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# "Through the Roof and Underground": Translocal Hardcore Punk in Los Angeles and Ljubljana

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"THROUGH THE ROOF AND UNDERGROUND":

TRANSLOCAL HARDCORE PUNK IN LOS ANGELES AND LJUBLJANA

by

MINDY L. CLEGG

Under the direction of Michelle Brattain

ABSTRACT

Punk moved from a marginal subculture to an underground counter-culture -- hardcore punk -- which shared musical culture and sense of a communal identity. Local punk scenes grew, in part due to attention from mass media. New kids in the scene brought new tensions and attracted the attention of authorities. Two police incidents signaled a shift in the punks' view of themselves. I examine two punk scenes from 1975 to 1985 in Los Angeles, USA and Ljubljana, Yugoslavia by looking at newspapers, television programs, fanzines, music, and clothing. I show that a loosely connected group of individuals, self-identified as punk, became increasingly similar as the parent cultures put increasing pressure on punks.

Index Words: History, 20th century, Punk, Rock, Los Angeles, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Cold War, Popular culture, Counter-culture

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TRANSLOCAL HARDCORE PUNK IN LOS ANGELES AND LJUBLJANA

by

MINDY L. CLEGG

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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Georgia State University

2010

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2010

**DEDICATION**

To Rome and Fiona.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Punk rock as it came to be understood in the 1980s -- translocal hardcore punk -- did not evolve from pure underground beginnings free of commercialism. Beginning with an attempt by some music fans to bring rock out of the arena and back to fans, punk eventually emerged as the underground subculture of choice for many young people around the United States and Europe by the 80s. This only occurred after a decade of creating punk via discourse on music and its role in society. Musicians and music fans at the local level appropriated what they were reading about in national underground magazines. Punk scenes evolved in New York, Detroit, London, and Los Angeles, among other places. These scenes began to garner attention, which eventually led to a breaking point. The new attention grew the scenes, but it also had the effect of pushing them ever more towards an insular cultural formation. In the cases of London and Los Angeles (in addition to some bands getting attention from the large record labels) a good deal of negative media attention followed these scenes. Some punks began to show more outwardly aggressive postures. But at the same time punk became more underground and translocal. In other words the action in punk scenes became locally oriented, yet had connections to various other punk counter-publics. These counter-publics were transnational in nature -- carried out across national borders. Punk became a translocal underground counter-culture -- hardcore punk.

In this thesis I will give an overview of two sites of translocal punk. I will argue that punk (rather than being only confined to a localized scene) was a translocal identity formation that



began as a marginal subculture and became an underground transnational counter-culture. Punks crafted their own counter-publics as they increasingly met with resistance from the mainstream culture. This reoriented punks away from their national cultures towards each other, regardless of national origins. In this introduction I will define the terms punk and hardcore punk and highlight a selection of the literature on the subject. In the first chapter I will show how punk evolved in the cities of Los Angeles, U.S.A. and Ljubljana, Yugoslavia. I focus on Los Angeles because the suburbs were home to the earliest -- and arguably the most important -- hardcore bands. Ljubljana is important because it hosted some of the first punk bands in any Socialist state. The pressures put on these early scenes pushed punks in both cities to actively create a shared culture across long distances. These were actively cultivated with American cities like Los Angeles leading the way. In the second and third chapters, I will examine this transition respectively in L.A. and Ljubljana.

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Despite the narrative that we often attribute to punk -- that it began in a single place, these early artists influenced others, and eventually sold out to the major labels or burnt out<sup>1</sup> -- the reality of punk was really a story of the reworking of popular cultural forms in many places. Punk never began as a "pure" subculture, only to be exploited by the mainstream culture industry (rarely does culture operate in this manner). John Leland had a similar critique for popular

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<sup>1</sup> See many popular histories on punk, for example Clinton Heylin, *Babylon's Burning: From Punk to Grunge*, (New York: Canongate, 2007).

perceptions of an earlier American subculture. In his book *Hip: The History* in the chapter on the jazz variant Bop he said, "The story [of the appropriation of black culture by white businessmen] assumes that popular culture begins with Platonic ideal forms, from which descend lesser knockoffs." He went on, "But in practice the musicians, black and white, were more expansive than exclusionary."<sup>2</sup> This proves true for the early punk scene as well. Platonic ideals about punk's pure origins are a bit of a mirage. Those who came to identify as punk focused not on cultural politics but on appropriating and giving new meaning to the language of critics to describe their activities in the cultural realm. In the process, they forged their own underground identity.

Before we examine the literature on punk, we need to understand what is meant by "punk" and "punks." Punk was a concept previously associated with youthful criminality -- a definition it still retains even in reference to modern punk rockers.<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that today's punks are all criminals. Punk now generally refers to one who makes or listens to punk music, though one can listen to punk music and not be a punk. Punk music -- especially hardcore punk music -- tends to be based on early rock music stripped down to the basics. Punk is not just a single genre of music. Here I will discuss two main branches of punk music -- first wave and hardcore. Early, or first wave punks tended to be more experimental with sound and instrumentation. Hardcore punks stuck to more basic rock music played with a harder edge.

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<sup>2</sup> John Leland, *Hip: The History*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004), p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> William Shakespeare used the word "punk" to refer to a female prostitute.

Many punks today tend towards a do-it-yourself (D.I.Y.) ethos. Self-recording, self-producing, and even self-distribution of punk and post-punk music is still common. This extends to other parts of punk life. Being active in the local scene was and still is crucial to punk authenticity. One can set up or promote concerts (known as "gigs") or write and publish a local fanzine (a home made magazine given away or sold at shows or local record shops). Punks often dress within certain parameters. First wave punks tended to dress dramatically, with heavy makeup and bondage gear. Their style was often derived from earlier glam musicians like David Bowie. However, there was nothing uniform across the scenes. Some leaned towards post-glam androgyny, others to a 50s rockabilly look cribbed from Elvis Presley. Eventually, the predominant image of punk was of leather jackets, ripped and pinned thrift store clothing, chains, and spiky hair or Mohawks. Hardcore punks often preferred a t-shirt or work shirt, cut off shorts or jeans, and combat or work boots. Their image tended towards working class styles. Punks have an attitude towards non-punks of outward aggression, though this is often for show. The look and aggressive attitude are part of keeping others out. Most importantly, a punk must self-identify as such. They need the acceptance of their peers as well. These are not hard and fast rules, and the identity of punks changed over time. The most important element other than self-identity and peer acceptance, as Michelle Phillipov reminds us, is a love of punk music.<sup>4</sup>

Over the past decade or so, popular histories of punk have become more common. These

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<sup>4</sup> Michelle Phillipov, "Haunted by the Spirit of '77: Punk Studies and the Persistence of Politics," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3, (September 2006), p. 383 - 393.

works often have competing narratives about what punk is and what it means. One common genre of punk books are oral histories. Books such as *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, *Please Kill Me*, and *American Hardcore: A Tribal History* provide great narrative starting points, as well as primary sources for academics.<sup>5</sup> These books are often geographically focused. *We Got the Neutron Bomb* is an oral history of the Los Angeles punk scene, while *Please Kill Me* is about the New York punk scene. *American Hardcore* covers several major hardcore punk scenes, with a focus on hardcore punk's origins in the United States. Other popular punk histories are memoirs or biographies of individuals or bands within various punk scenes. Brendan Mullen wrote a biography of Darby Crash and The Germs, *Lexicon Devil*.<sup>6</sup> The definitive history of the London punk band The Clash is considered to be Marcus Gray's *The Clash: The Return of the Last Gang in Town*.<sup>7</sup> Joey Keithley of the Vancouver band D.O.A. wrote about his life in a punk band in *I, Shithead: A Life in Punk*.<sup>8</sup> Books such as these are incredibly important in understanding punk as a cultural phenomenon. However, these works betray the bias of the writers and often ignore the larger context of historical processes (not always, though). They also betray economic motives. In a review of Alan Parker's biography of Sex Pistol Sid Vicious, *No*

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<sup>5</sup> Biases inherent in these sorts of works need to be taken into account. Brendan Mullen and Marc Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb: The Untold Story of L.A. Punk*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001). Gillian McCain and Legs McNeil, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*, (New York: Grove Press, 1996). Steven Blush, *American Hardcore: A Tribal History*, (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Don Bolles, Brendan Mullen, and Adam Parfrey, *Lexicon Devil: The Fast Times and Short Life of Darby Crash and The Germs*, (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Marcus Gray, *The Clash: Return of the Last Gang in Town*, (London: Hal Leonard, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Joey Keithley, *I, Shithead: A Life in Punk*, (Vancouver: Arsenal Press, 2003).

*One is Innocent*, British musician Jah Wobble discussed how economic motives were at the heart of these punk nostalgia works. He said of Parker (and others), "Parker is one of the coterie of blokes that eke out a living by stripping the last remains from the carcass of punk."<sup>9</sup> Some attempt to reach an academic audience by examining punk in a larger historical context. *Lipstick Traces* by Greil Marcus was one such book.<sup>10</sup> With the exception of Marcus' book, most of these do not make an overall argument about punk historically. They are more concerned with the events than with their meaning.

Punk in academia is not new. In *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige attempted to make an argument about the left-leaning radical intentions of punks. It was one of the earliest punk studies. In this work, the punk subculture signaled disaffection from society with inverted signs from straight culture. Hebdige argued that, "The meaning of subculture is, then, always in dispute, and style is the area in which the opposing definitions clash with most dramatic force."<sup>11</sup> Hebdige examined style as a means to understand cultural rebellion. This study -- while providing a strong argument about punks in the British context -- can be found wanting. Hebdige assumed political motives of punks -- and a certain purity of those motives -- and ignored those who saw an economic opportunity in punk music. There was little from punks

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<sup>9</sup> Jah Wobble, "Sid Vicious: No One is Innocent, by Alan Parker," *The Independent*, Sunday June 17, 2007, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/sid-vicious-no-one-is-innocent-by-alan-parker-452965.html> (accessed July 14, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, (London: Routledge, 1987), p. 3.

themselves. Meaning was written onto these young men and women by Hebdige rather than them expressing their view of what it meant. Not long after Hebdige's book, sociologist Simon Frith also examined punk in his study on rock and youth *Sound Effects*.<sup>12</sup> Frith examined the consumption of rock music by youths as a sociological phenomenon. His view of punk generally echoed Hebdige. He coded punk as a leftist rebellion against market forces. These academic studies of punk provided a good starting point for thinking about punk in a scholarly context. However, both works assumed that punk was a Platonic ideal that was appropriated by the mainstream entertainment industry -- in other words, the mainstream media were always racing to catch up to these clever outsiders. This was not always the case.

More recently, historians have begun to examine punk as a historical event. Two particular studies are worth examining here. In Dewar MacLeod's dissertation on hardcore punk in the Los Angeles suburbs, "'Kids of the Black Hole': Youth Culture in Postsuburbia", this youthful subculture was the key to understanding changes in city-suburban dynamic in the 1970s. According to MacLeod hardcore punk was a "mutant offspring" of British punk, and became a "postsuburban, middle class, and social phenomenon."<sup>13</sup> MacLeod brings together the media, youth culture, and the often stultifying postsuburban landscape of the late 1970s to explain the rise of hardcore punk in Southern California. This study was fiercely local in focus.

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<sup>12</sup> Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

<sup>13</sup> Dewar MacLeod, "'Kids of the Black Hole': Youth Culture in Postsuburbia," (Ph.D. Diss., The City University of New York, 1998), p. iv - v.

Hardcore punks turned inward toward the local scene, but their orientation towards punks elsewhere does not play into MacLeod's work very much. While the understanding of punk in L.A. needs the local context, its interaction with other cities is likewise important; I would like to illustrate how the local scenes connected to one another and how fundamental this was to punk identity in the early 1980s. Montgomery Wolf expanded the focus to American punks more generally in "'We Accept You, One of Us?': Punk Rock, Community, and Individualism in an Uncertain Era, 1974 - 1985." In this study punk was positioned as a means of expressing individuality and as a challenge to the hegemonic music industry of the day. The period of "disillusionment and discontent in post-Vietnam, post-Watergate America" is key to understanding Wolf's view of punk in American culture.<sup>14</sup> Wolf's study takes three major punk scenes into account: New York, Los Angeles, and Washington D.C. None of these scenes evolved completely independently; perhaps we can say they "co-evolved". The focus is squarely on punks in America, with a gesture towards the British punk scene. The local story is important, but the interaction between Anglo-American punks and other punks matters as well.

In this study, I will show that punks were communicating across national boundaries, forging a translocal identity. This extends beyond the Anglo-American context and even outside the West. The work I will do here will add to these previous attempts to understand punk as a social and historical phenomenon. Punk has no pure meaning; rather the term has been

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<sup>14</sup> M. Montgomery Wolf, "'We Accept You, One of Us?': Punk Rock, Community, and Individualism in an Uncertain Era, 1974 - 1985," (Ph.D. Diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007), p. 7.

appropriated in various places, and has become somewhat of a pastiche -- taking on different meanings depending on who deploys it. The word continues to have meaning today within both the punk underground as well as mainstream culture.

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Punks were not just in the West, but in the Communist East as well. The background of rock and punk culture in Socialist countries has thus far been understood in a different way than punk and rock in the West. Most studies focus on the role of the state as opposed to the punks themselves. Unlike in the West -- where the state and industry are imagined to be completely independent entities -- the state in the Eastern Bloc had a much more obvious role in the production of culture. In general, rock (and later punk) proved to be popular with kids in the Communist bloc countries. Contrary to the "iron curtain" rhetoric often used in reference to the Cold War, culture moved between the two worlds. First, we should look at the literature on rock and punk in the Communist world.

Timothy W. Ryback -- most well known for his books on the Third Reich -- engaged this topic towards the end of the Cold War. In his account of rock in the Communist states, he positioned the repression of rock music and culture as attacks on individual freedoms. This has been a popular view of rock and punk in the Communist world.<sup>15</sup> In Ryback's configuration rock culture represents American consumer culture. Embracing rock music was coded as an embrace

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<sup>15</sup> Timothy W. Ryback, *Rock Around the Block: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, 1954 - 1988*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).



of the American political and economic system. It is perhaps correct to say that rock was rebellion against the establishment -- for some at least. However, the roots of the rebellion might not always indicate a rejection of Socialism (and a corresponding embrace of Capitalism). The question was never either-or. It might just signal disaffection or even just a love of music -- nothing more, nothing less. Ryback, like others, focused on the state as the main actor in the story of rock and punk in the Communist world. However, a monomaniacal focus on the state will not get us to an understanding of why this kind of music was embraced in the first place. As Simon Frith reminded us, "rock meanings aren't determined by their commercial means of production."<sup>16</sup> Why young people embraced rock is just as important as the state's reaction to rock culture.

Not much English language scholarship exists of rock and punk in Yugoslavia. Several scholars of the Balkans have written on the topic since the break-up of Yugoslavia. Political Scientist Sabrina Ramet has for the most part dominated the discussion. Not surprisingly, Ramet sees rock and punk culture through the lens of politics. Ramet engaged the topic of punk in the Communist world in a 1984 article on punks in East Germany, "Disaffection and Dissent in East Germany." In that article, Ramet described punks as retreating "into counter-culture... which will in turn sustain their deviance and reinforce their disaffection."<sup>17</sup> Punk culture represented, "An

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<sup>16</sup> Frith, *Sound Effects*, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> Pedro Ramet, "Disaffection and Dissent in East Germany," *World Politics*, Vol 37, No. 1, October 1984, p. 87. Pedro and Sabrina Ramet are one and the same person.

anti-establishment pose in which, in the East German context, Marxism-Leninism, the S.E.D., and the entire program of resocialization are rejected as foolish irrelevancies at best." Ramet quoted one punk who said, "I am against Germaness. The German for me is a petit bourgeois and a philistine by nature. I am bothered by the whole pretense, by this mask which is there but no one removes."<sup>18</sup> This punk put his social disaffection in terms of the language of the state -- Marxist-Leninism. But this is also something a West German punk might have said, this rejection of German constructedness. We do well to remember here William S. Burroughs's famous dictum, "Language is a virus from outer space." The language we speak in our modern world is all too often the code of the powerful. In order to gain traction in the world, we will speak and act in that code. This punk here spoke in the language of power while he placed himself in opposition to that power.

Others have examined punk in East Germany. Recently on the news blog *The Daily Beast*, writer Tim Mohr dealt specifically with punks in East Berlin. In the article Mohr wondered if punk played an important part of the fall of the Berlin wall. Mohr claimed that underground music "played a key role in fomenting and steeling opposition in the country throughout the 1980s." Punks did not start playing in East Berlin until 1981. The first show was attended by 100 or so punks. Mohr stated that punks numbered about 1000 and with "10,000 sympathizers", according to the state. A state crackdown followed the arrival of punk and it was

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<sup>18</sup> Ramet, "Disaffection and Dissent in East Germany," p. 93.

this action which politicized the scene. The East German secret police -- the Stasi, or Ministry for State Security -- were involved by the end of the year; an indication of the perceived seriousness of the problem. Interestingly, local churches provided shelter for punks and it was here that punks met with others who had political aims against the state. According to Mohr, this further reinforced the shift to politics. The guitarist for the band Die Anderen stated, "For me personally, I only began to think about that sort of thing once the harassment started.

Politicization was something the Stasi did."<sup>19</sup> Mohr glossed over the fact that punk was made political by the actions of the Stasi. There was nothing inherently political in East German punk itself. It also seems unlikely that punk was responsible for the fall of the Berlin Wall. We would never assume that the rise of punk was responsible for important political developments in the U.S. such as the Iran-Contra Affair or Robert Bork's failed confirmation hearing. Why should we assume that punk played a major part in the fall of Communism?

Ramet more recently examined rock and punk in Yugoslavia. The focus here was more on the recording industry in Yugoslavia (a state run affair) as a means to show how disconnected the various Yugoslav republics were economically after the liberalizing period in the 1960s. During this time, more power devolved into the discrete Communist parties in the federal Republics.<sup>20</sup> Given that it was a Communist system the state control of the media and

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<sup>19</sup> Tim Mohr, "Did Punk Rock Tear down the Wall?" *The Daily Beast*, posted November 8, 2009, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2009-11-08/did-punk-rock-tear-down-the-wall/full/>, (accessed March 29, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> This process is described in detail in Sabrina Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962 - 1991*,

entertainment industries should not surprise us. That being said, state control of the local recording industry did not mean that musicians did not have agency within that structure. The popularity of Western rock in the 1960s led to the release of popular American and British rock bands on a local label.<sup>21</sup> Again, given that Ramet is a political scientist, we should not be surprised on the focus of the role of the state. But as we will see, punks in Yugoslavia were not initially interested in critiquing or interacting with the state. It was not until the death in 1980 of Josip Tito Broz (the leader of the Communist party) that punks were even on the radar of the state and the popular imagination in any meaningful way.

Many view punk and alternative culture in the Yugoslav republic of Slovenia as leading directly to a Slovene "civil society." Jozef Figa stated, "Punk rock was for Slovene youth as manifestation of a discontent with the official ideology and accepted lifestyle. Its impact was rooted in its marginality."<sup>22</sup> The assumption here is that listening to punk was the same as expressing discontent. Listening to music that may have some rebellious content does not equal discontent. Nor does all punk express discontent. Punk (like rock before it) was not initially considered a social threat. It does not seem to become an issue until later, at which point punks move to a more underground posture. Gregor Tomc, a Sociologist at the University of Ljubljana

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(Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), see pgs. 90 -91.

<sup>21</sup> The state run label Jugoton pressed copies of The Beatles's Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band in 1967, see Sabrina Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia From the Death of Tito to Ethnic War*, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1996) p. 94.

