

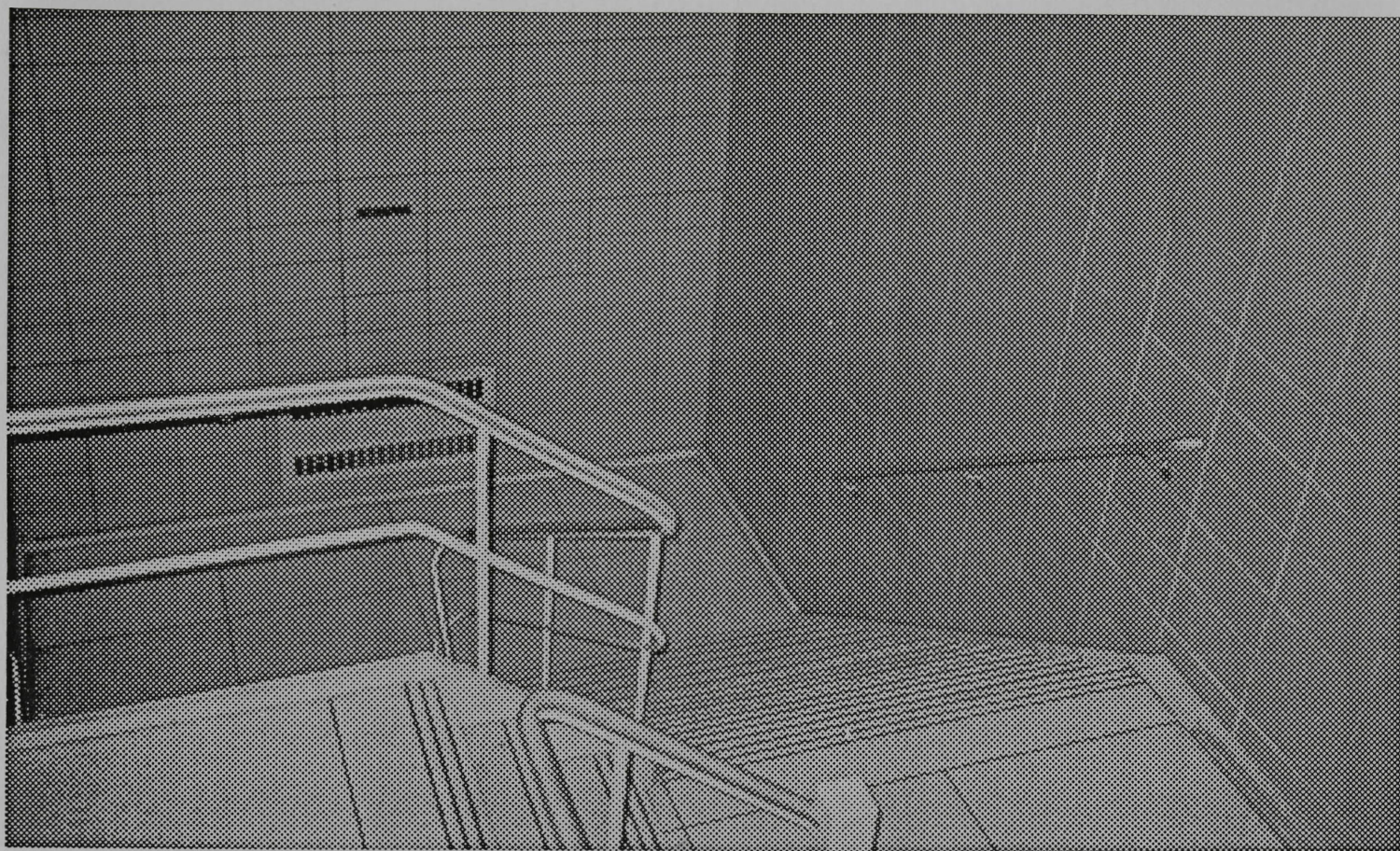
**YOU CONCEIVED IT. YOU MADE IT HAPPEN. NOW IT'S TIME TO CONQUER.**



# **GET THE WORD OUT**

**BY JEFFREY YAMAGUCHI**







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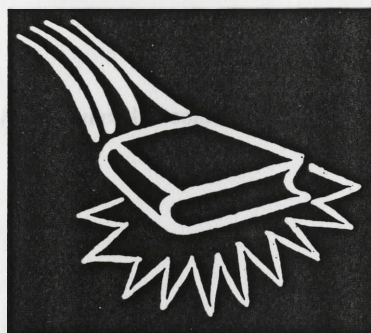
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"Speed Book" drawing by Mike Tobeno

All photographs by Jeffrey Yamaguchi



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A MIDNIGHT RAMBLE  
ON A SIX YEAR NIGHT



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# CONTENTS

## GET THE WORD OUT

Plan your work  
Work your plan

We Are the Music Makers

25 Simple Things You Can Do To Get the Word Out About Your Project

## STARTING CONVERSATIONS

A long ago, late night conversation about an amazing, influential song from my high school days:

## STUCK ON THE CREEP

25 Camp "What do you think he said, right after he finished writing the song?"

Don't Quit Your Day Job

## THE SPIN

How I Published My Book

A Best Seller In My Book

The Truth Behind the Title of "Book Review Editor"

## BE AN EDITOR

It comes down to you. It always does.

So You Think You're Going to Write the Next Great American Novel

Get the Band Together

## THE BOOKMOUTH.COM INTERVIEWS

An interview with Jen Angel, Publisher of the Zine Yearbook and Co-Editor of *Chorus Magazine*

An interview with Photographer Cynthia Casady

An interview with John Spanich, Zine Buyer and Magazine Manager

Cody's Books

An interview with Kevin Sampson, Publisher of *Future Issues Books*

An interview with Lisa Crosby, Founder and Publisher of *Eye Magazine*

An interview with Venus or Vixen's Cam Bogue

The Self-Publishing Adventures of Travel Writer Evelyn Kays

An interview with Zinebook.com's Chip Rowe

An interview with Jim Munson, Author of *Angry Young Spacewoman* and Publisher of *somebodysings.org*

An interview with Mike Tolento, the Artist Behind *Empty Life Comics*

An interview with Sasha Cady, Publisher of *To-Do List Magazine*

An interview with Rebecca Hall, Publisher of *Free Press*

An interview with

An interview with

An interview with

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An interview with

An interview with

An interview with

An interview with

An interview with

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# CONTENTS

## GET THE WORD OUT

Introduction  
Some Notes on Who This Book Is For  
We Are the Music Makers  
25 Simple Things You Can Do To Get the Word Out About Your Project

## FIGHTING CORPORATE CONTROL

After the Last Merger  
25 Simple Things You Can Do to Keep Your Money From the Corporations

## LIVING ON THE CHEAP

25 Cheap Shots  
Don't Quit Your Day Job

## THE STORIES OF MY BOOK

How I Published My Book  
A Best Seller In My Book  
The Truth Behind the Title of "Book Review Editor"

## BIG ON CAMPUS

So You Think You're Going to Write the Next Great American Novel  
Get the Band Together

## THE BOOKMOUTH.COM INTERVIEWS

An Interview with Jen Angel, Publisher of the *Zine Yearbook* and Co-Editor of *Clamor Magazine*  
An Interview with Photographer Cynthia Connolly  
An Interview with John Supanich, Zine Buyer and Magazine Manager at Cody's Books  
An Interview with Kevin Sampsell, Publisher of Future Tense Books  
An Interview with Lisa Crosby, Founder and Publisher of *Eye Magazine*  
An Interview with Venus or Vixen's Cara Bruce  
The Self-Publishing Adventures of Travel Writer Evelyn Kaye  
An Interview with Zinebook.com's Chip Rowe  
An Interview with Jim Munroe, Author of *Angry Young Spaceman* and Publisher of *nomediakings.org*  
An Interview with Mike Tolento, the Artist Behind *Empty Life Comics*  
An Interview with Sasha Cagen, Publisher of *To-Do List Magazine*  
An Interview with Rebecca Wolff, Publisher of *Fence Magazine*  
An Interview with DJ Gordon Hurd  
An Interview with Hal Niedzviecki, Author of *We Want Some Too*  
An Interview with Filmmaker Greg Pak  
An Interview with Jim DeRogatis, Author of *Let It Blur*

## SUGGESTED READING / RESOURCES



# GET THE WORD OUT

"I just want to make shit." Back in the day when my good friend Kendy and I used to hang out and either one, drink too much coffee, or two, drink too much beer, it seems that I ended most of my ramblings with that statement:

"I just want to make shit."

I was referring to projects. Zines. Literary journals. Music. Books. A collection of poems. Furniture. Films. Photographs. Paintings. Even found sound collages, for God's sake. You see, we used to just talk and talk and talk and talk some more about all the cool things going on around us—the new magazine that just launched, the happening record release party for an amazing new band, a startling, beautiful book one of us had just read, or a freaked out, shocking movie we had seen together. I wanted to be doing projects just like that: bigger and better than the things I had going on. Kendy felt the same way, and I guess that's why we found ourselves going back to the same old conversation.

Kendy has a much more relaxed personality. He'd make his comments and take in mine, all the while sipping his drink and dragging on his cigarette. I'd get all amped up and stressed out, and finally just blurt, "I don't want to have to work at my stupid job, I don't care about money, I know if I just had a shot, you know, and I had more time, and I knew the right people, I could do something really cool... I just... I just... I just want to make shit."

It's a wonder that Kendy kept engaging with me. He's a good friend.

Recalling these conversations from my early post-college days fixes in my mind the point at which I began to see personal accomplishment as the completion of artistic projects. This view has strengthened as my desire to create projects has grown. Simply put, I love making projects. The good news is that over time, I've gotten better at spending less time talking (whining, complaining, lashing out at nobody in particular), and actually getting the work done. Though I must admit, I still do my fair share of talking.

And it doesn't stop there. I love seeing, writing about, and celebrating the projects made by others. It's a major source of inspiration for me. Jealousy as well, but mostly inspiration.

One aspect of project creation that has always interested me is getting the word out. Indeed, once a project is complete, a great deal of work remains. You've got to let people know your project exists. That takes promotion, marketing, selling, and more selling, all with a creative twist. It's hard work.

I see getting the word out about your independent project as part of the creative process, and I believe that equal to the creation of your project is the unique way in which you deliver it to an audience. You've got to get the word out. That's what this book is all about.

Of course this book isn't a ticket to stardom. There are no guarantees, no ready-made formulas to obtaining the love and admiration (not to mention the dollars) of a worldwide audience.

But this book will provide some simple ways to start getting the word out about your project. And within these simple ideas, and they really are simple, you'll find the seeds of the ideas that you will come up with all on your own, to develop creative ways in which to launch not only the project at hand, but future projects as well.

Again, there's no quick and easy way to fame and fortune. Even if you've got the most amazing, groundbreaking project ever, that doesn't necessarily mean it's going to make the front page of the *New York Times* Arts section, get you on the network morning shows, and find an immediate audience of thousands. Lots of money doesn't necessarily mean you'll be able to buy your way onto the scene. And all the blood, sweat and tears you can give, backed up with an unrelenting persistence, might not generate a single mention of note.

But all of these things are part of the process of getting the word out. The right combination, with a little luck, good timing, some advice from a friend, help from a colleague, ideas from a late night program you happen to catch, details from an article you found in an old magazine lying around your friend's house, a happy accident, and a disaster thrown in because it's bound to happen anyway; all contribute to an effective campaign to get the word out about your project. It's never just one thing. That's why you have to keep working at it.

Of course, you have to see your campaign to get the word out in terms of a broader effort to build an audience over the long



haul. Yes, you've got a project that people need to know about, and that's what you have to focus on. But keep in mind the projects you'll be producing in the future, both known and unknown to you at the present time. A reporter might not write about your current project, but your contact with him helps cultivate a relationship that will lead to articles in the future. Even if your current project garners nothing but yawns and unreturned phone calls, all your hard work is not in vain. You are still laying groundwork for the next one.

It's an important to view your projects as relationship builders, not just with people who can directly help you get the word out—reporters, writers, store managers, etc.—but with your general audience as well. People who are interested in your current project are more likely to be interested in what you produce in the future.

I could go on and on, and I do, in the following pages of this book. And in these pages you'll also find the following:

- 1) Ways to keep your money from the corporations. They pretty much control popular culture, which of course isn't a good thing. Just by making your project, you're fighting the power. But you can do more. Simple gestures, really, but they do add up, and they do cycle back to help your endeavors, as well as those of your fellow creators of independent projects.
- 2) Ways to live on the cheap. If you're involved in independent projects, you've most likely got limited dollars. The featured cheapskate ideas will help you get by with less, as well as help you stretch those already stretched finances of yours.
- 3) How I published my first book. My specialty is book publishing, and this section outlines some of the things I've learned, both positive and negative, about independent publishing and the book industry.
- 4) The many reasons why college is the best time to start launching projects (Oh how I envy you if you're currently going to college). This section highlights all the cool, unique opportunities the college environment offers students who take the initiative to make and promote projects.
- 5) Interviews. A mixed collection, featuring a zine buyer, a bunch of authors, several website publishers, a dj/party promoter, a filmmaker, and a photographer. All rich with ideas, experiences and inspiration.

Taken all together, the various chapters in this book add up to a nice package of information that will hopefully supply a path to creative success in how you get the word out about your project. That was my goal in putting this book together. And while the book contains lots of details, I'll be the first to tell you that it's nothing more than a jumping off point. It comes down to you. It always will.

You conceived an idea for a project. Then you completed it, with a finishing shine to boot. Now it's time to conquer. Get the word out, as loud as you can, and then take it higher. And don't ever stop turning up the volume.

—Jeffrey Yamaguchi  
Brooklyn, NY

## **SOME NOTES ON WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR**

On the most basic level, this book is for anyone who is creating independent projects and wants some insight on how to not only get the word out about your projects, but also get by while you're creating and promoting your projects.

By projects, I mean everything from zines and books to music and films to bizarre art concepts.

For many people, one of the main goals of producing independent projects is to parlay the effort into a deal with a major publishing house, record company or film studio. Call it a calling-card or a stepping stone, often it isn't so much what you have created but how much buzz and excitement you have generated that gets the attention of an acquiring editor or corporate executive.

But even if you're already in a band with a record deal, or an author who has been published by a major publishing house, or your film has been picked up by a studio, this book is still very useful. Even though these big companies have publicity departments, you still want to be actively involved in the promotion of your project. Of course it would be wonderful if once you got your deal, all you had to do was worry about creating your project. But that's a fantasy, and it would be a huge mistake to function as if the promotion of your project is totally being taken care of by someone else. And even if the publicity department is doing a bang up job getting the word out about your project, they will very quickly move on to the next thing. You need to be involved, every step of the way, but especially after the initial frenzied support of the publicity



department drops off.

## WE ARE THE MUSIC MAKERS

Something that I'm always thinking about is inspiration. What makes someone do something, first, and then what makes someone do something new and different and totally amazing. It's all tied into a million things, but on a simple level, you can break it down to inspiration.

I get a great deal of my inspiration just by taking in all the cool projects that are out there, from the past, present and even the soon to be released. Reading the papers and websites about other people's projects, or seeing films, hearing music, reading a book, seeing a play... I get inspiration from all of it. Maybe the subject matter is inspiring in and of itself, or maybe it's the project in its entirety (from the packaging to the promotional campaign), but I know that seeing, or just reading about other people's projects, is an incredible source of inspiration for me.

Initially, I sometimes get outright jealous, even bitter, that someone else has created some great project and all I get to do is participate as a ticket buyer or onlooker.

But once I rise above such inner turmoil, knowing full well that it comes from my own self-doubt and insecurities, I let the projects of other people fuel my energy and ideas and focus so that I, too, create projects. In short, I am inspired.

Seeing all the zines at Cody's Books or St. Mark's Bookstore, checking out an independent label's website and seeing that it has a huge roster of bands, seeing a film by an independent filmmaker, maybe I'm just reading the newspaper and I'll see an ad for a "CD release party" for a band that I've never heard about before... All of these things inspire me.

And then there are things like that scene in *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, when the little bratty girl tells Willy Wonka that there's no such thing as a "snozberry." Willy Wonka is startled by the little girl's comment. He then leans over and whispers into her ear: "We are the music makers. And we are the dreamers of the dream." I love that fucking scene. I find total inspiration in those words. We are the music makers. And we are the dreamers of the dream.

I read an article about Egon Schiele, an artist with a distinct and unique technique, who shook up the art scene, was admired and persecuted, formed an influential art group, had successful shows, and created a prolific body of beautiful, engaging, controversial work. Not until almost the end of the article is the artist's age mentioned. He died at 28. I have to find a balance between feelings of shock, jealousy, and inspiration when I read about such people.

I went to see this woman speak about her son, a young photographer named Dan Eldon. She put together a book of pages from his journals, which were mainly collages made from the beautiful photographs he took during his travels around the world. His photojournalism appeared in numerous major magazines. He ended up getting stoned to death by an angry mob while he was trying to photograph the results of a U.N. bombing in Somalia. He was 22. Dan Eldon's book is called *The Journey is the Destination*. Check it out the next time you are in a bookstore or a library. Dan Eldon's story is a reminder that we don't have forever to find our inspiration, that we cannot put off until tomorrow what can be done today, because there may not be a tomorrow. Dan Eldon, even at his untimely death at 22, had a wealth inspiration. His journals are the proof.

I heard this guy give a talk about the music industry, and he was discussing the different ways in which local, independent bands get people to come to their shows. He said that one band he knows made a cassette tape consisting of two songs from their album. Instead of just passing out flyers, this band passed out these tapes to people. When a band member gave the tape to someone, he said, "come to our show, bring this tape to the door, and you'll get in free." The band ended up getting 80 tapes back, which it then used to promote its next show.

On the radio I heard this guy talk about his new online literary journal. He spoke eloquently about why he put his journal together, and how the internet is giving literature new and powerful ways to impact people's hearts and minds. Throughout the interview he kept mentioning other online literary journals and giving examples of all the cool, ground-breaking things people are doing with their literary websites. The conversation made me say to myself, "I want to create an online literary journal."

I remember seeing *Why Man Creates* during high school, on a film reel projector. *Why Man Creates*, made by Saul Bass in 1968, is a wonderful, humorous, and thought-provoking documentary that explores the creative process through a series of quick-paced animated and live action sequences. I've seen it twice—during my sophomore year in Mr. Coronet's geometry class and during my senior year in Mr. Cohen's calculus class. These two teachers made a point of going beyond explaining



formulas and proofs and all the math type stuff that I wouldn't be able to figure out to save my life at this point. I mean, really, it's true, who gives a shit if  $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ . Don't get me wrong—you've got to learn that stuff in high school, as it makes your brain work and expands its problem solving capabilities, not to mention the required math courses in college, but these two teachers seemed to get that to the core. That's why they did things like show the *Why Man Creates* film in their classes. Simply put, they were factoring in the concept of creativity into the nature of math—not  $2 + 2 = 4$ , but the magic of how the mind can prove that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , and how that proof impacts the next step in the endless stream of equations and numerical possibilities. More simply put, they were sending a very clear message: your mind is a very powerful tool.

There's a scene in *Why Man Creates* that both haunts and inspires me, to this day, 17 years after I first saw it. It's the part where a physicist is explaining that the research he's been working on to prove the Big Bang Theory for five years is wrong. As you watch the physicist walk down a dark, laboratory hallway, in voiceover the interviewer asks, "What are you going to do now?", and the physicist says, "I don't know. I really don't know." Just as he finishes his sentence, he walks out of the laboratory, and silence takes over as the door is closing. Then the door slams shut. To me, this scene embodies the fear—which lingers, always, always, sometimes a safe hazy distance away, sometimes staring you down like a reflection in surgical light—that some kind of payoff for all your hard work will remain elusive, or might never arrive. All the more reason to keep working, striving, moving forward. Like I said, that scene both inspires me and spooks the hell out of me all at the same time.

Discovering inspiration is an ability buried so deeply within some people that they never find it. But really all you have to do is look around, listen, take a closer look at that article you are reading, the website you've been checking out, the film you saw two weeks ago and can't stop thinking about. It's there, behind you, at the picture you will see later on today. It's a fleeting memory, something your friend says, an image that makes you angry. It's within you already, waiting to be tapped, triggered by happenstance or years of study, ready to make a difference. Always seek it, keep finding it no matter what, and make your projects happen.

## **25 SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO GET THE WORD OUT ABOUT YOUR INDEPENDENT PROJECT**

You've worked your ass off to complete your project, and now it's time to let the world know about your zine or book or album or website or movie or whatever.

It may seem like a daunting task, but getting the word out about your independent project is not impossible. You may not have the backing of a major media conglomerate, but that doesn't mean that you're cut off from the promotional highway. It just means that you've got to work a little harder, be creative, and follow the 25 simple things you can do to get the word out about your independent projects outlined in this book.

The fact that you've taken the initiative to independently create a project proves that you've got the energy and the drive to go the extra mile to get the word out and let people know that your project exists.

With regard to money, you probably have less for your whole promotional budget than those corporate suits and short skirts spent on a pre-planning marketing lunch in which they discussed next year's Janet Jackson pin-up calendar.

But that's okay. You don't need that much money. You'll need some, but not that much.

It's important to note that this is a time of information overload. There are a gazillion projects out there vying for people's attention. Even if you've created a masterpiece, something so brilliant that it should easily attract attention based on its sheer existence alone, it might still get buried beneath billboards for CocaCola and a catchy Gap commercial. Your plan to GET THE WORD OUT has to be solid, interesting and well-executed.

As the mega-mergers continue to consolidate media power, a smaller and smaller number of corporations wield a larger and larger amount of influence over every aspect of our lives. Corporate logos are being fire branded onto our brains. Independent projects are a way to fight this power. It's important to work hard to get the word out about your project, to stake a claim on the national attention span.

You've done the project. Now it's time to get the word out.



## 1. Develop a plan

Whatever your project is, whether it's a zine, a book, an album or a movie, your main goal, after completing that project, is to get the word out. Promotion. Marketing. Sales. Even if you've got the most amazing, one-of-a-kind, stop the presses kind of project, if you don't plan a strategic marketing campaign, and work your plan, then no one outside of your circle of friends and family is going to hear about it.

Getting the word out about your project involves selling. Lots and lots of selling. You are your project's advocate, and you have to be willing to pitch your project aggressively and relentlessly, whether you are talking to a reporter who might write a story about your project or a store owner who is thinking about carrying your project. In order to successfully sell your project, you need a solid marketing plan in place. It's easy to talk. Some people do nothing but talk. But if you've got a plan, you'll know who to talk to and what to say. And your talk will mean something, because it's backed up by the actions outlined in your plan.

What should this plan include?

First and foremost, a distribution plan must be constructed. List the stores, mail order catalogs and websites you hope will sell your project. Write and practice your sales pitch. Also, figure out all the ways you can sell direct—through your project's website or at events you plan to attend. Keep in mind that selling direct means you get all the profit. Selling through a store involves middlemen, which means you split the take. You want to have all this in order before you kick off your promotional campaign, because you want people to be able to get a hold of your project once they start hearing about it.

Second, construct a publicity strategy. This should not only include how you plan to pitch your project, but who you plan to pitch.

Three, remember that the concept of "what I need" should be irrelevant. Thinking like that allows you to create obstacles before you even begin to promote your project. It is best to have a philosophy along the lines of "how do I promote my project with what I've got." In other words, strategize ways to complete your promotional tasks with the tools at your disposal. Included in the tools at your disposal should be the help of friends who have access to things that you don't, like an unsupervised photocopier or a top-flight scanner.

Four, establish goals and methodically plan out how you will meet them. You don't want your momentum to be directionless and end up sputtering out. You want to make calculated decisions that lead to the results you expect. Simply write down your goals, and in detail note the ways in which you plan to accomplish these goals.

Finally, do your best to make your marketing plan as detailed as possible. For example, if you are going to tour to promote your new album, that is obviously something you want to address intensely in your plan. The more thorough the plan, the more successful your effort to get the word out will be. Though your marketing plan is not set in stone, it establishes a path and provides a solid promotional direction.

## 2. Get a website

This is one of the most important promotional things you can do for your independent project. It's cheap, it's accessible by millions, and it's open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week no matter what you are doing. A website provides you with a forum to present your project as completely and thoroughly as you want.

People who hear about your project—either through word-of-mouth or perhaps through a review in a zine or from a flyer you passed out—can go to the web to find out more. Also, people who are surfing the web may come upon your project if what you are doing corresponds to their various searches and web surfing direction.

That said, it's important to make your website interesting and relevant on an ongoing basis. You have to update it constantly. Many people make the mistake of producing websites that are nothing more than an electronic version of their catalog. While that may be better than nothing, it's not much better than nothing.

Make sure to get your very own domain name, so that your website's URL is either the name of your project, group, company, your actual name, or some other catchy word or short phrase that you want to use as your long-term homebase on the web. (URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator, which is a very technical way of describing a website's internet address.) Owning your own domain name makes it easier for people to remember how to find your website, and it makes your operation seem more together and professional. It should look like this: [www.yourdomainname.com](http://www.yourdomainname.com). Picking a good domain name is one of the most important decisions you will make.



To be very clear: For your website, do not use a free community web page (from a company like geocities), and do not use the web page your ISP offers as part of your Internet connection service, as your domain will look like this: [www.nameofISP.com/yourdomainname](http://www.nameofISP.com/yourdomainname). If you have to use the word slash when telling someone how to find your website, then you have nothing more than a cumbersome domain name. It should be very simple: [www.yourdomainname.com](http://www.yourdomainname.com).

When picking a name, you want to avoid words that can be spelled different ways, and be careful with the use of numbers (people won't know whether to use the numeral or spell out the number).

Also, make sure you get your domain name with the .com extension. If you want .org or .net, I'd purchase .com as well, because that's what most people will automatically type when going to your website, even if you tell them .org or .net. If someone already owns the .com for the domain name you want, I would not advise moving forward with the .net or .org extensions for that particular domain name. Domain names that are perfect and available are getting harder and harder to come by, but they do exist. You just have to be diligent in your effort to find the perfect, appropriate and available name.

And don't bother with .biz, .info, or any of these other new domain name extensions.

Buying a domain name is easy. First you have to find out if the name you want is available. There's a good chance your first, second and even third choice will already be owned by someone else. Keep looking and working to find a catchy name. Once you settle on a domain name, buy it immediately. The purchase price is simply the annual fee of owning a domain name: \$35. It may cost less depending on where you register your domain name, or how many years you decide to pay for upfront, but don't ever pay more than \$35 a year. You can buy your domain through VeriSign.com (Network Solutions), Register.com, or even Yahoo.

Once you've bought your domain name, you have to find an Internet Service Provider (ISP) to host it. That will cost you anywhere from \$9.95 to \$29.95 per month. Make sure you shop around and do your research to find an ISP that has both affordable pricing and a solid reputation.

The best way to learn about websites is to go to the source: the world wide web. There are a great number of websites and free resources available online to help you learn and advance your website building skills. I recommend checking out [www.useit.com](http://www.useit.com). Also, make sure to review and analyze the source code (an option available through your browser -- look for "Source") of the more simply designed websites that you like. Seeing the code and then being able to look at the finished webpages really will help you solidify your understanding of basic HTML code.

Don't be intimidated. Creating a website is easy. And don't think you have to wait until you have a killer website before you post it on the web. Do something basic and make it available as soon as possible. Then build upon that site, adding new content, new features, better graphics, etc., over time.

Remember that with websites, content is king. All the graphics and moving images and all that pinball tilt dazzle means nothing if there's nothing interesting to read at your site. It's great content, that is changed and updated frequently, that will make a web surfer tune in and keep coming back for more.

#### **Here are some important elements to include in your website:**

A web log (commonly called a blog). An easy way to keep your website constantly updated. Simply provide links to cool things you find on the web. Provide at least a witty sentence or two explaining why you've posted the links in your web log.

Original content. Post essays, stories, reviews, images, poetry, a serial novel, travelogue, anything really. But make sure to get new stuff up there regularly.

A resource section. This is an area where you can provide a service to your readership. Link to relevant articles and websites you've found useful, and list books and other types or resources that you've used in your own efforts. Back up the reason why these items are in your resource section with at least a sentence or two of explanation. Note: Resource sections are a nice way to draw traffic to your site. They often show up on web searches, and they're also the kind of thing people will establish links to on their own web sites, as a resource to their readership.

Upcoming Events. A great way to keep your audience informed about your shows, readings, speaking engagements or whatever. Keep your list of events up-to-date, meaning pull off events that have happened, and list every event that's coming up.

Contact information. Provide whatever is appropriate, but definitely list your e-mail address.



Ordering / Where To Buy information. List all the ways in which someone can get a hold of your project. This includes how to order it directly from you, where to buy it online, where to buy tickets, and which stores carry your project.

Detailed information about your projects. This should include the who, what, where, when, how and why of your projects. All the details, and photos as well.

An About You section. It's always hard to write about yourself. You don't want to sound like you're bragging, but people will be interested in who you are and why you have created your project. Don't be shy. You don't have to tell everyone you were the valedictorian of your high school's graduating class, but you should give some history on yourself, as well as the how and the why of your project.

A Sign Up For My Newsletter page/section: Encourage people to sign up for your newsletter. Assure people that you will never sell your list, that people's e-mails are safe with you. Let people know what they can expect in terms of the frequency of your mailings—once a week, once a month, once a year. Give some good reasons why someone would want your newsletter. Provide a sample newsletter, or links to all your past newsletters.

An online diary. This certainly doesn't have to be about all your personal relationship problems, but it's a nice touch to write up daily or almost daily accounts of the goings on in your life. If even that's still too personal, the diary can focus on your efforts with your project, or the art scene you're in, or rock shows that you attend, or your book tour. The main point here is to contribute regular entries that explore your personal experiences similar to the way you would write in a personal journal. What you choose to write about it totally up to you.

Photos. If your project happens to involve pictures of fine, naked women, well, your site is going to get a hell of a lot of traffic. Obviously if your project involves photography, you'll want to post those photographs. But even if that's not the case, people like to check out photos. Post photos of your shows, your tour travels, your project, the making of your project, yourself, your release parties, your parties in general, whatever. Having a scanner or a digital camera will make posting pictures as easy as pie.

Reviews and Interviews. Don't make your website all about you. Write about other people's stuff. Reviews are an easy way to do it. You can also do e-mail interviews with other artists and writers, and post those interviews at your site.

