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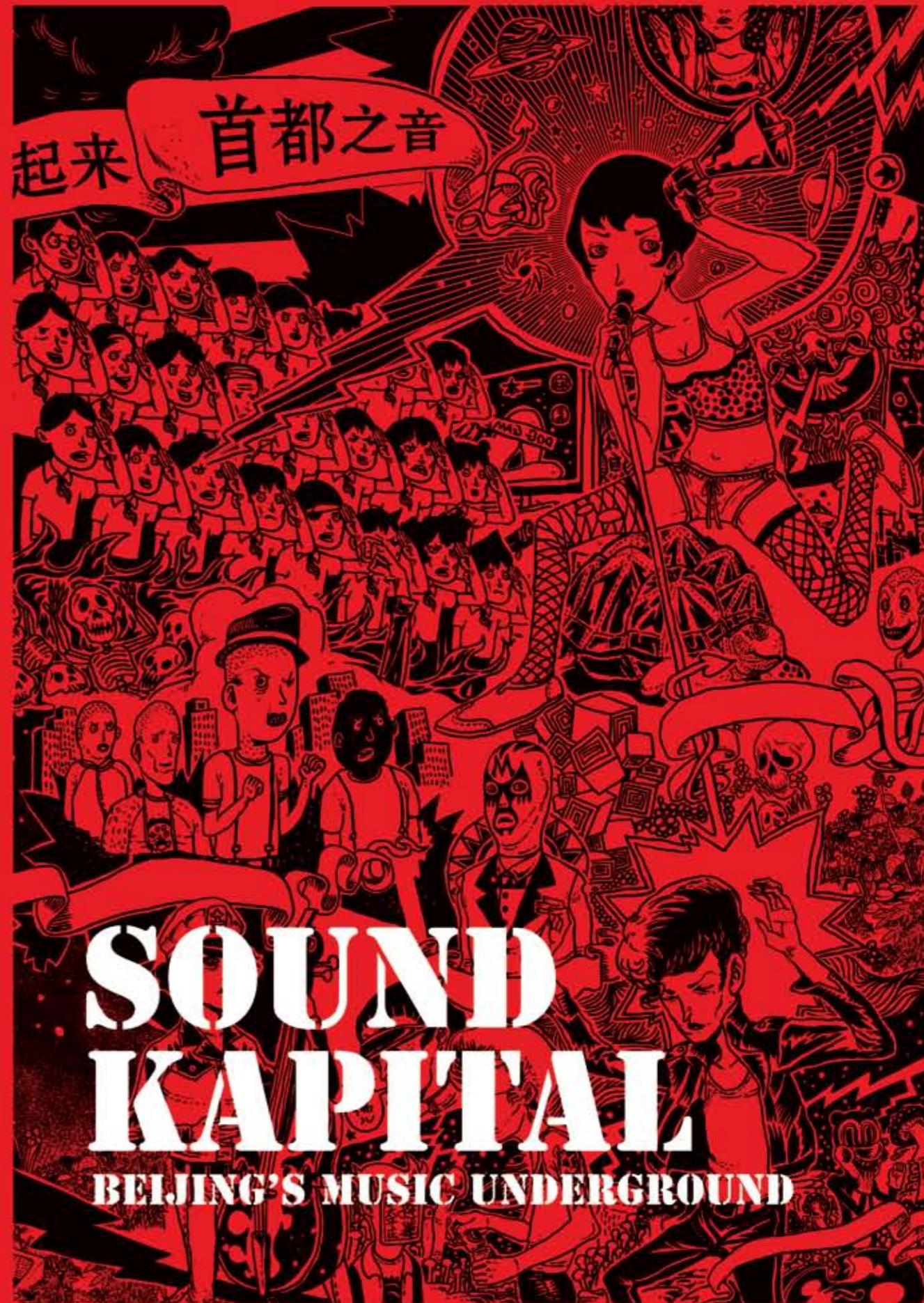
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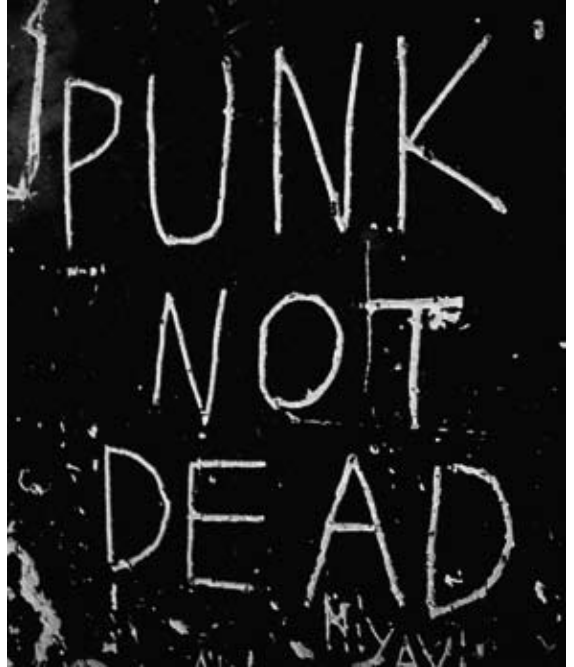
SOUND KAPITAL - BEIJING'S MUSIC UNDERGROUND - MATTHEW NIEDERHAUSER



**SOUND
KAPITAL**
BEIJING'S MUSIC UNDERGROUND

SOUND KAPITAL

BEIJING'S MUSIC UNDERGROUND



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matthew niederhauser | 洪天祥

illustrations:
chairman ca | 擦主席

introduction



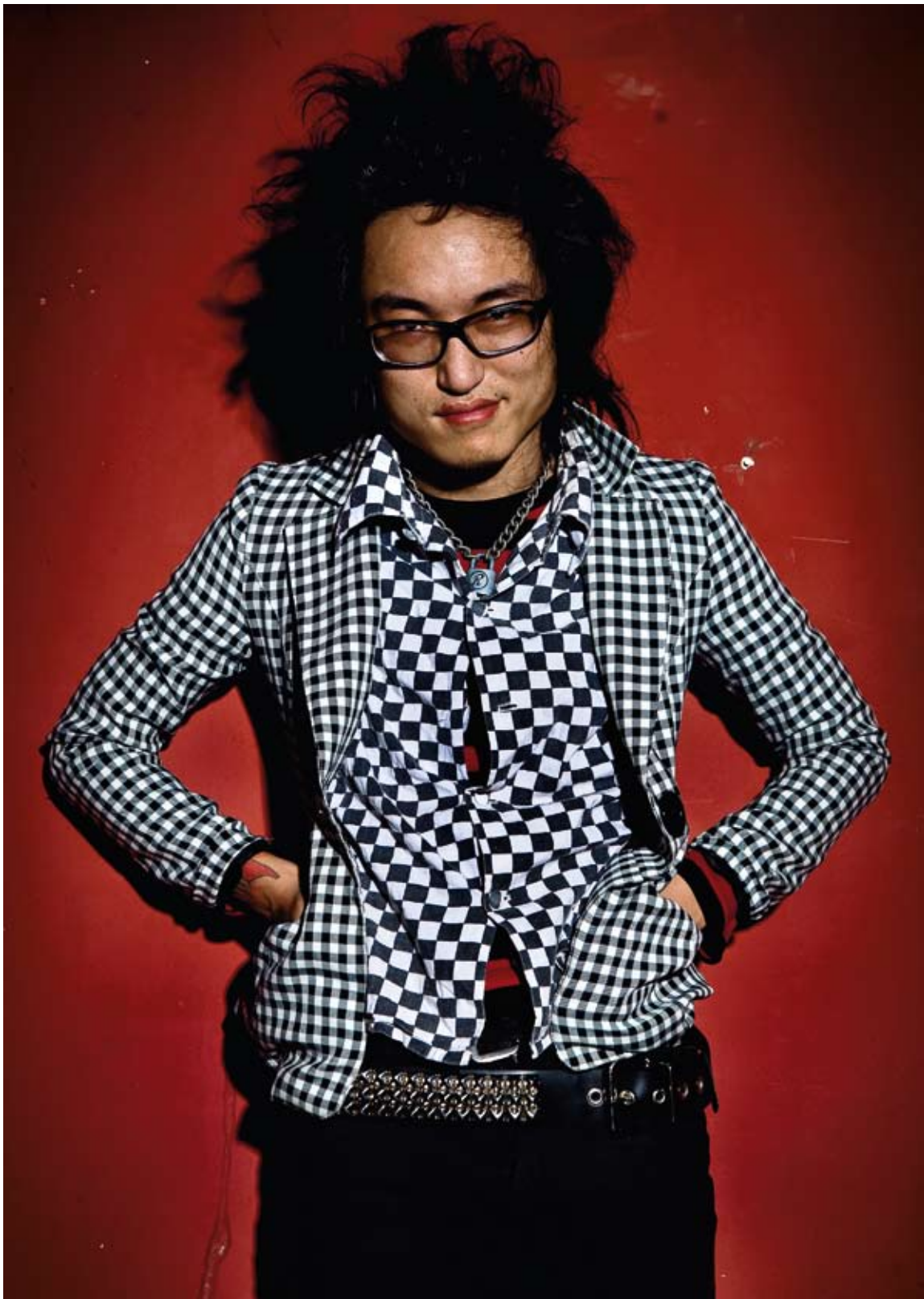
On October 3, 2007, I first entered D-22—a dive bar featuring live music in Beijing’s university district—to check out the current underground offerings. Smoking cigarettes and slamming cheap beers, a packed crowd jostled for space at the foot of a small stage where three women began to tune their instruments under dim, red lights. Five years had passed since I last attended a concert in China, and I was not particularly optimistic. In my mind Beijing continued to flounder in a creative mire when it came to live music. Nothing prepared me for what was to come: the next four bands completely floored me with their intensity, sincerity, and ingenuity. At the end of the night I fought my way out of a teeming mosh pit, camera barely intact, and left D-22 with some of my first images documenting the personalities behind the creative orgy driving Beijing’s underground. | Working outside of government-controlled media channels, this burgeoning group of performers gigged wherever possible across Beijing’s mutating landscape. Fortunately, venues such as D-22, Yugong Yishan, 2 Kolegas, and MAO Livehouse provided a steady platform for an eclectic mix of punk, experimental, rock, and folk performances and captured the international music community’s attention. More and more people flocked to these enterprising hubs, which incubated fresh, independent, and frequently irreverent voices in a country renowned for creative conformity and saccharine Cantonese pop. I became addicted to these live performances and fully possessed by the compulsion to catalog them photographically. As Beijing prepared itself for the 2008 Summer Olympics, the underground reached a critical mass with larger audiences and more bands making the move to the capital. It was a time of unprecedented change. | For now, China remains in a liminal state between the socialist idealism of old and a calamitous drive for wealth spurred by free-market reforms. This seemingly unbridgeable gap tears at the country’s social fabric while provoking younger generations to greater artistic heights, especially in the realm of music. The unique sound emerging from Beijing’s underground illuminates this void, aggressively questioning the moral and social basis of the fragile modernity on which it subsists. Near the heart of this cultural shift lies broader access to mobile phones and the Internet, which now mold China’s erratic social landscape. These technologies allow people with special interests and idiosyncratic tastes to readily connect with each other and access an exponentially broader realm of music, art, and news from both home and abroad. In large and densely populated China, patterns of conformity belie an attendant undercurrent of counterculture—people want to stand out from the masses. This increasing tendency toward individualism, coupled with newfound forums for public expression, represents the cornerstone of China’s emerging civil society, as well as the musical outpouring I document here. | If the underground thrives off underlying social conditions, it is nonetheless impossible to attribute a core message to these musicians. They come from diverse backgrounds and project varying messages that continually take on new form and direction. It would be presumptuous and misleading to label the motley crew of dropouts, hipsters, vagrants, bumpkins, intellectuals, and nighttime rockers as a whole. But if one thing binds



