

Behind the Zines #1

June 2016

For awhile I've wanted to start a new zine-focused zine, similar to Xerography Debt or Vellum Underground, a zine that talked about zines, and talked to the people who make them. Instead of starting a whole new zine, I decided to just write out a few pages and submit them to Cuneiform. (If you have received this as a mail insert, and want to know what Cuneiform is, email me. Or email me about anything else: iknowbilly@gmail.com)

In the zine world, Al Burian is most known for his long time punk zine, Burn Collector. In the music world, he is most known for playing bass in the band Milemarker. I used to see Al from time to time when we lived in Chicago, but then I moved to New Mexico, and he moved to Berlin.

I wondered what he'd been up to lately, and figured maybe other people in the zine world were curious as well. Here's an email interview, enjoy!

Al, how is Berlin these days, and how is your German coming along?

Berlin continues to be a fun, friendly city. My German has always been decent because I grew up bilingually (my mom is German). The longer I live here the more I improve, of course. You're catching me at a moment of total unemployment, so my business-German ("most esteemed sir or madame, I am writing today to submit my application for..." etc) is getting really good right now.

Over the years you've published a lot of zines, such as Burn Collector, then Natural Disasters, but you've also written for Vice, Punk Planet, and others. What sort of writing are you doing now?

I'm still slowly cranking away at it, working on some epic long-term projects which I believe will probably get jinxed if I talk about them, so I'll keep it vague. Secret Epic Projects.

When was the last time you put out a zine?

The last issue of Burn collector was in 2012, but I've put out self-published stuff since then pretty regularly, generally in small print runs that don't get distributed much beyond shows I play and maybe some small regional distros. I have been doing more comics than straight writing, in terms of what I've been putting out, so I guess these might qualify more as mini-comics than zines.

What is the German zine scene like? I'm sure there are lots of comic book shops in Berlin, but do they sell DIY, zine-type publications? Is there a Quimbys of Berlin?

As far as I've been able to find, there is not really a Quimbys of anywhere else. Quimbys is a pretty unique institution. In Berlin, the Renate Comics Library is a pretty unique institution too, but in a different way—the front is an art book/comic shop with mostly Berlin-based contemporary comics and graphics/art stuff, while the

back houses shelf upon shelf of a gigantic comic and zine library with English, French, and other language sections, plus of course lots of German comics and publications. The library came of being in the early 90's squatter scene, and the zine/self-publishing thing had a somewhat different connotation coming out of the former East German context, where the activity was very political and was often illegal/anti-state behavior. Nowadays Renate still beams out a nice underground weirdo vibe against the mostly gentrified surrounding neighborhood. And that, I guess, does sound like Quimbys.

You've been in Berlin for a few years now, surrounded by multiple languages. Has this changed how you write, or what you write?

Maybe shifting to making more comics is a reflection of the surroundings, since it is less language-based, or uses simpler language. Robert Crumb or Dan Clowes' comics had a pretty strong impact in Germany, so the idea of the "personal comic" is pretty widely understood, but if you come at people with a "personal zine," that mode of expression just never caught on here. So it's frustrating to work in a medium where people don't "get" what the object is that you're handing them.

I'm a zine nerd, so to me you were always that guy with a great zine, who also plays in bands. For some people it was the opposite. You also like to draw, and paint, and who knows what else. How do you balance all those creative interests?

If you read any "secrets of being successful" type life-coaching manual, the first thing they tell you is to focus on one specific goal. I'm aware that my strategy of spreading myself thin over different interests is counter-productive, and I wouldn't recommend it to anyone else. My pathology is basically that I like to do a lot of stuff and that anything I have fun doing has the fun ruined the moment that I make any money off doing it.

What's your musical life like these days?

I have a laid-back, low-stress band in Berlin called Big Eater. And I still play in the high-stress, low-reward band Milemarker.

How often do you make it back to the US?

Coming on tour this summer, speaking of stress. More info/tour dates can be found at:

milemarkerwebpresence.com

Any plans of moving back? Or do you see yourself in Berlin for awhile longer?

I don't know— America is changing. Weed dispensaries, Trump vs. Clinton, North Carolina bathroom laws, all this has happened since I left, and I'm totally confused. So I think I'm just going to hang back and see where my fellow americans take things for a few more years. Then I'll give that question some thought.

I know you have your website, www.alburian.com, with random and sporadic updates. Do you blog, or write for any websites or magazines on a regular basis? If people want to read your words, where do they go?

I experimented with writing for the internet, blogged, wrote some articles for Vice, so there are some words out there if you have a computer and want instant gratification. I guess virtual publishing just leaves me with an empty feeling, whereas for some inexplicable reason producing a physical object of any kind (comic book, novel, LP record, painting, cassette tape) with my name on it makes me feel like I have conquered the universe and defeated all the forces that were trying to keep me down.

Any new zines coming out?

Touché!

ZINE REVIEWS!!

Going Places

goingplaceszine@gmail.com

I picked up three different issues of this awesome zine from Pioneers Press. Kesheena is a female Navajo punk rocker, and her zine reflects various aspects of this upbringing. *Going Places* helps connect her to other Native Americans, but also does a great job of educating people outside her circles. Of the three issues, one was a lot of general thoughts on Native life and Native history, another issue was more focused on the Native American education systems, covering the forced boarding schools of old as well as modern college classes, and the third issue was a quick history of powwows.

Living in New Mexico has allowed me to learn a lot about the Navajo people, and other tribes, but there is still so much I don't know or understand. All three issues of this zine enlightened me, and I wrote to her to order more copies to give to some of my friends. Personal stories, history, and education, what more can you ask for? Order from Pioneers Press, or contact Kesheena for pricing.

ShortAndQueer #18

PO Box 13559

Denver, CO 80201

The public has endured a 5-year drought since Kelly's last issue of S&Q, so I was pretty excited to get my hands on this one. Subtitled "Time to get this off my chest," this issue is all about Kelly's process of having top-surgery. (For those unfamiliar with the zine, S&Q largely deals with Kelly's life as a transgender man.)

S&Q18 takes the reader from the decision-making process, into the surgery room, and then home for recovery. He talks very openly about learning to live with such a drastic alteration to his body, something that takes a lot of adjustment, not only physically, but mentally and emotionally as well. Kelly continues to put out one of the most important zines of our time, showing the world his strength by allowing us to see his vulnerability. Send him \$2 or \$3 for a copy.

Stratu's Diary Comix

PO Box 35
Marrickville NSW 2204
Australia

It's always a special treat to get Stratu's comics in the mail. His drawings are only a small step up from stick-figure drawings, so this isn't a comic where you sit and marvel at the intense artwork. But through the simplicity he delivers a lot of raw emotion, even when that emotion is nothing more than boredom. Dumb days at work, irritation while shopping, and filling out crossword puzzles is about as exciting as some of his days get, but I still chuckle to myself at *how* he describes such mundanity. I feel bad when Stratu has had a bad day, but man do I love how he *draws himself* when he's had a bad day. Send him a few bucks or a nice letter.

Rumpshaker #6

www.rumpshakerzine.com

I got this in the mail and thought, "Oh, I'll flip through this a bit, then give it to my drummer. He's *really* into hardcore." Even though I'm supposedly in a hardcore band, I don't really listen to that much HC, and I sure don't know half the bands that ever get interviewed in HC zines. I wasn't expecting to find much interest in this.

Boy, was I wrong.

This zine is so well written, and the interviews are so intriguing, that I read every word of every page, even when it talked about bands I'd never heard of. Bands covered include Sick of It All, Punch, Judge, Ceremony, Limp Wrist, and lots of others. There is an interview in here with Chuck D, *and his mom!* You know you want to read that. Lots of record reviews, a few articles and a great sense of humor.

Big, thick, with lots of photos and over 140 pages to keep you occupied. Great read.

Behind the Zines #2

October 2016

(by Billy, 432 Manzano NE Apt. B, Albuquerque, NM 87108)

Cuneiform didn't excite me too much the first couple issues I read, but I've since realized that it works best as an interactive zine. Each issue I read now is like catching up with ten pen pals at a time.

That being said, yes I will do my best to always put people's postal addresses in here when appropriate. If a zine has their address printed in the pages, I feel it's fine to republish it in reviews, otherwise don't do it, even if you know it. As for me, the only reason I don't print my address in my zines is because I move around a lot. I make a LOT of zines. In 2015 I printed about 16 zines, plus my own monthly mailer and other diddys here and there. So if I move, then have to go back and change my address in all those zines I might reprint?! No, too much. On the other hand, I've had the same email address for years.

