



# TAKING PUNK TO THE MASSES



“OK! Let’s give it to ’em right now!” screamed Jack Ely of the Kingsmen into this microphone at the start of the guitar solo for “Louie Louie.” With its simple song structure, three-chord attack and forbidden teenage appeal, this single song inspired legions of kids in garages across America to pick up guitars and ROCK. “Louie Louie” has become a touchstone in the evolution of rock’n’roll, and with over 1500 recorded cover versions to date, its influence on teenage culture and the future DIY punk underground can’t be underestimated.

Ely’s vocals were so rough and unintelligible that some more puritanical listeners interpreted the lyrics as being obscene and complained. This rumor led several radio stations to ban the song and the FBI even launched an investigation. All of this only fueled the popularity of the song, which rocketed up the charts in late 1963, imprinting this grunge ur-message onto successive generations of youth, by way of the Sonics, Stooges, MC5, New York Dolls, Patti Smith, The Clash, Black Flag, and others, all of whom amplified and rebroadcast its powerful sonic meme with their own recorded versions.

#### NEUMANN U-47 MICROPHONE, CA. 1961

“There was this great record, ‘Louie Louie,’ by a band from the Pacific Northwest called The Kingsmen. I bought their album and it was a great influence on me because they were a real professional band, y’know?”

– Wayne Kramer, MC5

“‘Teen Spirit’ was such a clichéd riff. It was so close to a Boston riff or ‘Louie Louie.’ When I came up with the guitar part, Krist looked at me and said, ‘That is so ridiculous.’ I made the band play it for an hour-and-a-half.”

– Kurt Cobain, Nirvana (*Rolling Stone*, January 27, 1994)

“I was in seventh grade and ritually would watch Hugh Downs and Barbara Walters with my mother on the *Today Show*. The Who did sort of an early lip synch video of ‘I Can See For Miles’ and then they interviewed Townshend and Daltrey. They’d just returned from their first American tour – this was the peak of the British Invasion by and large. ‘Well, what was your favorite thing about America?’ They thought for a minute and said with a fairly thick accent, ‘We were in this place called Seattle and we saw this band called the Sonics.’”

– Larry Reid, curator/punk promoter/manager

“I heard that one a lot, y’know, when I was six, seven, eight years old. Of course, every kid learns that pattern and tries to figure out what he’s saying – what the hell is that guy saying? Is it satanic? Is it sexually-driven or what?”

– MIKE McCREADY, PEARL JAM

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# Alice Cooper

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Seattle performance art troupe Ze Whiz Kidz are one of the great hidden stories of punk rock, instilling a heavy Seattle connection to the transition between glam and punk. They were founded in 1969 by David Xavier Harrigan (aka Tomata du Plenty – pictured on this poster), who was formerly a member of the San Francisco-based psychedelic, gay drag ensemble, The Cockettes. The group featured an extensive, revolving lineup, with flamboyant names such as Satin Sheets, Gorilla Rose, Louise Lovely, Palm Springs, Cha Cha Samoa, and Rhina Stone.

Ze Whiz Kidz staged nearly a hundred gender-bending music and theater performances from 1969 to the mid-1970s, and occasionally opened for glam and glitter kings such as Alice Cooper or the New York Dolls. Tomata moved to New York in 1972 with Gorilla Rose and performed sketch theater at CBGB's and other clubs in the East Village, alongside band performances from Blondie and the Ramones. At the dawn of the punk age, Tomata du Plenty returned to Seattle and formed (along with Melba Toast and Rio de Janiero) the Tupperwares, which would soon after re-form in Los Angeles as the seminal synth-punk band the Screamers, while Whiz Kid Satin Sheets (now Satz) formed the Lewd, making a splash on the Seattle and San Francisco punk scenes.

**ALICE COOPER, ZE WHIZ KIDZ, AND THE DOILY BROTHERS, AT THE PARAMOUNT NORTHWEST, SEATTLE, JULY 9 – 10, 1971**

*"Who else would you put on the bill with Alice Cooper, except the Whiz Kidz? Alice said at the end of the show – being as outrageous as he is – he said to us, 'You scare me!'"*

