

Greg Kessler Interview  
Interviewer: Jason Stacy  
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Jason Stacy: This is Jason Stacy interviewing Greg Kessler, for Madison Historical. The date is November 3, 2021 at 4:12 in the afternoon. We're at Recess Brewery and we're talking about the music scene in 1980s here in Madison County. Greg, tell us a little bit about yourself.

Greg Kessler: I'm from Granite City. I was born in 1967. I went all through Granite City public school. I really didn't discover music in any serious way until high school. My first concert with Bob Seger, and Michael Bolton opened up in 1983 at the arena. It was astonishing. But I didn't go to a lot of concerts. I didn't go to a lot I think the next concert I went to was Van Halen 1984, which we only bought tickets to because Slade was supposed to open up and they didn't. Velcro opened up, which was a Romantics rip off band. And then I don't think I went to another, I didn't really go to a lot of arena concerts. Not long after that I discovered other music and went to... so high school I didn't see a lot I... the first live band I can remember seeing was freshman year in high school at our first dance of ankle Beowulf played. I'm sure this is... I'm sure it's an accurate, but I have this image of them wearing like, leather vests with no shirts and trying to look, you know, super Frank Frazetta in front of a bunch of high school kids. And again, I'm sure they didn't, but I have this image that they likely played, you know, the tower by Angel, and maybe some Trooper, and, you know, some Billy Squier or something.

JS: Now, Greg, usually when I think of the Greater St. Louis area, I think of this as a classic rock area. And you're proving that true in what you're describing, I think of KSHE as defining the region. But I know you've done some research on the punk rock scene in the Greater St. Louis area, and I know you played in a band called Snake Ranch. So I wonder if you could just tell us a little bit what punk rock was like, what the scene was like here in the Midwest, when you were younger?

GK: Okay, well, the gear that I had...anything I know about it is things I've learned about it in hindsight, because there were things going on when I was in high school, but I had no concept of it. So on the east side, there were bands, but there weren't a lot. There was a band, Club Zero from Alton, was around in 83, I think. I graduated 85. So they were around an 83. Max Load, which is actually Belleville, but played around. They were around in 81, I think. There was a band called East Vietnam that was around that time period that I don't know. I only know the name. There were some shows, I think in Edwardsville, but it really it didn't exist to any great degree. Around 80...I'm sure I'm gonna get yelled at... but there were other bands that came up after, there were bands like The Bishops and The Mockers, that showed up around the same time. But again, I wasn't aware of any of this. My introduction to everything was in St. Louis going to Animal House and seeing The Nukes for the first time and The Eyes and bands like Boyfriend and Ferrari that were doing Night Ranger songs and stuff but The Nukes were definitely in early St. Louis punk band. Oddly enough, The Nukes took that name and didn't realize that there was another band called The Nukes that preceded them by about five or six years that they had no concept of. So all that stuff wasn't, I had no concept of any of that stuff. And I

knew there was shows in Mississippi Nights and I knew there were things going on. In Granite, the only thing that I can the only thing that I know happened in Granite City was my senior year... and... 84-85... a band called Rude Pets, who had actually opened for the Dead Kennedys and opened for TSOL, who were more like a new wave cover band, played a place called Nash's in Granite with another band called State of Shock, which is a new wave band from St. Louis They played, but I wasn't near cool enough to have gone. Friends of mine went to see it and thought was really cool and then those same people Rude Pets actually opened for The Clash at Keel when they came through on Combat Rock after most of the band had quit, but the Rude Pets did that, so they already knew the Rude Pets and they went to that but I wasn't near cool enough to go I was still way wearing bell bottoms at that point and I think playing dungeon dragons more than I should have. But um, they played that stuff. So that was something was happening in Missouri or Illinois at the time, but I had no concept of it.

JS: Yeah. So would you say St. Louis was primarily where most of the kids went for shows?

6:06 GK: Sure there wasn't very much going on here. In Madison County the big thing... there were... there were bars where people played but it was mostly covered . In fact, I had when I worked...I worked at IHOP midnights at one point, we just had these regulars come in and talk and I said something about wanting to be in a band and the guy looked at me and he said, "Well, there's only two things people in Granite City make: babies and bands, and none other than turnout and any good." And so there was Yeah, I mean, everybody went to St. Louis, for that stuff. Now, like I said, Club Zero was playing. So they were playing VFW shows and things like that on the east side of the river. And they were doing battle of the bands on the east side of the east side of the river, but I had no concept. The first time I came into contact with an east side band was Judge Nothing was with Club Zero at the time. They played at SIU in the Meridian Ballroom with Ultraman from St. Louis and Naked Raygun.

JS: Wow.

GK: And there were a few shows and that was February of 86. And there were a few shows right before that, that were put on by like a left-wing group at the school. But that night, people from St. Louis came over and absolutely destroyed the University Center, broke the elevators, smashed all the trophy cases, broke the ice cream machine. I mean, they just started. But I saw Club Zero, saw Ultraman, I already knew who Naked Raygun was, but I knew who either those bands were and I saw them. And I didn't even talk to them, but saw them interact with people and had no idea who they were. Within a year we had...we were playing with them. But it was...and I had just had no clue what was going on.

