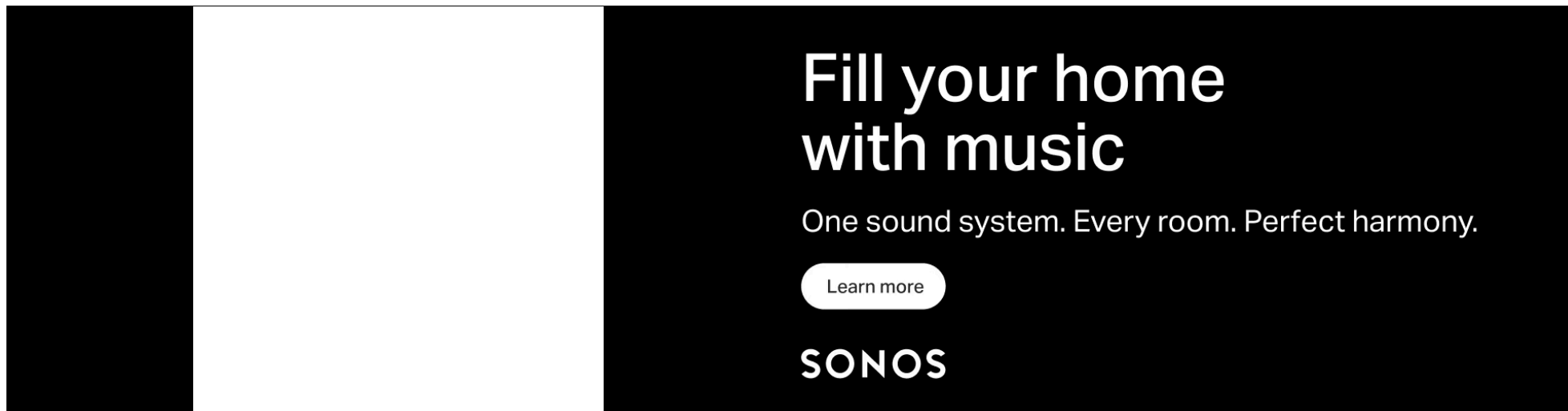




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TEENAGE RIOT

KIM THEORY: MEET THE L.A. TEEN PUNK BAND THAT'S PLAYING LOLLAPALOOZA

Named after a trio of awesome alt-rock Kims, this group is making lots of noise before graduating high school

By JAE-HA KIM

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Kim Theory: Lula Seifert, Zoey Su, Audrey Cymone, Lucy Fraser (from left)

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Kim Theory's motto is “Part-time band, full-time friends.” Named after the holy trinity of **Kim Gordon**, **Kim Deal**, and the late **Kim Shattuck**, this all-female pop-punk quartet of L.A. teenagers will make their **Lollapalooza** debut on July 30, where they plan to perform songs from their two EPs,

Bitch Scene and *Trophy Wife*, as well as some covers of favorite artists like Chappell Roan.

In this exclusive 90-minute interview with *Rolling Stone*, the soon-to-be high school juniors are smart, poised, and funny. Vocalist Audrey Cymone and drummer Zoey Su join the video chat from their respective homes in the greater Los Angeles area, while guitarist Lula Seifert and bassist Lucy Fraser Zoom in together. Because they are all underage, Seifert's father quietly sits in on the call in case the girls need assistance. They don't.

The only time they appear surprised is when I mention their publicist. "Wait, we have a publicist?" Su asks, before enthusiastically talking about their trip to Chicago for Lollapalooza. "None of us have been to Chicago before, but we are all super pumped. I want to check out local restaurants and shopping districts. But more than anything, we really, *really* want to visit the Bean." (She's referencing *Cloud Gate*, the massive, 33-foot-high, 110-ton public sculpture by artist Anish Kapoor that's known colloquially by that name and photographed by nearly every visitor to the city.)

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It wasn't too long ago that Kim Theory were just kids goofing around in each other's garages. As Seifert recalls, "When Zoey and I were in middle school, we used to carpool to school every day, and we'd listen to new

bands and be like, ‘This is amazing! How can we take this a step further in our life?’ So we started learning to play instruments. After school, we’d go to Zoey’s garage. She’d hit her drums and I’d try to play chords, and we’d write our little songs. It was fun.” There was just one thing missing: “Then we’re like, ‘We can’t have a band with just guitar and drums, we want a singer.’ I said, ‘I know the best singer.’ So [that was] Audrey, obviously.”

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Shortly after their 2024 formation, the trio added Fraser, who had been the bassist for another L.A. group. With their lineup solidified, Kim Theory wrote songs like “He Said She Said” and “Child Star Teenybopper,” setting the tone for their sound — punk rock mixed with melodic ’90s alternative angst. Seifert, Fraser, and Su are aggressive musicians who know how to

take their sound up to 11, while Cymone's vocals cajole and roar, plead and demand. Her dismissive laugh is implied.

They're cool rock stars now, but they're also fans. After their all-ages Lollapalooza set, Kim Theory are scheduled to open for *Stranger Things*' Finn Wolfhard at the festival's official late-night aftershow at a Chicago club. Ironically, if the 16-year-old girls weren't performing that evening, they wouldn't be allowed into the 17+ concert.

"I think I manifested this one," Cymone says with a grin. "I love *Stranger Things* and I would watch all of the cast interviews and stuff. Finn Wolfhard would talk about how he had a band called the Aubreys. He wanted it to be called the Audreys, but couldn't because that was already a band name. And now we're gonna play with him."

Though performing at Lollapalooza is a huge deal that they knew about months ago, the band members kept it low-key at their respective schools, sharing their good news with a few close friends and teachers.

"If I tell someone something that I'm excited about, they're excited, too," Seifert says. "I go to an art school, so a lot of kids are musicians. There's never been jealousy. I'm surrounded by people who think like me, who know I would offer my support to them, too."

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After their concerts in Chicago, Kim Theory will perform a few dates closer to home on weekends, including a highly-publicized gig in September opening for the influential riot grrrl band Bratmobile.

“We brought them out last year for ‘Gimme Brains,’” Bratmobile singer-songwriter Allison Wolfe tells *Rolling Stone* in a separate phone interview. “I love them! They’ve got really good voices and are good musicians. I saw them perform a stripped-down unplugged set and they were amazing. I was blown away.” She heard about Kim Theory through Bratmobile’s drummer, Molly Neuman: “She knew about them already and really liked them. When we were planning our tour, she said, ‘Hey, I want Kim Theory to open for us.’ I said, ‘Oh yeah!’”

Kim Theory are aware that they are in an unusual situation. Most teenagers don’t perform at major music festivals or do interviews of any kind. But they take their burgeoning fame in stride. They note that while other teens may not be in bands, there are plenty who are passionate about socio-political issues that affect their communities. It doesn’t sit well with them that too many adults want to infantilize teens, as if they’re not capable of forming their own opinions.

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Ethnomusicologist Elizabeth Keenan points out that Kim Theory rings true with both older and younger fans because their music fits into the Nineties nostalgia that’s been prominent over the past decade.

“There’s so much going on in our culture right now that resonates with feminist movements and women musicians like the Kims who inspired Kim Theory’s name from the 1990s,” Keenan — who also wrote the riot grrrl novel *Rebel Girls* — says in an email to *Rolling Stone*. “This cultural resonance is what sets the stage for younger musicians like Kim Theory to find their own voices [and] also make a connection back to previous generations of women. You can see this in their cover of Bratmobile’s ‘Gimme Brains.’ What’s really interesting for me about Kim Theory is ...

they're looking back and making it their own at the same time, which is great to see."

Bassist Fraser is all about empowering and encouraging other kids, especially girls, who want to start their own bands. She encourages them to "just do it. I think it's kind of almost ridiculous that we as humans have been conditioned to think, 'Oh no, it sounds too hard so I'm not gonna do it' or you're too embarrassed or scared of failing. Even if you do fail, at least you tried. For us, we're just having fun being together and being a band. We didn't have a big plan."

Meet Kim Theory

Audrey Cymone (vocals)

The lone group member who no longer attends regular school — she takes online classes — Cymone is also an actress (Netflix's *One Piece*, NBC's *Annie Live*) and a self-described theater kid.

Her influences: "My dad was always a huge Guns N' Roses fan, which was what I was listening to a lot growing up. But I also remember him playing me 'Luka' by Suzanne Vega and I would try to learn how to play it on the ukulele [when I was] 10 years old. It was just such a beautiful, haunting song and I loved it so much."

Favorite musicals: "When I was eight years old, my favorite musical in the whole world was *Shrek the Musical*. Now, I like a lot of rock musicals like *Next to Normal*, *Spring Awakening*, and *Dear Evan Hansen*. But I also like the older ones. I love *Miss Saigon* and *West Side Story*. All of those soundtracks are always playing in my car."

Lula Seifert (guitar)

Seifert's father, Heath, plays with L.A. punk band the Astral Jets, and her elder sister, Sophie, co-wrote "He Said She Said" with Kim Theory. The guitarist enjoys punk, grunge, Chappell Roan, Katy Perry's earlier songs,

and Halsey. And she took two years of tap dancing to fulfill her P.E. requirements.

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The Pizza Dudes: “Zoey and I used to do music lessons when we must have been, like, seven,” Seifert says. “It was more like musical experimentation. I have a distinct memory of being in the basement of a little music school. Zoey was hitting the drums and the instructor said, ‘Just play G.’ And I said, ‘How do I play G’? But we wrote our first song. Our name was the Pizza Dudes and my sister was in the band with us. That moment of us taking lessons together connected us as musicians. When I think about music, I think about that. I think that was relevant to forming a band with Zoey.”

Punk-Rock Blitzkrieg: “I would always listen to Marky Ramone’s Punk Rock Blitzkrieg on SiriusXM,” Seifert says. “I listened to punk before that, but that’s what took me around the punk globe. I heard songs by a bunch of different bands. That introduced me to high-energy punk music, which got me into punk culture. I learned about live music and started getting interested in going to shows. All of that really changed who I am and really influenced my view on music.”

Lucy Fraser (bass)

Fraser credits the *Guardians of the Galaxy* soundtracks for her love of oldies. She also enjoys yacht rock, Rupert Holmes’ “Escape (The Pina Colada Song),” the Beastie Boys, Childish Gambino, Britney Spears, and “anything they may have covered on *Glee*.”

Her influences: “Specifically, I remember maybe in 2019 we put our bikes in the back of the car, then we’d drive to the beach and listen to the *Guardians of the Galaxy* soundtrack and talk about it,” Fraser says. “We’d get there and ride our bikes on the sidewalk by the beach, and then would

get back in the car and put the soundtrack back on again. I think that was my introduction to what would become my musical taste on a very basic level. It's evolved, it's grown, it's reached different branches of the trees and spread. But that was kind of where it started. That soundtrack means a lot to me. It's really good."

Zoey Su (drums)

Su's parents played a variety of music in their home, exposing her early to different genres. She took piano lessons for a while before switching to drums. "My dad was definitely really happy that I chose the drums," she says. "He mentioned that when he was a kid, he had wanted to play the drums, too. They were both very supportive."

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Her influences: "I'd carpool with Lula, and they always had the Beatles station on, so I'm very well-versed in the Beatles," she says. "Any song [of theirs], I'm a sleeper agent. I know all the lyrics somehow. My mom played me a lot of the Carpenters, Cranberries, and Alanis Morissette. My Dad played S Club 7 and Cypress Hill, which is polarizing." Su also enjoys listening to screamo and electronic music.

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Representation: Su grows pensive as she remembers an interaction her mother had with a fan at one of their gigs. “My mom was selling merch for us and this Asian girl came up to her and was like, ‘Oh my god, is that your daughter on the drums? That’s so cool to see an Asian girl on drums,’” Su recalls. “I’m Asian and Audrey’s [half Filipino]. There’s probably a lot of female drummers [and singers] in Asian countries, but I feel like [that’s not as common] here in our local L.A. scene. It’s always really cool even when I see another girl drummer.”

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