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Punk Rock Karaoke

Karaoke is many things: a good way to hear your favorite songs without actually going to see the band who wrote them, a great way to spend a Friday evening, and a fantastic way for you to potentially embarrass in front of a roomful of strangers. In short, it's fun for the whole family, provided that your family has a tendency toward drunken, sing-along displays of extraversion. But is it punk?

The one aspect that both punk and karaoke have in common is they both reward, and enable, the spirit of doing it yourself. Of course, the doing-it-yourself in punk involves forming a band, record label, and ethos, whereas the rules for doing it yourself in karaoke are much more lax: namely, you show up and pick a song. You don't even have to sing it well. By contrast, the do-it-yourself aspect in punk definitely includes writing your own music.

So what to make of the new DVD of Punk Rock Karaoke?

The concept is admittedly a fun one: four veterans of second-wave punk, including members of NoFX and Bad Religion, serve as the backing band for 22 widely regarded underground punk classics. Think along the lines of "Holiday in Cambodia" rather than "Anarchy in the UK." You write your name on the list of songs next to the one that you want to sing. Then, when it's your turn, you get up on stage and sing with idols playing the songs of their idols. Based on the reactions of both crowds and participants, everyone looks like their having a blast singing along, and the DVD includes footage of rowdy band performances that put together different performances for a single song. Wisely, the DVD only a few covers of songs from which to choose, so boredom doesn't sink in quickly. On the other hand, aside from a few featurettes, the DVD doesn't have much else to offer. Once the novelty of the concept wears off, you start to wonder why your in your living room watching this DVD, instead out watching actual punk, or at least listening to the originals (even though these new versions are faithfully executed, if not particularly inspiring).

The basic problem with *Punk Rock Karaoke* is that it doesn't answer this question: "Hey, this looks really fun. Why aren't I doing something like this right now? Why am I inside watching this DVD?" The band, made up of second-wave punk veterans, certainly looks like they're having fun imitating their idols. So do the fans who run up to join them on renditions of "Nervous Breakdown", amongst others. The entire punk ethos was inspired by brothers and sisters doin' it for themselves. So while it's certainly fun to hear competently executed versions of past punk classics from the likes of The Descendents, The Buzzcocks, and Bad

Religion, it's a lot more fun to pull out your copies of *Milo Goes To College*, *Singles Going Steady*, and *Inflammable Material* and sing along with the originals in the privacy of your own home.

The DVD of *Punk Rock Karaoke* isn't bad. It's just unnecessary. Instead of buying *Punk Rock Karaoke*, go out and start your own punk rock karaoke. It would be the most punk thing to do.

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By [Jon Graef](#)