



MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL REVIEWS #511

DECEMBER 2025

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MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL

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This issue contains 92 reviews, contributed by:

Jason Harding	Nick Odorizzi
Luke Henley	Jake Joyce
Eric Anderson	Biff Bifaro
Gonza Perez	Tony Party
Matt Casteel	Johnny Leach
Ben Marshall	Willis Schenk
Romain Basset	D. Gregory
Sir Bobos	Katy Otto
Seth McBurney	Kenny Kaos
João Seixas	
Jeff Cost	
Viktor Vargyai	
Mama Goblin	
Erika Elizabeth	

THE COUNTERFORCE

This zine digest was compiled and laid out by The Counterforce.

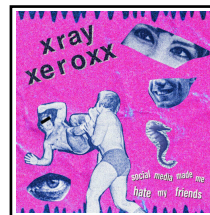
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XRAY XEROXX – Social Media Made Me Hate My Friends cassette

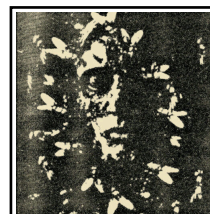
Short and sweet four-song cassette EP by an incredibly active Los Angeles-based solo project. This is the third cassette release by XRAY XEROXX (two EPs and a full-length), all of which came out this damn year! Juvenile, upbeat, poppy, garage-infused RAMONES-core filled with both self-deprecation and societal deprecation. There sure is a lot to hate in this world, but I do not hate XRAY XEROXX. Looking forward to the three releases this project is due to shit out throughout 2026.



Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Robot Cannibal

YELLOW GHOUL – Yellow Ghoul cassette

Solid five-track debut from Buffalo punks YELLOW GHOUL, featuring grimy and lo-fi(-ish) guitars accompanied by pounding drums and vocals by SCIENCE MAN's John Toohill. YELLOW GHOUL speeds through these songs, slowing down for a breakdown or two but not much else. Overall, I have no complaints here; this sounds like something Toxic State would put out, which is as high a compliment as I can pay.



Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Swimming Faith

V/A – Somos El Peligro Social: Un Hom- enaje a Ultimo Resorte LP

Seminal early '80s act UL- TIMO RESORT left a last- ing impact on not just their home turf of Barcelona, but on Spanish punk as a whole, which would ex- plain the wide scope of groups united in homage on this sprawling tribute album. During their original run spanning from 1979 to 1984, the band channeled numerous styles, ranging from speedy hardcore to anthemic UK82, and the lineup of groups covering them here is equally di- verse. Everybody from the ass-kicking DISTHROAT to technopunk experimenters ECM showed up to drop a track and pay respect. There are 24 tracks in total, packaged with a poster in this fitting follow-up to the retrospective LP that came out in 2023.

Reviewer: Jason Harding

Label: 16 Forever / BCore / Little Jan's Hammer / Vic- tim / Zaragoza Desorden



V/A – This Is It... LP

With every compilation I have ever heard in my entire life, I always look for several distinct things. The first being, did these bands give their best, or did they submit throw- away tracks? Second, do I get the feeling that I'd want to stop into this area for lunch and record shopping? Third, and most importantly, do I want to seek out music from bands I've never heard be- fore? Put simply, this is the Midwest at its absolute best, styled as a variety of underground hardcore and punk to let you know that quality control and in- tent is paramount to the label that put this out. With seven bands, and six of them having multiple songs, this comp does its best to hack a path to uncover that raw nerve dry socket of the Great Lakes region.

Reviewer: Tony Party

Label: Back Ache



WAX STATIC – Wasted Town EP

The cover is a picture of a broken skateboard with the band name in '90s la- belmaker font, and there's a PRIMITIVE HEARTS cover included. I love it when a band lets you know ex- actly what to expect from their cover art. There's a lo-f surfy element to these songs, but it's still a little tough while still being fun. Both "Wasted Town" and "Back to You" have an early BLACK LIPS feel to them and pair well with the PRIMITIVE HEARTS cover. The vocals are much more audible and in the mix than on their demo released in early 2025, and it ben-



efits them well. Worth checking out if you're into lo-fi bedroom garage punk.

Reviewer: Sir Bobos

Label: Blank Step

WHO PAYS – Hard Times EP

What a year for NYC's WHO PAYS—they wrecked stages across the country, dropped this killer EP, and (check- ing notes) loaned Captain Sensible a pair of pants. Anyway, that new EP, *Hard Times*, features five orig- inal cuts of powerhouse HC and an equally aggro BABY HUEY cover. They sort of remind me of Cleveland's INMATES if they traded the AGNOSTIC FRONT influence for POISON IDEA. You get the pic- ture, this thing fuckin' rocks. Highly recommended.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson

Label: 11 PM

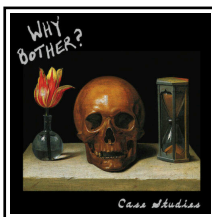


WHY BOTHER? – Case Studies LP

Prolific punks WHY BOTHER? are back with another LP on the heels of an EP released earlier this year. While the former re- lied heavily on a synthe- sized version of '80s-in- spired Midwestern punk, *Case Studies* sees the band, yet again, charting fresh ground, but I'm not so sure that's such a good thing. Make no mistake, every few songs, there is a song that rips. They shine on tracks like "I Take Back," "There She Was," or the album closer "Galaxy Eyes," where they ef- fortlessly combine heavy '70s psych melodies with SPITS-style lo-fi goodness, and vocals that call to mind early GUIDED BY VOICES. Unfortunately, the rest of the record felt boring and longwinded. Songs of- ten drift in and out of ambient and instrumental ex- plorations that would best be saved for a Friday jam session rather than on a recording. Repeated listens could change my mind, but I'm not sure I have the at- tention span to reach for this one again.

Reviewer: Sir Bobos

Label: Feel It



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- **Radio Valencia**
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Wednesdays at 1:00 am BST/GMT
- **Space FM**, 101.1 in Seattle, WA
Friday nights at 10.00pm
- **UMFM (CJUM)**, 101.5 FM in Winnipeg, MB, Canada
Fridays at 6:30 am (Good morning, Win- nipeg!)
- **Wednesday** at 11:00pm (Pacific and Moun- tain Time)

100 FLOWERS – Presence of Mind EP reissue

Shortly after the URINALS changed their name to 100 FLOWERS, they cemented the switch with the release of this artsy 7" in 1982. A bit more explorational than their earlier output, which brought us dum-dum classics like "I'm A Bug" and "Ack Ack Ack," the band's evolved style on this three-song EP is more in line with the sound of early WIRE and PUBLIC IMAGE LIMITED. The dark disco of the title track leads the proceedings, an energetic post-punk number that would eventually make its way onto the group's LP the following year. Next up, the brief and bouncy "Dyslexia" quickly reminds us that we're still dealing with the same guys that wrote "I Am White and Middle Class." On the flipside, "Mop Dub" is an instrumental backwards treatment of "Presence of Mind," providing a symmetrical bookend that suits the fashion of the era. Faithfully reissued in its original format, this poignant little slab documents the iconic unit's transition from weird to weirder.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Spacecase



ANGEL FACE – Out in the Street LP

If you're a fan of garage punk and this isn't already on your radar, then no, you're not. Distributed via the gold standard Slovenly and featuring members of TEEN-GENERATE and the FADE-AWAYS, this exemplifies what makes the genre exciting. The hooks are incredible and the production presents the whole affair within crackling gritty trappings. These players have power pop chops for decades, but they're so tuned in here and pushed into the red that they have major teeth track to track. Background "ooh"s and "ahh"s are guiding stars of style, as well as hand-claps that inflect a bubblegum tone that bumps nicely against the spikier edges of what's going on. This group's debut was good stuff, but this is a whole other level. The B-side standout "Press Your Luck" has STOOGES' dripping venom with a chorus that's downright gorgeous. The album is undeniable, so don't try and fight it off and let it take over your turntable.

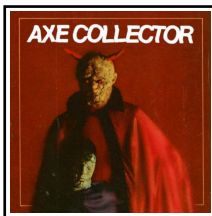
Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Slovenly



AXE COLLECTOR – Unforced Damage EP

Human Future continues to prove why they're one of the most exciting labels in today's hardcore landscape. Evil-driven AXE COLLECTOR unleashes a full-force EP of ripping, steel-cut aggression: sharp riffs, collapsing-wall drums, and vocals that spit fire without a pause. Every track hits like a thrown brick—fast, raw, and absolutely determined. Fury with intention, nothing sloppy, all deadly precise. Hardcore with no filler, no posturing. A record that feels urgent, necessary, alive, like it was tracked inside a street riot. One of my favorites this month.

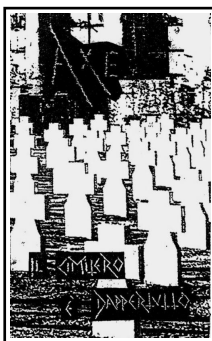
Reviewer: Gonzala Perez
Label: Extinction Burst / Human Future



AXE – Il Cimitero è Dappertutto cassette

Italy's Sistema Mortal has had an excellent year, starting off with the head-splitting FARCE 7" and wrapping things up with this killer debut from Milan's AXE. Featuring two vocalists and a raw, crusty sound, AXE plays with a little more texture and melody (and I think keyboard) than your usual D-beat fare. Opening track "Patto di Sangue" kicks off with an ominously dark tone that quickly morphs into full on mangel fury that doesn't let up for the entirety of the tape. A total scorcher and highly recommended.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Sistema Mortal



AYUCABA – Operación Masacre LP

Here's a searing debut from this Barcelona powerhouse. Featuring members of killer bands like MURO and INYECCION, the bar for this slab is quite high, but goddamn, my expectations were fully exceeded. Not unlike INYECCION, there's a prominent UK82 backbone, yet AYUCABA eschews the street punk bent for metal leanings in a BROKEN BONES kind of way. Ripping solos, chaotic, thrashy riffage à la BLACK UNIFORMS, Operación Masacre is a behemoth album. Impressive instrumentation is bolstered by straight evil vocals, launching this into a whole other galaxy. This whispered part of the opener "Sistema Sinistro" has Sakevi vibes, and there are nods to Japanese hardcore found throughout the album's ten tracks. A po-



THE SLEEVEENS – Downtown / Drowning 7"

The hits keep on coming for the SLEEVEENS. The latest offering from this Nashville/Dublin combo shows their continued ability to take three-minute songs and make them feel like epic journeys. A lot of this amplification and magnification of sounds and sensations surely comes first from the emotive vocal delivery, but the instrumentation across the board definitely bears load on these creations. "Downtown" specifically just feels larger than life, and also shows that the band is really finding their sweet spot. Their first single, "Give My Regards to the Dancing Girls," was an awesome way to debut their sound, but it did leave me wondering a bit about the decision of the over-five-minute runtime. When the song appeared again as the opening track to their debut full-length, the track was cut down by almost three minutes, which then ironically left me wondering about all that was left off of it. The three-minute runtime of "Downtown" hits every note with every second sounding vital, surely pleasing even the fussiest of the punk rock Goldilockses.

Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: Goner



TOY TIGER – Meow Sabotage LP

TOY TIGER, a DIY five-piece from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, dish out '70s glam- and Oil-influenced street rock built around steady, down-the-middle playing and explicitly anti-racist, anti-authoritarian, pro-LGBTQ+ lyrics. Meow Sabotage, their second full-length, sticks to that formula and spends most of its time parked in the same mid-tempo lane. The overall effect reminded me more of '80s L.A. sleaze rock—like they could have opened for FASTER PUSSYCAT on the Strip—than T. REX's shimmer. Nothing here knocked me sideways, and a lot of the tracks blur together, but Buggy Faithfull's vocals were a standout, shifting between a controlled street punk snarl and a '50s-tinged Danzig croon. I have a feeling these songs hit harder when you're shoulder-to-shoulder in a bar, singing along and getting swept up in the message with the people around you.

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Street Rats



TWENTY ONE CHILDREN – Ice Cube EP

Scrappy, hook-driven punk rock with garage energy and a sneering attitude. TWENTY ONE CHILDREN balance raw distortion with catchy songwriting, keeping things loose but memorable. The EP moves fast, loaded with youthful frustration and sharp humor, recalling classic underground punk while still sounding fresh. A solid reminder that simple punk done right still hits hard.

Reviewer: Gonzala Perez
Label: Slovenly



UZU – À Qui La Liberté? لمن الحرية؟ LP

Symphony of Destruction has quite the knack for bringing us bands that push the boundaries of punk. Case in point: UZU returns with their second full-length, building out their deathrock gloom ship for further exploration. Based in Montréal, the group is an international outfit with ties to Algeria and Colombia, delivering their lyrics in Arabic. To the latter point, the vocal delivery is one of the elements that sets UZU apart, with an inflection falling somewhere between Jello Biafra and Rozz Williams. While CHRISTIAN DEATH is certainly a jumping-off point, UZU charts a path of their own, much like fellow Canucks HOME FRONT and ULTRA RAZZIA (with whom they share members) have. Inspiration is more a point of departure than an anchor. À Qui La Liberté? is a bold, forceful album. Don't sleep on this one.

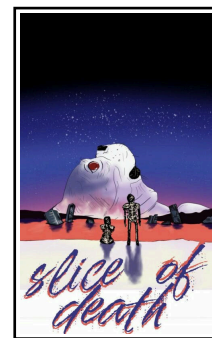
Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: Symphony of Destruction



V/A – Slice of Death cassette

Tennessee Cold Cuts have had one hell of a busy year, dropping some of the best albums I've had the pleasure of reviewing over these last 365 days. This comp will give you a great taste of what this label has to offer, with tracks ranging from egg-punk to goth rock, dance punk to brutal grindcore. This is a fantastically eclectic mix and definitely worth a couple plays. Tennessee's punk scene is looking mighty strong heading into 2026.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Tennessee Cold Cuts



THE MANKS – Last New Wave Hero!!!! CD

Japan's the MANKS ran from 1994–2001 as part of the Chiba punk scene, and *Last New Wave Hero!!!!* collects eight tracks of their extremely lo-fi garage/'77-style punk, pulled from demos and compilation appearances recorded thirty years ago. It's raw, unvarnished, recorded-in-the-basement rock delivered with a bratty, high-energy sneer. "My Generation" might be the highlight for me, although at 2:52, it's the longest song on the collection and probably could've been trimmed. It all falls into that wonderfully sloppy zone where there's way more spirit than technical finesse, but I think the potential really shines through. Members later went on to the SPIT, the PLASTERS, and, more recently, SPIT-TN, but this CD captures the scrappy origin point and it's better than it has any right to be.

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Private Scandal



THE NOT – This Record Contains Not One Hit Single... + I Do Not Care!!! CD

Off-kilter Japanese punkers NOT existed in the early 2000s, sticking around for just long enough to record the thirteen rough-hewn tracks showcased on this CD. Injecting straightforward '77 punk in the vein of the KNOCKS with a bit of modern meddle like the BLACK AND WHITE, the band's sound is ultimately a quirky take on '90s garage punk style. The opening groove to "I Can't Get Back to Me" is a straight-up REGIS-TRATORS swipe, and the winding instrumental "Mituwadai 101" sounds like it could be a GASOLINE jam session captured in uncharacteristically clean fidelity. Tracks one through eight are from the band's most realized recording, titled *This Record Contains Not One Hit Single*, and the remaining songs are taken from their 2004 demo (*I Do Not Care*), bringing you the full NOT experience on one disc. A brief interview with the group's founder Hidde included in this package alludes to a reunion gig slated for 2026, so keep an eye out if you happen to find yourself in Chiba pre-fecture this coming year.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Private Scandal



THE PAGES – Ordinary Love / I'm a Bullet 7"

From Portugal, these guys remind me of the TRANZMITORS, if only because they bring a sound rooted in mod and power pop. The music is straight-forward and mid-tempo. The vocals are soft and almost whispery at times, just sort of calming. The B-side is particularly catchy and a total toe-tapper/head-bouncer. This is definitely worth checking out.

Reviewer: Kenny Kaos
Label: Lux



THE PROBLEM WITH KIDS TODAY – Take It! CD

These guys come out of the gates swinging, with some straight-forward, melodic, and catchy punk'n'roll. When the vocals themselves are melodic and also a group effort, I just find that kind of infectious. There's a rawness that reminds me of early REPLACEMENTS, without really having that sound. It's just the energy. But then they take a different turn and sound almost like the CLEAN. Towards the end, they put together back-to-back-to-back songs all under a minute each. That's how to win my heart. Excellent album.

Reviewer: Kenny Kaos
Label: In the Shed



THE SINKS – Pleasure to Burn EP

The A-side is a slow-burner that doesn't really hold my interest. The B-side has two more punk'n'roll tunes that are a bit faster but still not very interesting to me. These three tunes feel a bit uninspired, which seems weird since the members have been in bands such as POISON IDEA, SMEGMA, OILY BLOODMEN, EXAC-ERBATORS, LOVESORES, and so on. I guess I'm a bit surprised by the lack of impact.

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Sonic Jett



tent formula executed with deftness and precision. Can't seem to keep this one off the turntable.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: Metadona

BAHIA DE KOTXINOS – Bahia Kotxinos LP

This is a strange piece of ephemera; a long-abandoned debut by Euskara band BAHIA DE KOTXINOS, who by all accounts were a leading light in an active scene and had a record ready to go that was left on the shelf, gathering Basque dust for the next 30 years. Now lovingly remastered and released into the world, it's a peculiar document of a very specific scene. It has the taut, frantic energy of yer DEVOs, yer WIRES, yer ADVERTS of the world. However, it also has the sort of wacky, clever-dick stylings of a kind of proto-egg-punk too, which is unfortunate. It's certainly a lot more interesting than I was anticipating, and well worth your time, albeit three whole decades later than you should have enjoyed it.

Reviewer: Ben Marshall
Label: Discos Enfermos / Zaragoza Desorden



BANDA DES FEMER – Herència Envernada 12"

It's the first time I get assigned a band singing in Menorcan Catalan, which is a specific type of Catalan from the Balearic Islands, and if the language is new to me, the music certainly is not, because BANDA DES FEMER play good old raw, käng-influenced hardcore punk that takes no prisoners and gets straight to the point. What sets this LP apart might be the peculiar production that keeps things deceptively simple and primitive—it doesn't go for any deafening "wall of noise" or anything fancy, but just old school D-beat punk for the punks (a noble cause indeed). The band clearly displays self-awareness about the genre and their own technical prowess, which I find quite refreshing. I like the upfront vocals that are still intelligible, and there are some welcome mid-paced moments and even a couple of sing-alongs. There are strong hints of '90s D-beat and some songs would have been at home on a Distortion Records compilation in 1994. The music also reminds me of DHK for its spontaneity and its radicalism, not synonymous with extremity here but of core value. Simple, fast, and loud political hardcore punk that loves DISCHARGE lovers. However, I think the record should have been longer, as seven songs in fourteen minutes is a little short for an album (although the three members do not live in the same town, so practicing has to be an issue), but these are fourteen good minutes.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Diy Kontraatak / Korc Edicions / Plastic

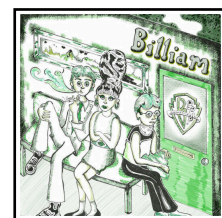


Wound / Todo Roto / Wrong Disk / Zaragoza Desorden

BILLIAM – The Letter W & the Numeral B EP

Melbourne's BILLIAM is back with another EP, his fourth release this year. There's nothing new here, and any of the four tracks could have appeared on any of the project's previous efforts. If you've enjoyed any of his other records, you'll dig this. "New Wave" and "Houston We Have Rock" are full of fuzzy three-chord punk, battered with synthesizers and left scrambling to catch up to the lo-fi hi-hats working overtime in the background. The vocals sound like they were recorded through a cell phone inside of a cave, which kind of ruins it for me, although repeating the phrase "Houston, we have rock" 16 times in 54 seconds brought a smile to my face. The B-side is more mid-tempo and features the highlight of the EP for me, the closing "Essential Feedstock Oils," where they repeat the word "record" 27 times in 90 seconds. Heavy SPARKS vibes with a bedroom charm. It ain't for me, but fans of 1-800-MIKEY and GEE TEE will eat it up.

