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Little Brother

Part 2 in the ongoing story of a runaway American punk in Seoul

Paul Mutts
I was feeling homesick again. It would come and go and I became fairly good at fighting back tears sometimes. Other times maybe one or two would slip by my own ego and find its way across my cheek. Of course in the rare occasion someone would notice I would say it was sweat and change the subject. Maybe homesick isn't what I felt. You see, I have lived in Korea most of my life, but I speak very little Korean. I look Korean though, so in the United States I get this feeling of being a sort of

grey swan on alien waters.

Here I was, an American (by nationality) and a Korean (by race) living amongst the Korean punks. I consider myself an extrovert but I rarely spoke; the little Korean I knew might be held against me as evidence of being stupid. Having someone to talk to was an event I looked forward to. Most of my English-speaking friends at the time were in high school so I had to wait until the weekend to see them. I had so many stories to tell them. Penis/fart jokes rolled past my lips when I

was not quick enough to catch them. At least I had people to talk to, at the price of acting immature and stupid.

One day outside Hongdae Park, the homesick feeling came back again. It spread though me like a gnawing, unwholesome cold beating back the warm summer night. With my parents I had spent all my time trying to get them to understand me, and out here it was even worse. But was I accepted out here as one of them? Did they view me as a chimera, with some attributes wholly recognizable and some

word that might as well be from Mars?

It was an after-show party at a restaurant. Everyone sat around joking and telling stories. I had my own jokes and stories I wanted to share with them. It was too much, so I left, bought a beer from the supermarket, and went into an alley. Someone must have noticed that I was, at the very least, agitated when I left. I had not wept since my dog Joy ran away a few years ago. I fought it back in that purely masculine stupidity that a show of extreme emotion, save aggressiveness, was a sign of weakness. I couldn't fight it anymore. I cried like a little girl that skinned her knee. I drank my beer in a huge painful gulp; maybe I wanted to numb myself. It seemed like all the tears I had been holding back for months—if not years—had rallied for a massive counter-offensive and I was laid bare with my cover blown. I hugged my knees and buried my face in myself. I got the feeling I was not alone.

I saw Joo-Hyun standing there looking down at me, though the blur created by my own tears which played with light and drew it out into long web-like strands. I couldn't see his face and I don't think I wanted to, I didn't want him to think any less of me. I knew that if I saw his face I would see a mixture of pity and disgust, mostly the later. I couldn't look up at him. He spoke to me but I did not understand the words. He might have been saying "Get up you pussy ass piece of shit," for all I knew, but something inside told me that's not at all what he said. I wanted more than ever to know what someone was saying to me. I picked out each sound and tried to ascribe a meaning to it. Every

word I understood. I strung in my mind like pearls on a strand, but they did not make sense or follow one another in a pattern I could comprehend. Then one word stuck out more than anything else he said. One word in Korean: "동생." It means "little brother." I looked up and saw not pity, not disgust, but a smile, the one he always has. No one had ever or has since made me feel so much better by uttering a single word. He put his arm around me and talked some more. We were more than friends, more than bandmates. We were brothers. We shared what was left of that beer and went back to join the others in the restaurant.

I don't know if he ever told anyone what happened or even really remembers if it did in fact happen at all. It doesn't matter. I will carry that with me for the rest of my life. They say that family is forever, but does that family have to only include those that you share and immediate and common bloodline with? I don't think so and again, it's immaterial. I have a brother, my Hyung-ah.

Even though that took place several years ago, if I think about it I can feel my eyes well up a little but my face always cracks into a smile. I think it's the same smile some of the more unrepentant adulterous men get when they think about their hedonistic extra-marital flings. It's not supposed to happen but it did and fuck all if it wasn't good. Your brother is supposed to have the same mother as you. Not for me though. I have always found myself to be the exception from the rule and this was no exception.

I also suck at math. Go figure.

tent that many families still impose curfews on their daughters aged over 18. The families believe that imposing curfews will make their daughters safer, more ladylike, and less inclined to lose their virginity. This is a major pain for girls in the punk scene. Although some of them have cool parents who let their daughters have a cultural life, most girls who live with their parents have curfews, and this is a major impediment in enjoying the scene. A lot of girls have to go home after a show, missing the afterparty and the chance to meet new people. Sometimes girls leave in the middle of the show. In the end, some girls rebel, some girls move out, but it is definitely one of the hardest things a girl will face in the scene.

4. Occasional scorn from male punks

OK, the punk scene in Korea is dominated by men. There aren't many female musicians, and quite a few of the girls in the scene were introduced to punk by their punk boyfriends. Also, many of the girls who

come to the shows do not come for the music, but for the excitement of the show itself. As a result, a few male punks think that the girls are in the scene because of fashion or for the boys. Also, there is a tendency to think that girls aren't talented or don't love music as much as the boys. This may be true in some cases, but not all. Such thoughts are really unfair to the devoted girls.

These are the difficulties that I could categorize in 30 minutes. I know that the difficulties the girls face are a lot more complex and need better explaining. What is important is that there are girls who choose to be in the punk scene in a very conservative country, and they should be applauded for just being who they are and not compromising and becoming what society asks them to.

I guess things will get better. I mean that is what punk is all about: rebel against established norms and social injustice to make a better society. And, that is what (I think) the few devoted girls in the scene are doing.

Riot Cats?

Nevin Domer

There can be no denying that punk scenes tend to be heavily male dominated—testosterone, mosh-pits, and pounding guitars aside, I want to resist the temptation to say it's only natural. A notion that would instantly be shot down by Korea's newest girl band, Shorty Cat. Actually they aren't breaking any terribly new ground; anyone familiar with the scene could quickly list off a whole string of bands containing female members. However these girls are catching eyes and have been building up an extremely loyal fan base. Recently I cornered the members of Shorty Cat to ask them how they formed and what it's like to be female in the scene.

Shorty Cat is currently made up of four females, all fairly young, but not inexperienced when it comes to playing punk. Eunjin, the guitarist, explained to me that the band rose out of the ashes of former girl band Rouge Bonnet. Both Eunjin and drummer Minchae, who had also been involved in the band, dissolved it in order to create something a little more active, eventually hooking up with friends Yoojung (vocals) and Nayun (bass) to solidify the current line-up. Their primary goal, according to Eunjin, was to create an "active and positive girl band" while incorporating their varied tastes. But what are these "varied tastes?"

When asked about their influences, most members decline to mention any particular bands, preferring instead to emphasize, like Minchae, an eclectic range of influences: "I gather my influence from everything that surrounds me and the feelings and thoughts I have about those things."

I was thinking that there might be more to it than that, and when pressed most of the members did mention some interest in the Riot Grrl movement. But don't worry, fellows, Yoojung assures us that Shorty Cat "isn't one of those bands hostile to society cursing men unconditionally."

"It's not about attacking men," Eunjin continues. "However, we don't want to be only about music, but

also hope to carry a positive message with our band. Where there are boundaries set against women, especially in Korea, we want to push through them and say hey, women can do this too!" For Shorty Cat it's not so much about rebellion as it is a natural element to what they are doing, "if we are a girl band naturally that includes ideas from Riot Grrl," explains Yoojung, "if we are expressing our own thoughts and the thoughts of women then naturally we can be viewed as Riot Grrl." Nayun agrees, "Even if we say we are only punk and not Riot Grrl, the act of speaking our thoughts candidly through the music includes the ideas of Riot Grrl." Yet I still wondered how those very confrontational ideas translated in Korea.

Eunjin recognizes that there are very few active females in the Korean punk scene, but feels that this has less to do with girls being excluded from the scene and more with the size of the scene itself. She also attributes the warm response to her band as a sign that the scene is open to more involvement from females. "Because females in the scene are still fairly rare even when we only do a little people are very grateful. Whether females are starting a new band or contributing to the scene in another way, many kids are very excited and encouraging because we are girls." This isn't, however, always the kind of attention they want. "From the position of a female band we don't want the attention simply because we are girls. Instead we would hope that people will evaluate our music and message objectively and support us out of their true feelings for the band."

When I asked if it was easy for females to participate in the scene, Eunjin responded that she doesn't see any difference between guys and girls. "It's just that there aren't many active girl bands in the scene so some people may feel, almost unconsciously, that it's still the territory of the guys who started it. There is absolutely no reason why females can't be part of the scene and



Summer show in Hongdae Playground.

the more girls who become active in the scene the easier it will be for new girls to get involved!" So what does the future have in store for Shorty Cat? They have burst brightly onto the stage and just recently released a demo album; Eunjin how-

ever, isn't one to feel complacent. She says the first recording is still a little too "unripe." For the future, "We would like to perform as much as possible while gaining more experience and learning to craft songs closer to the idea we have for the band." As

the band matures it seems highly likely that they will become future role models for other girls looking to join the scene, but Shorty Cat isn't just for girls; Eunjin concludes, "we hope to share our hope and our joy not only with other women but also with all our peers."



The girls of Shorty Cat.

It's not easy being a girl

Jiyoung Lee

1. The prospects of not marrying a good husband

A lot of girls in Korea are pursuing "professional careers" these days. Still, the most important success factor for girls (at least to their parents) is the husband they marry. Everyone must've heard "Shi-Jip" in some part of their stay in Korea. As a result, even though most girls are encouraged to get higher education, they are pressured to be ladylike, so that they would be attractive for men with prominent jobs.

