

COLIN BRUNTON

The first wave of Toronto punk came to a crashing conclusion on December 1st, 1978 at Toronto's Horseshoe Tavern with the Last Pogo, where they had the final couple of gigs featuring the first Toronto punk bands. The Horseshoe had grown uncomfortable with the new genre of music that was being booked by the promoters, the Garys (Topp and Cormier), and as a result, they gave The Garys and the punk scene their walking papers. We got an opportunity to talk to Colin Brunton who caught this last show on film, resulting in the 26 minute movie *The Last Pogo* which had remained underground for 30 years until the DVD release in 2008.

Interview by Greg Dick

MRR: So you're a Toronto boy?

Colin Brunton: Yep. I started off in The Beaches, then I spent a couple of years in Scarborough, then the West End. When I was thirteen, I went out to the East End where I remained.

MRR: Did you go to high school out in the East End?

Colin Brunton: Yep. East York Collegiate.

MRR: What kind of bands were you getting into in high school?

Colin Brunton: This would have been the early '70s, so I still loved Led Zeppelin. I hate to admit it, but I was into Edgar Winter. I also liked bands like Humble Pie, but my real secret shame is Jethro Tull. Loved Alice Cooper. The bands that I really liked I got into when I was twelve or thirteen. Those were Alice Cooper and the Yardbirds. It started off with the British Invasion, and opened up to the Animals and the Kinks and all that stuff, and when I got into high school I was getting into Led Zep. The musical thing for me in high school was scoring this gig at The Original 99 Cent Roxy. Gary Topp hired me to work there. That's when I got really turned on to tons of awesome music, film, culture, and art and stuff. The best one was finding out about Roxy Music.

MRR: What was your first exposure to punk rock? A lot of us saw pictures first before we saw bands.

Colin Brunton: It depends on how far you want to go back.

MRR: I'm talking spiky hair, safety pins...

Colin Brunton: I don't think the spiky hair started until '79 or '80, but my first thing I guess—discounting an Iggy or Velvet Underground gig, would've been the Ramones when they came in September of '76. Obviously, months before that we were all getting a taste of it. Gary used to show this movie called *Blank Generation* at midnight shows at The New Yorker. It is a film by Amps Poe, a documentary on the New York punk scene, so you got a little taste of the Dead Boys, Ramones, Talking Heads, Television...all that, and you'd have to ask Gary himself this question, but I think that's what got him keenly interested; the first couple of shows he brought were the Ramones and John Cale, and then everything just kind of changed.

MRR: I started seeing pictures of a lot of the New York bands in *Rockscene* before they had records out. I know the movie *Blank Generation* was kind of interesting because the audio is not in sync with the footage, but it was the only way to see these bands

at the time unless you lived in New York, which we didn't.

Colin Brunton: And if you were at The New Yorker at midnight watching *Blank Generation* and smoking weed, or being on some other thing, it didn't matter if it was in sync.

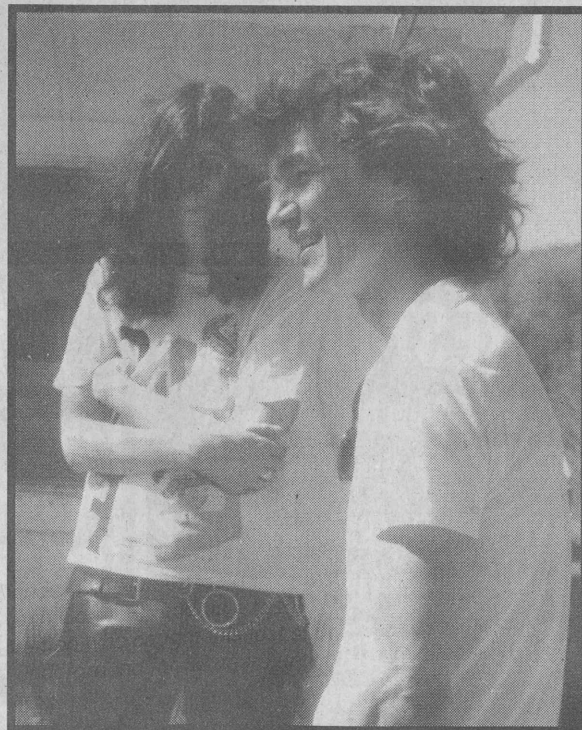
MRR: How did you meet The Garys?

