



THE COUNTERFORCE

HARDCORE PUNK UNDERGROUND

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What is this? **The Counterforce** is an initiative to push back against the corporate capture of hardcore punk. Social media apps and streaming platforms dominate how we interact online, including how we share and distribute our music and ideas. The corporations that run these platforms extract massive profits from us, which they use to fund and facilitate exploitation, war, and genocide. Meanwhile, our independent and underground alternatives have eroded.

The goal of The Counterforce is to strengthen and grow the hardcore punk underground that still exists outside of this corporate capture. Rather than funnel punk into profit-driven walled gardens, we want to foment and encourage a culture that is autonomous and independent. This is not just a nostalgic, backward-facing project—we want to explore new alternatives for spreading hardcore punk online and offline.

You are reading issue #7 of the print version of The Counterforce.

Find the files to print and distribute this zine (and others like it) yourself online at <https://the-counterforce.org>

There, you will also find the other arms of The Counterforce:

A WEB ZINE

This site publishes reviews, letters, scene reports, profiles/interviews, rants, and how-to guides, all with an emphasis on projects that try to exist outside of corporate platforms.

In part, we hope this will encourage human-driven curation, recommendation, and discovery. Find out about new bands that aren't on the streaming sites. Submit a review of your own band. Compile a scene report or show review and send it in. We also publish articles and DIY how-to guides to help empower other punks to build and participate in a scene that's less centered around evil apps.

All this is published online, but also compiled into regular print zine editions to bring paper back to the punk show (like the version you are reading now).

A DIRECTORY OF SIMILARLY ALIGNED PROJECTS

The Internet is breaking down. Websites outside of a handful of apps have slowly disappeared, and the ones that are still out there are harder and harder to find.

The Counterforce provides a directory of these websites: blogs, archives, distros, zines, radio shows and podcasts... anywhere hardcore punk can be found online (and maybe offline too!).

A PLACE TO EXPERIMENT WITH AND LEARN ABOUT ALTERNATIVES

It's easy to shit on the corporate social media and streaming platforms, but what other options are there? There are alternatives and we try them out—public online show calendars, open-source social media, self-hosted music sharing—and encourage other punks to join us.



THE COUNTERFORCE IS A DISTRIBUTED AND COMMUNITY PROJECT

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If sending us something other than a letter (like a record/tape for review) from **outside Canada** you must **indicate it has a declared value under \$20**. Otherwise, Canada will apply duties and taxes which we cannot afford to pay!

PRINT THIS ZINE

This zine is available on our website as a PDF you can print out and distribute yourself, with more coming soon.

ZINE REVIEWS



Crash-Test Magazine (May and June 2025)

I came across this zine in a distro in Lille, which is quite close to Brussels where the zine is based. Crash-Test is zine of anarchy and punk, with many contributors. It was one of my best discoveries of tour. Crash-Test has been going since December 2024, steadily putting out an issue every month. Issues are often based on a theme (May was "Sports" and the July issue was "Drugs"). They also put their PDFs online so anyone can print and distribute the zine (as do we here at The Counterforce) following a Print It Yourself principle. And like us, they have an editorial policy against listing Instagram handles in their pages.

I should mention that being based in Brussels, the zine is in French. Here are their principles:

Les balises actuelles (libre d'interprétations et d'évolutions) :

- Punk (quoi qu'on en dise)
- Anar (quoi qu'on en pense)
- Noir et Blanc (quoi qu'il en coûte)
- Format A4 plié (quoi que)
- Pas de lien insta individuel (ya pas de quoi)

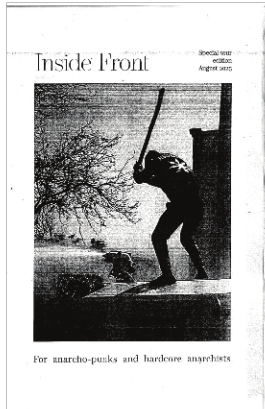
Translated to my best ability:

- Punk (what we say)
- Anarchy (what we think)
- Black and White (what it takes [to make, since it's a photocopy zine])
- A4 folded (what is it [A4 is the European paper size])
- No Instagram links (no worries)

Perfect!!

Most of the content in these issues is in the overlap of the punk and anarchist scenes (a much bigger overlap in Europe). There are record reviews, reportbacks from demos and bookfairs, show and event listings, essays, interviews with punk/political collectives, euh-roscofes, much more from many contributors. If you live in a French-speaking place I encourage you to start printing out and distroing Crash-Test at shows!

—Martin Force



Inside Front (special tour edition)

Inside Front was essentially a early/proto Crimethinc. zine from the 90s, put out as late as 2003 (back when Crimethinc. was really punk).

I had a small amount of overlap with Inside Front's original run, but somehow I never encountered in the wild at the time. I started going to shows in 2000 and I would grab any punk/hardcore zine I came across at shows (or anywhere else — I remember getting a copy of Punk Planet at the local magazine store sometime before I'd even been to my first punk show). There was also a lot of Crimethinc. stuff tabled at the early shows I went to, and I dunno if Crimethinc. is really cringe now but I was definitely one of those kids who graduated from ANTI-FLAG lyrics to Crimethinc. books in my earliest political trajectory. But Inside Front never made it up to my part of Canada with the rest of the Crimethinc. stuff, I guess.

So I've never read a copy in-situ, just browsed the archived issues online (10-14 were posted by Crimethinc. with a little retrospective, and the rest appear on archive.org except Issue 3 which is noticeably missing!!).

Anyways, CATHARSIS (essentially the Crimethinc. house band) is back in 2025 with a new LP Hope Against Hope and with an upcoming tour, Inside Front is apparently also back for a "special tour edition."

The cover says "For anarcho punks and hardcore anarchists" and I could just stop the review right there. This might be the epitome of "perfect zine" for me. The first non-meta content is "Like Weeds — A Dialogue about HIS HERO IS GONE's Timeless Anthem" in which two thinkers trade increasingly deep and heady observations and anecdotes about the song and it's context (even more impressive when you realize both parties are almost certainly completely sober).

There's also a relatable story about an EXTREME NOISE TERROR CD triggering scrutiny at the US border, a show review from someone's first hardcore show ever, top-10 lists, a few reviews, ideas for a Stateless Fair, and a pair of parallel accounts from fighters in the Syrian civil war bonding over a Czechoslovakian hardcore song they all happened to know, and the struggle to finally download and listen to the song in the middle of a war zone.

It feels like a special and unique zine, since it draws on energy built up over 20+ years since the last issue. I'm not sure if Inside Front will return in a more permanent way, but I hope this issue gets wider distribution than just the CATHARSIS tour so more of you can enjoy it.

—Martin Force

A DIGITAL ZINE DISTRO

Major punk fanzines of the past fell victim to the rising costs of printing and shipping. We publish printable PDFs of our zines online for anyone to print and distribute themselves, and encourage other zinesters to submit their own.

What if instead of shipping zines around the world, any punk anywhere could log on, download some PDFs and scam some copies to have a fully stocked, PWYC zine distro at the next show? Print-It-Yourself!

A HARD LINE AGAINST CONTRIBUTING TO FURTHER CORPORATE CAPTURE OF OUR SUBCULTURE

- No links to Instagram, Spotify, Linktree, Discord, or other corporate platforms.
- No coverage of releases that are on major labels, or only available digitally on corporate streaming platforms.
- Always independent and not-for-profit.

For expanding the hardcore punk mutual aid autonomous zone.

For facilitating human curation and recommendation.

For hardcore punk with context and politics.

Against celebrity, ladder climbers, clout chasers and influencers.

Against the algorithmic flattening of our subculture.

Against the capitalist death machine and the corporate capture of hardcore punk.

Contributors to this issue: Corn, Greg the Builder, Hampton / Earth Girl Tapes, Marginal, Martin Force, P-Lou Free Palestine, Ralph Rivera, Slim and Taylor Joy. Cover + back cover by Stunk. Layout by Taylor Joy.

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John and Miss Bill, double-exposed with the band FAN CLUB (photo by John)

Interview with Cruel Noise

by Taylor Joy

Cruel Noise is a weekly punk radio show that is released as a podcast. Produced by John Villegas (who also currently plays in extremely sick Pittsburgh hardcore punk bands DE RODILLAS and PEACE TALKS), each episode consists of sets of new and old hardcore punk and other underground music interspersed with light banter. Though I've only been listening to Cruel Noise for a fraction of its 361-episode (at time of publishing) run, it's quickly become a highlight of my week AND one of the main ways I learn about and sample new or new-to-me bands that I want to listen to more, tell my friends about, or try to catch live.

Fresh off the chaos of Pittsburgh's notorious Skull Fest, John was kind enough to take the time to answer my questions about the evolution and making of Cruel Noise, finding new music, DIY punk and wanting only the best for our human and animal friends. Queue up a sick record, pour yourself a big glass of water and enjoy The Counterforce's interview with John Villegas.

