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Film and Concert Review: Youth Brigade, Punk legends, play Mercury Lounge

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Shawn Stern of Youth Brigade

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Back in the early days of [Punk Rock](#), the media often portrayed the scene as a bunch of violent knuckleheads getting wasted and slam-dancing one another right into the hospital. While it's true that some individuals engaged in fighting and debauchery, as they do in any kind of 'scene', and an unfortunate racist segment of the community tarnished the Skinhead image, there was actually much more to the whole way of life than the media let on at the time.

By focusing on the negative behaviors of the community, the media did the scene a complete disservice. What the news should have been talking about was how Punk Rock isn't just about fast music, circle pits, green hair and t-shirts bearing the anarchy symbol. There is actually a very productive core belief that was/is motivating the kids, which is: ignore the path of depressing conformity, be yourself, take charge of your own destiny, and go after your dreams. As prominent members of the [Los Angeles punk scene](#) in the early 1980's, that's just what brothers Adam, Mark and Shawn Stern did. Thankfully a documentary has been put together to recount their story and fill in the blanks that the news stations focusing on the dark side of the scene never did.

Sunday night the [Mercury Lounge](#) held a screening of "[Let Them Know: The Story Of Youth Brigade and B.Y.O. Records.](#)" The film tells the story of the Sterns' band [Youth Brigade](#), key figures of the fervid Los Angeles punk scene of the early 80's. Whether it was overseeing the makeshift punk commune "Skinhead Manor", putting on [massive shows](#) for the kids of L.A. or taking business matters into their own hands by forming [B.Y.O. \(Better Youth Organization\) Records](#), this band is a great example of what the punk movement was all about.

The band, and the L.A. scene altogether, aren't nearly as celebrated and talked about as much as other acts of the time, such as New York's [Ramones](#) and the UK's [Sex Pistols](#) and [The Clash](#). However, the film makes it clear that the punk world would not be the same without Youth Brigade or the scene it rose out of. And their influence didn't end with the heyday of the scene either. Though the label originated from that era, it has managed to carry on into the modern day punk scene as well, having put out [split records](#) featuring Hot Water Music/Leatherface, Alkaline Trio/One Man Army, Bouncing Souls/Anti-Flag, and of course the extremely popular NOFX/Rancid split. For a band that has been around long enough to have taken Social Distortion on their first major tour (documented in the movie "[Another State of Mind](#)"), maintaining relevance after 25+ years is quite an accomplishment. The film "Let Them Know..." serves as a history lesson to those who want to learn more about punk beyond what they overhear in between bands at [Warped Tour](#).

After the screening and opening sets by TV Tramp and The Scandals, the crowd was treated to a live performance from Youth Brigade. 30 years after the formation of the band, brothers Shawn and Mark Stern still form the backbone of the band and still sound as raw as they ever did. Hardcore punk fans spanning all ages came out to see the punk legends and mosh away the remaining hours of their weekend. Though it can't possibly compare to being at one of the Youth Brigade shows of the early 80's (but what could?), concertgoers still got a taste of history and a good ear-ringing that surely lasted into the morning.

For additional Youth Brigade screenings and tour date information, please visit their official [site](#).



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