

WRISTWATCH – III LP

The best offering yet from this fiery Madison, WI post-garage-punk trio. This is five songs from their first record and five songs from their second record, re-recorded. This time around, they ditched the drum machine in favor of their live drummer, and it really pays off. What I dig most about this is that it's infinitely more aggressive in nature than their previous releases, and honestly, more than most of the stuff I hear in the genre. It's pissed-off and weird, but also really melodic and hooky, and there's an explosiveness to the songs that was lacking on their previous releases. The music is tight, angular, intricate, and sonically combustible. You can feel the energy of them all playing together, and it makes a world of difference. There's some killer guitar work going on, and when the bass needs to shine, it really shines. Bassist Ty Spatz lays down a sick bass line during the track "Rules," and it's one of my favorite moments on the album. It reminds me of an angrier DEVO meets early PAVEMENT or the BUZZCOCKS. Vocally, the JAY REATARD influence is still there, but it's not the star of the show. Vocalist/guitarist Bobby Hussy has come into his own vocally, screaming maniacally and theatrically, adding an additional layer of tension to a record already busting at the seams with tension and anxiety. The closing track "Fix" is a highlight of the record for me and a perfect demonstration of everything I liked about the LP packed into one song. It's tense and moody, working through several musical passages that push it past the five-minute mark before resolving and releasing all that goddamn tension. Play it loud!



Reviewer: Sir Bobos
Label: No Coast

XRAY XEROXX – Art Rock! cassette

XRAY XEROXX brings medium-fi garage punk that is stylistically all over the place. The first two tracks revel in thick, fuzzy chord progressions with catchy, gruff vocals, resulting in grunge-meets-garage Warped Tour fodder—essentially NOFX with a Big Muff pedal, which is probably a cup of tea quite a few people enjoy. The second half sucks in a different way. Not to weaponize the band name, but "Art Rock!" and "121 Jiggawatts" sound like cheap, bad copies of quirky egg-punk bands without the nervous weirdo energy and rawness that make the microgenre tolerable. The tracks feel calculated and inauthentic, and while snappy with their squiggly synths and jerky vocals, smack of forgettable genre tourism. Lyrics to "Art Rock!" say, "Is this new wave or no wave? / Who's to say? / Is this grunge, is it shoegaze? / Is it cliché? / Is this new wave or no wave? / Who's to say either way? / But would I listen to it? / No way!" Yeah, same.



Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Low Ambition

YOUNG AND DOOMED – Horror at Its Very Finest cassette

Heavy alt with ultra-powerful and theatrical femme vocals that absolutely steal the show. Perhaps not of interest to readers with DISCLOSE records on their shelves, but there are punks who got in via EVANESCENCE and haven't made their way to GITS and SPITBOY...yet. I'll take "Predator" any fukkn day, punk—the shit hits hard.



Reviewer: Robert Collins
Label: self-released

悶煮悶 MENGZHUMENG – Social Reintegration cassette

What a wild hog-ride of an introduction to this band! MENGZHUMENG is the solo bedroom recording project of WeiWei, based out of Chengdu, China. Originally released as a series of cassettes on YeYeYe Records, XTRO has since compiled the project's first three demos into a single limited-run cassette. Each release—*Social Reintegration Demo #1*, *Social Reintegration Demo #2*, and *Social Reintegration Demo #3*—features six tracks (five originals and one cover). The covers might be the strangest part of this collection, leaning into weird novelty takes on each of them. It's an eclectic mix including the STALIN, a modern Chinese bedroom pop outfit the COLUMBIAN COLA LTD (who incidentally have some absolutely beautifully-crafted pop songs), and 69, a late-'90s Chinese punk band. They're handled with a tongue-in-cheek, slightly off-kilter approach that admittedly ends up feeling like a bit of a distraction from the originals, although perhaps that just highlights how strong those originals actually are. MENGZHUMENG delivers a set of irresistibly catchy tracks, a mixture of revved-up egg-punk and catchy lo-fi bedroom pop, all of which have a strong new wave undercurrent. Very cool collection released in such a limited number that getting a copy might be difficult, but thankfully it doesn't seem like WeiWei has any shortage of songs coming our way.



Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: XTRO

THE COUNTERFORCE



MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL REVIEWS #516

MAY 2026

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• (+39) 375-649-94-64 MY TELEPHONE NUMBER • AGITA • ANCIENT LIGHTS • APÉRO • ARÜSPEX • BETRAYER • BLEAKNESS • BLOOD TRACE • BLUDGEONED PIGS • BOLT SWALLOWER • BRAT FARRAR • BUMBO'S TINTO BRASS BAND • BURNED UP BLED DRY • CASPA • CATASTROPHE • COACHEZ • CRACHE • AMASS • CRESS • CRYING FORM • CULT OBJECTS • CUT-RATE DRUGGIST • D. SABLÜ • DIET TEA OTHER COLA • DOWNSIDE • DRÄUMAR • DURS COEURS • EARTHFUCKER • EKIBYO • ERISTETYT • ERROR DE PARALAJE • FAKE LIGHTERS • FASHION BATHERS • FLATWAVES • FREAK PHONE • GAMMA • GOLD CUP • GREG WHEELER AND THE POLY MALL COPS • GUIMAUVE • GUNNER • HELGA PATAKI • HIGHWAY PATROL • HUGE PRICK • INDIKATOR B • ISMATIC GURU • ISOTOPE SOAP • JULIAN HERESY • KALLE HYGIEN • KING SLENDER • LIFE EXPECTANCY • LISTERINE • LOS FIASCOS • LOVEBOMB • M.O.T.O. • MASSACRE SYSTEM • MASSMEDIA • MEDICINAL • MENTAL SLAUGHTER • NEON BELLY • NORTHEAST REGIONAL • OFFEND YOUR FRIENDS • OI!TAKUS • OMEN NEGATION • OUT. • PISSSNIFFERS • PLASTIC LUNG • PLQMRX • DOGFIGHTT • POGOWOLVES • POISON SUCKERS • PROBLEM ADDICT • PSICO GALERA • PUBLIC FIGURES • PURE INTENTION • R.D.A. • REAKTORI • RED DEVIL RYDERS • RETAIN MIND • SAVAGE BEAT • SEALER • SHELTER CAT • SIPHON • SKELETT • SOFT CIRCUIT • HEAD WOUND • SOFT EXIT • SOUNDS FAMILIAR • SPOOKY VISIONS • SQUELCH CHAMBER • STATIC FRICTION • STORM BOY • 24/24 • STRAGE DI STATO • STRAGGLER • STRANDED • STRÄNGT FÖRBUDET • KAUKOLÉ • SUBSCUM • SUX • STRES • SVOBODNY SLOVO • SWEET REAPER • T-RED • TASTE TESTORS • THE DUMPIES • THE NORMALS • THE SPACKLES • TOTÄLICKERS • TREMORS • TRI GROŞE • SOJI • URBAN WASTE • USCHIS MUTTI • V/A • VENOM SNIPERS • VILETONES • VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY • WHOSE REALITY • WITCH PISS • WRISTWATCH • XRAY XEROXX • YOUNG AND DOOMED • 悶煮悶 MENGZHUMENG •

MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL

This is an **unofficial** zine digest of MRR 516, first published May 2026. You can read it online at:
<https://www.maximumrocknroll.com/review/issues/mrr-516/>

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This issue contains 118 reviews, contributed by:

Willis Schenk	Matt Casteel
Nick Odorizzi	Alex Howell
Seth McBurney	D. Gregory
Biff Bifaro	Jason Harding
Romain Basset	Kenny Kaos
Eric Anderson	Robert Collins
Jake Joyce	Tim Janchar
Jeff Cost	Daniel Z.
Sir Bobos	Luke Henley
Mama Goblin	Erika Elizabeth
Emma Miller	
Tony Party	
Ben Marshall	
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THE COUNTERFORCE

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

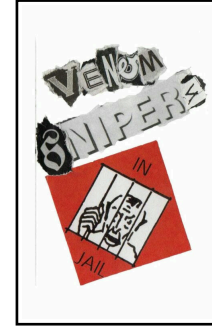
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VENOM SNIPERS – In Jail demo cassette

Brief, weird hardcore demo that recalls the era when SST Records started encouraging the freakos to grow out their hair and reach beyond traditional punk blueprints. The band rips serviceable blown-out chords à la early BLACK FLAG, but the unique vocal style is what sells it. Imagine a weathered, tobacco-de-stroyed baritone narrating a driver's ed scare video or reading a Cormac McCarthy audiobook: world-weary, emotionless, and intimidating in its detached authority. Now place that voice front and center, doing deadpan spoken word over hardcore punk. I went from “What the fuck is this?” to “Yes, sir, I'm listening” in five seconds. I don't want to get grounded again, you know?

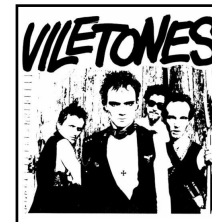
Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Roachleg



VILETONES – Screaming Fist EP reissue

Known for unpredictable onstage violence and nihilistic theatrics, it's clear that the early inception of the VILETONES aimed to give audiences an experience to remember. So, it's fitting that their debut record is led by such an unforgettable scorcher. A faithful recreation of the original, this Artifix Records edition is its first official reissue. Released in 1977 on the band's own Vile Records label, the *Screaming Fist* EP is a cherished relic of first-wave fury and a staple in serious collections. Behind the killer Mick Rock photo cover, it sounds like it looks, and the A-side is an elite punk anthem. It doesn't even matter what the other songs are, really. With iconic simplicity, the title cuts like a knife every time. Frontman Steven Leckie was one of the original punk agitators, relentlessly promoting the band and stirring up trouble everywhere he went. The legend of his antics often overshadows the music, but “Screamin Fist” still manages to shine through brightly.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Artifix



VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY – Voluntary Redundancy cassette

Absolutely wild UK anarcho fastcore, irreverent to a glorious fault. This is the kind of punk you can only make if you know better and you don't give a shit, and “not giving a shit” energy is exactly the kind of energy I want in my punk. Political in the most specific and no-bullshit manner imaginable, raucous, bass-heavy hardcore rumbles with barked, uncompromising missives that will make you smile knowingly and question your own damn self. To call this “refreshing” would be a criminal understatement—punk needs VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY more than VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY needs punk.

Reviewer: Robert Collins
Label: self-released



WHOSE REALITY – Whose Reality demo cassette

Australian raw punk that is exactly up my alley. Raw production, D-beat for days, echoed vocal effect, and fuckin' great riffs add up to a total crusher of a demo that deserves to be on your radar. If you dig fellow Aussies NO FUTURE and SHOVE, this is for you. Highly recommended.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Noise Merchant



WITCH PISS – Hot Bog cassette

California's WITCH PISS truly stunned me with this one. It's beautifully de-ranked in the most tasteful way possible. Unhinged vocals on top of sick bass lines, serrated guitar riffs, occasional ear-candy synth parts, and full-throttle drums make for an album that I'm super impressed by and honestly, kind of jealous of. Covering one of the best CURE tracks ever might have had a slight impact on my judgement, but oh well...this thing undeniably rules, and so does its artwork.

Reviewer: Mama Goblin
Label: self-released



liberate and thoughtful. USCHIS MUTTI, I feel, had a big-picture plan on what they wanted to do with *Urlieb*. I'm really digging this record.

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Konkanre

V/A – Notes From the Northeast EP

With every compilation I have ever listened to, I always look for a few distinct things. First, did these bands give their best, or did they submit throwaway tracks? Second, do I get the feeling that I'd want to stop into their hometown for lunch and record shopping? Third, and most importantly, do I want to seek out music from bands I've never heard before? Here we have four bands stretching from Staten Island, NY to Philadelphia, PA, each showing off their brand of hardcore. All are tight and premier for what they do. It is clear from the first go-round and round (see what I did there) that there is no filler. Oh my golly, there are no weak links on this little spinner. The only reason that I gotta call the CABLE CAR THEORY song my favorite track is because they start with a movie quote from *The Golden Child*. So, do I wanna grab lunch in their town(s)? Yes. Regions of the country that have bands that sound like this most definitely have good eats around. Lastly, do I want to seek out other tunes by these bands? Yes. Coming into this, I knew GREY C.E.L.L. and would have picked this up in the wild just knowing their name alone, only to find that they keep good company. If you are in the market for a tight, solidly interesting plastic slab of '90s–'20s melodic hardcore, screamo, and post-hardcore, then look no further. And guess what, it has five or so vinyl colors to choose from, and an eight-page booklet printed at Kinko's with stolen copy cards that were later purchased for pennies at Michigan Fest.