<sup>22</sup> Jozef Figa, "Socializing the State: Civil Society and Democratization from Below in Slovenia," in *State-Society Relations in Yugoslavia, 1945 - 1992*, ed. Melissa K. Bokovoy, Jill A. Irvine, and Carol S. Lilly, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 164.

and member of the Ljubljana punk band Pankrti, had a slightly different perspective. Initially punk (much like rock) was tolerated in the late 70s, but eventually became demonized and tied to Nazism.<sup>23</sup> He argued most punks were initially apolitical.<sup>24</sup> The punk scene in Ljubljana (which began to receive attention from authorities much like in L.A.) went through a process of shifting from a marginal subculture to a more insular counter-culture. They reoriented themselves to both the local scene and to other punks around the world. Punk in both places underwent a process of marginality to counter-cultural, eventually creating a more unified translocal underground scene in the 1980s. Even then this shift to a more counter-cultural, underground stance was not always about oppositional politics.

Yugoslavia was similar in many ways to other Communist states in regard to tension over rock. In the Eastern Bloc some states initially adopted policies of toleration within limits. These policies changed over time. Terry Bright examined popular music in the Soviet Union in his article "Soviet Crusade Against Pop." The Soviet government attempted to control the creation of music. The government in Moscow issued permits for professional bands and amateurs registered at the local level. Bright estimated that some 40,000 musicians were not registered in either manner.<sup>25</sup> Bright viewed this system of registration as interfering with the natural course

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<sup>23</sup> Gregor Tomc, "The Politics of Punk," in *Independent Slovenia: Origins, Movements, Prospects*, ed. Jill Benderly and Evan Kraft, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 117.

<sup>24</sup> Tomc, "The Politics of Punk," p. 120.

<sup>25</sup> Terry Bright, "Soviet Crusade Against Pop," *Popular Music*, Vol. 5, Continuity and Change, 1985, p. 123. Where he gets these numbers for the unregistered bands is unclear. This number could include musicians who had no intention of playing for an audience or of recording albums.

of art. Professional bands had their songs written by sanctioned composers, had all live performances closely monitored, and according to Bright, "were created by the state agencies (beginning in 1968) as a counterbalance to the growth in amateur bands."<sup>26</sup> He argued that amateur bands evolved "organically" outside the interference of the state. In addition, some of these Soviet "independent" bands were eventually co-opted by the state in the hopes of eliminating any subversive ideological elements. A backlash occurred with a change in regime, and these bands eventually were purged for lack of ideological purity.<sup>27</sup> In Bright's narrative a clear division existed between state sanctioned bands and these "organic" rock bands. In doing so, he glossed over possible manipulation of the state apparatus by musicians. As these earlier rock bands were eventually normalized or gave up the game of amateur rock, punk and new wave emerged as a particularly tough challenge to the party. Bright said that punk shows were never accepted and were literally underground, often playing in the subways as a means to evade authority.<sup>28</sup> Bright asserts that rock and punk was never fully acceptable in the Soviet Union. However his narrative leaves no room for the various motives of those who self-identified as rock fans or punks, nor does he take class into account. Those who had access to Western goods might have been in a more privileged position. Despite his assertion that he was interested in the "authenticity" of Soviet rock bands, he refused to acknowledge the activities of Soviet bands

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<sup>26</sup> Bright, "Soviet Crusade Against Pop," *Popular Music*, p. 124.

<sup>27</sup> Bright, "Soviet Crusade Against Pop," *Popular Music*, p. 125-6.

<sup>28</sup> Bright, "Soviet Crusade Against Pop," *Popular Music*, p. 132.

within the system as authentic.

Despite the strength of these works, most are an analysis of the state, not social or cultural histories. Looking at punk will help us to better understand how people in both the U.S. and Communist world crafted their identities; and how some looked to each other (rather than a political system or nation-state) for a communal identity. Punks were forming identities based on cultural creation and consumption that crossed national borders. This does not seem as evident when looking at the early punk scenes. As time moved on punks began to more actively seek out the evolving punk counter-publics and resisted attempts of definition from the outside. Some punks abandoned punk as an identity altogether (or were excluded). By the time the early 80s roll around, most punks are plugged into these now transnational counter-publics. The all important "scene report" became the center of crafting a local punk that was considered authentic by others in the translocal scene. Punks, while more insular, became in many ways more democratic. As we will see in the next chapter punks were identifying with one another early on, yet were less uniform and more locally focused. Eventually -- with certain outside pressures -- punks began to turn inward.

## 2. ORIGIN STORIES: PUNK IN 1970s LOS ANGELES AND LJUBLJANA

Most cite Detroit, New York, and London as the epicenters of first wave punk. L.A. proved just as relevant to the early history of punk. In fact, the punk scenes in New York and London might have taken a different trajectory if it had not been for two music fans from California.

The idea of punk did not begin as a localized project of musicians. Punk culture became a shared culture early in the 70s thanks to the various critics who defined the term relative to music. Greg Shaw and Lester Bangs -- two music critics often credited with helping to set parameters for what "punk rock" meant in popular culture -- did not intend to create a social movement.<sup>29</sup> Both found themselves deeply unsatisfied with the mainstream rock culture which dominated the music industry and the AM airwaves. In their minds rock as a viable rebel youth culture was dying. Their discourse helped to create an underground music scene, but not the one they imagined. Rather it was one built around the concept of control of the production of music by artists and fans together, and in which the line between performer and fan was blurred and unimportant. Punk became not just a genre of rock music -- where it began in Shaw's and Bang's ramblings -- but an overall identity.

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<sup>29</sup> Marcus Gray takes exception to Lester Bangs, at least, being responsible for the term punk being used as a term to describe a certain kind of music. See Marcus Gray, "Babylon is Burning: From Punk to Grunge: Clinton Heylin," *Trakmarx*, issue 30 [http://www.trakmarx.com/2007\\_03/05-mg.html](http://www.trakmarx.com/2007_03/05-mg.html) (accessed March 27, 2010). Some disagree about how important they were, but it seems clear that many were influenced by Bangs and Shaw, even if they were not the first to use punk to describe music.



Shaw wanted nothing less than a fan takeover of the industry to suit his own taste. He believed that music in the early 70s had become boring and safe. As a young teenager, Shaw was a part of science fiction fandom culture (sci-fi fandom). Science fiction writer Robert Coulson in the introduction to the book *Science Fiction Fandom* said, "[S]cience-fiction fandom involved more than reading magazines and writing letters to the editor." He pointed to the well known slogan, "Fandom is a way of life". There are hundreds of conventions (some of which attract over 100,000 people yearly - most notably the *San Diego Comic-Con* in July) and numerous fan run magazines. Coulson states that fandom often "dominates one's social life."<sup>30</sup> Being a fan means being part of a larger community tied to cultural consumption. Shaw, with deep ties to sci-fi fandom, saw music in similar terms.<sup>31</sup> Shaw embraced techniques he learned in sci-fi fandom to promote rock music as a fandom community.

Shaw's music fanzines -- *Mojo Navigator* and *Who Put the Bomp! or Bomp!* -- proved fundamental to spreading the early discourse on punk. This was not his goal. His core motivation was to create a powerful music fandom to shape the music industry. He said of music of the time, "There was nothing!" Instead of a hindrance, this proved motivational to Shaw. He said, "But out of this came my notion (Dave Marsh might call it a 'dialectic') that a few big labels, and

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<sup>30</sup> Robert Coulson, "Fandom as a Way of Life," *Science Fiction Fandom*, ed. Joe Sanders, (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Lisa Fancher, founder of the punk/post-punk label based in Los Angeles, Frontier Records, says of Shaw: "...he was just as interested in science fiction [as he was music], and had somehow accumulated thousands of pulp magazines dating back to the 1920s." Mick Farren, "Introduction," *Bomp!: Saving the World One Record at a Time*, ed by Mick Farren and Suzy Shaw, (Los Angeles: American Modern Books, 2007), p. 17.

the spread of 'Top 40' radio, worked to trivialize the fan. *Bomp! Magazine* began promoting the idea that we, the fans, might become enough of a power bloc to support the kind of music we liked, in a kind of alternative economy."<sup>32</sup> One finds little discussion of the role of musicians here, other than as an object of fan attention. Shaw saw no real delineation between musicians and the industry, even within his language of an "alternative economy." This contrasted with later hardcore punks. Their focus tended to be on the creation of a common community based on both identity and music, with a blurring between performer and fan. Despite this disconnect between Shaw's stated aims and later hardcore punk, his work proved important to laying the early punk ethos. *Mojo Navigator* -- a San Francisco zine published for only a little over a year starting in 1966 -- was local in focus.<sup>33</sup> In 1970, Shaw began to publish the fanzine, *Who Put the Bomp!* (by 1977 it was just known as *Bomp!*). Later punk zines appropriated from earlier zines like *Bomp!*. Zines became an all important counter-public that helped later punks to craft a translocal punk.

If Shaw helped to promote the mechanisms of a counter-public, Lester Bangs helped create the attitudinal stance of punk rock with his writings, which act as a sort of legendary foundational discourse across music criticism today. He freelanced for some national music magazines (most notably *Rolling Stone*) while still in Southern California. He eventually moved

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<sup>32</sup> Greg Shaw, "Who Put the Bomp!", *Bomp!*, p. 91.

<sup>33</sup> *Mojo Navigator* can be read at "Rockmine Archives," *Rockmine*, <http://www.rockmine.com/Archive/Library/Mojo.html> (accessed July 13, 2010).

to Detroit to work for *Creem*. Reading over his body of work, it is easy to see how Bangs' passion for life, music, and his fusion of the two in the written word would inspire others. His stylistic fingers can easily be seen in some of the L.A. punk zines.<sup>34</sup> We can also see how many of the "proto-punk" bands gained that reputation amongst later punks through Bangs' work. As early as 1969, he had begun to throw the word "punk" around. In his unfavorable review of the band MC5 he described the band as "punks,"-- though not in reference to their music; punk here retained its original criminal connotation.<sup>35</sup> He began to use the term differently two years later. In the pages of *Who Put the Bomp!* in 1971 he reviewed the British band The Troggs in article "James Taylor Marked for Death". The band was best known for the song "Wild Thing", a song written and produced by Chip Taylor. Rather than just a review of one album or single, Bangs wrote about the band's entire discography. Over the course of the article, he incorporated punk several times as a descriptor for the band's music and by extension their attitude. For example, he discussed the single, "Gonna Make You". He said of the b-side "I Can't Control Myself," "It opens with a great Iggyish "Ohh, NO!", employs a buckling foundation of boulderlike drums as usual, and takes the Trogg-punk's intents and declarations into a more revealing level." Terms like "agitation and desperation" were employed to highlight the aggressive and sexualized nature

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<sup>34</sup> Compare, for example, Claude Bessy's initial editorial in the first *Slash Magazine* to Bangs' style, reprinted in Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 81-2.

<sup>35</sup> Lester Bangs, "MC5: Kick out The Jams," *Rolling Stone Magazine*, April 5, 1969, np, available at [http://www.rollingstone.com/artists/mc5/albums/album/105316/review/5941601/kick\\_out\\_the\\_jams](http://www.rollingstone.com/artists/mc5/albums/album/105316/review/5941601/kick_out_the_jams) (accessed March 24, 2010).

of the music.<sup>36</sup> It was articles like these which provided a template for bands that would be grandfathered into the newly dubbed "punk genre". Punk music -- as defined here -- was typified by a stripped down style of music and often focused on "teenaged" themes (generally young sexuality).

As the decade moved on, others picked up on the term and ran with it. By the Summer 1974 issue of *Who Put the Bomp!*, Shaw called the band the Standells "...one of the first punk groups, along with the Kingsmen and Raiders." The producer of the album, Ed Cobb, became a "punk pioneer." Interestingly, these bands Shaw grandfathered into punk were often from Southern California.<sup>37</sup> In the next few years, punk became a common term used by music critics. Music critic for *The New York Times*, John Rockwell, said of the band New York Dolls in 1974, "Music is the least concern of the New York Dolls. This is a punk-glitter, latter-day Rolling Stones band that grinds out basic hard rock-blues of an unvarying sameness of volume (loud) and mood (theatrically aggressive)."<sup>38</sup> By 1977, more mainstream national rock magazines like *Rolling Stone* "discovered" punk. The October 20th, 1977 cover of the magazine had a picture of Johnny Rotten of the British band the Sex Pistols.<sup>39</sup> Even former Nixon staff writer William

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<sup>36</sup> Lester Bangs, James Taylor Marked for Death (What We Need is a lot less Jesus and a Whole Lot more Troggs!)", *Who Put the Bomp!*, no 2 Fall/Winter 1971, p 62 -63, reprinted in Farren and Shaw, *Bomp!*, p. 112-113.

<sup>37</sup> Greg Shaw, "Love that Dirty Water: The Standells", *Who Put the Bomp!* No. 12, 1974, p. 6, reprinted in Farren and Shaw, *Bomp!*, p. 136.

<sup>38</sup> John Rockwell, "Rock Concert Given by Elliot Murphy," *The New York Times*, February 19, 1974, p. 24.

<sup>39</sup> See *Rolling Stone*, #250, October 20, 1977.

Safire weighted in on the punk phenomenon in *The New York Times*.<sup>40</sup> By this time punk had passed into mainstream terminology, not as a youthful criminal offender, but as a musical genre. So punk was being used by those who were at least a marginal part of the music industry (music criticism) before young men and women in local scenes began to style themselves as punks in the culture. Punk evolved out of parameters in part defined by these two music fans. This was the root of mass media's various engagements with punk as a concept and where people appropriated the term that, over the next decade, created a web of signification that continues to reverberate today.

Once Shaw and Bangs moved the term punk into circulation amongst music fans, the meaning of punk and the term "new wave" came up for debate within punk circles. New wave refers to music that evolved alongside punk in the 1970s, initially as part of the punk scene. The term was borrowed from French new wave films of the 1960s. The music was experimental, but was not focused on rock purity. Generally, most think of new wave as having arrived on the scene as a safer, corporate friendly alternative to punk rock. In 1979, the hardcore punk band Dead Kennedys wrote a song "Pull My Strings", which incorporated the well known riff from the Knack Song, "My Sharona", the number 1 hit on the billboard charts that year.<sup>41</sup> Dead Kennedys

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<sup>40</sup> In this article on punk, Safire manages to connect punk to the Soviet Union, via Anthony Burgess, author of the novel *A Clockwork Orange*. See William Safire, "Punk's 'Horror Show': Punk is Sweeping the Country," *The New York Times*, June 30, 1977, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> See "1970s Billboard Number One Hits," *Pop Culture Madness*, <http://www.popculturemadness.com/Music/Number-One-Songs-70s.html>, (accessed March 31, 2010).

performed the song at the 1980 Bay Area Music Awards in San Francisco as a protest against corporate co-option of punk in the form of new wave.<sup>42</sup> The lyrics included sarcastic lines such as, "I wanna be a tool/Don't need no soul/Wanna make big money/playing rock and roll."<sup>43</sup> Despite this later antipathy to new wave, earlier self-defined punks were far more ambiguous about the use of both terms. They competed as the term of choice within various scenes and within the industry before "new wave" became the preferred industry standard and "punk" the preferred counter-cultural standard. The terms were often used interchangeably. The San Francisco fanzine *Search and Destroy* used "new wave" more frequently at first and only later deployed "punk" more. This was true of the bands interviewed in the zine. The San Francisco band Crime used rock & roll to describe their music, stating, "[sic] WE NEVER SAY WE ARE PUNKS. WE PLAY ROCK-N-ROLL AND NOISE AND NON-MUSIC, WHATEVER WE FEEL LIKE PLAYING."<sup>44</sup> Vermilion from the band Mary Monday said, "What's this Punk Rock shit?"<sup>45</sup> Clive Live of the band Deaf School did not disavow the use of the term punk, but he did make a distinction between "music business punk bands" and "grass roots" punk bands.<sup>46</sup> The term punk became the preferred underground term when some bands were heavily marketed by

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<sup>42</sup> Dead Kennedys, "Pull My Strings", *Give me Convenience or Give me Death*, Manifesto Records, CD, 1987, MFO 42904. DKS-13.

<sup>43</sup> "Pull My Strings lyrics," *Lyrics Time*, <http://www.lyricstime.com/the-dead-kennedys-pull-my-strings-lyrics.html> (accessed March 31, 2010).

<sup>44</sup> "Crime," *Search and Destroy: # 1 - 6*, p. 4. Capitalization in the original.

<sup>45</sup> "Vermilion Bitches," *Search and Destroy: # 1 - 6*, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> "Clive Live: Deaf School Guitarist," *Search and Destroy: # 1 - 6*, p. 12.

the entertainment industry as new wave. The inside cover of the October of 1977 issue of *Rolling Stone* carried an advertisement for Sire Records' new acts, including New York bands The Ramones, Dead Boys, and Talking Heads. It proudly proclaims, "Don't Call it Punk..." It was in that same issue when the magazine began to engage punk rock as a codified genre. The cover article was "Rock is Sick and Living in London: A Report on the Sex Pistols."<sup>47</sup> John Holstrom, editor of the New York fanzine *Punk*, said of that advertising campaign, the bands that had been signed by Sire Records, and their view of his magazine:

Most of the NYC musicians resented us. They didn't like the idea of the scene being labeled with the 'P-word. Seymour Stein, president of Sire Records who had signed The Ramones, Talking Heads and Dead Boys, even ran a promotional campaign in 1977: "Don't Call It Punk." It appeared on all their letterhead and press releases.<sup>48</sup>

Those that began to self-identify as punk, like Holstrom, began to appropriate the term from critics like Shaw and Bangs, in part due to their interactions with others in the music industry. In Los Angeles, an early punk zine and some L.A. proto-punk bands helped to kick the scene off in the middle of the 1970s. Eventually, this scene was credited with the revival of the Hollywood club circuit for unsigned local bands. The early scene was largely ignored by much of the mainstream music industry for longer than in New York or London.

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<sup>47</sup> See the cover of *Rolling Stone*, No. 250, Oct. 20th 1977. For advertisement see p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Guy DeBored, "John Holstrom-Do You Feel Lucky, PUNK?" *Trakmarx.com: The Needle & The Damage Done*, issue 6, Sept. 2002, [http://www.trakmarx.com/2002\\_04/07holstrome.htm](http://www.trakmarx.com/2002_04/07holstrome.htm) (accessed March 26, 2010).

## "Forming" : First Wave Punk in Los Angeles

Greg Shaw did more than just write zines. He helped to shape the local music scene in L.A. In the early 1970's, Shaw teamed with record producer Kim Fowley to put together the Runaways, an all-teenage-girl rock band. This band proved to be pivotal in the formation of a local punk scene in Hollywood. Shaw ran an ad in the Summer 1974 issue of *Bomp!* looking for "the female Beatles, Stones, Who, Shangri-las of the 1970s!"<sup>49</sup> The Runaways with other local acts such as the Imperial Dogs and the glitter act Zolar X influenced later Hollywood punk bands.<sup>50</sup> Paul Beahm and George Ruthenberg -- later known as Darby Crash and Pat Smear of The Germs -- were big fans of The Runaways. They even showed up at the band's studio once and stated that they wanted to form a band just like The Runaways.<sup>51</sup> This band was not the only formative happening in the L.A. punk scene. Some of the earliest connections were made in the L.A. glitter scene, the American West Coast variant of British glam rock. Kid Congo Powers -- later the guitarist for L.A. punk bands The Gun Club and The Cramps -- had his first encounter with a localized scene hanging out at Rodney Bingenheimer's English Disco. This club was not a punk club. Bingenheimer was aware of glam rock making waves at the time in Great Britain. He rented a building specifically for playing glam music. Bingenheimer said of glam, "In America it

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<sup>49</sup> "Wanted: Four Girls," *Who Put the Bomp!*, no. 12, Summer 1974, p. 16 reprinted in *Bomp!*, p. 178.

