

JENNY'S

Julien Ceccaldi
Rock N' Roll Princess
May 19 – June 22, 2019

Julien Ceccaldi's second solo exhibition at Jenny's is a tribute to Pop Punk princesses real and fictional: ZONE, Avril Lavigne, Nana Osaki, and Full Moon.

The central character featured in the works is Stéphane, a French superfan of a rock band based on the now-disbanded Japanese pop-rock quartet ZONE. Despite his receding hairline and adult acne, Stéphane sports a rarely wavering smile. He has an optimistic outlook on life thanks to the things that uplift his spirits: listening to his favorite all-girl band, hooking up with older and bigger men, and wearing cute punk-inspired accessories. This character has been designed without friends, family or even a love interest. His passion for the entertainment industry is what keeps him alive and optimistic.

He dreams of becoming a popular musician himself, who inspires and connects with hearts all over the world -- in the same way he was touched by ZONE's final concert before their disbandment in 2005, at the Nippon Budokan. In their ultimate performance, all four girls sang their biggest hit "Secret Base" to a full stadium. The lyrics fit the occasion:

*I knew that, until the end, you were shouting
"Thank you" from the bottom of your heart
Farewell while smiling and holding back tears is so hard
Such great memories...*

Dressed in angelic bridal dresses, the girls cry sad tears of goodbye to their fans, and perhaps tears of pride as well, for fulfilling the band's original purpose: going from Z to number ONE.

The vinyl banners and multi layered drawings emulate the aesthetic style of fan art, playing homage not only to ZONE but to Avril Lavigne, a Canadian Pop Punk singer who emerged in the early 2000s. "Miyu," the bright pink portrait in the exhibition, is a drawing of the lead singer Miyu from ZONE, but based on a screen grab of Avril Lavigne in her music video for "Smile" (2011). The clothing and hairstyle of the skeleton sculpture "Pop Punk Idol" highlights key elements of Avril Lavigne's looks from the height of her career, including a pair of jeans from her fashion line Abbey Dawn.

In addition, two important thematic references from manga are central to the exhibition: Ai Yazawa's manga *Nana* (2000-ongoing) and *Full Moon o Sagashite* by Arina Tanemura (2000-2004). In *Nana*, boy-crazy Hachi takes the underground rock star Nana to a concert by the latter's ex-boyfriend's band. While the crowd jumps and cheers, Nana and Ren, the Sid and Nancy of manga, lock eyes for the first time since they separated - Ren playing guitar on stage, and Nana holding Hachi's hands, unable to hold back her sobbing.

In the manga *Full Moon o Sagashite*, Mitsuki is a middle schooler who dreams of becoming a singer. Unfortunately, she has been diagnosed with throat cancer, and her only chance at survival is a surgery that would risk ruining her vocal cords. Through a pact with two adorable Death Gods, Takuto and Meroko, she is able to transform into Full Moon, a healthy blonde teen, which will allow her to sing her heart out for the final year of her life. She ends up becoming a famous idol, until her cancer is at its final stage and she has an emotional final concert as Full Moon. The song "Rock'N Roll Princess" by The Scanty, an early 2000s Japanese pop-rock girl group, is used for the opening of *Full Moon o Sagashite's* anime adaptation (2002).

Stéphane doesn't have a best friend to hold his hand at a concert. He doesn't have adorable death gods to grant his wish and turn him into a pop star. It is unsure if he will ever truly make it in the music business or build up any kind of audience. But he does die of old age, alone, smiling until the very end as he hums his favorite song.

Julien Ceccaldi (b. 1987, Montreal, Canada) lives and works in New York, NY. He received his BFA from Concordia University, Montreal, in 2009. Recently he held his first major solo museum exhibition titled *Solito*, at Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany (2018). He has exhibited in several international galleries and institutions including Greene Naftali, New York, NY; Lomex, New York, NY; Oakville Galleries, Ontario, Canada; Swiss Institute, New York, NY; the 9th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany; Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen, Germany; among others. Ceccaldi's comics and drawings have frequently been featured in online and print publications, and he is the author of several self-published comic books.