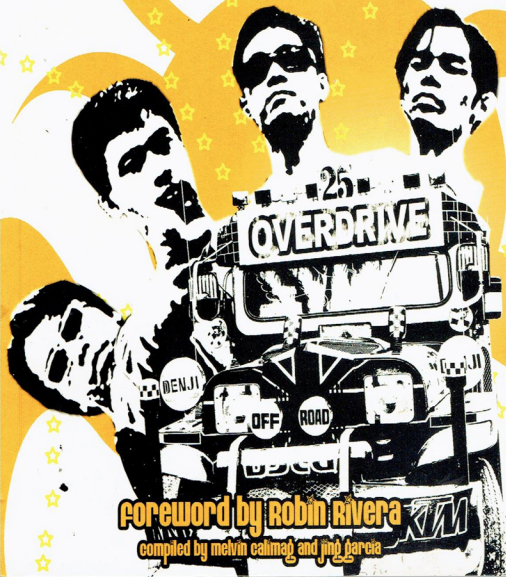


Tikman and Langit

an anthology on THE ERASERHEADS



foreword by Robin Rivera

compiled by melvin calimay and jing garcia

For most Filipino youths in the Nineties, the Eraserheads was the band that defined their generation. From the underground scene, the band led the alternative music's invasion of the mainstream and ushered in a new era of Pinoy music.

In this compilation of essays and never-before-seen photos, the E-heads' exploits and influences are portrayed from the point-of-view of the fans -- stories that depict how an ordinary-looking "combo" made their impact, and why we regard them as the last great Pinoy band.

I was putting off reading this because of the mixed feelings I have about the E-heads. But I finally took the plunge, and was actually surprised. There are a number of bits and pieces here from people who knew me and my bandmates pretty well, but a lot of it is new, even to me. So I think you'll probably find a lot of fresh insights and revelations on the band you'll find interesting and amusing.

— Raymund Marasigan

Many thanks go to the fans who loved the music as much as we did. In every step of the way, the fans completed the wonderful equation that was the Eraserheads.

— Buddy Zabala

I have nothing but respect for Kapitan Elyboy and my shipmates, Buds and Rains. We all had our different spheres to cover. Raymund made sure we were always five steps ahead of the game. Buddy is a supermusician. I was punk and I took care of the freaks. Rakenrol

— Marcus Adoro



VISUAL PRINT ENTERPRISES

essays by
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More than any other group before them or since, the Eraserheads wrote songs that rang true about what it meant to be young, gifted and Pinoy. Their music is imprinted in our cultural DNA, and this collection of fans' notes goes a long way toward explaining why they meant as much as they did -- and still do -- to the generation that came of age in the Nineties.

-- Eric Caruncho, *rock journalist, Sunday Inquirer Magazine*

How does a four-minute song change a teenager's view of the world? How can four guys write soundtracks to an entire generation's loves, griefs, hopes, despairs and boredom? This anthology of essays -- ranging from the clinically objective to the droolingly reverential -- might answer that.

-- Lourde Veyra, *writer and lead singer, Radioactive Sago Project*

We loved the Eheads not just for the words and music but for the way they captured specific moments in our lives. No band could survive that kind of possessive identification.

-- Jessica Zafra, *writer and book author*

I was putting off reading this because of the mixed feelings I have about the Eheads. But I finally took the plunge, and was actually pleasantly surprised. There are a number of bits and pieces here from people who knew me and my bandmates pretty well, but a lot of it is new, even to me. So I think you'll probably find a lot of fresh insight and revelations on the band you'll find interesting and amusing.

-- Raymund Marasigan, *drummer, Eraserheads*

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-- Marcus Adoro, *lead guitarist, Eraserheads*

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VISUAL PRINT ENTERPRISES

FOREWORD

The modern recording studio is a clinical environment that demands a high level of focus and concentration. In order to achieve this level of concentration, I made a conscious decision to insulate the Eraserheads from as many external forces as possible once they set foot in the studio.

I felt that this would allow them the much needed freedom and control needed to operationalize their wonderful music the way they wanted. I once wrote that I tried to create the one true refuge or sanctuary from all the seeming madness that surrounded them in the outside world.

But unlike the band, who after each session returned to bask in the spotlight of pop stardom, I could conveniently retreat into anonymity and objectivity. Although the band often told me stories about their exploits and let me read some of their mail, I remained generally disconnected from the rest of the music scene.

So when I was asked to read this collection of articles written by fans, it was like being ushered into a world I completely missed during my tenure with the band. There is a theory about history and the tyranny of the written word (which in some cases can be viewed as unfortunate) that an event doesn't really "exist" unless it is documented and/or published.

One of the main reasons I decided to help the band record the now legendary *Pop-U* was that in the event that they never got a recording contract, I wanted it to serve as permanent proof of the creativity of their youth. I am therefore glad that a group of fans have responded in kind by documenting how the band changed their lives, even just a little.

It provides another significant component in contextualizing the "band explosion" that occurred in the Nineties. And it reminds us that the "phenomenon" of the Eraserheads was not just an individual concoction, but a collective construct in which all the social actors, fans included, played a significant role.

Robin Rivera

11 August 2006

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PARA SA ERASERHEADS

"Narinig mo na ba
ang Eraserheads?"
tanong ng aking friend

nakatambay kami sa car niya
sa parking lot ng aming college
habang oras ay wine-waste

"Sino? Razorheads?"
sagot kong patanga
sa friend kong nakanganga

"Eraserheads! luka-luka!
tumugtog sa dorm yung banda"
sabay sungalingal ng tape niya

dun sa tape na yun
na masking tape ang label
una kong narinig ang Eheads songs ever!

"Hanep! Astig! sisikat ang mga toi!"
ala-dilang anghel kong pagkakasabe
sabay dasal na magka-tape na rin ako at kotse.

Dimpy Jazmines

There Was Something Special About This Ordinary-looking Band

EDWIN SALLAN

WHAT you see is what you get.

There was a time when rock stars were defined not just by their music but also by their respective images. Think of the term rockabilly and the greasy pompadours of Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly and even the Stray Cats immediately come to mind. Think of glam rock and you think of the made-up faces and flamboyant stage presence of Alice Cooper, Kiss and Queen. Punk rock? You got those leather jackets, safety pins and spiked hair of the Sex Pistols and The Clash.

Pinoy rockers were no exception. The legendary Joey "Pepe" Smith is, of course, its poster boy as every ounce of his lean and mean frame has "rock star" written all over him. The charisma, the attitude, the stage presence -- Pepe Smith was and will probably always be Pinoy Rock personified.

There were others. Mike Hanopol was for a time also known for his trademark bandana and RayBan aviator sunglasses. Freddie Aguilar had his troubadour sombrero. Joey Ayala and his Bagong Lumad put a premium on

their own ethnic appearance to go with the indigenous instruments that defined their music.

The Eraserheads? Come to think of it, these guys didn't have anything.

If the band were a computer program, it would be best described by an interface simply known to old school word processor users as WYSIWYG.

What you see is what you get.

There was neither a particular Eraserheads look nor a trademark stage move to emulate for E-heads wannabes. Sure, there were the occasional Levi's jeans and Converse Chuck Taylors but these lads were still light years away from being the image endorsers of any fashion gear, which seems to be the case now for every local band that has at least one hit record including Marasigan's Sandwich and Ely Buendia's Pupil. These days Raymund actually wears eyeliner, Doc Martens (standard gear for many rock stars) and new wavish attire that easily recall Robert Smith of The Cure. Ely now always performs wearing long sleeved shirts and thin neckties over Levi's and Pony sneakers that yes, his band is naturally endorsing.

With the exception of the Abba T-shirt Ely wore in the music video of *Fruitcake* and a group of acrobatic cyclists and skateboarders that graced their first major concert at the Folk Arts Theater, there was really not much by way of a fashion statement or any other crowd-pleasing routine by which the E-heads could be best remembered. Well, I do recall one of those cyclists having a bad fall as the band was performing "Ugaya" at the start of the show while he and others were doing their stunts in the background.

Other than that and perhaps that charmingly crude music video of "Ang Huling El Bimbo," the one thing about the band that will always linger in people's consciousness is well, the music. As hackneyed as that sounds, it also happens to be the truth.

Because whether they were consciously aware of it or not, the band's refusal to adhere to any fashion or musical trend paved the way for a golden OPM era where fans began to put more premium on the music than anything else. Just about every other band that struck gold in the wake of the E-heads' success was not known for any kind of visual gimmickry.

So what if The Youth didn't look anything like the punk rockers that inspired their hit records? So what if

Yano performed wearing only *tsinelas* (or flip-flops as most kids prefer to call them now) or the closest thing to an onstage gimmick Agaw Agimat could think of was having frontgirl QT Paduano sing barefoot, prompting one concert heckler to dub them as Agaw Tsinelas? And who the hell cares if Medwin Marfil of True Faith was not really the towering hunk that he sounded like in "Perfect" as long as he stood six feet tall in our CD players?

It's not that the E-heads lacked personality -- far from it. Ely's rugged good looks and brooding, silent type mystique made him the band's resident "chick boy" (a reputation he probably disdained) and he was linked with every skirt, from groupies to established celebrities like Agot Isidro at one time or another. Raymund and bass player Buddy Zabala are talented musicians who would further hone their craft with their active involvement in several side projects during and after their E-heads stint. And there was something about lead guitarist Marcus Adoro's scruffy look that most people can only associate with someone who plays in a rock band.

Who says these guys are not image conscious? Keep in mind that the E-heads were also from UP so they were quite astute when it came to career decisions, even supposedly

risky ones. Like there was this story about their refusal to perform one of their hits as a duet with no less than megastar Sharon Cuneta on her own live show when this sort of thing was standard practice in ABS-CBN variety shows like *ASAP*. They were also said to piss off Martin Nievera with their smart-alecky answers on his late night talk show. The same smart-alecky attitude that did not exactly endear them to media folks and started a backlash of sorts.

And their only movie? I wouldn't be surprised if a band at the top of their game like the E-heads got several offers to star in this or that flick back then. But the fact that they chose to star in only one opposite funnyman Joey De Leon in *Run Barbie Run* says a lot about what these guys wanted to be remembered for. Although it didn't do that well in the tills, being associated with Joey De Leon, whose *kanto* boy humor they admittedly admire also showed what partly influenced their own brand of deadpan wit especially in early favorites like "Tindahan ni Aling Nena," "Maling Akala," "Toyang" and "Combo on the Run." An accomplished lyricist himself who wrote classics like "Ang Boyfriend Kong Baduy," and those unforgettable *Tough Hits* and of course, "Iskul Bukol," the former Joey Escalera couldn't have written those E-heads tunes any other way.

The E-heads occasionally courted controversy and while it seemed that they were just caught up in the trappings of their own fame that probably surprised them more than anybody else, methinks that's not really the case. The way I see it, they knew exactly what they were doing as none of all that supposedly negative stuff actually hurt their solid fan base. At the end of the day, all of the above "career moves" point to what the band really stood for. It was still, first and foremost, about the music and nothing but the music. Everything else is irrelevant. And that was pretty much what the "Eraserheads Era" (can it really be called anything else?) of the mid-Nineties ushered in.

What you hear is what you get.

So who cares if the Eheads didn't sell out that Folk Arts Theater concert? Or many of the other major gigs that followed? Their records went double and triple platinum on a consistently regular basis during their prime because classics and now karaoke favorites like "Pare Ko," "Ugaya," "Ang Huling El Bimbo," "Alapaap," "Magasin," "With A Smile," "Overdrive," "Torpedo" and many more were simply irresistible ear candies that connected with people in ways that no other band or solo artist has done before.

Sure, they had their share of lemons and low points. I, for one, cringe every time I hear the very cheesy "Para Sa Masa" or that familiar Pale Fountains riff in "Alapaap" that I thought was too *plakado* for comfort or the hopelessly bland "Maselang Bahaghari" which in my book was a sub-par effort for a band of their caliber or even their rather embarrassing reading of Ryan Cayabyab's "Tuwing Umuulan At Kapiling Ka."

But for the most part, the music was pretty good. Actually, it was more than pretty good. Even the lesser-known hits like the hard-rocking "Maskara" and the acoustic-flavored "Julie Tearjerky" still showed those killer hooks and clever wordplay in peak form when the law of diminishing returns was beginning to catch up on the latter part of their career.

While these guys were quite the Fab Four, I personally thought it was a stretch to compare them to The Beatles. Having interviewed the band on several occasions, I know Ely would cringe at that very thought. This is the same guy who recently told me that he didn't think his songs were "the defining sound of the E-heads." Maybe he was just being modest or simply pulling my leg with that remark but really, is there any other band that comes close? Rivermaya? The self-proclaimed *banda ng bayan*? I'll

concede that Rico Blanco is a craftier tunesmith and perhaps a more reliable hitmaker but no, I don't think so.

Like the video of "Ang Huling Ei Bimbo," the E-heads brought us hook-laden pop that was by and large and for the lack of a better term, charmingly crude. The songs didn't speak to us in the most eloquent of terms. They captured our imagination with their sheer simplicity and DIY feel.

So these T-shirt and jeans Average Joes didn't look too hot onstage. So their live shows lacked that particular oomph and had no fireworks at all. So they didn't put on tons of makeup or destroy guitars or display any other flamboyant stage moves like other rock stars. None of that really mattered.

We didn't identify with them because we saw them as larger than life figures. We identified with them because we saw them as people like us -- Average Joes. Of course, it also didn't hurt that the music was simply that good, too. And that's why their unparalleled success remains the benchmark by which all other bands are still measured.

For the Eraserheads, what you see is what you get and yes, what you hear is exactly what you get.

And for the countless fans whose lives their music continues to touch, that's more than enough.

I AM a music fan of the first order. I have 2,000 CDs and more than 13,000 songs in my iPod. I am also capable of swooning, though it doesn't happen very often. By swooning, I mean acquiring an artist's entire discography, attending concerts whenever convenient, memorizing lyrics and idiosyncrasies, even following trivial news and career developments.

This only happened three times when I was young. I swooned over Elvis Presley, The Beatles and Michael Jackson. Very unimaginative choices, I know, but also very foreign. While struggling to deal with pimples and hair gel as a teenager, the one local band that came close to making me swoon was The Dawn, but my interest died with guitarist Teddy Diaz. Yes, I loved Rey Valera and Apo Hiking Society and Hotdog and VST & Company. But I wouldn't make an effort to swing by a record bar just to purchase their music.

Which I did when I was 21, a time when I thought I was old enough to be impervious to musical fanaticism. It was the time an unknown Filipino band released its debut album with a title that conjured up my very childhood. I was hooked as soon as I flipped to

side B of an *ultraelectromagneticpop!* cassette, and I would eventually go on to buy every fucking CD the Eraserheads were destined to make. I even fell for the *Anthology* album even when I had already owned practically all the songs in it. Put an 'Eraserheads' tag on any CD and I would gladly pay for it.

Yet I have no idea what qualifies me now to write a piece for an Eraserheads book.

Sure, I once interviewed them for a magazine cover story back in 1996, fresh from the ecstasy of having seen them launch *Cutterpillow* at the UP Sunken Garden, Ely Buendia and I would later correspond through e-mail a few times after that, thanks in no small part to The Beatles shirt I wore to the interview.

Sure, I very nearly ended up in the *Fruitcake* MTV shot at Araneta Center in Cubao. I had bumped into Ely the previous night and he had invited me to attend it. If I didn't have work on shooting day, I might have played a blind, guitar-slinging beggar in the video.

And sure, I have 7.4 hours' worth of E-heads music in my iPod, and I can still recite the lyrics to "Shake Yer Head" even after 10 bottles of beer. In fact, the Eraserheads are the only musical act apart from The Beatles whose entire catalogue is in my digital jukebox.

As far as I'm concerned, however, these circumstances do not automatically give me the right to contribute an article to this, a lofty tribute to what I debatably believe is the best Pinoy rock-and-roll band ever. Because I can guarantee you that for every one of my Eraserheads anecdotes, hundreds of more zealous fans can match it with 10 of their own. The group became so big that it wasn't difficult to imagine countless punks getting lost in their chords and hooks, and chronicling their every move. Even the iconic Joey de Leon just had to give in and make a movie with them.

No, I'm not writing this because I was -- and am -- a fan. If you bought this book, chances are you're a bigger fan than I have ever been. I am writing this because the Eraserheads provided a soundtrack to my life, for which I am eternally grateful.

Guess what I was doing when "Ligaya" came out. I was helping the love of my life finish her thesis, exactly what the E-Heads vowed to

do in the song. Guess where I was bumming around when I first heard "Magasin". In Baclaran, my birthplace and place of residence to this day -- and where the band spotted the pornographic reading material as stated in the song. And guess how I was spending my time when "Overdrive" broke out. I was literally learning how to drive because I had just launched my pretentious career as a motoring journalist.

As young and deluded as I was, it was very easy for me to think the Eraserheads were writing songs about me. In reality, the Eraserheads were writing songs about every young Filipino -- indeed, about every Sharon Cuneta fan. I guess they really sealed the deal when they released "Pare Ko". The brilliantly simple lyrics were exactly the sentiments of anyone who had ever been rejected by a paramour. Yet no one before (or after) them had given vent to such a range of emotions with as much poignancy and honesty. With that one song, the Eraserheads anointed themselves as the official mouthpiece of the Filipino everyman.

And all along that they were speaking for us, they were also working to elevate our collective musical tastes. I have not seen any other Filipino singer or band that matured so greatly in the span of just three albums. Play

ultraelectromagneticpop! and *Cutterpillow* one after the other, and you'd be ignorant not to notice the level of lyrical, musical and technical growths that separated the two. The lush orchestral tendencies of *Cutterpillow* were majestic in appeal, certainly a far cry from the raw energy and youthful exuberance of *ultraelectromagneticpop!* I know of no other Filipino song that is as wonderfully crafted as "Ang Huling El Bimbo". I also know of no other song that has made me so proud to be Pinoy.

And the album (*Circus*) between them? Let's just say it was the album that convinced me that here at last was the greatest local band to ever come along. "With A Smile" was so gorgeous and sublime, I just had to place a long-distance call to the above-mentioned love of my life just so I could play her all four-and-a-half minutes of it over the phone.

The Eraserheads eventually got tired of their countrymen as their main audience, and set out to conquer bigger markets in remote lands. When *Fruitcake* came out, I just knew they were starting to lose the plot. It was soon our turn to get tired of them.

But it was OK. The boys had already given us "Toyang" and that was more than enough to make many of us swoon for life.

