

Not Just a Zine: the “Rollin Under” Zine and Thessaloniki’s DIY Music-making (1985 – 1990). Thessaloniki’s DIY Music Scene

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Abstract

KARAMOUTSIOU, Alexandra: Not Just a Zine: the “Rollin Under” Zine and Thessaloniki’s DIY Music-making (1985 – 1990). Thessaloniki’s DIY Music Scene.

From the early 1980s, with the common ground of the DIY ethos, lots of and different kinds of popular music idioms (from hardcore, punk to reggae and trip-hop) blossomed in Thessaloniki, Greece. This rich and constant music-making would not have been as vivid during its first period (1982 – 1994) without its own pillars of distribution, which consisted of independent labels and music stores, pirate radio stations and fanzines. In this essay I will focus on Thessaloniki’s emblematic fanzine *Rollin Under*, which was active from 1985 to 1992. I will show the relationship between *Rollin Under*, Thessaloniki’s music scene, the DIY ethos and the Greece’s historical and political context of that time. Finally, I will describe fanzines as alternative cultural spaces through which we music historians can “hear” the voices and untold stories of the participants of the music we research.

Keywords: DIY Music Scenes, fanzines, 1980s in Greece, Metapolitefsi, “bottom-up” music historiography

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For over 30 years now, musicians from different scenes, ages and educational backgrounds have been meeting at do-it-yourself (DIY) rehearsal and recording studios in Thessaloniki. These studios are located on the upper floors of old buildings, especially on the west side of the city centre, above stores and bars and outside of the recorded, official and local histories of musical life. From the mid-1980s these places were the springboard for a series of crucial musical osmoses, operating as places of communication and networking but also the formation of musical collectives. With the DIY ethos as common ground and Thessaloniki as their urban site, several different kinds of popular music idioms (from hardcore, punk to reggae and trip hop) blossomed throughout these 30 years of ceaseless musical creation. But is it sufficient to describe these musical activities under the term “music scene”?

The use of the “music scene” concept outside the field of journalism started during the 1980s as a critical opposition to the term “subculture”.¹ Music scenes have

1 PETERSON, Richard A. – BENNETT, Andy. Introducing Music Scenes. In PETERSON, Richard A. – BENNETT, Andy (eds.) *Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville : Vanderbilt University Press, 2004, p. 1.

been defined in several ways. For example, Straw describes a scene as a space where different musical practices interact and coexist in a specific geographical region² or in a specific urban setting.³ Similarly, Shank defines a music scene as a productive community that represents itself through music in a specific geographical place.

The concept of a community was used before “music scene” and is considered to imply a not so stable and homogeneous group of people.⁴ Nevertheless, recent critical approaches use the term “community” to describe a more romantic and wider construction in which music is a common practice of its members and is exalted as a common way of living, away from the hierarchical relationships of the music industry.⁵

In any case, if we try to describe the DIY music activities of Thessaloniki through the aforementioned concepts, we are faced with several problems. In the case of using the term “music scene”, we will not be able to deal either with the plurality of the music idioms that we meet in the DIY music of the Thessaloniki phenomenon (because when we are talking about a “music scene” we usually talk about a specific music idiom⁶) or with the historical background of the phenomenon. Moreover, DIY music studio activities have not been as clearly removed from the hierarchical relationships of the music industry as the concept of a music community (Stefanou, Graham) implies.

However, in this essay, I am exploring stories and activities from a specific period (1985 – 1990) of DIY music-making in Thessaloniki, as they were written and documented in the *Rollin Under* fanzine.⁷ We could describe Thessaloniki’s music-making DIY activities during those years using Shank’s scene definition. We are therefore talking about a productive DIY music community in Thessaloniki that represents itself mostly through specific rock idioms, such as, punk, post punk, garage punk, new wave and hardcore.

DIY is the acronym of the phrase “do it yourself”, which constitutes a political attitude⁸ that was first expressed artistically through punk music.⁹ However, this

2 STRAW, Will. Systems of Articulations, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music. In *Cultural Studies*, 1991, No. 5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502389100490311>

3 BEALLE, John. *DIY Music and Scene Theory*. Revision of a paper presented at a meeting of the Midwest Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology. 13 April 2013, https://www.academia.edu/4406896/DIY_Music_and_Scene_Theory

4 STRAW 1991, p. 373.

5 STEFANOEU, Danae. “Sharing what we lack”: Contextualizing live experimental music in post-2009 Athens. In TRAGAKI, Dafni (ed.) *Made in Greece: Studies in Greek Popular Music*. London; New York : Routledge, 2018, pp. 132-133; GRAHAM, Stephen. *Notes of the Underground: A Cultural, Political and Aesthetic Mapping of Underground Music. (PhD Dissertation)*. Goldsmiths College : University of London, 2012, p. 44.

6 BENNETT – PETERSON 2004, Introduction.

7 I would like to mention here that this is ongoing research; thus, there will probably be some gaps, omission or maybe mistakes in my narration. I feel extremely thankful for all the people who trusted me through their live interviews up until now. For this essay I want to specially thank Babis Argyriou.

8 “Whilst also having political implications, providing an alternative to dominant cultural channels of capitalism as it does.” GRAHAM 2012, p. 67.

