

# BEHIND THE ZINES

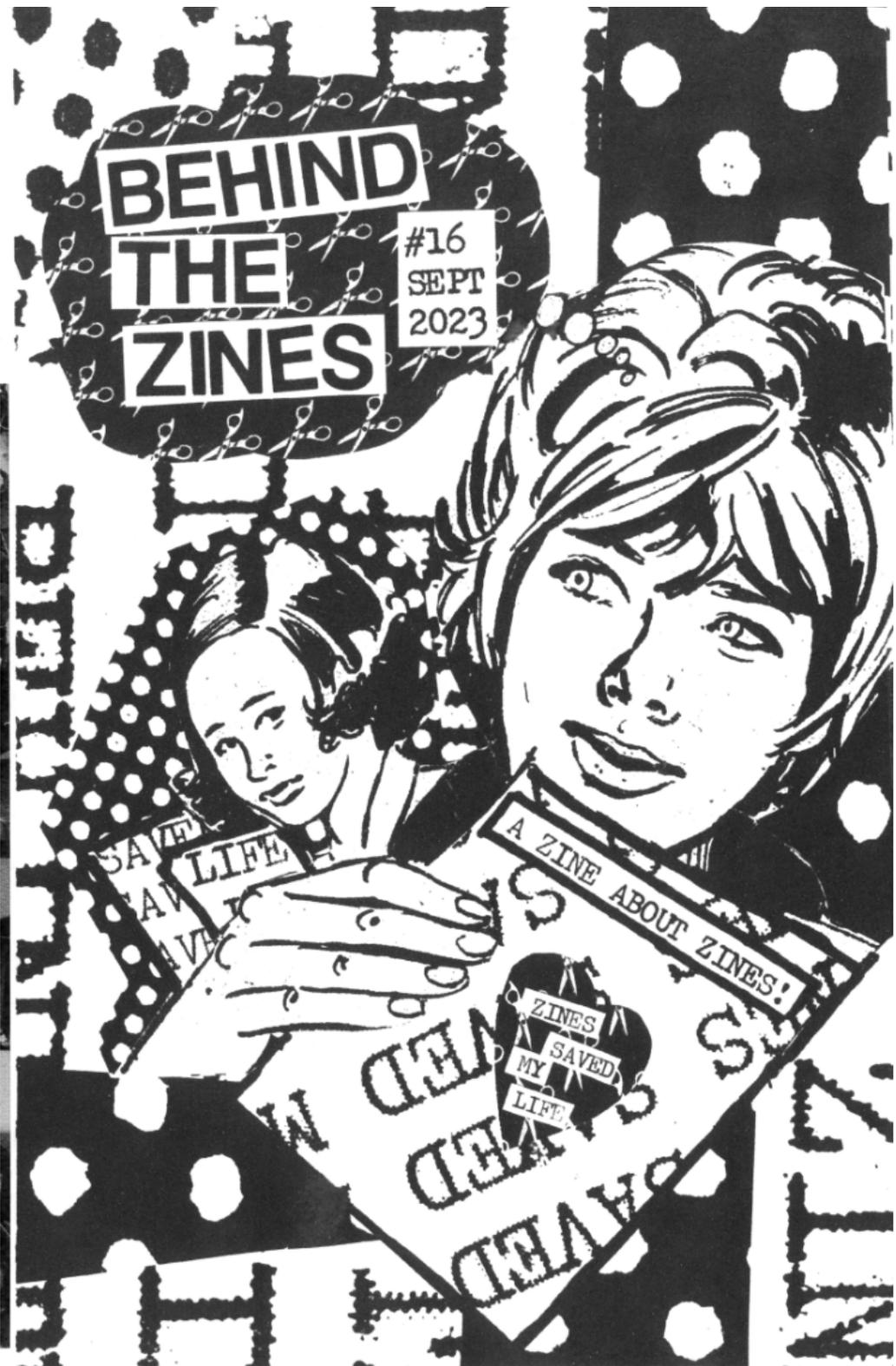
#16  
SEPT  
2023

SAVE  
LIFE  
SAVE  
LIFE

A ZINE ABOUT ZINES!

ZINES  
SAVED  
MY  
LIFE

IN  
CREATED  
CREATED  
CREATED



## Finally, a Themed Issue

Each time I ask people if they'd like to contribute to a new issue of *Behind the Zines* (and I'm always trying to get new people involved) their first response is often, "Sure, what's the theme?"

I'd never thought about having a theme for this zine, because as it says right there on the cover, this is "A zine about zines." ZINES. That's the theme. That's always the theme. All I want is for this little publication to be a place where we can all get together and talk about what we do. *Modern Drummer* is just a magazine about drumming, *Juxtapoz* is a magazine about art. That's all the theme you need.

But when I read the introduction to *Ornery Cuss* a few months ago, something Krystle had written really hit me hard. She told a story about a time when zines saved her life. And by writing about it 2 decades later she implied that they have continued to do so.

I reflected upon my own life, and my own relationship with zines. I've always loved writing, ever since I was a little kid. My first journals were in elementary school, my first pen-pal was at age 9. I was making "booklets" as a 10-year old, and started my first newspaper/magazine/publication around age 16. I'd collect stories from my friends, slap them together and copy them in the school library, then distribute the finished product to the 30 people who might actually read it. I included hard-hitting stories like "How to do a kickflip" and "The history of the chain wallet."

I'd been printing that thing, whatever it was, for about a year before I ever saw a zine. I was at a music festival and some stranger walking past me handed me a copy of *Happy Goat #6*. "Whoa!" I said to myself, "This is like what I do, only way, way better!"

It was my first zine, a little rag out of Ankeny, Iowa. It was mostly about music, but with other bits of life strewn about as well. Nothing in there explained what a zine was; **it explained itself**, by simply existing. The last few pages were reviews of other zines. I think I wrote to every single one of them, and was thus introduced to *zine culture*, as well as zines themselves.

I think about that random dude who handed me a zine at a music festival. He didn't say a word, just thrust it into my hand as we walked past each other. It changed my life forever. If it hadn't been him, with that zine, it may have been someone else, with some other zine. Still, the moment was pivotal.

Zines took root in my life, and have continued to grow ever since. There have been streaks of time, a year here, or a year there, where I didn't do zines, or was only marginally involved. But I keep coming back to them. They are my favorite type of art to consume, my favorite type of art to make. My favorite way to express myself. The thing I think about when I first wake up.

Zines have shaped my life, changed my life, and driven my creative energy for 25 years. I love everything about the culture, the scene, the process.

So, yeah. Zines saved my life. All of our lives. In one way or another. In a world where climate change is always worse, politics are always worse, and capitalism is ruining everything around us, zines remain pure. Zines are better than they ever have been.

So I gave this issue a theme: Zines Saved My Life. Some people ran with that theme, others wrote on a totally different topic. Perfect. Will the next issue have a theme? I'm not sure yet.

*Ornery Cuss* is available through Behind the Zines Distro. Or email Krystle directly: [awkward\\_stutter@yahoo.com](mailto:awkward_stutter@yahoo.com)

The back page of this zine has contact info for all the contributors, and another page lists 8 distros for you to check out. Stay connected, stay strong.



*Billy* ↑  
#

## A Promise to Keep

by K. Ratticus

This kid with yellow eyes used to tell me in high school that I was "so ugly that I should just kill myself." He was always saying mean things to me. Once he told me he was gonna cut my head off and laugh as I bled out. Another time he said he wished I had been shot at Columbine. Something about that last one really fucked me up and I had the first of what would later be called, "an episode." I wasn't a bad kid that acted up all the time but my teachers were done with me. Some counselors would meet with a juvenile officer and they called my mom to come get me. They all agreed that scared straight was the way to go and before the end of that day, I was being checked into a youth psychiatric hospital. After 24 dehumanizing hours of telling my story over and over to strangers, I had to agree to go back on generic prozac if I wanted to go home. Mom got my prescription filled and picked up McDonald's for dinner. McDonald's was a treat for good grades or birthdays and tonight it was an apology. "I'm sorry you're fucked up and have to take pills." I looked out the car window at the rolling farmland, whizzing by the interstate, and thought about dying because none of it mattered and nobody cared.

