

It must be noted that fine folks at Arrow Video have also chimed in with their own release of *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* with most of the above, as well as a bonus DVD of Meyer's 1971's *The Seven Minutes*. However, this set is only available in the United Kingdom as a region B/PAL disc. Based on an Irving Wallace novel on a subject that Meyer knew only too well as a nudie director, censorship, *The Seven Minutes* can only be described as an interesting disappointment. A bookstore owner is arrested for selling the allegedly obscene book, "The Seven Minutes," after public moralists tie the novel with the rape and murder of a woman by a disturbed young man who read the book prior to the assault. The tired old arguments regarding freedom of speech and expression are trotted out in a series of lengthy, talky scenes. With only the barest of skin and gals in tight sweaters to appeal to Meyer's base demographic, *The Seven Minutes* is a bit of a slog but features a strong cast, including a very young Tom Selleck, Charles Napier and Yvonne DeCarlo. *The Seven Minutes* is hopelessly dated by this point. If such a thing were to occur today, many of the older generation would be delighted to find that the young defendant found the time to lay down his iPhone to crack the spine of a book!

The chief extra on Arrow Video's *Seven Minutes* disc is a half-hour episode of the public access show *The Sinister Image*, hosted by writer David Del Valle and starring Russ Meyer and Yvette Vickers. The conversation here is a lively one, but one tinged with sadness. Vickers, memorable in both *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman* (1957) and *Attack of the Giant Leeches* (1958) would leave the world in tragic Hollywood Babylon style, her mummified corpse found a year after the fact in her Malibu home in 2010.

If you don't have a copy of *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* in your collection, now is the time. As critic Michael Musto points out in the disc's many extra features, there are very few other films that are a guarantee of a good time than Meyer and Ebert's skewering—and love letter to show biz.

Greg Goodell

THE DAMNED DOCUMENTARY: DON'T YOU WISH THAT WE WERE DEAD

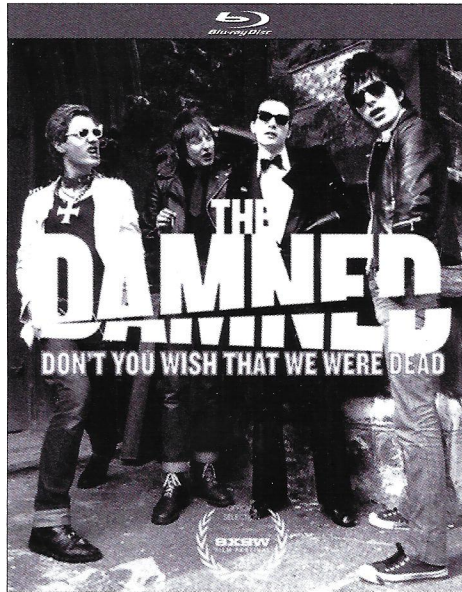
Directed by Wes Orshoski
(2015) MVD Blu-ray / DVD Combo

Captain Sensible looks like my father. I have to start with this as it has probably somewhat influenced my feelings towards The Damned; in fact for many reasons my life has been inextricably connected to this band. In 2016, they celebrated their fortieth anniversary with the biggest gig of their career at the Royal Albert Hall in London, and I was there, with my dad, who has been following the group since 1976, the year I was born.

I first saw The Damned on my 16th birthday in London, with my dad, at what was supposedly their final gig. To make the night even more interesting, they supported themselves as the psychedelic rock ensemble Naz Nomad and the Nightmares, wearing disguises so we might not suspect who they were. It was an amazing night and made a lasting impression on this then teenager. I have since seen the band live so many times that I have lost count. I interviewed drummer Rat Scabies for a college project, I have one of his drumsticks, and I once gave Captain Sensible a copy of the Hammer film *The Damned* (1962, Joseph Losey, UK) on DVD when it was very difficult to obtain.

Unlike many early punk bands who were just angry and anti-establishment, The Damned set out first and foremost to entertain, and were unafraid to show their interests in their work. The name of the band either comes from Visconti's decadent Nazi drama *The Damned* (1969, Italy), the aforementioned Hammer film, or the double-bill of *Village of The Damned* (1960, Wolf Rilla, UK) and *Children of The Damned* (1964, Anton Leader, UK). I have not been able to ascertain which, but I like to think it's the Hammer film.