First of all, how was Skull Fest 2025? Any highlights / favourite bands you saw that people should check out?

Skull Fest was a success, people had fun, bands played, little to no blood was spilled. The majority of my time was spent running around and working but I did get to see some great bands! The stand out sets were LA PREGUNTA, IDEATION, STRESS POSITIONS, THE DARK, FLOWER, and ZORN. A lot of other bands that I saw were as good or better, but I had never seen those particular bands before so they had a greater impact in my human brain. Honorable mention to COMMITMENT from Philly.

that would give it the push into constant rotation. Maybe a rawer recording, or if the vocals sat lower in the mix. The cover art is great and there's a strong enough foundation that I'll tune into future dispatches. (3.5/5)

Released by Neon Taste Records.
—Ralph Rivera



TENSER – Demo

Full disclosure, I actually recorded this demo in 2023. TENSER was a band with a bit of a false start that shared the same practice space as me.

They formed pre-COVID, as early as 2019, initially as a guitar-bass-drums unit searching for a vocalist. Actually, now that I think about it they asked me to sing as well, but I guess I didn't have time. The pandemic derailed the band's full formation, and although they started practicing again eventually the search for a vocalist took a long time. The vocals were definitely recorded much later, by Alex from RIVALED ENVY. There was at least one show booked, I think meant to line up with a tape release, but something happened and they had to drop. Ultimately they disbanded, and sadly this demo is the only thing left behind.

Being made up of former/contemporary members of bands like SUBSIST and MAXXPOWER, TENSER played powerviolence but down-tuned and high-brow. Toronto's THE ENDLESS BLOCKADE is an obvious influence (a cover is included on the tape) and there are also some of the PV prog bass playing codified by bands like GAS CHAMBER. But the riffs are far from derivative or boring, I enjoy these

songs a lot. It's a demo, and we recorded everything but the vocals live, but it still sounds surprisingly good like a complete EP. For example, there is tasteful interstitial harsh-ish noise that helps tie the song together.

If you are into good powerviolence, you'll certainly enjoy this and I hope it will become an important footnote in Canadian PV history rather than just being lost altogether.

Released by Mouth of Madness Tapes.

—Martin Force



THE ESTRANGED – S/T LP

Probably one of the albums I listened the most in the last two years. My friend Juan mentioned them in a tour we were doing around Europe with IRREAL, because I was really obsessed with WIPERS, but I listened too much ALL their albums and I needed something new. His recommendation was surprisingly spot on, THE ESTRANGED covered all my musical needs with a refreshed take on the Portland trio. With an amazing and consistent rhythmic work (same drummer of HELLSHOCK, LEBENDEN TOTEN... and bassist also from HELLSHOCK, FROM ASHES RISE... legends!) and perfect melodic and dark guitar lines complemented with the amazing vocal work, their music fulfills all my desires of a band of that style.

Their previous albums were super good too, but they sound a bit harsher, and the production is not that polished. This one is an absolute perfection of the mix of punk and rock. In my honest opinion it is a masterpiece and I hope they play again someday.

—Marginal



(+39) 375-649-94-64 MY TELEPHONE NUMBER – Album #01

Incredible band name, the most unsearchable moniker since SEX VID. I thoroughly enjoyed the half of this album sonically situated between HEAVY METAL (the band) and the SECRET PROSTITUTES, while the other half is a bit too yolk for my tastes.

Released by Feral Kid Records
—Ralph Rivera

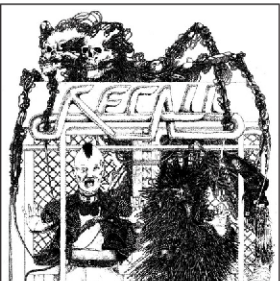


Precipice - Down the Well MLP

A classic case of the label writing hype checks bound to bounce: Precipice does NOT sound like DIE KREUZEN or SPIKE IN VAIN, and so the first pass flopped. The subsequent go 'round revealed a band fully capable of standing on its own two-to-ten legs (possible solo outing? Inconceivable to me, as a singer or bassist by trade). 8 brisk (by European standards) tracks of what I like to call "psycho hardcore."

8 teeth missing and a bruise on the forehead.

Released by Discos Enfermos.
—Ralph Rivera



RECALL - EP

I have loved RECALL since the first time I saw them! I remember listening to the demo tape out of my Sony Sports Walkman at work all the time. I was very excited when I heard an EP was on the way earlier this year.

Released on 7" with 11pm Records and on tapes through Broken Skull, this new release from the freaks is exactly what it should be — a significant evolution of their sound while always staying true to the

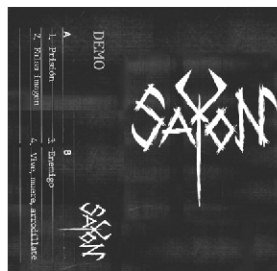
essence of the previous material.

To me RECALL is first and foremost a D-beat band but the influence of early USHC is undeniable. Between the drum assaults and Misery's screams from the sewers, there are some very catchy and sometimes danceable moments that also really caught my attention! I also love how the guitars, even though relentless and abrasive, have a constant harmony that really brings the sound of the band to another level.

Running at a tight 8m15sec there is not a dull moment on this record. I will definitely put this one somewhere in my releases of the year 2025!

FFO: good punk, good hardcore, real shit, anti-capitalism, anarchy

Released by 11pm Records and Broken Skull Records.
—P-Lou Free Palestine



SAYÓN - Demo

Grow your hair! Prepare your necks for the SAYÓN attack! Following an acclaimed debut show a month ago in downtown Barcelona, SAYÓN's demo probably is, for me, one of the most anticipated music releases for this year. I have listened to these SAYÓN tracks a few times and, after an extraordinary rainy season, suddenly this Mediterranean region feels a bit more like Devon, UK, than the nearly desertified landscape (with no bands—no rain) that we had a few years ago. With some AMEBIX-styled vocals and BOLT THROWER Realm Of Chaos era mid tempo riffs (don't worry, there's no double kick!) this demo ticks all the boxes for a metal punk release to be listened on repeat, a kind of

band not very common around here.

Lyrical the song "Prisión" (I think) revolves around the situation in Gaza, "Falsa Imagen" is about fake people and being lost yourself in made up personalities, "Enemigo" is more like a classic anarchist anti authority song with what I feel like a more anti colonialism lean and "¡Vive, Muere, Arrodiolate!" has a sad meaning, about the situation where some people were born in the wrong place, grew up going against the grain and finally were murdered. A sort of memento mori also, since there's no mention to the murder itself, maybe I'm just inventing the meaning (hehe, sorry!).

"Enemigo" is my favorite, it is full of perfect simple riffs along with the blend of Anyella's and Esteban's vocals, in a sort of NAUSEA style. This really evokes the NYC band when Anyella hits that higher pitch lines "rechazo sus ideas, rechazo su división, rechazo su dogmatismo" that after a growled "ENEMIGO" will return to previous riff. Amazing, that's all I need.

I have high expectations on the future of this band, and I hope this demo (to be released by the Colombian label Disordera Records) will end up soon in my hands! Meanwhile we will wait for them to write new music as we have been waiting for the rain, patiently, but excited for the moment it arrives.

—Marginal



SISTEMA OBSOLETO - Esmagado Pela Engrenagem Capitalista 7"

Five high energy, TOTAL-TAR-tinged tracks. Not bad by any means, but it's missing something

How and why did you start making Cruel Noise and what forms has it taken over the years? I've heard you mention that it was an on-air radio show at some point, and that there may be some early episodes lost to the sands of time and internet platform decay... how did you land on the podcast format?

Some friends and I did a pirate radio station for a few years until the FCC shut it down. We simulcasted it online near the end, and when the feds told us "no-no" I decided I was going to figure out how to keep doing it. The first 30-60 episodes were on SoundCloud, and at some point Sony bought SC and deleted a bunch of accounts of people who were playing copyrighted music. It was a minor blow to little old me, but I know there were some bigger DJs who lost a lot of mixes they had on there.

At that point I emailed someone from a podcast I listened to called "Rock and/or Roll" and asked him how he got away with playing music he did not have the rights to on Apple Podcasts and he told me that despite their rules and regulations saying "you cannot play other people's music" they actually don't care. So I found a third party website that uploaded the RSS to all the places that I knew distributed podcasts and never looked back. I considered trying to get on one of the local college stations here in Pittsburgh, but at that time of my life I was drunk, reckless and unreliable and knew I would not (and could not) conform to their collegiate values of what radio should be. Plus I am painfully DIY, probably to my own detriment.

Do you have a process for picking music for or making the show? How is the Cruel veggie-sausage made?

I play a lot of my friends' bands, bands I see on tour, and bands whose tours are coming through town as the starting point. I always try to focus on what is new as the bedrock.

