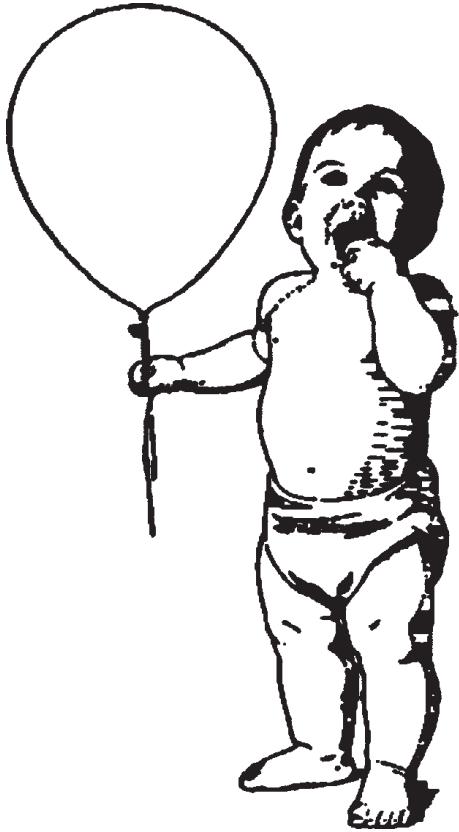


# THE INNER SWINE

## YOU SHALL KNOW *our zine-making techniques*



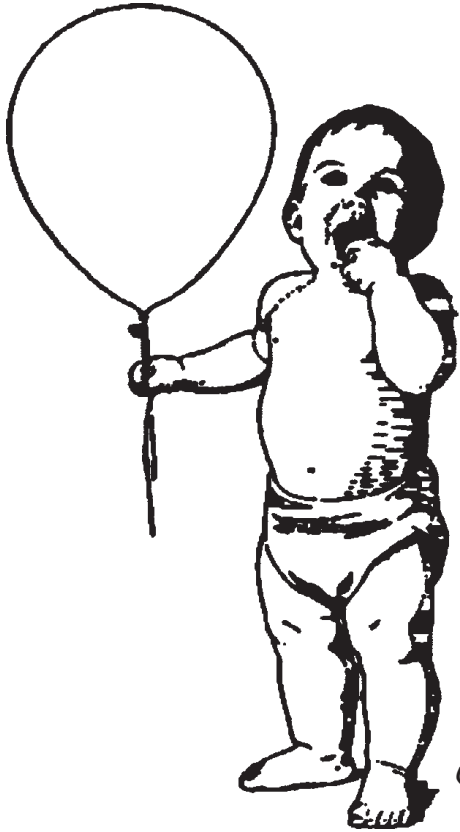
**JEFF SOMERS**



YOU  
SHALL  
KNOW!

our zine making techniques





YOU  
SHALL  
KNOW!

our zine making techniques

Copyright © 2004 by Jeff Somers except where noted otherwise, dammit.

ISBN: 0-9713719-3-8

“YOU SHALL KNOW our zine making techniques” is a collection of zine-related articles which originally appeared in *The Inner Swine* (PO Box 3024, Hoboken, NJ 07030; ISSN: 1527-7704), on *The Inner Swine* website [www.innerswine.com](http://www.innerswine.com), and in *Xerography Debt*, which is a grand zine published by Davida Gypsy Breier (PO Box 963, Havre de Grace, MD 21078; <http://www.leekinginc.com/xeroxdebt>).



*The Inner Swine* is a magazine published March, June, September, and December by Oinking Sow, Inc. (There is no company, really.) Subscription rates and such can be found in the back of this book, in case you’re wondering, but stop teasing me, you’re never going to order a subscription, *you heartless bastards*. Free trades are absolutely entertained; send me something, and I will mail you treats. *Treats*, of course, can and will be defined in any way we decide at the moment we receive your mailing, and can and probably will include any one of the following: Food, pocket lint, foreign currency, pictures of ourselves, old issues of TIS no one wanted in the first place, broken gadgets, toys, and electronics, mail art, or stickers. We don’t want submissions. Still, if The Voices In Your Head insist, all submissions or requests for guidelines (there are no guidelines, though) must be accompanied by S.A.S.E. Misty Quinn (left) appears in all TIS-related front matter for no particular reason and we assume this pleases her, though it’s always possible it angers her and she is plotting our demise as we write this.

By the way, the characters, places, incidents, and situations in this book are imaginary and have no relation to any person, place, or actual happening. Except for the following people: Jeof Vita, Rob Gala, Ken West, Misty S. Quinn, Danette “The Duchess” Somers, Cassie Carey, Mex Carey, Lauren Boland, Loretta Somers, Sean Somers, and Jeff “Captain Fantastic” Somers. Those people are real and should be feared.

Cover art © 2004 by Jeof Vita.

Printed by Tower Records in the USA



# TABLE OF contents

Preface ix

## ZINE THEORY 101

<b>The Five Stages of a Zine Publisher's Life</b>	3
<b>Zine Rebel or Zine Elvis?</b> <i>Or Something In-Between?</i>	7
<b>Ten Things That Annoy Me about my Fellow Zine Publishers</b> <i>(In No Particular Order)</i>	11
<b>30 ISSUES to GREATNESS</b> <i>The Inner Swine Timeline 1995-2003</i>	15
<b>TO DIE. IN THE RAIN</b> <i>What Kind of Writer Are You, Anyway?</i>	19
<b>STEAL THIS ZINE</b>	23

## PRACTICAL ZINE STUFF

<b>YOU SHALL KNOW our zine making techniques</b> <i>How The Inner Swine Gets Made</i>	31
<b>Free as in Beer</b> <i>Laying Out a Zine on a PC At No Cost?</i>	37
<b>Dance With a Hand in My Pants</b> <i>How I Produce 60 Pages of Quality Shit for Cheap</i>	45
<b>Mr. Mute's Guide to Making a Zine</b>	49
<b>QUICK &amp; DIRTY E-PUB</b> <i>Be a Fucking E-Publisher If You Want: Do It For Free, Yo</i>	53

## COLUMNS

---

— MORE SHIT I GOTTA DO —  
from [www.innerswine.com](http://www.innerswine.com)

<b>My History of Zining</b> <i>Publish Your Own Book, Why Not?</i>	61
---	----

Persistence of Zining	65
I Am Fucking Rich	68
Number 288 of 324 <i>Precious Little Zines</i>	71
Why Must We Stay Where We Don't Belong? <i>Is DIY Publishing Too Interesting to Ever Be Big?</i>	73
I've Got Nothing to Say, I Hope You Have a Nice Day <i>I Love My PO Box</i>	75
Don't Write for Me, Please!	77
Page 43 Messes with Texas	79
Time Dilation May Impede Zine	81
The James A. Farley Post Office Building been Very, Very Good to Me <i>Automated Postal Machines Confuse the Masses</i>	84
<hr/> <i>IT MEANS IT'S WANK</i> <i>from <b>Xerography Debt</b></i> <hr/>	
#1: WHY I LOVE BAD REVIEWS	87
#2: PERSONA NON GRATA	90
#3: NO BITCHING ZONE	92
#4: THE LONG DARK TEA TIME OF THE SOUL	94
#5: THE PRICE OF EVERYTHING AND THE VALUE OF NOTHING	97
#6: A WORLD OF PEOPLE COOLER THAN ME	100
#7: FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT	102
#8: ZINE SUPERSTAR	104
#9: DO NOTHING, SAY NOTHING, AND BE NOTHING	106
#10: THE HUMORLESS	108
#11: STUBBORN IGNORANCE	110
Glossary	115

JEFF SEZ: "Thus launching a zine and yourself into good old-fashioned American service to your fellow man, who desperately needs things to read in the bathroom."



# PREFACE

PEOPLE who don't publish zines frighten and confuse me. I wonder what they do with their time—probably attending Communist Party meetings, wearing the sporty little hats communists prefer (see figure 1). I also wonder how they spend their money—probably purchasing kittens and puppies for their decadent and evil feasts. Most of all, I wonder what they do with all the office supplies they come into contact with on a daily basis—probably they waste them on boring, unamerican things like financial reports, PowerPoint slides, and, of course, pornography. These people puzzle me, because I've long thought that *everyone* ought to be publishing zines. All of you. Yes, *you*. If you're not publishing a zine, you're something scientists like to call a *Weenie*.



Figure 1. Sporty little hat well-known communists wear

I shouldn't warn you about this, of course, because your strange reluctance to do your American duty by publishing a zine has the odd effect of increasing my Cool Factor. I owe you a debt of gratitude, just like I owe a debt of gratitude to a kid we called



Figure 2. Typical Zine Publisher

Slow Walter back in grammar school, who made me look like a genius every time he opened his mouth. Because the Zine gene pool is so small, I manage to look pretty damn cool when compared to your typical Zine Publisher (see figure 2), whereas if all of you jumped into the water I'd quickly drown, as I'm that kid with the shoulder floaties strapped on, blinded by the chlorine and peeing into the water uncontrollably. But because you lack the simple red-blooded desire to fart your every thought onto paper and mail it out to an uncaring world, I look pretty good when compared to the typical Zine Publishers out there.

Of course, nothing attracts people to communism like laziness, and I can already here some of you pinkos out there claiming you don't publish a zine because you aren't a very good writer, or don't enjoy writing very much, or are illiterate. Bollocks—sorry to burst your bubble, *comrade*, but not all zines are filled with the tightly-packed handwriting of psychopaths and terrorists—although I'll admit that *most*, indeed are. Many zines are filled with photos,



poetry, or artwork, and some have very few words in them at all. Or at least very few *correctly spelled* words, spelling and grammar being a trap The Man has set up to keep us down. So a lack of writing ability or ambition is no excuse. Every gun-toting, steak-eating American has a duty to publish underground pamphlets and magazines at their own expense. If you don't publish, the Terrorists win.

Don't claim you don't have the time, either. I know people. I *am* people. And we people have tons of free time. I think the basic misunderstanding here is that *being entertained* is not a requirement. Just because you've got sixteen hours of The WB television TiVoed doesn't mean you have no time to put out a zine. We're only given so much time on this Earth, and if you think it's wise to spend a huge proportion of that time watching television, well, then, go with god—just remember, when you watch TV, you watch with Commies. But publishing a zine is a much better use of your time, JimBob, trust me, and here's why.

**1.** Zines offer you perhaps the only way you're ever going to leave a mark on history. Most people skate through life with no bigger accomplishment than surviving their 21st birthday and the gauntlet of ill-advised booze their 'friends' make them consume. If you think the good folks at Duffy's bar in your old college town are going to remember you for having survived 22 Tequila Fanny Bangers, you're sadly mistaken. Spend a few years *writing about* Tequila Fanny Bangers, like I have, and the world eventually gets to know you as the Tequila Fanny Banger guy. I have that printed on my business cards, by the way.

**2.** Zines will make you cool. No, really. The funny thing about nerdy things like writing and publishing zines is that somewhere between junior high and adulthood, they transmogrify into cool. This is because all the cool kids back in school were so busy being cool they forgot to pay any attention and learn anything, so when they're thirty-five anyone with the ability to write coherently or program their computers takes on the mystic aura of a magician.

**3.** Publishing a zine often results in perfect strangers sending you cash in the mail. No, really.

There you have it, my Red friend, all the reasons you need to march home immediately, scrawl some bad poetry, ill-informed opinion, and lame fiction on some paper and copy it a few hundred times, thus launching a zine and yourself into good old-fashioned American service to your fellow man, who desperately needs things to read in the bathroom. Thanks to clint johns of Tower Magazines (Figure 3), I've been given this opportunity to command the slacking masses in this great country to purchase long-arm staplers and get publishing. Actually, clint johns thought I was writing



Figure 3. clint johns

*Blondes, Bombs, and Bourbon: The Clint Johns Story*, and probably wouldn't have allowed the publication of this fine tome if he'd known what was really spending Tower's advance money on. Despite not supporting this project consciously, Johns still deserves our thanks.

What follows are some articles and essays I wrote on the subject of zines and DIY publishing over the past few years. The knowledge contained herein is invaluable, and yet we are charging five dollars for it. This is one of the mysteries of the universe, and you'd be best advised to just accept it and move on.



YOU  
SHALL  
KNOW!

our zine making techniques





ZINE  
THEORY  
101



JEFF SEZ: "The realization that one zine isn't going to make you a star settles in when you get half your mailing back with bad addresses, and absolutely no attention paid. This is when you turn to Demon Alcohol for comfort."



# THE 5 STAGES OF A ZINE PUBLISHER'S LIFE



EVERY now and then I have an attack of Zine-Thought. Zine-Thought is when I've run out of subjects which have even the most tangential connection to me personally and am forced to think of something else to write about for a change. My chubby, beer-bleared eyes scan the immediate surroundings, since I have long ago passed the point of being able to stand up and move about under my own power. Usually they fall on one of the zines on my desk, possibly my own zine, possibly someone else's, and I decide to just write about *zines* in some way. Zine-Thought has gotten me into trouble in the past, because some people don't agree with my thoughts on zines, and some people just don't think I should be commenting on anything except a) my level of inebriation, b) how pathetic I am, or c) how much I would like you to send me money in exchange for my zine, the idea being that I'm a small, slimly talented man who shouldn't be spreading his wings too much, you know? Bastards. Plus, zines are produced by a huge swath of humanity, all of whom have different ideas about what they're supposed to be about. The minute you say anything about zines in general, millions will pour out to abuse you for your presumption.

Ah, fuck it, I got nothing else. I could publish my laundry lists, and some random doodles, or perhaps a lengthy treatise I have completed on those cheap dinner delights Ramen Noodles, but this at least pretends that I've got something meaningful to say. So here's the article.

It starts like this: I was wondering how in the hell all this disparate people end up doing the same thing, namely publishing zines. Zine publishing (any DIY publishing) is a lonely, cash-sapping avocation that only antisocial fuckup weirdos like me and you consider pouring our souls and energies into, so the fact that so many people consciously choose to do it amazes me. As I thought about this mystery, I thought I saw at least one pattern emerging. I'm probably just making this shit up to fill some pages of this rag, but I thought I perceived certain definite stages in a Zine Publisher's life.

## THE STAGES OF A ZINE PUBLISHER'S LIFE

### **1** *STAGE 1: Pre-First Issue. LENGTH OF STAGE: Varies from 1 week to 27 years.*

Ah, that magical period between realizing that any shlub who can jab the COPY button at their local Kinkos can put out something that vaguely resembles a magazine, and bollocks to anyone who says they can't, and actually producing an issue. It's a heady time, because it is, in the words of Willie Wonka, a time of pure imagination - you haven't actually tried producing anything, and you haven't met the cold realities of creation, reproduction, cost and distribution - the four horsemen of zine apocalypse. Like as not you've already told the world that you're putting out a zine, and every day some new wanker appears asking to see a copy of it. This can quickly lead to madness, which is, of course, a required trait in finishing any zine.

For some unlucky souls, of course, the pre-first issue stage can last their entire lifetimes, with puzzled relatives paging through thousands of unsorted pages in the event of our deaths.

### **2** *STAGE 2: First Issue. LENGTH OF STAGE: Fifteen seconds.*

Once those golden issues of your first ever zine are in the mail, a wave of relief and euphoria sweeps over you and you get all giddy. Then a sweaty film breaks out all over you, because you realize that you just condensed 27 years worth of material into one issue. At this pace, you'll be dead before you finish out the first volume, so the next issue looms large in your mind. You need to get it out faster, but how?

The usual solutions will enter your head, but you must resist, for the good of humanity. The usual solutions being: writing movie or album reviews just to fill space, publishing your junior high poetry, doodles, or diary entries just to fill space, using unusually large fonts to fill space, and generally just rambling on about whatever enters your pretty little head.

The realization that one zine isn't going to make you a star settles in when you get half your mailing back with bad addresses, and absolutely no attention paid. This is when you turn to Demon Alcohol for comfort.

### **3** *STAGE 3: Alcoholic Inaction During Post-Inaugural Issue Depression. LENGTH OF STAGE: 1 month to 27 years*

This stage is self-explanatory.



## 4 **STAGE 4: Subsequent Issues. LENGTH OF STAGE: Anywhere from 1 to 1000 issues of zine.**

Once you break through to the next issue of your zine, you're in uncharted territory, really, since so few people actually produce more than one issue of any zine. During this period your zine will probably mutate away from its original purpose, look, and style. Unless you are one of those lucky people who remains locked in an adolescent mental state throughout your entire life, and you proudly publish issue #345 of *Boogers Shaped Like Things I've Found in My Nose* a week after your thirty-fifth birthday.

Everyone finds their own way in this stage, of course. Some people publish as regular as clockwork, spitting out issues with the fascist attention to timeliness that made Italy such a force in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some people produce issues according to a lazy, hard-to-pin-down inner schedule which sometimes sees one issue in a year, and sometimes five. Insanity, by this point, is largely assumed, as you are regularly pouring money, time, and passion into a black hole that is rarely read, or even known about, by anyone outside of your circle of friends and family. Then again, what else would be putting our time, money, and passion into? Playstation games? Pornography? The Discovery Channel?

Insanity, in this situation, is really just another word for *doing something worthwhile with your time*.

## 5 **STAGE 5: Coasting. LENGTH OF STAGE: However long Stage 4 lasts.**

Not really a separate stage, but a subset of Stage 4, but *The Inner Swine* has never been known for its subtlety or accuracy or even its attempts at these things. Stage 5 is where you've figured everything out: the composition, typesetting, printing, and distro of your zine. Nothing surprises you. Nothing comes as a shock to you. The good part of this is that you can't be stopped, your zine just keeps on coming. The bad part is, of course, the crushing ennui of regular publication. The challenge of just doing it is gone, and now you're in constant danger of letting it become a job. Because, let's face it, the hours are long, the actual creation, distribution, and promotion of a zine is grueling, and the pay is low. By the time you realize you hate putting it out more than life itself, you've likely published five or six really shitty issues.

I guess there is a final stage: **post-zine**. I'd like to think that good zines go on forever, but, inexplicably, people who put out good zines often do so for a brief period of time. What happens after that? Well, sometimes they put out another zine, of course. Sometimes I guess they tire of the all-work-and-no-pay life of a zine-publisher, and I've speculated in the past that gaining success as a writer or artist leaves little room for unprofitable stuff like zining.

**6 - YOU SHALL KNOW** our zine making techniques



JEFF SEZ: "Where else can I refer to myself as His Royal Highness Jeff Somers? That's right, nowhere."

# The Inner Swine's State- of-Zining Address: ZINE REBEL OR ZINE ELVIS? Or Something In-Between?

First off, let me thank you for buying this zine and for reading this article. Out of all the articles in this zine, most of which are better, you're reading this one. And of all the other zines out there, you chose mine. Lord knows why. Every issue of this zine is pretty much the same as the last: I ruminate crankily about subjects I know little if anything about, make a few lame jokes, and spruce it all up with stolen fonts and clip art. But, you made some sort of effort to acquire this issue, and then you turned to this page and by god, you're still reading! So, thank you, anonymous reader.

Friends, every now and then I am unfortunately compelled to pull my squinty, mushroom-pale face out of my cavernous (but wondrous!) ass and write about something other than myself. No! Wait! Really! I'm not kidding! Just keep reading, and I'll prove it. Today's subject is Zines, and the wacky personalities that feel compelled to produce them. More specifically, I wonder why good zines die.

Sometimes a zine will come out and it's ambitious, or hilarious, or genius-in-general, and after two issues it disappears. Sometimes a zine will attain a certain level of fame, at least within the zine community, and then, without warning, it disappears. Because I do not shy away from the tough questions, I ask myself: Why? Putting out a zine is never an easy thing, considering the effort, the expense, and the lack of support, so mere obstacles cannot be the sole answer. And zinesters tend to be the most arrogant people in the world, convinced that their genius deserves printing, so bad reviews or lackluster response can't be the sole reason either.

After my usual lack of research or preparation, I've come to the conclusion that the main reason good zines die is success.

