

**"IF YOU WANT TO START A BAND, JUST DO IT.
DON'T BE DISCOURAGED BY WHAT SOCIETY TELLS
YOU. SOCIETY MAY NOT BE MADE FOR US, BUT I
WILL PERSONALLY WELCOME YOU WITH OPEN ARMS.
AND ME AND MANY OTHER PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON
MAKING THIS SCENE WORK FOR US, EVEN IF SOCIETY
DOESN'T."**

-BUNNY, WINTER WOLF



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**ACCESSIBILITY IN LOCAL MUSIC
THE COMMUNITY ISSUE: YOUR STORIES FROM
THE SCENE**

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Thank you to all the contributors for your wisdom, your vulnerability, your rage and your hope. I'm deeply honored to share your work here.

A special thank you to @annaliebouchard for the cover photo and many other images in this issue. Thank you also to Raquel Espasande, who's Canva account this zine is laid out in, and Luca Milonas my wonderful partner. t4t sick4sick 4ever



FEBRUARY/MARCH 2023

Hello!

Welcome to Issue 3! I'm so excited for this issue because it's mostly not written by me, it's written by you! So many cool disabled artists and fans have written about their experiences, the good, the bad and the strange. We are here and we've always been here. I'm also excited to feature interviews by trans musicians and other night life workers. It is a hellish time for body autonomy here in the US (and Canada, and England, and-) but we are never as alone as we feel. Reach out to other people. It's time to organize, even if you are, like me, doing it mostly from bed.

Cripple Punk Mag is now online at medium.com/@CripplePunkMag. Medium includes a feature that will read articles aloud to improve the accessibility of this zine.

Want to submit something? Email merlin.sabal13@gmail.com. Show reviews, accessibility ratings for venues, other resources, bands to check out (Especially local disabled musicians) art, kvetching, you name it.

PS: My other main zine project is a collaborative project called Sick Of It! which examines disability and prison abolition, and makes information about Disability Justice available to people inside. SOI is free online to read or print (sickofit.space). I am trying to keep Cripple Punk Mag focused(ish) on music, but if you read page # on the 10 Principals of Disability Justice and want to learn more, I humbly suggest it as a resource

THE DILATORS

Vocals: Saoirse

Guitar: Deirdre Weirdre

Guitar (Filling In): I Don't Cara

Bass: Sandy

Drums: Ash



Saoirse at the
BKTC Halloween Show '22

If you're reading this you probably know The Dilators. A riotous all trans girl punk band "here to expand your mind & other orifices" they are one of the most fun bands to see live I've had the pleasure to witness in a long time. Saoirse, who sometimes goes by Sawyer, is everything you want in punk frontwoman, charismatic in a way that stands out even in a room packed with rowdy queers. She is also one of the main organizers of Brooklyn TransCore, a collective of trans musicians putting on shows and building radical community in Brooklyn and beyond. She and I did an interview at a BKTC meeting, to talk about community building, disability and the plans for the new year, what BKTC has dubbed "Tranny '23". There's a tour brewing so follow them @thedilators on instagram and @brooklyntranscore if you're local.

MERLIN

Okay. Hello. All right, so first, will you just say your name and your pronouns if you want to, and then anything that you want to add upfront about who you are and what your work is about.

CSAOIRSE

Howdy I'm Saoirse, I use she/her pronouns, and I'm like a punk rocker, raver community organizer.

MERLIN

Can you tell us a little bit about how you got into music and then about your current band, the Dilators, and what they're up to.

SAOIRSE

So, like, a little bit about music. I'm from the south, from a family that loves music. My mom was a punk. My dad was kind of like Lynyrd Skynyrd type, and my older sister was, like, a very virtuoso young player. But I was a dancer growing up, and I was trying to make it as a male dancer, and that'll take a lot of time and energy. It was all, like, trying to get out of where I was and get to New York. And I had like, a lot of creative interest [in music] but you have to be very practical when you're working class and you're trying to be creative and be an artist, you have to be like, what is my avenue? And when you're like, a closeted kid, that was what felt possible for me. When I came out as trans in New York as a professional dancer, and nobody would have me, and I didn't really have anything to do with my life or any positive stuff going on, really. That was when I had nothing to lose and I started playing music.

SAOIRSE

And then one day this, like, hot trans girl was like, 'hey, do you play bass? Do you want to be in a band that's going to change the world?' And I was like, obviously, I play bass, [She did not, at the time] and I want to change the world.

And I quickly got a bass with like, money I didn't have and learned on YouTube as much as one can in, like, a few days and just, like, had the first practice of my first trans band, and no one complained and in three weeks we were playing our first show. We were, like, opening for Hirs in some warehouse. And then I was, like, hanging out with a bunch of freaky trans people on a train track within the evening, and just the rest is herstory or whatever. So now that was, like, 2015, 2016 and it's 2022 now. I'm not playing bass. I spent years just playing bass in any and every trans punk band in the city, all around the country and the world on the dream and a prayer.

And then the plague happened and I dipped out for a while and as I was kind of getting my restart, I started singing, I'm in the Dilators. We're expanding the idea of what it is to be like a trans punk band in the city and yeah, generally fucking shit up.

MERLIN

Awesome. The Dilators is a super punk name, by the way. Do you want to talk a little bit about Brooklyn TransCore?

SAOIRSE

Yeah, absolutely. Love to talk about Brooklyn TransCore.

SAOIRSE

Brooklyn TransCore is like a trans dimensional transgenerational, transgressive, transcendent little crew of like, trans freak punks and like gender dissidents, organizing, galvanizing, tearing shit down and building other shit up in New York City and beyond.

We've been around for a long time, especially as far as the gay shit goes. Like, we've been around forever, which is to say that we've been around for like ten years. Like, you know, started around 2012, very connected with like the Punk Island community. It was a small crew of trans people trying to like, make trans punk music not an afterthought in the community. And I kind of got involved. Like 2016 ish just by kind of being a trans punk band in the city and kind of receiving support from that kind of crew of people and benefiting from the space that they had made. But by 2019 I was a lead organizer and I'm kind of like lead coordinator now. And since COVID we've actually been really fucking shit up.

We've moved from being an organization that centers around like our one big festival of the year with a few benefit shows leading up to it, to being like, there is not a month without something on the calendar that's specifically Brooklyn TransCore. At our events we bring hot food for people, a free clothing store, harm reduction resources, we try to collaborate with other community members like, such as yourself



SAOIRSE

Like Bluestockings has come through to our events and provided like, harm reduction, drug information resources, narcan training. We've had monkeypox vaccinations at our events. We have a monthly open meeting that about like 50 or so trans people come to every single time. We have a little happy hour every week where we're always kind of hanging out and getting down to business at the same time. And there's a lot more than 50 people. There's no way to know, really how many people are in Brooklyn TransCore. That's kind of the point. If you ID are Brooklyn TransCore, I guess you are. I guess we do the whole transidentification thing, and there's a lot of different affinity groups that organize within Brooklyn TransCore between noise musicians, Americana musicians, ravers, punks, hard party people, sober living folk, people who are trying to bring greater accessibility in its myriad forms into the punk rock community. And if you want to get involved, look up Brooklyn TransCore on Instagram. We are very much on the Internet, and we have weekly and monthly get togethers and just hit us up and get involved.

MERLIN

You brought up accessibility, which is a great little segue. Thank you. But I think part of what's so great about us connecting is that the punk scene, especially, is supposed to be about being marginalized from a bigger part of society. But sometimes it can feel like you are too marginalized for the margins, or you just can't get in through the door for whatever reason, literally or figuratively. Do you have any experiences of disability that you feel comfortable talking about?

SAOIRSE

So in terms of, like, yeah, I am definitely a punk with disabilities in myriad forms. I'm pretty heavily disabled. I have pretty chronic foot and knee problems and have my good days and my bad days with that. I had a pretty serious skating injury a couple of years ago that I never really recovered from. That really limited the strength in my hands, which was devastating as a touring musician and like, a hustler who survived off of odd jobs and odder jobs and even the oddest jobs. It's relegated me to some of the more dangerous and criminalized work that I've had to do because I'm super disabled. I, like, many trans people get depression and anxiety, post traumatic stress. I'm probably some sort of neuro atypical. Although, like, that's not because I, like, have, like, knowledge of, like, my neurons or anything, but more just like, I would say, like, I'm a psychic survivor. Somebody said that to me once and I really liked that. I'm a psychic survivor. Punk is a community that I very much need, that I'd be dead a thousand times over without. And yet sometimes you just feel too marginalized for the margins and it can be a really devastating feeling, and y'know, queer community has not always been there for me in that front, like in serious ways.

You know, I was a street action organizer and event producer and artist in this city for a long, long time. And when I went to go, I had a gender affirming surgery that didn't go as easy as I thought it was going to go. And then I had trip and fall injuries and I had medical neglect and I had debilitating poverty. And, you know, all of a sudden I couldn't produce 1000 events and give people a bunch of free labor and all of a sudden I saw less people. I got invited out a little bit, but once I said like, hey, I have this access need and I have that access need, all of a sudden I got less invites. And it was really hard.

SAOIRSE

And it was Winter Wolf and Maafa- Flora and that really incredible crew of people that actually were some of the first people to start hitting me up after I had been gone for a while. And I remember Tony from Winter Wolf being like, hey, I haven't seen you, girl, in a while, you all right? And I miss you and what could we do to get you to a show?

AND IT'S LIKE, I HADN'T REALLY EVER HAD IT PUT TO ME LIKE THAT BEFORE. LIKE, WHAT COULD WE DO TO GET YOU THERE? AS IN, LIKE, NOT FULL ONUS ON ME, BUT LIKE, HEY, YOU'RE WANTED AND WE WANT TO TROUBLESHOOT THIS?

