

Community Building Through Do-It-Yourself Practices & Values

in Bangkok's Rock 'n' roll Subculture

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Abstract

This article presents the practices and values among members of Bangkok's rock 'n' roll subculture. Understanding a particular manifestation of rock 'n' roll practices, in a specific scene and location, needs to begin with an analysis of both the similarities and differences it has with other, wider rock 'n' roll subcultural groupings. How do they relate and remain distinct from each other? In order to answer this question, four rock 'n' roll scenes cohabiting in Bangkok city are investigated, they are: metal, punk, hardcore/straightedge and rock. By analyzing the people behind these scenes it is possible to understand the ties and conflicts faced by the participants in these music scenes and their roles in the construction of a subcultural community evolving around independent music.

Keywords: Bangkok, Youth, Subculture, Rock 'n' roll, DIY, Community

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Introduction

Subcultural Studies Relevant to the Case of the Rock 'n' roll Subculture in Bangkok

The early subcultural research tended to present them as unitary entities with proper internal dynamics. This was a perception very distant from the messier reality of subcultural structure and dynamics. Furthermore, researchers tend to present the relationship between subculture and mainstream groups in dualistic terms. For example, Cohen (1955) theorized on the emergence of youth subcultures as a response to tensions in the wider culture. These tensions were perceived by young people as 'problems', which were mainly status-driven. Cohen saw the emergence of subcultures through understandings generated between groups of young people with a common understanding of their condition, which, in turn, is transformed into a set of practical solutions together with their own internal dynamics of norms and rules. It is worth quoting the author:

"The emergence of these 'group standards' of this shared frame of reference, is the emergence of a new subculture. It is cultural because each actor's participation in this system or norms they go by in evaluating people. These criteria are an aspect of their cultural frames of reference. If we lack the characteristics, or capacities, which give status in terms of these criteria, we are beset by one of the most typical yet distressing of human problems of adjustment. One solution is for individuals who share such problems to gravitate towards one another and jointly to establish new norms, new criteria of status which define as meritorious the characteristics they do possess, the kinds of conduct of which they are capable." (Cohen, 1955: 65-66, emphasis in original).

Trying to map out the practices and values of the rock 'n' roll scenes in Bangkok from this point of view is entirely convincing: disaffection with or a sense of exclusion from mainstream norms and values can lead people to find each other and jointly establish alternative norms, values and criteria of status which, as in the case of the rock 'n' roll subculture in Bangkok, are opposed to those of the mainstream. These differences between Bangkok's rock 'n' roll subculture and the mainstream will be explored in this article by studying the Do-it-yourself values and practices and the idea of authenticity as perceived by the participants in the subculture as well as by the study of inauthentic behavior. Yet, it is still necessary to fit in this definition the variability and mutability of rock 'n' roll practices and values. These practices and values are not the same from one scene to the other and do not remain invariant over time. It is this constant evolution of practices and values that make the idea of uniformity and coherence an illusion since inevitably some individuals and groups are set to claim their own practices and values as closer to what was originally set out in punk's creative emergence.

In 1977, the advent of punk as a new musical genre provided a vehicle for its participants in which previously unacceptable forms of behavior could be adopted and practiced while still being able to shock the rest of society. Cohen viewed subcultures as the providers of "a new status system sanctioning behavior