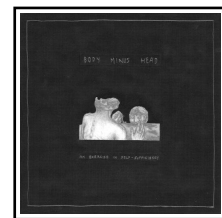
Reviewer: Sir Bobos
Label: Low Ambition



BODY MINUS HEAD – An Exercise in Self-Sufficiency LP

BODY MINUS HEAD hail from Kitchener, Ontario, and play a blend of hardcore and crust punk that is emotive and gnarly. On *An Exercise in Self-Sufficiency*, the first full-length by the band, you'll find vocal blasts that give goosebumps, guitar licks that make you say "hell yeah," and a rumble rhythm section that gets your head nodding. The majority of the songs on this ten-track album are over in less than two minutes each, so you know BODY MINUS HEAD isn't wasting time noodling around, and most of the songs hit so hard you may experience shellshock. Tracks like "Reset to Factory Default" and "Unconditional" are full-on sonic pummelings, while the lyrics speak truths about the failures of the human condition. If you've ever listened to MURDERESS's *The Last Thing You Will Ever See...* and said to yourself, "This could be heavier and faster," then you should absolutely check out BODY MINUS HEAD.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: No Funeral



BOOTCAMP – Time's Up LP

Who doesn't like a great hardcore record that makes one punch a hole through a wall? Strap on your boots, because it's time to slam with Iowa City's **BOOTCAMP**. Proper USHC delivered in an intense manner, sounding fresh but remaining true to the classic tropes. You will find them on the same record store shelf as **ARMOR** and some of the 11 PM releases. *Time's Up*, go listen to this! Now!

Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Convulse



[BRICK] – Demo 2025 cassette

Visceral and vitriolic, the UK's **[BRICK]** are angry and have good reason to be. Existing in a world that rejects you at every turn is unimaginable, but that is indeed their reality. As a group of trans women (who met at a transfeminist book club, awesome), **[BRICK]**'s songs speak to the very real hate faced by trans people every day. Sonically, it's a lo-fi and straightforward punk affair, occasionally going off the rails into discordant noise territory. Lyrically, it's a brutal listen, but one that deserves to be heard.

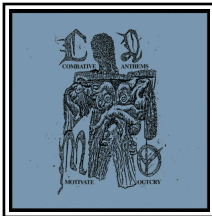
Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: self-released



C.A.M.O. – Combative Anthems Motivate Outcry 12"

If you played this for me and told me it came out in 1985, I'd believe you, but **C.A.M.O.** out of Vienna, Austria exists in 2025, and thanks to Mendeku Diskak, their cassette *Combative Anthems Motivate Outcry* is now available as a vinyl disc. Anarcho-punk with a cold bent makes **C.A.M.O.** sound indignant and haunting, and this eight-song album is full of sonic macabre with ominous lyrics and guitar riffs that sound adjacent to funeral marches. If you dig early **KILLING JOKE**, 1919, or **PART1**, then go check out **C.A.M.O.** right now.

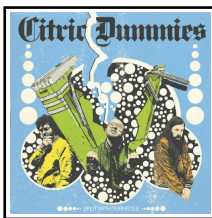
Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Mendeku Diskak



CITRIC DUMMIES – Split With Turnstile LP

Minneapolis cut-ups **CITRIC DUMMIES** return with their fourth LP, *Split With Turnstile*, which—consider yourself warned—is not a split with **TURNSTILE** at all. They put up a snotty front, but all hijinks aside, across eleven high-energy songs in twenty minutes they blast out buoyant, tongue-in-cheek punk propelled by D.V. Tinner's hyperactive drumming. It's fast without tipping into hardcore, landing somewhere between the **BROKEDOWNS** and **DEAN DIRG**. My buddy Tom says parts of it sound like a less crusty **ANNIHILATION TIME**, and he's not wrong. Even when they're yelling "I Don't Like Anything," the whole thing still bursts with this dumb, irresistible sense of fun. I fucking love this record. Immediate top ten material.

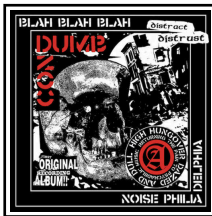
Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Feel It



CONDUMB – Disassociation EP

Crasher-crust noise punk from Philadelphia. It's a well-crafted 7" where both the songwriting and the smart usage of the classic pedal arsenal are strong—there is a good balance between fast- and mid-tempos, and the screaming vocals let the songs breathe but sound forceful when they're happening. The songs are so well-written that they would work without the screaming/swirling jet sounds of the guitar, which in could go against the noise-not-music ethos within the record, as the added effects are not masking rather traditional songs but upgrading primitive, non-existent ideas to something truly otherworldly. Here, the noise is masking knowledge and talent if you let yourself lead into mindless headbanging (which the record offers), but if you arrive via the main bands of the members, you probably will not feel cheated, either. Or if you listen beyond aesthetics and pay attention to what is actually happening. Nowadays, the look and slogans of this style seem more popular than ever, yet most bands do not come close to getting the essence of this sound. **CONDUMB** does; they get it and do it just right.

Reviewer: Viktor Vargyai
Label: Stupid Bag



DEAD BUG – 6 or 12 New Songs cassette

NYC/Richmond, CA duo **DEAD BUG**'s *6 or 12 New Songs* is not really an album, but more of an experiment on interpreting visual data and translating it into music. It goes like this: there is a zine called *5 New Songs* which has cryptic drawings and enigmatic descriptions that symbolize abstract ideas for five different songs. Both members of the band work alone to write and record their respective sides with their interpretation of what those songs would sound

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Private Scandal

THE DRAGS – Dragsploitation... Now! LP

One of three well-deserved **DRAGS** reissues delivered by Total Punk this year, *Dragsploitation... Now!* is a brief and potent ride through the band's legendary '60s-fueled punk swagger in its earlier stages. Originally released as a 10" by Estrus in 1995, this was their sophomore effort following the iconic *I Like to Die 7"*. Alongside the **MAKERS**, **THEE HEADCOATS**, and a handful of others, these guys forged the throwback garage style of the '90s, offering an eye-opening take on punk for impressionable youth of that era (including yours truly.) Dig that crazy beat—it still feels fresh 30 years later.

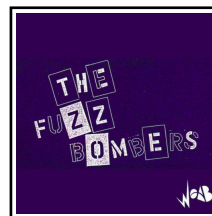
Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Total Punk



THE FUZZ BOMBERS – The Fuzz Bombers cassette reissue

The **FUZZ BOMBERS** were a blink-and-you'll-miss-them San Gabriel Valley band active circa 1998, built from ex-members of the **JAWAS** and future members of the **TAKEDOWNS** and **BAD MOTIVATOR**, among others—basically the extended universe of singer/label-runner Brian Von Wolfe. This tape pulls together two sessions from that year, and the results are classic no-budget garage punk: fast, loose, and sounding slightly better than recorded-on-a-boom-box. There's an early version of "Get Out Of," later re-recorded by the **TAKEDOWNS**, but this one is faster and a shade more raw. None of this rewrites the genre playbook, but it's a perfectly decent document of late-'90s punk ephemera. Maybe essential if you're trying to fill out the Brian-adjacent family tree; otherwise, it's probably not going to have a huge impact on anybody.

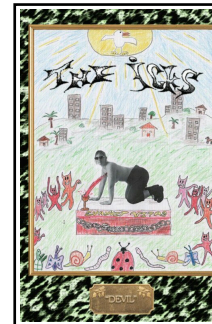
Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Wolf on a Bridge



THE ICKS – Devil cassette

Second five-song cassette released by this Florida three-piece punk outfit. Similar to the first tape, this follow-up is almost painfully lo-fi. Unfortunately, this does detract a bit from the songs, making it difficult to discern exactly what's going on. While I find the attempt to do an analog recording right onto a stereo tape deck incredibly commendable (and a hell of a lot more real than doing a crummy cell-phone-recorded demo), there is a learning curve and obvious limitations with such an approach. In terms of the songs themselves, the first three are driving, mid-tempo grunge-inspired punk songs with somewhat lazy vocal delivery, "Nice Things" being the clear standout of the bunch. From here, the tape changes lanes completely, bringing us an artistic, quirky spoken word/bass interlude, and finally an acoustic, open-mic-style bedroom pop song. All in all, I'm just left more confused than anything else after listening to this release. Oh, also, having to do research to figure out that a release is on a tape label is a bizarre move. Why wouldn't the label releasing something just put their label name somewhere on the tape or the artwork?

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Ragdoll



THE ICKS – The Icks cassette

Five tracks of fuzzed-out, overblown four-track fidelity, with bratty vocals and drenched in Florida humidity. The **ICKS** ride the line between angular, fuzzed-out punk and slow and gritty mid-tempo bore-core. "IDMTMTM" is killer and will end up on a mixtape or two. If the tape ended here, I would love it, but they use the dreaded disco beat to lead off the next song, and that is an automatic point deduction from me. This would be best played loud while skating curbs in your local cul-de-sac, or taking resin hits from a dirty bong.

