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*The Banana Punk Rawk Trials* is best located within the 'third space' literature that sits between academic and popular writing on subcultures. Ferrarese is described in the blurb as a 'metapunkthropologist', and the writing here shifts across a number of registers, from gonzo journalism, through travel writing (Ferrarese has contributed to Lonely Planet guidebooks), narrative ethnomusicology, auto-ethnography and even short bursts of sober sociocultural critique here and there. For the most part however, the prose is weighted towards the less formal end of this continuum. Ferrarese makes clear from the outset that the book is as much about himself as it is about the musical milieu he passes through, or the musical genres and phenomena he sets out to understand and define. Accordingly, Ferrarese's personality is writ large, and his irrepressible *joie the vivre* is for the most part endearing; his frequent flights of self-aggrandisement are usually (if not always) offset with a punchline at his own expense, and he sends up his own pomposities and Eurocentric assumptions throughout. Indeed, Ferrarese's own gradual education and enculturation serves as a narrative device through which the reader can vicariously discover and explore the complexities of Malaysian societal mores, and their impact on the subcultures he investigates.

One of Ferrarese's stated aims is to address a perceived neglect of Malaysia's extreme music scenes within global metal and punk studies. He gives a brief but persuasive historical account of Malaysia's musical heritage, highlighting longstanding and buoyant hard rock and metal scenes across the country, despite the conservative government and sociocultural climate. We learn that Ferrarese arrived in South East Asia from Italy in 2009, having not played guitar for several years. Formerly of the band The Nerds, he had become frustrated with the tired metal and punk scenes of Europe and North America and moved to South East Asia to travel and teach Italian. Despite his initial determination not to engage in music again, he ultimately fails to suppress his latent inner rocker, and before long he has joined a band in Penang, Malaysia, with whom he reconciles his passions for extreme music and insalubrious travel into the subcultural backwaters of South East Asia. This happy symbiosis is conveyed using the unwieldy metaphor of a pair of dirty underpants; to paraphrase, where the callow Western gap year student will put their dirty briefs in the laundry bin out of sight, the true adventurer will thrust their nostrils into the gusset and inhale deeply, because 'it's a real high, [...] a glimpse of the world through the rear view mirror, an angle that most eyes leave unduly unnoticed. [...] Think of it: you can't see the whole picture if you fail to enjoy the fine details [...] that hide in the cracks'.

Metaphors such as this are routinely flogged to death throughout the book. At times it's impossible not to share in Ferrarese's enthusiasm as he does so, but elsewhere his comparisons and turns of phrase are as uncomfortable as they are arguably unnecessary. Readers familiar with (non-academic) punk writing will no doubt take this sort of thing in their stride, but given the broad readership of this journal it feels appropriate to issue a warning in this regard: Ferrarese is an abrasive storyteller and his writing is frequently and wantonly offensive.

The main narrative begins with Ferrarese's first gig with WEOT SKAM, a week after joining the band, and follows the band as they drive and fly to various places throughout Malaysia to play shows in unlikely locations, with varying success. Malaysia, we learn, has advantages and disadvantages when it comes to accessing and performing extreme music. Ferrarese is pleased to discover that most towns across the country have well-appointed practice studios that can be rented by the hour, replete with good quality amps and drum kits. These are usually housed in the top floors of shopping centres and serve as hubs of subcultural activity, and the scenes are for the most part dedicated and inclusive, and thrive on enthusiasm and goodwill. On the other hand, there are very few venues of the kind typical in Western countries, and hiring large performance spaces is prohibitively expensive; renting a hall for a day costs the equivalent of a month's rent. This impacts upon programming, as

promoters seek to cram as many bands into a bill as possible to ensure a return. Accordingly, gigs in Malaysia are day-long affairs that test the endurance and stamina of even the most exuberant thrill-seekers. The price of equipment and artefacts such as CDs and magazines also imposes constraints on the scene, and this effectively ring-fences subcultural activity for those who can afford it. There is no question of getting paid to play in Malaysia; most bands fund themselves and consider the occasional food voucher to be a success. This state of affairs is particularly unacceptable to Ferrarese, and he resolves to improve the fortunes of his band by challenging promoters and insisting upon expenses.

The Malaysian subcultural scene is one of striking juxtapositions. Gigs are programmed around prayer times, when the entire audience and most of the performers (some are native Chinese and non-Muslim) leave to perform their ablutions and pray at the mosque, before filing back into the venue and moshing violently. To Ferrarese's surprise, the vast majority of ethnic Malay extreme music fans are devout Muslims, who rarely drink, pray five times a day and fast during Ramadan. The cognitive dissonance that this provokes recurs throughout the book, and underpins some often hilarious stories. One such example centres around a black metal gig that Ferrarese attends with a sardonic French friend called Thibaud. When a scheduled performance is cancelled by the authorities in a flurry of moral panic, the band arrange a secret show at an undisclosed location. Ferrarese is driven to an innocuous-looking recording studio, the walls of which are adorned with pictures of the pious studio managers, all of whom are present, on the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Soon the studio is crammed full of metalheads wearing corpse face paint, obscene t-shirts and inverted crucifixes, and the band take to the stage, their lead singer Shaiythan (trans. 'Satan') screaming anti-religious slogans over bludgeoning drums and down-tuned guitars. 'Zis is fuucked', deadpans Thibaud.

The book includes extensive photographs of gigs, venues, practice spaces and scene participants. These lends verisimilitude to the storytelling, particularly regarding the individual characters who feature in the narrative; Ferrarese's portrayals of people (physical appearance, demeanour, dress sense, turn of phrase) are evocative and well-handled throughout. As with the writing however, I would have advised a judicious culling of the many photographs of (for example) the author's guitar pedals, or audience members signing the devil's horns with their hands. These are surplus to requirements and compound the sense that the book is twice as long as it needs to be. What is missing though, in my view, is a map of the geographical area covered in the book. This would have helped to anchor the passages about travelling between cities, which readers unfamiliar with Malaysia and the surrounding territories may find disorientating. Ferrarese's discussions of Malaysia's demographics, on the other hand, are well-handled and helpful in establishing the wider sociocultural context. His insider-outsider perspective, together with the blend of writing styles discussed earlier, affords him the ability to approach tensions and ambiguities surrounding Malaysia's ethnic make-up through both via discursive analysis and more obliquely through off-the-cuff observations and asides. Because the book at large seeks to set itself apart from academic writing, effectively precluding any substantial reference to complex theory or prior research, the latter instances are arguably more valuable from an ethnomusicological point of view for offering visceral depictions of primary experience. Indeed, the scope of Ferrarese's experiences, garnered over five immersive years of travelling across the length and breadth of Malaysia and beyond, constitute the book's most substantial contribution to music scholarship.