

the magazine of zine culture and the independent arts

# brokenpencil

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GENERATION TEXT:  
WHAT THE INTERNET  
COULDN'T KILL

A HISTORY OF  
SUBVERSIVE  
TECHNOLOGY

AND  
ZINE PROPHET  
MICHAEL BIDNER

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# 2003 Canadian Unknown <sup>\*</sup> Writers Challenge

Complete this sentence and win a free writing course<sup>1</sup> from the Continuing Education department at George Brown, Toronto City College.

"They say it takes one to know one, so \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. " (Max 50 words)

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2003 Canadian Unknown Writers Challenge  
c/o Continuing Education Communications Department  
George Brown College  
PO Box 1015, Station B, Toronto ON M5T 2T9

Deadline is Dec. 31, 2003.

<sup>\*</sup> You know who you are, obviously. So does your family, your work colleagues and so-called "friends". What we mean here is Canadian writers (i.e., Canadians who can write) who have not yet scaled the peaks of fame and public notice.

<sup>1</sup> Here's the deal: If you win you'll get a letter from a kind administrator at George Brown. Submit this letter with your registration form for a communications or writing course. There has to be room in the course you want and you only have one year after winning to take the course. One prize will be awarded. No cash value. Judges decisions, which are final, will be made on subjective, arcane and outlandish criteria. Entries become the property of George Brown College.

George Brown  
Toronto City College

# Broken Pencil Consults the Psychics

or...

## Friendsters Die Faster Than Hamsters

**We at** Broken Pencil don't know much about prophesizing but we do know this. You can keep your genome pokers and prodders, you can have all your \$1000-an-hour futurists, you can even keep Moses Zaimer... Here at Broken Pencil, we like our future bullshit the old fashioned way: doled out by a woman who sounds like Judy Tenuda and has lots of earrings and long fingernails. Of course, to be scientific about it we consulted several different sources, or "mediums," regarding the future of this crazy magazine...

We started with the website "Ask Zelda." We asked Zelda, "Will Canzine be a success this year?" Zelda must be a very fast typist because we had our answer instantly: "The runes say YES YES YES."

Yeah, we here at Broken Pencil love the runes! Just to be sure, we also consulted the website of "The Psychic Wizard," posing the same question. The Wizard's answer bummed us all out: "Sources say no!" Not just no, but no! (with an exclamation mark). He must have been upset with his table last year.

Shaken, we continued our psychic investigation into the future of Broken Pencil by ordering a "Forecast Audit" from Indra. Just by giving Broken Pencil's sign (Gemini, if we go by the release of our first issue) and birthday (June 1995 for those interested in sending presents), Indra was able to issue this prediction:

"Mr. Pencil, you are versatile and adaptable. Usually, you have fifty projects going, all at the same time. You are interested in everything, but this makes it very difficult to do anything in particular very well. You love to relate. You build your day and your life around interactions with people, ideas and events. When you are well organized, you accomplish. When you develop sympathy for others, your relationships become more stable...."

Thanks Indra, but you didn't mention cheap toy cameras becoming valuable art tools or anything about how a guy from London, Ontario changed the world of magazine design. Maybe your powers are limited and you just couldn't foresee...Future Now! This is Broken Pencil's lame attempt at hijacking the zeitgeist. Read on Indra, read on. *~*

**editors:** Emily Schultz (editor@brokenpencil.com)  
**founding editors:** Hal Niedzviecki (hal@brokenpencil.com)  
**design:** John Hodgins (design@brokenpencil.com)  
**zines editors:** Audrey Gagnon (zines@brokenpencil.com)  
**fiction editors:** Emily Pohl-Weary (fiction@brokenpencil.com)  
**books editors:** Ryan Bigge (ryan@brokenpencil.com)  
**film & video editors:** Flick Harrison (video@brokenpencil.com)  
**art editors:** Jon Sasaki (art@brokenpencil.com)  
**music editors:** Terence Dick (music@brokenpencil.com)  
**website & ezine editors:** Derek Winkler (derek@brokenpencil.com)  
**editor-at-large:** Hilary Clark  
**roving columnists:** Jonathan Goldstein and Heather O'Neill, Nathalie Atkinson  
**editorial assistants:** Dave McGinn  
**ad coordinators:** Brian Joseph Davis (ads@brokenpencil.com)  
**contributors:** Mitch Adams, Suzanne Alyssa Andrew, zev asher, Ted Baker, Wendy Banks, Gillian Best, Irene Bindi, Karyn Bonham, Anna Bowness, Crystal Bueckert, Brian Burch, Michele Collins, Jonathan Culp, Brian Joseph Davis, Kieran Dick, Jason Dickson, Dale Duncan, Nick Flanagan, Cameron Gordon, Joel Katelnikoff, Bill Kennedy, Erin Kobaashi, James King, Mark Kingwell, Colleen Langford, Andrée Lachapelle, C.J. Leon, Scott Marlowe, Dave McGinn, Laura M. Miller, Susanna Molinolo, Hal Niedzviecki, Jon Pressick, Mari Sasano, Alex Snukal, Rob Thomas, Vince Tinguely, Leslie Trites, Sarah Van Sinclair, Teri Vlassopoulos, Darren Wershler-Henry, Mary Williamson, Greg Woods, Kate Zieman

**illustrators:** Erica Brade, Jeff Lemire, Curtis MacDonald, Lorenz Peter

**copy editors:** Ken Hann, Dave McGinn, Alex Mlynek, Andréa Schmidt

**cover:** Instant Coffee

Writing for Broken Pencil: Broken Pencil encourages submissions of original fiction accompanied by a self addressed stamped envelope and/or email address. Please include a disc in PC format (when possible) and a bio. We also encourage submissions of original essays, columns, rants, interviews and features - anything related to the subject of independent culture in Canada. But before you write your opus, please send a proposal for your article (2-3 paragraphs), along with samples of your work and a self addressed stamped envelope. We are also interested in working with new photographers and illustrators. Send us samples (not originals) along with a self addressed stamped envelope.

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# Using Broken Pencil

## Organization:

Broken Pencil reviews independent publications published in Canada and the world, including ezines and recordings. All the listings in Broken Pencil are organized by province/region. International and US listings are after the Canadian publications. There is an index in the back that lists every publication and recording reviewed in Broken Pencil in alphabetical order.

## Structure of listings:

Title — the name of the publication

Definition — the arbitrary classification we attribute to a publication

Name(s) of creators - the creators of the publication, the people who write and publish it.

S — the price that the publication is sold for individually and, if available, by subscription. These prices do not include postage, which is extra (see "how to order zines")

Address — every effort will be made to have the correct addresses for all publications, however errors do occur and address changes/tipos/mysterious disappearances are always a hazard.

Review — the review of a publication represents the subjective opinion of the reviewer. Personal taste cannot be edited out of a review. Broken Pencil welcomes dissenting opinions while making every effort to offer a fair and true judgement.

## What Is A Zine?

A zine is an independently published, not-for-profit publication. Although it usually represents the personal vision of a single creator, it can have many contributors. Although most zines are photocopied and hand stapled, some zines are professionally printed. What makes a zine a zine is its dedication to the independent transference of thought on a non-commercial basis. Variations on the zine include the comic zine (indie comics), the litzine (literary - poems, fiction, essays), the perzine (personal, autobiographical), and the ezine (zines published only on the internet). In addition to zines, we also review independent/alternative newspapers, journals, magazines, books and chapbooks, and recordings in LP, cassette and CD format.

## How to Order Zines

Please Send Cash! If you are ordering anything under six bucks you should send well concealed money. Many zine publishers don't have a separate bank account for their zine and cannot use checks made out to their zine or to their pen name. In fact, many zine publishers do not have a bank account at all. So the best thing to do is to staple cash to a letter (or tape coins to a piece of paper and staple that to a letter), though for anything over the six dollar mark, you should probably send a check. We list a name in our ordering information, and you should make the check out to that name or the name of a publishing house if that information is available. The second big thing to remember is that you are also paying for postage. Figure on including a dollar extra for postage on a standard zine (within Canada). If you are ordering Canadian zines from the U.S., pay in U.S. dollars and that should cover the postage. Ordering Canadian zines from overseas you should pay in U.S. and throw in a dollar extra, two if you want air mail. If you are ordering U.S. or overseas zines from Canada, you'll need to send U.S. dollars and a dollar or two extra for postage. Don't send Canadian dollars or checks to anyone overseas or in the U.S. as they won't know what to do with it most of the time. Some zines include postage in their price, most do not. If a zine indicates their price includes postage, we will note that in the ordering info, otherwise, figure that the price listed is the cost of the zine only, not the cost of getting it to you. If a zine is free, always include a dollar or two for postage. Keep in mind that ordering zines takes time as zine publishers are busy. You should plan on waiting several months before deciding that a zine isn't coming. Should that occur, send a postcard asking what happened. If you don't get a prompt reply, drop us a note and we can try to contact the publisher for you, and/or warn others not to waste their money. But be patient, because most of the time you'll get what you ordered, though it might take a while. And hey, zine publishers like to know how you heard of their zine so be sure and tell them we sent yeah.

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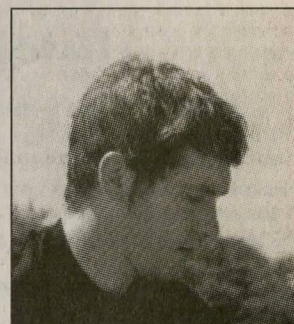
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Irene Bindi is a masters student in the graduate program in film & video at York University. Jason Dickson is the editor of Clearance: Selected Journals of Dr. Michael Purdon, Parapsychologist (Bookthug, 2002). He reads and writes in London, Ontario.



Mark Laliberte works in the mediums of photography, collage, sculpture, and computer-based sound composition. His work has shown in exhibitions throughout Canada and the USA. A founding member of Thinkbox, he has upcoming shows in Montreal & Vancouver. Visit [www.marklaliberte.com](http://www.marklaliberte.com) & [www.thinkbox.ca](http://www.thinkbox.ca)



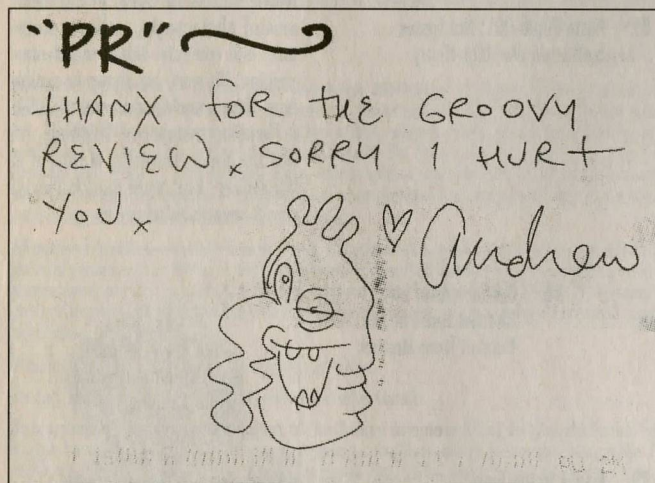
James King spends most of his time reading cyber-punk novels, playing video games, watching movies, playing guitar and avoiding sleep. He also runs the Majestic Night of Film Excellence film series at the University of Toronto (where he spends a lot of money studying film and English), and is in constant search for enough cash to fund his little bloody film projects.

# Letters

To Broken Pencil staff,  
I send Hevy Servd. Also being sent in is Electric Eye, done by my friend Chud. In regards to yer last issue, it ruled ass. I read all the articles but skipped some of the zine reviews from the U.S.A. Not that I have anything against U.S.A zines, just you know, different stamp, different money. Well I should wrap it up.  
Peace & hair grease, Billy

From: www.stinz.com  
You tell Colin [Upton] that he does one more interview without promoting me, and I'm pulling him off my website. (This is a JOKE!!!!)  
Donna Barr, The Desert Peach, Stinz, et al.

Good Afternoon,  
Thanks for the review of my website <http://www.jasongallagher.com>. I wish that it would have been for a review of a chapbook or for the latest copy of my full length poetry collection but unfortunately for the past 2 years I have been held captive by a cult of siamese mimes. I was pleased to see upon my escape (I created a series of fake tunnels) that my work was still being enjoyed. This year I plan



on devoting my energy to being the first person to ever beat the worlds high jump and long jump records both at the same time so it is possible that a new collection of my work will be delayed. However, for all those with time machines I'm sure you'll get a kick of my 2007 stuff. Don't lick the welcome mat.  
Jason, the worlds tallest midget,  
<http://www.jasongallagher.com>

To: Emily Schultz  
Re: Broken Pencil #22  
My name is Rob Thompson and I am writing in regards to the latest issue of Broken Pencil (the Comic Book issue). I was very happy to see that Broken Pencil gave special attention to comics, especially since comics and zines are often associated together. At first glance I was excited to see that several of my comic titles were reviewed...all eight of them in fact. Then I read the reviews.

I am very open to journalists reviewing my work, and I'm quite open-minded when it comes to criticism. However, I do not tolerate writers making a personal crusade to throw around insults and trash my work. Patrick Rawley must be a very bitter person. First he hacked my series Champions of Hell! I can understand if he didn't like the series as it is not for everyone. But rather than staying objective, he let his negative perspective taint every single other issue I submitted for review. His criticisms were derogatory, closed-minded, and very insulting. No comments were made on story content, variety of styles, nor artwork. Instead, he made fun of the way my books were assembled, trashed my

opening dedications, and made unfair statements on my assumed lifestyle.

Judging from his continuous slander, I doubt he actually read all the issues he critiqued. Does Patrick even like comic books? And if he hated Champions of Hell so much, why was he assigned to review all of my associated titles? He took personal delight in ripping apart anything with my name attached. Where does this attitude fit in with journalism and professional critiques?

Needless to say, I am irate. The unfortunate part is that not only does it make me look bad, but also Broken Pencil for getting away with writing slander. I will never purchase another issue of your magazine again. I will tell others not to read it.

This letter will be followed up with a personal letter to Mr. Rawley. I am also asking Broken Pencil Magazine for a letter of apology.

Please concern this letter with the utmost sincerity, as I most certainly do.  
Sincerely, Robin Thompson

## Letter of the Issue

Dear Emily,  
Michele and I were just discussing plans for Canzine when I looked on our Value Village calendar to check the date and look what I discovered. Canzine is on the night of the most important Jewish holiday of the year — Yom Kippur. I can't go to Canzine this year. I'm not saying Broken Pencil should observe the Sabbath or start eating gefilte fish for lunch. But, you probably wouldn't schedule Canzine on Christmas Eve, would you?  
Sad to be missing out cuz I'm a big Jew, Sarah Dermer



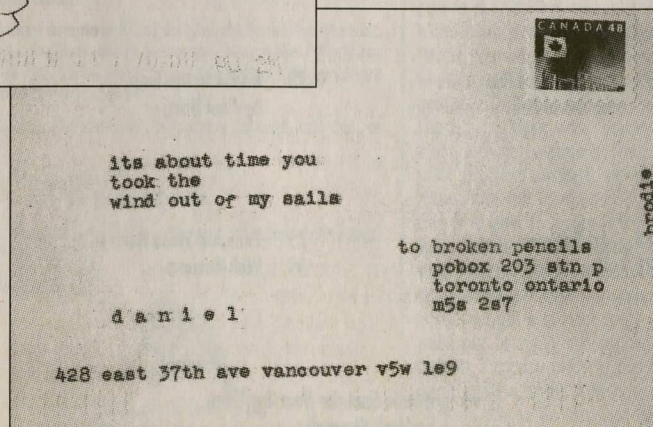
The girl who saved Canzine, rescheduled Oct. 19

Dear Broken Pencil,  
"Big bad smelly pussy farts eat dick for breakfast!" will forever be my favourite piece of bathroom graffiti!

I always wondered why Kurt Cobain killed himself...Bigger Nirvana fans than I always told me that Courtenay did it for the cash (dumb boys!) Thanks to BP, I now know he did it cuz of fame! Duh! (I'm finally catching up with the 90s!)

I'd also been wondering why Eminem was so freakin' famous...I thought his appeal lied in his overt hatred of women & homosexuals. Richard Goldstein of "The Nation," for example, states that war-mongering breeds a tendency toward machoism in pop culture, because, in times of crises when citizens seek reassurance, they turn to strong figures, even if they're wrong, hence Eminem's increasing popularity since Sept 11th, 2001. Dick's suggestion that North Americans take interest in Eminem b/c of the "authenticity debate" was very compelling, as well, and could even be easily applied to punk rock. "Punk identity" is especially problematic for girls & women who do not play in a punk band. Often, their "punkness" is measured in who (which boy in which band) they happen to be dating. She is always "a groupie" before "a roadie." So, in the same way that divisions may exist in hip-hop along cultural lines, exist also in punk rock along gender.

Emily: keep up the good work! #21 was a GREAT issue!  
Candace, Fredrickton, N.B.  
PS. You need better coverage of Atlantic Canada! Zines/music/art exist here too!



# Revolution of the Moment: Action Grrrlz

It's Sunday afternoon, in a room at the 519 Community Center, and Michele Collins is busy planning her next zine, "I did a zine on facial hair but I want to do a zine that's better. It would be really fun to get a bunch of people involved and just have them write about hair in general. That's my plan. Earlier I wrote a letter to my mom as if I was the Queen." Sitting next to her is Sarah Dermer, her life partner and co-founder of Action Grrrlz. She's attempting to sew a Books-Not-Bombs patch on an old pair of jean shorts.

There are about ten other girls sitting around at a table working on all sorts of crafty things from neat-looking bead necklaces to complex Halloween costumes. That's what Action Grrrlz is all about: working on something, ANYTHING. One girl announces she is working on her dissertation while another is making up lists and attempting to organize her life. "The week we started Action Grrrlz," says Dermer, "we actually made a list of the things that we wanted to do to change our lives and we found that it was really long and depressing." Collins is quick to add that the depressive aspect was mainly due to the fact that the same list had been written six months prior and nothing had changed. That's when the girls decided to get out of procrastination mode and launch themselves into action. Action Grrrlz was born.

"It all started out with Gay Geeks," explains Collins, "where people expected us to be sort of a big group, like it was all official. We were just like, no, we just show up [to Gay Pride] with signs. So we thought about it and decided that if we're going to have a group we would want it to be something that got us working on the things in our lives that we want to focus on. Sort of taking a chance to do things that we care about."

It was one year ago that the Action Grrrlz had their first official meeting at the Toronto Women's Bookstore. The response was positive and the girls quickly realized that a bigger space would be necessary. In October 2002 the group moved themselves to the 519 Community Center where they continue to meet the second Saturday of every month. A year later, Action Grrrlz is surpassing Collins and Dermer's expecta-



**Action Grrrlz: from zines to sewing and every feminism in between.**

tions. Not only is the group bringing out an average of 10 to 15 girls to the 519 every month, but Action Grrrlz has turned itself into an active on-line group boasting over 50 members. "There's that kind of networking where people are learning from each other. That's exciting," says Collins. Even more exciting to Collins and Dermer is the fact that this network solely consists of grrrlz and grrrl-identified people.

For Dermer, the reasons are political. "Not that we don't like our boy friends, but a lot of the times women are spending time doing stuff for other people and

not getting their own projects done." Collins suggests that people's motivation stems from the more social aspect of Action Grrrlz. Dermer agrees, "there's no procrastination if everyone at the table is doing something."

It also helps that the atmosphere at Action Grrrlz meetings is surprisingly welcoming. Within minutes of walking in the door fellow Action Grrrlz were introducing themselves and offering me chocolate cake. I was pleasantly surprised. Collins explains, "Often when you get together with lefty women there can be this assumption that you all think the same way. I really think that Action Grrrlz hasn't done that. We want it to be a place where everybody can just sort of find a common ground and enjoy working with each other."

"It's a grrrl anarchist group with juice and cookies," says Collins and everyone laughs. I think she couldn't have said it better. (Audrey Gagnon)

**Who:** Action Grrrlz

**When:** Every second Saturday of every month. 2-4:30pm

**Where:** 519 Community Center, Church Street, Room R31, Toronto ON

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/action-grrrlz>

[actiongrrrlz@yahoo.com](mailto:actiongrrrlz@yahoo.com)

## July Zine of the Month

### One Way Ticket

**perzine, #2, 56 pages, Julian Evans, free if you write to him or trade, 1111A 4th Street, Courtenay BC, V9N 1H6, [julian@riseup.net](mailto:julian@riseup.net)**

If you guys read my review of OWT #1 in the last issue of BP, you're already aware that I was highly impressed by Julian's first attempt at zine-making. What do I think of the second issue? Damn, it's absolutely great! This kid is going places fast. All the goodness of the first issue remains; great writing, kick ass layout, intelligent ideas; except that Julian takes everything up a notch closer to perfection. Take the cover for example: first issue was printed black on standard white paper. For the second issue Julian opts for a crisp midnight blue card stock (paper he got free from a friend named Trevor) covered with a grey silk-screened design. The combination of grey and midnight blue is simply stunning. OWT's insides are just as breath taking as the first issue. Same sort of

crisp layout, but this time around I was pleasantly surprised to see Julian experiment a little more with graphics, tone, and font; all the while keeping a style that remains constant throughout both issues. This second issue surpasses the first in terms of writing. It's powerful. It's honest. It's the type of zine you'll keep around for years to come just so you can pick it up once in a while and be reminded that some really great zines do in fact exist out there. It's about simple pleasures like going to shows, running around in the rain, writing letters to people you only know through the zines they create. Or as Julian puts it, "This is me, every word and every line and every picture... I feel free and happy when the words pour and my fingers furiously tap the keys of this old and now fading typewriter. And it is even better when people communicate back, tell me they read this, my ideas and words and life, and liked it. And felt some sort of connection. I will be here for a while." In my opinion, OWT is mandatory reading. (Audrey Gagnon)

# Goldstein Says

by Heather O'Neill

Goldstein says we need an apartment with a balcony so that he can go out there at night and see the stars. Goldstein says he wants a goldfish in a glass so that he can have something that truly belongs to him. He gets upset that I use his radio producer trophy as a pencil holder. He polishes it and dusts it and says he's in the wrong life, that this isn't his life at all.

A month ago, we vacationed in New

York and spent the whole time at Brighton Beach where everyone is Russian; the old women swam in their brassieres and even the six-year-olds played chess with serious looks on their little faces. A man with a porkpie hat and old suit pants was selling bottles of beer out of pillowcases. Zuuzuu played in the water with a boy who was eight like her and said he was related to Ring Lardner.

We held up a public radio umbrella to keep us out of the sun.

Since we got back to Montreal, Goldstein can't bring himself to unpack his toiletry bag and he leaves his suitcase packed in the closet. Goldstein has become a stand-up comedian. He says that he only ever feels at home in a hotel room. He has his notebook filled with jokes. He has a suit that makes him look like the drunk man who dances alone at a wedding even after all the other guests have gone home.

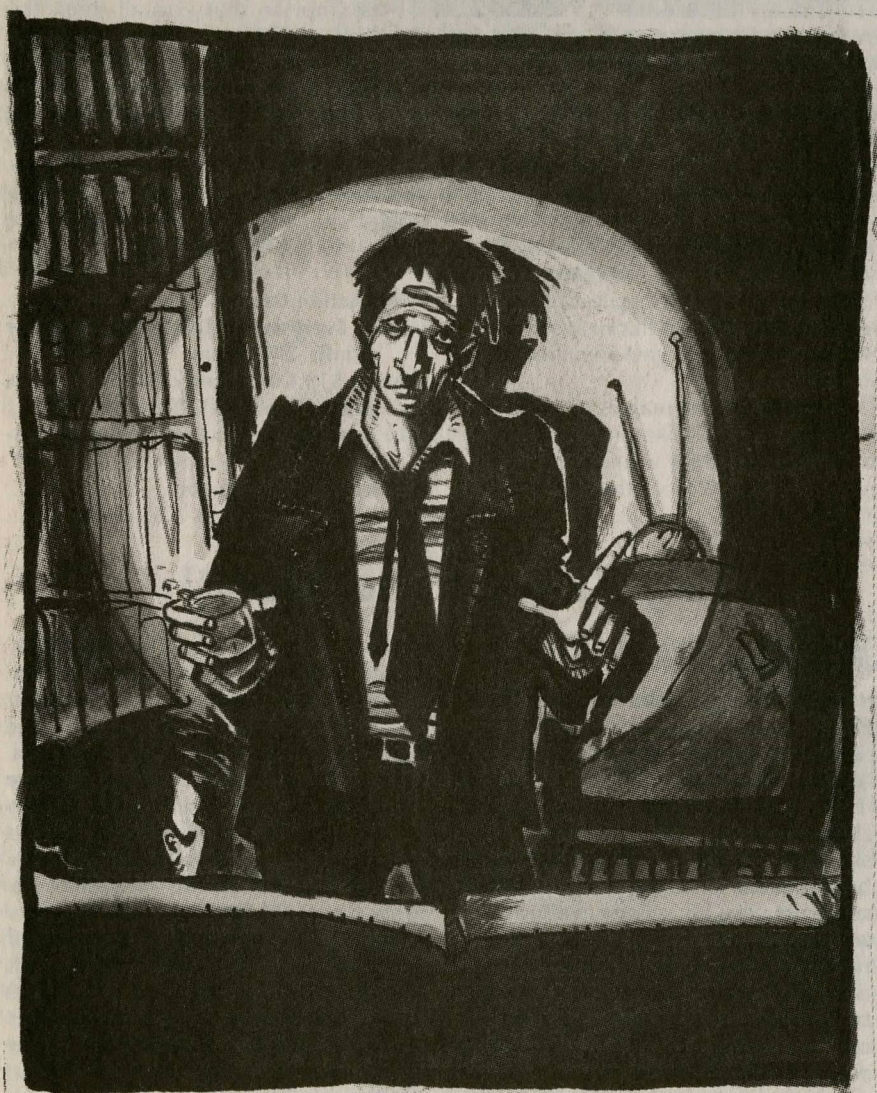
He only leaves the apartment if it is to go to the train station or the airport. Otherwise he stays in his pajamas. He lies in bed begging everyone to bring him a coffee or to hand him his copy of Anna Karenina. In bed he writes notes and observations in tiny telephone book. He thinks it makes him seem like one of the angels from Wings of Desire.

## August Zine of the Month

### No Frequency Media

public domain diskette distribution protocol zine, Skot Deeming, Managing Editor, No Frequency media, 254 Kennedy Ave. Unit C, Toronto ON, M6P 3C3, [www.nofrequency.org](http://www.nofrequency.org), [nofrequency@sympatico.ca](mailto:nofrequency@sympatico.ca)

This fucking rules. It's like getting one of those surprise grab bags of toys and candy from the convenience store, only it's not disappointing and won't rot your teeth. It's a diskette, like, a 3" floppy, with a random assortment of stuff on it. Mine has .wav files of all the sounds from the Atari Centipede video game (boy, does that bring back memories), some lovely close-up photos of Transformers (the toys, you know, robots in disguise), the full Project Gutenberg text of Alice in Wonderland, a pirate flag made out of typographical marks, and some other stuff I haven't even looked at yet. What these No Frequency people are doing, apparently, is making these compilation disks, no two the same, and distributing them so people can add their own stuff to them or change the contents and pass them on. Given the way this little disk just made my whole day, I strongly recommend that you get in on the fun. (Wendy Banks)



He practices his comedy routine in the living room and Zuuzuu and I turn the radio up. He practices saying thank-you in the mirror.

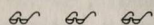
"I can feel the love in the room here," he says. Zuuzuu is sitting on the couch staring at him. He's positioned the lamp in such a way that its like a spotlight.

"Is he having a nervous breakdown?" Zuuzuu asks.

"See what she picks up from you?" Goldstein cries.

"You don't think I'm funny. I read this in front of three thousand people in Portland and they laughed. A man on the street called me Mr. Goldstein and made me sign his coffee cup. I signed it 'Mr. Goldstein.' I'm sorry. I think I just need a change of scenery."

"We just got back from New York! Can't we just try to stay still for once?"



"I can't move from this city because I know you'd kill yourself if I left."

"I don't know about that," I say.

"The guilt of knowing that is a very hard burden."

"I might date someone French if you left. I could polish up my vocabulary."

Goldstein has created a shelf on my bookcase. He calls it my ex-boyfriend shelf. He says he's making a compilation of all the work from all the men I've dated. There are some bad poets on the shelf that I only met for five minutes at book signings. He doesn't believe that Jacques Brel is a French national treasure. He thinks he's some schmuck I dated in college and turns the record player off. That's the problem with seeing someone everyday. You're the last one to notice they've gone mad.

He pulls his suitcase out of the closet on a Monday morning. He puts on his fake Rolex. Goldstein is going back to New York.

"I'd like to be mugged, you know? At least I would know that someone has genuinely noticed me. Picked me out of a crowd. I don't care if I've been picked

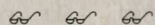


illustrations by Jeff Lemire

out as a fool or a loser. Around here I am simply ignored."

He walks out on the apartment, sadly, like a man who works hard for a living.

At two in the morning the phone rings, "When are you coming to New York?" he asks. "I'm terribly lonely here. Please come."



Zuuzuu and I go down to the Greyhound station to sit around and contemplate buying tickets. We sit on a bench and contemplate. Young homeless kids walk by with their cats on leashes. The cheap hotels by the bus station are lined up like dollhouses. A very pretty prostitute with baby fat and no gel in her hair is dancing in front of one of them. I read an interview with a Parisian singer in *Le Voir*. He says that you have to leave your city to really get to know yourself.

All you have to do is get on the midnight bus and fall asleep and in the morning you will be somewhere else. These actions that cause change are as physically easy as any other motion. At the same time, you can do a million little gestures during the day and still end up in the same spot. By virtue of deciding not to go to New York, it seems that I have gone someplace.

Zuuzuu and I sit at the Greyhound bus terminal a little while longer and think about Paris while drinking our Diet Coca-Colas.

Goldstein calls the next night from New York. He says there's been a blackout and everyone is walking through the darkened streets sipping from cans of beer. I can hear people singing in the street behind him.

"I went up on the roof and saw a shooting star, right in the middle of Manhattan. No one's seen one of those around here for years."

# Zine Profile: No Frequency Media

Skot Deeming, 254 Kennedy Ave. Unit C, Toronto ON, M6P 3C3, [www.nofrequency.org](http://www.nofrequency.org), [nofrequency@sympatico.ca](mailto:nofrequency@sympatico.ca)

**Broken Pencil:** What is No Frequency Media all about?

**Skot Deeming:** No Frequency Media's mandate is a simple one: To promote and distribute independent media and independent media culture; whether that's video/film/new media/print. Mainly we want to create a sense of community, and create a showcase for indie media talent. We like it lo-fi, passion over production value. Johnny Camcorder and his home computer. The video or media artist. The academic. That's the audience, but that's also our contributor base. Media that has a dialogue with its audience and an audience that can truly have a dialogue with its media.

**Broken Pencil:** You've mentioned that No Frequency Media is taking an "omni-media approach to indie culture"; what propelled you to take the project in that direction?

**Skot Deeming:** The project started as an idea for a film/video compilation tape (video magazine I suppose), but all of the editors came from a film-theory background, so we decided to add a print component to the project. Then came the web. We feel the effects of branding every day; all brands cross media somehow. No Frequency acknowledges that that is where we come from, so why not apply the same branding methodologies that THEY use to indie culture? There is a product, it has a philosophy. It's a brand. Print, web, video, complimentary media just like THEY have. But it's for us. We may be the programmed, but we are also the programmers.

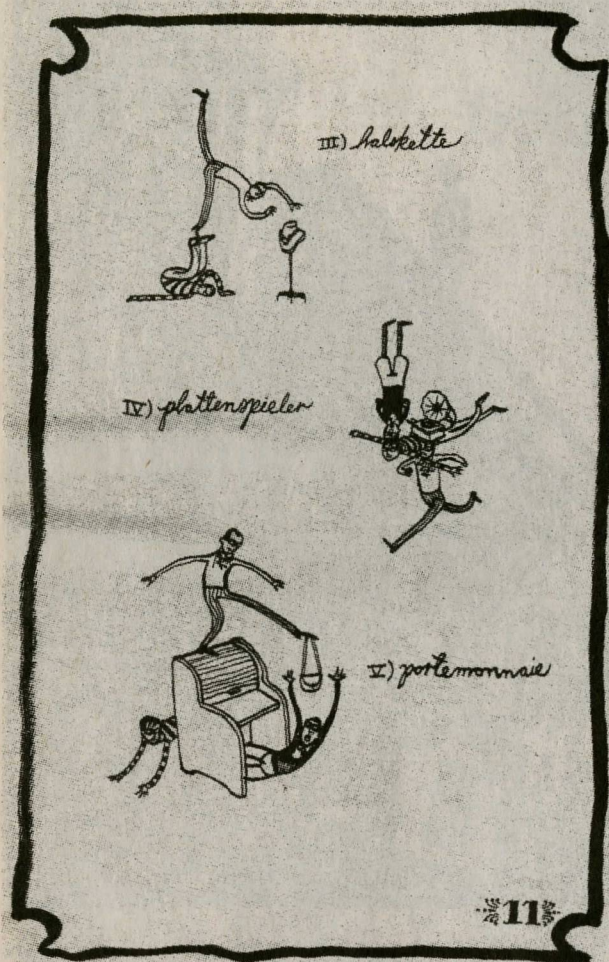
**Broken Pencil:** Name a media project you are currently impressed with.

**Skot Deeming:** I don't think I am impressed particularly with one specific media project per se. However, there are some very interesting developments on filesharing (peer to peer) networks such as Kazaa. There are these videos, AMVs (anime music videos), where someone will take footage from one of their favourite Japanese cartoons, and then take their favourite song, combine the two, edit it, and create their own music videos. I think that is impressive. It's opening up whole new avenues for cultural production and distribution. The whole thing is completely digital; there is no physical manifestation of the media. These are more than just cultural byproducts, they are mutations, like a new kind of fanzine. I find it all totally fascinating.

**Broken Pencil:** What are your future plans for No Frequency Media?

**Skot Deeming:** Well, now that the first issue is out, we are going to start accepting submissions for a second, and continue working on the floppy disc zine. But we have other plans: a documentary competition, and we are launching a new website, the Urban Sporting League—a kind of guerilla video urban sporting show site ([urbansporting.com](http://urbansporting.com)). These are the plans. Now we have to find the time.

(Audrey Gagnon)



## September Zine of the Month

### Die Letzter Kaper

artbook, 20 pages, \$6 L. Reid and G. Stab, Tiger Press Books, [tigerpressbooks@hotmail.com](mailto:tigerpressbooks@hotmail.com)

Usually when people send their publications into Broken Pencil, they include a little note that says something like: "here's the latest...it costs so-and-so and my current address is such-and-such..." and that information goes on the first lines of the review. In this case those would be the lines with all the question marks on them, because to be honest, I think I lost the little note. So here's me telling you to rush out and buy a book that you can't really rush out to buy. Die Letzter Kaper is a comic with German captions that features "Die Kaper Freund:" three exceedingly agile, (presumably German) cat burglars. The characters perform incredible feats of acrobatic dexterity to Infiltrieren a mansion, Manövrieren around the place undetected long enough to Diebstahl some swanky looking valuables. The only thing more nimble than these guys is the hand that illustrated them. Like those little cartoons in the margins of Mad magazine, these tiny tableaux tell the whole story on their own...which is good for readers whose German is as schlecht as mine. I only hope that the authors Google themselves on a regular basis, see this review, and send us some contact info schnell! (Jon Sasaki)

# Space for Rant: Another Day at the Office

by C. J. Leon

It's another day at the office. There aren't any offices really. There are dividers though. A-screen-a-keyboard-and-a-telephone. I sit in a swivel chair waiting for beeps.

For the sake of efficiency, team members (the class to which I currently belong) are only put on "live lines." That is to say, something the thousand-armed deva of a dialler has called "connection" has occurred. This usually means automated answering devices of one sort or another. If not, approximately .9 seconds has elapsed and the person on the other end of the line has probably already said "Hello?" Don't ask for people by name; this only leads to all manner of lost sales. Think for a moment of the socio-political implications of the seemingly benign "Mister-or-missus-X?" Lost sales, period. Gender specifics? Few women like to be called "Ma'am" and those few who do would be far more likely to read the National Post than the Globe and Mail, which I am in fact trying to sell.

Well, not exactly. The ad said "order-taking." Silly me. It's a promotion, right? One of those no-but-some risk kind of things. Money-back kind of deal, eh? You know. You've probably heard the pitch as many times as I've given it. It's like:

"Hi, this is Michael calling from The Globe and Mail newspaper. Have you read a copy of the Globe lately?"

My name isn't really Michael as you may have been aware. I'm actually calling from XYZ Telemarketing. I love the question, though. It's so cathartic to hear people falter between answering it and telling me off. Most people think we're a survey. Diabolical.

Anyway, there's some action on the phone, usually. There are always "monkey-shavers" to help the shift blip by. Hang-ups, obviously. If someone tells me to fuck myself with a wrench or some other clearly causing-lots-of-pain-to-genital-region object, I can mention it at break. Most people are kind. At least to me. True, some people receive disproportionately large helpings of abuse. These people have generally poor technique:

"Yeah, this is Logan calling from the Globe and Mail. Do you know what I'm talking about, hmm? The GI-OA-be and May-ill? Do you have any idea what I'm talking about? Eh?... Hmm?"

Logan is, of course, the name of his



illustration by Curtis Macdonald

Marvel hero, Wolverine. This guy has a Master's. He actually manages to sell one subscription a shift. Go figure.

The real action, however, if it may be so termed, is in the liaisons of all the fucked-up people who telemarket.

You've got your lifers. Yes, there are telemarketing lifers. These people are about the most pathetic fluent English speakers you will find outside of the United States. Let me state it another way: one makes about the same on welfare as one does telemarketing, and these select few prefer the latter. Go figure.

You've got your need money for cell-phone/credit-card teenybopper gals, long/short duration.

You've got your "what's telemarketing?" here-for-a-shifts.

You've got a surprising number of holders of post-graduate degrees from Second Rate U in subjects as practical as psychology, urban planning, and economics.

Then you've got the usual assortment of uneducated professionals requiring a clientele. Hookers and dealers mostly.

Flash a ten, get drugged. Flash a fifty, get head. These come and go staying long enough to hook the place up. When the right people have the pager number, they're on their way. This takes one to five shifts depending on finesse.


So me? What am I doing? I'm hoping for about a sixty dollar line of credit, or that Allan will inadvertently drop a dime-bag of anything-to-kill-the-hours getting up from his station beside me, I'm listening to Franklin a.k.a. Logan, M.A., Raelian convert, rant about missing bodies in the pyramids ("you know the ones in Egypt?") ("!!"), I'm working for rent and writing supplies in between trips to the Fort York Food Bank.

What am I doing?

I'M WRITING MY NOVEL! ~

C. J. Leon is 22 and just dropped out after his third year at the University of Toronto (yes, he did get good grades but...) to write his first novel. The above is about how it goes. He is, at present, underpublished, with several things in a seemingly infinite limbo with different editors.

# Column: Comica

by Nathalie Atkinson  art by Kagan McLeod



Modern male coming-of-age literature started with *Oliver Twist* and later everybody's favourite disaffected hero, Holden Caulfield. This literary genre also had beginnings in Germany, where Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship (1794) was a prototype for what pundits of 1870 called Bildungsroman. Literally, it means "development story" — as in, the shaping of a single character. Bildungsroman explores the moral, psychological and intellectual development of a sensitive, and usually male, protagonist who is in search of the meaning of life and the nature of the world.

The hallmarks of manhood are varied but universal, from wet dreams to the awkward first kiss. Cartoonist auteurs, with the complete control of both narrative voice and the medium's visual dimension, are uniquely positioned to deliver smart, sensitive and affectingly direct cartoons. Their Bildungscomics become compelling visual songs of innocence and experience about reconciling first love and disappointment with an emerging sense of self, in an external world that is often strange and alienating.

In the beginning, there was Binky Brown. Binky Brown Makes Up His Own Puberty Rites by Justin Green first appeared in *Yellow Dog* #17, 1969, spawning the 1972 classic *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*, and inspiring a generation with an autobiographical comic that explores teen neuroses and the inherent id of a rigorously Catholic upbringing. Binky Brown Sampler (Last Gasp, \$26.95) is an essential compendium for apprentices of the genre, and a recent edition includes a foreword by Art Spiegelman, who claims that "without Binky Brown there would be no Maus," and likens Green's pioneering of the genre of confessional autobiographical comix to the Brontës' contribution to Gothic romance. Green's vignettes are challenging: cluttered and text-heavy, with heaps of religious symbolism in most panels (without belabouring Catholic guilt in the now-stereotypical fashion). Which doesn't stop it all from being hilariously iconoclastic.

In the early nineties, Green's cross was taken up by Canadian cartoonist Chester Brown, the best of our generation's confessional autobiographies. Brown's spare and reserved sexual confusion in "I Never Liked You" was originally published in *Yummy Fur* and titled "Fuck" (a conceit in the comic is that Chester refuses to cuss). Its precursor, *The Playboy*, is a

riff on obsession with onanism and the magazine by the same name. There is again the specter of a Catholic upbringing throughout typical teenage rites of passage, with the complication of his mother's struggle with mental illness.

Stylistically, Chester Brown combines narrative subtlety and controlled understatement with an elliptical economic style (tiny frames floating in white space, brief ambiguous episodes), and the result is poignant but detached. "Chester" the character is passive but nevertheless hurtful; he does not yet understand how to love or be loved, and the book's scenes overflow with painfully unspoken feelings. The timid Chester is downright writhing in his own skin, while Chester the cartoonist is a master of breathtaking, internal monologues that are tender and poetic, but also display the frank, unabashed cruelty of youth: "As we lay on the ground waiting to be found (though we never were) we talked. I can't remember what we talked about except that it seemed we talked about everything. I really liked Connie when we played the field game. Whenever we weren't playing it I didn't like her much at all. And I was sure she felt the same way about me." When interpreted as a posthumous apology to his mother, reading *I Never Liked You* is the ultimate experience in heartbreaking melancholy: like listening to glass shatter into a thousand tiny, perfect pieces.


Chester Brown's contemporary, the infamous Joe Matt — an autobiographical misanthrope and cartoon masturbator par excellence — is also a must-read. Matt speaks for a generation of porn-obsessed teenage boys huddled in bedrooms around the nation, and new readers should be prepared for more vitriol than Philip Roth (and, inexplicably, chicks dig his remorse-free hero's unsympathetic brand of spite). Matt recently moved to La-La-land to adapt *The Poor Bastard* into a screenplay, likely to be more acidic than even "Curb Your Enthusiasm."

Yet another Brown, next generation cartoonist Jeffrey Brown oozes bemused, baffled youth as he explores his own young adulthood, first with the self-published début *Clumsy*, and recently with *Unlikely* — both simple, scratchy dissections of important first relationships (the latter recounting how Brown lost his virginity). His characters are sweet and guileless whether drinking, smoking pot or being cruelly kind. Excruciatingly honest, bare and detailed, Brown's awkward underdog is not afraid to show himself in

an unflattering context, which gives material that has the potential to be overly sentimental a wonderful light touch. Ever the deliciously self-aware cartoonist, he recently knocked off a charming summer-time comic zine entitled, *Maybe We Could Just Lie Here Naked Holding Each Other For A While But Not Have Sex*. To his surprise (and chagrin), the tongue-in-cheek self-parody sketchbook has proven wildly popular; such are the downfalls of sexually revealing autobio...

This generation's rising autobiographical star is Craig Thompson, the 27-year-old who crafted the acclaimed and popular *Goodbye, Chunky Rice*, a simple but powerful parable about separation and friendship (some say a sort of St. Antoine d'Exupéry meets *Life of Pi*); Thompson wears his heart on his sleeve with the new graphic novel *Blankets*. Where an American comic book plot starts and finishes in a claustrophobic 24 pages, this is 592 pages of lush, unrelenting poignancy — not to mention the buzz book of the summer since its launch at MoCCA in June. The story is an extremely personal memoir that explores not events but emotion: despair, longing, love and loss in the quiet, snowy woods of Wisconsin, all with the cartoonist's coming of age in a religiously fundamentalist environment (with all the punishment, persecution and loneliness that includes). All told with elegant, expressive brush and pen work reminiscent of European artists like Blutch and Edmond Baudoin.

The teenage boy is a fascinating specimen for any literary genre, but this particular gut-spilling artisanal medium puts cartoonists at the center — literally: visually — of their own stories. We can see them and follow all the glorious teenage angst, hormonal banality, pimply mediocrity, the witty bests and intimate worsts not just through narrative voice, dialogue and prose, but with self-caricature. By placing themselves firmly at the centre of the story panels, cartoonists shed another layer of anonymity and gain in intimacy.

It is this aspect — the cartoonist's own renderings of himself on the page in the identity he remembers, imagines, or wishes for himself — which is the most disarming. 

Nathalie Atkinson joins the BP force as a regular columnist focusing on comics.

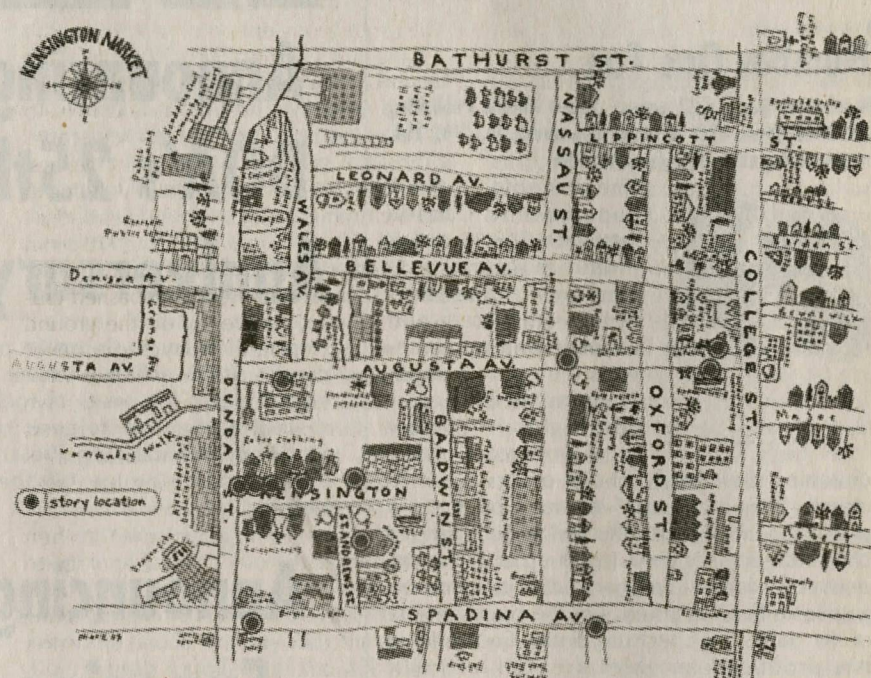
# Listen: The [murmur] of Cities Speaking

Do you sigh when you see the apartment where you had your first threesome? Is there a park you can't pass without thinking of the dog you loved and lost? Is the city map covered with the stories of your life? Stories don't just live in our books and imaginations, they belong to the buildings and homes where they take place. Stories can haunt these places like ghosts, can bring a city's architecture to life. If walls could talk, they'd have a lot to say; [murmur] is a project that's giving them a voice.

[murmur] is Shawn Micallef, Gabe Sawhney, and James Roussel. They met as residents of the Habitat New Media Lab at the Canadian Film Centre in the summer of 2002, and started [murmur] as a way of letting Toronto's vivid oral history articulate itself. [murmur] collects real stories from real people and archives them for anyone to hear. This democratic approach "breaks down the hegemonic 'official' history of Toronto The Good, and offers countless alternative histories," says Micallef. It's true: Toronto's cultural life isn't restricted to places like the Skydome or the CNE; the city's real identity derives from the little things that happen, day to day, in the places we really spend our time. It's not hard to imagine, for example, that some interesting stuff has gone on in the alleyway behind the Green Room or in the storage room of a Parkdale gallery; to hear these places speak would be to know the city more intimately.

[murmur] makes them speak. Here's how: using cellphones, pedestrians can call phone numbers listed on signs posted outside places that have stories. Call the number, and hear the story that took place where you're standing, while you're standing there. And hear it told in the voice of the person who lived it.

Why cellphones, and why pedestrians? While the boys of [murmur] admit that cellphones may come across as a rather elitist interface, they insist that they are the easiest-to-use, most appropriate, and most intimate way to dole out sto-



ries. [murmur]'s stories are told to pedestrians because one of the aims of this project is to get people reacquainted with their cities, at street level. "The city moves at the speed of walking," says Micallef. "Hearing a story in the space where it happened lets you feel the story, and reconcile it with what you see and feel around you."

This fall, [murmur] will have installations in Montreal and Vancouver, but this idea is one that belongs everywhere. It could work as well in rural Saskatchewan (find out what's really inside that grain silo), in the wilds of St. John's (that antique store used to be Grandpa Percy's hooch distillery), or even in a suburb like Scarborough or Grimsby (one of those cookiecutter garage doors has got to have scandal behind it). But right now, [murmur] is alive and well and living in Kensington Market.

"We decided to launch the project in Kensington because it's a microcosm of Toronto: layers of the city are visible there, from the Victorian infrastructure to

the brand-new immigrant population. As well, people are really attached to it," explains Micallef. Take a walk through the market, bring your cellphone (or a friend who has one), keep an eye out for the signs, and let shopowner Stuart Scriver regale you with tales of the early days of *Courage My Love* while you browse his beads. Hear secrets about sweaters from inside indie knitting upstart *Fresh Baked Goods*; eat dumplings at the *Saigon Pearl* while you listen to a classic dim-sum-oriented coming-of-age tale. Let the market murmur some of its stories in your ear while you walk through it, and then, if you want, tell some stories of your own.

[murmur] wants stories from everybody. The more there are, the better the city is represented, and the more animated its streets and structures become. To hear, tell, or learn about [murmur] and its archive of urban mythologies, visit [www.murmurtoronto.ca](http://www.murmurtoronto.ca), or take a walk outside.

(Anna Bowness)

# Product of the Month: From Vancouver with Love

## Number One Fan

hand-made book, 123 pages, Smart Cookie Publishing  
#4-2017 West 15th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V6J 2L4,  
[www.webspotter.com/smartcookie](http://www.webspotter.com/smartcookie)



©Shawn & Tina Kim by Maria White

The average trade paperback in Canada retails for \$19.95 and is produced in runs of at least two thousand by drunk, unionized, and nihilistic printers somewhere in Quebec. Standing under fluorescent lights in narrow indie bookstore aisles, clutching their bright cheap covers, I say to myself, "This is a book?" It's not a book. It's a product — flimsy with the feel of Scholastic, a child's object, designed to fall apart or be lost down the side of the couch after its mediocre guts have been digested. On the opposite side of the publishing spectrum, Smart Cookie Press has produced an objet de book-art with Number One Fan. Hardbound with hand-stitched signatures, this limited edition (100 and going fast) retails for \$11.95. Lovingly crafted is the proper format for a book that collects essays and prose about fandom, as to feel this book in the hands is to hold an object made with the same dedication as communion wafers baked by nuns. Editors Kris Rothstein and Sam Macklin have picked writers who allow themselves to wallow without shame in front of the idols of perversity. Most perverse is Margaret C. Sullivan's timeline of her descent into Jane-Austen fandom. Maybe that's tied with Erin Stanley's account of cross-stitching a portrait of James Spader. The reader may personally want to put James Spader's head in a vice but, at a certain point, the object of fandom becomes irrelevant—the love felt becomes the thing. And it doesn't matter if it's Don Knotts or the Buffy characters in Emily Almond's "Lesbian's, Where Art Thou?" (There's a lot of Buffy in this book.) But don't buy this book based on whether or not any of your loves are written about in its pages; buy it for the funny, and incisive writing, and for all the love and craft that went into this collection. (Scott Marlowe)



## Announcing DOA's 25th Anniversary!

Happy Birthday to Canadian punk classics, DOA, who turn silver this year. Twenty-five years of rocking result in the fall release of I, Shithead (Arsenal Pulp Press), an autobiography by Joe "Shithead" Keithley. *GR*

## Announcing Expozine 2003!

**Montreal's 2nd Annual Small Press, Comic, and Zine Fair. Saturday October 25th, 10-7, @ Relais MontRoyal, 500A Mont-Royal East**

The fair is free to the public. Last year's festival was a huge success. For the contributors and the public, Expozine represents a chance to see publications and meet writers and artists from a diverse array of vibrant communities which rarely come together in the same place anywhere else in Montreal. The capacity crowd last year was evidence of how long overdue it was. This year we are expanding and welcome out of towners. Register soon for a table though because they'll go fast. There is a

suggested donation of \$10/table.

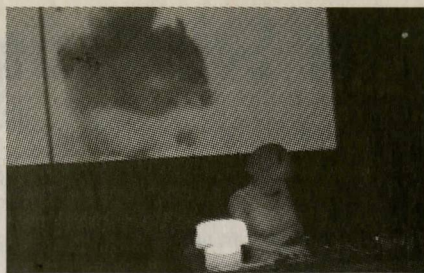
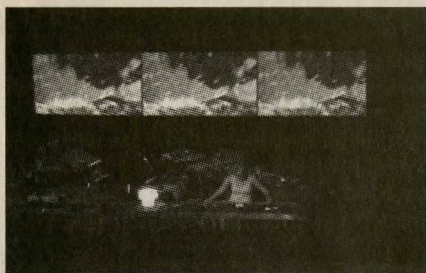
To book a table to sell your zine, books, or comics: call Monastiraki at 278-4879 or e-mail [archivemontreal@canada.com](mailto:archivemontreal@canada.com) or send us a letter, PO Box 55003, CSP Fairmount, Montreal QC, H2T 3E2. Check the website for updates: [www.expozine.ca](http://www.expozine.ca) *GR*

## October Zine of the Month

### Fuzzy Letters Are Better

#11, 38pgs, \$?, [fhabzine@interlog.com](mailto:fhabzine@interlog.com)

There are moments of self doubt that only occur in one's life during certain sexual acts or when you've just spent \$800 on putting out a zine called *Knee Deep In Shit*, when you pause and think "What am I doing with my life?" While *Fuzzy Letters Are Better* doesn't deal directly either of those situations, it is suffused with a contemplative tone as the author uses this zine/exhibition essay to parse the meaning of her alternative adolescence, the passing of time and the nature of communication itself. Patti Young Kim's medium has long been the letter—perhaps the true genetic antecedent of the zine—and for her recent thesis show at NSCAD she bound her collected letters into hardcover volumes. This binding into a format added a ground or a stability to an otherwise transient and disposable medium. *Fuzzy Letters* was created to accompany this exhibition and works like a long letter from a friend, jumping from personal pop history, to rumination on what it means to create zines. In the middle is a lament for physical mail which made me pause to wonder if one day someone will publish my collected emails? If you can't make it to NSCAD to enrol in "Beyond the Gluestick," the zine course that Kim teaches, this could be the next best education. Effervescent reading for those experiencing Xeroxed breakdowns and dulled X-acto blades. (Brian Joseph Davis)



## Mutek Membranes

by zev asher

From early spring until late autumn, a non-stop barrage of cultural events fall on the island of Montreal in the form of a series of increasingly eclectic arts festivals. Music events cater to aficionados of blues, jazz, pop and the new improv-skronk *Suoni Per Il Popolo* (run by the smart-asses who started up one of the city's best venues, Casa del Popolo). But Mutek is the fast-growing entry into the culture sweepstakes and provides a forum for electronic musicians from around the world to strut their digital stuff.

The 4th edition of Mutek, this past spring, marked the coming of age of the glitchfit laptopers who embrace the fringes of the ever-broadening and dynamic genre of electronic music.

This festival is unique in Canada for its eclectic programming and showcases of significant international recording labels. Two of this year's most memorable concerts highlighted artists that produce sound scraps of a rather extreme and disjointed variety. Montreal's No Type and Austrian trendsetter MEGO share similar approaches to the dispersion of mostly inaccessible electronic thuggery. Both are independent labels with fiercely independent agendas.

MEGO has branched out considerably since its inception in 1994. After winning the relatively prestigious Prix Ars Electronica's Award of Distinction for Digital Music in 1999, the label has gone on to start its own booking agency as well as an experiment in "the field of motorsports." MEGO's Mutek showcase featured noise/drone mavens Pita, Kevin Drumm and Hecker. All of these acts make bristling sound explorations and have one thing in common: they have as much stage presence as they do hair. The exception is Tujiko Noriko, a waif like Japanese heartbreaker from Osaka who sings sweetly over fractured loops and rhythms...to startling effect. Her music, like that of her cohorts, is entirely laptop-based yet conjures up adjectives like "pretty", "gentle" and "soothing." A far

cry from the raging noiseboys, her set provided a somewhat welcome respite from the aural holocaust that preceded it.

The No Type showcase featured a variety of Quebecois sound manipulators. Samiland had two guys named Pascal (one from Quebec and one from France) making a bed of burbly wooga-wooga sounds. Up next was respected sampling damsel Diane Labrosse and Aime Dontigny, one of the last of the old-school desktop computer surfers. Despite Mr. Dontigny's unfortunate baby-blue toque, this duo made some lovely washes of unidentifiable sonic sorcery. And then Morceaux de Machines' portly Erick Dorion delivered a blistering display of thin metal scraping and a tonal density worthy of Japan's most honored noise stallions. This was the only performance with genuine theatrics as Dorion trembled and shook his way into our hearts. Coin Gutter rounded off the bill with a pleasant set of ethereal collage. No Type, the label began its operations in Quebec City as an Internet-only affair and provided crucial early exposure for a number of artists that have moved on to receive considerable accolades. It has since released a number of intriguing CDs that defy easy categorization.

