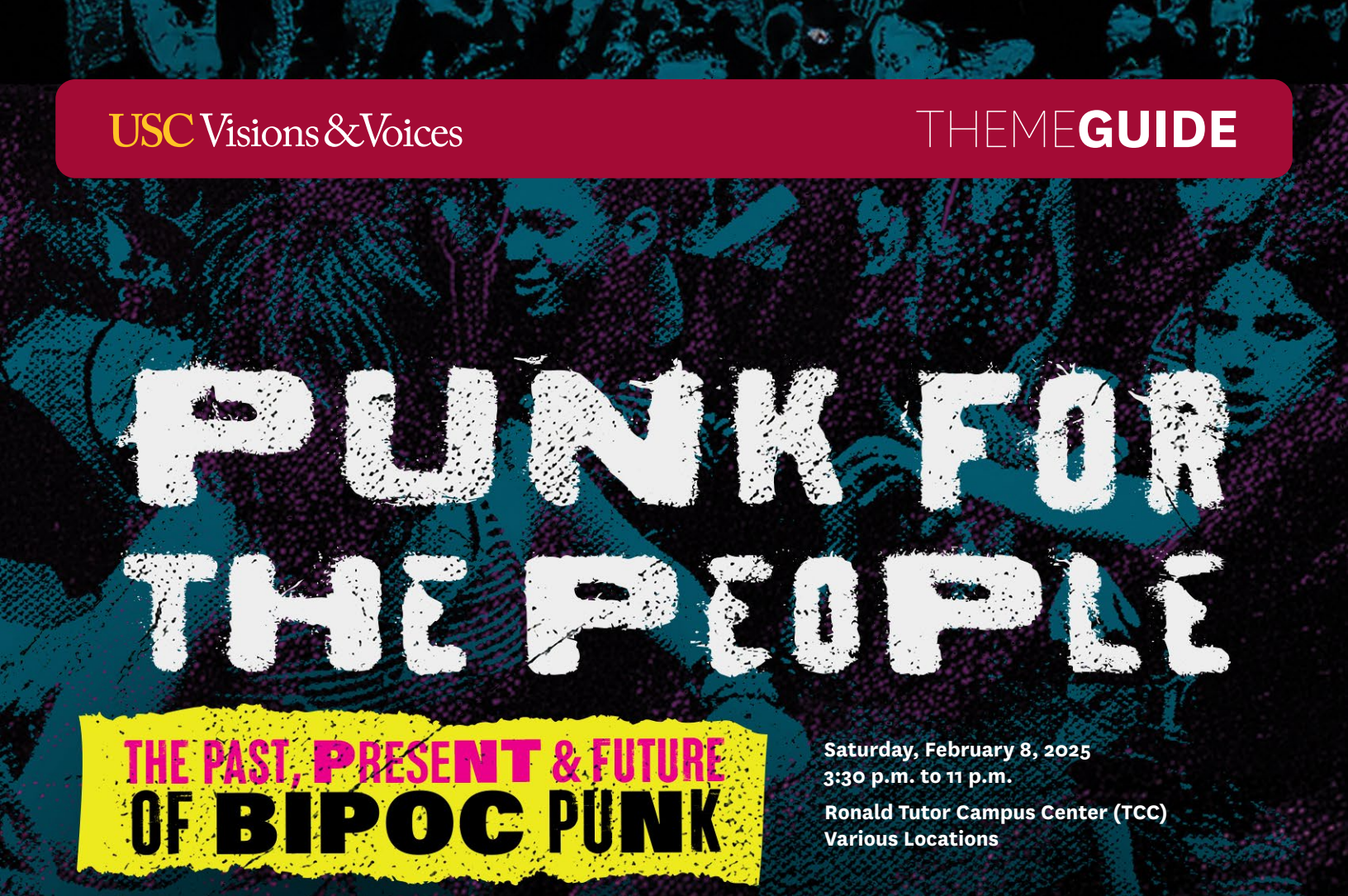


PUNK FOR THE PEOPLE

THE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE OF BIPOC PUNK

Saturday, February 8, 2025
3:30 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Ronald Tutor Campus Center (TCC)
Various Locations

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Punk for the People highlights the role of the BIPOC community in punk rock, with a concert featuring Soul Glo, Sweeping Promises, and Trap Girl; conversation with L.A. punk legends Alice Bag (The Bags) and Teresa Covarrubias (The Brat); and a Do Your Own Fest! panel and workshop featuring BIPOC organizers from across the country.
- Punk for the People is curated by James Spooner, creator of the *Afro-Punk* documentary and *The High Desert* graphic novel and co-editor of the *Black Punk Now* anthology.

WHAT IS PUNK?

It's hard to define *punk*. And maybe nobody who is punk or loves punk would even want to try. But there are some general things that can be said about punk's history, aesthetic, and ethos.

