

BURNING FIGHT

THE NINETIES HARDCORE REVOLUTION IN
**ETHICS, POLITICS,
SPIRIT, AND SOUND**





GUILT

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SUPPLEMENTAL ZINE

Ati Moran (Breaking Free Fanzine) on hardcore: Hardcore for me is definitely an idea, an expression of feelings and [an attitude of] never giving up on what you believe in. [It's] an emotion you feel strong about that no one can take away from you! I also believe hardcore has a lot to do with the people I met in the last 22 years who were apart of the scene - they weren't everyday people. Besides hardcore being music, it was a place to get away from the normal world!

Charles Maggio (Rorschach, Gern Blandsten Records) on hardcore: John Brannon said it best: hardcore is the "blues of the suburbs."

Walter Schreifels (Quicksand, Gorilla Biscuits) on fighting/ disagreements in hardcore: In the scene there were homeless people all around us and a lot of fighting going on. There was the whole punks versus skins thing. There was that back drop, so it was a pretty obvious place to say something about it, and it's cool to have a scene that allows for that discussion. That's what gives it power in a way. The hardcore scene is like high school. There's the typical bullshit that goes on everywhere, but it's cooler because it's like a musical high school and there's something kind of romantic about that. There was also a lot of back and forth between hip-hop and hardcore at the time, too. There was a time when there was a lot of racism but there was a whole backlash against that. A lot of people were really against communism and were taking this stand against it, which is funny to me. [laughs] People were really into straight edge and then everyone was against it. There were just all these different movements and waves of ideas, so you tended to write about it.

QUICKSAND



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SNAPCASE

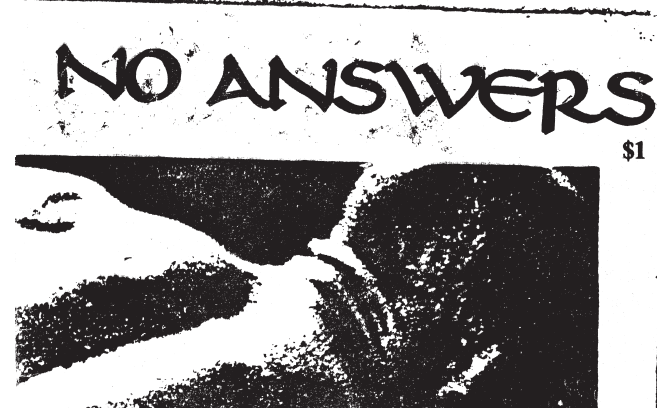
Kent McClard (Ebullition Records, HeartattaCk Fanzine) on the "birth" of nineties hardcore: Nineties hardcore starts in about 1985 in D.C. Here were these people who were a few years older than me and they had already been through this outward anger thing and they were trying to figure out what they could do themselves to change things. Embrace and Rites of Spring and all that mid-eighties D.C. Hardcore takes a few years to build before the formation of the overall attitude we encountered with nineties hardcore.

Jeff Beckman (Chokehold) on straight edge: Chokehold was definitely a straight edge band, but I think we could sum up Chokehold's perspective on straight edge by saying, "What good is thinking straight if you're not gonna think at all?"

Andrew Kline (Strife) on what attracted him to hardcore: Hardcore was raw and a lot heavier than most of the punk bands I was listening to. I was drawn in by the heaviness, aggression and the lyrical content. I could agree with the statements the bands were making and the whole package just drew me in.

Daryl Taberski (Snapcase) on straight edge: We were just as straight edge as Strife and Earth Crisis; we just didn't really promote ourselves as a straight edge band. What was most interesting to us was that we stayed straight edge for a lot longer than many of the bands that really preached it. I guess our message was much bigger than just one topic. But for being a straight edge band we didn't write songs about being straight edge. It was kind of ironic though because we had so many people come up to us and tell us they were addicted to drugs and they read our lyrics and it helped them make some positive changes. A lot of the straight edge bands that preached it kind of isolated themselves from people they were trying to reach.

#10.25



Chrissy Piper (Photographer) on vegetarianism in hardcore: I was vegetarian pretty much as soon as I figured out what it was. It went hand-in-hand with straight edge for me. Thinking about animal rights just made sense. I learned a lot about it from other people in the scene and through lyrics and records. I just didn't want to support the meat and dairy industry.