A links section. Provide links to other cool websites. Once you get a really long list of links, consider organizing it into appropriate categories. Or don't. Indeed, one of the coolest things about the web is the way website links can lead you on surprising, strange, and informative journeys. Don't worry about people leaving your site to check out other websites—that's just part of the deal. Also, if you link to someone else's site, there's a good chance that person will return the favor. And the more people who link to your site, the more chances people have of finding their way to your site.

Press. Link to all the press you get about your project. Sure, it's a little self-aggrandizing, but showing that you've got some press helps you get even more. It also ups the standing of your project in people's minds when they see that you've been written up.

Flash animation and video clips. If your project is animation or film/video, these will obviously be a part of your site. But even if your project does not involve these mediums, that doesn't mean your website can't have them. Takes a bit more know-how, equipment, and skill, but definitely makes for some excellent entertainment on your website.

### **3. Promote your website**

Once you've put together a website, the work is just beginning. Now you have to break out among the zillions of sites clamoring for attention, everything from family photo albums to the latest highly financed one-stop, never-have-to-go-anywhere-else portal. While some have called the web the great equalizer, the truth is, websites are just like any other independent project—if you don't promote it, no one is going to check it out. It's true that people can access your site just as easily as they can access the website produced by a major corporation, like Yahoo or MSN.com. But unlike Yahoo and Microsoft, you don't have the ability to buy television time, let alone the budget to hire an ad agency to create a promotional campaign and produce catchy, clever commercials promoting your website. You don't have billboards up all over the country advertising your site. You don't have ads in hundreds of newspapers and national magazines, and you don't have banner ads planted all over heavily trafficked websites. So, the great equalizer? Absolutely not. But that bit about the access, now that's not something to be taken lightly. It's actually pretty amazing. Your actual project isn't as accessible as the products produced by major corporations. That's just a fact of being an independent. But with the web, you've got a real



chance to reach an incredible amount of people. That's why promotion of your solidly produced website is so important.

Here are some basics:

Submit your site's URL to all the major search engines. Simply go to the search engine site and follow the instructions. Do not pay to have someone submit your site to "over 1,000 search engines." Surely you've gotten such an offer in your e-mail box. Submit your site to as many search engines as you can, but as long as you hit the major ones, most web surfers will be able to locate your site through both specific and general (but not too general) searches.

Put your URL on everything—at the end of e-mails and newsgroup postings, in your catalog, on your projects, on your letterhead and fax cover sheet, on your outgoing phone message, etc.

Announce the launch of your website to appropriate newsgroups (see #15), as well as to your own confidential mailing list. Feel free to announce major changes to the site, but don't send out a message or post to a newsgroup every time you update your site.

Make your content interesting, and change it regularly—every day, if possible.

Actively surf the web, stay abreast of what other people are doing with their websites, both for design and content ideas. And stay up-to-date on new e-commerce trends and strategy.

Make sure your website has a links page, and do your best to get other websites to provide a link to your site. How do you get other websites to provide a link to your site? Simply ask. Some people will say no. Some people won't say anything. And some people will create a link. Be sure to return the favor.

Some amazing things are happening on the web. In particular, the web is revolutionizing how music is distributed, and is shaking up the music industry big time in the process. If you've got a band, you can make your music available via the web to millions. (Check out [www.mp3.com](http://www.mp3.com) to begin your education). This is all happening right now. If you've got a short film, there are websites that showcase such work to audiences much bigger than any short film could hope to reach via the traditional methods. If you are a writer, put up some of your stories, the first chapter of your book, or the whole book if you want. Again, the audience you can potentially reach is huge.

Consider the success of the independent film *The Blair Witch Project*. I am always dubious about films that brazenly hype how much they cost to make, because usually even if the hyped film cost less than \$100,000 to make, it has a marketing budget in the millions. But *The Blair Witch Project* owes much of its roaring success not to television commercials (though those were used to expand the hype) or famous actors, but to its website. Millions of people visited *The Blair Witch Project's* website before the movie was even released, and the website creatively and effectively cultivated an interest in the myth of the Blair Witch, as well as the mystery of what happened to the three young filmmakers who were attempting to film a documentary about the myth. People who visited the website (usually checking in on a regular basis to see the frequently updated content) were the ones who led the charge at the box office (and waited in long lines to get tickets).

Now (actually, six years ago) is the time to establish yourself on the internet and get savvy with the technology. The big companies are spending lots of time right now figuring out how to corner this new marketplace. And this is not paranoia. This is fact. Just pick up the business section of any paper (or better yet, surf the business technology news websites on the web), and you'll read about "cooperative consortiums" made up of all the big media companies trying to come together on "industry standards" so that they can keep control of how products (particularly music) are distributed. They want to corner all the markets and capture all the dollars. It's that simple.

So take action immediately. Don't be intimidated by the technology. Begin your education now and keep up the with changes. The web holds the future of commerce and information dissemination. The more knowledge you have in this new arena, the louder the word will be about your projects.

#### **4. Get press**

This is much easier than you think. Don't be intimidated by the concept of a reporter writing a story about you and your project. Keep this in mind: many reporters secretly want to be the writer of the next "great American novel." If you are taking it upon yourself to create an independent project, most reporters are going to not only respect you, but they will be cheering you on. They are part of the media establishment, and in some sense feel as if they are just a cog in the machine. They want your project to succeed.



Also, reporters are always looking for stories. The fact that your project is small benefits the reporter because the story he's going to write will be about something that most people have never heard about before. That's the kind of story that good reporters want to write.

Here are some basics on what you need to send a reporter:

1. A cover letter.
2. A press release, no more than two pages.
3. A fact sheet with bulleted items like title, price, where your project is available, etc.
4. A review copy of your project.
5. Clips of press that you have received.

Consider the above your project's press package. Your cover letter is a very important part of this package. Reporters get lots of press releases. It's important to send a press release, but it's the cover letter where you are going to really sell your story. In the cover letter, you want to give the reporter a "spin" on your story. For example, if you are sending a press package to your hometown newspaper, the spin on your story could be "local boy creates project." When you are sending a press package to the larger newspapers, like the *Los Angeles Times*, you might try a spin like "small independent press/record label takes on the conglomerates," or something like that. Reporters love the "little guy takes on big guy," "underdog dreamer dreams big dream" types of stories.

It should be noted that reviews are different from stories. A publication or website might not review your project, but that doesn't mean it will not write a feature story on you and your project. For example, your book might not get reviewed in the *New York Times*' Book Review, but you just might be able to get written up in Arts section, or the Sunday paper's City section. It works the other way as well. You might not get a feature story, but your project might get reviewed. You have to work all the angles, meaning you have to contact ALL appropriate editors at each paper.

Remember to start with the small papers, and also note that no press is too small. Send a press package to your alumni newsletter, the small, local weeklies... as many papers as you can. Do not skimp on review copies. Who should get a review copy? As many people as possible. How many review copies should you send out? As many as you can. And don't neglect the web. You want to get reviewed by both print and online publications. Keep in mind that different kinds of publications have different lead times. Magazines need your review copy months in advance, whereas online publications need much less lead time.

The goal is to increase your odds of getting written up, reviewed, mentioned, featured, listed... something, anything. Any exposure is good, and it usually starts with short reviews. Even a mention in a small zine helps. There is a snowball effect with being written up, and I'm not just talking about increased sales. Write-ups lead to more write-ups. Just like consumers tend to buy what other people are buying, reporters and reviewers and zine publishers tend to write about what other people are writing up. And small stories in small publications get read by people who write longer stories for bigger publications. So the more people you get your project to, the more likely this kind of momentum will build.

Once you start to get reviewed and written up, be sure to include these write-ups, referred to as "clips," with your press packages or send them along with a follow-up/reminder letter to people you have already sent review copies to.

Be sure to keep track of who you sent press package to, and when. This isn't just for record-keeping. In order to actually generate some press, you have to make follow-up phone calls on your mailings. It's best to avoid leaving voice mail messages. Just keep calling until you get a hold of the reporter, and when you get them on the phone, don't just ask if the writer/reviewer received your project in the mail. Of course he did. He might not remember getting it, but it definitely showed up in his mailbox. Tell the writer who you are, what you sent, and a quick bit of relevant information—a pitch on why your project is of interest to the particular writer's readership. At best, you'll convince the writer to write up your project, at the worst he'll rudely tell you thanks but no thanks. It's also very common for the reporter to say he's not sure if he got your press package, and then ask for you to send another package. Kind of a pain, and definitely an extra expense, but you have to mail off that second package. Just make sure to make contact. The squeaky wheel gets the grease. Sending an e-mail to follow-up on a press package is also effective. Reporters will often reply to you right away. The problem is the response you get will often be very short, and it's hard to gauge interest. Phone calls are better, but e-mail is still a good option. Any reciprocated contact is good.

Of course, the bigger the publication, the harder it is to get a hold of the reporter. And sometimes you just won't actually get a hold of the person you are trying to reach. Certainly don't harass anybody. That would have the opposite effect of what you are trying to accomplish. If you can't follow-up with a phone conversation, send a handwritten note, along with a second press package, encouraging the reporter to take another look and reconsider your project for coverage.



To get staff contact information at publications that you want to review or write-up your project, simply go to your local library's reference section and look at either *Bacon's* or *Burrelle's* media directories (print, online, radio and television). Not only do these directories list addresses, website URLs, e-mail addresses and phone numbers, they also provide the names of writers, editors, reviewers and producers. And of course, do research on the web. And remember that most print and online publications supply contact information right on their websites, including the e-mail addresses of the reporters and reviewers.

Put some serious thought into your media list. Don't just mail out your press package to feel like you're doing something. Strategize your effort. Seek out the contact information for reporters and reviewers that you think will be interested in your project. Include on your list any journalist that you've met or had dealings with before. Obviously you want to target journalists writing for publications that cover whatever theme, subculture, subject or niche that your project falls into.

Following are some publications in which you have a real good shot of actually getting some coverage, so they should definitely be included in your media list.

#### **Local paper first**

Send your press package to your local newspaper(s), and make follow-up phone calls right away. Use the local angle to get coverage. There are more opportunities to get a good chunk of ink in your local paper, so don't just automatically send your book to the editor of the Book or Arts section. Consider contacting the editors of the Features, Local/Metro or Business sections—even the editor of the Front Page if your local paper is small enough to cover a local artist on page 1.

#### **Alumni Newsletter**

Your University's Alumni Newsletter is a great place to get ink. Keep in mind that alumni newsletters go to all graduates of your University—thousands and thousands of people. And alumni newsletter editors are always looking for news on former students, so make sure to send your press package, as well as a recent photo. Be sure to also note in your cover letter what your major was and the year you graduated.

#### **Hometown paper**

Newspapers love to write about the local boy/girl who moved away and done good. Send your press package, along with a personalized cover letter outlining your history with the town, to the appropriate editor(s) at your hometown paper. It helps if your family still lives in the town, or if you have some solid roots that you can point to, such as the being the valedictorian of your high school's graduating class.

#### **Your Due For Paying Your Dues**

Send a press package to relevant Association / Organization newsletters. If you're a member of any relevant association or organization, be sure to use your member status to get a write-up in the organization's newsletter.

### **5. Postcards rock**

They're cheap, easy to make and even easier to distribute, and strikingly effective in getting the word out about your project.

Here are some ideas on how to use postcards to get the word out:

Give them to your friends, family and co-workers.

Give them to friends, family and co-workers who will pass them out to their friends, family and co-workers.

Mail them to media outlets.

Mail them to stores that you want to sell your product.

Use them as thank you notes.

Use them as follow-up notes to the media.

Put stacks of them in bookstores, record stores, bars, cafes, libraries—any place frequented by people who might be interested in your project.

Make sure to bring stacks to stores where your project is being sold, and give them directly to the manager. If you can't hand deliver, mail a good-sized stack with a nice note to the manager asking that he put the postcards out.



Mail a few with every direct order you send out.

Always keep a stack with you, and get used to finding ways to put them into the hands of people you come across at parties, events—wherever.

Place stacks at relevant events. If you can't attend the event, simply send them to the organizer and ask that they be placed on the flyer table.

Stand on a corner and pass them out on the lunch hour, or during rush hour, or outside of an event. It takes a little nerve, but it's no big deal. Obviously works best if you're standing in an area or near an event that is relevant to your project.

If you're having an event or throwing a party, use the postcard to get the word out about it, or even as the invite. Simply put all the event information on a mailing label, and place the label on the back of the postcard. A little time consuming, but it's cheaper and faster than creating a whole new invitation, especially if you're having multiple events.

Tips on design:

The standard postcard size is 4.25" X 6".

Make the front side cool, something someone will a) want to look at b) hang up in their cubicle, on their wall, or on their fridge c) and go so far as to want to mail it to a friend. Make it sexy. Or funny. It doesn't just have to be the cover of your book / album / movie poster. Indeed, try and avoid doing that, which is the obvious and less interesting route to go. Of course find a way to get your cover image on the postcard somewhere, but it does not have to be the dominant image. It's a challenging design issue—you've got a small card and you've got to convey a lot of information. But hell, you had the brains to get your project done, so you'll be able to creatively design a cool, effective postcard.

The back of the postcard should have all the pertinent information about your project, but don't over-do it. Leave some white space. Not just so that a person can write a note to a friend on the back, but so that YOU can write a note on the back. Most people who get your postcard won't be sending it on, as if they are sending postcards from Hawaii. It will be you who is sending out lots of postcards, and you're going to want room to write notes so that you can tailor your handwritten message in different ways to the many different people you'll be sending postcards to.

The pertinent information you should include on the back of your postcard:

The name of your project and your name.

The price.

Your website address, and other pertinent contact information.

A short description, and possibly a blurb (quote from a review or well-known person)

Lots of white space, and not just on the right side of the card where you will place a stamp and write the mailing address.

Two good companies to consider using to print your postcards: 1800postcards.com and ModernPostcard.com.

Things to watch out for:

Putting a date on your postcard. If you put "Coming Soon," people might assume your project is not available once it actually becomes available. If you put a release date, your postcard might seem dated just a couple of months after the project has come out. The key is to simply put "Available Now." That lets people know exactly where your project stands, and the postcard will not ever convey the message that your project is dated.

Make absolutely sure that the bottom 5/8 inch of your postcard is left blank. The US Postal Service barcodes or marks up this area with code (usually with a sticker), and you don't want any of your text covered up.

## **6. Make a catalog sheet, and enclose it with all orders and correspondence**

People who buy your current project are the people who will most likely order your backlist and future projects. So when you send them what they've ordered, be sure to let them know about what else is available. You're already paying the postage, so why not take advantage of this contact.

This catalog sheet doesn't have to be fancy, but it shouldn't just be a list of your available projects either. It should be a creative, interesting message to your customer. Definitely include a thank you message, and be sure to write-up any upcoming projects along with dates of completion and availability.



## **7. Get your product in the stores**

Most independent stores will take things on consignment. Usually, all you have to do is ask the person in charge of consignments. The key is to be responsive. You want to create a positive relationship with the store owner/consignment manager, so that she actually cares about how your project is doing. The manager might decide to spotlight your project, she will definitely re-order your goods when they sell out, and hopefully she will pay you in a timely fashion. This positive relationship also helps when your goods don't sell at all. You can talk to the store owner about why your stuff didn't move, providing you with invaluable insight. She sees how customers react and respond to your product. I'm not saying that you have to re-tool your project based on how the "market" perceives your product, but it's still good to know what people think. (Even if you say you don't care, you know, deep down, that you do.)

Make your project available through online stores and mail order catalogs. Approach the people behind these types of operations similar to the way you approach the owner of an independent store.

If your project is a book, an album or a video, sell your project through the Amazon.com Advantage program—[www.amazon.com/advantage](http://www.amazon.com/advantage). This program is set-up specifically to make it possible for independently produced projects to be sold through Amazon.com.

Sell your stuff on eBay.

Look into getting distributors to take on your project. Distributors are middlemen who specialize in getting product into retail operations. Each different industry—books, magazines, music, films, etc.—has its own book worth of details and nuances on how distribution actually works. Obviously big corporations churning out massive amounts of product need distributors. But as a producer of an independent project, it's a riskier proposition. You have to invest in a larger inventory so that a distributor can actually distribute your project. Payment will usually arrive later than late. And if your project doesn't sell, it will get returned or possibly be destroyed. Do extensive research and proceed with caution before signing up with a distributor. I should note that it's not easy to get a distributor to take on an independently produced project, so even if you want to go this route, you might be denied access.

## **8. Hit the road / Go on tour**

Man, this takes as much planning as all your other Get The Word Out efforts put together, but it's a heck of a lot more fun than mailing out postcards or making media call backs. It's a road trip, baby, one where you're the center of attention in every city that you land.

And touring doesn't just help you meet and expand your audience. The fact that you are in a town makes your story local, and therefore you're more likely to get press coverage in publications that would normally not cover or review your project. And if your tour involves music, you might also be able to get yourself interviewed on the local radio stations to promote your album and your shows.

A whole book could be written on touring... the best cities to go to, the best freeways to drive, places where you can pull over and shower, how to utilize Greyhound to get from point A to B, C, D, and E and back. What to pack, where to eat, how to handle a broken down car. The list goes on.

First and foremost, you have to plan your tour way in advance. Figure out what cities you want to visit, then start making arrangements for free places to crash all along the way, and most importantly, start booking venues. The cities where you have an established audience, can find free places to sleep, and are able to book shows should determine your tour itinerary.

At this early stage in the planning it's also a good time to consider joining forces with other people and going on tour as a package. The benefits include the sharing of resources and the promotional workload, as well as the combined force of each person's/group's audience. This should translate into a cheaper tour and bigger crowds at your events. Plus, you'll also have people to hang out with during the down time, not to mention someone to take over the wheel when your eyes get bleary and all you want to do is sleep.

Two, announce the tour on your website, and update the tour details as you book shows.

Three, do your research and get good press contacts for all the local publications and radio stations for every city on your tour. Start the PR effort, not only to get advance listings and feature stories, but to encourage the media to come to your shows.



Four, start figuring out ways to promote your events. Enlist the help of friends, family, colleagues, and fans to help spread the word.

Five, come up with a strategy to further your distribution network. Locate stores that will be interested in carrying your project, or make plans to meet up with the managers of stores that are already selling your stuff.

Six, make arrangements so that your project can be sold at your events.

Seven, encourage people to join your mailing list. You want to keep in touch and create long-term relationships with the folks who come to your shows while you're on the road.

And eight, talk to people who have been there and done that, old pros that can give you real-world advice and information about hitting the road.

**Some items to take with you on the road:**

Bulk, non-perishable food stuffs that are ready to eat and drink. Things like granola bars and bottled water.

Good road maps.

In your glovebox should be an auto maintenance manual specific to your car's make. You may not be able to fix a broken down car, but at least you'll be able to communicate on some level with the mechanic who may or may not be running an honest shop in the middle of nowhere. If your car is gonna breakdown, it's going to happen in the middle of nowhere. Make sure you at least know how to change a flat tire.

A cell phone. Be sure your cell phone plan includes a good supply of free long distance and free roaming minutes.

**Here's some insight from an article entitled "Do-It-Yourself Indie Touring" by author Jim Munroe.** Munroe, who has done several tours to promote his books, explains and encourages people to do something a little different with their show:

"I'm a big fan of people thinking creatively not just in their art, but in how they present it. If you're a fantastic reader, with material suitable to be read aloud and an incredible delivery, then great. But as I'm dissatisfied by the obligatory fifteen-minute reading, I decided to launch my book (about a guy who goes to another planet to teach English) in a somewhat different way. I did a recruitment seminar on why you should teach English on other planets, complete with slides and alien artefacts. While this ain't for everyone, it's good to think about adding a little performance zing to the show. Think about what would interest and intrigue you as a launch goer. Mixing up the genres by also having locals present their short videos or playing a few songs can make for a fun night."

[See the rest of Munroe's excellent article on DIY touring at [www.nomediakings.org/touring.htm](http://www.nomediakings.org/touring.htm). Also, on page 47, there's a full interview with Munroe about his print and online publishing efforts.]

**Here's a great example of what Munroe is encouraging:**

Rock critic Jim DeRogatis, author of *Let It Blur*, a biography of the legendary rock critic Lester Bangs, went way beyond the traditional promotional reading with some of the events he organized for his book tour. In keeping not only with the subject matter of his book, but the spirit of the book's subject, DeRogatis organized rock shows featuring the music that Bangs loved. The Lester Bangs Memorial Tribute Band—which featured DeRogatis on drums and a revolving membership of mostly rock critics—also rocked out at a couple of the events. Not only were these events excellent tributes to Bangs, they were also the kinds of events that packed people in and gave those in attendance a real good time.

On page 60, there's a full interview with DeRogatis about Lester Bangs and *Let It Blur*.

NOTE: A good source for DIY touring information is *Book Your Own Fuckin' Life*, a resource guide for the DIY punk community. Visit [www.byofl.org](http://www.byofl.org) for more information.

## **9. Participate in events**

Get out there and stand in front of your projects. Smile and shake hands. Talk to people about what you are doing, and while you're talking, put your project into their hands. Engage them. Your point is to sell your project, but more importantly, it's your chance to tell people about what you're doing, and in a sense create a relationship with current and future members of your audience.



What kind of events should you participate in? Art shows, book fairs, street fairs—any event that has something to do with your project's basic properties and themes.

Sometimes getting a table at these events can be expensive. One way to cut the cost in half is to share a table. Remember to have a catalog sheet that people who come by your table can take. Not everyone will buy right there and then, but a catalog sheet will serve as a reminder of your projects, and will serve as a way for people to get in touch with you to make a purchase long after the event has ended.

## **10. Put up flyers**

Posting well-designed, intriguing flyers is a great way to draw attention to your project. Even if your project is not centered around an event, you can still put up flyers all over your city, as well as any city that you visit or know people who are willing help you out, with information about what your project is and where it can be found. Flyers can be taped or stapled onto light and telephone poles, or posted on community bulletin boards, or wherever you see other people posting flyers. College campuses are usually good places to post flyers, as well as cafes, independent book and record stores, libraries, and clothing shops. Be sure to highlight your website, making it a prominent part of your flyer.

Of course you always have the option to use the more permanent wheat paste or wallpaper glue to post your flyers and place them wherever people will see them, regardless of whether or not it's legal to do so. In this tradition there is also the use of stickers or spray paint to get your message out. Bands, activists, artists, concert promoters and the like have used these subversive promotional tactics very successfully for years. And indeed stickers, posterizing and graffiti art are projects in and of themselves. A few excellent examples of this are the Guerilla Girls project ([www.guerillagirls.com](http://www.guerillagirls.com)), Shepard Fairey's "Andre The Giant" campaign ([www.obeygiant.com](http://www.obeygiant.com)), and Robbie Conal's biting, satirical poster portraits of politicians (remember the "Newt Wit" poster? Check out [www.robbyconal.com](http://www.robbyconal.com)).

If you go the more subversive route, your posterizing campaign will certainly have more impact. But please be aware that such activity can lead to an arrest, possibly a night or two in jail while you await arraignment, and most probably a monetary fine. And of course it can become a part of your permanent record. The response by law enforcement varies from community to community, but it's safe to assume that such activity will be considered illegal no matter where you are. Do your research, not only on what happens to people who get caught (so you know the possible consequences), but on the best ways NOT to get caught wherever you happen to be doing your posterizing. Here are a few tips: Travel light. Do it late at night. Don't act suspicious. Wear regular clothes. And go with a group so that you can act as lookouts for each other.

## **11. Advertising**

I know there isn't enough money to actually create your independent project, so there's definitely not going to be enough cash to advertise. And as a matter of independent project law, you should avoid paying for advertising at all costs. A paid ad, even a small print ad in a small weekly newspaper can wipe out all your hard-earned revenue. Remember, just because you've got some cash does not necessarily mean you've made a profit. Anyway, there hopefully will come a point when you can add paid advertising into your budget, but let's assume you've not reached that point yet.

Even without cash, you can sometimes do a display ad swap. If you run an ad for someone in your project, she will run your ad in her project. If you've got a film or a musical show you are trying to promote, some radio stations will run promo spots if you give them free tickets to your show. Regardless of what is exactly involved in the transaction, it never hurts to go the barter route. Perhaps you can loan your design abilities or your quick typing speed for a small display advertisement. Perhaps if you agree to plug a magazine at your next gig or at a screening of your movie, the magazine publisher may give you some ad space. You never know. It never hurts to ask. The worst that can happen is you can be told "no." And as every diligent salesman knows, every "no" answer you get just means you are closer to a "yes."

If you do find yourself with a small cash surplus, or you really do need to get an announcement into print, consider running a classified ad. These are usually very affordable, and though not as eye-catching as a display ad, a classified ad can have an impact. Most likely you won't be able to afford a display ad, so you'll have no choice but to run a classified. You'll have to run it more than once, and you should do your best to make it catchy. And be sure to run a classified only in publications that you actually read. There are some papers out there that charge extremely minimal amounts of money to run a classified. The thing is, you've probably never read any of these publications, let alone their classified ad sections. Usually, the classifieds in alternative weekly newspapers, found in most decent-sized cities, are the best places to run a classified.

When you do graduate to the level of the display ad, and you will get there, never, ever pay the list price of the display ad. Drive a hard bargain. You are in control of the situation. You do not have to run the ad. That said, you do have to be reasonable. In a word: negotiate.



Something that should be noted here is that you might feel the urge to run an expensive display ad before its time to make that move. You might be tempted to run an ad, believing that it will prove that what you are doing is legit. When you start to get that feeling, go back and do the math. See how much you've spent, and add up what you've brought in. Detail future expenses, and keep in mind the "things never go as planned" variable. If the cash is there, take a hard look at where it might be better spent. Of course you want to get to the point where you are buying paid advertising for your project. You just have to make damn sure you're at that point.

## **12. Be sure to give first class treatment to people who help you out**

The true measure of success for your independent project will be when you get to the point where you can pay people for their contributions. But until you reach that level, make sure to show your appreciation to the people who helped you out. Most definitely write a thank you note. No matter how small, be sure to acknowledge all contributions. Without spending much money at all you can throw a dinner party and invite all the key contributors, or take everyone out for a beer. The point is, do something. These people helped you out, and they deserve your gratitude. This effort on your part will make people feel good about their contribution to your project, and it will strengthen their belief in the project overall. Remember: word-of-mouth, which multiplies exponentially, starts with the people who are involved, and the more people who are talking positively about your project, the better.

## **13. Throw a release party for your project**

This can be elaborate, or this can be simple. It can be a party at your apartment or you can rent out an entire bar for a couple of hours. There are endless options, of course, but you should try to figure out a way to have a cool event that doesn't break your bank. Some bars will often let you have a cordoned off area or a private room for free if you guarantee that a certain amount of drinks will be bought. Or to limit your exposure if you want to pay for people's drinks, many bars will allow you to buy a certain amount of drink tickets, which you, or someone, can hand out as people arrive for your celebration. Whatever you decide to do, remember to enjoy yourself. After all, you're celebrating the release of your project.

For your release party, remember to invite everyone who helped you out, and the media as well. Promote the heck out of the event. Make sure you fill the house. And give away free stuff. People like free stuff. If you advertise that you are going to give away free stuff, people will be more likely to come to your event.

## **14. Put out a sampler, and give it away for free**

Since you won't be charging, it can't be that elaborate. But make sure the sample of your work that you provide will be good enough to prompt potential buyers to go out and actually buy your project. Essentially, you want to provide a "teaser," a little taste of what you've made, and you want it to be good enough to leave the potential buyer wanting more.

These kinds of items come in real handy at events you are participating in or attending. For one thing, it will draw attention to you and your project. People love free stuff. But in addition to that, your free sampler will serve as reminder of your project, and it might result in a purchase on some future date, long after the event is over.

## **15. Post comments to newsgroups**

A newsgroup is an internet discussion forum, kind of like an electronic bulletin board. People can post a question or comment, and others can respond. There are thousands of newsgroups on the web, on every topic imaginable. Do a basic search to find the newsgroups that relate in some way to your project. To join a newsgroup, simply follow the basic directions—a simple process which usually entails sending an e-mail to the specified address with the words "subscribe" in the subject and/or text area of an e-mail.

Certainly you should alert a newsgroup about your new project, but that should not be the principle way in which you utilize newsgroups. Post comments about the goings on in your industry. Get involved in the many dialogues that spring up in the newsgroup. Don't just criticize and complain. Make sure to post positive comments about other people's projects. You can also post details on events that you are aware of or other kinds of information that might be of interest to the newsgroup.

Don't just write about yourself and your projects.

Be sure to list your project after your signature, as well as contact information that includes your mailing/ordering address and most importantly, your website URL and your e-mail address. If people find your comments stimulating, they'll probably check out your website or send you an e-mail responding to whatever you've written.

## **16. Be sure to know about and help put out the word about other people's projects**



There are all kinds of ways you can help out. You can enclose flyers about other people's projects in all your mailings. You can provide links to other websites on your website. You can review and write stories about other people's projects. You can pass out flyers or hang posters for someone else. And most importantly, you can talk up other people's projects and spread word-of-mouth as much as you can. And don't forget to financially support other producers of independent projects by buying their goods or going to their shows. Your support will most definitely be reciprocated.

## **17. Offer something free**

This is a basic incentive for people to purchase your goods. If people think they are getting something extra, they are more willing to fork over a few bucks and purchase your product. Remember the Ginsu Knife commercials? How could you forget. "But wait, there's more..."

Some free items you can offer are stickers, buttons, a poster, a bonus zine, a bookmark, or a free pass (or a half-off coupon) to an upcoming show. Even though these items are being offered for free, you'll notice that they offer additional opportunities for you to further get the word out about your project.

## **18. Get involved with arts groups**

If you do a zine or a book, then join the local small press organization, or the writing center. If you make movies, join the local film arts group. This is an excellent way to meet people who one, will be supportive of your work, and two, will be full of ideas and energy that you can learn from. This is the kind of place where networking happens just by showing up at events and talking to people. You never know who you might meet, what idea or tip someone might offer you, what horror stories you will be told about that will allow you to avoid a similar failure, or what kind of relationship will be forged between you and

another like-minded individual. And the more people you meet, the more people who will know about you and your projects. Also, the more involved you are in these arts organizations, the more exposure you get in the community-at-large when the organization holds events or participates in projects that go beyond the membership.