Hey, Jay, Don't Go Away or, How the Eraserheads
Took a Sad Song and Made It Happy and Gay

CHONG ARDIVILLA

It was 1995 B.C. -- Before Cell Phones. There was still simmering anger over the execution of Filipina domestic helper Flor Contemplacion in Singapore. Not everybody wanted to be a nurse then. The Universal Motion Dancers were hot shit. Our President had testicles. The Spice Girls were about to destroy what was left of grunge in the face of the weakening of the international rock and roll scene. Students in college were doing surveys on backmasking tapes in order to decipher Satanic messages found in popular songs. Blues ruled EDSA and the Metro Rail Transit then was a commuter's fantasy. The Eraserheads were enjoying the tremendous success of *Circus*, their second album under a major label, which came out late the previous year. I had just entered college.

It was a heady experience. As a freshman at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, I found myself flung into a world of cutting classes and classmates who wore slippers to class. (Later on, I myself would attend classes smashed on alcohol and whatnot.) We all relished our little freedoms: going to the Sunken Garden, climbing trees, talking for hours on

end about brave ideals that would eventually be killed by the onslaught of adulthood and withholding taxes.

Back then, we only cared about where and when the next outing/party/gig was. The Eraserheads was the biggest band in the Philippines at that time. When *Circus* came out, a lot of my contemporaries rushed to the record bars and bought tapes that had on its cover a picture of a jellyfish that looked like a quirky character from the Toxic Avenger cartoons. It served as the soundtrack of transition for many of us as we crossed over from high school into the bigger, crueler world that was college.

I remember when the Eraserheads were set to play in the then newly built UP Bahay ng Alumni. I went to see them with newfound friends and we danced and bobbed our heads with the crowd.

While the Eraserheads had a string of hits in *Circus*, one song was distinctly left out of the then-powerful airwaves of cool radio stations. That song was "Hey Jay." The Eraserheads may have cemented their popularity with ditties on spurned love, but "Hey

Jay" was a defiant statement and an encouragement for a gay friend who found himself being rejected by his own father. "Jay" also had to deal with the violence directed at those who were seen as "different."

1995 was also the year I decided to break free and "out" myself -- at least to my friends. I was afraid of disappointing my parents and fearful of being relegated to the margins of society. If "Hey Jay" were to have filled the airwaves then, what a difference it would have made to people like me. And there were a lot of us wrangling with the ugly reality of being "not normal."

But the song played only in the private confines of rooms and Walkmans. Perhaps, society was not ready for that song. Perhaps, the Eraserheads were ahead of their time. After all, it was also the same period when the popularity of Roderick Paulate's faggoty caricature of the *bakla* had reached its apogee. In films and television sitcoms, the *baklas* were smacked in the head and kicked down the stairs. Their screams -- as they sashayed in sequined outfits just before being made comic whipping "boys" -- drew laughter from the audience and guaranteed the cash flow of movie producers. These films and shows made it acceptable to dunk the *bakla* into a drum of

water, a metaphor surely for trying to drown away homosexuality. But guess what? The *sirena* refused to go away.

Then the Eraserheads played and sang this song of acceptance.

Hey Jay, nag-away na naman
kayo ng tatay mo
Hey Jay wala raw siyang
anak na katulad mo
Alam niya namang wala kang
kasalanan
Alam niya na ipinanganak ka
ng ganyan

A teacher said he once had a student who hanged himself in his bedroom. The boy told his classmates days before the suicide, "I will have a very lonely life." The boy had homosexual tendencies and decided it was just too much. He was just 13. It is stupid and unfair to think that perhaps "Hey Jay" could have "saved" him.

But it definitely would have made him think.

I imagined how these words have helped some of us who were at the brink of utter depression. Sometimes, it takes words to salve the wounds inflicted by harsh words, too. Words are powerful and comforting. I remember the dark times where I felt that I was all alone and could not talk

to anyone at all and thus, reached for other people's words for comfort and, perhaps, wisdom.

Think how the song's lyrics would have affected people who were afraid to be society's expected caricatures and would wish to be somebody else:

Now he-he-he-he Jay
Be happy and be gay
He-he-he-he Jay
We still love you anyway
We still love you anyway

Ironically, rock and roll has never been kind to *baklas* either, in spite of the assurances sung by one the country's more influential bands ever:

He-he-he Jay
He-he-he Jay
Everything's gonna be okay
Everything must be okay

Bakit ba sila ganyan?
Puno ng galit ang isipan
Ba't ba tayo ganito?
Walang galang sa kapwa
Ta-o ta-o ta-o

Homosexuals are still quietly reviled by the movers and shakers of rock & roll in Manila. I know someone who is gay who fronted a rock & roll band. One day, his band staged a coup and ousted him. One even

suggested that their gay member "tone down" if he wanted to be part of the band because they didn't want to turn off the all-too-powerful music executive. The band mates wanted to live the illusion of the rock & roll lifestyle, with screaming groupies and corporate-backed angst-ridden lyrics. The gay guy was trumped by The Normalcy Machinery.

Unfortunately, the Machinery remains well-oiled, inadvertently perhaps, by a few misguided people.

There was a song popular years ago about how this guy who found out his buddy was in love with him. It spoke of nothing more than a hilarious avoidance of the awkward situation, complete with a music video of a guy in a tutu.

Then there are the 'invisible' lesbians of local rock and roll. They live in the closet and seek acceptance by trashing their very identities. Perhaps, the find comfort in singing songs devoid of passion. Perhaps, they refuse a painful and alienating search for truths in their lives. Perhaps, they prefer the safe, the sugary, and the lucrative.

Where is "Hey Jay" now in these ugly but real vignettes? I thought rock & roll was all about defiance -- a big "Fuck you!" to the constrictions

of society. That rock & roll was music about reaching minds and provoking thoughts and questioning the establishment. That it was about choices we make and not those forced upon us. That it was about changing the world.

Perhaps, I am naïve. Perhaps I should give in to the cynical assumption that rock & roll is about the perks of money, drugs, sex, and how product is packaged and sold.

But what about these words?

Hey Jay sa'n ka na ngayon pupunta?
 Hey Jay kailangan ay magtiis ka
 Alam mo namang may iba ka pang magagawa
 Alam mo namang ang mahalaga ay nabubuhay ka
 Jay, what you are and wherever you go
 Isip-isipin mo na lang na may nagmamahal sa 'yo

Who can blame me for thinking that songs can change some lives, and perhaps, the world?

The Evolution of A Fan

ABIGAIL HO

For someone who grew up singing in the church choir, being given the chance to be the Eraserheads' PA (production assistant or personal *alalay*, you decide) for one of their gigs was like winning the lottery.

I mean, come on! I loved doing church music, but there was something exciting about being a groupie for a night and being close to my music idols -- even for just several minutes.

People in their mid-20s to mid-30s can very well relate to how I felt when I found I'd be at the beck and call of Ely, Raymund, Marcus and Buddy for that one night. Uh, that didn't quite come out right.

Anyway, being their PA for a UP Diliman gig in February 1999, the *Bandemonium* rock concert organized by the UP Mass Communicators Organization, was one heck of an experience for me.

Sure, they probably wouldn't remember me now. But that night gave me a chance to be near them and to talk to them -- even if it just meant asking if they wanted anything while they waited for turn on stage.

(Starstruck as I was at that time, I'm not quite sure now which of them had cold mineral water or ice cold San Mig Light. But I do remember Ely asking for a bottle of mineral water -- not from the ice chest, but straight from the box. Discipline, discipline. No cold drinks before going on stage for this guy.)

Okay, so I didn't launch into an intelligent discussion with them. We didn't discuss their musical influences, their song inspirations, their rituals before each gig, the meaning of life, the Theory of Relativity, blah, blah, blah. As I said, I was starstruck!

The usually chatty girl that I was ended just sitting on a Monobloc chair backstage, alternately staring at my clipboard and at my generation's gods of Pinoy alternative music.

And then it was their time to play. The UP Film Center almost literally shook. People screamed, clapped, jumped. For some, it was their first time to see the E-heads play live. For most, it was probably the *n*th time. But it seemed like the first time nevertheless.

Like it was for me. Although I had seen them before, the intensity I felt over their live performance was like the rush of seeing them for the first time. I sang my lungs out and jumped crazy on stage (just on the wings, don't worry). Never mind that "Pare Ko" was already more than five years old at that time. That E-heads staple still had me clapping until my palms were numb.

And after one set of intense rockin' and rollin', 30 minutes of hardcore singing (or maybe screaming out song lyrics is more appropriate), crazy jumping and serious head-bobbing/head-banging, I found myself, together with hundreds of E-heads fans, screaming for more.

No Instant convert

But years before that, I wouldn't even consider myself a fan. In fact, I had no inkling whatsoever that I would turn into one. I was, after all, only 13 when the E-heads broke into the commercial music scene. And, admittedly, my liking for rock/alternative/grunge was quite repressed, having studied in a Christian school at that time, and having my values shaped by a fundamental Christian church.

Confessions, confessions. I was one of those kids who, upon hitting

puberty, suddenly didn't know exactly what they wanted -- which friends to go with, where to hang out, how to dress.

And music, as it turned out, became one of my outlets. From wholesome kiddie tunes and mushy ballads, I started listening to Aerosmith, Pearl Jam, Nirvana, Stone Temple Pilots and other bands my parents didn't approve of.

Then came the E-heads. I was a freshman in high school when they released *ultraelectromagneticpop!*. They were okay, I thought at that time. But I wasn't an instant fan. In fact, back then, I'd take Steven Tyler or Kurt Cobain over Ely Buendia any day. But that deserves another chapter, or another book, altogether.

Anyway, looking back, during the band's infancy, I remember seeing them perform live at the SM Entertainment Plaza on the basement of SM City North Edsa (before it was given a facelift and back when it played host to Tito Pepe's *Family Kwarta o Kahon!*). I hardly noticed them.

At 13, I thought they were just a bunch of guys sporting the grunge look like the rest of the college bands, and most teenage guys, at that time. I didn't even pay close attention to their music, what with

the smoke from my sizzling plate stinging my eyes and all the noise from the SM City Food Court almost drowning them out.

But something struck me about them, even if it wasn't their music... yet. It was their name. Eraserheads. *Mababaw* as that might seem, the name got me hooked. I thought it was unique. (I had no idea who David Lynch was back then, sorry.)

The song that started it all

And then they started appearing on TV, playing "Toyang," which I thought was really funny. And catchy. And quite creative, actually. It was kinda cool hearing a new spin on something that my parents may have listened to when they were younger. And it was interesting to hear a popular Pinoy nursery rhyme sung that way.

Pengeng singko pambili ng
puto
sa mga tindera ng bicho-
bicho.
Skyflakes, Coke 500, pahiling
ng kiss
Pambayad ko sa jeepney,
kulang pa ng diyos.

It was also fun trying to catch the rapidly sung lyrics and memorizing them. Yes, folks, "Toyang" did it for me.

It wasn't just the catchy tune that got me. My 13-year-old self actually found the song so damn real. And simple. It depicted real life and young love much more vividly than most sappy love songs.

Mahal ko si Toyang
pagkat siya'y simple lamang.
Kahit namomoroblema,
basta't kami ay magkasama
Madalas man kaming walang
pera,
makita lang ang kisiap ng
kanyang mga mata,
ako ay busog na.

Can you get any simpler -- and sweeter -- than that?

Sinking deeper

So I became a certified E-heads fan. Yep. The simple words and the little truths accompanied by equally simple melodies wove their magic on me and got me hooked. Apparently, for years to come.

Because here I am now, a business reporter for the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 13 years after my first encounter with the E-heads, and I'm still as big a fan as I was years ago when "Toyang" first made an impression on me.

I still feel giddy when I hear songs from *ultraelectromagneticpop!*, my ultimate favorite because of its sheer simplicity and honesty. I still choose E-heads songs to sing during videoke sessions with my friends, and still rave about the gods of Pinoy alternative music as if their band still exists.

"Toyang" still catapults me back to high school, bringing back memories of when I first fell in love with the E-heads, when I bonded with my cousins over alternative music and swapped cassette tapes of the band's first album (CDs were way too expensive for our high school allowance) along with Aerosmith's *Get a Grip* and Nirvana's *Unplugged in New York*.

"Magasin" still makes me wanna sing out loud, "With a Smile" still makes me, well, smile, and "Overdrive" still makes me wanna go to places I've never been before (and makes me wonder about *tahong*, *chips ahoy*, ox brain, *pinatuyong itlog ng kabayo*, *ginataang gata* and *ginataang niyogi*).

While "Ang Huling El Bimbo" takes me back to the days of puppy love, it also makes me think about harsh realities -- that women who get pregnant don't necessarily marry, and that they sometimes have to work

on odd jobs like being a dishwasher in Ermita just to earn a living.

"Maling Akala" also stresses some harsh realities, albeit in a more upbeat manner -- that when people talk, the truth gets blurred and gossip becomes gospel truth.

"Superproxy" and "Maskara" both veer from the simple themes that made me love the E-heads in the first place. While the lyrics remain simple, the songs are more loaded. These songs have now become conveyors of great truths for me -- about escaping, pretending and dealing with two-faced scumbags that, unfortunately, continue to walk the earth.

While an E-heads song may resonate differently for each fan, one thing is certain: they are The Beatles of our generation. In the same way my dad remains a huge Beatles fan even after 40 years, I've got the E-heads so deeply entrenched in my system that I'm sure I'll still be a fan decades from now.

Cutting across generations

And the E-heads' effect is obviously not confined to those who were there in UP Diliman when the band was just starting out in 1989, to those who witnessed how *ultraelectromagneticpop!* opened

commercial doors for underground college rock bands, to those who saw how the band placed the Philippines on the MTV map by bagging the 1997 Southeast Asia Viewers' Choice Award for "Ang Huling El Bimbo," to those who cried when the band split up in 2002.

Today, hearing teens sing E-heads songs -- written when these adolescents were just toddlers -- proves that the band lives on. They get to feel the magic that we reveled in back in the day, to experience for themselves the genius behind the music that captivated the hearts of millions of Filipinos.

Many of the band's songs can now be considered "classics," having breached the 10-year mark. But they continue to convey the meaning and emotion that made us laugh, cry, sing, dance, shout and break out of our shells when we were young and had no idea exactly what to do with our lives.

They are our Beatles, our Rolling Stones. In the 12 years they were together, they had albums turning gold in a day and platinum in less than a week, videos gaining international recognition, songs drawing flak for allegedly encouraging drug use.

And let's not forget their sudden breakup, which fans like us still wonder about up to now. For me, it's still right up there with the classic Philo. 1 questions: "What is the meaning of life?" and "Why am I here?"

The fact that the band has been dead for six years now doesn't mean their heyday is over. Proof is the recent E-heads tribute album, *ultraelectromagneticjam*, with everyone from Rico J. Puno doing "Ang Huling El Bimbo" to Francis M. on "Super Proxy."

Sure the band members have moved on to other endeavors: Ely as frontman for Pupul, Raymond as lead vocalist for Sandwich, Buddy as bassist for Twisted Halo, and Marcus as...well, I'm not exactly sure where he is right now. But you can't take away the fact that their old band has become legendary. They changed the landscape of Philippine music. That's a fact that just can't be denied.

Walang Nagbago: My Affair with Marcus
Adoro and the Eraserheads

CLAIRE MANEJA

One night many years ago, on my way home from campus, I alighted from a jeep to find Marcus Adoro (or his doppelganger) following me all the way to my house. He introduced himself as a "musician from Peyups" and politely asked for my phone number. Instead of screaming for the *barangay tanod*, I batted my lashes and smiled dumbly at the stalker while I tried to analyze his features under the moth-mottled streetlights: coarse, longish hair, a face landscaped by shadows, cheekbones that threatened to pierce the skin. Sweet Lord, could this be Mr. Adoro? Since I just stood there like a fool, he finally bade me good evening and left. I recounted my adventure to my sister, who ran an Eraserheads cult on the side. She yelled, "Gaga! Marcus can afford a fleet of Bentleys. Why would he take a jeep? Now what if that loon comes back to massacre us?"

Such stupidity could only be borne out of manic devotion to the Eraserheads, the band that truly, madly, deeply belonged to my generation. It was *ours*. We laid claim to the band with impunity, and deservedly so. Following the syrupy tyranny of Introvoy and other bands whose names hinted at severe dyslexia, the Eraserheads was

a whoosh of holy Himalayan air, crisp and unadulterated. The Eraserheads was my generation's nirvana, no pun intended.

Our older sisters and cousins cooed along to Paco Arrespacochaga's banal lyrics, which to this day never fail to make my toenails fall dead. Then there was Smokey Mountain, brash and trashy, the "in" thing among girls my age. In my mind, however, the nascent, subterranean voice of chic whispered warnings, but hell, Geneva and Tony were the rage, songhits with "Mama" and "Kallan" proliferated like weapons of mass destruction, and the last thing a 12-year-old wanted was to be the odd chick out. There were no other choices. And no, Andrew E., Michael V. and Denmark did not count (if you don't remember the last dude, google him; on second thought, don't bother).

All that obviously changed when the Gang of Four, bless their hearts, came along. It was destiny. The arrival of the Eraserheads coincided with the first Vesuvian explosions of adolescent hormone (yes, yes, let's not be squeamish here: my first period, my first acne, my first bra. The Eraserheads provided the

soundtrack during those heady days of self-discovery. Yet even if the 'Heads had burst into the scene long before my pimples did, they would have still won me over. Simply put, the music was masterful.

Starting with the folksy, funky-tonk vibe of *ultraelectromagneticpop!*, the Eraserheads electrified an insipid soundscape. Their music was authentic and real as the *pan de sal* from the corner store. Their lyrics -- swooningly honest and singable -- melted in the mouth like butter-flecked brioche. Or *bicho bicho*. Pre-Eraserheads, who sang so convincingly about *puto* and Skyflakes? You do not cringe when you sing an Eraserheads song; you grab the guitar and bellow out in earnest. There is no threat of ridicule unlike that which awaits the unwitting chanteuse who trills, "if I had a line to heaven I swear." Now here was a band I could truly call mine. With the typical self-centeredness of a teenager, I was convinced that the band churned out song after song with me and my cohorts in mind. The songs were ours, and no one else's. Our *ates* could have Paco all to themselves.

This next song is all about love and I wrote it all by myself

What kind of magic wand did the Eraserheads wave over us? It wasn't

the looks. Each 'Head possessed a visage that was less than stunning. Ely Buendia, let's face it, had neither the cerebral charisma of Thom Yorke nor the formidable lung power of Plácido Domingo. He was cantankerous, with a whiny voice to match. During concerts, he played with ennui as if he were doing the *hol polloi* a favor; fine, we forgave the tormented artist schtick.