It seems to me that above the other categories of zines (Review Zines, Punk Zines, etc.) you can divide all the zinesters out there into three basic categories: **Shock Jocks**, **Movementeers**, and plain old **Writers**. Now, everyone is a beautiful

individual snowflake and I can't fit every zine, or every zine publisher, into one of these categories. But I do believe that in general, we're all one of them. Maybe I'm wrong. But that's okay, I'm still filling some empty space in this issue, so it's all good, baby! As with everything in this weakly-written rag, this is all idle speculation on my part, based solely on the issues of zines people have deigned to mail me for free and the ongoing posts in *alt.zines*, where I continue to hang around like that kid who graduated high school three years ago who still shows up at the football games, trying to pick up the cheerleaders.

The Shock Jocks are those amongst our DIY brood who think they're the first people in the world who have dared to use cuss words and scatological humor. They tend to spend their time trying to, well, shock you. I tend to assume most of the purveyors of this sort of zine are teenagers, but that's not necessarily true. In this jaded day and age, of course, the moment any member of your audience detects an attempt to shock, they generally put up their *blasé* attitude and shrug, so it's kind of a futile effort.

This isn't to say that Shock Jocks can't or don't write well, or don't often produce really interesting or funny work. But their main goal is to jolt, to be outrageous. They give their zines titles like **I'd Anally Rape Your Grandmother for Pocket Change** and write articles about the different types of shits they've taken. Then they mail the issues out and sit up at night waiting for someone to tell them how sick and twisted they are, so they can feel smarter than everyone else. Or so it seems to me.

More frightening and usually less entertaining are the Movementeers, who believe that zines are part of some sort of underground revolution. These are the people who happily call you names when you add a UPC to your cover, or agree to be distroed at Tower Records. Their zines are not so much creative efforts as they are propaganda for whatever underground they perceive themselves to be a part of, and as such can be a little dry, and a little cranky, filled with endless railing against people like me who shrug in boredom whenever confronted by their manifestos.

It can be difficult to tell from the outside that a zine is a Movementeer product; they have the same look and feel as any other zine. Certainly if you bought it in a bookstore, chances are it's not, since Movementeers would never sink so low as to be coopted by the System. If the title is too subtle, scan the contents; Movementeer product tends to include at least one screed against a zinester who "betrayed" the underground and DIY ethic either by "selling out" to a distributor or by "buying in" to the mainstream, usually by taking on paying writing jobs. If the zine in question includes articles like that, the chance that you've got Movementeer product is high, and you should put it down unless reading about how lame a sellout someone is entertains you somehow.

Finally, there are Writers, and I put myself into this group. We generally have no interest in shocking people, and we generally don't consider ourselves members of some underground movement or revolution. Oh, we might believe in the DIY spirit, we might detest corporate America, and we might turn down more lucrative sponsorship deals before 9am than you do all day, but that isn't *why* we're writing, bubba. We write because we like to write, and instead of sitting around waiting to be discovered by the clueless and disinterested literati of the world, we're publishing ourselves and loving it. The main reason our zines exist is to get our writing in typeset form.

The Writers are usually much more concerned with creating new things than with preaching or selling issues or outraging their audience. We may or may not be ambitious about becoming the next David Foster Wallace, we may or may not have grandiose personal visions about where our zine activities are leading, but the main identifying feature is that we write. Our zines are predominantly filled with our material. Each issue is filled with stuff written specifically for that issue, not just leftover college Creative Writing 103 compositions and some random filler like half-assed reviews or pages and pages of clip-art montages rendered unreadable by the magic of Xerox. Not that there's anything wrong with that.

Of course, there are those pesky Review Zines, which exist primarily to review other people's zines. I wouldn't put them in with the Movementeers, because most of them spend their pages reviewing zines, not wheezing on about their political views. They're obviously not Shock Jock product, although I guess there might be some Shock-Review zines out there; I just haven't seen any. Personally, I lump these in with the Writers, because they do fill each issue with their own material. Possibly they deserve their own separate category, but as I am sure the international zine community is *not* waiting breathlessly for this article in order to make its recommendations to the U.N., I'll table that for a later page-eating filler article. Muhahahaha!

So now that I've wasted our time with my own pet theory about zinesters, what was the point again? Mainly, I was musing about how often zines simply disappear, and this three-category theory evolved from there.

Let's face it, almost as soon as a pasty middlebrow white boy like me hears about a famous, wickedly incisive zine, it's ceased publication, and its *wunderkind* author is 34 and working full time for Comedy Central or something. Sure, some zines go on forever, but they are definitely the exceptions. Most zines flash into existence, burn brightly (or not-so-brightly, but I'm not naming names; I've got enough flame wars going on right now. I don't need one more) and then disappear, often before the third issue. Hell, often before the *second* issue.

Of course, some of the reasons for this are easy: A lot of zinesters are teenagers or college students, and their zines are products of that particular period in their lives: the angst, the drugs, the free time. Especially the free time. Times change, they move on to other things, and lots of factors conspire to strangle a zine: Their co-conspirators are no longer down the block or down the hall; their mission in life changes (you can't really do a zine about how badly Harrison High School sucks when you're 22 years old and working full time at the Piggly Wiggly, after all); they very simply don't have as much time to sit around their room smoking pot and writing about how badly it all hurts.

Sometimes, believe it or not, zines actually go big-time. *Wired*, after all, was once considered a zine. Arguments continue about *Bust* and a selection of other titles that now get as much magazine rack space as *Playboy* and accept advertising from Budweiser. I guess when you've got a circulation of 25,000 and you have to actually *hire* people to help you, it just ain't a zine anymore.

Some of it simply has to do with the *why*—which brings us back to our three categories, believe it or not. The motivation behind a zine can be elusive, ephemeral. It's a lot of work

to put out something that half the people will be bored by and the other half largely scornful of, and holding onto your motivation can be difficult. The Shock Jocks lose a lot of steam, I think, when they realize that every dirty joke and inflammatory statement they make has been made before, and everyone hits an age when being outrageous starts to lose its appeal, and being taken seriously starts to look good. Or so I've been told. I suspect that the Movementeers get just as easily disillusioned when they discover that so few people want to hear their spiel. Besides, their scorn for 95% of us usually means they don't try very hard to gain us as audience members, and we should probably be thankful for that. The Writers probably get sick and tired of reading about how bad their writing is, or bummed that after five beautiful issues they still have only four people on their mailing lists who aren't blood relations or old friends.

Certainly, *failure* kills zines. But I submit that *success* kills them much more often.

I believe this because putting out a zine is in itself the act of pushing off the weighty ennui of the world. No one puts out a zine imagining that they will have millions of readers, get on TV, and be wildly successful. You spend months working on the damned thing, and when you put it out, the most you get are a few enthusiastic responses and a lot of static. After a while your friends get tired of pretending to care about it. Simply publishing the thing indicates that failure in all of its subtle forms doesn't scare you much.

But consider the ingredients for a zine: You need unequal parts self-centeredness, free time, disposable income, and energy. Success of any kind eats that stuff up. This does not have to be artistic success, although that certainly counts. But it could just as well be career success or academic success. Working 60 hour weeks leaves little energy and time for putting out a zine. And if you do happen to get a writing *career* off the ground and get paid for articles, stories, and books, well, that can leave precious little time, energy, or desire left over for a photocopied zine with a circulation of 75.

We're zinesters. We're *used* to failure, bubba. It's the success that creeps us out.

Now, this is where I speculate on my own future. While I doubt that I am the Faulkner of my generation and am destined for greatness, or even income, as a writer, I do hope to be widely published and reprinted. Why? Certainly not so I can be a Media Whore like Tom Wolfe in his disturbingly white Pimp Wardrobe. Mainly because the more widely my works are distributed, the better my chances are of being remembered after I die. It's that simple. I love to write, too, and if I had an income from writing and could quit my day job, I'd be able to do more writing, yippee! So I do strive for commercial publishing success. What happens if it comes? I've been publishing *The Inner Swine* for more than five years now, and this is issue number 20. If I have a bestseller that gets made into a box office smash, will I stop publishing my zine?

Honestly, I don't think so. I enjoy the freedom too much; I enjoy the ego-stroking. I enjoy forcing myself to come up with these sloppy little articles that are more fun than accurate or well-reasoned. And my Ego will never be satisfied with mere fame and fortune. Where else can I refer to myself as His Royal Highness Jeff Somers?

That's right, nowhere.

JEFF SEZ: "Nothing makes me want to read the damn thing less than a bitchy letter in ARGTTUP. Hell, at least someone's reading your goddamned zine. Suck it up, silky boy."



# TEN THINGS THAT ANNOY ME ABOUT MY FELLOW ZINE PUBLISHERS (In No Particular Order)

Sometimes, you just have to be cranky. I will name no names, but there are plenty of annoying people out there publishing zines. I'm sure I'm on other people's lists ("Number three, people who put their disembodied face all over their zine. . .") but that just makes me feel "big-time".

## Ten Things That Annoy Me About my Fellow Zine Publishers



1. When they send me their pathetic zines with nothing but a note (sometimes a *photocopied* note), which says REVIEW ME. The arrogance is breathtaking, as if there were legions of heretofore unknown zine publishers who have nothing better to do. Am I a Review Zine? Nope, and a cursory glance at TIS will reveal that to anyone.



2. When they include a big stack of random advertisements for other people's zines, or when they send me a stack of their own ads and ask me to distribute them to everyone I mail something to. I don't work for anyone but myself, and I am never asked if this is cool before they mail this shit to me, so fuck them.



3. Spamming the alt.zines newsgroup with what seems like hundreds of postings that merely announce, over and over again, a new issue or updated web site. Certainly, one posting to this effect is fine. Twice earns you a scowl, three times in the span of two days and I'm mailing you a dead rat.



4. The ones who assume that just because I put out a zine, I must be 16 years old.

5. When they bitch and moan about a “bad”, “inaccurate”, “biased” review in one of the Review Zines out there. Nothing makes me want to read the damn thing less than a bitchy letter in ARGTTUP. Hell, at least someone’s *reading* your goddamned zine. Suck it up, silky boy.

<http://>

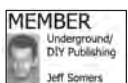
6. The ones who e-mail me out of the blue and ask me to link to their web site, without offering to link back, or even hinting that they at some point even read my zine. I’m happy to link with people who either link to me or have given me support of some sort (money, advice, service, genuine criticism) but an e-mail from a complete stranger urging me to up their hit counts? Fuck ‘em.

*It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents—except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the housetops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness.*

7. The ones who submit stuff to me without asking first. A long time ago in a far-away land, I did implore my readers to submit works to me. This stopped in 1996, when I stopped kidding myself and realized I only had interest in printing *my* works. Since 1996 I’ve printed a few pieces I didn’t write, but all of them were either commissioned by me (translation: I begged a member of *The Inner Swine* Inner Circle to write it) or just randomly caught my fancy. The only indication that TIS entertains submissions is in the *boilerplate* on page 4, which reads in part: “Address submissions and correspondence to Jeff Somers, The Inner Swine, PO Box 3024, Hoboken, NJ 07030, [mreditor@innerswine.com](mailto:mreditor@innerswine.com). But let’s face it, when was the last time we published anything not written by me or one of my cronies? Other people’s pimply writing gives me hives. Still, all submissions or requests for Guidelines (there are no guidelines, though) must be accompanied by SASE.” This is set in 7/8 type at the bottom of the TOC, and I just can’t believe anyone reads it. In any event, the statement is not asking people to submit, it is just warning you that if you don’t include a SASE with your submission, you’ll probably never hear from me. I don’t mind the occasional submission, but don’t just mail me 65 poems and expect me to care.



8. Their endless, endless first-person navel-gazing. I am rapidly coming to believe that the worst part of zines is when people select any pointless episode in their lives and write about it in painful detail. Why do they assume their rambling, pointless tale about what they did two months ago is interesting in any way? At least have a compelling reason to write about your recent unemployment, or personal crisis, or whatever. And yes, I’m aware of the irony of complaining about this in a first-person narrative, dammit, but at least I’m not telling you a supposedly interesting story about my life.



9. When they gripe at me about some aspect of how I handle my zine that they disagree with. I don’t recall signing a membership agreement in some fucking



Underground Press Society, and I resent being treated like I did. Don't like bar codes? Fuck you. Don't like poetry? Fuck you. Think I ought to be more active politically? Double fuck you. The beauty of self-publishing is you don't need to care what anyone else thinks.



**10.** Handwritten zines. It sounds romantic, sure, and I guess when you're 13 you can get away with it. I've had a typewriter since I was 10 years old. No kidding. Is it *that* fucking hard to peck out a few pages of material? Even when your handwriting is legible, it's generally annoying, because it's either filled with hearts-for-dots or little doodles or just *frightening* personality hints. While even in this age of technological wonder some people are still without computer access, typewriters are cheap. Buy one. Handwritten zines blow goats.

14 - YOU SHALL KNOW our zine making techniques



JEFF SEZ: "Widjets worked cheap but balked at wearing 'Oompa Loompa' costumes, causing Somers, now drunk almost continuously, much woe. The dead monkeys were, of course, eaten."

# 30 ISSUES TO GREATNESS

The Inner Swine Timeline 1995-2003

PIGS, believe it or not we've made it to 2003 without having to check into an alcohol rehab program or falling into the usual pitfalls of zine superstardom (debt, toner poisoning, conviction on petty theft charges, and, of course, kidnapping by stalkers). From time to time it's good to sober up long enough for the blood to disappear from your urine and take stock of your situation. Come with me now as we take a magical journey through the past and review the highlights of *The Inner Swine's* evolution into the Most Popular Zine not about Cars, Music, What It's Like to Be a 16-Year-Old Girl, and Which Is Also From Hoboken, New Jersey. We *nailed* that category, bubba.



**1993.** Four young men gathered in a windowless kitchen at 208 Somerset Street in New Brunswick, NJ to discuss creating a zine. **Rob Gala** suggests the name and overarching motto of the publication, and agrees to be the Political Editor, writing about world events and issues. **Jeff Somers** agrees to be the Fiction Editor, writing short stories for each issue. **Jeof Vita** agrees to be the Art Editor,

creating covers and writing articles about comics, perhaps creating some comics himself. **Ken West** agrees to be the Technology Editor, providing us use of his mighty 386 PC and writing a column about technology issues. This is the first and last meeting of the four editors, and ended in a fistfight between **Somers** and **West** over the last Pizza Roll.

**1994.** No issue yet. After the meeting **Jeff Somers** retreated into his room with several cases of Olympia beer, and emerged only once, to submit a single short story to the project. Emerging a year later to inquire about the zine's status, he's shocked to discover the apartment's been taken over by monkeys and none of the other Editors is anywhere to be seen. Also, at some point he apparently graduated from college. He returns home to find a job.



**1995.** Issue 1(1) is released after **Rob Gala** and **Jeff Somers** spent a year trying to work together, finally giving up



when **Gala** tips off PETA that **Somers** has the monkeys working as slave labor in his apartment, and they set off a bomb in his kitchen, destroying most of his liquor supply. By mutual agreement **Gala** goes on to better things, and **Somers** take the TIS name and publishes issue #1 using only the cover **Jeof Vita** created back in 1993, cereal box ad copy, and an essay by his brother **Sean**. No one notices, and he *still* has about five issues left from the initial print run.

**1996.** Issue 2(2) features the first cover by **Jeof Vita** not drawn by hand. Sadly, over the years **Somers**, drunk most of the time, has misplaced the original digital files of this cover, so all that remains is this ghostly thumbnail. It was really cool when **Vita** first created it, trust us. Beginnings of blood-fued between **Somers** and **Gala** which would eventually result in attempts on **Gala**'s life and his subsequent flight to Seattle.



**1997.** The first issue Somers doesn't get embarrassed about when looking back--despite the fact that Dave Mathews' face was used as the cover model. It's not that it's such a particularly great issue, just that for the first time the basic elements of what TIS was had come together in one issue. Also the first time Somers actively tried to create quality material, instead of using whatever was lying around or could be stolen from the Internet.



**1997.** The first review of TIS is reprinted, beginning a grand tradition of horn-blowing that continues to this day. The review was by **Paul T. Olson**. The last of the monkeys finally succumbed to cirrhosis of the liver, forcing **Somers** to employ circus midgets to manufacture the issues. Midgets worked cheap but balked at wearing "Oompa Loompa" costumes, causing **Somers**, now drunk almost continuously, much woe. The dead monkeys were, of course, eaten.



**1998.** Issue 4(2) was the first issue carried by **Tower Records**. Contract negotiations between **Somers** and **clint johns** were grueling, finally stalling on **Tower**'s refusal to purchase new monkeys for **Somers**' private training and use. **Tower** finally sends **Somers** a case of *Early Times* and forges his name on the agreement, and he has yet to realize this fact, despite being paid in **marbles**.



**1998.** First issue to ever appear with a cover **not** created by **Jeof Vita**. The next issue was the last one to do so. **Somers** inexplicably proud of his substitute cover, mainly because he figured out how to create a 'turnpage' effect. Whoop-de-frickin-doo. Also marks the last time **Somers** had sufficient hand-eye coordination to do anything more complex than removing twist-caps and making feeble evil-eye gestures at his (mostly imaginary) enemies.

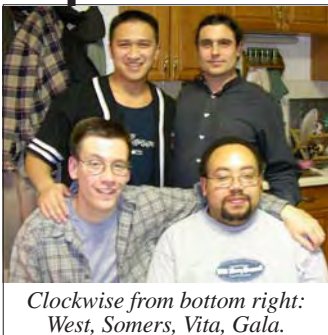




**1999.** First appearance of Mr. Mute! Shortly followed by awkward moment when TIS Publisher **Cassie Carey** asked “Who’s Mr. Mute?”, breaking **Somers’** heart in three places. **Somers** decides then and there to breed race of Super Monkeys so he can avoid heartbreaking humans in all future endeavors. Unfortunately, all of **Somers’** physics knowledge concerns beer brewing, and initial experiments are a failure. albeit delicious. As are all subsequent experiments.



**2002.** *The Freaks are Winning:* The Inner Swine *Collection* is published and sells about sixteen copies, mostly to **Somers’** mother. This will likely be viewed as the high-tide mark of TIS by future historians. A peace treaty is agreed to by **Gala** and **Somers**, or at least everyone assumes **Somers** agrees to it, as he is only capable of moving his eyes by this point, and might have been signalling fierce disagreement, or perhaps a desperate need to relieve himself. No one knows. Cha-Cha the Helper Monkey arrives on the scene and steals **Somers’** heart for a few months...until Cha-Cha’s mysterious disappearance, and a sudden weight gain by **Somers**.



Clockwise from bottom right:  
West, Somers, Vita, Gala.

**2003.** Thirty issues in, and the Founding Four meet together for the first time since 1993. Somewhat, uh, *larger* than they used to be, they no longer have any energy left for petty vendettas and murderous plottings. **West, Gala, and Vita** agree to replace **Somers’** long-lost monkeys and serve him. Tearful embraces follow, and then the hauntingly familiar words echo through the house:

“You know, I never really liked you.”  
“Fuck you--pay me!”

Exciting, no? Starts to make you think there’s a good reason most zines don’t live much past their third issue. I mean, I think about the sheer amount of booze required to keep me going through the lean times and shudder--I could have died! Thank goodness now I’m fat and rich off of TIS licensing deals. I still drink the same amount, but I can afford to pay younger men to trade blood with me, aging them decades in the process and keeping me alive. Alive! Muhahaha!

Ahem, I digress. What I mean to say is: please purchase *The Inner Swine*. I need the cash.

**18 - YOU SHALL KNOW** our zine making techniques

JEFF SEZ: "As our Teacher and Guide Gary Coleman said, it takes diff'rent strokes to move the world. And at least one surly boozehound with nothing better to write about."



# TO DIE. IN THE RAIN.

## What Kind of Writer are You, Anyway?



Lord knows my public persona is a carefully constructed straw man made of assumptions, half-truths, ominously oblique remarks, and lurid facial expressions, which is to say there ain't much meat to it. When confronted, in public, with a careful questioner who begins tugging gently at the loose threads that sprout from my opinions, declarations, and explanations, I can only run in fear and cower behind alcohol, meaning I pretend to pass out and refuse to be brought back to consciousness until the offending person is gone. It doesn't help, certainly, that I am fact-challenged in most of my positions. I prefer to answer probing questions with brisk falsehoods, and hit the ground running hoping that no one bothers to follow up and discover how much bullshit is inside this wicker man.

