The Deaf Club
An Un-oral History

This piece was originally published by Maximumrocknroll, the long-running fanzine that understood the historical importance of the venue that hosted two years’ worth of ribald punk music, art and performance, and underground films that have become an intrinsic portion of West Coast “year zero” lore. I am indebted to Kathy Peck of the Contractions, who was able to network me to old guard San Francisco punks. The piece is also dedicated to Olin Fortney, who was both deaf and punk—an actual Deaf Club member before the venue hosted shows. He befriended me in 2005 when we taught together in western Oregon and provided me with remarkable visual materials and anecdotes. He also embodied the spirit of the era so well. He died on my birthday in 2010, so I was unable to interview him for this oral history, which shames me to this day. I miss him profoundly.

Ethan Davidson (fan)

In 1978 or perhaps 1979, a lot of punks were getting fed up with Dirk Dirksen and the Mabuhay Gardens having a monopoly on punk shows. Some people didn’t like him, some didn’t agree that punk was a “theatre of the absurd.” Some simply wanted the community itself to have more control. We sought out alternative venues and came up with one of the most interesting social experiments I’ve participated in—the Deaf Club.

Nobody was famous, the shows were really cheap, and as soon as a band stopped playing, they got off the stage and simply became part of the audience. This all makes it sound like we didn’t take anything very seriously, which is partly true. I had missed the chance to be a hippie and had regretted it, and now I was excited to be able to participate in a movement of my very own. I had spent a year in Central America alone and free, and was having trouble adjusting to the restrictions of an American suburb. Punk gave me a way to be free again. Certainly I believed in the left-wing ideals, which I had always believed in,
though I was acutely aware that the hippie movement had failed to achieve its basic goals. The nihilistic hedonism, which many punks advocated, didn’t make sense to me. But besides all that, it was the funnest scene in town.

Lu Read (club promoter)
I remember the Deaf Club regulars signing and talking to each other, dancing and enjoying themselves. I remember going there one night to see a show, and when I arrived with my friends, there was a strange figure on the sidewalk out front. I assumed it was a mannequin or such, since many musicians also attended art school. As I approached, I realized it was a dead body, splayed in a very strange way, since the neck/spinal cord broke from the fall; the way the body lay on the sidewalk did not look human at first. Thick cerebral fluid surrounded the head. It was intense! I hurried upstairs, somewhat nauseated from the sight. I returned to the sidewalk to watch until the police and fire department pushed us all back. “I guess he didn’t like the band that was playing,” I said. It was a suicide leap from the roof, not a homicide or fall. Later in the evening a Latina woman poured buckets of hot water and bleach on the sidewalk to wash away the blood, though much of the chalk outline remained.

Fredrik Nilsen (BPeople)
We played the Western Front Festival, and we played there with Barbie and Ken (Boyd Rice and Laurie O’Connell) and Monitor. Somebody jumped out the window one of those nights. Michael Uhlenkott from Monitor probably remembers better. He is fluent in sign language, so he was talking to all the members present when it happened.

Ethan Davidson
One night I arrived to see a puddle of blood on the sidewalk in front of the club. Somebody had jumped from the hotel next door. Chalk outlined where the body had existed. “Don’t go near that line,” said a police officer. But some primitive impulse moved me to stick my finger in the blood and rub it on my face. The police officer said, “Don’t be stupid.”

Klaus Flouride (Dead Kennedys)
Somebody falling out of a window? I’ve never heard of that. I’ve never heard of a suicide there or people jumping out of windows, but that doesn’t mean it didn’t happen.

Esmeralda Kent (Noh Mercy)
Another night I was really stoned standing outside on the sidewalk smoking and talking when a dead body fell out the window from the whore hotel upstairs
and scared the fuck out of me! It was already dead when it fell, they reported. The police painted a line drawing around the body in red, and it made the Deaf Club even more notorious.

**Lu Read**

The neighborhood was no rougher than the Tenderloin, or the Lower East Side of New York City in the ‘70s. I actually don’t think parts of the Mission have changed that much. I recall the Tenderloin being the rougher of the two neighborhoods, which is still true today.

