

# Morbid Outlook

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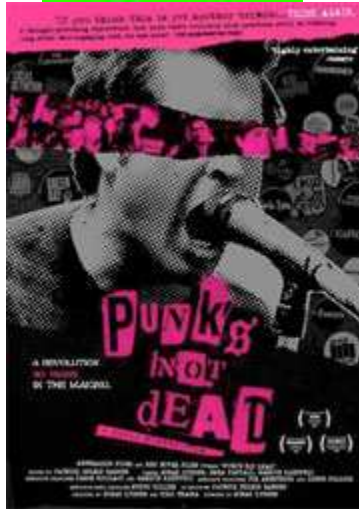
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### About the Author

**Dylan Madeley** is a freelance writer. He is currently holed up somewhere thirty minutes north of Toronto and teaches Shotokan Karate part-time. He can sometimes be found around Queen West, Dundas, or College Street leafing through bins of vinyl or used CDs, hoping to score a Hawkwind album he doesn't yet have, or at a handful of different club and concert venues where he might indulge in another hobby, concert photography. It's far easier to find him on YouTube, though, banging out cover songs.

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## MUSIC Articles

### DVD Review: Punk's Not Dead Dylan Madeley

*PUNK'S NOT DEAD* SHOULD BE a riveting film for any punk fan. For outside dabblers like me, it can drag at times but is nevertheless entertaining and informative. Using interviews with iconic punks and television footage from *Donahue* to *Quincy, MD*, it sets out to make viewers question everything they think they know about punk.

The film achieves this by discussing key issues using the ongoing history of punk music as its frame of reference. It is compelling to a wider audience than punks because the "versus" issues – commercialism versus independence, tradition versus change, youth versus predecessors – can be found in any movement or genre of music which appears to have a "mainstream" and an "underground" and which has been around long enough, such as metal or hip hop.

The film is keen on showing the blurry lines between these terms whenever interviewees suggest that the "pop" elements of punk have been around as long as the old school punks who are disgusted by pop-punk bands, or that it is possible to use commerce to help an attitude and a genre survive without losing the "authentic" values of the music. The idea of what exactly it means to be a punk is as far up in the air as what makes punk music punk, from the looks of things, but through the haze you can pick out the values of accessibility and doing things yourself – even in a world where some punks deride others for

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not being as hard-core and where one can easily buy pre-ripped jeans or faux-homemade shirt designs.

It also examines the glossed-over fifteen year lull after the first wave of punk and before its big commercial breakthrough, poking fun at the idea that punk disappeared and suddenly came back. This depends on your definition of presence in music; some people believe that nothing is happening with a genre if it's not on the charts or getting mainstream attention, but droves of underground partygoers would enthusiastically disagree.

If it were possible to weave all of that into one coherent narrative, with segues between ideas that are surely connected by more than just having to do with punk, it would have reduced the drag factor.

It certainly starts well, with a snippet montage to hook you in that seems to be a popular technique. The film is divided into portions, each with a different focus yet referring in some way to the others, and the only clue you get about the content of a section is a song quote; after a minute or two you can usually pick out the focus.

It may be better to watch *Punk's Not Dead* piecemeal, since the scene selection of this great DVD age makes it easy, but it definitely didn't feel like a one-sitting film. I found myself restless somewhere near the end of the third section, seeing another song quote preface and wondering whether the next section would contain any point that had not been drilled home in the previous sections. They usually did, but the weight of facts and tidbits and history that ought to keep a punk hooked felt heavier to a half-interested dabbler as the film progressed.

Editor's Note: I definitely recommend the extras on this DVD and almost prefer them more to the documentary itself. Available for sale through [Amazon](#).

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