

ALL HAIL FINLAND! AKA FINNISH HARDCORE SCUM FILE

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After last month's article about Anti-Cimex and Swedish hardcore, it seems proper to cross the Gulf of Bothnia to Finland. Americans tend to think of Finland and Sweden as very similar, but, in fact, the two countries do have some marked differences. The greatest differences you ignorant Americans need to know are between their histories (Finland's neighbor is the turbulent Russia who annexed it in 1808, while Sweden is the only country never to have been conquered by outside invaders) and their languages (Finnish has a bit in common with Russian, but is a lonely withering leaf on the language tree).

However, punk hit Finland as hard as it hit Sweden in the early days. Most early Finnish punk is very upbeat and melodic (as one can hear on Bloodstains Across Finland), which did not portend what was to come. Though there were a couple rough bands, or at least bands that put an edge on their melodies, like Eppu Normaali, it was not until the '80s that bands began to exploit the inherent tendency of the Finnish language to sound ugly, apoplectic and raw. Like in other countries around the Western hemisphere, after the initial punk explosion began to simmer, Finnish commentators claimed punk was becoming mere steam. Luckily, one band proved everyone wrong: Lama.

Well-known to collectors, Lama put out 4 7"s and an LP. Their live shows were aggressive and energetic. The 7"s start on the melodic side, but with an edge, and progress to a more hardcore sound. The LP, though, is hardcore, with melody still present. Its songs are memorable and the vocals, complete with classic mob choruses, hint at the coming trend of train-wreck Finnish vocals—hysterical tongue-twisting screams. The LP came out in '82; clearly, Lama bridged the gap between the first and second waves of Finnish punk. Their LP is probably the best Finnish hardcore LP, showing mature song-writing without lacking any energy. It has excellent production and is instantly memorable. Lama were the most popular hardcore band in Finland and they set a high standard. As I've said before, every punk rocker should be familiar with Lama.

Two years before Lama's LP, though, a band from the small Northern town



of Tornio called Terveet Kädet released their first 7", and firmly established themselves as Finland's first hardcore, nay THRASH, band. The histories of Terveet Kädet and Lama are intertwined since they played shows together in their early days and, it could be argued, Lama broke the ground for Terveet Kädet

who were already covering Lama in '81! Additionally, Rattus, who started in '78, bridged the gap between simple punk rock and total thrash (more on them later). However, Terveet Kädet started fresh and started early as a total hardcore band.

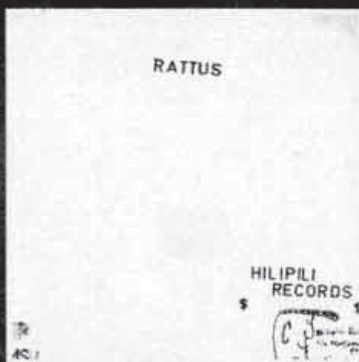
The first 7" Terveet Kädet put out, "Rock Laa Haustan Vastaa" is like Bad Brains' "Pay To Cum" 7" in its boggling rawness and accidental greatness. Sure, hardcore had been steadily forming in the US, and by 1980, there were a bunch of bands firmly rooted as hardcore bands, but there was almost no American influence in the early Finnish scene, especially that early. Even more so than in Sweden, Finland took its cues from the UK and the UK only. Thus, it is nothing short of miraculous that Terveet Kädet, in 1980, the same year as "Realities of War," matched Discharge in raw, chaotic energy. By today's standards, Terveet Kädet's first release was slow and hopelessly lo-fi, but in 1980 I doubt you were playing blast beats into a sixteen-track. The record has immediacy and intensity that make it memorable. Three songs, all under one minute with Lajä's shrieks leading the marauding noise, make the listener crave more. Unfortunately, there were just 200 copies on the band's own Ikbals Records and the 7" itself was one-sided. The sleeve is a crappy photocopy of a live photo, and like the Skitslickers, it comes on two flimsy sheets of paper. The 7"s rarity has been accentuated its legendary status, but I guarantee, it is not undeserved. If you are lucky enough to find one of these bad boys for sale, be pre-