**Ethan Davidson**

A number of the clubs were in slummy neighborhoods. The Geary Theater was in the Fillmore. The Sound of Music and the Hell Hole were in the Tenderloin. A lot of us lived in those kinds of places, too.

**Ginger Coyote (Punk Globe)**

The Native American Cultural Center, which was also open to having punk shows, was located near Fourteenth and Valencia, and the trek between there and the Deaf Club was very dangerous at the time. It was near the projects, so there were numerous Latin and Afro-American gangs and just mean nasty kids that loved attacking the punks. Lots of attacks with blades and on occasion the gangs would pound long heavy-duty nails into 2×4s of wood and would see punks walking on the street or waiting at bus stops and whack them in the
back and face. I know that happened to Johnny Genocide, the lead singer of No Alternative and Fast Floyd. I remember a group of punk girls walking around the bus stop and a huge guy cold cocked Mia from Frightwig smack in the face. Girls were often raped and everyone was subject to being robbed. I remember a young woman telling me that she was pulled into the projects and beaten and raped.

Ethan Davidson

One Halloween night I was walking towards the Deaf Club when a group of guys sped by and shouted “Hey faggot, what’s it like to suck dick?” Used to being verbally harassed in high school, I yelled, “Fuck you,” and flipped them off. A couple of blocks later, the car had stopped, and the passengers stood facing me. I said, “Excuse me, do you know how to get to Sixteenth Street?” I don’t remember being hit. I remember wandering confused until a Mexican American man found me and took me to the emergency room, where they stitched the cut over my eye. And then I took the bus back to Sausalito. The next day I inspected the damage, and I looked like the character Two-Face from Batman comics. On my left side, I was the same cute guy I had been before. On my right side, I had a black eye, a fat lip, stitches above my eye, and scabs from my forehead to my chin. Suddenly, my social stock escalated. I got respect from the kids in high school, and from the people in the punk scene, too. This led to me moving into the city and living the life full-time.

Klaus Flouride

It was the Mission. We lived in the Mission at the time. It was Latino and Catholic, obviously, to a high percentage. There was some gang stuff. One of our female roommates, who became a great journalist, figured out she could pass for a Latina if she wanted, because she was Mediterranean, tall and attractive. If Amy went anywhere where guys would be schmucks and hit on girls and stuff like that, she figured out if she wore a crucifix and a fake wedding ring, they kept her safe in the Mission. It was just a matter of street smarts, literally. But it was a funky area, which has all been gentrified now. You still don’t want to be there way too late, which would have to be 4:00 a.m. by yourself on a Friday or Saturday. Back then, it wasn’t gentrified much at all. It was basically around Sixteenth and Mission, which now has all sorts of hipster clubs that come and go.

Ethan Davidson

The Mission was a dangerous place in those days. BART was under construction, and the noise and dust had closed many businesses down. Those who did live there were mostly low-income Mexican immigrants and their children. It had a
serious gang problem. The so-called Cholos were running rampant. There were regular gay bashings. I don’t know if the Cholos thought punks were gay (as I suspect), or that they were members of a rival gang, but they didn’t like us, and communicated this physically on a regular basis.

Of course, they were not alone. To be punk in that era was to be harassed by people of all races, from the dimwitted suburbanites yelling “Devo” to the gangs that physically attacked us. Our budgets, as well as our temperaments, often took us into low-income neighborhoods where people tend to express their opinions physically.

People sometimes stumbled into the Deaf Club with bloody faces. But once they were inside, it was a safe haven. I enjoyed it so much that I commuted by bus all the way from Sausalito, regularly.

**Ginger Coyote**
The Deaf Club was one of my favorite venues in the early days. The deaf people could feel the vibrations from the floor and the music excited them a lot. They all seemed to enjoy the music and the people. Every once in a while, a problem would arise with either one of the deaf community or a drunk punk and a fight would break out. Robert Hanharan, who worked with the Offs, was doing the booking there. There were not many venues that catered to punk, so we tried our best to keep the Deaf Club open and available. I had a birthday party at the Deaf Club and all sorts of San Fran folks came out for it. My magazine *Punk Globe* covered a lot of the shows booked there.

