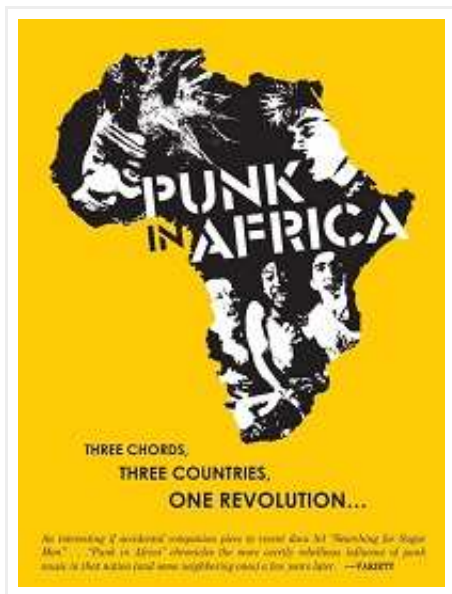


LOVE & POP

Punk in Africa

JULY 10, 2014 / GLENN / 0 COMMENTS



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Try naming a single punk band from Africa. Stumped? If you are then it makes the existence of this film all the more necessary.

Tracing the lineage of Southern African punk from the 1970s to the present, 'Punk in Africa' helps to show viewers the ignored, but no less crucial global scenes which the punk rock explosion spawned. Already a cultural movement which openly flaunted its political subversion, punk in Africa picked up an even greater sense of urgency,

taking place in the dark days of the Apartheid regime. While their American and British counterparts had to deal with bad press and hostile glares in public at most, the African punks had the very real threat of being silenced by their political opponents, or even more frightening, being 'removed' altogether. They ran high risks and put everything on the line in order to play their music and voice exactly what they thought about the state of things. This documentary stands testament to their struggle.

The story of the film is told in a manner most common to documentaries like these focusing on scenes and subcultures. Interviews with the participants are cut together with archival footage (some of it rare and unseen) of the bands playing which include African punk stalwarts like The Rudimentals, Suck and Wild Youth, bands which won't be recognisable to most viewers outside of the African Punk scene, but are spoken of in reverence by the individuals in the film. They didn't care that these bands weren't acknowledged internationally, what mattered was the personal interaction between the audience and the musicians and the overwhelming feeling that this music 'meant something' to those involved in it and this feeling comes through strongly in the film.

The film also heavily features historical footage from the times, scenes of strife from unstable Southern African countries, which helps the viewer to understand the climate this scene grew up in and why its message was such a necessity for the disaffected who wanted to voice their own opinions.

The urgency of their mission really comes through in the dialogue of the film with many of the musicians openly acknowledging how the music they created was an easy outlet for their anger and disillusionment within a political maelstrom they had no say in. Sonically it treats 'punk' as an umbrella term for a whole range of expression rather than a distinct sound which is why you'll see bands in here stylistically ranging from old-school punk rock to new wave and pop punk while also touching on punk's offshoots like ska. A lot of these musicians are proud to note the distinctly African music styles which influence their playing, sometimes more so than the imported punk sounds they base their sound on. This both shows how the music was a feeling rather than a simple generic format and how crucial the participants

own local scene as a source of influence.

At 82 minutes long it is rather brief, but for the majority of listeners unaccustomed to any of the bands shown in this film it is a perfect point of entry for a somewhat obscure music subculture. The concise timing of the film makes it easy to understand what the scene is and was about without getting bogged down with an overload of unfamiliar content. A great watch for anyone interested in seeing how the culture of punk is able to traverse social and political boundaries, or just a fan of well-made, informative music documentaries in general.

DIRECTOR(S): Keith Jones and Deon Mass | **COUNTRY:** South Africa | Czech Republic | Zimbabwe | Mozambique | **YEAR:** 2012 | **DISTRIBUTOR(S):** MVD Visual | **RUNNING TIME:** 82 minutes | **ASPECT RATIO:** 1.33:1 | **REGION:** ALL /NTSC | **DISCS:** 1

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