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a zine for the misanthropocene

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it's after the end of the world, don't you know
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world, don't you know that? it's after the end

ELEANOR KONIK:

Jason sat sipping coffee as he scanned *Yesterday Today*, savoring the slick feel of the glossy magazine between his fingers. The technocrats kept insisting that hardcopy mailers were out-fashioned and wasteful, but Jason preferred to put off the inevitable moment when his inbox would sync and overflow with urgent demands from the ignorant masses to *fix this, fix that; how dare anything break.*

The phone announced a call, destroying the illusion of peace his white-noise generator provided. Because it was his boss, Jason tugged the ear clip from the pocket of his favorite shirt and fastened it in place.

"We need you to come in." No time for a greeting.

He dumped his mug into the sink and rinsed it. "What happened?" Usually he worked remote.

"Security breach in the transportation hub. We shut down external access."

Jason sighed and looked down. The ratty flannel shirt hung down to his bare knees. "I'm gonna be late."

"Understood. But, Jason? If you'd been logged you'd've gotten the alert like everyone else."

He ignored the familiar jibe. "Alright. Be there soon."

It took five minutes to find clean slacks and a suitable shirt. On his way out, he picked up the magazine. The apartment's elevator took him down to the metro station, where he finished skimming the advertisements before dumping the mailer into the recycling bin.

The train came three minutes late. A short brunette caught Jason in the gut with her elbow as she maneuvered through the press of bodies straining toward the doors. When they opened, the handful of passengers waited for the crowd to open a pathway. As people struggled to move out of the way, a tall woman in military uniform pushed him aside with her bulk as she disembarked.

A deep breath later, he managed to sandwich himself between the plastic doors and a hefty bald man who smelled of sweat and rancid hygiene products. He envied the lucky few who managed to find a seat as he fought to maintain a tight grip on the vertical rail so as not to embarrass himself by falling over.

When the train came to the third station stop, it braked harder than ever before, lashing him with unexpected force. He stumbled.

Seconds later, impact.

The rail wrenched from his grip. He got out a split-second yelp before his skull slammed into the hard plastic sheet behind him.

Bloody, grayish ooze stained the pants of the corpse that cushioned Jason's collapse as his brain seeped out through the back of his skull.

#

The emergency response was swift and efficient, like almost everything else managed by the technocracy. A paramedic carried Jason's sluggishly bleeding body to a gurney and laid him on it. The gurney's automatic systems began their diagnostic routine, so the young man jogged back into the ruin of steel and plastic.

"Can't believe the failsafes didn't work," he heard someone say to a reporter.

"I heard a rumor about someone hacking the system."

The paramedic ignored the chatter beyond the yellow tape and dug out another body from the wreckage. He carried to the medicar, searching in vain for a pulse.

Jason's gurney beeped. In a woman's cheerful contralto it reported, "Diagnostic complete. Diagnosis: brain, dead. Recommendation: recycle for parts."

The paramedic grunted as he overheard the analysis and considered taking the eyes for his son's new cybot. His boy loved that shade of blue, and the chief wouldn't mind.

"Damn shame about the crash, eh?" his partner said as they hooked up the second body.

Distracted by his plans for the transplant, he only nodded.

KC:

A Burning Man (How Fire Works)