Personal electronic devices were employed in equal amounts by both performers and audience members throughout the festival, what with the plethora of tiny digital cameras constantly held aloft. Some festival goers got bored of watching people playing laptops onstage and proceeded to boot up their own and check their e-mail (via wireless technology, natch). Perhaps they were sending messages to the performers.

Meanwhile, some genuine stars of the electronic underground helped make this a bona fide event. British homo-industrial heroes Coil made their Canadian debut with an uplifting instrumental set. Vocalist John Balance was conspicuously absent. The two other current band members (Peter Christopher-

son and Thighpaulsandra) donned white furry suits and employed a shimmery video backdrop to aid their visual presence. At its worst, Coil's imagery resembled little more than generic suburban screensavers yet one piece had some lilt-ing photos of mid-20th century crime scenes — the band's saving grace.

Luckily, projected video enhanced a number of the shows to varying degrees of effectiveness. Performing on a bill with a group of emerging Montreal artists, Jennifer Morris aka [sic] provided the festival's most original video backdrop (squirrels, a slo-mo heart attack and natural wonders) along with a contemplative, drone-based soundtrack. Halifax transplant "Sixtoo" ended that particular concert with a fine display of effortless turntable buggery (from associate P-Love) over pleasant hopped-up beats and soundscapes.

Senor Coconut also made their Canadian debut in an impressive Vegas-style display of big band histrionics and showmanship. This Santiago-based group is led by Mutek favourite Uwe Schmidt, a prolific German musician who also records and performs as Atom Heart. Herr Coconut's main shtick has been the dissemination of selections from the repertoire of German electronic music pioneers Kraftwerk. Senor Coconut reimagines songs like "Showroom Dummies" and "The Robots" as fiery Latin dance numbers. Uwe stood stoically on the side of the stage, triggering barely audible sounds from his laptop. A full horn section and accompanying musicians pumped out the hits. Two towers of blasting lights flanked the band and a half-dozen screens hovered over them. Visual sequences provided appropriate eye candy to complement each song. A genuine crowd-pleasing spectacle.

Mutek is fast becoming an important festival for electronic music in North America. Already, it is a solid platform for Montreal's current generation of knob pushers and the people who love them. *GA*

# Call for Submissions

**Gutter Press** is putting together a saucy new literary offering and we need your input. Gutter Press, a small but prolific publishing house, is dedicated to the discovery and promotion of new authors. Founded by Sam Hiyate, Gutter has published the work of many celebrated young authors, including Tamara Faith Berger, Hawksley Workman and Lydia Eugene. Gutter's most recent releases, *The Double* by Philip Quinn and *Kiss Painting* by Sandra Jeppesen, were published in the spring to rave reviews. Lydia Eugene's *Burnt Orange Lipstick* (2001) and N.J. Dodic's *I Was Hitler's Cat* (2002) were placed on *The Globe and Mail's* top one hundred books of the year list. For more on Gutter Press go to [www.gutterpress.com](http://www.gutterpress.com).

Gutter's latest project will be the first in a series of anthologies that explores sexuality. The first anthology entitled *Like A Virgin* will be a collection of losing one's virginity as recounted/remembered in your own words. Take a look at the one-pager attached and if you're interested in being on the submissions list for this book let us know. The deadline for submissions is September 30th, 2003. Submit early to insure your tantalizing tale will be included and watch out for promotion of the book in the fall.

Submissions must be non-fiction, however, creativity is definitely encouraged.

Things to consider when writing your story:

1. minimum 500 words please
  2. Era (pop movies, music, fashion, etc.)
  3. Place
  4. Age
  5. Reasons — "why I did it."
  6. Regrets
  7. Satisfaction
  8. Traumatic intruders, i.e. pets, parents, other lovers, etc.
- and anything else you can think of that will make the story more compelling and unique.

Gutter Press, 56 The Esplanade, Suite 503, Toronto, ON. M5E 1A7  
[www.gutterpress.com](http://www.gutterpress.com)

## Women & Environments International Magazine

Call For Submissions: *Cities for Women*. Women & Environments International Magazine is looking for submissions from North, South, aboriginal and minority communities around the world. We are looking for analyses, theories, cross cultural comparisons, creative initiatives, projects, processes, poetry and art that

address women's concerns/needs in creating communities which better serve women and their multiple roles and responsibilities.

Submissions can address:

**HOUSING** — property rights, financing, security of tenure, design, supply of affordable housing, homelessness, shelters innovative projects and ideas,

**COMMUNITY PLANNING** — planning to encourages diversity, accessibility, integration of functions, density for affordability, planning for safety of persons not only property, women's access to the planning process,

**SERVICES** — health, children, aging, recreation, refuge from violence, education, arts, community economic development, jobs, waste disposal, right to clean air, water and energy,

**TRANSPORTATION** — support for transit, bicycling, walking, and animals,

**SUSTAINABILITY** — of our livelihoods, food, environment, air, water, and energy,

**GOVERNANCE** — women's ability to fully participate in all aspects of governance,

**URBAN DESIGN** — gender sensitive design of cityscapes and structures

Deadlines: an indication of interest/abstract by October 1, 2003; Manuscripts by January 15, 2004.

Writers Guidelines are on our Web site: [www.weimag.com](http://www.weimag.com) under participation.

Women & Environments International Magazine is a unique Canadian magazine offering feminist perspectives on women's relations to their natural, built, and social environments. It provides for academic research and theory, professional practice and community experience.

General Inquiries: Women & Environments International Magazine, IWSGS, New College, U. of Toronto, 40 Willcocks St., Toronto ON, Canada M5S 1C6, ph: (416) 978-5259; fax: (416) 946-5561; email: [we.mag@utoronto.ca](mailto:we.mag@utoronto.ca); home page: [www.weimag.com](http://www.weimag.com)

## From broadcast scissors:

What if the whole world was a zine? What if you could cut out some things and paste in others, just like that? This is a call for submissions. I don't know whether it will be a one-shot thing, broadcast scissors #2, or a whole new zine, but I do know enough to ask for submissions. What would you take out of your life, your city, your world, your

mind, your bedroom, your library, your CD player...? What would you paste in instead? A few examples off the top of my head...in the world, I'd cut out imperialism and paste in peace...in the music biz, I'd cut out *avril lavigne* and paste in *ani difranco*...on my desk, I'd cut out my English homework and paste in more time to write stuff that matters...in my closet, I'd cut out that ancient pink gap tshirt and paste in magical no-tear fishnets...in my kitchen, I'd cut out meat and paste in soy...do we get the idea? I'm looking for any interpretation, application or spin that you can possibly put on this, in any form that I can photograph, type, or scan into my computer. Tell me what you would cut, what you would paste, or both. Nonfiction, fiction, rants, cartoons, collage, photography, drawings, poetry, etc. etc. etc. I've got a decent scanner and I'll be doing digital printing, so B&W photographs, drawings, etc. should show up surprisingly well. Pages will be 8.5"x11", format will be portrait. FINAL deadline is October 10/2003, but I plan to do as much as possible before that final sprint to Canzine, so please give me the gift of sleep and send stuff in early. Anyone who submits will get a free copy of the final product, and my undying gratitude. So submit! and remake the world with your trusty x-acto and glue stick...  
[broadcast\\_scissors@hotmail.com](mailto:broadcast_scissors@hotmail.com)

**"TRACKING A SERIAL POET": LICHEN LITERARY JOURNAL'S FIRST ANNUAL CONTEST** ...A test of talent, ingenuity, and insatiable greed for the written word. Who are we after? You — the one who can hit the same nerve from three different angles, who can start from zero and end up robbing the whole bank, who can give us an alibi told by three different witnesses, who can — ...well, you get the picture. We're looking for 3 strong poems about anything you like, poems that can strike out on the lam and make it, but that are in on the same conspiracy. Theme isn't important (and it doesn't have to be crime-related — that's just our way of getting your attention). Development isn't the key either; the things that count are the image in one poem deftly repeated in another, the fugitive link between the curtain in one poem and the bullet in the next. COMPLETE RULES, REWARD & GUIDELINES AVAILABLE AT: [www.lichenjournal.ca](http://www.lichenjournal.ca), [info@lichenjournal.ca](mailto:info@lichenjournal.ca) DEADLINE: December 31, 2003. ✍

# There Is No Such Thing As A Xerox



## Prophet of Xerography, Michael T. Bidner

by Irene Bindi and Jason Dickson

**As a** couple of local-history-obsessed geeks, we are coming forward to proclaim our love for the late lithographer, xerographer, independent printer and publisher, collage and video artist, philatelist, and founder of Artistamps, Michael T. Bidner. And we want to share this love with you.

Like the much-touted Greg Curnoe, Bidner was a graduate of London's legendary Bealtech, and he too attended the Ontario College of Art and dropped out to pursue his own line. A major player in generating national and international interest in mail art and artist stamps, he founded the above-mentioned Artistamps, a stamp art collective. What has often been overlooked, however, is his pioneering work in xerography and zines, as well as his exceptional collage work, and experiments with "telecopy" — fax art — in the early '80s.

Bidner was a serious printmaker in the traditional sense. His early print work,

though frequently exhibited in galleries in southwestern Ontario, was more often dispersed within the community; in the '70s he printed posters and other materials for projects by London collectives such as Awes Studio, Applegarth Follies Press, Canyon Productions, The Polyglot Gallery, and ACME Print & Litho. For many years, he did silkscreen posters for punk acts as well as campaign posters. He also ran his own newspaper and printed an assortment of ephemera, as well as a variety of amazing zines.

When we spoke to some of Bidner's print buddies from those days, namely Michael Neiderman (of the early Fags & Faggotry and Applegarth Follies) and Arnie Boyd, they both used the same phrase to describe Bidner's work ethic. When Bidner was working on something he would work on it to "kill it," to "beat it until it was dead." This isn't at all surprising when you look at his work, particularly his collages and zines; you can see the

killing taking place. He would print until a thing had been printed out, print it until it felt done, attempting to physically use the image up — not to convey some loss of meaning in the image itself, but to engage in the exorcising of the image through the very act of printing. At least that's our take. Bidner was part of a group that was committed to — and obsessed with — printmaking. (For example, a later collaborator of Bidner's, Joe Thomas, spent most of his time in his basement print shop and was known to mysteriously pass out, sometimes not being discovered until a day or two later by friends. One night while partying he passed out, and only when rushed to the hospital was it discovered his blood contained a near-fatal amount of printing chemicals.)

In the mid '70s Bidner acquired a then new 6500 copy machine from Xerox because the company was trying to promote it. He mounted "there is no such

# When Bidner was working on something he would work on it to "kill it," to "beat it until it was dead."

thing as a xerox" at London's McIntosh Gallery in October of '76, and after racking up a \$10,000 debt from using Xerox equipment, he convinced the Art Gallery of Ontario to mount "Colour Xerography," a group exhibition that included his own work as well as that of contemporaries Michael Hayden, Flavio Belli, Barbara Astman, Jan Poldas, and Robert Arn. The Xerox spy who was sent to check out the opening was so impressed that he got Bidner's debt cleared, claiming the exhibition was better than any advert Xerox had planned for their new product. Bidner had a talent for turning corporate money, and even just names, into a love/hate play in his work. He did a series of backward prints of the ads for the 6500 and duplicated schematic diagrams of it.

This kind of commercial play was pushed to an extreme in Bidner's incredibly smart and funny zines. One of these zines, *adz*, was an ambitious project, self-described as an attempt to explore the "magazine as art." By using typical and atypical content lifted from any number of materials (periodicals, product labels, government documents, maps, posters, books, personal letters), and artfully displaying the possibilities of printing, Bidner crafted a hyper-version of the commercial magazines of the time, both a celebration and a parody of the popular press.

In '77, Bidner began a collaboration with London-area printmaker Joe Thomas. Out of it came ACME Print & Litho, which moved in '78, from Stratford, Ontario into a well-equipped facility in London. The studio's major achievement (as far as we're concerned) was RUDE Magazine, conceived as "a prolegomena journal (fundamentals of knowledge and culture)." It was printed on 14 x 20.5 inch found stock. Bidner used found paper for his printing when-

ever he could (he once lifted 750 lbs of clay paper and drove it in a pickup truck to the Adz Stratford headquarters). A second facility was opened in Stratford in '79 for the artists, writers, and printers who worked on the zine.

Rag and RUDE are two of the most craftily abrasive zines we've encountered. If there were stuff out there like this now, well, we'd mention it here, but we don't know of any so we can't. Bidner did the offset Rag out of Toronto. Made up entirely of collage text and images, Rag is heavy on punk and queer imagery, and littered with a combination of local ads and Bidner's found "adz," making up a beautiful chaotic conglomeration, where the two combine and confuse in a gorgeous junky mess. The energy of this pub is unrivaled, with the exception of perhaps...RUDE.

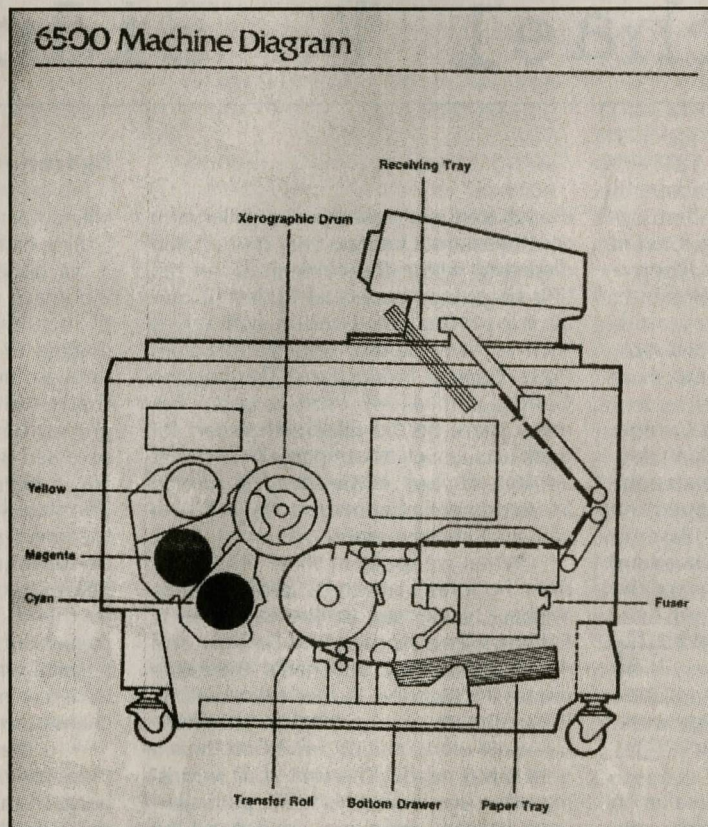
Published by Joe Thomas, with art and design by Bidner, the word "zine" seems so right yet so wrong to use in conjunction with this magnus of a publica-

tion. The "magazine as art" mandate of "adz" was fully realized in this two-issue beauty, whose own tagline was "from pornography to politics like a slap in the face." Throughout the pages of collage, photos, ads, rejection letters for offers for ads, found texts, etc. are various statements about the RUDE mandate, each slightly altered from the last. With the contact info is a list of things information is available on, including: "back issues, future issues, posters, writing for rude, investing in rude, prints, buttons, subscriptions, antique printing machinery, slightly used bondage equipment, stale turkey, crow." One issue of RUDE was printed on the backs of found sheets of Campbell's soup labels. At that time, Bidner knew nothing about Warhol's work, and he was reportedly devastated when he did finally encounter it, even though he and Warhol were doing completely divergent things with the same type of ad imagery.

Bidner's work with Thomas culminated with *Art on the Run*, an exhibition at The Gallery Stratford where, in Bidner's words, "the gallery was covered wall to wall and floor to ceiling with hundreds of images printed in a variety of manners using processes relating to off-set lithography. Namely, photography, plate-making, design, colour separation (photographic and mechanical), inking, xerography, and lithography." Bidner's personal journal and publisher's dummy from his time in Stratford working on RUDE and with ACME was eventually exhibited at Toronto's Centre for Experimental Art and Communications.

Meanwhile Bidner continued to exhibit more widely, with work in *Art in the Mail*, *Correspondence Art Show* (New Zealand, 1978), *Button Button*, the first international photographic button show (New Jersey, 1978), and *Appropos Gallery's T-Shirt Show* (Luzern, Switzerland, 1979).

He moved back to London after his three-year stint at ACME to begin the alternative newspaper, *The London District Union*. Four issues of the paper were published as a market probe. Unfortunately it folded because Londoners couldn't stomach the title, and thought the magazine was a left-wing



union journal. It sank fast as you can say "London-is-our-hometown!"

In April of 1982, Bidner began to assemble the Standard Artistamp Catalogue + Handbook (Canada + Worldwide), a project which aimed to be the largest international directory of stamp art. Previously, only one artist stamp catalogue had been completed. He was in the process of cataloguing about 100,000 stamps produced by an estimated 1000 artists from all over the world. According to Bidner, he kept "100 tons of files and collection in about 2000 square feet of studio space." Each response was coded and listed by artist, alphabetically, with biographical details. The miniature artworks were described by date of issue, paper type, perforation, watermark, colour, size, gum and number produced.

To raise money, he sent out 15 pre-publication supplements, intended to interest the collectors of art and philatelic work. In fact, it was a specific aim of the catalogue to educate the two worlds about each other, bridging what were often exclusive practices suspicious of each other's business.

The project was enormous, costing Bidner \$1000 per month in postage alone. Tragically, he didn't live to see it completed, dying of AIDS in 1989. There were a few preliminary exhibitions connected to it before his death. The Artistampex, Philatelic Artistamp Expositions + Bourse opened at The Forest City Gallery in London, Ontario in 1984, advertised as the first ever philatelic exhibition and exchange of artistamps. Artistamp Review at Toronto's C.A.T. Gallery followed.

Because Bidner isn't as well-known either as a great collage/print artist or for his incredible contributions to zine culture, we sincerely hope there will be a major retrospective of his work at some point in future. We think he deserves something huge, but in the meantime you can find examples of his work in library local-history collections in Toronto and London — if you dig deep enough — as well as in some public gallery collections. Some of it is too transgressive for the delicate sensibilities of our public institutions however, so you'll have to search elsewhere for this stuff. Some of his stamp work is online. But if your Google fingers are itching, the truth is, Bidner's works are best appreciated in person.

And, if you're ever in London, stand in front of 343 Richmond and look north-east at the building tops across the street. That mural of a 7-up ad turned inside-out? That's his. *ew*

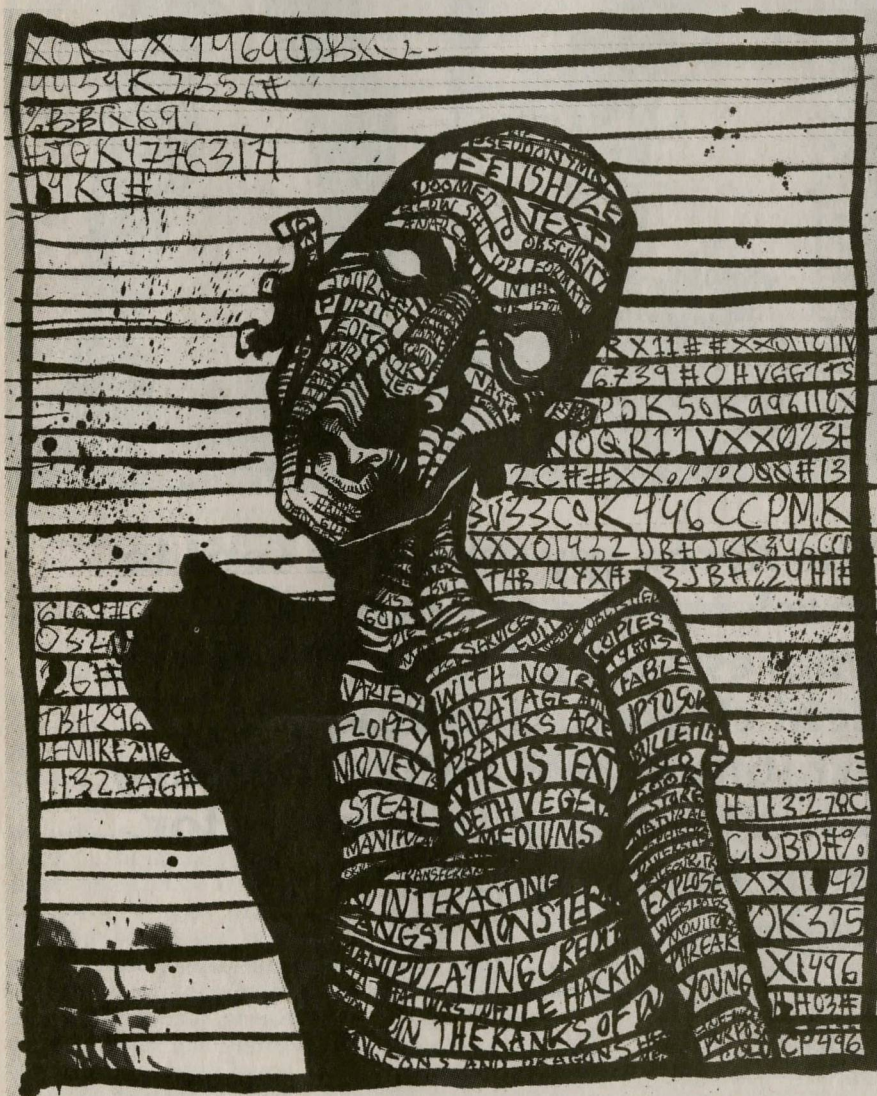


**The Xerox spy who was sent to check out the opening was so impressed that he got Bidner's debt cleared, claiming the exhibition was better than any advert Xerox had planned for their new product**

# Generation Text

## Old-School E-Zines Come of Age

story by Joel Katelnikoff, art by Jeff Lemire



**Bobby** comes home from school, drops his backpack on the floor, and heads straight to his room, locking the door behind him. For the rest of the evening he will use his computer to log onto Bulletin Board Systems (BBSes), using his parents' phone line and a device called a modem. If you think this sounds harmless, think again. Tonight Bobby will be transferring text files to his computer from the BBSes. These text files contain information that is anonymous, uncensored, outrageous, and absolutely dangerous. With information about anarchy, drugs, sabotage, and even explosives readily available, every BBS that Bobby calls is a game of Russian roulette for himself and others. Little do Bobby's parents know that the machine they bought to help him improve his grades may prove to be a more deadly weapon than a switchblade or handgun.

This is a familiar scare scenario that one might have seen in the media in the late 1980s, when television and newspapers discovered a new medium through which computer users could freely acquire and disseminate information without any restrictions. Text publications were soon to join the ranks of Dungeons and Dragons, heavy metal music, and video games as scapegoats for the ill-behavior of young people. Despite the efforts of corporate media, however, text zines continued to endure and evolve.

Before the Internet was available, there were computer services called Bulletin Board Systems. BBSes were run on personal computers. They often had one dial-up phone line connected to a

Most people involved with today's

text zines were introduced to the medium through their search for illicit information. Gir of angstmonster says that what got him into text was “being little and wanting to blow shit up.” In my personal experience, I was most interested in the texts that discussed scams and explosives. In terms of information on getting free stuff and ripping off businesses, text zines are a natural extension of the YIPPIE movement as described in Abbie Hoffman’s *Steal This Book*. The anti-corporate, underground, do-it-yourself voice is definitely there, with titles such as “How to Hack a Coke Machine” and “Improved Ways of Cheating in School.” These guides are important primers on how to succeed in capitalist society when you’re not a member of the bourgeoisie. If you can’t cheat people legally, you have to do it illegally. As for building explosives, there may be no philosophical rationale for it, but can you really pass by a title like, “How to make a Really Nice Pipe Bomb”? C’mon! It’s irresistible!

cDc captured a lot of attention throughout North America, being featured in a variety of media. On an episode of Geraldo Rivera's show, he held up a copy of a cDc article entitled "Sex with Satan," and disgustedly yelled, "Cult of the Dead Cow? These guys are a bunch of sickos!" They were featured in the cover-story of a 1993 issue of the Montreal Gazette, entitled "Computer Data Can Be Dangerous." In The Gazette, cDc collective member Deth Vegetable was attacked for disseminating

information on how to make explosives because three teenagers from Laval lost fingers while building a pipe bomb of his design (featured in the article "Anarchy for Fun and Profit"). A few years later, The Globe and Mail referred to Deth Vegetable as "[the world's] most infamous hacker." With a blend of technical knowledge, disobedience, and desire to be heard, it comes as no surprise that this group has had an influence on most zines that have come afterward, either by first-hand or second-hand contact.

Over the course of 15 years, cDc grew from a group of bad-ass kids boasting "All Rights Worth Shit," to a forum for thought and expression. When they and similar groups such as underground eXperts united (uXu) and Greeny world Domination (GwD) began to venture out from HPACV to fiction, a unique blend was formed. This was not the refined writing that one might expect to find in mainstream media; it was raw, unpolished chaos. And still, it was different from other independent media; text zines harnessed the desire for free thought and free information, including zero printing costs and zero purchasing costs. But what truly characterized early fiction in text zines was the unique repertoire and language of computer and BBS culture. This was not just any literature. This was the literature of hackers and anarchists — ironic and cynical texts from people who cared nothing for the world.

So what was it like to witness the early literature of text zines? Some writers share their stories:

"You've got to picture it: here's a 14-year-old kid in Warwick, Rhode Island who is completely bored by the world around him and suddenly there's this huge influx of disparate opinion, ideas, and writing." — AIDS of Hogs of Entropy (HOE)

"Dan Rather wasn't telling me which crystal to buy at RadioShack to build a redbox so I could prank call Russia! No matter what type of viewpoint you held, you could whip together some text and upload it somewhere." — Kilgore Trout of State of unBeing (SoB)

"I had this strong sense there was a huge world out there, and sitting here in America, I wasn't going to see it by reading books, magazines, and watching television." — The Prime Anarchist of Activist Times

"Computer systems were full of kids questioning, interacting, teaching each other — creating a community on their own terms." — Mogel of HOE

"Being able to write something and distribute it all over the world was something that back in the infancy of my Internet experience was something pretty

damn remarkable, mostly because of that whole 'underground' feel to it." — Leandro of Capital of Nasty

What made the rise of literature within text zines so amazing was the repertoire of the writers. One story that I have always considered to be a classic example of the literature that rose from the world of computers is Mogel's "mE t0o!@#\$". This is a classic love story told through a unique text filter: Boy has angst, boy meets girl, boy eventually confronts her via modem. This story riffs on the cynicism prevalent in earlier text zines, but eventually breaks through into the earnestness of true emotion, despite what pain might accompany it, demonstrating that honesty and openness were also possible in the medium. When this story was published, text zines' focus on HPACV culture had been diminishing steadily, and a new culture of post-HPACV/BBS zines was beginning to emerge.

Post-HPACV-BBS zines started to take off in the mid-1990s with zines like SoB and Doomed to Obscurity (DTO), which focused on fiction, editorials, and poetry. While residual hacker and BBS slang hung around, it was no longer in the foreground. These zines took literature more seriously, and strove for a higher quality of writing. Zine editors created more challenging projects, occasionally merging several zines into larger super-zines. As a result, many of the smaller zines felt left out or unable to contend, and so the number of active zines diminished.

However, while high-falutin zines provided the market with prose and poetry, earlier zines like Big Long and Hairy (BLaH) and GwD bypassed the literary movement to abide by the "trash aesthetic." Impulse reality, and angstmonster, for example, state that they will print any submissions whatsoever. The result is a spontaneous and stimulating potpourri of art and smut, with content that appeals to a variety of readers. These zines prove that, through text, something can be written one day and published the next.

Zines like Intertext, Capital of Nasty, and The Neo-Comintern, on the other hand, have a more rigorous editing process. Editors often conditionally accept work, offering writers suggestions for revision. These zines are well-organized and committed to the development of quality within their core group of writers, honing their skills over years to consistently produce better issues.

Some of the most influential zines are those that tackle political issues. TCAHR is devoted to political essays, and Activist Times is a weekly journal that has relayed American and International news

from an independent perspective for the past 15 years. Other zines, such as cv.crud and Addendum, are written entirely by individuals and can vary as easily as a mood swing. All in all, there is as much diversity in the world of text zines now as there ever has been, in terms of style, format, and content.

But in this day, why do zines continue to publish in text format? At one point text was the natural publishing choice of any computer user, but today other options (such as weblogs) are available. While text is still the purest media form, it would not be a natural choice for most people. HTML is easy to compose, allows linking, has word-wrap instead of hard line breaks, and allows for pictures, audio, and video, and so it has more sensory appeal than text. Naturally, the use of the text medium is decreasing as other media increase in popularity. To choose text in this textless age becomes a statement, an ascetic denial of modern media.

Text zines tend to be less polished than other media not only because they are published independently, but also because many text editing programs predate an option that revolutionized the desktop publishing industry: word-wrap. In DOS-Edit, for example, if one wanted to add a word to a sentence, one would have to reformat the line breaks for the rest of that paragraph. For this reason, many (if not most) early text articles were published as first drafts.

In our time, most zine writers who are serious about their writing will work in a more sophisticated word processing program and only use the archaic programs for the purpose of formatting. The formatting is still important, since without hard line breaks editors do not have control over the formatting of their zine. Without hard line breaks, one would not be able to read a text article on a web-browser without having to scroll back and forth repeatedly. Also, the text zine standard is to limit the width of zines to 78 columns of text so it can be viewed on old-school 480x640 monitors.

Today's zine writers fetishize text. It is a beautiful thing, so pristine and succulent. SoB's Kilgore Trout says, "What has always drawn me to textfiles is the simplicity of the format; you don't have to worry about layout or graphics. Sure, you can be ASCII King and fancy stuff up, but when it comes down to it, it's all about what is being written. If the words don't hold up, there is nothing to fall back on. That purity has always been enticing."

In the late 1990s, Mogel feared that with the growth of the Internet, contemporary text zines would get lost in the shuffle. In order to unite the zine community, he created a mailing list, but

shortly decided to focus his effort on an HTML-based text zine hub instead. This hub would include links to all active text zines, zine resources, and daily updates on the newest releases. The hub would be known as "The Current Text Scene," and would be the essential website for current readers and publishers alike. Recently, the site has been more alive than ever, finally getting its own domain name ([www.textscene.com](http://www.textscene.com)), adding on-site archives of zines that do not have their own webspace, and encouraging zine publishers to be productive and ambitious.


While Mogel is no longer involved in text zine publication, The Current Text Scene continues to thrive, co-administrated by linear, gir, and myself. In linear's opinion, what makes this website so significant is that ever since its inception, [textscene.com](http://textscene.com) has been run by individuals who have a personal investment in text zines, are passionate about their work, and have a sincere concern for the health of the community. He says, "The way the text scene is set up makes it hard not to want to start your own zine, or write for an already established one, or participate in SOME WAY! And that's a great, important part of the community. It shows you that it is easy to share what you have to say with thousands of other who share something in common with you (hell, even people who have nothing in common with you other than computer access!!)."

When people start their own zines, it

## To choose text in this textless age becomes a statement, an ascetic denial of modern media.

is a simple and unrestrictive process. One only needs to open a text editing program, start typing, click the save button, and start distributing. That's it. But there are a few other things that text publishers must consider about the medium. Since the writing is read from a screen instead of a page, articles need to be shorter in order to be easy on the eye. Paragraphs should not be as long as in other media; a large block of text on a screen is harder to deal with than it is in a book. You don't have to pay for printing and you've got unlimited space in a text file, but the reader's attention is actively sought by other Internet media sources, from other text zines to more rounded multimedia presentation. In an age of flashing lights, it can be helpful to secure a readership through concise and punchy writing before delving into more drawn-out material.

Some advice from the experts? Prime Anarchist reminds us, "the 'art-work' has to be drawn with words. By that I don't mean literally as in shape poems or anything. All of the imagery has to hold your readers with just text." Leandro says, "This may sound odd, but what is the main part of a text zine? Text.

So if it sucks reading it, you aren't going to read it." AIDS says that text writing needs three major things: "coherent stories, easy to follow prose, and a general desire to be actively read." Mogel urges writers to "bring the reality to readers in the best way you can, while still respecting them, without compromising too much." Kilgore Trout, when asked if he had any advice to give, replied, "Not really. Probably just that everybody should try running a zine at some point. It'll keep you on your toes." 

All text zines mentioned in this article can be accessed through [TextScene.com](http://TextScene.com).

Two other important text resources that were not mentioned in this article are [textfiles.com](http://textfiles.com) and [etext.org](http://etext.org), both of which exist for the sole purpose of archiving thousands of new and vintage text files.

Thanks to all sites and authors for their interviews and suggestions.

Joel Katelnikoff is the editor-in-chief of *The Neo-Comintern Magazine*, co-managing-editor of *Qwerty*, co-administrator of [TextScene.com](http://TextScene.com), and is pursuing a Master's degree in Creative Writing at the University of New Brunswick.

## A Concise Timeline of Subversive Technology

by Brian Joseph Davis

Martin Luther has his 95 theses printed. The mass production of this tract is the beginning of Europe's enlightenment. (The enlightenment ends 475 years later when a visibly nervous Alan Koons stands before his grade 11 history class and bunnies, "And then Martin Luther nailed his feces to the church door.")

The German printer Gutenberg creates metal typefaces to better reproduce Christian verse but only 67 years later...

The soda fountain is invented. The soda counter soon becomes the only place for youth to gather and ruminate about their oppressed condition, the hypocrisy of elders, and to ogle each other outside of the controlled worlds of school, home, or church.

The photocopier is invented by law student Chester F. Carlson who was frustrated by his library's mimeograph machine. Appropriately enough, Carlson went into patent and copyright law. First produced in the '40s the photocopier was bulky and expensive, its only virtue over offset being ease. Not subversive till Star Trek fans in the 1970s started breaking into their dad's offices to copy their rants AND LET THEIR VOICES BE HEARD!

The aerosol paint can is invented by Edward H Seymour. Subversive, but not fun till the "no clog" spray valve is invented in 1953 by Robert Abplanal.

1450AD

1517

1798

1937

1949



# Dana Samuels: Pick-Up Artist, Digitally Speaking

by Mari Sasano

**"I've** been duped!"

My friend is calling me about a girl. Bobby (not his real name) is a young writer and artist, 24 and single. He's smart, cool and cute, but has problems finding datable women in town. Edmonton: a shallow gene pool. So he casts his net as wide as he can; in this case, on the Internet.

This afternoon, he's giving me the lowdown after setting up a date with an interesting older woman he met on The Onion Personals. He should have known better.

His date turned out to be with Dana Samuels, a Toronto artist visiting Edmonton for Visualeyeyz, a festival of performance and time-based art that happens in late spring. In her piece, a three-parter called "Pickup," "Call Me" and "Date With the Artist," Samuels places personal ads in newspapers and online (under the names *slow\_dazzle*, *ciccone youth* and *slum\_goddess*, among others), and advertises via cards she leaves at strategic locations. Cellphone in hand, she schedules as many dates as possible

with men and women, and then parlays them into on-line and poster-based art.

Bobby is one of her dates, and he's freaked. "She's a PERFORMANCE ARTIST," he complains while I laugh. I can't help it. "Do you want to come?" he asks. Yeah, sure. Way to turn the tables on the performance artist: bring along your own press.

We meet at Latitude 53, an artist-run centre that sponsors Visualeyeyz. Dana is waiting for her lunch date when we burst in. She is surprisingly nonplussed by the presence of a gatecrasher, and we decide on a nice Cajun lunch.

Let's see what the breadsticks have to say.

**"Bobby":** What's Lavalife like?

**DS:** Boring. Nerve asks a lot of questions and you can be a little creative with them. They're starting to change that a bit. My ads were rejected from Yahoo! for criticizing Yahoo! And they just assume that if you're a woman, you're looking for a man.

**MS:** Do people get really mad when they find out [that your dates are for art]?

**DS:** Well, at first, ha ha.

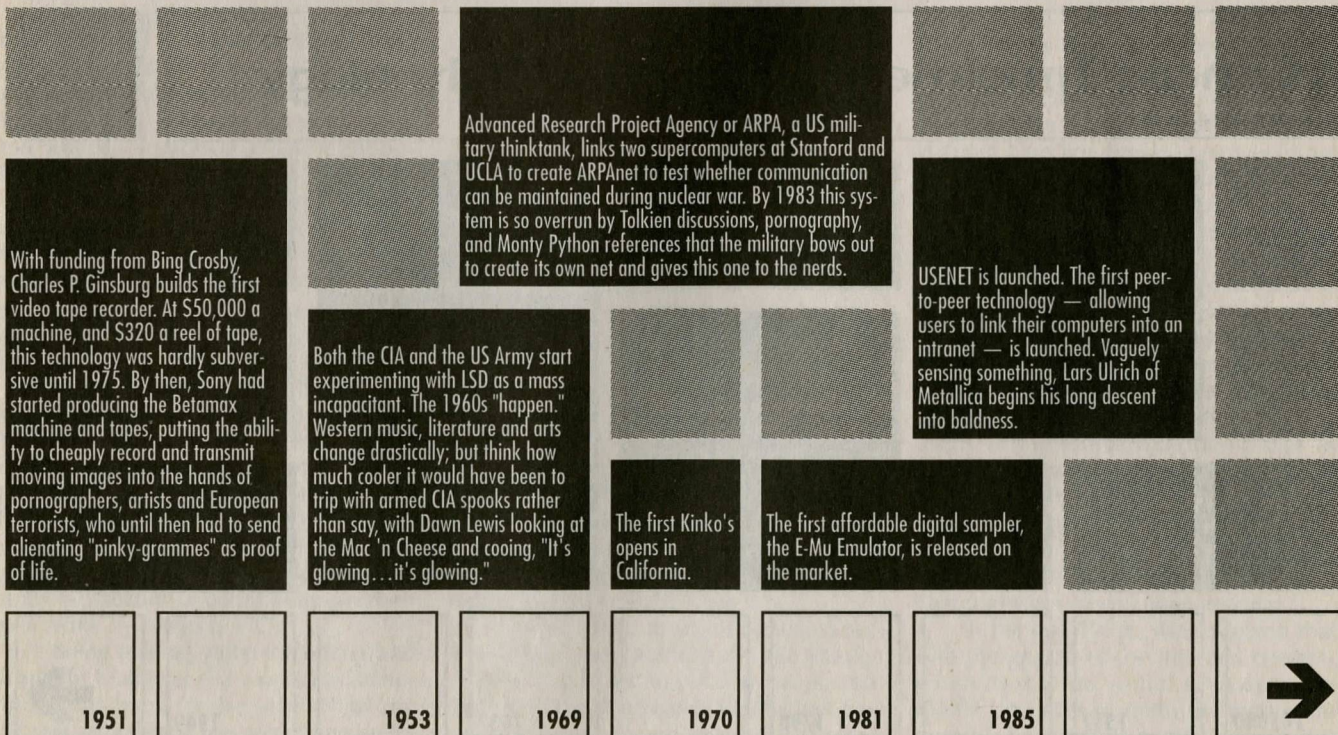
**MS:** Who have you gone on dates with so far this week?

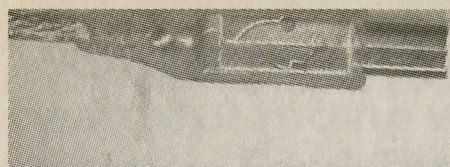
**DS:** Mostly people who know about the project.

**"Bobby":** That's cheating.

**DS:** Or people who bring reporters. [laughs] We actually thought you'd stand me up. There was one guy, he had no context for what I was doing, but he thought it was really cool. Kind of a real normal guy.... But he was open to the possibility, so we talked for over an hour and it was a nice time. I told him that people were allowed to watch the dates, and he said, "Is it that big group of people over there with the cameras?"

**"Bobby":** It must take a lot of courage to allow that.





**DS:** The [other] guy yesterday, I didn't have as much of a chance to talk to beforehand. He was waiting for me for lunch, but half an hour before meeting, the TV people showed up and wanted to show me on a date and I said, "Oh, I don't know. I'd have to ask first." I had to call him and ask, make sure it was okay. He said yeah, but he was taken aback. He got really nervous, and I felt really bad, I mean here's this guy who wanted to meet me and he'd never met anyone on-line before.

**MS:** How do these things usually work out?

**DS:** This is kind of the first time I've done it this way. I also have a Web site [where] I would download everyone's pages, put messages on it, and try to recreate that environment.... We'd send messages and then I'd meet them in person. But I have met some people locally who I've dated [for real].

**"Bobby":** You know the worst thing that happens? When you kind of get that sinking feeling when you first meet, like this is not going to happen.

**DS:** One guy, the first thing he asked was

whether my bra and panties matched. Like, I don't think you need to know that!

**MS:** Yes, thank you! Next question!

**DS:** I actually haven't met anyone creepy. In the past I would always meet my dates in the same place, I would never give out my last name — Dana Plato is the name I'd give.

**MS:** E-mail and chats kind of privilege people who are good writers, highly literate.

**"Bobby":** Yeah, that would give you an edge, like if they didn't know how to spell...

**MS:** Deal breaker.

**DS:** I guess it depends on what you're looking for. But it's weird, because that kind of starts to become your criteria.

**"Bobby":** It's what they say and how they say it. Like, "the last great book I read was something by James Joyce," well, you didn't read that. No one's read that.

**MS:** Unless you're still in school. Well,

the Internet and lying seem to go hand in hand.

**DS:** I guess if you have to sum yourself up in 20 lines or something like that, you wind up with a caricature. No matter how honest or upfront you think you're being.

**MS:** Like psychometrics. You get put into your own little group. You're self-evaluating.

**DS:** I had a friend who didn't know what to write in his ad, so I said, "Let me write it!" And it went really well, because I'm an outside observer.

**"Bobby":** Do you think [your] performances are...a little too confrontational?

**DS:** There's always a line. I've been really thinking since yesterday's date, really questioning whether I'll do this again in the same way.

**"Bobby":** I would have melted if a CBC reporter showed up. What about those ads that say "discreet"? Do you just ignore those? Because obviously they don't want other people to know.

**DS:** I just ignore those. On Lavalife they've got only three categories: dating, relationships, or intimate encounter.

**"Bobby":** I can't imagine someone doing that. "Encounters!"

**DS:** Well, I just ask people for their dirty stories, and I'm getting them. That's research for something else I'll do.

**"Bobby":** Dirty stories: I was covered in mud!

[Her phone rings.]

**DS:** Hello? Okay, great. I'm busy right now; I'm on a date. Can you give me your number? I'll call you right back. Uh huh. I'll talk to you soon. Bye.

**MS:** Got another date?

**"Bobby":** You should mention in your article that she's planning another date while on a date! And that I look like this [makes hangdog expression]. I thought I was your date!

The first sampling lawsuit makes it to the courts. The judge throws the book at Biz Markie for sampling Gilbert O'Sullivan's "Alone Again." Since this case, no court has ever ruled in favour of the sampler and the art form remains stymied by the crippling costs of "sample clearance." Nobody beats the Biz?

See the rest of this issue of Broken Pencil.

The first handset mobile phones appear on the market. Whether you're planning a coup, a poetry reading, or adultery, the cellphone is the true meaning of that trite phrase "become the media." Teenagers, drug dealers and outlawed student groups are now a force unto themselves. For less than a \$100 you can free yourselves from the tyranny of the "land line" and join an invisible mass of millions murmuring. Caveat Emptor... In 1991 all three major cellphone manufacturers patented a radiation shield for their phones, but none have implemented it yet.

The Supreme Court of Canada decides whether or not to allow the royalty free photocopying of law case and textbooks. Law libraries state that it's their duty to disseminate knowledge. Publishers, being publishers, think this should and can be profitably "marketed." Please see 1937.

1987      1991      2003      Future

# Fifteen years of Pixel VISION from Baltimore to Venice Beach

by Rob Thomas

**The machine** is temperamental. The images it produces can be unpredictable. Replacement parts are non-existent. Recording time is limited to ten minutes. Its cheap plastic lens fogs over time. Resolution is less than 2,000 pixels (a standard TV image can be a hundred times better). Editing footage can be tricky. Repairs are a nightmare. Yet despite all of its well-known limitations the Fisher-Price PXL 2000 has enjoyed nearly a decade and a half of fringe popularity. And there are good reasons. The camcorders are cheap, they are easy to use, they record visual matter onto audio tapes, their field of view is virtually unlimited, and the pixelated black and white images it produces can turn the most everyday subjects instantly into captivating avant-garde art.

James Wickstead, head of the company that designed the camcorder, says they receive an email a week asking how to get the PXL 2000. He has to tell the aspiring auteurs that they can't. Not anymore. The PXL was taken off the market in 1989, shortly after its second Christmas on the market.

Cult popularity is hardly what Fisher-Price expected when they placed the camcorder on the market in 1988. The idea was to create an affordable camcorder for children. With a target retail price of US\$99 the camcorder was definitely affordable. The trouble is the children weren't interested. At least, that's the official story.

Fisher-Price says the camcorder was cancelled because they wanted to concentrate on their core pre-school market.

They add that the camcorder was popular and it sold well. Wickstead argues that cost was the real reason. Sanyo manufactured the camcorders in Japan, and Fisher-Price bought from them in US dollars. At the time, the exchange rate was such that the cost was going up every three months. Having already agreed to retail prices and stuck in the middle, Fisher-Price saw its profits shrinking. Ironically, Sanyo had a plan to shift operations to a Chinese facility, but the camcorders were discontinued before this could happen.

A decade later, rumours sometimes circulate that the precious camcorders sell for thousands on eBay. They don't. They sell for two to five hundred. Stories of them selling for dollars and change at garage sales are common. And Sanyo still has a licence to manufacture and sell the camcorders in Japan. Rumours of the Japanese PXL persist (the elusive Sanpax 1000 looks in photographs to be an exact replica). The many rumours are testament to PXL's fringe appeal. The camcorder has become a fetish item, as much as it is a tool.

PXL images first reached a broad audience in the concluding sequences of Richard Linklater's 1991 film *Slacker*, but Michael Almereyda might be the best known director to use the camcorder. Almereyda's 2000 film *Hamlet* brought the camcorder itself into the foreground. Ethan Hawke's *Hamlet* notably used a PXL to film his own soliloquies. Almost all of Almereyda's films include PXL images. His 1992 film *Another Girl Another Planet* was shot entirely using the

PXL and his 1994 film *Nadja* includes evocative sequences where the PXL image is used to represent the viewpoint of a vampire.

In Canada, a 1992 music video for the song "Go Fish" by erstwhile cuddlecore group Cub brought PXL images some attention too. But it is film-maker Sadie Benning — with her own rock and roll connection to the band *Le Tigre* — who is most often cited as pioneering the Pixelvision aesthetic. Gerry Fialka, organizer of the 13-year-old PXL This festival, good-naturedly calls Benning the darling of the PXL. And that's basically what she is.

There's no question Benning's story has mythopoetic potential. Her father James Benning was a well-known experimental filmmaker. In 1988, he gave his 15-year-old daughter a PXL 2000 for Christmas. A few years later Benning would use it to document her nascent lesbianism. Most of her videos were confessional and diaristic, shot in the privacy of her own bedroom. Benning went on to receive a Rockefeller grant at the age of 19. At 20 her videos were being shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. As filmmaker Michael O'Reilly has pointed out, her story was a dramatic fulfillment of Francis Ford Coppola's prediction that "some little fat girl in Ohio is going to make a beautiful movie with her father's camcorder." It was the 1991 pixelvision compilation "Big Pixel Theory," curated by Eric Saks, that first brought attention to Benning's work.

O'Reilly has garnered acclaim for his own Pixelvision work. His 1992 video

**"Some little fat girl in Ohio is going to make a beautiful movie with her father's camcorder."  
- Francis Ford Copolla**



from 'The Judy Spots' by Sadie Benning" courtesy of VDB

"Glassjaw," for example, is a startling video that documents his recovery from a serious accident and assault. O'Reilly points out that the camcorder tends to encourage confessions. This could be because the camcorder is often linked directly to a TV, so people end up working closely with the camcorder, or simply because people don't find the toy threatening. Almereyda's use of the PXL for the soliloquy sequences in *Hamlet* is obviously an elaboration on this trend.

This close-up and confessional tendency is probably best expressed in a sprawling, ambitious work called the "Philosopher's Union Member's Mouthpiece Mega-Project." The Philosopher's Union project was created by an avant-garde videomaker named Tentatively a Convenience. Mr. Convenience heard about Fisher-Price's "toy" video camcorder very early on and decided it would be well suited for shooting close-ups. Using the natural limit of the audio-cassettes (PXL tapes run at high speeds so a 90-minute tape might only capture five or six minutes per side) he began recording close-ups of subjects' mouths as they recounted their philosophy of life. After the initial 20 he expanded the project to include 50,000 mouthpieces.

Gerry Fialka is fond of pointing out that the PXL 2000 basically fulfills Cocteau's challenge that "film will only become art when its materials are as inexpensive as pencil and paper." Fialka organizes the PXL This Festival, held twice yearly in Venice Beach since 1991. Fialka is the toy's unofficial post-commer-

cial booster and "pencil and paper mentality" is exactly what attracts him to the PXL. In Fialka's own words, his "favourite kind of art is the kind that children make on sidewalks with chalk. It's like Bucky Fuller said," he adds, "you can literally do more with less."

PXL This is exactly that — an exercise in doing more with less. It certainly isn't the Sundance festival. Fialka usually receives 30 submissions and all of them are screened. There is no entrance fee for PXL This and Fialka appreciates the fact that entrants don't think of themselves as filmmakers. Anyone can make a film. Anyone can enter. As Fialka describes it, "What you have is a hundred people who gather to watch films, made by people from around the world, and celebrate art."

Fialka is an unusual booster. Describing the PXL he compares it to public access television and invokes words like cheap, fragile and cheesy. It's hardly a glowing recommendation. "In the real world everything isn't perfect," he explains. He is unapologetic. "Film as an art form has been swindled by capitalism."

The community that uses the camcorders says the same type of things. They like the unpredictable image. Fuzziness and pixelation is what attracted them to the camcorder. The image is unique. And Fialka's self-deprecating banter belies the camcorder's fifteen years of cult popularity. The images it produces aren't good — not in a traditional sense — but they have their allure. Is it fetishism? Maybe. But it's also something more. One PXL user sum-

marized a general feeling very succinctly saying, "What I like about the PXL is that for \$200 and a slew of audiotapes you can make a unique image that you CAN'T make with all the expensive plugins in the world." You can try this at home. *BT*

Rob Thomas lives in Ottawa. He is Books Editor for *The Peer Review* magazine and a freelance writer and journalist.

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#### Further Info

*Precious Realms* has produced an excellent compilation called "The Art of Pixelvision: Underground Archives volume 1." It includes many pixelvision videos, interviews with Fialka and Wickstead, footage of PXL This 12, a documentary on the PXL by Brian Flemming and instructions for modifying the camcorder. The price is reasonable and profits are shared with the artists. (It does not include work by Benning.) For a limited time you might also win a PXL ([www.precious-realms.com](http://www.precious-realms.com)).

PXL This is still running and always looking for submissions. PXL This 13 will be screened November 15 at *Midnight Special* in Santa Monica. Go to [www.indiespace.com/pxlthis](http://www.indiespace.com/pxlthis) or contact Gerry Fialka 310-306-7330 for details.

Michael O'Reilly has also published some of the best technical and aesthetic information about the camcorder available ([www.michaeloreilly.com](http://www.michaeloreilly.com)). Also available on the *Precious Realms* DVD.

Yahoo! hosts a PXL board.