There was a package waiting for me at home, my friend had sent me a bunch of stuff from Chicago. Stickers and buttons and these little diy magazines. I had never heard of zines before but there was one called *Burn Collector*, and another called *Caboose*. There was *Tight Pants*, *Proof I Exist*, *Pick Your Poison*, and *Loitering is Good*. I studied each one closely, reading them over and over. I showed them to friends and made them read them too. Then I started to make my own zines and I wasn't thinking about dying much anymore.

**Ever since then, I have enjoyed telling folks that in a way,  
zines saved my life.**

After the episode and my hospital stay, I had to go to the alternative school. That's where they dumped the poor pregnant students and bad home lives. One day, the principal called me into his office for being disruptive by bringing my zines to class. Content was not coded in these things, they were an honest airing of the whole trailer-park's laundry. Maybe he felt like the less he knew the better. The principal asked me what I was gonna be doing with my life in 20 years and with my whole chest I answered, "I'll still be makin' zines."

Looking back now I don't think anybody believed me. So I guess I've got a promise to keep. Fuck those guys.

*(This piece originally appeared in Omery Cuss, one of my favorite zines to come out this year. I highly recommend it. --billy)*

# Pseudonyms!

## Skank Krystle

The first hot striking pangs of my teenage rebellion began with the word “skank”. While most would define it as a promiscuous individual, in the rural community where I grew up it meant white trash. The second most popular definition on Urban Dictionary states, “Skank is a derogatory term for a (usually younger) female, implying trashiness or tackiness, lower-class status, poor hygiene.”

The high society of public school put me in this box and when I grew tired of feeling bad about it, I made the word mine. With fabric paint and scraps of material I fashioned my own DIY clothing brand. “Skank Brand.”

Creating mock logos of Tommy Hilfiger and Adidas, “Skank Brand” would be painted down the side of sleeves and across chests. Hand sewn labels stitched on the back of thrift store trousers. My own sense of style in high school was heavily talked about by students and I went from being known as “That skank, Krystle” to “Skank Krystle.” A moniker that followed me online in the early 2000s, from chat handles to LiveJournal usernames. When I began creating my own zines, each one signed off as “Skank Krystle.” After graduating, when I became more involved in performance art, I went by the simplified and pretentious “The Skank.” It fit this non-binary and feral child-like persona I would adopt for creative purposes. Other times, in a more foppish variant, I was “The Dapper Skank.” But in my early 20s, when I began to write more serious prose, it felt like it was time for Skank Krystle to mature a little.

## **So I gave her a last name.**

The name came to me one winter when I had caught a pretty bad flu. A neighbor had given me some Sudafed for symptom relief and let me borrow a few movies. By the time the medicine had taken hold of my brain and made me loopy, I was halfway through *The Great Mouse Detective*. The cartoon’s villain is a big fat pompous rat voiced by Vincent Price, Ratigan. I was a rat lover, keeping rodents as pets most of my teen years and Vincent Price was my high school celebrity crush. It was only natural that I became obsessed with the character.

First considering “Ratigan” as my new handle, I desired something more scathing to the ear.

### **Rat-i-cuss.**

At the age of 21 I became K. Marie Ratticus. Different variations have been signed to my writing and paintings, KM Ratticus, Krystle Ratticus, and now almost 20 years later I usually prefer K. Ratticus. And when the day comes that I’m worm food and a tombstone is erected in memoriam, I hope it reads in full:

**\*THE DAPPER SKANK, KRISTLE MARIE RATTICUS\***

### **Juli Jump Rope**

I get a secret kick when I realize my zine friends don’t know my last name. I get mail addressed to Juli Jump Rope, Juli J. Rope, J.J. Rope, and, since starting my Ph.D., Dr. Jump Rope more often than the bills bearing my legal last name. Juli Jump Rope came into being twenty years ago, when I was a 17-year-old twee pop baby. My best friends and I formed the ironically wholesome Fun Club and initiated new members into our fold with this jump rope rhyme: “Fun Club, Fun Club how aptly named. Fun Club, Fun Club, now here’s the game...” we’d give increasingly absurd jump rope challenges like, “Turn around once... Turn around twice... Now do a backflip to add some spice!” We’d invite all the punks, skaters, and rude boys into our fold, and when we went to shows, we’d get the touring bands to join Fun Club in between sets. None of the other members of Fun Club had nicknames, but when I started making zines around this time, I wanted a secret name. I didn’t know anyone who made zines in my hometown, but through the magic of livejournal (2003, man!) and mail order distros I met people like Alex Wrekk, Cassie Ramone, and Kickball Katy, and decided to adopt my own zine name. **Juli Jump Rope was born.** I’ve published all my zines (and my newsletter, The Homebody Herald) as Juli Jump Rope. Even after I took a long, long break from making zines in my 20s, I still returned to my jump rope roots and picked up right where I left off. At first Juli Jump Rope felt like a way to keep my personal life private, but as I’ve grown up, I realize it’s the other way around. People that know me as Juli Jump Rope know the most intimate details of my life, and the people who only know me as my legal name aren’t privy to the personal thoughts and feelings I share in my zines and newsletters. I’m glad to have a fun, goofy zine name that still fits and lets me get vulnerable with my zine friends. Long live Fun Club!!

# Zines Saved My Life

Larry Wolf, June 2023

Zines became a source of joy for me in the middle days of the COVID pandemic when it looked like this would go on forever. January 2021. The depths of winter. My photo buddy Shawn Rowe was teaching an online class on making photo zines. Other photo friends were going to be there. I was psyched. Little did I know it would be more than just another photo class. It would change my life.

Zines answered that impossibly awkward question: “What do I do with my photographs?” Frame them and put on a wall? In an album to be forgotten on a shelf? A few more bits of flotsam and jetsam in the flood of social media?

The thrill of something to hold. Something to pass around. Very tangible. A great way to connect with one Forever stamp during the isolation of COVID. Something beyond the virtual. No big deal. Just do it.



The whole thing engaged me. The challenge of the layout and folding. The challenge of what images to use. The constraints of working with a single sheet. The challenge of the printer not always printing the same (color shifts, front-back alignment). Challenges and constraints that resonated with how I think and how I work.

One of my art buddies started saying that the single-sheet mini-zines I make are my calling card, that everyone should have a zine calling card. What an idea! It echoes to the early days of photography when cartes de visite were all the rage, some personal, some political (check out Sojourner Truth and her phrase “I sell the shadow to support the substance” -- including filing for copyright to protect her sales, though now public domain).



And then finding other zine makers!!! Chicago Zine Club, Zine Party, Quimby's and Zine Mercado became my opening to others, people I now exchange with, people I've become friends with. Plus now, as the in-person indoor events pick up - a whole world.

Zines are how I express the random movements that catch my eye, the deep grief of a friend whose wife has died or the life-affirming energy that my cancer diagnosis and treatment unleashed. Conceptual. Emotional. Rough and ready.



I am drawn into the magic of these paper objects, learning from origami, from mathematics (hyperbolic paraboloids are nested squares), from my childhood (fortune tellers/cootie catchers), and from other artists. It's all marvelous and amazing.

Things I love to make and love to share.

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## Zines Continue to Save My Life

by todd taylor

*Trigger warning: violence*

When I was younger, in the mid-'80s, I was in the back seat of a car, being driven back from Boy Scout camp. The car was so old it didn't have rear seat belts. The front right tire blew out. The car overturned many times. My friend, Pat, who was driving, was killed instantly. I was ejected through the windshield and landed in the median. Two things saved my life. I went through the hole he made in the windshield. Out of pure reflex, I lowered my head, so the top of my skull took the brunt of the impact, not my face, not my jugular. My scalp flapped down in front of my eyes, making me think I'd gone blind, but it was just dried blood pooling in my eye sockets. My brother had been sitting next to me. He only got scratched above his eye, but the trauma never fully left either one of us.



