



The Unheard Music

Silver Anniversary Special Edition

Press Kit Documents

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The Unheard Music

Silver Anniversary Special Edition

“The punk-rock era’s LAST WALTZ...assembled with Scorsese-like care....”

Boston Globe

The iconic L.A. band X changed the face of punk music with their vibrant, original style. We see the band at its peak in this legendary film, which took five years to make. As vital today as the day it was released 25 years ago, THE UNHEARD MUSIC – preserved by the Sundance Collection as a “seminal independent film” – provides an indelible record of underground America in the Age of Reagan. This innovative and unconventional film puts us inside the world of X using a striking, visionary style reflecting the uncompromising passion and raw energy of their music. Includes seventeen X classics from their critically hailed first four albums: *Los Angeles*, *Wild Gift*, *Under the Big Black Sun*, and *More Fun in the New World*.

Available for the first time in HD, this Silver Anniversary Edition of one of the greatest rock films ever made includes a new film transfer and 5.1 mix, plus never-before-seen Xtras: a 25th anniversary dialogue with John Doe & Exene Cervenka; an inside look into the making of the film with Angel City Productions (circa 1983); a raw outtake of a live performance of the song “Some Other Time”; the original theatrical trailer; and a replica of the original souvenir song book.

For Release on Blu-Ray and DVD by MVD Entertainment.

Target Street Date: 13 December 2011

An Angel City Production

X

THE UNHEARD MUSIC

Starring JOHN DOE EXENE CERVENKA BILLY ZOOM D.J.BONEBRAKE

Director of Photography KAREM JOHN MONSOUR Production Designer ALIZABETH FOLEY

Co-Produced by EVERETT GREATON Produced by CHRISTOPHER BLAKELY

Written & Directed by W. T. MORGAN

Contact: W. T. (Bill) Morgan 310.418.1980 / masspro@aol.com

The Unheard Music
Silver Anniversary Special Edition
Liner Notes by writer/director W. T. Morgan

A quarter-century ago THE UNHEARD MUSIC premiered at Sundance.

To get there, Angel City Productions – Chris Blakely, Everett Greaton, Alizabeth Foley and I – spent a lifetime in wolf years shackled up with X and their uniquely charged punk poetry. We found kindred spirits in John Doe, Exene Cervenka, Billy Zoom and D. J. Bonebrake, and tried to capture lightning in a bottle during that electrifying run when they made *Los Angeles*, *Wild Gift*, *Under the Big Black Sun* and *More Fun in the New World*.

It may be loud, but it's folk music: of the people, by the people, for the people. Punk broke down barriers between audiences and bands. Fans formed bands; bands were fans. Bands like X did their own artwork, leaflets, album covers. You could say it was a revolt against commercialism, or artists remaking society in their own image, but it was more than that. DIY was/is a way of life and a toolkit for navigating a warlike world of mass media conformity where commodities rule and corporations are granted more rights than humans.

This was our first film, and we put everything we had into it – blood, sweat, 96 tears in 24 hours, our bottom dollars, thousands of film fragments...I'd say everything but the kitchen sink, but there *is* a sink in *We're Desperate*. It's literally and figuratively hand-made: shot on film, cut on film, fx created in-camera – analog all the way.

John Doe once observed that most people today react to X with either: “They changed my life...” or “Who?” This film is for both of those groups.

THE UNHEARD MUSIC is a kind of time capsule, so for this Silver Anniversary special edition, we have sought to preserve the original intent and intensity of the film without adding too much of a revisionist backward-looking perspective. Even the extras are mostly of their time, captured in the heat of the moment, our vision at the time of the zeitgeist swirling around us.

This is the way it was. The time has passed but the spirit lives on.

W. T. Morgan
Los Angeles, 2011

WHAT IS “THE UNHEARD MUSIC” ABOUT?

It’s about the rock group X
It’s about the L.A. music scene in the 1980s
It’s about life in the underground
It’s about the business of music
It’s about American culture in the Age of Reagan
It’s about turning life into art
(and vice versa)
It’s about 90 minutes

THE UNHEARD MUSIC is more than a look at one band and their work.

Beyond that, it is an examination of the L.A. music underground, the ferment where American music is constantly being reinvented.

Beyond that, it is a wildly funny expose of the music industry: skewering recording and radio execs who claim to be the vanguards of new ideas, but who stop short of actually encouraging any.

And beyond that, the film explores the “unheard music” of the American cultural cosmos – the barrage of sounds and images that provide the rarely remarked-upon background for our lives.

THE UNHEARD MUSIC

Selected Press Quotes From Its Original Release

“...[T]he punk-rock era’s LAST WALTZ...assembled with Scorsese-like care.... Rarely do films capture or convey the spirit and edge of the best rock ‘n roll. This one does.”

-- Jim Sullivan, Boston Globe

“A stunning new film about this rebellious band...more GUERNICA than documentary.”

-- L.A. Daily News

“Easily one of the best rock ‘n roll movies ever made.”

-- David Menconi, Boulder Daily Camera

“The best rock film of the 80’s.”

-- Michael Nash, High Performance

One of the most absorbing and well-crafted films ever made about rock and roll....

Destined to rank as a classic in rock ‘n roll movies and innovative filmmaking.”

-- Russell Smith, Dallas Morning News

“Dazzling imagination and technique.”

-- Todd McCarthy, Daily Variety

“THE UNHEARD MUSIC doesn’t just shake, rattle and roll; it spits, sweats and snarls, grabbing viewers by the scruff of their shirts and playfully tossing them into a group of feverish slam dancers.”