9 MORAN, Ian P. Punk. The Do-It-Yourself Subculture. In *Social Sciences Journal*, 2010, Vol. 10, No. 1, [http:// repository.wcsu.edu/ssj/vol10/iss1/13](http://repository.wcsu.edu/ssj/vol10/iss1/13)

concept could be used to comprehend a broader context of autonomous artistic practices, as is the case of Thessaloniki’s music scene. Spencer delimits DIY theoretically and historically to a more general basis, as an ethos that expresses “*the urge to create a new cultural form and transmit it to others on your own terms*”.¹⁰ So, DIY efforts can be seen as an attempt to recover a more active attitude towards artistic creation in general. DIY’s starting point is self-organized, “bottom-up” creation. This practically means that music is created, for instance, in self-organized studios and distributed through independent labels, promoted by fanzines and pirate stations and performed in self-organized live gigs, festivals, parties and squats. This is exactly what was happening in Thessaloniki during the mid-1980s and 1990s.¹¹

The Zine: a “labour of love”¹²

The fanzine seems to be the ideal embodiment of the DIY ethos¹³ because it is, using Spencer’s words, “*a cultural form that it is transmitted to others on its own terms*” under no control and censorship.¹⁴ It is a small-scale, underground, self-funded¹⁵ and self-organized publication created by music lovers¹⁶ who are not professional writers; it has a non-profit goal and most of the time is produced and distributed at a financial loss.¹⁷ The zine’s editors and writers are not to be considered as pathetic fans¹⁸ but as actively involved members of the scene¹⁹ searching freely for their own voice. “*When you are a part of a minority and out of the system, you create your own world and communicate with your own language [...] you have to be free and do something on your own without a master.*”²⁰ In our case, we are talking about a music zine which usually referred to bands and their music, Greek or not, that were not promoted by the mainstream media.²¹ However, *Rollin Under*’s first

10 SPENCER, Amy. *DIY: The Rise of Lo-fi Culture*. London; New York : Marion Boyars, 2005, Introduction.

11 As Duncombe puts it: “(T)he Scene: the loose confederation of self-consciously ‘alternative’ publications, bands, shows, radio stations, cafes and bookstores and people that make up modern bohemia.” DUNCOMBE, Stephen. *Notes from the Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*. Portland : Microcosm Publishing, 2008, p. 58.

12 Larry Bob’s quote, see DUNN, Kevin. *Global Punk: Resistance and Rebellion in Everyday Life*. New York; London : Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 161.

13 SOUZAS, Nikos. What fanzines are? From the uninterrupted personal expression to the composition of new forms of socialization. In ARAPINIS, Pantelis (ed.) *Anti-culture: The Emergence of a New Social Subject after 1980*. Sparta : Idiomorfi, 2012, pp. 59-71.

14 DUNN 2016, p. 162.

15 Usually a fanzine is funded by its own editors and writers, by its fee, if there is one, and by self-organized parties and gigs. SOUZAS 2012, pp. 59-71.

16 LAING, Dave. *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock*. Oakland : PM Press, 2015, p. 23.

17 DUNN 2016, p. 160; It is important to mention that Pakis Tzilis in *Rollin Under*’s issue 13 describes a fanzine’s labour in the exact same way: “*Quite a lot of people (and if only boosted) have decided to oppose their anti-informing to the official informing with conditions that they define and constitute an expression of their need. Loving what they’re doing, lack of speculative goals and mostly the willingness for creation (I don’t like what is being served by anybody that is craving for profit, I will do something of mine, on my own or with my gang) are the main fanzines’ characteristics...*” TZILIS, Pakis. Fanzines. In *Rollin Under*, 1988, No. 13, pp. 10-12.

18 SOUZAS 2012, pp. 59-71.

19 DUNN 2016, p. 169.

20 Babis Argyriou, live interview.

21 SPENCER 2005, p. 88; On *Rollin Under*’s 15 issue cover we can see a photo of the band Jesus Couldn’t Drum. This is an indicative example of this attitude. Because as Argyriou explains: “(N)o big music magazine could publish something like that in Greece at that time. This kind of band wasn’t known by many

intention was to promote the local scene, so in a way we are talking about a music scene zine.²²

In this essay I will focus on Thessaloniki's emblematic fanzine *Rollin Under*, which was active from 1985 to 1992. I will show the relationship between *Rollin Under*, the Thessaloniki music scene, the DIY ethos and Greece's historical and political context of that time. This will be mostly achieved through the following questions: Why and under what conditions was *Rollin Under* born? Who were the creators? What was the content and means of expression? What are the hidden stories that we can find in its pages? Ultimately, answering those questions will contribute to the description of fanzines as alternative cultural spaces through which we music historians can "hear" the voices and the untold stories of the participants of the music we are researching.

The 1980s in Greece: Music, DIY and its artifacts as a "way out" for youngsters

In 1981, Greek elections were won by the socialist Panhellenic Socialist Movement, or PASOK, and along with it the supposed and desired "change"²³ had arrived in Greece's reality. During Greece's modern history this was the first time that a leftist government was coming into power without any interference from the military.²⁴ In fact, Greek democracy was still pretty young at that time, because a military junta had been governing the country for a seven-year period (1967 – 1974) as recently as 14 years before. From 1974 until 1981, Greece experienced the transition to parliamentary democracy (Metapolitefsi), with the right-wing government of the New Democracy party trying to restore the democratic state's institutions, but in general, being conservative. New Democracy couldn't or didn't want to follow the radicalization of Greek society, particularly of young people.²⁵

An example of this radicalization was the squatting movement that was born during students' reaction to a new educational law of the conservative New Democracy's government in 1979 – 1980. Through this movement, a new field of doubting, a new political "space"²⁶ emerged and was formed. It was colour-

people. But we liked it and made a cover with it. Even the band was really surprised they didn't expect to be on the cover of any magazine." From Babis Argyriou live interview. You can find the cover by following the link <https://www.fanzines.gr/rollin-under>

22 Scene zines: "These contain views and news of the local music and underground cultural scene in the writer's area." DUNCOMBE 2008, p. 18.

23 "Change", apart from PASOK's electoral slogan, was the word that could characterize the climate of the 1980s generally in Greece. SOTIROPOULOS, Dimitris. Change. In VAMVAKAS, Vasilis – PANAGIOTOPOULOS, Panagis (eds.) *Greece in the 80s: A Social, Political and Cultural Vocabulary*. Athens : Epikentro, pp. 19-20.