IDY- This summer I decided to go through all my boxes of old zines and actually organize them. What a process! But worth it. I found a bunch of old SFNs, and even found a letter you'd written me in 1999! Whoa... You had the exact same handwriting. I'm excited to see the new "Cuneiformat." I've said for years that you have the best zine layout in the biz. (my layout this time will be nothing special, my apologies...) I don't expect you to do all the layouts for this zine, but I think simply switching to half-size will be nice just for a change. I really love the burned CDs you sent me of your radio show, which I've still never listened to live online. But you sure know a lot of good music. I liked hearing you talk about copy machines in the last one. I love making copies. I totally understand your thoughts on these new machines moving their light scanner too fast. One cool thing I found on a local machine is the ability to save settings. I don't think I'm really supposed to use it, but no one else at the shop (customer or employee) seems to even know how to do it, so I've saved a few settings, especially for color copy projects, so with one click I get all my copies to look exactly like the last batch I'd done the week before. So, ya know. Technology, good and bad.

SCOTT – It's nice to hear the voice of an inmate. I've had a number of prison pen pals over the years, and have learned a lot from each one. Your thoughts on race and race war/class war are pretty spot on. It happens on the outside and on the inside. The more that working class people fight each other over such things, the more the ruling class elite stay in power.

AL FRY – On the topic of oxygen, a decade ago I read a book called “How We Die,” by Sherwin Nuland. It talked about numerous ways in which people die, and one of the most interesting concepts Nuland put forth was the idea that all death is caused by one thing: lack of oxygen. If you are cut or shot, and bleed out, well, you don't really need blood. But without blood, oxygen doesn't make it to the brain. If you have a heart attack, same thing, etc. The body runs on oxygen, and the more we can do to keep oxygen flowing smoothly through our lungs and bodies, the healthier we will be.

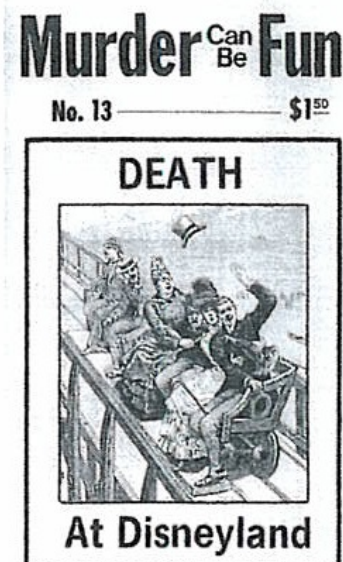
JASON – Jason, those are some weird postcards. Exactly why people get PO boxes. Hey, I loved your thoughts on “King of Kong,” one of the best video game documentaries ever. I really like video game docs. There's a good one on Missile Command called, “High Score,” a couple on pinball that are okay, and then, of course, “Ecstasy of Order,” which is all about Tetris. I play a ton of Tetris, and used to think I was pretty good, until I watched that movie. Even if you aren't a huge fan of the game, it's a good movie to watch.

JAMES – I only recently pieced together that you are the same James Dawson from wemakezines.ning.com. I think we've talked a few times online. Any idea about the future of that site? It's been a good source of contact and info for me, so I hope something equally cool will take its place if it ends of folding.

Okay, on with the interview!

John Marr started publishing the zine “Murder Can Be Fun” in 1986. The quirky zine told true stories of bizarre deaths, and quickly became an underground cult classic. Such a zine required months of pre-internet research, with most issues focusing on central themes, such as people dying in amusement parks, or people dying in zoos. It managed to feel both professional *and* DIY, in a way that few zines are able to achieve.

I didn't start reading zines until the late 90s, and had often heard how great MCBF was long before I ever actually got my hands on a copy. I was not disappointed. I quickly did what I could to find other back issues, and always kept my eyes open



for new ones. It has been 9 years since Marr gave us an issue of MCBF, and I got to wondering what he has been up to since then.

Was MCBF the first zine you ever published? What was your initial print-run?

The first issue came out in 1986. Initial print run was 100 copies, but I did reprint it several times over the years!

How many issues did you publish?

I published 19 regular issues of MCBF (#9/10 was a double issue) along with two unnumbered special issues (Anti-Sex Tips For Teens and Obscure Crime Books) and 10 issues of The MCBF Datebook. If I hadn't found that cheap storage space around the corner from my old apartment, I would have drowned.

John Marr
johnmarr1@yahoo.com
PO Box 640111
San Francisco, CA 94164
United States

MCBF combined so many wonderful qualities to create a fantastic zine, but on some basic level what you really managed to do was tap into human curiosity. When did you start to realize that other people might be interested in the weird stories that interested you?

As a life-long bookish sort with a penchant for exactly the sort of stuff you read about in MCBF (coincidence? I think not), I'd been reading about this stuff since I was a kid. By the time I starting making the punk rock scene in the late '70s, I had a full complement of dark cocktail chatter that fit in perfectly with the punk rock ethos. Instead of babbling about the Stooges, I'd babble about Jim Thompson or the Great Boston Molasses Flood. People seemed interested, so I decided to try to reach a broader audience.

I know you've done some blogging and online work since MCBF ended, but have you published any print work since then? Any zines or books?

I have only done the few odd bits and pieces since I pulled the plug on MCBF. I'm afraid I've adjusted poorly to the current media landscape. In the '90s and early 2000s, I did a fair amount of writing for alt weeklies and similar fringe publications. Pay was a pittance, but it was pay! I'd be happy to do more blogging, but every blog wants you to do it for "exposure." (Of what?) I will only expose what I really want to! But I am looking to get back in the game in some capacity. I just have to accept the fact that it does all come down to vanity!

We've all read, and even written, articles about how the internet changed the zine world. Most of us come from the angle of buying and selling zines, but for you the biggest impact must have been on the creation of the zine itself. When and how did you really start to feel the internet affect your process?

No question about it, the Internet changed everything. When I wrote my original "Death at Disneyland" article for #13 in 1994, it literally took me months of scrolling through microfilm newspapers and digging through libraries to come up with all the dope. When I updated it for my final issue (#20) in 2007, I did it on my lunch hour. I didn't even have to leave my desk. I think this ubiquity of information killed a lot of my motivation for doing MCBF. Part of the fun for me was digging up stuff that no one has ever heard about, or at least fleshing out a story most people know little about. Most of my best stories had as their starting point some obscure book or article or not readily accessible source that I had that other people didn't. Now that you can Google most of this stuff, what's the point?

MCBF was written with a tongue in cheek sense of humor, but was informational and educational at its core. But I know you read as much fiction as non-fiction. Have you ever written any murder/mystery stories or published fictional stories?

Actually, these days I read much more fiction than non-fiction. I would like to write some fiction, but I'm sure you know the fiction market is even more saturated! I have only published one story: "Have My Children Been Drugged? Yes, I Did It" in True Confessions December 1993. It was published anonymously so you'll just have to take my word for it.

Other than being "That dude who used to do that zine," what do you do? Job? Family? Hobbies?

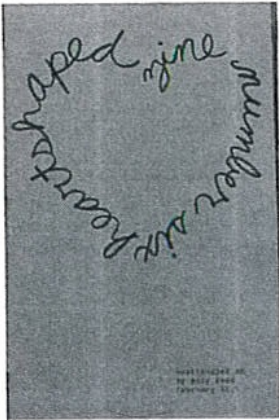
When I started the zine, I was a humble young civil servant who read a lot and listened to punk rock. I am now an even more humble middle-aged civil servant who listens to rock and jazz, but manages to read even more.

Any big projects in the works, or anything you'd like the public to know about?

I only wish! I do hope to get a "Best of MCBF" going at some point. I got feelers from a few publishers a couple years back. Hope they're not dead yet!

Thank you so much to John Marr!

And finally...

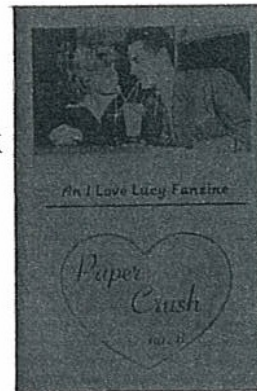


Heartshaped #6 – etsy.com/shop/heartshapedzine

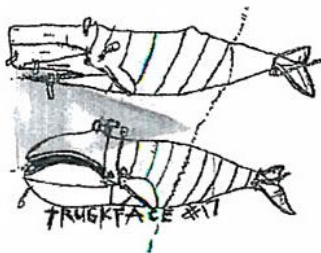
This is a cute perzine from 2015, written by Mary Reed. A good mix of typed and handwritten, she tells personal stories and anecdotes about living in NY, tips on how to keep a journal, and also shares a few of her personal mantras. This is a quick read, an easy read, but enjoyable. Well worth \$3.

Paper Crush #6 – PO Box 14613/Portland, OR 97293

This issue is a special “I Love Lucy” fanzine edition. I have seen the show, and enjoyed it, but didn't really think of myself as a fan, but I got this zine because I love reading informative zines, especially when they come from a loving source. Krissy really does love Lucy, and it shows in this zine. She tells you a brief history of Lucille Ball, of her career, of her cast, and of the show itself. Although there are certainly traces of, “my favorite episode is when....” but it goes much deeper than that, even throwing a bit of feminist critique on what was one of the first national TV shows ever. Very cool zine.



