

FRITZ ARAGON, ETHOSPINE RECORDS

Angela: Talk about Ethospine.

Fritz: ETHOSPINE is a DIY project that releases noise/art that moves me and is worth documenting. I'm just trying to share what I think some people will appreciate.

Angela: How did Ethospine get started?

Fritz: It was originally the name of the Dogs of Ire mail order. Then, in JAN 2003 I was laid-off, but I soon received a severance. A few months after that I decided to spend the money on releasing the Piano Drag CD. That would be the official beginning of this fucking godforsaken monster. Vision? Well, the seventh straight day that the lords of rock parted the clouds and blasted the yellow beam of light through my bedroom window I had to give in. Not because it was annoying but out of fear. I was frightened that, like all the bands across the country that have moved me, including numerous awesome bands here in town that have scarred my mind at 13-14 years old, they would be forgotten for never being documented. These are just some of the bands from last year's tour that I was lucky enough to experience and now grateful to work with.

Music is constantly redefining itself as it should, and I want to contribute to the energy of artists who are progressive not just musically but politically. I definitely need female and more minority representation. There are so many good bands that I would love to share with others. But honestly, I don't know where this whole thing is going. I guess ETHOSPINE will continue until the day that I wake up to a big boot to my skull from some collections agency. The vision in general is to exceed beyond music and to some way collaborate with all mediums of art and to have more people involved in challenging what art/music/culture/existence means. I need all the help possible.

Angela: Name some bands on your label.

Fritz: ROGUE STATE, DEATH TO TYRANTS, CIRCUIT SCARECROW, DOGS OF IRE, SADAHARU, PIANO DRAG, and soon, BRUTE MEDIUM. ETHOSPINE is affiliated with all DIY and independent individuals willing to collaborate art/music and exchange resources. ETHOSPINE is definitely more affiliated with all the shit-hole towns across the planet spilling their guts than the hipster kids who don't know what nostril to blow with their parent's money.

Angela: Tell me about some benefit shows you've worked on.

Fritz: I've contributed more than I have organized. There are plans in the near future for more organizing. Some of the benefits we've played have been for Habitat for Humanity, Food Not Bombs, a couple Filipino organizations such as BARKADA and piNoisepop. Some recent benefit comps for Filipino activism and radio in the Philippines. Some past compilation benefits: Schools for Chiapas and even mainstream organizations such as The Foundation Fighting Blindness. A buddy and me were discussing the idea of organizing a show that gets people shaking their lazy asses to the voting booth... so many ideas ya know.

Angela: What kind of advice would you give to artists who are just starting out?

Fritz: If there's anything I would want to be a part of or learn about, whether it be a gallery, music venue, zine etc., I would confront the people in charge and ask a lot of questions. A lot of people have wonderful ideas that never leave their craniums because of some institutionalized formula telling them they can't do things on their own. There are no secrets. It's just learning to deal with people, to step outside your precious artsy self and interact. Don't let the uptight and burnouts halt your enthusiasm. I mean, jeez, at the end of the day we all pick up our own guts. It's not impossible to start that zine, venue, gallery or whatever and BECOME that person asking people to get involved. You'll find people who share the same conviction and who are willing to help in some way. If things don't come to fruition at first, you'll definitely have more resources to work with than you ever did before. Save and categorize your contacts. And always SHARE your resources. Make them available to everyone because everything is connected. Bring in people from outside the community and get involved with theirs. Get over yourself and share the shit.

Angela: What's your opinion of the space for shows around here (in Riverside)?

Fritz: As far as galleries, I think, for the most part, they are respectable spaces. There is a lot of drive behind the exhibits here and a lot of creativity from many artists. I don't think people understand how good they have it here in comparison to other cities across the states that don't even have art-walks or even galleries. And I'm only bringing up the comparison thing cus people will constantly put down their own community for not being LA or Frisco enough. Well, no shit, perceptive one. But all the amazing things in any part of the world never just dropped out of the sky to entertain the cliques. Enlivened people kinda like, us, aggressively created them. People with noses, arms, legs, and ears even! And as far as venues or in terms of music spaces, there are no Whisky-a-go-gos or whatever, but I never cared for the fancy stage lights, bouncers, and barriers between bands and people to begin with. I'm a stinky, sweaty, basement kinda guy. I think there will one day be a solid art space/venue for touring bands and artists to create and/or perform every night of the week. Let's not allow this to be crazy talk.

Angela: Why do you think there's such a strong DIY ethic here?

Fritz: It's strong because, like all DIY communities, people have challenged their surroundings and strived to create the things that were not available for them. I think a lot has been accomplished over the years. It's a beautiful thing to see what is created out of nothing. I am much more attracted to that. I remember the late eighties and early nineties there being plenty of activity. But it was isolated. I feel there is more do-it-togetherness than in the past. There is still so much we can do better. Again, like many small towns people take their power for granted. A place like Riverside may not have all the big city resources, but I think people have much more influence (or chance of) here. There are other advantages. You can move to the big city and be a part of something. But if you want to create something, then stand in line. But bring a lunch.

What really irks me is the whole "it could never happen here" slavery impulse. The whole "not now, not me." It's always somewhere else, someone else with the magic powers. It's not only contagious but fucking annoying. Here's a shovel. Bury yourself already. I'm really lucky to have shared time and have learned from other DIY communities all over the world that anything is possible.