BUT, I am also obsessed with compilations of the first waves of punk and hardcore. "Killed By Death," "Bloodstains," old regional comps like "Are We Too Late For The Trend" & "Cleveland Confidential" that are a snapshot of a time and place and often have a band's only recorded song. You will find other themes in there as well, songs whose titles all share a single word and most often songs all released in the same year often times a 10-, 20-, 30-, 40-year anniversary type scenario.

Part of the goal of The Counterforce is to push back on the algorithmically-driven flattening of punk and hardcore (e.g. the shaping of music to be more conducive to success on platforms like Spotify or YouTube) by encouraging human curation — radio shows being a perfect example of that. I'm wondering if this is something you think or care about, or if it's even part of the motivation for continuing to make the show?

Yes of course! My life was forged by mixtapes and mix CDs. I love the glimpse into someone else's world, a sample of their music taste boiled down into the confines of a media limited by time and/or space. Try as it might, the algorithm does not understand me and cannot predict what it is I want to hear. I know that I cannot do that either, but I hope that out of all the things I throw at the musical wall something sticks and you, the listener, find a new band or bands that you love.

I am obsessed with finding new sounds — tapping my fingers on objects to the annoyance of others, playing my guitar as loud as possible hoping to discover some tone new to me and, most relevant to this, music I have never heard before that

piques my interest. That is where my love of digging for the old music really comes in. I mourn the loss of kbdrecords.com which was a seemingly endless resource for great old bands that were mostly forgotten to time. Once I find some great old punk song, I get excited to share it with people. I never liked gatekeeping, mostly because I was the loser who would be on the other end of the situation. It doesn't make sense to bully people because I was bullied, I believe people should be sharing music and art with each other with as little judgement as possible.

I don't use Spotify but have a love/hate relationship with YouTube. I am happy to be some sort of low-level alternative to the corporate music model.

Other than that, what else keeps you motivated to keep making the show?

I really, really love punk, I want everyone else to have a chance to listen to the music that I think is great. Through playing in bands and touring I have seen so many great bands and met a lot of good people and I want to share their music as far and wide as I possibly can. Also doing the podcast helps keep me motivated to listen to newly-released music. I am a nerd who is obsessed with music and I just want to share it with people. There is so much out there that flies under the radar and I hope by cosigning a band, song, label, etc., that you will give them a chance.

When I started listening to the show regularly, the thing that sold me on it was not just the music selection, but also your encouragement to "support the bands by going to see them live, buying their records and telling your friends about them," which is something you say pretty much every episode. It's a breath of fresh air to hear this, in a time when we are more often prompted to follow or stream bands on various hostile corporate apps to support them. Why do you feel like its important to emphasize that every episode? Has this always been a directive/pseudo-tagline of the show, or did it develop somewhere along the way?

I do not remember when I started saying that but it is in the same spirit as "Now go start your own band!", something that is seemingly salient but also impactful. It probably has something to do with me being old and coming up in a time before the corporate structures got their hands on my version of DIY punk. I legitimately want the best for the bands I play because I think they deserve it and going to see them live, buying their records and telling your friends about them is the most direct, unfuckwithable way I can think of to do that. Cut out the middleman, go straight to the source.

On a recent episode, you played a block of songs about not eating animals and talked a bit about being vegan, wondering why it's not as common of a thing as when you were coming up in punk. I found the way you folded it in with your typical light banter about your life, pets, bands, etc, to be pretty chill and non-judgemental but still impactful. As a person with a platform, how do you relate to talking about what's going on in the world or encouraging making choices that line up with ones ethics or politics? And do you see these choices as an integral part of DIY/punk alongside the music?

No one likes being preached to about the things they do or do not do. Through much trial, tribulation and loss I have found that I cannot fix the things I perceive to be problems in others but can only fix the problems in myself and hope that leading by example can show people another possibility. I quit eating meat when I was 15 or 16, I LOVE animals so much and seeing how they suffered on their way to the plate hurt

Wise statements are put in the exact position to trigger different feelings, making you think and ruminate about all the sentences thrown at you.

The performance of words and meanings is improved by the repetitive riffs that are long enough to sound chaotic with constant little variations. Both create a unique atmosphere that is something I haven't listened to before. Every instrument holds an important value in this record, along with the production, but I would like to say the drums are superb. Of course I can't stop thinking about the second LP of ORDEN MUNDIAL (an album I listened to a million times) when listening to this LAME album, but there are some details refined, making the sound of drums unique here.

Delivered by well-known musicians that have been in several acts like ORDEN MUNDIAL, POU, BARRERA, BARCELONA, GLAM, ANTIDOTO, ENAMORADOS... LAME was a good band that has now turned into an excellent punk act with this album.

Released by La Vida Es Un Mus
—Marginal



LOS MONJO – La vida que todos envidian LP

Among the dozens of bands that tried to imitate ESKORBUTO, there's one that stands out over the rest: LOS MONJO. These three brothers and their cousin decided to use their common surname as the name of the band, and formed their already legendary "rock basura" sound from Guadalajara, Mexico.

Their music is passionate, they are not competing to be the fastest

ones. They just expose how fucked up everything is, how every city is a pile of trash that should explode but at the same time is our home. Anyone who understands what they are saying will feel the urge to destroy everything around them.

My favorite track from this album is "Decepción", a refined word to express the anger they put in the lyrics of this song against the state of Mexico. If a song could kill, this one would have cut in half all the government, police, judges and every piece of power a state holds.

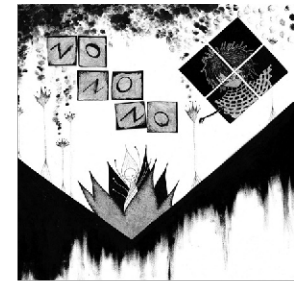
—Marginal



MOTHER NATURE – Loving, Joyful, and Free MLP

Six song (sigh) 12" from Leeds' MOTHER NATURE. An interesting whole that doesn't quite sound like its purported parts (record labels near and far: gimme vibes, not unattainable subcultural marketing parallels in your write-ups). I'm personally not hearing YDI or COLD SWEAT here, but MN's mix of stompy, burly hardcore and flangey guitar is still a worthwhile listen. Great cover art is a common thread stretched 'cross all the records I've reviewed this ish and this one's no different. Imaginary point deducted for lack of Oxford Comma. (3.5/5)

Released by Static Shock Records.
—Ralph Rivera



NO NO NO – No No No LP

Batshit Japanese art punk from a few years back. Contemporaneous reviews cite COMES as a starting point, but "Stop Jap"-era STALIN, smashed up against the "fast but not fast" method pioneered by GAUZE (and, a world away, BAD BRAINS) is more apt.

Listen & choose, reader! Are these references: a) far too on the nose or b) the post-patfall schnoz that is making an FFO list for an unadventurous public?

(5 sick out of 6 nasties)

Released by KikiVilla Records.
—Ralph Rivera



OOVA – CREATURAS DEL SUBCONSCIENTE

A blind listen would have you thinkin' this was a four or five band compilation. While we're mostly talking gruff, tupa tupa type shit, OOVA switches it up stylistically speaking too often to feel cohesive. Don't hate it, but I'm a stickler for vision.

Released by Planeta Destrozado
—Ralph Rivera

that I love certain sub sub sub genres of hardcore, but in the lizard portions of my brain, in the depths of my art punk heart or whatever, there is an unapologetic desire for the mosh.

The demonstrated style doesn't have a better representation than **CORRECTIVE MEASURE**. Fast, angry, and subtle as a fucking hammer. Definition of meat and potatoes, with great breakdowns and no corny bullshit. (5/5)

Released by *Refused Records*
—Ralph Rivera



CRUELSTER – MAKE THEM WONDER WHY

CRUELSTER have spent seven years since their last record carefully assembling an insular world, a model train village with a sniper in the clocktower and a miniature fistfight in the Wal-Mart parking lot.

I've been addicted to CRUELSTER's rabid, fractured, indisputably Cleveland hardcore since the Potatoe Boys LP in 2013, but it's clear from the first proper track "I'm Going to Ukraine" this is a massive level up: the recording quality is crisp and massive, allowing you to catch lines like "I WAS SHOT POINT BLANK IN THE CHEST WITH A RIFLE" in enormous stereo. The messier lo-fi stuff will always have my heartburn, but I really appreciate how much time clearly went into making this record. Songs like "Jerks" and "Nuclear Word" are obvious contenders for big hit repeaters (especially with their insane music videos), but just about all of them could be some other band's best song (I'm personally partial to "Croup" and "Sent Down Youth").

Their songwriting has always been left-field and catchy, but in keeping with the improved production, this is amazing: whip-crack start-stop drums and fearlessly stupid guitar lines, five synthesizer and obnoxious samples, lead singing that alternates between bellowing and being spit through gritted teeth, all backed up by layered gang vocals that make everything feel like an anthem, no matter how obtuse.

