

Arts & Entertainment

Battle of the bands; bad for the bands, good for business

BY MICKEY ACORN

When a band starts out playing in their parents' basement, or paying thirty dollars to rent a jam spot, they usually have dreams of playing at some large venue. Most of them use this kind of goal as the reason they practice. The sad truth is, for many of the bands there is no place to play. The only hope for a band is to play top 40 material to get gigs at Myron's and other local bars.

For most young bands, however, top 40 is not an issue, let alone playing forty songs.

The real problem starts at the fact that most of them are not writing their own music. Originality does not make money unless you have something to catch people first. Since these bands are original and are definitely not Myron's material, they have to organize their own shows. This involves renting a place to play, which can be expensive if there is a damage deposit. Also, you have to rent security, usually at fifty dollars an hour. If enough people come to hear the bands, they might break even.

This can cause bands to get discouraged. Some might not think it is worthwhile. Others develop the "I just want to play" attitude. The people who develop the latter start looking for any kind of exposure. Benefits for charity are noble, but the most popular exposure in this area has become the Battle of the Bands.

The people and places that put these shows on promise big prizes and big audiences. These two promises are usually kept, but the bands usually at the band's expense.

The first promise is the prize. Let us pretend there is a battle. It allows ten bands to perform. As a way of insuring that the bands play, each must pay a registration fee (though this is not the case for high schools) that ranges on aver-

age between \$25 to \$50. This results in a sum of up to \$500, meaning that very good prizes can be awarded. Considering that this money belonged to the bands in the first place, it seems that it would be simpler if they all just played a game of poker.

The other promise is the exposure. The bands are the cause of the large attendance, but they receive none of the door money. If it costs five dollars to get in, it could work out to as little as fifty cents a band; not a bad deal. All of this money goes to the organizers because the prizes were given out of the registration fees. Over all, there are ten bands playing and only three getting paid, though \$50 of the potential prize was their own money to begin with. Now you have seven bands who are either discouraged, resentful, or angry at the other bands. This

leads to the next problem.

Local bands are agreeing that battles make the competition the main focus, not the music. Many who have won battles have found that other bands would not share information about upcoming opportunities for playing. Band to band hatred followed. People were talking behind backs and putting down both the music and the musicians. The idea of a "show" is to bring bands together, not to start wars. Other points made by musicians were that the winners of these battles are usually not the best band, that some bands with different styles do not get credit for being original, and that you hear only a few songs from each band.

Now you read this and wonder what the solution is. Here is mine.

Boycott these battles,

and try to organize a pseudo-union of musicians. This will cause friendly relations between bands. Let other bands know that you are all on the same side. If you can organize shows that will require that you all have to pay \$50 each to cover the expenses, do it. It would be the same as a battle, only the bands can collect the door money. Also, non-musicians are organizing venues for young bands to play in. Generation XX is a perfect venue. They do not have battles, just ordinary shows.

I ask those of you in bands, and those of you who watch bands, not to go to battles. For you musicians, support this. If everyone does, it can wake up the battle organizers. For you fans, support the bands when they do organize their own shows.



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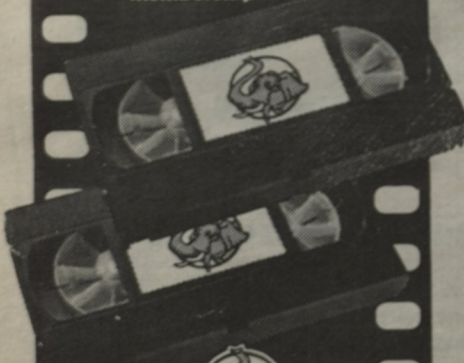
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