



CAINS

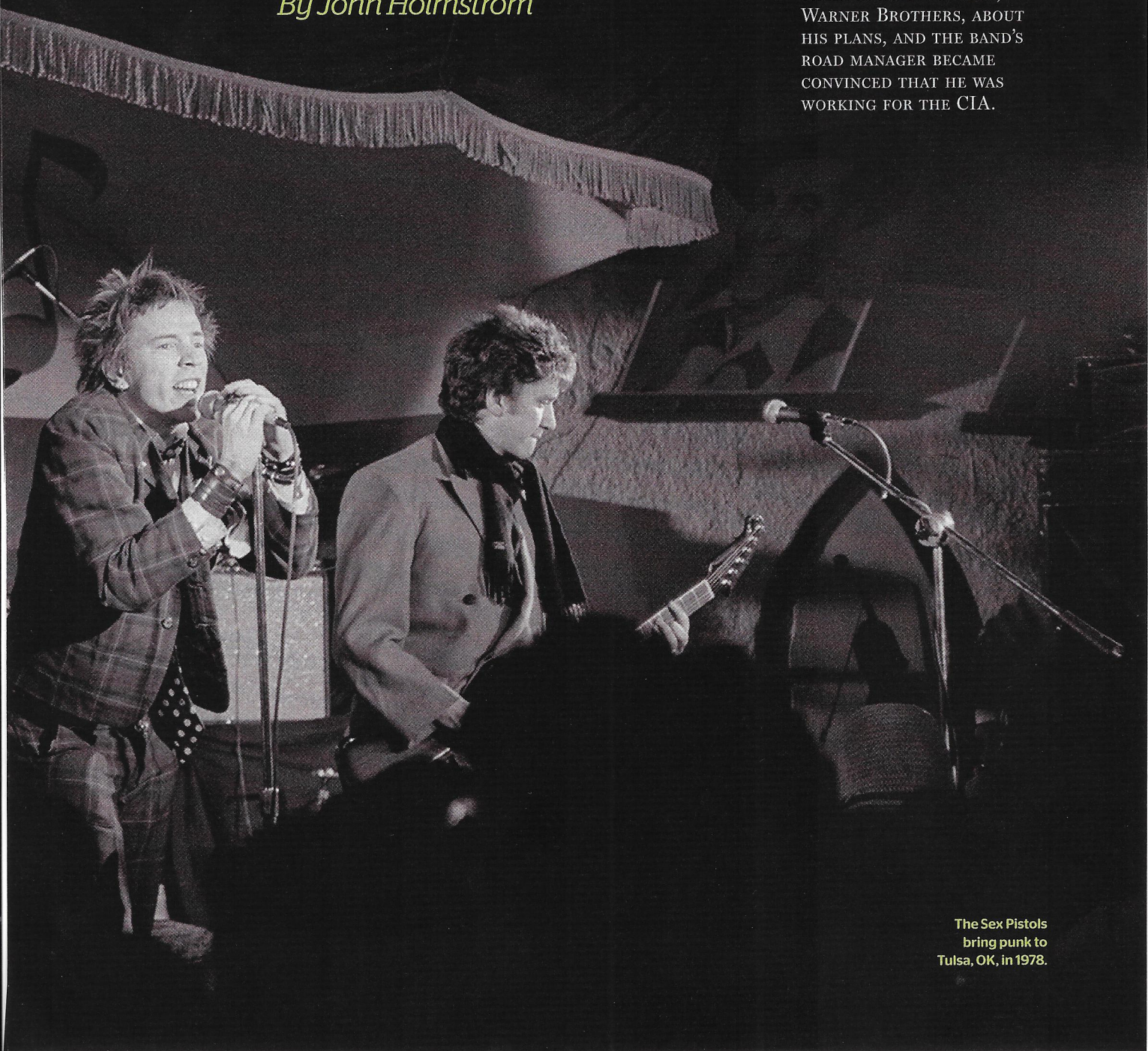
anarchy in the USA

Tom Forçade on tour with (and against) the Sex Pistols.

By John Holmstrom

HIGH TIMES' FOUNDER, TOM FORÇADE, WAS KNOWN FOR BIG THINKING—AND BIG SPENDING.