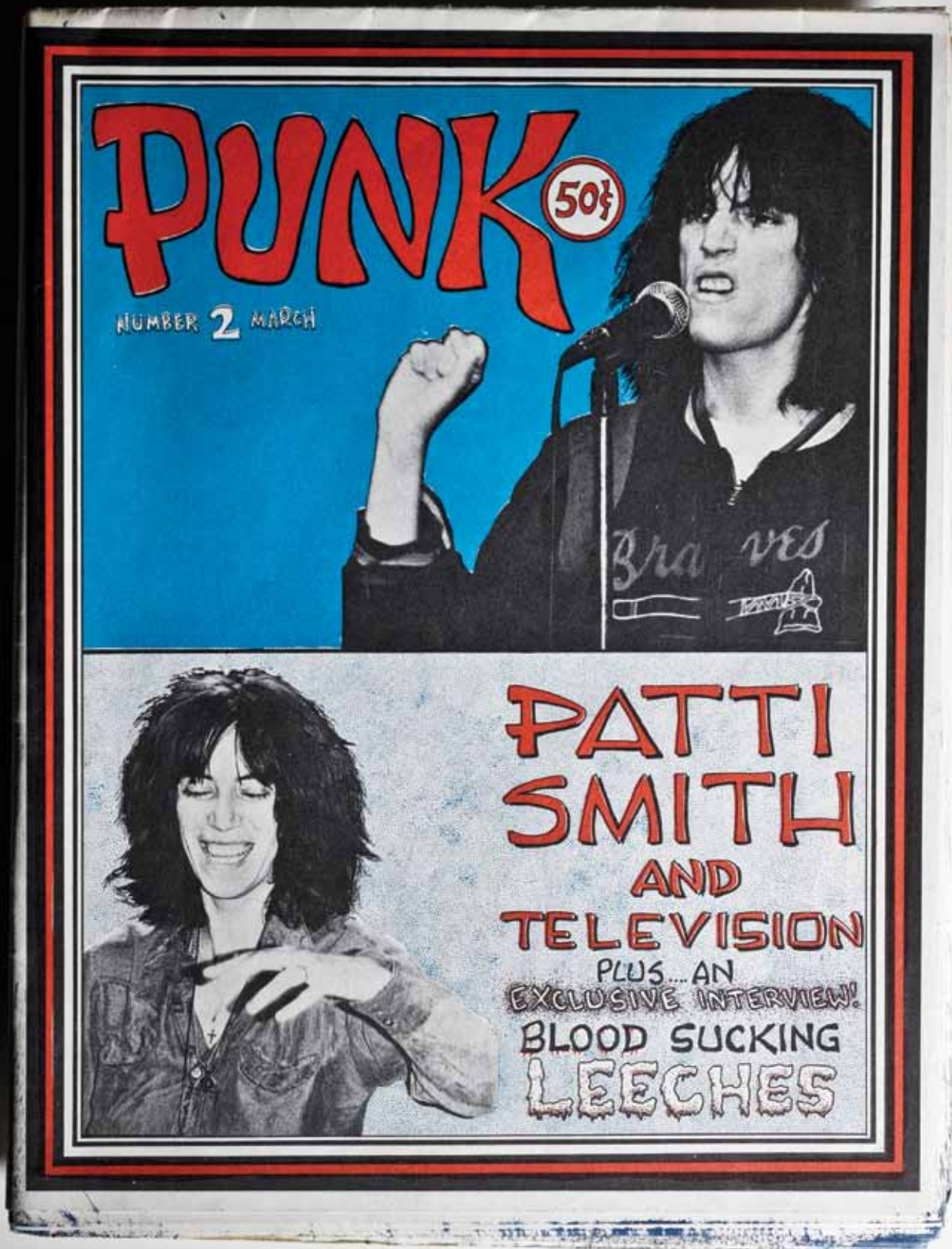
– SATZ, ZE WHIZ KIDZ, THE LEWD

"We had a lot of impromptu shows. Wednesday we'd write a show. Thursday we'd call people. We'd rehearse it. And Friday we'd put it on. And by Saturday, it would be the end of the show. We had kind of a training ground in the Submarine Room, in the basement of the Smith Tower. Originally it was a gangster club. They sold sub-machine guns and a lot of drag queens were there. It had a Class H license, which was liquor, but they got busted. So the owner was sitting down there for about two weeks with nothing to do. And so I discovered this club. At the time I was only 17, but I looked a lot older, being tall. I told him I was 21. And I told him that we had a theater group, and if he let me take it over, we would bring shows in and he wouldn't have to be here. And he was real agreeable to that."

– Satz, Ze Whiz Kidz, The Lewd

"DIY in the Northwest actually precedes DIY in England or New York. The earliest punk, true, classic, DIY, scrappy, cut-and-paste punk rock posters I've ever found are actually in the Northwest. They were done by Tomata and Gorilla Rose for the Whiz Kidz. If you look at the New York scene that developed in the '70s that became CBGB's and all that stuff, their graphics more or less look like print shop graphics. It was a picture with some set type underneath it. It echoed an old show card look. It wasn't the hand-lettered, cut out, Xeroxed, collage paste-y thing that later became associated with Jamie Reid's work with the Sex Pistols. But that was the look of the Whiz Kids and The Screamers and the early punk scene in Seattle. The history of punk rock graphics goes way back in the Northwest."

– Art Chantry, graphic designer



New York City's *Punk* was the first magazine to devote itself totally to punk rock. By 1974, the NYC glam rock scene began to wane, and a new cadre of bands with original songs emerged. Television, Suicide, Patti Smith Group, the Ramones, the Heartbreakers, Talking Heads, Blondie and others began playing at former glam ground zero Max's Kansas City, and CBGB's.