Colin Brunton: I was a high school kid. The 99 Cent Roxy was the cool theatre to go to. Not just for awesome movies. There were double bills, different movies every night, and it was a fun place to go to. Gary Topp's presentation was unparalleled. As soon as you walked in the door, the show started. When you got into the theatre itself, it was the music he played, playing movie trailers without the sound but with rock music over it. It was a buzz. So, I hung out there, and what happened was that it started getting really busy when Gary brought *Reefer Madness*. He offered to pay me and a pal twenty bucks a night to watch the doors and make sure people weren't sneaking in, and it just kind of evolved from there. I continued to work with Gary there, then The New Yorker Theatre, and then at the Horseshoe. To work at the Roxy Theatre in high school was considered pretty awesome. It was the only movie theatre in Toronto where you could openly smoke dope. We experimented with marijuana there quite often.

MRR: You were hanging out with the Garys making sure everything was running smoothly?

Colin Brunton: Gary Cormier wasn't in the picture at the Roxy so it was just Gary Topp and a couple of other partners who didn't stick around that long. Then this guy named Jeff Silverman from Brooklyn came in and helped Gary run it. My job was great. I was taking tickets, and then as soon as I took the tickets I could go in and watch the movie, and just make sure I was out for the break. And occasionally throw people out of the theatre. We didn't tolerate people who drank or dealt drugs, so they could smoke all the dope they wanted to, but if we heard the clink of a bottle we would be down there

figuring out who it was, and casually ask them to leave the theatre. We'd have to talk down people that were having bad acid trips. Our failsafe was the guys that hung out at the pool hall across the street, so if we ever got in big trouble they were there for the rescue. I remember once I had to throw this guy out that was on PCP or something. I had to sit on his chest, and he looked at me and he just started rising up, and I thought, "Fuck, I'm going to get killed here." Then Ducky, and Spike, and the boys from the pool hall came across and saved me.



Right: Colin with Joey Ramone
Photo by Tim Sebert

And now live from Toronto



The Last Pogo.

MRR: The crowd that you were seeing at the theatre, would you say that they might have been the foundation of the future punk scene?

Colin Brunton: A lot of the regulars ended up going to The New Yorker and the Horseshoe, and it wasn't so much a clique. It was a fantastic place to get this really wide taste of culture. It wasn't necessarily 'punk. Gary would show Roger Corman movies one night, and the next night a Buñuel double bill, and always new music. He'd just hear about bands before anyone else did. The kind of creativity it encouraged may have planted a seed in certain people's minds that continued on and contributed to the idea of punk. You can't measure how much influence Gary Topp has had on the counter culture in Toronto.

MRR: Gary went on to spearhead the Toronto punk scene, and I always found there were parallels between cinema, literature, and the first generation punk scene. I noticed in Hamilton the people at The Delta would pop up at Club David's and the Crash 'n' Burn. They're curious and they were looking for something a little cutting-edge, which I think is what a lot of those rep theatre type places were. Were there ever any gigs at The Roxy?

Colin Brunton: Probably one of the best shows I have ever seen was the first gig I ever saw at The Roxy by an awesome band called Breathless, which featured a very young—he must have been maybe seventeen-years-old—Nash The Slash, playing his electric viola. Later on, I remember a ten minute concert by Nash where he sat down—I think it was his premier gig as the masked Nash The Slash, and he did a live soundtrack to Dali and Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou*. And you have to know that when people went to any weekend show at The Roxy they were ripped out of their minds. I remember sitting watching Nash and watching the audience, and everyone was leaning forward in their seats watching the movie, their jaws were just *dropped*. They couldn't believe this. It was unreal. He had a candelabra set up, and did trickery with his tape machines, which was so ahead of it's time. It was fantastic.

MRR: Why did the theatre close?

Colin Brunton: I think it was the rent. They didn't own the building. From what I can recall

and now live from Toronto



THE CARDBOARD BRAINS
on BOMB RECORDS and TAPES

the Last Pogo BOMB 7029

as a little stoned seventeen-year-old kid, I think it was a matter of however successful Gary was there, the landlords would up the rent, and I don't think they ever got a piece of the snack bar. That's how you make money at a movie theatre. The tickets were 99 cents and the thing would sell out every weekend. After a while they just couldn't make any money, so they moved on to The New Yorker and leased the place off of a guy called Bennet Fode. It was kind of the same deal as The Roxy: Different movies every night, midnight shows, stuff like that.

Nash The Slash was the first manager, and I was his assistant for about the first year. We would take turns going to the basement, having a puff of weed, and then taking off to Funland to play pinball. (Sorry Gary!) I remember one day Gary and Jeff needed to get the snack bar fixed and they called in this carpenter. This long-haired, bearded guy came in and did an excellent job, and he and Gary just hit it off. That was Gary Cormier. He had some experience managing Rough Trade, but had gotten out of the business, and I think meeting Gary Topp... they were kindred spirits. They both got excited about doing this stuff and the next thing you know they built a stage and started bringing in all these bands. They became known as the Garys. It was very exciting. That's where it happened. I am pretty certain the first one was the Ramones although it could have been Ali Akbar Khan, a sitar player. It was one of those two and then John Cale was probably the second or third person.

