



# SWEDISH THRASH SCUMPI ATTACK!

In the last half-decade, due to the Killed By Death and Bloodstains compilations, early punk rock has become a focal point of both punk record collecting and punk historical inquiry. The work

done to document the bizarre bands that dotted the landscape with their one-off 45s truly impresses me. Hardcore has been documented well, and this magazine has had an active role in that documentation from the start. However, I do think there is a need for its history to be told again because there are bands today still using the lessons Toxic Reasons or BGK taught about touring, while there are few people twiddling knobs in hopes of reproducing Tapeworm's zany production. I'm hoping to write several articles focusing on the formative early years of certain

have only the vaguest idea that punk has always been international. Their record titles are memorable and characterize the genre: "Anarkist Attack," "Raped Ass" and "Victims of a Bombraid." Long before I had ever heard this band, I knew they had penned the immortal line: "This fucking system is like a raped ass." Then, when I finally did hear them, something clicked. I knew that Discharge was hugely influential, but I realized that it wasn't just the D-beat or the wailing waves of guitars, but it was also a certain attitude (one that is fundamentally punk) which was influential. Discharge brought hardcore to the UK at a time when nearly everyone making such declarations had declared punk dead. 1979 had some bright spots, in the form of the original "second wave" bands, but overall, punk's original idea of pushing the envelope had been forgotten. The fuck-you attitude could only grow more stale as it was rehearsed by bands with music that was no longer a



national hardcore scenes.

In the last few years, European hardcore bands have re-surfaced in popularity, touring the US and putting out records on US labels. This is not a replay of the '80s, when bands like Raw Power and BGK changed the face of American hardcore. Rather, the bands that are coming over today reflect the change that American hardcore had on bands from other countries. For many kids, unfortunately, the mention of European hardcore calls to mind bands which imitate US hardcore (and that's why they are popular). However, there was a time when each country in the world had its own general sound for hardcore. We think of Italy, with its chaotic drumbeats, lines of lyrics far too long for the rhythm, and psychotic vocals or Brazil, with its ultra-gruff vocals, trebly, cymbal-heavy production, and rough guitar sound. Since hardcore is, like it or not, essentially imitative and self-referential, it must be possible to draw a line, even if it's crooked or dotted, to a band that laid down a certain sound template or a record that you'd play for a friend who wondered what you meant when you talked about Italian or Brazilian hardcore. Since I am most excited about Swedish hardcore, my first column will deal with Swedish hardcore—one of the most loved and internationally reproduced national sounds.

Anti-Cimex is a band name recognized by many who

sonorous fuck you.

In the US, Middle Class and Bad Brains, on opposite coasts, and without having heard of each other, simultaneously put out records that are now considered the first hardcore records. It's been said that a Bad Brains demo tape made it to the Ny Våg (new wave) radio show in Sweden (the only place to hear punk on the radio in Sweden), but it's clear that the first hardcore band to influence a number of bands outside the US or UK was Discharge. Their attitude was somewhat similar to that of The Ramones: strip down the music, play it loud, don't over-emphasize lyrics because we ain't philosophers, and, oh yeah, fuck you if you don't like it because we'll do it anyway. Many ossified punk rockers who wished it was still '77 claimed that Discharge weren't punk because their music was so abrasive; of course, such people didn't realize that they has become exactly like the establishment punk had originally rejected. So, this is a long-winded way of saying that Anti-Cimex, named after an insecticide, were firmly rooted in the tradition of Discharge's attitude—one of pushing the envelope—as well as in their musical tradition. Sweden, as the Bloodstains compilations show, had



a ton of punk bands in the late '70s, most of whom were centered around the nation's universities (they're free in Sweden). One of the most popular were the Rude Kids, an absolutely amazing band, who were on the major label Polydor. Their attitude was punk to the bone and their single "Raggare Is A Bunch of Motherfuckers" caused them to be severely beaten by raggare, a gang of thugs like the Teds who enjoyed beating up punks or chasing them down in their big American cars (don't you just love youth culture?). What is most important to our discussion is the Rude Kids' sound, which I would call proto-hardcore because of its rough guitars and vocals and its high energy. It seems to me that the Rude Kids probably had an influence almost equal to that of Discharge on the



record itself. The 7" did not see much export until later, when it was repressed on Malign Massacre Records, run by Mats of the Headcleaners. While the original press was 500 copies in a flimsy two-piece sleeve depicting some poor soul getting stabbed in the stomach by a soldier, the subsequent presses are the infamous "Cracked Cop Skulls" sleeve depicting the band, in a crude but charming drawing, murdering some cops. The bassist, Jonsson (remember that name), is ripping a cop in half—lengthwise! For export, the band anglicized their name to Shitlickers (some confused people may think the two are different bands) and called the record "Cracked Cop Skulls," which is an English translation of the song title "Sprackta Snutskallar." The



ANTI-CIMEX



Victims of a bomb raid



early Swedish hardcore scene due to their popularity. A similar comparison would be to say that even though many American bands don't sound like Minor Threat, the members have been greatly influenced by the band because they are ubiquitous in our punk heritage. Every drunk I know can sing "Straight Edge" word for word.