Truckface #17 – Lbj4prez@hotmail.com (also available through Antiquated Future Distro)



I've been reading Truckface for years, and used to distro it back when I had a distro. This issue, from 2015, is long, and it's good. LB is an excellent writer who perfectly exemplifies the “personal is political” qualities zines are known for. She doesn't pound you over the head with class war rhetoric

(like I tend to do) but instead she simply tells her story, that of a complex, working class, school teacher who is also in a punk band. A feminist who loves football, an awkward adult who stays out late, has cats, and loves to read. LB is someone who understands that the ship is sinking, but what choice is there but to keep on bailing and hope for the best? This is a thick zine, with lots of words, and a few rad drawings. Get it.



Billy

MANZANO NE
ALBUQUERQUE,

Behind the Zines, #3

feb '17

Every issue I read stories about why someone's contribution was late, and always think, "Well, you had three months, what's the problem?" Well, this issue it's ME who is late, and I'm hoping Idy is just a bit behind and hasn't yet gone to print when he gets this. The election bummed me out on epic scales, and I spent November and December drinking myself to sleep each night. Not my norm, and not healthy, but we all find ways to cope. By Jan I had woken up a little, and remembered I had a lot of good things going in my life, including a wonderful partner who did her best to stay posi as I moped about. So guess what? We got married! After 5 years of living together we decided, fuck it, ~~let's~~ let's get married. Planned it all out in 10 days and made it happen. So, between crippling depression and an amazing and fantastic celebration of love, I'm a bit late on this.

I liked the last issue, and took notes about responses I wanted to make, but since I'm trying to write this in a day and mail it out tomorrow, I'm gonna skip all that. But I read last issue cover to cover, so thank you to all of you for writing.

Kelly ShortAndQueer is a good friend and former roommate of mine who now lives in Denver. His perzine, Shortandqueer, talks very candidly about his life and experiences living as a transgender person. Some of those experiences directly relate to this part of his identity, such as stories about taking hormones, or having surgery, but even his more generic stories, about work or relationships, still relate indirectly being queer and trans.

On top of all that, he also helps organize the Denver Zinefest, and also helps run the Denver Zine Library. He's a great dude, and can be reached at shortandqueer@yahoo.com, or at Kelly/PO Box 13559/Denver, CO 80201.

How long have you been writing zines?

I put out my first zine in 2003 and ended up making a few one-off zines before settling into my current series, Shortandqueer.

When did the first issue of Shortandqueer come out?

The first two issues of Shortandqueer came out in August 2004. In fact, #2 was actually finished before #1, but I didn't want that to be the first in the series. To date, #2 is the only one that has been drawn by me and I knew then that wasn't going to be my primary format.

How do you describe SnQ to people who have never read it? Shortandqueer is a collection of personal stories about my life as a queer and transgender person. Each issue has a theme and the writing is through the lens of my identities.

What made you decide to write a zine so centered around your sexuality and gender identity?

For much of my life, there are pieces of myself that I never saw reflected (or at least in a positive light) in mainstream media. When zines were brought into my life, it opened up new conversations and new ways of thinking. As I began writing about my own experience, I was amazed at the response I started receiving. I had people reaching out to say that I was writing about things that they've never considered and others who said that they share similar experiences. On both sides, it felt like there was a give and take around my zines that I hadn't expected. I was receiving encouragement and validation that also provided the motivation to want to continue to share my life through my zines.

Do you think SnQ has helped other queer or trans-based zines get printed?

I think that queer and trans people have been documenting their stories for a long time, but many people may not have had access to them. In the zine world, I know that I've existed in certain bubbles, so I'm sure there are tons of zines out there that I don't even know about. My hope is that with every story that is made public (my zines

included), it helps pave the way for others to think, "I can do that too." In 2004, I created a zine called "Trans(in)formation", which documented 24 zines that were written by transgender/genderqueer zinesters or with transgender/genderqueer content. I updated the list in 2008 and was able to track down 205 titles. That felt like a huge jump in the number of people who were willing to make their stories public and I'm glad to have been part of that group of folks.

How has the zine scene, in general, reacted to your zine? How do non-zinesters react to it?

Overall, I've had really amazing responses to my zines. It's been a way for me to connect with queer and trans folks directly and has also been a resource for friends and family of other queer and trans people. I think that non-zinesters aren't always quite sure what zines are, and are sometimes surprised at the amount of personal information I'm willing to share publicly. What I've found is that sometimes the more vulnerable pieces are the ones that create the strongest connections with folks.

shortandqueer #16



Interview with
Grandpa Sabín

Also, for Shortandqueer # 16, I interviewed my grandfather for two hours and transcribed it into a zine.

I made a different cover (without a zine title and issue number on it) and gave copies to people in my family.

It was incredible to see the various responses.

The best was that my grandfather told me how he's keep it with him all the time and show the nurses at his appointments. It felt like it brought us even closer than we already were.

How long was the hiatus between your last two issues?

Sadly, there was a five year break between Shortandqueer 17 and 18. As one of the

co-founders of the Denver Zine Library and one of the organizers for the Denver Zine Fest, zines are definitely an active part of my life. Being called a "retired zinester" was good motivation to get my own words on paper again.

When is the next issue?

My goal is to have a new issue of Shortandqueer by the 2017 Denver Zine Fest, which is being planned for the summer.

What year did you start the Denver Zine Library?

We officially opened on December 5, 2003, after about six months of active planning.

How many zines are currently in the DZL collection?

I think our collection is likely somewhere around 15,000 zines. We have a ton that have been donated but not cataloged yet, so it's hard to get a totally accurate number. But we still get several donations a week in the mail, ranging from an individual zine to a box of zines.

How many people currently work for the DZL?

Our volunteer base has shifted over the years, but we have about 10-15 active volunteers at the moment, which is really growing the DZL's capacity to do more and be more visible.

Can people check out and take home zines from the DZL?

We do maintain a lending collection where we ask people to come visit us three times. On the third time, they can start borrowing zines – up to five zines for up to three weeks. We only keep one copy of each zine on our shelves, so our thought was that if someone comes back three times, they're more likely to return the zine than someone who comes once and is not invested in the space as a community resource.

Tell us a bit about the Denver Zinefest.

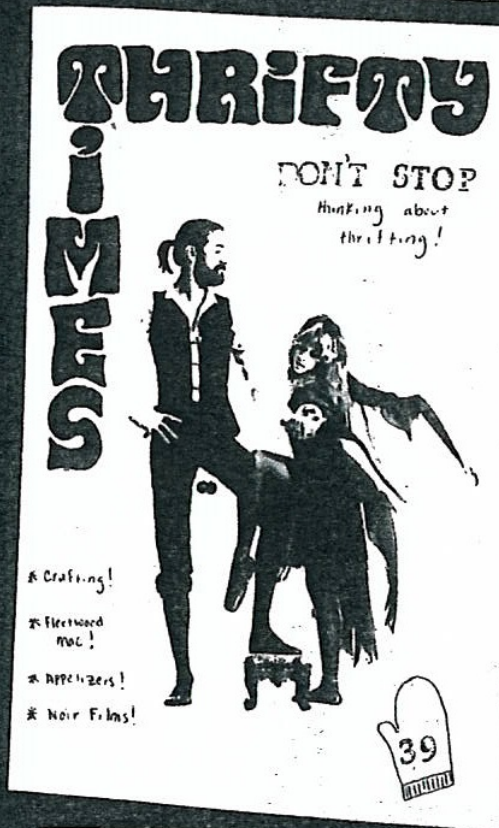
We're thrilled that the Denver Zine Fest (DZF) is back up and running as a vibrant event that brings together amazing zinesters, comic artists, and self-publishers. The first DZF was organized by the folks at Iron Feather Books in 2006 and then the DZL took the lead in 2007 and 2008. It's not totally clear why, but then the DZF went on hiatus. In 2015, we revived the event, much to the credit of Mel, a zine librarian who was determined to make it happen. We had 40 exhibitors, many local folks who didn't previously have a relationship with the DZL. In 2016, we grew to over 75 exhibitors and anticipate that the event will continue to grow!

Any final thoughts for our Cunneiform readers?

Write zines! Read zines! Support zine libraries!

