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SPEX

# Peel Obsession

## Falling hard for Melt-Banana

The first time Melt-Banana beat me up was during my first week of higher education. As a fresh-faced freshman in a completely foreign city — Chicago — I desperately grasped for any shred of friendship, tagging along with some punk rock sophomores to a "noise rock" show at a run-down bowling alley in the sketchy part of town (aka every part of town that wasn't downtown before I knew any better). According to my starchy father, who branded all music except swing and Sinatra as noise, "noise rock" could have meant anything, and the way my cohorts described it ("It's like punk, but crazier." "It's like a drill straight in your ear") it sounded sinister and actually painful. I was psyched.

My companions and I scrambled into the all-ages venue and pushed our way through the piercings and patches to the front of the stage just as the singer shouted, "We are Melt-Banana from Tokyo, Japan!" Then all four musicians leapt into the air and dropped in a salvo of ear-splitting chaos and clamor. The drummer looked like he was in a back-alley fight with his kit, thrashing cymbals and cold-cocking the snare. The bassist strangled her instrument with the cold finesse of a femme fatale. The guitarist, donning a surgical mask, diabolically operated on his guitar, extracting squeals, shrieks and B-movie dissonance, while the frontwoman chopped herky-jerky at the air and barked haikus like a terrier with Tourette's. Before the song had barely begun, it was over, and the singer abruptly bowed and moused, "Thank you."

**Melt-Banana,**
**The Athiarchists,**
**Rye Wolves,**
**9th Moon Black**
8 pm Wednesday, Oct. 17
WOW Hall
$10 adv., $12 door

Melt-Banana did this 25 more times in the next 40 minutes, caterwauling through a song and casting it aside like a rotten vegetable. The singer yipped and yelped and the guitarist catapulted off the bass drum, kicking out one ceiling panel after another. In music and performance, it was an exercise in deconstruction, and with a dizzied head and some definite hearing loss, I spilled out of that bowling alley sweaty, exhausted, euphoric and a full-blown disciple of noise. EW

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