

ROCK IN A HARD PLACE¹

Gina Arnold

I. Once upon a time, in a galaxy far, far away, there was a beautiful band called the Ramones, and the world for once agreed. The Ramones were perfect; the only perfect entity in existence.

First of all, there were four Ramones, which was the perfect number for a rock 'n' roll band. Then, they were named Johnny, Joey, Tommy, and Dee Dee, which were the perfect names for a rock 'n' roll band. (These weren't their real names, but that was okay, because in rock 'n' roll, you're allowed to be called anything you want.)

Another perfect thing about the Ramones was the way they looked: identical. They were skinny and greasy and longhaired and pale-skinned, and they wore tight black jeans and black leather jackets, and they looked like they didn't give a fuck. All those perfect people who make the rest of us feel inferior had no power over the Ramones: the Ramones were perfect as they were.

But the most perfect thing about the Ramones was their music, which distilled to its very essence the good things about rock 'n' roll. Each song had only three chords, but they were, as Joey once put it, the *right* three chords. Each song had an immensely fast tempo, which made them sound even more exciting. The band played loudly, and exactly in unison – thus coining the term “loud fast rules” – and they sang lyrics that were a poignant cross

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between goofy and terrible and perfectly apt. They never forgot to put in a tune and a catchy chorus, and every song began with the same four words, “One two three four”, and that was perfect, too.

When they first began, the Ramones played a lot of shows in their hometown of New York City, and everybody who saw them loved them immediately. People from America agreed that they were wonderful and joyous and gave new meaning to the term “genius”; people from England saw them and went home and formed rock bands that sounded just like them. The Ramones were inspirational, because they proved that you didn’t have to be pretty and pretentious and sensitive and overbearing – even particularly musical to be a member of a fucking great rock band.

It was obvious. And because the Ramones were so good, they were allowed to make a record almost right away. After all, given the history of rock – of bands like the Beatles and the Stones and the Monkees and Led Zeppelin – it seemed a foregone conclusion that a band as simple and as affecting as the Ramones would take over the world.

But it didn’t happen that way. For years the Ramones put out records with wonderful songs on them, and they toured the United States and Europe over and over again. But they never made it past what is known as cult status – they never made a record that had a gen-u-ine hit.

They should have, though. Because if “Sheena Is a Punk Rocker” had been a hit in 1977, everything would have been different. For one thing, there would have been no reign of Ronald Reagan, because America wouldn’t have been fixated on *Happy Days* and nostalgic music, because the present would have been so good. Instead of dwelling on a past that never really existed,

they'd have been out forming punk rock bands and dancing merrily to something new.

Yes, picture a world where "Sheena" was a hit – followed, of course, by *Rockaway Beach*, *End of the Century*, *Bonzo Goes to Bitburg*, *Pet Sematary*, and so on. Instead of wearing polyester and spandex, everyone in America would have worn cotton-blended black and white. Instead of fluffing their hair like Farrah Fawcett, they would have left it long and straight. They would have had taste, damn it. They would have had better pictures of themselves in their photo albums. They would have had some self-respect.

Alas, this never happened. The Ramones had a different history – the wrong history as it were – foisted off upon them. Valiantly, they plugged away at things, but enough is enough, and in 1995, they decided to break up. And then a funny thing happened. When the Ramones announced their imminent breakup, certain people wouldn't let them. They literally refused to let it happen. (Can you say "Perfect"?) One by one all the bands that loved and revered and worshiped the Ramones came out in public and said, 'We won't let this happen'. First Pearl Jam, then White Zombie, then Soundgarden. They insisted that the Ramones please tour with them that they extend the date of their demise till all of America had seen them and formed their final opinion. And so, in the summer of 1996, the Ramones finally got to face Middle America: steaming hot fields full of shirtless white boys, the audience that ought to have embraced them all along, if it hadn't had magentacolored spandex pop metal haircut bands pushed off on it instead. And a person had to wonder: Was it too late for American youth to learn to love the Ramones? The country had been given one last chance.

II. Forks in the River Speedway, in Newport, Tennessee, is an hour and a half from Knoxville – although it is only a few miles away from Pigeon Forge, the childhood home of Dolly Parton in the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains. Tourists pack Dollywood on weekends to attend the legendary ‘dinner stampedes’, but the speedway scene is another trip entirely. A couple of weeks ago, Charlie Daniels and 38 Special rocked the Smokies at the Speedway – fifty thousand rednecks on reds peeing on the side of the road – and today, it’s Lollapalooza’s turn to turn Appalachia into Lollapalochia.

