

Summary: Benefit rock concert will help defray defense expenses of Satyricon owner

George Touhouliotis is the Atlas of Portland's alternative rock world.

Granted, even on the level of local music, nothing is really accomplished by one person alone, but for individual contribution to the scene, the owner and operator of the Old Town nightclub Satyricon towers above most others involved.

In its seven-year history, Satyricon has been the lone piece of terra firma for a range of bands, artists and nightlife denizens whose worldviews don't exactly jibe with "Club MTV," "PM Magazine" or "Nightline." Blue Gallery, the Stadium Inn, the Long Goodbye, the X-Ray Cafe, Portland Underground -- other clubs have drifted in and out of the picture, but Satyricon's place at the center of the frame is grandfathered in by now.

For Touhouliotis, a Portland State University graduate, the club has been a personal, passionate endeavor -- at some times less so than at others, but always an experiment proudly undertaken. The experiment has paid off in the success of such Satyricon-nurtured bands as Poison Idea and **Napalm Beach**, who are finding both receptive crowds and respectful critics in Europe; the Dharma Bums, who've been barnstorming the clubs of America lately; and in the number of punk-inspired rock bands surviving in Portland.

"George is giving a whole segment of the music community a venue," says musician and promoter Craig Mayther. "He gives a chance to people who might never have a chance otherwise."

The club is no Paris Opera House, of course, but it doesn't want to be. I took the place, and Touhouliotis, to task in The Oregonian several months ago for failing to sustain the excitement of Satyricon's earlier years. But such a hard-nosed evaluation would only make sense for an establishment that in the past had justified our great expectations.

But these days Touhouliotis' leather-clad shoulders have more than the weight of this noisy young world on them. Since he and several other club employees and regulars were involved in a scuffle with police in April of last year, Touhouliotis reportedly has racked up several thousand in legal costs.

To help someone who's helped them, six of Portland's best alternative rock bands -- **Napalm Beach**, the Daddies, Sweaty Nipples, Hitting Birth, Completely Grocery and M99 -- will play an all-ages benefit concert Wednesday night, in both the upstairs and downstairs rooms of the Melody Ballroom.

Though posters advertise the event as a "benefit to support the First Amendment," proceeds will go to defray Touhouliotis' debt.

The problems began early one morning (or late one night, depending on your lifestyle) when Portland Police Officer Rocky Balada stopped what he was doing, arresting someone for heroin possession, to address the more pressing evil of public urination. The man relieving himself in a vacant lot next to Satyricon happened to be Touhouliotis.

Whether the resulting scuffle inside the club was an anti-authoritarian rocker's riot or an example of overzealous physical law enforcement still is a matter of dispute. Many of the charges -- riot, assault, escape, etc. -- against Touhouliotis and several other club regulars were dismissed by a grand jury. Others were dealt with through plea bargaining.

Touhouliotis pleaded no contest to resisting arrest, paid a \$250 fine and served 50 hours of community service. Steve Birch and John Noyola were convicted Wednesday of misdemeanor harassment charges and fined \$500 each.

The case still pending, and probably causing most of Touhouliotis' legal fees, is a civil suit filed by Balada and three other officers. The officers want damages for such injuries as "bruises, scrapes and abrasions . . . and a cut right thumb."

The First Amendment connection comes from Balada's claim to "mental distress" caused by a painting that was hung in Satyricon some time after the April incident. The painting of a policeman choking a bleeding black man included the name "Rocky."

Whether the painting was about him or not, Balada has become something of a folkloric figure in Old Town.

Meanwhile, there are those who view Touhouliotis as a hero of sorts.

"I booked the bands and got everything together," says Mayther about the benefit. "But really, George did it. It was easy for me to get the bands and all because everybody believes in what George is doing."

- AROUND TOWN

Also of interest this week is a Thursday night show by Miami-based rock quartet Saigon Kick.

Like Chicago rockers Enuff Z'nuff, Saigon Kick pays equal allegiance to "Revolver" and "Houses of the Holy." Like Jane's Addiction, the band also wouldn't mind being Siouxsie and the Banshees when the mood strikes. And like either of those other attitude-fueled new bands, Saigon Kick seems to think its mildly interesting subversion of hard-rock orthodoxy qualifies it for "great artist" stature.

Bravado always has a strong exchange rate in the pop marketplace, but this isn't enough change to buy much.

Even so, when the band reins in its pretensions and writes hooks rather than wrecking balls, such as on "ICU," from the band's debut, it shows a great deal of promise. And for pure energy blast,

most of what the band does will get a rocker's blood going.

Saigon Kick plays the Roseland Theater at 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$5 in advance or \$6 at the door.
PREVIEW Benefit for George Touhouliotis Where: Melody Ballroom When: 8 p.m. Wednesday With:
Sweaty Nipples, the Daddies, **Napalm Beach**, Completely Grocery, Hitting Birth, M99 Tickets: \$8
at the door, all ages

CITATION (APA STYLE)

HUGHLEY - of the Oregonian Staff, M. (1991, July 5). A LITTLE HELP FROM HIS FRIENDS . *Oregonian, The (Portland, OR)*, p. E06. Available from NewsBank: America's News – Historical and Current: <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.proxy2.multcolib.org/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/0EB08695CFA63B76>.

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