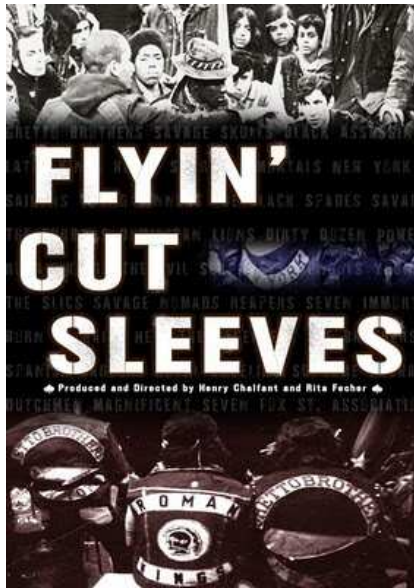




SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2010

DVD REVIEW: Flyin' Cut Sleeves



Flyin' Cut Sleeves
(Mvd Visual)

amazon.com.

Completed in 1993, *Flyin' Cut Sleeves* is a documentary surrounding the lives of street gangs in the South Bronx, produced and directed by Henry Chalfont and Rita Fecher. Fecher, who taught many gang leaders in school when she was a teacher in the Bronx in the late 60s and early 70s, became fascinated with the lifestyle of gang youth, and moreover their representation in our society.

The film opens up in 1989 with Fecher interviewing Ben Buxton, a calm adult male

who is nursing a baby. Then the film travels back to 1970, with footage of the same Ben Buxton, this time young, hostile and ranting about how "his people" were being mistreated.

We come to learn that Ben Buxton was president of the Savage Nomads; one of the many gangs that ruled the South Bronx in the 60s-70s. "His people," otherwise known as a "family," are community members who are part of his gang, and who are protected and characterized by their label as a Nomad. Despite gang violence as stereotyped by the media, Fecher investigates how these gangs were actually very political, and how organizations like the Young Lords Party and the Black Panthers inspired gang leaders to use peaceful measures in their communities.

When Cornell Benjamin was murdered after trying to peacefully resolve a gang fight, a "peace meeting" was held, in which gang leaders from all sides came together to resolve the situation. Statements were made like, "whites, police, all of them, don't have to live in our slums and live through the winter with no heat. WE do. So WE have to stand up and do something about it."

Gangs didn't need interjection from police, media and others who did not understand their issues. When someone was killed, these young minds met, delegated and spoke from a powerful platform that you'd typically associate with political speakers and activists; and they managed to keep a potentially hostile situation from snowballing into disaster, with words.

Fecher returns to the South Bronx in 1993, 20 years later, to discover these gang leaders are still residing in areas of poverty, but now they are adults raising their own children, and

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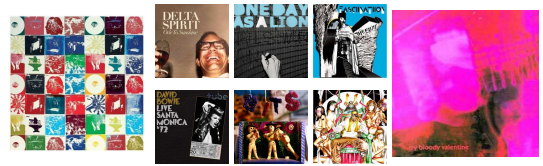
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