Rebelmatic and that whole tribe was having like weekly outdoor shows on the street. In a lot of ways it was very accessible, but also I was pretty desocialized from COVID plus surgery, plus mobility issues that were keeping me inside the apartment. It was very overwhelming to get back to a punk show, but they would be like, hey, we've got a spot for you on the outside, but it's a good viewpoint, but it's like sitting on a picnic table, but also its kind of like low stimulation to an extent as far as like, a punk show goes. And people are getting me food, making sure I had enough water, making sure that I wasn't sitting there by myself. And none of it was an afterthought. And that's part of why Winter Wolf is Brooklyn TransCore as fuck.

Because as far as I feel about the queer life, it's not all about identity, it's about the life we share. Or at least that's what it's about for me. And not everybody who's in this crew at Brooklyn TransCore is like, trans people, not even all of them identify as gay,

SAOIRSE

but as people who have a real life together and we're helping each other out. I think that while I always thought that I was trying to consider access at my events before I considered myself physically disabled, when you start to not be able to go to things, it really changes it for you. What it made me realize is that I'll never be able to fully understand how to make something a fully accessible thing because people have conflicting access needs all the time. And the way that Brooklyn TransCore has tried to live with that reality and not a way that's in spite, but, like, honoring that as being like, we're not just trying to make one kind of event.

We understand that radical, trans, art loving people love all sorts of kind of things, and not everybody is trying to be in a pit, and not everybody is trying to go to the rave.

SAOIRSE

We have people playing country music together in like, jammy cafe settings. We have, like, people moshing. We've been building out our all ages events because there is a burgeoning, like, queer trans scene of all sorts of genres of music that are fucking putting us all to the shame, honestly. They're so cool and they want to be included when we have age exclusive events. People protest outside and that's fucking badass. I feel honored that people think that they want to come to our thing enough that they would make a scene if I'm not including them, feel honored, honestly.

Authors note that i recognize we have gotten fast and loose with the fonts. This will likely continue.

MERLIN

Yeah, that's fucking awesome. And I mean, I don't think there is such a thing as, like, a fully, perfectly accessible event because people are just so varied and need different things. I think the problems happen when it's like there's only one thing and only one kind of person can go there. And so I think it's so awesome that you're working on so many expansive things.

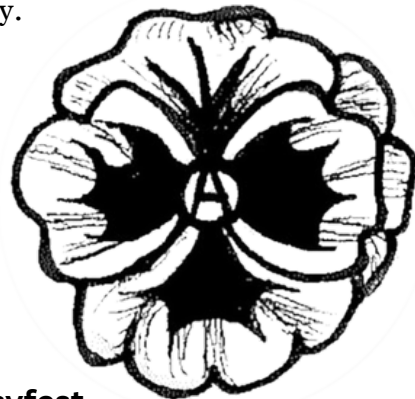
MERLIN

Okay, so I have two more questions. Are there any events you've seen already out in the world where you saw something that was like an example of really great access?

SAOIRSE

Well, first off, just like a brief shout out, I want to shout Pansy Collective, which is like, a queer trans punk collective in Asheville, North Carolina. And they've been a deep inspiration to a lot of Brooklyn TransCore in the 2020s, I went to a Pansy Fest 2019, and it was like 500 trans people at the same time and it intersected with an anarchist book fair, it was in an accessible venue, there was a lot of radical care in the space. It was like two days of like intense punk shows, but then the last day was kind of like acoustic and they were like, don't even come in your punk look, come in your jammies if you want to. It's going to start early in the day.

We're going to have a full country breakfast. And there was like food for all sorts of dietary needs and to have a food centered event as opposed to a booze centered event was like really profound and I thought that was really great.



@pansyfest

SAOIRSE

I helped organize what's called Fern fest in Michigan, which is a trans inclusive women's music festival. And it's some of the most incredible physical accessibility I've ever seen in rural festival work.

They have a system where they have like twelve golf carts running the circuit of it so

that every ten minutes, like the subway from every different area you can be shipped around and then through all the fields they put hay bales out so that you don't have to walk the whole field. You could walk a little bit and then go sit on a hay bale with your friends and walk a little bit further. And they have mats out at the main trail parts of the field to be low impact. And then like even like at their like the concert aspect of the festival, like at the front left, it's like people aren't doing substances and are really engaged in the music. To the right is the language access space where there is always sign language interpretation for every musical act. And generally the people who need that interpretation like chill in that area and have priority. And then in the back is the loud and rowdy area where people are smoking and chilling and kind of carrying on and maybe paying attention, maybe partying. And then in the background there's like kids playing with bubbles and stuff. And then beyond for all the adult gay stuff that happens at this queer festival, y'know its an age integrated space, so basically all the partying happens in an adult only space in a different area of the festival. Never before have I really been in a space that considered so many different myriad access needs and found a way to honor that in a way where nobody's yums were being yucked but a lot of people were cohabitating pretty harmoniously. A lot of my life is like queer festivals and that was some profound stuff for me.



michiganfernfest.com

MERLIN

Amazing. Then my last question is what are three bands that you're excited about right now in New York?

SAOIRSE

Well, first off, *Persona* is like delicious and nutritious. My friend Rebecca sings for them and they're just like a really scary punk band that's really noisy and they're mad about something and I'm about it. They don't even have an Instagram presence or anything. They have no social media. They only do all ages shows. It's like a who's who of scene legends, who have just been around, and I've always kind of been about it. I can't, like, sing the praises of persona enough. Their new album just came out. It's called free your mind. You should check it out. I'm not going to include *Winter Wolf* in this because I think I've attested that they're like, my favorite band, but I guess I just said that right there. But you all should check out *Hardly Fits*. They're like a queer all ages band that is really making radical, safer spaces in their community and are putting in the work right now and deserve your attention. And then check out *Commando* on the West Coast in the Bay area. Fucking seven piece trans nu metal band, super group, Monstrously Good. Commando is like the number one band that the Dilators are trying to play with. If you see this Commando, we're calling you out. Let's share some rage together!

MERLIN

Thank you so much. It has been really great talking with you, and really great coming to events where I felt like I was still able to participate even when I was there with my cane or whatever.

MERLIN

And I think that the different models of care going on in in this community are so inspiring and so great. And I'm really excited to keep building something here in late stage capitalism with you. Is there anything else you want to do, talk about before we end?

SAOIRSE

I'll say one last thing before I sign off. Well, just that I guess I'm glad that we're building the thing since it is such a late stage of capitalism. I'm glad that we're building the next thing together because all these preppers and stuff, preparing for the future, there's nothing wrong with that. But making some sort of bunker and isolation cavern is insane. That's not actually going to help you at all. There are people out there, there are queer people farming right now who want to share that information. There are people like you who have taught me a lot about expanding my access knowledge. The information is out there and everybody's trying to meet each other. So, like, get into it. Like, hit us up. There's so many people doing the great work, and if we do it together, that's how we build the next thing.

MERLIN

Yeah. And it doesn't have to be perfect. It just has to keep trying to do good.



@hardly_fits



@commandosucks

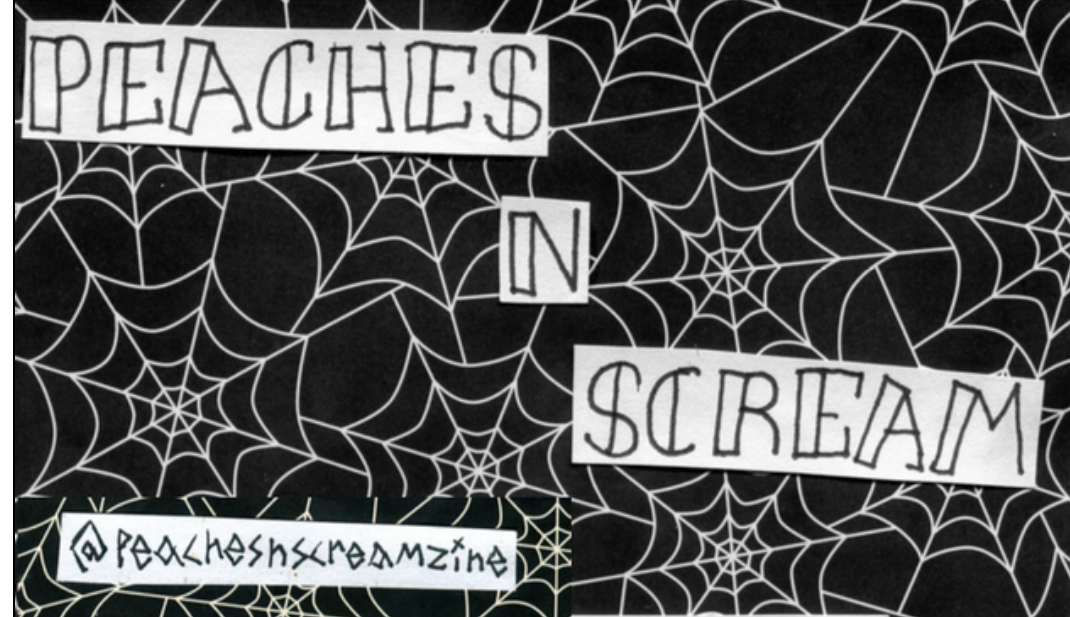
ZINES AND THE CORVALLIS

SCENE

Quinn Gatsby

Hello! I'm the Quinn behind Quinn Gatsby music and the main writer/editor of the Peaches 'N' Scream zine! I've been pretty heavily involved in my local scene in Corvallis, Oregon since I moved here in the summer of 2021. Corvallis is sort of a nestled college town haven among many rural towns. I was honestly surprised to find such a diverse queer community in the north west part of Oregon. Other than towns like Portland and Salem, there really aren't a ton of progressive cities in terms of being a disabled queer person and in terms of a progressive music scene. As an artist and as a zine writer, I want to bring attention to local bands in my scene and to talk about issues I've gone through in my life. So when I was made aware of this project I was really excited to be a part of it!