Some collectors might remind us that Missbrukarna put out a split 7" before Anti-Cimex had put out a record, and that Huvudtvatt (Headcleaners when they sang in English) had their own label and a couple releases before Anti-Cimex, but they never gigged and the band members' identities were something of a mystery to many Swedish punks. Thus, when we talk about the genre Swedish hardcore, we are not talking about bands that sound like either of those two bands, we are talking about ones that sound, more or less, like Anti-Cimex!

In 1982, in Göteborg, a band called Skitslickers released a 4-song 45 called "Warsystem" on GBG Records (which was really Bullshit Rec). In this magazine, Felix Havoc aptly described it as sounding like four punks broke into a recording studio in the middle of the night, cranked the knobs to eleven, and busted out the wickedest hardcore yet recorded before the cops showed up. The band released the

export version has two presses: the first is on flimsy red paper—almost construction paper—that is a 3/4 size sheet, meaning that the back of the sleeve only goes half-way up. On my copy the ink has faded or partially rubbed off meaning that it was printed quite cheaply. The second press is on slightly heavier white paper with a slightly different drawing (see the bottom right corner) and a full back. I guess that the red-sleeve version had 500 pressed, while the white had 1000 or more. I've never seen it, but there's also a "US Press" of the 7" which was made from the left-over vinyl after the sleeves ran out. The sleeve was photocopied and it says, "Distributed by: Systematic, Rough Trade and Really Fast" on the back. There were probably about 100 copies of this press.

All presses have the same classic four songs. This 7" was supposedly bootlegged quite a while ago in a white-sleeve version that might be almost the same as the original. However, I've never seen one of these bootlegs. It was bootlegged in the last half-decade with the first Anti-Cimex 7" as the B-



side. Distortion Records has also legitimately reissued it on CD and LP picture-disc with an unreleased second 7" as the B-side. Unfortunately the unreleased tracks are more derivative, straight Discharge-imitation with horrible, not just rough, production. Supposedly, Ny Våg would not play Skitslickers because the singer, Lasse, never returned a tee-shirt he'd borrowed from the DJ! One thing that makes the Skitslickers 7" desirable, in any of the three versions, is how fucking cool they look in the pictures. Studs, leather and spiky hair that outdoes most of the British bands without looking like they were only into looking cool. I've seen this record sell for a wide range of prices, but I would say that it's worth buying regardless of the price if you do want an original. The urgency of the songs caused the urgency of my need to own an original. However, if you first see one for more than \$75, you should probably wait for the next one. If the next one is that price too, buy it. Luckily, no one needs to track down an original just to hear the music. I believe it's impossible to talk about Anti-Cimex without talking about Skitslickers and vice versa. They both put out records that are among my personal top-5 ever. And they shared a sensibility about how hardcore should be played: loud and fast—before Harley actually played in a band that was either. Anti-Cimex and Skitslickers shared a member (Jonsson), but Skitslickers broke up before Anti-Cimex put out their 2nd 7".

While I think Anti-Cimex's "Anarkist Attack" is great, compared to the Skitslickers 7" or their own 2nd

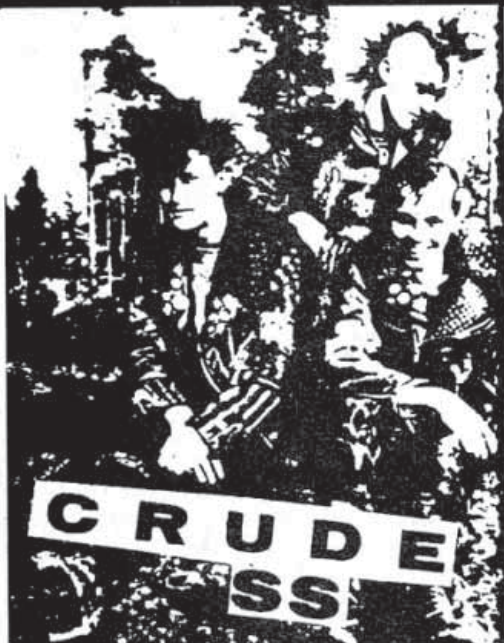


time (that was Jeff Bale's hypothesis in his original MRR review of the record). Oddly enough, people who've obtained this record in the last few years have probably paid over \$150 (generally more than for the second).