It was all just mind-blowing. The thing about The New Yorker that was awesome was that it was a small theatre with 500 seats, so *any* seat was a great seat. What made it more intimate was the fact that there was no back stage, and so the bands would have to walk from the basement through the lobby and down the aisle. You would just hear this *buzz* starting because everyone in the back would say, "Hey, here comes John Cale!" or whatever, and the applause would build and go to the front like a wave, and then they would leave the same way—off the stage, walk up the aisle, through the lobby, and down into the furnace room.

MRR: The first time the Ramones played was with Johnny Lovesin. Tell us about that show.

Colin Brunton: It was great. I don't know if you can get a show much more exciting than the first Ramones show. It was Johnny Lovesin

and His Invisible Band, which means that it was Johnny Lovesin solo. And he was great! What balls to go and open for this band that everybody was so excited about.

MRR: I didn't see the first Ramones show. I went the second time when they had the Dead Boys open for them.

Colin Brunton: We were excited. They didn't let us down. Three shows man. Five bucks a ticket.

The Garys probably never made a nickel off of it. They couldn't sell out the three shows. I think they did a total of 1,300 tickets. Peter Gabriel walked out after the first ten minutes of the show muttering, "This is bullshit." We were thinking, "This is un-fucking-believable!" It was such an assault, and it was so different and faster and crazier than anything you'd heard up until that point.

MRR: The second time they came the Dead Boys played with them. Were there more people the second time around?

Colin Brunton: I am pretty certain that one was sold out. That was the Dead Boys, the Poles, and the Ramones. The nasty Dead Boys... They came quite a few times. I interviewed Cheetah a couple of summers ago at a cemetery for this project that I've been working on for a couple of years. When we were at The New Yorker, Gary and Jeff got me to clean up what would be the dressing room. I would take this muriatic acid and splash it on the wall, and then hide my nose away from it, then scrub it with this brush and try and clean this whole brick wall. We tried to make this crappy basement into a dressing room and we got it looking okay, and then the Dead Boys came and trashed it in, like, an hour! When I interviewed Cheetah, I called him on it, and it was funny because he was just so apologetic. "I'm so sorry. Did we really destroy it?" "Yes. Yes you did." "I'm so sorry man". The Dead Boys were bad boys.

MRR: During the time that The New Yorker was happening, what other clubs or hangouts were there back then?

Colin Brunton: It is hard to track it all. In '76 or '77 I think the first one that popped up was the Colonial Underground, and there was the Turning Point, David's, and I believe that the Crash 'n' Burn didn't start until the following summer. Then it seemed like a new club would

RAMONES
at the New Yorker

ALL SEATS \$5.00 PLUS TAX
ADVANCE TICKETS:
NEW YORKER RECORDS 4 WEEKS
ROUND RECORDS
SEPT. 24 7:30 & 10:30
SEPT. 25 MIDNIGHT @ SAN'S, EATON'S, etc.

"A MASTERFUL DISASTER-PIECE...
attacks, destroys, and evades...with the fury of blitzkrieg."
--JSPICKER, TINY MIX TAPES

"Ends in pure sound...the riotous symphony
of 200 tables and chairs being splintered for punk posterity."
--JOHN SAKAMOTO, TORONTO STAR

"Now THIS is a fuckin' documentary."
--BLOGGER, PORT, EX-PRO WRESTLER JOHN HARVEY

"Punkier than you'll ever be."
--PETER HOWELL, TORONTO STAR

"A++++"
--GINGER COYTE,
PUNK GLOBE MAGAZINE

"Great film."
--MAXIMUM ROCK 'N' ROLL

"It's great."
--DANNY FIELDS

"Wow!"
--JACK RABID
THE BIG TAKEOVER

THE LAST POGO
TORONTO PUNK 78

TEENAGE HEAD THE VILETONES THE UGLY
THE MODS THE SECRETS CARDBOARD BRAINS &
THE SCENICS. 25 MINUTES. SPECIAL FEATURES
INCLUDE A 20 MIN. 1978 SET BY THE SCENICS

WWW.THELASTPOGO.NET \$12.00

Horseshoe
QUEEN AT SPADINA • 368-0838

JULY 17 & 18... 99¢
JOE HALL solo
AND JOE HALL the CONTINENTAL DRIFT

JULY 19 & 20... 99¢
ROBBIE ROX
PSYCHO-PUNKABILLY FROM N.Y.C.