tabooed or frowned upon by the larger society”, however, “the acquisition of status within the new group is accompanied by a loss of status outside the group” (1955: 68). Despite being now largely neglected, Cohen’s work provided a credible argument from the analysis of youth subcultures in the mid-20th century. Nevertheless, his models ignored the processes of assimilation and relative acceptance of subcultures by the mainstream culture, as well as, how members of the subculture can, over time, turn themselves over to positions of respectability. His study also ignored the divisions and difficulties that occur within a particular subculture and how these can lead to the formation of newer subcultural groupings (scenes) that nonetheless, share similarities with their subcultural predecessors. Subcultural divisions might be the best place where to start mapping the differences between practices and values among the rock ‘n’ roll subculture in Bangkok. Later theorizations of scenes and subcultures still fall on divisions among scenes or between them and mainstream society so this study will include the analysis of inner divisions in particular rock ‘n’ roll scenes, specifically between the hardcore punk and the straightedge punk scenes from the wider punk scene. In order to do so, this study will use Kruse’s (2010) interpretation of scene as a localized music oriented community created as a response to mainstream or popular music. Their locality and their opposition to mainstream music make scenes important contributors to the formation of oppositional identities among their participants. For these participants the concept of authenticity is fundamental, authentic members of the subculture are admired and praised while inauthentic members are perceived as fake or show-offs. This follows the idea of authenticity proposed by Moore (2002) in which authenticity is seen as a matter of interpretation defined within a cultural position. It is a concept attributed to a performance thus labeling both the performer and its engaged audience. Thus, music scenes allow both the authentication of the performer and its audience. This is what creates the sense of community. Every person involved in the development of a music show is part of the scene. However, before we engulf in the exploration of the different practices and values among the punk scene it is necessary to study existing the literature regarding the problems of difference and conflict between subcultural groupings. Due to the voluminous amount of literature and research done on the topic, I will focus the discussion on two key texts in order to illustrate the argument: Firstly, I will present the work of Dick Hebdige (1979) who focuses his study on the political divisions in the punk scene in England by commenting on the internal inconsistencies between original and later members of the subculture. Finally, I will present the work of Stan Cohen (1980) who focuses on differences between the mod and rocker subcultures in England via their representation in the media.

For Hebdige the main differences between early adopters of the subculture chiefly took places around the idea of style. For him, “the style no doubt made sense for the first wave of self-conscious innovators at the level which remained inaccessible to those who became punks after the subculture had surfaced and been publicized. Punk is not unique in this: the distinction between originals and hanger-on is always a significant one in subculture. Indeed it is frequently verbalized (plastic punks or safety-pin people, burrhead rastas or

rasta band wagon, weekend hippies, etc versus the ‘authentic’ people)” (Hebdige, 1979:122). In Hebdige’s readings of subcultures, the aesthetics of style prevail over moral guidelines of conduct. However, it is my opinion that divisions and animosity within and between subcultures have deeper and broader causes and consequences than what a predominant attention to style can point out. A primary focus on style is unable to encompass them sufficiently, or to interpret them satisfactorily. However, style and morals are not the only cause of division among subcultures; the media can also play a part on it. The study of Stan Cohen (1980) focuses on the role of the media in amplifying divisions through their focus on the social deviance generated by the mod and rocker subcultures in England.

Cohen is mainly concerned with media reaction and the construction of conflict between subcultures via the discourse of social deviance. He notes that “the focus here is on how society labels rule-breakers as belonging to certain deviant groups and how, once the person is thus type cast, his acts are interpreted in terms of the status to which he has been assigned” (Cohen, 1980: 12). Cohen’s thesis argues that subcultural reaction to the portrayal of its deviance in the media produces an expansion in the deviant behavior of the subculture. Deviance amplification is useful to explain the early exploits of a subculture such as controversial appearances on the media and so on. As we can see, these three different studies by Cohen (1980) and Hebdige (1979) gloss over the divisions and present subcultures as unified entities and when differences appear they are interpreted as problems related to style (Hebdige, 1979). This study attempts to go beyond this vision of subcultures as unitary entities and will explore the practices and values among Bangkok’s rock ‘n’ roll subculture. It will focus on both differences within and between the multiple rock ‘n’ roll musical scenes coexisting in Bangkok. However, by listing the different practices and values that are important to the scenes, I do not want to create a model, or a “follow step-by-step list”, for participants to become authentic members of the scenes. There is not such a model and no true, absolute way. The fact that divisions and dualisms exist among musical scenes is a proof of this. Rock ‘n’ roll generates a reflexive conflict in the participants of the different scenes in regards to what it is, depending on how it is conducted and the perception of authenticity and authentic behavior. As we will see in the following sections, the DIY (Do-it-yourself) spirit inherited from the punk movement of the late 1970s in England plays an important role in the everyday practices and values of the participants of Bangkok’s rock ‘n’ roll scene and in the creation of subcultural capital via the generation of authentic behavior.