Created by cartoonist and editor John Holmstrom, along with Ged Dunn, Jr., and Roderick Edward "Legs" McNeil, *Punk* emerged in January 1976 and made an instant impact. The goal was to cover a broad spectrum of rock and other topics, but the interest in punk music and the vitality of the New York scene dictated that *Punk* limit its scope to the local punk music community. The zine featured early work by legendary music journalist Lester Bangs, *I Shot Andy Warhol* and *American Psycho* director Mary Harron, underground cartoonist Peter Bagge, and others. Despite the rebellious name and being denied shelf space at newsstands, the magazine's circulation was up to 10,000 copies within a few months of its premiere issue and copies were being sold around the world. Until it functionally stopped publication in 1979, *Punk* was at the center of the New York punk scene.

#### PUNK ZINE #2, MARCH 1976

"Patti and I liked the CBGB's scene because it was small and loose. There were maybe five or six bands that hung out there – I saw the Ramones there for the first time and an early version of Blondie called the Stilettos. The owner Hilly Kristal was kind of bemused by these bands – I don't think it's what he had in mind when he named the club 'Country Bluegrass and Blues.'"

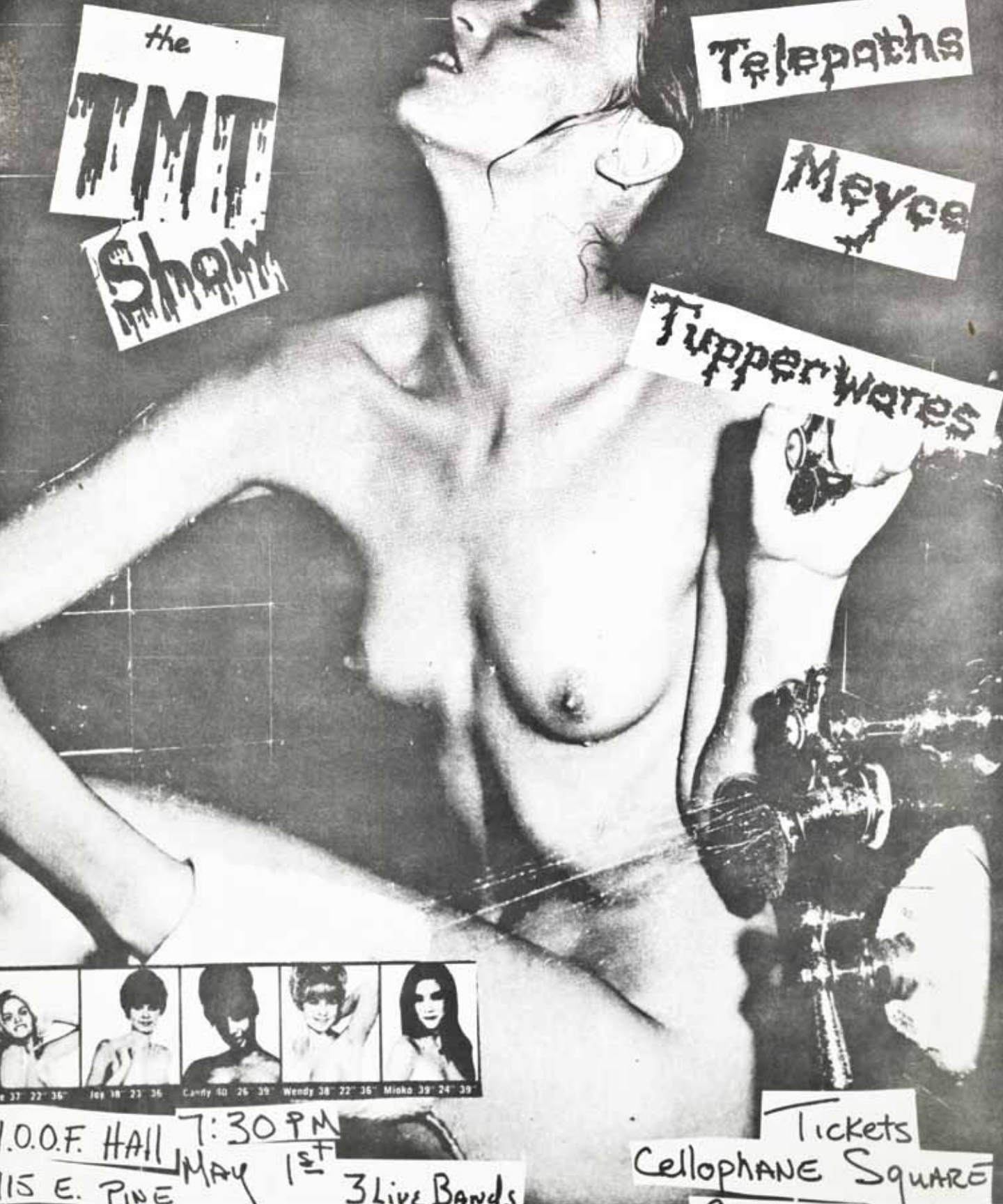
– Lenny Kaye, Patti Smith Group

"I fell in love with the Ramones at first glance. That's how I met the Stooges, I fell in love at first glance. I mean, if it takes more than five or ten seconds to figure out if you like something or not, there's something wrong with you and you shouldn't be in the taste-making end of this world. For me it's five seconds of hearing – what's left of my hearing. The Ramones had it so perfectly – they dressed alike, they had the same haircut, they had the same name, they had great songs, they had great lyrics, they were perfect. They were the perfect band."

