

## Noah Fleischman Memoir

Question: You mentioned you were a younger punk from North KC, what was the impact on you when you saw punk in mid-town?

My history with KC Punk and underground started when I was held back in 7th grade from Eastgate middle school in NKC and was sent to St. Paul's Episcopal in midtown. This would have been 1983, and I was not into punk at all. In fact, the first day at St. Paul's for gym class I wore a Journey concert jersey, (not even a cool one, it was fresh from the Frontiers tour) and several of the kids who were into Sex Pistols and Black Flag gave me a lot of shit. I was a feathered-hair freaker and they were just discovering Hardcore because of this one older kid in 8th grade. I had completely stuck to my guns and for months thought punk was stupid and I was right and they were wrong.

Then one day our class went on a field trip a few days before the beginning of the Summer break and I was arguing (again) with this kid and finally I asked to hear the tape he was listening to on his Walkman. I was like, "Ok, let me hear this Punk shit." The tape was "Never Mind the Bollocks" and for some reason it just fell into place. It clicked. It hit me like a ton of bricks. I basically talked the kid into letting me borrow that tape. I had to. There was no other choice in the matter. I listened to that for hours over and over and I couldn't believe it.

That Summer I fell into the underground so fast it was ridiculous. Being pre-internet, I had no idea where to begin, but a couple important things happened: first, I was lucky enough to have had some very cool record stores in town to check out. One huge stroke of luck for me was going into the Music Exchange and asking Ernie Locke what some good "Punk" records were. Fortunately, one of his suggestions was The Cramps "Bad Music for Bad People", which sent me in a whole new and unexpected direction. That was cool. The best record store ever in my opinion was Rock Therapy on the West end of 39th. Incredible place. Leaves would be blowing in off the street and the place was just packed with amazing records and stuff. A guy named Duncan Burnett ran the store, (still friends with him) and he turned me on to even more stuff like Hunting Lodge, Einsturzende Neubauten and SPK among other things. So while getting into Punk, I was also discovering early Industrial and Noise stuff too. It was a great time. I spent

every bit of money I could on records and tapes. The second big thing for me was discovering mail order catalogs like Toxic Shock and 'zines like Maximum Rock&Roll and Flipside. All of the sudden I had the means to learn about other scenes all over the world and order stuff I couldn't get locally.

Obviously back then, we couldn't just Google something and hear it. We had to take chances on things, usually based on if it had a cool cover or something. I remember when Recycled Sounds first put in the turntables for listening to stuff. It was ground-breaking. Before that you had to ask them to play something for you.

It was around that time, (maybe a year or so later) that I heard about this place, The Foolkiller. I soon heard that one of my favorite bands, the Crucifucks, were playing. I had to be there. I couldn't tell my parents the band name was Crucifucks so I told them Crucifix, (another HC band I loved). They still said no, so I ran away and skateboarded across the river. That night was incredible and changed my life. Here I was this totally naive 14 year old in this place that defied logic to me. It was dirty, shady, fucked up and nowhere a parent would want their kid at night. But I was there, and the thrill of being somewhere I wasn't supposed to be was exciting. I didn't know anyone, and I clearly was a "noob". There were a couple other kids there around my age and I kind of fell in with them early in the evening. But then after about an hour of hanging around, one of them spotted a stack of the Crucifucks' records underneath a chair and grabbed them, stashing them in the back seat of his car. The band I guess found out and got their records back, but the damage was done. They were not happy and the bass player had his back to the crowd the whole time. The singer, Doc puked on a set list and teased the audience with it, eventually throwing it out into the crowd. I saw the whole thing play out over the course of the evening and was glad I had not become too associated with those kids.

After the show, I had nowhere to go and somehow I met Archer Prewitt who let me sleep in the Bangtails practice space upstairs. It was weird, scary and fun all wrapped up into one. The next morning I went down to a church and got a bag of groceries from a food pantry and was going to stay out as long as possible but a lady my mom worked with saw me walking down 39th and

talked me into going home. I got in huge trouble but it was so worth it. The only other band I saw there was Like A Horse from Columbia, MO.

Question: In your memory, what was the Foolkiller like as a kid?

It was dark, scary, dirty and a bit sketchy, but it came alive when there were shows and mostly everyone was very cool. It was a place I knew my parents did not want me to be, but it felt so right. It was a place I wanted to be more, but couldn't. I wish there were still places like that. Now everything is safe, clean and up to code. The place had this nice almost old abandoned building feel to it. Very raw. Fairly high ceilings, red and black walls, dirty white tiles. It was a dark hole in the wall that I just had to peek in, and luckily I had the chance a couple times at least.

Question: You said you were younger in the mid to later 80s what was your experience like in the Nelson steps scene? What went on there?

The Nelson was such an anomaly. Even back then we were amazed they let people hang out back there and drink. These were the days before cameras were everywhere. In fact, when they put the cameras up is when it ended. At any given time there would be anywhere from 5 to 30+ people hanging out on the steps, most drinking cheap beer, some not. Usually people would hang out in their own groups, so there would be several little gatherings here and there. There were folks like me who knew a lot of different people and would bounce around between groups. It was just a big party. Every weekend. There were punks, skinheads, new wave kids, general misfits, local drunks, losers, posers, the whole lot. Across the street was South Moreland Park, which at the time was referred to as Hippy Park, where it seemed more of the non-punk burnouts and wastoid types would be. A lot of the kids hanging out at the Nelson would go down to the park to get drugs and stuff, so there was a bit of spillover between the two. Occasionally there was a fight, but mostly peaceful. Every once in a while you would stumble across people having sex in the bushes or off to the side. A friend of mine was with a girl out in the lawn area once when a helicopter came by and shined its spotlight on them for

everyone to see. That was amusing. The most prevalent memories are of mohawks, cheap beer and a whole lot of just hanging out being there away from the Plaza or Westport. Milwaukee's Best and Weidemann's were popular as I recall. A somewhat unknown fact is that after the Nelson was off-limits a lot of kids started hanging out at a graveyard over on 71st & Troost. It was the same scene almost, just a graveyard. Good times.