Folks around Forks think that Lollapalooza’s going to draw a scary, black-shirted metalloid crowd – after all, Metallica’s fan club is based in nearby Knoxville – but folks are wrong. To those on the East and West Coasts of America, this year’s Lollapalooza lineup – featuring Psychotica, the Screaming Trees, Rancid, the Ramones, Rage Against the Machine, Soundgarden, and Metallica – is considered the most mainstream bill ever, a travesty of commercial, testosterone-driven acts. But as anyone who’s ever spent a Saturday night in Knoxville knows, Lollapalooza is the biggest thing to hit what passes for alternative culture in the Great Smoky Mountains ever.

Of course, in 1996 ‘pop culture’ has become a pretty loose term – thanks mostly to the influence of Lollapalooza itself. Too much has been written about the festival at this point for one to bother to recap its history or its influence; suffice it to say that, along with MTV, it has had a profound effect on pop culture. Now in its sixth year of existence, the festival has been one of the main subversions of metal-pop-country hegemony in America, and this year is the most subverted – some might even say perverted – version yet. Lollapalooza has always provided onlookers with a glimpse of clashing genres. But few stories illustrate the moral dichotomy

inherent in 1996's punk-meets-metalloid lineup better than the afternoon in West Palm Beach when a girl came up to Rancid's Tim Armstrong and begged him to get her backstage. The girl, a typical Floridian babe in scanty clothing, pled her case as eloquently as she could. "Please, Tim, I've got to go there. The drummer from Metallica said he'd do a line on my tits!" Tim, who shaved his Mohawk a few weeks ago but still bears the stigma of ten years spent in hardcore heaven: "Do a line? You mean... he's going to draw a picture on your tits with a Sharpie?"

III. Armstrong's words sound impossibly naïve – unless you consider just how low-key bands have become in the last five years. The tit-waving antics of GNR (Guns 'N' Roses) are over and done with; now it's Metallica who seem old and foggyish for behaving like the stereotypical "rock stars" of old. This, then, is the moral and artistic dichotomy of Lollapalooza 1996 – the same dichotomy that has seemingly kept audiences across the country at bay. On your left, you have Rancid, straight-edge, DIY, indie-label – short for "independent", meaning unaffiliated with a major – punk rock heroes, backed up by their homies the Ramones and, at some dates, by Devo. On your right, the defending champions of humorless heavy metal, Metallica, who come complete with thudding bass line, high-neck guitar solos, cigars, chopper rides, Learjets, backstage babes, and onstage pyrotechnics. They are supported, to a certain extent, by the less flamboyant but equally heavy music of Soundgarden and, at some dates, Rage Against the Machine.

In theory, a tour that melds together these utterly populist elements would create a mighty strong metal indeed. But in practice, the two things have turned out to be more antithetical than *gangsta rap* and industrial rock, than jazz and *eurodisco*,

than mind-wandering indie-crap and shiny girl grunge, than Sinead O'Connor and Courtney Love.

Punk and metal, antithetical? Get outta here! On the surface, the two things seem like the least-daring mixture ever. The Melvins, for example, who are playing the second stage, have been melding Dead Kennedys with Black Sabbath since Kurt Cobain was knee high to a grasshopper. But to audiences in places like Des Moines, Iowa, Rockingham, North Carolina, and Ferris, Texas, the combo has proved to be scarier than a bill with the Butthole Surfers and Ice T. The initial perception was that a Lollapalooza bill featuring Metallica and Soundgarden, both of whom have number-one albums, would be far too popular to put into amphitheaters. But ticket sales for this year's Lollapalooza have been similar to other years', and about half what the tour producers expected.

How come? "I don't have any idea", tour manager Stuart Ross says, shrugging. "There's one theory that says that Metallica audiences are waiting for Metallica to come do their big two-and-a-half-hour production in an arena, and don't want to come and wade through eight hours of alternative music that they may not appreciate and crowds they may not want to hang out in. That's theory one. "Theory two is that the alternative audience has been turned off by the fact that Metallica's on the bill. I don't agree with that, but some people hold that theory. Third is the fact that we raised the ticket price, and this is the point of price resistance.

