

# Suburban Voice On-Line

The on-line page for Suburban Voice fanzine

## About Me



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I've been publishing Suburban Voice 'zine since 1982 (it was Suburban Punk for the first 10 issues). It's been on hiatus since 2003 but I'm attempting to end that hiatus. I'm also a columnist for [Maximum Rock 'n Roll](#) and [AMP Magazine](#). I also host an on-line radio show [Sonic Overload](#) that is updated each Monday. Please send review material (vinyl, CD's, demos--no "advance" or incomplete packages however) to: Suburban Voice PO Box 2746 Lynn, MA 01903

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## Links

Hear Nothing, See Nothing, Say Nothing  
Hardware Media & Radio  
Introverted Loudmouth (Brian Walsby's blog)  
Missionary Penetration  
Allan McNaughton-Drop Out  
Sonic Overload (my web

Saturday, July 26, 2008

## Suburban Voice blog #63



### CATCHING UP ON SOME DVDS

It's a rainy day, there's no baseball game so I decided to have a bit of a marathon and watch some of the DVDs I've been neglecting. I still have some others to check out but it's a start, at least. First on the list is TSOL's "The Early Years Live" (MVD Visual, PO Box 280, Oaks, PA, 19456, [www.mvdvisual.com](http://www.mvdvisual.com)). It's a little bit of a misnomer in that it's not the band's earliest days. It's also a rather glaring misnomer to print, on the back of the box, that *"this footage clearly defines TSOL as the founding fathers of vicious grindcore."* HUH? Attention Marketing Dept: these guys had about as much to do with grindcore as the Bay City Rollers.

The performances are from around '82-83. The bulk comes from a college performance with the "Beneath The Shadows" lineup and the set-list leans heavily towards that album although some of the band's earlier classics, like "Code Blue" and "Superficial Love" are included.

radio show)

## archives

August 2006  
September 2006  
October 2006  
November 2006  
December 2006  
January 2007  
February 2007  
March 2007  
April 2007  
May 2007  
June 2007  
July 2007  
August 2007  
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October 2007  
November 2007  
December 2007  
January 2008  
February 2008  
March 2008  
April 2008  
May 2008  
June 2008  
July 2008

It's kind of humorous to see a mix of punks and more normal-looking college kids looking on. It's a single-camera shot and, as the crowd activity picks up towards the end, the view gets blocked quite a bit. "Beneath The Shadows" was a marked change for the band, moving into poppier territory (it's been called their take on the Damned's "Black Album" and that's not completely inaccurate) but the songs have more punch in this setting. That set came from a Flipside video release. There are also a pair of songs from a Target Video, probably shot in '82 and taken from the "Weathered Statues" EP. I'd really like to see stuff from the time of the first EP or "Dance With Me," if it exists. One thing that's never changed throughout the band's history is Jack Grisham's imposing presence. He almost seems playful at times but someone who could do serious damage if fucked with. The "extra stuff" includes a lengthy interview with Jack, guitarist Ron Emory and keyboard man Greg Kuehn, done at the same time as the college gig and it's disjointed but occasionally humorous, with some of the tales of debauchery. There's also a live song from '07 where they look as imposing as ever—and a funny moment where Jack stops the song to offer a critique on a kid's stage diving technique and give him another try at it. Finally, there a brief reading from Jack's upcoming autobiography that promises to be quite vivid in its imagery. It's not any sort of comprehensive TSOL document, just capturing a certain moment in the band's transitional history.

Also on MVD Visual, The Dead Boys' "Return Of The Living Dead Boys" is taken from a 1986 NYC reunion show on Halloween night. No bells and whistles—as with most of the TSOL DVD, it's a one camera shot that keeps focusing in and out but you get the idea. If Stiv Bators isn't quite as crazed as in the 70s and there really isn't any sort of dangerous, chaotic vibe, they don't look like they're phoning it in, either. Far from it. Stiv, by himself, has learned his lessons from the School of Punk Rock Frontmen, black hair flying everywhere, throwing himself, skinny/muscular frame and all, into the crowd and, for the final encore of "Sonic Reducer," revealing quite a bit more, if you catch my drift. Incidentally, you KNOW it's the 80s from the parade of idiotic stage divers. I cheered when a mulleted bouncer gave one of 'em a pretty good heave-ho.

