

= The Teen Idles =

The Teen Idles were an American hardcore punk band formed in Washington , D.C. in September 1979 . Consisting of teenagers Nathan Strejcek , Geordie Grindle , Ian MacKaye and Jeff Nelson , the Idles ' recorded two demo sessions and the 1980 Minor Disturbance EP before they broke up in November 1980 . The influential independent record label Dischord Records was originally created with the sole purpose of releasing the Teen Idles 7 " record . They were an early landmark in the D.C. hardcore movement , and MacKaye and Nelson would later form the seminal punk outfit Minor Threat .

The Teen Idles were among the first punk rock groups from the early 1980s hardcore movement to break out of their regional scene to tour and sell nationally . Inspired by other American punk bands like the Cramps and Bad Brains , the Teen Idles ' music was an early version of hardcore punk , and an attempt , in the words of MacKaye , " to get away from a really corrupted music . " Their appearances , lyrics and musical style sought to revive a punk movement that they believed had lost its original zeal .

= = History = =

= = = Formation = = =

In 1978 , Washingtonian teenager Ian MacKaye discovered punk rock through a local college radio station , Georgetown University 's WGTB . He met Jeff Nelson , a classmate of his , after Nelson set off a pipe bomb outside their school and MacKaye went to investigate . The two became friends and quickly discovered their shared interest in punk . MacKaye and Nelson saw their first punk show in January 1979 ? a benefit concert by the Cramps for WGTB . The concert inspired the pair ; MacKaye later admitted , " It blew my mind because I saw for the first time this huge , totally invisible community that had gathered together for this tribal event . [...] I thought , ' This appeals to me . This is the world I think I can breathe in . This is what I need . ' "

After seeing a Bad Brains concert , MacKaye and Nelson began playing in a punk band , the Slinkees , with school friends George Grindle and Mark Sullivan . The Slinkees played a single show before Sullivan went to college . After a failed attempt to recruit MacKaye 's friend Henry Garfield (later Henry Rollins) , the band recruited Nathan Strejcek as a vocalist . The Slinkees soon renamed themselves the Teen Idles . After touring and practising for several months , the band recorded two demo sessions at a local studio in February and April 1980 , despite the engineer and a visiting band openly laughing as they recorded . They also began playing at house parties and pizza parlors , and opened for Bad Brains at an art gallery , in a dilapidated row house in the Adams @-@ Morgan neighborhood , called Madam 's Organ .

To revive the fervor of punk , which the band felt was being distorted by new wave , the Idles sought to look as intimidating as possible . They shaved their heads , grew mohawks and wore various punk accessories . Nelson and MacKaye even drove thumbtacks into the soles of their boots so they would make an " ominous clacking " sound when they walked . The band 's visual presentation was at odds with their demeanor ; according to MacKaye , " in our shows and within our own community , we were totally goofy guys . We were painfully honest ? we didn 't shoplift , we didn 't vandalize , we didn 't spray @-@ paint . [...] We don 't do anything ? everybody just hates us because of the way we look . "

After a number of concerts in D.C. opening for bands such as the Untouchables , the Idles decided to tour the West Coast in August 1980 . Along with roadies Garfield and Sullivan , the band traveled to California . They were immediately hassled by police upon their arrival , and after challenging the police , Nelson was handcuffed for an hour . When the Teen Idles eventually began their tour , they were refused entry at Los Angeles ' Hong Kong Cafe because of their age . Originally due to open for the Dead Kennedys and the Circle Jerks , they settled for playing the next night , opening for the Mentors and a band called Puke , Spit and Guts in exchange for just \$ 15 . The Teen Idles

impressed those at the venue ; MacKaye later said " People were freaked out by how fast [we played] . "

Upon returning to D.C. , the Teen Idles were asked by Skip Groff , owner of the Washington record store Yesterday and Today , to record some tracks at Inner Ear , a small recording studio in Arlington , Virginia . They were introduced to engineer and owner Don Zientara (the " studio " was a four @-@ track recorder at Zientara 's house) . The Teen Idles played live in the basement while Zientara engineered and Groff produced . Seven tracks were recorded in total . However , the band were undecided about what to do with the tapes and eventually shelved them .

