

FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

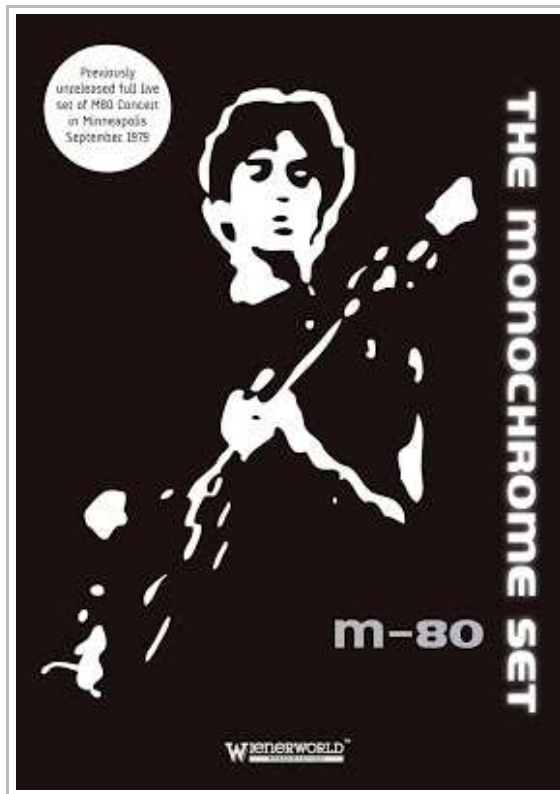
Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

TUESDAY, JUNE 25, 2013

DVD Review: The Monochrome Set: M-80 [1979]

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Images from the Internet



The Monochrome Set: M-80, Live at the Marathon 80 Festival, Minneapolis 1979

Weinerworld Presentation

50 minutes, 1979 / 2013

www.weinerworld.com

www.themonochromeset.co.uk/

www.MVDvisual.com

The Sex Pistols were still an active band in 1978, when London's The Monochrome Set formed. The Clash was going strong and about to release *London Calling* when this video was recorded in September of 1979 in Minneapolis, during the two-day *Marathon 80: New-No-Now-Wave* festival. And yet, much as Brit punk was a shot across the bow to both the social climate of England at the time and the New York scene, aka *First Wave Punk* (yes, it was, Greil), The Monochrome Set (TMS) was - in its own way - a fuck you to the British *Second Wave*.

From 1976-79, British punk was largely flash and thrash, that is fashion and deconstruction. TMS seemed to borrow more from the

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DVD Review: The Monochrome Set: M-80 [1979]

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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

burgeoning US Midwest scenes and the New York *No Wave* movement that began around 1977. Both these employed stilted rhythms, stoic stage presence, and an adapted-yet-played-down Mod fashion (e.g., straight ties, sunglasses, and earthtone clothes).

While I would be hard pressed to call TMS “No Wave,” I can see shadows of the blaring of the Contortions, the minimalism of industrialization, and the monotone of any of a number of that subgenre’s bands. Yet, within that, it’s easy to hear the kinds tones that would show up shortly on the *Fresh Sounds of Middle America* cassette series from Bill Rich’s *Talk Talk* fanzine in the early 1980s... and yes, I still have them. Crisp, occasionally atonal, and yet at other times quite earworm-like (see the song below). I always thought this style was a milder rock’n’roll version of the kind of jazz Miles D. posited on the world. And like Davis, this sound did not last very long, swallowed up the hardcore scene and the polar opposite proto Boy Bands (e.g., the Bay City Rollers).

Despite the static stances of TMS playing live, there is something about them that is enjoyable to watch. While they were influenced by others, the amalgamation (or synergy, if you will) would go on to influence others, arguably such as Tommy Tutone (“867-5309”), the Producers (“[What’s He Got](#)”) and the Split Enz (“[I Got You](#)”).

This was obviously taped by (a) an amateur person or organization, and (b) probably either onto reel-to-reel video, or a 3/4” videocassette; perhaps a Beta. It’s grainy as hell and a bit tinny, but being familiar with video of that period, it’s actually quite good (compare it, for example, with the infamous [The Cramps video](#) of the same era). Of course, in just a few years, the introduction of the 1/2” videocassette would change everything, but I digress...

But, all things considered for its era, the use of multiple cameras and superb editing, we have an important document of a band in its nascent years. Most of the songs they perform would show up on their first album, *Strange Boutique* (1980), including the wonderfully monikered “Eine Symphonie Des Grauens (part of the title of the classic 1922 vampire flick, *Nosferatu*). There are many memorable songs here, such as “He’s Frank” and the abovementioned “Strange Boutique.” There are also a couple performed by the bassist, Harrington, for which this is the only time it was filmed live. That’s a good thing because while the songs themselves are decent, his voice is not. Luckily, Bid sings most of them.

This is worth checking out if you’re interested in the period, because it’s so much of an anomaly for the period of British music. Plus there are some great songs in there, as well.

Band:

Bid (Ganesh Seshadri): vox / guitar
Lester Square (Thomas. Hardy): guitar
Jeremy Harrington: bass / vocals
JD Haney: drums

Track Listing

The Monochrome Set
Fallout
Tomorrow Will Be Too Long
Fly Me to Moon

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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The Etcetera Stroll
Mr. Bizarro
Love Goes Down the Drain
Ici Les Enfants
Lester Leaps In
Eine Symphonie Des Grauens
Martians Go Home
The Lighter Side of Dating
Viva Death Row
He's Frank
Goodbye Joe
The Strange Boutique
Encore:
Expresso
Alphaville

Posted by [Robert Barry Francos](#) at [12:01 AM](#) 

Labels: [British punk](#), [FFanzeen](#), [London Punk](#), [Minneapolis](#), [MVD](#), [no wave](#), [Robert Barry Francos](#), [Sex Pistols](#), [The Clash](#), [The Cramps](#), [The Monochrome Set](#), [TMS](#), [Weinerworld](#)

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