"Ladylike" in Korea usually comes in the form of chic outfits, long straight black hair, sophisticated make-up techniques and eloquent manners. Therefore, it is nearly suicidal in terms of being a good bridal candidate if you are a punk girl in Korea. Whether you are into ska, old school or new school punk, girls in the punk scene tend to dye their hair, wear

unique outfits, and get piercings and tattoos. Most Korean men are not accustomed to these styles, and many upper-class men would find punk girls unfit for marriage.

Not that the girls in the punk scene really care. Most of the girls I know couldn't care less about getting a good husband. However, most of their parents are, and many parents use scare tactics. For example, "If you don't take that ring off your nose, you will not find a decent husband, and you will be destined to a life of misery." Many girls in the scene have to endure this talk every day.

2. The prospects of being labeled as a "slut"

Maybe it is because of the infamous erotic movie called "yellow hair." I don't know why, but Koreans tend to revile girls with yellow/pink/red/etc hair as whores. In addition, piercing was unknown in Korea just ten years ago, and tattoos

were reserved for the mistresses of gangsters, so a girl with the traditional punk outfit will probably be labeled as a slut on the streets of Korea.

In addition, it doesn't help that some girls in the scene had slept around with male punk musicians in the past. Not that being a slut is a bad thing. I personally think that it is just another way of living one's life. However, in a country with strong Confucian values, virginity is still a big thing. And, people tend to think that being a slut is somewhat immoral. Therefore, if a girl is labeled as a slut in the streets of Korea, there is a lot of discrimination and harassment waiting for her. As a result, many girls in the scene have to endure such hardships as a result of wearing clothes of different fashion.

3. Curfews

Confucian values are still embedded in Korea to the ex-

Lychee to Korn—Bring it on

King Ly Chee tour July 30 and 31

Interview by Jon Twitch Translation: 99Anger Lee Editor’s note: Okay, so this show came and went. We missed a big deadline, but we still got this interview out of it.

An important problem with Korea’s scene is that we don’t cooperate with other countries enough. Sure, we all have friends in Japan, but how much do any of us know about things in China, or Malaysia, or Indonesia? This summer we’ll get a taste of Hong Kong first—hand. King Ly Chee is ready and waiting. I conducted an interview with frontman Riz Farooqi over e-mail.

Q) First, can you tell me a bit about the Hong Kong scene? How big is it? How old? Do punks and hardcore people cooperate?

A) What’s up Korea! Our scene is tiny bro, much like what I assume Korea’s scene is like. The whole hardcore scene only started up in 1999 with my band being the first.

There was a punk scene prior to this but it was basically an expatriate scene and most of the local kids weren’t into it—they labeled punk rock as “foreigner music.”

Punk rock and hardcore had a huge impact on my heart and my overall well-being—it turned me from someone who

didn’t care about shit, to someone who cared so much about the world.

So I realized that local kids weren’t getting into it because everything was in English—the bands were singing in English, the zines we had were in English. The English level in Hong Kong is very low—much like I presume it is in Korea—and so I decided that to open this whole punk/hardcore thing up to more of the local Hong Kong kids that things needed to be in both English and Chinese.

So I started a zine called “Start From Scratch” which was a bilingual Cantnese/English zine that focused on trying to introduce punk rock/hardcore to kids in Hong Kong in a language that would appeal to them.

King Ly Chee started at the same time as the first issue of the zine because I realized that just having the words wasn’t enough, kids here needed something in their face so they could feel and absorb the energy of hardcore. For us, the message of hardcore is even more important than the music.

Without the message, hardcore is just regular old metal (especially these days—we love metal; don’t get us wrong!). So we are passionate about making sure kids understand what we’re saying in our songs.

The entire first year of the band we sung only in English. We got an alright fol-

lowing—but once Alex joined the band and started singing in Chinese, the reaction from kids was phenomenal. All of a sudden all these kids didn’t need to spend time translating our lyrics to understand; they could just hear it on stage and it blew them all away. The fire would ignite in their eyes and the spirit from the lyrics and the music would just take over their entire being...it was incredible to watch it all unfold from the stage.

King Ly Chee is proud of being from Hong Kong. This is our home and where we all come from—I’ve lived here my entire life from when I was a month old. We’re into promoting Hong Kong culture to the world—how can you do that if you sing in English? Cantonese is what’s spoken here and Cantonese is what will forever have the most power in transforming minds in this city.

Q) On your MySpace account you say you guys were tired of Hong Kong’s music situation. Why was that? Did you mean punk or in general?

A) No—we mean music in general. Hong Kong is such a tiny city that all types of music cross paths all the time. On any given show, a band before us could be a hip-hop act, or a pop/rock band, and the band after us could be full-on death metal, or an acoustic duo. That’s what’s so special about our music community here—kids are into everything. It’s super healthy. We’re all part of the independent music scene which is small and unsupported by mainstream Hong Kong. Canto-pop is what rules the airwaves here and no bands have ever made it to the mainstream (except for like 5 in the history of Hong Kong including Beyond, LMF, etc).

We have been trying to create our own underground community since Day One and have come a long way in the past six years. We’re definitely not just a hardcore scene—punk kids, metal heads, rock kids, indie-rock people are all mixed into this underground community. It’s fucking rad!

But when we started off the environment was so different. Kids back then who were playing in so-called “heavy” bands didn’t even play original music. They’d get on stage, hype the crowd up, and break into some fucking Limp Bizkit/Kid Rock cover.

Thank god things have changed so much. Just these past two years we’ve seen a whole new explosion of unbelievably good hardcore and punk bands. The future looks so bright for our little city...

A) How is it being a foreigner in a band there? Are there any problems with that?

Q) Nope...I don’t consider myself a “foreigner” and people don’t either because I speak Cantonese. My band members are all local Chinese kids and we all communicate with each other in Cantonese. Even when we’re on stage, I’m speaking Cantonese to the audience.

Q) What was the impact on Hong Kong’s scene of rejoining China?

A) It’s great! Hong Kong is a Chinese city—it belongs to China and all local Hong Kong people are proud of their heritage and are proud to be Chinese. Now, if you’re asking me about the Chinese government—that’s a different story. Oh look! That’s your next question!

Q) How do you feel about the Chinese government, and does it ever cause you trouble?

A) I think there definitely has been progress made but they’re a long way away from actually understanding what “human rights” entail. Recently, a Hong Kong reporter was detained in China for supposedly “spying” on China. It doesn’t matter that this HK reporter is known for his patriotic spirit and love for China and was actually gathering data for the government—the Chinese government is just overly sensitive up there and lives in constant fear of their own people uprising.

Yes we’ve had problems with the Chinese government—supposedly our band has been blacklisted by the Ministry of Culture in China. That’s horrible...and we feel horrible about it because we’re all so proud to be a part of China. We were invited to be part of an annual music festival in Beijing, but we played a show in Taiwan that unfortunately was a bad move by us and since then we’ve been blacklisted by the Chinese government. The Beijing festival organizers immediately cancelled us from the festival.

Q) Is there much cooperation with mainland China’s scene?

A) Yes, there is lots of cooperation and communication with the scene in China. It’s mainly punk rock up there though—but it’s awesome...punk bands in Beijing are so fucking good! Bands like Re-lector and Recycle are seriously international-level bands—they’re so good.

Q) Is there any trouble selling your releases in your home country? I know a lot of Chinese punk bands can’t.

A) Yeah—we haven’t been able to release anything in China. We’ve been able to smuggle our stuff into Southern China and sell it there...but none of our stuff will be released legally because we have such strong leanings towards human rights, personal freedoms, civil liberties, democracy, etc.

Q) You list lots of influences from Malaysia and Thailand

on your MySpace account. Why there?

Because we had just finished a Southeast Asian tour when we set up our MySpace page and we just wanted to let people around the world know that Asian bands are just as incredible as American bands. I mean come on, how many Asian bands’ websites have you seen where their influences are a huge list of American bands? There are millions! It sucks! So we were like, “Fuck that!” We just got back from a Southeast Asian tour where we played with such incredible Asian hardcore and punk bands and so we listed them as our influences. They’re so good down there! Just the overall standard of bands down there blew us all away.

I think, in general, Asian hardcore/punk kids need to stand more united in supporting each other. The American scene is huge—but do they really need even more support from Asian kids? It’s the Asian bands around here who need the extra encouragement from scenes in neighboring areas; scenes in Korea, Hong Kong, etc. who are so small that we need each other’s help to keep the fire going in our hearts.

Q) Do foreign bands tour there much?

A) No, foreign bands don’t come here...there’s no market for heavy music in Hong Kong. So no big sponsors will offer to pay for bands to come out here. We’ve had some good stuff come, like Himsa, 100 Demons, Envy (Japan), Rambo, and a tiny bunch of others...but they all came out here on their own account.

Q) I heard you opened for Korn—we collectively have always hated this band. The reason we did this was because for the longest time Hong Kong labeled all nu-metal music as “hardcore.” Since 1999 we were fighting an uphill battle with all of HK’s music media, huge music chain stores, and radio DJs about getting them to redefine this garbage music as “nu-metal” not hardcore. They have nothing to do with the hardcore scene, culture or purpose. Since we’re considered one of the biggest heavy bands in Hong Kong, we were invited to open for Korn. We thought it over for a good 2 or 3 weeks before we agreed to do it. Our rationale was that there was no better way to show people the difference between hardcore and nu-metal than actually putting the two styles together on one stage so people can hear the fucking difference loud and clear.

It was rad dude! There were over 4000 people there and we blew Korn right off the stage.