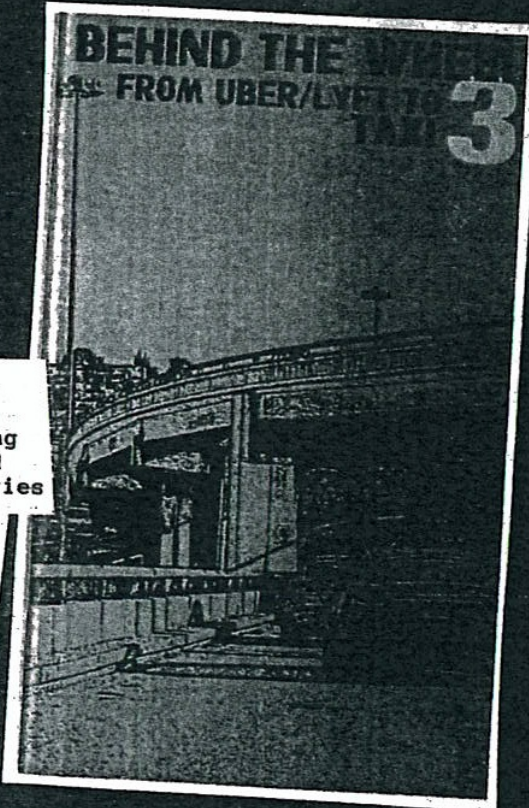
Zine Reviews

Oh, and I know everyone prefers real addresses over email, and I will make sure to print them when I have them. But some zines you can only get online, and if a zine is good, I will review it. Up to you if you want to pursue it.



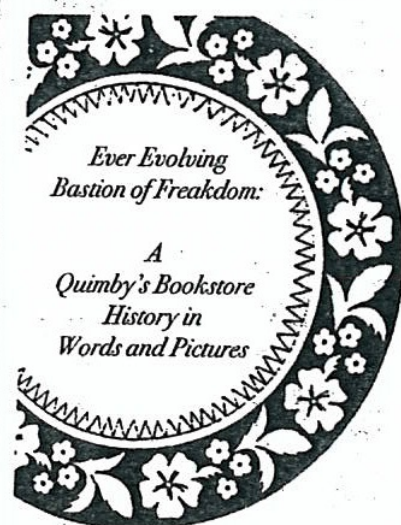
Thrifty Times- The idea of a zine subscription is so enticing, yet almost always a lost cause. Other than Cuneiform, what zine comes out on a regular basis? Well, Thrifty Times does. For \$13 you can get a year subscription, and every month or so a new issue pops up in your mail box. Sarah ~~xx~~ writes about, you guessed it, thrift stores. Tips on thrifting, reviews of terrible romance novels, and funny anecdotes about people she encounters. This girl loves to find a good deal, and tells you all her sill adventures along the way. Not too heavy or serious, just a light read.

thriftytimes@aol.com



Behind the Wheel #3 - This zine, by Kelly Dessaint, is the third installment of his life as a driver. Issue 1 was about driving Lyft, #2 was about Uber, but now he's moved on to driving taxis. Not only are the stories

exactly what you'd expect (drunken frat guys, prostitutes, crime, drugs, vomit...) but they are really well told. A pro-looking layout, great cover, and great stories. www.idrivesf.com



Ever Evolving Bastion of Freakdom - This behemoth of a zine is \$6, plus \$2 or so for shipping, but could have easily been made into a \$12 book. This is a very extensive history of Quimbys, the #1 zine shop in Chicago, if not the world. The history is told through a series of interviews, letting the owners, employees, and patrons tell whatever stories they can remember, spanning the 80s til today. I'm still not done, but have loved every page. If you know about, were involved with, or are curious about Chicago's art scene over the past 30 years, then you'll love it, too. Chicago has a great zine scene, and a great comix scene, and all those artists roll in and out of Quimbys on a weekly basis. quimbys.com
Quimbys, 1854 W. North Ave, Chicago, IL 60622

Behind the Zines #4

iknowbilly@gmail.com



Billy

MANZANO NE APT. B
ALBUQUERQUE, NM

June '17

Hey there, Cuneiformmers, how are ya this month? I've done a bit of traveling since last issue. I went to Salt Lake City for the first time to attend a zinefest. I stayed with an anarchist collective called The Boing House, and had a really great time. My wife and I also took a week off from work to go camping around in southern New Mexico. I love the city life, but always feel rejuvenated by spending time away from things like TV, computers, and humans.

It was nice to get out and explore New Mexico a bit, because I think we are going to be moving by the fall. Baltimore is top on our list, and we might be east-coasters by September or so. I've lived in a lot of places, but not east coast, so it will be a big and exciting change. Keep ya posted.

Here's a conversation I've been having with another zine friend of mine: zine pricing. Over the past year or two it seems the average price of zines has really gone up. In the 90s, \$1 was the standard zine price. Then \$3 became the new standard in the mid 2000s. Now it seems like most zines at zinefests etc are asking \$5. Is \$5 really the "average" zine price now days? Are people no trying to make a living off it? It's cool if they can, and anyone can charge anything they way. But I still charge \$1 or \$3 for most of my stuff.

I remember a long time ago I asked Idy about his zine, "Something for Nothing," which is just that. He gives them away. He basically said, "Everyone has a hobby. Working on cars, collecting baseball cards, etc. People always spend and lose and waste money on their hobby. Zines are my hobby. I love making zines, I don't care if I lose money doing it." That idea has always stuck with me, and I really like that.

I don't like to make "free" zines, as I feel they are often not taken as seriously. I usually charge \$1 or \$3, but will give many away, or trade them. Obviously the internet and social media somehow continue to impact zine culture. Zines are no longer "needed" to express or communicate. Not only is Twitter etc easier, but is often preferred now. But I also think many current/younger/newer zine-makers are coming into the zine world from places other than punk rock. And that's great! That's fine. But punk teaches DIY, it teaches you how to live with little or no money, it teaches you how to scam and steal copies, etc. It teaches you how to make things for VERY

CHEAP, and it also teaches that money is dumb. I think many zinesters today think of it as a business, making a product to sell, and perhaps they are embarrassed if they don't profit.

Just some observations. Feel free to comment, or not!

Mailing Comments:

Al – I always find it interesting to hear you tell stories about the Beat Generation, hearing accounts of people like Jack Kerouac and Timothy Leary. I appreciate Leary's attempts to "wake the youth" through drug use, but a lot of people took it too far, of course. Instead of doing drugs as step towards revolution, the drugs became the end result for many. I don't do any drugs, but support those who do. A lot of brilliance has come from the minds of recreational drug users; less has come from drug addicts.

You often mention CIA conspiracy theories, aliens living amongst us, etc, all of which is fun to talk about and little of which is ever supported by any evidence. Enough "bad" stuff is known about the CIA that I doubt any thinking person honestly trusts them. But all the talk of greys and reptilians living in our midst seems like a distraction from actual CIA missions, such as assassinating world leaders, arming insurgents in other countries, and stuff like that. I think a lot of that "Coast to Coast AM" hyperbole is just misinformation to keep thinking people busy solving puzzles that don't exist while ignoring the ones that do.

There are a lot of topics on which I agree with you, Al, such as your thoughts on various problems in our culture and our over-reliance on technology. But I have to say, your views on women and gender are totally skewed. I've read stuff you've said in the past, and have rolled my eyes, but let it go. But I just can't do it this time. Everything you said in the "women in trouble" section of the last issue was offensive and ridiculous. You sound like any other man telling a woman what to do. Completely condescending. You talk and act like women belong in the home. Women don't "belong" anywhere! All humans, whether men, women, trans, or non-binary, should be not only allowed, but ENCOURAGED, to do whatever they want! Work in a factory, raise a family, hop a train, start a band, become a lawyer, whatever. I don't mean to be confrontational, but your views would have sounded misogynistic in the '50s, let alone today.

Frederick – I liked your rant on technology. The weird twist on our 1984 future, so unexpected that not even Orwell could have predicted it, is that our society is *asking* for it. Are companies brain-washing us to sell products? Sure, as best they can, but they can't take all the credit. People WANT these devices. People want these phones with them at all times. These tracking devices, these things that can be hacked and turned on to be used as recording devices. Hackers (which might be the NSA/government, or your phone company, or an ex-lover, or someone trying to steal your personal

info) can remotely turn your phone on or off, and activate any device on your phone. (Or laptop, for that matter.) The only way to prevent this is to take the battery out of your phone. But guess what? More and more phones use embedded batteries! They CAN'T be removed. The upside of this is that phones are smoother, slimmer, and less likely to break. The downside is that if the battery wears out you need a new phone, and also that your device is ALWAYS hackable. (None of these problems pertain to us Cuneiformmers too much, I know.)

Idy – I like that you watch so many cartoons. I think The Simpsons is one of the most important shows of our time, but I got sort of bored with it. The details and references are great, and they do a good job of commenting on current events, in their own way, and do a great job of showing all sides of most situations. For example, I love their jokes making fun of vegetarians, though I'm vegan. All that being said, I find a lot of their basic characters and story-lines to be one-sided and predictable. It's a male-driven show, where Bart and Homer are cool and funny, while Lisa and Marge are nagging side characters. (And yes, they have their moments, and their episodes, but overall....) Homer is dumb, Bart is a trouble-maker, Marge is a Nag, Lisa is smart... It has a place in my heart, but I don't watch regularly.