24 "The electoral success of PASOK in 1981 and the smooth transition of the reins of power to a party with such a radical agenda as PASOK had, did, in fact, consolidate democracy in the land where it had been abolished only 14 years earlier." KOLIOPOULOS, John S. – VEREMIS, Thanos M. *Modern Greece: A History since 1821*. Oxford : Blackwell publishing, 2010, p. 161. The same opinion is supported by other historians, too, such as: VOULGARIS, Giannis. *Metapolitefsi in Greece: 1974 – 2009*. Athens : Polis, 2013, p. 95; NIKOLAKOPOULOS, Ilias. Elections in 1981. In VAMVAKAS, Vasilis – PANAGIOTOPOULOS, Panagis (eds.) *Greece in the 80s: A Social, Political and Cultural Vocabulary*. Athens : Epikentro 2010, p. 150.

25 SKLAVENITIS, Dimitris. "Katse kala Gerasime": *Student's movement and squatting, 1974 – 2000*. Athens : Asini, 2016, p. 104.

26 SKLAVENITIS 2016, p. 89.

ful, dynamic, radical, self-organized and autonomous, like a Greek analogy to the movements springing out of May 1968.²⁷ Specifically, through this “space” new subjects of problematization emerged: environmental issues, self-determination and sexual orientation, feminism and patriarchy.²⁸ We could say that the *“signification of politics was broadened in order to conclude all the activities and relationships of everyday life”*.²⁹

Hence, the first steps of the DIY ethos in Greece and its artifacts, such as music scenes, zines and pirate radio stations, can be examined in this context. Under this light, it cannot be a mere coincidence that at least 40 new bands were born in Thessaloniki in 1980.³⁰ Those bands were searching their own sound and voice away from the political art of the popular Greek music that had dominated the left wing during the Metapolitefsi (democratic transition) and was promoted by the state of “change”.³¹ In general *“Young people of the 80s were suffocated by the dominant political discourse, party guidance and conservatism of Greek society”*.³² Punk and new wave, along with the DIY ethos, were the way that the new generation liberated itself.

As Giannis Aggelakas³³ wrote: *“rock was a way out for us [...] on the other side was the political songs of the Metapolitefsi, which were getting on our nerves [...] in that period we had already lived punk and all this stuff, and we started to be more political beings, but we were not involved in parties [...] it was something that was coming out of our music too”*.³⁴ So an increasing amount of DIY music appeared in Thessaloniki during the early 1980s, with the launch of the first DIY music studios on the east side of the city in the Depot and Kalamaria areas

27 SOUZAS, Nikos. *“Stop Talking about Death, Baby”: Politics and Culture in the Antagonistic Movement of Greece (1974 – 1998)*. Thessaloniki : Nautilus, 2015, p. 72.

28 KARAMANOLAKIS, Vangelis. From the fall of the «junta» to «Change»: the «timid» transition of higher education in Greece (1974 – 1982). In *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación*, 2015, No. 2, pp. 33-48, <http://dx.doi.org/10.14516/ete.2015.002.002.003>

29 SOUZAS 2015, p. 72.

30 DIMATATIS, Ntinos. *Get that Beat, Greek Rock of 80s & 90s, Vol. II*. Thessaloniki : Katsanos, 2001, p. 12. Up until now, through my research, I have discovered 47 bands that started their activities between 1980 and 1985.

31 This refers mostly to a Greek music idiom based on the artistic elaboration of popular or traditional Greek instruments, like the bouzouki or the Cretan lyra, mainly by Mikis Theodorakis and Giannis Markopoulos. This music was forbidden during the junta years mostly because of its lyrics which were coming from leftist poets of that time. During the Metapolitefsi there was a massification of these songs and sometimes a commercialization that led lots of young people to react and try to find new ways to express themselves musically through rock idioms. Notably, PASOK, the new government voted in power in 1981, had a leftist and socialist background, so in a way it firmly promoted these music idioms during the 1980s.

You can find more information about culture issues during the Metapolitefsi here: PAPAIOGIANNIS, Nikos. *Culture during the Years of the Metapolitefsi*, <http://metapolitefsi.com/>

32 KUMIONIS, Stelios. Rock Scene. In VAMVAKAS, Vasilis – PANAGIOTOPOULOS, Panagis (eds.) *Greece in the 80s: A Social, Political and Cultural Vocabulary*. Athens : Epikentro, pp. 520-521.

33 <https://www.discogs.com/artist/766553>

34 Giannis Aggelakas interview to “Start the scene”, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThsO7COHhL0&t=4s&ab_channel=StartASceneProductions

and bands like Mpeste skuloi aleste³⁵ (punk) and Moot Point³⁶; on the west side of the city, in the Neapoli area, were bands like Berkebe (punk), Grover³⁷, Indignant Citizens³⁸, Gulag³⁹, Out of Control⁴⁰, Holes⁴¹ and others.⁴² Therefore, we could say that the radicalization of youth was empowered and expressed through the DIY ethos and its artifacts, and vice versa.⁴³

Rollin Under

Within these rich DIY music activities in Thessaloniki *Rollin Under* was born as an effort to promote and distribute Thessaloniki's music groups. *"To get a record out was an impossible dream [...] because of the political songs during the Metapolitefsi and [...] I didn't want their (the music groups) work to get lost [...] there was nothing about Thessaloniki in Maximumrockroll, let's say, and I didn't send anything, obviously."*⁴⁴ Thus, Babis Argyriou was experiencing the vivid music life of Thessaloniki and felt that he should do something to capture it, promote it and distribute it. He was running a pirate radio station at that time, Radio Free, with the technical support of Makis Terzopoulos. Argyriou was also collecting LPs and cassettes and realized that he loved sharing the music he liked with other people.⁴⁵

Some years before, he had played keyboards and guitar and sang in the music group Life in Cage⁴⁶, but he soon left that dream and focused on searching for⁴⁷ and listening to music, attending live gigs in the city and sharing his experiences. He recorded live gigs with a Sony Professional Walkman and began playing them at his radio station in 1980. After a trip to the USA in 1984, he came back to

