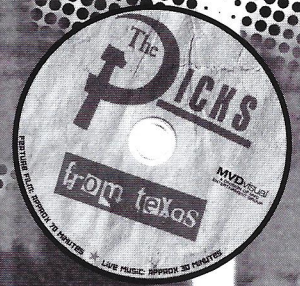
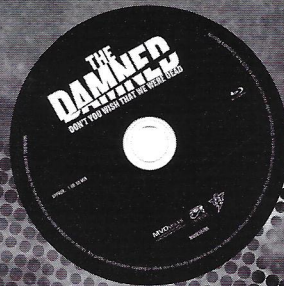
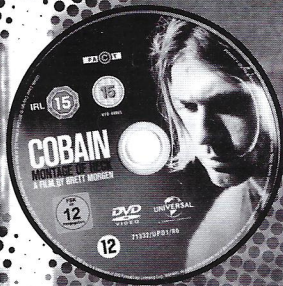
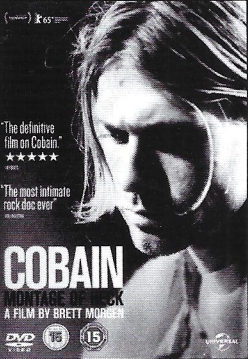


DVD REVIEWS



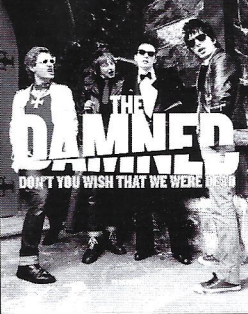
"COBAIN: MONTAGE OF HECK". (UNIVERSAL)



"Montage Of Heck", directed by documentarian Brett Morgan, is an exceptionally insightful look back at the life of Kurt Cobain. Now, if like me, you figured you'd seen and heard all there is to know about this particular subject, then you're in for an eye opener. "1991: The Year That Punk Broke" and "Live, Tonight, Sold-Out" are collectively the final

word on Nirvana's live footage in my view, but you'll recall how both, by design, focused rigidly on the music. This documentary does quite the contrary and unearths what has until now, by and large, remained in the privacy of those family members closest to Cobain. Brett Morgan mentions in an interview included in the extras of the DVD that he only wanted to speak with the half dozen or so people who would have shown up at Cobain's funeral had he still been a janitor when he died. In these times of documentarians increasingly utilizing high profile faces to secure funding and distribution, this is such a welcome departure. Limiting the interviews to Cobain's parents, wife, sister, girlfriend Tracy Marander and band-mate Krist Novoselic maintains the focus and Morgan is absolutely correct when he states that these are the points of view that matter most when looking to chart his life story. What a relief it was to discover that at no point in this film was Bono consulted! Morgan indicates that he pulled this thing together by means of having the blessing of Cobain's daughter, which in turn is what influenced the other cast members to participate. It runs at close to 2 hours 30 minutes, but is by no means overspent as all the footage is vital in moving the story forward. The director also makes striking use of Cobain's artwork and animates it to illustrate the impetus behind each picture. He dissects his early childhood abandonment in a way that implies it was this which influenced his later year choices. The portrait painted isn't always a pleasant one, but it's reasonable to assume that at this point the world really does not need another piece informing us why Nirvana's music is as imperative as it is. "Montage Of Heck" strips away the facade and goes right to the heart of Cobain's short 27 years of living. What's more it does so devoid of backslapping and worship, exemplifying Morgan's dexterity as a resolute documentary filmmaker. (www.universalpictures.com)

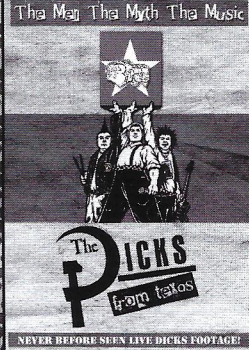
THE DAMNED "DON'T YOU WISH THAT WE WERE DEAD". (MVD)



Wes Orshoski done an even-handed job on the "Lemmy" documentary and here he uses a comparable outline to impart the story of The Damned. Running near two hours, "Don't You Wish That We Were Dead" is an in-depth and exhaustive history of the band who many consider to have hatched the first ever

