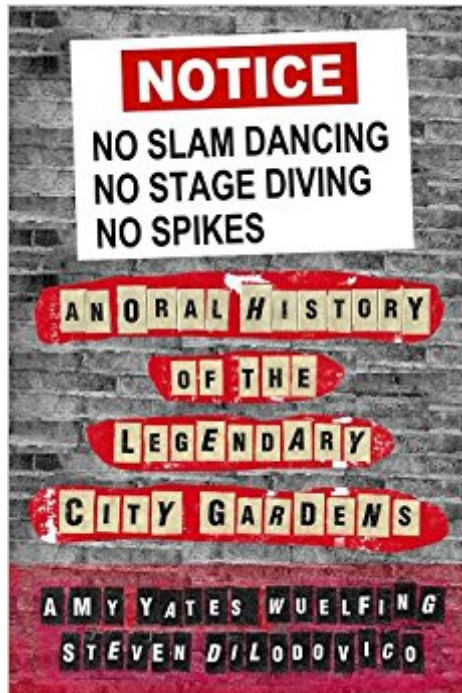




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No Slam Dancing, No Stage Diving, No Spikes



Synopsis

No Slam Dancing, No Stage Diving, No Spikes is an oral history of 80s-era alternative, metal and punk rock music told through the portal of one club Trenton, New Jersey's legendary City Gardens. From Punk to Metal, from Ska and Reggae, New Wave and Alternative, if there was a band you dug through the 80s and 90s that never made the commercial airwaves, there's a damn good chance they played at City Gardens. The club played a huge part in a lot of people's lives... No Slam Dancing... is an oral history of one of the most important clubs to ever exist. For far too long City Gardens has gone without being recognized as such and now it's time for the people who lived it and made it what it was to tell the story in their own words. Whether you went there or just loved the bands who played there, there is a story inside for everyone who has ever attended a live gig.

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Customer Reviews

If you grew up in the big city, and involved yourself in underground music during the 80s and 90s, you might have taken a lot for granted. Bands want to gig in your town, and there are spots for them to play, so it's pretty easy to keep up on the new, hot stuff. However, if you grew up near the almost Philly/sort of Jersey armpit called Trenton, NJ, you may have relied on a fine gentleman named Randy Now Ellis who found himself an abandoned car dealership, and created a home-away-from-home for next-level punk, ska, hardcore, metal, hip hop, reggae and alternative music (when there still was such a thing) called City Gardens. Oh they had 90 cent dance nights, too. What authors Amy Yates Wuelfing and Steven DiLodovico bring forth in the thoroughly researched No Slam Dancing, No Stage Diving, No Spikes that makes this tome so very vibrant and

interesting, is an understanding that a venue off the beaten path such as CG, lives almost exclusively off the passions of the community surrounding it. They accomplish this via the voices of nearly each and every person who made City Gardens tick, including many of the artists who took to its stage on numerous occasions over its years of operation, which includes onetime Trentonite Henry Rollins (Black Flag/Rollins Band), Ian MacKaye (Minor Threat/Fugazi), Peter Hook (Joy Division/New Order) and even former City Gardens drink-slinger, and current Daily Show host, Jon Stewart, among so many others. --Words by Howie Abrams at Mass Appeal

Now here is a book that I had been looking forward to for a long time since I first heard about the project a few years ago. Titled after the infamous sign inside the long-shuttered Trenton, NJ club City Gardens (the last show there was in 1994), this is nothing less than a superb oral history (as the title suggests) of the club from its early 80s beginnings to its end in the late 90s (dance nights continued there for a few years after they stopped doing shows). For those who don't know, Randy Now Ellis started promoting shows in a dilapidated warehouse/former car dealership in a depressed part of Trenton, NJ, giving bands who could play nowhere else a chance and booking many national headliners who regularly stopped there between gigs in New York, Philadelphia and Washington, DC. Though perhaps City Gardens was known mostly for punk and hardcore, it should be said that Randy booked bands in all kinds of genres, including ska, reggae, new wave, alternative, hip-hop, industrial and others, often times mixing up bills in ways other promoters wouldn't. Many former City Gardens regulars (including the authors themselves) are interviewed, as are members of some of the many different bands that played there over the years. Generally speaking, the book is broken up into sections spanning a few years at a time. However, special chapters are devoted to The Ramones (who played there 21 times, more than any other band except Ween, New Hope, PA locals from across the river who played the last show there and were known for getting booed off the stage by fans of headliners like Fugazi) as well as the 90 cent dance nights that were held every Thursday night. For me, the allure of this book was two-fold. First off, I would finally be able to read about the days I missed there, as I didn't start going to shows there until 1991. Thus, though I'd heard a few of the stories from the 80s, it's nice to have many of them in one place and packed with such intricate detail. Then, of course, there was the thrill of reading about shows I attended there in 1992 and 1993, including amazing shows by Fugazi, Shudder to Think, Jawbox, Green Day (their first show in New York or New Jersey ever and the last show they played on the Kerplunk! tour before they signed to a major label) and an incredible, impromptu 1993 Descendents reunion I witnessed. There is also an extensive segment in that chapter about the most violent show I have ever witnessed, a 1993 show by FEAR in which Neo-Nazi skinheads fought with others in the audience and incited a