This really only becomes a problem when I meet new people who previously have known me only through this zine. My established friends are used to my bullshit, and don't even bother asking me questions any more - the common sense ones ("Would you like another beer?") have obvious answers ("Yes, and be quick about it, damn your eyes!") and the ridiculous ones never occur to them. One of the ridiculous questions which always occurs to strangers, however, is "How do you write?" or one of its tributary questions, like "How do you decide what to write about?" or "How much of your real life is in your writing?"

These questions are ridiculous because, to be honest, I can't imagine their value to another human being. Write your way, baby, and don't worry about mine.

Still, it always demands an answer, because if I go my usual route of hemming and hawing and then pretending to choke on a pretzel, people walk away with that look on their face I've come to recognize as *jesus does this asshole even actually write his own shit? Note to self, begin investigating Somers*. No one wants this. The answers to this writing questions aren't easy ones. They're complex philosophical issues concerning the nature of art and the creative process. Naturally I will now boil it all down to about 800 words and three bullet points, because I am either a) a genius or b) an asshole, and you can take your pick. There isn't a complex issue I can't boil down in this manner, and that's why I am me, and you're no fun to be with.

As I see it, there are basically three types of fiction writers in this world, from a philosophical point of view. Whether you write literary fiction, or historical fiction, or science fiction, or romance novels, I'll bet you fall into one of these broad categories. If you don't think you fall into one of these categories, I certainly don't want to hear about it.

## THE INNER SWINE DEMANDS THAT THERE BE THREE CATEGORIES OF WRITING PHILOSOPHY

Let's say for argument's sake that god appears as a burning bush in three people's rec rooms one evening and commands them to write a story about wrestling a tiger. After making some impressive miracles happen to prove himself, the writers each sit down to compose their story.



*Papa and one of the many, many things he killed during his life.*

**1. The Hemingway Tiger-Wrestler:** The HTW hops the next plane to Africa to go wrestle some tigers, believing firmly that all good writing comes from personal experience. They disdain 'imagination' as a device used by pussies, and insist that if you're not writing about something you've actually done or lived through, then you're just masturbating in writing. The HTW also firmly believes that life is for living and pursues new experiences tirelessly, trying to stock up amazing experiences they can then write about in pure, honest first-person prose. Every aspect of the story must be experienced directly. If, for example, the HTW makes a wrong turn in the African wilds and end up being attacked by, and therefore wrestling, a large Gorilla, they cannot simply assume that wrestling any large mammal would be a similarly painful and stress-inducing experience, and simply write an account substituting the word *tiger* for the word *gorilla*. This would be lying.

**2. The RIF Writer:** The RIF Writer believes strongly that reading is fundamental. While RIFfers are not necessarily against personal experience, they do not feel it is necessary to actually wrestle a tiger to write about it - or necessary that you be a secret agent, or that you know how to fly a plane to write about these sorts of activities. However, they also disdain *imagination* as a tool, if not for pussies, for ignorants. When in need of tiger-wrestling information, they will spend months researching the topic under the assumption that the towering human intellect, while capable of taking raw information and synthesizing it into a believable narrative, is incapable of just making up the pain, struggle, and terror of wrestling a tiger. When the story is done they're experts on the subject, and pack their fiction with huge amounts of data and fact.



**3. The Imagineer.** The Imagineer sits down and just lets his imagination go crazy. Having never wrestled a tiger, or even been near a tiger, or even watched a Discovery channel film



on the subject of tigers, he rolls up his sleeves, takes a quick nap, and writes down his dream images of tigers, then writes a fanciful story wherein Superintelligent Tigers from the planet Stripa arrive to invade the earth, and the hero has to win a climatic wrestling match with their leader, Snarl-ka. The wrestling match occurs in zero-g, and involves jetpacks, laser weapons, and an interdimensional fairy named Pica.



Then, there's how I'd do it:



**4. Me.** I struggle for about three minutes with the sudden appearance of a deity I'd never believed in, then shrug and figure it doesn't matter, but why fuck with potentially omnipotent burning bushes? If the burning bush wants a story, I'll write a story. I've never seen a tiger up close, and I've never wrestled. But the idea of research makes me sleepy. So I just make shit up. I write about the smell of the tiger's breath, rotting meat and terror, I write about how its fur is strangely soft and silky. I write about the claws slicing into my shoulder, and how the pain goes from intense to numbingly beyond my comprehension within seconds, negating itself, and I find that I can fight on ignoring it. I write about seeing my own abdomen sliced open, my stomach and bowels spilling out, and how I sit there in dumb shock as the tiger rips my throat out. I do this in about fifteen minutes, and it lasts about three pages. I then write fifteen more pages about lying there dead, being eaten by the tiger, and having an imaginary conversation with the burning bush as my soul withers away to nothingness, wishing for bourbon. For the five people in the world who have wrestled tigers, it probably strikes them as pretty fake and shitty right before they finally succumb to their injuries and die, clutching my story in their ruined hands. For everyone else, it's probably as convincing as anything else they've read about wrestling tigers.

What's the point then, eh? None, really, like so many of these frustrating articles. I'm constantly amazed at how people will discount imagination when discussing writing, as if making stuff up is a sin of some sort. There's nothing wrong with writing from experience, or seeking new experiences to write about. There's nothing wrong with doing research to shore up the blank spots in your mind. There's also nothing wrong with just imagining what something might be like, and sometimes a story that's just entertaining and fun doesn't need to be accurate or realistic. As our Teacher and Guide Gary Coleman said, it takes different strokes to move the world. And at least one surly boozehound with nothing better to write about.

22 - YOU SHALL KNOW our zine making techniques



JEFF SEZ: "Technically. Let's face it, if I purged my mailing list of all the freeloaders, I'd have about five people left, and if I wanted you punished for stealing this zine, I'd have to start paying for my photocopies, which would quickly beggar me. So let's call it a wash and let it drift."

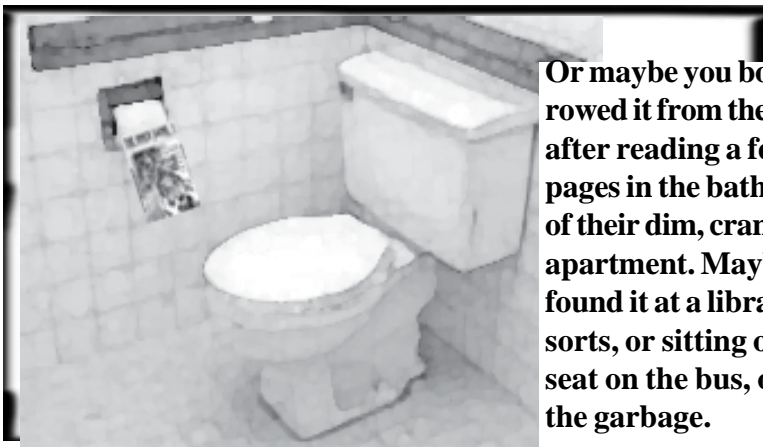
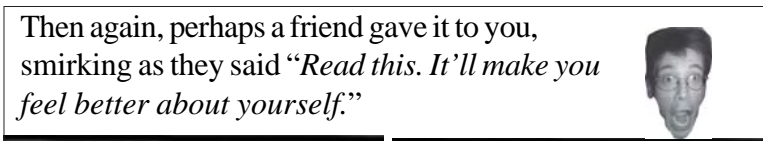
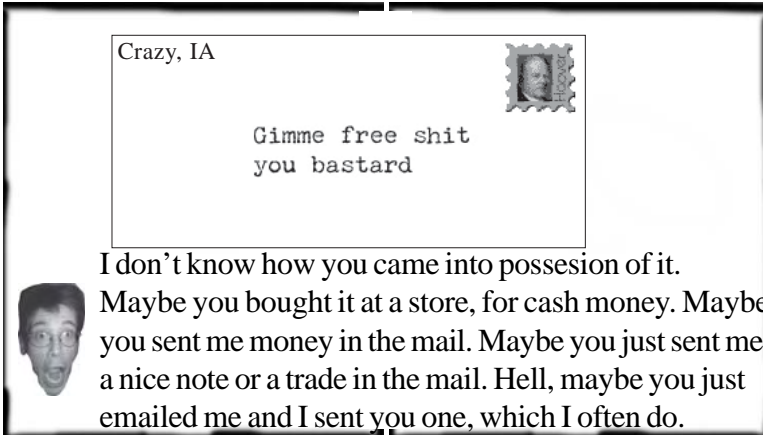
Can You Really

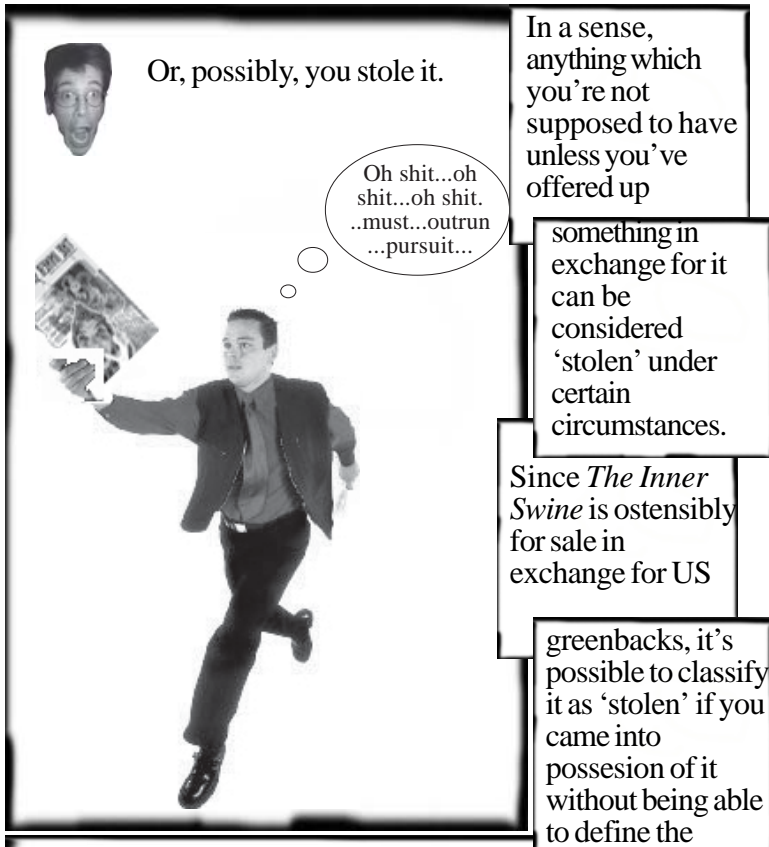
# STEAL THIS ZINE

## Or Is Property Just an Illusion



FRIENDS, somehow you're in possession of *The Inner Swine*, and are most likely disappointed with it, and who can blame you.

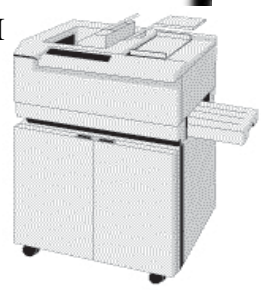




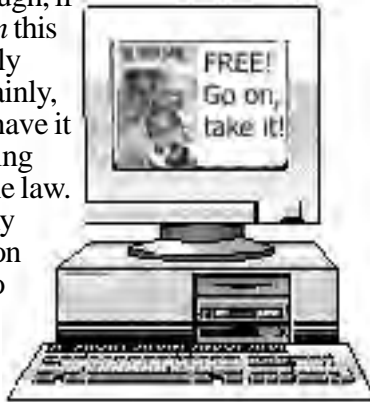
exchange that took place - money, a trade zine, stamps, whatever. However, I don't think you can ever really be accused of 'stealing' TIS, even if you're reading this in the parking lot of your local Tower Records store after boosting it off the zine rack.



This is due to two damning reasons: a) I give away far too many of these bastards and b) I steal quite a bit of stuff to make this zine in the first place. Technically. Let's face it, if I purged my mailing list of all the freeloaders, I'd have about five people left, and if I wanted you punished for stealing this zine, I'd have to start paying for my photocopies, which would quickly beggar me. So let's call it a wash and let it drift.



This leads me to wonder, though, if in any sense you actually *own* this copy of TIS. if you can't really steal it, can you own it? Certainly, you can possess it. You can have it in your hands, and as the saying goes possession is 99% of the law. Then again, I give away all my back issues in digital format on the Internet. They're *free*. So while you can possess a copy of this zine, you can't really own the words in it, can you?



The question really is, though, can *I*? Do I own *The Inner Swine*? More importantly, do I own the words within it? Because I can certainly trademark the term *The Inner Swine*, and I can copyright the words within it, but really, once I mail out all these issues, do I have any effective control over the words written here? Nope. Even if I had millions of dollars and a staff of lawyers to try and enforce my wishes, it'd still be an impossible job. Once I send these words out, I lose control over them. I can't control how you interpret them, how you feel about them, or whether you think they're funny, or smart, or whatever. You can burn this issue, make copies of it, give it to your friends, resell it. There *might* be laws out there designed to give me some of that control, but as any Record Executive will tell you, enforcing those laws is a bitch.



So, I have no control - and that's pretty much how it ought to be. ***Fuck*** control. Control is for pussies who aren't sure their work is going to last under pressure, for simps who think their words are so delicate that poking and prodding from the unwashed masses will ruin them.



**CONTROL IS FOR PUSSIES**

After all, piggies, someday I will be dead, and whether this means my consciousness melts as my brain putrifies, screaming silently as the Earth absorbs my biological remains, or that I'm floating up on a cloud looking down, either way I've permanently lost control over my words, yes? Soo all the sturm and drang I manage in life will, ultimately be useless. My words will survive or not based on their merits, and no amount of bullshit control will have any noticeable effect.



I'd rather have credit instead of control. Corporations prefer control because control can be translated into money, which is all a corporation cares about. I don't care so much about money. It'd be nice to have some, and I appeal to everyone reading this to send me some, but fuck it. Long as you put my name next to everything I write, I'm happy. I'll get money somehow. And when I'm doing time for screwing up some bank robbery or whatever and spending my days being raped by a guy named Tiny, I'll blame you for not sending me money when I was so obviously making a cry for help. Bastards.



28 - YOU SHALL KNOW our zine making techniques





PRACTICAL  
ZINE  
STUFF

JEFF SEZ: "If you have no morals whatsoever and are generally an asshole, you can also fill your zine with meaningless reviews of records, movies, and other zines, diary entries, essays on your cats, or whatever the neighbor's dog is ordering you to write that day."



# YOU SHALL KNOW

## our zine making techniques

### How The Inner Swine Gets Made

PEOPLE who know me are amazed that I publish a zine. Not in the sense of *gee, this zine is fucking fantastic, how can a mere mortal do it? There must be witchcraft involved. I'd better have Somers burned at the stake just to be safe*, but in the sense of *how does man who regularly soils himself while trying to think manage to publish 60 pages of anything on a regular schedule?* I get at least one e-mail a year demanding to know exactly how I accomplish the feat of producing four issues of TIS a year, although there is some suspicion that I myself may be writing that e-mail whilst out on one of my 'benders', traveling the world under an assumed name, drinking and accosting the underpaid attendants in the world's Internet Cafes. Still, *someone's* asking, and as you're still standing there reading this, I have to assume you are not entirely without curiosity.

Plus, since I just spent a few pages telling everyone that they should be publishing a zine no matter what their situation, I guess it only makes sense that I give you a practical guide towards making a zine. I've only made one zine in my life, *The Inner Swine*, so that's the kind of zine I'll be discussing here. if you want to make some other sort of zine, you're on your own, and if your basement explodes because you strayed from the holy words I'm about to share with you, well, you damned yourself when you closed this book and strutted saucily out of the bookstore, choosing not to pay me for this wisdom.

## HOW TO MAKE A ZINE REMARKABLY LIKE MY OWN

You will need:

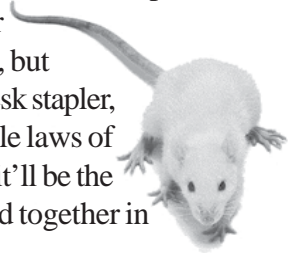
- 1. Paper.** Assume your first print run will be 100 issues. You'll need 100 sheets of cover/card stock (paper weight around 60lb; they're normally sold in packs of 125, 250, and 500; if you buy 125 sheets you'll have some extra for when the photocopier eats a few for lunch). You'll also need 1500 sheets of copy paper. This you can also buy in packs of 500, or the copy store you end up using will supply it when you purchase copies. Or, do what I do and steal it all from various sources: Your job, your families, your best friends. Total strangers



who happen to wander by carrying packs of copy paper. Paper, dammit: Web Zines are for weenies.



**2. A long-arm stapler.** Stapling is a cheap and reasonably durable binding for your zine: not as pretty as twine, perhaps, but more efficient. Try to staple the zine we're making here with a regular desk stapler, and you'll end up raving mad and covered in paper cuts: The immutable laws of physics forbid it. Go buy yourself a long-neck or long-arm stapler and it'll be the best \$25—30 you ever spent, bubba. Send me a zine that isn't fastened together in some reasonable manner, and I will mail you a dead rat in response.



**3. Some form of typesetting tool.** This could be as simple as your precious, bizarrely-neat block lettering, a typewriter, or a decent computer with some typesetting software, depending on your inclination and budget. If you're looking for tips on setting up a computer Desktop Publishing system, see the essay in this book entitled "BLAG". I use Adobe PageMaker, The GIMP, Open Office Writer, and a bunch of smaller utilities when making my zine.



**4. A photocopier.** If you don't have a nifty high-volume photocopier lying around your mansion, good news! You can rent them at places like Kinkos, Office Max, and Staples. Or your local Mom and Pop copy center, if you're feeling like supporting your local community (assuming your local community is not filled with unlovable drunken yuppies, like mine is). Or do what I do: Steal copies from your place of employment. The way I figure it, my company steals about six hours of my life every week in bullshit meetings, ridiculous memos I have to read, and other claptrap. The least they owe me is a few hundred dollars a year in photocopies.

**5. Stamps and envelopes.** Under no circumstances will you staple your zine closed and print the address and stamp right on the back cover, you freakos.

**6. Winged Monkeys.** Or Gnomes. Or Dwarves. Or Gizmos, Pygmies, Gremlins, or Elves. Whatever works for you as a magical unpaid slave labor force.



There: Armed with these supplies, you're ready to start making a zine remarkably similar to mine. Here's how we do it:

### STEP ONE: Write a bunch of stuff

You can do this all by yourself, or you can get a team of dedicated idiots to help you, but you're going to need about 15-25,000 words of material, unless you're going to a) do one of those clipart collage zines, b) print everything in 17 point fonts with lots of spacing between

lines or c) do a poetry zine, in which case it doesn't matter how much you write since no one will ever read it. You can also do what I do, which is to keep a big file of everything you've ever written and separate that stuff into two basic categories: CRAP NO ONE WILL EVER PAY ME FOR and STUFF SOME FOOL MIGHT ACTUALLY PUBLISH. Then, every time you need material for your zine, dip into the CRAP folder and put anything not completely objectionable into the issue. SHAZAM! You've got material.



If you have no morals whatsoever and are generally an asshole, you can also fill your zine with meaningless reviews of records, movies, and other zines, diary entries, essays on your cats, or whatever the neighbor's dog is ordering you to write that day.

