

No. 19  
March 2025

# Behind the Zines



**A zine  
about  
zines!**

Hello, everyone, and welcome to issue #19 of *Behind the Zines*. Every time I start to put together a new issue, I'm convinced it won't be long enough. Then when I start working on the layout, I almost always realize that I have way too much material. It's a wonderful problem.

Thank you to everyone who contributes to this zine, and thank you to everyone who reads it. In these past six years, BTZ has steadily grown, and hopefully serves as a connection point for the zine community.

We need as many connections as possible these days. Life has always been hard on the common folk, and peasants have always complained about the tax they pay to their king. But times are especially dire right now, particularly in America.

Fascism is real, and it really, really sucks. It's no longer a theory, it's happening right before our eyes. Our communities are being attacked, fractured, and destroyed, which is why every connection matters. Every friendship, every pen-pal, every phone call. We're all in this together. If something in here catches your interest, track down the contributor and tell them. Trade zines, share your hardships, build on those connections.

Fighting fascism isn't easy. It isn't cool or fun. But we have to fight. In big ways, in small ways. In every way. We have to fight, because the only alternative to fighting fascism is to *just go along with it*.

Well, fuck that.

Make zines, make art, make plans, make friends.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Billy" with a stylized arrow pointing upwards and to the right.

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Special thanks to West-Coast Ed for helping with layouts

The theme for issue #20 will be "Zine Distros," and the deadline is July 1<sup>st</sup>.

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

# CORK ZINE

by **Danny Noonan**

# FEST 2024

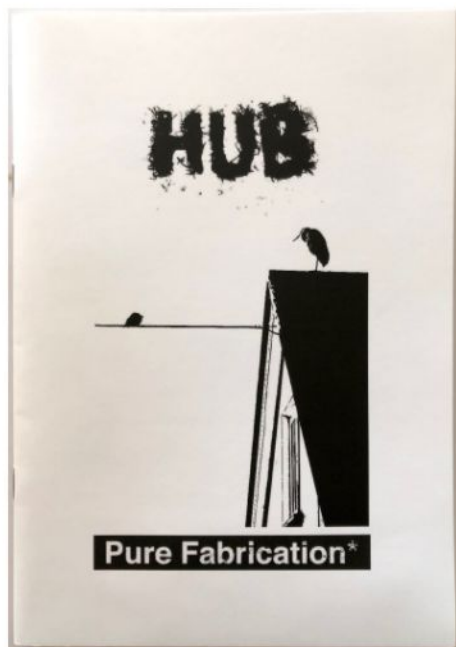
I'd been living in Galway, Ireland for a few months with my wife and our child. The small town on the Atlantic Ocean had book stores, a comics festival, and release parties for local literary magazines. But there wasn't much when it came for zines. For that we needed to head south to the Cork Zine Fest. Originally I envisioned our journey starting with a nice train ride. We'd traveled by train to go back and forth to Dublin and I found it spacious, scenic, and a good way to get some writing done. Planes and trains always seem to give me bouts of creativity. That dream was squashed when we saw that we'd have to change trains and it would take forever. Plan B was to rent a car and go on our first road trip.

Arriving in Cork I realized how much I had gotten used to small town life in Galway. Now we had to deal with bigger buildings, longer waits for restaurants, and worst of all, parking the rental car. It's not that hard to drive a car with the steering wheel on the right, until you have to parallel park in a tight space. Ugh. But we made it.

We found the zine fest and, although it was small, it was packed with talent. When it comes to walking around at any sort of fest I really think you should do a full walk around before making a purchase.

There are so many different styles of publications that fall under the umbrella of "zine." I can appreciate all kinds of zines but I do tend to look for certain types. The more words the better. I like titles that are numbered. One-off issues are fine, but I like diving into someone's ongoing project. Historical non-fiction, personal essays, and reviews will catch my eye. Zines about music are a treat, especially when they cover new, local, or obscure bands. I was around when there was a lot of talk about how zines should be about more things than music, bands, and records. Which I agreed with. But the pendulum went pretty far in the other direction. It'd be nice to discover new music without being online. Also, with the ease that social media accounts can be deleted, it would be good to have some documentation of bands who might otherwise get forgotten.

So that was the type of publications I was on the lookout for. I wasn't disappointed. Here are some of the highlights...



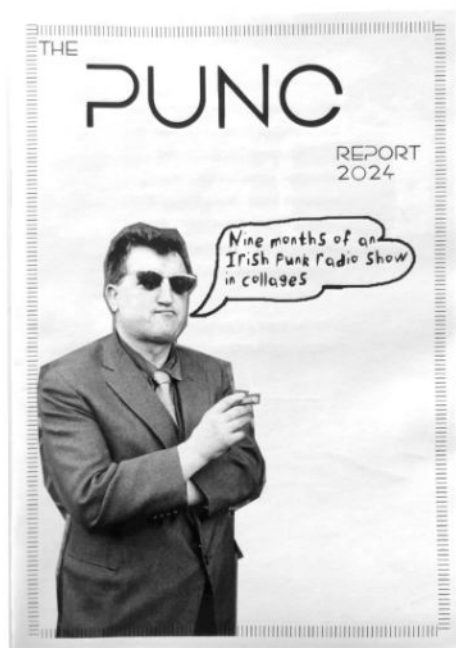
# HUB

*by Richard Howard*

*published by Pure Fabrication*

Five fictional short stories. Great stuff. Quite witty and well-written satirical stories. I really enjoyed these. The writing was smooth and the topics were creative, especially the one about two friends starting a funeral business involving shipping the deceased to a holy place to be eaten by birds. There's another one about the new body mod trend of exposed bones. Came with a download code for audio book versions.

Order the zine and audio at [purefabrication.bandcamp.com/album/hub](http://purefabrication.bandcamp.com/album/hub)



# PUNC

I picked up two of these (neither was numbered so I don't know how long it has been going). They are combinations of playlists from the author's college radio show, laid out over collages. The collages are well made and colorful. There is a news section covering upcoming shows, events, and zine releases. Unfortunately none in Galway. There was a full-page spread for a Halloween Punk Picnic called "Punk is Undead" which made me laugh.

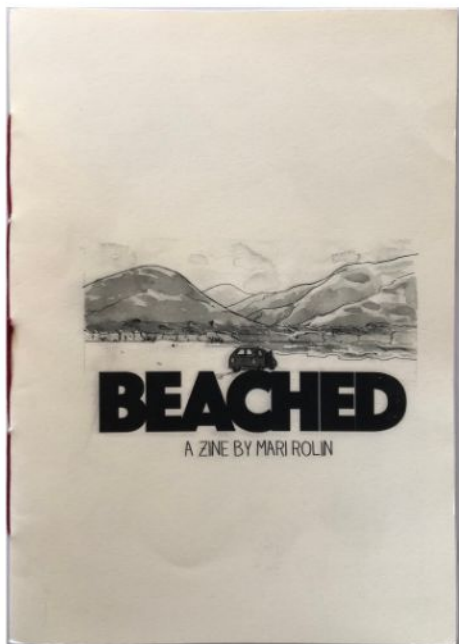
Back issues and info at [punc.neocities.org](http://punc.neocities.org)



# BEACHED

*by Mari Rolin*

A mini comic about a woman who moved to Ireland from Brazil. The art work is good as is the storytelling. It's all about swimming at Irish beaches. Anyone would find this enjoyable, but if you've ever swam at an Irish beach you'll appreciate it even more.



Order her comics at [www.marirolin.com/](http://www.marirolin.com/)

On our drive home we planned on breaking up the drive with a stop at a donkey sanctuary. Unfortunately there was a major wind storm and a fallen tree blocked the road. Our Plan B was to stop off in Limerick. We stumbled onto an art museum next to the park. It was free so we went in. There was a room with zines that had been made by kids with lifelong health conditions. Inspiring stuff and a good end to the trip.