**Ginger Coyote**
The deaf people also drank the beer being served and would get drunk. Depending on the show and what people brought into the club, fights would break out. The rational (sober) deaf people could see it was a matter of too much beer, and they would control the deaf patrons. But they also would cut off the punks. Sometimes that was the core of the fights that broke out. Basically we all got along. There would be people who paid at the door that would get freaked out and end up being in a gang in the area and punks would often have fights with each other. Booze being the reason behind most fights.

The punks really did not have gangs although there were cliques that people belonged with. The punks would often walk in groups with chains and bottles for protection.

**Jello Biafra**
For the most part, the people there were cool and weren’t out to beat each other up.

— *Can You Hear Me? Music from the Deaf Club* liner notes.
Ethan Davidson

The most interesting thing about the Deaf Club was that it was a real Deaf Club. The members stood around with the rest of us drinking the powerful drinks. I don’t sign, so I never “spoke” to any of them, but what I was told was that they enjoyed our music because they could feel the vibrations on the floor. I imagine that they also enjoyed the visual display, for we were the most visually interesting visual community at the time. People would dye their hair a different shade of blue, green, or purple every week. It can now be said that I never had trouble buying a Bloody Mary, even though I was sixteen.

Bonnie Hayes (The Punts)

The club was utterly uncontrolled, which was one of the best things about it. It was basically like a big, really messy party at someone’s house. It seemed private, like an inside thing—you would meet everybody and be in the family. Everybody was drunk and a lot of people were using heroin. I remember a fair amount of throwing up. I was always drunk as hell myself, as I couldn’t perform without getting wasted.

Esmeralda Kent

The Deaf Club was down the street from our “house” which was a ginormous storefront, 1920s dry goods store on Valencia Street that is now Artists Television Access (ATA Gallery) at 992 Valencia St., where me, Tony Hotel, and our manager (and Tuxedomoon’s manager) Adrian Craig lived. We had a huge basement that had secret passages (connecting all the block) where we used to record and practice.

The Deaf Club was my favorite club because of how strange it was. One night after we played at the end of the night, I went backstage and changed and I thought everyone had left because it was so quiet I was sure I was alone. I went out and the room was full with over a hundred people all signing. I wondered if drunk deaf people slurred their sign language.

They loved the music because they could feel it. Deafness knows no specific demographic, so rich, poor, old, young, black, Asian, anyone could be and
often was deaf and they were all there. Who knew? It was great to write a note of what you wanted to the bartender and see old ladies drinking with spiked mohawk punks.

**Bonnie Hayes**

I spent many happy hours at the Deaf Club listening to great music and soaking up the new freedom of the punk scene. I saw X, the Dils, the Contractions, Pink Section, and others. Maybe the Mutants? The Mommers and the Poppers, D. Iyall’s band. T Moon played there a lot. I played there with my band the Punts many times. The music was amazing—whatever you wanted it to be. Experimental, messy, off-key and off-time but really original and alive-sounding, not all fixed up and careful. The deaf people sat on the edge of the stage or on the floor near the stage and placed their hands on the stage to feel the music.

**Klaus Flouride**

I don’t remember people touching speakers, though I recall someone telling me that for most people, deafness is a percentage level. Profoundly deaf is where nothing works, apparently, due to nerve damage, etc. Things are totally gone. That was not the largest percentage of people that were there. This music they could really get a grip on and hear because it was loud, and that club, which generally had card and bingo games and stuff like that when there wasn’t a show, was literally a club for deaf people, so not only did they have something they could hear, it was also punk rock theater. Back in the days when the Deaf Club was going on, there wasn’t one hardcore band after the other like it is nowadays. Back then, there was a range between art bands, or the experimental Tuxedomoon-style bands, which fell between art and stuff. Bands like Pink Section. The record *Can You Hear Me? Music from the Deaf Club* also had KGB, which included Johnny Genocide, who is still out there playing.

**F. Stop Fitzgerald (photographer)**

I do remember some great nights at the club. It was very clear that what seemed a blue-collar neighborhood club for the hearing impaired had taken an interesting turn. It was at first unusual to see these folks—regular members, I would assume—at the bar, and dozens of strange-looking punks and punkettes all about. The contrast was wonderful. It was also obvious that the deaf patrons were enjoying the music—at the bar, in front of the stage, near the speakers, or backstage. They definitely seemed to dig it.

