

# Punk Show

Of

## Angry Pieces

To Be Put Together

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*Wipe the sleep from your eyes, and envision yourself awake. Rub away the sinking fatigue with the top of your fist, with the number-one knuckle. It was made to depress the orbs and vent the sockets.*

*Can you feel the music pounding, shaking through the walls? Can you absorb the changes, the rolling speed, the corrosive message? Or perhaps you'd rather smile complacently and nod your head.*

*Maybe you'll grit your teeth a little later. Right now, the bourgeois radio entangles you, and your fingers tap without thinking. When you're fully awake, when your eyes are open, when your brain is thinking, you should accompany me inside. And I mean IN.*

# Punk Show

The punk show is never sold out; the doors are always open. They let us in without patting us down.

The punk show is always affordable; no one lines their pockets. If your wheels are stuck, they'll give you a push. They don't eye you heavily. They don't fling mud your way. This isn't another money machine.

At the punk show, we're accountable for ourselves. There is a code of conduct here. There is a cause to every effect. There is a gleam in every eye. We are our own bouncers.

The mirror is our policeman, and it shines at the center of our thoughts. If we commit some wrong it will be there to take us in, where reason will prevail.

## Arrested by the Gap

The music has a desperation in it; the lyrics are biting and angry. It's common sense enraged. I've always admired that righteous sound.

Frustration twinges our brains—a victim's justified anger. The music arms us with order, with a wounded dignity. Apathy flees like the coward it is.

There is an energetic frustration, a tremulous sense of despair, a poignant judgment, and a stark dissatisfaction. I feel terribly inconsequential, and I channel that horror outwardly.

I muster myself up and then deflate again. I run into distractions, into half-pleasures which pacify and disable. My rebellion disperses until the next band's music, arrested by the gap.

# Alone in the Group

The opening band exits; the next one enters. I stand outside while they set up their instruments, smoking in the group. The tobacco's low burn hypnotizes me as the coal consumes itself. A buzz is in my brain, electrifying and uplifting.

I am a small part of them, standing on the fringes, consumed with thought. I stare out up the street. I take in the lights, the signs, the pedestrians. Vehicles glide past, and the inhabitants stare out with charcoal eyes. I relish this jagged center, this aloof inclusion. It jumpstarts sensation.

I came alone, and I stand alone. I stood alone on the outside; I stand alone in the group. I am alone without the music, when it takes its brief siesta. I'm most alone when the silence abounds, and my ears whisper like seashells after a great storm. It's a terminal emotion, but it retracts when the music resurrects.

Just a few minutes more of this awkward inclusion, glancing sidelong at the people, wondering what's baking in their brains. The smells reach me, but I shut them out. They can keep their cookies and cream.

# GROWLING IN THE CAVE

The band doles out their noise: the repetitive speed, the plunking bass, the shredded fingers. The jostling heat, the foreign perspiration, the coursing energies. A fire burns in our flammable brains, spreading out from the stage and catching in the crowd.

Before me the circle pit rages, a vortex of human flesh: swirling and bobbing bags of meat upon the stomped and aching concrete. Some watch the figures from a distance, dancing their strange dance, aching that strange ache.

Trundling down the stairs into the arena, and it looks like a goddamn circus. They think they're living it, but I've calculated their magnitude. I'm here for that raging power and nothing else.

We'll raise our hackles until we're growling in the cave. We'll clench our fists until they crack. We'll drink that drumbeat until it makes us vicious.

## In Here I Am Healthy

I absorb the sounds like a thirsty plant, enlivening slowly. My limbs grow greener, my leaves perk up. My stem straightens and strengthens. I stretch upward, leaning toward the stage, all appendages extended.

My roots twine through the soil and then bust out of the planter, unconfined. Little bumpy, brown, dirt-encrusted tendrils flop into the world. People are careful not to step on them. A person's roots are respected here. Mine are twisted like curly fries.

In here I am healthy. The punk-sun nourishes my leaves, injects my veins with life. I become self-sustaining. Little black flowers blossom in the beat. Their petals quiver in the wind of sound, the product of dark noise, an anti-decoration. They exude pungent intoxicants into the atmosphere.

I wonder if I'll wilt again when I leave. I wonder if the flowers will dehydrate and then snap off with a dry crackle. I wonder if they'll fall to the ground and be trampled to pieces by black and polished shoes. I wonder if their resin will smatter the pavement like sickly balls of gum.



# There Was Punk Rock

When the synthesizers were beeping their way into music, when the electronic bassists were droning through the songs, when the cocaine was lodged in the sham-artists' brains, when the keyboardists tapped in their robotic tunes, when the consumerist noise zapped its way into an entire generation, there was punk rock.

