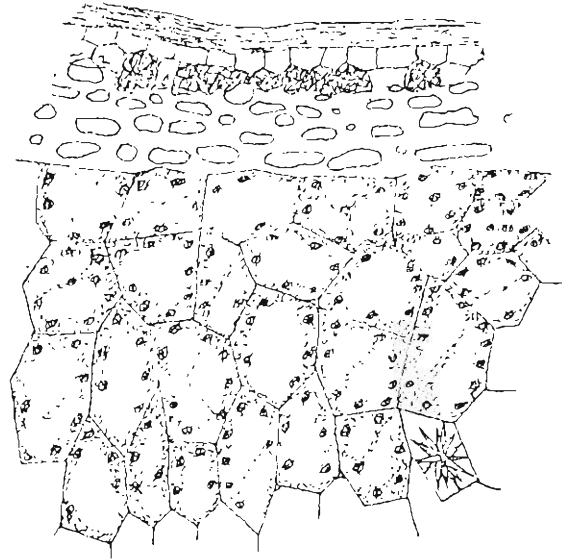
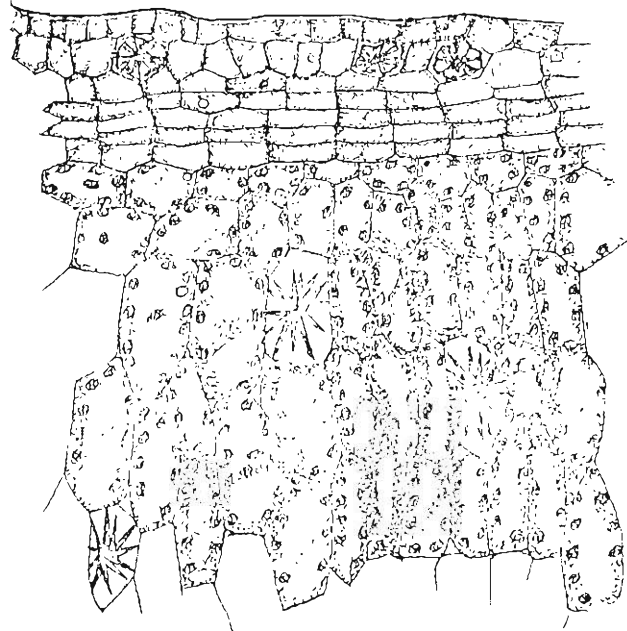


OPUNTIA

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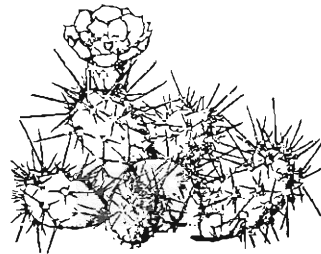
OPUNTIA is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada as the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount. US\$ banknotes are acceptable in Canada at par value; what we gain on the exchange rate we lose on the higher postage rate to USA. Do not send mint USA stamps as they are not valid for postage.

Whole-numbered OPUNTIA's are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, and x.5 issues are perzines.

ART CREDIT: *Opuntia castillae* leaf pad cross sections are depicted on the cover, drawn by J.C.Th. Uphof for his 1916 paper co-authored with J.J. Thornber. "Cold Resistance In Spineless Cacti". It appeared in UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENTAL STATION BULLETIN 79:119-144. At left is a two-week old plant with young skin cells at top. The two-year-old plant at right has developed a thick, cold-resistant integument to protect the interior cells from frost.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Scott Crow, Chuck Welch, Scott Garinger, Ruel Gaviola, Rodney Leighton, Sue Jones, John Held Jr, Michael Waite, Wilfried Nold

LETTERS
TO THE
EDITOR
[Editor's
remarks
in square
brackets]



FROM: Henry Welch
1525 - 16 Avenue
Grafton, Wisconsin 53024

1999-08-17

Your comments regarding e-mail versus print are exactly opposite of my preferences. I much prefer the e-mail locs because my typing speed is pretty bad. I find it takes less effort to reformat and clean out the extra carriage control stuff in the electronic locs than to type in print stuff.

FROM: Chester Cuthbert
Winnipeg, Manitoba

1999-08-29

I sometimes think that our basic philosophy dictates what we choose to read. This may be wise, since there is a limit to the knowledge we are capable of assimilating, but it leaves us ignorant of whole subjects.