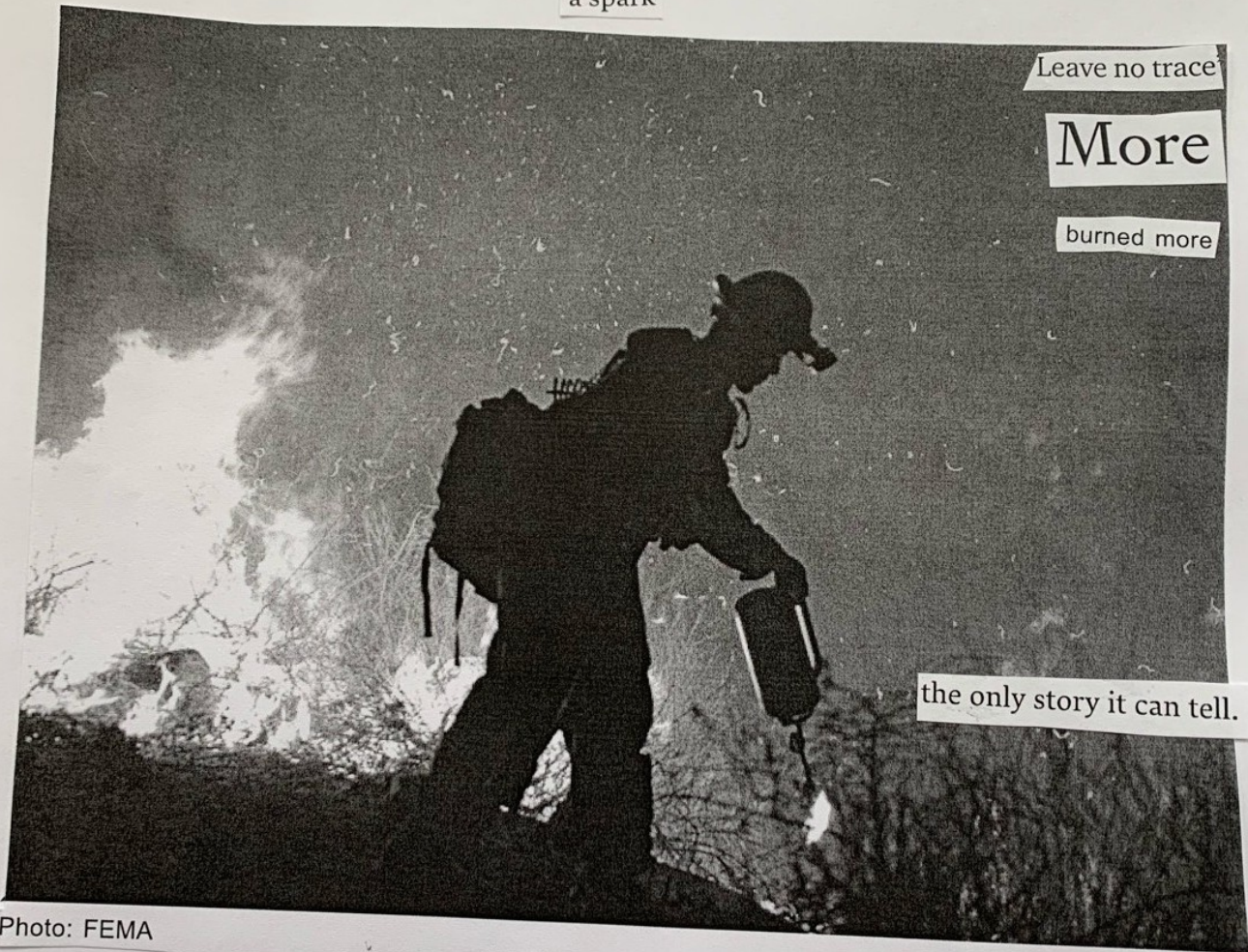
Hotter Days and Nights

a spark

Leave no trace

More

burned more



the only story it can tell.

Photo: FEMA

LAZARSKI:

Ecocide Triptych

1. Memories of Fauna

As a child I would often wonder why wild animals would flee from me, couldn't they tell that I meant them no harm?

Sitting by a small pond in my grandmother's garden I watched the newts and frogs swimming in the water, rising and falling from dark up to the light. Sitting quietly among the trees I felt that this is what happiness must be.

Catching catfish in the nearby river I took one from the net and as I opened my mouth it did the same and I felt like we were playing a sort of game. Now I realise that the fish was unable to breathe.

We found a small bird with a broken wing and kept it in a shoebox on the mantelpiece to nurse it to health. It died that afternoon.

Spiders gathered on the lampposts by the river. I would often pluck them from their webs and take them further upstream to drop in the water. One day one of them bit me and I was so shocked that I dropped the spider on the gravel and stamped beyond what was necessary to kill it, leaving only a brown paste.

Turning over logs to reveal the woodlice underneath I flipped them on their backs to show their soft fleshy bellies and with a magnifying glass I concentrated the summer sunlight on them, made them swell until their tiny bodies burst with a faint pop.

I caught a house spider and kept it in a National Geographic bug catching kit. Over the next 2 months I captured flies from my window and released them into the spider's enclosure until it eventually died in its prison.