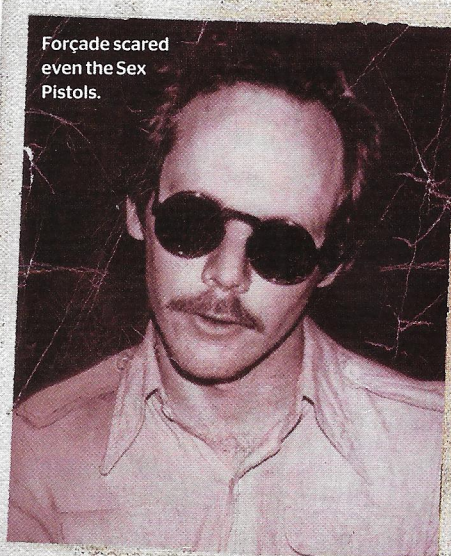
INSPIRED BY THE SEX PISTOLS' REVOLUTIONARY "FUCK YOU" ATTITUDE, FORÇADE SET OUT TO MAKE A DOCUMENTARY MOVIE ABOUT THE LEGENDARY BRITISH PUNK BAND'S ILL-FATED 1978 TOUR, AND HE WAS WILLING TO SPEND WHATEVER IT TOOK TO GET THE JOB DONE. THE ONLY PROBLEM WAS, HE NEGLECTED TO INFORM THE PISTOLS OR THEIR RECORD COMPANY, WARNER BROTHERS, ABOUT HIS PLANS, AND THE BAND'S ROAD MANAGER BECAME CONVINCED THAT HE WAS WORKING FOR THE CIA.



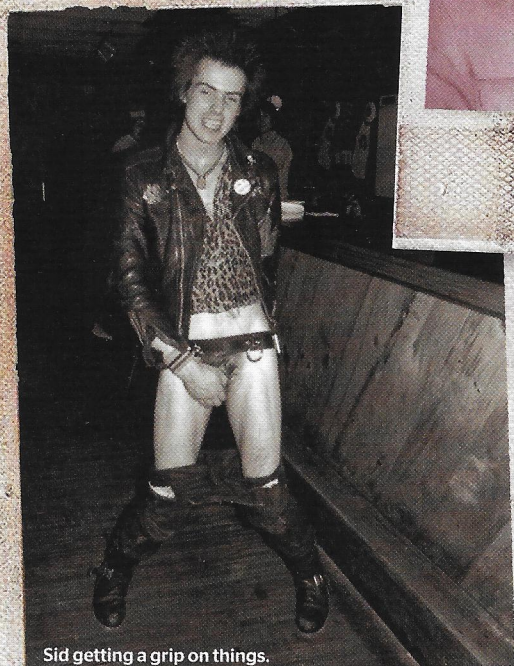
The Sex Pistols
bring punk to
Tulsa, OK, in 1978.



From left: John Holmstrom, Tom Forçade and Jack Coombs looking for Johnny Rotten in Jamaica.



Forçade scared even the Sex Pistols.



Sid getting a grip on things.

Sid was looking for drugs and was eventually found in a hospital, high on heroin, with the words "GIMME A FIX" carved into his chest.

In May 1976, a man dressed in a western-style three-piece suit barged into the offices of *Punk* magazine, took a seat, plopped his cowboy boots on my desk and announced: "I'm going to make you rich and famous." He briefly went over his plan, then gave everyone in the office a brand-new \$100 bill. "Never mention to anyone that you know me," he warned. "This could be dangerous for both of us."

That was my first meeting with *High Times* founder Tom Forçade.

A few weeks later, Forçade rented a Cadillac limo and took the *Punk* magazine staff to a club on Long Island to see the Dictators, one of our favorite bands. Forçade was smoking the strongest pot I'd ever inhaled—I could barely speak. Tom also bogarted the joint forever, letting the world's most expensive marijuana burn while he talked business, music and magazines. In the club, we were drinking

beers, and as we cheered for an encore, Tom took an empty glass pitcher and started banging it against the table. I was so stoned that I got paranoid it would break and send glass shards flying everywhere. As always, Tom knew what exactly he was doing: He was outpunking the staff of *Punk*!