– Danny Fields, A&R rep for the Ramones

"What really inspired me to start a band was reading about what was happening in New York. I used to read in *The Village Voice* about CBGB's and Max's Kansas City and the scene, and it sounded real exciting and open. It was all kinds of different bands playing all kinds of different music. And that's what a lot of people don't realize about punk rock. When it started it wasn't a certain style of music. It was an environment where people that made any kind of music that was outcast from the formulaic rock of the time had a venue to play. You had all kinds of bands, from the Ramones, who people associate more with punk rock nowadays, to Blondie, who was more of a pop band. The Tuff Darts were more like a bar band. And Wayne County. And Television with the long guitar jams."

– Greg Ginn, Black Flag



This was the first show booked, promoted, and played entirely by punks in Seattle, held at the International Order of Odd Fellows Hall. At that point the scene was microscopic, and the shows were often held at friends' houses or at rented halls such as the I.O.O.F. Established clubs and bars weren't generally willing to book bands with original material, preferring to play it safe by booking cover bands that could reliably attract a steady crowd. For punks in Seattle interested in playing outside of the basement, they had to take matters in their own hands.

The Telepaths were a fuzz-laden, Bowie-inspired arty outfit, which included a member who was ancient by punk standards – 35-year-old former University of Washington professor Homer Spence. The Meyce had more of a pop sound and were Seattle's first introduction to Jim Basnight, who later reached local renown with his band the Moberlys. The Tupperwares, lead by vocalists and Whiz Kidz alums Tomata du Plenty, Rio de Janeiro and Melba Toast, had a '60s pop vibe and were backed instrumentally by scenesters Pam Lillig and Ben Rabinowitz (later of the Girls) and Eldon Hoke (the future El Duce of the infamous Mentors). With this show, the scene was born.

**THE TELEPATHS, MEYCE, AND TUPPERWARES, AT THE I.O.O.F. HALL, SEATTLE, MAY 1, 1976  
POSTER BY TOMATA DU PLENTY**

"Admission to the TMT Show was one dollar (yes \$1), about a hundred people showed up, the groups paid for the room and made their nut. This show (please correct me if I'm wrong) was the first self-promoted show in town. The bands rented the hall, got a PA and DID IT. It was as much fun or more than many of the shows now."  
– Neil Hubbard, rock journalist (*Rescue*, May 1981)

"The Telepaths, Meyce, and Tupperwares had to literally go out and rent a hall to put it on. Get a PA together. Get somebody to work the door. Get some lighting. And they got a show. It had a good audience 'cause it was something fresh. It wasn't the same old humdrum crap schlock that was being forced down the kids' throats at the time."  
– Satz, Ze Whiz Kidz, The Lewd

"We did that show on May Day and the Meyce opened up. That was our first real live show. It caused a good stir, there was a good turnout. And then the punk thing started really taking off."  
– Jim Basnight, The Meyce, The Moberlys

LIVE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE TUPPERWARES COURTESY OF ANITA LILLIG (05/01/76)





Vivienne Westwood designed this outfit for the London boutique Seditonaries which she ran with her boyfriend Malcolm McLaren, manager and impresario of the Sex Pistols. With McLaren's tutelage and Westwood's clothes, the Sex Pistols became masters of media manipulation and instant symbols of punk music and fashion, setting the standard for what punk was, and largely is, to the mainstream.

Westwood and McLaren opened their London shop Paradise Garage in 1971. They began by selling vintage clothes and records, but over the next few years changed the look of the shop, its name and the clothing they sold to reflect their current interests in fashion nostalgia and avant garde culture. In 1974 they named it SEX and Westwood began creating her line of punk bondage pants and jackets, incorporating elements from S&M fashion, biker culture, and traditional Scottish design, with outrageous results. Two years later the shop was redecorated in a high-tech mode and renamed Seditonaries. Despite the change, Westwood and McLaren continued to sell the bondage pants and the now famous SEX T-shirts. Their goal: confront culture and thereby revitalize it.

**BONDAGE JACKET AND ZIPPERED PUNK TROUSERS, CA. 1976, DESIGNED BY VIVIENNE WESTWOOD**

"I was prepared to be a cook for the rest of my life. And then I saw some TV show, when the Sex Pistols had been out maybe three months, and were causing all this commotion, and then they said that Johnny Rotten's age was 'blank blank.' And I was like, 'I'm the same age! And I'm a cook and he's having fun! NO!' So I figured I should give it one more chance. Let's go see what we can do as musicians."