Punk 45 with "New Rose" in October of 1976. That, of course, was just the beginning of the story and, as we know, The Damned went on to explore many forms and genres throughout their illustrious forty-year career. This is a remarkably entertaining and astute look back at that time, from the mid 70's Croydon gloom that spawned the band, through the Punk years on both sides of the Atlantic and the subsequent fallout that brought on countless incarnations of the band up to the present day. Each member and former member has their own account of history and the film doesn't take sides, presenting it less as an authoritative back story and more as a group of associates with differing views and recollections. Recounted in a linear, chronological fashion beginning with the classic Brian James years, this section includes several worthwhile anecdotes from the man in question and looks at the nucleus of the band that was the creative force behind "Damned, Damned, Damned". There is plenty of discussion around their supposed lack of commercial appeal when weighted against The Clash and The Pistols, which I found odd, and I think Jack Grisham from T.S.O.L. nails it best when he points out that no Damned fan thinks in those terms; it is only the band themselves that do. The sharp editing of interviewees keeps the movie flowing and there're a wealth of spot-on sound bites from the likes of Jello Biafra, Steve Diggle, Glenn Matlock and Ian MacKaye as well as the band members themselves. Losing Brian James after the second album was a significant blow; however they rebounded with "Machine Gun Etiquette" and so usher's in the second era of the group. I'll admit to parting company with The Damned shortly thereafter, so from a personal standpoint it was a learning experience to get a recount of the superseding Goth years and yes some of the footage here more than justifies my abandonment of The Damned during that time! The personal life of Captain Sensible was another new one for me as the film delves into Ray Burns off stage and the apparent nervous breakdown he suffered whilst away from the band and struggling financially. We're denied the same degree of insight into the life of Dave Vanian however and his guard remains firmly in place for the entirety of the film - to the point that it's become something of an in-joke with other band members. Filmed over the course of three years, there're the expected killer live performances that interweave with backstage and tour footage. The inner feuding received more attention than I had expected and eventually much bad blood still festers between the Captain and Scabies, primarily over royalty payments. "Don't You Wish That We Were Dead" shines a long-awaited light on a first-generation Punk act that were exceptionally innovative and influential. Despite their renown as a "fun" Punk band, the narrative of The Damned is at times more melancholic than many, myself included, may have foreseen, but its precisely this dimension to the group that made the documentary so engrossing. (MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP: 203 WINDSOR ROAD, POTTSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, PA 19464, U.S.A.)

"THE DICKS FROM TEXAS". (MVD)



There're a number of band names that immediately spring to mind when the term American Hardcore is thrown up and for me one of those bands will always be The Dicks. I still vividly memorize the first time I heard the "Dicks Hate The Police" 7-inch and to this day its a record that's never far from my turntable. There was just something menacing

about Gary Floyd's voice screaming "Mommy, Mommy, Mommy ..." that set the band apart from the west coast Hardcore I'd been familiar with up to that point. When I later discovered The Dicks were in fact from Austin, Texas it seemed to make complete sense. I eventually tracked down a copy of their one and only studio LP "Kill From The Heart" which cemented my view that The Dicks were indeed something quite special and distinct from any other Hardcore Punk band I had heard. Funnily enough, bar a live album, that was the end of The Dicks recorded story, yet their legacy remains firmly etched in American Punk folklore. Historical documents on the band remain thin enough on the ground and I'm astounded in many ways that it's taken this long for their story to be told in visual format. "The Dicks From Texas" was over fifteen years in gestation and it's a first time outing for director Cindy Marabito. Before Dicks fans get too excited I should point out that this documentary comes with a health warning. The sound quality is sketchy and can in fact be pretty piss poor on occasion (I learned more recently that the director used her cell phone to shoot some of the interviews!). Moreover, some of the discussions take place in bars with music playing, which makes much of what is being said inaudible to a significant degree. The editing is not much better either I'm afraid, disjointed to the point of it taking a couple of views to track the story. It almost runs like a collection of bar chats people have had about The Dicks weaved together into a 70-minute compilation. There's not a lot of direction and you need to piece parts of the story together in your own mind. In the director's defence however, from what I can gather there was zero budgeting for this movie, hence the fifteen year time lapse and credit must be given to Cindy Marabito for her unbridled enthusiasm and drive to see the thing through. The Dicks story is an enduring one and Gary Floyd is the embodiment of Punk Rock, which is why any Dicks fans will overlook the technical shortcomings of the film. It represents an era when Punk Rock genuinely stood for something and being as outlandish as The Dicks were in Texas in the early 80's affirms just how legit they were. As an aside, something that resonated with me when watching this was the roll call of people who have died during the making of the film and in many ways the documentary belongs just as much to them as it does The Dicks. There's a vivid message that's apparent throughout, be it intentional or otherwise, and that is how close knit a group the Austin Punk fraternity of the time were. Indeed it speaks volumes when you see how many of them are interviewed communally and in the same social circles and local bars today. Finally, I should mention the wealth of previously unseen live footage from The Dicks throughout the documentary and as extras on the DVD. Now, yes this too is distorted beyond reason, but remains a historically significant record nonetheless. In the end, everyone needs The Dicks in their lives and this effort marks what is hopefully a first step in having their story recognised as the Punk milestone that it was. (MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP: 203 WINDSOR ROAD, POTTSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, PA 19464, U.S.A.)