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## Filmmaker Blog

Wednesday, April 20, 2005

### PUNK TV

Danny Vinik's *TV Party*, a documentary about Glenn O'Brien's *TV Party*, the legendary public access TV show from the late-1970s, is among the many films premiering at this year's [Tribeca Film Festival](#).

According to the film's press release, "In [the late 1970s], two revolutionary trends emerged in New York City: public access TV and punk rock. Punk rock was about do-it-yourself television. Punk rock was about do-it-yourself music. These two phenomena were made for each other and they came together spectacularly in Glenn O'Brien's *TV Party*."

Capitalizing on the novelty and low cost of producing public access television, Glenn O'Brien, a columnist for Andy Warhol's *Interview* magazine, sought to create a weekly hour-long program that would feature a who's who of New York's downtown glitterati. Part variety show and part Happening, O'Brien modeled his offbeat show on Hugh Hefner's *Playboy After Dark* -- a TV show in the form of a party.

As O'Brien writes on the film's Web site: "The *TV Party* gang came together spontaneously. My best friends were Chris Stein, the guitarist of Blondie, Edo Bertoglio, a photographer, with whom I collaborated on many magazine jobs (and later on the film *Downtown 81*), and the film director [Amos Poe](#). Edo became a cameraman. Amos became the director. Chris became the show's co-host. [[Walter Steding](#) provided musical accompaniment to the madness at hand.] Chris and I had a lot of things in common: friends, music, art, drugs and delinquency. We were serious potheads and we were always trading buds and talking big ideas..."

"'[We described] *TV Party* [as] the show that's a cocktail party but which could also be be a political party.' That was the slogan. My idea," says O'Brien, "was that socialism meant going out every night, and that social action started with socializing. I think we were trying to inject a sort of tribal element into things. That's what happens when you smoke reefers and read Marshall



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McLuhan... I thought we could do subliminal politics as absurdist comedy. I actually did believe in anarchy, as the peaceful society that comes after the 'withering away of the state.' I thought withering away the state sounded like fun, so we made fun of the state every chance we got.



... "I guess it was punk TV," he adds. "We were anti-technique, anti-format, and anti-establishment. We liked to break all the rules of good broadcasting... They say 'dead air' is the kiss of death in broadcasting, but we liked it. Sometimes we would sit perfectly still, like a tape on pause, but it was live."

*Glenn O'Brien's TV Party* -- which featured appearances by Iggy Pop, David Bowie, Klaus Nomi, Debbie Harry, John Lurie, Tuxedo Moon, DNA, David Byrne, Jean-Michel Basquiat, hip-hop pioneers Fab Five Freddie and Funky Four Plus One, among many other guests -- ran for four years, from 1978-1982.

Following the screenings of *TV Party* at the Tribeca fest on April 27, 29 and 30, Brink DVD plans to release a limited edition 3-DVD box set on May 15 that will include Danny Vinik's feature documentary and two original episodes of *Glenn O'Brien's TV Party*. The documentary, produced by Kai Eric and Danny Ninik (*Spun*), includes interviews with Glenn O'Brien, Debbie Harry, Chris Stein, Walter Steding, Amos Poe, Arto Lindsay, Fred Brathwaite and company, along with hilarious footage from the original show.

A stand-alone episode of *TV Party*, *TV Party Crusades Show*, can also be purchased from Brink DVD.

# posted by Steve Gallagher @ 4/20/2005 12:11:00 PM

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Best TV show ever-Dave Letterman

# posted by Anonymous @ 7:23 AM

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