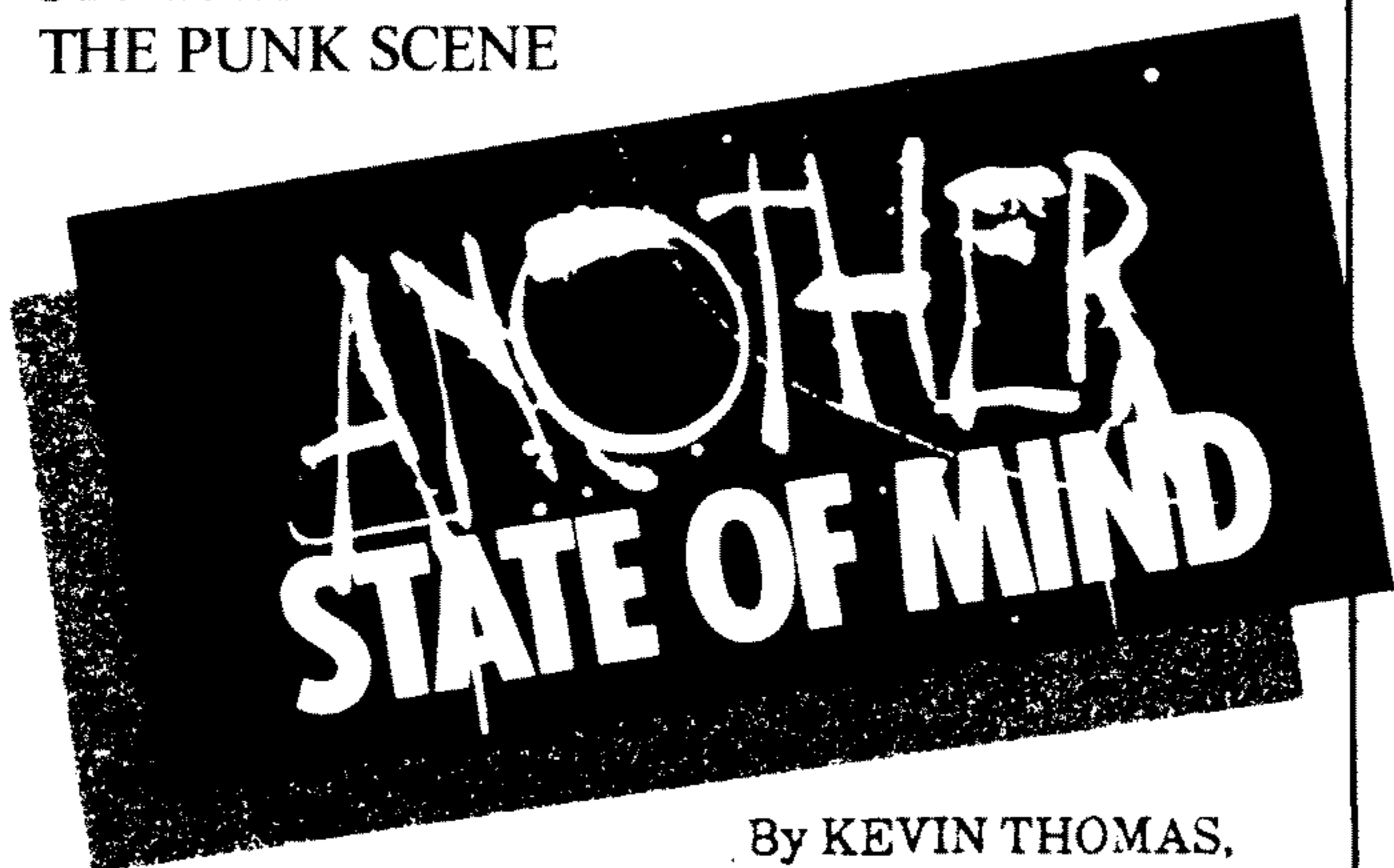


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SYMPATHETIC VIEW OF  
THE PUNK SCENE



By KEVIN THOMAS,  
*Times Staff Writer*

**R**ight at the beginning of the highly entertaining "Another State of Mind" (opening at the Lumiere Friday), it's clear that this is not going to be just another documentary on the punk scene. That's when Shawn Stern, in his opening remarks, tells us that punk is about power and energy and, above all, change—and not about "rolling around on glass."

Stern, in Los Angeles, is in the midst of organizing a cross-country tour in an old school bus with some fellow punk musicians. Luckily for us, enterprising film makers Peter Stuart and Adam Small went along for the ride and came back with an 88-minute film that is not so much about music but about what a great many disaffected young people all over the United States and Canada are thinking.

While these 11 young men might not be mistaken for members of Youth for Christ—although they do encounter (with respect) a group of "born-again" punks—they embark on their tour idealistically, determined to make music for pure joy and communication and not for profit. What emerges is a large-scale portrait of young people engaged, not in the nihilism and despair of heavy drugs and violence, but in striving to create a far-flung alternative community in which they feel they can become whomever they wish. (Those freaky haircuts, clothes and makeup are, however, perhaps more badges of identification than true self-expression, regardless of what these young people have to say about their appearances.) Most come from broken homes and feel disenchanting with the traditional American dream, not to mention our current national leadership.

One young man protests the assertion that punk is breaking down the family system by suggesting that there's nothing left to destroy. By the time they've gone 10,000 miles, their bus, which had "only 90,000 miles on it" when they started, conks out in downtown Washington. The tour is beginning to conk out, too. The musicians are getting on one another's nerves, they're practically broke and the lucrative lure of Los Angeles, where they can easily find work, begins to cast its spell. But by and large they seem without regrets. They've had some good times and they've discovered, reassuringly, a kind of extended family out there, groups of musicians willing to take them in and put them up everywhere they've gone.

"Another State of Mind" is actually endearing, encouraging even, rather than decadent—even the slam-dancing, although admitted by some to be potentially dangerous—is seen by the punks as a pleasurable, healthy way of working off aggression. And we meet some memorable people, like Valerie, the beautiful Baltimore girl with a shaved left temple, who has left a bad family life and a troubled past to go her own way and who says of her actually quite striking appearance, "I believe people should sculpt themselves to express the way they feel."



Ten years from now the people of "Another State of Mind" quite likely will be in another state of mind themselves. Obviously, this documentary is not the whole story of the punk scene nor does it purport to be. But it is a record of young people capable of thinking for themselves and, as such, is heartening.

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