-- Jeffrey Ressler, Hollywood Reporter

“Sets new standards for anyone thinking about making a film on rock music.... Don’t miss this movie!”

-- Frank Blank, Philadelphia City Paper

“Bursting with raw creative energy and open defiance of conventionality...part rockumentary, part concert video, part hallucinogenic experience....”

-- Dann Gire, (Chicago) Daily Herald

“Captures the revolutionary spirit of L.A.’s fertile underground music scene...provides viewers with a greater understanding of the forces that shape contemporary rock and roll.”

-- Gene Stout, Seattle Post Intelligencer

“One of the most brilliantly original films in years. It may be close to a masterpiece.”

-- Nicholas Griffin, Daily Trojan

“Unlike any film you’ve ever seen. Saying it’s about X is like saying WAR AND PEACE is about Russia....”

-- Steven Gaydos, Pasadena/Altadena Weekly

“Offers fascinating glimpses into X’s personal mythology, home lives, rehearsal process and eclectic musical background with exciting performance footage and inventive visual effects.”

-- Patrick Goldstein, L.A. Times

“Audacious, personal and experimental filmmaking, an uncivilized animal full of no-holds-barred creativity.”

-- Michael Dare, L.A. Weekly

“A free form chronicle that’s as savage and compelling as the band’s music.”

-- Carrie Rickey, Philadelphia Inquirer

“An innovative, turbo-rhythmed kaleidoscope that sent me reeling beyond and back.”

-- Bob Strauss, Movieline

“A stunning new film, compelling and fast-paced.”

-- Jonathan Taylor, L.A. Daily News

“Brooding, sarcastic, funny...as vital and fun as STOP MAKING SENSE was lean and cool.”

-- Jerome Weeks, Houston Post

“The best film I’ve seen about the current musical generation.”

-- Billy Ciofi, Music Connection

“As unique a rock movie as X is a band.... Most reminds one of Dylan’s DON’T LOOK BACK....”

-- Charles Cross, Seattle Rocket

“A mad hatter of a band profile.”

-- Austin Chronicle

“A rousing plea for individuality.”

-- Dallas Times Herald

“A sarcastic salvo against middle-brow rock.”

-- Michael Spies, Houston Chronicle

“An accomplishment not to be missed.”

-- Kathy McTee, Daily Texan

“By all means don’t leave THE UNHEARD MUSIC unseen.”

-- John Lewis, Dallas Observer

“The film explores the “unheard music” of a culture, an outcast generation, a pioneering rock band, and, through that band, the unheard music of their dark and silent interior world. In the last scene, ragged, bleary-eyed Exene, hair in her mouth, head rolling, sings: ‘There are some facts here which refuse to escape/I could say it stronger, but it’s too much trouble...the world’s a mess; it’s in my kiss...’ Her fragile, oddly hopeful final message reminds us that we are surrounded by a world in turmoil, and we lead bewildering, exhausting lives. Meaning is found in the most fundamental of forces: a kiss.”

-- Joan Anderman, The Weekly (Seattle)

THE UNHEARD MUSIC

Production Notes

Although it uses elements found in concert films, sociological studies, music videos, documentaries, science fiction pictures, industrial films and comedies, THE UNHEARD MUSIC doesn't fit neatly into any of these categories. The film is as fluid and resistant to labels as its subject matter: the vivid Los Angeles underground of the 1980s, where American music – and American culture – were constantly being reinvented. THE UNHEARD MUSIC takes a long, detailed, and funny look at this scene, but focuses on the group that critics singled out as the leader of the underground pack – a four-person rock band with the enigmatic name X.

Directed by W. T. Morgan, the film began shooting in 1980 – before MTV existed. Morgan and his partners in Angel City Productions were chronically short of funds, and put everything they had into making the film. Painstakingly shot and assembled over the next five years, THE UNHEARD MUSIC premiered at the 1986 Sundance Film Festival. During its theatrical run and first home video release it received thunderous acclaim, but after a series of distributors went out of business, it largely disappeared. But, much like X, THE UNHEARD MUSIC developed a powerful cult following, and its innovative storytelling and stylistic techniques – as well as its DIY (Do It Yourself) punk spirit – exerted artistic influence far beyond its commercial fortunes.

Today traces of the film's pioneering approach can be found across the media spectrum. Morgan himself progressed from hand-made effects (created in-camera, and on ancient – and borrowed – animation stands and optical printers) to creating more groundbreaking films, television, interactive multimedia, theater, videogames and Disney attractions. Others who contributed to the film would go on to productions ranging from Peter Gabriel's "Sledgehammer" video to the features JFK, SPINAL TAP, and LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE. The extended X family (a close-knit group of friends, family and colleagues known as The Wolves) would go on to play major roles in such films as DANCES WITH WOLVES and THE LORD OF THE RINGS trilogy.

THE UNHEARD MUSIC screened anew at the 2007 Sundance festival as part of the Sundance Collection, a select group of seminal independent films preserved at UCLA's Film and Television Archive that include BLOOD SIMPLE, STRANGER THAN PARADISE, KILLER OF SHEEP, and RIVER'S EDGE.

THE UNHEARD MUSIC is an Angel City Production: written and directed by W. T. Morgan, produced by Christopher Blakely, co-produced by Everett Greaton, designed by Alizabeth Foley (who also appears in the film as "Paulene"). Director of Photography is Karem John Monsour; editors are Morgan, Kent Beyda, Charlie Mullin and Curtiss Clayton. Music is by the film's stars – X: John Doe, Exene Cervenka, Billy Zoom, and D. J. Bonebrake.