I never got into Dr. Katz, never even saw one episode. Same with Rick and Morty. Maybe I should give them each a try. Recently I watched a DVD of Freakazoid, which I think is brilliant in a totally weird way. I'd have to say, overall my favorite cartoon is King of the Hill.

Reviews – I love getting my zine reviewed in MRR or any other zine, but I hear you. It used to be that even a bad review would get your 5 orders of your zine. Not any more. I still like getting reviewed in MRR and Razorcake, mostly to hear a critique of my work. (Yes, I like it when people point out what they like and dislike about my zines!) The Xerography Debt community is pretty supportive, and when my stuff gets reviewed there I always get orders. Most zines I print I will start out with 50 or 100 copies, then go from there. I believe every copy I print will get read, but like you I rarely hear back. I have my core base of followers who read everything I write, but I don't get random letters from people I don't know.

Hey, props to you for doing SFN for 30 years! That's awesome!

Jason – Thank you for all the personal letters we've been sending back and forth, I've enjoyed it. I always knew your name and read some of your review zines, but since we've both been writing for Cuneiform we've also become closer pen pals.

I will look up that Disinformation TV show, though I've seen some documentaries on Mr. Awesome. Funny, weird dude.

Quick question, do you know Ken Bausert, from The Ken Chronicles? He lives in Albany as well.

Tim – Tim, I'm sorry to hear about all your physical ailments! It's tough to get any creative work done when you're feeling crummy physically. Congrats on the memeograph. Personally, I've always wanted a Risograph machine. A friend of mine in Chicago sold one last year without telling me, which made me mad! I always keep an eye out for them, but have never owned one. I owned a copy machine for awhile, but it was so old and broken down that it proved more trouble than it was worth.

And yes, I am "Billy da Bunny." For many years I would dress as a bunny any time I attended a zinefest. I became known as Billy the Bunny. I've sort of gotten over that. I still dress up silly, but not EVERY time. I usually go by Billy McCall, my pen name.

I don't know what's going on with the WeMakeZines website. Recently I've offered my help, but I haven't really done anything. It is/was a great site to connect with people, and I made some good friends and contacts through that site, but Krissy is worn out on it. There are about half a dozen people who want to be admins to a new site, but it has sort of stalled. We'll see what happens.

The first time I ordered stickers from Sticker Guy was some time around 2003, for a band I was drumming in at the time. I'd seen an ad for them in Razorcake, or some other punk zine, and thought I'd give them a try. Their stickers were affordable, good quality, and were shipped to my house within a couple weeks. Since then I've ordered tons of stickers from them, stickers for bands I've been in, zines I've written, and distros I've run. Heck, I've even printed stickers of random inside jokes between me and my friends. For \$20 you can keep a stupid joke going a long time by putting stickers of it around town.



For this issue of "Behind the Zines," I interviewed Jenn, one of the workers at Sticker Guy, about what it's like to make so many of the stickers so many of us see getting stuck around town.

Jenn, thank you for taking the time for this interview! How long have you been working at Sticker Guy?

Sure thing, Billy! I have been here for over a decade now.

And what is your job title there at SG?

I don't really have one, but I primarily take care of all Small Quantity orders - which consist of black & white, and red, black & white. This entails emails, invoicing, art review, file set up & customer service.

How many people are on staff at Sticker Guy?

Seven! We really are a small company.

About how many stickers to y'all print in a month?

I have no idea - thousands! We receive many orders daily.

Sticker Guy is based out of Reno, NV. What's it like living in Reno?

It's pretty chill. We laugh at some of the negative publicity Reno gets, because some negative perceptions are true and totally understandable! But, there's also a vibrant local music scene, good people, and lots of beautiful out-doorsy stuff surrounding us. I have met friends for life here.

Sticker Guy is a "regular" business in many ways; I assume you work 9-5 filling orders, etc. But so much of the punk culture goes to SG at some point, whether bands or zines or DIY coffee shops... Is the SG staff a bunch of punkers, or just regular people who provide a service? Do you or your co-workers listen to punk music or read zines?

I don't think anyone here actually calls themselves punkers, BUT virtually every single person that has ever worked here grew up with a close relationship with the Reno punk scene. At any given

**THE JOYS OF
STICKER
MAKIN'**



music lovers here, & our tastes our pretty diverse, anything from punk to salsa to hip-hop to metal. And some of us here do read & collect zines!

time in our history, at least half of the working staff here are local musicians. I feel like we are regular people offering a service, but sometimes we get people asking to speak to our "sales agents" while we're blasting loud music in the background, & it's kind of funny. We're all big big big

Your slogan is, "Sticker Guy - stickin' it to The Man since 1993!" Are stickers an inherently counter-culture device?

Yes.

Have you ever turned down a sticker order based on content? Racist, sexist, etc?

Yup. We get so many orders in a day, but we do try really hard to stay on top of the content we put through our presses. My favorite was one time when I turned down some straight up neo-nazi shit, & the dude told me "People like you make me sick". LOLZ, as the kids say.

I won't ask you about your least favorite stickers, but what are some of your favorite stickers you've helped print?

Oof. That's a hard one. We've been printing Jawbreaker stickers the past few years, that's pretty cool. A lot of positive cool designs for the LGBTQ+ community. I always enjoy the different variations of the "posse" designs.

I assume you've printed lots of stickers for a lot of my favorite bands. Have you ever printed stickers for big, popular mainstream bands? Or politicians or anyone famous?

I feel like Jawbreaker is probably the closest we've come to a bigger band, but I don't think they're really considered mainstream? No politicians come to mind. We did print some Team CoCo stickers for Conan O'Brien years ago, and sometimes get orders for the Upright Citizens Brigade.

As one of your work perks, do you get as many free stickers as you want or something? Do you print free address labels for yourself, or any other dumb stickers just because you can?

We do have buckets and buckets of free stickers which are samples from past orders(so 20+ years of random samples). But, as far as our own sticker designs, we don't get them free, but we do get a nice discount. In general, a great work perk is that we can dress how we want, and just be ourselves. We are privileged in that sense, because many people are not able to just be who they are at work.

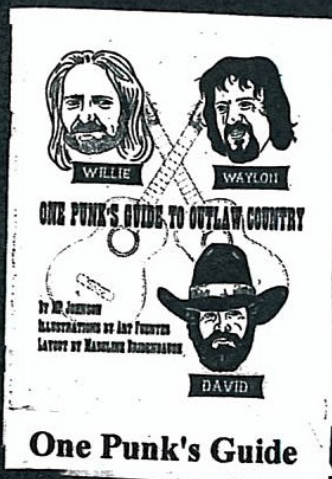
Any favorite sticker-related stories you want to share with us? Also, have you ever thought about writing a zine about what it's like to work in a sticker factory? I'm sure it's often just a regular boring job, but it's also so unique.

There was one time we made stickers for the guys in Citizen Fish/Subhumans. Subhumans is one of my all time favorite punk bands, & I got to email with, and talk to Dick Lucas on the phone. Except apparently I am not so good with thick British accents, and I could hardly understand anything he said, & it made me feel super lame!! Aside from that, in the day-to-day, we get a lot of weird questions - "How big is 2.75"?" or "How red is this red?". I have not thought about making a zine working here, but it's not a bad idea. :)

That's all! Thank you so much, Jenn. Next time you need stickers, go www.stickerguy.com.

Jenn Archerd | jenn@stickerguy.com
Po Box 204 | Reno, NV 89504 | USA

Zine Reviews



One Punk's Guide

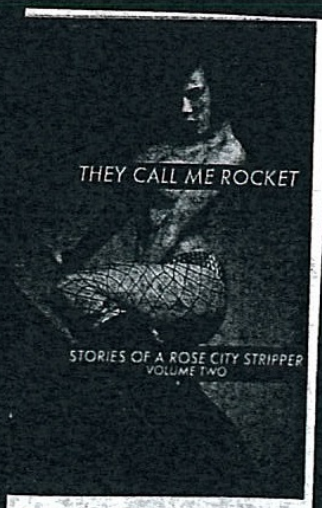
not sure, but I'd imagine if you sent them a few bucks in the mail, they'd mail you hard copies.

While at Gridfest, in SLC, I met some of the Razorcake people, which was kind of exciting. They were all really cool and really nice. (I've been reading Razorcake a lot lately, and think it's a quality magazine.) They had a bunch of issues of "One Punk's Guide," which is a regular article in their magazine; these were just zine formats of those articles. Each issue was \$1, and covered a different topic, such as Otis Redding, Pinball, Outlaw Country, and Silent Movies. The zines are informative and well-written, in language that is easily understood and makes learning fun. You can read them for free on their website, or download PDFs. I'm

Razor Cake
PO Box 42129
Los Angeles, CA 90042
razorcake.org

In Australia is a rad lady named Nyx. She does a great per-zine called "Don't Call me Cupcake," and recently she mailed me another one of hers called "The F Word." This is another educational zine, (I love learning through zines!) and is a short history on the word, "fuck." It's short, it's sweet, it's funny. She loves snail mail, but I'm not sure what she'd do with American money. Either contact her online, or just mail her \$5 worth of zines or random goodies, she'll mail ya a copy.