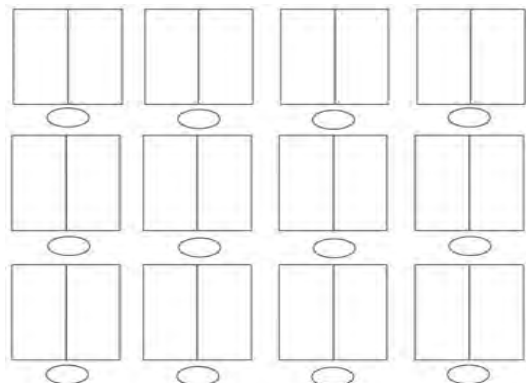
### STEPTWO: Design

Before you can do much else, you have to figure out what the fuck your zine's gonna look like. I chose what's known as a digest-sized zine: 5.5x8.5—basically a letter-sized sheet of paper folded in half. I chose this trim size for two reasons: One, it's easy. The only way to have a simpler layout would be to just take some letter-sized sheets of paper and staple them in the corner or along one side. Two, one of the first magazines I ever submitted stories to and bought a subscription to was a scifi mag called *Space & Time*, and this was the exact format of the magazine when I was a kid, so it stuck.

*The Inner Swine* is 60 pages long with a cardstock cover. This translates to 16 sheets of letter-sized paper (15 20lb sheets and one 60lb cover sheet) divided up into 4 panels (2 each side) and laid on top of each other, then folded. Each sheet of paper inside comprises 4 pages, 15x4 = 60, plus the cover (4 more panels). You can shrink your issue by 4 by removing a page from the stack. 14 pages = 56, 13 = 52 etc. That is, if you're not man enough to match my awesome zine page for page. Loser.

Nowadays I can lay this sucker out in my sleep, but at first I needed a cheat sheet, so I created a grid like this:

It's based on Adobe PageMaker's screen, because that's what I use, but the concept should work in almost any typesetting environment. Each double-box is one *side* of one of those 16 sheets. You number the covers c1-c4, and the rest 1-30 (remember, each sheet has two sides). Then I put in the page numbers, which alternate: The first sheet, for example, has page numbers 60 and 1. The second has pages 2 and 59—one is ascending, one is descending, and they keep switch right and left. The last box in the sequence should have pages 31 and 32; if it



doesn't, you did something wrong.

When we get through Step Three and know how long all of our material is, we can use this cheat sheet to quickly fill the pages in an orderly fashion, rewarding our hard work with a stiff double bourbon. Or two.

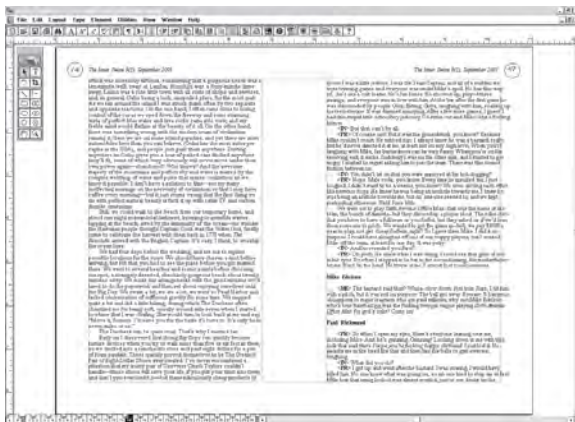
### STEP THREE: Typesetting

Once you've created a bunch of written works to be published, you have to put them into a printable format. Since you're going to put everything onto what are essentially 5.5x8.5 sheets, it's best to flow all the words onto a sheet like that. For this purpose, a computer-based Desktop publishing program (or even a Word Processing program) is your best choice. Typing or writing your words directly onto sized paper will work, but its a pain, and your errors will haunt you, as they won't be very easily fixed. On the other hand, people laid out publications by hand, using typewriters, wax, and exacto knives, for years and years, so it can definitely be done. But if you've got \$100 to spare, see the essay on E-Publishing cheap in this book and get yourself a POS computer system and a copy of Scribus.

As I said, I use Adobe PageMaker. This choice was made because back in 1995 when I published the first issue of my zine, I didn't own a PC, so I used my work computer to lay everything out, and work happened to have PageMaker 5.0 (then published by a company called Aldus) installed on it. I've heard that Quark XPress or InDesign are just as good, but have never really used them seriously, so can't say. Here's what an issue of TIS looks like in PageMaker:

Obviously it resembles the cheat sheet we used above, which makes it easy. I set up each article as a separate file and lay them out in the same trim size: 5.5x8.5. Set your margins any way you wish. I bring in all the text as 10/12 Times New Roman, add whatever graphics I've stolen from the Internet to spice things up, and SHAZAM! We have an article. Layout pros can spend weeks making a page beautiful, but for your crappy photocopied zine you can have a usable layout of an article in about six minutes. And that includes two minutes for mixing a decent drink to inspire yourself with. You'll have white space at the end of each essay, but that's okay—that can be filled with ads, poems, blurbs, whatever bullshit you feel like. As long as it's filled. White Space is madness, never forget it.

Once you have all the material typeset, see how many pages you have. You need 60 (or 56, or 52, or whatever). This should also include whatever front- and end-matter you're going to include (Table of Contents, Letters to the Editor, whatever). If you count everything



up and you have 65 pages, that's great! Because you've filled your issue. If you've got 50, well, you can either find or create more material, or you can futz with the type size, the leading, the margins, and stretch everything until it comes up to snuff.

Once I've got enough material, I create a master issue document which has all 60 pages in it, and begin inserting the articles. Using the cheat sheet, I know at a glance that page one of the master (pages 60 and 1 of the issue) has a comic strip on the left and my introductory essay on the right. The cheat sheet allows me to just breeze through, without thinking about page numberings or the crazy, mixed-up order of things (when you get to the middle page, you stop going forward and start going backward, so an article that starts on page 27 of the master might loop around and end on page 26). When the pages are in there, I look for white space at the end of each essay and fill it with whatever I have on hand, as mentioned before, and spend some time worrying over the details.

#### STEP FOUR: Manufacturing

Once I've got the whole issue typeset, I print out the 16 pages (including cover) and order them, alternating their orientation: The top of page one faces right, the top of page two faces left, and so on. This is because I'm going to be copying them double-sided, taking 32 sheets of paper and copying them down to 16. Then, it's photocopying hell for a while. I do the covers first, because they're easy, and I like to do easy stuff first. I hate getting all sweaty and out of breath.

Then comes the stapling. Oh, the stapling. It's an art. It might look like all you have to do is adjust your trusty long-arm stapler to the proper depth, slide each packet of 15 pages plus cover in lengthwise, and put two solid, Taiwan-made staples into the spine of your new creation...but you'd be right, but try doing all that after half a fifth of Jack Daniels. I dare you. Pussies. This is where the Winged Monkeys (or Elves, or Gnomes, or whatever) come in: A couple dozen of those little bastards, and your stapling and folding is done *pronto*. Assuming the little bastards don't start eating the issues, which, I must admit, has happened a few times.

That's it! Just repeat the photocopying, stapling, and folding routine 100 times and you've got a zine to distribute to the world. I will assume you are not yet so ruined that you don't know how to mail things. No guarantee is made here that anyone will read your zine, or care that you produced it. And certainly do **not** mail me an issue and ask for my opinion, because my opinion is invariably expressed via the shipment of dead rats.



JEFF SEZ: SHAZAM! is my new favorite word.

36 - YOU SHALL KNOW our zine making techniques

JEFF SEZ: "I'm not suggesting that you need a computer to put out a zine - roll a page of blank paper into a typewriter, and go to it."



# FREE AS IN BEER

## Laying Out a Zine on a PC at No Cost?

PIGS, there was once a time when Your Humble Editor ran around in the outside world rather athletically. No, really. When I was but a lad I was skinny and fast and I would run around all day, winning races, playing ball with a modicum of skill. I wasn't a jock, but I was active. Then a series of head injuries occurred and I rather suddenly became cerebral and sedentary. Whether this was damage or evolution, we may never know. What we do know is that my habit of sitting around thinking undoubtedly has led directly to my writing and publishing a zine. So you can consider yourself blessed or cursed by both my brother Sean, who once threw me into a chair causing a concussion, and some big fat-assed redheaded kid, who once knocked me down in the street causing me to hit my head on a curb--another concussion.

As a sedentary kid who read more than he went outside during a period of my life, I also became interested in computers, although not nearly as much as I probably should have. Back in the early 1980s my parents bought me a Commodore 64, which was, at the time, a pretty kick-ass machine. Actually, looking back, it still is a pretty kick-ass machine, relatively speaking. In any event, I actually did begin to learn the basics of programming and how computers work. Unfortunately, after a few years I lost interest, probably because I never moved on to an IBM PC or Macintosh, and thus drifted away from the exploding personal computer scene. I got back into it a few years ago and picked up where I left off, learning the basics of actually using your computer as opposed to merely running software on it.

So, it's no surprise that I lay out this rag on a PC. Of course, not everyone can; it can be pretty expensive to own and use a computer these days--but it can be pretty cheap, too. I decided it might be worthwhile to explore the different choices everyone has when it comes to acquiring and using a PC to lay out a zine. The short answer is that depending on what you're trying to do, technically, with your zine, you can either spend next-to-nothing or you can spend thousands of dollars. Since we're all DIY publishers, I figure you'll be more interested in the next-to-nothing business, but you never know. There are zines out there that are laid out on expensive computers using expensive software, and there's nothing wrong with that.

Of course, you can lay out a zine using a typewriter, so if you're having trouble buying *food*, forget this article. If you're looking to lay your zine out on a PC without spending much or any money, you have, I'd say, two choices: go with **Low End** equipment and **freeware**, or go with **stolen** software. There really aren't



many other choices. If you can afford to buy a top of the line PC, you can probably swing the extra \$\$\$ for a good quality publishing program, so this isn't going to be a review of PageMaker, InDesign, or Quark XPress. If you can afford to buy a Windows or Mac machine and these software packages, more power to you, go ahead and enjoy. If not, read on.

First off, you don't need to spend \$1000 on a new computer. Or \$500. Or even \$100, necessarily. The low end machine you need, at a minimum, is a 1994-era PC with a 486 processor, 500MB hard drive, at least 16 MB of RAM (the more the better, if you can), a CD ROM drive, and any kind of VGA graphics card. Of course, you need a keyboard, mouse, and monitor too. And a modem if one isn't built in - and if the built-in one is a 14.4 dinosaur, you might go for a new 56K modem anyway, but 14.4 will get you where you're going, so it isn't necessary.

Where can you find such computers? My goodness, I've got three of them under my bed. No kidding. I got them from my place of employment for free because it was easier for them to give the units to me than it is to get rid of them. You might know someone like me with some old PCs lying around they'd give you. If not, go to Ebay and search on "486". You'll get somewhere between 500-1000 results, most of which are complete systems priced under \$50. Many will come with software installed, but be careful: if it's the software installed on the PC when it was bought new, it's most likely illegal to use it. Most of these systems will come with a keyboard and mouse, but you'll need a monitor, too--unless you opt for a laptop, which is more portable and has a monitor included. Otherwise, nothing fancy: 14" or 15" will do just fine. I searched on Ebay for "monitor 14 inch" and got 253 results back, including a Packard Bell color monitor for \$10.50 plus shipping. If you need to get a CD ROM drive to go with your Piece of Shit (POS) system (back in 1994 CD ROMs were not yet standard in every system as they are today) I'd suggest you go with an internal drive, as they are cheaper. These, however, require that you open up the PC and install the damn thing, which can be difficult and confusing for people with no PC experience. An internal drive will go from \$10-50; an external one will cost more. With shipping costs included, you can have a 486 low end system for about \$100 or so.

Now, a system like that won't be able to run Windows XP, kids, but the point is that Windows XP is expensive software. Your slightly tarnished used system will, however, run lots of older or smaller software. You might want to upgrade it a little: more RAM, maybe, which is cheap (try [www.crucial.com](http://www.crucial.com)), or maybe a better video card or something. If you've got the cash, why not? If you don't have the cash, you can get by on something like the one described above, which will run a variety of operating systems, plus do all the things you want a PC to do: word processing, Internet services, spreadsheets, games - whatever. No, you won't play Quake 3 on it. But you could play Doom II on it. If you've got a bit more scratch, move up from a 486 to a Pentium or Pentium II system.

Once you've got some cheap POS computer sitting in the spare room, you need to throw some free software on it to get it to do something. I'm going to assume for the purposes of this section of the article that you don't want to spend any money, and that you don't want to break any laws, which means that even if your Ebay machine came with Windows 95 and Microsoft Works 97 installed, you'll wipe the hard drive because you

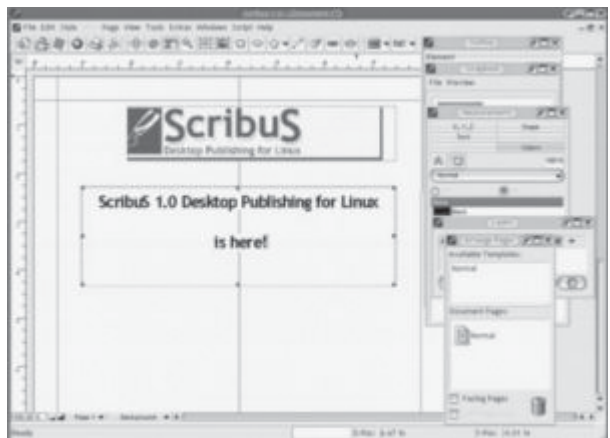
legally aren't supposed to use that software for anything, or that the machine came pre-wiped.

I'd recommend **FreeBSD** or **Linux** for you. Both are Unix-based operating systems that are open-source and free to use. You can either download the whole damn thing for free, or you can spend \$30-100 for a pre-packaged version on CD ROM. Downloading is free, but then you have to have a high level of knowledge to install and configure the damn thing, plus it will take *forever*. You will literally see the end of the Universe before you finish downloading one of these systems on a 14.4 modem. With a 56K modem you will simply die before seeing the end. Spend the money on the CDs, and you will get the operating system and, more importantly, you'll get a lot of free software along with it, ready to install, free to use. Both FreeBSD and Linux will give you Internet access, web browsers, email clients, and word processors, along with any other kind of software you might desire (spreadsheets, games, IRC, et al). Linux comes in a variety of 'distributions' which are pre-packaged versions of the generic Linux code. The best ones are Mandrake, Red Hat, SuSE, and Debian. For someone who's never used Linux before, Mandrake is probably the best choice. The newest versions of these Distributions will probably not run well on a really POS system, but older versions can still be found.

With either choice you can use the **Open Office** office suite, which is feature-comparable with Microsoft Office, which is, however, quite the memory hog, however, and if your low end machine is really, really low end you might find it too much for your system. In that case, I'd recommend **AbiWord**, a standalone word processor, but which is already an impressive piece of software. As a matter of fact, this article was written on AbiWord. Both OpenOffice and AbiWord run on several platforms, including Windows, so if you have to use Windows 2000, say, at work or school you can transfer your files back and forth without any trouble.

Open Office and AbiWord are both *word processors*, not desktop publishing programs. There is only one desktop publishing program like Quark or PageMaker in Linux right now: **Scribus**. Scribus is a pretty good program, though it's in version 1.0 and has a long way to go before it can seriously compete with Quark et al. However, it does work, and it is free, so if you'd like a frame-based typesetting program for your POS system, Scribus will do the job.

If the word 'Unix' scares the bejesus out of you and you don't want to tackle the learning curve of those arcane operating systems, there is another free alternative: DOS. No, not MS-DOS, but DOS-like operating systems. DOS might sound old-fashioned, but you know, Windows 3, 95, 98, and ME were all just GUI shells to various DOS versions -the guts of the operating systems were still DOS. DOS can be a robust and incredibly useful operating system, and if you come from a Microsoft background it



*Scribus 1.0: Still a little buggy, but a great application for Linux.*

can be easier to deal with than a Unix system. Plus, there's just as much DOS freeware out there as Unix, so you'll have no problem finding applications to do your dirty work.

**DR DOS** is the great-descendent of an operating system called CP/M, which, legend tells, once came thisclose to being the operating system in the original IBM PC, losing out to a little known company called Microsoft and their MS-DOS product. MS-DOS was, actually, based on CP/M and the two resembled each other greatly. DR DOS was recently given away free for personal use, although it is not open-source. It is almost 100% compatible with MS-DOS, and thus will run just about all DOS applications. It is professional-grade and network-ready, stable, and relatively resource-easy, meaning it will likely run on your POS computer. **FreeDOS** is an open source project to create a DOS operating system from scratch, and has recently moved into a stable, and workable version. It is also nearly 100% compatible with DOS software, though it is a Beta product and thus can be a little unreliable. You can download both FreeDOS and DR DOS from the Internet, and FreeDOS can be found on CD Rom at some web sites.

Once you have one of these DOSes running on your POS machine, you've got a choice of literally thousands of software packages, giving you the ability to do anything on your DOS system that you want. Web surfing, email, word processing, spreadsheets--it's all there, baby. There are even a bunch of GUIs to use if you must have a point-and click experience, although most of them are Beta products and offer few, if any, usable applications beyond file management and a CD player or two.



*New Deal Office 2000 Writer--not bad for something running on top of FreeDos.*

There's also **New Deal Office 2000**. NDO is a GUI-cum-office suite which runs on top of DOS, sort of like a low-rest Windows and Microsoft Office. It includes a desktop environment much like Windows 95, as well as applications like a Word Processor, Spreadsheet, Web browser, and a bunch of other utilities. It goes for about \$100, which is pretty steep for old, outdated software, but if you got your POS system for free it might be worth the investment, since

it will get the job done for you.

With one of these DOS choices, your choices are limited when it comes to Desktop Publishing, but you can still manage it. Believe it or not, you can download version 5.5 of **Microsoft Word** for free directly from Microsoft - it's listed as a Y2K upgrade to Word 5.0, but the exe file you download installs a full version of the word processor. This Word is incredibly different from its windows brothers, though, so be prepared to learn a new way of doing things and to do without most of the features Word currently sports - but MS Word 5.5 is a robust and powerful word processor that will let you flow your words, which is the point. There are actually tons of word processors for DOS, but most look like MS Word 5.5 anyway - no graphical environment, everything keyboard and hot-key. At least MS Word is powerful.

There is also the enigmatic but potentially good to great **Envision Publisher**, which is a DOS/Win3.1 desktop publisher that looks pretty crummy when put up against PageMaker or such, but if you're running FreeDOS on a 486 POS machine, it's pretty fucking cool. Plus, it has mouse support and all the usual desktop pub features, yahoo. It just looks low end, because it is, and the version you'd want (2.04) was last released in 1995. Still, it'll layout your pages, so quit bitching. The only problem is that the downloadable Envision 2.04 I found is a time bomb shareware, meaning that you get 30 days to evaluate and then you're supposed to send the company \$49 to buy the damn thing; this version becomes inactive after 30 days. \$49 ain't too bad, considering what you can do with this program, but you could also just reinstall the software when it timebombs out.

**Got Windows?** Maybe you already own a computer with Windows running on it, and you want to just get some free software to lay out your zine, eh? Not a bad idea. If your machine came with MS Word or Works or Corel Wordperfect, one of those will do fine. If your machine is low end and you're looking for something free or very resource-friendly (let's face it, MS Word is a fucking monster), there are other options.

I'll assume for purposes of this article that you don't have several hundred dollars with which to purchase a professional desktop publishing package like *Quark Xpress* (\$950), *Pagemaker* (\$500), or *InDesign* (\$700), or even *MS Publisher* (\$120). Let's assume you're broke, or reluctant to support corporate America, okay? In that case, you have two Windows choices:

**Serif PagePlus 5.0** Free software which is very close in functionality to PageMaker. You have to answer a bunch of personal information questions at their website in order to get to the download, but you can make up all that info, which I recommend. The program itself is extremely usable--you can definitely lay out just about any trim size using this program, and that's all that matters. It's easy to use and works with most of the text and image formats

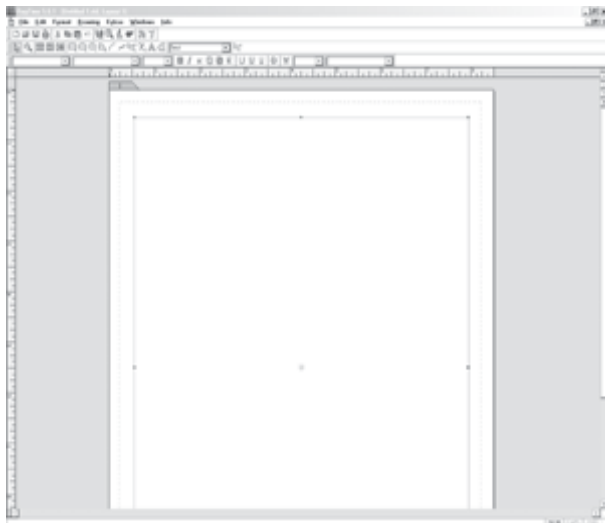


*Serif PagePlus*

you'll need to work with--I'm actually pretty damned impressed with this. For free, what the fuck? You don't break any laws, you don't spend any money--fuck, do it, if you've got Windows. It's about an 11 megabyte download, which can take anywhere from about half an hour to two hours on a dial-up download, depending. There's an option to purchase the program

on CD for a few bucks.

