



NOTES FROM THE TRENCHES

by Eddie Havoc

This is the first of what I hope will be a series of columns about... stuff. Obviously, stuff as I see it. I'm not really about reviewing bands, but as a member of MediaCrime, I'll be looking at things from the perspective of an *original* musician. I specify original, because, aside from covers, tributes, weddings, club dates, etc., being in an original rock band has its own singular set of circumstances.

Those of you who are over, say, 25 years of age, may have noticed that today's climate (and I don't just mean war & terrorism, okay?) is... well... *not as much fun*. It seems that there is an actively functioning "anti-fun faction." Go back a decade or so - hell, make it two and Roslyn; that's right folks; Roslyn, NY was one of *the* fun places to be. Ask anyone who was there about My Fathers' Place alone not to mention about four or five other places, most with live music and (remember it?) *partying*.

Admittedly, gas was much cheaper and the "hidden checkpoints in occupied Poland" atmosphere on the roads was not as prevalent. You were still supposed to designate a driver. But now, if you're spending a week's salary on cable or satellite TV (on TV!?) or several hours wages on a movie or... well, people end up staying home; a lot. Not to mention being shoed outside in all manner of weather if one wants to smoke.

Oh yeah! Let me say it; as it applies *specifically to bars and night-clubs*, the smoking ban is *wrong*. For nigh on to 230 years, American bar & club owners have dutifully paid taxes and licensing fees on their establishments. Establishments where people went to *smoke* and *drink* (and see live music, right?). At least two of these pastimes are not too healthy. Neither are rugby, bike riding (you could crash), sky diving, using sharp implements... you get the drift. Furthermore, the taxes levied on liquor, tobacco and gasoline constitute a hefty chunk of the federal, state and local budget, hmmm.

So the taxes that the bar & club owners have been paying (and I'll bet they haven't gone down!) are partly going toward their own oppression (or so I've heard some say). It all started when Mayor Bloomberg "did" NYC, then Nassau and Westchester went, then the whole state. Not once were "we the people" asked to vote on this issue. There was a lot of

talk about "level playing fields" and "polling results."

Believe it or not, I've actually got a few friends who are... yup... Republicans (other than that they're great guys). They told me that since statistics indicated that people were in favor of this there would be no official, party sanctioned opposition. The same with Democrats (yeah, yeah, they're good guys too - but...).

Meanwhile, my own observations indicated otherwise. No one i spoke to, smoker or non-smoker, was in favor of this legislation. So what about the stats? A friend of mine in the legal profession [GASP!] cleared up the confusion. The polls cited were known as "push polls." These are surveys that are carefully worded so that the respondent is compelled to respond in the way the info is gatherer wants. Reagan sent one over to me on nuclear power in the 1980s. After some recreational mind mellowing, some friends and I drew up our own "push poll" and wrote back saying, "if you answer ours, then we'll answer yours," which he never did.

From the band standpoint, its hard to get the regulars, walk-ins and punters at the places we used to play in NYC to turn into fans. Because their numbers are decimated by the near prohibitive of going out in the "new NYC." Oh yeah, don't get a parking ticket and... clean air? in metro New York!?

If the owner wants to prohibit an activity, well that's up to him; isn't it? I'd rather have a law saying that the band had to step outside rather than half the audience. It is understandable with offices, food serving establishments, movie theatres, etc. *Fine!* But really, a clean polite, smoke-free CBGBs? Nah!

If you agree with me, use that computer and deluge the politicians with emails or letters (I did and at least one reply was pretty funny). If you're discussing the idea and think I'm wrong, good. At least we're discussing and thinking. And vote! Let the politicians, *local* as well as national know it. Why should creepy special interest guys have all the fun?

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