The band's brilliance lay in their deft use of language, notably through Ely's particular brand of wordplay and wit. Perhaps their most singular achievement was to make Tagalog fashionable, but not in the elegant, mellifluous manner of *Ka Freddie* nor Asin. The Eraserheads gave my generation a lingo. They tanned and dyed the language to make it supple; they made Tagalog *wearable*. They knew instinctively that the *lingua franca* held an unspoken appeal and that it was time to unleash it. Other bands immediately followed suit. Suddenly it was no longer toe-curlingly tacky to croon or even spew metal in Tagalog. Copycat after copycat came to serenate us, but they were all second-rate and tried too hard.

Each generation has its anthem. We had many, courtesy of the 'Heads. I dredge up memories from high school and college based on the popular Eraserheads songs of the

time, so much so, that I can't play back certain scenes in my head without the appropriate track in the background. In junior high, when I pressed my best friend to reveal a scandalous secret, he whipped his head around and purred, "*Huwag mo nang itanong / sa akin / di ko rin naman / sasabihin*." I promptly shut up. Another friend blithely mocked my aspirations to fame by whipping out her guitar and introducing "Magasin" thus, "This is for you."

"Minsan," which I consider one of their wisest songs, bittersweet like Cuban coffee, is a classic, a staple of many a graduation party. Later, snow-bound in Washington, DC, I played the song in a freezing apartment, came close to tears, and had a sudden epiphany. Of course, Ely was right. Things will never be the same as when I crept about with friends in the Sunken Garden in the wee hours of the night, soused on *tuba* and other ghoulish concoctions. I will never be able to bring that back. If I really wanted to, the DC police will come at any moment and shine a light on my glassy, stupefied eyes.

The Julie Tearjerky affair

However, as with any affair, this one gradually ran out of steam. I grew older, resolved to grow some cool, and flirted with other options. I still

kept the Eraserheads on the radio, but clucked my tongue in disapproval as Raymund Marasigan scuttled off to his part-time Sandwich job and the smirk on Ely Buendia's face seemed increasingly resistant to all manner of abrasives. All these I accepted to be nature taking its course. Hey, even John Lennon had moments of sheer arrogance. Yet when I began to see them on MTV Asia with alarming frequency, dripping with big-label largesse -- all four 'Heads looked dermatologized, with perfect pores -- I panicked. Even Marcus -- *my Marcus!* -- began to resemble one of those shiny, happy people. Their music began to evolve, and unhappily, the resulting mutant wasn't to my liking. Like a slovenly husband who started preening for a mistress, it wasn't long until the Eraserheads barely resembled their old selves. Cheats, I fumed. I was seething with jealousy, more than I cared to admit. Why woo the Taiwanese when they will never love them the way we do? What do Singaporeans know about El Bimbo?

If we didn't have the Eraserheads, where would we be?

I took that as a betrayal. I expected that the Eraserheads would see us through, and provide the tracks for the next scenes of our lives: job house settle down children die. We

wanted the 'Heads to be there when we begin having babies and start dipping into retirement funds, much like what the Rolling Stones did for our parents' generation. It seemed as if we wouldn't be so lucky.

Providing the backdrop to my breakup with the Eraserheads was *Natin99*, fittingly, it took place at the turn of the century. When Ely sang, "*Huwag kang matakot! Di kita pababayaan kailan man*," what did he mean? Was that goodbye? We were too befuddled to read between the lines. I was not there to see the final cut. In the summer of 2000, I packed my CDs and left the country.

Sa wakas ay nakita ko na

My first years in the United States were a frenzied blur of faces, tastes and sounds. In my zeal to embrace my new life, I jumped with reckless abandon at the dizzying diversity Uncle Sam had to offer. The cornucopia of musical choices was staggering: from Amharic to Zulu, from Afrobeat to zydeco. I stuffed my iPod like it was nobody's business: In went Femi Kuti, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Buena Vista Social Club, Cesaria Evora, Raul Seixas. When my mother visited one winter, I was experimenting with Marisa Monte. Weary of the lusophone assault, she cried, "What are you now, Brazilian? The last time I was here,

you were Indian!" Uh, not fair. But the more I sailed into new soundscapes, the more I realized that I needed anchor. When I came home in the evenings to a cold, quiet apartment, I wanted something old and familiar for comfort. I had forgotten about the Eraserheads, locking them up under the "Teenage Fad" file.

Well what do you know -- I had a hankering for 'Head. Still smarting from their betrayal, I had not been following developments in the homeland with keen interest. I wanted to move on; the band that I called mine was no longer. Whatever news I got came from my sister, who threatened to go on hunger strike when the band collapsed; she had now recovered from her devastation and continued to track the movements of the foursome. So, I gingerly loaded the classics into my 'pod.

I will never forget the precise moment when the familiar riffs of "Ligaya" rushed through my earphones after a long spell: it was like tumbling into bed with Viggo Mortensen after interminably chaste years in a Tibetan monastery. Goose bumps the size of China formed on my arms, I heard the throbbing hums of a thousand monks in the background, and I felt a strange, inner peace. "Yes, yes," I murmured, settling deeply into the couch, deaf to the world, with ears

only for the 'Heads. There was no more evil karma clouding the air between us. I was healed.

Walang nagbago

To prove my theory that the Eraserheads truly belonged to my generation, I did an unscientific survey on cousins age 19 and younger. True enough, the brats puckered their noses at the mention of the E word. They recoiled from me as if I had avian flu. "*Baduy! Chaka!*" they screeched. I had no doubt that they would have stoned me to death if I had come closer. By God, these children thought that even U2 was so ... over. They lived for Maroon 5 and a host of American Idols. "Pagans," I spat. Why they shose to gravitate towards vacuous, mechanical substitutes for talent I could never understand. Nevertheless, we must show compassion to the ignorant. I felt secretly pleased that these kids could not identify with the one great band that defined and shaped my generation. The Eraserheads, it turns out, are still mine. I look forward to the day when I will entertain my toddlers with my rendition of: "Toyang."

"Tang ina!" ang kataga sa kantang "Pare Ko" ng bandang Eraserheads na bumasang sa tainga ng mga tagapakinig ng musikang Pilipino. Isa itong mapangahas na paraan sa pagpasok sa industriya ng musika sa Pilipinas noong dekada '90.

Matatandaang popular sa panahong iyon ang mga *balladeer* tulad niya Ariel Rivera at Martin Nievera, maging ng mga bandang Side A, Neocolours at The Dawn. Mahigpit ang kompetisyon para sa mga taga-industriya sapagkat nakakahon ang pormula ng mga record companies para sa kanilang mga pinasisikat na talents.

Bukod dito, nakaapekto sa mga mamimili at merkado ang masalimuot na kalagayang pang-ekonomiya at pulitika sa loob at labas ng bansa tulad ng krisis pulitikal sa Gulpo sa Iraq at ang pinsala ng lindol at pagputok ng Bulkang Pinatubo.

Kahit ano pa man ang mga naging balakid at hamon sa pagsikat, nakapasok pa rin ang E-heads sa eksena ng musika sa bansa. At ang pagpasok na ito ng E-heads sa industriya ay nagbigay-daan upang makapasok at makasabay din ang iba pang bandang

umaasang maging sikat din gaya ng mga nauna.

Pagbangga sa pader

Umalingawngaw ang kanta ng E-heads nang nasa ikatlong taon ako ng hayskul. Una kong napanood silang kumanta sa isang Sunday noontime show. Ang banda ay may apat na miyembro, parang Beatles.

Kinanta nila ang "Pare Ko". Live ang kanilang performance, hindi katulad ng mga nakaugallan ng mga Pilipinong mang-aawit na naglilip-sing. Mapaghahalatang naiilang pa ang miyembro ng banda sa pagharap sa kamera. Hindi ko alam kung natural kay Ely, vocalist ng banda, ang garalgal ng nag-limpit nyang boses.

Pero hindi nila binigkas ang mura sa kanilang pagkanta. Siyempre malampang, napagsabihan na sila ng production staff na ipinagbabawal ang pagbanggit sa salitang "tangina" sa harap ng telebisyon dahil matalas pa rin ang ngipin ng censorship sa mga programa sa telebisyon.

Naging popular ang "Pare Ko" sa mga kabataang nagsisimulang mangarap, humanga at magmahal. Hindi

matatawiran na bahagi sa kulturang Pilipino ang musika patungkol sa pag-ibig tulad ng kundiman at harana. Sabi nga, likas sa ating mga Pilipino ang maging romantiko.

Pero ang paggamit ng mura* sa "Pare Ko" ay naging isang paraan upang matandaan ng mga nakikinig at tagapanood ang E-heads. Ito ang kanilang nagiging tatak o marka sa pagpasok sa industriya ng musika. Ito ang naging tanda sa pagbali ng E-heads sa kumbensyon ng mainstream music. Hindi naman ito naging dehado sa grupo lalo pa't aral ang miyembro ng banda sa Unibersidad ng Pilipinas. Sa sikolohiya, mapatutunayan malaki ang impluwensya ng environment sa behavior ng isang tao. At ang pagmumura ay paraan ng pagiging malaya ng isang tao na ibulalas ang kanyang tunay na nararamdaman o saloobin. Ekspresyon na maituturing ang pagmumura ngunit malalim ang pinaghihugutan nito sa pagkatao ng isang tao. Sapagkat ipinagbabawal ang pagmumura ng simbahan, binabangga din ng E-heads ang pader ng pananampalataya ng isang tao sa pamamagitan ng kanta nito.

Bukod sa paggamit ng ipinagbabawal na salita, nagkaroon din ng fashion statement ang E-heads. Pinasikat ng banda ang pagsuot ng Chuck Taylor na sapatos. Kumbaga sa Beatles na nakakurbata at amerikana, nagpapauso

rin ang E-heads ng kanilang sariling imahe upang madali silang matandaan ng kanilang awdyens.

Naging usap-usapan din ang pagkakaroon ng E-heads ng mga babaeng manager dahil ang katwiran nila'y sa babae lang sila pwede sumunod. Kung tutuusin, binabasag din ng E-heads ang konseptong patriyarkal na lipunan. Imbes na lalaki ang laging nasusunod, ipinangalangandakan nilang sa babae lang sila pwedeng tumanggap ng utos.

Nagsimula ang E-heads na maraming binabasag na tradisyon. Naging malingkad ang kanilang pagsikat dahil na rin sa mga alternatibong konsepto hindi lang ng kanilang pagkanta ngunit maging sa kanilang mga panuntunan sa pagkanta at buhay. Sabi nga ni Eric S. Caruncho sa kanyang artikulong "Confessions of a Rock Journalist, or Some Disjointed Ramblings on Pinoy Rock N' Roll," "Bands are formed for different reasons, and these reasons are by in means mutually exclusive. To make money, to express one's self, to create art, to be cool, to attract women, to let out teenage aggression and anxiety, to change society and the world at large, all of the above -- these are just some of the reasons people get into bands." Anuman ang tunay na dahilan ng pagbubuo ng E-heads, napatunayan nilang pwedeng balin ang tradisyon

upang makabuo ng isang bagong tunog at kamalayan.

Tunog kalye

Nasubaybayan ko ang pagsikat ng E-heads sa pagpasok ko sa kolehiyo. Laking tuwa ko ng unang ko silang makita ng personal sa freshmen orientation ko sa UP Diliman. Syempre, makulit, malngay ang grupo gaya rin ng mga bagong estudyante sa Peyups. Iba na talaga ang sikat! Kaya nga ako napasali sa isang musical group sa Peyups dahil nalaman ko na doon sila (maliban kay Ely) nagsimulang umibig sa pagtugtog.

Hindi tunay na naging madali sa E-heads ang pagsikat. Inamin sa isang interbyu kay Raymond, drummer ng banda, na nahirapan silang kumbinsihin ang record companies na i-record ang kanilang mga kanta dahil na rin sa tema ng mga ito na patungkol sa realidad ng buhay (gaya ng "Tindahan ni Aling Nena"), isyung panlipunan ("Alkohol") at personal na pananaw sa buhay ("Toyang"). Maging ang pagiging tunog lata ng kanilang musika ay naging tumpul ng tukso. Aminado naman ang miyembro ng grupo na hindi sila bihasa sa kanilang mga instrumento.

Gayunpaman, mas napalapit ang kanta ng E-heads sa mga kabataan, Hindi naman kasi hiwalay ang karanasan ng

nga miyembro ng banda sa realidad at karanasan ng kanilang mga tagapakinig. Dahil madaling sabayan ang kanilang mga kanta, madaling naaalala ng kanilang mga tagapakinig ang liriko ng kanta. Kaya nga sa bawat kalye na merong grupo ng kabataang nagkakantahan at may naggigitara, hindi mawawala ang kanta ng E-heads. Kaya nga ng nagsulputan ang ibang mga banda, nabansagang "tunog kalye" ang mga kanilang likha ng mga ito. Kumbaga, kapag sinabi mong Eraserheads o E-heads, nabibilang sila sa tinatawag na pop culture dahil sa pagiging bentahe nito sa masa.

Nagpatuloy ang pagsikat ng E-heads sa paglabas nila ng mga bagong album. Sa katunayan, meron silang pitong album at ilan sa mga kanta gaya ng "Huling El Bimbo" ay nagwagi ng awards sa loob at labas ng bansa lalo na sa MTV Music Awards. Ginamit pa sa pelikula at TV commercials ang ilang sikat nilang kanta.

Sa kanilang album na *Natin'98*, nag-experimento sa tunog ang E-heads. Hindi na patungkol sa isyung panlipunan, pag-ibig at pananaw sa buhay ang naging tema ng kanilang mga kanta. Sa pagkakataong ito, hindi na sila nagtagumpay. Hinanap ng kanilang mga awdyens ang dating tunog ng E-heads. Wala na ang mapangahas na imahe ng grupo. Tama si Caruncho nang sabihin nyang "The

dilemma of [Pinoy] rock n' roll, then, is basically the same as the dilemma of the revolutionary. Once you succeeded overthrowing the establishment, you become the establishment, and it is only a matter of time before a new generation of rebels emerges."

At gaya rin ng mga naunang sumikat na banda, naghiwalay din ang myembro ng grupo.

D' Classic Eraserheads

Sa kasalukuyan, patunay na ang pagkakaroon ng *ultraelectromagneticjam*, revival ng mga piling kanta ng E-heads, na ang kinilalang grupo ay isa nang haligi sa kasaysayan ng industriya ng musikang Pilipino.

Masasabing sa anumang larangan, sining o propesyon, mahirap banggain o buwagin ang anumang tradisyon, kultura o kumbensyon. Bihira ang nagtatagumpay sa kompetisyong nakabatay sa pagkakilanlan. Bihira ang nakahuhulagpos sa panlasa ng mapanuring lipunan.

Isa lamang sa mga nakahulagpos sa pagball ng tradisyon, ang Eraserheads.

* 1) "Pare Ko," ang kantang may mura at, 2) "Walang hiyang pare ko," ang kantang walang mura.

The Long Goodbye

JOEY ALARILLA

Huwag mo nang itanong sa akin/ At di-ko na iisipin

In 2002, the story goes, a text message changed the Philippine music scene, and the lives of Filipino music fans.

It was news that shocked us all when we first heard it: the Eraserheads had broken up.

I don't know the real story behind this, why lead vocalist Ely Buendia supposedly texted bassist Buddy Zabala to say he wanted to quit the band -- arguably the most successful and influential in Philippine history. Only a few, and Ely himself, would know the whole truth. And maybe not even Ely would really know why.

All we know is it happened.

And it's still happening.

We're still waiting for the curtain call. For closure.

Ely Buendia on lead vocals. Buddy Zabala on bass. Raymund Marasigan on drums. Marcus Adoro on lead guitar.

We called them the E-heads. And they were more than just four University of the Philippines students who lit the match that resulted in the explosive growth of the alternative Filipino music scene in the Nineties. They were more than just a band that took its name from the David Lynch cult movie, *Eraserhead*, and whose first commercially released album playfully derived its title from one of the weapons of the hugely popular anime TV series, *Voltes V*, and who have been compared, in terms of musical influence and popularity, to The Beatles themselves.

The Eraserheads was more than just a string of hit singles, but a phenomenon in Philippine music and pop culture that we are still trying to fully understand and appreciate, even to this day.

This musing is not meant to give you a biography of the Eraserheads, but to pay tribute to a band that left an indelible mark in the Filipino consciousness, while wondering aloud about what they mean to you, me and thousands of other Filipinos.

In the end, this might be an imaginary story. Perhaps we're still hoping to see

these four men reunited, just as an earlier generation waited for the day John, Paul, George and Ringo would once more make music together for the world to enjoy.

The Eraserheads died in 2002 after being around for 12 years. This may be an imaginary story... but in the words of Alan Moore, who once asked whatever happened to the Man of Tomorrow, "Aren't they all?"

Kailan ba ako magkakapera
Kailan ba ako makikilala?

It's a running joke, an urban legend, or maybe even a strange cosmic truth, that each of us personally knows at least one of the Eraserheads. Call it the Filipino version of Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon. Here, somehow, you can connect everyone to the Eraserheads.

In my case, it was their lead guitarist, Marcus Adoro. He belonged to the same fraternity as one of my UP Tinta ormates, Dino Fulgencio. So I got to share a few drinks with him whenever my best friend Eric Evano and I had drinking sessions with Dino, Dino's then girlfriend and now wife Pauline Orendain, and the rest of his *Pl Omicron* brods.

That was how I first heard of the Eraserheads, who back then (this

was circa 1990) were just starting to make a name for themselves in UP Diliman. Over beer or hard drinks, we'd listen as some of the brods would ask Marcus how the band was doing, and he would smile and say that they were doing OK. I don't really remember him giving that many details on how their sessions went, or what the band's plans were -- at least not during those sessions (then again, too much alcohol might have killed off a few of my brain cells).

This was how many of us who were *Iskolars ng Bayan* at the time knew the Eraserheads -- as a struggling band that had a cool sound, but one that only a few of us shaped by common experiences in UP could appreciate. I don't think anyone really knew how huge the Eraserheads would become. Again, I can't claim to know the different band members that well, or to know for certain what was going on in their heads at the time (in other words, what they were thinking back then, as opposed to how they might recall those early days), but I never got the impression that they were doing this because they wanted to be rich and famous.

They just wanted to play. Sure, they also wanted to earn a living -- who doesn't -- but I don't think making money was their priority when it came to their music.

Heck, who really knew their sound would prove to be a commercial success? Who knew that those of us who heard them before *ultraelectromagneticpop!* came out would have to shake our heads in amusement when people actually thought the original lyrics of "Pare Ko" were "*Di ba? Langhiya.*" Not that I could claim that I was already a huge fan of their sound before they became famous, or that, like some lovers of the alternative scene, I was begrudging other people the pleasure of discovering their music, or complaining that the Eraserheads had become mainstream.

