

Shonen Knife: Live at Mohawk Place 2009

★★★★1/2

(2009) 57 min. DVD: \$16.95.
Music Video Distributors (avail.
from most distributors).



Kawaii, the Japanese word for “cute,” certainly applies to the Osaka-based, all-female band Shonen Knife—but this is no backdoor pejorative; they may be adorable, yet these pop-punk musicians are not lightweights. Captured here in Buffalo, NY, on the last date of their 2009 U.S. tour, they deliver the goods in an exuberant, thoroughly entertaining show spanning a career that’s now almost three decades long (not that you’d know it by looking at them—guitarist-singer-songwriter Naoko Yamano, the sole remaining original member, looks like she’s still in her 20s). Displaying an

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obvious debt to the Ramones, the group delivers a full 18 tunes in less than an hour, virtually all featuring Yamano’s thrashing power chords (her solos are mercifully brief and simple), Etsuko Nakanishi’s pounding drums, Ritsuko Taneda’s adept Fender bass lines, and an endless supply of ridiculously catchy melodies. The songs are in English, but considering the performers’ fairly limited language skills, we’re not exactly talking Bob Dylan here—but that’s part of the charm. The titles alone are a clue: “Banana Chips,” “I Wanna Eat Chocobars,” “Giant Kitty,” and “Muddy Bubbles Hell,” among others. As for the lyrics, what’s not to like about a tune whose entire message is “*Konnichiwa! Konnichiwa!* Welcome to our show. Are you ready to rock? Let’s have a good time tonight”? Presented in PCM stereo, this delightful concert from a legendary cult band is highly recommended. (S. Graham)