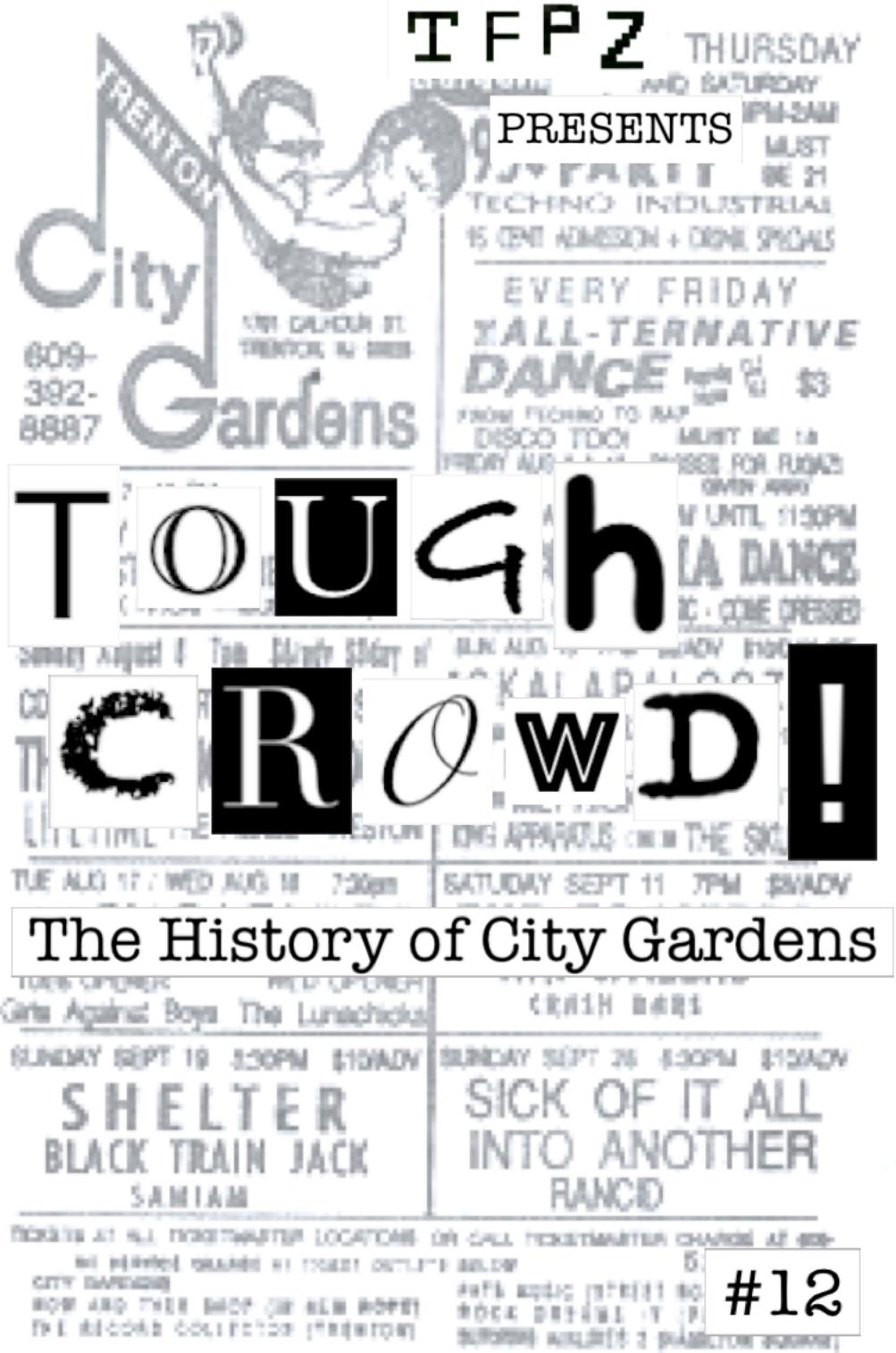

TFPZ
PRESENTS
TOUGH
CROWD!
The History of City Gardens
#12
City Gardens
TRENTON
609-392-8887
THURSDAY
TECHNO INDUSTRIAL
EVERY FRIDAY
DANCE
$3
TUE AUG 17 / WED AUG 18 7:30pm
SATURDAY SEPT 11 7PM $9/ADV
SUNDAY SEPT 19 5:30PM $10/ADV
SHELTER
BLACK TRAIN JACK
SAMIAM
SUNDAY SEPT 26 5:30PM $15/ADV
SICK OF IT ALL
INTO ANOTHER
RANCID

The building that would become City Gardens

started its life as a car dealership called US Motors

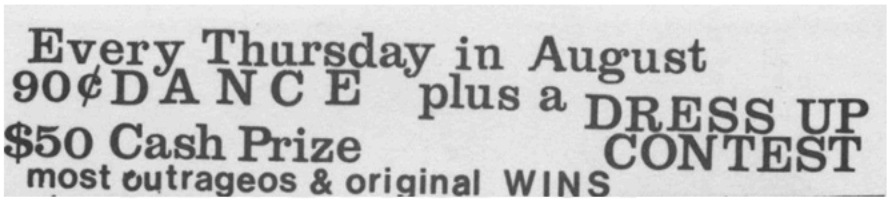
In 1976, it became an after hours club named Chocolate City (after the Parliament-Funkadelic song of the same name)

Two years after that it became a blues club

Finally in 1979, Frank "Tut" Nalbone, having inherited the property from his father, opened City Gardens

It also spent some time as a bible warehouse

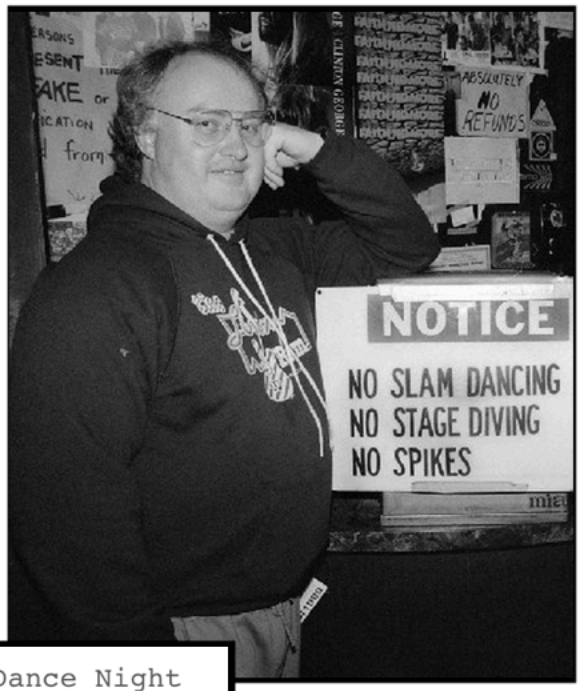
Nobody is sure of when exactly City Gardens first opened their doors



90 Cent Dance Night quickly became the backbone of City Gardens with its introduction in 1979

Every Thursday, DJ Randy Now (Randy Ellis) would play both UK & USA Punk while also incorporating new wave, ska, reggae, and classic rock

He also booked the bands which put the venue on the map

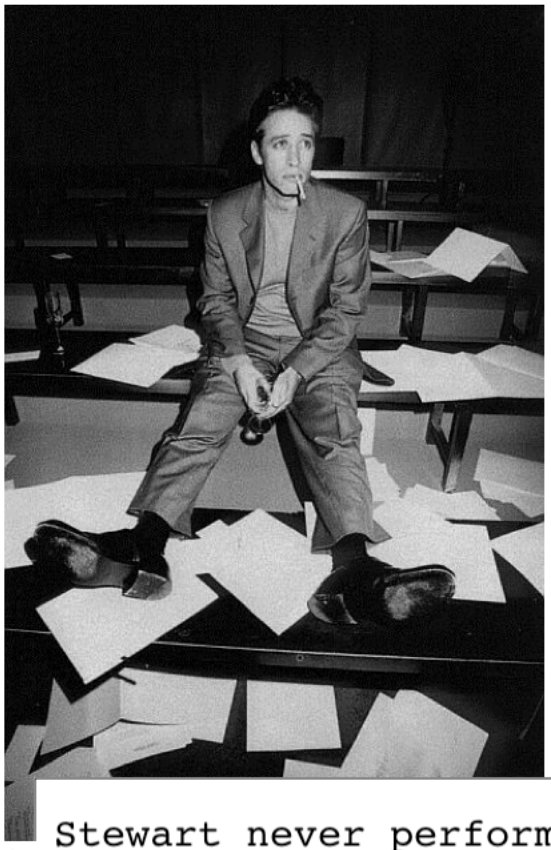


In 1983, 90 Cent Dance Night went up to 95 Cents before capping out at 99 Cents in 1992

At its peek, 90 Cent Dance night brought in 700 to 1000 club goers weekly

Carlos Santos, known as DJ Carlos, took over music duties from Randy Now in early 1983, acting as house DJ until 1994

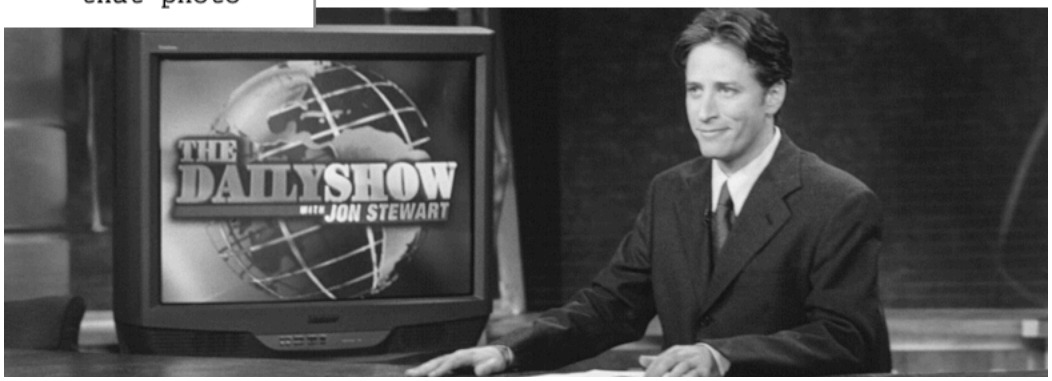
Before his tenure on The Daily Show Jon Stewart worked as a bartender from 1984 to 1987



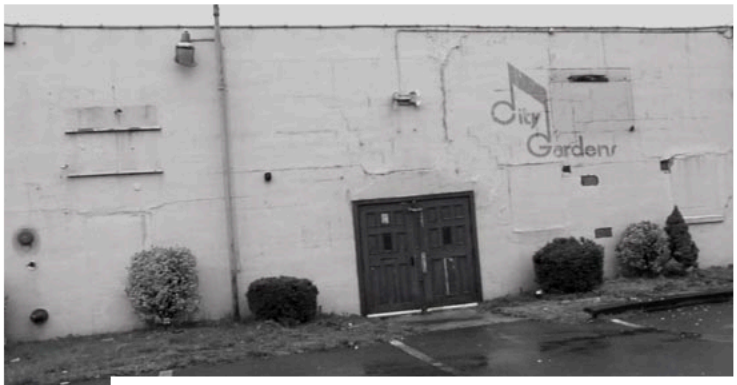
This was before his stand-up days or his television career with networks like MTV and Comedy Central

Stewart never performed at City Gardens and only one photo of him at the club is known to exist

This is not that photo



- Beastie Boys
- Billy Idol
- Black Flag
- Bouncing Souls
- The Cramps
- Danzig
- De La Soul
- Devo
- Flock Of Seagulls
- George Clinton
- Green Day
- GWAR
- Iggy Pop
- Jane's Addiction
- Joan Jett
- Joe Strummer
- Lydia Lunch
- MC Lyte
- Megadeth
- Mighty Mighty Bosstones
- Ned's Atomic Dustbin
- New Order
- Nine Inch Nails
- Nirvana
- NOFX
- Offspring
- Public Enemy
- Ramones
- R.E.M.
- Red Hot Chili Peppers
- Sinead O'Conner
- Slayer
- Soundgarden
- They Might Be Giants
- Violent Femmes
- Warrant



Like all good things, City Gardens too came to an end

DJ Randy Now booked New Hope, PA rock band Ween to play the final show on December 2, 1994

While there are multiple reasons for the club's demise, most chalk up its end simply to "changing times"

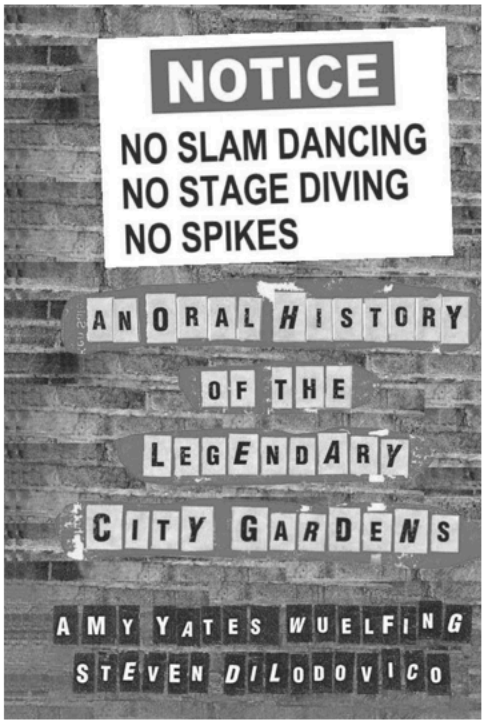
In 2013 the building was purchased by Exodus Entertainment LLC, before the city of Trenton took possession in 2016

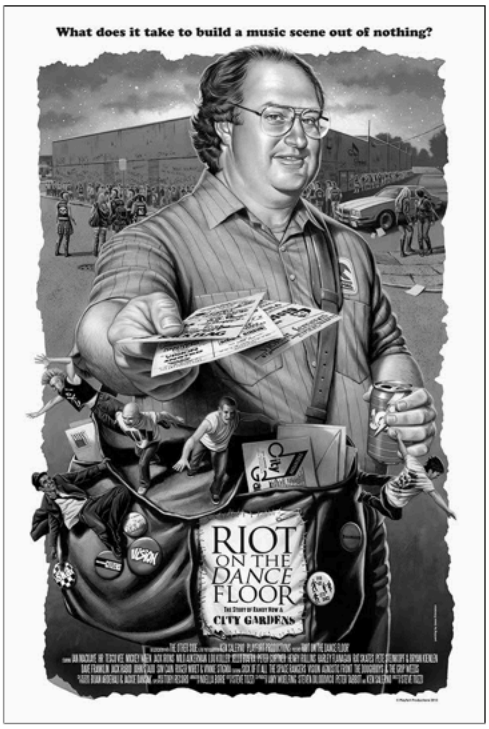
The city then auctioned off the land in 2019

Despite its time in the spotlight having passed,
the interest in City Gardens has not waned

Multiple books, and even a documentary have
been created about Trenton's legendary music spot

For further exploration, TFPZ suggests the following





A huge thanks to the team behind "No Slam Dancing, No Stage Diving, No Spikes: An Oral History of the Legendary City Gardens" for their detailed list of the club's chronology and set lists. This zine wouldn't have been possible without their memories

Another thanks to DJ Randy Now, whose story is intertwined with the legacy of City Gardens. Check out "Riot On The Dance Floor" for much more than this zine could squeeze into six pages

PARTY ON!

with more zines

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www.trentonlib.org/zine-library

or call (609) 392-7188

Extra special thanks to
Laura Poll
for guiding
this zine and steering
it in the
right direction

THANKS FOR READING!

Source: Yates Wuelfing, Amy, et.al. “No Slam Dancing No Stage Diving No Spikes An Oral History of the Legendary City Gardens.” Morrisville: DiWulf Publishing, 2014.

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