

XEROGRAPHY DEBT

Issue #24 August 2008

Davida Gypsy Breier, Editor

INTRODUCTION

After the last issue of *Xerography Debt*, one which was plagued by multiple delays, I knew I had to make some overdue decisions. I expected the decision to be a hard black and white “should I stay or should I go.” One of the things that had been bothering me was the lag time between when zines are published and when reviews appear. It wasn’t uncommon to run a review of a zine that had been published a year ago. In addition to the lag, zines were not coming in nearly as heavily as they had previously judging from my PO Box. XD has been around nine years now, but there seems to have been a steep decline in zine production in the last year or two. Furthermore, the costs of printing and mailing have increased, but supporters and subscribers declined.

Instead of letting XD joining the ranks of defunct zines, I have come up with another solution. I have started a blog, which will handle all the reviews portions. It is online at <http://xerographydebt.blogspot.com/>. The reviewers are now autonomous and we are posting on a rolling basis. This solution improves the lag, reduces costs and it means we can continue in print as well.

This is the start of the new print edition of *Xerography Debt*. There will be columns, letters, open discussions, independent press news and views, and more. I don’t know what kind of reception this new version will have, so we’re not accepting subscriptions going forward. If you have a current

subscription and would like a refund for unfulfilled issues, please just get in touch.

Also, I have decided to take a step backward. Instead of the fancy Quark layout, I’m going back to basics with a plain word-processed layout, which is easier to email. Time is a precious commodity too. This new format will be available via email, as well as online.

The future of the zine and blog are in your hands. If you have something to contribute or you want to review, please get in touch. If you keep the discussions going and produce great zines to review, we’ll be here.

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STATE OF THE ZINE UNION

In the last issue of *XD* I posed several questions about the current state of zines. The following responses provide a dialog about the status of zines and also how individual zinemakers are handling the changes. Please feel free to continue the dialog and mail or email me your thoughts.

Letter from A.j. Michel:

I want to respond to the questions you asked in *XD* 23 about the "State of the Zine Union." This is something I've been thinking about quite a bit as of late. I really waited a long time to send out that "TV Call for entries" because I wasn't sure if I can really "mentally handle" another issue. Strange thing – the 2007 reading log I put out in January almost did me in, for some reason. Things just KEPT. GOING. WRONG. For example, I messed up the layout and somehow made the zine into manga style, reading back to front. And, I copied 50 sets that way! Then when I went to fix the masters, I left in a guideline on some page 1s...and I mangled some with the huge papercutter at Staples...it was just a mess and convinced me never to do a print reading log ever again. That's why I set up *Syndicated Consumption* (syndicateconsumption.tumblr.com). It makes more sense to do a reading/media log that way – much more current.

Whew.

To start addressing some of your questions...

"How do you feel about the paper vs. digital changes?"

Simply put, people who have been publishing good, quality zines for years generally have good websites and blogs. They know how to write well. More importantly, they understand the difference between writing for the printed page and writing for pixels. For physical print, articles can be longer and use sidebars for more info. Online, and on blogs especially, it has to be shorter. It is difficult to read a 5000 word piece on screen – anything really long needs to be printed out.

So:

Good, established paper zine publishers ➔ Decent, well organized and written web presence

I've said this before (in the intro to *Synd Prod* 13)...if you're doing a blog or a Live Journal or a MySpace page (which are all vastly different from each other) and NOT writing any real content of substance, don't turn it into a paper zine just to be able to use up your collection of Hello Kitty stickers. Over the past five years, the amount of really crappy zines seems to have tripled. I'm not hesitant to call something crap when I see it. Just because someone made a zine doesn't mean I have to this it is good because I am also a zine publisher. If you're upset about the poor review you got in *Zine World*, well then yeah, maybe it's not a well done zine.

Is it zine elitist (zinelitist?) to say that if you're unwilling to rent a PO Box for your publishing pursuits, maybe you don't really need to publish on paper? If the only contact address you provide is an email address or a MySpace or Facebook page, are you really committed to self-publishing on paper?

"Are you online or have moved to online only? Why?"

I've had a blog zine 2002, and I see it as something completely separate from my regular zine title, *Syndicated Product*. There is almost NO overlap between what I write for the blogs and what appears in my zines. It really irks me when people just reformat blog posts, photocopy them, and call it a zine (or a book – don't get me started on how much I hate blog-to-book deals). There is nothing I've written specifically for the blog that was reprinted verbatim in the zine. However, I have placed short pieces from the zine on the blog a few times, but very rarely.

As mentioned, I have given up on doing a printed reading/media log. It's just more beneficial to have that on the web because the information gets out quickly.

"Do you have more readers or reader feedback?"

Honestly, I probably know 50% of my zine readers because I've been trading with and writing to them for 10 years in some cases. They are the only

ones who still write me letters – or thoughtful emails – about the issues I send them.

Otherwise, it has been a **long** time (5 years?) since I've received an e-mail or letter from someone who bought one of my zines at Quimby's or Atomic, or through Etsy. I've sold 100+ copies of various zine titles on Esty since June of 2007, and have never received a postal letter or an e-mail! And in my Etsy feedback, if people do write anything, it's one line and often it says "received quickly." That's it!

"Has e-mail wiped out zine mail?"

Yes! I used to check my PO Box almost daily between 1998 and 2005, and it would often be full of great zine related stuff – trades, zines I ordered, letters, dollar bills, and scrawled notes...now I can check my PO Box once a week, and there will not be any zine-specific mail for weeks. It's sad. Which is why I am going to start writing letters and postcards during work downtime instead of mindless internet time. (And I am also going to work on my writing.)

"If you are a paper devotee, why?"

Much like Fox Mulder wants to believe, I too want to remain devoted to paper. But lately, all forces have been conspiring against me.

For example:

Photocopier prices seem to have gone through the roof since about 2004. And, mega-stores like Staples and Office Depot don't give discounts on double-sided copies any more! [Ed. note – there is a bulk discount that I survive off of. I'll mention that later in this article.] I think every copy jockey got re-trained at the same time, too. It's impossible to "work" the system anymore. I usually take advantage of any coupons and discounts I can find. And yes, I have flirted with socially awkward copy clerks to get double-sided copies for single-sided prices. [Ed. note – who hasn't?] I think the problem is that slackers don't seem to work at copy shops any more. And all the copy machines are probably now linked into one computer that keeps track of every damn copy made, so scamming – either by the clerk or the customer has become impossible.

