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OPUNTIA



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OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment on a previous issue.

ART CREDIT: Teddy Harvia, 701 Regency Drive, Hurst, Texas 76054-2307.

WEB CREDIT: Teddy Harvia advised me that the cover art he has done for OPUNTIA is now on his home page at <http://www.cyberramp.net/~artemis/> featuring the goddess Opuntia in colour. The page is titled as Wing Nut Wing Club, and advises that "No cartoon characters were hurt in the creation of this web site.". Also on the Web page are some David Thayer articles and even a pair of Wing Nuts, the anthropomorphic hardware seen in other zines.

THIS JUST IN ....

... or just out, as the case may be. TESSERACTS Q is the latest issue of Canada's annual SF anthology. This issue is edited by Elisabeth Vonarburg and Jane Brierley, and is a collection of stories from Québec translated into English. I haven't had a chance to read it yet, having bought it at Smithbooks just before press deadline. But you can check it out for yourself, as it is available at the usual chain stores or query to Tesseract Books, 214 - 21 - 10405 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3S2.

EMPTIES #16 (The Usual from Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarkes Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands WV13 1HX, England) A tidy little digest, starting off with Claire Brialey on her involvement as a civil servant on the team that prepared a new environment law in Britain. Observing how legislation is handled in the two houses of Parliament, she concludes that the House of Lords is the better place for serious discussion of issues and a Peer likely to be better informed than an MP. The latter have too much of their attention diverted to politics; a Lord is in no hurry to be re-elected and can take the longer view. Elsewhere in what appears to be a law and order issue, the late Bob Shaw on how to smuggle drugs in a colostomy bag, and various articles on punishment to fit the crime, police are good folk, rules for bees, ants, and humans, writing software (which confirms what I've always believed about our Ultrix system at work). A final harrowing story about a woman's rough delivery of her baby; not recommended for impending first-time parents.

DRIFT #83 (The Usual from C.F. Kennedy, Box 40, 90 Shuter Street, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K6) A memorial issue for Ernest Mann, who published LITTLE FREE PRESS. Mann died in March 1996 when he was murdered by his grandson, who then committed suicide. Mann advocated the Priceless Economic System, a utopian ideal that did away with money. He tried as much as possible to live that way as well. This issue has memorial essays about Mann's life, and reviews of his books I WAS ROBOT and FREE I GOT.

FOR THE CLERISY ABOUT LATVIA #16 (The Usual from Brant Kresovich, Riga Business School, Skolas 11, LV-1010 Riga, Latvia) An expatriate explains how toilets work in that country, jewelry, and hazards of long-distance flights.

QUIPU #6 (The Usual from Vicki Rosenzweig, 33 Indian Road, 6-R, New York, New York 10034) Perzine starting off with the recent Life on Mars kerfluffle, and why it should or should not make any difference in space exploration. Most of this zine is taken up with a report on Wiscon 20. Wiscon has found a niche as the only SF con specializing in feminism, the size of a local con but drawing a national audience. The zine closes with an account of the Bronx Zoo butterfly garden.

FOSFAX #181 (The Usual from FOSFA, Box 37281, Louisville, Kentucky 40233-7281) 72 pages of microprint on SF books, including the continuing series on Heinlein, and non-SFish matters such as the Unabomber, the Pearl Harbour attack, chronology of the Bible, King Arthur, Clinton bashing, the spy business, and practical space exploration. Fully half the zine is locs, so if you are miffed that I keep WAHing you for lack of room in OPUNTIA, then here is where you rant at length. It is fashionable to bash FOSFAX for its rightist editorial slant, but this zine publishes more SF reviews than most any other SF zine. Well recommended.

SEARCHING FOR DELICIOUS #3 (\$2 from HomeHome Publishing, 1413 Centre Street South, Calgary, Alberta, T2G 2E5) Mostly a cut-and-paste type zine with pointless photocopy collages, some fair-to-middling essays and fiction, and poorly drawn cartoons. Like PLAYBOY, you should only buy it for the articles.

TRAP DOOR #16 (US\$4 or The Usual from Robert Lichtman, Box 30, Glen Ellen, California 95442) Memorial issue on the passing of old-tyme SF fans Redd Boggs and Charles Burbee, with selections of their writings. In other accounts, Corflu con reports, cattle drives, a brain injury, and a funny (to Canadians) piece about cold winters in Edmonton, Alberta. Locs, of course.