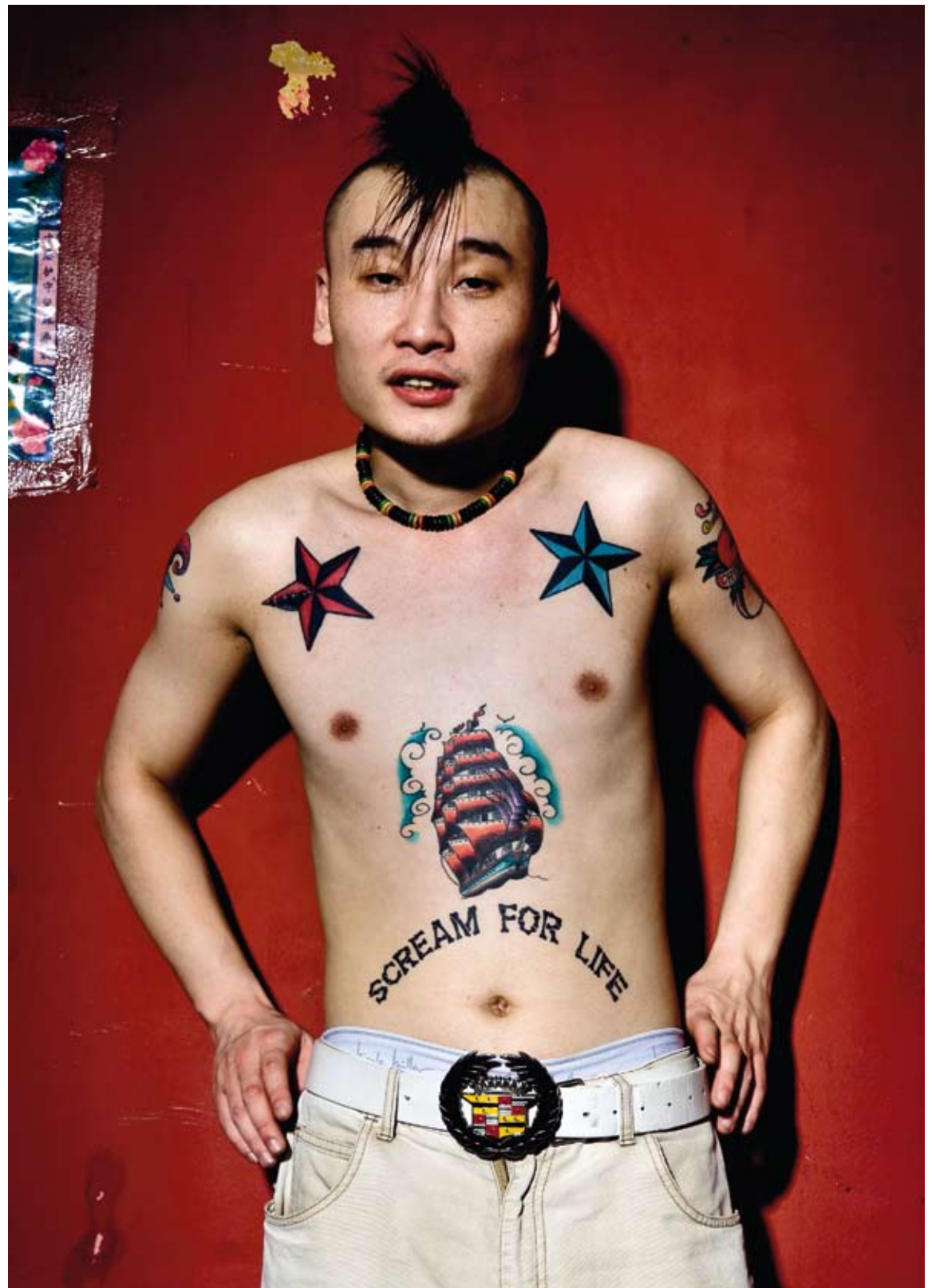
many in the underground, it is a dissatisfaction with the rise of a rabid, vapid, and often unsustainable consumer culture. A select few may take more antagonistic stances and openly vent their anger with the government, but, in one way or another, every performer is a critic at heart. In the end, a greater part of the work draws upon more intimate worlds, subsisting on the creative fodder of relationships—loss, joy, and personal battles—sources of inspiration that touch on the commonalities of human experience. No matter who takes the stage, the music is still grounded in a contemporary China that harnesses foreign influences just as readily as traditional sources. | As important as the developments in Beijing are the inroads the capital’s underground is making in China’s heartland, connecting with new audiences without using the government-controlled media. While metropolises like Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan, and Chengdu support steady concert scenes, elsewhere more than a billion people lie in wait for alternative music options. Only recently has a network of venues begun to extend from these urban centers to reach the cities that spring up almost overnight across China’s interior. Even though this generation of concertgoers is enthusiastic, the nationwide underground scene remains incipient and sometimes uncertain. Chongqing, for instance, is one of the largest municipalities in the world, with over six million people living in the city center, yet it only offers places like the Nuts Club, which features a cramped stage in a bare, concrete room that scarcely holds a hundred people. At the end of the show I attended, the young audience quickly scattered into the night as if fleeing the scene of a crime. For the foreseeable future, many hurdles remain. | The greatest hurdle by far is the uncertainty emerging bands face concerning the long-term viability of working as professional musicians. China’s renowned taste for media piracy, for instance, can be devastating to the income of fringe performers and the handful of independent labels that dare to support them. In addition, there are few options for significant commercial success outside regulated media channels that are peppered with apparatchiks who favor cloying pop stars over anything considered remotely controversial or offbeat. Most of China’s underground musicians are forced to keep their day jobs or seek other sources of income. | One thing that can never be denied is the passion displayed by both the performers and concertgoers who lose themselves in the fray. The portraits presented here are a comprehensive survey, culled from tens of thousands of photographs of more than a hundred bands, taken over the past two years. They strive to capture a moment in time in China’s musical evolution. Shot against the same red wall in D-22’s back room, the musicians featured are some of the most important contemporary performers emerging from the underground. They constitute a formidable new wave of artists striving to expand their creative limits in an autonomous and compelling fashion. Even though it is too early to tell what may come of the innovative strides made by these musicians, there is no doubt that they will continue to break ground within Beijing’s nascent artistic landscape, helping to push the boundaries of an already expanding realm of independent thought and musical expression in China.