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Immigrant Sun

V/A – Ready! Aim! 1! 2! 3! 4! A M.O.T.O. Tribute CD

Ready! Aim! 1! 2! 3! 4! A M.O.T.O. Tribute features 46 bands covering songs by M.O.T.O. (MASTERS OF THE OBVIOUS), which should tell you something about the reach of Paul Caporino's songwriting. The man has been at it since 1981–45 years of garage rock filtered through pop, new wave, and occasional metal detours, and the one constant across all of it is that the hooks are relentless. Caporino writes melodies with a '60s pop instinct that won't leave you alone, the kind of songs that burrow into your head even when the lyrics make you wince. "Dance Dance Dance Dance to the Radio" is a good example: you might argue with the words, but good luck getting that bop out of your skull. On a comp this size, interpreta-



tions range from faithful to sideways, and the quality varies. I hadn't heard of most of the artists here, but standout contributions from ERIC AMERICA featuring BRONSON TERMINATOR TEW, ERIC CUNHA, POPDUDES, HOUSEGHOST, PAINT FUMES, and SHERILYNN featuring the SWEET LOVES kept me hitting play. If you're already a fan of Caporino's work, there are plenty of good takes here to keep you happy. If you're not, do yourself a favor and check out the originals. The man might be the Brian Wilson of garage rock: prolific, obsessive, and incapable of writing a song that doesn't stick.

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Chain Smoking

V/A – Sniffing Glue UK Punk: 1979–1982 LP

Arriving starkly with a cut-and-paste sleeve and plain white labels, this *Sniffing Glue* compilation is as deliciously unofficial as it gets, opening an illicit portal to some excellent unsung first-wave action. Regardless of your punk snob pedigree, there's a heavy chance you haven't heard most of this stuff yet. Opening up with a dopey little sing-along and clumsily bouncing bass line, the title track performed by ANTI STATE CONTROL quickly shifts into some of the snappiest UK82 this side of the PARTISANS. The band's spirited sound continues across two more tracks, kicking this collection off on a high note. Next up is VERTICAL STROKERS, a Bishop's Stortford unit that once shared stages with the EPILEPTICS. These scrappy lads serve up a lighthearted and poppy number in "Saturday Girls" that's followed by the darker "Holidays," whose piercing urgency comes from the inclusion of a shrieking violin. From the same scene, URBAN DECAY provides two four-chord stompers, each thick with roughshod DIY charm. Their slow-burning "Sex Assault" ends the A-side in a smoky haze. EASY ACTION starts the flipside sounding like a cross between MICK FARREN & THE DEVIANTS and the DRONES. Their catchy "Burning a Hole" is easily the closest thing to a Top 40 hit that you'll find on this record. Up next is the GROOVE, whose "I Want to Be a Pygmy" has a distinct early BUZZCOCKS vibe, while "I'm in Love" echoes Leamington Spa's cheeky SHAPES. Finally, we have the SODS from Essex (not to be confused with the better-known, Danish SODS), who, like many acts of the era, brought a bit of pub rock influence to the party. Their organ-driven bop comes off like a lo-fi STRANGLERS mixed with the RADIATORS FROM SPACE. In the end, this unexpected round-up scrapes the edges of the punk history barrel to pull out some surprisingly satisfying B-list material. Now run along and track your copy down.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: self-released



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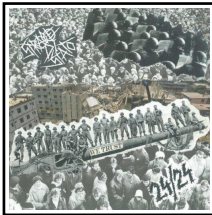
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- **KZUM-FM**, 89.3 FM in Lincoln, NE Sunday nights (Monday morning) at 1:00 am Airing MRR Radio in Lincoln since 1983! Cheers to Rich D.
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- **Radio Valencia** Sunday nights (Monday morning) at 2:00 am
- **Resonance Extra** via DAB+ in the UK to Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, London and Norwich, and worldwide online 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, Winnipeg!)

24/24 / STRAGE DI STATO – split EP

Quick, no-bullshit hit of raw D-beat straight from the DIY gutter on this total ripper split from 24/24 and STRAGE DI STATO. Tracks are over before you catch your breath, blasting by in under a minute each with nothing but stripped-down rage. 24/24 from Brno play super fast crust, beginning the chaos with an unrelenting assault of blown-out distortion, tight riffing, and drums that keep a steady path of destruction. STRAGE DI STATO, blistering punks from Kisújszállás, answer back with the same fast-paced ugly attack, almost sounding like a grindcore band without blastbeats and full of dissonance. No reinvention here, just pure execution. Loud, short, and savage. Exactly how it should be.



Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Blastbeat Worship / Drinkin' Beer in Bandana / Raw Zine / Sors Fintora / Svab / Ultima Ratio

(+39) 375-649-94-64 MY TELEPHONE NUMBER – Album 1 LP

The duo of Wilson and Dani bring their debut LP stateside by way of Feral Kid Records. *Album #1* was released in their home country of Italy in 2024 on the heels of their *Demo #1* cassette (all four songs of which appear on this debut). Their sound blends bedroom pop, on songs like "Goldfishes," with oddball electronic/techno/hardcore breakdowns the band dubs "ROK"—perhaps most notably on the song "Spongebob ROK." Wilson and Dani take turns signing, groaning, and delivering some fun-as-hell tunes throughout the whole album, though I think I still prefer the more typical song arrangements from the demo. That said, "Friends With Benefits" is my favorite of the new material, with a guitar that oscillates between picked-apart chords and palm-muted fifths, and more melancholic feel than the rest of the offerings. Great track. Between the mouthful and strange concept of a name (has anybody called??), and that ROK sound, this one will keep you guessing, but never leave you disappointed. Excited to see what's next from these two.

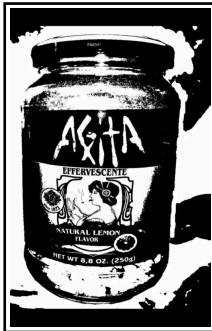


Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Feral Kid

AGITA – Commercials cassette

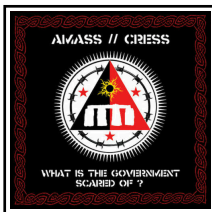
Fifteen tracks of scabby, unsettling noise rock with only one song clocking in over a minute. In a genre where repetition and endurance are cornerstones, the brief blasts here never overstay their welcome, hitting you with barf vocals, syncopated dirge riffing, and pounding drums like a HARVEY MILK or MELVINS Whitman's Sampler. It's rad gutter noise punk in small doses, perfect for short attention spans or repeat listens.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Strange Mono



AMASS / CRESS – What is the Government Scared Of? split LP

The DIY spirit of Grow Your Own Records must be commended. Loyal to the ethos and principles of the original anarcho-punk wave, the label has steadily put out records from old school anarcho bands, be they old-timers or newer acts. This new split LP is somewhat in between, since AMASS is a new act made up of old-timers and CRESS has become this seemingly indestructible, lovable band since the '90s. In any case, I always have a lot of time for the label and usually enjoy its releases. AMASS is made up of current members of ALTERNATIVE and the SYSTEM, and ex-members of much noisier bands from Northern England like EMBITTERED or BOXED IN. The band plays fairly traditional fast UK punk with dual male/female vocals. From the four songs included, I love the more aggressive, darker ones more (what a surprise, right?)—reminiscent of AUS-ROTTEN or a metal-free ANTI-SYSTEM or ANTISECT, but the clarity of the vocals gives more of a rather welcome punk rock feel, if you know what I mean (like CIVILISED SOCIETY?, maybe). The main criticism is that the production is clean, too much so for my taste anyway, and a more abrasive sound would have been more fitting for the genre. Great lyrics about consumerism and the class war. On the other side are five songs of the mighty CRESS, also hailing "from up north," and showing for years that using a drum machine for your punk band could actually sound great and that drummers are a liability. CRESS is one-of-a-kind; the riffs are simple but very catchy and dynamic, they are one of the few bands that can have me dance (and when you know how much of a shit dancer I am, it's not necessarily for the best). Clever, psychedelic, energetic (and yet hypnotic and dark at times) tribal anarcho-punk somewhere between CRASS and their followers SMART-PILS or CROW PEOPLE, but they have really created their own sound and they are a genuinely unique band so comparisons are really unnecessary. All in all, a good record with a relevant message. Old punks never die, indeed.



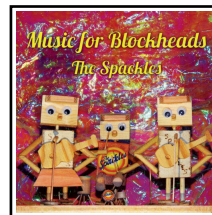
"Monkey Out of Me") is far more lighthearted, a no-frills, pogo-primed and pop-minded first wave rush like a North Island counterpart to TOY LOVE, complete with a big, dumb (positive) "Going tutti frutti!" chanted hook from vocalist Dazee Day. Go ape for both of them!

Reviewer: Erika Elizabeth
Label: Leather Jacket

THE SPACKLES – Music for Blockheads CD

I have no doubt in my mind that the SPACKLES put on a very raucous and unpredictable show, filled with friends and lovers dancing around the room and singing along. These songs would fit very well on a Very Small Records comp, chugging gallons of Olympia beer. All of this is to say that these songs are earworm catchy in a lo-fi, quirky way, and balance on the line of annoying and wonderful. All three tracks together clock in at six-and-a-half minutes, so there isn't even enough time to wonder if you like it or not until you have to play it again and then again and then again, and now the tunes are stuck with you and there is no going back.

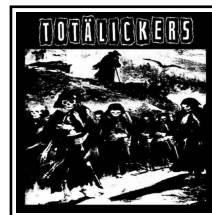
Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Rum Bar



TOTÄLICKERS – Totälickers LP reissue

In celebration of its twentieth anniversary, a reissue of TOTÄLICKERS inaugural LP has been released. It seems like just a little bit ago that these Barcelonian punks were hitting the scene with their street-level punk *crudo*, but here we are twenty years on. Honestly, nothing much has changed in the past two decades of punk, as the LP still sounds fresh if you're uninitiated. A barrage of D-beat, lyrics *en español*, buzzsaw guitars grinding out lightspeed melodies, a punk classic and yours to be had.

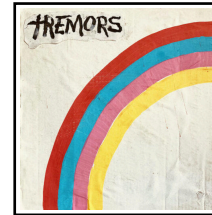
Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Distribuidora Soroll / Diy Kontraatak / Grita O Muere / Kremón / Producciones Tudancas / Ruido Y Pasión



TREMORS – Love is War Now LP

This is what I mean when I tell people I listen to pop punk—catchy, energetic pop songs played with grit and hollered 'til you're hoarse. More RAMONES than BLINK-182, and the genuine article. These Germans sit in that sweet seat at the table alongside Dirtnap Records-type garage revival revival with non-stop hooks and guitars you can sink your teeth into. You can tell they know what they've got and how to use it, too, because there are nine tracks here and not one is over three minutes long. Verse/chorus/verse/chorus perfection, makes a splash and politely leaves before overstaying its welcome. I love it!

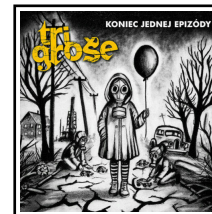
Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: My Ruin



TRI GROŠE – Koniec Jednej Epizody LP

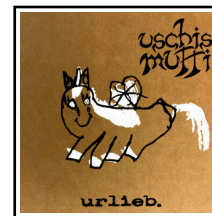
Very '90s-coded melodic punk here. Musically, this album hits like a less street-sounding version of the SWINGIN' UTTERS, with accordion-like keys sprinkled throughout and plenty of Eastern European-influenced beats (even a couple that push out so far that it's basically ska). The production is a little too clean for me and the vocals aren't my favorite (they have a "dad at the pub" vibe to them), but generally the songs are fun, if maybe forgettable, little exercises.

Reviewer: Daniel Z.
Label: Papagájův Hlasatel



USCHIS MUTTI – Urlieb LP

From Bremen, Germany, we get a full head-on punk stomper from USCHIS MUTTI that touches on a bunch of stuff in the hardcore and punk fields. Pápsy's vocals are delivered with machine-accurate precision, flowing with the music and making her words and message as much an instrument as they are budding with powerful imagery. Punctuating her vocals are BumBum and Arne, perfectly disrupting enough to move *Urlieb* into an unpredictable, interesting, and melancholy atmosphere. What USCHIS MUTTI delivers is a heavy hardcore punk record with thoughtful songs, some twisting and some straightforward, leaving you with a cratered feeling and wanting to fill the hole with more USCHIS MUTTI. The LP has eight songs that average three minutes each, with the last track "Horner Eck" slugging forward and slowly gaining speed, reigned in at a couple seconds under seven minutes. Everything about this release, from the sequencing to the songs themselves, feels de-



me groan a bit looking back at this record cover. But, whatever, these are kids who grew up post-landline, so I kinda get the allure, and the lo-fi aesthetic largely works. A thoroughly fine record.

Reviewer: Alex Howell
Label: Youth Riot

SWEET REAPER – Still Nothing LP

SWEET REAPER's *Still Nothing* is their fourth LP since 2015, and this Ventura three-piece continues to operate in the same waters as the Denton, Texas power pop/punk axis—think MIND SPIDERS, MARKED MEN, RADIOACTIVITY—so it tracks that Jeff Burke mastered the album. But these beach rats aren't coasting on the comparison. They bring a distinctly Southern Californian sweetness to the formula, at times layering some tight vocal harmonies over the buzz and drive, with tracks like "Zero Candles" and "Meemees" adding a '60s pop warmth. Seth Pettersen's vocals sit in a familiar upper register, but at times he adds a Billie Joe Armstrong-esque nasal whine. Lyrically, the album lives in a state of exhaustion without surrender: relationships crumbling, systems failing, but still just enough gas in the tank to keep moving. This is fucking good! Eleven songs and not a dud in the bunch. Also available on cassette from the band's Naked Time Tapes.