Often times getting involved with arts groups means volunteering your time and talents for a good cause. This altruistic behavior will energize your spirit and make you feel good about yourself. You will be empowered by your good deeds, and this new energy will allow you to work even harder and more diligently on your own independent projects.

Also, along the lines of being altruistic, give part of your profit to a non-profit. This is a way for you to share your good fortune. Also, if people know that you aren't just out to make a buck and that part of the money you make goes to a good cause, they will be more inclined to support you and your projects. Share the wealth. You always complain that all those CEO's of the giant mega-corporations are greedy. Well, here's your chance to walk the talk and set an example. No doubt, your donations aren't going to be gigantic, earth shattering amounts, but every little bit counts.

## **19. Collaborate with others on an event**

Organize an event showcasing more than just your project. If you put out a zine, then get together with a band and a painter and put together an event where the band does show, the painter exhibits her work and you pass around your zine. The more people you involve, the more people who will show up at your event. Or organize an event focusing on the type of project you are producing. If you are publishing a zine, organize a zine fair. If you make films, organize a film festival. This is a way to not only connect with the public, but with other artists who are also producing projects. It's a great way to share and grow your respective audiences.

## **20. Branding**

This will mean more as you grow, but in the beginning, simply make sure that all of your projects have your name (or company name) on them, as well as a mailing address, website and e-mail address. Don't think you need a big, fancy logo, but start to consider some form of a distinct identifying mark to be placed on all projects you produce. This kind of consistency will help intensify the awareness of your current and future projects.

## **21. Be a source to the press.**

In addition to your efforts to get stories written about your project, be sure to provide information about other people's projects when you talk to the press. Anytime you've got a piece of information about an event or an interesting project someone you know is working on, make a call or send an e-mail to an appropriate reporter. Like I mentioned before, reporters are always looking for stories. Maybe they'll use your tip, maybe they already have the information, maybe they'll think your idea is stupid, but they will appreciate your call. Passing on information creates and strengthens the relationships you have with your media contacts. And you can bet that the next time this reporter is writing a general story on independent projects, he'll give you a call and interview you, possibly including your comments (and who you are and what you do) in his



story. Naturally, this reporter will also feel inclined to write about your next project. The point is, don't just reach out to reporters when you want a story written about yourself. Give the reporter information he can use for stories about other people's independent projects. By becoming a source, you forge a strong relationship with the reporter, which will result in more stories about your projects over a longer period of time.

## **22. Sit on panels, give talks**

Seek out events that you would be interested in attending, find out who is putting together the event, and then offer to sit on a panel or give a lecture. Send a letter outlining why you would be a good speaker or panelist, and then follow-up with a phone call. Keep in mind that these types of events are organized way in advance, so you have to get in touch early on, during the planning stages.

You can also make your talk an event in and of itself. Put together a how-to workshop based on your project, and seek out stores, community centers, schools, colleges, churches, etc., that might be interested in hosting your program. Not only will this help get the word out about your project, but it can also bring in some extra dough. Definitely charge an appropriate, market-based fee for your workshop, whether it's a flat fee charged to the hosting facility/organization or based on enrollment. It's certainly okay to do your workshops for free—you may have no other option—but do your best to get paid for putting a workshop together.

## **23. Build Your Mailing List**

This way, you can do promotional mailings, event and show announcements, and even send out a newsletter. The longer you're in the business of making projects, the bigger your list will get, and the more valuable of an asset it will become in your efforts to get the word out.

There are all kinds of ways to collect contact information. You want to be cool about it, so the best way to get it is to ask for it—that way, the people you are contacting actually want to hear from you. Always put out a clipboard at events or shows and ask that people who are interested in your work to join your mailing list. On your website, be sure to invite people to sign up for your mailing list. Assure them that they aren't going to hear from you everytime you update the site. In correspondence and even on the project itself, let people know that you keep a mailing list, and encourage them to join it.

It's also smart to collect the e-mail and mailing addresses of people who contact you or purchase your projects. It's definitely okay to let these people know about your new projects, but take the time to actually write a short, personal note. Don't just add these people to your mailing list. The value of your mailing list lies in how many people actually want to be on it. Don't be tempted to increase the size of your list by adding people who haven't given you permission to put them on your mailing list.

E-mail is the most useful kind of contact information. It's an extremely efficient way to reach a large number of people quickly, effectively and cheaply. Cheap is key—it doesn't cost anything to send out e-mail (except the monthly ISP fee, which you're most likely paying for regardless if you are sending out an e-mail newsletter or not). Mailing out a postcard not only involves money to print up the postcards, but postage as well.

But mailing out postcards or other types of printed matter is cool too, and if you make whatever it is that you decide to mail out really creative and unique, the physical nature of the piece might have more of an impact on the people who receive your printed mailer.

It must be noted that the number one rule with a mailing list is to hold sacred this contact information. Never give it to anyone else, and don't abuse the fact that you have it. This means that you shouldn't be sending out e-mails every week to your list. Keep the contact to an effective minimum. You don't want to approach anywhere near what people on your mailing list will consider spam. Spam-like levels of e-mail will not only keep people from being interested in your project, it will cause people to start hating you. To avoid such a circumstance, in addition to keeping the issuance of mailings at an appropriate level, always let people know how they can get off your list, and make sure you promptly remove anyone who requests to be taken off your list.

**VERY IMPORTANT:** Never, ever send out an e-mail to a large group of people where everyone's e-mail address is listed. If you do that, you've made the horrible mistake of exposing your entire list, and not only is that wrong just on the all-important issue of privacy, but there's a good chance someone will take those e-mail addresses and use them for his or her own mass-mailing. Make sure you know how to properly set up a mailing list with your e-mail program so that when you send out your mailing, no e-mail addresses are revealed. Run tests until you know you are doing it right.

One of the best ways to effectively grow and use your mailing list is to offer an e-mail newsletter. It's okay to simply use



your list to make announcements, but if you offer some kind of newsletter, not just about your projects but something that offers coverage beyond just what you're up to, people will be more willing to join your mailing list. If you publish books, you could send out a newsletter about new technologies impacting the book industry, or a newsletter of book reviews. If you publish a zine, you could send out a newsletter detailing all the cool zines you've come across lately. If you make films, you could send out a newsletter about film festivals, including not only entry deadlines but your commentary on the films you've seen at recent festivals. If you run a progressive magazine, you could send out a newsletter about upcoming protests, or coverage of recent protests that you have attended. If you run a literary journal, you could send out information about writing contests or calls for entry in other journals and anthologies. The more useful and interesting your newsletter, the greater the number of people who will sign-up for it. Not only that, but people will forward your e-mail newsletter to friends and colleagues, and therefore more interest in your newsletter, and your project, will be generated.

A couple of companies that offer free e-mail newsletter list service are Yahoo Groups (formerly eGroups), and Topica. Keep in mind that when you utilize these free services, you end up carrying ads served by these companies. Not a good thing, but not necessarily a deal killer. It's your decision whether or not you want ads you can't control going out with your communications.

## **24. Enter contests**

Always be on the look out for contests to enter. Winning a contest does a number of things for you and your project: 1) It lends prestige to your project. People are going to pay more attention to you now that your project has been called out and celebrated. 2) It opens your project up to a new audience, not just of people who are interested in checking out what you've made, but people "in the business," such as agents, producers, talent scouts. 3) Generates press, not only when the winners of the contest are announced, but just in the normal course of your PR effort. Reporters will be more apt to pay attention to a project that has been picked as a winner. 4) Prize money. Maybe it's a token amount, or maybe it's a figure in the thousands. Whatever, money is money. No doubt you have bills to pay, but make sure you take yourself out for celebratory drink.

A couple of things to watch out for: 1) Huge entry fees. It's always surprising how much it costs to enter even minor, unknown contests. Figure out how much you can afford to spend on entry fees, and then try to determine the best contests to enter based on that dollar amount—a good mix of well-known contests, as well as contests that you feel you've actually got a good shot at taking home the prize. 2) Only enter contests for which you actually qualify. That means read the contest guidelines thoroughly. You don't want to be paying entry fees and taking the time to submit your project to a contest that you are guaranteed not to win.

## **25. Get rid of your television**

This may not seem like it belongs here, and this may come off as a little preachy, but the truth of the matter is your television is a time magnet. Get rid of it. Now.

I know that shows like *Homicide: Life on the Street* or *The Sopranos* aren't just television shows, that they're art, believe me, I know. Or maybe you're the kind of person that likes to tell people that you only watch PBS, but that's bullshit, because you know you watch *Friends* and other crappy shows, maybe even reruns of *Suddenly Susan*. So turn off that television and get rid of it for good. You'll have more time—a lot more time—to creatively and effectively get the word out about your independent project.

## **BONUS ITEMS**

### **26. On working with a publicist, if you should be so lucky**

A couple of quick tips on working effectively with a publicist. The best way to start the relationship is to ask the publicist who will be working on your campaign how you can be helpful. Always be courteous and willing to help out. Make sure to understand the strategy of your campaign as established by the publicist, and figure out creative ways to positively impact the strategy. Be persistent with your own promotional ideas, but don't be a pain in the ass. Never, ever yell at the publicist. Being negative and hostile will only make a publicist do less work on your publicity campaign, not more. Make sure to provide encouragement to your publicist, preferably in the form of handwritten notes (don't waste a publicist's time by calling him on the phone). Do not criticize the amount of attention your project is getting. Provide media contacts, as many as you can. Indeed, providing good contacts—journalists you know and have relationships with—is the most important thing you can do to help your publicist with your campaign. And always, always get your publicist a gift to say thanks for all the hard work he's doing on your behalf. In fact, get a gift towards the start of the campaign, and then another when the campaign is winding down.

### **27. Write columns or stories for other people, or contribute to someone else's project**



This provides an opportunity for people to sample your work. It also broadens the reach of your endeavors, which contributes nicely to your effort to get the word out. Be sure to always include a short biographical sketch about yourself and your project, as well as the name of your website, at the end of your contribution. Hopefully whatever you have contributed will ignite enough interest in the readers so that they will want to seek out other projects you have produced.

## **FIGHTING CORPORATE CONTROL**

By now, everyone knows about the mega-mergers and the fact that a very few number of corporations own the dominant media-oriented companies that run radio, television and cable networks, publish books, magazines and newspapers, make films, produce music, and run websites, not to mention satellite systems and internet services.

The inundation and barrage of advertising by the media conglomerates, as well as the messages found in mainstream media owned by the media conglomerates, influences all of us in ways we'd like to think we're too smart and unique to be affected. When a very small number of conglomerates 1) produce content over various mediums 2) own the major vehicles which review and report on this content and 3) control the distribution of the content, we need to make damn sure we provide and support alternative, independent voices, and we need to make sure we are not drowned out.

It's extremely important to create and promote independent voices. The tools are at our disposal, we just have to pick them up and wield them with deft skill. We have to work hard to build projects and work even harder to get them noticed. It's our duty to provide an alternative, independent voice.

It's also just as important to support these independent voices, and do our best to avoid buying the big budget projects produced and promoted by the major corporations.

When it comes to fighting against corporate control, both within and outside of your own work, you will find that there are looming hypocracies at every turn. You will see others doing things and making choices that you do not agree with, and you yourself will often feel like you aren't being true to the independent code you have developed for yourself. You might be tempted to call someone a sell-out, or feel like a sell-out yourself. Is it alright if your book is sold through Amazon.com or Barnes & Noble? Is it wrong to sign that deal with a major label? Is it okay to see the new big budget action film over an independently produced foreign flick? This is what I say to myself: Do your best to fight corporate control, stay aware of how the powerful media corporations are operating, and make, promote and support independent projects. How I function and make decisions shifts constantly, because the landscape in which we all must operate always seems to be picking up speed and shooting off into different directions. This means that my standards find new ways to play themselves out. Realistically, there is no way to be absolute. What matters to me at the end of the day is how it all adds up. I know when I'm doing good, and I know when I'm doing badly. Each person has to set their own standards, and each person has to have their own way of calculating and analyzing the sum total of their decisions and actions.

## **AFTER THE LAST MERGER**

It was the third time this year that I was having to throw out all my letterhead. The publishing company I worked for had sealed the deal on yet another merger, and our name was being changed to "The Publishing Corporation."

Just as I had filled up my recycling bin (we're a pro environment company), a clean-cut young man poked his head into my office.

"Are you Mike V., the vice president of marketing?"

"No, I'm Jim D. the vice president of marketing strategy."

"Glad to meet you. I'm Bob C., the vice president of the marketing groups."

We shook hands. He had a firm grip.

"Well, it looks like we'll be working together, along with the other vice presidents. I didn't see you at the meeting earlier today."

"What meeting?"



The corners of Bob C.'s mouth slumped. "Dammit. The inter-office communications department promised me they'd be fully functional once the merger went through. I'll have to set up a meeting with the vice-president of inter-office communications."

Bob C. started to leave, but pulled on the door jamb and swung himself back into my office.

"I almost forgot something," said Bob C., pulling out an electronic organizer and efficiently tapping on it with the half-sized plastic pencil.

After a moment of squinting his eyes relaxed and he said firmly, "You've got to move quickly and get the new Fall books to the market."

I knew Bob C. was a vice president, but since I had missed the meeting earlier that morning—through no fault of my own—I ventured a few questions.

"Will I be working closely with the PR department?"

"We don't have a PR department anymore."

"We don't?"

"Well, we do, but it's now called the Editorial department. Just tell them what they need to write, and they'll run stories and interviews and reviews in all of The Corporation's magazines and newspapers."

"What about advertising?"

"Again, just call the Editorial department," said Bob C.

"Will the regional sales reps be coming to The Corporation's headquarters for a meeting to discuss the launch of the Fall books any time soon?"

"We got rid of our sales reps," said Bob C. "We don't need them to call on accounts anymore, because we aren't dealing with accounts. We've decided to sell direct through our web portal."

"I thought our web portal was mainly a search engine?"

"Of course it is. But whatever someone is searching for, our books come up at the top of the list."

Bob C. was back to tapping at his electronic organizer. He was now almost out the door, just his head sticking in. I knew he probably had an important meeting with a vice president, but I had to ask him one more very important question.

"Who are the authors of the new books?"

"The who?" Bob C. seemed perplexed.

"The authors... the people who will be writing the books..."

"Oh, you're absolutely right. Thanks for reminding me," said Bob C.

"Call the Casting department at The Film Corporation—which is now part of our corporate family, thanks to the last merger—and have them send over a few edgy looking sexpots."

"Excuse me?"

"Yeah, and make sure they look around 20 to 24. The vice president of focus groups says that people are more willing to buy a book if the author is a young woman who appears to have 'lived or is living a rough life.'"

"Have the books even been written? Who's going to write the books?"



Bob C. seemed irritated. "I really wish you had made the meeting this morning. The vice president of finance and his team of vice presidents explained that by eliminating the costs associated with both the acquisition of manuscripts and the overall editorial process, The Corporation's bottom line will be improved significantly."

"But who is going to write the books?" I asked, aghast.

"Well, we're outsourcing the actual book writing, and currently getting bids from several companies based in the Philippines... I've got to run to another meeting, but we should definitely have a meeting to get you up to speed."

As Bob C. made his way down the hall, he yelled, "Call my secretary—the vice president of scheduling—and schedule a lunch."

## **25 SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO KEEP YOUR MONEY FROM THE CORPORATIONS**

1. Do not buy coffee (or anything else) from Starbucks. Starbucks created a café formula that worked, and they've now multiplied their concept to the point where there is a Starbucks on every other corner in every single neighborhood, everywhere. This is a café that sells all kinds of overpriced coffee paraphernalia. This is a café that plays jazz music for your enjoyment, and then tries to sell you a Starbucks-issued CD. When the Starbucks employee asks, "Is that all?" after you've purchased a coffee, they're not just trying to sell you a scone. Big business is going on.
2. Do not rent movies from Blockbuster, Wherehouse or Hollywood Video. Rent from independently owned video stores. Independent video stores often stock a greater selection of independent films, so you're not only supporting the independent video store, but independent filmmakers, producers and production companies as well.
3. Do not buy books from Barnes & Noble, Borders, Books-A-Million or any of the other book "super" stores. These companies aren't just putting independent bookstores out of business. Through massive purchasing power, they are controlling the kinds of books that are published. Indeed, if a Barnes & Noble buyer doesn't like a book cover (yes, Barnes & Noble buyers see book covers before books go to press) publishers will change it to his liking. It happens all the time.
4. Do not shop at The Gap, Banana Republic, The Limited, or Abercrombie & Fitch. Buying your clothes at stores like these is like wearing a school uniform. A gazillion other people are going to have that same sweater. Or vest. Or whatever mass-produced style of clothing they've decided to make the trend this particular season. Not to mention the prominent display of the store's logo on the clothing. Don't be a walking billboard. Buck trends.
5. Surf the Web. Many of the alternatives to corporate created product can be found on the web. Remember, not everyone can afford that 30 second spot on the television, or even the cost of producing a radio ad. But almost every independent company can afford a website.
6. Do not buy music at the megastores or the chains. Buy your albums at independently owned music stores, which are more supportive of smaller, independent labels. So you're not only supporting the independent music store, but the indie bands and independent record labels as well.
7. Seek out independent films and go see them as soon as possible, hopefully the weekend they open. Independent films don't stay in theaters for very long. If attendance is poor when the film opens, a theater has no choice but to discontinue its run before word-of-mouth excitement, which indie films depend on due to small promotional budgets, has time to generate significant interest.
8. Get rid of cable. The emerging power of the very small number of cable companies is complicated and extremely frightening. Stop adding your cash to their coffers. I know *The Sopranos* is a great show. But just wait a few months until after the season and then rent the whole season from your local independent video/dvd store.
9. But really, you should just get rid of your TV. This is the main source of corporate influence. Cut it off. More than anything, though, is that TV is a major time waster. Get to work on your project.
10. Stop buying glossy, non-independent magazines. This is actually harder than it seems, because let's just admit it—we're all suckers for *People* magazine, or *Glamour*, or *Maxim*. For some reason we cannot resist reading about Brad and Jennifer, or Marie Osmond's troubles with depression, getting Best Sex Ever / How to Have an All Night Orgasm tips, or seeing the latest starlet spread out in a skimpy bikini. We fight the urge to read about who George Clooney and Julia Roberts are



sleeping with (each other?), but then we just can't stand it anymore and have to get the latest dirt. I am like the biggest sucker for this stuff, and can spend hours at a magazine rack perusing the most gossipy of the gossip ridden rags. But we should make an effort to seek out independently published magazines, like *Bitch*, *Clamor*, *Bamboo Girl*, *Giant Robot* and more. Look for these magazines in the magazine racks at newstands and bookstores, but of course, since they're independently published, they don't always have the best distribution. All the more reason to subscribe, which actually helps these independent publications stay afloat.

11. Buy hand-crafted items directly from the artist or from cooperative stores and galleries. Also, seek out craft fairs, art events, and other types of festivals which feature artists' booths.

12. Don't base your music purchases entirely on what is played on the major radio stations or on MTV. Seek out independent music. Local college radio stations are a good source for finding out about cool new music the major market radio stations would never play. You may not get the signal on your radio even if the college station is just a couple miles away, but I bet you'll be able to hear it on the web. The web also offers a never-ending, always growing supply of mp3 files to sample. Other ways to tap into cool independent music is to see shows, and then buy the cd the band offers up for sale at the end of their set. And of course independent music stores showcase top-notch selections of independent music. Sample it at the store near you and make an impulse buy.

13. Don't buy or wear clothing with prominently displayed labels. For the advertising you are providing, the clothing company should be giving you the clothes for free. But instead, you end up paying a higher price for the "privilege" of wearing the company's logo for all to see. Don't be such a sheep.

14. Buy generic. Aspirin is aspirin. Bleach is bleach. The extra money you pay for name brand items subsidizes the advertising and marketing and the creation of brand name recognition. Do you say "pass me a tissue?" or "pass me a Kleenex?"

15. Don't eat at chain restaurants like El Torito, Chili's, Chevy's or Denny's. Eat at independently owned and operated restaurants. Better service, better food. And most importantly, no reminders of lame commercial jingles and slogans upon entering the restaurant ("Chiiiiiiii's baby back ribs, I want my Chili's baby back ribs...")

16. Never purchase greeting cards of any kind. Giving someone a heartfelt note or a letter on nice paper is one of the most special gifts in the world. Don't let Hallmark say it for you.

17. Gift giving should involve real gifts. Don't just run out and buy something. Write a poem or a short story. Frame a photograph. Paint a picture. Be creative. Such gifts will be more appreciated than a new CD or one of those lame gift items (like candle holders) from Urban Outfitters, Pier One Imports, or Pottery Barn.

18. Of course sometimes there just isn't time to make a gift. So make sure you purchase an independent project, whether it's a book or an album or a photograph or whatever. Shop independent if you're going to shop.

19. Have no loyalty to your long distance telephone company. If one company sends you a check to switch from your current carrier, then switch. When the company you left sends you a bigger check, switch back. Same goes for your credit card company. If you've got debt, make sure to transfer it over to a credit card company offering a lower interest rate. Look for low introductory rates that last for at least 6 months. When that six months is close to being up, seek out a better deal.

20. Do not rely solely on your city's daily newspaper for the news of the day. Read as many different papers as possible, and definitely look to the internet. Through the internet, you have access not only to pretty much every publication in the country, but publications from foreign countries as well.

Just a few major media corporations own most of the newspapers in this country. The owner's of these newspapers have a vested financial interest in how their publications cover major corporations (especially their own), as well as the more general philosophy of the concept of the corporation. Don't expect to get both sides of every story, or to get the story at all. And remember that most newspapers are more loyal to their major advertisers than they are to their readers. (Ever wonder why there's an "automobile" section in your paper... It's because the auto dealerships are major advertisers in every paper across the land.) But it is important to get news and information. The solution is to increase your number sources, so read as many publications as you can.

21. Support independent bookstores. These stores, through a slow, but sure process, turn obscure books into well-known classics. Support for these kinds of stores strengthens independent voices. Again, just like it is with independent movie houses, video/dvd rental stores, and music stores, independent bookstores stock more books by independent publishing houses and authors. So when you buy from an independent bookstore, you are also supporting independent authors and



publishing houses. It's a cycle folks, and the more you contribute, the better the cycle will flow and grow.

22. Buy from Thrift stores. Save money. Have fun. You are guaranteed to find great stuff for incredibly low prices.

23. Don't shop at The Body Shop, or any other chain store selling bath and beauty products. Not for one minute should you believe the PR spin about The Body Shop being environmentally conscious and fair in its trade relationships with overseas, Third World communities. The Body Shop is a huge chain with storefronts in every mall in America. Don't be fooled by a skillfully created marketing campaign that plays on your effort to be a conscious consumer. Buy bath and beauty products from independent shops or directly from truly environmentally conscious independent manufacturers.

24. Read the book *The Media Monopoly* by Ben Bagdikian, *Conglomerates and the Media* edited by Patricia Aufderheide, Erik Barnouw, and Richard M. Cohen, *The Business of Books* by Andre Schiffrin, and other books that explore corporate control and ownership, and subscribe to *EXTRA!*, the publication published by FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting / [www.fair.org](http://www.fair.org)). These publications will open your eyes to the far reaching and deep-rooted influence of corporations in all aspects of life. Understanding this influence will enhance your ability to make decisions and formulate opinions about products, politics, policies, and people, and lessen the impact of 30-second spots, clever jingles, newspaper ads and billboards with seemingly inspiring words like "Think Different."

25. Buck trends. With everything that you do. Make bucking trends a part of your mindset. From the books that you read to the movies that you see to the clothes that you wear. Trends are actually cool ideas that have been hijacked by the corporations. By using their money and muscle, they take these cool ideas worldwide, and fast. So by all means, hit on the cool ideas, and support them. But avoid trends. Don't buy a book just because it's on the bestseller lists, or see the big movies because they're the "number one film in America," or buy that pair of jeans that everyone else is wearing. Peruse the bookshops for intriguing books you've never heard of before, discover new bands by regularly hitting the local live music scene, and seek out independent movies that most surely have miniscule marketing budgets, if they've got a marketing budget at all. Buck trends.

I'm a fan of Roger Ebert (his newspaper reviews and the show, despite that other guy), and whenever he reviews a really good independent film, or a really good foreign film, he always pushes people to really seek these films out. He knows the films will have a limited audience due to limited release, lack of awareness, tiny marketing budget, subtitles, subject matter, and the pull of the blockbuster movies. And the smaller the audiences, the quicker these films disappear from theaters. By simply seeking out these small, independent movies, you'll be bucking a trend.

And books. I am always amazed at how many books there are out there. The books that came out in the last year alone would be more than enough to keep me happily reading even if that's all I had to select from for the rest of my life. And yet we've got years and years worth of books to select from. So my new thing is to go to bookstores and find books that I have never heard of before—books that I've never read a review of or had recommended to me by a friend. This is my way of bucking trends in my book reading efforts. I should point out that this doesn't just mean finding books from years past, but also books that have been published by smaller publishing houses or by the authors themselves.

In light of the concept of this particular way to keep your money from the corporations, however, it's only appropriate that you carve your own path and figure out your own ways to buck trends. In a way, that's the master key that will allow you to find all kinds of ways to keep your money from the corporations.

## LIVING ON THE CHEAP

Producing independent projects usually means one thing for sure: that you'll be short on cash.

You will either be pouring all of your disposable income into the project, or you'll be short on income in general because you have decided to forgo employment to devote more time to the project.

Regardless, you'll most likely have to live lean. Beans-and-rice-for dinner-eight-days-a-week lean.

Really, it's not so bad. If you learn to live a frugal lifestyle, essentially making your money saving attitude a habit, you'll be able to make whatever amount of money you happen to have at the moment go further.

Following are some tips on how to stretch those dollars to make ends meet.



## 25 CHEAP SHOTS

**1. Make use of your student ID,** even if you graduated from college ten years ago, or never went to college at all (fake college IDs are easy to get in big cities). Use your student ID to get into all kinds of events and places like museums and movies at a much cheaper rate.

**2. Never go out for lunch.** Eating lunch out, even just a sandwich at the corner deli, really adds up. By bringing a sack lunch, you can save some serious dough. Sounds easy, but here's what always happens to me, and my dilemma is not unique. I get home from work and I'm tired. I have all this crap to do, and before I know it, it's midnight. I'm too tired to make a lunch for the next day, so I say to myself, "I'll just get up early and make a sandwich." But when the alarm goes off the next morning, I hit the snooze button. A couple of times. Needless to say, at lunchtime, I'm standing in line at one of the joints I've eaten at a thousand times before, dropping \$6 to \$8 for a joyless lunch. Add on the cup of coffee or two that I always buy during the course of the day, the candy bar from the vending machine I can never seem to resist, and a copy of the newspaper I read on the subway on the way to work, and I've spent \$10 to \$12 on crap I didn't really want to be spending money on. The solution: like most cheapskate living, you just have to get more disciplined. I simply need to make sure I pack my damn lunch up the night before, so all I have to do is grab it on the way out the door in the morning.

**3. Drink lots of water, instead of expensive juices or soda, and make use of a reusable water bottle.** Now, some people have a fear of tap water, due to the excellent marketing skills of the bottled water companies. I say you should raise your glass of tap water on ice and wish the end of Evian, Mountain Spring, and all the rest of those companies who have preyed upon our fears of rusty pipes and bacteria. But if it's too late, and you're scared of drinking straight from the tap, go out and buy yourself a simple water pitcher with replaceable filters. The pitcher itself is inexpensive, but the filters, which have to be replaced every few months, are kind of pricey. Still, an actively used filter system pitcher is much more cost effective than buying expensive cans, bottles, six-packs, two liters and jugs of juice.

**4. Make a list of the things you need before you go to the grocery store, and buy only the things on your list. DO NOT STRAY FROM THE LIST.** Don't shop when you've got the munchies. You'll end up buying all kinds of impulse items, things that you don't really need, like Oreo Cookies, or strangely enough, items like beef jerky. Also, don't get suckered in by coupon offers. If there's a coupon for something you plan to buy, bonus, but don't add things to your cart just because you've got coupons for those items. There's a reason coupons are offered for certain products—usually because they're non-essential food items that need extra inducements to get you to buy them.

**5. Bring only cash to the food store.** You'll be more inclined to shop wisely. If you've got a credit card, you'll buckle under the pressure of Oreo Cookies, and rationalize how just a few extra bucks on the ol' credit card won't matter in the long run. The bring cash only rule can apply to all sorts of things—the clothing store, the bar, a night out on the town. It's a way to one, limit how much you will spend, and two, it will help anchor your thoughts on how much money you are comfortable spending, thereby making you less likely to rationalize spending more money than you should.

**6. Avoid convenience stores.** Now I know, because they're so convenient, that this is a tough one. Many a time my sink has been clogged with God knows what, and instead of dashing to the local grocery outlet, I walk to the liquor store and spend a fortune on Drano. Get off your ass and get to the real store, the one that doesn't charge a huge mark up on toilet paper and other such basic necessities.

**7. Get yourself a cookbook and actually open it.** Or surf the web—there are thousands of recipe websites, many of them with cool tools that allow you to create meals based on whatever ingredients you happen to have stocked in your kitchen. The point is that cooking from scratch, once you have a good supply of spices and the like, will save you a bundle. As we all know, eating out is expensive. Even when you buy a burrito for \$3.50 at a cheap burrito joint, you are wasting precious dollars. Why, if you spend \$3.50 on beans, tortillas and some vegetables at your local grocery store, you can make enough burritos for dinner, a midnight snack, and a good sized lunch for the next day—even if you eat like a pig.

**8. This same line of thinking pertains to those little frozen meals that are so cheap.** First of all, no matter how good those frozen meals look on the box, they will NOT taste as good as the meals you prepare in your own kitchen. And secondly, there definitely won't be any leftovers to take for lunch the next day. Usually, there's barely enough for a full square meal.

**9. I know some of those greeting cards are cool, but come on, \$2.50** for a mass produced piece of paper stamped with "I've seen it before," bubblegum art and either a lame quip or lofty dime store poetry. Forget about it. Give a big "Fuck You" to Hallmark and make your own card. All you need is some nice card stock paper, a little paint (or crayons or water colors), and an ounce of creativity. Another good idea for a homemade card is to take a relevant picture and attach it with



some glue (or double stick tape) to the front of a folded over piece of card stock. Or use a collage of magazine cut-outs for the front of the card. The truth is, it's not just that a handmade card is cheaper than a store bought card—a card you make from scratch is a million times more meaningful than even the classiest store bought card.