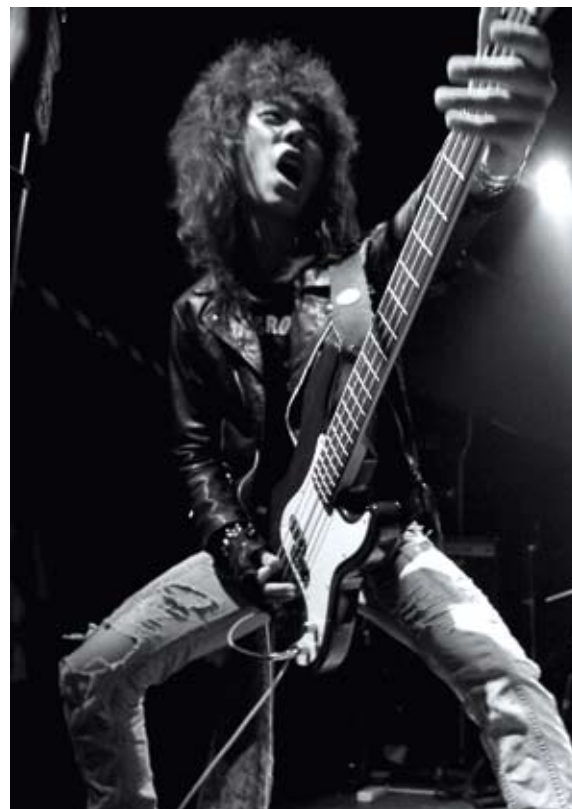
Guan Tou / 罐头



Du Wei / 杜威



Guai Li / 怪力



Clockwise: The Scoff, New Pants / 新裤子, Rustic





Rebuilding the Rights of Statues / 重塑雕像的权利





Wu Hao / 吴昊





Top to bottom: Illusion Division by the Hand, Bigger Bang / 大棒







Han Han / 韩涵



Clockwise: Yao Wang / 姚望, Vince Li / 李文泰, Yang Yang / 泱泱, Dan Shapiro

08.10/1-10/4 D-22 国庆 PARTY

10月1日

snapline
the gar
AV okubo (Wuhan)
33 Island
AntidoteDJs (Shan Hai)

10月2日

Boys Climbing Ropes
明天就解散
Liquid Architecture (France)

10月3日

Candy Monster
Rogue transmission (ShangHai)
steely Heart
The K

10月4日

The Molds
Ourself Beside Me
Scott

门票: 50/30

时间: PM 10:00

ADD: 海淀区五道口,
蓝旗营成府路
242号D22酒吧

TEL: 010-62653177



<S.DIZINE>内刊"破茧"庆祝演出 10月11日 愚公移山

PM 9:30

票价: 60/50 (学生)

北京市东城区张自忠路
3-2号 (段祺瑞执政政府旧址)

BANDS:

CARSICK CARS

THE GAR

OURSELF BESIDEME

24 HOURS





Clockwise: Birdstriking, Streets Kill Strange Animals, Luxinpei / 路新配, Mingtianjiujiesan / 明天就解散





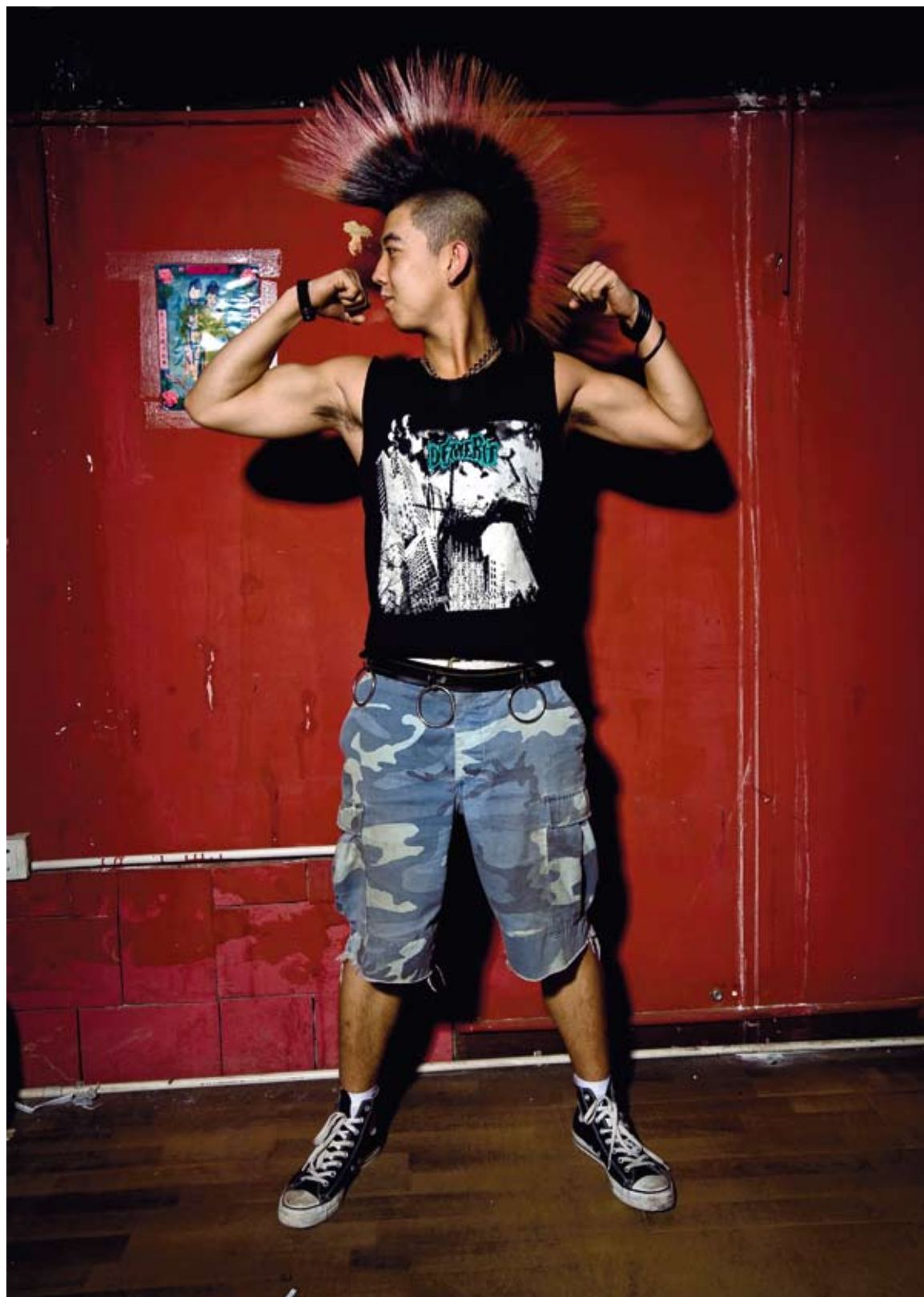


Top to bottom: Snapline, Speak Chinese or Die!





Wang Zi / 王梓



Du Shuai / 杜帅





Top to bottom: The Noname, Girl Kill Girl / 女杀女





Zhou Yun Peng / 周云蓬



Clockwise: Wu Tun / 吴吞, Wang Juan / 王娟, Zhao Yi Ran / 赵已然, Dong Zi / 冬子

D-22 . 11月22日
PM 10:00
TICKET: 50/30(学生)
 D-22: 海淀区成南路242号
BANDS:
CASINO DEMON
HEDGEHOG
SCOFF
FIREBALLOON

北京 搖滾年
 搖滾

ALPHA
 SILENT

D-22 . 11月29日
PM 10:00
TICKET: 50/30(学生)
 D-22: 海淀区成南路242号
BANDS:
CARSICK CARS
OURSELF BESIDEME
24 HOURS
LAVA/OX/SEA (HEFEI)