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- 35 Tourkouvelis in his book *Rock Diaries*, mentions them as one of the first punk groups in Thessaloniki. Their drummer is a well-known DJ in Thessaloniki and maybe the only stable member of the band. As characteristically mentions in an interview: *"Yes I started as a musician in a punk band that we formed in 1982. According to Rock Diaries we were one of the first 2-3 punk groups in Thessaloniki, but we had a problem. We did our gigs without rehearsals and we never played with the same consistency"*. <http://www.ough.gr/index.php?mod=articles&op=view&id=523>
- 36 Rock'N'Roll/Punk band formed in 1984 in Thessaloniki, Greece, <https://www.discogs.com/artist/1434978-Moot-Point>
- 37 Post punk band formed during 1981, <https://www.discogs.com/artist/689941>
- 38 Romanized to Aganaktismenoi Polites. Hardcore band formed in 1986 in Thessaloniki. <https://www.discogs.com/artist/1558916>
- 39 Gulag, the name taken from the Soviet forced labour camps, is a Greek band from Thessaloniki formed in December 1985. Their music is a mixture of punk, hardcore with some metal and melodic elements, <https://www.discogs.com/artist/709953->
- 40 Romanized to Ektos Elenghou. A Punk/Rock'N'Roll band from Thessaloniki. They started playing in 1982. <https://www.discogs.com/artist/766558>
- 41 Romanized to Tripes. A post punk group from Thessaloniki Greece. They started playing in 1983 <https://www.discogs.com/artist/766552>
- 42 KARAMOUTSIU, Alexandra. *"At the mercy of modernization...": Histories of DIY music-making in Thessaloniki and the case of "NAFTIA"*. The upcoming paper was presented at an International PhD graduate Student Conference in Thessaloniki in February 2018.
- 43 As Chu Julie put it: *"For zine publishers the media environment provides some of the few remaining resources and opportunities for youths to carve out a space for themselves."* CHU, Julie. Navigating the media environment: How youth claim a place through zines. In *Social Justice*, 1997, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 71-85, www.jstor.org/stable/29767022
- 44 Babis Argyriou, live interview.
- 45 Babis Argyriou, live interview.
- 46 You can listen to the cassette by following the link <https://lazydogrecords.bandcamp.com/album/life-in-cage>
- 47 There were some vinyl stores at that time in Thessaloniki, such as Stereo-disc and Blow Up, and some bookstores that imported fanzines from abroad, mostly from the USA. These were Babis's main source of information and not so much the mainstream Greek media of that time, such as Pop and Rock or the more alternative Sound (Romanized to Echos).

Thessaloniki with a four-track cassette recorder in his luggage and started recording his favourite local bands. In 1985 he asked his favourite local bands to participate in a cassette collection, and this is how the first issue of *Rollin Under* was born: “I proposed to the groups whose gigs I like to listen, to participate in a cassette collection that I was preparing. They accepted with pleasure, but I soon found out that the collection wasn’t enough for me. I wanted to include a booklet with some information that eventually had 24 pages and was called *Rollin Under*.”⁴⁸ So, *Rollin Under* was first supposed to be a booklet to accompany cassette collections of music from local bands. However, this happened only for the first three issues, and Babis Argyriou continued his recordings and distribution, running Lazy Dog Records at the same time.⁴⁹ During that period, he met Giannis Plohoras and asked him to become *Rollin Under*’s co-editor. After the first issue there was also an open call for anyone to send his/her article and to take part as a writer. Argyriou and Plohoras were the main editors and worked together until issue 20 in the early 1990s, then Plohoras published two issues on his own, and that was *Rollin Under*’s last breath.⁵⁰

However, *Rollin Under* was only one of the dozens of fanzines that were born in Greece at that time. From the mid-1980s and 1990s countless of fanzines were created and most of them were music zines⁵¹ that documented and supported local scenes. After 1985 zines were spread almost all over Greece, contributing not



Figure 1. Cassette release of Rollin Under’s issue 1, 1985 (source: <https://lazydogrecords.bandcamp.com/album/give-bees-a-chance>).



Figure 2. Cassette release of Rollin Under’s issue 2, 1986 (source: <https://lazydogrecords.bandcamp.com/album/no-dogs-fly-here>).



Figure 3. Cassette release of Rollin Under’s issue 3, 1986 (source: <https://lazydogrecords.bandcamp.com/album/never-trash-a-pretty-face>).

48 <http://www.babisargyriou.gr/rollin-under-fanzine>

49 <https://lazydogrecords.bandcamp.com>

50 Babis Argyriou, live interview.

51 KOLOVOS, Giannis. “Social Waste”: *The History of the Punk Scene in Athens (1979 – 2015)*. Athens : Aprovleptes, 2015, intro.

only to the empowerment of their local scenes but to the connection of the local scenes with each other and with similar movements abroad.⁵² Specifically, a fanzine called *Papari* (which is Greek slang for testicle) claimed that in 1985 there were 27 active fanzines in Greece. It is interesting to see the way their writers described their activities and efforts: “*Notebook recording*”; “*alternative independent expression*”; “*It is just a hobby and a way to help the scene*”; “*A magazine for the never found passages*”; “*personal and fanatically amateur*”; “*determined to work for fun*”; “*amateur document that talks about music across mass media*”; “*a casual, amateur, dirty but so real press*”.⁵³

Thus, we are talking about publications springing from their writers shared love for music. These were not widely accessible and were not promoted by the mainstream music media. Writers were guided by their urge to share the music, local or not, that they were searching for, discovering and listening to, in their own way, through their own means. “*We were writing for everything that moved us and stimulated us; we were interviewing local and foreign groups through mail or live, before or after their gigs. Writers decided on and proposed a subject that they wanted to talk about, and sometimes they brought it directly, with no warning.*”⁵⁴

Rollin Under was admittedly, along with *Open City* (Romanized *Anichti Poli*), very effective to its readers on matters of musical and political preferences.⁵⁵ At the same time, through *Rollin Under*, a reader could be informed in detail about the music life of Thessaloniki and sometimes Athens and be “transported” to almost every gig that was taking place at that time by Greek or other bands. Moreover, *Rollin Under* was also a source of information about what was happening in Europe at that time, through the experiences of writers who were attending gigs there, or the diaries of musicians who were touring. Through their stories, readers were informed about and connected with Europe’s squats, their activities and their networks.⁵⁶