By the way, except for "Anarkist Attack," all the 7"s discussed in this article had blank center-labels originally. Most Swedish 7"s of the period came this way because, supposedly, it cost as much



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and 3rd 7"s, it's flat and boring. Anti-Cimex's first 7" was released on Jonsson's Bullshit Recordz in '81. There were 500 copies with a photocopied insert that I've only seen in a couple copies (it includes handwritten lyrics and band information). The Discharge influence was not present yet, and it's possible the band was listening to some early US hardcore at the

to print the labels as it did to press the records. The labels of "Anarkist Attack" have a simple drawing of a punk rocker and the song titles. After the first 7", which was shouted in Swedish, Anti-Cimex recorded a demo or two in Swedish. The demo includes some really raw tuneage that indicated where they were headed. Three tracks from it appear on Really Fast Volume 1 LP, which came out in '83. As a side note, I should mention that this compilation (recently reissued along with #2 and #3 by Sound Idea) is unbelievably raw and urgent while also spanning nascent genres; Swedish hardcore as we know it was on the brink of inventing itself. Unlike the Finnish scene of the same time, the Swedish scene had a lot of styles of punk (not just thrash), but "Swedish hardcore" is a term that describes a specific genre within the larger Swedish hardcore scene. It may seem like I'm splitting hairs, but when someone says that Masskontroll played Swedish hardcore even though they were from Oregon in the mid-'90s, we know that they did not sound like Raped Teenagers



or Asta Kask, we know they sounded like Crude SS and Anti-Cimex. The reason I would say that the Skitslickers 7" did not spawn the genre is that it was the band's only release and they were short-lived. It could have been a fluke (of course it wasn't); an analogous 7" in the US might be SOA's only 7". But if someone put a gun to your head and asked you to say what the first Swedish hardcore record was, the



Skitslickers 7" would be the best answer. Also, around the same time as RF vol 1 (perhaps before), Rosa Honung released a compilation LP called "Vågra För Helvete" with Asta Kask, Sabotage '81, Nyx Negativ, DNA, and Anti-Cimex among others. The two Anti-Cimex tracks are in the same vein as the Really Fast tracks: hard thrash with Swedish vocals; one is a thrashier version of a track from the first 7".

Before "Raped Ass" (the moment you've all been waiting for), Bullshit Rec released a total obscurity that I would say is right between "Anarkist Attack" and "Raped Ass" in sound and sentiment: the "Blodig Stag" 7" by Absurd. This record, in my opinion, is amazing because of its timing (recorded Nov '82) and its obscurity. 500 copies with a lyric insert similar to the "Anarkist Attack" insert. The band disappeared from the planet, it seems, right after its release. They were mentioned as having broken up in a Swedish scene report in this magazine, then a picture of them appeared, but I have not seen any mention of them since except on collectors' wantlists! If anyone from Absurd is reading, please get in touch because that 7" is a reissue waiting to happen!

So, Anti-Cimex, in this period, had made the crucial shift to singing in English, and putting Jonsson on vocals; Nillen, with his wimpy vocals, left the band to front DNA (who put out a 12" and some comp tracks in those days) and a new bassist, Conrad, took over on bass. Supposedly, at some point, Jonsson tried out for the vocals of Asta Kask! Can you imagine how different the world would be? He also is said to have played drums for Product Assar who appeared on Really Fast Vol 1. Busy guy, eh?

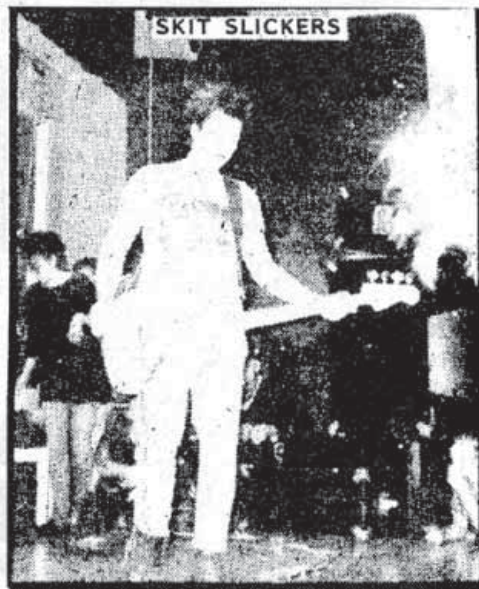
After this line-up change, Anti-Cimex found their sound, and, in my opinion, they made some of the best hardcore ever. Some punks, both at the time and since, have criticized the band for having a political pose, but not following through with it. My personal view on this (removed by a few thousand miles and almost two decades) is that their critics, predictably, haven't understood that the genre they were creating had political overtones in its anti-establishment and anti-war ideals, but, at root, was not part of any political or ideological movement. They sang about issues, but weren't obsessed with them as say, Crass were. Their politics were their action: they created urgent music that could break down barriers set up by nation-states and music-industry corporations. Other than that, serious political pronouncements was for genres of punk in which they were not taking part.