北京 搖滾年
 搖滾

ALPHA
 SILENT



Misandao / 蜜三刀



Longshendao / 龙神道







Clockwise: Muscle Snog, Candy Monster / 糖果怪兽, Bu Yi / 布衣







Liang Long / 梁龙



Zhao Xiao Xi / 赵小溪



Shou Wang / 守望



Top to bottom: Sulumi & iLoop, FM3



Clockwise: Old Fashioned, Cold Case, Flyx, Quasimodo / 夸西莫多





Reflector / 反光镜



Clockwise: Zhao Ze / 沼泽, IC Girl Band, Silent G



Clockwise: Hot and Cold, Old Fashioned, The Jason Kills



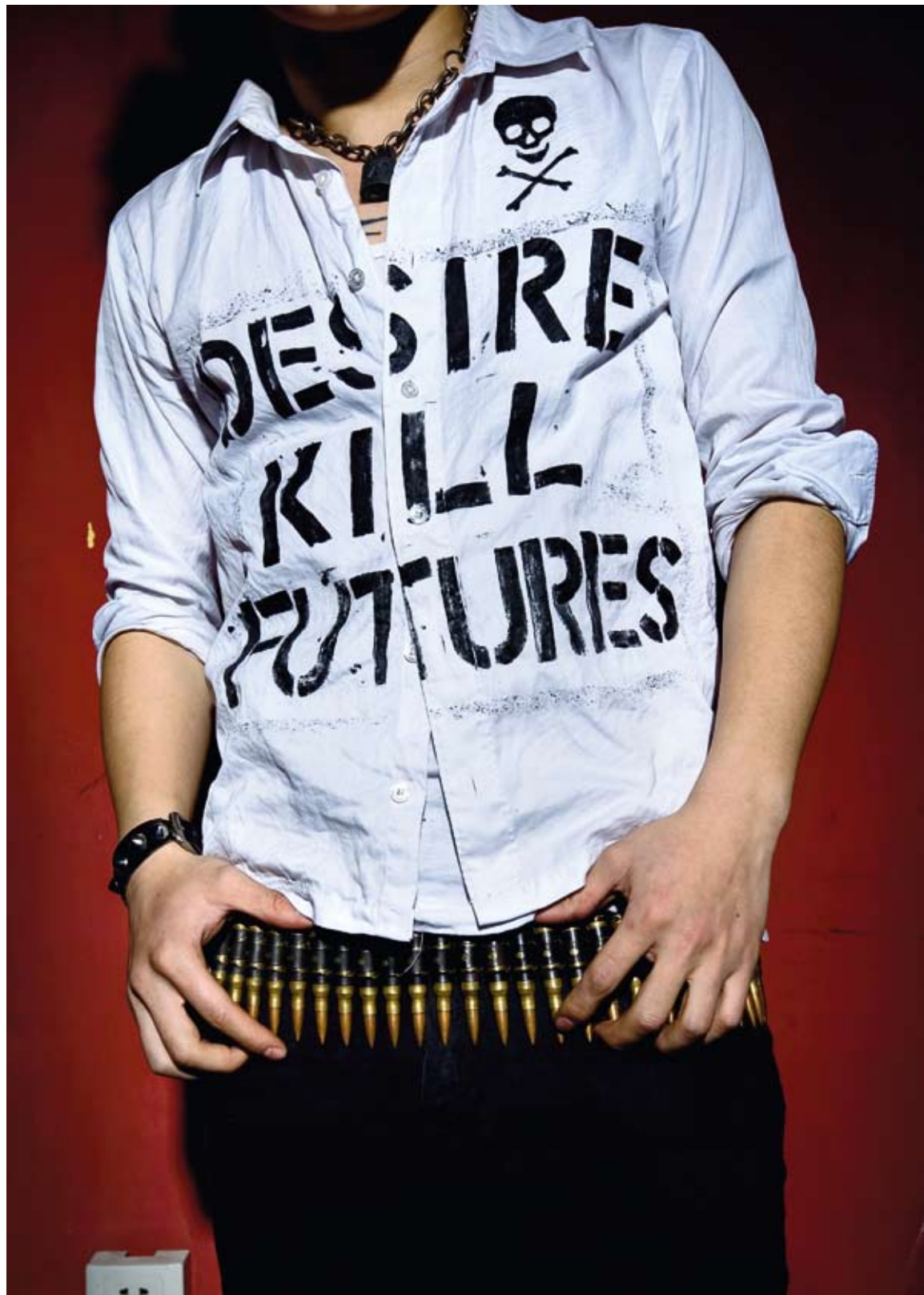




Offset: Spectacles / 概观: 像同叠



Clockwise: Perdel / 逃跑计划, AV Okubo / AV大久保, Arrows Made of Desire / 欲望之箭





Clockwise: Song Yu Zhe / 宋雨喆, Yi Ying / 义英, Yerboli / 叶尔波力, Wu Jun De / 吴俊德, Ju Lai Ti / 居来提, Mamuer / 马木尔



Clockwise: Liu Kun / 刘堃, Wan Xiao Li / 万晓利, Traveler / 旅行者





2008.12.13. 愚公移山 门票: 60/50(学生)

李卓



BANDS:

Carsick Cars.

24Hours

怪力

The Fireballon

愚公移山: 东城区张自忠路32号, 魏祺瑞政府旧址西院



Sulumi / 孙大威



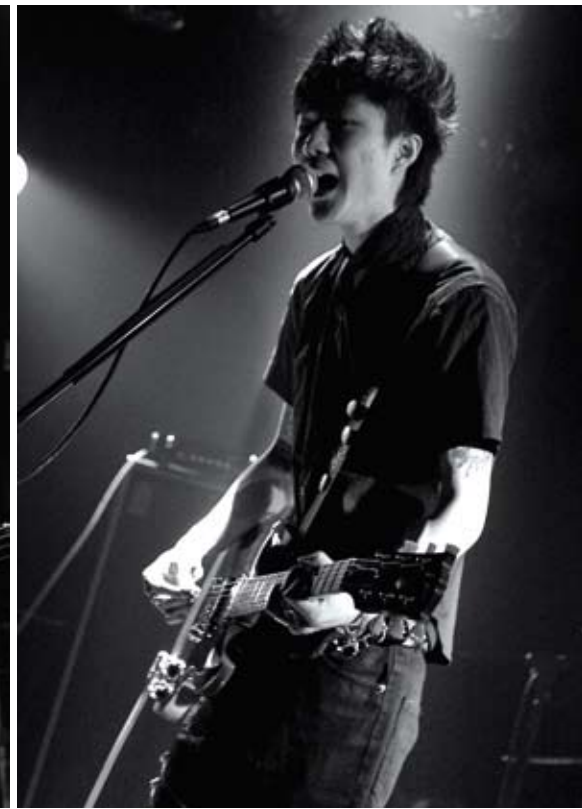
Clockwise: Li Man / 李满, Ronez / 周沛, Dead J / 邵彦棚, Junky







Mafeisan / 麻沸散



Clockwise: The Gar / 嘎调, Hell City, Joyside



Top to bottom: Brain Failure / 脑蚀, 24 Hours / 24小时







Liu Ge / 刘柯



Muma / 木玛



D-22 Second Year Anniversary

D22两周年
系列演出

4月30日

PK14.
Orang Zebra (法国)
1 Step Inside (法国)
The Rouge Transmission (上海)
Shake Hand With Danger.

5月1日 (店庆)

JoySide
后海大鲨鱼
Scoff
carsick cars
赌鬼
嘎调

5月2日

24 Hours (西安)
AV大久保 (武汉)
The Molds
糖果怪兽
Snapline
ourself Beside me

5月3日

Angry Jerks (南京)
过失
犯罪想法
SMZB (武汉)
瑞王坡
OVERDOSE (南京)

所有演出
60元/40元(赠)
每: PM 10:00.

地址: D-22 南京区城南路242号 蓝湾音乐年 65283177

3月15日-3月16日 (18:00-24:00) 地址: D-22酒吧: 五道口, 成府路, 242号, 242 Cheng Fu Lu, Wu Dao Kou, www.D22BEIJING.COM