Radio DJs the next day were all like, “Wow! King Ly Chee was amazing!” and then went on to shit on Korn because honestly, they sucked live. The Korn dudes didn’t even talk to the audience—just the regular insincere thank-yous in between the songs. They were so lame...but we accomplished what we set out to do. It was such a great feeling to show up an American band that we’ve always said sucked and we’d do it again to any of the other shit bands that we’ve never been fans of. Bring it on Limp Bizkit!

Q) Do you tour much? Ever been outside Asia?

A) Yeah we’ve played in lots of places around Asia... but we’ve never been outside—can’t wait to get out there someday. More power to our brothers in Vassline for being the first Korean hardcore band to tour the States! Let the American scene know what Asian hardcore is all about!

Q) How was the previous show in Korea?

A) Unbelievable! We played six shows in three days and got to become very close with our Korean brothers in Johnny Royal. Their friendship camaraderie, and hospitality all reminded me of what hardcore is all about. Those dudes have been ingrained in our hearts forever.

Seriously, when we were on the plane, we were all in tears leaving Korea—that’s how much of an impact Korea had on us...we can’t wait to be back and have been looking forward to this for years.

Thanks for interviewing us, Jon—it means a lot to us! We owe a huge thank-you to Jin from Vassline for our July 30 show, and Dokyo from 13 Steps for setting up our July 31 show, and I’d like to thank my Korean brother Kim Hwan from Johnny Royal for getting this whole thing started. We can’t wait to be back! See you all soon!

지금 현재 한국선이 가지고 있는 문제중에 하나가 다른나라의 선과 많은 교류가 없다는 점입니다. 일본과의 교류는 좀 이루어지는 편인데 우리가 과연 일본을 제외한 나라 중국,말레이시아,인도네시아 등등……의 펑크/하드코어 선에 대해서 얼마나 알고 있을까요?

이런 여름 홍콩의 킹라이치가 홍콩하드코어에 진수를 보여주려 한국에 옵니다.다음은 킹라이치에 프론트맨 Riz Farooqi 와 이메일 인터뷰한 내용입니다.

Q) 처음으로,홍콩하드코어 선에 대해서 알고 싶습니다.선이 시작인지 얼마나 됐으며 선이 어떤 일이 있었지만 별로 활동적이지 않았고 사람들도 펑크락을 “다른나라의음악”이라고 치부하고 별로 관심을 두지 않았습니

다. 펑크 와 하드코어 음악은 음악을 떠나 제 인생에 커다란 영향을 끼쳤습니다. 한국선도 예외가 아니라고 생각하는데 선이 시작할땐 모든 밴드,팬진들은 모두 영어를 사용했습니다.이 문제가 펑크,하드코어 키드 들이 선에 참여하지 않는 하나의 이유라고 생각했습니다.이런걸을 생각했을때 홍콩의 펑크/하드코어 선이 커지기 위해서는 저희의 언어 와 영어를 같이 사용해야 겠다고 생각했습니다.그래서 펑크/하드코어 키드 들에게 더 다가가기 위해 캔토니스(중국어인중에 하나) 와 영어로 팬진 “Start From Scratch”를 발행하기 시작했습니다.

이쯤에 킹라이치도 활동을 시작했는데 팬진으로는 느낄수 없는 라이브의 에너지를 보여줌으로써 키드들의 선에 참여도를 높이려는 노력으로 이어졌습니다.저희에게 하드코어 는 음악보단 메시지가 더 중요하다고 생각합니다.메시지가 없는 하드코어는 그저 옛날 메탈음악이나 다름게 없다고 생각합니다.(오해하지 마세요 저희도 메탈팬입니다.)그래서 저희의 메시지를 키드들에게 전해주고 이해시키는것도 정말 중요합니다.저희가 처음 킹라이치를 시작했을땐 가사들은 모두 영어였지만 Alex 가 밴드에 들어온 이후에 중국말로 부르기 시작했습니다.그 이후 반응은 엄청났습니다.자연스럽게 키드들은 영어를 중국어로 번역할필요 없이 저희 메시지를 좀 더 이해하고 음악에 좀 더 빠져들게 되었습니다.저희는 저희가 태어나고 자란 홍콩에 대해서 자부심을 갖고 있습니다.저희는 홍콩문화를 세계에 알릴려고 합니다.그러기 위해서는 우리의 언어 우리가 사용하는 언어,우리가 모든걸 표현할수 있는 언어, 캔토니스 로 알려야 되지 않겠습니까?

Q) 마이스페이스 사이트에서 홍콩뮤직선에 대해서 “지쳤다”라고 얘기한것은 펑크특정적인것을 말한거 였나고 아니면 전체적으로 말한거 였나요?

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로 관심을 두지 않았습니

A) Yeah we’ve played in lots of places around Asia... but we’ve never been outside—can’t wait to get out there someday. More power to our brothers in Vassline for being the first Korean hardcore band to tour the States! Let the American scene know what Asian hardcore is all about!

Q) How was the previous show in Korea?

A) Unbelievable! We played six shows in three days and got to become very close with our Korean brothers in Johnny Royal. Their friendship camaraderie, and hospitality all reminded me of what hardcore is all about. Those dudes have been ingrained in our hearts forever.

Seriously, when we were on the plane, we were all in tears leaving Korea—that’s how much of an impact Korea had on us...we can’t wait to be back and have been looking forward to this for years.

Thanks for interviewing us, Jon—it means a lot to us! We owe a huge thank-you to Jin from Vassline for our July 30 show, and Dokyo from 13 Steps for setting up our July 31 show, and I’d like to thank my Korean brother Kim Hwan from Johnny Royal for getting this whole thing started. We can’t wait to be back! See you all soon!

지금 현재 한국선이 가지고 있는 문제중에 하나가 다른나라의 선과 많은 교류가 없다는 점입니다. 일본과의 교류는 좀 이루어지는 편인데 우리가 과연 일본을 제외한 나라 중국,말레이시아,인도네시아 등등……의 펑크/하드코어 선에 대해서 얼마나 알고 있을까요?

이런 여름 홍콩의 킹라이치가 홍콩하드코어에 진수를 보여주려 한국에 옵니다.다음은 킹라이치에 프론트맨 Riz Farooqi 와 이메일 인터뷰한 내용입니다.

Q) 처음으로,홍콩하드코어 선에 대해서 알고 싶습니다.선이 시작인지 얼마나 됐으며 선이 어떤 일이 있었지만 별로 활동적이지 않았고 사람들도 펑크락을 “다른나라의음악”이라고 치부하고 별로 관심을 두지 않았습니

다. 펑크 와 하드코어 음악은 음악을 떠나 제 인생에 커다란 영향을 끼쳤습니다. 한국선도 예외가 아니라고 생각하는데 선이 시작할땐 모든 밴드,팬진들은 모두 영어를 사용했습니다.이 문제가 펑크,하드코어 키드 들이 선에 참여하지 않는 하나의 이유라고 생각했습니다.이런걸을 생각했을때 홍콩의 펑크/하드코어 선이 커지기 위해서는 저희의 언어 와 영어를 같이 사용해야 겠다고 생각했습니다.그래서 펑크/하드코어 키드 들에게 더 다가가기 위해 캔토니스(중국어인중에 하나) 와 영어로 팬진 “Start From Scratch”를 발행하기 시작했습니다.

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도 “외국인”이라고 생각하지 않습니다.그리고 대화하는데 전혀 지



장이 없고 뭐 공연할때도 관중들에게 캔토니스로 말하는데요. 뭘~~

Q) 이제 홍콩선이 “중국선”이 되었는데 어떤 임팩트가 있을까요?

A) 저희는 홍콩이 중국이 일부가 되었다는걸 아주 자랑스럽게 생각하고 홍콩은 중국의 한 도시 너무나 좁은 거죠. 캔토-팝(캔토니스 팝) 이 모든 미디어를 장악하고 있으며 락음악을 하고 있는 밴드가 홀라가가 위해진 너무나 높은 산입니다.저희가 밴드를 처음 시작한 첫날부터 지금 6년째되는 지금까지 저희는 커뮤니티를 만들려고 노력해왔습니다.단지 하드코어인말을 말하는건 아닙니다.펑크던,메탈이던,락,인디….모든 사람들이 함께 참여할수 있는 커뮤니티를 만드려고 노력해왔습니다.그러나 생각같이 쉽지 않았던게 “박스” 밴드들이 라고 불렀던 밴드들은 모두 림프비즈킷 이나 키드락 같은 밴드들의 곡들을 커버하기만 했습니다. 그러나 지금 이렇게 바뀐걸 생각하면 정말 다행이라고 생각합니다.홍콩선의 미래는 이렇게 발전할것이며 아주 밝다고 할수 있습니다.

A) 네, 많은 교류가 이루어지고 있습니다.그리고 베이징 밴드 Reflector 나 Recycle 는 아주 멋진 밴드라고 생각합니다.

Q) 중국에서 앨범을 발매하는게 어렵다고 하는데 어떤 트러블이 있는지요?

A) 네, 그렇습니다. 저희역시 중국에서 앨범을 릴리즈 못하고 있습니다.저희의 사상과 메세지등등이 강하기 때문에 더 어렵습니다.

Q) 마이스페이스에서 많은 말레이시아 ,태국 밴드가 영향을 준 밴드로 거론되었는데 이거에 대해서 설명해주세요.