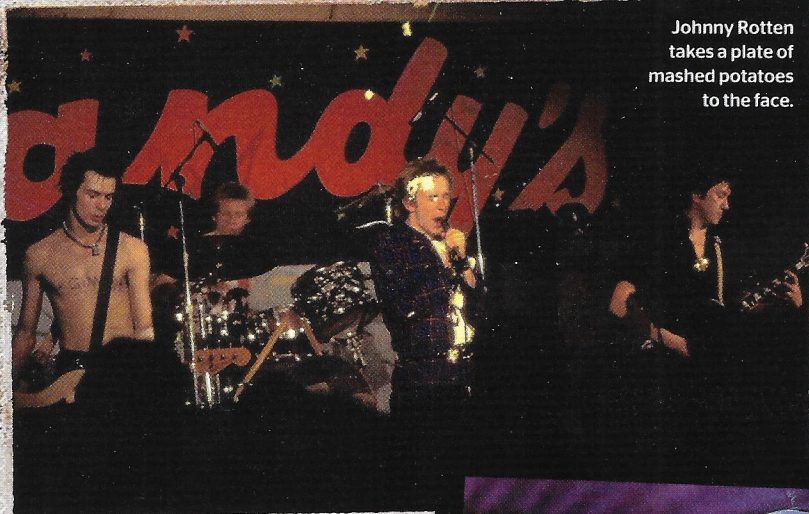
After the show, we went back to his loft. He lit up yet another joint and played the first MC5 album, *Kick Out the Jams*. In the opening to "Rocket Reducer," singer Rob Tyner raps about how rich people always think they're high society, but "*we are the real high society*." Tom told us this phrase inspired him to name the magazine *High Times* (and for several years, *HT* was subtitled "The Magazine for High Society"). His stereo's huge speakers—over 10 feet tall—had been "liberated" from an air-raid station; they were the same ones he'd used to attack the Medicine Ball Caravan, a Warner Brothers-sponsored musical tour

(and film) intended as the next Woodstock, a few years earlier. Tom followed the hippies around in a black Cadillac Deathmobile (similar to the one in *Animal House*) and tried to drown out their peace-and-love vibes with David Peel's grating pro-marijuana music.

I fell out of touch with Tom for a while after his first plan for "rich and famous" misfired. When I saw him again in the fall of 1977, he had a new master plan but couldn't reveal it just yet. Looking back, I think Tom had already decided to make a film covering the Sex Pistols' US tour, which was being announced around that time. It was supposed to begin in late December in the Midwest: Pittsburgh, Cleveland and a few other cities, with a stop in New York to appear on *Saturday Night Live*. (Imagine what *that* would have been like.) However, due to Sex Pistols guitarist Steve Jones's drug bust, the tour was delayed and their TV appearance cancelled, so the first show didn't take place until January 5 in Atlanta.

Tom flew down there the day before. There was no way that he would work with Warner Brothers, the label that had sponsored the Medicine Ball Caravan (and also released *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols* in the US), so he contacted the Pistols' tour manager, Noel Monk, directly. Tom tried bribing Monk, showing him the recent *High Times* cover story on Johnny Rotten and even attempting to give him an antique Packard car. But Monk didn't want any part of Tom or the film. And so they became antagonists—both of them driven by ambition and success, each one insanely paranoid about the other. Without Monk's (or anyone else's) permission, Tom and the film crew he hired began shooting the show in Atlanta, but were soon kicked out of the concert and banned from the rest of the tour.

I was in New York when I got a call from Tom inviting me to that night's show in Memphis, which would be taking place in just a few hours. I rushed to the airport and arrived later that night, past the time the Sex Pistols were supposed to go on. Luckily for me, the show was delayed because Sid Vicious had disappeared. According to Monk's book *12 Days on the Road*, Tom had kidnapped Sid in Memphis and held him for ransom in an attempt to get Warner Brothers to cooperate with his film. I think Monk made this claim to cover up his own incompetence: Sid was looking for drugs and was eventually found in a hospital, high on heroin, with the words "GIMME A FIX" carved into his chest.



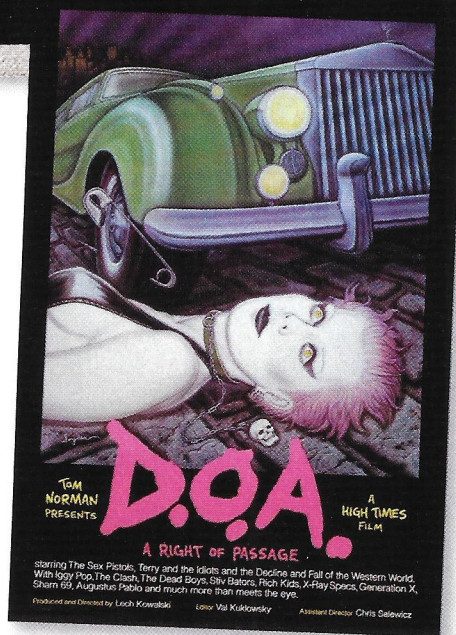
Johnny Rotten takes a plate of mashed potatoes to the face.