Rollin Under was mostly distributed in Thessaloniki’s vinyl stores, such as Blow up, Stereodisc and Billboard, as well as in some bookstores, too. Moreover, Argyriou or Plohoras also travelled by train and distributed the zine in person to Athens’s vinyl stores (Music Machine, Happening, Art-nouveau, Jazz Rock, etc.) and bookstores (Vavel, Para Pente), too. They carried the issues around (two or three hundred of them) mostly on foot and collected fees from previous sales door-to-door at each record shop. After that, they were free to hang around the vinyl stores to search for and buy LPs. Lots of issues were also distributed by hand and by mail through readers who became friends of the zine and helped with

52 SOUZAS 2012, pp. 59-71.

53 A Glance to Greek Fanzines’ Underworld. In *Papari*, 1989, No. 6, pp. 3-10.

54 <http://www.babisargyriou.gr/rollin-under-fanzine>

55 SOUZAS 2012, pp. 59-71.

56 This is exactly what Duncombe describes: “*The idea of a zine holding a scene together is not new... some do it by providing tour guides to the bohemian diaspora scattered across terra firma. This function explains the almost ubiquitous presence in punk zines of the band tour diary. In these diaries the zine writer takes the reader on a day by day tour with the band: riding in vans, playing at clubs, eating bad food, crashing on couches.*” DUNCOMBE 2008, p. 61.

the distribution in smaller cities in the country. The maximum number of copies printed was 1500 and the minimum 300; they probably published 25 issues, one every two-three months from 1985 – 1991 or 1992.⁵⁷

The zine was never handwritten. Writers sent their articles to Argyriou and he typed them out on his sister’s typewriter. *“Assembling the issue was a very joyful process, before we got involved with printers and book binders, when photocopies were getting in line, folded and stapled by the drafting group, in between the jokes and the badinage.”*⁵⁸

During the zine’s publication, the group grew. Most of the members were friends before the zine started, and some were added along the way, among them Kostas Apostolidis, Lambros Skouz, Babis Halatsis, Pakis Tzilis, Dhmitris Veldemiris, Panos Konidaros, Vassilis Giatsis and others. Argyriou added photos and designed the titles with Letraset letters or letters cut out of other magazines⁵⁹, and Plohoras sometimes drew the covers. It is interesting that there was no stable logo for the name of the zine. Almost every issue was bigger than the previous one (24 - 68 pages) and some of the last issues were in four-colour print, too. As the issues became richer and bigger, they were typewritten by a printing centre and sometimes designed by a graphic artist.⁶⁰



Figure 4. Issue 1, 1985 (source: <https://www.fanzines.gr/rollin-under>).

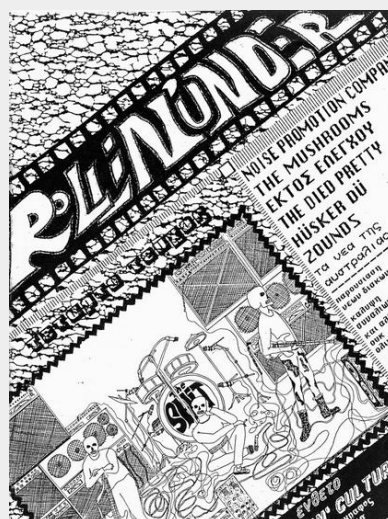


Figure 5. Issue 4, 1987 (source: <https://www.fanzines.gr/rollin-under>).

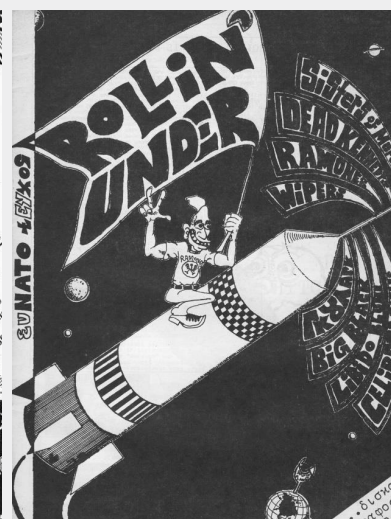


Figure 6. Issue 9, 1987 (source: <https://www.fanzines.gr/rollin-under>).

As the years went by, the zine evolved and got bigger, richer and more elaborated. Thus, one might wonder: was it still a zine or was it becoming more akin to a music magazine? This is a question that arose during the early 1990s, as the DIY scene was becoming an alternative scene, occasionally promoted and subsumed

57 Babis Argyriou, live interview; Babis Argyriou, personal site: <http://www.babisargyriou.gr/rollin-under-fanzine> and <https://www.fanzines.gr/rollin-under>

58 Babis Argyriou, live interview.

59 *“Everything was photocopied and then paginated and bound with scissors and glue.”* Babis Argyriou, live interview.

60 Babis Argyriou, personal site: <http://www.babisargyriou.gr/rollin-under-fanzine>



Figure 7. Issue 16, 1988 (source: <https://www.fanzines.gr/rollin-under>).

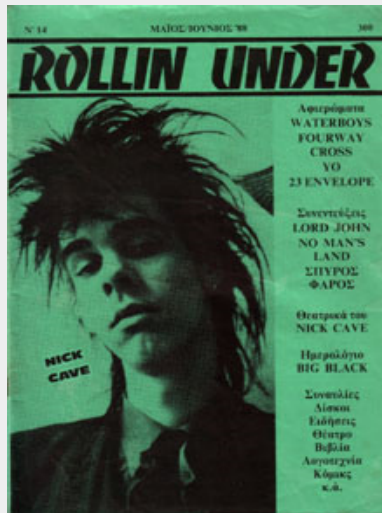


Figure 8. Issue 18, 1989 (source: <https://www.fanzines.gr/rollin-under>).

