

## SOME OUTSIDER MUSIC HAMILTON

**Becky Katz and Aaron Hutchinson with featured artists Charli, Sahra Soudi and Katie McDonald**

Mixed-Media

“There is a sliver of the Hamilton music community that has received little mainstream attention: our treasured Outsider Music scene; oftentimes referred to as underground, Noise, or DIY, in which performers of niche brands of music wear multiple hats as musicians, producers, bookers, promoters, label operators, product designers etc. Most of these efforts are modeled after a non-profit, idealistic system of self-ownership and self-determination - partly because of the artists’ own ethics toward music and property, and partly because their product is simply bewildering and substantially unappealing to mainstream audiences.



Exhibit detail with featured work by Sahra Soudi (top left) and Katie McDonald (top right)

We set out to investigate the weirdo heroes of our scene (approx. 2008 - 2018), dredge up their most relevant cultural artefacts, and present them, observe them, revere them, and reflect on the fact that it is a scene mostly comprised of white men. DIY spaces and operations have always teetered on the legal margins, increasingly since the Hamilton Real Estate Boom. We reflect on the Outsider Music shows we’ve organized and attended... what would happen if we swapped the majority of white bodies in attendance with a black and brown audience: how long could that DIY event survive before attracting the attention of police, and before the event gets shut down? Evidence suggests it is far more restrictive for non-white artists in Hamilton to own and operate physical, autonomous arts spaces, and subsequently, Outsider Music labels.

The significance of using retromedia was an attempt to democratize ways and means of making legitimate music distinct from mainstream industry models. However, despite good intentions, the Outsider Music scene has become a small, specialized and privileged niche group of mostly white men experimenting and creating around the aura of obsolete media. As we take a long look in the mirror, we realize and come to terms with our own involvement in this exclusive artistic practice.

What imbues someone with the confidence, agency and platform to create our relevant cultural artefacts? How does One participate in a music scene that is steeped in covert white supremacy and sexism? As our traditional venues are shuttering at an alarming rate, artists are starving, and genius is going undiscovered... we take a look back to remember and celebrate historical cultural artefacts while understanding that we need new ones.

If some of the raw materials are toxic, we can reconfigure their chemistry into something sanguine. As artists, we need to be critical, but we can also be Utopian. Some monuments belong on the bottom of rivers. We consider freer resources and new ways of sharing power and privilege through collaboration. We focus our highly trained psychic and empathetic forces toward this reimagined future of an equitable music community in Hamilton.

We acknowledge this is not the whole story. We highly encourage interaction with this artwork - please send us a comment or question to [outsidermusicahamilton@gmail.com](mailto:outsidermusicahamilton@gmail.com), or drop it in the comment box. If you have stories of outsider music in Hamilton, we want to hear it.”



Exhibit detail with featured work by Katie McDonald (top left)

- From lead artists Becky Katz and Aaron Hutchinson

Collaborators/Contributors:

Craig Caron  
Daniel Troupe  
Reptile Jesus  
Aaron Hutchinson  
Sean Gadoury

Lee Reed  
Scott Johnson  
David Payne  
Dallas Walzak  
Nathan Ivanco

Jackson Darby  
Jeremy JAG Gilbank  
Ryan Ferguson  
Daniel Farr  
Dan Dunham

Labels:

Schizophrenic Records  
Old Frontiers  
Fadeaway  
Middle James Co.  
Cloud Valley  
Tranquility Tapes  
Space Slave  
Sic Sic  
Scott's Cloud  
House of Sun  
Digitalis  
Hooker Vision  
Worn Habit

Avant Archive  
Bathetic  
Rotifer Cassettes  
No Label  
Housecraft  
Private Collection  
Myiasis Tapes  
905 Tapes  
Colour Ride  
Hobo Cult  
Sacred Phrases  
Different Lands  
Goldtimers

Notice Recordings  
Rocket Machine  
ArtBeer  
No Kings  
HAVNrecords  
Personal Records  
No Why Records  
Creative Arc  
High Anxiety  
Crux  
Shallow North Dakota

OUTSIDER MUSIC HAMILTON will be on display in the Anne Foster Windows through November 2020.

### **The Anne Foster Windows:**

As part of the City of Hamilton, Tourism and Culture Division's ongoing support of the creative industries, local artists are invited to create and install window displays that celebrate Hamilton's music scene. This space, the Anne Foster Window, is a fitting home for music themed displays as the entryway lead to the Anne Foster Music shop for almost 50 years (1947-1995).

For more information visit [www.hamilton.ca/annefosterwindows](http://www.hamilton.ca/annefosterwindows)