**10. Indeed, going the handmade way can save you lots of dollars when it comes to gift giving as well.** While there are some people out there who won't be satisfied by a gift unless it's got a digit heavy price tag, most people, and hopefully the people you know, will be honored and much happier with a gift that you make by hand. The options for what kind of gifts you can make are endless—something simple like a basket of homemade chocolate chip cookies, or something more complex and time consuming, like a bound collection of your short stories. Pick up a craft magazine and see if something catches your eye. Go to a bead shop and create a necklace or bracelet. Anything goes (except spending lots of dollars). And remember, you don't have to be Picasso to create beautiful handmade gifts.

**11. Instead of going shopping or to the movies on a Saturday,** pack a little lunch, throw a beach towel and a book into your backpack, and head over to a park. Get a couple of friends to go along and you've got yourself a group picnic. Good times for sure, and all for much less than those crazy movie ticket prices. Another cool, cheap outing is to plan ahead and go to a museum on its free admission day. (Most museums offer one day a month—set on a schedule like the first Thursday or the last Saturday—in which admission is free).

**12. Search for the bars with generous Happy Hours.** By generous I mean cheap drinks and a happy hour that lasts from 5 to 9. Work from 9 to 5. Then drink cheaply from 5 to 9. You can't go every night—you've got a project to create and then promote. But it's good to go out and hang with friends and drink some beers. There will be times to celebrate, like when you finish the project, and there will be times when you just need to get a damn drink, because your computer crashed or the write up you thought was going to happen does not get published. Either way, make sure you at least find a cool bar with cheap drinks.

**13. Gourmet coffee can cost up to \$8.99 a pound, and usually it's more.** Buy a can of the cheap stuff (more grounds, cheaper price), and add a few drops of vanilla extract or a small scoop of vanilla ice cream to the brewed cheap stuff. It will taste like it's the gourmet shit. Or you can always buy flavored creamer. The power of that flavoring will overpower the bitter taste of cheap canned coffee. While were on the subject of coffee, remember that paper coffee filters can be used more than once. Just dump the grounds and run water over the filter. Good as new.

**14. Going out bar-hopping or clubbing is usually pretty expensive.** An all-out cheapskate would avoid such wallet thinning activity altogether. But that's just no way to live. So here are some effective ways to break down the high cost of clubbing:

Always make friends with bouncers and party promoters. A bonus of these friendships will be quick and free admittance into their clubs. This usually works best for women, cause you know, guys are suckers.

For the ladies: Perfect the art of getting guys to buy you drinks.

For guys: Watch out for girls who have perfected the art of getting men to buy them drinks.

Stop by a cafe or bar or shop that lets club promoters leave stacks of postcard club flyers. Usually if you present these postcards at the door, you either get to enter the club at a discount, or sometimes, for free.

Check your local weekly newspaper, or the entertainment section of your daily paper, to see if any free events are happening at any of the clubs. Sometimes the ads serve as coupons, which if presented at the door, allow you to enter the club for free.

As a rule, clubs often let you in for free or at a discount if you arrive before a certain time. This cut-off time is usually 9 p.m. or 10 p.m. Sure, it's lame to be going out so early, and it might mean you'll end up spending more dollars on drinks, but if the club's door fee is \$15, it might be worth it to arrive before the cut-off time and hang out. Besides, you'll most likely avoid standing in a line at the mercy of the door guy if you get their early enough.

Part of going out clubbing usually involves getting a group of people together. Arrange it so that everyone meets up at someone's pad, and pre-party with a couple of six packs and some cheap tequila. This way, everyone will arrive at the club with a nice buzz, or totally smashed, and less money will have to be spent on drinks at the club.

Going to a club in a big group, for obvious reasons, also cuts down immensely on the cost of a cab.



One guy I know drinks all night long at clubs, but never even walks up to the bar. His secret: a flask. That's right. He fills his "silver kiss" (that's the nickname he's given his flask) with the liquor of his choice and goes to town without spending a dime on drinks.

Hang out early outside the club until one of the DJs shows up. They usually have crates of records and maybe some equipment. Offer to help them carry their stuff in, and if you look trustworthy enough they might accept your aid. Benefits: cut in front of line, enter club for free (unless the bouncers are wise to your game), help out your fellow man, look like a cool insider in front of all the chicks. One might even consider buying a \$30-\$50 record bag like all the DJs carry and bring it with you to all the clubs. Find out who's spinning before you go, and when you get up to the door just tell them that DJ so-and-so invited you to come sit in on his set. Either it will work or you'll get your face bashed in by both the bouncer and DJ so-and-so.

**15. Never buy paper napkins or paper towels.** Invest in some good cloth napkins and dish towels. Or take a good supply of napkins from your friendly neighborhood fast food joint, or from the kitchen at your place of work.

**16. Buy generic** (especially over-the-counter medicine) and you'll be sure to save. Same ingredients, just different packaging.

**17. Stop buying clothes at regular prices.** Go to outlets, thrift stores, consignment shops. And if you must buy at the regular retail level, make sure to get it on sale. There's just no excuse for paying full price.

**18. Don't buy checks from your bank.** Look for ad inserts from check making companies in the Sunday newspaper. Usually, there's an offer for checks that is much cheaper than what your friendly neighborhood multinational bank will charge. But try as hard as you can to only use your bank's ATM machines. If you use another bank's ATM, or one of those ATMs found in liquor stores, you will not only get charged a fee by whoever runs the particular ATM you use, but by your bank as well. And those kinds of double whammy fees really add up. Always make sure you look over your statement very, very carefully, so you are aware of the fees being charged to your account. Actually seeing the charges will shock you into cutting back on the services that cost you lots of money, and you'll also discover any unwarranted service fees and account fees that banks love to sneak onto your account statements. These charges just show up one month, and you have to call and talk to a customer service representative to get them taken off. If you make the call, these charges are usually removed. But you have to make the damn call—a pain, yes, but not as bad as the pain of getting ripped off.

**19. Speaking of statements in general, it's important that you check every single one that you get, every time you get one.** This means checking statements for your credit card, phone, cell phone, internet service provider, gas and electricity and all the other items you get bills for. Look carefully for unwarranted or incorrect charges, and make sure to call and nicely demand that any such charges be taken off of your bill. Again, it's a pain to make the call, but the people on the other end of the line usually take care of crediting your account immediately. True pain is when you get overbilled and don't notice.

NOTE: I have to say that unwarranted or incorrect charges appear so often on my statements that I have become convinced it's intentional, and that companies know only a certain percentage of people will call to dispute and correct erroneous charges. The worst offender in my experience is my bank.

**20. Get into the habit of calling for quotes.** Compare prices. No matter what you are buying, use the ol' yellow pages (either the actual phone book or the website equivalent) and call around before you hand over your cash. There are many websites that offer price comparison breakdowns, so make sure to do some research on the web. Yeah, time is money, but for now, money is money, and the more you have, the better off you are.

**21. Don't ever develop your film at a "one hour film developing" shop.** Usually, they don't get it done in an hour, and more importantly, they're way too expensive. Drop it off in a photo bin at a grocery store or drug store. Sure, you have to wait a day, or maybe two, but you can save immensely, perhaps as much as \$5 to \$7 a roll.

**22. Don't make directory assistance calls.** Use the phone book or the internet to find the number you need. Make sure to avoid all the extra options a phone company offers, including voice mail (get a good answering machine). Do you really need caller ID? Ever gotten in the habit of using \*69 to find out who called but didn't leave a message? All these options the phone company offers add up to big bucks.

**23. Make sure you have the cheapest long distance phone plan available.** That means do research and find the company that offers the cheapest plan, and then make sure you use the plan effectively. These plans change all the time, so stay on the look out for the best option. Once you find a good deal, switch. Find a better deal the next week? Switch again. Also, if you've got a cell phone plan that allows free long distance, make sure you use up those minutes before using your regular



land line phone.

**24. Sell old books, cds that you don't listen to anymore, and clothes that are just taking up space in your closet.** Before you attempt to sell any items, do a little research and find out which stores pay the best for various used items you are trying to unload.

**25. Never buy envelopes or pads of paper or pens.** Take those items from the supply cabinet at work. If you can get away with it, use the company postage meter to send out your mail and the UPS account to send out any packages. Make as many long distance personal phone calls as you can from the phone on your desk. Consider the place where you work as the office of your independent project. This way you'll be able to pass some of your project's expenses on to your employer. Take advantage of these kinds of unofficial perks while you're on the clock. Not only are you saving money, but you're sticking it to the man, which is a pretty nice little bonus.

## **BONUS CHEAP SHOTS**

**26. Use your media status to get free stuff.** As a member of the media, you can get into concerts, movies, plays—pretty much any type of event that involves tickets—for free, and you can also get free review copies of the newest albums or books. To get into events, you have to get a press pass or be put on the media list. A new list is developed for every event, so you have to work a new PR person for each event. Sometimes it will be easy, and other times you will be denied. To get free review copies, you just have to get on media reviewer lists. It's much easier to achieve this -- just send a fax or an e-mail to the right PR people, or even just the right PR Department, and on the lists you'll go. And once you're on these lists, you usually can't get yourself off even if you try.

If you have no intention of actually covering these events or writing any reviews, keep this activity exclusive to the major corporations. As you know, the indies need support. Don't scam your fellow producers of independent projects.

**27. Get a Library Card.** As a writer of books, who is indeed interested in selling those books, I'm half-kicking myself for writing this cheap shot up, but... Get a Library Card. Not only does your local library system almost certainly have a terrific collection of books, it most likely also has good, maybe even great, collections of both music (CDs) and film (videos/DVDs). Instead of buying ALL your books and music, and always paying rental fees for all the movies you watch at home, utilize your local library. Get some culture, expand your mind AND save money. What a deal.

## **DON'T QUIT YOUR DAY JOB**

The smart thing to do is to hold on to your day job, and use your evenings and weekends, as well as any company time that you can get away with, to work on your independent project. This way, you won't dig yourself into deep debt, and you'll also have an income until you are sure that your independent project is a profitable venture, or at least generating enough cash to get by on.

Another reason to hold onto your job—something which is even more important and not readily obvious to those who have never gone for an extended period of time without an income—is to steer clear of the stress that can literally take over your life when you have no money in your pockets and no paycheck coming at the end of the week. A perpetual stream of bills with looming due dates covering what seems like every day of the 30-day billing period can overwhelm your creative impulse and leave you sleepless and on edge. If you go to the corner store for a candy bar, you'll feel guilty. You won't be able to stomach going to see a movie, not even at the matinee price. And if you go out drinking, plan to get drunk enough to forget about your financial troubles.

That said, there are a couple of other options. Having a full-time job might not leave you enough energy and time in the 24-hour day to work on your project. You can get a part-time job, which will give you a small amount of cash to cover living expenses, as well as enough time to work on your independent project. The other option is to temp. This will provide you with cash, as well as flexibility in your schedule. One week you can work at a temp assignment, the next two you can focus solely on your project. If you need cash, then seek out a temp job. If you've got enough cash to get you through a month, then delve into your project and ignore possible temp assignments.

A few notes on temping: It can be demeaning, and it really, really sucks. However, the company who is temporarily utilizing your services deserves as much loyalty as it is giving you. If you can get work done on your project while you're on the clock, then go for it. If you can make long distance phone calls from the phone on your desk, dial the digits. If the photocopy machine is tucked away and outside the scope of your supervisor's field of vision, make some copies. Use the assignment to your advantage. Remember, even though you are working as a temp, your real job is your independent project.



# THE STORIES OF MY BOOK

In April 2000, I published my first book: *Working For The Man—Stories From Behind the Cubicle Wall*. I've done PR and promotion for everything from cookware to books on motherhood, but getting the word out about my book, which I self-published, gave me the greatest insight in terms of promoting an independent project. It gave me the desire, and internally, the credibility, to actually go forward with this book. After all, I'm no rock star, or famous bestselling author. Who the hell am I to be telling you how to get the word out about your project? Well, in this chapter I reveal some of my own experiences, where I learned a great deal of what should and should not be in this book.

This book is for projects of all kinds, but my personal focus and the area where I have the most experience is in zine and book publishing, and that's why I wanted to include this section. While the following pieces are specific to book publishing, many of the ideas and thoughts can be applied to other kinds of projects.

## HOW I PUBLISHED MY BOOK

*NOTE: I include this essay with all direct orders for my book, Working For The Man—Stories From Behind The Cubicle Wall. I use it as a bonus item to encourage people to order directly from me.*

There's a lot of talk right now about the changes happening in book publishing. Some people are even arguing that the printed book will be dead in just a couple of years. That's just not going to happen, but whatever the outcome, it's a really cool time to be involved in publishing. The rise of the internet and e-commerce, e-books, print-on-demand, electronic publishing—all of these things represent new opportunities and possibilities for people who want to write and publish their own work.

Still, even with all the talk about the changes, and not just talk but all the cool projects and products and websites and new companies that are springing up and making waves, the printed book is, in my opinion, alive and well and going to survive just fine. Now there is just all this other cool shit you can do with your content.

So in this essay, I'm going to spell out the basic information you need to publish a book.

A quick note about self-publishing: non-fiction is easier to sell than fiction, and fiction is easier to sell than poetry.

A quick note about the publishing industry: There has been major consolidation in the industry, and the major book publishers have all been swallowed up by the powerful media conglomerates, which have also consolidated and merged into just a handful of gigantic corporations. While this makes it difficult as an independent publisher on many levels, it also creates opportunity. It makes it difficult because the major book publishers have lots and lots of money and can promote the hell out of their books. Why is there opportunity in the current situation? The intense corporitization of the industry, which is creating a hollow, creatively stifling atmosphere at the major publishers, is giving rise to small rebellions and energy on the fringes of publishing. And this is happening just as all kinds of new opportunities and fundamental changes are happening in the industry, from e-books to print-on-demand to e-publishing. Independent publishers who have some marketing savvy, know how to take advantage of all the internet has to offer, and are putting out challenging, fascinating and creative new works, have a good chance of getting the word out about their books.

That's my short take on the current state of the industry. Now, here are some basics on self-publishing a book:

You've got to have material that can fill at least 100 pages of a regular-sized paperback book.

**Get an ISBN** (International Standard Book Number). This number, which will be unique to your book, is the code that allows your book to enter the book marketplace (bookstores, distributors and wholesalers use this number to order books and communicate with each other about your book). Look at any book on your shelf at home and you will see the number on the back cover. As of February 2002, it costs \$225 for an ISBN. That \$225 actually buys you a block of 10 ISBN numbers, which is the minimum number that you can purchase. Not to worry, you'll be able to use the rest for your future books. To get your ISBN, as well as more information about ISBNs in general, go to [www.isbn.org](http://www.isbn.org). Once you get your ISBN number, make sure you put the ISBN on the back cover of your book. You'll have to have a bar code created based on both the ISBN and the price of your book. You want the Bookland EAN-13 bar code with price extension (which means you have to set your book's cover price if you haven't already done so). To get a computer image file of your bar code (ready to be placed in your cover's Quark document), or for a print or negative, it should cost between \$10 and \$30. There are many suppliers, and a comprehensive list can be found online at [www.isbn.org](http://www.isbn.org). There are also computer software pro-



grams that will generate the bar code you need, so if you are going to need to do lots of bar codes in the near future, look into acquiring one of these programs. Be sure to search for and test out free software on the net before spending cash on a bar code generating program.

**Know QuarkXpress, layout your own book, and design an amazing cover.** Assuming your book is already written, simply decide what size you want your book to be and lay it out in QuarkXpress. Most printers accept your book on a zip disk, and will want it formatted in Quark. Hopefully you know that Quark is a computer design program used by designers to design everything from book covers to ads to movie posters. Don't pay someone to layout your book. Figure out how to use Quark and do-it-yourself, assuming you've got some decent design skills. You will save a ton of money. The actual size of your book will most likely have to be adjusted depending on what printer you decide to use, but at this stage in your publishing career, you want to avoid paying for things like a unique book size, so go with the standard sizing specified by the printer you end up deciding to use (usually 5.5 X 8.5 or 5.25 X 8.25). With regard to the cover, if you've got some design talent, then do it yourself. If you're no good at design at all, get a friend who has design skills to help you out, or consider hiring a freelance designer. The cover of your book is very important—People do judge books by their covers. Your cover should have color, and it should look professional. It doesn't have to be full color, but it should have some color. Printers now accept covers in the form of computer files, but if your printer needs film, simply have your cover output at a reputable service bureau. The specifications will be spelled out by the printer. Make sure to communicate the correct specs to the service bureau.

**Choosing a printer.** Find a good printer by getting lots of quotes and asking other people who they have used. Working For The Man was printed by Morris Publishing. I had a good experience with this printer. Morris specializes in short run printing—for jobs as small as 200 books. Friends and colleagues in the publishing business have mentioned the following printers to me (these are not endorsements as I have not personally used them, but you should check them out for yourself): RR Donnelly; Bookcrafters; Gilliland; and Bang Printing. The key here is to get lots of quotes, and make sure the printer that gives you the lowest quote is reputable. Literary Market Place most likely has the most comprehensive listing of printers, and Dan Poynter's The Self-Publishing Manual also has a good list.

Once you decide on a printer, most likely you will be able to submit your book on a zip disk, and your printer will take it from there. Be sure to understand the printer's requirements, everything from how you should submit your materials to how you will pay for the printing. Keep in mind that your printer will send you proofs to sign off on. Be sure to look over your proofs carefully. The proof review period is not the time to make major changes, but if there is a major flaw, you want to catch it before your book is printed and shipped.

**How do you get your book to the market?** Established publishers use distributors, or if they are really big, have their own distribution arm. You will most likely begin your foray into the world of publishing as a self-distributor. And that may be best. Keep in mind that if a distributor takes on your book, unless you've got some funds to participate in the programs your distributor offers to retailers on behalf of your book, then you aren't going to see much action, except for maybe big returns. That's right—in the book business, retailers simply return the books (or ripped covers) they don't sell. Your best bet to successfully sell your book is to do the following: (1) Focus your retail selling effort in local stores, and any other stores that you have relationships with. Make consignment deals if you have to. Just get the books into as many stores as you can. (2) Sell your book directly via your website. You can also offer your book for sale by having customers mail in checks—be sure to offer some bonus items to encourage these kinds of direct orders, as no one takes a cut of a direct order. (3) Do your best to make your books available at online retailers. Amazon.com has a program for small publishers called the Amazon.com Advantage Program. Powells.com, the online store of Powell's Books in Portland, OR, is another great online bookstore where you should try to make your book available. Selling your book through online retailers makes it possible for anyone with access to a computer capable of buying your book, no matter where they are located. (4) If your book is a how-to, see if small, classified ads (which don't cost very much) result in direct orders. Fiction and poetry will not sell this way, so don't even try. (5) Participate in events and do readings, and sell your books at these events and readings. (6) Put out the word about your book to your mailings lists. Offer a special, limited-time deal for people on the list.

**Promotion:** So you think you've got a bestseller? Do you have thousands and thousands of bucks to spend on a promotional campaign? Then you don't have a bestseller. But, not to worry, you probably couldn't afford to print the 50,000 to 100,000 copies you'd need to sell in order to make the list. But there are some basics that you can do to get the word out about your book. 1) Tell all your friends and family about the book, both over the phone, in letters, and via e-mail. Tell your friends and family to tell their friends and family, and so on and so on. Make sure they know this is your first book, if that is indeed the case. People like to support rookies. 2) Do some readings and/or have an event to launch your book. 3) Make a postcard with the cover of the book on the front and a book description and ordering info on the back, and distribute that postcard like a madman. 4) Send out review copies. One thing to keep in mind about sending out review copies is that newspapers and book review publications receive lots and lots of books EVERY DAY for review. I've had book reviewers tell me they've received over 800 books in a week. Most of these publications will not review your self-published book.



The excuse they give is that because your independently produced book is not widely available, they cannot review it. With the rise of internet commerce, this argument is pretty much obliterated, but there are lots of annoying people on the editorial side of the book business who still use typewriters. So, expect the excuse to be used for a few more years. The key is to compile a very focused promotional list. You shouldn't skimp on review copies, indeed you should send out as many as you can. But make absolutely sure you do the following: send review copies to all publications where you have contacts, no matter how weak your connection to that contact might be (your cousin's friend who knows the boyfriend of the assistant to the associate book editor definitely counts as a contact); Work hard to get coverage in your local newspapers and magazines—the local angle always gives you an edge; Attempt to get coverage in the cities where you grew up and where you went to college, etc.; And finally, any publication that has anything to do with the subject matter in your book, whether it be fiction or non-fiction, should receive a review copy and a few pestering phone calls from you pitching the reasons why your book should be written up. (Revisit the 25 Simple Things You Can Do To Get The Word Out About Your Independent Project section for more promotional ideas).

This essay should by no-means be your only source for information about publishing a book. While there are lots of books out there to tell you how to publish a book, they all pretty much say the same thing. Don't go and blow money you will soon need to print your book by buying a bunch of how-to books. Do lots of research on the web, check out Dan Poynter's *The Self-Publishing Manual* (probably the best how-to book on self-publishing), make sure you know the basics cold, and be creative and add in your own ideas. The main thing is, if you want to publish a book, then do what it takes to publish your book. Follow some of the rules, and break others. Most importantly, no matter what, get the job done.

## A BESTSELLER IN MY BOOK

*Note: I wrote this piece shortly after I published Working For The Man—Stories from Behind the Cubicle Wall.*

Just last month I released my first independently published book. Here's why you probably haven't heard of it: I have no distributor working to get the book in stores, there is no publicity department hyping the book to media outlets, I haven't bought a single ad, I didn't throw a release party, and there was no six-city promotional tour.

Making the promotional effort even more difficult is the fact that I'm not a famous athlete or television star or professional speaker on the lecture circuit. I'm just a two-bit freelance writer with a few non-award winning clips under my belt, as well as a webzine producer who barely knows how to code basic HTML.

About the only thing I did do was print up some promotional postcards. Not many. Just enough to place small stacks here and there in and around New York City, and to mail to friends and family members.

Yet despite this seemingly lackluster marketing strategy and my own complete lack of known quantity quotient, my book—*Working For The Man—Stories From Behind The Cubicle Wall, Vol. 1*, is burning up the Amazon.com sales rankings. I'm kicking some serious ass on this list.

Now I know what you're thinking: "How could Jeff's self-published book compete with ground breaking tomes like Maria Shriver's insightful, beautifully written *Ten Things I Wish I'd Known*." And you are absolutely right to wonder.

Well, my book is simply not in the running with Ms. Shriver's book. After all, how could *Working For The Man* compete with a book full of life lessons and secrets of success written by an annoying, privileged, big-haired multi-millionaire member of the Kennedy family. Oh, I almost forgot—she's also a teleprompter reader on Dateline NBC. (I'd mention her husband, but I understand he's a pretty tough guy).

As the author of an independently published book, I'm just not in the same league as Maria Shriver, or any of the WWF wrestlers for that matter. I'm on another level, which starts out at around the two million mark on Amazon.com's sales rankings.

*Working For The Man* debuted at sales rank number 1,808,554. One week later, it was up to 1,391,430. And just last week, it shot all the way up to 925,201! Not only did my book break the one million ranking mark, but it almost moved up and over one million other books—all in less than a month. This is simply incredible. Not since Grandma Mary's book on her Wisconsin family's genealogical history entitled *Our Wisconsin Family* has a book moved up the rankings so fast. I am beside myself with joy.

I'd like to take a moment here and thank from the bottom of my heart all of the people who decided to buy a copy of my book (Mom, Dad—Thanks!). If all continues to go well, I should overtake Lou L.'s poetry collection about the 1979 Houston Oilers entitled *1,979 Poems about the 1979 Houston Oilers* in no time at all. (I'm coming for you Lou. My book is gonna kick your book's ass.)



At this very moment I'm having more postcards printed up.  
Working For The Man currently hovers between 300,000 and 400,000 on the Amazon.com sales rankings.

## **THE TRUTH BEHIND THE TITLE OF "BOOK REVIEW EDITOR"**

Duties: Take call from publicist asking if the book she sent has arrived.  
Tell publicist yes, and that you don't know if it's slated for review.

Avoid call from guy in the ad sales department "just letting you know" about the books that will be advertised in next week's book section.

Go to used bookstore to sell copies of books that won't be reviewed. Use cash to buy lunch.

Take another call from a different publicist asking if the book she sent has arrived. Tell publicist yes, and that you don't know if it's slated for review.

Open packages from yesterday's mail. Realize you've blocked yourself into your cubicle.

Call reviewers to see why they haven't turned in their reviews yet. Add the more creative excuses to your list.

Fill recycler with independently published New Age titles.

Settle fight with staff writers over review copies of the good books.

Take yet another call from a different publicist asking if the book she sent has arrived. Tell publicist yes, and that you don't know if it's slated for review.

## **BIG ON CAMPUS**

If you're currently in college, I'll cut to the chase: the time to start that rock band is now.

Maybe making rock music isn't your thing, but your dream is to make films, write novels, or compose poetry. Perhaps you have an idea for a website, you want to write and direct plays, or start a jewelry design company. Maybe you've got a great business idea and you feel a surge of entrepreneurial energy coursing through your veins.

The point here is that whatever your dream is, no matter what the odds are of making it in "the real world" people are so fond of telling you about, the college years are the best time to harness your passion and take steps to make your dream come true.

And I'm not talking about doing an internship.

You've been trained to think of your four (or five) years at college as a time of preparation for the future, and indeed that's certainly an important part of the experience, but the truth is that there is no better time to start a venture and launch your career than during the college years.

Whatever it is that you dreamily talk about at the tail end of a 12-hour cram session for a big test the next day, or during those impromptu gatherings of friends at three in the morning around the cluttered coffee table, that ideal career you'd like to pursue and make happen that comes up when you talk about your goals and the future, that's what you should go after. Not after you graduate, but right here and right now, during the college years.

Here are some of the obvious reasons why you should start now: you get a jump on launching your career; you get some extra time to either make mistakes or figure out that you're on the wrong career path; you'll forge relationships and begin to build a network of professional colleagues; and you gain some real world entrepreneurial experience.

Here are some of the not-so-obvious reasons why you shouldn't wait even a day to get started, despite your busy schedule of classes, studying, intermural volleyball, and midterms: your campus, the one you know so well, is essentially a microcosmic economy that you will be able to reach with no-budget promotional dollars; you will be written up and talked about by



the campus media; your fellow students, who once they graduate will be charging \$30 to \$200 bucks an hour for their professional services, will help you out for free; and you have free access to equipment and facilities that cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars to rent.

These are just some of the advantages to launching your career during the college years, you lucky dog, and the end result is all upside: either an impressive resume with unique accomplishments, or the start of a successful career or entrepreneurial enterprise with a future that stretches well beyond the campus walls and the college years.

The college experience has an element of a carefree lifestyle, but make no mistake about it: the decisions you make during college have an immense impact on the path that you will take for years to come. Don't just talk about your dream in late night conversations and worry about your professional future in fleeting moments between classes. Make it happen right here, right now. Get big on campus and you're on your way.

## **SO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO WRITE THE NEXT GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL**

Your roommate finally gets you to read his favorite book, *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac, and suddenly you find yourself blasting jazz, loading up on black coffee, writing stream-of-consciousness poetry and having endless conversations about your idea for a novel. Next, you're changing your major from pre-med to Literature, reading *Subterraneans*, *Visions of Cody* and other lesser known works by Kerouac, and having even more feverish conversations about another idea for a novel.

A life changing event has occurred, and yet, it all makes perfect sense. You've always appreciated literature and had a knack for taking essay question tests. You actually enjoyed reading the classics in high school—even *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence—and your short stories were consistently selected to be read aloud in class. By God, you still keep in touch with your ninth grade English teacher.

You feel for the first time in your life that you have found your calling, and you know that deep down within you is the talent to write the next great American novel:

You decide that you want to be a writer. No, you ARE a writer. You've been writing story after story, not to mention those notebooks full of poems. Now you just have to figure out how to get published, so that the rest of the world, not to mention your parents, know that you are indeed the writer you claim to be.

Prepare yourself to be overwhelmingly welcomed to the world of the form letter rejection—a world run by unpaid interns that read your unsolicited submissions while answering the phones and in between photocopy assignments.

Getting published is a tricky, difficult business, and it doesn't happen overnight. The competition to get a story or poem published in a prestigious literary journal or magazine, or to win a writing contest, often precursors to getting a book published, is fierce. To get a book published, you need a literary agent, but to get an agent, you need to be published.

The struggle to break through this paradoxical quagmire beats down and eventually leads many would-be writers to either apply to law school or look for work in public relations, advertising, or, God forbid, something like building management. So the best time to start your writing career is while you're in college, and it's not just so that you get an early start (though that certainly helps your situation).

Many of the elements that can bring it all together and lead to published work exist in the day-to-day of college life: writing classes, writing groups, mentors, literary journals, writing contests, and the ability to burn the midnight oil and write and write and write.

Here are some things you can do right now to launch your writing career:

**Stop talking about your novel or short story ideas and start writing.** Get in the habit of writing for at least an hour every day, no matter what. One successful strategy is to get up an hour earlier than you have to, make yourself a cup of coffee and completely focus on your writing. Not only will your mind be fresh, but you won't be distracted by phone calls, prime time television or a visit from a friend. The main idea here is to make writing part of your daily regimen.

**Join or form a writing group.** This gives you an opportunity to get your work critiqued, an incentive to complete and improve your writing, an outlet to commiserate and celebrate with fellow writers, a place to learn and experience different



kinds of writing styles, and a source to both find and give inspiration.

**Start submitting your stories to literary journals and magazines.** But before you start sealing those envelopes and unleashing a continual tidal wave of mass-mailings to all the journals listed in *Literary Market Place*, become familiar with the multitude of literary journals, many of which are obscure and not available at your local bookstore, as well as the many magazines which feature new fiction. Two excellent, comprehensive online indexes of literary journals can be found at [www.litline.org/links/journals.html](http://www.litline.org/links/journals.html) and [www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/ohenry/0900/litmags.html](http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/ohenry/0900/litmags.html). Create some form of database with contact information, submission requirements, publishing schedule and theme issues, and most importantly, the kind of writing the publication publishes. Once you've done your research, then you can start submitting stories on a regular basis to the APPROPRIATE journals and magazines. Submissions that do not meet a journal's specific basic requirements are despised by editors.

