

# EXCERPTS FROM CROSSED PATHS

Rock Wars

## CROSSED PATHS

DESPERATION SQUAD  
AND THE AGE OF FORTUITISM

KEVIN AUSMUS

Pelekinesis

*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](http://www.bobgruen.com)

*Layout and design by Mark Givens*

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## ROCK WARS

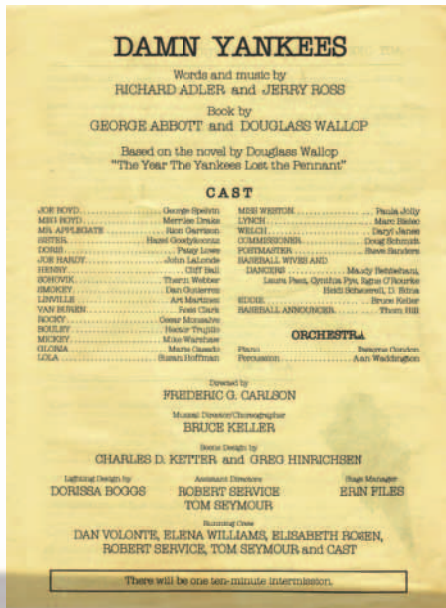
If Desperation Squad's first show was a triumph simply for the fact it was completed without incident,

their next show neatly encapsulated the delightful polarization the band would provide to audiences over the next 30 years, and made good a general observation Mr. P had made, "The worst thing for a band is for people to have no opinion of them." The "Rock Wars" show clearly delineated that there was no middle ground with the Squad, you either loved them or hated them. Two guitar players, one tall and lanky, wearing short shorts, the other swarthy and stout playing incomprehensible upside down feedback, a chick bass player



*Mr. P relaxes before the big show*





who looked 15 years old, an out of control recently discharged Marine prancing around menacingly, an unruffled drummer calmly keeping the chaos in check, and a front man who scream-sang lyrics about suburban swim clubs, cockteasing babes and third string baseball players while bopping spastically to the rhythm.

**“Rock Wars” was the brainchild of Max Copley,** the band’s old buddy from Mt. Sac, who was staging a local battle of the bands with a grand prize of \$700 and 10 hours of recording time at the Music Store in Walnut, where Copley worked. At first Mr. P (along

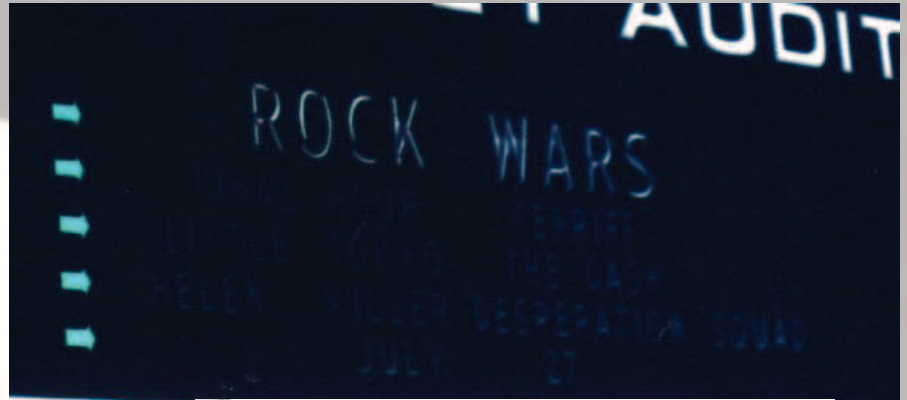
with brother John) was recruited as a judge, meting out harsh assessments of the very same “ordinary” metal/glam bands he loathed. Inquiring about a possible D-Squad gig, Copley informed Mr. P that participating bands paid \$450 upfront and hustled pre-sale tickets, an early



Bob and Alan backstage (w/Harold Clements from the Dull)

“pay-to-play” format Mr. P knew the band couldn’t pull off. Then, two days later, Mr. P received an impassioned phone call from Copley. One of the other bands had dropped out and they needed a replacement ASAP, pre-sale requirements overlooked.