The
F
 Word



Sea Green Zines
PO Box 786
Bendigo Central, VIC 3552
Australia
www.seagreenzines.com

Rising Room Gallery
2222 NE Oregon St. #212
Portland, OR 97232

They Call Me Rocket is a work-zine about working as a stripper. Rocket is a woman living in Portland who dances, does burlesque, and lots of other art stuff. There are two issues of TCMR, and both are glossy with color covers, and cost \$5 each. The zines tell first hand accounts of working in strip clubs. Stories about other dancers, some of whom are pros some of whom are not, stories about customers, some of whom are creepy sleeze-bags, some of whom are really cool, and stories that you really aren't going to read anywhere else.

currently a
nomad with
no home
address!
email me!

Behind the Zines #5

September
2017

iknowbilly@gmail.com

Hey everyone! I hope to turn in my Cuneiform submission in time, but I have been traveling for the entire month of September, slowly making my way from Albuquerque to Baltimore. My wife and I have done some camping, and stayed in some hotels, but mostly we have been staying with friends and family. I even had a chance to hang out with Idy in real life! Idy and I have been pen pals for 2 decades, so about time we had lunch together. The unexpected and unplanned state of my life is exciting, but also tiresome, and I haven't been on my own computer in over a month, which is difficult as a writer.

But I have had the chance to see some really great places, spend time with some really great people, and it has also given me the chance to read a lot of great zines and books. So those are all good things! I've spent time on farms, and in cities, and every house we stay in seems to be "perfect" in its own way. As I prepare to start a whole new life I am trying to keep in mind what will make my life the perfect life. Nature? Bookshelves? Board games? Pets? We'll see.

On the topic Idy mentioned, about how many copies of this to print, here are my thoughts. We need to ask if we think non-contributors would be interested in reading this. For the most part, I don't think so. Maybe? But if Idy can swing some extra copies, sure send them out. I'm sure we could each find 4 or 5 other people to give this zine to. I should be living in Baltimore soon, and could take an additional 5 copies to the local zine store. Also, do we want more contributors? If we really tried, I'm sure we could each find one more person to contribute. I know I could, but I've never really tried because I didn't know if we wanted more people. So, should we try and expand our membership?

Mailing Comments

Al Fry: I completely agree that writing things by hand, or script-writing, is good for the mind. The comparative slowness gives the mind a second to concentrate and almost meditate. Many writers still write things by hand first, even if they transcribe it later, because the slow pace of script-writing allows the mind more time to think about how to word each sentence. I love reading handwritten notes, and have studied the art of handwriting analysis for a long time. And yes, handwriting analysis is real, and if anyone is curious I can discuss it further.

But I don't understand any of your points about upper-case letters. How do they relate to authority, or the law? Many languages use upper-case letter variants, and this has nothing to do with handwritten versus typed, it's simply another form of grammar and distinction, the same as punctuation, and only serves to clarify the language.

Frederick: I'm so happy to hear about your marriage, as well as the marriage of your daughter! I'm not happy that you *got* married, but I'm happy that you *are happy* that you got married. I used to be very anti-marriage, for a lot of punk rock, anti-patriarchy, anti-establishment, anti-religion type reasons. But fuck all that. There are a lot of potential problems with marriage, but if you do it YOUR WAY, then there are lots of awesome benefits. So bravo to you!

visible tape lines, Ahhh!!

Jason: I really enjoyed reading about your flyer campaigns. I've done lots and lots of street art, graffiti, performance, and installation artwork over the years, including more joke flyers than I can even count. Some times these were "pull-tab" pun of the day type things, other times it was for imaginary lost pets, etc. For a week or so in Albuquerque I was doing bolted-up signs with George Carlin quotes, single phrases

out of his acts that said things like, "Kill the Poor," and "Fuck Hope." We should talk more about this. Be careful, though. As you know you might face trouble with the law, or various neighbors and union worker types if you're seen putting up the wrong things in the wrong places...

JCT: Welcome aboard! Happy to have new people. You mentioned Behind The Wheel. It's a great zine, there are three issues. Kelly is a great writer. It's not so much about the actual driving as it is about the people he encounters. But yes, there is a driving theme.

Idy: It was really great to see you in Cleveland! Thank you for being our tour guide. After Cleveland we stayed in Pittsburgh for 5 days, and all of your predictions about it were true: I heard people say "yinz," there were lots of hills, and YES WE GOT LOST! In every other city we visited we were able to drive straight to our friends' houses using nothing more than handwritten directions. But not Pittsburgh! As soon as we were within Pittsburgh city limits we were lost, and had to stop in a Whole Foods parking lot and have our friend come get us. Pittsburgh roads are insane.

I was sorry to hear about Tim and his ailments. Send him our best wishes.

I thought it was interesting that you mentioned the "visible tape" on my contribution to issue #16, as if this were some obvious mistake I had overlooked. If you ever see visible tape marks in my zines, I promise they are there on purpose. Do you not like to see tape? It's an aesthetic choice for me, sometimes I want to see the tape, some times not. I like the raw punk rock feel of it at times. A bit dirty, a bit rough.

Your comment reminded me of an MRR review I got once, for the zine "Jargon." They barely mentioned the content or purpose of the zine, but went on for 2 paragraphs about how they didn't like how "grey" my zine was, and that a good zine should be bold! Black and white only. I was laughing, because I had experimented so hard to get that exact shade of grey, and had written a note and stuck it to my master-copy: "Photo mode, +1 contrast, +2 darkness." I loved that grey! And sometimes I love tape marks.

James: I'm interested in your Vegan Libertarian Benevolent Society. It seems like a cool idea. I've done some Food Not Bombs stuff in the past, and other giving away food type activities. I'm also vegan. I'm curious about the VLBS moniker. Vegan, because it's vegan food, and Benevolent Society to be sort of a funny and positive name for something, but why Libertarian? What does that word mean to you, and what does it have to do with giving away food?

Interview Time!

Antiquated Future is a Portland-based zine distro that has existed in one form or another since 2008. Most of their 500-item catalog is made up of zines, but they also sell postcards, patches, artwork, and a wide variety of music. Joshua James Amberson, the main person running Antiquated Future, agreed to do a last minute interview with me for Cuneiform.

Josh, thank you for taking time to email with me! Before we talk distro, let's talk zines. How long have you been writing the zine Basic Paper Airplane? Have you written other zines?

Thanks for asking me! I've been writing Basic Paper Airplane since 2005, so this summer was the 12-year anniversary. That said, I'm slow. I take a long time with each issue, so there have only been 11 issues to date. I've written a number of other zines, but the ones that have gotten out there the most are The Prince Zine, which is a biography of Prince through a critical fanboy lens, and Growing Things: A Guide for Beginning Gardeners.

I actually just finished up a collaborative zine with my old friend Craven Rock of the Eaves of Ass zine (he also wrote a book about Juggalos) called Picking Stuff Apart. The zine was the end result of a year-long project where we assigned each other things to review. Most of the assignments were books or albums or podcasts, but some were more experiential—I joined a book club for several months, he went to an industrial music awards ceremony. It was fun. I'm not sure if it makes for interesting reading, but it exists.

What made you want to start up a distro? Writing and selling your own zines is one thing, but what made you want to try and sell zines written by other people?

The distro was started completely on a whim. I went on my first tour with a band in 2008 and, since the band I was playing in only had one album out, I asked my friends if they wanted me to take their creations on the road and sell them on the merch table. So friends gave me their zines, handmade cards, screen-printed shirts, and whatnot. I got back, gave them money for what had sold, but when I tried to give them their stuff back they all said something to the effect of, "Just put it out at your next show."

One day I woke up and looked at this box of stuff and realized none of it could be bought online. This was before Etsy had really caught on, so it wasn't common for artists to be running their own online sales. I thought it all should reach a wider audience and I wanted my friends to make money for their art, so I made myself some coffee and in my pajamas put it online. I just used a free Blogger account and added some Paypal buttons. I emailed those folks and said, "I made this, let me know what you think." And people just kept giving me more and more stuff. I'd have to dig to figure out how many items we carried in those early years, but since moving over to an actual website some years back we've carried 1,100 items.

It was almost purely a labor of love in those early years, but things definitely changed in 2012, when one of our zines (Shit's Fucked: A Positivity Guide) went viral on Reddit. I think we sold a thousand copies of it that week. It just brought a whole new audience and level of attention to what we were doing, and turned it into a business. And the fact that it never fully stopped (Shit's Fucked has sold around two thousand copies every year since then) has allowed us some room to try some things and spread out in a way we wouldn't have been able to. It's still almost as much labor of love as it is business, but without that turn of events I would probably have had to throw in the towel long ago.