My experience as a disabled person in the scene has been both good and bad but thankfully, the good outweighs the bad a million to one. I have always loved punk, emo, and hardcore growing up and admittedly, I was a little worried about going to local shows. I have chronic pain so I was worried about how being at a punk show might potentially hurt me. The very first show I went to in Corvallis was put on by two lovely people who make up Bitter Half Booking. They made it very clear that people moshing needed to steer clear of those who had no intention of being in the pit and even spoke before the show about how the environment was a safer space for everyone. I mean, hell, half of the people at the show had canes like me and trans flag pins on their jackets like I did.



They definitely left a really good first impression. I can only count on one hand the few times I didn't feel safe at a venue out of the dozens of shows I've been to.

At most venues I've been to, there's always some kind of seating in the back for people if they ever need to sit down and nearly everyone I've spoken to at shows has been nothing short of supportive when I have an episode or a flare up while I'm in public. Within the past year, I discovered that I have DiD. There was one show in particular where I had an episode on stage and had to quit playing early due to the circumstances. While there may have been a couple of jerks in the crowd, I had a large group of people on their toes to help me out in any way that they could, even if it was just to listen to me talk about what had just happened. In many other towns that I've gone to shows at, it's a very dog eat dog kind of vibe that you get but Corvallis has a very tight knit group of people that'll always step up to offer help whenever they can, even if you're strangers to them.

In my case specifically, the biggest thing I've come across has been misinformation regarding my Dissociative Identity disorder. Even in a place where a lot of folks at shows are educated people, there seems to be a stigma around mental health issues that people deem as 'worse' than anxiety or depression. I've gotten strange looks from people when I explain the reason why I did or said something the way I did and 90% of the time, it's because of the disorder that impacts nearly my entire life. Sometimes even from people who I've known for months, suddenly I'm treated differently even though we got along just fine before I gave them one piece of information. Thankfully these instances are few and far between but truly the only way for them to get over this hump is to have an ounce of empathy.

The best way that I've seen people bring various issues to light has been through zine distribution at shows. From zines about how to support your disabled friends (written by other disabled people) to zines about at home remedies for chronic pain if you can't afford a doctor. I've seen many people get up on stage and talk about these issues too. I've also seen posters all over town about resources for disabled folks and shows put on with the intention of raising money for someone in our community that needs it. I know that some of these things won't be as possible as it is in our scene but for those reading this, the best thing you can do to support and assist disabled folks in your local scene is to shut up and listen. There are zines galore about so many issues that are far more articulate than I could ever be and so many musicians who've put a melody to struggles I couldn't even begin to digress.



I was lucky enough to find myself in a small college town full of amazing disabled queer folks who stick together like glue. If you put on shows, have some extra chairs in the back for folks who can't stand for the whole set, set some ground rules in place before any of the bands play, and have a zero tolerance policy for any kind of discrimination. If you go to shows, don't be afraid to speak up. If someone's being an asshole, do what you can to get it to stop. Be aware of your surroundings and if someone looks like they need help, don't hesitate to ask if they need it.

There seems to be a new wave of people coming into local scenes where their motto is 'if you can't handle the pit, then stay at home'. Which goes against the very ethics of punk music. Punk is made by and for those who have been victim to constant punching down from an able-bodied, neurotypical, cisheteronormative, white supremacist society. And from my experience we are nothing if we don't look out for one another.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO DYING WITH YOUR MASK ON IF YOU'VE GOT TO?

NOTES FROM AN IMMUNOCOMPROMISED MUSIC FAN

Will Xia

In July 2021, I broke my leg and one of my best friends died. In December 2021, I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease. In May 2022, I got into emo music again.

As a fourteen year-old, I'd been devoted to the mall emo bands of the 2000s as much as any other teen destined to discover they were transgay in the future, but I was never really into the scene. Looking up LiveJournal band primers was as close as I got. I had not yet figured out how to keep track of that kind of social signaling. As I got older and bands broke up or went on hiatus, my interest waned for a time.

Something about the past year has made it come back alive for me. Maybe something about my shifting gender, the wear of the pandemic, and the loss of friends makes the almost-childish raw expressiveness of pop-punk and adjacent genres a comfort. I spent all of May and June listening to Gerard Way's "Action Cat," the echo of "Do you miss me? 'Cause I miss you" in my headphones. I started watching livestreams of the My Chemical Romance tour and felt fireworks go off in my head at the high of going on new antidepressants and seeing Gerard Way in funny little costumes. I bought tickets to see them at the nearest tour stop. When I started rabidly telling anyone I could about My Chem, my friend who is one of those people with an encyclopedic knowledge of indie music told me I might like an emo act called Proper.

I listened to "Jean," a song about an old friend dying in immigration detention, and sobbed to the feeling of "I always thought I'd see you again eventually" howled over a massive guitar riff.

I don't intend to belabor the usual alt kid of color representation politics lament, but I was surprised and pleased to learn Proper is queer-fronted and all-Black. It's not so hard to find incredible pop-punk/emo/post-hardcore etc bands these days that are gayer and transer and more ethnic than the majority of the mall emo scene had been in its prime.

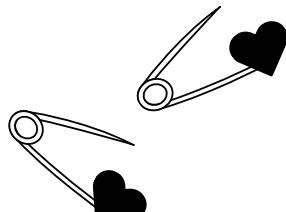


 Picture by Nikki Austin-Garlington

But in all the ways that matter, the DIY scene is foreclosed to me. The heart of being at the scene is being crushed in and screaming along at a show, and my immune system is too fucked. I'm what they call "high-risk." When I got COVID this summer, I was in bed for two weeks, and in the kind of pain and fatigue that made leaving my apartment exhausting for three months.

It was not unthinkable for a stretch in 2021 that COVID would look better in six months, eight months. But as mask mandates and testing infrastructure and any semblance of social pressure to take precautions faded away over the course of 2022, I gave up on seeing My Chemical Romance. I gave up on going to dinners at friends' apartments. I gave up on going to the grocery store. It is less safe for me to go places now than it was a year ago because the government has decided that normative consumption is more important than immunocompromised people being able to participate in public life.

Keeping from being constantly bitter requires deliberate ignorance. Most people are okay with killing immunocompromised people in exchange for going to restaurants. Most bands are okay with touring to massive unmasked crowds. Most people get angry if you don't forgive them for making life unbearably difficult for people like you. It is impossible for me to not resent my coworkers and casual acquaintances and writers of my favorite songs if I think about it. I mostly try not to think about it. Pop-punk is helping me live through grief. I can't let myself think about how these bands are adding to it. Cognitive dissonance is key to getting through the day.



See, like what is probably 30% of My Chemical Romance's fanbase, I am a transmasculine who relates to Frank Iero. The usual reasons apply—he's short and irreverent, but he's also chronically ill. His interviews and solo lyrics are dotted with references to his lifetime of constant nausea, fatigue, and stomach issues. He's played a show with an oxygen mask and a clock pendant Sharpied with "TIME TO GET ILL." He is, by all accounts, immunocompromised too. And I watched as he, alongside his bandmates, shed their masks and toured massive arenas. Simply being ill does not create any kind of solidarity with other ill people. Identifying with celebrities always requires some measure of cognitive dissonance anyway. This is just a particularly painful sort. On a smaller scale, the state of things is easier to understand in some ways. If you are in an indie band and it's impossible to make enough money to survive off streaming, you need to tour.



Frank Iero playing in an oxygen mask during the Project Revolution Tour, 2008?

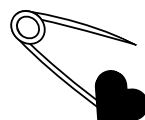
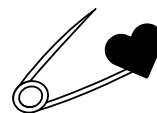
If you have no choice but to be exposed to unmasked people at work and on public transit and via your children, why not do risky things that make life enjoyable? In other ways, for people and bands and scenes closer to understanding ordinary life, a lack of care gets harder to understand.

I went to a show in October. Pinkshift, an all-POC punk band with unusual technical chops and incredible live energy, was playing a tiny venue in town. The venue policy required masks and proof of vaccination. I had the best time. Even perched on a stool in the back, feeling the crowd's energy while I screamed along and banged my cane to the beat was transcendent. It was the most excited I'd felt in a year. It was stupid of me to go. No one checked for vaccine cards. My friends and I were some of the only people masking. Looking at the crowd of kids, it was hard to hate them. But it was also hard to feel like professed progressive politics and inclusive ethos actually amount to anything.

I don't have an unusual experience. I would argue that becoming chronically ill in your twenties is a deeply normal life path for the kind of people punk music is supposed to be for. I broke my leg and lost my friend and all I got was lupus. Being autistic, transgender, and a child of refugees makes me a decent staging ground for trauma-mediated Weird Diseases, and I'm fairly well-off. Having physically stressful jobs, unstable housing, losing friends to suicide, and other demographically typical experiences makes the slow collapse of the body ever more likely. Immunocompromised people live among society's re-exposed eugenic bones, and we don't even have any good shows to see while we're here.