A) 마이스페이스를 만들때에는 저희가 아시아투어를 마치고 난 후였습니다.그때서 많은 사람들이 모인 공연에서 아주 멋진게 콘을 둘러봐었습니다.그리고 콘을 많이 노출된 반면에 아시아에 중

은밴드들은 그렇지 못하게 현실입

니다. 그걸 안타깝게 생각해서 써 포트 하는 차원에서 그렇게 적었습니

다.다음날 디제이들은 킹라이치에 칭찬을 아끼지 않았습니

다.우리 펑소 좋아하지 않는 미국밴드

를 그렇게 놀렸다는데에 너무 기

분이 좋았고 다시 미국밴드가 온

다고 해도 기꺼이 받아드릴생각이

없습니다…다음밴드누구 ? Limp

Bizkit??

Q) 투어를 많이 하는 편이냐

요? 아시아 이외에 투어한적은 있

나요?

A) 네네..아시아안에서는 투

어를 많이 했습니다.그러나 아직

까지 아시아밖을 나가보지 못했네

요.바세린이 미국으로 투어를 가

는 첫한국밴드가 되었는데 아시아

선에 대해서 많이 알고요 왔으면

좋겠습니다!!

Q) 한국에서의 전공연은 어

뻤나요?

A) 너무 좋았습니다.삼일동안

공연을 여섯번했는데 자니로알하

고 아주 친해졌습니다.그리고 너

무 잘해줘서 아주 저희 기억속에

자리잡고 있습니다.그리고 한국에

떠날때 진짜로 눈물을 흘릴정도로

아쉬웠습니다.그만큼 한국의 기억

이 너무나 좋습니다.빨리 가고싶

어서 미지겠네요.

마지막으로 인터뷰해주신

Jon 그리고 7월30일 공연에 도움

준 바세린의 박진씨 그리고 31일

청주공연에 도움주신 13스텝스

Dokyo13 과 저희 브라더 자니로

알 김환씨에게 너무나 감사드니

다.그럼 곧 뵈요~~ 여러분~~



Tapes? What in the fuck?

Musiro Records

Nevin Domer
Dig out that old Walkman if you can still find it. Maybe it was traded in for a CD or mp3 player long ago, but can they really capture the nostalgia of those old mix tapes? And these aren't your ordinary mix tapes: Musiro Records is a DIY tape distro offering a sampling of grind-core from across the globe. You're probably thinking: "Does anyone really listen to tapes anymore?" Well I sat down with Gunhee, owner for Musiro Records, and asked him that and other questions about the Korean and international DIY scenes. Here's what he said:

Q. Musiro Records has been around for over a year. Tell us a little about how it got started and what sort of projects you do or hope to do?

A. Since I had long been around the international tape-trading scene, the initial idea was just to put out some "personal bootlegs." I soon decided to get slightly more professional, releasing the Tekken/Terror Revolucionário split tape. I also have a small distro. It hasn't been updated since early this year, but hopefully it will be by the time you read this interview.

Let me confess I had been indifferent or even hostile to the local scene here before I got down to my so-called business. This is more common among metalheads, many of whom complain about the lack of bands, but few have the guts to start one of their own. Anyone who believes in DIY ethics, be it a crusty, a sXe'er, a thrasher, or even a grind freak, should be different, though. The greatest virtue of punk rock is, I dare to say, democracy, and running such a small label as mine is not a big deal really.

Other than that, well, there isn't much to talk about regarding the current state of Musiro Records. Okay, some of the bands that are expected to work with me in near future are Fallen World, Choice Of My Own, x Secret Seven x, and Gordon Ivy & The Jaybirds.

Q. Why did you choose to distro tapes instead of CDs or CD/Rs?

A. Among the generation of iPod-users, even CDs might appear out-of-date, and this is South Korea, one of the countries with the most gadget freaks ever, so whatever format I choose it's not likely to do me any good or harm in terms of sales. I've got some nostalgic feeling about cassette tapes as I grew up with them in my teens. It sucks that many local and foreign labels have stopped handling cassette tapes. Vinyl is popular in Western DIY scenes, but things

are not the same everywhere. I mean, in certain situations punks might have less chance to own turntables while CDs are still expensive as hell either to press or to buy. Bearing this in mind, I consider tapes the most universal form of promoting underground music. Most people have a cassette deck at home or if not you can buy a decent one for 30 000 won or even less. Many bands are recording their demos on CD/Rs, which can be even cheaper than tapes. It's when they or other distributors sell them for inflated prices that I get pissed off. Don't get me wrong; I'm a big supporter of the whole "copyleft" idea and Soulseek rules, if it all remains non-profit. I still prefer cassette tapes, but then again, that's merely a matter of my fetishism.

Q. You do distro for grind and thrashcore bands all over the world, but seem particularly interested in Latin America. Is there any reason you're drawn to that area? And what sort of connections do you have with the bands?

A. If you ask me what is so special about the Latin American sounds, sorry—I have no idea. I do however, hate the Hispano- or US-centric view of punk, which is quite prevailing in South Korea if not all over the world. I can't stand the "wish-Hongdae-were-another-NYC"-type bullshit. I've always had an exceptional interest in the underground music in different parts of the world, which you might carelessly label "exotic," but which I prefer to call "unfairly ignored by Western punks," blah blah blah. I know bands from Iran, Saudi Arabia, Burma or Myanmar, Nepal, Mongolia, Romania, Albania, and many "-stan" republics. A lot of my latest favorite bands hail from Mexico, Venezuela, Guatemala, Chile, Peru, and especially Brazil. I appreciate their ideas, as well as, and sometimes even more than their music. When they sing about massacres, military regimes, and poverty, I tend to sympathize with them more than I do with rich Scandinavian crusties saying the same things, as these are their "own" problems. Besides, we South Koreans have gone through similar madness so perhaps that counts. The same goes for other great scenes that exist in Southeast Asia.

Q: When you talk about international punk and DIY scenes how do you see the place of South Korea within them?

A: Most kids here know little or nothing about international scenes other than those in Japan, America, and Europe, so when I mention a band from, let's say Thailand, they react like, "Are you kidding

me?" Ironically enough, this is pretty much the same way that a lot of the "first-world" punks view South Korea. One of the most embarrassing questions I myself have ever heard is something to the effect of "Is it still illegal to listen to rock music in your country? Aren't you afraid of ending up in a jail?" Instead of aping the Western sounds, we should care more about truly international scenes. As for Korea's place in these scenes, I think we are still finding it. Some countries seem to be specializing in a style. When I look at Malaysia I think of the vast crust and grind scene there, and Indonesia of Youth Crew, Singapore of thrash, and so forth. The scene in Korea is still developing and I don't think we have anything that could be considered the "Korean style," nor do I think we really need one. The fact is we just need more bands playing more diverse styles of punk.

Q. You've also have some releases by Korean bands, Terror Revolution and Pulgasari. Are you looking to release more local bands or focus mainly on distro?

A. Just to correct you it's Terror Revolucionário, not Terror =Revolucionário, and they're from Brazil. Sure enough, I'm always keen as hell to find and collaborate with more Korean bands: it's actually my number

one concern. As mentioned before, I used to stand quite apart from the contemporary local scene for some vague reason, and still kind of do, albeit not for the same reason. It's just that there are not a lot of people around who share my fucked-up taste in music. I have probably seen more Korean bands live for the last five months than I have for the last five years. I already have it in my mind to work with some of them on future releases. I wonder, however, if they would still bother to do a cassette tape. Pulgasari, on this score, is one of the main reasons why Musiro Records exists, or vice versa.

Q. Some of the bands you release, including Pulgasari, are pretty political in their lyrics. Are you politically-minded as a label, and how does that affect what bands you handle?

A. As an individual, absolutely; as a label, well...kind of. Everyone has his or her own dietary, sexual, and political preferences, which is nothing to make a fuss about, but personally I appreciate those who are promoting the healthy left-wing ideas in the punk scene or otherwise. While I cannot speak for others, Pulgasari does have a lot of lyrics focused on obviously sociopolitical issues, such as the neo-McCarthyist stupidity that pollutes this country.

It's what you might call "more than music" or in the case of the particular band "more than noise." It more or less affects the label as well. For example, there's no way I will work with a band that is sexist, male or female chauvinist, racist, pro-Amerikkkan, Islamophobic, militarist, patriotic, reactionary, or simply moronic. That's a matter of conscience, but then again, I never want to be a PC fascist or the like. I mean being socially aware and active is one thing, and being preachy is another. I often stop by the Profane Existence message board merely to see how those "punk fundamentalists" talk shit about meat-eaters, nine-to-fivers, voters, and other innocent people who aren't like them. It pretty much reminds me of the whole hooligan sXe bullshit too. Elitism in whatever form can suck it. There are always more and better ways to convey your message. In this regard, some of my favorite bands are Los Crudos, x Limp Wrist x, Lärm, Agathocles, Fear Of God, Disrupt, Charles Bronson, Parkinson, and perhaps Dir Yassin, although each has a different musical or lyrical concern.

For more information and sound clips you can either visit Musiro Records on the webs at geocities.com/musirorecords or contact Bahk at musirorecords@yahoo.com.



The Foundations of Korean Ska

Jon Twitch

When I first discovered punk, it wasn't my thing. Then one day I saw my first ska show—and everything fit into place. Ska helped me understand punk. A few years later I was DJing on the community radio and spinning reggae songs in the punk nightclub. Then I left it all behind for Korea.

Coming here, I practically fell into the punk scene. I found everything I needed here—everything except ska. Around that time, the only ska band playing was Beach Valley, and they sucked more than Ashlee Simpson's vacuum cleaner. The Skunk compilation I bought didn't impress me either, with Brassman and the most godawful of godawful bands, Lazybone.

