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## Circle Jerks | My Career as a Jerk (MVD Visual)

Written by Jason Neubauer  
 Wednesday, 03 October 2012 18:54

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*The film feels less like a biopic and more like a conversational exploration into the band members' personal histories.*

When Keith Morris departed Black Flag as lead vocalist in 1979, it wasn't because he had mellowed out and was looking to leave the hardcore scene altogether, as so many artists since. The same can be said of guitarist Greg Hetson, who decided to depart from another seminal hardcore racket, Red Cross (now Redd Kross), at around the same time. When the two young musicians joined forces, they would find a synthesis that would keep them occupied with their music for some 30 years.

While it is true that some groups have been representative of weird mash-ups—including members of former acts, super groups or not, that have left much to be desired from their original incarnations—one thing is agreed upon by most listeners and erstwhile participants of early hardcore: The Circle Jerks were not a substitute. They did not epitomize some ersatz version of the founding members' former bands; rather, they quickly earned the reputation of being one of the "glory bands," a group whose omission from a collection of early hardcore punk rock would doom said collection to being glaringly incomplete.

In *Circle Jerks: My Career as a Jerk*, the story is told in a collection of interviews with band members who have come and gone over the years, well-recognized names from other seminal acts, members of the teams who would ultimately release the Circle Jerks' records, and live footage of their performances throughout the past three decades. It isn't just a story of the music, though; it is the story behind the band's several lineups and the manner in which those changes occurred, some partings left with bad blood and some with good.

It is also the story of struggle with alcohol and drug addiction, the development of a large following, inner turmoil within the group, as well as the strong bond that welded them together. There are also nuggets of trivia about the band and its music, given by members themselves, that are very telling about its history (to wit: the grainy and raw sound that was achieved on their first full length *Group Sex*, which wasn't present in their subsequent albums, was simply due to a low budget forcing them to record over another band's used tape).

The face-to-face style of the interviews of the diverse subjects in the film, and overall organization of the footage, makes the composition seem less like a biopic and more as a conversational exploration into the band members' personal histories together as components in a landmark force of American hardcore music. | **Jason Neubauer**

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