Driving home from school we almost hit a fox running across the road. There was blood coming from its mouth. It disappeared into a hedge and the dogs were close behind.

I heard a flapping sound in the spare room and walked in to find an adolescent kestrel trapped in there. We caught it in a catbox and up close its plumage contained shades that were invisible from a distance, like petrol in sunlight. It was beautiful.

A bull lived in the stable opposite Mum's horse. He was incredibly gentle and would lick your hand when you petted him. One day he was not there anymore.

A rabbit with myxomatosis, eyes swollen red, quivered where its leg has been caught between two rocks. I told my Dad and he turned the dogs on it.

My first puppy was called Indi. I was obsessed with him, I could close my eyes and see him running towards me on the lawn.

When he was older Indi would often run away on walks. I stood by and watched as Dad beat him with the chain lead when he returned.

I was told that we must kill the rabbits because we will trip over their holes and break our ankles. Dad bought an air rifle and I watched the rabbits jerk on the lawn when he shot them in the head from the window.

A hypnotic video of a family of farmers with their children digging away at the soft earth where rats had nested under the chicken coops. They unearthed the rats which were each in turn dispatched by the seven dogs, shaking their bodies limp and tossing them aside. The children enjoyed watching this and I found that I did too.

A cat I never named would visit me daily in my student house. She would fall asleep on my bed and was a good friend at a difficult time.

I always told Dad when there were rabbits on the lawn because I enjoyed watching them die. I watched my pet dogs tug at a rabbit's limp body and pull it in half so that its guts spilled onto the lawn.

A strange man examined the rabbit traps he left on the lawn a few days before and went to each of the rabbits in turn, pulled them out of the traps by their hind legs. This was the first time I discovered that rabbits are not always silent, that they can scream strange, high-pitched rodent shrieks. The first rabbit dug its front paws into the wire of the cage but it was no use and the man tugged sharply on the rabbit's neck and let it fall to the ground as the others watched. It kept moving. It was spasming as if its body were trying to escape what had already happened and I thought it was alive but it was not alive. This was also when I discovered that real death is not like in films.

Walking home late at night we stopped a moment to listen; the birds were singing at 3am in winter. In the permanent light of the city they thought it was sunrise.

The same week as a chemical weapons attack in Syria I took a lighter to the ants on the garden wall. They scurried madly to escape the flame. No particular ant stood out to me.

A new era of control –

[illegible]

3. Endling

I don't know what year it is. If that makes sense.

I must be some kind of extremophile. How else could I have lived so long?

Out on the plains I thought I heard voices but I did not hear voices. These hills are empty.

Nothing moves except dust.

Imagining the cold, barren face of a distant planet. This planet exists somewhere as I

imagine it & it is orbiting a dying star.

Why should that planet care for life?

“”The apathy of the stars””

I suppose I must be old now.

I gave birth to a baby girl once. She was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.

I have seen death & I have seen death.

Who am I writing for

Dear diary Sorry it's been a while. I have been wandering for several days. The old

supermarket is getting barren and I needed to find another.

Besides, I can't think of anything to say.

The words for things are fading.

I saw a bird today.

RUSTY:

Stasi officer's love letter to DDR [East German] punks

I got ya taxonomized, my
leperous butterflies.

I caress your mugshots,
aching
for the cool feel
of studded leather,
the glue crusting in mohawks.

I savor your spew:
*"We have no plan, and
 we like it that way."*

Lemme pathologize
your fuschia'd stains, your
nurtured rabies, your erupting
skeletons.

Lemme show you a place
where dreams
never
existed.

DDR punks reply to the Stasi

Fuck exhaust skies,
shatturd

walls in
city-cores, Nazi
ghosts still
(how many told us
"You should be gassed!",
today?)

We corrode cassettes, secrete basement
rehearsals.

We pogo-dance before church
altars.

We burn & laugh, resilient
cockroaches.

JINE MARSHOF:

On default

“Create Account” and you’re entering a preconfigured state with checkmarks already set. Look at that pre-completed form. Now uncheck boxes, unlink apps and toggle off everything. Undo is what you have to do. Unfuck the defaults for a little privacy.