<sup>50</sup> For the Imperial Dogs, see for example "South Bay Rock 'n' Roll: Red Asphalt, Atomic Kid, Blind Owl, Spike, Imperial Dogs," *Back Door Man*, Issue 2, p. 6. For Zolar X, see Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 10 and 17.

<sup>51</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 55.



was called glitter rock. It wasn't 'glam'.<sup>52</sup> The first club Bingenheimer opened was "The E Club" with his partner Tom Ayers. He played British glam rock, such as David Bowie, T. Rex, and Slade.<sup>53</sup> This eventually closed and English Disco was opened in another location. Eventually Bingenheimer began to book local bands, including local glitter acts like Zolar X and Berlin Brats. It was here that Powers saw Zolar X perform. According to Powers the club was full of underage kids, some of whom eventually became the first wave punks. He said of his time in that scene, "I was one of those young glitter kids scurrying around like that."<sup>54</sup>

These early encounters with a localized scene organized around music influenced how the L.A. punk scene evolved. Punk bands were generally ignored in L.A. by the national and local major dailies for longer than the New York and London bands. This in many ways proved a boon to these early punks, who had a longer time to perfect their sound and image. Shaw's statement about punk applies even more so to L.A. He said, "[U]ntil about 1979 the industry, radio and major media seemed determined to suppress or ignore punk... leaving a void that *Bomp!* tried to fill." Lack of attention from the mainstream music press did not mean that L.A. was a musical wasteland. Shaw said of the local scene, "By 1977, there was a solid scene in Los Angeles, too, and *Bomp!* recorded [local] bands including The Weirdos, The Germans and The Zeros, as well as Devo."<sup>55</sup> Shaw also connected the local scene with punks from other places

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<sup>52</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 14.

<sup>55</sup> Greg Shaw, "Destination Bomp!", *Bomp!*, p. 94.

quite directly. His *Bomp!* storefront in North Hollywood hosted the British punk band the Damned when they toured the States in 1977. John Denney of The Weirdos and members of The Germs crashed the in store signing, in part to "try and call some attention to ourselves," according to Denney.<sup>56</sup> Others with tentative connections to the mainstream music industry also championed early punk bands, such as Rodney Bingenheimer. Shaw said of him, "Rodney Bingenheimer was practically the first person I met when I arrived in L.A."<sup>57</sup> In addition to the aforementioned club, Bingenheimer had a radio program on the L.A. radio station KROQ starting in 1976. Although he was initially supposed to play glam and glitter rock, he instead played the local bands that he knew around town.<sup>58</sup> Bingenheimer said, "Gary [Bookasta, the founder of the station] wanted me to play glam rock, but as soon as I went on air, from the first show on, in August of '76, I went right into punk."<sup>59</sup> In many ways, Bingenheimer was more important than Shaw to the development of hardcore punk in the suburbs. First wave punk bands like The Germs might not have been heard in these places otherwise.

If music critics initially defined punk, it did not take long for the local scene to appropriate and play with this understanding. It was here that punk began to move toward a participant defined scene. This began before there was a proper punk scene. L.A. had a music

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<sup>56</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 72.

<sup>57</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> The importance of Bingenheimer's show to early L.A. punks was discussed in Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 57 - 62.

<sup>59</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 58.

fanzine by 1975, published by Phast Phreddie Patterson. This fanzine, *Back Door Man*, was an early example of a zine reaching out to a local readership. This localized focus differentiates it from *Bomp!* (but makes it more like Shaw's earlier zine, *Mojo Navigator*). It did have some important similarities with some later L.A. zines *Slash* and *Flipside*, both of which will be discussed later. According to the website where the first two issues are scanned, "It was quite possibly the first music periodical to write about local acts and events as regular editorial policy, a full year before *New York Rocker* and/or *Punk*."<sup>60</sup> Such claims are up for debate as the locally oriented *Mojo Navigator* predates it by almost a decade. *Back Door Man* was the first L.A. zine to focus mostly on local music happenings. The zine was started because of proto-punks playing gigs in L.A. Patterson said, "The Patti Smith show at the Whiskey in November '74 was the catalyst."<sup>61</sup> In the opening editorial in the first issue, Patterson referenced important L.A. music events of 1974. He listed important bands that played that year, including proto-punk from Detroit, Iggy Pop, playing with James Williamson and Ray Manzarek.<sup>62</sup> The article "Talk Talk", written by Doc Savage, (Don Waller) gave a top nine list of bands. He described The New York Dolls as "our favorite punks."<sup>63</sup> The zine also had scene reports. This became a common feature

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<sup>60</sup> "Back Door Man Magazine," *Myspace.com*, <http://www.myspace.com/backdoormanmagazine> (accessed March 24, 2010). As we have seen, however, *Mojo Navigator* had a local slant to it. The search for "punk ground zero", can be seen now as big business, as many from the early punk scene have written books on the topic and appeared in various documentary since the 1990s alternative boom.

<sup>61</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 51.

<sup>62</sup> Phast Phreddie Patterson, "Phast Phreddie Sez..." *Back Door Man*, Vol. 1, No 1 Feb. 1975, p. 2, a scan can be found at <http://www.myspace.com/backdoormanmagazine> (accessed March 24, 2010).

<sup>63</sup> Doc Savage, "Talk Talk", *Back Door Man*, vol. 1, No 1, Feb. 1975, p. 4 <http://www.myspace.com/backdoormanmagazine> (accessed March 24, 2010). The New York Dolls were a punk

of many later punk zines. Scene reports cover musical and social happenings important to a local scene. Some of the more transnationally minded zines received and published scene reports from all around the world. This reinforced the communal and interactive aspects of underground music scenes. The scene report found here was not nearly so global in scale, but it did connect music fans around the Los Angeles area. Also, these were written by writers for the magazine rather than sent in by those in the scene. The "South Bay Rock 'N' Roll" scene report focused on local bands and fan/authorities interactions. In it, a police incident at a show in 1972 was recounted. The band Clap (which the article described as having a "punkoid" song) played a gig with ticket prices at \$3 that none of the teenagers could afford. When the police arrived at the scene, the only thing they managed to do was run over a girl and break her leg. Here we can see the beginnings of punk antagonism towards the authorities. The writers of this zine were hanging their authenticity on their antagonism towards the police. This was one way in which the later punks were like earlier 60s counter-culture. In the article, the band was compared to The Seeds, a band that Shaw had grandfathered into his definition of punk. Patterson was perhaps reading *Who Put the Bomp!* at the time. Another local band White Light were likewise "harassed" by the police for drug possession. Despite some claims that L.A. punk began in Hollywood proper, this band (who early L.A. punks like Patterson were listening to) played not only at Rodney Bingenheimer's club in Hollywood, but around the L.A. suburbs. The band originally hailed

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band from New York City, with used glam fashion in their stage act.

from South Bay and included Don Waller (Doc Savage).<sup>64</sup> Other early punks were influenced by this zine. Kid Congo Powers recalled, "There was a little bit of a scene surrounding these people that was my first exposure to punk. *Back Door Man* was where I first read about Pere Ubu [an experimental rock band who originally came from Ohio], and they'd print essays on rebelliousness and other things."<sup>65</sup> What this shows is that the roots of punk are far more complex and generally localized than previously thought. Rather than kids simply aping happenings elsewhere, the local scenes took some shape based on a combination of local events, some of which include non-local bands and actors. These local scenes only later started to fall into line with what they find out about other scenes.

Fanzines became all important to the forging of a collective punk identity. It allowed self-identified punks to debate the meaning of their newly emerging sub-culture across greater distances than the local scene. Early zines like *Bomp!* were a bit more top down than later zines. *Back Door Man* seemed to take for granted the definition of punk found in *Bomp!*. Later zines did not take *Bomp!* at face value but began to work out these ideas for themselves. The punk vs. new wave debate raged in later L.A. zines. They were already beginning to search for the authenticity so important to later hardcore punks.<sup>66</sup> We have already seen the punk/new wave

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<sup>64</sup> Jart Von Larm, "South Bay Rock 'n' Roll", *Back Door Man*, No. 1 Vol. 1, Feb. 1975, p. 6 -7, <http://www.myspace.com/backdoormanmagazine> (accessed March 24, 2010). There is currently a DVD available of the Imperial Dogs performance in Long Beach from 1974. A preview clip can be viewed at "The Imperial Dogs", <http://www.theimperialdogs.com/>, (accessed March 24, 1974).

<sup>65</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 33

<sup>66</sup> see for example, Dewar MacLeod, "Social Distortion: The Rise of Suburban Punk Rock in Los Angeles," in

debate in the San Francisco zine, *Search and Destroy*; L.A. zines explored the issue at around the same time. The zine *Slash*, edited by Claude Bessy, used the terms interchangeably during the first year or so of publication. Letters in the 1977 October issue of *Slash* illustrate the point, and show that some transnational connections were already being forged. Two self-identified British punks wrote to the zine and complained of the *Slash* coverage of punk. They called the local scene, "dull, ultraconservative, unadventurous and... passe." They condemned bands such as The Germs and The Weirdos as "Clash/ Pistols/ Adverts/ Jams soundalikes," while giving praise to new British acts such as "Elvis Costello, Ultravox, the Tom Robinson Band," for "all trying to break away from the aging 'new wave'." They positioned these acts as authentically punk. Ironically, today these artists would most likely be slotted into the category of new wave, while bands like The Germs and The Weirdos would be called punk. Writers also discussed the meaning of these terms. Another letter from a reader named DV8 described the relationship between punk and new wave thusly, "'New wave' and 'punk rock' are not one in [sic] the same. New Wave refers to all the new groups with new ideas, new statements, etc. Punk rock is one faction of the total new wave movement."<sup>67</sup> As we saw in the introduction, new wave was later rejected by many punks. But at the time, the differences were not nearly as clear cut as they later became.

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*America Under Construction: Boundaries and Identities in Popular Culture*, ed. Kristi S. Long and Matthew Nadelhaft, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), p. 136 on policing the subcultural borders in hardcore punk.

<sup>67</sup> "Letters," *Slash*, Vol 1, No. 6, December 1977, p. 6.

Not all of the L.A. zines were conflicted about punk and new wave. *Slash* read like an insiders' report to outsiders. The zine made references to the collective punk identity and included almost anyone who called themselves a punk. Despite this inclusiveness, the feel was more top down. Letters to the editor and scene reports were never as important a part of *Slash* as they were in *Flipside*, which by contrast was far more focused on input from the community. *Flipside* emerged around the same time as the hardcore bands. It ran from 1977 until 2000. This zine was most likely the first zine to champion the hardcore punk bands and readers' participation as a matter of policy. Early on, the zine covered the first wave punk bands. One early issue of *Flipside* discussed a single by the local band the Adverts, "Bored Teenagers/Gary Gilmore's Eyes". Reviewers X-8, Tory, and Al Flipside debated whether it was punk or not. Regarding the song "Bored Teenager", there was this exchange, "Tory: I don't like the fills by the guitar, its not punk, just rock and roll. Al: its new wave" Later in the same review, Tory said of the Gary Gilmore song, "it's more new wave, not as nice as the other one [sic]."<sup>68</sup> By late 77 issues of *Flipside* show a shift in the local scene; punk firmly reigned over new wave. *Slash* continued to cover a wider range of music, yet managed to privilege the first wave punk scene over the newer bands. *Flipside* proved just as important to a later transnational punk scene as the later San Francisco zine, *Maximum Rock n' Roll*. Both had a focus on dialog across national

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<sup>68</sup> X-8, Tory and Pooch, "The Adverts: anchor records, Bored Teenagers/Gary Gilmore's eyes," *Flipside*, Issue 2, October 1977, p. 4. An archive of Flipside (and other zines including *Maximum Rocknroll*) can be found at "Punk Zine Archive," Operation Phoenix Records, <http://www.operationphoenixrecords.com/archivespage.html>, (accessed June 9, 2010).

borders. Zines like these acted as a punk counter-public, allowing local scenes to present their local narratives to others. In much the same way print-capitalism helped to create an imagined national identity, these zines helped to create an imagined community of self-identified punks in many different places around the world.<sup>69</sup> Punk as we know it today -- loud, harder edged, DIY -- evolved from these sorts of zine conversations. *Flipside* was perhaps the first hardcore zine to reach an audience outside the local scene, and many later zines copied its cut and paste feel. Many also privileged the participants' voice over that of so-called experts, a feature *Flipside* excelled at in comparison with *Slash*. It was a zine written by older members of the local scene. According to punk scenester Pleasant Gehman, "Claude and Philly and Steve and Melanie [writers and editors for *Slash*] were really nice but they all seemed really old!"<sup>70</sup> Perhaps many younger punks gravitated towards *Flipside* as the writers were of their same age.

If Rodney Bingenheimer's club provided the first spot for an early local punk scene to begin forming, Brenden Mullen provided a space for punks to begin to practice and play. Mullen opened The Masque in Hollywood in June of 1977. Mullen said, "The Masque space began literally as somewhere for me and my cronies to experiment with beating drums and anything else that showed up, undisturbed by neighbors or cops, 24/7."<sup>71</sup> The space was in a basement of a

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<sup>69</sup> Benedict Anderson discusses the role of newspapers and print media in shaping the modern nation-state as an imagined community. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 2006), especially chapter 6, p. 67 - 82.

<sup>70</sup> Bolles, Mullen, and Parfrey, *Lexicon Devil*, p. 61.

<sup>71</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 124.



building in central Hollywood. The space was nearly ten-thousand-square-feet. The building had been unoccupied since the 40s.<sup>72</sup> Eventually, Mullen rented space to other local musicians. The first band was first wave punk band The Controllers.<sup>73</sup> According to musician and scenester Black Randy, "The Masque became the focal point for everything. Everybody I knew started going there on weekends."<sup>74</sup> The club eventually closed due to code violations, but the space provided a center for the first wave punk scene and was important in the scene's growth.

There are many splits in the L.A. punk scene which are often taken for granted in popular histories. The split between the earlier bands and the later hardcore bands tends to be the most often talked about. First wave punk bands were less uniform in sound and image than the later hardcore bands. The Germs and X were two of the most influential first wave punk bands. The Germs were formed by Paul Beahm and Georg Ruthenberg, who became friends at school in West Los Angeles. Neither had any real background in music, other than as music fans. As noted above, The Runaways proved a big influence on Beahm and Ruthenberg. Eventually, the two formed The Germs with others from the scene, including Teresa Ryan (Lorna Doom) and Don Bolles. The band made shirts before they even played a note together.<sup>75</sup> They opened for the Weirdos at the Orpheum in 1977. The band was, in the words of Nicky Beat, "[T]he least professional kind of band you could imagine...tuning up for ten minutes on stage, and then

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<sup>72</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 123.

<sup>73</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 124.

<sup>74</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 127.

<sup>75</sup> Bolles, Mullen, and Parfrey, *Lexicon Devil*, p. 44.

starting a song and then stopping and starting over again, total amateur bullshit."<sup>76</sup> Musically, the band played a kind of basic rock music. The songs had two and three chords and a rather simple chord progression. Even the later more professionally produced songs are relatively simple songs structurally speaking. In musical terms, The Germs had more in common with the later hardcore bands than with their cohort of punk bands. The band was also very image driven. Some of their early influences include David Bowie, Alice Cooper, and Queen, all very theatrical rock bands.

In contrast to the amateur enthusiasm of The Germs, X were always more interested in a more serious kind of artistic expression based on solid song-writing and literary lyrics. Lead singer and guitarist John Doe met Exene Cervenka at a poetry group in 1977.<sup>77</sup> Guitarist Billy Zoom was a serious musician from childhood. He said, "I took up guitar in 1954, at the age of six, after studying piano, violin, and accordion."<sup>78</sup> Doe had answered an ad for a guitarist from Zoom, and eventually Cervenka joined the band, too. Musically, the band leaned toward a more classic rockabilly sound.<sup>79</sup> Even their early demos sound far more polished than the professionally produced tracks by The Germs. Image wise, outward appearances were less important to the band. While The Germs attempted to provoke the crowd during shows, X were more interested in putting on solid shows musically speaking. The differences between these

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<sup>76</sup> Bolles, Mullen, and Parfrey, *Lexicon Devil*, p. 54.

<sup>77</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 96.

<sup>78</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 95.

<sup>79</sup> Three of the four original members of X are currently in the country punk band, the Knitters -- John Doe, Exene Cervenka, drummer DJ Bonebreak, and Dave Alvin, who was in the L.A. rockabilly band The Blasters.

bands illustrate the diversity of the first wave punk scene musically speaking. In the next chapter, we will examine some hardcore bands to get a better understanding of the later scene.

Most seem to think that hardcore was rejected by older punks at its inception. However, first wave punks seemed initially inclusive of hardcore bands. Both The Germs and X were popular with later hardcore punks. The imagined split between the two scenes came about in 1979. The late lead singer for the band the F-Word, Rik L. Rik, said of the split between the hardcore bands and first wave punk bands, "Around this time [1979], the crowds had gotten really violent. The Hollywood people wouldn't go down to Orange County or the South Bay *anymore*."<sup>80</sup> Many first wave punks were initially interested in these new bands. This was how Mike Patton of the early hardcore band Middle Class remembered events. He said, "The Middle Class was just kids from Santa Ana in Orange County, but it didn't take us long to get shows."<sup>81</sup> The legendary hardcore pioneers Black Flag played with first wave punk bands.<sup>82</sup> One of Black Flag's early singers, Keith Morris later formed the band the Circle Jerks who also played with first wave punk bands.<sup>83</sup> According to John Doe from the band X, "From '77 to '79 it was an inclusive scene, and from '79 onward it became splintered."<sup>84</sup> In other words, the split occurred

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<sup>80</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 221. Emphasis added.

<sup>81</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 174.

<sup>82</sup> A flyer for a show at the Hong Kong Low Cafe from 1979, featuring The Germs and Black Flag can be found at "Fear, Germs, Black Flag Punk Hardcore Flyer," *Flickr*, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/28508439@N02/3033928182/> (accessed May 2, 2010).

<sup>83</sup> An undated flyer, presumably before the break up of The Germs in 1979 and the ultimate death of Darby Crash in 1980, so perhaps mid-1979, can be found at "Old Punk Flyers and Stuff," Rat Sound systems, [http://www.ratsound.com/tours/early/flyers/pages/circle\\_jerks\\_uxa\\_germs\\_JPG.htm](http://www.ratsound.com/tours/early/flyers/pages/circle_jerks_uxa_germs_JPG.htm) (accessed May 2, 2010).

<sup>84</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 172.

later.

During the late 1970s, the local first wave punk scene grew and eventually suburban teenagers caught on to the Hollywood scene. Rodney Bingenheimer's radio show helped to disseminate punk in the L.A. suburbs, spreading it to a new, younger demographic. It was the suburban youths that would take over punk's banner and shape it in their own image. For now we turn to the city of Ljubljana, Yugoslavia and the first wave punk scene in that city.

