

ALEX'S MUSIC + THE NYC SCENE

I've always had a main band—for a long time it was this band called Dead Tenants which was me and my brother and another Alex. There were a lot of bands that I just joined for fun essentially or just because I liked their music or they seemed insane.

I was in a band called Juggernaut that was a varying number of people but could be up to like 12 people and it was like a weird Butthole Surfers-esque kind of thing. We had dancers and animal parts flying around and hotdogs and condoms. It was just complete mayhem. It got kicked out of a lot of venues. The people in that band all went to this bar in Manhattan called Mars Bar that was a real dive bar, like a dive-dive bar with real cretin people. The main people in that band were all in their 40s and I was in my late 20s at the time and it was just real debauchorous. One of the main members was this person named Johnny Bizarre who is a Coney Island sideshow performer and he'd have people staple money to him and do sounding in the middle of the show.

The music scene in NYC is very strange because it's a lot of different things. You can have two different punk scenes operating right next to each other, playing some of the same venues and never interact with each other. I always tried to make it a point though to traverse a lot of different types of scenes because I just like different types of music. When I was booking shows in NYC, I tried to mix a lot of those bands together because I was like 'why aren't these bands playing together?'

"What got you into booking shows in NY?" Just the fact that no one would book my band. There was just a lot of bands and I feel like with Dead Tenants especially it was very middle-ground—we were too weird for punk bands, too punk for weird shows. It took me a while to even find bands that were even semi-like-minded, which are actually a lot of the people I know now who have come down from NY. There was a point where we would float around between some punk shows but we never really played the real hardcore kind of shows. We were too weird for that kind of stuff.

The thing that I liked about a lot of the people I played with in NY is that a lot of them were like 'oh I do this really weird no-wave project but I also do acoustic music and some performance art stuff and I'm also in a wedding band.'

I always gravitated towards weird music, like one of my favorite things as a kid was Captain Beefheart's Orange Claw Hammer. A lot of my friends were into heavier music so there was a lot of like weird metal stuff that I got into in high school. I did end up getting into a lot of the no-wave stuff when I was a kid, but it was weird getting into noise. I was never really a part of the noise scene until I moved to Richmond. I was always in the bands-zone. I was always in bands, I was always playing with bands.

When I was like 13, there was a free music festival in Coney Island called Siren Fest, and it was more local bands that would play. I think I saw Liars play there and that like blew my mind. I was like 'there's things happening that are interesting,' it wasn't just like stories of music scenes happening in the past—good things are happening in the present. That's kind of the reason I do what I do in the first place—not to be like 'I do this for the kids!'—but it is partially true. I like when people discover something new, I like when people figure out what they want to do after seeing something off-chance.