To this day, I still like their first commercial album, *ultraelectromagneticpop!* the best, even though some of the songs in their later works boasted greater sophistication and musical complexity. In fact, it's the lack of sophistication of the first album that appeals to me most, because these jam sessions to me were as close to the real sound of the band, as close to the raw experience as you could get short of seeing and hearing them perform live.

It's the same reason I love the uniquely Filipino dish of *kinilaw* or *kilawin*, because as the book *Kinilaw: A Philippine Cuisine of Freshness*, by Edilberto Alegre and the late Doreen Fernandez, puts it, this is a

way of cooking without cooking, by using vinegar as the liquid fire that transforms the dish from its raw state, while still keeping it as close to nature as you can.

True, maybe I'm romanticizing the nature of their debut album, and propagating the notion of the rocker as rebel, but think about it: at the very least, they weren't consciously trying to make their sound a commercial success because their songs didn't really conform to the popular taste at the time. It was witty, caustic, honest, amateurish and, hell yeah, it was sometimes corny, but we liked what we heard. Like fishball, or *kikiam*, or *isaw*, or *balut*, or *tokneneng*, or *Adidas*, which not everyone will like, but which many of us do.

I don't know how a band would feel about being compared to *kilawin*, but one thing's for sure: it makes for great *pulutan* during drinking sessions.

Ilang taon na rin ang
lumpas! Mga kulay ng
mundo ay kumupas

When did you first realize that you were no longer a Young Turk, that while you're still creative and fueled perhaps by the same fire, you're now on the other side of the generation gap?

For me, it was when one of my former colleagues in the online news company *INQ7.net*, our then business development officer Sheryll Ang, asked me what kind of music I liked.

I replied: "Well, I grew up with Eighties music, so it's still New Wave for me."

So Sheryll, who's a lot younger, replied without any malice but with just a hint of surprise: "Oh! Friday Magic Madness!"

Yup, you know you're old when the cutting-edge music of your youth is now pop radio's "classics" and relegated to nostalgia programming.

Not that I had any illusions that I was still young, though thankfully some people think I'm younger than my actual age (or at least they pretend to, he-he). I'm no longer a rookie reporter but an editor, and though I would say I'm still as passionate about my work and excited over new ideas, I have to admit that somewhere along the way, I had a lot of the illusions of youth shattered, even though I still cling to the ideals that shaped me. Back when I still hadn't quit smoking -- I stopped cold turkey over two years ago -- my *yosi* buddy and the person I owe most in helping me get through the roughest years in *INQ7.net* was our then marketing officer

Marilyn Dee-See. She and I would talk about our plans for the company, she from the marketing side and me from the editorial front, and vent our respective frustrations over the compromise between what's ideal and what's doable.

At heart, I'm a rebel. Then again, in these days when rebellion has become an image and lifestyle, when alternative is another label, some of the core values I hold dear might be hard for other people to understand.

I guess a number of us went through that stage in college and even our early years of work dealing with the great divide between our ideals and the reality we find ourselves in, especially in this country. When I first started working, I left one job after another, either because I got bored with what I was doing or because I didn't agree with the way the company did things. It was during my first job, as a staff writer for a defunct magazine, that I first saw the Eraserheads again after *ultraelectromagneticpop!* and their second album *Circus* had made them a household name. Another staff writer, who was really into the alternative music scene, particularly Yano, brought them to our office after his interview and pictorial at the studio to show them around. I remember them looking as down-to-earth as ever, though I didn't get to

talk to them because I think I was interviewing someone over the phone at the time.

Their songs then and now spoke to a lot of us, and gave voice to the turmoil many of us were feeling. I purposely chose not to pursue a career in the corporate world, not only because I wanted to be a writer, but also because I knew I didn't want to put up with rules of a regular office job. For years, I was moving from one workplace to another, still wondering if I'd made a mistake not pushing through with law school after passing the Law Aptitude Exam at the UP College of Law. Or by not choosing a business administration or economics degree (or whatever business-related course would land me a job in the corporate world, because I "couldn't make a living as a writer") in the first place as my parents had wanted.

Marami na rin ang mga pagbabago!
Di mailwasan pagkatayo
ay tao lamang
Mapapatawad mo ba ako/
Kung hindi ko sinunod ang gusto mo?

The song "Para sa Masa" may have come a few years after I left college and found myself questioning some of

the decisions I made, but when I first heard it I embraced the song, just as "Next in Line" from *Afterimage* was the anthem of many of us back in college. It sounds corny now, but that doesn't stop it from being true.

The irony of "Para sa Masa" is that it not only talked about all the changes that had happened in Philippine society, or the feelings of those who felt that they were oppressed or neglected by the system. It also posed the question to us: Have the Eraserheads changed from the band we embraced all those years ago? Did their music evolve, or was the album *Sticker Happy* just a cynical pastiche of foreign influences and their newfound love for synthesizers and musical sampling?

Have we changed too much?

Huwag kang matakot sa hindi mo pa makita!
Kasama mo namán ako

It seemed appropriate that while we were preparing to bid farewell to the old millennium and trying to deal with the near-hysteria that the specter of Y2K or the Millennium Bug stirred (you know, with doomsayers declaring this was The End of the World as We Know It), the Eraserheads came up with their most high-tech album, fittingly called *Natin99*.

This wasn't the last album the Eraserheads recorded -- the last album with Ely Buendia on vocals was *Carbon Stereoxide*, while the last official Eraserheads album (with Kris Dancel, formerly of the all-girl band Fatal Posporos, as the new lead vocalist) was the EP *Please Transpose*. But I thought *Natin99* was the end of an era. The new millennium would bring us new heroes, or maybe, more accurately, a lack of belief in heroes.

We have the benefit of hindsight, of course, but the new millennium that had people girding up for a global collapse induced by misplaced '90s and '00s, would also see the coming of the dotcom crash, the Love Bug or ILOVEYOU worm and 9/11.

Here in the Philippines, we saw a second People Power oust one president, a third try to return him to power, and now continuing efforts, ranging from impeachment bids to coup attempts to calls for more People Power to remove the current Philippine president -- not to mention the ongoing bid for charter change.

In the face of all this uncertainty, is it any wonder then that many of us wonder what the future holds for the Philippines?

One thing I've learned, however, is that you can't live without faith, that

you have no guarantee that things will work out the way you want them to, but that if you believe in yourself and in the people dearest to you, you can face whatever tomorrow might bring.

Whatever difficult times I experienced, whatever wrong turns I might have taken, I have no regrets because I found the one person I want to share my life with, my wife Ellen Quijano, whom I married in 2000, and with whom I've been blessed with our daughter, Samantha Nicole, who was born in 2001. At the end of the day, the success we reap would not be complete if we don't know who we truly are or recognize the most important people in our lives.

If the Eraserheads taught me one thing, it's the message they eloquently share in "Huwag Kang Matakot." Don't be afraid of what you can't see. Don't be afraid of what might happen in the future. Don't be afraid to be yourself.

I don't know what the future might bring. I don't know if the original band members will ever reunite, or if that last album with Ely was truly "Ang Huling El Bimbo," so to speak.

It's only music, you might say, but in modern society, music plays the role once reserved for poetry in an earlier age.

Music speaks the truth about our times. The Eraserheads spoke for us back then and, in the hearts of many fans, continue to do so today.

How to be The Girl in the Eraserheads Song

FAYE ILOGON

None of the Eraserheads were ever pop-star cute. None of them possessed the *laglag*-panty charisma of, say, Elvis Presley in his pre-Las Vegas days. But my gosh, the girls of my time were all a little in love with any or all of them. We all wanted to be the girls that Ely, Marcus, Buddy, and Raymund wrote songs about. And though that desire remained unrealized, I can bet my entire stash of Curly Tops that we'd all still die for the privilege. I know I would.

Though the four have gone their separate ways and are now singing different tunes, I present a belated guide that would have been so useful to me and my sisters-in-latent-grouplehood back in the day. Of course, the guide is written in the present tense because a part of me is still in denial -- both about the Eraserheads splitting up and getting older.

Lose your way.

If the song "Magasin" is anything to go by, it's clear that women who fall from grace arouse the Eraserheads. Though you might balk at the thought of displaying your mammary

glands on the cover of *Tiktik*, keep in mind that the image of The Fallen Woman has always been a surefire hit in the pop music universe. In fact, "Magasin" is a merry reworking of Freddie Aguilar's "Magdalena." Scandal makes sexy. To the "Magasin" girl -- who went from being a fashion model garbed in Inno Sotto to tabloid eye candy -- the Eraserheads sing: "*Iba na ang 'yong ngiti/ Iba na ang 'yong tingin/ Nagbago nang lahat sa yo.*" Wouldn't you just want to be her?

Use men indiscriminately.

In "Ligaya," the Eraserheads teach us that college girls who look cute and act as if they can't do their homework make great musical muses. ("*Gagawin ko ang lahat patil ang thesis mo/ Wag mo lang ipagkait ang hinahanap ko.*") This song pays homage to the kind of girl who will never have enough. Even if a guy gives her his liver and one of his kidneys, she will still be like the greedy "Ligaya" who, for some reason, will always have lovelorn idiots doing things for her. Employing this strategy takes a lot of gumption, as well as the ability to project guilelessness (fake, of course).

Break hearts and balls with great relish.

New girls are not as memorable as the bitches who cause men to cry and contemplate alcohol, suicide or both. The featured female in "Pare Ko," for example is a cock tease. Thus, the Eraserheads wall, "O, Diyos ko/ Ano ba naman ito/ Di ba...tangina! Nagmukha akong tanga/ Pinaasa niya lang ako/ Lecheng pag-ibig to." Also, we learn from "Pare Ko" that a bad case of blue balls would make a guy think that he is in love with you: "Hanggang kelan maghihintay/Ako ay nabuburat na/ Pero minamahal ko sya/ Di biro/ T.L. ako sa kanya." (If you want to up the ante, try taking pointers from the "Kaliwete" girl -- "Noong nagsama tayo/ Ay kanan ang ginamit mo/Nguni't biglang natorete/ikaw pala ay kaliwete" -- i.e., a more vicious incarnation of the "Pare Ko" girl.)

Get tragic.

Here's the plot of "Ang Huling El Bimbo." Boy meets girl. Girl gets knocked up and dies. Boy sings about girl being messed up and dead. This song, written in flashback, proves the cheesiest adage: "First love never dies." But since it's hard to pull off being a "first love," just make sure to seem always in distress. Fake some family problems and you're good to

go. No need to follow the rest of the "El Bimbo" storyline: "Balita ko'y may anak ka na/ Nguni't walang asawa/ Tagahugas ka raw ng pinggan sa may Ermital/ At 'sang gabi nasagasaan/ Sa isang madilim na eskinita."

Act mysterious and/or nuts.

Never mind who "Julie Tearjerky" is or why "she'll swallow anything that's round." In this scenario, the game plan is to seem crazy in a woman-child sort of way. Think Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. Think Natalie Portman as the off-tangent Matilda in *The Professional*. Think a younger, sexier Sisa -- way before she had Basilio or Crispin. Or you can simply opt to be the spaced out "Shirley," of whom the Eraserheads croon, "In love na naman si Shirley/ Sa binatang maganda ang kotse." Word to the wise: though it's easier to do a "Shirley," being a "Julie Tearjerky" guarantees getting under your victim's skin and staying there for, heck, decades. Men go bonkers over women they can't figure out.

Be the daughter of a *sari-sari* store owner.

Guys, as the Eraserheads show us in "Tindahan ni Aling Nena," will do anything to hide the shame of being sent to buy condiments from

the *sari-sari* store, "Pumunta ako sa tindahan ni Aling Nena/ Para bumili ng suka/ Pagbayad ko aking nakita/ Isang dalagang nakadungaw sa bintana/ Natulala ako laglag ang puso ko/ Naglaglag din ang sukang hawak ko") Sometimes men fancy themselves in love with the girl in the *sari-sari* store as an excuse to go there -- thus, ridding them of the embarrassment of having to run errands for their mothers. Also, proximity is an underrated aphrodisiac. As the *sari-sari* store owner's daughter, you'd be like a human Venus Flytrap. All you have to do is stand there and all the men will come buzzing over.

Make like a good girl.

If all else fails, "just be sugar and spice and everything nice" like the charming "Toyang" who inspires such love and devotion. ("Mahal ko si Toyang/ Pagkat siya'y simple lamang/ Kahit namumrublema/ Basta't kami ay magkasama/ Madalas man kaming walang pera/ Makita lang ang kislap ng kanyang mga mata/ Ako ay busog na.") Then again, perhaps "Toyang" isn't a real girl. She's a saint, the *siyota* idealized in the first flush of romance.

Now, if you ask me what sort of Eraserheads girl I want to be, I wouldn't know what to tell you. In

They tried to tell us we're
too young.
Too young to really be in
love...

the song on the radio. I also wished
our class had done the tune. (Though
we did search for something "Iba"
from the albums of Joey Ayala and
The Dawn.)

Ah, an old song. I remember myself
thinking. I didn't know the artist, and
I was not really impressed with the
vocals. This musing happened for just
a few seconds -- because after those
first two lines, it was pure bedlam.

That was how I was introduced to
the music of the Eraserheads. The
song, as any dedicated fan knows,
was "Toyang." While the band's
record company, BMG, first promoted
"Ligaya" and "Pare Ko," "Toyang"
eventually made it on air.

Bahay naming, maliit lamang...
Pero, pero, pero, malinis to!
Pati sa kusina...

By that time, it really didn't
matter what E-heads song BMG
was promoting. The Eraserheads'
ultraelectromagneticpop! album was
selling like hotcakes. Every song off
the album was a hit. They were staples
to anyone who played the guitar. They
were the Beatles of the Philippines.
All of a sudden, the E-heads were
the voice of the the Filipino youth,
and soon, the masses.

I was caught off guard. Surprised by
the change in beat and exhilarated
by the playful melody and lyrics. I
grinned. I was unsure why.

In the beginning...

Well, maybe because my high school
batchmates were dressed like kids in
the Fifties and they were boogieing
to the tune. I mean they looked like
they were actually having fun for
what appeared to be another sucky
school requirement -- interpreting an
original Filipino song for our subject
in Filipino, of course. That was 1993.

There are many urban legends
associated with the band. Here's
one of them: Back in 1987 when Ely
was sporting a Kevin Costner-haircut,
he played bass for a band whose
members would take turns doing the

As soon as the song ended defiantly
and joyfully with, "we're not too
young at all!", I knew I'd be hearing

vocals. When it was Ely's turn, his friends and the audience would jeer and tell him to stick to the bass. Imagine if Ely had listened to his detractors.

In any case, jamming sessions on the third floor of the boys' wing of UP Diliman's *Kalayaan* Residence Hall with a keyboard borrowed from the girls' wing could have provided Ely with the opportunity to develop his voice and muster enough confidence to eventually take on the vocals for the E-heads.

The E-heads were officially formed in 1989. The recording companies didn't take notice. Not even after they released an independent album titled *Pop-U!*

My brother was lucky to have listened to a demo tape of the E-heads before the band eventually joined BMG. A high school friend of his, who was in the same fraternity as Marcus Adoro, gave him the tape and predicted that the E-heads would be famous one day.

After listening to the tracks on the tape, my brother dismissed the idea. His roommate from Cagayan de Oro, who presumably knew the band, asked if he could keep the tape. My brother, convinced his impeccable taste did not extend to the band, obliged.

I'll still have to ask my brother if he regrets giving away the demo, as he eventually turned into an avid fan - buying all the early albums of the band he once wrote off.

One-album wonders; no, two-album wonders; no...

Like many success stories, the E-heads shook the underground, alternative music scene before the majors came a-calling. In 1992, an impromptu boys' choir sang "Pare Ko" during an acquaintance party in the *Kalayaan* dorm -- the choir arrangement supposedly done by one of the members of the band.

Before 1993, the Philippine alternative music scene teemed with genius and potential. It remained just that, however, hidden (or protected) by a small but rabid knot of fans. Something had to burst the floodgates, a catalyst to usher in a new musical era. From the outset, the E-heads never seemed to fit the bill. In scruffy tees and trademark Chuck Taylors, they were the antithesis of the manicured mainstream but they wrote songs everybody could relate to.

Even their playfully mocking ways on TV appearances -- refusing to lip-sync or pretend to do so -- endeared them even more to their fans. For a while, they seemed like a novelty

group, a refreshing gust in a musical playground populated by falsettos and overly-dramatized pop songs. It soon became evident that they were more than a one-album wonder. Their second album *Circus* turned out to be an even bigger hit with songs like "With A Smile," "Kailan" and "Minsan." So they were two-album wonders, I told myself.

Famous last words. Their third album, *Cutterpillow*, threw me for a loop. With "Huwag Mo Nang Itanong" and "Ang Huling El Bimbo," the album became a personal favorite as I felt the band truly demonstrated their full musical abilities.

When I saw E-heads performing "Fruitcake" in *Eat Bulaga* sometime in 1996, I was finally convinced how wrong I was to second-guess their talent and longevity. I immediately liked "Fruitcake" and came to realize, sitting in front of the TV, that there is an E-heads song for everybody, just like there's a fruitcake for everyone. Corny as sounds, I believed it completely.

When Ely left the band in 2002, the news didn't really affect me. The Eraserheads had long established itself. They had nothing more left to prove.

Today, you hear a faint echo of every Eraserheads song that's ever been

written in the new crop of bands on occasional rotation on MYX and MTV. In fact, it seemed apt that a tribute album to the band's music would come out in just a little over ten years after they went kaput.

That being said, I never really bought the Philippine Beatles tagline for the group. Ely, Marcus, Buddy and Raymund are simply the Eraserheads -- the band who hooked me with "Toyang," the band who redefined the music landscape with their catchy tunes and lyrics. The band may have broken up, but their music left an indelible mark. The band's songs have endured the test of time -- and just for that, the Eraserheads should be accorded the greatness it deserves.

Oh honey, when I die
(You can) Dress me up in a
coat and tie
(But) Give my feet a pair
of...
Chuck Taylor

Hip hop at metal ang uso nun. XXXL na t-shirts at maluluwang na pantalon o puruntong ang trademark ng isang hip hopper. Yung mga mukhang boksingerong nakapangbasketbol. Yung tipong hindi sila makadecide kung si Mike Tyson, Mike Jordan, Mike Jackson o Mike Hanopol ang gagayahin. Mike Bijon tuloy ang kinalabasan. Rap ang music nila (na 50 percent yata ng lyrics ay "Yo"). Itim na t-shirt naman at pantalong hapit mula hita hanggang binti ang sa metal. Ang unawa nila sa musika ay kiliwa't kanang kaskasan ng gitara at mapang-wasak na mga palo sa drums. Kung ano yung sounds sa pag-itay ng ingay at chaos, iyun yun.