**David Javelosa (Los Microwaves)**

I remember playing as Los Microwaves at least two times. There really wasn’t much of a stage except a low platform. I realized that I had to enunciate my
drink orders to the bartender, because he was reading my lips for drinks! When we opened for Tuxedomoon, they surrounded the stage with plastic sheeting and started to spray-paint it from the inside. That drove us out of the dressing room and many from the club because of the fumes. Everyone wanted to play the club, until they actually did! It was in a bad neighborhood back in those days, but there were great tacos across the street. It didn’t last for more than a year or two. The scene pretty much moved to Broadway where there were four or five clubs within a few blocks’ radius. The high point of the club was the Western Front music festival that included everyone in town.

**Deaf/Punk by Richard Gaikowski.**
1979, 16 mm, b&w/so, 8 min.

**Summary:** “A dada-documentary of an unlikely liaison between punk rockers and the deaf who for a while shared the now legendary San Francisco Deaf Club. We see punk poseurs juxtaposed with the animated presence of deaf-mutes. Hands talk and wave around as we hear the dirty R&B of the Offs. The film works because of the concept of the environment.” http://www.mail-archive.com/ambit@mediascot.org/msg00998.html.

**Anonymous**
I remember going with my older sister to see punk bands at the Deaf Club. The punk music, the club members with balloons to “feel” the sounds they cannot hear, the TVs to watch because they could read lips. The bar was a folding table and a refrigerator full of Budweiser. A perfect match of outsiders with absolutely no pretensions.

**Klaus Flouride**
I remember it being working-class, but I don’t remember it being that dingy, but we played an awful lot of pretty dingy punk clubs. That didn’t ever impress upon me that much. I think that “California Über Alles” might have come out by the time we played there, but I really don’t think so, because we still had 6025 in the group. So, it was still before we had a single out. We were still early on in the thing. There was a folding table in the back. They sold cans of Budweiser. I think it was for like a buck apiece. Back then, you could get Buds for $2.50 or $3.00 a six-pack, or something like that, so they were doing okay. That was your bar. The thing that impressed me the most was that when we were watching the Germs I was right up front, and I was trying to talk to the person next to me. Everybody was grabbing somebody’s ear and hollering to try and talk, whereas the deaf members, the people who were deaf and frequented the place on an everyday basis, would just lean forward towards the stage and sign each other—no problem with communication.
Bruce Conner (artist and filmmaker)
It was reassuring that, when the music got loud at one end of the room, you could crawl to the other end of the room and talk to the deaf people. They always had TV without sound.

— *Can You Hear Me? Music from the Deaf Club* liner notes.

Johnny Stingray (The Controllers)
I remember the Deaf Club well! We only played there once, but it was the best. The people *actually* were deaf, but loved punk because of the vibrations and the punk fashion. We were the headliners that night. It was our first headline gig in San Fran and the place was packed. Over capacity, in fact, and the fire marshal closed down the show. We never made it to the stage. The highlight was Darby Crash and Jello Biafra kicking in store windows after the canceled show. I believe Jello cut his Achilles tendon as a result. Fun times.

Klaus Flouride
When we played, it was weird. We weren’t introduced by Johnny Walker, like it sounds on our *Live at the Deaf Club* album. He came up in the middle of the set and just grabbed the mic because he was Johnny Walker and who in the fuck were we? We were just this band out of San Francisco that was starting off. We had a fairly good following in San Francisco at that point. I can’t recall if we opened for the Germs. It was one or the other. I think the Germs headlined. Walker just jumped up in the middle of the set and did his spiel about, “We’re going to show them that San Francisco is the center of...” That sort of stuff. I don’t recall the fire marshal closing down the show, and I may be wrong. I don’t recall the Controllers being on the bill, but I may be wrong too. I know Biafra went out with some of the Germs and they indiscriminately kicked out windows. Biafra kicked out one, then realized that his fancy little pointed shoes weren’t like the big old boots the Germs had on—big leather things past their ankles. So, Biafra’s foot slid on the broken glass and he cut himself. He did a miserable injury to himself. Sliced a vein and a bunch of tendons. For four months after that we played shows with him in a wheelchair because he had to have his leg in a cast because everything had been operated on. It was a lesson for him: if you are going to kick in a window, make sure you have the proper footwear.