Don't You Wish That We Were Dead (a line taken from the song *Second Time Around*, oddly never actually referenced in the film) is a new documentary made by an American, which initially seems odd given they are such a quintessentially British band. Perhaps, given their lack of major recognition back home in Blighty, it is fitting that this level of attention should come from abroad. Wes Orshoski followed the band around the world for four years and paints an amusing (and occasionally melancholy) portrait of this current incarnation of The Damned, with only two of its original members left: Captain Sensible (guitar) and Dave Vanian (vocals). The Damned have had a remarkably varied history over the past forty years, with at least eighteen people who can claim to have been members at some point, including Lemmy from Motörhead. They have all pursued solo projects at various points too, with Sensible achieving major pop success in the 1980s, which caused him to actually leave the band for a few years, whilst Dave reinvented The Damned as goths, something which suited his image as the punk Dracula (and his former career as a grave digger). Orshoski manages to cram some of this history into the documentary, catching up with the original guitarist and creator of the band Brian James (Captain Sensible began as their bassist), and the memorably monikered drummer Rat Scabies, so called because he actually had scabies the first time he came to audition for the band.



Sadly, Rat Scabies drummed with the band for the last time back in 1996, and Brian James actually quit in 1977, although he has returned occasionally, the last time ending spectacularly badly in 1999, as explained in the film. Their various creative, financial and egotistical reasons for not getting along are all examined in some detail here, and Orshoski even follows the adventures of Scabies and James as they tour France with their own version of the band. Neither come across particularly well in the documentary, appearing as truculent uncles you would try to avoid at family reunions.

There are some holes and seemingly deliberate omissions in *Don't You Wish That We Were Dead*. Dave Vanian is painted as some sort of mysterious figure who even the members of the band do not really know or understand. No attempt is made to find out anything about him beyond his role as the singer, yet fans of the band all know that he is a fairly regular guy under the makeup and Victorian suits. In 2004 he married their bass player Patricia Morrison (formerly a member of Sisters of Mercy, and the only woman to have played with The Damned) and she left the band when they had a baby. Patricia continued to act as manager, yet she gets no mention in the film at all. His daughter Emily, now twelve, appeared on stage at the Royal Albert Hall gig playing violin during the encore, with a clearly very proud dad watching from the side. Dave is also a keen motorcyclist, which could have been mentioned, but perhaps it was more interesting to depict him as something of an enigma. This left Captain Sensible to provide most of the actual legwork, and the documentary becomes dangerously close to being his story, with the band playing a supporting role. He always was the clown prince of the group, his onstage antics and outrageous costumes often overshadowing the fact that he is still one of the world's great guitar players (and if you are a fan, he often sells old, worn out guitars on eBay!). When I spoke to Sensible (real name Ray Burns, incidentally) recently, he told me he found this documentary a drag, focusing too much on the band rows. He does have a point, and they do also occasionally come across as being a little ungrateful of their success, expressing jealousy of fellow punks The Sex Pistols and The Clash who have all achieved legendary status, when The Damned actually got there first: first punk single (*New Rose*), first album (*Damned Damned Damned*) and first UK punk band to make it in America.

Another significant omission is the total side-lining of most of the current band. Despite Orshoski being on tour with them for three years they are virtually ignored. Drummer Pinch is interviewed, yet his name does not appear on screen, keyboardist Monty Oxy-Moron, who has been with them for twenty years, speaks once and does actually get a name credit, and bass player Stu West, who has been with them for ten years, is just a figure in the background. Given how hard these guys have all worked for the band, that does seem a little unfair.

Where Wes Orshoski does score highly is in his dozens of interviews with former band members, managers and fans. We get to hear from many current musicians including Jesse Hughes of Eagles of Death Metal, Billy Idol and Dexter Holland of The Offspring, all of whom have admiration for The Damned. Orshoski has also compiled some amazing archive footage of the band from throughout their career, much of which will not have been seen by fans before. It is quite shocking given the reverence they treat their equipment with now (I once saw Monty Oxy-Moron go mental at an audience when someone threw beer all over his keyboards) to see early gigs that ended in everything being smashed on the stage and Rat Scabies setting his cymbals on fire. This film also captures the energy of the current live shows and the great relationship which exists between band and audience, many of whom, like me, have seen them perform dozens of times.

This Blu-ray release is worth picking up if you are a fan of the band, or if you love punk music in general. Alongside the documentary itself are some great extra features including more interviews and a recent live performance of early Damned anthem *Smash It Up*. After watching all of this, you will immediately be looking at The Damned's official website to find out when they are touring near you. As one of the hardest working bands in the world, there's a good chance they will in your part of the globe within the next twelve months.

Adrian Smith