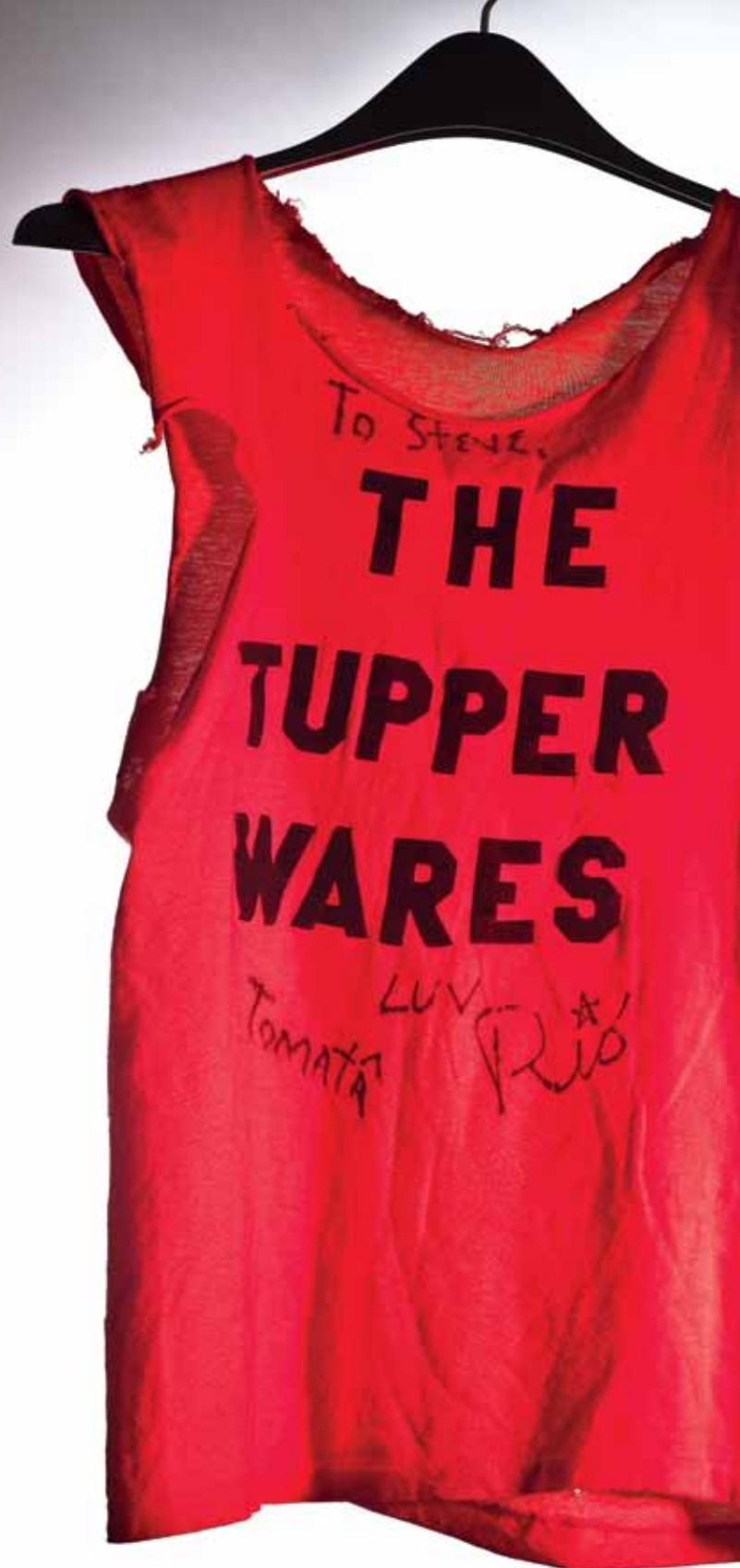
— DAVE ALVIN, THE BLASTERS

"I got into the Sex Pistols and I just loved the whole idea of them, y'know? The whole idea of someone stirring something up, because before that, everything was so complacent. It was just a bunch of rich rock stars, and that was about all you could do music-wise."

— Trudie Plunger, LA punk scenester

"You get these idiots like Malcolm McLaren, pretending they orchestrated this whole thing. He orchestrated his thing maybe, but probably not quite as cleverly as he makes out. But it doesn't matter what was going on with the real ins-and-outs of McLaren's shenanigans because we believed it in the suburbs. We believed punk rock existed through people like ATV and Mark Perry. He said, 'Here's a chord. Here's another chord. Form a group.' And we believed in the things that were being said. So, it became true."

— Billy Childish, Thee Headcoats



The Tupperwares formed in 1975 as a collision between post-glam, gay performance art and garage punk. Vocalists Tomata du Plenty, Melba Toast and Rio de Janeiro were backed instrumentally by various musicians from the scene. This shirt was handmade by Rio de Janeiro with iron-on letters, and later signed by du Plenty and de Janeiro and given to fan Stephen Vigil.

Tiring of the tiny Seattle scene, Tomata and Melba (soon to be renamed Tommy Gear) moved to Los Angeles in 1976 and hooked up with musicians David Brown and K.K. Barrett, changing their name from the Tupperwares to the more aggressive Screammers. Most important, they took the unique – and influential – musical tack of eschewing guitars entirely in favor of synthesizers. They produced frenetic, driving synth beats and chordal snarls coupled with du Plenty’s screamed vocals, which drew as much from Krautrock bands such as Kraftwerk and Neu! as early punk rock. They quickly became one of the most popular bands in the early LA scene, selling out shows at venues such as the Whisky A Go Go and the Roxy. The combination of intense songwriter Tommy Gear and irresistible frontman Tomata du Plenty was unstoppable – until they drifted away from the scene in 1980 and fully collapsed in 1981, without ever releasing a record.