FROM: Harry Andruschak
Box 5309
Torrance, California 90510-5309

1999-08-28

I really need to pick up a copy of Bukowski's book POST OFFICE, but I assure you it would be almost impossible to write any fictional Boss From Hell story of the USPS that wasn't matched or beaten by facts. [Harry is a sorting plant technician for USPS.]

FROM: Harry Warner
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

1999-09-01

There must be enough other people with this sort of experience to create the need for 36 printings of the book by Charles Bukowski.

[I'm sure a lot of posties and philatelists have bought the book over the years, but it is just plain funny in its own right, enough to keep renewing its audience by word of mouth over the years. It will still be selling steadily through the small press years from now, even as the multi-million bestsellers from the time of its first publication are now completely forgotten and will never be reprinted.]

ZINE LISTINGS.

by Dale Speirs

[The Usual means \$2 or \$3 cash, trade for your zine, or letter of comment on a previous issue. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada or overseas as the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount. US\$ banknotes are acceptable around the world.]

Warp #48 (The Usual from Montreal SF and Fantasy Association, Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montreal, Quebec H2W 2P4) Clubzine of SF media fans. Not surprisingly the recent Star Wars movie dominates this issue, but there are also convention reviews. The recent death of DeForest Kelley is marked with an interview that Montrealers did with him a decade ago.

Saucer Smear V46#7 (US\$2 from James Moseley, Box 1709, Key West, Florida 33041) The newszine of UFOnuts. This issue starts off with Moseley's statement of where he stands on the question of alien visitors. He believes in intelligent life out there in the universe but is suspicious about all the reports of humanoid aliens who seem only slightly more advanced than us, given they are supposedly starfaring, and who have an unaccountable interest in sexual abuse of rednecks. Elsewhere, news of James Randi feuding, reviews, and general commentary, all done in good-natured humour. Enjoyable even if you don't believe in UFOs.

Slush #6 (\$2 from Bev Rosenbaum and Patricia Storms, 1245 Caledonia Road, Toronto, Ontario M6A 2X6) Handprinted zine, a reminder to newbies that you don't need the latest software to publish. Sort of a poor woman's version of WRITERS' DIGEST, with articles on rejection letters, sending queries, living cheaply on a starving writer budget, writers' spouses, and bad timing (now is not the time to be peddling your horror screenplay about a slasher terrorizing a school).

Fantasy A.P.A. #248 (Sample bundle US\$5 from Ken Forman, 7215 Nordic Lights Drive, Las Vegas, Nevada 89119-0335, or details only about joining from Robert Lichtman, Box 30, Glen Ellen, California 95442) This bundle has 37 zines comprising 268 pages. Nominally about SF, but in actual practice is largely perzines and reviewzines with a fannish tinge. One feature is the mailing comments, which are remarks by members on each others' zines in the previous bundle. Members are required to send in 65 copies of their zine, which is the membership limit. Currently there are a few vacancies, so if you hustle a letter of enquiry to Lichtman for details, you should be able to get in.

Sugar Needle #10 (The Usual from Phlox Icona, 1174 - 2 Briarcliff, Atlanta, Georgia 30306) Devoted to candy and other sweet stuff, with illos of candy wrappers from around the continent, reviews about candy, and reviews about books about candy. A diabetic's nightmare and a dentist's joy.

Point Of Divergence A.P.A.

(US\$10 per year for postage, plus 30 copies of your zine, double-sided 8½ x 11. Write first to Jim Rittenhouse, Box 562, Lisle, Illinois 60532, to verify vacancies are available.) This bimonthly apa requires a minimum of two pages of original material once every other issue. It is devoted to alternative history and sizes up at roughly 250 pages per bundle. World War Two and the American War Between The States tend to dominate the discussions, but there are other alternatives discussed as well, such as Islamic invasions of Europe, workers' revolutions, and colonialism gone awry. Solid reading; mostly essays and extended commentary but also some fiction, as some POD members are working on novels and timelines.

On Spec #37 (\$4.95 from On Spec, Box 4727, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5G6) Canada's SF prozine. Normally the stories differ enough from other SF prozines to justify ON SPEC's existence as an alternative, but this issue seems strangely retro. Stories about people waiting passively for World War Three to begin, or the human race giving up its existence because they'd all rather be downloaded into computers where they can create their own worlds. These have all been done before and better elsewhere. A day late and a dollar short.