Kathy Peck (The Contractions)
The place was filthy. My boots would stick to the floor. The deaf people would dance to the vibration of the beat. Robert Hanrahan would do a radio show with Johnny Walker (BBC punk rock DJ) on the side of the stage, it seems. Robert Hanrahan, manager of the Offs discovered the San Francisco Club for the Deaf in 1978, and was able to rent it on a nightly basis.
It was great fun. The Deaf Club was more a like a neighborhood place, very underground, in the Mission District. People would give the deaf sign for a beer as the Offs, the Contractions, Middle Class, No Alternative, and the Dils played. People like Ginger Coyote (Punk Globe) would hang out, dance, and drink. The bathroom was full of graffiti. We’d load in, and the punk bands would always get in crazy fights, especially Brittley Black, drummer of Crime, who fell out of the upstairs window many a night.

The deaf people were receptive. They could “hear” through the wooden floor—a simple floor, made from planks or linoleum. It could catch the vibrations. Frank Moore from the Outrageous Beauty Pageant was there in his wheelchair that people dragged upstairs, since it was on the second floor. Dirk Dirksen (Mabuhay club promoter and San Francisco music icon) nurtured his career.

**Klaus Flouride**

I don’t specifically remember Frank Moore being there, but he was at everything. It wouldn’t stand out because he was at so many things. He was a really cool guy. He was really disabled. He had a Ouija board on the front of his wheelchair and a pointer on his hat so he could point out things he needed, because he couldn’t talk. His hands were too uncontrollable to run the wheelchair himself, and he had a group of people that he lived with that almost worshipped him. They would get him to shows, and carry him up and down. They lived in Berkeley, and I think they still do. Everything is all tie-dye now, even the colors of the house and the car they drive around in.

**Ethan Davidson**

At the Mabuhay, I remember quadriplegic performance artist Frank Moore Performing with his Sexually Explicit players. In one memorable performance, Frank played a severely physically disabled man being tortured and given an enema by a nurse. It was extremely black comedy and would not have been
socially acceptable even in the punk scene if Frank hadn’t organized the whole show himself. As far as people of color, I don’t remember them at the Deaf Club. At the Geary Theater, I hung out with Tony Zero, who was Mexican American. I remember a black Rastafarian working at GT. Some of us briefly got involved with Rock Against Racism, which was organized by a black woman. Later in the early ’80s I remember hanging out with a couple of Asians. Oh, I met a Japanese woman at the Sound of Music and married her. We were together for about four years.

**Kathy Peck**

It was an era of disposable beer, disposable art—the Xerox art movement—as well as disposable bands. We played there with Wall of Voodoo, Zeros, Jennifer Blowdryer, and Johnny Genocide. I used Lysol spray to clean the stage at sound check. It was pretty dirty. People would party and get drunk and spill stuff. There was no real staff to take care of the place. The deaf people would do what they could to take care of it.

People were recording bands. V. Vale (*Search and Destroy*), Brad Lapin (*Damage* magazine), Lu Read, and Randy Seanor were there, along with bands, the Mutants, Crime, Dead Kennedys, Tuxedomoon, Noh Mercy, Pink Section, JJ180, Los Microwaves, Units, Punts, Jars. It was really mixed. It was more about the music rather than what somebody was or, “You Don’t Know Who You Think I Am”—the whole identity thing. The deaf people would dance at sound check.

Dirk cancelled one of our early performances at the Mabuhay, so we switched over and played our first show at the Deaf Club thanks to the Offs.

**Ethan Davidson**

Now, I have to admit that when it comes to the music, a lot of us weren’t paying attention very closely. I remember Tuxedomoon coming on and I joined somebody in yelling, “Boring!” and “Art Frat!” Tuxedomoon is actually a good band. I just enjoyed yelling.

I remember Johnny Genocide of No Alternative singing, “Giddyup, little horsey, I just can’t wait to fuck my horse again.” This was his parody of a country song.

