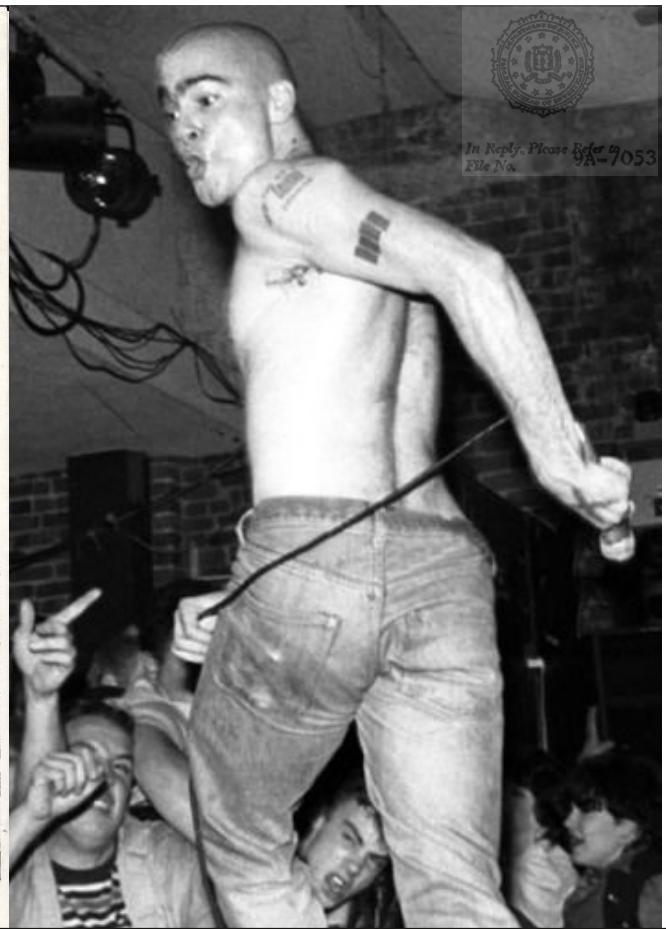


BLACK

Subject :

UNSUBS;
dba Black Flag;

dba Climax - VICTIM
EXTORTION
OO: Los Angeles



"it feels good to say
what i want"

black flag, FOIA, the
FBI, and KROQ-FM



9-7053-2

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
JUN 2 1981	

b6
b7C

FOIPA Request No.: 1469120-000

Subject: BLACK FLAG

On June 22, 2020 I filed a Freedom of Information (FOIA) Request to the Federal Bureau of Investigation which read as follows:

To Whom It May Concern:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, I hereby request the following records:

All documents mentioning Black Flag - the American punk band active since ~1977 (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Flag_\(band\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Flag_(band))).

The requested documents will be made available to the general public, and this request is not being made for commercial purposes.

In the event that there are fees, I would be grateful if you would inform me of the total charges in advance of fulfilling my request. I would prefer the request filled electronically, by e-mail attachment if available or CD-ROM if not.

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation in this matter. I look forward to receiving your response to this request within 20 business days, as the statute requires.

