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## MCN Columnists

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### **X: The Unheard Music: The Silver Edition**

The title, "**X: The Unheard Music**," refers not only to the band's tough road to relative stardom, but also to the struggle of all L.A. underground and punk groups in the late 1970s simply to be heard. As crazy as it might seem in 2012, the club scene in Los Angeles was practically non-existent outside the mainstream venues; AM and FM radio both sucked; major labels and their handmaidens at MTV were completely risk-averse; and CDs, the Internet, iPods and satellite radio weren't even at the pipedream stage. The Ramones and Sex Pistols had already established a beachhead in New York and London, and the media simply didn't know what to make of them. Punk rock was being played in Los Angeles and Orange County, but only a few adventurous media outlets paid any attention to it. That would change in due course and the music industry would tie itself up in knots trying to recover. W.T. Morgan's "**X: The Unheard Music**" was released about five years after Penelope Spheeris' 1981 "The Decline of Western Civilization" introduced the world to some of the L.A. punk bands mentioned in the X song, "I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts" ("We're the last American band to be played on the radio ..."). As much a visual essay on life in a steadily decaying Los Angeles, as it is a performance film, the documentary took five years to complete. In Blu-ray, it looks and sounds terrific, while the music and message aren't at all dated. The same baloney spieled by the radio and music executives interviewed 25 years ago applies to the industry in 2012, except that today's listeners have many more recording and playback options and availability to emerging artists via You Tube is unlimited. The execs' attitudes also help explain why music lovers today aren't at all sympathetic to the labels' complaints about sagging profits and fierce competition from new-media outlets. The Silver Edition package includes lots of music, fresh interviews, a "dialogue" with John Doe and Exene Cervenka, a songbook and live outtake of "Some Other Time."

- Gary Dretzka