Crude SS were a more-political early Swedish hardcore band. Although they were around at the same time as Anti-Cimex, their 7" did not come out until '84 and we can see that their influence is more prevalent in current political bands like Snifter, while Anti-Cimex's influence is more prevalent in marginally political bands like Disclose or Meanwhile. In the end, though, does anyone really need a more complex political philosophy than "You talk about the freedom but we have no freedom / You talk about the rights but we have no rights / This fucking system is like a raped ass"??

The high point of Anti-Cimex's discography, of course, was the "Raped

Ass" 7" on @ Rec. That label was run by an anarchist named Svempa who was connected with a local anarchist café! The five songs on this record capture the rage so many of us feel in the face of this fucked-up system; few records match the fury and immediacy of this one. Though the Skitslickers set a benchmark for raw guitars and pummeling drums, "Raped Ass" combines some of the rawest vocals ever with production that is, I think, the perfect thrash production (much better than the demos which preceded it). Today, it's difficult to think of good punk production without thinking of glossy, heavy-metal-like production, but be sure that's not what I mean when I say "Raped Ass" has sick production. Perhaps it was a studio accident, but its production helps the record be so memorable. The 7" has guitars that are up-front, like a jackhammer in your brain, and solos that whine with ferocity and pain; chaotic D-beat drums that don't dominate or bore, but aren't quiet either; bass that holds up the bottom without making the sound bottom out; and vocals that are forceful, frenetic and harsh. Again, I think "raw" is the best description for this 7". When I put it on, I can't help but clench my teeth and pound my fists! It's no accident that Swedish hardcore is called "Räpunk" in Swedish. "When The Innocent Die" is one of my favorite songs ever, and it's a great choice for the first song (the order of tracks on a record is very important to me).

Until I started to write this article, I believed what I think is common collector knowledge: that there were 2 presses of 500 of this 7". Thanks to some discussions with Mats of Distortion (who was the major distrib-





utor of Swedish hardcore back then), I've discovered that there are FOUR presses of the 7". The first press, of 1000, is a cardboard, folded sleeve. The second, on Really Fast instead of @, is a fold-out poster with pictures and lyrics inside—300 of this. Out of these 300, 150 have printed sleeves (the first 30 of which differ—the "violin drawing" is absent) and 150 have photocopies of the printed sleeve due to a loss of the master. Apparently, Jonsson got very mad at Really Fast over this press because he forgot (!) that they had Svempa's permission to re-press it. The third is super-surprising, and should be at the top of your want list: 333 copies on clear vinyl with an actual photo; this press was used mainly for promotion! The fourth, the one I bought thinking it was first, is 300 copies with a two-piece sleeve made of the same flimsy paper as the Skitslickers'. Needless to say, all these presses are extremely rare. As far as I've seen, the artwork is the same for all picture sleeves. The artwork on this record is punk as fuck, too. In the grand tradition of punk appropriation of existing art, Anti-Cimex took a somewhat famous drawing by Ron Cobb for Fifth Estate, the Detroit anarcho-primitivist magazine, and placed it above the words "Raped Ass." The next time someone asks you what this punk thing is all about, you could show this sleeve to the person and say, like a Zen master, when one understands this, one understands punk. To the outsider, it's simply repugnant, but we know that such a reaction is too simple because punk, by that time, was no longer about being mindlessly shocking.

After this amazing 7", there were some rumors regarding what the next Anti-Cimex record would be. At first, in March '84, they said it would be a 7" called "Set Me Free." In May '84, the band produced the classic "Victims of a Bombraid" 7" on Malign Massacre Records (with "Set Me Free" as one of the songs). While this record is still very rare, it is the easiest of the three to find. It would have been impossible for the band to have matched the previous 7", but this one is nearly as good. If I had to choose a single 7" that defines Swedish hardcore, this one would be the one. It has all the elements: sweeping guitars, D-beat drums, harsh vocals and stark war imagery. The title track, which Jonsson screamed as "Wictims of a Bombraid," is so fucking good! A classic!