Dekada '90 tuloy tayo yayanigin ng tang nang Lindol at puputukan ng letseng Pinatubo

Elementary lang ako noon at wala akong ibang inautupag kundi ang magbasa ng libro at mag-aral nang mabuti (30 minutes lang tuwing

bago ako matulog). Pagkatapos kasi ng eskwela, busy na agad ako. Busy ako sa pakikipaglaro ng trumpo o di kaya naman ay teks sa mga kababata ko sa lugar namin. Pag sawa nang maglaro, sa bakanteng loteng di kalayuan sa bahay namin ang punta. Mga gagamba naman ang pagtitripan. Kanya-kanya kami ng diskarte sa paghuli ng gagamba. May biglang sasapian ni Cheetah at aakyat sa puno, may nanunungkit lang, may gumagamit ng plastic bag para ipandaklot at kung anu-ano pa. Ihahanda namin ang "deathmatch ring" na walis tingting at pagre-wrestlingin ang mga wala-namang-atraso-sa-isa't-isang mga gagamba. Kapag sawa na kami, panoorin ang away ng mga gagamba, pagkakataon na namin upang magpasikat katulad nila. Kami naman ang magkukutsian. Mas exciting 'yun di ba? Nakakalnis kasi kapag nabilot ang pambato mong gagamba. Pasok sa eskwela, trumpo, teks, gagamba, suntukan at pagbabasa ng libro (minsan lang). Eto ang mundo ko. Eto ang akala kong mundo ko.

E biglang me lumagpak na isang spaceship. Apat na alien ang lulan.

Houston, we have a problem

Mula sa trumpo, teks, gagamba at kung anu-ano pa, nabaling ang atensyon ko sa mga lata ng biskwit. Hindi typo error to. Oo! Mga lata nga ng biskwit ang nabasa mo. Hindi na yata maalis sa alaala ng kabataan ko ang mga lata ng biskwit. Iba't ibang korte at sukut, iba't ibang taas at lalim at sari-saring mga kulay. Isa-isa ko itong inayos. Ipinatong ko ang isa sa bangkitong de-tiklop. Dalawang lata ang itinali ko nang magkatabi sa di-kaatasang bangkito. Inilupasay na lang sa sahig ang iba dahil wala na akong maisip na pwedeng pagpatungan. Gamit ang dalawang hindi pa tasadong Mongol #2 bilang pamalo, isa-isa kong tinesting ang tunog ng bawat lata. Tig-tisang mahinang palo sa bawat isa. Pwede! Nagmamadali kong kinuha ang malilit na upuang kahoy namin, na kung hindi ako nagkakamali ay mas matanda pa sa akin. Lumapat ako nang upo sa harap ng aking obra. Sa wakas! May drumset na ako!

Atat na atat kong pinindot ang "play" sa luma naming cassette player. Tunog ng apat na alien ang pumailanlang. "Pare ko" raw, sabi nila. Mukhang friendly naman ang taga-ibang planeta (Pero kalaunan aabduct-in pala ko ng mga 'tang na!) Konting pihit ko sa volume control. Wala pa namang naghuhurumentadong kapitbahay e. Habang pinapakinggan ko ang kanta ay sinasabayan ko naman

ito ng palo. Kahit alam kong wala ako sa tiyempo ay sige lang. Hataw dito, hataw doon. Ako ang bulilit na Raymund Marasigan.

Greyd tri ako nung una kong marinig ang "Pare Ko". Swabe ang areglo, magaan pakinggan, madaling sabayan, masarap sabayan. Ito ang mga katangian ng kanta kaya naman walang duda, wala yatang nabuhay noong dekada '90 na hindi nakakaalam ng awiting ito. Bata at matanda, may ngipin o wala, ay nasilo ng mahiwagang lubid ng musika nila. Oo, pramis, kahit walang ngipin. Yung kapitbahay nga naming bungat bumabanat ng "...Gill I'll thtay, through tha bad thaymth....I'll geth by wittth a thma-aaayy!"

At katulad ng maraming Pinoy, isa ako sa mapalad na naging biktima. Gaya nang sabi ko kanina, grade 3 pa lang ako nang marinig ko ang "Pare ko". Napakabata ko pa noon kaya hindi ko pa naiintindihan ang tunay na mensahe ng kanta. Sa edad na siyam, ano nga naman ang pakil ko sa niletseng pag-ibig? Basta ang mahalaga noon ay gumagaan ang pakiramdam ko sa tuwing naririnig ko ang "O, Diyos ko, ano ba naman ito. Diba?, langhiya..."

Nagmukha akong tanga

Chuck Taylors na matitingkad ang kulay. Na kung isinuot sana nung

guri na kamukha ni Paraluman hindi sana siya nasaydswip kahit madilim yung eskinita. Medyo kupas na maong na hiniwa sa bandang tuhod (tumaas ang sales ng Ruble Blades nun). T-shirt na eyan. At buhok na hindi maintindihan (bumaba naman ang sales ng Springmaid). Ito ang E-heads Look. Taob ang maluluwang na damit ng hiphop. Tiklop ang mayayabang na boots ng metal. (At nag lay-to ang tulisang bigote ni Romy Diaz. SUN)

Ito na ang simula ng makabagong pananamit at itsura ng bagong masang Noypi. At anong maligno ba ang pumasok sa utak ko at plit ko silang ginagaya? Walang problema sa maong. Kasi nama'y panay luma talaga ang mga maong ko. (Di ba pag dalawa, mga?). Kumuha ako ng t-shirt na may kuwelyo. Peke ang Chuck Taylor ko. Umgang kasi ang bulsa sa orig. Sa harap ng salamin, dahan-dahan akong nagbihis. At sa isang iglap, JARAA! Mukha akong hikahos na dwendeng aatend ng children's party! In short, mukha akong tangal Malay ko bang hindi pala bagay sa akin ang ganung fashion statement dahil bukod sa payat ako, matangkad lang yata ako ng konti kay Ungga Ayala. (Hindi pa kasi ako tuli noon. Atin-atin na lang ang sikreto ko ha!) Pero di bale na. Hindi na mahalaga kung ano ang itsura. Ang mahalaga ay yung pakiramdam. Alien?

Alien!

ULTRA-ELECTROMAGNETICPOP! Kung nabuhay ka noong dekada 70 at nagkataong mahilig ka sa cartoons, alam mo na ang orihinal na pinagkuhanan ng salitang ito. "Ultra-electro-magnetic-top!". Pasigaw itong binibigkas ng robot na si Voltes V. At sa isang iglap, lababas ang dalawang trumpo sa kanyang dibdib. Gamit ang lubid sa magkabilang kamay, huhuliin niya ang mga trumpo at libabato sa kalaban. Ginagamit niya ito upang sugguin ang masasamang loob (wala pa kasing pulis pangkalawakan noon). Pero mas matalim daw ang laser sword ng president nung taym na yun kaya natsung raw ito sa ere. Me bahid daw kasi ng rebelyon ang kuwento ng robot. Napanood ko rin ang cartoon series na ito dahil ipinalabas ulit ang VoltesV noong kabataan ko matapos mag-pearly shells sa Hawaii at tuluyan nang kunin ng laser beam ang dating pangulo. Tandang-tanda ko pa na sabay namin itong pinapanood ng pinsan ko. Itago natin siya sa pangalang "Otobanat". Mukha tunog Hapon dahil singkit siya. Kasabay na sumikat ng robot na si Voltes V ang singer-dancer na si Gary V. Kaanu-ano kaya ni Gary V si Voltes V? Wag na nating alamin, bahala na si Ate V na sumagot nun.

Balik tayo sa "ultraelectromagneticpop!". Ito ang taytel ng unang album na

inilabas ng Eraserheads noong 1993. Patok agad sa masa ang mga kantang "Ligaya," "Toyang," "Tindahan ni Aling Nena" at "Maling Akala." Ito kasi ang mga kantang maririnig sa radyo at sa bawat kanto ng mga panahong iyon. Sa kasawiang palad, hindi ako nagkaroon ng kopya ng album. Wala pa kasing mga Pirates of the Carriedo nun.

Ok lang yun! Ayos lang naman dahil naiintindihan ko ang estado ng pamilya namin. Peke nga ang Chuck Taylor ko e, makakabili pa ba ako ng cassette tape? Paano na ako? Paano ko mapapakingnan ang mga kanta ng idolo kong banda? Ito ang mga tanong na pumasok sa isipan ko noon. Ito na ba ang katapusan ng mundo para sa akin? Grabe na to! Mabuti na lang at nahanapan ko ng sagot ang mga katanungan ko sa buhay.

Nabunutan ang ko sa tinik sa dibdib nang matunungan kong nakaskor pala ng album ang isa sa mga pinsan ko. (Ayuni! Me mahihiraman.) Itatago ko na lang siya sa pangalang Heck dahil ayaw niya magpakilala. Hulog siya ng langit sa akin! Hayskul siya nung panahong iyon. Medyo may katagalan bago siya nakaipon ng pambili ng tape. At nang tuluyan na siyang nakabili ng album, ako ang lumaspag. Ayos di ba?! What are cousins for? Hehe. Nagtenkyu naman ako sa kanya nung isoli ko ang laspag na cassette tape.

Mabuti at in good mood siya nun, hindi naman ako pinulot sa poorman's grave. Kinutusan lang niya ako ng three times. Kasalanan ko naman... saka...*I saw it naman coming around...I saw it coming around, yeah...I saw it coming around...*

So I just, yeah, shook my head and walked away

Apat ang milyembro na Eraserheads. Si Ely, Raymund, Buddy at Marcus. Pero bakit parang apat na milyon sila kung mang-impluwensya? Bakit maraming nakikinig sa kanila? Maraming gumagaya? Nalimpluwensyahan nga lang ba nila ang mga Pilipino? O sila na ang nagsisilbing boses ng masa upang isampal sa mga mukha natin ang tunay na kalagayan ng sumasagwa nating bansa? (Hanep, political speech!) Hindi ko rin alam. Pero ano kaya kung kumandato sila noon bilang presidente ng Pilipinas? (Panandalian muna nating larulin ang ating isipan.) Ano kaya kung nanalo sila? Masaya kaya kung apat ang presidente natin? Lalakas kaya ang benta ng gitara sa Cebu dahil sa impluwensya nila? Pupunta ba sila sa Roma at makikijamming sa Santo Papa ng "Julie Tearjerky?" *I need some more/No happiness/No loveliness/No emptiness/It wasn't here before/! hear her calling my name...Papa papa pa...* Sasalikwatin kaya nila ang yaman ng bansa para ibili ng imported musical instruments

na sila rin ang gagamit? At kung mapatunayan nga natin na nangulimbat sila, mapapatawad kaya natin sila kaagad kapag hinarana nila tayo? Stop muna, para na akong bangag magkuwento a...

Sumerious muna tayo.

Isang matandang taong grasa ang namamalimos sa isang college student. (Legend: MTG: matandang taong grasa. CS: college student.)

MTG: Bosing! Palimos po. Kahit kaunting barya lang.

CS: Tekla, ano ba bibilihin mo? Magru-rugby ka ba? linom ng alak o maninigarilyo?

MTG: Ay hindi po bosing! Wala po akong bisyo!

CS: Ganun ba? O sigla, sumama ka sa akin para makita ng parents ko kung ano ang nangyayari sa taong walang bisyo...

Tungkol sa mga bisyo ang naging paksa at imahe ng ilan sa mga awitin ng Eraserheads sa album na *Circus*. Ang mga kantang "Alapaap," "Minsan" at "Alkohol" ay matatandaang naging kontrobersyal noon dahil sa mga mensaheng hatid nito. Walang masama, harapin natin ang katotohanan sa likod ng mga awiting ito. Naging negatibo ang pagtingin ng karamihan sa ganitong estado ng banda. Pero pabayaang natin sila. Maraming mga

opinyon, maraming tainga at iba't-iba ang panlasa. May kasabihan nga tayong: "Give a man a fish and you will feed him for a day. But teach a man how to fish and you will feed him forever." (Maaring walang koneksyon yung kasabihang iyon sa punto ko pero talagang me kasabihang ganun, promisi!) Hindi siguro nagustuhan ng iba ang mga awiting ito, marahil ay dahil hindi lang nila rinunawaan. Saka bakit kung? Simpleng bisyo ng kabataan, nagpuputok ang butse nila. E me mas malalala pang bisyo dun. Yung biktima ng bisyo lagi ang pinagdidiskitahan samantalang yung promotor ng bisyo, binebeybi! Bakit pag me nangyayaring di maganda sa lipunan, yung kabataan ang pinuputukan! Lahat na lang ng sisi, sa kabataan. Baka pag biglang me umutot, kabataan pa rin. Dun sana sila manggaliit sa tunay na masasamang bisyo. Tulad ng pangungulimat sa gobyerno at pagbastos sa karapatang pantao! (Another political speech.) Wala lang, gusto ko lang sabihin sa bandang: *"Nung pinilit mo kong lahon, gusto ko ring sumama.... hindi ko lang siguro alam, kung paano."* Pero tastasin man ang mga political at social statements ek-ek sa mga awitin nila, nababakas ko pa rin dito ang abilidad ng banda upang sumubok ng iba't-ibang paraan ng paggawa ng musika.

Sa patuloy na pamamayagpag ng banda, lalong lumalalim ang mensahe

ng mga awitin nila. Yung lalim na sinusundutan ng humor. Katulad na lang ng "Ang Huling El Bimbo" (Pano masasagasan, me dumadaan bang sasakyan sa eskinita?), "Spoliarium," (Lumiwanag ang buwan "Luna San Juan di ko na nasakyan), "Fill Her," "Maseyang Bahaghari" at ang "Para sa Masa." Hindi na lang sila basta nagbebenta ng musika, ipinaliliwanag na nila sa atin ang kahalagahan ng buhay, na masarap pala mabuhay. At ito'y sa paraang kanilang-kanila lamang.

Labintatlong taon na ang nakakalipas simula nang imulat ako ng Eraserheads sa dalig ng musika. Labintatlong taon na rin akong nabubuhay sa kalupitan ng kanilang impluwensya. Labintatlong taon na pero hindi pa rin nagbabago ang aking pananabik sa tuwing naririnig ko ang kanilang mga awit na sumasariwa sa aking kabataan.

Beinte dos anyos na ako ngayon. Tumatanaw ng malaking utang na loob sa bandang Eraserheads, na nagturo sa aking mangarap na maging musikero. Nagpapasalamat sa mga lata ng biskwit na hindi umangal sa kabila ng malalakas kong palo. Salamat din sa dalawang Mongol #2 na nagsilbing drumsticks ko noon. Salamat sa inyo dahil ngayon ay isa na akong gitarista! (Wala, ayaw sumapi ng kaluluwa ni Raymond e.). Pero kumtento na ako sa pagiging

gitarista. Makapupunta na ako sa gusto kong puntahan...

- Saan ka pupunta?
- Sa Tindahan ni Aling Nena.
- Ano'ng dala mo?
- Gitar.
- Patugtugin mo nga?
- Timpalok, timpalok, tae ng manok.

Greyd 5 ako unang nakahawak ng gitara. Nagkataon kasing may acoustic guitar ang isa sa kabarkada ko. Metal strings at medyo may kalakihan ang gitara kaya nahihirapan akong yakapin iyon. Malit na lang kasi ako dati. Hinihiram ko ito paminsan-minsan kahit alam kong hindi naman talaga ako marunong tumipa. Pilik ko lang ginagaya ang porma ng mga kamay at tindig ng katawan ng mga napapanood kong gitarista. In short, isa akong magaling na wannabe noon. At maniwala ka't sa hindi, wala nang gagaling pa sa akin (sa pagiging wannabe).

Ilang linggo lang ang lumipas, may natutunan na ako kaagad. Magaling nga kasi ako (sa pagiging wannabe ulit!). May alam na akong apat na chords! Apat yun! Alam ko na kung paano ang C, D, G at A. Pagkatapos ko matutunan iyon, ito na ang matindi, hindi na ipinahiram sa akin ang gitara kinabukasan. Wannabe rin kasi siya at di niya matanggap na me papalit sa sa kanya. At iyon na nga ang huling hawak ko ng gitara. Okey lang yun. Di

naman magtatagal at magkakaroon din ako ng sarili kong gitara, sa isip-isip ko. Pero yung "di naman magtatagal" na yun ay inabot ng anim na taon.

First year college na ako nang makabili ng acoustic guitar. P500. Brand new pero walang brand. Hindi kagandahan pero ayos na. Gusto ko lang naman noon na may gitara ako para may mapaglibangan sa mga oras na wala akong ginagawa. Pag-uwi sa bahay, pinabili ako ng memorya ko. Alam ko pa rin ang apat na chords na natutunan ko nung greyd 5. Napatunayan ko sa sarili ko na magaling talaga ako (sa pagiging wannabe nga e, kulit!)

Anim na buwan ang lumipas, apat na chords pa rin ang alam ko. Hanggang sa isang kabarkada ang nagpahiram sa akin ng isang malit na libro. Siya si Carlo (Carlo talaga pangalan niya, hindi na natin itinago). Parang notbuk pero libro talaga iyon. Me picture ng isang gitara sa cover at may title na: "Tips On How To Play A Guitar". Wow! Tekla, ibig bang sabihin, madadagdagan na ang alam kong apat na chords sa gitara? Excited kong binasa ang libro sa bahay at nang bukiatin ko ito, wow na naman! May complete guitar chordchart! Kumpleto ang laman ng libro. Simula basic hanggang sa advanced guitar playing tips. Kaya naman nagpapasalamat ako kay Carlo! (Pero sa isip lang, kasi hindi ko pa naman isinilosol ang book.)

Dahil sa librong yun, madali akong natuto ng guitar basics. Kasabay ng kaunting tiyaga at madalas na pagpapraktis ay nalaman ko ang iba't ibang techniques. Nahaluan pa ng swerte, nakabili rin ako ng songmag na may mga kanta ng Eraserheads. Tignan mo nga naman o! Sarap ng pakiramdam! Natutugtog ko na sa gitara habang kinakanta ang mga hit songs ng idolo kong banda! Ang una kong natutunan ay "Ang Huling El Bimbo." Mahiligaya para sa akin ang awit na ito. Kusang lumalabas sa akin ang emosyon sa tuwing tinutugtog ko ang musika nito. Makapangyarihan.

Sa liang inuman o sa mga pagtitipon ng barkada, may mga pagkakataon na nahihilingan akong tumugtog. Walang problema. Siyempre maraming kanta, maraming tono. Pero hindi mawawala sa listahan ko ang mga kantang kinalakihan ko. Talagang may mga bagay na hindi malipaliwanag sa siyensya. May kung anong espiritwal ang nagaganap sa tuwing tutugtogin ko ang mga kantang bumubuhay sa alaala ng apat na alien. Ang bawat nakakarinig ay nakauunawa. Sumasabay ang bawat isa sa pakganta. Nagiging sentimental ang bawat sandali. May kapangyarihang taglay ang bawat kanta tulad ng "Kailan," "Minsan" at "Spoliarium." Masarap at puno ng pangarap ang naging buhay ko sa panahon ng Eraserheads. Inilipad nila ako sa alapaap; iginala sa ilalim

ng blog na buwan, inilibot sa ibang planeta...