Steve Reddy (Equal Vision Records) on vegetarianism: Being a part of the "posi-hardcore" movement you start to question why you do the things you do. My friend Dave Stein introduced me to vegetarianism, and I just felt like eating meat was wrong. If I didn't have to kill then I shouldn't. But it was a challenge at first. In 1987 it was hard to find tofu, and when you did find it you didn't know how to make it. [laughs] Now you don't even think about it.

Rick Rodney (Strife) on his first exposure to hardcore and the eventual start of Strife: I grew up on all kinds of music. I had an older cousin who introduced me to bands like Black Sabbath and Van Halen. He had good taste in rock. He followed bands that weren't as pop oriented. Like Black Sabbath, for example, was the black sheep of the rock world back in the day, and I liked the fact they had a darker side lyrically and aesthetically. Then I got into Slayer and Iron Maiden and bands like that. When I was in junior high I got turned onto punk rock. I had moved from a city to a new city and went to a new school. I was totally depressed and left all my friends behind at the previous school.

I came into seventh grade and failed it because I was so disenchanted with the move and not knowing anyone in our new location. My second year of seventh grade I got together with some kids into punk and metal, so I started listening to Minor Threat and the Dead Kennedys. It was sort of a natural progression of most of the American kids who get into punk or hardcore. I grew up in a regular household. Both of my folks were around, but the kids I was running with were from single parent homes and they pretty much did what they wanted. So, we all started going to shows. I got intrigued with punk through political and social aspects of it. I felt like I got a little more out of it than a lot of my friends. I soaked up the messages and the ideology behind it all. We were getting fucked up, drinking and smoking weed. We'd all grab beers at go sit in this place we called The Wash, which



STRIFE



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was this drainage area for run off water. We'd sit there and drink beer at night and listen to Black flag on a ghetto blaster. It was this romantic suburban existence for a young punk rock kid like myself. But because of the lack of authority in my friends' lives, they started experimenting with heavier drugs like acid and pushing it more and trying to figure it out. But I couldn't get down like that because I had both my folks at home and if I came home all fucked up they would rip me a new asshole. So, I was afraid to push it as far as my friends were. Looking back now I have to thank my parents because I wasn't getting as fucked up as they were. Eventually, there was this wedge driven between my friends and myself because I wasn't going down the same path they were. I was more into the music and was looking for bands I felt I could identify with. I remember spending a lot of time researching all this music and was looking for a place to fit in.

One of my friends started getting into straight edge, and he turned me on to bands like Youth of Today, Bold, and Gorilla Biscuits. I had been listening to Uniform Choice and Minor Threat along with Black Flag and a bunch of other stuff—it was really this hodgepodge of aggressive hardcore and punk. But I never associated Uniform Choice with bands like Youth of Today because their sounds were distinctly different. I was initially turned off by what I perceived as the “metal” sound of Youth of Today. At first I was like, “This isn't punk!” But I started listening more to those bands because I could identify with the lyrical content. There was an underlying political message, but they weren't getting fucked up. I remember it hitting me like, “If this music scene and punk/hardcore culture really wants to make a change in the world like they are always talking about in their songs, then how can you do it being drunk or fucked up?” I had this realization that the government or the powers that be that you are supposedly fighting against in the outside world want you to be sedated with alcohol or drugs. If you're inebriated then you are not thinking with a clear mind.

So I started to identify with those ideals more so than getting fucked up with my friends. I started going to some straight edge shows. Back then as a punk rocker I was wearing spikes and had different colored hair and dressed like you're typical disenfranchised teenager. But I saw the camaraderie at these straight edge shows that was really cool, and there was also this other aesthetic side of it as well. Kids were wearing hoodies and your standard issue



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hardcore dress of the time. I started to get into it and decided to take the leap to be straight edge, which really drove a major wedge between my friends and I. It was just as much my fault as it was theirs. I found something tangible that I could believe in, but I didn't really have anyone else around me into the same things I was, at least not in the small town I was living in. My best friends were punk rockers and gang members, so I suddenly found myself a bit isolated.

Eventually I started meeting kids from neighboring cities. I'd sneak off to shows in other towns and we'd exchange numbers and call each other and network that way, long before email or chatting. That's when I met Andrew and Sid. Back in that time all these hardcore and punk bands would play together. There would be a big Los Angeles band that would headline, but then all these other bands on tour would be supporting, so there was this mix of hardcore and punk, and it wasn't all just one type of sound. These bands shared some similar views, but they sounded different. That was really cool because they would expose me to a variety of sounds.

