



## The Damned: Don't You Wish That We Were Dead

### A Legacy Is Defined

By Ed Sum

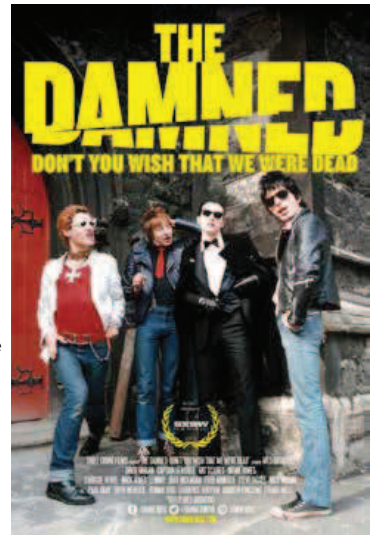
*The Damned: Don't You Wish That We Were Dead* is a fascinating documentary that looks at the rise, decline and resurrection of the United Kingdom's seminary lords of the music landscape. The Damned helped give rise to London's punk rock scene the mid-to-late 70s, and the people they influenced included Chrissie Hynde of The Pretenders, who played with The Damned, albeit briefly, before finding her own road to success.

Although I would have liked to hear more from her brief stint, many other well-known names talk about this band in the documentary. Appearances from Billy Idol, Mick Jones of The Clash, Lemmy, Nick Mason of Pink Floyd, Don Letts of Dead Kennedys and Clem Burke of Blondie are just some of the musicians who lend their insights to what this group represented. Although The Damned never attained the larger success of bands like the Sex Pistols, that may be in part to the image they wanted to project. They were rather schizophrenic early in their inception.

Through old and new interviews, stock footage and archival material, this product nicely covers a lot of ground. The drama is tough to find, but the retrospective in showing how The Damned evolved with the times is the highlight. The latter half is the more fascinating, but that depends on when the viewer became interested in this group's music. This band's style changed throughout the decades; from punk to goth, where they can achieve their mainstream success is just one layer of this movie-length discourse.

From their years of being active in the scene to being inactive and changes in their roster, this documentary covers a lot of ground. The drama between the two heavyweights, bassist/guitarist Captain Sensible and drummer Rat Scabies is at the core of this product, some of which has been widely publicized. Parts of this video look at their disagreement over unpaid royalties. Whether this dispute is ancient history or not, that's tough to say. Interestingly, there was also a difference of opinion in what punk rock represents, since these were the years the movement really got noticed.

In a product that took three years to make, finding the focus requires paying attention to the two-hour discussion, picking and choosing which parts of the film are interesting over others. It is nicely divided into chapters; I enjoyed the refresher course in what these folks consider as punk. They were writing music and singing about



the working class. These were the days of vinyl — and as one part of this film revealed, an entire side of the record album would be dedicated to explaining their side of the world, if not life.

What this documentary does nicely is to provide more than a retrospective for a group who is still going strong. They are performing, giving interviews and letting fans know they are not dead. Although former bassist Bryn Merrick (Phantasmagoria) passed after the release of this product, the rest of the mates are still at it, proving their contribution to the world of rock is here to stay.

A list of theatrical screenings can be found on <http://damneddoc.com/screenings> and for those who wish to own the video release, this documentary is now available for purchase on Amazon.

The video release contains a bevy of extras, including the following:

- Captain Sensible's tour of Croydon.
- A featurette on the 1976 Anarchy Tour (in which the real story behind the Damned's ousting from that tour is told for the first time).
- A featurette on The Doomed era of the band, featuring former bassist Henry Badowski.
- Audio track by the Captain at a "Doomed" rehearsal at Rat's parents' home.
- A clip with the Captain and comedian/actor/musician Fred Armisen busking in L.A.

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