

# DOXA film festival: Bloodied but Unbowed chronicles Vancouver's crazed punk scene of the '70s

BY JOHN MACKIE, VANCOUVER SUN MAY 7, 2010



Susanne Tabata with album covers from Vancouver punk era.

Photograph by: Jason Payne, PNG

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## Bloodied but Unbowed

With the Doxa Festival

Directed by: Susanne Tabata

Granville 7

May 13, 7 p.m.

## Doxa Documentary Film Festival

Friday until May 16

Various venues

Tickets and information: [doxafestival.ca](http://doxafestival.ca). Tickets are also available from Bibliophile Bookshop, 2010 Commercial Dr.; Biz Books, 302 W. Cordova Street; Videomatica, 1855 W. Fourth Ave.

VANCOUVER -- Vancouver's punk rock scene was pretty small back in 1978-79, probably a couple of hundred people, including fans.

But that scene was incredibly creative. It produced two of North America's top punk acts, DOA and the Subhumans, and three of the top new wave bands, the Pointed Sticks, Modernettes and Young Canadians. The top art band in the scene, UJ3RK5, produced three world-famous visual artists: Jeff Wall, Rodney Graham and Ian Wallace.

The producer of most of the great local punk and new wave records, Bob Rock, went on to produce Metallica, Bon Jovi and Aerosmith. Pointed Sticks manager Steve Macklam is now one of the world's biggest managers, looking after the careers of Diana Krall, Elvis Costello and Norah Jones, among others.

The scene even had a couple of legendary "cable access" video shows, Nite Dreems and Soundproof. Susanne Tabata was one of the Nite Dreems crew, and went on to produce and direct "subculture" documentaries on skateboarding (Skategirl) and surfing near Tofino (49 Degrees).

Now she's turned her lens on the Vancouver punk scene. Bloodied But Unbowed is a raucous look at the characters that created all that hubbub back in the late '70s. Foul-mouthed ne'er-do-wells like Joe "Shithead" Keithley, Gerry "Useless" Hannah and Randy "Rampage" Archibald, whose knack for bone-crunching riffs was matched by their knack for blunt, often humorous lyrics.

Three-and-a-half years in the making, the 75-minute documentary will make its debut next Thursday, May 13 at 8 p.m. at the Granville 7 as part of the DOXA documentary film festival.

"It doesn't profess to be the best music scene of its time," said Tabata. "But it's funny and it's authentic, and it's driven by characters that cannot be cast in a movie."

Characters like Zippy Pinhead (birth name, Bill Chobataur), a larger-than-life fellow who would be a gold medal contender if they had an Olympic event for partying. Zippy is blond, has giant lips and is blessed with a smile wider than the mighty Fraser, a combination that seemed to make him irresistible to punkettes back in the day.

At least that's what Zippy claims.

"He called himself the Gene Simmons of punk rock," laughs Tabata. "Who would go on camera and say to the world 'I had a different girl every night?' I vetted that clip with him before I included it. He goes 'Wow, I'd be honoured if you put that in.' He's not running from it, he's running at it."

The best moments in the film are when Tabata gets a bunch of the crack crew together to tell old war

stories. There's an utterly hilarious scene with DOA's Keithley and Rampage recalling the band's long-forgotten original singer, Harry Homo, who had lots of confidence but unfortunately no musical talent whatsoever.

"They really belong together onscreen," said Tabata of Keithley and Rampage. "That dynamic between the two of them ... it's a tempestuous relationship, [but] it sizzles, it works."

Tabata unearthed some amazing vintage clips for the movie, including Martyn Stubbs' footage of a legendary "anti-Canada Day" concert staged by anarchists in Stanley Park on July 1, 1978.

Being anarchists, they didn't believe in getting a permit, which presented a bit of a problem. When they arrived at Lumbermen's Arch to set up the show, they found somebody else was already there, so the leather jacket brigade wound up bouncing around the park until a Christian group gave up their picnic spot near the Hollow Tree. Whereupon the punks played songs like Disco Sucks, F--- You and Slave To My Dick.

Clips of the scene's many imaginative videos (mostly directed by Ed Mobray on his off-hours from CKVU's old Vancouver Show) are interspersed with live shots, including footage of the Pointed Sticks in the long-lost Dennis Hopper movie *Out of the Blue*. Modern-day interviews are mix-and-matched with old interviews, including some marvellous clips of Keithley. At one point he sums up his angst with "society is trying to fill my head with s---."

"Joe was born to have a camera on him," said Tabata. "From the inception of this scene, when anybody was taking film or videotape of him he was definitely camera-ready and camera-right. He did it, and he nailed it."

There is a sadness to the film, as well. Heroin killed off several of Vancouver's original punks. The scene's greatest songwriter, Art Bergmann, somehow survived years of drug and alcohol abuse, only to be stricken with arthritis that prevents him from playing guitar.

The hardest part of making the film was deciding what to leave out. Tabata said she has over 100 hours of outtakes. Many of the characters in the scene (Keithley, Rampage, Hannah, Zippy, Bergmann, Buck Cherry, Wimpy Roy, Randy Pandora, Frank Ramirez) are worth a documentary by themselves.

She knows the results won't please everyone.

"I'm going to be criticized, because I've turned the scene story into something that maybe leads more to the comedic," she said. "I will get that criticism and I accept that, but I think that's what carries the story the best."

There will be two versions of the film, the 75-minute theatrical release and an hour-long version that

will screen on the Knowledge network this fall. And she thinks it will have international appeal. When she approached punk icons like Henry Rollins and Duff McKagan of Guns N' Roses, they readily agreed to be interviewed for the movie, because they loved the Vancouver scene.

Alas, Keithley won't be able to make the premiere, because DOA is on tour in Europe. But the Godfather of Vancouver punk has sent his blessings.

"We shot a pre-recorded message, and it will lead the show," laughs Tabata.

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