Reviewer: Sir Bobos
Label: Rip



Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: self-released

SYMPATHY FLOWERS – Dreams of Lurking Fear LP

Dreams of Lurking Fear is the first full-length by Oakland, CA dark punk band SYMPATHY FLOWERS. However, *Dreams of Lurking Fear* is an expansion of last year's *Through the Veil* cassette (which was SYMPATHY FLOWERS' inaugural release), with most of the cassette tracks being reworked with a better density and richness for the LP. There's something in SYMPATHY FLOWERS' sound that reminds me of the below-the-radar punk that cemented my relationship to our illustrious genre in my teen years. Maybe it's the driving rhythms blended with the quick shift guitar riffs, or maybe it's the poetic-but-direct lyrics that are defiant while deviant. Whatever it is, *Dreams of Lurking Fear* scratches an itch I didn't even know I had.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Cellofame

TTTTURBO – Modern Music cassette

Someday people who write great pop songs won't be so scared of themselves, obscuring their catchiness with lo-fi tricks and budget ethos. But in the meantime, it's still lovely to spend time with a tape like this that sounds like California underwater with the good vibes still intact. The bouncy bass lines walking up and down the throbbing synths and half-muttered bedroom vocals can't hide forever that these are bangin' pop songs. I hear you, TTTTURBO, and I know what you're up to. You can throw an egg on top while you're at it. Sounds great like an artifact from the future.

Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: It's Eleven



THE ACTION PARTY – The Action Party CD

The ACTION PARTY is a tepid rock'n'roll band. Maybe you could say this is like a flaccid JONESSES and stuff like that. I'm betting their shows are a rocking good time, maybe. I'm not sure this was quite the right place to send this for review. This is fine, well-produced rock'n'roll that might fit in better on a "Best of the '90s" college/alternative rock CD. I guess the one positive thing I can say is that I dozed off a couple times while listening to this, so if you are a little sleep-deprived, then this is the CD for you.

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: self-released

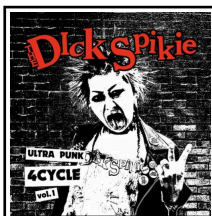
THE COVIDS – Pay No Mind LP

The COVIDS have an UN-DERTONES quality to their songs while drawing in a more modern song structure influenced by Goner Records' roster of catchier bands, the Rev. Nørb, and bands blending the METHADONES and RAMONES. "Waste of Space" is my favorite track on the record simply because of the way they cadence the chorus of "space and time" with space and time; it will make sense when you hear it. There are ten songs rounding out this LP, making this a perfect length. I think I'm most pleased by the front and back of the sleeve because it gives you a near-perfect idea of what this band is like just by the color and composition, and the sunglasses on the back made me giggle.

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Wap Shoo Wap

THE DICK SPIKIE – Ultra Punk 4Cycle Vol. 1 EP

Three fantastic Japanese Oi! tracks that will bring you to your feet to pogo with the best of them. Much like the BUSINESS and BLITZ, this trio of D-beat classics are equal parts catchy and rowdy as hell. "Restriction & Freedom" is the cream of this crop, an earworm that led me to spinning the A-side quite a few times. On the B-side, we have a song called "You're a Bastard" that features some of my favorite lyrics of the year. Here's a taste: "You're a bastard / Wipe your arse yourself." Fair enough. For my money, Japanese Oi! has always sounded the most authentic, and this is no different. Grab this slab today!



like. The results are really interesting and it's definitely a thought-provoking experiment. But I think reviewing and trying to describe how it sounds would defeat its purpose, as it requires listeners to connect the dots between the music and the visuals. I highly recommend checking it out and maybe even trying it yourself. Reviewer: Mama Goblin
Label: self-released

DIE BENJAMINS – In 10 Jahren / Pas de Deux 7"

Synth-spiked German post-punk casting backward glances to the pop-leaning (but still properly asymmetrical) side of the Neue Deutsche Welle—think ÖSTRO 430, IDEAL, NEONBABIES, etc. That was enough to pique my interest after cueing this single up with zero background context, so imagine my surprise when I clocked that DIE BENJAMINS' vocalist Annette Benjamin was the same Annette who had been the singer (and occasional saxophonist) for late '70s/early '80s femme-punk paragons HANS-A-PLAST! Her voice is as powerful as ever here, with all of the shouty defiance and boundless energy that made "Rank Xerox" and "Sex Sex Sex" such indelible rippers, but while these two songs are clearly informed by her musical past, they're definitely not shackled to it. Thick, distorted bass drives the quirky/art-y A-side "In 10 Jahren," periodically dissolving into washes of echoing electronics straight out of the modern Leipzig school (not unlike a punchier/less coolly detached MARAUDEUR), with the darker and more desperate atmosphere of B-side "Pas de Deux" only heightened by Annette's soaring, passionate pleas. Totally unexpected, in the best way.

Reviewer: Erika Elizabeth
Label: Tomatenplatten

DRE PERISH – Criminal Ghost LP

Rootsy collection of noisy, melodic rock songs steeped in Southern gothic and reverb that might appeal to fans of the GUN CLUB or the DRIN. *Criminal Ghost* is not bad by any means, but it definitely follows a more traditionally structured mainstream rock music approach than punk, although some of these tracks do have a smoky post-punk skeleton inside the meticulous production. DRE has a full-throated singing voice with a bluesy warble that registers somewhere between Win Butler of the ARCADE FIRE and Jeffrey Lee Pierce and gives the songs a lived-in sonic weight. The recording was done in New Orleans, which seems apropos, given the streetwalking at dusk vibes; I can practically smell the stale beer and cigarette smoke wafting through the lyrics, accompanied with just a touch of danger.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Strange Daisy

DRE PERISH – Twist of Fate LP

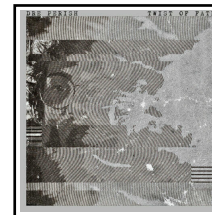
New Orleans artist/producer DRE PERISH (also of the noise punk duo QUARTER RATS) is a self-styled "psych punk/no wave junkie," and their new LP seems to push that identity in every direction at once. PERISH handles vocals, guitar, bass, synths, sax, beats, and samples, with guest players dropping in on about half the tracks. Across its eleven songs and three field recordings, the album meanders between styles like a Tuesday-night CBGB audition lineup: opening with a NINE INCH NAILS-leaning opener, then a detour into alternative/art rock, the rumble of a passing train, and then "All Night!"—the standout for me, which sounds like it could've come off one of the more chaotic OS-EES recordings. There's also a crunchy/synthy cover of GANG OF FOUR's "To Hell With Poverty!" I found myself gravitating toward the tracks played with real instruments and patiently waiting for the synth-heavy ones to end, but that's just personal taste. For most people, this will either be a challenging listen or a novelty, but if you've got a wide-open brain and enjoy listening to an artist follow every weird instinct, *Twist of Fate* might be an entertaining journey.

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Primitive Postures / Strange Daisy

EAST END REDEMPTION – Crashing Down LP

Pop punk out of Maine that combines the melodic sensibilities of your average RAMONES-core outing with a hint of early PROPAGHANDI—mainly in the vocals. In other words, this sounds like it came straight from the early years of Fat Wreck Chords. Good mixture of lighthearted lyrics paired with dystopian themes, specifically with tracks like "Lost Town" and "Lacking Motivation." Nothing groundbreaking here, but it really scratches that itch if you're a fan of this era of punk. I would be remiss not to mention how great the bass tone is on this here slab. Solid production all around, actually. In my research, I came across a recycling center of the same name from the same town the group calls home. I love when bands pull their monikers from shit like that. Fantastic stuff, and would recommend for a couple spins.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Crack Rock



EMBITTERED – This Failed Endeavor cassette

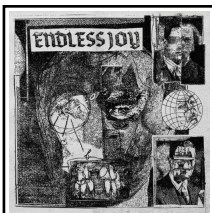
Raw, pissed-off hardcore punk with a distinctly bleak tone. EMBITTERED tears through short, furious tracks driven by urgent drumming and a bitter vocal delivery. The cassette format suits the band perfectly—lo-fi but powerful, emphasizing frustration, alienation, and total rejection of false optimism. Hardcore meant to be felt, not polished.



Reviewer: Gonza Perez
Label: Hey Fuck You

ENDLESS JOY – Endless Joy LP

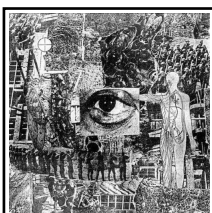
Iron Lung hits the mark once again, delivering another masterclass in abrasive, high-stakes hardcore. ENDLESS JOY plays with tension and dissonance like a weapon—jagged riffs, frantic delivery, and a suffocating, anxious energy that never lets up. Every song feels like it's on the verge of imploding, yet the band maintains complete control, which is exactly what makes it so powerful. Easily one of the strongest releases of the batch.



Reviewer: Gonza Perez
Label: Iron Lung

EROSION – Invasive Species LP

The perceived amount of bands can often feel staggering in the internet age, and as much as you try to keep in tune with new releases, it feels like an impossible task that even a mythological hero would fail to complete. I normally feel comfortable among crust-related bands, so if even I have never heard of EROSION, I am not lost as far as what they are trying to achieve is concerned. In fact, besides MASSGRAVE, I have to admit that I don't know any of the bands the members of EROSION have been or currently are involved in. Who said the world was small? If EROSION includes a Swedish-flavoured dark metallic crust influence, I would not put them fully in the crust category. A lot is happening on their second LP *Invasive Species*, sometimes too much so for my basic brain, as this Vancouver act also incorporates elements of extreme metal (black or death) into their behemoth recipe that borders on blackened crust. The record is punishing, heavy, and mean, no doubt about it, and will appeal to metalheads and fans of modern crust alike. The label Mechanized Apparatus Revolt rightly compares them to MARTYRDÖD, but they are more versatile and diverse. I would also add kang-driven metal

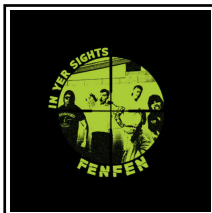


bands like ADRESTIA adopting a blackened HIS HERO IS GONE approach (assuming that makes sense). It's a little too technical at times, and sometimes I have the impression that the band wants to do too many things in their songs. However, the sound is great and crushing, definitely an intense listen.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Mechanized Apparatus Revolt

FEN FEN – In Yer Sights 12"

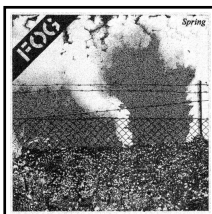
Pumping stripped-down and rugged rock into the Motor City, FEN FEN unleashes a tough rip of tunes on their debut 12". Loaded with foreboding riffs and catchy lyrics, the songs are propelled by a triumphant power, at times coming across like a warped version of the HIVES. Snappy and snotty, its clean aggression makes for pure punk catharsis.



Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Low Ambition / Sweet Time

FOG – Spring EP

FOG is a four-piece anarcho-punk band that has been very active for the past couple of years. The band's latest release, *Spring*, is a four-track EP that takes a hard look at the genocide of Palestinian people in Gaza with poetic and articulate lyrics. Sonically, FOG reminds me a lot of France's TOXIC RITES, with fast-paced, quick-switch punk rock forming a backdrop to the vocals. When compared to FOG's previous output, *Spring* comes out feeling more focused with its concise lyrical theme. The closer "No Fate" is perhaps my favorite song on the EP, as it lets the instrumentals come through fully and has a playful energy while still being serious as hell.



Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: AlwaysNeverFun / R.I.P. Peace

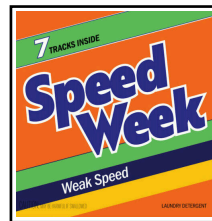
FRENTE NORTE / THE OLD BREED – split EP

Broadly fine split between two Midwestern street punk-y types. My heart initially sank when I saw the cover and bore witness to not one but two fellas wearing the kind of daft flat cap only seen in *Peaky Blinders*, or on a Victorian chimney sweep or a fight at Cheltenham races, which is usually the sign of the worst kind plodding, midtempo, faux Oi! *shite* that makes me wish for an inner ear infection, but I was mostly pleas-



SPEED WEEK – Weak Speed 12"

With players from the excellent Australian bands the BRAKES and SPLIT SYSTEM comes a snarling slab of punk with conviction. SPEED WEEK presents here with an assured confidence and maturity that perfectly tempers their wild-eyed energy. Reminiscent of more mainstream acts like SHAME or FONTAINES D.C. but with a wiry cool, this band sounds poised for bigger and better things without the fear of losing their edge. It's well-read, high-energy punk rock that doesn't miss a step. Impressive as so few new acts are.



Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Erste Theke Tonträger

STARBURST – Revolutionary Technology cassette

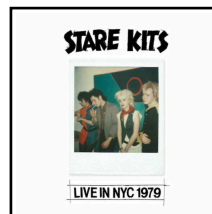
Harkening back to when emo was being argued over on the WEEZER message boards (during its third wave that many decried as false) is this harsh-washed gem of a tape that buries its achingly sweet harmonies in swaths of lo-fi gunk. The result is totally compelling and well-anchored to its melodies, which are uniformly excellent. Even though they get a little Midwestern on the lick starting off the penultimate cut "Summer," this is a novel approach to pop-sensible indie rock with a punk ethos. Perfecto.



Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Rip

STARE KITS – Live in NYC 1979 LP

STARE KITS were an enigmatic, art-leaning minimalist punk quartet that operated on the periphery of New York's late '70s no wave scene—their first show was actually on a May 1979 bill with the similarly-disposed (and also debuting) UT, two strange and striking flowers simultaneously sprouting from the same overgrown garden plot. It turned out to be an incredibly short-lived project (six whole months and three live performances), with a legacy that has largely survived through the web of what its members would later go onto to do, namely vocalist Angela Jaeger relocating to London and joining DROWNING CRAZE and PIGBAG after STARE KITS' split and drummer Amy Rigby forming the SHAMS in the late '80s before a lauded singer/songwriter career. This LP marks the



first proper STARE KITS release, with Side A pulled from live tracks recorded at two of the band's three gigs at the Lower Manhattan post-punk/experimental music hub Tier 3 and rehearsal versions of six of those eight songs making up the flip. The raw, feral energy of the live takes gives them an almost universal edge here—"If It's Red It Can't Be Black" is STARE KITS at their most classically no wave, as Angela's vocals waver somewhere between spoken, sung, and incanted over a completely tumbling and halting rhythm, while the doomed guitar-and-poetry intensity of "I See Them From My Window" almost prefigures MECCA NORMAL, and standout "Strength Accumulate" strips bass-driven, UK DIY-style post-punk to an absolutely paper-thin extreme. A footnote in the grand scheme of things, to be sure, but still one worth investigating.

Reviewer: Erika Elizabeth
Label: Feeding Tube / Negative Glam

SUBVERSIVE INTENT – Subversive Intent demo cassette

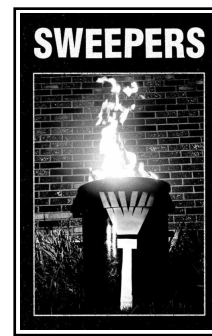
A solid debut from San Diego's newest hardcore outfit SUBVERSIVE INTENT. Plenty of speed and leads on top of leads call to mind SoCal legends BATTALION OF SAINTS. Better than average production pushes this one past usual demo fare, making it more than worth a listen. Check out "Payaso" and "Weather-vane."



Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Camel Clutch / Rebirth

SWEEPERS – Sweepers cassette

Self-released cassette version of an LP released on Abandon Everything Records. I can't remember the last time I was this confused by a band. A novelty punk project about sweeping? I guess it's impressive that one can write that many songs about sweeping. Between this full-length recording and the band's initial demo, that's over 25 songs, of which the only subject matter seems to be...sweeping. Hell, I don't think I've swept the floors of my house as many times as this band has songs about the act of sweeping. To make it all that much more confusing, musically this is something of an artsy free jazz project, wrapped in novelty punk packaging. Maybe I'm the wrong person for this kind of "punk." Halfway into this band's eighteen-song LP (too long), and I'm ready to sweep this under the damn rug.



SHAKTI – Shakti LP

Barcelona punk band with members of Indian heritage deliver a fucking killer debut record that captures post-colonial disillusionment so precisely that it sounds like a future rebel anthem. With Marathi-language vocals and Bollywood-influenced dancefloor rhythms, SHAKTI feels culturally rooted in India, while also existing as a seething punk band. It's an incredible, invigorating balance—and the track “Lahan Pani,” with its spoken word intro detailing the exploitation of India by countries that repair the favor with blatant racism, is maybe the year's best album opener. The bass riff is hooky, and the fury that follows is decimating. Locked-in bass/drums configurations that wouldn't be out of place on a disco floor abound on this record, but it stays punk AF; not an easy feat. Songs like “Maut” and “Andolan” have a funk-anchored post-punk approach that crackles with found-sound samples, sounding like a walk past a dance club anchored by a wall of TVs displaying the same staticky news reporter. It's a rich experience, and you owe it to yourself as a connoisseur of international punk to get this on your turntable fast.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: La Vida Es Un Mus

SLANG – Rest in Misery LP

Sapporo City legends return after a decade of silence with all the subtlety of a bomb blast. Stoke-on-Trent meets NYHC in a glorious amalgamation that still sounds fresh and innovative over thirty years on. The vitality and rage hasn't faded in the least, and one gets the sense that SLANG has reemerged in response to the deteriorating global political climate. In the face of so much avoidable death and exploitation, the outrage laid bare across the nine tracks of *Rest in Misery* is palpable. Prank isn't as active as they once were, but they always deliver the goods. No exception here, just raging Japanese hardcore with a metallic bent that will make you want to run through a wall.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: Prank



SO CLOSE / WIPEOUT – split EP

Samples and powerviolence go together like a horse and a carriage. WIPEOUT delivers a seriously bass-heavy axe to the face, with a thin, can-like snare cutting through the wall of fuzz with precision, and horrific vocals setting the mood. Four tracks of modern powerviolence as short as they come that could appease both the WEEKEND NACHOS enjoyer as well as the CROSSED OUT purist. Next up is SO CLOSE, and guess what? Samples? Check! Blasts, skanks, and breakdowns? Check! More polished-sounding (if there is such a thing), INFEST-like fast hardcore delivered with the obligatory Joe Denunzio snarl. And by the time you're done reading this review, so will be the split. One for the Ham-slappers.

Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Drinkin' Beer in Bandana

SPARES / TREASURE PAINS – split 12"

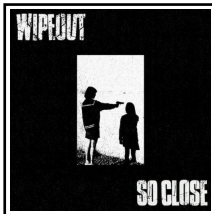
Alright, I've griped about this before, so I wanna get it out of the way first—please stop halving split albums between two different Bandcamp accounts. It defeats the purpose of said split! I know it's all together on the record, but the vast majority of people will be listening online. Keep it together, folks! SPARES play classic post-hardcore and remind me a bit of RUSSIAN CIRCLES (with vocals), and THRICE. TREASURE PAINS are in the same realm and have more of a dissonant edge like RIVAL SCHOOLS and HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE. Production for both bands is crisp and loud as hell. Really solid stuff here. I'd go as far as saying it's worth bouncing between two Bandcamps.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Council / Wiretap

SPATTER PATTERN – Atomic Dinette / TV Casualty 7"

Two tracks of DIY minimal synth punk from Michigan. Both sides throb with thick, warmly produced synth tones, crisp drum machines, and cynical spoken/sung vocals. “TV Casualty” got a few extra plays due to its noisy buzzing frequencies that accompany the main dancefloor rhythm and infectious chorus railing against the influence of television (a quaint concern these days). Bleak, catchy, and worth a listen.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Mutated Pink Fuzz



antly surprised. FRENTE NORTE, the stronger side of the split for sure, comes across like a jangler, more pop-oriented FUERZA BRUTA. OLD BREED's side is boring as fuck but not offensive; can always use that side of the split as a coaster or something.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: self-released

FUNGAS – Intelligence 1 LP

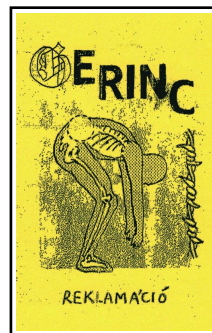
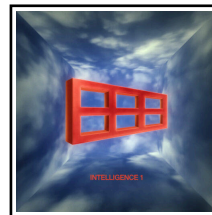
Sci-fi egg-punk from Australia that mixes DEVO-core vocals and herky-jerky rhythms with maximum dork power (they're really into rocks, apparently?). Sneaky spy riffs tangle with alien synths for a familiar but fun high-energy blast. “it” pulls back the shtick just a bit to allow classic new wave melodies to emerge and build a near-perfect multi-layered pop song. If you like this kind of stuff, you'll like this record—it's well-produced and carefully composed for maximum party impact.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Erste Theke Tonträger

GERINC – Reklamáció cassette

Not everyone has an ear for melody, but certainly everyone in this group does. The guitars have a satisfying crunch, interplaying with the bass in a way that surpasses the bare minimum root note playing most punk asks of its players. In just eight brief tracks, this international Budapest-headquartered band shows a refined and biting sound brimming with harmonic turns that keep the ear on end. Citing the iconic WIPERS as a reference, tracks like “Dolgozz” earn the right to the influence, with downpicked chugging that gives way to Greg Sage-like chiming open chords, to say nothing of “Mindent Belep” which all but echoes the opening arpeggios of “D-7.” But the sound is novel and all their own. The energy never lets up, with earnest, ganged-up vocals and a drummer who keeps it close and tight. An immensely satisfying listen. Grab a tape while they're still around (they won't be for long).

Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Szégyen Kazetták



GNATS – Gnats demo cassette

First demo from Florida-based, self-proclaimed bubblegum rock band. It's a little confusing reviewing a band's first release, which is a year-and-a-half old, when the band has dropped two releases since, but we happily write about what is assigned to us. Six tracks of lo-fi drum machine music with a keyboard seemingly set to emulate the sound of a swarm of bugs, hence the band's name. That's a funny idea and all, but not all ideas seem worth following through to fruition. This just comes off sounding like someone is badly playing a slide whistle over all of the songs, some of which actually seem well-crafted and have a fair amount of pop sensibility to them. The final song, “Serial Mom,” is really cool and driving right up until the point that the swarm of slide whistles comes in. Don't get me wrong, I love a stupid-sounding synth, but this reoccurring aspect through all six songs is just too commanding and makes the songs hopefully forgettable.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Rip

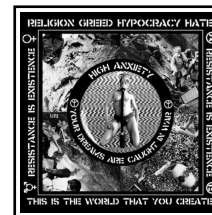
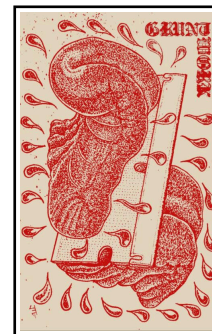
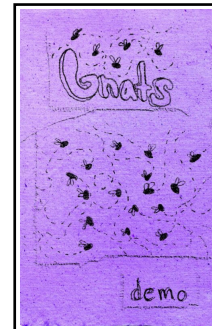
GRUNTWORK – Violence in the Workplace cassette

Noise-added, shit-fi punk that just might drive ya to the brink of homicidal rage if you're listening too close in proximity to your place of employment. Four snappy, over-before-you-know-it jammers that kick harder than your grandpappy's shotgun, this whole affair will take up less than five minutes of your precious time. For fans of HOAX, FRIED EGG, long stretches of unemployment, etc.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: Human Future

HIGH ANXIETY – Your Dreams Are Caught in War 12"

HIGH ANXIETY from Ontario, Canada plays crust-blown anarcho-punk, and earlier this year, they released *Your Dreams Are Caught in War*, which is ten tracks of indignation and rage. Espousing post-crust and proto-grind elements, HIGH ANXIETY features noisy vocals, upfront, dirty bass, and guitar riffs that are primitive,



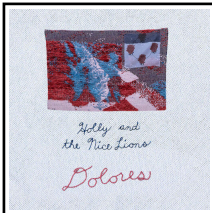
rhythmic, and energetic. Lyrically, HIGH ANXIETY cuts through the bullshit with scathing criticisms of political, cultural, and religious institutions of our time. The ten songs on this disc are over in much too short of an amount of time, leading to multiple playthroughs. *Your Dreams are Caught in War* is a joint release of Fiadh Productions and Violet Hour Transmissions, so the sleeve and disc are of the highest quality.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Fiadh Productions / Violet Hour Transmissions

HOLLY AND THE NICE LIONS – Dolores LP

I went to Green Bay UFO Museum Gift Shop and Records for the first time a few years ago when I decided to drive the northern route around Lake Michigan to Minneapolis. I walked out of there with some great records on Amphetamine Reptile and a Darth Vader bank for my cousin that would activate with every road bump and say "Impressive, most impressive, you are not a Jedi yet." There were a lot of bumps. Still, with that slap-tickle memory, I was excited to see that they had something to do with this release. I researched (typed into an Internet browser) Certified PR Records and found that they are based in St. Petersburg, Florida, where long-ago *Maximum Rockroll* shitworker, reviewer, columnist, and interviewer Lali D lives, so it can't be that bad. I heard that St. Pete has a good glass arts scene, too. This *Dolores* LP starts off with a song clocking in at over four minutes, pulling from the dark side of the dirge-like, cloud-covered Midwest, but around the two-minute mark, it becomes a straight-up middle-finger rocker. This easily could have been on Sympathy for the Record Industry with its lean into the punk side of rock'n'roll. The standout on this is the HOLLY part of HOLLY AND THE NICE LIONS band, and her direct and committed vocals. Oftentimes I've felt that singers can tend to overdo it with screaming to try and get across their disgust or pain or anger, but in this instance, HOLLY uses good songwriting coupled with subtle vocal tones and inflection to let you know she's had enough. I'd be remiss if I didn't touch on Steven Spoerl's bass-playing that complements every song, almost as though another dim and somber conversation is taking place somewhere in the same room, with Travis Pashek's drums pulling you forward through a late-night drive north, hugging the lake shore alone with everything getting darker and darker. This record, in sum, is thoughtful, heavy, dark, empowering, sorrowful, and redeeming rock'n'roll/punk/sludge/garage. *Dolores* is for those times that you want to be alone to work out what's been bugging you. HOLLY AND THE NICE LIONS have been a band for over a decade, and I'm a bit sad that I'm just hearing them now. In closing, my cousin loved his Darth Vader bank, and think he's going to love this record, too. He's 53.

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Certified PR / Green Bay UFO Museum Gift Shop and Records



HURT HAWKS – The Big Sweat cassette

Ever wonder what it would sound like if Charles Bukowski had a Casio keyboard? Oh, are you ever in luck. HURT HAWKS are here to spit gravelly, liquor-soaked tales of debauchery and hard living in your face, accompanied by a drum preset. The opening track goes something like this: "Libation! / Liberation! / The last mad days of a hedonist / If you want to bitch about it / Dial 1-800-Eat-Shit!" The next track features the chant, "Bad whiskey, bad women, bad sex / My goddamn life is rudderless." Reading these lines, you are either snapping your fingers at your new favorite tough guy poet laureate, or rolling your eyes back into your skull like a slot machine. That's really all you need to know.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Rad Safari



IGNORANTES – Las Promesas Que Te Hacemos Te Las Puedes Meter Por El Cul 7"

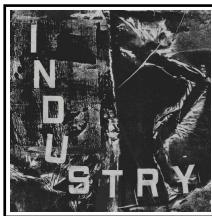
Chilean punks IGNORANTES usually deal in scorched, blown-out, hyper-abrasive recordings—the kind of raw *tupa-tupa* punk that is so harsh it feels like it's stripping paint. But this two-song 7" is a bit of a curveball, serving up super lo-fi but almost poppy Oi! with plasticky keyboards that give it an odd sweetness. While digging through their catalog for this review, the release that grabbed me most was *No Hemos Inventado Nada, Ni Nos Interesa Hacerlo*, even though the recording quality is so brutal it made my ears bleed. By contrast, this 7" is lighter and bouncier. Side A's "Adiós Camarada" even carries a hint of that CURE "Boys Don't Cry" tune, which gives the whole thing an oddly familiar flavor. I respect the swing into new territory, even if it doesn't fully land for me.

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: General Speech



INDUSTRY – Industry LP

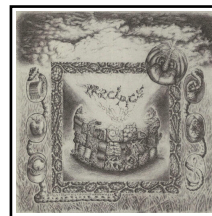
Berlin-based INDUSTRY has been gathering steam from the past two years and has finally unleashed their self-titled full-length. Burly punk rock with jazz compositions and an agro vibe creates a ten-song LP that reads as monolithic but is overtly so much more. In other words, lyrics born out of exasperation are delivered over rumbling rhythms and grinding guitars that shift grooves frequently, but always seem to get your



PRECIPICE – Down the Well 12"

PRECIPICE is a band that formed during COVID and put out a demo that I heard yet quickly lost interest in. *Down the Well* is a welcomed return, and is demonstrative of the Nantes group strengthening and turning the knobs. Bass-driven in an almost KILLDOZER-like way, the eight tracks are spread evenly with hate and indignation. A minute-long beatdown with "A Customary Behavior in a Particular Situation" is my mixtape track. Good bruisers.

