

# SCENE



## MOB MENTALITY

An interview the spin-kicking, tape-splitting straight-edge king of New York, Mob Record's Zay

## MELANCHOLIA

Traveling the great wall of sound of New York's shoegaze scene

## CHAOTIC CATHARSIS

An exploration into the emotional explosion of New York's screamo scene

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# SCENE

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# WHY SCENE?



When I first moved to New York City in 2021 I was a sparkly-eyed, freshly 20-year-old eager to live out my Lou Reed, Patti Smith, and Richard Hell fantasies in the Big Apple; ready to be a part of a music scene. Growing up in a mostly rural area in upstate New York there wasn't much of a scene around me, the one venue in my hometown played large legacy acts like the Grateful Dead, but there wasn't anywhere to see smaller or medium-sized acts. I've been a music lover my whole life and was raised on all types of music. My dad was a punk in the '80s but also loved new wave, and reggae, and my mom was a deadhead with an affinity for the industrial metal and grunge acts of the '90s; My mother tells me my love of music came from when she went to a Red Hot Chili Peppers concert while pregnant with me.

Because of my deep love for music, I was so excited to move here and finally get to witness and maybe even participate in a music scene and to feel seen, no pun intended, by fellow-minded music nerds. This did not happen. I found it very hard to find out about small venues, local musicians, or even music scenes in New York. I spent

years bouncing around concerts trying to find a sound and community that felt right for me.

After years of a Cinderella-esque journey, I finally found my lost slipper. I had found this band, herlovebeheadsdaiesies, a San Antonio-based screamo band online, and saw they were playing in New York the next week. Arriving at the show at a dive bar in Greenpoint I was, honestly, kind of scared. A dark room full of leather-clad heavily-pierced punks swarming a stage with a girl scream crying into a microphone. After the set, I talked with some of the harsh-looking concertgoers and found them extremely soft and inviting, despite their appearance. In the year and a half since I've been to so many screamo shows that I've lost count. I've made friends at shows, and I've introduced friends to the scene. I've gotten to the point where I can't fathom going to a show and not running into five people I know; I'm finally living my dream, and it's been more than I could've imagined.

The point behind Scene Mag is to help people in their journey to find their scene to be able to experience the joy I feel being a part of mine.

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# GET A ROOM



Mia Estonia photographed by @nothing\_radio

By Cameron Noble Irish

I had arrived just before the live music started excited to see that I hadn't missed the mystery live act that DJ Something Fun had hinted at to me a few weeks prior. This not being my first time at a Nothing Radio party I knew what to expect for the crowd, and thus wasn't extremely shocked when I walked into the dark, smokey bar full of people who looked much hotter and much cooler than I did, but I digress.

Walking in further I saw the band setup in the middle of what is typically the dance floor. Upon seeing the band, specifically how they

dressed, I instantly knew why they'd chosen them. Aesthetically the band perfectly mirror what I've come to recognize as the Get a Room regular's outfit, tight jeans, black leather jacket, lots of skin, ironic trucker



Justin Spades of Bad Vacation by @nothing\_radio

hat, all bedazzled with pins; One part Kravitz, one part Casablancas.

Spade's sound brings seventies era punk-rock to the present, creating a CBGB-esq sonic apparition, leaving you daydreaming about what your life could've been like if you were around during punk's heyday. Having

only ever heard this style of music on poorly recorded self-published demos it was incredibly interesting to hear it live, with modern technology, further immersing me in this fantasy, but before I knew it the band's time was up, and I was ripped back to reality.

Following the band were tandem sets by the regular's Something Fun and The Analysts. Now, admittedly I don't understand how to DJ, something incredibly rare in New Yorkers in their twenties, but the seemingly telepathic ability to DJ together is something that's always confused and mesmerized me. The music consisted of beautiful blends of nostalgic pop, house-classics and the



SomethingFun and Mia Estonia by @nothing\_radio

occasional oldie; the crowd going wild when The Cure's 1987 hit Just Like Heaven.

