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Punk in England/London Reggae in Babylon

German documentary maker **Wolfgang Buld** began his career as a pop historian in the late 1970s with a trio of films on the increasingly influential British rock and reggae scenes. Even if the period has been fully explored in the interim, these DVD releases remain fun to watch today. That's because they captured a moment in time before the best of the bands found other ways to channel their raw creative energy and punk nihilism (a.k.a., being co-opted). The interviews aren't bad, but the real joy comes in watching such artists as the **Jam, Ian Dury, X-Ray Spex, The Adverts, Madness, The Clash, The Specials and Boomtown Rats** in their earliest incarnation.

Reggae in a Babylon documents how the rising Jamaican phenomenon was shaped to fit the tastes of rastas in exile and British audiences. **Bob Marley** and other reggae pioneers had already made their presence felt in England, but the musicians shown here were dealing with the same commercial realities that faced punk groups. Both genres were impacted, as well, by **Maggie Thatcher's** reactionary politics. As such, there was much cross-pollination of musical ideas. The evidence is all there to be seen on re-mastered discs.

- Gary Dretzka