Sincerely,
J Ader

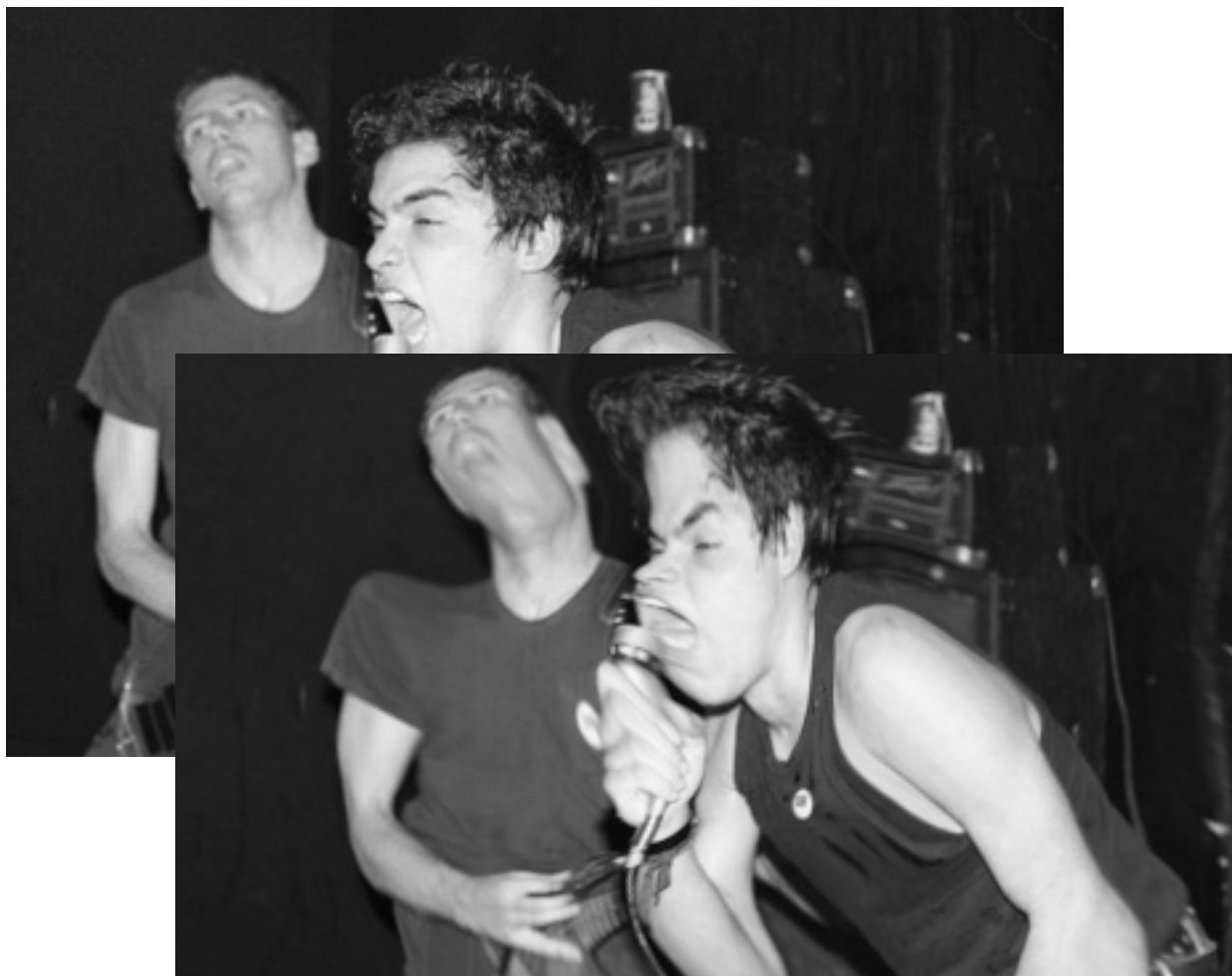
FOIA is a strange and wonderful tool used to liberate all sorts of records from government agencies, whether they be local public agencies (like a public school board) or federal ones.. like the FBI.

I won't get too into the nitty gritty of FOIA law here, but "U.S. Code, 5 U.S.C. § 552" is the law in question that spawned FOIA as a tool way back in 1966.

Some people call FOIA "toothless", and they aren't wrong. A request will often be greeted with an absurd response. Anything from an astronomical fee requirement, to a hand-wavy denial, to pages upon pages of seemingly shotgunned redactions. More than four black bars, if you'll pardon the pun.

But still, FOIA can be a useful tool in cracking open some creaky back doors and revealing important information about how government functions (or malfunctions).

Moreso, it can be a tool for historical gleanings and perspectives, even some warped views in the realm of a mundane world of art..



So why not venture out into trying to understand how an L.A. hardcore punk band - notorious with the law - may have been scrutinized, perceived, watched, digested, and investigated by one of the largest domestic intelligence agencies in the world?

Two months after my initial request, the FBI Information Management Division began processing it. And a little over a month after that I was delivered responsive records to my request.

They were not really what I had expected.



U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D.C. 20535

August 27, 2020

Let's really quickly go over what a standard FOIA request looks like, since I said I wasn't going to bog you down in bureaucratic details. I'll be using the example of a Federal Agency here, which is a little different of a process compared to something more local, but generally follows the same ideas:

Step 1: Craft a request with enough detail about the SUBJECT you are looking for records about, but vague enough to try and cast in a larger amount of records. If this is a person or group, make sure to provide a date of when they were active/alive. Its best to ask for "records mentioning and/or pertaining to..". Don't ever use language in the form of a question, instead _state_ what you are looking for.