Outside for a breather I ran into Nothing Radio's Carter Houck and asked him a bit about his baby, and what Get a Room means to him. "Get a Room was born as a space to



SomethingFun by @nothing\_radio

be creative and play primarily indie/electronic music...I see fashion girls and finance bros all dancing to the music soundtracked by the guys. In my opinion that's the goal. Everyone who stumbles down the Home Sweet Home stairs can catch a vibe and enjoy a cheap beverage while they're at it."

I think this laissez-faire attitude truly summarizes the vibe, and has contributed to its continued success, now being hosted bimonthly, a surprise they have yet to reveal...



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**Coke.**



share a  
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VERVUME  
*New York*



VERVUME  
*New York*





Grabba at Gold Sounds by @parallelofdeath

# MOB MENTALITY

An interview the spin-kicking, tape-splitting straight-edge king of New York, Mob Record's Zay



Grabba at the Meatlocker in New Brunswick by @g.a.l.a.t.i

By Cameron Noble Irish

If you've ever been kicked in the head at a show before, you know Mob Records; though many know the label and its iconic bulldog logo, you may not know the man and the story behind the label.

Mob Records is an independent New York-based screamo and hardcore record label run by Jersey native Isaiah "Zay" Espinosa. Zay is currently a junior at the Fashion Institute of Technology majoring in Graphic Design. His appearance, a stark contrast to his soft-spoken laid-back demeanor; Eyebrow pierced, septum pierced, ears pierced, and a mean-mugging expression, instantaneously turned into a smile upon a wave.

Mob was originally formed as a skate team & clothing brand he and his friends started, "started for me as a

group thing in high school it was a skate group some homies in high school run by middle school friends" "it just gave



Blouse performing in front of the Mob Records banner by @images.konstantina

me an outlet to make art and gave me a reason to make stuff."

Zay reformed the brand into a record label to reflect his new found interest in screamo, stemming from his love of punk and hardcore. "I would say against a screamo kind of late,



Grabba at Cinco de Mayo in New Brunswick by @images.konstantina



OLTH with a Mob Records shirt by @olthcreativefreedom

you know, I got into it within the last few years, basically. I was more into hardcore.” His love for screamo came from its blend of heavy instrumentals of hardcore and the intimate lyricism of emo.

Zay’s first release under Mob Records was for the New York-based screamo band Silk’s 2023 demo. “I met Pat(singer) and I was already homies with Nick(guitar) and Leo(drummer) ... I introduced them to each other and they ended up starting the band, and you know, they got this music and they were like, “yo, we’re starting the band, we’re about to play our first show soon” and I had already made a run of ten tapes for a friend that made electronic music just because I had I had a little shitty tape deck, a portable one, and I



OLTH performing in front of a projected Mob Records banner by @youreyesandears

recorded them all real time for him and, it just started off like that.” I know how to make tapes so we made some tapes for their first show and I was like all right, now I did two official unofficial releases, I guess I’m a label now, and it’s

kind of like, yo guys, I’m open for doing tapes ... that’s how I really started. It was just like, fuck it”

On top of being a full-time student, and running Mob Records, Zay is also in the hardcore band Grabba, when asked about the biggest challenge with this crazy life he said “school and then juggling the business. Last



Zay at the Silk vs Blouse battle set by @hurllllllll

semester was crazy just trying to figure out the work balance between should I work on schoolwork or should I work on a bunch of CDs or a bunch of tapes and I found myself being up so late doing mad tapes. Then I’d have a big ass project to do the next day, grinding it out or missing class because I’m trying to get stuff done pretty much, you know, this is that Yeah, that I have friends that have me up and there, yo, can you get us like 40 shirts for tomorrow? and

it’s 10 PM and I’m like fuck, I’ll see if I could try, you know, and I usually pull through somehow, I don’t know, but that’s kind of just the way I am. That’s been my challenge.” When speaking on the future for Mob he had two main moves for the future, “definitely get to book my own fest, that would be awesome, it’s definitely possible...It’s just seems so stressful to book a big ass show like that” “I wanna get into vinyl, you know, getting pressed. cause there’s some good albums



Mob Records tattoo by @mobeightreCORDS

that I have that would be dope on vinyl.”