JULY 21 & 22... \$4
THE CRAMPS
AND THE UGLY

JULY 24 & 25... 99¢
SWOLLEN MEMBERS
AND RICARDO NOVA

JULY 26 & 27... 99¢
THE GOVERNMENT

JULY 28 & 29... \$3
NASH THE SLASH
RISES AGAIN!

Horseshoe
QUEEN AT SPADINA • 368-0838

JULY 31... 99¢
THE 'B' GIRLS • THE MODS

AUGUST 1... 99¢
THE MODS • THE EXISTERS

AUGUST 2... 99¢ MOVIES
...LAST TORONTO SHOWING OF
'BLANK GENERATION' PLUS...
'STRANGLERS' DEVO...BOLLOCKS...
'MONDO PUNK'...AND THE INFAMOUS
'OUTRAGE CONCERT'...AND MORE

AUGUST 3 & 4... \$4
THE BEST OF NEW YORK'S NEWEST WAVE
THE CONTORTIONS
Teenage Jesus & The Jerks
THE GOVERNMENT

AUGUST 5... \$4... FROM NEW YORK CITY...
DEAD BOYS
ARSON • THE DEMICS

LIVE at the new Yorker
velvet underground co-founder
JOHN CALE BAND

the return of
THE FLYING BURRITO BROS.

SAT. FEB. 19 9:00
TUES. FEB. 22 7:30 & 10

\$6

ALL SEATS RESERVED ADV. TICKETS NEW YORKER
RECORDS ON WHEELS ROUND RECORDS
RECORD ROCKET

Horseshoe
QUEEN AT SPADINA • 368-0838

JUNE 21 & 22
From NYC U.S.A. Handsome Dick Machuca
With World Heavy Weight Champion Dick Machuca

THE DICTATORS
VS. FROM DETROIT U.S.A.
THE ROMANTICS

JUNE 28, 29
TEENAGE HEAD

JUNE 30, JULY 1
THE UGLY THE ANDROIDS

JUNE 30, JULY 1
THE GOVERNMENT
AND SHAMBLES

MUSIC HALL
DANFORTH AT BROADVIEW SUBWAY 463-1186

8 pm
THIS FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER 7

I'm moving to L.A.
to sing pop!

Buzzcocks
VILETONES
THE LAST POGO FILM
GANG OF FOUR

Horseshoe
QUEEN AT SPADINA • 368-0838

JUNE 19 & 20

THE TROGGS
VILETONES
THE SCENICS

Horseshoe
QUEEN AT SPADINA • 368-0838

THIS THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY
JUNE 1-3

FROM NYC
SUICIDE

FROM DETROIT
WITH EX-STOOGES
RON ASHETON
AND EX-MCS
MICHAEL DAVIS

DESTROY!
ALL MONSTERS

TEENAGE HEAD TEENAGE HEAD

and now live
from Toronto

on BOMB RECORDS and TAPES

THE SCENICS

the Last Pogo BOMB 7025

pop up over night. You'd hear, "Go to so-and-so address on Yonge Street," and there would be a band in a flat above a store, and you brought your own beer or bought it there like a speakeasy. They'd last for maybe a weekend and then they'd disappear.

MRR: Who was the first Toronto punk band you ever saw?

Colin Brunton: I remember it was with Gary and Gary after a shift at The New Yorker. "Come on, let's close it up and check out Steven Leckie's new band at the Colonial Underground."

MRR: What was Steve's band called?

Colin Brunton: The Viletones. Not the Dialtones. The Viletones. It was something to behold. It was like nothing we had ever seen before.

MRR: Would it be safe to say that they were the first Toronto punk band?

Colin Brunton: I can't really think of anyone else who came before them. The Ramones were September 24th, 1976, and it seemed like a week or two later this whole thing started. All of a sudden you started seeing handbills on telephone poles in the city, which you had never seen before. All of a sudden there was this *thing* happening. Steve Leckie was the first. It was an awesome show. It was one of my favorite shows of my life. It was just so anarchic and chaotic.

MRR: When did the idea hit you that you could become a filmmaker?

Colin Brunton: I think about one second before I said, "Hey Gary, I want to make a film about this Last Pogo show you're doing."

MRR: So that was a little later on from the time that we are talking about?

Colin Brunton: I was fumbling around trying to figure out what I wanted to do, and I wasn't super ambitious or anything. I took a filmmaker's weekend course at this place called the Toronto Filmmaker's Co-op, and made a little movie with Elizabeth Aikenhead called *Bollocks*. It was a little five minute thing where we went to Club David's and shot the Viletones, and then we just shot some goofy stuff. We re-created the front cover of the first Stranglers album with a rat, and I made one of those giant safety pins that you could wear like an arrow-through-the-head kind of gag, and that kind of gave me a taste for it. I started driving a cab and one night I pulled up in front of the Horseshoe to pop in and say hi to Gary, and I heard Andrew Paterson talking to the Garys saying, "Hey this Last Pogo sounds like a great idea."