Recovery was slow. Three hundred stitches in my head. I'd almost been completely scalped. For months after the crash, glass shards popped out of my skin, where they'd embedded in my hands, knees, and the back of my head. I was not in a good place physically or mentally. I'd been an ultra-active kid, and for the first time in my life, I couldn't just ride my bike into the desert to vent some

frustration. As part of therapy, I drew, read, and wrote. Three things my mom had done with me, and encouraged, my entire life. It was a way to work through the raging static in my head. Of dealing with grief and loss.

Even though, legally, we were under the protection of the Boy Scouts, the organization officially disavowed any fault for the crash and, in no uncertain terms, told us to sue our dead friend's family for negligence. That didn't happen, but it was a watershed moment for me. Organizations such as the Boy Scouts ask for fealty, for you to follow their codes, to memorize, embody, and evangelize their social structures. If you do, the implication is they've got your back. My brother and I were Boy Scout exemplars until that day. After having followed all their rules for years, I discovered a true tenant of power. It can discard you, invalidate you at any time if you deeply question it, even if you're a true believer. How can an organization claim any moral high ground and not accept culpability for its own actions? I no longer wanted any part of it.

Even at a younger age, I had a shaky relationship with authority. My parents are amazing in this respect. As long as my grades held and I wasn't an asshole to them, we worked out compromises. As a kid, I couldn't articulate why organized religion skeezed me out; I just didn't like it. After an incident when I rammed my head in between the banister railing on the steps up to the church in a last-ditch effort to avoid going and got stuck, I was given the option to sit in the car in the parking lot when my parents went to services. I did that for several years.

One year, I got roped into being in the living nativity scene. You just stand there for hours, looking at a plastic baby haloed by a clip-on light, but I scored being a shepherd. I listened to a duped version of Dead Kennedys' *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables* on repeat on a tape player, played softly, headphones hidden by head swaddling, watching reverent, beatific parishioners' faces pause then walk by to Christmas services as I listened to "Stealing People's Mail" and "Let's Lynch the Landlord," careful not to bob my head, tap my foot, or mouth the words.

During my recovery from the crash, I happened upon zines. I just didn't really know it. I couldn't make a distinction between zines and magazines, because there wasn't that taxonomy at the Tower Records in Las Vegas where I bought them. They were all in the same section, mixed together. I bought the stuff my local library branch didn't carry.

Neither my friends nor I had the vocabulary to break down the difference, but it was instinctual. *Zines talked with you, not at you.* The one that left the earliest, strongest impression on me was *Pow!*, a scooting zine, of all things. I was frustrated I couldn't find any of the music they talked about. It definitely wasn't on the radio. It took years for me to hear Floyd Lloyd And The Potato 5 and find I wasn't that big on their interpretation of reggae. (But the hunt was a lot of the attraction.)

Zines left an impression on me as my questioning of authority overflowed into high school. I was still recovering and self-conscious about my scars. I wore a bandanna to class and was told I couldn't wear it, as they were all "gang-affiliated." (Which is patently stupid in the context of Boulder City in the late '80s.) I decided to make an alternative yearbook for my senior year of high school with a friend. The idea was simple: ask people to write or draw anything they wanted, collect it together, add some cut'n'paste graphics, get it printed. Being a small town, and being a nice-enough weirdo—most people who didn't know me thought I was an exchange student—I collected enough material that it needed an industrial stapler to get three staples through all the pages and form a spine. Since there was no selling allowed on school grounds, we clandestinely sold it out of our lockers and wore buttons that said "Bake Sale" to let our fellow students know we were selling. Was it great? No. Was it empowering? Definitely. I got to say fuck you to the school administration by putting out reading material by the people who are traditionally marginalized and omitted in the official yearbook. Pretty great stuff.

Fast forward almost forty years. Zines—their culture, their history—became more and more in focus for me. I learned by doing, I learned by corresponding and collaborating with hundreds of others. I know I'm fortunate to just be alive. I also know I'm fortunate that I caught the end of the zine boom of the '90s and have been able to have a livable existence, creatively, on my own terms for decades. Ever since 1996, making zines has been my main job. I've been responsible for releasing at least one every two months the entire time, through today.

**You better fucking believe zines saved my life,  
and continue to do so.**

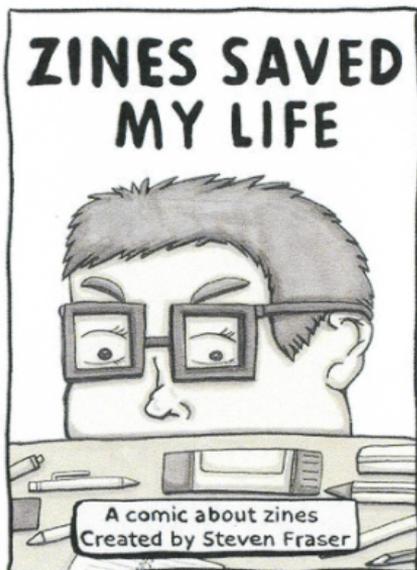
*Todd Taylor is the editor of Razorcake Magazine.*

## Five Questions, with Steven Fraser

When I put out the word that this issue of BTZ was going to have a theme, a friend emailed me to say that he had just read a zine with the exact title of "Zines Saved My Life." When I looked the zine up online, I realized that I had also read that one many years ago. So I tracked down the very busy Steven Fraser for a quick interview. Enjoy!

**Could you tell us a bit more about how zines have saved your life?**

Zines have given me an outlet to express my feelings and emotions and make me feel like my voice is heard, even if it is only in a really small way. One of the things I like about zines is that they can be an unfiltered and unedited way to express yourself. They also tend to be made by marginalised people who are ignored or undervalued in society. Zines have saved my life because they give the opportunity for people to read about different experiences. I have become a better person because I create and read zines. I also live with quite a few mental health and neurodiverse



behaviours. Being creative and making zines has given me something positive and worthwhile to do with my time and granted me a space to relax and express self-care. Zines have been a source of therapy for me.

**You have several zines and buttons about anxiety, about being queer, about not fitting in. How did zines become a place for you to talk about these topics?**

I think the self-published and DIY nature of zines has given me a place to talk about these things. I understand that mental health is now talked about more in media, art, and literature, but zines allow me to talk to people directly. My thoughts and feelings are put in the zines and then I can literally put the zine in the hands of someone at a zine fest or zine fair. That direct relationship made me realise it is important to put honesty into my work and to make sure that

people can read it. Places like zine fests tend to be welcoming places with more diverse people. For example, I am unlikely to be the only autistic or queer person in the room at a zine fest, so they can feel like safer places. I can talk about anxiety and being queer and have a platform to present my feelings.

**You make a lot of zines about mental health. Do you also read a lot of zines on these topics?**

I read lots of zines. I am drawn to perzines because I like to hear about personal stories. When I table at a zine fest, I usually spend the bulk of my profit on other zines. As soon as I see a zine with an LGBTQIA+ topic and a personal story, then I am likely going to buy it.

**In 2022, you won an award for the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival for your short film, "Prosopagnosia." Why did you want to make that film?**

I made the film for several reasons. Prosopagnosia means face blindness and this is something that I live with. That means that when I look at a person's face I might not be able to tell who that person is. I thought that it was an interesting topic for a film and I wanted to make a personal and intimate film about my own experiences. I felt that a short film was the best way to tell this story, as opposed to a zine.

Another reason I made the film is that if I didn't, I am pretty sure some middle class neurotypical prick would probably make a self-indulgent and dishonest film about the topic and completely make a mess of it. I have lost count of how many terrible films I have seen about neurodiversity and I wanted to do something different. My film has screened at lot of film festivals and won quite a few awards so I must have done something right.

**What projects are you currently working on?**

I am currently working on a new film project. It is self-funded and I will hopefully put it out in 2024 sometime. It is an animated documentary about protesting while living with selective mutism. It will be about 3 minutes long and it will take me about a year to make in total. After that I plan on doing some new zines and then work on a bigger animation project that I will hopefully get funding for. I have a day job, so I have to create zines and films in my spare time. I also connect with my community through volunteering, so I don't get a lot of free time. That's why it takes me a long time to make anything.