This is over an hour of mayhem, covering just about everything you'd want to hear, including the disarmingly sentimental/melodic "Won't Look Back" and "Calling On You," along with thorny favorites like "Sonic Reducer" (duh), "Ain't Nothing To Do," "What Love Is" and "Caught With The Meat In Your Mouth." Even with the scuzz punk rep, the Dead Boys' weren't afraid to exploit their poppier instincts and Stiv acknowledged that before their cover of the Stones' "Tell Me." He also acknowledges the band's obvious debt to the Stooges before doing "Search and Destroy" and it's never been any secret how much these guys drew from "Raw Power." In a more whimsical (?) vein, Stiv mentions how if Mama Cass hadn't had that meat in her mouth and if Karen Carpenter had had the meat in hers, they may both still be alive. He also comments on how much the bald-pated Cheetah Chrome bears a resemblance to Uncle Fester. But it's unlikely that Uncle Fester could dish out the spark 'n burn emitting from Cheetah's guitar.

The one bonus feature is a segment taken from a Youngstown, OH morning TV show featuring a smarmy host named Gary Cubberly. Cubberly interviews Stiv and Frank Sechich, who joined the Dead Boys after Jeff Magnum left and then worked with Stiv on his solo album “Disconnected.” After a few minutes, you get the urge to smack this guy silly for his inane questions and I’m sure the thought crossed Stiv and Frank’s minds a few times. Interestingly (or maybe not), Cubberly moved on to have a TV news career in Detroit that ended abruptly after he was killed in ’92 when he suffered a heart attack and crashed his car. Moving on from that irrelevant tidbit (thank you Google), that clip also includes a cool music video of “Sonic Reducer” that I’d never seen before.

As long as I’m writing about the “old timers,” there’s another Clash DVD, “Live: Revolution Rock” (Epic/Legacy). 22 live songs from ’77 to ’83, up through the last show with the Strummer/Jones lineup at the US Festival in ’83 (no “Clash Lite,” in other words). The songs are presented mainly in their entirety—some have appeared on other Clash DVDs and video releases but it’s a good career spanning retrospective. And I’m eternally grateful for the option to watch the songs without the cheesy documentary-style voiceovers in the regular format. That boils down to every dodgy rock-doc cliché imaginable. There’s still the occasional voiceover from Joe Strummer on the audio-only setting but that’s not any sort of annoyance. I know there are plenty of people who think the Clash were overrated, sold out their principles, etc etc and it’s definitely kind of odd seeing them play at Shea Stadium, opening for the Who. But I’m biased—they’re still one of the best live bands I’ve ever seen and these videos reinforce that opinion. In the earlier days, in particular, the performances are impassioned, every drop of sweat genuine. Appended with two interview segments, one from a NYC news/talk show and another from Tom Snyder (there are also two songs from that show). In those settings, the Clash didn’t interview well—it almost seems as though they were reserved in the more “mainstream” arena, much like Stiv’s interview on the Dead Boys DVD.

Finally, “La Escena” (“The Scene”) is a documentary about punk in Puerto Rico, created by Guillermo Gómez Álvarez. The dialogue is in Spanish, with English subtitles and the film centers around interviews with a handful of people who have been and/or are still involved and are also at different points in their lives. One person is homeless and addicted to heroin. Another is working on a PhD but is still connected to the skinhead movement. The person who runs the Discos de Hoy label (a co-distributor of this DVD) exudes enthusiasm about the DIY aesthetic. At the outset, there’s an introductory manifesto, so to speak that says, in part (translated), “*Aren’t we looking for authenticity or being heard? Or is it a relief from our frustrations? Or is it simply pure fucking rage?*” The film tries to create a sense of punk history in Puerto Rico and what’s interesting is how the motivation for involvement doesn’t differ that much from the US or anywhere else. Chafing against a conservative society, what’s expected from an individual. For many, the attraction is the loud/fast/energetic music. People come and go, different influences come and that could apply to punk rock anywhere. There is mention about how things evolved from talking about just records and turned more towards protest

The film traces Puerto Rico's punk scene's ups and downs, including an upsurge in activity in recent years, after things were nearly destroyed with violence and drug abuse. There's a segment about "Rock en Espanol," where there was an attempt at mainstream cooptation of the scene (sound familiar? Lollapalooza? Warped?) and some bands took the bait and tried to cash in. This set up a dividing line and, like in the US and elsewhere, the DIY community became more defiant about creating an alternative to the commercialization of their music.