Le Journ'Alle #Juillet-Aout (Mail art Usual from Christian Alle, Residence Chantereyne, Surcouf N#10, 50100 Cherbourg, France) Mail art listings from numerous countries, mostly in French but with some English requests for contributions. A place to plug into the Eternal Network if you are starting to get serious about mail art.

Mark Time #58 (The Usual from Mark Strickert, 300 South Beau Drive #1, Des Plaines, Illinois 60016) Diary of a county collector, whose hobby is to drive through as many counties as possible. While he is at it, he also tapes radio stations along the way. This issue covers his latest trip, with another county collector, as they pick off 57 counties in Kansas, 2 in Missouri, and 8 in Nebraska. Also letters and miscellaneous comment.

Tortoise #5 (The Usual from Sue Jones, 89 Sutton Road, Shrewsbury SY2 6ED, England) Essays on the troubles of keeping legendary creatures as pets, personal accounts, and reviews.

Obscure #45 (US\$1 from Jim Romenesko, 45 South Albert Street, #1, St. Paul, Minnesota 55105) The final issue, as Romenesko is devoting his time to his e-commerce business. Mostly about Jim Goad's decline and fall, as he takes a plea-bargain for 3 years imprisonment as a result of a domestic dispute with his ex-girlfriend. Goad's zine ANSWER ME!, which

featured articles favourable to rape and abuse, were part of the reason for a stiff sentence in a case which otherwise might have been a routine minor matter. *Litera scripta manet.*

Typograpunx #ii (The Usual from 15 Churchville Road, #115-163, Bel Air, Maryland 21014) Musings about typography but annoyingly the editor only touches on each topic for a paragraph or two before ending the discussion. This is not for lack of room to develop arguments in an essay, as half this issue is blank space, often with one paragraph isolated in the middle of the page. There is some commentary about typefaces to provide a bit of substance, but most of the issue is filler, such as unedited e-mail threads. A hint to zine editors everywhere: if you really must print e-mail threads, then at least clear out all those duplicated lines and route markings.

The Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin V7#4 (The Usual from Julie Wall, 470 Ridge Road, Birmingham, Alabama 35206) Clubzine of federation of SF groups across southern USA. News and reviews, listings of clubs, zines, and conventions, letters, and convention reports.

The Geis Letter #66 (US\$1 from Richard Geis, Box 11408, Portland, Oregon 97211-0408) Conspiracy newsletter, with this issue mostly on Y2K and Waco. Also book reviews.

Banana Wings #14 (The Usual from Claire Brialey, 26 Northampton Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7HA, England) Doorstop-class zine, not to be quickly skimmed. The lead-off essay is a bit of fanhistory about weekly pub gatherings, something fans in some of the bigger cities such as London, England, or Toronto do. Various book and zine reviews, wildlife cookery, thoughts on running conventions, and letters of comment.

Ethel The Aardvark #86 (The Usual from Melbourne SF Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) Clubzine with news, notes, reviews, and letters of comment.

Broken Pencil #10 (\$4.95 at newsagents or from Broken Pencil, Box 203, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S7) Canadian reviewzine, slick cover. Illustrated throughout but unfortunately the editor is under the impression that bad graphics makes it look more zineish. Reviews of Canadian zines sorted by province, ignoring as usual the fact that the whole idea of zinedom is that it is not local by geography but international by interest. News and notes of zinedom. Several essays on mass media response to zines, with explanations by insiders why zines will always be treated by them as "Aren't they cute?" or "This is disgusting filth contaminating our beautiful city; film at 11". Not so much bad fiction in this issue, and overall much improved content.

Parakeet #1 to #3 (The Usual from Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE) Single-sheet microtext zine for distribution at the weekly pub gatherings of SF fans in London, England, but also sent out in trade or whim. Humourous tone throughout, with convention reports, CCTV (one of the fans installs them for a living), joining an English gun club, and building a new garden fence. Enjoyable reading; the fannish equivalent of ANSIBLE.

Grammar Q And A #18 (The Usual from Misti and Scott Crow, Box 445, Clements, California 95227) Single sheet dealing with topics of the English language. This time around are discussed the eternal verities of ending sentences in propositions, split infinitives, and preventive versus preventative.

Probe #107 (The Usual from Science Fiction South Africa, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) Clubzine nicely produced in digest size with card covers. The usual reviews and letters, but mostly short stories by local authors.

