



SOMETIMES LIFE HANDS YOU A...



View in a Great Prune Orchard of 300
Santa Clara Valley, California

Heavy Lemon

Hello.

My name is Chris. I've been playing in bands and booking shows in San Jose, CA for my entire adult life at this point. I've lived in "punk houses", toured around the US, ran a small record label, booked some big shows, booked some really small shows, and after all this I think I've learned a lot. I love talking about music and DIY, and I love sharing the knowledge I've gained through my experiences with people who want to do all of the things I mentioned above.

As I've gotten older, I've realized that there isn't much documentation about how to survive as an independent DIY artist that isn't tied to the digital realm. I can't shake this nagging thought that all of this will live and die in my head. I learned a lot from random zines I would pick up on the road, and from oral history passed down from old heads trying to impart wisdom from their successes and failures. Now I see that knowledge hidden behind paywalls and patreons instead of being distributed for free. So now I'm writing a zine because that's the only thing I know how to do: do it myself.

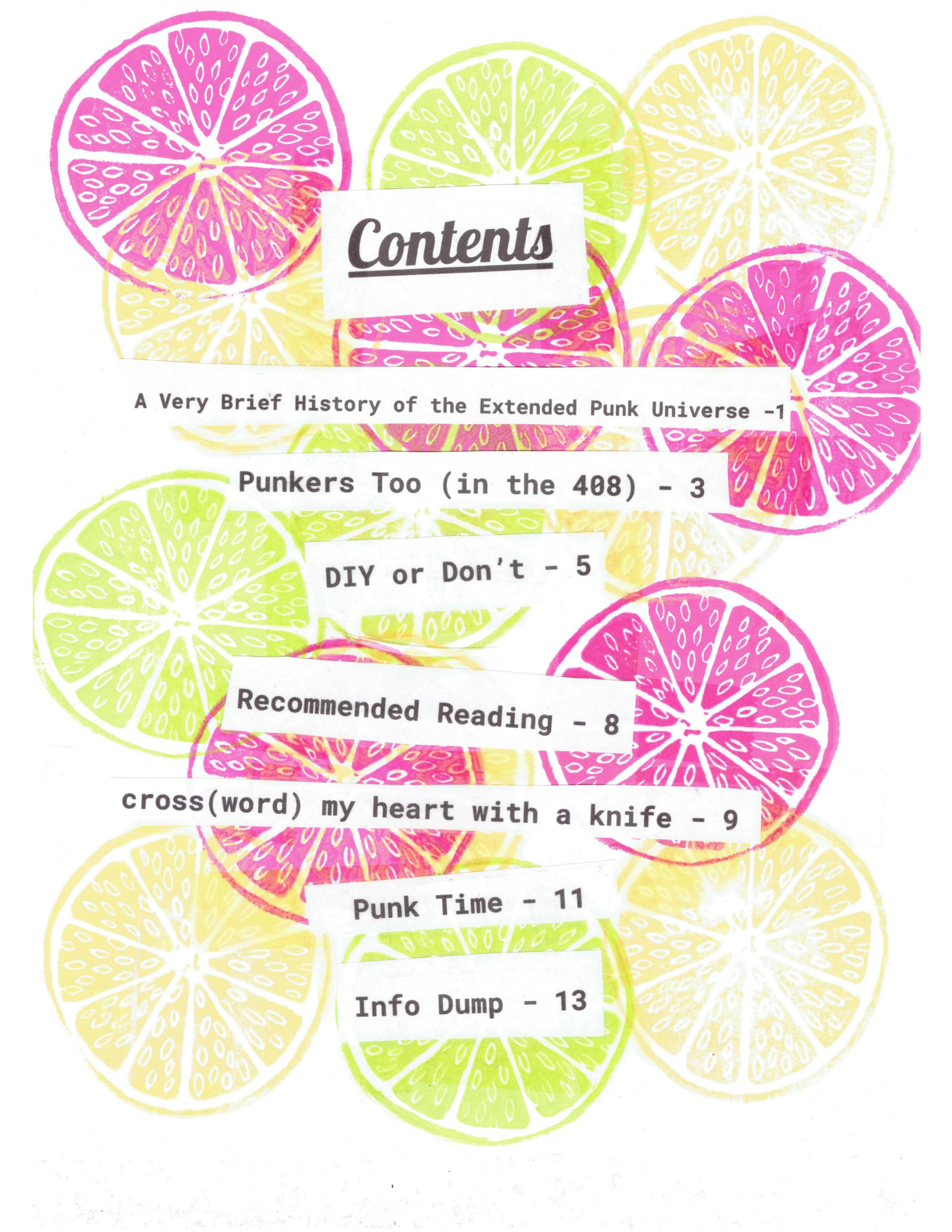
The saying goes something like "When life throws you lemons, you gotta make lemonade." The "lemons" in our lives can be anything from a tire pressure light to making that last \$50 in your bank account stretch the rest of the week so you can eat. Maybe you just stubbed your toe, or maybe you lost someone really close to you. Some of these lemons are easy to make lemonade out of. It's an easy squeeze and the juice is sweet. Some of these lemons are heavier to carry and harder to process. When life throws you a heavy lemon you're going to need some friends to help give it a big ol' squeeze.

This is the philosophy I want to share when it comes to DIY. The communities I've been a part of have changed my life in ways I don't think I ever could have foreseen. The friends I've had for 10+ years, the unrepeatable experiences of musical performances, even my current career would all have been lost to me without being part of the amazing San Jose DIY communities. At the end of 2019 there were packed shows spread across houses, art galleries, restaurants and community centers of all types of bands and genres. It truly felt like the beginning of a golden age for punk in San Jose. People were beginning to do some really amazing things.

I am writing this during the third year of the pandemic, a giant lemon we are all dealing with on a global scale. We have been extremely lucky in San Jose to be able to continue to have all ages shows in some form after lockdown, but it is evident that the DIY infrastructure that existed before is largely gone now. For the first show back in June of 2021, members of the bands literally built a stage in a parking lot to have the show for over 2000 people. This was a legendary achievement, a moment that will echo throughout punk history. It showed the depth of San Jose DIY punk culture and ingenuity all in one day. It was easy to forget that we were all in a dirty parking lot instead of one of the many show spaces of only a few years ago. On the drive home I wondered if there would ever be a time in San Jose DIY music again the way I remembered it being before the pandemic.

So this is my first step to try to help rebuild that something, if only just to share some thoughts and knowledge that might help whether it's someone that wants to start a band or a record label or whatever. Hopefully there will be a time where that won't be so hard to do in the near future.

Thank you for reading. If you were forced to pay money for a digital version of this zine you got scammed.