### **"Lublana je bulana / Ljubljana is sick " : First Wave Punk in Ljubljana**

By 1980 three northern cities in Yugoslavia had relatively interconnected punk scenes -- Ljubljana, Rijeka, and Zagreb. Ljubljana was an important center of punk that eventually had a well defined hardcore punk scene. As in the United States, first wave punk was a marginal subculture, not quite a counter-culture; but unlike the United States, punk was generally more popular among young people in Yugoslavia -- especially in Slovenia. As in Britain, punk benefited from a smaller geographical region than in the U.S. with fewer record labels and media outlets to compete with. If tensions existed between punks and the state during this time, most punks simply ignored the state -- and at least at first the state returned the favor. However, much of the literature regarding punk in Yugoslavia focuses only on the state. Punks themselves are almost of secondary concern. It will be useful to directly focus on punks and on specific media interactions with punks during this time.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Isa Blumi suggested this line of inquiry and I am grateful that he brought this to my attention.

Punk was quite popular in Slovenia. According to one website reflecting on the history of Yugoslavia, "In the Northwestern-most republic of Slovenia, punk-rock practically reached to the most remote places, creating an absurd situation in which at some point more than 80% of a generation listened to punk music."<sup>86</sup> Of course, listening to punk does not mean self-identification as a punk. Some did embrace punk as an identity as well as a style of popular music. In Slovenia first wave punks generally rejected politics. Nor were the youth organizations connected with the Communist party interested in punk. Gregor Tomc (sociologist and guitarist for the punk band Pankrti) said of the relationship between early punks and the various Communist youth organizations found in Yugoslavia, "How did the punks of the late 1970s perceive the youth organization politicians? They mostly ignored them....For punks, taking any politics seriously was ridiculous and taking 'youth' politics seriously would be piteous and a sign of bad taste."<sup>87</sup> If many young people were unhappy with youth organizations, perhaps this would explain why punk proved so popular.

Yugoslavia had a general policy of toleration towards rock music in the 1960s. Rock music could be heard on Radio Luxembourg, a radio station aimed at the Communist world. The programs played on the station could be heard in Zagreb and Ljubljana.<sup>88</sup> Not surprisingly, eventually local musicians reinvented rock through their own understandings of music. For

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<sup>86</sup> "BalkansNet - Rock," *Balkans Pages*, <http://balkansnet.org/rock.html>, (accessed March 30, 2010).

<sup>87</sup> Gregor Tomc, "The Politics of Punk," in *Independent Slovenia: Origins, Movements, Prospects*, ed. Jill Benderly and Evan Kraft, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 113 - 134. Quote on p. 119 - 120.

<sup>88</sup> Ramet, "Shake, Rattle and Self-Management," p. 178.

example, rock bands like Bijelo Dugme (White Button) of Sarajevo began to sing in a local language (Croatian) and incorporated local folk musical traditions into rock. This evolved into the popular New Primitive scene in Sarajevo.<sup>89</sup> This coincided with Yugoslavia's liberalization and decentralization period.<sup>90</sup> The end of the liberalizing period came in the early 70s when Yugoslavia's constitution was rewritten. According to Tomc this coincided with some political non-conformists being eliminated; however, he stated, "The rock subculture managed to survive undamaged."<sup>91</sup> This would indicate that despite the recentralization attempts in other industries, rock music was not on the Party's radar at this time. A recent interview with Slovenian music producer, promoter, and journalist Igor Vidmar confirmed the latitude rock had during the early 1970s. He cited the Ljubljana band Pankrti as an example. Pankrti recorded their first single in Italy. It was released not by the Slovenian record label ZKP RTV, but through ŠKUC, the Student Cultural Center, which was not a record label at all. The release proved popular enough that Pankrti's next two albums were on the regional label.<sup>92</sup> According to Vidmar they were able to record and produce an album because, "The record industry was already market oriented enough and some people were open minded enough to react to the increasing popularity of

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<sup>89</sup> Ramet, "Shake, Rattle and Self-Management," p. 179. For the Bijelo dugme in the New Primitive scene, see Aida Kalender and Dijana Marjanoviae, "Rock Under Siege," *Si21*, <http://www.kabi.si/si21/IASPM/aida.html> (accessed May 4, 2010).

<sup>90</sup> Ramet describes the system under Tito in terms of the balance of powers, and this became especially true after the fall of Ranković, and the decentralization. See her argument in Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962 - 1991*, pgs. 90 -91, which describes his ouster.

<sup>91</sup> Tomc, "The Politics of Punk," p. 117.

<sup>92</sup> See the Pankrti's website for a discography, "Pankrti: Discography," *Pankrti*, <http://pankrti.tripod.com/eng/discography.html>, (accessed May 4, 2010).

punk." The labels' output was not strictly under the control of the state. Not long after this, Vidmar produced the debut LP for the Rijeka band Paraf. Other than lyrics to one song being found inappropriate by the label (the song "Our Police is the Best" or "Narodna Pjesma"), Vidmar said, "The main 'problem' was my lack of experience and studio engineer (also the owner) who was just afraid that the lyrics would be too prominent in the mix..."<sup>93</sup> The censored song also found its way onto the *Novi Punk Val 78 -80* compilation produced by Vidmar in 1981.<sup>94</sup> This does reflect a degree of latitude artists had in making music that might not have been officially sanctioned by the state. Despite some censoring of lyrics, Paraf was not prevented from releasing their album. Nor were they punished for their controversial lyrics. We should also note that support for Pankrti's first single came from outside the music industry in Yugoslavia. Movement between Yugoslavia and the Western world was not an unusual occurrence regarding culture. Early punks in Ljubljana took advantage of this freedom of movement.

Musically speaking, first wave punks in Yugoslavia were not unlike their American and British counterparts. This shows that bands here were listening to punk music from the West. Pankrti played a stripped down rock. The song "Lublana je bulana" (the band's first single) shows similarities to some early Western punk bands.<sup>95</sup> The song consisted of only a few chords

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<sup>93</sup> "Igor Vidmar," *Uzurlikzurli e-zine*, <http://members.iinet.net.au/~predrag/vidmar.html> (accessed May 5, 2010).

<sup>94</sup> Various Artists, *Novi Punk Val 78-80*, ZKP RTL, LD 0658, Yugoslavia, 1981. The song was the fifth track on side A.

<sup>95</sup> The song can be heard at "Lublana je bulana", Youtube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4co3B7CeGA> (accessed July 10, 2010).

and had a basic rock song structure. In addition, the song was short in duration -- around two minutes. The music blog *Last Days of Man on Earth 2.0* said of the bands 1980 album *Dolgcajt*, "The combination of oi-like streetpunk structures with the more arty chord progressions and conventions is uniquely representative of pogo music from that area of the world."<sup>96</sup> Notably, western commentators recognized Pankrti as a regional variant of the same genre, drawing on similar roots. These bands not only sounded punk, but they actively sought to be understood as punks. Pankrti actively cultivated a style and sound that would be understood by Western punks. This was also true of the band Paraf from Rijeka. They played music that was similar in style to Pankrti. The band had a less polished sound. Their censored song "Narodna pjesma" sounds less professional musically speaking than Pankrti's music. The cover of Paraf's debut single "Rijeka" had a guitarist in a jacket with no shirt, sneering at the camera.<sup>97</sup> While these bands are not carbon copies of British or American bands, it is clear that these punks in Yugoslavia were listening to Western punk bands. Early on they were more oriented towards each other and towards the local punk scene; and while this remained true, the later hardcore scene was more concerned with how punks in other countries viewed them than these early punks were.

Overall, the period from the late 70s until 80-81 seemed productive for Slovenian punks, at least if the activities of Vidmar were any indication. His first punk show was with Paraf in

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<sup>96</sup> Joe Stumble, "Pankrti - Dolgcajt," *Last Days of Man on Earth 2.0*, July 24, 2008, <http://www.lastdaysofmanonearth.com/blog/?p=276> (accessed July 19, 2010).

<sup>97</sup> Joe Stumble, "Paraf - Rijeka/Moj život je novi val 7inch," *Last Days of Man on Earth 2.0*, January 28, 2008, <http://www.lastdaysofmanonearth.com/blog/?p=211> (accessed July 19, 2010).



Zagreb in 1978. That same year, he began to play punk records as a DJ on Radio Student, produced Pankrti's first single, and wrote articles on punk for various culture magazines across Yugoslavia.<sup>98</sup> In *Stop* he discussed a Pankrti show in a school gym in the Ljubljana suburb of Kodeljevo, describing punk as a "return to the roots of rock music" and a rejection of "musical perfection." He also celebrated the lack of politics in the music. Instead lyrics focused on "everyday things."<sup>99</sup> Here we can see how first wave punk was promoted by a punk to what was presumably an audience consisting largely of non-punks. The apolitical nature of the bands were highlighted. If punks were not political, but were perhaps looking to "drop out" of the establishment, then taking a non-political stance would make sense.

Despite what appeared to be punk's general neglect by the local media, Vidmar was not the only person paying attention. An unattributed review of the same show appeared in another cultural magazine *Antena*. The article ignored the local nature of the band, and instead chose to focus on some presumably non-local characteristics. Punk in Ljubljana was explicitly connected to London. Pankrti was directly compared to the Sex Pistols with the band embraced as home grown heroes. The author ignored Vidmar's view of punk as apolitical. Instead anarchism was imagined to be punk's philosophical center. The band was also compared to folk singers of the 60s. In other words, the article assumed a political stance lay behind first wave punk.<sup>100</sup> Pankrti

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<sup>98</sup> "Igor Vidmar," *Uzurlikzurli e-zine*, <http://members.iinet.net.au/~predrag/vidmar.html> (accessed May 5, 2010).

<sup>99</sup> See his review of a Pankrti show in *Stop*, Igor Vidmar, "Punk po naše. Več kot moda?" *Stop*, October 27, 1977, reprinted in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985). p. 105-6.

<sup>100</sup> "Punk na Kodeljevem," *Antena*, Jesni [Fall] 1977, reprinted in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and

guitarist Tomc responded to this article stating "I am not interested in your opinion of punk."

He rejected the notion of punks as anarchists, and said that if the author wanted to see it that

way, "that is your problem." Tomc did not embrace or reject anarchism, he just viewed it as

irrelevant to punk. At one point, the article in question had referred to "meetings." Tomc said,

"meetings put me to sleep. I think it would have similar effects on our audience." Finally, he

accused the article of misrepresenting punk and wondered if it was deliberate or ignorance.<sup>101</sup>

Pankrti suggests that first wave Slovene punks who found themselves in the public eye largely

rejected politics. Perhaps it can be argued that it was anti-establishment and that this was a

political point of view. Punks at this time seemed uninterested in politics altogether. Despite the

fact that some scholars credit various alternative cultures found in Ljubljana during the 80s with

the creation of a civil society in Slovenia, these early punks actively distanced themselves from

politics.<sup>102</sup> Perhaps some young people with a political bent found a voice in this early punk

scene, but there is little evidence that this applied to all punks at the time or even a vocal

majority. Rather they most often described themselves in terms of their love of the music.

Vidmar for example was actually a former member of the Communist party. He described his

leaving the party as "being expelled for insubordination and ideological dissent."<sup>103</sup> His rejection

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Tomaž Mastnak (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985). p.106 - 108.

<sup>101</sup> Gregor Tomc, "Antenin punk: Odgovor na Dok, št. 2." *Antena*, Jesni [Fall] 1977, reprinted in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p.108.

<sup>102</sup> See for one example, Jozef Figa, "Socializing the State: Civil Society and Democratization from Below in Slovenia," *State-Society Relations in Yugoslavia, 1945 - 1992*, ed. Melissa K. Bokovoy, Jill A. Irvine, and Carol S. Lilly, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 163 - 182.

<sup>103</sup> "Igor Vidmar," *Uzurlikzurli e-zine*, <http://members.iinet.net.au/~predrag/vidmar.html> (accessed May 5, 2010).

from the party might have led him to embrace a non-political point of view and to code punk as non-political for this reason.

Punks in general -- and Pankrti in particular -- emerged in the consciousness of the less culturally focused press with a concert in 1978 in the coastal town of Koper. The response to the band was anything but positive, but was not anything like the scrutiny punks would later endure. The May event was a concert organized by the Koper youth center scheduled to last from early afternoon until late night. The concert reportedly drew nearly 2000 people to Koper from Yugoslavia and neighboring Italy. Appearing with Pankrti was the Italian progressive rock band Area and fellow Slovenes Buldožer. Poets and officials from the ZSMS, the Slovenian Communist party, also addressed the concert goers during the festivities. The local newspaper *Primorske novice* praised the event overall. However, Pankrti was not included in that praise. The author stated the band had nothing in common with Yugoslav society and was "leading youth astray." The article seemed to assume foreign subversion rather than local appropriation.<sup>104</sup> The antipathy aimed at the band might have to do with their confrontational yet apolitical demeanor. This paper was not alone in its condemnation of Pankrti at the Koper concert. Franc Goljevšček described silence when Pankrti took the stage in his review of the concert in the magazine *Stop*. Other than "some teenagers" he stated most of the audience were unimpressed.

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<sup>104</sup> V. Japelj, "Imported Manifesto" *Primorske novice*, pt. 23, 6/2. 1978, Koper, in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 110-111.

In a frustrated response, according to Goljevšček, a member of the band mooned the crowd.

After that, they were escorted off the stage. Overall, according to Goljevšček, the band was not well received.<sup>105</sup> However, neither of these articles mentioned the aftermath of the show.

According to Slavko Hren in the magazine *Mladina*, a bonfire was lit at the Koper football stadium and some who had no other place to stay gathered there. This impromptu campground, complete with guitars and drinking, brought out police with truncheons.<sup>106</sup> These events and the surrounding publicity were enough to warrant a defense of the entire program by Youth Cultural Center of Koper. They highlighted the lack of participation by other organizations and pointed out disinformation on the part of the media regarding the event. They called the event a success, as shown by the large number of attendees at the concert and the later successful television broadcasts in both Yugoslavia and Italy. The event -- despite some problems -- was positive for those who attended, according to the sponsors at least.<sup>107</sup> But it is here where we begin to see some early concerns over youth actions in the public sphere. At this time, punks were not anywhere near the center of attention.

Punk at this early stage was marginal enough to be generally ignored or actively marginalized by the media, except in these cases where punk was on display to a larger audience.

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<sup>105</sup> Franc Goljevšček, "Pankrti v Koprju," *Stop*, no. 23 6/8/1978, Ljubljana, in *Punk pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 111 - 112.

<sup>106</sup> Slavko Hren, "Mama, pelji me na žur v Koper," *Mladina*, no. 24, 6/15/1978, Ljubljana, in *Punk pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 112 - 114.

<sup>107</sup> Committee MKC-Koper, "Informativno pismo," *Mladina*, no. 26, 6/29/1978, in *Punk pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 114 - 115.

The preferred tactic was to ignore or dismiss. One case of dismissal can be found in Dimitrij Rupel's review of Pankrti's first single, "Lublana je bulana" in *Teleks* in January 1979. In the review, he urged his readers to "ignore" the new record. He sneered at the band's lack of polish and called the music a "cheap, plastic spectacle." Rupel reported to the reader that punk, as a phenomenon, arose amongst the English lower classes. He hinted at fascist overtones regarding the "uniform fetish" of some punks.<sup>108</sup> Despite these hints at a Nazi connection the real focus was on punk as mass culture. Interestingly, Western papers did occasionally position punk as a "mass culture." The tone was far from panicked; rather it was dismissive. Much like in L.A. punk was not yet the source of cultural panic it would become. It was seen as a cultural blip on the radar, a marginal music scene with some troubling cultural overtones.

Overall during the 70s, while it was not incredibly easy to be in a punk band in Yugoslavia, it was possible. In fact, it seemed not much harder than in places like L.A. or London. Some first wave punk bands found an enthusiastic audience amongst Yugoslav youths.<sup>109</sup> At least they were popular enough for later hardcore punks in Slovenia to later question their punk credentials.<sup>110</sup> Vidmar, despite his protests to the contrary, seemed to not have had major problems finding work as a promoter of punk music during the late 70s. Much of

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<sup>108</sup> Dimitrij Rupel, "To Morate Preslišati," *Teleks*, no. 4, 1/26/1979, Ljubljana, in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 120.

<sup>109</sup> Vidmar discussed Pekinska Patka in the interview footnoted above at no. 63.

<sup>110</sup> Vidmar, for example, recently called the Serbian punk band Pekinska Patka "risible", and positioned the band as a "new wave" band. See "Igor Vidmar," *Uzurlikzurlj e-zine*, <http://members.iinet.net.au/~predrag/vidmar.html> (accessed May 5, 2010).

this changed after the death of Tito in 1980. During the 1980s, Ljubljana gained a well developed alternative art scene and a more underground oppositional hardcore punk scene. The split mirrored what happened in Los Angeles. According to one commenter, "There wasn't any serious Indies label until mid 80's. Before that, all the records have been released on various major labels, and in this case it meant government owned labels."<sup>111</sup> Much like in L.A., when events hit a critical point, major changes became obvious in the official attitude towards punk from the parent culture. In Yugoslavia, it took the form of more direct state intervention. These events in both cities signaled a change in the nature of the punk/parent culture relationship -- from toleration to active discrediting. It had the result of actively drawing punk scenes around the world closer together in style and identity.

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<sup>111</sup> Predrag Delibasich, "Yugoslavian R'n'R," <http://members.iinet.net.au/~predrag/yugo.html> (accessed March 30, 2010).

### 3. "POLICE STORY": FROM FIRST WAVE TO HARDCORE

In 1984, Alex Cox released his punksploitation film, *Repo Man*. The film functioned as a critique of both modern society and of the hardcore punk. Set in Los Angeles, the film begins with the punk Otto Maddox getting fired from his dead-end grocery store job. He spends some time hanging out with other punks and eventually ends up working for a repossession company. Eventually Otto moves away from his young punk friends, some of whom had turned to a life of crime; one is shot in a botched gas station robbery. All stores in the movie have products with obvious generic labels - "beer", "food", "soap", etc. One website dedicated to the cult film said of the generic products "It's a satirical commentary on the commodification of modern society."<sup>112</sup> The main character's parents -- former hippies -- give away Otto's savings to a televangelist. The film's greatest ire was aimed at the late Cold War nuclear culture, and hardcore punk was not spared. Hardcore punks were shown to be aggressive and eager to break the rules for no reason. Rebellion was merely another distraction from reality, not a means of changing society for the better.<sup>113</sup>

As we have seen, punk arrived on the scene in the 1970s. Musically, punk was first defined as 60s garage rock bands, with stripped down rhythms and a basic beat. Towards the end of the 70s, punk began to attract those who identified as outsiders. Many people took the punk

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<sup>112</sup> Bob Cantor, "Frequently Asked Questions," *Bob Cantor Presents: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Repo Man*, 2010, <http://www.bobcantor.com/repo/faq.htm> (accessed July 19, 2010).

<sup>113</sup> *Repo Man*, DVD, Directed by Alex Cox, (1984; Universal Studios, 2004).

moniker as an opportunity to experiment musically and socially. Self-defined punks appropriated the term for their own ends. However by the very late 1970s -- as punk became more familiar to a wider audience -- punks began to turn inward even as more young people identified as punk. This coincided with the media and authorities "discovering" punk.

The news and entertainment media began to pay attention, locally and nationally; during the 1980s, news programs and television dramas focused on various social ills. After-school specials, aimed at a family audience, often dramatized and moralized on the topic of drugs and sex. Several of these television dramas had episodes with punks as the bad guys. In part conforming to these confrontational images of punk, some punks began to adopt a more aggressive outward appearance. Self-identified punks could be found all over America and Europe. Eventually, hardcore punk became the preferred version of punk music for this new transnational underground. A thriving punk hardcore underground was a testament to their non-commercial success. It had the side effect of making punks more uniform transnationally. This chapter explores the American side of this transnational subculture.