**TUPPERWARES T-SHIRT, CA. 1976, WORN BY RIO DE JANEIRO OF THE TUPPERWARES**

GIFT OF MICHAEL CAMPBELL



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN VIGIL

“The Tupperwares were to the punk scene what the Harlem Globetrotters are to the NBA.”

– Rio De Janeiro, The Tupperwares

“Tomata came back from New York and formed a punk band called the Tupperwares, and they all wore leather jackets and had Brian Jones haircuts, y’know, and they were all doing Iggy Pop covers. And for Seattle in the mid-’70s, people were freaked out! Everybody was still listening to Journey and Kansas and local bands that had names like Cheyenne and Gabriel. Heart was huge! And here’s this guy coming back from New York acting the part of a punk rock dude.”

– Art Chantry, graphic designer

“Within a month of coming to LA, I was at some show at the Starwood, and I ran into these two guys, Tomata du Plenty and Tommy Gear, who stood out from the crowd in that they had spiked hair, wraparound sunglasses at night, and dark clothes. Everybody else had feathered haircuts, soft yellow or light blue bell bottoms, sneakers, polo shirts, and we’re listening to John Cale and Cheap Trick.”

– K.K. Barrett, The Screammers



This box kept the daily earnings for the LA club, the Masque. The basement club and rehearsal space, opened in July 1977 by an eccentric Scottish expat promoter, Brendan Mullen, gave the scene a dedicated, stable venue, allowing it to grow. Soon, the Germs, Dils, Go-Go's, Weirdos, X, Plugz, and others played and rehearsed here. It was a safe haven, fostering bands that would explode in popularity by the end of the decade.

Still, the Los Angeles Police showed up frequently, claiming that the club, which was dark and rank with layers of graffiti, was a threat, shutting it down several times. The fire marshal also closed the club in January 1978. Mullen was forced to relocate the club in January 1979, and it closed for good in May. Though it lasted less than two years, the Masque provided Los Angeles with an early and vital piece of punk rock infrastructure.

#### CASHBOX FROM THE MASQUE, JULY 1977 – MAY 1979

"I found this basement – it was like 10,000 square feet, off Hollywood Boulevard in a building built by Cecil B. De Mille in 1926. It was a gorgeous building, and the basement was all bombed and totally trashed out. Nobody had been in it for at least fifteen years. No electricity, and I went down there sparking matches – it was this labyrinth, like in *Jason and the Argonauts* – so I'd be able to find my way back in case I got lost."

– BRENDAN MULLEN, THE MASQUE

"The Masque was in the basement of a porno theater, the Pussy Cat Theater on Hollywood Boulevard, in a really, really rotten area of Hollywood that was crawling with hookers and drug addicts and homeless people. It always stunk down there, 'cause every time there was a show, the plumbing would get messed up, and it'd end up flooding the place. It was the smell of puke and sewage and stale beer and just, y'know, smelly bodies. That was the smell of the Masque."

– Jane Wiedlin, The Go-Go's

"All the Germs, Pat and Lorna and Darby, came down to the Masque and I was supposed to audition. The room was a gutted shell of what once perhaps was a bathroom, and there was three inches of like – I don't know what this fluid was. I set my drums up in that and I just started banging on them like Mo Tucker or something, thinking they'd be impressed with how punk it sounded. And they just sort of sat there, not looking very excited. Then they went outside and talked amongst themselves for a minute, and then Darby came back and said, 'Well, you're a Germ.'"

– Don Bolles, The Germs

FRI JULY 1

SAT JULY 2

SUN JULY 3

# Blondie

with LIDO / 1st & 2nd and ALEX CHILTON / 3rd

TUES JULY 5

WED JULY 6

THUR JULY 7

FRI JULY 8

# Talking Heads

with GUEST NEW WAVE BANDS

SAT JULY 9

SUN JULY 10

# Patti Smith Group

with THE FEELIES

Taylor

With this lineup of shows by the biggest bands in the city, the Village Gate, traditionally known for its jazz and R&B shows, fully embraced the New York punk scene. By 1977, the Patti Smith Group, Talking Heads, and Blondie had been defining themselves for several years. They each had a very distinctive sound, but grew out of the same insular scene of freaks and outcasts. When the major record labels began signing the New York bands, they felt that the "punk" descriptor might prove to be transitory, and began using the more marketable and appealing term "new wave," which was already used in the UK. As time went on, "new wave" became associated with more experimental acts and groups that incorporated synthesizers, while the more guitar-driven, garage-inspired bands retained the "punk" label.

Regardless of the marketing spin, Blondie and Talking Heads became chart-topping pop stars and Patti Smith and the Ramones became eternally cool rebels – the stars of the early New York scene (much like the Sex Pistols or Clash in the UK scene) have become forever associated in the popular consciousness as the creators of punk.