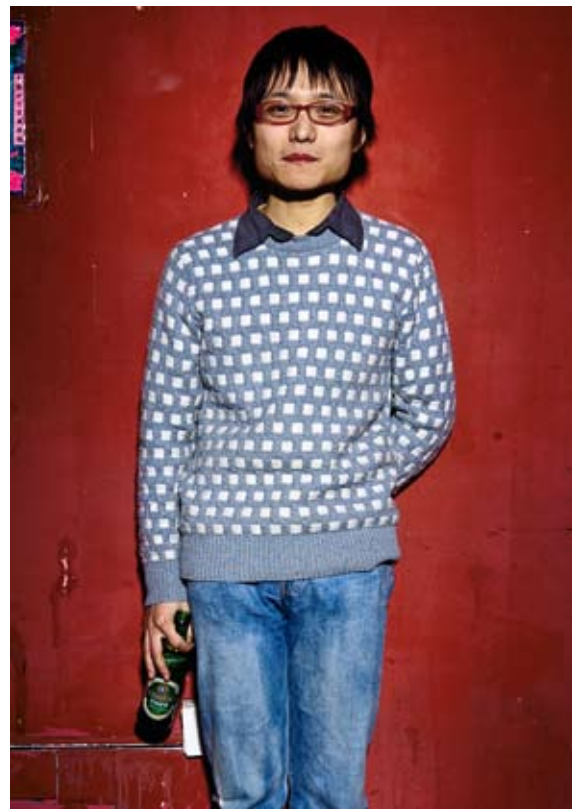
2008 中国先锋音乐节

票价
单日: 50元
双日: 80元

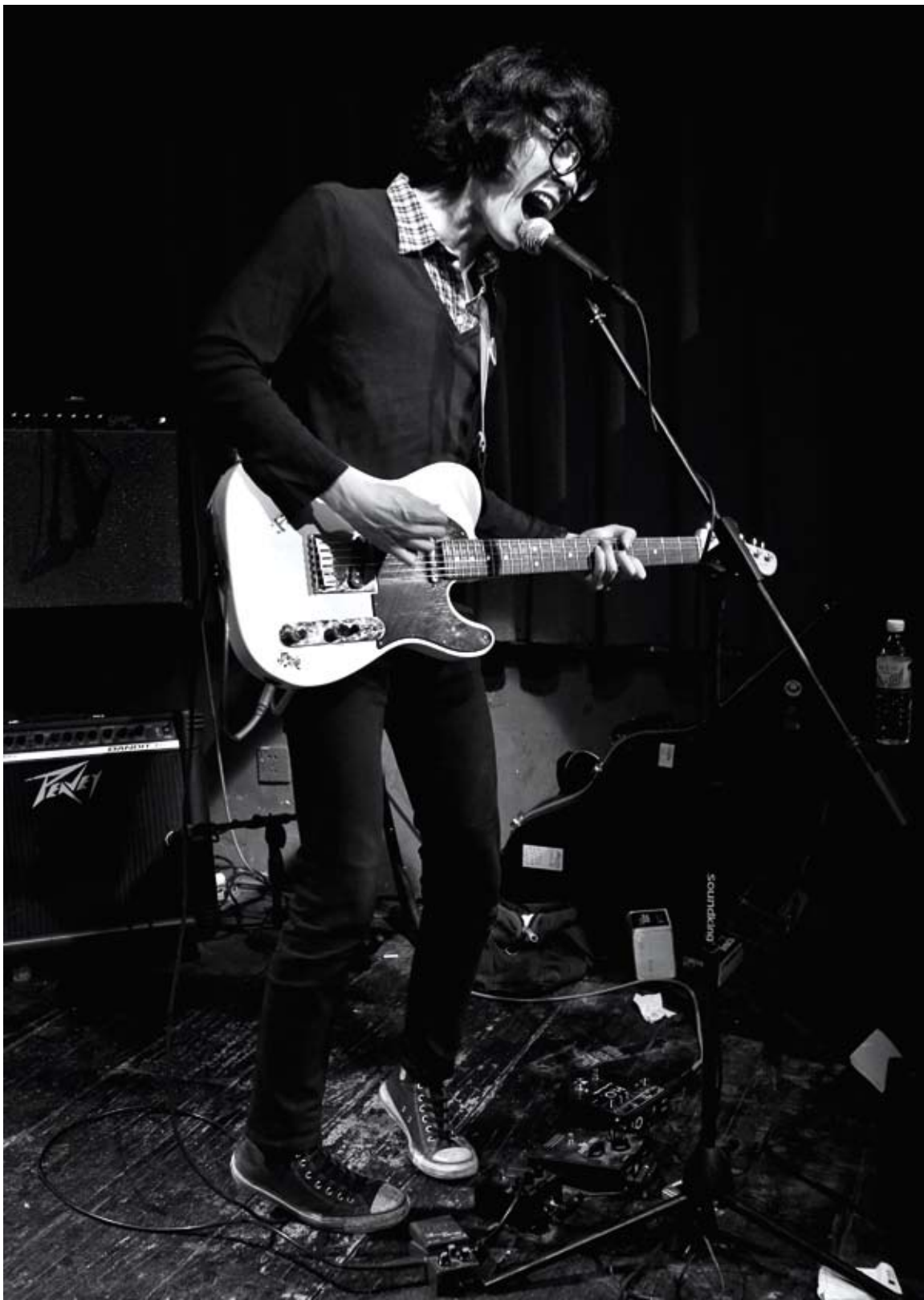
3.15: 麻沸散 (北京) 颜峻 (北京)
欢庆 (大理) 叶建康 & 王峰 (杭州/广州)
守望 (北京) 虐待护士 (上海)
梁和平 (北京)
李斯树 (香港)
高斯南 & 三重奏 (北京/广州)

3.16 卡西多 (北京) 死猪 (上海)
BRUCE GREENWOOD (纽约) DAVID OFFIT
黄梅 & Gong (北京) AKA D'Op (德国) Domitro (纽约/北京)
林松宜 (北京)
小河 (北京)
Domitro (纽约/北京)









The Gar / 嘎调





Little Punk / 小朋友





Li Qing / 李青







Bian Yuan / 边远





Clockwise: Candy Monster / 糖果怪兽, Steely Heart / 钢铁的心, Rubber Phonograph Needle / 橡胶唱针



7月19日愚公私山

9:30PM

TICKETS: 50/40

MAYBE MARS & L.S.D! PRESENTS

东城区张自忠路3-2号
段祺瑞执政府旧址西院

BANDS:
GARSICK GARS
OURSELF BESIDE ME
THE MOLDS
A EYE SPY (NAN JING)



L.S.D! management



Zhao Hui / 赵辉



Clockwise: Boys Climbing Ropes / 男孩爬绳子, Pet Conspiracy / 宠物同谋, 3 Step / 三跺脚, RandomK(e)





Casino Demon / 賭鬼



The Believers / 信徒





Wang Jiang / 王江







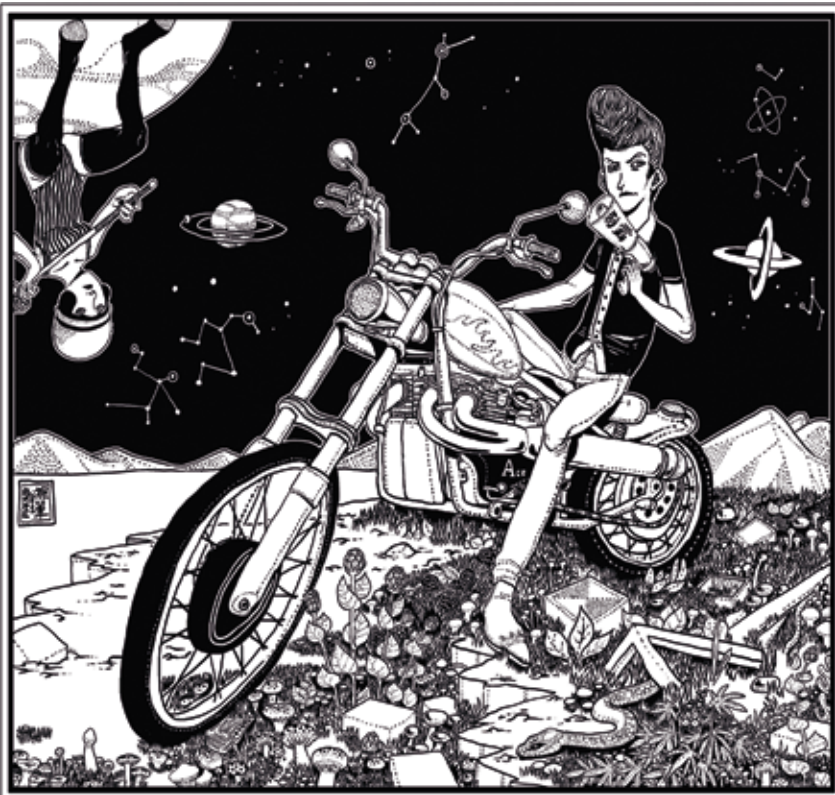


Fire Balloon / 热气球



Clockwise: Li Zi Quan / 李子轩, Song Xiao Feng / 宋晓峰, Rustic





CURSELF BESIDE ME 专场音乐

1月17日 (上海) 艺江艺工坊

BANDS:

Ourself Beside Me.
Carsick cars.
Snapline.

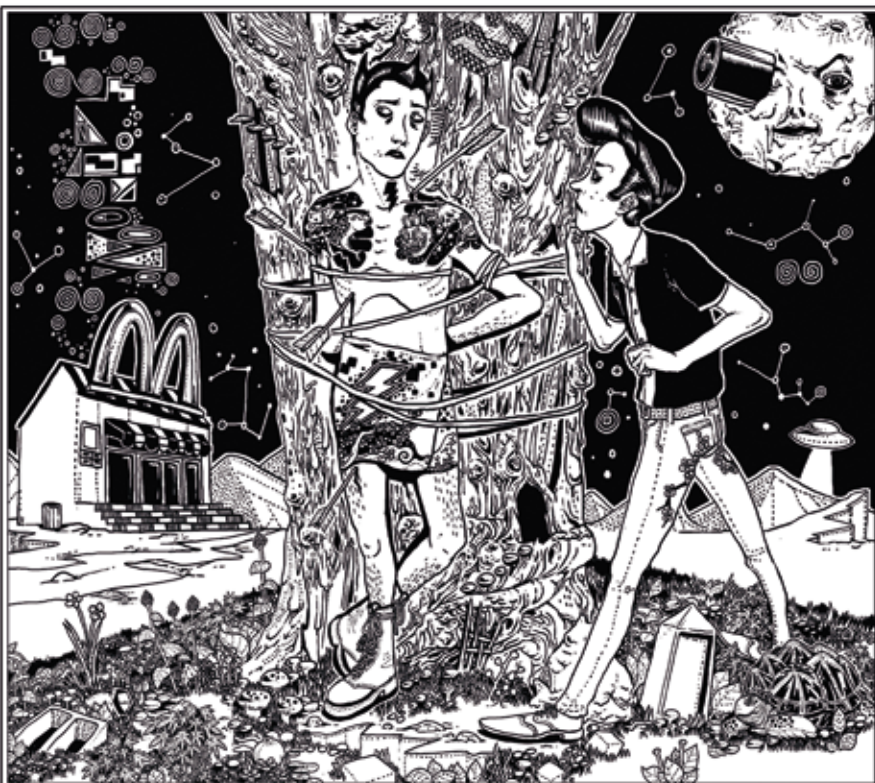
Av Okubo.

