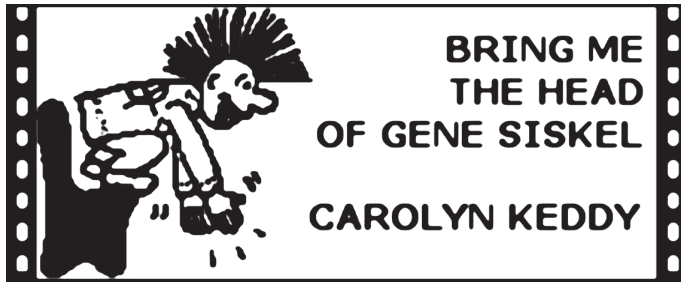


MOVIES



INCENDIARY DEVICE

You know it is an atypical month when I see three punk documentaries about bands that I like that are also all good. Since that never happens I have to resist to the urge to compare them. There are three levels of music documentary represented.

First, we have **The Dicks From Texas**. It is the punkest of the documentaries. It is made scrappily. People are interviewed in bars where fellow patrons are talking loudly in the background. Subtitles are occasionally used when the background noise drowns out the interviewee. The result might be difficult for your average viewer to handle. For me it has the right feel for a punk film.

The Dicks From Texas gets all the band documentary things right. This is a film for people who like the band or are interested in the band. They do not make any attempt to introduce punk to the average person. Everyone interviewed was there at the time. Even documentary stalwarts Henry Rollins and Ian MacKaye were there and their insights are kept brief. There is a good amount of footage from the '80s. Reunion footage doesn't appear until the end of the film and is kept short. Plus they save the archival performance of the Dicks' most well-known song for the end of the film.

The Dicks started when singer Gary Floyd returned to Austin, TX after seeing the Sex Pistols in San Francisco. He started claiming he had a band called the Dicks. This fad was known as poster bands. Fliers were made with fake shows and non-existent groups. The Dicks soon became a reality when bassist Buxf Parrott and guitarist Glen Taylor joined up with Floyd to form the band. All they needed was a drummer who they found in Pat Deason just in time to play the Punk Prom with the Big Boys.

The Dicks From Texas follows the evolution of the Dicks from Floyd as a local celebrity through band formation to punk legend. A funny story is told by one guy who went to a Lou Reed show to be inspired, just as he was getting into punk. Reed didn't inspire, but noticing Floyd walking through the crowd did. Everyone has a story to tell of those early days of Austin punk. It seems like a small town punk scene. Although there most likely had to be some rivalry, it has all been passed over for the good stuff.

David Yow comments that "it never occurred to me before seeing the Dicks that being afraid of the band could be a cool idea." It seems strange in 2015 to relate to a time when being a punk was not widely accepted. People were afraid and hated you simply for the way you looked. Seeing Gary Floyd looking intimidating in a mohawk and eye makeup reminds me of my own traumas dealing with men who would beat me up because they didn't like how I looked. Of course, that didn't stop me. I assume it didn't stop the Austin punks either.

The Dicks From Texas breaks one major punk documentary stereotype in that the majority of the people interviewed for the film are women. I have never seen this many women in a punk doc before. Finally a dose of reality. There were/are many females involved in punk even if the documentarians tend to make it look like this wasn't the case.

For all the Bay Area readers, **The Dicks From Texas** will be screening at The Eagle Tavern on October 22nd. It is also playing in other cities. Go see it. (thedicksfromtexas.com)

At the other end of the spectrum is **The Damned: Don't You Wish We**

Were Dead. After almost the twentieth time hearing it I wanted to shout "We don't need to hear *New Rose* again!" Yet, the filmmaker thought we did. There is also too much new footage of the band. At almost two hours the film could use some more editing.

Those gripes aside **The Damned: Don't You Wish We Were Dead** manages to get the story. There are interviews with all four original members of the band: Dave Vanian, Captain Sensible, Rat Scabies, and Brian James. The result is the most seemingly thorough and honest account of a band's history. There are grudges, annoyances and anger. That always makes for an interesting film. In this case it also makes for a depressing one. There is too much honesty for my liking. Do we really need to know every personal detail of a band? While I wish I knew less, I am still fascinated by all the intricacies.

Captain Sensible takes us to the building where he worked cleaning bathrooms with Rat Scabies. He even takes us into one of them. While there he recounts how Scabies left work early to go to an audition for what would become the Damned. He told Sensible that they were also looking for a bass player if he was interested. He was and the rest as they say is history. The Damned were born. (damneddoc.com)

The last time I saw Captain Sensible, I had to ask when we were going to see the Johnny Moped documentary **Basically, Johnny Moped** in the Bay Area. I already knew I could buy a copy or download it (he reminded me of it, too), but there is something about the event of going to see a film in a theater with other excited people. That is how the screening of **The Damned: Don't You Wish We Were Dead** was. That conversation was months ago and though some vague promises were made about the Captain coming out to introduce a screening nothing came about of it. I got the download and all I can think is that would have been a great event. The film is that good. Even if you know nothing about Johnny Moped you will get caught up in it.

Basically, Johnny Moped is the story of a proto-punk band from Croydon, UK. It was formed by a bunch of kids who went to school together. They couldn't play and were proud of it. After all they were kids and having some fun. This was much to the chagrin of the other more serious local bands as well as their neighbors. That attitude set them up to be part of the British punk scene appearing at the Roxy in London. As Captain Sensible recalls, "The worse you were, the better people liked you in 1976. Isn't that great?"

Of course, the story is more complicated. The band started as kids. Some went off to college. The band broke up. The members joined other bands. During this time they learned to play. Then they reformed. Captain Sensible was a member until he got overcommitted with the Damned. Chrissie Hynde was involved in two versions of the band getting kicked out both times. As Roger Armstrong of Chiswick Records remarks, they were "part of the Croydon tradition of musically competent punks."

On top of it all is Paul Halford, the kid who would become Johnny Moped. He was named such because he really wanted to be a biker. He even got a "Hell's Angels Croydon" tattoo. He ended up driving a moped and thus semi-mockingly was dubbed Johnny Moped by his bandmates. He is a great front man. As such he is also eccentric and difficult to work with. The band flourished and suffered as a result.

Of the three films **Basically, Johnny Moped** is the most professional looking of the bunch. It was made by Captain Sensible's son Fred Burns. There is a good amount of footage of the band including some of their first show in a backyard. The story related is typical of the average band. A band enjoys a modicum of success, releases a few good records, breaks up, is forgotten and then reforms. Johnny Moped just released a new single on Damaged Goods which I keep hearing on the radio. Every time I do I always think what a great song it is. I have to remember to pick up a copy. (basicallyjohnnymoped.com)

I am always looking for films to review. If you made one, send a copy to Carolyn Keddy c/o Maximum Rocknroll, PO Box 460760, San Francisco, CA 94146-0760. If your film is playing in the San Francisco Bay Area let me know at carolyn@maximumrocknroll.com. I will go see it. carolynkeddy.com