Also, "mom + pop" copy places are now few and far between anymore. And I would never scam an indie business.

Postage!! Is going up again May 12th!! And the new, increased "large envelope" surcharges suck. Anything over 3.5 oz is now an extra cost, as well as are oddly shaped envelopes. If the photocopy prices don't do me in, postage will. And the counter clerks have become so surly since the size and weight rules went into effect.

I like publishing on paper, I really do. I love the hands-on feeling, and coming up with ideas to personalize each copy (like the issue I did that had a different, used postcard attached to each cover). But it just seems to be getting more difficult to do every year.

A.j. Michel

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Ed. note - AJ sent in a hand-written paper letter, so any typos are my fault. I found it very interesting that most of the print advocates emailed me, but AJ, who does in fact advocate online media wrote me a real letter.

Letter from Christopher Robin:

Since I have been doing a zine for over 8 years, it's true I have seen a lot of zines disappear, most all of them to the web. But for my zine, I have noticed readership increases with every issue, both paid subscribers and prisoner requests, though you can probably guess which ratio is higher! I also agree with you that it is mostly older people in their 30's and 40's who are keeping zines alive; who want to return to the simplicity and accessibility that print zines provide, who perhaps want something a little more tangible than the web. I myself do not have the attention span for online zines, though there are a few review zines I will occasionally read. One thing I've realized is that people appreciate print more when they see a person making an effort to continue in this medium, and I am grateful to receive donations after every issue I send out; (not per issue, of course, but after a press run). I also get a lot of snail mail! So much I cannot usually answer it all - in a 'timely' manner, which is a good indication that

there are still a lot of people using the mail, for random mail art, crank letters, tapes & cd's, inexplicable Wal-Mart receipts, and bad porn; and there is still a sense of anonymous camaraderie, the anonymity we old timers might remember before the internet, where you could feel like you knew someone without having to view a Myspace page, just their handwriting. My income of many years is currently in jeopardy, and my time is spent trying to find creative ways to make a living, as well as produce zines for prisoners, so my zine will probably only come out once or twice a year from now on, and it probably already does. Also with my new issue coming up, I am going to let people know I will no longer send it to people who don't stay in touch, I simply can't afford it. My policy used to be, if someone said they liked the zine one time, I would send it to them for many years, which was about as dumb as my earlier policy that a lifetime subscription was only \$5.00! These are tough times and I consider a zine to be a form of art, (albeit-the lowest form there is ☺) but art nonetheless, and art should have some value and the post office lines are heinous as well as the prices to produce and send. I still do a lot of trading for zines but don't have as much time to read them as much as I used to, as Santa Cruz is slowly recovering from a drought and I shouldn't spend so much time in the bath. But I still love zines and I love real mail so I will continue to do both, hopefully well into my old(er) age. Thank you for all that you do. I'm pretty sure I have been corresponding with you since about 1996. And I figure if your print empire is still going strong after all this time, then there's no excuse for my lazy ass, as I have never bred and remain happily single. Thank you for your commitment, your passion and for not abandoning print. You Rock!

Sincerely,
Christopher Robin
Zen Baby Zine/I press On Prison Zine Distro
Box 1611
Santa Cruz CA 95061-1611

Letter from Heath Row:

I prefer paper to the Net -- and I live online -- because zines and paper-based media (mail art, handwritten letters, artist's books, even mass-market books) have elements of care, concentration, distance, time, and weight (wait?) wrapped up in them.

Online, you can spend all your time chasing the news cycle and never learn anything or understand anything. Zines and their corollaries make us take pause, gather our faculties, and consider what we have before us.

This is true on the front end (production), as well as the back end (consumption). Emails and blog posts and Web articles are mere squibs compared to what goes into a zine or a book, even if ill written -- because the packaging of the zine takes time and care in a way that writing online does not.

Heath Row, mediadiet.net
empowermentor.blogspot.com

Letter from Michele Michael:

I thought those were great questions you asked about the place of paper zines in today's world. I for one much prefer the paper. For me, sitting at a cathode ray tube (yep, still at an old-fashioned CRT) is where I work and where I do all the stuff that has to be done quickly and efficiently.

For rest and relaxation -- and for information that is neither restful nor relaxing -- I prefer to read laying on my bed, sitting in a chair or while waiting for or riding the bus. There is a sense of security I feel in knowing that even if my computer crashes I still have my paper copy (although ironically, I lost my entire paper library a couple years ago and only was able to retain what was in ebook form on my computer and for that reason I do like to keep a good library in my computer as well).

There is something about zines and books. I don't want to spend my life looking at a screen; yet I have no problem laying away thousands of hours staring at and turning paper pages with ink or pencil on them. I use the computer more to see if I want the paper before I spend the money. As much as

possible I read reviews and excerpts online or on my computer to select my away-from-computer and away-from-screens reading material. I worry about the ink though. It is not ecological. I wish we had a new ecological kind of ink.

I also have a chronic case of apocalyptic thinking, and imagine the day could come I would have to pick a box of books and zines and head for the hills leaving my computer behind. To me, those paper pages would be almost equal in importance to having uncontaminated water to drink. For those who don't like to read, well they were going to be that way anyhow. For those who really love to read I think most of us don't want any substitutes for the printed page.

Cheers,
Michele Michael
deradune@gmail.com

Letter from James Dawson:

The reasons I believe paper zines are better are subtle, complex and to some degree perhaps, subjective.

The net still to a large degree, confuses and frustrates me. I hit "Reply to Group" and hoped to have the original message in front of me to guide my response, but I can't find it in the reply box, and my cursor won't scroll down to find it. Yes, yes, I know. There's something I'm doing wrong. Isn't there always? There's always some "rule" I'm breaking, so it's not the net's fault. It's mine. I haven't studied or practiced enough the million-and-one rules of "how to write on a CRT", so I should quit whining.