Ruthie #8 (\$2 from Ms. Mastre, #28, 101A, 601 - 17 Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta T2S 0B3) Feminist zine, with articles on how to start a peaceful revolution, dating, dietary diseases, and miscellaneous.

The Bibliofantasiac #14 (The Usual from C.F. Kennedy, 39 Claremore Avenue, Scarborough, Ontario M1N 3S1) Reviews, letters, poetry, and short stories.

Fanzine Fanatique July '99 (The Usual from Keith Walker, 6 Vine Street, Lancaster LA1 4UF, England) Brief reviewzine, four pages.

Sivullinen 2/99 (The Usual from Jouni Waarakangas, Kaarelantie 86 B 28, 00420 Helsinki, Finland) In English, 4 pages. A mix of poetry, direct action statements, and zine and record announcements.

The Thought #114 (US\$2 from Ronald Tobin, Box 10760, Glendale, Arizona 85318-0760) Political zine with letters and articles about Kosovo, JFK Jr, abortion, and American politics. A bit too much did-not-did-too-I-never-said-that arguing. A poor-man's FOSFAX.

Word Play #1 (The Usual from Misti and Scott Crow, Box 445, Clements, California 95227) Single sheet dealing with the origins of phrases and words. This issue discusses trooper versus trouper, 'heads up!', 'salad days', compleat versus complete, and colours.

Young And Critical #? (\$2 from Laurel Paluck, Georgia Fisher, and Joleen Edmondson, c/o Peterborough Arts Umbrella, 1 - 360

George Street North, Peterborough, Ontario K9H 7E7) Cut-and-paste collage a few original ideas to go with the legalize marijuana essay, free-verse poetry, and band interview. A survey of the Peterborough citizenry (sample size or age not given) produces 68% against extending the vote to children, the same percentage agreeing that television is addictive, and 71% favouring legalization of marijuana.

Amusing Yourself To Death #15 (US\$5 from Ruel Gaviola, Box 91934, Santa Barbara, California 93190-1934) Non-SF zinesters have wasted much time and energy worrying about who will take over as the focal point reviewzine now that FACTSHEET FIVE is dead. They miss the point or refuse to understand that there is no focal point in the Papernet. Every zine is at the centre of its own network and the periphery of everyone else's. For those who really, absolutely must have a central reviewzine, I recommend AYT D, which has 60 pages and hundreds of zine reviews. It has certainly good claim to succeed the late FF. In addition to zine reviews, there are also listings for zine libraries, distros, and events. Well recommended.

Yhos #56 (The Usual from Art Widner, Box 5122, Gualala, California 95445) Marred by the editor using fonetic speling and abbrev. wrds. unnecess. but redeemed by two good essays by clergy on why they are SF fans and why religion deserves better treatment in SFdom.

Anna's Banana Bulletin #4 (Mail art Usual from Anna Banana, RR 22, 3747 Sunshine Coast Highway, Roberts Creek, British Columbia V0N 2W2) Single-sheet mail artzine. Starts off with her recent trip to Italy, the first part of which was to collect money owed from a dead-beat art dealer named Sarenco, and the second and more enjoyable part a tour of the sights. Also news of what she has been up to and sightings of bananas thither and yon.

The Knarley Knews #77 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) Genzine, with news and notes about SF fandom, an essay on fake violence in Hollywood versus real violence, and lots of letters of comment.

FUN WITH RUBBER AND GUMMED PAPER

for non-philatelists, wrote the reviewer Dale Speirs

Stamp Stories: The Boyhood Memories Of An Old Philatelist (US\$12 from Sheldon Lifter, 5008 Prentiss Drive, Troy, Michigan 48098) Trade paperback, 64 pages, self-published. Nicely produced overall but a few problems where some phrases in the text WERE RANDOMLY TYPED IN ALL CAPS but this minor

distraction of poor proofreading did not seriously mar the stories.

The author reminisces about his childhood during the Great Depression and his stamp accumulating. Stamp collecting was more popular then than since because there were fewer distractions such as television, science fiction, trading cards, or the multitude of activities kids have today.

Lifter's stories cover a remarkable range of people and places he met along the way. Remarkable especially for a young boy, but as he points out, his obsessive search for stamps anywhere he could find them led him into some strange places. He made friends with the son of a bordello madam, who, learning that her son needed more stamps, made her customers bring in 100 stamps in addition to the usual fee for services rendered. He soon had an ample supply for his project, which was to paper his bedroom wall with stamps.