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During the 1980s hardcore punk became the predominant punk identity in the public imagination. This was a two way street. Hardcore punks closed ranks and the American media began a sort of public scare campaign aimed at punk. At the same time, bands that played other sorts of music were no longer grouped under the rubric of punk. Two examples are The Go-Go's



and Christian Death. The Go-Go's would not now be considered a punk band by anyone's standard. In 1980 they signed with the large independent label I.R.S. Records. Their debut album, *Beauty and the Beat*, was a wildly popular pop album with videos constantly on MTV. However, the band started out playing in the L.A. punk scene. In fact, Belinda Carlisle was initially slated to be the drummer for The Germs, until she came down with mono.<sup>114</sup> Later, she joined The Go-Gos. Their goal -- according to Carlisle -- was to be "rich and famous". They succeeded -- but they had to leave all pretense of being punk behind.<sup>115</sup> Such success became somewhat of an albatross for those wishing to be considered punk. The Go-Go's did not find the trade-off all that problematic. Other first wave punk bands who had more moderate success within the music industry such as X never disavowed (nor were they written out of) punk.

The bands no longer considered punk were not just limited to those who found mainstream success. Others went on to related subcultures. Several bands later became more well known as goth, gothic, or death rock rather than punk. The gothic subculture, while sharing a common root in punk, embraced androgyny and music with a darker, more atmospheric sound. British bands like The Damned and Bauhaus are cited as big influences. L.A. bands Christian Death and 45 Grave influenced later goth bands in the United States. Both started playing in the L.A. punk scene.<sup>116</sup> Self-described Punk Seal remembered Christian Death front man Rozz

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<sup>114</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 68.

<sup>115</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 150.

<sup>116</sup> Both bands, along with other "non-punk" musicians and artists are included in the popular history, Peter Belisto and Bob Davis, *Hardcore California: A History of Punk and New Wave*, (Berkeley: The Last Gasp of San

Williams quite fondly in a recent interview with Alice Bag.<sup>117</sup> Not everyone remembered him so fondly. Founder of Toxic Shock Records store Bill Strassenberger briefly shared living quarters with Williams when he moved his original storefront in Pomona, California to a larger location. In an online interview at the website *Punk Vinyl*, he recounted how the arrangement ended when Strassenberger discovered stolen merchandise from his store in Williams' room. In retaliation for being kicked out of the shared space, Williams crashed a car into the storefront.<sup>118</sup> What matters regarding Williams is not his popularity or possible criminality, but that he is remembered as being a part of the same scene. Later in the 80s these bands were indeed understood as something other than punk. At an earlier stage "punk" was amorphous enough for these bands to play in the same clubs and hang out in the same scene as those we more readily identify as punk today. In an odd twist on Christian Death being written out of the punk genre, an interview with the band in the March 1981 issue of *Flipside*, Williams positioned his band as far more "punk" than the hardcore bands.<sup>119</sup> Perhaps much like The Go-Go's, Williams rejected punk as much as punks rejected him.

If bands like The Go-Go's and Christian Death were no longer "punk", then who was

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Fransisco, 1984), see pgs. 53 - 56, regarding "horror rock".

<sup>117</sup> "Women in L.A. Punk: Interview with Seal," *Official Website of Alice Bag*, <http://www.alicebag.com/sealinterview.html> (accessed May 2, 2010).

<sup>118</sup> The story was related in an interview found at "Selections from the Punk Vault [Peace Corpse]," *The Punk Vault*, <http://www.punkvinyl.com/2008/09/18/selections-from-the-punk-vault-peace-corpse/> (accessed May 2, 2010).

<sup>119</sup> "Christian Death," *Flipside*, Issue 23, March 1981, np. It is clear from the interview that Al Flipside, who is conducting the interview, does not take them very seriously.

punk? The bands that predominated as punk identity moving into the 1980s were hardcore punk bands. Two examples are the bands Middle Class and Black Flag. Middle Class was the first hardcore band to play in L.A. punk clubs.<sup>120</sup> In *The OC Weekly* in 2002 Matt Coker discussed the influence of the band on later hardcore bands, especially the single "Out of Vogue." First wave punk Brendan Mullen told Coker, "They certainly pre-date Bad Brains [the first Washington D.C. hardcore band] and the D.C. straight-edge Dischord [Records -- a label started by Ian MacKaye of the band Minor Threat and later Fugazi] scene with that one... They were definitely a major, uncredited Hollywood-to-OC segue band during 1978." Although the single was released at the same time as Black Flag's first single "Nervous Breakdown" in 1979 Mullen said that Middle Class "were playing solidly for at least eight months before Flag ever played publicly."<sup>121</sup> The song "Out of Vogue" was harder and faster than anything being played by other L.A. punk bands at the time. One can hear the influence of The Germs in the single. Much like The Germs, they had little of the polish of a band like X.

Despite Middle Class appearing on the scene before Black Flag, the latter band is more widely known. The band, whose members hailed from Hermosa Beach, began playing together in 1976. This does put Black Flag ahead of the curve, even if Middle Class debuted first. Band leader Greg Ginn had the band practice for something close to a year before they played the local

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<sup>120</sup> See the Frontier Records website for their album rereleases, "Middle Class - Out of Vogue - The Early Material," *Frontier Records*, 2008, <http://www.frontierrecords.com/middleclass.html> (accessed July 19, 2010).

<sup>121</sup> Matt Coker, "Suddenly in Vogue," *OC Weekly*, Dec. 12 2002, <http://www.ocweekly.com/2002-12-12/music/suddenly-in-vogue/> (accessed July 19, 2010).

punk circuit. They played their first gig at Redondo Beach in January of 1979.<sup>122</sup> The band went through a series of local singers, including Keith Morris, Ron Reyes, and Dez Cadena in the early days. Chuck Dukowski, bass player and occasionally singer, often acted as the public face of the band. In 1980 Henry Rollins from Washington D.C. became the lead singer of Black Flag. Rollins moved to Los Angeles and stayed with the band through all of their album releases. Most outside of the L.A. punk scene know the Rollins-fronted band better than its earlier incarnations. The band's early music was loud and fast rock music. Ginn's complex guitar work leaned toward an almost jazz feel. Black Flag's later work was more on the experimental side. The album *Family Man* from 1984 was a spoken word/instrumental album. The first half of the album contains some of Henry Rollins' spoken word performances and the second half of the album contains several instrumental pieces by the rest of the band.<sup>123</sup> Despite Middle Class predating Black Flag in terms of playing in public, Black Flag was by far the most influential of the L.A. hardcore punk bands. Their work ethic is legendary, and the label started by Ginn (SST Records) is still in operation today.<sup>124</sup> The reason for Black Flag's notoriety is in part because of that work ethic (which included near constant touring) and in part because Black Flag became one of the most visible bands in the moral panic that surrounded punk in L.A. beginning in 1980.

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<sup>122</sup> A flyer of the show with the bands The Alley Cats and Rhino 39, can be found at "January 27, 1979," *Dementlieu Punk Archive*, <http://www.dementlieu.com/users/obik/arc/blackflag/79/live0127.html> (accessed July 20, 2010).

<sup>123</sup> Black Flag, *Family Man*, CD, SST Records, SST CD 026.

<sup>124</sup> The label has a webstore, where they sell Ginn's current work as well as the bands that have been on the label. *SST Superstore*, <http://www.sstsuperstore.com/> (accessed July 20, 2010).

It was these bands that some had in mind when the panic over punk began in 1980. In June of that year music critic Patrick Goldstein wrote an article in the weekly Calendar section of *The Los Angeles Times*. After giving a list of shocking incidents, including the stabbing of a 23 year old fan at an X show, Goldstein comes to the point -- it is not the older punks but the newer punks who followed the new hardcore bands who were to blame for this violence.<sup>125</sup> Compare this with Robert Hilburn's piece two years earlier in *The Times* about the Masque benefit show being held at the Elk's Lodge. The article opened with 59-year-old Dale Johnson stumbling upon one of the gigs, where he found young punks pogoing to the music. After he left he was asked if the kids had scared him off. He said "Hell no, the kids are fine. It's the noise. My ears can't take it. Why do they have to play so damn loud? But I may be back. See: I got my hand stamped. They said that'd get me back in." During the show, Brendan Mullen made sure to keep the kids in line. At one point a report of a kicked in glass door sent Mullen downstairs. It turned out the door was kicked in by a member of a wedding party being held in the same building, not a punk.<sup>126</sup> What accounted for these vastly different accounts of punk in such a short amount of time?<sup>127</sup> It was at this time that L.A. punk began to change. This was in part due to new members

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<sup>125</sup> Patrick Goldstein, "Violence Sneaks into the Punk Scene," *The Los Angeles Times*, Calendar, Sunday June 28, 1980, p. 3 - 4. One incident recounted in the article, a girl claiming to have been stabbed at a punk, was later refuted in the pages of *Slash*, stating that "the stabbing took place several blocks away." A lawsuit was being prepared by the X's manager Jay, over the claim. See "Local Shit," *Slash*, vol. 3, no. 5, Summer 1980, p. 7.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Hilburn, "A Positive Perspective on Punk," *The Los Angeles Times*, The View, Part IV, Tuesday, February, 1978, p. 1 and 8.

<sup>127</sup> Some of this can be chalked up to a difference of opinion between Hilburn and Goldstein. Hilburn generally kept his views positive of the punk scene into the early 1980s.

joining the scene and in part due to the authorities' changed attitude to punk. Here was when punk began to morph from a marginal subculture to an inward looking transnational counter-culture.

Despite having a well established punk scene prior to 1978 L.A. is most remembered for the rise of hardcore punk. Often thought of as a post-punk movement, hardcore became the preferred expression of American punk as an underground counter-cultural genre of music. Hardcore as it evolved on the West Coast of the United States and Canada and Washington DC eventually became the dominant expression of punk transnationally. Two west coast zines eventually became staples of punk life -- L.A.'s *Flipside* and San Francisco's *Maximum Rock n' Roll*. It seems that by this point a more national zine such as *Bomp!* (aimed at more than just a punk audience) was no longer on the radar for punks. These youngsters were crafting their own media to express themselves and communicate with one another. Even the local tabloid zine *Slash* fell out of favor, ending its run in 1980. It was these younger punks who were writing new fanzines that started taking over the meaning of punk. First wave punk was still the acknowledged starting point and many hardcore punks still loved the bands that came out of New York and London. No one rejected Sex Pistols, The Ramones or The Germs. But it was during this time that the word came to mean hardcore punk. These younger punks -- often from more conservative areas of the Los Angeles suburbs -- rejected moving to the urban center where the first wave punks congregated. According to historian Dewar MacLeod, they also embraced

violence in a more direct way.<sup>128</sup> MacLeod argued that this more violent posture was a means of policing the subcultural borders, rather than violence for its own sake.<sup>129</sup> It is with hardcore that punk became more underground and translocal in nature. The mainstream music press began to promote the first wave punk bands while complaining of the violence in the punk scene. The blame for violence in the punk scene was placed squarely on the shoulders of the younger punks.

There was a split in Los Angeles between newer hardcore punks and first wave punks. However it evolved over time, and did not simply emerge when hardcore punks first arrived on the scene. In fact much of the antagonism often came from the first wave punks and was aimed at younger punks. This was in part seemed due to the new media attention on punk violence. Greg Shaw's disenchantment with punk coincided with the arrival of suburban hardcore bands. Shaw theorized that punk was losing its revolutionary status and becoming the status quo. His belief that it was going mainstream coincided with a larger local scene in L.A. In the March 1978 issue of *Bomp!* Shaw advocated that rock fans seek out the next big revolution -- powerpop. He said that "...[W]e're going to totally ignore what's going on in the center ring of the rock arena [punk], and cast our gaze over to the wings where the next act is warming up." He said, "Punk rock as we know it today was created with a built-in obsolescence. It was a form of shock treatment, a necessary therapeutic stage between the lobotomized atrophy of the early '70s and

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<sup>128</sup> See chapter 4 of MacLeod, "Kids of the Black Hole: Youth Culture in Postsuburbia," p. 175 - 187.

<sup>129</sup> MacLeod, "Social Distortion'," p.136. Although sometimes it was also violence for it's own sake.

the kind of healthy organism pop will hopefully be by the early '80s."<sup>130</sup> The tone of *Bomp!* overall began to show distance from punk. In his fanzine review section in *Bomp!* for the month of January 1979, Gary Sperrazza said, "The punk scene has largely become the antithesis of its founding principles: to have fun, celebrate a reaction to the past and crank out some more great 3-chord rockers." He continued, "Punk fanzines were largely divorced from the *fan mainstream*, anyway." He went on to criticize the local L.A. zine *Slash*. He stated that "suburban punks" had infiltrated the urban punk centers, or "true rebel pockets."<sup>131</sup> In contrast, Sperrazza positioned the work done at *Bomp!* as authentic, with the suburban punks being mindless followers of a trend. *Bomp!*, an early advocate for punk, jumped ship with a shift to a more underground hardcore punk. This provides insight into why hardcore punks looked to their own media rather than older zines like *Bomp!*.

As earlier supporters of punk began to move away, authorities in L.A. began to pay attention to punks as a group. One event seems to mark a turning point in the L.A. punk scene -- the Elk's Lodge St. Patrick's day "police riot".<sup>132</sup> In March 1979, several punk bands played at the Elks Lodge, including The Alley Cats, The Plugz and The Go-Gos.<sup>133</sup> This was not a show of

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<sup>130</sup> Greg Shaw, "The Beat: Editorial", *Bomp!*, March, 1978, p. 4, reprinted in Farren and Shaw, *Bomp!*, p 216.

<sup>131</sup> Gary Sperrazza, "Fanzines," *Bomp!* January 1979, p. 36, reprinted in Farren and Shaw, *Bomp!*, p. 252. Emphasis added.

<sup>132</sup> Brendan Mullen called it the "St. Patrick's day Massacre", while several others call it a "riot" started by the police, see Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 188 - 189. Craig Lee and Shreader also called it the "St. Patrick's day Massacre, see Lee and Shreader, "Los Angeles," *Hardcore California*, p. 34.

<sup>133</sup> Bands were listed in Lee and Shreader, "Los Angeles," p. 34.



"violent" hardcore punk bands, but first wave punk bands. The same night, The Lodge was also hosting a wedding celebration in a different part of the building. According to Kenneth Freed in *The Los Angeles Times*, some 60 officers in riot gear showed up in order to deal with 600 punks. These numbers reflected the growing popularity of punk music. The police were called because "some fans...were drunk, throwing bottles and fighting." The manager of the Elks Lodge called the police when those attending the wedding reported feeling intimidated.<sup>134</sup> Robert Hilburn provided a more in-depth and skeptical account of the incident the next day. Two music journalists who regularly covered the punk scene were in attendance -- Kristine McKenna for *The Los Angeles Times*, and Chris Morris for the weekly *Los Angeles Reader*. Both backed the punks' stories of unnecessary police brutality. The police claimed that the trouble was not the show itself, rather a "life and death situation" on the staircase outside the ballroom where the concert was being held. Brendan Mullen was astonished at the police response. He told Hilburn that previously police had no problems regarding punk shows. He said, "They (the police) generally come up and ask what's going on and I explain that it's just like it was in the 1950s... the kids like to dress up in leather jackets, but they're not really violent. The police seem to understand and leave us alone. That's why what happened Saturday was such a surprise." The police defended their actions to Hilburn. One stated that they were responding to a "riot situation." Police commander William Booth said of the fact that "some sort of rock music or

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<sup>134</sup> Kenneth Freed, "8 Arrested at Rock Concert," *The Los Angeles Times*, Part I, March 19, 1979 p 3 and 18.

bands appearing" was "incidental."<sup>135</sup> In this article the police spokesman rejected punks being targeted for police action. Instead, he focused on the specific incident that necessitated the police's actions. Despite that, this event was the starting point to punk being considered a social problem that necessitated police intervention.

After this incident, the police became a factor in the changes in the punk scene, and police actions aimed at the collective L.A. punk scene became more common. The July 1979 *Flipside* cited the "Elk's Lodge Police Riot" as the beginning of a "grim two months." Not all of these changes were negative in the eyes of local punks. Al Flipside stated that it made the local scene a "recognized sub-culture." Local punk Otis was picked up for public drunkenness. Rather than being called the usual "weirdo", "freak" or "faggot", the cops called him a "punk."<sup>136</sup> The actions of the police were often disruptive as well. The Masque's final show, featuring Mau Maus, U.X.A., Smart Pills (from New York), Black Hearts, and Black Flag on August 1979 drew the police and the fire department. The show was broken up during U.X.A.'s set. While no reason was given for the police appearance in the article, the arrival of the fire marshal with the police suggests that a violation of the fire code may have been the reason for the raid.<sup>137</sup> Police actions became a definable part of local punk culture. Punks talked about the police actions in

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<sup>135</sup> Robert Hilburn, "Police and Fans Disagree on Raid at Rock Show: Concertgoers Outraged but L.A.P.D. Defends Tactics," *The Los Angeles Times*, Part IV View, March 20, 1979, p. 1 and 10.

<sup>136</sup> Al Flipside, "Editorial," *Flipside*, no. 15, July, 1979, np.

<sup>137</sup> Paul Problem, "Mau Maus Party with U.X.A./ Smart Pill/ Black Hearts / Black Flag at the Masque August 12," *Flipside*, no. 16, October 1979, np.

zines and in songs. In the October 1980 issue of *Flipside*, in a regular column which reprinted song lyrics, the Gears song "Elk's Lodge Blues" appeared. The lyrics were, "Battle Stations it's Saturday night/ something cookin' downtown tonight" and warns fans to "wear a helmet if your [sic] planning to/ go out in the street."<sup>138</sup> The Black Flag song "Police Story" also addressed police violence aimed at punks. The song appeared on Black Flag's first album *Damaged*, released in 1981. The lyrics are more general than the lyrics for the Gear song. "This fucking city/ is run by pigs/ they take the rights away/ from all the kids/ understand / we're fighting a war we can't win/ they hate us, we hate them/ we can't win -- no way."<sup>139</sup> Police actions caused some punks to turn inward and focus on the outside antagonism they faced for being punks. This caused some to embrace underground culture rather than attempt to break into the parent culture.

Other major changes were taking place that aided this shift away from a Hollywood-centered scene. Brendan Mullen had run The Masque club since 1977. For a few years the club had provided a sense of unity for the Hollywood punk scene, but during the late 1970s The Masque and the effort to save it as a venue emerged as one center of the split. In the July 1978 *Slash* Mullen responded to concerns some had over the money from the 1978 benefit for The Masque. He stated that the city was simply waiting for a plan and that even the "local boys on the beat" seemed to be on board. The owner of the building was the holdup and Mullen was

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<sup>138</sup> "Words of Wisdom: Elks Lodge Blues Gears," *Flipside*, no 20, October 1980, np.

<sup>139</sup> Lyrics to this song can be found at "Black Flag: Police Story lyrics," *Lyrics.Time* <http://www.lyricstime.com/black-flag-police-story-lyrics.html>, (accessed June 10, 2010).

looking to have ownership transferred to the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Arts. Mullen encouraged local punks to write to the city council, the Hollywood revitalization committee, local papers, and to inform the Chamber of Commerce of what was happening with the building.<sup>140</sup> The following month's *Slash* reiterated the discussion over The Masque benefit money and the club itself. One reader named "Curious Boy" wrote and asked, "how much was made and second of all, in dollars and cents what was it spent on?" He seemed unimpressed by the plans to have the arts council take over the building and asked why they could not just use another building.<sup>141</sup> In the same issue, Mullen detailed the protracted legal battle surrounding the attempt to reopen The Masque reopening.<sup>142</sup> Far from breaking the law this first wave punk was keen to play by the rules. In doing so, he wished to position the scene as a net positive for Hollywood. The club gave teenagers a place to go and something to do. But by the summer of 1979 the city backed out of its promise to approve the building plans. In January 1979 -- a couple of months before the incident that precipitated a more permanent split between first wave and hardcore punks -- *Flipside* ran an editorial about the problems being encountered in trying to reopen the club. According to the article, "The old building code was not accepted by the city at the last minute." Brendan Mullen, attempting to play by the rules, hired a new architect for new

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<sup>140</sup> Brendan Mullen, "In Which Brendan Responds to the Accusing Public Finger: 'Where's the Money From the Benefit and When's the Masque Gonna Re-Open,'" *Slash*, vol. 1, no. 11, July, 1978, p.6.

