



BIFF: Pang Nat Det (Punk Not Dead)

By J.B.

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Given the political corruption of Indonesia's political system and its traditional Islamic society, it is understandable how its younger generations, feeling repressed, would be so receptive to punk rock. Punk might be little more than a nostalgia trip in the West, but evidently Indonesia's scene is thriving, which is why the long-in-the-tooth German punk band Cluster Bomb Unit periodically tours there. It is one such tour that Andreas Geiger follows in his documentary, *Pang Nat Det (Punk Not Dead a.k.a. Punk im Dschungel)*, screening as part of the Brooklyn International Film Festival



Cluster Bomb Unit never really became huge, so do not be alarmed if you weren't previously hip to them. Still, despite living quiet suburban and rural lives, they periodically get together for shows and tours. Before leaving Germany, they play a gig for a few hundred uninspired listeners. During the tour they play for thousands of Indonesians moshing and rioting in front of them, which explains why they come. It is not for the money. During the tour, they crash at local punk collectives and receive no upfront guarantees, but they get rockstar treatment, of a sort, from their loyal fans and friends.

We hear a whole lot of Cluster Bomb Unit in performance. If you are a German punk enthusiast, this is the film for you, but if you are not already a fan, their music might not win you over. In German, punk sounds even more severe, and translated for subtitles, their lyrics read like self-parody. However, the band members seem very down-to-earth and good-natured when interacting with Indonesian punks when off-stage. They also appear genuinely interested in all aspects of their host country's culture, like guitarist Werner Nötzel, who buys some campy, but intriguing looking Indonesian pop on vinyl.

The initial set-up for *Pang* shows a lot of potential. Indeed, the visual images of big, grizzled German punks making their way through sleepy Indonesian villages are undeniably intriguing. Unfortunately, the film never really gets beyond the basic travelogue. Rather late in the film, Geiger does try to establish the local punks' credentials as political activists, particularly as advocates of an anti-consumerist D-I-Y campaign. (Ironically though, the punks seem quite enterprising, coordinating ambitious tours for clueless European bands.)

Geiger also seems to want to position punks within the Indonesian mainstream, recording one punk's Imam pronouncement that: "punks are good people." It is great that he is so accepting, but one wonders what kind of responses Geiger would have received had he polled twenty or thirty more Imams.

It is definitely fascinating to see this Indonesian sub-culture based on western music survive and even thrive. It is also encouraging to see Cluster Bomb Unit can still bring it loud and rude, but once you have those points, you largely got the entire film. It screens again as part of BIFF on Saturday at the Brooklyn Lyceum.

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