It was all ska-punk, which I've said is neither ska nor punk. Lacking the soulful groove of ska and the relevance of punk, I've never been able to enjoy any of it anywhere. Back in my hometown we called it frat-ska, because it appeals to university idiots who think it's cool to pretend to be James Bond and then jump around on the dancefloor like retards on the moon. Ska-punk attracted the people we hated, and none of the big bands came from the underground like we did.

I was disappointed that there was no ska. There's nothing wrong with Korea's ska-punk bands—except Lazybone, who can choke on their own testicles—but I can't bring myself to like any of them as much as I love the real ska sound. I will never respect their influences.

When Kingston Rudy Ska came about, I wasn't optimistic. It even took a couple shows before I got into them, partly due to a weak response from the kids in Skunk.

What I needed was a band

that understood the roots. And that's what we got. A band that harkens back to ska's roots—not in Korea, not in fucking California, all the way back to, well, Kingston.

This band is for you if you like the sound of the Skatalites. In every way possible, they reproduce the music of the Skatalites, although sometimes I wonder how familiar they are with the other bluebeat musicians. With a setlist filled with originals and covers, they're worth going to see, but only if you like dancing.

One humorous note to me is the two Skatalites songs they cover—"Guns of Navarone," which is usually the high point of their set, and "A Shot in the Dark." Neither of which, ironically, are Skatalites originals, but movie soundtracks, as the early ska bands loved making music about their favourite movies. It kind of reminds me of all the Korean (and Japanese) bands I've heard cover the Clash classic "I Fought the Law," without acknowledging the song belongs to Sonny Curtis.

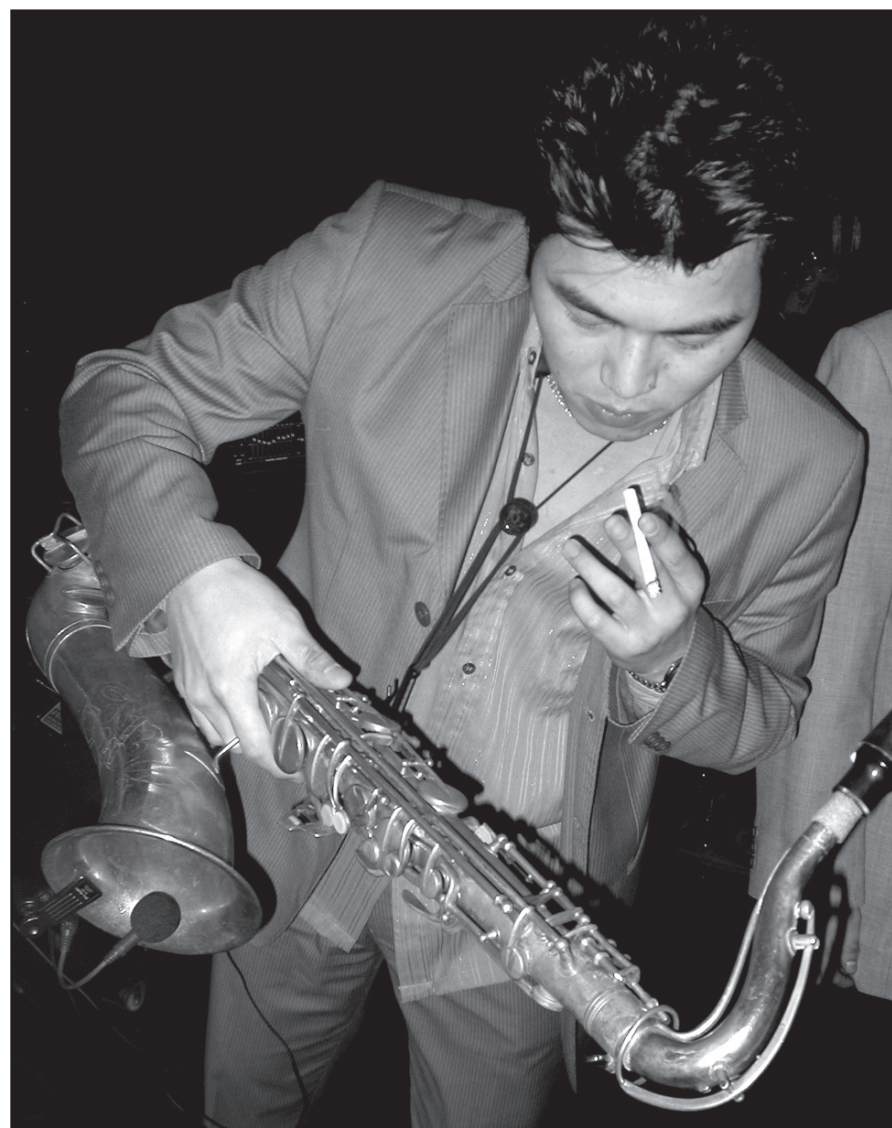
The real low point for me is a reggae song from Bob Marley, "Three Little Birds." I wish they'd dug back a little farther and found some of the Wailers' original ska stuff, rather than relying on the hits, and one of the weaker ones at that.

Some songs come and go as the band goes through singers. Their original vocalist was from skate-punk band Half Brothers, an odd pair-up, but he left for the army. Since then, they've had a parade of new singers coming through. At the moment, it seems that the sax and trombone players are in charge of vocal duties. From what I've seen, they're doing a decent job of it as well.

I do miss the organ player,



The women of Kingston Rudy Ska.



They sometimes play in Skunk Hell, but they have a regular gig in Bar Nana in Itaewon, if you can stand going there. They do a set around midnight on the first Saturday of every month, and you'll probably see me there mashing up the dancefloor.

who left the band so he could rejoin Crying Nut when the members were released from the army.

Eccentricities aside, this band will be the foundation of the Korean ska scene. There's a good crowd of ska fans out there, and most of them are musicians. Our next step is to get a band that looks good on a bill alongside the Kingston Rudies.

It's kind of a problem right now; every ska show has the same bands, but only one plays ska. Suck Stuff and Ghetto Bombs do their best to put together a ska set, and Number One Korean plays crowd-amusing ska punk, and there's Dub Spain doing their Sublime rock thing and somehow passing it off as rocksteady. It's not rocksteady; just listen to the rhythm.

How do we make Korea's ska scene grow? Look what's out there now, even in Malaysia and Japan. Ignore ska-punk. Ignore Sublime—I'm tired of hearing Sublime cov-

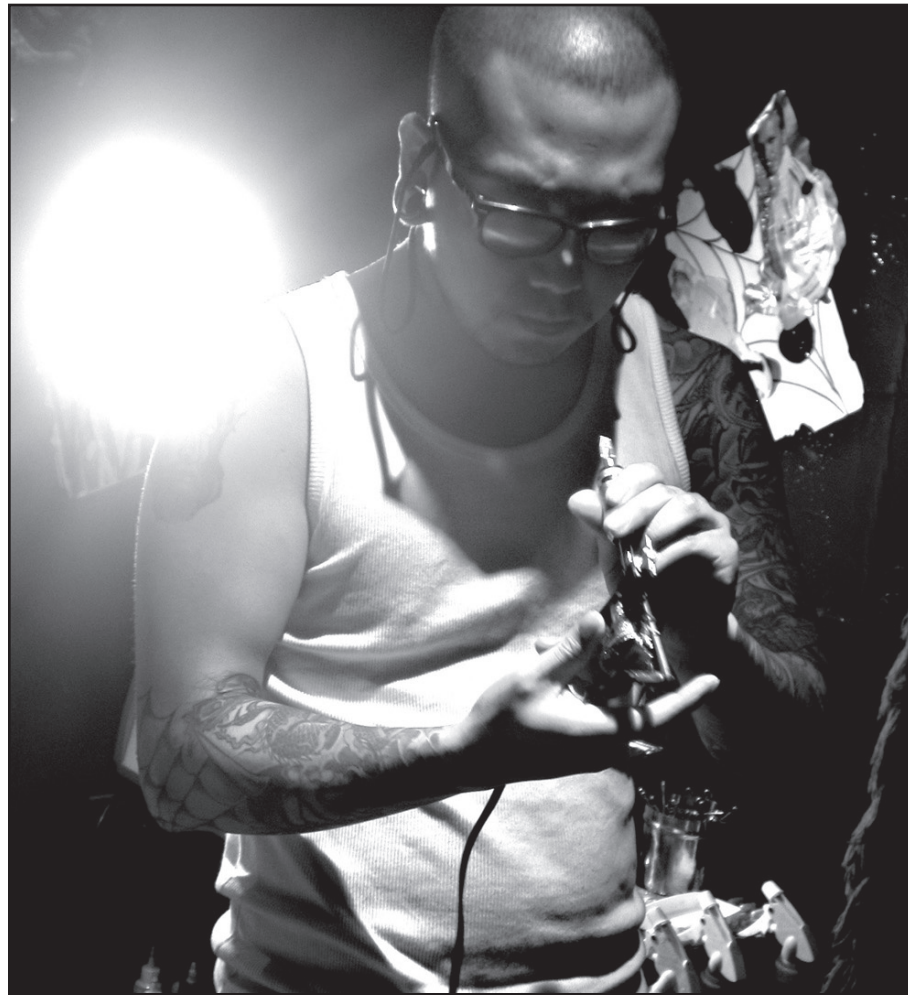
ers. They don't even play ska half the time. Even push aside Bob Marley, if you can get that through your skull. Don't let the big names eclipse you. We need Korean two-tone, Korean rocksteady, Korean skinhead reggae. By the way, dibs on that last one.