### BLONDIE, TALKING HEADS, AND THE PATTI SMITH GROUP, AT THE VILLAGE GATE, NYC, JULY 1 – JULY 10, 1977

"Debbie Harry was like the Patsy Cline to our Loretta Lynn. She took us under her wing, as did the Talking Heads – Chris Franz and Tina Weymouth were so friendly. We went to Debbie Harry and Chris Stein's apartment and saw all these gold records just kind of lying around and we thought, 'Why don't they put 'em on the wall?' Of course now we all have ours just shoved under stuff."

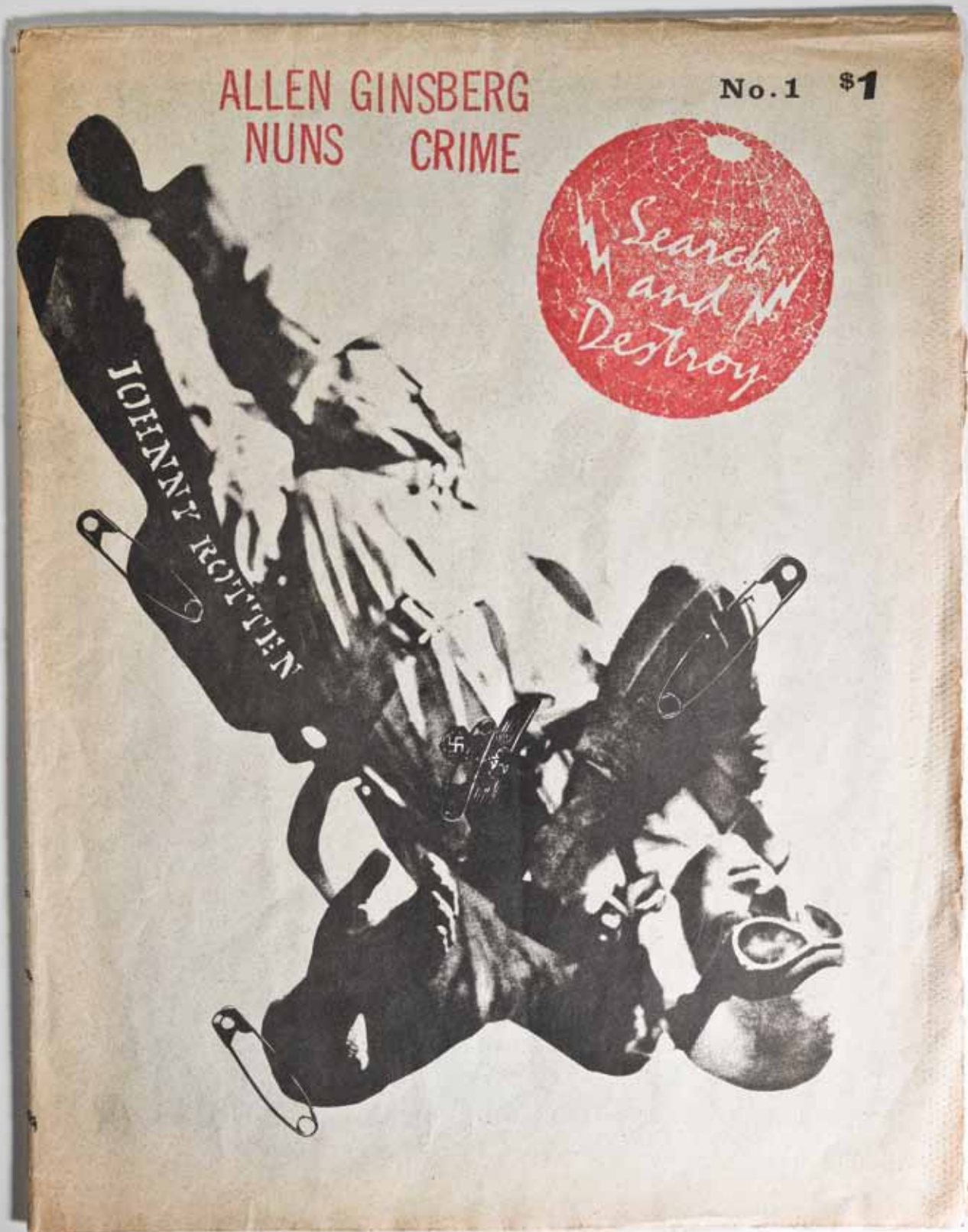
– Kate Pierson, B-52s

"Blondie was the first new wave band to get anywhere. They had infiltrated into real society, and we were impressed by that. And obviously the Go-Go's evolved more and more into just being more of a pop band than a punk band, and then the whole new wave thing happened and by '81 the world was ready to take a sort of 'less threatening' punky pop band and make them a hit. So we were the ones that did something out of our scene and it was great, but I remember at the time that it was very ostracizing. It set us apart and people said we were sellouts. We went from being like this hard core punk chick to being America's sweetheart."

– Jane Wiedlin, the Go-Gos

"A lot of the people who started in new wave bands like Talking Heads and Blondie came out of art school. They were either theatre majors or painters or sculptors. So there were a lot of ideas flowing around and just the idea of deconstructing music, that was something that was in the air in all of the arts at that point in time. In New York there was an awful lot of stuff going on and if you didn't live inside the City, you had no inkling to it."