"Then there's the issue that because we're in fields, and some of our audiences are too young to drive and some of their parents may have been hesitant to take them to a venue they're not familiar with and which they don't already know as a nice, safe environment. 'Lastly, for some reason, it's a big movie summer and it's a slim music summer. I hear that no show except for Kiss

is doing well this summer'. Still, despite the warning signals, the slow sales have taken Lollapalooza by surprise. An early gig in Rockford, Illinois, drew 35,000 people, but elsewhere sales haven't been so hot. Newport, Tennessee, had an attendance of 19,000. The week before the show, New Orleans had only sold 10,000 tickets, although that had risen to 18,500 by showtime. And at Ferris, Texas – fifty miles north of Dallas, normally a huge Metallica market – sales were 17,500.

According to Ross, Lollapalooza is losing about five hundred thousand dollars in potential revenue per gig. The losses are incurred by the expense of running each gig in half-capacity fields: this year Lollapalooza, for example, is traveling with forty trucks, thirty buses, and a crew of three hundred workers at each venue. The idea was that by shoehorning itself into fields instead of playing at already existing fifteen-thousand-seated amphitheaters, the tour would be able to accommodate the many Metallica fans who would flock to see it.

In order to make money on that kind of outlay, however, Lollapalooza would have to sell over twenty-five thousand tickets per venue. But sales have been off projections – way off. The irony is, in terms of sheer entertainment value, this bill is the shit. Critics have charged that by excluding more “alternative” acts (including previous festivals' seemingly token female and rap acts) Lollapalooza has given in to the mainstream by retreating into the safety of an old-fashioned all-male, all-metal extravaganza. In fact, what they've given in to is the concept of sheer entertainment. The T-shirts say 'Summer of Noise', but within that term, you couldn't get a more disparate group – or one more continually appealing to Lollapalooza crowds. There's no ultrahip act on the Matador label this year, no Pavement, no GBV. But there is nonstop great rock.

‘What I like about these acts’, says Mark Weinberg, twenty, guitarist for third-stage band Crumb, “is that they aren’t trendy flash-in-the-pan acts like Bush, they’re not one-hit wonders. They all have really deep roots. And I don’t know, my favorite bands are Sebadoh and Pavement, but for Tennessee, Rage and Metallica and Rancid are so much more appropriate a definition of alternative. Joey Ramone, of all people, agrees: “Everyone I’ve met here so far is pretty cool and kinda like grass-rooted, you know what I mean? Soundgarden, Rancid... It’s a *rock ‘n’ roll show*. Alternative... I don’t know, half those bands, like the Presidents of the United States, I don’t know what the fuck to make of them, you know? ‘But this is a cool bill; it’s kind of a real sobering bill – it’s like bands that are unique and rooted and grounded... They’re real, they’re not bullshit, not living in the hype world... not trendy. I’m happy about being on this bill.’

IV. This bill begins with psychotica, a glammy, Bowie-influenced act led by a former drag queen in a silver body suit, silver Mohawk, and orange eye makeup – a hell of a getup to be wearing in ninety-five-degree heat. He is carried on stage on a giant silver cross. “Hello Hillbillies! We’re Psychotica and our whole mission in life is to piss the Bible Belt off!”

The crowd roars with pleasure, lifting its fists in the devil salute. It’s impossible to read whether this is ironic or not; but it’s easy to imagine that it is done in the same playful spirit that is clearly attending every Kiss concert this summer. Psychotica’s whole trip is to make fun of metal, and it’s clear from the start that people get the joke.

The Screaming Trees make a wonderful counterpoint to Psychotica’s outrageous, New Yorky act. Few bands look more like their audience than the large, lumbering Screaming Trees, and the

noise they make is equally unpretentious, a loud moan of anguish, a lovely, hard wail. They go over well even before they play their 1992 hit "Nearly Lost You." After that, they have the audience in the palm of their hands.

Next up are the kung fu monks of ShaoLin, China, whose display of "nonaggressive" combat tactics – the live-action version of half the video games on the planet – lulls and fascinates the throng. The monks are followed, at around four o'clock, with about six more hours of nonstop killer rock: Rancid, the Ramones, Rage Against the Machine, Soundgarden, and Metallica. (In Los Angeles, Seattle, Phoenix, and San Francisco the Rage slot will be filled by Devo.)

