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MUSIC, LIFE, & CULTURE

God Save the Queen

A Punk Rock Anthology

(Music Video Distributors)

One of the downfalls of punk rock was that it started taking itself too seriously. A rickety frame of anarchism and three buzzing chords is not enough to support issues of psychological break down and social justice. Hence, bands like Warsaw, the Clash, and musicians like Howard DeVoto evolved. The music became more complex along with its themes, and thus we get the brilliance of Joy Division from Warsaw, or the groundbreaking Magazine from DeVoto. I suppose it depends on the band maturing. Punk rock fits a certain age-bracket and a certain mentality, when pushed beyond that it must change, or things can get scary.

How scary? Post-heroin paunchy scary. That is one of the primary mistakes in the *God Save the Queen* anthology: Some of the videos record recent reunions by the bands involved. Watching a group of older men play a song of youthful rebellion written at least 20 years ago is disappointing. What sounded revolutionary when played by scrawny would-be rebels sounds forced and kind of goofy played by anyone else.

Even Iggy Pop, and artist who still has a good deal of cultural relevance, seems slightly out of place performing "I Wanna Be Your Dog," a feeling that is not eased by the fact that the rest of the Stooges haven't aged as gracefully as Iggy. Image may seem a shallow thing to focus on, but it was more a part of the punk movement than some people like to admit. The reunited Stooges still play just as well as they did in the early 1970s, but that was never really the point. Attitude was just as important as the music, indeed it was part of the music. Even Iggy, whom I adore, seems to have softened a bit. Maybe "The Adventures of Pete and Pete" is to blame. Regardless, something is different.

I suppose it is just the fact that time is impossible to hold onto. With that said, some of the older videos still suck. But it is hard to blame anybody for that. Punk rock was not something looking for technological advances, and consequently the archival film is murky at best. Still, there is some good material on this anthology, coming from this older footage. The television appearance and interview of X-Ray Spex is particularly interesting. Even if it doesn't capture the raw intensity that punk rock was capable of, it is still great to hear how intelligent punk could be from the inimitable Poly Styrene.

Another gem is the live performance of "Boredom" by the Buzzcocks. The video is extra special for that rare glimpse of DeVoto as the frontman, sneering his best punky sneer for the camera. But if you look closely at his eyes, you can see his own boredom and a



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hint of things to come. Punk couldn't live forever. It was by its very nature combustible. Fortunately for the world of music, something has survived to rise from its ashes.

Reviewed by
Cody Shaffer
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 PRINT

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