Most online services, platforms and apps are part of a sociotechnological infrastructure that is designed to publish and correlate what you type, click and retrieve. Your accounts are part of a social graph. There’s no wonder about that anymore.

Since every technical object is a cultural object preceded by a certain configuration of knowledge, design and legal-political regulations, it always has an initial setting you inevitably agree with. Since it is also a product of humans who have prejudices, presets define the moral dimension of technology. The “algorithmic bias” is huge. But the desire for something that is always ready-to-go or ready-to-use is huge too.

If the internal functionality of a technical object allows to make adjustments, to select different options, it should encourage or invite you to do so, no? Most of the time it is assumed that you, the user, don’t want to or can’t do this anyway, that you may not have a plan at all. It happens by default. You did not do anything to change the options? What are your options? Did they even show up?

Default, that’s the standard or system setting. Default, that’s also the failure to meet financial obligations. System setting: the failure to meet financial obligations. And the other way around, system settings (the big ones) are implemented in default parameters and arguments within algorithms.

The terms ‘default’ and ‘fault’ mean almost the same: Error, lack, debt, guilt, malfunction. Failure to act; inaction or neglect. The meaning of the prefix ‘de’ is erased. As you’ll be constantly in default with your actions to rectify faults and clear debts. Somebody will come to fill in the gap. To keep you able to act, under their conditions. You owe them.

In 2015, Greece fails to meet its 1.5 billion euro payment obligation to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The state is on default. TROIKA is coming. It presumes executive power to itself by setting up default parameters for the state to function at all. IMF does a similar trick.

Default as the general standard in a world determined by technical infrastructures and financial relationships manifests the horror of existence as Emmanuel Lévinas describes it: *il y a* (‘there is’). It is the heavy “present absence” that sets up a field of forces with NULL values.

KC:

CONSUMER CULTURE (a warmer world)

consume verb
con·sume /ˈkɒn·sɪm/
1. to do away with
COMPLETELY: DESTROY

Fire can destroy your house and all of your possessions in less than an hour.

**EVERYTHING
— BURNS —**

You can feel fire,

You can also see it and smell it,

property damage

As the world warms,

a trend toward larger fires

Look what we did. Look at what we're capable of.

STUART SCHRADER:

A Short Anti-Fascist Playlist

The Cigarettes “They’re Back Again, Here They Come”

This is the perfect anti-fascist anthem. It’s crafted to represent the threat. It begins politely, with some barely suppressed giggles because it’s all a joke innit. But as with Trump, Bolsonaro, and Hitler himself, the joke always turns serious. The menace seems to come out of nowhere, and the urgency increases as the mask falls. The pounding drum and the plaintive riff make an announcement: stop them now or else.

The Cigarettes’s three-song 45 came out June 1, 1979, less than a month after Margaret Thatcher’s election to prime minister. Her triumph laundered far-right ideas into sentimental claptrap, with a barely contained snarl beneath the surface. It was the National Front’s own pose, as The Cigarettes highlighted. Fascists could not quite pull it off smoothly, however. Few were fooled by Thatcher, but one effect of her win was to deflate the National Front’s attempts at hiding their own violent tendencies through mainstream electoralism. In the streets, militant anti-racism simultaneously defeated the Front’s willy-nilly campaign of violence. Racist street attacks did not cease entirely, but by 1979, the Front could no longer pretend its electoral efforts and the violence were unrelated. Militant anti-racist action proved their linkage.

The Cigarettes analyzed this dynamic perfectly. They don’t look like brawlers. They’re moddish, looking a bit like students who failed out for skipping class. But they know their history. They’ve seen it all before. Forty years ago *was* the height of the fascist career. Today, history is what’s happening. This isn’t a game. The fash better pay attention: I’m not a violent person, but I’ll make an exception for you.

The Pigs “National Front”

Less sophisticated than The Cigarettes, The Pigs still produced a primo slice of ’77 punk that put the cards on the table. The National Front *are* fascists. And their ideas of racial supremacy are stupid.

I’m not sure how agit-prop could get any better. The message is clear, memorable, and fun. The song embodies the do-it-yourself aesthetic, with a recording that oozes immediacy and informal urgency. No time for polish.

Some people have misunderstood what the Summer of Hate was about. This record was recorded in August, at its peak. Any claim that the Summer of Hate’s hate was misdirected simply cannot withstand the evidence. The Pigs are the proof. Punk

opposed fascism.