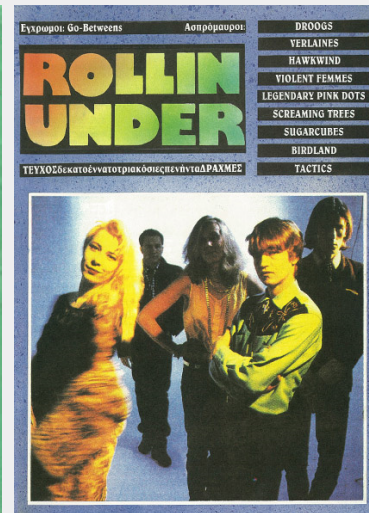


Figure 9. Issue 19, 1989, (source: <https://www.fanzines.gr/rollin-under>).

by more mainstream media and labels. Some mainstream music magazines were now referring to zines, and some zines were advertising small record labels in their pages. This evolution led to a public dialogue and problematization about the zines' identity and ontology. In *Rollin Under's* issue 23, Kostas Apostolidis wrote an article about this matter as an answer to the cruel critique about the fact that small labels were advertised through the zines. In his text, Apostolidis noted that the freedom of speech was a basic characteristic of a zine and could not be suppressed in any way.⁶¹ *Rollin Under* ceased its circulation exactly during the time that this problematization was at its peak. Babis Argyriou stopped being involved with the zine two issues before the zine's last breath, as he felt really exhausted⁶², and instead focused on his Lazy Dog Records label and the publication and distribution of LPs.⁶³

The late 1980s in Thessaloniki...

Through the first three issues of *Rollin Under*, we are informed about the music life of Thessaloniki through responses to almost every live gig that happened in 1985 – 1986. From the descriptions we can learn about the places (Up Tempo, Moon, Romanized to Selini, and Suspense)⁶⁴ where live gigs were taking place and realize that the main problem of the scene at that time was that there was no proper venue with adequate sound equipment for the bands to play. During the summer of 1986 two open air festivals took place in Thessaloniki: one in the Wood Theatre (Romanized to Theatro Dasous) and the other at the Nuns (Romanized to Kalogries), as people

61 SOUZAS 2015, p. 285.

62 Publishing a fanzine is very hard work; this is something that I understood through interviewing Babis Argyriou, but that is also documented by other zinesters too. "Erik Nakamura, publisher of the popular *Giant Robot* told me he spent approximately 100 hours in getting the writing, photos and layout together for his 4th issue [...] 'burn out' is quite common in zine publishing." CHU 1997, pp. 80-81.

63 Some years later he opened his own vinyl store with the name Rollin Under; it closed in 2009. At the same time, he started running a music online site in the year 2000 that is still active today (<http://www.mic.gr>), and he wrote three music novels and one collection of short stories.

64 Gigs very often took place in cinemas, too.

at that time called it. They were probably referring to the playing field of an abandoned orphanage on the west side of the city (Stavroupoli) or to the now days famous open theatre of Thessaloniki "Moni Lazariston". Those two events were covered by four to five articles and interviews in two different issues, three and four. And this is indicative of their impact on the members of the scene and fans, as dozens of groups from Thessaloniki and all over Greece took part. Of course, through the zine's pages we are also informed about that year's releases and realize that the musical creativity of the groups was empowered from year to year.

After issue four, one notices that the zine was also enriched with articles about literature and the cinema.⁶⁵ There were also some comic strips included. In issue 4 we can read an interview with a local band called Noise Promotion Company.⁶⁶ Through this interview we are informed that this band participated in the 2nd Biennale of Young Artists from Mediterranean Europe that took place in Thessaloniki in 1986⁶⁷, along with No Man's Land⁶⁸ a band from Athens. Two years later, in 1988, Noise Promotion Company participated in Bologna's Biennale of Young Artists of Mediterranean Europe.⁶⁹ These events, along with the fact that foreign fanzines started to mention Greek bands⁷⁰ and *Rollin Under* was mentioned in the American zine *Maximum Rockroll* (MRR) and described as a very rich-in-content music zine⁷¹, that lead us to the assumption that during the 80s the local scene of Thessaloniki tried to communicate and promote its artifacts to a broader international audience.⁷² Moreover, Gulag, a very active punk band of that time, shared through a travel diary that was included in *Rollin Under* their experiences from their tour in Europe (25 October to 20 November) in 1988.⁷³ Gulag, along with Naftia, were bands from Thessaloniki that utilized the networks between the DIY scenes of Europe (Germany, Italy, Netherlands, etc.) of the 1980s and early 1990s.⁷⁴ Naftia actually made six European tours from 1987 – 1994.⁷⁵

In 1988 the most talked-about event, even in Thessaloniki, was the Rock Festival in Athens, which was organized under the auspices of the General Secretariat for the New Generation and Municipality of Athens, with bands and artists from Greece, Britain, California and Australia.⁷⁶ The event concluded with brutal fights

65 There is a thorough description about the issue's content and its differences from the previous ones at: ARGYRIOU, Babis – PLOHORAS, Giannis. Index. In *Rollin Under*, 1987, No. 4, p. 2.