This is a place that's hard to end on. I could add some advice about mitigating and communicating about risk to make safer events, but it feels hollow at this point. I am a stranger to most of the people reading this piece. I am fortunate enough to have a community that is willing to keep accessibility in mind enough that I have a social and political life that sustains me outside of the music scene. There are immunocompromised people in your community, or immunocompromised people that could be in your community. The life that you can collectively give to them is up to you.

 @boo_cool_robot



INTERVIEW WITH BUNNY

MGNT/MERCH SUPPORT W/ WINTER WOLF

 @sn0w.cheese

MERLIN

So hello! What's your name? And if you have pronouns that you want to share and then anything that you want to talk about, about how you identify, vis a vis disabilities, health, etc.

BUNNY

Okay? My name is Bunny. My pronouns are they/them. I am nonbinary and neurodivergent, or I like to call it neurospicy. I'm on the autism spectrum, comorbid with depression, ADHD, anxiety, PTSD.

MERLIN

Okay, cool. So first of all, how did you get into the music scene? And then how did you start working with Winter Wolf?

BUNNY

Okay. So I first started going to shows in high school when I was around, like, 15, 16, when I lived in Staten Island. And then when I moved out of Staten Island no, before I even moved out of Staten Island, I met Nate from Winter Wolf. Before he was in Winter Wolf, we became really great friends, and he invited me to his shows with a band called Embrace the Downside and then eventually Maafa too. So it's kind of a funny story how I got involved with Winter Wolf. So it was February 19 of this year, 2022, it was actually my birthday.

And I got there like, early because I'm like a nerd that goes, like, early to places. But I got there and said hi to Nate, and he said, hey, actually, can I talk to you?



He said our merch person actually couldn't make it, so would you mind filling in for today? I know it's your birthday, but we could really use the help. And I was like, yeah, sure, why not? And I got to meet Tony and Jay. I never met them before, like, that day, and they were super grateful and super nice and gracious. So I'm like that was cool.

The next day, Nate messaged me and said, oh, my God, Bunny, you did so well at the merch table. We were talking about it, can we have you permanently as our merch person? And I'm, like, really I was really shocked. Honestly. I didn't think I did amazing, just okay, but I was like, yeah, because I had a lot of fun, too. And we started having more discussions about the band in general, and they were, like, including me.

BUNNY

And I started going to all their practices, too, and we would just discuss planning for the show, and, like, they would, like, hear my suggestions. Like, my opinion mattered. And, like, that meant that means, like, a lot to me that my opinion mattered. And so when I, when we went to Texas, they, like, said, oh, yeah, you should come along with us. And from that point this is in the summer, but around that point, I kind of started to take a little bit more of a manager. I was also helping with looking for arrangements for other shows that they would do, like, outside of New York City. My role kind of grew bigger, and it felt really nice to have that bigger role than just, like, selling a merch. And I feel really grateful that they trust me with that.

MERLIN

That's awesome.

Bunny

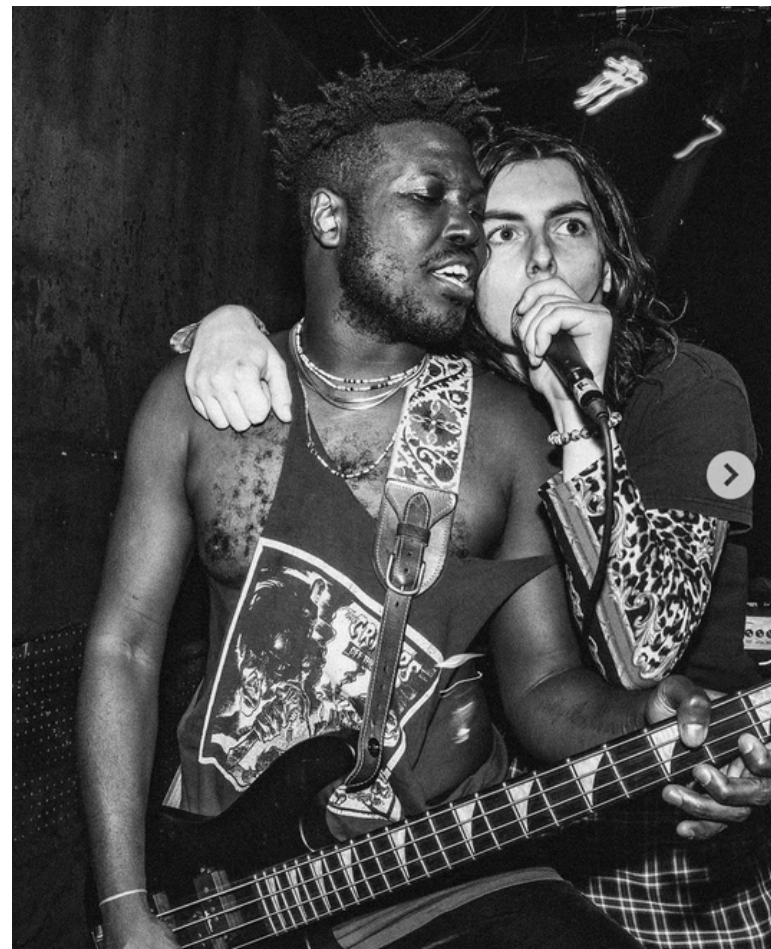
Yeah. They just inspired me so much. They inspired me to start my own band, like, next year in 2023. And each one of them I know Nate for a long time. And just meeting Tony and Jay and X is in the band, too. Meeting them changed my life for real, and I don't know where I would be without them now.

Merlin

Yeah, that's really great. That's really awesome. So do you go to a lot of other shows? Are there other musicians or bands that you're really into or that you've seen who have had really great shows.

Bunny

Yes, The Dilators. 100% I love The Dilators.



Jey of
Winterwolf
and Saoirse of
The Dilators

 @annaliebouchard

Bunny

I love seeing more trans punk bands. I don't see that enough. They also inspired me to start like a non binary trans punk band because I don't see that really. So it's like, be the Change you want to see, right? So they are so inspiring and also especially Flora. And there's a song from my office called Welfare and it shouts out non binary people. And it's like when you see someone else doing something like you doing something, it's like, oh, I can do it too.

BUNNY

Maybe Foul Pride, too. There was a show on June 10 where I didn't go lead singer, was talking about being on the autism spectrum and writing songs about that. And that also made me feel, I got really emotional when he was talking about that because I also felt really seen because I don't see anyone really that I know of on the spectrum doing things like this as well. And I always felt like my diagnosis that even as punks were supposed to be like the misfits, but before I met these awesome people that I know, I've encountered elitism in those spaces and whether it be like punk or clear spaces, and I often felt othered by the other and it's like, it feels really shitty. So to see all this, like, representation, like a real representation, like, really fucking matters. I don't know why some people still don't get that, that representation matters.

It's just a case of like, oh, I see people like me doing something so awesome that I've always wanted to do, but always felt like I wasn't cool enough or I didn't belong in, that I wasn't allowed to be that badass. But seeing that all these people that are like me doing like, badass stuff encourages me to want to do it too.

Merlin

Yeah, that's really awesome. That's so important. It sucks. Especially in scenes when the whole thing is built on being rebellious and saying like, fuck you to conformity, but then there's like other secret conformity.

Merlin

Okay, something really cool that I saw was you were doing ASL at the Brooklyn TransCore Halloween show, which was like, punk as fuck. It was so awesome. I was so excited seeing that. So I wanted to ask a little bit more about that and be like, how did you learn to sign and how did you guys decide to incorporate that into that performance?

Jey of Winterwolf and Bunny



 @annaliebouchard

BUNNY

So at Brooklyn Transcore, I did sign for Winter Wolf's set. Funnily enough, it was kind of a last minute well, it's not exactly a last minute thing. It was something that was kind of discussed between me and their booking manager, Evan, because he had found out I know ASL. So I learned ASL when I was in college by my professor, Scott Gable. He was actually considered himself a CODA, which is in the deaf community, the one hearing person in, like,

a deaf family usually, or, like, the minority hearing person in a deaf family because his whole family is deaf. He was a really great teacher. This was at the college of Staten Island. I took it for, like, two years with the same teacher, Scott Gable. And from there, because what I like about sign language is that I don't have to talk. I can use my hands because I'm already like, whether it's because I'm on the spectrum or not, I just like to talk with my hands. And I'm very physical when I communicate. So it was, like, a really good way for me to channel all that energy into another way to communicate.

Yeah, Evan had approached me saying that it would be really cool if you signed during Winter Wolf's set. And I was like, really? I had never seen that before. I've kind of heard of people interpreting at, like, concerts and stuff, but that's.

MERLIN

Like, professional level festivals who have budgets.

BUNNY

Yes, big professional things. So it was kind of intimidating to me to do that. And I was like, there's a lot to go into that because you have to know all the lyrics to the songs. You have to know the context of it, because translating ASL to regular English, hearing English can be difficult if you don't have the context right, because you can be literal about it, but then the message might get misconstrued. So I was not sure. The day before, we were having a meeting with the band and Evan and everybody. Evan was like, yeah, Bunny, are you signing for the show? I'm like, man. Fine. Fuck it, I'll do it. And I was, like, scrambling. I've been to so many Winter Wolf shows as their manager and some songs I knew the lyrics to, but others, like, I have like an auditory processing disorder. And sometimes I can't isolate if there's noise,

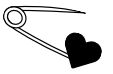
if there's background noise in our room and someone is saying something or if they're singing a song, I can't always make out exactly the words. I can hear that they are singing, but I can't actually hear what the specific words are. Even if I'm trying to read lips, it's hard for me. So I was scrambling to get lyrics of some of the songs, and some of the songs I knew, and they have songs on Spotify. So I was, like, listening to I got the set list. I was like, okay, these are the songs that I need to know, and we just try and practice. And funnily enough, I hadn't signed in a long time. I still knew stuff, but I had to practice the night before and the morning and afternoon of and it was very anxiety inducing, not going to lie, but it was also really important. So I didn't want to just give up and not do it, even on the way to the show. When I got to the show, I was at the merch table, but I was practicing, practicing, practicing, and I couldn't interpret some of the songs. I couldn't interpret the whole song. But I'm like, okay, maybe I can just do the chorus. And that's like, something, right?