The Filmmakers (Angel City Productions)

Writer-Director W.T. MORGAN's first film, THE UNHEARD MUSIC, had its world premiere at the 1986 Sundance Film Festival. He then directed A MATTER OF DEGREES, a satirical comedy set at a college radio station featuring Arye Gross, Tom Sizemore, Judith Hoag, Christina Haag, John Doe, Wendell Pierce, John F. Kennedy Jr., Kate Mailer and Michael Imperioli, which premiered at the 1990 Sundance festival. Morgan co-wrote 500 NATIONS (an eight-hour documentary miniseries hosted by Kevin Costner) and SPIRIT (with Peter Buffett), and directed 500 NATIONS: THE FIRST AMERICANS. He has written screenplays and partnered with Michael Blake, author of DANCES WITH WOLVES, to develop film projects. He has created video games and interactive experiences for Time Warner, Walt Disney Imagineering, Microsoft and IBM. He is a longtime member (and former chair) of the board of directors of the Actors' Gang theater company (co-founded by Tim Robbins). Along with screenwriting and ongoing work for Walt Disney Imagineering, current works-in-progress include documentaries about Barack Obama and Indian Country, and SEE HOW WE ARE, a sort-of sequel to UNHEARD MUSIC.

Producer CHRISTOPHER BLAKELY formed Angel City Productions in 1980 with college buddies Bill Morgan and Everett Greaton to produce THE UNHEARD MUSIC. Before that he was president of the Entertainment Law Society at U.S.C. and was actively involved in developing film projects. Today Chris runs a successful California video production company, Main Street Media.

Co-Producer EVERETT GREATON was a music aficionado, film studies major and popular student D.J. at Stanford University, where he met future Angel City colleagues Bill Morgan and Chris Blakely. Everett followed up THE UNHEARD MUSIC by pursuing interests in music and world travel. He is currently web master for a large L.A. law firm.

Associate Producer/Production Designer/Actor ALIZABETH FOLEY created the role of "Paulene" – the fictional character who opens the film. Behind the camera, she helped create other memorable scenes, including the stills animation and house-moving sequences. She has continued to work on both sides of the camera as a producer, writer and sometime actor in such varied projects as A MATTER OF DEGREES, COLUMBUS, 500 NATIONS and the upcoming SEE HOW WE ARE.

X

“X emerged from the punk ferment of 1977 with a fast, careening, intensely focused sound that perfectly caught the dark undercurrents of the L.A. psyche,” writes Chris Morris, author of *Beyond and Back: The Story of X*. “The group’s depth and originality won them the praise of local and national critics – yet the indifference of radio programmers and record buyers kept them (to quote their song, “The Unheard Music”) ‘locked out of the public eye.’”

By the late 1970s the live rock ‘n’ roll music scene in Los Angeles had gone stale and institutional. With the appearance of a cramped, funky basement club called the Masque, a new alternative music scene was born. That scene soon exploded outward into a network of tiny nightspots stretching from the Chinatown district to the ocean – the Whisky a Go Go, Starwood, Madame Wong’s, Hong Kong Café, Club 88. In these offbeat gathering places, young musicians came together to express a revolutionary spirit of creativity.

Groups like Fear, the Screamers, the Germs, the Alleycats, the Plugz, the Skulls, and the Bags sprouted up, playing short, stark, feral slices of musical life. A fertile period of fresh ideas and inspirations began in the L.A. rock scene, which at that point was associated in the minds of the public with the laid-back sound of the Eagles, Linda Ronstadt and Fleetwood Mac. The subculture developed into a vital and radically original musical and social experience.

Although many of these young bands faded rapidly, a few found independent record labels willing to expose their volatile and risky new music to the public. Some – including the Go Gos, the Blasters, Los Lobos, Black Flag, Red Hot Chili Peppers and others – would achieve wider notoriety. But the band commonly acknowledged as the leader of the pack was X.

As recounted in *THE UNHEARD MUSIC*, X bassist and singer/songwriter John Doe met writer/singer Exene Cervenka at the Beyond Baroque poetry workshop in Venice, California. Guitarist Billy Zoom linked up with Doe through virtually identical ads in a local classified newspaper. Drummer D. J. Bonebrake was recruited as their drummer from another Masque band, the Eyes.

X released their first single, “We’re Desperate”/“Adult Books”, on the small Dangerhouse label at the height of L.A.’s punk rock ferment. The band went on to release its first album, *Los Angeles*, in 1980 on independent Slash Records (an offshoot of an underground L.A. magazine), followed the next year by *Wild Gift*. Both were produced by Ray Manzarek of the seminal L.A. band, the Doors (Ray first saw X play after hearing that they closed their sets with a scorching version of “Soul Kitchen”).

These albums brought X’s high-tension introspective music to the attention of critics. *Los Angeles* was chosen Album of the Year by the L.A. Times critics; *Wild Gift* won

similar kudos from the New York Times as well, and was included in Time magazine's list of the ten best albums of the year.

The band's shift to Elektra Records in 1982 brought their music to a broader audience, as they remained a mainstay of critic's polls. Their first Elektra album, *Under the Big Black Sun*, narrowly missed pulling off an Album of the Year three-peat, while their fourth album, *More Fun in the New World*, returned them to the top.

This is where THE UNHEARD MUSIC leaves X – never having compromised their music to gain larger audiences. As director Morgan noted at the time of the film's release, "If X seems closer to the musical mainstream today [in 1986] than they did in 1980, it's not because their music has changed. X is still out there doing what they've always done. If they've gone from outsiders to insiders, it's because the mainstream heard what they were doing and moved to include them, not the other way around."