Once offered the slot, Mr. P had to determine if the band could, in fact, play it. One huge obstacle was that Alan Waddington was already committed to performing in the musical *Damn Yankees* at Citrus College. Mr. P went to a “Rock Wars” band meeting, where the night’s lineup would be determined through a random draw. Mr. P immediately volunteered for the final slot, hoping that no one else wanted it. The ploy worked, resolving scheduling conflicts and getting Desperation Squad onto the bill. Not only was D-Squad competing for a chance at the grand prize, they weren’t paying any upfront money and the winner would be announced only after the crowd had to sit through their set!



#### EXHIBIT A

##### ROCK WARS INFO SHEET

The "ROCK WARS" is designed to showcase local talent and give local bands the chance to gain exposure as well as the chance of winning an album project. Below are the rules and procedures for this event.

Each band will be provided with 150 (One hundred fifty) tickets. (Each band will be limited to 150 pre-sale tickets.) The price printed on the tickets is \$6.00. It is recommended that the bands sell advance tickets at \$1.00 discount. When the band sells all 150 tickets at \$5.00 each, they will make a profit of \$300.00. If the band chooses to sell the tickets at full face value, their profit margin will be greater and they will reach breakeven on the \$450.00 investment earlier.

Sequence of performance of bands will be determined by a random drawing at a meeting held at P.V.A. on the Thursday evening, at 8 P.M., prior to the performance. Band members from each band should plan to attend this meeting. Other important information such as house rules, introduction of crew heads, dressing room facilities, etc., will be discussed.

Each band will be permitted to admit only six crew members. There will be no other guest passes or additional crew member passes available.

- continued -

KA  
(Initial here)

*"Rock Wars" was one of the first instances of "pay to play", where bands were coerced to put up large chunks of cash to secure a gig, then hustle to sell tickets to their friends, a practice that became commonplace throughout the 80s and beyond.*

# POMONA VALLEY

## ROCK WARS



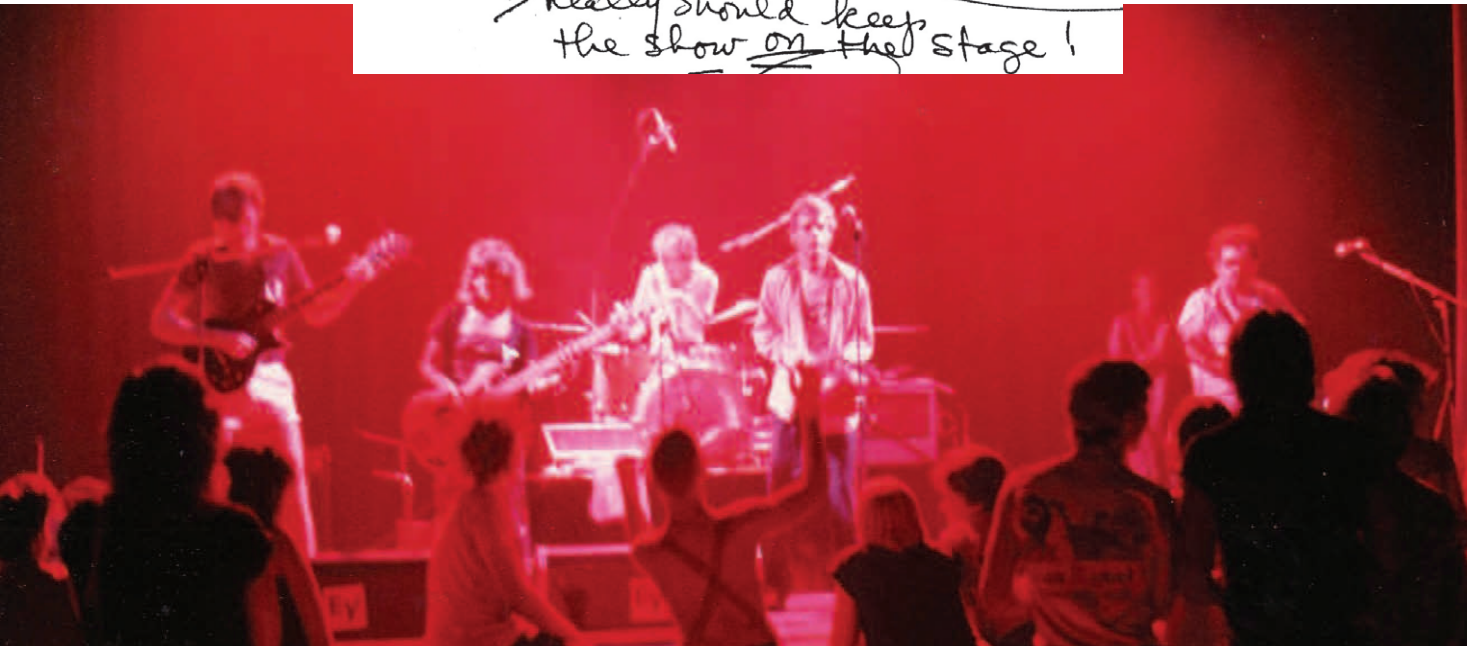
Laura and Jeff all tuned up and ready to go.



