

OLLI Berkeley SF Punk and New Wave Syllabus

Title: We Are the Ones: Early Bay Area Punk and New Wave

Course Description: From the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, the Bay Area was one of the first regions to embrace punk and new wave when the music had yet to catch on throughout the country. Acts like the Avengers, Crime, the Mutants, and the Dead Kennedys made some of the earliest and most exciting independent and records in the style, with local venues like the Mabuhay Gardens and radio stations like KUSF championing the underground movement. This course covers the birth and maturation of the region's punk and new wave through film and audio clips, as well as several guest speakers who were crucial to its growth in the Bay Area.

Weekly Outline:

Week 1: The Roots of San Francisco Punk: Fired by records and reports of new music exploding in New York and London, the first San Francisco punk bands form. Even before the term punk was used, independent record labels specializing in maverick underground music like Ralph Records start. The first local punk records and performances happen by acts like Crime and the Dils.

Week 2: San Francisco Punk: The First Wave: Several acts develop local followings in venues like North Beach's Mabuhay Gardens, including the Avengers, the Nuns, and the Mutants. The Sex Pistols play their last show before breaking up at Winterland, with the Avengers and the Nuns opening. But the acts struggle to release records and gain mainstream media attention, although local zines like Search & Destroy and Maximum Rock'n'Roll cover the scene with zeal, and live performances are documented by Target Video.

Week 3: SF Punk Diversifies: Punk starts to branch out from the all-out energy of its early days, with acts like Tuxedomoon and the Sleepers adding arty and avant-garde touches. The Residents have been doing this since even before the mid-1970s, and the Ralph label issues odd discs by them and others that aren't exactly punk, but are far from the mainstream.

Week 4: California Hardcore: The most uncompromising musical and lyrical strain of punk is spearheaded by the Dead Kennedys, whose singer Jello Biafra runs a semi-satirical, semi-successful campaign for San Francisco mayor. By the early 1980s, other acts like Flipper make some of the noisiest and provocative punk done anywhere in the globe, their proud inaccessibility gaining fanatical fans and limited their impact to the

hardcore underground.

Week 5: San Francisco New Wave: Artists blending some of punk's energy with more melodic pop accessibility gain notice in the early-1980s Bay Area. Several are fronted by women, like the Punks with Bonnie Hayes, Pearl Harbor and the Explosions, and the Contractions. The 415 label is the most successful local record company working this territory, though their national success is limited.

Week 6: The End of The Early SF Punk and New Wave Era: By 1983 or so, while many early pioneers have broken up, some continue to record and tour for quite a while, like the Dead Kennedys. Newer new wave acts emerge, like the guitar-oriented Translator, and Romeo Void, who get some national attention with "Never Say Never." But with the folding of the Mabuhay Gardens and some other local venues and new wave-supportive media, this age of San Francisco punk and new wave comes to a close.

Bibliographic materials: These are just a few of the recordings, books, and videos that will be detailed more extensively in course handouts for background information on early San Francisco punk and new wave:

Recordings:

The Avengers, *The Avengers*; Crime, *Murder By Guitar*;