**Ragtime Solo 5.0.** Another remarkable free piece of software is Ragtime Solo 5.0. I don't like it as much as PagePlus 5.0, mainly because I found PP5 to be more instinctual and well-designed. Still, considering that it's all free, you can't go wrong, and I can confidently say that either program will enable you to lay out your zine just about any way you want to.



*Ragtime Solo 5.0*

Certainly, if you've got Windows installed, you're better off using one of these DTP programs rather than a simple Word Processor. The Ragtime program is 50 megabytes, which is a hella long download on a dial up connection (there is an option to buy the program on CD for \$9.95). Between these two, I strongly prefer Page Plus, but if you've got the bandwidth, why not download both and give 'em a whirl.

If one of these DTP programs isn't right for some reason, there are plenty of free Word Processors, which could conceivably be used to lay out your zine.

The adored **Abiword** and **Open Office** will both serve your purposes well enough, and a quick search on Google for **freeware word processor** will dig up a long list of possibilities. You could also look into the free **602Pro PC Suite 2001** from Software602 Inc. This program is free, but it's a complete office suite (word processor, spreadsheet, etc) that, like Open Office, requires a relatively new PC. However, it is free and the word processor is extremely powerful and compatible with MS Word. If you're looking for something smaller, **Atlantis Nova** weighs in at 1.1 MB and is a really startlingly complete piece of freeware word processing. It actually works really well, and its size means it'll run on a very low end machine.

There is, of course, **Microsoft Publisher**, which retails for about \$120, and **Print Shop Pro Publisher**, for about \$100. I've never used these programs so can't comment on them, but they are marketed as PageMaker/Quark-like applications for those who don't want to pay for the real thing. Probably more than enough to lay out any zine. You could also look for **PFS First Publisher**, an older desktop publishing application which you can find on Ebay for \$5-10 sometimes. It was once a midrange package which has since slipped into the abyss - hard to find, but might be just what you're looking for.

**What about the Mac?** I am not a Macintosh person. I have nothing against Apple computers, I just haven't used many in my time, and my knowledge of how they work is slim. The time I do spend on Macs is generally hurried, desperate, and confusing - as would brief periods on an IBM be for a Mac person, I'm sure. I did however get some quick feedback concerning the cheap-and-free Mac question, and here, very, *very* briefly are the nuggets from those discussions.

Cali Ruchala (check out [www.diacritica.com](http://www.diacritica.com)) tells me that "...QuarkXPress 3.x runs fine on MacOS 7.5, which is completely free from Apple's ftp server. You need OS8 to use Quark 4.x, I think (that may be wrong — never tried it with 7.5 myself...)

“Furthermore, there’s a larger community of people sharing programmes which could, rightly or wrongly, be considered “Abandonware” for the Macintosh. Apple had an OS that functioned fine on a computer with less than 100 mb of RAM and a 400 mhz chip. Granted, MacOS 7.5 is hideous graphically, but that’s why there’s Kaleidoscope.

“In fact, I did many, many zines using OS 7.5, with less than 20 mb of RAM, a cracked version of Quark 3, on a machine with a processor that ranged between 20 and 30 mhz. Photoshop was temperamental as hell, but the actual layout wasn’t impeded in the least. That computer I think I bought for about \$20. When you go to OS8, you need (1) lots more RAM, (2) to buy the OS (OS8 isn’t free like everything before it is, and it’s like 30 megs in size; I assume that someone needing to go through this isn’t going to have access to a cable modem and Carracho) and eventually (3) you’ll probably want a PowerMacintosh, which is still cheap used but a step up from the Apple’s 68k models.”

Joe Smith emailed me to add his two cents on the cheap-publisher Mac side of things: “When I started publishing my last zine, Orthophobe (now defunct), I did the layout on a Macintosh IICI that I picked up for \$500—the price for the ENTIRE system. It was so old and slow, it crashed if I tried to run OS 7.5 so I was forced to run an even earlier OS (I can’t recall the number).

“Regarding software, I used Pagemaker 4.0 (which I pirated from the university I was attending) and it worked well for the first few issues of Orthophobe, which ranged from 48 to 56 pages.”

Personally, I’ve been looking into picking up a cheap Mac for learning purposes and have discovered that there are plenty of options under \$300 for a Mac that’ll do anything you need it to. Check out the detailed model descriptions on [www.lowendmac.com](http://www.lowendmac.com) and pick the lowest one you think you can handle, then look for it on Ebay.com or some other place. There you go for those of you who want a cheap Mac for zining - it can be done! Also, **Open Office** has released a version of its free office suite for Mac OS X.

**Stolen software.** Of course, the options discussed above range from complex and involved to crappy features and performance - I mean, if you have grandiose designs, Envision Publisher is not going to do it for you. If you have no cash but you want to lay your zine out in Quark or PageMaker, you have one choice: steal them.

This is a lot easier than you’d think. I must stress here that I am not advocating this choice, and will not provide a step by step tutorial in how to do it. But it’s possible, even easy.

First off, you need Windows 95 or Mac OS 8 or better. You can legally purchase these operating systems pretty cheaply these days on Ebay, but if you’re looking for completely free you can usually borrow a CD from a friend and use it to install on your PC. I don’t know much about Mac OS so I’ll stop talking about it now, but Windows 95 will run okay on the aforementioned POS 486 machine you can get on Ebay as well. It may not fly on that machine, but it will run. Microsoft doesn’t like to admit this, but Windows 95 is perfectly usable even today for your basic tasks: word processing, Internet apps, multimedia. It will remain perfectly usable for years to come, actually. Sure, as time goes by the new software may not run on Windows 95, but you’ll still be able to do just about everything with it. So if you can get your hands on Win95, you’ll be set to run Quark or PageMaker, yahoo.

Where to get this stuff? Why, from the Internet, of course. Specifically, from the Peer-to-Peer (P2P) File Sharing networks or by hanging around IRC channels. If you don't know what IRC is, don't bother trying. P2P programs like Kazaa, BearShare, or Limewire. can sometimes offer you illegal copies of expensive copyrighted programs like Quark or PageMaker. It can be a frustrating experience, but with some determination and patience (and a fast Internet connection) you can illegally acquire cracked versions of just about any software program. You've got to be careful about virus and trojan exploits, of course - remember, you're downloading software from strangers and executing code on your machine, Bad Things can happen.

Still, this way you can potentially have a cheap or free system running free software that allows you to lay your zine out like a pro, assuming you know what you're doing. It can be done. Just remember it's illegal, and accept your consequences if you get caught.

My recommendation? If your system is relatively new (Pentium II or better), go with Mandrake Linux, Open Office, and Scribus. You can buy pre-made Mandrake CDs for about \$5 on E-Bay and at various web sites, or download it all and burn your own CDs with everything you'll need, including advanced office software you can use to produce some pretty decent layouts. For an investment of under \$200 (maybe under \$100) you'll be able to set up a computer system to lay out your zine - and just about anything else you want to do, too. If you're broke and have to go with a lower-end machine, go with FreeDOS and New Deal Office--sure, it's \$100, but it'll make your experience much more pleasant. And if you don't have \$100, well, there's software out there. Do some digging.

I'm not suggesting that you **need** a computer to put out a zine--roll a page of blank paper into a typewriter, and go to it. Or handletter something beautifully, and go to it. But if you want to use a PC so you can save your work electronically, or because you like working on a PC, then remember that you can do it without straining your DIY pocketbook.

Whew, I'm exhausted.

## Web Links for Downloads

<b>FreeBSD</b> - <a href="http://www.freebsd.org">www.freebsd.org</a>	<b>PagePlus</b> - <a href="http://www.serif.com">www.serif.com</a>
<b>Linux</b> - <a href="http://www.redhat.com">www.redhat.com</a> ; <a href="http://www.suse.com">www.suse.com</a> ;	<b>RagTime Solo</b> - <a href="http://www.ragtime-online.com">www.ragtime-online.com</a>
<a href="http://www.debian.org">www.debian.org</a> ; <a href="http://www.mandrake-linux.com">www.mandrake-linux.com</a>	<b>Freeware</b> - <a href="http://www.dosbin.com">www.dosbin.com</a> ;
<b>Open Office</b> - <a href="http://www.openoffice.org">www.openoffice.org</a>	<a href="http://www.completelyfreesoftware.com">www.completelyfreesoftware.com</a> ; <a href="http://www.simtel.com">www.simtel.com</a> ;
<b>AbiWord</b> - <a href="http://www.abisource.com">www.abisource.com</a>	<a href="http://www.freewarehome.com">www.freewarehome.com</a> ; <a href="http://ww.macosarchives.com">ww.macosarchives.com</a>
<b>FreeDOS</b> - <a href="http://www.freedos.org">www.freedos.org</a>	<b>Resource-friendly freeware for Windows</b> -
<b>DR DOS</b> - <a href="http://www.drDOS.org">www.drDOS.org</a>	<a href="http://www.tinyapps.org">www.tinyapps.org</a> - I love this site!
<b>New Deal Office 2000</b> - <a href="http://nt.breadbox.com/geocats.asp">http://nt.breadbox.com/geocats.asp</a>	<b>Kaliedoscope</b> - <a href="http://www.kaliedoscope.net">www.kaliedoscope.net</a>
<b>Envision Publisher</b> - <a href="http://www.envisionpublisher.com/envision/envision.htm">www.envisionpublisher.com/envision/envision.htm</a>	<b>Low End PC Resources (general)</b> -
<b>MS Word 5.5</b> - <a href="http://office.microsoft.com/downloads/9798/Wd55ben.aspx">office.microsoft.com/downloads/9798/Wd55ben.aspx</a>	<a href="http://www.lownedpc.com">www.lownedpc.com</a> ; <a href="http://www.lowendmac.com">www.lowendmac.com</a>
<b>Atlantis Nova</b> - <a href="http://www.rssol.com">www.rssol.com</a>	<b>602Pro Suite</b> - <a href="http://www.software602.com">www.software602.com</a>
	<b>Cheap IBM PCs</b> - <a href="http://www.affordablecomputers.com">www.affordablecomputers.com</a> ;
	<a href="http://www.secondwindpcs.com">www.secondwindpcs.com</a>

*AUTHOR'S NOTE: I do not warranty any of these programs, configurations, or attempts to wriggle from under the thumb of Microsoft. If something doesn't work, destroys your PC, or blinds you with a sudden flash of energy, don't come bitchin' to me. You save a few bucks at your own risk.*



JEFF SEZ: "A less-than-ideal diversion is to eat inappropriate stuffing materials, like the actual George "The Animal" Steele did."

# DANCE WITH A HAND IN MY PANTS

## How I Produce 60 Pages of Quality Shit for Cheap



*Get caught stealing  
office supplies and  
you'll be screwed.*

PIGS, this is the Very Special Article that I'm sure will send you all home sniffing back huge, exhaustive emotions drummed up by the nearly-repulsive Baring of My Soul. I assume you all want my soul bared, because you're reading this. Once I decided we needed a Very Special Article in this book, I spent a lot of time trying to figure out what the theme for a VSA should be, most of that time spent drinking Plum Schnapps in front of Ken West's entertainment center, which is truly a Huge and Frightening collection of technology. Ken now has the ability to pick up reflected television broadcasts from outer space, giving him, in effect, a Time Machine in his living room. This allowed me to make an exhaustive survey of all the Very Special Episodes ever broadcast, throughout time, including the classic *Diff'rent Strokes* episode in which Gary Coleman discovers he was bought solely to amuse Mr. Drummond by dancing, and the eternal *A Christmas Carol*-based *Blossom* episode in which Blossom realizes that being a cute small child too often means being a bizarre-looking and crack-addicted adult. Inspired by these tear-jerking teleplays and Ken's seemingly endless supply of Plum Schnapps, I quickly realized that I was pretty much a bitter poseur bankrupt of ideas and lazily decided the theme for the VSA would be: zines. Summoning the energy to scrawl the word ZINES on my arm in marker, I passed out. As usual when that happens, I woke up in my own kitchen pantsless and covered in red army ants.

Standing in the shower washing ants and various other substances off of my shivering, shriveling body, I thought about my little zine and, as is common in these situations, began to get really angry at all of you who read it, which quickly spilled over into a more generalized rage, which I call Ralph. Ralph usually manifests itself like this: At the apex of my anger, I suddenly go all calm and ceramic, and then Ralph is there, telling me what to do, and I am swept with happy, giddy relief because I no longer have to deal with anything, it's all in Ralph's able hands. Ralph hangs around for a few days and tells me what to do, and then gives me back



control. The Bad People keep trying to take Ralph away, but so far we've outwitted them.

All that is neither here nor there, however; the point is that Ralph helped me to realize that the one major issue I could help people with in this VSA is how to put out your zine for (almost) free. How Ralph showed me this is of no concern, although it did involve some property damage.

Let's face it: We're DIY publishers, for god's sake, and we live in a capitalist world, so everything costs money. However, if we had money, ironically enough we would no longer be considered DIY publishers. If we had money, we'd be considered Mega Rich Dilettante Fuckwits, or so is the extent of my comprehension of the issue. Lacking money, we endeavor to publish quality work, manufacture it into a pleasing and accessible shape, and distribute that item to the waiting maws of our greedy, ungrateful fans, all without shelling out a dime, if we can help it. The *No Money and Issues* policy of DIY publishing is one of the more daunting aspects of self-publishing, as we all know: Everything in this fucking world costs money.

Every single person who has ever produced a zine on a regular basis has solved this problem, to a lesser or greater extent, on their own. This is not their solution. As a matter of fact, fuck them if they haven't passed their wisdom along. Ralph and I will be paying them a visit fairly soon. No, what follows is my solution to the cash flow problem, and it boils down to a beautifully simple single command: *Don't pay for anything*. It's easier than it sounds.

First, let's examine the materials needed to assemble an issue of *The Inner Swine*. The materials used for your lame zine may vary from this list. I could not care less what they might be. For each issue of TIS I need: An IBM PC with Windows, a word processor, and Adobe Pagemaker; A quality laser printer; Good letter-sized paper; A quality photocopier; 54-60lb cover stock; Mailing labels; Envelopes; Postage; Several six packs of Raoul's Beefy Beer.

Whew, that's a lot of stuff. And under normal conditions, a lot of expensive stuff, bubba. Happily, I haven't existed under what you'd call "normal conditions" since I was 12, which is when (historians agree) I simultaneously rejected god and accepted my inner UberMensch, who is also, by great coincidence, named Ralph. When you leave normal conditions behind, you enter a shadowy world called Jeff Conditions, and in Jeff Conditions the items listed above are mostly free, with some exceptions. There are actually two possible ways to get all of the above for free: the **Fell Off a Truck** method, which I can't recommend because it involves potential incarceration and prison rape, and then **The Way of Jeff**. In The Way of Jeff, there is no prison rape, at least not that I am personally aware of. There is a rather blatant disregard for laws and the rules of civilized society. But no prison rape. That I can remember, anyway.

### **The Way of Jeff in Several Easy Steps**

Get a Job in Publishing. Maybe you still harbor ludicrous dreams of financial success in the career of your choice. Ha! I giggle girlishly at your dreams. It is an unproven and largely speculative fact that people who self-publish their drivel lack the drive and blandness of personality to be successful in business. If you cared enough to spend 90% of your mental

energies on earning money, you certainly wouldn't be publishing a Flintstones fanzine or the like. Therefore, stop thinking about your career and making moolah and land yourself the greatest job known to man, assuming that the man in question is a DIY publisher: low-level shlub in the publishing industry. I did this back in 1994 and it was the best zine decision I ever made. Let's look at the positive side to working in publishing. Want to?



*The powerful supercomputers of the future that my office will soon possess will someday enable me to beam The Inner Swine directly into your brain, probably killing you.*

First off, most publishing companies, as I can personally attest, are confused, disorganized messes. This is due to the nature of publishing, which is an attempt to take the creative process of the human being and streamline it into a profit. It is also due to the fact that the people who choose publishing as a career are 33% DIY publishers more concerned with stealing copier machine codes than with doing their jobs; 33% bored, apathetic people who grew up thinking something would eventually happen to knock them off their sad track but who find themselves now working in publishing; and 33% complete freaks. The last 1% is thought to be made up of men and women who got lost in the bowels of office buildings and wander there to this day, a race of shadowy mole-creatures lost to the sunlit world.

More importantly, publishing companies offer you everything you'll ever need to publish your own scrawled works of art. The day I got my job in publishing, I got a computer with desktop publishing software, laser printers by the dozen, several industrial-strength copy machines, and all the paper I could ever want. Plus, staples. Oh, I also got a boss, an inbox, and a dress code, but shit, man, I inherited someone else's economic strength in the process, and if I have to endure a few conference calls or an occasional employment review, I'll do it.

**Free Copies.** The best part of having a job in publishing, of course, is the free copies. Free copies are pretty much the holy grail of any zinester, and we'll lie, steal, or cheat to get them. When you work in publishing, free copies are a simple matter of devoting all your thought and energy towards acquiring them. Here are my three basic strategies for getting free copies at work without getting fired and/or beaten up:

**1. The Balls of Steel Approach.** The simplest but most dangerous way to acquire free copies is to stuff your masters into a folder labeled **HORRIBLE DISGUSTING GROSS PICTURES OF PHLEGM**, march off to the copier of choice, and start brazenly copying. This follows a belief that you can get anyone to believe or do anything simply by applying your massive Ayn-Randish will on them. In this scenario, which I have used successfully under the right conditions, the secret is to **maintain eye contact** with anyone who approaches. The moment I glimpse anyone coming near, I stare at them, fiercely. When they arrive at the copier, they're usually either so freaked out they just hurry by, or are too polite to break eye contact with me. I make no effort to hide what I'm doing. I just keep my eyes locked on theirs until they leave. Men won't look away because of some instinctual competitive drive—they'll challenge you to a fight, but they won't look away, as that would risk becoming known as The Office Nancy, which no man can live with. Office Nancies don't live long, once identified as such. They're usually found about a week later, hanging in the kitchen area.

The BOS technique has resulted in a few conferences with Human Resources, but no firings yet. In Human Resources conferences regarding my staring, I usually manage to break down into tears at least once. Then, a quiet request for our company's employee support hotline, and everyone usually leaves me alone for a few weeks.

**2. The George "The Animal" Steel Approach.** A more wily but sometimes unpredictable way of scamming free copies is to skulk to the copier of choice and be prepared to cause a diversion if anyone in authority comes nears you. The easiest diversion is to quickly snatch your materials from the copier (possibly while it's still chugging along) and run; while this is somewhat effective, it often results in burns, ink staining, and my tie caught in the machinery of the copier, with a crowd of people gathered around trying to free me from the copier and picking up scraps of paper and saying, "What the hell is this?" At that point it is usually best to feign a seizure of some sort.

A better diversion is to pause the copier discreetly and claim that it's broken. Copiers break down in offices all the time because Americans can't build anything very well and our entire economy is now based on service contracts for shitty crap and licensed use. When the copier is broken, most people just walk away without alerting anyone else or making any attempt, however minor, to fix it themselves. This is because people are dumb and selfish. So turn off the copier, shrug mournfully, complain that you have pages stuck inside and that you'll "be here a while, ha ha ha!", and stare daggers at them as they move on to the next copier. Then turn the copier back on, clear out the paused job, and start over.

