

CBGB

by Tim Young

Lou Reed was sitting in CBGB,
I was sitting on Greenwich Ave. and West 10th street.
I didn't know him then and I didn't know him later either,
but we were both there.
Now Lou is gone but I'm not and no one
is sitting in CBGB and someone else is sitting on
Greenwich Ave. and West 10th street.
Such a long time ago, funny how ancient of a long time ago.
CBGB was way across town from Greenwich Ave.
They had not much in common except for the City of New York and
being downtown.
Greenwich Village had such a familiar aroma for me,
while the wild East side held many more secrets.
That kind of aroma. A different kind of hunger there.
Greenwich village more about a history mixed in with certain
traditions and expectations of tourists. East village not certain about
anything least of all what might pop up next.

Walking down to Bleecker street from West 10th was no big deal
but then if you walked East on Bleecker all the way to the Bowery
then you would run into CBGB. It was kind of scary because of the
Bowery neighborhood. Unwashed, no varnish to hide its flaws.
Chaos a real possibility. I didn't run into CBGB until a few years
after
Lou Reed was sitting in there in 1976. But then I did run into it.
If there would have been cell phones in 1976 I would have amazing
photos
of CBGB. The infamous, horrible men's room, the amazing string of
beer lights
in surreal neon colors running down the entire length of the bar.(and
the bar was long) And, of course the stage and the writing on the

walls. And people. You can find some photos like I've mentioned online.

I do have one incredible photo of myself and my bass player sitting in what they called the dressing room after our performance on Valentine's Day in 1981. From the expression on our faces it is easy to infer that we just had one hell of a good time. It was true too. It was an audition night. The sound man recorded our set off the board and gave us a cassette. He liked us but we never did get booked on a regular night. It really didn't matter too much, what mattered was that we had played CBGB. My bass player was David, my drummer Artie, my keyboard player Scott, and my lead guitar Dave. If we ever played another gig with these players, I don't remember it. Other versions of the band did persist and some were recorded. I did have a knack for coming up with a good band name in those days and this particular band was known as Food. Our title song, had we ever cut an album was one I wrote. "Food For You."

When we had packed our gear into the rented van that I had parked about half a block from the club, it would not start. After many tries I had to open the hood to have a look and that's when the discovery was made that someone had run off with our battery. I don't remember all the details after that except probably, we hired more than one cab and then dropped the stuff off at my apartment to be collected by the guys the next day. Probably. I didn't live on Greenwich Ave. and 10th street anymore. I lived in mid-town at 43rd street and 9th Ave in a HUD funded building because I was also an actor and had my Actor's Equity card.

I never saw that photo of the bass player and I until later and later than that it had been blown up and I still have it today. It was taken by a friend of my bass player. I think his name was Dave as well. I believe it was he who blew the photo up to poster size and it's incredible because our faces are just so radioactive. By 1981, Lou Reed, Blondie, Television, The Ramones, were all big stars and didn't

hang in CBGB so much. At least I never saw them. But the club was the living, breathing, blood pumping, fucking heart of rock n roll. Once inside CBGB it was obvious as the life force flowed within you and without you. Thanks can be said to Hilly Kristal who opened the club. The irony is he was never, at least during the formative years, even a fan of rock n roll.

Some time before my band Food played our audition night, I visited CBGB, maybe for the first time, when they still had movie theater seats right in front of the stage. I sat in one of those and saw a band that night I never saw again but they were phenomenal. In my opinion there is nothing quite like incredible electric guitars. I remember their name. They were The Necessaries. They played a song about tension, feeling the tension, living the tension. That night a certain kind of tension entered my bloodstream, rattled my brain; the kind of food that helps keep me sane.