Step 2: File the damn thing with the agency. It's best to look on their website for a "Public Records" Division or Department and their contact details.

Step 3: Wait (a long time).

Step 4: Hopefully get some responsive records, or else get a denial, or a request to pay a fee in order for the processing of many documents.

You can request to waive a fee under certain FOIA law, but this requires justifying the the files in question - and their release to the public - and providing a good enough argument that they outweigh the fee requirements (and whatever they are based on).

Luckily, in this case, no fees were required. The general public has long expressed their feelings on Black Flag anyways...

"It was such a lovely Sunday afternoon.
Mom & dads brought along the kiddies,
there was plenty of potato chips and
baseball and lemonade. There was a
playground and ducks and love and
niceness and kisses all over until,
(horrible music creeps in)

"Somebody let Black Flag into the park . . .
.""

The spark which flew to ignite and create Black Flag is said to have taken place in the middle of the 1970s, when Greg Ginn and Keith Morris heard 'Search and Destroy' by Iggy Pop and The Stooges playing on the radio for the first time. Keith lost control of his body. Both of them were inspired by the raw and unrestrained sound. The Ramones were an early influence as well.

The infamous logo was a spit in the eye of the institutions that would prove as barriers to their free-spirited aesthetic - designer Raymond Pettibon (who is also Ginn's brother) said "If a white flag means surrender, a black flag means anarchy." The four bars would become a fractured representation of this call to anti-authority.

Fast-forward: through rambunctious shows in parks, a couple of different vocalists, and a progression of the punk scene in Southern California, you have Ron Reyes stepping away as lead singer and Henry Rollins quitting his day job at an Ice Cream store to join as the new vocalist (after being an avid fan and discontent wage worker for far too long).

At this point, the band began working on their first full album: Damaged. The LP was released in December, 1981. A couple of months before this, however, the band would do an interview with a local California radio station. This is where the responsive records here come in.



*In Reply, Please Refer to
File No. 9A-7053*

KROQ FM is a famous station based in Pasadena, California. In the early 1980s during the burgeoning local punk scene there were some important radio DJs like Rodney Bingenheimer who were responsible for interviewing and airing a lot of great bands of the time like The Germs, X, Souxsie and the Banshees. I'm sure a lot of people maybe even first discovered some of these acts via KROQ.

In July of 1981, an FBI agent writes up a field file. As far as I can tell, this field file was written up after an unknown source within KROQ called the FBI to inform on the band. The reported concerns voiced to the FBI were based on an interview Bingenheim had with Black Flag on the radio station, taking place on June 7, 1981.

The initial file in the FBI responsive document contains the following.

Memorandum		
<hr/>		
To :	SAC, LOS ANGELES (9A-7053) (C-1)(P)	Date 6/29/81
From :	SA [redacted]	b6 b7c
Subject :	UNSUBS; <u>dba Black Flag;</u> [redacted] dba Climax - VICTIM EXTORTION OO: Los Angeles	
	b6 b7c	

Re SF-71 of SA [redacted] dated 6/8/81.

b6
b7C

[redacted] telephone number [redacted]
[redacted] telephonically advised SA [redacted]
at the Santa Ana Resident Agency that during evening of 6/7/81,
while Punk Rock group, Black Flag, was being interviewed
live on radio station KROQ, Pasadena, California, a member of
Black Flag remarked that they, Black Flag, were going to
kill [redacted] and all the people at Climax.
[redacted] noted [redacted] is associated
with Climax, a booking company, and is currently engaged in a
financial dispute with Black Flag Music Group.

On 6/10/81, above facts were related to Assistant
U. S. Attorney (AUSA) Daniel G. Clement, Los Angeles, who stated
he desired that copy of interview of Black Flag be secured
regarding interview of this group on 6/7/81, in order that
determination could be made if Title 18, Section 875(c) was
violated by Black Flag group. AUSA Clement said if radio station
KROQ would not voluntarily furnish copy of pertinent interviews
of Black Flag on 6/7/81, he would issue subpoena for same.