JS: And you were playing with them with Snake Ranch.

GK: Yeah, our first we played our very first show at Corner Tavern, which was in Edwardsville, right behind the Farm Fresh.

JS: Yep.

GK: And they had started having shows there just a little bit earlier than that. We played our first show March 7 of 87. And it wasn't it wasn't Snake Ranch, it was Beer Frogs, which is basically the same guys. But we played. We practiced for two weeks wrote like 12 songs, learned a couple covers and played it was absolute chaos.

JS: And what were you guys called again? The Beer Frogs?

GK: Yeah.

JS: And...and...who...who? Who was your inspiration? This would have been 86?

GK: No, it was March 7 of 87.

JS: Okay, and so March 6, and who are you trying to sound like what those 12 song?

GK: Oh, I have no idea.

JS: Okay.

GK: We...we wrote...Jim Bone was playing guitar. So a lot of it was up to Jim and whatever he wrote. And we actually two guitar players got a guy was getting Mike Slinsky. And I actually have on a tape somewhere because a lot of our songs were just the same riff over and over again. And I have a I have a recording of Mike who was a decent guitar player at the time screaming "Just one change! Come on!" So, it's been a... it's been a mantra for the last 30 years, because a lot of them are just, you know, [imitates simple guitar riff] no changing. No idea. So we had no clue, we were just... we were just going to go... even the idea of being in a band... I had never even considered... never considered being in a band ever. But we would go to Animal House. And I don't know if it was late 85 or early 86. I was going to McKendree in Lebanon, but they had come to pick me up and take me to Animal House one night. And I was messing around.

JS: And where was Animal House?

GK: Animal House was on 367 and Belfontaine. It was the old Mark Twain theater. I saw Jaws there.

JS: Okay.

GK: And then they had pulled a bunch of the seats out, put couches in had a band and...and then the upstairs was actually on Friday nights was like a hip hop club. On a Saturday night, the whole place was a hip hop club.

JS: Uh huh.

GK: But on Fridays, it was more of a new wave club downstairs. And um, I was playing around and I was acting dumb. And it seems like in my head, I remember somebody being very sad. There's always

somebody crying. That's what we did, not what I did. You know, everybody was depressed. And so he's messing around trying to make somebody laugh and Jim Harper was my friend and one of the guys came to me said, you know, I'm gonna start a band and you're gonna be the singer. And I went home and went back to McKendree. And because when Jim says something, I go, okay. And so for the next month, I wrote lyrics. And then when I saw him again, I don't know if he was surprised or not. I said, we're gonna practice? And so Jim and I kept trying to get things together, and we just, it just didn't work out and we weren't really looking for...we weren't doing it the right way. But he met Jim Bone, and Mike Slinsky, at the fraternity and at...at SIU, and said, Okay, we're gonna do this. So it was, it was Mike and Jim, and Keith [unintelligible] from Granite, we got a Mark Soba [?]. And Mike said, we played and we...I think we played...I think we played three shows. We played, I think we played twice at the Corner, and once in the basement of the, like, Community Center at SIU at that...what are the dorms called?

JS: Cougar Village?

GK: No, 30 years ago, before they built that stuff it was on...it was like the family units... apartments and stuff.

JS: That's not Cougar Village?

GK: No, no it's by the lake.

JS: Yeah, I know what you're talking about.

GK: So we played there. I don't know why we played it.

JS: So who's your audience who showed up? I mean, Jeff friends show up, or...

GK: Our very first show we played with Club Zero. So they had a crowd. But then we told people hey, we're gonna play we're gonna do some people did show up and watched us just massacre the stage. And I think, I want to say Jim went through the wall at one point, it was just, it was just absolute chaos. There was no music to what we were doing.

JS: Yeah.

GK: But someone remarked that it looked like Black Flag opening for REM. Because Club zero, and they just a reunion the other day, they are fabulous musicians, they can write, they should have been stars. We were just bedlam on stage. And um, so yeah, our friends started to show up. And then we started we immediately started meeting other bands. So this one at SIU now not of people showed up, but I actually have it on tape. Awful. And it's the first time my parents came. So they were like, Oh, this is such a waste of your life. But then the next one though, this the second we played, lots of people showed up.

JS: And you're still beer frogs at this time?

GK: Yeah. And lots of people showed up. And one of the guys showed up was the guy from Whoppers Taste Good. Who were hardcore band from St. Louis. And they're the ones that recorded our first demo. And I mean, it just sort of spiraled out from there. And I think that's, to me, at least, and I could be completely wrong. It seems like 86-87 is when things start happening more on the side of the river. A band called The Primitives, who eventually become Uncle Tupelo, they start playing at VFWs and stuff for fraternities at Edwardsville at SIU they said play for Sick Pie and they play from these other bands...