= = = Breakup and Minor Disturbance = = =

In late 1980 , the Teen Idles decided to break up , mostly because Grindle had fallen out with Nelson . Grindle 's new girlfriend , a born @-@ again Christian , disapproved of the band , causing Grindle to question his role . Tensions between Grindle and Nelson , who was an outspoken atheist , escalated until Grindle decided to quit . Their last show was on November 6 , when they opened for SVT at the 9 : 30 Club . It was a key event for the popularity of all @-@ ages shows ? where alcohol was not for sale , and thus no age restriction for admission . Previously , at the Mabuhay Gardens in California , the band were allowed entry to the club only after big Xs were drawn on their hands ? this showed that they were under the legal drinking age . The Idles suggested this to 9 : 30 's management , and vowed that if youths were caught drinking , the club could ban them . The management agreed ; the Teen Idles ' final show passed without incident .

After a year in existence , the band had earned \$ 700 total . They now faced two options : divide the money among the members , or press the recordings they had made with Zientara at Inner Ear . Choosing the latter , Nelson , Strejcek and MacKaye formed Dischord Records with Groff 's help , to release the recordings . The band sent the tapes to a pressing plant in Nashville , Tennessee that specialized in pressing country music records . Initially puzzled by the request to put eight songs on a 7 " record , they pressed 1 @,@ 000 copies . For the cover , the band took apart another 7 " record sleeve and used it as a template for their own cover design . They photocopied it on 11 " x 17 " paper , which the band members cut out with scissors , folded and glued by hand , then into these inserted the records and lyric sheets . Released in January 1981 Minor Disturbance was a local success , receiving radio air @-@ play and reviews from fanzines such as Touch and Go , which meant that Dischord now had enough money to release records by other bands .

After the Teen Idles disbanded , Grindle chose not to pursue a career in music . By the time of Minor Disturbance 's release , Nelson and MacKaye had already formed Minor Threat . The new band 's first show was on December 17 , 1980 . Strejcek became involved in the running of Dischord , until Nelson and MacKaye , disappointed by his lack of effort , " decided to take it back . " The Teen Idles appeared on a number of hardcore @-@ punk compilations throughout the 1980s and 1990s . Dischord , to celebrate their one hundredth release , issued Teen Idles in 1996 , comprising the two demo sessions the band had recorded in February and April 1980 .

= = Musical style and outlook = =

According to journalist Michael Azerrad , the Teen Idles " played proto @-@ hardcore tunes that skewered their social milieu " . MacKaye later explained in the hardcore documentary Another State of Mind : " When I became a punk , my main fight was against the people who were around me ? friends . " When MacKaye was thirteen he moved to Palo Alto , California for nine months . On his return , his friends had begun taking drugs and drinking . He remarked , " I said , ' God , I don 't want to be like these people , man . I don 't fit in at all with them . ' So it was an alternative . "

The graphic emblem most associated with the Straight Edge movement is a black " X " , typically drawn onto the wearers hands with a marker . According to MacKaye , " We were in San Francisco , and we played a place called Mabuhay Gardens . They figured out we were underage , and they wouldn 't let us play . We worked out a deal with their management that we just wanted to play and we weren 't going to drink , so they got a marker and put a big ' X ' on our hand , So we came back

to Washington D.C. and went to this nightclub , the 9 : 30 , and said ' Hey look , we 're not going to drink and we will put this ' X ' on our hand . If you see us drinking you can throw us out forever . We are not going to drink , we just came to see the music . ' " The band adopted the marking , and though it was initially meant to signify youth , it became a wider emblem for bands prepared to play to audiences under the legal age to be served alcohol . MacKaye noted that at the time the symbol " wasn 't supposed to signify straight edge ? it was supposed to signify kids . It was about being young punk rockers ... it represents youth . "

Most of the band 's lyrics were written by MacKaye . Like the group 's appearance , their lyrical subject matter reacted against the then dominant New Wave scene , and the perceived complacency that many first @-@ wave punk bands , including the Clash and the Damned seemed to have fallen into by the early 1980s . In " Fleeting Fury " , Strejcek pleads , " The clothes you wear have lost their sting / So 's the fury in the songs you sing " . The Teen Idles were strongly influenced by punk bands in Washington and California , such as Bad Brains , Black Flag , and the Germs . These band 's influence is reflected in The Teen Idles ' songs , which consisted mostly of Strejcek shouting over a one @-@ two hardcore beat , with MacKaye and Grindle providing short and speedy riffs , interspersed with quick guitar solos from Grindle .

= = Discography = =

All Teen Idles records were issued by Dischord Records

Minor Disturbance , 7 " EP , 1981

3 songs on Flex Your Head , compilation LP , 1982

First EP reissued as part of Four Old 7 " s on a 12 " , 1984

First EP reissued on Dischord 1981 : The Year in 7 " s , 1995

Teen Idles (1980 demos) , 1996

1 song on 20 Years of Dischord , compilation 3 @-@ CD box set , 2002