I asked him about what his proudest moments have been with Mob, “Being able to sell stuff outside of the east coast, like being able to ship shit to like California... kids coming up to with me saying,”yo you’re on Mob Records, I love everything you’re doing.””

One of the newest feature of Mob

Records is their tattoo deal, if you get a tattoo of their logo you can get any drop you want for free, since the implication of this deal multiple people in the New York scene have gotten the classic bulldog logo tattooed to represent their dedication and appreciation to Mob Records and the New York scene “it was just kind of a joke, I wanted to see how crazy, it could get.”



Zay performing with Gabba by @carlgunhouse

One of the biggest aspects to Mob Records is the straight-edge lifestyle, a lifestyle originating in the 80s hardcore scene wherein members would vow against the use of all drugs and alcohol. Zay himself has never touched a drug in his life, when asked how important being straight-edge is to mob, Zay said “I think it’s like a quintessential part. I would say that for sure, I mean I know a lot of the people that support me aren’t straight-edge, ... I’m not too crazy about the whole straight-edge thing where it’s like fuck you, if you have a beer, I don’t mind.”

# Melancholia

Traveling the great wall of sound of  
New York's shoegaze scene



Velvet live in Providence by @ne\_crowdshot\_collection

By Cameron Noble Irish

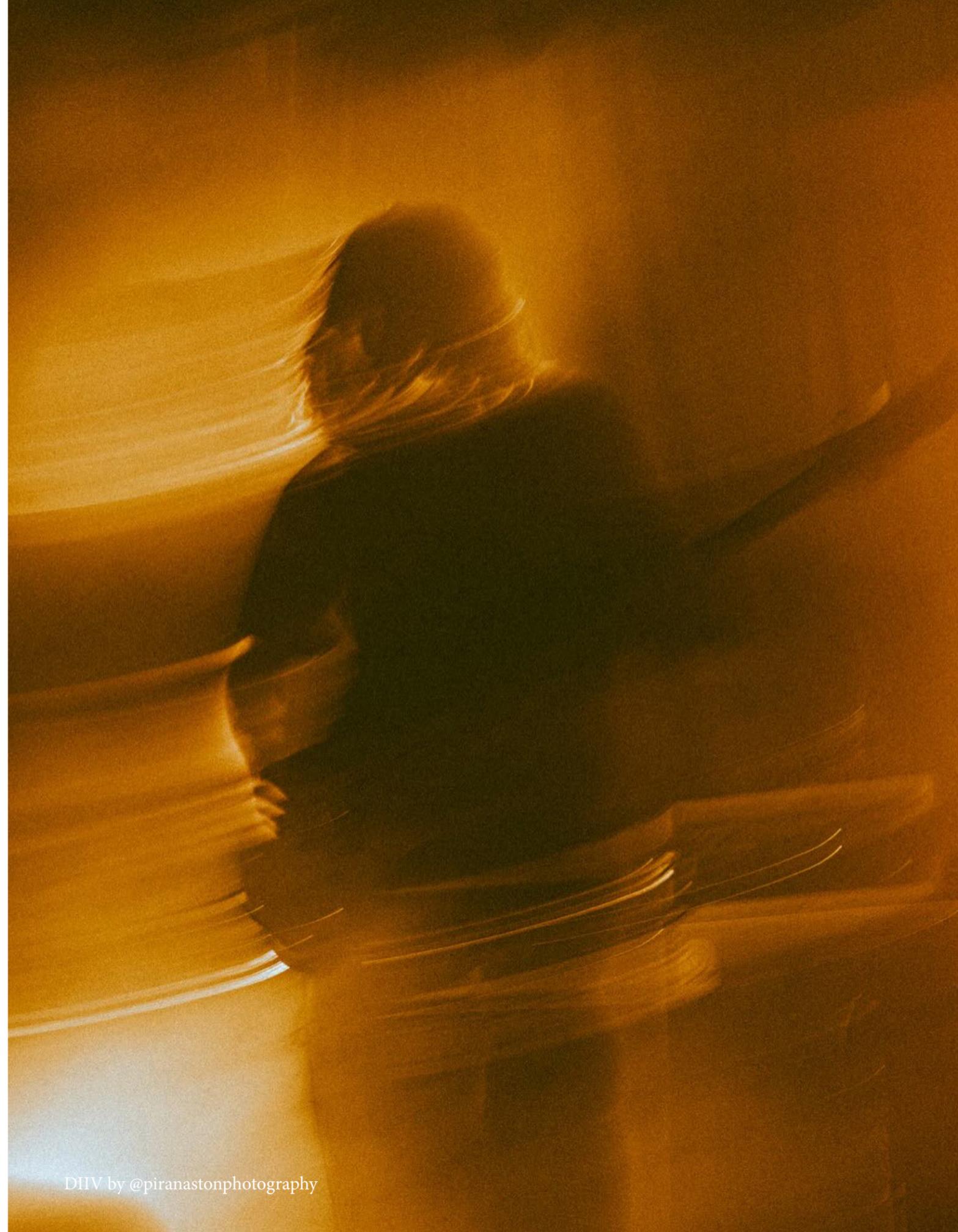
Riding the coattails of the mid-eighties noisepop craze, bands in Ireland and the United Kingdom began blending the noisy dissonance of The Jesus and Mary Chain with elements of psychedelia creating the first wave of shoegaze. Its name comes from a confused journalist's complaint about a guitarist's tendency to stare at their guitar's foot pedals. My Bloody Valentine, A.R. Kane, and Slowdive were pioneers in the early shoegaze scene, but in the years to come this genre would spread around the globe leading to the expansion of the scene and sound.