On a similar note, maybe we can gaze on the album cover, looking like Bosch's The Garden of Earthly Delights carved into a public school desk, to get a clue as to CRUELSTER's thoughts on our sick society. To my eye, they're a deeply political band from a perspective that feels hyper-modern and refreshing: informed by the internet, scattershot but aggrieved, dripping with the feeling that we're all being screwed. Frantic obsessions with Julian Assange, Belarus, psychic transmissions from the mayor and the history of Egypt make the album feel like a debate exploding in a Call of Duty lobby, a Civil War re-enactor trying to get you into Bitcoin, or those AI Minecraft videos of Family Guy characters talking about BlackRock.

In other words, true American hardcore. Take cover.

Released by *Convulse Records*.
—Corn



FLEAS OF MERCY – The 8th of May 12"

A-regular, asymmetric, a-okay!

Slot 'em in a mixtape rock block twixt CHRONOPHAGE, DESPERATE BICYCLES, MD, or STRAW MAN ARMY. 5/5

Released by *Stucco Label*
—Ralph Rivera

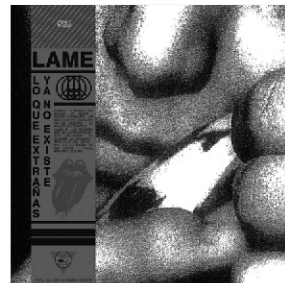


HOMEMADE SPEED – Faster Is Better 7"

Coulda been a bad day, coulda been the 1,000th Caves cover art in a calendar year, but it seemed HOMEMADE SPEED lost something between that manic live footage that initially blipped my radar and the first spin of "Faster Is Better." It felt domesticated.

Last week's revisit revealed the idiot genius I knew they had in 'em: bandanas, dumb crew vocals, & 8 tracks that hit like lost cuts from the "Cleanse the Bacteria" and "No Core" comps. (7.5/10)

Released by *Not For The Weak Records*
—Ralph Rivera



LAME – Lo Que Extrañas Ya No Existe

"What You Miss Does Not Exist Anymore," such a powerful statement is the title of an amazing album by the London – Mallorca – Berlin band that destroys your ears with the new twist of the "Sonido Balear" and the "Extremo Nihilismo". The vocals are an evident distinctive feature of this band, where Sally throws dozens of words per second in a game of symbolic meanings and double intentions that collapses your mind.

me so bad that it was a no-brainer to become a vegetarian. Veganism seemed to be the logical next step on my journey. The title of the FLUX OF PINK INDIANS album "Strive To Survive Causing the Least Amount of Suffering Possible" really resonates with me and I think about it often.

A theory I have toyed with as to why punks don't care about veganism or animal rights so much anymore is that:

1. "Karens" have taken veganism and made it "cringe"
2. Western culture and social media have pushed the agenda of "ME," making everyone the star of their own show to the detriment of others.

This is a very broad strokes version of unfinished, probably unprovable idea(s).

I don't want to be preachy. I don't want to be judgmental of people. These are things that I have been trying to tamp down in myself in a more concerted effort since becoming sober in 2019. It is hard to not be an asshole about things you really believe in when you are faced with people who have opposing views. I struggle with it all the time. Personally I think punk, ethics and politics are all inextricably linked BUT I know that it is not reasonable for me to expect everyone else to think the same. To some people it is just a party. I want to be mad at them for not doing what I perceive to be "THE RIGHT THING" but I know I have done the wrong thing a lot and hope they can find their way to it sooner than later.

At the end of the day the podcast is about music, the talking is secondary. I am happy to share my opinion(s), no matter how incomplete or misinformed with anyone who asks for it, but I don't see it as my place to force it down anyone's throat.

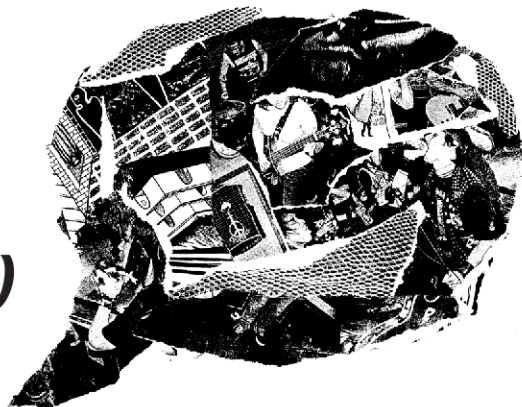
Do you have any tips for people who might want to start making a radio show?

I think if someone feels compelled to do a radio show or podcast they should absolutely do it. It is easy and you can do it for cheap or free. There are hundreds of guides on how to do it online, and if there are questions I could answer you can email me at john@cruelnoiserecords.com.

You can subscribe to *Cruel Noise* on your podcast app or RSS reader of choice, or visit cruelnoiserecords.com for links to everything. 📻

Signal for Punks (It has Stories now!)

by Martin Force



INTRODUCTION

I've been using Signal for at least 10 years, it's long been the best way to reach me. A few years ago, I started using the Signal Stories feature, mostly as an experiment. At first, I didn't know anyone else using Signal Stories, and I wasn't even sure if any of my friends were seeing the show flyers, clips of bands, and local groundhog sightings I was sharing.

Now, several years later, my circle of punk friends using Signal Stories has grown substantially. I keep up with a lot of my distant and local friends via Signal Stories and people regularly ask me how to use them. I don't think Signal is perfect, and I don't personally love the "Stories" format of social media, but it's clearly something that works for a lot of people.

Here I'll present Signal as a good alternative to the corporate social media platforms. One of the broader goals of The Counterforce is to help move hardcore punk culture away from corporate social media apps like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. So this is going to be a guide for punks on how to get started using Signal and Signal Stories.

As "social media," Signal Stories are great for sharing stuff relatively safely with a private audience that you control. For broadcasting information to a more public audience, (like promoting shows, bands and projects) I think alternative social networks like **Mastodon/The Fediverse** are better suited. Check out our Guide to Mastodon and The Fediverse (For Punks!) for much more about that.

Signal

Signal is an *end-to-end* encrypted messaging app for phones and computers originally designed by anarchist hackers and now operated by the USA-based non-profit Signal Foundation. Being a non-profit foundation, Signal's ultimate goal is to provide secure messaging for its users, **not** to create value for shareholders at the expense of its users' privacy and experience. There are **no ads**, and in over 10 years of using it extensively I think I've received maybe 1 or 2 spam messages.

"End-to-end encrypted" means that messages sent with Signal can't be read by anyone except by the sender and the receiver. The Signal Foundation, and all the various Internet pipes and servers that are used to transmit your messages, can't read them. Signal is open source, which means that independent experts look through the source code for bugs or errors.

The Signal encryption protocol is so well designed, it is widely considered the gold standard. Other applications which offer encrypted messaging just copy the Signal protocol, although that doesn't mean these apps are as good or as secure as Signal. Besides the encryption, Signal is carefully designed to minimize any other kinds of data ("metadata") that is generated through your usage of the app (for example, who you are messaging and when, what groups you are a member of, etc.).

SUBMIT PHYSICAL RELEASES FOR REVIEW BY MAIL:

The Counterforce
PO box 25072
Montreal RPO Villeneuve
4547 Boul Saint-Laurent
Montreal, QC
H2T 1R0
CANADA

*if sending us something other than a letter (like a record/tape for review) from **outside Canada** you must **indicate it has a declared value under \$20**. Otherwise, Canada will apply duties and taxes which we cannot afford to pay!

what I've heard and read about how it was recorded, I think the band took their time with these songs. Hope Against Hope isn't a whole new sound for CATHARSIS. It's still their tasteful blend of crust and hardcore, but I think these songs lean a little more hardcore sounding than the older records.

There are tempo changes in the right places, softer parts, build ups, anthemic fast parts, blasts, and tasteful leads. There's even violin. All keeping these songs, half of which go longer than 5 minutes or more from getting boring. These songs don't pass you by, letting you sit with them. A record that with repeat listens you start to have favorite parts in different songs. There is a part in the middle of Eremocene that I get excited for every time it starts.

I think you can hear subtle hints of the bands that came after CATHARSIS, like REQUIEM and even UNDYING, in these songs. All the instruments are perfectly balanced and sound good. Brian's voice sounds great, which to be honest I was not sure would be the case. There are times over the past 15 years when it did not seem like his voice was able to hold up live from the years of screaming. After the first 2 or 3 listens I was prepared to say that the additional vocals on Power, which I will call operatic because I don't know the right word to call them, were not for me, but they grew on me and I genuinely love how they sound on the song. Lyrically, again, this record is nothing new for CATHARSIS, which is to say they are thoughtful and interesting. The only exception being the opening track, Nocturne, whose repeated lyrics "The darkness before the dawn, it just goes on and on" left me wanting a little more.