In the intervening years, X's fortunes have waxed and waned. Although they have never achieved the commercial success that many believe is their due, they continue to be hugely influential and respected among their peers and fans. As was once said of the Velvet Underground, not many people may have bought their records, but they all went off and formed their own bands. Even X formed an ad-hoc acoustic sub-band – the Knitters – joining John, Exene and D.J. with Dave Alvin of the Blasters and stand-up bassist Johnny Ray Bartel.

The band's personal lives have evolved since the completion of the film: John and Exene divorced, but remained close friends and colleagues. Today John has three daughters, and has balanced a respected solo musical and acting career with his ongoing X and Knitters duties. Exene met and married actor Viggo Mortensen, with whom she has a son (born the same day in the same hospital as John Doe's first daughter!); after moving for awhile to the middle of the country she has recently returned to Southern California, balancing her X and Knitters duties with a vibrant solo career and as a celebrated graphic artist. Billy Zoom left the band shortly after the movie's premiere, but later reunited with his original cohorts; the father of twins, he runs his own recording studio. Like Billy (seen expertly noodling a clarinet in the film) D.J. Bonebrake has always displayed remarkable versatility (check out his marimba – and percolator – playing in several scenes) in addition to his powerful inventive drumming; he plays multiple instruments with a staggering array of side bands.

The film's fortunes followed a similar arc, its fate forever joined with that of its subjects. Upon its first theatrical release, THE UNHEARD MUSIC received rave reviews (see attached selections). Its run in several cities was extended many times over. Seattle was one example of what seemed at the time to be a surprising hot bed of interest in the film (later, the mystery of that attraction was solved when grunge – a post-punk sound pioneered by Nirvana, Pearl Jam and other Seattle bands – exploded onto the scene).

Many who weren't at first fans of the band found the innovative filmmaking appealing. Following one screening, a studio executive told the director that if he didn't get a three-picture deal with a major studio out of the film, she would leave the business.

Six weeks later, she left the business.

It has now been thirty-one years since filming began on *THE UNHEARD MUSIC* (twenty-five since its first release), and in December of this year a 25th anniversary special edition Blu-Ray and DVD will be released by MVD Entertainment.

It has also been thirty-one years since the release of X's landmark first album (qualifying them for inclusion in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame – are you listening, voters?). Morgan once described them as “the bastard child of Dylan and the Sex Pistols”. Today the original members of X continue in their live shows to blow the roof off with their lyrical intensity – carrying forward the torch of raw rootsy poetic rock and roll.

THE UNHEARD MUSIC

Credits

X

THE UNHEARD MUSIC

An Angel City Production

Written and Directed by	W. T. Morgan
Produced by	Christopher Blakely
Co-Produced by	Everett Greaton
Associate Producers	Alizabeh Foley
	W. T. Morgan
Director of Photography	Karem John Monsour
Production Designer	Alizabeh Foley
Music by	X
Original Songs by	John Doe & Exene Cervenka
Editors	Charlie Mullin
	Kent Beyda
	Curtiss Clayton
	W. T. Morgan
Starring	John Doe
	Exene Cervenka
	Billy Zoom
	D. J. Bonebrake
Featuring	Ray Manzarek
	Rodney Bingenheimer
	Brendan Mullen
	Frank Gargani
	Alizabeh Foley
With	Denise Zoom
	Dinky Bonebrake
	Bob Biggs
	Al Bergamo
	Joe Smith
	Robert Hilburn
	Jello Biafra
	Tom Hedges
Additional Photography	Marino Colmano
Camera	Karem John Monsour
	Marino Colmano

	Jeremy Lepard
	Jon Huck
	Bruce Barrow
	Norm Gollin
	Stephen R. Johnson
	W. T. Morgan
Home Movies	John Doe
	Billy Zoom
	Denise Zoom
	Mr. & Mrs. Zoom, Sr.
Stills/Animation Montage	Alizabeth Foley
	W. T. Morgan
Animation Consultant	Jon Hall
Model Animation	Monumental Pictures
	Frank Rocco
	Les Bernstein
	Kurt Zandler
	Patt Harrison
	Jim Balsam
	Jeremy Cushner
Optical Printer Operator	Kevin Lombardi
Additional Animation Camera	Erik Van Dijk
	Doug Henry
	Anthony Wilderman
Still Photography	Ed Colver
	Gary Leonard
	Frank Gargani
	Debbie Leavitt
	Gary Pearlson
	Rooh Steif
	Ann Summa
	Karen Filter
Xerography	Michael Hyatt
Sound Designer	Craig Smith
Production Sound Mixers	Jon Huck
	Everett Greaton
Dolby Stereo Re-Recording	International Recording
Mixers	Wayne Heitman
	Matthew Iadarola
Pre-Dubs	JDH Sound
Scratch Mix, Transfers	SSI

Running Time: 86 minutes
MPAA Rating: R

Backstory

THE UNHEARD MUSIC was filmed between 1980 and 1985 in and around Los Angeles.

The filmmakers have a lot of history together. Morgan and producer Christopher Blakely attended the same high school. They ended up in the same freshman dorm at Stanford, where they met co-producer Everett Greaton. All three spent six months in Florence studying, among other things, Italian film. After a series of extended stays in Italy and New York, Morgan returned to Los Angeles, where one of the first people he met was Elizabeth Foley, who would become an integral part of THE UNHEARD MUSIC on both sides of the camera – and his wife.

While still in Europe, Morgan had spent a month in Paris writing a spec screenplay, broke and living in a vacant apartment with only two records for entertainment: *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols* and Bob Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks*. Back in L.A. and living a block from the world famous Whisky a Go Go on the Sunset Strip he stumbled across a local band he immediately recognized as the bastard child of Dylan and the Sex Pistols – X.