Punk music emerged in the mid-1970s in the U.S. and the UK. The music was characterized by an aggressive sound and a DIY ethos. Musicians didn't have to know how to play instruments to pick them up and make music—they didn't have to follow any of the established rules of music, art, or society. And while there are some common aesthetic characteristics of punk—short and fast songs, shouted vocals—there are many subgenres and styles within punk, with different sounds and vibes. What ties it all together is do-it-yourself, anti-authoritarian, anti-establishment values.

Since the beginning of punk, BIPOC artists have been part of it. Pure Hell hung out with the New York Dolls before it was even a genre. X-Ray Spex was right there with the Sex Pistols and Damned when the musical movement exploded in England, and DJ Don Letts introduced reggae to The Clash. Meanwhile in L.A., Alice Bag, The Brat, The Zeros, and Alley Cats were playing alongside the Germs and Weirdos. Bad Brains pioneered the hardcore sub-genre of punk, and the list goes on—and continues to go on.

Beyond the music, punk subcultures emphasize many aspects of independent, DIY community building, from creating community venues where you can make your own events to making your own media like zines. As Alice Bag put it in an interview with the *Milwaukee Record*, "I think if I hadn't started writing and blogging, my band would have been written out of history." At the core of punk is creating independent culture and community—not following established norms, doing it yourself, and finding liberation and empowerment there.



Alice Bag


Scout Cartagena


Teresa Covarrubias


Flora Lucini


Von Phoenix


Jazzmin Readeaux

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

ALICE BAG was the co-founder and lead singer of The Bags, one of the first bands to form during the initial wave of L.A. punk from 1977 to 1980. The Alice Bag Band was featured in the seminal documentary on punk rock *The Decline of Western Civilization*. Alice has released three solo albums and is the author of two autobiographies, *Violence Girl: East L.A. Rage to Hollywood Stage, a Chicana Punk Story* and *Pipe Bomb for the Soul*.

SCOUT CARTAGENA is a multidisciplinary artist and host of Break Free Fest, a POC-focused punk and hardcore fest in Philadelphia. Using glass, printmaking, installation, and video work, they convey themes of memory, heirlooms, and the rebellious act of living authentically and reclaiming their identity as a chronically ill/disabled Afro-Latine.

From 1978 to 1985, **TERESA COVARRUBIAS** was the lead singer for The Brat, a Chicano punk rock ensemble from the barrios of East Los Angeles that played the Vex and released one venerated EP, *Attitudes*, before breaking up despite being championed by bands including Los Plugz, X, and R.E.M. Covarrubias provided the chapter "Starry Nights in East L.A." to *Under the Big Black Sun: A Personal History of L.A. Punk* by X's John Doe, and continues to make and perform music to this day.

FLORA LUCINI is an Afro-Brazilian jazz bassist, composer, educator, and curator with over 20 years of experience in the music industry and hardcore punk scene. Flora has been instrumental in building inclusive music communities around venues and festivals across multiple states. Recently, she co-organized the second annual Secret History of Black Punk Fest in Brooklyn and launched the Black Punk Now Fest. Flora is also the founder, composer, and vocalist of MAAFA, an Afro-progressive hardcore band that blends traditional hardcore with rhythms and percussion from the African diaspora, and bassist for Mass Appeal Records' blues-punk outfit The 1865.

VON PHOENIX is the architect of Punk Black, a record label and media network that focuses on the movement of increasing representation for people of color in the rock, art, cosplay, and nerdlore communities; guitarist for Howling Star and Being Hvman; and co-producer of Infinity Hour, New Orleans' only Black utopian burlesque variety show.

JAZZMIN READEAUX is the founder of the Black and Brown Houston festival. After moving to Chicago at the age of 18, Jazzmin was inspired by the original Black and Brown fest to dedicate his musical journey to helping the community of color, as well as advocate for queer folk and youth. Readeaux's bands Lagrimas and Arabella allow him to connect with people on an emotional level while the fest allows him to connect on a personal level. He also helps other survivors of domestic abuse and single parents feel welcome by speaking up about those issues and creating kid-friendly spaces.



Daisy Salinas



Photo: Zen Sekizawa

"Atomic" Nancy Sekizawa



Shawna Shawnté



Soul Glo



Photo: Lisa Nola

James Spooner



Photo: Shawn Brackbill

Sweeping Promises

DAISY SALINAS is a Xicana feminist zinester, punk, activist, and rabble rouser living in Yanaguanaaka, San Antonio, TX. With the mission to uplift the voices and talents of artists of color, Daisy is the founder of the decolonial Xicana feminist zine *Muchacha Fanzine* and the feminist punk collective Xingonas in the Pit. She is also a member of the anti-system Tejana punk band Frijolera Riot.

