



DVD REVIEW

House Of The Rising Punk

MVD Visual, 2008

Review by Joe Milkier

Originally filmed for German television in 1998, *The House Of The Rising Punk* is a documentary film directed by Christoph Dreher, who delves into the New York City punk scene from its inception, which of course begins with the infamous CBGB Club in the heart of the Bowery. However not only does it cover the music and artists through vintage video footage, but also the social and societal aspects of the era. An era in the mid-1970's when middle-class families were moving to the suburbs, leaving large sections around the lower east side of New York in multi-racial poverty. However this kept the cost of rent down in the Bowery, a perfect setting for punk rockers to flourish.

The interviews throughout this documentary are fantastic, as such punk icons as Richard Hell of Television, Patti Smith, Dee Dee of the Ramones and even CBGB owner Hilly Krystal himself, talk about the original punk scene cultivating at CBGB's and what made it so power and unique, but also less iconic figures speak such as Alan Vega of Suicide, Jayne Country and Legs McNeil, creator and publisher of the ground breaking Punk Magazine. For those who might not know, Punk Magazine is actually responsible for the naming of this new music genre.

However the true gems of this release is the classic black and white, never-before-seen footage littered throughout the film, taken by (at the time) budding filmmaker Amos Poe. Despite not even having a sound-synch camera for filming, the rough, close up footage of bands such as Blondie, Television, Talking Heads and Patti Smith is raw and riveting. Also included are some rare and interesting video clips of vintage guerilla films being made at the time, including a haunting clip featuring a very young Debra Harry of Bondie fame.

The sound is remarkably good despite the 30 year old footage and the fact that it was originally made for German TV, hence the occasional German subtitles at the bottom of the screen. The only disappointment perhaps is there are no extras or bonus material included, because I really wanted to see some more of that classic punk footage from CBGB's, the cathedral of the punk music movement. This DVD comes highly recommended to not only die-hard punk fans, but also simply, fans of music and its history.