Also: no doubt you'll be able to remember which stories get published, but be sure to **keep track of which stories have been rejected by which journals**. Some journals of note: *Zoetrope*, *Open City*, *Ploughshares*, *Granta*, *Tin House*, *Zyzzyva*, and *McSweeney's*. A trick to finding out about journals is to look at the bios of published authors and contributors to literary journals. Keep in mind that getting published in one of these bigger journals is like winning the writer's lottery, so be sure to submit to smaller, less monumental journals and magazines that you've got a better shot of getting published in. This way you're building both your resume and your talent.

**Start a literary journal.** There will never be an easier time to launch a new literary journal. And this way, you'll be guaranteed to get published (Don't feel the least bit shy about publishing your own work. Everyone does it.) This is also a way to build some prestige for yourself early on in your career. By starting the literary journal you'll get to meet and work with other writers, garner some press attention, and have a cool project to show when you are applying for jobs, fellowships, or dare I say it, an MFA program. Important Note: Producing a literary journal takes lots and lots of time. Don't forget to get some writing done.

**Self-publish your own book.** Once you get enough material, either a novel, a work of non-fiction, or a collection of poems, essays or short stories (not necessarily all written by you), this is a great route to go. Get yourself a copy of Dan Poynter's *The Self-Publishing Manual*, start doing research on the web, and begin your education on exactly how to self-publish. There is even helpful information—I hope—in this very book. Self-publishing involves lots of little details, but overall, it's a fairly simple process. And by self-publishing, you'll not only learn the ins and outs of the book production process, but also what it takes to actually sell copies of your book. You may find that you will never do it any other way, you may get discovered by an agent that wants to represent you, or your book might get picked up by a major publisher (which would most likely first involve being discovered by an agent). Whatever the outcome, you will gain these two important things: 1) you will have put your work out there in the form of a book, and 2) you will have an understanding of the nature of book publishing in terms of how you want to be involved in it.

**Enter contests.** Winning a contest is another way to get noticed by either an agent or publisher. There are all kinds of contests out there, including *Playboy's* very own annual College Writing Fiction Contest. The higher the profile of the contest, the more cache a win, runner-up placement or honorable mention will have. Keep in mind that all contests have very specific guidelines, and many have a \$5 to \$15 entry fee, so before you send out your best short story to every contest you come across, make sure you read the fine print. Again, do your research and create a database with deadlines, submission guidelines, addresses and of course, prize money.

No doubt you would figure all this out during the course of your research, but **here are some excellent places to find an abundance of information about journals and contests:** *Literary Market Place* (available in the reference section at your library); *Writer's Market*; *Novel & Short Story Writer's Market*; *The Complete Guide to Literary Contests*; *The Best American Short Stories* (Includes a great resource section in the back. Be sure to note what journals these stories originally appeared); *The O. Henry Awards* annual, and the annual *The Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses*. Also, check out *Writer's Digest* ([www.writersdigest.com](http://www.writersdigest.com)), Zuzu's Petals Literary Resource ([www.zuzu.com](http://www.zuzu.com)) and Poets & Writers ([www.pw.org](http://www.pw.org)).

**Here are some contests of note to give you a head start:** the *Atlantic Monthly* Student Writers' Competition, Raymond Carver Story Contest at Humboldt, *Boston Review* Fiction Contest, *Missouri Review* Editors' Awards, New Letters Literary Contest (poetry & fiction), Flannery O'Connor Award in Short Fiction (U. of Georgia Press), *Glimmer Train* Awards, *Colorado Review* Awards in Poetry & Fiction, *Iowa Review* Awards, AWP Intro Contest, and the Sarabande Awards.

**Begin your education of the book publishing industry.** Figure out which publishing houses publish the style of writing you are producing. Research the names of editors that are behind the kinds of books you wish you had written. Follow the trends and stay abreast of who's who on the inside of the industry. This kind of information will give you an edge when you



have a body of work worthy of getting published. A good book to get a hold of for this kind of information is the *Writer's Guide to Book Editors, Publishers and Literary Agents* by Jeff Herman. Also, check out *Publishers Weekly* Online ([www.publishersweekly.com](http://www.publishersweekly.com)), the website of the publishing industry's main trade magazine, and MobyLives.com, which features a daily round-up on all the latest book news, as well as an excellent, always insightful weekly column. And definitely sign up for the electronic newsletter Publishers Lunch ([www.publisherslunch.com](http://www.publisherslunch.com)), which sums up and provides links (as well as biting commentary) to the most important publishing news and deals of the day.

**Enroll in writing courses.** Anytime you're taking a class, you are forced to write. Not only that, but people other than your girlfriend will critique your work. And similar to being a part of a writing group, you will have the opportunity to meet other writers and read their work.

**Cultivate relationships with everyone around you:** your fellow classmates, the MFA students/TAs, and especially your professors. These relationships will lead to everything from awareness of upcoming writing contests and fellowship opportunities to meeting the agent that's going to get you your first book deal. The better relationships you build, the more opportunities you'll land. It's always about who you know, but in publishing, it is ALL about who you know.

**Look to the web.** The web is full of literary journals, many of which are read by a greater number of readers than even the best known print journals. While the prestige factor still isn't as high as being published in a print journal, and you most likely won't get paid for your contribution, getting published anywhere should be your main goal at this early stage of your career.

## GET THE BAND TOGETHER

So you've got a band. Or you want to start a band. Maybe you only know three chords but you're a good looking cat and know how to belt out a tune. Perhaps you don't even know three chords, but you're taking guitar lessons and dream of playing sold-out stadium crowds all across the land.

Well, there's no better time to put together a band and make some music than when you're in college. You've got a captive, willing on-campus audience. Access to all kinds of equipment, as well as space to practice. A tiny, but crowded universe which you can reach without spending tons of promotional dollars. People all around who are never going to be more willing to help out for free with things you don't know how to do. A schedule which permits time for jam sessions. A party circuit unable to afford pricey bands but in need of live music. A campus radio station where the DJs will be willing to play your entire album if you walk into the station bearing a dozen donuts. A campus newspaper in need of material. And long breaks, including a two-and-a-half month summer vacation—perfect for getting on the road and going on tour as far as your broken down van will get you.

So get started now and take advantage of the ideal circumstances the college setting provides. The sooner your band gets some good music laid down, a schedule of gigs, and a following that wants to hear that music, the better chance your band has of succeeding. That may mean good paying, regular gigs outside the college party circuit, and it might mean a record deal. You never know. But no matter what, a band that can bring in a crowd and sell its music is going to go places.

Sure, teenyboppers who dance around chairs and can't play an instrument to save their lives, let alone write a song, are all the rage right now. But the music business works in cycles. Soon, the huge number of teenage carbon copy acts will start smearing and blurring each other into the has-been, one-hit wonder racks, and you'll be ready to take center stage and give the world what it's ready to hear.

Lots of bands came together in college and made it to the big time: R.E.M. (University of Georgia at Athens), Galaxie 500 (Harvard), The Doors (UCLA's film school), Talking Heads (Rhode Island School of Design), The Push Kings (Harvard), Papas Fritas (Tufts) and the list goes on. Even the incomprehensibly successful Hootie and the Blowfish, who created that horrible video showing the band members goofing off on a golf course, got their start at the University of South Carolina.

Here are some basics on how to get a band going at college:

If you're part of a college band already, you're already half-way to the finish line. But if you aren't part of a band and you want to put one together, there's never going to be an easier time to find some bandmates. Run an ad in the campus paper and put flyers up around campus. And put out the word among your friends and fellow students. You'll have a band organized in no time.

Find a practice space and start to put together a couple of live sets. Make sure to include covers in the set. If you want to



get gigs, you are going to have to play some music that people recognize and dig. The good news is that a college crowd tends to have a more eclectic, alternative taste, so feel free to add in your own freaky, funky style to whatever songs you cover. No, I'm not thinking Puff Daddy. Listen to Jane's Addiction's cover of The Rolling Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil" for a good example.

Find out about all the big campus events which involve live music. Sign up your band. Make friends with the people who book the bands at the campus pub, etc. Talk to fraternities and sororities, and any other campus group that regularly throws parties, and offer to perform for nothing or next to nothing or free beer. Play as often as you can. Get good on the stage. Feel free to venture off the campus, but cut your teeth on the various campus stages.

Use your free student internet access to create a website about your band. Turn live sets and select songs into mp3 files and make them available for free on your site. Be sure to update the site regularly and keep a schedule of upcoming shows up to date. Also, start collecting e-mail addresses of people who like your music, so you can let these people know about upcoming shows and any other band news, such as the availability of a new album.

Get your friend the photography/art major who has access to the campus darkroom to take some band photos. Even though you'll try not to look pretentious, you will. Don't fight it. You need a band photo and that's that.

Cut an album as soon as you're ready. If your campus has a recording studio, take the class that lets you get access to it, even if your major is microbiology. Studio time is the major expense in producing an album, so if you can avoid paying for studio time, you've taken away a major cost. Pressing a few thousand CDs isn't that expensive these days. Even on your student budget you should be able to get the funds together. Get quotes and ask around about the cheapest, but still reliable, pressing facility. Do research on the web and ask members of relevant newsgroups.

Be sure to sell your CD at all your live performances. A band member's girlfriend or boyfriend or friend can sell the CD while the band plays. Be sure to put out a notebook so people can write down their e-mail address and join your band's mailing list.

The college crowd is probably the most savvy when it comes to the internet, and has absolutely no resistance to buying things over the web. So make your album available for download at mp3.com and every other site that allows you to sell your downloadable album at their website. If you don't know how to do this, get one of your friends who is majoring in computer engineering to show you how. Since you won't have distribution, and therefore your CD won't be available in stores, this is an especially important way to make your music available. You won't get rich selling your CD this way, but at this point, your main goal is accessibility, which the web allows you to do cheaply and effectively.

Once you've got an album, it's time to get some press. Put together a basic media kit: a press release (info on the new CD, the band members, how the band came together, that kind of stuff); a band photo, and the new CD. Start with a strong effort to get one of the arts writers from the campus paper to write a feature on the band. Getting that first article written is always the hardest, but you are almost sure to get an article in the school paper. Put that clip in your media kit and continue to push for coverage.

Take a video class and make a couple of music videos. Again, it doesn't matter if you're an anthropology major. Outside of college, access to film and video equipment, as well as editing facilities, is very expensive. If you take a video class, it's all free. Of course you're not going to get your band's video shown on MTV, but you never know. It's better to have a music video than not to have one. It also might be a good thing to include in your media kit.

Post flyers around campus advertising your shows. Sure, your campus is huge, but you know where students congregate and where it makes sense to post flyers. Make it a habit to carry around flyers, tape and a stapler in your bag, so that as you make your way around the campus getting from one class to the next, it becomes second nature to stop and post some flyers in all the right places.

Everyone knows that it's a million to one shot to make it to the big time in the music business. Even if you play long and hard and get real good and write the best damn songs ever during the college years, you might still end up becoming a suit-wearing, straight laced tax accountant, or worse, going to law school, after you graduate. But getting a band started during the college years increases the chances that you'll make it. So stop talking about it and get that band together, make some music, and play it loud and hard and all night long.



# THE BOOKMOUTH.COM INTERVIEWS

I'm always interested in talking with the people behind cool projects. I like to know why they put the project together, where their inspiration came from, how they did it, what the difficulties were, how they got the word out about the project and more.

The following interviews were done over the past few years, mostly during 2000 and 2001, and were published over that period at Bookmouth.com, my website about independent projects—books mainly, but not entirely. The reason I sought out these people for interviews in the first place was because their projects caught my eye. Maybe I had read about their project in the newspaper, perhaps a friend recommended that I check it out, or I simply stumbled upon it in a store or while surfing the web. Every project has a slightly different way in which you become aware of it.

These interviews are important to me because they provide an immense amount of inspiration for my own work. And that's one of the main reason that I do these interviews. Yes, I want to highlight these people and their projects, and I want to get some insight into their works, but what I'm really after is finding yet another source of inspiration, not only for myself, but for others as well. These people have made some cool projects, and their words can help us not only understand their work, but our own work as well.

One of my favorite comments from one of my earliest interviews for this project came from photographer Cynthia Connolly. I asked at the end of the interview if she had anything else to add, and she said this:

"If you put your mind to it, you can do anything. You should never let others discourage you from being inspired to create. It's one of the most important things in life and is true freedom."

I couldn't agree more.

And one of the most honest answers in all of these interviews came from Jim DeRogatis, author of *Let It Blur*. I asked him what his favorite part of the project was, and he replied with a single word comment: "Finishing."

He went on to give a more thorough answer, but anyone who has ever worked their ass off on a project knows what a huge deal it is to actually finish the damn project—It's one of the best feelings in the world.

So here now are the interviews, which of course speak for themselves.

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH JEN ANGEL, PUBLISHER OF *THE ZINE YEARBOOK* AND CO-EDITOR OF *CLAMOR* MAGAZINE**

Jen Angel keeps taking her independent publishing efforts up a level. There's *Fucktooth*, a personal zine that she's been doing for years, then came *The Zine Yearbook* five years ago—an annual collection of the best pieces from zines over the course of the year, and most recently, *Clamor*—a bimonthly magazine that offers up the often unheard voices in stories that don't make the front page but should. The quality and the persistence of the material speaks volumes, but it's the focus and unique perspective of the work that really hits the high note. Below is an interview with Jen about her projects, what makes her keep up the effort, and how she manages to get it all done.

**How has *The Zine Yearbook* evolved over the past five years?**

It's changed a lot. On one hand, I've learned a lot about producing it, and the process is now a lot cleaner and more professional in that it looks nicer and comes together easier. In addition, the variety of zines that are included constantly changes—that's always a good thing, because, after all, the point of it is to publicize new and different zines.

**What is feeding the sustainability of *The Zine Yearbook*—why do you do it?**

I continue to put energy into it because I think it is necessary. I've been a champion of the independent press for a long time and I frequently feel like my definition of independent is different from a lot of other people's. Sure, *Mother Jones* is independent because they're not owned by a huge media conglomerate, but that's a completely different thing than someone who goes and works a 40-hour week and then comes home and produces a zine because they love it and because they feel



inspired to say something. I respect that drive. I want to help those people who are doing good zines to get publicity that will help them sustain what they are doing, and will help them interact with more people who are into what they are saying. That's the whole reason I started this in 1996, and that goal hasn't changed.

**Will we be seeing a new issue of *Fucktooth* anytime soon? How does the *Fucktooth* project relate to your other projects?**

This is a difficult question. I have material finished for a new issue, but I don't know when it will appear in print. I like *Fucktooth* a lot, it's like my own personal way of expressing myself, the one thing that isn't compromised by what others want in any way. But I haven't done an issue in a couple years, and honestly it's difficult to think about just putting another one out out of the blue.... So, in a way, *Fucktooth* just kind of gets the back burner because with *Clamor* and *The Yearbook* and, of course, my day job, there's just not many hours left in the day, and those are usually spent sleeping. Or eating.

**With all these independent publishing efforts, don't tell me you have a full-time job as well? How do you manage?**

Yep, full time job. Currently I work at Planned Parenthood of Northwest Ohio. I love it. I wish I made more money, but the job is great. The staff is amazing and it's a job where you can really see a need for what you are doing, as opposed to going to an office job where you don't really see the effects of your actions. I manage because I have to—someone has to pay the bills, right? I share a lot of responsibilities with my best friend, Jason Kucsma, who co-edits *Clamor* with me and works on *The Yearbook* as well. He also does the Underground Publishing Conference each year—I try to help out, but he really does most of that, despite what he says. I guess I do so much because I just can't stand the idea of coming home and sitting in front of the TV every night. Plus, there are tons of rewards, why else would anyone do these things if they weren't getting anything out of it? Corresponding with and meeting people, getting exposure to new ideas... these are all good things.

**How is *Clamor* magazine funded? What is involved in keeping an independent magazine like *Clamor* on a regular publishing schedule, in terms of financial viability?**

Well, *Clamor* is funded with a mix of personal savings, credit cards, and a bank loan. Technically it's supposed to survive on a mix of subscription sales, ad sales, and newsstand sales, but it just hasn't made it there yet. What it takes is staying on a strict schedule, nagging people to get their shit in on time, and not compromising on the deadlines. In terms of financial viability—you must publish consistently and be able to do what you say you are going to do or else you won't survive. We're always on the brink of going bankrupt, so we'll see how the next year or so goes. Subscriptions and donations help the most, so we're always trying to look for new ways to publicize or to fundraise.

**What kind of impact is *Clamor* having, and what kind of impact do you want it to have?**

Well, I can't really say for sure what kind of impact it is having, we only really get a glimpse of what people think from the correspondence we get. Basically, people are really responding to it, and are identifying with the approach that we are taking. We believe that media should be more accessible for everyone—and that everyone's story is valuable. What we want is to create a forum, a space for discussion of ideas that are commonly left out of mainstream media, of things that are important to us as individuals.

For more information about Jen Angel's projects, visit [www.clamormagazine.org](http://www.clamormagazine.org).

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH PHOTOGRAPHER CYNTHIA CONNOLLY**

The photoshow of Cynthia Connolly's photos of DC musicians with their cars and Pat Graham's photos of those same musicians playing live traveled all over country back in 1998, and was exhibited in all kinds of venues. I talked to Connolly about her photographs, how her project came about, and how she put the cross-country photo tour together.

**How did you come up with the idea to take photos of musicians with their cars / favorite mode of transport?**

I was a huge fan of *Speed Kills* magazine and after seeing a couple issues I decided I really wanted to do something for the zine. Since *Speed Kills* is about cars and music most of the time, I decided to take photos for *Speed Kills* of musicians with their cars from DC. At that time, a lot of people had old cars of aesthetic interest and some newer ones that were appealing in some way. It was the first time in a long time that I had taken photos, so I was rusty at first, but got the hang of it eventually. It took about 2 years to get the whole batch of like 15 together.



**Which photograph from the show is your favorite, and why?**

I don't have a particular fav... a lot are for different reasons. I like Christina Billotte because of the car and the light along Christina's face. Then there's Steve Gamboa with his moped... I like the space around the person and moped... Then there's Ian MacKaye that I like a lot, because it expresses a part of his humour that I love. Chris Thompson I like... I like the composition and the pavement in it... The texture is really nice. There's the second one of Alex Dunham that's stellar... as I just like the way it looks. I could go on and on. Oh, and Alec MacKaye... His facial expression is beautiful.

**Which photograph generated the most interest at the shows?**

I think Kathi Wilcox... She is a huge idol to young women and I'm finding it out. I met a young woman in Olympia and she loved the Kathi Wilcox photo so much that she wanted to blow it up at Kinko's from the postcard. She asked for a note saying it was ok to xerox since Kinko's is so hard ass about copyrights. She was so cool that I wrote the note (of course) and I sent her a big photo. So many people love Kathi Wilcox.

**How hard was it to get your show from city to city?**

It was surprisingly easy to get the initial shows. Olympia and Austin were the hardest. It was hard to get anyone to say they could do anything... Or call back. I usually moved the photos physically myself, Pat did a couple times, or I arranged for people to move them, or I arranged for people to UPS them to the next place... It was risky but I had all these instructions for everyone to follow and it worked.

**How did you know which venues would show your work?**

I just asked reliable people in the cities I knew would be a good place to show. I also went to places I had been before, so I knew I'd have something to do after the opening or closing.

**What kind of response has the show received?**

The response has been great. We (Pat and I) get e-mail on occasion, and I think it's inspired people... which to me was one of the main goals. I really also wanted to do it, just to say that it is possible. I hate how art has to go thru these long waiting lists to get into galleries. It's so tedious. I just wanted to go out there and do it, you know?

**What's your next photo project?**

I am always doing photo projects. I have had other photos in shows other than the tour. I'm really into landscapes with multiple frames lined up... I love the west... Probably because I grew up there. I love power lines and bridges and dams. I'd love to do a huge project involving that kind of stuff. I'm very much concerned with the frame along with the photo. In the last year I've gotten a letterpress and I'm working on doing letterpress on photos. I think I may go out West soon and take more photos and do something with that. I've just built my own darkroom and hope to make larger prints. We'll see. Can't wait! Sometimes I wish there were more hours in the day.

**Anything else you'd like to add?**

The only other comment is, if you put your mind to it, you can do anything. You should never let others discourage you from being inspired to create. It's one of the most important things in life and is true freedom.

**Here's a May 2002 update from Connolly, as the above interview took place in 1998:**

Hi... This is Cynthia Connolly and it's mid 2002. Since that interview, I've done quite a few photoshows, including a "tour" I did on my own of five locations in Europe. I took trains between each show and carried my photos in a box unframed. I designed this photoshow to match the photoshow I did in early 1999 at the Milky World Gallery in Seattle. This show in Seattle was my first solo show with a multitude of styles of my photography in one show, which was a mind-boggling challenge for me. I shipped out about 80 photos in about 6 boxes by UPS. The photos were framed for Seattle, and for Europe, they were unframed. So, I printed the Europe photos larger to create the same size print as though they were framed, so I could easily hang them similarly to the Seattle show for instant hanging without a lot of time spent on composition on the wall. (The Seattle show took a week to hang... The Europe shows I had about 8 hours maximum to hang the shows). This same show in Seattle was amended, (with photos taken in Europe, as a matter of fact) and in March 2000 I did a show at my favorite-to-this-day-artspace called Space 1026 in Philadelphia (check it out at [www.space1026.com](http://www.space1026.com)) I've printed three



sets of color deckle-edged postcards, which were taken with my half frame camera, and I continue to "work in" postcards and I love postcards. (You can see the images at my website). I also have made a postcard set launching in a fancier new direction that is a BOX OF ICE BOXES. It's a heavy-duty printed box with ice box images on the outside and images of ice boxes that I've taken now as postcards on the inside. As a matter of fact, I cull ideas from postcards on eBay... Since it's easier sometimes than going through my personal stack of old cards. I finally am doing more work on letterpressing on my photos, and I plan to have a more streamlined show (i.e. not 70 photos like my other shows... more like 15 photos) of letterpressing on my photos which will open in December 2002 at Mission Space in Baltimore.

For information on Cynthia Connolly's photo shows and projects, visit <http://www.southern.com/southern/band/CYNTH/>

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN SUPANICH, ZINE BUYER AND MAGAZINE MANAGER AT CODY'S BOOKS**

Cody's Books in Berkeley, CA, has one of the coolest zine sections around. John Supanich is the guy who runs that section. And not only does he stock a good, plentiful supply of zines, he also pays on time—something that's pretty unusual in the zine scene. I talked to John about what kinds of zines sell best, how he decides which zines to stock, and whether zines by women sell better than zines by men.

**You run the zine section at Cody's Books. How do you decide which zines to sell?**

Generally I'm looking for things with a nice graphic design, an interesting topic or point of view, and good writing. I also tend to favor the zines that are brought into the store in person. I like to keep the local feel since Berkeley and the whole Bay Area is such a hotbed of zine activity. So those always get priority over zines I'm sent or ones I hear about from elsewhere.

**What are the most popular zines right now?**

*Cometbus* is always the biggest. Then as far as more national zines go, *Bitch* and *Bust* are the only ones that sell like *Cometbus*, then *Giant Robot*, *Punk Planet*, all the usual suspects I guess. Of the smaller, local zines it's more like different tiers of popularity—a number that we always sell out of, some we sell a few of each issue, and a few that never seem to sell at all.

**What is your definition of a zine?**

I'm pretty broadminded in considering something a zine since I also deal with all the slick corporate mags. If a magazine is produced by one person or a group with common interests, in order to say something rather than sell something, I'd call it a zine. On the other hand, in business terms I only think of zines as those that are self-distributed, self-made, intensely personal.

**What kinds of zines sell best?**

Again, it's more like there are high selling/medium selling/low selling zines, and that's not really determined by genre. All graffiti mags sell, if those are zines. Otherwise, it's more the strength of a particular zine.

**Do zines by women sell better than zines by men? And do men buy more zines than women, or is it the other way around?**

We get a lot more zines made by women these days, and most of them do sell very well. It's more the male zines that are totally unpredictable as far as sales. Our customers are a good mix. I don't do any actual register work or a lot of the floor selling so it would be hard for me to break down the ratio of male to female customers. But I'm betting it's a slight female majority.

**Since you witness the reactions customers have when they first check a zine out on the rack, you probably get some feedback from regular customers, and of course you know which zines sell best, what would your advice be to zine publishers who want their zines to sell better?**

Make a nice cover. Too many zines have the same xeroxed look. A little effort or imagination to make it stand out helps in a store like ours with lots of zines. Then of course make the content worth the picking up. Price doesn't seem to affect whether a zine sells, so if you put more work into it, don't be afraid to charge for it. And as far as selling it to me, check



your damn spelling and grammar. It's not that hard and it makes it seem like you care.

Cody's Books is located at 2454 Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, CA. Check out the store's website at [www.codysbooks.com](http://www.codysbooks.com).

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN SAMPELL, PUBLISHER OF FUTURE TENSE BOOKS**

Kevin Sampsell is coming at the small press from all kinds of angles—not only is he the founder and publisher of the independent publishing house Future Tense Books, he's also a published author and he runs the small press section at Powell's Books, a well-known independent bookstore in Portland, OR. This kind of multi-directional involvement means he's not just taking himself somewhere, he's actually pushing, shaping, and moving independent publishing to new and cooler levels. I talked to Sampsell about how he got started, why the small press is important to him, and what he thinks is the biggest problem independent publishers face.

**You run the small press Future Tense Books, and you also manage the small press section at Powell's Books. Why is the small press important to you?**

Well, especially nowadays, the various viewpoints and contents of small press books are so much more vast and challenging. With all the big presses being bought and conglomerated it's like there are less people making these decisions at the big presses, as far as what's getting published, and the chances are getting slimmer and slimmer for new writers to get decent book deals. With small presses, these writers may not get paid much but they're getting their book out there to see how it does. And often times the small presses aren't going to tell the writers to make changes or revisions to the work like some big presses do. These big houses have meetings with a table full of people and they make these stylistic decisions that are going to sap the interesting parts out of some of these books. It's formulaic and depressing.

**Tell us the story of how Future Tense Books came to be, and what your current goals are for Future Tense Books.**

I started to do Future Tense in 1990 while I was living in Spokane, Washington, solely for the purpose of having a fancy press name on my self-published chapbooks. When I moved to Portland in 1992 I began to meet so many good young writers. Portland is really a bookish town. I wanted to publish some of these other writers' work. After a couple of these, I discovered that it was just as fun and rewarding to help other people get these neat little books done. Future Tense was getting a reputation locally and I even published a couple of glossy paperbacks when I had the money. Recently I've tried to focus more on fiction and less on poetry. I've always had a love/hate relationship with poetry anyway, and I read mostly novels and short stories. But one important thing I've always tried to do was to surprise people a little with each book. I'm inspired by independent record labels like K Records and Sub Pop, how they seem to birth these unique styles and how they've earned this expected level of quality even when their products seem to be wildly different.

**I should say you also write books. Tell me a little about your writing efforts...**

My writing was pretty raw at first, sometimes even sloppy. Now I think it's much better and sharper. I use a lot of humor in my work and I've gone through some pretty experimental type of things too, but what I try doing is blending those two elements. I want it to be accessible, not inexplicable. I like thematic writing, thematic books. I did one chapbook that was mostly sex stuff, I did one chapbook that was all text collages from newspaper headlines that turned out pretty funny, I did one book that was a weird Southern love story, and I did a book of haiku named after various celebrities. I've written a novel too but I'm still trying to figure out what to do with it.

**I'd say getting books out there is the toughest thing for an independent publisher. What do you think the toughest thing about being an independent, small press publisher is?**

Money is the biggest problem and worst obstacle. Sometimes you want to do something with a book and then find out that it's too expensive or you can't print as many as you'd like. Of course, not much cash also equals little advertising, and a lot of big magazines won't review your book unless you buy an ad!

**How do you get the word out about Future Tense's books?**

I usually list all the other Future Tense books in the back of every release, so that someone who has enjoyed one book can say, *Hey, maybe I'll read this one listed back here next*. But the main thing really is just word-of-mouth and doing readings wherever you can. After you've been around a while people realize you're serious and they give your books more of a



chance too. It's hard to respect a publisher who does it for a year or two and then gives up. Having a web site helps too, but I'm really more into the grass roots way of promoting: HYPE!

### **How do you decide which books to sell in the small press section at Powell's?**

Well, if it's from a publisher who's been around a while like Manic D Press and Incommunicado, then I know it has to be good. If it's someone on an unknown press or something like that, it's harder. But you know what—little things like having a snappy title or some cool cover design really helps getting people to simply take that first step: look at it. Sex does sell, and so does other aspects of humanity that a lot of bigger presses may shy away from. I usually try to only carry stuff that has an edgier style. I try to maintain an atmosphere in that section of the store. I can't have some cheesey love poetry chap-books or nature writing clogging up the shelves. The small press has always been "alternative" in some way or another, and I'd like to stress that "alternative" at Powell's. Of course, we have small press books all over the store, depending on what category it is.

### **Which small press books do the best, and why?**

The ones that have been around do the best because they have the most connections and experience. Manic D and Incommunicado are my faves. I like Green Bean Press in New York. Joe R is one of the most unique writers going right now. There's one here in Portland called Sniffy Linings. They have a nifty web site at [www.sniffylinings.com](http://www.sniffylinings.com), and they're putting out limited edition books of various bindings. Attack! is from the UK and they've got the art of titles down pat—they're doing kind of the Irvine Welsh style of stuff. Open City is doing cool stuff now besides their literary journal. Soft Skull does cool stuff too. The Dennis Cooper book of essays was good. They also picked up that controversial book about George Bush Jr., so that was a coup for them. Perhaps my favorite thing in the world right now though is McSweeney's magazine, because the design is infinite fun and the contents are always playful, funny, and sometimes downright oblique. To them, everything is a joke, even the submission guidelines!

Check out Future Tense Books' website at [www.futuretensebooks.com](http://www.futuretensebooks.com).

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH LISA CROSBY, FOUNDER AND PUBLISHER OF *EYE* MAGAZINE**

The last issue of the independently published glossy *EYE Magazine* was published in 2000. That was bad news for the overall arts culture, but it was especially sad for the independent, DIY scene. Since 1993, *EYE* had been exploring, discovering, and highlighting cool music, movies, books, zines and more that were outside the mainstream—all packaged in a glossy, well distributed magazine available at bookstores all over the country. It was a good solid source of thought-provoking, you heard it hear first (and most likely nowhere else) information, as well as a publication that cool indie projects could count on for coverage. I talked to Lisa Crosby, founder and publisher of *EYE*, about her decision to stop publishing the magazine, as well as her thoughts on the overall independent publishing scene. *EYE* will be missed, though I should point out that eye-mag.com, the website component of the operation, will continue on.