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Alien Snatch

T-RED – Partie 1984–1985 LP

Active in Balen, Belgium from 1981–1985, Paul Dierckx, Frank Geys, Rudi Maes, and Walter Seigers made up T-RED, who may have only been known to those they toured in front of—until now. In 2024, the band recovered the recordings from their 1984 four-song promo cassette *Partie*, and remastered them for this release, with the subsequent eight tracks on this album coming from a 1985 demo. After 40 years on the shelf, T-RED's version of post-punk/new wave feels bright and new and dark and moody and familiar. It feels exactly like it is: listening for the first time to a band contemporary to a scene whose catalogue of music you thought you'd exhausted. What else is out there lying in wait? This stands right up there with SAD LOVERS & GIANTS (who Dark Entries revived), or some of East Germany's resurfaced bands from the Tapetopia project. While the first four tracks from the promo are definitely more polished, these songs don't have the soaring production value/wall-of-sound that more major acts of the era showcased, but the pared-down, lo-fi plodding is irrevocably part of this band's charm. For fans of all things '80s post punk/icy new wave, I highly recommend this one for your collection.



Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Nausea

TASTE TESTORS – Taste Testors LP

Bubblegum punk with a hint of pub rock. Has a classic ELVIS COSTELLO vibe, but of course brings to mind the RAMONES. Reminds me a bit of radio darlings the OUTFIELD, except more lo-fi. Poppy guitars and catchy-yet-haunting vocals. Nothing groundbreaking, but this is some solid punk rock here. Perfect for a drunken summer beach day.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Moodkiller

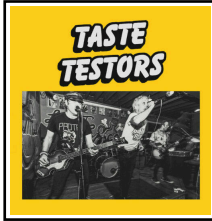
THE DUMPIES – Lub Dub LP

I would put this somewhere between BLATZ and the FLESHIES, but with a finer ear for melody. Surprisingly catchy punk more on the lo-fi end of the spectrum, with a bass-forward mix that keeps the songs from sounding thin. As the record unfolded, it made me think of CRIMPSHINE, maybe more in feel than in sound. Punk rock/queer lyrics, focused and interesting songwriting, and shit that will make you sing along and circle-pit in your heart. Standout tracks "Work Song" and "Life in Hell" will be staying with me for a long, long time. This one's a banger, strongly recommended.

Reviewer: Daniel Z.
Label: Dirt Cult

THE NORMALS – Anorexia Nervosa / Monkey Out of Me 7"

Not the KBD degenerate NORMALS from New Orleans, but rather one of the earliest punk bands to form in Wellington, New Zealand, making their first appearance on vinyl here almost a half-century after they broke up. Kiwi DIY enthusiasts should immediately pick up on some clues in these songs, recorded in 1979 shortly before the band splintered, that help situate the NORMALS within a very specific, time-fixed regional context—right off the bat, the lyrically direct, personal/political femme-punk of A-side "Anorexia Nervosa" effectively foreshadows Wellington's late '70s/early '80s Terrace scene as documented on the essential **** (Four Stars) comp, in particular LIFE IN THE FRIDGE EXISTS and the WALLSOCKETS (see the latter's "Euthanasia" for some clear musical and thematic parallels). B-side "Bananas" (alternately referred to as



Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Grow Your Own

ANCIENT LIGHTS – Reclamation LP

Reclamation by ANCIENT LIGHTS has been cycling the underground for a few months now, and if you haven't imbibed yet, let this review be your ultimatum to get your ass in gear. ANCIENT LIGHTS play peace punk in the tradition of the MOB or ZOUNDS, while keeping things fresh by exploring new rhythms and sounds. Aggro social discourse is balanced with moments of melodic play, the production is dense, and the whole album has the vibe of an epic tome when consumed in full. Sporadically, there are riffs that remind me of the BUZZCOCKS, while intermittent tongue-in-cheek lyrics recall PROPAGANDHI circa *How to Clean Everything*. Frankly, there are far too many references cited in *Reclamation* to cover here, and you should just go check it out yourself.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Grow Your Own

APÉRO – Cold Drinks, Cool Snacks cassette

Contrary to what you'd imagine given the band's name, it's straight to the main course as soon as you push play on this debut APÉRO cassette. Thumping, revved-up drum machine beats paired with tasty synth lines that seem to perfectly emulate the NACHTHEXEN tone push this kooky German/French egg-punk band forward. To look at the song titles, you may be a little confused if it's just going to be total nonsense time or a tribute record to the strangest amalgamation of things, but the jokes seem to stop with the song titles. This is eleven songs of non-stop, synth-heavy, head-bopping mayhem with no shortage of catchy riffs. The tape culminates with an absolutely killer cover of "Safe Neighborhood (Shit on the Ground)" by MADONNA with her early group the BREAKFAST CLUB. I have always wanted to cover that song, but never followed through on it. Congrats, APÉRO, you win this round. If you've been paying attention to cassette releases over the past handful of years you certainly must recognize the label XTRO for their continually consistent scrambled output. Easily one of the big names to be mentioned when discussing modern synth and egg-punk releases, and APÉRO fits in nicely with the label's output. As always though, wildly limited release numbers—only 25 of these exist, and I've already got one of them. Get on it if you want one.



Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: XTRO

ARÜSPEX – The Death Instinct LP

ARÜSPEX is a relatively new band from Northern California, and I was not familiar with their work until this review. Their name refers to the priests who practiced divination through the inspection of sacrificed animals' entrails in ancient Rome, and although for all we know, they may have been a bunch of merry lads, this choice for a band's name does signal grim bleakness rather than upbeat optimism. Fittingly, ARÜSPEX plays what is often referred to as "blackened crust," and if the term tends to be used improperly, I think it is relevant here. The post-HIS HERO IS GONE neocrust of the '00s (EKKAIA, AMBULANCE, or FALL OF EFRAFA of this world) is definitely summoned, but the black metal influence is also very strong here. It sounds quite versatile, with epic, melodic D-beat crust moments, full-on black metal blastbeats, and mid-paced atmospheric bits working together to tell an overall good cohesive story. The extreme vocals reek of anger and despair, and the production matches the genre's prerequisites. I'd be lying to claim I'm an ecstatic fan of the blackened crust genre, but ARÜSPEX does it very well, and I can imagine them being praised quite highly by the certified amateurs.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Fellowship of Enemies

BETRAYER – Betrayer cassette

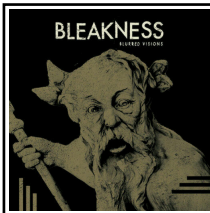
Straight-up POISON IDEA worship from, you guessed it, Portland. I mean, really, it is uncanny how much this sounds like them, down to the Jerry A vocal stylings. I don't hate it, the tunes themselves are good, but you wouldn't be wrong for calling this derivative.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Black Water



BLEAKNESS – Blurred Visions LP

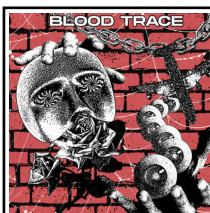
Gothic death-punk with a tinge of orgcore coming to you straight from ol' Paris, as if PAINT IT BLACK collaborated with the DIS-POSSESSED to bring you a melodic hardcore version of the CURE. Fantastic production; the natural distortion on the guitar is absolutely classic and clean, while the bass is punchy and crisp. For a trio, these folks pack a huge punch. It doesn't sound like they did a lot of overdubbing either, so I'd have to assume this is a pretty faithful recreation of how they sound live. Everything feels huge and soaring—vocals, guitars, and hell, even the drums. Really solid slab and well worth checking out.



Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Black Water / Vicious Circle

BLOOD TRACE – Retaliation EP

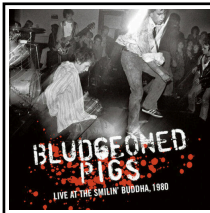
Although they play old school, American-style hardcore punk, BLOOD TRACE is indeed from Athens, Greece. I confess I was previously unaware of the band, but they do quite well what they intend to do. I do enjoy the POISON IDEA vibe that some songs have here, but unfortunately I cannot say that I really dig this record. This production is fine and energetic, the songwriting does the job with stomping, mid-paced numbers answering beefy, fast ones, and the vocals are the strongest point, rough-hewn but dynamic and expressive. I am sure they can be very enjoyable live, but at the end of the day, it's just not my style of hardcore punk. Sorry, guys.



Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Cháos & Antikomformismós

BLUDGEONED PIGS – Live at the Smilin' Buddha, 1980 EP

BLUDGEONED PIGS were a blink-and-gone Vancouver band from the late '70s/early '80s who never managed to put out a proper record during their brief run. This six-track EP, rescued by Supreme Echo from a 1980 set at the legendary Smilin' Buddha Cabaret, is probably the closest we'll get. And look, the sound is rough. The performance is sloppy. The singer is picking fights with the audience like it's his actual job. The audio drops out entirely more than once, possibly because someone unplugged a microphone. But the SEX PISTOLS were clearly this band's north star, and fidelity was never the point. For anyone who was in that room, or in any room with BLUDGEONED PIGS during their short window, this is probably a price-



less piece of their youth. For the rest of us, it's a short scrappy document of a band that existed mostly in the memories of the people who were there.

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Supreme Echo

BOLT SWALLOWER – 26 Spring Tour Promo cassette

Obsessed with the production of this tape. Lo-fi and blown-out, it has that garbage noisecore element that was huge in the mid-2000s when everyone was still recording their albums straight to cassette through a single pen microphone and immediately uploading it to MySpace. I mean that as a compliment! I hope the tour went well. Tennessee Cold Cuts is an eclectic label and has been dropping some of the best releases over these last couple of years. Give this a play, and then dive into the rest of their discography.



Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Tennessee Cold Cuts

BRAT FARRAR – Group LP

This one was a little different than I expected. It sounds like DINOSAUR JR. or the REPLACEMENTS, but if they started five years earlier and were new wave bands. BRAT FARRAR is Sam Agostino, previously the frontperson for DIGGER AND THE PUSSY CATS, backed by a band featuring members of the BLOWERS and BROWN SPIRITS. Collectively, there is a lot of ground covered by all the musicians and there's some cool songwriting going on, but I found the record to be mediocre at best. They are a good band, tight as hell, but none of the songs really stuck out to me aside from the first couple of tracks. The opener "Tower of Lies" has a killer driving rhythm and hook, and "More Money Meathead" is a true bonehead song, just dumb fun. I would have liked this more if it were an EP.



Reviewer: Sir Bobos
Label: Take the City

STORMBOY – Beast Machine Theory CD

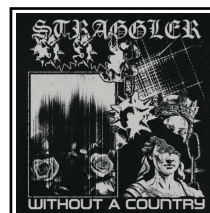
This is a pretty perfect example of a band that's not doing anything wrong, but just doesn't bring any novelty to the genre of melodic late '90s/early '00s punk. This is worn-out Chucks music that is played competently, recorded reasonably, and presented without fuss or pomp. That said, it doesn't keep my attention, and sits squarely in a space of music that is inoffensive and impossible to quantify. I truly think these folks have a blast playing these tunes, and I hope they continue to do so for as long as they can. I'll cheer to them for getting up there and doing the thing, but I just cannot see myself returning to these songs.



Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: self-released

STRAGGLER – Without a Country EP

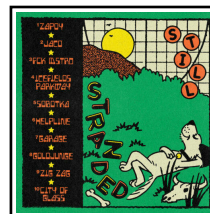
Povviolence-flavored hardcore with all the bells and whistles from Oakland. *Without a Country's* runtime is only four minutes, but it feels significantly longer thanks to the sheer density of these songs. Each sub-two-minute track is crammed with bouncy riffs, vocals that oscillate from low growl to high shriek, blast-beats, and quickly shifting tempos. Not entirely in my wheelhouse, but good shit. For fans of GULCH.



Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: To Live A Lie

STRANDED – Still LP

Is this smart music for dumb people, or is it dumb music for smart people? I really can't decide, but I can say that it's a good time. I was reminded of MILK from Japan while taking this in. Not because they sound alike, but more in the approach and the end product. While MILK's hardcore is aggressive vocals paired with clean guitars, STRANDED flips that often on this LP. The instrumentation is indisputably aggressive, while the vocals feel rather clean. This obviously isn't a groundbreaking approach, it still makes for a nice listen. Beyond that initial comparison, this album also takes some time to explore some other sounds, at times slowing down to sound a little like SPIRITUAL CRAMP, especially on the one-two grooves of "Helpline" and "Garage." So if you're a genius, give your brain a break and crank this one. And if your brain is fried from sniffing glue, feel free to crank this one as well to fill your head with something.



Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: My Ruin

STRES / SVOBODNÝ SLOVO – Pohled Ven!! / 333 Stříbrných Kokotů split LP

This is a raw and valuable snapshot of early Czech hardcore punk, issued in 2026 by Papagájův Hlasatel Records. Bringing together 30 tracks from the late '80s and early '90s, the record captures two closely connected Sokolov bands at their most urgent, STRES and SVOBODNÝ SLOVO. Musically, it's fast, aggressive HC punk with a distinctly underground feel. SVOBODNÝ SLOVO ("freedom of speech") delivers short, hard-hitting songs rooted in the faster side of hardcore, giving off a UKH vibe, while STRES (you guessed it, it means "stress") leans into a rough but controlled USHC-type mood. The recording quality may be unpolished, but that only adds to its authenticity. More than just a collection of songs, this split works as an important document of the early Czech hardcore movement, imperfect, loud, and full of angst.



Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Papagájův Hlasatel

STRÄNGT FÖRBUDET – Lyxfällan EP

You came here looking for some CHUCK BERRY-esque punk rocking from Sweden, and now you've found it. Four whole songs of it, on one 7" record, no less. No frills, no pretense, and no words that I really recognize except "Anticimex." Recommended for fans of the KIDS.



Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Push My Buttons

SUX – Sux Sells LP

Oh, hell yeah! The St. Louis *Horrendous New Wave*-rs are back! Or, wait, that was a band called SHUX. Bummer. This here is SUX, a quartet of Seattleites cosplaying as HUNX before he got actually hunky. I gotta admit that I was not psyched to dive into this record after looking at its cover. But I also gotta admit that I was pleasantly surprised once I was in. "Get Outta My Way" kicks off the album with a revved-up garage punk number with quite a melodic hook. It reminds me of GAUNT, a comparison that I haven't had the pleasure of making in I don't know how long. Sick! Subsequent tracks never quite reach the heights of the album opener, but are solid enough. The tinny vocals are a result of being sung through a telephone receiver, which is a gimmick that I'd like to see die, and one that makes



SOFT CIRCUIT – Night Fruit CD

Post-punk with an emphasis on punk. I loved the dual vocals and some funky slap bass with a dribbling of synth here and there. The songs were overall quite catchy, with my favorite track being “Washed Out,” which felt super ‘80s and overall very full and immersive.

Reviewer: Emma Miller
Label: self-released



SOJI / URBAN WASTE – DCxPC Live Presents, Vol. 38 split LP

Killer split LP featuring Queens legends URBAN WASTE and Philadelphia's SOJI. The URBAN WASTE songs are exactly what you'd expect; technical, fast, and brutal NYHC. There's something to be said for a band 40 years into their career and still laying it down like this, respect! The SOJI side keeps the energy and takes things in an entirely different direction. It's hardcore that pairs chugging metal riffs against these groovy and melodic passages. It's not my thing, but the execution is excellent and it's fucking cool to see bands taking things into their own hands and doing it their way. Lyrically, it's confrontational and subversive. They are speaking about the shit that needs to be talked about and I love to hear it. Oh yeah, this is only available on LP through the label and limited to 200 hand-numbered copies, you can't stream it! Community over corporations, motherfuckers!

Reviewer: Sir Bobos
Label: DCxPC



SOUNDS FAMILIAR – She Loves to Live CD

SOUNDS FAMILIAR does, in fact, sound familiar. This has all the elements of best friends who were most certainly in basements watching bands in the early '90s. These four songs take on the sort of self-aware quality that came from that era. If you are into the PROMISE RING, FACE TO FACE, SILENT MAJORITY, SERPICO, etc., then you will absolutely love the transportive effect this will have on you. To be clear, this isn't a mirror of past styles, but moreover a transfer point from then to now. Some call this melodic punk, some call this emocore, I call this a fine listen that will probs have folks over forty remembering their twenties for tens of minutes.

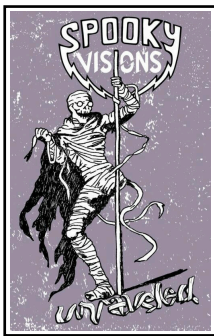
Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Old Friend



SPOOKY VISIONS – Unraveled cassette

Is bedroom synth punk a thing? Because this sounds like bedroom synth punk. KRAFTWERK via punks with Casios is the vibe here—it works best on the more propulsive tracks, but the cold, robotic vibe is nice and thick throughout. Two original tracks and two covers (WALL OF VOODOO and ROKY ERICKSON), the latter of which gives a glimpse into a more expanded, full-band sound that could be in the project's future. Solid, quick listen.

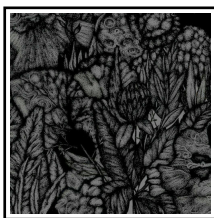
Reviewer: Daniel Z.
Label: Tetryon Tapes



SQUELCH CHAMBER – Drag You In cassette

Brief tape containing four tracks of ultra-blown-out, low-end noise rock in about ten minutes. The good news is that these bad boys rumble with distortion stacked on distortion that will have the BODY or THOU enjoyers doing that clenched-jaw head nod along with the heaviness. The other good news is how quickly the tape is over, because the vocalist is not great. He sounds like Chris Cornell fronting CLUTCH, with a wailing, bluesy twang/growl situation going on that doesn't quite fit the tectonic-plate-shifting riffage. Maybe it's the perfect Venn diagram center for a certain subset of listeners, but not this one.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: self-released



STATIC FRICTION – Static Friction 12"

Absolutely smitten with this 12". Melodic hardcore out of Boston that combines all the best elements of the genre: yelping vocals, soaring power chords, and catchy riffs that go on for days. Very reminiscent of KID DYNAMITE, NONE MORE BLACK, and ARMALITE. Insane to me that this is their debut recording; sounds like they've been playing together for decades. The songs are masterfully crafted and are super-tight. They wrap the whole thing up with a classic AFI cover, which is just pure perfection. This is an exceptionally solid slab and I require you to listen to it. Do it now!

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: 31



BUMBO'S TINTO BRASS BAND – V.3 LP

BUMBO'S TINTO BRASS BAND cranks up the weirdness and delivers ten songs to annoy your neighbours with. Yes, "everything sounds slightly off" is definitely a trope in the art-rock side of the post-punk spectrum, but it's not an easy one to nail at all. One might think it's about tuning your instruments a bit weird or playing slightly off-beat, but I believe it's more of a headspace that you can either get into or not...and it sounds like they were born there. I really enjoyed how unapologetically amorphous this record is, and I'm sure you will as well. Bonus points for the vocalist who sounds like D. Boon.

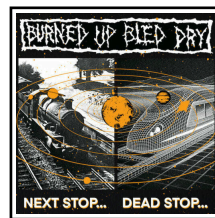
Reviewer: Mama Goblin
Label: Bumbo



BURNED UP BLED DRY – Next Stop... Dead Stop... LP

Arkansas cannot be said to be the most glamorous place of the Empire (or is it?), and judging from the ferocity of BURNED UP BLED DRY's first album, it might be an additional source of anger. If *Next Stop... Dead Stop...* is indeed the band's first LP, they have been going (on and off) since 1996, so they are not exactly in a hurry (contrary to their style). I had not heard of the band before, but they were apparently classified as a powerviolence act back when the scene was replete with representatives of the genre. From what I hear on this LP, in spite of the shortness of the songs (26 songs in 25 minutes, so there's no arsing around here) and the (very) fast numbers, I wouldn't call them a strict powerviolence act. The songwriting is diverse, somewhat progressive, with many breaks and changes, from sludgecore songs to crusty moments, blasting hardcore madness or high-energy stomping hardcore, but heaviness and despair are always at the helm. A wild pony with many tricks, if you like. Because they developed in the '90s and the LP is released on Prank Records (a defining label from that era), comparisons to works by the likes of HIS HERO IS GONE, DAMAD, and DEATHREAT are relevant, but BURNED UP BLED DRY sounds more urgent somehow—the powerviolence influence definitely affects this feel. The production is heavy and very guitar-driven, the angry vocals are raucous and expressive, and it stands as a very convincing work that could appeal to a wide audience of extreme music lovers (people with bad backs will definitely be into that), although the LP's relentlessness can sometimes be a little overwhelming and might be hard for some to digest in one sitting.

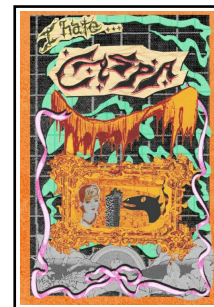
Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Prank



CASPA – I Hate Caspa cassette

Finding the right words for a review can be tricky when you don't want to lean on quick subgenre labels. CASPA is a San Antonio synth punk band, in that they are a punk band with a synth player. What I hear in them isn't a standard breakdown of a synth punk band or the modern-day simple equivalent of egg-punk, and requires separate assessments. The guitars, bass, and drums sit in mid-tempo punk/pop punk territory. The synth, sounding like a Fisher Price keyboard with only the highest octave working, plink-plunks catchy lines over the pop-laden songs. The final layer, the vocals, swing between sing-songy hooks and high-pitched squeals, sitting roughly three times louder than the instruments. While I know everyone doesn't share my mindset that vocals should be treated as just another instrument, the idea that the vocals are somehow three times as important as anything else is confusing to me. So much of this cassette is very high-pitched, and I'm relieved that my advanced tinnitus from years of loud gig attendance hasn't deprived me of the ability to hear the frequencies on this CASPA cassette. CASPA exists on a frequency all its own, above 3,000 Hz. It's clear that the label releasing this cassette and the one that has already done a vinyl version are both incredibly excited about the band, and there are surely reasons for that. Based on this cassette alone, however, I feel nothing but exhaustion after just one listen. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to check on the dog, who bolted as soon as the tape started. Perhaps there are even higher CASPA frequencies not perceptible to the human ear equally prevalent on this release.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Dirt Cult



CATASTROPHE – Cries From the Gutter LP

London-based champions of anarcho hardcore CATASTROPHE have returned with a full-length, and you're going to want to check it out. Nine blistering tracks of rage-filled dissent rip by in short order and will demand a replay. Inspiration seems to be drawn from CONCRETE SOX, DISCHARGE, and the body of crust, which gives CATASTROPHE a vast catalog of noises to use as fodder. As the album title implies, much of the lyrical content surrounds the theme of poverty and the turmoils caused by capitalism.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: 11 PM / Foundation / Symphony of Destruction



COACHEZ – Sonic Thumpers cassette

The opening track “Hot Shooter” is the best thing here. It sounds like NICK CAVE fronting AC/DC, and that’s the best thing I can say about it. Overall, this sounds like a group of people who have played their instruments for years and decided to finally start their first band. The riffs are decent, and while the musicianship is on point, the songs are too long and couldn’t hold my attention. “Longsnapper” tops the seven-minute mark, and the whole EP is only twenty minutes! The biggest stand-out to me is the vocals, and that’s because they are a complete mismatch for this band. There’s a croony, deranged quality to them that I could see working well with the right music, but here they fall flat against the sonic dumpers the band is cranking out.

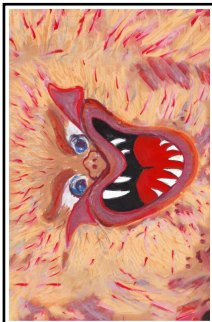
Reviewer: Sir Bobos
Label: High Bias



CRACHE – Éclaircie Sauvage cassette

Following a couple singles and a full-length in 2023, CRACHE is out with the *Éclaircie Sauvage* cassette (via XTRO in the States and Howlin’ Banana and Ganache Records in France). This synth punk quartet hailing from Marseille brings us five tracks of full-send energy, with everybody slamming their instruments and voices to a breaking point, bringing synth and hardcore to a mostly holy union. That said, they aren’t relentless, and offer plenty of moments of moodiness (“Rigoletto”), of doomy outros (“Confusion Générale”), and what I assume is tongue-in-cheek lyrics (“Ballade”) featuring a more typical, slower tempo and high-register “la la la”s over the chorus. No way to not have fun with this one.

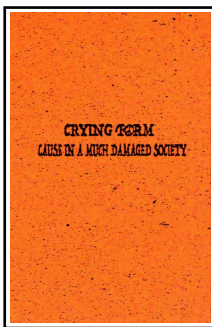
Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Ganache / Howlin’ Banana / XTRO



CRYING FORM – Cause in a Much Damaged Society cassette

Ripping hardcore punk from Athens, Georgia. Fast and no-frills, just the way it should be, CRYING FORM sounds like they’ve got some FIX and KORO in their DNA, and remind me a little of CHAIN WHIP as well as fellow Georgians CONSECR. Highly recommended, and looking forward to whatever these guys do next.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Hard Tack



CULT OBJECTS – Amulet LP

I was not especially “wowed” at first. To me, the lyricism stood out the most, as it felt quite poignant, especially in the track “Natural Death.” Some of the first couple tracks blended together as they were similar tempos and styles, but they were immediately disrupted by the absolutely funky, groovy piece that is “Diamond Dust.” That caught my attention and got me hooked again for the next couple tracks.

Reviewer: Emma Miller
Label: World Gone Mad



CUT-RATE DRUGGIST – Blistering LP

This two-piece from Oakland, CA comes out swinging like a three-piece (or even a four-or-more-piece). Rock’n’roll punk delivered with a smoldering attitude and swagger. However, under these driving tunes, the lyrics and sound have a dark and heavy quality like some of those AmRep bands from the ‘90s. I’ve come to expect a level of intensity of live performances from the DCxPC label, so reviewing a studio LP had me a little cautious—the label has been great at capturing the inertia of a band’s live recordings, and I was wondering if they’d be able to meet that same standard. I can tell you that they completely nailed it, and if it weren’t for a couple studio tricks, I would have thought that this was live-to-tape and then to press. CUT-RATE DRUGGIST is a great starting-off point to build confidence for future DCxPC studio projects coming our way.