## Subscriptions Available!

BTZ comes out twice a year. For \$8 you'll get 2 issues, postage included. Tshirts available for \$10, postage included. Paypal me at [iknowbilly@gmail.com](mailto:iknowbilly@gmail.com), or send me cash at: Billy -- PO Box 8818-- Albuquerque, NM 87198

## When You Need Them Most

by Ed Kemp

On the morning of August 3<sup>rd</sup>, my partner (Tara) came back into the bedroom after waking up and said, "I think there's something wrong with Ash (our cat)." When I went out to see him, he was hunched over in a strange position and let out a long, low, and what can only be described as sad meow. We took him to his regular vet where they drew blood and urine (bloodwork was good, urine showed a UTI), but could do little else as whatever was ailing him an hour or two before seemed to have passed and he was in tiptop shape the rest of the morning and into the afternoon.

Come early evening, though, his condition seemed to worsen as the sad meows were now accompanied by lack of movement and a look in his eyes like he wasn't all there. A trip to the emergency vet gave us little in the way of answers as, once again, he bounced back before we even got there and a sonogram didn't show anything wrong with his internal organs.

Over the next week, there were a few more visits to the emergency vet each time the sad meows returned, but we got no answers, except for an X-ray that showed that he had arthritis in his back. This set off a 4-month journey in back pain management.

On some days, we were successful with our pain management, including a two week golden period in October where he received no daily pain meds, had no sad meowing incidents and his outsized personality even returned, complete with him greeting me at the door when I came home from work every day. Other days, it seemed like no amount of Gabapentin would help and we could only wait out these sad incidents until they passed and he seemed fine again. Some days we wondered if we were even treating the right thing.

After two particularly bad incidents in November, I took him to see a spinal specialist and it was suggested that he get an MRI of both his head and back. The MRI would require full sedation, which is risky for an older cat, so agreeing to the test wasn't easy, but we hoped it would finally give us answers. And it did. On December 5<sup>th</sup> he got the MRI and on the 6<sup>th</sup> I was told that those incidents were most likely seizures brought about by a very large brain tumor and the next one could be his last. We made arrangements to have him put down on the 20<sup>th</sup> and lavished him with more love than I thought I had in me for those two weeks. He passed peacefully in our arms without having another seizure. He died like he lived, with dignity and surrounded by love.

Are you crying yet? Cheer up because this where the story turns into a zine love letter and starts to read like the sequel to my submission in BTZ's #16 - Zines Saved My Life.

From August to December, I put the finishing touches on 3 zines, and finished the rough draft copy of another. Once I proofread the rough draft and make the corrections, I can put another flat into the archives. I say this, not as a form of self-advertisement or accomplishment (OK, maybe just little), but more



to prove my point, the main crux of this entire article – I *NEEDED* zines over this time period.

Every time Ash was recovering from an incident or even just sleeping soundly in his bed, I was typing, proofreading, formatting, copying and assembling zines or packing envelopes. I needed something to relieve the stress and zines were there for me in a way that nothing else could be. I'd go for walks, but while I was out, I spent most of the time worrying about Ash. Same went with TV, it was too mindless and allowed my thoughts to wander too much. I didn't have the headspace for fun reading and food was mostly an afterthought for me. I had no other outlet but to work on zines. It kept me distracted and as a bonus, I got to be really productive doing something that I thoroughly enjoy—making zines.

Over this same timeframe, I was able to table at 4 different zinefests! Thanks to my loving parents who were willing to have the cat at their place, I was able to join BTZ's Editor-in-Chief Billy McCall in Cincinnati for a long weekend and their Zinecincinnati event. I was even able to participate in a reading down at Indie Northern Kentucky the night before the fest. My mom sent me a photo of the cat lying near the screen door enjoying the clean Pocono Mountain air minutes before I read, which put me in a fantastic mood.

Because my neighbor is so wonderful, I was able to attend Watertown Zinefest in Massachusetts. This fest required a night's stay on the road before the event, but my neighbor checked in on Ashes several times in a less than 24-hour period. See, I told you she was wonderful.

Pete's Mini Zinefest in Brooklyn and Newark Zinefest were both across only two rivers and easy to attend, even if I did miss and worry all day about the cat at home.

These events were enormous for me. Not only did they add a little normalcy back into my life, but I also desperately needed the camaraderie that a zinefest brings. I saw old friends, made new ones, and had countless conversations with strangers about creating, copying and collating. These were discussions that did not involve my cat, and ones that you just can't have with civilians. The zine community came to my rescue without even knowing it. They were just being themselves.

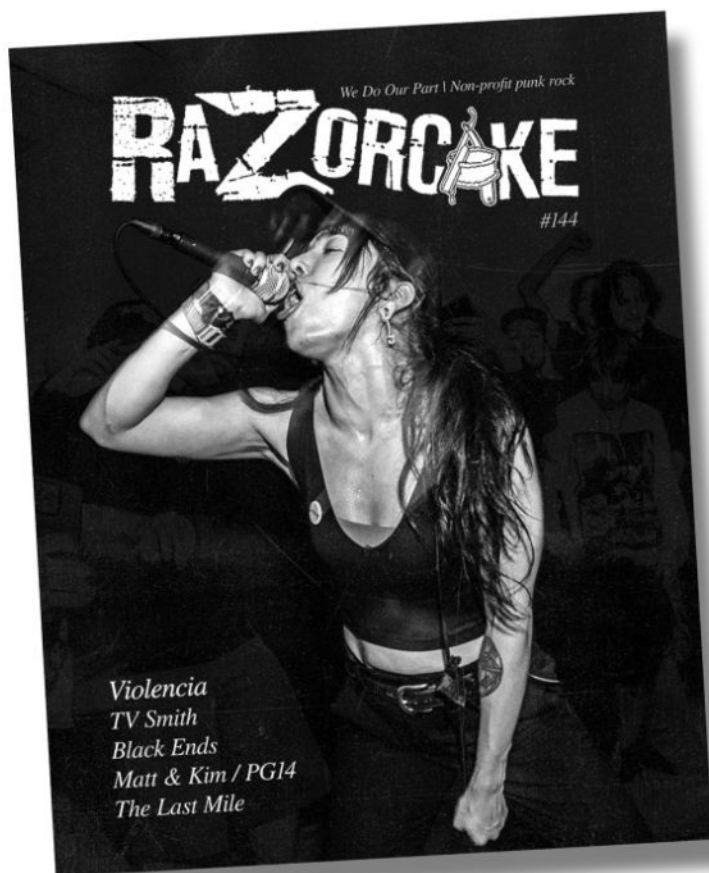
When I needed zines the most, they were there for me. I can't exactly say that zines saved my life in this instance, but they did save my sanity and that is enough for me.



*Purr in peace Ashes, Papa Bear loves you.*

# SO. YOU WANT TO BE INTERVIEWED?

by Todd Taylor



**H**ow does *Razorcake* decide who to interview in our pages? Sounds like a simple enough question. The short answer is we're punk music fanatics and have been for decades. We talk to one another; we're always sharing bands we're digging, always listening. Speaking for myself, I listen to music an average of forty hours a week. If a piece of music speaks to me powerfully enough, I'll reach out to the artist to see if they'd like to be interviewed.



**T**he longer answer is, well, we're a DIY punk zine, so we only really focus on artists who self identify as punk and/or DIY. (We occasionally interview hip hop artists or political folks like Howard Zinn.) There's a saying in DIY punk that there's no separation between band and audience, and we put that to the test. I want to meet on an even field. I'm terrible about caring about celebrities, or people who act like they are. I couldn't care less if a band is "hot" or "hyped" or how many online plays they've had. Popularity's never been a concern for me. No gods, no masters.

**T**hat cuts it down to about 1,000 bands worldwide we could interview at any given time, so there's a checkdown. Are the band's ethics in line with our mission? (No racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or ableist bullshit.) Not only, "Are they shitbags?", but do they "need" *Razorcake*? Are they in a Taco Bell commercial? Are they "sponsored" by large companies or are they "lifestyle ambassadors?" Do they have a management team we have to go through to get to them? If they tick any of those boxes, it's most likely not a good match. We have, max, five slots each issue to feature bands. Are their stories underrepresented, even in punk? That's a more prescient question.

**R**azorcake is intentionally untraditional in many respects. We're not part of the music industry in any way, shape, or form—even in punk—so we don't respond to publicists. We ask bands if they want to be interviewed; interviews rarely happen the other way around. We also don't assign bands for volunteers to interview. We appreciate it when small companies advertise in RZC, but their advertising doesn't affect editorial coverage. We ran a cover story on Mike Park of Asian Man Records, and they don't advertise with us. Mike's done and is doing so much positive stuff for DIY punk. He's a lighthouse, so no second thoughts or regrets there.