Merlin

Yeah!

Bunny

I was like, okay, this is my plan. And I was so nervous getting up there because I'm like I really didn't want to mess up because I'm signing potentially for other people to see, and I really didn't want to get it wrong. And even some of the songs, the lyrics I was asking Jay, if you wrote this song, what did you mean by this, like, the context? Because, you know, we have metaphors in English, but, you know, it doesn't like I said, it doesn't always translate into ASL because it's just ASL doesn't have a lot of grammar that we have, and it can be very literal, too.



So, like, I had to, like, kind of like there weren't signs for certain lyrics, so I had to, like, ask the context. I'm like, okay, this is the context, so this is a sign I'm going to use for that. There were some songs like Dead Body, Fuck Party that I knew the whole thing, and it was easy because it's a little repetitive, but I knew the chorus and the bridge and the whole song. If I told myself if I could at least do one full song, I'm happy with myself. So yeah. It was amazing though. I got so many people coming up to me saying, oh my God, that was so cool. I didn't expect that. Saoirse from Dilators was like, crying to me. Like, oh my God, that was so amazing. That was so freaking cool. And it felt nice to be recognized for that. And I think someone told me, I think Ash from Dilators said she was like, oh, you have such a stage presence, and that really meant so much to me. And it's like all these comments and then just seeing all these cool queer people and neurodivergent people out there doing their thing, it encouraged me to want to do something and like I said, start my own band, too. I felt validated.

Merlin

I was really excited to see you doing that because obviously I just really am excited whenever people are incorporating accessibility and diversity into their work. But also, you did just look really cool.

Bunny

Thank you.

Merlin

Yeah, I don't have a more in depth analysis than that. I was like, this is awesome. And I don't know if it's like, a thing you guys are planning to do more, but I think it would be cool to keep doing that.

Bunny

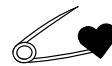
I've been talking with them about it. It's definitely a possibility. We're on hiatus now, but that's good because I'll have more time to prepare this time.

Merlin

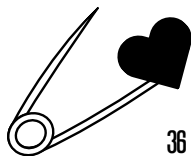
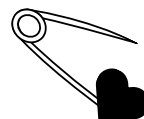
It's really great to have a community like that. I would love to hear more about what kind of music you want to play.

Bunny

So I have like, two ideas, I guess, because I've been writing songs for a long time, but I always had issues with my sound. So some songs that I'm writing, I feel like it's more suited for an acoustic kind of vibe. And some I definitely want to start like a hardcore punk or maybe thrashy kind of band. I'm exposed to all these different kinds of sounds, these bands. Winter Wolf, Maafa, The Dilators. I really like all three of their sounds. And, like, I'm definitely, like, inspired by them and, like, some stuff that I wrote, I'm writing, like, a trans and nonbinary anthem currently. And that's definitely inspired from Dilators and Maafa and Winter Wolf too. And then my acoustic project that I want to do is more like personal projects that I want to do, though I definitely want to incorporate accessibility and queerness and neurospicyness into those both acts.



I WANT TO INSPIRE OTHER NEUROSPICY PEOPLE THAT MAYBE HAVE FELT LIKE ME, THEY WEREN'T COOL ENOUGH, OR THEY DON'T BELONG WITH THESE BADASS PEOPLE.



Merlin

Okay, so what's an accessibility barrier you run into or like, what's a thing that needs work in the scene? And by that I mean, like, small house shows, secret venues, small Brooklyn clubs. That kind of thing.

Bunny

What do I think the scene needs? Well, I can only talk from my experience as being neurodiverse, basically being on the autism spectrum, I often mask at shows because I'm, like, anxious about people seeing me stim or judging me, because not everyone that goes to punk shows is neurospicy or understands what it's like to be that way there. It would be cool at shows if there's a comfort corner for people that are on the spectrum to prevent meltdowns or if they're overstimulated or just have a space where they can reset or recharge something. That's because I love punk and hardcore and I love going to these shows, but sometimes for my own self, sometimes it's just too much noise. I get overstimulated, and sometimes I just need to have a quiet place. And one thing that kind of annoys me is some places like, oh, no, re entry. And I'm like, what do you think I'm going to do? Sneak someone in or bring back a weapon or something?

Merlin

I don't know what's the point of that? I already paid to be here, so why can't I go back out? It doesn't really make sense to me.

Bunny

Yeah. Either let us be able to go out of the venue to decompress or have a space in the venue or somewhere that kind of like you can have a break from the intensity of the social aspect, too. The social aspect can be very overwhelming.

Bunny

To have some kind of space for that would be really great. One thing that I'm still getting used to, being in the pit, and I know it's a thing where like, okay, you're kind of like I don't know if you're supposed to get hurt, quote unquote, but I don't like getting hurt. I want to thrash around, but I don't want to thrash around on other people and hurt them. For example, at the Punk Island after Show pit, that was awesome because people like, if someone pushed you into someone else, they caught you and if you almost failed, they would pick you up. And I'm like, we need more of that. Literally picking each other up and supporting each other.

Merlin

Okay, my last question is, and I've been asking everybody while I've been working on this third issue, like, what is something you saw at a show that was, like, a really great example of accessibility.

Bunny

Something. Well, I would say at the Halloween show, at the Brooklyn Transcore Halloween Show, I liked that there, although this was me performing as the interpreter, but I liked that there was, like a little spot by the stage for me that people can see clearly.

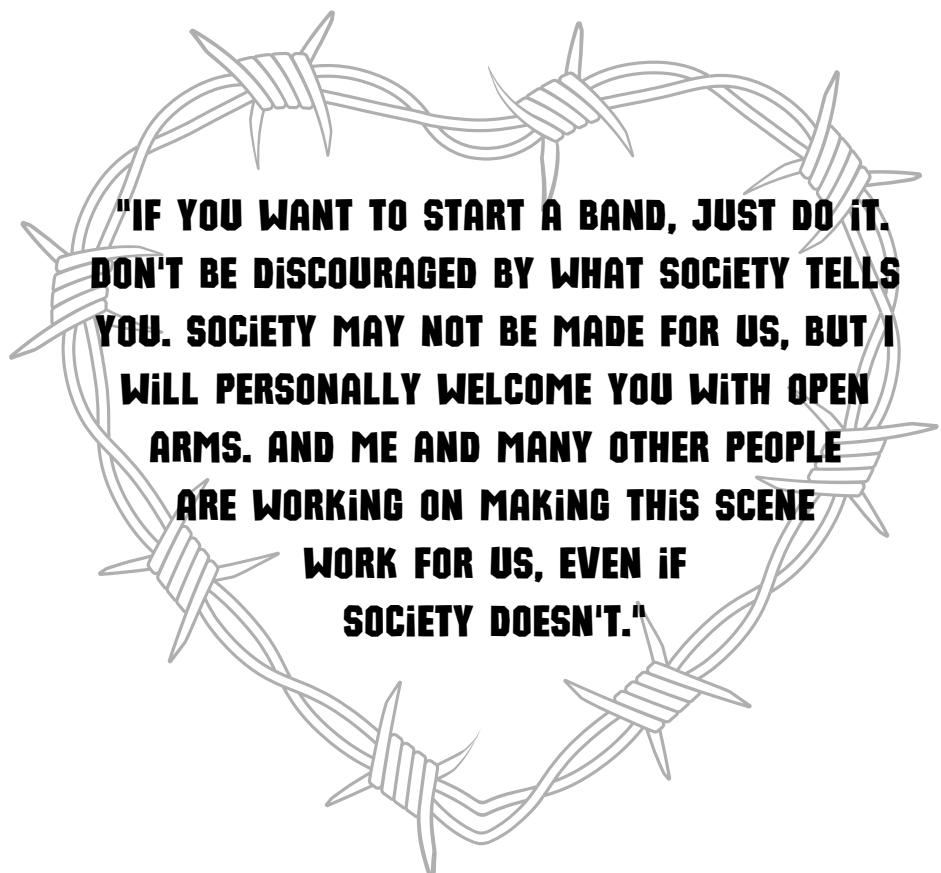
I think also places like Rubalon, they have the stage and the room where everything goes on, but then they have, like, an outside that's still inside the venue to cool off or decompress because it gets very hot in there. So that was like, a cool thing to have a second area to go to because most venues are just like the stage. That's it. I like when venues have another part to it that you can go to.

Merlin

All right, anything else?

Bunny

I feel like I want to say something else. To any neurospicy people on the autism spectrum or comorbid with a list of mental health issues, I would say if you want to make music, if you want to start a band, just do it. Don't be discouraged by what society tells you. Society may not be made for us, but I will personally welcome you with open arms. And me and many other people are working on making this scene work for us, even if society doesn't. That's not made for us. We are making this spot for us, this space for us. So, like, if you want to start a band, like, do it. And, like, you have so many people to support you if you just reach out.