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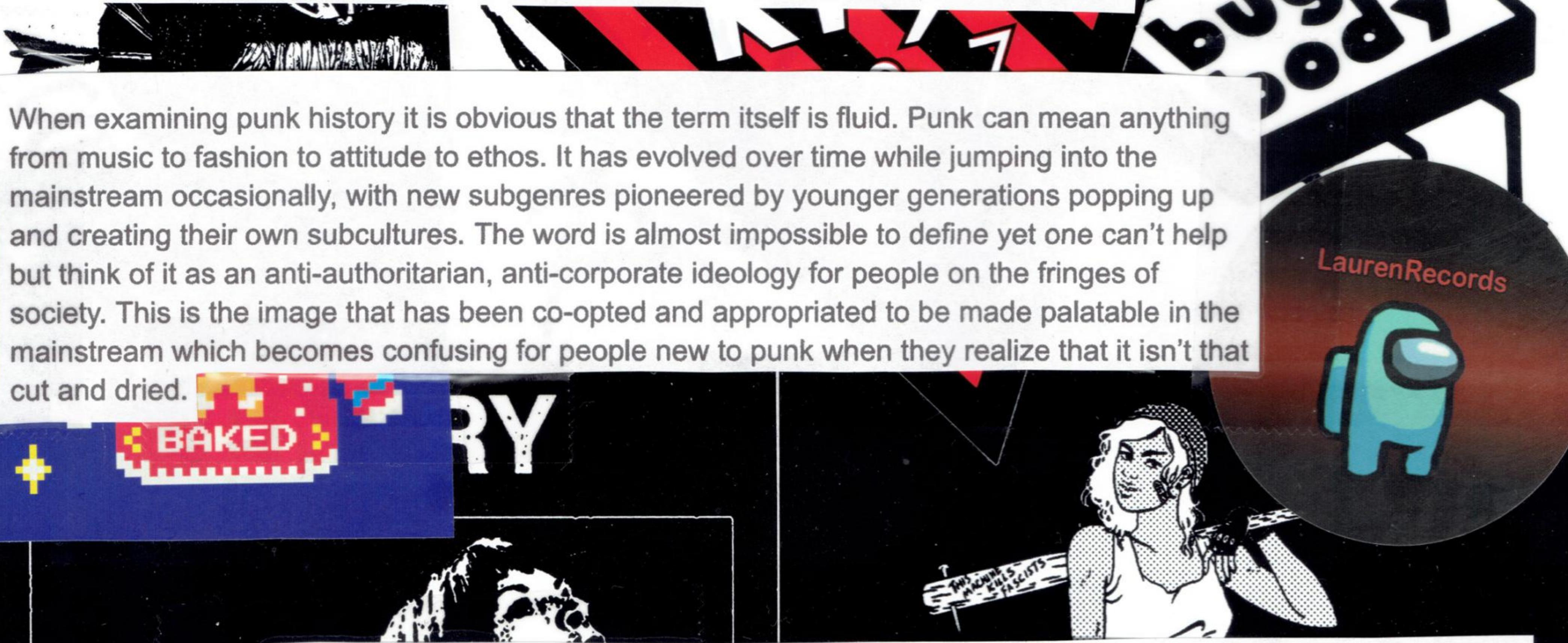
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RAFA'S TACOS

A Very Brief History of the Extended Punk Universe

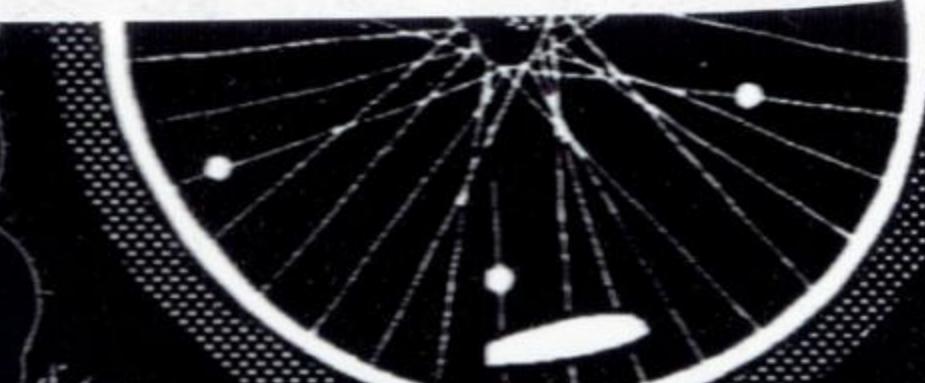
Before we get started, I just want to address some issues people may have with this article. Punk history is an incredibly nuanced topic and there is no way to cover all facets of it in just one sitting. For this reason I am intentionally vague and leave out a lot of detail as I believe it distracts from the overall purpose, which is to provide context for DIY punk philosophy. If you are looking for lists of influential bands and their respective genres there are many books and videos available that can fill in the blanks better than I can.

Over 40 years ago the DIY punk movement was created by young people who pioneered a new era of music philosophy. Many folks see 1976 as the year punk broke into the mainstream, with early punk musicians emulating the style and energy from musicians like Little Richard and James Brown. It would be fair to say that while the methods, genres, and bands have evolved over that time the central ethos is the same: create some kind of system outside of the corporate gatekeeping structures that controlled the music industry. While some of the first DIY bands were punk and hardcore bands, the philosophy has been adopted all across the world in many shapes and forms and as a result impacts many different cultures and musicians.



For years there has been a stigma for bands and musicians for wanting to pursue success by pandering to the industry. The punk philosophy purists of the 1980s and 90s set a precedent by creating music that was so anti-mainstream at the time that they believed it could never be sold by the major labels to the average consumer. Some of these bands created their own labels to release their music (ie Black Flag / SST Records, NOFX / Fat Wreck Chords,) which in turn also allowed them to create infrastructure for independent bands to tour, which is the most effective way for bands to expose and sell their music. For decades the anarchist punk movement grew steadily in popularity and from it stemmed new bands with new sounds that would become blueprints for many of the genres we are familiar with today. By the late 80s and early 90s the industry had taken notice of the growing popularity and found a way to sell it.