I was working as a security guard at a computer place and I remember listening to Bold one day. I was listening to the last track on their LP and this feeling came over me: "I want to be in a straight edge band!" I had already been in some knock off Misfits bands and punk rock bands, but I wanted to take this more seriously. I also wanted it to be an all straight edge band, which is something I had never been a part of before. I knew Sid was so I called him up and was like, "Look, I know we don't know each other that well, but I'm straight edge, you're straight edge—do you want to do a band?" He was like, "Sure, why not?" He had moved out from the Inland Empire, which was a similar social environment that I was from, so we got together with this other friend of ours who wasn't straight edge but he could shred on guitar. Our first bass player was this young kid named Scotty who ripped on bass. We practiced a bit, but Jim ended up leaving the band and Andrew got in the band because he had a guitar. He couldn't really play the guitar, but he had one, so he was in. [laughs] We started jamming and then Scotty left. He flipped the whole thing and became a Deadhead and started traveling around the country with his dog and living this crazy hippie life. So, then Chad joined the band.

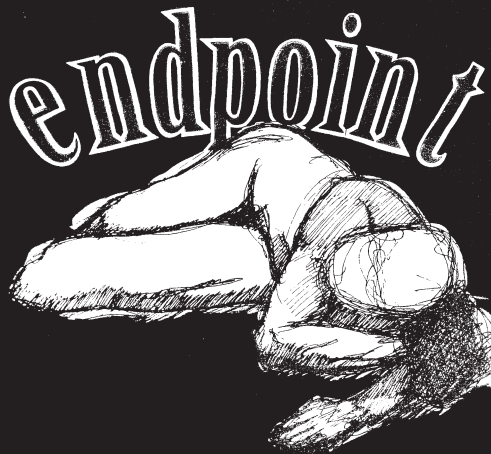


STRIFE

Rob Pennington (Endpoint, By the Grace of God, Black Cross) on Endpoint's early hardcore influences: We all listened to lots of different music and Duncan's sister had gotten him into punk at a very early age, so he had a much richer background of stuff to pull from music-wise. My first records were Circle Jerks and Suicidal Tendencies. I remember we were into Angry Samoans and Black Flag, and we also started listening to New York hardcore, as well as the D.C. stuff. All of those types of bands influenced us early on. We also had some cool records stores and there were some great older kids in the scene who turned us on to some great music.

Scott Vogel (Slugfest, Despair, Buried Alive, Terror) on his definition of hardcore: Hardcore is an energy that comes out of the music and the shows. I listen to a lot of types of music, but nothing really moves me the same way that hardcore does. At this point I don't have to wonder if I'm a hardcore kid or hardcore enough. I've been doing it long enough to know that it's who I am and I'm happy to be this way.

Justin Pearson (Swing Kids, The Locust, Struggle) on Unbroken and different perspectives/styles in hardcore: I didn't relate to your typical hardcore band at the time—most of them were middle, upper class white dudes with macho ideas and I could never relate to that. The whole macho straight edge scene was a turnoff for me. I wasn't really comfortable in a sausage fest. [laughs] When Unbroken started here were these greaser, Morrissey looking kids who were bringing non gender specific aspects to their music. They were playing the most brutal metal and they all looked gay and I thought that was a great combination. Things like that were good for hardcore aesthetics.