A shoegaze song is easily recognizable by its despondent "wall

of sound" created by heavily distorted guitars, and its melancholically sung vocals with often nonsensical lyrics. Though this sounds like a surefire concoction to create music no one would want to listen to, the



Blood Sports at Otto Bor by @\_daze.y



DIIV by @piranastonphotography



Punch Love by  
@richard.mukuze

culmination creates a transcendental, psychedelic listening experience that leaves you floating on the waves of the contorted instrumentals.

Since its invasion in the early 90s, shoegaze has had its place in New York City, with bands like Blonde Redhead, and Bowery Electric acting as early American adopters of the sound. In New York, a sonic Silk Road, groups began mixing elements of other genres creating their own unique sound. The previously mentioned Bowery Electric blended elements of trip-hop, an electronic



The Shining Hour at Main Drag Music by  
@maindragmusic

music genre that blends elements of many genres to create an atmospheric psychedelic sound, with the trancelike sounds of shoegaze to create a hallucination-like experience.

In the decades since New York's shoegaze scene has remained alive in

the underground through bands like Asobi Seksu in the early 2000s, or DIIV in the 2010s. During and post-pandemic shoegaze has seen a massive revival amongst Gen Z as they discover original-wave bands leading them to create their own bands. Acts



Velvet by @trans.pecos

like Julie, and They Are Gutting a Body of Water have spearheaded this nouveau shoegaze golden age. Back in New York bands such as Punchlove, Velvet, All Under Heaven, and High had taken reign in the New York scene. Whereas in the past this scene was centered around the Lower East Side and Williamsburg, the contemporary scene is centered around Bushwick and Ridgewood, seemingly following the trails of gentrification. Venues like Ridgewood's TV Eye and Transpecos and Bushwick's Our Wicked Lady

host most of the shows in the scene, though larger acts are often shown at bigger venues like Brooklyn Steel or Webster Hall.



Wisp at Coachella 2025 by @hashgag\_

One of the biggest players in New York's scene is Kanine Records, a Brooklyn-based independent record label that was started in 2002 by Leo and Kay Kanine. In the over two decades since its inception, Kanine has expanded its borders, signing bands from all over the globe like Hong Kong's Lucid Express which is playing in the upcoming Slide Away show, a two-stop touring shoegaze festival, which comes to New York's Brooklyn Paramount April 26th, featuring Her New Knife, The Pain

of Being Pure at Heart, Swervedriver, Nothing, Lucid Express and Whirr's first show in a decade.