**<https://stevenfraserart.com/>**

## Zinester Tattoos — by Billy McCall

For years and years I was in a toxic relationship that was as terrible as it was wonderful. We loved hard and we fought hard, and one night we decided to prove our dedication to one another by getting each other's names tattooed on our ankles.

A year after we'd separated we were still having sex, still loving and fighting, but the moment when I knew it was truly over was when she pulled up her pant leg to show me that she had gotten a new tattoo on her ankle, covering my name completely.

She'd finally moved on.  
I needed to as well.

I don't have many tattoos, and the ones I *do* have each hold their own special significance. So I put a lot of thought into what the cover-up should be. I wanted it to represent something that I love. I wanted it to represent *me*.



I love gambling, and I work in a casino, so maybe a roulette wheel, or set of dice? Or maybe some part pop culture I love? Star Trek? Ninja Turtles?

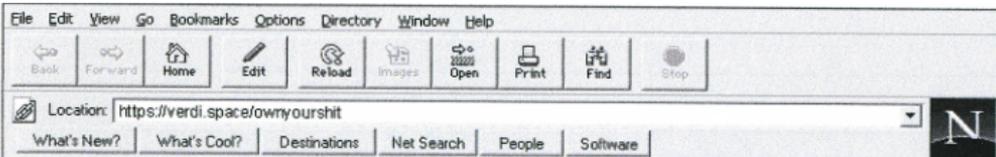
**But the thing I love the most is writing.**

I took a photo of my typewriter, which had been a gift from a friend. I then asked another friend if she would do a black and white drawing of it. I didn't tell her why. She mailed me the drawing a few weeks later, and I loved it immediately.

When I saw my friend a month later, I showed her my new tattoo. She was completely surprised to see her artwork on my ankle. We were in the early stages of falling in love back then. We're married now.

I know my ex's name is still on my ankle, buried underneath, but I don't mind that. She'll always be a part of me. But when I look at my ankle now I think about my friend who gave me a typewriter. I think about my lovely partner, and her art, her beauty. And I think about all the writing projects I have yet to finish.

Have a zine-related tattoo? Tell us all about it!



# OWN YOUR SHIT

By Michael Verdi      m@verdi.space

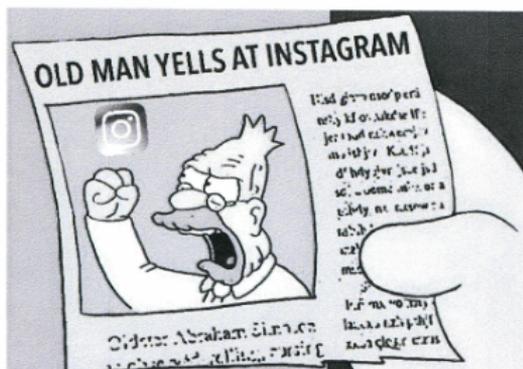
**Making zines has always been a radical act.**

**In 2023, making a website is a radical act too. Let me explain why you should have one and some options for making it happen.**

In olden times when we didn't have shoes or Netflix, we were mostly limited to interacting with the people there in the room with us. Maybe a friend would move away to another city. Boom. Now you had a pen pal (because long distance phone calls were expensive!). Then one day the internet came along and changed everything. It was so exciting because people from all over the world could connect with one another. My first thought was that if only I could somehow make my own website, maybe I could connect with people all over the world too. It was like pen pals but also zines and movies and games and every kind of art combined and supercharged. If you loved art and tech like I did, this was the best thing ever.

One thing I've seen over the years is that it's pretty uncommon to be into both art and technology. As I've gotten back into making and reading zines over the last few years I've noticed this again. Particularly with the dominance of social media, a lot of people who make zines don't have websites and most zine activity is happening locked away on Instagram.

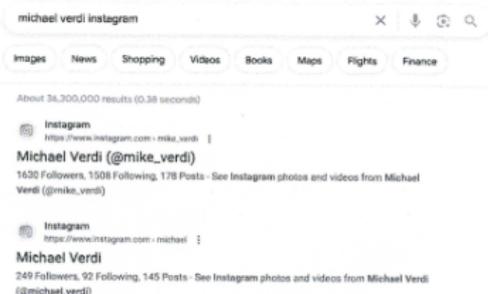
There are of course many reasons to not have a website. Two big ones are that they can be expensive (especially if you pay someone to make one for you), and they can be a lot of work to create and maintain. For a lot of people, Instagram, Facebook, or you name it social media app solves this problem. Just tap out a sentence or upload an image and you're doing it—you're on the internet connecting with people from all over—all while sitting on the toilet.



So while social media makes some things easy, there are some downsides to relying on it as your only online presence. These issues are all generally related to the fact that these places are owned by corporations whose goal is not to promote you to the world but rather to leverage your content to

sell advertising and mine data. So this is why, generally, someone has to have an account to even be able to see your stuff. If they're not logged in they can't be shown advertising while their data is mined. And if you do have an account, the system is designed so that you have to log in often and read everything (including a lot of ads and other things you may not be interested in) if you want to make sure not to miss something from your friends. Personally, I'm not interested in doing that or encouraging others to do it.

Relatedly, when someone does a web search for you or your zine, your profile may show up but it will have the social media sites' branding and it may say a bit about you or maybe it just says how many followers you have. If someone without an account clicks on that link, they might be able to see a few things or they might just be directed to a login page depending on the site.



These people are not me BTW.

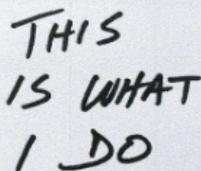


And while right now things might be fine for you, you don't own your account. Meta or Google can do whatever they want with it. They can decide what name you are or are not allowed to call yourself (Facebook). They can change the rules about what kind of content is allowed (Tumblr). They can become undesirable places to be (X, née Twitter). They can also shut down and delete everything (Myspace, GeoCities, Google+, Vine, and lots more).

I'm not saying you should quit social media (but, seriously y'all, FUCK INSTAGRAM). I'm saying you should own your own place on the internet. Use social media to help promote your work if you want but don't make it the only way to represent your work online. It doesn't have to be fancy—it can just be a list of links (like linktr.ee). It doesn't have to cost more than about \$20 a year. When you have your own site, you now have one address to give out. When someone searches for you, you have control over how you appear so people can find you. And if you ever want to change something or delete everything and start over, you can because it's yours.

Here are a few options:

- Buy a URL and point it at a free site on blogger.com (about \$20/yr). Cheap but not very flexible.
- Set up a website & buy a URL on wordpress.com (\$48 the first year, then about \$70/yr thereafter). More flexibility than Blogger but still limited.



THIS  
IS WHAT  
I DO

- Buy a URL and get web hosting for it (about \$120/yr). You can build your own website or have the hosting company install WordPress. You can do just about anything (but that can get complicated).

- Get real fancy and use Wix or Squarespace (about \$200/yr). Less flexible than building something from scratch or customizing WordPress but Wix and Squarespace make it easy to make a beautiful website.

A nice thing about buying a URL is that you can start small by pointing it to a free website and seeing if that works for you. Then later, you take that URL (because you own it) to Wordpress.com or Squarespace or wherever.

I put together a webpage for you that goes into more detail about how these options work. I even made a website template that you can use. Get that and links to everything at [verdi.space/ownyourshit](http://verdi.space/ownyourshit)



## Take Two Zines and Call Me In The Morning

By Jordan Sea

I'm a Gen X pessimist. I'm grumpy and cynical and increasingly so, the older I get. I get so many examples of humans being horrible every day. I fear that we truly have only about 10 years left before life begins to become dire and desperate from global climate change. And I have two teenage kids. I feel deeply depressed about what the global future holds for them. Yes, I talk to a therapist every week.

A lot of people in my position turn to faith. I have been confounded by traditional ideas of faith my whole life. But recently I realized there is one thing I do have faith in, a real and deep trust, a thread of light that inspires me and drives my ambitions. And that's zines and the zine community.

