

EXCERPTS FROM CROSSED PATHS

The Rock and Roll Mayor

CROSSED PATHS

**DESPERATION SQUAD
AND THE AGE OF FORTUITISM**

KEVIN AUSMUS

Crossed Paths: Desperation Squad and the Age of Fortuitism by Kevin Ausmus

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Front Cover

- *top photo of Mr. P at the Wckr Spgt tribute show 2010 by Andy Whitson*
- *untitled painting by Bob Jones, 74 by 33 in., acrylic on found panel, 2014*
- *SX70 photo from Arts Building, 1984, photo by Art DiLion*
- *Panda Man photo by Dylan Skrab, manipulation by Kevin Ausmus*

Back Cover

- *SX70 photo of Mr. P at the PVA by Dave Alvin, 1986*

Photo of Courtney Love © Bob Gruen / www.bobgruen.com

Layout and design by Mark Givens

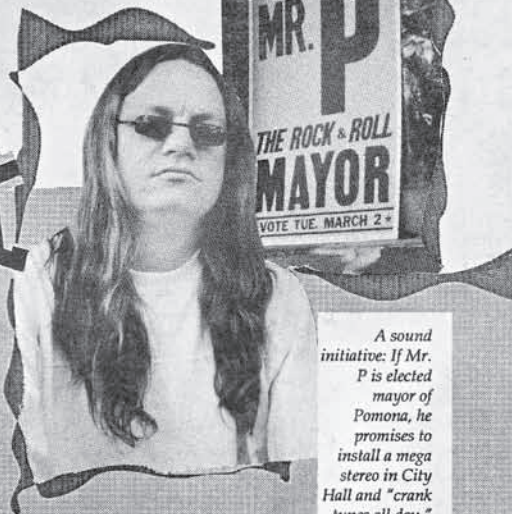
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Ballot with a Beat

Guess where they're really rocking the vote? Would you believe Pomona? The mayoral race for the city, located about 30 miles east of Los Angeles, could give new meaning to that cheesy Starship song, "We Built This City on Rock 'n' Roll." It's all riding on the candidacy of Mr. P, lead singer of Desperation Squad.

You won't hear Mr. P mouthing trite slogans like, "P for Pomona, P for Prosperity." There are seven other candidates eager to plow that tired old turf. Instead, Mr. P exhorts his fellow citizens to "get some rock 'n' roll into this town, ya know?"

"When I am elected Mayor of Pomona," he adds, "we'll put a state-of-



A sound initiative: If Mr. P is elected mayor of Pomona, he promises to install a mega stereo in City Hall and "crank tunes all day."

the-art sound system in the mayor's office and just crank tunes all day." P promises that any band, from anywhere in the country, can come to the mayor's office and drop off a tape. What about spoken word and mutant industrial stick-breaking (not to mention grungecore and Wilson Phillips)? "Well, I use the term 'bands' loosely; you can interpret it any way you want. I want people all over the country to know they can drop off a tape in Pomona."

"Seems to me it's the least I can do for the city."

If you're not eligible to vote in Pomona, you can still show your support by purchasing Desperation Squad's new cassette single, "I Am the Mayor (The Rock & Roll Mayor)/Soy El Alcalde (El Alcalde de Rock & Roll)."

— Gary Holt

ON THE RECORD

"I want the kids to vote for the rock and roll mayor. I want their parents to vote against me."

—Rock musician **Kevin C. Ausmus**, who, billing himself professionally as Mr. P, is one of eight candidates for Pomona mayor. **J1**

the ballot. As it turned out, no application fee and a petition signed by twenty registered city voters made you a candidate.

Thus started the Rock and Roll Mayor Campaign, a publicity lark by a fringe candidate that would change the political and civic landscape of the city and pave the way for thousands of bands to be welcomed to the city's neglected downtown.

From Arts Building to the P.V.A. to "Soul Cleanser" to Becky's loft to the dA Gallery to Munchies, D-Squad's history had been played out on or around the vicinity of 2nd Street in downtown for close to 13 years. If anyone could speak for the underground musicians and artists, certainly it was Mr. P.

