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Godfather II Interview [Interview]
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Punk in England

Score: **85%**
 Rating: **Not Rated**
 Publisher: **MVD Entertainment Group**
 Region: **A**
 Media: **DVD/1**
 Running Time: **89 Mins.**
 Genre: **Documentary/Independent/Live Performance**
 Audio: **English Mono**
 Subtitles: **English**

Features:

Women in Rock Documentary

Punk in England is the second in a three-part documentary series released to show the work that Wolfgang Büld did in the late '70s, to capture the musical scene of that time in England. His first effort, *Punk in London*, is classic in the sense that it features bands and music that went on to be much more meaningful than anyone would have guessed at the time. Plenty of people interviewed for **Punk in England** expressed a curious sentiment, similar to what was heard in the first documentary, about punk losing its way. This came somewhat from notions that punk was a fad, was aping more enduring rock styles, or was just the purview of losers that had nothing better to do and couldn't really play their instruments or sing. There was another reason that even some musicians in the English punk scene at that time were ready to write off punk. This had to do with the so-called ideals on which punk was founded, expressed in **Punk in England** and its predecessor as music accessible to all, musicians accessible to all, and music that promoted systemic cultural, political, and economic change. "Anarchy in the U.K." may have just sounded shouty to some ears then, and now, but it expressed the disconnect between traditional ways of living and harsh new realities. The kids weren't all right, and they weren't going to settle for what was always good enough for Mum and Dad. Büld does a better job in **Punk in England**, capturing people on film actually talking coherently about these dynamics in the music.



Büld also seemed to take lessons away from *Punk in London* that influenced how he shot bands and how he paced himself. The tendency in his first film to take a shotgun approach and skip around, back and forth between bands, was smoothed out by the time he shot **Punk in England**. Here, Büld does little studies of a particular group, spending time to catch them on and off stage, playing and talking. He also captures whole songs, showcasing each band's capability and style more effectively than in his first film. This pays off in long sequences with The Clash, Ian Dury, The Specials, and Madness. Attached to the main film is a special feature titled *Women in Rock* that was released as a complete documentary after **Punk in England**, making this DVD a two-for-one. The same aesthetic used in **Punk in England** holds true in *Women in Rock*, so we get to look over Büld's shoulder as he follows the likes of Siouxsie Sioux, The Slits, and Girlschool. Poor Büld seemed to have a bit of a hard time with The Slits taking offense at a documentary called *Women in Rock*, with the notion that singling them out was connected to some type of "separate but equal" strategy for keeping them from holding the same importance as their male counterparts. Love it or hate it, these perspectives were helping to build on the "peace and love" ideals of the previous generation's folk musicians, to eventually spawn idealistic and politicized groups like Bikini Kill, Huggy Bear, and Bratmobile. Ironically, The Slits waste a lot of time protesting to Büld on camera, that they could have used actually stating their platform and broadcasting a call to action...

The tricky thing about **Punk in England** is that it really isn't about **Punk in England!** The bulk of the content here is related to new movements in music that were spinning out of England with force, including new wave, ska, and reggae. The Clash is almost used as glue between the first documentary and the content here, so Büld needed a better title to convey that he was expanding both his geography and his musical focus. There is a good thread during conversation with The Specials about how ska and reggae picked up on the punk aesthetic of working against conventional systems, and also about how the music was all in response to dysfunction in the English system. Youth culture was finding new outlets for expression, and the rise of ska especially reflected multicultural influences that Büld would focus on exclusively in his third documentary, *Reggae in Babylon*. Pick this up if only for its awesome treatment of the female rockers hitting the scene in England, including a just-about-to-break band called The Pretenders... **Punk in England** does a great job picking up from where Büld left off with *Punk in London*, even if his title does him a disservice. Not only are there many good performances and interviews captured here, but Büld clearly improved his technique quite a bit between the two films.



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