In a time when we are flush with punk bands whose anarchist politics feel more of an aesthetic companion to their music instead of their music being an expression of those politics, CATHARSIS continues to remain earnest and sincere in their beliefs, making it as important to the band as the songs.

This record was genuinely a wonderful surprise. The day it was released I got to chat with so many friends about how much we liked it. I'm not going to make the grandiose statement that punk needed this record, but I will say that I'm glad it exists.

—Greg the Builder



CAUSTIC – Demo 2025 CS

Haven't heard a band so effortlessly channel the spirit of 80s hardcore punk without sounding hopelessly derivative in a long time. No vocal delay, chunky guitars, xeroxed to shit cover art, and I just know there's a "program repeats both sides" disclaimer somewhere.

Unadulterated and unspoiled by algorithm slop bullshit, I hope I never see this band on the summer punk fest circuit.

Released by Slow Death Records
— Ralph Rivera



COLD MEAT – Cake and Arse Party 7"

Five years after the release of their "Hot & Flustered" LP, these nazty rockers have returned from the depths of the Perth abyss. While I enjoyed that release, it didn't resonate quite so deeply as their "Pork Sword Fever" 7".

Never fear, their latest 5 song slab is a return to form: trebly 2 minute rants that vibrate on the same frequency as "Penis Envy," the PETTICOATS Peel Session, or the ENDTABLES. What a great year for punk art, thanks for da Meaty contribution. (4.5/5)

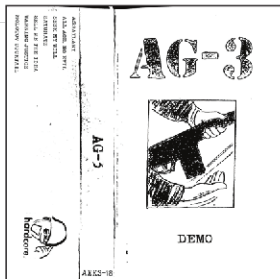
Released by Static Shock Records
—Ralph Rivera



CORRECTIVE MEASURE – Not For You Not For Anyone 12"

Investigating my daily listening habits, it ain't immediately apparent

REVIEWS



AG-3 – Demo CS

Fuckkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkk-
kkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkk-
kkkkkkkkkkkkkkkk.

Big time five out of five.

Unmitigated banger.

FFO: that hardcore punk shit.

Released by Brainrotter Records
—Ralph Rivera



ATENTADO – Todo está oscuro EP

A short EP of just 5 songs that sound like a demo (non derogatory). The name ('everything is dark') is a good description of what can be found in these tracks: cave-sound music featuring members that later would be part of DESTINO FINAL, GLAM, etc. The vocals are harsh and together with the also very dark lyrical themes they create a sensation of oppression, intensified by the mid tempo riffs and their kind of noisy production.

Its important to also recognize the powerful art that comes with the EP! Such a dark composition that continues the concept of the title. Lovely gem from Barcelona that I think you should know.

—Marginal



AYUCABA – Operación Masacre

I still need to get this piece of plastic, but it makes me so happy to see how this group of people got together, in this city, and worked so hard on such a great album. After a demo only released as a tape and not available online on purpose, I thought the LP would also be an obscure punk gem that only "the chosen ones" would be able to listen to, but it seems it has been released everywhere, which makes me very happy.

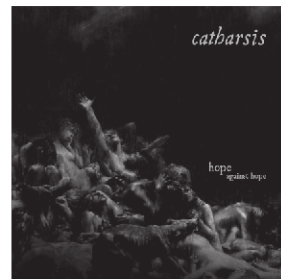
"Operación Masacre" is not the fastest album, but it also doesn't rely on these mid-tempo fashions that we see all over the punk planet. The general vibe is a big love for Japanese hardcore punk; from the vocals to the instrumental melodies, there's an epic vibe normally associated with "burning spirits" bands, while many other riffs are like super fast NWOBHM riffs, in what resembles the style of THE EXECUTE. The guitars are fantastically put together: they did a big step up here from the past, coordinating perfectly the two six-string axe swords with solos, little harmonics here and there, and a beautiful production that also

helps a lot on this. When the vocals are not on top, the guitars take the space, and perfect drums and bass fill the whole space.

In my opinion, drums are especially good on these ten tracks, delivering the needed violent feeling for this type of music, but with such a good taste. There's tons of technical stuff, but then there are parts that are more classic fitting perfectly in these songs. On the other hand, the bass is a bit behind the whole mix. You can spot it the whole time, but on a personal level, it would be great to feel it a bit louder or more consistent.

Overall a very good album reflecting the state of punk in Barcelona, where we have amazing bands releasing extreme music.

Released by Educacion Cineca
-Marginal



CATHARSIS – Hope Against Hope

When I woke up on August 1st, 2025, I did not expect to be surprised with the first CATHARSIS record in 24 years. I may have actually asked myself "is this the same CATHARSIS"?

It is, and I gotta say, it's really good. I've had to force myself to listen to other records every couple listens just so I don't burn myself out on Hope Against Hope.

This record feels like it was written with intent and care. Based on

In 2025, you should be using Signal if you are not already. Even if you don't think you "need" the security offered by Signal, you know someone who does. If you or anyone you know might ever have an abortion, take gender-affirming hormones, use drugs, or express outrage at the genocide of the Palestinian people, you should be using Signal.

I understand hesitancy around installing another app to your phone. Consider you could just delete Instagram to make room for Signal! It's likely that more of your friends are already using Signal than you realize, and frankly they are probably your cooler friends. And if you don't have any cool friends, well, using Signal might help!

Signal “alternatives”

Many people already use similar apps like WhatsApp or Telegram (hello readers outside North America!). WhatsApp is operated by Meta (who owns Facebook/Instagram), so using that app keeps you in Zuckerberg's Meta ecosystem of hell. Telegram is widely considered quite *insecure*, and is operated out of the UAE. Both these apps harvest as much of your data as they can, and share it with advertisers, data brokers and law enforcement/government agencies (happily and at every opportunity).

Signal is a much better and safer alternative to these apps, and it has all the same features you need (and it doesn't have an AI chatbot shoved into it).

SIGNAL BASICS

Getting started

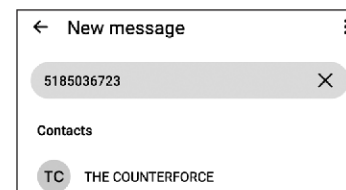
Signal is available for Android and iOS. You need a phone number and a smart phone to use it.

There are also Desktop versions for Linux, MacOS and Windows, but the app needs to be installed on a phone first before syncing with other devices.

Adding contacts

A Signal contact is basically anyone you have exchanged direct messages with in the past (and haven't subsequently blocked). Signal calls it "Connections."

Signal allows users to find each other based on phone number by default, and many people leave this feature on since it can make it easier to find people you know on the app. If a Signal user has this turned on, you can just start a new message and enter their phone number, and Signal will find them. If you give Signal access to your phone contacts when you install it, it will also automatically add any users whose phone number you have and who have left this feature on.



Signal Connections are people you've chosen to trust, either by:

- Starting a chat
- Accepting a message request
- Having them in your phone contacts

Your connections can see your name and photo, and can see posts to My Story unless you hide it from them.

However, you can disable this feature so people **can't** find you by your phone number. I recommend doing this, and these days many people do turn it off. It stops, for example, your boss or your landlord from finding you on Signal. I'll show you how to do this later.

Without phone numbers, you add other people using their Signal **username** or a QR code / contact link.

Signal usernames

Signal lets you set a Display name (the name that shows up in chats) alongside a profile pic, which is what people see when they're chatting with you. But Signal ****usernames**** are what you share with other people so they can add you on Signal. The username consists of a word + a random number – for example, the current Signal username for The Counterforce is: **counterforce.99**

You can only have one valid Signal username at a time. This gives you a bit more control over who can find you on Signal.

To set or change your Signal username, go to Settings and then click on your profile pic and display name at the top.

In addition to connecting via username, you can also generate a QR code or link that someone can use to add you. On the same Settings screen, you can generate a Signal contact QR code or link. You can share these with anyone you want to find you on Signal.

Groups

Signal groups work like group chats on other apps like WhatsApp or Instagram. No more Instagram band chats or gear threads! We have progressed beyond the need for Instagram gear threads!!

Other users in groups you're in do not become a Signal Contact unless you exchange direct messages with them. So you can be in group chats with relative strangers, and they can see your Signal profile but you won't see each other's Signal Stories unless you first message them directly.

SIGNAL STORIES

OK, yes, Signal has Stories that work like Stories in other apps. You can share a short video (<30 seconds) or an image. You can draw on or add text or stickers to the image. You can share just a text-based Story (and include a link!). Stories are visible to your contacts in a Stories feed for 24 hours and then they disappear.

Signal offers better privacy, both because Signal itself can't see your Stories (it isn't censoring your stories, training AIs on them, etc.) and because you have a lot of control over who can see your stories (more on that below). Also did we mention there are NO ADS, and no algorithmic promotion of some stories over others?