JERSEY BEAT #57 (US\$2 from Jim Testa, 418 Gregory Avenue, Weehawken, New Jersey 07087) Nicely produced music zine sent to me via staff columnist Rodney Leighton. The music is mostly punk and techno; lots and lots and lots of reviews. An interesting report on the WE Festival in Wilmington, North Carolina, basically a convention for the DIY music crowd. The freebie tables were loaded with zines, there were film screenings, bands playing day and night, and the spirit of fun and excitement came through easily in the report. Band interviews, readers on the Question of the Day "What does suburbia mean to you?", a zine review column that lists them in order of size.

SUNSHINE IN POPOPIA by Battershell (Cassette, from Ng Records, 622 Broadway #3A, New York, New York 10012) On the info sheet it is said that this is a punk-style band but I can't tell the music from ordinary pop rock. There is an occasional burst of punkish-sounding stuff, but in the most part this group is routine pop. Well-done pop, though, the female vocals and the music are good quality. If I used the star system of rating, I'd say 2½ stars out of 5. Exactly average.

ATTITUDE #8 (The Usual from Michael Abbott, 102 William Smith Close, Cambridge CB1 3QF, England) SF zine published by an editorial collective who also intend doing a convention next February. Various personal essays, a few thoughts about role-playing games, why THE LION KING is propaganda for the Divine Right of Kings (I doubt all those kiddies who saw the movie are likely to join the Monarchist League), Alexander the Great, con reports and locs.

NEW PORT NEWS #168 (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 713 Paul Street, Newport News, Virginia 23605) Apazine, mailing comments.

RHODODENDRON #6 (The Usual from Box 564, Virgil, Ontario LOS 1T0) Photocopy collage zine, starting off with responses to a questionnaire; most readers replied to the "I wish I was \_\_\_ years old" question wanting to be young again. However, one reader wanted to be 65 now so he could get his pension before the boomers wipe it out. Zine reviews and commentary, music, and a rant against the newly-elected Tory government in Ontario.

MARKTIME AUDIOZINE #2 (The Usual from Mark Strickert, Box 59851, Schaumburg, Illinois 60159-0851) A zine on cassette, with chitchat, audio clips of old station IDs and commercials, various bland musical selections, and baseball stuff. Strickert talks about his daily commute to work: "They seem to put all the accelerator-brake-accelerator-brake drivers on the bus routes I take." A political convention in Chicago reminds him of when his father took him to the 1968 event, where the smell of tear gas still lingered in the building.

FILE 770 #114 (US\$8 for five issues from Mike Glycer, Box 1056, Sierra Madre, California 91025) Newszine of SF fandom, with con reports, fan funds, award results, fanpeople in the news, and locs.

KNOW NEWS V4#3 (The Usual from Alden Scott Crow, Box 1948, Fair Oaks, California 95628-1948) A two-part zine, one of which is a digest-sized fictionzine, the other an 8½ x 11 essays on driving. The latter has a number of rants against the bad habits of others plus a history of how the automobile took over the world.

ANGRY THOREAUAN #17 (US\$5 from Box 2246, Anaheim, California 92814) Rowdy musiczine with the usual music and zine reviews but also other stuff you won't see in TIME magazine. A phone-sex operator discusses serial sex killers and reaches some surprising conclusions. Elsewhere, a look at life in Orange County which makes

me glad I live in Calgary (where the worst controversy is about whether or not the police should buy a second photo radar unit). Much of the music and band reviews are on southern California groups naturally, but that is why God gave us the post office, and there are numerous advertisements and listings.

BIBLIOZINE #51 (The Usual from John Held Jr, Box 410837, San Francisco, California 94141-0837) A double-sided single-sheet zine that reviews mail art zines, usually thematically. This issue, for example, covers Spanish mail art zines. A good networking aid, especially for SFers and punk zinesters who want to broaden their list of exchanges.

WARP #39 (The Usual from Montréal SF&F Association, Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montréal, Québec H2W 2P4) Clubzine of media SF fans, well produced with B&W photos throughout. News of local conventions, costuming, television.

RELUCTANT FAMULUS #45 (The Usual from Tom Sadler, 422 West Maple Avenue, Adrian, Michigan 49221-1627) Genzine from SFdom, with various accounts of office politics, a trip through Austria, army life, and commentary on the Hugo awards. Reviews and locs.

IT GOES ON THE SHELF #16 (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 713 Paul Street, Newport News, Virginia 23605) Reviewzine covering dozens of older books that deserve renewed attention, albeit you might have trouble locating a copy. Newer stuff as well, and most all of it off the beaten track.