Drink

# STEAM WHISTLE

Pilsner



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Beer Stores  
and  
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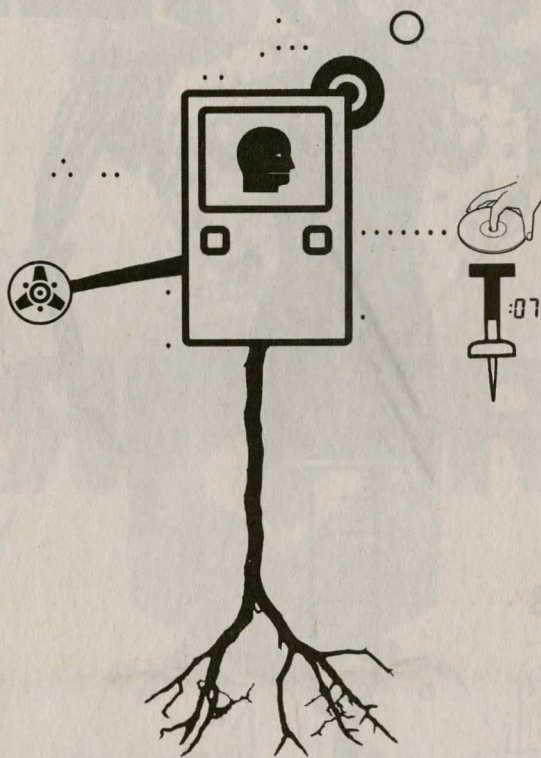
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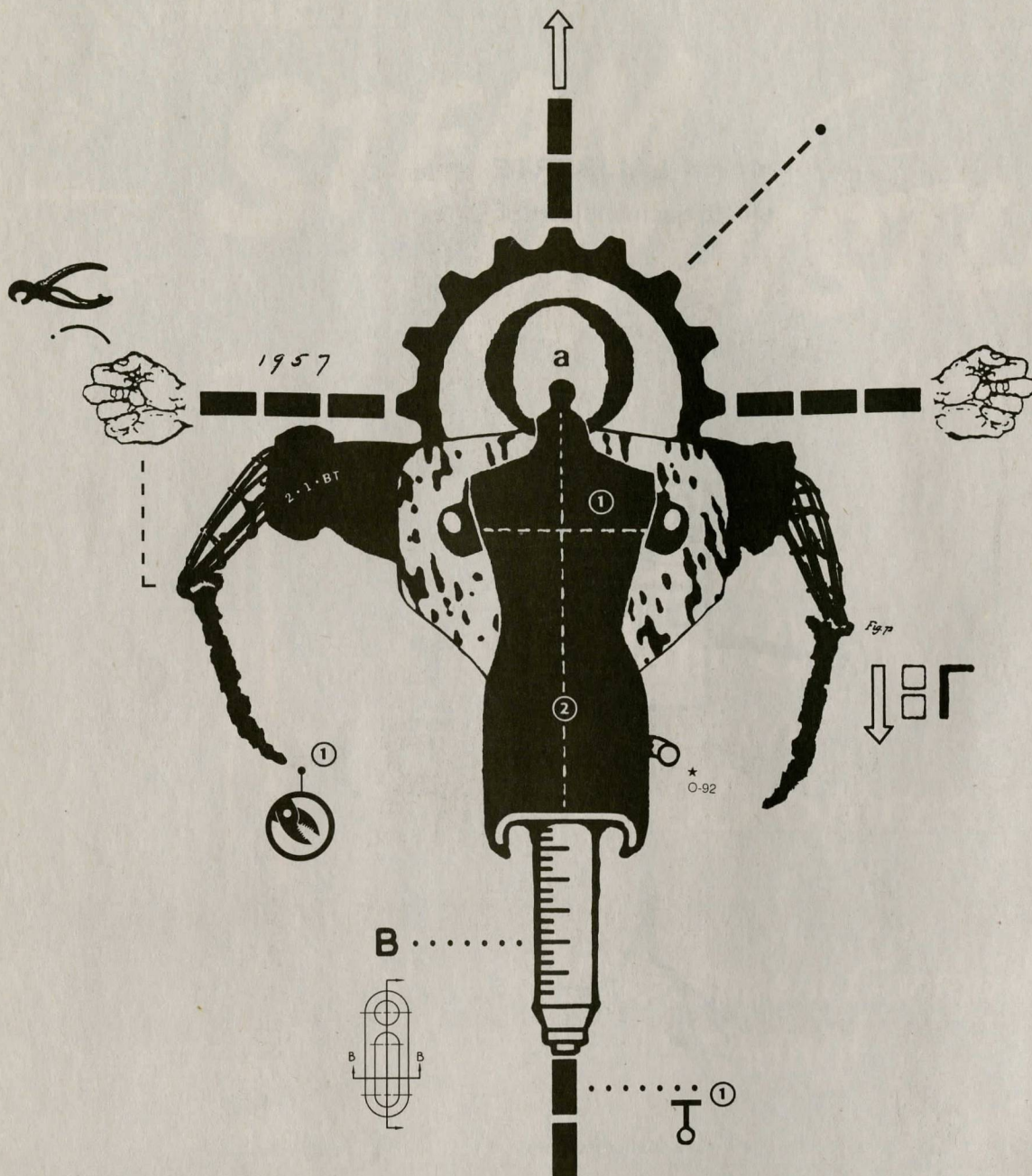
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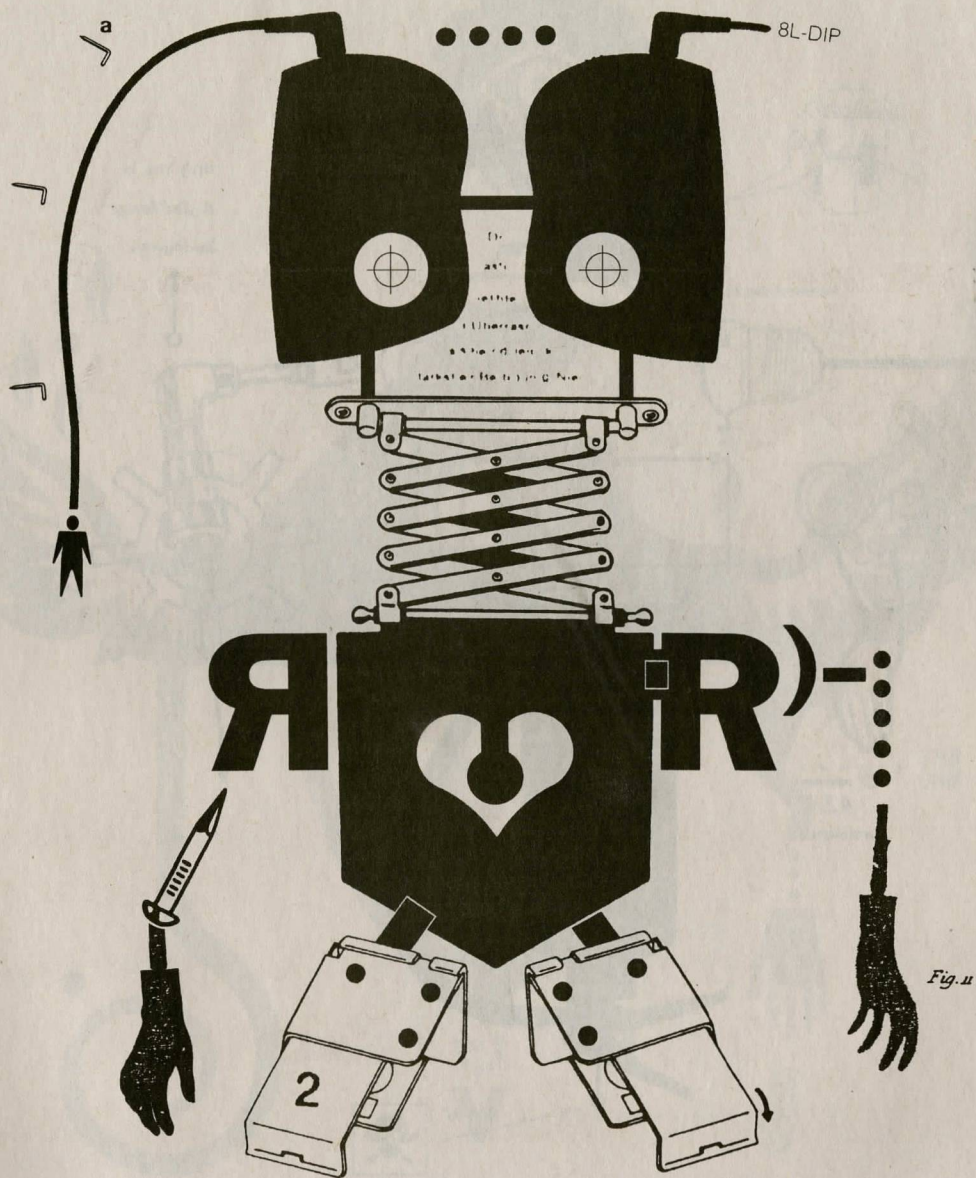
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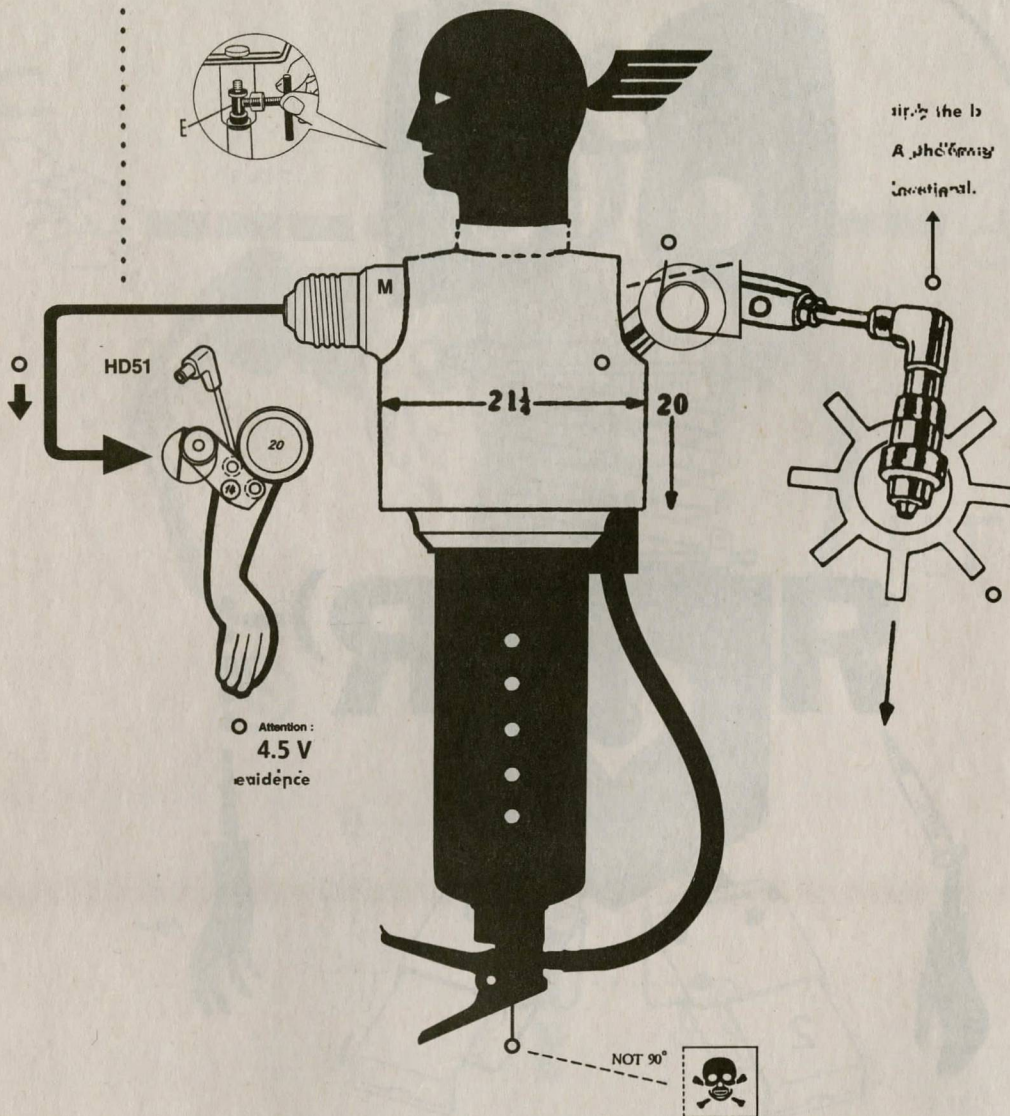




Needle : Cross : 1957 (2002)



Neck Extender R-R (2002)



4.5V Extinguisher (2003)

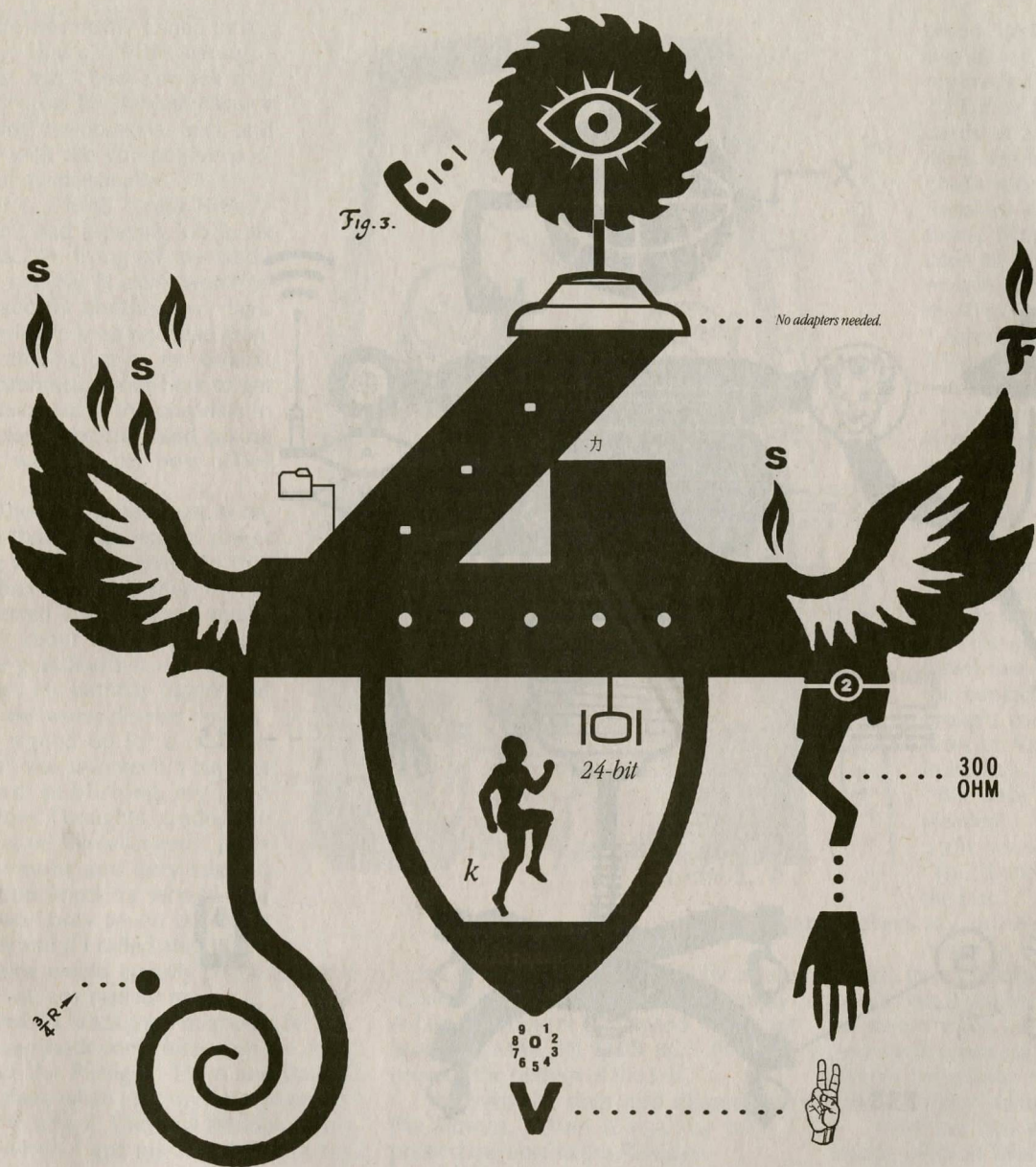
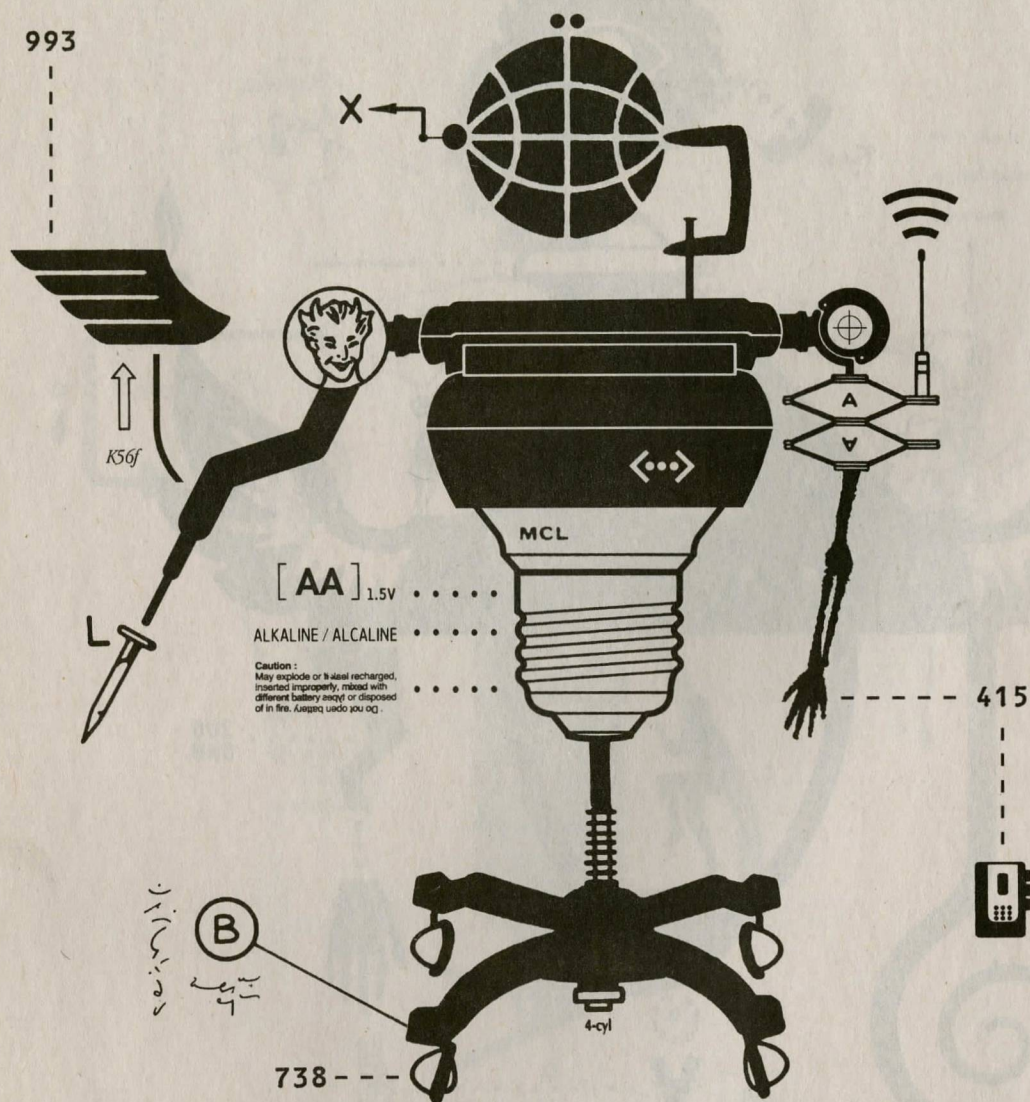


Fig. 29.

OHM Rotor (2003)



Alkaline [AA] (2003)

# Money Mart

by Trish Kelly from *The Make Out Club #13*  
East Broadway, Vancouver BC, V5T 1W5, trishkellyex@yahoo.com

My life was nearly ruined today. Okay, that's a little strong, I guess, but I had a shock that nearly upset the delicate balance keeping the obsessive neck and neck with the compulsive portion of my personality.

It's a high stress time. I haven't had a paying job in six weeks. I'm living off my credit card, and my EI claim won't be assessed for another two days. I'm trying to keep my head level. I'm catching up on my e-mail, brainstorming about how to get the stains out of the porcelain in the claw foot tub, and taking brisk walks to my post office box.

There's a wishful part of my brain that thinks maybe something is going to arrive in that mailbox that will save me. A redirected GST cheque I totally forgot about will arrive, or my senile grandmother will decide that it's my birthday (again) and send me twenty discreet dollars.

I signed up for a mailbox when I was seventeen. I had just started publishing my zine *Random Thoughts*, under the pen name *Miscellaneous*. I was anonymous and very excited about my knack for secrecy. The box was only seven dollars a month and if I called after noon, someone would actually check to see if there was any mail for me.

Box 33 holds good memories for me. I've even made some friends on the other side of the Plexiglas. Dave and Patrick were there when I got my letter of acceptance to school. They saw the look on my face when I got my first income tax refund.

Few of the Money Mart clerks from my late teens are still working at the East Broadway location. I like to think they've gone on to bigger and better Money Marts.

There is no longer a number plate on Box 33. It fell off about two years ago, and I like the fact that only me and the staff know which box is number 33.

Today when I opened the square door with no number, there was no mail. Though a cheque would have been nice,



art by Lorenz Peters My mind leapt to the new owner of box 33. Some creepy

a day without mail is not exactly a rare occurrence. But the box was not empty. A large computer generated note that read NO MAIL IN THIS BOX PLEASE! covered the bottom of the box.

I closed the door and slipped into the lineup. When it was my turn, I pressed the note to the Plexiglas.

"What does this mean?!" I begged the woman who was not Dave or Patrick.

"Your box has been closed."

"But, but," I stuttered.

She asked my name and consulted a large black binder.

"Your box was due on August first," she said with the deadpan voice required when one's job is doling out money to desperate people.

"Do you take Visa?" I managed, though my chin was quivering. I was calculating how many months I already

owed, and how much closer I was about to come to reaching my credit card's limit.

Of course they don't take credit cards at Money Mart. Credit cards are for people who have credit ratings, who have relationships with financial institutions! Money Mart does not cater to upwardly mobiles like myself who are just waiting for the EI to kick in!

I returned after a trip to the ATM for a cash advance and entered the line again.

"Your box has already been closed," another woman who was not Dave or Patrick told me.

I nodded.

Again, the stoic Money Mart countenance stared back at me.

I was panicking. I wanted to explain to the lady, I've had this box for eight years! I've published twenty-five booklets with the contact address listed! I've brought your coworkers chocolates at Valentine's Day and fruitcake at Christmas!

"But what does that mean?" I pleaded.

Stoic moved to impatience. "You didn't pay, so we closed the box."

He'd last two years before moving into an office in Yaletown. Fruitcake at Christmas! My first love letter from an army girl in Texas! Did these things mean nothing to Money Mart?

I pressed my face up to the glass so the clerk could see my desperation better. With my face against the glass, the expanse of eye burning yellow wall behind the clerk came into focus.

I remembered where I was. "Does that mean I can't give you the money?" I asked.

"Of course you can," she said with a

retail smile.

I slid my cash advance from Visa through the small slot at the bottom of the glass, and she reopened my account, and passed me a receipt for six months' worth of mailbox time. It had a personalized footer which read, "See you again, Trisha #33!"

I guess the day was salvaged. But it is the end of an era. A few years ago, when the provincial government decided to crack down on welfare and UI fraud, Money Mart changed its mailbox policy. Suddenly, it was not okay to get mail addressed to Miscellaneous. They wanted a complete list of all mail recipients for

each box. I gave the clerk a complete list of everyone who used my box — Random Thoughts, Miscellaneous, Trish Kelly, Trisha Chornyj, The Make Out Club, Riot Grrrl Press, High Phukovsky, and other names I made up just to prove how silly this new policy was.

"I'll need to see ID for all these people," Patrick said.

"I don't have ID for all these names!" I said.

"I'm sorry, I need proof that they're real people." He shrugged.

"But they aren't real people, Patrick."

No one ever tried to send a cheque

to Miscellaneous. And I never collected Unemployment Insurance under the name Hugh Phukovsky. The box filled with invites to book launches and the erratic birthday cards from my Granny, made out in the name I was born with.

There were some questions I was afraid to ask, like when the box was due again? Had I lost my seniority? How many assumed names were acceptable under the terms of my new tenancy?

I was too shaken to ask. But I promised myself, my first pay cheque, I'm paying for as many years as Money Mart will let me because I don't ever want to get that note again. *~*

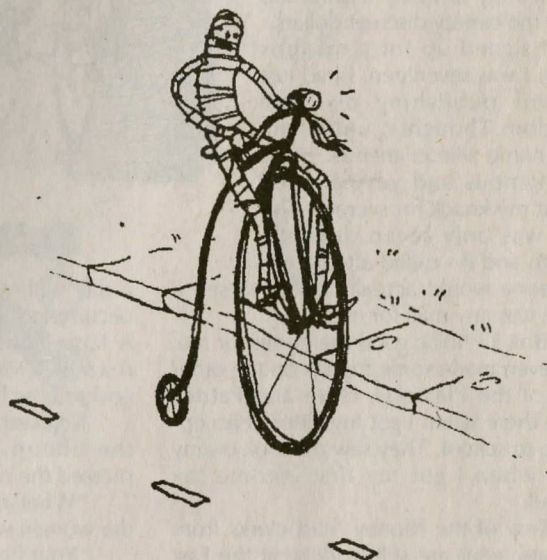
## The Mummy Concerns

by L. Reid and G. Stab from Tigerpress Books  
tigerpressbooks@hotmail.com

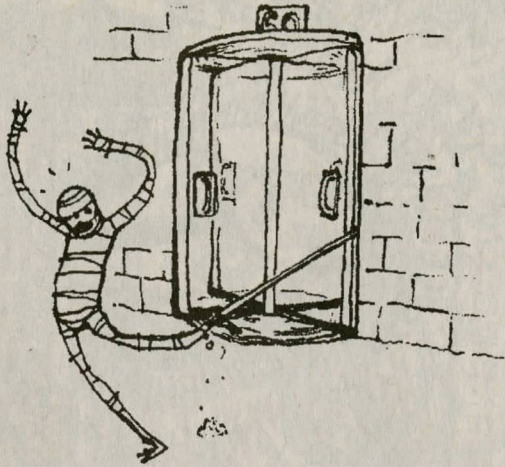
### the mummy concerns



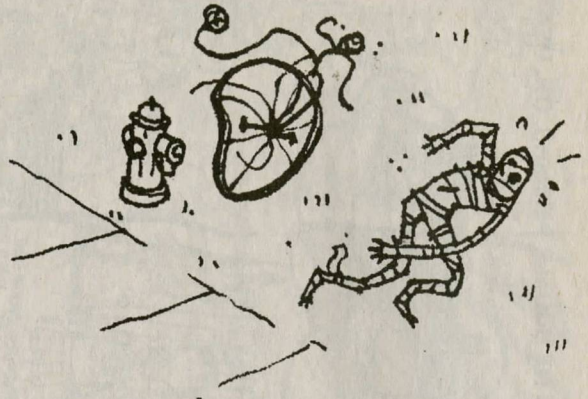
L.Reid/G.STAB



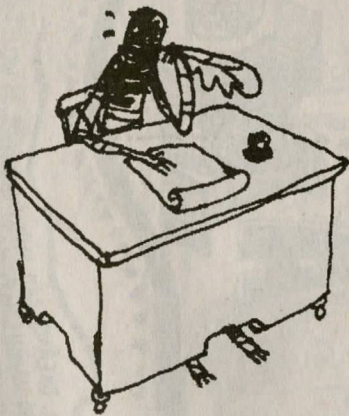
His outdated manner continued to foil his attempts at becoming contemporary.



The trappings of modern living  
were often more hindrance than help



Mummy mistook a fire hydrant  
for a portal into the netherworld  
and he smashed up his bike



While pondering the opening paragraph  
of his memoirs, mummy noted  
how absorbent he was:



Mummy prepared all manner of meal  
for mummy cat. But to no avail;  
mummy cat would not even taste it.

# An Odd Dream

by Superfrida from Tanglefoot, superfrida@earthlink.net, 315 NE Buffalo, Portland, OR, USA 97211

**An Odd Dream**

I HAVE VERY VISUAL DREAMS, AND MANY VARIETIES, AS WELL. SOME ARE RECURRING AND INVOLVE TORNADOES OR MYSTIC SYMBOLS. MANY OF MY NIGHTMARES REVOLVE AROUND HOLLYWOOD / WIIII IMAGERY. SOME ARE LITTERED WITH FORGOTTEN FILM STARS... I HAVE ONE THAT'S ESPECIALLY ODD..... EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE....

©2002 SUPER FRIDA

ONE NIGHT... I DREAMT OF MY PARENTS' OLD HOUSE WHERE MY FIRST 17 YEARS WERE SPENT....

I WAS PROBABLY SEVEN OR EIGHT... IT WAS SUMMERTIME... KIND OF HOT.

DAD WAS AT THE BARBECUE... I THINK HE WAS TRYING TO TALK TO ME... I COULDN'T TELL IF HE WAS SMILING OR GRITTING HIS TEETH...

OOEEEEEEEOO HAAAAAARHHH... NOOOOOOAAAAA... I STARTED HEARING ALL THESE SHRIEKING SOUNDS... LOW MOANS AND MUFFLED SCREAMS... WORDS WERE INDISCERNABLE... YET I KNEW THEY WERE CALLING ME...

OOEEEEEEEOO HAAAAAARHHH... NOOOOOOAAAAA... I STARTED HEARING ALL THESE SHRIEKING SOUNDS... LOW MOANS AND MUFFLED SCREAMS... WORDS WERE INDISCERNABLE... YET I KNEW THEY WERE CALLING ME...

I TURNED AND SAW MY MOTHER'S RATHER MODEST FLOWER BED... THE ORIGINS OF THESE SCREAMS, THESE FOGGY WAITS CAME FROM TOWERING SPIRES OF LILIES AND ROSES, FROM THE CENTERS EMERGING A GREAT FLESHY APPENDAGE, OPEN MOUTHS WERE SPITTING OUT SOUNDS, UGLY DEFORMED LIPS EMITTING A STRANGE UNHOLY CATERWAWLING... YET I WAS STILL UNABLE TO MAKE OUT WORD OR PHRASE...

PLUNGED INTO SILENCE, THE DISTRACTION OF A SMALL BABY OVERWHELMED THE SENSATION. TEETERING ITSELF TOWARDS THE OPENING OF A WELL... UNSURE STEPS LEADING AN UNCOOPERATIVE BODY...

AS THE INFANT APPROACHED THE WELL OPENING... I FELT ADRENALIN COURSE THROUGH MY BODY. INSTINCTIVELY KNOWING THE BABY HAD EVERY INTENTION OF CRAWLING (WELL... JUMPING) INTO THE OPENING, I SAW MY BODY MOVING BIONIC-LIKE IN SLOW MOTION. LEAD HAD REPLACED THE BLOOD THAN RAN SLUGGISHLY THROUGH CONSTRICTED VEINS. THEN, AS IF ON CUE, THE CHILD STOPPED... TURNING TOWARDS ME...

IT WAS STILL A BABY... AN INFANT, BUT AS IT, OR RATHER SHE, TURNED... I SAW MY 90 YEAR OLD GRANDMOTHER'S FACE STERNLY GAZE INTO MY EYES...

"NOW YOU MARCH RIGHT UPSTAIRS YOUNG MAN, AND APOLOGIZE TO YOUR MOTHER!"

I HEARD HER WORDS, AND YET, AS SHE KEPT STARING... IT SEEMED THE SAME EERIE WAITS AND MOANS WERE COMING FROM HER AS WELL AS THE FLOWERS!

TREMBLING, I FELT MY BODY SHIFTING.. MY NEXT PERCEPTION WAS THAT OF MY PRE-ADOLESCENT MALE BODY BESTOWED WITH AMPLE FEMALE BREASTS. ONE NIPPLE, THE ELDER-INFANT GREEDILY SUCKLING. I AWOKE SHORTLY THERE AFTER A SLIGHT SICKLY FEELING STAINING MEMORY.

end

# Confessions of an Internet Junkie, part 1

by Eric Bourret from Mastock #5

7375 Louis-Hebert, Montreal QC, H2E 2X5, [butterman@outpost31.com](mailto:butterman@outpost31.com)

## History of Being Hooked, part A

I am completely addicted to the Internet. I have been surfing the World Wide Web for years now, ever since my half-brother's parents had a modem and a browser on their 486-PC back in 1995. I used to spend hours non-stop online at his parents' place, clicking and downloading away like a nerdy mad doctor while my half-brother would either watch TV or snore loudly. I remember coming over to his place around 8 p.m., logging on around 8:10, and easily staying plugged until 3:00 or 4:00 a.m. I would surf hundreds of sites, clicking away, until my eyes would burn from exhaustion, or the computer would crash from too many simultaneous operations.

In 1997, my girlfriend bought a 486-laptop computer with a monochrome screen, along with a 14400 modem, which is the minimum for Internet connection. Soon enough, we found ourselves a cheap Internet provider, and before long, she was installing a navigation browser and getting us set up. Little did I know this "at home" Internet service would end up changing my life, as I knew it, forever.

It began like most situations begin: very slowly. Late at night, on weekends, after she'd fall sound asleep, I would connect. Using the old laptop (which was slower than the average 486 computer), surfing the net was a long, slow, and almost painful process. I remember we programmed the free email website HOTMAIL as our home page. It took well over 5 minutes just to load up the front page. I would often follow a regular, almost subconscious methodological pattern. Open up the computer; prepare the coffee. Open up the browser; boil the water. Log onto the email; get the milk and sugar out. By the time I finally could



art by Lorenz Peters

view my email, I had a nice hot pot of coffee with milk and sugar to last the whole night!

This introductory period of personal online web experience did not last too long, but is still very vivid in my memory. We were living on Le Plateau Montreal, which is an area in our city considered very hip and "in" by tourists and residents alike. What is not known is that Le Plateau Montreal is also one of the noisiest areas of the city, populated mostly by ignorant and unconscious humans who do not appear to have to work or jobs to pay the ridiculously high rent wages. Anyways, my point being that, while my girlfriend could sleep through a tornado, my sleep was often interrupted by loud noises coming from parties on the street.

Sometimes I would surf until the sun came up the next morning. My blurred vision from eye fatigue was often accompanied by various muscle spasms and cramps. Sometimes I would pass out in front of the monochrome screen, only to be awakened by a loud neighbour sometime later. However, more often than not, the only way my Internet surfing ses-

sions would end was when the computer would freeze up or crash, from too many simultaneous operations or too many porn pop-up browsers. Instead of going through the painfully long process of rebooting the computer, I would just give up and go to bed.

Needless to say I would often be totally fucked up the next day when I would be forced to wake up to do the dishes, the laundry, the groceries, the vacuuming, etc. My girlfriend would often lecture me about the illogical nature of my actions. She'd say things like: "If you lack sleep and you feel tired all the time, then why do you surf the net all night instead of sleeping?" As usual, she was right. One

thing I learned early on in our 10+ years of living as a couple is that she is rarely wrong.

One day, my mother's second husband was getting rid of his full-scale 486-PC computer (he just purchased the then new Pentium 1). My mother gave us the 486, which my girlfriend cleaned up over two months time, and then we began reformatting it to be web-friendly. We inherited a 36600 modem, making Internet surfing a bit faster. But the cherry on top of this free sundae was the colour monitor. I could finally view the Internet as it was meant to be seen.

Our Internet connection was faster now. I did not have time to prepare my coffee like I used to back when we used the old laptop with the 14400 modem. This new Internet connection speed, tagged with a more powerful computer, nurtured and fed my addiction to Internet material. Although I could surf much faster than before, my sessions would become lengthier...simply because I could visit more sites and download much more information in about half the time.

## British Columbia

### Alien Basement Food

perzine, #16, 47 pages, Ashley Lambert, \$1 or trade, Basement Freak Production, c/o Lambert, PO BOX 1417, Revelstoke BC, V0E 2S0, BasementFreak@antisocial.com, www.basementfreaksdistro.qjb.net

This traditional cut and paste zine is all about the going ons in Ashley's life. She lets us in on pretty much everything Ashley-related: from lengthy gushings about her boyfriend Billy (sounds like an amazing guy by the way), to bitching about crappy jobs and ranting about her insecurities and fears. Who is this girl? Well, we do know that she works as a short order cook at A&W. She lives with her mom. She's in love. She's no good with money. She's a punk at heart but shamefully admits that she tends to buy things that she doesn't necessarily need just to fill a void inside (urgh!...don't we all?). She spends a lot of time worrying that people won't like her zine. ABS is at its best though when Ashley stops worrying, lets it all out, and holds nothing back. The best piece in here is highly personal and uninhibited: "...she [Ashley's mom] used to give me baths she'd sometimes hold my head under the water when I wasn't listening..." The zine is not all sadness. Ashley is about action and doing things. She's starting a zine project that's all about communicating the old fashion way: "Let's start a paper revolution. The revolution will not be Internet-ified." That's just cool. (Audrey Gagnon)

### An Ode to No One

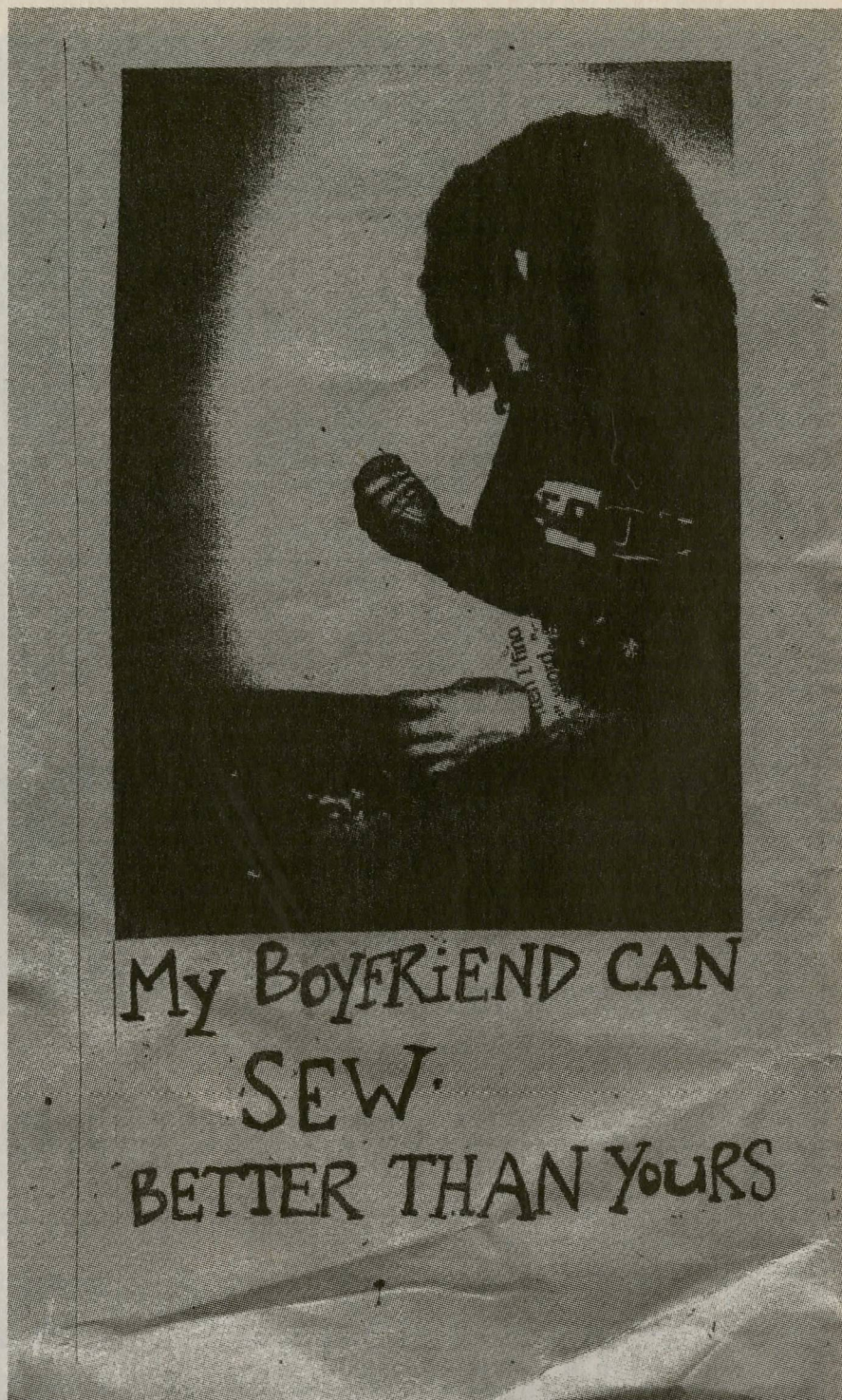
zine, 30 pages, Ashley Lambert, \$1 + 2 stamps, PO BOX 1417, Revelstoke BC, V0E 2S0, BasementFreak@antisocial.com

This CD-sized, old school cut 'n' paste zine documents Ashley's relationship with the Smashing Pumpkins: what it felt like to listen to them for the first time, her attachment to certain lyrics, what each album means to her. But as Ashley states up front, you don't necessarily have to be a fan of the Pumpkins to appreciate her words. This zine is more about music and the intensity of feelings a song can conjure. (Teri Vlassopoulos)

### Bat Boy

perzine, #1, 44 pages, Mathieu Shance, 2927 Cedar Hill Road, Victoria BC, V8T 3H8, mattgaux@hotmail.com

This zine sucks. Matt Shance hates everything in the same annoying self-indulgent way fifteen year olds hate everything. Shance writes: "I awoke this morning to horror. Knowing that no matter how hard I prayed, I could never return to the womb, I curled up into foetal position anyway, and tried my best." If Shance was actually fifteen I would just let this teen-angst ridden shit go; but he's way past that age. Instead of sounding all cute and teenage-like tortured, the zine just comes across as bitter, boring, and lacking in creativity. My biggest problems with Bat Boy: it's ridden with clichés and the design made me wonder how the hell this guy got into art school in the first place. To be fair there are some sketches in here that are



from Alien Basement Food

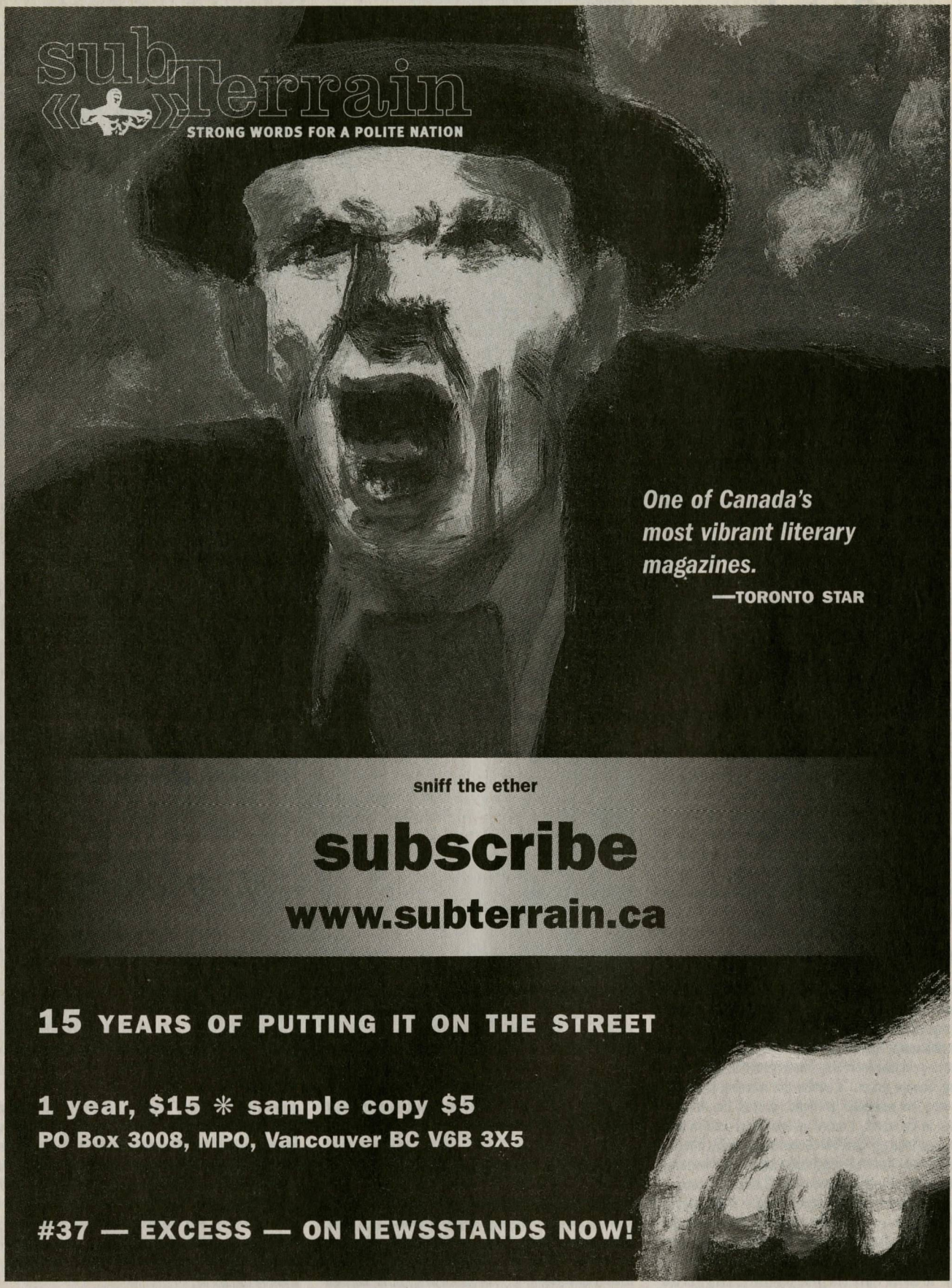
somewhat okay, but nothing spectacular enough to carry the publication. This is Bat Boy's first issue, so it could get better. I sort of doubt it though. (Audrey Gagnon)

### The Claremont Review

litzine, #23, 115 pages, \$8, The Claremont Review, 4980 Wesley Road, Victoria BC, V8Y 1Y9, www.theClaremontReview.com

This volume features the writings of young people who have clearly lived a lot; whether here on earth, on solid

ground, or in the wild landscape of their vivid imaginations. While the brief bios show a group of piano-playing, bowling-hating, creative minds ready to explode; their writing demonstrates bright talents and often sombre souls. Lynze Cranna pulls at heartstrings like a drowning man reaching for a life-jacket; while Robyn Plasterer plays with words with the ability of a born prestidigitator. In this zine, even the photographs are pure poetry. The result is a quality publication that should not be missed. (Andrée Lachapelle)



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## CuntBoy

zine, #2, C.B., \$2, Radiant Fracture Repair and Fabrication, 2002, PO BOX 8673, Victoria BC, V8X3S2

CuntBoy certainly did surprise me. Looking at the cover it seemed a tad dull and cheap. But, when you get into this trans-focused zine, you find a strong, sensitive publication that takes some chances. Taking the roman a clef form, Cuntboy starts off with some Whitman quotes and accompanying illustrations that work through many ideas concerning body shape and gender. From there, Cuntboy and Pan take over. I loved the characterization of the horny goatman Pan, totally perfect. But it is the story that Cuntboy tells Pan, about the long Greyhound journey, filled with self-discovery and exploration that stands out. Subtle language and a tender story combine beautifully. Cuntboy is tremendous on so many levels, for everyone, whether trans-identified or friendly or just a fan of quality work. (Jon Pressick)

## Avoid Strange Men

zine, #3, Captain Snowdon, \$2, Queer Words Project PO BOX 8673, Victoria BC, V8X 3S2

Wow. Avoid Strange Men is awesome. And I mean that in the fullest sense of the word. I am in awe of it. So much lovely queer content. So many amazing queer contributors: Michael V. Smith, Chloe Brushwood-Rose, Gordon de France. I could go on and on. I'm not sure how often ASM is released, but I hope I can keep up with it. I savoured and enjoyed all the pieces. One of those rare zines, and a queer one at that, that is a full cover-to-cover read. Captain Snowdon, guide me further. (Jon Pressick)

## Krazy Kat's Pyjamas

comic, 30 pages, Jim Smith and Gareth Gaudin, \$2, Magic Teeth & T'WIT Comics, 633 Johnson Street, Victoria BC, V8W 1M7, magicteeth@hotmail.com

This is a reverse comic jam, with one author starting at the beginning and the other starting at the end; switching back and forth after every panel. While this is an admirable idea, it sort of leaves the whole plot concept out on a limb. We start off with a cowboy, a regular guy, a squid and a wishing well. I got lost when two giant cats in shoes showed up and a tense gnome started blowing things up. Some of the drawings seem oddly sexual, but that could just be my dirty mind. One such panel includes a cat looking through binoculars at the quite phallic shape of the squid. I don't know what's going on here. This comic seems like it might have been more fun to make than to read. (Gillian Best)

## Vancouver

### The Make Out Club

litzine, #13, 25 pages, \$2, Trish Kelly, 33-345 East Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5T 1W5

In addition to the all-too-true sentimental ruminations of a postal-box junkie (reprinted here in BP), there are Lesbo-Emo poems, "Skate Porn for Faggos," and other tales of Cher, Barbie dolls, childhood love and mishap.

The whole shebang is shorter than I'd like, but there's that old saying, "Always leave them wanting more." When reading delectable little boy-on-boy bits like "Skate Porn," one wants the full-fledged payoff. This one goes all the way and then some. If only there were three or four more stories like it, this would be a must-have for faggos (and their female friends) everywhere. But I guess we'll just have to wait for #14. (Emily Schultz)

## Piss in a Bucket

perzine, #1, 34 pages, \$2, PO BOX 7, 1220 Salsbury Drive, Vancouver BC, V5L 4B2

As far as the cut and paste look goes, this zine is looking pretty damn good. The combination of text and graphic is pleasing to the eye and you can tell that some serious efforts were put into the design of this first time zine. The contents, mostly rant style prose about the politics of disability, were however slightly less impressive. I found myself feeling very uncomfortable with the preachy and often rage-tinted prose of Piss in a Bucket. While I do admire the zine's overall passionate tone, I felt like I was being yelled at by my mom half the time. That's no fun. A shift in tone does happen in the middle of the zine with "Driving in the Rain With Broken Windshield," a journal entry-like piece that says more than the entire zine combined. More of that would've been good. Maybe next time? (Audrey Gagnon)

## Ricepaper

magazine, Vol. #8.3, 74 pages, Alden E. Habacon, \$4.95, PO BOX 74174, Hillcrest RPO, Vancouver BC, V5V 5C8, www.ricepaperonline.com

This is a super slick, super elegant journal of Asian culture in Canada. This issue is subtitled "The End of Pure Race" and it's all about hybridity, hapa-ness, hyphenation (what you call it when you're part one background and part another). There are personal essays, interviews with actor Tzi Ma, dancer Andrea Nann, filmmaker Deepa Mehta, and a pretty cool fashion spread. There's also an interesting photo essay by Peruvian-Dominican photographer Jennifer Blas, in which she poses for snapshots with "groups of strangers who identify themselves as belonging to ethnic backgrounds that people have assumed I belong to" that graphically crumbles the walls between racial pigeonholes. (Wendy Banks)

## Xerography

litzine, 56 pages, Julius, \$4, Fish Magic Press, #6-2754 West 4th Avenue, Vancouver BC, V6K 1R1, xerographyis@hotmail.com

This is a clever and innovative collection of poetry and other writing. Maybe a little bit too clever and innovative. Maybe a bit indigestible — the disjointed word-paintings in near-illegible type and the translation of George Bowering's "A Typewritten Poem" into Windings had me rolling my eyes a bit. Or maybe I'm just reacting to the insufferable interview with St. Catharines-based playwright Olwyn Self: "Cell phones don't allow for difficulty...they're very post-colonial in that way I suppose. Catalysts of Diasporas and all that." Oh... how very very nice. Or then again, maybe I'm just a redneck philistine who's been out of school for too long. Some of the poetry's good and there's a nice book review, and

clever usage of colour photocopying technology. Not a lost cause by any means. (Wendy Banks)

## Prairies

### A Soft Degrade

zine, #4, Chad Schultz, \$10, 58 2nd St. NE, Medicine Hat AB, T1A 5K7

A collection of mini-anti-capitalist rants coupled with lavish full colour collages of various "wage slaves" and "capitalist swine." Some usual suspects are skewered including McDonalds, Microsoft, Disney, advertising and the corporate media. If I'm sounding uninspired here, well, it's because something about this lavishly produced Adbusters-meets-No-Logo zine leaves me empty. Is it because I've heard all this before? Partly. But it's also the blanket statements lacking personality and qualifier that irk me. "Artists are now a tool in the production line of commodity culture. It's as if we are being forced to eat our own shit." Is that true? What does it mean? Empty slogans and pithy seemingly subversive statements are all very well, but let's face it, there are few in this world who now stand outside commercial culture. More personal and subtle explorations of its ravages — and its benefits — stand to do more for the advancement of a free humanity living in something like balance with our environment than slogans. When we move away from the blatant, there is some strong writing. "It smells like suppressed memory in here," starts 3:16am, one of the more metaphoric and memorable pieces in this collection. Beautiful production and an obvious desire to alter the future. I'm looking forward to whatever Chad comes up with next. (Hal Niedzviecki)

## 40lb. Typewriter

zine, Serena Wells, free, 909 18th Ave. SW, Calgary AB, T2T 0H2

Well, this is a fun little zine. Pretty funny and full of subtle intelligence and wit. I mostly got my kicks out of the illustrations and photo-manipulations; but the text gave me a giggle too. David Colling's short story "Knights in White Satan" is a typical local-rock-star story, but he brings a curious writing style to it, and it does work. But back to the focal point of 40lb. Typewriter: the images. The "I'm Just Trying to Pass Out in Style" section made me snicker, and not because I can totally relate to the fashionably-challenged out there. Okay, that is why I snickered. I definitely did laugh at the white-scum centre spread who is begging me to feel his nipples. I laughed at that because it manages to be funny while making a strong statement. A good pick up. (Jon Pressick)

## Stylus

magazine, Vol. 14, #3, 52 pages, Deanna Radford, free, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg MB, R3B 2E9, stylus@uwinnipeg.ca, www.stylusmag.mb.ca

Having reviewed the previous issue of Stylus, and having completed a late spring voyage to Winnipeg in between, I can now honestly say that Stylus is everything its hometown is not: friendly, inoffensive, unstinky, and satisfying. It really is about the music, and as always, Stylus is packed to the gills with the

goods. This issue features interviews with pretension purveyors The Dears, Seattle's terminally underrated Damien Jurado, metal growlers Strapping Young Lad, plus a ton of other bands running the gamut from oil! to agro to cuddlecore and back. Tons of CD reviews bring up the rear and there's even a surprisingly insightful article about the relative merits of iPods (whatever the hell an iPod is) and MP3 players. Truth be told, it seems almost redundant to review each new edition of the rag as they've long ago earned their indie wings. However, if I had to make one minor suggestion, it would be that they expand their live review section. With the fervour of live music in this country always in doubt, I think shimmering accounts of local gigs can help boost the morale of both the local music community and the city as a whole. Otherwise, no qualms here. (Cameron Gordon)

## Toronto

### Ache

zine, #4, 56 pages, Armen Svadjian, \$4, 167 Cortleigh Boulevard, Toronto ON, M5N 1P6, [achemag@yahoo.ca](mailto:achemag@yahoo.ca)

Ache is a really charming and interesting zine full of intelligent interviews conducted by zine creator, Armen Svadjian. This issue features great interviews with Sam McPheeters (Born Against), Kim Thompson (Fantagraphics), and David Bazan (Pedro the Lion). Free of page numbers, there's a sense of not knowing what you'll stumble across in Ache. It was nice to come

across some short stories, comics and commentary that acted as breathers to the feature articles. My favourite piece was about Palookville's infamous comic artist simply known as Seth. Svadjian contemplates all aspects of the cartoonist's often depressing personal and professional life, making it a very rich and fascinating read with some cool photos of Seth's lair in Guelph. There are a few other contributors but Ache mostly revolves around the insightful Svadjian, a detail-oriented writer and hard act to follow. (Erin Kobayashi)

## Infiltration: Twin Cities Spectacular

zine, #20, Ninj, \$2, PO BOX 13, Station E, Toronto ON, M6H 4E1, [www.infiltration.org](http://www.infiltration.org)

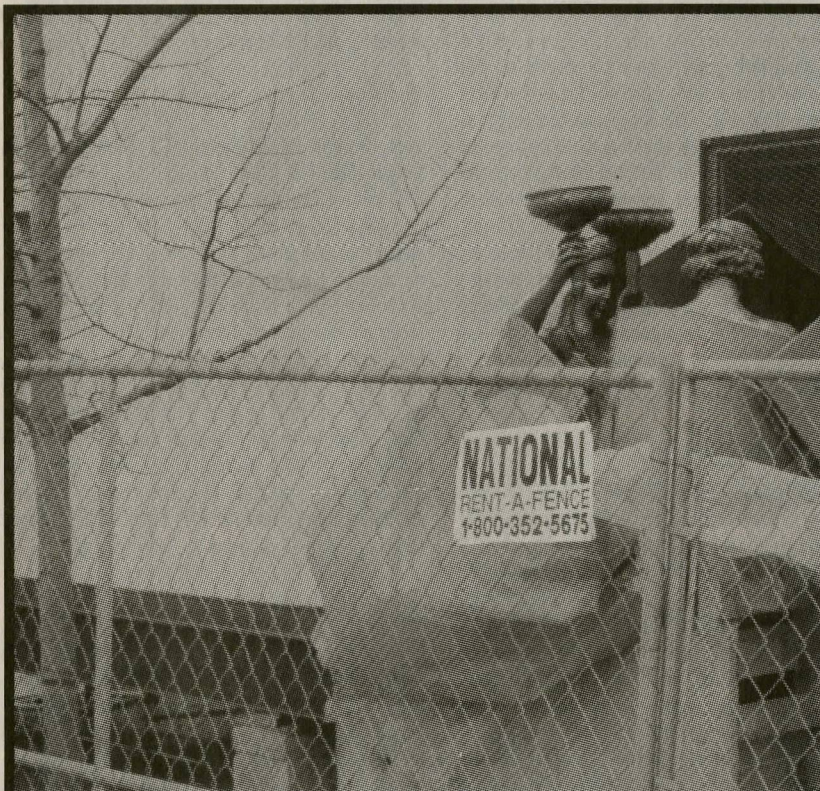
Remember watching that great movie when you were a kid, being totally blown over by it and then, without even thinking about it, you begin to emulate Beetlejuice and your mom starts to look at you funny. Well, there are still certain things that influence me to do some stupid things (though I'm a little wiser now, and can restrain myself) — Infiltration is one of them. I can't understand how anyone could read this zine and not want to break into every little secured space in the city. Luckily I've refrained from doing any of that — aside from some drunken roof-wandering at various pubs, etc. In the new issue, the crew seeps into the bowels of the twin cities in Minnesota, a region that rests upon soft sandstone, perfect for tunneling a complex network of passages under the city. The zine itself is sectioned off

into different headings of where they've traveled under the city, accompanied by some great pics of the cold, barren tunnels of the St. Paul Labyrinth. Among the little surprises was the Hamm Brewery, which appeared in 1864 and rose over the next 100 years to be one of the nation's biggest breweries — only to fall apart and eventually close for good in 1997. The brewery itself remains as a petrified mass of steel settled with dust from years of disuse. The labyrinth is where it gets interesting though, with aptly named places such as the "The Flying Crap Crawl" (a small crawl space bombarded — literally — with flying crap) and "The Poopslide" (a river of sewage next to the only small ledge to walk on). The zine combines interesting accounts of adventures with pieces of history from the areas searched, allowing the reader to get caught up in it all and, maybe one day, find a way to covertly creep into the various unsuspecting annals of the city — not just get drunk and find a way on top of the Waverly Hotel. (James King)

### Hive

magazine, #1, 40 pages, Pol Williams, \$5.95 per issue, 148 Dovercourt Road, Unit #2, Toronto ON, M6J 3C4, [info@hivezine.com](mailto:info@hivezine.com)

This magazine turns my crank, what else can I say? This first issue offers reviews of movies, art, and books by Canadians such as poet Tammy Armstrong, nominated for a Governor General's Award, and albums by Canadian bands with and without that familiar Neil Young feel. This is Canada, when beer and hockey have



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momentarily been put aside to allow other parts of our culture to come shining through. Politically-positive, queer-correct articles spotlight banned comics and reminisce on the underground scene of days past, and the fashion pages feature Damzels in this Dress and other designers whose clothes I would actually wear. A little in-your-face, rough around the edges but slick and glossy at the same time — Hive is a mag you can judge by its cover. This, the value(s) issue, features a smoking, bleeding Peaches as cover-girl, staring defiantly into the camera with a screw-you look in her eyes. Pick up the latest issue of Hive, and devour it. (Andrée Lachapelle)

## Liner Notes

**chapbook, Ilir Pristine, 70 pages, \$5, ilirpristine@yahoo.com**

This is exactly what it says: a notebook-style assortment of random thoughts, musings, or "lines." It may give you a thousand ideas for your own writing or projects, or it may simply make you chuckle. The "lines" fall haphazardly one after another. They range from such bizarre gems as "Delayed gratification is so 19th century," "You are not my typewriter," "Aesop's fables rock the jukebox," and "It's like Ghandi running a delicatessen" to everyday explorations such as, "I've been crushed to fine sand," "Are eyebrows uncool?" and "Hello two o'clock." What does it all mean? Best be advised to take a deep breath between each line as you ponder this and other questions. Apparently there's a film based on these liner notes, but how can pure idea become a visual? I can only guess. (Emily Schultz)

## Yo' Mama

**magazine, #2, \$?, Literature for Life, 120 Parliament Street, Toronto ON, yomamamag@yahoo.com**

This is a publication for, and partially by, teenage mothers living in downtown Toronto. It is survival oriented — advice on food banks, for example, or on dealing with temper tantrums — but not exclusively so. Debora Scorsone's "Why magazines are bad for your health" looks at the image of women in mainstream print media and the effects such images have on the emotional and social health of women. I found Jaclyn Pope's recipe for apple crisp better than most I've come across outside of Mennonite cookbooks. While based in an agency, it doesn't come across as a publication by a social service agency, trying to respond to a funding mandate. It is a complex, plain language periodical, produced by people with the life experience to understand the needs and interests of a young person struggling with being a parent. (Brian Burch)

## Magazine World

**magazine, 2003, 38 pages, Brian E. Wilkinson, \$?, School of Media Studies at Humber College, 205 Humber College Blvd., Toronto ON, M9W 5L7, <http://magazines.humberc.on.ca>**