66 Post-Punk band formed in 1984 in Thessaloniki, Greece, <https://www.discogs.com/artist/559093-Noise-Promotion-Company>

67 You can find more information about this event by following this link: <http://www.bjcem.org/biennali/ii-biennial-of-young-artists-from-mediterranean-europe-thessaloniki-1986/>

68 <https://www.discogs.com/artist/1446383-No-Mans-Land-6>

69 <http://www.bjcem.org/biennali/iv-biennial-of-young-artists-from-mediterranean-europe-bologna-1988>

70 Unknown writer. Foreigners write for not so foreign records. In *Rollin Under*, 1987, No. 9, p. 44.

71 TRIGAS, Nikos. Letters. In *Rollin Under*, 1989, No. 17, p. 64.

72 In Issue 9, p. 44, we can find an article about foreign zines that mentioned Greek bands.

73 APOSTOLIDIS, Kostas. Gulag: The Diary of their last tour in Europe. In *Rollin Under*, 1988, No. 17, pp. 10-14.

74 KOLOVOS 2015, p. 223.

75 KARAMOUTSIOU 2019, Upcoming.

76 You can find more information about this festival here: <http://lemonostiftis.blogspot.com/2012/03/rock-festival-88.html>; You can see the festival ticket by following this link: <https://lefkisymphonia.gr/photoalbums/lefki-symfonia-postersflyerstickets/1988-lefki-symphonia-live-at-athens-rock-festival/>

between the attendants and the police. The event was covered by articles and an interview with the bassist of PiL (Public Image Ltd), whose refusal to play was supposed to be the reason that violent fights started in the first place.⁷⁷ The years 1988 – 1989 seem to be very vivid and productive years for Thessaloniki's musical life, but probably the most famous event was the concert of Siouxsie and the Banshees during the International Exhibition of Thessaloniki. It is interesting to see that it was covered at the bottom of the page five of issue 17 with really tiny letters.⁷⁸ It was described as a nostalgic and “out of time” event that was organized in a commercial and fully controlled environment.⁷⁹ All the aforementioned stories were written in a personal, funny and imaginative way. The nonprofessional writers expressed themselves freely in experiential and sentimental tone⁸⁰, and this is one of the reasons that makes this zine so pleasing to read.

***Rollin Under* and the neighbors**

From the research so far it cannot be assumed that there was any systematic communication between *Rollin Under* and similar DIY artifacts from the scenes of the neighboring Eastern Bloc countries. As Argyriou says: “*There was no cooperation. If an author discovered anything, it was by chance. Our reporters were usually Greeks that lived or studied in a Western country, and they sent us reports, usually from concerts.*”⁸¹ However, we can find some scattered references regarding performances or albums, mostly about Yugoslavia and some for Hungary and Bulgaria.⁸² Specifically, information about Yugoslavia can inform us about the performance conditions there and lead us to interesting conclusions for both countries.

More analytically, there is a huge possibility that the punk groups Disorder⁸³ (Bristol) and Homo Detritus⁸⁴ (Oslo) played in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, in 1988, right before appearing in Thessaloniki.⁸⁵ This hypothesis is based on their conversation about their experiences from Yugoslavia included in *Rollin Under's* volume 13

77 JOURNALISTES Illegitimates s. Epics and Days of six poor beings and a dog. In *Rollin Under*, 1988, No. 16, pp. 18-20; KOTZIABASI, Fiona – ARGYRIOU, Babis. An interview with Alex Dias PiL's bassist. In *Rollin Under*, 1988, No. 16, pp. 26-27; There is a fun fact about this issue. There are actually two different issues with this number, one is called Issue number 13 and the other the 13th Issue.

78 Let's not forget that Gulag's four-page diary was in the same issue. For a zine like *Rollin Under*, a local band's European tour was a more important subject than the live concert of a very famous band, such as Siouxsie and the Banshees.

79 KAZIS, Dimitris. Siouxsie and the Banshees, 10 December 1988, EXPO. In *Rollin Under*, 1988. No. 17, p. 5; The following description is indicative of the critical state of mind of the zines' readers, who were sending their opinions of the concert: “(T)here are two kinds of concerts: The ones when the hands of the people in the front line touch the stage that artist is on and the others when there is a protective barrage between the stage and the audience and bodyguards in between.”

80 SOUZAS 2012, pp. 59-71.

81 Babis Argyriou, live interview.

82 The only Bulgarian reference that I have found was a critique of the album: *Le mystere des voix Bulgares - a cathedral concert* by Pakis Tzilis in volume 19, p. 36 in the Various section.

83 <https://www.discogs.com/artist/292799-Disorder-3>

84 <https://www.discogs.com/Seppo-Goes-To-Holocaust-Seppo-Goes-To-Holocaust/release/1908861>

85 This speculation can be confirmed by the following videos: Disorder: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDxt4aWEWZE&ab_channel=duleklc, Homo Detritus: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTxy5ROiIbs&t=569s&ab_channel=disordertaf; The last video gives us more information about the time and place of the gig, which seems to have taken place at the University of Sarajevo on 9 January 1988.

(2), which was published in March 1988. *“Taf (Disorder): It’s quite easy to play in Yugoslavia. There are lots of places that are the state’s property. When there is a concert there, everybody says there is a pop concert going on, even if Metallica are playing. And everybody is attending. I really like that. Things are quite different there. Some people manage their own places for concerts but in order to organize them they have to ask for the police’s permission and they usually get it. The police want to know what is happening and if you try to do it without police’s permission then they will come and stop you. Because, you know, they have the ultimate power [...] so they organize them (concerts) through the system.”*⁸⁶

Through Taf’s telling we learn about the conditions related to the concert venues and the organization of the performances. Through his narration we can ascertain that socialist regimes during the period of late socialism were on the one hand more tolerant with their citizen’s tastes but on the other wanted to control them⁸⁷, probably through the police’s displays of power.

Moreover, in volume 3 there is an interview with the Watermelon Men, a group with some members from Hungary. The journalist asks them about their song “Hungarian Heart” and then he is interested in Hungary’s political situation at that time: *“How are people there? I’ve heard that they are a bit of gloomy. Eric (drummer) tells me that right now things are changing and there is a turn to the Western way of life.”*⁸⁸ It seems that there was a general view among the Greek people that life in the Eastern Bloc was difficult and gloomy. In the same vein, Argyriou and Plohoras in the 4th volume compared Greece’s and Yugoslavia’s situation in order to be optimistic and humorous about the bad economic conditions in Greece, because obviously they believed that the situation in Yugoslavia was much more difficult. *“The economy’s development and the new tax laws makes it certain that all the people that are occupied with music will pay much more for cassettes, LPs and instruments, but there is always worse! In Yugoslavia importing LPs is forbidden and the circulation of foreign LPs is limited. Just imagine not finding Iron Maiden’s new LP [...] (Don’t you feel better already?).”*⁸⁹ This feeling that this *“was more difficult there than in Western countries”*⁹⁰ is common in *Rollin Under*’s reporters. However, in our case this didn’t work as a driving force to search more about the East Bloc scenes, as was the case for French fanzines, for example.⁹¹ Probably the reason was that Greece in the 1980s was still a young democracy, trying to make up for lost time, and not a typical Western country.⁹² Thus, Greek

86 Disorder’s interview In *Rollin Under*’s, Vol. 13 (2), p. 63; It would be interesting to further research the tours of several bands in Central and East Europe and try to discover if any interconnections and communications came into being between Thessaloniki’s and Sarajevo’s scenes.