CONTRACT V8#5 (The Usual from John Mansfield, 321 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2B9) Newsletter on SF conventions and miscellaneous fandom news. This issue has detailed voting numbers for the 1996 Aurora Awards and convention listings.

GLOBAL MAIL #15 (US\$3 from Michael Dittman, Box 1309, Grove City, Pennsylvania 16127) Subtitled "The Hole To The Underground", this requestzine has thousands of listings for mail art, zines, and art projects. This is the place to connect. There are two pages of Zines Requesting Contributors, so you should be able to get your essays or fiction placed somewhere. In the Mail Art listings, everything from a chap who collects crucifixes because he noticed the position of the feet varies considerably from one to the next, to someone wanting plans for a time machine. Highly recommended for those who like exchanges or penpals.

WOOF #21 (The Usual from Victoria Smith, 12627 Harbor Drive, Woodbridge, Virginia 22192) This is an apazine published by the WorldCon Order Of Faneditors, and is collated annually at the SF WorldCon. You don't have to actually be at the WorldCon; this issue was done in Los Angeles and I have a contribution in it. The copy count is 100 of your zine (8½ x 11) and you can mail it in ahead of time. An apa (amateur press association) works by having each member send in x number of copies of their zine, which are then collated with the others to produce an apazine. Each member gets back a copy of the apazine containing all the contributed issues. This is what mail artists call 'assemblings'. WOOF #21 is mostly perzines, with one reviewzine.

SPACE CADET GAZETTE #6 (The Usual from Graeme Cameron, 1855 West 2nd Avenue, Apt. 110, Vancouver, British Columbia V6J 1J1) Lively perzine, starting off with how Cameron attended a convention but couldn't find it until the second day despite staying at the same hotel. An hilarious account of a fanzine auction where he won a desired lot when his opponent turned out to have a weak bladder and had to rush to the washroom, during which the lot came up for bids and Cameron won it. The continuing series on what it was like to be in the WW1 trenches, written by Cameron's grandfather. And a re-

view of the film "Fire Maidens of Outer Space". Said review begins by asking: "Is it inept, unwatchable, and most unforgivable of all, DULL? Or a sensitive reworking of the Theseus myth?"

ROGUE RAVEN #49 (The Usual from Frank Denton, 14654 - 8 Avenue SW, Seattle, Washington 98166) Perzine with a travelogue slant, going from Reno to Israel to Washington State. Book reviews and miscellany.

various zines from INDIGEST PRESS (US\$2 or zine trade via Blind Robin, Box 480, Denville, New Jersey 07834) The batch of stuff I got starts off with some comix titled BLIND ROBIN, the hero of which is a smoked herring (with salt added) snack food. No worse than Spiderman, one supposes. SPRAY CHEESE DIARIES #1 is a diaryzine with a number of music and print reviews mixed in. The Heavy Metal Band Logo Brain Teaser invites you to decipher the unreadable logos of twelve bands; makes RAYGUN typefaces look like Times Roman by comparison. BUSINESS REPLY MAGAZINE #1 is a genzine with some personal stuff, zine and music reviews, photocopy art, a contest to redesign the US \$1 bill, and a report of nude photography on public streets.

THE STORY OF TWO MEN WALKING ACROSS THE ROOM TO THE SOFA AND WHAT HAPPENED ON THE WAY THERE TO CHANGE BOTH THEIR LIVES, or, HOW I BEAT MY FATHER TO DEATH WITH A BAT (via Indigest Press as in previous review) A 50-page booklet by Jeff Rentsch that is the most successful use of text and photocopy collage I have ever seen. Both images and text support each other in the telling of a story that rises to a stunning climax. Powerful emotions are induced in the reader by what is on the surface a dispassionate thought sequence of a son who loses control and can only observe himself from a distance an eyeblink at a time. Well-recommended.

VEGAS FAN DIARY #4 (The Usual from Arnie Katz, 330 South Decatur Boulevard, Suite 152, Las Vegas, Nevada 89107) It is not true that half the American zines published these days originate in Las Vegas. It only seems that way. The latest is a fannish diaryzine of the Las Vegas kingpin. Not just the daily accounts of his life, it works in fan news and philosophical zine topics.

PHILOSOFY #3 (The Usual from Alexander Slate, 8603 Shallow Ridge Drive, San Antonio, Texas 78239-4022) A fanzine that has found and occupied a vacant niche. It discusses philosophy and religion, with commentary on Jewish law. Reviews and locs.

