

The purpose of punk

by Dragos Ruiu

Punk is on its last legs as rebellion these days. Now you can have funny hair. You still won't get a job because of it, but at least you won't get beaten with baseball bats by 'concerned group'. Just as with jazz, rock & roll, and flower children, the establishment (religion, government, conservatism) couldn't crush it so they did the next best thing — they sanitized it.

In these enlightened days you can hear Violent Femmes in the posh clubs, and Yuppies listen to DK's 'Holiday in Cambodia' with a smile. It doesn't mean much though — they don't listen to the lyrics, but they shake their body to the beat.

Even the last bastion of political punk, Hardcore, has degenerated into SpeedMetal, just more ultra-violence for the morons to yell about. The only regret I have is that for all its big talk, punk has not achieved much. Too many people wasted their lives in the sewer listening to punk's correct but unheeded messages.

When Punk made the big trek across the ocean, away from England's wheezing class struggles, it caught on with the people who had the most to be angry about: the middle-class kids in big cities. Tired of being assaulted from all sides, these kids rallied behind the anarchy banner Punk waved.

The result? Just like generations before, they were ostracized by the same society that drove them to make their defiance known. Punk was an angry reaction, with a lot of yelling about political injustices, bureaucracies, and corporations.

This sometimes violent reaction could be noticed most in the large cities like Vancouver, New York, and San Francisco because the large populations of Punks often banded together in visible groups. These groups were avoided by all the 'normal' people because any such open manifestation of open defiance 'should' be shunned.

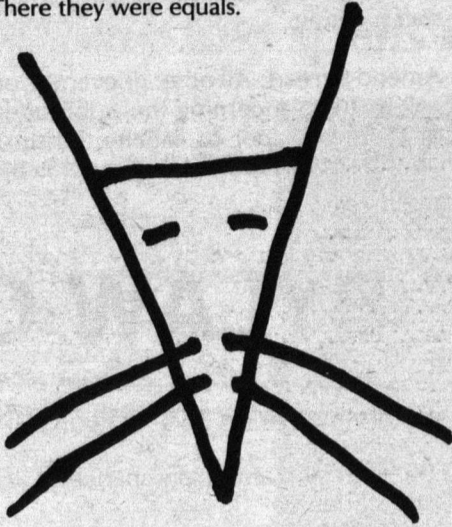
One such group banded together in San Francisco at a place called the Vats. The Vats was a unique structure in the San Francisco warehouse district (scary place!). It was a brewery that was condemned.

Problem was, when they condemned this abandoned brewery they forgot that the beer tanks were designed to hold millions of liquid gallons in an earthquake. They tried to demolish this building by stuffing it full of dynamite. When they set it off... BOOM and the Vats still stood. It was eventually decided that the amount of dynamite needed to blow this place up would seriously endanger surrounding neighbourhoods and the demolishing was suspended indefinitely.

The other side effect of the Vats was that the liquid vats themselves were perfect

acoustic chambers, so they became the preferred place for most of the punk bands in S.F. to practice. (Besides, they were free!) Thus the Vat Rats were born.

Dozens of punk groups emerged from the Vats (you probably don't remember Flipper or the Sluglords, etc.), and dozens more must have stayed there. It became a refuge for teen punks running away from home, or without a home at all. They flocked to the promises of rebellion and ideologies offered by punk music. A chance to be something, to do something with their as yet useless lives. There they were equals.