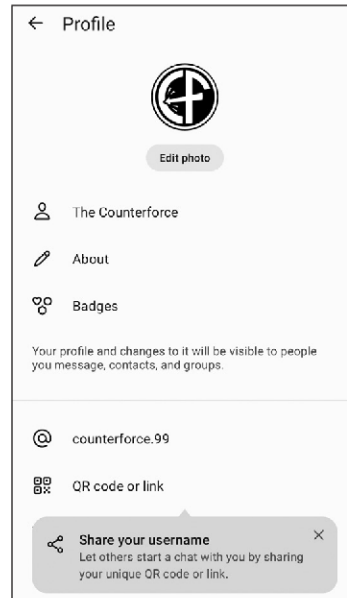
Once you start using Signal Stories, you'll probably discover a bunch of your friends already are, and if you stick with it more will follow your lead!

← Stories

Turn on stories
Share and view stories from others. Stories automatically disappear after 24 hours.

Turn it on!

If you've been using Signal for a while, you may need to turn on Stories. Go to Settings -> Stories to do this. Now you'll start seeing Stories from your Signal contacts (if you have any cool friends).



My advice: if you're planning a tour, skip Nashville and play Murfreesboro. Its just south of it. Check out COFFEE STAIN from Jacksonville, CERVIX, CONFUSION'S PRINCE, BORN and SNAKE CHURCH from Birmingham, PILL BOX from Indy, MISANDRY from Murfreesboro, and a bunch of other bands I didn't see because that room was filled to the brim of sick youth punks of all different styles and vibes getting wild for all these bands.

Now the 6+ hour drive home at 1am, that's a different (much more boring and bleak) story. I will spare you... 🤖

CERVIX (top) and SNAKE CHURCH (bottom) by Robert Swann





BAD ANXIETY by Robert Swann

20 minutes standing around doing nothing the cops left. Once again, props to the people living in the home for making sure the rest of the show-goers didn't interact with the police and stayed away.

With the final cop car rolling down the road away from the house, BAD ANXIETY continued. Kinda hard to regain momentum for a set after 20 minutes of police presence but we tried the best we could. Had another situation where someone moshed into all the amps knocking them and the PA over. It took another 5+ minutes to get everything set back up. The cosmos did not want us to play this set, but we continued on and made it work.

Spent the rest of the night watching sick Birmingham and Jacksonville bands. Bull-shitting with old friends, meeting new friends, and having multiple conversations with different groups about how Everything Is Not Okay 4.5 was a letdown. Was nice to hear I'm not the only one with big thoughts on that particular fest.

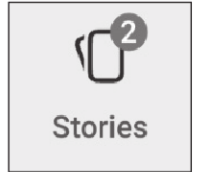
The true miracle was the moment the last band finished people started leaving. The property was a mess of dirt roads and trees, so I ended up being the main person directing traffic, helping get all the cars outta there. Thirty minutes later, our vehicle was free and we crammed while we still could. The party kept going for a while. I'm sure you could still hear the whippet canisters hit the ground during sunrise.

For a fest that I thought was gonna be forgettable and filled with insufferable idiots, I had a blast and was severely proven wrong. Gluesniffer was a celebration of hardcore punk and debauchery. Every band was awesome and kept their set times shorts, we got paid more than enough and much more than we expected, met a lot of new people, and got to play sick punk music and shoot silly string with my friends. What more can ya ask for.

Show me the Stories

Once you have Stories turned on, you'll start seeing them here. It's not very intrusive. Just a little red dot to tell you how many new stories there are. I usually check my Signal Stories once per day at most!

Posting your own stories is pretty intuitive. To save space I'm not going to get too into it.



Story Privacy

Signal allows you to create many different Stories which are seen only by different groups of your contacts.

My Story is the default. You can choose different ways to restrict who can see it:

- **All your Signal connections:** (anyone you've ever directly messaged on Signal – not people you are just in a group with)
- **All except...** (hide your story from specific people)
- **Only share with...** (only share with selected people)

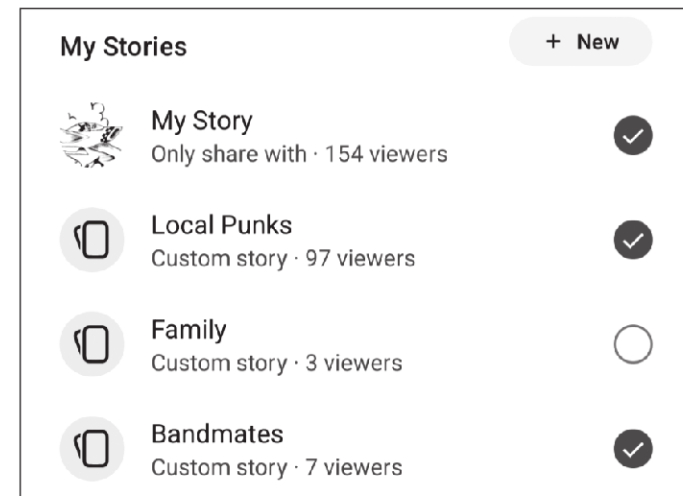
You can also create as many additional Stories as you like. For each one, you can decide who will be able to see it (as in "Only share with..." for the default My Story).

I have the default **My Story** set to "Only share with selected people" and I select only my close IRL friends.

I also have a Story for **Local Punks** that is shared with all the local punks I know (even people I'm not close with), for sharing show flyers and such.

Other stories I have are **Family** (got the whole family group chat on Signal!) and **Bandmates** for all my bandmates.

When you create a new Story post, you can select which of your Stories to send it to. Additionally, you can send it to any group chats you are in, and the Story will show up as a special Group Story for all the other members of those groups.



Keeping Stories up to date

First, a recap from earlier on how to add new contacts to Signal. To be able to view each other's Signal Stories, you and a friend must be Signal Contacts, so you first have to exchange a direct message. Being in a group chat together isn't enough! If you want "add someone on Signal" to start swapping Stories, you can start a new direct message with them by:

- composing a new message to their phone number (if they have that feature enabled)
- composing a new message to their Signal username (e.g. **counterforce.99**) – via their Signal Link/QR code.

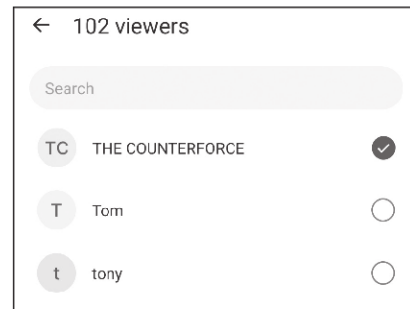
Get into the habit of asking for a Signal username (instead of an Instagram handle!) when you meet someone new you want to stay in touch with.



Whenever I get a new Signal contact, I go back to the Story Privacy settings (go to the Stories tab, and click the 3 little dots in the top right to get to Story Privacy) and open up the settings for the Story I want to add them to.

I search for the new person's display name to add them to my story. This is also where you can just scroll through and add or remove people from a Story.

People can't see which of your Stories you've added them to. For each Story, you can choose whether people can react or reply to your posts.



It's not the best interface for managing who can see which Story, but it's not too bad. And you have a lot more control and options than what Instagram gives you. Or just YOLO and let every Signal contact see all your stories...

BONUS: USING SIGNAL MORE SECURELY

If you are interested in leveraging Signal's encryption and secure design to keep you safe out there, there are a few tips to using Signal in a secure way.

First off, Signal is about as good as it gets for a secure messaging app that is also easy to use. It hasn't been hacked and it is not a CIA op. There are often viral claims or news articles about Signal being hacked or insecure, and thus far they have always been wrong.

Use disappearing messages

- Turn them on by default and adjust as necessary (you can set a different disappearing message timer for each 1-on-1 conversation or group chat). For example, if you are going to share a password or some other sensitive information, set the disappearing message timer to something really short!
- Leave and delete groups when they are no longer necessary.



SIL0 KIDS (top) and BAD ANXIETY (bottom) by Robert Swann

song in though, people ran in screaming and freaking out from outside and snatched the mic from me: apparently at least five cop cars had pulled up to the house.

Props to the people living in the house, they handled the situation as well as one could ask for. Moved people out of sight, didn't let the police come in. The cops tried to assure us they were "cool," saying that we can "keep smoking weed or whatever we don't care." The situation was that a "punk" looking person had stolen stuff from the dollar store down the road. Never heard a follow up to if any of that was true, but after

HAPPY BIRTHDAY DREW CROSS LET'S PARTY AT GLUESNIFFER FEST MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE



All the bands were hardcore punk bands. Genre-wise there wasn't much going on but for it being just one big show it didn't matter much. The room was decent size for a regular show, but filled up real quick for this big gig. Missed many of the bands simply because I couldn't get in the room.