Zines aren't just about what's written on paper. They're about "the romance of old post offices--- checking your p.o. box at the end of the day and having the pleasant surprise of seeing some potentially interesting mail and taking a little boredom and negativity out of your day. They're about a "rythm" in the larger day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month, year-to-year process of communication that has lasted, sometimes for decades. Blogs and net-forums are grabbing some ultra-fast trendy take-out at the 7-11 Super

Store. Zines are a long, liesurely walk on a cool evening to a little out of the way ethnic restaurant for a meal with a friend.

The medium DOES matter. I go for days sometimes when I'm being booted off the net every 3 to 5 minutes. It may take me a half hour to read one medium-sized e-mail, and I often just give up and realize, this mail may be "mine", but if the Net won't let me read it, there's nothing I can do about it. Zines never say "You must Log In" or "Username Invalid" or "This Page Cannot Be Displayed" or "An Error Has Occurred, This Program Will Shut Down Immediately" or.....A zine, passively, quietly, as it should, just let's you read it at your own pace, where you want to, when you want, as long as you want to. Is that too simple for some people?

I don't shun blogs as a matter of principle or spite or anything, but I think I probably read far fewer blogs than zines. It may be because of the assorted frustrations involved in reading the net-controlled CRT screen, but there may be others reason. I'm just quite sure why I have to admit. For some reason, they just aren't as inviting to me as a zine, and yes, "traditional" print-and-paper layout is a factor which makes a zine easier to read---even one with tiny print.

A high speed connection would remedy at least some downsides of the net, but it would cost me \$60 a month. How much postage and printing would that get me? I think quite a bit.

Have you ever read Yahoo's forum rules---carefully? There was a dispute on a Yahoo forum I'm on in which somebody was banned. He went to Yahoo and claimed a "rule violation". Technically, it seems he may have had a case. Yahoo could shut any forum down any time it wants and destroy any or all of the archives. The rules are so broad and vague, I'm sure we're breaking them all the time. ("Abusive speech" and all that).

I have thousands of e-mails, and as with my zines, I value most of them. I want to keep them. But how long would it take me to store them outside the net? How much paper and ink would it take to print them all out. (I must "shamefully" admit, I've done very, very little CD-ROM transfer, and don't relish the chore of learning and messing with it). My printer is often glitchy and slow, and web formats

lead to a lot of paper waste. I guess I'll have to just loose most or all of them. I don't even feel I own my own letters, to and from people. How can I own something I can't control.

The whole layout of web pages and forums still often confuses and distracts me. Reading web pages, as they're usually designed, for me, is a chore. It wares me out it short while.

Fred Woodworth has masses of anti-computer, anti-net rants, his own and in the letters section. He's said it better than I have. Fred can be a bit zealous and dogmatic about a lot of things, but his skeptical examination of computers and the net are very articulate and insightful. (The Match, P.O. 3012, Tucson, AZ 85702).

The thing is, I, James N. Dawson, technical-neanderthal that I am, CAN control paper, typewriters, carbon paper, white-out, pens, pencils, etc., etc. But I have very little control over the net. None of my precious writings that I sweat, bleed and cry a river of tears to write, is really "mine". The Net Giveth and the Net Taketh Away.

Has anybody CLOSELY looked at the cost of postage, paper, copying, etc. VERSUS ink cartridges, service fees, repair fees, etc. I guess this may not apply to all of us, but what about cost of TIME, how it's nickled and dimed away with frustrating glitch after frustrating glitch? What about "frustation" and "disappointment" costs, over and over and over again?

Especially if you've got computer/net savvy, are willing and able to pay for the best technology, and just LIKE the net, it works very well. I guess I can't begrudge people that. A lot of people really do well on it and enjoy it. I've pretty much come to the conclusion that it's futile for zinesters, internetters, and fusionists to try and convince each other of the superiority of their preferred media..

But for me, there are so many advantages to the "old communication culture". I don't think they're all just sentimental. We've notched up the craving for instant gratification with the net more than we ever have, and I think it's doing something to the culture. I'm almost 50, so I guess I feel alienated from the new technology. I just can't relate to it.

I hope one day, I will have the option of leaving computers and the net behind, but it seems

like it's getting harder and harder to do that. And that worries and saddens me.

James N. Dawson

jamesndawson@yahoo.com

Letter from Jennifer Manriquez

Personally, I prefer the paper format. But, as you said, the cost of postage (it now costs 97 cents to send a little half size, 24 page zine across the U.S.) has risen to a point that, if you want to recoup your costs of printing (which are also outrageous!) you have to charge more than folks are really willing to pay for a zine.

The way I handle the problem is this:

I print my perzines the old fashioned way. Black and white photocopy all the way!

People who love zines will buy a perzine. I, myself, don't even bother reading personal blogs. For the most part I find them boring. I don't care that you went shopping with your boyfriend today and I really don't care that you ate a hot dog. I'd rather read the perzine that's been filtered down to just the juicy stuff. Plus, I like to see people's drawings and pictures, and the way they mesh it all together on a page.

But my cultural zine - the one in which I review other zines, publish personal essays, interview artists and support local activism - has moved strictly to the web at samplepressonline.com. I had printed eleven issues over the course of three years and I found that, as blogs became more popular and big magazines were printing every article on the internet, people did not want to pay for paper zines. My subscribership dwindled while my web hits kept climbing.

When I finally printed issue eleven, I couldn't hawk that thing to save my life. So, I called it quits on the paper game and transferred everything to the website.

I'd love to start printing it again, but unless someone is willing to pay for it, there's no point.

In the interest of environmentalism, though, I have to say that the internet *does* provide a nice waste-free haven for underground authors.

But, dang it, there's something so nice about the tangibility of a paper zine!

You can collect 'em, trade 'em, buy 'em, sell 'em, draw on 'em and keep 'em in your pocket or purse to read while you're getting your oil changed.

And, you know that some effort went into the deal, that someone sat down and wrote and cut and pasted and fretted over that zine, just so they could share a story with you.

And that's really cool.

Jennifer Manriquez

SAMPLE Press, www.samplepressonline.com

Response from Davida Gypsy Breier:

It seemed only fair that I also respond to the questions I asked...

“How do you feel about the paper vs. digital changes?”