DIY: Generating Authenticity

Gray articulates quite accurately the early punk spirit of Do-it-Yourself (DIY): ‘if you are bored, do something about it; if you don’t like the way things are done, act to change them, be creative, be positive, anyone can do it’ (Gray, 2001:53). In England at the end of the 70s there was a significant gap between pop music aesthetics and the everyday experience of the unemployed youth. It was impossible for the young kids part of the working class to resemble the pop stars of their time because they could not afford to purchase items related to them. The high prices of fashion and music at the time forced the English youth to create

all of this by themselves. This was registered in an extension of the previously existing DIY ideas of the British counterculture that fed into punk (McKay, 1988). In simple terms it has been manifested in terms of being and remaining authentic. The moral imperative of authenticity has directly influenced DIY values and practices, sometimes in quite divisive ways.

There is nothing worst than ‘selling out’, a term employed by participants in the underground rock scene to describe those bands or people that decide to join the mainstream in order to pursue financial gain instead of continuing contributing to the development of the scene. Once established in the ethos of DIY culture, those who sell out, ignore, transgress or just step over the marks are met with the moral discipline of those deemed (by themselves and/or by others) as authentic members of the scene. The common punishment for sell-outs is to be ridiculed, despised and even kicked out of the scene by the community as a whole. But what are the actions that qualify someone as authentic? Answering this question is a very complex task since the concept of authenticity can vary very quickly from musical subscene to musical subscene. However, bands and participants in the underground rock scene in Bangkok gain reputation as ‘authentic’ by having certain stands on the following topics: music, venues as well as concerts and promoters.

Music: Production and Distribution

In order to escape the tight control of the government and the big music corporations, underground music artists tend to either look to record with independent labels or, if they have the financial means to create their own label to allow themselves complete freedom at all levels of production and distribution music. The best example of this is the band Stylish Nonsense. Formed in the mid-90s while being enrolled in King’s Mongkut Institute of Technology in Ladkrabang by Yuttana “June” Kalambaheti and Wannarit “Pok” Pongprayoon, this band was among one of the first ones to start mixing live music with electronic music. In 1997 after gaining recognition among the underground scene and securing a deal with a label that allowed them artistic freedom, that closed down before they could record anything because of the economic crisis they decided to join forces with their university friend Somsiri ‘June’ Sangkaew from the band Bear Garden and create their own label: Panda Records.

Pok explains how it happened:

“We wrote our own songs and had the chance to send it to an indie label, Eastern Sky, and work with professional people to record but the label broke down due to the economic crisis. If you go to major label they are going to change everything about you and your music. My friends in the band and me didn’t want to do something like that so we decided to create our own label (Panda Records) and help each other. But we had no idea what we were doing.” (Wannarit ‘Pok’ Pongprayoon, March 2, 2014, Interview).



Figure 1. Wannarit 'Pok' Pongprayoon performing with Monomania at Monomania's CD release party at Play Yard [Photography courtesy of Dave Crimaldi].

By doing so, not only did they obtain complete freedom during the process of creating and distributing their music, they also achieved the crystallization of uncompromising DIY practices and values. After releasing their first album and following their momentum, Panda Records started helping other bands and musicians who faced the same problems Stylish Nonsense did when trying to deal with big label companies. When asked why they did it, Pok simply replied that it was because no one provided them a channel to express their music so they had to create their own infrastructure from scratch.

"We didn't have anyone paying attention to us. We couldn't get our music on radio or TV so we had to do something all by ourselves." (Wannarit 'Pok' Pongprayoon, March 2, 2014, Interview)

Without being conscious about it at the time, Stylish Nonsense and Panda Records were to become the face of the rock 'n' roll subculture. In those years, the only other independent label publishing CDs and tapes of rock 'n' roll bands was BAMA or Bangkok Alien Music Alliance. BAMA closed down in 2003 but its legacy carried on. Today, Bangkok counts over twenty independent record companies specializing in many different music styles that go from reggae to death metal.

Panda Records is run as a non-profit organization, all its money comes from what is invested by its owners but also from what they get from the organization of concerts and/or festivals such as Stone Free which feature only local independent artists, the sale of records, compilations and merchandising with everything being

reinvested into the production of new musical material. The bands signed under Panda Records have the freedom to record, produce and master their music as well as design their artwork, a true Do-it-Yourself attitude from beginning to the end.