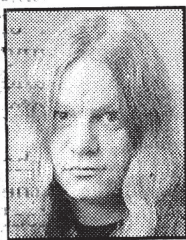
Downtown had been a ghost town for as long as anyone could remember. Once one of the country's first open air malls, with department stores and restaurants, by 1992 it was mostly low-end antique shops and band rehearsal spaces with a few code-violating artist lofts thrown in.

City politics and civic morale were at an all-time low, the city council mired in increasingly polarizing and personal disputes, with combative players like three-time incumbent mayor Donna Smith, recently recalled Clay Bryant and bickering council members Nell Soto and Tomas Ursua presiding over a city with a record number of homicides and an embarrassing, failed multi-million dollar world trade center - nothing more

than a weed-strewn vacant lot at the corner of Mission and Garey, just two blocks from the D-Squad rehearsal studio.

Candidates for mayor

Kevin Ausmus



Born: Oct. 14, 1959
Residence: off and on for 15 years
Occupation: rock 'n' roll singer
Company/employer: The

Desperation Squad band
Background: active in the local music and arts community for years; attended school in Pomona; involved in radio station and drama at Mt. SAC and community theater; founding member of the band Nixon's Revenge; was singing with the band Bad Attitude on stage when punks trashed the former Pomona skateland, "a legendary gig," in 1980.

Election results

All 26 precincts reporting

Results are unofficial

Pomona - Mayor	Votes	%
Kevin "Mr. P" Ausmus	96	1.4
*Eddie Cortez	1,690	25.0
Paul Geiger	1,599	23.7
James Reynolds	41	0.06
Ramon Romero	203	3.0
David Smith	253	3.7
*Tomas Ursua	2,600	38.5
James Wilkins	263	3.8

Pomona - City Council

District 2

Marco Robles	621	100.0
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District 3

Boyd Bredenkamp	319	42.7
Cristina Carrizosa	428	57.3
Albert Midgette	12	0.0

District 5

Donald Andrews	0	0.0
Elliott Rothman	395	34.8
Ken West	739	65.2

* Run off election between these two candidates will be held April 20, 1993

Kent Salas/Daily Bulletin

After filing papers, Mr. P prepared a press release which he hand delivered to the two newspaper beat writers covering the election - David Fondler of the Daily Bulletin and Mike Ward of the L.A. Times. Fondler had profiled the state of Pomona's downtown arts scene the previous summer - Becky Hamm was one of its subjects, as was Chris Toovey of the dA Gallery - and described the city's interest in it as little more than ambivalent. Both responded by profiling the rock singer prominently, the Times going as far as breaking out his "I want the kids to vote for the rock and roll mayor, I want their parents to vote against me." quote in its On The Record feature.



Kevin Ausmus

Business retention and development	Graffiti, gangs and youth
Favors building up the downtown artist and entertainment community with clubs and shops. "It seems every city around here has got something, La Verne has that big movie theater, Rancho is getting a baseball team."	Favors a community effort to encourage people to volunteer to clean up their own neighborhood. "The first step is not to make the mistake that every kid that's got a Kings hat on is a gang member."

D-Squad quickly assembled at Steve Santamaria's, guitarist for The Streetcleaners, studio to record "I Am The Mayor (The Rock and Roll Mayor)" for release in time for the February Candidate's Forum. Channeling the city's demographics, the cassette's flip side contained a poorly enunciated Spanish language version "Soy Es Alcalde (Alcalde De Rock and Roll)".

The Pomona Central Business District, comprised mostly of curmudgeonly antique store owners, held an informal get together for the candidates. Mr. P started his speech by reminding them his father Gene was once one of them, a downtown business owner. From there, Mr. P launched into a frenzied appeal to downtown artists and bands, which was summed up by the District this way:

"Mr. Ausmus feels that there is nothing to draw people to the city, that there needs to be more emphasis on entertainment establishments."