I have mixed emotions and feel that these changes go far beyond the luddite vs. techie wars. We are in a time of momentous communications changes and zines are just a very small part of that. While governments and employers are closer to Big Brother status than ever before, individuals are connecting globally and far faster than a stamp could ever allow for. It is both binding and freeing.

I've mentioned that my day job is within the book industry and here are some statistics that make for an interesting comparison to what is going on in zinedom. 276,649 new books and new editions were published in 2007, up 1% over 2006. For the first year Bowker broke out POD, short run and unclassified titles and that area had tremendous growth – up from 21,936 in '06 to 134,773 in '07. The two segments together show a 39% increase in new title production up to 411,422 books published in 2007. The rise in POD usage came from mainstream publishers, self-publishers, public domain titles, and micro-presses. While some polls show that time spent reading is down, book production is certainly increasing.

I have to wonder how many people, who may have published zines in 1995, now just go ahead

and publish a book instead? We've all been assuming blogging destroyed zines (per-zines at least), but how many fiction and obsession-based zines went into book form?

There seems to be an attitude that zines are the “only pure media,” but that is like saying only oil paints produce art, watercolors are for poseurs. I think zines (paper or digital copies) are a medium, and how it is used is down to the individual creator. I remember a time when those of us who preferred a desktop published look were derided by the cut-and-paste crowd. What I find especially ironic is that some of us who were in that boat ARE STILL PUBLISHING, and haven't going entirely online while some of our critics succumbed to the lure of the web.

“Are you online or have moved to online only? Why?”

I maintain a website for the Leeking Inc zines because it is the best way to make the information accessible. It compliments the zines, it certainly does not replace them. All the XD back issues are online, but only excerpts of *Leeking Ink* and *The Glovebox Chronicles* (r.i.p.) are online. I did start a blog for XD reviews because there was too great of a lag going on. Everything should, ideally, be complimentary, not competing.

“Do you have more readers or reader feedback?”

I feel like there has been a big decline in both. Most letters of comment come from people I already know.

“Has e-mail wiped out zine mail?”

Mostly. And what email hasn't wiped out, postal regulations and post 9-11 fears have. I used to get all sorts of high weirdness in my beloved p.o. box. It says a lot that I seldom check our box (Patrick usually does it) and I don't get the thrill of discovery that opening the door used to bring back in the old days. Water bottles with art inside and a mailing label on the outside!

I wanted to address two things: copy clerks and postal clerks. First, the copy clerks – the days of making friends with someone at a copy shop or

blind eyes turned at Kinko's at midnight are indeed over. I was using a local shop in Havre de Grace, but wasn't able to find an affordable place in Baltimore City. I use one of the big office supply chains. Their prices are comparable to what I was paying 5-6 years ago – HOWEVER – you have to know the bulk pricing structure chapter and verse and be better informed than some of the "sales associates." I have almost been over-charged for half of my transactions. I use every discount and coupon going and it helps keep things manageable. The fact that the clerks are poorly trained is not their fault and I wonder how many people know enough to question the over-charges. It is more work for me, but a \$50-100 difference means a lot! If you can print needed back issues, or even a few extra copies, it can mean more copies of your zine for less money. Find out the pricing breakdowns and do the math before you drop the zine off.

I've also had my fair share of surly postal employees. Most recently I went in with a stack of packages without understanding all the new regulations. I was frustrated and she was surly and we were both within our rights. Not only do the clerks have to learn all these new rules, they have to explain them over and over again to the masses who insist they are right. I'd be surly too.

The Future:

I commiserate with AJ Michel; each issue I do feels like the last. Then I get up again. Am I dedicated and persistent or just obsessive and nuts? I don't know. What I do know is that paper zines are my preferred medium, which is why I am trying to find a new way for *Xerography Debt* to go on. It is also why I am starting a new zine (and letting *Leeking Ink* rest for a while) and even toying with an additional project. Zines thrived for a while, I'll be happy to see them survive for now.

POST OFFICE NEWBIES

By Jeff Somers

Being an old man, I still utilize what is quaintly called "snail mail" by folks of my

generation just catching up to the year 1999. Granted, I don't use it much for personal correspondence any more—for anything personal I tend to just shoot off an email, and I am enraged and annoyed by old friends of mine who don't check their email every fifteen seconds or so like a cocaine monkey. There are a couple of friends I haven't corresponded with in years simply because they don't ever check their email. Like I'll send a nice, detail-crammed email to them, basically an old-fashioned letter in email form, full of pictures and anecdotes and all, and then eight months later I'll get a weak response along the lines of "just saw this...sorry, never check my account". And then I burn down a nearby warehouse in displaced rage.

I digress. It doesn't matter; from what I read email is already considered passe by the younger generation, who prefer twittering and IMing and such. They also think Red Bull is a good drink, and worse, they think mixing Red Bull with booze is drinking. Bastards. The world is ending.

Anyway, I do still use the old Post Office for my zine, which remains rather stodgily print-oriented. I do post PDF archives and there is a web site (a collection of static pages! that I have to update manually!) but let's face it, my zine is meant for paper, and I have no intention of converting it into a blog or anything like that. So I make my lonely trips to the post office, and over the years I've become pretty much an expert on the place. There are about three rules that will get you through any post office experience:

1. Never argue. These folks are behind six inches of bulletproof glass and you will die of old age before discovering the name of their supervisor, assuming they have one at all. If they tell you that you have to drizzle chicken blood on your envelope, just go find yourself a chicken. It will save you a lot of heartache.

2. Never assume they actually know the facts. This is kind of a corollary to #1. While you shouldn't argue, remember that postal workers are just as dumb as the rest of us, and if you hear something that you know for a fact is not true, simply displace: Walk out the door and go to the next nearest post office. You've got a pretty good shot of hearing the exact opposite over there.

3. Be prepared to stand in line. And don't whine about it.

I can spot the Post Office Newbies easily simply by observing who breaks these rules. While I find it hard to believe, the world appears to be filled with people who have avoided entering a post office until the age of thirty-eight or so; they walk in expecting. . .well, I don't know what. Efficiency? Friendliness? A transporter beam like in Star Trek that dissolves their missive into atoms and beams it across the universe? *The very person they're mailing something to, standing there through some mixture of voodoo and Federal Government Mojo?*

The mind, it boggles.