To this day, Panda Records is among the most influential and praised independent labels in Thailand. Independent labels not only apply DIY principles and values to their everyday activities but they also create a strong link between labels, artists and public that is built upon hope, trust and solidarity. By allowing the artists to remain authentic to their creative vision, independent labels set themselves apart from the mainstream and set clear and definite moral boundaries on how to treat and promote artists between 'them' (mainstream media) and 'us' (the independent). This approach creates a sense of community that includes the consumers of this 'authentic' music. It is widely accepted among Bangkok's rock 'n' roll scene that any band or artist that decides to live and maintain its artistic freedom by distributing its music in an independent label is an authentic member of the community.

Venues

Besides music production, another important part of the DIY practices and values is to open and run a venue allowing independent bands to perform. Venues and concert organizations are key for bands and participants to be able to interact with each other and develop the scene. Among the few places that have tried to dedicate themselves to live original music, the majority have closed down.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the rock 'n' roll subculture in Bangkok was very divided and thus each scene had its own places. Metal music was the subcultural arena with more internal fights. Rock Pub, a venue located near Ratchathewi BTS Station, was among the first places to open and dedicate itself to rock music. To this day many foreign bands come and perform in this place but it seems internal fights for influence and power among the metal scene led part of it to seek refuge elsewhere and from that schism was born Immortal Bar in 2000. Immortal Bar is owned by Fah, the singer and lead guitar of metal band Carnivora. Fah originally opened the place for his friends and their bands to play. It was strategically located in Khaosan Road in the Bayon building, the center of the new backpacking area that was being developed in the neighborhood. It was a time where backpackers arrived to Bangkok and had the opportunity to share their experiences and lives with young Thais hanging out at the local bars. That is how Guru from the band Sin Tonic got involved in metal music: by watching bands play music at Immortal and by talking about music with the tourists. Fah was able to keep the place open for almost ten years until the landlord of the place decided to increase the rent almost four times the normal price without a notice. Matt Smith, the singer of the Standards and person behind concert organizer Popszene, recalls that moment very clearly:

“At the beginning I was working with Immortal Bar who used to be in Khaosan road, I was doing a monthly event there and it was working really good. Always a good

turnout of people and Khun Fah was happy, I was happy and we decided to continue. But all of a sudden on a day before a big show Khun Fah calls me and tells me we have to cancel because the place was shut down and there was nothing we could do about it. That's when I realize how fast places opened and closed in this city." (Matt Smith, June 1, 2014, Interview).



Figure 2. The Bayon Building in Khaosan, Immortal bar used to be located in its first floor up until 2006.

Instead of being deterred by this event, Fah decided to move Immortal Bar to its current location near Victory Monument. It is still very popular among the local rock 'n' roll scene and hosts mainly metal and hardcore punk concerts that generally feature an international act supported by many local bands. Fah considers himself lucky to be able to make a living from his bar and from touring and playing with Carnivora. He has dedicated most of his life to music and is regarded as a successful person among the metal scene. He says that everything he earns he re-invests in the bar, purchasing light and sound material or replacing drums whenever needed.

Harmonica was a bar/concert venue that opened from 2011 to 2014. It was owned and managed by Put Suksriwan, from the bands Wednesday, Basement Tape, Plastic Section, and Cana. It was located on Sukhumvit Soi 38/1 in a neighborhood that had no other music venues around and was completely residential. Despite the weird location, Put explained his vision for the place:

'I wanted to open a place where people are not used to see live music. I know it might seem weird because it seems there is no market for a venue like this here but I think the response was great. Sometimes you could see people walking their dogs

pass in front of the bar when a band was playing and they would stay a bit and listen to the music before continuing with their stroll. A couple of them came back later to see what this place was all about' (Put Suksriwan, May 8, 2014, Interview)



Figure 3. Harmonica from the outside.



Figure 4. Put Suksriwan playing at Jam [Photography courtesy of Dave Crimaldi].

Very quickly Harmonica became a well-known venue across town. It had one of the best sound systems available and very good lightning as well. It was a place

that welcomed any kind of music and hosted a wide range of rock genres. One day it could be a Japanese hardcore festival featuring local heroes LowFat and their friends and the next one a folk rock concert. From time to time Harmonica hosted international bands such as Deerhoof. Harmonica was a place by musicians for the musicians; it catered to lots of bands such as Hariguem Zaboy, Abstraction XL, Aire, Degaruda and Plastic Section a place to play regularly with top of the line sound and light systems. For the three years it remained open, Harmonica allowed anyone interested in the rock 'n' roll subculture to enjoy bands playing live from Wednesday to Sunday. Put explained that his previous experience as a musician inspired him to open a place that could be dedicated entirely to host local bands shows:

“Back then I used to be in a band with a couple of friends in high school and we all had a gig with Van and Phil from Degaruda, who were playing in a small band called Ghost Story back then. We organized shows with those guys all the time and they [the venues] always gave us dead days like Tuesdays and Wednesdays in small restaurants in Thonglor where there were no customers. They would let us use the space but we had to bring everything for the show: drum kit, PA system, Bass amp... And we didn't have the money to rent it all the time so we used to call friends and ask them favors to lend us their gear for shows. We did that for years! There was no place where you could only go there with your guitar and bass and play a show and that is 5 years back, not even 10 or 20 years when it was even harder. I wanted to change that with Harmonica.” (Put Suksriwan, May 8, 2014, Interview)

Do-it-Yourself was the everyday life of musicians back then and, even today despite having more places dedicated to live music, Put thinks that it is only with self-reliance that the rock'n'roll scene can progress.

“The DIY mentality has allowed the scene right now to progress, ten years ago bands relied too much on the promotion brought by Fat Radio and now we have to do all by ourselves. I am much happier like this, it is a challenge. A lot of people are sad that Fat radio is over, there was a magazine called DDT that featured underground music and gigs but it is over, it is sad that they don't exist anymore but it is good that bands don't rely on them anymore and that they have to start doing stuff to promote themselves. Not just ask people to do it for them, or the people to invite them to play shows. Lots of people who complain that they don't have places to play are just ridiculous; it is just because they don't want to do it. As Wednesday I have already toured Bangkok twice! I organized myself shows around the city for ten shows in different locations in a month” (Put Suksriwan, May 8, 2014, Interview)

Many interviewees expressed their concerns by pointing out that a lot of the venues that started as places for the performance of rock'n'roll music either closed down because of their financial losses or because the landlord realized he could charge more money for the local once it had establish itself in the location.

Harmonica was seen as a 'second home' (Ben Edwards, March 5, 2014, Interview.) for many of the local bands, Plastic Section used to practice there when it was

closed and Low Fat used it as their place of predilection for their 'and now you are here' shows. Aire, Degaruda and Hariguem Zaboy released their albums by playing incredible shows with the place packed with people jumping around like madmen. Unfortunately for the scene, Put decided to close Harmonica because it took too much time and effort and he wanted to spend more time with his family since he was soon going to become a father. Many bands have wondered if another place will open that will allow them as much freedom and dedication as Harmonica did. Put is not only highly regarded among the rock'n'roll subculture as a musician but he is also seen as the one that dedicated his bar to music. Put says the closing down is temporary, a matter of a couple of years and once his kid is a bit older he would love to open it again although maybe in another location.



Figure 5. Degaruda performing during their CD release party at Harmonica.

Concerts and Promoters

Musicians in the underground rock scene in Bangkok do not aspire to the top of the charts; however they do want to inspire other people in their community to start playing music. By not being in the constant search for remuneration, though a paid concert is always welcome, or at least some free drinks during the night, the primary concern of musicians participating in the underground rock scene in Bangkok is to share a meaningful moment with their audiences. Bands expect total freedom to decide which songs they will play and concert organizers will refuse any band imposition from the owner of the place. Very often the organizers will be members of bands that will look for a place where their band and their friends' bands can play. In order to attract a crowd as big as possible concerts are

usually free or with a minimum entrance fee that includes one drink. Popszene, one of the most important concert organizers in the city started like that. Matt Smith, freshly arrived from London, decided that the inactivity in the city and the music scene needed to change:

“I was freshly arrived from London where the scene is always active, I was in a pub or a club every single night catching bands or DJs and then I came here and it was a great place to be but there was nothing going on at nights music-wise. That’s when I met Paul. And we both had been in bands in England and we decided to give us a try together and it worked. Then I started Popszene purely to get regular shows and that kind of snowballed into what it is now. We went from organizing nights with DJs mixing 60s and 70s music to live concerts with Thai bands and now bringing indie bands from abroad to perform in Bangkok.” (Matt Smith, June 1, 2014, Interview).