Score 19

STAGE PRESENCE: (25 point  
to relate to performance a  
movement and general showm

→ Really should keep  
the show on the stage!





# AUDITORIUM



*Bob Jones rocks it while chaos reigns.*



*Among the other bands at "Rock Wars" was The Dash, featuring 14 year old Jon Crawford on drums and Sean Sullivan on guitar. From South Diamond Bar, their paths would cross with D-Squad many times over the years.*

Shortly after the Sav-On parking lot show, Tim Allyn had been discharged from the Marines. Too late to be the D-Squad bass player, Mr. P thought he could be of use to the band in some capacity so he invited Allyn to join the band as "dancer/percussionist". The result: Tim Allyn whipped around the stage like a leopard-robed tornado, drawing flak and derisive taunts from the crowd. 20 minutes into the show, during "Humphrey's Triple", he went flying off the stage and into the audience and started a brawl. The band never missed a beat. Mr. P held up a poster of Reggie Jackson, screamed "Reggie!" and D-Squad managed to complete their set in the required 30 minute set duration requirement (points were deducted for going three minutes over; Waddington timed the show on his watch, the band clocking in at 32:45!).

# ROCK WARS

EXHIBIT B

ROCK WARS 1984 - JUDGES SHEET

Group Name Desperation Squad Judge's Name F. Atencio

Score 22 MUSICIANSHIP: (25 points possible) Individual and group technical expertise as musicians and vocalists. Consideration should be given here for musical arrangement as well as execution of material.  
*Very good! Good Dynamics.*

Score 23 TONALITY: (25 points possible) Individual and group intonation. Includes instrumental and vocal harmony lines as well as soloist's concept of key center. This also includes overall group quality.  
*Sound was very good!*

Score 20 ORIGINALITY: (20 points possible) As pertains to original songs, music and lyrics. Consideration should be given for structure and content of original songs.  
*Best group all night! Great songs.*

Score 25 STAGE PRESENCE: (25 points possible) Individual and group ability to relate to performance and audience. Includes appearance, movement, and general showmanship. Also includes audience reaction.  
*Very good especially the guy who looked like David Letterman!*

Score 5 EQUIPMENT: (5 points possible) Group's ability to utilize their equipment to achieve the best possible sound quality for music being played. This includes appropriate volume, balance, and distortion.

Score SET DURATION: Set duration should be 30 minutes, plus or minus 3 minutes. There will be a two point per-minute penalty for playing longer than 33 minutes or shorter than 27 minutes. If the band plays within the allotted time window, no points will be added or subtracted. After each band the Stage Manager will post the band's actual play time on the easel stage right.

