

SUNSHINE

SUN-SENTINEL, Friday, October 5, 1979

CICHLIDS



PUNK

Rock's ragged edge

POISSON D'AVRIL



GERM DARBY CRASH



B-52s

Rock and roll returns to the people

Punk defies 'corporate rock,' seeks renewal in raunch

By GREG OATIS
Music Editor

Another Pleasant Valley punk night

The 17 dancers on the dance floor aren't exactly dancing. They're sort of twitching. Maybe jerking. Maybe even convulsing. A girl with magnesium hair and fake leopard hot pants starts hitting a guy with a cane and pushing him. It's difficult to tell if he's with her because the dancers aren't dancing *with* people, they're dancing *at* them.

Anyway, the magnesium-haired girl is swatting this guy with her cane and the guy refuses to fall down. By this time the cane — apparently rubber — is bending, and the dancers pressing around the combatants smell blood and start bouncing into them.

The guy goes down finally, and he takes two other dancers with him and a third person's shirt. The magnesium-haired girl bounces off, triumphant.

Meanwhile, someone has grabbed the guitar player off the stage and is stretching his muscle tee shirt into a four-foot Handi Wipe. Fortunately he's not singing lead.

The song is a punk retread of the Monkees relic, *Pleasant Valley Sunday*, and the woman singing it is wearing a naughty Wilma Flintstone outfit. The evil Theda Bara eyes she makes for the line "And the ki-i-ids just do-o-on't understand" burn through me like good chili.

The name of the band is the Cichlids, which in real life is a family of freshwater fish found from South America to Madagascar to Asia Minor. Some Cichlids raise their young in their mouths, and others have been known to feed on the eyes of other fish which is nothing compared to some of the bestial characteristics of these Cichlids.

The guy on the floor is up again, and he's got the cane. He's swinging it over his head like Steve Reeves poleaxing the Thracians in *Hercules Berserk*. The magnesium-haired girl spots him and starts bouncing away. The song ends. My drink is finished. It's the fourth from last punk night at Tight Squeeze, although we aren't aware of that now.

In the men's room, someone has scribbled, "John Cage was here (in spirit)," above the urinals.

And the dance is called the pogo.

The Cichlids in virgin territory

At the end of Johnson Street by the Hollywood beach, there's a seedy Ocean City-styled arcade with race car machines and Skee-Ball



Cichs: Bobby, Susan, Allan, Debbie

and pachinko and greasy old pre-inflationary pinball rigs with bumpers that score a single point and numbers that flop over instead of lighting up. Three games for a dollar.

In the back there's a row of slick new Break-Out games that look about as appropriate as Darth Vader in a *Sky King* episode. Their blue cathode ray haze plays off

the plastic and glass and chrome and gives the whole place a bilious look.

Near the front door there's an Oscillo-Massage vibrating machine "Used Professionally By Doctors." Behind that, one of those bulky brown photo booths that winos in bus stations used to use to pass out in. And beside that, a Your Weight 10 Cents scale.

Ask the old guy who runs the place his name and he says, "They call me Red," the way murderers on the lam do in James Cain novels. Red wears a white clerk's apron with pockets and he doesn't bother you if you're just hanging around as long as you don't lean on the glass. Guys like that I always imagine are counted among the Jewish faith's 36 unknown saints.

The setting is perfect for a Cichlids photo session/interview. There's even a kitsch gew-gaw counter with jack-in-the-box sunglasses and stuffed penguins and toy Delta Dart fighter planes. Not to mention "God Grant Me The Serenity" plaques. God grant me the serenity to hold on if these people start freak-ing during while I'm talking to them.

The Cichlids are the slickest, most commercially viable of the South Florida punk bands. They're also the most popular, testified to by the fact that their gala Halloween appearance at Peaches will be broadcast live on WSHE.

Getting on SHE is the Gold Coast equivalent of playing the *Ed Sullivan Show*. Even your mother's bridge club will hear you.

The Cichs are special not because they have two great looking girl members, but because they have two great looking girl members who can play. Debbie Mascaro handles occasional guitar and most of the lead vocals. She's not very tall and has great thighs and when she struts across the stage for *These Boots Are Made For Walkin'*, you can feel it all the way up your spine.

Bassist Susan Robins wears cub scout shirts and tight sweaters and her guitar is held up by an imitation skunk strap and the hot breath of the crowd. Her heart-shaped mouth is lipsticked on, and she looks like somebody else's kid sister you've always wanted to get at. She plays a very simple, rubbery, agreeable bass — not exactly Charlie Mingus maybe, but then Charlie looked like the aftermath of a very bad Italian meal.