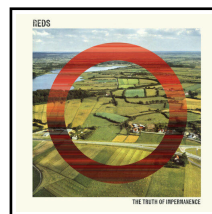
Reviewer: Johnny Leach
Label: Discos Enfermos / Urticaria



REDS – The Truth of Impermanence 12"

REDS! Liked the movie, love the band. Full disclosure, I have known these folks for some time and we cut our teeth on the same kinds of punk rock. Kids of the '90s, I tell ya. This new release is called *The Truth of Impermanence*, and it is out on Council Records. "So You Say" showcases vocalist Evan Kilgore's sass and snarl, with quiet vocals reminiscent of some of my favorite Ian MacKaye vocals both in FUGAZI and MINOR THREAT. This record is quite polished in terms of production, but the essence of punk is foregrounded and intact. "Energy" reminds me a lot of my favorite Louisville bands, and the first couple of guitar and vocal lines reached into my core, surprising me with how emotional it made me. There are creative and inventive bass lines peppered throughout, as well as driving, solid drumming. Some of my favorite patterns emerge in the song "The Body," with well-placed call-and-response instrumentation and noodling. These are the anthems I think we all need in these times, especially as they relate to human dignity and bodily autonomy themes. The treble at the end along with Evan's shouts makes me wanna punch a fist in the sky. Fans of Dischord will like REDS, and fans of liberation writ large will find something in this as well.

Reviewer: Katy Otto
Label: Council



ROYAL SCUM – Human Gallantry EP

This is a perfect example of a cover being a poor illustration of the music included on the record. In terms of semiotics, using a rather gruesome black-and-white picture of a horse being hung on a deck points to growling, nihilistic grindcore, but ROYAL SCUM from Hamburg does not belong to that school, rather

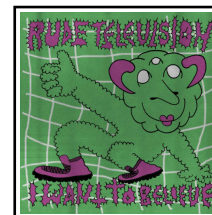


playing heavy and dark crusty hardcore with some moody melodies. The band is actually more of a collective and does not have a fixed lineup, so I do not know if the members of this version of the band were around in the '00s, but I would bet they were because ROYAL SCUM has that typical quite well-produced neocrusty sound that was so popular back then. It would be far-fetched to claim that they stand as an all-out FROM ASHES RISE-type band, but early/mid-'00s ACURED or UNKIND come to mind, although they do not sound quite as bleak, and the vocal delivery in English—as well as the use of several angry singers—makes me think of US bands (like ANTIPRODUCT, maybe?). With ROYAL SCUM being pro-vegan, I assume the cover is meant to reflect human cruelty toward animals, and I would guess the band is not too keen on the monarchy (even if Germany, besides Franz Beckenbauer, has not had a king for a while). On the whole, *Human Gallantry* is a pretty solid listen if you enjoy this sort of politically-driven, heavy, angry hardcore with dark melodies, and the EP works well and does perfectly what it set out to do.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Aktiver Ausstand In Plastik / Bolzkow / Frontcore / Zann's

RUDE TELEVISION – I Want to Believe EP

Another entry in the egg-punk universe: bouncy synths, wiry guitars, playful neon energy. RUDE TELEVISION executes it well, though the formula feels reused, with the record's explosive highlight being



tificial Paint." A fun, energetic listen—enjoyable, but not essential.

Reviewer: Gonzala Perez
Label: Sweet Time

SCHENECTAVOIDZ – Attaining New Levels of High cassette

Straight out of Schenectady, New York, this hometown homage brings us some modern "blink it and you'll miss it" hardcore. To put it bluntly (no pun intended), most of these tracks don't last longer than a minute—and-a-half, besides the appropriately titled "90 Seconds" which abandons the lightning-quick hardcore motif and adopts a sludgy edge. These folks channel the energy of CHARLES BRONSON, but sound a bit more like fellow East Coasters EVERY TIME I DIE and SUICIDE FILE. If you're a fan of the modern hardcore sound of the last two decades, you're going to want to check this out.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Shock to the System



tight bass and drums. There are only 300 of these LPs, on all of the different colors that an LP could be, perhaps. A *Thousand Couple Times*, although budding with infectious hooks, has a regretful and foreboding lyrical sorrow to it that always seems to be amplified by a band's proximity to the Great Lakes.

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Snappy Little Numbers

NAPE NECK – The Shallowest End LP

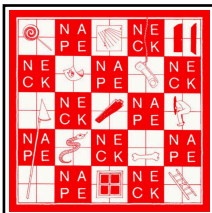
I won't beat around the bush, folks—Leeds trio NAPE NECK's first LP *The Shallowest End* utterly and totally stunned me. This thing is a perfect mess of puzzling bass lines, proudly no wave guitars, and incredibly fucked-up drum beats. What's crazier is the fact that all three members are singing while breezing through those dazzling signature changes and sharp turns in composition. I mean, how? How is it possible for three people to make that much noise and make it make sense? It's an absolutely explosive and electrifying noise rock freakout, and I'm head over heels in love with it. *Ring-ring*: Hey Alex, I know I already submitted it, but is it possible to make a few changes to my year-end top ten?

Reviewer: Mama Goblin
Label: Dot Dash Sounds / OCCii / Red Wig

OKRES – Demo '85 / Jarocin '85 LP

Pulled from obscurity and into your stack of questionable records, this archival LP remembers OKRES out of Ostrów Wielkopolski, Greater Poland. The first half of the album features the band's demo recordings from 1985, and the second portion brings us another blast from the past of the legendary Jarocin music festival of that same year. It's fast and loose first wave hardcore driven by pure energy—"Liban Nie Żyje" has a wicked swarming guitar attack like Government Issue's "Sheer Terror". There's nine crude tunes from the demo and nine from the festival, but Bandcamp only teases four songs, so if you want to hear the whole thing, you'll have to pony up.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Warsaw Pact



OPTIC SINK – Lucky Number LP

Tennessee's OPTIC SINK delivers eight synth-driven post-punk tracks with their LP *Lucky Number*. While thoughtfully layered drum machine beats and bass lines akin to Peter Hook's melodic style form a strong foundation for the album, analog and unpolished synth tracks provide a nice, gritty top layer for Natalie Hoffmann of NOTS to sing over. Though not as front and center, guitars help strengthen the melodic content significantly. All in all, it's a nice album to sway along and wander off.

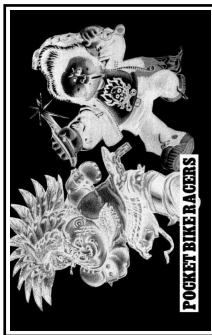
Reviewer: Mama Goblin
Label: Feel It



POCKET BIKE RACERS – Pocket Bike Racers demo cassette

Posthumous cassette release of a two-song demo from a lo-fi, nasty, rock'n'roll/rockabilly-infused one-off garage punk project from Cleveland, OH, recorded in 2020 during COVID lockdown. There's something very charming about these tracks, and it is yet another of many examples from that timeframe of people finding a way to have some sort of creative outlet when isolated from others. Released in small quantities, Knuckles On Stun is onto their second run of 25 copies of this demo, with the second press having the art inverted as a differentiation from the first run of 25. Thankfully, my copy is from the first run or I would have had to photocopy my own cover, inverting it back to normal as that is a massive pet peeve of mine. Check out the recent article written for *The Counterforce* on that exact topic if you are confused as to what I mean.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Knuckles on Stun



head banging. If you've had your fill of AXEGRINDER and are looking for something more, then look no further than INDUSTRY.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: La Vida Es Un Mus

JAILCELL RECIPES – Artifact for an Empty Tank World LP

A reissue compilation encompassing the first two full-lengths and first two EPs from hardcore Wiganers JAILCELL RECIPES. The target for this collection was to clean up poor-quality old recordings to be introduced amongst a teeming new audience. Did it work? Yes, it did. The traversing collection starts with the band in their heavily YOUTH OF TODAY-influenced genesis and ends with the band's LEATHERFACE-styled coda. Tons of material is crammed into this record sleeve, really everything there could be to know about these blokes.

Reviewer: Johnny Leach
Label: First Strike



KIBERA / SOLITÄR – split LP

In sci-fi movies, especially in the '80s, time machines are always a big deal: incredible technological feats involving years of studies, vast amounts of unstable nuclear energy, and the possibility of changing the course of history. Listening to KIBERA is a much safer way to travel back in time, although it will not get you farther than the mid-'00s crust dimension. This Czech band plays raw, dark, and aggressive neocrust with harsh female vocals. I am definitely reminded of bands like AMBULANCE, EKKAI, or even SCHIFOSI, back when the core of the subgenre still relied on the punkier, more direct side of the spectrum rather than the more emotional or polished "post-hardcore" one. The six songs on this LP are firmly rooted in primitive, angry hardcore, and the listening experience is therefore pleasant if you like depressive crust. KIBERA shares the split with SOLITÄR, a rather new Prague-based unit that delivers direct, fast, and furious crustcore. Of course with a name like this, it's hard not to get the heavy nod: yes, these people are into TOTALITÄR. But, even though there is an influence (especially riff-wise), I would not place the band in the käng drawer overall, but clearly in the crust basement. There is a lot of energy on this recording, and it certainly more than makes up for some moments that don't totally work for me. The relentless feel really works well here, and on that level I am reminded of bands like INFECJA, local classics like MASS GENOCIDE PROCESS or even MASSGRAVE, or some Brazilian thrashing hardcore at times (because of the fast-paced vocals, probably).