A magazine all about magazines, Magazine World is written and published by journalism students from the Humber College School of Media Studies. Fully of savvy, it addresses many important issues in the Canadian magazine industry and was still fun to read. Vivian Song

deals with what seems to be an ever-present Canadian anxiety, the brain drain to the US, in her article "Brains, Trains, and Automobiles." Other topics include journalists in exile, why alternative weeklies like Now magazine are still free, the merits of publishing on-line, unfair stereotypes of overworked and coffee-fetching interns, gamer and skater magazines, and how elusive Canadian humour is captured by satire magazines. There are points when you are reminded that this magazine is put together by students, but all in all, an impressively professional and triumphant issue. Perhaps this is a potential rival for the award-winning Ryerson Review of Journalism, published annually by the magazine majors in Ryerson's journalism program. (Lesley Trites)

## The Writing Space Journal

**litzine, Vol. #9, \$5, The Writing Space, 50 Baldwin Street, Ste. 307, Toronto ON, M5T 1L4**

Poets, playwrights, librarians, teacher and self-proclaimed trouble-makers relate tales of seniors who have played a significant role in their lives. In "Deda," Kate Marshall Flaherty shares a portrait of her colourful grandfather through the re-creation of familiar tastes and smells. This is the strongest piece in the journal: the author manages, in just a few sentences, to capture an entire life. In the rest of the book, short stories attempt to bring to life an old lady haunted by spiders, a pig farmer who suffers a gruesome demise, and a loud-mouth cab driver. The authors try to bring poetry to lives lived fully, or not so fully: it is clear that the actual people featured in this issue were characters worthy of having poems and essays written in their honour, but simply telling the tales that made these people special in their own right does not seem to be quite enough. In most of the poems and stories, the element of soul is missing, and the majority of the pieces in this collection have a hollow ring. (Andrée Lachapelle)

## Riot!

**fanzone, #4, 38 pages, Liz Worth, \$?, 157 Delta Street, Toronto ON, M8W 4E4, riot-fanzine@yahoo.com**

This 38 page zine is an easy read. I sort of find the title, Riot!, funny considering the content. Riot! It sounds so immediate, so demanding and so dangerous. Yet when I opened the zine, I realized its pages were dedicated to My Little Ponies and how to make a cat toy. What the hell? I really feel like the creator, Liz Worth, doesn't give a damn about what is published in her zine and I'm fine with that. I don't think the point of Riot! is to make people think. I think the point of it is to make people just relax and smile. This is not a pretentious zine that caters to a specific, special interest audience. Riot! mostly focuses on music of all kinds. Liz interviews musical artists from all genres including Admiral Crumple (hip hop) to Bankrupt (a Budapest punk band), as well as reviews of fairly mainstream live performances like Folk Implosion and The Datsuns. So, if you like music, My Little Ponies, cats, acid trip stories and Jello Biafra, this one's for you. If you don't, I'm sure Liz will randomly cover something you do like in the next issue. (Erin Kobayashi)

## Zine Nation

**zine, # 1, \$?, 17 Paton Road, Unit # 8, Toronto ON, M6H 1R7, zinenation@yahoo.com**

This is a new publication that has no links to previous zines in England and the US with the same name. However, it does share the commitment to reviewing zines. It is routed in the DIY culture, reflected in such pieces as the reprint from Inside Front, "Do It Yourself Touring," full of practical advice for indie bands. A huge range of pieces from recipes to advice on how to make giant inflatable creatures can be found here — the eclectic approach to what is important helps make this a really interesting zine. Like all good review publications, it is a source of info on what is available in the world beyond the corporate media. An appeal to support Milwaukee zinester Cullen Carter and his family helps remind us that there is a real community within the DIY/zine/small press world. (Brian Burch)

## Jones Av.

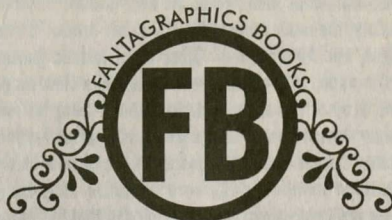
**poetry, Vol. 9, #1, 24 pages, Paul Schwartz, \$2, OEL Press, 88 Dagmar Avenue, Toronto ON, M4W 1W1, oel@interlog.com**

A clean-cut collection of poetry with a refreshingly simple layout, this issue of Jones Av. features mostly Canadian poets, with a few internationals thrown in for good measure. Though a few of the poems were too sloppy or gimmicky for my taste, for the most part there was enough imaginative language to keep me hooked. I'm not usually one for favourites, but I found Suzanne Collins' "rus in urbe" most compelling and evocative of a moment in a bubble. Andrew Oldham uses wonderfully gritty poetic language: "strippers in mid-noon bars / whisper love into five dollar bills / their jasmine nipples tassel-tight / around the neck of jack daniels." Also notable were pieces by Ian Ayres, C. Michelle Deines, Tara Borin, and Geoff Shatz. (Lesley Trites)

## My Cat's More Punk Than Yours: A Biography of Maxwell

**zine, 20 pages, My Mean Magpie, \$3, PO BOX 68568, 360A Bloor Street West, Toronto ON, M5S 1X1**

While reading this great little book I sat on an overstuffed chair, legs tucked under, tense, the zine open in front of my face to hide welling tears. When I was done I walked over to my good friend Mr. Cochon and gave him a treat, petting him and patting him down to detect anything of potential harm. This is more than a simple biography: it is an ode to Maxwell. The tale takes us through years of the cat's life and even includes comprehensive resources and tips on feline care. This zine is fantastic: the line-drawings are wonderful and while the text lacks in punctuation and grammar, it shines in terms of structure and sheer storytelling. I anxiously await more offerings from Five: Seventeen, my furry friend and a box of tissues at my side. (Andrée Lachapelle)



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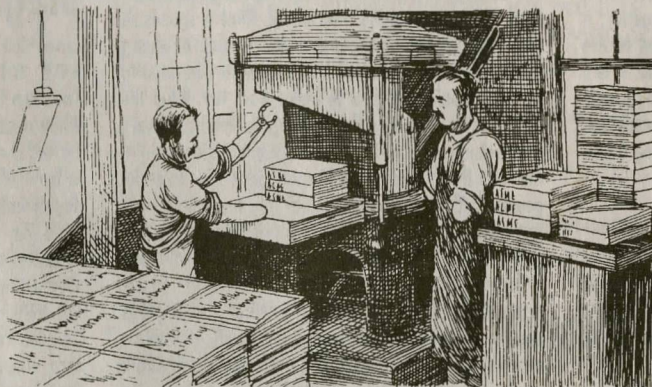
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## Ottawa

### Front & Centre

litzine, #7, 44 pages, Matthew Firth, \$6, 573 Gainsborough Avenue, Ottawa ON, K2A 2Y6, [firth@istar.ca](mailto:firth@istar.ca)

Inspired by the dismal results of a report on the state of Canadian literature in high schools, issue #7 of "Front & Centre" starts off with an impassioned plea by Howard Hoefle to get writers into schools and subsequently encouraging students to read and write. He gives a good argument. The creators of this litzine are definitely doers and the stories collected in this issue are of fine quality. Don't be deceived by the smear of colour finger-painted by editor Matthew Firth's three year old son, the stories in here deal with decidedly adult topics (sex, weird relationships, body image) and the closing book reviews are strong and insightful. (Tori Vlassopoulos)

### Murderous Signs

litzine, #7, 23 pages, Grant Wilkins, free by hand or \$5 for two issues, \$8 for four issues, The Grunge Papers, PO BOX 20517, 390 Rideau Street, Ottawa ON, K1N 9P4, [grunge@achilles.net](mailto:grunge@achilles.net)

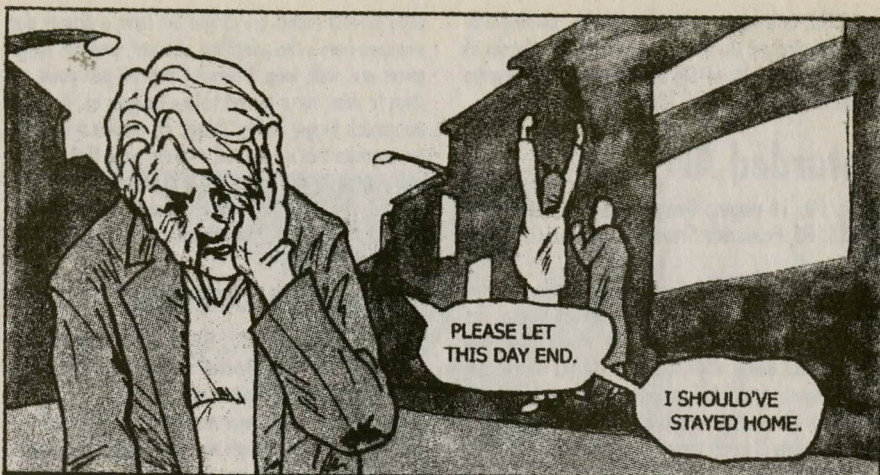
Murderous Signs is a biannual literary zine that provides comment, prose and poetry not found in the mainstream. This particular issue is 'The J.J. Steinfeld' issue. Steinfeld has been dubbed "a Canadian Kafka" but I'm not sure if you will be able to see the comparison by simply reading the eight poems and short story that are in here. I do think this little zine is worth picking up just for the editorial entitled The Terminology of War. This editorial about the war in Iraq is so awesome that I wish it was an essay. Steinfeld writes in an active, critical voice mocking the American media and defining terms used throughout the war like "coalition" and "weapons of mass destruction." The zine ends with 'In the Scheme of Things,' a sci-fi short story about a 70-year-old man discovering and rejecting his paternal alien roots. (Erin Kobayashi)

## Ontario

### Lilly in Miami

zine, #3, 36 pages, \$2, 184 Willow Lane, Newmarket ON, L3Y 6R8, [peachy6pie\\_100cot-ton2@hotmail.com](mailto:peachy6pie_100cot-ton2@hotmail.com)

Um... this zine is so all over the place; I don't even know where to begin. Let's see what we've got here: an article about San Fran band "Angel and the Reruns," a weird ass story about a guy named Terrance Apple Sweetie and a bag of potatoes, a piece about how much Newmarket sucks, an interview with a school janitor, a school essay about anti-heterosexism day that made no sense at all, music reviews, and some comics. Phew! That's a lot of stuff. Yep... lot's and lot's of stuff, but zero focus whatsoever. Lack of focus is not always a bad thing — sometimes it works out pretty good. Sometimes it works out pretty bad. Lilly in Miami is of the latter category. It's no big deal though since the zine's creator already knows that her zine is not spectacular: "um yeah I kind of suck at this zine thing... so brace yourself, it's



from Human Lizard Saves the Day

### Human Lizard Saves the Day

comic, #3, 12 pages, Jason Loo, \$2, 5288 Guildwood Way, Mississauga ON, L5R 3T5, [dspublications@sympatico.ca](mailto:dspublications@sympatico.ca), <http://leapin-lizard.cjb.net/>

The Human Lizard, an office worker by day/loser superhero in a loose-fitting lizard suit by night, has a very bad day in this simple, stylish comic. The storyline seems a little perfunctory, although it looks like there might be an interesting plot slowly developing over several issues. And the drawings, with their heavy black outlines, are smooth and chunky and elegant and fun all at once. The cover is full colour with a nifty collage on the back. Nice work. (Wendy Banks)

### Red Diaper Baby

zine, #3, Becky Ellis, \$2, 340 Colborne St, Apt 1402, London ON, N6B 3N1, [isismama1@yahoo.com](mailto:isismama1@yahoo.com)

Being a parent who is a radical is an ongoing challenge. Balancing the need to care for a child, which includes trying to formulate proper values for a progressive household, while continuing to be a part of the activist community is not easy. Fortunately for mothers in Toronto there is a new zine to call upon. Pieces like "Children as Activists" and "Sharing the workload," both by Becky Ellis, speak clearly to the experience of those with children, providing advice and encouragement. Kathleen Fatooh's "Heroism 101a" is a more personal, reflective piece. It comes from a life long activist who looks back over decades of experience of grand struggles and significant, but often overlooked, accomplishments. It is something those of us becoming cynical with age should read. There are a few reviews of other related resources which are hard to find but worth the effort to track down. Overall, I was struck with a reality that despite decades of efforts, the work of parenting is still heavily gendered. All the contributors are women who, even coming from a radical perspective, appear to have ended up with the bulk of responsibility for caring for and nurturing children. They are good writers that care about their children and the world their children are growing up in. But it

very cliché whining about the suburbs and such...." Bonus points for warning the readers prior to entrance. Maybe you'll like it. I don't know. I guess I'm just not into the whole cliché suburb thing. Also, spell-check is a good thing. Please use it. (Audrey Gagnon)

### Big Boots

zine, Vol. #2.2, 47 pages, Una Lee, \$1.50, 91 Friuli Court, Unit #22, Woodbridge ON, L4L 4G5, [bigboots@riseup.net](mailto:bigboots@riseup.net), <http://bigboots.shemadethis.com>

The winter issue of Big Boots is subtitled "Battlefields," and it's all about the experiences of women of colour in war. There are accounts of life in a refugee camp and experiences in a bomb shelter and fiction and poetry about feelings of displacement and the desire for peace. There's a pull-out poster and a recipe for wheat-paste to poster with. There's advice on what to do to resist the war that's still dragging on as I write this. This is a serious and useful little zine, and nice-looking to boot. (Wendy Banks)

### Red & Black Notes

newsletter, #16-17 (double issue), 22 pages, \$1.50, PO BOX 47643 Don Mills, ON, M3C 3S7, [red\\_black\\_ca@yahoo.ca](mailto:red_black_ca@yahoo.ca)

At times, this communist/anarchist newsletter made me feel like I was viewing a pamphlet. It has that stark, aesthetically boring look that isn't the most exciting thing to stare at. But I quickly got over that as soon as I started reading the contents. The reviews, articles, letters, reprints from leaflets about Iraq, the class war and leftist organizations were very informative and written in a clear, direct voice. I think Red & Black Notes leans more towards educational rather than instructional if you can see the difference. It doesn't order the reader to see everything one way. Instead, its goal is to make the reader more mentally and morally aware of the different extreme left-wing organizations, debates and arguments that exist. There are also suggested Internet links and readings sprinkled throughout the publication. Much fatter than past Red & Black Notes, this is a double issue, so you'll definitely be getting your money's worth. (Erin Kobayashi)

seems that in even in radical households, nothing dramatic has changed since the time of the first releases of "The Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood" and Emma Goldman's "Living My Life." (Brian Burch)

## Retarded Art

comic, #3, 16 pages, Greg McCann, \$?, PO BOX 31055, 25 Frederick Street, Kitchener ON, N2H 6M0

More lively little comix from Itchy Eyeball Press, this time with a beeyootiful colourful silk-screened cover. The comics are well-drawn but kinda silly, like a drunk guy spits on a cat and a white kid talks Ebonics on the bus and outrages a frustrated commuter who wants to tell a joke about the weather and can't. Silly stuff, but really, the cover alone is worth the price of admission, whatever that may turn out to be. You could frame this baby and hang it on your wall. Get a couple, even, so you could frame both the inside and outside covers. There's this little blue astronaut, and some people rollerblading. So cute. (Wendy Banks)

## Brown Paper Bag Comics

comic, #2, Daniel Barclay, Brown Paper Bag Comics, 133 Sophia Street, Peterborough ON, K9H 1E2

BPBC #2 is essentially a collection of thoughts gathered and images created, worked and reshaped and rethought and recreated, to finally be printed. The "Shards," short

experimental comics are alright but have a shaggy dog, whoopee-here's-the-punchline element; and the longer pieces are, well, long. If Barclay puts his pen down and stops to think for a second before he goes on, he might accomplish bigger, better things. Or maybe it is simply the opposite that is required, to hang on to that pen and just keep drawing: "Scars," a 24-hour comic, is great to look at, the story flows nicely and in this comic, the punchline works well. (Andrée Lachapelle)

## Soda Pop Dreams

magazine, Vol. #6, #2, \$?, Blair Matthews, PO BOX 23037, Krug Postal Outlet, Kitchener ON, N2B 3V1, playing@pww.on.ca

It's that sweet brown sugar water that rots the teeth and plumps the gut that tempts me, every time I walk past a convenience store, to buy just one can and run that chilled sweetness over my tongue and into my stomach to burn another craving for that special drink. Soda Pop Dreams pays homage to everyone who has this kind of fixation for pop, and wants to carry it a little further than just drinking copious amounts of the stuff. Dream's focus is mainly on the history of the industry and various rare bottles and soda companies that came about in pre-WW2 America. Matt Barkee's article about the history of the New York bottling works, specifically with the drink "Lucky Sams," provides an interesting read. What starts as a little investigation into a soda-bottle he got as a 12 year old quickly turns into an epic search into the history of Lucky Sams and ... finding little Lucky Sam himself! The rest of the zine runs along with just about anything to do with pop (American translation: soda) ranging from

reviews of soda-bottle conventions to the world's largest Coca-Cola bottle in Las Vegas (110' if you're interested). This year also seems to be a milestone for several bottling companies, as the Augusta and Philly Coca-Cola plants both celebrated their 100th anniversary. To commiserate, Dreams chronicles the entire history of Coca-Cola, all the way back to its 1886 origins by an Atlanta pharmacist looking for a relief from headaches. The zine caps itself off with a market-place section where people can buy and sell rare bottle collections. This zine is great for anyone who's already tapped their veins with the sweet sugar water. (James King)

## Saliva Girl

zine, 38 pages, Erin O'Reilly-Doxsee, \$1.50, RR #2, Bradford ON, L3Z 2A5, shattered\_star@starmail.com

The title of one of the journal entries in Saliva Girl: "Very honest. You have been warned." This should be applied to the entire zine. Erin has compiled a series of poems and journal entries dealing with the heartbreak associated with a particularly messy relationship with a certain boy. The zine is intensely personal and as I read poem after poem about unrequited love and its subsequent effects, I wanted to call Erin myself and tell her that she deserved better. Luckily we find out that Erin has learned that lesson, and that the creation of the zine is more of a way to put the relationship behind her rather than dwell on it. Although Saliva Girl is not for the cynic who has no patience for teenage angst, it will be of interest to someone seeking solace from a broken heart. (Teri Vlassopoulos)

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## Sequential Art Riot

comic anthology, Jason Loo and various comic artists, \$4, 5288 Guildwood Way, Mississauga ON, L5R 3J5, [dspublications@sympatico.ca](mailto:dspublications@sympatico.ca)

This slick and confident collection put out by Illustration students of Sheridan College has got some standouts, some good stuff, and just a couple dogs. And the difference between these differentiations is not great. These kids must be doing some good book-learnin' at their college! It is nice to see some very different styles of comic art included, full marks for that. But I am curious why that diversity is not extended to include a few different types of stories, as opposed to all sci-fi or fantasy. I am also curious why Loo, who submitted the zine, directed Broken Pencil to certain passages in his intro letter. Surely we read the whole collection? I did, and I like some in particular, including Loo's own submission. His illustration skills are solid; he is skilled in portraying subtle emotion. I also quite enjoyed Roberto Robert's strong use of black in his illustration. Overall, a nice collection that shows what them kids are learnin' at the school house. (Jon Pressick)

## XYZed

zine, #15, 20 pages, J. Anxiety, \$2, 6 Haig Street, St. Catharines ON, L2R 6K5, [xyzed@sprint.ca](mailto:xyzed@sprint.ca), <http://pages.sprint.ca/anxietypress>

Have you ever wondered what happened to the Bay City Rollers? Well, wonder no more. This issue of XYZed includes a giddy account of J. Anxiety's meeting with former guitarist Ian Mitchell, a biography of Mitchell, and a review of the Bay City Roller's 1976 album "Dedication." Those of you with a deep and abiding passion for teeny bopper bands of the '70s should purchase this issue right away. All others should be advised that while there is some other stuff here (a review of the 1984 Canadian classic *The Dog Who Stopped the War*, a couple of rants, and a meandering road trip essay), the BCR-related content dominates the zine. (Kate Ziemann)

## Montreal & Quebec

### Leaving the Road

poetry zine, Jason Heroux, \$4, Mercutio Press, Montreal, [www.mercutiopress.com](http://www.mercutiopress.com)

Every once in a while, a poetry zine will really blow you away. Could be the language, could be the balance, could be the essence of the pieces. Could be all of the above. Other times, poetry zines can make you feel embarrassed, annoyed, distressed. Unfortunately, Jason Heroux's *Leaving the Road* falls in the latter category. I really don't like to be harsh in reviews, but the pieces in this collection offer nothing. There is no redeeming language, no striking ideas. Instead there are terrible pieces, such as "The Chair": "The chair is a saddle, without a horse. / We sit on it when we want to go nowhere. / The long and difficult journey nowhere. It's impossible to get there by foot." I mean, c'mon. There is also a truly fascinating poem about a spoon that is drowned while being used. This collection is weak and immature. (Jon Pressick)



from Brown Paper Bag Comics

## Love in the Time of Dioxin

chapbook, 17 pages, Joshua Auerbach, \$4, Blue Phoenix Press, PO BOX 48003, Montreal QC, H2V 3Y4, [vallummag@sympatico.ca](mailto:vallummag@sympatico.ca)

The first thing that struck me about this collection was the author. On the back cover of this chapbook, Auerbach stocks a meaty paragraph containing the names of the many awards he has won and the journals to which he's contributed in the past. In short, the paragraph is long and in this reviewer's opinion, a bit unnecessary. The prose contained within his work is solid enough as Auerbach certainly has a knack for expressing the kind of longing and regret that most of us feel. I especially liked "Shaman's Curse," a piece which reads like a creepy bedtime story for your average working-class pud. But man, I just can't get past his need to tell us his life story after all is said and done. He has every right to be proud of his achievements but it just seems that coming on the back page of an otherwise subtle publication, it makes the whole effort appear sorta defensive. Maybe I'm reading too much into it? Perhaps. Am I oversensitive to these matters? Hell, yeah. Still, I just think that Auerbach's work can stand on its own merit without resorting to these tactics (if these are indeed tactics). Otherwise, I'm sure he's a very nice man and I'd like to take this opportunity to offer belated congratulations on his victories. Honest. (Cameron Gordon)

## Raw Nervz Haiku

litazine, Vol. 3, #3, 52 pages, Dorothy Howard, \$7, 67 Court Street, Aylmer QC, J9H 4M1

The truth is, the last time I seriously thought about haikus was in the fifth grade. While initially flipping through this issue of *Raw Nervz*, I carefully counted out the syllables on my hands and realized that this alleged haiku didn't follow the formula Mrs. Currie taught me back in the day. The contents page informed me that this journal is actually filled with haiku, senryu, tanka (and more!). Turning to my teacher of late (the Internet) I learned that modern haiku isn't as strict as the 5-7-5 pattern. Cool. *Raw Nervz* is bursting with dozens (Hundreds? Thousands?) of haikus written by various authors, some of them heartbreaking in their precision and some of them negligible. While this isn't something you could read in one fell swoop, leave it by your bedside or in your bag for those moments when all you need are 17 syllables. Or more. Or less. (Teri Vlassopoulos)

## Simultaneous Brazil

chapbook, Cory Frost, \$3, Conundrum Press, PO BOX 55003, CSP Fairmount, Montreal QC, H2T 3E2, [conpress@ican.net](mailto:conpress@ican.net), <http://home.ican.net/~conpress>

This short story was more a series of interconnected prose poems than a single narrative. The structure of the

collection — a postcard sized photograph or sketch followed by a paragraph that could easily fit on the back of a postcard — helps to make this more of a sharing of thoughts between friends than a story told by a stranger. It isn't dramatic or exciting writing, but it is an interesting experiment. (Brian Burch)

## INTERcultural

journal, #144, \$20/year, Intercultural Institute of Montreal, \$2, 4917 St. Urbain, Montreal QC, H2T 2W1, [info@iim.qc.ca](mailto:info@iim.qc.ca), [www.iim.qc.ca](http://www.iim.qc.ca)

There is a world of radical academia I've missed since ending graduate studies some years ago. The seeking out of evidence prior to presenting a layered argument that helps to make sense of the world, which includes rationally considering alternatives to that experienced in daily life or even seen in the normal course of exposure to media and other sources of information, is no longer a part of what is my world. This journal intensely reminded me of this lack. Ultimately, I would disagree with much of the relativist approach to law, rights, culture and the state expressed in the journal's articles — and particularly with what feels like a bias in favour of the collective over the individual; tradition over change; diversity over universality; natural law over reason. Yet there is a real sense that the pieces presented are part of a dialogue, not the final conclusion in an argument. The pieces cover a wide spectrum of global concerns including Robert Vachon's "The Oka Crisis and After," and Ashis Nandy's "Culture, State and the Rediscovery of Indian Politics." I found this a challenge to read, but worth the effort even as I continue to disagree with both premises and conclusions. (Brian Burch)

## Tuesday, September 11, 1973: Day of Terror

chapbook, Time Machine Vol. #3, Louis Rastelli, \$3, Spontaneous Productions Rgd., PO BOX 1232, Place des Armes, Montreal QC, H2Y 3K2, [archivemontreal@canada.com](mailto:archivemontreal@canada.com)

More people died as a result of the US supported coup in Chile that occurred on September 11, 1973 than died on September 11th, 2001. Political violence has rarely been restricted by boundaries. This chapbook is an all-too-short overview of the events of the Chilean coup, with a brief follow-up chapter and some concluding remarks that help to make the events of September 11th seem much less far away. Rastelli is a good writer. His piece doesn't come across either as a dogmatic focused retelling or history that lacks context. Rather, we are provided with a sympathetic look at an historical event that has ramifications lasting into the current time. (Brian Burch)

## New Brunswick

### Nightwaves

music zine, #13, Gary Flanagan, free, 23 fourth Street, Rothesay NB, E2G 1W7, [muzik-man84@hotmail.com](mailto:muzik-man84@hotmail.com)

It's always a treat to see a new issue of Nightwaves pop up in the BP mail bag. It's an even bigger treat to see that nothing much has changed since the last time I reviewed this zine. It's still packed with electronic music

goodness: interview with Peter Pringle, a piece on the electroclash versus synthpop debate, reviews of cds, shows, films, and a massive ass zine review section. The same usuals are still there too: the Classic Synth Corner, profiles, poetry, just to name a few. I was happy to see that Flanagan decided to go with a bigger font. Wise decision on his part, as it is now possible to read the whole publication front to back without the use of a magnifying glass. As usual, my personal favourite of the issue is one of Gary's own stories — a piece about working in a record store in Toronto. "The big misconception is that a record shop is a cool place to work...Not so. Actually the pay is awful and it can get pretty tedious at times. And just like any other, you can encounter some pretty bizarre, acidic, and memorable customers." If you haven't seen Nightwaves yet, electronic music fan or not, you're missing out. (Audrey Gagnon)

## QWERTY

litzine, winter 2003, \$12.00/yr., UNB English Department, PO BOX 4400, Fredericton NB, E3B 5A3, [qwerty@unb.ca](mailto:qwerty@unb.ca)

This isn't a place to find incredibly nuanced and crafted poetry or a writer's first piece of fiction. Rather it primarily serves as the home of new writers having crossed the barrier between published and unpublished, but not yet masters of their craft. This isn't a place of experimentation in form or content, but it does try to encourage its contributors to push themselves just one stage further in their creative journey. I found the photos of Emma Hutchinson and Jennifer Bronson the most interesting work. Both were able to capture and abstract something unique in the common place subjects of their pictures.

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The first two lines of John Lofranco's "Ghosts" were stronger than the rest of his work and perhaps could stand on their own as a couplet: "Words can't fail— / they simply don't show up." Yi Mei Tsiang's "Voice" was an excellent poetic prose/short fiction piece. This is an uneven collection, but representative of those whose voices will likely be found in Canadian small presses and university literary journals over the next decade. (Brian Burch)

## People and Places

zine, 20 pages, Bess Winter, \$3, Mount Allison University, 152 Main Street unit #1381, Sackville NB, E4L 1B3, [heygromit@rogers.com](mailto:heygromit@rogers.com)

It's hard not to love a zine that begins with a piece called "Spit Droplets Everywhere." This meditation on that pre-sneeze moment of realization and horror paves the way for a parade of often-peculiar musings, stories and poems. To its credit, People and Places is not so random as to be self-indulgent; even the untitled story about Kapluncka Krafft, the disaffected Arkansas State Prison cafeteria worker, has a recognizable glimmer of truth. All hail Bess. (Kate Ziemann)

## USA

### Aquatulle

fanzine, #5, 96 pages, Raquel Bruno, \$3.95, 332 Bleeker Street, #K15, New York NY, 10012-2890, [drooper123@aol.com](mailto:drooper123@aol.com)

This big, fat, fancy newsprint zine with glossy cover is exuberantly and unconditionally in love with all things early-Eighties, from Atari to Cheap Trick to Television. It's soaked from cover to cover in this marinade of unabashed Andy-Summers/Deborah-Harry/Siouxie Sioux worship that sloshes from geeky to galvanizing and back again. Highlights of this issue include in-depth interviews with Roberta Bayley (the Punk magazine photographer who immortalized the Ramones and Richard Hell), David Sylvain from Japan, the rhythm section of the Go-Gos, Martha and Mark from Martha and the

Muffins, and many, many more. There are some good comics, some slandering reviews of Rhino reissues of Eighties-classics, and, most importantly, several photos by Roberta Bayley, culminating in a fantastic two-page centerfold of Joey Ramone on Coney Island clutching a surfboard and posing like some kinda coy scrawny mutant schoolgirl, which I personally intend to laminate and carry with me wherever I go from now on. 'Cause God Bless Joey Ramone. And Dee Dee, too. (Wendy Banks)

## The Autocast

poetry, #2, 24 pages, \$?, SevenTen Bishop, 710 N. Bishop, Chicago IL, 60622, [www.seventen-bishop.com](http://www.seventen-bishop.com)

The Autonomy issue of The Autocast feels a little forced in its typical rant about capitalist routine, consumerism, and technology. That said, there are a few pieces that approach the theme with refreshing innovation. Rob Funderburk's "The Police and the Bandito" is a catalogue of unusual details — a succession of existential statements from unusual beings that pile on top of one another until you're left wondering how anyone could bother to take the consumerist existential angst so lamented in the rest of the zine very seriously. "I," for example, "am a board member for a ring of gremlins" and "I am a torpedo smuggler in a land-locked region sitting waiting at a froufrou little coffee shop for a blind date." Then there are the pieces like that of David Joshua Nagelberg (can I mention that untitled poems are a pet peeve of mine?) that says what may have been said before, but that says it well: we've been "Dumped into / The McLife playland / SUVless" and so we "Rent the apartment / And work for the rent." (Lesley Trites)

## Complete Control

zine, #10, Greg, \$2, PO BOX 5021, Richmond VA, 23220

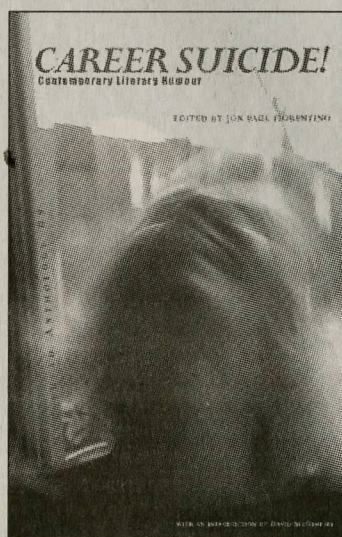
While there are echoes of a collective somewhere in the background, this is primarily a personal zine — one piece on an anarchist's open response to a relationship, a second on his being accused of sexual

harassment/oppression forms the core of this issue. Both are well written, and provide a glimpse into the ongoing struggle within many individual males, particularly on the libertarian left, to find a way to live out a commitment to personal integrity, a belief in egalitarian principles, and the value of transformational justice within the confines of relationships where such ideals don't always mesh with the realities of gender conditioning. I do find his description of trying to have a mediation session with the victim of his actions worth directly responding to. Mediation can only work within a relationship of close to a real balance of power. There must be a clear goal that both parties are seeking to accomplish. Using mediation, even in the form of a mediated intervention, to respond to an event that happened years before, where there is a feeling of an imbalance of power, I feel that there is little that can actually be achieved other than the airing of a grievance and the acknowledgement of a wrong. At the end of the process there is little in the way of healing, atonement or reconciliation possible. While the author has taken up the essential and ongoing challenge of anti-sexist work in the anarchist community, I question the ultimate value of the intervention that led to this stance. At the end of his well crafted piece I still was left wondering if it was the author who primarily benefited, not the woman who called for the mediated intervention. 'The Story of Ed Worthington,' a response to the murder of an HIV+ homeless man, deserves to be more widely read. Like many hate crimes, this had an impact far beyond the immediate web of relationships of the victim. The author found a way to describe the impact of the murder without being sensational or exploiting. The zine is rounded out by a manifesto by The Better Days Collective. It is a good zine, worth trying to track down. (Brian Burch)

## The Catholic Worker

newspaper, Vol. LXX, #2, by donation, 36 East First Street, New York NY, 1003

It is rare that anarchism, pacifism, and radical Catholic Christian thoughts come together — yet this 70 year old publication continues to weave these strands together. First hand reports from Voices in the Wilderness in Iraq,



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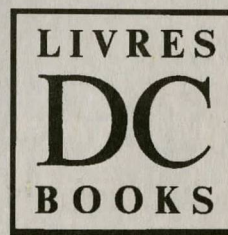
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Moosehead Anthology #9

to a report on a civil disobedience action on Martin Luther King's birthday, to a reprint of a 1954 column by Dorothy Day titled "Are They Insane?"; the issue ponders the need for disobedience against a state and an economy intimately linked to war. This publication expresses a truly radical, rooted opposition to a world where violence and a lack of compassion towards others are acceptable norms, and often given legitimacy by traditional religious leaders. I enjoyed the woodcut illustrations by a number of artists. In simple, elegant and intimate ways, they appeal to our sense of justice and hope. (Brian Burch)

## The Die

**zine, Vol. #2, #2, 11 pages, Joe Smith, free, PO BOX 764, College Park MD, 20740, redroach-press@yahoo.com, www.redroachpress.tripod.com**

In reviewing this issue of The Die, I'll try to hold my own personal ideologies—political or otherwise—in check. After all, it's not my place to say whether I agree or disagree with editor/creator/writer Joe Smith. And to be honest, I really neither agree nor disagree with a lot of the stuff he says since a lot of it falls in the grey area between right and wrong (i.e. reality). In 'A Civilian War Diary' Smith offers a fairly revealing worm's-eye view of his feelings and thoughts leading up to and into Operation: Iraqi Freedom or whatever the hell they called it this year. What I liked about this read was that Smith wasn't as obviously militant or heavy-handed as most protest-oriented writers were on the subject. Sure, he makes his strong anti-war position painfully obvious in ... um, line one of the essay, but in the end you're given more of a summary than a rant, which is bound to be appreciated by his readers. However, Smith pretty much lost me in his four page 'Why Read Philosophy?' essay. I found it a bit confusing and self-indulgent but

alas, considering the zine is entirely Smith's handiwork, it's hard to fault him. The real gem of this issue turns out to be a brief but engaging account of how some unauthorized zine-oriented website was selling back issues of The Die without Joe's permission. The sampling from Joe's e-mail communication with this fiend was pretty messed and just goes to show, there are always gonna be looters out there, even amongst your fellow underground, zine-publishing, hipster compadres. Who knew there was a real black market for this kind of thing? Better lock up your back issues, kids! (Cameron Gordon)

## Impact Press

**magazine, #45, 60 pages, Craig Mazer, free or \$2 by mail, PO BOX 361, 10151 University Blvd., Orlando FL, 32817, editor@impactpress.com, www.impactpress.com**

From the land of sand, sun and Mickey Mouse comes this anti-societal magazine subtitled "covering issues the way the media should." Hmm! Anyway, while the publication is based in the supposed cultural wasteland that is Orlando, Florida, it actually manages to strike a nice balance between its local contributors and forces from abroad, including that foxy Canadian environmentalist David Suzuki. All the regular issues of concern to your local protester are covered here: the environment, animal testing, civil rights and lotsa Bush Bush Bush. The blend actually works in the favour of the Impact Press as it never becomes too overbearing or preachy, which is a major plus for a work of this nature. If you need a chance to come up for air, you can check out the literally dozens of CD reviews that bring up the rear, from bands both socially conscious or otherwise (I've never seen Mac McCaughan be the least bit political but I've heard that he is a helluva nice guy). All in all, another strong effort and one which truly seems to think globally, not locally.

Its impressive 45 issue back catalogue is a testament to the dedication of this magazine and the good folk who give it what they have. Good luck on the next 45, gents! (Cameron Gordon)

## The East Village Inky

**perzine/comics, #19, 40 pages, Ayun Halliday, \$2, PO BOX 22754, Brooklyn NY, 11202, inky@erols.com, http://www.ayunhalliday.com**

This is hilarious. It's a long-running account by a cool New York mom of her life with two little kids. It's all hand-lettered and frenetically and amusingly illustrated, and the writing is hyper and witty and great. The highlight of this issue, for me anyway, is an extended riff on "Our Town," by Thornton Wilder, substituting details from the author's own life, with a running commentary by Paul Newman as God. The rest of it is pretty funny too: she drags her kids out to protests and is dragged by them, in turn, to kindergarten square dances and puppet shows. It's somehow deeply reassuring to think that SUV-owning, golf-loving corporate fucks aren't the only ones breeding nowadays. Zinesters: go forth and multiply! (Wendy Banks)

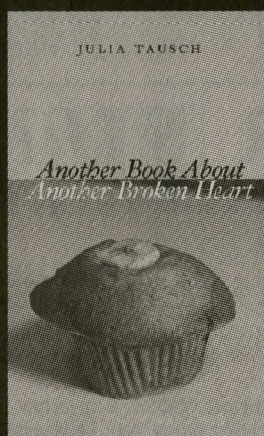
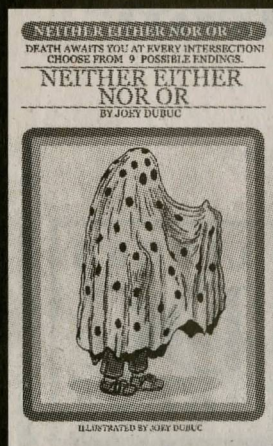
## Eaves of Ass

**zine, #2, \$2, Craven Rock, PO Box 406784, Louisville KC, 40204, eavesofass@yahoo.com**

There's a picture of a dog near a bunch of malt-liquor bottles on the cover. Well, I think they're malt-liquor bottles, but I guess I can't be sure. I do know it's a dog though. And I do know that Eaves of Ass is pretty funny. Well, it made me laugh a few times. I mean, there's a dog on the cover. Oh, and yeah, there is loads of funny shit on the inside. Like a reprinted fuck letter found outside Dupont Middle School. I never got letters like that in

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school. I've also never considered writing my reviews drunk, like these guys do. Makes reviews seem way more better. So I tried it for this one. But don't take my slur for it, this is a funny zine. (Jon Pressick)

## Counterpoise

zine, Vol. #6, #3, \$12, 1716 SW Williston Road, Gainesville FL, 32608-4049, [contact@counterpoise.com](mailto:contact@counterpoise.com)

It is kinda weird to be reviewing this particular issue of Counterpoise for Broken Pencil. I have no doubt that Counterpoise is a fine journal (with a focus on libraries). A strong collective seems to be in place and their mandate and abilities are clear. Their subtitle says it all: "for social responsibilities, liberty and dissent." I imagine that past and future issues will showcase the best of alternative media, much in the same way that Utne Reader does. But what makes this issue so hard to review is that this is Counterpoise's zine issue. And since it is a collection of quality works from zines or zine-related mags, there is a generous quantity of Broken Pencil material in here. Looking past this, there are strong pieces, worthy of excerpting in other periodicals, including an interview with Travis Friscoe, and a great piece on fringe feminism. Next time I come across Counterpoise, I hope I haven't read half of it already. (Jon Pressick)

## Fencesitter

zine, #6, Bradley Demetter, \$1, Fencesitter Productions, 2003, 662 Mountain View Road, Mountain View CA, 9404

There is no way I could describe Fencesitter better than the zine's own mandate. Boiled down, here is a neat little zine "committed to questioning and deconstructing binary systems of gender, sex, and sexuality as well as confronting marginalization including disability, class, race and body zine." Wow! Certainly a wide-ranging mandate, and fortunately, Fencesitter comes through. Combining poetry, essay, illustration and a few other bits and pieces, Fencesitter challenges readers. It is not all angst, it is not all education, and it is not all preachy. Some of these are represented yes, but when you're fighting the fight against marginalization, you have to tell the whole truth. Gritty, raw, and at times honest, Fencesitter pushes the reader to think about trans issues, body issues, issues, issues, issues, but does so in an engaging way. I look forward to finding back issues. (Jon Pressick)

## The Guild Reporter

newsletter, Vol. #70, #5, 8 pages, Andy Zipster, 12/yr @ \$20/yr, 501 Third Street NW, Suite 250, Washington DC, 20001, [azipster@cwa-union.org](mailto:azipster@cwa-union.org)

My friend told me that she got an internship at CBC. Instead of congratulating her, I think I really scared her. Thanks to The Guild Reporter, I could inform my journalism buddy that life at the CBC may suck hard. Being an intern aka coffee-fetching, photocopying donkey in the working world, she may be placed in a workspace that is only 30 square feet! Knocking elbows with others is not the only problem, as she will surely be extremely distracted and will slowly lose her hearing due to the noise levels! As an aspiring journalist, I like The Guild Reporter a lot. Not because it makes me a dream crushing know-it-all monster, but because they cover important issues that people interested in the communications industry should be aware of. The only drawback is the lack of Canadian coverage but it's still interesting and often revolting to read about labour standards, wage cuts and freedom of speech. (Erin Kobayashi)

## Kitty!

zine, #1, 28 pages, Daina Mold, \$1 or trade \$2 outside of US, PO BOX 6681, Portsmouth NH, 03802, [kittyzine@yahoo.com](mailto:kittyzine@yahoo.com)

I hate cats. I even hate kittens. I want to kick them. One, I'm allergic to the little beasts; and two, they hate me as well. They pounce and hiss at me when no one is looking; and you can be sure that they don't ever miss a chance to bite my toes and annoyingly scratch at my skin. Okay, now that that's out of the way, let me assure you that my hatred of these furry little devils will not in any way affect my judgement of this zine. So here goes: I thought this zine would be kind of lame, but zine creator Daina Mold approaches the subject with such an awesomely clever sense of humour that I found the zine impossible to resist. It's hilarious right from the opening page, when Mold lays out a clever dialogue between herself and her cat (who by the way is the editor in chief of the publication). Some highlights in here are Mold's cat profiles, a short piece on the paper or plastic debate, and a comic about "The Story of my Incestuous Homosexual Cats." This is funny stuff. I still hate cats with a passion, and maybe I'm feeling a little silly, but I enjoyed this zine quite a bit. (Audrey Gagnon)

## Interstitial

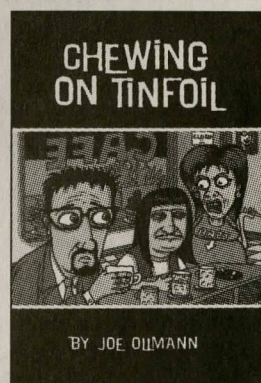
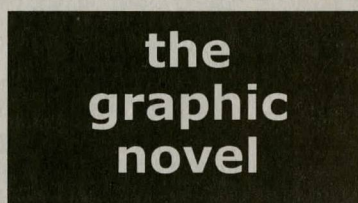
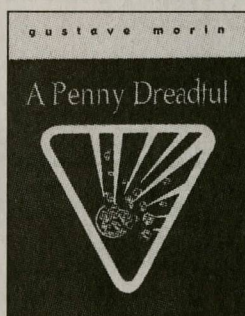
zine, #1, 28 pages, James McQuiston, trade or \$1US or \$2CND, 308 S. Maple, Lancaster OH, 43130, [editor@neufutur.com](mailto:editor@neufutur.com), <http://www.neufutur.com>

Interstitial describes itself as a "political and music zine with personality," and it ain't lyin'. This inaugural issue includes: a now-thankfully-outdated outline of American sodomy laws complete with a colour-coded map, an interview with the Red Hot Valentines, some obscure movie reviews and a curiously misanthropic rant about the lost art of the mix tape: "if you have to make a mixtape for when you're in an angry mood, then not only are you a fucking idiot, but you're not fucking angry enough to begin with because angry people don't sit around making mixtapes." Most of the music content focuses on the Lancaster and Urbana-Champagne indie/punk scenes, but there's enough other stuff in here to amuse the uninitiated. Future issues may want to skip the lengthy local concert reviews, but all in all this old skool cut and paste beastie is worth a read. (Kate Zieman)

## Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet

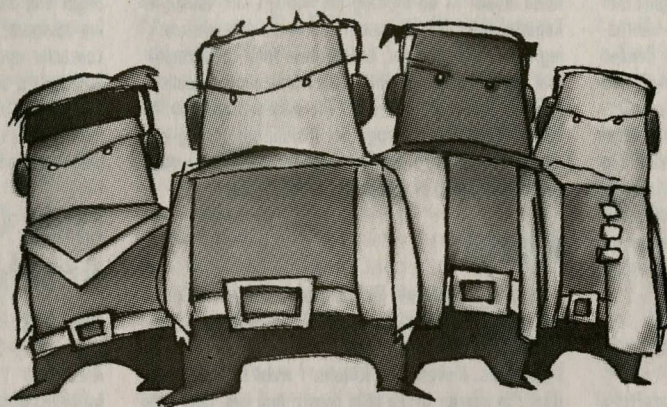
zine, #12, 52 pages, Gavin G. Grant and Kelly Link, \$4, Small Beer Press, 176 Prospect Avenue, Northampton MA, 01060, [info@lcrw.net](mailto:info@lcrw.net), [www.lcrw.net/lcrw](http://www.lcrw.net/lcrw)

Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet's twelfth issue is a zine of many moods. There's something for everyone within these pages, which include fiction, poetry, non-fiction, a book review, a film review, a few zine reviews, and even a piece that could pass for a visual poem. If anything, you could argue that the zine is a little too eclectic because it doesn't cohere under any one theme or mood. But these days, who needs coherence? Most of the fiction, like Ursula Pflug's "In Dreams We Remember" and Richard Parks' "The Plum Blossom Lantern," is based in science fiction and fantasy. Many of the stories, like Jan Lars Jensen's "Happier Days," at first seem perfect for a lazy, hung-over Sunday afternoon when you may be more receptive to a bit of good old nostalgia, but then take a weird and welcome twist. Cara Spindler offers some poetic mid-zine relief with her delightful lyricism, and Richard Butner instructs on how to make a proper martini. (There is no such thing as a Choco-Banana Martini.) L. Timmel Duchamp revisits Deena Metzger's



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genre and gender bending novel "The Woman Who Slept with Men to Take the War Out of Them." This is a good zine to keep in your bag during daily travels. (Lesley Trites)

## The 2nd Hand

**litzine, #10, 4 pages, Todd Dills, The 2nd Hand, \$1, 1428 W. Walton #GF, Chicago IL, 60622, USA, info@the2ndhand.com, http://www.the2ndhand.com**

While The 2nd Hand is primarily a quarterly, glossy four page broadside, the website is a good companion piece if you're searching for similar writing (or past issues). This installment has four short-short stories and a comic, including the surreal "A Report from Dr. Fugue": in which Henry Miller is brought forth from the dead and unleashed upon the city of Chicago, and "Lyrics": a bittersweet tale about a bad ass, Axl-Rose-loving teen. Recommended to those who love or hate to love or love to hate McSweeney's, and for you hipsters, the current issue can be ordered free from insound.com. (Teri Vlassopoulos)

## Lilliput Review

**poetry zine, #129, Don Wentworth, \$1, 282 Main Street, Pittsburgh PA, 15201**

This aptly named publication fits into the palm of my hand. A zine of haiku and other short forms of poetry, it is not cutting edge or experimental but comforting to

read — short bursts of images primarily, but not exclusively, arising from the natural world. My favourite piece in this issue is Richard Kostelanetz's "From Two-Element Stories: ABOLISH PERMEATE." This remains an alternative to periodicals that publish the work of academic poets or urban spoken word elites. These are the poetic equivalents of the three chord folk or country song. (Brian Burch)

## Listen to This

**litzine, #3, 20 pages, Paula Mayberry, \$2, Overground Distro, PO BOX 1661, Pensacola FL, 32597, paulamayberry@hotmail.com**

This collection of short stories focuses on the ending of relationships — more precisely, the unhappy ending of relationships. You'd think that they'd leave you all depressed but the four stories left me in a more reflective state of mind. Written in first person narrative, it was easy to get drawn into each story no matter how brief or far from my own life they were. I'm not a struggling young mother, nor did a dying ex ever dump me, but I got sucked into every story because of the raw emotion and gritty detail. My favourite story is "Take a Backseat," a piece that looks at a guy meeting up with his ex-girlfriend to try and make peace. It's an awkward setting filled with edgy emotions as he tries to understand the exact reasons why he has fallen out of love with her. This is a lovely collection of fleeting moments and, as a writer, Mayberry definitely has the ability to catch them. (Erin Kobayashi)

## Here

**magazine, #6, 36 pages, Neil deMause, \$3, PO BOX 310281, Red Hook Station, Brooklyn NY, 11231, http://heremagazine.com**

According to the editorial note in issue #6, Here is working on their distribution to make it available at more stores. As the magazine does not accept paid advertising and is thus even more vulnerable to the high cost of independent publishing, getting the word out can be difficult, which is a shame, because this magazine is packed with subtle, powerful creative non-fiction. Michael Rogner writes about "The Lord God Bird" that is so rare, so awe-inspiring, all a person can say when they see it is "Lord God." In "News," Thomas K. Dean weaves the Iowa Flood, thunderstorms, his family and cancer into cohesive, powerful piece. The other articles in this issue are just as strong. Perhaps if Here was everywhere, the world would be a better place. (Teri Vlassopoulos)

## maximumrocknroll

**zine, #242, \$3, PO BOX, 460760, San Francisco CA, 94146-0760**

This remains, after all these years, one of my favourite zines. From reviews to columns, it continues to keep alive the anarchist, political core of the DIY punk scene. Courtney's interview with ANFO from Peru stands out. There is little news of either the music or political moments in Peru and this interview provided an articulate perspective on both. "Anti-War Amazingness in San

*"A fantastic Canadian hybrid"* —SEATTLE WEEKLY

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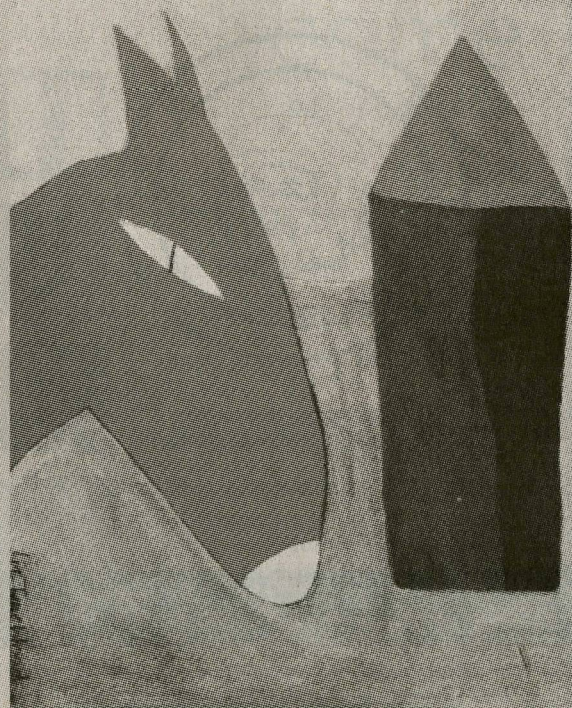
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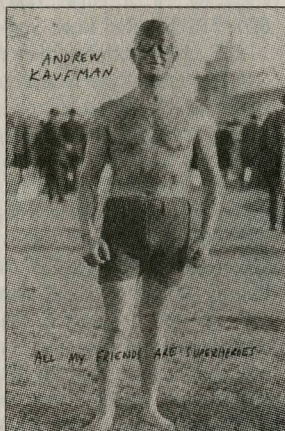
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Francisco" was a great piece on protests that were creative and a far cry from the usual walking around in circles, chanting boring slogans and listening to even more boring speeches. About 1/10th of this issue is devoted to reviews of CDs, tapes and vinyl from bands around the world. It looks the same as it did when I first picked it up — collage and cut-and-paste aesthetics on newsprint — but a constantly evolving collective and openness to new writers and graphic artists keeps it real, alive, and an important source of info on what is happening in the punk/hardcore world. (Brian Burch)

## Metal Rules Magazine

magazine, #16, 99 pages, Jeff Rappaport, \$4.95US \$5.95CND, 2116 Sandra Road, Voorhees NJ, 08043,

[www.metalrulesmagazine.com](http://www.metalrulesmagazine.com)

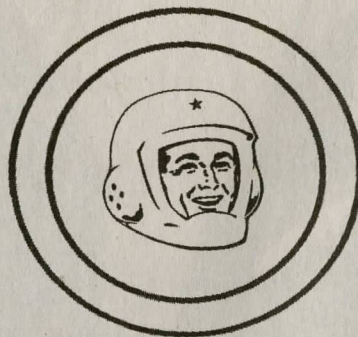
I love how these great metal mags try so hard to come up with synonyms of the word hard in describing a certain metal sound; usually falling back on classics like sick, brutal, or insane. This five year anniversary issue of Metal Rules fills out with a ton of interviews, articles and an extensive music review section. This is also the dual Jason issue — interviews with Jason Newsted (for-

merly of Metallica) and Jason Mewes (Jay of the Kevin Smith flicks). The great thing about the interviews is that they read like a tapped phone transcript — no real structure, just a couple guys shooting the shit — and it's a nice break. The interviews are pretty lengthy as they drunkenly wander from career-related-run-of-the-mill questions to batting back and forth girlfriend-related, ass-eating stories (Jason Mewes). The interviews also open up a bit more because they ain't so formal. Jason Newsted openly talks about the bullshit he had to go through with his former band, and ... as a little aside, he digs chubby chicks. Who knew? Thankfully Metal Rules never takes itself too seriously, especially in the interviews with the gravely serious Swedish death metal bands. The review section is brutally extensive and covers a wide range of metal sounds from thrash to black metal. Running at 99 pages, Metal Rules covers a wide range of different insane acts, keeping it light by poking fun at them and itself with great little editor comments throughout. (James King)

## Red Eye

pzine, 124 pages, Ludovic B., \$1 or trade, PO BOX 95696, Seattle WA, 98145

This chunky little zine describes itself as a story, but it comes across as more of a journal. You wind up sort of hoping it's fictional,



## RATED ROOKIE

*Rated Rookie* magazine, your mother will never know.