Shoegaze's almost four decades of underground popularity can be attributed to its accessibility; "Think it's linked to the love of the "wall of sound" heavy feel without aggressive elements but not corny like some psychedelic projects can be" says New York Shoegaze regular, Erin Klingler. It carved itself an extremely comfortable middle ground; not too heavy, not too light. Shows are low-maintenance, with no spin kicks, and no moshpits. "You can easily go by yourself and zone out or go with friends and have a nice time, it's a great weeknight thing I think."

When asking some of the local bands about what's next for the scene, they shared a calm, comfortable sentiment. "To me, I would say shoegaze doesn't necessarily have a singular next step. There's tons of bands doing different things. Some bands keep it classic, some add alt-rock influences, emo influences, metal influences, the list goes on and on. It's a great time when a genre can't really be defined by a sound and more by a feeling" Says Velvet's Zack Alfasi. This opinion was echoed by other bands, who feel there need be no next step; that shoegaze will stay shoegaze.



Boy Factory by @katrina.a.stewart



Grimlitter at the Meat Locker by @photosbyoliviaf

# Chaotic Catharsis

An exploration into the emotional explosion of New York's screamo scene



Ted Williams at Trash Bridge by @pixelbugg

By Cameron Noble Irish

Screamo (Or Skramz when referring to the new wave of Screamo) is a term used to describe a genre of music deriving from hardcore punk which began in the late nineties. The name is a portmanteau of the word scream and emo. Its sound a blend of chaotic, heavily distorted and constantly changing instrumentals nicknamed panic chords for its anxiety inducing sound paired with screamed vocals about interpersonal struggle and societal woes.

The genre started in the late 90s as a response to early 90s emo being “too whiney” and losing its hardcore roots. Original bands like Paganinety-nine, Love Lost But Never Forgotten, and Orchid are unrelenting, yet deeply

intimate. Though originating in San Diego, New York fans quickly started forming bands with this new sound creating their own brand of screamo. In 1997 Saetia formed in New York's Lower East Side, their sound is a slightly softer take of screamo with a heavy instrumental influence from jazz.

But by the mid 2000s major bands had broken up and music trends shifted towards poppier post-hardcore and pop-punk sounds, leaving screamo, in less than a decade, to fall into obscurity. An obscurity it would remain in until the 2020s.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, original bands began to blow up in online music circles on social media. These explosive personal albums



OLTH at the VFW by @camararata



Blouse at the Market Hotel by @hurlllllll

comforted and connected to listeners during this turbulent lonesum times. “It’s visceral, it makes me feel something,” says fan Shane Corwin. As quarantine restrictions were lifted, the world saw an influx of new-gen screamo bands all over the country, though hot pockets quickly formed in Los Angeles, San Antonio, and of course, New York. “I think it’s kind of blown up in popularity due to quarantine and tons of kids finding great bands when they were stuck at home doing nothing and eventually those kids that found these great bands started bands and it’s kind of like a cycle” says drummer of New York’s Coquette. Bands like OLTH, Grimlitter, and Silk took screamo’s sound and blended it with outside influences creating their own unique sounds.

The trail blazed by these bands led to an explosion of bands in New



xclocktowerx at the White Swan by @girlsgunsandynamite

York solidifying New York as a hub for contemporary screamo. Venues like Bushwick’s Trans-pecos, Gold Sounds, and Market Hotel have become islands for New York misfit toys, nicknamed scene kids.

A common problem in this scene is the bands, like the songs, are fast and explosive, only lasting a maximum of a few years, and in some cases only a few months. This problem plagued the original scene, and was a huge contributing factor to its original downfall. Mirroring the original scene, in the last year many of the scene’s biggest bands have broken up. Major bands like Onewaymirror, Herlovebeheadsdaies, Blouse, and Catalyst have all broken up within the

## So is this the beginning of the second death of screamo?

last three months, all victims to the fast and loose lifestyle of emo stars.