**I** began interviewing bands in 1996 for *Flipside*. I really didn't overthink it, except that I wanted to produce an interview I'd be proud of in ten years' time. What I also learned is that conducting a good interview is a lot of work and takes a hell of a lot of time. I spend hours and hours conducting research. I go down wormholes and enjoy the journey. I then shape all of my questions into an arc. Although I have all the questions typed out and laid out in front of me, I log all of them into short term memory so I can be present during the interview, read faces, absorb responses, and be flexible with how the interview's flowing. (It's important to me to do face-to-face interviews whenever possible.) Then there's transcribing the interview (every fifteen minutes of talking takes about an hour for me to transcribe, but that depends on how many people are sitting in), editing it, sharing the text with the band and making sure everything's kosher (because you're building allies, and weeding out preventable mistakes is a good practice), either taking photos or lining them up, then doing the graphic design for the layout.

**A**fter doing this over three hundred times, I realized I was getting more particular with who I'd interview. My criteria has been refined slightly: Are they more than "just a band?" Do they stand for something beyond just music? Do they seem like genuinely nice people and/or have life experience that will translate into a unique interview? It's a massive time commitment to do it well and I don't want to burn out. There are far too many boring interviews in the world that act as lazy PR instead of engaging insight with human beings that celebrate their artistic achievements. We try our best not to add to that stink pile of "content for content's sake."


**F**ortunately, we currently have a great corps of interviewers at *Razorcake* who bring bands to the table. (And with everything we do, it's an open solicitation for anyone to participate if they can meet our standards and follow our protocols.) As an editor, I try to foster an ecosystem that values knowledgeable enthusiasm about music. If the potential interviewer's excitement and interest is genuine and we haven't interviewed the band before in print, it's usually green-lit. I put trust in the interviewer. It's important to encourage their fandom. Everyone has different tastes. The more people in the overall conversation about punk, the more diverse it becomes. That's an asset. I may not be ga-ga about a specific band, but I fully back the interviewer, fully back the content of the interview that's published.

**A**t this point, we're investing in the quality of the submission. Yet, here's where a lot of interviews by first-time *Razorcake* interviewers die on the vine. This shouldn't be drudging homework for the interviewer or interviewee. My life is too short and precious to run bog-standard, uninteresting "what are your influences?" interviews. I hate reading them; I sure as fuck don't want to edit or publish them. Also, don't fib. If it's an email interview, we won't run it in print and it will solely be considered for the website. Be prepared to go back to the band if there are unanswered questions. (Seriously, the original singer for Toxic Reasons mentioned he'd fought a bear, and the interviewer just went on to the next question. When I pressed him to flesh the story out, he refused to follow up. Our publishing relationship ended that day.) I won't say that a lot of the decisions of who we interview are self-selecting, but they do have a way of weeding themselves out, down to four or five per issue.

**S**o here we are, at the end of the funnel. For the past twenty-four years, every two months, *Razorcake* celebrates bands and DIY artists from all over the world. We hope readers value the interviews with who we think are making the most interesting, dynamic, powerful punk music, from stone-cold classics like Alice Bag and TV Smith to newer bands like Home Front and Dead Pioneers.



# ZINEMONGERING } *Hamish Ironside* THE HARD WAY }



Billy told me he wanted some overseas perspectives for this issue of BTZ, so here I am, in merrie olde England, to tell you about what it's like producing zines on this side of "the pond".

The first thing I should say is that we do actually have print shops over here, and we've even got the internet -- it's just that I hate the internet and I like making things difficult for myself.

So anyway, let's start with a bit of background information ... I'd produced a few zines way back in the late eighties and early nineties, before getting more into poetry and alcohol for a couple of decades. Around 2015 I started wondering what had happened to all the zinemongers I used to know, and whether anyone was still zinemongering in the age of the internet. These ruminations culminated in a book I co-authored with my friend Gavin Hogg, called *We Peaked at Paper: An Oral History of British Zines*. Available from all good bookshops. Get your copy today.

Putting that book together was a huge learning experience, and it also made me fall in love with zines all over again. The thing that probably interested me the most was learning about the printing technologies used in the very early days of zinemongering, before the photocopier and cheap printing, from the 1930s up to the mid-seventies or so. The best of those technologies was the stencil duplicator (aka mimeograph). In the US I think the Roneo was probably the dominant machine of this sort,



but in England it was the Gestetner, and the process was even referred to as “gestetnering”.



The machine itself is a robust cast iron contraption with a handle to crank a roller that gets covered with ink. The other element in this process is the stencil, which is a sheet of thin paper coated in wax. You can feed the stencil into a manual typewriter, and the keys strike through the wax to make a gap in the shape of the letter. (You can also use a hand-held stylus to draw or write through the wax, but that's less reliable than the typewriter.) When you attach the stencil to the surface of the inky roller, paper gets fed into the machine and the ink gets forced through the letter-shaped gaps and onto the paper.

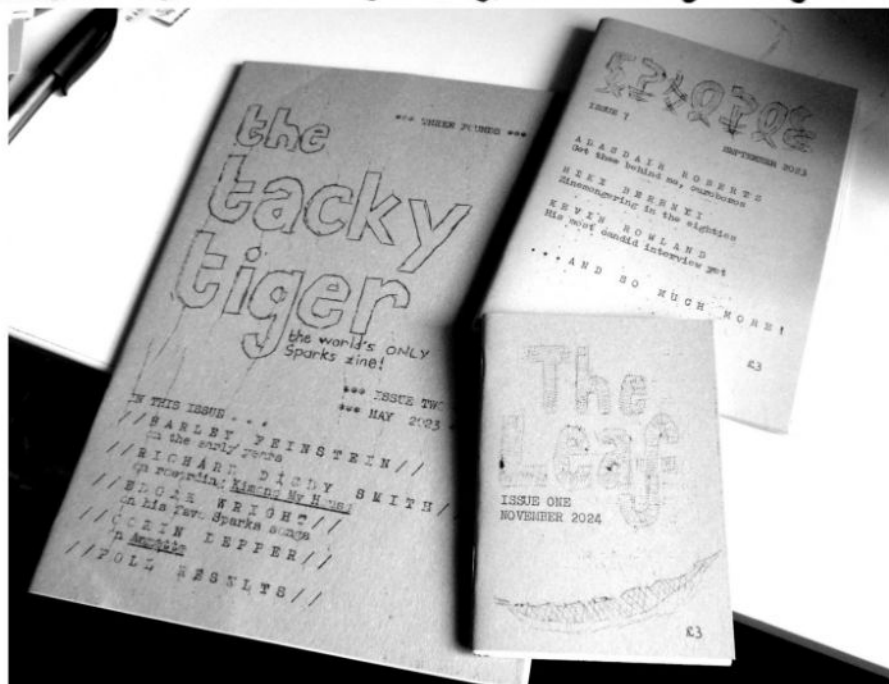
This magical process has a charm that is lacking across the entire spectrum of the internet.

So it got me thinking: could I somehow get hold of a Gestetner and see if I can put it to work in the so-called digital age? I began by looking around for a machine (yes, I did use the internet for that). They are actually pretty easy to find, and not even very expensive. The reason (I surmise) is that so many were produced, and they are such a hassle to dispose of, people just let them languish in attics and barns for decades. It's much more difficult to find the original ink, in the tube that fits right into its little slot in the machine—but actually, you can find alternatives that will work by just squeezing the ink directly onto the roller. What are really difficult to find are the stencils. They have not been produced since the eighties, and they are as scarce as hen's teeth.

Fortunately, where the internet failed, the zine community (small though it be) succeeded. Peter Willis at BOOKS in Peckham put me in touch with Jim Pennington of Crouch End parish, and Jim furnished me with a machine, ink and stencils, as well as the other essential component: training in how to use it. I am more indebted to Jim than words can express. I don't mean financially -- he gave me a very reasonable price and I paid in full on the spot.