Ticket: 80 / 70 (学生)

预售网址:

<http://www.sourjournal.com/ckts/ticket.html>

地址: 上海市静安区巨野路
288号4层 (近西藏路)



D22 2月14日

PM 10:00

BANDS:

24 HOURS
CASINO
HEDGEHOG
LABF

TICKETS: 50/30 (students)

地址:

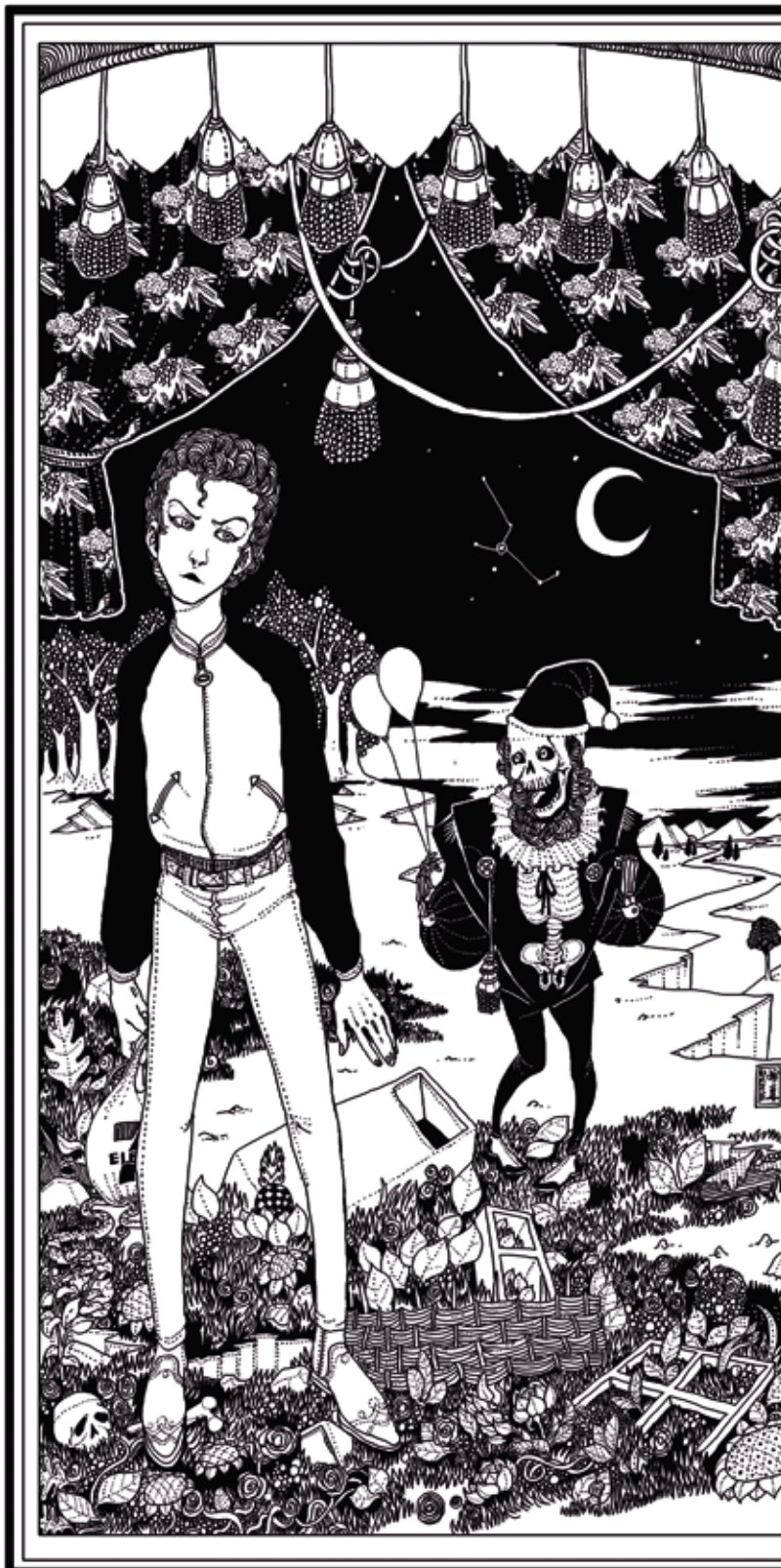
北京市海淀区成府路242号
蓝旗营车站东

TEL: 010. 6265. 3177

WEBSITE:

[HTTP://WWW.D22.CN](http://www.d22.cn)

[HTTP://WWW.DOUBAN.COM/GRUPO/D22/](http://www.douban.com/group/d22/)



12月24日

Christmas

Eve

Party!

圣诞前夜摇滚大派对

BANDS

Our self Beside Me

Molds.

Guai Li

Scoff.

you mei you.

Price:

60 / 40 (学生)

地址:

海淀区成府路

242号 蓝旗营东

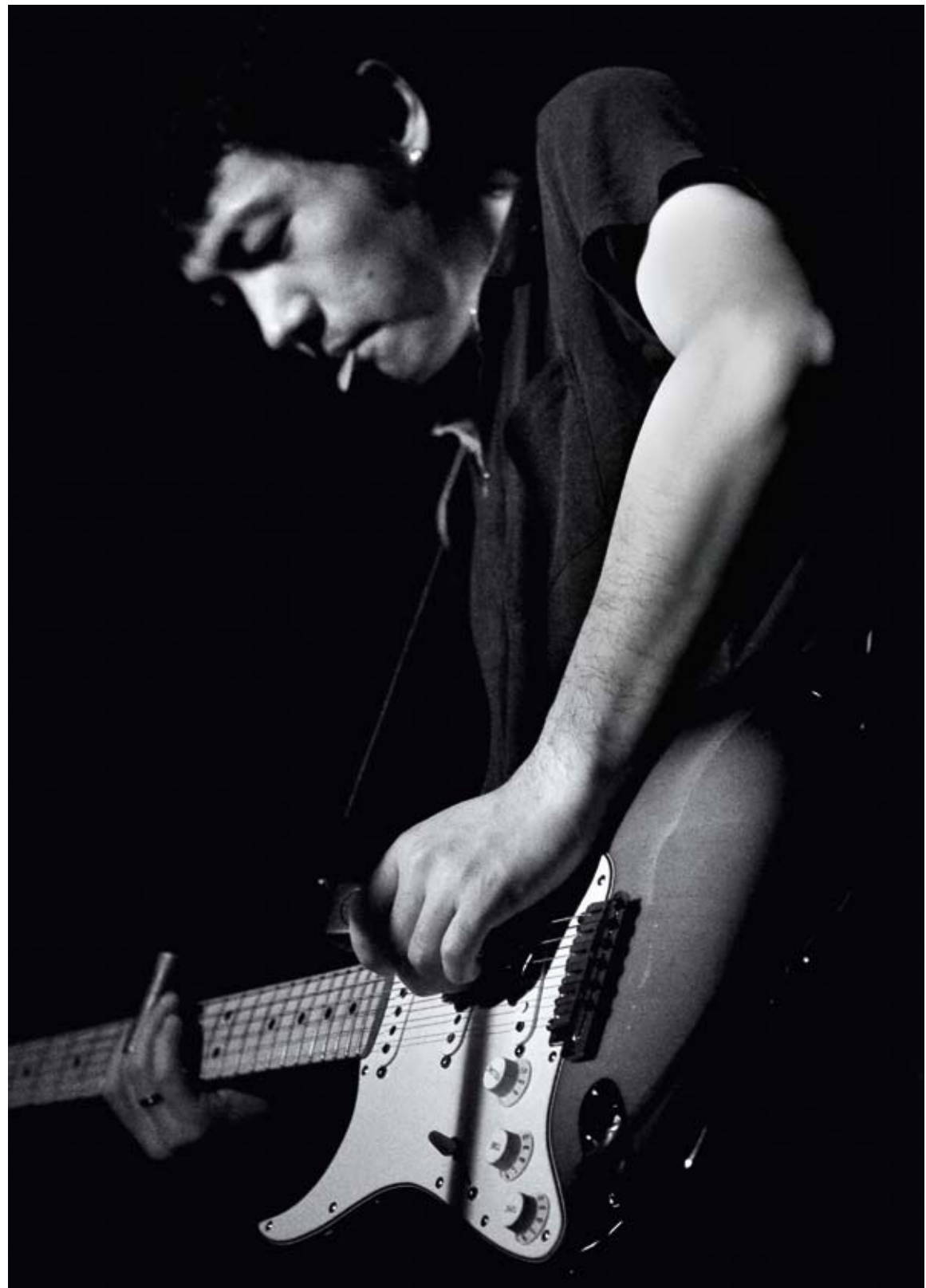
Tel: 62653177

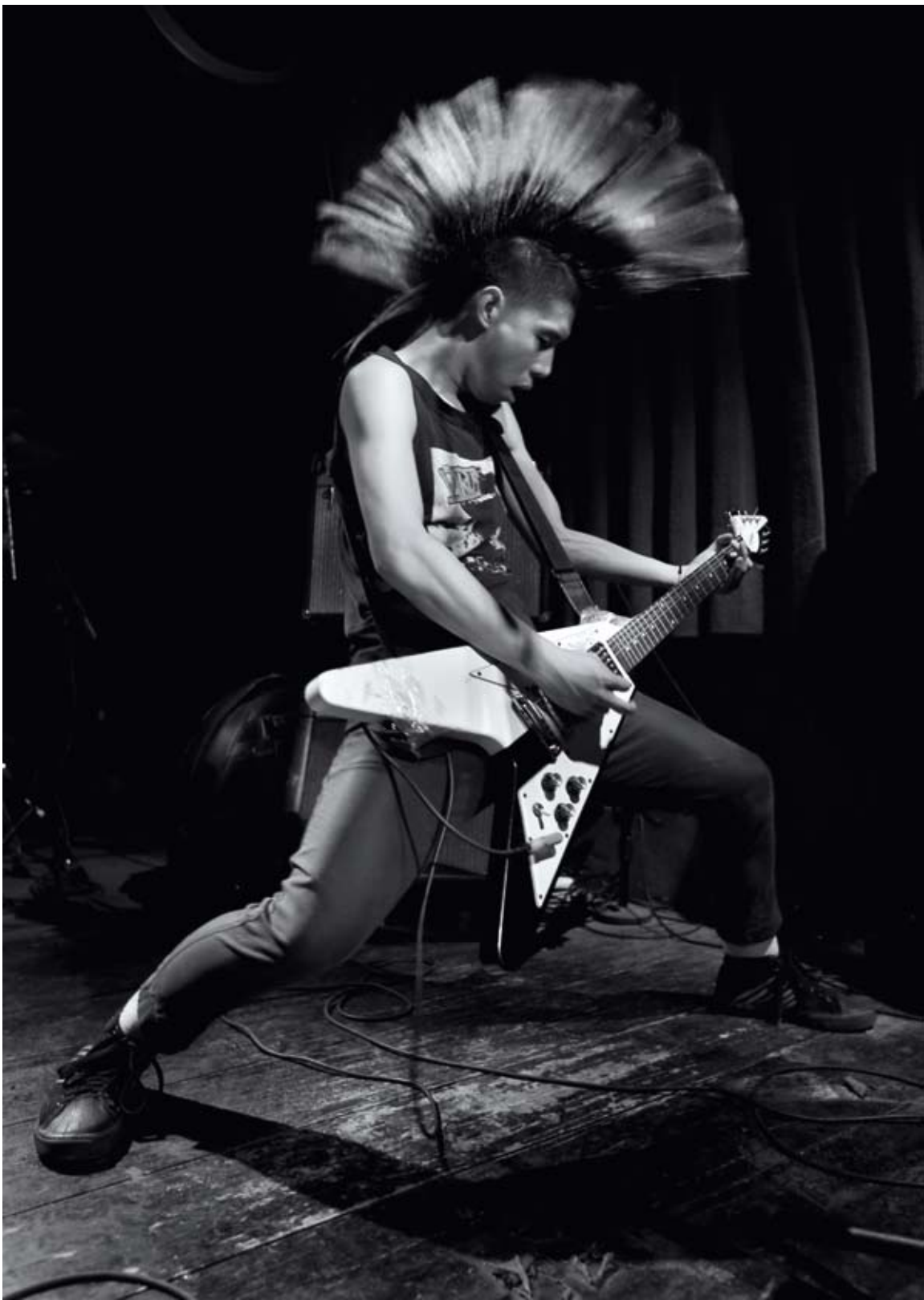




Top Floor Circus / 顶楼马戏团







Demerit / 过失











Clockwise: Yan Jun / 颜俊, Red Hand Jazz Band / 红手乐队, Li Jian Hong / 李剑鸿 & Sun Meng Jin / 孙孟晋 & Li Tie Qiao / 李铁桥





Li Tie Qiao / 李铁桥



Clockwise: Li Zeng Hui / 李增辉, Muscle Snog, Bruce Gremo, D!O!D!O!





Clockwise: Stranger Strange, Defy, Huoxingjihua / 火星计划, Golden Driver









Hu Ri Cha Fu / 呼日查夫



159



The Gar / 嘎调



Girl Kill Girl / 女杀女



Queen Sea Big Shark / 后海大鲨鱼







Ourself Beside Me





Yao Lan / 姚澜



Zhang Yang / 张杨



bands

When Xi'an's best band, **24 Hours**, decided to move to Beijing in 2007, as so many other Chinese bands were doing, it was a real blow to Xi'an but almost immediately made sense to the band. Kicking off with a Martin Atkins-produced first CD, the band's two female guitarists and male drummer have become some of the city's most consistently powerful performers. *P.88, 129*

Joewi Verhoeven, the mastermind behind lo-fi rock mavericks **Arrows Made of Desire**, continues to leave his signature sonic stamp on the Beijing underground with his roller-coaster song structures, dangerously addictive hooks, and a healthy dose of lyrical wit. *P.69, 119*

The recent explosion in Chinese music is above all a Beijing-based phenomenon. But one of the few out-of-town bands that rank with the absolute best of Beijing hails from free-thinking Wuhan—a dark, dirty, industrial behemoth located at the meeting of the Han and Yangtze rivers. **AV Okubo** combines a dazzling electronic sophistication with the punk sensibility that dominates the Wuhan music scene to create a rapid-fire explosion of industrial dance music littered with delightful references to the detritus of modern Chinese culture. *P.48–49, 69, 154–155*

Xiao Rong has been a cornerstone of the Beijing punk scene ever since he started penning songs in high school, helping to found **Brain Failure** in 1997. One of the most successful underground acts out of China, Brain Failure has toured extensively in Japan and the United States with its socially conscious lyrics and hard-driving live sets. *P.88, 122–123*

One of the most widely admired bands in Beijing's underground, **Carsick Cars** have played major festivals and concerts in China and abroad with the likes of Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr., and Ex Models. Employing the ferocious aural attack of one of China's most brilliant guitarists and composers, Shou Wang, they tear through their beautifully crafted songs in a thrilling but almost religious orgy of violence. *P.7, 56, 84–85, 118, 141*

Casino Demon combined a Britpop sensibility with wild-man guitar posturing to break into the Beijing scene during 2007. Although partial to love songs, when they rage, they rage big. And when the guitarist turns away from the microphone to pummel his guitar, the sound is overwhelming. *P.120, 170–171*

Punk emerged in China over a decade ago, but it is only recently that bands like **Demerit** burst out with their own particular and original sound, which combines blistering sonic rage with a unique instrumental virtuosity. Hidden in the debris of their explosive performances are some of the best-written songs in China, with lyrics featuring a vitriolic social critique. *P.12–13, 35, 83, 138–139*

Quirky, talented, and thoroughly independent, **The Gar** is a young band that elicited great hopes from knowledgeable Beijingers even before they started performing. Their already-legendary 2009 China tour, with label-mates Carsick Cars, cemented their reputation among young Chinese intellectuals and students. Their high-intensity performances and razor-edged instrumentation consistently explore new territory. *P.77, 87, 102, 160*

Led by long-time rocker Gia, of Hang on the Box fame, **Girl Kill Girl** dishes out minimalist bass lines crossed with hypnotic vocal effects. Still, don't be lulled into a false sense of security by their demure looks. Their sharp sound matches their offstage demeanor. *P.38, 161*

Since 1999 **Glamorous Pharmacy** has continually pushed the boundaries of the Chinese experimental art scene. Their most recent album did not disappoint, featuring diverse instrumentation, including mini-cymbals, glockenspiels, and accordions. Their mesmerizing live performances often incorporate theatre, dancing, and long segments of wild improvisation. *P.144–145*

Guai Li has been compared to a host of bands and artists, from Pavement to Big Black to Patti Smith, and many local musicians can be counted among their most devoted followers. Their music ranges from slow, sludgy drone rock to raw, rollicking performances verging on pure punk. *P.10, 105*

Hang Gai are pioneers of China's folk scene. At the musical core of the band are two of the world's oldest instruments, the horse-head fiddle and the two-string banjo. Steeped in the rhythms and sounds of horseback riding, many of their songs also use a throat singing technique that has been handed down over the course of two millennia. While Beijing may seem like a surprising place for a Mongolian folk revival, Hang Gai has established a large following in Beijing's rock-saturated underground with their refreshing interpretations of the traditional songs of the steppe. *P.66–67, 158*

Hedgehog wants to be a pretty pop band, but the mad percussive stylings of their compact female drummer and their searing guitar riffs make it difficult to categorize them. They labored unknown for three years at tiny venues like What Bar before a set of dazzling performances in D-22 in late 2007 catapulted them into the center of the Beijing underground. *P.4–5, 47, 126–127*

No other band in China captures the rebellious rock and roll attitude like **Joyside**, whose honest performances have made them one of the most influential of the older Chinese bands on a younger generation of musicians. With their dazzling virtuosity, complete indifference to popular opinion, and swaggering rejection of sobriety, they consistently put on some of the best performances in the city. For Joyside, every show is a sold-out party and every song summons frenzied dancing and wild cheering as students, musicians, and even accountants throw themselves into the bacchanal. *P.20–21, 87, 164–165*

Li Tie Qiao is a Chinese composer and saxophonist/multi-instrumentalist based in Beijing. An extended techniques player and an outstanding experimentalist, his self-studied improvisational work and use of electronics are some of the most progressive in Beijing. *P.146, 148*