“Onstage they struck me as a kind of chiaroscuro creative chaos. John and Exene were these primeval voices howling into the darkness, while Billy Zoom looked like he'd just stepped down from the rock god pantheon, blond and glowing, flashing this million dollar smile while tearing through these incredible licks with the greatest of ease. And D.J. just pounding furiously on the drums. I was blown away. It sounds corny and overblown now – and a bit strange to wax nostalgic about punk – but I felt like I'd stumbled into a post-apocalyptic Cavern Club and was seeing my generation's version of the Beatles (still in their leather-jacket phase).

“When their first album (*Los Angeles*) came out I wore out the grooves on it [yes, Virginia – this was the age before CDs and itunes]. Not only were the songs amazing, but X's producer had been a member of my previous favorite L.A. band – Ray Manzarek of the Doors. Not to mention that prior to becoming a filmmaker my greatest ambition was to be a poet, and there was some serious neo-beat poetry going on there. I said, ‘I don't care what happens, I have to do something with these people.’”

Then occurred one of the many meaningful coincidences that seemed to mark this project from the beginning. At the time Morgan was living off option money for unmade film projects, studying directing and acting under Lee Strasberg, and getting involved in political activism through Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda's Campaign for Economic Democracy, who had recently vacated an office space in Ocean Park (not far from Beyond Baroque, the poetry center frequented by John and Exene, and occasionally by Morgan). Morgan took over the space, but needed partners to cover the rent, and found one in his college friend Chris Blakely, a law school refugee who, as it happened, wanted to do a documentary about the music business. Before they knew it they had joined

forces, brought in Everett Greaton and Alizabeth Foley, made a deal with X, and THE UNHEARD MUSIC was born.

The project immediately stalled when the first shoot – the sequence documenting the recording of the “White Girl” single – drained every penny in the Angel City bank account. But the deaths within days of each other of John Lennon and Darby Crash – not to mention the election of Ronald Reagan – spurred the film team to seize the moment and capture X and the L.A. punk scene before it disappeared.

As it happened, the making of THE UNHEARD MUSIC would take five hard years, echoing the struggles X faced in getting their music into the public ear. The filmmakers worked with begged and borrowed equipment, recruited themselves and friends as crew, and called in every favor they could. Shooting proceeded in fits and starts, depending upon the current cash flow.

Angel City had to battle on two fronts to win over potential investors: one faction was dubious that music should ever be seen (shooting began before MTV existed); others wanted to see more of a traditional rockumentary, with a neat, upbeat feel – as one non-investor put it, “a New Wave Rocky.”

Being forced to shoot over time, and to do most of the work themselves, turned out to be a plus. “Not only did we end up documenting the band’s organic growth during their prime,” Morgan notes, “but having to build the film in a more modular way led me to push to make every new sequence different in tone and style. It became more of a dynamic collage, drawing on every period in film history. It didn’t hurt that we were amateurs – in the best sense of people who do it for love – and hadn’t yet become jaded, or allowed ourselves to get talked out of fresh, untested ideas. Which was what the DIY [Do It Yourself] Movement was all about, anyway.”

“I’ve always liked the idea of reinventing the rules. Many of my favorite films are from the period when filmmaking was young – the early silent movies, from Melies to Murnau to Eisenstein and Keaton, when nobody knew the rules, so they did whatever they thought would work. We didn’t know what not to do, so we improvised. More seasoned hands kept telling us, ‘You can’t do it that way,’ but we were young and arrogant, so we ignored all the sage advice. I liked the notion of the Keystone Cops comedies – where they’d hear fire engine sirens, rush over to shoot the fire, then figure out later what to do with it. You see that philosophy throughout the film – things like the house-moving sequence, which was triggered when Alizabeth and I were grabbing a bite at three in the morning and saw a house drive by; or the “Johny Hit and Run Paulene” sequence, which was inspired in part by an actual hit and run we witnessed – again, late at night (we all lived like vampires back then) – while dining at Johnny’s Pastrami in Culver City; or the flurry of images at the end of “I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts”, when I was unable to sleep and sat up all night shooting single frames off the television.”

The filmmakers cut corners everywhere. Most of the film was shot on weekends and at night, partly to take advantage of policies by equipment houses and local film schools,

who would lend them equipment for free to shoot “tests” – which would inevitably end up in the film. “I think we had a negative shooting ratio – we reused everything at least twice,” jokes Morgan.

THE UNHEARD MUSIC utilizes a wild panoply of styles, spliced and splintered with animation, stock footage, a silent movie pastiche, quick cuts from TV commercials, corporate industrials and news programs, home movies, concert and interview footage. One of the distinctive techniques – ubiquitous today, but shocking back then – is the machine-gun pace of montages to create a densely-packed blizzard of images, some flickering past for only a fraction of a second.

But the ordering of the images is anything but random. Forced to plan each shoot carefully, Morgan scripted and blocked the film many times over. “I really did think of this as a narrative film with documentary material. Although there are elements of *cinema verite* in the approach – especially in the “Real Child of Hell” sequence, where you see a song being born before your eyes – the movie has more in common with Cubism and multimedia than it does with most documentaries.”

Avoiding and even mocking (pre-SPINAL TAP) many documentary conventions, Morgan worked to avoid clichés, including the most-hallowed – the straightforward talking head interview. “I’d much rather try to capture somebody behaving in their environment – like wildlife in a nature film – than see them interrogated. It’s more of a conversation, where the band members invite you into their world.”

“Documentaries tend to put people under microscopes,” says Alizabeth Foley. “But it’s more interesting to see how X dealt with the raw material of life that’s available to everybody, and then turned it into art.”