The newbies usually break #3. First are the ones who walk in, see the line of twenty-seven people, and stand there with their mouth open as if twenty-seven people is the *most* people they've ever seen in their lives, ever. Experienced Post Office customers sometimes walk in, see the length of line, and walk right back out again, but the newbies are always the ones who stand there in total shock, as if a line at a federally-associated service was a surprise.

If the Newbie decides to be brave and get in line, their resolve usually lasts about thirty seconds, at which point the neck-craning, foot-stomping, sighing, and general jackassery begins. A line is a line, folks—the reason there is a line at all is because a) the service being rendered takes a long time and people are arriving faster than the workers can execute their tasks or b) there aren't enough people working. Once you get in a line, you have accepted the fact that you are going to wait your turn.

Newbies fail to realize this, and their stay in line is usually an amusing collection of tics and short-attention-span theater. A lot of times they will complain to the people around them, as if anyone cares, and if the people around them are not responsive they will often pull out their cell phones in order to call someone to complain to. Every action of the postal workers will elicit a sniff of amazement, and they will also attempt to psychically suss out the work schedules and staffing issues of that post office, wondering aloud why all fifteen windows aren't staffed, why that postal worker is eating lunch while we're all standing there, why, why, why in the world aren't there more workers?

Sometimes I swear the newbies look at me as if insinuating that I should quit being a slacker and somehow slip behind the counter and start selling some goddamn postage.

Then, of course, the newbies confirm everyone's suspicions of them by slowing down the line with complaints. For example, after a half hour of sighing and foot-stomping irritation the newbie finally gets to the window and is told that their piece of mail requires a form. They're directed to the table with the forms and told they can fill it out and bring it right back without standing in line again, while the worker handles other customers. The newbie then breaks rule #1 and argues. Their argument generally follows this logic: They did not know a form was required, because they generally don't know anything, and this ignorance is somehow the fault of the United States Post Office, and thus they should not be required to do any such thing. The form should be filled out for them, or, better yet, waived completely.

Meanwhile, as they fight their futile fight, the rest of us stand on the line staring at their back wishing we could set people on fire with our thoughts.

Sadly, this Postal Wisdom is becoming obsolete, and soon I will have to turn to the younger generation to explain things like Tumblr to me. Until the final days, however, I can still stand in the post office and feel superior to the newbies who walk in with a 60-pound box marked VODKA AND TARANTULAS and watch them get all twitchy when they're told they can't ship it. It's great fun. Until someone, usually a postal employee, starts shooting, of course.

ZINES AND CONTEMPORARY ART IN TURKEY

By Şinasi Güneş

abridged and translated from eBenzin 3 (2007;
<http://www.ebenzin.com/sayi3/6.asp>) by Donny Smith

Fanzinler: A Bird's Eye View of Zines

Zines are non-commercial, non-professional, messy, and generally printed in small runs. Sometimes

made by hand, sometimes reproduced by photocopy and distributed, they are publications that possess an anarchist structure, produced in an unrestricted environment. Many zines include no identifying information. Finding these publications is not easy since they are distributed in very restricted numbers. Zines are produced by individuals or groups with very particular interests with the intent of forming physical links between these individuals and groups and generally are not published on a regular schedule. Zines can be found in alternative culture and art spaces, bookstores, small shops, and cafes. In general, they are published in the arts-dominated districts of a city. As a matter of fact, the principal reason that zines are not published as much as they should be is the poverty of the artistic and cultural scene in Anatolia—and parallel to this, the lack of support for art. The majority of art zines are made up of cartoons, mail art, street art, and video art, using techniques like collage, cut and paste, and drawing. Art zines put together by individuals who are not integrated into the system or who remain outside the system are objects of rebellion and alternatives to institutional relationships and to the popular culture supported by institutions.

The Brief Turkish Experience

In 2002, an exhibition by Altay Öktem with the title *Genel Kültürden Kenar Kültüre: 101 Fanzin* (From General Culture to Fringe Culture: 101 Zines) opened in the Kargart arts center in Kadıköy in Istanbul (<http://www.kargart.org>). Many unknown zines were exhibited. This project was later brought out in book form by İthaki Press under the same title. After that, a “zine workshop” was put together by Eren Barış and Selda Tuncer in issue 5 of *Siyahi* (Negro), with the participation of zines with varying concepts and from various provinces. In 2005, a zine market was put together in Ankara. A similar project was realized in Izmir. Art zines were also displayed in this zine show. From October 7 to 18, 2006, I. Düş Günleri (Dream Days 1) were held in Izmir by the Hayalbaz Art Association (<http://www.hayalbaz.com>). In addition to various exhibitions, performances, and workshops, there was a small zine show. Zines like *Benzin* (Gasoline), *Düzensiz* (Messy), *Fetus*, *99KÇ*, *Albemuth*,

Tesmeralsekdiz, *Psişik Kedi* (Psychic Cat), and *Çamur* (Mud) were included in the zine event put together by Rafet Arslan.

Here are a few of the better zines dealing with art:

Körotonomedyä (Blindautonomedia):

Created in 1993 by a group of like-minded academics and artists in Ankara. Since 1994, has brought research and other work produced in and around the association to the public via a website created on a desktop computer at Middle East Technical University. Has produced quite a few works in fields of common interest, from the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas to experimental video theory. Has been engaged toward evaluating autonomist Marxist theory and post structuralist theoretical developments within a political framework. Has been at the forefront with its videozine *Kısa Devre* (Short Circuit). One of the “most alternative” zines published in Turkey. URL: <http://www.korotonomedyä.net>

Benzin:

Contemporary arts zine of which Çoşkun Sami and Şinasi Güneş put out a single issue in 2001. Subtitled *Life Information*. Included original texts and collages, as well as a translated text by French philosopher Baudrillard. Since 2005, has continued its life online as *eBenzin Güncel Sanat E-zine* (e-Gasoline Contemporary Arts E-zine). Features fields of current art like street art, mail art, and video art. URL: <http://www.ebenzin.com>

99KÇ:

Started in April 2005 by Erman Akçay. The first street art magazine from the fertile lands of Bostancı (a district of Istanbul whose name means “vegetable gardener”). Has given space to examples of graffiti from Turkey and abroad and to interviews with the important street artists and illustrators of the world. Has published 4 issues so far.