A less-than-ideal diversion is to eat inappropriate stuffing materials, like the actual George "The Animal" Steele did.

**3. The Nancy-Boy Approach.** Come in on a weekend when no one else is around and copy any way you fucking please. Copy in your underwear. Copy with your feet up reading *Penthouse*. Use three copiers at once. Who cares? Once you descend into Nancy-Boy territory you have no worries, and no pride.

Personally, I choose #3. I used to battle my way with #1 or #2, but I'm too tired now. Just call me Nancy.

You may be wondering if The Way of Jeff basically boils down to getting a job in publishing and raping it for every resource it offers. The answer, of course, is: Pretty much. If you've already committed to some other career that doesn't offer you free desktop publishing software, free laser printers, and unlimited free copies, well, I'd advise you to reconsider your career choice. Even working part-time at Kinkos would be better, I think, from a pure zine-publisher point of view.

There you have it. My secret: Corporate America is my ally. Rather than railing against the bland, faceless army of Corporate Mongrels, I welcome them with open arms—because each one brings a copy machine with them.



*Normally my job is a heinous maze of suffering. But at least I get free copies.*



*Gotta go back to the endless treadmill of horror that is my job now.*



JEFF SEZ: "Even dimwitted throwbacks should have little trouble following those steps."

# MR. MUTE'S GUIDE TO MAKING A ZINE

I despise noise. More specifically, I despise *unnecessary* noise, which mainly comes in the form of bleating, dumb bullshit from the people around me. People are just incapable of recognizing their own stupidity and shutting the hell up. So, I have dedicated my existence to shutting you all up, one person at a time. Someday the *Campaign for Forcible Silence* will begin, and you're all on my list. Until then, I amuse myself with these lighthearted essays.



*Mr. Mute is a cartoon character that doesn't speak, with wacky, murderous intentions towards you all!*

Zine-publishers, as a whole, please me, because they at least have the good sense to put their imbecilic ravings in *writing* instead of bleating them out audibly, thus leaving nothing but the peaceful rustle of paper in their wake. This doesn't mean that zinesters aren't morons. It just means they don't land on my To Do list as often as the rest of you talkative bastards. Of course, that doesn't mean that zinesters don't flout the Laws of Civilized Society, thus earning my wrath. It just takes me longer to realize it, because they aren't SHOUTING their idiocies into my ear. But have no fear, I am well aware that you're a danger to society.

Still, I would rather you all put out zines instead of becoming a street preacher or some such nuisance, which is generally your other career opportunity. Zine Publisher or Street Preacher, that's you, admit it. Towards a more livable world, a world with fewer Street Preachers filling the air with their prattling, I have decided to put my *Campaign for Forcible Silence* on hold and get more of you yokels into zining. So, here's a guide to putting out a zine that anyone can follow, and I certainly hope you all will, instead of talking about not doing it, or talking about doing it, or talking about how people who put out zines are just effete assholes.



*Once I spark the Silent Revolution, people who create poetry zines will be shot even before those who talk too much.*

## HOW TO MAKE A ZINE

### 1. Decide what kind of zine you're going to put out.

Some people would say that there are as many types of zines as there are wonderfully individual people in the world. I wouldn't.

There are five. **A. The Perzine.** This is a zine wherein you write about your inner feelings and the events in your life, like a public diary. Don't do it. Perzines are for effete assholes. **B. The Music Zine.** This is a zine that has music, specifically the kind of music you accept and enjoy, as its central theme. This gives you lots of easy material in the form of vapid record reviews and amateurish interviews with bands no one else will ever care about. I don't recommend the Music zines; they're for effete assholes. **C. The Collage Zine.** In this zine, you cut out a lot of clip art and fill every page with various doodles, poems, snatches of text, coffee stains, and inscrutable little shout-outs. Collage zines are like talking with a schizophrenic on the subway. How many times can Bob the fifties man smoking a pipe be used for satiric effect in a zine? The Collage zinners are determined to find out. **D. Poetry Zines.** Jesus, if you're looking for effete assholes, look no further. **E. Review Zines.** These zines primarily review other zines. While lots of zines in the other categories use zine reviews as a way of filling a few pages, or as a nobly-intentioned service to the zine community, Review zines have made this their reason for existing. Before starting a Review zine, ask yourself why anyone should care what an effete asshole like you thinks.

*Does a 5-item list of your favorite cat names really need a two-page spread in the middle of your zine? I condemn you to have your tongue ripped out.*



2. **Actually create some material.** Whether your zine is going to be book-length and cost \$15 in stamps, or a single postcard with tiny type, too many zines are quite obviously style over substance. Don't worry about the style of your zine (layout, design, etc.) until you actually have written/drawn whatever it is you want to put in it. You can usually tell a ziner who made this mistake by one of these clues: There are more fonts in the goddamned thing than actual words or cartoons; There are whole articles devoted to the style and design of the fucking zine; The last page(s) of the issue are a big-font, wide-leading exploration of how the authors ran out of material for the issue. If you can't come up with however many pages of reasonably typeset stuff, don't fucking bother to put out issue #1. If it took you a whole year to come up with 1,000 words of stuff for issue #1, why fucking bother? It'll be six years before you come up with issue #2. Might as well go to Business School, asshole.

3. **Then, just fucking do it.** Got a few pieces of your creative brain on paper? Great, you're a genius, now stop talking about it and do it. I would recommend you don't worry too long about design and layout. You start fucking around with layout and design, and six years later you're still putting the finishing touches on the cover of issue #1. *Some time spent thinking about layout and design is great: Realizing early on that using 250 different fonts and type sizes, reverse-bleeds, and lots of dim, photocopied photographs is a Bad Thing will move you down to the bottom of my To Do list. For a while. Getting that first issue out is much more important than getting that first issue right.* Get it out, and start working on issue #2. The layout and design will evolve and clarify, unless you're an effete asshole, in which case it will only get worse.



*The busier you are creating your zine, the quieter you'll be, I'll bet.*

As for how to produce your zine, well, thousands of years ago people managed to paint on cave walls. Do you really need an in-depth discussion of Quark vs. Pagemaker? If you have a computer, lay it out in Word Pad, for god's sake. For a photocopied zine, you could type it all on a typewriter, paste it up, and go.

**4. Give the fucking thing away.** Sure, put a price on the cover, and act all tough about making people pay for it. But then give it away. No one wants it badly enough to pay you,



*Despite the fact that I can predict right now that no one has read your first issue--no one--I'd still prefer you just go ahead and put out the second issue rather than blather on and on about how disappointing the reception to #1 was.*

trust me. Maybe five years down the road when you're being celebrated as a genius for a disaffected generation someone will pay you, but for now getting paid should be the last thing on your mind. If you put out a zine in order to make money, you're both evil and dimwitted, and shoot up to #1 on my To Do list. No, give it away. Send it to everyone you know. Send it to every ziner you've heard of. Above all, send it to Review Zines. Good reviews make you feel good, bad reviews might teach you something, and even poorly written or vague reviews can offer you a sense of superiority to the monkey who penned it. Plus, it's free

advertising.

**5. Stop jerking off on your first issue and put out the second.** Nothing sadder than issue #1 out two years ago and issue #2 "still in the planning stages", unless issue #1 sold 500,000 copies.

There. Even dimwitted throwbacks should have little trouble following those steps. While you're busy quietly creating your publication, I will be free to stop supervising you and get back to my real work, reorganizing the world according to my wishes: a quiet, orderly place where no one speaks unless spoken to. Have fun. I'll probably kill you next year.

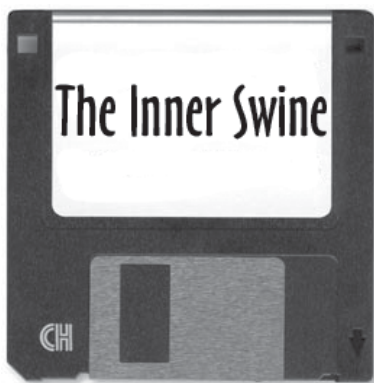
52 - YOU SHALL KNOW our zine making techniques

JEFF SEZ: "Personally, I think most electronic publishing sucks. Sucks big piles of shit. I'd rather have my arms and legs crushed beneath Zamboni machines than read an E-book, to be honest with you"



# QUICK & DIRTY E-PUB

Be a Fucking  
E-Publisher If You Want  
Do It For Free, Yo.



Okay, a short, dull article about **E-publishing** and if you don't like it, turn the page and read something else. This is my house, and you don't get to tell me what to do in here. Okay? All right then.

I am amazed that in this day and age so few writers self-publish, because we live in a unique time when it is possible to do so effectively. Print publishing remains a daunting and largely hopeless task for individuals unless they are individuals with money and time to spare, in my opinion; although you *can* create your own perfect-bound books and get them out there if you want to. It just isn't *free*, and even if you totally bust your balls promoting the damned things you're likely to sell very few of them. And many people find Internet publishing (HTML et al), while cheaper, to be intimidating in its use of markup languages and computer protocols.

So be an E-Publisher. Electronic publishing - not Internet, necessarily - simply means a text produced in electronic format. Personally, I think most electronic publishing sucks. Sucks big piles of shit. I'd rather have my arms and legs crushed beneath Zamboni machines than read an E-book, to be honest with you, and fear that the marketing muscle of today's corporations will someday soon force E-books on us. The one compelling aspect of electronic publishing, however, is that it can be done effectively for free. Free is a pretty compelling reason to toss aside your prejudices and start spitting out horrible E-books.

A clarification first: Many people assume that by E-book I would be referring to some proprietary format of digital publishing controlled by a huge company like Adobe or Microsoft, requiring some sort of handheld decoding device or computer software. I'm not, though. If your purpose is to transmit your words in a typeset electronic file to readers, you don't need to use some bullshit piece of proprietary



software like Acrobat - and although I use Acrobat to archive the past issues of my zine, I would recommend that you don't. Technologies like PDF or the various E-book formats are very useful for people who have heavily designed, graphic-filled layouts in their publications. If you're publishing fiction, or any kind of text that has minimal graphics and simple layouts, you don't need anything more than a computer, a word processor, and possibly (but not necessarily) an Internet connection.

There are Luddites in the zine/DIY-publishing world who cringe whenever computers are mentioned, and that's fine, as long as they leave me alone. If you think the 'purity' of a zine is only preserved when manual typewriters, or pencils, or perhaps sharp stones dipped in the blood of your dinner are used - fine, continue to publish that way. Leave the rest of us alone.

To publish an E-book, in all truth, you need only the following:

- One (1) cheap-assed computer, or access to same. This doesn't have to be some cutting-edge monster. An old 386 running DOS, or an ancient Mac running System 7.5.5, will do just fine.
- One (1) free Word Processor. Don't buy one, it isn't worth it. If your cheap-assed computer doesn't have something preloaded you can use, there are free ones out there, many of which are extremely powerful. There are even good ones for DOS that, while visually unappealing in today's GUI world, will do the job. The Word Processor you choose should have the capability to read and write Plain Text (.TXT) files and Rich Text Format (RTF) files, at a minimum. Any other formats supported will be gravy. If you have an Internet connection, you can download small, free programs that will make it through even the slowest modem, no sweat. If you don't have an Internet connection and nothing was preloaded on your computer, well, it's a lot harder. Send me a letter detailing your operating system with \$1 postage and I'll send you one on disk, how's that? (Check out the article *Free as in Beer* elsewhere in this book for ideas on getting cheap PCs and software.)
- Something to publish.

Optionally, you can also have an Internet connection of some sort to set up a free web page and free email account. This isn't necessary, but can make distribution of your E-book easier and cheaper.

Okay, so how can you be an E-publisher once you have these things in hand? Simple. Follow these easy steps, and you're there:

**1. Keyboard your project.** The first step is to type whatever you want to publish into the Word Processor (duh!). Start off by saving it as an RTF file; RTF is a pretty standard format that almost all word processors in the world can read fairly accurately, and it preserves basic formatting like bold and alignment from processor to processor. Keep the layout simple: one column, standard-sized pages. DON'T use lots of weird fonts and a million fancy layout tricks. Just keep it simple, use at most three fonts (and choose those from the

standard stuff: Courier, Times Roman, etc) and keep the style to a minimum too: bold and italic. Forget color. Keep graphics to a minimum too. Also, double-style bolds and italics, because when you're done with the RTF file, you're going to convert it to text-only so people will have the choice. Text-only is the lowest common denominator of text files, able to be read by just about every word precessing program in the universe.

What do I mean by double styling? Well, let's look at the title of this article. In RTF, I'd keyboard it as follows:

```
=====
                QUICK & DIRTY E-PUB
                Be a Fucking E-Publisher If You Want
                Do It For Free, Yo.
                By Jeff Somers
=====
```

Okay, a short, dull article about **\*E-publishing\*** and if you don't like it, turn the page and read something else. This is my house, and you don't get to tell me what to do in here. Okay? All right then.

I am amazed that in this day and age so few writers self-publish, because we live in a unique. . .

Looks okay - it's not *high art* or anything, but it looks like a layout to me, babe. Now, when this file gets converted into a plain-text file (via a save-as in your Word Processor), this is what it's going to look like:

```
=====
QUICK & DIRTY E-PUB
Be a Fucking E Publisher If You Want
Do It For Free, Yo.
By Jeff Somers
=====
```

Okay, a short, dull article about **\*E publishing\*** and if you don't like it, turn the page and read something else. This is my house, and you don't get to tell me what to do in here. Okay? All right then.

I am amazed that in this day and age so few writers self publish, because we live in a unique. . .

You can see that by adding asterisks around bolds and italics, and giving the chapter openers some simple surroundings, you've got formatting that will survive in a plain-text file, meaning that no matter which version your potential readers get your book, they'll be able to make sense of it. If you don't double-code your style, your text will be completely vanilla,

and a lot is lost. After you've finished keyboarding and creating the alternative plain-text file, you can go back into the RTF file and delete the asterisks for a cleaner look, if you want.

## 2. Now, it's a simple matter of advertising your E-book somehow.

You've got an RTF file and a TXT file which will probably fit on one floppy diskette. The floppy diskette is getting forgotten in today's age of CDRs and Zip Drives, but it remains a hugely useful and undervalued media. They're cheap (about 70 - 90 cents apiece) and cheap to mail, and you can fit *War and Peace* on there if the file is just text with minimal formatting. So, if you assume manufacturing and mailing costs are thus about \$2, you can charge \$3 for your E-book and still make money. Who wouldn't take the risk for \$3, postage included? And to read the file, all they need is fucking Wordpad in Windows or SimpleText in Mac OS, at a minimum. Plus, everyone but those poor, sad idiots in the Mac OS world can use a floppy disk. We can't help the Mac people - they're lost, and have to use a 650 MB CD-R to store a 50k text file. Suckers.

It ain't sexy. Once your reader has the file, they can either read the book on their PC, or they can print it out and read it that way. Once again, not sexy, but I've done it, and it works, and for three lousy bucks maybe others will. You can make labels for the disks if you want, you could even create little custom disk sleeves if you wanted - increasing your costs, but making it look more inviting. The point is, without spending much or any money you're E-publishing, and you don't need some fancy Reader or a licensing deal with Microsoft to do it.

Having Internet access makes it a little easier. You can set up a free web site on the web at one of any number of places like Yahoo! Geocities, where you get a certain amount of space and even free web-building tools to create a quick welcome page. Then, upload samples of your book either as HTML if you want to and know how - which will allow you to keep the basic formatting of your RTF file (there are even freeware translator programs which will take RTF files and turn them into HTML files), or as the plain-text version. Any web browser can read a plain-text file. People can surf to your samples, and if they want to buy a copy they can mail you \$1 and you can email them the whole E-book as an attachment. Cheaper and easier, and you have a nonstop advertisement for your book on the web at all times - sure, it isn't exactly a billboard in Times Square, but people looking for something akin to your subject matter might find your site, and might decide a friggin buck is worth the risk, eh?

And if you don't give a crap about making money, but just want to get it out there, than put the whole thing up for free download, right? No one needs a special program or device to read your book, and they can still print it out if they want to. You can see what I've done on my own modest E-Book web page, if you want: <http://www.innerswine.com/ebooks.html>.

The point is, with the willingness to keyboard your manuscript, you can self-publish your book cheaply and easily. You could also just photocopy the manuscript and sell *that*, but the obvious downside is the continuing photocopy costs and the increased postage

costs. Once you get beyond \$3 a copy, people start wanting more than a home-brewed photocopy, natch. The electronic file will be crisp and perfect each time, and can be altered as you wish in case additional editing is required.

Is this perfect? No. Very few people want to get a diskette in the mail and go through the trouble of loading it onto their PC, and many publishers don't want to eschew all the fun of complex layouts and eye-pleasing graphics and fonts. You're never going to storm the *New York Times* Bestseller List with a book-on-floppy. But it is a way to publish cheaply, and at least get your work out there - and who knows? Maybe there are more people willing to read a diskette than I think. There *are* a few actual publishers out there who put out E-books on diskette (Hard Shell Word Factory [[www.hardshell.com](http://www.hardshell.com)], DiskUs Publishing [[www.diskuspublishing.com](http://www.diskuspublishing.com)]), and you can even find them on Amazon.com. There are also at least two initiatives to put books on the Internet in various electronic formats (PDF, HTML, TXT) for free reading or downloading (check out <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books/> or the fabulous Project Gutenberg at <http://promo.net/pg/>). So *someone* thinks it's a good idea.

What the hell, if you don't have any other options, why not give it a shot? The other choice is to sit around bitching that no one wants to publish your stuff. You might as well do something.

58 - YOU SHALL KNOW our zine making techniques



# COLUMNS



JEFF SEZ: "There's nothing like a completely, totally, unabashedly self-involved essay to get the blood really pumping."

# MORE SHIT I GOTTA DO

From [www.innerswine.com](http://www.innerswine.com)

November 27, 2001

## My History of Zining

*Publish Your Own Book, Why Not?*

There's nothing like a completely, totally, unabashedly self-involved essay to get the blood really pumping. Whenever I find myself less-than-inspired, I sit down and ask myself: *what can I write about me?* and that usually sets everything in motion again. So recently someone on the Internet newsgroup alt.zines started a discussion which led to everyone talking about how they got started publishing their own zines, and this got me to thinking about it. Technically I started publishing a zine when I was 23, when the first issue of *The Inner Swine* was published. But as I thought about it, I guess I really started self-publishing when I was a wee little one. I don't know why anyone would be interested in this, but screw it: I have nothing else to offer in this column right now, so lap it up, and leave me alone.

I think it all started with a school project to write and bind your own book. This was in, I think fifth or sixth grade. You got a supply of paper and some instructions on how to lay it out, and then you were told to write and illustrate a story, which we would then bind in class. I guess it was educational, though why having a knowledge of 13th-century book manufacturing techniques was deemed a wise use of our time, I'll never know. At any rate, I remember being really excited about this project. Anything that didn't involve math I was generally excited about. I wrote a story about the Earth being created by aliens using some sort of shrinky-dink pill, where they added water and the planet just exploded into being. I drew little illustrations. We also created hardback covers for the books.

It was around this time that I began reading *The Lord of the Rings*. When you're ten, anything halfway cool really kicks you in the head because you've never ever seen anything like it before, so I thought J.R.R. Tolkien was a genius. So when the above project got me thinking it would be fun to pretend to be a writer, I chose, somewhat unconsciously, to rip him off. I took my Mom's typewriter (a fabulous 1950s manual Remington model, which I still use to write first drafts) and wrote a thirty-page novel called *The Gem Untouched*, which would land me

in serious trouble with copyright lawyers if it ever saw light of day. When this first volume was received with critical acclaim from my parents and some beleaguered friends of the family (no doubt tired of my precocious dullness by this point) despite its lack of originality, or quotation marks (punctuation explained to me at some later date by a friend of my father's) I proceeded to pump out two sequels, mainly because at the time I thought all epic fantasy stories came in three volumes. The collected work, *The War of the Gem*, was ninety pages of crap, but then again, I was ten.