**Klaus Flouride**

*Can You Hear Me?* was all recorded by Jim Keylor, who recorded “California Über Alles.” He recorded our first single. It was recorded on the same equipment as *Can You Hear Me?* He just set up at the side of the stage and winged it. It was for one solid week that he did that, basically. Well, I can’t imagine him breaking down and setting the equipment back up again. So, I think it was a solid week of shows. Johnny Walker was there, who was one of the DJs at Radio Caroline,
one of the first offshore pirate radio stations in the UK. I don’t remember KUSF (University of San Francisco) or KALX (North Gate Radio), which would be two stations that would broadcast live. Both used to do remotes, but I don’t remember them being there. I think Kathy might be remembering Jim Keylor on the side recording. He had his whole setup, like a splitter for all the mics.

The punk crowd was not all that diverse, even though the bands were more so. There was a Mission crowd, a North Beach crowd—but they’d all turn up at the Mabuhay, they’d turn up at Ben T. Rat Productions, which were Rat shows, and they’d rent different halls all the time. There was a guy named Montgomery—a black guy that did shows in Berkeley. The only really solid, all-the-time venue had been the Mabuhay.

The Deaf Club was one of the few places that had established itself as possibly a place that had more than two shows. Most of the time there were maybe one to two shows at the basement of a place. We played the Finnish Hall, all these places, like one time. I can see Dirk saying, “If you play that place, you’ll never play the Mabuhay again,” in some sort of bluff, but I don’t think, or I don’t remember there being anything along the levels of anybody threatening anybody other than when Bill Graham put on one show, or two shows.

At the show we played with the Clash, it was a big show, his goons got out of hand. He didn’t like how stuff went, and he said, “I’m never going to put on another punk show.” This is after he said, “I’m going to show punk rockers how it’s done. I’m going to show these goddamn punk rockers how you put on a rock’n’roll show.” Then by the end of it, he’s like, “I’m never going to book one of these kinds of shows again.” People were not behaving like he was used to, like just swaying to the music and going “ooh and ah.” He went on radio once and was interviewed by Tim Yohannan and the people of Maximumrocknroll. They really confronted him. It wasn’t like David Letterman and Donald Rumsfeld. They really did confront him about a goon throwing some kid without a proper stamp on his hand in front of a truck. But I never heard of any band being told by one club or the other, “If you play that club, you’ll never play here again.”

**Ethan Davidson**

Dirk Dirksen had a certain vision of punk as theatre. Other people saw it more as people as singing and talking about our real lives. The Mabuhay was focused around the personality of Dirk, no matter who else was playing. He deliberately drew the audience’s anger towards himself, so his sneering voice was part of every show. North Beach, by this time, was not, mostly, an Italian or a beatnik neighborhood, but a center of sleazy, voyeuristic strip-club tourism. The aura of sleaze seemed to permeate everything. And not the seedy punk sleaze, but the manipulative, money-grubbing kind. The Mabuhay got the most press, and
drew people who were brand new. The Deaf Club generally got folks who had been around at least a little while.

And then, the Deaf Club died quickly, while the Mabuhay died slowly and painfully. As the media took hold of punk and kids started flocking in from the suburbs in the early '80s, it became a tourist trap. The brick walls with spray-painted graffiti were covered with fake brick with fake spray-painted graffiti. I couldn’t believe that it had so blatantly become an imitation of itself. The rules got stricter: no ins and outs. The bouncers got more uptight, and then sometimes actually violent. I saw somebody get thrown through a glass door. The police started hounding the sidewalk in front. It turned into a “no fun” zone. The Deaf Club never did. The Deaf Club did seem more DIY than the Mabuhay.

Craig Gray (Negative Trend)

What I remember about the Deaf Club is that there weren’t many deaf people there, mainly the staff. I don’t remember any deaf punks being there per se, but I didn’t know everybody in the scene. I don’t know if it’s fair to say they were square and sidelined. Once in a while there would be some, who I assumed were the staff, standing up front with their hands on the PA. I don’t think most of the people at those gigs were really aware of the deaf people and assumed whoever didn’t look like a punk rock kid was one of the deaf. No one was consciously excluding anybody, more than anything it would have been a communication problem—not a lot of signing punk rock kids in 1978–79.