Rotten made a point of saying that the CIA was following the tour—an obvious reference to Noel Monk's paranoia about Tom.

The next day, Tom invited me to join him and some associates in a white Cadillac stretch limousine. Tom laid out his plans to do a movie about the tour, have *Punk* magazine publish the book version, and make everyone rich and famous.

Tom had been burned by the world of corporate rock in the past. Back in 1969, he was running the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS) and reached millions of young people through its 200-plus member publications. Forçade and UPS promoted the film *Woodstock* to the mostly hippie readership, then watched in dismay as big corporations cashed in on their work. When Warner Brothers bought the film rights to *Woodstock*, many in the counterculture were outraged: Didn't the filmmakers realize that Warner Brothers had just been purchased by Kinney, a parking-garage company with ties to the Mafia? Worse, the filmmakers gave up all future profits for just \$50,000, whereas Warner Brothers eventually made \$500 million on the deal.

Back in the limo, someone showed me a couple of the gold bars that Tom was using to bribe people on the tour. (I later heard they were actually lead bars painted to look like gold, as in the famous alchemist's trick.) Tom was in communication



with some of the Pistols and insisted they were being held prisoner by Noel Monk and his security crew. The Pistols had allegedly asked Tom if he could procure some belts made of bicycle chains so they could defend themselves. The next show was in San Antonio, and as we headed for the airport, Tom outfitted me in a three-piece western-style suit, complete with a snakeskin belt and cowboy boots. Since we couldn't find anything resembling those bicycle-chain belts, Tom handed me a belt buckle with a large "THC" (for Trans-High Corporation, *High Times*' parent company) emblazoned on it, explaining that it was the next best thing.

Before we got on the plane, Tom bought dozens of magazines about everything from aviation to guns, which he devoured during the flight. He remarked that the price for a private jet he'd been interested in had gone way up, and that his financial advisors were wrong when they talked him out of buying one. Before we landed,

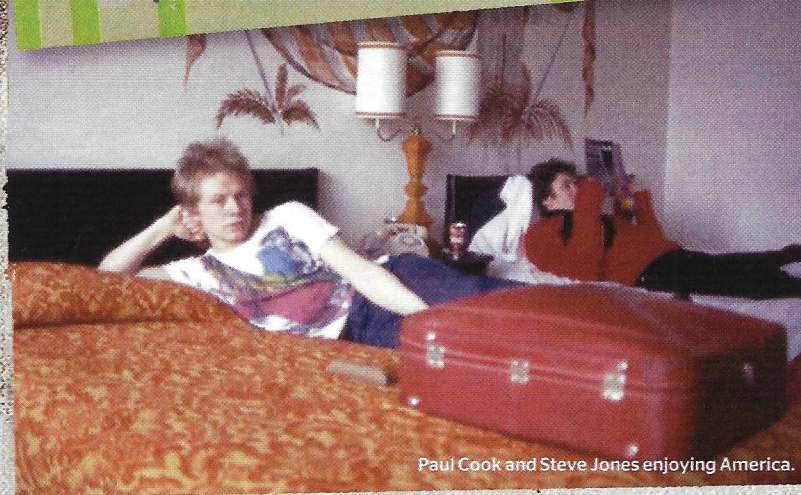
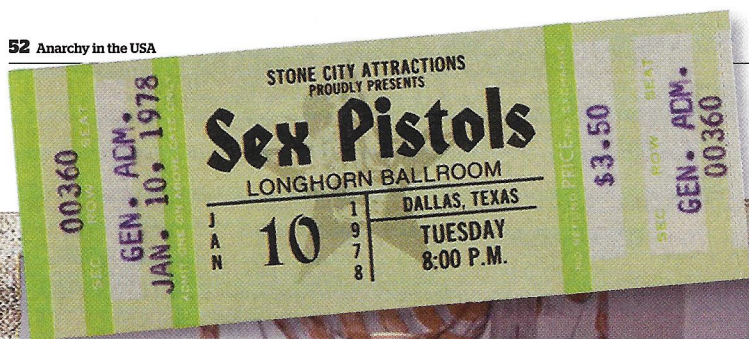
Tom asked me if I knew a good photographer. I recommended Roberta Bayley, who soon joined us. She became very useful once Tom found out that she had an American Express card. It was essential, as we were to learn.