Obviously a scene cannot persist without bands to be built around. It’s anything but, here in New York despite the loss of major bands, there’s been twice as many new bands popping up. The result of this is a brand new wave of bands being passed the torch. In the past months bands like Tearaway, Theycanhearyouscream, Citrus Milk, Aelita, and Hasada have formed and



Febuary at Real art in Tacoma by @meliascamera

originally playing free do-it-yourself shows through promoters like LittleKittyDiy, but have quickly proven themselves, getting paid gigs at the same venues as the more established bands in the scene. On top of this, the scene is bigger than it’s ever been. In my own anecdotal experience, in the last three months shows are bigger than they’ve ever been. A show that would once merit a small group now has a line down the block to snag the few door tickets, after the show completely sells out online. Even the idea of a line for a show a few years ago would be unimaginable, now they’re wrapping blocks. Shows are having to get rebooked at bigger venues to keep up with the explosion of popularity selling out shows.

The crowd is also younger than ever, the average age at a show seeming to be around 17, when it was once in the mid-to-late twenties. For a small scene like this, such an invasion and changing of demographics can be daunting, but the kids are alright. Though their actions at their first shows, can easily be compared to a new-born giraffe, not fully understanding the unspoken rules of the scene, the new-generation is learning fast and starting their own bands, perpetuating the scene for the future.



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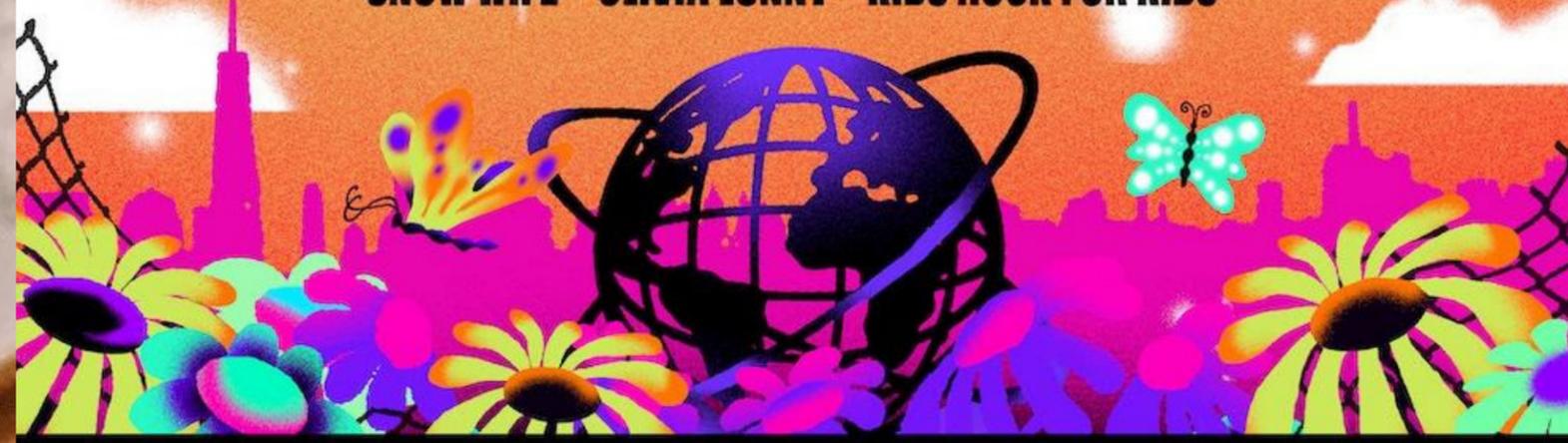
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ELLIE REED



# The Great Earplug War



By Cameron Noble Irish

As someone who's gone to multiple shows a month for years, and has parents who did the same, I've seen the result of not wearing hearing protection. Much of my life has been repeating what I just said louder and louder for my father who practically deafened himself at punk shows in the eighties.

When I turned 22 I decided that if I want to be able to continue going to shows and enjoying music for the rest of my life I must actively protect my hearing as there's no way of healing them retrospectively. I've also encouraged all my friends I go to shows with to do the same. But what earplugs are the best? What Noise Reduction Rate (NRR) blocks the perfect amount of sound without taking you out of the moment? Which preserve the sound quality the most? I set out to test the five most popular options to answer these questions at rowdy screamo show hosted by Blursday NYC at a senior daycare center in Bushwick.