Anecdotes abound. There was a neighbour down the street who insisted on being buried with his stamp album to prevent his faithless wife from giving the collection to her lover. There was a friend's Uncle Max, the local Communist, who fell afoul of the law when one of his Party flunkies tried to mail propaganda with Russian stamps. A bad moment in Lifter's life came when his mother had to sell his stamp collection to pay his doctor bill.

Perhaps the most unusual stamp club he saw (one that he did not join) was a tontine called the Saxony Stamp Club. Membership was limited to twenty German immigrants, veterans of the Franco-Prussian wars. Each donated stamps or covers to a collection, of which the last survivor of the club would inherit.

The stories amuse and illuminate a time when philately was king and kings were philatelists. Today stamp collecting is one of hundreds of activities and not as popular as it used to be due to fragmentation of the collectibles field. Lifter shows us how it was when people made their own fun and did it inexpensively.

L'Arte Del Timbro / Rubber Stamp Art (US\$18.95 from Stampland, 450 Taraval Street #276, San Francisco, California 94116) Trade paperback, 176 pages, bilingual in English and Italian, published by AAA Editions, 1999. This is a history of rubber stamp art, from the Dadaists of the early 1900s up to the modern-day Mail Art network. The author is John Held Jr, who has previously published on mail art and is well known in the Papernet. Assisting to produce the book were Picasso Gaglione, a rubber stamp retailer, and Vittore Baroni, who did the Italian translation.

Illustrated throughout, with the Italian text on the lefthand page and the English text on the righthand page. The type is set in

rainbow colours, not black ink. Beautiful and yet easy to read, unlike most typographical experiments. The colours do not detract from the text if you are reading for content, yet can be admired for their beauty.

Held starts off with the origin of rubber stamps in the 1860s. The rapid and widespread growth of the rubber stamp industry bears remarkable similarity to the Internet boom. There were 400 manufacturers of rubber stamps by 1880, and 4,000 by 1892. Rubber stamps were first used for artistic purposes in 1912, but after an initial flurry faded out as art until post-World War Two.

Popular with the original group of mail art practitioners, and too popular according to some after a 1974 book on mail art rubber stamping. The original artists retreated into their own little world in dismay at the flood of "kwick kopy krap", much as literary SF fans were swamped by the media barbarians after Star Trek appeared.

It was a proud and lonely thing to be a stamper. The first rubber stamp art exhibits appeared in the early 1970s. RUBBERSTAMP MADNESS magazine began in 1980, brought together people who thought they were alone, and created an entire new industry of graphic arts stamp manufacturers. Now there are hundreds of companies, not a few of which specialize by

topic. Rubber stamp conventions began in 1982, and there is even an apa, the Rubber Amateur Press Society.

That was in North America though. In too many countries, and still so today, rubber stamps, like photocopiers and typewriters, were severely restricted if not banned. Many mail artists behind the Iron Curtain put themselves in harm's way when they were stamping. They hand carved their stamps from old shoe soles, while North Americans were squabbling about cute versus weird.

The field is still growing today and splintering, such as SF and philately did. At one time SFers all read the same books and magazines; now they are hopelessly fragmented into hundreds of sub-fandoms. Philatelists used to all be worldwide issue collectors, now most of them don't even collect all their own country. Rubber stamping went from Dada to young moms into scrapbooking and greeting cards, with no knowledge of what went on before. RUBBERSTAMPADNESS is now full colour, a thick, matronly magazine packed with ads.

But Held is more concerned with the mail art end of it. After his introductory history sets the stage, he then discusses quite a number of mail artists, using them to illustrate the trends in rubber stamping in the avant garde. Samples of their works are abundant throughout the book. Certainly an excellent overview of the field. Well recommended.

DO IT YOURSELF.

-10-

DiY Culture: Party And Protest In Nineties Britain, edited by George McKay (Verso, 1998, ISBN 1-85984-260-7). This is an anthology about direct action groups in Britain, with an extended introduction by editor George McKay, followed by essays on various topics of the DIY movement. (Comments by Joseph Nicholas and Judith Hanna, in a letter dated 1999-05-06, are inserted in italics in this review.)

The Do It Yourself culture, more commonly abbreviated as DIY (or DiY in Britain and this book, but I'll use the North American version, which is easier to type). It is a multifaceted culture. Included in it is punk music, an outgrowth of rock-and-roll, where everybody is in a band, there are countless DIY record labels producing vinyl, cassette, and CDs, and if you can't afford to rent a hall, then have it in somebody's basement. In politics, instead of working within the system or walking in protest marches, which are considered ineffective, sabotage and building squatters are employed. Those who want to improve the viability of local communities bypass the central banks and government with barter and local trade currency or credits. The 1970s burst of zines was in part due to the growth of DIY.