ADVENTURES OF AN UNEMPLOYED ENTOMOLOGIST #7 (US\$2 or zine trade from Box 3026, Worcester, Massachusetts, 01613-3026) The title is self-explanatory, but this zine also goes into the details of cicada hatches, a museum display of amber, Giardia infection, and the diagnosis of what species of grasshopper it was in a box sent to a police officer. Why someone sent a Massachusetts lawman a box from Florida containing nothing but one live grasshopper is an unresolved question.

DEROGATORY REFERENCE #83 (The Usual from Arthur Hlavaty, 206 Valentine Street, Yonkers, New York 10704) Pazine in the life of a copyeditor, miscellaneous notes, and locs.

TEXAS SF INQUIRER #55 (The Usual from Fandom Association of Central Texas, Box 9612, Austin, Texas 78766) Clubzine, but this issue more resembles a comix, with strips about an irresistible cat food, Space Zombie, and Captain Haymaker (the talkiest comic strip in history). Numerous capsule reviews and fanhistory.

VISIONS OF PARADISE #69 (The Usual from Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court, Budd Lake, New Jersey 07828-1023) Diaryzine in the life of a math teacher, plus reviews.

APPARATCHIK #68 (The Usual from Andy Hooper, 4228 Francis Avenue North, #103, Seattle, Washington 98103) Published every third week, a better frequency than most e-zines. (Actually, quarterly fanzines have better frequencies as most e-zines I've seen are apparently updated about two times a year). The issue at hand is musing on alien TV shows and the general gullibility of the viewing public. Some articles on aggressive driving and Huck Finn, neatly closed off by thoughts on supermarket tabloids. Locs as usual.

PINKETTE #15e (The Usual from Karen Pender-Gunn, Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130, Australia) And people complain about OPUNTIA's numbering system ... In any event, #15e is a slim genzine, mostly clippings, personal notes, and some locs.

ANSIBLE #111 (The Usual from Janice Murray, Box 75684, Seattle, Washington 98125-0684) Dave Langford's Hugo-winning newszine, covering British Sfdom and a bit on the American side as well. This issue slags Penguin for a stupid book promotion stunt in which the Good Times virus was modified and used to publicize a new book. It is not necessary to be an SF fan to enjoy this zine; the writing is the funniest around.

PUNCH #7892 (\$5.95 at newsagents) Back in OPUNTIA #9.1, I reviewed the final issue of the British humour magazine PUNCH, which died on April 8, 1992, after 151 years of publication. From time to time subsequent, there had been rumours of its revival, which finally came true in September 1996. I happened to see a couple of the new series whilst browsing in W.H. Smith. Under the ownership of Mohamed Al Fayed, one of those businessmen whose name keeps showing up in the newspapers tainted with scandal (Fayed, not the newspapers), PUNCH has returned as if nothing had happened. New editorial staff, new artists, but the same upmarket advertisements, leader articles, and cartoons. Even, alas, a few toilet-humour jokes that belong in PLAYBOY, not PUNCH.

SERCON POPCULT LITCRIT FANMAG #7 (The Usual from Garth Spencer, Box 15335, Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 5B1) Life on the poge, why his Web page is on behalf of the Royal Swiss Navy, con reports, and newsy locs.

BARDIC RUNES #14 (\$4 from Michael McKenny, 424 Cambridge Street South, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 4H5) This is a fictionzine specializing in sword-and-sorcery type high fantasy. Ten short stories, three poems, and some artwork.

BUSSWARBLE #30 (The Usual from Michael Hailstone, 14 Cecil Road, Blackheath, New South Wales 2785, Australia) Pazine alternating different articles and fiction pieces, one page at a time in rotation. Locs at the end of it all.

BROKEN PENCIL #4 (\$4.95 to Broken Pencil, Box 203, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S7 or at newsagents) A slick reviewzine covering small press and underground zines. Excerpts and features are reprinted from a few of the zines to give an indication of what the scene looks like. The capsule reviews are arranged in geographical order, but not the e-zines, music, or book reviews. I never understood why B.P. or FACTSHEET FIVE sort zines by geography. Zinedom is based on subject interest, not physical location. However, B.P. does serve the very useful purpose of introducing neos to zines, as it has exposure at the newsagents where the usual zine does not. B.P. advertises zinedom to the world at large, and for that it deserves praise.

SOUTHERN FANDOM CONFEDERATION V6#6 (The Usual from Tom Feller, Box 13626, Jackson, Mississippi 39236-3626) A clubzine covering the news of southern USA, with con reports and listings, and further lists of zines, Web sites, and clubs in that area. Locs as well. Quite a useful resource for anyone looking for information on fandom of the American South.