As someone who sees a lot of zines, what general changes have you seen over the past ten years?

Aside from the obvious tendency toward cleaner design, the two biggest changes I've seen in zines are focus and price. When AF started in 2008, perzine series were probably our best-selling zines. While most of these would have at least a loose theme for each issue, the cover rarely announced that; there was a sense of mystery that people seemed attracted to.

But in the years since then, those kinds of zines have become much less popular and a cover really needs to announce what it's about for people to pick it up (whether online or in-person). Looking at our best-sellers list from last year, almost every one has a subtitle that makes its contents clear (Building: A Guide to Creating DIY Spaces, A Great and Terrible Golden Age: Movies of the 1930s, Pissing in a River: A Patti Smith Fanzine, etc). Two of my favorite zines in recent years--Jim Joyce's Let it Sink and Dannv Noonan's Clock Tower Nine--use the more old-school approach of keeping their contents fairly mysterious and, despite how cool they are, just don't sell as well as other zines because of it.

And then pricing has really changed. It used to be \$5 was pushing it, but people will pay \$7 or \$8 for a zine these days without flinching. I never thought I'd carry zines with cover prices like that, but now they're some of our best sellers. While a part of me feels like it's a betrayal to even carry these, I also think these zines are great. And again, I want to provide as many entry points to zines as possible.

What role do you think distros play in the zine scene today? If people are ordering zines online, what's the difference if they order a zine from your website, or the website of the individual who made the zine in the first place?

Well, I would guess that most people who order from us just wouldn't find out about these zines otherwise. It takes a lot of work to keep up with new zines. Especially since the majority of zinesters don't put the word out there when they make a new zine. So I feel like distros are providing the function they always have: a place to find out about new things. But there's also a number of items we carry that aren't available anywhere else online, so I like thinking of us as also being a sort of storage house for people who are looking for one particular zine or album that they just can't find anywhere else.

Have you ever put out a print catalog? How often do people look up your stuff online, but send you money to do an order through the mail?

I think in the early years we made some very simple print catalogs, but in general no. I wish! When I was a young teen in the mid-'90s, living way out in a rural area, I sent away for every distro catalog I could get my hands on and read them each over and over. There's so much nostalgia in distro print catalogs.

But honestly our stock changes so often—even our most popular zines will occasionally sell out for periods of time—that it's just not practical to make one. If we had more money and could do bigger print runs, or if we made more zines in-house, it might make more sense.

And I wish people placed more orders through the mail! I'm always very excited when it happens, but it really only happens a handful of times a year. (ed. note, hey Cuneiform people! Send him some orders!)

A lot of distros center their collection around a theme, such as mental health or food, etc. AF seems like a mixed bag. How do you choose your inventory, and why do you feel it's better to have a bit of everything?

That's just my tastes, really—I love such a wide array of zines! The thing that got me into zines was that they weren't static or easily definable—they couldn't be boxed into one way of being. I'll also say that the majority of our customers don't seem to be zinesters and many of them are new to zines. And this was my goal from the start: to reach outside the zine community. I think providing a number of different entry points to zines means that more people are welcome.

Along with all the zines you sell, you also sell a lot of music, including a cassette tape distro. Are the same people who buy zines also buying music? Or are they different sets of customers? What are some differences between selling music and selling zines?

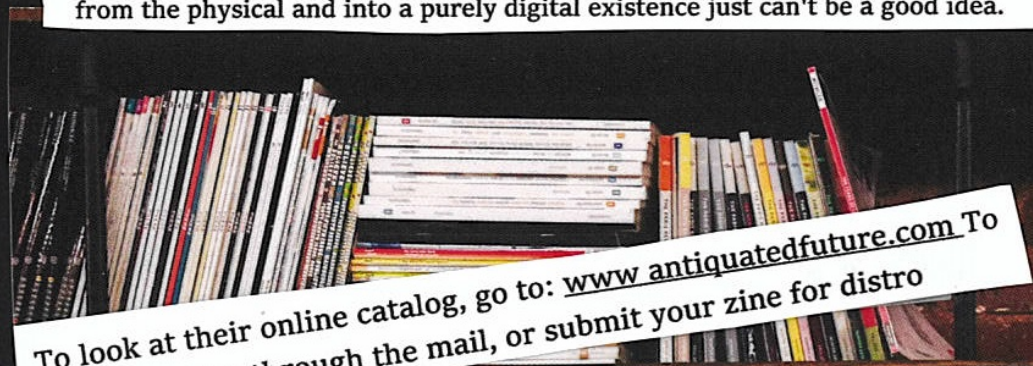
Though this isn't a question you asked, I'll just mention that this is a '90s approach. To me, the zine distro that only sells zines is a new convention. All the distros I ordered from as a teen sold a pretty wide range of things. They had zines and music and shirts and patches, odds and ends, no specific theme. So, kind of unconsciously, I modeled Antiquated Future off of this everything-together approach.

It's difficult to generalize on who buys what. There's a decent number of people who buy both music and zines, but in large part they're different audiences. We run a cassette tape label (Antiquated Future Records), which has grown a lot in the last year or so, and most of the sales for that happen through our Bandcamp page. So the audience could be broken down even further because there's the people who buy from the label and then there are those who mainly just buy albums we didn't release but carry on the distro side.

Zines are definitely easier to sell in this day and age than physical music. So mainly I just try to promote the music we release (sending out review copies, etc) and then the albums we distro becomes more like the "storage house" idea I mentioned earlier: Existing for when someone is looking for a particular tiny indie band's album that they can't find anywhere else. CDs have become almost impossible to sell for us in the last few years (though I know a number of artists who still say it's what most people buy at shows) and LPs have even slowed down a lot in the last year or two. But as we've been releasing more tapes, we've been selling a lot more distro tapes. I always bring a tape box to tabling events and they get a lot of attention.

Your website says that "Antiquated Future seems descriptive of what we do: spread print and physical mediums through digital means. Employing the future to preserve the past," which I like a lot. Can you talk a little bit more about why it's important to keep old mediums alive?

I suppose it's purely an inner sense that the physical is important. To me, it's just such a different experience to interact with art or information physically than digitally. Maybe I'm a dinosaur or overly nostalgic and maybe I'm not. No one's going to be swayed by my intuitive sense, I realize that, but I think our rush to move away from the physical and into a purely digital existence just can't be a good idea.



To look at their online catalog, go to: www.antiquatedfuture.com To place an order through the mail, or submit your zine for distro consideration, write to:

Antiquated Future,
PO Box 42081
Portland, Oregon 97242 USA

Zine Review:

Cul-de-Sac #7

I've been traveling for a month, and visiting lots of great zine shops including the legendary Quimbys in Chicago. I scooped up dozens of zines, then dropped them all on the floor as my eyes bulged out of my head upon seeing CDS#7!! Sitting right there on the shelf!

When I first moved to Chicago, back in 2000, I bought a few issues of CDS, but even back then those were outdated. CDS #6 came out in the 90s, like 20 years ago! This zine is made by two women, one named Julie whom I've never met, and one named Liz, who is a friend of mine! Liz also does the zine Caboose, and is the main chica in charge at Quimbys.

CDS #7, like other issues, has Liz and Julie trading unrelated articles back and forth. Liz talks about misogyny in the comic world, Julie talks about playing D&D, Liz talks about binge watching sci-fi shows, and so on. One of the best articles in this issue was also the heaviest, which was Julie describing her experience as a woman who has had miscarriages, a topic that is hardly ever discussed. Her honest vulnerability was enthralling and educational.

Both women have a dorky and tangent-driven style of writing, which makes you feel like you are in a kitchen with them as they ramble through life stories over a cup of morning tea. It's been a long time since I've read Cul-de-Sac, so I was pretty stoked to flip through this one as I drove out of Chicago.