– LEE RANALDO, SONIC YOUTH



Taking its name from a song by punk godfather Iggy Pop, the San Francisco punk zine *Search and Destroy* made its debut in June 1977. Created by ex-Blue Cheer keyboardist V. Vale with a \$100 loan from Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, *Search and Destroy* quickly became one of the most outspoken and informed sources of information about the San Francisco punk scene. In March 1979, stating only that its mission had been accomplished, after 11 issues it ceased publication.

The zine (or fanzine) was developed in the 1920s in the early science fiction fandom community, as a way to share information among the converted. Punks embraced it for the same reasons. Zines dovetailed perfectly with the era's DIY ("do-it-yourself") aesthetics and the easy access to affordable photocopy technology. At the time, there wasn't any infrastructure dedicated to relaying information about the growing punk scene, and the zine became that vital mode of communication. *Search and Destroy* in San Francisco, *Slash*, *Damage*, *Maximumrocknroll* and *Flipside* in Los Angeles, *Touch and Go* in Lansing, Mich., *Forced Exposure* in Boston, *Punk New York City* – all of these early examples lead to thousands of subsequent punk zines published throughout the '70s, '80s, and beyond. Without them, punk would have died an early death.

#### SEARCH AND DESTROY ZINE, JUNE 1977

"The greatest underground zine I've ever seen in my life was out of San Francisco called *Search and Destroy* where the definition of punk rock was much wider. Brilliant interviews with Devo, Iggy Pop, David Thomas of Pere Ubu, and what made *Search and Destroy* so good was that they didn't just ask the standard indie-zine shop talk questions of 'What's the scene like in your town, how long have you been together, what do you think of anarchy and nuclear war?' No. One or two shop talk questions and then Vale who ran the magazine and the other interviewers would just delve in with the weirdest stories they could coax out of you. You could open *Search and Destroy* to any page and learn something amazing."

– Jello Biafra, Dead Kennedys

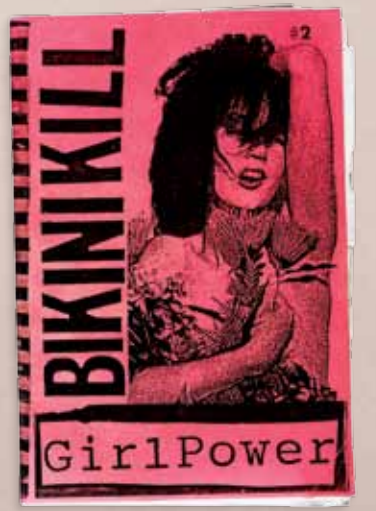
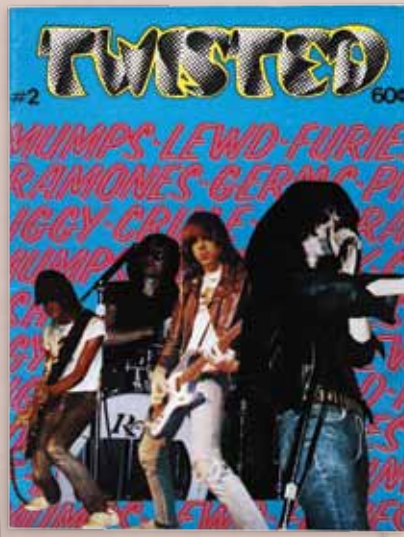
"The first fanzine I ever saw was called *Hot Gorilla*, which was published in New England in 1976. That was the first place I ever saw the Sex Pistols or the Ramones mentioned, before *Rolling Stone* or the NBC news piece on the Sex Pistols throwing up in airports. And then I started seeing other magazines that were more specifically punk rock oriented. *Boston Groupie News*, *Killer Children*, *Subway*

*News* – the quality of the writing in that magazine was so damn good, they really kind of elevated it to a new level. *New York Rocker* was absolutely colossal. Later on Tesco Vee's *Touch and Go* magazine – it was really great. And the early issues of *Forced Exposure* really upped the ante on anything I was trying to do with my fanzine. I thought that they right off the bat were doing the best fanzine in America."

– Gerard Cosloy, Homestead and Matador Records

"*Maximumrocknroll* was the most amazing thing, and the advertising was really cheap, and for small labels I thought it was an incredible contribution that *Maximumrocknroll* even existed because of its consistency. Whether or not you liked the content or not didn't matter. Y'know, you could put an ad in it for thirty dollars and you could sell all your records, y'know, nothing could replace that. You could find people all over the world who were interested in what you were doing. Now there's the internet and things like that which sort of replaces it in a way, but at the time it was the only thing like that."

– Cynthia Connolly, Dischord Records



PUNK #8, 1977; TWISTED #2, 1977; SLASH #1, May 1977; SEARCH AND DESTROY, 1977; STELAZINE #3, 1978; FLIPSIDE #15, 1980; TOUCH AND GO #3, 1980; MAXIMUMROCKNROLL #1, 1980; JIGSAW #3, 1991; BIKINI KILL, early 1990s