



Clockwork Orange County: DVD

Clockwork Orange County, which was originally going under the fitting moniker *We Were Feared*, is basically a rework of a much earlier film, *Urban Struggle: The Battle of the Cuckoo's Nest*. Like its predecessor, it recounts the tale of the legendary Cuckoo's Nest, an early '80s punk club nestled deep in the heart of one of the country's most virulently reactionary counties. OC was ground zero for Southern California's much-ballyhooed and exceedingly influential second wave of punk/first wave of hardcore, and during its relatively brief existence the Nest was one of the few clubs out that way that provided a place for that wave of bands a stage on which to cut their teeth. As a result, the club, in turn, found itself turned into ground zero for the cultural war that mainstream America waged on punk, a war that resulted in police harassment of the clubs patrons, pitched battles with denizens of the "urban cowboy" bar which shared its parking lot, and a pitched legal battle with the City of Costa Mesa over its very right to exist.

Utilizing period footage from *Urban Struggle* and interviews of recent vintage, the film recounts the tale in swift but holistic detail—the importance of the venue to the scene, the love/hate relationship between the punks and club owner Jerry Roach, and the shitstorm that ensued in the streets, in the courts, and in the media. It's also filled with enough live footage of the Circle Jerks, Black Flag, Adolescents, TSOL, and so on to whet the appetite

of fans, music archeologists, and historians looking solely for some great "old school" performances. Though clearly a DIY effort, with the occasional clunky transition and music cue, the filmmakers tell the tale well, deftly keeping the proceedings engaging without letting things devolve into neither a surreal pastiche of vaguely connected footage nor a rigid drone of talking heads. There are scant few attempts at historical documentation that manage to do this particular area of interest justice, and this is definitely one of 'em. —Jimmy Alvarado (Endurance Pictures, no address listed)

Positive Force: More Than a Witness:

30 Years of Punk Politics in Action: DVD

The DC punk scene is probably the best documented in the world. There's *Banned in DC*, a photo book that came out at the end of the '80s and *Dance of Days: Two Decades of Punk in the Nation's Capital*, a thick tome chronicling DC-area non-mainstream rock. Recently, Dave Grohl (he played drums in *Scream*) took viewers down the *Sonic Highway* through the District for a chat with Don Zientara, the producer of most of the Dischord catalog. As of this writing, I am praying to the Madonna of Dupont Circle that the Oakland screening of *Salad Days: The DC Punk Revolution* will not sell out. Do we really need another movie where we watch Fugazi and listen to Ian MacKaye talk about Fugazi?

The answer is yes. In the late '80s and early '90s, if you wanted to see Fugazi and many other great bands such as Jawbox, Nation Of Ulysses, Beefeater and Fire Party—and Basque and European politico-punk bands such as Negu Gorriak and Chumbawamba—in DC, it was most often at a show put on by Positive Force. All of the shows benefitted one local organization or another, were all-ages, and five dollars. They were held in church basements in neighborhoods where condos now command high rents but then were places where tenants were organizing and Positive Force was supporting their efforts.

This film chronicles the efforts of this group through the shows they put on, the meetings they held in their community house, and the work they tried to do to affect change. It's one thing to yell, "Fuck the system." It's quite another to work to keep people from getting fucked by the system. PF gave the DC scene a character not found in other places. That character, to some—myself included—felt a little puritanical at times. I lived in DC

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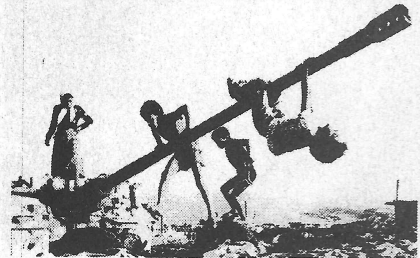
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during the part of the time covered in the film, went to a couple of meetings and helped out with a couple of shows, and attended many more. It was a real culture shock when I moved to San Diego and a “benefit” show was to raise money for the drummer’s paternity test. But it was nice to drink alcohol and listen to live punk rock at the same time.

Any group of committed, idealistic, young (or young at heart) folks are bound to have disagreements, right? Well, not according to this movie. There are a couple of times where breaks in ranks are briefly mentioned, but every good documentary has a plot, and part of that plot is conflict. Instead of glossing over disagreements, it might have been more interesting to see how these folks worked through their differences.

