DISQUS](#)

All trademarks are the property of the respective trademark owners.

© 2009 smellslikescreenspirit.com all rights reserved.

[Site by Websy Daisy](#)