

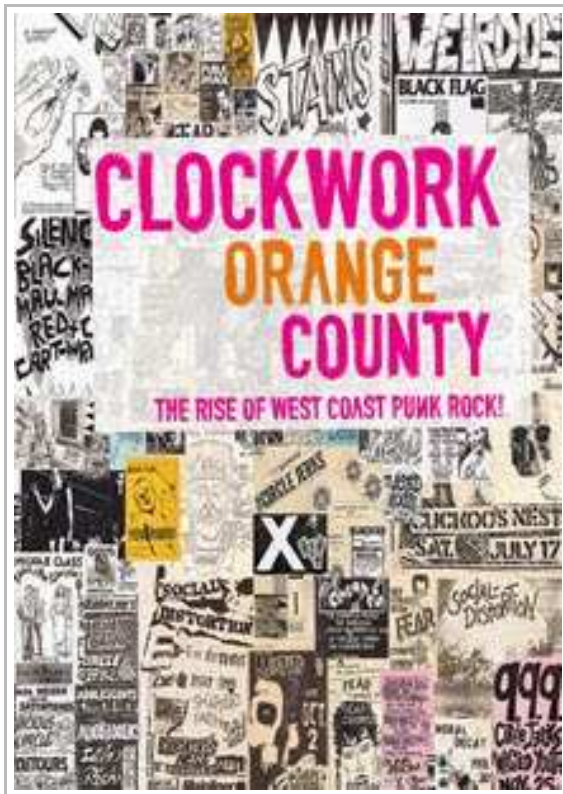
# FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2014

## DVD Review: Clockwork Orange County: The Rise of West Coast Punk Rock

*Text © Robert Barry Francos / FFanzeen, 2014  
Images from the Internet*



### Clockwork Orange County: The Rise of West Coast Punk Rock

*Directed by Jonathan W.C. Mills*

*Endurance Pictures*

92 minutes, 2011

[www.fearthismovie.com](http://www.fearthismovie.com)

[www.mvdvisual.com](http://www.mvdvisual.com)

In Costa Mesa, located in Orange County, California, the hardcore scene could be narrowed down to a single club, the Cuckoo's Nest. Opened in 1979, from this very wellhead sprung the movement that some might say transformed punk into hardcore, setting in motion the third wave of punk rock.

Of course, every scene can claim that, from Washington,

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D.C.'s 9:30 Club, to the Masque in L.A., to A7 in New York, and so on. But there is no doubt that the Cuckoo's Nest was a touchstone moment in the movement.

What is most impressive is the heavy hitters willing to talk to the camera (in 2011) here, including various members of bands like Social Distortion, T.S.O.L., the Circle Jerks, the Adolescents, Agent Orange, Black Flag (including Rollins, of course), Dead Kennedys (Biafra, of course), and so many of the others that took a scene and brought it to that whole new level which became a standard / uniform for the rest of the world, and in many ways is still in play now, over 30 years later.

Rather than just yammering heads, there is a wise choice in showing both music and talking clips from the period, mixed in with the "present" (again, 2011), so you can see how the musicians and fans have changed over the years. The music clips, all shot at the Nest, are not complete, but many of them are lengthy enough to actually get a feel for the appeal.

Each topic / chapter is introduced with a title card, and is discussed pretty well in detail, again mixing the past and present. It makes for an interesting oral history, most of which are of memory, but this lets the memory mix with the moment.

Some of the subjects discussed include:

- the both figurative and literal fights with the rednecks in the C&W bar next door, who were constantly antagonizing and threatening the punks (naturally you don't hear their side, which I think could be amusing).
- the love / hate relationship between the bands / fans and the club's owner, Jerry Roach, who Rollins calls "a tightwad son of a bitch."
- how important the parking lot scene outside the club was to the denizens of the Nest
- when Pat Brown, one of the regular fans, allegedly tried to kill a cop by dragging him in his car (resulting in three shots by said cop hitting his car as he drove away; this film is dedicated to him)
- and even how (possibly) Jim Decker, the lead singer of the Crowd, started Slam Dancing as a trend.

*[Side note: the first time I ever saw slam dancing was by Harley Flanagan when he was the drummer for the Stimulators, who opened for Sousxie & the Banshees at Irving Plaza around 1982.]*

The topic of slamming brings up the subject of excess violence that followed as part of the natural order. Joe Escalante of the Vandals refers to the aggression of the pit and the audience as the bands merely being "the

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#### About Me

Robert Barry Francos  
Currently living in Saskatoon  
(email at RBF55@msn.com for address). From 1977-88, I used to publish a print version of a music magazine in New York called FFanzeen, which dealt with the wide-ranging independent music scene. I also photographed many bands from the period (and since). Now I write this blog, and have a column at jerseybeat (dot) com (slash) quietcorner (dot) html. And the beat goes on.

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soundtrack to beating the crap out of each other.” I often felt like many people at hardcore shows are not there to hear the music, but to strike out at anyone they can through fists and kicks in the pit. At the Nest, this resulted in the choking off of the punks via legislation and harassment (1000 tickets in 3 days) resulting in the closing of the Cuckoo’s Nest more than anything else (as announced on their local television by a very young Connie Chung).

The thing is, just about every hardcore scene on the West side of the country (not just OC) seemed to have followed the exact same pattern, if not timeline. It starts with some kids who liked bands like the Ramones and Sex Pistols, and they find a dive to drive it. The kids start forming their own bands and put some originality into it, only to get harassed by law enforcement (remember, right-wing Ronnie’s the Prez in 1980 and the “moral majority” nuts are starting to show their teeth). The violence perpetrated on the kids starts to show up in the scene when the jocks who used to beat them up for being punks find that by being punks themselves, they can join that mosh pit and continue to beat on the brats. The violence level increases by within and without, the media starts paying attention, this turns the fans away, and the source - in this case the Cuckoo’s Nest - closes down and effectively turns the tide by abating the access.

Another aspect of this film that is interesting is when they don’t just get stuck in the past and take it to the modern punk bands that were influenced by that scene, such as the Diffis and Death Punch. The original bands seem split on how their legacy has been picked up, whether that’s good or bad, and whether the modern punks are, well, really punk rock.

The only extra is the trailer and chapter selection.

Is this a good film? Well, yeah. They’ve taken what could have been a boring talking head film and made it interesting by grouping topics together, and mashing up historical film documents, including live performances, interviews, and newscasts, and also throwing in some of the newer area bands. It keeps the pace moving and the interest high. And if you’re like me, and you have the music of all those bands (didn’t see many of the West Coast bands live), it’s great to see the then-now differential.

Plus, it’s always great to hear the Circle Jerks’ Keith Morris’ strange and enjoyable vocal patter, Henry Rollins’ near poetic talking style, and Jello Biafra’s sibilant “s” and humor, for example.

Posted by [Robert Barry Francos](#) at 9:32 PM 

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