NO RELIEF

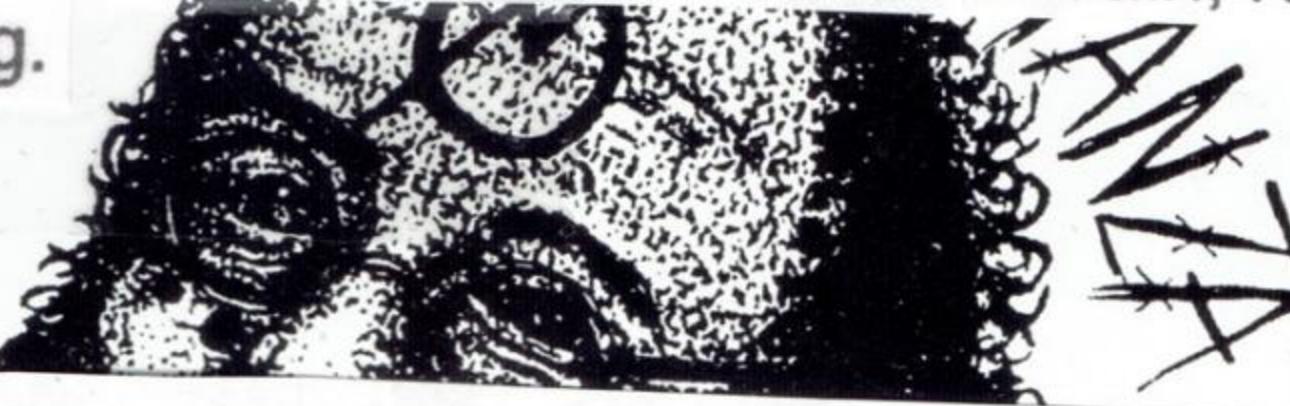


DECIMINALIZE SEX WORK

Major labels had been trying to capture these pioneering bands who for the most part stubbornly stayed independent. It isn't hard to understand why artists weren't exactly thrilled with corporate attention, as corporate record labels were notorious for locking bands into exploitative contracts that limited their artistic freedom. The rock and pop industry had plenty of practice with the hair metal bands of the 70s and 80s to create vicious formulas that maximized profits and maintained their brand through exploitation of artists. While there had been some punk bands that signed to major labels during their careers, none really became "household names" in America. In 1991, the band Nirvana signed to DGC records (a subsidiary of Geffen Records) and released the album that would bring grunge (a new and exciting music genre) squarely into the mainstream.

PIAG

The release of *Nevermind* catapulted the Seattle trio to near Beatles level of popularity. Nirvana became the face of a generation searching for an identity and brought the punk lifestyle into the spotlight. The grunge movement in the Pacific Northwest had all the infrastructure built by punk bands and indie labels. It had a healthy scene bursting with potential and plenty of inspiration from the last decade to draw upon. The stage had been set for years but it was the first time the "Independent to Mainstream" pipeline was fully realized. A band could feasibly go from playing warehouses and house shows to playing festivals and arenas. Within a few years after their meteoric rise the band would end with the death of Kurt Cobain, reinforcing the punk philosophy of living fast and dying young.



Thank You

A new precedent was set with grunge breaking into the mainstream. Breakout moments became the goal for many bands even if it wasn't articulated as such, and mostly seen as a social faux pas. As time passed musicians got tired of being broke and sleeping on floors, they wanted to get paid for their hard work. Even the most outspoken popular independent musicians eventually would cave to promises of paychecks and tour support, usually to the chagrin of their friends and fans. For some it took their music careers to new heights and for others it was the beginning of the end. Despite all of this controversy and chaos, a path had been laid for future artists to follow if they wanted to make it big. And yet for some the fight to preserve independent music culture became a way of life, forever chasing the feeling of raw genuine joy crammed into a small sweaty room with your best friends.

practicing
sincerity

It left a

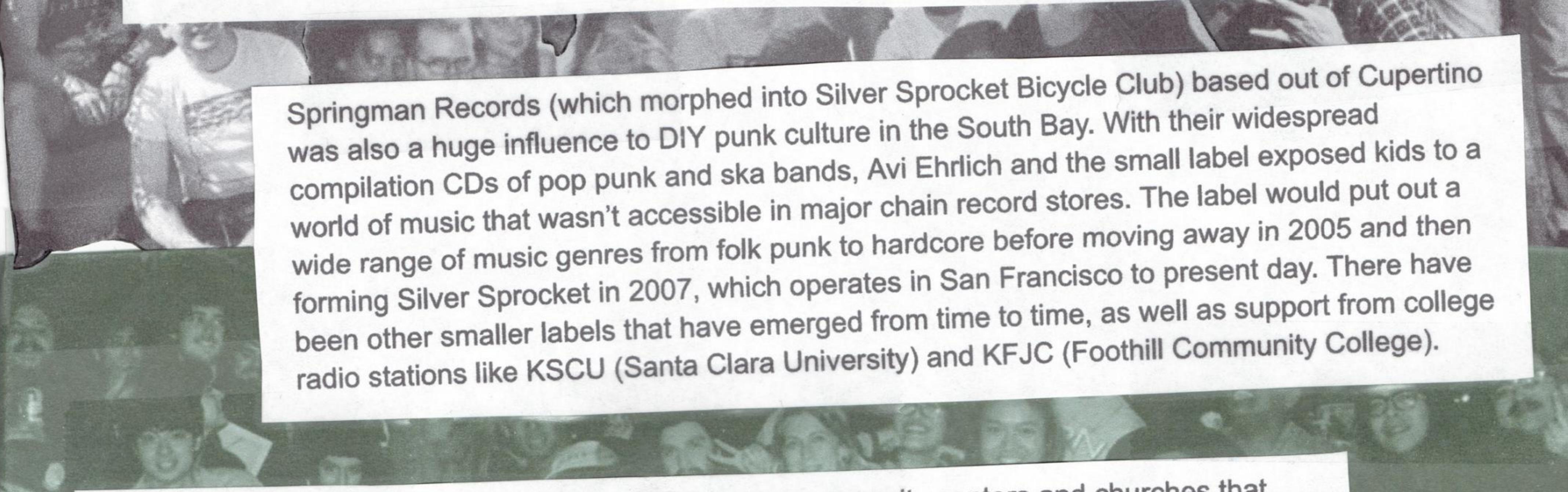
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Punkers Too (in the 408)