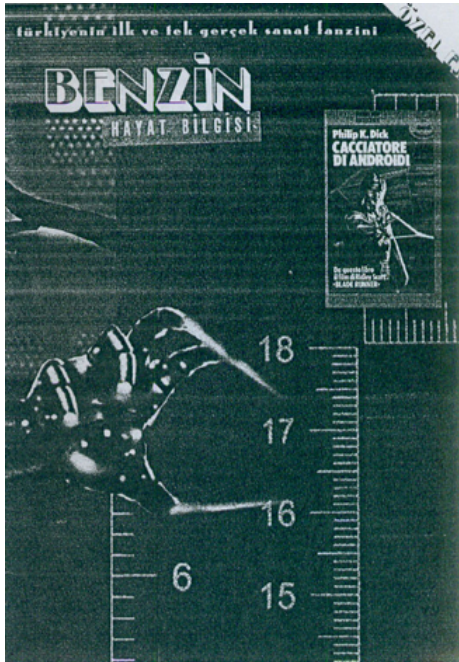
Kop-Art (Cop Art or Break Behind):

Began its print life in October 2006 as photocopies by Gamze Fidan, Cansu Aybar, and Zeynep Turuthan. Comes out irregularly. A “street couture” zine that has adopted collage as its mode of expression. A zine

ENVELOPE RAGE

By Jeff Somers

platform that brings independent visions to its audience with street art, critical media readings, alternative culture products, and surprise guests/topics. Teaser site online, URL: <http://www.kop-art.8m.net>



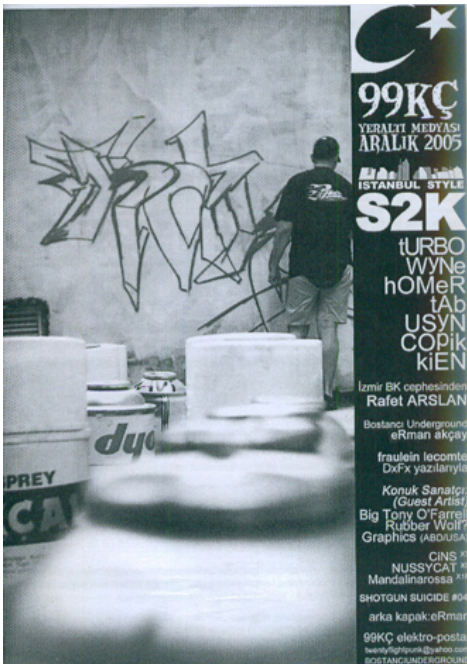
It's pouring rain here in Hoboken today, so instead of wandering the neighborhood searching people's trash for usable items and being physically ejected from local businesses, I guess I'll do some of my rainy day activities. Such is the glamorous life of the piddling published author.

I have often referred to my disdain--hatred, really--of zines that arrive in the mail sans envelope, usually just taped or stapled shut with the address and stamp directly on the back cover. Oh how I despise this. I can see that you save some money; if you need 6x9 envelopes you save a whopping 7.2 cents an issue. So if your print run is 500 issues, you're saving like \$36, which for some folks is a significant proportion of their rent or food budget that month--and let's face it, DIY publishers tend towards the poor side of existence, since we obviously have absolutely no concept of the value of our time.

Ah, but consider what you lose: You might as well take your freshly printed issues, crisply folded and professionally saddle-stapled, and burn the whole damn lot of them, because the chances that they will get to their destination in one piece is roughly the same as me being sober as I write this. Which is to say, none.

Maybe the postal handlers in my town are more range-filled than other places; I've never received a zine mailed without an envelope that didn't arrive tattered, stained, and, in many cases, apparently chewed on by rabid animals. Seven cents seems a small price to pay to ensure that your zine doesn't arrive missing pages, or with a dozen pages stuck together in a brick-like consistency that rivals the most advanced polymers for tensile strength and hardness. It also seems like a cheap way to avoid having water damage make your zine completely unreadable, which has happened several times.

Every now and then a zine without an envelope does arrive in pristine condition, I admit, and it is always a cause for rejoicing. We have a little feast and some dancing here at Swine Compound when this happens--though it often turns tragic



when we attempt to actually undo the tape or staples holding the zine shut, usually resulting in damage to the zine, and occasionally damage to my fingers.

Then again, I am frequently drunk when attempting to open these zines, so it may be my fault. And it's been said that bursting into tears and violently flinging the zine against the wall because of a paper cut is not exactly manly behavior, which would explain the pointing and laughing I have to endure from time to time. Manly or not, it's damned annoying. The best is when the zine is sealed with more than one piece of tape, resulting in an epic battle that I usually only win in the sense that I prove my dominance over inert paper products by throwing the whole thing into the trash.

Naturally, I don't expect anyone to pay any attention to me at all, continuing an unbroken trend of 10+ years of the zine community, such as it is, ignoring me more or less completely. I certainly wouldn't care what anyone had to say about the manufacturing process of my own zine, and being lectured on something about it would probably result in me doing the exact opposite, because I'm that brand of stupid that thinks being contrary = being smart. If that were true I'd be a freaking genius. Don't say anything, you bastards.

THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BEING A NON-TV WATCHER

By Maynard Welstand

In 1999, I unplugged my TV. I did it because I was moving cross-country (again) and decided to give the no-TV lifestyle a try. I'd used it as a crutch and fear-pacifier through many dot-com bouts of unemployment.

The long, sleepless nights, the days of penny-pinching angst, had been relieved with the boob tube. My hard-scrabble life of no health insurance and poverty-line living were coming to an abrupt halt. I had scored another dot-com slot. I'd be flush with cash, and was eager to shed my fearful ways of compulsive TV-watching.

I'd planned my escape for some time, taped all my favorite shows and only permitted myself to watch something I had previously taped, so no random flipping allowed. I'd reached a point where I was 4 months behind in my viewing. I realize I was ready to pull the plug entirely.