87 ŠIMA, Karel - Michela Miroslav. Why fanzines? Perspectives, topics, and limits in research on Central Eastern Europe. In *Forum Historiae*, 2020, Vol. 14, No. 1, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/forhist.2020.14.1.1>

88 KONIDARIS, Panos, GIATSI Vasilis, In *Rollin Under*, Vol. 3, p. 13-14.

89 ARGYRIOU Babis, PLOHORAS Giannis, In *Rollin Under*, Vol. 4: p. 2.

90 ETIENNE, Samuel. Echoes of Central and Eastern Europe Underground Scenes in French Fanzines Before and After the Fall of the Berlin Wall. In *Forum Historiae*, 2020, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 53-67. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/forhist.2020.14.1.5>

91 ETIENNE 2020, p. 64.

92 See in this article’s subchapter: The 1980s in Greece: Music, DIY and its artifacts as a “way out” for young-

zinesters were maybe more occupied following and reporting mostly the West's developments, apart from their own scene's development.

Not just a zine...

Rollin Under was one of the longest lived, most informative⁹³, self-organized, participatory and DIY-oriented fanzines of the 1980s and early 1990s. Through *Rollin Under*'s pages a reader or researcher can discover lots of bands that were famous in their time but which are now facing near obscurity, can be informed about Greek bands' annual releases and learn about dozens of venues and live gigs. Therefore, I consider *Rollin Under* and zines in general not only as containing very important data and being a research tool for tracing the "messy" tracks that the DIY scenes left behind⁹⁴, but as historical records that offer us "rich amounts of materials for research into subculture communication and community networks and marginalized subjects who are otherwise not present within archival holdings".⁹⁵ They narrate the raw hidden stories that most of the time are glossed over, ignored and assigned to oblivion.⁹⁶ Zines are often the "only representation of ephemeral and otherwise undocumented spaces", the only "archival traces of marginalized communities".⁹⁷

Moreover, when someone is researching the music activities of a small DIY music community there is very often no previous research background (bibliography). In that case the main research tool is live interviews from the people who were active participants on the scene. However, through a zine's interviews, such as those in *Rollin Under*, for example, the researcher has the chance to re-meet the same narrators in their mid-20s and analyse their discourses and stories from an entirely different point of view. So, from that perspective I recognize *Rollin Under* as a crucial preliminary data source that not only empowers our aspirations for bottom-up music historiography but also teaches us that "anyone can DIY their own history"⁹⁸ as music zinesters do in our case, through recording and sharing the music and musicians they love. Zines are living proof that "possessing the means of recording allows you to impose your own noise"⁹⁹ and why not "herald

sters.

93 It is indicative that in his book *Stop Talking about Death, Baby: Politics and Culture in the Antagonistic Movement of Greece (1974 – 1998)* Souzas refers to *Rollin Under* at least 15 times.

94 As Robinson puts it: "The zine, as it passes from hand to hand, acts as a marker buoy for loose connections, shared spaces and moments of transient recognition that build a subculture or scene. The zine is currency in subcultural capital." ROBINSON, Lucy. Zines and History: Zines as History. In THE SUBCULTURES NETWORK (eds.) *Ripped Torn and Cut: Pop Politics and Punk Fanzines from 1976*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2018, pp. 84-101.

95 FIFE, Kirsty. *The Personal is Historical: The Ethics of Archiving Zine Subcultures*. Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MA in Archives and Records Management, UCL, 2013, p. 13.

96 Anne Elizabeth Moore quoted in DUNN 2012, p. 162; As Robinson puts it "It is hardly news that groups of people have been excluded or written out of history." ROBINSON 2018, p. 88.

97 FIFE, Kristy. Not for you? Ethical implications of archiving zines. In *Punk & Post Punk*, 2019, Vol. 8, pp. 227-242, https://doi.org/10.1386%2Fpunk.8.2.227_1

98 ROBINSON 2018, pp. 84-101.

99 ATTALI, Jacques. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis; London : University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p. 145.

a society in which individuals and small groups dare to reclaim the right to develop their own procedures and their own networks”.¹⁰⁰

In conclusion, zines can help us find and clarify the vague traces that DIY scenes left behind, reveal histories that would possibly otherwise remain hidden and untold and, most importantly, give us the opportunity to listen to the protagonists’ voices and their historical narrations as they were written at that time. All the aforementioned zines’ advantages enhance our effort for a bottom-up music historiography and teach us that we can all DIY our own history. Hence, *Rollin Under* and zines in general should be considered not just as zines, not only invaluable preliminary data tools that should at least “*take their place among other sources such as letters, diaries, and oral history interviews*”¹⁰¹, but, I would dare to say, as alternative cultural spaces that thrive in the system’s ruptures and operate as silent revolutions.¹⁰²

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100 McCLARY, Susan. Afterword: The Politics of Silence and Sound. In ATTALI, Jacques. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis; London : University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p. 185.

101 CHIDGEY, Red. The resisting subject: Per-zines as life story data. In *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2006, No. 10, pp. 1-13.

102 Here I paraphrase Hakim Bey’s terminology about TAZ (temporal alternative zone). BEY, Hakim. *The Temporary Autonomous Zone. Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*. Brooklyn; NY : Autonomedia/Anti-copyright, 1985/1991, p. 77.

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