

excalibur October 30, 1991 ← 6 ← alternative press supplement

scissors, glue and some serious attitude: a glimpse into the world of punk fanzines

by Louanne Voskans

You wouldn't know this by watching MuchMusic, listening to the radio, or reading Rolling Stone, but in many places around the world people are putting out their own magazines on their own terms.

Even though these magazines are often typewritten, xeroxed, and produced in basements and bedrooms, their existence is known to people in different cities, countries, and continents - provoking arguments, providing information, and helping a whole style of music to stay alive and survive without corporate interference.

A What-zine?

Like well known publications such as Spin or Rolling Stone, punk fanzines deal primarily with music providing band interviews, record and tape reviews, and up-to-date news and gossip.

Since punk music, by choice, exists independent of major record labels and is therefore largely ignored in major publications, fanzines play a necessary role in disseminating information and bringing new bands international attention.

The recognition brought about by fanzines means new bands are often able to sell an impressive amount of recorded material and set up national and intercontinental tours within a relatively short period of time. The effectiveness of these fanzines in bringing musicians this type of recognition attests to the power of alternative press. Corporate magazines and major record labels are unwanted and unnecessary for exposing new bands.

The path for punk bands paved by fanzines allow for punk scenes to maintain the autonomy they desire.

Since fanzine editors often publish lyrics and discuss political subjects within band interviews, readers also gain insight into the many issues and ideas which are being debated within the punk genre.

While some of the nuts and bolts aspects of musical coverage make fanzines similar to the mainstream press, the similarity end there.

You Mean To Say You Do Your Own Magazine?

Punk fanzines differ fundamentally from corporate rock magazines in the way they are produced. While the big-name publications are put together by an impersonal professional bureaucracy, fanzines are so named because they are produced by fans themselves.

Many zine-editors are high school students who don't have money, notoriety, or access to expensive technology. While some fanzines are assembled with computer graphics and laser-printers, all that's really necessary is a pen, paper, scissors, and glue.

While fanzine editors do have to work hard in order to put their publications out by themselves, the Do-It-Yourself aspect is not viewed as burdensome, in fact it is often regarded as the most rewarding aspect of fanzine production.

You Mean You Don't Get Paid For This?

In sharp contrast to most magazines of any type, fanzines are not produced for profit. Editors aim to construct their zines as inexpensively as possible and sell them at non-profit prices. Fanzines are often money-losing ventures. The few that gener-

ate a surplus of money usually re-invest it into the next issue's production.

Fanzines also differ from major magazines with respect to advertisements. In most fanzines, ads are printed free of charge to the advertiser. Free ads exist because the zine editor supports the advertiser's product and in turn, wants to make use of her/his space in the fanzine to give exposure to such a product. Sometimes ad space is provided in exchange for merchandise, and sometimes fanzine editors trade ads among each other.

This method of advertising reflects the ethic of support which exists within punk communities.

Although editors' pockets are not lined with money from zine or ad sales, these people continue to produce fanzines out of a love for the punk scene and a sense of self-satisfaction. Working independently and without drawing a salary means that editors don't have to abide by rigid schedules of production or continue making fanzines once enthusiasm disappears.

Sleeping With The Enemy? Networking Among Fanzine Editors

An ethic of cooperation is essential for the survival of punk fanzines. Although some zines can be found in record and book stores which cater to independent artists, most are actually sold through the mail or by fanzine editors in other cities.

"Zine Review" sections appear in most fanzines and serve to describe fanzines which are produced by other people as well as information on how they can be obtained. Zine editors also trade zines in bulk from city to city; in this way, fanzines from other places can be sold at gigs or in local independent record and book stores. The non-profit aspect of fanzine production facilitates this support between zine editors - since no one is competing for profit, editors are more than happy to make other fanzines available to a wider range of people.

Aren't People Who Like Punk/Hardcore Music A Bunch Of Angry Loudmouths?

For the most part, yes, and therefore readers will find that fanzines are often full of opinionated and controversial writing. Columns and articles

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have been written on topics ranging from racism, to government policies, censorship, sexism, animal rights, the environment, pornography, homelessness, the music industry, and sexuality to name a few.

Since fanzine editors don't have to worry about offending paying advertisers, political expression can be uninhibited.

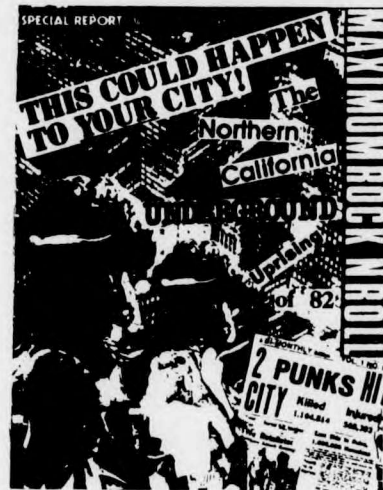
Why Do You Keep Getting All Of These Letters From Poland?: Fanzines - Making The World A Little Bit Smaller

One of the most interesting things about being a fanzine editor is getting mail from different places around the globe. After reading a fanzine, people will often write to the editor in an attempt to exchange information about their own local punk scenes and their culture in general.

People from various areas - from South Carolina to South America - are getting together and talking about the music and issues.

So Now That You Know (almost) Everything About Fanzines...

Why not get your hands on one?
A few fanzines can be found in Toronto at the Record Peddler - 621



Yonge Street; or you could send away for what some would consider to be the most comprehensive monthly punk zine (which includes reviews of other fanzines around the world) by sending \$2.75 (U.S.) to Maximum RocknRoll/P.O. Box 288/Berkeley,

California / U.S.A. / 94701-0288.

You may never see a punk fanzine in a corner store, but in many corners of the world, people are expressing themselves, sharing ideas, and keeping a whole style of music functioning vibrantly and independently.

Fanzine editors are living examples of the power of the written word, the effectiveness of grass-roots organizing, and the ongoing strength of alternative press.

FANZINE
THAT
HAD-NO-NAME
has interviews with:
CRINGER **CIRCLE JERKS**
PLAU **RETTA** **FUGAZI**



as well as record and fanzine reviews and suggestions, plus articles (one sided rantings, really) by the editor (the pretentious goof photo on the right) in fact, the only thing it doesn't have is square corners!

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