JS: And Uncle Tupelo eventually became Sun Volt and Wilco, which people probably have heard today, if not Uncle Tupelo.

GK: And there were a few bands or a few places in Edwardsville where you could play; there was the Granary and Granny's Rocker, and there was a place downtown not far from here, I think, Spanky's, where there were some bands that played and, and Stagger. In between the alley between Stagger and the building there was a big thing that said The Mockers. The Mockers, pretty sure we're from Alton, and their big song was "Corn." And when they played that they would bring big bags of dried corn and whip it at the crowd. And I think we played with them, and I have a video of them. And their bass player went on to become assistant superintendent.

JS: Of Edwardsville district?

GK: And now he's over in St. Louis. His specialty is fixing districts that are falling apart. Bill McDonald, great, great guy.

JS: And what was the band he was in again? The Mockers?

GK: The Mockers. I don't know if you call them...and a lot of this goes into were they really need a punk band? I don't care. They were playing underground shows for no money in front of the same crowd that were going to go see the Ramones. That were going to see The Nukes. The were going to go see Ultraman, and were going to buy tickets to see The Clash when they came. So whether you want to call him punk or not, that's up to you.

JS: Now. What does that mean, "underground crowd.?" What does that mean in Madison County?

GK: I mean, it was it was most of it was at VFWs and American Legions and Corner Tavern, lots VFWs, VFWs in Collinsville, VFWs in Belleville, there were a couple places in Alton that I don't know very well. I know there's some places. There was a community center, there was another band called The Avon Ladies. They opened up with the Dead Kennedys. And I don't know them either. I know a little bit about them, but don't know. So there was this sporadic thing, but I think at the same time that that, I think the

same time that it explodes in Madison County, or starts to surge in Madison County, is this sort of second wave in St. Louis. There's an earlier wave in St. Louis, that really started in '76. And there's a little bit of a lull, I think, at some point. And I think '84, '85, '86 there's an upswing again. And so that's kind of where we came in.

JS: And what's the fan base for underground music? You said that you often had a lot of people repeat, come to shows and that you sort of got a scene where you'd know people and so how, who were those people? How did they fit? Was there a sort of...conscience...conscious scene on their parts?

GK: I don't know. When we were in high school. We were you know, there wasn't there was a small group of us in high school...because there weren't people that listen to music, but didn't sort of outwardly show everybody that they were, you know, they wanted to be set aside. So but we kind of did, there was a small group of us, which I came too late. I came to later, I wouldn't ever claim to be you know, you know, the first guy at Granite that bought a...came to school in a Motorhead shirt or something, I wasn't because I was, again, I was wearing bell bottoms, and listening to a lot of Bob Seger. And I had to be sort of shown the door. You know, in...my people that were my age, people like, Bob and [unintelligible], my friends, Jay Huber, John, John, [unintelligible]. John Williams, and Jim Brown. I mean, those people, Steve Kusmerzik, whose music those people had an interest in that music beforehand. And there was a I think a lot of it is, you know, there's always somebody feeding you things in Granite, there was a place called, there was a c- op records. And there was a place called The Record Company. And one of the guys that worked there was named Gavin Grace. And I think Gavin fed people music. And Bob worked at the record store. So I think Bob heard a lot of things and would feed it to people. And Gavin, Gavin, had played in like prog bands, and, I guess classic rock bands, I'm not even sure in the 70s. He was...he was older than us. But he had done a lot of the stuff and he played like experimental and fusion jazz and stuff. And, and he was, and I think in some ways, it wasn't just music, it was, it was sort of his attitude too. One of the things that Gavin would do to annoy people was he would pick two or three records out of the use bin and mark them up to \$99.99 like a Partridge Family Album, and people would come up to the thing and say, you know, this has got to be wrong, right? They didn't want to buy it. They were just upset that it...No, no, that's really worth a lot of money to put that back before you heard it. And it was great. He just he was kind of, and he was, you know, by far he was not part of the punk scene, but Gavin was just sort of amazing in his own right. He was an artist and a visual artist. And I think he was the first guy I ever talked to about Glass...

JS: Philip Glass?

Philip Glass. He was the first guy who talked about Phillip Glass.

JS: Yeah. The minimalist composer.

GK: Yeah. He was first person that I ever heard talk about The Butthole Surfers. He was the first person I talked to about Sonic Youth.

JS: Now, this is this about the same time you were in Beer Frogs soon to be Snake Ranch, or is this earlier?

GK: I mean, I knew about Gavin earlier. But he was around for all of this stuff. But I think he's the one that fed... I think any scene in some in some way in Granite is due to Gavin.

JS: Okay.

GK: Now he was feeding people stuff and there was a record company at Cottonwood mall here in Edwardsville. But I don't think it was there that early because I worked there for a while.

JS: Is that slackers?

GK: No, they actually used to be a mall there.

