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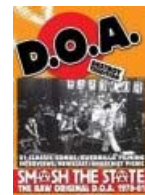
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REVIEW

Music Review: D.O.A. *Smash The State: The Raw Original D.O.A. 1978-81* DVD

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It's pretty hard to believe that it's been a little more than 30 years since the Sex Pistols released *Never Mind The Bollocks* their first and last studio album. In spite of bands like the Ramones, The New York Dolls, and others playing a similar type of high energy rock and roll, it was the Pistols who garnered all the publicity and became the face of Punk Rock for the media and everybody else.

England of the mid to late 1970s was in a horrible state with unemployment running rampant among the young. Facing the prospect of a life of poverty and a series of dead end jobs until death, is it any wonder that they were more than a little bit angry and very nihilistic? When Johnny Rotten was singing "no future" the majority of the audience related to the statement personally.

If you went to see the Pistols live, you didn't expect to hear many of the lyrics, but the music was another story. It was loud, abrasive, aggressive, and best of all angry, which not only summed up how the audience felt but gave them the means to express it as well by pogoing with wild abandon. (Pogoing was dancing by jumping up and down and flinging yourself around at the same time.)



In Canada, the punk movement started around the same time that it did in England. As early as 1977 bands like The Viletones, The Diodes, and others played on a regular basis in a number of small clubs that opened in Toronto Ontario. Out on the West Coast in Vancouver there was a similar out break with bands playing in any number of small venues.

Unlike in England where bands were actually signed to record contracts, in Canada there was very little money around to sustain a band for any length of time; by 1980 most of the bands were no more. In fact, The Horseshoe Tavern in Toronto, home to punk music for a few years, was host to an event called "The Last Pogo" in 1980 to officially mark the end of Punk as they saw it.

There is one band though that has managed to hang together all these years, and that is the Vancouver outfit D.O.A. From the early years back in the 70s until today, they are still out there railing against the system. With their own label, [Sudden Death Records](#), they are able to regularly produce CDs as well as provide a home for another bands who are too alternative for other companies.

In an effort to let people today know what the band was all about back in their earlier days they have compiled footage of the band performing at various locations along the West Coast. The final result, *Smash The State: The Raw Original D.O.A. 1978-81* has been put out in conjuncture with [MVD Visual](#) on a new DVD.

The DVD contains excerpts from five separate gigs, a T.V. shoot, and some Bonus Shit. Of the live gigs the first one recorded in 1980 at On Broadway in San Francisco and The Anarchist Anti-Canada Day concert in Stanley Park Vancouver in 1978 have the best sound and video quality. Of the other three, neither the sound nor the video quality is good enough to be anything more than annoying. In one case, the vocals are lost completely, in another, the sound is like mud and you can't distinguish the individual instruments, and in the third, you can barely discern the band the video quality is so bad.

The two live gigs that are good, and the two songs shot in studios (one being the video for the song "World War 3" included in the Bonus Shit) give an indication of what the band is capable of. What's interesting is the Anarchist Picnic is from early in the Band's career – in fact it marked their first appearance as a four-piece band – and the contrast between that gig and the one in 1980 at On Broadway shows you how quickly they developed into a polished and effective band.

In 1978 they were a high energy punk rock band but they lacked the cohesion to be completely effective. Joe Shithead's vocals were mainly just shouted out and he wasn't able to do much more in terms of modulating his voice. You could see the potential they had to be a really good punk band if they were to stick together and keep working at it.

It's only on the TV studio outtakes that we hear crystal clear sound and perfect video quality. However, because of a lack of live audience there seems to be something a little off in their performance. High-energy music like punk needs an audience to bounce off or it sounds like it's being played in a vacuum. Technically everything is fine with these performances, but they are missing the extra edge the music gets when played for an audience.

D.O.A. was one of the original punk bands in Canada, and the fact that they are still around speaks volumes to their durability and quality as a band. Unfortunately *Smash The State: The Raw Original D.O.A. 1978-81* doesn't give that complete a picture of their capabilities as there are too many problems with sound and video quality.

On the other hand it sure was nice to see them again, pounding away on some old favorites. This is a disc that will best be appreciated by people who already know the band, not someone hearing it for the first time. They'd be better off buying one of the band's CDs and getting to know the material first. Better yet, head out to Vancouver and catch them live – then you would get the real D.O.A. experience.



Richard Marcus is a long-haired Canadian iconoclast who writes reviews and opines on the world as he sees it at [Leap In The Dark](#) and [Epic India](#).

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