I have struggled mightily with staying on this earth, so I can truly say that zines have literally saved my life. Sometimes this idea seems flimsy, superficial, and shallow. But I realize that I am uplifted by so much more than little booklets. I am privy to other people's childhood experiences, their discoveries, accidents, passion, joy, ordinariness. When I read the personal anecdotes, diaries, reflections of those I don't know very well, from places I've never been, often it reaches into my past and squeezes the shoulder of my teenage self, telling me, "You aren't alone. I do that too."

And zines are how I learn about social history, the real cost and signs of oppression. They shine a bright light on my privilege, allowing me to feel deeply uncomfortable. This is my practice.

Zines are how I learn the answers to questions I don't know how to ask. It's how I learn what stimming is, what being asexual means, how to support disabled folks, how craps is played, what a residential school is, what it feels like day to day to practice drawing, what it's like to grow up under a fascist dictatorship.

The other thing I realized is the massive difference in digesting zines versus most other media. I watch a lot of videos – TV shows, movies, YouTube, TikTok. I love visuals, I love a story, I love discovering a new role that a familiar actor takes on. This is the stuff I mostly grew up on. I'm even talking about fiction books. When I consume those media, I often feel disoriented, distant, floating. And sometimes that's what I'm going for, particularly if my life feels heavy and sorrowful.

However, when I sit and read a stack of zines, I have found that instead of feeling disoriented, other people's stories presented in this way have the effect of grounding me more in myself. In a way, it doesn't make logical sense. I'm still consuming a story that is not mine. But there's something about the familiarity of it, especially if I know the person who wrote it, that allows me to settle down and take in the material, leaving me thoughtful or hopeful or joyful, but still very much myself.

These are hopeful things. They sparkle on the horizon and give me a reason to stay here. Zines are life-giving as much as they are life.

## Everyone Welcome

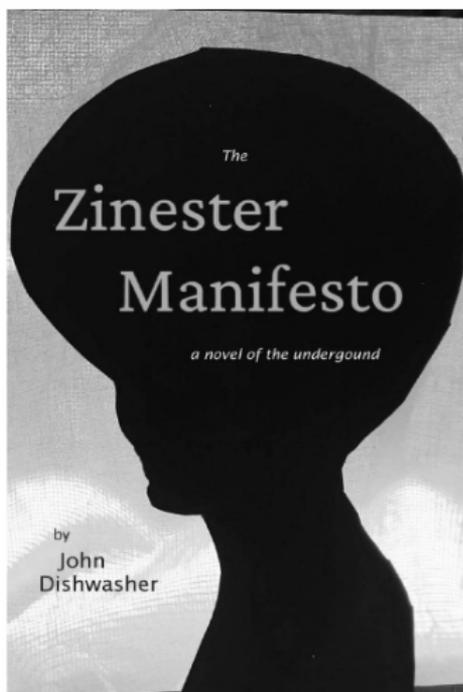
A conversation between Billy McCall and John Dishwasher

*The Zinester Manifesto is a 300-page fictional novel, written by John Dishwasher. It tells the stories of 6 different California zinesters as their lives slowly begin to overlap and intertwine. The book is captivating and well-written, doing all the things a good book is supposed to do, but if you are familiar with zine culture then there are also plenty of details along the way that will keep you smiling.*

*I began reading it while visiting Salt Lake City to attend Grid Fest. What a perfect backdrop: reading a book about zinefests as I was about to attend a zinefest. I'd been toying with the idea of using the theme "zines saved my life" for this issue of Behind the Zines, and this book helped hammer home that idea, as that very theme also runs through The Zinester Manifesto. Rather than a 2-paragraph review of the book, I asked John if he'd like to do an interview.*

**The beginning of *The Zinester Manifesto* introduces us to 6 different characters, but as we work our way through the book one of the characters slowly emerges as the "main character," although all 6 have almost equal page-time. What made you want to tell a story in this way?**

The thing I love most about the zine world is its diversity. Also very inspiring to me is its egalitarian aspirations -- How most zinesters respect other zinesters as equals, regardless of background. So I wanted to reflect these qualities as truly as I could. That meant a diverse cast of characters who get equal time and have equal influence on the plot. Also I've always



been fascinated with the idea of convergence. Having a bunch of characters moving slowly but surely toward each other across a story feels compelling to me. All this prompted the bigger cast.

### **Can you give us a quick description of each character?**

**Ezekiel** drives around SoCal in his convertible lowrider luring cops into pulling him over. When they do, he launches drones from his back seat to record everything they do and makes a zine out of it.

**Blossom**, in her zine, is on a quest to identify and expose “The Man Who Booed Littlefeather” at the 1973 Oscar Awards Ceremony.

**Viola** makes a living (barely) off her art, which includes a BIPOC fairy tale collab zine.

**Clare**, who has a lot of money, decides to confront her own privilege by giving up her car for a bicycle. Her zine is a fanciful art zine involving extraterrestrial plant life.

**Rocky** is an AMAB (assigned male at birth) person who makes a collage fashion zine called “Shake Me the Boom Boom.”

And **Stanley**, at the beginning of the novel, has no idea what a zine is. The reader watches him discover the zine world and then heal from a personal trauma while making his first zine.

**Your character "types" are all over the place. Different ages and genders, different races and backgrounds. It's always risky to write from a perspective other than your own, but it all comes off as believable and real. What did you do to make sure your different "voices" were not only accurate and compelling, but also respectful?**

Thanks for reassuring me that they're believable. Whew! My approach to this problem in general is kind of philosophical. Before we are Black or white or Latinx or woman or man or non-binary or gay or straight, we are just human beings. When I'm writing a first draft, I only worry about that: The human being. Any time you're finding a piece of fiction compelling, in my opinion, it's probably because the writer got that part right. Or at least close. After this, though, to make it accurate and respectful, as you say, I work on how we are *different* as human beings. Because this is so beautiful,

too. Most of these kinds of details in the book come out of my own experiences living and working in different communities around the U.S. In the later drafts, though, I fixate on the differences in vocabulary and syntax that happen during dialogues or interior monologues. To me, how characters communicate is what brings them to life.

**With the 6 different characters, there is really a full range of not only personality types, but also a full range of zine types. Ezekiel and Blossom are making very political zines, trying to affect real social change, while Viola writes an entirely fictional zine. Was it fun coming up with imaginary zines? None of these zines seem particularly connected to the actual zines that you write.**

Yes!! That was one of the funnest parts of the project. I could indulge myself in any kind of zine whim without having to go through the work of actually making the zine. Like “The Man Who Booed Littlefeather” was an idea I had after seeing Sacheen Littlefeather’s speech at the 1973 Oscars on YouTube. But I never started that zine because I didn’t think any single audience member actually initiated that booing, and it would be too much work to track them down even if they existed. So in the novel I got to play out that zine fantasy through a fictional zine maker. Of the many imagined zines peppered throughout the story, like *Kindergarten Knife Fight* or *Lap Cat of the Apocalypse*, all are totally fictional, I believe. Only the title of *God’s Pussy* alludes to a zine I saw mentioned in *Broken Pencil* once, though I changed its content completely. Props to *God’s Vagina*.

**Was this your first novel?**

Actually I’ve finished two full-length novels before this, and a couple of novellas. They are all unpublished so far except for the novel *The Gods of Our Fathers*, which I self-published on my website in 2006. Right now I’m conceptualizing how to serialize one of the novellas as a zine. It’s called *Armageddon Cupcakes* and is based on an epic movie Jody and I did from Honolulu to Massachusetts.

**How long, in total, were you working on *The Zinester Manifesto*?**

It took me two years and two months to write it. It would have taken longer but my wife Jody encouraged me to quit taking day-labor jobs and work on it full-time.

**How wonderful to have people around you who support your work. May I ask who did your editing? What was that process like?**

This project is a one-person show. Besides writing the text, I created the visual art, designed the cover and interior, and edited and published the thing alone. The post-writing part took more than a year. In order to make it easily accessible internationally I had to even set up a legal business entity, which I found agonizing. That's way not my thing. But a book dealer in Poland ordered a copy. So it was worth it.