JS: Right.

GK: And it was inside the mall. But I work there, Johns work there, but that was mostly 87, so before that, you know the person that I know that was feeding us stuff was Gavin. Whatever there was, I'm sure there was somebody exactly like Gavin in Alton, and somebody exactly like him and Belleville and there was somebody like him or Edwardsville. I just don't know who they are. But Gavin was giving us... not me as much because I didn't know him as well as other people. Again, I came in on the tail end of a lot of things, but I was able to benefit from the things that Gavin was giving out. And he just, he seemed to know everything. He seemed to have a, he seemed to have a knowledge of all this stuff. And you seem to know what to direct people to.

JS: Do you think that that's something that still exists today in the same way? Or, you know, you work with young people now...and so...do you see music being discovered in a similar fashion? Or is it largely now searching and algorithms.

GK: It's, you know, I don't know if I mean, the searching, I don't think is at a record store. I don't think they'll go to a record store and talk to somebody behind a desk. I don't think that's... for some people, I'm sure it is. For most of them. I think it's a matter of sitting down at... sitting down computer and looking on YouTube, or, or GarageBand, or whatever the other stuff is, or whatever. But I don't think I don't think it happens anymore. And I think it's, I think it's something, the phrase I was having my head is, music isn't an imperative anymore. It's not music, even though people like music, love music, I don't doubt that they love it. But there was a point where, or at least for me, there was a point where when I listened to said way more about who I was than what music I liked.

JS: Good. So what, what back, back to the late 80s, early 90s. And, you know, when you were just starting to play in bands, and music was an imperative for you. And you felt like it was for a lot of people too. It said something about who they were. In this region, what were the kinds of listeners, right, what was the different sort of genres that people were listening to? Maybe bands that were maybe up the

feeding chain a little more or down the feeding chain, you described yourself as kind of in an underground, playing VFWs. So how did you fit in the ecosystem of music listeners around you?

GK: The nice thing was, when I discovered the music, when I discovered the crowd, there was no... I didn't feel like there was a hierarchy to it. One of the things that was great was you were accepted, almost immediately. And if you didn't know something, nobody gave you grief about it. They just oh, you listen to that, too. Because everybody had a different, had a different thing. And everybody had the band that they wanted to rave about. And it's everybody had a band that they kind of thought of as "Oh, this is the thing I can tell other people." And then there was stuff that everybody was doing. I mean, everybody had, if you talk about if you talk about like tapes, everybody had, Black Flag, the first five years, or whatever it is with the [indecipherable]. Everybody had that. Everybody had the Repo Man soundtrack. That was just like, I mean, you had to have that.

JS: The movie Repo Man.

GK: Yeah. Yeah. Because it had it had on Johnathan Richmond "Pablo Picasso" on it. And it had it had "Burning Sensations" on it. And I mean, it was just, you know, it was one of the things you, you had to have. And then everybody rented that movie all the time. So there was that stuff. But there wasn't kind of a hierarchy when you slipped in you, you slipped in and there was not..... I will say there's a difference between the... what I always perceived as the Illinois scene and the Missouri scene.

JS: Yeah. Tell me about that.

GK: The Illinois scene was very much more rooted in, in classic rock and in metal. Not that that's what it sounded like. But if you were to ask, this has just been this has been my experience. If you were to ask, you know, at that time, you would walk up to somebody in a hardcore band in St. Louis and say, What is your favorite Rush album? They wouldn't be absolutely offended that you asked. If you walked up to one of us and said, What was your favorite Rush album? Oh, my favorite. I like 2012. But I think Wish You Were Here...not Wish You Were Here...Permanent Waves. That's my favorite. I like Permanent Wave better. But I know people who like, you know, the second or third album better and we covered a Rush songs forever. And no one ever knew what it was. But I think growing up over here, you don't have... it seemed like people in St. Louis had quicker access to record stores and more things were going on. So people over here had a longer... a longer gestation period with classic rock. So you know, if you... like you go to anybody in if you ask anybody in in Snake Ranch or in, in, in Beer Frogs in 87, you walked up and said, you know, what's the name of that...that um, that hit off the off the Angel album. It's The Tower. You know, what's your favorite Nazareth song? They would have said, Oh, this Flight's Night. Hair of the Dog, what are you talking about? If you went and asked other people, even if they knew some people wouldn't probably wouldn't even have said, because it's you know, there was there was a little bit of posturing going on and posturing everywhere. But it seemed like those of us on this side of the river and this doesn't go for everybody in Missouri, because Rob Wagner, who played bass for us played in Ultraman and played... and Rob can play the baselines for all of the Rush albums. He grew up St. Louis. He was, you know, early on, I mean, Rob's one man punk rock explosion. But in general, it seems like there was kind of, you know, that classic rock stuff, but for us, no, I never denied how much I liked Bob Seger. You know, I never, I never, you know,

JS: And what do you say accounts for that? Is it just down to a rural area with smaller cities and a more urban environment in St. Louis? Or does it have something to do with something particular about the Illinois side of the river?