I installed the machine in the garage of my mother's house in Oxfordshire in spring of 2023. Since then I've produced three separate zines on it: issue 2 of *The Tacky Tiger*, a zine devoted to Sparks (issue 1 appeared 35 years earlier); issue 7 of my main zine, *Saudade*; and just a few months ago, issue 1 of *The Leaf*, a zine edited by T. E. P. Noodle (author of *The Lucky Leaf Handbook*).


It takes a while to get the hang of it. The ink gets everywhere -- if you ever try it yourself, make sure you have plenty of kitchen towel on hand (is it even called kitchen towel in America?). The paper often misfeeds, and sometimes it gets chewed up somewhere



along the way, so while you are cranking it with the right hand, the left hand has to be ready to flick the switch that stops the paper feeding in. And there is a constant need to maintain the right level of ink, which you can only judge by the printed sheets coming out. But once you get going you can crank out maybe fifty or more sheets without stopping, and there is frankly nothing in this world to compare with the exhilaration when that happens. The very sound of the machine is deeply satisfying. As for the smell, it is impossible to describe, but I long for the day when the Yankee Candle Company produces it Gestetner-scented candle.

In case anyone else is thinking of trying the same thing (which I urge you to do), I'll add a few practical notes. One thing is that although the machines can be bought pretty cheaply, they will almost always be "sold as seen," because almost no one has the means to check whether they still work,





and although they are extremely robust, there are a few components in them that can degrade. This is because they are made of rubber, which is needed to feed the paper in to the roller. So if you get the chance to check it before you buy it, I would say try to look carefully at any rubber parts, as well as checking for obvious things like rust and to ensure the handle turns easily.

Most of the paper produced now is designed for inkjet and laser printers, which means it has a shinier surface than the paper of the mid-twentieth century. Mimeo machines work best with a more "spongy" paper. Xerox produce a recycled uncoated paper that has a slightly grey appearance (it's actually called Xerox Recycled), and this works perfectly in the machine. For the cover I always use coloured card, and the thicker it is, the more likely it is to misfeed, but it will work up to about 250 or 300 gsm—you just have to allow for more waste. On that subject, I'd say that once you've got to know your machine, you should not have more than about 10% waste, allowing for maybe 20-30% waste for the cover.

Print runs can go up to about 500 copies from a single stencil, which is more than enough for most zinemongers. What you will find is that the constant working of the stencil makes it break down very gradually, with slight wrinkles in the paper or opening up of the gaps where the letters were typed. You can see the deterioration in the sheets coming out of the machine. As mentioned before, you also get variations in the amount of ink, and sometimes the text can get quite faint. Occasionally a blob of ink will mark a page, and after a misfeed you might find the bottom roller (which presses the paper against the inky roller) takes on a little ink that prints on the back of the sheet. All this means no two copies of the finished zine are quite identical, and I like this slightly random element.

How long it all takes depends on how many stencils you use and how long your print run is, but I produced about 200 copies of The Tacky Tiger #2 in a single (rather long) day, using 21 stencils to make a zine of 40 pages plus the cover. I typically take a couple of hours getting the machine set up and running smoothly, but once it's warmed up it is remarkably reliable. It recently had to withstand an invasion by mice, which chose it as their favourite place to defecate—and still it did its job without too much complaint.

Once you've done the printing there is then the whole business of collating, folding, stapling, pressing and trimming—this is the boring part of zine production, but I find it more tolerable to do it while watching the Eurovision Song Contest ... somehow the tediousness of the task seems to complement the tediousness of the songs.

Is it all worth it? Of course it is! Getting a fresh box of zines back from a printer is a pretty good feeling, but I get so much more satisfaction from having total control of the whole procedure. I also really like the aesthetic of it—the feel of the paper and the simplicity of the hand-typed lettering, with just a few very rudimentary headings or drawings. I don't know of anyone else who is still using a mimeograph to produce a zine, but if there is anyone I would love to hear from them. You can email me at hamishironside@hotmail.com



Hamish's zines are on sale at Quimby's in Chicago and at Powell's in Portland, or from his zine shop at <https://threebluebeans.bigcartel.com/>

*We Peaked at Paper* and *The Lucky Leaf Handbook* are both published by Boatwhistle Books and are available from PM Press at <https://www.pmpress.org/>

Words and Photos by Hamish Ironside, Layout by Ed Tillman

# Finding Balance

by Karin Panther

I was born in 1982 with a zinester heart. As a child, I loved art and writing. I made my own books and collages with construction paper and scotch tape. I created a neighborhood newsletter on a typewriter, copying articles verbatim from *Highlights* magazines from the 70s. I loved receiving mail and trading my stories and art with other kids. I would sign up for every pen pal club I could. This was a great escape for me as I grew up in a religiously conservative home. I was also the fat kid. I was bullied relentlessly. I just wanted real connection with people who could not judge me by looks. It's a shame I never knew about the zines growing up. In fact I had never held a zine until the day I turned 40. I was Googling "unique stores in Chicago" and Quimby's appeared. I thought zines sounded fabulous. After my first visit, I left with bags of zines and I vowed to start making tons of zines myself. That was easier said than done.

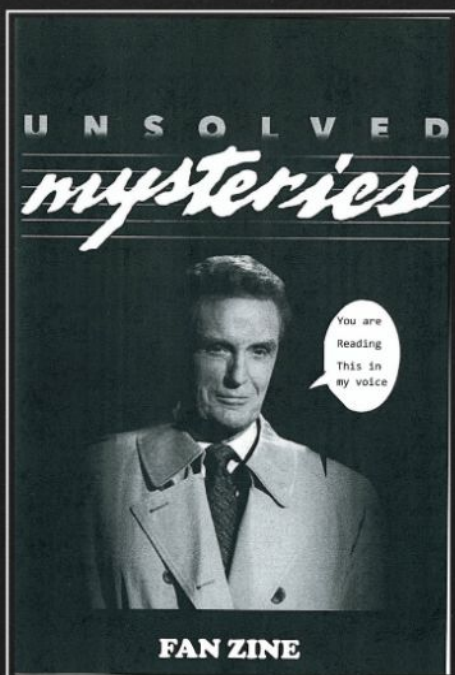
I'm so sad that I didn't learn about the zine community in my 20s and 30s, when I had way more time. Now, at age 42, I have a small child, aging parents, and a full-time job. My knees and back hurt more now and I'm usually in bed before 10pm. I live in Iowa and am four hours away from any major city, which makes participating in zine communities difficult. In *Behind the Zines* #18, Kris with a "K" wrote "*Older zinesters are burning out (or getting swallowed up by real life responsibilities. . and man that makes me feel like such a dinosaur.)*" That resonated with me. I hope that in another 20 years the "zine dinosaurs" like me will be retired, empty-nesters, and will once again return to zine world in full force!

Until then, here are some tips to balance the real world and zine world:

- 1) Find hobbies that you truly enjoy, whether zines or something else entirely. It is good to have a passion that is separate from your real life responsibilities. Not everyone has kids but we all have responsibilities that keep us from the fun stuff. Do not feel guilty for taking time to enjoying what you love.



2) Do not force an interest or hobby. Pick something you are zealous enough to write about. If you force yourself to write on a topic it will feel like work. I always want my zines to be about things I can write about for hours. My *Unsolved Mysteries Fan Zine* started this way. I started watching old seasons of the show and taking notes. I wanted to look for case updates. These notes slowly blossomed into a zine I am really proud of.



3) Don't be afraid to read new zine topics. Once a month I get a mystery pack of zines through Zine-O-Matic. I never know what I am going to get, which I love. I have been pleasantly surprised by these zines. Some of my favorites are topics I would have never known about or picked on my own.

4) Evaluate how you spend your time. When my daughter started kindergarten my work schedule had to change. Once I drop her off to school and drive to work I have about 25 glorious minutes to myself before I have to clock in. I stopped doom-scrolling on my phone and have now used that time to read some zines in my car.

5) If you are creating zines, remember that most deadlines are in your head. The zine community is very forgiving.

6) Be sneaky creating your zines (if you can). I work in a strict office. I cannot confirm or deny that I have written a zine or printed my zines little by little when I should have been working.

7) Write ideas down ideas right away! I keep a little notebook with me to jot down zine ideas. If I don't write it down right away I won't remember my idea, no matter how great it was.

8) If you don't have time to start a brand new zine, dig up some old projects you never finished and finally complete them. Half the work is already done and you will feel accomplished!