**Wow! That's really impressive. DIY to the max. It's also very meta, because that process sounds like something a character from your book would do. Did you see parallels between yourself and your characters as were working on this?**

Definitely. The closest parallel at the personal level is Stanley, who, like me, is a middle-aged, cis-het, white male. Thankfully, though, I'm not dealing with his issues. At a philosophical level though all the characters parallel my inner life. The basic theme driving the story is that 'there is only dignity in revolt,' with each character revolting against a different aspect of life that impinges on our dignity: Authority, fear, injustice, conformity, comfort and ease, and in Stan's case, self-destruction. All these revolts parallel my own strivings in some way, though they are manifested in the characters' lives much differently than in mine.

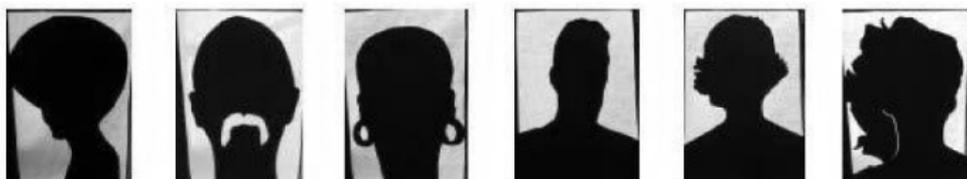
**It's interesting that you say Stanley is revolting against self-destruction, because his original self-destruction seems like a revolt against life itself.**

It's a mixture of both. He wants to leave this life terribly, so in a way he has turned his back on life. But he senses that if he can just wait out the worst of his emotional trauma, he will be glad he resisted doing something irrevocable. Both are there, but the stronger and more deliberate revolt in him is against his urge to destroy himself.



**I think the idea of “zines saved my life” could apply to any of your 6 characters, but the most obvious one is Stanley. At the beginning of the book he’s never even heard of zines, and is literally on the cusp of death. From what, we don’t know, but he’s not doing well. But as he discovers zine culture, his spirit starts to come back, his health starts to come back. What inspired that character-arc?**

For Stanley’s story I went to one of my own deepest fears, something that would be very difficult for me to recover from. I asked myself how could zines help me keep going? The first answer seen in the book is the zine community, and how welcoming and supportive it is. Right at the beginning Stanley finds a zinefest flyer that says ‘everyone welcome,’ and this gives him a little hope, and a hand-hold out of his isolation. Most importantly though is the catharsis of actually making a zine about something that troubles you. When Stanley finally experiments with this, he truly begins to recover. All art heals, I think. But I feel like zines have a special power in this regard because they are so accessible.



**Yes! I love the idea of “everyone welcome,” and obviously that was exactly what your character needed, and what so many of us in real life need when we participate in zine culture. How did it feel having zines as almost a seventh character in this book? A lot of the plots and character developments are heavily integrated with zine life.**

Yeah, I was really shooting for that. There are only a few scenes in the entire novel that do not involve zines in some way. The characters have other stuff going on in their lives, but the story only intersects with them when they’re doing something related to their zines. So the narrative bounces around among all the different facets of zine making – from some random inspiration that you never follow through on, to the satisfaction of the staple and fold session, to worldwide distro, etc. I tried to find a place for every part of the process in the book so all zinesters will recognize themselves in it. But also I knew I might be introducing zine culture to folks who don’t know about it. So I tried to really show how a zine can be

anything. I mean, to Clare her zine is a fanciful pastime. But Viola's zine is an essential part of her income.

**The full spectrum. And for you? What role do zines play in your life?**

Most important to me is the community. Writing is lonely. I've moved around a lot and I'm not social so I never connected with a community until I discovered zines at age 50. After finding my people so late, I am *all in*, making up for lost time. I hit all the zinefests here in SoCal, whether I'm tabling or not. Also, making zines is therapy. Building some piece of writing into a physical, shareable object connects my abstract world to the everyday world. This has shored up my mental health. I would not say zines actually saved my life, but definitely they have steadied and enriched it incalculably.

**John, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me about your book. I highly recommend it to all my BTZ family out there. Any parting thoughts? And if people want to order your book, what's the easiest way?**

My pleasure, Billy! Thanks for having me. It's a real honor to converse with you like this. I guess I would only add the one-liner I use at my zinefest table. When people pick up the book I say, "It's like an origin story for a collective of zine activists." You can get it through my Etsy or Big Cartel shops. But I always encourage folks to buy it from the indie bookstores that stock it, if they can. They are Quimby's in Chicago and NYC. And in SoCal: The Pop-Hop, Verbatim Books, Page Against the Machine, Speakeasy Books, and Caradura Cafeteoria in Tijuana. You can also order it through any bookstore that sells new books, or through online retailers.

**<https://www.etsy.com/es/shop/JohnDishwasher>**

**<https://johndishwasher.bigcartel.com/>**

# We Got Merch!

Shirts look like this! Cover art from past issues!



Stickers look like that!

(Photo of Billy McKay, not Billy McCall)

Behind the Zines tshirts, only \$12! Stickers for \$1.  
Subscriptions for \$8 a year. Talk to Billy for more info.

[iknowbilly@gmail.com](mailto:iknowbilly@gmail.com)



## Zines Changed Saved My Life – Ed Kemp

Neither zines, nor zine making, *saved* my life. No longer drinking an excessive amount of alcohol on a daily basis is what did that. But zines definitely have *changed* my life dramatically, and ultimately, for the better.

While my zine making and drinking overlapped for a bunch of years, it wasn't until I quit the latter that the former became much more important to me. I found that since I wasn't spending most of my waking hours in a drunken stupor anymore, I had way more free time on my hands, and making zines filled a lot of the downtime that used to be spent palling around with my ol' buddy Jim Beam. It was also during this time of not writing under the influence, WUI if you will, that I tried to start to care about the way things looked and sounded. Not every zine needed to be a cut and paste, punk rock, fan-zine pile of shit. While they still could be cut and paste, punk rock, fanzines, they didn't have to look like shit. And when they did, I totally meant to do that. I could indeed actually proofread and align, and maybe even *realign* stuff, so it didn't get cut off by the photocopier. I'm not saying that my writing or zines are any better these days, but they do usually have fewer careless mistakes and bad margins.

Of course, taking up time is not the only thing I get from zine making. I could pick up any number of hobbies if that was the only thing I was looking for. No, I also enjoy the community surrounding zines and feel that the people in it have enriched my life. From just postal pals to actual real life homies, there is a whole roster of folks I would not have known if not for zines. My mail is way more fun, my vacations are fuller and my life is generally better because of the people I now know. For someone who doesn't like to make new friends in adulthood, this is pretty huge.

This doesn't even take into account the feeling I get when I'm at a zinefest and have the chance to come in contact with like-minded people. Having conversations with strangers about process, paper, inspiration, other zines, mutual acquaintances, the weather, music, whatever - this is not something I normally do in my personal life, but definitely feel at ease doing it at a fest. Plus, at events you get to see fest friends - people you only see once a year at zinefests and are always happy when you do. Look, finding good, clean fun as an adult can be difficult. Luckily, most zinefests offer just that.

I've owned my own business, skated and played in a punk rock band, so the DIY spirit has always been with me from the days of building my own ramps to making flyers, organizing events, marketing with no money and things like that. But making zines has only strengthened and honed that spirit even more, which has increasingly spilled over more and more into my personal life over the years as well. I look to reuse or re-purpose almost everything, which has made me both more ecological and economical at the same time.

The downside to this is that I'm now a borderline hoarder when it comes to certain things, but you take the good with the bad. All of this is because zines have kept me connected to that DIY ethos and has made me want to make, rather than buy things, now that I no longer skate, sing or run my own business.

So I honestly don't know where I'd be without zines. Maybe after I quit drinking I would have dove into a gym addiction like so many other folks in my situation do, or found some other mind-numbing hobby where I would have been bored outta my gourd and fumbling through a midlife crisis right now, it doesn't really matter either. Post drinking, I dedicated a lot of free time to zines and ultimately love how my life has turned out because of it. Shoot, I met my partner because she heard me on a podcast talking about a zine that I make (true story that I'll save for another BTZ.) So yeah, I guess looking at it from a happiness and sanity aspect, zines have *definitely* saved my life.