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: DCxPC



Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: XTRO

SAVAGE BEAT – Bright Lights, Tall Shadows LP

SAVAGE BEAT’s *Bright Lights, Tall Shadows* is the latest from this Amsterdam five-piece, now a decade into their run of TURBONEGRO— and DEAD BOYS-worship filtered through glam and pub rock. The ingredients are all here: gang vocals, rock’n’roll keys, big choruses, and a general air of leather jacket celebration. The band clearly knows how to work this lane, the playing is tight, the vocals fit the material, and you can hear the fun in it. Where it loses me is that the songs started running together after a few listens. If you’re already sold on this style, nothing here will offend you. The problem is that almost nothing here will surprise you, either. The record as a whole could use a few more sharp turns, but if you’re already deep into this style and want another slab of it, SAVAGE BEAT delivers exactly what’s on the label.

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Longshot / Mendeku Diskak / Wap Shoo Wap



SEALER – Sealer LP

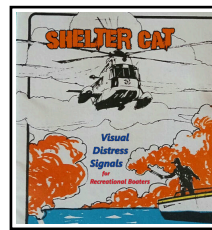
Cincinnati’s SEALER seals the deal with their debut self-titled LP. I could tell that I was in trouble from the first couple seconds of the album, and I was correct to assume so: this thing hits all the sweet spots for me. From gnarly riffs to eerie textures, noise rock to post-hardcore, in-your-face to slow-burn...it covers a lot of ground in just nineteen minutes. It’s the kind of music that leaves your neck muscles sore and gives you a permanent stank face. I’ll be on the lookout for whatever comes next from SEALER. Highly recommended.

Reviewer: Mama Goblin
Label: The Ghost is Clear



SHELTER CAT – Visual Distress Signals for Recreational Boaters LP

Hyper-scruffy punk rock from PA. Melodic but not too melodic, with cow-punk-ish moments, not really tied to a particular beat and open to explore. There is some clear JAWBREAKER love here (the vocal line for one of the songs might sound very, very familiar) and it’ll remind you of early Lookout! Records catalog, but to me that’s a feature, not a



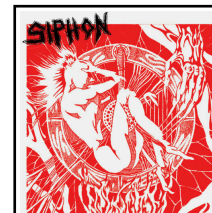
bug. The mix puts the rhythm section up front which makes for some pleasantly complex moments, particularly from the hell of a bass player they have here. Vocals have a very effective sardonic detachment with a tinge of melancholy that makes all the elements come together really, really well. I’m quite impressed with this record.

Reviewer: Daniel Z.
Label: Chumpire

SIPHON – Stark Raving Mad EP

A shock to the system from this brand new Richmond hardcore unit featuring members of several other raging bands like SUFFOCATING MADDNESS and FUTURE TERROR. Sound-wise, there is a lot that this band owes to D-beat with the obvious blueprint of hardcore masters DISCHARGE, but it’s transformed into something more claustrophobic and unhinged, with some hints of classic Japanese punk and *Scandinavian Jawbreak(er)-ing*. The songs twist and burn out fast, leaving behind this lingering sense of unease. This is well captured by the amazing cover etched by Joe B., one of the best in the game. Before you know it, it’s over, so hold on tight and enjoy every second of it. Though the release is very short, it leaves a strong impression and is impossible to ignore.

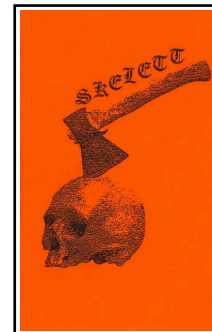
Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Black Water



SKELETT – Skelett cassette

This self-titled release from SKELETT sticks to a pretty minimal formula that works: wiry guitars, tight but slightly loose-feeling drums, and explosive vocals. It leans into that in-between space of punk that isn’t fully hardcore but not quite post-punk either, just kind of hovering in its own grey zone. Tracks like “Electric Sledgehammer” and “Blut” have a nice forward motion without going overboard on speed. They’re direct, but not overly frantic. There’s a bit more room to sit with the riffs, which gives the whole thing a colder, more controlled feel compared to other hardcore demos. A lot of the record works on repetition and tone rather than big moments. “Digital Dumpster” and “Allergic Reaction” especially feel locked into a groove with their simple structures. By the time “Rot” closes things out, it feels more consistent than anything else. A solid run of songs that stick to their lane.

Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Flennen



PURE INTENTION – Pure Intention CD

I would have never guessed that these guys were from Chicago. This has that pure punk'n'roll energy that you get from bands like AN-TISEEN, HOOKERS, and HELLSTOMPER—the type of acts you can really only find south of the Mason-Dixon line. They'd fit like a glove with that whole Confederacy of Scum gang. Sloppy and raw, but powerful and catchy. The bassist has this interesting picking style where they scratch the strings on each downstroke. It's a neat touch that adds a little more chaos onto this pile of madness. According to their socials, the band is currently on a hiatus. I hope they make a return soon, cuz this is good stuff!

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: self-released



R.D.A. – Brave United in Trust LP

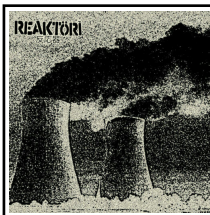
If you ever wanted proof that punk didn't just explode in the same old places and burned just as violently in Southeast Asia, dig into R.D.A., short for REFORMED DESTRUCTION FOR ACTION, and their feral debut *Brave United in Trust*. Released in 1987 on Twisted Red Cross, the original cassette dropped straight into a scene already boiling with bands like the WUDS and DEAD ENDS. There's a looseness here with their MINOR THREAT/UNIFORM CHOICE type of hardcore that modern bands spend years trying (and failing) to fake. And like so many releases from that era of Filipino DIY punk, *Brave United in Trust* didn't travel much as it stayed trapped on cassette, circulating hand-to-hand, until now. In 2025, the record finally made its way onto vinyl for the first time, nearly four decades late, but right on time for anyone still chasing the real thing.

Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Puke n Vomit



REAKTÖRI – 反応器 demo cassette

This is a new band from Vancouver that I have seen mentioned several times but never actually checked out. Don't you feel overwhelmed by the number of new music being released all the time? How can one focus long enough on a given record in order to relate to it? You have four hours, and I want the copies on my desk tomorrow by 9:00 am. Thanks. I understand REAKTÖRI's drummer also hits things in PHANE, and I wouldn't be surprised to learn that the other two fellows have been involved in bands before as well. Because of



the moniker's translation into kanji, I was expecting a full-on Japanese-style hardcore band, but the main influence here is closer to beefy Swedish hardcore. ANTI CIMEX or DRILLER KILLER are not far, but the production is rawer (it is a demo, after all). There is a lot of echo and effect on the vocals, a little too much for my taste, and it took me a couple of listens to get used to it. It also reminds me of '00s PDX bands like BLOOD SPIT NIGHTS or DOG SOLDIER, especially with the "charged punk" vibe of the recording. Pretty good shit, and I can imagine them being great live.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: No Just Cause

RED DEVIL RYDERS – Is It Love? LP

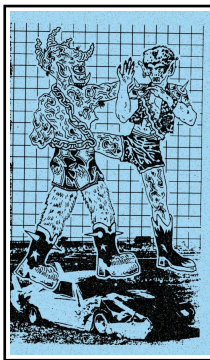
Very cool sounds coming out of Cleveland here. Lots going on, not easy to pin down, track times ranging from two minutes to over seven, half a dozen genres listed on their Bandcamp page—and yet, it all seems to work pretty well. There are plenty of other sounds you'll find yourself thinking of throughout these thirteen tracks, and they'll keep changing as you go along. The Ohio connection jumps out right away with GUIDED BY VOICES, but then you might think of the GIZMOS, or a more contemporary SMARTHEARTS, and then maybe ROYAL HEADACHE on the standout track "Rude Awakening." The vast sounds and references make for a less than singular, cohesive collection, but it never really veers into feeling too disjointed at any point. A fun collection that will draw you in and out throughout its runtime.

Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: Feral Kid



RETAIN MIND – Street Box Fighting cassette

Four tracks of sloppy, dingy, lo-fi punk that lean somewhat toward the garage side of things. This is the second cassette release by RETAIN MIND, a three-piece project from Poland. Vocal duties are shared between the guitarist and bassist. There are times that this almost has an early MEAT PUPPETS feel to it. While there are moments where it seems like the band is about to go off the rails and completely fall apart, it's still a pretty solid cassette, even if the songs are somewhat forgettable. The tape itself doesn't list a title, however the band and label both universally refer to it as *Street Box Fighting*. That name appears on the tape only as the title of the fourth and final track.



D. SABLU – Righteous Light EP

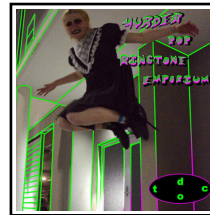
This honestly kicks some serious arse. Coming across like an unholy union betwixt the ferocity of DISCHARGE and the riffier end of POISON IDEA, Mr. Sabludowsky's singular wail cuts through the ensuing melee like a ban-shee, making for an exhilarating eight minutes or so. Very few releases are good enough to warrant an immediate replay, but I was wheeling this one up within seconds of completion. Good gear.

Reviewer: Ben Marshall
Label: 11 PM



DIET TEA OTHER COLA – Murder Pop Ringtone Emporium cassette

Every month when I get my cassettes to review, I scan the covers for something recognizable, either a band I already know or a release on one of a few labels that always puts out solid stuff. I then save those for the end of my review pile, as I often need a bit of a palate-cleanser after listening to some of the not-so-great releases coming out. XTRO has been one of those standout labels for me for a while now, always and consistently cranking out fun, synth-heavy egg-punk. Well, unfortunately they have really let me down with this one. What in the hell am I listening to? This has got to be the most confusing, nonsensical, unlistenable garbage I have ever had the displeasure of sitting through. I feel utterly betrayed. A lazier reviewer would have turned it off after the first godforsaken track, but this glutton for punishment is pushing through trying to find even a single positive thing to say about this horrible fever dream of a cassette. Twenty-six tracks. Over an hour long. Overstimulating hyperpop vomit spewing like a firehose strapped to my skull. A soundtrack seemingly written to accompany some modern, unfunny meme that I also don't understand. Look, I get it, I'm in my forties, I'm sure this review will have me labeled as some old punk who "doesn't get it," but holy hell, the replay value of this is completely non-existent. I am halfway through and have begun fantasizing about self-immolation to escape the obligation of flipping the cassette. The hands of time are cruel. Oh analog gods, I implore you, feed your hunger, take a little nibble, eat this cassette mid-play and free me, free me from this auditory hellscapel! I have always believed that there is beauty in simplicity when it comes to music. Well, this surely isn't beautiful. Words cannot express how much I truly and utterly disliked listening to this cassette. Apparently this recording was released digitally in 2020, and XTRO just reissued it on cassette. Normally the label makes only 25 copies of their releases, but they did twice their normal run for this. All 50 have already sold out. Well, I've got a copy here if some moron who hates music wants it, otherwise it's getting placed under one of my kitchen table legs



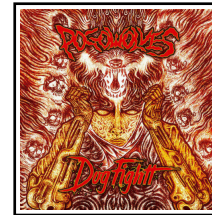
to even out the wobble, or dubbed over. Horrid. Just horrid.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: XTRO

DOGFIGHTT / POGOWOLVES – split EP

POGOWOLVES are tough to nail down—there are elements of wild Japanese hardcore (thinking about the backing vox and the You-esque bass), and they seem to be leaning towards a metallic STARVING WOLVES approach; it's a lot to handle. On the flip, DOGFIGHTT is early UK trash and '80s Sunset Strip energy, total ENGLISH DOGS and INEPSY vibes with searing lead vocals. Both bands are from Kuala Lumpur and both demand further investigation.

Reviewer: Robert Collins
Label: Bollocks / Kusottare



DOWNSIDE – Cruelhead/Something's Off LP

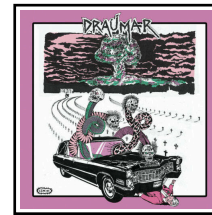
A solid hardcore band thrives on urgency and attitude, and this one delivers both without overcomplicating things. DOWNSIDE plays frantic hardcore punk, raw in nature and with a very growly voice, making the whole thing sound much more aggressive. In 2019, the L.A. band showed us *Something's Off*, and in 2026 they are back with a new record—*Cruelhead* on Side A, plus the old one on Side B. Some songs are in English, some songs are in Spanish, but all of them have the same anger directed at the world. They channel hardcore effectively into short, punchy tracks that leave a lasting impact.

Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Under the Gun



DRÄUMAR – Draumar LP

Here an extraordinarily powerful debut from what has to be Oslo's pre-eminent hardcore outfit. The riffs on this sucker are mind-melting. There's some noodling that has me convinced their guitarist has an extra digit or two on their fretting hand, but it's the foundation of riffage that I keep coming back to. Check out "Blodigler" or "Parasitt" as examples of how absolutely raging this band is even when the shredding is held at bay. Through and through, this shit just kills. Pissed-off vocals, intricate basslines, fantastic



drumming...even the interludes are rad. Grip this or die sad, punk.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: Static Shock

DURS COEURS – Crise Cardiaque LP

DURS COEURS have booted down a door (and perhaps a wall) to fuse proto-metal, post-punk, and street rock. Melodic without being overtly pop-influenced, gritty and tough yet not impenetrable. The instrumentation across these eight cuts is impressively tasteful. They keep things wound tight and in the pocket when it counts, and sprinkle in the right amount of flourish when called for. As the opening track fore-shadows, there's a surfy twang splashed across the album that adds a buoyancy that lifts DURS COEURS to level beyond many of their peers. Fans of CAMERA SILENS in particular will want to take note.



Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: Broken Skull

EARTHFUCKER – Why Should You Survive? cassette

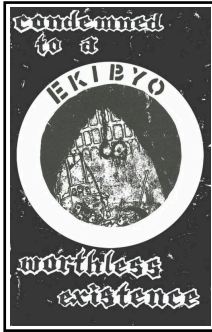
I have to admit that I am not well-versed in the Oklahoma punk scene (and even this would already be an understatement). This recording is the first from this young punk band, but you wouldn't know it listening to these seven songs, as the music is focused, well-written, with many changes of pace and vibe requiring solid musicianship, and overall, it just sounds really good. Impressive indeed. Oddly, EARTHFUCKER (admittedly a bit of a mouthful for a name) sounds a lot like a '90s band with their raging blend of sludge, crust punk, and destructive hardcore punk. I would bet that bands like HIS HERO IS GONE, BORN AGAINST, or DAMAD get some airplay at their headquarters. The production has an organic sensibility and retains a dirty feel that perfectly matches the intensity of songs that, in spite of tackling different subgenres, remain somewhat cohesive. Had you told me that it was an unreleased recording from 1997, I would have believed you (but hey, I am pretty gullible). The tone of the tape is desperate, too—you can tell that EARTHFUCKER is to be taken seriously, and while I cannot say that I regularly listen to this sort of band, *Why Should You Survive?* was certainly a pleasant ride.



Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: self-released

EKIBYO – Condemned to a Worthless Existence cassette

I've said it before, and I'll say it again—I'm a sucker for lo-fi, noisy, crasher punk, and EKIBYO out of Florida does not disappoint. The *Condemned to a Worthless Existence* cassette contains five original songs and a RUDIMENTARY PENI cover, all slathered in distortion so dense you'll swear there's a swarm of bees coming through your speakers. Indignant lyrics critique multiple aspects of imperialistic societies with a rapid-fire delivery while a heavy rhythm section pounds out primal beats. EKIBYO certainly isn't attempting to reinvent the wheel, but *Condemned to a Worthless Existence* is worth a listen if you're in the mood.



Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: self-released

ERISTETYT – Meri EP

The Finnish punk scene has done so much to influence and shape extreme music that it's hard to believe it gets often overlooked. ERISTETYT is a Finnish hardcore punk band born in 1989, rooted in the raw, D-beat-driven tradition of the country's classic scene. They draw clear influence from early pioneers like RIISTETYT or MELLAKKA—both urgent and shamelessly primitive, emphasizing aggressive, fast-paced songs and a stripped-down, metallic aesthetic typical of Finnish hardcore. After an extensive catalog of noise, splits with the likes of AGATHOCLES, and assorted compilation appearances, ERISTETYT delivers *Meri* via Terminal Records, recorded in 2021. The songs are simple but effective, locking into relentless rhythms while the drums push everything forward with a pounding, almost militaristic intensity. It carries that classic harsh delivery, more about attitude and force than clarity. *Meri* has an essential hardcore quality: direct, aggressive, and immediately repeatable.



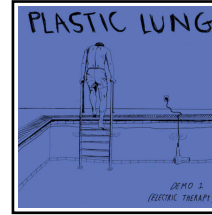
Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Terminal Records

tion-wise, it sounds perfect—studs-oriented, pummeling, and still raw with angry vocals. Nothing new under the nuclear sunrise, but PISSNIFFERS have that *je ne sais quoi* that makes their classic dispunk recipe stand out. And don't forget that wearing a shirt can also make your parents mad if you are still fifteen.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Chãos & Antikomformismós

PLASTIC LUNG – Demo 1 (Electric Therapy) CD

PLASTIC LUNG's *Electric Therapy* is a four-track demo from this southern Italian three-piece that threads noisy post-punk with lyrics (in English) about surveillance capitalism, digital alienation, and self-destruction. The playing runs on tension: high-pitched, escalating guitar lines pulling against vocals that stay weirdly calm given the subject matter. The guitar solo about two minutes into "Surge of Destruction" goes completely sideways (in the best way), and the saxophone on "Deckard's Way" isn't just a JOHN ZORN panic squeal, it's woven into the song like it belongs there. The recording sounds solid for a demo, the musicianship is there, and while the vocals don't always match the intensity of everything happening around them, they don't sink it, either. Four songs, and enough good ideas to make me curious about what comes next.



Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: self-released

POISON SUCKERS – Charmer EP

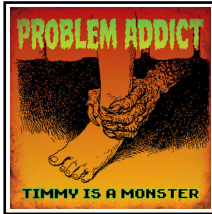
Wow. If you like your garage music with dueling male/female vocals, you've come to the right place. If you also like it fuzzed-out as shit, this is for you. If you wouldn't mind a hint of glam thrown in there, then this is going to be 100% right up your alley. All of that is delivered in a super-catchy and melodic fashion. There's a whimsicalness throughout, but they are very serious about what they're doing. These Canadians deliver with this one.



Reviewer: Kenny Kaos
Label: Transister

PROBLEM ADDICT – Timmy is a Monster cassette

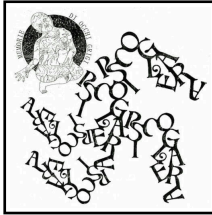
Aggro, spooky garage rock that's over in a blink. Seriously, I threw this on without paying heed to the track lengths and was shocked when the record came to a sudden end! Lots of fun, melodic tracks that don't run over two-and-a-half minutes each. If you love BOBBY "BORIS" PICKETT and the QUEERS, then this will most likely be your new favorite band. I think this band has a dedicated sampler, which I would love to see in more punk bands.



Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Dummest

PSICO GALERA – Memorie Di Occhi Grigi 12"

It is hard to quantify a proper reaction to a record like this for the simple fact that it's rare to encounter a band that breaks through the trappings of trend and convention. Listening to this album is like looking at a map that includes a weird new territory that didn't previously exist. There are the contours of the punk we know, but every song fucking explodes out into an extra-dimensional shape with insane modulated guitar shredding, trance-inducing vocal refrains, and pummeling death beat drumming. If it weren't so infectious and raging, it would be truly unsettling. Experimental, cosmic, bizarre hardcore for the real freaks. I've enjoyed all of PSICO GALERA's output, but this is lightyears beyond their preceding material. If you catch yourself feeling bored with punk, give this a spin and try to keep your brains inside yer gourd.



Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: Sorry State

PUBLIC FIGURES – Figure It Out! 12"

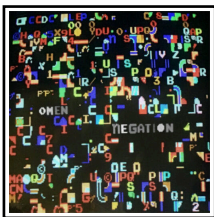
Debut EP from this young Melbourne band that has a sonic depth and insight beyond their years. There's a swagger and attitude as if JOAN JETT and PATTI SMITH had been in the original lineup of HOLE. Lyrically, there's a strong identity of female power and resistance with a fresh honesty. Bonus info, band member Evie creates all their music videos, which are an amazing reinforcement of their energy and essence.



Reviewer: Tim Janchar
Label: Blow Blood

OMEN NEGATION – Omen Negation demo cassette

OMEN NEGATION is a three-piece punk band from Portland, Maine. It's a long trip from one Portland to the other, where their significant WIPERS influence comes from. This tape certainly has plenty of driving guitar riffs in that style, but somewhere along the cross-country trek, it seems to have picked up a hitchhiker, adding a touch of early 2000s folk-inspired indie rock/pop punk to the mix. That aspect is mostly noticeable in the singing. Vocals feel intentionally off-time, with the singer attempting a kooky, off-kilter style, reminiscent of the HOLD STEADY and similar indie rock acts. Backing vocals pepper the tape with strained, yelling harmonies, which are probably the clearest nod to that 2000s folk-leaning pop punk sound. An eight-track demo, recorded very crisp, clear, and professionally. Some of the guitar licks are real head-bobbers, but the vocal delivery leaves the songs feeling like head-scratchers.



Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: self-released

OUT. – Somebody Done Somebody Wrong Songs LP

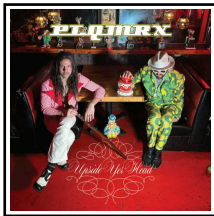
Think about those '90s garage bands that were punk but heavy on the rock'n'roll—talking GAUNT, NEW BOMB TURKS, KARMA TO BURN, NINE POUND HAMMER here, the kind of shit that still felt pretty redneck, but the shit sounded punk. Enter Kentucky's OUT., who were all of those things with a measured dose of AVAIL hooks and should-have-been grunge riffs thrown in because it was the '90s. Noise Pollution released this stunner three decades ago on CD and are celebrating the birthday with a vinyl edition...it's been a while since I listened to something that so clearly came from a different and specific time, and I like a record that takes me on a trip back in (to my own) time. Worth the price of admission for "Love Can Break Your Back" alone, a track that takes all of the above influences and still sounds like an early punk classic—this band was on some kind of trip, and this record is a welcome addition in a modern sea of copycats and try-hards.



Reviewer: Robert Collins
Label: Noise Pollution

PLQMRX – Upside Yer Head 12"

This record sucks so profoundly that I don't have the words to express how pissed I am that I wasted 22 minutes of my finite lifetime listening to it. Look at the cover for some clues: we have two guys in gaudy vintage suits, clown sculptures, and a font from the Man's Ruin Records design bible. If time stopped for you in 1995 and these dudes look like a chill time, go ahead and order the "Crackhead's Bundle" of records, shirts, and shit from their Bandcamp. Crank it up and bond with your favorite estranged uncles over this overworked, overblown casserole of psych, funk, doom riffs, and noise rock. And please understand that they wear wacky costumes when playing live. I wish I could do a citizen's arrest on guitarist (let me check the notes) Midnight Moses—that's right, the members have goofy pseudonyms like vocalist Cleetus Alreetus Alrightus and drummer Vinniehana, rumored to be Vincent Signorelli of UNSANE—for egregious wah pedal abuse with intent to harm. The songs, from the bombastic opener "Us vs. Them" to the deeply stupid "Hundred Dollar Hot Dog," are an unceasing blast of psyched-up wah soloing, distorted bass grooves, and growling, growling vocals. It's loud and unyielding, but in the most annoying way possible, like a guy on a bus screaming his best Jim Carrey impersonation in your face. They namecheck FLIPPER, BUTTHOLE SURFERS, and FUNKADELIC as influences, and sure, whatever, this shit kind of sounds like those bands, with touches of LAUGHING HYENAS, RED FANG, and COWS. But much, much worse. Reptilian has released some great records, but this is not one of them. I would honestly rather sit in silence than play this again.



Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Reptilian

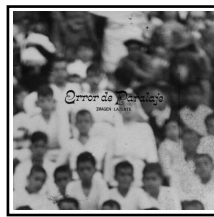
PISSNIFFERS – Pissniffers LP

You know what? I am very pleased that I got assigned this LP for review, not just because I actually already own and love the thing, but because I find the prospect of wearing a PISSNIFFERS top during a job interview hilarious. Unless you want the job, of course. Greece has no shortage of acid hardcore bands these days with acts like IYYP KATA BOYAHSEH or ΠΑΕΚΤΑΝΗ delivering the goods. I am a sucker for Greek punk and I find the language works with every punk subgenre, and PISSNIFFERS, unsurprisingly, indulge in shitlicking kāng hardcore punk, a style I am fond of indeed. Our sniffers don't necessarily aim for a perfect replica of Sweden though, and I am reminded more of other Scandi-inspired but non-Scandinavian bands such as TOTÁLICKERS, PISSCHRIST, and other bands who dick around with umlauts. The songwriting is simple but effective, and the energy certainly makes up for the relative typicalness of the music (which I monomaniacally don't mind, personally), and produc-



ERROR DE PARALAJE – Imagen Latente LP

This Granadan trio casually swung in at the tail end of 2025 and dropped off one of the year's best records. Maybe too casually. Unlike other recent bands who you could similarly describe as jangly or power pop-y, they haven't been buried under mountains of praise. I'm not sure if that's due to a lack of exposure, or the fact that they can't obviously be lumped in with the current jangle/power pop revival. In any event, they are a band you should be paying attention to. ERROR DE PARALAJE isn't simply reheating BIG STAR or GUIDED BY VOICES; they're taking a rich post-punk stock and clarifying it into a bright, delicate pop consommé. This 12", the band's second release since forming in the late 2010s, is a record dripping with a nostalgia not conveyed via obvious signifiers like a band donning period costumes, but via melodies that genuinely ache for a past that promised something other than the bleak reality we inhabit. The music walks such a fine line between sweet and melancholic, often sounding something like a stripped-back LOOK BLUE GO PURPLE mixed with BLONDE REDHEAD's "Hated Because of Great Qualities." Or a track like "Mi Mundo Gris" has you imagine a world where the FEELIES were heavily inspired by ENNIO MORRICONE. It's such a strange, beautiful record that I want more folks to love, so please check it out!