There is a passing explanation of what makes punk in Puerto Rico unique compared with the rest of the world but maybe it could have gone a little more in-depth there. There are certainly universal motivations, influences, etc. but when I've seen bands from Puerto Rico (like Tropiezo, Juventud Crasa and Cojoba), those bands undoubtedly offer their own musical twist and a perspective that comes from their surroundings. I also wouldn't have minded seeing a bit more of a sociopolitical context. Finding out more about Puerto Rico itself although the film's scope is likely aimed at educating people in the country of the existence of this scene. There's plenty of musical footage covering the past decade and a half or so, of varying quality and covering a variety of punk and hardcore genres. One commonality is there seems to be a joyousness at many of these shows, people bouncing around and singing along, creating their own refuge from the "real world." Where it can encompass all of the elements mentioned above—being heard, relieving frustrations and expressing "pure fucking rage." An interesting glimpse into the Puerto Rican scene. (SouthKore Records, 2814 S. Spaulding, Chicago, IL 60623, [www.southkorerecords.com](http://www.southkorerecords.com))

### VINYL PRESSINGS OF CDs ALREADY REVIEWED

... and they all sound better. Many of you are reading this and saying, "of COURSE they sound better, idiot" but I needed to be reminded of that on occasion. Anyway, I've acquired three records of releases already reviewed in these pages and that will be the format pulled out of the stacks when I need a fix.

There really *is* a sonic difference with the Red Dons' "Death To Idealism" LP. Their vocalist Doug Burns told me that this was a different mix than on the CD and it has much more punchiness. As mentioned previously, this is pretty much a continuation of the Observers, with Doug's mannered vocals paired with a melodic, driving '77 impetus and, in case you didn't figure it out from the title, a rather disillusioned lyrical approach. "No Pain," the song that directly mentions this idealistic demise, brings the album to a slashing conclusion. Definitely a case where some tweaking makes things better. (Deranged, 2700 Lower Road, Roberts Creek, BC V0N 2W4, CANADA, [www.derangedrecords.com](http://www.derangedrecords.com))

Unseen Force's "In Search Of The Truth" is given a long-overdue vinyl repress on No Way Records (3211 Idlewild Ave., Richmond, VA 23221, [www.nowayrecords.com](http://www.nowayrecords.com)). In this case, owning the CD isn't necessarily a bad thing since it also included a live set and demos from 2000 Maniacs, a predecessor to Unseen Force. This remains an underappreciated album from that time. Originally released in 1986 and this Richmond band

created a stinging, scrappy hardcore sound with a whiff of metal guitar. In retrospect, they could be seen as east coast brethren (and sister, since they had a female bass-player) to Christ On Parade. If hardcore was dead or dying by '86, as reported by certain clueless authors, no one told Unseen Force. The opening line on the album declares "*Some people in this world make me sick....*" and ain't that still the truth in way too many of life's situations.

Meanwhile, Black Water Records (PO Box 5223, Portland, OR 97208-5223, [www.blackwaterpdx.com](http://www.blackwaterpdx.com)) have unleashed the LP version of Blowback's "Living Vibration," originally released on CD on HG Fact in their native Japan. Completely obliterative, overdriven hardcore-meets-steamhammer rock 'n roll. That covers it—over the top in every way, from the unhinged, hoarse vocals to the band's blazing approach. Blowback are definitely in the upper echelon of Japanese bands and it's a shame their recent tour didn't hit the east coast. I suppose the west coast deserves to get good international touring bands on occasion. As mentioned in the previous review, this album features new material and re-recordings of a few older songs.

... AND THE REST...



### BAD REACTION

#### **ANTI YOU-Making Your Life Miserable (No Way, 7" EP)**

"Guess what? You suck!" Yeah, I'd say that's a good way to get your attention. Nothing like coming out and saying exactly what you think. Thrash thrash thrash from Italy's Anti You plying the early 80s-inspired sound with bright guitar, spot-on drumming and those anti-social (natch) lyrics. Andrea has the vocal attitude to pull it off and this is a brash statement. They've got a newer 7" on Puke 'n Vomit that I still need to get. This will do for the time being. (3211 Idlewild Ave., Richmond, VA 23221, [www.nowayrecords.com](http://www.nowayrecords.com))

#### **BAD REACTION-Had It Coming (Reflections, CD)**

This CD includes Bad Reaction's two recent EPs (on Flat Black and Blind Spot) plus a cover of the Bad Brains' "Pay To Cum" as a bonus. Catchy,

energetic hardcore punk with punchy (but not overdone) production that brings out the band's surge and the occasional lead guitar lines are done tastefully—there's definitely a love for the rock in the background here. The lyrics touch on standard topics of employment, religion, people who act pretentiously and I'll give 'em bonus points for the title "Keep Your God Out Of My Peanut Butter." A handy format but track down the vinyl if you can. ([www.reflectionsrecords.com](http://www.reflectionsrecords.com))

