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## Punk in London

1977

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It's difficult to pinpoint exactly who the first true punk band was, where they were based out of, but the early 70's breed a subculture that refused to die. Like many musical genres, parents thought that punk was a musical phase that would die out, but it hasn't and has evolved over time. While there are some that have stayed true to the roots of the music, there is the new wave of punk, corporate punk, which many of the long time fans see as being false punk and for someone like myself who listened to bands like The Dead Kennedys, Black Flag, The Subhumans, and Crass, I agree with the statement that today's punk is nothing more than an imitation.

Punk was a do-it-yourself movement featuring bands and artists that were against what the mainstream offered. It wasn't about a preppy look, synchronized jumping and clean production and there was a certain attitude that went right along with it. With any musical movement, there are places that you can pinpoint as being the mecca of its birth where there was a certain sound that went right along with the bands. In metal for instance, California became known as the birthplace of speed metal with Slayer, Metallica and Exodus while Florida would become the breeding ground for death metal with Death, Cannibal Corpse and Autopsy being the known artists and across the pond, England would be known as the origins of grindcore as Napalm Death, Carcass and Extreme Noise Terror blasted beats faster than anyone has imagined.

London is considered by many to be the definitive location where punk was born, though that is something that can be debated and argued as bands were emerging from the United States, Australia and other locations across the globe. However, bands like The Sex Pistols, The Clash and The Damned began getting attention beyond their local following. The power of punk was felt beyond just the youth they were trying to reach and that would lead German director Wolfgang Büld to craft a documentary on the subject.

*Punk in London*, filmed in 1977, features some of the best that London had to offer, some which would become legendary with the genre, others that you've probably never heard of before, but the reality is that this is the first wave of punk, true punk, at the height of its glory. This was before the media and entertainment industry fully grabbed hold and tried to make it seem like some

horrible and negative form of music (just watch any movie from the 80's to see some really bad stereotypes and how Hollywood imagined punks should look and act.) However, this isn't quite the typical documentary that you might expect it to be.

Büld doesn't necessarily seem to come across with an opinion one way or the other, not that I can tell as any narration done on his part is entirely in German, but what he does feature are live performances and not just a few seconds here and there. You won't find any montages of the bands but instead live concert footage that's completely raw and uncensored just as it should be. Bands such as The Adverts, The Clash, X-Ray Spex and The Boomtown Rats are all featured and while it might sound like the usual, three chord punk that you hear now, there's something drastically different. Each band featured in *Punk in London* has an energy about them that doesn't focus on thousands of fans at some corporate rock show but instead, these are the small club shows that were a huge part of the DIY movement that was at the heart of punk, though there were certainly clubs that were dedicated to punk rock and the crowd.

Aside from the music though, there are plenty of people interviewed. This includes the members of the band who really come across with having more of a reason to play the style of music than some of the bands you'd hear interviews with now. I really don't think new breed of bubblegum punk has quite the same attitude towards the music or why they play it, not like the early bands. The political and social rhetoric goes beyond the lyrics and is very much a part of everyday life for any of the musicians that are featured. Of course, we do get some of the opposite opinions from club owners or promoters who don't get the music, don't like the fans, but yet are still tolerant to some degree, but this is very much true of any music that includes a different sense of fashion be it punk, goth, metal or anything else.

There isn't much as far as extra features unfortunately. Wolfgang Büld is interviewed and then there is footage of The Clash in Munich. I suppose given when the documentary was done, it's probably exceptionally hard to find extra features so in this case, it's a bit more forgivable than if this was made in the past few years.

*Punk in London* is a fantastic look at what could be considered the origins of the music. This isn't quite a documentary piece as much as it is a historical reference and although it might not have enough "big names" for some; there should be enough for long time fans to get excited and hopefully introduce the modern "punk" to a more humble period in the legacy of punk rock music and culture.

-mike-

Directed by:  
Wolfgang Büld

Written by:  
Wolfgang Büld

Cast:  
Gaye Advert  
Jack Airport  
Arturo Bassick

DVD Features:  
Audio: 1.33:1  
Audio: English Dolby Digital 2.0  
English Subtitles  
Interview with Wolfgang Büld  
The Clash in Munich

Rick Buckler  
Chelsea  
Robert Collins  
Miles A. Copeland III  
Wayne County  
Andrew Czezowski  
Henry Daze  
Paul Dean  
Jim Doak  
Lorry Driver  
The Electric Chairs  
Manic Esso  
Carey Fortune  
Bruce Foxton  
Bob Geldof  
Vic Godard  
B.P. Harding  
Topper Headon  
The Jam  
Mick Jones  
Lora Logic  
Paul Myers  
Gene October  
Paul Packham  
Fabian Paffendorf  
Howard Pickup  
Kevin Rowland  
Iain Shedden  
Paul Simonon  
T.V. Smith  
James Stevenson  
The Stranglers  
Peter Stride  
Joe Strummer  
Poly Styrene  
Rob Symmons  
Howard Wall  
Paul Weller  
X-Ray Spex

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