Spontaneity was encouraged. Having heard that Billy Zoom played jazz clarinet (!), Blakely brought his own clarinet to one of the shoots. Billy picked it up and promptly blew a beautiful improvisation loosely based on “Stardust.” On the day of an interview with D.J. Bonebrake, he happened to be giving a vibraphone lesson, which was also captured on film, as was later noodling on various TV themes (which became a fun sequence in the film, but created headaches for the music rights supervisor).

Alizabeth Foley does double duty on both sides of the camera, appearing in the film as Paulene, a fictitious character [though don’t tell her that!] whom Morgan describes as “an archetypal – and over-identifying – X fan.” The character was inspired by the confluence of several factors: an anonymous fan letter from an emotionally disturbed young woman convinced that all of the songs were about her; an actual hit and run accident in front of Johnny’s Pastrami witnessed by Morgan and Foley, where a woman was tossed or fell from a speeding car, and then run over; and the lyrics to X’s song, “Johny Hit & Run Paulene,” which found pulp friction in the collision of punk outcasts, drugs and violent rape. In Foley’s mind it all crystallized in two key lines:

She wasn't what you'd call living really
But she was still awake....

The filmmakers enjoyed their first reward at the 1984 Filmex, held as part of the Olympic Arts Festival, where THE UNHEARD MUSIC was screened as a “work-in-progress.” One of only three films in the festival to sell out (overflowing despite being a midnight show), the film received a raucous ovation. It then premiered in its final form at the 1986 Sundance Film Festival; then screened again at Sundance in 2007 when it was selected for the Sundance Collection, a group of “seminal independent films” preserved at UCLA Film Archives. Now, upon the 25th anniversary of its first commercial release, THE UNHEARD MUSIC arrives in a special edition Blu-Ray and DVD featuring a new HD transfer and never-before-seen Xtras.

Bios

Angel City Productions

W.T. MORGAN (writer/director): Bill Morgan is not a Creationist, Beat archivist, or team doctor for the Boston Red Sox, despite what Google says.

THE UNHEARD MUSIC (Sundance Collection) was his first film. It premiered at Sundance in 1986 and played at the first Sundance Film Festival in Tokyo. A MATTER OF DEGREES, a satirical comedy set at a college radio station featuring an ensemble cast including Arye Gross, Tom Sizemore, Judith Hoag, Cristina Haag, Wendell Pierce, John Doe, John F. Kennedy Jr., Kate Mailer and Michael Imperioli, was developed at the Sundance Filmmaker Lab and premiered at the 1990 Sundance festival.

Morgan co-wrote 500 NATIONS, an eight-hour documentary miniseries about the history of American Indians hosted by Kevin Costner. The CBS series was nominated Best Special of the Year by the National Television Critics Association and spawned a CD-ROM for Microsoft (created by Morgan), which a CNET poll ranked second among the all time best CD-ROMs. In 2004 he directed a Discovery Channel special, 500 NATIONS: THE FIRST AMERICANS, which aired in conjunction with the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. while at the same time, at the other end of the National Mall, SPIRIT: THE SEVENTH FIRE – a live multimedia “journey in dance drums and song” (co-created with Peter Buffett) played to sold-out crowds. Featuring an all Native American cast, the show was based upon the earlier SPIRIT, which drew raves during a series of PBS broadcasts and live tours.

Morgan was senior writer/producer of two landmark interactive multimedia projects for IBM and Robert Abel’s Synapse Technologies: COLUMBUS, installed in the Library of Congress to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the epic encounter between Native Americans and Europeans; and its sequel, EVOLUTION/REVOLUTION. He served as senior vice president of inscape, the Time Warner videogame company behind the graphically rich role-playing games, THE RESIDENTS’ BAD DAY ON THE MIDWAY, DEVO’s ADVENTURES IN THE SMART PATROL, DROWNED GOD, ASSASSIN, and the worldwide hit artificial entity, CREATURES.

Morgan became a filmmaker after being steeped in the films of Bertolucci and Fellini at Stanford University’s overseas program in Florence, Italy. Living in Rome during the Aldo Moro affair, he wrote a script about terrorism and Italian television that not surprisingly failed to unlock American studio coffers. But it did land him another screenwriting gig. Upon his return to America he trained with Lee Strasberg and embarked upon an odyssey through music, film, interactive multimedia and theater. He is a longtime member – and former chair – of the board of directors of the Actors’ Gang theater company (co-founded by Tim Robbins), and co-founded a company to develop film and television projects with Michael Blake, Oscar-winning author of DANCES WITH WOLVES, whom he met through X.

He continues to work as a screenwriter and director (making, as he jokes, “More films you haven’t seen”), and as a writer/director on projects for Walt Disney Imagineering and other companies. Upcoming projects include documentaries about Barack Obama and Indian Country, and SEE HOW WE ARE, a sort-of sequel to UNHEARD MUSIC. Morgan lives in Los Angeles with adulthood sweetheart and partner in Angel City – Alizabeth Foley.

CHRISTOPHER BLAKELY (producer): Chris Blakely is a fifth generation Californian, born in Santa Monica, whose after-school jobs included working in a Hollywood market “bagging groceries for Broderick Crawford.” He was a Classics major at Stanford, studied “classic film” in Italy, and returned to the States determined to enter the motion picture industry. Instead, he enrolled in law school. At U.S.C. he was president of the Entertainment Law Society. His law degree came in handy during production of THE UNHEARD MUSIC.

Today Chris runs a successful California video production company, Main Street Media. He is married to Elizabeth Blakely, a business and tax attorney who also worked on the film. They have two children.