pared to spend a lot of money for it. Some Finnish hardcore stuff had okay distribution in the US, and, thanks to this magazine, very good coverage in the punk media. However, I still don't think that if you want the early Terveet Kädet records, you can wait 'til they turn up in the dollar bin in Peoria. Unless you're my pal Nick (I hate you). Anyway, the second Terveet Kädet 7" is even better than the first. Called both "Terveet Kädet II" and "Mull on Liian Lyhyt Sänky," this one is another one-sided early thrash masterpiece. Like the first, it came out on Ikbals and there were only 200 copies. This one continues on the trajectory of the first, with ludicrous screams, buzz-saw guitars, and amazingly driving drums. Seriously, it sounds like Lajä broke out of a straight-jacket and ran fifty miles from the loony bin straight to the studio to record the vocals. The drumming is really exciting because there's a crashing urgency which gives the songs, especially the first one, a jackhammer feel. The bass is painful, too. It's a shame that the damn thing goes by so quickly. But, it's still worth a week's paycheck or whatever you have to pay to get it. The sleeve features a chaotic punk collage only matched by the chaotic punk rock on the record! This record came out in '81. Think about how amazing that is in these terms: in '81 Pil were more popular than Minor Threat, and, even still, Minor Threat were tidier than Terveet Kädet!

In 1983, Vote Vasko reissued the first two Terveet Kädet 7"s as the "Kädet Suojelee" 7" on his P. Tuotanto label (500 copies). The reissue was reissued in '90 with a different sleeve. The original re-release, of course, is a much easier-to-find and more economical way to get the music from these two essential records. It's still a tough record to find, but not as elusive as the originals.

To compare, Rattus put out their hyper-rare "Khomeini Rock" 7" in '80 (200 copies) and their great, and also hyper-rare "Fucking Disco" 7" in '81 (300 copies). Neither of these self-released records is hardcore. Even their third record, the legendary "Rattus on Rautta" 12" is more upbeat sing-along stuff. In a Sept '83 interview, Rattus themselves declared their three early records to be shitty, the third the shittiest. Rattus are well-deserving of their reputation as a monumental thrash unit, but I do not think we can call Rattus Finnish hardcore in the truest sense of the term despite their style and location. Basically, no one else at the time sounded like Rattus; they were doing something different. They had roots in Discharge



and were more intense than getting beaten to death with a wrecking ball while inside a sinking submarine during a nuclear war, but they did not sound like the majority of the Finnish bands—and believe me, there were A LOT of bands playing the Finnish hardcore style. My distinguishing metaphor is this: the Propaganda bands, following Lama's influence, sounded like a train-wreck while Rattus sounded like a cyclone. The self-titled Rattus LP on New York's infamous Ratcage Records is jaw-dropping. It's a collection of tracks from their earlier records re-recorded. I wonder how the drummer managed to beat so many damn things at once. This record is so over-the-top! I imagine some New York Hardcore thug in 1984 walking into the Ratcage store, asking what was new, and then hearing this LP. The image of some tattooed tough guy in tight pants getting pulverized by Finland's Rattus is one to savor.