Most DIY members have little use or knowledge of the history of their branch of protest, save that petitions and protest marches

were ineffective. They concentrate on the here and now because they do not believe there will be a long term if nothing is done. Stop that road going through a pristine wilderness. End the poll tax. Save houses for people who need them.

While it concentrates the mind wonderfully if you believe the environment is going to hang within a fortnight, it has its hazards. As editor George McKay writes: *“The ... danger of focusing on direct action is that it contributes to a culture of immediacy, that what can be overlooked or lost in the excitement of the moment is the past ...”*. Ravers and techno DJs think they were the first to circumvent the major labels by inventing DIY music, as if skiffle had never existed in the 1950s. Long before LETS, Social Credit populists were issuing local currency during the Great Depression in western Canada, sometimes as simply as circulating cheques made out to bearer but never cashed. Direct action was used by labour unions in those terrible days of the robber barons and Darwinian economics. Garden allotments go back to World War One. Organized squatters working for political purposes go back to the Diggers of 1649. Zines reach back to the middles 1800s.

To be a bit more fair, however, during the protests against the oxymoronic Criminal Justice Act, the DIYers were asking each other where the hippies were from the 1960s. Keeping their heads low, says McKay, to avoid being picked off by Thatcher, and hoping for New Labour to solve everything. The 1960s and 1970s

hippies are often unaware or non-participant in 1980s and 1990s DIY. I'd suggest that might change once they get their mortgages paid off, but by then they'll be too busy pricing cruise trips to the Caribbean.

There has always been a conflict within protest movements of peaceful versus pugnacious methods, what in the 1990s became known as the fluffy versus spiky debate. Writes McKay: *“The fluffy was supplied by news images of old grannies and Second World War veterans out on the protest line, with flasks of tea and sandwiches; the spiky came memorably in the form of a brick through the driver's window ...”*. Advocates of change have more credibility when they practice what they preach, thus the emphasis on DIY and direct action as a means of demonstrating one's seriousness.

McKay points out a problem DIY activists have is focussing too much on their direct actions and forgetting about the marginalised fringes they were supposed to be allied to. Two of the examples cited are interesting. A DIY group decided to publish a directory of activists to be called THE WHITE BOOK. They sent out questionnaires to as many groups as possible for inclusion in the directory, and were puzzled that they had no response from blacks. Another group organized a Reclaim The Streets demonstration, and realizing that disabled people have an interest

in such matters, invited them along. The rendezvous was via the London Underground, the committee blithely unaware that the tube is not user-friendly to disabled people. There is a consciousness in direct action groups that they must try to be inclusive, but practice does not always conform to theory.

After McKay's introduction, the essays by various contributors start off with something closer to zinedom, an account by Jim Carey of SQUALL magazine. This periodical began as a zine for squatters, people setting up alternative communities in abandoned buildings. SQUALL staffers learned the hard way in dealing with the struggle against the Criminal Justice Act that politicians and mass media are two sides of the same coin.

SQUALL spread into other areas such as the McLibel suit, the longest court case in British history. McDonald's of the fast food McDonalds told a British couple they didn't deserve a break today for printing the background behind the restaurant operations. The case developed into a major public relations disaster for the corporation, which finally won after seven years and tens of millions in legal fees, but at the cost of having its internal operations spotlighted unfavourably. [JN&JH: *"McDonald's did not achieve total victory, and had judgement against them on at least three issues. Having won on the other issues, McDonalds's announced that they wouldn't attempt to enforce judgement against the two defendants, because they were (and still are)*

unemployed and thus unable to pay but also because McDonald's knew perfectly well that attempted enforcement would make the corporation appear even more vindictive."]

Carey makes the point that one reason for SQUALL's success was its emphasis on research and only printing what was established fact. This reputation for accuracy is what separated it from the majority of zines, which print Internet downloads, rumours, and "I remember reading somewhere ... ". This is a point to be noted by denizens of the Papernet. Leave the fast-breaking news and rumour-mongering to the Internet, where it will be lost in a sea of intellectual garbage. Print zines should concentrate on being the journals of record, of documenting the facts, of publishing quality fiction and art, of being the place of sober second thought. Unfortunately this is not the case. For that matter, even mass-market newspapers and periodicals don't obey this policy. Credibility is of major importance to DIY culture, and SQUALL showed how to achieve it. Carey's essay should be read by all zine publishers, whether or not they deal with politics.