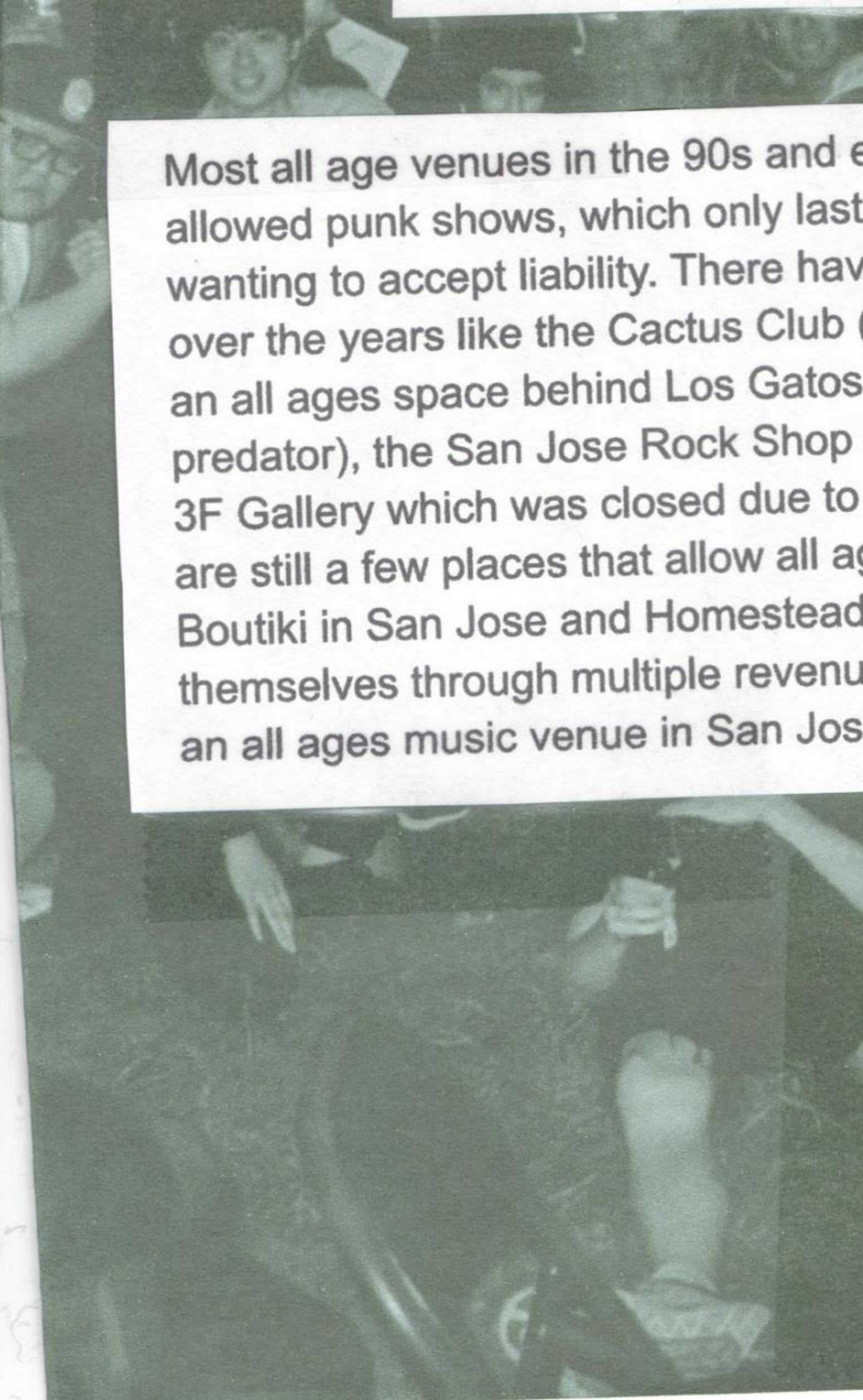


The DIY music culture in San Jose, California has a rich history spanning back to the late 1980s and early 90s, with the explosion of ska and pop punk in the Bay Area. Asian Man Records (an

independent DIY record label originally called Dill Records) was started by Mike Park out of his parent's garage and is active to this day. Asian Man has inspired multiple generations in the 30+ years they have been releasing records and introduced thousands of people to DIY culture. In many ways, Asian Man Records and Mike Park are an embodiment of what fully embracing the DIY punk philosophy can look like if you are willing to put in the years and years of work.



Springman Records (which morphed into Silver Sprocket Bicycle Club) based out of Cupertino was also a huge influence to DIY punk culture in the South Bay. With their widespread compilation CDs of pop punk and ska bands, Avi Ehrlich and the small label exposed kids to a world of music that wasn't accessible in major chain record stores. The label would put out a wide range of music genres from folk punk to hardcore before moving away in 2005 and then forming Silver Sprocket in 2007, which operates in San Francisco to present day. There have been other smaller labels that have emerged from time to time, as well as support from college radio stations like KSCU (Santa Clara University) and KFJC (Foothill Community College).



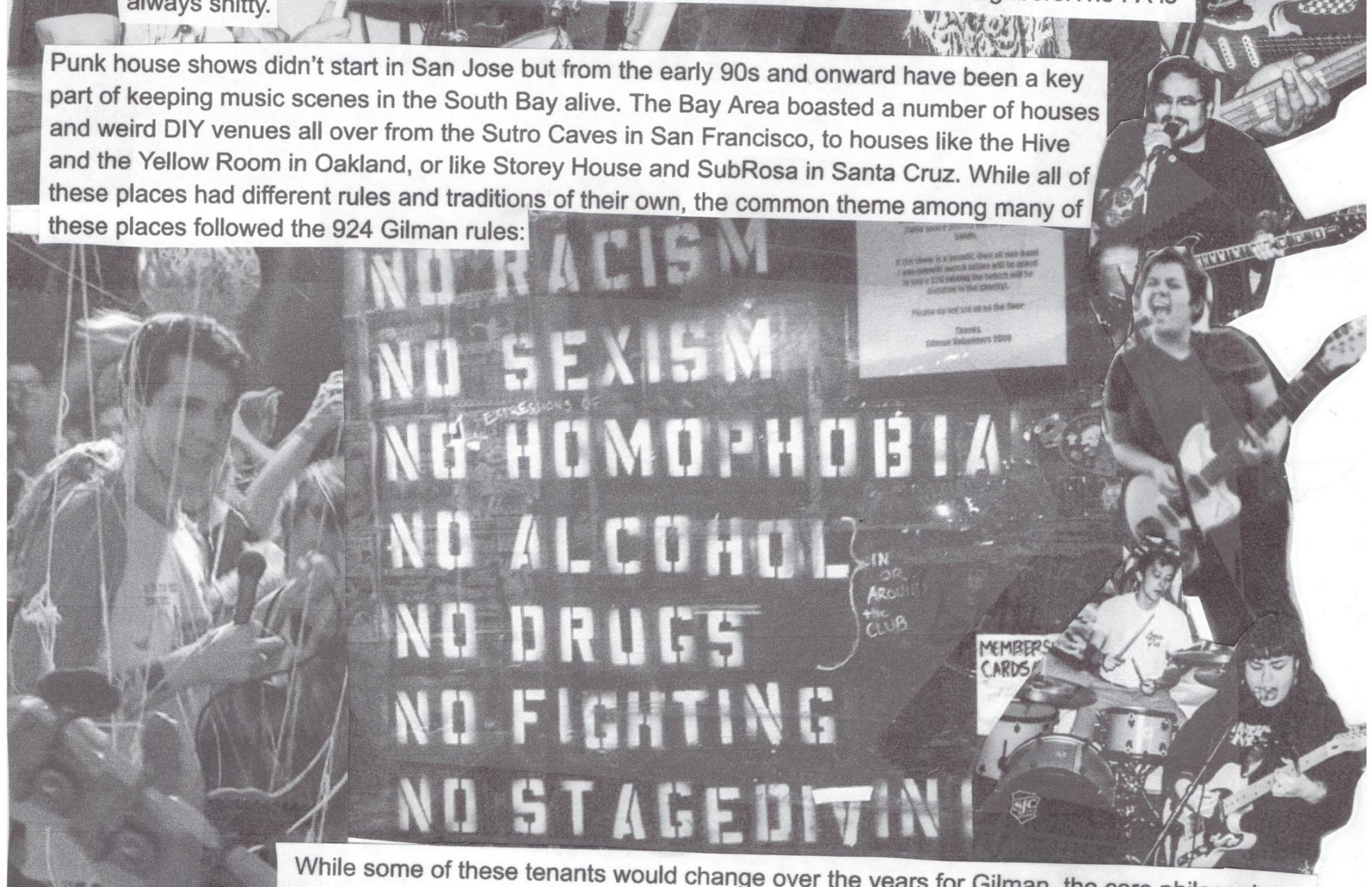
Most all age venues in the 90s and early 2000s were community centers and churches that allowed punk shows, which only lasted a few years before most of these organizations stopped wanting to accept liability. There have also been dozens of all ages venues that have popped up over the years like the Cactus Club (now a nightclub), the Los Gatos Outhouse (aka the Venue, an all ages space behind Los Gatos High School closed in 2009 due to an incident with a predator), the San Jose Rock Shop which closed in 2015 (it is now a gym), and most recently 3F Gallery which was closed due to the pandemic and is now a techie toy repair shop. There are still a few places that allow all ages shows, namely Playback Studios in San Jose, the Art Boutiki in San Jose and Homestead Bowl / X Bar in Cupertino which are able to sustain themselves through multiple revenue sources within their businesses. It's no secret that opening an all ages music venue in San Jose is difficult despite the high demand for one.