MORE COOL ZINE RECS

That font is called nectarine isn't that so sweet? See Issue 2 for previous zine recs



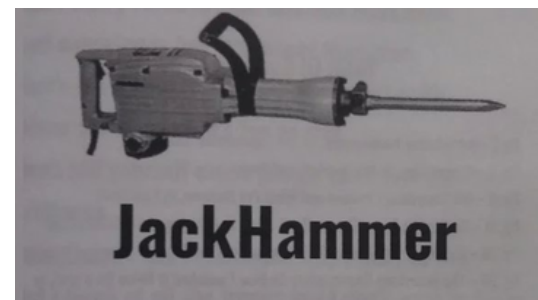
 @peachesnscreamzine

Peaches 'N Scream

Remember? From page 13. Quinn does a great mix of local bands & well known music. He writes with a passion that gets me excited whenever I read his stuff, and I've found some great music this way!

Jackhammer Fanzine

Brooklyn's own queercore zine, a great blend of local band news and queer/anarchist/music history. Only offline so email Áine or come to a BKTC meeting to get your hands on one.



jackhammerqueercore@proton.me

SING IT LIKE THE KIDS THAT ARE MEAN TO YOU!



Maybe you picked up on how many My Chemical Romance references there are in this issue, even though I did not write many of the pieces. Maybe you have asked me IRL how many MCR shirts I have and I have dodged the question. If so this won't surprise you. Full of brilliant essays and art, it discusses "what it means to exist as a person of color in emo/punk/alt-rock/etc scenes and in online bandom." Highly recommended even for non-MCR fans. Created by @thrashbeatles, you can get it at birdloaf.com.

NO FUN CLUB: ON PUNKS WHO

CAME BACK WRONG

ALMA R.

It's hard loving something that doesn't love you back. Or, to be more specific, it's hard loving something that only loves you when you're in pain. As it stands, this is my relationship with live music. I grew up in my local Punk scene, going to at least three shows a week for most of my late teens; my first foray into the career that I have now was writing about shows, as many of them as possible, and rarely missing one my friends were going to. I found a community at these shows— I was a weird gay goth that most people recoiled from in polite society, but within the sticker-covered walls of my local venues, I was seen. People embraced me and were happy to see me show up. Live music was a lifeline for me when I was going through traumatic experiences at home as a teenager, another universe where nobody could hurt me.

When I think about my longest friendships, all of them come from that scene. The impact it has had on my life is absolutely unmeasurable.

I never imagined, growing up, that I would start to resent the very thing that used to make me feel alive— but then everything changed when the pandemic hit.

In 2020, before vaccines were widely available and despite masking everywhere, I caught COVID. Long story short, my lungs never recovered.

I can do a lot of things now that I couldn't do when my symptoms were at their worst, but the damage was considerable; it just isn't possible for me to stand for long periods of time like I used to.

The hardest part of it, more so than the weight I feel in my chest when I do anything physical, has been the alienation. When venues reopened mid-2021 and shows started back up, everyone I know was ecstatic to finally get back to it. Artists, understandably, were relieved to have the income from touring back. And then here I was in the middle of it, with ribs that hurt every time I sang along to anything and a body that wouldn't support me — I felt like I had come back wrong, like a graveyard had been opened and everyone had crawled out of their grave as a full-fledged human being while I'd come back a failed zombie.

But more than anything, going back to shows after that time away showed me how ill-equipped my local scene was when it came to accessibility. Things that I used to joke about as quirks of the DIY Punk scene became real barriers, like the fact that so many venues are in old shitty buildings with stairs all over and no elevator or ramp in sight, or how stage times weren't posted anywhere so people would come and watch every band.

In a time where everyone was stressing the importance of supporting live music after so many musicians in our community lost income, it was hard to feel like I had a right to voice these things; especially in DIY scenes, there's sometimes a sense that we should be grateful that we can do any of it at all and therefore should just take what's offered to us.

But if a scene that preaches community and thinks of itself as better than the soulless capitalist machine that corporations have made mainstream live music into can't do better, what is it actually worth?

For the past decade and a half, this scene had been telling me that there was a place for me where I fit in, that it would celebrate me for being different. Yet when that difference manifested itself not as being a freaky goth but as being someone with different accessibility needs I felt like an inconvenience, like an afterthought to the structures that preached inclusivity for everyone.

When I think of the shows I've been to in the past few years, I actually have trouble thinking of people I've seen there who were using mobility aids or other disability accommodations. Obviously this doesn't mean disabled people weren't in attendance, as we all know that it's impossible to tell by just looking at someone— but it troubles me to think that other people, like me, have had to pretend to be able-bodied to still enjoy places where they should be able to come as they are.

Even now, after going through a lot of therapy to come to terms with how I feel about my health, I am still grappling with how to approach these conversations, and how to ask for accessibility at these events, because so much of it is so opaque. This is to say nothing of the fact that going to shows at all right now is still a huge risk when it comes to the pandemic; it's a choice I have to make every time I decide, against all other factors, to come to a show.

I could, of course, choose to stay home to avoid all this, as I did when my symptoms were at their worst and I still sometimes do if I'm having a flare-up.

MORE THAN ANYTHING, GOING BACK TO SHOWS AFTER THAT TIME AWAY SHOWED ME HOW ILL-EQUIPPED MY LOCAL SCENE WAS WHEN IT CAME TO ACCESSIBILITY.

But I shouldn't have to; if shows and venues were more accessible, I wouldn't have to choose between seeing my friends and being able to walk the next day.

I truly do think a better DIY music scene is possible; after all, we built it from nothing. But the work required to get there feels, frankly, overwhelming, and at times like I would be putting myself in an adversarial position against people who are putting on these events, even though it would end up benefiting them as it would mean more people could attend.

There are some moments where I have hope things aren't totally bleak, like when my friends make sure I'm comfortable in a crowd or check if I need to leave and sit down. But if we want disabled people to even be there to have those moments in the first place, we need larger community changes, like exact timings for shows.

For now, though, it's still going to be me and the pain in my chest.

  @knifefemme

WE NEED MORE SICK KID ANTHEMS

DISABLED FRONTWOMAN AND ROWDY GUITARIST LOOKING FOR DRUMMER

Rybecca Quinn (she/her)

I'm Rybecca Quinn, a doing-whatever-it-takes to pay the bills freelancer who has worked across the multiple entertainment and media industries. On Monday, I'm photographer; Tuesday, I'm writer; Wednesday, I'm a business student; Thursday, I'm running a networking group for disabled creatives on the internet; Friday, I'm rocking out; Saturday, I'm a YouTuber and streamer known as Emotastic for the channel the Glitch Ghouls; and Sundays, I f—ing rest.

As a passing cripple, I'm trying to expand the idea of what the public thinks when they hear someone is disabled. While I can pass through a door or some stairs, that whole "passing" thing becomes quickly false when people see how bad I shake from nearly decades of having tremors.

I was lulled into the punk community when I was in middle school by Green Day leader singer Billie Joe Armstrong, one of the first modern artists I had heard who let their voice shake freely. After years of never fitting the mold as a tremor-y mezzo soprano, I found fellowship in the punk community.

My younger years were riddled with mental illness, bullying, unfortunate events beyond my control, but I found peace in music. Some of the singers who helped shape the musician I became include Armstrong, Geddy Lee of Rush, David Lee Roth, Steven Tyler, Mary Hopkins, Stevie Wonder, and Danny "Sexbang" Avidan of Ninja Sex Party.

I put every ounce of emotion into what I sing like Armstrong and Wonder, long to take listeners on a journey like Lee and Hopkins could, start a party like Roth and Tyler, and create self-confidence while also being able to laugh at myself like Avidan.

Nowadays, I spend my time catching local punk shows at the Star Bar and working on an upcoming album without even naming my work-in-progress band. This is where we're gonna need that drummer, so my lovely and elusive drummers hear me out.

My lovely guitarist Ian Rich and I have a dastardly dream, a musical mission, a goofball goal; we pose to you, dear drummer hopefully located in Atlanta, Georgia, We Fixed It, Phil. A "tribute" album where we can create an image and sound ourselves while updating an honestly (maybe just a teeny, tiny bit) dated catalog.

The perfect long-term drummer for our nameless band (that you have the chance to help name) is someone who understands the struggles of being disabled, someone who has a burning passion for all things rock 'n' roll. Many of rock music's best drummers are disabled, Rick Allen of Def Leppard and Robert Wyatt of Soft Machine.

What the punk community has always excelled in are what my friends and I like to call "sick kid anthems". Did you hum Blood by My Chemical Romance every time you had to get your blood drawn? How about 21 Guns by Green Day when a medication was kicking your ass? Or what about Death Dance by Palaye Royale when the pain was blending into that numb agony that's been eating you alive?

To our future drummer, we can't wait to write the next generation of sick kid anthems alongside you, homie. You'll probably get so sick of me both ironically and unironically calling a homie or homeslice, but we'll be great friends if you can laugh at misery, like anime and other nerdy shit, and prefer animals over people. We're gonna steamroll those ables, all while being loud, jittery, and chasing down our next gig like a pack of hungry piranhas.

To contact me about the drumming position, please email me at rybeccaquinn@yahoo.com. Those who want to keep up with how the drummer search is going, feel free to follow me on Instagram and Twitter (if you still use that) at @rybeccaquinn!

  @rybeccaquinn

 @meleemassacre9546

10 PRINCIPLES OF DISABILITY JUSTICE

By Sins Invalid, a disability justice based performance group

INTERSECTIONALITY “We do not live single issue lives” –Audre Lorde. Ableism, coupled with white supremacy, supported by capitalism, underscored by heteropatriarchy, has rendered the vast majority of the world “invalid.”

LEADERSHIP OF THOSE MOST IMPACTED “We are led by those who most know these systems.” –Aurora Levins Morales

ANTI-CAPITALIST POLITIC In an economy that sees land and humans as components of profit, we are anti-capitalist by the nature of having non-conforming body/minds.