Reviewer: Alex Howell

Label: Andalucia Über Alles / Brainwasher / Chicken Attack / Collector's Series DIY / Crapoulet / Cuerdas Fuera / Discos Banana / Discos Dark / Metadona

FAKE LIGHTERS – Sinking In LP

This has a real OFF WITH THEIR HEADS/DILLINGER FOUR feel to it. It's sloppy but authentic, and chock-full of hooks and sing-along parts. This has all the perfect elements of a "windows down, car full of friends shouting along with the songs" record. I feel like Long Island, NY has been churning out more and more of this kinda stuff in recent years. Simple and memorable, passion-filled, with vocals bleeding through the guitars with melody and honesty. Apparently they've been cranking out the hits for four years. Also, I gotta talk about the sleeve with a big ol' grizzly holding a dandelion as the fish jump past him. I love it. I'd wear that shirt.



Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Mystery Box

FASHION BATHERS – From the High Desert cassette

Social media is trying to turn the world into a lifeless monoculture. AI slop and LLMs are trying to do the same to the written word. But it's not all doom and gloom, because this FASHION BATHERS cassette exists. This is genuinely one of the most refreshing things I've heard in forever. If TONY MOLINA moved to Australia and got lost in the egg scene out there, I suppose the outcome might be similar to *From the High Desert*. But these 30-second-long earworms hail not from down under, but from the mighty north in Manitoba. Only two of the eighteen tracks here even crack the one-minute mark, with almost half of them not even hitting thirty seconds. And while on paper that sounds like something that might not pull me in, in practice it destroyed my brain. Also, as these tracks come and go so quickly, I didn't even realize until I finished the entire tape that it was the same nine songs done two different ways to make up the full tracklist—because it felt so fresh, I almost missed the repetition completely. Hell, make it 36 tracks next time.



Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: Knuckles on Stun

FLATWAVES – Tell Me Secrets LP

Oh, this is quite nice, no doubt about it. Has a modern MY BLOODY VALENTINE shoegaze-y vibe, but also incorporates a little bit of blackgaze—very atmospheric and vast, as if LITA FORD started singing with SWERVEDRIVER. This album is a master class in songwriting and production; you can really tell that a lot of care went into both facets of the recording process. Really fantastic work here, and well worth a couple dozen spins.



Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Abandon Everything

FREAK PHONE – Demo 2025 cassette

When I picked up this tape and saw the name FREAK PHONE and the artwork of someone crudely tonguing the handset of a landline telephone, I assumed I was in store for a world of novelty art-punk nonsense. Thankfully, what I received when the tape kicked in was bare-bones, no-frills, RAMONES-core rock'n'roll from Portland, Maine. What might feel overly simplistic to some



comes across as a breath of fresh air. In today's world, modern-day RAMONES-worship bands often seem to be scared to just...be RAMONES. There's always a fresh take or some artistic flourish added to the tried-and-true formula. What the hell are these acts thinking? You can't smarten up good old-fashioned, glue-sniffing, moron mutant rock'n'roll! Based solely on the demo, FREAK PHONE doesn't seem to fall into that trap. Here's hoping there isn't some novelty aspect to the band that would cheapen their sincerity in some way. This five-song cassette delivers pure, unpretentious rock'n'roll, including an awesome take on "I Want to See The Bright Lights Tonight" by RICHARD AND LINDA THOMPSON. It's simple, it's catchy, and it doesn't need a damn gimmick.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: self-released

GAMMA – Subconscious cassette

Six cuts of ripping hardcore from across the pond, GAMMA's *Subconscious* is tightly wound up and bristling with early '80s USHC goodness. This is right up my alley; not many frills, pissed-off, fast, and loud. Overall, they remind me of Nashville's



G.U.N. Great stuff, highly recommended.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Gob Nation

GOLD CUP – The Piss Has Been Taken cassette

GOLD CUP's *The Piss Has Been Taken* is a six-song cassette from a Manchester four-piece who've been kicking out really solid rockers since 2023. This release is a little less egg-punky than some of their earlier material, but the fuzzed-out vocals over hard-driving rock'n'roll keep things moving and let a killer bass tone do a lot of the heavy lifting. At times, it reminded me of the KIDS, that same kind of locked-in, no-frills energy where the songs don't need to be clever because they're too busy being good. The playing is tight, the recording suits the music perfectly, and every listen pulled me in a little deeper. The limited cassette run is already sold out, but the whole thing is up on Bandcamp, so do yourself a favor and check them out.



Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Sour Grapes

GREG WHEELER AND THE POLY MALL COPS – Slimephone Surveillance LP

With their goofy name and Rod Farva-esque drummer, GREG WHEELER AND THE POLY MALL COPS could easily have been another wacky garage knockoff. Instead, these innovative Iowans use the chicanery as a fun front for their layered and entertaining music, and this second LP demonstrates a smooth evolution to their subtly surfy sci-fi sound. It's got a winning combination of classic candy riffs, buzzing energy, and infectious melody, but there's also a tinge of chill early 2010s style like JACUZZI BOYS and WAVVES, which is another agreeable flavor. By the time we reach the closing "Your Quiet Charm," the tide has turned entirely, leaving us with a sickly-sweet synth/acoustic indie ballad as a final surprise.



Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: High Dive

GUIMAUVE – Effondrement LP

There is a long-standing tradition in punk stating that some good bands willingly shoot themselves in the foot by picking too odd a name as a moniker. Time will tell if GUIMAUVE belongs to that heroic category—GUIMAUVE meaning "marshmallow" in French. This Parisian hardcore unit does not, however, indulge in sweet, lush punk music. Paris is hardly known for its scarcely populated hardcore scene, so bands like GUIMAUVE are always a breath of fresh air (in a manner of speaking). On a lot of levels, the band is of its day, as their hardcore punk sound borrows a number of different influences and uses diverse paces and atmospheres to get their political lyrics (in French) across. GUIMAUVE deals in mid-paced, dark hardcore as much as they can deliver the faster, wilder moments you'd expect from the genre. As a result, this first album does not feel redundant or repetitive, and even if they use effects on both the guitar and the vocals, they do not overwhelm the listener or try to hide simplistic compositions. The songs are usually well-thought-out, and I really enjoy mid-paced numbers like "Lapogée du Spectacle" or "On Aurait Pu." The vocals are raucous and direct, but remain intelligible in spite of the rapid delivery. Old school '80s US hardcore bands clearly got invites, but as mentioned, GUIMAUVE sounds more like a contemporary take on the old school rather than worshipping the old school, and I can see them appealing to fans of NEGAZIONE, POISON IDEA, or BAD BREEDING alike. Give this one a chance.



Reviewer: Romain Bassot
Label: Creepozoid Productions / Emergence / Guerilla / Keponteam / Les Disques Mauvais Garçons / Mass Productions / Yoyodyne

Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: Council

MENTAL SLAUGHTER – Feedback

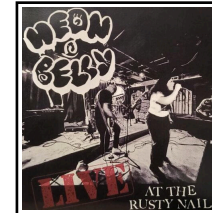
Members of GAOLED and NO FUTURE infrequently play together as MENTAL SLAUGHTER, a raw, munitions-grade, LANGUID-worshipping D-beat band. Screaming guitar leads sweep over a rumbling and banging rhythm section that supports the gnashing and disgusted vocal delivery. Noisy and distortion-laden, MENTAL SLAUGHTER offers eight songs on this initial cassette, and if you're into the D-beat that gets your fist pumping and head banging, then this is for you.



Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Iron Lung

NEON BELLY – Live at the Rusty Nail 7"

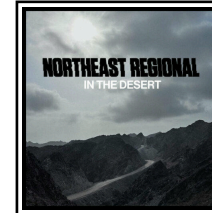
Pressed on a limited edition, single-sided lathe-cut 7", this offering from Wilmington, NC's NEON BELLY presents two tracks of gut-level hardcore punk with basement-level recording quality. Recorded live at the Rusty Nail, just like it says on the tin, this second release from the group brings 100% down-and-dirty ruckus, from the brooding "Down on Your Luck" to the chaotic "Last Song." Not many of these were made, so if you have one, you're special.



Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: self-released

NORTHEAST REGIONAL – In the Desert LP

The ten-song *In the Desert* opens with a short, slow number powered by Jeff Byers' scratchy vocals before swinging into "MR," a noisy post-punk rager that hit me like a slightly less chaotic HOSE GOT CABLE and ended up being the high point of the whole record. NORTHEAST REGIONAL is a Richmond-area five-piece with three guitarists, which may or may not be strictly necessary, and a roster pulled from a deep bench of Virginia and D.C.-area bands. When Mike Morris takes over vocals on three of the tracks, the energy shifts hard toward indie rock, like, I dunno...the LEMONHEADS? That's where the album loses me. The band bills themselves as post-hardcore, but a chunk of this lands closer to alternative rock, and the gulf between those two worlds gives the album a bit of an identity problem. The musicianship is sharp and the recording sounds great. I just wish they'd com-



mitted more to the aggressive side, where the songs really come alive. This could have been a killer 7".

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Tor Johnson

OFFEND YOUR FRIENDS – Almost Didn't Make It CD

From Fond Du Lac, WI, we get the punk/ska/hardcore/Oil of OFFEND YOUR FRIENDS, who have been smashing the state since George W. Bush was in office. I really don't know what to make of this. The song topics range from being upset about things to eating poop. Spanning the aggressive, melodic ranges of punk, ska and hardcore, *Almost Didn't Make It* is globbed full of sing-along choruses and adorable saxophone solos. I can't single out what specifically makes this so appealing, but overall, it's the entire bundle of everything they are throwing at me. I bet they bounce off the walls live, play way too long, and everyone in the room loves every second of it. Popping with the energy of firecrackers tossed under a picnic table, the jokes timed with power and purity make this album more than just a passing glance. The twelve songs start to run out of steam around track ten. This is going to resonate with someone somewhere, and that person is going to go on to do something miraculous and attribute it to these fucked-up punk/ska songs outta Fond Du Lac. Also, the exact opposite might happen, where something horrible occurs and the manifesto references this release. Look, you don't come here for fortune-telling services, but you could still check out this album and maybe be the person you've always wanted to become.



Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: self-released

OII!TAKUS – Two on One: Oilitakus EP and How to Date an Anime Girl cassette

A cassette compiling two EPs about anime, with songs having the sound structure of punk, Oil, and hardcore. I have a tribute record to *Sesame Street* songs, so I'm down with silly stuff. However, I'm a bit outgunned here. The songs are fast punk/Oil-core and probably right on for what they are trying to do. Look, if you are into hardcore and punk and want possibly scathing hot takes on the world of punk and anime and how they crossover, then I'd say look no further. There are only a few of these tapes that exist, and after they are gone, you'll have to wait until there are more.



Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Tennessee Cold Cuts

LOS FIASCOS – Pick It Up 10"

I'm reading that this is a one-man band. If you are a fan of the more milque-toast bands on Epitaph or Fat Wreck Chords, then you will dig this. I feel like maybe with a little more input from other musicians, it would move out of the guardrails and challenge the style a bit. The songs are good and the playing is competent, lots of hooks, fine drumming, regular lyrics for the genre, but he doesn't sound completely committed to what he's singing about. I really appreciate the effort, and I respect anyone that is willing to put something out there. However, this is just not doing it for me. Maybe putting together a band and playing live four or forty times would extract a bit more life from these songs.

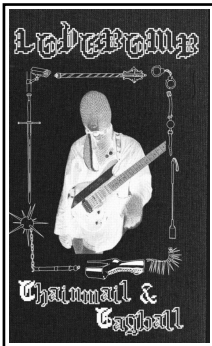


Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: self-released

LOVEBOMB – Chainmail & Gagball cassette

Mannheim's solo egg-punk extravaganza LOVEBOMB absolutely stuns with their super lo-fi shenanigans and claustrophobic quirkiness. Seemingly recorded between a dungeon's sweating walls with nothing but a dusty multitrack recorded looted off of a low-level warlock, *Chainmail & Gagball* is the perfect record to scratch your early POWERPLANT itch. Vibes are truly immense on this one.

Reviewer: Mama Goblin
Label: XTRO



M.O.T.O. – Kill Moto LP reissue

I've been aware of this band forever, but never listened to any of their music. I'm not sure why. Maybe I didn't like the name? Or the logo? Both terrible reasons not to at least check a band out. I just did some checking. They've been around since 1981. Jesus. This record originally came out in 2002. Well, it's been my loss. I can't speak for all of their records, but this one is memorable. Punk at times and more poppy at other times, but it's always catchy and melodic. There's also a goofiness (in a good way) that seems to be a consistent theme. At some points, it reminded me of WALL OF VODOO. Might be the vocals. I'm glad that I've finally seen the light.

Reviewer: Kenny Kaos
Label: Chain Smoking



MASSACRE SYSTEM – Massacre System cassette

MASSACRE SYSTEM out of Richmond, Virginia plays noisy, raw D-beat punk. Their self-titled cassette offers four tracks that blur, blend, and bleed with squelching lead-ins and outros. My personal favorite is "War Crime Technology." If you like things like ENZYME, HERESY, or YELLOWCAKE, then be sure to check out MASSACRE SYSTEM.