For store locations go to [www.rated-rookie.com](http://www.rated-rookie.com)

though. The narrator, Ludovic, who has the same name as the author and may therefore be the same person, is at once unflinchingly honest and self-aware, and a mean-spirited little wretch. He hangs out in the West Coast punk scene, where he bums around and thinks nasty thoughts about his friends, himself and the world at large. He sees right through the stupidity of scene politics, and isn't afraid to announce his views to all and sundry, but he has some pretty indefensible ideas himself, and seems to have a policy of not listening to anyone else. He treats his friends like he thinks they're shit-heads, and then wonders why they're always excluding him. Nothing much happens in the zine — he tries to go train hopping, but can't; he visits Kurt Cobain's house with friends and sits on a bench — it's all internal, but it's artfully done, and either real and sort of depressing, or fake and brilliantly convincing. (Wendy Banks)

## Modest Proposal

magazine, #2, 59 pages, Ryan McKee, \$?, PO BOX 3211, Tempe AZ, 85280, [editorryan@modestproposalmag.com](mailto:editorryan@modestproposalmag.com), [www.modestproposalmag.com](http://www.modestproposalmag.com)

Straight from that breeding ground of show biz...uh, Tempe, Arizona, comes Modest Proposal, a self-proclaimed "counterculture comedy" rag of the most modest means. Now, I've often equated the term "counterculture comedy" with inside jokes and personally, I don't find Bill Hicks either amusing or significant. That being said, I was truly impressed by the package put together by Modest Proposal. It's no laughing matter...hey, I made a funny! Anyway, this issue has cool interviews with the

veteran cultural commentator Todd Barry, Michael Essany from the E! network, and a ton of other up-n-comers. The interviews basically consist of a journalist and subject trading barbs and zingers back and forth; but for the most part they're well done and kept within the legal limit (i.e. they're short). To be honest, I found most of the material hit: "Nerd Rock Mafia," or miss: "Magic Johnson Kicks AIDS Right in the Ass"; yet as a whole, there was a remarkable professionalism and sincerity to this read that you don't often find from such young publications. I also enjoyed the features on "counterculture musicians" like MC Paul Barman and Adam Green from the ever-bizarre Moldy Peaches, and thought the reviews section reserved for CDs was a great idea. If you're even remotely interested in the festering hole that is underground comedy, I implore you to, quick as a bunny, seek out Modest Proposal. I should probably end this with a witty comment since it would be so damn apropos but, instead, I'll just end this. (Cameron Gordon)

## Morbid Curiosity

magazine, #7, 112 pages, Loren Rhoads, Automatism Press, PO BOX 12308, San Francisco CA, 94112-0308, <http://charnel.com/morbidcuriosity>

The cover of Morbid Curiosity reads like a monthly gardening catalogue for those with a preference for people who have different uses for gardening shears. Over a picture of a cow skull we are given a list of the tantalizing things inside: Art from Blood, Rabies, Shamans, Serial Killers, Terminal Cancer, Testicular Injury and Industrial Sailing. The best thing that this zine does is create a

mood — all the artwork and photography have that tombstone-esque, eerie calmness to it. Like when you see a picture of some old house, looking so peaceful that it makes your mind run through a hundred different horrible possibilities for what grisly disaster could or did happen there. The articles and stories are great and stay true to the dark subject matter. The most excruciating story is one of a factory worker who was repairing some equipment one day, while another co-worker (unaware that the machine was being repaired) turned the power back on — which led to the young man unfortunately being skewered through the scrotum, feeling his testicles tear open and be dragged away by the machine. From there some great stories of botched sexual rituals in cemeteries and a little one about trouble in the office from a trio of women who perform a little Voodoo gris gris in order to get revenge on another co-worker work well. There is also a decent book review section at the back to fill things out. The medical section at the back is too good to sum up here — just read it and know you'll get accompanying half-page pics of fallopian tubes. (James King)

## Rated Rookie

magazine, #5, \$3 US/\$4 CAN, [www.ratedrookie.com](http://www.ratedrookie.com)

The thing about Vice Magazine is that their conflated self image (or Animus in psycho-analytic speak) is absolutely true. Vice is indeed run by spoiled whyte boyz happily selling "fashion as revolution" to waitresses and guys who live at home AND get to show up late for work with casual high fives and cocaine nose crusties. Basically, a Richard Branson of the future (Mecha-Branson?). But if



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you want the real, rude deal then read **Rated Rookie**. This zine is put out by people who work temp jobs at shitty New York magazines and are forced to live in Queens. Like Michael Douglas in *Falling Down*, their glasses are broken and the sweat pours from their swampy mass-transit pits while plotting out story arcs and concluding paragraphs to "When Mormons Attack: How A Vietnamese Boy From Arkansas Found God in His Girlfriend's Underpants." And only editor Joshua Bernstein could write about what really goes on in the Promised Land... "The Boy Who Went to Israel and Got a Mouthful of Mitzvah," or how he burned his member on the radiator in his room while doing some serious pimple-popping naked. But lest you think this is a trash-talking all-boy party, check out Jaclyn Gleisinger's "Fear This," an intimate rumination on her own irrational fear of death which began at age 13 with a talking shrine to her dead grandmother. Gleisinger's candid capsule lapses into a survey of how New Yorkers have dealt with all forms of fear since September 11th — from the enormous notion of "forever" to the tiny arachnid. Black and white offset, with an instruction-manual design style, this publication is slicker than my girlfriend after three margaritas. (Scott Marlowe)

## Snowbound

zine, Vol. #1, #5, 96 pages, Alan Mäkinen, \$5, PO BOX 708, 3023 N. Clark Street, Chicago IL, 60657-5205, [amakinen@keikomedia.com](mailto:amakinen@keikomedia.com)

Included in the masthead of this zine is a short definition of what **Snowbound** is, part of which is: "... a variety of perspectives on cultural life in the far north as well as on

social issues that affect the region's inhabitants and environment. **Snowbound** also directly presents the work of contemporary writers and artists and extensively reviews music from the far north, with particular, although not exclusive, attention to music of the Nordic-Baltic region." This is a pretty apt description of the zine, but I would say they put a lot of emphasis on the music. In this issue there was a very scholarly article on the environmental impact of snowmobiles in Greenland that was really interesting, and by far my favourite piece, as it was written with clarity and discussed a problem I wouldn't normally hear about. This is something I felt to be somewhat lacking in the music related articles: they seemed to be geared towards those who are very familiar with the Nordic music scene, but me, I don't know my ass from a two-row accordion. If you're into this genre of music then this zine will provide you with detailed album reviews, as well as articles about the major Nordic music concerts and festivals. If you're not already familiar with the bands and the instruments, then you may find it a bit confusing. (Gillian Best)

## Stir Krazy 5

zine, 20 pages, Garry Erwin, \$4, PO BOX 25148, Rochester NY, 14445

This political zine comes straight outta Attica, the maximum-security prison in upstate New York. It's got well-researched articles on the legalities of homosexual relations in the South, the morality of the death penalty, the US invasion of Iraq, and excerpts from articles about peace and corporate censorship by the likes of Gordon Fellman and Naomi Klein. I don't agree with the opinion

that everybody feels the urge to kill, or that violence is the most effective solution to many problems — it seems to me that you would only believe that if you happen to be physically big and sturdy yourself — but it's an interesting read overall. (Wendy Banks)

## Tongue.Tied


zine, #1, 8 pages, free, 1304 Bay St #2, Bellingham WA, 98225, [tonguetiedzine@yahoo.com](mailto:tonguetiedzine@yahoo.com)

This new zine, subtitled a "sociolinguistic press," is a collection of reprinted articles about the study of language in society. The articles in here are interesting and do not require having taken Linguistics 101 to understand. However, a cleaner layout would've been preferable, as it's hard to grasp the abstract concepts of linguistics when the words are difficult to read. (Teri Vlassopoulos)

## Verbicide

magazine, #8, 72 pages, Jackson Ellis, \$3.95US or \$4.95CDN, Scissor Press, 32 Alfred Street, New Haven CT, 06512, [www.scissorpress.com](http://www.scissorpress.com), [info@scissorpress.com](mailto:info@scissorpress.com)

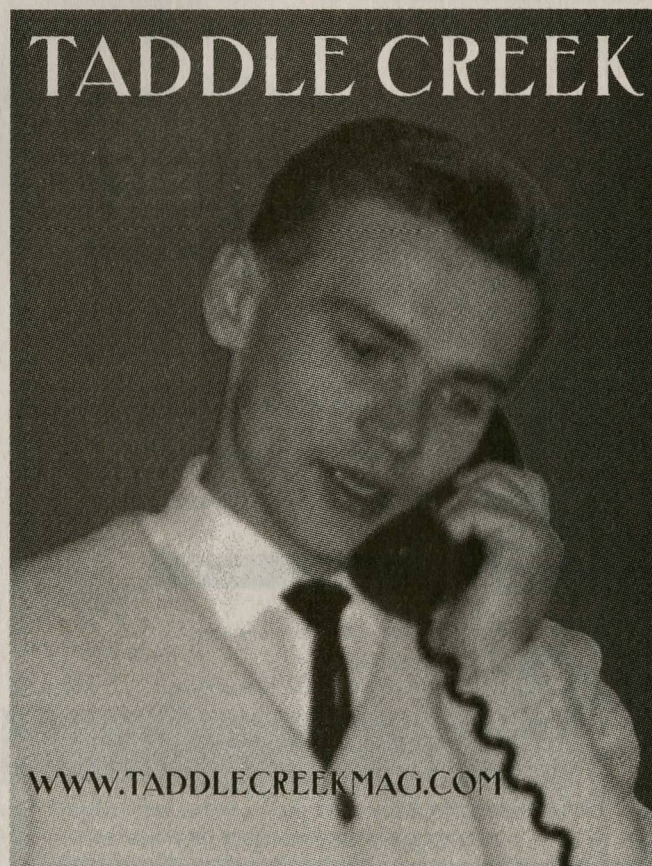
This particular issue of **Verbicide** features an interview with Vietnam war vet writer Tim O'Brien. If that's not enough to pick up this zine right away...well...I just don't know. The interview starts out kinda basic, but then allows itself to branch out as O'Brien talks about the current war situation in relation to his experiences in Vietnam. The zine focuses mostly on short fiction and poems. There are some really great pieces in here, espe-



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cially Jason J. Marchi's "Boy On the Tracks," and Helen Whitehurst's "Winter Mix." Vericide also features some great music reviews and a sort-of preview section of up-and-coming bands. The feature on boxer "Irish" Micky Ward kind of sticks out oddly...don't know, it was interesting, but it seemed kind of out of place in a lit-zine. The issue finishes off with some great interviews with people like Rob Aston of the punk-trio The Transplants and Flogging Molly (love that name) who is featured on the cover. It also has a pretty extensive record review section, however (I guess for space reasons) the font gets small and the reviews eventually get crushed into each other. But then again, Tim O'Brien is in this issue. Good enough for me. (James King)

## no shelter

perzine, 32 pages, nidhi & nick, \$2 + 2 stamps, 309 Cedar Street, #550, Santa Cruz CA, 95060, [bottomdrawer@hotmail.com](mailto:bottomdrawer@hotmail.com)

Nick and Nidhi are young and in love and socially isolated and alternately sad and angry about the world, so they put together this zine about it. It's got rants, poems, love letters they've sent to each other, and little drawings. It's pretty cute, in a way, but in another way it's one of those zines where you end up feeling uncomfortably like you know too much about these people, like you maybe can see things about them that they can't see themselves yet — like they're unreliable narrators of their own lives? Like you want to perch on your little soapbox and give them all kinds of unsolicited advice that they wouldn't want to hear anyway...but you won't because they'll figure it all out themselves, eventually, and besides you might be wrong, and it would be arrogant and presumptuous to try turning your reviews into advice columns for perzinesters, although damn it's tempting sometimes. (Wendy Banks)

## You Idiot

zine, #2, 43 pages, Nate Gangelhoff, \$1, PO BOX 8995, Minneapolis MN, 55408, [PickYourPoison@beer.com](mailto:PickYourPoison@beer.com)

In this issue Nate gives us a quick history of the anti-drug propaganda that has been flooding the American media. This is interesting to me because in the past cable-television-free years I've been living on my own, I seem to have missed out on some classic commercials, such as George W. Bush's more recent campaign: "If you quit drugs, you join the fight against terror in America." Nate gives the typical pot-smoker's rant against the government, but the commercials he catalogues really don't need his help to be funny; they're already laugh-out-loud hysterical. There's also a compendium of product-placement video games. I started out really digging this section, but it got a bit tired towards the end. Product-placement is only funny for so long. The piece de resistance in this zine is the article about Hulk Hogan's debut album, Hulk Rules. The very idea that Hulk Hogan has cut a record is enough to spark hours of laughter, but the details Nate gives here make you want to run out and buy it. He includes actual lyrics and quotes from the liner notes. That article made my entire day. (Gillian Best)

## Slave to the Needles

knitting zine, # 1, Aimee Hagerty, \$2, 1463 E. Republican, Box 131, Seattle WA, 98112

In case you haven't heard, knitting is the newest arena to be "reclaimed" and "subverted" by edumacated and hip young things. Others, like me, just like making little baby hats and dreaming of the days when I will create fabulous fashions for my cats. Slave to the Needles can appeal to both (not unrelated) sides, but could stand a little diversity regarding contributors, which I'm sure will happen in time. The hand-drawn likenesses of the reviewed books are a cute touch, as are the various illustrations. While I understand the need for the "beginner lessons," I hope those who catch the second issue of this zine will find it filled with more patterns and articles. My personal favorites were "I Don't Knit, But My \_\_\_ Does," the enlightening "Knitting Lessons: The Fishermen's sweater," and the sassy section on hand-stitched unmentionables. Equal parts cheeky, sweet, tarty and opinionated, this charming zine is an enjoyable read for those who are interested in the wild world of knitting. (Sarah Van Sinclair)

## International

### Totally Bored

zine, #1, Monster Bobby, £2.50, plus 50 pence postage, Totally Bored Co-op, 31 Bristol Gate, Brighton, BN2 5BD, UK

To quote the skinny, effeminate judge on TV's Iron Chef, "this reminds me of my boyhood." Imagine my pursed lips, my rolling eyes. Not that I ever was a boy, but if I had been, I am sure that I too would have talked a lot about my throbbing meat. This zine is in a format I have seen too many times; so many times in fact that I had to dig up my old stuff to make sure that Monster Bobby had not ripped me off. The look is dark, filled with graffiti, overly photocopied on 8 1/2 x 11, folded in half and stapled. The zine features little pen drawings that could have been copied directly from binders and textbook scribbles. Cut-out lips, sensual, seem to drip ink onto the page. What is new and fresh is the CD stuck to the zine, "The Future is Boring." The eighteen tracks, .AIFF files, wreaked havoc on my computer, almost blew up my tiny speakers and eventually crashed my machine. I liked it. (Andrée Lachapelle)

## Mandakini

journal, Vol. #2, Dr. Mahashweta Chaturvedi, \$?, Professors Colony, Shyam Ganj, Bareilly, 243005 U.P. India, [mahashweta@rediffmail.com](mailto:mahashweta@rediffmail.com)

It was a surprise to receive this publication in the mail. It is, in essence, an unpolished academic journal. It publishes both in Hindi and in English — some in translation and other original works. I was struck at how beautiful the written language of Hindi is. Megha Singh Rohila's "Victoria Age: An Era of Peace" overlooks the Crimean War, Boer War and other wars of the Victoria era. This

article talks about reformers who put pressure on the government of Great Britain to alleviate social evils but ignores the work of those such as William Morris, Frederick Engels, and Annie Besant who advocated and supported militant political action to challenge a system that promoted competition and exploitation. It was a surprise to come across an essay, by Shubha Dwivedi called "Margaret Atwood's The Edible Woman: A Feminist Narrative of Self-Discovery." While it is not on the cutting edge of analysis, it does serve as a reminder of the global reach of this Toronto writer. It is unlikely that any of the poetry or articles that appeared here would meet the standards of academic periodicals I'm familiar with. However, I found that it was of value to have a perspective on the world and on writing far different from those arising from the Western world I am immersed in. (Brian Burch)

## Viva Sparky

zine, #9, 14 pages, Tecwyn Buttock, free, Blwch Post, PO BOX 88, Yr Wyddgrug Mold, CH7 4ZQ, CUMRU WALES, [vivasparky@aol.com](mailto:vivasparky@aol.com)

Wales has always been a land steep in cutting edge music and frighteningly wild guitar licks untold, ranging from the stadium bombast of the Manic Street Preachers to the gypsy pop of Gorky's Zygotic Mynai and, of course, that daft bitch Tom Jones. From this land of plenty arrives Viva Sparky, a spare but spunky read from the fine-feathered folks at Catchpenny Records. Sure, a good portion of the zine is written in Welsh but in such an ass-backwards way that it makes it more intriguing. I'd hazard to suggest that many — if not all — of the bands featured are unknowns, but that's really the whole point. From the preface on, editor Tecwyn Buttock makes it clear that the mandate of the zine is to give much needed exposure to Wales' lesser lights and that's exactly what they accomplish. There are your typical news, reviews and gig recounts to be had, and even a cutesy little classified section on the second-to-last page. And even if you don't give two shits about any of that stuff, you've got to admire them for making an effort. (Cameron Gordon)

## The Days Are Hardly Here At All (A peine si les jours sont là)

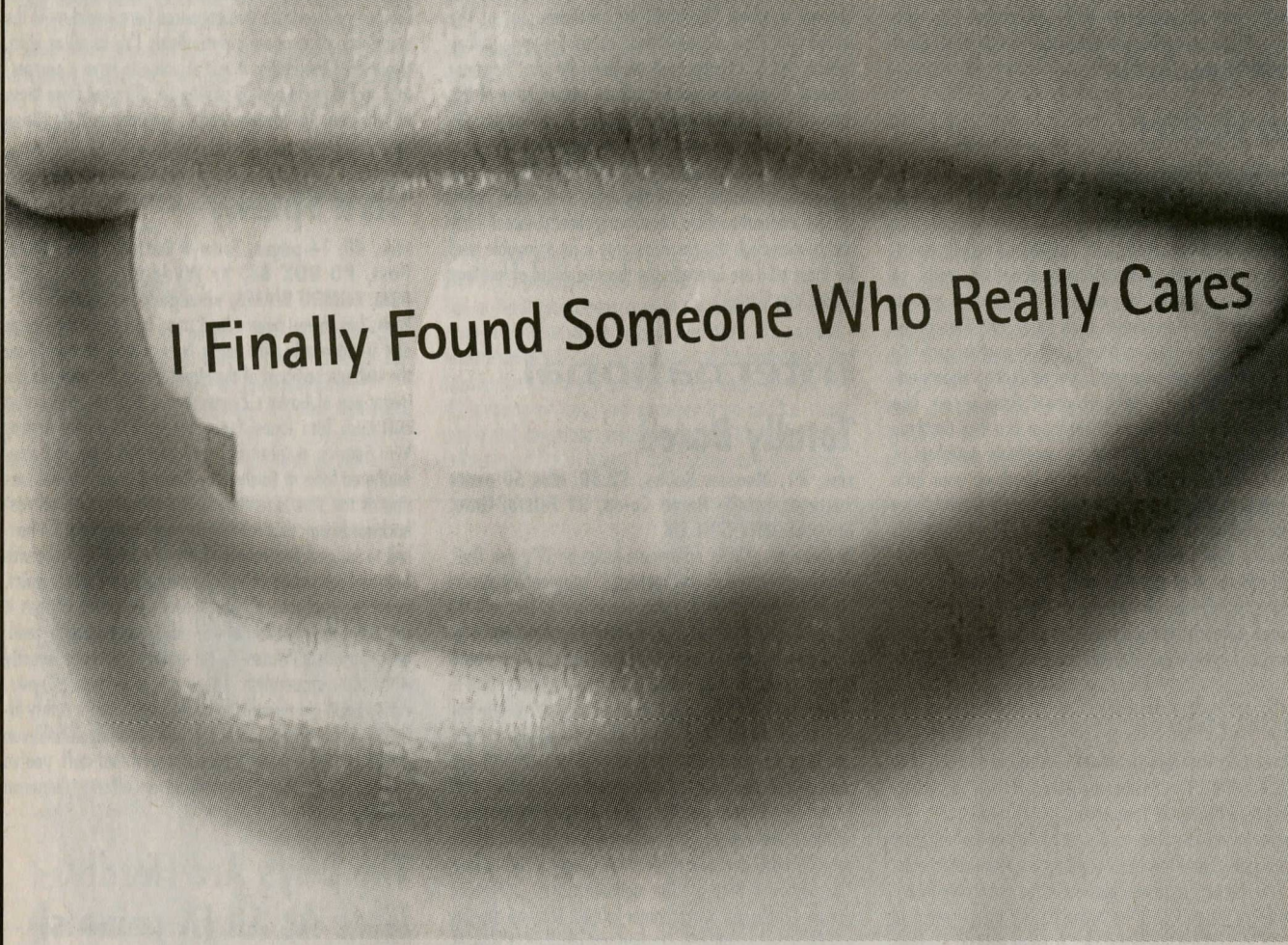
chapbook, 21 pages, Jason Heroux, Eric Dejaeger (transl.), \$2, Revue microbe, Launoy 4, B-6230 Pont-a-Celles, Belgium, [rmicrobe@yahoo.fr](mailto:rmicrobe@yahoo.fr)

In The Days Are Hardly Here At All, Kingston poet Jason Heroux offers a series of brief, sometimes playful and often melancholic glimpses of a parallel universe. The poems are quite short and have been flawlessly translated into French by publisher Eric Dejaeger. It's hard to do justice to this tiny, perfect tome without getting all Martha Stewart on its ass. I want to call it charming but I know it would hate me if I did. Words like wry, haunting, and peculiar might be better. Buy it and see for yourself. (Kate Zieman)

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## Spoken Word Discs

### The New War On Terrorism: Fact And Fiction

Noam Chomsky  
AK Press / G7 Welcoming Committee  
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Noam Chomsky wasn't caught snoozing when all the events of 9/11 unfolded. He's probably one of the few American intellectuals who could offer a coherent explanation on what had led to the terrorist attacks on American targets — and luckily for us, his first public lecture on the topic was recorded (on October 18, 2001) and released as a CD. Among other things, he describes how, in the late seventies and into the eighties, the CIA funded and armed the Islamic fundamentalist forces in Afghanistan, who — once they'd driven out the Russian army — proceeded to bite the hand that fed them. Two earlier side effects of American meddling in this powder keg were the assassination of Egypt's Anwar Sadat in 1981, and the World Trade Center bombing in 1993. Although his talk was recorded a scant month after the events of 9/11, it remains as current and informative. Chances are, if you're in range of a decent campus / community radio station, you might've already heard this. Otherwise, it's essential listening. (Vince Tinguely)

### Various artists — The Road Less Taken: The Saint Valentine Sunday

Poetry Marathon 2001  
Spectrum of Poetic Fire  
[spectrum@mica.edu](mailto:spectrum@mica.edu)

This is a well-recorded sampling of a six hour poetry reading that took place at the Mount Royal Station Building Auditorium, Maryland Institute College of Art. Produced by MICA faculty member Chezia Thompson Cager and Baltimore poetry dynamo Blair Ewing, the

recording commemorates the twenty-two years of poetry events at MICA, whose ranks have included Joseph Cardarelli and Jack Micheline. Featuring 34 poems by 34 poets, the content runs the gamut from spiritual musings on the existence of God to fiery identity politics, from your basic narrative poem to hip-hop inflected spoken word rhythms. While eclectic, there's no evidence of sound poetry or experimental poetry here — you can always make out what's being said, and understand what the poet is trying to get across. There's also a tendency toward inward, spiritual, or psychological topics, or else reflections on the near-at-hand, home and hearth, over poetry that engages with what life's like in the belly of the world's only superpower in the twenty-first century. But that might be due to the Valentine's Day theme. (Vince Tinguely)

### Norman Cristofoli — Pass The Mustard

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Norman Cristofoli offers poetry from a non-academic space. In that, there are certain nuances that remind me of Bud Osborn's delivery — especially the elements of plainspokenness and intimacy. But Cristofoli is coming from a less harrowing milieu, a 'regular guy' mulling over how he feels about this trip through life. In one of his poems, Cristofoli says, "There are no words that come close to defining the way I feel." Sometimes there's a sense of that on this CD, where he seems to get bogged down in a kind of emotional hair-splitting over things that just about anybody listening will be able to get with a lot less verbiage. Generally this happens when Cristofoli is getting deep into the whys and wherefores of existence. Cristofoli's strength lies in his ability to paint powerful, dramatic pictures for the listener: witnessing a car crash in "Glass Blizzard," describing his sleeping daughter in "Letter To Annie," evoking a wilderness thunder storm in "Manitou." Many of the pieces on the CD are complimented with solid, bluesy musical accompaniment; there's also a few live tracks. (Vince Tinguely)

### Ward Churchill — In A Pig's Eye: Reflections on the Police State, Repression and Native America

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On this deluxe two-CD package, Ward Churchill starts with the fact of Leonard Pelletier's continued incarceration, despite the overwhelming evidence that he didn't commit the murders he's been imprisoned for. In order to explain current American government policies of political repression (of which Pelletier is an example), Churchill traces its roots back to the formation of the Pinkertons, which was basically a privately owned army deployed to smash attempts at workers' unionization and other popular activities over a century ago. When the FBI was formed in the early years of the twentieth century, it basically took over the work that the Pinkertons had carried out until then. While mainstream propaganda images of the FBI portray them as carrying out police work against organized criminals, Churchill argues that a substantial portion of their budget goes toward the suppression of any groups or individuals who oppose American government interests. This led to the notorious FBI Cointelpro (counterintelligence program) campaign against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement from the late sixties to the mid-seventies. Churchill describes their use of extralegal organizations, such as the "Goon Squads" who were deployed on the Pine Ridge reservation during a stand-off there, to carry out physical intimidation and murder to break up the American Indian Movement. Like Chomsky, Churchill is able to construct a narrative that makes sense of events which, through the mainstream media lens, seem to be random, violent, and senseless. Professional journalists take note. (Vince Tinguely) ~

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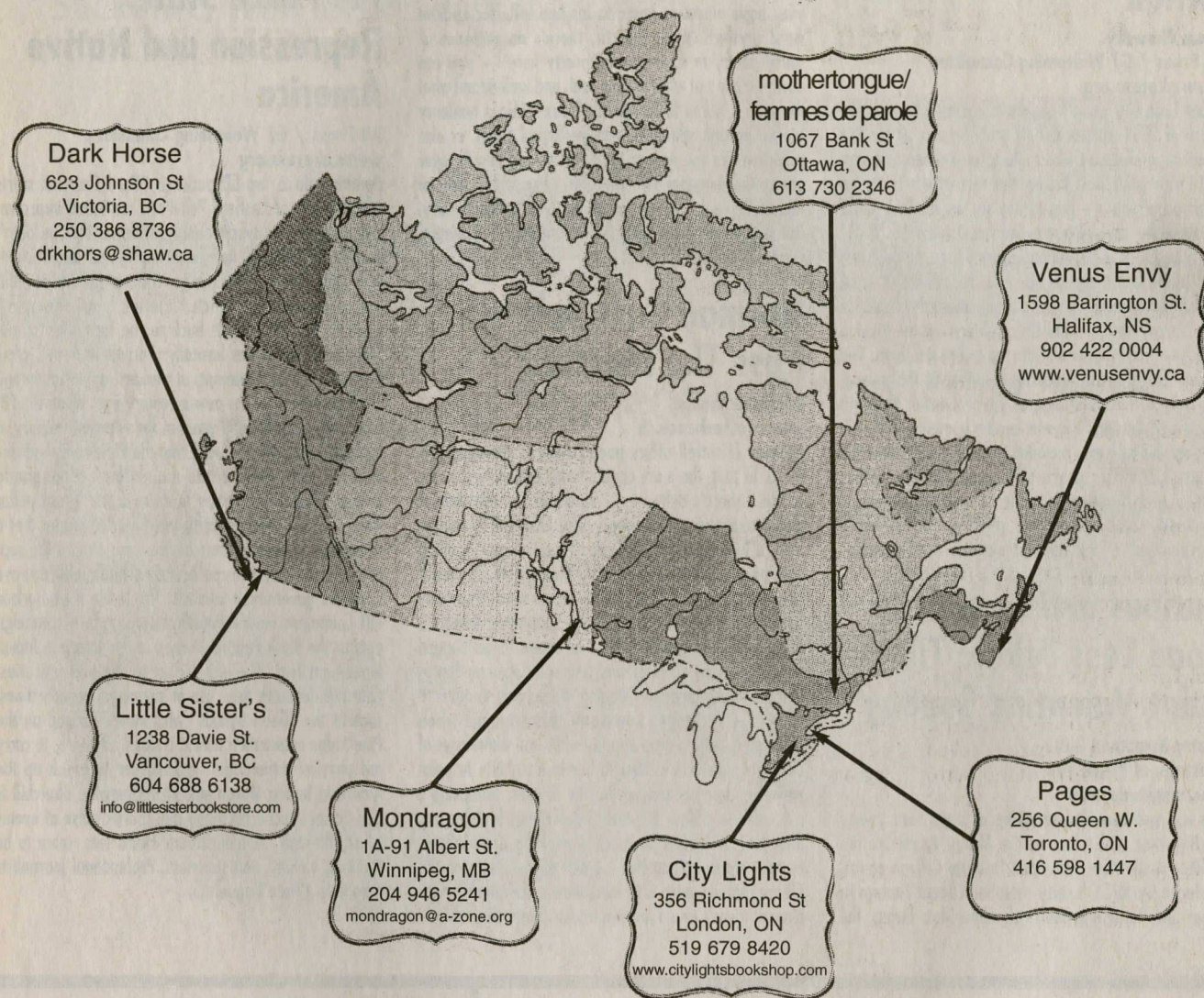
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# Independent Thinking: Between the Lines Answers Six No-Nonsense Questions

by Ryan Bigge

Paul Epile is the editorial coordinator at Between the Lines ([www.btlbooks.com](http://www.btlbooks.com)), a collectively run, Toronto-based independent press that proudly tilts leftward. This fall BTL will be publishing the 13th and 14th books in the No-Nonsense Guide series (the HIV/AIDS guide and the Poverty guide). Here, Epile explains how complex issues like the Arms Trade and Democracy are distilled into 144 pages, à la Cole's Notes, without cheating either the reader or the writer.

**Broken Pencil:** How did the No-Nonsense Guides come to be?

**Paul Epile:** They were originated by New Internationalist publications in Oxford, England. They publish a magazine called NI, that concerns itself with issues of development. About two years ago they broached a new idea with us, a series of books that we had also thought about doing, books that were concise, straightforward, simplified but not simplistic, and affordable.

**BP:** What was the first title in the series?

**PE:** The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization, which was published in spring of 2001. And that, in fact, has been the best-selling title so far. And it was written by a Canadian, Toronto-based author Wayne Ellwood, an editor at NI.

**BP:** What sort of ideology powers the series?

**PE:** Between the Lines publishes critical work that challenges received ideas. My personal view is that it's extremely hard to define the political spectrum anymore, though BTL would always choose to continue to call ourselves Left. But I think it's increasingly difficult to pin down just what that means in the context of a Post-Soviet Union world.

**BP:** What sort of tone do you strive for?

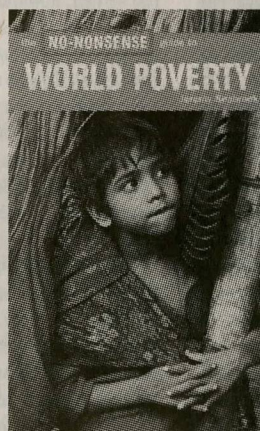
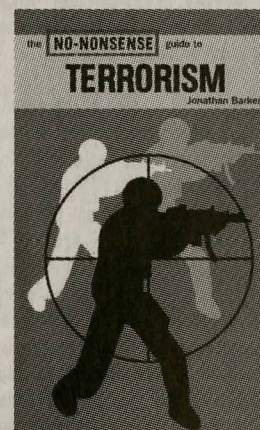
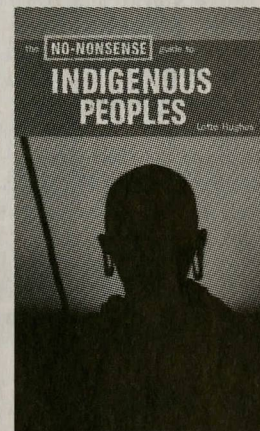
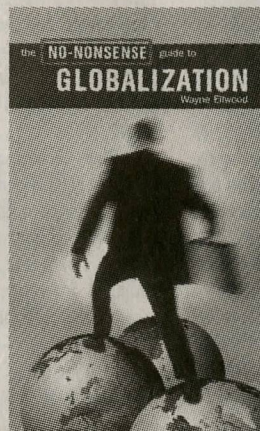
**PE:** I think that there's a kind of deftness in the way you can write about these issues. You don't have to use big convoluted sentences, you don't have to use technical vocabulary. And you can deliver information in an almost conversational way. The guides are refreshing and engaging and connect with people in terms that they feel comfortable with.

**BP:** How important is it for an independent press to have a successful book series?

**PE:** It's a big lift. The books have sold strongly. And the series acts as its own kind of lever. Once you get the series established, it piggybacks all of its titles along. More importantly, it has raised our profile in both independent bookstores and chains.

**BP:** What future guides can we look forward to?

**PE:** We'll be tackling Islam and Global Media in the spring of next year, and the fall of 2004 we hope to cover Women's Rights and Science.



## Universal Recipients

by Dana Bath, \$19.95, 174 pgs, Arsenal Pulp Press, 103-1014 Homer Street, Vancouver BC, V6B 2W9, [www.arsenalpulp.com](http://www.arsenalpulp.com)

Told with an honest poignancy that is too straightforward to be self-pitying, Dana Bath's stories remind us that the past is immobile. The 13 stories that make up *Universal Recipients* are immersed in a sad finality that cannot be accepted, merely endured.

The past weighs heavily in these stories, underscored by basic desires: the need for belonging, understanding, love and intimacy. These universal needs cannot be forgotten or dispelled. Whether they are in Montreal, Vancouver, Newfoundland, Japan, Thailand, or Singapore, the characters in *Universal Recipients* are all burdened by an inescapable sense of grief.

But Bath's writing is not loud and pleading, it is quiet and meditative; her characters too honestly depicted to be melodramatic. Profundities in Bath's stories are as they should be: subtle and true and there whether we accept them or not.

This isn't a feel-good summer skim, but neither is it a depressive, moaning collection. Instead, it achieves what its characters cannot: a measure of enjoyable calm. (Dave McGinn)

## A Love Supreme

by Kent Nussey, \$17.95, 207 pgs, Mansfield Press, 25 Mansfield Avenue, Toronto ON, M6J 2A9, [www.mansfieldpress.net](http://www.mansfieldpress.net)

*A Love Supreme* is the name of the album-length suite which many consider Coltrane's finest moment on record. To them, this remains the ultimate expression of the jazz saxophonist's spiritual quest through his music. Kent Nussey's fascinating, subtly comic, mysterious and cinematic novel concerns Omar, an eccentric, 40-something writer, and his quest to scribe the indescribable Coltrane. *A Love Supreme* draws faint parallels between Omar Snow's journey and Coltrane's. Chiefly, his obsessive quest in transcribing that state of grace mirrors the jazz great's obsession to push his music to untold limits. So driven is he in his work that the introverted Omar has forsaken material wealth — along with matrimony and domesticity — for his pursuits. Although the novel also alludes to such fantastic things as chance, omens, and dreams (which befits this story about a quasi-mystical quest), it is nonetheless a very real, human drama. Omar begins a strange relationship with Carrie, his 38-year-old neighbour, who is a frustrated actress living in her mother's basement. "Never date an actress," his friend warns, and their meetings often end in bitterness and bewilderment. His feelings for her are equal parts attraction and repulsion — he knows that a relationship with this woman will only bring heartbreak — yet he acknowledges that her world offers him an anchor of family and friends and the human contact he often shuns for an obscure personal goal. Perhaps the greatest offering of *A Love Supreme* is its vivid, moving portrayal of people who are approaching middle-age and have sacrificed hopes of a family or a solid career for some deeply per-

sonal, unattainable, indescribable Thing. Despite their radically different personalities, the central characters of *A Love Supreme* share Coltrane's obsession with finding that elusive grace which will redeem their lives. (Greg Woods)

## Knucklehead & Other Stories

by W. Mark Giles, fiction, \$18, 236 pgs, Anvil Press, 6 West 17th Avenue, Vancouver BC, V5Y 1Z4

I like novels. And short stories I get. Beginning, middle, climax, resolution, end — got it. But vignettes and slice-of-life stories? Are these real? Am I missing something? Should I feel ripped off? Where's my fucking denouement?

Now, having said all that, *Knucklehead* is a thoroughly enjoyable and absorbing collection, regardless of how you decide to label these strange tales. Filled with wonderful, descriptive language, the pace never drags, sentence structure and tenses are effective and kept me intrigued.

Plenty of bizarre, morbid stuff about death and very sad characters — some of which I quite hated (while still loving the story). In "The Day the Buffalo Came," the main character finds himself drawn to another man's lips, wanting to kiss them — moments before jumping out of a car to defecate on the side of the road (all this brought on by a near car accident). Clearly shaken, he then proceeds to his destination only to find himself on the verge of tears and licking the back of his shaking hand to calm himself.

I really enjoyed this collection of quality stories, but I was mildly disappointed there was no one named *Knucklehead*. (Mitch Adams)

## Manifesto

by anonymous, 200 pgs, self-published, no contact info

*Manifesto* is a page-turner. It's the first person account of a very sad and alienated 21-year-old dropping out of college (and society), having a mental breakdown and dealing with an alcohol problem. The writing is honest and earnest. However, some readers might have trouble sympathizing with a character (the author?) who appears to be a self-absorbed, over-privileged, self-indulgent, destructive child who needs to grow up and get a job.

The protagonist hates everyone. Especially his fellow students: "I like books. Most of the putty-headed students didn't read the books. I read and liked them all. I liked authors, recorded information, knowledge. I could discuss books. I hated discussing books. Books were books."

I can identify with the main character, hence I like the writing. I quite hate university students myself (more so when I was one). The author also doesn't want to work, grow old, get fat — but then, who does? "I wanted to be warm and drunk... I didn't want a job or anybody's lousy opinions. I didn't care if I was destroying myself. I didn't like the alternatives" he or she writes.

Some will find two hundred pages of such sharp sentences trying. Recommended for those who like depressing in the style of Bukowski, *Trainspotting* or the *Basketball Diaries*. (Mitch Adams)

## The Originals

by L.E. Vollick, \$17.95, 259 pgs, DC Books, Box 662, rue Decarie, Montreal PQ, H4L 4V9, [www.dcbooks.ca](http://www.dcbooks.ca)

L.E. Vollick's *The Originals* is an honest portrayal of the life or death questions poor urban youth face. Magpie, the book's protagonist, trusts her community of fellow club-goers to look out for her. Her local, the Underground, is the first place she feels she belongs. But when it really matters, her scenerester friends let her down.

While Vollick's prose occasionally glimmers electric, *The Originals* needs a sharp edit with a ginsu knife to slice unnecessary repetitions and chop off hackneyed language. Witness clichés like "shaking his booty" and "we're all in it together" or haphazard descriptions where "everyone is having a ball."

Readers patient enough to wade through the swamp of flashbacks and tired phrases in the first few chapters will eventually find their way onto dirty downtown streets and vomit-stained, beer-scented bar stairs. They'll stay up all night, drop acid at a drug dealer's party, watch violent drunken fights, and befriend nervous runaways.

Vollick's novel construction is deft. She introduces micro-level concerns with first-person narration — Magpie describes what it's like to be a kid petrified by media portrayals of nuclear war. She's a straight-A student who, after watching her single-mom's minimum wage struggle, knows she'll never be able to afford a university education. With the addition of some strategically placed details, Vollick successfully widens the scope to intelligent macro-level socio-political arguments around Reaganism and the North American class system. Magpie and her friends cope with the feelings of inadequacy low-income people often experience. She begins to understand why people decide "it's easier to hang themselves rather than tie up their shoelaces and make coffee in the morning," and decides that "the end of the world isn't just one thing. It's more like a chain gang that wears you down until the fireworks at the finale."

Vollick's characters are interesting insofar as they go beyond merely questioning their immediate surroundings and consider how to improve things for themselves without numbing themselves to what's really happening. It's the authentic punk rock street ethic many of us have forgotten or would prefer to ignore. (Suzanne Alyssa Andrew)

## Tight Like That

by Jim Christy, \$18, 202 pgs, Anvil Press, 6 West 17th Avenue, Vancouver BC, V5Y 1Z4, [www.anvilpress.com](http://www.anvilpress.com)

*Tight Like That* is a collection of noir-ish short stories by BC author Jim Christy about drunks, hippies, yuppies, and lesbian bar owners. His bio implies that his writing is

# The Haunted Hillbilly

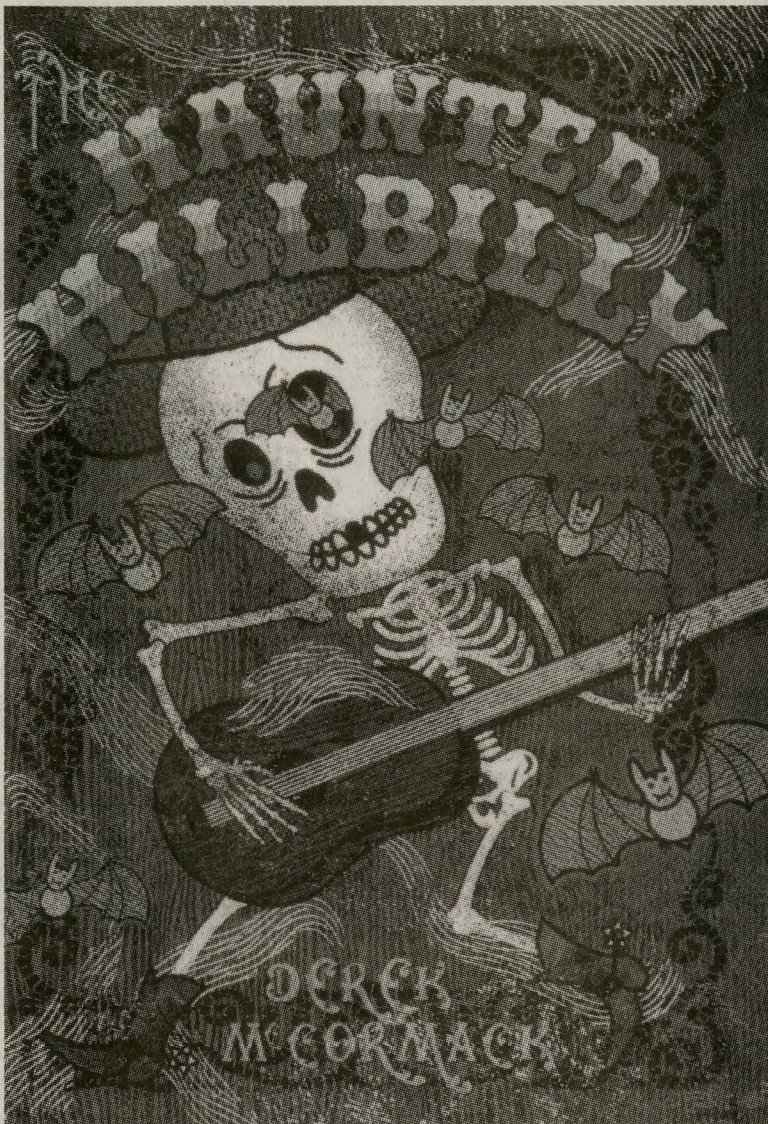
by Derek McCormack, \$18.95, 124 pgs, ECW Press, 2120 Queen Street East, Suite 200, Toronto, ON, M4E 1E2, [www.ecwpress.com](http://www.ecwpress.com)

In this freak-show novel, country superstar Hank Williams gets his ass munched while under anesthesia. How does Derek McCormack manage time-and-again to tackle carnie sex, kewpie dolls and other mysterious dark-hearted kitsch without gouging the lustre? Because he manages to stitch together a plot without seams, using the best words in human history, like "jalopy," "oompah," "dime store," "midway," and "appliqué." McCormack is a master of this genre, beginning with his *Pas de Chance* chapbook *The Western Suit*, and continuing with his Gutter Press releases *Dark Rides* and *Wish Book*. If you haven't read these, the time is here and now. Get your *Haunted Hillbilly*!

McCormack combines words as easily as Lego. That this little adventure lasts only an hour will in no way detract from the pleasure of your experience. Read this novel like a long poem, for I venture the argument that it is just that. Four years since McCormack's last publication, this one feels as if every word has been laboured over, possibly late at night, by the single light of a sewing machine, threading the apparel of the man who will take over the Grand Ole Opry with his first appearance. Our hero, Hank, begins the novel with a humble brown suit lovingly made by his wife. In his pursuit of fame — and the perfect shirt to complement it — Hank stumbles into a magical atelier. His outfitter — a vampire named Nudie — competes for Hank's love and control of his closet. He destroys two of Hank's marriages and sews his elaborate jackets with bone rhinestones. Essentially, this is a gayed-up version of *The Devil and Daniel Mouse*, and every bit as cartoon-spectacular. It's full of comic touches: "The sky's very Ray Bradbury. A weird wind." The characters even have cartoon physiques ("His body more Marvel than EC").

If the wit is too thick, by all means, take a break. Have an apéritif. Ask yourself, "Aside from drinking himself to death, what did Hank Williams do to deserve this?"

Even when McCormack is crueler than a couturier ripping human skin with a crewel, he has a master plan. To make us laugh, cringe, maybe pulse in our pants, or feel sympathy for characters caught in the whirlwind of his crazy underworld novels. To mock and dethrone the most sad-eyed lovelorn singer in heterosexual history. To play with words for a dollar. Step right up! You can only guess what makes this inside-out, outside-in novel work! Every guess is a winner! (Emily Schultz)



legit, as he was "raised in the slums of Philadelphia" and his writing has been praised by Bukowski. Hmmm. Bukowski + living in poverty = street cred? Not unless the writing is damn good.

Christy puts so much emphasis on a "noir" tone and plot twists that the stories are often predictable, interrupted or lost. In "Six Dead, Nine Wounded," a red-neck family man decides to save his kids, who have been kidnapped by their militant lesbian feminist mom. His solution is to open fire on the entire town — and then disappear. So what about his frickin' kids? Did he kill them? What was the point?

However, when Christy lets the stories supercede style, his writing begins to breathe and live. Highlights include "The Lawn Party," "The Mug," and "Happy Endings" — a particularly well-written story about a book lover who gets his kicks from seeking out strangers and ruining the end of their books. Hilarious.

This collection is full of interesting characters and

ideas — but the writing isn't as "tight" as it could be. Christy is at his best when he's not trying to be the next Bukowski. (Michele Collins)

## Just Murder

by Jan Rehner, \$16.95, 254 pgs, Sumach Press, 1415 Bathurst Street Suite 202, Toronto ON, M5R 3H8, [www.sumachpress.com](http://www.sumachpress.com)

The blurb calls it "A spine-chilling mystery that explores the issue of violence against women and the courage needed to challenge it." Sounds spine-chilling, eh? Like an educational filmstrip is spine-chilling. But keep reading.

A man buys a woman a drink in a bar, and then hits on her. Outraged, she storms out; he follows her and tries to kill her. She is rescued by a mysterious female figure. Roll eyes, mull gender politics, shake head. Keep reading.

Three main female characters are introduced. They all eat like horses, even the professional model (dieting isn't feminist), but they're all pointedly slim and shapely. Flip to author bio: a Prof. at York. Don't they do fat as a feminist issue there? Shrug. Keep reading.

Forty-odd pages in, the main villain shows up. He's rich and white and stalks his ex-girlfriend, and has the flat, black eyes of a shark. What, no twirling mustachios? Nyuk, nyuk, nyuk. Okay, wise-gal, keep reading.

And then, boom! Fifty pages in, suddenly everything falls into place. The villain is, like, a psycho supervillain with a crazy back-story. The heroine is a mysterious Wonder-Woman type with a dark past worthy of its own comic book. There's a secret network based on the strategies of the French Resistance. And terror. And romance. And stalking. And daring escapes. In short, it's a gripping pulp suspense novel with feminist underpinnings, and if you can get past page 48 or

so, you'll have a hard time putting it down. I hope Rehner started on another novel immediately after finishing this one, because I get the feeling she's on a roll. (Wendy Banks)

## Darwin Alone In the Universe

by M.A.C. Farrant, \$18, 160 pages, Talon Books, PO Box 2076, Vancouver BC, V6B 3S3, [www.talonbooks.com](http://www.talonbooks.com)

Veteran avant-garde Vancouver Islander M.A.C. Farrant is on familiar territory with this, her seventh short story collection and first in four years. Strange moments of non-coincidence illuminate the weirdness of everyday life. An all-encompassing mediasphere swirls overhead, bathing everything in a gray phosphorescence. Darwin is alone in Farrant's lonely universe, a place where hearses arrive instead of taxis and "no expert can with assurance affirm that any particular wisdom is better than any other." The stories in this collection are short, pithy and function like guidebooks to places we thought we knew. In one-pager "The Holiday," a couple vacations in a "run-down city cottage inhabited by a refugee family from Poland." Minimal and absurdist, the story resonates, at once familiar and utterly foreign.

Similarly, in "The Poet Who Came In Three Sizes," a woman's multiple encounters with Leonard Cohen in and outside a grocery store lurches from giddy celebrity exuberance to utter desolation, two-and-a-half pages that function to skewer fame-obsessed society even as Farrant asks poignant questions about the nature of the quest for enlightenment. Farrant is at her best when she

is telling short, not-quite-cryptic tales and letting the reader share the burden of meaning. She falters when she tries too hard to connect us to the cyborgspace of pop culture and its ravages. This is particularly notable in the title story, "Darwin Alone in the Universe." It's a story that starts off with an intriguing play on the am-I-crazy? narrator who begins by poignantly describing a fire at a drop-in yoga centre. But things go awry when our raconteur starts to rant Baudrillard-like epiphanies: "Who would have guessed that this is what artificial intelligence has become: visual images with lives of their own feeding on our hunger?"

This book is more personal and revelatory than the sarcastic brave new world of her seminal 1995 release *Altered Statements*. However, it is edging closer to a chasm that the author needs to leap off if her fictions are to avoid being dismissed as merely poignant and observational, rather than mind-shattering, ghoulish, and original. (Hal Niedzviecki)

## A Sharp Tooth in the Fur

by Darryl Whetter, \$20, 188 pgs, Goose Lane Editions, 469 King St., Fredericton NB, E3B 1E5

Pimped panties, a boy struggling with a debilitating skin disease, illicit affairs in Paris and the bush. Darryl Whetter's first collection of stories is strewn with solitude and disconnection, his characters desolate castaways fecklessly scanning the ocean in hopes of rescue. Stories inevitably start lonely and proceed with the wave gazing. Sometimes, a ship appears. Most times, not. Whetter's a master of one-liners, a king of openings. "Grater is Pavlovian over birch," is how he describes a tree-planter taking a shit. "Paul's driving definitely improves with

each divorce," opens the story of a breakup and flirtation with yoga, punctuated by e-mails in the form of a screenplay sent to a sympathetic pal. It's filled with solitude and indecision with a conclusion that falls just short of epiphany. Whetter's stories tend to be overly complicated. He has great instincts for the moment, an excellent ear for dialogue, but he needs to burrow further into solitude, learn to let his characters float in the space of their own heads on a sea of bitter but buoyant waves. Still, this is a strong first collection exploring the half-grown up world of male desire and identity. (Hal Niedzviecki)

## The Double

by Philip Quinn, \$17.95, 133 pgs, Gutter Press, [www.gutterpress.com](http://www.gutterpress.com)

"We're at an interesting juncture in publishing history," notes Jim Munroe in his self-publishing manifesto available at [nomediakings.org](http://nomediakings.org). "An individual can produce a book as polished as a corporate outlet can for about the same price." The quality of DIY books over the past few years, especially in terms of graphic design and overall production values, suggest Munroe is correct. If most anyone can produce their own novel, then independent publishers, especially well-regarded ones like Gutter, should offer the book-buyer some extra ummph to distinguish themselves from the zinester rabble. For example, last year's *Wound Ballistics*, by Steven Manners, was published in a hardcover edition by Gutter. Granted, such aesthetic decisions aren't cheap — the press that Sam Hiyate built has always suffered economic distress of one variety or another. Last year, a fella by the name of Ed Sluga took over the press, vowing to respect both edgy



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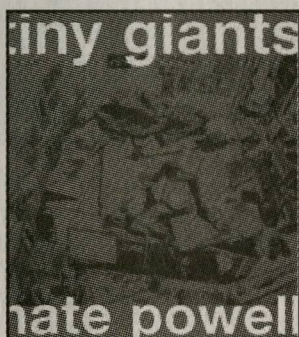
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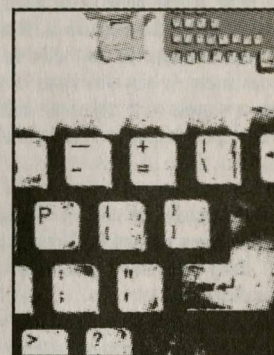
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fiction and the bottom line. But in his attempt to make the press profitable (or at least break even) Sluga has allowed Gutter's corporate extravagance to slide into bargain-basement irrelevance. The cover binding of *The Double* cracks at first touch. The typesetting is ugly, the paper cheap and the back cover lacks a UPC; the overall aesthetic is more biblical tract than trade paperback. Don't judge a book by blah, blah, blah, one might argue, but I return to the Munroe doctrine. Books are objects, the tactile pleasures they exude are meant to intertwine and resonate with the literary delights within. To try and encase transcendent moments of emotional honesty and greater truth within the equivalent of a brown paper bag is to invite almost certain failure.

That said, the words themselves combine to offer a bleak, fragmented narrative, set in modern Toronto, with transpositions of historical figures from the 1960s. The geography of T-dot figures prominently, and no explication is provided for those who have never spat in the Don River or kicked past the Queen Street Mental Health Facility. The text is choppy, even striated, the tone distant and the novel hops from moment to moment with progressions such as: "Wake up. Move to the window. Push aside the useless drapes and look down. Huge praying mantis lights hovering over the street. I'm spotlighted. Go berserk. Knock over a chair. Crawl along the floor." These constant staccatos, coupled with intentionally confusing shifts in perception and identity make this work more exercise than pleasure. The horrific typography doesn't help matters. (Ryan Bigge)

## Poetry

### Ashland

by Gil Adamson, \$16.95, 79 pgs, ECW Press, 2120 Queen Street East, Suite 200, Toronto ON, M4E 1E2, [www.ecwpress.com](http://www.ecwpress.com)

You read a Gil Adamson poem and you shudder, take a breath, and look around for someone to show it to. Some of these poems end with lines that are like punches in the gut — others are like uncanny dreams that you're never quite sure you've woken from. This collection is unrelentingly morbid, but not goth-morbid, not even Plath-morbid. It's maybe cowboy morbid: there's a wild west feel to all this massacre, and you feel cool and tough after you read about it, like you've just had a shot of whiskey.

Adamson is meticulous: she doesn't miss an opportunity to gloomify the atmosphere of Ashland. There are no stray words; each is an image. And she is a choreographer: she gets the lighter words to lift off pages and land again, precisely and softly, in other poems. Life, in this collection, is as lightweight as a word, and death is the centre of gravity.

These poems are a graveyard full of death and violence; both serene and eerie. Everybody should read them. (Anna Bowness)

## Go-go Dancing for Elvis

by Leslie Greentree, \$14.95, 85 pgs, Frontenac House, 1138 Frontenac Avenue SW, Calgary AB, T2T 1B6, [www.frontenachouse.com](http://www.frontenachouse.com)

Greentree's second collection, *Go-go Dancing for Elvis*, begins with an overly simplistic framework that juxtaposes two sisters (the pretty, exciting one versus the boring, domestic one) and devolves to self-flagellation. It's dead dull.

One sister travels the world as an "exotic" knee-high boot wearing go-go dancer for an Elvis impersonator. The sister who stays home to renovate her house and play with power tools (both literally and figuratively) describes herself as a crippled Deborah Kerr from *An Affair to Remember* and spews long, Harlequin-worthy passages about vanilla sex with an emotionally distant lover.

With a clunky writing style that neglects fussy matters such as flow, word choice, and rhythm, Greentree toddles between seriousness and idiocy: "the day I realize I will die alone the only thing to do is go/ shopping," she writes in her poem "the apples I will add."

The effect is rather funny in "my breasts and I" with, "I didn't like to be on top because my breasts swung wildly...for reasons that had nothing to do with prudery and everything/ to do with television." And in her steamroller approach to poetry, Leslie Greentree manages to flatten an otherwise vivid image of a daydream comparison between the sexual techniques of Jean-Luc Picard and Hawkeye Pearce.

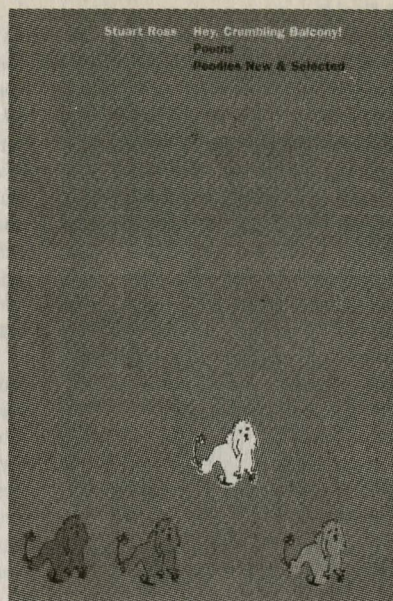
What's unfortunate here is the poems that stray from Greentree's over-arching themes of sibling rivalry, jealousy and household renovation are actually quite engaging, as though the collection's framework prevents her from full expressive capacity.

"Fargo's, Whyte Avenue," for example, is darkly sublime: "I watch the solitary drinkers/ the waitress/ the way your hair falls over your eyes/ you look up to ask/ which is more phallic — / to be shot/ or stabbed." (Suzanne Alyssa Andrew)

## Long Shot, Volume 26

edited by Danny Shot, \$11, 172 pgs, Long Shot Productions Inc., PO Box 6238, Hoboken, NJ, 07030, [www.longshot.org](http://www.longshot.org)

Poetry editors need a high cringe threshold. And in the editor's note to this final installment of *Long Shot*, Danny sounds like he's reached his. "I no longer have the stomach for a lot of the writing that comes my way, much of it being whiny, mindlessly hateful, mechanically rhyming at the expense of content, consciously frigid, or too ranting and raving in the face of reason and dignity." Just because some of the work here doesn't fit that description — though much of it does —



## Hey Crumbling Balcony!

by Stuart Ross, \$25, 224 pgs, ECW Press, 2120 Queen Street East, Suite 200, Toronto, ON, M4E 1E2, [www.ecwpress.com](http://www.ecwpress.com)

For Toronto's resident poet of the poignantly weird, it all began in 1978 with the first of what would be a regular series of self-published chapbooks. More than 30 publications later — including a handful of full-length books put out by various small presses — Ross is still going. What's more remarkable, perhaps, is his destination. In this book of poetry, new and selected, we can chart the progress of this sometimes snide, sometimes surreal writer with subtle ambitions. Over the course of the book, Ross moves from puerile, startling and occasionally effective to deeply affecting, sarcastic, and yet still not afraid of utilizing the odd adolescent stunt. Like any good writer, life's ravages and beauties have challenged Ross to reassess his aesthetic, to grasp what is possible with the word, as less ambitious, more personal poems seem to say more than expansive early works that tend to encompass, as the title of one Ross poem goes, "The Clamour." To compare, say, the opening lines of "Little Black Train," an earlier poem ("Waiter there's an alligator in my eye/ and christ I need a shave") with the start of new poem "The True, Sad Tale of Benjamin Peret As it Relates to Me" is to move from a profundity of odd to an odd profundity. "Hey, balcony crumbling outside my window/ whose concrete organs plummet to the parking lot below," sings Ross in the latter poem, part lament, part tribute to a French surrealist who died the year Ross was born. "Black Train" is all gusto and verbal muscle. "Peret As it Relates" doesn't shy away from weird — Ross still "sends poodles cowering behind the furnace" — but he also presents a more considered articulation of his own life-long compulsion to create. In that sense, the poem is a wiser manifesto, one that could not have been written in 1978, one that comes hard won and hard fought. "Hey Captains of industry," cries Ross. "Give me a dollar, a dime/ a roll of cabbage, a/ piece of paper and a/ reason to bespoil it." In *Crumbling Balcony*, readers are given the rare opportunity to explore the growth and maturity of a poet whose style and substance have remained consistent, even as his voice extends in timbre. Let the snow fall, Ross challenges the sky: "I will catch it/ and put it back." Twenty-five years of spoiling paper and Ross keeps getting better. (Hal Niedzviecki)

doesn't mean it's good.