Hanggang mahulog ang tala...

Houston, we have another problem

Pagkatapos ng 4th year college, hindi inaasahang nahinto ako sa pag-aaral. Pangkaranilang dahilan. Wala na kaming pambayad ng tuition fee. Medyo mahirap tanggapin pero hindi ko pababayaang na pihintuin nito ang pag-ikot ng mundo ko. Kailangan kong gumawa ng paraan. Naisip ko na pwede ko pala gamitin ang naging impluwensya sa akin ng Eraserheads. Marunong akong maggitara at katulad nila, pwede rin siguro akong "magbenta" ng musika. Wala namang mawawala kung susubukan diba? Kailangan kong makaipon para makabalik ako sa eskwela. Konting lakas lang ng loob ang ginawa kong puhunan.

Hindi nagtagal ay napasok ako sa isang acoustic band dahil kinulang sila ng miyembro. Twisted Fate ang napagkasunduan namang ipangalan sa banda. Swak! May intsant hanapuhay na ako. Pero teka, kailangan ko ng maayos na instrumento dahil sa entablado na ako tutugtog ngayon. Bumili ako ng de-kalidad na gitara sa tulong ng kuya ko. Pinautang nya ako nun at hanggang ngayon ay hindi ko pa rin tapos bayaran. Pero what are brothers for, hehe.) Handa na ako!

Fire! Swabe ang mga eksena. Gabi-gabi ang gigs sa mga bars. Iba't-ibang mga lugar din ang napuntahan ko dahil sa pagtugtog. Parang taxi, from Manila to any point of Luzon. Ganun ang nangyari. Mabilis ang usad. May pagkakataon pa na naimbitahan ang banda para lumabas sa isang morning show sa TV. Yung tipong pagtutok pa lang ng araw e tumutugtog na kami. Ayos din naman pala ang gig sa umaga. Nakakapanibago lang dahil sisig at beer ang kadalasang hawak ng mga awdyens namin tuwing gabi. Pero sa studio, kape at tinapay ang tinitira nila.

Masasabi ko na ring malayo na ang narating ko mula sa pagiging wannabe. At kung mahilig kang manood ng MTV... malamang ay hindi mo ako makikita dun dahil hindi naman kami lumabas sa MTV e, bwahahaha! Pero hindi naman ako nag-aambisyon maging ganun kasikat. Makatugtog lang, solb na. Ito ang naging buhay ko bilang gitarista. Puyatan at halos wala nang uwian ng bahay dahil kapag walang gigs, kailangan namang magpraktis para sa mga susunod na araw. Parang wala na akong personal na buhay nun. Kahit ang pamilya ko ay minsan ko na lang nakakasama. Mahirap ang skedyul kaya nagdesisyon ako na hindi muna ako babalik sa eskwela. Mas kailangan ko ang pera nung mga panahong iyon.

Pero lahat ng bagay ay dumarating sa katapusan. Dahil sa mga personal na dahilan na hindi ko na maaring ikuwento, nagkawatak-watak na ang banda (sounds familiar, huh). Naglahong parang bula. Parang walang nangyari. Kumbaga sa Mario, GAME OVER. Pero hindi ko dun tinapos ang pagiging gitarista ko. Nakakapagbigay ako ng guitar lessons ngayon at kailan lang ay niregaluhan ko ang sarili ko ng isang gitara (hindi lang basta gitara, mamahaling gitara, ayon sa panuntunan ko ng "mahal"). Dadalawa pa rin ang maong ko, pero anim na ang gitara ko.

Pero ang pag-awit ay hindi paramihan ng gitara. Paramihan ito ng mga hinahaplos na kaluluwa sa pamamagitan ng iyong musika. Pang-aluw sa mga nalulungkot. Pagbigay-pag-asà sa mga wala na. At sa tingin ko'y ito ang naging silbi ng Eraserheads sa aking panahon.

Pahabol-Sulat (0 dahil ayokong tapusin ng seryoso ang essay na to)

Matapos ko itong isulat, uwi muna ako sa bahay ko para tsumibog (inakikigamit lang kasi ako ng computer ng titi ko). Solb! Pagkatapos tsumibog, kinuha ko ang gitara ko sa case. Badtrip! Putol ang isang string. Kinilab! ko. Sagwa! Siguro ay nagtampo ang gitara ko dahil hindi ko siya pinapansin nung

mga araw na ginagawa ko ang essay na ito. Ayoko ng nakikita ko. Pumunta agad ako sa Intsik para bumili ng kwerdas. (Intsik kasi ang may ari ng tindahan kaya Intsik din ang tawag sa tindahan nya.) Bumili ako ng dalawang Mariposa strings, isang #1 at isang #2. Nang magbabayad na ako, sinisingil niya ako ng P16.00. Whaaa! P8 na ang isang string? Overpricing kaya yun. E nung huling bili ko, P5 lang ang isa. E kung itong Intsik kayang ito ang binubungi ko? Wala akong choice nang mga oras na iyon. Hindi ko pwedeng pabayaang bungsi ang gitara ko. Kahit sobrang masakit sa kalooban ko ang P6 na diperensya para sa dalawang kwerdas, pikit-mata ko na itong binili.

Pag-uwi sa bahay, kinuha ko ang gitara at ang guitar tuner kong mukhang analog cellphone. Pumunta ako sa labas ng bahay upang makitumpok sa mga pinsan at Tito ko. Dito ko ginamot ang naghihinalang kong gitara. Gamit ang tuner ay itinono ko ang gitara. Konting kalabit, konting pihit. Naalala ko yung ginawa kong essay. Sana'y kasing dali ng pagtotono ng gitara ang pagsusulat. Mas madaling tugtugin at kantahin ang Eraserheads kaysa isulat sila. Bungsi-bungsi pa rin sigurado ang essay ko pero hayaan mo na, hindi rin naman talaga ako writer e. Saka kung sablay man yun, meron namang eraser.

Do a search on "Eraserheads" in Google and you'll find at least 191,000-plus entries in 0.18 seconds. That's what I did for this little online adventure to rediscover the Eraserheads. I was trying to figure out what else to write about the Eraserheads. Some of the essays in this book have touched on personal discoveries so I decided to take an online adventure instead.

The amount of information out there was not surprising. When I first heard their rock ballad, "Pare Ko," I was a graduating journalism student at the University of the Philippines College of Baguio. I loved music but it was mostly Western rock music. So when someone started playing "Pare Ko" on an old and battered guitar at my alma mater, I asked, "Pare, ikaw ba nag-compose nyan?" The fourth-year high school student stopped, looked at me and said, "Di pre, kanta ng E-heads to." I paused. E-heads? Never heard of them.

But how could I have missed this new song that everyone and his dog knows? Later, another awkward situation. Some UP friends and I were jamming late in the afternoon. I was their guitar player so I gave them my repertoire of classic big hair rock

ballad tunes -- "More Than Words" by Extreme and "Patience" by Guns N' Roses. They were staples. However, that afternoon somebody requested "Pare Ko."

"Uhm, 'di ko pa alam yung chords nyan," I admitted. "Alam ko 'G s'ya tapos 'C,'" the requestee answered. "Tapos parang 'Patience' yung tipa," another person added. It was embarrassing.

With the exception of a few Pinoy rock groups like Juan dela Cruz, I listened selectively to Pinoy bands. Since I lived near an American base in Baguio (the old Camp John Hay), my taste gravitated to foreign music. In high school, American music blurted out of my little transistor radio. At midnight, I listened to the Voice of America on AM radio. I was on the edge of understanding why my uncles grew their hair long and why they loved listening to Nazareth and Led Zeppelin. I knew about Pinoy Rock but I believed most of the local artists tried to copy foreign bands, twang and all.

Which brings me to The Beatles and, by extension, Eraserheads. I remember reading an article then that the

Eraserheads were as hooked as I am on The Beatles. Listen closely and the influence is unmistakable. Except that Eraserheads have made the music their own.

All these ideas were now running in my head as I began my online adventure.

Free lyrics

A website providing "free lyrics" to E-heads tunes topped the search results. No surprise there as we're a karaoke-loving bunch. Knowing the lyrics to any song is supposed to be a given. The site also offers free ring tones for mobile phones.

Never mind if the entire universe knew the words to "Pare Ko" by now; they were still up there, the national anthem of heartbroken college dudes.

Masakit mang isipin
kallangang tanggapin
Kung kelan ka naging
siriyoso tsaka ka niya
gagaguin
O, diyos ko ano ba naman ito
Di ba
Tangina nagmukha akong
tanga
Pinaasa niya lang ako
Lecheng pag-ibig to-o-o-oh

Number two on Google's results page was not a fan site but a Wikipedia entry. Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia created not by a group of experts but by ordinary folks who write and update all of the entries on the site.

The "expert" average Joe who contributed the Wiki entry wrote, "The Eraserheads was one of the most popular Pinoy rock bands in the Philippines during the alternative rock explosion of the early 1990s. The Eraserheads was also regarded as the band that opened the commercial doors for other aspiring Filipino Rock bands, like Rivermaya, Parokya ni Edgar, and Yano. Their fans affectionately call them 'E-heads.'"

While short and to the point I also discovered that the band's name was inspired by a David Lynch movie, the fun of Wikipedia is the history of discussions among people who have edited entries over a period. In the case of the E-heads, the earliest edit occurred on March 9, 2004.

To resurge or to comeback, that's the question

There were some discussions on the influence of the E-heads on the "resurgence" of The Dawn and After Image, both of which were popular in the 1980s.

A Wiki user from Paço, Manila called Joseph Ballesteros (identified as Jojit fb in Wikipedia) split hairs, questioning whether "resurgence" was the correct term to describe the comeback of older bands when Eraserheads debuted in the early Nineties.

He argued: "Did After Image or The Dawn resurge during the popularity of the E-heads? I think that After Image was still popular during that time. Actually, the E-heads borrowed musical instruments from the After Image during their earlier years. In 1995, The Dawn broke up because Jett Pangan gone solo while E-heads was in the peak of their career. Did The Dawn resurge because of the E-heads? Nope. I think that we have to rephrase the sentence and remove the word 'resurgence' to make it more NPOV," wrote Ballesteros who is apparently an active contributor in "Tagalog Wikipedia."

Alfie Vera Mella, a Filipino active in the scene in the Nineties, now a resident in Canada, balked but eventually agreed with Ballesteros.

"But, I still think, albeit indirectly, Eraserheads had been pivotal in the renewed interest in the mid-90s for many older bands. In the same vein that, if not for Nirvana (formed in 1987), many bands older than they - like The Lemonheads (1984), Pixies

(1986), and Soul Asylum (1983) -- might have not achieved commercial status. (Pardon my overindulgence.) Hahaha. The topic seemed to have sucked me into those heydays," wrote Mella who also maintains a blog about his punk band Half Life Half Death.

300 new messages for a dead band

Then I discovered what's claimed as the earliest E-heads mailing list in Yahooogroups. Called *Circus: The Eraserheads*, the list began in August 1998, "the oldest surviving online discussion group covering the band," it said in the introduction, "We take the name *Circus* from the band's second (and possibly greatest) album. The Eraserheads are dead. Long live the Eraserheads!"

At the time of this writing, there were over 300 new messages on the list. "dedicated," it said, "to discussing the life, times, music, and legacy of the Philippine-based rock band Eraserheads (1989-2001) as well as the various groups that have spun off this group since disbanding -- mainly Sandwich, Squid 9, Cambio, SurferNando, Pedicab, the Mongols, and Pupli."

I also stumbled upon music forums, such as Talk@Philmusic. I checked out one discussion titled, "The greatest Pinoy rock band of all time is..."

and yes, it was a toss up between Juan dela Cruz band and Eraserheads, although there were a few fans of VST & Co. and... Rockstar?!

One of the fan sites I found was called "A Salute to the Eraserheads." It wasn't fancy but it ranked fourth in my Google search. It contained personal impressions on the band's different albums, which were honest and contained long-forgotten bits like the controversy on "Alapaap." With supposedly druggy lyrics (*Masdan mo ang aking mata/ Di mo ba nakikita/ Ako'y lumilipad at nasa alapaap na/Gusto mo bang sumama*), the song was banned in Quezon City (?).

Perhaps my biggest discovery was the number of websites offering "free downloads" of the band's music. Some also offered tablatures or music sheets. One website called "The Eraserheads Project" seemed like one of the more popular sites, as it had the band's entire catalogue in MP3 format.

Of course, this seems about par for the course. In spite of the war on online piracy, the new technologies (MP3, peer-to-peer networks) make it easy for anyone -- and especially students and netizens from the Third World -- to download for free and with impunity. I myself remember

making bootleg copies of bands in live concerts and radio shows because back in high school I had little money to spare to buy the originals. With today's technology, you only need an Internet connection, a storage device (a thumb drive or an MP3 player) and a little patience to find free music on the Internet.

I know I barely scratched the surface on my online adventure. I was a tourist. Hardcore fans know there are recesses in cyberspace where Eraserheads arcana lie in wait.

I only know I learned from Wikipedia that the band released an indie album called *Pop-U* in 1989, claimed as "the 1st ever indie album in Philippine music history." Not true, of course. But that's Wiki for you.

Still, I found it fascinating that *Pop-U* contained "Tindahan ni Ailing Nena," "Toyang," "Scorpio Rising," "Pare Ko," "Milk and Money" and "Wishing Wells" as well as six unreleased tracks. The Wiki entry added, "The quality of this album is not that good but you may notice the influence 70's music in this album."

A Band for the Conos and the Jologs

JOEL PINAROC

Nagulangang ang lahat nang bumulaga ang Eraserheads sa Pinoy music scene in the early Nineties. The impact was so great, ika nga, that as soon as the first song in the *ultraelectromagneticpop!* hit the airwaves, the band was well on its way to "combo" superstardom.

Like an unexpected social phenomenon, the arrival of the Eraserheads or E-heads, brought more than a whiff of fresh air to the Pinoy music scene. At bakit hindi? For the longest time, no band was able to literally capture the attention of practically all sorts of listeners, from the jologs to the conos.

In schools and almost everywhere else, pareho mong maririnig ang mga conos at mga jologs na sumasabay sa tugtog nang "Pare Ko," "Toyang," "Ugaya" atbp. Ang nakakatawa pa, mapa-jologs man o cono, nakakarelata sa mga kanta.

The road to success wasn't smooth for the Eraserheads at first. Pagkatapos nang marami-raming eksperimento sa alternative music, at pagkaraan nang marami-rami ding rejections, the band finally got the

ball rolling with the release of their first album and the succeeding albums, which were exponentially more successful than their previous release.

In their reign as kings of Pinoy rock for almost a decade, the Eraserheads paved the way for other "alternative" bands to enjoy mainstream success.

The Bagulo experience

Katulad nang karamihan, I was a struggling, pseudo-activist, pseudo-jock in UP College of Bagulo during the early Nineties.

Back then, we in UP Bagulo usually had to wait for copies of the latest tapes coming from Manila. Kokonti pa lang and merong CD noon. Kahit pa probinsiya ang Bagulo (at least in the late Eighties), we got our regular fix of new music from friends from Manila. Yun nga lang, some of the stuff we got were weeks or even months old.

Back then, para kang nagbibili sa kamag-anak mong pupunta sa Saudi para sa mga bagong cassette tapes na makakabot sa'yo pag-akyat nila ulit sa Bagulo.

Isa lang ako sa marami na umaasa sa mga kaibigan to provide the tapes. At syempre, once the tapes come in, umpisa na rin ang inuman.

It was one of these sessions that I first heard "Pare Ko," perhaps the most definitive E-heads song. I was a late convert. The song had been playing on Manila radio stations for quite some time before we got our hands on the album. Word of mouth lang kaya we thought of giving it a try. But I didn't expect the band to be as good as the hype.

By today's standards, corny na yung kanta. It's a guitar-based song na mababaw ang lyrics. However, kahit maraming kanta na ang nagawa tungkol sa isang istudyanteng in-love sa isang kolehiyala, iba ang dating nang "Pare Ko." It was the perfect theme song for little boys lost in love, of the torpe, the alskado, the olat's -- a very accurate sketch of the hopelessness, pining, angst and ka-lechehan ng pag-ibig.

The song captured the mundane; the genius lay in how the song resonated well beyond the UP crowd who probably first heard it and identified with it.

Admittedly, all of us back then saw

a piece of ourselves dun sa kanta. Sino ba naman ang hindi nakatikim nang rejection nung college, at sino ba ang hindi uminom para lunurin and problema sa pag-ibig?

"Pare Ko" even became controversial because of that all-too-true encapsulation of romantic frustration -- "di ba, tang ina" -- which was later sanitized to "langhiya." As usual, mula sa mga pulitikong gustong sumakay sa agos nanggaling yung ingay tungkol sa kanta, the same politicians fanned the flames for a few groups to call for a ban on the song.

We wished back then the darn politicians had just left us alone sa tahimik na pakikinig at pagmumuni-muni ng kantang yun ng E-heads.

The coming of the Eraserheads

With a few political hiccups (palagi naming meron), the Nineties were a relatively peaceful decade. Hindi naman turbulent, hindi din naman sobrang tahimik.

Siguro nga, the Eraserheads came at the right time at the right place. But then one could also argue about how personal and brilliant their music was. Saan ka nga naman makakarinig nang kanta tungkol sa isaw at paniliigaw all in one go? Or in the case of "Tindahan ni Aling Nena," of a boy

falling in love with a lass while buying suka for his nanay?

I vividly recall downing *cuatro kantos* with a bunch of friends while listening full blast to an Eraserheads tape. Funny thing was, there were friends of friends who would never dream of coming within ten feet of us kung hindi lang sa Eraserheads. Kung hindi sa banda, malamang hindi sasama ang mga cono sa mga jologs na katulad namin.

While "Pare Ko" and other tracks unspooled, dumami ang basyo ng *cuatro cantos* habang nag-umpisa nang mag-iyakan at magmuni-muni ang iba.. I remember na may nagsusuka sa isang sulok habang may nagpapacate naman sa kabila. And on the background, ang alingawngaw ng banda.

On the rare occasions na nai-invite kami (o kuma-crash) sa party ng mga cono, Eraserheads pa rin ang madalas patugtugin. Yun nga lang, naka-segwe sa Boyz To Men.