LEAD

LOS ANGELES

AT PASADENA, CALIFORNIA: Will secure copy of interview
of Black Flag Music Group regarding their appearance at radio
station KROQ on 6/7/81, in order that AUSA Clement can be apprised
of contents so he can render prosecutive opinion.

JCM:cjl
(3) [redacted]

[redacted]

case head

9-7053-a
b6
b7C

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
JUN 2 1981	
EELS	

Some LA punk fans
are probably
familiar with the
name "CLIMAX" here
- the booking
company was often
featured on fliers
in the early/mid
years of Black
Flag's history.

CLIMAX PRESENTS
BLACK FLAG

WEDNESDAY FEB. 11
at the STARDUST BALLROOM



More details from the responsive documents:

b6
b7C

NOTE: Hand print names legibly; handwriting satisfactory for remainder.
Indices: Negative See below

Subject's name and aliases UNSUB dBA Black Flag x		Character of case EXTORTION (Arson)				
		Complainant				
		Complaint received <input type="checkbox"/> Personal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Telephonic Date 4/8/81 Time 3:00 PM				
Address of subject CLIMAX - VICTIM		Complainant's address and telephone number				
Subject's Description	Race	Sex	Height	Hair	Built	Birth date and birthplace
		<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Weight	Eyes	Complexion	Social Security Number
Scars, marks or other data						
Facts of complaint						
<p>C stated that [REDACTED] in associated with a booking company called CLIMAX. He stated that Black Flag is a punk rock musical group. C said [REDACTED] in in the midst of settling a financial dispute with Black Flag, however there apparently is still money owed to Black Flag. C said that during the evening of 6/7/81, he was told, the group Black Flag was interviewed on Pasadena radio station KROQ during which time [REDACTED] a song titled "Vengeance" and stated that [REDACTED]</p>						
<p>SEARCHED INDEXED SERIALIZED FILED APR 11 1981 FBI - LOS ANGELES</p>						
Action Recommended						
<p>TJ WCA AM a C</p>						

(Agent)

b6
b7C

FBI - Discuss w/ Russel re possible viol. T.O. Soc. #75. Advise CNE decision & presence he knows FBI is not in protection business

"C" stated that [REDACTED] is associated with a booking company called CLIMAX. He stated that Black Flag is a Punk Rock musical group. "C" said [REDACTED] is in the midst of settling a financial dispute with Black Flag, however there apparently is still money owed to Black Flag. C said that during the evening of 6/7/81, he was told, the group Black Flag

was interviewed on Pasadena Radio Station KROQ during which time [INDECIPHERABLE] a song titled "Vengeance" [SIC] played [REDACTED] and stated that [REDACTED] owed them money and that they were going to kill [REDACTED] and all the people at Climax.

Facts of complaint	
<p>and that they were going to kill [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and all the people at Climax. C said that he contacted a program manager of KROQ and later heard from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (PHL) who was [REDACTED] "Black Flag." [REDACTED] told C that he didn't believe the group meant what was said. C also learned that a printed copy of the interview was on file at the station.</p>	
Action Recommended	(C should be advised to take action to be taken by FBI)
(Agent)	

C said that he contacted a program manager at KROQ and later heard from [REDACTED] [PHIL?] who was [REDACTED] "Black Flag". [REDACTED] told C that he didn't believe the group meant what was said. C also learned that a copy of the interview was on file at the station.

Some notes here:

- Someone ("C") from KROQ probably wasn't well aware enough with Black Flag's common dissembling with statements they make.
- The little b7a exemptions to the right of the redactions signify "divulging of this information could constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy". b6 is also privacy related.
- The FBI agent here wrote that the song played during the interview - after the alleged threat was made - was titled "Vengeance" when the real title of the track was "Revenge" (from the "Jealous Again" EP).

Some weeks later, the FBI apparently did a follow-up where they reached out to a Program Manager of the radio show, who was Rick Carroll at the time.