But San Jose punks are resourceful and have managed to create their own all ages show spaces in the places they live and work. This is where you will find the deepest part of San Jose punk culture: in the living rooms, garages and backyards crammed full of excited people dancing to a band most people have never heard of yet. These places are clandestine by necessity, but somehow still able to get plenty of people in to see less well known but in some cases purely amazing.



The formula for a DIY house show is usually pretty simple: bands play in whatever relatively empty space is available to them (sometimes in basements or garages, sometimes in living rooms). These shows are usually organized by folks that live at the houses who take donations for the bands that are playing. Touring bands tend to get the majority of the donation money, with local bands taking whatever is left or donating their portion to the touring band as well. Early on houses posted their addresses on flyers, later the phrase "ask a punk" was adopted to protect shows from getting preemptively shut down by cops or conservative neighbors. The PA is always shitty.

Punk house shows didn't start in San Jose but from the early 90s and onward have been a key part of keeping music scenes in the South Bay alive. The Bay Area boasted a number of houses and weird DIY venues all over from the Sutro Caves in San Francisco, to houses like the Hive and the Yellow Room in Oakland, or like Storey House and SubRosa in Santa Cruz. While all of these places had different rules and traditions of their own, the common theme among many of these places followed the 924 Gilman rules:



While some of these tenants would change over the years for Gilman, the core philosophy would stick with multiple generations of young punks who would get to pick and choose what parts would best fit their communities. Some punk houses in San Jose include Locust House, House of the Dead Rat, Trash House (aka House of the Dead 2), Texas Toast House, Hi Jinx House, Cuddle Space, Kitty Castle and so many more. One of the most romantic aspects of DIY punk culture is that it largely exists in our memories and a few photos, but it makes it harder to be accessible to the next generation of folks who want to create their own little piece of it.

DIY or DON'T

A discouraging aspect of being an artist in modern times is that it has become harder to make a living from your art in a meaningful or structured way. Most bands rely on two main sources of revenue: physical/digital music royalties and selling merch. Selling physical copies of your music (tapes, CDs, vinyl) was the main goal for most artists until digital media was created. The freedom of the internet introduced new ways of sharing and accessing music (P2P, torrenting, streaming services) but was regulated over time by major labels to protect their revenue streams. The strategy of most corporate labels or production companies has been to control the distribution of physical and digital media, often letting the artist take the risk of blowback from a failed investment. Even moderately successful indie labels are tainted with stories of artists not being paid for their royalties, being forced to pay for the cost of their own records, or having to buy back the rights to their own masters after a shady contract. Yet for most serious artists the only path to any kind of sustainability in a reasonable amount of time is through a record label.

Every artist has the leverage of the art they create. The value of that art is measured by popularity, which can be driven from a number of factors not limited to but including: the art is inspiring and original (ie "good", very rare), nepotism (most common), or pure resilience (ie grind it out and grow your audience slowly over time) and in modern times how much social media reach your "brand" is able to generate. The way an artist operates usually depends on how they arrive at their level of popularity and there is a wide spectrum of practices between a fully independent artist to an indoctrinated industry artist. Emulating industry strategies can seem like the most straightforward approach for most artists because it fits the mainstream perception of how entertainment is manufactured. Originally this would mean sending your work to a major label hoping they would take a chance and give you a bunch of money. In modern times it generally means trying to get a song on a popular playlist curated and promoted by a corporate label or platform. Depending on the contract, working with a corporation usually means more money, more opportunities, and mainstream distribution of your art. **It can't be stressed enough that this is far from the typical or even likely outcome for most artists.**

The other side of the spectrum is a myriad of possibilities and philosophies but there is a tried and true way to becoming a successful independent artist: perform your art as much as you can. Live performances are something only an artist can do; no corporation can produce live content without an artist. The way that we consume entertainment today is largely through streaming services, however as we saw over the early years of the pandemic even streamed live events were a poor substitute for live music. It is the most direct way to get people to experience your art and the greatest opportunity to make a direct sale of your music and merch. The live entertainment industry is related to but separate from the larger music industry, with many different types of jobs and expertise required to keep a varied and complex network of venues, printmakers, promoters and organizers all operating in different capacities. The larger establishments are often owned or partnered with larger corporations, while smaller clubs and venues cater more to up and coming artists. At the very bottom of this hierarchy are local DIY scenes and communities, making the least amount of money with the least amount of security.