MRR: And Andrew Paterson was a member of the Government?

Colin Brunton: Yeah. I just heard him muttering in his way, and I was pretty certain that I may have been experimenting with marijuana in my cab that night, and I grandly announced without really thinking about it, "Hey that sounds like a really cool thing to make a film about." I left it at that. I finished my shift and the next morning I got up and it still sounded like a good idea. I pulled it together somehow.

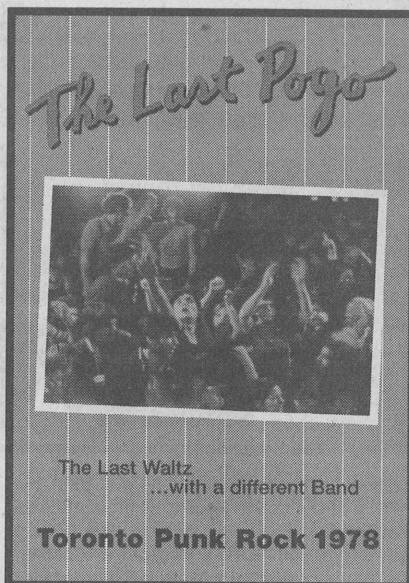
MRR: Did you work at the Horseshoe?

Colin Brunton: Gary was the most awesome guy to work for. When I started working for him I was seventeen, and it was just such a big influence on me. To this day, the way I treat my crews on film and TV shows is much the way Gary treated me. Do your job and relax, and get it done. It was very loose. By the time we got to the Horseshoe he asked me if I wanted to work here and I said, "For sure. So what do I do?"

He was like, "I don't know, whatever." "Uh...do you want me to take tickets?" "Oh, no. We'll have people for that." "Do you want me to bus tables?" "No there're people for that, too." "So what do I do?" "I don't know. Just hang out." So I just kind of hung out. Then I started making the handbills. I made all the posters, and then I went and stapled them up around town. Sometimes it would cost more to make the poster...back in those days when you made a handbill you had to cut with scissors and paste with glue. If I had white lettraset I would scratch it to make it look distressed, and then if I wanted to make it bigger or if I wanted to make it black instead, I'd get on my bike and go to this place called Midtown Reproduction in Yorkville. I'd drop it off, tell them what I wanted, come back either three hours or a day later, get the new artwork, spend ten bucks on that, and occasionally realize I made a really stupid typo. It would take forever. I think they paid me 50 bucks a handbill, which back in those days was really generous. But sometimes I would end up paying more to make the handbill.

MRR: What were some of your favorite gigs at the Horseshoe?

Colin Brunton: One of my favorites was Edie the Egg Lady. Edie was famous for being in John Waters' *Pink Flamingoes*. She was the obese elderly woman who sat in the crib waiting for the egg man to come by. She came to town and she had some poetry, and it was one of those



spontaneous catch-lightning-in-a-bottle things. The Garys arranged for the Viletones to back her up, so it was Chris Hate, Motor Mike, and Freddie Pompeii. They met Edie that afternoon and she told them what she wanted to do, and it was awesome. She did her big hit, "Hey Punks Get off the Grass." Another show I really loved was Suicide.

MRR: Was that the night with Destroy All Monsters and Teenage Head? The triple bill that went three nights?

Colin Brunton: The Suicide show that stands out to me is the one that they may have done by themselves. There were very few people at the Horseshoe; there were maybe a dozen people. Alan Vega is pretty intense, and we were standing there, and we had grins ear to ear watching him because the guy was just so entertaining and so different. Every so often you would get these stragglers that would wander in. I remember there was this table of what you might perceive as university jocks sitting at this table having a few beers and yapping off to Alan Vega. At one point Vega jumped off the stage and marched up to the table and put his face about one inch away from the loudest jock's face, and keeping totally in time with Martin Rev's, synthesizer screamed "I wanna fucking kill you!" The guy never said another word. The Contortions were awesome. The Cramps were great. The Stranglers. Richard Hell. The Dead Boys always. The thing is, you look at the handbills from those days, and it was nine months, seven nights a week. It's hard to believe.

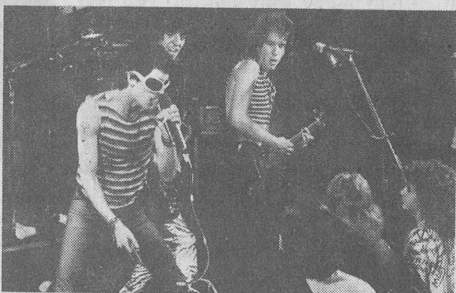
MRR: Were there any bands wanting to play The Last Pogo that were turned down?