Eventually SILO KIDS took the stage. I was filling in on drums and we were playing a shortened set. The vocalist of SILO KIDS, Patty, got their start in DIY from shows at CXR when they previously lived in the area, so playing this show meant a lot to them. The set was awesome. To all of our surprise, people knew the songs, sang along, moshed, and the reception was killer. It was boiling hot in that room. The extra fan we brought didn't exactly help but we had to try. BAD ANXIETY hit the stage (floor) next, broke out the silly string and party supplies. Things were bumping, shit was rocking. Second

Hide your phone number

- Settings -> Privacy -> Phone number
- Set "Who can see my number" to "Nobody"
- Set "Who can find me by number" to "Nobody"

This will prevent unwanted people (like your landlord or a delivery guy) from contacting you on Signal. Your Signal contacts also won't be able to find out your actual phone number unless you choose to share it with them.

- People will have to use your Signal username or link to add you.

Video/voice calls

- Signal calls are also encrypted, but if you are having a call with someone who is one of your Signal contacts already, the call is peer-to-peer which means they could determine your IP address.
- You can turn this off by choosing "Always relay calls" in Settings -> Privacy -> Advanced- Notifications
- You can customize how much information is displayed in Signal notifications on your lock screen. By default, the name and contents of messages are shown, so anyone looking at your locked phone can see them (and if you have a cursed phone with an AI assistant, the AI can probably read these notifications too)
- You turn this off in Settings -> Notifications -> Show

Signal's security is only as good as your security. Signal can't protect you if you add an enemy to a group chat by mistake, or if your phone is stolen and the thieves can unlock it.

If you want to read more about how to keep your phone activity safe in general, check out this zine: <https://distro.f-91w.club/keeping-safe/>

MY SECRET SECURE MESSAGING APP IS BETTER THAN SIGNAL!

OK, so you are some kind of reply-guy and you are dying to tell me about a messenger app that is "more secure" than even Signal?

My goal here is to demonstrate an app that is accessible to my punk friends, already widely used, and has the features people want. Signal isn't perfect, I know. But please don't get in touch to talk about your favorite alternative secure messaging app. I don't want to flex but I can almost guarantee I know more about secure messaging apps than you do, I've already heard about whatever app you think is better than Signal!

ADD THE COUNTERFORCE ON SIGNAL!

As of this writing, the Signal username of The Counterforce's is **counterforce.99**

Add us and send a message if you want to try out Signal, test out stories, or have any questions. Or for submissions, suggestions, hate/love letters, etc!! Thanks for reading. ☺



Years ago I meet a stranger in a dark bar in Montreal's Pointe-Saint-Charles neighborhood. Six years later, after many lessons, sprays and a wild chase, I am interviewing my friend and legend Listen.

He started us off:

Listen: I want to see everybody's graffiti, you wanna talk about anarchism that's the spirit of the medium. It's pretty diluted these days, you can look on YouTube for tutorials or whatever.

If you have a can and a surface, anything that you and I see in the public realm, even it's defined private property, it's still public space.

I wish there was a more public conversation. Not we've decreed this a legal wall. More like those who want to paint in the public eye can have access to the space.

Slim: Is that why you do the bird?

I guess so. You know when you do something for so long that it morphs into this habitual thing? Imagine you're cooking for yourself and you like cooking macaroni and cheese or vegan sushi. You get into the routine and because you do it enough, you put enough time in, you get really good at doing that one thing. It's out of habit, not the intention of mastery.

You're pushing multiple directions, there's one that becomes easier so you continue that way because there's less obstacles and it gets reduced to "now I'm drawing a fucking bird on shit."

It's a disarming image. I remember sitting in a park in St Henri next to the railroad tracks. This 6 year old is running around and points to a box I painted and is like "hey Dad it's the bird guy again."

CONFUSION'S PRINCE by Robert Swann



Gluesniffer Fest Reportback

by Hampton / Earth Girl Tapes

Over the years the Murfreesboro, Tennessee, USA scene has developed a bit of a reputation. Potentially wild gigs, lawless youth, the occasional bleakness that comes with punk houses, and at the end of the night you get paid 17 wet dollars. Last time BAD ANXIETY and SILO KIDS tried to play Murfreesboro they canceled the show on us (reasons still remain unclear), and we only found out through an Instagram post the day-of. All that being said I didn't have high hopes for "Gluesniffer Fest."

BAD ANXIETY and SILO KIDS rolled out in early AM to make the drive. I was able to convince the folks booking this to let SILO KIDS do a secret set since they were going to be in attendance anyways. Before the gig, BAD ANXIETY stopped off at a dollar store to pick up gig essentials — an oscillating fan, some silly string, and other various party supplies.

The show was at a punk house, The Crossroads or CXR for short. A little outside of town, on a big corner lot with no neighbors in sight. Kinda the perfect setup. The property was deep and allowed for a ton of parking. We parked and immediately realized "oh shit were gonna get boxed in by the folks staying the night." We weren't planning to camp, but depending on the hell that was trying to get out of here we realized we might be forced to.

The show had already started once we arrived. Said "wassup" to some friends and started chilling by the merch tables (my preferred spot.) The whole fest was a real celebration of hardcore from the American southeast — the furthest band was from Indianapolis. As far the eye could see it was a sea of freaky youth punkers. Banjos, a dog or two (never saw them inside when a band played thankfully), big fire pit, a comical number of whippets and other drugs. A punk utopia for certain individuals. Many things I would normally find annoying but the overall vibe to the fest was so positive and fun that it was only a good time. Everyone was taking care of themselves and each other while getting wild to some sick bands.

- As someone else said to me: "Attack Of The Clones." So many bands that all sound like the exact same breed of current cookie-cutter hardcore punk. Shit I love, but when everyone sounds the same, looks the same, and all plays like they're bored to be there... what are we even doing? So many of these bands were a total snore. I don't care how many YouTube views your demo got, if you play like you're bored and don't want to be there then I won't care at all. Just an overall lack of diversity. Every other band was a Charlotte, NC band of kids with rat tails, dangly earrings, and partially bleached hair. Or at least it felt this way. In moderation I can get down with this, but it was all the same. There's so many sick bands currently playing and touring, but it felt so curated to be only specific bands from specific friend groups. I know I'm not exactly breaking from the norm in how I look or how my bands sound, but it was all too much the same. Some of my favorite and memorable sets from years past were the weirdo bands. I think there's a greater statement to be made here about the explosion into the alternative mainstream of 'egg punk' and then the backlash from the DIY community that has lead to really really boring bands that try to be dark edgy and sneak boring d-beat riffs into every song.

THE UGLY

- The front person of one of these Charlotte bands throwing out F-slurs and R-slurs and being a drunken idiot into the mic, then half the crowd with half a brain still moshing even though the other half of the crowd is actively coordinating how to handle this situation. These kids showed their asses and I think its time for them to give up this subculture and try something else. Ruined the vibe of the night but also felt like a culmination of the energy all these wannabe edgy cool hardcore bands were bringing the whole weekend.

Maybe it's obvious to see that negatives outweighed the goods. It was clear from everyone who attended this fest in previous years, the past years didn't feel like this. I don't regret traveling and playing and seeing friends. Those parts were awesome. But the experience left me a little more jaded then when I showed up. I knew it couldn't compare to the original run of Everything Is Not Okay, but this entry should be forgotten to time. Even as I'm writing this I'm remembering more negative things. Rumors after the fact how much certain bands were paid compared to others, or that certain bands with known sketchy members were going to play.

The fest was clearly not as well attended as many thought it would be. Makes sense with how insular the bands playing felt. I have nothing but love for the scene and people of Oklahoma City. Could I book a better fest? Doubtful, I'd rather not even try. I can't blame anyone for going back to the well on this idea either.

I encourage anyone touring through middle America to play in OKC. The scene isn't huge but it's a scene of people who give a fuck. Something worth much more. Some of my favorite shows I've ever played have been there. I won't blame the OKC scene for this slight flub of a fest. Check out their locals bands. PRIMAL BRAIN, ROCKSTAR NIGHTCLUB, and probably tons more that I'm less familiar with. Bands that aren't afraid to do things a little differently and can have fun while being creative. 🌐

This is why, THIS IS WHY.

Unintentionally, because I pushed this image, I made things more simplistic in terms of a street throw up. I can pull it off in a few minutes, which is nice for major cities. To hear a child be stoked on it, that's pretty encouraging.

What's the largest bird you've painted?

If this one wasn't the biggest it was top 5 for sure. This photo is from a while after it was painted, the ground was full of debris and rubble when I painted it. But yeah, this building burned down on the corner and the location and texture of the wall was too good to not paint. I only had a few days in town, and I was obsessed with the spot. I asked around to see if anyone would lend me an extension ladder since I didn't travel with my own, lol. No one would lend me one so I had to get my hands on one somehow. At the time the Home Depot had a garden centre with an area with a lower fence around the skids full of soil and fertilizer. I had put several baskets of paint there before and come back after a few hours to scoop em. So I had two nights left in town, I thought I would grab this ladder and leave it by the soil and lower-fenced zone. However when I got to that area it was fully closed off. Maybe too late in the day or whatever...