The reason I think this counts as zining history is that I took my 90 page manuscript, drew a color cover for it, drew some illustrations, had my Dad photocopy a bunch, stapled them together, and distributed them. Distributed them to my family, sure, but still. It could be viewed as my first zine. I still have a copy, in case anyone wants to buy it for \$100,000 and publish it to the world. But be warned: I never did get around to adding quotation marks. In High School, I disdained most of the activities offered. My high School was big on getting involved in the school community' (I guess they all are, and this is why so many of us stumble into college bitter, unhappy people searching for booze and sex desperately) and tried to goad everyone into getting involved in stuff. The only thing I found interesting in school was the Literary Magazine. I don't know how many high schools have literary magazines, but I'm glad mine did, because it was really a zine put out with school money. Oh, it wasn't even vaguely cool. It was called *The Paper and Pen* and it had that pretentious literary-bend you find in all academic publications. But it was student run, so it was filled with teenaged fiction, poetry, and art every issue. It was digest-sized and photocopied, and distributed free to all students. None of it was all that good, of course, but it was fun. It was the only thing worth my time back then, too, which should have been a hint as to the future.

Nowadays I wish I could still self-publish everything effectively. I wish E-books weren't such an abomination against nature, because that would be the easiest way to just publish my own novels and tell the industry to screw itself. While self-publishing a book is certainly possible, and even possible without spending millions, it ain't easy, and getting some company to pony up the cash is still the best option - but I wish I could just do it myself and still expect to reach a few hundred, if not a few thousand, people. I guess that's why I look back on my zining past so longingly: Back then, I had 100% confidence in reaching my target audience successfully, because there were 20 people, tops, in my target audience.

Still, when I put out the first issue of this zine in 1995 I had about 50 people on my mailing list, most of whom didn't know they were on it until they got their copies in the mail. Family, friends, old teachers - these were the only people on the mailing list back then. Today I ship out about 600 issues of TIS every three months. Probably 300 of those make it into the hands of people who give a shit, but that's still quite an improvement. Maybe self-publishing a book is the same: all about persistence of availability. In other words, if I spend a thousand dollars having 500 copies of a book printed, maybe I won't sell 500 in a year, but maybe three years from now I'll have to print up a new batch, and that would be cool enough.

I certainly get enough DIY come-ons in the mail these days. Having a published book, and having purchased a block of ISBNs recently (needed for the TIS collection *The Freaks*



*Are Winning*, natch) I get more publishing-related junk mail than I can bother to read. But the legitimate junk mail from publishing service houses points out that you *can* self-publish, if you want. Here's how you could do it pretty effectively:

1. Lay out the book yourself in Adobe PageMaker, InDesign, or Quark XPress. If those two programs are beyond your budget, you probably can't afford to have the book printed anyway. People will tell you that you can lay out a simple book in MS Word or MS Publisher, but don't believe it, suckers. Well, you *can*, but try finding a Service House that can take your crappy MS Word files and actually produce a decent book, and I will congratulate you. MS Publisher is gaining some acceptance as it improves, but you're much safer going with one of the three packages mentioned above.

2. Buy an ISBN number for your book. You can buy a block of 10 ISBNs from Bowker, Inc. for about \$250 ([www.isbn.org/standards/home/isbn/us/index.asp](http://www.isbn.org/standards/home/isbn/us/index.asp)) and use them to publish your books. ISBNs are necessary if you're hoping to get your book sold in real-world and online bookstores, plus it gets you listed in Books in Print and the Library of Congress. Yahoo. If you're going to sell your book exclusively from your web site or basement, you don't need an ISBN, and you can always sticker one on later if you decide to at a later date.

3. Contact a company that will manufacture your book. You can look into local printers, or you can hunt for one on the web - search for book manufacturing' and you will get a load of hits on companies that will quote the job for you. This usually includes printing on a specified stock of paper, printing a cover, binding the books, and shipping them. This isn't cheap, but it isn't something that necessarily prohibits you - you should be able to find a quote that gets you 500 books for about \$2000. Not cheap, no, but possible. A place to start is [www.greenepublicationsinc.com](http://www.greenepublicationsinc.com). I don't recommend these people - I've never used them - but it's one of the friendlier web sites I've seen, and might help you get the idea.

4. Then, contact Amazon.com about joining their Amazon Advantage program (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/subst/partners/direct/advantage-for-books.html/107-1179595-5631760>). Basically, this program means that Amazon will order a small number of your books, which you ship to them at your cost, and then they house those copies (typically 1-10) in their own warehouse. You get the usual listing on Amazon, and because they are doing the warehousing they can ship your book in 24 hours just like the big boys. You get less money per book sold than you would otherwise, but you do have your book available on Amazon.com. When they run out of books, they email you asking for more, and at the end of every month they cut you a check for books sold. Potentially this could work out very well for you. The advantage of having your book on Amazon.com is obvious: it's a national presence. You can and should also go to local bookstores and convince them to stock your book on their shelves, but if they do it's still only in your town. Get it on Amazon and you get both prestige (yes, I said that with a straight face - people take you more seriously if you're on Amazon.com) and someplace anyone in the country can order your book.

Certainly you can and should also just sell the damn thing in any other way you can, and you should promote it as best you can, which I won't go into here. I'm seriously considering using all of the above resources to self-publish a future book - why not? But I haven't made the financial decisions yet, so it's probably years off.

Something to think about. Them there's my boring thoughts today, anyway. Until next time, I got more shit to do. Mail me if you want.

*March 6, 2002*

## **PERSISTENCE OF ZINING**

**BLOATED LIKE A SEA-TOAD:** Your Humble Editor considers himself something of a study in contradictions, in some things. One of these things is organization. On the one hand, I know where every book I own is located in my apartment, and can find scraps of handwritten manuscript from six years ago simply by closing my eyes and visualizing which red folder I stuffed it into. This is true, I can prove it, if you like, but you won't enjoy it, so don't ask me to, please. On the other hand, I am developing a theory of space-time that somehow explains how my Important Papers can turn into invisible, odorless dust the moment I stop looking directly at them. How do they know I've turned away? How can the Law of Conservation of Energy be applied to Important Papers that simply vanish? It's all very mysterious. So there's the contradiction: organized and disorganized at the same time. Therefore, running an underground publishing empire, as I do, is often a challenge. I'm expected to somehow keep all sorts of things straight at all times, which is difficult if you're a) very disorganized in many things and b) as drunk as I usually am. The hardest thing for me to keep track of is my mailing list, because people are constantly changing addresses, sending me cease-and-desist letters, disappearing off the face of the earth, or fleeing the country just ahead of DEA agents. It makes keeping track of things difficult. So every few months I pull out the huge, leather-bound tome filled with my spidery, indecipherable writing and try to make sense of it all. Whenever I do this, I'm struck by the number of people on my TRADES list that have vanished just like my Important Papers. These are usually people who at one point or another produced cool zines (or shitty zines - I'm a trade whore and it don't take much) for a little while, often as briefly as one skinny issue. I generally continue to send them free copies of TIS every three months like an idiot, but it has got me thinking about persistence. And the lack of it in DIY publishing.

Persistence is, I think, about 50% of any success. Put simply, you've got to stick around long enough to get noticed - and you can never know how long that'll take. Sometimes one issue and you've got Hollywood mailing you checks. Sometimes you're old and feeble before everyone realizes how cool you are. And certainly there are plenty of Frank Stallones out there on whom fortune will never smile. Personally, I'm counting on persistence counting

for something - eventually I'll morph into that DIY publisher who's cool simply because he's been doing it for fifty goddamn years. I'll turn up in Lifestyle sections across the country, a smiling old man surrounded by reams of paper, billions of words thrust out hot and steamy and ignored by a revolted world until they'd cooled into a grey mass.

Well, that's the plan, anyway.

Persistence, however, is one thing no one would attribute to most zine publishers. Many would even celebrate this as one of the cool things about self-publishing - the way everything is in constant motion, the way a zine has disappeared from the face of the earth just as you discover it, a tattered copy from two years ago in the zine rack at Tower. I wonder though. It's not that I think people should slave away on a publication for which they've lost all their passion, absolutely not. But I wonder why so many zines pop up in my mailbox, amuse me enough to send a trade, and then...disappear.

Part of what bothers me about it, certainly, is that these people usually don't just stop sending me a zine, they literally disappear, often without the tell-tale returned mail of someone who has moved. I mean, lots of ziners are students of some sort and after a few years of publishing from a fixed place it's natural that they'd move on, and break some connections along the way. But for many of these situations, it's like the person has vanished. being me, I start wondering if they've been murdered and consumed by Pagans after being allowed to be King for Day somewhere. But that's just me.

I also wonder if this kind of unreliable inconsistency makes people more dubious about self-published works. It's one thing if you're sure you're going to get a full subscription when you send in your money. It's quite another if you've got a 75% chance of being burned on your Five bucks. Five bucks ain't a lot, unless you're a voracious reader and you buy subs for every zine you dig out there. It's bad enough for we impoverished publishers who lose postage and stock sending issues to vanished ziners - we know what we're dealing with (or at least learn it very soon). But what about someone who sends you money after reading issue #2 in Tower or Powell's and then never gets anything in response? They're quite possibly not likely to ever chance cash on a similar publication.

Naturally, this being *The Inner Swine* and me being me, I have no solutions, just an endless list of sour complaints. Ha! That's entertaining your asses off, friends. I make it look easy, but it isn't. Easy, that is.

Still, I can't help but think that most of the zines that a majority of people recognize, no matter how deeply or long they've been into zines, are the ones that have persisted. *Cometbus*, *Angry Thoreauan*, *Maximumrocknroll* - these are zines well into their second or third dozen issues, zines that, even if they don't follow a definite publication schedule can be counted on to persist, to put out another issue. At the very least they can be counted on to not just disappear.

Here we are again, at the end of another column, and you're probably once again wondering the same thing you always wonder: was there a *point* to all that? Probably not. To decide yea or nay I'd have to go back and read what I just wrote, which might lead to proofreading. We can't have that. So let's just make up a point from whole cloth right now. **The point is, you're all insane and terrify me.** When I'm rich I'll build a fortress-like

home that will keep me safe from all of you. There I'll be left in peace to let my fingernails grow, to wear tissue boxes on my feet as shoes, and to mutter to myself incessantly. On that note: see ya! Send me an email if you want. Otherwise, check back in a few weeks for my next column.

Until next time, you can reach me here, and I remain. . .Jeff

---

## FOOTNOTES

*[1] Whenever I make comments like this one, I know one thing is for sure: lots of emails from well-meaning but terribly high-and-mighty relatives will flood in begging me to turn my life around. I wish the relatives would go away, but if ignoring them for twenty years won't do it, what will? Oh, the horror...2*

*[2] I swear one of my relatives is Marlon Brando, pretending.*

March 19, 2002

## I Am Fucking Rich

THE POST OFFICE workers are now protected like the goddamn Pope, you know, sealed up inside plexiglass boxes which even Imperial Stormtroopers couldn't blast into. At least they are around here. You walk into the post office and there they are, pathetic, trapped, so safe they can't even get out any more, holding up signs like PLEASE CALL MY WIFE AND TELL HER I CANNOT GET OUT. What really makes me pull out the old hip flask and take a contemplative snort is the question of who, exactly, we're protecting out postal workers from. Isn't it usually the postal workers who end up shooting up the post office? In those situations the plexiglass cages will just make the murderous postal workers' jobs easier, since their coworkers will be trapped. Although the ricochets, I think, will be a bitch. Of course, I look at the security cages in the post offices around here, and I think to myself what anyone in my shoes would naturally think: "When I'm rich, I'll have my whole house built out of that stuff, and I'll challenge the cops to come get me." This inevitably leads to wonder when the hell I'm going to be rich. This is just taking way too long. I decided to analyze *The Inner Swine's* books and see if maybe there's a reason I'm not rich yet. Most zinners claim to lose money or - maybe - break even on their publishing exploits. We do it for the love, right? And certainly I love it so much I've never really considered how much anything costs, which means I am a total financial fuckhead. But hey! You can't write good and be a bean counter at the same time. It's a physical law, go look it up. First, let's examine the costs involved in creating a single issue of *The Inner Swine*. Naturally, every issue is actually priceless. You just can't put a number on a creation of such passion and awe-inspiring artistry. Well, you can, of course, and I'm going to in a few sentences. What was my point again? Never mind.

**COSTS (Your Mileage May Vary; don't whine to me  
if you can't steal as much stuff as I can,  
suckers)**

**Paper: Stolen**

**Copies:** Stolen

**Cover Stock:** \$20

**Staples:** Stolen

**Postage:** \$130

**Envelopes:** \$5

**Gnomes and Midgets to amuse me whilst I stuff envelopes:** Expensive, but not in money

So every issue costs me about \$155 to produce and distribute. Multiplied by four issues, that is some number over 155....calculator...calculator...uh, that's HOLY CRAP! That's \$620 a year I spend on you people! I can't believe it. It is just suddenly so not worth it. All the joy of self-publishing just drained out of me and pooled on the floor here, a cooling mass of enthusiasm. Ah, but look at my gnomes and midgets, dancing so gaily! They cheer me so, and give me the will to go on.

## PROFITS

It can't all be vinegar, so let's take a look at monies earned through the zine, and yes, I say that with a straight face. I will not be naming actual numbers in this section because it ain't none of your damn business how much money I make or lose by breaking off pieces of my genius and mailing them to you, bubba. So we'll use imaginary numbers. Using imaginary numbers, I made roughly jumbabwa dollars in 2001, which is great because there's actually some money left over when you subtract what I spent from jumbabwa. Not enough to retire on, but beer money. To be honest, I never looked up from my humble middle class beginnings long enough to dream of anything more than beer money, so it's all good.

## THE HOUSE OF PAIN

But the fact remains - beer money and jumbabwa aren't going to make me rich, and my dream of owning an entire island on which to conduct my secret experiments with genetically-altered human-like animals I will call humanimals continues to elude me. There's so much money in the world, yet I have so little, it's mysterious. In my biggest writing year ever, capitalism-wise, I earned \$1600 directly from writing. That was a lot more than jumbabwa. At my job, I earn twenty times as much, so you figure that to maintain my level of beer-intake and cable-fondling, I'd have to start generating at least 80% of my current salary through writing. So far, I am about 78% short. Or, in imaginary numbers, polugula short.

I can see my treasured plexiglass bulletproof house flying away...the gnomes and midgets gather around me excitedly, shouting "One of us! One of us!"...and I stare glumly at the stack of \$1 stamps waiting to be used to mail issues to ungrateful bastards, like you. I wonder why no one ever steals stamps. They're money, after all, in a sense. Where's the

mafia? Why aren't they hauling off millions of dollars in stamps and selling them at half price on the street? I ask only because I'd be one of their willing customers. Then I could list 'postage' as 'stolen' too. And suddenly jumbabwa gets to be a much nicer number.

Oh well. None of you care, I'm sure. I'll keep handling the money matters, you bastards, which is just more shit I gotta do, and you can just keep on assuming fake identities and asking me for free 'sample' issues because you won't spare \$5 for a sub. I'm on to you! I'm on to all of you! Just wait until my House of Pain is completed. You'll all pay. Anyway, until next time, I remain. . .Jeff.



April 2, 2002

## Number 288 of 324

Precious Little Zines

Zoiks! That this zine takes up far more of my energy and attention than is healthy can't be denied, but at least I have a healthy capitalist attitude towards it: mass production. Sure, I don't make any money off the damn thing (more's the pity), but at least I don't futz about with various precious schemes like individually hand-drawn covers, numbered issues, or ridiculously inefficient manufacturing techniques. I am ready to admit to myself what many of my fellow zine-publishers can't: zines are entertainment, and are therefore consumed. Sure, some people might collect them, but those people are probably a little strange, just like the people who collect any regular periodical. I slap the issues together with gleeful speed and fart them out into the world without any concern for quality control or consistency, which I regard as my trademark. My trademark: no quality control or consistency. And repetition. If it's low quality and inconsistent, you're holding an *Inner Swine*!

So I don't know exactly what to do when I get zines which are treated like little pieces of art. The most curious thing is the hand numbered zine, "issue 34 of 344" and the like. To put it as eloquently as my huge, HAL2000-like brain can, what the fuck is up with that? You're writing quite a large check when you individually number the issues of your zine, mi amigo, and I have yet to find the numbered zine that can cash it. In my opinion, the only things that should ever be numbered are things with **actual cash value**, like money itself, bubba. Things I get free in the mail should not be numbered.

I could start numbering *The Inner Swine* I guess. Something like "Number 22 of as many as I can scam out of my employer before they go Enron and it's back to butcher paper and crayons for me". Hmmn...I like that.

### **ACTUAL CASH VALUE: THE INNER SWINE STORY**

There have been quite a few zines in my mailbox which are actually very beautiful pieces of art, with gorgeous hand-painted covers, little pop-ups doohickies in the middle, all sorts of arty touches. Some of these, of course, did not survive the cruel, delirious handling of the

outpatients who populate **The United States Postal Service**, unfortunately. This saddens me, because I imagine little Jimmy or Suzy Zine-maker sitting at home up until the wee hours painstakingly constructing all twelve issues of their limited-run zine titled ***For God's Sake Take Me Seriously or I Will Write More Poetry***, then deciding to send me one of those twelve issues (number seven, let's call him Rusty), getting out their very special calligraphy pen to scratch the number onto each cover. They wait breathlessly for the torrent of twelve stunned emails to come back and affirm their genius. Meanwhile, when I get the damned thing it is damp, torn, and apparently stepped on. And possibly read by postal employees, who then took the time to scrawl editorial comments on the zine in disturbing red pen. Prying apart the glued-together pages, only a sad remnant of ole' Rusty remains. His last gasp is to bleed sad arty ink all over my hands, and in a fit of rage I burn him to ashes. *You bastards in the USPS!! The day is coming when we won't take it anymore!!! The streets will run red! RUSTY WILL BE AVENGED!*

Don't get me wrong, most of these precious zines are actually quite good when you get past the bullshit and read them. I just wonder about the value of the dressing. When *McSweeney's* does shit like that I sit around with my zine friends and laugh my ass off at Dave Eggers' incredibly shiny ego and idiotic, smug irony in place of actual talent. Doesn't Dave Eggers' smug lack of talent bother ANYONE else? Jesus, people, come on! So why should I cut a break to the more self-important buggers in zineland? All that matters to me is whether the zine has something interesting to say and plenty of it. All the dressing doesn't hurt, but it doesn't help either.

Then again, zineland is a place where people actually dislike you if you distribute too many issues, so what the fuck, do what you want, the Red Queen will be out later to play cricket.

Anyway, until next time, I remain. . . Jeff.

April 28, 2002

## Why Must We Stay Where We Don't Belong?

Is DIY Publishing Too interesting to Ever Be Big?

My brain is fried like a banana after driving to and from Chicago last week to read at Quimbys, but since most of my writing is inane drivel anyway I doubt anyone will notice any difference here. I've been sitting at home drinking Plum Schnapps and burning my collection of cassettes onto CD; when I was in high school and college I couldn't afford CDs so I bought everything on cassette. My cassette deck is currently on its last legs, barely playing tapes, and I decided that instead of either buying a new tape deck, or replacing 500 cassettes with CDs at \$10-20 a pop I would just record them as MP3s and burn 'em. Sure, this means that some of that low-fi cassette hiss and warping gets captured forever in digital, but that's how I've been hearing the songs for years anyway. Error-free digital purity would just frighten and confuse me, anyway.

So I sit here in the dark eating pretzels, drinking schnapps, and listening to my entire music collection one song at a time. I've gained 50 pounds, grown six inches of beard, and am now so photophobic even the dim light of my computer monitor is paining me. Soon I will be 100% mushroom, and the world will rejoice.