TOTAL 95 JUDGE'S COMMENTS: Please give a brief overall critique of the performance. Use back of this page if necessary.  
*Very stimulating performance!*

© Giant Communications, Inc. 1984

Not only was the band *not* disqualified but, incredibly, they had easily won over the judges, several of whom fairly gushed their approval. One judge noted “Best group all night!” “Great songs, Reggie!” “Very stimulating performance!” and compared Mr. P to David Letterman, while giving the Squad 95 out of 100 points! They scored 81 on another ballot, and another, while awarding them an average 73 (dismissing their Tonality, which he noted was “not a requirement of your particular format”), thanked the band for being so fun and “not taking yourselves so seriously”. Even the one

*Desperation Squad's performance exceeded all reasonable expectations, causing one "music industry" judge, F. Atencio, to gush effusively in his praise, awarding the band 95 points out of a possible 100, not to mention commentary that bordered on fanatical.*



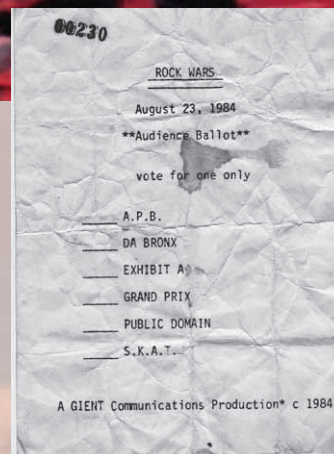




judge who hated the band, giving them a 41 total, summed up the experience like this (scrawled almost illegibly on the back of the ballot): "This world is not ready for two Mick Jagger".

Two gigs into his rock career and Mr. P was already being compared to Mick Jagger!

A rumor circulated that the Squad had the best overall scores but in the end, cries of "fix" were rampant as Mr. P's brother, John, had remained on the judges panel. John, by the way, gave the Squad a score of 79. While this deep-sixed the band's chances of moving on to the finals, it's hard to imagine an encore performance topping this show.



*A month later, a group featuring Ian Carlson and Jerry O'Sullivan - Grand Prix (pronounced 'pricks') - made their own appearance at "Rock Wars", also with Waddington on drums and The Unforgiven's Steve Jones on guitar.*

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## DESPERATION SQUAD AND THE AGE OF FORTUITISM

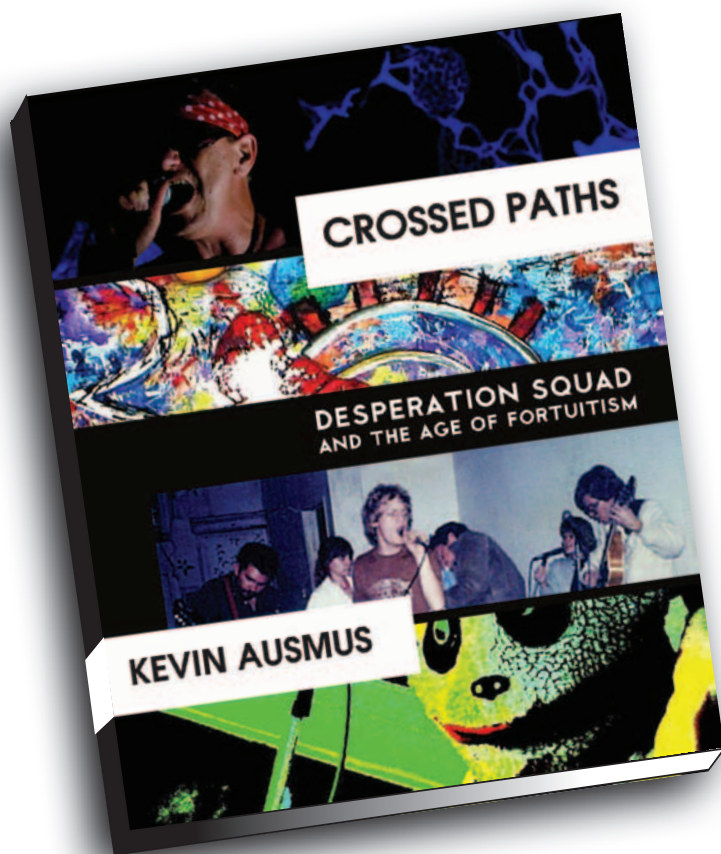
### Art Show Opening

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  
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## 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.