The rock ‘n’ roll subculture in Bangkok tries to make the music as accessible as possible. Such accessibility is based on a non-profit moral principle given the fact that many of the participants in the scene are either students or young professionals that sometimes struggle to make ends meet. At concerts it is quite common to find merchandising and CDs from the artists performing and even these are sold at very accessible prices. The idea is not to make money out of these items but to recover the money invested in making them to be able to re-invest it in newer products later on. This non-profit commercialism attitude is a core part of the practices and values code in the rock ‘n’ roll subculture, not only it allows the scene to develop with a constant reinvestment of capital into the production of new material but it also expands the circle of influence of the participants by making all cultural products easily accessible to participants and potential participants to the scene that might be set off by the price of the CDs, merchandising and tickets for concerts organized by the mainstream music companies. The members of the subculture buy this kind of products because not only by doing so they assert their support to the bands or people that produce them but in order to gather knowledge and experience from the daily activities of the subculture. The rock ‘n’ roll community in Bangkok has managed to become sustainable and to develop itself by the implementation of a network of small businesses that cater to the needs of the subculture. When influential or key players of the subculture decide to open a company that will cater to the needs of the scene, the credibility and level of authenticity is transposed from the person to the business although this perceived level of authenticity can vary quickly depending on the actions of the new business man and its future implication with the scene.

Nonetheless, some in the music scene criticize this stand by claiming that aspects relative to fashion, style and identity consume the subculture rather than creating it. This is the case with the punk scene, which sees the rest of the underground rock scene in Bangkok as consumption driven and without any interest due to the lack of overt political agenda and thus are not perceived as ‘authentic’ by the punk community. As moral alternatives crystallize into daily scene practices, transgression becomes frowned upon. Of course this is a constant reminder of the

intra-group tensions that exist in the everlasting pursuit of authenticity and will be developed a bit longer farther ahead. Despite this kind of tension, it is quite normal to have some members of both scenes participate in DIY activities such as concert organization or even sharing the stage. Due to the size of the underground community in Bangkok, most of the time differences are put aside for the greater good of the community.

DIY Practices and Values: The Never-ending Search for Authenticity

Despite a quite effective organization from the labels and the concert organizers, Bangkok's underground rock scene needs to promote itself via the use of media outlets. In order to keep building their credibility in the eyes of their public, the fact that the use of mainstream media is avoided as much as possible makes an analysis on the use of alternative media channels an interesting tool for generating and disseminating the idea of authenticity among the underground rock community.

Alternative Media

In the 1980s, when underground music started to appear in Bangkok, one of the popular means of musical reproduction, alongside vinyl, was the use of tapes. Through such methods of mechanical reproduction, underground music could be inexpensively copied, traded and shared among participants in the scene. As it has been studied previously, tape trading has been central to the development of the underground music scene in Bangkok (Wong, 1990). Fanzines, cheaply printed magazines done by participants of the scene were sold at concerts and contained the latest news on records, concerts and places where to go and buy music by all the favorite local musicians. Fat Radio, a radio station that became famous for broadcasting underground music became part of the mainstream due to its own success and eventually was sold and stopped existing altogether. However, the advent of the Internet changed the relationship between the underground music scene and the media.

YouTube channels such as In The Living Room provide any internet user with a glimpse of what is happening in Bangkok music-wise through the production of entirely DIY videos of acoustic sessions of the myriad of artists and music genres that take place in the city and specialized YouTube channels such as ROCKWAY provide small *webisodes* (internet episodes) with interviews of the artists that played during the previous weekend.

Almost all of these new media outlets are produced and broadcasted by participants in the different music scenes that comprise the underground rock community of Bangkok with barely any budget but with lots of passion. The DIY morals drive these people to work on media products by themselves in order to show the rest of the society or scenes in other countries what is happening in their city. All these activities are being done by participants in their free time: continuity is rare. Many channels disappear as fast as others replace them but the feeling is there. This is a media done by the community for the community. No economical or marketing gain is sought. Artists are usually willing to participate

in such media projects because they are working with fans and friends. The footage is usually raw and made without all the production material used by big television studios, it is only a couple of microphones, a camera or two and a computer, the sound is not that clean but it has that 'authentic vibe' that only live music possesses.