So I was thinking maybe I could just walk out with it or something but then it hit me I could use the ladder to get out. I fully extended the ladder out of view of cameras. I was expecting a worker to come assist me but it was a ghost town in there. So I leaned the ladder against the third level of bricks. No one came so I pulled up the ladder and put it on the other side of the fence. That same evening I painted the wall. My good friend Barfo was down and he and his dog kept six across the street. I stopped for every car that drove by which was a workout, I was in better shape back then. Not sure if it's legible from the photo but I quoted a FUGAZI song because I'm a huge dork.



I feel like everyone talks about how St. Henri [neighbourhood in Montréal] has changed a lot. Care to weigh in on the change you saw during your long term residence in that neighbourhood?

I haven't been there in a few years but it feels to me like a typical trajectory of gentrification.

Working class neighbourhood with cheap rent. Outsiders move in for affordability (myself included). Real estate speculators buy the buildings. While new businesses pop up to cater to new residents. Then the new (and sometimes older) landlords jack up the rent across the board. Business associations up their fees to fund the smoother flow of capital. The city increases taxes to pay for new promenades that lubricate the flow of capital. All of this pushes people out of the neighbourhood.

It's a clear reflection of the values of those in power. Whatever is good for business is good.

No concern for quality of life, the inner workings of a neighbourhood, the history, the people who built the neighbourhood.

When the cycle is complete the majority of the people there have no clue what came before. They are there for the facade, the shell of the former lively community, to cosplay in an idea they have that is transposed onto the place itself.

In Montreal the process is slowed down by tenants rights organizations and co-ops, activities that make it uncomfortable for the movement of capital. Sometimes in Quebec this comes down to language. Businesses don't want to operate in Quebec because of language laws.

Short answer is: way she goes.

In your time writing graffiti have you experienced much of an attitude shift in the subculture?

I think I started early 2000s, first thing I painted was when I was like 8yrs old or something. It was with a chrome fan cap on the concrete outdoor stairwell of my childhood home. I wrote "secret hideout" with an arrow pointing toward the spider-ridden woodpile under the back deck. I got in shit when my dad found this but he also laughed at the irony of pointing an arrow towards a "secret hideout."

Attitudes towards graffiti have shifted drastically. I used to rack books from Chapters and sell them at a used bookstore a block away from the Chapters. Make \$100 selling art books or whatever.

At the time I was doing that there was maybe one or two books about graffiti on the shelf at Chapters. A few years later half of the art section was "graffiti and street art." I wanna say by mid to late 2000s, there was a bit of a bandwagon publishing books about graffiti.

What's the best moment you've had with graffiti and what's the worst moment you've had with graffiti?

Every time I paint becomes the best moment I've had painting. I like to try new things when painting and I'm building on what I've done before, so the moment that I'm painting is a culmination of a lifetime of work.



EINOK 4 1/2 Reportback

by Hampton / Earth Girl Tapes

For four years, Everything Is Not Okay in Oklahoma City, USA was a legendary punk outing for the freaks of Hattiesburg. The last year of the fest was in 2019. We would drive 12+ hours through some of the most boring parts of the country to see some of the best bands at the time. I hold those memories very near and dear to my heart. When EINOK 4.5 was announced for May 9/10 2025 and my band JUDY AND THE JERKS was asked to play, we knew we had to say yes and bring a whole squad with us. We went, we played and we all came to the same conclusion: some things need to stay dead.

THE GOOD

- Got to see so many friends I hadn't seen since pre-Covid, and was able to introduce old friends to new friends. Shoot the shit on the old days and also got up to some new antics with buds. Rolling 20 deep into Lee's Sandwiches will always be a highlight. These fests are essentially family reunions. Unlike my actual family reunions, I really value being able to get friends from across the country together to kick it.
- Some really cool bands. The lineup didn't really 'wow' me but some acts did really get my attention. Some classics like WICCANS, NEGATIVE DECREE, ARMOR. Bands you can count on to deliver. PRIMAL BRAIN from OKC was an insane blast. The JUDY set was a ton of fun, silly string and a saxophone is always a winning combo. ROCKSTAR NIGHTCLUB, an OKC local was the standout for me. Younger kids, having fun, all wearing different colored ponchos, not playing generic hardcore punk, everyone was smiling. My kinda shit. BORN from Birmingham played the best set I've ever seen them play.

THE BAD

- It felt like every band took so long to set up, get their gear sorted — all momentum was lost in between bands. At the matinee show we played, there was some power issues at the venue, making the show last easily twice as long. By the time JUDY played, half the crowd had left since the show ran so long. So many bands had to break in between songs and tune, at every show it was like this. It was wild how little gusto there was anywhere.



JUDY AND THE JERKS by Garrett Fisbeck



The worst times I've had is getting caught up in someone else's bad decisions. There's a tendency when a group of writers get together to compete to do the most impulsive audacious act. It's annoying at best and has landed me in some shitty scenarios by proximity.

Do you have a goal or finish line? Or do you believe in the unwinnable race?

Great question. There is no race, no goal, I'm not competing. There is a physicality to painting, but it's not a sport.

My attitude has definitely changed in the past 20 or so years. Initially, I think my intention was to communicate to people. That something else was possible, to break the cycle of capitalism in a way that I was good at. After getting attention from stuff I had painted and seeing the public discussion, I shifted into a more destructive direction.

Eventually I settled into realizing the act itself was enough and I can't control how it's interpreted. It became a fun way to interact with my surroundings. While still showing that laws for property are unimportant, hopefully make people laugh, or change the way they see their surroundings.

I guess to boil it down, my intent is to be an anti-capitalist force. Up until very recently I stole all of my supplies, would only sell my art for anarchist fundraisers, etc.

I think it's cool that you buy cans now, you put in infinite hours over so many years. There has to be a time when comfort is a goal.

For sure, I still would rather rack paint. The store credit thing is much more difficult now though.

I'm not sure how much paint I've acquired for free, but for a couple decades I didn't pay for coffee beans. I would get quality beans averaging \$15 a pound. I'd go through 3 lbs a month maybe? So over 240 months that's \$10,000 worth of coffee. One pound at a time.

I think it's important to note that was never a goal or milestone. It is just a result of daily push-back.

It's funny trying to transition things that you do obsessively into activities you do when you are feelin' it.

Definitely, there's an effect that generations of manufactured scarcity has on an individual. The behaviour is kind of like, if I don't do everything and anything right now, it will be gone tomorrow.

Then if there's a surplus, no one wants to do anything. It's interesting how these systems can effect an individual's behaviour

One real example: where I work, our break room has some basic supplies like coffee, hot chocolate, milk, cream, Gatorade in the summer, etc.

So when we first received the packets of hot chocolate, there was one box of them. It was gone in a day, people hoarded them. Then more boxes were ordered, and more, and more. Then there was a whole closet full of hot chocolate, like 20 boxes. Then no one was interested anymore. We have universal access and a surplus so there's no hoarding.

The tragedy of the commons will only happen when there's a perceived scarcity. This can be applied to other parts of life too, like if you have a bit of spare time there pressure to make it productive. Or a pressure to be the best or to be competitive in whichever activity. That sort of perspective is insatiable.

I guess I'm confused by our existence. We could all be comfortable and have more than enough but instead five multi-billionaires have super yachts and the rest of us are supposed to "hustle" or have three jobs. Or like this Air Canada CEO makes 12 million a year and a striking flight attendant makes 35k a year. Also only gets paid for time in the air.

Something fundamental has to change. I started adding "???" To everything I paint now because things have gone so sideways.

Sorta fucks with our collective imagination as well.

Most systems we live under are broken yet most people see them as a given. When it's all a human invention and we can undo it as well.

Speaking of which I gotta go to work soon!

I heard one summer you did a rooftop campaign. I love walking on Parc/St Joseph tryna' catch a peek of the roof with Jaroe.

Yeah I wanted to paint spots that hadn't been painted before, so I tried to paint a bunch of stuff like that. Not sure how many I did but it was fun.

Who are some writers that you don't know personally who've influenced you? And who are the writers that you know personally that have influenced you?

There was someone who wrote phrases and signed it – boy, most small town elaborate graffiti something an alienated weirdo metal head would paint. Random SLAYER tags as well and in terms of actual technique I can say seeing ribity throw ups got me to move more in that direction.

I guess anyone I've spent enough time painting with has rubbed off. Kind of a long list at this point but yeah anyone who has been a consistent painting partner. There's a level of trust involved when someone is keeping six for you and a dynamic that has to work.

Did you ever think you'd do graffiti long term? Have you ever thought of quitting?

I never considered stopping, at the same time I never thought I would be doing it this infrequently either. 🌐