GK: We just had less access. I think we just had less...when I worked at record company, this would have been 86-87. We were still selling like four copies of the Roger Hodgson solo tape a week. Okay, but no one should be buying Hodgson's solo album, or Supertramp albums for that matter. But we were selling like four copies of his solo album, with "Sleeping with the Enemy" on it, a week. So you know, it's, I think it was just you had less access. Now, my cousin. My, my first, I'm sure you heard the Sex Pistols at some, I'm sure you heard that name, or on TV or on the news or whatever. But I didn't know what it was. It was just a name that ran around my head. In 83, when we were going to Bob Seger, we stopped the truck stop on 203 right on the highway where the racetrack is now. And I went with my brother and a bunch of other a bunch of other guys that were big KSHE guys. And we were at the rest stop. I don't know why we stopped at the truck stop. But they were given my cousin Richard absolute hell because he had bought the Sex Pistols album. And he liked it. But Rich was also a big class rock guy. But he also listened to some of this other stuff and they gave him no end of grief over. And that was the first time I had connected that it was a band. And I think within a year of that, I had the tape. Not thanks to Rich, but because of people I knew. And it sort of all of a sudden, it all kind of crystallized for me.

JS: And what year would have been?

GK: it would have been beginning of 83 end of 84 combined. The big thing was, at the end of my sophomore year, there were there were two high schools in Granite, South which is the high school now and North, which is SWIC. And, you know, my sophomore year they combined them. And the guys I knew from playing D&D lived in, who went to South, all of a sudden, we were there together all the time. And my, my, my bad hair and giant leather belt and bell bottoms were not going to happen. So there was a there was a there was a there was a noticeable push to try and sort of change things. And they kept saying, "Don't you like The Clash? Don't you like The Clash?" and I still to this day, absolutely cannot stand Combat Rock. Just think it is a terrible tape. But then one day, my friend Jay, we were riding in his car, and he threw in London Calling. God, that's amazing. And it sort of started to change. And in fact, we drove to record company one night and said, I'm gonna buy my first tape. And I had a choice. They said, "We're closing. You got to grab something really quick." So there were two things sitting there. And they said, grab one. So one was Iggy Pop, The Idiot and the other was Ramones Subterranean Jungle, and I grabbed some tree and jungle which in hindsight, I think was the best thing to grab because I like singsongy and I like the choruses. But that was kind of that was kind of where it all kind of started then I bought you know straight leg jeans... But, but still those guys even though they were into this other stuff, especially Jay. Jay it was a big, big Willie Nelson fan, biig, big Grateful Dead fan. Was really into KSHE classics. Really ended The Blend that had a hit with the Warriors stuff.

JS: So it sounds like there was a lot of actually diversity in listening over here and that there was a lot of cross fertilization. There weren't sort of like musical tribes where people were just dedicated to punk rock or just dedicated a metal.

GK: The...well, the people who listen to like different kinds of music, they listen to lots of things. If you were to talk to the normal person walking down the hall at the high school, that wasn't the case. They would not have, they would not have been willing, your typical... What's a good example? My senior years when Born in the USA came out. Your typical Springsteen fan was not going to give the Dead Kennedys a shot.

JS: So I want to I want to go back something because you mentioned you got your haircut and got some straight leg jeans. But I saw on YouTube, a closed circuit, cable broadcast of snake ranch, and you were had what look like shoulder length hair and it kilt.

GK: Yeah, that was three years later.

JS: So tell me about the from... from... Beer Frogs to three years later, you're on cable television with Snake Ranch. Tell me about those three years.

GK: Well, Jim asked me to... Jim mistakenly said he wanted to be in a band. And I got too excited about it. So we tried to play, played our first show in 87. And we... the best thing that happened was we knew Club Zero. Because Club Zero were already playing Mississippi Nights, they had already opened, they were opening for The Descendants, and they were in... to me with the exception of Max Load who was much earlier, Clubs Zero is the is the first East Side band to really make an impact. They're playing Turner's, they're playing Mississippi Nights, they opened for The Sescendants, they opened the Dead Milkmen. They, I mean, the list of people they opened for It's just huge. And they were around and they were also playing with all the bands in St. Louis. So we knew them. And they told us some things. And then we really just kind of played Corner. Until... and I don't remember why. We went to made a trip over to an Bernard's Pub on Lafayette in St. Louis, and gave our tape to John Green. And John said, well, "come over and play," and John started booking us, start booking us a lot. So John wants to like this because all of a sudden we were playing a lot. And then we got we got a show on The Landing to play at Kennedy's, although when we first played it Kennedys, they were only allowing one band at night to play for three hours. So we had to learn a bunch of stuff to play. It was terrible. And then about six months later, we're like, Oh, why don't we have four bands play and more people come and so we start playing Bernard's, and Bernard's, we, for one reason or another, we started getting... we start getting shows we played with Henry Rollins, we played with HR and Bad Brains, we opened for Social Distortion.