By allowing these alternative media to produce and broadcast cultural products such as articles, videos or interviews, Bangkok's underground rock scene disassociates itself with the mainstream media, validates the participants involved in the production of those cultural artifacts as active members of the scene despite not being directly involved in the production of music and gains more validity as a DIY driven community that doesn't need to 'sell-out' to the mainstream media coverage to promote itself. So far I have attempted to map the moral code of the DIY movement but for the last part, I will focus on those differences that happen inside the scene. In regards to the production and consumption of merchandising, different groups of participants from the same genre can apply the DIY moral principle differently.

Practices and Values in the Straightedge and the Hardcore Scenes

Straightedge originated on the east coast of America in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The major sites of straightedge activity are the East Coast cities of Washington DC, New York, and Boston. Later the movement spread to the West Coast, Europe, Japan and Australia. Straightedge culture is now an established micro-cultural phenomenon present all around the world with strong networks that allow musicians to travel and perform almost anywhere and Thailand is not the exception. But why did straightedge develop? The main reason is a logical evolution around the idea of resistance. By taking the DIY ethics and the concepts of alienation and autonomy as given, the early Straightedge groups constructed a new sub-cultural movement under the idea of rebelling against the traditional forms of rebellion embodied by the punk movement. Traditional forms of punk rebellion are seen by the Straightedge culture as being undermined and controlled by the self-destructive ingestion of drugs and other substances. For the Straightedge movement, the dependency of the society on the consumption of harmful substances, be it drugs or alcohol, is a clear obstacle when rebelling against the system. True rebellion needs to be undertaken while having a clear, critical and positive mind.

The hardcore and punk scenes have always constituted and reconstituted themselves through occasional intra-scene antagonism and rivalry. For Straightedge, a clear, sober, alert, and positive mind was set against the nihilism of drunkenness and decadence, in a sort of puritanical form of dissent and non-conformism. One of the principal points of Punk and Hardcore music in Thailand in the early 2000s was Chiang Mai. The city had multiple punk bars with bands performing every day. It was common to see Thai youths wearing colored Mohawks and stapled-leather jackets around town and the scene was known as THHC, Thailand Hardcore. After some time, the scene moved to Bangkok and a schism occurred. While attending concerts at the Immortal Bar, some

of the participants in the Punk Hardcore scene met foreigners involved in the Straightedge movement and decided to follow its precepts and stopped drinking and using other mind altering substances. The THHC separated into two different movements, the SXT, Straightedge Thailand and the HDB, Hardcore Drinking Bangkok scene. Fights and animosities grew among the groups as each accused the other of not being 'authentic' to the punk concepts of rebellion. However both scenes worked in parallel and sometimes together in the organization of concerts and the establishment of international networks with other punk groups from abroad.

As will be illustrated in this example, the straightedge movement sees itself as a movement of rebellion against traditional forms of rebellion. The straightedge participants see these traditional forms of rebellion as being undermined by the destructive consequences of alcohol and drug ingestion, which dilute rebellion. One of the central arguments of the straightedge culture is that the majority of the society is dependent on the consumption of substances and this dependency works as an obstacle in the path of having a clear, critical and positive mind. For the straightedge drug, alcohol and substance culture is the result of, and reproduced by, peer pressure.

By applying moral principles according to their concept of rebellion, the Straightedge movement participants in Thailand positioned themselves in what they perceived to be a stronger and more effective way of rebellion than the Hardcore Drinking Bangkok group who was seen as weaker and badly organized because of their auto-destructive lifestyle. On the other hand, the HDB group perceived the Straightedge as a 'sell-out' conformist group that traded the original rebellion of punk for a socially better version of it. This demonstrates that moral divergence is present among the underground rock factions; however, these factions continue to apply the DIY concepts when producing, performing and disseminating their music. These differences are a proof that the Hardcore and Straightedge scenes have always constituted and reconstituted themselves through occasional intra-scene antagonism and rivalry however, both scenes being small they do have to collaborate in order to keep developing as scenes. Holding On Records publishes both Straightedge and Hardcore bands because as Gap, the owner of the label and the main booker of bands for the city, explains:

"Well the scenes [Hardcore and Straightedge] are small so it is difficult to have two scenes separated. Same music you know, just different opinions on alcohol, drugs and sex. If we make a concert and a hundred kids come up, maybe 20 will be straightedge. Sometimes there are fights between them (the two scenes) but nothing serious. We need each other." (Nutpongton 'Gap' Sittiboon, May 22, 2014, Interview).