The show at Randy's Rodeo was insane: People showed up to challenge and hopefully injure the Sex Pistols, and the band did their best to rile them. Early in the show, Sid unslung his bass guitar and tried to whack a heckler in the head a few times. (Instead, he hit a Warner Brothers executive, who had to be hospitalized.) The lights and sound went off immediately after this ... the noise from the crowd sounded like the villagers in a *Frankenstein* film when they gather to kill the monster. Sid took a full beer can right in the mouth, then stuck his chin out and defiantly motioned for more. Someone else threw a plate of KFC mashed potatoes and hit Johnny Rotten in the face. By the end of the night, the pile of beer cans by the stage was knee-deep, and the Pistols came out for their one and only press conference. Rotten made a point of saying that the CIA was following the tour—an obvious reference to Noel Monk's paranoia about Tom.

The only conflict bigger than Tom's battle with Monk and Warner Brothers was the one he was having with his own magazine's staff, led by Andy Kowl, the publisher of *High Times*. Tom, addicted to adventure and aware of his manic spells, had insisted to Andy when hiring him that Andy safeguard the finances of *High Times* and Trans-High Corporation and refuse to allow Tom to spend all of the company's money on any mad schemes. So when Tom called from the tour and insisted that Andy send him a dozen signed checks and a big bag of cash, Andy figured that Tom was in another crazy state and refused to cooperate. Tom threatened Andy, promised he would be fired after the tour, and did everything in his power to get money to finance the film. And still Andy refused.

On the tour, we noticed definite signs of Tom's mania. When we landed in Dallas, we watched as he had a very emotional conversation on an airport pay phone. Tom was so angry that his face turned red. He ended the conversation by banging the phone receiver so hard that I was amazed it didn't break into pieces.

After catching the Pistols' sound check at the Longhorn Ballroom, Tom summoned us to his hotel. We didn't want to go because we'd already seen how pissed off he was, but we were there as his guests, and there was no way I was getting



Paul Cook and Steve Jones enjoying America.

After catching the Pistols' sound check at the Longhorn Ballroom, Tom summoned us to his hotel. We didn't want to go because we'd already seen how pissed off he was.

kicked off this tour for disobeying Tom, foul mood or not.

We took the private elevator up to his suite, which encompassed the entire top floor of the hotel. I think Tom was making a point to Andy Kowl about trying to prevent him from spending his own money when he wanted to. I could not believe the luxury all around us: Ming vases, Oriental rugs, vast rooms, incredibly big bathrooms. But Tom's depression was like a cold fog rolling in through the suite: As exhilarating as it was to see him when he was going up the roller coaster, it was miserable when he started downhill.

Forçade sat in the middle of a huge bed and ordered us to call room service. Roberta objected: "We just ate!" Tom got angrier: "Just order the most expensive item on the menu!" So we did. (I added a few beers.) While we waited for the food, Tom reiterated his plan: 1) "Never mention to anyone that you know me." 2) "Get as close as you can to the Sex Pistols. Forward any information that might be useful. I must talk with the Sex Pistols!" And 3) "You're all going to make a lot of money from this. You'll see. Just follow my plan."

Roberta ventured to tell Tom that she was getting worried about her American

Express bill, which was now running into the thousands of dollars. Tom retaliated by throwing one of those "gold" bars at her feet and spat: "You want money? There's your fucking money!" Roberta began to cry. Then the phone rang, and when he jumped out of bed, we noticed that he had pierced nipples—very unusual in 1978. I talked Tom into letting us go see the Pistols, since that was why we were all there. Tom agreed and waved us away.

The show in Dallas was one of the best, mostly because Sid was Sid, getting head-butts from three Los Angeles groupies, which gave him a nosebleed. He wiped the blood all over his chest and played to the crowd ... until the biker security goons started attacking those girls for daring to touch Sid! This random, unprovoked violence from the security goons went on throughout the tour.