The majority of the poetry here falls into two categories: Beat or Bukowski. Amongst the latter, Paul Beatty's "Firecracker" stands out for having the decency to be crude and offensive. The rest are easily forgotten — mundane or self-righteous prose masquerading as poetry. Among the Beats is a tone of depressing reminiscing — a poem to Ginsberg, one to Bob Kaufman, and one by Mikhail Horowitz sadly declaring himself the last of the Beats.

The poems outside the Beat-or-Bukowski schema are hit and miss. Jacqueline Michaud's "Greetings to ovid, grate poet ov tomis" is an intolerable two page letter written phonetically, but skip past it to reach Latasha Natasha Diggs' work, whose pop and punch and flash, too fast and bright to be contained in form.

There is some good work here, poetry that is interesting and will make you laugh. But some of it should be passed over like dharmic revelries in the be-bop night daddy-o. (Dave McGinn)

## day blind.ness: poems from an unfiltered head-space

by Candace Sepulis, 93 pgs, [www.ballyhoome-dia.ca](http://www.ballyhoome-dia.ca)

This collection often speaks to "you." Less the reader than some omnipresent figure, a former lover or a current object of desire who is nonetheless absent from the proceedings, or at least oblivious to the writer's feelings. *day blind.ness* is full of slight variations of persistent themes of loving someone who doesn't reciprocate, or "morning after" regrets about the unsaid. While the speaker within each poem may differ, each are anxious outsiders, haunted by memories. Despite the commonplace subject matter, this collection remains consistently engaging thanks to a command of language that makes her tonal poems seem visual as well as figurative. Both commonplace objects (bowling shirts, half-filled wine glasses) and the fantastic (gas masks in the year 2051) become clever metaphors for personal baggage, regrets or alienation. Throughout these fragments of verse, there is a pervasive thread. As we read, we can see why these mournful characters are outsiders, as they all share a willingness to express themselves fully, in naked honesty. Likewise, they seek that same trait in others, and seldom find it. In a world full of guarded souls, it is small wonder that the people in these pages seem so lonely, misunderstood, even blunt. (Greg Woods)

## Crowd of Sounds

by Adam Sol, \$16.95, 71 pgs, House of Anansi Press, [www.anansi.ca](http://www.anansi.ca)

*Crowd of Sounds* is like a music compilation — some poems didn't speak to me even after four reads, others I've read over and over and still find magic. I'm drawn to Sol's portraits of people: those of strangers and those whom he loves. I'm also drawn to his minimalist form, his tender metaphors and urban/domestic themes. But I'm disappointed that his editors didn't see the need for a glossary. Tsk, tsk Anansi! Words like "sukkah," "Haredi," and "Ashrei" are not part of everyone's vernacular.

There's a wealth of emotion and character in these 45 poems. "You Say" is the sexiest poem, a breathless lover's dance of words that culminates with "it isn't what your words mean that I love/it's what you say so slow it takes all night." Meanwhile, "Xmas Eve at Perkins" is a song of hope cleverly juxtaposed with a hopeless scene in which the narrator is "watching a worn-mouthed woman/arrange her deranged father in front/of his poached eggs and tapioca." There's wonderful personification with characters like Quiet in the poem "Where Quiet Works" and the creative child-like mind of Pluto, who in "Letter Back" makes up planetary-gibberish names for fun.

In "Impact," Sol takes a tragic, life-changing moment and translates it into a simile — "Inside is the man who will break our lives in half, like a biscuit" from the poem "Impact" — that deserves a standing ovation given its three-fold impact: visual, auditory and emotive. Despite his academic background, I believe Sol is a sensual writer. As this collection shows, the further he plunges into emotion the stronger his voice becomes. (Susana Molinolo)

## Sideways

by Heather Haley, \$14, 84 pgs, Anvil Press, 6 West 17th Ave., Vancouver BC, V5C 1Z4, [www.anvilpress.com](http://www.anvilpress.com)

*Sideways* is the first collection by Quebec-born west-coaster Heather Haley. Conspicuous absence proves to be a consistent strategy here — the poems are often about what is missing rather than what is there. Haley uses short conversational lyrics to sketch out a landscape of diminished figures, solipsistic characters who chose to live life in a lower emotional register rather than being overwhelmed by the world: "We were not frightened / of anything so far away" she writes in "Uranium Town," "I was born pink and healthy, / in spite of everything." Poem after poem probes this theme of disaffection and the burbling anger of resentment that accompanies it: "Sum of the Parts" has a gelded pinto whose "altered state / spooks the stallions," an emasculated horse for whom the "plain ... no longer exists." "Lena" has the eponymous character having an Alanis Morissette, "you oughta know" moment, "indulging herself / with the luxury of regret." One of the subjects of the triptych "Neighbours" is a sad, "smoldering" figure who is contemptuously accused of taking "vacations as banal as [his] life."

"Day-Long Hour on Killarney Lake Trail" is one of her more successful pieces in this regard, concentrating on kids missing the point during a back-to-nature trip with the family: "Randy carries just as much ammunition. / — a Game Boy Colour in glaring green — though / Junior has a Game Boy Advance and a PlayStation 2. / His Game Boy Colour — screaming yellow — / was nicked from our car after the accident. / Thievery unnerves him." Unfortunately, *Sideways* isn't quite unnerving enough: parts of the book are tired ("The burning bridges / in his wake / created a huge stumbling block / to intimacy"), simplistic (likening cars to bad-boy "I hate myself for loving you" boyfriends in the poem "Dying for the Pleasure") or weakly characterized (the portrait of the angry gangsta-girl narrator of "Valentine's Day" is unconvincing and reductive as is the "working girl" in the "Working Girl's Prayer"). The poetry has its moments, but is a little too airy and prosaic for

my tastes and ultimately suffers from a bad case of line-break-itis — my personal hobby-horse is the imposition of arbitrary and ill-thought out carriage returns to make otherwise good sentences look more like verse. (Bill Kennedy)

## Paper Hotel

by rob mcLennan, \$17.95, 120 pgs, Broken Jaw Press, Box 596 Stn A, Fredricton NB, E3B 5A6, [www.brokenjaw.com](http://www.brokenjaw.com)

Good 'n' juicy, and not just because there's a woodcut of a lemon on the first page. The first poem made me laugh and laugh. Why don't more poems do that? What I'm generally looking for from poetry is something that makes me say, "oh, yeah, that...I've felt that," something that makes me close the book and look out the bus window, audibly "hmm"-ing to myself. If that's simplistic, then I guess I'm a simple girl. When I get a new poetry book, I fold down the corners of my favourite poems. Most collections get four or five. This one has at least fifteen delicious earmarks.

In a time of missiles, this lowercased Ottawa guy writes what he titles "old standards," "remix," and "extended mix" amongst some of the heavier poems about relationship breakups, fathers and daughters, hangovers and overcast skies. He kicks off the collection with this little gem: "monday is a slow moving corpse / like saying that miss ruby red is a deep, / deep well that you fall into. oh that. / ah, yes. she smiles. he." That's from "only shooting stars make love slow," and hopefully I won't get sued for reprinting a whole poem. Later, in "premiere," I savour these lines: "a head full of car horns, dumb / as a sack of hammers, like a snowballs chance / / at 10am every morning, how the / hangover hits, in hell / not the first but not the last as well." I don't know what mcLennan's on, but I want some. I won't be lending this book out anytime soon. You will have to buy your own copy. *Paper Hotel* is stacked with frugal poems and industrious ampersands. Though I've never met him, I've already reached the conclusion the world needs more rob mcLennans. (Emily Schultz)

## how we play at it: a list

by matt robinson, \$15.95, 84 pgs, ECW Press, 2120 Queen Street East, Suite 200, Toronto, ON, M4E 1E2, [www.ecwpress.com](http://www.ecwpress.com)

What's not to like about a book that has a winsome trip-to-Canada's-Wonderland style family snapshot of Captain Caveman on the cover? The Captain, if you remember, was the prehistoric superhero who was defrosted by a trio of cartoon hotties ("The Teen Angels") to help them fight crime. Unfortunately, I'm not really sure what matt robinson's sophomore collection, *how we play at it*: a list, has to offer the Captain's fanbase — this book, for all of its initial emphasis on playfulness, is in a fact a very serious effort.

Robinson's book is a series of contemplative, subtle and remarkably controlled poems that work their way through familiar lyric territory (love, breakups, death, sex, hockey, family, autumn, the meaning of life) with refreshing reserve and intelligence. His primary strategy is to work outward from the small and banal until it yields a more general insight. A breakup poem about onions ("10. reduction — settling in; at the grocery store"), for instance, could be horribly silly but robinson

pulls it off with grace. Similarly, the "poem for my father" could be a maudlin disaster, but Robinson manages to capture the nature of the speaker's familiar bond through Dewdney-esque observations about stones: "i think my father understands / this; i think / dad appreciates the idea or, / maybe, it's the motion / of stones, that slow internal. a cool / quiet sex; it's firm paradoxical / ending ... a geological game of frozen / tag."

If I were to wish anything on this book it would be to embrace the playful promise of its cover. Maybe this is how Robinson plays at it, but these poems are far too careful to be surprising or fun; their insistence on control borders on oppression. In "practice," Robinson poses a revealing question: "i haven't decided if this is childishness / of a kind, or a kind / of spiritual enlightenment: that first / sort of intimacy I had — that i still have — with inanimate objects, with things / like old goalie sticks." I find this question disingenuous if only because it is already answered in the asking: these are poems that flirt with childishness but never embrace it. (Bill Kennedy)

## Non-Fiction

### Never Mind the Pollacks: A Rock 'N' Roll Novel

by Neal Pollack, \$36.95, 272 pgs, HarperCollins, [www.harpercanada.com](http://www.harpercanada.com)

Back in 2000, McSweeney's, the literary journal that Dave Eggers built, started publishing books. Their debut title was The Neal Pollack Anthology of American Literature, an incisive parody of machismo celebrity journalism. Through relentless touring and blogging ([www.nealpollack.com](http://www.nealpollack.com)), Pollack (a former staff writer at the Chicago Reader) has eked out a strange journalistic niche based on his ability to puncture the "blather that floods our computer screens and magazine racks, stuff that passes for profound but is really just pompous filler." To some surprise, this angry young man has managed to trick mainstream publishers into bankrolling his big bad rants.

Enter Never Mind the Pollacks, a novel that skewers the rock industry and the critics who created it. The story begins with Paul St. Pierre, a rock critic, receiving the news that Neal Pollack, the greatest rock critic in history, is dead. St. Pierre feels compelled to write Neal's biography, a project that lasts over eight years and ruins his life. This novel reads like a Who's Who of rock. The names are real but the story is completely fictional — Mick Jagger an avid bridge player? Elvis Presley collected Alice Cooper albums? Please let it be true.

Neal Pollack, the character, grew up in a household in which The Caissons Go Rolling Along was the only song ever played. One day Neal snaps and tosses the record out the window. His mother sees this act as a sign of musical genius; his father sees it as confirmation that his son is an idiot.

Chance meetings and freak accidents make up Neal's life. Neal introduces Elvis to Sam Phillips. Neal bumps into Jann Wenner of Rolling Stone and is hired

after smashing a Jimi Hendrix album. Neal hands in his first review, a random striking of typewriter keys. He is fired. And so begins the self-destructive pattern of Neal's life.

Never Mind is filled with farfetched but hysterical scenes — Neal turns an innocent James Osterberg into Iggy Pop; gets Dee Dee Ramone out of Glam Rock; and talks Joey into letting Neal join the band as Smokey Ramone. Neal is a rock critic and a prophet who creates icons only to destroy them — and himself in the process. Is it possible to love a character who mainlines cough syrup, followed by drain cleaner and a bourbon chaser? The answer, thankfully, is Yes. (Laura M. Miller)

## Dangerous Kitchen: The Subversive World of Zappa

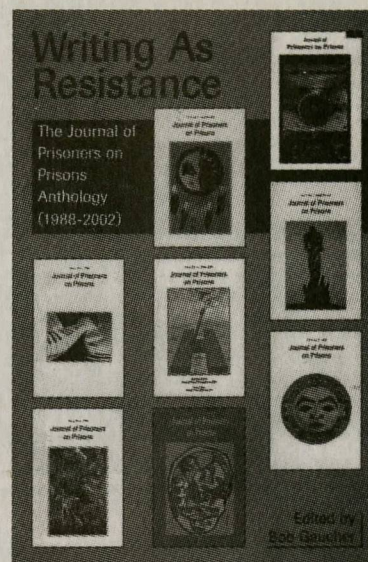
by Kevin Courrier, \$24.95, 553 pgs, ECW Press, 2120 Queen Street East, Suite 200, Toronto ON, M4E 1E2, [www.ecwpress.com](http://www.ecwpress.com)

Legions of Zappa films will argue that he was a musical genius. Others think he was little more than a musically talented buffoon. In over 40 albums recorded between 1965 and his death from prostate cancer in 1993, Zappa broke every musical norm and all the rules of good taste with Lenny Bruce-style social satire overtop innovative compositions. With songs like "Broken Hearts are for Assholes" and "Titties 'n Beer," it's easy to see why Zappa was dismissed as a guitar wielding class clown who mocked whoever and whatever he wished. Regardless of opinion, few who judged Zappa shared his vast musical knowledge, a prerequisite to properly assess his music. "I hate to be a guy sitting around saying, 'I'm misunderstood,'" Zappa once said, "but it's not even a matter of being misunderstood. It's a matter of being uncomprehended."

In Dangerous Kitchen, Kevin Courrier provides the information and argument necessary to comprehend a man far stranger than the times he lived through. Courrier is a Zappa fan, but he's not trying to add to the myths — he's trying to dispel them: that Zappa was a drug addict, that Zappa was a fetishist, that Zappa was an authoritarian bastard. (That last one is harder to dispel than others.) Taking a critical look at the man and his times, Courrier argues that Zappa was a musical utopian who made no distinction between classical music and 50s doo wop. Here are the albums, arrests, tours, debacles, battles, bandmates, facts and influences that made Frank Zappa's life and music so interesting.

Tracing Zappa's entire career, Dangerous Kitchen never fails to provide appropriate context. Whether it's his attack on the hippie sub-culture in the 1960s, his sneers at disco in the 70s, or going up against congress in the 80s to fight censorship, this book covers the most important elements of the legend of Frank Zappa without adding to the myth.

Courrier does an excellent job of detailing the music and musicians that informed Zappa's style and attitude. By drawing links to musical antecedents including Igor Stravinsky, Charles Ives, and Zappa's hero Edgar Varese — whose music rebelled against



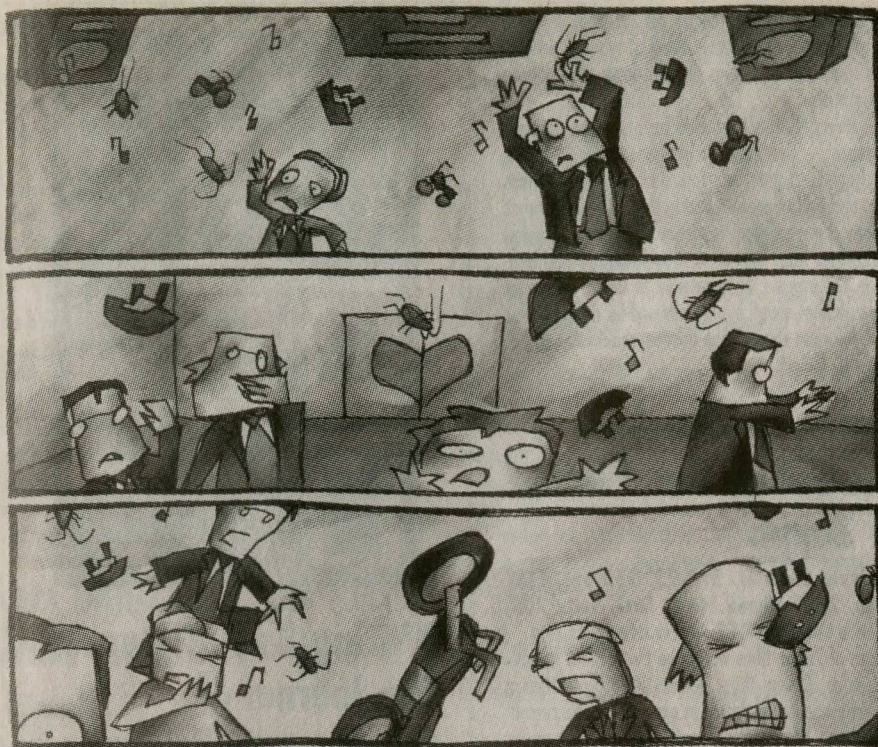
## Writing As Resistance: The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons Anthology (1988-2002)

edited by Bob Gaucher, \$39.95, 538 pgs, Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 180 Bloor St. West, Suite 1202, Toronto ON, M5S 2V6, [www.cspi.org](http://www.cspi.org)

Writing As Resistance (WAR) is a collection of some of the best activist, academic, and personal writing from The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons. The anthology explores such issues as capital punishment; racism, classism, and sexism (this section is aptly titled "Control of the Dangerous Classes"); marionization (the power taken by staff to punish prisoners in whatever way they want); and the high suicide rate among prisoners.

Many of the writers are long-time contributors to the journal and have been on the journal's board. These first-hand accounts show how prison privatization results in longer sentences and harsher prison conditions. Some of the writers are internationally recognized as political prisoners, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal and Little Rock Reed, and have won prizes for their writing. Some of the writers are prisoners who have recently been imprisoned for the first time. All of the writing is strong, intimate, and riveting.

Like the journal, Writing As Resistance is an important work, which confronts the stereotype of the prisoner as a monster, and humanizes the prisoner by allowing her/his voice to be heard. Each contribution is powerful separately, but, when collected together, show the importance of both individual and collective struggle against injustice. Resistance illustrates that the act of writing is a means of survival, of maintaining your sense of identity and sanity. WAR is a call to arms — to pick up your pen and fight back. (Michele Collins)



Romanticism in the nineteenth century — along with contemporaries like blues man Johnny “Guitar” Watson, 50s R&B and doo-wop, Courrier explores the vast array of music that influenced Zappa’s career.

Often, however, Courrier lapses into album synopsis. Devotees to the cult of Zappa may find these passages tedious, because if you already own the record you don’t need to know what each song sounds like or what order they’re put in. That said, *Dangerous Kitchen* is a good book for Zappa fans and an excellent book for the curious but uninitiated. (Dave McGinn)

## From Someplace Else: A Memoir

by Ralph Osborne, \$22.95, 312 pgs, ECW Press, 2120 Queen Street East, Suite 200, Toronto ON, M4E 1E2, [www.ecwpress.com](http://www.ecwpress.com)

Anyone who wasn’t around for the 1960s is familiar with the Time-Life (or Wonder Years) version of events. But the personal has become lost in the facts. What was it like to be alive, full of hope, and taking acid circa 1967?

From *Someplace Else* is a first person account of what the 60s were like, not to an entire generation, but to just one man. The book spans Ralph Osborne’s entire life, from growing up poor on Canada’s east coast, living in London and Regina, meeting Leonard Cohen, fathering a child, working as a janitor and dropping acid for the first time.

At the centre of *Someplace* is the legendary Rochdale College. A free university in Toronto, Rochdale was a doomed experiment that was, for a while, the embodiment of the counter-culture. The place drew everyone who rejected the world as it stood. “The streets at the time were teeming with young people who had left home, voluntarily and otherwise, in search of peace,

by Kid Koala

love, and groovy. A free university where I am my own teacher and my own student? Sign me up.”

Since its demise, Rochdale has suffered the fate of lesser-legends — the details have all been obscured. You might expect to find them here, considering Osborne was Rochdale’s general manager for two years during its heyday, but you won’t. After reading *Someplace* I know as much about Rochdale College as I do about my own university dorm. People came in and out of my room getting high too, and I, like the author, also made a bong.

*Someplace* won’t tell you when Rochdale began or when it ended, it won’t give you numbers and dates or recount stories picked up by the mainstream media. Osborne is not out to set the facts straight. He only means to touch on what Rochdale meant to him, and he does an excellent job. *Someplace* gives readers a feeling for what it was like to live in Rochdale and its era. You won’t find facts here, and the cynical and disaffected may cringe at anyone who takes the teachings of Lao Tzu seriously. But if you have ever wondered what life was like in Rochdale College, this book is a good place to start. (Dave McGinn)

## How We Eat

by Leon Rappoport, \$19.95, 212 pgs, ECW Press, 2120 Queen Street East, Suite 200, Toronto ON, M4E 1E2

This book is an overview of how we approach and understand food in our culture. I was hoping for something more scholarly, but maybe that’s a good thing. The lack of facts made this book easy and enjoyable to read. It’s not a novel, nor a textbook, and Rappoport provides so many anecdotes it feels like a lesson from your kinda cool gym teacher.

However, I didn’t feel that Rappoport dug deep enough into any of the issues he raised. For example, the chapter on food pathologies (essentially eating too much or eating too little) discussed how people eat too much or eat too little. I kept turning the pages hoping for something I hadn’t heard on Oprah or Jerry Springer, but alas, it seems that eating disorders are caused by “psychological forces.”

Rappoport does cover topics that you haven’t discussed ad nausea in your grade nine Family Studies class, like food ideologies (e.g. North Americans don’t have a real taste for puppy dogs). He also talks about the fact that there are three main things we’re looking for in a foodstuff: “hedonism, nutritionism and spiritualism.” Unfortunately, they’re hard to get all in one product. The funniest thing in the whole book was this one little aside to Steve Jobs, where Rappoport is talking about Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. He says, “No bible scholar would have named his computer the Apple.”

If you’ve researched veganism or vegetarianism already, you might not get that much out of this book, but if you’re starting to think more about what food you put into your body — and why — then *How We Eat* is an interesting read. (Gillian Best)

## Evasion

by the Evasion Kid, \$6, 278 pgs, CrimethInc. HQ, 2695 Rangewood Drive, Atlanta GA, 30345, [www.crimethink.com](http://www.crimethink.com)

In the aftermath of high school graduation, most people are presented with two options: further your education by attending university or get out of mom and dad’s basement by getting a job and transforming yourself into a useful, productive member of society. When the Evasion Kid’s parents gave him a September 1 deadline to get a job, go to school, or get the hell out of their house; this youth said “fuck it” to those options and invented another alternative. He decided to embrace the freedom that comes with unemployment and the ability to get whatever you want for free by taking it from under the noses of mall security guards and by salvaging treasures from suburbia dumpsters. This is not a book about how hard it is out there on the street. It doesn’t leave us with an I’m-much-better-now-that-I’m-off-the-streets-be-careful-all-you-kids-not-to-follow-in-my-hobo-footsteps moment at the end of it all. Instead this book celebrates the vagrant lifestyle of hopping trains, hitchhiking, and petty theft. The Evasion Kid is starting a revolution and wants everyone to join. He even goes as far as to give his readers detailed instructions in the art of theft, riding the rails, and assorted scamming.

“Unemployment,” the Evasion Kid writes, “when one’s role in life shifts from passive observer to active participant ... When we stopped shopping inside stores and began shopping in back ... When we looked at the big, crazy urban chaos and suburban sprawl, and it all began to look suspiciously close to a big playground.” Evasion is meant to glorify vagrant adventure books like *On the Road*. Does it succeed as such? Not really. The Evasion Kid is no Kerouac, but he tries. The writing is a little sketchy; the plot often fails to develop, not to mention the Evasion Kid’s tendency to repeat the same clichéd lines about summer and how “the kids started taking everything back.” Still, the Evasion Kid is cool. He

infiltrates rich resorts. He steals stuff in really creative ways. He eats food from dumpsters and never gets sick. Yay Evasion Kid! I say read this book, but don't even think about buying it. Evasion is definitely meant to be stolen. (Audrey Gagnon)

## The Cedar Surf

by Grant Shilling, \$16, 84 pgs, New Star Books, 107-3477 Commercial St., Vancouver BC, V5N 4E8, [www.NewStarBooks.com](http://www.NewStarBooks.com)

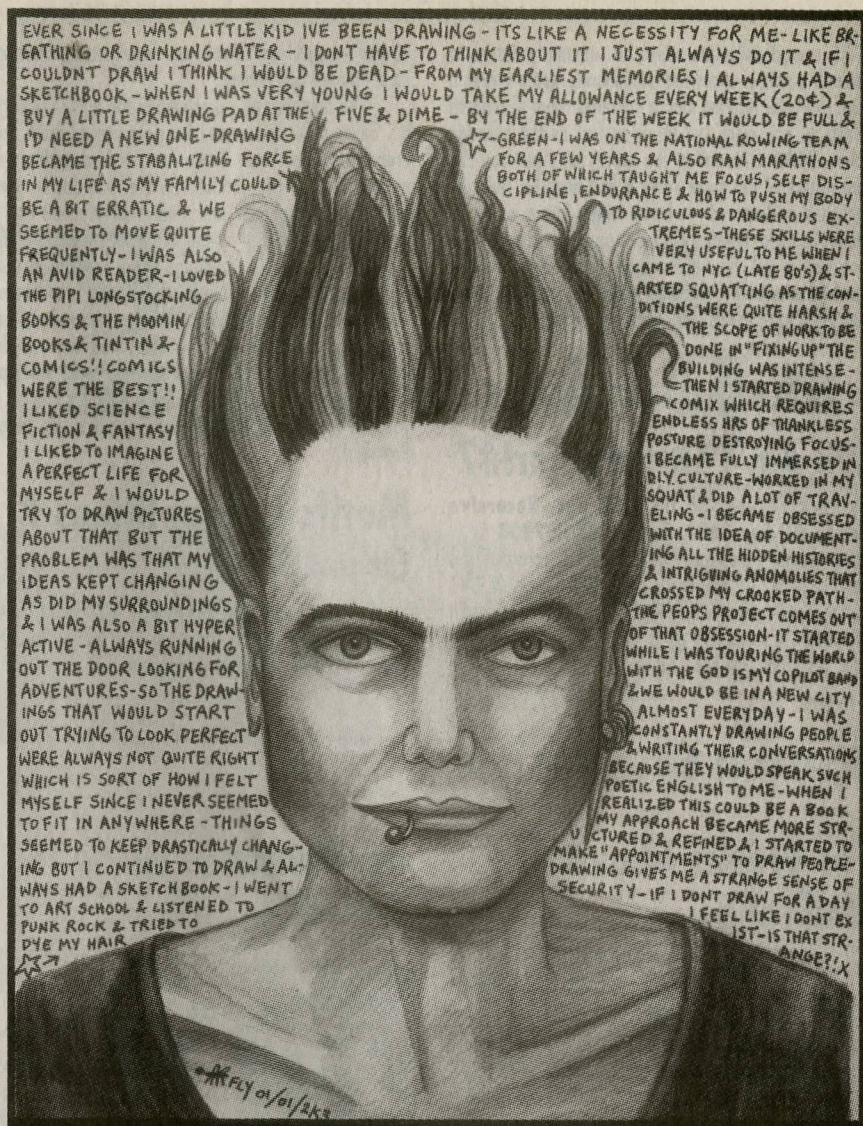
This is a tidy history of British Columbia surfing that also chronicles Vancouver Island and its move from extremely rural retreat to semi-urban playground. Written by Grant Shilling, best known for his work as editor of the now sadly defunct free newspaper the Gulf Islands Gazette, it spans roughly the mid-50s to the present day. The goal here is not a comprehensive chronicle, but instead a cross-section of the history of a region, all examined through the microscope of surfing. Why surfing? Because, as the writing abundantly makes clear, Shilling loves the sport. But more importantly, surfing works here as a kind of metaphor. Early BC surfers made their own boards, built their own huts on empty beaches largely cut off from civilization, and taught themselves how to ride the waves. Today's surfers cruise into places like Tofino for the day, buy lavish gear from shops, crowd locals out of the best spots, and annoy the locals who nevertheless depend on them for their cash. Still, Shilling doesn't condemn or lament, he simply tells the story through the words of people who have been there, focussing on figures like Barbara Oke and Steve Johnson, who lived on Sombrio Beach for 16 years and raised 11 surfer children in a "cedar home they built themselves." Ultimately, Shilling's message is as hopeful as it is nostalgic. As Ucluelet-based surfboard maker Billy Leach puts it, "Surf is a resource that can't be taken away from us. If you could harvest it, it wouldn't be here. It would have been gone." (Hal Niedzviecki)

## Graphic Novels

### Peops : Portraits and Stories of People

by Fly, graphic novel, \$31, 195 pgs, Soft Skull Press, 71 Bond Street, Brooklyn NY, USA 11217, [www.softskull.com](http://www.softskull.com)

There is a part of my craven junior capitalist heart — the part not concerned with running water, flushing toilets and basic hygiene — that wonders what it would be like to have led the life lived by Canadian-born, world-based artist Fly. Having never slept on the floor of Gilman Street or emptied a piss bucket at a Lower East Side squat I can, however, vicariously partake in Fly's portraits of people on, under, and over the edge of alternative living. During her tenure as bassist for the criminally underrated God Is My Co-Pilot, Fly began interviewing and sketching every person she met on the road, and, later, anyone she met, period. Like a Manic-Panicked Studs Turkel, her pen has captured a vast, rich, heartbreaking cross-section of the world. John Zorn, her neighbour, is caught in a paranoid moment of candor while "Nathan from Sarnia" (a teenager who showed up on her doorstep) bemoans his chemically saturated



hometown. Even if you're not moved by tales of — good lord — finding tofu at the bottom of a dumpster, you'll enjoy the weird sense of fealty from recognizing a few people in this book. (Brian Joseph Davis)

### Tiny Giants

by Nate Powell, \$15 US, 188 pgs, Soft Skull Press, 71 Bond Street, Brooklyn NY, 11217, [www.softskull.com](http://www.softskull.com)

Since I live in a country that produces terrible novels, it is quite the bummer to come across the work of Nate Powell and discover someone who wrenches more subtle truth, surreal flourishes, and aching emotions from the crude medium of comics than most authors do with 400 pages and a sepia-toned cover photo from the Bettman Archive. Collecting all the self-published comics of Powell, Tiny Giants soars across the page and past its panels as it provides stories of various suburban flaneurs avoiding work and love as they suffer generalized feelings of dread. Any two pages of this tome could earn Powell the title of Teenage Tolstoy, yet like all of us, his strident, political moments are his weaker ones. But then again, Powell is so deft at narrative and characterization that

by Fly

even his weak moments are salvageable. Be warned: there is no story per se, rather vignettes whose titles have wisely been kept to a minimum to ensure maximum free-association. These panels could be and probably are your life, your own memories of first kisses obscured by intrusions of scenes from a thriller. Stunningly assured and filled with gravitas, Tiny Giants might be the future of the novel. (Brian Joseph Davis)

### Nufonia Must Fall

by Kid Koala, \$29.95, 339 pgs, ECW Press, 2120 Queen Street West, Suite 200, Toronto ON, M4E 1E2, [www.ecwpress.com](http://www.ecwpress.com)

This cute little book offers one more reason why turntablist Kid Koala is so awesome. Through a series of beautiful, simple sketches, Koala tells of a turbulent love story between a girl and a robot. The girl's name is Malorie. She works as a robotics engineer for an evil mega-corporation. She's overworked and in need of a vacation. She's lonely too and could use a friend. Nufonia is a working-class robot. He works in a deli. He finds comfort

in his record collection which he constantly listens to through a pair of oversized headphones. Koala throws a third character into the mix: a nameless robot so modern it can do any work ten times as fast as the average robot. Without revealing too much, let's just say the appearance of this super robot is bad news for Nufonia. His world is shattered — he no longer knows where he fits in. To make things even more complicated he falls in love with a girl. How does one review a book with no words? I'm not sure, but I do know that repeated viewings are a must in this case. (Audrey Gagnon)

## Miscellaneous

### We Ain't Got No Car!#7

by Jack Saturn, \$8 US, 251 pgs, Recursive Delete, PO Box 3824, Portland OR, 97208

In the author's bio, Jack Saturn says he "considers this thing to be both a zine and a book, simultaneously." It's best that you look at it that way. Because if you look at it as a book, it's not very good, but if you look at it as a zine, it's great. For book I'd say "tedious," but for zine

I'd say "meticulous." Book: self-indulgent and boring. Zine: intimate and honest.

The narrator, also presumably the author (though it's never safe to assume) has just moved from San Francisco to Portland, Oregon and is finding his way around this new city and his new life. One day he goes out to buy an umbrella, and it takes all day. This isn't a Joycean experiment, it's more like a sad, autobiographical truth, but Jack's ramblings along the way are so endearing that I forgive him. Jack is totally unmotivated and has no life, and if I didn't like him so much I'd call him a bum. But I do like him — this bookzine reads like a weblog, so I feel as if I know this guy really well and can appreciate his foibles and shortcomings. Read this if you, like Jack, have plenty of time on your hands. (Anna Bowness)

### Motifs & Repetitions & Other Plays

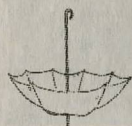
by C.E. Gatchalian, \$14.95, 125 pgs, The Writers' Collective, Cranston, The New Hogarth Press, PO Box 19614, Vancouver, BC, V5T 4E7

I like Samuel Beckett and Edward Albee, and so I like C.E. Gatchalian too. He wears his influences on his sleeve, but he's not a copycat. He takes the minimalism and experiments of Beckett, plus the brutal domesticity and nonstop discomfiture of Albee and adds a queer twist of his own. His characters are all floundering and longing; they are gay and straight, sad and happy, surrendered and hopeful. There are three plays in this collection, and one monologue. Hands is an uncomfortable family drama whose loudest announcement is never said aloud, despite all the yelling. Claire is a weird experiment that brings four characters together but doesn't let them touch, like parallel lines. Star is a too-poetic, too-sparse monologue. Motifs & Repetitions, the title play, is a fucking masterpiece. Hardly anything in this play is actually said — there are probably a hundred words in the whole thing, and nobody talks to each other — but each of Gatchalian's words weighs a thousand pounds. His silences are equally heavy and you're left feeling drained and exhausted. If you like this sort of thing — and many people don't — then Gatchalian is your man. (Anna Bowness)

## Pencil Shavings

### For Weeks Above the Umbrella

For Weeks Above the Umbrella



(10-07 100-10)

by Todd Dills, \$10, 69 pgs, www.the2ndhand.com

Chicago word monkey Todd Dills is a drunk tourist with an M.A. in English and superb comic timing. These are McSweeney's-style articles, minus the too-cool-for-you pretension, worth the price of

admission alone for his Toronto diary wherein Dills and sidekick Skunk Ape discover they generate enemies effortlessly.

### Foreigners and Other Familiar Faces

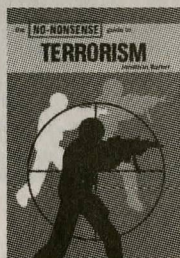


by Mark Rich, \$5 US, 66 pgs, www.smallbeerpress.com.

What a jumble: a memo from an alien on selecting the best specimens ("On the Collection of Humans"); a story about wife-swapping and flower beds (Mrs. Hewitt's Tulips) and an executive who torches his own dick ("Ashes of Penis Thrown

to Sea"). Rich's confident and compact prose is spiked with sci-fi quirks that veer in unexpected but ever-rewarding directions.

### No-Nonsense Guide to Terrorism

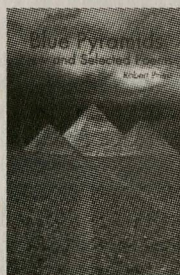


by Jonathan Barker, \$15, 144 pgs, www.btlbooks.com

Tired of being soundbitten to death by choreographed press conferences designed to market and brand the War On Terrorism? Barker provides clarity and historical context (replete with footnotes) while probing the moral equations

and consequences of Bush Inc.'s response to 9/11.

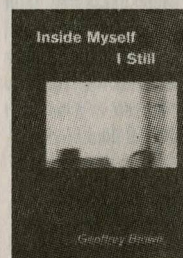
### Blue Pyramids: New and Selected Poems



by Robert Priest, \$16.95, www.ecwpress.com

Smart, inventive poems (witness: "Several Other Uses for a Halo") that rarely irritate (witness: "Education of Shit"). Also includes a few songs, complete with accompanying melodies, plus musings on the usual (and unusual) suspects like death, sex, birth, male genitalia and tall women.

### Inside Myself I Still



by Geoffrey Brown, \$12.95, 63 pgs, www.gutterpress.com

This tiny novella (small size and page count) is a clipped, intentionally repetitive textural experiment that evokes the literary equivalent of hypnosis through its calm and measured prose. Obsession expressed through bursts of violence and

desire create an elliptical narrative of omission, haste and confusion.

### Lickin' the Beaters: Low Fat Vegan Desserts



by Sive Moffat, \$17 PPD, 96 pgs, beaterlicker@yahoo.com

A punky, self-published collection of ethical recipes that nourishes both tummy and soul. Cute, funny illustrations by eight artists, including

Allyson Mitchell and Joe Ollmann, mixed with cut-and-paste design, help spice and leaven this zine-y collection of tasty treats.

# Touring, Touring, It's Never Boring

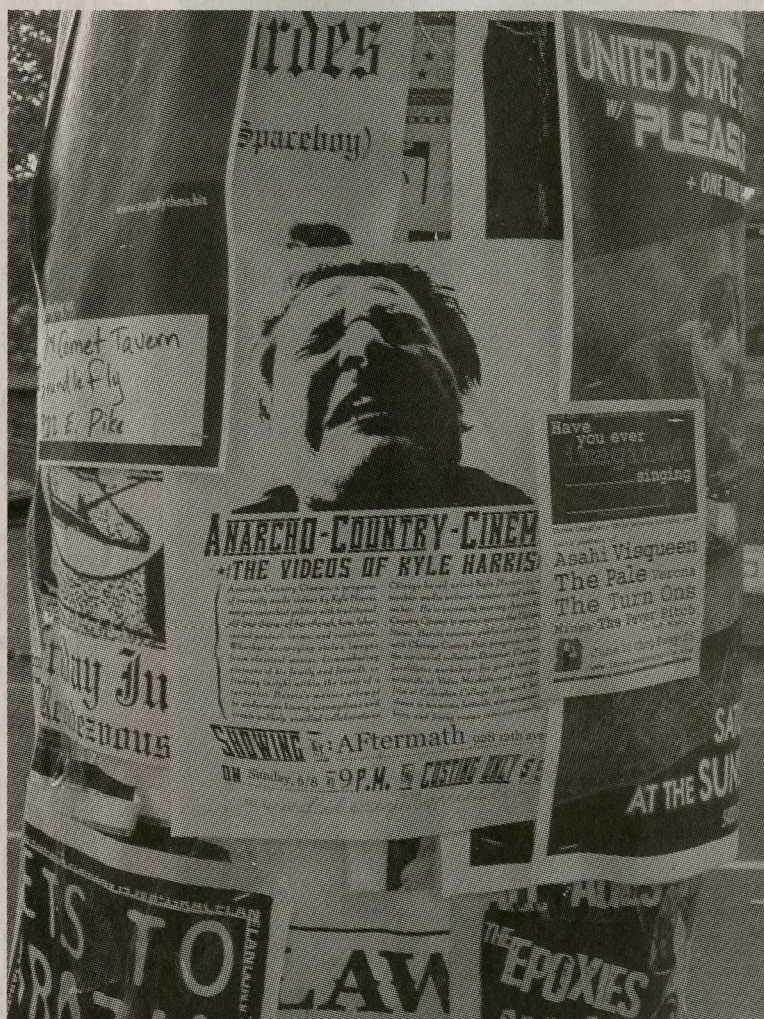
by Jonathan Culp

**Chaos** is the most hated enemy of power, so if you are an enemy of power yourself, why not make your life a little more chaotic and organize a film and video screening tour? The lengthier and farther-flung the better, of course. And if that's not chaotic enough, try writing about touring when the tour is actually happening! Try finding a computer on the Alaska Highway!

Nonetheless, even in the midst of the frenzy it is easy to remember why I'm doing this. The difference between selling your movie to a broker, who then has it inserted into the appropriate venue and reports the results numerically, and lugging the movie around yourself from great unknown to great unknown, is the difference between service and struggle. It's one path to the realization that the current structure is fucked, and a good way to test our own ideas about change.

In hour-long, library-hopping bursts from Collingwood to Whitehorse, I do manage to find evidence that the film tour is blossoming into an actual subculture, one with some common values and ideas. This affinity is spontaneous, but it could turn into a movement if somebody's not careful.

"I felt alienated in the large and expensive festival scene," says Kyle Harris of the Anarcho-Country Cinema tour.



"People kept telling me that those festivals needed corporate sponsorships and entry fees to survive. I felt that there had to be a way to show my work outside of those structures — I figured if I was going to get an audience to watch the work without the burden of entry fees and corporate profiteering, I'd have to do it myself."

Very similar sentiments can be found in Vanessa Renwick and Bill Daniel's North America-wide joint film tour. "By actively creating and supporting independent screening spaces, media artists and curators are carving out a network of places for people to see and hear non-corporate-controlled ideas. This tour is made possible not by government or corporate funding, but by the accessibility afforded by this supportive network of venues," they proclaim.

"Bill's part of the show is a 2-projector, hobo-campfire installation on the secret world of hobo graffiti," Renwick explains in an email interview. "Because it requires a 20x20 sq. ft. floor space at least, and works best outside, we steered clear of most traditional film venues... we want to get out of that and meet people that would never go to film shows. We didn't just show up with a dvd and say 'here.'"

The increasingly legendary Lost Film Festival, meanwhile, stages a telling Q & A with Scott Beibin for their press release: "This is about breaking the illusions cast by Hollywood & CNN — You won't see a lot of these at typical indie festivals."

No wonder we roam the face of the earth — with corporation and state both defined as enemies of our trade, and the

nominal "indie festival" finally cast into the same fiery pit, we are out looking for new options. The search is leading us all over the place — sometimes even skirting the influences we declaim against (such as, ahem, my current state-funded status), but always measuring our work with an eye on something radically better.

For many of us, getting out of the cin-ee-ma is a necessary step in creating a direct dialogue, in changing the relationship of work and audience into something less controlled. This can mean a

simple re-grounding in the turf of a compatible community. Lost Film Fest and Kinofist Imageworks have done extensive screenings with punk bands, and Marc Moscato's "Work Sucks Tour" has also done co-presentations with bohemians of various stripes. A similar situation arises in the touring of activist videos, logistics for which are often based on affinity around the video's carefully articulated political message.


In all these examples, the venues are instrumental in the impact of the event;

in many, the foreknowledge of the specific setting has influenced the entire artistic approach. This can even extend to the abandonment of seats-and-screen for more self-conscious constructs.

Harris, who disdains activist documentary ('I would prefer to throw a brick than represent someone else doing it. I hate propaganda.'), takes things a step further, using his presence to swap roles with the audience. "In 'This is Not a Rape' the audience is illuminated by the brightness of the screen. Their performance as audience is critical to the work. It's always what I'm watching as my movies play."

This may not sound like anything new or exciting — having not seen it, I can't say. But when Harris talks about the need to address "the micropolitical problems of beauty and despair," I think of the way activism can mutate into the rote transmission of messages, when it really needs to be about a redefinition of changing relationships. In this sense, of course, touring is a perfect match of agenda and tactic, because it exposes both artist and audience to scrutiny, and so brings into question these set categories, opens up new possibilities.

This is where the chaos comes in. Listen to Harris on the kickoff of his own tour: "My first show was in Billings Montana at 'The Madriver Microcinema.' I walked into a coffee shop and realized that the microcinema was a TV and that the lights wouldn't turn off. Nobody was there for the show. Everybody was there to play music at an open mic night. Whenever people looked up at the small TV they laughed, rolled their eyes and resumed talking. I showed some of my most personal explorations to an audience that could care less. It was a nightmare."

With every tour guaranteed a bundle of shows like this, it's no wonder people are already talking about long-term vision, about how to build on and elaborate the methods that the film tour nurtures. Scott's web site talks about file-sharing initiatives, and an effort to document venues in Europe; in my case, I'm using my tour to build a database of Canadian filmmaking and touring that could begin the process of eliminating middlemen from the filmgoing ritual. Horizontal integration, anyone? The train is leaving the station. 

For more information about film tours, check out [www.libertymovies.com](http://www.libertymovies.com) (Kyle Harris), [www.odoka.org](http://www.odoka.org) (Vanessa Renwick), and [www.lostfilmfestival.com](http://www.lostfilmfestival.com) (Scott Beibin). Jonathan Culp's "Recycled Cinema" roadshow concludes at Toronto's Cinecycle on November 22.

# "In the beginning"

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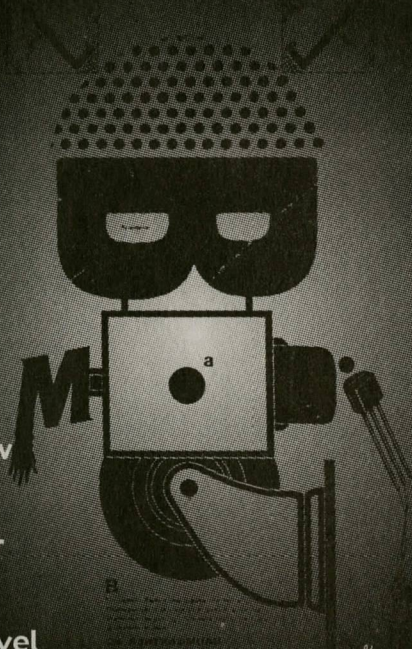


Illustration by Mark Laliberte

# What Is Machinima?

by James King

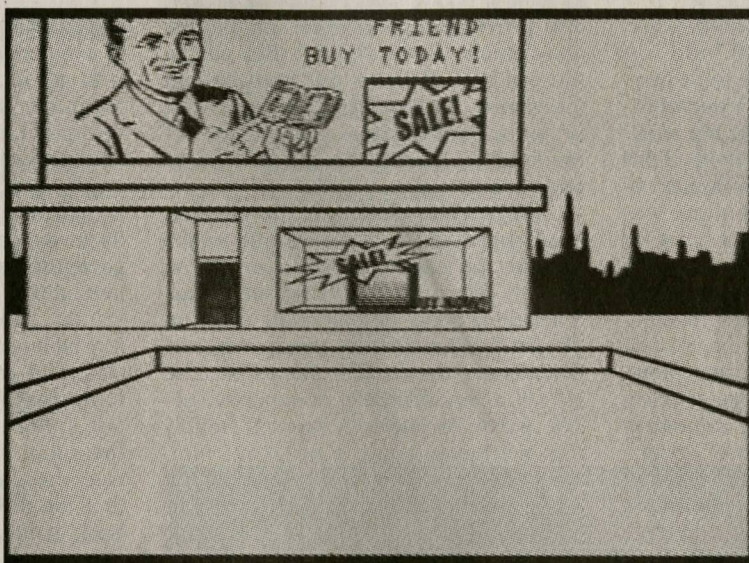
**Machinima (ma-SHEEN-nay-maw)**

A cool name. Machine animation. D.I.Y. C.G.I.. Film making without film, without video, without real locations, without real actors (just voices). Machinima means essentially hacking into computer games, hijacking their models, artwork, animations, etc., and using it to create a fictional narrative which can be dumped on Machinima.com and watched like a short film. It's like rewriting your favourite book or re-editing your favourite film. It's a digital artistic chop shop.

You take what's familiar and fuck with it.

The heart of it all is still filmmaking, however. The game is only the graphic vessel for the film to appear. Game companies spend millions of dollars on research and development, meticulously building character sprites, locations, animations, and sound — painstakingly ensuring the best game (max fun / profit). The game is released, becomes wildly successful, circulating through the hum of hard-drives, cpu's and graphic cards of every 24/7, \$1.5/hr basement L(ocal)A(rea)N(etwork) party in the city. Give it a month, then the users (gamers) become antsy, they need something new, so they begin to play around with the games, just to see what they can do. The game falls into the hands of Machinima filmmakers, and is transformed.

Major game companies aren't averse to this though. Quake and Doom have had their source codes (blueprints)



released for a few years now, unleashing the mass-anonymous orb of Internet dwellers to fashion "mods" — new levels, sounds, music, images, and effects. Mods are freely spread around public game sites. This is why you can play Doom while listening to a MIDI-cover of prince's "Purple Rain," and eliminate a slew of Bugs Bunnies yelling Evil Dead quotes at you and throwing flaming turds with a sawed off fish gun (all in the game, of course). And according to the guys at Dead on Que Productions, Machinima is ready to take on any new game system that follows. "Newer games will offer more versatility to the Machinima filmmaker...we think in the near future, it may be something supported by game companies, but who knows. It may all grow into something bigger."

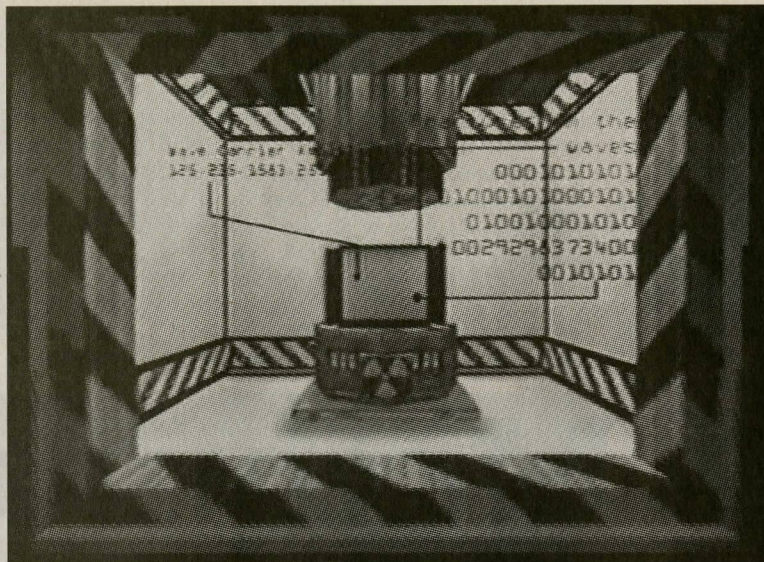
Machinima takes the mod element a little further. It all comes down to hacking into the "game engine" — which is just

the core of the game that translates the math into pretty pictures, like exploding heads, or ...Yoshi. Machinima can either use the characters and pictures that are in the games, or create its own and then place them into the environment. Once that's done, the fun begins. You wield Kubrick-like control over the production. And for those of you who have glazed over their 1000th "making of" DVD extra on the spectacularly difficult task of making the latest Pixar pic, rest assured that Machinima will have none of that. It's done entirely in real-time, recorded as the game plays. No slow CGI here.

Imagine you haven't showered, dressed, or fed yourself properly and you can feel the particles in your ass slowly expand and separate to actualize that union between it and your seat. Now imagine you have to be at a film shoot in three minutes. Call it a cheap slogan, but with Machinima, it's possible! Band together some rigs (computers) via networking, fire up the multi-player function of the game and you have a virtual shoot (minus the catering and frantic head-mic people). For this process to work, the majority of Machinima films use first-person shooters as their base (you know, the ones that piss off congressmen because they think that the games are training grounds for fighting Hell demons on Mars). This makes everything easier because, essentially, the camera man is one of the gamers that watches the action

through his game view. It's like the camera man grafts a camera to his forehead and walked around the set shooting everything.

For me, Machinima first surfaced as another random Internet "thing-I-should-check-out" from one of my no-sleep ICQ friends. I checked out a short little matrix-type film (the Matrix 4x1 shorts by Strange Company) — and thought it was actually pretty cool (this was in 1999) because these were films from the games I was actually playing. Skip ahead a few years, and for some reason it comes up again — another random wee-hours Internet skimming and I land on Machinima.com. Up until recently, Machinima existed as an Internet word-of-mouth style awareness — no big press. For the guys at Dead on Que Productions (who spoke collectively to me through e-mail), stumbling onto Machinima was "Pure accident. We first made a spoof for PC gamer using Half-Life, and when we later decided to make a full-length cinematic we were informed that the medium had a name...." From there the relative anonymity of Machinima became pretty damn appealing as a "challenge of doing something new and exciting, something that people have only yet to hear about," they say. The fact that Machinima is both quick to produce and easy to distribute



also provides a good draw for the up-and-coming digital director. But pulling those digital directors out from behind the games can be difficult at times. Fact is, most people have never heard of Machinima (count yourself privileged now for knowing).

Hugh Hancock, one of the founders of Machinima.com, and a member of the production team Strange Company, recently discussed this very problem on Machinima.com. Despite some spots on TV and some major sites, magazines, and newspapers, the medium suffers because it's still a very computer-community specific entity. As Hancock says it's "simply that we haven't had a breakout film. Sure, films have had a lot of success, but we've not had the Dogme 95 or 'Blair

Witch Project' equivalents that digital video has had." Machinima seems poised in a little state of limbo between the underground Internet movement it is, and the potential for commercial success.

This spring, I ran a mini-Machinima film fest at the University of Toronto and the recurring question I got when promoting it was, of course, "what the hell is Machinima?" Bridging the gap between the non-computer community (a.k.a. reality-people) and the world of Machinima will be the

biggest obstacle for the medium. The key to overcoming this (in small steps at least) is to get more little projects such as Jim Munroe's "My Trip to Liberty City" which appears on Novel Amusements ([www.novelamusements.org](http://www.novelamusements.org)) and banks on the popularity of Grand Theft Auto 3 by making a visual travel-log of violent little escapades. The feeling of watching a computer game fades away, replaced instead by a film experience.

At the helm of Machinima is Machinima.com: the apex for films, articles, and anything to do with the new form. Machinima.com held its first film fest in Mesquite, Texas last August with the support of nVIDIA (a major video card manufacturer). It was so successful that the next one is being held in New York at the American Museum for the Moving Image in October 2003. Hell, even an Academy for Machinima Arts has been founded ([www.machinima.org](http://www.machinima.org))! As well, Mr. Hancock's ambitious Machinima squad Strange Company is currently working on a variety of large projects with different organizations, including the BBC — though, due to contractual obligations, he's being pretty secretive about the whole thing.

Machinima is resting in a pretty nice spot right now — just underneath the radar of most of the people you'll see walking down the street — but with the potential to become something really huge. The whole principle of it rests on infiltrating existing computer games to create one's own films, using the might of major game companies for one's own means. It avoids the expenses caught up with typical Hollywood CGI, and when it floats from the relative obscurity where it's treading right now, Machinima will find the respect and (computer) screen time it rightly deserves. *GR*

## Dunkirk

### Machinima Film

So we have these conservative senators that have for years been demonizing the computer-game industry for its use of violence, and how they see it as transferring onto those poor susceptible youth the idea that violence is okay. Then you have these same conservative souls supporting war. Then you have a surge of war-related computer games hitting the market without a peep from these senators. Then you have the release of Dunkirk — the first epic machinima war film. A computer game war film. These sorts of things always work in strange ways. Dunkirk's presentation is akin to a Spielberg or Coppola feature (if they had no money and recruited digital actors), from the opening musical arrangement to the battle sequences and story-line. The story follows a young war photographer during the 1940 fight at Dunkirk — where allied soldiers were pinned to the coast against an onslaught of German forces — requiring a great escape. The story plays out simply enough (though the ending seems to find that overly-sympathetic cheese factor pretty easily), moving along via a series of notes from the photographer. The film is interesting in

that it has no voice-over or scripted dialogue, but just carries you from war ships, to planes to the ground like some kind of poor war ghost that can't find his lost platoon. This style allows it to show some great battle sequences. As with most big dramatic machinima films, the story suffers in parts, but then smoothes itself out with a style that hijacks big Hollywood for its own means. (James King)

## Easter Egg

### Machinima Film

It's hard not to get caught up in an "experimental" machinima film that equally blends the sickeningly cute with bloody-good violence. Take the death-smile on the Joker's face at the end of Burton's *Batman*, give it a pulse, an imagination, and inject it with bright colours — this is what its dreams would be like. Easter Egg's story (?) more or less consists of a girl waking up and hunting down a bunny for its feet. Simple enough. The appeal all comes in the style as she runs across an earth the size of a beach ball with trees and shrubs jutting out the sides, hunting down that little furry bunny with a cleaver the size of... well, her. (James King)

# Machinima Essentials

## Matrix 4x1 Shorts

by Strange Company

These four short films are, essentially, where Machinima really began. The characters from The Matrix act out a variety of short scenarios with the "agents" — check these out to see where it all started.

## Fake Science

by Dead on Que

This film took the medium out of its action-orientated genre, and into more experimental ground. The film also manipulates the game environments beyond what was seen in The Matrix 4x1 shorts, using new camera movements and special effects.

## Rendez-vous

Peter Rasmussen for Nanoflix

The action genre is again thrown aside in favour of a more character-oriented film. The story focuses on two space-satellites who encounter each other in the middle of nowhere. The great voice-acting makes this film.

## Ozymandius

by Strange Company

Based on a Percy Shelley poem. Never before (and apparently never since) has Machinima based itself on any literary form. Side note: Roger Ebert did a write-up once on how much he loves this one.

## The Chase

Noam Sher

Music-video Machinima in true '80s fashion. This film becomes more of an experiment in texture than anything, but a 4-minute electronic-music video in the style of Ah-Ha's "Take On Me" is good in my books.

## Anachronox

by Ion Storm studios, Dallas

The true achievement here is that this is the first feature-length Machinima film. Staying true to the medium, a cyberpunk, shadow-run meets Blade Runner storyline features a rugged, Harrison-Fordish, disillusioned hero who hunts, helps, and kills if the price is right.