Conclusion

DIY practices and values exert, in the very effort to live by and maintain them, a continuous pressure to articulate their presence through the identification of the multiple ways to negate them, whether these involve temporary slippage, ambiguous action or wholesale betrayal. The never-ending fight to define

authenticity started since the inception of underground rock music and is still raging today among the various scenes, sub-scenes, genre groupings, factions and splinter formations that define and compose the big community that is the underground rock scene in Bangkok.

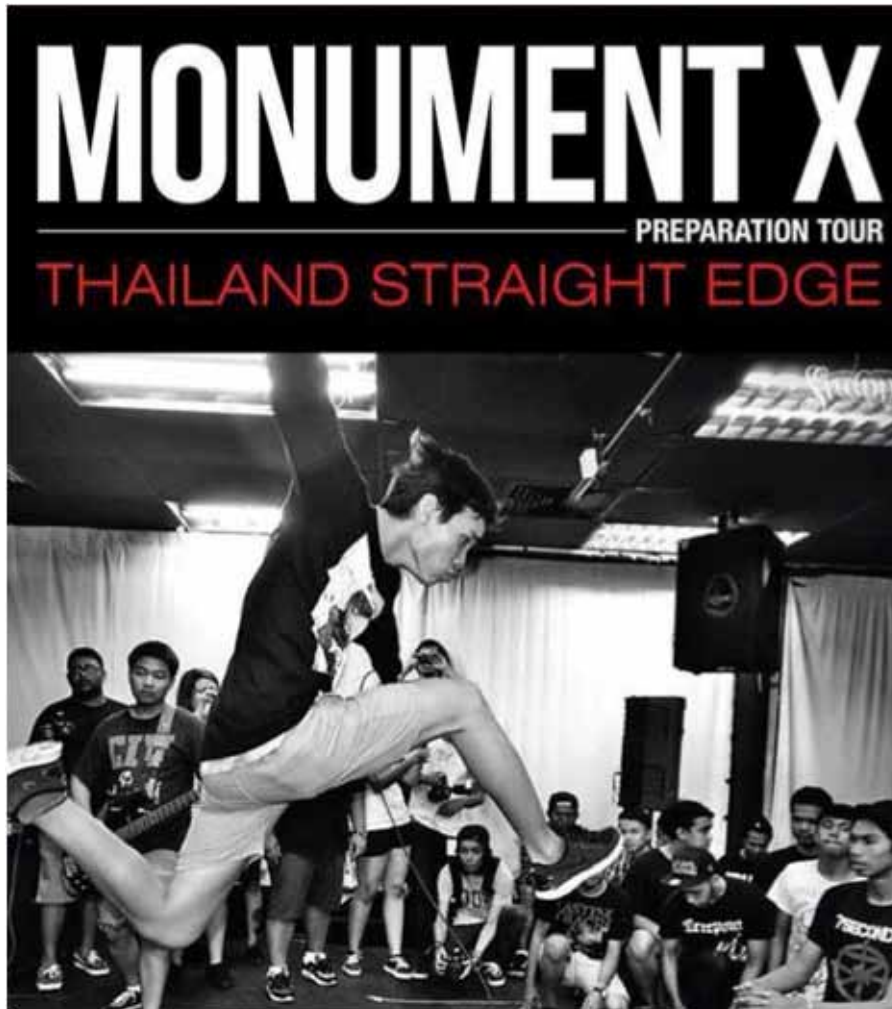


Figure 6. Flyer for Monument X's Preparation Tour.

Bangkok's rock 'n' roll community has organized itself into smaller groups of people that provide different services in order to allow the sustainability and development of the music scene. From creating music, organizing concerts, doing interviews, informing participants about events or the design and production of merchandising, all these activities follow, apply and repeat DIY principles into their daily routines. The actions of these individuals and the relatively small size of the rock'n'roll subculture in Bangkok city contribute to the development of a strong music community that allows the coexistence of different music scenes. These scenes might have different internal perceptions of authenticity however, their common fight against mainstream culture makes their participants to recognize each other as members of the same subculture separate just by a specific music genre. Nonetheless it is more and more common to see concerts

featuring bands from very different scenes which is a proof that Bangkok's rock'n'roll subculture is strong and open to new musical collaborations.

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