The band buzzed through a couple of older numbers, then launched into "On the Road," a new song written during their recent tour of the West Coast. The inevitable light broke out, and Springa announced that SSD would play a cover to cool things down. "Remember (Walking in the Sand)," recently repopularized by another Beantown rock group, started off as a slow grind but quickly sped up to a thrashing climax.

S. S. Decontrol is one of the more vociferous proponents of the "straight edge" philosophy, whose followers eschew the use of all drugs and chemical stimulants of any kind, whether legal or illegal, as being mind-dulling and self-destructive. Virtually all of their songs deal with this issue, such as the title track from their new EP Get it Away:

Think I'm joking about your smoking?
Think it's fair to steal my car?
You're gonna burn, you're gonna burn.
You don't have a mind.

The Jerks, another LA punk band which gained nationwide exposure through its appearance in the film The Decline of Western Civilization, approach life much less seriously than do SSD. They performed a wide mix of songs from their three records, all of which have achieved a consistently high level of hardcore energy. Their latest release, Golden Shower of Hits, attempts little in the way of an expansion in the band's style, but is an excellent effort nonetheless.

Circle Jerks played a long set, never changing the intensity of their attack from a fast and loud assault on the senses. Singer Keith Morris was almost as manic as was Springs before him, but was in greater control of his vocal inflections and enunciation — you could usually understand the words, even though they were spilling out about as fast as the human mouth can operate. Even with the recent addition of a new rhythm section, the rest of the band played flawlessly, the expected result of four years of continuous gigging.

The show would continue, and Circle Jerks do plan to play after a brief intermission.

For their encore, Circle Jerks performed "Jerks on 45" from the new album, which is a hilarious sendup of the "Stars on 45" series — but in the Jerks' case it could be titled "Suppose Songs of the Seventies." They ran through such tunes as "Havin' My Baby," "Afternoon Delight," and "Love Will Keep Us Together" in a punkish mode, this could well turn out to be the novelty hit of the year.

Both bands played to their maximum capacity — by the end of the evening, the crowd was exhausted, sweaty, in some pain, but happy. What was especially pleasing about this show was the restraint displayed by the audience. SSD's Springs must be given credit for stopping the show when he did — had he not, the situation would have been completely out of control. The crowd realized the importance of remaining within the ground rules established by the Channel, as a result, there will be more hardcore at the Channel.

Drew Blakeman

ARTS

Hardcore punk is here to stay

The local hardcore scene took a giant leap forward with Sunday's Circle Jerks/ S. S. Decontrol show. This was the first large-scale all-ages punk concert in town during the past few months, and its success or failure would determine the likelihood of future shows in the area. The show itself, which packed the club to near capacity, was a rousing success both financially and artistically. This issue, however, was not the main one.

Hardcore has a deserved reputation as being excessively violent — fighting among the audience and with the hosier is prevalent, and there are frequent stage dives — people climbing up onto the stage and then diving headfirst back into the crowd. As a result, hardcore has been prohibited by a majority of local clubs, who do not want to deal with even slightly unruly patrons.

Many fans of hardcore music are, in addition, under-age; since clubs make most of their money from selling drinks, their profit margin shrinks drastically for all-ages shows. The clubs' alternative is to admit only those 20 and older, but many bands refuse to play these shows because their fans are often denied admission.

The Jerks/SSD show was held at the Channel, the city's only venue large enough and sturdy enough to withstand the assault of hundreds of slam-dancing fans. The Channel was sued by someone who had incurred injuries at the last hardcore show there, and as a result the club banned all punk-oriented music. After an intense negotiation, the Channel agreed to resume staging these shows, but with a ban on stage diving. If any occurred, the show would be halted immediately, and there would be no future shows held there.

Amid a buzz of uncertainty as to what might happen at S. S. Decontrol's 9:30 start, SSD is perhaps Boston's most respected hardcore band — they are looked up to as an example for others to follow. Singer Springs is the visual focus of the band, screaming and cawing from one end of the stage to the other, and the rest of the band thrashes away in a moderately fast hardcore style. Two guitarists, the second added after the release of SSD's first album, contribute a heavy-metalish feel to the tune. The Channel was sued by someone who had incurred injuries at the last hardcore show there, and as a result the club banned all punk-oriented music. After intense negotiations, the Channel agreed to resume staging these shows, but with a ban on stage diving. If any occurred, the show would be halted immediately, and there would be no future shows held there.

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Unfortunately, someone jumped onto the stage just as S. S. Decontrol was getting into gear; the band left the stage, never to return. Although SSD was serious about ending the show at the first hint of trouble, the Channel was less so — after some confusion, it became apparent that the show would continue, and Circle Jerks do plan to play after a brief intermission.

For their encore, Circle Jerks performed "Jerks on 45" from the new album, which is a hilarious sendup of the "Stars on 45" series — but in the Jerks' case it could be titled "Suppose Songs of the Seventies." They ran through such tunes as "Havin' My Baby," "Afternoon Delight," and "Love Will Keep Us Together" in a punkish mode, this could well turn out to be the novelty hit of the year.

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