THYME #111/AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS #71/ARTYCHOKE #17 (The Usual from Alan Stewart, Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) Three zines in one. THYME is a genzine, this issue covering the WorldCons of 1996 and 1999, fan politics Down Under, and various news and notes. ASFN is, despite its title, a reviewzine on new and forthcoming books. ARTYCHOKE deals with SF art; each issue features an artist and his/her portfolio (in this case, Brad Foster), and continues the saga of the Space Time Buccaneers, an excellent and highly literate comix series.

RUBBERSTAMPADNESS #90 (US\$7 from Rubberstampadness, 408 SW Monroe #210, Corvallis, Oregon 97330) Bimonthly for the rubber stamp crowd, perfectbound, colour throughout. Massive in many senses of the word, with 192 pages, size 25cm x 32cm, hundreds of display ads from dealers in rubber stamp art, lots of how-to articles, accounts of rubber clubs and conventions, mail art listings, and, in the lettercol, slagging against the 'cutes' by 'weirds'. All fandoms are the same, whether philately, aquarium, science fiction, or rubber stamp art. Fascinating and lengthy reading; I had no idea the hobby was this big. I bought this at a local rubber stamp store; you might do likewise. And yes, I have an opuntia rubber stamp.

WILD HEIRS #17 and #18 (The Usual from Arnie Katz, 330 South Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, Nevada 89107) These folk in Las Vegas wrote up more about the Toner convention than what I've seen so far from everyone about the WorldCon. Toner was held just prior to the WorldCon for fanzine fans to stop over en route to Los Angeles. Panel discussions on zinedom made one interesting point; "The finesse of recruitment is to find a few, not hundreds or thousands." In other words, 'tis better to have some dedicated workers rather than a horde sitting about and waiting for others to do the work for them. This zine also reprints a few classics from yesteryear, including one that sent me to the OED to find out how many fardels there are in a nook.

ON SPEC #26 (\$6 from On Spec, Box 4727, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5G6) Canada's prozine of speculative fiction. In this issue are Tanya Huff and Robert Sawyer, but the piece I preferred was Jody Ivanic's "Obelisk of Cle Elum", about an Egyptian obelisk that decides to relocate itself to a farm field in the Cascades.

PROBE #100 (The Usual from SFSA, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) Digest-sized clubzine with card covers enclosing 84 pages, and carrying a fair bit of fiction. This issue, not surprisingly, takes time on the occasion of 100 issues to review the history of SF in South Africa and how SFSA came into being. Not just the usual struggles of every SF club either. Getting SF into SA was a struggle in itself, as the censors of the government were prepared to ban anything they did not understand. It almost goes without saying that the bureaucrats could not understand the SF they had been given. On one occasion, no doubt not as funny at the time as it is now in retrospect, the club was visited by an agent of BOSS (Bureau of State Security, the SA equivalent of KGB). Fortunately he was a reasonable man, and not only cleared the club but took some of its members out for dinner, just to show no hard feelings.

OBSCURE #38 (US\$1 from Jim Romnesko, 45 South Albert Street, #1, St. Paul, Minnesota 55105) A reviewzine of the zine world that looks at a few zines or trends in depth, rather than a mass of capsule reviews. Some things never change. More discussion on the future of FACTSHEET FIVE, the ongoing antics of Robert DuPree, who seems most likely to be indicted for preying on young naive Riot Grrrl zinesters, and the mad rush to cash in on books and pro writing now that zinedom has been noticed by the media.

ETHEL THE AARDVARK #68 (The Usual from Melbourne SF Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) Clubzine with news, reviews, locs.

ERG #135 (The Usual from Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ) In this issue is a look at stillborn technology such as flying cars or 'Municipal Announcer' loudspeakers (to be used as a public service broadcaster, whose announcements could be heard "up to five miles away". Noise pollution at its finest moment of glory.) Also various reviews and locs.