<sup>141</sup> Curious Boy, "Letters," *Slash*, vol. 1, no. 12, August 1978, p. 6.

<sup>142</sup> Brendan Mullen, "Wot's Happening With the Masque... Next Chapter... Does Brendan Come Through or Not???", *Slash*, vol.1, no. 12, August 1978, p. 10.

plans to be made, and the rebuild was estimated to cost \$100,000.<sup>143</sup> Punks were falling out of favor even when they attempted to play by the rules.

If punks were becoming a "public menace", this might have to do with there being more of them around town. In the January 79 issue of *Flipside* Frankie discussed the state of the scene. Only The Dickies at this point had been signed to a major and "the rest is all underground." Despite this "underground" status, some 500 people regularly showed up to see local bands at the Other Masque (an alternative venue set up by Mullen). Frankie said, "If you have been to Club 88 in the past few weeks you would have seen complete sold out shows -- not filled with record company guests, or filler people with free comps, [but] sold out with kids willing to pay, and a line waiting to get in." Frankie listed several clubs all over Los Angeles where punk bands were becoming a regular feature. Other than Club 88, there was Hong Kong Cafe, the Bla Bla Cafe, and the Cuckoo's Nest in Orange County, the Squeeze in Riverside, and the Whiskey in Hollywood. The hope of the writer was that eventually the majors would take notice and sign some of the more successful punk acts.<sup>144</sup> By this time, bands were not just playing Hollywood, but all over L.A. and the suburbs. If it was just restricted to a small number of kids in Hollywood, this would not have been the case.

These changes in local punk scene coincided with music writers for *The Los Angeles Times* beginning to distinguish between first wave punk and hardcore bands. There was Patrick

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<sup>143</sup> "Masque," *Flipside*, no. 12, January 1979, np. Emphasis added.

<sup>144</sup> Frankie, "The State of the Scene--or What Will Summer Bring to L.A.," *Flipside*, no. 15, July 1979, np.

Goldstein's article about violence in the local punk scene. At the same time, others in *The Los Angeles Times* began to give some of the first wave bands a second look. These bands were talked about as "new wave" bands. How these bands defined themselves mattered little. In the summer of 1980 Robert Hilburn wrote a four part review of the L.A. punk/new wave scene in the weekly Calendar section of *The Los Angeles Times*. On June 22 he wrote a glowing review of the band X as they prepared to head off to a tour of the East coast and Europe. Their last two shows at the Whiskey were sold out with nearly 300 people turned away at the door. He called the band "punk-inspired" rather than punk. He described the attention the scene received from major labels. According to Hilburn about two dozen bands had recording contracts in part due to the success of the band The Knack's single, "My Sharona." Despite this he argued X had been "forced" to sign with *Slash* Records rather than with a major label. Success of a music scene was predicated on mainstream attention, not on the numbers at shows and success on an independent label. Hilburn also credited X and other first wave bands with the revival of the L.A. club circuit for smaller local bands. By 1976 the Whiskey had been closed to live bands. Other clubs -- such as The Starwood and The Roxy -- were almost to that point. The success of the local punk helped to revive these clubs for live music. But how Hilburn chose to describe this music scene was revealing. He preferred "new wave" over "punk". This was despite the subjects of his article using the term punk to describe themselves. This was perhaps an attempt to distance the bands he

liked from the newer hardcore bands.<sup>145</sup> This would indicate that "punk" was increasingly being coded as "hardcore punk." But Hilburn had not always been a fan of X, the band he spent so much time championing in 1980. In his article on the punk bands playing at the Elk's Lodge in 1978 -- a year before the St. Patrick's day Police riot -- he spared a single line for the band. He stated that, "The X band was mostly routine."<sup>146</sup>

Other media outlets began to notice punk as well. Most news reports that covered punk focused on hardcore bands. Gossip columnist Rona Barrett's 1980 interview with Chuck Dukowski of Black Flag (along with several other punks) was one example of the overall fearful tone regarding punk. Black Flag became one of the most recognizable hardcore bands during the 80s and Dukowski was often the public face of the band until Henry Rollins joined. The band played harder and faster than the earlier Hollywood bands, dressed "down" by Hollywood punk standards, and attracted a more male, aggressive crowd. Barrett said of punk "It is here in Los Angeles that punk has taken on hardly harmless and distinctly violent proportions." She said Black Flag had, "a particularly violent following." Despite Barrett's attempts to bait Dukowski, he handled himself well in the interview. When Barrett asked if punks were "part of the Nazi movement," he patiently explained that punks were not Nazis. In fact punks were calling the police fascists. He explained to her that he was college educated. His embrace of punk culture

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<sup>145</sup> Robert Hilburn, "X Marks the Heart of L.A.'s Rock Scene," *The Los Angeles Times*, Calendar sec., June 22, 1980, p. 1 and 72 - 73.

<sup>146</sup> Robert Hilburn, "A Positive Perspective on Punk," *The Los Angeles Times*, The View, Part IV, Tuesday, February, 1978, p. 1 and 8. The quote is on p. 8.

was from his anger about the state of affairs in American life. By the end of the interview, Barrett's initial nervous demeanor at sitting the same room as a supposedly dangerous punk had shifted to a much more reassured -- if not totally convinced -- tone.<sup>147</sup> Black Flag and other suburban hardcore bands were increasingly seen as authentically punk, even by a parent culture that was not all too happy about them.

If Barrett was somewhat reassured, not everyone got the memo. In 1982 KABC-TV in Los Angeles aired a news program which explored the local punk phenomenon. The provocative title, "We Destroy the Family: Punks Vs. Parents," belied the stated aim of "understanding punk." The focus was on the young, middle-class, and suburban make up of the punk scene and the violent content of the music. The program began with concert footage of the band Fear -- a band known for an over-the-top machismo pose. The focus on Fear revealed much about the motives of the program. The band provided an easy target for criticism with their openly aggressive lyrics and lead singer Lee Ving's open provocations to the crowd. The reporter discussed the song "Let's Have a War." The song's lyrics included "Let's Have a War/ Clean out this place/ It already started in the city/ Suburbia will be Just as Easy."<sup>148</sup> These could be interpreted as a kind of satire, the newscaster observed, but he nevertheless concluded that

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<sup>147</sup> The clip can be found at "Chuck Dukowski Interview from early era of Black Flag," Youtube.com, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ou1TD1O\\_8OA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ou1TD1O_8OA), (accessed March 28, 2010,). This interview appeared on the program *Television: Inside and Out*, aired in 1980. A description of the interview can be found in Jake Austen, *TV-A-Go-Go: Rock on TV from American Bandstand to American Idol*, (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2005), p. 182-185.

<sup>148</sup> Lyrics to this song can be found at "Let's Have a War," Lyrics.Time, <http://www.lyricstime.com/fear-let-s-have-a-war-lyrics.html>, (accessed March 31, 2010).



teenaged punks were too unsophisticated to understand such satire.<sup>149</sup> Both Rona Barrett's interview and the news report focused on the street riots or clashes between the police and punks. The blame was placed squarely on the punks and ignored the police role in the unrest. Footage of police/punk confrontations appeared in both, even as the second focused more on the effect punk supposedly had on families. In this way, the news programs subtly backed the position of the police regarding actions against punks.

If new police attention, lack of a centralized club for punks to gather, and negative press split the scene, the cracks can be found in these local zines. The later zines of the hardcore punk scenes were the connections between punks transnationally. The well established L.A. punk tabloid *Slash* rarely made distinctions between the hardcore bands and the first wave punk bands. They provided often favorable coverage for all who positioned themselves as punk. In 1978 *Slash* reviewed a show by Middle Class. The article pointed out the bands' Orange County origins ("where else?" it said). They performed with The Bags, The Germs, and The Controllers at The Larchmont in April of 1978.<sup>150</sup> The band received a longer review for a show with The Snot Puppies, The Reptiles, and The Germs at the "Lobotomy Night Number Two" held at the Whiskey (no date given). After a sarcastic view of punk life in 1978 ("how cynical we are.") the author -- who had been sitting with his back to the stage in an ostentatious display of jaded

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<sup>149</sup> "We Destory the Family: Punks Vs. Parents (1 of 3) 1982," Youtube.com, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zW1SGnB9TiQ>, (accessed March 28, 2010).

<sup>150</sup> "Live: The 'Hey, you Mean They Got Punks in Those Places?'" Dept." *Slash*, vol. 1, No. 11, July 1978, p. 28.

boredom -- described himself as shocked when Middle Class took the stage. He appreciatively said "The sound hit me in the back like a semi-truck that's lost its breaks in a downhill curve." He expressed some confusion when he saw the band. "I turned around after the obligatory delay that shows the tourists you are a jaded weary connoisseur and almost swallowed my Siouxi and the Banshees badge: Where were the safety pins? the electro shock hair? At least the ten pounds of chains around the scrawny necks?" The band, "...looked normal. Like chemistry class normal. Like writing a paper in the library normal." But "How come they sounded like twisted metal air raids and dynamite fumes? If you look like that you're not supposed to sound like that." In spite of the sarcastic comments on the bands and the scene, the author was not rejecting this new band but was impressed. The crowd was likewise convinced, "pogoing with genuine furor."<sup>151</sup> *Slash* seemed generally supportive of the new bands right until the last issue. Early hardcore bands like The Adolescents, Middle Class, China White, Circle Jerks, and Agent Orange all got mentioned in the "Local Shit" section in what turned out to be the final issue in 1980. The review of recent local events included coverage of a police raid of a punk festival out in Orange County, where many of the hardcore and first wave bands were slated to perform.<sup>152</sup> A round up of the new local bands revealed a wide selection of bands from the local scene. Along with bands like Castration Squad (which included longtime members of the scene such as Alice Bag, formerly of The

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<sup>151</sup> "Live: Lobotomy Night Number Two with The Snot Puppies, The Reptiles, Middle Class and The Germs at (where else??) The Whiskey," *Slash*, vol. 1, no. 11, July, 1978, p. 25.

<sup>152</sup> "Local Shit," *Slash*, vol. 3, no. 5, Summer, 1980, p. 6 -7.

Bags), newer hardcore bands like The Adolescents, The Descendants, and Circle Jerks were highlighted. Local rockabilly band The Blasters made the cut as did the East L.A. band The Brat, and proto-goth band 45 Grave. Some twenty-nine new bands were reviewed in that issue.<sup>153</sup> This final issue of *Slash* -- much like later hardcore punk zines -- included a section in that issue of international scene reports in acknowledgment of this new cultural underground.<sup>154</sup>

If *Slash* had an open stance towards all those who defined themselves as punk, the early hardcore fanzine *Flipside* became far more exclusive, yet more open to input from the punk community. The aim was to create community participation, hence the zines' motto "Be More than a Witness."<sup>155</sup> Early issues mirrored the structure of *Slash* with a news section, letters, reviews, and the like. The layout was a bit more amateurish -- pasted together and photocopied -- while *Slash* was a more professional looking tabloid style newspaper. Later, *Flipside* looked more like a low-cost, yet professional magazine -- with a glossy cover and newsprint on the inside. At the time the zine began, they reviewed the same bands as *Slash*. First wave punk bands and national punk bands were reviewed -- like the The Germs, Devo, and Blondie show at the Whiskey on October 2, 1977. Interestingly, one can see here a possible root of later hardcore punk aggression. One commenter, Lash, complained of being attacked by "some straight

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<sup>153</sup> "New L.A. Bands Update," *Slash*, vol. 3, no. 5, Summer 1980, p. 26 - 32.

<sup>154</sup> See especially pages 10 - 21, which covers San Francisco, Vancouver, New York, Britain and Germany. *Slash*, vol. 3, no. 5, Summer, 1980.

<sup>155</sup> This seems to appear regularly in the zine around 1980 or so.

asshole" who "clubbed" him "in the neck and kicked my legs out from under me."<sup>156</sup> Punk shows -- especially those with more well known national acts like Blondie -- were attracting non-punks. Non-punks showing up at shows might have helped to create a drive towards a more exclusive scene. The antipathy aimed at the "straight" who attacked Lash seems to indicate this sort of tension.

Eventually *Flipside* (both editors and readers) began to express dissatisfaction with the L.A. punk scene. In the introduction to the ninth issue -- which marked the first year anniversary -- editor Pooch expressed some hostility the zine had encountered over the past year. He said, "It has been a difficult job chronicling the L.A. scene in our altered tongue in cheek manner, because frankly we won't kiss asses to get ahead, and we're often misunderstood for it."<sup>157</sup> In the same issue was a letter from a suburban punk, which discussed urban punk's disdain for suburban punks. The author said, "I love punk rock!" but "I kinda live in the suburbs so people out here don't like it." He went on to say that "I don't look very punk... It seems lately when I go to the Whiskey, I'm looked down on because I don't look like everyone else." The editor expressed sympathy and offered advice for making friends in L.A. First, looking "punk" was "not really necessary." The editor told the writer that if they "hang out enough" and are "cool... you'll make friends."<sup>158</sup> This was published in 1978. The tension between the two factions were

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<sup>156</sup> "Koncert Reviews: Germs/Devo/Blondie," *Flipside*, no. 4, Nov. 1977, p. 7.

<sup>157</sup> "One Year Ago," *Flipside*, no. 9, np.

<sup>158</sup> A True Punker, "Oh So Happy in -- Suburbian Dreams," *Flipside*, no. 9, np.

not nearly as prominent then.

*Slash* continued to review all the local bands, both the newer hardcore bands and older first wave punk bands. Older punks expressed some antipathy towards younger hardcore punks. Mullen took a dig at *Flipside* in the August 1978 issue of *Slash*. He described himself as representing "the wishes of all (or nearly all, except for a few sour cheeses who make Xerox richer)" in an obvious reference to the fact that *Flipside* was still a paste and photocopy zine. Despite his seeming dislike of these younger punks, he did not exclude the readers of *Flipside* from punk. He said "This little community *must come together and love each other*."<sup>159</sup> Not all of the *Slash* readership was so kind. In the same issue a reader named Freon called the "rival" zine out regarding its negative view of art school students within the local punk scene. He said, "*Flipside* are fakers, they scream 'artsy fartsy' but I went to art school with that 'artsy fartsy' (to say the least) X-8 [a Flipside writer]. This picture is proof. ha haaaa."<sup>160</sup> *Slash*'s previously glowing view of the early hardcore band Middle Class was far less appreciative a month later in August of 1978. This might have been in part a response to what was becoming a growing split or it could have just been a case of differing opinions on the review staff. The band was described as being "monotonous" and "fine for the pogo set, but for the rest of us with the beer in hand it was somehow short on excitement."<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Mullen, "Wot's Happening With the Masque..." *Slash*, no. 1, vol. 12, August 1978, p. 10. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>160</sup> Freon, "Letters," *Slash*, no. 1, vol. 12, August 1978, p. 6.

<sup>161</sup> "The Duplicators, Middle Class, L.A. Shakers, and the Controllers at Larchmont Hall (still???)", *Slash*, vol. 1,

The new tensions within the punk scene can be found in the pages of *Flipside* as well. A letter from Mike in the May 1980 issue of *Flipside* complained of the fact that bands from his town of Fullerton were "dismissed" by Hollywood punks. He reminded readers "how long it took Hollywood to get going."<sup>162</sup> By the end of 1980 *Flipside* was connected to a larger audience, although it retained a local focus. Scene reports were becoming a larger portion of the magazine. Letters came in from outside the greater Los Angeles area. At the same time, as was evident with the "Nooze" section in October of 1980, authorities were increasingly cracking down. In part because of this, the emerging hardcore bands were finding it tougher to book shows. A Black Flag/D.O.A. (from Vancouver) show at The Whiskey was shut down when cops arrived on the scene to disperse the ticket holders waiting for the second show.<sup>163</sup>

By the early 1980s the split between the hardcore bands and the first wave punks was readily apparent in the pages of these two zines. Some of the early bands that had been part of the first wave punk scene in L.A. had either disbanded or signed with major labels. Some appeared on the new nation-wide television network, MTV. In the early days of MTV many of the major labels ignored the network and continued to focus on radio. Miles Copeland of I.R.S. Records discussed the role MTV played in breaking bands such as The Police and the bands he signed to I.R.S. Records. He said "So MTV basically went to whomever they could get --

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no. 12, August 1978, p.24.

<sup>162</sup> Mike, "Letters," *Flipside*, no. 18, May 1980, np.

<sup>163</sup> "Nooze," *Flipside*, no. 20, October 1980, np.

beggars can't be choosy -- and so MTV paid attention to The Police, to the punk bands. And in return, the punk bands paid attention to MTV because they were one of the few people who would play their stuff. And The Go-Go's totally benefited from this... MTV coincided with a new generation, with the punk generation, and the marriage worked. Then everybody woke up in the industry to what the power of MTV was."<sup>164</sup> Not everyone was as convinced of MTV as a net positive for punk. Exene Cervenka of X had a negative appraisal of MTV's role in the music industry. She pointed out the distinct lack of alternatives for her wave of punk bands. She said:

In life, no matter what you do, you have to deal with the reality outside the perfect world you're trying to create for yourself, and your friends, and your family, so going to see the Blasters and Gun Club play and drinking all night and listening to 78's is a wonderful thing, but then in the morning there is such a thing as MTV. Nobody liked it. Nobody wanted to be part of it. Everybody was dragged kicking and screaming into it. The more noble people, the hardcore bands, could just say 'fuck you' 'cause they already had a really strong network of kids who would go see them play and buy their records and follow them.<sup>165</sup>

Cervenka saw it as a deal with the devil that was unavoidable. Strangely, she acknowledged that alternatives existed, forged by the L.A. hardcore bands. The network she described was not just local, but in fact became transnational. Hardcore bands and their labels (like Ginn's SST) continued to produce albums outside the major label system (and many continue to do so). They were apparently oblivious to these realities described by Cervenka.

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<sup>164</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 276. Copeland states that big named major label acts like ZZ Top initially rejected MTV, but later appeared on the network once it was a proven boon to sales.

<sup>165</sup> Mullen and Spitz, *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, p. 276 - 277.

It took years of forging an interconnected network around the world, but by the early 1990s many punk bands -- and those influenced by punk bands -- were achieving success in terms of album sales and attention outside of the punk scene. This happened not because the world suddenly paid attention to punk, but because hardcore punk bands had created a translocal underground. It was with the success of bands with punk poses like Rancid and The Offspring, as well as classic hardcore punk bands like Bad Religion and Circle Jerks around the same time, that punk really became a recognized genre of music within the mainstream music industry. All of these bands were generally well known in the punk underground before having mainstream hits. Not long after proto-punk bands and later punk bands began to be inducted into the American Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. However, it has been all first wave punk bands that have been honored. But it was in fact the creation of this interconnected network which helped bands to break into the larger public consciousness. L.A. hardcore punk bands were at the forefront of this move from a marginal subculture to a transnational counter-culture. It was these hardcore punks that Ljubljana punks reached out to in the early 1980s.