This was a sentiment likely posited by many others would-be entrepreneurs over the last dozen or so years. The difference was that Mr. P was a candidate for public office and was thereby presenting this fairly obvious need as a political issue. Mr. P was picking the locks that had barred any sort of comprehensive downtown arts and music plan for years.

It was the Candidates Forum where Mr. P, in the words of David Fondler of the Daily Bulletin, stole the show. The mayoral primary brought forth a host of first-time candidates, most of whom were political novices. A palpable air of tension braced the auditorium.

Pomona politics had been so acrimonious for the last several years, no one could remember when there had been a light moment, let alone huge belly laughs. Mr. P provided these and more, conducting a forum that was part stand-up, part improv, part

DO NOT VOTE IN PAMPHLET. USE BALLOT CARD ONLY.

1-M OFFICIAL BALLOT - CITY OF POMONA PRIMARY NOMINATING ELECTION - MARCH 2, 1993		
For MAYOR		Vote for ONE
DAVID W. SMITH Engineering Administrator/Designer	2	→ ○
RAMON P. ROMERO Deputy Sheriff Supervisor	3	→ ○
JAMES ROBERT REYNOLDS Horseman/Instructor	4	→ ○
TOMAS URSUA Vice-Mayor	5	→ ○
EDDIE CORTEZ Business Owner	6	→ ○
KEVIN "MR. P" AUSMUS Writer/Performer/Musician	7	→ ○
PAUL D. GEIGER Aerospace Engineering Manager	8	→ ○
JAMES WILKINS Planning Commissioner	9	→ ○



Aquí vemos a Cortez discutiendo algunas estrategias con Romero

civics lesson that the rest of the nervous candidates were grateful to hear - it made them feel much more at ease.

Mr. P's opening statement was the "Mad as Hell" monologue from the movie "Network". His campaign promise was to "bring a boom box to the mayor's office and crank tunes all day". He chided city officials for ignoring the downtown underground arts and music community, stating that if Pomona youth were encouraged to pursue the arts they might stay off the streets. Mr. P cracked jokes, invited bands from all over the country to come drop off a demo at City Hall, plugged the band cassette and showed no interest at all in any issue that couldn't rock out. "Issues! You gotta love em but they just get in my way".

Mr. P wasn't finished. He and Martin Kauper got together and filmed a number of 30-second ads that ran incessantly on local cable. Campaign signs were made. A Daily Bulletin candidates Q&A featured a wild-eyed long-haired photo of Mr. P (taken by Walt Weis), and his views of "Business Retention and Development" - "Favors building up the downtown artist and entertainment community with clubs and shops."

Again, these weren't necessarily original thoughts, but placed in the context of a city election, they were practically revolutionary. No one else who favored these developments had gone this route before, and this included several very interested Pomona downtown property owners and outside business interests.

ROCK AND ROLL MAYOR

When Election Day finally rolled around, a couple dozen supporters gathered at the D-Squad rehearsal loft and prepared to march on City Hall, parading down 2nd Street, making a few stops along the way to muster up more support. Inside city chambers Mr. P got some startling news - despite tons of publicity his vote total was less than a hundred. Fringe candidates that had nothing to offer the city were trouncing him. As he joked later, at least he beat the homeless guy. He garnered 1.4 percent of the vote. Good guy gas station owner Eddie Cortez would eventually be elected in a runoff with runner-up Tomas Ursua.

Outside, D-Squad geared up to play "I Am The Mayor" on the steps of City Hall. With the crowd chanting, the Panda mask came out and all at once, it was over.

Later that night, back at the studio, Dan Scratch told Mr. P he was quitting the band, once again leaving D-Squad without a bass player.

What started in May 1984 on a pick-up truck was seemingly running aground close to nine years later. D-Squad played one more gig - without a bass player - at the Motley at Scripps College and slowly, almost imperceptibly, faded away. It had been a long haul with a lot of good times and a few bitter disappointments. It was, in the end, the typical band story.

Within a year, a sign was erected on 2nd Street in Pomona. It said "Arts Colony". Art galleries and lofts began to sprout up all over the place. The downtown area began to show signs of life. In 1996, the Glass House opened and thousands of bands would be welcomed to the city's revitalized downtown.