There are three presses of this 7". Again, the pressing information was a slight mystery to me before doing the research for this article.

The first press, of 1000, was a full-size sleeve with pictures and lyrics inside and "Anti-Cimex" written in silver ink on the front. The sleeve was printed by an unreliable shop run by drunks that left the band name off the front, so they had to add it later at a different printshop. Also, on this press, there is blood dripping from the words "Victims of a Bombraid" while later ones do not have this crucial imagery. The second press was almost the same as the first, but with nothing inside it and with white lettering on the front. The third had "Anti-Cimex" written in a different font than the previous two, and included a photocopied insert with photos

and lyrics. The last two presses were of 500 each. I know that math-wise, it seems like the 3rd 7" should be rarer than "Raped Ass," but experience will tell you that that is not the case.

After the 3rd 7", for fall '84, the band announced an LP and a European tour with the Skeptix (one of the best UK hardcore bands, with Discharge's drummer). The LP didn't come out and I don't know if this tour happened, but if there was ever a tour I wish I could have seen ...

In 1986, Anti-Cimex put out a 12" that is variously called "s/t" or "Painkiller." The record was released on the British label Distraught Records. NYC's now-defunct Distraught took their logo from the center-label of this 12". This record is surprisingly awesome. It reveals a slight Motorhead influence, which would be fully articulated in Wolfpack which Jonsson started in the mid-'90s. Oddly, the record has sound bites or effects between most of the songs, but they aren't totally distracting (who cares about a machine gun here or there, anyway?). A re-done version

of the classic "Set Me Free" from the 3rd 7" appears on the 12". This record is definitely rarer than "Victims of a Bombraid" because there were only 1000 copies.

After this 12", the band released a few more records: the better-than-you'd-expect "Absolut Country of Sweden" LP, the metallic "Scandinavian Jawbreaker" LP, and a live 7" called "Fucked in Finland". The (most important) second and third 7"s have been reissued by Distortion on CD and 12" called "Victims of a Raped Ass." On the bootleg 2x7" "Let's Start a Riot in Sweden" (an excellent sampler of the era), some of the band's sick demo tracks appear: "Wave of Fear" which was to be on the never released LP "En Dod Soldat," an amazingly brutal track that was recorded a few months before "Raped Ass." There is a chance that someone will re-release all of the Swedish-language Anti-Cimex demos on CD/LP, but don't hold your breath.

On a 1986 Brazilian compilation LP put out by New Face Rec, called "Afflicted Cries in the Darkness of War," the 3rd Anti-Cimex 7" was re-released along with some other Swedish thrash classics by Crude SS, Rovsvett and Fear of War. Finally, on the relatively rare bootleg LP "Eat My





Brain Go Insane" by Revoltation, one can find the first Anti-Cimex 7" plus the tracks from "Vagra För Helvete." Demos by Asocial, Bedrövlertz and Mob 47 also appear on this LP.

Mob 47 took a heavy international influence from bands like DRI, Neos, Poison Idea and Lärm, and broke the speed record in Sweden with demos, comp tracks and a 7" as raw as those by the Göteborg bands, but much faster. Mob 47 are one of my favorite bands, and their axe-man, Åke, played an essential role in the Stockholm scene (as excellently documented by the just-released 2xLP "Stockholms Mangel" on Distortion Rec), but their speed and tightness was not really replicated by any other bands outside Stockholm. Additionally, most other Swedish bands of the time stuck to UK influences like Anti-Cimex did. Mob 47 are the Ying to Anti-Cimex's Yang, with a center of rawness and aggression in each, but the fact is that when we talk about Swedish hardcore, Mob 47 are included, but most of the original bands that form the core of genre (Disarm, Crude SS, SOD, DTAL, Krunch, Moderat Likvidation, Avskum, Asocial, etc.) sounded like Anti-Cimex, not Mob 47.

Felix Havoc wrote in this magazine a couple years ago that the most important Swedish hardcore 7"s are: Anti-Cimex "Raped Ass," Skitslickers "Warsystem," Mob 47 "s/t," Crude SS "Who'll Survive," and SOD "Beside My Head." I agree with these choices. In fact, I'd say that all these records transcend the genre and can stand on their own without references to the genre they produced. There are, however, many other Swedish hardcore and melodic punk records from the same period that are amazing. Top bad I can't write about every single one. I want to thanks Mats from Distortion, Patrik from Really Fast and Felix Havoc for help with research. For more information, write to me c/o MRR if you have time to spare, or, for a quick reply, e-mail gameofthearseholes@hotmail.com.



**D-BEAT MASSACRE**