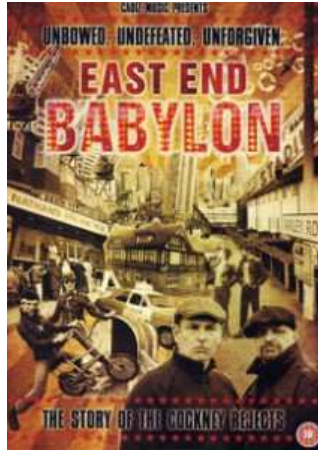


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“EAST END BABYLON”— The Story of the Cockney Rejects

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“East End Babylon”

The Story of the Cockney Rejects

Amos Lassen

Jeff (Stinky Turner) and Mick Greggus are brothers who created The Cockney Rejects in 1978, a punk band with a loud and angry sound. Their songs are about football, fighting and pride in living in London’s East End.

Director Richard England examines the history of where they live for the first half of the film. We hear Jean Greggus, the band member’s mother memories about London during the blitz of the second World War and see archival footage of the period. East Enders faced tremendous hardships back then and she shares with us the hardships of raising her two sons.

By the time the 1980s rolled around, the band was becoming popular and it signed with EMI for an album and began appearing on television. They used their appearances to tell people of their difficult journey which eventually brought them to the BBC.

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The Cockney Rejects soon went on tour and their exposure was even more heightened. Because they loved to sing about football so much and there was violence in London during the game, there were fights when they sang. They often had to engage in battle to get home. In 1980 in Birmingham, the band was at its lowest point. The Fascist Party in London, British Movement, saw the band's concerts as breeding grounds for young British agitated young people but the band denies any right-wing leanings and actually condemns them. However, once they were branded as a British Movement band, they were unable to shake that label. At the end of 1982, they reinvented themselves under the new name of The Rejects but it was difficult for people to believe that they had changed and most of their fans were upset at the shift from punk music to rock and roll and by 1991, the band was finished. The mid nineties punk revival from America was a lifeline. Jeff and Mick discuss their surprise at hearing their name crop up in interviews with Green Day, Rancid etc. Joe Strummer went as far to say they were the real deal. We soon discover that their first three albums had touched people in places they'd never visited and never played.

Enquiries for gigs started coming in from across Europe and then even further afield – like Brazil and in 1999 The Cockney Rejects were back on the road.

“East End Babylon” is more than just a documentary about a band called The Cockney Rejects. It's one family's view of the late 70s isolation and destruction of working class people in East London and a timely reminder that violent far right political parties should never be tolerated nor taken lightly. They were lucky to have a happy ending— Jeff and Mick's honesty and eternal youthful exuberance may have caused them trouble in their formative years, but by the end of the film it is clearly it is their music sustains them to this day.

There have been many “rockumentaries” over the years, but here the director sees something completely different here. He realized a story spanning over a hundred years, a story of the most impoverished place in Britain, it's people, culture and way of life that are gone now all but gave birth to one of the most ferocious rock'n'roll bands that ever lived. We see the redemption as the Rejects who became a worldwide cult band and whose music has influenced some of the biggest bands on the planet. They have

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