The Loop Experience 2 are the most popular concert earplugs due to their social media presence. At \$36.95 these are priced right in the middle of the range of concert-oriented earplugs. As these are the earplugs I personally used prior to this article, I wanted to start here as I have the most experience with these. The Loop Experience 2 has a sleek Apple-esque shape for the keychain case and the earplugs themselves and is available in 7 colors, which has certainly led to the brand's success. In the box you get the typical four sizes: extra-small, small, medium, and large. They have a noise-reduction rating (NRR) of 12 decibels (dB) Loop says these are geared for slightly tuning down concerts to protect hearing while preserving sound quality. As these are my go-tos, these earplugs

were my base for comparing the other headphones to. These bring the noise level down to a level where you can enjoy the concert at a level where your ears are not in pain, but not low enough that you're brought out of the experience. The large size fit my ears perfectly and I didn't have any fear of them falling out.



Coming in as the most expensive on the list at \$41.95, the Eargasm High-Fidelity Earplugs have large shoes to fill, or maybe more accurately, expensive shoes to justify. These were my previous daily-drivers until they fell off my keychain onto the subway track... Their design is more utilitarian than the Loop Experience 2 with a metal screw-top, keychain case, and clear silicone housing for the noise filter, which is available in 10 colors; Though they only come in two sizes: small, and standard. The earplugs have a higher NRR at 17dB, 5dB above the Loop Experience 2.

These earplugs are noticeably quieter than the previous headphones, when testing them during a particularly loud set the difference from the loop was

noticeable, and wearing one of the Loop earplugs and one of the Eargasm the difference was even more evident. The tricky thing with concert-oriented earplugs is what is too quiet? In my opinion these headphones were right on the line, and ultimately the choice between these and the loop come down to personal preference, I prefer shows to be a little louder because I want to feel like I'm in it, and these headphones took me a little too out of the moment, but if you want it quieter, these are the earplugs for you. Unlike the Loops the earplugs don't have slots inside the case for the earplugs to store them in, but the case is the sturdiest of the bunch being made out of milled metal.



The Relaxcharm Pro Concert Earplugs are the cheapest of the non-disposable earplugs on this list at only \$18.99 on Amazon. Their design is similar to the modern design of the loops but differ slightly with the earplugs and are available in 3 colors. They come with five size options: extra-small, small, medium, large, and double-cup. They claim a NRR of 19dB, higher than both

the Loop and Eargasm earplugs.

The Relaxcharm Pro's were again noticeably quieter than the Eargasm headphones, and in my opinion this is where the line I mentioned when talking about the eargasm earplugs is crossed. Wearing these earplugs the quality of the sound is noticeably worse and the concert was so much quieter I lost engagement with the show and felt like I was brought out of the show. The standard size fit me decently, but with only two options it leaves a lot of room for it not to fit people, and the case did not feature specific slots for the earplugs like the loop earplugs instead just letting them rattle around in their cheap plastic case.



The cheapest on the list at just 50 cents a pair, the Walgreens Superior Soft Foam Earplugs come in a 10 pack for \$4.99, and have an NRR of 32dB. These were my least favorite of the earplugs I tested, they somehow blocked too much sound and did not block enough at the same time. The fit was poor and constantly fell out or needed readjustments; but for the short amount of time they fit, the sound quality was

Scene Vol.1

demolished, and the concert was ruined. I would only ever use these earplugs if they were the only option available, and even then I'd still consider just losing my hearing.



The Walgreens's Waterproof Silicone Earplugs are my go-to disposable earplugs for when I forget or lose my reusable earplugs. At a slightly higher price point of 67 cents a pair and come in a 6 pack for \$4.99 at Duane Reade and have a NRR of 25dB. Out of the two disposable options these are the clear winner, the fit is much better, and while they still lower the levels too much, and negatively affect the music's quality, they still sound better than the foam options.

Overall if I were to choose a winner I'd be a hard choice between the Loop Experience 2 and the Eargasm High Fidelity Earplugs, ultimately the choice between the two is up to personal preference on how much you want to bring down the noise level. Both are excellent choices for protecting your hearing, unfortunately they will not protect you from concussing kicks to the head like I experienced whilst testing these earplugs...





SEIT  1911

*Merz b. Schwannen*