Tom called me as soon as we'd checked into the Holiday Inn in Tulsa, OK, for the band's next gig and instructed me to buy the largest set of steer horns I could find and give them to Johnny Rotten. (Rotten must have mentioned to someone that he wanted them.) Roberta and I both thought that Tom had finally lost his mind, but we set off for the hotel gift shop, which had a

huge, six-foot set. The next morning, as I was about to check out and return them, I ran into Johnny in the hotel elevator. He stared at the horns in amazement: "Cor, blimey!" And so I was able to gift them to Johnny Rotten at last. When I told Tom the news, he was ecstatic.

Steve Jones, the guitarist, and Paul Cook, the drummer, were tired of living in the tour bus, so we ran into them and their manager, Malcolm McLaren, at the airport. We were sitting on a bench making small talk when Tom appeared out of nowhere. They eyed him suspiciously as he said hello to Roberta and me, then asked us to introduce him to Steve and Paul. We did so, and after he left, Paul said, "I don't like that guy."

I was amazed by all of this: Tom had been telling us the whole time not to tell anyone we knew him, and then he revealed our relationship just like that? He'd broken his own rules of secrecy! I never found out why, but this event basically sealed our doom as far as Warner Brothers and Noel Monk were concerned. Later that day, Sid and Johnny were on the tour bus, on their way to the final show in San Francisco, when Monk found out that I was the one who'd given Johnny the steer horns. Monk had the bus come to a complete stop, then he grabbed the horns, dragged them outside and chopped them into little pieces, convinced that it was all a devious plot by the CIA to plant drugs on the Sex Pistols so that the US government could have them arrested and thrown in prison. (Needless to say, no drugs were ever found in the horns.)

Later, when Roberta and I tried to get into the Winterland Ballroom with our complimentary tickets and backstage passes, Monk and his biker security guards spotted us and brandished their fists, still insisting that we were CIA agents. Then they shoved us out and warned us not to return. "Fuck them," Roberta and I said in agreement. So we bought new tickets and made our way to the top of the arena, avoiding the security goons.

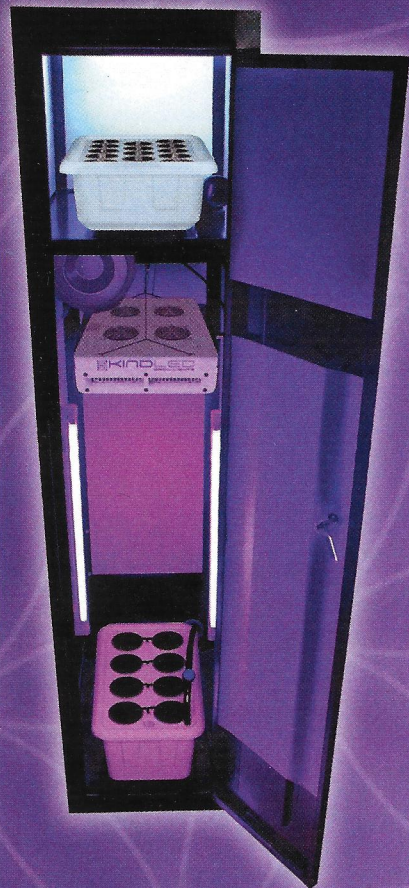
It ended up being the worst show of the tour, and the Sex Pistols broke up the next day. We returned to New York and went to work on a great story for *Punk*. Meanwhile, Tom hired a small theater, summoned the *High Times* staff, and ceremoniously fired Andy and the employees who supported him in a public execution.

Lesson: You did not fuck with Tom Forçade.

A few weeks later, Tom invited me to go to Jamaica. He'd heard that Johnny Rotten was recording *continued on page 136*

SUPERCLOSET

#1 Selling Grow Boxes in the World



SuperLocker LED

66" h x 15" w x 24" d

FEATURING:



KIND LED
GROW LIGHTS

KINDEST YIELDS

700 mA Driving current diode efficiency and output, resulting in a brighter, higher yielding footprint

KINDEST SPECTRUM

Proprietary 12 band complete "Perfect Spectrum" powered by 3 watt diodes

KINDEST INTENSITY

Secondary optical lens magnifies PAR and increases canopy penetration by up to 200%

Kindest Quality

Extra large heat sinks, quiet fans, precision drivers, superior craftsmanship

**ONLY LED GROW LIGHT
THAT HAS BOTH
IR & UV TECHNOLOGY!**

SuperLocker Video



www.supercloset.com

P.O. Box 883663 ph. + 877. 476. 9787
San Francisco, CA 94188 fax. + 415. 285. 0301

anarchy in the USA

continued from page 52 some music there.