Anyway, Finnish hardcore firmly established itself in '82. Though Lama had been around since '77, their first 7" was not released until '80, the same year as Terveet Kädet's first. In '81, the split 7" shared by Kaaos and Cadgers came out. This one has been repressed several times, but the original version was on Vote Vasko's P. Tuotanto label and all versions are shit rare. This 7" is a raw and classic document of the nascent Finnish hardcore sound. There were 200 numbered copies of first press, 150 un-numbered 2nd press, 100 4th press from '89 and probably about 200 of the third, but I'm unsure. Cadgers went on to become Riistetyt, but the style was already developing on this 7". Both bands deliver highly simplistic but honest and aggressive UK-influenced thrash on this split. Rough and dirty shit that reminds me of the time I caught your parents fucking. From early Finnish scene reports in this magazine, it appears that the early Finnish scene was quite divided from one city to the next. Except for Lama, who played shows all over Finland, and in the UK with Black Flag, bands didn't play often outside their own cities. Keeping this in mind, it is somewhat amazing that one label—Propaganda Records from Helsinki—was able to release so many awesome records by bands from other towns in Finland. In '82, the label released three of the staples of Finnish hardcore: the amazing "Russia Bombs Finland" compilation LP, Bastards "Maailma Palaa Ja Kuolee" 7" and Kaaos "Totaalinen Kaaos" 7".

Of course, I could say the Finnish sound was defined by the regional compilation "Russia Bombs Finland," but that would be a tautology. This compilation, which was recently bootlegged on red vinyl, like the original (there are some black vinyl originals, too), is absolutely bone-

crushing. It is like Really Fast Vol. 1 in that it shows a scene on the brink of finding its trademark sound. Bands like Kaaos, Appendix and Riistetyt contribute amazing thrashers, while Terveet Kädet have two of the fastest and rawest tracks put to vinyl until then (and for a few years after), and bands like Maho Neitsyt and 013 contribute more melodic, drunk punk tracks.

Kaaos's "Totaalinen Kaaos" 7" contains some original and frenetic drumming, and wailing vocals. It certainly defined that band's sound, but I refrain from labeling it the quintessential Finnish 7" because its guitars are too low in the mix and a lot of Finnish bands were very much guitar-driven. Nonetheless, this 7" is a keeper; like most of the Propaganda releases, it was pressed on colored vinyl (I've seen both blue and black). On the split with Cadgers, Kaaos had a different singer, but throughout their many lineup changes, from this 7" forward, Jakke, who's still punkin' and drunkin' around the scene, was a constant. Jakke's vocal style actually is the best of example of Finnish hardcore vocals: it seems the screamers always emphasize and elongate the last syllable or word of each line. This style alone makes the Finnish sound immediately recognizable.

Also in '82 the Bastards 7" came out. This one is total Disorder-style chaos. If you can imagine a Disorder LP on 45, that's what this messy and chaotic ripper sounds like. The 7" was released with four different presses of 500, each on a different color vinyl, for a total of 2000 (that's some math for ya). Until Selfish, this 7" was the best-selling Finnish hardcore 7"! Therefore, in comparison to some of the other ones we're discussing, it's easy to find. And, believe me, you need it! Bastards released a long, tape-only LP that rips and, later, another LP called "Siberian Hardcore" which is a bit more mellow. Also, in '82 Vote released two important records: Riistetyt's "Laki Ja Järjestyks" 7" and the cool compilation 7" "Systeemi Ei Toimi" ("System Doesn't Work") with Laahaus, Vapaa Pasy and Kaaos. There were definitely under 500 originally pressed, but this one turns up once in a while. The Kaaos stuff is the best on the record, but Laahaus are great too. There were four Finnish hardcore compilation 7"s which you should note: "Systeemi Ei Toimi" which I mentioned; "Lasta" which I will mention later; "Pultti," from '82, probably the rarest, put out by the singer of Maho Neitsyt; and the ultra-unknown "Hyvinkää" which I've never even seen, but which came out in '84 with bands like Purkaus and



Sotakulttuuri. Who? Beats me.