FUSE V19#5 (\$5.50 at newsagents or from Artons Cultural Affairs Society, 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 454, Toronto, Ontario M5V 3A8) This is a typical art magazine of the kind I usually don't read, filled as they are with pretentious drivel about art, and forgettable work from art-college students and instructors. This issue had the magic word 'zines' on the cover blurb, so I bought it on spec (pardon the pun). Part of it is the regular mix I would expect to find on obscure artists from other countries, ads by art galleries (and a chartered accountant) and reviews. Much of it is whining about budget cuts as Ontario artists suddenly learn the truth of the proverb that "Who sups with the Devil needs a long spoon", or, perhaps "Who pays the piper calls the tune". Either way, the Art Establishment is reeling about in shock from the budget cuts of the recently-elected Tory government. I am not especially sympathetic to art mags and centres in trouble. Too many of them are more to create jobs for administrators rather than fund real artists. Too many of them perpetuate the work of fake artists with no skill or talent. As one article in this issue admits, the major purpose of establishing art centres seems to be to continuously beg for more money in the future to upgrade the facilities, buy new computers, build a new wing, and otherwise keep the brick monument going irrespective of what it was supposed to be for in the first place. There is a passing acknowledgement that it is possible to publish a zine or do art without a Canada Council grant. It may be a horrifying prospect to many in the CanLitCrit crowd, but it can be done! I would like to have read more in the article about WORLDPOOL, a primitive Internet run by artists from 1978 to 1981. Just as histories

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of zinedom usually assume it all began in the 1970s, so it is that Internet histories all skip over nets that were not part of ARPANET or the recognized dogma of computer network history. WORLDPOOL used computer mailboxes, slow-scan video, and the early fax machines in what was called 'interactive telenetworking'. This article has me wondering how many other stillborn Nets existed back then that are now forgotten, just as the apas of the 1800s are largely unknown to most zinesters. Despite the WORLDPOOL comments, the article follows stereotyped histories about zinedom, the same as you would see in any newspaper Sunday supplement.

WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE #50 (The Usual from Jean Weber, Box 744, Ryde, New South Wales 2112, Australia) Genzine with articles about an SFish trip through USA, back to Australia, folk music, life on a mixed farm in New Zealand, capsule book reviews, and locs.

MIMOSA #19 (The Usual from Nicki and Richard Lynch, Box 1350, Germantown, Maryland 20875) Card-covered, saddle-stitched fanhistoryzine, a long way from its mimeograph origins. The definitive journal, almost, of SF fandom history, with accounts from the decades Back When. The modern era is not neglected though, with reports of the 1996 WorldCon, thoughts on why Vulcan breeding cycles are illogical, Swedish fanslang, and locs.

COYOTE BRAND CORN FLAKES SERIAL #2 (\$1 from Johnny Voodoo, Suite #193, 1919B - 4 Street SW, Calgary, Alberta T2S 1W4) Mostly handwritten zine; the typeset stuff is clipped from elsewhere. An article on Tibet, some bad fiction, and a band review.

GIRLIE PRIG #7 (\$1 from Karen, 1518 - 17 Avenue NW, Calgary, Alberta, T2M 0R5) Perzine, mostly handwritten, by a teenager with the usual woes about brothers, working at the fast-food outlet, school, vacation, and sex.

KNARLY KNEWS #60 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) This is a tenth anniversary issue of an SF genzine. The theme is on how fandom and fans have changed over the past decade, and both editor and readers provide their opinions on this.

PUNK PLANET #15 (US\$2 from Punk Planet, Box 464, Chicago, Illinois 60690) 120 pages, saddle-stitch, offset print, photos throughout, in short, high production values that are supportive of the contents. All the usual zine and record reviews, band interviews, and locs (currently the vegetarians are slagging with the omnivores) that is to be expected in any musiczine. But P.P. steps ahead of other punkzines by emphasizing content. Columnists by the dozen, who have substantial things to say, who can write it to keep the reader's interest, and who are not deluded into thinking that 'kewl' is cool. As this zine appeared circa the American elections, there are reports on the two party conventions. In Chicago, the hottest-selling souvenir was a T-shirt with the Chicago police emblem on front, and the slogan on the back "We kicked your father's ass in 1968 ... wait 'til you see what we do to you".

MOSHASSUCK REVIEW, November 1996 (Zine trade from Ken Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741) Apazine specializing in Lovecraft and his circle. Very detailed historical research work. Also reviews of small press books of ghost stories.

CENTERRIFICAL TALES #2 (The Usual from Kevin Welch, Box 2195, Madison, Wisconsin 53701-2195) Perzine, starting off with how-to writing books and which of them did or did not influence Kevin's attempts at writing. Pieces on Simak, Sheckley, a few book reviews, and an oddment.

WHY DOES EVERYONE WANT TO BE ON THE CUTTING EDGE?

Preentious one-upmanship is a basic instinct of the human race, the "I know something you don't know, nyah nyah!" hubris that leads inevitably to the avant garde and the cutting edge. Anytime I ever pruned a branch in my day job as a horticulturist, I always wore safety glasses to keep the wood chips from ruining my eyes. Our shop mechanic does a lot of cutting edge stuff on a lathe, the most noticeable effect of which is that a lot of debris and shavings accumulate. The art world is no different; the cutting edge generates mostly waste, and the blade must be resharpened at intervals.