Bobby Tak, the drummer and remaining lead singer, is a clean-cut Bogart lookalike. He's the backbone of the band, reciting the song titles at the beginning of each number in monotone, like a bingo caller reading off tiles.

Lead guitarist Allan Portman is quiet and observant and everything else that sensitive artists are except misunderstood. But onstage he looks like a member of some latter-day Hitler Youth cell. His movements are stiff, almost mechanical, and he makes it a point to scowl whenever he sings.

The band has built up quite a following since

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it went public in June. Where two previous incarnations of Cichlids concentrated on Top 40 covers — Boston, etc. — the present one does almost all original material. *Everybody's Gone Red*, *Follow the Trends*, *Tourists Are Pink*, *Motorboat*, *Fourteen or Fight*, *Bubblegum*, *Planned Obsolescence* ... Fast, catchy, good-time songs played with a healthy helping of unhealthy sex.

In a bar, eating pizza after the photos are shot, Tak gets a strange, half serious look on his face. "We don't consider ourselves a punk band," he says. "It's more like Caucasian dance music."

Portman agrees. "Punk had a hardcore England and hardcore New York slant to it. We're maybe their third cousins."

Actually, everything about this band seems half serious except their will to succeed. And that raises the ire of punk purists who criticize them as being *plastique*, i.e., not authentic.

The Cichs are more or less the brainchildren of their manager, Robert Mascaro, the father of Dania punk. Mascaro ran Dania's first punk publication, a glossy called *New Order*, for two issues back in early 1977, even before the Sex Pistols landed their U.S. record deal. He drinks anisette and Amaretto, a concoction that in New York is known as a Good 'n Plenty because that's what it tastes like.

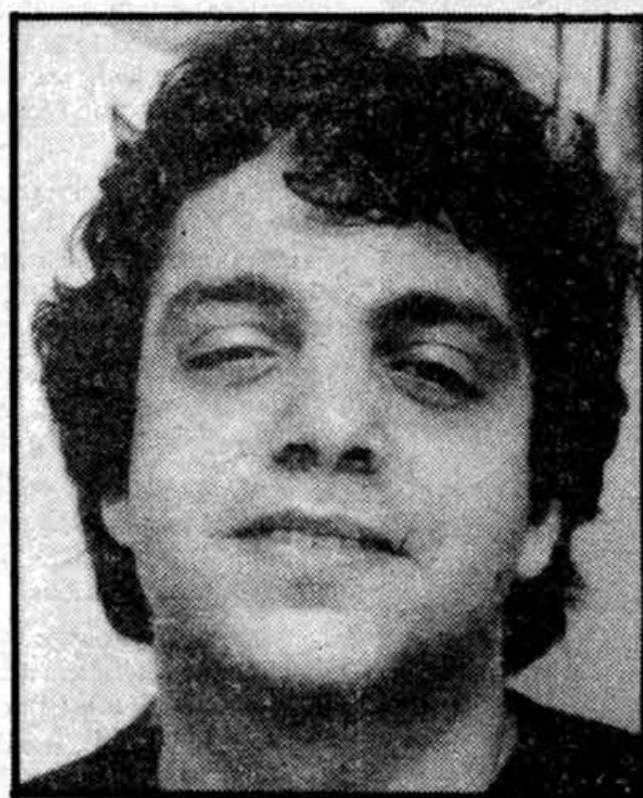
Mascaro's *Order* ran interviews of the Damned and Patti Smith and Voidoid Richard Hell, but it folded after two issues because costs got out of hand.

"I like to have fun and I hate f---ing hippies," Mascaro says, his tongue sticking out of his cheek about a foot. "I don't like to be different. I like to be normal. I like Joe DiMaggio for God's sake."

South Florida will be a punk paradise in eight months or so, Mascaro figures. "New things always happen in virgin territory. San Francisco was virgin territory in the '60s. Liverpool was virgin territory. Memphis was virgin territory. It never comes out of New York or London any more.

"Dania is virgin territory — *real* virgin territory. We're a Dania band. Our hearts are in Dania. Write that."

"Yeah," Tak says. "I even have a yarmulke that's embroidered with a 'D' on the front. When Debbie wears it it's a beanie, but when I wear it it's a yarmulke."



Robert Mascaro

Even disco radio feels heat of punk scourge