JS: Those are some big names.

GK: So it was great. But this is all pre-92. This is all pre-Nirvana, before they started bringing bands, but before that, before they figured out how to make money on it. Because these people were showing up and they were just they were sleeping in people's houses and getting up next morning and going.

JS:

Even Social Distortion?

GK: Yeah, they were, it was their first tour after he got out of prison. So it was a prison. They had Mommy's Little Monster, 1945 and stuff, but Prison Bound was the first one where it kind of sounded like it does now and or at least the first to my knowledge, but he they played, and it seems like every other song was a Stones song, but it was great. It was one of my favorite shows almost nobody showed up. But it was it was just such an amazing show.

JS: And you open for them.

GK: Yeah. We had we played and there's a couple of where we were playing was that, that was at Bernard's on Lafayette. And, and Henry Rollins played there to you. Yeah, opened for Rollins there and you know, and then there were shows we never played there but there were shows.... There was a roller skating rink on Del Mar called Sports Palace. And we didn't play there. We were too late for that. Turner's which was Turner's on...it was, had been like Turner's Athletic Club on Salisbury in North St. Louis. I saw Black Flag there, but everybody played there. We were too late for that. But um, there were a lot of people playing there, or played the whole bunch, really, everybody, there's just tons of flyers from there.

JS: And so how often in those in those years before 92 And we'll get to 92 because that sounds like an important year. How often were you playing out with Snake Ranch?

GK: Early on it was a little sporadic, but it ended up being at least every couple of weeks. And then one of the great things that happened, because we were playing there was a place on the Atlantic called First Rock. And we played there a lot. And then Bernard's closed and reopened and it was in the same building as First Rock. We played one show in a Frosty factory with club zero who was Judged Nothing. We started playing Kennedy's more because they were having multiple bands. But one of the best things that happened and we would play VFWs and stuff in Illinois, in O'Fallon, a place called, and I don't know what name came first. First, it was Indoor Sports, or the the Tornado Shelter. This guy had like an under 21 place where kids could come play foosball, and he built a stage. And all of a sudden, we had an under 21 place, and he would book us every week. And we were playing with tons of people, we were playing with hardcore bands, and we've played with metal bands, Nuclear Winter, we played with Ultraman there, we played, we played with Boppers there, and we played with, and then there was all these bands from Belleville, there was [indecipherable] Monster, and there was Dimension 13 and Disco Zombies, who eventually combined to making [indecipherable] and mice, and there was it was just like, we could play like, every weekend there. And there was a huge crowd that showed up. And it was a blast. And it wasn't, we didn't make a lot of money. But I mean, we got to play every weekend. And we played you know, we maybe didn't want to cover it was all originals, and they came and they knew the songs. And they play foosball and hung out. And, and that was great. So we played, we played a lot. And then eventually, the guy that ran Bernard's opened up Club 367, which was in the old Animal House building. And when it first opened up, they were booking some real cool stuff. We opened for Jesus Lizard Bear and we opened for All there.

JS: And All was Descendants after Milo left.

GK: And it was great. It was those were those were our two last shows. And we thought oh, this is great, because it's a big place. Huge stage. Lots of seating, lots of parking. This will be great. We have a place that isn't Mississippi Nights that isn't looking to, they're not booking Roy Buchanan Yeah, um, you know, they're going to do this and this is going to be great. And, and I don't know what caused it. I don't know why it went this direction. But it very quickly went from booking a lot of different stuff to booking metal, and it became almost a strictly metal place and not like, not like Slayer or something, a lot of metal that I wouldn't have.... And I went back a year later. And the band was Rabbit with a Habit. And the opening act was a guy who called, who billed himself as the heavy metal magician. And there were foosball tables and pinball. All right, no, but there was a huge scene there. There are people who look back on that club has like the apex of their, their, their young adult...

JS: And what town was this in what town was the club in?

GK: North St. Louis. It was the same building as Animal House. Animal House had closed. And I think I don't know what there was every time it may have been like a blues bar there in between. And then Club 367 opened up and it was great for a while we thought this is going to be... but then we broke up.

JS: Yeah. So where's the cable access come in there? What was that show cuz it looked like it was on quite a bit. And you were sort of the featured band in that episode.

