

entire city was going to hear about it, and their support or disdain would in turn affect our ability to organize. We weren't operating outside the scene—we were just creating a new sub-community within our larger community. A community based on the principles of solidarity and fighting the bosses.”

a really weird supermarket, maybe. —Billups Allen (Drawn And Quarterly, drawnandquarterly.com)



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Dragon City: Punk Rock in China: DVD

For whatever reason, the back cover gave me the mistaken impression that this was a documentary about the Chinese punk band No Name, with the camera dude following them around to show us decadent, unappreciative Westerners all the shit a punk band has to endure to tour—or, hell, to even exist in—China. Not so. It's actually a work of fiction. To wit, four hardy, young lads, living the usual hardscrabble existence of the post-apocalypse ((and, since it's post-apocalyptic China, we just assume that it's even worse than, like, post-apocalyptic Canada or somewhere, which is probably true, because they have cannibals with luchador masks and meat cleavers who hunt people down in the street for food, whereas Canada would just have people arguing over donuts)) come across an expat American who is sorta like a cross between George Carlin and Stan Lee, and lives in what he claims is the last fully-functional nightclub on earth, Dragon City. Since one of the four has an acoustic guitar on which he occasionally plays baleful melodies, George/Stan talks him and the rest of the merry gang into playing music on his fully equipped stage ((I wonder what kinda monitor mix one gets after the apocalypse? I suppose not much different from what ya get today, come to think of it)). The guys immediately develop instant proficiency and launch into a few of their passable-if-Fat-Wreckish songs, which rouse the downtrodden spirits of the miscellaneous kindred lowlifes in the neighborhood. George/Stan takes ill and dies, and the band plays a few more songs, secure in the knowledge that their gift of music is the one spark of hope in an otherwise sparkless scenario. The movie is done in under forty minutes, which is, to be truthful, about the right running time for it. The rest of the DVD is filled out with music videos and live clips—earlier stuff like

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"Smash Everything" has a certain raw, Chaotic Discord-esque charm; later stuff like "My Attitude" just sounds like some lame Poison power ballad or something ((note to band: In English, the word "take" is not pronounced the same as George Takei's last name. But I agree it's much cooler your way!)). I'd say that, as far as the forty-minute movie serving the purpose of getting me interested enough in the band that I watched the rest of their videos, mission accomplished. As regards Asian punk movies, however, *Wild Zero* this ain't. -Rev. Nørb (MVD Visual, mvdvisual.com)

Only the Young and Tchoupitoulas: DVD

This double-disc set contains two documentaries from Oscilloscope Laboratories. The films are set on opposite sides of the country, but their themes of adolescent innocence and exploration draw them together.

Only the Young is, first and foremost, beautifully shot. Lens flares twinkle between lingering shots of drainage ditches and abandoned houses, and everything seems washed out in a soft desert haze. The filmmakers' portrayal of suburban Southern California is heavily nostalgic, but not necessarily inaccurate. Speaking of nostalgia, the lanky skate punks at the center of the documentary bear signifiers familiar to anyone who grew up "alternative" in an era of mass-produced punk artifacts: crisp embroidered patches, streaks of hair dye, that one "Out of Step" T-shirt every record store carries. Garrison, Kevin, and Skye are as recognizable as any kid I knew in tenth grade. Many of the moments they share are so perfectly candid and graceful that it isn't immediately clear whether or not they are scripted. Nonetheless, this isn't a structured narrative about the pain of growing up or the triumphs of disaffected youth over suburban conformity. *Only the Young* is more of an intimate teenage diary, offering glimpses of tentative relationships, half-completed projects, and the first unnerving pangs of adulthood. Unfortunately, the film's power is hampered by some awkward hiccups in pacing and emphasis, but the overall effect is sweet, honest, and tastefully subdued.

Like its companion film, *Tchoupitoulas* is less formal documentary than immersive portrait. It follows three young brothers on a night's journey into New Orleans.

William, the youngest, emerges as our curious protagonist. He races behind his brothers, indifferent to their exasperation with his mile-a-

minute questions. The camera follows over his shoulder and documents the sights and sounds of the city: gaudy costumes, street evangelists, fire spinners, sidewalk vendors, tourists in matching T-shirts, and, of course, live music—on every other corner, spilling out of bars and clubs, drifting out of open windows. The experience of watching *Tchoupitoulas* is as close to tramping through the French Quarter as it gets without actually doing it. The bustling city scenes are divided by intervals of dreamlike quiet in which William muses on topics including his dream careers (football player, lawyer, architect, in succession), what he would do if he could be twenty-one forever (stay on the phone all night and ride around in Lamborghinis), and the beautiful girl he's ever seen (his friend's girlfriend). Barely even on the brink of adolescence, William is as earnest and charming a guide an audience could hope for.

At a little over an hour apiece, these two documentaries make a resonant and well-matched pair. Though set in vastly different landscapes, both curate the experiences of their subjects without commenting on them or forcing a narrative. They aim instead for the sincerity of real moments. It's a lofty goal, and one that each film happily achieves. -Indiana Laub (Oscilloscope Laboratories, PO Box 20090, 527 Hudson St., NY, NY 10014, oscilloscope.net)

Punk in Africa: DVD

This documentary profiles the various punk bands that sprung from South Africa's tumultuous political climate during the '70s up until now. Pioneers such as Wild Youth, National Wake, and The Genuines braved harsh police repercussions just to play their instruments for some eager ears. These bands represent the radical politics, interracial communion, and discontent of Africa's youth. The directors, Keith Jones and Deon Maas, do an excellent job of providing the historical background from which these bands arose and a lot of insights are finessed from the interviewees. *Punk in Africa* is an awe-inspiring film that confirms that punk, in its essence, functions most potently as a protest device and as a means to liberate a radical consciousness. Highly recommended. -Sean Arenas (punkinfrica.com)



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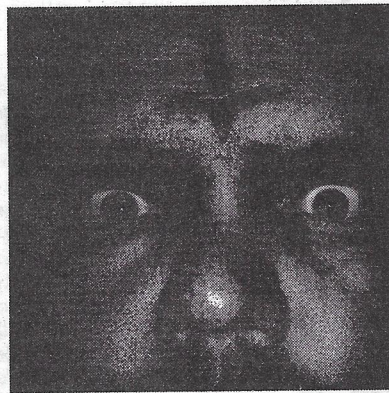
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