San Jose

FOUNDED 1777

CITY LIMIT POP.

UNEMPLOYABLE

For many people, DIY is where you begin your art "career". Often communities will form around an artist or group of artists who in turn start to create local infrastructure if it doesn't exist already. This usually means finding a place to host events (live shows, art shows, plays etc) and then finding people to come to the events. If you are new to your town and don't know many people it might be pretty slow at first until folks start to take notice, especially if you rely on word of mouth and social media for promotion. The best way to grow your audience is to get involved in your local scene: book shows in your hometown if you have the space for it, offer touring bands a place to crash if they don't have a place to sleep, buy merch from local artists, or just show up to local events if you can't help in a more direct way. People at this level recognize the support they receive because their interactions within their communities are more intimate than say, an artist trying to attract corporate attention. Setting up a small show for your friends and having a fun time is an incredibly rewarding experience. However, just because an artist is "DIY" doesn't mean they should not try to make money from the sale of their art.

The stigma with success within punk is centered around "selling out" which has become a catch all term for any artist attempting to increase their reach and revenue, presumably by compromising their art and vision to achieve monetary success. This is especially true of artists that choose to mimic corporate marketing strategies to create more of a brand with their art, or artists that choose to work with an agent or some kind of outside management. Over the years the line has blurred between what is acceptable for an independent artist to do to market themselves and what is expected of an artist that chooses to work within the industry. It's important to recognize that commerce and exploitation (which have a heavy relationship within capitalism) can and should be mutually exclusive. An artist does not need to use DIY communities as stepping stones on their "road to success", but that doesn't mean it hasn't become a standard practice for most industry minded people.

Building up your community and the folks within it will come with its own rewards. You will meet new people with stories and experiences to share, and with those relationships you find yourself building a support network that extends outside of your local art scene. Touring bands are always in need of a place to play, and will repay their gratitude in most cases by returning the favor in their towns. Finding jobs or like minded people to live with becomes more accessible, and you may find yourself in a career you truly love as a result. Strong communities provide some real benefits for people that are often overlooked because they are varied and unstructured, but no less important to quality of life. Above all, it creates space for people where they can feel like they belong and are supported. The more people give to their communities, the stronger everyone becomes over time.

This isn't to say that this is a foolproof recipe for a healthy scene. Every city is different with its own share of challenges and obstacles. There is no guarantee of monetary success or safety within a community, which is no different than the rest of the world. This is a constantly evolving ethos and conversation we must be critical of in order to grow. All we can do is learn and try to do better while inspiring younger generations to continue the punk tradition of creating space for art that cannot exist in the mainstream. Anything worth doing is going to require some thought and effort.

It's fun to learn about success stories and the early days of bands like Black Flag or Green Day and add that context to your own community. Witnessing some of the most legendary moments happen to ordinary people is inspiring. Maybe you find yourself sitting in your car thinking "I want to be part of this. I want to do something that makes me feel alive." but you have no idea where to begin. The good news for you is that punk isn't just being in a band and playing shows! There are many ways to navigate within the DIY realm and being a musician is the merely the most common path. Organizers and promoters, zine makers, artists, photographers, designers, screen printers etc all have a place within the larger community of creatives. Bands would simply not survive without the support of creative people, and so naturally DIY punk communities are often made up of diverse groups of people with many different skills and expertise. You don't ever have to wait for permission, you can always do it yourself.

Thank you for reading if you made it this far. I hope this helps in some way, shape, or form to inspire folks into doing more, whether that is find or start their own communities or become more active in the community we have in San Jose. The next volume will be centered around starting a band and booking a tour for the first time, as well as some more insight from artists in our community.

Credits:

Cover art illustration by Saoirse Alesandro

Pg 1 Stickers: Rafa's Tacos, Gezan, KFJC, Bug Body, Entry, Lauren Records, Silver Sprocket Bicycle Club, Full of Hell

Pg 2 Stickers: Novela, @gravewine, Silver Sprocket Bicycle Club, Plague Walker, Great Hart, George Crustanza, Middleman Records, Lauren Records, Practicing Sincerity, Superworld, Signals Midwest

Pg 5 and 6 collages created by Myron Fung (@fungipower) as limited run posters.