When the stage-costumes were worn, and the hair was grown long and whorish; when the make-up was smattered, and the pink tongues lolled; when good music meant complex riffs and cheap party favors; when the lyrics became insubstantial and ignored the human condition; when profit bogged down all and prevented genuine feeling, there was punk rock.

When the whiny nineties rolled around, and the dirty millionaires played with holes in their arms, there was punk rock. When the big labels stole the street's sounds and sold it on TV, there was punk rock. When emo crash-landed, and adults squealed like pigs, there was punk rock.

Punk's been beaten, molested, violated, twisted, slandered, misrepresented, bought, traded, sold. But it has never died. It has moved in mutations, but its core has always survived. It still raises its ugly fists, unknown and underloved.

# Martyrdom

Solidness and cohesion reverberate through the venue. It's a welcome sight, a worthwhile possession. And it is digested.

Trust is tentative at first, a shy and fragile flicker. The tie strengthens if the music is steady and snaps if its promise proves empty. Our trust is difficult to earn.

We are doubters and skeptics, a suspicious and cynical mass. We demand impression. We will not be serenaded. We spit on sophistry. We relish simplicity and hate industry.

Once given, our trust is fanatical. If it is violated, we are embittered, and our self-respect demands action. But we honor martyrdom most of all, the firm assurance of an ideal, the truest expression of self-trust. Our bodies jolt to the music because it runs all through our blood.

# Staying Submerged

It's like jumping into a pool and staying submerged. You can breathe beneath, but all your efforts are concentrated on that, on leeching the oxygen out of the water. Every other part of you struggles to hold on. The initial and disorienting rush stalls you with its intensity.

There is movement all around, murky and indeterminate. You've never seen the world move like this before. Part of you longs to unleash yourself, but the more prudent half remains aloof. We all tread the water at first.

But eventually, little by little, your mind will acclimate, and your actions will mirror the music. Your inhibition will deteriorate, and the scene will crack wide open. Body and mind will be conjoined, and all action is then expressive—a self-aware trance.

That is breakthrough. It is one of the fewest, one of the truest. It is the only kind we can accept. We are savage proponents of the cathartic medium. We champion art in action.

# Some Rage

What a feeling it invokes. It's unlike any other in the musical or artistic realm. It captures, it animates, it activates. It overwhelms, and the subject basks in the overload. It's concerned with itself, and all implements are directed toward its output: a seething reaction.

Some rage is mindless and misdirected. Some rage is shredded through a guitar, pointless and sourceless, undefined and misshapen. But punk rage is honed and pure. It knows its origins. It knows its target.

Punk rage is the beginning of the end. We ride its crest, and the drop-off is imminent, but we feel no fear. It is a living maelstrom, a cleansing despair. It wouldn't exist without us, and our likeness calcifies our emotions.

It starts in the heart and then spreads to the head. The blood excites. The jaw clenches. The pores close. The eyes harden and narrow. The fists pump. The breath dives deep. Then the dance begins, and all souls solidify.

# And They Drink

And they drink. My how they drink. This ocean wouldn't exist without booze. Some of them are submerged completely, while others merely graze the surface and lap up the waves.

In the past, I've taken myself down twenty-thousand leagues. There was nothing at that depth except the darkness, and the tide never came up when I was there. I chose to sink, to imbibe the infinite, but eventually I was jettisoned onto the nearest landmass. My only reward was a sopping brain.

Here is my island. Here is my palm tree. Here is the red and black banner. It is the shade that shelters me. I huddle beneath its folds when the sun reaches its zenith. Their drowning loves and their drowning hates sing to me on the dry and burning sand. But I just bury my feet and hands.

Another island is apparent in the distance: a straight edge cresting the horizon. A flag flutters high above it; an 'X' is spray-painted across the banner. Figures roam upon the surface, grappling like shades. They fight to distract themselves, to bury their sweltering wits. They can't handle the heat.

## At Its Height We Sprout Gills

Now it's mounting again, gathering up momentum. Higher and higher it surges, until its peak just grazes the ceiling, altering the lights. The people on the fringes bob like debris, and their arms may flail if they experience discomfort.

The bubbles sizzle whitely upon the blue expanse, and the levels continue to rise. Some of them enjoy the levitation while others wish their feet were firmly grounded. Some lodge in the center, teasing the vortex.

We may be mere specks, but we are infused with identity. For an empty ocean knows no life. It is subject to; it is tortured by its own energies. They ebb and surge, but their might is nothing without spectators.