# The Case For One-Pagers

By Michael T. Fournier

In 2011 my buddy Ben Stein invited me to a reading in Northampton, Massachusetts. Some of his stuff had been anthologized by *The2ndHand*, a lit journal. I had a great time listening to all the readers, and hanging out afterwards. Ben introduced me to this guy Todd Dills, from Nashville, who ran the journal.

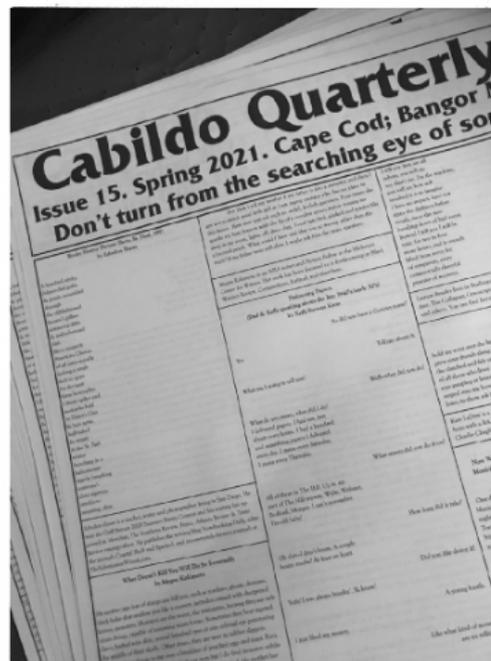
It was a single printed 11 x 17 page.

A light bulb went off over my head.

I did zines in the nineties – five issues of *Adhesive X*, punk rock from New Hampshire; and two of *Frame 609*, which compiled diary vignettes I sent via email. But neither of these zines came out as often as I would have liked, because I couldn't afford to print them. Pretty much the entire run of both zines was somehow scammed.

Todd's broadsheet got me started putting out my own one-pagers. In 2012 I began *Cabildo Quarterly*, a lit journal after the same fashion as *The2ndHand* – fiction and poetry on a single 11 x 17 sheet. The great poet Lisa Panepinto came on as poetry editor in 2013 and stayed until the journal folded in 2021. We published tons of new and emerging writers over our ten year run.

And in January 2021 I got the itch to start doing diary vignettes again, so I started *Policymaker*, a



monthly one-pager which recaps the previous thirty or so days. I sell subscriptions and do monthly mailings and (mostly) break even while keeping in touch with friends and people I've met along the way.

**You should do a one-pager. Everyone should.  
And here's why:**

**\*Ease.** I know not everyone has access to graphic design software – or the inclination to use it. If you do, great. Figuring out the rudiments of graphic design isn't too hard, especially if a doofus like me can do it. I usually write around 3500 words a month, which I manage to cram into two columns. The title box for each month's issue is a different font. Early on, I ripped off the Pizza Hut logo, the Survivor logo (I've watched all 44 seasons), band fonts associated with Black Flag and Husker Du. It's fun to think up and execute visual gags like this. And plenty of cool fonts are available online – over at [justseeds.org](http://justseeds.org), for example, an archive of fonts culled from revolutionary publications is available for free.

If you don't have graphic design software (or interest in it), you can do a one-pager by hand easily enough. Over at Shining Life Press, you can check out the *Bullshit Monthly* 1984-1991 anthology, which collects the entire run of zines by crucial NYC scenester Mike Bullshit. Mike started by handwriting a single page's worth of news, reviews and gossip about the New York City hardcore scene. My buddy Ricky Vigil handwrites a one-pager called *The Super Cool Times*, and includes comics he draws.

Plus, there's the ever-present threat of writer's block. So many zinesters feel defeated by the blank page, the urge to produce. A single page is a little less intimidating than an empty word doc.

**\*Immediacy.** How many zines start off with a hangdog disclaimer? You know the one: "hey, sorry I'm so late with this issue. I had a lot of stuff going on," blah blah blah. Putting out a zine can be difficult, especially when contributors have promised stuff they haven't delivered yet. With one-pagers, though, it's easy. Get an idea, work on it, and boom, you're done. Like a band's new record? Write a page-long review. Pissed about work? Rant about your stupid boss.

**\*Affordability.** During the pandemic I unexpectedly got paid for some writing I did, and invested in a desktop printer that does copies, color, and 11 x 17. I know that I'm in a position of privilege, and that everyone doesn't have access to printers like this. With that said, printers are getting cheaper all the time. So are ink and toner. The barrier to entry regarding purchase is getting lower.

If you don't have a printer at your house, maybe you have one at work you can use. Or school. Or maybe a friend has one. Printing a one-pager takes way less time than something with multiple pages. Even if you're paying at a copy shop, it's way more affordable to do a one-page zine than anything you need to fold and staple.

**\*Connection.** I fucking *love* getting mail, so it follows that I better *send* some mail. Hitting ninety or so of my closest friends via the USPS every month means that I maintain correspondence with a swath of rad folks in an organic way that has nothing to do with liking a post or retweeting something or hitting the 'ha ha' button on my phone. Certainly there's a place for social media in the zine world, but it's nice to operate outside of that world, too.

Cape Cod is a weird place to live – it's tough to find people of similar minds here. Having a one-pager to hand to people makes connecting and re-connecting a little easier.

Some of the best experiences I've had in the zine world have come because of one-pagers. They're easy, cheap, affordable, and, above all else, they're *fun*. You should do a one-pager!

*Michael T. Fournier is a regular contributor to Razorcake, America's only nonprofit punk zine. He writes and publishes the monthly one-pager Policymaker and co-edits the fanzine Zisk, one of many ways to be a baseball fan. He and his wife Rebecca Griffin play in Plaza, Cape Cod's #1 band. Track him down at [michaeltfournier.org](http://michaeltfournier.org), [policymaker.bandcamp.com](http://policymaker.bandcamp.com) or even @xfournierx.*

*Or, if you're up for a trade, send your one-pager to:  
Michael Fournier - PO Box 530 - Yarmouth Port MA 02675*

# Eight Places to Buy zines!!

Antiquated Future - run by Josh,  
out of Portland.

Behind the zines - run by me, billy,  
out of Albuquerque

Crapandemic - Run by Julia EFF, out  
of Buffalo

Roostercow - Run by Chris, out of  
chicago

Portland Button works - Run by Alex,  
out of Portland (duh!)

wasted Ink Zine Distro - Run by Charissa,  
out of Phoenix

The word Distribution - Run by Ed,  
out of Jersey City

Zine-o-matic - Run by Noah, out  
of Los Angeles

Pick out the one you've never heard  
of, and order something! And let  
me know who I should include  
on this list next issue! ♡

# Zine Camp Choir

By Ayun Halliday

The moment I found out about Complaint Choirs, I started itching to make one.

A complaint choir gathers to sing a crowd-sourced musical litany of aggravation arising from their specific community.

I got my first chance some ten years ago, while bartering my labor for my sleep-away camp children's tuition. I was in charge of programming afternoon activities and correctly figured that by the final week of our 3-week session, the campers would find plenty to complain about.

My only rule was that our chorus couldn't be used as an opportunity to pick on individual campers. The complaints had to be of a more universal nature.

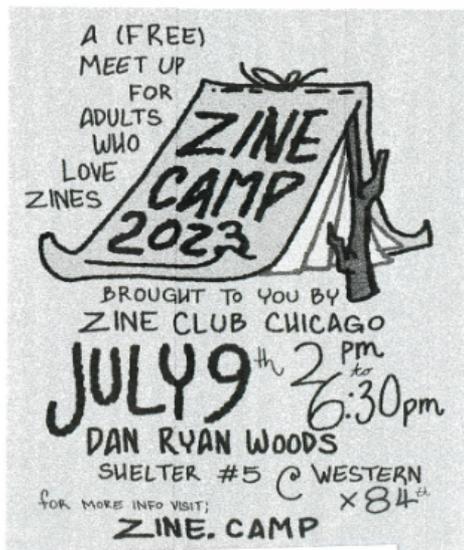
We spent our first couple of hours brainstorming beefs, then crafted them into lyrics, set them to a simple tune and rehearsed for our big performance the evening before parents arrived for pick up.