We flew all over the island, which helped to get Tom's best friend, Jack Coombs, some hours toward his pilot's license, but we never ran into Rotten.

On March 6, 1978, *Hustler* publisher Larry Flynt was shot in Atlanta by the proverbial "lone nut." This event thrust *High Times* into financial disarray, because Flynt's distribution company was also handling the distribution of *HT*, and further frustrated Tom's attempts to finish his punk rock film. He had dispatched the film crew to London, where they filmed *Generation X*, *Sham 69* and *X-Ray Spex*, as well as the infamous Sid and Nancy interview, in which Sid is so high he can barely speak.

However, things went rapidly downhill after Tom went to Los Angeles and met with the major studio executives, who treated him like a fool. "Who wants to see a movie about some band that broke up six months ago?" was the typical reaction to the film's rough cut. Soon after that, Jack Coombs died when his plane hit a tree as he was trying to land with a pot payload at a small Georgia landing strip. Tom, who was flying in a separate plane behind him, could only watch as his best friend burned to death, along with a small fortune in marijuana.

The last time I saw Tom in person was at the ill-fated *Punk Magazine Awards* ceremony on October 13, 1978. In attendance was the Sex Pistols' manager, Malcolm McLaren, along with Lou Reed, Blondie, the Ramones, the Heartbreakers and a host of others. Unfortunately, Sid Vicious had been arrested for killing Nancy Spungen the day before, so everyone was in a weird mood. The audience took delight in heckling the event and had trashed the place by the end of the night. I was mortified. I didn't know Tom was even there, but just after the awards show ended, he stopped by my table and offered some words of encouragement: "Great event! I'm sure you'll get a lot of publicity from it!"

So what do I think, looking back on it all now? Truth is stranger than fiction, and there's a lot of fiction out there about Tom Forçade. But as weird as he was, Tom was also the best mind the counterculture ever had, and he's been missed by almost everyone who knew him. I only wish that someone would have had the sense to allow Tom to make his movie back in 1978. 🌿

John Holmstrom is the founding editor of Punk magazine.

Marc Shadowus

continued from page 106 is using people with your skills to eradicate marijuana?"

"Um ... that's an honest question. I think it's a waste of taxpayers' money, it's a waste of jet fuel—and about the last five years of my career, I did it because it was my job. And you can definitely publish this: I got to a point, I flew in the left seat of a 58-cal. Ranger OH-58 Kiowa Warrior helicopter, and if I saw a patch of dope, I would just ignore it. Like I said, the last five years I was done with the competition thing. I was going through a divorce, and I was just absolutely lookin' at the calendar, counting my days."

"What's the bust that you're most proud of?"

"The most proud bust? We found, oh, like 40 plants behind a house and called it in. The DA, the DEA—and all them were knuckleheads, of course—but they rolled in and searched the basement, and it was a dub station for child porn. This was before DVDs—they had machines making VCR tapes of all kinds of child porn, plus they had methamphetamine, heroin ... you name it, it was there. We slapped a couple beer glasses together that night. We did good, because the gentleman that lived there needed to go to jail."

Scars

These days, Darth Raider is not a healthy man. He has collapsed arches in both feet, a torn meniscus in his right knee, six titanium screws in his right shoulder and three more in his left. One afternoon, he started showing me his scars, rolling up his sleeve to point out the gunshot wound that he received during a crack-house raid, and then turning around so I could see the scar from the bullet that nicked his spine in another drug-house raid six years later. Darth returned fire in the first incident and hit his target between the eyes. He can't remember anything about the second shooting except for waking up in Walter Reed Hospital two weeks later and being told that he would probably never walk again. Unbeknownst to him at the time, his wife was already in possession of this information and, while he was still in a coma, drained their bank account and filed for divorce.

Darth was given a bronze star for the man he killed in the crackhouse raid, and the guys in his unit pressured him to get a "death" tattoo, a heart with devil horns permanently inked into his ankle. I've heard him say more than once that he was forced to kill that man, *continued on page 138*