

Krishnacore

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As the 70's punk revolution moved into the 80's a number of punk and American hardcore youth became increasingly dissatisfied with the anarchic and nihilistic philosophy that had permeated the scene since the revolution first swept forth from streets of London. Seeing so many of those around them descend into downward spirals of drugs, sex and self-abuse, some individuals began to coalesce into an internal counter scene. These teens began to form their own bands, write their own music and expound their own basic philosophy based on abstaining from drugs, alcohol, tobacco, illicit sex and, often, meat.



They began painting black X's on the back of their hands, taking the image from the stamp given to underage kids at hardcore shows. In 1981 the band Minor Threat released the song "Straight Edge," codified the developing sentiment and gave the movement a name:

I'm a person just like you
 But I've got better things to do
 Than sit around and fuck my head
 Hang out with the living dead
 Snort white shit up my nose
 Pass out at the shows
 I don't even think about speed
 That's something I just don't need
 I've got the straight edge

One of the most influential skinhead bands on the US hardcore scene in the late 80's was Youth of Today made up of Ray Cappo and John Purcell joined later by Drew Thomas, Craig Setari and Richie Birkenhead. The band released *Break Down the Walls* in 1986 followed by *We're Not In This Alone* in 1988. Eventually Cappo became



disillusioned with the violence that had all too quickly come to characterize the straight edge and hardcore scenes in the latter half of the 80's. Drawn by his growing interest in Eastern spirituality, Cappo departed the scene and moved to India.

While in India he became a Vaishnava monk. He was not in India long before deciding to return to the West and continue his musical work. In an interview with Beats e-zine, Cappo commented "I think music is like my 'dharma' or calling... so music did and will always magnetically drag me back even though some times I move away from it." After his return, still holding true to his conversion to Krishna Consciousness, he formed the band Shelter. They released their first album *Perfection of Desire* in 1990 on Cappo's own label Revelation Records—the insert including an interview with H.G. Satuaraja Prabhu. A second album *Quest for Certainty* followed in 1991 on Equal Vision Records and included a spiritual lecture by H.H. Hridayananda dasa Goswami.

The devotee run Equal Vision soon stood at the center of a growing Krishnacore movement. In addition to Shelter they also released albums Krishna Consciousness inspired bands 108 and Prema. Zines such as *Krishna Grrrl* and *War on Illusion* appeared on the scene. John Bloodclot and Harley Flanagan of the legendary Lower East Side skinhead band Cro-Mags had both converted to Krishna Consciousness and their influence was strongly felt in the New York scene.

Porcell described what they were doing as "bhajans for the 90's" drawing a direct connection between Shelter's music and the Vaishnava tradition of devotional singing. Equal Vision released a collection of songs recorded at the New York Krishna temple. The album included a strikingly beautiful track "Koda Nitai" featuring vocals by Sri Keshava. The Australian Sri soon went on to become lead singer for the more pop-oriented and upbeat Baby Gopal whose self-titled album included "Boys Against Girls," "Govardhan" and "Lost Generation."

Shelter continues to tour and record. They released the honest and personal *The Purpose, the Passion* (Supersoul/Century Media) in 2001 and, just recently, an album of ancient Indian devotional songs *Shelter Bhajans*. Sri also released a solo album *Gravity Reminds Me*. Ray Cappo has also made a film chronicling the history of the New York hardcore scene *Talk about Unity: New York hardcore/punk '82-88*. Cappo also teamed up with Jake (Crucifix) and Sri to record a CD of new songs *Touching Water*, which includes a cover of Generation X's "Kiss Me Deadly."

More resources available at the Ashé website.