9) If you have kids, engage them in zine-making. I recently taught my daughter and her cousins how to make the eight-page zine out of one sheet of paper. They went nuts for hours drawing and creating their own little books. I used that time to work on my zine projects, too! I've also been saving some of my daughter's drawings to be the backgrounds in my next zine.

10) Start small. When I made my first zine I was way too ambitious. I wanted 40 pages. I wanted full color. I wanted to include EVERYTHING. I wanted to sell them at every zine fest. I wanted to be in every zine group. After attending several zine fests I had to take a step back. Going to the fests was fun, but took a lot of time away from my family. I also had to factor in the cost of travel, time off work, and paying a babysitter. I also didn't have time to hang out with people I met after the fest because I had to rush to get home. When I consider all those factors, I decided to let the zine fests go (for now.) Now, I try to participate virtually. If you are running a fest, please consider ways for people attend virtually. Include contact info/links for everyone who is tabling. Post videos with the artists talking about their work. Have online events or live-streams. Anything that helps others participate from afar is appreciated!

My dream project is to create an ongoing zine trading community through the mail. I'd love to organize a giant gift exchanged of zines. Until then If anyone wants to trade zines, please contact me at [karinezine123@gmail.com](mailto:karinezine123@gmail.com)

MY

# MOBILE COLLAGE

KIT

I am a self proclaimed collage enthusiast. I believe that that collage is one of the most accessible art forms. Some people carry a notebook and pen to journal, I carry stuff to give me the ability to cut shit up and glue it back together.

With tools to do that, my handy MOBILE COLLAGE KIT lets me CTRL+x and CTRL+v my life.

## WHAT IS A MOBILE COLLAGE KIT?

For me, its just an exacto knife and a glue stick. Its compact, not much different from carrying a pen and highlighter. Your kit can look different for you. The world will provide the materials. I use whatever notebook or sketchbook I have on me as a base for the collage. Keeping a notebook allows for easy review of what you've made.



## HERES WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR OWN MOBILE COLLAGE KIT:

### COLLAGE ANYWHERE!

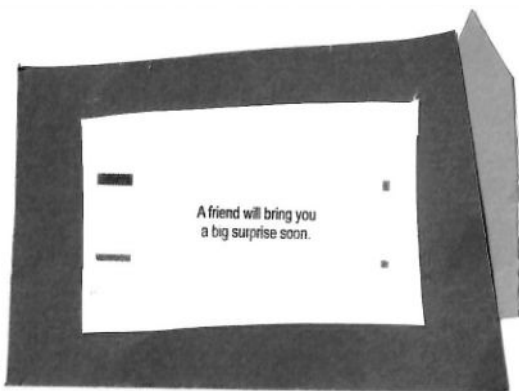
Collaging is just like doodling, but with existing pictures. Drawing can be hard, save steps by adopting outside elements. You can record ideas without being limited by your ability to draw. Collage can be a great way to be creative on the go!





## SAVE STUFF FOR LATER!

Did you come across any sort of small paper? A sweet note from a friend, a wrist band from a concert, a fortune from a fortune cookie? Save that artifact for future use or reflection. Collaging on the go lets you be sentimental with the objects that are ephemeral.



## TRANSFORM YOUR PAGE!

Let collage help you **EXPAND** your notes from the 2D world. Add extra height and extra length to your page. So many new ideas can unfold when you rethink the constraints of the page. Think outside the box by redefining the box.



## DEFEND YOURSELF!

If you always have this kit on you, then you always have a knife on you. You'll be ready when someone sneaks up behind you while your guard is down because you're deep into a collage trance. Stay safe!



There are so many more uses and possibilities. Collage to transform the world into one you want to see! With the right tools, you have the power to rearrange your reality.



# Behind the Jewish Zine Fest

by Anastasia @stormbringer\_press



In September of 2024 I organized an event I called “Jewish Zine Fest of Pittsburgh 5784.”

We printed zines to distribute, collecting PWYW (Pay What You Want) to raise money for charity. The zines were largely Jewish and also politically radical. The charity was Operation Olive Branch, a mutual aid group working to house and feed people displaced by genocide in The Gaza Strip. The event was located in Pittsburgh, my lifelong home, at a small Anarchist bookstore called The Big Idea. The number 5784 was to acknowledge the year in the Jewish calendar. The Jewish new year is in Autumn, so by the time you’re reading this it’s already 5785!

It was a zine event for all, but run by Anarchist Jews for all who are against The State. Whither Anarchism: States are hierarchical structures of domination, and the enemy of liberation for all peoples everywhere. As long as there have been States, there have been Jewish ancestors working to organize opposition and to build a better world, and to reckon with the idea that G-d is not solely to be conceived as a being. It's a verb, co-created through striving for justice: actively fighting for radical and ethical responsibility when so many American Jewish institutions have subordinated that responsibility through the fetish of such things as a "Jewish State."

So, I organized a little fest with Jewish in the title, but with the intention that solidarity and liberation was just as important as that cultural/civilizational element of my identity. That duality felt especially important not just to distinguish us from other zine events but also from a new "Jewish Book Festival" in our city that is politically neutral, having corporate sponsors. To be neutral in the face of war or genocide is to take the side of the oppressor, and it's my firm intention to try and start a kind of counterinstitution to local events like that.

For organizing something largely (sic. inadvisably) by myself, I'd say it went really well! I was inspired by the work of Xava Shapiro (@jewishzinearchive), creator of The Jewish Zine Archive, who runs a yearly zine fest over in The American Southwest. I was also inspired by my own participation in tabling at zine events, most notably ACAB 24 (Another Carolina Anarchist Bookfair) in so-called Asheville, NC. Shoutout to Firestorm Books, the first place to ever carry my zines!

It was instructive on several fronts. For the first time, I truly understood what a collective can accomplish to make something happen. I also realized that if I wanted to see cool stuff happen in Pittsburgh, I'd need to labor to make it happen. After attending ACAB, then seeing Xava's call for people to throw Jewish Zine events in parallel with the one in Tucson, I thought it would be a perfect opportunity to put those ideas into practice.



Spearheading it myself, I tried to rely on my relationships with other people to try and punch above my weight. I brainstormed activities: people give talks, should I give a talk? I drafted one about zines and Midrash (Rabbinic storytelling). I put out guides for folding one-page zines and raw supplies on tables. I reached out to my friend Dade Lemanski, who I met through our local Jewish Anarchist collective, and they very generously agreed to come give a talk. They're publishing a book on Yiddish poetry in Appalachia (come 2026), and were able to tell us about the history of Anarchist Rabbis in historic Pittsburgh coal miner's unions. How cool is that?

What does this teach us?

*Relationships make organizing possible.*

Self-reliance would be delusion. My relationship with my FLGS (friendly local game store) allowed me to borrow their overhead tent



to protect the goods from rain. My relationship with members of the Bookstore collective got me into a venue that was FREE (even if it was small). My relationship with certain librarians let me print the distro zines at next to nothing, and helped me find two people to table with short notice.

*If you're organizing, assume you'll be a mess the day-of.* Take deep breaths. Stay hydrated. Act as if you don't eat a real breakfast then the whole day will fall apart (it very well may). Have someone in your corner, a best friend or a partner, who will surprise you with a cooked meal and force you to sit down and eat it later in the day. Give other people a chance to shine and bring their talents to bear. I really enjoyed giving a talk on zines as a form of Midrash, but it was HUBRIS to be the go-person for all the spinning plates AND sitting down to basically give a speech.

If you've been in this situation, my observations will not be shocking. Getting access to wisdom and expertise is very different from digesting it and putting it into practice. Despite how well it went, I made lots of mistakes. I miscommunicated really poorly with some of the members of the Big Idea collective, due to how stressed I was. Despite trying to run a "Jewish event," it completely slipped my mind to consider that people might want ritual.

## The event was on shabbat, after all!

Thankfully in that regard, my fellow Jews had me covered and brought their own ritual elements and held a small shabbat service, completely unprompted. I only caught the tail end of it in person while we were cleaning up the store! The beauty of Anarchists! I didn't account for the need, but others saw it and took action themselves: all we have is each other, after all.