COMMITMENT TO CROSS-MOVEMENT ORGANIZING Shifting how social justice movements understand disability and contextualize ableism, disability justice lends itself to politics of alliance.

RECOGNIZING WHOLENESS People have inherent worth outside of commodity relations and capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history and life experience.

SUSTAINABILITY We pace ourselves, individually and collectively, to be sustained long term. Our embodied experiences guide us toward ongoing justice and liberation.

COMMITMENT TO CROSS-DISABILITY SOLIDARITY We honor the insights and participation of all of our community members, knowing that isolation undermines collective liberation.

INTERDEPENDENCE We meet each others' needs as we build toward liberation, knowing that state solutions inevitably extend into further control over lives.

COLLECTIVE ACCESS As brown, black and queer-bodied disabled people we bring flexibility and creative nuance that go beyond able-bodied/minded normativity, to be in community with each other.

COLLECTIVE LIBERATION No body or mind can be left behind – only moving together can we accomplish the revolution we require.

DISABILITIES IN THE MUSIC SPACE

Lark Detweiler

How do I exist as a Deaf person in music spaces?

How is it possible that I can interact with people, interact with music, create in a medium that presumes hearing?

YOU CAN'T HEAR. HOW IS MUSIC YOUR LIFE?

I honestly wish people would stop asking me these things. Not so much that they are stupid questions, because they're not— they're very good questions, especially if you've never personally met or interacted with a Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) individual. These questions are tiresome because I am asked these same questions every day, time and time again.

But then again, I would much rather answer the questions, if you'll pardon the sigh. I would much rather people be curious and ask, or be curious and go on the internet to learn more about how Deaf people interact with the world. Deafness comes in all different shapes and sizes. Some people wear cochlear implants, some people wear hearing aids, some people prefer not to use aids at all. Some Deaf sign, some Deaf are verbal and can read lips, some Deaf use both. While I cannot speak for any or all of the Deaf community, I can speak for myself and my own experiences as a Deaf person.

To preface, I am a professional dancer and musician. I started interacting with music and dance before my own family even realized I couldn't hear.

My mother put me into dance classes when I was three and I grew up with nothing but music on my mind. I picked up my first instrument when I was eight years old—the clarinet—when other small children couldn't make a sound move through the reed, I loved the way the vibrations tickled my hands as I played a melody.

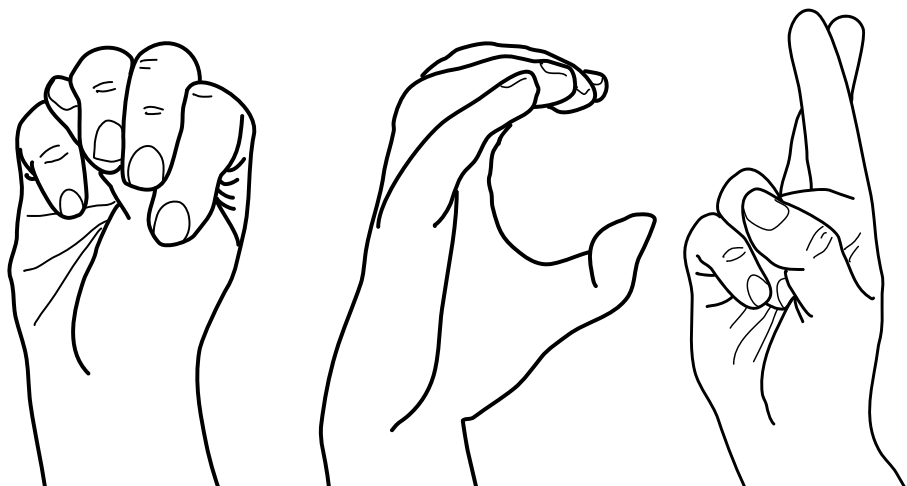
My existence in the world of music and dance was always met with confusion: How is this child allowed here? What do you mean they're Deaf? Are they up to par with the other (hearing) children? While hearing children were allowed to be talentless, out of tune, bad at rhythm, inattentive, I had to prove I could exist by their side, had to prove my worth, had to prove I was “good enough” to be in the room. I was lucky my first dance teachers didn't know I couldn't hear because there was never a barrier in place until people knew. Or even if people didn't know, I was young enough that my inability to perfectly follow along with instructions was dismissed as “typical three-year-old behavior.” With music, I have to fight to get a foot in the door, convinced that once I start playing people will stop doubting me! I have a right to be here! I'm good enough! I'm MORE than good enough, just give me a chance!

When you put your hand on the speakers, you feel the vibrations, the bass pumping movement into your hands to demonstrate sound: do you feel that? That's how I feel music everywhere I go, all over my skin.

At concerts when most people are forced to put in ear plugs, I can take my hearing aids out and feel the music better. Zero worries about hearing loss, could you believe it?

Music is such a glorious experience! Just because someone hears music in a different way doesn't mean they are incapable of experiencing the joys of music.

There are always ways to be more accessible in the music space! For me as a Deaf person, it should be normalized to have ASL interpreters by the stage (or by where a Deaf person is sitting/standing) in big venue concerts. For example, I went to the MCR concerts at the Los Angeles KIA Forum. As someone who knows every lyric MCR has ever put out into the world, I don't necessarily need the ASL interpreter for the songs, but for the in between moments when Gerard just says stuff. I enjoyed the show, even the parts I couldn't understand, but really while everyone else (hearing people) had access to what they were saying, I have no idea and suddenly the rug is pulled from under me and I realize I'm an outsider even at a show for one of my favorite artists of all time.



Also, there was an ASL interpreter available at one of the dates for the MCR shows, but the location was up in the balcony level, not helpful to me who was in the pit. I'm also a huge advocate for artists releasing their lyrics upon release.

Many of the goth artists I listen to take months to upload lyrics on Spotify (if they're well known enough), and some don't upload their lyrics at all anywhere. In those cases, I go out of my way to message the artist to ask for lyrics (if they're willing to send them) or rely on a hearing friend to decipher the words as best as they can. I want the privilege to scream along to lyrics upon second listen!

For concert goers in the crowd with me, treat me like any other hearing person. Please stop asking me "Oh you're Deaf? Why are you here then?" I am a fan and have a right to be here just as much as you.

 @batcavelark

intothebatcave.substack.com





WHIRLYNN

Vanessa Garcia

Mi nombre es Vanessa Garcia. My artist name is Whirlynn. Yo soy Boricua. I have brittle type 1 diabetes. I've had this invisible chronic illness 80% of my life and have almost died over 100 times. This isn't a badge of honor and I am not complaining. It's just very complicated. Creating art and music has always been my therapy to maintain my mental health. Only 5% of all diabetics in the world are type 1. Only 3 in every 1000 become brittle with no explanation. Every single day is a gamble and I am grateful for every passing waking moment spent among a community that understands the importance of being inclusive when it comes to disability.

When I play music I feel free, and I'm releasing a lot of trauma. It's a way for me to let it go. Often through my music I would profess words of doubt and painful reflection through bass heavy drum beats, synth and more.

My last album, *Yákakeitiwa* (We are still here) is my expression of a reconnection with my Indigenous Arawak-Taíno heritage, and journey to decolonize myself.

“Anti-colonial themes weave through the lo-fi synth-pop music of *Yákakeitiwa*.” -Justin Garcia of Creative Loafing, Tampa. Album was released on Orlando based label Popnihil: (Find it bandcamp.com)

Yákakeitiwa is my first official release with this project. Through the lauded underground label Popnihil, I have found a home for my sound and message. The cassette tape version of *Yákakeitiwa* sold out through the Orlando based label's Bandcamp. It's Popnihil's 137th release.



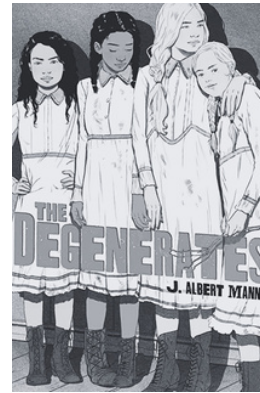
I also promote others through my radio show called Florida Showers, streamed on Nett Nett Radio based out of Mexico, which airs every Tuesday from 10-11 p.m.

NettNettRadio is an expansive network of activists, artists and cultural agents who make radio to cultivate information channels that aggregate experiences and stories from citizens around the world. As a freethinking radio community, we advocate for accessibility, the exchange of knowledge and the development of safe spaces for the production and broadcasting of diverse cultural and artistic practices - essential processes for social, physical and mental well-being. We operate as a self-organized, non-profit, non-corporatized group of artists, activists and innovators that believe in revolution through radio. Now, more than ever, we must work together to develop solidarity among a diverse and impactful web of trans-continental voices.

<https://m.facebook.com/whirlynn>

COOL BOOK RECS

(Fun) Books I've loved or found helpful, about disability or otherwise. Support your local bookstore!*



The Degenerates By J. Albert Mann
This is a queer YA romance set inside of the the Massachusetts School for the Feeble-Minded in 1928 . While dark, because disabled history is dark, its a really engadging read with a hopeful, satisfying ending. CW for historically accurate depictions of eugenics.

All Systems Red By Martha Wells

I loooovee the Murderbot Diaries, of which this is the first. A serise of interlinked novellas, they are short, easy to read, queer and very funny. IMO, all stories about cyborgs or cyborg like guys are disability stories



Doom Patrol By Gerard Way

The seriee as a whole is my real rec, but I confess, I like Gerard's arcs here. Doom Patrol takes after some of the weirder X-Men stories by asking "what if you had super powers and it really sucked". Intentional or not, there are plenty of disability paralells here, and I found this series surprisingly heart warming.