I gave away just about all my furniture and the TV. I felt a pang as I let it go; not so much for the loss of the TV, but for the many loveless, jobless, empty years that I had tried to shield myself from truly experiencing by using the TV as a buffer. What a no-win those years were! I suppose I did the best I could with myself at the time, but one has to wonder.....

What shocked me about my choice was how it isolated me socially. I didn't expect that so much casual conversation hinges on TV shows. I wasn't prepared for the hostile reactions I got from people when it dawned on them that I don't watch.

People fear me because I don't watch TV. I have figured this out over the years and have a psychological theory.

1. They think that I think I am superior in some way because the Monkey is off my back. I'm not chained to the damn thing. They wonder how I manage to spend time, to withstand my own company, without the boob tube. They don't know that I am in recovery: permanent recovery from TV poisoning.

2. They are fearful and angry at themselves for all the hours wasted in unsatisfactory viewing. They wonder what they would do with their lives if they, too were TV-free.

I opt for option 2. I hope that is where most people are coming from. If it is option 1, then most folks hate my guts!

Our leisure culture is a new thing. For millennia, only the wealthy had free time. And what did they do with it? The Romans watched Christians being eaten by lions and then went to an orgy. The Middle Age people burned people as witches or heretics or whatever other reason. I think the Renaissance folks did a lot of nice things with their free time....

Anyhoo, the ironic thing is that I waste my free time, too. I enjoy it. I read, listen to music, listen to the radio, talk on the phone, write weird little

essays and bad poetry. I potter about, talk to myself, answer myself back. It's all very scary, but I have peace of mind; it is marvelous. You see, my mind wanders its chosen free-range path. No programming forces me to focus on topics or characters that I don't wish to. No commercials ruin my stream of consciousness with unwanted desires. My mind roams where I choose and sometimes it just lies fallow. Well, most of the time....

Try it some time. Unplug for a week or more. Get acquainted with yourself again.

IT MEANS IT'S WANK: PERMANENT WAVES

By Jeff Somers

"So what does that mean? It means it's wank."

— Vic Flange, *www.fleshmouth.co.uk* [now defunct],
describing my zine.

PERMANENT WAVES...*in which Your Humble Correspondent considers the eternal nature of web reviews, branding him a Jackass for Life..*

Ah, the cruel mistress Internet, with her bottomless storage and endless appetite for archives. Make an ass of yourself once, and you will be on the Ass Wall forever, in a little tarnished frame, with your name neatly printed below you. Believe me, I know.

I started publishing a zine back in. . .say it with me. . .NINETEEN NINETY THREE. It took me two years to get that first issue, out the door, but 1993 is when all the magic began. I didn't own a computer, no one I knew had an email address or a cell phone, and everything was still done on paper. If someone had something to say about your zine, they wrote it out, printed it on paper, and put it out into the world. And then, a few weeks later, that review was peeled off the damp floor of a public restroom, tossed into the trash, and never read again. Today, if you wanted to read some of those reviews you'd a) have to undergo some psychological profiling to make sure you're not insane and simply looking for

clues to my real address so's to come and burn down my house, and b) you'd have to track down a real live actual copy of the zine the review appeared in.

Some zines, of course, are quite famous and culturally significant and are held in zine libraries, private collections, and other places and may not be too difficult to locate. As we all know, plenty of small zines come into your mailbox, some quickie jobs created and mailed out simply to get thoughts onto paper, some simply not all that interesting—most of these are lost to the sands of time. Or at least lost to the sort of lazy research and investigative powers that lazy men such as myself can muster on a regular basis. If I got a bad review in Jim's Tiny Print Run Special (motto: if you got one you're a friend of Jim) circa 1996, the odds of anyone ever finding that review and taunting me with it until I cried is slim at best.

Not today, though. Those heady days of the Memory Hole are over. And I think we're all going to regret it soon enough.

Today, if Jim's Yahoo Site Creator Web-a-Zine says that reading my zine is like breathing through a mask made of some fat guy's used socks, man, that review is going to hang around *forever*. Or for a few years, which to a lazy guy like me seems like forever. I mean, if you were to say to me, Jeff, you're going to be working this soul-sucking Day Job for at least the next few years, all I'd hear is Jeff, you're going to be working this soul-sucking Day job forever. Dig? So the fact that five years from now Jim's review of me will still be showing up in FutureGoogle's search results is dismaying.

Even if Jim pulls his web site down after a few years, there's an excellent chance an Internet archive site will have it indexed somewhere. For the rest of my existence—at least seven more years if current liver function tests are accurate—I'll have that damn review following me around. Every time I meet someone and tell them I put out a zine, they'll find Jim's review and refuse to accept a sample issue. And possibly strike me, or simply offer up that pitying gaze I've grown so used to. I am starting to hate Jim. Jim doesn't exist, and yet I will spend the evening drinking Early Times from the bottle and plotting to burn down his house.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Call for Submissions: A Zine about Hitch-hiking

I'm making a zine about hitch-hiking.

Yes. Here's a call for stories, pictures etc about the wonderful world of hitching...

The title is going to be "itchy feet". I have written a text of dos and don'ts, with a bit of hitch philosophy thrown in for good measure. If all is good, richblabla will make some illustrations and I'm hoping some people feel like sending me a recollection of their best or worst hitching experiences... I already have two crackers from iain! They don't have to be too long and funny is good. Send 'em over to spaceman@mujinga.net.

Call for Submissions: Syndicate Product 13

Syndicate Product wants to you THINK OUTSIDE THE IDIOT BOX for an issue about TELEVISION and EVERYTHING that surrounds it.

YES to stories/vignettes such as:

- personal television experiences - e.g., did you appear on a game show and win a case of Turtle Wax or a house full of Z-Brick? Or, have you worked in television production? Appear on or host a cable access show? Work for TV Guide?
- stories involving television equipment and technology - e.g., the day cable arrived, our family's first color television, wow... high definition television is really distracting, you can have my TiVo when you pry the control from my cold dead hands, the golden era of "television lamps"
- stories that tie your personal experiences in with the television experience - e.g., What did you watch all night after you were dumped? What shows did you watch to avoid writing your dissertation? How about when someone you loved died? When you first moved to a new

Of course, the opposite is true as well: Great, drooling, the-messiah-in-zine-form-has-come kind of reviews will also be out there forever, teaching future generations that you once, for a brief shining moment, embodied cool. Uh, so far I haven't gotten a review like that, but if anyone wants to take pity on an aging, alcoholic zine doofus and write it, feel free. I will pay you in good will and staples.