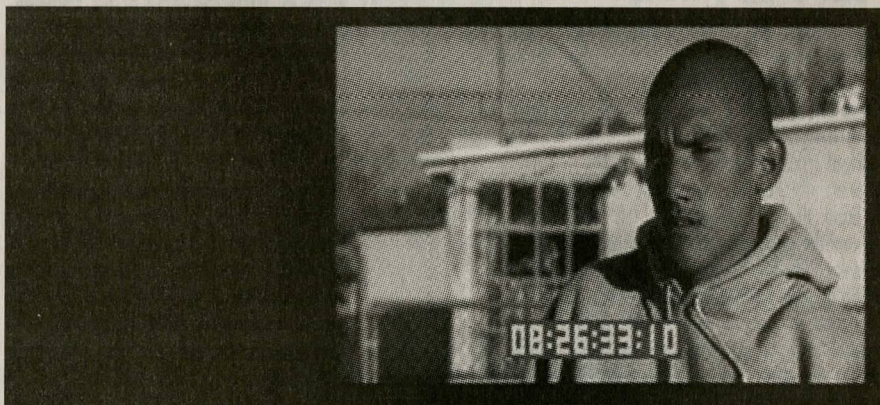
## Film & Video

### Running at Midnite

video, by Pablo Toledo, 1 hour 50 mins, [www.runninatmidnight.com](http://www.runninatmidnight.com)

This Tucson feature, made with mostly non-actors, but with a fully professional crew and a truly indie attitude, walks the most delicate of tightrope acts between activist objectives, Hollywood structure, and down-home earnestness. It's about a bunch of mostly latino kids in South Tucson (the Tucson skids, apparently) trying to get their acts together, dodge gang violence, play basketball for scholarships, and do anything they can to escape the dangerous streets. While I might not bother watching another LA or New York version of this same story, there are new inflections and insight to be gained from seeing it played out on a different stage, with different history and local texture.

Toledo takes an individual approach to solving these problems. In this film's universe, every character has a choice to escape their predicament: whether wheel-chair-bound by gunshots, unwillingly pregnant, or bullied into violent gang warfare, they each must decide whether to give up or at least try for a solution. Every character is both a political archetype and a real person, a great achievement which allows Toledo to alternately symbolize and ignore their race, gender, and class within the story. This is the kind of thing that made John Sayles great. I would think, though, that Sayles might have



taken a less kind approach to the state apparatus; when one black kid assaults a grey-haired professional man, then sits catatonic in a basketball court with a gun in his hand, I couldn't believe the cops would be so conveniently tender when arresting him. (Flick Harrison)

## Mutes in Bondage

film short, by Clinton Carew, 4 minutes, 16mm mastered on Betacam SP, 11002-106 Ave, Edmonton AB, cc@automatic.cx

It delivers exactly what it promises: this is a silent film depicting a man and a woman without the power to speak, tied to chairs, in a basement. What's there not to get? An award-winning short, no less, shot in appropriately moody black and white—a dark, dark comedy. (Mari Sasano)

## Velocipede VS Velociraptor

animated short, by Marsh Murphy, [www.radioisboring.com/velocipede](http://www.radioisboring.com/velocipede)

A learning exercise turned into the filmmaker's first paid gig—in film! Ex-web guy Marsh Murphy's friendly bearded face is now FAVA's (Edmonton's film and video co-op) database guy, and his deadpan non sequitur animation is pretty much par for the course for the Murphy oeuvre (check out last year's opus, *Radio is Boring*, on the same website). The simple line drawings are at first flat, but as the short progresses, we see that there is some perspective. It's strongly graphical, incorporating a little text, but mostly it's a conceptual joke. Seeing those dinosaurs skittering behind ye olde tyme bicycle! BWAHAHAHA! (Mari Sasano)

## I am a Boy Band

video short, by Benny Nemerofsky Ramsay, 5:30 minutes, distributed in Canada through V Tape, [distribution@vtape.org](mailto:distribution@vtape.org)

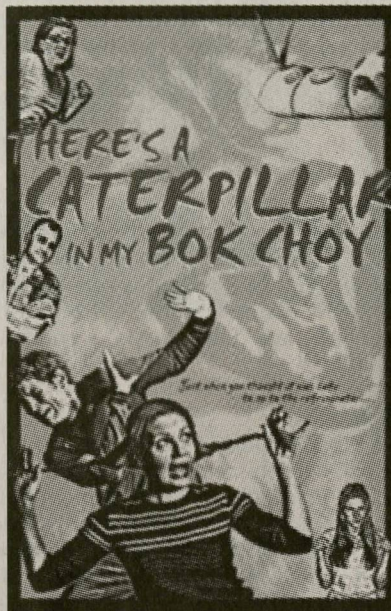
I Am a Boy Band is a short video depicting the artist, Benny Nemerofsky Ramsay, singing an Elizabethan madrigal transposed into a very pretty pop tune. His image is multiplied onscreen into the various "types" in a boy band: the shy sensitive one, the athlete, the tough guy, and the pretty boy. It's hard to pick a favourite! It's a cheeky little bit, having some fun at the expense of (and in homage to) the boy band phenomenon. The sexual subtext of those groups is made explicit in the surprisingly horny lyrics, which describe the various yearnings for hot shafts and the like that leave its subject unquestionably homo. It's a strong piece of video art, and has been included several international festivals, as well as in the curated exhibition, "Soundtracks." But on top of its artistic cred, it is also a delicious pleasure on its own, too — the boy can surely sing. Plus he's SO cute. (Mari Sasano)

## Waiting For Trains

Dir. Alejandro Gomez, 13mins

A man awaiting execution in a future US civil war flashes back through childhood transgressions. This tight little film has a lot to say about the social-guilt complex which is used against the losers in violent conflict. Because

there is no explanation of the context in which this fiction takes place, and the soldiers don't seem in any obvious way different from the civilians they capture and execute, the minutiae become unfathomably important, every clue becomes an enigma, and the victim's quest for self-indictment symbolizes the paralysis of resistance in the face of irrational oppression. Or something. A great flick. (Flick Harrison)



## There's a Caterpillar in my Bok Choy

comedy, by Katharine Leis, 2003, American, Length:?, VHS or DVD, \$12US, order through [www.theresacaterpillarinmybokchoy.com](http://www.theresacaterpillarinmybokchoy.com)

If you're looking for a comedy about stalking (and let's face it, who isn't?) then your search is at an end. The indie feature, *There's a Caterpillar in my Bok Choy*, the dream child of model/actress/director/writer/Floridian Katharine Leis, purports to be such a film. Leis plays Delila, a woman impossibly oblivious to the attentions of her wackily obsessed stalker Bill (Gustavo Flores). The central problem with Bok Choy is that stalking is a very tough thing to be funny about. You need to transcend the creepiness factor or at least make effective fun of it. Bruce McCulloch pulled it off once but the people responsible for this film don't quite make the leap.

On the upside, *There's a Caterpillar in my Bok Choy* does include some incisive and genuinely funny TV parodies including a spoof on those ridiculous "The Ab Doo Doo." One minute on the thing is supposed to equal about 210,000,000 sit-ups. Sign me up! Also funny is the TV lawyer whose cheesy ass fake sincerity is enough to induce nausea. Then there's Mr. Strawberry (Cy Jariz Cyr), a big guy packed into a hilariously awful strawberry costume whose unctuous advice to the kiddies at home is to "Stay in school and don't interrupt people when they are speaking."

A lot of work went into this. The cast is large and the production values are unusually high for an indie shot on a shoestring. Sure, the pacing is a bit wonky

and the acting tends to be on the amateur side but you gotta give Leis some props for her drive and ambition. Right now, as a filmmaker, her reach exceeds her grasp but that may soon change. (Ted Baker)

## Wasted,

experimental, by Scott Russell, 2003, Canadian, 20 minutes, VHS, \$2, Scott Russell, #906 239 E. Georgia St., Vancouver BC, V6A 4J7

Psychedelic, surreal, and absurd are some adjectives that may spring to mind when you watch Vancouver based filmmaker Scott Russell's *Wasted*. The film is really a compilation of films — short, sharp, well-executed films that manage somehow to be simultaneously both funny and disturbing. Like video-zinester Meesoo Lee, Russell pokes fun at the perpetual state of alienation we tend to swim in.

These films were not shot on a big budget but Russell makes the most of what he's got. For example, in one segment we're presented with a guy falling on a bed but the image is looped and repeated until an afterimage remains. It's a simple enough camera trick but it makes it appear that the guy is having some sort of out of body experience. Spartan yet effective animation is another medium that Russell employs. Slow and fast motion is also skillfully employed. In one sped-up scene Russell wears a plastic bag over his head and sucks part of the bag in and out of his mouth while "Wasted" by Black Flag plays exuberantly in the background. He resembles a frighteningly freaky sex doll come to life and his artificially spastic movements only add to the weirdness.

The most disturbing part of *Wasted* comes with footage of what definitely looks like a real street fight. A disconcertingly happy and laid back song plays (the singer sings something about "a warm San Franciscan night") as two huge thugs assault a group of people apparently minding their own business. The violence is quick and brutal and the relaxed and calming music accentuates the surreal senselessness of it. *Wasted* is well worth watching. Tune and drop out brothers and sisters. (Ted Baker)

## Disinformation

TV series, 6 hours, \$29.95US, [www.disinfo.com](http://www.disinfo.com)

This is not exactly an indie show, but the fact that it was never shown in North America makes it interesting to indie folk. Basically a kind of newsmagazine for weirdos, the series covers amazing underground artists like "The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black," insane conspiracy theories (one involves time-travel brainwashing that can only be reversed by mutual masturbation) and truly amazing news (like cuddly Satanists). In one bit about "Outsider Music," there is a complete music video by BJ Snowden called "In Canada" which must be seen to be believed — embarrassing, amateur honesty that makes you almost cry as you stifle a guffaw. The thing is, this big-budget series makes most underground folk I know seem completely out-of-touch by comparison... Why haven't any of my friends told me about insane painter Joe Coleman? And why didn't anyone tell me about "Uncle Goddamn," the unfathomable redneck home video in which a drunken uncle is set on fire, spray painted, and punched continuously, and whose only reaction is invariably "Goddamn!" This is, really, a great 2-DVD set. (Flick Harrison)

# Copy-Left

Stirnemann, Switzerland,  
and International Trade

by Andrée Lachapelle

**I am** an artist, and my work is traded in studios, living rooms and bingo halls the world over. I produce an average of 120 pieces a year, but most of those never make it past my work table—let alone out the door, into a mailbox, and straight to Switzerland.

But now some of my art makes it all the way to Zurich, and thanks to m.vânçi stirnemann and Copy-Left, a few pieces make it even further.

## Who Is Copy-Left?

Founded in 1983, Copy-Left is made up of editor-publisher m.vânçi stirnemann, and all participants in his various projects. Over the years, Copy-Left has published books and magazines about a number of topics including performance-art, mail-art and of course, Artist Trading Cards.

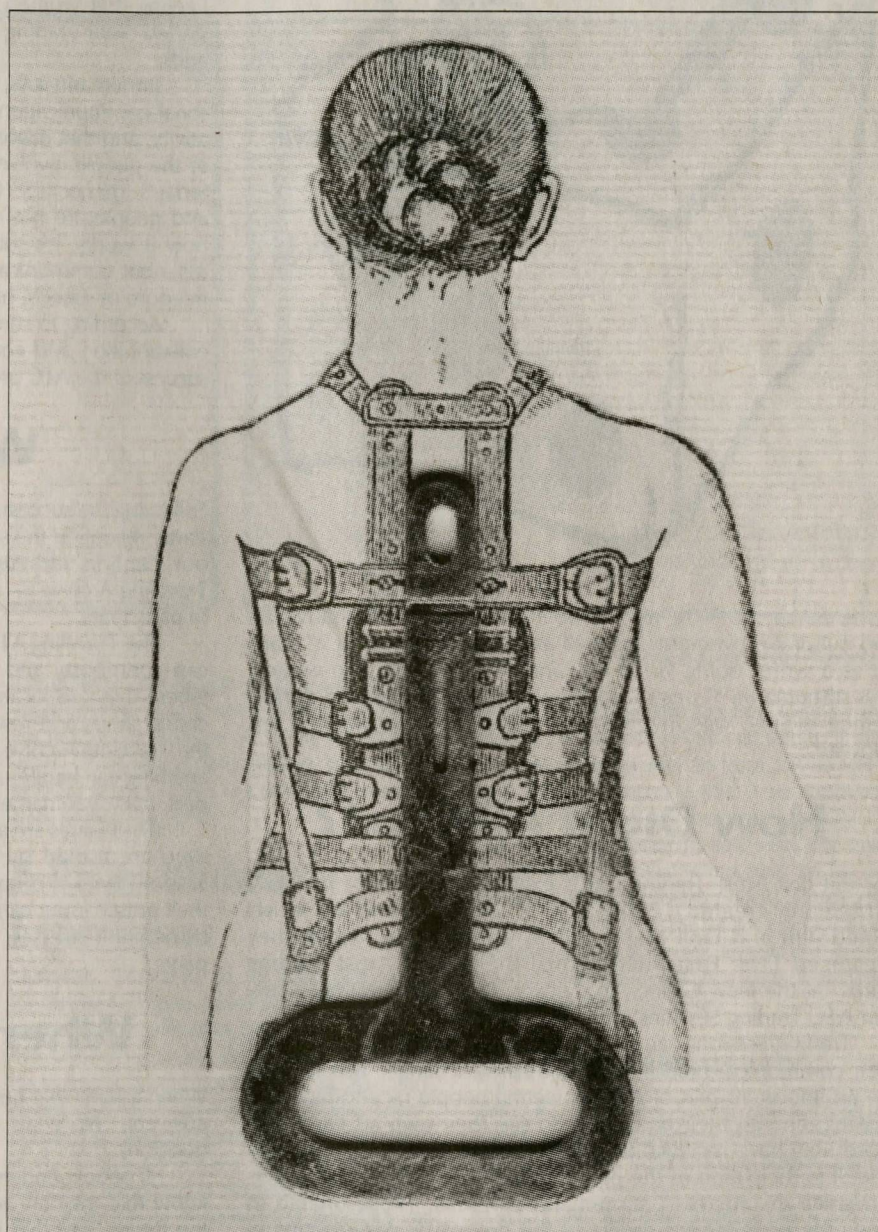
A self-described loner who is also very communicative, stirnemann sees himself as social not only to other humans, but to all beings. "At least that's how I feel and what I'm trying to be," he adds. He craves feedback, and needs to contribute to society. "Trading cards came out of this," he says.

"I started the ATC copy-left editions for several reasons," says stirnemann. "To spread the idea of the project and to trigger more Trading Sessions all over the world, to allow people who live in the boonies to participate in the ATC project, to connect people from different countries."

## What Are Artist Trading Cards?

In Canada, people of all ages indulge in a pastime that may seem irrelevant to many, but has had a huge impact on m.vânçi stirnemann: the collecting and trading of hockey cards.

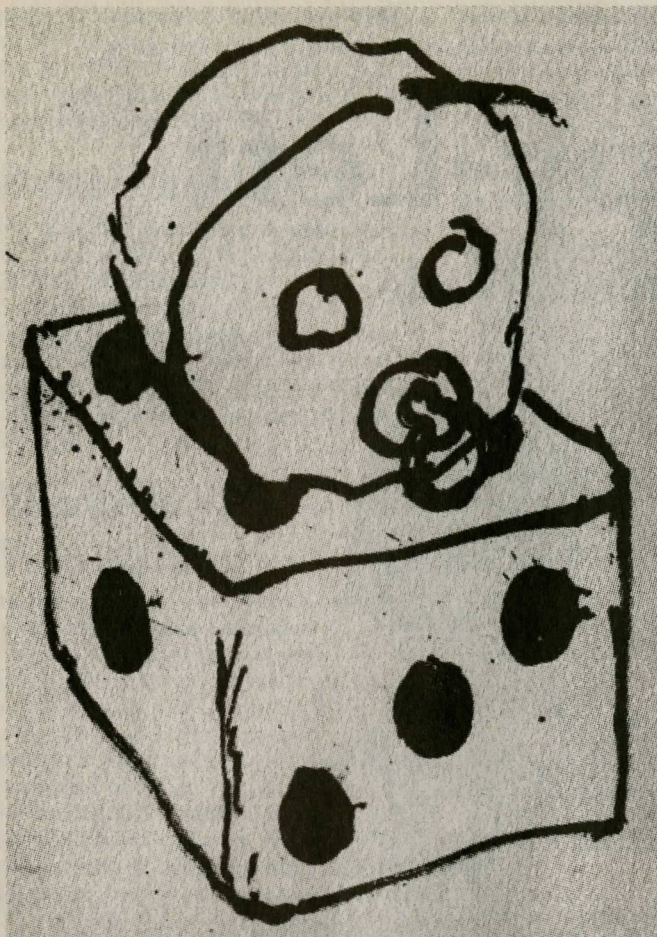
Artist Trading Cards (ATCs) are original works of art created in a format tradi-



tional for other trading cards: 2 1/2 x 3 1/2 inches. Anything goes — all techniques and media are accepted, as long as the art piece adheres to the given dimensions. The ATCs can be individual pieces or part of a larger set, and the

onus is on the artists to produce work born of their own experiences.

Art brut and outsider art — in particular the works of Antonin Artaud and Armand Schulthess — have been an important part of stirnemann's life and



work. Since the '60s, he has been involved in alternative art and cultural movements, as well as academic thinking. "I started as a writer doing visual arts and was an artist who wrote," says stirnemann, "I organized shows and catalogues and performance events, was involved in mail-art/correspondence art, copy-art...."

## How Did It All Start?

For the first Artist Trading Cards exhibition in Zürich, in 1997, stirnemann created 1200 ATCs. In 2000, around 80 artists joined him and Don Mabie (a.k.a. Chuck Stake,) when they organized "The First International Biennial of Artist Trading Cards" at the New Gallery, in Calgary. The gallery still hosts regular ATC Trading Sessions, and all are welcome.

Trading Sessions can be organized by anyone who feels that their community could benefit from the exchange. The sessions are an important part of ATCs: meeting people face-to-face and looking through their binders — to see their own art cards and those they have received from other artists — is integral to successful participation in the project. "It always was seen as a performance in progress," stirnemann confirms. Those unable to enjoy the performance aspect of the project by participating in Trading Sessions can send their work to Switzerland to be traded by Copy-Left. In exchange, participants receive art cards made by artists from around the world.

"The guidelines to this project seem to be too simple," says stirnemann, "People almost can't believe how easy it is to participate so they suspect a trap, or they think they didn't get the idea."

## Why Do It?

"The complexity of the project shows once you are involved," stirnemann continues, "You are part of the problems and part of the solutions." This is one of the main aspects of the ATC projects, says stirnemann, stressing the importance not only of fighting for one's own ideas, but of being able to listen to those of others.

Cat Schick's idea of earthly happiness is a familiar concept: "Being able to work at...something you love doing." Originally from Winnipeg, Cat is currently living in Zürich; she is married to stirnemann and was involved in Artist Trading Cards from the start. "At our Trading Sessions," she says, "the men outnumber the women." Feeling that women needed an artistic outlet of their own, she started Sister Trading Cards. "Based on the Copy-Left edition," she adds.

stirnemann says, "I hope that people will be interested in personal communication and exchange, personal involvement in creativity, and that might lead to regular Trading Sessions—or whatever the people involved feel fits their situation...I want to transgress today's 'democracy' towards more responsibility of/for everybody, and people are not used to it because no one ever taught them how it works. It's something everybody has to learn by him/herself—but communication with others helps a lot. This is not only freedom of speech, but also freedom of thought and experience."

According to stirnemann, this sense of freedom — along with collaboration and communication — has proven essential to the success of the ATC project.

## Where Next?

Following the success of the First Biennial in Calgary and the enthusiastic reception the show received when it later travelled throughout Canada and Australia, stirnemann decided to create the Traveling Archive — a travelling show that is open to all who wish to participate.

The Traveling ATC Archive is not a juried competition; anyone can contribute, and anyone can organize a show, regardless of where they are located. Favourite sites for stirnemann range from coffee shops and restaurants, to artist-run centres and libraries. In the Traveling Archive, the Trading Session is still centerpiece — but anything can happen... "workshops, lectures, panel discussions, dinners, bars...you name it," says stirnemann.

Blind Dates are also arranged, where art cards sent in ahead of time are traded by the organizers during the event's Trading Session. Even if certain artists cannot physically attend the show, their artistic input can still be felt. "It is a performance-in-progress," stirnemann stresses, "and therefore is influenced by all participants."

## When Is The Future?

When asked what he has in mind for the future, stirnemann simply answers, "No goals — the ATC project is based on day-to-day decisions."

"If people understand the concept of the ATC project they will know that they are responsible for what they do with the idea in the future, and that they are free to do it as long as they understand and respect the concept," stirnemann continues, "there are very few rules." *art*

For more information, visit [www.artist-trading-cards.ch](http://www.artist-trading-cards.ch). Copy-Left c/o INK.art & text, dufourstrasse 132, CH-8008, Zürich, Switzerland. Sister Trading Cards STC c/o Ms. Cat Schick same address as above.

## Art



### La Gentille Amibe

comic, 34 pages, \$?, Cédric Plante, [brideoffblobby@yahoo.ca](mailto:brideoffblobby@yahoo.ca)

Damn, and I thought Lolita was a problematic love story! But we at Broken Pencil are no strangers to difficult material...hence the word "broken" which carries connotations of contention, reminding us on a daily basis here at BP headquarters that we must champion work like *La Gentille Amibe*, no matter how uncomfortable it may make us, no matter how challenging the idea of human/amoebae sex is to our narrow, bourgeois sensibilities. Synopsis: a microbiologist, finished studying her little one-celled creature, suddenly has second thoughts about destroying the specimen, pockets the petrie dish, and begins a star-crossed romance with it. If it were a movie, it would probably star Molly Parker and maybe Joey from *Degrassi* as the amoeba. If Disney made it, they would probably schmaltz it up by hammering home some kind of simple "love conquers all" moral, instead of the ambiguous and slightly sinister ending that Cédric Plante penned. This is a cryptic parable that asks some provocative questions, but doesn't spoon-feed easy answers. There is a sign taped to the water cooler in my wing of the BP compound that says "tasteful is not always a good thing." True for bottled water, but it is worth mentioning here that *La Gentille Amibe* thankfully allots a wide berth away from gratu-

itous titillation. Final thought: you know how sometimes you're watching a sci-fi or horror movie and at the end you're like: "oh, they are SO setting this up for a sequel..."? I kind of got that sense here, and to tell you the truth, I hope there WILL be a continuation 'cause I'm pretty hooked. (Jon Sasaki)

### A Room Without Experiences

bookwork, 16 pages, \$5, Jo Cook, Site 19, C-21 Quadrant, Mayne Island BC, V0N 2J0, email [southerngulf@gulfislands.com](mailto:southerngulf@gulfislands.com)

Back in the spring Jo Cook did a two-week residency at the Ministry of Casual Living in Victoria, BC. She collected stuff she found on the street and made little sculptural assemblage thingamajiggies, which she then installed in the Ministry's storefront window gallery, photographed, and printed in this bookwork. I guess she found a piece of tile or cardboard or something, and decided to make it into a cardboard-looking whale. And she also found a trio of what appear to be shrivelled mouldy potatoes and wrapped them with colourful string, titling them "Queen Cells." On second thought, those are probably blobs of honeycomb, not potatoes. So...I'm having trouble describing this work without sounding like I'm making fun of it...for real, I think

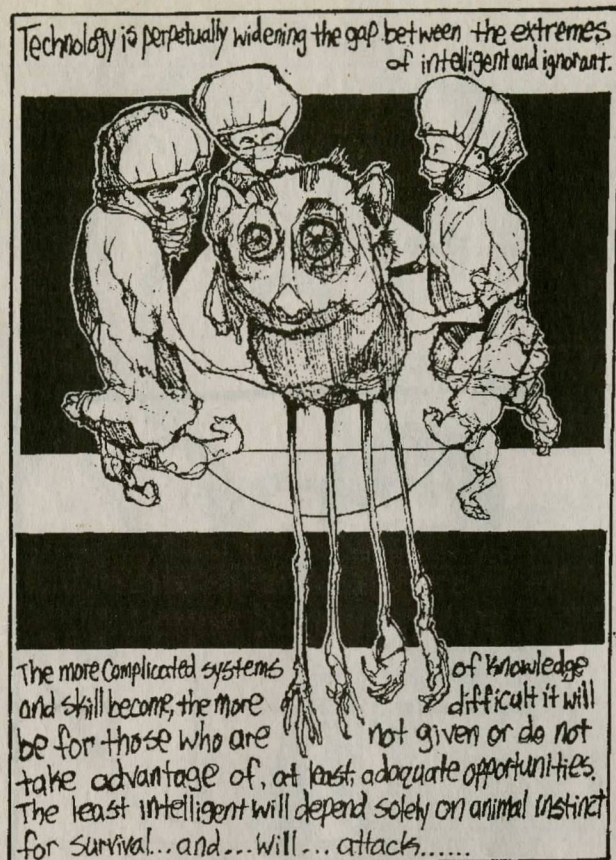
from *La Gentille Amibe*

she's got a good thing happening here. There is a double-helping of ambiguity in Cook's art practice; in some cases, I'm not certain what the found material was in the first place, the degree to which it was manipulated by the artist's hand, or how Cook wants her audience to react. Yeah, at first glance this work seems a bit crackpot, but to leave it at that is to overlook the fact that this stuff is actually charmingly crackpot, possibly even brilliantly crackpot. Or maybe I'm just a sucker for crap you find by the side of the road. Apropos: if anyone has a use for a rusty old 10-speed bike frame I found in the garbage, contact me. (Jon Sasaki)

### Synthetic Universe

comic, #3, 32 pages, \$3.95, Alison Elizabeth Taylor, Hardcut Publishing, PO Box 291700, Los Angeles, CA, 90029, [www.hardcutpublishing.com](http://www.hardcutpublishing.com)

It's August 14th. Mars is the closest it's been to the earth in hundreds of years. A friend of mine has warned me that this is going to throw the universe off balance for a while causing things to go a little wacky. After reading issue number 3 of *Synthetic Universe* in the midst of the multiple city-wide blackout, I'm starting to believe that she may actually be on to something. As I flip through the pages I'm greeted by images of a bald woman



from Coldhandsdeadheart

sewing ripped human arms, a beautiful "cue tip woman" lassoing bunny rabbits and handsome men, and a sheep that believes it's a flying elephant and jumps to its death. The stories that accompany the pictures are just as strange, imaginative, and sinister. In one, an eight-year-old prince is in love with a frog girl who travels around with a caravan of freaks. In another, a young man is tortured by an old bone he found in an Irish cemetery that he can't get rid of. I'm not quite sure what to make of this creative comic, but I think I'll send a copy to that friend of mine. If it sounds like something that might be up your alley, it's probably worth checking this zine out. (Dale Duncan)

## Coldhandsdeadheart

zine, #16, 20 pages, \$2, Mike Twohig, 83 Howell St., Apt. 2, Rochester NY 14607, m\_twohig@hotmail.com

At first glance, this small zine looks like a combination of intricate doodles and rantings of a bored and angry high-school skater kid. The words meld together in and around the images. Sometimes they are difficult to see, but once I worked my way through them I felt as though I had been given a look into the author's stream of consciousness. It's political, well written and even poetic. Twohig seems to enjoy playing with the spelling, shape, and sound of words. It's not always easy-going, but this forced me to give more thought to what I was reading. Rad man. (Dale Duncan)

## Asthmatic

comic, #2, 10 pages, James Bradley, \$?, 62 Welbourn Drive, Hamilton ON, L9A 3N4, jbradley@chek.com

Both characters in the two stories included in this zine grapple with the problem of how to capture an experience, moment in time, or natural phenomenon. The first comic involves an average, 20-something male, who writes a story on his failed quest to start a new relationship with one of his "what ifs" from high school. (Girls he might have shared a romantic relationship with at the time if there hadn't been something standing in the way). Looking back on the story months later, he finds it terribly written and embarrassing. He thinks of eventually rewriting it one day, but never does. A year later

he wonders "what — if anything — is to be gained from this experience. Have I touched upon something? Anything? Or does this memory now simply exist as a distilled, trivial anecdote?" The character in the second story, which was adapted from an article by Jules Borely, is the painter Cézanne. Famous and successful, one would expect him to speak confidently of his work. Instead he complains that he is not able to capture local colours, and talks of Monet more than himself. "How difficult it is to paint well," he says. "How do you approach nature directly? Today our sight is overworked, abused by the memory of a thousand images." These stories left me wondering: why do we feel the need to capture and preserve things that we have experienced, thought, or seen? Perhaps we want to prove to others that we were somewhere, that we learned something, or that we are wiser. Or maybe it's simply that we want to be able to share ourselves. Regardless, it's a problem I myself constantly struggle with. Just look at how much trouble I'm having trying to articulate how much I really enjoyed this zine. (Dale Duncan)

## FLICKER: Super 8 Guide

zine, volume 1, 50 pages, \$3, Desert Moon Periodicals, [www.flickerla.com](http://www.flickerla.com)

Having just bought a Super 8 camera (no manual, free case though), I have discovered that I know next to nothing about what to do next. FLICKER has proved to be extremely helpful in its scope; everything from choosing the perfect film stock, various video transfer methods and blow-ups to camera identification. This sweet little publication is full of vintage manual illustrations and useful diagrams which make the learning so much more fun. The meat of the zine is in the instructional reading. But there are also ten pages of lists of outlets, venues, labs, websites, submission calls and fanzines. FLICKER is also the name of the screening chapter. The reader is invited to start a FLICKER festival and given the oh so important guidelines to do so. This is followed by FLICKER Field Reports from Austin, New York and Frankfurt. All three appear to have healthy roots in the underground and have each become successful events. The spirit of FLICKER extends to Super 8 grants and vintage footage giveaways. It's a hotbed of experimentation and community support, something S8 makers are looking for. Now I just need to find my camera. (Crystal Bueckert)

## The Adventures of Boxlor

photo-comic zine, 100 pages wrapped in a brown paper bag, \$2, Mike Saturday and Jonah Campbell, [mikesaturday@yahoo.com](mailto:mikesaturday@yahoo.com)

It's about a guy with a cardboard box for a head. And he has a few other problems.... The character Boxlor has good intentions, all of which are illustrated in this photocopied photograph comic book. He has aspirations of finding a refreshing beverage, falling in love, seeing a flick and quitting drinking. However, each adventure sparks an innate anger the likes of which no recycled paper product has seen. The stories all contain some elusive catalyst that spawns a blue-streaking episode resulting in events like an eaten cat, a destroyed stuffed walrus or sworn revenge on the New York Knicks. Boxlor explains that: "when you grow up, your heart dies..." It's a sad phrase punctuated by a not so discreet finger gesture. The six adventures of Boxlor reveal a wicked half-inanimate character forever plagued with a morning of good intention followed by a catastrophic temper tantrum of an afternoon. He is endearing for his oversized head and obvious lack of anything smooth. (Crystal Bueckert)

## Violin Spine

zine/perzine, issue #2, by Opium Poppy Fields, \$5+postage, 30 pages, 4546 61st Street, Delta BC, V4K 3L2, [opium@sinister.com](mailto:opium@sinister.com), <http://sinister.com/~opium/spine.html>

My friend Kim Samitzsky used to mail me these crazy letters when she was living in the Yukon. She would make these cool envelopes from magazines she read that month, and then put her collage art on the outside and make all kinds of funny, silly jokes and sexual innuendo so that when you opened the mail box you saw all these bright colours and crazy images and it was fun. Inside those neat envelopes were the recounting of Kim's adventures and observations from her chilly new home. I mean lots of that stuff was just sort of the day to day of living, but she was such a great storyteller that a yarn about going to town for supplies, or a description of a regular at her bar would have you totally engaged, let alone all the juicy stuff about her new boyfriend. Opium, the creator of Violin Spine, should really meet my friend Kim. Violin Spine is a zine in letterform, meaning each issue is a bundle of letters written to "you." One of the beauti-

ful things about published collections of letters and diaries, is that they satisfy the voyeuristic tendencies in us. Who can wait to crack open someone's personal mail or intimate journals for the chance to uncover stories of the author's drug intake, sexual preferences and relational heartbreak? The problem with *Violin Spine* is that it completely misses this point. Admittedly inspired by the Griffin & Sabine series by Nick Bantock, *Violin Spine* takes us through Opium's love of surfing, her shopping wish list, her involvement with boys, and the questioning of her sexuality, but with absolutely no flare and precious little emotion. It reads mostly like a "To Do" list, with a teen-angst journal feel. I don't mean for Opium to go out and start shooting heroin and having affairs with under-age hustlers and writing about it; but I'd be a lot more motivated to read the next letter if she made some kind of attempt at making the things that are interesting to her, a little more engaging to her readers. (Colleen "The Colleenstigator" Langford)

## LIFT

**zines, volume 23, issues 1 & 2, 22 pages & 24 pages, free, issue 1: editor Larissa Fan, issue 2: editor Mark Wihak, Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto, 37 Hanna Avenue, Suite 301, Toronto ON, M6K 1W8, office@lift.on.ca**

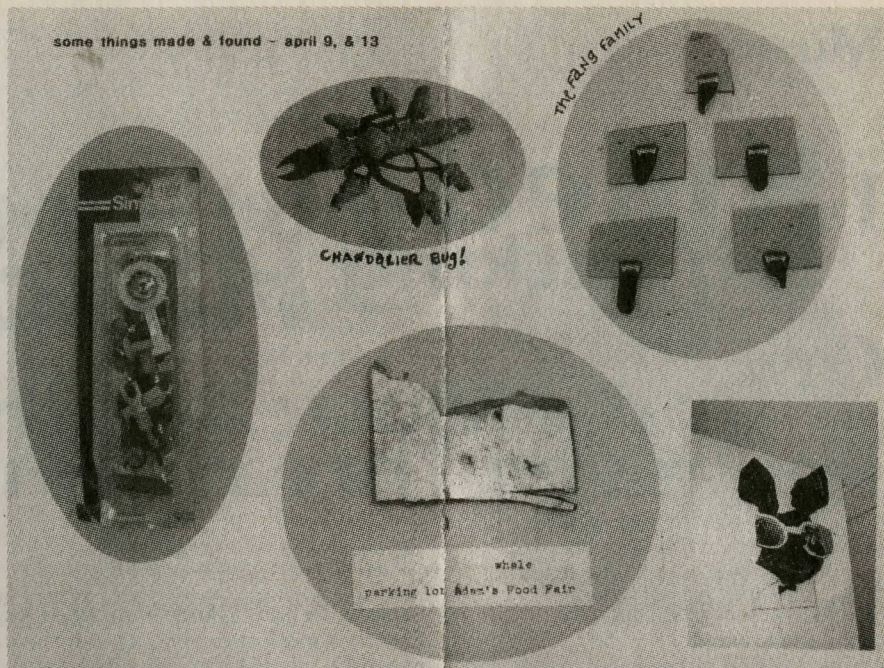
LIFT is a "non-profit co-operative which supports and encourages independent filmmaking through the exchange of information and access to equipment and facilities." This particular zine is just one of their many projects which fittingly highlights the rest of LIFT's activities. Issue 1 features the LIFT Storyboard: a brief description of LIFT member's works in all media. It is a wrap-up of the 2002 productions including screenings and distribution information. This is followed by a review of REEL ASIAN Film Festival that claims the event to be better and glitzier every year. Also reviewed is "The Field of Light," an interdisciplinary event focusing on the qualities of chemical and light. Issue 2 is the Digital Issue. Included are many discussions, interviews and essays arguing on DV vs. film. Opinions come from all perspectives and practices, both pro and con. Both issues contain a bulletin board, announcements, calls for submissions, equipment rental information, funding and festival information. (Crystal Bueckert)

## Art Visionary

**journal, Vol. 1, #3, 65 pages, editor Damian Michaels, \$10 USD, To GPO Box 1536, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, 30001 www.artvisionary.com, editor@artvisionary.com**

Reviewing Australia's Art Visionary magazine (Issue Three 2001-2002) raises important questions about the nature of critiquing and writing about art: 1) One doesn't necessarily have to understand or "like" something to respect it/write about it; 2) Copy Editing is as imperative to a visual arts magazine as the actual art.

It is difficult to decipher whether or not this high quality paper stock publication is a legitimate "International Journal of the Fantastic, Visionary and Surreal" as it purports to be or simply another poorly camouflaged, big budget gallery advertisement vehicle (but aren't they all?). There's nothing overly fantastic about the layout of this publication. A consistent lack of



## Jo Cook from A Room Without Experiences

white space throughout makes it difficult to appreciate the finely detailed, otherworldly aspects of the paintings and drawings presented. (While perusing its pages I found myself creating my own Rudolf Hausner inspired-fantasy art piece complete with a disgruntled art director whose artistic "vision" for the magazine is truncated issue after issue by the incessant fantastic realist twaddle of hairy brooding writer characters spouting in Times New Roman: "The individualized soul has merged with the supreme soul. The little 'I' has immersed itself into the capital 'I'. This is why the majority of people find their highest experience of bliss in the act of creation [mega-creativity] making love" — yuck! Or: "One can also learn to evolve in a relationship with inspiration as one does with a lover. In love we must learn to surrender at times which is an act of vulnerability, of bravery and it is the same with inspiration and art. We dance between asserting and allowing—we co-create"). Surrender your copy to some editing Art Visionaries. (Mary Williamson)

## Stylus

**music zine, Feb/March 2003, 48 pages, published by the University of Winnipeg Students Association, editor Deanna Radford, \$? Bulman Student Centre, University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg MB, R3B 2E9, stylus@winnipeg.ca www.stylusmag.mb.ca**

There's cool shit happening in Winnipeg and there always has been. People just forget that because it seems to take forever to get there no matter what direction you're coming from, and it's so fucking cold there. But geographic isolation and shit weather are what make Winnipeg such a cool place. If you can't leave your house because it's so cold, then you have to stay in and make art and music. This is how the mighty citizenry of the mighty tundra town of Winterpeg think, and Stylus is a little peek inside.

Particularly about music, it's a fine publication from the fine people at the U of W Student's Association. Record and show reviews, well-conducted interviews (two particularly good examples are the interviews with Kathleen Edwards and Bob Log III) and local exposure are some of the great things you'll find behind the retro-futurist cover of Stylus. It's a tight little magazine that covers the local scene and far beyond, with a bent towards indie acts and community radio. In fact, Stylus has its own radio show on CKUW 95.5 FM, and the sexy centrefold of the magazine is the station's program guide.

Stylus reads a little like Toronto's Exclaim! without the English degree. Some of the writing is a bit silly and stupid, but so are some University students, so who cares? If you wanna know what's going on in Winnipeg, Stylus is your man. (Colleen Langford)

## Hive

**magazine, publishers Pol Williams and Richelle Forsey, issue 1, 39 pages, \$5.95, Unit 2-148 Dovercourt Road, Toronto ON Canada, M6J 3C4**

Wanna discover some of the new art, music, fashion, theatre, and film coming out of Canada? Pick up a copy of Hive magazine. In this edition, entitled the Value(s) issue, you'll be able to catch an interview with "potty-mouthed sex rapping electro punk star" Peaches, as well as a chat with painter Derek Mainella, a selection of Jeff Ladueur's graphite work, and an intriguing collection of CD, book, theatre, art, and film reviews. Hive even delves into the political arena, with a rant by Blandon Borung on the state of the Canadian music industry and an article by Jonathan Ellis on the censoring power of Canada Customs which seized volumes of the adult gay comic book anthology Meatmen. Hive provides readers with a bit of everything, and will hopefully grow to be a magazine that will help to get people excited about the arts in Canada. (Dale Duncan)

# I Killed Interscope with my Big Fucking Hard Drive

## Or: Indie Music and the Perceived Threat of File-Sharing

by Terence Dick

**The** potential impact of file-sharing on the music industry is widely publicized. Articles, opinion pieces, news reports and public pleas (as well as attempted legislation, criminal charges and industry funded "educational programmes") have all warned us about the impending death of music as we know it. Unfortunately, the music industry (as we know it) isn't particularly well liked; after being overcharged for years for less than quality product, few music fans lose sleep over downloading songs and some even feel vindicated for sticking it to the majors. But there is a smaller music industry of indie labels and individual record producers who rely on the same economy as the big boys. They make and sell records, fronting their own hard earned cash and dedicating good chunks of their lives to the production of recorded music. They too would prefer it if you bought their CDs instead of downloading them from the internet. However, they differ from the majors because they have faith in music lovers — they are music lovers themselves — and look upon their customers not as open wallets but as open ears.

*...if I was the head of some swag, posh record label that has millions of dollars and even more A&R reps..., taking money off other people's music would be my business so of course I would be pissed. However, I am not in that kind of music business so I have no negative feelings. I don't understand why artists would get pissed if people downloaded their songs. I mean, people can always record it off the radio and if your stuff isn't even on the radio (which is usually the case with lots of independent artists) how the hell is anyone going to hear it?*

— **Anne from Worthy Records**  
([www.worthyrecords.com](http://www.worthyrecords.com))

Broken Pencil asked a number of Canada's musical martyrs (to call them merchants would be to ignore how much they sacrifice) how they feel about the free flow of music, the scourge of file-sharing and the future of the music industry (big and small).

*I think [file-sharing] exists primarily because the record industry is a giant rip-off and file-sharing is giving it a much-needed kick in the ass. And I have no problem with people downloading music from major labels (who are connected to such fun as arms manufacturing). But people do need to value music as a profession and this talk of "music being free" is bullshit, as anyone who's been in a serious band knows, it takes a lot of time, work, and money to make good records. I think if you're downloading independent music and you listen to it a lot, buy the fucking record.*

— **Derek from G7 Welcoming Committee** ([www.g7welcomingcommittee.com](http://www.g7welcomingcommittee.com))

Music costs money but musicians rarely have money. And when they do, it goes toward the never-ending expenses of playing music (and beer). The inevitable adaptation is to simplify one's life. Musicians reduce, reuse and recycle to maintain their livelihood. Through tough times and in light of the uncertain effects of technological advancements, it is best for those who work with musicians to follow suit.

*The music industry has been changing rapidly for the last seven years. Less stores, less product in stores, less indie product in stores, and a fantastic increase of DVD sales. My philosophy has returned to doing-it-yourself.... Aside from selling via*

*weewerk.com, indie store consignment, and via the band — we haven't been concerned with mainstream stores — why bother?*

— **Phil from weewerk**  
([www.weewerk.com](http://www.weewerk.com))

For simple economic reasons, the way in which indie labels are run makes the threat of file-sharing much less dangerous. Keeping business on a smaller scale means that overhead is kept low and even a slow accumulation of sales can result in profits (or, at least, breaking even). File-sharing in fact works for the labels rather than against them, often serving as a promotional tool (an area where majors spend a great deal of their money and most indies scrimp). Relying more on word of mouth and person to person sales (i.e., at concerts), indie artists generally have a different attitude about the scale and investment in running a business. This grassroots attitude serves them well; they get to participate in the creation and distribution of music they love (and hope others will love) and, resisting capitalist impulses, form an international community of mutual appreciation and support.

*[The music consumer should recognize]...the value of micro-economies of indie record production that aim to redistribute marginal cash surpluses to the musicians, artists and artisans who contribute their labour to small scale duplication (rather than squandering it on management and marketing).*

— **Ian & Don from Constellation**  
([www.cstrecords.com](http://www.cstrecords.com))

No matter how much the technology around it has changed, music itself remains a longstanding (maybe even the

longest) forum for human interaction and means of personal expression. Times might be changing but a few essential truths and undeniable facts will remain

Maybe those mall stores will vanish (fine), maybe CDs will vanish (fine), maybe used stores that sell promo copies will vanish (fine), but I'd hate to see the really good independent record stores go, the ones that are as much community centre as record store. Those are really vital to the music culture of any city.

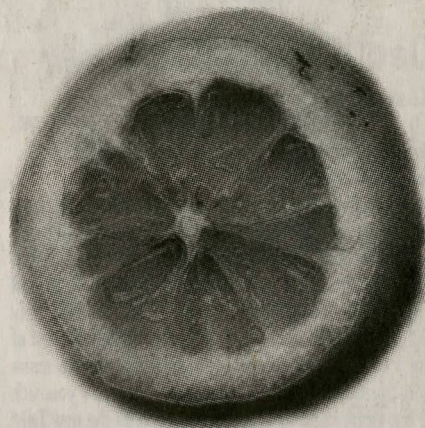
— **Blair from Endearing** ([www.endearing.com](http://www.endearing.com))

**THERE WILL ALWAYS BE RECORDS!** Since there will always be a market for records (because there will always be people who understand and love music) there will always be a venue to buy them. I really don't care what Team St. Angry do to protect their tennis courts. Some of us actual-

ly love music. We make art. We release records that actually represent our feelings, inspirations and artistic goals. We will do it whether anyone buys it or not.

— **Allen from Stutter**  
([nastyon@telus.net](mailto:nastyon@telus.net))

While the music industry scrambles to find new ways to sell an immaterial experience that only really exists as vibrations in the air, indie labels continue to create artful objects and release unexpected sounds. The logic of their thinking is that they see the value in what they do and hope others will feel the same and share in it. It might not make economic sense and it won't make anyone a millionaire, but it does mean that the music we rely on to get us through the day, the week, the year, will keep on keeping on. The majors might be sounding a death knell, but indie labels have hardly broken a sweat. *~*



## Music

### DOA & Thor

**Are U Ready**

CD, Sudden Death Records, Cascades PO Box 43001, Burnaby BC, V5G 3H0  
[www.suddendeath.com](http://www.suddendeath.com)

Like the bristling, thunderous sequel to Glenn Gould's *The Idea of North*, this patriotic collaboration between mighty punk veterans DOA and brooding metal compatriot Thor explores the relationship between hockey and frozen tundra in the fevered imaginations of Canadians. The collaboration gives the album an exciting "call and response" format with each song building firmly on the back of its predecessor. For example, Thor's opener, "Call of the Triumphant," a menacing homage to the Viking team ethic, quickly finds its match in the bristling violence of DOA's, "Give 'Em the Lumber." Other stand-out tracks include Thor's closer, "Rock the City" — which sounds like Rob Halford singing Gary Glitter's "Rock and Roll Part II" — and DOA's sledgehammer political analysis of Canadian-American relations, "I Am Canadian." Arena organists take note — there are only a few months left to add these new classics to your repertoire! (Karyn Bonham)

### The Honeymans

**Plugged Up**

CD, Sudden Death Records, Cascades PO Box 43001, Burnaby BC, V5G 3H0  
[www.suddendeath.com](http://www.suddendeath.com)

I'm a Toronto-boy, so maybe I'm biased. Perhaps if I was born on either coast of this great nation I'd appreciate lightning-speed violin solos over heavy metal guitar riffs, thumping bass lines, and driving drum rhythms, but I just don't. Sixteen out of twenty tracks on this disc are from a live pub show and that's where this type of music

belongs. I challenge anyone to stay in their chairs after a few beers once the Honeymans get warmed up. I don't drink so I'd be at home in bed before sound check ends. Hard rock, speed metal, a little funk, some ska, and traditional folk fiddle tunes will blur by until you realize it's past last call. Punch out the bartender and scream for another encore but not too loud because I'm sleeping. (Kieran Dick)

### The Beauticians

**Cosmology**

CD, Cheemo Records, 1329 East 15th Ave., Vancouver BC, V5N 2E5  
[www.thebeauticians.com](http://www.thebeauticians.com)

Remember all those compilation albums your parents used to play when you were young? There was a strange mix of songs on those platters. The only common thread between them was a force-fed feeling of sugar pop. Songs like: "The Name Game," "Tequila," the theme from *Batman*, and "Cool Jerk" (portions of which are all easily recognized on this CD). Hooks and riffs so catchy they annoyed you as soon as puberty set in. You haven't heard any of that music for a long time and your memory has distorted what you think it sounded like. You do your best to recreate what you think you remember and combine it with every other style of AM radio music since then and, for some reason, get not one but two people in your band to play violin. That's just the beginning of my description of the Beauticians. I don't have the space, time, or will to explain any more. The problem here is this band of people is so open-minded their overall style encompasses far too many influences. That said, I bet they have a die-hard fan-base who also can't or won't limit their interests. You yourself may fall into that category, so, at the very least, hit their website and listen to an mp3 to be sure. (Kieran Dick)

### The Real McKenzies

**Oot and Aboot**

CD, Honest Don's, [www.honestdons.com](http://www.honestdons.com)

Much like Ralph Machio in *The Karate Kid* I don't understand what my sensei (a.k.a. Terence the BP music editor) is doing sometimes. Why is he giving me this CD? Does he hate me? Am I merely "sanding the floor?" With patience I realize that when he does these things he is actually teaching me the way of the powerful review. That instead of striking out in blind rage and calling this album beer-commercial punk, I must look in my heart and strike out with furious grace. To see that though the Real McKenzies are as hetero-psychotic as a beer commercial, perhaps a crowd sometimes needs a facile and caricatured representation of the Scottish experience. It seems that while the real Scotland has given us Jesus and Mary Chain, the Shop Assistants, and Primal Scream, only Canada could produce The Real McKenzies. (Brian Joseph Davis)

### The Salteens

**Let Go of Your Bad Days**

CD, Boomp! Records, 2686 West Fifth Ave., Vancouver BC, Canada V6K 1T3  
[salteens@canada.com](mailto:salteens@canada.com)

Let Go Of Your Bad Days is so pop that I was scared of seeing people I knew on the street when I was listening to it. What could I possibly tell them to ease my humiliation? It would be the same kind of embarrassment you assume those people who put ten sugar packets in their coffee must feel when they're beside you at the sugar-and-milk counter and your coffee is basically black. It's the kind of music you listen to by bobbing your head side to side rather than forward and backward. I like a lot of other bands that have the same kind of happiness to them so don't think I'm some tough guy who only listens

to metal. But this record is just way too much. There's no twist on the whole pop angle. Every hook seems totally contrived and cheap. Even the drumming is cheesy. Plus, the guy who sings has got this pop-punk/emo whine thing that he does which is the worst. People call records like these "summer albums," so if that's what you're into... (Alex Snukal)

## Death From Above

### Heads Up

CD, **Ache Records**, PO Box 138, 1001 W. Broadway #101, Vancouver BC, V6H 4E4  
[www.acherecords.com](http://www.acherecords.com)

Death From Above should change their name to Totally Fucking Awesome From Above because when this shit drops, it's more "shock and awe" than deadly. But then you read the notes and it's like "Conceived/Recorded 9/11/2001-9/11/2002" and you're just like "Oh, holy shit, now I get it!" Actually I think I'm missing the rest of the joke because I don't see anything beyond the name and the date. Death From Above will make you sick while you're dancing at their shows. It'll be the new Twist but called the Disgusting. The guy who plays bass plays it through two bass stacks so it's like this thing I was reading where the US Army was testing ultra-low frequency noise that makes you sick in your pants and your mouth. The cover alone is worth the price of the record. It's brilliant orange with a nice drawing of two guys with serious elephantitis and it'll look really nice beside your record player when guests come over. Heads Up might be the loudest sounding record I've heard in a long time. It's really fast, loud, and totally catchy. You'd think having only bass, drums, vocals, and the occasional vocoder would be pretty sparse but it's actually really full sounding. The bass is so distorted it sounds like a whole band, and the drummer plays through just about the whole album on the crash symbol. (Alex Snukal)

## Mico

### Outside the Unbearable Grows

CD, **G7 Welcoming Committee Records**, PO Box 27006 Main Street Concourse, Winnipeg MB, R3C 4T3  
[www.micoband.com](http://www.micoband.com)

Okay... I think I've finally figured out the new direction for this ad campaign. Forget what I said about those topless models driving through the Outback with Scott Baio. This is much moresubtle and makes people feel empowered as we sell to them. No pressure, no hype. Just a single car moving through a starlit landscape; a lone driver revelling in both personal freedom and the envy of others. The radio playing a sad song as the car heads for nowhere in particular. Yeah, I suppose it sounds a lot like that Volkswagen ad, you know, the one where they played "Pink Moon," but hey, no one remembers it anymore. For example, this fairly hip band from Calgary named Mico wrote a song which essays the exact same scenario ("The Other World Is Possible"). It's like they'd never heard of Critical Mass or public transportation or even smog for that matter! C'mon — they're inveterate anti-corporate activists who equate driving alone with escaping the clutches of conformity. It shouldn't be too hard to convince the general public. Wow, I can hardly wait to roll out the new G7 — the sporty Coupe for today's earnest driver. (Karyn Bonham)

## Warsawpack

### Stocks & Bombs

CD, **G7 Welcoming Committee**, PO Box 27006, 360 Main St. Concourse, Winnipeg MB, R3C 4T3  
[www.g7welcomingcommittee.com](http://www.g7welcomingcommittee.com)

Warsawpack play the rap game and that's a war of words. Passing on the rap-reviewing rock critic's recourse to complementing the music and stepping off on the discourse, I'd like to address the phenomenology of hip-hop poetry. Especially when it's agit-prop — political in content like every track on Stocks & Bombs (except the instrumentals) — two challenges present themselves to the lyrical listener. One is obfuscation, confusing the message by abstracting it beyond recognition or, as MC Luhan asked, "Do you hear the rhyme or the skills?" That doesn't happen here. The Pack's politics are loud and clear, but this brings up the second challenge: preaching to the converted. We all know that television is bad, the war in Iraq was wrong, and that consumer society is a virus. Maybe some youngsters will start leaning to the left by reading the lyrics to "Rogue Nation" but for most of us, the lesson is a big "no duh." Confirmation is not a bad thing but repetition soon becomes rote. Too often rap lyrics are aped without thought to the meaning; check out preteen wannabes chanting X-rated gangsta tales. Words become sounds and lose their effect. All that's left are some funk jams, which, depending on your mood, might be just what you'd like to hear. But I'll leave it up to the rock critics to tell you why. (Terence Dick)

## Esmerine

If Only A Sweet Surrender To The Nights To Come Be True CD, **Resonant**, [www.resonantlabel.com](http://www.resonantlabel.com)

Nature in all its maleficent beauty. A sun gently sets on two innocent children in a playground. A boy and a girl with imaginations so great, only they understand this world. On the swing set, they fly higher and higher, never quite reaching the place where sky turns from a warm orange to a cool blue. Streetlights flicker on and a train can be heard in the distance. No parents in sight, one child jumps from the highest point of her arc, grabbing for a dark mass of clouds. She floats away, almost carried into the heavens as darkness approaches. Alone, with no momentum, the boy skids his feet into the sand. Spinning himself and twisting the rusted chains of the swing until his release. A rotating pendulum, he places himself between bliss and nausea. Will she ever come back? Whose dream is this? Night falls and he is still alone... And that's just my description of the packaging for this CD. The actual music is 17 times more awe-inspiring and forcibly introspective. (Kieran Dick)

## Action Makes

### Upper Down

CD, [www.actionmakes.com](http://www.actionmakes.com)

What a compact, smart surprise of an album. Having survived the last half-decade of flaccid grunge, it's easy to forget about how great the power rock of the late 80s, early 90s was. One is tempted to suggest that the mealy corpse of Kurt hovers in the background of these diamond-sharp songs, but upon closer inspection, I hear The Wipers' pop-prog lurking with some of that Ohio sound

as well — not surprising since this is reminiscent of those early Brainiac albums. And considering how fucking great Brainiac became it beckons for good and bold things for Action Makes. Album closer "Pleasant Hymn" is as close to rock-epic perfection as it gets, with its shout outs to all fourteen minute psych-garage, teen angst freakouts of yore from "The End" to "Funhouse" to "Youth of America." (Brian Joseph Davis)

## Beautiful Senseless

### the warmest rain

CD, [www.beautifulsenseless.com](http://www.beautifulsenseless.com)

It's been a while since I've been to Guelph, Ontario. Apparently the place is swarming with musicians and songwriters. What I can remember and what I've forgotten of that city and its surroundings has been put to music by Beautiful Senseless. So distinctly Canadian, I want to say they're a hat tip away from the Rheostatics but I won't. Their wonderfully hypnotic harmonies, occasional soft trumpet solos and subtly complex lyrics put them just a wink away from the short-lived mini-Statics, People From Earth. This gang of poets invite you to sit with them in the tall grass to relax and reflect. Every member knows his or her role in the arrangements, playing off one another with graceful melodies and smooth transitions within every song. They are as one, as every band should be. Wherever you are in Canada, buy this CD and let it be your soundtrack for a drive to Guelph. Remember to pack a blanket and keep an eye out for some tall grass. You'll understand once you get there. (Kieran Dick)

## Great Lakes Swimmers

CD, **Weewerk**, 620A Queen St. W., Toronto ON, M6J 1E4 [www.greatlakeswimmers.com](http://www.greatlakeswimmers.com), [www.weewerk.com](http://www.weewerk.com)

Sitting on the porch on a summer's sunbaked afternoon after the big summer of 2003 blackout when the city was told to stay home if they were unessential and I'm as unessential as can be so I stayed put. And we were lucky enough to have power so I could sit on the porch with Great Lakes Swimmers on the stereo and imagined Mr. Great Lakes Tony Dekker sitting on the porch with me as the sun went down, singing his porch-folk tunes like a younger, sweeter-voiced Neil Young. The crickets in the background on the record blended with the buzz of the cicadas and the distant rumble of traffic, birdsong and voices of a half-speed city given a free day to change gears and turn off the industry, slow down its intake of water and electricity, and relearn simpler pursuits like foraging for food and catching up with its reading. (Terence Dick)