### **Give a little history of *EYE Magazine*, when it started, how it started out, what you built it up to?**

I started *EYE* in August 1993. I was living in New York City, working full time for a book publisher and taking graduate courses at NYU at night with an emphasis on publishing and journalism. I was passionate about independent journalism and a free press, and started *EYE* because I believed that an alternative to the watered-down stuff on the newsstand was imperative, even if it had to be on a small-scale.

### **Why did you decide to stop publishing *EYE Magazine*?**

After a great deal of thought, I made the decision in early March of 2000 because it was not generating enough revenue to sustain itself much longer.

### **What were the major factors that contributed to your decision not to publish anymore—slow payments from distributors, problems attracting advertisers, printing costs, all of the above...?**

Quite simply, it is close to impossible to keep a publishing company afloat (large or small) unless you target a lucrative niche (b-to-b trade journals, for instance). The amount of money to publish a glossy title of any sort of quality requires a colossal amount of money—and that's when you're functioning as frugally as possible.



**Do you think the ability people now have to find stories on even the most obscure art group, band, etc., via the internet impacted interest in *EYE*?**

The Internet helped *EYE* greatly; not only was the staff able to accomplish an astounding amount of research online (especially when compared to the year I started *EYE*; the web was a virtual desert, and I relied on microfiche and midnight hours at the library almost every night of the week), but it was (and still is) a very cost-effective means of garnering new interest.

**Did *EYE Magazine* have a full-time staff? How many people were working full-time and part-time at the magazine?**

*EYE* operated with a minuscule staff. At the end, there were three full-timers (including myself), two part-timers, and a pool of freelancers that I used as necessary. Two of us put in 65-80 hours weekly for years without a break. We were very dedicated; we devoted our lives to indie publishing.

**What are some of *EYE's* accomplishments that you are most proud of?**

Many of *EYE's* articles were used as foundations for other's research; we were cited frequently in such journals as the *Utne Reader*, quoted in the *Village Voice* and attracted calls from staffers at such diverse companies as *Ripley's Believe it or Not* and the *Boston Phoenix* because they had read one of *EYE's* articles. I am very glad that *EYE* was able to expose a few more people to some topics that were sadly underreported.

**What is your advice to zine publishers out there that are thinking of stepping up to the next level and going glossy?**

Use consultants unless you're being backed with venture capital and can be fully staffed. Don't do anything without first having a publisher's model created for your company which will supply you with various scenarios regarding the business. When will you break even? What would happen if you hire three people? Or thirty-five? What paper stock? Page count, etc.? If you don't care for spending your own money or someone else's on consultants, then do not go any further.

**What are your thoughts on the current independent, alternative, DIY scene overall?**

Unfortunately, there just isn't much left right now on a significant scale because of the prohibitive cost. I think that a world in which only a few titles can be purchased at only a few major sellers is in the near future. (Or perhaps, right now.) Mailorder (and online ordering if the title is so equipped) makes the difference. I am going to continue to subscribe directly to the publications I find well-done and thought-provoking.

**What are your plans for *eyemag.com*, which I understand will be continuing on?**

It will remain online indefinitely. I don't have a concrete idea of how it will evolve, but for now it is allowing people to contact *EYE* easily and order back issues securely with credit cards. The site is also offering a zine exchange (in the spirit of *Factsheet Five's*) to get some of my surplus small pubs into the hands of interested readers.

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH VENUS OR VIXEN'S CARA BRUCE**

It used to be that if you wanted to read erotica, you turned to Henry Miller, Anais Nin or *The Story of O*. These days, erotica is everywhere. Cara Bruce, who runs the Venus Or Vixen erotica website and publishing operation, was well aware of the availability, and she felt that the crush of offerings were getting a little too "nice." She decided to put together a collection of stories that intentionally pushed the limits, to slap back some of the PC prudishness that has slipped into the mainstream erotica offerings. The result: *Viscera—An Anthology of Bizarre Erotica*. I interviewed her about the book, her website, and erotica in general.

**How did the idea for *Viscera* come about?**

I was getting bored with reading so much erotica (I have to read a lot for work). It seemed to me that sex was getting really PC and nice and taking the edge and sexiness out of sex. I don't think *Viscera* ended up being overly "sexy" per se but the original idea was to put some of the edge back in erotic fiction.

**Is Venus Or Vixen a side project?**

It is a side-project, a time consuming side-project but still a side-project.



**Why do you like writing, editing and publishing erotica?**

Sex is much more fun than technical writing.

**What do you think of Nerve.com?**

Nerve.com is very well-done. It's a great looking site and they have a lot of really good authors. For literature it's wonderful, for turn-on factor... well, it doesn't really turn me on.

**You seem pretty involved in web-based projects. Why didn't you just publish *Viscera* on your website? Why publish a book?**

I love books. I've always loved reading and writing and I enjoy having a product I can hold and take with me and that I know will never simply disappear like so many Web sites do. I also enjoy the art aspect of publishing books: choosing cover images, fonts and everything else that goes into creating a book. I know that aspect exists in Web sites but it's different when you're making a book. And besides, I built a miniature model of the Great Wall of China out of all the boxes of my books. Publishing is the best.

**I read on your website that people were walking out of one of the *Viscera* readings. What were your thoughts as you saw people leaving?**

In one sense I was a little bummed out because I try to save the best for last, but on the other hand it made me feel that I had actually succeeded in either freaking people out or at least upsetting them, which I think is hard to do nowadays. Maybe I'm just over-saturated but it's hard to find things that freak me out. So if I can freak someone else out I'm happy. Or maybe the people just didn't like me or my book, but in that case, I just don't give a fuck.

**The goal of the *Viscera* book is to push limits, to publish what other editors have rejected. Is there a story that gets mentioned to you most often as the one readers find most disturbing? If so, what is it about that particular story that seems to create such a reaction.**

There's not one particular one that gets mentioned as being "over the top" but the one I thought people would pick on was "Pure Love" by Simon Sheppard. Which is why I put it first.

***Viscera* is the first book from your independent press—Venus or Vixen Press. How are you getting the book out there?**

I have six distributors, including Turnaround in the UK and Marginal in Canada. They are all doing a great job getting the book out there. I also stand on the street corner and trade them for crack.

**It used to be that if you wanted to read some erotica, you went out and bought *Little Birds* by Anais Nin, or *The Story of O*, or Henry Miller. Now, you can't escape erotica books. When did this change start happening, and why?**

I think the Internet definitely had a lot to do with it. It's allowed a lot of people to read erotica without having to go buy it and for a lot of writers to get their work out there. Of course Susie Bright and her *Best American Erotica* series also brought Erotica "out." I remember a few years ago (I can't remember how many) when I saw a *Best American Erotica* in an airplane bookstore and thinking "wow, that's weird" and now so many bookstores have pretty large erotica sections.

**You've got some well-known writers in the collection. Who are some "discoveries," people who haven't been widely published?**

Michelle Scalise and Rebecca Kissel both have stories that are getting a lot of press. One of my personal favorites is Sonia Greenfield. Her story "A Girl on the Train" haunted me for days after I first read it.

For more information about Cara Bruce and Venus or Vixen, visit [www.venusorvixen.com](http://www.venusorvixen.com). Here's a quick update on what Cara has been up to since editing and publishing *Viscera* (she's been very busy). She edited *Best Bisexual Women's Erotica* (Cleis Press, Dec. 2001), co-wrote *The First Year - Hepatitis C* (Marlowe & Co, March 2002), and edited *Best Fetish Erotica* (Cleis Press, July 2002). Forthcoming is *Horny*, an adult guidebook for San Francisco which she is co-editing. All that, yes, but there is more: Venus or Vixen Press published its second book, *Embraces: Dark Erotica*.



## THE SELF-PUBLISHING ADVENTURES OF TRAVEL WRITER EVELYN KAYE

Here's a piece of advice that we've all heard before: Do what you love. It's simple to say and easy to understand, but very hard to actually put into practice. Day to day life, with all its messes and obligations and distractions and surprises, just seems to get in the way.

Of course we all follow the advice to a degree, but some people really take it to heart and run with it and find the kind of success that inspires all of us to keep passing the advice along. Evelyn Kaye, author of over 20 books, is one those people. She's taken her love of both travel and writing and built up a full-fledged travel-focused book business.

"It's crazy, but it's true," said Kaye. "I used to write books for New York publishers but never made any money, so when they all turned down my idea for a book on educational vacations, I started my own company."

Not unlike other writers who have struck out on their own, the rejection of an idea she knew to be a good one set Kaye on the self-publishing path.

"I just got pissed off," said Kaye. "It seemed to me that it was a great idea. I had done a piece for *McCall's*, which had gotten nice attention and response on the topic. That was my moment of truth. I said, 'I will publish this myself.'"

Kaye launched her independent publishing venture, Blue Panda Publications, in 1989, and her first self-published book, *Travel and Learn*, has been through four editions.

Other books she has self-published include *Family Travel*, *Active Woman Vacation Guide*, *Free Vacations & Bargain Adventures in the USA*, *Amazing Traveler Isabella Bird*, and most recently, *Adventures in Japan*.

"I publish offbeat travel resource guides and books about interesting women travelers," said Kaye. "It's basically me and my husband, who does the layout of the books, and I hire freelance cover designers, editors, copyeditors and others to help."

Of course the writing—a component easy to forget in the six-ball juggle that defines self-publishing—is handled by Kaye, who brings to the table some serious credentials as well as a bit of unique history. She got her start at weekly newspapers in England, where she grew up, "writing about jamborees and people celebrating 70th birthdays." She moved on to work for several news agencies, and then became the first woman reporter in the *Manchester Guardian's* newsroom. She moved to the United States in 1963, and has been freelancing ever since, writing for publications such as *The New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Denver Post*, *McCall's*, *New York Magazine*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Glamour*, *Ladies Home Journal* and more.

Kaye's source of inspiration for her books is deeply rooted in her love of adventure travel. She's sailed around the Galapagos Islands, camped in an Amazon rain forest, rafted through the Grand Canyon, and horse-packed in Colorado's Sangre de Cristo Mountains. She recently visited Antarctica to observe icebergs, penguins and seals from a Russian research ship.

Kaye's perspective as a woman, and the important but often unrecognized role of women in exploration, also impacts her approach to travel writing.

"I've always had to think up my own ideas, and some of them have worked and some haven't, but I have always felt very deeply that women don't get equal treatment in many places, and certainly not in exploration and travel," said Kaye. "Women are in fact superb travelers, and they're always treated as sort of secondary travelers or secondary explorers. I feel quite strongly that it's important to write about these forgotten women, because they've made tremendous contributions."

The effort to self-publish has been an adventure of its own kind. Kaye's early education began when she helped a friend put together a book on television screenwriting. The friend taught a class on the subject, and wanted to collect the course materials into a book.

"That was my moment of 'so this is how you do it.' That was my rehearsal," said Kaye.

Dan Poynter's *The Self-Publishing Manual* and John Kremer's *1001 Ways to Market Your Books* were a big help, according to Kaye, and so was the training she received from her experiences with the major publishers in New York. "I watched them publish the books and learned from them—how not to do it," said Kaye.



The changes and new opportunities in the industry keeps the learning process ongoing.

"I think publishing has changed dramatically in the last 10 years. The big houses are all amalgamating into a half-dozen super publishers who only want bestsellers and hot name books. Mid-level writers who often write about interesting topics are just not hot enough," said Kaye. "What's changed the playing field of publishing are the new computers that allow you to write, layout and promote so easily, and the world of on-line stores like Amazon.com, BN.com and others where small publishing houses can get just as much attention as larger ones—if their books are professional and good."

In other words, the playing field is leveling. That's good news for self-publishers, and not just because of the potential for increased sales, according to Kaye.

"In many ways, it's freeing to be able to take your writing destiny into your own hands, and publish what you want as you want it."

Kaye is quick to point out, however, that the hardest part about self-publishing is actually selling books. You have to pound the pavement and work diligently on a consistent, ongoing basis to get the word out about a self-published book, according to Kaye.

"It's something that most writers don't feel very happy doing, but it's the only way to move books out of the boxes," said Kaye.

Kaye does all the usual promotional stuff, including press releases and postcard mailings, as well as readings. She also has a website—[www.travelbooks123.com](http://www.travelbooks123.com), as well as a toll-free 800 number (800-800-8147). For one of her books, *Amazing Traveler Isabella Bird*, she joined up with a storyteller and toured all over Colorado.

"We created a little program. I talked about the book, then she came out dressed in costume as Isabella Bird, and told the story of Isabella's Bird's 14,000 foot climb of Long's Peak in Colorado," said Kaye.

"Sometimes it was a bust, and sometimes we sold 20 books," said Kaye. But since *Amazing Traveler Isabella Bird* was published in 1994, Kaye has sold over 9,000 copies of the book.

The success of Kaye's biography of Isabella Bird, as well as the interest the subject of the book held for her, led Kaye to write her most recent book, *Adventures in Japan*. The book tells the story of Kaye's adventures following Bird's 1878 route through Northern Japan.

"Isabella Bird did so much at a time when women were supposed to do so little. She traveled to some of the most remote places—Iran, China, Australia—long before airplanes, wearing her long skirt and coping with all kinds of disasters. She was such a terrific writer. She describes places so that you can really see them—in a time before photos and videos. She had a real talent for making you feel you are standing next to her as she sees Mount Fuji or a Japanese wedding or a children's birthday party," said Kaye.

Kaye is currently working on another 19th century traveling lady who also went to Japan—Marianne North, a painter and botanist.

"She set off to travel the world to paint the trees, flowers, plants and scenery before civilization arrived to destroy it all. Her paintings are superb, and botanically accurate, and 800 of them hang in her gallery in Kew Gardens in England," said Kaye. "At the moment I'm just collecting stuff, and I have a pile on the floor. That's how my projects begin."

To find out more about Evelyn Kaye and her books, visit her website at [www.travelbooks123.com](http://www.travelbooks123.com).

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH ZINEBOOK.COM'S CHIP ROWE**

Chip Rowe is a very important part of the zine scene. His website, Zinebook.com, is an excellent resource—perhaps THE resource—for zine publishers and people who are interested in getting into zines. The site not only features a large number of how-to articles for zinesters, but also provides links to all kinds of articles that have appeared over the years about the zine scene, as well as links to other relevant websites.

Rowe has also published the paper zines *This Is The Spinal Tap Zine* and *Chip's Closet Cleaner*, he put together a book—*The Book of Zines*—which collected some of best writings from zine world, and he's expanding his publishing efforts on



the web with sites like ChipRowe.com and SpinalTapFan.com. I interviewed Rowe about these different publishing vehicles—paper zines, e-zines, and books—to gain some insight into how they're working as individual mediums, and how they function together when combined as part of a larger project package.

**What is the current state of your paper zine?**

I am hoping to eventually do Issue 14 on this thing you call "paper" but it's difficult when the Web offers instant gratification—plus I can fix typos and no one ever knows the difference. The trouble with any ambitious zinester is that each issue becomes progressively more complex, so it's difficult to go back to the copy shop, hand-folded roots. I've been collecting material but I have a feeling it might end up at chiprowe.com before you're able to read it on the john. The Web is also enticing because more people visit my site in a week than have ever seen my paper zines. Some zine editors consider this elitist—you eliminate readers who don't have computers—and I guess I can't argue with that. Most zine editors aren't too concerned about their readers—you do a zine for yourself, and if someone else likes it, fine. But there is something cool about getting a zine in the mail. I recognize that.

**A few years ago you put out an issue of *Chip's Closet Cleaner* on the web, instead of putting out a paper issue. What was the reaction back then, and what do you think the reaction would be if you did that today?**

I did it on a diskette—one for Mac and one for Windows. People generally hated it, and I didn't like doing tech support despite making the programs what I thought were no-brainers (just insert and click). The issue wasn't that compelling either—I threw in a lot of old material because I got seduced by the technology. This was before I knew much about Adobe Acrobat, which is an amazing piece of software. I just reprinted my *This Is The Spinal Tap Zine* by transforming it into a PDF file, which is complete with color and fully searchable. If the Acrobat software were a bit less expensive, it would be great to see what zine editors could do with it. You could download your favorite zine right to your computer and print it out yourself if you wanted. The zine editor could still make their dollar or two per issue, but it wouldn't go into postage or printing. They could print the issues on demand, rather than printing a few hundred copies and trying to sell them all.

**You've done a book based on zines, *The Book of Zines*, and you pushed the book, as well as zines in general, by producing the Zinebook.com website. Was this one of the first books to use a website to promote and further the content of a book? Did the people at Henry Holt, the book's publisher, know what you were up to? Did they understand the value of the website?**

I doubt that mine was the first site to push a book, but it may have been one of the first non-computer books to prominently promote a website address inviting readers to visit for more info. I did the site less to promote the book and more to put up the interviews and other stuff I had done or collected for the book that didn't fit. I didn't want it to be a billboard, but a freestanding site that happened to have a book at its center. Plus it gave me a place to provide basic instruction for people who wanted to start their own zine, and to post updates to the zine addresses listed in the back of the book. It grew from there. It ended up getting as much publicity as the book (e.g., *Newsweek* wrote up the site). The book is now at a point where one sale can skyrocket it 20,000 positions on the Amazon.com rankings, but I still update the site frequently because there's really no other site devoted to fanzines/zines done for passion rather than profit. Nowadays everything online is called a "zine," from a true fanzine to an e-mail newsletter that consists of nothing but classified ads for get-rich-quick schemes. Holt recognized the value of the website and helped me by creating the initial design. I think they were surprised by the response it got.

**Can you think of any other books that have a really cool, informative supporting website?**

The ones that use the Web well are computer books, of course. (webpagethatsuck.com is one I recommend—the book is really helpful for learning basic web design). Another one that I think really does a good job of promoting a book without pushing it in your face is Amy Krouse Rosenthal's MommyMommy.com site. She created a sort of club for mothers and puts new material up frequently.

**What are your thoughts on e-books?**

They're great as long as they're short. Stephen King got it right when he published a 66-page short story and called it an ebook. It's short enough to be read on a screen, and priced right at \$2.50. You can't go wrong. It's really epamphlet publishing, and it's not hard to imagine a zine being published that way. Once they figure out a way to do micropayments and lower the cost of entry for editors to publish and receive payments online, you might see more magazines, zines and pamphlets available that way (as well as in print).

For more information about Chip Rowe's projects, visit [www.chiprowe.com](http://www.chiprowe.com).



## **AN INTERVIEW WITH JIM MUNROE, AUTHOR OF *ANGRY YOUNG SPACEMAN* AND PUBLISHER OF NOMEDIAKINGS.ORG**

I found out about Canadian-based author and publisher Jim Munroe by stumbling across his website—nomediakings.org. It was a lucky find. Munroe's website is exactly the kind of resource anyone interested in self-publishing should check out. So many self-publishing resources say the exact same thing, as if they are all based on the same damn book. But Munroe's honest and open approach to explaining the self-publishing process, including such items as a budget breakdown on how much it cost to put out his book, *Angry Young Spaceman*, is top-notch. What makes Munroe's self-publishing information even more credible is that he opts to go the DIY route even though he's been published by a major publishing house. But wait, his indie-cred gets more intense: Munroe had the guts to tell Rupert Murdoch (whose News Corp. owns HarperCollins) *no thanks, I'll publish my own book*, along with some other choice words. You'll have to check out the nomediakings.org website for the full story. But before you do, read my interview with Munroe here.

**Many writers who self-publish do so because they don't have any other option. But you had the option—you had an offer from a major publishing house. What made you decide to self-publish?**

I didn't have an offer—when the manuscript was ready to go, I told the ed-in-chief that I was going to self-publish. She was "disappointed but not surprised"—they considered my first book a success, but she let me out of the contractual condition that I show them the second manuscript.

**Did this move generate a lot of publicity?**

Yes—self-publishing by choice was a good media hook, but it helped that I had slick website, a marketing plan, and a political motivation.

**What resources did you find most useful when you were putting together your first self-published book?**

My most valuable resource was other indie publishers, who I called up and asked about everything from ISBN numbers, to distribution, to printers.

**How do people respond to your website? Does it generate lots of interest in your publishing efforts?**

People tell me that they find it inspiring, which is fantastic. It does generate a lot of media interest—as far as readership interest, it's hard to know how it translates to sales. There's been close to ten thousand visitors, five thousand of which have downloaded the free e-book version of *Angry Young Spaceman*, and while there's only been 50 online sales it's hard to gauge how many of the bookstore sales (close to 2000) were prompted by visiting the site. But it's not just a sales tool—it's part hype, part agitational-propaganda—so I don't judge it's success on how much profit it generates.

**What is the brief history of your career as a writer?**

My first self-published book was *Infinity Points*, a perfect bound novella I put out thru zine routes in '95. By the time I was putting out *Angry Young Spaceman*, I had ten years of publishing experience in zines, magazines (managing editor of *Adbusters*), newspapers (feature editing and writing for the university paper) and books behind me.

**Where did you get the idea for your self-published book, *Angry Young Spaceman*?**

It had a little something to do with teaching English in Korea for seven months.

**How did you promote and distribute *Angry Young Spaceman*?**

I sent out 150 media packages (with a book, launch invite, press release, clipping) all over Canada. I did a cross-country launch in four cities across the country (see nomediakings.org/TEOOP.htm for details) which was key in getting coverage in those cities. Distribution was done through a mid-sized press that had a sales force and warehouse set up—often these are hard to get without a track record.

**What is the main piece of advice you give to writers considering going the self-publishing route?**



Check out [nomediakings.org](http://nomediakings.org), obviously, plug plug... but I guess what most people don't consider is the organizational and promotional elements that go into publishing effectively. If you're hopeless in these areas either do a 500 print-run with a break-even goal or consider getting someone else to publish it.

For more information about Jim Munroe's projects, visit [nomediakings.org](http://nomediakings.org). The engaging site features a great collection of self-publishing resources.

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH MIKE TOLENTO, THE ARTIST BEHIND *EMPTY LIFE* COMICS**

I met Mike Tolento a few years back at the Alternative Press Expo in San Jose, CA. He was at a table across from me, selling his *Empty Life* comics. I was there attempting to sell copies of my *Working For The Man* zine—didn't sell too many, unfortunately. Anyway, I admired his work a great deal, and I'm happy to report here that Mike's body of work continues to grow. There's a fearless quality to his work, and it's damn funny. Damn funny. I interviewed Mike about the process of his comic creation, why he's cutting back on the sex (in his comics), and the funniest scene he's ever drawn.

**Mike, you mentioned to me on the phone recently that you've toned down the sex element in your comics... What did you mean by that, and why the change?**

My comics have always emerged from my brain completely unfiltered. I think about sex all the fucking time and it came through in *Empty Life*. I shouldn't say the sex element will be toned down forever. I still enjoy drawing and reading comics that are erotic, adult, whatever, but my current projects aren't going to rely on that. I need to tell stories without a stigma.

**What were the first comics that you drew?**

The first comic I remember I made was on notebook paper with pencil and crayons when I was about nine. It was a war comic inspired by the G.I. Joe animated show and comics I used to enjoy. I don't know if my mom threw it out or not.

**What is the process in which you construct your comics?**

I try not to use the same approach twice. I play around with the medium a lot. My process is loose and ever-changing. As long as I have a hard surface and my tools (bristol board, ruler, mechanical pencil, Microns, white out pen) I'm good to go.

**How is the web impacting indie comics, both the positive and the negative?**

The web is changing just about every aspect of life as we know it. All of it can and is being applied to comics. The web is opening an alternative form of promotion and distribution. It cuts out the middle men in retail, so the artist can connect directly with the reader. You can make the argument that the web medium will eventually change the language of comics. The way we view images changes when they go from the printed page to a screen.

**What are some of the best comics you've seen lately?**

Titles that are coming to me off hand: I like *Stray Bullets*, *Louis Riel*, *Acme Novelty Library*, and *Berlin*, all available at your local comic shop. Minicomics to check out are *Die Spanks!*, *five*, *Noe-Fie*, *Ten Foot Rule*, *Get Bent*. These and more of my favorite minicomics can be found easily through Stuff—a distro run by Paul Houston.

**Your comics are very autobiographical—explain what it's like to put your real life stories into your art?**

Sometimes it's just easier than thinking up fiction. I draw myself and my surroundings because I know myself best. It may make for a boring protagonist, but if you put a character you know in a cool enough situation, he'll run.

**What's the funniest scene that you've ever drawn, that even when you glance at it now, it makes you laugh?**

Back to the sex of my earlier work: Waaaay back in *Empty Life* #3, I made this single-page comic of a pussy being shaved. I still like it because it's so simple and brilliant. I will never top that one.

**Have you done any comics on your experiences working at the library?**

The story I'm working on now has a scene that takes place at my work. It's a pretty short scene though. It doesn't really say



much about my job. Other than that the library is absent. I have written about past jobs though. My job as a laundromat clerk had some good material.

### **Any new directions that you're taking your comics?**

I did a comic called *Sex and Death* that juxtaposes words and images at random to a neat but ultimately unnerving effect. I'm looking for length and depth, baby. Stories and characters that I feel for real. The story I'll be releasing in *Empty Life* #15 that will run through a few issues is completely without dialogue. I'm doing it to try to learn to tell a better story through visuals.

### **What influences your work?**

Weed and other comics. Films, books, a comic artist needs to take in everything that makes up his or her surroundings as possible source material because cartooning and comic writing are disciplines that borrow bits from so many others.

Visit [www.emptylife.com](http://www.emptylife.com) for more information about Mike Tolento and his comics.

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH SASHA CAGEN, PUBLISHER OF *TO-DO LIST* MAGAZINE**

To-do lists are very telling. Read someone's list that you've found in a used book or left behind on a table at a coffee shop, and you feel a little guilty, like you're reading someone's journal. In a way, you are. The list is a unique window into someone's life, but it's left for the reader of the list to fill in the blanks. Using the simple to-do list as a launching pad to dissect and expose the everyday details that make up and shape our lives. Sasha Cagen, Annie Decker, and Burns Maxey launched *To-Do List* magazine in June 2000. I interviewed Cagen about where the idea to start the magazine came from, the difficulties she faces putting out an independently published magazine, and the nature of the organizational lifeline, as well as the browbeating, stress-inducing pocket-sized beast, that is the to-do list.

### **Where did the idea for *To-Do List* magazine come from?**

When I was in college, my friend Tara and I wrote a zine called *Cupsized*. That was at the height of the zine revolution, and the girlzine moment, and it was really a fantastic time to be writing a scrappy little publication. Then, ineluctably, came graduation; I moved from New York to San Francisco and took a job as a publicist for labor unions; it was a great job promoting a cause that I really believed in, but I found myself getting really worn-down and depressed. I felt like I wasn't too great at writing press releases, or convincing reporters to cover labor.

So I started toying with the idea of returning to something that I was good at: publishing. Tara came out to visit; we spent the weekend shouting out titles for a potential zine: "Adult Contemporary," "Face Bra," and then the obvious standout: "To-Do List." It summed up this period in our lives, as well as the more universal themes. Tara played a big role in the conception. In terms of actually producing the magazine, though, my partners have been people who live in the Bay Area: Burns Maxey, our art director, and Annie Decker, my editorial co-conspirator.

**To-do lists, on the surface, seem so mundane, but when you're looking at an actual list that is not your own, it really is interesting, and it makes you ask questions and think about the person who wrote the list. Why do you think to-do lists are so fascinating?**

I think that there has probably always been a fascination with reality; we have always had a craving to know more about our fellow human beings, and how they deal with basic issues like love, work, friendship, and just getting your chores done. To-do lists are low-budget reality culture. They are a mix of the meaningful and mundane things that are on anyone's mind. When we look at these lists, we step into that person's life for a moment. They make us curious about each other, which is what this magazine aims to do.

### **What do to-do lists say about the individuals who write them?**

To-do lists are very revealing. They are like diaries. They tell you about what the person is trying to do, wants to do, and what the person has to repeat to him or herself day after day. Sometimes they are intriguing. Sometimes they are boring. They can say things like: pay bills. But if pay bills is all in CAPS with three exclamation points and two underlines, that can be very telling. (We sometimes get lists that appear to have been written specifically for the magazine; you can always tell a real list from a fake one.)



**What are some of the difficulties you face as you try to put out your independently published magazine?**

Right now the biggest challenge is the balance between editorial and business and selling advertising and fulfilling subscriptions. There's not enough time to do everything, especially since we are all working other jobs. We're looking into becoming fiscally-sponsored by a nonprofit so we can apply for grants and accept tax-deductible contributions. We would love to get office space and make this our real job. I would love for someone to take on more of the business operations. We'll see.

It's also hard to strike the balance between writing and editing. The editing mindset is a critical mindset; and that can inhibit the creative process. Then again, I can't complain too much because I get to do something that I love.

**Why did you decide to launch a print magazine? Why not just do it on the web?**

We just like print. We like putting words down on paper. Ink hitting the page. The web is great as a tool, but not really for reading. I have always preferred reading on paper, and I feel much more of a sense of accomplishment from creating an actual, tangible object.

**How is your magazine doing? What has been the response from readers?**

When we put out our first issue, we wondered if anyone would buy it. We really had no idea. A few days later, a friend called to tell me she saw a middle-aged dyke walking down the street with the magazine tucked under her elbow. We were so happy! We got a major boost when *Utne Reader* reprinted a story from our first issue, "The Quirkyalone." In November we got the news that the editors at *Utne* had nominated *To-Do List* as Best New Title in its Alternative Press Awards. We won the Reader's Choice Award for Best New Title. So yeah, it is going well! Our subscriber list is growing, and we are having more luck getting advertisers now that we have more name-recognition.

**What is the most original, thought-provoking list you've published so far?**

A list my friend Maggie found in her junior high school diary included the item, "Let my eyelashes grow."

**Any last comments?**

A few few tips for anyone considering independent publishing:

- 1) Put up a website with sample content (a great tool for getting subscribers);
- 2) Send out a press kit and work the media (a good way to increase circulation without spending money on direct mail or advertising);
- 3) Don't stress too much about when you come out (no one is keeping track until you are working with a corporate distributor.);
- 4) Work with people you really like. Have fun. It has to be fun or it's not worth it.