Klaus Flouride

You couldn’t tell from the stage if the patrons were punk rock. When you were playing, you could see people signing, and that was about it. In terms of the punk rock stuff, as far as the fashion, if you want to call it that, the look and stuff, we thought, we are not going to wear spiky hair because we didn’t want to take one uniform and replace it with another. So, there could have been people there totally into punk rock, as far as the visuals go, because they liked the theater of it, or whatever, but you couldn’t really tell. Back then, the shows were so, well, look at old show photos of the Mabuhay in 1977 and ’78, which you can find all over the Internet. You look at the styles. You see people...
the front of the stage at Mabuhay that look like it’s 1975 still. That doesn’t mean that they weren’t into it or that their fashion didn’t change later. They were right up front, dealing not with a pit, but a lot of action. I didn’t notice one way or another whether the deaf people were punk. Well, I know there were a lot of people there for curiosity’s sake because that was their Deaf Club, and deaf people would go there on Friday or Saturday night. Maybe they just sat at the back and watched, and thought, hmm, curious.

**Ethan Davidson**

I don’t personally remember much in the way of interactions between the punks and the deaf patrons, except that they just stood around with the rest of them. I assume that the bartender was deaf, though he didn’t seem to have any trouble with my drink order.

I remember that a number of people in the punk scene were gay or bi, which didn’t mean that the rest of them were totally free of homophobia. But the general public tended to lump both groups together. This was, after all, the same time when the San Francisco gay scene was exploding.

**Klaus Flouride**

The whole thing lasted less than a year before they got complaints from the neighbors who were not deaf, basically.

**Ethan Davidson**

The neighbors had complained about the noise, so they had covered the walls with egg cartons, stapled on. But a member of the Mutants ripped them down during a show. For this, or perhaps some other reason, this unique social experiment was closed down, and we went back to hanging out at the Mabuhay Gardens and wherever else we could. Shortly after that, my scars and bruises attracted the attention of a young woman, who moved me into her one-bedroom apartment with four other punks and removed my stitches with a pair of scissors. And my life was permanently changed.

**Kathy Peck**

Ironically, for two decades, as cofounder and executive director of Hearing Education and Awareness for Rockers (http://hearnet.com), I have worked with musicians suffering from hearing damage, providing hearing services and education, and I started off playing at the Deaf Club, and suffered from intense hearing loss for ten years myself.

Once, the Mermen, White Trash Debutantes, Mo’Fessionals, Meri St. Mary and the Vktms played an event we called “Vibe-O-Thon” for a HEAR benefit (1996). I invited the deaf community and the punks to feel and hear the music.
through the vibration of the floor. In fact, everybody ended up lying on the floor like seals, a good vibration. Vibe-O-Thon was one of the first Media Cast Internet broadcasts. The Tactile Sound System (Clark Synthesis) allowed concert-goers to “feel and hear” the performances like never before at a volume that will not risk hearing damage to the audience “by vibrating the floor, and using the human body itself as a bone resonator, we were able to turn down the overall volume to help prevent hearing loss for those with hearing, while deaf and hard-hearing people were be able to ‘hear’ the concert via sound vibrations.” It felt loud, but it wasn’t as loud as it seemed.

**Ginger Coyote**

Now in 2011 the area has been gentrified and people are allowed to dress as they please. It is also a lot safer for people to walk in the area with ease. It seems the police patrol the area a lot more. There are patrol cars making the rounds at all times.

**Esmeralda Kent**

Valencia Street is now extremely chic. The rents are sky-high and it is filled with promenading twenty-somethings from India and the Midwest who work at Apple, Google, Yahoo, etc. with shitloads of discretionary income to spend in the trendy upscale restaurants and clothing boutiques. They call them “hipsters,” but there is nothing “hip” about them. They are tech-addicted hardcore capitalists with huge 401(k)s. They remind me of straight people’s parents in the ’70s (and they like those straight ’70s clothes!). They seem incapable of coming up with an original thought that does not include social networking or walking around bumping into things, looking at the device in the palm of their hand.