To get a copy, send \$3 to Quimbys, c/o Liz Mason, 1854 W. North Avenue, Chicago, IL 60622.

behind the zines 6

feb 2018

billy

po box

baltimore, md 21203

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hello cuneiform, how is everyone? i am typing out this issue on a 1980 sears typewriter called 'the scholar.' pretty fancy, i know. the only thing i don't like about it is that the shift bar messes up the letter or punctuation, like this - 2 1 v v v 2. idy, is that why you always use lower case?

i am now living in baltimore. it's an interesting city, and i haven't quite formed an opinion of it yet. it's poor, full of art, and thus far full of nice people. well, people on the street. people working seem to always be assholes, but maybe that's just east coast.

i managed to talk my way into a job at atomic books, one of the best bookstores in the country. it's harder than i thought it would be, but i'm thankful to be in such an enlightened environment (compared to my previous job in a casino.) i sell zines and comics for a living now, so i'm very thankful for that.

i have started a new monthly mailer called east coast adventures, available by subscription. contact me for more info. i also started a choose-your-own-adventure service where i mail people chapters of a fictional story, then let them decide what the next chapter will be about, also available by subscription. other than that, just trying to find a good copy connection out here so i can continue churning out zines. i may attend santa fe zinefest in april, and also chicago zine fest in may. put them on your radar.

mailing comments

al fry - once again you offer lots of very interesting stories and conspiracy theories, with no actual proof. yes, insiders run the world, i agree with you there, but you offer no evidence or solutions. i can't believe you called trump 'honest.' even his supporters know better than that. he lies at every single press conference. he's an entertainer, nothing else. a horrible person, a horrible president.

you and i disagreeing on politics and conspiracies is one thing. but your outdated and misogynistic views and comments about women are more than i can handle. did you try to make a clever joke about domestic violence? you are an embarrassment to this entire zine, and it surprises me that i'm the only one to speak up. we really need some diversity in cuneiform.

jct - it was nice to have some stories from you, but boy is your handwriting tough for me to read. i really liked your story about the publisher and the comic, and wonder if it ever got printed and finished.

idy - once again i'd like to say that cuneiform is looking really great, and i love the covers. thank you for putting so much time into it. i really liked reading about your zine collection. i used to have soooooo many zines, many from my days running a distro back in chicago. before our move out here i trimmed it down to only about 1,000 or so of my all time faves. but yes, printed time capsules, what a great way to put it. now that i am at a zine store which has been in business for 25 years (a fuckin long time!) i have been slowly going through some of their random backstock and reading a lot of old zines like heartattack and mrr, from the 90s. and i love finding old zine reviews, of mine or others that i've read.

frederick - i'm bummed out and sorry to hear about your lack of a radio show. what a shock to your system. but you seem okay with it. maybe take a break and get back to it in a ~~year~~ year or two. thank you for the stories about mb, they were fun to read.

jason - keep up the flyer campaigns and keep us updated! send some to the new guy, david in canada, it sounds like he would love them. the city of baltimore doesn't have much money, so a lot of the infrastructure, like roads, post offices, etc, are in bad shape. this includes their street signs, many of which are faded beyond readability. so my latest project, since moving here, has been removing the signs, repainting them, and putting them back up. so far i have only traced and re-written the exact phrasing and signage, doing my best to make it look 100% legit, but little by little i plan on getting more creative. it's street art, but so far people who have seen me do it actually thank me, because what good are old blank signs?

david - welcome aboard, and thank you for writing to me. i liked reading about how you became involved in the zine world. i also liked that you mentioned hp lovecraft being racist. i have never looked into it or read much about him, but people i know who are smarter than me all say the same thing. 'hp was a genius, but... kinda racist.' i loved all your zine reviews. oh, and i also used to love all the classified ads in mrr. does anyone know if slug & lettuce is still around? they always ran tons of classifieds, and would print the for free. i wrote to you today to mail you a couple addresses of mail art people i know. mail art is cool, but i'm sort of over that phase of my life. i just prefer a simple letter or postcard, i don't need random magazine pages or your ~~receipt~~ receipt from taco bell, know what i mean?

Zinester Interview!! – Thrifty Times

In past issues of Behind the Zines/Cuneiform I have reviewed the zine "Thrifty Times," and in this issue I thought I would interview the zine's creator, Sarah MacDonald. Thrifty Times is a zine that centers completely around (duh) thrifting and thrift stores. Thrifty Times comes out bimonthly, and is even available through subscription.



Sarah, how long have you been making Thrifty Times, and how consistent have you been with the "monthly" status?

I started Thrifty Times back in 2012 (has it been that long?). It came out more sporadically at first, and then I decided to move to a monthly format. That lasted quite a while, but a year or so ago I changed to bimonthly. It was just getting too difficult to produce an issue every single month, especially because at that time I was also putting out a bimonthly zine called "Seriously? Yes." I felt it was necessary to reduce the frequency to ensure the quality (and my sanity) stayed in tact. That being said, I have been fairly consistent with meeting deadlines, but I do allow myself to miss them on occasion. For example, I didn't

have enough time for making the November/December issue because of the holidays, so it will be out in January.

Most zines come out so infrequently that a subscription is out of the question. How tough is it to make your self-imposed deadlines, and how tough is it to maintain an accurate subscription list?

I don't usually find it very difficult to meet my deadlines, unless there's something out of the ordinary going on (such as the holidays, or a long vacation). None of my subscribers have seemed to mind if I miss a deadline, as they purchase a subscription for a certain number of issues, not a length of time. So even if I'm a bit late, everyone still gets the same number of issues (eventually). The housekeeping aspect is pretty simple - I keep track of everything in a spreadsheet. If I had hundreds of subscribers it might be more of a burden, but with the current modest list it's no problem. I like selling subscriptions the most because it gives me a great feeling to know that my readers have enough faith in me to sign on for a long haul, and not just buy a random issue and forget about it.

The actual production of a monthly or bimonthly zine is a rigorous schedule, but consistently coming up with new material seems like even more of a challenge. But one of the great things about your zine is that you really seem to *love* thrifting. Are you just in thrift stores every day, or what?

I'm not in thrift stores every single day, and that is a darn shame. I do go pretty much every week, however. It never gets old. A thrift shop is a museum of old stuff, library, video rental store, clothing shop, record store, craft supply shop, antique store, furniture warehouse, kitchen shop, bad art gallery, toy store, and just a fascinating place to observe people. Plus, everything is for sale and it's dirt cheap. Why would I not want to constantly be there?

Does your creation of the zine affect how you thrift? What I mean is, often in my life I think, "Oh, this will make a good zine story." What's the balance between documenting something you do, versus looking for something to document?

Most of the stuff that I write about are things that I'm drawn to for personal reasons and am naturally interested in. However, sometimes I do see an item that I wouldn't have otherwise purchased, but recognize that it would make a good article for Thrifty Times. A regular CD review feature called "The \$2 Bin" is a good example of that - I would never have purchased anything by The Verve Pipe, but I thought it would make an interesting review...no matter how wrong it felt to fork over 2 bucks for it. (Luckily, it's easy to reverse thrift things I don't want to keep!) Some of the "peculiar picks" that I feature are actually items that I didn't even buy, but just photographed in the shop. I don't necessarily need to OWN a Liberace in lederhosen doll, but I can't deny that it deserves some attention.

The most recent issue I read was #43, "The 80s Issue." You've done a lot of other themed issues. Do you plan those ahead of time, then go out looking to thrift stuff that fits the theme? Or do you just thrift so much that at some point you realize you have a bunch of stories about a particular topic?

It's mostly the latter. Putting together an 80s issue was a cinch based on stuff I already own, and sometimes it's fun (and focusing) to have a theme. But even when a theme seems like a no-brainer, I usually still have to look for something or other to round out the issue. The travel related issues (England, Germany, Florida, Tokyo, etc.) are a lot more of a scavenger hunt. Those start with me traveling somewhere and end with me searching my local thrift shops for some junk related to the place I visited. Sometimes my husband (Nick Burgess, also a contributor/cartoonist for Thrifty Times) will suggest themes as well. He came up with the idea for the fitness issue, which I think turned out pretty fun.

What is your top pick, #1, favorite thrift store you've ever been to?

Urban Renewals in Allston, MA. Luckily this is about a half mile from where I live. It's huge, has great turnover, and is insanely cheap. They will put anything on the shelf, from an empty pickle jar to an antique shaving mug, and price them both for 99 cents. They just don't give a crap. They're more interested in moving stuff out the door than being picky about how much they get for any single item, and that's a formula for finding a lot of treasures.

What do you want from a good thrift store?

I am not interested in a "curated" shop. Show me to a place with messy piles, bad organization, dust bunnies, and weird smells, where half of the shelves are filled with pure garbage, and I'll be happy. I'd much rather have to do some searching than pay through the nose because the shop owner thought they deserved a premium for something they call "80s vintage". Thrift shops definitely have changed over the years - back in the 90s they were cheaper, messier, and full of stuff from the 70s! These days 90s cast-offs are more common, which makes sense given the passage of time.

What sorts of zines do you like to read? What are some of your favorites?

I mostly buy/trade zines when I'm participating in zine fairs and I look for zines that have a good amount of actual reading content. I like artwork, but I'm typically more interested in something that I can read. I also look for zines that are more on the humorous/lighthearted side, which can be hard to find! One of my favorites is all about the author's food preferences, which were extremely particular. I can't remember what it was called, but it was really funny and relatable. (*ed. Note: Might be "My Complicated Relationship With Food"? There are three hilarious issues.*)

Any final thoughts, words, or stories you'd like to share?

Support your local thrift shops and zinesters!

www.thriftyzine.com