I can still hear those kids' sweet voices as they stood shoulder to shoulder in a field, bemoaning the bugs in the bathroom and the fact that there were no-seconds on dessert.

I got to take another crack at a complaint choir this summer when the organizers of Zine Camp (Aim Ren Beland, Michael Verdi, Liz Mason and Cynthia E. Hanifin) invited me to be part of their five hour in-person free event in a forest preserve on Chicago's south side.

The other counselor, Jude R. Bettridge, had a zinemaking activity planned.

Was there a similarly fun group activity I could lead, maybe a craft project or...?



Flyer by Aim Ren Beland

Oh friends, I have an activity that will blow your craft project out of the water.

I immediately started wracking my brains for traditional camp tunes that could be adapted to our purposes. I settled on “Today” by John Denver:

*Today, while the blossoms still cling to the vine  
I'll taste your strawberries, I'll drink your sweet wine  
A million tomorrows shall all pass away  
'Ere I forget all the joy that is mine, today...*

It was a campfire favorite back at Gnawbone, the wonderful Southern Indiana sleep-away camp I attended as both camper and counselor in the 70s and 80s. On our final night, we would stand on the hillside holding hands, tears streaming down our cheeks as we warbled its bittersweet harmonies.

It was perfect. Hopefully people would be familiar with it.

More worrisome, would they be willing to sing it?

I'm an extrovert with plenty of performance experience, but that's hardly the zinester norm.

I didn't foresee any hitches when it came to generating complaints. Postage and staplers alone could fill an EP.

But would the attendees prove too bashful to publicly perform whatever tortured rhymes I managed to devise while they were off making zines with Jude?

Furthermore, how would they know what to sing? It's not like our reserved picnic shelter came equipped with a projector and a bouncing ball. I requested some Sharpies and a dozen sheets of posterboard and hoped for the best.



*Ayun Halliday, with her  
kazoo trumpet!*

At the appointed hour I hopped on a picnic table and blew into a trumpet shaped kazoo purchased a couple of weeks earlier at a Brooklyn stoop sale. “Who here knows that old John Denver song “Today”?”

Someone named Helen raised her hand.

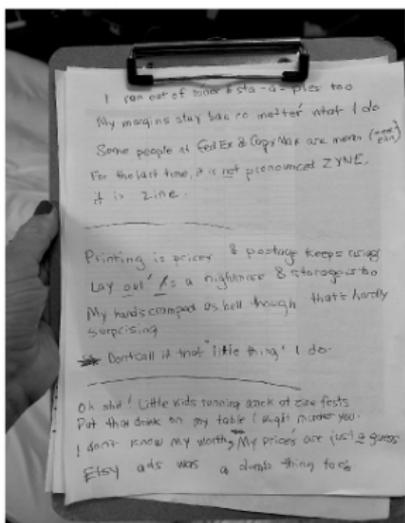
I endeavored to spark memories by singing a few lines.

Helen’s remained the only hand in the air.

Ruh-roh. Fingers crossed Helen’s compatriots would turn out to be quick studies.

As anticipated, the community readily tapped into a rich vein of complaints:

Layout headaches, unsupervised toddlers wreaking havoc on zinefest merch, a mainstream lack of respect for our beloved subculture. Responses pelted down like snowflakes in a blizzard.



“Pricing,” Jude called out.

“Can you go into more specifics about that?”

“...like, trying to figure out what  
my prices should be?”

“\$\$\$ how much???” I scribbled

“And it’s hard to know  
your own self-worth?”

THAT’s the sort of crowd-pleaser you want  
to do justice to, lyrically.

Even in the virtual realm, Chicago Zine Club events are distinguished by an abundant selection of snacks. I grabbed some, rationalizing that higher than usual quantities of sugar and grease might shock my brain into fairy godmother mode. The community had voiced their complaints. Now it was up to me to swap John Denver’s original lyrics for something that captured the spirit of those complaints. Ideally in a way that made rhythmic sense... and rhymed.

**(Never underestimate the neurological boost of  
Trader Joe's Scandinavian Swimmers and  
Bamba Peanut Snacks.)**



*Liz Mason, Aim Ren Beland, Ayun Halliday*

By the time I'd copied two verses and a repeating chorus onto 5 posterboards, the number of attendees had swelled to nearly double. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves, making new friends reconnecting with old friends, folding zines according to Jude's Choose Your Own Adventure Zine template, and writing postcards to zinesters too far flung to attend camp.

Then it was time for swim tests.

Kidding. It was time to find out if people were willing to carry through with the activity. So, yeah, a swim test of sorts for me.

Those with a horror of singing were allowed to opt out by volunteering to stand facing the singers, holding the posters with lyrics.

We accustom ourselves to the melody with a line by line a call and response sing through of Today. Then the poster holders stepped into position, reading left to right.

I had prepared myself to shoulder a large portion of the performative burden, especially after Helen, who was super into it, had to leave early. Liz Mason is a dependable karaoke maven, but who else could we count on to make this turkey fly?

Talk about needless anxiety. Our zine campers raised their voices like melonfarming bells! They swayed in unison and leaned into the emotions in hilarious ways.



After a couple of run-throughs, we emerged from the picnic shelter, performing our Complaint Chorus on a grassy expanse for an invisible audience that far outnumbered the poster holders, Cynthia's nieces and nephews, Michael's camera and Quimby's livestream.



To sing along with us, look up John Denver's "Today", then toddle over to this link:

<https://www.ayunhalliday.com/news-and-events-posts/zine-camp-complaint-chorus>

(Chorus)

I ran out of toner and sta-aples too  
My margins stay bad no mat-ter what I do  
Some people at Fed Ex and Copy Max are mean  
For the last time, it is NOT pronounced zyne, it is zeen.

Printing is pricey and postage keeps rising  
Lay out's a nightmare and storage is too  
My hands cramped as hell, though that's hardly surprising  
Don't call it "that little thing" I do

(Chorus)

I ran out of toner and sta-aples too  
My margins stay bad no matter' what I do  
Some people at Fed Ex and Copy Max are mean  
For the last time, it is NOT pronounced zyne, it is zeen.

Oh shit! Little kids running a-mok at zinefests  
Put that drink on my table, I might murder you.  
I don't know my worth - my prices're just a guess  
Etsy ads was a dumb thing to do

(BIG FINISH! Chorus)

I ran out of toner and sta-aples too  
My margins stay bad no matter' what I do  
Some people at Fed Ex and Copy Max are mean  
For the last time, it is NOT pronounced zyne, it is zeen.

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*Photo credits to Michael Verdi. Looks like a super fun day, we all want to go next year!*

## Pertinent Info

Behind the Zines comes out twice a year, in March and in September. It is edited and published by Billy McCall, but is a group effort with a rotating cast of characters. If you'd like to contribute, please get in touch. Soft deadline for issue #17 is Jan 1<sup>st</sup> (rough draft) and hard deadline is Feb 1<sup>st</sup> (finished draft).

[iknowbilly@gmail.com](mailto:iknowbilly@gmail.com)

or

**Billy – PO Box 8818 – Albuquerque, NM 87198**

The cover of this issue was designed by Alex Wreck, zinestress extraordinaire. She writes *Brainscan*, which consistently has some of the best layouts of any zine out there. She also runs Portland Buttonworks, so if you like the cover go buy something from her.

The back-cover is a collage of photos which were submitted by Nicole Morning, who organized the Las Vegas Zine Fest this year, in Las Vegas, New Mexico. Her zinefest tote-bags have now traveled far and wide.

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Subscriptions to BTZ are \$8 per year (for 2 issues, postage included.) Venmo, paypal, or cash accepted. Get in touch for more info.



Las Vegas

Zine Fest,

2023!



I was there!



[www.behind-the-zines.com](http://www.behind-the-zines.com)