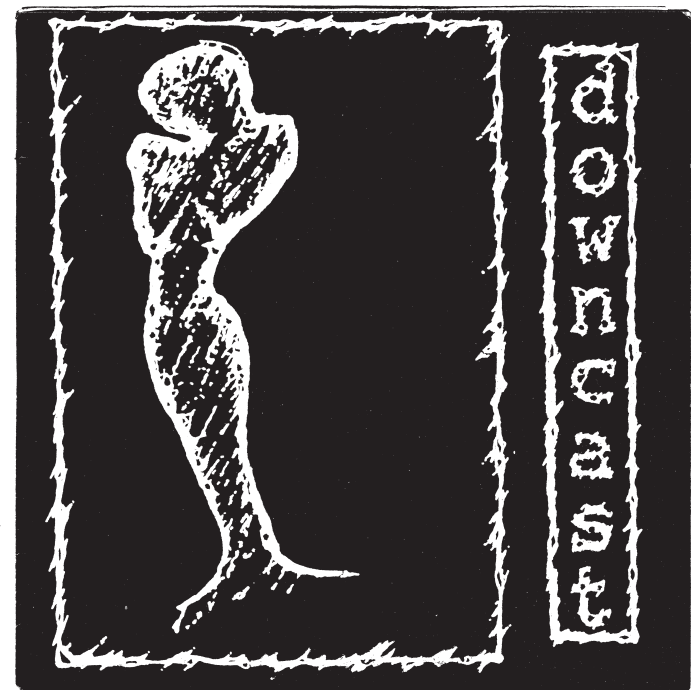
Ken Olden (Damnation A.D., Worlds Collide, Battery) on violence in hardcore: There were a lot of awful fights in the D.C. area, the kind that people looked dead at the end of a beating, laying in a pool of blood. I actually witnessed more than a few murders, which is pretty unbelievable even now when I think of it. Going to a show in the late-eighties was a real adventure, I mean you didn't know if you were coming home, or going to the hospital. You really had to know somebody--it was like being in prison a bit. You needed to be down with some clique otherwise you were really on your own. At the time that scared feeling was also kind of exciting, though. [laughs] One thing was back in 1987 and '88 there were like 500 straight edge kids, but also 500 skinheads, and maybe 200 punk kids, and like 100 metal kids all going to shows together, which made for a lot of conflict. You had to know who the real dangerous people were and always be aware of where they were in a show. You bump into the wrong guy while you're dancing and that could seriously end up being the last show you ever go to.

Vique Martin (Simba Fanzine/Records) on the impact of writing a fanzine: I started [Simba] in the fall of 1992. I just wanted to interview bands and write about what was important to me. I think it was one of the pioneering zines of the mid-nineties that bridged the gap between hardcore and Riot Grrrl in that it still interviewed bands in most issues, but also talked about political and personal issues in a way that most music-orientated zines fail to cover. It was full of personality, and I think it stands the test of time quite well, interview-wise. The personal stuff often makes my skin crawl. I was so young. But doing it helped me grow into both the person that I am now, as well as the writer that I've become. And via the zine I've made a lot of life-time friends. It led me to the two longest term relationships of my life. It's got a lot to answer for.

Mani Mostofi (Racetractor) on spirituality in hardcore: Spirituality is a legitimate part of the universal experience and that's what hardcore is there for—to share our ideas and passions. It was weird that people talked about everything else but they didn't want to talk about spirituality. I understand being skeptical about religion, but people do have a right to express their feelings in regards to their spirituality. Why is there a need to censor that aspect of our lives?

John "Porcell" Porcelly (Shelter, Judge, Youth of Today) on getting into spirituality: I had gotten burnt out on the material world and the scene and politics and gossip and I wanted to unplug myself for a while. Steve Reddy and I sold everything we owned. I sold my hardcore collection which was my pride and joy and we moved to this farm in Pennsylvania and it was awesome. All the things people take for granted...there is so much false ego involved in normal American life. There is so much bravado and fronts you have to put up and you've got to try and impress certain people...there is also this whole undercurrent of anxiety that goes along with it and trying to keep up with the status quo. Taking myself out of that situation was like taking a rock off my shoulders and putting it down for a few minutes. [laughs] It was almost a relief not having to impress people and to lead a simple spiritual lifestyle for a while.

Kevin Doss (Downcast) on religion in hardcore: We just were of the mindset that by subscribing to a doctrine, you have given up. Certain things about religion will resonate with people because it fills voids in our lives that we all have, gives us potential answers to very unanswerable questions. I'm still searching for something I can sink my teeth into spiritually. It's just such an enormous issue.



Stacey Iguchi on D.I.Y: Where I lived there was nothing to do, so you had to create things. We wanted a place for Strife to play, so we set up a show. We weren't looking to make any money off of it; we just wanted to see our friends have a place to play. I would go to other shows and see how they created fanzines and thought, "Hey, I can do this!" It was a great way to have something to do in the boring suburbs. I think that boredom, just as much as necessity can inspire creation.