GK: So we did it twice. Every week there was a local band. The very first episode was Uncle Tupelo. And they recorded it in Jay's bedroom. The show was Critical Mass with Deedee Schofield who's from Collinsville. And she went to KTHX or Double Helix and said, I want to do this. And so labels sent her videos. So she would, you know, run videos. And she was like a VJ. She talked about what was coming. And she talked about the calendar, what was coming out and what releases were coming out. And then she would interview a local band, and there would be like two segments where they played. And that was in between the videos. And it was amazing. I mean, there was no reason we should have been on that show. Because we were schmucks and she put us on she put us on, actually twice. We did one in the studio. And then they did we did a benefit for her. And we played at Kennedy's and it was us, and it was us and Sinister Dane and The Urge both of whom want to get signed to major labels. Yeah, like do big tours, and us and, and we and the Kennedy stage was about the size of four of these tables. And there were the four of us, plus three GoGo girls, and a violin player hanging off the stage. But it was great because at that point, we were drawing, we were drawing a decent sized crowd Sinister Dane and The Urge were drawn a mass crowd and there were just hundreds of people. And that one's on there as well. I have pigtails in that one. And then there's some interviews from it and stuff and was great. And she just, she really, I think, is an unsung hero of the entire scene. And she also played videos. It's kind of like 120 Minutes. But she, you know, great, great stuff. And, um, you know, she was, she was one of the people that introduced the new Duncan Imperials to St. Louis, you know, she was a big, and um, she played a lot of big, big Replacements fan, and she could see all that stuff on there. So she did a lot of it. It was great. She, she was, like I said, you know, the people in bands, we have to do reunions. Deedee doesn't get near the near the recognition she should. Because it was great. And there were a couple of others, there was one called Velocity. There was a little bit later it was late, it was mid 90s. And then there was apparently somebody at SIU in the TV department that did

some stuff in the early 80s. But no one seems to know much about it. Max Load, I think, did one, but there doesn't seem to be a lot of information.

JS: So how did the shop Hullabaloo fit or influence any kind of scene that you were in.

GK: With Donna. Donna Kmot who was one of the people that that that started it. Donna had, she was tending bar in St. Louis in the 70s. And she was the first person to bring in touring punk rock acts. She booked...Hot Rods. She booked 999 and The Dickies, she brought in Steel Pulse to Stages, which was in which was right there by the highway on 203. And so she was booking that stuff. And she was also doing these punk rock record spins, at clubs in St. Louis. And then there was a guy, and so she was doing that. But she was also, she has always been, I think, a vintage poster person. So they bought the, I don't know...did she worked there? She just knew in place called Edgar DeSoto and Edgar DeSoto sold vintage clothing. And she eventually, I think, bought it out or bought the stock or whatever. And she opened a small place called Hullabaloo with a guy named Dana Hunchy. And Donna knew everybody, Donna to this day knows everybody. Donna knows everyone, everyone walking. So whatever Donna did, people followed and Hullabaloo would have some shows and stuff. But everybody would come in because they knew they could pick up clothes. And she also I think I'll get yelled at if I'm wrong. I believe she was involved in the punk rock fashion show, like 81 or something like that. So she's just been there the whole time. So people naturally came to the store to buy stuff. And as it grew, you know, it was only place in St. Louis that you could buy an MC Five shirt or Dead Kennedys shirt. You know, you could go in and you could buy Doc Martens or you could buy Manic Panic stuff with hair, you could buy lip service, which was like... Do you remember lip service. It was um, it was almost like hair, metal goth. clothes from LA. You know? But you come in by that and you could also come in and buy used clothes you go in and you know, you needed a if you needed a flannel shirt, tie around your waist so you could look like the kid on on the Circle Jerks album, you can go buy it . They had T shirts, they had boots and had all this other stuff. And then you could get posters and posters there. So everybody's kind of followed Donna. So that was one of the things that we discovered. I don't remember who told me about it originally. Somebody said you should go over to over Hullabaloo and I remember the first time I went over I bought I remember I was just stunned. They had James Brown shirts. I bought a James Brown shirt. And I said, I was with my girlfriend, and I said, "What should I buy the The Addams Family or the James Brown shirt" and she said "you know you're gonna have more fun in the James Brown shirt." And I bought an African Bombatta and the Soul Sonic Force shirt. Where are you going to get an African Bpmbatta shirt? I eventually I wish I had it. I traded it to Anthony Kiedas from Red Hot Chili Peppers at the show. He was like "I need that." He said we're friends with his son and I traded him for a shirt and like a bunch of stickers and my mom sold the shirt or threw it away.

JS: was this at a Red Hot Chili Peppers show?

GK: Yeah. it was them. I'm pretty sure it was the Masters of Funk tour. It was them, Fishbone and Thelonus Monster. So you know about this.... And then we did Critical Mass with DeeDee and it turned out the DeeDee work that Hullabaloo and I was complaining, I was working at a record store downtown in St. Louis. But it was a corporate thing was Camelot Records. And they were making a cut my hair all the time. And she said, and at that point I was when my hair was long in high school, it was nicely feathered. By the time I got to this point, I was growing it out. All these hardcore bands had long hair, so