EVERETT GREATON (co-producer): Everett grew up New England, and came to California to attend Stanford University, where he majored in film. After graduation he worked in a San Francisco law firm as a paralegal, spending his free time traveling through Mexico and Latin America. He came to L.A. to work on THE UNHEARD MUSIC. He is currently web master for a large L.A. law firm, and continues to pursue his interest in music and world travel.

ALIZABETH FOLEY (Associate Producer, Production Designer, “Paulene”): Alizabeth created the role of “Paulene” – the fictional character who opens the film. Behind the camera, she served as associate producer and production designer and was instrumental in creating the animation and house-moving sequences. She has continued to work on both sides of the camera as a producer, writer and actor in such varied projects as A MATTER OF DEGREES, COLUMBUS, 500 NATIONS, and upcoming projects with husband W. T. Morgan.

ALSO: Many who contributed to THE UNHEARD MUSIC went on to illustrious careers, including cinematographer John Monsour, who invented a device used to synchronize film and video; second-unit cameraman Steven R. Johnson, who directed “Pee Wee’s Playhouse” and Peter Gabriel’s “Sledgehammer” video; editors Kent Beyda (SPINAL TAP), Charlie Mullen (THE DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION), and Curtiss Clayton (DRUGSTORE COWBOYS); apprentice editor Joe Hutshing, who won an Academy Award for editing JFK; and Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, directors of LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE, who provided footage of the Masque and environs.

X

EXENE

“In August of 1976 Exene moved to Los Angeles, because she knew she had to get out of Florida. She arrived in town with \$80 in a paper bag and wound up living with 5 people in a 1-room apartment in Ocean Park. A short time later she began working in Venice in the library at the literary arts center, Beyond Baroque, where she was allowed to live upstairs.

“X, the punk band formed in 1977 by Exene Cervenka, John Doe, Billy Zoom, and D.J. Bonebrake, came along just in time for those of us coming of age in the mid-70s who were discovering that the conventional path through life wasn’t an option. In Los Angeles at that point in time our numbers proved to be legion, and we found each other at L.A.’s seminal punk Petri dish, The Masque.” – Kristine McKenna (www.xtheband.com)

Exene and John were married in 1980, around the time her sister – a major influence in her life – died in a car crash while headed to an X show at the Whisky a Go Go.

It is at this point that production on THE UNHEARD MUSIC began, which ended up documenting the band’s fortunes over the course of their critically-acclaimed first four albums – LOS ANGELES, WILD GIFT, UNDER THE BIG BLACK SUN, and MORE FUN IN THE NEW WORLD.

Soon after the film’s completion, John and Exene divorced, although they continued as partners in X, creating such landmark albums as SEE HOW WE ARE.

In 1986 Exene met actor Viggo Mortensen in New York City on the set of SALVATION! Viggo played Exene’s husband in the film, and soon adopted the same role in real life. Though they later divorced, they have a son, Henry, a recent college grad, who was born on the same day in the same hospital as John Doe’s first daughter, Veronica.

Exene has published a number of books of poetry, is a respected graphic artist, and continues to record and to perform with X, The Knitters, and as a solo artist, including the recent *The Excitement of Maybe*.

JOHN DOE

“John Doe (is that your real name?) was dreamed up in Los Angeles in January or February ’77 after an exhausting trip from Baltimore on Halloween, ’76. He settles in Venice, CA (‘cause that’s where the Beats lived), goes to the Venice poetry workshop and meets Exene. X band starts, records a single, gets more popular (1979 there was a line around the block at the Whisky) signs to Slash Records and by 1981 the L.A. “punk-rock explosion” is all but over. X’s first two records have poetry and hard rock; it

connects with the audience's guts and brains and the critics really like it. X signs to Elektra, make five more LPs, some videos, tour the U.S. and Europe, appear on network TV, make a film (THE UNHEARD MUSIC), abuse body and soul, write about it, connect with more and more varied audiences and the critics move on to someone new.

“[Since the release of the film] J.D. has been in some films, taken some acting classes so as not to completely embarrass himself, signed as a solo artist, remarried and had three children [with a little help from Gigi]. Finding Los Angeles no longer inspiring, he moves “to the sticks,” records first solo record (while X takes an overdue vacation), [acts in] a few dozen films, movies and TV shows, [does] three more solo records as The John Doe Thing, another X record, and countless tours. Rhino re-issues entire X catalog and J.D. makes a long-awaited but mostly ignored acoustic record w/ lots of guest star/friends singing and playing.

“The latest chapter [2004 and solo record # 6] begins w/ a desire to make an electric record that is utterly simple, musically and lyrically. Not wanting to return to punk rock, “old music” makes a comeback in the J.D. vocabulary. Loving the collaboration of the last record, J.D. calls some other friend/guest stars. Over a two-week period in April, the musicians and singers came to Dave Way's Way Station in the hills of Los Angeles to sing and play all together in one very small room. Hardly any “fixes,” over-dubs, no auto-tune and everything given to the moment of the song and its players. This is the Muddy Waters record he always wanted to make. This is a record I think Bob Dylan would like. This is a record of songs that have the style of the blues and country w/out the self-conscious modernisms, show-off solos or purist traps. Hope you like it and see you out there.” — John Doe 11/20/04 (www.xtheband.com)

John continues to act, to make acclaimed solo records, including *A Year in the Wilderness* and *Keeper*, and to perform in X and the Knitters.