Check out *To-Do List*'s website at [www.todolistmagazine.com](http://www.todolistmagazine.com).

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH REBECCA WOLFF, PUBLISHER OF *FENCE* MAGAZINE**

Of course you've heard about *McSweeney's*. Maybe you've heard about *Open City*. Those are a couple of literary journals that are getting some attention as of late, along with *Fence*, which you might not have heard of before.

Dare I even write another word about *McSweeney's*? And *Open City*, it just seems so cliché. It reminds me of the literary journals that I put out back in college, where I just published all my friends' writings (as well as my own stories). But *Fence*, while surely well-known in the writing community, is still a little under the radar of The Reader Out There.

The truth is, most literary journals exist in the realm of "under the radar." Even *Granta*, or *Glimmer Train*, or *Ploughshares*, respected literary journals that have been around for a very long time, seem like their rightful place is on the bottom shelf of the bookstore's magazine rack. At the very back of the bottom shelf.

And I'll tell you why: because they're boring.



But *Fence* seems very much alive. And in addition to the journal, *Fence* now has a book publishing arm, and it continues to regularly organize and participate in literary events. The Reader Out There will be made aware.

I talked with founding editor Rebecca Wolff about all the goings on with *Fence*.

**I read an excellent piece you wrote about the story of *Fence*—the events and thoughts you had that led to the creation of the journal. You talk about the frustration you felt as a newly graduated MFA poet. Since you're now in the position to accept and reject, what do you think is the most common frustration other poets and fiction writers have as they try to get their work published?**

I think the most common frustration is knowing that your work is good—at least as good, if not better, than much of what you see coming out in journals—but feeling powerless to bring it to anyone's attention. The sense people have that you have to "know someone" to get published is quite valid—there's a whole lot of happy circumstances that go into literary success: the writers' conference, the workshop, the cocktail party—all good opportunities for people to make connections with publishers, and they do.

**The journal is a non-profit venture. Do you ever get frustrated having to seek out grants and funds? What's the hardest part about keeping *Fence* going financially?**

Knock on wood, but we've actually been lucky with scaring up just enough money to make *Fence* work. *Fence* is run on a shoestring, and in our first year we depended on readings and benefit parties to put together the cash for the printer's bill. In our second year we were lucky enough to attract the attention of a private foundation. Now we've branched out into what are called in the business world "revenue streams": we are launching two book contests. Book contests allow small publishers to do what they want to do (publish books of poetry, which don't make much money, if any) while supporting the publisher as well.

**How are you using the internet, and have you considered only publishing on the web? Why is a print version of the journal important? Wouldn't you reach more people and save money if you only published on the web?**

Our website is a static one; I really consider it a teaser for the magazine, as well as a place for information about events and developments such as our book contests. We post guidelines for submission to the contests and to the magazine. One can also subscribe, using a credit card, on the website.

I'm not convinced that *Fence* will always exist as a print magazine. I enjoy doing it that way, and will continue to do so until something makes it very obvious to me that a move to the web is necessary. I don't mind thinking that someday we will go the way of *Grand Street* (which has just discontinued its print version). It makes me slightly sad, but not much. I do use the web a lot, and I don't mind reading things on the web. On the other hand, it's just a whole different tactile thing to hold a journal in your hands, put it in your bag, read it on the subway, etc. Palm Pilots seem totally unattractive to me as a reading experience. In terms of being able to reach more people—that's the thing that makes me think that one day we just may go that route. Although we may also try to figure out how to distribute *Fence*, the magazine, free on college campuses nationwide, instead.

**How are you getting the journal into the hands of readers?**

Part of the original concept of *Fence* is that it must be visually appealing and desirable as a consumer product—this is not because I'm a slave to the capitalist system but because I wanted people to buy the magazine, rather than to stand around in bookstores and read it and then put it back on the shelf. This is the death of the independent literary journal—for some reason many readers of journals don't consider the fact that these journals need to be purchased to be able to survive, just like anything on the market, be it a cracker or a shampoo or a doll.

I do a tremendous amount of work on our distribution, which is one of the toughest aspects of literary magazine publishing. I've actually sat down in the office of the Barnes & Noble Periodicals Manager and manually fiddled with the numbers and vendors and etc. I also talk on the phone frequently with my Account Executive at Ingram Periodicals, one of our distributors. It's important to me that *Fence* get into the hands of people who are not necessarily in "the loop" of the small journal scene. And I do get very gratifying letters from people who've found it in a mall somewhere. I also use e-mail announcements as a means of spreading the word cheaply and efficiently.

**How is *Fence* different from the other literary journals out there? If the trend towards more experimental works in the traditionally traditional journals continues, will *Fence* seek to get even more experimental? Is that the point?**



No, that's not the point. *Fence* isn't an explicitly "experimental" journal—unless you consider that the experiment of *Fence* is to juxtapose work by writers who you might not expect to see next to each other in a journal. Generally that means writers who have been pigeonholed as being either "experimental" or "mainstream" but who we have decided are actually just original and interesting and intelligent.

**What's your advice to someone who keeps getting their works rejected by the major journals?**

Read more journals, buy more journals, see what the journals are actually publishing and figure out which ones are really compatible or potentially sympathetic to what you're doing in your own work. And know that a lot of the major journals don't really publish unsolicited work that often—much of it is done by solicitation and the afore-mentioned "happy circumstance."

**You publish some big names in your journal. Who are some poets and writers that we haven't heard of before that *Fence* has published?**

Well, that's a funny question: If you've never heard of them, what point in me mentioning their names? But here goes: Andy Mozina, Lacy L. Schutz, Michael Craig, Sandy Brown, Regan Good, Devin Johnston, Beth Murray, Corwin Ericson, Sam Witt, Anthony McCann, Ellen Sharp, Josh Bell, C. Douglas Johnston, Melissa Huseman, Christine Deavel, Chelsey Minnis, Alan DeNiro, Betsy Andrews, Eric Schneider, Sara Levine, Lisa Beskin, Duane Esposito, Jean Donnelly, Rodney Phillips, Lisa Isaacson, Robyn Schiff, Miranda Field, Cheryl Noethe, Rachel Zucker, Dana Guthrie, Geoffrey Cruikshank Hagenbuckle . . . you get the point.

We publish tons of unknowns, because we get lots of great work in over the transom, from people who've obviously read the magazine (and hopefully purchased it) and understand what we're looking for.

**What's that like, getting a submission from some unknown writer that just blows you away?**

It's totally awesome. It's my favorite thing in the world. It's our *raison d'être*. Really, I was moved to start *Fence* after working as associate editor at this little journal *Gulf Coast*, in Houston, and being powerless to publish the cool stuff I saw coming in and being rejected in favor of really boring stuff. I would read the slush pile and just dream about having my own magazine.

**What is the future of *Fence*? I see you've launched Fence Books. And what about your own work? Are you still submitting poems to other journals?**

The future of *Fence*: I do hope we will continue to publish *Fence Magazine* for a long long time. Eventually I would love to be able to increase our frequency to three or four times a year, as that would really help out with our distribution. But at the same time I'm not sure anyone ever makes it through the whole magazine, even with six months in between. Another dream is to be able to print out art in color—that's really expensive.

Fence Books is an exciting development for us—we knew we wanted to do it eventually but we had no idea the opportunity would come along so quickly. Another private foundation (the Alberta duPont Bonsal Foundation) with a special interest in supporting female poets came along to help us fund the Alberta Prize, and we've launched the Fence Modern Poets Series with the aid of Saturnalia Books.

My own work is funny: I basically only write during the summer, now, when I get to go away from *Fence* for a month or two, leaving it in the capable hands of Max Winter, Associate Editor (also one of four Poetry Editors). So I go away and work on a project: in 1999 I wrote a play, and this summer I worked on a novel, which I'd begun years and years ago. Poems have always been kind of an in-between activity for me anyway, so I try to keep writing them as I've always done—on buses, walking down the street, etc. It makes for sort of "disturbed" poems, meaning the thru-line is not always allowed to become clear. It's a sort of collage approach.

I do still submit to other journals, but not nearly as often. Sometimes I get invited to submit by journals, which is fabulous, but sometimes I get rejected, too.

For more information about *Fence*, visit [www.fencemag.com](http://www.fencemag.com).

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH DJ GORDON HURD**



The first time I met Gordon he was wearing an old man hat, short rimmed and curled in the back. I thought to myself, *What does THAT dude think he is doing wearing THAT hat?* Of course, this was back in the day when I was wearing wool pants, plaid, untucked shirts, a sport jacket that I made sure didn't match the shirt or the pants, and an ugly tie... though that sounds very much like a clown's outfit, I believed it was very hip. No doubt Gordon was thinking, *Why is THAT dude wearing THOSE clothes?* Needless to say, we hit it off and became the best of friends. I can always count on Gordon to be involved in cool, interesting projects, whether it's launching an acid jazz magazine, writing short stories, shooting photographs, or his current project, spinning grooves and hosting Sound Effect, a weekly dance party at a DJ bar in San Francisco, CA. I interviewed Gordon all about the business of getting people in the door to do some hanging out and some hangin' out.

**What kind of party do you throw?**

We throw a weekly party at a little DJ bar called An Sabin in San Francisco. Basically it's four DJs playing house music and hanging out with friends. We represent the deep house side of things, deep, dubby, funky, gritty, soulful, and so on. A couple of our sound-shifters are also known to throw down some old skool, electro, breaks, and some of that broken beat stuff coming out of west London.

**Would you say you're part party promoter, part DJ? How do you define your role?**

Yes and yes... In a small, no-budget, ragtag operation like ours, you pretty much define your role based on what's not getting done. But there are four of us participating, and we all kind of organically fall into participating in whatever needs to get done. When there is something that needs to get taken care of and no one wants to do it, we sit down and talk about it and take turns fulfilling the shit-work.

**Is it true that you strip down to your underwear to get the party going?**

It is not true. I don't wear underwear to my parties. You need to check your sources, bro.

**Do you ever think, "Man, we have to get fine women to come to our event"? How important is it to have a good looking crowd?**

It's well recognized that a successful party/event has a good mix of people. If your party can appeal to the female crowd, it doesn't take too much to understand that the rest of your crowd will soon follow. Especially since it seems that the ladies like dancing more than the dudes. As for how good looking the crowd is, it doesn't really matter. We do this for the music, not faces. I like to believe that if people are having a good time they tend to all be good looking.

**What is up with this velvet rope shit?**

I have never participated in the velvet rope phenomenon. It's an antiquated approach to party organizing. Back in the Cotton Club days, I can see where it came in handy: velvet ropes, town cars, tuxedos, hats, cigarette holders, all that jazz. I mean, there was a depression going on, so you really needed to step things up to get folks's minds off troubles. Nowadays there's no need for that pomp and circumstance. Velvet rope mentality only means two things: "come on in if you look like a playa or a ho" and "the music inside is whack."

**What kind of vibe do you try to create, and how do you go about creating it?**

Our vibe tries to be comfortable, friendly, down-to-earth, and the focus is supposed to be on the music. This isn't a "scene," and we want to try and provide a place for folks who aren't interested in a scene-attitude. Usually a nice smile, and a drink in hand help to make people comfortable enough to get out on the dance floor and shake some backside. It also really helps to greet people and thank them for coming out to your gig.

**Why do you like putting these events together?**

I like going out at night but I don't really like being a spectator, for lack of a better word. I feel more fulfilled if I can be on the organizing side of things. A secondary benefit is that if I'm involved in nightlife events, then I don't just sit at the bar and get drunk. I do have a day job, so I got to maintain some control. The main side of it is the music, though. Rather than bitch and moan about how the music scene sucks, we want to get out and try to contribute to it. I'll be honest, I don't always like doing it. Especially when you work hard and pull something together and no one shows up. That's a real blow to your confidence and energy. It's hard to see the shallow, trendy events and clubs getting all the crowds and attention. But, when our shit does come together and you see a room (or two) of smiling faces and dancing bodies, it's all worth it.



**How do you get bar/club owners to let you host parties at their places? Any advice you can give to someone who wants to get something going?**

There are a lot of different tactics one can try, but the best and most successful tactic, for us, is to be up front and direct. Tell the owner you want to do something at their joint, tell her why, and let her know why your deal is good for her establishment. No one is out to do you any favors in this game, so you have to come at it like a businessperson. Be willing and ready to negotiate. If the owner wants to keep the bar profits, fine, that's her prerogative. You keep the cover charge money. If they want you to pay for the usage of the space, negotiate a portion of the bar profits. Never agree to terms straight off, you know, the standard negotiation tactics. And if you're trying to take over a spot that someone else is hosting, be prepared for backlash. Don't fuck with people's events if you don't want people to fuck with yours.

But, in the end, it all depends on what kind of vibe you want to represent. If you want to do something a little more commercial than we do, you're gonna have to deal with a lot more bullshit from everyone—from DJs, promoters, owners, club-goers, etc.—so you're gonna have to dole out some of that bullshit too.

**How do you get the word out about your events? How do you get people who have come to keep coming back?**

The perennial question. We have approached this based on a few different philosophies. One was word-of-mouth. We hoped that if we built up attention and attendance solely on word-of-mouth, then we could prevent any sucker-ization and temptation to sell-out, and ultimately maintain a solid following on our own terms... Word-of-mouth is very hard to build. As a result, we have developed a combination of word-of-mouth, with traditional promotional tactics: listings in the community press, website listings, printed flyers, and an e-mail list. No one thing is more effective than the next. You have to use every and all promotional tools at your fingertips. Free mix CDs, trying to get on the college radio station, getting write-ups in the press, these are things that we need to get moving on in order to keep a buzz going. As far as getting people to come back, I can't think of anything more powerful than throwing down a really good set and making people really feel the music. But, sometimes, you just never know what brings people back.

**How do you know everyone is having a good time?**

When they say it. If someone comes up to you and says "nice party," they generally mean it. People don't often go out of their way to give props. Also, if you see people smiling, dancing, and hanging out till you have to kick 'em out, then you most likely were successful in providing a good time. The best indication, though, is if they come back the next time.

**What is one of the worst experiences you've ever had in your side-career as party promoter?**

At one of our parties a little over a year or so ago, it was Christmas time and the bartender wanted to do a holiday giveaway to our guests. This was fine, but it didn't help that she kept making us turn down the music so she could scream out the raffle ticket numbers at the top of her lungs. This bartender was also prone to partake in the bar stock, so by the time the party was really jumping she was lit up like a Christmas tree herself. One minute the crowd is grooving, the next minute they're holding their ears to keep out the unbearable shrieks of a drunk bartender giving away a set of janky, plastic margarita cups. It made for some uncomfortable, yet pretty funny moments.

**What was one of the best?**

The very first party our crew threw together. It was a Sunday afternoon, we hadn't all really known each other that long, we were taking a bit of a gamble since we had to pay for the venue and we didn't know if anyone was going to show up at all. We had a great turn-out, we had a cake and some free champagne for people, we tore shit up on the turntables, everyone was piss drunk and having a good time. Awesome.

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH HAL NIEDZVIECKI, AUTHOR OF *WE WANT SOME TOO***

Hal Niedzviecki's book, *We Want Some Too*, is complicated. As I try to simply write a quick description of the main point he's trying to make with this book, I find that I can't exactly pin it down. I want to say that it's about how the current alternative, underground culture fits in with the overall mainstream culture, but one of the major points of this book is that there is no underground. (And such a description over simplifies what the book is about anyway.) Like anyone who writes about books, I turned to the inside flap and the back-cover of the book for some help, but that copy doesn't really nail what the book is about. In some ways, the inside flap jacket copy might as well be for another book.



I should say that my confusion has nothing to do with Hal's writing. Indeed, he has put together an excellent, thought-provoking book, full of unique, challenging insights and hit-the-nail-on-the-head-dead-center commentary. Part of the book is about discovery, and part of the book is about making sense of what we think we know but don't. He's got some kind things to say, but he's not afraid to criticize.

Fortunately, Hal provided some extremely insightful answers to my questions about his book. So I'll just leave it at that and let you get to the interview.

**Hal, first of all, in just a sentence or two, what is your book's central argument?**

*We Want Some Too* argues that we are now using pop culture not as entertainment or distraction but as a central way to order and make sense of our lives. What we want is access to the entertainment continuum, to that increasingly prevalent parallel universe that is as real and important as our everyday lives.

**Explain for people who haven't read your book what "lifestyle culture" is, and how it impacts the so-called "underground." (I realize that you wrote an entire book to address these areas, but for the purposes of this short interview, if you could summarize...)**

In the book I argue that this desire to have a voice in pop culture, to in some way confirm individuality upon ourselves via the massing dynamic of pop, manifests itself in a new kind of approach to our everyday lives. I call this approach lifestyle culture, in which style and pop become a way to live life. In lifestyle culture, things that don't matter, that shouldn't matter, matter a lot: your collection of vintage lunch boxes, your obsession with the characters of *Survivor*, your hidden desire to quit your job and become a punk star, all these things take precedence—or at least have a kind of equal weight—over your "real" life of work, family, school, etc.

Another thing I argue in the book is that in such an environment, an environment where people actually care a lot about fictional characters and collections and celebrities and serial killers turned into celebrities and many other manifestations of mass culture, there is no longer such a thing as an underground. Which is to say, underground culture's project of disrupting the mainstream and presenting alternative perspectives is a pretty hopeless one within the context of a lifestyle culture that is more fragmented, alienating and strange than anything the underground could show us. In the age of the instant public e-diary and Madonna and Charlie Manson serial killer fonts for your computer, what exactly is underground? Everything is up for grabs now, there is no normal, or status quo—just a constantly shifting lifestyle culture in which we try to elevate our seemingly meaningless lives by giving them over to the pop moments which seem more real and more important than we could ever be. The underground gone mainstream, if you will.

**While reading your book, I got a little depressed about some of my own efforts to create independent projects. Sometimes it seems so transparent how I've been influenced by elements of the pop culture. Or how my work is simply an obvious response to something much bigger than I could ever dream of building. Was that the point I should have been getting?**

I think getting depressed by the extent to which we are complicit and trapped in the mass culture world is part of the point of the book. We shouldn't fool ourselves. We are the hopeless unwilling participants in the mass culture experiment, and we can't escape by producing "independent" culture. Our very minds have been colonized. We are all *Friends* on the *Love Boat* and even if we drown, we'll just end up in the *ER*. At the same time, I'm not saying that the answer is to hate who we are and to hate the media and mass culture. Rather, I think the answer is to come to terms with who we are and what we have lost and gained living as we do at the end of the 20th century. If we can recognize the importance and primacy of mass culture in our lives, then we can recognize why we feel so compelled to respond with our own variations on the mass culture narrative. At that point, the point by which we transparently understand that we aren't rebels or underground pioneers but simply people who want and deserve a voice in our own society, then I think we can move forward to find new/old ways to communicate.

**The reason I ask is because something that I didn't see in your book was how obvious pop culture influence and "plunder" (Perhaps you should explain what "plunder" is...) is often a precursor to the birth of something completely original and new. I'm talking about on a personal, individual level. Is this something you've thought about?**

Perhaps—and the book hints but doesn't really explore this territory—we need to think in different terms, outside of the context of "new." One of the things that pop imbues us with is an obsession with newness, the new album the new sport the new book the new show the new face etc. And yet, the new is often the same as the old. When I talk about true participation in pop culture, I'm not necessarily saying that it will all be new and individual. Most of it will simply be rote and silly. And



yet that to me is somehow preferable to the mundane and focus-grouped. Do I want to see a bad movie done by a huge corporation or do I want to see a bad movie done by my next door neighbor (whom I've never met, I'm too busy writing letters to Jennifer Lopez)? New isn't necessarily the point, and great art—whatever you think that is—is more likely to emerge if you can choose between two hundred movies (most of them local and independent) than the 5 prepackaged spectacles currently playing in every movie theatre in North America. The move from pop to individual expression is already happening: the more we are obsessed and live our lives through mass culture, the more we want to be participants in that glamorous world, the more we become grassroots cultural producers. Whether that's a question of making something new or unique remains to be seen. In a way, I'm answering a different question than the one you asked. But the question of how we can move from a society where we all share the same cultural referents and spend most of our creative energy simply rearranging and reworking those referents I'll try to address in your next question.

**How do we stop the overriding influence of pop culture? Reading *Adbusters*, listening to *Negativland* albums and doing a zine are not enough. But what can we do?**

What we can we do? Very little. We can't turn it off. We can't make it stop. *Adbusters* and *Negativland* aren't a solution, they are part of the very same thing. All exist in the world of mass culture. So what do we do? How do we reclaim our minds? The answer is not, as Neil Postman says, that we must return to a simpler, better time—the enlightenment anyone?—When we weren't amusing ourselves to death. Mass communication and production isn't going anywhere. The goal of *We Want Some Too* is not to suggest that we need less, but that we need more. Perhaps doing a zine is enough. when we reach a kind of critical mass of cultural participation, then the message of conformity and passivity that society projects through pop will be challenged. Even if, perhaps, all that cultural participation consists of is a web site of Mr. T versus collages. The challenge is to turn the mechanisms of pop to our advantage—rock music isn't at fault. But the corporate convergence that peddles it is. I don't believe that we can't have one without the other.

**You'd think in this day of instant communication and the internet and pinpointing niche pockets of interest that the popularity of boy bands and Britney Spears wouldn't happen. But sure enough, it's alive and well and bigger than ever. How does this fit into your argument? If we're all artists entering the fray, why is this bubblegum, prepackaged shit still capable of making it so big?**

Okay, I see it this way. There are various stages of lifestyle culture. the primary, most basic stage is to simply obsess over a pop phenomenon. The band, the tv show, the celeb, the monster truck driver, whatever can be commodified, packaged, reduced to an empty shell we can fill with our own desires, fears, aspirations. Most of us—surrounded by a regressive system that seeks to drown us in commercially friendly noise, thereby keeping us quiet—never realize that what we really want to do isn't be Britney but, in fact, be the aura of confidence and celebrity and reality Britney seems to have. Britney is important. We aren't important. That's very frustrating for most people, but rather than turning away, we instead find ways to connect ourselves to the important—we stalk, we buy the sweat soaked bra, we learn all the lyrics and dance steps, we become the ultimate fan or the ultimate anti-fan with our I Hate Britney website and zine. The fact is, pre-packed pop shit is so empty, we literally have to fill its void with our own lives, thereby entering the strange wonderful world of lifestyle culture. When, as more and more people are starting to do, we then move from the basic stage of lifestyle culture where we participate through passive mediums, usually buying, to more active mediums, then we will no longer be so obsessed with what is emerging from the pop void, we won't need it anymore to make our lives important. We can be "important" on our own terms.

**What has been the reaction to your book? Based on the dialogues you've had with people since the publication of the book, is there anything you think you got wrong?**

Well a lot of members of the older generations have rejected my ideas saying that everyone can't have their own radio station or be their own pop star, because then there would be no quality control and we would have cultural anarchy. That to me is funny—like there's so much quality control out there right now. Like cultural anarchy doesn't already exist. It's just unacknowledged and easy to ignore. Anyway, more substantive dialogues came when I traveled across Canada to promote the book. I took part in some grassroots panel discussions and debates that were very interesting. A lot of people were concerned that political content was being negated by my take on pop. They argued that what I call lifestyle culture is really a reaction to capitalist oppression—in particular, the part in the book where I look at an anarchist conference and big protest with puppets and songs etc. (really part of the anti-globalization movement we saw in Seattle, etc., though the book was written before that). What I argue is that the conference, Activist Resistance 98, really showcased young people who wanted a voice—they were there not so much because of political convictions, but because they wanted to be part of something, to be in a protest and see themselves on TV. Of course it goes deeper than that, and of course political conviction still exists too, but that's the core of successfully attracting a new radical left wing; by making the protests more performative and fun and media staged. Anyway, there was a lot of anger to that suggestion and I'm not sure that I did a good enough job separating those with true, strong, political convictions from the lifestyle culture perspective (and making it clear that being a



part of lifestyle culture does not preclude political convictions).

**You mention in your book some of the television/press interviews that you've done due to your involvement with *Broken Pencil* ("Aren't zines just a fad?"). Have you had any similar experiences while promoting *We Want Some Too*?**

Oh yeah, lots of weird moments promoting the book. I did TV talk shows, talk radio, that kind of thing. "The press" seemed really nervous talking to me, like I was on to them or something. There is so little substantive dialogue about the media and its impact on society that I think it freaked out some of the TV and radio types. There I was on their show telling people that they should turn off the TV and start thinking about making their own TV. Some highlights: doing an interview for afternoon news in Hamilton, Ontario. The interview was sandwiched between the weather and a report on a McDonald's Restaurant Charity Day. Also doing a talk show in which I followed Kirk Cameron, former child star of *Growing Pains*. On that show, I got into a bit of an argument with the host who told me that she often has "ordinary" people on her show. Like who? I said. She reached over, patted my hand gently and said: "I ask the questions here." That moment was a kind of synecdoche for the whole experience of what mass culture is all about.

**In the jacket copy of your book, published by Penguin Canada, you are referred to as the "Alternative Culture Guru." Is that a label you want? Surely you prefer "cultural commentator" or something like that...**

Ah well, all that stuff is crap. But publishers cling to it desperate for anything that they think will pique people's interest through the usual process of pigeon-holing and reduction. In fact, it's interesting because one of the arguments I make in *We Want Some Too* is that if they (the media) doesn't want you to be taken seriously they label you alternative or underground. Not that Penguin doesn't take me seriously, but they are unwitting slaves to the media which will only have me on if I'm a seemingly corporate approved expert (in this case on a mythical underground which doesn't even exist). And of course if you aren't in/on the media, no one will know about your book, no one will buy it.

**What are the chances of getting this book published by a US publisher?**

Damn I don't know. I've been trying to get it published in the US, and there are a few interested parties. I really hope to find someone in the next couple of months. Reaction in Canada and from the people who have read it in the US has been something of a revelation; from letters and e-mails I got I realized that my generation (I'm 29) is really desperate for this kind of discussion. Having been the first generations to really grow up cradle to grave in the pop continuum, we have a stake in this. We want to know why we're so obsessed. We want to know what pop is doing to our minds. *We Want Some Too* is a starting point to address those questions and I think it would be great to get the book out in the States and contribute to a dialogue there too. For now, if anyone wants a copy, they can send \$20 (US) to Broken Pencil, po box 203, Station P, Toronto, On, M5S 2S7 Canada (checks made out to Broken Pencil). Then I'll mail it to them. Or they could order it from [www.chapters.ca](http://www.chapters.ca) or [www.indigo.ca](http://www.indigo.ca) (our versions of amazon.com). And if anyone wants to get in touch with me (say a prospective publisher) they can e-mail me at [hal@brokenpencil.com](mailto:hal@brokenpencil.com).

**What are you working on now?**

Well I've got a novel I'm revising called *Ditch*. I'm also co-writing a book with Steve Mann, a professor at University of Toronto, who is the first cyborg and the inventor of the wearable computer. Both those books will come out in Canada sometime in the next two years. Hopefully in the US too! I'm also doing research for what I consider to be the sequel to *We Want Some Too*, a book as yet untitled that will deal more specifically with the history of conformity and the possibilities of individual action in the age of mass culture.

For more information about Hal Niedzviecki and *We Want Some Too*, visit [www.brokenpencil.com](http://www.brokenpencil.com).

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH FILMMAKER GREG PAK**

*Asian Porn Pride? All Amateur Ecstasy?* It would seem that with titles like that, you would know exactly what to expect from filmmaker Greg Pak. But don't jump to the obvious conclusions. Yes, the titles are meant to draw you in, but they are not just some cheap marketing ploy. These are smart, sexy fun short films with high-roller payoff.

These two films have garnered Pak quite a bit of attention, *Asian Pride Porn* even landing him on the cover of *Time Magazine Asia* two years ago. But these are just two of Pak's projects. He's made a dozen shorts over the years, and he has just completed his first feature film—*Robot Stories*. But that's not all. Pak runs several websites, including



AsianAmericanFilm.com, which provides the latest scoop about Asian American film and filmmakers, and FilmHelp.com, an advice site all about low-budget filmmaking.

I interviewed Pak about all of his filmmaking efforts, everything from how he gets the word out about his films to how the web has influenced his filmmaking. Pak also discusses his new film *Robot Stories*, which will soon enter the film festival circuit and begin chasing down the independent film dream.

**What's the story, or rather stories, of your new film, *Robot Stories*? What inspired this film?**

*Robot Stories* is a feature film which tells four stories about love, death, and robots. The segments include "My Robot Baby," in which a couple must take care of a robot baby before adopting a real baby; "The Robot Fixer," about a mother dealing with the imminent death of her estranged son by trying to complete his robot toy collection; "Machine Love," in which an office worker android learns that he needs love; and "Clay," in which an old sculptor must face the decision of whether to die or have his brain scanned into a computer.

When I was growing up, Ray Bradbury was my hero. I loved his short stories—the loopy science fiction grabbed me, but the totally human characters and situations are what sold me. So one of the initial impulses with *Robot Stories* was to make a fun independent movie with ROBOTS in it! But what makes the stories compelling to me are the deeply human struggles these characters go through. A friend recently wrote that *Robot Stories* is really all about human frailty—that appeals to me enormously. I've been through a hell of a lot over the past couple of years, including a divorce and the death of a close friend. I wasn't consciously thinking about my own experiences when I was writing *Robot Stories*, but this loss of innocence, this awareness of human failure and frailty runs throughout the picture.

**What is the game plan for getting this film an audience?**

We're chasing the independent film dream, taking the movie to film festivals and markets in hopes of getting a distributor. My goals are to play theatrically in at least a half dozen cities, to get some kind of national television broadcast, and to get it out on DVD with all kinds of nifty extras. I'll be thrilled if we can find a name distributor to pick up the film. But if necessary, we'll self-distribute theatrically. I believe there's an audience out there for the picture—it's funny and sad and true, and I think folks will respond to that. And did I mention the totally cool robots?