No wonder Lollapalooza had to send the four carnival rides it had hired back after the fourth date. No one has time to ride them without missing some essential act. Even the second stage – actually, a second and third stage, which alternate throughout the day, encompassing some ten different acts – isn't drawing too well (although this tends to vary a lot, depending on the layout of the venue and whether Sponge, a huge draw, is on the bill).

V. Tim Armstrong blows into the tour bus an hour later, still dressed over warmly in skintight zip trousers and leather jacket, and a T-shirt on which he has handwritten the words 'Disorder and Disarry' (*sic*), the misspelled title of one of his own songs. He's just finished worshipping at the altar of the Ramones, whom he watches faithfully every night. ("If it wasn't for the Ramones", he says, "we wouldn't be on this tour.") It's about a million degrees out and humid with it, but, like so many of the fans in the audience, Armstrong claims not to feel it.

Besides, the bus is air-conditioned, so Armstrong takes a pew. There have been so many rock-star moments on this tour”, he giggles. “This morning, we pulled up here around four A.M., and me and some of the others went walking in the field where everyone is camping out, and you wouldn’t believe it: they were blasting Ted Nugent!’. Tim finds this funny, because Rancid was nurtured at punk rock mecca Gilman Street, a place where the Nuge is banned for life. But its members have taken to the stadium with the same aplomb as their hometown friends Green Day. Two years ago, Green Day used nudity and rudity to capture this same constituency; Rancid have been a bit more pragmatic, augmenting their natural energy with a three-piece horn section and a keyboard player.

True, they had to hire a whole extra tour bus to carry that big a band – but the extra space they farmed out, free of charge, to the Ramones’ longsuffering road crew. No wonder Rancid are the darlings of Lollapalooza, both in front of the stage and behind it! No one has a bad word to say about Rancid since the date in Toronto when the band broke out their own blow-up swimming pool, placed it in the center of the backstage area and invited everyone in for a swim; they have created an unlikely camaraderie almost out of whole cloth. ‘But everyone here is so cool”, protests Armstrong: *The Ramones! Psychotica!* Even Metallica, they’ve been so nice to us. Jason from Metallica, he’s traveling in his own bus with his own recording studio in it, and the other day he recorded us with it in his hotel’.

As Armstrong has noted, Jason Newsted travels in an entire bus by himself, reportedly because he wants to get to hang out and be ordinary with the other bands. But Metallica’s Learjet is rumored to have two stewardesses and a humidor full of hundred-dollar cigars. They use it on days off to go special places: to see

Kiss in Charlotte after the Knoxville gig, for example; and to go to Las Vegas, while the other bands are slogging it out between Dallas and Phoenix.

The Ramones, on the other hand, are saving money by traveling by minivan – all except for C.J., who is getting to gigs via his Harley, escorted by a couple of Hell’s Angel friends. Once, C.J. was held up for two hours at the Canadian border, almost making him late for the Toronto gig. “Everyone was all worried, and then he roared up the center of backstage on his Harley just in time and we’re all cheering, ‘Yea, C.J.’, relates Armstrong. “Another total rock ‘n’ roll moment’.

In truth, Rancid is barely breaking even on this tour – every band is taking a cut on its salary at venues where ticket sales are slow, and the cost of the buses and hotels makes it almost impossible for the early bands to turn a profit. But Rancid will profit by being here on record sales and merch. Their T-shirts – which they sell for twelve dollars, half the cost of the other main-stage acts – are selling like crazy.

Rancid’s great popularity here also underscores the irony of this Lollapalooza, which is that, although this is the tour’s least successful year in terms of projected ticket sales, it is its best in terms of value and artistry. The final two acts on the bill, Soundgarden and Metallica, have both scored huge number-one LPs in the last few months; and no one on the bill – from Rancid to Rage Against the Machine to Steve Earle to the Ramones – is less than critically acclaimed.

Kids who come to this show are being nailed to the ground with every act. For seven straight hours, each succeeding act is topped by a band they like better – which is one reason this year’s midway has been scaled down a lot from previous years’ designs. Gone are the peripheral cyberspace displays and sideshows: this

year's unmusical fare consists only of a couple of "freak" displays, the chill room, which is full of political activist literature and couches (and is air-conditioned for comfort), and the eight mist tents, which are so essential in the blistering midwestern heat.