On the whole, a solid split LP, and a relevant display of fast and aggressive punk music from Czechia.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Crust as Fuck / Phobia / Svab

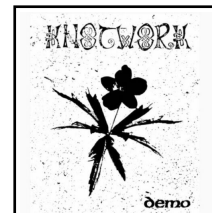
KNOTWORK – Knotwork demo cassette

The last time I heard of a Detroit crust band was when ANGUISH released their first EP in 2009, a comparatively innocent time when the very idea of Donald Trump being president still belonged to the realm of dystopian science fiction (where it should have stayed). I cannot be said to have a large expertise in this area, but I have a sixth sense when it comes to quality crust and, weather permitting, am able to detect it from beyond the seas. KNOTWORK had been on my prestigious "bands to watch for" list, so I was genuinely excited when this demo tape finally came out. And let me tell you that I was right to be excited, and my sixth sense is as sharp as ever. If the production might be a little too raw for some—as a lover of cave music, it certainly is not for me—the songwriting skills of KNOTWORK are undeniable, and for a first proper recording, it is a crust tour de force. The band inhabits the stenchcore revival waters of the punk world and are not unlike modern classic bands like ALEMENT, the sadly missed ZYGOME or mid/late '00s INSTINCT OF SURVIVAL, meaning they have a certain flair for good crust arrangements. Basically, they keep working on the traditional old school apocalyptic metal crust sound that, if it cannot be said to be the fanciest of punk subgenres these days, still has very loyal enthusiasts ready to save on soap in order to buy the stenchcore goods. KNOTWORK also nods to the genre's forefathers like DEVIATED INSTINCT or AXEGRINDER on a couple of occasions, but the influences are overall structural, the band cannot be considered as too derivative even if they borrow liberally. There is a good mix of paces and vocal styles, which is all the more impressive since there is just one vocalist who can switch from demonic growls à la LAST LEGION ALIVE to more traditional DETESTATION-ish '90s anarcho shouts. This tape is right up crust street.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Distorted Sedition / Sound of Chaos

KOLPEKA / REVERT – split 12"

Perfectly executed split 12" showcasing two bands from the Basque Country, a region whose punk and Oi! scene Mendeku Diskak has pretty much put on the map. On the A-side is REVERT, whose tooth-chipping stompers take cues from early Boston hardcore. REVERT's vocals are particularly rough and pissed, taking these songs up a notch or two on the aggro-meter. KOLPEKA follows up on the B-side, and



while they retain some of the East Coast brutishness of their fellow countrymen, they have a little more spring in their step. I've read from a couple of sources that KOLPEKA are avid skateboarders, so maybe that explains the slight uptick in energy. Regardless of its source, their speediness compliments the more mid-tempo pace of REVERT nicely, making for a well-rounded split. Top it all off with the killer artwork this is wrapped in, and Mendeku Diskak once again proves why they're one of the best in the game.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Mendeku Diskak

LAKE INFERIOR – Five Ahead / Avoid All Robots 7"

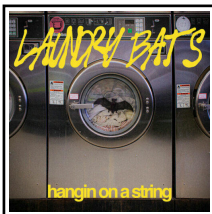
Wow, this is a phenomenal pair of songs here. Sinister doom-goth-surf rock, as if WEEDEATER decided they wanted to sound more like the CRAMPS and Danzig-era MISFITS. I love the unintentional (at least I assume it's unintentional) irony of their song "Five Ahead," which features the lyrics "Five years ahead of our time / Ten years behind." This certainly sounds like it's from the future and not at all dated or "behind." The B-side ("Avoid All Robots") is equal parts retro-futuristic and a cautionary tale for our current AI-added society. Really great slab here. Highly recommended.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: self-released

LAUNDRY BATS – Hangin on a String LP

Behold the LAUNDRY BATS—an unanticipated bastion of punk purity in these troubled times. These are the Memphis all-stars of dirt-caked rock'n'roll, featuring members of the OBLIVIANS and COMPULSIVE GAMBLERS, and led by the distinctly raw vocals of Abe White (MANATEES, TRUE SONS OF THUNDER). This configuration taps into an unbridled, freewheeling spirit that unwittingly touches edges with the likes of the RE-TAIL SIMPS and even Bloomington's enigmatic COW-BOYS, swinging from soulful '70s blues rock à la *Kill City* ("Bizness") to psychedelic spaghetti western ("Lawnmower Man") in impressively graceful fashion. You'll throw your hands in the air at the haunting and sympathetic "Church of Bad," and nod in approval as "Nightmare" reappropriates the lead riff from the CLASH's "What's My Name" like it was a stolen catalytic converter welded onto a rusted Camaro. That's not the only familiar groove you'll find here, but any similarities to other songs living or dead are undoubtedly in tasteful homage. It's a diversely inspired party of a record, with the only constant being that it's 100% fire.

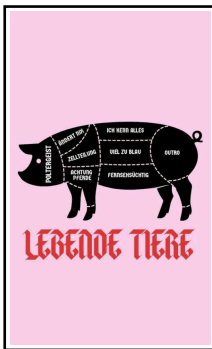
Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: HoZac



LEBENDE TIERE – Uwaga cassette

New release on Berlin, Germany's Flennen label from LEBENDE TIERE with their *Uwaga* cassette. From what I can tell, this is the band's debut, and I assume they are also from Berlin? The songs are fun and fast, featuring bouncy drums and bass, and higher-register guitar tones with a perfect amount of crunch that squabble in some forever-turmoil under the shouted direction of a lively vocalist. Everything feels electric, frantic, and...a little odd or eggy? For example, the vocals in "Achtung Pferde" are replaced by the neighs and whinnies of a horse. So that's fun. They may have had me with the red-on-pink cassette jacket, but the music rips, too!

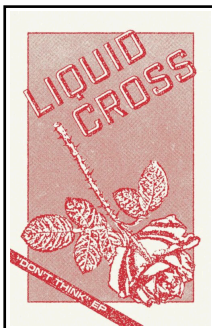
Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Flennen



LIQUID CROSS – Don't Think cassette

In reading the Bandcamp description for this release, three things feel undeniable—the SAINTS, the WIPERS, and the Pacific Northwest. I might add RADIO BIRDMAN here as well to round out what the listener might expect. These songs have a palpable desperation to them that really draws the listener in and along. The image of a fresh smelling pine tree enshrouded in a dense fog makes sense here as well; you can sense the presence of melody, but you can't easily see it through the wonderful sonic din. These tracks are timeless DIY.

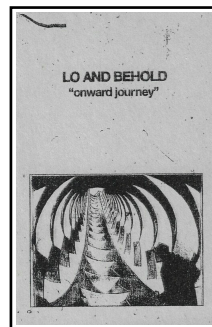
Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: Strange Mono



LO AND BEHOLD – Onward Journey cassette

Debut release from LO AND BEHOLD, the solo project of Louis Harding. In a list of bands too long to name, Harding's tenure as a songwriter really shines through on this heartfelt, ten-track masterpiece. I recognized his name from his bass work in BELGRADO, whose 2023 *Intra Apogee* made quite a splash. That said, there's no synth/dance vibe present on *Onward Journey*, instead we get a beautiful, sweeping reverie, reminiscent of the shimmering guitar and despair on something like Paul Westerberg's "Answering Machine"—trading Midwestern sensibilities for downcast British shoe-scutting. This will make my top ten albums of the year, easy. I just hope the cassettes are quality, because unlike many raucous, lo-fi recordings, this one wants to be listened to loud and clear. Buy the ticket, take the *Journey*.

Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Gob Nation / Inscrutable



MAKING FRIENDS AS ADULTS – New Road CD

I'm never sure what's going to happen when an acoustic guitar starts off a record, but dang, it's in and out fast. Pulling from BRAID, DISCOUNT, LEMURA, POHGOH, FIFTH HOUR HERO, and so on, these are catchy songs delivered in a thoughtful, melodic way that can bring early ALKALINE TRIO to mind. Although MAKING FRIENDS AS ADULTS pulls from these bands, they also are clearly carving their own path. There are eleven songs on here and I think they maybe could have gone with eight or nine, but overall, this CD is a great listen. One bit of advice for MAKING FRIENDS AS ADULTS would be to not do it. I'm in my fifties, and at a certain point, you know enough people and making friends is overrated and tiresome.

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: self-released



MASK APPEAL – Slice & Slice EP

Debut release from Los Angeles-based MASK APPEAL. With members from DETROIT COBRAS, OZZELLES, and the STAR-LITE DESPERATION to name a few, this lot is well steeped in a noisy, industrial death wail akin to the BIRTHDAY PARTY. The bass is way up front in the mix, propelling this creature forward, with big, hall-reverb drums, and both set the stage for a writhing, shimmering guitar and howling vocals that inspire a morbid fascination. A tragic poem recited to an anxious pulse. Thank you to whatever forces of good and evil brought these three together, MASKED APPEAL truly rules.

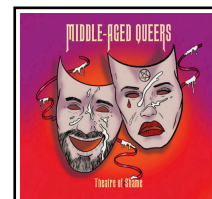
Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Slouch



MIDDLE-AGED QUEERS – Theatre of Shame CD

I guess this might be the feel-good, laugh-steady queer punk album of the year, unless there's another one. These are catchy songs, not unlike PANSY DIVISION or some DIESEL QUEENS tunes. Among the laughs and fun-time-party-guy stuff, the MIDDLE-AGED QUEERS pepper in some lyrically heavy songs, exemplified by the tunes "Big Sisters" and "Nobody Wants." I initially was ready to toss this into the WEIRD AL punk category, but MIDDLE-AGED QUEERS have more than that to offer. Look, WEIRD AL punk is a fine place to be, I like a lot of it, but all I'm saying is that MIDDLE-AGED QUEERS have more than just songs funny about slumber parties, kinks, and anal beads. And just in time for Xmas, the MIDDLE-AGED QUEERS have a fully stocked online merch presence!

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Engineer / Sell the Heart



MODEL MARTEL – A Thousand Couple Times LP

MODEL MARTEL has a parallel sound with many bands on Tiny Engines Records and the Lauren Records style of Midwest-centric emo-punk-pop-core. This is shitty jobs, friends you can't depend on, broken relationships, expecting more from life, and finding comfort in late night talks, all wrapped in guitar hooks and melancholic melody. If I were 25 years younger, I would be calling this my favorite record of 2025 because of how it encapsulates life's twenties and thirties. A solid, lyrically-focused rite of passage LP, open-eyed on broken and healing, punctuated with