Punk Time illustration by Saoirse Alesandro

Layout, design, and words by Chris Gough

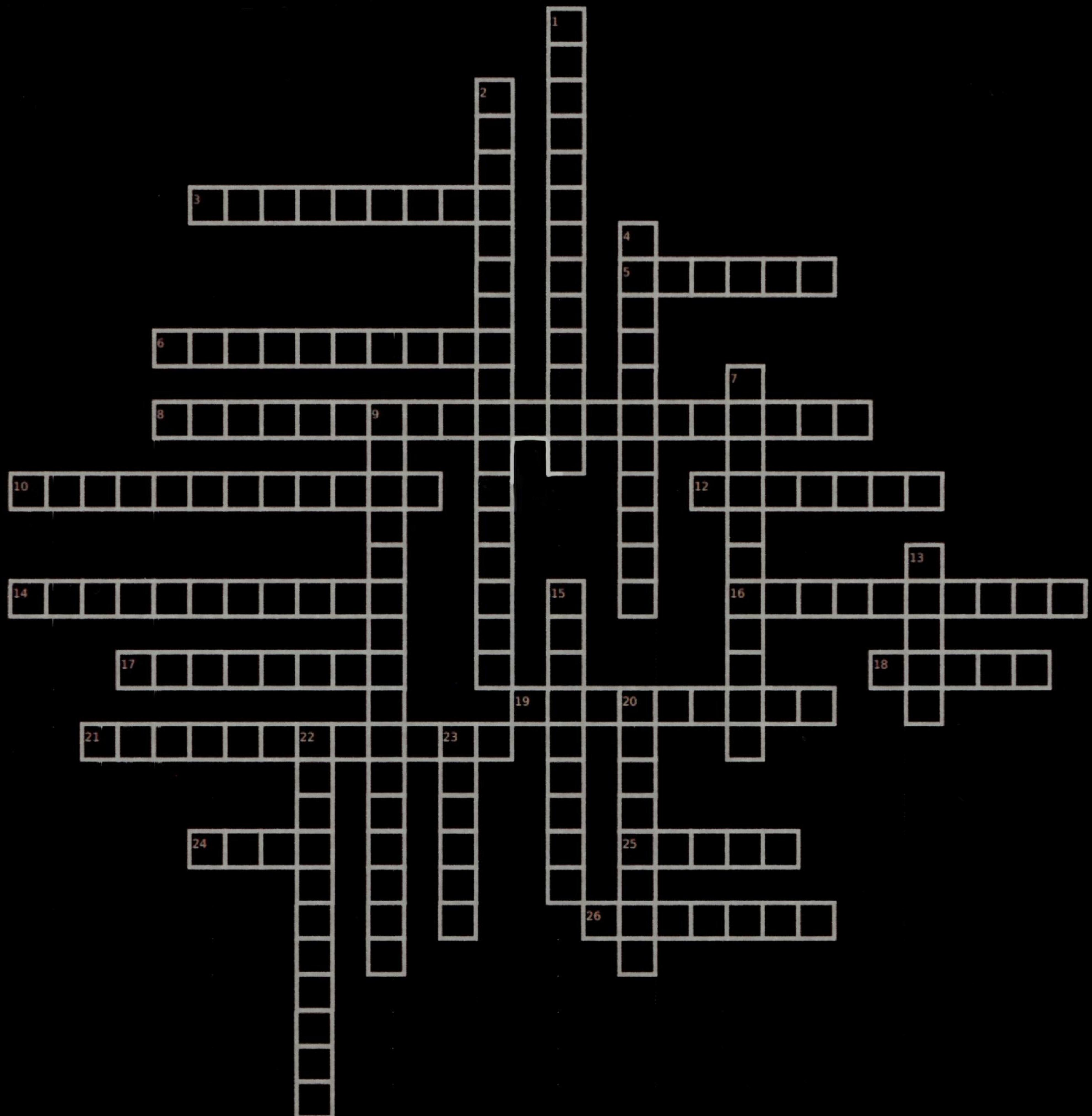
Recommended Reading

Our Band Could Be Your Life by Michael Azerrad - For a lot of folks I know this book opened their eyes to DIY punk culture. For myself, I felt like this created context to all of the weird traditions and rules around shows or being in bands which people still follow today. Azerrad serves as an entertaining narrator through the history of 13 influential bands in the 80s that essentially created the infrastructure for independent bands and labels to operate outside corporate structures today. In all it's horror and glory of those early days of hardcore punk music there is a lot of information and wisdom in these pages that is really easy to absorb. It made me want to get a Black Flag tattoo after reading it (I didn't).

Sellout by Dan Ozzi - This book is relatively new, but in many ways feels like the spiritual sequel to *Our Band Could Be Your Life*. The format is much the same, with Dan Ozzi telling the story of bands from the 90s and early 00s journey to releasing their first albums on major labels. Ozzi covers a variety of bands from that time from Green Day to Jimmy Eat World to My Chemical Romance. For many elder millennials this is nostalgia central, as for many 90s kids this music was all they heard on the radio and then later downloaded on Napster once the internet became more accessible. While the book focuses on major league debuts, the most interesting part to me is how these bands came up. It serves as a roadmap to what success (or ruin) can mean in the music industry and why modern day artists maybe aren't as adverse to "selling out" as people were in the past.

Meet Me in the Bathroom by Lizzie Goodman - These three books were fun to read together, as *Meet Me in the Bathroom* covers the NYC scene from 2001 to 2011. To be honest, this book was extremely difficult to follow at first because it is essentially a series of interviews from dozens of people spliced together to fit around the same subject matter. I had to sort of imagine it as a documentary where a bunch of people give their two cents about something and the screen would show them talking with a little caption to tell you who they were. There is a list of "cast members" in the beginning of the book which I found myself flipping to constantly. The insight of eyewitness accounts is incredibly compelling, as you get the thoughts and memories from the people in and around bands like the Strokes and Yeah Yeah Yeahs of that time in their lives. While not "DIY punk" stories the book paints a beautiful picture of rock music in the 2000s that seemingly came out of nowhere if you can embrace the unique format of the narrative.

CROSS(WORD) MY HEART WITH A KNIFE



ACROSS

- 3 - modern screamo trio from Illinois
- 5 - this band was half of the highly memeable skull split
- 6 - this Bay Area band shares a name with a fault line
- 8 - this band had 8 years in between their first and second full length release
- 10 - where the bereaved go for moons over my hammy
- 12 - this Bay Area band started and ended with the same members in 2013
- 14 - this band shares a name with this *Alien* actor
- 16 - this Swedish band disbanded in 2018 after 13 years of playing together.
- 17 - this city is considered by many to be the screamo capital of the US
- 18 - classic Saetia lyric there is no _____ here
- 19 - this band shares a name with a tragic character from the film "Dead Poet's Society"
- 21 - the other half of the skull split
- 24 - this album by Ostraca did not live up to its name
- 25 - despite their vocal style, this band is anti-birds
- 26 - this band has released over 60 songs since 2016

DOWN

- 1 - this band played over 90 shows in 2019
- 2 - minute hour day week month year
- 4 - this band has been a part of nearly 42 releases
- 7 - this southern California band shares a drummer with 3 other bands
- 9 - this chaotic sassy band was best known for their dual vocalists
- 13 - the English translation for this band's first release is "water"
- 15 - Popular Raien sing-along - this is my _____
- 20 - this band shares a name with a fictional fantasy character
- 22 - this band's original name was "Brother Bear"
- 23 - the spiritual successor to Orchid



Paranoid Void at 3F Gallery
February 5th 2020
San Jose, CA

Punk Time

It was a rare rainy evening in San Jose the night we were blessed by the three angels in Paranoid Void, a mathrock band from Japan. The last minute show had been thrown together only a week prior to fill a hole in the band's schedule. The space itself, 3F Gallery in Japantown, was a small art space that shared a building with three other businesses with barely enough room for the band and their instruments. The bass player and drummer both wore the shirts the band was selling on a small folding table outside the gallery door. Most of the art had been removed to avoid damage to any of the fragile pieces save for a few more permanent installations and posters nailed to the plywood wall.

The damp showgoers crowded into every available corner in the room, completely surrounding the three women preparing to play. People waiting in the bathroom line in the hallway behind the band ended up in some of the best places in the room to witness the show. The guitarist leaned towards the microphone to softly call out "We are Paranoid Void, thank you for coming..." to the eruption of cheers from the crowd. The band shared a surprised laugh at the response, and then began to play as the noise from the audience faded.

The song starts with a slow complex dance between guitar and bass, gradually stretching out to an arpeggiated guitar build up to a soaring verse. The faces of the audience are rapt with a dreamlike expression as if drawn into a trance by the music. The rhythm section is perfectly in sync, playing around the drone of the repetitive guitar riff imposing itself in the mix. Suddenly the dynamic shifts to a funky duet between drum and bass, an impressive display of musicianship and skill. The audience snaps out of the reverie and gently nod their heads in unison, eyes locked on the bass player as her fingers flew across the fretboard with each unique fill.