*If you are interested in the not fun recommendations pleaseee feel free to reach out theyre still amazing books



Meet Me In the Pit w/ Sydney

CONDUCTED VIRTUALLY DUE TO A LACK OF SPOONS ON THE PART OF THE INTERVIEWER

Merlin
Hello! Can you introduce yourself a bit! You're a really dedicated concert goer. What kind of music do you go see, how many shows have you seen this year?

Sydney
Hi, thank you! I'm Sydney, I'm 19, and I'm both disabled and a very dedicated music fan, determined to prove that those two things can and do coexist. Concerts are my primary hobby and music is a huge part of my daily existence.

I'm always listening to music (writing this interview in my headphones), at a show, or working on my record collection. I collect setlists, guitar picks, and signed records.

I go to all kinds of shows - and being so into live music has hugely expanded my tastes - but most of what I see is somewhere in the indie rock realm, and almost always female, non-binary, and/or queer musicians. I've also gotten into other fun things in 2022 like hardcore & hyperpop. I saw a grand total of 47 shows last year alone! I want to beat that record in 2023.

Merlin
Can you also let readers know anything that feels important to you about your disability?

Sydney
I have a genetic disability that has been progressing over time (as well as other chronic illnesses) that affects everything - but especially my joints, muscles, nerves, etc, and I'm autistic. I've used all kinds of mobility aids in my life and now use a power wheelchair full time, as well as my service dog Wish (she's a Golden Retriever) to do pretty much everything I can't or find difficult - picking up dropped objects, helping me take socks and jackets off, opening and closing doors, flipping light switches, pushing door opener buttons, and more. She's a smart girl! Wish doesn't come to shows if I'm in the pit, but has been to a few where it's safe for her in the seats or separate accessible seating (and in her hearing protection). Otherwise, I use a "service human" in the form of a friend or my mom.

Merlin

What kind of chair do you use?

Sydney

I use a power wheelchair. I also think that being a power wheelchair user enables me to go to shows and be up front in a way that is not available to (or easy for) all wheelchair users, since I have an elevating seat, so I can get eye level or even a bit taller than the people next to me. I have a manual wheelchair with power assist that I use only when absolutely necessary since it's physically more difficult for me - I get tired faster, my baseline level of pain is much higher, I can't do even half as much, I'm shorter in it, etc.

Merlin

Where do you usually sit at shows?

Sydney

I half-jokingly say that I'm a "front row or don't go" kind of person - you will almost always find me in the pit, at the barricade, front and center. Usually if I'm anywhere other than the front row, I either wasn't able to buy a pit ticket because they sold out too quickly or the venue was discriminatory and tried to prevent me from being there because of my wheelchair. Or, I did intentionally stay further back from the stage at a hardcore show recently because I can't really mosh in my powerchair. (I totally would, but I don't want to get tipped over or accidentally squish toes. Hahaha.)

Merlin

What's a great show you saw recently?

Sydney

I saw Lingua Ignota at Trinity St Paul's Church here last December, and that show really stuck with me. It was one of the very few shows I've seen where there were almost no phones up filming, the audience was totally silent, and people were fully absorbed in it and even crying. I was front row (definitely impressed by the accessibility there, especially given I got the ticket last minute and didn't really tell them far in advance I was coming, just called day of to make sure there was a ramp and then made my front row request when I got there) and had never been to a Lingua show. I immediately recommended all my friends go see her when I got home. Her music is already so beautiful and immersive and fascinating but to experience it live was another level. She started the show from the balcony in the audience, walked through the audience at other parts. It was also unique in the sense that there was no opener, just two different sets of hers with a 15 minute intermission between.

I love shows that blur the line of music and performance art. And an honour to get to see Kristin's last tour as this Lingua project!

Merlin

What advice do you have for other wheelchair users who want to go to shows? I only recently started going back to shows because I got my chair, but it can be really intimidating to think about taking a chair to the pit.



Sydney

I think it's important to check in with yourself and ask yourself what you want to do for seating and shows. I've met lots of wheelchair users who find what I do exciting, and just as many others who find the idea of being in the pit or on the floor scary, or simply not something they're interested in. Both sides are valid, and the whole point of my advocacy these days - and in this space specifically - is for the right of choice. Really, I just want us as disabled music fans to be given the same amount of choice that abled people get, but I am in no way suggesting that the pit is right for every wheelchair user. Just as an abled person doesn't have to be in the pit because someone like them enjoys that experience, the same goes for us! Disability is so individual.

For the pit, you need to consider many things: how big is the venue? Are you ready that if you're in the pit, you will not be able to leave it during the show, and it will be very crowded and tight? Are you ready to be pushed and bumped accidentally by other fans (especially dependent on the genre & artist you're seeing)?

If you do want to be in the pit, I also strongly recommend researching and/or contacting the venue in advance and making sure that there are no physical barriers to you being in there and that the venue does not have a policy against you doing so. Even though those policies are discriminatory and technically illegal, we still live in a time where they are unfortunately out there. On the other hand, many venues welcome me to the pit/floor and remember me!

Sydney

I am lucky to say my positive experiences far outnumber the negative ones. Smaller shows are generally easier as well, I will say that I don't really do arena shows or stadium shows. The biggest shows I go to these days are for Florence + the Machine.

Lastly, if the venue has a barricade (the metal fence between the stage and the crowd that generally comes up to a standing person's chest), you probably won't be able to see over it in a manual wheelchair. Venues that have a barricade should be able to offer you an alternate accommodation if this is your situation (such as seating you in front of the barricade off to one side, or a separate accessible section). I have done two shows in my manual wheelchair where there was a barricade, and I was able to see just enough, but this will vary from venue to venue and individual to individual. (If you want to be behind a barricade in a manual wheelchair you also have to be prepared for the fact that you must be front row to see. Many venues will let you in first if you ask.)

Merlin

You mentioned doing advocacy for disabled people's right to be at shows, can you talk about that?

Sydney

Yes, I spend a lot of time talking to venues, staff, managers, etc. about accessibility and our right to the floor. Because I often line up to get a good spot in the pit, it gives me time and I will really talk to anyone at the venue that will listen! I always make friends in line as well and my advocacy usually comes up - I think educating our peers is important too.

Sydney

I'm currently working on pressuring two of our venues in town to fix those policies I mentioned earlier that keep wheelchair users out of the pit for no good reason, and when I'm talking to venues I'll explain the importance of having an accessible seating section separate from the pit and an accessible floor. If walking people get to pick between seats and the floor, we should be able to as well! The only reason that venues still have accessible seating but no accessible floor (or won't allow wheelchair users to the floor or pit) is plain ableism, and the assumption that we are less worthy of autonomy and independent choice, or the assumption that we don't deserve an equal experience. Society often does not view us as people, even subconsciously.

Merlin

Any etiquette advice for non wheelchair users at shows when they're in the crowd with someone using a chair?



Sydney

Honestly, use the same etiquette that you would for a walking person! I had a frustrating experience in the pit at Beabadoobee in December where people felt they could lean on me or grab onto my push handles, which isn't at all appropriate. How I explained it to people later, and how I still explain it now, is that the same things that are okay for a walking fan are okay for a wheelchair-using one. Accidental bumping or pushing is understandable absolutely, and I won't be mad, but treating me like furniture isn't. My armrests are for me to rest my arms on, not strangers. It's like leaning on some standing person's shoulder in the pit... you just wouldn't. **My wheelchair is my body**, and leaning on me makes me incredibly uncomfortable at best and could damage my (expensive, custom) wheelchair at worst.

Aside from that, just talk to us normally and don't make weird disability jokes if you're a stranger (but you can also laugh at my jokes if I do make one, I promise!). I can always tell when people are speaking down to me, or are surprised to see me, or are amused by my presence in the pit as if I don't deserve to be there. Just talk to me like you would if I were a standing person, I promise I'm nice and would love to talk to you about anything music related!

Merlin

Anything else you want to add?

Sydney

I would encourage other disabled people to try out anything that interests them and see if there's a way they can make it work. Ableism (both our own internalized ableism as well as the more obvious societal ableism) loves to tell us where we do and don't belong, but that decision should be yours. I've always loved music and concerts, but only started going so frequently and being up front and advocating for my place there when I randomly had the opportunity last spring to be front row. It was some of the most fun I've ever had, and I wouldn't have even known I love that experience (and eventually learned I love being front row and in the pit at all kinds of shows) if I hadn't just tried it. Whether it's at a concert or anywhere else, you deserve to be there if you want to be and you are allowed to take up space both literally and metaphorically. Showing up to a space especially as a visibly disabled person is a powerful act of resistance, and I'm proud of every disabled person reading this and finding their place in the world.

SHOWING UP TO A SPACE ESPECIALLY AS A VISIBLY DISABLED PERSON IS A POWERFUL ACT OF RESISTANCE, AND I'M PROUD OF EVERY DISABLED PERSON READING THIS AND FINDING THEIR PLACE IN THE WORLD.

 @sydneymakes_

THAT'S IT! THE END! THANK YOU FOR READING <3 WEAR A MASK, PICK PEOPLE UP WHEN THEY FALL DOWN, CARRY NARCAN, TEST YOUR DRUGS, DON'T TALK TO COPS, DO TALK TO STRANGERS, GIVE MONEY TO THE HOMELESS, START A BAND, START A ZINE, TELL PEOPLE YOU LIKE THEIR SHOES, BE TRANSGENDER, SUCUMB TO THE PLEASURES OF THE FLESH!