The remaining votes were divided among the rest of the pack, including James Wilkins, David Smith, Ramon Romero, Kevin "Mr. P" Ausmus and James Reynolds.

As officials with the city clerk's office posted the totals through the night, a pattern quickly became apparent, with Ursua leading throughout and Cortez and Geiger in a neck-and-neck race for second.

While the votes were being counted, Ausmus' rock band Desperation Squad began loudly playing "The Rock and Roll Mayor" on the steps of the council chambers where the votes were being counted.

Ursua contacted at a nearby restau-

sound
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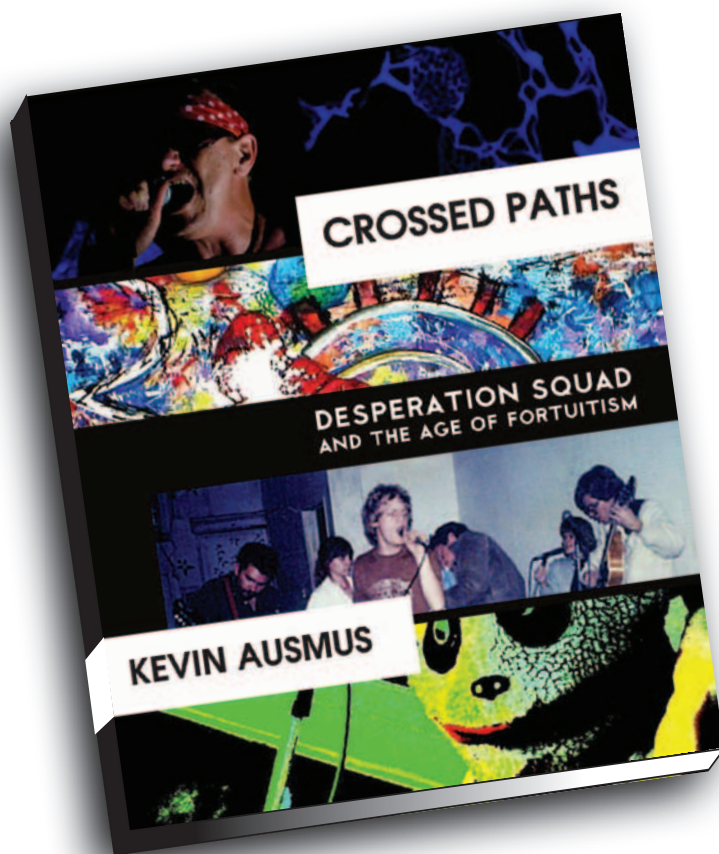
Art Show Opening

May 9, 2015

7pm

A landmark event documenting and exploring a slice of the underground art and music scene in the Pomona Valley, beginning in the early 1980s and moving into the 21st Century with a particular focus on The Desperation Squad.

Highlights include stories from The Warped Tour, America's Got Talent, and Mr. P's run for mayor of Pomona (the "Rock and Roll Mayor"). The show will feature photographs, flyers, music, handwritten lyric sheets, and plenty of legendary tales.



Space Gallery

250 West Second Street

Pomona, CA 91766

AND LOOK FOR
THE BOOK FROM

Pelekinesis
www.pelekinesis.com



What is Fortuitism?

The lines that are drawn upon the globe, the signals zipping around from one node to another, the paths that cross every day, the people we meet, and the sounds we hear - these are pieces of the world we live in, the world we embrace, and the decisions we make. How we interact with the pieces—which pieces we touch, which pieces touch us—determines how we see ourselves moving through life. Some decisions are out of our control. Some decisions are the lesser of two evils. How we use the results of these decisions are ours, and interact to shape who we are and how we live.

Fortuitism allows for a certain amount of serendipity and spontaneity to enter the art we create. The decisions we make are the signposts along the path.

Fortuitism is a different way to tell a story. Create art, save things, find a venue. You need not be famous or even enduring. Rock and roll is everyone's story. If you are fortuitous enough, you can tell your story in a way that makes it great art as well.