riot. Thankfully, most of my memories of the place are happy and by the time I started going there, it seemed like most of the worst of the violence (with the exception of that FEAR show) was over with. However, if I have one very minor complaint, it was that reading about the endless amount of violence and stupidity that occurred there in the late 80s got kind of exhausting and discouraging after a while. It does, however, give the reader a proper context for why shows there eventually were stopped, as insurance costs, injuries from patrons stage diving and the resulting threats of litigation made it harder and harder for Randy to continue. All in all, this book is a terrific read and I had trouble putting it down, barreling through its 400 or so pages quite quickly. If you are a former City Gardens patron or a fan of the 80s and early 90s underground music scene, this book is for you. Even if you never attended a show there, if you like books like *Our Band Could Be Your Life* or other recent oral histories like the one about The Replacements or another about the early 80s Detroit hardcore scene (which was compiled by Tony Rettman, a City Gardens regular who is quoted extensively here. --Words by Matthew Berlyant at The Big Takeover

Amy Yates Wuelfing was a City Gardens regular. Her mom used to call there looking for her. Steven DiLodovico was an annoying hardcore kid. Steve is a loud-mouthed young buck from Philly who knows everything about everything. He's the kid you wanted to pummel at every show.

I'm a simple man. Give me a Harley Flanagan (from the Cro-Mags) fighting story and the book is already at 4-stars. If it actually involves him giving a beating to the bassist to Vision who was a complete terror and trouble maker back in the day that book is getting 5-stars posthaste. A fun, thorough, easy read on a club I only frequented maybe a dozen times when there was a killer show slated that wasn't playing anywhere closer to me. Getting to the club, getting into the club (the bouncers making me put my keys and key chain back in the car was always a treat | you didn't want to be in that parking lot by yourself if you didn't have to be), the threat of violence it was a hassle and they cover it all in this book. My favorite parts include each chapter starting off with the Top 10 Songs of each year (and then diving into a story about the Meatmen, Gwar or DOA playing songs that never had a chance to be hits, thank god) or the conflicting memories of what happened at a show between band members, the bouncers and the regulars there. It's also interesting to see some of the demigods of punk (like Jello, Keith Morris and Mike Ness) all get goofed on and taken down a peg or two. Definitely worth reading. "The wall of death is as stupid as it gets, and we've seen a lot of ridiculous things because we are dealing with a ridiculous art form to begin with. City Gardens was the only place I had ever

seen it." - Keith Morris (Circle Jerks)

This book is well written, and a treasure trove of anecdotes from the golden days of Punk and alternative rock as seen through artists and regulars from City Gardens, a now gone club in Trenton NJ which hosted the best of the best in it's day. For people like me who grew up seeing shows here it is a wonderful recollection, for some it may be lost.

I was able to see many of the Bands and the shows in which they played . This book bought back MANY great memories. The book gives a A nice overview of the history of the building . Starting of when it was a car dealership. I started seeing Bands there back in 1983. For every show I was able to lean on the stage while the bands played the feelings cannot be described. Many of the Bands I was a big fan of. The "Pit " was always fun ! I "dived " at a few shows. I warned people how to protect their head and face once the "Fun " began.As stated in the book many times. The people coming to see the Bands were there for the, MUSIC ! In 6 years of going to various Shows, I saw very few fights.If you went to a Show with a Chip on your shoulder I did not last too long. The bathroom was a masterpiece. The Club up front was hot as hell ! It was always fun to watch a new person who went to see a Band there for the first time with a look of terror as the fun started. I also meet a few Band members at the back bar. Henry Rollins pulled My Buddies hair during a Show in 1984. He thought He was the one that threw a pitcher of beer on him. He then said to Him, " I like mixed drinks, "Motherfer ".Any how was a regular there knows what I am talking about. Randy is 1#.

This was a marvelous "Remembrance of a Things Past" for the post-punk generation. I played in bands in NYC and Boston around this time, and I vaguely recall being dragged to City a Gardens by a then-soon-to-ex-girlfriend (I forget the band, but the smell of the place lingers). This is a great testament of those times, the chaos, the instability of what was cool, the chance meetings with people who would become big names. Anyone who was ever in a band from the 80s to the mid90s, anyone who went to a punk rock club at that time and can still recall the damp piss soaking into your chucks, anyone who wants to form a band now, should definitely read this book and rest assured, no exaggerations were made here.

A TRUE TELLING OF THE DAYS I REMEMBERED HANGING OUT AT CITY GARDENS! Anyone who was there will remember the shows, anyone who missed them really missed out.

I grew up in South Jersey and went to City Gardens throughout my life and I miss it dearly. What great memories and this book brings many of them back. Awesome read.

The great thing about an oral history is hearing stuff first hand. This book showcases stories from some of the best punk and hardcore musicians. Great tales.

City Gardens in Trenton was out of the way, in a horrible neighborhood, was a hangout for skinhead gangs, and pretty disgusting on the inside. (the bathrooms were IMO worse than the bathrooms at CBGB, which were legendary for their disgustingness.) But pretty much every touring punk/alternative band of the 1980s and early 1990s played there. I saw many shows there myself (ramones, pixies, rollins band, skunk, mentors, murphy's law, gwar, social distortion amongst others). This book chronicles all of that in an oral history style, and i must admit i'm proud to have been quoted in it. A must have for music fans of that era from that area, and also quite relatable for those who were never there but in their youth needed a place to call their own and see some great bands. Definitely pick this up. Rowan Bishop (Guitar - The Outcrowd)

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