So sa akin, E-heads brought together kaming jologs and silang cono, a feat any way you look at it. Parang meeting of minds ng April Boy Regino fans and die-hard Pavarotti listeners.

Of course, this not to say that all of us back then became instant

fans. The early Nineties saw the renaissance of bands. Nagkalat ang banda noon -- from one-hit wonders, to proto-emo types, hardcore and everything in between. Naturally, marami ding comparisons among bands of the period. Limitado lang ang knowledge ko sa music, but I know there are other bands "deeper" than Eraserheads. And that Ely Buendia isn't the world's greatest vocalist.

But Buendia's reedy voice, his catchy lyrics, the effortless melodies put a spell on us all. Sabi nga noon, "kahit mababaw, malalim ang dating."

The last great Pinoy rock band

So what set the Eraserheads apart from their contemporaries, and why, this early, is the group being considered as probably the last great Pinoy rock band?

Sa tingin ko, the very simplicity of the music appeals to the psyche of the Pinoy. Sapoi, ika nga.

For most, madaling sakyan ang tugtugan nang E-heads. Obvious ang influence ng Beatles. Pero hindi Beatles ang dating. Just pure E-heads. Ang madalas na marinig na comment sa albums ng E-heads ay, "Walang panapan sa mga kanta nang E-heads." (Personal favorites are *Circus* and

"With A Smile," a song for young romantic fools. Jologs nga e.)

Their songs on love, homosexuality, road trips, angst, puppy love, "trips," etc. also show you how "deep" the music of the Eraserheads is.

A popular anecdote in the Eraserheads history is that the band began playing original songs because they sucked at doing covers. On the few times the band allowed covers on their albums, malupit pa rin yung naging resulta. Their own rendition of "Tuwing Umuulan at Kapiling Ka" turned an already good song even better.

End of an era

Hindi naman kami nagluksa nang mag-disband ang E-heads. But most us thought it was the end of an era, na medyo mahirap nang maulat pa. Give the remaining members their props for wanting to "revive" the group even after Ely Buendia's departure. Kaya lang, iba na yung "feel" nang subukan ng banda na gawing babae ang bokalista. It just didn't feel right. But credit goes to the remaining members who attempted to reassemble the group.

It is an experience being around when the Eraserheads were making Pinoy rock history. Kung hindi lang siguro sila nag-disband, who knows what

other milestones the group could have achieved.

Forget the fact that they are just four unassuming ruffians from UP, that they seemed to depend on only one member to "carry" the band (unfair mang sabihin) or that they sometimes sound "too simple."

But what's simple is often the hardest to pull off. And the Eraserheads have done so. In a body of work we will continue to sing out loud to until we hack and croak and the young sweet voices of our children take over.

A Dreddful Story (with many digressions)

JING GARCIA

It was a cool and slow evening in December of 1990 and Club Dredd - the original location on the corner of Timog Avenue and Scout Tobias Street -- was newly opened. Robbie Sunico, co-conspirator of what was then an underground rock club, was tending the open ground floor bar. That very moment, Dean's December frontman Blinky Lampano arrived from the yearly extravaganza that was the UP fair. Robbie wanted to know what went on at the Sunken Garden and who played best on stage. "There's this band, they're called Eraserheads...I think," Blinky replied. Unknown to the two permanent Dreddizens, sitting at the bar that very moment were Raymond Marasigan and Marcus Adoro.

The old Club Dredd was home for bands that made it big in the early and mid-Nineties. But even before the rock bar gained its self-propelled status, the place was already famous for catering to some of the best alternative college rock bands emerging from the Pinoy underground music scene under the management of Red Rocks, which occupied the very same hole in the wall. Bands such as After Image, Introvoys, Joey Ayala at ang Bagong Lumad, Grace Nono, Color it

Red (yes, this band started in the late Eighties) and Athena's Curse, who later renamed themselves Alamid were a few of the alumni of Red Rocks and later got their MAs in Music in the same school of rock wedged between the girly bars along Timog.

Life in lower Timog

In the late Eighties, I practically grew up hanging out at Red Rocks. I spent much of my evenings caressing bottles of San Mig Super Dry, finishing an entire bottle of Pale Pilsen, sucking a bong, chasing dragons and downing shots of Holy Gasoline, a type of lambanog the color of diesel.

At Red Rocks, we started what was probably the first Xeroxed-based fanzine in the country called *Red Racket*, which we gave away for free. Which pretty much summed up the entire endeavor. All 20 pages of it. All for the love of music. All for weed and meth. That was 1988.

I edited the rag with graphic artist Magyar Tuason, under the artistic direction of the late great Wilfredo "Dodong" Viray, our source of Holy Gasoline and the man who helped create the entire alternative music

scene in Manila by his sheer zeal and incomparable creativity. *Red Racket* was actually one of his many concepts, or rackets if you will. On his day shift as Art Director for Dyna, Dodong was the man behind the artwork of many album covers including those from Identity Crisis, the compilation *Ten of Another Kind* and most of the artists that sprung from Tommy Tanchanco's underground music label, Twisted Red Cross (TRC). If it wasn't for this guy, an artist nonpareil, the Nineties Pinoy alternative music scene would not be what it was -- brave, compelling, intensely creative.

When Club Dredd Lower Timog opened in 1990 (the term Lower Timog was coined by Dodong to distinguish it later from Club Dredd EDSA), the place became the last bastion for upstarts as well as old-timers to spread their musical wares. Chickoy Pura's The Jerks, Ed Fortuno's Bosyo, Pepe Smith, Betrayed, The Dawn -- all played regularly at Dredd along with Anno Domini, Mutiny in Manila, and of course the Eraserheads.

As for E-heads, the band was lucky enough to have recorded an eardancy demo tape that served as their Dredd audition. Their cassette album, *Pop-U!* had been making the rounds of UP Diliman. By the time Dodong and Robbie had a listen at Club Dredd - where I worked as the audio and

tech engineer at the time -- the two Dredd lords clearly made the wisest decision that would eventually change the entire Philippine muscscene in the Nineties. After listening to *Pop-U!*, Dodong turned to Robbie and uttered one his many famous last words, "Look after them, man, they're going to be big."

Robbie did. He became the band's first band manager.

Pare ko, pop U!

When the E-heads played at Dredd, I barely noticed them. Even though they were there regularly, attracting a jampacked crowd every time, I simply couldn't see what the fuss was all about. The song "Pare Ko" had turned into an all-time club hit, endlessly requested until the band had had enough of the classic *tambay* song and stopped playing it altogether. Remember, this was years before the song even hit local radio.

Somehow, I missed the fuss. I was cold to "Pare Ko." I dished the same attitude when the Friday college crowd start singing the lyrics of After Image's "Next in Line," thinking it wasn't an original because the band also had Extreme's "More than Words" in their repertoire and the fans from La Salle (because lead singer Wency Cornejo was a green archer himself)

were more than in love with the song. Being the club's sound mixer, I had to endure a song I hated.

My snobbish approach in my choice of music probably stemmed from the years I spent writing for *Jingle* magazine, where writers cultivated a snooty, know-it-all air. And maybe because I also worked as a part-time custodian for a wonderful hole-in-the-wall record bar in Anonas called A22 Records (owned by *Jingle*'s managing editor Ces Rodriguez and beau Leslie David). If you saw the John Cusack pop classic movie *Hi-Fidelity*, you'd know what I mean.

In the Eighties, I went for the underdog, the non-mainstream. I would rather watch the guttersnipe punches of The Wuds and Urban Bandits in rundown corner gymnasiums rather than listen to the mediocrity of The Dawn (thank God, though, for Francis Reyes) and the gay-ish Gothicism of Identity Crisis. But hey, that was just me.

At Club Dredd, I always believed that Color it Red would make it big first. More than any other band at that time, Cooky Chua's enigmatic college band was a guaranteed weekend crowd magnet. I was wrong.

"Pare Ko" was a song that the country seemed to have waited for

for a long, long time. The lyrics were simple and completely hummable. They were honest and unpretentious. From the outset, "Pare Ko" was on a train ride to the tunnel of Pinoy-rock classics.

Thanks in large part to Alamid, a new wave-cum-goth band, the song became even more popular at Dredd when they started playing it after E-heads dropped it from their weekly set list to the point that people thought "Pare Ko" was an Alamid original. They were simply keeping it in the family, so to speak, as Eraserheads, Alamid as well as Color it Red were under an umbrella management group called Racket Music Group that Dodong and I established back in '89, right after Red Rocks was closed by a court sheriff.

"Pare Ko" was part of the *Pop-U!* compilation demo of E-heads songs, and was later included in the band's first major label, multi-platinum album *ultraelectromagneticpop!* *Pop-U!* began the long relationship between the band and perennial E-heads record producer Robin Rivera, a professor (still is) at UP, who took music recording courses at Berklee College of Music.

Fittingly, the band recorded their demo tape at the UP Faculty Center. They reproduced about 20 cassette

copies of the recording and gave them away to close friends. And the rest...paraphrasing an adage, was duplicated.

Enter BMG Pilipinas

To keep the flame burning for the E-heads, the band needed to go beyond the university campus and the walls of Dredd. One of the band's memorable early out-of-town gigs took place in Cebu. Dodong and Robbie flew the band south to play for a battle of the bands show. The main act of the concert was actually The Introvoy, whose boy band good looks had already created a fan base under the direction of Tommy Tanchanco -- yes, hard to believe, but the same man who led Manila's punk rock scene with TRC in the early Eighties. The E-heads were actually the front act for The Introvoy at that concert.

With club cult-hits such as "Pare Ko" and "Toyang," Dodong decided that the band was ripe for a proper album and a recording deal. ("Toyang," by the way, ended up to be a song about Vicky, Ely Buendia's college sweetheart, and mother to teenage daughter Oona.)

To record their first album, Dodong sought the help of record producer and composer Ed Formoso. They laid many of the tracks at AD & AD

Studio on Shaw Boulevard. By the time the album was done, Ely was already working as an A&R Manager for music labels Mute and Mushroom at BMG Pilipinas (thanks again, perhaps, to Dodong's connections in the local recording industry).

With Ely already in BMG's turf, the locally based international recording subsidiary had the first crack at the album. Unfortunately, Vic Valenciano, BMG's top A&R man wasn't convinced the band's amateurish recording did justice to what he thought was a potential hit album. He wanted the whole thing re-recorded.

Enter Robin Rivera once again. The group went to Tracks in Pasig, remixed the entire album and added "Combo on the Run." In 1993, *ultraelectromagneticpop!* was finally ready for the masses.

Rock managers no more

Although Dodong was not totally involved in the management of the E-heads in their early years, the band would not deny his unselfish influence. Like I said earlier, Dodong Viray was responsible for virtually everything that bubbled in the alternative/underground music scene in the Eighties and Nineties. Ask any band who was there at that time and they'll tell you an unforgettable Dodong anecdote.

While Robbie managed E-heads in their early days -- he let them sleep on the floor of his rented pad behind Shoppersville grocery across Maryknoll College (now Miriam) on Katipunan Road while Marcus made tie-dyed shirts to make ends meet -- Dodong and I went on to manage other Racket Music Group bands, namely Alamid and Color it Red.

By this time, all the big-name bands that started at Lower Timog -- except for Color it Red -- had recording contracts. The Eraserheads were already receiving gold and platinum record awards left and right. Yet, it took several more years, before Cooky and her band got a deal with Alpha Records -- yep, the very same label that had Nora Aunor in its fold. While the very idea sent shivers up many people's spine, Alpha proved to be a good home for the band. To this day, CIR remains with Alpha, returning to the label after coming out of a two-year contract with BMG, during which time the band stood still, they turned into a "frozen delight," an industry strategy in which companies would sign up bands by the dozen before ferreting out potential hitmakers and then leaving the rest unrecorded, underpromoted or both.

In the Nineties, the Eraserheads was BMG's cash cow. But in order to make money for the band as well,

the group booted out Robbie and replaced him with Ann Angala.

Shy but strong-willed, Ann came from nowhere -- well, at least that's how I saw it. Some people said she used to be Ely's girlfriend. I had no proof of that. Even Robbie was stunned by the decision. But with Ann's sudden entry, the rest of the band could only say one thing: Ely called the shots.

There were plenty of stories about how Ann managed the band. First, how the band got into a perpetual contract with BMG Pilipinas, which was under Musiko Records of Rudy Ty and Co. (wasn't Robbie the one who signed that?). How Ann managed to procure a Mitsubishi L300 van with the band's own money and then got them to pay rent every time they used it for a concert. How the E-heads fueled the travel agency business of their manager. How each member received Equitable Visa Gold credit cards courtesy of their record label. And how their manager, with the help of her lawyer (?) dad, managed to insert a provision in the band's contract that would allow her to receive royalties on every album released by the E-heads even after she ceased being the band's manager.

Of course, these were just rumors, most likely pieced together by disgruntled agents of doom or people

envious of the band's unstoppable rise to fame. But one thing was clear, no matter what one thought of Ann, she brought the E-heads to the highest point of their musical career.

When alternative music was at its peak in the Nineties, band managers decided to form an informal group to secure the career of their respective talents. Initially formed by Tommy Tanchanco of Introyos and RMG for Alamid and Color it Red, the manager's circle was later joined by Sabrina Lontoc of After Image, Lizza Nakpil of River Maya, Eddie Boy Escudero of Rizal Underground, Teddy Dario of True Faith, and Richard Tan of The Youth and the upcoming Parokya ni Edgar. Despite the tightly knit group, and although she showed some interest at first, Ann never really acknowledged its existence, and to my knowledge, never attended a single meeting. Somehow, in the course of her wards' relentless popularity, Ann remade the Eraserheads into a kind of large corporation and by her indifference, conveyed to us that she could handle their own business. We believed she saw the other bands as threats to the E-heads and made the Fab Four untouchables. We detested that.

Beyond the band's music

But beyond backroom politics, the band that made wearing T-shirts, jeans and Converse sneakers cool

again almost single-handedly brought down the excesses of the shoulder-padded Eighties. College bands were on the rise in the US, and the alternative music scene was fresh in the Philippines. I vividly remember an incident in Cebu when RMG brought bands Tame the Tikbalang, Sonic City Zoo (later Poppy Field) and Color it Red for a concert on the location where the Ayala Center now stands. When told that the bands played alternative music, one of the promoters asked, "Tutugtog ba kayo alternately?"

The Eraserheads were both alternative and mainstream -- obscure at times, grindingly hard on the guitars, yet, still easy to listen to. Their music burrows into the heart of Pinoy pop. When you listen to American college bands such as The Pixies and Sonic Youth, you might actually believe that these were the bands that truly influenced the Eraserheads. However, people would rather think it was The Beatles. (But Robbie did say that while Ely bunked at his place, the E-heads frontman was fervently reading the biography of John Lennon.)

In addition to their songwriting genius, the members of the band are also multi-talented instrumentally (well maybe except for Marcus, as everyone joked). I was fortunate enough to work with

two members of the band during my record-producing days. As we were laying down the tracks of Color it Red's "I Need You Here" and "Mushy Song" for the *Alert Level 4* compilation album produced by Stephen Liu of Rizal Underground at his Loudhouse recording studio in Sucat, the band decided a better keyboard arrangement was needed. E-heads bassist Buddy Zabala delivered the remarkably haunting keyboard riffs on the two CIR songs.

As for Raymund, he was closest to me. Both he and Buddy would attend yearly Racket parties at my place near Tomas Morato. Raymund and I basically started our love for music production with the use of computers almost the same time in the mid-Nineties. For the longest time, the E-heads drum beater was going out with Jeng Tan, bassist for riot-grrl band Keltcross, whose lead guitarist Pam Aquino also became a large part of my music life.

At the time I was producing the award-winning gold album *Numeric Sampler 504*, Raymund was there to lend a hand in studio music production as well as in the arrangement and production of the much underrated CD, *Revenge of the Fishlips*, Keltcross' debut.

Raymund turned out to be more than a drummer for the Eraserheads. Many of the albums recorded by today's alternative college bands were

produced by him or his alter ego Squid9. He even fronts for Sandwich now and drives Pedicab.

Early on, it was reported that a big fight ensued between Raymund and Ely when the former jestingly announced to a chinky-eyed lady reporter that he had already composed a follow up to their hit song "Toyang." Somehow still involved with his college sweetheart Vicky, Ely was irked by Raymund's little joke. Ely had been calling the shots for the band from the beginning, but that particular incident might have been an indication of the personality clashes that would echo long after the band called it quits.

Nonetheless, the Eraserheads delivered what was missing in the local music scene of the alternative Nineties: fresh music that you and your friends could jam to *sa harap ng tindahan ni Aling Metring*.

After the success of what could be the golden age of Pinoy rock in the Seventies, many tried to revive the glory days but got lost in the doldrums of the underground Eighties. Some say The Dawn first opened the door for the resurgence of mainstream Pinoy rock that started in new wave/punk-laden Eighties. But it was the Eraserheads that literally brought that same door down.

RACKET music group

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Rmg file #002
biodata/

Name of band ERASERHEADS

Age / sex / sex Early Junior

Name Ely Buendia

Address Los Pinos, Nueva Ala

Membership Date 1989

Height 5'10" weight 140 lbs.

Hobbies dancing

7-7's November 2, 1990

Educational attainment Date finished

Elementary St. Martin Sch / San Isidro 1985

High School Emmanuel High College of Saint 1988

College St. Thomas, Chicago City 1991

Position in the Band

Lead / Rhythm guitarist



Address
4th Floor 500 International Place
211 South St. Lynch Village
Miami, Florida 33131

Phone Number
813 581 1010 M.C.
Miami, Florida 33131
1990/91

Sex
Male
CHAM PA

Telephone
813 581 1010
813 581 1010

Original copy of Ely Buendia's application for membership to the Racket Music Group (RMG), an umbrella management group that includes Color it Red and Alamid. Note the cursive handwriting and the "dancing" skill that Ely wrote on the paper (c.1990)

RACKET music group

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

RMG file #002
biolater

NAME of band RASERHEADS

Lead Musician ROB SUNICO

Name RAYMUND MARASIGAN

Address UP MOLAVE (DILIMAN)

Membership Date 1989

Height 5'7" Weight 135 lbs

Hobbies Reading

Age MAN 27, 91


Educational Attainment: Date Finished

Elementary Lady Mediatix Institute 1986

High School LML 1988

College UP DILIMAN

Position in the Band
DRUMS / HARMONICA / KEYBOARDS



Address: 400 West CDC International Plaza
2nd Floor, Suite 200
270 Avenida D, Laguna Village
Makati, Metro Manila

Phone: 810-1111
Fax: 810-1111

This RMG form comes from E-heads drummer Raymund Marasigan. Note his doodle on the lower right side. Unfortunately, Buddy's application somehow got lost in the bureaucracy.