#### **BESTHÖVEN/SUBURBAN SHOWDOWN-split (Subterranean, 7" EP)**

With Besthoven, you pretty much know what to expect at this point and that's dead-on D-crush and they don't disappoint. Production is actually fairly clean for these songs but the rawness remains. Suburban Showdown, from New Hampshire, offer a Dis-inspired feel for "Victims Of Conformity" but stretch out on "Time Runs Out," a different hardcore punk tack going through tempo shift, complete with a heavier breakdown to wrap things up. First release for this label and it's a good one. (106 Fourth St., Dover, NH 03820, [DIYcrust@yahoo.com](mailto:DIYcrust@yahoo.com))

#### **DANGERLOVES-Easy (DeadIdeas, 7" EP)**

Heart-on-sleeve pop/punk tuneage and I was about to say they share the same approach as the Bayonettes (both bands are from Toronto)—and, it turns out, two people from that band are in this one. "Home" has what sounds like a toy xylophone to add some cutesy content and I need to check my sugar content after that one. And while the upper register vocals are also rather precious, the other pair of songs have more than enough drive to avoid the dreaded twee region. (PO Box 851, Austin, TX 78767, [www.deadideas.com](http://www.deadideas.com))

#### **DEFIANCE-The Very Best Of Defiance (HG Fact, CD)**

You'd usually associate a collection with this title with more mainstream bands—a greatest hits package for the holiday season or the casual fan. That's not meant to denigrate this 15 song disc, released to coincide with Defiance's Japanese tour. Besides, the 'subtitle' of the album is "And We Don't Care." Over the years, the personnel might have changed (the most significant being the departure of vocalist Gibby, with guitarist Mike Arrogant taking over that job) but Defiance always stuck with the pure punk attitude. An undeniable affection for the rousing, catchy sound of the No Future bands and the Cockney Rejects, plus adding a faster attack on some songs. That was more evident with these guys than other bands on the Punk Core label, who have maintained the band's catalog. Defiance's lyrical mentality is laid out right at the start, with "No Future No Hope," but the tuneful, singalong nature of the song almost sounds contradictory to what they're singing. The first five tracks here come from that album and it remains Defiance's defining (couldn't resist) album. The later songs aren't always as inspiring but don't represent any sort of drastic departure, either. It's wrapped up with a cool bonus cover of the Partisans' "Time Was Right." ([www.interq.or.jp/japan/hgfact](http://www.interq.or.jp/japan/hgfact))

#### **FORBIDDEN TIGERS-Magenetic Problems (Dead Beat, CD)**

Shake 'em up rock 'n garage trash but not really on the lo-fi tip. There are a few songs that sound like my right speaker has been blown out, though, and I had to take a look to make sure that wasn't the case. These guys do like to fuck with sonic effect and not maintain a similarity

in tone for every song. The overall ambiance is bluesy with an echo in the lower-timbred vocal—coolness without crossing over into caricature. Showing an affection for the source material. T’ain’t bad at all and gettin’ real gone for “Neanderthal.” (PO Box 361392, Cleveland, OH 44136, [www.dead-beat-records.com](http://www.dead-beat-records.com))

#### **LAUDANUM-s/t (Pirate Punx, 7” EP)**

Somewhere between epic crust and thrash (just a minor part of the equation) along with some metal for good measure. The lead vocals are occasionally countered with subhuman grunts that sound like a frog expelling its lunch. The playing exhibits a high degree of technical skill and packed with aggression but the songs aren’t particularly memorable. (3704 West St. #A, Oakland, CA 94608, [www.pyratepunx.com](http://www.pyratepunx.com))

#### **VIOLENT SOCIETY-The Complete Punk Collection (Puke N Vomit, CD)**

Well, almost complete—they left off the debut “You’re Gonna Fall” 7” from ’94 but, far as I can tell, all other 7”, comp and split appearances are here, plus a few unreleased goodies. Violent Society were a 90s bright spot, one of those bands who helped revitalize the no-bullshit punk sound. An assimilation of spiky, UK-inspired punk and US hardcore—there’s no way they could deny the “quotation” from Minor Threat’s “Seein’ Red” for “Indivisible,” for instance--and with an inherent catchiness. The sound of frustration but also played in upbeat fashion. A lot of slash ‘n agitation, especially in the way Pat Society spits out the words. Unlike Pat’s recent band Cranked Up, which directly tackled certain political issues, the words here are of a more bellicose, personal nature—the diissatisfaction of the outsiders and the pissed-on and an unwillingness to deal with life’s bullshit. And these guys got increasingly aggressive as time passed, as well. This disc provides a crash course of Violent Society’s sonic blitz. (PO Box 3435, Fullerton, CA 92834, [www.punknvomitrecords.com](http://www.punknvomitrecords.com))

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