Thomas Harding's essay on independent video news gets off to a bad start in the first sentence when he describes a protest scene in " ... the English offices of McMallinan Blowdell, the company responsible for the clearcutting of Vancouver Island in Canada ... ". Setting aside the garbled name of the Canadian pulp-and-

paper company MacMillan Bloedel, one gets the impression in the article that Harding doesn't really understand the size of Vancouver Island, or how much is clearcut and how much is urbanized by retirees settling on the island, Canada's equivalent of Arizona or Florida for the geriatric set.

But from there he goes on a little better, describing how the camcorder has brought benefits and disadvantages to DIY actions. Sometimes it helps to reduce police beatings, but other times it provokes people into showing off for the cameras. When police are also videotaping, it becomes confusing to the DIYers as to who are the good cameramen and who are the bad ones, leading to a "Kill them all and let God sort them out" response. Harding's personal experience is to co-ordinate with the DIYers ahead of time, to ensure the cameras are known to be there for logical reason and friendly support. Once the footage is obtained, one must distribute it. Television stations only want fast-paced action sequences, so the alternative cameraman must learn to edit raw video down to something short and snappy. Political protest video must not be propagandistic films that are unwatchable.

The chapter on the campaign against the M11 Link Road by 'Aufheben' uses this struggle as an illustration on the philosophy of DIY. Protestors squatted on the road, the houses, and the green spaces to be demolished for the new freeway. They had to consider how far non-violent protest could be carried, what to do

about 'lunch outs', as slackers in the communes were known, and how to consider traditional class struggles. It was not simply a matter of squatters versus government. The squatters had their own internal divisions, Pogoians meeting the enemy and finding they is us. It illustrates a common problem of DIY, where coalitions and informal groups must sort out their strategies while simultaneously dealing with the protest situation. Either one is difficult on its own. Many a rural commune has been fatally riven by differences in philosophy in peaceful situations. DIYers must accomplish this in the face of television cameras, police attacks, and a fluctuating quantity and quality of volunteers.

John Jordan's "The Art Of Necessity" considers direct action as performance art. A fair comparison, as it is often difficult to discern the difference between the two. Giant carnival figures in hoops and skirts, playing bagpipes, move down a street at a party protesting the M41 Link Road. Underneath the hoops and skirts, activists jackhammer the pavement and plant tree saplings rescued from another motorway development, the M11. The bagpipes covered up the noise of the jackhammers. Both politics and performance art, and certainly more ingenious and entertaining than ranks of picketers marching in lock step and chanting slogans. [JN: *"I was there, with the other members of our Friends of the Earth street theatre group, to entertain the partying masses with several performances of our "car trial".*"]

Squatting is considered as detournement, which is the appropriation or detouring of something from its intended or original use to another use. Mail artists and zinesters use detournement when they take comic strips and replace the original dialogue with their own. It seems logical enough that squatters reclaiming abandoned houses and condemned roads as living quarters are using detournement writ large.

The DIY methodology of using fluid, non-hierarchical groups is further illustrated by Alex Plowes as he discusses his involvement with Earth First!. These groups bypass the traditional organizations such as Friends of Earth, with their paid memberships and policy-making. Individuals come and go from other groups such as the ravers or squatters. They form for a specific purpose, then disperse. EF! emphasizes that there is no such thing as a single issue; all is related as part of an economic system that does not consider the cost of green-field destruction or social unrest. A protest over a roadway is a protest over lack of democratic consultation, a protest over housing policies that smash down neighbourhoods, a protest over destruction of green space. Plowes also considers the use of non-violent direct action, which is needed to take the moral high ground and gain the support of the general public.

George Monbiot, in his essay about *The Land Is Ours*, starts off with the protests over land destruction, whether a tropical forest

in the southern hemisphere

or British hedges. From there, he shows how developers stymie local people and town councils by legal action and bribery. This leads to his logical endpoint, the justification of direct action because petition and meetings fail.