#### 4. "LEPOTE MOJE DOMOVINE/THE BEAUTY OF MY HOMELAND" : HARDCORE PUNK IN LJUBLJANA

As we have seen, by the late 70s punk was a fixture in Communist Yugoslavia. In the early 1980s, Western hardcore punk bands were touring even some of the more inaccessible countries in Eastern Europe. Vancouver hardcore band D.O.A. toured Europe in 1984 and 1985. During that tour they played in two Communist states. Lead singer Joey Keithley (aka Joey Shithead) described both tours in his memoirs, *I, Shithead: A Life in Punk*. The latter tour of Poland in 1985 was in Keithley's estimation, "bizarre." He said of the four date Polish tour, "We were guided everywhere by our comrade Wojcek, and we were always the only band playing. Shows with crowds of around 300 people would start at six PM. Audiences didn't know any of our songs."<sup>166</sup> He described the daily life of the people he met along the way. When he first met Wojcek, the promoter was passed out drunk from half a bottle of vodka while waiting for the band to arrive in Poznan.<sup>167</sup> He described lineups for basic items as "a central feature of Polish life."<sup>168</sup> He also talked about the local Polish band Dezerter, a band they played with later in 1998 in post-Communist Poznan.<sup>169</sup> The picture that Keithley paints of Poland overall tends to be the most common perception of the Communist world -- intense state repression, few economic

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<sup>166</sup> Joey Keithley, *I, Shithead: A Life in Punk*, (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2003), p. 172.

<sup>167</sup> Keithley, *I, Shithead*, p. 171.

<sup>168</sup> Keithley, *I, Shithead*, p. 172.

<sup>169</sup> Keithley, *I, Shithead*, p. 173. An English language history of the band Dezerter can be found at "Dezerter," *Kill From the Heart*, [http://homepages.nyu.edu/~cch223/poland/dezerter\\_main.html](http://homepages.nyu.edu/~cch223/poland/dezerter_main.html) (accessed June 12, 2010). The band sold 50,000 copies of their first single released by the state label, Tonpress, in 1984.

opportunities, and widespread black-market activities in response to scarcity. This was not always the case in all Communist states.

The previous year's tour of a Communist country had a much different impression for Keithley. In 1984 DOA toured Yugoslavia where they played gigs in Ljubljana and Zagreb. When they arrived in Slovenia from Vienna, Keithley said of Ljubljana, "we were amazed at how prosperous it looked for being in a communist country. The cars seemed to be in good shape, and the shops were full of things to buy." More importantly was the audience for the band -- around 800 to 1000 at each show according to Keithley. While the 800 he stated came to the show might not seem like much, for a relatively small independent band traveling in a foreign country, that was not at all bad.<sup>170</sup> Unlike in Poland, the crowd seemed to know the music. Keithley said of the opening act (who he does not name), "They were the biggest trouble makers. They kept running across the stage and knocking over mike stands and monitors. I don't think they had seen too much punk rock, especially from North America, but they knew what to do." The band's show in Zagreb attracted nearly 1000 fans according to Keithley and "it was pretty much like the show in Ljubljana. Berserk!"<sup>171</sup> Not only did the reality of daily life in Yugoslavia's northern-most republic contrast starkly with that of Poland at around the same time, the fans seemed much more "punk" than the fans in Poland. Punk was part of the cultural

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<sup>170</sup> Keithley, *I, Shithead*, p. 143.

<sup>171</sup> Keithley, *I, Shithead*, p. 144. In a report for the tour *Maximum Rock n' Roll*, both shows drew about 800. See Ken Lester, "Crossing the Frontier of Music," *Maximum Rock n' Roll*, Issue 16, August 1984, np.

landscape by this time, with hardcore the predominant form. As we saw, hardcore evolved in Los Angeles when an increasingly large punk scene ran up against police brutality and other forms of community sanctions; in Ljubljana, a similar evolution occurred. While Igor Vidmar was writing articles praising Pankrti and not getting much attention, by the end of the 70s the press focused on punks a bit more. By the early 1980s punks (along with the art industrial band Laibach) were the topic of discussion in party congresses. Hardcore punks increasingly connected up with their international peers via music and the established punk counter-publics of the day. Their audience became not Yugoslavs, but punks -- no matter what their location.

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Punks came out early in support of their new musical passion. Vidmar wrote an article about punk in *Stop* in October of 1977, where he discussed the band Pankrti. The band had played a show at the Moščanske High School Gym in mid October. Much like others who supported early punk bands, Vidmar saw this band as a revival of rock music. Vidmar said of the band (and punk more generally) "If this is a return to the roots of rock, without the naive optimism of Bill Haley, Elvis and company, then it is punk." Furthermore, the antics of the band, which Vidmar calls "an anti-show", was a "parody and destruction of 'beautiful rocker behavior'."<sup>172</sup> Vidmar emerged as a staunch defender of punk, in addition to his role as DJ and music promoter. He discussed punk here in much the same way as early punks in the West. They

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<sup>172</sup> Igor Vidmar, "Punk po naše. Več kot moda?", *Stop*, October 27, 1977, Ljubljana, in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak, (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 105 - 106.

rejected the entrenched rock establishment. It was a kind of rebellion on a cultural level. Also Vidmar was already somewhat oriented transnationally. Much of the press in these early days -- especially around the show in Koper -- was simply dismissive of punk bands like Pankrti. Many simply compared the bands to British punks and were done with it.<sup>173</sup> Early supportive articles on punk came from popular culture magazines, although *Mladina* (a more general youth magazine out of Ljubljana) also proved supportive.

In the aftermath of the Koper concert described in the first chapter, some more mainstream media outlets began to pay attention to punk. It was here when the dismissive tone gave way to a more worried tone. The 1980s would not prove as kind to punks and other artistic outsiders. Arrests of punks who had a Nazi pose became the center of the moral panic around punk in the Ljubljana media. This "Nazi punk affair" provided the same hinge point as the Elk's Lodge Riot. Punk -- which began with perhaps tentative transnational ties -- became more underground and explicitly transnational in nature. The Nazi punk affair refers to an incident in the fall of 1981 involving the arrest of several punks who had been accused of writing a "Nazi manifesto." Dario Cortese wrote to *Maximum Rock 'n' Roll* about the band and the incident, "Some dumb punks thought it would be great to make some racist nazi manifesto."<sup>174</sup> The police in Ljubljana arrested members of a band by the name of Četrtri Reich [Fourth Reich]. Around the

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<sup>173</sup> An August 1977 article in *Antena* did just that, with a favorable view of Pankrti and other punks, and an unfavorable of the London punks in general. "Punk na Kodeljevem," *Antena*, jesni (fall) 1977, np, in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak, (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 106 - 108.

<sup>174</sup> Dario Cortese, "Yugoslavia Scene Report," *Maximum Rocknroll*, Issue 7, July 1983, np.

same time, graffiti was appearing around Ljubljana. Some of that graffiti included swastikas. It was in the media that these two separate events, along with the stabbing of a 14 year old boy, were conflated into a moral panic as we shall see. Gregor Tomc described some of the fallout of this event. He described "police repression on a wide scale," and said "If punks developed a habit of meeting in a certain pub or disco, this was a sure sign that it would soon be closed down by the authorities." One 16 year old punk was beaten for refusing to admit he was a Nazi.<sup>175</sup> In a relatively recent online interview with Predrag Delibasich of the band Bamodi<sup>176</sup> Igor Vidmar dismissed the band at the center of the controversy Četrtri Reich. The band apparently never played a show and never recorded an album. Indeed videos of other bands from punk's early days in Slovenia are plentiful, none seem to exist for this band. Nor was any mention of the band outside of their arrest found in scene reports sent from Yugoslavia. The band were not at all players on the scene. Despite their lack of pull or popularity on the punk scene, the band's appearance and apparent ties to Nazism had real world consequences for punks in the Ljubljana scene. Much like the Elk's Lodge riot and the police repression that followed, this incident separated the true believers from those who did not take punk as seriously.

Vidmar called their arrest and trial as "a show trial situation, totally misconstrued and media blowup [sic]: one of the three -- a singer of Ljubanski Psi -- had absolutely nothing to do

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<sup>175</sup> Tomcs, "The Politics of Punk," *Independent Slovenia*, p. 121.

<sup>176</sup> Although not date is given for the interview, the webpage for the band is copyrighted 2007. I would assume the interview occurred sometime in early 2000s. See *Bamodi*, <http://members.iinet.net.au/~predrag/index.html> (accessed August 4, 2010).

with 'Fourth Reich'. The other two had, but this so-called 'band' never ever performed publicly."

Vidmar said that he had come to the band's practice before the arrest and had assured the band

that "they would never play publicly, as far as I and Radio Student was concerned, due to the

stupid bigotry of their lyrics...and then I forgot all about them." This suggests the band indeed

had some actual Nazi overtones to their music and appearance. Vidmar clearly indicated that

these guys were seen as unacceptable by the local punk scene. However, the media saw them as

representative of the entire punk scene in Ljubljana following their arrest. It made it easier to tie

punks to something that was politically unacceptable. According to Vidmar what followed the

arrest of this band "was a massive wave of heavy police oppression." In the end, he said "The

consequences -- although Radio Student and some youth papers denounced this plot [the band's

Nazi pose] openly, and the three arrested were later absolved of all accusations due to 'lack of

evidence' -- was that the 'movement' lost some people."<sup>177</sup> He was not the only one to assume the

band were Nazis. With the benefit of hindsight, Vidmar saw this as a major event. But Cortese

largely dismissed it at the time as "only two were arrested."<sup>178</sup> Vidmar's view has the privilege of

time; when he discussed this issue, he knew what the fallout had been. The long term

consequences were well known. Cortese was writing from much closer to the actual events. If

some had abandoned punk, perhaps Cortese would not have seen this as a big loss; despite this, it

had enough impact on the local punk scene for him to mention it to other punks. There was

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<sup>177</sup> "Igor Vidmar," *Uzurlikzurli e-zine*, <http://members.iinet.net.au/~predrag/vidmar.html> (accessed June 23, 2010).

<sup>178</sup> Dario Cortese, "Yugoslavia Scene Report," *Maximum Rocknroll*, Issue 7, July 1983, np.

nothing to indicate that the band was anything more than an odd outlier from the rest of the punk scene. Vidmar showed a willingness in his interaction with the band to police the scene from this sort of element. The focus on this band by the authorities would only have increased the scene's sense of persecution from the parent culture.<sup>179</sup>

It was with this event in 1981 that punk began to receive more scrutiny from the mainstream media. While the majority of the documents from the late 70s came from music and culture magazines, more documents after the so-called Nazi punk affair came from major newspapers discussing punk, and even from party documents. *Nedeljski dnevnik*, *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, and *Delo* were some of the dailies which began to engage with topic of punk, among others. Punks and their supporters often wrote letters responding to articles in these and other papers. One article from 1981 called punk a "dangerous fashion", and implied it was a capitalist's plot, "a bunch of evil seducers... which behind it is gentlemen in top hats and tuxedos, with a tool called punk bands stultifying crowds."<sup>180</sup> It was later that month, that the Cultural Plenum of the ZSMS (the youth wing of the Socialist party) discussed punk and youth activities in culture. In the overview of the meeting there was an attempt to analyze punk's impact on youth culture. It stated both sides of the argument thus far -- that punk was either a foreign capitalist plot or an authentic working class movement -- were absurd. However, punk within the context of the

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<sup>179</sup> Michelle Brattain brought this point to my attention.

<sup>180</sup> Sonči Globokar, "Nevarna moda," *Nedeljski dnevnik*, April, 11, 1981, p. 6, in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak, (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 158.

meeting was being discussed as a problem of "social alienation" in "the youth organization." The meeting sought to address the problem of alienation amongst youth. Punk was but a symptom of that alienation.<sup>181</sup> The party was not supportive of punk, yet did not code it as some foreign subversion of the state. It was only with the new media focus on punk that the party addressed it seriously.

Despite the more measured tone taken by the party, the media did much to undermine the punk scene. Although there were actual arrest of some punks for their racism, the Nazi punk affair was mostly a product of media hype. The article that changed the way the media perceived punk was an article written by Zlatko Šetinc. We should not assume his objectivity regarding punk; these were not just the words of a concerned journalist and citizen. Gregor Tomc described Šetinc as "the son of a high ranking Communist official and a man with close connections to the police."<sup>182</sup> It is unclear whether his background would have been well known or if he was given this assignment in order to discredit the punk scene by some higher up. What is clear is that for him, punk was more than just a symptom of youthful alienation; it was a manifestation of a real social problem. In November of 1981 in the paper *Nedeljski dnevnik*, Šetinc examined the torture and stabbing of a 14 year old boy by some older cohorts, some graffiti that included swastikas, and the punks that had been arrested for Nazi ties (Četrți Reich).

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<sup>181</sup> Kulturni Plenum ZSMS, "O kulturni politiki ZSMS in dejavnosti mladih na pročju kulture," *Kulturni Plenum*, brochure, Ljubjana, April 1981, in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak, (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 188.

<sup>182</sup> Tomc, "The Politics of Punk," p. 120.



These three incidents were not connected. Yet he linked them rhetorically in this article. He attempted to link punk with both criminality and politics contrary to the mainstream. He asserted punks often had anarchist -- and more shockingly -- fascist leanings. Images of British punks, the graffiti that had recently been found around the city, the stabbing, and the arrests of the members of Četrti Reich were his evidence. It was a case of foreign subversion. He pointed to the relationship between what were thought to be punks (but were most likely right wing skinheads) and the British National Front who were making waves in Great Britain at this time.<sup>183</sup> The connection to British punk (erroneously conflated with the skinhead foot soldiers of the British National Front) was something he said that local punks "do not deny." He admitted that punks often take anti-fascist stances (he mentioned the Dead Kennedy's song, "Nazi Punk, Fuck off") but still insisted that punk could be a vector for the infiltration of fascism. The focus on fascism was an attempt to discredit punk as a youth culture and to rally popular opinion. He gave no real evidence for this viewpoint. Nonetheless, he compared punk concerts to "Goebbel's Nazi youth rallies." The graffiti, he claimed, consisted of "pro-Nazi slogans and signs." Fascism was not the only problem with punks. Moral decline was also a concern. Some of the young men involved in some of these incidents were "aged 14 to 19 years" and possibly undereducated. He pointed out that several went to technical school. More importantly, some had "chaotic family lives." The

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<sup>183</sup> The National Front made waves in the late 1970s into the 1980s, often drawing on right wing skinhead as foot soldiers. There is a website dedicated to the history of "The Battle of Lewisham" in August of 1977, when the National Front staged marches through the majority black neighborhood of Lewisham, which led to battles between racists and anti-racists. See Lewisham '77, <http://lewisham77.blogspot.com/> (accessed August 4, 2010).

problem was not isolated to these few youths. Rather this was evidence of a crisis of values in Yugoslavia. "Youth rebellion in the West," he asserted, "was quite understandable." But youths in Yugoslavia would have "no reason" to rebel against their families and schools (and implicitly society), if they were being properly trained.<sup>184</sup> Even though it was tailored to an audience presumed to be on board with the Socialist ideal in Yugoslavia, the article was similar to the moral panic articles about punk in American newspapers. The major difference was that the blame was not placed only on the family, but was shared with society as a whole.

Other commentators in Yugoslavia took the tone of this article and ran with it. In an editorial at the end of January, 1982 Kristina Lovrenčič penned an editorial called "Ominous Sign on the Wall." Lovrenčič had seen a television documentary about the Nazis. Not long after, she heard of punks painting swastikas on walls in Ljubljana. She said some punks "renounced the painting of the swastika," but this did not convince her of their anti-fascism or at least their worth as human beings. She took pains to remind the reader of the meaning of punk -- "something bad, worthless, miserable." While not reaching the same level of social panic over punk as Šetinc's article, Lovrenčič had reached much the same conclusion regarding Yugoslav youths who embraced it.<sup>185</sup> Punk was being coded as a serious social problem in Slovenia.

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<sup>184</sup> Zlatko Šetinc, "Problemi mladega rodu so spet razburkali duhove: Nam je kdo podtaknil sedemnajstletnike, ki v zabavo mučijo sošolca? Kje bomo začeli iskati krivce," *Nedeljski dnevnik*, November 11, 1981, p. 3, in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak, (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 222 - 226.

<sup>185</sup> Kristina Lovrenčič, "Uvodnik: Zlovešče znamenje na zidu," *7 D*, January 28, 1982, in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak, (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 304 - 306.

Violence and fascism were seen as being part of punk culture, much like in Los Angeles. It was these similar approaches from the parent culture towards addressing punk that helped to drive punks in different places together. Punks turned away from their parent cultures and towards each other. Notice this cut across economic and political boundaries.

Such articles elicited a response from punks. The debate was not top down and one way. Igor Vidmar tended to be on the forefront of such reactions. He responded on his radio show, *Rock Fronta* (which aired on Radio Študent). He mocked the panicked tone of the article, which he said "calls for help of the silent majority."<sup>186</sup> On the radio program, he was perhaps preaching to the choir. He was directing his comments towards other punks and those who were sympathetic enough to tune in to his program. But Vidmar participated in other forums as well, and this included those not directed at other punks, but at non-punks. He wrote directly to the *Nedelj dnevnik* on November 29th, 1981 to respond to some of the negative press about punk. He highlighted the various anti-racist and anti-fascist activities of some well known punks. Johnny Rotten's anti-racist credentials and his involvement in the Anti-Nazi League was proof positive that punks were not fascist. He likewise objected to the comparison between punk shows and Goebbels's youth rallies. He wondered if the article got the picture of British punks from "a source which does not distinguish between punks and skinheads."<sup>187</sup> Others echoed Vidmar's

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<sup>186</sup> Igor Vidmar, "Rock Fronta," *Radio Študent*, November 22, 1981, in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak, (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 226 - 229.

<sup>187</sup> Igor Vidmar, "Pisma bralcev," *Nedeljski dnevnik*, November 29, 1981, in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak, (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 235 - 237.

criticism in the pages of youth magazines. Vojko Flegar also responded to Šetinc's article in *Mladina*. He positioned *Nedeljski dnevnik* as not much more than a propaganda mouthpiece for the authorities, and said of the article that it used "the language of institutions."<sup>188</sup> Others objected to Šetinc's characterization of punks in Slovenia. Others wrote in directly to the newspaper. Letters from Marine Gržinić and Aine Šmid appeared in November, 1981 *Nedeljski dnevnik*. Gržinić and Šmid criticized the mainstream press in Slovenia. Media outlets such as *Delo*, *ND (Nedeljski dnevnik)*, and *RTV* contrasted markedly from *Radio Študent*, *Mladina*, and *The Tribune* in their treatment of punk as a topic of discussion. These former outlets have created a "one-dimensional problem", and had not honestly addressed "different views of events".<sup>189</sup> By late 1981 punk became a hot topic of public conversation. Punks and their supporters were not silent about the media's engagement with punk culture. A back and forth existed between punks and the mainstream culture. While people like Šetinc had somewhat of a larger audience, punks did not back down from defending their culture in the public realm against such attacks.

Other events in underground culture in and around Ljubljana would not help punks to escape the fascist label. The band Laibach -- who straddled both the popular music and arts realm -- began to play with fascist imagery around this time. Laibach often performed songs in

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<sup>188</sup> Vojko Flegar, "Prejeli smo pismo: Namesto Sex pistolov o revoleraših," *Mladina*, no. 47, November 26, 1981 in *Punk Pod Slovenci*, ed. Neža Malečkar and Tomaž Mastnak, (Ljubljana: KRT, 1985), p. 226 - 229.

<sup>189</sup> In *Punk Pod Slovenci* it is written as 1984, but this seems to be a misprint.