I wish I could share all the small moments of beauty and connection with you, poured out from my heart like water. My best friend Krist helping me haul tables in and out, and later making an effort to point out to me how excited everyone was to be there and participate. Fest-goers asking me "how often do these things happen?" and "when will this happen again?"



Dade checking in with me before I gave the speech, and listening with such kindness when I self-disclosed my own struggles with our overlapping identities. Someone who would later become a trusted comrade confiding in me: “I feel so alone.” Moments of grounding from my beloved. A Talmud teacher correcting me mid-speech when I confused head-cannon of Midrash with the reality (this was especially embarrassing. It was the least important part of the talk, but I got Jewish monster lore wrong and I pride myself on knowing the difference between a Re’em and Tachash).

## **Our Mascot**

I distracted myself from the anxiety of organizing an event for the first time by creating a mascot for us. Like how Iron Maiden has Eddie, their zombie O.C.\* they dress up for different albums, I wanted JZF to have it’s own mascot, its own Eddie. I was inspired by papercuts, specifically the superhero collages done by Isaac Brynjegard-Bialik. He made a golem out of comic panels of Gotham City, which stuck in my mind since Pittsburgh has been used in making the Christopher Nolan Batman films. What would a ‘Pittsburgh Golem’ look like?

I spent too much time researching it, but the mud\* I used to make my golem came from a Yiddish newspaper published in Pittsburgh circa the 1930s called Der Vegvayzer, or “The Jewish Indicator.”

His forehead reads ‘Emet’, Hebrew for Truth. This is the activating word of the golem, from the Prague myth. When the threat to the community is passed, the first letter (aleph) is smudged, turning ‘Emet’ into ‘Mot’, turning Truth into the Hebrew word for Death. Dan is fully activated, holding a text box that says “Yiddish zine,” ready to keep his community safe. I decided to name our mascot Dan. Daniel originally meant “Judge of God,” but I picked it mostly for the double-pun of our status as The Steel City. He’s Steely Dan! Imagine the song “The Fez” playing wherever he goes.

*\*O.C. is fanfiction terminology meaning “original character”*

*\*A golem is a being from Jewish folklore, typically created from mud or clay, then brought to life through ritual.*



## Terminus

In the end we raised circa \$200 for Operation Olive Branch. A small drop in the bucket, but even more importantly we started planting the seeds of a Jewish Anarchist counter-institution for zinesters. If you're reading this, you know that connections are some of the most important things we can build with zines, and the JZF forged quite a few. We are at the margins of multiple communities, and that gives us a better position to see how much we all have in common in the struggle against rising Fascism. I hope you can see that too! Follow us at [@jzf\\_pgh](#) and keep us in mind this coming Elul (Aug-Sept). Here's to next year, even bigger!

Solidarity from all of us fighting to keep some sparks of hope alive in the dark <3



# Thirteen Zine Novels

john dishwasher

I waited until I finished the first draft of *The Zinester Manifesto: A Novel of the Underground* before I looked around to see what other novels had been set in the zine world. I wanted to make sure I had my preliminary ideas on paper and fleshed out some before they could be influenced by how other fiction writers had approached zine culture. When I finally looked to see what else was there I was astonished. I found some novels that featured zines, some that featured zinesters, but no novel that had done what I was attempting; that is, to build a novel around an entire zine community.

I read all of the books that I found, each of which I enjoyed, and devised ways to allude to them in mine as an homage. It turns out that so far, in long-form fiction, zines fulfill one of three basic roles. One, zines serve as a vehicle of resistance. Two, zines serve as a repository for arcane information. Or, three, zines serve as a means of self-healing or personal growth. Below is a list of all the zine novels I currently know of, divided into those three categories. Some of these I found after I self-published my novel.

+ = zines play a leading role in the plot

- = zines play a supporting role in the plot

## Arcane Knowledge or Information

*Chicago Joe and the Ancient Pages* by Billy McCall + (2024)

Lots of ziney sleuthing in this as we watch the search for a seminal zine artifact. The story reads like playful Noir and has hella momentum with a ton of zine history and zine energy. Billy's a natural-born storyteller.

*The Gospel of Anarchy* by Justin Taylor + (2011)

Esoteric spiritual ideas are left in a zine by a mysterious guru. The ideas influence a utopian commune in a Florida college town.

*Distant Star* by Roberto Bolaño - (1996)

This is the earliest novel I know of that features a zine. Though the zine's appearance is limited to a few pages, it is essential to the development of the plot. Bolaño's impressions of "fanzines" are clearly influenced by 1990s punk zines.



*The Shadow People* by Joe Clifford - (2021)

Some schizophrenic ideas find their voice through a zine. Though the zine is mostly background here, this is a creepy read with an end thrilling enough to keep me up past my bedtime.



## Resistance

*Moxie* by Jennifer Mathieu + (2015)

My favorite on this list (besides mine and Billy's). Here the zine is instrumental in young women revolting against a high school patriarchy in a small Texas town. I liked the movie, but the book thrilled me.

*Vicious Is My Middle Name* by Kevin Dunn + (2022)

A punk girl relocates to a small mountain town. Through zines she combats the vested interests she finds there and builds a supportive community.

*The Zinester Manifesto: A Novel of the Underground* John Dishwasher + (2022)

An origin story for a collective of zine activists. This fictionalizes



the amazingly dynamic Southern California zine community by following six zinemakers through a season of SoCal zinefests. The theme: "There is only dignity in revolt."

*Walking Man* by Tim W. Brown + (2008)

A phoney, funny biography of a Gen-X zinemaker, documenting the life of a man walking through his young adulthood in Chicago and accidentally getting ultra famous in the process. This fits the resistance theme in a meta way, as it parodies the excesses and vacuity of celebrity culture.

*Grrrls On The Side* by Carrie Pack - (2017)

I hoped for a stirring portrayal of Riot Grrrl culture here, but didn't get it.

## Self-Healing and Personal Growth

*Vinyl Princess* by Yvonne Prinz - (2009)

Teenage angst and love of music in San Francisco. The protagonist's music zine and blog empower her to deal with the uncertainties of life.

*First Rule of Punk* by Celia C. Perez + (2017)

I've heard so many people talk about this book as if it is the only novel ever written with a zine in it. Always freaks me out. Very popular among librarians. I liked it. The zine helps a young girl deal with relocation stresses.

*Hard Love* by Ellen Wittlinger - (1999)

The most unusual novel on this list. Exploring what people need from relationships through a 'romance' between a lesbian girl and a boy who can't stand to be touched. Zines help bridge the divide between them, allowing them a love undistorted by sexual confusions. This is one of those novels categorized as "young adult" that is actually literature with a capital L, imho.

*Gabi, A Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero + (2014)

An intelligent teen living a trying life. Expressing herself through a zine gives her strength and helps her articulate her struggle and find her identity.

A couple of these books I found totally by accident, which suggests to me there must be many more zine novels out there that I don't know about. If you are aware of others, please DM me on Instagram: @johndishwasher

# zinebook.com and zines in the digital age

In the year 1989, the underground press is poised at the precipice of another technological revolution. Desktop publishing exists, though most zines are laid out by hand and photocopied. Within a few years, intrepid zinesters set up newsgroups, start websites, and join email lists. Some abandon paper altogether, make e-zines, and host them on file libraries or the *WELL – Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link*. Meanwhile, spurred on by enterprising ISPs, millions get their first taste of cyberspace. Punk breaks, alternative culture hits the mainstream, and zines are hot.

Here, Chip Rowe, fresh out of journalism school, enters the fray, going on to publish 13 issues of *Chip's Closet Cleaner*, an ever-eclectic compendium of found clippings, lists, quips, reviews, letters, and Chip's own longer-form writing. At the tail end of its print run, he compiles *The Book of Zines* (1997) and a companion website, *zinebook.com*.

Through some minor miracle of the internet, 28 years later, *zinebook.com* is still live in all its Web 1.0 glory: a grid of text links leading to other links leading to yet more text. Following Chip's penchant for categorization, the homepage is divided into relevant sections for zine archives, how-tos and distribution, interviews, discussion, history, online catalogs, etc.