Avant garde art is a misnomer. The accumulation of new ideas and products builds up like a sphere. Anyone standing on the sphere's surface cannot see an edge. Where, then, is the avant garde and the cutting edge? One person's cutting edge is another's Same Old Same Old. What keeps the myth of the avant garde going is the lack of historical knowledge. Neo-zinesters are convinced they are the first to shock and to explore new territory by using four-letter words and pointless collages. Their grandparents also used such words and published drivel fifty or one hundred years ago. But that knowledge is lost or forgotten. Zines were not a product of punk rock or sensawonder SF fans, but few ever see a copy of something from the 1920s or 1880s.

All of this is a runup to T.A.Z.: THE TEMPORARY AUTONOMOUS ZONE, ONTOLOGICAL ANARCHY, AND POETIC TERRORISM by Hakim Bey (1991, Autonomedia). This is an essay collection which alternates between readable and unreadable. I get the impression that the author could explain things easily if he would, but is habituated by exposure to humanities academics and art critics to using the academese gibberish. This is a desperate attempt to convince themselves as much as outsiders that arts and humanities are capable of objective and rigorous interpretation in the same manner as science

and technology. But all art and literature criticism is only a matter of opinion, no matter how much it may be dressed up with jargon and pseudo-Marxist dialogue.

T.A.Z. gets off to a reasonable start with commentary on Poetic Terrorism, which is essentially the art of practical jokes and parody glued together by litcrit theory. Art Sabotage, in another essay, is the darker side of Poetic Terrorism, more simply straightforward vandalism.

The major essay of this book "The Temporary Autonomous Zone" gets off to a good start with a chapter on pirate utopias, islands and hideaways used by sea rovers for resupply and relaxation. It is a good analogy for The Net, not the computer version, but the real-life underground networks that survive because they are unnoticed by Authority, too marginal to be considered a threat to anyone. The Net survives by mail art, zines, word of mouth, and unadvertised BBSes and mailing lists. This essay was written a few years ago just as personal computers were starting to connect to the Internet. The TAZ essay points out that computers will merely provide an electro-workshop where housewives work at home on second incomes for the family, just as 150 years ago crofters had weaving looms in their cottages. A lot of the essay alternates between common sense writing that provides a fresh point of view and, alas, the Art Theory drivel of a university professor. One gets the impression that there are ideas behind TAZ buried under bad writing.

It is easy to see how Hakim Bey might be his own worst enemy, and it is not at all surprising that others used him as a target. At hand I have an essay by the multiple name Luther Blissett entitled "Why I Wrote a Fake Hakim Bey Book And How I Cheated The Conformists of Italian Counterculture". (Available for The Usual from Federico Guglielmi, Box 744, 40122 Bologna Centrale, Italy) The title pretty much sums up the essay. Whether it is Poetic Terrorism or Art Sabotage depends on your opinion of Hakim Bey.

For many years the only readily available serious work on zines was Fredric Wertham's *THE WORLD OF FANZINES* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1973). After the death of the first incarnation of *FACTSHEET FIVE*, Mike Gunderloy and Carl Goldberg Janice published *THE WORLD OF ZINES* (Penguin, 1992) which had a few how-to articles but was mostly a catalogue of zines, out of date by the time the book appeared and now only of historical interest. Now at hand is a new book *ZINES!* (Vol. 1) by V. Vale (V/Search, 1996, ISBN 0-9650469-0-7). It is a descendent of the *Re/Search* series of books on the weird side of culture. Like its predecessors, it is detailed; obviously quite a lot of research has gone into it.

To cover all of zinedom in a book is impossible, nor does *ZINES!* even attempt it. Estimates of the number of zines at any given moment range up to 50,000 titles and good luck locating more than a fraction of them. This book instead selects a few thematic groups of zines, then further selects a few editors within each group, and interviews them extensively. One can thus get an appreciation of why people do zines, and see the commonalities over a diverse array. It has long been a truism that no subject is too obscure to have a zine for it. This book uses as examples zines on the subjects of thrift store shopping, clip art, found art, Riot Grrrls, fat lesbian dykes, and nostalgia. There is also an interview with a magazine/book distributor which should inject a dose of realism into zine publishers entertaining fantasies of being the next Time-Warner. The economics of sale-or-return are brutal and demonstrate that zines are better off trying other means of distribution if they want to go from a hobby to a business.