German and wore military uniforms. The name of the band was the German name for Ljubljana. Most would not describe Laibach as punk now, but as in L.A., categories were not as clear when the band came on the scene in 1980. The band's biographer Alexie Monroe argued that they were initially considered a punk band.<sup>190</sup> Despite being lumped into the same category as punks, their pose was far more ambiguous than that of most of the early punk bands -- intentionally so. In 1983 the band gave an interview on Slovenian TV. According to Monroe, "Laibach appeared in full uniform and armbands... [interviewer Jure] Pengov upbraided the group for their use of German language and imagery at a time when the Slovene minority in Carinthia 'have to fight for each word and sign' -- a reference to Austrian nationalist group resistance to public bilingualism, even in majority areas of Carinthia [Austria]."<sup>191</sup> Not long after this, the band's name was banned in Slovenia. Later, the band became the focus of a letter writing campaign by the partisan veteran's association. Monroe argued that the letter writing campaign intensified with Laibach's name being legalized in 1986.<sup>192</sup> By this time Laibach was no longer grouped together with punk bands. Likewise it was evident that a split between punk and new wave had already occurred in Yugoslavia. The similar "genrefication" that happened in the Western subculture of punk had occurred in Slovenia. In both cases, hardcore became the predominant punk outlook.

The outcome of this media attention and arrests by the police was the establishment of the

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<sup>190</sup> Alexei Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), p. 207.

<sup>191</sup> Monroe, *Interrogation Machine*, p. 160 - 161.

<sup>192</sup> Monroe, *Interrogation Machine*, p. 168 - 169.

more underground confrontational form of punk in the form of hardcore. By 1983 and 1984 punks in Yugoslavia had a well developed underground scene. If earlier punks were positioning themselves in connection with the London punk scene, these later punks more often looked to America -- especially the hardcore scenes becoming more common across the country. This was despite easier access to British punk music. Branimir Nedeljkovic of Belgrade said that "Punks here mostly listen to English music, because American records cost a lot more, due to import taxes." But American bands were still popular. He said "The Dead Kennedys are the most popular U.S. band, but some tapes have been circulating of M.D.C., Minor Threat, 'Boston Not L.A.'"<sup>193</sup> Many of the punk bands that appeared in the wake of this incident looked and sounded more like the L.A. hardcore bands. First wave punk bands such as Pankrti had a far poppier sound. The music was not nearly as hard or fast. Later bands -- influenced by American hardcore -- played harder and faster music. Bands like Ljubljana's Tožibabe and III. Kategorija were two of the hardcore bands that were popular with punks in Ljubljana.<sup>194</sup> Tožibabe was an all female hardcore band. In addition to playing what was recognizable hardcore punk music, the women in the band dressed quite provocatively -- often in lingerie. III. Kategorija played a hard edged thrash brand of hardcore punk. This band looked much like their Western hardcore counterparts -- a bit more like "regular kids." These punks also began to connect more directly with their

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<sup>193</sup> Branimir Nedeljkovic, "Scene Report: Belgrade," *Maximum Rock n' Roll*, Issue 7, July 1983, np.

<sup>194</sup> Songs by both bands can be found online. For Tožibabe see "Tožibabe - Tistega Lepega Dne," *Youtube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgTQIMItm7k&NR=1> (accessed July 4, 2010). For III Kategorija see "III. Kategorija - Vizija," *Youtube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrNNe-L2TnU> (accessed July 4, 2010).

Western counterparts via scene reports sent to Western zines and concerts by Western punk bands in Yugoslavia. A few months later in that same year, Dario Cortese (the same punk who had addressed the Nazi punk affair two issues earlier) discussed the rise of hardcore punk in Ljubljana. He reported on a gig held at the youth center, in which "four hardcore bands, and two 'suspect' bands" played. He said, "A lot of people were really confused because they had never heard anything like this before." He said of the final band that played, "Finally, O'Pizda appeared, who are more old style punk, and nothing special." Only pictures of the hardcore punk bands appeared in the scene report. A flyer from the show was also included with the report. The concert was called a "hard-core koncert" with the hardcore bands being given top billing.<sup>195</sup> Both Cortese in Ljubljana and Nedeljkovic in Belgrade worked hard to position themselves toward what was becoming the predominant punk norm -- hardcore.

It was during this time that hardcore punk bands in Yugoslavia began to turn towards independent labels to produce and promote their music. The Slovenian independent label FV Založba was one of the first in Yugoslavia. The label was started in 1985 by the Slovenian EBM (Electronic Body Music) band Borghesia.<sup>196</sup> The label released a compilation of hardcore bands in 1985. It included bands such as Tožibabe, III. Kategorija, and U.B.R.<sup>197</sup> They also released Tožibabe's first single in 1986.<sup>198</sup> These bands actively crafted an image and sound that a punk

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<sup>195</sup> Dario Cortese, "Scene Report: Yugoslavia," *Maximum Rock n' Roll*, Issue 9, October 1983, np.

<sup>196</sup> Terens Štader, "What is FV?" *FV Music*, <http://www2.arnes.si/fv/index2.html>, (accessed July 4, 2010).

<sup>197</sup> Various Artists, *Hardcore Ljubljana*, FV Založba, LP, 1985, FV 002.

<sup>198</sup> Tožibabe, *Dežuje*, FV Založba, EP, 1986, FV 003.

from the West would easily recognize as hardcore. In January 1984, a scene report from Yugoslavia filed by Tomi, David, and Gregor discussed the Italian label Attack Records. The label was run by the band RAF Punk who had recently played in Ljubljana. While it was an Italian label, some hardcore bands from Yugoslavia released records on the label, including U.B.R.'s 7inch EP *Corpus Delecti*.<sup>199</sup> According to the report, "Punks came from all over Yugoslavia for this." Local bands Stres D.A., Odpadki civilizacije, and U.B.R. (all bands that had played the first hardcore gig from the October 1983 scene report) opened for the Italian band. The writers stressed the split in the scene. They said, "The media and older punks hate us because we are all younger, and because we've developed our own ways." They then invite their Western readers to come to Yugoslavia.<sup>200</sup> The authors of this scene report stressed a couple of things. First, was their love of hardcore punk music as a distinct genre. Second, they did not think that the media or older punks understood them. Their rebellion was aimed not just at society, highlighted by the fact that the Italian band were "anarcho-punks", but at older punks as well.

As we can see from the above scene reports, the translocal dimension of hardcore punks can be found in the pages of West coast punk zines in the early 1980s. Scene reports were more than just outlining shows and releases for local bands. It was about sharing the local community with the transnational punk community and proving their punk authenticity via shared music,

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<sup>199</sup> U.B.R., *Corpus Delecti*, U.B.R., Vinyl, APR 7.

<sup>200</sup> Tomi, David, and Gregor, "Scene Report: Yugoslavia," *Maximum Rock n' Roll*, Issue 11, January 1984, np.



style, and communities. This was done in part to show authenticity, as well as to find a means to exchange physical goods. *Maximum Rock n' Roll* began to receive somewhat regular scene reports by 1983. The initial report came in two parts, one with a focus on the north of the country -- the three city triangle of Ljubljana, Rijeka, and Zagreb -- while Belgrade received a separate report. The Yugoslavia report gave historical background on the punk scene for their Western readers. They discussed the Nazi punk affair a few years prior, and the problems had by hardcore punks regarding recording and promoting. It also gave a broad overview of the Yugoslavian political system, which the writer, Dario Cortese emphasized "...is not under the control of the USSR..." As we saw, the Nazi punk affair was shrugged off by Cortese. The punks "weren't in jail long." He also described the media's treatment of punk. Punks were viewed as "racists and totalitarians" and "scum of the earth." He did not connect the media's view of punk with the Nazi punk affair. In fact he emphasized the fact that neither he nor anyone he knew had any real problems with the police. At the same time, he mentioned more arrests of those suspected of Nazi connections. However it is unclear whether or not these punks were Nazis or not.<sup>201</sup> Perhaps much like in L.A. collective action against punks by the police was becoming a routine feature of punk life. If so, this would have pushed punks even closer together. It gave them another shared cultural feature -- state repression. The second half of the scene report came from Branimir Nedeljkovic in Belgrade. His report was more focused on the problems faced by local punks

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<sup>201</sup> Dario Cortese, Scene Report: Yugoslavia," *Maximum Rock n' Roll*, no. 7, July 1983, np.

within the context of the punk scene. Little mention was made of problems encountered by Belgrade punks regarding the authorities. He tells the readers of Belgrade's local punk history and positions the scene as authentically hardcore, in part by his dismissal of bands that began as punk but then "went pop."<sup>202</sup> The fact that the first half of the scene report mentions the second half would seem to indicate that there was enough exchange happening between different punk scenes in the different republics to warrant working together on some level. The shift to hardcore moved all punks closer together. However, the Belgrade scene seemed to have their own initiative. Another scene report came from Belgrade a year later in 1984. This report was written by Rista, but translated and sent to the magazine by Tica, as "Rista is in jail today for writing graffiti in his factory: freedom/fuck the system. But he will join us soon." This hints at continuing problems punks had with authorities all over Yugoslavia, not just Ljubljana. Rista stated that "Punks here are totally pessimistic because they were totally boycotted by the mass media, and had numerous hassles with the police government, and hooligans. This is in contrast to Ljubljana, where the youths and political organizations cooperate in putting on concerts, etc." It seemed that Belgrade punks had little, if any unity when compared with the Ljubljana punks, who appeared to have had some institutional support.<sup>203</sup>

By 1984 Yugoslav punks were semi-regularly sending in scene reports to *Maximum Rock n' Roll*. There also seemed to be a single individual coordinating the efforts to present local

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<sup>202</sup> Branimir Nedeljkovic, "Scene Report: Belgrade," *Maximum Rock n' Roll*, no. 7, July 1983, np.

<sup>203</sup> Rista, "Scene report: Yugoslavia," *Maximum Rock n' Roll*, no. 15, July 1984, np.

scenes on the translocal punk stage. In October 1984 David Krzisznik in Ljubljana issued that months' scene report from Ljubljana. It also carried an interview with the band Arhivska Zabava. Krzisznik wrote the report and conducted the interview. He also published the fanzine, "Vrnitev Odpisahin" in Ljubljana. Separate reports from Belgrade, Subotica, Novi Sad, Zenica, and Pula were included as well. However, rather than being sent individually to *Maximum Rock n' Roll*, these were collected by Krzisznik and sent together as a group. Enough of a hardcore scene had developed to warrant a more unified presentation to punks in other places.<sup>204</sup> The scene report in *Maximum Rock n' Roll* 20 from December 1984 was also filed by David Krzisznik. In this report he agreed that Belgrade punks lacked institutional support, but saw this as a boon to hardcore bands operating in the margins. Subotica likewise had "an explosion" of bands. In Ljubljana, the band Niet received positive attention from the mainstream press, and seemed to have a popular following. They were at least mainstream enough for Krzisznik to have rejected them as an authentically hardcore band.<sup>205</sup> The trajectory of punks in Ljubljana appears markedly similar to those in L.A. -- from a marginal subculture, which received some support in the mass media, to an underground, translocal phenomenon.

*Maximum Rock n' Roll* was not the only West coast zine to receive international punk scene reports, indicating that this was not the only zine to reach an international audience.

*Flipside* also received scene reports from around the world. The magazine predated *Maximum*

<sup>204</sup> David Krzisznik, "Scene Report: Yugoslavia," *Maximum Rock n' Roll*, no. 18, October 1984, np.

<sup>205</sup> David Krzisznik, "Scene Report: Yugoslavia," *Maximum Rockn' Roll*, no. 20, December 1984, np.

*Rock n' Roll* by some five years. However, it was more focused on the American punk scene for a longer period. Early on, it did branch out of the West Coast scene. The July 1979 issue had scene reports from North Carolina, San Francisco, New York, and a larger section on local shows.<sup>206</sup> The October 1979 issue covers more local scenes -- Orange County, San Diego -- and has a separate section in the magazine for Toronto and New York.<sup>207</sup> Larry the Punk filed a scene report from New Orleans in the August 1980 issue.<sup>208</sup> The same issue had two competing reports from Texas.<sup>209</sup> As you can see, most of these are American scenes, with the West of Canada taken into consideration; however, *Flipside* was acknowledging punks from outside the local scene.

Scene reports from Yugoslavia did not arrive in the pages of *Flipside* until almost the middle of the decade. By this time there was a very definitive transnational punk scene. Belgrade punk Silvije Osim described the lack of support for punks there and the institutional support Ljubljana punks received from the Student Cultural Center (SKUC). According to Osim, "They are trying to popularize punk and other kinds of non-commercial but good music. They have a radio station [Radio Študent] and that is a good way to popularize punk. They are also organizing concerts such as: Rattus, D.O.A., Anti-Nowhere League, Discharge, Siouxsie and the Banshees.

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<sup>206</sup> "Scene Reports and Show Reviews," *Flipside*, Issue 15, July 1979, np.

<sup>207</sup> "Scene Reports," *Flipside*, Issue 16, October 1979, np.

<sup>208</sup> Larry the Punk, "New Orleans Music in the 80s", *Flipside*, Issue 19, August 1980, np.

<sup>209</sup> Henry Wild Dog, "Texas Correspondant Credibility: Arguments in Favor of Proposition 8," and Insolin Gretle, "Texas Correspondant Credibility: Arguments Against Proposition 8," *Flipside*, Issue 19, August 1980, np. The two reports do not seem to get along by the dueling reports.

And most important, they are recording bands and distributing cassettes."<sup>210</sup> If *Maximum Rock n' Roll* dominated the transnational punk scene, *Flipside* set the tone for how punk would be covered -- from the local level, with the input from punks paramount to the role of experts on what mattered musically. *Maximum Rock n' Roll* was based on *Flipside*. Both zines were important in the connections of punk as a transnational counter-culture.

By sending West Coast American punk zines scene reports, Yugoslav punks reached across transnational borders to make those connections and position themselves as authentically punk. But they made pains to position themselves as authentically hardcore punk, rather than just punk. They wrote in about the music they were listening to, sharing on cassettes, and trying to make that would connect hardcore punks everywhere. This scene was more underground, aimed at doing as much on their own as possible. The tone set by these West Coast zines became the punk norm to which other punks conformed.

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<sup>210</sup> Silviye Osim, "Scene Report: Yugoslavia," *Flipside*, no. 44, November 1984, np.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Punk as a subculture was a phenomenon that flourished in response to an unresponsive recording industry. As punks ran up against mainstream opposition -- including police actions and media antagonism, along with some bands being picked up by majors while others were ignored -- they hardened the subculture into a counter-culture. Although it began as a music critic phenomenon, the cases of L.A. and Ljubljana illustrate that punk was appropriated by musicians and fans in order to express themselves through a shared collective culture. This eventually led to some of the early punks dropping out and a reorientation to a more insular counter-culture. Most interesting about the similarities between the trajectories of L.A. and Ljubljana punks was what prompted this reorientation -- the focus of the mainstream cultures in both places.

In L.A. punk came to town in the mid 1970s. With the exception of a few articles in the L.A. Times, punks did not gain any larger attention from the local mainstream media until 1978. By this time the city had several zines, an (at times beleaguered) popular club, and helped to revive the Hollywood music establishment for non-major label acts. At about the same time that local bands began to sign to major labels, punks in the suburbs arrived on the scene playing a faster and harder version of punk, dubbed hardcore punk. Bands like Middle Class and Black Flag eventually set the tone for these newer suburban bands. As these harder bands gained attention in the mainstream culture, a subsequent police crackdown occurred -- the first instance

being the "police riot" in March 1979. Police actions became a regular feature of punk life in L.A. These realities set the tone for hardcore punk into the 1980s. Hardcore punks looked inward, yet reached out to far flung places to reinforce their identity as punks.

The case of Ljubljana unfolded in similar ways. Bands were initially influenced by Western bands (most often London punk bands) and received some marginal attention from the Yugoslav music industry and media. The scene was initially ignored or at best dismissed by those not directly involved. One event seemed to provide a hinge point from a marginalized subculture to one with negative connotations. The arrest of several punks for being Nazis -- tied to the murder of a fourteen year old boy and swastika graffiti around the city -- was the focus of a cultural panic rhetorically tied to punk. It was here that the mainstream media began to pay attention to punks, but only in regards to violence and assumed Nazi affiliations. The attention eventually led to punks who did not drop out of the scene either taking the more acceptable "new wave" road or the less acceptable "hardcore" road. Of the two hardcore was the more underground, counter-cultural phenomenon in the case of Ljubljana. Here was when the members of this scene reached out to other hardcore punks around the world by conforming to a collective understanding of punk crafted in the pages of punk zines.

By the mid-1980s hardcore punks had their own underground subculture, complete with independent labels and counter-publics. Although some punks participated in national oppositional politics of the day, many punks just focused on their local and growing

transnational public. They had their own communal signs that could be understood across national borders, as well as a common history that could be discussed or debated amongst punks. Despite this egalitarian system, this should not efface the fact that the U.S. (as in many other cultural realms) dominated the definition of punk. As hardcore punks in L.A. closed ranks, they simultaneously set the direction for punks world-wide for the next decade or so. This may not have been the intent, but it nevertheless seemed to have been the outcome. Anglo-American punks were the trend setters for the counter-culture, at least in regards to how punks in places like Ljubljana positioned themselves for their Western audience. These punks were appropriating a language, style, and music which helped them to express their frustrations about their daily lives.

More importantly, these reorientations by both scenes led to a more uniform punk that proliferated in the 1980s. Despite this shared common culture, there was no real consensus about what punk meant, either musically or culturally. Debates about the meaning of punk, the role of violence in punk, the authenticity of this band or that, basic punk history, other post-punk genres, and the mass media's engagement with punk proliferated in the pages of well known zines like *Flipside* and *Maximum Rock n' Roll*. Many punks also took the maxim "do-it-yourself" to heart and created their own media, their own labels, their own clubs and their own scenes during the course of the 1980s, along with their own notions of what was or was not "punk." A variety of mainstream and underground bands today have appropriated the term punk for themselves. The



"dead" punk of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame co-exists with smaller specialty punk labels like Artifix Records or Rubric Records.<sup>211</sup> In addition, web based companies such as *CD Baby* which distributes CDs for independent bands, *Bandcamp*, which provides space for digital album sales, and the proliferation of social networking websites like *MySpace* and *Facebook* have made it easier for musicians to independently connect with fans outside of the traditional routes for the music industry. According to an article posted on *Digital Music News*, "a total of 105,000 new full-length albums were released in the year 2008, a fourfold gain from the earlier 2000s. And of that pot, just 6,000 releases sold 1,000 units or more in the first year."<sup>212</sup> These numbers seem to include both the majors and the independent labels and artists. It is clear from this that the digital revolution is changing the industry in remarkable ways. Many artists who normally would have stuck it out with the major label system, are taking the classic hardcore punk ethos to heart. D.I.Y and the process of creating a translocal community to share music and culture has become the rallying cry of more than just punks. This transnational way of creating art seems to be the longest lasting legacy of hardcore punk rock.

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<sup>211</sup> Artifix is dedicated to "releasing vintage punk rock from the early years as well as some new releases by legendary bands." "News," *Artifix Records*, <http://www.artifixrecords.com/> (accessed June 23, 2010). Rubric is a New York label started in 1999, that released albums by more current bands, such as Gogol Bordello's early releases. "Welcome," *Rubric Records*, <http://rubricrecords.hasawebstore.com/> (accessed June 23, 2010).

<sup>212</sup> Paul Resnikoff, "Just How Many Releases? These Numbers May Scare You..." *Digital Music News*, January 3, 2010, <http://digitalmusicnews.com/stories/070809howmany> (accessed June 23, 2010).

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