I was growing my hair, and I liked it. And I will admit to having a thing for Bono at that point. So it's growing here, I want to try and be honest about my own..., but I said I'm sick of cutting it. And um, she said "I think I can get your job." So I went saw Donna and talked to her. And he said, Why do you want I said, I just I want to do something else. I want to stop cutting my hair. And she hired me. And I worked there. Jim Saltcider [?], who was in a ton of early bands, worked there. Ray Kirsch who was in, let his trumpet work there. And there were just all these guys there that and, and the cool thing was, even the guys that didn't play in bands that were there, they knew everybody. For me, it was an entry into a generation I had missed. Because once I knew Donna, all these other people start showing up. And because I worked at Hullabaloo, and you Donna, and all of a sudden these guys started calling back. And you know, all these guys were friends. They were you know, I would see him out. And it was like oh, and I would see so it was a huge for me, it was an entryway and all of this because it gave me and I don't Donna may not appreciate that I put it like this or other people not, but it gave me a little bit of it don't know cache or whatever, to be able to worm my way into this older crowd, which 30 years later has become a huge deal because I even though I'm now 30 years older, those guys are the ones and ladies are the ones who were really, really a big deal in the 70s 80s and I have this connection with them which is completely through for the most part through Hullabaloo, through Donna through Donna. I know these people through Donna, I know this story through Donna, I can connect this band. And and there's lots of other people too, but you know, it was hopping from Critical Mass to Hullabaloo was a huge deal because it gave me and in fact, at some point, we bought a bunch of real obnoxious shorts deadstock shorts, and she didn't know what they were going to look like. So she had me trial on one day at the warehouse. And so she called them Snake Ranch Shorts. And that's what they were I never owned a pair but but that was what they call them in the in the catalog. So that was a huge thing. And everybody everybody went to hullabaloo

JS: Now you implied 1992 is kind of a watershed year and I don't know if that was off the cuff or if you had that already on your mind.

GK: Oh it's I mean once once Nevermind hits, everything changes. I mean it's not a not all and I don't want to sound like old man screams that cloud there were things that were good that changed a lot of people I know actually made some money finally and for that matter, Henry Rollins finally had enough to buy a house because I'm sure he wasn't I'm sure he wasn't buying a big house before people started making but it also meant that a lot of bands at that point well I guess this is the this is the trade off there were bands in St Louis local bands could sell out Mississippi Nights, Fragile could Ultraman could, you know, Sinister Danes, The Urge could you know these bands could start Mississippi Nights. But it also meant that bands weren't getting the opening slots that they had been two or three years before because when most bands went on tour their record labels sent them with another band. You know that would that stuff was predetermined and it didn't happen always. But it was it was part of it. At the moment that I knew it was the moment I know it was different. We were at Mississippi Nights went and saw John Spencer Blues Explosion and it was probably later than 92 but I don't think much and we had broken up by them. And I stopped going to shows quite a bit we went saw them because I like Johnson's and Demolition Doll Rods opened up for a really great but before the show. There was a big guy in a football jersey with a brand new Mohawk punching girls in the crowd. Like oh, I'm slamming I'm

doing this so I went and it was just never the case. And I went over to one of the guys one of the BND security guys And I said, Look, there's a guy who's gonna start a fight as soon as it starts and the BND security guys were not the nicest people in the world and he looked at me with an ominous look. And I said "you stand on your chair, you can't pick him out. I'll go home and not ask for a refund." So he stood on his chair and said "son of a..." He walked over and threw the guy because it was always a people would show up occasionally, but it was all of a sudden it drew in lot of people who wouldn't have found it before...but it also drew in people who would have normally been fighting at a KISS concert. It just it the crowd got much bigger. And it wasn't. It wasn't as enjoyable. But I'm, I wouldn't, I wouldn't go so far as to say it was an all bad thing, because there are people who have benefited from it a lot. And a lot of people who discovered it who are still, you know, it changed their lives. So it's not up to me to say it was good thing or bad thing. But originally the St. Louis scene, they referred Bob Trammell I think, but I could be wrong. I called them the Fun 100 Because Magazine played at the basement of the Keel, I think. And 100 people showed up. That was like 77 or 78. So they call themselves Fun 100, they were referred to as the Fun 100. And even when I started, it was a relatively small crowd, and you knew people and the people that were there, and maybe shared a sense of community, because there wasn't a lot of people that were into it. But that changed things greatly. And more people come in, and that's never a bad thing. But it changed the makeup of some of it too.

JS: Right. Would you say it ceased to be as much of a scene?

GK: I wouldn't say that. I think it just changed the nature of the scene, the scene grew. And if a small town becomes a city, if you take, for instance, if you take the the the impression that people always have of Austin as this great place where there's underground bands, you can go hang out and be bohemian, that hasn't existed in 25 years. It's a corporate town where you're going to pay serious money doesn't mean that it's all bad. But the people who went there for that reason, you know, so, yeah, so I mean, the scene didn't change because the scene, the scene persists. The scene is there today, but the nature of it changes and it changes repeatedly. And it has changed again.

JS: Well, I gotta run. Okay. So I appreciate it. Greg. This has been Jason Stacy and Greg Kessler talking about music in the late 80s and 90s and Madison County and St. Louis, for *Madison Historical*, signing off.