Riistetyt's history could be a column unto itself (luckily, Felix did the honors a few months ago), but I just want to say that first 7" is amazing thrash. Absolute D-Beat Discharge worship. Totally raw. The early Finnish thrash scene took all its cues from the UK, so Disorder, Discharge and The Varukers were the big influences. In MRR #3, Nov.-Dec. '82, Vote wrote: "The main influences come from England. Most of the punks don't pay much attention to other countries, except some U.S. bands like the Dead Kennedys and Black Flag. They follow every fashion which originates in the U.K. They see pictures of British punks and then dress like them and get haircuts like them . . . When Jello's sampler came out here, many punks realized that there's something happening in the U.S. and that it's much better than British punk. The problem is that American records are very difficult to get in Finland . . . Of course, some punks aren't interested in U.S. stuff anymore. I think that's stupid because the U.S. bands are hundreds of times better than 95% of the British punk groups, but I still like British band like Discharge (the best punk band in the world), Disorder, Chaos UK . . ." Riistetyt means "Exploited," but the Finnish Barmy Army was way cooler than the UK's in my book. Riistetyt's first LP, which was originally released on Propaganda as "Valtion Vankina" with some copies on blue vinyl, begins with an awesome Varukers cover, and continues with track after track of blistering Varukers-style destruction. As they grew older the style changed, and they eventually changed their name again to Pyhät Nuket or Holy Dolls when they toured the US, much to the chagrin of US thrash-aholics. Before the line-up and name change, though, they recorded the ultra-rare "Skitsofrenia" 12" on Propaganda, and this is one of the best Finnish thrash releases—totally crazy and well-produced fast, noisy thrash! You know how the Crucifix LP or Discharge's "Why" turned up real loud is like having the guitar plugged directly into your cortex . . . yeah, same thing on Riistetyt's "Skitsofrenia"!

In '82, Poko Records, one of the biggest labels in Finland (I'm not exactly sure about its level of independence) released Terveet Kädet's "Aareton Joulu" 7". If I were allowed to take one Finnish 7" to the grave, it'd be Terveet Kädet's 2nd, but the 3rd is the favorite of many. The cover of the 7" is a classic pic of a naked dude strung upside-down with a lit candle up his butt! Terveet Kädet, apparently, were into the more prurient pleasures of the flesh. 8 songs on this 7" which continue in the raw, fast and urgent tradition of their previous releases. There were only 500 of this one. I highly rec-

commend the Grand Theft Audio CD reissue of Terveet Kädet stuff. It includes a Lama cover and a couple Stooges cover, so you know where they were coming from, as well as some ultra-crazy demo and unreleased tracks. Terveet Kädet's LP is really good, but its fuller production actually detracts from it, I think.

Also in '82 (or the end of '81), Rattus decided it was time to play hardcore. By the way, as a youth, I assumed Rattus meant something like "Genocide Destruction" or some other appropriately thrashistic thing, but in reality, it's just the Latin for "rat"; the band was originally inspired by the Stranglers' LP "Rattus Norvegicus." In Dec '81 Rattus recorded their "Räijötettu Ydinsota" 7" on Poko Records. The title means "Limited Nuclear War", an oxymoron that was a popular topic for '80s hardcore bands. Basically, from what I can tell, someone played Discharge for them one day and they were like "Holy Shit! Let's play like that!" This 7" includes four tracks which were just smashing. Literally! I imagine them fucking blowing up buildings when they recorded this shit. It's awesome. Until the Ratcage LP, this might be my favorite stuff by Rattus! Their riffy, repetitive thrash style, however, is different from the rest of the Finnish hardcore stuff, as I've said. This 7" was later re-pressed in Brazil, as were other Rattus records. The Finnish originals were generally limited to about 500, but there are many more copies of the Brazilian presses (especially the 12"s). I should note that the Brazilian hardcore scene—which was huge in the '80s—was mainly influenced by Finnish hardcore! More on Brazil someday . . .