D.J. BONEBRAKE

“Donald James Bonebrake (yes, that is his real name) grew up in the suburbs of Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley. He began drumming at the age of 12 and studied classical and traditional music while playing in various rock n roll bands. DJ entered the Los Angeles underground music scene in the mid-1970's when Charlotte Caffey and Joe Ramirez saw his band, Rocktopus, at Immaculate Heart College. They asked him to join their group, The Eyes, and it wasn't long before members of X caught The Eyes playing at the Masque and asked DJ to be X's drummer. After several years of touring and recording X took a brief hiatus and DJ began earnestly building his reputation as a talented and dependable live performance and recording session musician, playing drums, percussion, and mallet instruments with a variety of musicians and music groups. Today, in addition to playing drums with X, and snare/washtub with the Knitters, DJ is gaining a reputation as a talented vibraphonist. His two jazz ensembles, Orchestra Superstring and the Bonebrake Syncopators, include veteran rock and jazz musicians from a broad range of musical interests.” (www.xtheband.com)

BILLY ZOOM

“Billy began life as Ty Kindell. His father was a big-band saxophonist and clarinetist. Billy plays nine different instruments, ranging from guitar to clarinet, saxophone, flute and keyboards. In 1966 he set out from Savannah Illinois ‘to seek fame and fortune’ and landed in Davenport Iowa. There he became a member of the Loved Ones, a popular group that toured the Midwest playing soul covers. The nomadic Kindell traveled the country, putting in stints in Boston and San Francisco before landing in L.A. As an off and on member of Art Wheeler & the Brothers Love from ‘69 to ‘72, he backed up the likes of Etta James, Johnny “Guitar” Watson, Bobby Day, Johnny Taylor and other soul legends. Billy today notes that he only later fully appreciated the experience: “If I had my druthers, I’d still be playing R&B...I got out of it when they started getting into funk. I didn’t go there. I didn’t do acid, so that whole Parliament/Funkadelic thing got kind of weird for me. I didn’t want to wear the pink feathers and stuff.”

In 1971 Zoom landed a gig with rockabilly titan Gene Vincent, who had fallen on hard times in the psychedelic era. “Musicians in his band were embarrassed about playing songs like “Be Bop a Lula” in front of people,” Zoom recalls. The thing I remember him saying the most was, “I can’t believe that somebody who looks like you can play like that.” I still had hair down to my waist and bellbottoms in those days.”

Zoom’s nascent punk attitude was honed in the early 70s. “70s music really sucked. I think music sort of died at Woodstock. I think everything between Woodstock and the Ramones is an embarrassment and needs to be erased from the history books...I started doing rockabilly [because] I couldn’t get into the glam-rock thing.”

In 1972 Ty Kindell became Billy Zoom. “I had hair down to my waist and little wire-rimmed glasses, and I decided to change my image. That look wasn’t rebellious any more. All of the people who threw beer cans at me had long hair now; they were rednecks on acid. So I cut my hair real short and bleached it a bit, and I got really blue contacts. I had this friend named Liz who came over...and she just stood there staring at me and said, ‘You don’t look like you anymore; you don’t look like Ty...you look like your name ought to be Billy Zoom or something.’ Then some friends started calling me that, and it just sort of stuck.”

Zoom played with a roots band called the Alligators in 72 and 73 before starting his own rockabilly combo the next year. The Billy Zoom Band recorded on the tiny indie label Rolling Rock Records, where Zoom proved that – in addition to being an astonishingly gifted instrumentalist – he could sing! But as Billy puts it: “You couldn’t give away rockabilly in those days. Nobody really cared...until years later, after the Stray Cats and all that happened.”

Then [as recounted in THE UNHEARD MUSIC] in 1976 Zoom read a review of the Ramones that trashed them. “It said the songs were too fast, too shot, too simple...stupid lyrics, no guitar solos – and that just sounded like real positive things to me!” So he went

to see the Ramones and something clicked. “It was like Rockabilly turned to 10 [11].” Looking to take this a bit further – “make it slightly more musical, but not enough to wreck it” – he placed an ad in the *Recycler* and the first person to respond was a singing bassist named John Doe.

Fellow axeman Dave Alvin, a founding member of the Blasters who would for a time replace Zoom in X, marvels at his ability to craft elaborate orchestrations. On stage, Zoom stuck out like an alien, rock still and grinning a million dollar smile. This was partly a satirical riff on the grunting and grimacing guitar hero of lore who labored over the simplest riff. “[Where the guitar player [takes] this solo – wheedly-wheedly-wheedly- playing lots of notes and making all these faces and shaking his hair...As a joke, I would play something difficult and just smile and not look at the guitar and act like it was nothing. To me, that was funny.”

By 1985, after nine years and five albums, Zoom was tiring of the game and the grind. “Being in a band is like being married to three people...without the sex....I just couldn’t stand it another day. We were on the road seven or eight months out of the year, locked in a recording studio two or three months out of the year, and the rest of the time, we were rehearsing.”

Billy quit the band to concentrate on Billy Zoom Music, his amplifier and guitar repair shop – and producing. But he kept playing music and delighted in confounding bands trying to cover X songs: “There’s at least one chord in every X song that nobody can figure out.”

Tracing his home family picture gallery is like visiting a microcosm of 20th century music: Dad in blackface with a minstrel band, western group, and swing orchestra; 12 year old Ty wearing Buddy Holly shades, in a Beatles haircut, as the only white guy in a soul revue, as a hippie with hair down to his waist, as a latter day rockabilly, and finally with X as the primal punk guitarist. Culminating in the framed t-shirt on the wall with his rock-god picture and the words BILLY ZOOM – NICE GUY, PUNK LEGEND.”

-- Adapted from Buddy Siegal, *Nice Guy, Punk Legend*, OC Weekly Feb 1998
(www.xtheband.com)