Rondos “Which Side Will You Be On”

The Crass song “Bloody Revolutions” summed up their approach to socialist anti-racist politics: they disapproved. For Crass, opposing National Front candidates in elections and fighting National Front hooligans in the street led equally to authoritarianism. In another song, “White Punks on Hope,” they labeled Rock Against Racism “white liberal shit.” (They had been early supporters of RAR but quickly soured on it, as they focused on the Trotskyist organization to which some organizers belonged rather than on its practical goals.) Crass felt that opposing violent racists through militant self-defense would violate racists’ right to free speech. They equated Left and Right, aiming to remain above the fray—quite literally, like when neo-nazis attacked their fans at their gigs and they fecklessly stood by and watched, particularly at Conway Hall in September 1979. (The best scholarly book on punk, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture, 1976–1984* by Matthew Worley, begins with this episode.)

Crass have been hugely influential. Many a young punk had their minds first blown, then expanded by Crass. It is impossible to downplay their significance. But in the light of 2019, with white England attempting to leave the European Union, fascists in the halls of power in Europe, East Asia, and Latin America, and Trump in the White House, it is impossible not to approach Crass today with a jaundiced eye, or ear. Their pro-free speech stance sounds far more like the Far Right today, or the liberals who give the extremist Right cover. Their anti-statist and ultimately individualist lifestyle politics were far more consonant with Thatcherism than contradictory to it. In 2019, try not to retch when you listen to the Crass lyric “We’re all just niggers to the rulers of this land.”

Rondos played that Conway Hall gig, dutifully leaving any hammer-and-sickle banners at home, at the request of Crass, lest they incite the punters. It didn’t matter. British Movement bruisers wrecked the gig anyway. Crass stood mostly idle. At the time, Penny Rimbaud blamed the aggro on the full moon. I shit you not. Later, in *The Story of Crass*, they ended up blaming Rondos.

Members of Rondos were shocked by what happened at Conway Hall. They recounted to me a few years ago how, to this day, they still could not quite grasp how Crass felt that fighting back against neo-nazis would mean debasing themselves. In response, Rondos wrote the dyspeptic but urgent song “Which Side Will You Be On,” invoking a classic socialist slogan. It expressed their shock and disillusionment at what they witnessed. They had traveled all the way from Rotterdam to London, and it fell to them to participate in the fight to protect a Crass gig. There was only one place such a neutral stance could lead in their view: further emboldening the fascist hooligans. That was the real authoritarian threat. Once the dust cleared at Conway Hall, and after a polite debate about the political choices each band was making,

Crass decided to break their ties with Rondos. Crass released “Bloody Revolutions,” whose lyrics traffic in familiar right-wing tropes about socialist politics leading inevitably to mass killing. In response to this anti-communist screed, Rondos put Mao on the front cover of their record “Fight Back!” If fighting fascists at punk gigs means we’re in favor of the Cultural Revolution, mass starvation, and re-education camps, then we might as well lean in. I still crack up every time I look at the record. I bet the dour hippies in Crass still don’t get it.

“Peace Dilemma,” incidentally, is another Rondos song that lampoons the stringent pacifism of Crass, even lobbing their famous line “Fight War Not Wars” back at them. “Pacifism needs fighting for,” Rondos declare in this minimalist barrage.

Although I spent some years under the sway of Crass, it was early on in my years as a punk that I was disabused of the notion that offering the right of unimpeded expression to neo-nazis would somehow cause them to reciprocate with—well, I’m not sure what such single-minded goons could reciprocate with. A kid in my high school who hung out with avowed neo-nazis got in trouble once for spewing bigotry. I defended his right to say whatever the fuck he wanted. Long story short, a few months later he still beat me up. My prior defense was meaningless. This script is familiar. Somehow Rondos saw it clearly. Crass didn’t. Which side will I be on? Not with the aloof anarchos who don’t want to sully their hands. That’s white liberal shit.

The Astronauts “Getting Things Done”

There are two kinds of punks in the world. Those who listen to the Astronauts and poseurs. Mark Astronaut, the songwriter and lyricist behind the band, is one of a kind. His dry, sardonic observations of life in London are unparalleled. You get the feeling listening to the Astronauts that you’re entering a more intense version of a familiar reality. The songs sensitize you to the everyday.