Kingston Rudy Ska are a revival band. Isn't it about time to make Korean ska come alive? I've heard that dub was the

Some bands worth looking up:

- Aggrolites (US skinhead reggae)
- Big Youth (UK punky reggae)
- Bodysnatchers (UK all-girl two-tone)
- Dr Ring Ding (German skinhead dancehall)
- Gerhana Ska Cinta (Malaysian skinhead rocksteady)
- Hepcat (US roots ska)
- Judge Dread (UK skinhead reggae)
- Lee Scratch Perry (Jamaica's most important producer)
- Mikey Dread (DJ punky reggae)
- O! Skall Mates (Japanese skinhead ska)
- Operators (Canadian punky reggae)
- Papa San (modern reggae)
- Prince Buster (Jamaican bluebeat ska)
- Radiation Kings (US third-wave)
- Scotty (dub reggae)
- Scrapy (German skinhead ska)
- Ska-D-Lite (Dutch roots ska)
- The Slackers (Brooklyn soul)

Marked in Korea



Deep in the subterranean lair of Sun Tattoos, TK prepares his implements of torture.

Jon Twitch and Jungy Rotten <http://thememagazine.com>

On the wrong side of Ehwa Women's University, you can find cheap stores filled with unpackaged junk, old men fighting in front of the convenience store, and North Americans picking through the trash. This is where you find Sun Tattoos, one of Korea's underground tattoo shops. I can't give you more specific directions because it might get the owner, TK, arrested.

Tattoos are a touchy subject here. "They're an insult to God!" blusters one editor to me. More importantly, they clash with Confucian belief, which is still strong in Korea. Most Koreans believe that our bodies are gifts from ancestors, so it is our duty to preserve our bodies. It's not surprising then the reactions that most Koreans have to tattoos. Expose your tattoos here, and you may never experience the infamous Korean hospitality. In Europe in the past, tattoos were used to mark all kinds of criminals, slaves, and undesirable. Korea has not moved as far beyond such practices. Consequently, getting a tattoo in Korea is harder than getting a nice cold beer in Salt Lake City.

Moon So-Yee, a Korean living in London, was shocked to observe that "Seven out of ten people wear a tattoo like shirt or hat. I am totally shocked and

I ask myself, they are all gangster? In Korea, someone has tattoo, he must be in criminal because of tattoo."

The practice, possibly ad-

opted from Japanese yakuza, is a rite of loyalty. Once you're marked by a gang tattoo, you may never fully leave, at least in theory. I recall a taxi driver one night who covered his tattoo with an armband. He was released from his gang after he had done his time in prison. I never got to see his tattoo, other than the odd bits not covered by the armband. Although the practice is seemingly still continued, it doesn't account for all tattoos.

Binool, a tattooist based in Hongik University area, claims that most of his customers are regular people, mostly in their 20s. "There are many artists like musicians, dancers, actors, and painters among my customers," he says, "but also university students and office workers and even housewives."

Not quite the stereotypical set of contemporary undesirable most Koreans would lead you to believe—the Japanese, gangsters, and foreigners." Most of the visible tattoos you'd find in Korea would be on foreigners. A Korean would most likely get a tattoo in an area easily hidden under clothes—the shoulder, the back, or the thigh.

Speaking of hidden, it takes hours to find the unmarked entrance to Sun Tattoo. It's hidden down a narrow basement stairway in an unmarked alley. Outside a group of kids are tapping around a soccer ball, unaware of the secret laboratory underneath their feet. We're assured by everyone that we're not breaking any laws, but it somehow feels like we are.

Tattooing is technically le-

gal in Korea, but tattooists are often arrested, fined, and usually convicted. Binool knows a tattoo artist currently waiting trial. He was charged with illegally practicing medicine without a licence. This practice became standard practice in 1992, when a judge convicted one tattooist on this charge, having nothing else to throw at him. That case has made it far easier to convict any other tattooist in subsequent cases; even though some judges understand there is nothing wrong with tattoos, they are afraid to go against the landmark 1992 verdict.

These verdicts obviously upset Binool. "It might be a drastic example, but the law says it's even against the law if you just apply medication on your son's knee at home when he falls." Although no one has ever been brought to court for this, it is illegal to practice any form of medicine on another person in Korea.

"I was in prison for ten days," says Gun-won, a Korean tattooist, in an article in local bilingual zine DDD. "They took me in, but they couldn't find any evidence. They took all my customers' phone numbers and called, but they couldn't find anybody to incriminate me. So they regarded me as an illegal medical doctor and charged me with that, because the needle goes through the skin." Gun-won is last known to be awaiting trial.

Though tattooing is officially legal in Korea, everything about it is illegal, including equipment and there is no licensing body. Standards for hygiene are set by agreement between artists. "Since there is not any institution giving lessons to become a tattoo artist in this country," says Binool, "I travelled all around the country to meet as many tattoo artists as possible." Unfortunately, there is no guarantee you're getting a quality tattoo, unless you know the artist.

"Don't get tattooed in Hongdae," warns Drew, an American who's lived in Korea for most of his life. He confides in me his most embarrassing tattoo, which resembles a man yanking on a bull's privates. The circle around the tattoo is uneven. He got it in the back of a piercing shop. "I told the artist I had to catch a train in two hours, which may have been my mistake."

Another concern is hygiene. "The room [for Sun Tattoo] kinda puts people off," says Paul, a half-Korean punk who plays guitar in a band called Suck Stuff, "but I don't see why, because the room's not going into your arm."

An alternative to a tattoo parlor is one of the many cosmetic surgery clinics on nearly every street in Korea.

These places are operated by certified (<—John: "certified" is sadly the correct word for a doctor's accreditation in Korea.) doctors. Jay's barracks buddy Spanky recently got a tattoo at one such place. "Look for a green cross," he says. "If it's a surgical or medical clinic, go for it. It's expensive, but it's worth it—you won't get chlamydia or Hepatitis A."

"Hepatitis B," corrected Jay.

"Whatever," retorted Spanky.

It's rare to find a cosmetic surgeon who would do a real tattoo. The doctor Spanky visited was probably used to doing more standard plastic surgeries. All kinds of cosmetic surgeries are popular in Korea, from spot removal to the famous eye surgery, to "permanent makeup." Cosmetic surgeons are accredited to administer tattoos, although they're not used to anything more than eyebrow tattoos or other natural-looking makeup tattoos. And they are not peers of underground tattoo artists: "It's literally makeup, not a tattoo," sneers Binool. "No, I would never think of it as a kind of tattoo."

Sun Tattoos turns out to be adequately stocked with hygienic equipment. The owner of the shop, TK, shows up at 6:00 to let us in. While we thumb through his library of Japanese tattoo magazines for Jay's design, TK sets to sterilising his equipment. TK has his portfolio on display over all of Korea's punk scene. He's the official tattooist of Skunxs.com, the Korean punk online store.

Tattoos are popular in the Korean punk scene. As a result, most of them can't get decent jobs, relying on labour work to pay the bills. When they go to public saunas, everyone glares at them. So why do they get tattoos?

"Because other people did it," says one punk.

"I was curious," says another.

"I just thought it would look cool," adds a third.

Pretty disappointing reasons, especially considering the hardships they face from having tattoos. So why do they keep getting inked? The Korean punks say it gives them a feeling of achievement, and makes them feel special. Their number one gripe about getting tattoos continues to be the pain itself.

"Rather than a particular motive," Binool says, "tattoo has just been a natural way for me to live my life, just like going to school, going to the army, getting married and starting a family."

Motivation must be questioned for why Koreans would get tattoos. Especially considering the employment situation, and the risk of bullying in the army. In the past, anyone slightly different would easily be targeted by bullies, and tattooed soldiers got it worse. However, stricter rules have cracked down on bullying.

Every Korean male must



serve two years in the army before turning 30. Until recently, the Korean army refused to accept recruits who had tattoos over two-thirds of their bodies. They can't flee to Canada, so Koreans choose to get stabbed a million times with a tiny needle.

"There used to be many people who took advantage of that law before," says Binool, "but nowadays you cannot get an exemption from the army by having tattoos anymore."

According to a 2003 article on CBS News, about 170 men had been arrested over the years for trying to dodge the draft by getting tattoos, a crime punishable with up to three years' imprisonment. The young men were shown in the national media, disgraced, handcuffed, heads lowered, and shirts removed to reveal tattoos of dragons, fish, birds, and roses.

"When I give people tattoos, it is beyond my care what they're gonna do with their tat-



naked in front of his young son because he was ashamed of an old tattoo. "He cried for happiness to have gotten a cover-up tattoo," recalls Binool. "When I watch these people going back home after I give them cover-up tattoos, when they starting being proud of themselves again, I feel proud of what I do. I believe what I do can change their lives. That's what they get tattoos for. It is for a change in life."

Surprisingly, piercing is becoming popular in Korea. Piercing shops are scattered throughout Seoul, particularly around Ehwa University, where you can find groups female students purveying the merchandise. "The biggest difference is trace. The biggest charm of a tattoo is that it leaves a trace and doesn't get erased, but at the same time it's the biggest weakness. Piercing doesn't leave a trace. If you just wanna cool in your youth, then piercing is the best.

"Getting a tattoo is having

a friend to keep until you die. You shouldn't without thinking deep choose your friend who will live for the rest of your life on your body and die with you."

Jay is not ready to get a tattoo yet. He has an idea, but getting it to look right is much harder. He makes an appointment to come back next week.

"Thanks for coming," says TK. "Don't draw any attention to this place as you're leaving."

