

The Lowdown with Matt Munoz

Doe is rising as X caps great year

Legendary LA punks return to Palace

Who would have thought weaving through a trash-strewn security frisk line would feel so warmly nostalgic?

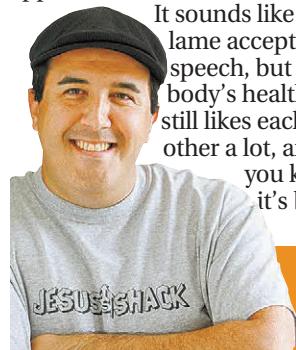
It was for me during last Friday's GV30, a three-day celebration to commemorate 30 years of Goldenvoice promotions at Santa Monica's Civic Auditorium. On the bill, a trio of acts from the company's early punk rock years: Social Distortion, The Adolescents, and wedged between the two, my favorite: X.

The sold-out show in front of 3,000 adoring, sweaty fans of all ages was just one of the many milestones experienced this year by the original lineup: John Doe, bass; Exene Cervenka, vocals; Billy Zoom, guitar; and D.J. Bonebrake, drums. After opening with "Your Phone's Off the Hook, But You're Not," off their 1980 debut album, 'Los Angeles,' they proceeded to rip through an hour's worth of hits and deep tracks while beer and dirty shoes flew.

Bakersfield can look forward to that kind of unbridled merriment when the legendary punk act returns to Buck Owens' Crystal Palace on Wednesday, sans the mosh pit chaos, which will be prohibited.

"I think I'm a little exhausted. I haven't been home in two months," said Doe during a phone interview a few days before the band's Santa Monica appearance. "We are so fortunate.

It sounds like a lame acceptance speech, but everybody's healthy and still likes each other a lot, and, you know, it's been a



X
When: 7 p.m. Dec. 28
Where: Buck Owens' Crystal Palace, 2800 Buck Owens Blvd.
Cost: \$18 to \$24
Information: 328-7560 or vallitix.com

real prosperous year. And so, I think we count ourselves as very lucky."

Doe, 57, was living in Oildale at this time last year, but he said he's left the area for good. When asked if life in the '08 was too much even for someone of his rowdy past, he offered up a polite response.

"No, I moved up to Northern California. I didn't get tired of it. My daughters live up there and I moved in with my girlfriend. I did write a song for Bakersfield on my solo record though. It's called, 'Cottage in the 'Dale.'"

"They still play Buck and Merle Haggard, when it's Senior Sunday at the honky-tonk, teenage men at the Front Porch, and punk rock at Jerry's Pizza," he sings on this affectionate stroll through town off his album "Keeper," released in August.

"I won't be playing it with X, but maybe in the street before the gig," he laughed.

Dubbing this tour "X-Mas 2011 Rock N Roll Revival," Doe and his bandmates also just returned from opening for Pearl Jam during the group's South American tour. It was his band's first trip to Brazil, where they played in front of mammoth-sized crowds nightly — a far cry from the dives of their youth.

"It was incredible, a completely different world. It was not nearly as dangerous as everybody said, and there was a kind of freedom there that I'd never experienced



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOLLY CARLYLE

John Doe performs with X during the band's Dec. 27 show last year at Buck Owens' Crystal Palace.

before. They love rock and roll. There would be 50,000 people in a football stadium and I didn't see a bunch of drunks and fights and people shoving like they would be in the States. I encourage everyone to go there."

This string of dates also coincides with the rerelease on DVD and Blue-Ray of the 1986 rockumentary "The Unheard Music." Filmed over five years, the movie is interspersed with interviews and performances during the band's peak years. It's also a bittersweet reminder of guitarist Billy Zoom's lengthy absence from the band the same year it was released.

"I've got to give Billy a lot of credit. He's got his special guitars,

and sometimes he doesn't like traveling too much, and he said, 'Let's do it.' So that kind of shows that, you know, we may be set in our ways, but somehow we're still willing to take chances."

That renewed attitude has had a creative impact on the group. While they've always performed in various incarnations, including as their rockabilly alter-egos, The Knitters, Doe revealed some good news for fans.

"I think the time is right for Exene and I to start buckling down and doing some writing for X. So, that's our plan anyway for February and March."

Doe said for fans headed to the Palace to expect all the favorites, plus deeper cuts.

"Exene and I will do an acoustic song or two, and we'll be playing more of a variety. We've been working on some more old songs and putting them back in

the set list."

Asked to comment on the upcoming induction of fellow alternative music icons the Red Hot Chili Peppers into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Doe says an induction for his band wouldn't be a bad gesture. After all, X did influence a great deal of the groups who've already made it in.

"I think it would be fitting and great. The fact that the Red Hot Chili Peppers are being inducted and we're not, that's sort of strange. They opened for us."

Opening Wednesday's show will be the duo of veteran Orange County punk vocalist Sean Wheeler and Circle Jerks' bassist Zander Schloss, plus Los Angeles trio The Black Tibetans.

"I think X is still a little bit underground for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. That's who we are, for better or for worse — that's who we are."

Matt Munoz is editor of **Bakotopia.com**, a sister website of *The Californian* that devotes itself to promoting Bakersfield's art scene. Matt's column appears every Thursday in Eye Street.

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