The other way of looking at this is that it's a form of low-rent immortality, isn't it? Good or bad, reviews of your zine lingering out there on data servers will show future generations that your zine—and thus, by association, you—once existed. Maybe they'd even be inspired to search out an issue or two, or ask permission from our future alien conquerors to research you and write a scholarly treatise on your value to the once-mighty human culture. Why not? You might be the Zine Elvis and not even realize it. Even if they decide to use this power for evil and write a scathing attack long after you're dead, and thus unable to defend yourself, at least it's immortality. Who would you rather be: Edward Bulwer-Lytton, or Milhouse? At least people are talking about Bulwer-Lytton, if not necessarily in a positive way.

Of course, one last possible opportunity would be to seed the future archives with reviews *you have written yourself*. Completely unethical, of course. But think about it: These dusty archives will be all future generations know about you, unless you somehow become famous and/or culturally significant. Why not slant things a little in your favor? A few dozen fake reviews of *Eating Boogers Issue 45* could do wonders for your legacy, especially as time goes by and the details get rubbed off everything by time's busy hands, and no one will know that you wrote them. They'll just fade into the mass and skew your overall perception.

This scheme will be greatly aided if you can manage to destroy all existing copies of *Eating Boogers Issue 45* so there can be no objective comparison.

Either way, you've got a lot of work ahead of you, preparing for the permanent future that awaits us. Better get cracking.

city or a new apartment? What shows were you not allowed to watch growing up?

- unusual lists of television-related goodness, not just basic lists of episodes or "moments", like the ones in every other issue of Entertainment Weekly or TV Guide. Get creative! How about a list of the television characters you and your friends pretended to be as a kid? (I've known many of you for over 10 zine years - you have it in you!)
- non-United States television experiences, or conversely, impressions of United States television programming if you don't live here
- Just plain odd television-related stuff. Pitch me something! Send me something!

NO to the boring and tired:

- "Why Lost (St. Elsewhere, Seinfeld, etc.) is the greatest show ever!" The point of this issue is to think beyond the popular and well-reported. However, if you can make a case for something really offbeat, obscure, unusual, or just plain odd, pitch it.
- "Oh, I DON'T watch TELEVISION." This issue is a fete for television programming, not a lecture about how television rots your brain. (Plus, if you say you DON'T WATCH TELEVISION, but own all the seasons of The Sopranos, yeah, YOU WATCH TELEVISION.)
- Routine "Top Lists" - best sitcom episodes, best science fiction, best stunt casting.

Comics are welcome! The issue will be digest sized (half-letter). The zine will be B&W and photocopied.

Length: I'm not going to get too hung up on length for this issue, but I would say between 500-1000 words is a good size. If you need to go longer, please do. If the writing is good enough, people will want to read it to the end. I'll let you know if a piece is simply too huge.

Due Date/Where to submit: This issue will be ready for the fall television season, so the due date (for now) is Sept 5, 2008. Send me your pieces as they are ready! Submit entries to syndprod@gmail.com. OpenOffice, MS Word, RTF attachments, or just paste the text into an e-mail. If you want to mail

them, send them to: A.j. Michel, PO Box 877, Lansdowne, PA 19050.

Yeah, I'm stupid enough to do another issue of Syndicate Product, despite the rising photocopy and postage costs. Won't you help me fill it up?

Syndicate Product Covert HQ:

www.syndicateproduct.com

Call for Submissions: Smile Hon Seeks Baltimore Stories

Eight-Stone Press (ESP) is now accepting Baltimore-related stories, poetry, photography or other artwork for the tenth installment of ESP's popular Smile, Hon, You're in Baltimore! series.

Text submissions are preferably received as attached Word documents. Images should be in .JPG or .TIF format (300+ dpi) and measure approximately 5x7 (horizontal or vertical). All contributors will receive three (3) complimentary copies of the issue in which their work appears.

Send your submissions/inquiries to wpt@eightstonepress.com. The deadline for submissions is September 30, 2008.

Visit ESP online at www.eightstonepress.com or at www.myspace.com/eightstonepress

Call for Submissions: Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go

Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go is looking for zines for our upcoming (January 2009) gallery show. We need zines in these categories:

Spanish Language
Politics and Social Change
Queer
Chican@ and Border Issues
Youth
Feminism
Hurricane Katrina

Zines will be archived in our public collection after the show.

HOW TO SUBMIT ZINES FOR REVIEW

Questions should be emailed to info@gzagg.org.

Zines should be sent by November 1, 2008 to: 605 Normandy Road, Encinitas, CA 92024, USA.

Thanks in advance - we will be posting more information about the show as it approaches, and of course photos when it's done.

Margarat
Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go
<http://gzagg.org>

Call for Submissions: Things I've Already Done Before I Die

I want to put together a zine with the theme 'Things I've Already Done Before I Die'. It's in response to all those 'Things I Want To Do Before I Die' lists. Why not get excited about your life so far and the things you've actually experienced?? It will cut down on the longing. This will be a mostly written zine, no art required unless you want to send something. Write me at delangel3@hotmail.com.

With thanks and in honor of Leona Drizin, my high school English teacher, my inspiration, and my friend. She passed away on August 22, 2008. She could somehow lead and encourage and make you think it was your idea. She went well beyond the role of teacher in my life and I miss her so very much. She pushed me into directions I needed to go and became the grandmother I never had.

You can mail copies of your zines to XD HQ:
Davida Gypsy Breier
PO Box 11064
Baltimore, MD 21212

Or if you know the reviewer you want to send your zine to, go ahead and send it direct. Reviews will be posted to the blog: <http://xerographydebt.blogspot.com/>
You can subscribe with an RSS feed if you want to be notified about new posts.

If you want us to review your zine, please include the following info:

Title:

Issue #/Date:

Contact name:

Address:

e-mail:

website:

price: \$__US/ \$ __Can/Mex / \$__World

trades: yes / no / maybe

size:

page count:

description: