

# Crime stats hint at work ahead for the Justice Center

## Opens March 15 though voters didn't want it

BY HEIDI SWILLINGER

THE Tenderloin's 2008 crime statistics are out, and there's some good news. Compared with 2007, there were fewer homicides. Robbery was down. So was aggravated assault, drunk driving, prostitution and even vandalism. Reports of rape didn't decrease, but as least they didn't go up – 13 each year.

On the other hand, burglary reports increased, as did weapons charges, liquor law violations and sex offenses that didn't involve force. Disorderly conduct jumped, but drug offenses were through the roof, soaring 22%.

Tenderloin police responded by making 6,500 arrests – 500 more than in 2007 – including all suspects in the neighborhood's four murders. They also issued hundreds of citations – Capt. Gary Jimenez says the department doesn't know the actual number – for misdemeanors and nonviolent felonies.

That's the good news – depending on which side of the law you're on, of course.

The bad news is that the bulk of the drug bust efforts wasted time and taxpayers' money. Jail doesn't

cure drug addiction, so offenders tend to cycle in and out of the justice system. Many don't even make it into the system – it's virtually impossible for law enforcement to follow through on

citations issued in less serious crimes.

Drugs are by far the Tenderloin's biggest, most pernicious law-enforcement problem. They not only accounted for 3,042 of the neighborhood's 7,876 nonviolent felony and misdemeanor complaints in 2008, drugs magnetize other criminal behavior. Women sell themselves. Men break into cars. Kids settle drug turf wars with guns. People get too high, lie in the street and defecate in doorways, which doesn't seem like much of a crime, unless it's the doorway to a shop you own and you have to clean it up.

Police make arrests in serious cases, but more than two-thirds of the people they collar on drug charges will end up back in custody within two years, according to a 2008 report by the Judicial Council of California.

People who commit drug-related misdemeanors or nonviolent felonies are most likely to be slapped with citations. They aren't well tracked, and no one has measured their deterrent effect. But, even in the best of economies, there's not enough city staff to ensure that those cited actually appear in court. "Our officers submit their citations knowing they're a useless piece of paper," says Jimenez.

The Community Justice Center is

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# CENTRAL CITY

# EXTRA

SAN FRANCISCO

## 'MY PARACHUTE'



Itzhak Volansky, musician and bookstore owner, wrote a song in 1979 that briefly resurfaced recently. This shot is from a DVD shown on YouTube.

# 5 minutes of fame

## Long, strange trip: TL to Hollywood, Warfield to YouTube and back to Turk St.

BY TOM CARTER

SEATED on a stool where the ramshackle bookcases start, California Red, a neighborhood drop-in at McDonald's bookstore on Turk Street, softly strums his guitar for storeowner Itzhak "Isaac" Volansky, who occupies a chair across from Red.

Volansky, short, balding and 58, wears a

weak smile as the aimless chords wash over him. He's an island in the dead sea of derelict books, ancient magazines, battered boxes and other trash on the floor around him. It's approaching noon on a workday in December and the store is closed.

"I'm a musician trapped in a bookseller's body," Volansky says, his stock quip that suggests another standup occupation that eluded him.

But, recently, Volansky broke out. After agonizing years of dreaming of becoming a comic/composer/singer, it just happened. Volansky became a hot item and even answered his age-old riddle — "I always knew I'd be an overnight sensation, I just didn't know the night." A radio station asked a young rock band to take his dormant signature song, "My Parachute Won't Open," and shape the quirky thing their way. That done, it created a ripple of excitement.

"Now I have fame," Volansky said. "I just need fortune."

The group that raised Volansky up is Dizzy Balloon, five pop-rockers from tony Piedmont. They sound like the early Beatles and demonstrated that under pressure they can make lemonade when lobbed a lemon.

The fallout for Volansky was that after dwelling the better part of three decades in obscurity — fitfully trapped — he was invited to perform "My Parachute," solo, at Oracle Arena on Dec. 11. He did so before a sold-out concert crowd of 14,000. He claims he was all but mobbed by affectionate fans as he left the building, but we saw his tongue drift into his cheek when he said it.

An unlikely road led to his Volansky's latest fling with of fame.



Volansky, guitar in hand, parachute on back, sings at the Warfield.

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