At its height we sprout gills. Our fins flick, and we swim with control. It's quiet beneath, but the levels are falling. Once it drains, our drenched legs react, and our bodies surge in emulation. Then it all evaporates, and we crackle dryly again, gasping for another wave.

## Forget Casual Cohesion

Bonded together, raging one day and silent the next. I am there. I am a part of it. A drop of water in the ocean. It's exactly what I've been running from.

Yet when our droplets congeal, the result is singular. What an array of minerals, what a collection of noise. And the sonar is what kept us together: forget casual cohesion. We only bonded when the punk show began.

It affects our chemistry, and we savor the mutations it achieves. They make us stronger, in vitro. Then we're shaken up, and we grin with powerful malice.

The water has grown hard, and its deposits lodge in my skin. My face glitters eerily before it plunges under again. Just another face in a sea of faces.

# Sane to a Small Degree

We're all insane to some degree. And everyone at this venue, including me, is only sane to a small degree.

The sounds of chaos and adrenaline, the uncertainty and frustration. It is there in discordance, and it will be there when society crumbles.

I see it when the music plays. The toting smokes, and the lost fortunes. The cracking streets, and the dirty beggars. Fascist submission, and the collapse of reason. Lies and denial on every screen.

We'll be there, at the height of the bedlam: hard, human and intelligent. We are survivalists, and we'll hold our own when society bucks, when the resources dwindle. We are toughening up and have grown calloused with anticipation.

Our anger brings us balance. We'll retain it while the homeowners cower behind their drapes. We'll stare straight into the dancing fire's eyes, burning purer than it.



## No Hygiene Here

There's the lead singer. He looks out his eyes and not down his nose. He sits at a table, rubbing shoulders with the crowd.

They don't pester him with autographs, they don't scream in starstruck bewilderment, they don't pull his identity to pieces. And the women, they don't leer out of their eyes, melting with submission.

Bands of other genres don't mix with the people. They wear expensive make-up and decadent costumes. They are withdrawn and unreachable. Their fans kiss the ground they walk on.

We don't tolerate that kind of aloofness. We despise fanaticism. We've killed our idols and warred on godhood. Life's mud has splashed us all. There is no hygiene here.

## Beneath the Algae

It's a way of thinking, an activism of the mind. It teaches one to overcome, to spurn all pernicious and two-faced influences. It's a dirty nobility, gold encrusted with grime. And the purest human lays beneath the algae.

It's a clenched fist, an extended finger, a can of spray paint, a shattered window. It's an empty picture frame. It says, "Place portrait here." And when your face goes in, you'll realize how unique you are.

Then your individuality is etched. Then your sense of worth is magnified. Then your consciousness is expanded. Then true power is attained. You'll feel it for only a moment, and when it exits you'll want it all back.

It's a terrific wakefulness, an active template. Don't be afraid to experiment with it, to test out all avenues. Just don't lose yourself in the fray, in the endless tempest. Just don't lose yourself in all those waves.

# The Markings on the Walls

Energy courses heavily, primal and unconstrained. It travels through us, entering in the ears and dramatically calling to arms.

Facets are unlocked; special reserves are tapped. The energy floods through the caverns, and shines out the body like torchlight. We don't bother to read the markings on the walls.

We accept the gift amicably and indulge it until we've gone berserk. That's the state we relish, the rushing invulnerability. It is a force that moves mountains. Its power contorts the features.

We'll never get enough of it. The room empties of it though our minds are still caught up in it. Bodies pine when it's scarce. Bodies rupture when it's abundant. And so we push ourselves hardest when the end is nearest.

# The Music Lingers

When the last note dies, the band slumps down. Our heads sway, our voices grate, our ears are stuffed. We mill around for a few more seconds, glancing about like strangers, dazed and smitten. The end is here, but we can't accept it. The music lingers in empty spaces as we hobble into the streets.

What's ahead of us now? No transportation awaits. We're spent and vented. We feel like ghosts in the city, drifting dumbstruck. The stoplights tick; the cars obey. We pass sign after sign after sign. We walk together, glancing behind us. The police stare with chilling, granite faces.

The homeless shuffle on street corners, hands outstretched. All this order is disturbing because something bubbles just beneath it, gurgling hollowly from the sewers. Only the bourgeois could dismiss it, could be reassured by paper-thin plasters. But one last look into the city's eyes will reveal the truth.

Now go on home and forget all that you have felt here tonight. There's a clear forecast tomorrow. The weatherman announced it, flashing his wide-white teeth. Teeth like those don't lie.

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