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Key words: punk cinema, New York, No Wave, television, music, concerts, political activism posters, 1970s, 1980s, film form, DIY esthetics, punk scene, public access cable TV.


Title: “Anti-everything”: punk cinema, music and politics as a symbiosis of negative means

Abstract: In The Foreigner (Amos Poe, 1978), punk modifies film form by, for example, breaking the continuity of space, giving up all attempts at realism in dubbed dialogue, or refusing the spectator any sense of depth because of exaggerated contrasts. Punk, in this film, is referred to via a TV show the main character is watching in his room at the Chelsea Hotel. The presenter says: “The problem with the punk rock bands [is that] they seem to have rejected all values; they are anti-everything”. This sentence brings together TV, music and cinema, and even political activism (on another level) since punk is “a problem” for society.

Punk films may be said to come at the end of a process that includes other media, namely handmade posters, flyers and fanzines and music gigs. Using Amos Poe’s The Foreigner and other films made in New York in the late seventies, this presentation will show how the aesthetics and issues of each media are all to be found in films. Of course, in this case, each layer, each representation or action, aims at undoing certain values and conventions. A very blatant one is musical knowhow, which punk bands utterly refuse. We contend that punk film is a symbiotic system that encompasses the diverse forms of refusal implemented by the punk movement in New York.