"ATOMIC" NANCY SEKIZAWA was the owner of the Atomic Cafe, a popular gathering place during the first wave of L.A. punk with a legendary jukebox filled with 7" singles given to her by local and visiting punk and new wave bands. She has kept the 45s and plays them during DJ sets on special occasions. Nancy is also a First AME choir member, performer in Great Leap, early member of the seminal Asian American jazz band Hiroshima, Certified Addiction Specialist, and community activist.

SHAWNA SHAWNTÉ is a queer DJ, musician, and multimedia artist based in Tucson whose mission is to curate spaces where music, subversive self-expression, and revolutionary joy intersect and celebrate the radical power of creativity. A self-taught multi-instrumentalist, Shawnté's experience as co-executive director of Bay Area Girls Rock Camp and being in bands, including the current project Formula 88, led them to co-found The Multivrs Is Illuminated: Bay Area Black and Brown Punk Fest. Since 2019, Shawnté has been the sole organizer of the fest, now rebranded as the 143rd Dimension. They founded Tucson Rock Camp in 2023 to share the life-changing power of punk rock with youth from 8 to 18.

SOUL GLO's songs confront the personal and the political with equal fury as vocalist Pierce Jordan howls about the inequities of the culture around him while offering a look at the conflict inside his head and heart. Fusing hip hop, hardcore, and punk, the Philly outfit are fearless in their approach and even more ruthless in their delivery, injecting their colorful narratives into predominantly white spaces.

JAMES SPOONER is an award-winning graphic novelist, filmmaker, and tattoo artist. His debut graphic novel, *The High Desert*; anthology *Black Punk Now*; and forthcoming novel continue to center the Black punk experience, kicked off by his seminal documentary *Afro-Punk*. He co-founded the Afro Punk festival.

SWEEPING PROMISES are Lira Mondal and Caufield Schnug. A chance meeting in Arkansas led to a decade of playing in an eclectic assortment of projects together. Bass-playing Lira is an emotive bolt of thunderous energy with the iconic blast of a girl group rolled into one robust throat. Caufield is an intentional guitar player and drummer.



Trap Girl



Martin Wong





Razorcake 140, featuring Crisis Actor, Félix Partoutatix, Shit Present, Erin Link of EB Ranch Farmstead, Clapton Community Football Club: Against Modern Football

Hard-hitting and in your face, **TRAP GIRL** is carving out their space in L.A.'s underground scene. Full of rage and ready to take on the world one scream at a time with a mix of old-school punk and riot-grrrl edge, Trap Girl is glamorous yet gritty like a stiletto shoved in the mouth of patriarchy.

MARTIN WONG was the co-creator and editor of all 68 issues of *Giant Robot* zine from 1994 to 2010 and organizer of the Save Music in Chinatown series of all-ages punk matinee benefit shows from 2013 to 2022. He has been a regular contributor to the non-profit punk zine *Razorcake* since 2019.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- What does *punk* mean to you?
- Is punk different in different times and places? What is the role of punk in 2025 L.A.?
- Is punk inherently political?
- How does identity or lived experience shape what kind of music an artist makes?
- Can a subculture have subcultures within it? What are some challenges and benefits that might result?
- Where do you encounter DIY or independent art?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- *Muchacha Fanzine*'s guide: Punks of Color Bands Worldwide: A-Z
  muchachafanzine.com/mf-blog/punk-of-color-bands-worldwide-a-z
- The documentary *Afro-Punk*
  spoonersnofun.com/afropunk
- Chicxs Rockerxs South East Los Angeles
  crsela.org
- Razorcake, a non-profit punk zine
  razorcake.org
- The Smell, a volunteer-run DIY space
  thesmell.org
- Upcoming Visions and Voices events
  2/12 Club Kaya
  3/1 *El Respiro / Respire*: A Geochoreography by Carolina Caycedo
  3/5 Voices of Freedom, Voices of War in Ukraine: Creative Workshops and Conversation

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

CHRISTINA SNIDER of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

ARTICLES

- Rubén Ramírez-Sánchez, "Marginalization from Within: Expanding Co-Cultural Theory Through the Experience of the Afro Punk," *The Howard Journal of Communications* 19, no. 2 (2008): 89–104.

BOOKS

- Alice Bag, *Violence Girl: East L.A. Rage to Hollywood Stage: A Chicana Punk Story* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2011).
- John Doe and Tom DeSavia, *Under the Big Black Sun: A Personal History of LA Punk* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2016).
- Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay, *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* (London: Verso, 2011).

DATABASES

- Rock's Backpages
- Calisphere Digital Archive
- The Latino American Experience: The American Mosaic

JOURNALS

- *FlipSide Fanzine*
- *Punk & Post-Punk*

STREAMING MEDIA

- *Los Punks: We Are All We Have: The Hispanic Punk Rock Scene in Los Angeles* (The Film Sales Company, 2016).
- *Turn It Around: The Story of East Bay Punk* (Giant Pictures, 2017).
- *Afro-Punk: The Documentary* (trailer)