RACKET music group

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

RMG file #002
biolater

NAME of band RASERHEADS

Lead Musician Robby "Peks" Sunico

Name Marcus Antonius Corpus Adoro

Address Narra Res. Hall, UP Dil, Qc

Membership Date 1989

Height 5'2" Weight 95 lbs

Hobbies Reading

Age Dec. 31, 1971

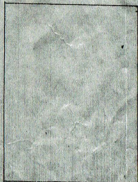
Educational Attainment: Date Finished

Elementary San Mar. Elem. School 1984

High School SWLAC 1989

College UP Dil

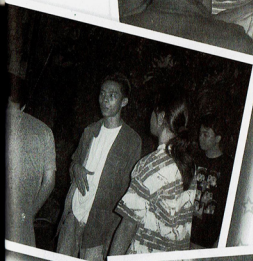
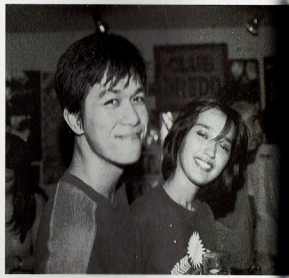
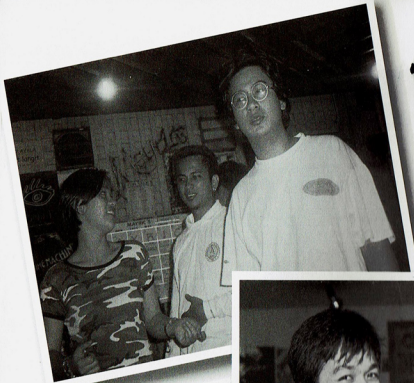
Position in the Band
Lead Guitarist



Address: 400 West CDC International Plaza
2nd Floor, Suite 200
270 Avenida D, Laguna Village
Makati, Metro Manila

Phone: 810-1111
Fax: 810-1111

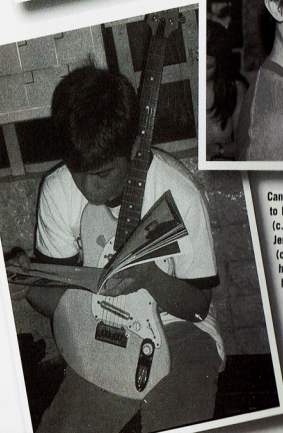
Another original application form to join RMG. This time from lead guitarist Marcus Adoro.



One of the RacketMG parties at Jing Garcia's place in Quezon City, where many of the famous and not-so-famous bands gather yearly on New Year's day (c.1996); Jing Garcia (seated left) together with members of Pin-up Girls and Keltscross along with Raymund in his home-studio in Marikina (c.1997)



Candid shots of the band members. From top to bottom: Ely outside Mayric's with friends (c.1994); Raymund with former girlfriend Jeng Tan of Keltscross at Club Dredd EDSA (c. 1995); another photo of Raymund hanging out outside Mayric's waiting for his band's turn to perform (c.1996).





The E-heads at the height of their popularity in the mid-90s. The band is seen here playing at 70's Bistro in Anonas St. Quezon City (c.1995).



AFTERWORD

seminal (*adjective*): influential, formative, groundbreaking, pioneering, original, innovative; major, important.

A word most often used and abused by music writers to describe an artist's sphere of influence, allow me to use (and hopefully, to not abuse) the word for the nth time. For no other word can best describe how a bunch of college dormers captured and captivated an entire nation's musical fancy. I bought my very first *ultraelectromagneticpop!* cassette tape sometime June 1993 -- the very moment it was released. At that time, I still had to struggle with the Odyssey salesladies for the Eraserheads were still virtually unknown then -- a cult band so to speak. High school memories were peppered with occasional Club Dredd visits, when Dredd was still a miniscule haunt/fire hazard along Timog Avenue. There we'd catch the Heads in their musical heydays, singing their still unheard of hits like "Pare Ko", "Tindahan Ni Aling Nena", and "Ligaya".

It wasn't until the first few months after *ultraelectro's* release and during my freshman year at UP Diliman that I realized the Heads had become big -- phenomenal to say the least -- which on hindsight, is truly a good thing. For prior to their commercial breakthrough, rock bands appearing at noontime shows was simply taboo. Save for pioneering rock bands like The Dawn and After Image which had their taste of media exposure in the Eighties, it was the Eraserheads that really opened the sluice gates. What followed was a deluge -- a deluge more popularly known as *Filipino Alternative Rock*.

Aside from being a music fan, you might say I had become part of this deluge, albeit involuntarily. Since our grade school days, my friends and I had our own band -- Tungaw -- where I played bass. When Club Dredd reopened at KM 19 EDSA in January 1994, we were so thrilled that our band was to open for the Eraserheads. We never thought we'd be sharing the bill with our idols, even if we were just an opening act. I think another significant legacy that the Heads left us was that of having the courage to play your *original* songs to an audience who was expecting to hear covers of their favorite foreign acts. This was where the Heads' "seminality" sprung -- they *erased* so-called "cover culture" practiced by so many rock bands then.

Judging by the Heads' phenomenal breakthrough, you might say that they were at the right place at the right time. The early nineties saw a dearth of rock bands entering the major playing field, mainly due to the majors' unwillingness to take risks and their sticking to tried and tested musical formulas -- balladeer-belter-solo artists copping chops from commercial foreign acts. But when a wittily titled album by some grungy college dormers took to the stratosphere, every major record label wanted their own. The fact that local rock acts continue to perpetuate and propagate up to this day can be traced back to that day when *ultraelectromagneticpop!* was first released to an unsuspecting public.

With a hefty discography comprised of eight full-length studio albums, several EPs, an anthology, and a tribute, it's as if the Heads never left us that fateful day in 2002. Despite the break-up, it's still very heartening to see how they continue to rev up our local music scene. Ely Buendia with The Mongols and now Pupil. Raymund Marasigan with Sandwich, Pedicab and Cambio. Buddy Zabala with Cambio and now The Dawn. As a musical tandem, Raymund and Buddy have also co-produced some very notable local bands like the Itchyworms and Sugarfree. Recently, they also recorded as the rhythm section for Dong Abay's solo album. Meanwhile, Marcus Adoro, in between surfing the waves of San Fernando, La Union (where he's currently based), pursues playing and writing his own songs -- first as Surfermando, and now he's collaborating with musicians of Romeo Lee and the Brown Briefs on his latest project Marcus Highway.

Indeed, the Eraserheads have practically personified the word "seminal" either as a band or as individuals. Contrary to my previous fear, my use of the word "seminal" has resulted neither in abuse or misuse. Indeed, you can truly say the Eraserheads have heralded a very significant chapter in our recent musical history. True enough, such musical history continues to be written as I finish writing the afterword of this book.

Michael Vincent Gaddi

about the writers

DIMPY JAZMINES works in a telecommunications company during the day. He is also a published writer whose feature articles, prose, and poems have appeared in various publications. Dimpy is also the current president of Mensa Philippines.

ABIGAIL HO is a twenty-something journalist-of-all-trades, writing business, technology, fashion, lifestyle, and human interest stories for the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *Preview* and various other publications here and abroad. She is a sucker for the Dallas Mavericks, WWE Raw and Smackdown, and beer nights with the boys. She likes to think of herself as a free spirit confined by society in a stupid box.

CHONG ARDIVILLA is a cartoonist, writer, graphic designer and a raging diva. He does the comic strip Fringe Benefits Cafe under the pseudonym Sic N Tyrd to reflect his state of mind regarding adulthood and paying taxes. You can download his comics from his webzine www.burnedpopcorn.com. He blogs as a coping mechanism at constipateddiva.blogspot.com. He will never be thin.

CLAIRE MANEJA was born in Cagayan de Oro and grew up in Manila. She graduated from the University of the Philippines, where she developed a passion for fishballs and spent countless hours stalking Marcus Adoro, the thrill of which made her feel like "nakuryenteng puso." When her efforts came to naught, she moved to the US to pursue graduate studies. At various points in her life she was an unpaid intern, a nanny, an ESL teacher, and a contributor to *INQ7.net*. She currently works for a non-profit in Washington, DC.

EDWIN SALLAN was only 19 when his first record review was published by *Jingle* chordbook magazine in 1983. A contributing editor for the seminal music rag for three years thereafter, he went on a five-year hiatus before returning as a music columnist for the *Manila Chronicle* in 1992. Since then, Edwin has written articles on his other interests including comic books, videogames, and

information technology. He still writes about music for the *Manila Bulletin* and was invited to be a judge at the 2005 NU Rock Awards.

ERWIN OLIVA is a journalist who loves music. He usually spends his spare time reading (biographies of famous musicians), playing with his daughters Natasha and Fiona, and jamming on his second-hand modified Strat that was formerly owned by a member of Sampaguita's band.

FAYE ILOGON reportedly danced a mean El Bimbo at age two. She firmly believes she would have become a dance prodigy if she hadn't been so shy. As such, she now strings words together for a living. Easily starstruck, Faye takes pride in the fact that she went to the same school as the Eraserheads did. Along the way, she has managed to win a Palanca for short-story writing.

MICHAEL VINCENT GADDI, or simply Jing, is a lawyer by profession and musician by persuasion. He finished his law studies at the UP College of Law in 2002 and passed the bar exams thereafter. Prior to this, he graduated from the same university in 1997 with a degree in English Creative Writing. While writing for the Kultura section of the *Philippine Collegian* during his entire undergraduate stint, Jing played bass for the band Tungaw. Likewise, he also played and continues to play for Romeo Lee and the Brown Briefs. Jing now works for SALIGAN (Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panigal), a legal resource NGO creatively using the law in educating and empowering basic societal sectors. Currently, he holds the bass chair for a band whose name is a direct shout-out to the Eraserheads -- Ang Bandang Shirley.

JING GARCIA used to be a record bar custodian at A2Z records, a music journalist for *Jingle* music magazine, an editor for a fanzine called *Red Racket*, a citizen of Red Rocks, a sound technician at Club Dredd Lower Timog, a band production manager and a multi-awarded recording producer. He has his own soundart group called *The Children of Cathode Ray* that he helped establish in 1989 and continuing their pioneering works in sound experimentation with his alter-ego *autoceremony*. He also wrote for *Psicom*, *Volume*, *Menzone*, *e-Magazine*, *Manila Standard*, and *Pulp*. Currently, Jing is a contributing editor for *Speed Magazine* and the editor for Tech Times and Tech Times Online, the infotech section of *The Manila Times*.

JOEL PINAROC is a part-time editor and writer and full-time dad to three kids. He's a freelance journalist because he's too lazy to get a 9-to-5 job and hates to wear a suit.

JOEY ALARILLA is an *INQ7.net* editor, *CNET Asia* tech blogger and *PopMatters.com* multimedia critic. In 2004, he won a Palanca award for the essay "Surviving the Zeroes." He once dreamed of becoming a rock star, only to wake up to the reality that he couldn't sing or play any musical instrument.

SI JULIO DELA CRUZ JR. ay nagtapos ng kanyang undergraduate at masteral degrees sa UP Diliman. Naiwan pansamantala ang pagsusulat. Ngunit masayang natutunan ang gawaling pang-hardinero at karplintero sa bahay at buhay kasama ng kanyang bithing asawang si Catherine at anak na si Julio III.

MARCO ABELLA admits he knows nothing. Nevertheless, he continues to pilot "the little train that could."

VERNON SARNE has been a motoring journalist for 11 years. He was once the motoring reporter of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and later the motoring editor of *The Manila Times*. He also held editorial positions at several car magazines, including *Automotion* and *Rev*. He is currently the editor in chief of *Top Gear* magazine. Despite having worked with automobiles a full third of his life, Sarne has remained musically inclined. When evaluating a vehicle these days, one of the first things he finds out is whether the car has iPod connectivity. His idea of a memorable road trip is equal parts excellent music, good company and quality vehicle.

VINCENT BATACAN. Vincent, as in "Greeting cards have all vincent, and Christmas rush is through..." Hehe. Born: July 25, 1984. Kabertday ko po si Dolphy, kaya madaling tandaan...Dolphy -- Dolphin!

CES RODRIGUEZ wrote for *Jingle*, ran A2Z Records with her partner Leslie David, and occasionally played DJ on Capital Radio, a daily show she and Leslie produced on DWXB. When the weather is 'bad, she listens to the Eraserheads with her 18-year-old daughter, Creole.

THANK YOU!

Robbie Sunico, the girls of Red Rocks (Ces, Kathy, Joy, Christine), A2Z Records: Ces Rodriguez and Leslie David (for all the music and good food!), Dina Bellocillo and Sonia Sanga (for dancing to ska music), Blinky Lampano, Veronica Pedrosa, Lee Laureano, NU07, XB102, LA105, Capital Radio, all the Racket Music Group bands: Color It Red (Cooky, Marc, Barbi, Edison, Hank, Mike), Poppy Field (Jet, Minco, Ray, GP), Alamid, Keltscross (Jeng, Shella, Krits, ZJ, Pam), Tame The Tikbalang, Inquisition, Discant X, Children of Cathode Ray (Magyar, Tad, Regi, Peter, Blums), Slakol, autoceremony, Jerome, Robert and Rolly, all the Numeric Sampler 502 and 507 Bands, Digits Gonzales, Manny Espinola, Tony Maghirang, Jingle Chordbook Magazine, The Shop, Romeo Lee, Mondo and Angelique Castro, Roxlee, Tricia Liles, Karen Kunawicz, Isabel Ramos, Do Teehanke, Maryana, Patrick and Cindy Reidenbach, Lara Parpan, Claire Miranda, Anabel Bosch, Tina Pimentel, Carl and Kevin Roy, Eddie "Boy" Escudero, Teddy and Janine Dario, Margarita, The Rock Managers Group, Noel Dugenia, Ninio, Riza, Cel, Roxcell, Sony-BMG (Sir Rudy, Vic, Ciso), Dominic, "Papadom" Gamboa, Alpha Records (Sir Alvin), Tomy Tanchanco, Pagay Away, Anno Domini, Skavengers, Skawalags, Pinwheel, Pinup Girls, Rubber Inc. (Noel and Maleki), Parokya Ni Edgar, Rivermaya, Twisted Red Cross, Ikang De Jesus, Jack Sikat, Posse, Edwin and Edgar, "Par" Salan, Jimmy Jam, Lour De Veyra, Bones Caleja, Mabgan Aguilar, Marishka and Happi David, Judge "Arthur" Dredd, Silverfilter (Electronicanila), Tengel (s.a.b.a.w.), SweetSpot, Pocholo Concepcion, The Dawn and Martin Galan, Identity Crisis (Leni, Carla, Buddy), Prettier Than Pink, Piyaops and Rose, Urban Bandits, The Wuds (Bobby, Alfred, Aji -- the best Pinoy punk band!), The Jerks (especially Chickoy and Nitoy), Dead Ends, Dong Abay, Joey Ayala, Grace Nono, After Image, Introvoys, Mayric's (Sasi, Burt), Mona Nieva, Eric Caruncho, Jessica Zafra, Stephen Liu and Marty Genato of Loudhouse, Delilah and Maria Aguilar, Chako Hirayama, those who got stoned in our click at Red Rocks and Club Dredd Lower Timog (legalize it!), Crazy Daisy, my good friends and supporters in the IT industry, Manny Delos Reyes and the staff at Speed magazine, CyberPress, The Manila Times, all the writers in this book, Nida Gatus of Visual Print Enterprises (for taking a chance), Ira, Kyle, Caitlyn, my mom, Mel Dominguez, Events@Work, and of course, the Eraserheads (Ely, Buddy, Raymund and Marcus): For me, this book is dedicated to our good friends: Noel Garcia (1965-2006) and the late great Wilfredo "Dodong" Viray, (1958-2001).

-- Jing Garcia

Melissa Borja, German Gervacio, Gino Borja, Obet Chavez, Marlon Magtira, Conrad Manalac, Red Samar, Popoy Olivar, Marlon Terrado, Ronald Zapanta, Vincent Villaflor, Fitzgerald Barluad, Bing Ramos, Maricel Estavillo, Music R Us, CyberPress, UP Smmart, UP EdSoc, my brothers and sisters, nieces, and Nanay.

-- Melvin Calimag



Some of the bands who played in the early underground days of Pinoy Rock. From top counter-clockwise: hardcore punk band Tame the Tikbalang (c.1992); earliest photo of the original Color it Red at the 2nd floor hallway of Red Rocks (c.1989); punk band Betrayed with frontman Dominic Gamboa a.k.a Papadom (c.1983); Chickoy Pura, Flor Mendoza and Nitoy Adriano of the seminal rock band The Jerks (c.1982); and 90's riot-grrrl band Keltscross.

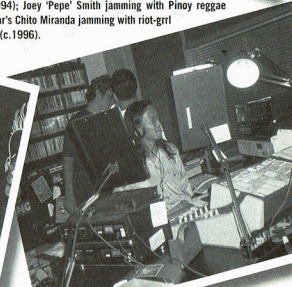
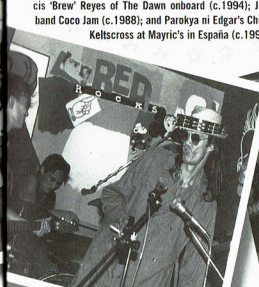


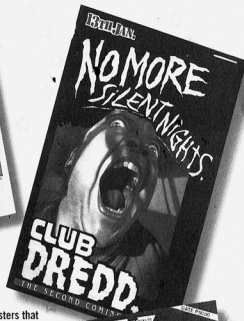


The underground music scene as it was: (from top to bottom) The ground floor open bar at Red Rocks, and the nightly crowd gathering in front of the famous underground rock club located at the corner of Timog Ave. and Scout Tobias in Quezon City (c.1988). The place later became Club Dredd.



The last bastions of Pinoy underground music: (clockwise, from top) The weekend punk rock scene at Katrina's in Malate (c.1985); inside the DJ's booth of cult-radio station 102XB (c.1986); local band-friendly rock station NU107 with Francis 'Brew' Reyes of The Dawn onboard (c.1994); Joey 'Pepe' Smith jamming with Pinoy reggae band Coco Jam (c.1988); and Parokya ni Edgar's Chito Miranda jamming with riot-grrl Keltscross at Mayric's in España (c.1996).





Promotional concert posters that appeared on the pages of Red Racket and the walls of Red Rocks and Club Dredd.



Documenting the music scene: (top, left-right) Classic folk-rock band Asin on the cover of Jingle Chordbook, the country's pioneering music magazine (c.1984); The Shop, the in-house newsletter of underground record bar A2Z records (c.1985); Red Racket, one of the earliest Xerox-based fanzines edited by Jing Garcia, created to support Red Rocks (c.1988); and a tabloid account of a concert riot allegedly instigated by Keltscross (c.1995).