"Pablo Picasso, Vincent van Gogh, they're all great artists," says Binool. "How many canvases did they have to tear and throw out until they finished one piece of art? Probably a lot. Tattoo is art on a human body. Even if you don't like what you have done, can you tear it? Can you erase it and start all over again? It requires extremely high concentration and a professional mind. Tattoo artists are greater artists than Picasso or van Gogh, I believe."



Born-again atheist Unity gets inked up at Sun Tattoos.



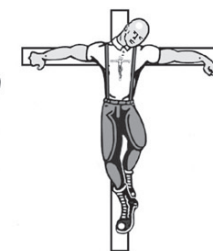
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CENTREFOLD



JOEY, 27, likes tattoos, rock and roll, and guitars. He thinks you have pretty lips.

Up on the Cross



Rocking For Rock Against Communism?

Jon Twitch
It's hard to talk about skinheads and racism, since there's so much bullcrap out there on the two.

We are the single most universally hated bunch of folks in the world, and some of us love it. You think that skinhead up on the cross wants to be let down? Hell no.

Part of being a skinhead is asking for trouble. It gives freshcuts a bit of glee when some ponce jumps in their path and calls them Hitler's Youth. Those people are a godsend when you're feeling punchy.

And sometimes, if we're not tired of playing ambassador, we do sit those people down and explain things out. The other day, I met a nice foreigner outside Skunk. I told him what I am and pointed out some of the Korean skins standing around, and he replied "Well, we have real skinheads back in South Africa."

Don't blame people like this; they don't know better. It doesn't help that we encourage these assumptions. Red or white braces and bootlaces, Skrewdriver shirts, bands with '88' in the name—if we were really sensitive to what people think, we'd stop it all. I had a friend who wore a Skrewdriver shirt to a reggae night where I was DJing, and his friends told him to change. Perhaps we can get away with it by pulling out some sort of race card—"I love reggae" or "I'm a Korean." We all have a copout.

In fact, after reading this article, you may laugh it off and say "How can a Korean really be into this shit?" In a nation that is not predominantly white, how can we have white supremacy? To an extent, everyone here has the freedom to explore racist music because it won't result in a swift and immediate bootfucking. We can enjoy it ironically, and laugh over the lyrics, and even call ourselves Nazis when we're all good and drunk.

Probably the single thing that irks me most among the Korean skinheads is the interest in RAC, or Rock Against Communism. To me that's every bit as much a symbol of white supremacy as a Nazi flag or a burning cross. There's a folder full of RAC on just about every Korean skinhead's Souleseek account. Everyone knows who Skrewdriver was. Every once in a while, each of them is contacted by some enraged foreign SHARP or concerned punk who threatens them and calls them



Korean skinheads—just what are they rocking against, exactly?

a race traitor. Is it deserved? Sure, you need to know the consequences.

Now I'll make a confession. I've got a horde of RAC music on my own computer as well. Why not? It's fun to listen to. However, I'm cautious about sharing it with others, and I nearly had a heart attack when a People Haters song came on while I was cuddling with my Korean girlfriend. "Gook oi! We'll never forget Pearl Harbor!" What a rush that was.

I say that if you're interested in RAC, you must know what it is and be smart on the subject. The music may be good but the politics are rotten, and it's in every Korean's best interest never to meet an RAC skinhead.

Of the racist skinheads I've talked to, most of them really didn't have a problem with Koreans liking RAC. As long as they do it in their own country.

One such Korean, Boram (bassist of Samchung), bore witness to one such band while visiting Sweden: Pluton Svea. He reported no problems among the locals with having a Korean skinhead present. It makes me wonder if they performed the song "Hail the Swastika," in which they sing:

We fight for the existence of the white race every day.

Niggers and Jews, gooks and communists—you have to pay!

The race war is here; there's no turning back; we won't retreat

Our enemies already starting to

run from our screams

How can a band compromise these lyrics when they see an actual "gook" at one of their shows? I can't even begin to imagine; the only theory I have is that white supremacists are as lame in Europe as they are in Canada. Boram's encounter led him to believe that there was something greater than racial politics at work there.

The top misconception of RAC revolves around the name. "Anti-communism? That sounds perfect for a South Korean skinhead!" One problem: the original Rock Against Communism organisers had little or nothing to say about actual Communism. They began organising RAC shows in response to Rock Against Racism, which must have been making their lives difficult. The name of RAC itself is oppositional to Rock Against Racism, not to Karl Marx. To those far-right and racist participants, they saw Communism in their nation's lenient immigration policies and acceptance of multiculturalism. Try asking these people what Communism is. You'll get things like "Skinheads who mix with other races" and "South Koreans."

In every article I find about Rock Against Communism, I read that the concerts were dominated by "far-right and white supremacist bands." Far right, huh? So maybe originally RAC was nothing more than the "Conservative Punk" movement of today. Maybe, maybe. I find it

strange that anyone with a far-right political stance who isn't racist would want to throw their support under Skrewdriver, a white power band that did not hide their belief in racial superiority.

The leader of Rock Against Communism was Ian Stuart Donaldson, who is considered by racists to be the grandfather of all skinheads. The lead man of Skrewdriver, who formed in 1977, he wasn't known for racism in the beginning. In fact, he roomed with some of the members of Madness before things went ugly. Most of the stuff you can find by Skrewdriver online is from before they broke up in 1979. It wasn't until 1982 that Donaldson reformed the band, with all new members and a new objective: rallying whites to action.

It's important to know who's pulling the strings behind all this. The thing I find despicable about the original racist skinheads is how they were nothing more than pawns of British racist group the National Front. In America, the seminal label Resistance Records is financed by the National Alliance, who promise "a society in which young men and women gather to revel with polkas or waltzes, reels or jigs, or any other White dances, but never to undulate or jerk to negroid jazz or rock rhythms." The main reason why I would not trust my back to a white power skinhead is because one of these two groups

has influenced him, backed him, funded him, or at least his justified his existence in some way.

Over time, RAC has become a label, then a zine, then a sound. It moved to America, and everywhere else where white boneheads wanted an anthem. Most of the time it's used as a synonym for white supremacist music, since pretty well all white power bands were involved in RAC in some manner.

Many Korean skinheads insist that RAC has shifted its focus. To them, it's a symbol of national pride, wherever you're from, and racism isn't the issue. Operating on this assumption, it is now possible for Asians to make RAC bands—bands that have no official association with the original people, and almost certainly have no following with them. I'm sure it's the greatest insult to some of them that Koreans are downloading and enjoying their music.

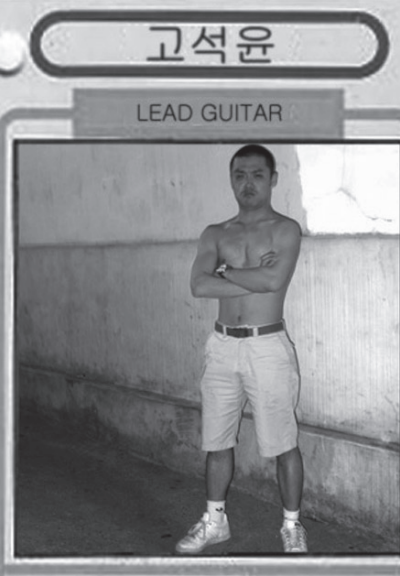
So let me ask why Koreans need to copy these cockmarts. All the racist skinheads I've met have been the dumbest people I've known: why would you want to associate with that? The Japanese made their Skinhead Samurai Spirit movement, making all sorts of RAC-influenced bands, but not in the name of RAC. Although you can find all sorts of evidence of Japanese nationalist skinheads, they're more the flag-waving type than the Paki-bashing or Asian-bashing or gay-bashing racists we deal with in Western countries.

Malaysia too has a growing neo-Nazi community, but these guys seem more like fucking retards. They want to show pride in their country so they wear a symbol of white supremacy. I don't care who you are; any non-Aryan who dresses in a Third Reich flag is a race traitor. Even that inbred Prince Harry was pissing on his ancestors' graves by wearing the Nazi uniform, but I doubt he meant it. The Malaysian Nazis do mean it, and one of them told me they believe that everyone is Aryan except the Jews. Uh, no.

What we see now is that RAC has come to represent a sound or a genre, just like oi or clockwork punk. Just the same as we ask for a Kleenex when we need to blow our noses, or a Band-Aid to cover our cuts, or we drink Coke instead of generic cola, or we "Photoshop" images, the white supremacist groups have lost control over their trademark name. And through this, we're left with an interesting exploit.



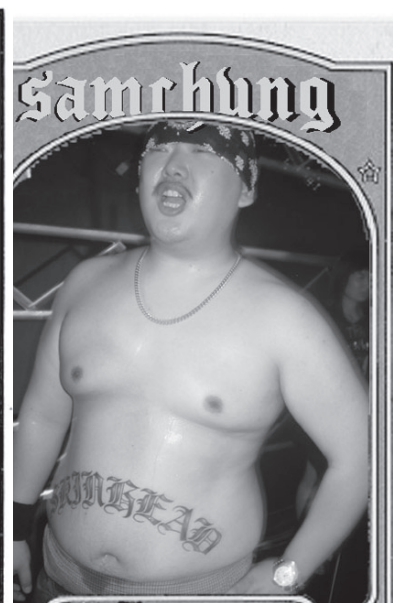
PARK JONGGO
공격대
CHUNGJU SKINS



DIRTY SMALL TOWN
South Korean Skinhead Rock And Roll Band Extraordinaire



OH LAEWAL
오래알
rookie card



Boram



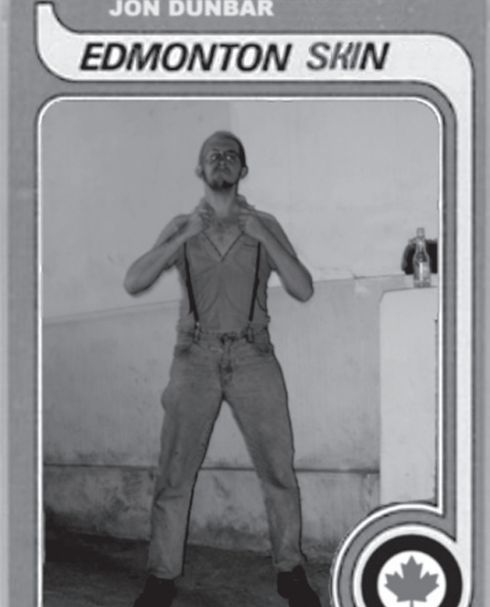
JON DUNBAR
I don't speak English



이종혁
ORC



PARK YEONGSOON
singer ATTACKING FORCES



EDMONTON SKIN

Korean or English?