**Will you be making any more films along the lines of *Asian Porn Pride* and *All Amateur Ecstasy*? These films have both gotten a lot of attention—are those the films you are best known for? How have these films impacted your opportunities as a filmmaker?**

I've made about a dozen shorts over the years—for a long time, I was best known for my Student Academy Award winning short documentary *Fighting Grandpa*, an account of my search for evidence of love between my Korean grandparents. But in recent years, I've made a number of goofy digital comedies, two of which have become incredibly popular online at AtomFilms.com. *Asian Pride Porn* even got me on the cover of *Time Magazine Asia* a couple of years ago. The shorts have been a fantastic way for me to keep my name out there. And they've actually made some money (which is maybe not so terribly impressive given the fact that each cost about a hundred dollars to make). And they've been a way for me to keep up my chops as a filmmaker. It's unbelievably tough to get financing to make feature films. But I could roll up all the loose change I have in the house and have just about enough money to shoot a digital short over the weekend. As a result, I can keep working and learning and getting better as a filmmaker when I'm between larger projects. Finally, one of the glories of short films is that you can take the plunge with an entirely goofy or risky or even dangerous idea—you can take risks with form and theme which are much harder to take when you're making a feature film for a mass audience with someone else's money. So yes, I do plan on making more short films. They're fun, they get my name out there, they keep me on my toes, and they let me tell the stories I want to tell when and how I want to tell them.

**How has the web influenced your filmmaking?**

I made *Asian Pride Porn* and *All Amateur Ecstasy* with the web in mind. Early in the game, I realized that the most successful films on the internet were short comedies with some kind of sexual content. *Asian Pride Porn* and *All Amateur Ecstasy* are almost spoofs of that paradigm—they're short comedies with ridiculously provocative titles, big bait-and-switches, really. And the titles of both films start with "A" so they'll show up early in the website's indexes.

I don't know if I would have made these particular films if I hadn't had the phenomenon of internet films as an inspiration and outlet. And I'm very pleased with the films' success online. But I have to admit that the fact that these films were destined for the internet limited me aesthetically. People watching films online tend to be looking at very small screens which may or may not play back smoothly. So very simple and talky films tend to do well—a more cinematically sophisticated



film which relies upon subtle, silent moments of human interaction may fail online because the data stream stutters at the key moment and the images disappear. Films like *All Amateur Ecstasy* and *Asian Pride Porn* use simple, clear, bold images with the soundtrack telling the story simultaneously. You can miss a few frames and still enjoy the picture. It's ideal for the web. But it's not the most sophisticated visual storytelling around. So while I'll probably continue making films for the web, my true vocation is making films for the big screen which can make full use of the subtleties of visual storytelling.

#### **How do you use your websites in your filmmaking efforts?**

I use my website GregPak.com as a kind of online resume, touting me, my films, and upcoming screenings and events. I've also created FilmHelp.com, where I publish articles and advice about low-budget filmmaking. I would never have been able to get as far as I have if other filmmakers hadn't helped me—FilmHelp.com is one way of giving a little something back.

I also run the website AsianAmericanFilm.com, which provides the latest scoop about Asian American film and filmmakers. The hope is to build audiences and excitement for Asian American films—in the end, I think the success of any Asian American filmmaker makes it easier for the rest of us get our stories told.

#### **What are the basic tools someone needs to make a digital film?**

A MiniDV camera with manual focus, manual exposure, and jacks for external headphones and microphone. A decent external microphone with boom and shock mount. A set of headphones. Digital video editing software. A computer powerful enough to run digital video editing software.

Those are the absolute essential pieces of hardware and software. But the most important thing is to have a decent script, a good story to tell. If the script doesn't work, the film won't work.

#### **Where should a person who is interested in making films begin their self-education? What books and websites do you recommend?**

For writing, I suggest *The Art of Dramatic Writing* by Lajos Egri, *Four Screenplays* by Syd Field, and *Story* by Robert McKee. For cinematography, *Masters of Light* by Dennis Schaefer and Larry Salvato and Nestor Alemndros's *A Man with a Camera*. For low budget filmmaking, of course I recommend my own website, FilmHelp.com.

#### **You have VCDs for sale at your site. What is VCD? Are lots of independent filmmakers distributing their films this way? How easy is it to make DVDs available for sale?**

VCDs are Video CDs, movies burned onto CDs. It's a popular format in Asia—you can find VCDs in video stores in most Chinatowns. The picture quality doesn't rival DVD, but it's comparable to VHS. And since it's a digital format, it won't deteriorate over time the way VHS will. VCDs will play in most computers and DVD players.

If you have the right hardware and software, VCDs are incredibly easy to make at home. We burn the VCDs we're selling at AsianAmericanFilm.com on an iMac using software called Toast.

I don't know of many independent filmmakers distributing their work on VCD. It's still an unusual format for the United States—there's something of a struggle to get people to accept it as viable. But it's much cheaper than burning DVDs and much cooler than VHS.

#### **How do you get the word out about your films? What kind of DIY marketing strategies do you use?**

I've built up a email list over the years—people who visit my website can fill in a form asking to be added to the list. And I run www.AsianAmericanFilm.com, which is devoted to getting word out about Asian American films—from time to time I flog my own work on the site.

#### **What are the best film websites to submit work to for possible showcasing?**

The internet bust killed dozens of promising websites. But AtomFilms.com remains a strong site with frequent visitors.

#### **What are the best film websites to check out to see really good films?**

For Asian American films, check out AsianAmericanFilm.com—we've been streaming super short films for a few years now.



Probably the most aesthetically pleasing stuff online, given the nature of the streaming technology, is Flash animation. JibJab.com has some great Flash shorts.

Visit [www.GregPak.com](http://www.GregPak.com) for more information on Greg Pak and all of his film and website projects.

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH JIM DEROGATIS, AUTHOR OF *LET IT BLURT***

Quick notes: Jim DeRogatis has written an excellent biography of Lester Bangs. The biography is called *Let It Blurt—The Life and Times of Lester Bangs, America's Greatest Rock Critic*. DeRogatis is also a rock critic, currently covering the music beat for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. There's a good chance that you've heard of Lester Bangs, but never actually read anything he wrote. Before you read Jim's book, you should track down some of Bangs' reviews and writings. Then, after you've taken in some of Bangs' work, read *Let It Blurt*. Believe me, you'll want to. But before you do any of that, read the interview with Jim DeRogatis below.

**One of the most striking things about your book is the extensive bibliography of Lester Bangs' writings. I'm curious about how you discovered some of the more obscure pieces. Are there any that would be "lost" if you had not found them?**

Many of the published pieces are not available in any libraries, including the Underground Press Archive, a national resource that's the best of its kind, originating out of the University of Chicago Research Library. It will have, say, half of a given year's output of *Fusion*; the rest is lost to time. So I really had to beat the bushes to find a lot of the older published stuff, and friends and fellow rock critics helped enormously. (One of my gripes against the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame is that instead of selling overpriced snow globes, it ought to be working to archive the quickly evaporating written history of rock.)

As for the unpublished stuff, Lester's family and his literary executor John Morthland were gracious enough to provide unhindered access. There are some incredible writings in there that I hope people will one day be able to read, either when the archive is donated to a library, or when another collection of Lester's work is published. Morthland hopes to do one at some point to augment *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, which, obviously, is the place to start in any appreciation of Bangs. My goal for *Blurt* was not to replace *Dung*, but to augment it, and provide a road map for reading the rest of Lester's work.

**The interview you did with Lester Bangs, where he keeps mentioning the novel he's going to write, instills an eerie feeling, given what happened just two weeks later. How did that interview, and Lester's death so soon after, impact you?**

Well, obviously, I was hit really hard by Lester's death. I'd been a fan, and I'd just recently met him, and we had this incredible conversation, and then he was gone. But I'd hesitate to read too much into some of the things he said—things that seem portentous in that interview perhaps would not if he hadn't died two weeks later. On the other hand, he says a lot of things very clearly and emphatically—like he planned stop writing about music and concentrate on that novel—and I see no reason NOT to take him at his word, especially since many of those themes in our interview were things he'd written about and said to many others for a year or two BEFORE his death.

**What is the short version on how Lester Bangs' writing has impacted your own style as a writer and rock critic?**

The thing I take away most is not the style, although obviously he was a fantastic stylist and it's tempting to imitate him (though few pull it off). But what I get from Lester most is his passion and his honesty, that sense of commitment to the reader—he's gonna tell it exactly like it is, from his heart and from his intellect. And if he later doubles back on himself, that's irrelevant; the most important thing is that he's giving it to you straight, without hype, which is obviously the dominant force in most rock writing today.

I also think there are serious philosophical ideas and insights in his work, and that while he is entertaining you as a funny and stylish writer, he is also giving you a lot to think about. That's an ideal for any critic of any art form to aspire toward.

**Taking a look at Lester Bangs' prolific body of work, which piece resonates with you the most, and why?**

You know, that's like asking me what my favorite song or album is: It's gonna change at any given moment depending on



my mood, the weather, whatever. Right now, at this moment... hmmm, I'll say the Voice New Year's Eve epic. But that's because that particular holiday happens to be looming. Check back on Jan. 2.

**Have any new Bangs' pieces surfaced since your book was published?**

A handful of odds and ends have been sent my way by readers, which is exactly what I hoped would happen—some weird little fanzine stuff, some letters, a bio he wrote for Bob Seger. I've been copying and forwarding it all for inclusion in the archive.

**Are you working on any other book projects right now?**

Yes, but I haven't figured out how to do it justice in a few sentences yet; it requires a half hour of me ranting and raving while grabbing your lapels to convince you that it will be worth reading. So far, I have written exactly one sentence, and that sentence is: Everything I know about life I learned by playing in rock bands.

**What was the best part about writing *Let It Blur*?**

I cannot resist the easy answer: Finishing.

The real answer is meeting so many fascinating and passionate individuals whose lives were touched by Lester. As a group, they were some of the finest people I have ever encountered as a journalist or as a plain old human being; even the ones who in the end didn't think that I did justice by Lester (or who hated Lester in the first place). I think one of the ways to judge somebody is by the quality of people who were important in their lives, and that's yet another aspect of Lester's greatness.

For more information about Jim DeRogatis and *Let It Blur*, visit his website: [www.jimdero.com](http://www.jimdero.com).

## **SUGGESTED READING / RESOURCES**

Throughout *Get The Word Out* there have been books and websites mentioned that you should check out for further information and insights. In this Suggested Reading / Resources section, I am providing a shortened, snapshot version of the *Get The Word Out* Resources section. The actual Resources section—which is much more extensive and constantly updated—can be found online at [www.Bookmouth.com](http://www.Bookmouth.com). There you will find links to websites and relevant articles, as well as an even longer list of books. Sure I'm doing this to get you to go to the website, but mainly it's for efficiency and practicality. For one thing, the Resources section is simply too large to print in this book. Secondly, and most importantly, new books, articles and websites are always arriving on the scene. An online Resources section allows me to add new information at will. This works the other way as well: I can delete books that are no longer in print or relevant, as well as remove links to information that is no longer available, as it is quite common for links to go bad.

So, to check out the comprehensive, up-to-date Resources section, go to [www.Bookmouth.com](http://www.Bookmouth.com). The good news is that in addition to the resources, you'll also find new interviews, essays and other types of information all about the edgiest new projects.

NOTE: Books are a great way to gather information, and there are lots of books out there to choose from. But don't go out and buy all these books. You need to save your money, so that you can pay your bills and fund your project. With regard to books on marketing, sales and promotion, if you go to your local bookstore, there will be a great many books explaining the "secrets" of selling, or the 101 best ways to market/sell/promote your product/idea. All the ideas are the same, and yet all the ideas are different. It's how you decide to apply the information to your project. The best thing to do is to figure out the best books to read and to absorb as much as possible of the best advice, insight and information. The better your research, the easier it will be to determine which of the many ideas out there will work best for you to get the word out about your project.

### **BOOKS**

*The Self-Publishing Manual* by Dan Poynter — It seems that every person—myself included—who has self-published has read and used the information in this book. It's an excellent, well-organized resource.

*1001 Ways To Market Your Books* by John Kremer

*Writer's Guide to Book Editors, Publishers, and Literary Agents* by Jeff Herman — If you're looking for an agent, then you want this book.

*Book Business: Publishing Past, Present and Future* by Jason Epstein



*The Business of Books: How the International Conglomerates Took Over Publishing and Changed the Way We Read* by Andre Schiffrin

*The International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses* edited by Len Fulton

#### **Book Websites:**

[www.publisherslunch.com](http://www.publisherslunch.com) (sign up for the daily newsletter)

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

[www.nomediakings.org](http://www.nomediakings.org)

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

[www.litline.org/links](http://www.litline.org/links) — Links to literary journals (both online and print), presses and organizations

[www.clmp.org](http://www.clmp.org) — Council of Literary Magazines and Presses

[www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/ohenry/0900/litmags.html](http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/ohenry/0900/litmags.html) — A comprehensive index of literary magazines

#### **ZINES**

*The Zine Yearbook* edited by Jen Angel and Jason Kucsma — A yearly anthology that collects the best writings from the small press. Published by Become The Media.

*Zines! Vol. 1 and Vol. 2: Incendiary Interviews with Independent Publishers* edited by V. Vale

*The Book of Zines: Readings from the Fringe* by Chip Rowe

*Factsheet 5 Zine Reader* by Seth Friedman

*A Girl's Guide to Taking Over the World: Writings from the Girl Zine Revolution* edited by Tristan Taormino and Karen Green

*Zine Scene: The Do It Yourself Guide to Zines* by Francesca Lia Block and Hillary Carlip

*Notes From The Underground: Zines and the Political Alternative Culture* by Stephen Duncombe

*We Want Some Too* by Hal Niedzviecki

*Zine Guide* — a comprehensive resource guide, published about twice a year, which features thousands of zine listings and reviews. Mailing address: Zine Guide, P.O. Box 5467, Evanston, IL 60204. Email: [zineguide@yahoo.com](mailto:zineguide@yahoo.com). Cover price: \$6.

#### **Zine Websites:**

[www.zinebook.com](http://www.zinebook.com) — The ultimate collection of zine resources. Links to relevant websites, articles and interviews.

[www.undergroundpress.org](http://www.undergroundpress.org) — The website of *A Reader's Guide to the Underground Press*, a zine review that is highly respected and considered an important part of the overall zine scene.

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

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

[www.factsheet5.org](http://www.factsheet5.org)

#### **FILM**

*Spike, Mike, Slackers and Dykes—A Guided Tour Across a Decade of American Independent Cinema* by John Pierson

*Shooting to Kill* by Christine Vachon

*The Filmmaker's Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for the Digital Age* by Steven Ascher and Edward Pincus

*What They Don't Teach You at Film School: 161 Strategies to Making Your Own Movie No Matter What* by Camille Landau and Tiare White

*The Independent Film and Videomaker's Guide* by Michael Wiese

*The Art of Dramatic Writing* by Lajos Egri

*Four Screenplays* by Syd Field

*Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* by Robert McKee

*Masters of Light: Conversations With Contemporary Cinematographers* by Dennis Schaefer and Larry Salvato

*A Man with a Camera* by Nestor Alemndros

#### **Film Websites:**

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

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

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

[www.filmarts.org](http://www.filmarts.org)

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

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

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

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

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

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



## MUSIC

*Tim Sweeney's Guide to Releasing Independent Records* by Tim Sweeney and Mark Geller

*Start and Run Your Own Record Label* by Daylle Deanna Schwartz

*The Indie Bible* published by Big Meteor Publishing ([www.bigmeteor.com](http://www.bigmeteor.com))

*Tape Op: The Book About Creative Music Recording* edited by Larry Crane

*Amped: Notes from a Go-Nowhere Punk Band* by Jon Resh

*Our Band Could Be Your Life: Scenes from the American Indie Underground, 1981-1991* by Michael Azerrad

*We Owe You Nothing, Punk Planet: The Collected Interviews* edited by Daniel Sinker

*Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain

*Last Night a Dj Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey* by Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton

### Music Websites:

[www.byofl.org](http://www.byofl.org) — Book Your Own Fuckin' Life. A touring resource and more.

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

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

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

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

[www.negativland.com](http://www.negativland.com) (see the "Intellectual Property Issues" section)

## WEBSITE DESIGN

*Web Pages That Suck: Learn Good Design by Looking at Bad Design* by Vincent Flanders and Michael Willis

*Creating Killer Web Sites* by David Siegel

*Designing Web Usability: The Practice of Simplicity* by Jakob Nielsen

### Website Design Websites:

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

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

## MEDIA

*The Media Monopoly* (6th Edition) by Ben Bagdikian

*We The Media* by Don Hazen and Julie Winokur

*Conglomerates and the Media* edited by Patricia Aufderheide, Erik Barnouw, and Richard M. Cohen

*You Are Being Lied To: The Disinformation Guide To Media Distortion, Historical Whitewashes & Cultural Myths*

*Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Images and Sounds Overwhelms Our Lives* by Todd Gitlin

### Media Websites:

[www.medianews.org](http://www.medianews.org) — Daily weblog covering the news about the news.

[www.fair.org](http://www.fair.org) — Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting

[www.mediabistro.com](http://www.mediabistro.com) — Features a daily weblog of media news, job listings, and active, informative message boards.

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

[www.ojr.org](http://www.ojr.org) — Online Journalism Review

[www.alternet.org](http://www.alternet.org)

## MISCELLANEOUS

*Seizing The Airwaves: A Free Radio Handbook* by Ron Sakolsky and Stephen Dunifer

*Jamming the Media* by Gareth Branwyn

*Steal This Book* by Abbie Hoffman

*No Logo* by Naomi Klein

"92 Days" in *Big Bad Love* by Larry Brown

### Miscellaneous Websites:

[www.newpages.com](http://www.newpages.com) — Features excellent literary and publishing resources, literary journal and zine reviews, and a highly informative weblog covering books, music, films, the media, and more.

[www.librarian.net](http://www.librarian.net)

[www.transom.org](http://www.transom.org) — A web-based workshop and showcase for radio shows and segments.



## OTHER PROJECTS BY JEFFREY VANDERBILT

[www.52projects.com](http://www.52projects.com)

Project 52

Make your art, maybe a photograph or a painting or a drawing. Put the art in a nice frame, one that isn't hard to see. Then, hang your framed art in a place you aren't supposed to, but where people will assume it is supposed to be, like the lobby of your apartment building, in the hallway at your office, on the smallest wall in a motel room, in the quiet corner of a library, inside the downstairs's restroom at a restaurant or bar, the back corner of a club, in the bathroom of a spaceship.

Visit [www.52projects.com](http://www.52projects.com) for more projects.

[www.52projects.com](http://www.52projects.com)

Bookmouh.com features author interviews, a calendar with people making cool things happen in the publishing world, and being commentary on the news. Plus, when it comes to books, the store will be interviews with people outside of the book world, like the author of the book, as well as a web log on books, the book industry, and once you're done, you can find the words from the Get The Word Out project.

Turn off your television.

Stop talking about it.

Just get to work

and make it happen.



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

workingforthem.com humorously explores the benefits and advantages of the workplace, and provides a much-needed antidote to the doldrums of dealing with a bad boss and a dead-end job. Make sure to bookmark this website and read it regularly while you're on the clock.

### Working For The Man - Stories From Behind The Cubicle Wall

A collection of the best stories from the Working For The Man site and [workingforthem.com](http://workingforthem.com). Price: \$8.95. Ordering information can be found at [workingforthem.com](http://workingforthem.com).



# OTHER PROJECTS BY JEFFREY YAMAGUCHI

## **[www.52projects.com](http://www.52projects.com)**

### Project #5

Make some art, maybe a photograph or a painting or a drawing. Put the art in a nice frame, one that isn't brand new. Then, hang your framed art in a place you aren't suppose to, but where people will assume it is supposed to be, like the lobby of your apartment building, in the hallway at your office, on the smallest wall in a motel room, in the quiet corner of a library, outside the downstairs restroom at a restaurant or bar, the back room of a club, in the bathroom of a museum.

Visit [www.52projects.com](http://www.52projects.com) for more projects.

## **[www.Bookmouth.com](http://www.Bookmouth.com)**

Bookmouth.com features author interviews, interviews with people making cool things happen in the publishing scene, and biting commentary on the book industry. The main focus is books, but there will be interviews with people outside of the book industry. Book marketing and DIY publishing tips are also featured, as well as a web log on books, the book industry, and cool websites in general. **Bookmouth.com** is also the online home of the **Get The Word Out** project.



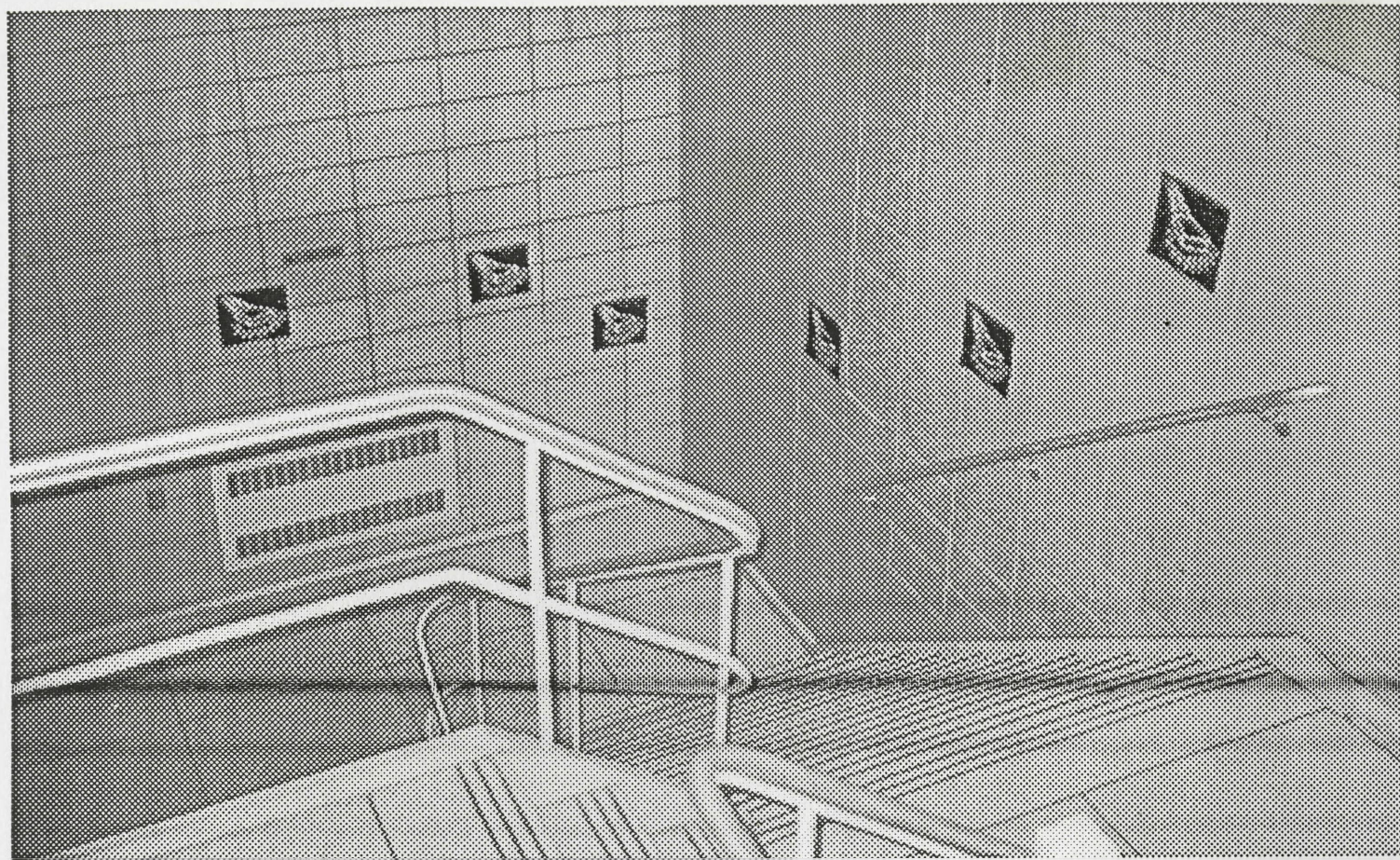
## **[www.workingforthem.com](http://www.workingforthem.com)**

workingforthem.com humorously explores the horrors and absurdities of the workplace, and provides a much-needed antidote to the doldrums of dealing with a bad boss and a dead-end job. Make sure to bookmark this website and read it regularly while you're on the clock.

### **Working For The Man - Stories From Behind The Cubicle Wall**

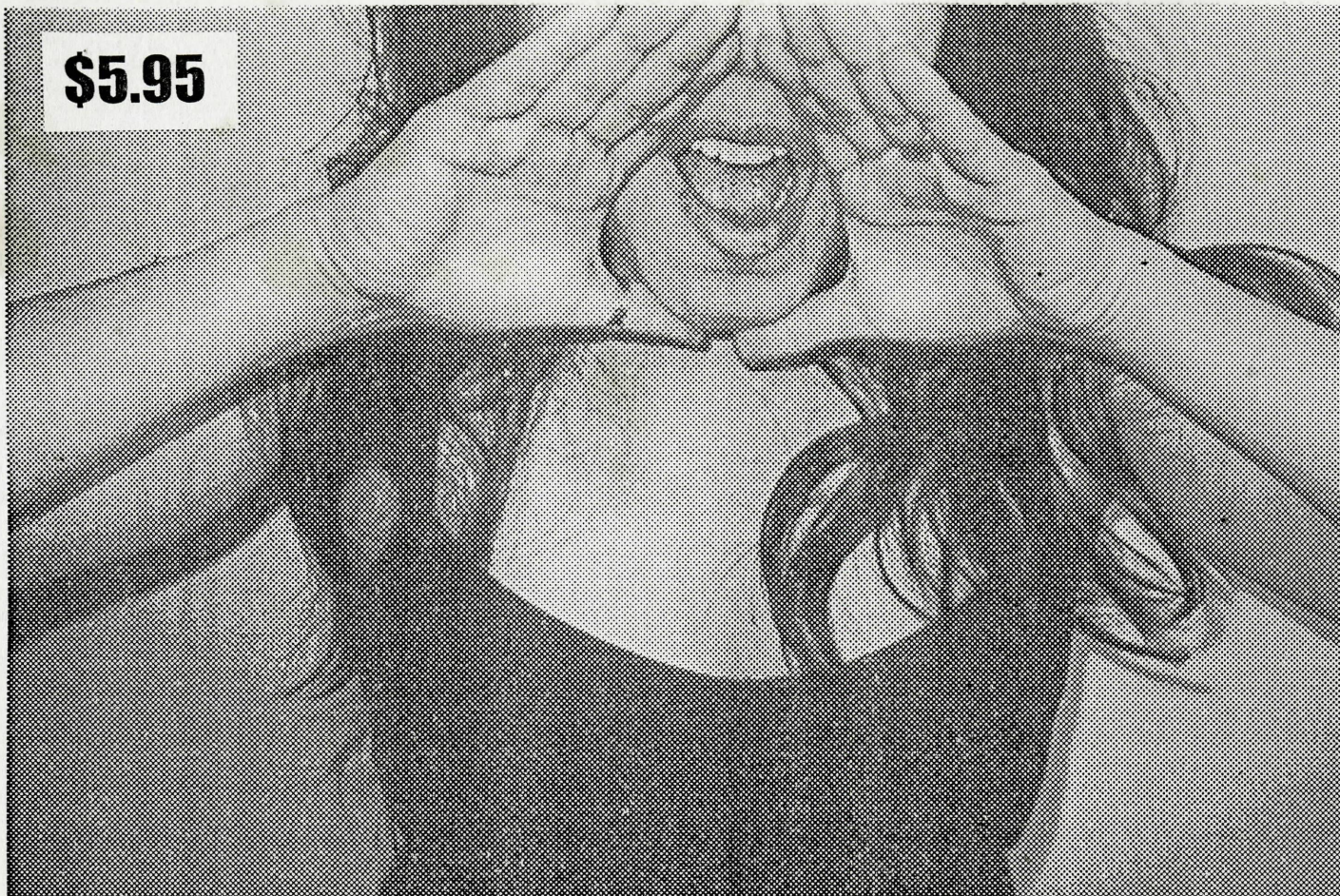
A collection of the best stories from the Working For The Man zine and [workingforthem.com](http://workingforthem.com). Price: \$8.95. Ordering information can be found at [workingforthem.com](http://workingforthem.com).







**\$5.95**



So maybe you've got a dead-end job. And you're no doubt sick of the bland products mass-produced by the all-powerful media conglomerates (which have way too much control over how we view our real and imaginary worlds). Stop whining and get busy, for there are things that you can do.

Turn off your television. Stop talking about it and get to work. Make that zine, write that novel, finish that screenplay, get out and take those photographs, build that website, draw the comic, bind up those poems, lay down the tracks, shoot the film. Conceive it, see it through, and then let the world know about it. **GET THE WORD OUT.** The inspiration exists within you.

[Discovering inspiration is an ability buried so deeply within some people that they never find it. But really all you have to do is look around, listen, take a closer look at that article you are reading, the music you're listening to, the movie you just saw. It's there, behind you, perhaps within a photograph you will see later on today. It's a fleeting memory, something your friend says, an image that makes you angry. It's within you already, waiting to be tapped, triggered by happenstance or years of study, ready to make a difference. Find yours now, and make something happen.]

**GET THE WORD OUT** is a guide to promoting your independent projects, keeping your money from the corporations, and living on the cheap. Also featured are 16 interviews with project creators, as well as sections on how to self-publish a book and why it's ideal to launch your career during the college years. **GET THE WORD OUT** seeks to provide information and insights into project creators, project creation, and project promotion. The projects range from books to filmmaking to party promotion. The coverage ranges from interviews to essays to how-to pieces. The overall goal is to facilitate and inspire the proliferation of independent projects.

THE FEATURED INTERVIEWS: Jen Angel, Publisher of the *Zine Yearbook* and Co-Editor of *Clamor Magazine* | Photographer Cynthia Connolly | John Supanich, Zine Buyer and Magazine Manager at Cody's Books | Kevin Sampsell, Publisher of Future Tense Books | Lisa Crosby, Founder and Publisher of *Eye Magazine* | Venus or Vixen's Cara Bruce | Travel Writer Evelyn Kaye | Zinebook.com's Chip Rowe | Jim Munroe, Author of *Angry Young Spaceman* and Publisher of [nmediakings.org](http://nmediakings.org) | Mike Tolento, the Artist Behind *Empty Life Comics* | Sasha Cagen, Publisher of *To-Do List Magazine* | Rebecca Wolff, Publisher of *Fence Magazine* | DJ Gordon Hurd | Hal Niedzviecki, Author of *We Want Some Too* | Filmmaker Greg Pak | Jim DeRogatis, Author of *Let It Blur*

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