Though Rowe occasionally updates the site, most of it remains a tribute to the state of the zine world on the web no later than 2002, near dead-on to when the arrival of the blogosphere signaled, to many, the demise of print zines. In that year, *SFGate* called zines a "fad" and "just about dead."<sup>1</sup> Two years earlier, Christopher Yorke, in *Broken Pencil 12*, discussed factors he would later call "the increasingly destabilizing and distorting effects of the internet on the zine scene."<sup>2</sup>

Zines didn't die, obviously; the publication you're currently holding is a testament to their continued relevance. *Zinebook.com* persists as well, still a comprehensive guide and a preserved window into a pivotal and wild decade for zines and zine culture.

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<sup>1</sup> "Just Another Cultural Co-Op? / Blogging hits the mainstream, for better or worse" by Joyce Slaton, accessed via [sfgate.com](http://sfgate.com)

<sup>2</sup> "Zines are Undead" by Christopher Yorke, *Broken Pencil* 57, 2012



>>> Interview with Chip Rowe  
(edited for length and clarity)



**Q: When did you first become aware of zines, and how were you introduced? When did you begin to fancy yourself a zinester?**

A: I started doing *Chip's Closet Cleaner* in the early '90s. I thought I had this original idea. I was a journalist, and I created this mimeographed thing at work, and I would give it to my friends. And I was in Chicago. And I think I went to – I wish I could remember the bookstore [editor's note: later determined to be *Guild Books on Lincoln Ave*]. And on the floor, I still remember looking down, and there's *Factsheet Five*, a pile of them. I'm like, holy shit, this is all – this is a whole magazine of people doing the same things I am. And I think Mike Gunderloy was still the editor.

I just devoured the thing. I sent dollar bills all over the country to get all these zines. It was a total connection to me, like this world I didn't know existed that had actually been around for years. And as an editor, as a professional journalist, I thought the writing in many of them was amazing. Not all of them, obviously, but, you know, the ones that stood out like *Murder Can Be Fun* and these very popular zines. Like, they were just great writers and researchers. And the ideas were a little different. They were a little skewed. It was like 10% off the reality everyone else was living.

And so I got very excited about it. And my zines, like many, started getting more and more sophisticated.

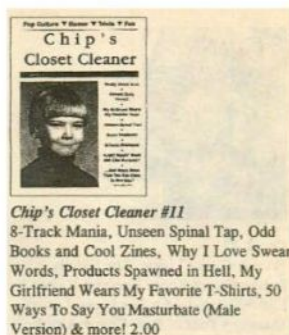
**Q: So you were producing *Chip's Closet Cleaner* out of your apartment?**

A: Well, yeah. So I was living in DC, and I remember xeroxing

them. I worked at *American Journalism Review* at the University of Maryland. It was, like, a trade magazine for journalists. And I went in on a Sunday to xerox, you know, secretly, my 100 copies, and the publisher happened to come in to get something. And so he caught me xeroxing all this stuff. And so I didn't know what to do, and I just gave him a copy.

But as I moved to Chicago, the last couple issues I did, I was distributing them at Barnes & Noble. I got a professional printer; they were on cardstock covers. It was much more sophisticated.

**Q: You edited *The Book of Zines*, released in 1997. This was a year after RE/Search's *Zines! Vol. 1* and the same year as R. Seth Friedman's *The Factsheet Five Zine Reader* and the first Zine Yearbook. Did the world reach some kind of critical zine mass in '96/'97?**



A: All these books came out at the same time. There was like four or five zine anthologies that came out in that same summer. And so it was sort of the moment where zines were kind discovered. There was a *Wall Street Journal* headline, "Zines of the Times."

They tried to rhyme "zines" with "times." It started showing up in headlines in the *New York Times*.

And, you know, none of them did very well because there was so many of them, and there wasn't a mass market for it.

**Q: Was *zinebook.com* a natural extension of *The Book of Zines*? Was it initially meant to promote the book and/or was it always intended as a hub or resource for zine culture on the web?**

A: When they published the book, I said, well, I want to do a website with it, which at the time was like a - you know, I



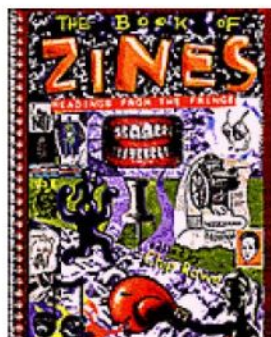
registered the domain name, and, you know, they didn't help me with any of that. I hand-coded it. They made a graphic of the teeth that are on the cover chattering – which I need to find.

**Q: Actually, I checked out the site on archive.org, and I went back to, like, 1997, and you can see that.**

A: Oh, good. Okay. Maybe I'll try to download it.

So I do keep it up to date, like, annually. I just keep the links up to date. And I add stuff. I add new links. Like, I'll add distros when I find them. So I do keep it going. And it is kind of nice when I find some new site, you know, a wiki or something that people are still discussing. But I didn't have a sense, like, that there were more than a few people doing the print ones. I'd like to give it a refresh, an update, but I'm also kind of reluctant to make it – it's an artifact, right?

**Q: Absolutely. I mean, I think that's what's so fascinating about it. And you have links on there, but you also host a lot of material, as well, within the website.**



A: Yeah, and I talked to Mike Gunderloy because he had done this booklet in the early days of *Factsheet Five*. I can't remember the name of it – "How to Publish Your Own Fanzine." So I wrote Mike and said, "Hey, can I scan this?" I bought a copy for like \$50. I mean, it was hard to find. But at any rate, I asked him if I could scan it, and he said, "Sure." So I cut it up, you know, scanned it, and put it online.

**Q: I saw that you submitted CCC to something called the Etext Archive. I feel like you had an involvement in this nascent digital culture that was coming up, where it intersected with zines.**

A: Yeah, I thought that was amazing. I could distribute it free all over the world, like putting it on those archival, you know, ASCII-format things. I feel now, looking back, that had no soul. The print was what was cool, right?

**Q: When you first began publishing, this was right before AOL, before widespread connectivity. During the time you were putting out CCC, all of these digital tools had just become available. At the time, did it seem like e-zines might be the wave of the future?**



<a href="#">Zine Archives</a> Back issues online...	<a href="#">Buy Zines</a> Online catalogs...	<a href="#">What's a Zine?</a> Good question...
<a href="#">Zine Libraries</a> Donate your collection...	<a href="#">Zine Reviews</a> Sites that review zines...	<a href="#">Book of Zines</a> Updates, excerpts...
<a href="#">Comics</a> How to distribute...	<a href="#">Zine Help</a> Advice for print zines...	<a href="#">Zine History</a> The typewriter machine...
<a href="#">Humor</a> Mocker fun...	<a href="#">E-Zine Help</a> Tips and tricks online...	<a href="#">Recommended</a> What editors read...
<a href="#">Legal Issues</a> Copyright, advice...	<a href="#">Zine Books</a> Anthologies and how-to...	<a href="#">Events</a> Conventions, potlucks...
<a href="#">Discussion</a> Opines, rants, spouts...	<a href="#">Interviews</a> Zine makers speak...	<a href="#">Directories</a> Editor lists and other info...
<a href="#">Distribution</a> How to distribute...	<a href="#">Controversies</a> Two sides to every...	<a href="#">Articles &amp; Essays</a> A little bit of everything...

A: Yeah. Because it was free. Like, people always wrote about the cost of going to Kinko's. I was in there stealing photocopies at my work, you know? I mean, so the idea that you could distribute to all over the world, no charge. There wasn't even graphics involved. It was just ASCII.

**Q: Did your involvement with zine culture continue after the book and website came out, or did it strike something of a note of completion?**

A: I got married, like, in '96. So I think – and I had a full-time job and – you know, yeah, you just – I was writing articles for *Playboy* and still freelancing a little bit. So I had plenty of things to do, like writing-wise.

But I still have the folder. And if I do another issue, it'll be printed, for sure.

# on zinebook.com:

- **"Why Publish?" by Mike Gunderloy from *How to Publish a Fanzine* (1988)**

They're never going to stop asking, "*What is a zine?*" so save your breath and direct them to this now-classic text.

- **"A Day in the Life of Qvimby's Book Store" by Sherri Gionet.**

Nostalgic and poignant account of the very early days of Qvimby's in Chicago.

- **Textfiles E-zine Archive**

Archive of ASCII-based e-zines ca. 1995-2004, which itself includes a txt file of John Labovitz's E-Zine List (1995).