By '83, Finland's hardcore scene had really exploded. Tons of lesser-known bands formed across the country. In general, bands were singing about war, unemployment, drugs—the typical political topics of that era. Like in Sweden, some Finnish bands seem to have taken Discharge lyrics and recast them in their native language. Both Rattus and Terveet Kädet held a do-what-you-want philosophy which was different from the liberal streak found in many U.S. bands of the time. Finland's scene was marked by Finland's endemic propensity for voluminous consumption of alcohol—they were drunk motherfuckers! You can hear it in the choruses, when it sounds like a bunch of drunk Finns, dressed in studs and leather, were unleashed upon unsuspecting microphones in a kaotic frenzy. Some of the awesome bands that formed after the first hardcore bands were Rutto, Kansan Uutiset,



Varaus, Massacre, Mellakka, Tampere SS. I'll talk about some of these bands in another article in the future.

Propaganda continued to release classics by Finnish hardcore bands, including the way under-rated Appendix. Capturing the melodic, but edgy spirit of Lama, Appendix released a 7" called "Huora" with three different covers—two band photos (the one known as the "Parock" sleeve is the rarest) and one photo of a squat-looking building. They also released an amazing LP called "Ei Raha Oo Mun Valuuttaa" (re-released on R-O-R as "Money Is Not My Currency") that should be in the collection of every self-respecting punk rocker. I wrote about Appendix in GOTA #3. They put out a third LP called "Top of the Pops." Guess which direction they went in on that one. I should note that Appendix are back together, and from what I hear, are kickin' ass! (Terveet Kädet never really broke up, just started sounding like a Finnish, post-HC Danzig, and Riisteyt are back, too.)

Two more classic compilations: "Hardcore '83" and "Finnish Spunk-Hard Beat" came out, as did LP's by Rattus, Riistetyt, Terveet Kädet, Kaaos, etc., on Propaganda, and around '84, the label began to license some of their releases for export by Germany's Rock-O-Rama. Most folks know ROR as the label that released an assload of Nazi shit, but a little while before they were taken over by some fascists in the mid-'80s, the label released some righteous German thrash and a bunch of Finnish reissues.

Also in '84, an essential lo-fi thrash compilation 7" called "Lasta" was released with 12 insane tracks by bands like Terveet Kädet, Riistetyt, Bastards and Kansan Uutiset among others. It's amazing how many great records came out after the initial thrash explosion.

Two more heavy-hitters that I need to mention are Kaaos's LP "Ristiinnaulittu Kaaos" and the compilation LP "Yalta Hi-Life." Both these awesome LP's were released on the Barrabas label which also produced a fanzine. The Kaaos LP is up there with Lama as the best and quintessential Finnish LP. It has awesome heavy production and echoey vocals which might be irritating to some, but I think they're fine. My copy of the LP has a heavy, fold-out poster sleeve, a lighter-weight version of the sleeve and a poster insert dedicated to the Cold War. Apparently some Finnish pop-music mag declared that LP one of the year's best back then! Kaaos really lived up to their name and yet never released a bad record. Be sure to check out the U.S. press of their posthumous "Nukke" 7" just released on Havoc Records. "Yalta Hi-Life" is a sick compilation with Terveet Kädet, Kaaos, Varaus, Äpäät,

Aivoproteesi, and Kansanturvamus-
ikkomissio (say that ten time fast).
Great production and a huge, fold-out
sleeve make this another awesome
Finnish release. The Kaaos tracks are
some of my favorite tracks they did. I
know it was reissued a few years back,
along with the Kaaos LP, and I don't
know how to tell the difference
between the reissues and the originals
so caveat emptor.

A lot of Finnish hardcore stuff has
been reissued or bootlegged. There are
legit reissues of nearly everything on
Propaganda done by the Finnish label
Kraklund, which you can probably get
from P. Tuotanto (or from GOTA dis-
tro if you're lucky). I guarantee that,
with the exception of some later Rattus
and most of the later Terveet Kädet
stuff, you can't go wrong with the
Finnish bands I've mentioned. All of
them produced punishing, urgent
thrash that has made a place for
Finland in the hearts of many punk
rockers around the globe.

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For more info, to correct me, to order
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