There is also an Airwalk display, complete with skate ramp and skate and BMX bike pros. But in general the vibe here is much more music based than it's been in the past. In New Orleans, for some reason, the ShaoLin monks are replaced for one date by Waylon Jennings, who goes over extremely well. (In Des Moines, he was booed until James Hetfield came on stage and bawled out the audience.)

In Dallas, however, Rage are off the bill, replaced by country rebel rocker Steve Earle, who is bottled by the rowdies up front. "Rage would have sold at least five thousand more tickets", a promoter says bitterly as he watches.

Meanwhile, the big joke backstage – and probably in front of the stage as well – has to do with Metallica's new look: neat jeans and muscle shirts, clipped facial hair, makeup, and piercings. Despite the fact that one of Metallica's guitar techs has a case full of pro-gun, pro-redneck, antiliberal, antigay bumper stickers, several of the band members look like nothing so much as a typical gay man, circa 1978. The band's motto this summer is *We Don't Give a Shit*, which is plastered across their special laminates. Also, after the third or fourth song, singer James Hetfield habitually announces to the crowd that Metallica doesn't give a shit.

We don't give a shit! he yells. *But what does he mean?* I say wonderingly after hearing it for the fourth time.

He means that they don't give a shit that everyone thinks they're queer now, a singer for one of the other bands on the bill butts in. Huge titters all around. Judging by the number of stripper types around the band, Metallica are not, in fact, gay. Not yet,

anyway. But one can't help but wonder if their 'real' constituency – all the ones who aren't here, that is – are indeed staying away merely because they are disappointed by Metallica's new look – particularly Kirk Hammett's chin stud. Maybe that, more than price resistance or fear of palooza, is what's keeping them away.

Poor ticket sales notwithstanding, Metallica are not about to fade away. *Load* was number one for three weeks. But if this Lollapalooza has taught the record business one thing, it is that punk rock has more of an ability to assimilate with the mainstream than anyone ever thought... more ability than metal. Joey Ramone: "There's a much healthier attitude in music right now than some years. Everything's a lot better now... and I feel like rock 'n' roll's better because of the Ramones. I mean I don't want to sound all full of myself, but I know how things were before, back in the dark ages, and now everything's opened up. Everything's open for business now."

VI. At six o'clock every Lollapalooza morning, a little village is erected in the dust. It's a village that includes three stages, three sound booths, an entrance, an exit, a bunch of food stands, toilets, showers, and miles and miles and miles of fence, not to mention several large inflatables – a gorilla, an elephant, and a clown – which are unleashed and inflated each day by one Chris Althoff, Lollapalooza's gorilla wrangler. At seven o'clock, he kills the beasts by unzipping a flap on their legs. *If you ever see a wild gorilla*, he jokes, *"you can subdue them by finding the zippers on their calves.*

Wiley Dailey is the tour plumber. He erects and maintains the eight mist tents, as well as the hoses at the front of the house that hose down the sweating crowd. Then there's catering. Caterers, who are contracted separately in each city, feed three meals to the army of workers. Alas, the quality of the meals differs from place

to place, and tends to be the one thing that people on tour remember about a gig. The food can make or break the backstage atmosphere, and thus, the entire show. These are just a few of the hundreds of specialized workers who are needed to make Lollapalooza happen – and besides them, there are the seven main-stage bands, ten indie-stage bands, and their separate crews and management. It's an incredible thing to see in action – this mobile village, this lumbering circus – but one wonders if it's worth it. Do kids need to see seventeen bands in one day, to come out to a field in the blistering heat and bond with their own kind?

Ross, who has been involved with Lollapalooza since its inception, thinks so. There's a lot of great music here.

The problem is that the press, for whatever reason, takes Lollapalooza from rock concert status to lifestyle status, and assumes that we have an agenda and criticizes us for our wavering from that agenda. The fact is, we don't have an agenda. We produce the best rock show we can. We try to give people a lot of things to do. They can see a wide variety of music, they can get political information, they can shop the little stands that are out there, and at the end of the day they can say, 'I had a good time, I was treated well, it was safe, I'll come back next year.' That's really our agenda.

That being said, there is a sense, here in 1996, that Lollapalooza has lost its constituency; that by combining punk and metal, Lollapalooza has allowed the H.O.R.D.E. tour – which stands for Horizons of Roll Developing Everywhere – with its raft of sixties impersonators (the faux Janis, the faux Stones, and this year the faux Jimi) to take over the zeitgeist. On the Coasts, Lollapalooza is oft-criticized for providing just as fake an 'alternative'. But in New Orleans, the *Times-Picayune* still covered it as if it were novel and weird, sending a reporter into the crowd to make snide remarks about piercings and bizarre clothes. And in Texas, the local paper of Ferris called its arrival an influx of a nest of Satan worshipers.

Ross: A reporter asked me about the Satan worship this morning and I said, 'It's true. What we do is, as soon as the kids walk through the gate, we have people who take them aside and implore them to give up all Judeo-Christian values.'

Articles like those are why it's in places like Ferris and Newport that one is better able to see the necessity of Lollapalooza. To kids who live among people who think that rock is the devil's music, the opportunity to see bands like the Ramones is still really special. Respect is due to the fans of New Orleans, who moshed to Waylon Jennings as well as to the Ramones; to the fans in Ferris, Texas, who came out at 11 A.M. in hundred-plus-degree heat and sang every word of *Psychotherapy* and *Sheena is...*; to the fans in Newport, Tennessee, who camped out all night playing Nugent and were immediately confronted with *Psychotica* – and clapped.

Even the artists are having their eyes opened by some bands. "I was with some friends", says Joey Ramone, "and we were watching Soundgarden and Rancid and Metallica, and they kept saying, 'Oh! I didn't know Soundgarden were like that.' Seeing 'em live kinda turned them onto it."

Singer Patrick Briggs, leader of *Psychotica*, is also no stranger to the sense of having his eyes opened by Lollapalooza. Briggs is going on his third year as a Lollapalooza performer. In 1994, he was on the third stage doing spoken word. Last year, he emceed the second stage in drag. ('Next year', he jokes, 'I'll own it'.) Briggs's experience in the pit – he calls it his 'field research' – with the kids is, he says now, what led him to form *Psychotica*. 'When I went out that first year, I realized that contrary to what I had been told on the East Coast and in New York – that the Midwest was very close-minded and stuff – I came to find that wasn't true at all... that we were really making rash judgments about the Midwest, that we had no idea what we were talking about'.

'You know', he continues, 'these kids pay forty dollars to come and be entertained, and if you provide them with that, then they're pleased. It's a very simple arrangement, really. I mean, the kids this year may not be as obviously creepy-looking as other years, but they want the same thing. Even a staunch Metallica fan just wants to be entertained'. Briggs's words are an important reminder of what's good about Lollapalooza: whether you're a Smashing Pumpkins fan watching Jesus Lizard for the first time, or a friend of Joey Ramone being unwillingly confronted by Soundgarden, it is a festival best attended in a nonjudgmental frame of mind. Questions about what constitutes 'alternative' have been moot for many years, but now that Metallica is sporting eye makeup and facial piercings and the Ramones are considered part of the Monsters of Rock, they are less than relevant, they are positively retarded. There are no monsters anymore – only people, hardworking people, undisguised, undistinguished, playing their workmanlike songs, doing a job, and doing it well.

VII. One night in Ferris, Texas, just as Soundgarden takes the stage, Tim from Rancid decides to take a bike ride through the fields of goldenrod and bluebonnets that surround the venue. The song *Outshined* is filling the sky all around us, and, as we look back at the arena, glowing in the distance, Tim is silent for a sec. *You know what? Once in 1986, when I worked at La Vals pizza, James Hetfield came in with some friends and ordered a pizza from me, he says reflectively. And the next night, I saw him at the Berkeley Square, and he yelled out, 'Hey pizza boy!' 'Pizza boy': that's an insult, right?* Tim pauses. The light from the sky has suddenly become achingly beautiful, and sonically, Soundgarden is peaking. 'Back then', he goes on, 'I wasn't even in Op Ivy; I never thought I'd ever go to a concert like this, much less be onstage

and be like... popular'. Tim ducks his head shyly, a characteristic gesture. 'You know, in a way I feel like this sort of my revenge. Revenge of Pizza Boy!' he laughs. Then he stands up on his little bike's haunches and screeches off into the dust, back into the arena, and the belly of the beast.