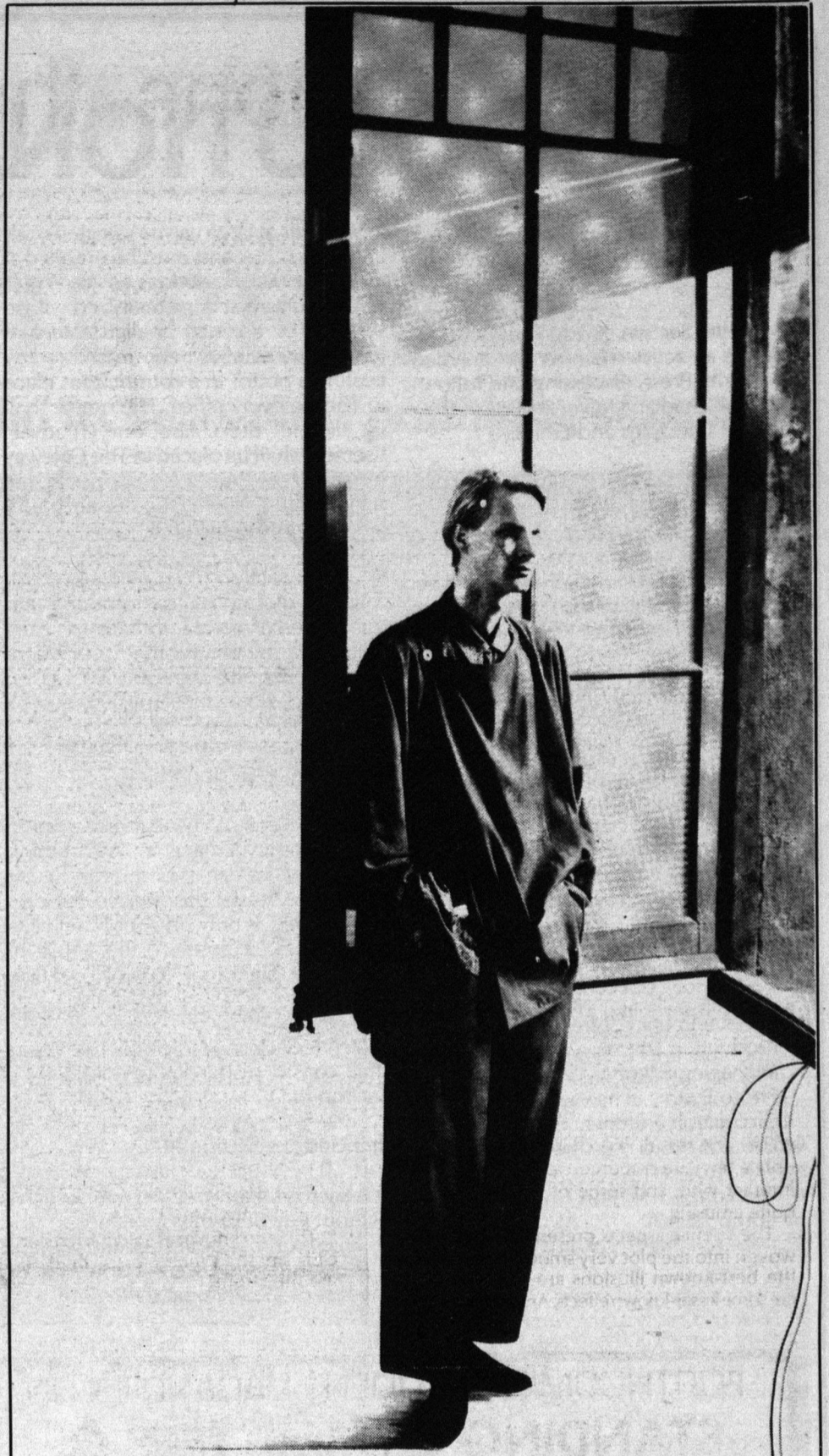
The Vat Rats 'official' graffiti

I don't think I'll ever forget the day I spent there in 1984. I stared in horror at the dozens and dozens of kids my age living in the rubble, with the real rats, dumpster-diving and scavenging for food. About a quarter of the people there shot heroin to make their world look nice. They said that if you survived the first week there you would be okay because only sleeping strangers were free game...

They called themselves the Vat Rats. I am saddened as I consider what could have happened to them. I hope some may have survived because their only crime was to be discarded by the mores of our society.

These days, as punk fizzles and becomes tame, I wonder what those people there would think. They lost again — they wasted their lives on what turned out to be an empty cause. The living hell... and for what? That's the question that hurts the most.

There is no real rebellion today, but soon youths will become fed up with our incompetent world again. I wonder what form the next rebellion will take, and what will happen to those that pledge themselves to it? Will it be music again? It doesn't have the best track record...



Exclusive Japanese Fashions

GMAT LSAT GRE

(Graduate Management Admission Test) (Law School Admission Test) (Graduate Record Exam)

Accepting registration for GMAT, LSAT and GRE weekend test preparation courses. Includes Sexton text book, lectures and personalized services. Tax deductible. Student discounts. Ask about MILLER ANALOGIES TEST and others.



CALL 459-7261

Endorsed by the Academic Commission, University of Calgary, Students' Union.

McKernan Baptist Church

11103 - 76 Avenue 436-0611

Sunday Bible Classes 9:45 A.M.
 Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 A.M.
 Sunday Evening Fellowship 6:00 P.M.
 Tuesday Prayer and Study 7:00 P.M.

Assertiveness Training Workshop

When? Friday, Feb. 27: 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
 Saturday, Feb. 28: 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
 (Students must attend both sessions.)

Where? Room 225 Athabasca Hall, U of A.

To register, contact Student Counselling Services, Room 102 Athabasca Hall (Phone 432-5205).

Advance Registration Only

There is no fee.

AVAILABLE AT:

Homme

fashions

Europa Boulevard
 2486 West Edmonton Mall
 (406) 444-3316