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## Reunion to celebrate S.J.'s '80s punk heyday

### **BANDS, FANS RECALL VIBRANT, CLOSE-KNIT SCENE**

By Judi Morrissey  
Special to the Mercury News

Long before the yupification of downtown San Jose, even before Nirvana played Marsugi's or Green Day, Alice in Chains and Helmet rocked the Cactus Club, there was a small but vibrant community of young musicians struggling to make some noise in the city's downtown wasteland.

During the early 1980s, there were no clubs in the porn-dominated South First Street area. Bands were forced to take the do-it-yourself approach to a new level. They put on shows in basements, garages, rented halls and even skating rinks. They promoted, produced and distributed their own music. Followers of the scene created their own literature, publishing zines out of their bedrooms.

This weekend, those musicians and their supporters and friends are reuniting to celebrate the '80s San Jose punk scene with two nights of sold-out shows at the Blank Club and a family event at Hellyer Park on Saturday, which includes an exhibit of photos, collages and fliers from that era.

Eight bands are reuniting for the shows. Scheduled to perform today are Thieves Cross, Frontline, Executioner and Ribzy. Saturday's lineup includes the Boneshavers, Grim Reality, the Faction and Los Olvidados.

DJ Andy Average will host both nights. Former KFJC-FM personality Alex Morgan will introduce the bands on Saturday. In the '80s, Morgan's "Vinyl Rites" show was responsible for breaking many local punk bands.

These groups were the Northern California equivalent of bands from Orange County such as T.S.O.L., Agent Orange and the Adolescents, which rose to popularity during the formative years of West Coast punk.

"San Jose had a scene that was so underrated, but it was really happening," says Joe Sib, one of the reunion organizers and former singer for Frontline. Sib now lives in Los Angeles and runs his own independent record label, Side One Dummy Records.

"I've been in L.A. forever, but I've never come across such a strong DIY work ethic. I've never come across such a talented group of people at that young of an age in any community," he says.

What really made the San Jose scene unique was that the talent was homegrown. "It was the big town/small town difference," says Alex Marinshaw, a familiar face at shows back then and now a stay-at-home mother of three in San Jose.

"In San Francisco, they were all transplants who had known each other for a few years. In San Jose, we had hung out at Oakridge Mall together, gone to high school together. We grew up together. It was a real neighborhood," she says. "But it was also a lot harder. . . . There were no clubs. There was no place to go. People had to work hard to make things happen."

But they did make it happen, and they supported each other fully. "Today, local music is weak, scattered and diverse," says the event's co-organizer, Larry Trujillo, who promoted punk shows in the '80s and is now owner of Zero Magazine and co-owner of the Blank Club. "Bands don't support each other like they used to. Back then, you had goths hanging out with punks. Even punk bands don't support each other today. In the '80s, if there was a band playing, then everyone would go to the show."

The idea for the reunion was sparked when Sib ran into an old friend on a flight from San Jose to Los Angeles. "It was great catching up and talking about old times," says Sib. "It made me think about how there are so many more people like that who I'd love to see -- the friends I made from skateboarding, bands, ramps and shows. These were people that I wanted to keep in touch with, not the kids from my high school. But the whole idea of a punk reunion, how un-punk-rock is that?"

Still, Sib and Trujillo put together a Web site for the reunion and began gathering names. The e-mail group quickly grew to almost 200 people in all corners of the country. For the reunion, former locals are traveling from Germany, Florida, Ohio, Wisconsin, Colorado, Oregon, Los Angeles and San Diego.

The title of the event, "Lust for Life," refers to an Iggy Pop song and pays tribute to Scott Vollmer, who played guitar for the Stiffs. Vollmer, who also had a "Lust for Life" tattoo, died in March 1988 defending a black friend from racists. "He was the poster child for the scene back then," says Trujillo.

The most difficult part was organizing the bands, some of which haven't played together in two decades.

Of the bands performing, the Faction may be the best known. Though the band was together only a few years, it's the most representative of the punk-skateboarding connection. The band's "Skate and Destroy" became the anthem for many skaters.

During his Faction days while touring the country and playing venues such as CBGB in New York, singer Gavin O'Brien was in his teens. "We got to do a lot of things when we were young," says O'Brien, who now works at Apple Computer, "things that I'm not sure I'd let my own children do now. It was that DIY thing. We booked our own tours, promoted our own shows, made our own fliers and press releases. We had our own label, and we never even thought about switching to another label when we could do it all ourselves.

"This is like a high school reunion for all the kinds of people that wouldn't go to their high school reunions.

Lust for Life:

A Reunion

of the San Jose

Punk Scene

1980-89

**Where:** The Blank Club, 44 S. Almaden Ave., San Jose

**When:** 9 tonight-Saturday

**Tickets:** Sold out

**Call:** (408) 292-5265

**Also:** Noon-5 p.m. Saturday, Hellyer Park, 985 Hellyer Ave., San Jose