John says: "*When I started the list, e-zines were usually a few kilobytes of plain text stored in the depths of an FTP server; high style was having a Gopher menu, and the Web was just a rumor of a myth. The number of living e-zines numbered in the low dozens, and nearly all of them were produced using the classic self-publishing method: scam resources from work when no one's looking.*" [As quoted in Zine Wiki]

- **Alt.zines Archive**

Alt.zines was an influential Usenet newsgroup (apologies to anyone born after 1985) active roughly from 1992-2012. Are zines dead? Who sold out? Hoary debates perpetually preserved in searchable format. Internet archaeologists can chart the collision of zines and technology from dial-up modems to the advent of blogs, as seen through the eyes of those on the front lines.

- **Interviews with many of the contributors to *The Books of Zines*; notes on the Underground Press Conference at DePaul University in 1995; its fair share of dead links (so it goes)... and lots more.**

- August Personage (@Tangent\_Distro\_PGH)



# FIVE QUESTIONS

(by Billy McCall)

WITH JOSHUA JAMES AMBERSON

Any time I travel, a big part of my process is to pick out a book to accompany me. A world to float through while on planes and waiting in lines. In November I took an extended weekend that found me on a few different planes with a few different layovers, and the book I read during my down-time was *How to Forget Almost Everything*, by Joshua James Amberson. It is the story of a 15 year-old boy named Elly, who is living in Portland when he learns that his young mother is having trouble with her memory. I thoroughly enjoyed this unusual coming-of-age novel, and since I'm friends with the author I thought I would use *Behind the Zines* to get a bit deeper into the story.

**Josh, the main character, Elly, spends most of the book trying to help his mother with her memory loss. Along the way he studies and contemplates what makes memory important to the human experience. What made you want to use the concept of memory as a theme in your book?**

When I first drafted the novel years ago (about a decade ago now), I had a bit of a preoccupation with memory. I think the fact that I had some family members and friends struggling with their memories was part of this. But I also think the fact that a number of my loved ones had passed away in a relatively short amount of time also factored in. I was thinking about all this interpersonal history, the inside jokes, the secrets we shared and how I was the carrier of all of that now. It got me thinking about how much we define our lives through our memories and how fragile that definition is.

**The story also touches on the topics of cults and mind control. What inspired that idea?**

I definitely didn't start with that as the plan or direction for the story. But I love how fictional characters come alive, seemingly on their own, and do things that you as the writer don't expect. I don't have the same fascination with cults and mind control that a lot of people seem to have these days, but in my fiction I repeatedly come back to it (the new novel I'm working on has a cultish secret society element).

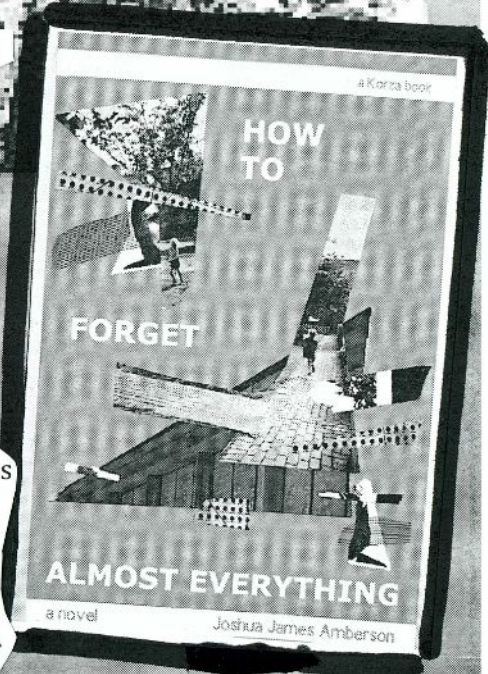


I'm not exactly sure why, honestly, but I do think a lot about how much we as humans seek structure and security and how often we make rash decisions in that pursuit.

I actually had a family member briefly join a cult in the early '70s, so I know for a fact that really intelligent people can be brought into bad situations. It's more a question of trust than intelligence, I think. For myself, I know that I really want to trust people, and if trusting is stupid then I'm going to continue being stupid.

**One interesting thing about the book itself is that most of the chapters are very short, often only one or two pages long. Why did you make that decision?**

Back when I first drafted the novel, I was reading a lot of experimental literature--quite a bit of which used short chapters as a device. Short chapters cause a somewhat frantic, chaotic energy and they make the story move in an unusual way, which felt right for how the character was feeling. As the novel progressed, the chapters got longer by necessity. But I still wanted short chapters to open the novel.



**You told me that your friends at Korza Books helped a lot with your editing and rewriting. What was that process like for you?**

Well, to answer this question I might need to back up a bit, since the publishing of this book was a very unusual situation. I'd put this novel in a drawer years prior and had no plans to dig it out again, but a friend of mine, Michael Schepps--one of the only people who had read that initial draft--started a small press and reached out to me to see if I'd be open to publishing it. One of my stipulations for saying yes was that I wanted help overhauling it; I'd put it in a drawer because certain elements



weren't working for me, and I couldn't figure out how to solve those problems on my own.

I'd worked with him and the press' head editor, Molly E. Simas, on a zine we'd done about BoJack Horseman, so I knew we all worked well together. Molly is an incredibly insightful editor, which gave me a lot of confidence. Basically, we just had a shared Google Doc of the manuscript and did three rounds of editing: one being big and structural, the next touching up problem scenes and inconsistencies in character development, and the final being a copy-edit and fact-check pass. We were all making comments along the way--basically until the moment it had to be laid out and sent to print.

**Along with writing novels, you also run Antiquated Future, which is not only a zine distro but also a music label. With so many things going on in your life, do you have a set routine of when to work on each project? Or do you just spend time on whatever happens to inspire you in that moment?**

That's something I think about a lot! I could definitely have better routines, but I struggle because my schedule is very difficult to make a routine out of. There are just so many variables: sometimes the distro gets really busy out of the blue; the label is really busy before and just after a new release but normally not other times; I teach creative writing through a community college's community education program so I'm really busy at the beginning of every quarter but also usually have 2-4 weeks off between quarters, I do freelance book-manuscript editing so get busy just at random times with that, I help run an artists' co-op shop here in Portland and I do a lot if we're going to put on a pop-up event but otherwise just work one day a week, and I'm busy with my own writing if I have a deadline but otherwise can make my own schedule.

My own writing suffers the most in this, of course, since everything else has a clearer cut financial or interpersonal incentive. That's the main reason I try to make more solid routines, but as it is I usually just do a little bit of everything each day.

If you'd like to read some of Josh's books, go place a big order at:

**[www.antiquatedfuture.com](http://www.antiquatedfuture.com)**



This issue is lovingly dedicated to

# Fred S. Argoff

March 1, 1956 - October 23, 2024

Fred Argoff published *Watch the Closing Doors, Brooklyn!*, and *Anachronisms*. He took part in the *Letter Exchange*, was a regular contributor to *Just a Jefferson*, and was a zine reviewer and occasional columnist for *Xerography Debt*. He also wrote for *Ponder Pond*, *Hilltop Curmudgeon*, *Cherry Pit News*, and many other newspapers, magazines, and zines over the years, too many to list.

Fred was generous with his time, offering tours of his beloved Brooklyn, providing research on various topics and promoting zines. As to his own timetable, Fred had a steadfast schedule for when each of his publications were to be printed and in the mail. Fred enjoyed feedback, and used the responses to improve on his excellent zines.

Fred grew up in Morganville, NJ, and graduated from Marlboro High School in the class of 1974. He attended Rutgers University Livingston Campus.

After moving to Brooklyn, NY in the late 70s, Fred worked in publishing before joining the New York City MTA. At the time of his death he was a Tower Operator and was responsible for the safe passage and proper routing of trains. He loved the NY Mets, collecting stamps, maps and coins.

*Brooklyn!* Is on the shelves of the Brooklyn Library, as well as a public library in Massachusetts. His zines are likely on the shelves of several zine libraries around the country, and on the shelves of the many friends and pen pals he exchanged with over the years. Fred has passed on, but his many zines still survive.



(Written by DB Pedlar, with excerpts from Fred's online obituary.)