Colin Brunton: The one I remember of course was Mickey de Sadist from the Forgotten Rebels...

MRR: ...who does a cameo in the film?

Colin Brunton: Yeah, well we finished the shooting of the thing and we thought we should get a few interviews with people. We went down to New Rose which was the punk record/clothing store run by Freddie Pompeii and Margarita Passion. We interviewed the both of them. Mickey was there and he was jokingly bitching about the fact that the Forgotten Rebels didn't get to play The Last Pogo. We

and now live from Toronto



THE
UGLY

on BOMB RECORDS and TAPES
the Last Pogo

BOMB 7029

and now live from Toronto



DRASTIC MEASURES
on BOMB RECORDS and TAPES
the Last Pogo

BOMB 7029



decided to interview him and he was great. He held up his *Forgotten Rebels* album and told us that *The Last Pogo* was "one big farce," that it was stupid, and he did a *Mods* impersonation. We thought, "We *have* to keep this guy in for sure now." He was just too funny.

MRR: That night the Viletones pirated the stage and weren't expected to play. They took *Teenage Head's* gear. I know Sam was playing Steve Mahon's bass upside down, which Sam had some trouble with, but they still pulled off a fantastic set.

Colin Brunton: Plus, it's always good when you play a bass guitar to, y'know, plug it in. I don't remember very much of that evening at all. I was trying to make this film with a few camera people, and I was a little shell-shocked. I remember getting pushed outside. I remember talking my way past the fire chief, or the cop, or whoever it was that told us we had to leave. Apart from that, I'm drawing a blank on the whole evening. I'm glad I made the film so that I can remember it. Or at least 26 minutes of it.

MRR: The place was way oversold. Did you expect that kind of a turn out?

Colin Brunton: I think everyone in the scene was pretty excited about the gig. We thought it was probably going to sell out, we just didn't expect that there were going to be an extra 300 people that would make their way through the doors. It ended up being pretty chaotic, but again, I don't even remember where I was standing that night, or what I was doing. I think I was behind the sound board and occasionally walking up to a camera person. The only thing I really remember is being out on the sidewalk and hearing the riot and thinking, "I can't believe I'm stuck out here on the sidewalk." And then I was thinking, "Where's the sound guy?" Someone said he was still inside recording, so at least we captured the noise of the riot, and shot the aftermath.

MRR: Did the scene change much from last Ramones gigs at *The New Yorker* to the *Last Pogo*? There's a time span of almost two years.

Colin Brunton: The Ramones came in '76 and I remember when the show was over me and a couple of buddies that worked there were thinking, "Wow they had *black jeans*." You couldn't buy black jeans in Toronto. There was a big concern about it. "Man, we can't be hippies. We can't wear blue jeans. We gotta get black jeans from somewhere." So one of the differences by the time the Pogo came around is that people were getting a bit more into the

whole fashion thing. For the first couple of years Toronto wasn't as fashion conscious as New York or London were, and I think after that it changed a bit more.

MRR: Who do you think had the strongest performances at *The Last Pogo*?

Colin Brunton: The first night, as much as I loved certain bands there, I think the best performance was from the *Secrets*. They were playing down the street at the *Beverley*. They literally ran from a gig at the *Beverley* down to the *Horseshoe*, and just ran up on stage and did their show. And you can tell they were pumped with

adrenalin when they did their bit. It was a bit odd because they did some a capella, and it was more like an edgy rhythm and blues band. The *Viletones* were always exciting no matter what. You never knew what Steven was going to do. *Cardboard Brains*, the *Mods* and the *UGLY* were good. I like the *Scenics*, but they had the opening gig, and they didn't have a huge following. And it's pretty hard to beat a band coming on during a riot—there were people standing on tables and playing with the lights when *Teenage Head* hit the stage.

MRR: That was just incredible, those last twenty minutes in the *Horseshoe*. I'll never forget it. Walking through there with my buddy looking at piles of wood from these chairs that would have taken ten chainsaws to break apart, but somehow all these skinny little kids just destroyed everything. It was just amazing. In the movie why is the sound for *Teenage Head* so muddy?

Colin Brunton: What happened was that back in those days *Teenage Head* were managed by a guy who was very protective of his band and wouldn't allow *Comfort Sound* to record them. All we had to go off of for that moment was our tape recorder with our sound guy, so we just couldn't get good sound. And in fact, at

that point we couldn't get much footage of them either because we couldn't get to the stage, so we had to do our best to cut and paste together what we had.