Liu Kun, the powerful voice behind Low Wormwood, continues to dazzle audiences with his solemn and intense music. With one album already under his belt, Liu Kun seems to be setting himself up for the long haul in Beijing's folk scene. *P.73*

Led by the pensive Deng Pei, **Lonely China Day** stands out from its peers with its heady blend of bells and whistles, a staggering collision of minimalist guitar beauty, and thunderous rock hooks with a soothing voice cooing Mandarin poetry on top. Drawing strongly on traditional Chinese influences, they continue to woo audiences with their candle-lit stage presence. *P.30–31, 137*

Fronted by a manic clown from Shandong Province who favors wildly colored clothing and paper bags over his head and who proclaims himself a celebrity to anyone who will listen, **Mafeisan** is an anarchist noise collective that takes provocation and chaos to an extreme. Their sound isn't pretty, but when the band clicks into a groove, they are some of the most radical and compelling noisemakers out there. *P.86*

A skilled multi-instrumentalist, **Mamuer** is one of the most talented and soulful musicians coming out of Xinjiang. Best known for incorporating the guitar, dombra, and Jew's harp into his performances, his Kazakh folk songs resonate dolefully within Beijing's modernized urban landscape. *P.72*

The coolest and least reliable musician in Beijing is probably Liu Ge. At the helm of his band, the **Molds**, he manages to push his lazy, ironic drawl to the front of the their loud, sludgy, rockabilly-on-co-deine sound. *P.19, 89, 92*

Formed by four teens from the hutongs of Beijing in 1996, **New Pants** are one of the most revered bands in the underground and one of the only to see a glimmer of mainstream pop success. Initially heavily influenced by new wave and punk, in recent years their sound and style has tended more towards a collage of disco and electronic music. Still, their wild performances draw some of the biggest crowds in Beijing. *P.11, 52–53*

The members of **Offset: Spectacles** met in Hong Kong through a shared love of The Velvet Underground, and their slow, unique sound rapidly made them the only Hong Kong band with a serious following in Beijing. In 2008 they finally left their home city to move to Beijing, where they have

become a pure musicians' band—their audiences may be small but consist almost entirely of the best musicians in Beijing. *P.68*

If there is any single band that demonstrates how sophisticated the Beijing scene has become, it must be **Ourselves Beside Me**. This female trio will never be as wildly popular as some of their peers, but they leave serious music fans gasping for breath with their cool, brilliantly composed performances and strange, unexpected instrumentation. These women don't give a damn about anything, so catch them before they change their minds about performing in public. *P.33, 166*

After Demerit opened the door to a new style of Chinese punk, a number of younger bands rushed through, one of the best of which is the hard-rocking **Overdose**, whose female lead singer, Ruan Ruan, is among the most impressive young performers in the city with her scratchy, hard-hitting vocals. *P.9, 39, 59*

Pet Conspiracy sounds like a burned out showgirl from a 30s Cabaret crossed with an 80s Chinese underground disco. They're fronted by guitarist and main programmer Huzi, whose haphazard tastes finally led him to return to the band format after forays into electronica, and lead singer Helen Feng, who is renowned for her schizophrenic omnipresence. Their spectacular live performances always involve a bevy of lights, many costume changes, and onstage smooching. *P.108–109, 117*

Ask any of the younger bands about their influences and it is pretty obvious that **P.K. 14** has had the biggest impact of any local band on the burgeoning Beijing scene. However, their artistic intensity and the care with which they write their songs do not keep them from completely rocking out, and their shows in China and abroad regularly receive critical acclaim. Often referred to as China's best underground band, P.K. 14 more than any other band set the stage for the Beijing musical explosion. *P.6, 36–37, 103*

Descended from the hard, funky sounds of London and New York in the 1980s, **Queen Sea Big Shark's** explosive, guitar-driven performances, replete with pounding baselines and vertiginous synthesizer loops, turn venues upside down every performance. Led by rock queen Fu Han, they consistently leave audiences in a fit of euphonic ecstasy with their infectious surf pop. *P.90–91, 162*

Rebuilding the Rights of Statues came together when front man Hua Dong met bassist Liu Min in Nanjing and drifted up to Beijing in 2003 to set down their musical roots. After meeting drummer Ma Hui, they soon began electrifying Beijing audiences with their darkly riveting, explosive performances. Rebuilding's catalogue of influences are combed from Internet piracy, black market CDs, and mix tapes worn thin. *P.14, 128*

Longtime stalwarts of the Beijing punk scene, **Reflector** kicked into high gear in 1997 and never looked back. Over a decade later they still pack houses around Beijing with their adrenaline-pushing, mosh-inspiring stage presence. *P.62*

In the years since the underground really picked up momentum, a large number of very young bands have emerged with a self-confidence almost wholly lacking among older Chinese musicians. One of the best, **Rustic**, is a punk and glam-influenced band fronted by a crazed, teenaged farm boy from Hebei, who goes by Lucifer. *P.11, 131*

Second Hand Rose is highly regarded both in Beijing and abroad for its use of traditional Chinese instruments boldly combined with solid rock fundamentals. Lead singer Liang Long's cross-dressing tendencies make their live performances memorable experiences as they bend the rules of both music and gender. *P.54*

Satanic choirboys **The Scoff** have been one of the most talked-about bands in Beijing since 2005. Originally known for performances teetering on the edge of chaos as their wildly charismatic frontman egged on his brilliant guitarist, in 2008 the band suddenly changed directions to explore the long, slow,

deeply druggy music that was beginning to captivate them. Still never forgiven by their earlier audiences, their sheer musicianship is starting to draw a new and very devoted audience. *P.11, 113, 163*

SMZB was the first punk band in Wuhan, and one of the first in China. Distinguished by their use of the bagpipes, they draw wide acclaim both at home and abroad for their rebellious and spirited anthems. No one questions their dedication to the punk movement after twelve years of extensive touring both at home and abroad. *P.100–101*

While most Beijing bands revel in ferocious rock and roll combined with virtuoso musicianship, **Snapline** turned in another direction altogether. Digging deep into Beijing's unfinished subway tunnels and broken-down factories for inspiration, the band builds songs from the ugly fragments of urban decay. Their haunting beats are surrounded by Li Qing's strangely minimalist guitar and keyboard, and their sound hearkens back to the industrial gloom of 1979 Manchester. *P.15, 32, 74–75, 106–107*

Lead singer Kang Mao of the **Subs** easily packs one of the biggest punches in the Beijing underground. Her overwhelming stage presence combined with the riotous guitar riffs of Wu Hao will turn the most timid concertgoer into a ball of energy. With tours in Europe already under their belt, this seasoned outfit continues to stride boldly in new directions. *P.16, 29, 82, 98*

Once a member of the first punk band in China, **Sulumi** now wows audiences with his electronic and 8-bit compositions. A true laptop artist, he will remain bent over his instruments before bursting into a frenzied dance after dropping a new beat. His ability to endlessly recreate himself keeps him at the vanguard of experimental music China. *P.57, 80*

Cold, intelligent, mechanical, minimalist, and among the most intensively creative bands in the world, **White** has toured Europe to wild acclaim and were one of Beijing's first, important, experimental-musical exports to the world. Mixing New York and Düsseldorf minimalism with Chinese

obliqueness and No Wave energy, they have consistently found themselves at the center of the noise vortex taking over particular corners of the Beijing underground. *P.136*

In recent years **Xiao He** started reaching deep into the surreal folk traditions of a fast-disappearing China in much the same way Tom Waits immersed himself in the apocalyptic Christian mythologies of the American Deep South. He has created a strange, stirring vision of a 19th-century China crashing violently into a 21st-century China of boiling rivers and crumbling factories. *P.27*

The Beijing music scene has a dozen fathers but only one godfather. **Yan Jun** is widely considered to be among the most influential music critics in China and has championed many of the country's leading artists. His own aggressively experimental performances and his tireless support of the new and the different ensured that Beijing's musicians always had access to the most interesting and experimental sounds from China and abroad. *P.146*

Zhou Yun Peng might not be able to see the audience, but knows how to draw them out with his witty and incisive songs. A social lyricist at heart, he cut his chops traveling alone as a blind musician across China. *P.40*

Over the past five years **Ziyo** has redefined itself at least ten times, plotting a course that veered into mainstream before heading underground again, without losing a single member along the way. Rife with memorable hooks, the band now combines danceable beats with layered instrumental builds and noise to the pleasure of audiences across Beijing. *P.17, 156*



First and foremost, thanks to all the bands for taking the creative plunge. Then, in no particular order, I would not have been able to put this book together without the help and camaraderie of Nevin Domer, Michael Pettis, Charles Saliba, Matthew Kagler, Ed Peto, Indiana Gaier, Yang Yang, Mark, Padro, the Spanish girls, Damon & Comenos, Michael LoJustice, Meng Jin Hui, Doro & Lue, Chairman Ca and the rest of Cult Youth, the Maybe Mars staff, technically speaking the roomies, Graham, Alan & Jess, TR, and the D-22 staff. May the crazy nights continue well into the future. Last, and certainly not least, thanks to my family for their undying love and support through the whole process. I will come back eventually.

SOUND KAPITAL

BELJING'S MUSIC UNDERGROUND

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