The responsive documents contain this follow-up file:



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to
File No. 9A-7053

11000 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, California, 90024

August 31, 1981

Honorable Andrea Sheridan Ordin
United States Attorney
U. S. Department of Justice
U. S. Courthouse, Room 1269
Los Angeles, California 90012

RE: Unknown Subjects, doing
business as Black Flag;
[redacted] doing
business as Climax -
VICTIM
EXTORTION

b6
b7c

Attn: Assistant U. S. Attorney
Daniel G. Clement

Dear Ms. Ordin:

On August 19, 1981, Special Agent [redacted]
advised Assistant United States Attorney (AUSA) Daniel G.
Clement of the results of investigation in captioned matter
as follows:

b6
b7c

On July 13, 1981, Special Agent [redacted]
secured a copy of a cassette recording from radio station
KROQ regarding a live interview of Black Flag, a punk rock
group, on KROQ, Pasadena, California, on June 7, 1981,
wherein it was alleged a member of Black Flag had stated he
was going to kill [redacted] (who is associated with
Climax, a booking agency). Special Agent [redacted] listened
to the original cassette recording of above interview of
June 7, 1981, and no actual threat to kill [redacted]
was recorded thereon.

b6
b7c

In view of the above, AUSA Clement said he was
declining prosecution as there was no federal violation.
In view of this declination, Los Angeles is conducting no further
investigation in this matter.

Very truly yours,
EDGAR N. BEST
Special Agent in Charge

9-7053-3

2 - Addressee
1 Los Angeles (9A-7053) (VIA C-1)

JCM/dms dms
(3)

By: [redacted]

Supervisory Special Agent

b6
b7c

SEARCHED —
INDEXED —
SERIALIZED —
FILED —

7/2
FBI/DOJ

Rick Carroll furnished the FBI with an audio tape of the interview. He also told the agent that he eventually listened to the interview himself (although having not done so initially), and found no explicit evidence of intent to murder anyone (surprise) within it.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

1

Date of transcription 7/27/81

RICK CARROLL, Program Director, KROQ radio station, 117 South Los Robles, Pasadena, California, was interviewed at his place of employment.

CARROLL was advised he was being interviewed regarding statements made by a punk rock group known as Black Flag, who were being interviewed live on radio station KROQ, Pasadena, California, on June 7, 1981.

CARROLL advised he is aware of statements made by the group Black Flag because the day following the interview he was contacted by a [redacted] advising although he did not personally listen to the interview, friends of his had advised him that during the course of the interview, members of the rock group Black Flag had made threats against the life of [redacted]

b6
b7c

CARROLL advised he therefore contacted the [redacted] who [redacted] [redacted] and both he and [redacted] listened to the tape recording of the interview and were unable to locate any direct threat made to the life of [redacted] and therefore advised [redacted] of the same.

b6
b7c

CARROLL advised it is a well known fact that [redacted] owes several people money and during the course of the interview one of the members of the group Black Flag made a statement regarding [redacted] owing them money and having done them wrong and immediately following that a song called Revenge was played.

b6
b7c

CARROLL thereafter furnished the interviewing agent a copy of the original tape recording of the interview. The copy was then compared with the original to ascertain that it did in fact, contain exactly what was on the original tape.

Investigation on 7/13/81 at Pasadena, California File # Los Angeles 9A-7053
by SA [redacted] Vks1 Date dictated 7/21/81

b6
b7c

He even made it clear that the name of the song at hand was titled "Revenge".

When I got the responsive documents back, the FBI actually gave me a .wav file. It was a cut of the imperative segment of the interview, including "Revenge" playing in its entirety. I assume this is a digitized version of the analog media they were given by KROQ, and I'm not sure if this edit was done in the digitization process or there was some cutting done by KROQ before handing it over to the FBI.

Either way, its pretty funny/wild that someone - or multiple someones - at the FBI had to listen to early Black Flag for a job assignment.

You can find the exact audio the FBI gave me (as well as all the other documents) responsive to my FOIA here, as the file titled "**Audio 01.wav**" :



<https://github.com/RooneyMcNibNug/FOIA/tree/master/Responsive%20Docs/Black%20Flag>

Or you can listen to it at https://archive.org/download/20230810_20230810_0246/Audio%2001.wav. Here is the transcription of the full audio file's segment of the interview, which is only a little over 1m30s long including the song:

CHUCK DUKOWSKI: ..and um.. all that - anyways, this - this song is for the last gig we did. We played this gig with Climax Productions. And these guys, um.. were sleazy with us. And um.. for Charlie Gilreath [SIC?], who still owes me fifteen hundred dollars.. "Revenge".