MRR: Tell me about the interviews in *The Last Pogo*. You already touched on the one with Mickey de Sadist. One of my favorites was the one you did with the *Viletones*, with the famous quote from Tony Torcher, the drummer.

Colin Brunton: I knew Leckie and I thought, "How am I going to get a rise out of Steven Leckie? What is the stupidest question I could ask?" So I said, "Are the people that come to the *Viletones* shows laid back?" That just set him off, and he said, "No they are *not* laid back," and Tony came up with the line "People change. It's like a hit of heroin."

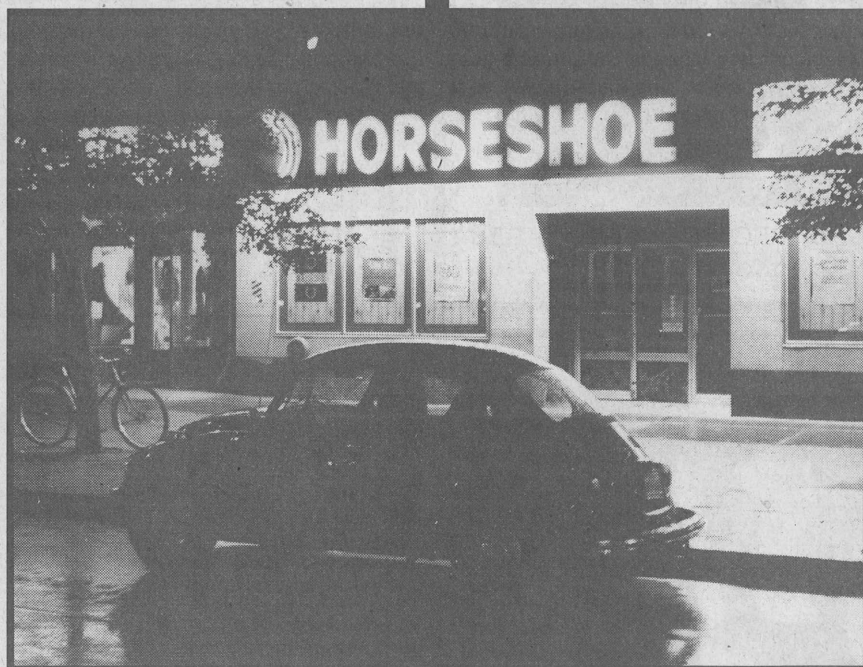
MRR: I think he said "The *Viletones* are like a hit of junk." I loved that, but I think they were more like a hit of speed. Tell me about the *Teenage Head* interview. They finish off the movie.

Colin Brunton: I asked them an honest question. I said "Do you guys think you'll be doing this five years from now?" They cracked a joke, and it's kind of funny because they went on to do it for another 30 years, which is pretty amazing.

MRR: The *Last Pogo* was billed as the last punk show ever. Was it?

Colin Brunton: It was the last punk show at the *Horseshoe Tavern* when it was run by the *Garys*. I really think that you can't peg a day that the punk scene started in Toronto. You can't peg a day when it ended. For my purposes, for the new project I'm doing, I'm saying that the punk scene started when the *Ramones* came in '76, and I think the first real wave of the punk scene ended the night of the *Last Pogo*, December 1, 1978.

MRR: I fully agree with that. Do you feel that the Toronto scene was overlooked internationally?



Above: *Horseshoe Tavern* Photo by Michael Korican

Colin Brunton: Absolutely. There weren't enough clever people in the record industry. The press was kind of amused by it. Look at some of the CBC archival stuff of interviewing The Viletones. I mean it was much the same attitude as the American media when they got onto Elvis, and the rock'n'roll thing started in the States. They just thought it was a passing fancy. The thing about London and New York is they got a lot more attention because there're a lot more people. There's a lot more press, and maybe they had smarter people. Toronto back then was still so provincial and small-town that we just didn't have the coverage. Luckily for me and this new thing that I'm doing, there were also a lot of really talented and creative people in the audience that night. I have so many fantastic photographs by people like Edie Steiner, Don Pyle, Ross Taylor, and a few others. There was a fantastic scene and no one paid attention to it.

MRR: I think that's changing now. The one thing I enjoy seeing with the Toronto scene is not just the enthusiasm within our own city, but I think the people around the world are starting to pay attention. The release of the movie is certainly going to help that. What did the promoters the Garys do after the Horseshoe?

Colin Brunton: They started The Edge. They took over an old pub. I think it was an old Ryerson student pub called Edgerton's. They renamed it The Edge and it was a much smaller room, and they continued on bringing in their favorite bands.

MRR: Did you work there?

Colin Brunton: No I didn't. I did the handbills. I was driving a cab. I had this vague notion that I was going to keep making films somehow.