Many Korean bands sing in English—we find out why

Paul Mutts

A lot of bands here in Korea sing in English. For the ignorant assholes like me that don't speak Korean past ordering beer, it's great to get an idea of what a song is about. So have the majority of the Korean bands been singing in English so that I can understand them? For some reason I don't think so, but I had to find out.

"I grew up listening to music from America, England, Canada—and all those countries use English. I fell in love with that music," says Sean from 99Anger. "I would listen to the American Top 40 every Saturday and tape it, listen to it all day long, search for the musicians and the albums, go to record stores and buy 'em, listen to them, sing along and play them with my guitar. I had no idea what they were singing about (well, mostly about love) but it touched my heart, made me cry, made me angry, gave me inspirations."

I guess a lot of it has to do with the American music influence. "Rock and roll is American culture" says Chul-Hwan from Suck Stuff. "Because of that, pretty much all the music we listen to is from foreign bands and we form our own rock bands to copy (or cover) them."

Some of the Korean bands' songs might have only the chorus in English or they may have half a verse or a few sentences in English. Some examples would be Couch's drunk punk anthem "Fuck it Shit" and "Pogo 'Til We Fuckin Die". Suck Stuff has their own "Just like a Punk Rocker" and the skaish tiff "Go outside," and the Explode has its combat-boot-to-the-teeth streetpunk songs "Social Victim" and "Where is Freedom?".

Then there's the bands that have songs largely composed in English like the Geeks with their tempo swinging "Let it Fade" and Samchung with their brutal and anything but peaceful "Rest in Peace". Roughly half of Rux's songs are all in English, like their new song "Knock You Down" and the anthemic

"Walk Along." Then there's the Spiky Brats with their bouncy "Together Moshing" and "We Never Change".

I wondered if it had anything to do with getting picked up by a label overseas. English is fast becoming an almost "standard" language and if you wanted international attention singing in English would make sense. Or would it?

With the help of AltaVista's Babel Fish I talked with Chul-Hwan about it. "Originally rock music was born in America, so in my case I think it's easiest singing in English."

When asked if it was a hurdle with the Korean audience, he said "Some people easy, some people difficult." So I suppose it's the same with any situation—but I don't want to suppose, I want to know.

"Punk music is a culture shared by people all over the world. The reason that Korean bands use English lyrics is, first, we personally think that it's there (that we are part of an international scene). Second it's because we are used to this style being in English, so we begin to think that the lyrics have to be in English or else they sound awkward. Several people in the scene here feel that way."

Sean from 99Anger had some more answers for me. "It's sort of a natural thing. Bands I look up to were all American or sang in English." I asked if maybe punk sounded strange in Korean to him: "No no, not at all. Like Rux, they sound really good. And of course, some bands sound worse singing in English. Well, sometimes in punk or hardcore music, lyrics are important so..."

So does the Korean audience have a hard time understanding the lyrics? "Yeah, definitely. Even my own band's members didn't know what I was saying. But sometimes, lyrics are part of music. Voice is part of music. You know what I mean? Sometimes, you don't need to understand lyrics to understand music, to enjoy

music, and even to sing along."

For someone to sing in a language that's not your native tongue... that must be hard. I have problems with drunken versions of "La Bamba," but then again but I'm a dumbass. Nonetheless, I don't know what it would be like to listen to music predominately in another language.

I called Jonghee, the owner of Skunk, lead singer of Rux, and very good friend of mine. Getting a hold of him is a feat and a half itself, but he had some insight and experience to offer. "They (the other bands) have many influences from English-speaking bands, so that's what they want to sound like. Because I lived in the States, sometimes I think in English, and sometimes English is easier to express my feelings"

Korean, from what I'm told, is a language that is heavy in emotional expression but lacking in logical expression.

"Sometimes that is right. Sometimes the translation in Korean just sounds silly. Admitted is weird, it (the word "addicted") doesn't make the right picture in the mind (in Korean); it's too deep. But if you say addicted (in English), it's just that."

"Korean words don't sound as good in songs. If you want to make lyrics in Korean, it's too long. Some songs made in English, you can tell a whole story in one song, but in Korean you need like twelve minutes."

Jonghee has also kept in mind the English speakers around the world. "Broken Nose," I wanted to say that to all the English speakers. I'm talking about 'It doesn't matter if you're black or white; I'm talking to those people from all over the world. English is simpler."

So do other Koreans have a hard time with lyrics in English? "I don't think so. If they translate it they can get it."

Seems Jonghee is fielding questions himself about English lyrics. "They ask me what such and such song is about. Lots of people ask. They want to know what they're saying when they cover the songs."

Something I always wondered about was Samchung. They have been around as long as anyone and have garnered more scene points than your momma. I always admired them as a band, but there were lots of rumours on the wind about their various political affiliations. Out of all the bands they seem to be the most nationalist out there. Despite this, their latest album, "United We Stand"—a split with hardcore heavyweights 13 Steps—is al-



most completely in English. Do you lose any Korean national identity by singing in a language other than Korean? So about the nationalist attitudes and everything...let's kill some rumours and get the facts.

"What would you say is Nationalism? We just hate PC bullshit." Straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak. "Maybe right wing but I do not know about Nationalist," says Boram, the bassist. "I hate North Korea and PC stuff. We sing in English because that is the sound we always have listened to."

So would any national identity be lost if you sing in a language other than Korean? "I do not think so." Makes sense to me.

Playing in a vastly western style would be bad enough, but these boys aren't about to give up guitars and drums for Kayagum(s) and Changgo drums. That would be pretty cool though wouldn't it?

Minju is a punk about my age, and is actually the first to show me Skunk when I was a younger pup. He is now the bass player for the Explode, an upstart band of the Chaos Class record label. Being what I consider a brother I wanted to get his take on Korean punk bands using English in songs.

"There are several different reasons: one is that many punks live in English-speaking countries. And punk was first started by bands that spoke

English. Also, there are a lot of people who speak English and we want to understand each others lyrics."

An interesting tidbit about the recording of their first release: "We first wrote the lyrics in English and then changed them all into Korean before recording." The Explode's lyrics are for the most part in Korean, but a few of the choruses are in English. He said about singing in Korean: "English is okay, but...it's not because I love Korea, but Korean has been my native language since birth and using Korean seems better."

So punk in English or Korean, which is your poison? Well, for me personally, I like a little of both. Some ideas or expressions in Korean don't translate very easily, and some English words have no real Korean equivalent. Being bilingual is a good way to express your ideas to a wide range of people. Don't hate a band for saying something that may sound stupid in English I'm sure you (and—I know—I) sound stupid making attempts of getting ideas across in Korean. When you're used to hearing a type of music in a different language, you can't help but emulate it to some degree. Pansori would sound awkward at best in English and sometimes Korean may not be the best language to use in punk or hardcore. But you gotta admit one thing: it sounds damn good.

The Feng Shui of Skunk Hell

Should that barrier in Skunk Hell stay or go? Time to do battle!

It stoo high.

It's metal and covered in rust.

IT IS BAD FENG SHUI.

IT SEPARATES THE BAND FROM THE AUDIENCE.

It blocks the view of the band.

It makes the dancefloor too small.

it is a good place to put your beer.

IT MAKES CROWD-SURFING EASIER.

It's part of the tradition of the venue.

THERE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO SPEND MONEY ON.

It keeps people from tumbling onto the stage.

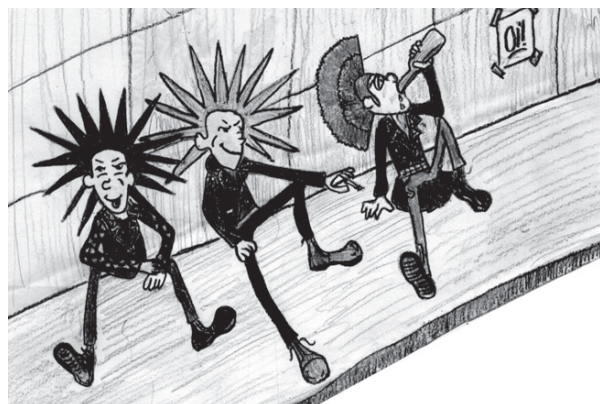
IT GIVES STAGE HUGGERS SOMETHING TO HOLD ONTO



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ON THE EASTERN OR WESTERN SIDE,
ONE THING I HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND,
ONE THING I CARRY DEEP INSIDE,
I WILL FOREVER BE A STRANGER
IN A FAMILIAR LAND.