The final four essays of this book cover various aspects of dance culture. Raves and warehouse parties brought together disparate groups who probably would not have otherwise met, from the DIY activists to bored young kids looking for something to do. In some cases, unfortunately, it brought in the gangster element, who discovered that £5 per head for 10,000 dancers in a vacant warehouse was very profitable. In too many cases, it brought in police forces, usually not the local constables, who often provoked riots by heavy-handedness. Local police mentioned that raves dropped the crime rate because the kids were dancing in a warehouse all night instead of drinking in a pub and then going out and creating trouble. The underground ravers had to put up with continual raids and confiscation of equipment, but carried on.

British legislation banning 'entertainments' and the Criminal Justice Act (which does away with the right to remain silent) hang heavy over the DIYers. Not a pretty picture. Open class warfare is one of the legacies of the Thatcher era. This side of the Atlantic, we might see the occasional paragraph about a rave riot in music magazines, and little or nothing in the mainstream press.

[JN&JH: *"The Criminal Justice Act did a lot more than abolish the right to silence. The Act was largely political in nature, and aimed explicitly at DIY culture in an attempt to eradicate the visible expressions of the political dissent it represents. Explicitly, the Act sought to criminalise the actions of four groups of people: ravers, squatters, hunt saboteurs, and motorway protestors. By criminalising these actions, the Act makes it difficult if not impossible for the silent middle classes to continue supporting them. The silent middle classes most certainly did support the motorway protestors, and to a lesser extent the squatters. The Act hasn't worked. Existing criminal laws on trespass and criminal damage were suitable enough. The provisions of the Act were so obviously politically motivated that any attempt to prosecute under them almost invariably resulted in acquittal, and large parts of it now conflict with the Human Rights Act and must therefore be deemed legally inoperable."*]

DIY CULTURE was certainly an eyeopener for me, accustomed to thinking of direct action as tree hugging or dance parties. It got me to see how easy it is to drift into an authoritarian state. Canada has not yet restricted its liberties as much as Britain, partly because of former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's constitutional reforms, which included the Charter of Human Rights. As he was also the one who invoked the War Measures Act against Quebec during the October 1970 crisis, the Charter was his expiation for

what he had done. This was why the much-vaunted organic constitution of Canada had to be replaced by what some call the Barristers' Benevolent Act, but which is still a better bulwark against creeping dictatorship than the old laws. DIY is the reaction to what happens when there is no hope of reform by traditional methods. It is a reminder that the Sixties are not over, only mutated into a newer and more dangerous form.

Mind Invaders edited by Stewart Home (Serpent's Tail, 1997, ISBN 1-85242-560-1, trade paperback) Avant-garde art, for all its posturing, is still part of the art gallery system, no more threatening to the foundations of society than ravers in an abandoned warehouse. This anthology is written by rejects from the avant-garde or those who never were a part of it. Somewhat distantly related to mail artists and performance artists, with a quick nod to direct action DIYers, these people debate anarchism and communism in often-unreadable essays, play three-sided football, plot ley lines through the Isle of Dogs, London, England, and propose to wreck capitalism by shopping sprees. About half the essays are by-lined with the collective name Luther Blissett. (A collective name is a pseudonym used by multiple authors around the world. Anyone can write under Blissett's name, and anyone does.) We hear from learned organizations such as the Bologna Psychogeographical Association and the Association of Autonomous Astronauts.

Some of the essays are serious considerations of what is wrong with modern culture, while others are pretentious drivel about art or anarchist feuds. Many of the essays are parody, which creates a problem for readers because today the arts, politics, and television have become parodies of themselves. It has become increasingly difficult to decide whether books such as this are serious or just funning the reader with parody. The Bill and Monica show recently concluded in the USA, then quickly segued to the Balkans where the wars of a century ago now replay themselves with a new cast of characters but the same ancient script. In Canada, our Prime Minister distracts public attention from his pepper-spraying of protesters by taking a header into the floor during a basketball game. Things like this used to be the province of Stephen Leacock or Robert Benchley in their sillier humorous essays. Now they are news headlines.

Into this comes creeping, or perhaps pogo-ing, Stewart Home and associates, from a world where pranks often cannot be separated from reality. Police break up innocent matches of three-sided football. The Neoist Alliance touches the exact truth when their manifesto declares (page 149): "*While occultists spend a great deal of time faking the antiquity of the activities in which they are engaged, the avant-garde's insistence on the element of innovation within its creations leads to a spurious denial of its historic roots.*". A mixed bag of essays as far as the quality goes, especially due to its Euro-centrism, but overall quite enjoyable.



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