

Diversions

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COURTESY OF FAT WRECK CHORDS

The punk band Anti-Flag is just one of more than 100 groups that advocates political responsibility through the Punk Voter organization, formed by Fat Mike, the founder of the band's record label.

BUCKING THE SYSTEM



COURTESY OF ANTI-FLAG/DANIEL VELASQUEZ

The above image, designed by a private artist for Anti-Flag, depicts the group's forward stance on voicing political opinions. Punk Voter emphasizes the harmful effects of apathy in the upcoming election.

BY BECCA MOORE

ASSISTANT ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

There are far more than 20-20-24 hours to go, but come Nov. 2, sedated is the last place America's voting youth need to find themselves.

In the buildup to this year's heavily contested Election Day showdown, a bevy of musicians and musical alliances have formed to help motivate their listeners.

One such group, Punk Voter, aims to educate punk-rock fans about the upcoming election, as well as about the importance of voting and continuing political involvement. Founded by Fat Mike of veteran punk band NOFX, the group has attracted a fair share of support from the scene.

"I'd say the outcome of the 2000 election is what motivated myself and everyone I know that's involved with Punk Voter," Fat Mike wrote in an e-mail. "It taught us all that every vote

matters and we need to get involved, or we'll get screwed."

Toby Jeg, a Punk Voter organizer, said that shortly before the 2000 election, Fat Mike played a number of shows in Florida to an estimated combined crowd of 50,000 people.

"He realized he could have said something on stage, and a couple hundred kids could have gone out and changed the outcome of the election," Jeg said. "It made him realize we needed to start doing something."

Full of links to news issues and guest columns by punk-scene stalwarts and newcomers alike, the Punk Voter Web site, www.punkvoter.com, is designed to give interested audiences tools to inform themselves.

The support base for Punk Voter comprises 39 companies and 132 bands, including popular acts such as Green Day, No Doubt, Rancid and Foo Fighters.

Fat Mike said it was easy to win the backing of so many groups.

"It's not just about this election, but elections in the future and local politics."

PAT THETIC, ANTI-FLAG

"I was surprised at the overwhelming support we got from so many bands and so many punk rockers," he wrote. "I just put the word out there, and before you knew, we had this massive slew of bands, labels, zines, everybody."

In addition to encouraging people to register to vote, Jeg also stressed the need for the punk fan base to become active and informed in order to invoke change.

"We're new to this. We're really not political people," Jeg said. "This is

really a first for a scene so rooted in anti-establishment mentalities."

Punk Voter, with its *Rock Against Bush Vol. 1 and 2* compilations as well as the Rock Against Bush tour, does not shy away from criticizing the Republican incumbent. But Jeg said the organization is also focused on simply getting people to think about politics and how it affects their lives.

"There are a lot of punk rockers out there," Jeg said. "They can form a bloc of voters that legislators will have to recognize, and their needs and issues will have to be addressed."

Jeg said the site receives more than 500,000 hits a day and estimated that efforts on the Vans Warped Tour have registered more than 20,000 people: "We had a big presence on the 60-date tour with a Punk Voter booth."

He said Punk Voter workers signed up 300 to 400 young voters per day — sometimes as many as 900, as they did in Detroit.

Pat Thetic of the band Anti-Flag

said the group was excited to be involved with Punk Voter from its beginning.

"We were in contact with Fat Mike when he started it," Thetic said. "We said we'd love to be involved. We are fans of getting out ideas."

On top of being featured on the *Rock Against Bush Vol. 1* compilation, Anti-Flag recently wrapped up a stint on the Rock Against Bush tour.

"We're not just trying to win the election, we're trying to win the argument," Thetic said. "The current conservative thought is trying to take us backward, not forward. It's not just about this election, but elections in the future and local politics."

Specifically citing environmental degradation and its long-term ramifications, Thetic said there are important issues that are being decided by people who are "not us."

"Bush and Kerry are both

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