MRR: That was another incredible place. You could see the Only Ones on Sunday and Ultravox with the Mods on Monday. Seven nights a week. It was just incredible. The public debut of *The Last Pogo* was at the Danforth Music Hall a long time ago with the Toronto debut of the Buzzcocks, Gang of Four, and The Viletones' debut as a rockabilly band. How did that go?

Colin Brunton: It went great. Gary put a screen in front of the stage so when one band ended the movie started, and you could kind of vaguely see the band behind the screen getting set. I was so nervous. In 26 minutes I smoked five cigarettes. I just wanted to get the thing over with. I was in the projection room sweating up a storm, puffing away. It went over great. To the Toronto audience it wasn't that much of a big deal. These were their bands they saw all the time, so the film got no attention when I finished it.

MRR: How were the reviews for the film? Were there any?

Colin Brunton: The only review I managed to get was—and this was after a couple of letters that I wrote to Peter Goddard—and finally he came through and wrote quite a nice article about the film in the *Toronto Star*. But I couldn't sell it. No one wanted to show it. The New Music wanted it for nothing. When they couldn't get it for nothing they picked up some British punk special instead. I just thought, "Fuck you." They did relent a year later and showed it three times.

MRR: Typical Toronto back then. It has

changed a little now. Ignoring their own scene.

Colin Brunton: It hasn't changed that much. Let's face it.

MRR: Did the film get any international exposure?

Colin Brunton: Funnily enough it got picked up by New Line Cinema. One of my trips down to New York I decided to pop in unannounced and ask them how the film was doing. Gary Topp had a friend in California who was an assistant camera guy who I admired because he had actually gotten into the business, which was very romantic to me. He told Gary that he saw a film of this Last Pogo at a midnight show in San Francisco. So, I went to New York and I walked into New Line's office and I said, "I want to see the books on my film." I looked at the books and I said, "What about the San Francisco gig?", and they hemmed and hawed, and I sat in the lobby for about an hour and a half, and then I left that day with all my film prints. They tore up the contract. It was over. I think I made \$36.

MRR: It has had rave reviews in *Maximum Rockroll* and the alternative press. I think that the way things are with the internet these days I have a feeling that the thing will get exposure. You had started filming the bonus footage for the DVD that's coming out, but it turned into a whole other project. You just started meeting all these people that were involved in the scene back in the day, and you found out that there was just so much and they were so interesting. Tell me about that.

Colin Brunton: It's kind of endless. The reason why I thought...well, the rights for *The Last Pogo* were tied up for ten years, and when I got them back I took a look at the film and thought, "Wow, this really holds up." At the same time I had this awesome camera that I'd managed to get, my son Ollie was thirteen, and I thought, "Maybe I should just take the summer off and we can go out with the camera and start tracking down some of the people from *The Last Pogo* and find out what they are up to," and it evolved from there. Now I have created a monster! I have to end this soon. I have to admit that I'm getting kind of tired of it because I have a family, and I have to work, so I kind of sneak time in. But it's still fun.

MRR: This is just a side project for you. You are working on *Little Mosque on the Prairie* and so many other things so...

Colin Brunton: Yeah, so it has kind of turned into this monstrous hobby and it's fun, but I just want to get it done. I think I have about two to three hundred hours of footage and there're still a couple of dozen people I feel like I *really* have to get that represent that period that I love—1976 to '78 in Toronto. That's what the new film is. We're going to use the original Last Pogo as the spine, and we will re-meet people that you saw in *The Last Pogo* and find out what they're doing now.

MRR: What is it going to be called?

Colin Brunton: *The Last Pogo Jumps Again*.

MRR: Are the Garys going to be involved in this upcoming *Last Pogo* show?

Colin Brunton: I don't think they're officially involved, but I know for sure that Gary Topp is going to be there. I haven't talk to Cormier, but the Garys have to come for sure or it's almost ludicrous.

MRR: Will it be filmed or recorded?

Colin Brunton: Yeah, both. When I say "filmed", I've toyed with the notion that I can pull some 16mm together for this, but I'm not *quite* as stupid as I was when I was 23, when I made *The Last Pogo*. I am not that much *smarter*, but not quite as dumb. I don't know if I want to jump 40 grand in debt to film this.

MRR: When do you anticipate the release of *The Last Pogo Jumps Again*?

Colin Brunton: 2010 for sure.

and now live from Toronto



THE SECRETS

on BOMB RECORDS and TAPES
at the Last Pogo BOMB 7029

and now live from Toronto



THE
M
O
D
S

on BOMB RECORDS and TAPES
at the Last Pogo BOMB 7029

and now live from Toronto



the Last Pogo BOMB 7029

THE
ISHAN
BAND

on BOMB RECORDS and TAPES