The guitar starts to creep back in with a few perfectly placed chords before taking the reins on the lead from her bandmate. The meandering riff that follows flows around the rumbling bass lines and staccato rhythm of the drums, each successive part pushing the listeners along the river of the song. The tempo increases subtly as the guitar and bass resume the dance from the introduction in a faster and more complex rendition, and eventually ending the song with a call back to the droning riff that had seemed to hypnotize the audience in the beginning of the song just a few minutes before.

The stunned crowd cheers and claps their hands clumsily as the sound fades, only to be cut off by the immediate start of the second song. Any effort to anticipate what change will come next is abandoned by the audience as everyone shakes or nods their head in time to whatever part they are focused on. Some people sway with their eyes closed, taking in the overwhelming waves of sound as the band moves from one section to the next. The trio fades out the song slowly till only the guitar is left to close with a dreamlike melody laden with reverb and delay. The room patiently waits for the sound to fade before exploding in applause, eyes and smiles bright from the joy of witnessing magic happen.

Paranoid Void
Subculture
WE
3F

Thank you for your support!

As of September 2022, Heavy Lemon, in cooperation with Playback Studios, will be partnering with local promoters and artists to hold more events in a dedicated event space in San Jose!

Here are some cool things about this space!

- **Not for profit!**

We will only be using money collected at the door to pay the rent and to improve the space. 80% of donations taken at the door will go to artists and bands.

- **All ages!**

This means this is a sober space, so no substances or alcohol will be permitted in the venue.

- **More shows!**

This space is intended to be shared amongst trusted members of our community. We have invited a bunch of different folks to book at the space and are holding the door open for more.

- **Not just an event space!**

Future plans include regular workshops, volunteer programs, zine library, and larger annual events.

More info will be shared on our IG in the next few months!

We welcome your support of this new art space!

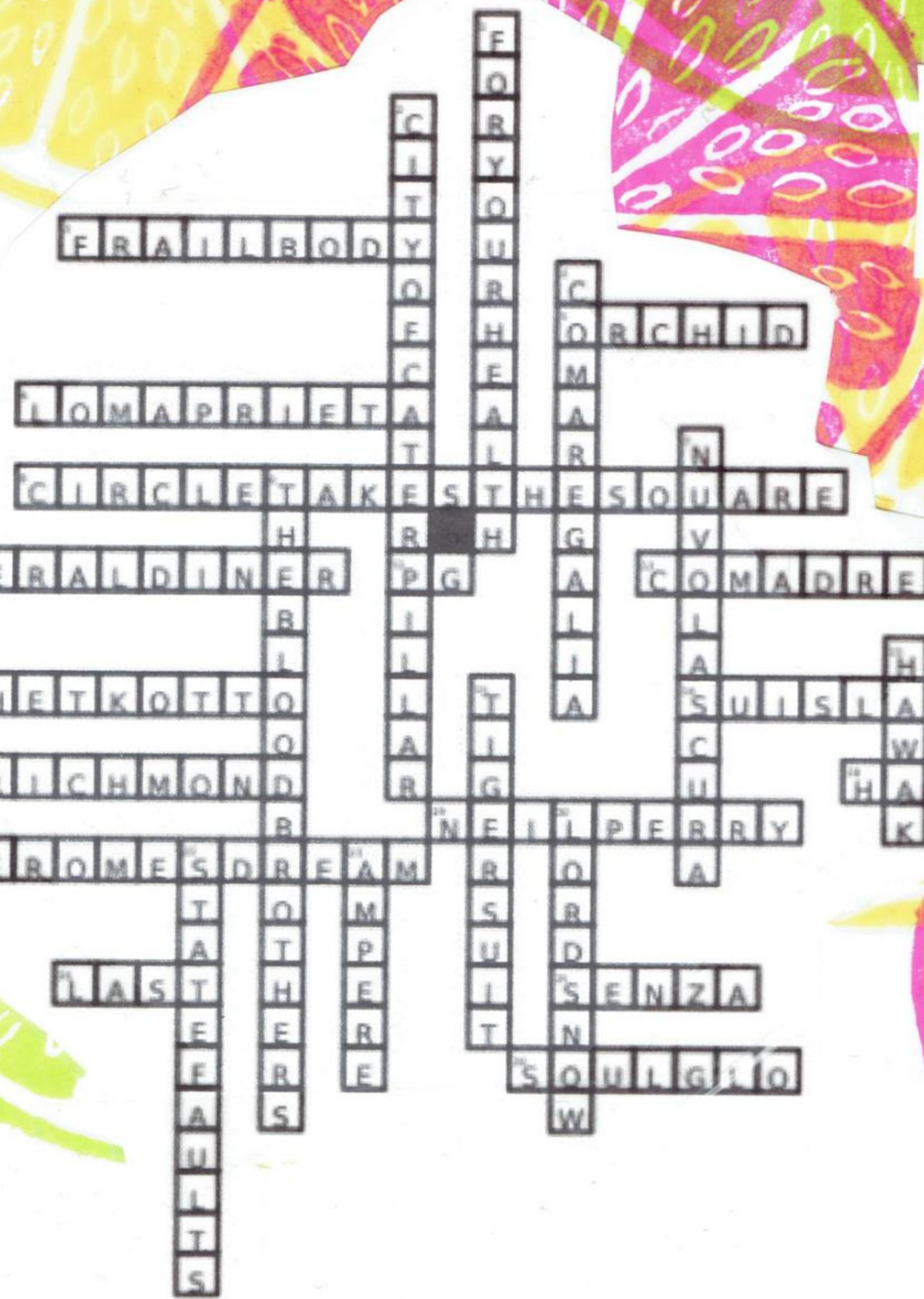
WE NEED HELP! THIS LEMON AIN'T GONNA SQUEEZE ITSELF!

We are looking for volunteers to help with running doors and helping with keeping the venue clean. You will learn everything about running a show and earn free admission to future events!

Are you a band local to San Jose trying to play more gigs? Send us your info with contact info below!

Are you a DIY promoter constantly having trouble finding a place to host your shows? Hit us up for more info about booking here!

For booking inquiries, artist info and volunteering please reach out to heavylemonsj@gmail.com



For show announcements and info follow
@heavylemonsj on IG

Attend shows
and earn
PUNK POINTS
to redeem
one of these
**FANTASTIC
PRIZES***

10 pts... BUBBLES
... CANDY



100 pts... JET SKI
... ALIENS



150 pts... KITTEN
... BIG SLIDE



*PUNK POINTS AREN'T REAL
BUT YOU SHOULD STILL COME TO SHOWS