## The Cansecos

CD, **Upperclass Recordings**, [www.upperclass.to](http://www.upperclass.to)

In an almost parallel universe, the Cansecos would be the well educated nephews of Beck who, every Saturday morning, plunder local garage sales, grabbing every musical instrument in sight. Providing a pleasing mix of analogue and digital sound sources, this happy-go-crafty duo already has a driving style that combines thoughtful lyrics of geek-love with quirky upbeat arrangements. This is the first album I've ever heard and thought, "This should be a graphic novel!" Beneath the Pet Sounds-



**Girls are Short**

inspired orchestrations (recorded amazingly enough in various bedrooms), you visualize words like "thumg!" and "kasplume!" as each song wins you over and takes you to a world where sad and happy are no longer opposites. Known separately as Bill Halliday and Gareth Jones, the Cansecos are ones to watch introduce a new wave of Canadian musical expression. (Kieran Dick)

#### Various Artists

### Ten; Ten

CD, My Mean Maggie, PO Box 68568, 360A Bloor St. W, Toronto ON, M5S 1X1

[www.mymeanmaggie.com](http://www.mymeanmaggie.com)  
(copublished with)

Lil' Red Wagon, 195 Denistoun St. #203, Welland ON, L3C 6P1

Ten artists from one label, ten from another. I think that's it. Or maybe it's their tenth release. Perhaps the semicolon is a typo and it's supposed to be a slash, thus rating this CD a 10/10. Are they being critical enough? Listen to it and rate it yourself. Ok, sure, that sounds like it might be the job of a CD reviewer but what do I know? I know this much: It's only \$8. It's worth it. There's a large selection of bands involved who demonstrate a curious electro-acoustic fusion that should be explored further. After listening to all twenty tracks, I guarantee

you'll be interested enough in at least one, if not more, of these bands to check them out in further detail. Which is in fact what a compilation CD should do. So for that alone: 10/10. Here's who caught my interest on the first pass: Lunchbox with their nice little cover of "Love is All Around," "I Fall" by Kimbliss featuring a haunting piano and effortless vocals, and "George Orwell" by Georgia, who in this case might as well be Georgia Hubley from Yo La Tengo. (Kieran Dick)

### Girls Are Short

#### Early North American

CD, Upper Class Recordings, [www.upperclass.to](http://www.upperclass.to)

On a drowsy August afternoon as I worked through mundane affairs in my little office cubicle at the gallery where I work, I had the good fortune of slipping the over-amped, hyper-activated, sappy softcore of Girls Are Short into my computer's CD drive. While the lethargic, bureaucratic environs remained around me, between my ears jingles bounced and careened, celebrating the "new girl sound" and shouting shout outs to Toronto, Ontario (where they do it in stereo!). Some summer fun was in the air and the Girls were making the world the better for it. Any number of the songs could have been a summer hit if the Girls had enough promotional muscle and a rad video with pony tailed girls and baggy pant boys and

scooters and headbands and a block party in the backyard with the parents off at the cottage. I prefer the songs with the falsetto singing that reminds me of The Amercian Flag (the band not the cloth) to the dancey tracks with vocal samples, but maybe that's because I'm old and have foregone summer vacation for a fulltime job. September is just another month to me, not the end of an era. But I can recall the memories of August anguish when summer felt like it was already over and time was running out. I feel like that a lot these days, no matter what the season. The song songs on this CD take me to the beginning of July, when the summer seemed forever, every night was an adventure and around every corner was a potential new love. (Terence Dick)

### Christiana

#### Fatigue Kills

CD, High School Champion, PO Box 86003, 670 Bloor St. W., Toronto ON, M6G 1L0

[www.highschoolchampion.com](http://www.highschoolchampion.com)

Fatigue Kills is pretty much just a standard indie-rock album. Christiana don't simply rehash the mid-90s but there is a definite quality to the songs that make you feel as if you've heard them all before. I know it's lame to talk about an album in terms of something as

ephemeral as fashion or style but it feels as if Fatigue Kills came out five years too late. Christiana seem constrained by the same indie/post-punk tradition they so faithfully take part in. It's a good record in terms of this style but Christiana haven't come up with a sound that has any novelty outside of it. There are a couple songs I do like and could probably end up really liking if I listened to them a couple more times. There's just one problem: there are these really layered vocal harmonies on every track that make me nuts. It's like syrupy-sweet Beach Boys mixed with a post-punk wall-of-sound aggression. (Alex Snukal)

## The Reveries

**Blasé Kisses**

**CD, Rat-Drifting, 22 Herman Ave., Toronto ON M6R 1Y2**

**www.ratdrifting.com**

The trouble with the Reveries is the conceit of the band is so great as to threaten to overshadow the music. Such is often the case with excessively theatrical heavy metal bands, overly political rappers and unnaturally attractive pop singers; such is not generally the case with avant-jazz balladeers. However, in this case, the music which would otherwise be the object of rapt attention is played through small speakers that sit in the player's mouths. The players then sing along with the standards they play, the mouths shape the music and the speakers impede the singing. The musicians drool, they mumble and the songs fade in and out of recognition. As a shtick, it is unique. As a way of making music, it is awkward and frustrating. But is it compelling? Were it not for the fact that they play standards, the Reveries would be another experimental project among thousands in the outer limits of improv. But when they play drawn out versions of "My Romance" and "Moonlight in Vermont," suddenly a range of metaphors are needed to explain these familiar but alien tunes. The music is dreamlike, drifting in and out of focus, watery and obscured, blurry as if forgotten and tentative as if struggling to continue. It evokes foreign lands, old radio broadcasts, howling winds, cinematic fadeouts and the slow loss of memory. It is both a pleasure and a challenge and while the conceit makes it hard to appreciate, the selection of songs makes the effort rewarding. (Terence Dick)

## Saint Dirt Elementary School

**Hangin' With the Kid Who'd Eat Anything For a Dollar CD, oval window records, www.joesorbara.com/ovalwindowrecords.htm**

What made Iron Maiden intermittently interesting was the fact that their bass player wrote the songs. What makes Saint Dirt Elementary School interesting is that Myk Freedman, the lap steel player of this jazz octet, writes the music. It's a lush base for them to fracture their take on Dixieland, like Marc Ribot does, with moments of wonderful skronk and Eastern European stylings (and with that comes the occasional Middle Eastern scale, just like Maiden). One composition is titled "North York Folk Music" and key player Ryan Driver wields an analog synth as it's supposed to be wielded, like a lover. Wonderful. (Brian Joseph Davis)

## Set Fire To Flames

**Telegraphs in Negative/Mouths Trapped In Static**

**2CD, Alien8, www.alien8recordings.com**

Godspeed's site-specific cousin's second release finds the ensemble in an altogether less urban and desperate mood. Taking Can's idea of the musical commune out of the studio and into more disparate locations makes for a pleasing sense of space in SFTF's music, which isn't so much music for architecture as much as music of architecture. On their first release, the 13 piece performed non-stop for 24 hours in a soon-to-be-demolished band house, the house and its objects joining in near the end. The tracks on this album, recorded in a barn somewhere in Ontario and a shack somewhere in BC, are delicate and sylvan yet with enough angles and corners to hold the Set Fire to Flames house together. (Brian Joseph Davis)

## Sam Shalabi

**Osama**

**CD, Alien 8, www.alien8recordings.com**

I could have reviewed this in the last issue of Broken Pencil but felt like I hadn't listened to it enough and thought about it enough to give it the respect it deserves. I've almost given up on reviewing it for this issue as well, so hard is it for me to wrap my head around. And my girlfriend, for some reason, hates it, so it's also hard for me to play around the house and get a better handle on. But the truth of the matter is I was in awe of and daunted by this CD as soon as it appeared in my hands. As an object, it is stark and beautiful and confusing. A white cardboard cover with the name Osama embossed in gold. The name has become electrically charged in recent years and this charge has lead Montreal's Sam (Osama) Shalabi to dedicate his second solo album (between turns with Shalabi Effect, Malasses and Detention among others) to the arabophobia in a post 9/11 world. Sounds like a segment on CBC radio or prime fodder for globe-trotting world fusion musicians but Walter Benjamin-quotting, free improvising key-players in Montreal's Mile End scene do things differently. This is so different and unexpected that it is exceptional simply for existing and its pleasures lie beyond normal critical discussion. So I throw in the towel and skip even the merest description of the contents within, so multifarious and playful that to describe them would be to ruin the surprise, and leave potential listeners to seek out the challenge. (Terence Dick)

## Brian Campbell

**The Courtier's Manuscript**

**CD, BeeDeeCee Productions, PO Box 48084, Montreal QC, H2V 4S8**

It's really all about donning your saffron robes and chanting mantras to the sky as you bemoan the passing years and all the women who grew out of their braids and abandoned you for those Bay Street-types. As you make your way to the fruiterie in your parapluie, you find yourself torn between your true calling as a mystical poet-creator and your desire to belong to the world of chaise-lounge owners and MBA holders. Maybe you'd escape your "Empty House" and catch your "Woman of

Desire" if you finally sold out? And then you remember how superior you are to everyone else and you head home to write yet another song of condemnation for inclusion in your manuscript. (Karyn Bonham)

## Polmo Polpo

**Like Hearts Swelling**

**CD, Constellation, PO Box 42002, Montreal QC, H2W 2T3**

**www.cstrecords.com**

Who knew (Part One)... that Brian Eno nodding off on a hospital cot while the rain drowned out a badly tuned radio would result in a genre of music called ambient? At first it seemed only to name an effect or a tendency like "heavy" or "out." While Blue Cheer was heavy and late Coltrane was out, certain other things, like Satie or Tangerine Dream or whale sounds were ambient. But then, right around the time David Toop wrote a book about it and the Orb released a double live album of it, ambient became a style, a section unto itself in the record store. Who knew (Part Two)... that the lapsteel, heretofore trapped in old-time scenes like country or blues, would be (along with the delay pedal) the ambient instrument bar none. BJ Coles figured this out and so did Sandro Perri aka Polmo Polpo. Mixed in amongst collaborating jazz cats, radio static and a rhythmic pulse that carries the compositions forward, Sandro's shimmering chords evoke wide-open spaces, inner and outer spaces, and float delicately from headphones into my head. The layers of sounds, separated from their sources by sampling and digital play, leaves one's imagination reaching for visual metaphors to make sense of the sonic field. This is virtual music, made in cyberspace and released into our world through vibrations in the air. (Terence Dick)

## Melon Galia

**Les Embarras du Quotidien**

**CD, Grenadine Records, PO Box 42050, Montreal QC, H2W 2T3**

**www.grenadinerrecords.com**

I was recently chastised after admitting I don't pay attention to lyrics when I review CDs. Now many readers might find this equally offensive or at least suspect and question my claim to the title of BP music editor but the honest truth is: 1) I rarely listen to lyrics when I'm just listening to music so why should I pay attention to it when I'm reviewing it and 2) I've been writing about music for a long, long time and have managed without lyrics thus far so back off darling. However, in the event of a mass backlash against yours truly, a consumer revolt and boycott of BP for misleading the indie public, perhaps I should limit myself to records like this one by Melon Galia. With its mostly French lyrics (except for half a song sung by Conor Oberst), I get off the hook. Can you fault me for not knowing French? You probably can but for now, I'll just say that I've forgotten what Belle & Sebastien sound like, it's been so long since they put out a record and so many have followed in their footsteps. These Frenchies (from the continent not the colonies) have settled on Rue B&S but they also channel the spirit of the Style Council and all those new, hipster bands that play music referencing the music I hated back when I was your age. This is the most "un-rock" pop music could be. It's soft and sweet and chipper and melodic and gen-



**Jack Breakfast**

tle and very French. And despite the little punk inside me who would have hated this fifteen years ago... I like it, I play it around the house, I play it for friends. Just don't ask me what it means. (Terence Dick)

## William Basinski

**The Disintegration Loops Vols. 1 and 2**  
CD, 21062 Unknown Industries, [www.MMLXII.com](http://www.MMLXII.com)

The first sound of the end of the world will sound much like the music of The Disintegration Loops. We comfort ourselves in the knowledge that much of contemporary music history will last. That somehow, rust glued to cellophane and then magnetized will preserve all. The guard who sits outside a climate-controlled safe in Geneva protects the master tapes for Bowie's "Let's Dance" not because of possible theft by well armed DJs but to keep those tapes from any undue contact with the elements. The Disintegration Loops began when Basinski, a New York musique concrète and multimedia artist, had rediscovered tape loops of lush pastoral notes he had made twenty years ago. While he was transferring to hard disk — to his horror and then near mystical curiosity — the tape itself began disintegrating with each pass past the tape head. Basinski had started transferring these early in the morning on September 11, 2001. Having started the loops, he would run between his studio and his rooftop, between the loops and watching his city burn. While it's fitting that the Disintegration Loops are possibly the only music to have been recorded on that day in Gotham, their haunting, hymn like quality would be present regardless of the trajectories of history. Yet those trajectories do rattle and echo within the music. Having captured the loops as they gave up the rust and became loops of clear plastic, Basinski has crafted a true

music of the future as all music will, with enough time and moisture, sound like this. It is a strange feeling listening to this — it's a stolen privileged listening of a last sigh and sublime as a dancer caught in mid-failure. Vol. 2 is the more accessible of the collections, consisting as it does of two 40 minute pieces whereas Vol. 1 consists mostly of one long 70 minute piece. The Herculean length of Vol. 1 gives the sense that Basinski didn't want to edit anything out, that he wanted to capture a new, "one time only" experience in its entirety. Thirty years ago Brian Eno created a form of ambient music that theoretically never ends, with looped tones that would change with each pass, the synchs and asynchronous moments creating random and never-ending songs of interaction. It was very "up with existence." By exploring the nature of recording itself in a very tangible manner, Basinski has created a corporeal music that, like the human body, comes to a silent end. (Brian Joseph Davis)

## Bottleskup Flenkenkenmike

**Looks Like Velvet, Smells Like Pee**  
CD, Brooklyn Beat Records, 490 Broadway #3R, Brooklyn NY 11211, USA  
[www.brooklynbeats.net](http://www.brooklynbeats.net)

That Bottleskup Flenkenkenmike is signed to a label called Brooklyn Beats should not be taken for granted; this record has Williamsburg written all over it. Any song from Looks Like Velvet, Smells Like Pee will fit perfectly in between all those DFA bands on that Hot Shit mix tape you're making for a friend. Bottleskup Flenkenkenmike does come with some credibility (You want me to say "cred" but I'm not going to do it). He's a member of Godspeed You Black Emperor! and used to be called 1-

Speed Bike so it's likely you've heard his stuff before. Picture this: four-on-the-floor live drumming, dub echo effects, noisy-synths, political protest sound-bites, and distorted low-fi recording. That's the album. Apart from all my glibness, I really do like the record. All ten tracks are totally entertaining. There are some really nice sounds and all the tracks lead into each other, which gives the record a sense of completeness (Alex Snukal)

## Jack Breakfast

**Over Big Bridges**  
CD, Troubled Cat Records, [www.jackbreakfast.com](http://www.jackbreakfast.com)

Jack once dated a roommate of mine and I didn't like him when I first met him because he would act nervous around me, fidgeting and hopping from one foot to another and twitching in my kitchen. That would make me feel awkward and I hated feeling awkward in my own home so I wasn't always too happy when he came by. Jack's not your normal, everyday kinda guy. He's idiosyncratic. That means he's not for everybody (which is fine because everyone's not for him either). But, like a lot of idiosyncratic people, if you give him a chance, he can pleasantly surprise you. Now, there's nothing explicitly offensive about Jack, he's not obnoxious or boastful or a white supremacist. He just takes a little getting used to. The same goes for his music. On first listening, it's innocuous but not immediately likeable. Nothing grabs you, his voice is kinda mannered and it keeps speeding up and down. But then he lingers or you linger, someone lingers, and suddenly his voice is in your head as you walk down Chester Avenue and sing to yourself, "Come with me to Coney Island." And the guitar licks and piano lines start popping up in your everyday mental music col-

lage. Before you know it, you've got some favourite songs you've only heard in passing but now you search them out. Jack's your new best friend. It took a bit of time but he's worth it. (Terence Dick)

## Gordon B. Isnor

**I am a Conjuror**

**CD, Lord Sir Skronk, 2155 Armcrescent East, Halifax NS, B3L 3C8**

**www.geocities.com/lordsirskronk**

This guy reminds me of Brian Wilson. Now, saying that and crossing my fingers that no one quotes only that sentence, I'll tell you what I mean. I'm talking about those Brian Wilson solo albums from the 80s and 90s. Isnor recorded this album in a place where he could go and tell his secrets. It shows. Deep within his songs there lies the foundation of his honest pop sensibility. His talent is songwriting. His words are an invitation to a garden party and you can bring your kids too. He is at his best in simplicity: voice, guitar and a simple hand-clapped beat. The problems arise when multi-tracked synthesizers are mixed in. Electronic keyboards are fun to play with but handled incorrectly, they will attack. The one exception here is an instrumental synth track ("Discofuck") that makes me think an instrumental synth album should be considered. It may just come down to reading the manual and learning how to program, but Mr. Isnor and Mr. Wilson both need the same thing: an orchestra. Or maybe a simple backing band that doesn't require midi cables. Sometimes you only need good lyrics and a simple melody. Gordon already has both of those. (Kieran Dick)

**Various Artists**

## Black on Black: A Tribute To Black Flag

**CD, Initial Records, www.initialrecords.com**

At an ancient mall food court, lost in the mists of time, there was once a detente between punks and headbangers. Though they differed on significant issues of culture and decorum, they agreed on trade issues — sharing speed dealers and complaining about import prices at Records on Wheels. This relative calm was shattered one day in the late eighties when Megadeth released their abysmal cover of "Anarchy in the UK." Dave Mustaine shaking his poodle hair (I'm not exaggerating, he had the hair of a 13 year old girl circa 1988) while playing hammer-on finger solos during what should have been a simple two chord rave up was an incursion into punk territory by a hostile culture. Yet Megadeth wasn't the first metal group to inexplicably cover a punk chestnut — Anthrax can take that honour with their 1983 cover of "God Save the Queen" — and they weren't the last (Metallica has made a sub-career of it). This isn't just a quest for credibility on the part of headbangers but rather a quest for legitimacy. While punk is readily accepted as a valid discourse — academia examines it and elderly punk performers can hang out at Tonic with avant-garde composers — metal's only presence on campus is when a hung over Cultural Studies professor wants to scare students with grim scenes of a lost and tragic subculture by screening *The Decline of*

*Western Civilization Part Two*. Yet the intervening years have brought contemporary punk and metal to awfully similar ground. Black Flag were credited (blamed) as the first bees to cross pollinate punk and metal but if you listen to those early Black Flag recordings you hear guitarist Greg Ginn channeling Ornette Coleman, not Tony Iommi. As such, Flag were not songwriters of any note but were an excellent, visceral listen. Free-punk? With that in mind it doesn't make sense to have Black Flag songs covered, especially if the songs are being covered by new metal bands who "correct" the songs, layer on the double bass and arrange those fake Wagnerian moments that make metal the illegitimate phenomenon that it is. Only those absurdists in The Dillinger Escape Plan rise above with their sloppy take on "Damaged 1 and 2." While I have no idea what mutually hostile outsider groups are hanging out in front of the Manchu Wok these days, I'm sure this release won't contribute to ever lasting peace anytime soon. (Brian Joseph Davis)

## Scout Niblett

**I Am**

**CD, Secretly Canadian, 1021 South Walnut, Bloomington, Indiana, 47401, USA**

I Am is a ferocious, jolting record, jumping about in fits and starts like an old tap dancer, the songs loping and sprawling and stretching beyond all expectation. Occasionally, one song will crash into another, leaving the listener dazed and breathless. Although individual songs do stand out — most notably "Fireflies" and "The Drummer Boy" — it is best to listen to the album as a whole, allowing its themes of individual defiance, obsessive love, and musical creativity to anchor firmly. Scout Niblett's drumming is especially noteworthy on this album. The snare drum jangling, shaking, and her singing along with alternately sweet and scabrous vocals. Highly appreciated and recommended. (Karyn Bonham)

## Adam Green

**Friends of Mine**

**CD, Rough Trade Records, Chelsea Hotel, Suite 103, 222 West 23rd St., New York NY, 10011 USA www.adamgreen.net**

Adam Green makes me want to be a groupie. His first solo CD since the Moldy Peaches fermented and decomposed, *Friends of Mine* makes me want to be just that. Green is like Paul Anka if Paul Anka sang about getting his cock sucked. The vocals lead the music here and it's hard to believe this is the same stoney-eyed boy who sang in a sad, veering voice, "Who's Got the Crack?" and (my favourite) "Who mistook the steak for chicken/who'm I gonna stick my dick in?" Gone are the days of the off-kilter, crackling melodies of the Peaches. While Kimya Dawson's own solo release this year seemed to disintegrate into childlike darkness, Green's soars into the sunlight. Melodic, bright, and strong, there's a definite 50s charm counterbalanced by wacky lyrics that could never have seen the light of day before now. From the heartfelt crooning of "Jessica, Jessica Simpson — you've got it all wrong," to "The Prince's Bed" with its lines, "Everyone's talking 'bout Jesus / everyone's fucking my princess / goodnight to my new dead wife / goodnight to my Nazi friends," Green is sweeter and

stranger than Lou Reed or rock candy on a stick. I mean, damn, there are smashing saccharine string sections in every song but one: track 12. Oh dreaded track 12. "There's no wrong way to fuck a girl with no legs; just tell her you love her as she's crawling away," Green intones and I shudder. Goodbye Adam Green. I was a fool to love you. Hostility glides forth from that gorgeous throat and I can only press skip again and again. Ours will be a condemned love. As you say in the fragile, melancholic track 13, "we're not supposed to be lovers." This will remain one of my top picks, but I can never be your groupie now. (Emily Schultz)

## Jorma Whittaker

**CD, Secretly Canadian, 1021 South Walnut, Bloomington, Indiana, 47401, USA**

This plaintive and understated effort is the solo outing for former Marmoset front man, Jorma Whittaker. Whilst the music here tends toward the ponderous and meditative, there are occasional growls of energy and humour lurking under Whittaker's depressive persona. His style often evokes comparison with Bowie circa 1971 or Syd Barrett-era Pink Floyd, particularly with his wry cover of the Everly Brothers' "Man with Money" and the spiralling synth-pop of "Birds Are Falling Through the Sky." Keep it in the First Aid kit along with that last cigarette. (Karyn Bonham)

## Flaming Fire

**CD, Perhaps Transparent Recordings, www.god-magazine.org**

Flaming Fire's self-titled debut seems like a bastard collaborative project between director Ken Russell — see *The Devils*, or *Lisztomania* — and Canadian pop-goth icons National Velvet. Hence, electro-dance, thrill-kill glee runs with abandon across this sometimes campy, sometimes creepy album, rife with references to rivers of blood. Opening track, "The Way You Kill Me (Blood Does Shine)" would have had them up on the dance floor at the old Sanctuary, "Kill the Right People" seems cut from a satanic version of *Grease*, whilst "Cut the Reaper" lets us know we don't all have to go quietly when our time is up. Perfect music to accompany your next exorcism — or keg party! (Karyn Bonham)

## The Kills

**Fried My Little Brains**

**CDEP, Rough Trade, www.roughtradeamerican.com**

When Alan Vega left the electrified streetfight that was *Suicide* to explore his rockabilly side on a major label, he ended up sounding like a drag queen doing Springsteen covers. If you don't believe me, I recommend *Collision Drive* by Vega, available for fifty cents at most flea markets. Vega should have, in theory, ended up sounding like The Kills. The Kills explore the sludge of Americana as only pimply British teenagers can, with slavish devotion and fervent trading of Beefheart and Radio Birdman bootlegs. Dear Rough Trade, here's your blurb: "Your stereo is the fire and The Kills are your gasoline," and I honestly mean it. (Brian Joseph Davis)

# PASTE BOMB 001: Net Losses

by Darren Wershler-Henry

*Paste Bomb (n): A random or nonsequitur-ial piece of data that is cut from one's hard drive and pasted into an online conversation. Meant to entertain, infuriate, and befuddle online conversants.*

— WIRED Jargon Watch

**The** Internet isn't going to make your life better.

There, I said it.

The Internet is a vast, Byzantine procrastination device that can (and will) threaten to engulf all of the functional and productive aspects of your existence. [NB: The time that it's taken me to write this paragraph, for example, has been effectively doubled by the fact that in the middle of its composition, Christian Bök sent me an email containing a link to "Decade of Rad: The 10 Eightiest Movies," a prose snickerfest replete with gems such as the following, from the synopsis of Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo: "When are real estate developers going to learn that progress is no match for break dancing recreation centers? I honestly think that if the American Indians knew how to break dance, our boats would have been pop rocked away and we'd all be reading this from the pantaloons lacing festival in the Spanish countryside."] If you're so inclined, there is a simple way to avoid this fate: turn off your fucking computer, grab a Frisbee and take the dog to the park, then have a sandwich and go build some houses for Habitat For Humanity. Everyone else — those of you that won't or can't allow your keyboards to be prized out of your pale and twitchy hands — please proceed to the next paragraph. If you're going to waste time, you should learn how to do it with some efficiency.

First of all, it's not your momma's Internet anymore. Since every 13-year-old with computer access now has a weblog, Google and the other venerable pillars of on-line search technology have been hopelessly gummed up with huge wads of post-literate meandering. In order to avoid becoming trapped in this morass and get to the good stuff (i.e. whatever rubs your particular nasty),

you'll need to start frequenting some sites that'll do your filtering for you.

"Filtering" is exactly what it sounds like: the process of sorting data through some combination of automation and human collaboration. A website's readership is often the source of its best material, and provides the cheapest and most effective way to rank and sort all of the material that's submitted to its editors (I won't bore you with the details of how collaborative filtering works, but if you're really curious, you can always read the Slashdot FAQ). The trick for individual would-be procrastinators is to locate the site or sites that concentrate the material that you find most interesting into a series of dense, flavourful bouillion cubes of data. (There are also tools like Shrook and Newsmonster that will help you oversee a number of such sites at once, but I'll get to that next time.)

Following are a few of the sites that I visit every day — some of them several times a day. Bookmark them. Love them. Use them. There's nothing they'd like better. So set your propeller beanie at a jaunty angle and start typing.

## Slashdot

[www.slashdot.org](http://www.slashdot.org)

The bleeping bionic Linux-based heart of the geek universe, Slashdot now has so many regular readers that its name has become synonymous with the on-line traffic jams that result from thousands of people all trying to follow a single hyperlink simultaneously.

When Slashdot links a site, often a lot of readers will hit the link to read the story or see the purty pictures. This can easily throw thousands of hits at the site in minutes. Most of the time, large professional websites have no problem with this, but often a site we link will be a smaller site, used to getting only a few thousand hits a day. When all those Slashdot readers start crashing the party, it can saturate the site completely, causing the site to buckle under the strain. When this happens, the site is said to be "Slashdotted."

Recently, the terms "Slashdot Effect" and "Slashdotted" have been used more generally to refer to any short-term traffic jam at a website.

Slashdot covers a huge variety of topics on a daily basis — everything from the minutiae of Free Software politics to on-line gaming to book reviews to anime to

weird Star Wars sex sites (where else would you find a link to the "Scout Walker Kama Sutra"? Some people have far too much free time). The beauty of the site is that it's highly configurable; as a registered user, you can specify what topics you want to appear in the site's main window, build customized "Slashboxes" that display links to other sites that interest you, maintain a free on-line journal, and do all sorts of other wonderful things that many sites would only provide as paid services. By rights, Slashdot should be your home page. The only downside is that the zealotry of the site's reader comments can occasionally grow tiresome.

## Blogdex

[www.blogdex.net](http://www.blogdex.net)

Blogdex is a brilliant piece of programming that originated in the MIT Media Lab. It does exactly what its name suggests; it tracks the diffusion of information through the blogosphere (i.e. the segment of the Internet that's occupied by weblogs). Because bloggers typically contextualize their writing with hypertext links relevant to the subjects they are discussing, Blogdex is able to use these links as shorthand for the things that the bloggers are actually writing, which then allows Blogdex to track a piece of conversation as it moves from weblog to weblog.

Blogdex crawls all of the weblogs in its database every time they are updated and collects the links that have been made since the last time it was updated. The system then looks across all weblogs and generates a list of the fastest spreading ideas, which appears on the site's front page. All you have to do is skim that list and voila — you'll know what's captured the ADD-riddled imaginations of the blogger world.

Number 2 on Blogdex today: "Power Outage traced to Dim Bulb in White House."

## Technorati

[www.technorati.com/resultshelp.html](http://www.technorati.com/resultshelp.html)

Technorati is Blogdex on steroids. Not only does it track the hottest stories in the blogosphere, it provides all sorts of other information about the sites carrying the story, such as a given site's Google ranking, the number of other sites currently linked to that site, the last time that site was updated, etc. One of today's screamers: "HOLY SHIT!!!! BBC NEWS reports: Vatican 'ordered abuse cover-up' A secret document shows the Vatican told bishops to hide cases of sexual abuse, the Observer newspaper reports." One of the shortcomings of blog reportage is verifiability; with its system of crosslinks and metadata, Technorati provides that in spades. Incredibly useful, but for serious geeks only.

## Metafilter

[www.metafilter.com](http://www.metafilter.com)

Metafilter is a weblog roundup of the current popular memes sweeping across the Internet. Anyone can contribute, but the regulars ("mefites") keep the site stocked with all sorts of juicy oddities. This morning, I'm looking at The Victorian Sex Cry Generator ("Turn your passions upon me! I lie in wait, my avenue too fair, too open to be miss'd."), the aforementioned Ten Eightiest Movies (aha! So THAT'S where Christian found it), and a round-up of stories marking the 35th anniversary of the infamous 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention.

## Memepool

[www.memepool.com](http://www.memepool.com)

The old-school ancestor to Metafilter, built entirely by human hands. No fancy web design, no RSS feed, no sidebars, just links to the endless stream of work produced by idle hands at their keyboards: Jewish hip-hop artist 50 Shekel, Friendster backlash site STD-ster ("You can use STD-ster to: Meet new people to infect, through your friends and their friends; Figure out where that awful rash came from; Motivate yourself to practice abstinence rather than just keep talking about it"), and, of course, Hipster Bingo (in the summer of 2003, Ironic Trucker Cap, Old-School Pumas, Too-Small Sweater, Pabst Blue Ribbon and Miller High Life spells B-I-N-G-O).

## Boing Boing

[www.boingboing.net](http://www.boingboing.net)

The digital descendant of the late '80s zine of the same name, Boing Boing is the epitome of good blogging — a dense, informative slice of the on-line universe that

reflects the personalities, passions, and career pursuits of its four major contributors (Mark Frauenfelder, Cory Doctorow, David Pescovitz and Xeni Jardin). Boing Boing also features "The Guestbar," a sidebar mini-blog that's been guest edited by net-stars such as SF writer/video game designer Marc Laidlaw and computer columnist Jon C. Dvorak. Today's Boing Boing bounty includes a link to the Mini-KISS site (an all-midget KISS cover band), the first whale-fart ever captured on film, and an on-line scheme to "Save Al Franken" from Fox TV's lawsuit to stop him from using the phrase "Fair and Balanced" in the title of his book. *ew*

## Other Referenced Websites

(In Order of Appearance)

### Jargon Watch:

[www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.01/jargon\\_watch.htm](http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.01/jargon_watch.htm)

### Decade of Rad: The 10 Eightiest Movies:

[www.thewavemag.com/pagegen.php?page\\_name=article&articleid=23960](http://www.thewavemag.com/pagegen.php?page_name=article&articleid=23960)

### Shrook and Newsmonster:

[www.fondantfancies.com/shrook](http://www.fondantfancies.com/shrook)  
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### Scout Walker Kama Sutra:

[www.scoutwalker.com](http://www.scoutwalker.com)

### Power Outage Traced to Dim Bulb in White House:

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### The Victorian Sex Cry Generator:

[www.hootisland.com/cgi-bin/victorian.cgi](http://www.hootisland.com/cgi-bin/victorian.cgi)

### Chicago Democratic Convention:

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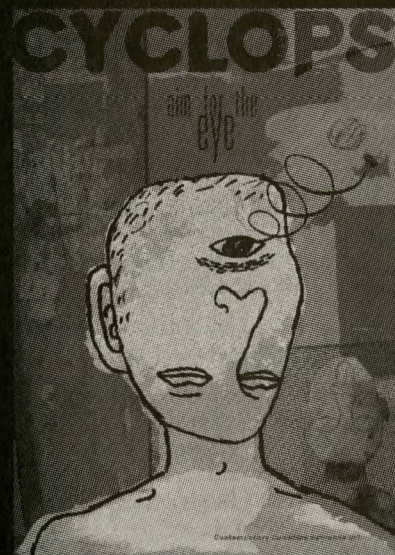
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### Mini-KISS:

[www.matteblack.com/minikiss/](http://www.matteblack.com/minikiss/)

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[www.heraldsun.news.com.au/common/story\\_page/0,5478,6947020%255E421,00.html](http://www.heraldsun.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5478,6947020%255E421,00.html)



## CYCLOPS: CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN NARRATIVE ART

Edited by Marc Tessier & Hélène Brosseau

"MONTREAL IS A PLACE PERCHED ON THE WISHBONE OF THE MEDIUM'S FOUNDING TRADITIONS — AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN, ENGLISH AND FRENCH — WITH A STELLAR REPUTATION BREWING ABROAD." — *EYE*

"IT'S DIFFICULT TO PICK UP THE BOOK WITHOUT BECOMING SPELLBOUND BY THE INTRICACY AND SCOPE OF THE GRAPHIC MADNESS WITHIN.... THIS IS A COLLECTION OF ARTISTS OF UNDENIABLE TALENT WHO ARE TESTING THE LIMITS OF THE MEDIUM." — *MONTREAL REVIEW OF BOOKS*

Featuring: Michel Rabagliati, Siris, Line Gamache, Peter Thompson, Marc Bell, Billy Mavreas, Alain Reno, Stéphane Olivier and Gilles Boulrice, Marc Richard, Marc Tessier, Bernie Mireault, Caro Caron, Jimmy Beaulieu, Phil Angers, Richard Suicide, Leif Tand, Rupert Bottenberg, Carlos Santos, Obom, Jean-Pierre Chansigaud, Jean-Claude Amyot, Philippe Girard, Hélène Brosseau, and Alexandre Lafleur.

### TORONTO LAUNCH AND EXHIBITION:

LOOP Gallery, 1174 Queen St. W. — November 21 (launch)–December 1

### OTTAWA LAUNCH AND EXHIBITION:

Ottawa School of Art, 35 George Street — October 23–November 22


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## Check Mate

by Zoe Whittall  art by Erica Brade

1.

Judy will not wear this sweater again, the flawless one with the short grey sleeves and black torso. Perfect thumb holes are worn-in around the wrists. Familiar.

She wore it today and she began to choke on the bus, ready to die.

She coughed up the hard, red candy, expelling it onto graffiti written on the silver back of the bus seat. It said: "Save yourself first" and "I Love You."

Now the sweater is bad luck. She tossed it on top of the kitchen garbage before she brought it out the next morning. Her husband didn't notice.

2.

She passed the funeral parlour on Marlon Road, the one between her house and her job at Stedman's department store. The undertaker outside was smoking, looked at her longer than he should, as if to say, "You're next, baby."

He watched her ass as she sashayed back home to call in sick. Bad Luck. Stares ruin everything. Judy rolls pennies on the plastic tablecloth.

3.

In the support group, there was a guy who chewed his own skin. There was a girl who fell a lot. There was a woman that Judy knew, just knew, wasn't going to make it.

The therapist told Judy she was making progress, even though she had never spoken, just smiled.

4.

When Judy got home she checked the pilot light again. Again. Again. Again. She noticed a hole in her left sock.



5.

Obsessed, prepossessed, infatuated, fixated, besotted, gripped, held, monomaniacal. A visionary.

6.

Her husband never ever worried. About anything. Sometimes when he was broke he would sigh a little bit. "Nothing to get all tense about, Jude," he said as he washed the carrots and set them aside. He rubbed a long one against the square metal grater. She knew he wasn't worried about death. Disease. The possibility of both. Just the shreds of orange falling into the ceramic bowl. Sometimes, this fact made Judy dream about chewing wine glasses.

7.

Judy played harmonica in the window. The lady downstairs in the yard, looked up. Her eyes were just like penny whistles.

8.

Judy said "heaven forbid" whenever she thought about having sex with everyone

on the bus. The old man, the girl with braces. She couldn't stop. She said "heaven forbid" without thinking she was saying it. It just came.

9.

Fatalistic, sceptical, negative, dubious, abrogating, neutralizing, pessimistic.

10.

The doctor said: "People with your condition either kill themselves or go on medication."

She took the script into the candy store. She bought red liquorice and felt lighter.

10.

Judy's mother telephoned every Monday night after bingo.


"How are you, sweetheart?"

"Nothing to complain about, you know, same old."

10.

He fucked her and she wanted to punch him in the head. She squeezed hard around him. She came hard, thinking he looked like a cowboy from the old western she watched the night before, when she couldn't fall asleep. She loved him completely, for his ability to just live.

11.

Judy remembered when God was a petal pulled in want. A first, second, third chew. A tangible fish. When it was God(.) not God(?) The brackets are new. 

Zoe Whittall is the author of *The Best 10 Minutes of Your Life* and the editor of the upcoming short fiction anthology *Geeks, Misfits and Outlaws*. She writes a comic called *Self-Serve* with artist Suzy Malik. A new column by Zoe will appear in the next issue of *Kiss Machine*. [www.zoewhittall.com](http://www.zoewhittall.com)

# Sir Dad Boss Pop

by David Bell art by Erica Brade

Sir Dad Boss Pop went crazy after his mommy died.

"She just went all gray and that was it," he told me, wiping his eyes. Sir Dad was practically a saint, looking after his mean-hearted mother the way he did. Once she was gone, he found himself a little broken and with nothing much to do, so he got himself a hobby.

The backyard aviary was completed in May. By June, there were birds, dozens of chirpy little orange and green finches, flown in from Australia. During the day, they would flutter around the wood-and-wire aviary and make plenty of bird music. At night-

time, they would sleep on their long perch, all those little birds in a row.

One day in July, Sir Dad came home happy. He rushed over to me and said: "Birdo, come out to the family station wagon and help your old dad."

He opened the backity-back window-door and looked at me with imp's eyes as I gasped at the sight of the enormous white bucket. "See birdo," he said, hoisting it out. Inside the bucket, thousands of little black beetles were crawling all over each other and making little-sounds. I jumped back in horror, but Sir Dad said, "Birdo, they're all sealed up tight."

"You're not putting them in the house, are you?"

"In the basement," said Sir Dad, "with the boxes and my radios."

"What if they escape?"

"They won't," said Sir Dad.

I live in the basement. Often in the night I trawdle bleary-eyed over to the next room and go pee. Every time, I must pass by the dark room with the boxes and the radios and now the beetles. There is a small light in there that shines dimly but bright enough so I can see where I'm going.

Every time it's the same, I whisper to myself "don't look at them, don't look at them, don't listen to them, I can't hear any bugs." But I still look at them and scrunch my face up in disgust at the sight of all those horrible black beetles crawling all over each other and making awful sucking noises.

I used to wonder what he fed them, or if he fed them, but I never asked. One time, I was passing by the bucket and, as always, I looked down. All the beetles were gone. Someone had stolen them and replaced them with little white worms, horrible little things that crawled all over each other and made sucking noises. I screamed and jumped and ran away from

there, but I forgot about the low ceiling on the way out, and then everything was dark, but the squishing sounds were in my ears, and the sucking noises too, and everything was beetles and bugs, beetles and bugs, and my Dad was holding them in his hands, eating them, and they went CRUNCH as he chewed on them, and they spilled out of his mouth and landed on the ground, and little white worms crawled all over his face and he was smiling.

"Some for you too Birdo," said my Dad as he came closer and closer.

"No Dad!" I screamed. "I'm frightened of bugs!"

Then it was morning and Dad had some frozen peas on my head. "There's a bump there, Birdo," he said, and he was sort of crying a little. "I'm so sorry, little bird."

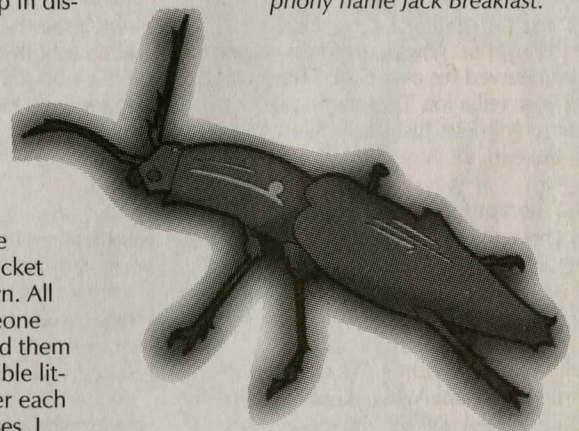
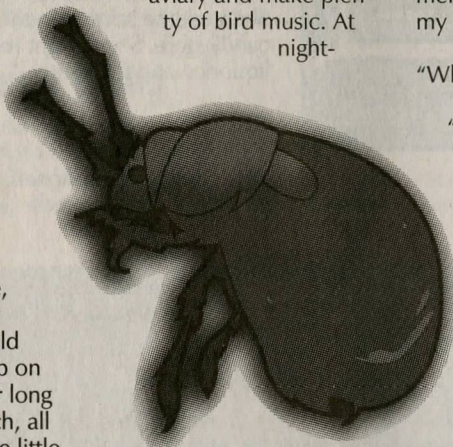
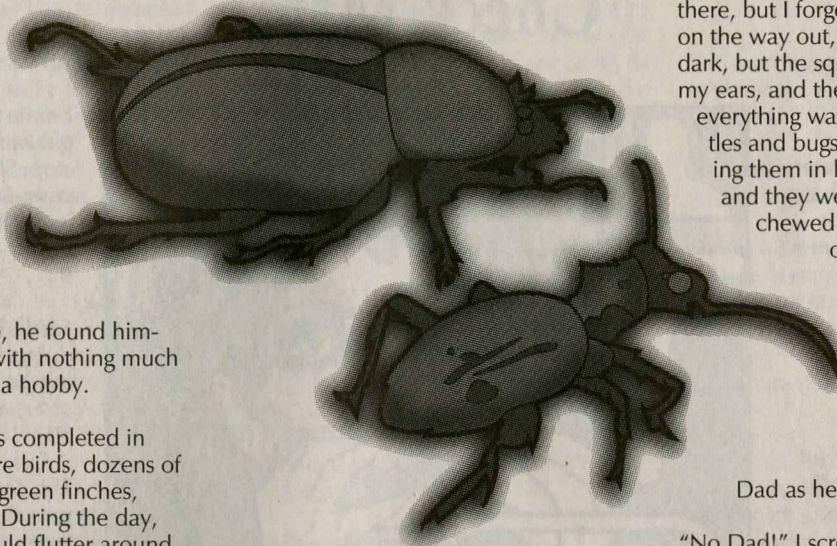
I was cradled in his arms and my head hurt, but I was happy all those bugs and beetles were only a dream.

"Dad can you keep them outside from now on?"

"Of course, Birdo."

I slept right there in his arms and had a beautiful soft white dream about baseball and Lucy.

*David Bell lives in Toronto. He sometimes plays music under the phony name Jack Breakfast.*



# Rabbit in the Trap

(Adapted from a Korean Folktale) by Paul Hong art by Erica Brade

John and Jane were afraid of rabbits that roamed in the surrounding neighbourhoods. One day, galvanised by an article they read in the paper, they discussed the problem and tried to find a way to live happily without this nagging fear. After much discussion, they came to an agreement to go shopping at Ikea.

A few days later, nothing had been solved. They decided to dig pits here and there to trap the rabbits. John and Jane called several of their friends and family members to come help dig deep pits around their house. Afterwards, they gathered in the backyard for a barbecue dinner.

One day, a traveller was passing through the neighbourhood and heard funny sounds nearby. He approached the area where the sounds were coming from and found a rabbit that was trapped in a pit, trying to hop out.

Seeing the traveller, the rabbit begged for help: "Please, help me out of this trap, and I will never forget your kindness." The traveller got a golden retriever from the next door neighbour's yard and, holding onto its hind legs, lowered it into the pit. The rabbit climbed out.

As soon as the rabbit was out of the trap, he said to the traveller: "I am grateful for your help, but because you people made the trap to catch me, I will have to kill you."

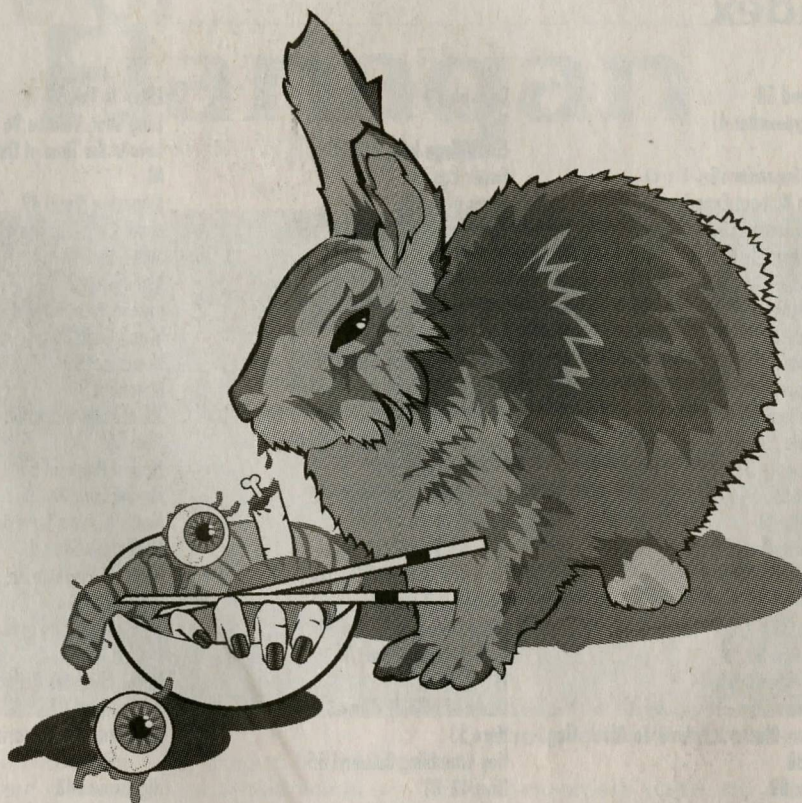
The traveller was speechless and frightened. Mustering all his courage, he said: "Wait a minute, Mr. Rabbit. It would be unfair to kill me considering that I just saved your life. We should at least ask a few impartial parties to judge who is right." The rabbit reluctantly agreed and both of them went to a hobo who lived in a shipping crate nearby.

After listening to their story, the hobo said: "It is the fault of the rich. We, hobos, also have a grudge against the rich. They ride us to work and then they leave us to starve and shiver in the cold. Talk about unfair!"

"Are you rich?" the rabbit asked.

The traveller lowered his head.

Next, they went to Mr. Pong. Mr. Pong



listened to their story silently and said: "John and Jane are wrong. They come in here all the time complaining about the price of cigarettes and dog food and they always call me 'Chief.' What have I done to them to deserve that? I am just trying to make a living. They have no heart!"

The rabbit had heard enough. The rabbit was elated, and about to attack the traveller, when a pig approached.

"Phew, you're just in time. Mr. Pig, please judge our case," said the traveller, and he told the pig what had happened.

The pig said: "Fine, but before I make any sort of judgement, I must see the original scene."

So the traveller, the rabbit and the pig all went to the pit where the rabbit had been trapped.

The pig said to the rabbit: "I must see exactly how you were before this traveller rescued you. Where exactly were you?"

Eager to show where he was, the rabbit jumped into the pit.

"Was that dog in the pit when you fell into it, Mr. Rabbit?" the pig asked.

"No, it was not."

The pig and the traveller lifted the dog out of the pit.

"Was that fast food delivery man in the pit when you fell into it, Mr. Rabbit?" the pig asked.

"No."

The pig and the traveller lifted the delivery man out of the pitfall.

"Was that nanny in the pit when you fell into it, Mr. Rabbit?"

"No, I don't think so."

The pig and the traveller lifted the nanny out of the pitfall. Then the pig said to the traveller: "Mr. Man, be on your way." And, with that, the pig left too.

Paul Hong is adapted from a folktale.

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# The Future of Nick Flanagan

by Nick Flanagan

**I believe** that my future looks incredibly promising. Things are looking up. I recently thought about brushing my teeth, and believe it or not, I followed through on that thought and actually did brush my teeth! This can only mean I am capable of anything. And I'm trying anything! Anal sex, listening to Frank Zappa — recently these are things I've either tried or briefly thought of trying.

Picture the year 2010. Flying cars, talking lunchboxes, cloned eyebrows available for transplant at one's whim, and a certain Surgeon General named Dr. Nick Flanagan, MD. That's right, my ambitions are political. I want to become Surgeon General so that I can perform complex abortions anywhere, and also so I can randomly discourage people from doing things. "Surgeon General's Warning: eating Pad Thai can make you impotent, induce diarrhea, and cause fatness in children." Bam! There goes the Pad Thai business. Now the only thing Thailand will have left to support its economy is the child-sex trade and rattan, but the Thai economy will crumble once those two trends die out, paving the way for my Thai presidential bid of 2041. I will run on a progressive platform; the only child-sex I will allow will be the viewing of holograms of midgets dressed like children in sailor suits having sex with each other. I will win the election because of my stellar previous record as a world-famous globetrotting Surgeon General, and also due to rumours of a Clintonesque curved penis in my pants.

Of course, I want to be a celebrity as well as a Surgeon General and future mayor of Thailand. My career idol is a gravelly-voiced brunette by the name of Alec Baldwin. His political ambitions have been betrayed by obvious insanity and a habit of shouting at his beautiful and agoraphobic ex-wife, whereas my election dreams will be based on clear-cut reasoning and thus will take me further than initially believed possible by my family and friends (who think of me as a dysfunctional human being with a talent for getting into scrapes with the law and getting ladies preggers — two habits



photo by heather maceachem

which unfortunately tend to intertwine more often than they should within my life).

To switch topics, I also think the future holds an increase in fatness for me. I wish to the Lord above that I meant "phatness," but obesity is what I'm talking about, not funk factor. When I'm not eating, I'm deliberately constipated so I can become fatter. It's not something I can help; it's a horrific mental death-wish to become the large-stomached man I need to be. A corpulent physique will impress people and make it easier for the good folks of Thailand to elect me as their leader.

But enough about me. I'm so sick of seeing future-predictors who only go on and on (and on!) about their futures, without a whit of care for the future of the world at large. It's selfish and it must stop, and I am the one to stop it. The only reason I haven't brought up the future of the world at large so far is because it's a lot worse than my personal future. For one, Thailand will be the only decent country in a flaming post-nuclear winter wasteland where vaguely humanoid creatures without eyes or genitals wander aimlessly, stopping only to pathetically try to start post-emo bands. Yes, the nightmare you had last night will come true: "post-emo" will become the

only commercially viable and artistically satisfying music genre in the universe. Post-emo types will despise my ban on child-sex, because the trend of people who cultivate an "emo" look having sex with minors will continue (in secret at least) into the deep future. Resultant hatred will lead to my assassination at the hands of post-emo mutant revolutionaries, followed by non-stop millenniums of terrible, whiny music, and hairless youth orgies. It will be ugly but beautiful, like Sandra Bernhard or Dilbert. It will be the future. *GF*

Nick Flanagan is a youthful comedian, musician and writer who occasionally undergoes periods of astounding shoddiness that are in some ways more brilliant than his moments of actual quality and deliberate wit. His writings have the perpetual scowl of a modern-day Eminem and the political savvy of a half-Jewish Canadian and ideologically undecided Chuck D. He is sometimes very worried about things, so if any of you ladies see him on the street, a peck on the cheek would be delightful. A nice pat on the back from the fellas would up his dander somewhat as well. If it helps his case, it should be known that he is currently boycotted in Vancouver.

# How to Spot the Next Big Thing

by Mark Kingwell

### 1. Know your terrain.

All markets are futures markets.

Spotting the Next Big Thing (NBT) is the basis of every human economy, from swapping marbles to John Poindexter's Policy Analysis Market, offering odds on the overthrow of Jordanian monarchy, Yasser Arafat's assassination, and a North Korean nuke attack. "The idea of a federal betting parlour on atrocities and terrorism is ridiculous and it's grotesque," said Oregon senator Ron Wyden, a Democrat, just before Poindexter was made to resign.

Nonsense. Just an NBT market like any other.

### 2. Think about death.

We live in time, which is unidimensional, which means nobody knows what's going to happen next. And we're mortal, which means we all die sometime but don't know when or how. Hence our indefatigable interest is what's next. NBT is really about death, because what isn't?

Thus NBT dominates everything from the fashion world to the art world, the stock market to the marketplace of ideas, and only a damn fool would ignore NBT out of some misguided sense of intellectual purity or cultural resistance. There is no resistance.

### 3. There is no resistance.

Philosophy, for example, likes to think it is bigger than NBT, but in fact is just a longer-term and higher-stakes version. Dialectical materialism or logical positivism? Nietzsche or Wittgenstein? Substance dualism or eliminative monism? Smart guy or damn fool?

### 4. Do the theory (I): "same" and "different."

NBT is always, by definition, something we have both heard of and never imagined. It is the cultural equivalent of the bread at a suburban mall, at once predigested and stale. Or of a middle-aged man living on this bread, at once

scrawny and pot-bellied. Pre-worn but sold new. Obvious but novel. Familiar yet breathless. Same and different.

The key to NBT is that it should, while loudly proclaiming its revolutionary nextness and bigness — its overwhelming and irresistible newness and freshness and nowness — fall into the existing systems of cultural exchange with absolute smoothness. Genuinely new things, like language-breaking poetry, are baffling. They change everything, and so sail past the bounds of understanding. Good luck to them! The essence of NBT, by contrast, is to be understood, to keep everything exactly the same, only more so, even while, at the very moment that, it proclaims how different everything now is.

### 5. Do the theory (II): "old" and "new."

The most crucial part of NBT is not the "new" but the "old" against which it is "measured." Fictional categories, delusional constructions, yet necessary to the power of NBT, and so of culture more generally. The taken-for-granted (Barthes), the already-thought (Bourdieu), ideology (Marx). The stuff nobody questions.

"News" is just the plural of "new." And everything old is new again. Sure, but don't be fooled. Everything old is new again is old news.

### 6. Ways and means (I): "This is the new that."

Brown is the new black. Green is the new brown. Grey is the new green. Black is the new grey.

Resistance is the new conformity. Irony is the new sincerity. Baghdad is the new Hanoi.

And so on.

### 7. Ways and means (II): "now" and "today."

Children are have worse manners now. There's more divorce now. Nowadays we spend less time reading.

We're moving faster now. Today things are more complicated.

And so on.

### 8. Ways and means (III): Faster.

Faster is the new deeper.

### 9. Ways and means (IV): Labels.

Interest in NBT is self-generating, it needs no outside justification. That is, the value of NBT lies entirely within the system in which it appears. There is no need for, no possibility of, intrinsic value — whatever that might mean.

Proclaiming NBT is sufficient, in itself, to establish NBT. Thus the rhetorical pace of fashion columns, style advice, technology reports, demographic research, and the like: authoritative non-answers to non-questions raised in a non-context of non-issues.

Labels confer legitimacy at the same time they obscure the only reality of NBT, namely the label itself, often simply a tautological statement of its own newness and nextness. Spring fling! Fresh express! Mission Accomplished!

### 10. But don't be cynical.

There is no resistance but there is an answer — though, as so often, not to the question you thought you were asking. Ha!

The only way really to spot NBT is to get beyond the self-perpetuating cycles of wanting to spot NBT. See the logic, be the logic. All talk of NBT holds at bay a larger, more unsettling truth: there is no NBT coming. The Big Thing is already here, and its message is: Big Things are over.

Always already here. Always already over.

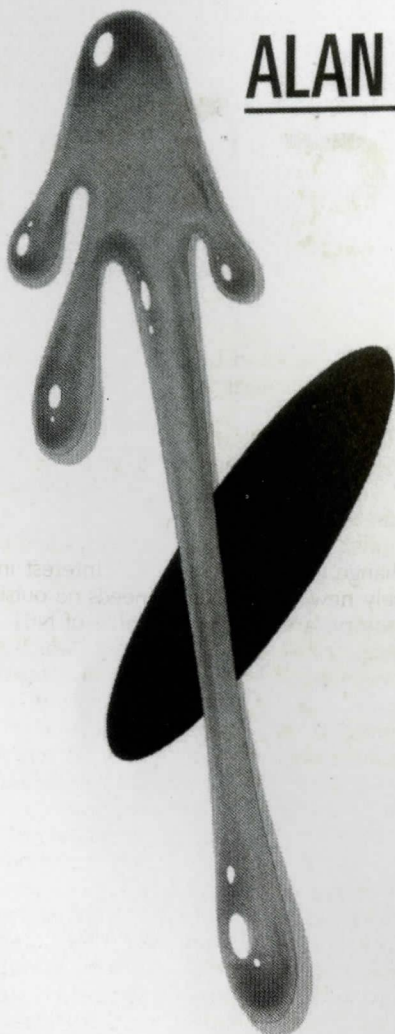
That's the news. Get used to it.

Mark Kingwell is a professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto and the author of seven books, most recently *Catch & Release* (Penguin 2003), a book that looks like it's about trout fishing but isn't.

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