“Getting Things Done” was first released under the band’s first name, Restricted Hours, which has resurfaced a few times for live performances over the past few decades. The record was a split 7" with The Syndicate, released on the local Rock Against Racism imprint in Stevenage, a town just to the north of London.

Although carnivalesque in sound, the lyrics of “Getting Things Done” veer in the direction of a socialist-realist aesthetic, about which I’ve written elsewhere, found also in bands like The Jam, Newtown Neurotics, and Fiendens Musik. It’s an approach void of adornment, pretense, or guile.

The song discusses those mature, knowing types that we’ve all encountered, including within punk, often with a belly glued to the bar. They admit that injustice exists, but they have enough of a clear-eyed understanding of how it all works to know that drastic change is impossible. Protest is wasted breath. Two pints of

condescension and a packet of gripes, please.

Among their earliest tracks, “Getting Things Done” is as earnest as The Astronauts get, which is belied by the handclaps and organ motif. The tune lets on a bit more about their own position than the wry narration of most of their tracks usually does. It’s clear where they stand. The song generally addresses the rank-and-file political tumult of the 1970s and seems to reference the Anti-Nazi League carnivals of 1978 and 1979 directly. To the cynic who usually dismisses political protest, ongoing organizing efforts are a fool’s errand. But when called out for extreme cynicism, the cynic defends himself. He says, “You know that Anti-nazi rally, man, I was there.” But Mark Astronaut archly points out the problem with this defense: “when the music stopped that’s when you ceased to care.”

Twisted Nerve “Neutral Zone”

“The National Front have got it wrong / That’s why we wrote this fucking song.” Edinburgh was not a Front hotbed, but that didn’t keep Twisted Nerve from taking a stand. The song appears on one of those ineffably improbable DIY records that mark a halcyon period when it made perfect sense to release a 7" compilation called “Mint Sauce for the Masses.” Twisted Nerve eventually went in a more gothic direction, but “Neutral Zone” is a pounding punk cracker, recorded in October 1980.

Like The Pigs, Twisted Nerve admit that they are not likely to be the target of a new nazi extermination campaign. But as so many anti-fascist protests have implored people to realize, Twisted Nerve recognized that protections would be thin once a new extreme right government emerged. We’re witnessing this today in the United States. Citizens are rounded up by ICE and detained, given no opportunity to prove their citizenship. Legal immigrants are finding their options diminished and freedoms curtailed. Denaturalization is on the table. Birthright citizenship will be excised from the Constitution if they get their way. Whiteness has always been provisional. It actually won’t be enough to protect anyone.

The Oppressed “Work Together”

Together or alone, The Oppressed weren’t going to win any beauty contests, nor poetry contests, nor songwriting contests. Simple, straight-ahead tunes for working-class jobs: brickwall Oi! is all they aspired to. But a funny thing happened along the way. By the 1990s, The Oppressed revealed themselves to have been on a narrowly circumscribed mission, even narrower than the already basic parameters of classic Oi! (And by “they,” I’m really talking about Roddy Moreno, the consistent member throughout the band’s existence.) This narrow mission was to support anti-racist skinheads. Or, put another way, to defeat fascist skinheads. That’s it.

When The Oppressed started to give such full-throated and explicit support to SHARP, AFA, RASH, and other groups, it threw a new light on some of their earlier material. Although there was never a dodgy lyric to be found on the old tracks, some of their street poetry registers differently when you realize how committed the band was to anti-racist politics. It also indicates what Oi! music could have been: a force for uniting a multi-racial working class movement against capital. Take “Work Together,” a song title that urges unity and renders Oi! music as a mode of unification, an instrument for building solidarity in the moment of decomposition of the industrial working class. We may no longer work together on the shop floor, but we’ll work together on the dance floor. And in the streets.

Listening to the lyrics today I am astonished at their radicalism. The Oppressed want to abolish the SPG, the police division responsible for killing Blair Peach during an anti-fascist protest. They want to abolish interracial violence. “Dreaming of how life could be / If society was free.” No one’s going to do it for us; we have to do it ourselves. Musically and politically.

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