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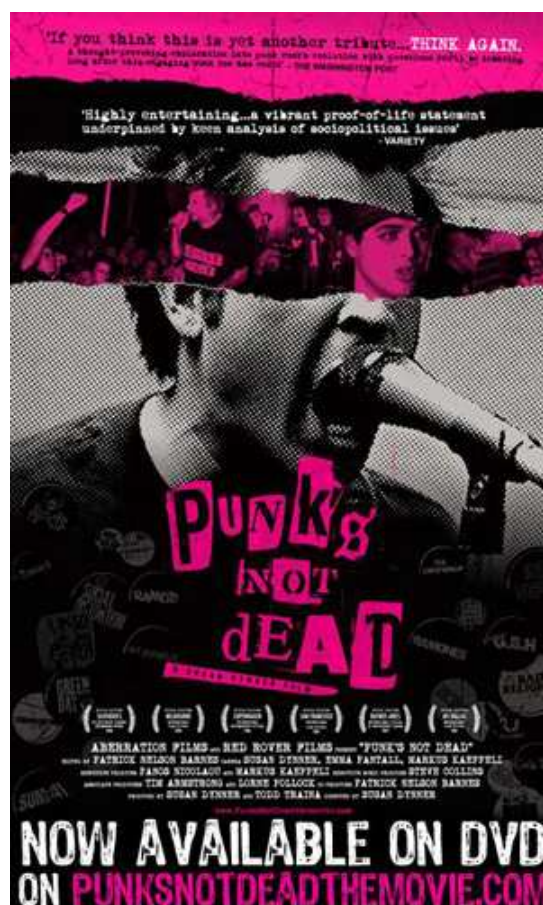
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DVD Review: *Punk's Not Dead*



reviewed by **Chris Estey**

It's been a big year for banging your head on the punk rock — on DVD. Long-time fans will be hitting the stores to score the release of Julien Temple's majestic Joe Strummer bio-pic *The Future Is Unwritten* and of more-than-local-interest is the astonishing love and care put into Kerry O'Kane's *The Gits*. Of a more general topical nature, Aberration and Red Rover Films have gotten finance help by everyone from Tim Armstrong of Rancid (among many other musicians in

popular bands) to punk-friendly companies Vans and Fender to assist director/producer Susan Dynner on [Punk's Not Dead](#).

Dynner is taking the dynamic, diverse documentary on the festival rounds, getting accolades from critics for capturing not only the usual spit and fire of the regular icons but also the voices of more women (than, say, *American Hardcore*), more international study (this is a real thrill for crusty Anglophiles — you can just imagine this being played in the background on the TV at a group house party), touching on taboo subjects like Hot Topic and Good Charlotte and the Warped Tour, and just letting her heroes and villains talk, talk, talk an amazing amount of informative and hilarious anecdotes.

Though the film itself is marvelous, it might be considered a bit ambitious (lots of cultural theorizing from gutter-punk heroes in English communes) and maybe too inclusive (Knox from The Vibrators juxtaposed with the kid from Simple Plan?!) — but considering the tone of the usual “Britain in 1977 was best” or “NYC in 1975 was where it was at, period,” or “Los Angeles in 1978 is IT” with these types of projects, it is arguable that Dynner be given a case of really good beer for trying it this way. It might also be suggested that even though the documentary by itself is really great, the DVD purchase is superior to the theatrical release in that there are several hours of ecstatic footage and very boss interviews with a wide range of those who influenced and were influenced by the scene, from the great grizzled likes of UK Subs and The Subhumans to legendary criminal OC contender-for-governor Jack Grisham to the more sedate memoirs of Noodles of The Offspring and even a Goo Goo Doll.

Dynner herself was transformed at a Minor Threat show in the 80s, and the deep fan appreciation of almost everything punk is presented here — though admittedly some of it chafes me, it did make me realize that mall-punk is still based in a feeling of alienation from the mall, and that trying to put something of worthy thought into the mall (or the touring circuit, or into our daily lives in any way) is commendable. But then Dynner doesn't leave out the goodies for us geezers either, like the conspiracy theory from Jello Biafra that Jimmy Carter sent a memo to the heads of record companies in the late 70s urging them not to sign punk acts (ever wonder why The Dickies were the last punk band ever signed, till Husker Du joined up with Warners in the late 80s? You can laugh, but how often do proven fanbases get ignored by the money-loving record business?). For less than \$20, you get all the great bands and all the crazed gossip too.



Punk's Not Dead official trailer

This entry was posted on Wednesday, July 23rd, 2008 at 11:15 am and is filed under [KEXP](#), [New York](#), [Reviews](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

2 Responses to “DVD Review: *Punk's Not Dead*”

1. [Susan Dynner](#) Says:
[July 25th, 2008 at 8:07 am](#)

Thanks for taking the time to write such a nice review about “Punk's Not Dead”. I just wanted to clarify one thing

that you touched upon in your review. The film was in no way sponsored nor financed by Fender or Vans. Punk's Not Dead was a DIY film, financed completely by the producers of the film as we didn't want anyone to have a say in how we made the film or the content we included. The bands were all very supportive and gave their own personal photos, videos and other archival material. Neither Vans nor Fender even knew we were including their logos on the back of the DVD until after the fact. We decided to do so as a thank you - Vans gave us unlimited (and free) access to film whatever we wanted at the Warped Tour, with no idea how we were going to portray them. Fender donated some amazing one-of-a-kind guitars (after the film was in the can), signed by the bands, to give away to fans of the film in various contests. Neither requested that we include their logos on the DVD, and we decided to do so at the last minute, simply to thank them. We worked very hard to make sure that people knew that this film was a labor of love and was made with no corporate sponsorship, whatsoever.

Thanks again for taking the time to review our film - glad you enjoyed it!

2. *Chris Estey* Says:

[July 25th, 2008 at 10:53 am](#)

Thanks for the clarification, Susan — I apologize for any confusion to our readers — and I really did enjoy the film. You raised an interesting challenge to certain passed along notions about punk, interviewed a lot of really interesting people, and made some assertions that will provoke people who are convinced that the topic is set to history. Congratulations on ruffling feathers, and making an overall excellent documentary!

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