



Positive Force: More Than A Witness; 30 Years Of Punk Politics In Action is a documentary that has more than just one face. On one hand you have an introduction or reprisal (for those who grew up in the D.C. area and knew of this particular chapter) of a grassroots organization which spearheaded charities and benefit shows for topics of all different kinds of nature. Then on the other hand you have a documentary about the bands that worked hand in hand with Positive Force to provide momentum and in most cases utilized the duality of their forces to provide a platform for change, in effect doubling their efforts to reach a wider audience for their causes.

Though I was pretty inspired by the coverage from the Positive Force half, I think I was more blown away by the bands who were involved with the organization and what they had to say. I look back on my experiences in the punk scene (and all that implies) and remember what an ass I was. Penny Rimbaud of CRASS is interviewed in the documentary and says something that I only realized in my late twenties, that each person is responsible and accountable for all the attitudes that come from their own head. I think that's a really important quote, especially for a scene so enveloped by youth.

The documentary talks a lot about why Positive Force was created by Mark Andersen and Mark Jenkins, two punk fans who were tired of the culture of violence and apathy consuming the punk scene. Looking back at my own life as a kid who was heavy into Ska music, which led me into more forward punk bands like Bad Religion and Minor Threat, I spent a lot of time trying to promote racial equality and did a lot of anti-war stuff, but eventually, as a teen, you have to face the material demons that come along with the age of not knowing who you are, what you really believe in, and all the extra stuff that may or may not be hurdles for everyone. Apathy and directionless explosions of violence happen, and when the music you love has a dark side, you win or lose by the choices you make, but it's so much easier to choose abandon rather than reason.

I was also blown away by the timeline in the documentary. We start at the beginning where bands are starting to make this huge political stance rather than just trying to live "The Great Rock and Roll Swindle". Subtly we move forward through time as Positive Force works with so many bands, even helping to create bands in the process, and into the MTV era and the grunge era and the era in which Punk explodes as this cellophane snug, mass produced, purposeless money scheme. At some points I'm watching the doc and thinking back on my youth, living through all these radical changes and the vaporizing power of corporate punk that numbed the movement, and then hearing it explained by the Positive Force campaign and the bands featured in the doc, it's an interesting mixture of enlightenment and vindication.

I wish that the documentary could have gone on a bit further and discussed the current climate of music and technology. With the birth of Myspace and Facebook bands have more of a platform than they ever did. With the birth of Bandcamp and crowd funding I wish the documentary would have commented on the over saturation of the free market and how that is either empowering or weakening the political music movement, or even just music in general. That would have made some interesting commentary.

In the end I was highly inspired by the documentary. It's like, I lived that, but I also never realized the full potential of what could be done with proper organization and direction. This is really a great documentary to have around in a day and age where inspiration has the ability to touch more people (the internet) and those people have the resources to do so much and reach so many. Amazing stuff. I highly recommend.

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