A concluding essay by Stephen Schwartz covers the history of zines. No need to cringe; he is well aware of

zine origins in the distant past. He takes as ancestors the pamphlets and broadsides of the 1600s and 1700s, and is apparently unaware of the amateur press associations of the 1800s. But he does correctly identify the Dada zines of the early 1900s as being in the line of evolution, although he slips up thinking that SF fanzines are a product of 1950s movie fans inspired by Forrest J. Ackerman.

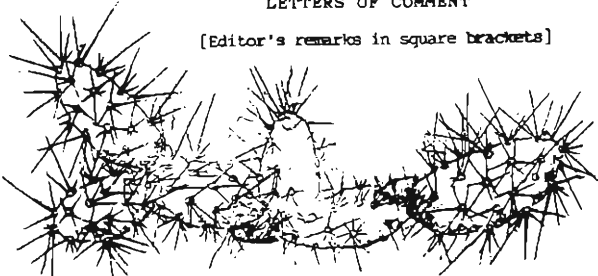
Schwartz uses as his main examples the Ranters, who were radicals of the Cromwell republic, and the revolutionary writers of the first half of the 1900s, who were socialists, union activists, and communists. The mimeograph was an important tool in the later stages, as initially letterpress was favoured in support of the printing trade unions. The Wobblies got around this by declaring their mimeographs to be union-operated presses. Communists were first in favour of zines, then, after gaining power in the people's democracies, repressed them. Samizdat was feared as much as any foreign army, and citizens who owned typewriters had to register them. Incidentally, one point made elsewhere in *ZINES!* was that paper zines will always be with us as they are harder for the government to track, whereas monitoring Web pages will soon be an automated process done by supercomputers.

The zine editors interviewed in this book are nearly all Californians, not surprising given that V. Vale lives in San Francisco. However the details are easy enough to generalize to other places and circumstances. The Riot Grrrl editors are Chicanos warped by their experience of being discriminated against not only because they were Mexican but were female. Their anger at prejudice brought them into zines. One can easily extrapolate and see how others, say Metis in Canada or blacks in Britain, might feel much the same.

I recommend this book in particular to SF fans, who have a tendency to see the history of zines only in terms of their little enclave.

LETTERS OF COMMENT

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



FROM: Kevin Welch  
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1996-8-19

The articles on amateur press associations and the pre-history of zines are most enlightening and very well done. They correct the impression that nothing interesting was done before Mike Gunderloy. It is simply amazing that the American, National, and United APAs are still functioning after a century. Things don't usually last that long. Governments do, and institutions like schools, universities, hospitals, and churches. In baseball, the National League is about 120 years old. But little else. Most American corporations are 75 years old or less because companies fail and are re-organized and bought and sold with some regularity. More to the point, few magazines have survived from the 19th century. Tastes change too much and publishers cannot adapt. The loose amateur networks of the apas seem better fitted for survival than the typical magazine publisher. Perhaps more amazing is that the membership often seems to work against survival. Members were and are all amateurs, and like a lot of fannish types they are given over to all sorts of petty squabbles which should have doomed any of

these groups a long time ago. There's no money involved in running one of these things, yet they still seem to flourish. I understand that the AAPA has a copy count of 300. Maybe the most amazing thing is that the apa is a hobby activity that assumes literacy, reflection, and a devotion to the crafts of writing and printing. These aren't qualities usually associated with recreation and entertainment.

[As many apas have died on the vine, one would have to see comparative statistics to determine if they have a better survival rate. But you do touch tangently on a factor that makes a difference. Commercial magazines are killed by money problems mostly, whereas many apas are carried at a loss if members were to calculate their time, energy, and out-of-pocket expenses. 'amateur' does not mean 'substandard', though it is often used in that sense; it means someone who does a thing for the love of it. It is love, not money that keeps apas going.]

FROM: Carolyn Clowes  
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1996-7-25

Technology makes information accessible, but it also spawns fads of dubious merit. Do we really need interactive books with multiple-choice endings, just because we can now click a mouse? Sounds like creative death to me. I'll take my stories the old-fashioned way, complete with pages I can't stop turning and endings that astound me, enchant me, or break my heart.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Joseph Major, Murray Moore, Rodney Leighton, Harry Warner Jr, Mark Strickert, Buck Coulson, Harry Andruschak, Chester Cuthbert, C.F. Kennedy, Sheryl Birkhead, Henry Welch, Teddy Harvia, Candi Strecker, John Held Jr, Lin Xi