This film is great for going beyond the music and showing that there is more to punk rock than the elements of clothing and fast music that became part of its commercialization in the early ‘90s, but, in the end, it comes off as a little too one-sided and self-congratulatory. —Lisa Weiss (PM Press, PO Box 23912, Oakland, CA, 94623, morethanawitness.com)

Rye Coalition: The Story of the Hard Luck 5: DVD

Never got into Rye Coalition. I first heard of them from their now-famous split 12” with Karp, but at the time they always came across as a weird and distancing amalgam of emo and post-rock; jagged and seriously devoid of hooks and, well, kind of boring. Turns out I was wrong about that. The film shows the band to be a lot of things, but boring isn’t one of them. But, hey, that’s where I was at at the time.

The Story of the Hard Luck 5 starts at the beginning and shows the band from their roots: a bunch of New Jersey kids in the mid-nineties playing VFW halls and basements, half of them touring before they could even drive. In many ways, it’s the same story for a lot of bands that lived through the feeding frenzy of the mid-nineties punk explosion: the band plays shows, slowly rises in popularity, begins putting out records, then tours incessantly and works their asses off for a number of years while muscling through any number of shit jobs that are easy enough to leave to go on tour. *That cycle, right?*

And after a few years, a ton of shows, and a few full lengths they decide to give full time touring a shot and just hustle. A few things begin to click into place: Steve Albini engineers an album. They get opening slots for Queens Of The Stone Age, the Mars Volta, At The Drive-In. Finally it

happens—in 2003 they get signed to Dreamworks, a major label, and Dave Grohl produces their record. But in keeping with the band’s history of shitty luck, Dreamworks promptly goes bankrupt and is incorporated into another major that wants nothing to do with the band or their album. The label sits on the record. The band still muscled on in spite of no new album, slowing momentum, and growing tension in the band.

Finally the album’s released on Gern Blandsten, a NJ label that’s run by a friend of theirs and most likely one that’s now too small for them, but at this point the band just wants it out, right? Shit’s imploding; tensions are high. And in 2006 the band breaks up. They’d gotten close to that idea of “rock success”—i.e. just being able to make a living playing in a band—but it just never quite happened. Just always a bit out of reach.

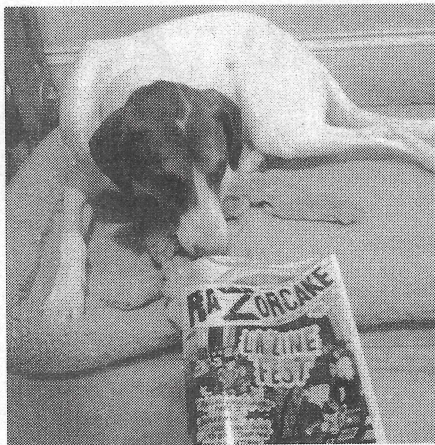
In 2010, at the behest of a band member’s father, they get back together to play a show for his birthday; it’s one of the most touching moments in the film. And that’s essentially where *The Story...* leaves off, with these five longtime friends who almost had the dream by the tail and then just watched it kind of vanish.

Like I said, I was never really a fan of the band, but the film itself is excellent. It was totally engaging for someone who was not that into them, so this shit’s probably *enthralling* to someone who’s a fan, you know? Jenni Matz did a stellar job at directing and editing. The pacing’s just right and is full of solid live footage from all eras. The interviews show that the band were, well, often kind of dicks—but goddamn, they could own a stage. (I’m still not that into their recorded output, but there’s no denying that even on video they are a fun and absolutely captivating band to watch.)

I think the film’s greatest strength is that it serves as a great snapshot into a volatile time for both punk and the music industry as a whole, and shows a band really hustling in their prime. It’s heavy with personality—that’s good television right there—and those accents just kill me. When guitarist Jon Gonnelli’s grandmother, in her heavy Jersey accent, laments the fact that the band hasn’t been able to put any money away (“Not even putting away ten dollahs in the bank!”) after all their years on the road, it’s absolutely charming. Really well done. —Keith Rosson (MatzOrific Productions, 203 Windsor Rd., Pottstown, PA 19464)



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