["REVENGE" BY BLACK FLAG BEGINS PLAYING]

KROQ IN ASSOCIATION WITH PHANTOM AND BUNKO
PRESENT IN CONCERT

BLACK FLAG

3 SONG 7" EP Six Pack, I've Heard It Before, American Waste

5 SONG 12" EP Jem RECORDS

4 SONG 7" EP

MINUTEMEN
PARANOID TIME
7 SONG 7" EP

THE ADOLESCENTS D.O.A. THE MINUTEMEN

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT TICKETRON AND THE CIVIC BOX OFFICE

AT THE SANTA MONICA CIVIC FRIDAY JUNE 19

Watch for new releases from: BLACK FLAG, THE MINUTEMEN and the debut SAC-CHARINE TRUST ALBUM on SST. For booking and information contact SST Records

RECORDS
P.O. BOX 1 LAWNDALE, CALIF.
90260 (213) 380-8318

SSST

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Give the gift of music.

Chuck and the other members of Black Flag must have really left an impression on someone working at KROQ at the moment of that interview - enough so that they went to the trouble of contact the FBI after Chuck's comment. Either that or "C" is the type of person who takes every angry utterance as a threat.

Either way, there are indications here of the band - already gaining notoriety as more than a nuisance to society at this point in time - really living up to their music, including their name.

There is also one really interesting and frankly funny note left by the FBI agent in the margins here - if you look carefully, you can read:

"Advise w/in 24hrs. Advise C the decision and ensure he knows FBI is not in protection business.."

within the first handwritten complaint form. With this note a picture begins to form of a maybe satanic panic-esque complaint reaching a disgruntled agent who really doesn't give a shit.

Or maybe I am grasping here, and this is much more of a note steeped in bureaucracy.

Nonetheless, the margins are where all the good notes are written, right?

So this is the small journey of finding a very strange and short investigation of extortion against members of perhaps the most influential American Hardcore Punk band - all of this stemming from a curious "hey, why not file this and see what I get back?" Freedom of Information Act Request.

Once requests like these are done, any of the responsive records released are essentially public records (unless somebody at the agency fucks up big time.. but even then, as long as they are released they are released to all. This makes FOIA a really great way to get records and source material out there for people who are doing research, writing, teaching history, or even to just do it. Some of the best FOIA records have started by someone wondering something and then simply filing a request on it to the proper agency.

If the FBI in particular gets a number of the same (duplicate) requests for a subject, they almost always end up releasing those documents to their Records Vault at <https://vault.fbi.gov/> instead of just to one of the requesters individually. This is a link worth digging into if FOIA sparks your interests.



Finally, I think its worth taking another look at the song "Revenge". Its a track that exaggerates on an anger we've probably all experienced at one point - going from flight to fight, or having had enough from someone or some institution. Its harshly expressed with vocals and instrumentals that slam into you. You can listen to it via the aformentioned .wav file for a pleasing experience (love that tape hiss), but also here are the lyrics in full:

It's not my imagination
I've got a gun on my back

Promises you made never become fact
We're gonna get revenge
You won't know what hit you
We're tired of being screwed

Don't tell me about tomorrow
Don't tell me what I'll get
I can't think of progress when
Just around the corner
There's a bed of cold pavement waiting for me

Revenge, I'll watch you bleed
Revenge, that's all I'll need

I won't cry if you die, die
We're gonna get revenge
You won't know what hit you
We're tired of being screwed

Revenge
Revenge



but this record bothered me," he said. "As a parent with two children, I found it an anti-parent record, past the point of good taste. I listened to it all last weekend and it just didn't seem to have any redeeming social value.

"It certainly wasn't like Bob Dylan or Simon and Garfunkel and the things they were trying to say."

appendix



- I used open source software to make this zine - mostly Scribus for the zine itself and Gimp for image editing. It went well. Support Free Open Source Software!

- I filed the FOIA request that inspired this zine via MuckRock, who are great people. I do most of my filing on there - you can view all my requests here: https://www.muckrock.com/accounts/profile/joliet_j/ - consider donating to them or other groups if you have the means.

- This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

- You can feel free to reach out to me if you want to chat or have any questions about FOIA. Most of my contact info can be found at my blog: <https://rooneymcnibnug.github.io>

- Go file a FOIA or make a zine, go practice mutual aid, go start a band, go paint some walls, go be creative in joyful rebellion!



(b)(6)

FBI is not in protection business