MOUTHPIECE



Sean Muttaqi (Vegan Reich, Captive Nation Rising, Uprising Records) on his early experiences in hardcore/punk: Looking at the way things are now and how they were in the early eighties is so different, both in terms of the aggressiveness of the music and the scene, as well as this kinetic energy that was happening. There were riots at shows. If you were into hardcore and were walking down the street people would literally stop their cars, like 30-year-old construction workers in their trucks while me and my friends were like 13 or 14, and they would get out and chase you down the street. People hated you for being into hardcore or punk rock. In the L.A. scene a lot of it was tied up in gangs. There was the L.A.D.S. (L.A. Death Squad), Circle One's "Family," The League, FFF, the Suicidals and others. There was a lot of gang violence and people getting killed around it. You had a whole different kind of vibe than you would see later on. It was much more dangerous, but at the same time it was kind of cooler, because it wasn't just this safe thing. It was very nihilistic. In 1981 most of the people I knew, including myself, may not have thought they would have been alive in five years. In D.C. they had straight edge going on, but out in L.A. it wasn't about anything like that. It was more about carving your arm up—self-destruction.

Dennis Merrick (Earth Crisis) on gender in hardcore: Men and women are different and deal with things in different ways, and not all men and women deal with things exactly the same as other people from their gender. Men often deal with their anger in physical ways and women don't as much, so the dance floor tends to have more dudes beating each other up. Men are kind of stupid like that. [laughs] Not to say that women don't have a place on the dance floor either and I've seen quite a few of them out there over the years. But overall women aren't as physically aggressive as men are. I thought a lot of the stuff like Chicks up Front was really cool because they made people think about gender issues. Hardcore is politically progressive in a lot of ways so it was weird to me that many guys would put their girlfriends or female friends in a subjugated position. "Hold my backpack while I go dance." [laughs] That was always kind of lame.

Jen Angel (Fucktooth) on what constitutes “selling out”: The question of “selling out,” or artists earning a living on music or on punk/hardcore, persists even today and exists within the question of whether projects, like zines, record labels, info-shops, show spaces, should have paid staff or not. This question pervades the punk/activist community and will probably continue to. It is complex and at the heart of it is finding a way for individuals to exist in a capitalist society when they don't subscribe to its rules. I don't think that this is particular to punk/hardcore.

Duncan Barlow (Endpoint, Guilt, By the Grace of God) on hardcore: Hardcore is a label. The question is what do we think of our own music; is it hardcore? What is hardcore? We all have our notions of what makes a band fit into a particular genre. The concept of genre is slippery because it relies on a common conception as to what is or isn't a part of it.

Tim McMahon (Mouthpiece, Hands Tied) on straight edge: Over the years, I've remained dedicated to straight edge. But for me it's just a part of who I am. I don't want to drink just like I don't want to go driving down a highway at 200 miles an hour with no seatbelt. [laughs] These are just things that I have no interest in doing.

Rob Moran (Unbroken) on how D.I.Y. motivated him: The fact that kids in my neighborhood in a band called Amenity started a band and were amazing [inspired me]. I thought if they can do it, so can I. It's that whole feeling of knowing you can just do whatever comes out of your heart and start a band. It may not always be good, but it's just knowing you can start a band, do a zine, book shows and you are part of an underground network of great people striving to make things better - even if the impact is small, it is impact nonetheless and that is what counts.

Greg Bennick (Trial) on politics in hardcore: Political bands inspired other political bands. It takes guts to get out there and share your opinions and beliefs, and when kids saw others doing it, they thought “I could do this, too!” Everyone draws influences from others, and all I would have hoped for, and still hope for today, is that bands push themselves to write better lyrics that are more insightful, challenging, and well-developed.

John Pettibone (Undertow, Himsa) on retaining hardcore ethics: At times I've gotten jaded, but I still haven't lost those old morals I hold from when I was a kid. Today it seems many kids come to shows to be seen—it's more of a social gathering. When I started going to shows I was there amongst friends but I was also there for myself as a release and to make a change. I didn't get involved with it to be cool; rather, it was the complete opposite when I was a kid. It doesn't bother me that the mainstream has come into contact with it. I'd rather kids be listening to music with truth behind it, but hopefully they think about the messages and try and grasp it.

Dave Mandel (Indecision Fanzine/Records) on straight edge: For me, straight edge was always a personal thing. When you try to make it a political issue it takes away any kind of real, genuine connection to it, and it just becomes politics. Those ideas are a lot easier to wave flags about and then walk away from later, and that's what many of those people did.