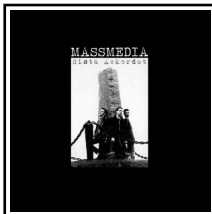
Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Bunker Punks



MASSMEDIA – Sista Ackordet LP reissue

I feel like I'm ill-equipped to review (or even give proper context to) such a classic recording, but the sounds are in the speakers and there's a keyboard at my fingers, so here we go. MASSMEDIA were teenagers from Sundsvall, Sweden in the late '70s, and they self-released a couple of stellar 45s before *Siste Ackordet* in 1980—hard-hitting, high-energy, hopelessly catchy punk with layers of backing vocals that seem to work only because there was no one telling them that they couldn't put backing vocals absolutely everywhere. "Mörkret" is a dark ballad worth its weight in gold, landing somewhere between MISSION OF BURMA and early LIPS, followed by "Dirt Problem" which lays the foundation for members' future work in early Swedish hardcore bands HUVUDVÄTT and HEAD-CLEANERS. Again, these were teenagers, and the songs are straight classics. *Sista Askordet* should be in print at all times—this is what starter punk should be.

Reviewer: Robert Collins
Label: Massproduktion



MEDICINAL – Buildings Abandoned LP

Hardcore and/or hardcore punk out of Long Island that can't quite decide if it wants to be the former or the latter. The vocal stylings are fairly unique and interesting, but the music is far too predictable and solid-state to rise to anything particularly engaging. I really found myself distracted by the general sound and production here. While they may find success when their friends show up to the South Shore VFWs, this sound can't afford the bridge or tunnel fare to get much further.



GUNNER – Reality Soldier EP

Totally violent hardcore from Perth, featuring members of the now defunct SEMTEX 87. *Reality Soldier* sounds absolutely brutal, each track a blown-out burst cranked all the way up. The guitars are a fuzzy wall of noise, the vocals bark along foaming at the mouth, and the drumming is particularly gnarly, recklessly pounding away with plenty of machine gun fills peppered in throughout. GUNNER has some great song titles too, paying homage to Abel Ferrera's infamous sleaze-fest with "The Bad Lieutenant," as well as the brilliantly lifted "Here Comes the Warm Jets," a song that is definitely not a cover of BRIAN ENO. Excellent and mean, for fans of Youth Attack Records.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Helta Skelta / Iron Lung



HEAD WOUND / SOFT EXIT – split cassette

Fucking rad split release from two innovative projects out of Kuwait. I love hearing bands from underrepresented regions, and this one smokes. HEAD WOUND presents a four-track stylistic buffet of modern punk that genre hops and never loses a sense of frenzied energy. "D.B.V.T.Y." glides effortlessly between heavily produced and melodic NINE INCH NAILS-style alt/industrial into blitzes of full-volume, full-mayhem cyber grind. The next song, "Evel Knievel," pairs dissonant post-punk with stuttering, effusive vocals, sounding like BLACK EYES for a minute before touching on metallic sludge and remixed egg-punk. Is it unfocused? Sure, but the intensity runs so high that it functions as a unified piece. SOFT EXIT might stretch the bounds of some MRR expectations with their experimental junk IDM, but the four tracks here work as a counterpoint to Side One. Think of a dumpster dive behind the Warp Records warehouse while an Arabic chant narrates your digging. Skittery drums and warm synths play hopscotch with massive black hole club beats and field-recorded speech samples. It is bewildering and head-bobbing. Check it out!

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: XTRO



HELGA PATAKI – Helga Pataki cassette

Another killer entry into Hey Fuck You's catalog. Hardcore punk with a power violence twist, MAN IS THE BASTARD dueling vocals, sub-30-second tracks, samples that are longer than the actual songs, and tongues firmly placed in cheek. If you love Slap-a-Ham, then you'll be quite pleased with this one. These folks are going to need to do a split album with Chicago's STINKY PETERSON.

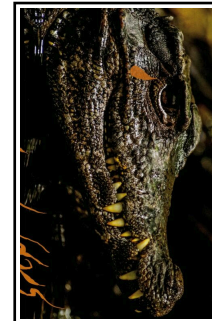
Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Hey Fuck You



HIGHWAY PATROL – In Tears cassette

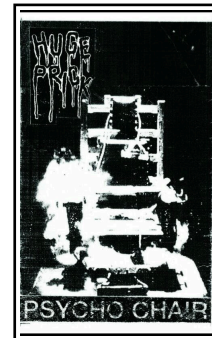
This is the third full-length release from Germany's HIGHWAY PATROL. Recorded live to tape, this somehow ended up sounding more produced than a majority of the recordings I get sent to write about. While that aspect is certainly impressive, beyond that, I'll admit it, I just don't get it. A self-proclaimed "country" and "wild rhythm 'n' voodoo [sic] blues" band, a made-up genre name so bizarre it even comes with a glaring typo. Twelve tracks of sleepy, sing-song meandering with the occasional fuzzed-out solo. There is a very real possibility that I am just not the target audience for this music, although I do consider myself pretty versatile in my knowledge and tastes. If this band were a patrolled highway, I imagine the many crash reports would indicate "fell asleep at the wheel" as the cause for the crash, with the drivers having been lulled off to sleep by the lullabies found within.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Phantom Records



HUGE PRICK – Psycho Chair cassette

Vancouver is absolutely filthy with excellent punk bands, so it's no surprise to see yet another show up in my review pile. HUGE PRICK (great name) plays totally blown-out and over-the-top hardcore that sounds fried to a crisp and grimy in the best way possible. This seven-track, six-minute-long tape boasts all the abrasive fun you could ask for, including the riff from BLACK SABBATH's "War Pigs" and a quick refrain of the chorus of "We're a Happy Family" by the

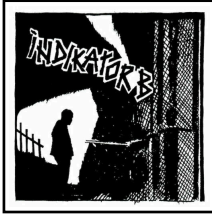


RAMONES. Check this one out; start with "R'N'R Dick-head."

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Lower Echelon

INDIKATOR B – II EP

INDIKATOR B out of Croatia has returned with a fresh EP that was released just before their East Coast to Midwest tour. The four-track 7" is straightforward punk in the INDIKATOR B style of earnest presentation that cites 1980s Valley punk, but with lyrics in the band's native language. If you dig AGENT ORANGE or early T.S.O.L., then you should absolutely give this EP a spin.

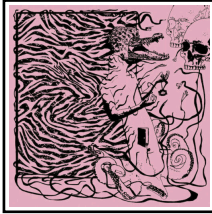


Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: General Speech

ISMATIC GURU – Crocbrain, or, Two Big Steps for Mankind cassette

Another wild release from the gutters of Buffalo, NY. ISMATIC GURU sounds like Mark Mothersbaugh fronting early WEEN. At times, the music sounds like it could be theme music for an episode of *Peewee's Playhouse*, and at other times, it sounds like a mad scientist drum machine experiment gone awry. There's a feeling that it could all fall apart at any moment, but it never does; it's tightly orchestrated with skronky guitars, drum machines that move like a cityscape, and bass lines that hold the fort and keep a cohesive thread throughout. Clocking in at just over five minutes, the songs themselves feel like short bursts of punk-fried krautrock, rather than fully fleshed-out tunes. It's a fun listen and it sounds like they had fun making it. The vocals add to the chaos; they feel like they are part of an inside joke that you weren't part of but now you're in on it, too. I found myself repeating the line "Go a little easy on the salt next time" randomly for like a week straight. No frame of reference or context provided, but it wormed its way into my brain and that's gotta mean something. Overall, it's fun and dare I say funky, but funky in more of a "my bandmate hasn't showered this whole tour" way than a "did you hear that dentist shred that eight-string bass solo" way. It won't please everyone but I found it to be a breath of fresh funk in a season dominated by hardcore releases.

Reviewer: Sir Bobos
Label: Swimming Faith



ISOTOPE SOAP – The Rise of the Centaur LP

Since their inception, Stockholm's ISOTOPE SOAP has been a gift that keeps giving. Even though there is a whole genre based around ripping off DEVO—which I myself am guilty of—ISOTOPE SOAP finds the best parts of what makes that sound great, and just takes it in another direction of their own. *The Rise of the Centaur* has subtle nods to a wide array of genres like darkwave, power pop, and weird punk. I believe what makes this record great is the combination of all these style cues. There are many directions you can go with hysterical vocals, super-tight drumming, pounding bass, tastefully written synth melodies and guitar riffs...yet ISOTOPE SOAP takes a road of their own between the lines. It's a great record from start to finish and definitely one that you wouldn't want to miss out on.

Reviewer: Mama Goblin
Label: Push My Buttons

JULIAN HERESY – Julian Heresy LP

One of those doom vehicles that teeters on the edge of stoner rock and the more metal-oriented grunge acts like ALICE IN CHAINS and SOUNDGARDEN. Those last two bands might not be the favorite flavors of your average *MRR* reader, but I am absolutely smitten by this album. Slow, low, and fuzzy, but a bit more nuanced than your typical doom venture as the vocalist swaps between brooding, melodic crooning and blood-soaked snarling. The same can be said about the actual music as well—sweeping, atmospheric desert jams melded with your classic BLACK SABBATH-esque riffs. Each song is its own epic adventure, and I got lost wandering around each one. This is a fantastic record, and you would be doing yourself a favor by spinning it a couple times. When it comes time to discuss great Midwestern music scenes, Madison is not talked about nearly enough. Spread the word!

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: No Coast



KALLE HYGIEN – Mount Meru LP

Reviewing records can be super rewarding and fun; getting exposed to new stuff, getting to be effusive of your favorite artists, maybe even turning some people on to a brand new thing. And in the past, it even felt the tiniest bit "important" because if you wanted to check out an artist, you probably had to buy the entire record/CD/tape, so a review could help you decide how you'd spend your hard-earned bucks. I don't have to worry about imploring you to save said hard-earned bucks by avoiding spending them on this record. You should not buy this record. But in 2026, you could easily listen to it without much cost besides your time, I suppose. This is not good. But maybe you get your rocks off on that stuff? I'm not going to say "don't listen to this" because it's, well, it's something. If those indie bands of the late 2000s that tried too hard to show they were weird (THEY SHOOT HORSES DON'T THEY, MAN MAN, later OF MONTREAL) tried to ape GORILLAZ beats, it might sound something like this? Maybe? Either way, I listened to it so you don't have to.

Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: Omega / Punk Brain / Push My Buttons

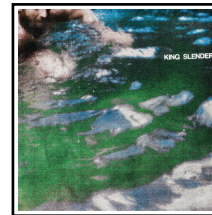
KAUKOLÉ / SUBSCUM – split EP

KAUKOLÉ is from Lithuania and SUBSCUM is from Ukraine. Both play unflinching, old school grind-core that occasionally drifts into more metallic delivery, while still maintaining a punk bite. Warp speed riffs, blastbeats, and guttural vocals—no bullshit, no soundbites, no wasted time, just good, solid grind. KAUOLÉ has a sound that is tight and definitely reminds me of Earache material from the late '90s, while SUBSCUM is a bit more gritty and had me recalling BATHTUB SHIT-TER. Definitely a fun recording and worth checking out.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Acid Redux Productions / Grindfather / No Name Distro / No Time

KING SLENDER – There is Your Image in Light LP

The kids these days have done a really solid job categorizing the different eras of emocore, and while I'm not really sure which generation this sound falls into, I am a sucker for the proto-screamo, dissonant chord, artsy form of the genre like BOYS LIFE, CAR VS. DRIVER, and INDIAN SUMMER. KING



SLENDER also scratches that itch, sounding very much like early PIEBALD before they started incorporating melody into their music. I know that the Midwestern noodly emo sound has held the spotlight for quite some time at this point, but this style has always been the "true" emo in my opinion. This is a fantastic record, and you need to check it out if you're into the aforementioned bands.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Tor Johnson

LIFE EXPECTANCY – Sold cassette

To say that this is a noisy recording is an understatement, and this is coming from a fan of crasher crust who owns the full ZYANOSE discography. I had not heard of LIFE EXPECTANCY, but after reading the "crasher" tag and seeing they were from Liverpool, I was curious to say the least. And what a listen it proves to be. This band is certainly not for those of us who like tunes in their punk. *Sold* makes most contemporary crust bands sound like the EAGLES. I have to admit that I struggled to complete the first round, but once I understood what LIFE EXPECTANCY was up to, looking to crank up the noise and indeed push it to the limit, I started to appreciate them more. The band clearly strives to experiment with the traditional formula with more rough noise, a hypnotic atmosphere with a seemingly endless D-beat, evil possessed vocals, and overall more challenge for the listener in an already challenging genre. So yeah, probably not the ideal Christmas gift for you nephew. Beside the usual suspects, I am reminded of Japanese bands like DEATH DUST EXTRACTOR, late ABRAHAM CROSS, or late TRUTH OF ARISE, because they experimented with and added to the Japanese crust blueprints in their own way. Maybe vintage ANTISECT moving to Kyushu in the mid-'80s and also getting into satanism? This sort of thing. I salute the daring wall of noise that I personally get and enjoy, but I believe few will.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Iron Lung

LISTERINE – Listerine LP

Eleven tracks of skull-cracking hardcore punk from Paris with no frills, only the good stuff. LISTERINE takes the No Way Records catalogue (think GOVERNMENT WARNING) and adds a heaping scoop of Italian hardcore (think WRETCHED), ending up with something strikingly close to contemporaries GOLPE. If, like me, all of these names excite you, this will be right up your alley.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Nunchakupunk / Tranzophobia / Vapaa Päivä