Then my reluctant columnist Tim the Angry Clown wrote a piece about how much NYC radio sucks, and I started to wonder about some of the songs that are currently on the radio - especially the songs which are on like three or four radio stations at once, which is, of course, a bean-counters wet dream. A song being exposed to the over-40 classic rock crowd, the MOR teenie-boppers, the 20-30 post-collegiate alterna-slackers, *all at once*? Holy crap! That means *sales*, motherfuckers. I can almost sense the marketing drool coming out of my speakers when these songs (e.g. *This Is How You Remind Me* by Nickelback(sp?)) come on. I started wondering why it is that these terrible, *awful* songs got so much airplay. The simple fact is, they get this kind of airplay because they're bland, flavorless. They have enough rock bite to get played on the rock stations, but are soft and mushy enough to get played on top-40 pop stations. They satisfy weak-kneed sappiness and have a crunchy riff at the chorus for air-guitar. These songs are successful in spite of sucking because they are

bland. Simple.

That hit me like a truck. Bland=successful. Holy shit.

It's so true it's frightening. We live in a country that is increasingly divided up into opposing camps of style and taste, after all; in order to have blockbuster success you *must* appeal to a wide range of different tastes. You *must* dilute your style and message with bits and pieces of other people's style and messages, or else the teeming millions will not be interested. If you cast your net too narrowly you might win a lot of strong fans in one cross-section of the country, but your sales will mire in the thousands and you will never reach national prominence. The truth is, the more successful you are, on a national level, the less interesting, daring, and worthwhile your work must be.

I know that for most of you, this probably wasn't a newsflash, and you're wondering (not for the first time) why I'm so dense. I had just never really clarified my thoughts on this; I knew it too, but in a subconscious way. Now it's on the top of my brain, clear and bright. This means, of course, that I now realize that Zines and all other DIY publishing or distribution are pretty much doomed to small-scale success. It's simple: we're all too narrow in our appeal. Not necessarily because we're geniuses or even talented; some DIY stuff, some zines, some indie music just plain sucks. No, we're doomed to obscurity because we don't consciously appeal to the lowest common denominator in a bald pitch for sales. Since we don't water-down our idiosyncratic styles, our opinions, or our technique to allow dimwits and suburbanites across the country access our work without fear, we'll never get their sales. Without their sales, we're trapped down below amongst the Mole People, who also happen to be the smartest, the most dissatisfied, and the least assimilated people in the country. The Mole People don't mind independent thought and weird, wacky ideas - they love them, and embrace us.

This doesn't bother me. I used to dream of being rich and successful and famous, but I've grown up and now merely dream of being able to quit my day job. I'd love to sell a book to Hollywood and walk away with enough money to quit and live on for the rest of my life - not because that would be a possible entry into fame and fortune amongst the Surface Folk, but because it would give me the means to burrow deeper underground and sever my ties with the Surface for good. Who gives a shit if the Surface People make a book of mine into a terrible movie starring Brad Pitt? I'd take the money, wash my hands of the whole thing, buy a nice house and start up my own small publishing business, and publish my own stuff for my fellow Mole People. No, the blandness of success doesn't bother me, I'm just surprised it took me this long to figure it out.

So that's my thoughts from my dark, carefree bunker, where fungus has started to grow on my shoulders. If any of you Mole People want to say hi, you know where to find me.

July 7, 2002

## I've Got Nothing to Say, I Hope You Have a Nice Day

I Love My PO Box

PIGS, one of the many things on the list of shit I gotta do is check my PO Box here in Hoboken. It is, of course, a pleasure, and not a chore, though it does take fifteen or twenty minutes away from my day. People like to complain about the post office, but not me. I love the Post Office, and I think the Post Office does a fantastic job. This is not just some hippy zinester postal-love, of which you see a lot—though there's nothing wrong with listing getting mail from strangers or near-strangers as one of your top-three favorite things. No, I honestly think the post office does a great job. For thirty-seven cents—cents!—you can stick any crappy, badly sealed, indecipherably addressed envelope into a metal box and within a few days it shows up where it was supposed to be. Does the PO lose mail? Sure. They're human. Their success record, though, at least in my limited experience, is fantastic. Thirty-seven cents is the fucking bargain of the century. I wish they'd skip these annual fare hikes, though, and just up first class mail to one dollar and let us all get used to that for a while. But no one is listening to me anyway. I finally remembered that my Jim Jones fantasy ends with me addicted to smack and with my head blown off in a tropical hellhole.

Besides all this, I love the Post Office because it might very well be saving my life.

Used to be I had all my zine-related mail sent directly to my apartment, for the convenience of it. I liked being able to just wander out to the mailbox in the lobby of my apartment building and get all my mail. Plus, it seemed more convivial. People could read my zine, and if they liked it they could send me stuff, directly to where I lived. I've always loved mail. I've saved almost all of the mail I've ever gotten—there was a time when I kept everything, letters, mementos, everything, out of a misguided attempt at permanence. Now I realize that the one thing we human beings are denied in this existence is permanence, so I've stopped saving so much—though I still keep most of my mail. Sure, I doubt I'll ever need to retrieve issue #2 of Badly Made Amateur Teenaged Zine, but you never know.

Once I started getting mail from prisoners, though, and once people started emailing me suggesting that they come sleep on my couch, I began to change my attitude. Where I

had once seen my openly published address and listed phone number as a stance against paranoia and bullshit, I began to see them as the first clues the police would ferret out while standing over the chunky pool of blood that had once been me:

**Cop1:** Wow, someone hated this bastard. He's been diced up into tiny pieces.

**Cop2:** Yeah, and they wrote the word bastard in his blood. Several times

**Cop3:** Look! Zines! Mailed directly to this address!

**Cop1:** That solves that crime! It was obviously amateur teenagers. Look—telltale staples mixed in with the blood.

Somehow, I changed my thinking on the address front from having my real live home address on the Internet will gain me a lot of slavish followers like Jim Jones to having my real live home address on the Internet will allow weirdos I don't want to meet to find me and murder me using powerful staple gun technology. I guess you could say I finally remembered that my Jim Jones fantasy ends with me addicted to smack and with my head blown off in a tropical hellhole.

So, I rented a PO Box and I've never regretted it. The Post Office is only a few blocks away from my apartment, but that magical buffer zone is all that stands between me and you, sleeping on my couch and vomiting in my bathroom. Plus, I can use the exercise, as trekking out to the PO Box is really the only time my heart rate gets above 80.

I guess at first I had this idea that hearing from fellow zinesters or fans of my zine would be cool. Cool people, interesting conversations, and, of course, lots of free cocktails purchased for me by grubby, dirty urchins with five bucks to their name, two of which would be on the bar, soaking up the sweat off the beer they just bought me. Jim Jones wanted...well, lord knows what that man wanted, but I wanted my cult followers to buy me booze. The idea was that cool, interesting people would come and hang out with me, not weird and disturbing people. But of course what I slowly realized was that only the weird and disturbing people wanted to come knock on my door and sleep on my couch. Normal people would never do that.

Once I realized that, I edited my idea to include the dirty urchins creeping from the couch at 4AM to slit my throat and eat all of my food, or perhaps taking on my identity, living my life, drinking my beer. Oooh, it makes me so angry! But of course, I now have a PO Box layer between me and the Freaks, so all is well.

Okay, enough jibber-jabber. You can, as always, complain about the low quality of this column at the usual place. Until next time, bubbas, I remain: Your Humble Editor.

November 24, 2002

## **Don't Write for Me, Please!**

Aside from the IRS investigations and slander lawsuits, the number one most irritating thing about running this web site and publishing the associated zine has to be getting unsolicited offers to write for one or the other from total strangers. It doesn't happen often, but like a recurring infection it's really annoying when it does happen, or at least it usually is. This isn't because the people who suggest they'd be a good addition to The Inner Swine milieu are all assholes; certainly some of them are, but most of them are just creative people who get the joke of TIS and think they'd be a good match. Most of these sorts of queries begin with praise for TIS and I generally get the sense that they're honest fans. Every now and then a true prick shows up who doesn't have a clue, but that's rare. Usually the person suggesting they write for me is nice, and I end up feeling like a complete asshole when it all ends in insults, acrimony, and death threats. People don't read my zine to become thoughtfully informed, dig? Actually, I'm not sure why people read my zine. I guess I'm not even totally sure anyone does read it.

It usually ends that way because I am an evil, controlling bastard with very little empathy for my fellow humans. No, really.

The Inner Swine, of course, began its life as a communal project between me and my then-roommates Rob, Jeof, and Ken. The four of us launched the idea of starting TIS, and worked on it with various levels of enthusiasm for 2 years before, one by one, everyone but me gave up and left. Then I took everything I'd written for it up to that point and put out issue 1(1), and TIS was reborn as a perzine. At first I pretended I wanted submissions, and even ran ads in the early issues demanding them. Over time, though, I realized that any time I actually got a submission from someone, I reacted with anxiety, hostility, and eventual disdain. Sometimes this was deserved; the submitted work sucked, or didn't have anything to do with TIS and its philosophy. Sometimes, however, there was nothing wrong with the work, it either simply wasn't very interesting to me, or was too political in nature. There are lots of opinions bandied about TIS, certainly, and some of them could even be classified as political. But these opinions are a) mine, and b) usually presented with some attempt at softening humor. When I get an article that grimly details an argument without a single

amusing reference to anything like helper monkeys, missing trousers, or hangovers, I get sleepy, and I assume that will be the reaction of most TIS readers. People don't read my zine to become thoughtfully informed, dig? Actually, I'm not sure why people read my zine. I guess I'm not even totally sure anyone does read it.

Many times people who suggest they write for me are nice enough when I beg off, even if we've gone back and forth a few times, even if they've actually spent effort on a piece. This is a testament to their niceness. The fact is, I am usually 95% sure I don't want them writing for me when they first approach me, but I don't want to be a total ass about it, so I figure a good compromise is to at least read something and then say no thanks. This leads to awkwardness, however, because they almost always mistake this for honest interest, when in fact it is craven patronizing this has nothing to do with their work, which at this point I haven't even seen. It has everything to do with the fact that I fear people, and wisely, I think.

Even though I no longer request submissions, or make any effort to solicit them, I haven't actually stated that I don't want them, so I suppose it could easily be argued that I bring this upon myself. I would agree, except that some of the people who submit work to me are arrogant, hostile, and humorless about it long before I have opportunity to arrogant, hostile and humorless. A lot of times these people send me their writings with an attitude of You remind me of me on my less-brilliant days, so why not print something good for a change. When I'm polite and say, sure, send something along and I'll take a gander, it just fans the flames of arrogance, and when I inevitably cringe away from non-Somers content and offer up mealy-mouthed apologies for being too controlling, they inevitably get pissed off.

So, even though I bring some of this onto myself, I have to say I think it takes some balls to just email me out of the blue assuming I'll swoon over your essay, especially if said essay is about as original and interesting as my dirty underwear. And people with balls like that don't get consideration from me, dammit. Some people out there react to rejection as if I'd just insulted their mothers, and this bugs me. It's my fucking zine, and my web site, and if you think I'm some sort of asshole for not digging your stuff, well, you're probably right, but that's not the point. The point is, I've once again lost my trousers, and have to go look for them now.

If you know where they are, please contact me in the usual manner.



March 23, 2004

## Page 43 Messes with Texas

The Inner Swine is free to prisoners. This decision, made years ago, was prompted simply because Zine World includes the query on their standard review submission form, and I couldn't see any reason not to give the thing away to men and women who earn seventeen cents a day, if that. Besides, I figured, prisoners have enough problems. If they get a kick out of a soft white boy's humorous ramblings, who am I to deny them? Since that momentous decision, TIS has proved surprisingly popular with prisoners. Maybe I'm one of few pubs which are free, or maybe my special brand of middle-class bitching is amusing to people suffering incarceration—that would amaze me, if it's true, but then I'm amazed anyone can read my zine and not conclude I'm a self-obsessed dork polluting the world with half-assed bullshit. Whatever the reason, I've got a few prisoners on my mailing list. And if I admit I feel better about this since I got a PO box and stopped listing my actual home address everywhere, it doesn't make me feel like less of a man. I suspect I could leave a pile of Swines out in the street with a sign proclaiming them free and freshly lemon-scented and the pile would remain untouched for thousands of years, until Proto-Ape archaeologists unearth it, grunt over it for a moment, and then burn it ritualistically.

Recently, I got a notice from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice that issue 9(4) of TIS, which had been mailed to an inmate there, had been denied because page 43 contained "material of a racist nature." The prisoner appealed this decision, citing, among other things, the many moments of racist hilarity found in your standard Bible, but this appeal failed. I have yet to take any action on this.

The 'material' in question is in the middle of a fiction piece called "Book of Days". At this point in the story, I've introduced a black character named Marve, with whom the white characters are comfortable enough to jokingly call a few racial epithets. Marve is also explaining on that page why white girls are easier for black men to sleep with. It's fiction, bubba, so hold off on the angry letters. I'm inventing people who don't exist and then making them say things. Still, I can see where people who are being extremely sensitive might see something there and decide it's dangerous stuff. But let's forget the kneejerk That is total bullshit! reaction to this censorship and focus on what really intrigues me: The fact that some low-paid Texas flunky found this.

Let's review some salient facts: 1. The material in question is on page 43 of a 60 page publication; 2. The rest of the publication, I think it's safe to assume, has no similarly offensive material. This leads me to an interesting conclusion about the Texas Department of Criminal Justice: Someone is actually reading *The Inner Swine* from cover to cover. The sub conclusions you can pull out of that are fascinating.

1. They're readin' TIS because it's they're job to scan everything for material like this and they take their job deadly serious.

2. They're readin' TIS from cover to cover because they enjoy TIS, and happened to note the 'material' in question because of this extreme interest in my hot, bubbling genius.

3. They're readin' TIS from cover to cover because they enjoy TIS, and cooked up a pretext in order to take each issue home with them without having to send me money.

If either idea is true, it's remarkable. I mean, if my zine were called *Kill All the White Man* or *Prison Riot Howtos*, I could understand how any bored, underpaid civil servant could snag it out of the slush and kick it to the curb. But TIS is kind of inoffensive-looking, and dense with words. To have found the 'material' on page 43 required someone to actually read it. Although I guess it is possible that the one truly bad epithet on that page might have just jumped out at someone flipping rapidly through. It's possible, but...I dunno.

There's also the possibility that simply by virtue of being a photocopied zine TIS gets put into the special Freako red bin for special consideration. Maybe if it was full-size and slick, with a picture of Britney on the cover, it'd be passed along without a second glance.

More fascinating to me, however, is the enjoyable idea that TIS has fascinated a group of TDCJ employees, who read each issue avidly before forwarding it on to its rightful subscriber. While it sure sucks for the poor guy who actually requested the issue in the first place, it amuses me to think that the sweaty pheromones of swinedom penetrate in even the most hostile of circumstances. Especially since I suspect I could leave a pile of *Swines* out in the street with a sign proclaiming them free and freshly lemon-scented and the pile would remain untouched for thousands of years, until Proto-Ape archaeologists unearth it, grunt over it for a moment, and then burn it ritualistically.

Ah well, it's time for my afternoon boozing. Remember what this essay has taught you: Even the thick walls of prison cannot keep you safe from *The Inner Swine*!

June 10, 2004

## Time Dilation May Impede Zine

FRIENDS—and I know you're my friends, because you come to this web site to read what I think about things, although true friends would also buy me drinks now and then, wouldn't they? Bastards. But anyway, I digress:

FRIENDS, I am by nature a very, very lazy man. Almost every decision I've made in my life has sprung from my desire to do nothing I don't really want to do. Now, most of us, I suppose, make some effort to avoid doing things they don't want to do—but few of you have patterned their entire existence around the concept. I have. I may occasionally dress up my decisions with reasonable-sound—but bogus—'reasons', but the truth is whatever decision I've arrived at has more to do with carving out more time for me to drink beer than anything else. I stayed drunk a long time, hoping some pixie would fly through the window, wave a little wand, and make bags of money appear. I thought this happened a couple of times, but when I sobered up it turned out I'd passed out in the bathroom again, and the pixie had been then-roommate Ken West, going to the bathroom.

When I graduated from college many, many years ago, I was faced with a terrible conundrum. For four years I'd done very little with my life. I was an English major, which required about 1% of my attention one day a year, usually a final examination situation. My jobs had all been part-time register jockey type things, requiring less conscious attention than breathing. But all that had ended when I made the fatal mistake of earning a degree. Suddenly I was forced to get a job.

This was the source of a great deal of angst, for me. I stayed drunk a long time, hoping some pixie would fly through the window, wave a little wand, and make bags of money appear. I thought this happened a couple of times, but when I sobered up it turned out I'd passed out in the bathroom again, and the pixie had been then-roommate Ken West, going to the bathroom. When I finally did get a job, I took the first thing offered to me, because that minimized my job-search period, thus maximizing the time I could spend getting back to the serious work of planning this zine and drinking heavily. Suckers spent months agonizing over what type of job to get—what industry, what position, what kind of compensation to get—but I knew in my heart it didn't matter. I was never meant to work every day, like a

coolie. I was meant for wealth and ease. One look at my soft, delicate hands will show you that! Since the cruel world had seen fit to ignore my obvious quality, I figured it didn't really matter much what I did eight hours a day.

That first job turned out to be a godsend, of course: A farm of unmonitored photocopiers, a mailroom staffed by friendly, incurious people, and the home to my personal underground publishing empire for ten glorious years. Who could complain? I sank my feelers into that corporation's flesh and sucked for all I was worth. After a while, as happens with such infections, the host died, and I was forced to pull my chubby little head out of its carcass, look around in fear, and scuttle off to another job.

I found one easily enough. Believe it or not—my wife, The Duchess, sure can't—I am a marginally talented and resourceful employee who brings value to the workplace. No! Really! So my period of unemployment was, sadly, boiled down to one self-imposed week spent lolling around my apartment with my cat, Pierre, while The Duchess was out of town on business. What Pierre and I did whilst unsupervised by The Woman, I can't say. But you can imagine what it must have been like, me, a cat, a huge pile of dirty laundry, and nothing to eat but a tub of peanut butter. It was my Bachelor Paradise all over again! I felt twenty-seven.

Sadly, it ended, and I started my new job. Despite my best efforts, I am unable to reproduce the aforementioned illicit publishing empire at my new job. Sadly, I am in the unenviable position of paying for my own photocopies, like a sucker. Plus, I actually have to do work. I was horrified, upon examining my job description, to find that the words "Internet Porn" and "Four Hour Lunch" appear nowhere therein.

And now, in the eighth paragraph and word 725 of this essay, we come to my point. My point is, I suddenly have much less time in which to create The Inner Swine, and it's freaking me out.

My life has undergone a bit of compression recently, to be honest. In a short span of months I gained a kitten and took on a new job, which may not sound like much, but believe me, it's shaved a few hours off my day. First of all, the kitten—the aforementioned Pierre—is just six months old and tears ass around the apartment all the time, knocking things over and meowing and jumping on us when we sleep, so I have to play with the little man a little bit before bed every day. If I don't play with him for about a half an hour, he goes mad after the lights go out and we don't get any sleep. So right there is about 1.5 hours a day spent entertaining the damn cat, just so I can sleep. I'll tack on another half hour due to what I'll call Pierre Erosion, which is the time spent here and there when the kitten decides to jump on my keyboard, bite my ankles, or once again drops a bottle of beer when he's practicing bringing them from a custom kitten dispenser I built in the kitchen out to me in the living room. My new job has shaved about two hours a day, too—I have to get up earlier, leave later, have a longer commute, and can no longer take two hour lunches. Put it all together and I've lost 4-5 hours a day since March.

Aside from being lazy as all hell, however, I am also pretty compulsive in my behaviors. I like a routine, and I like hitting goals on a regular basis—just because I've lost 4 hours from my free time doesn't mean I just shrug my shoulders and give up. I find ways to

maintain my output, because I am all about maintaining. Somewhere in the dank recesses of my psyche I think you'd find that I believe, deep down, that if I maintain enough I'll live forever, that death is just a symptom of slack. No slacking, no death. Simple! So despite the loss in free time, I am determined to keep writing as much as before, if not more. Something's obviously got to give, and that something is: Quality.

I hear that snickering out there, and I am marking down names, believe me.

It's full circle, actually: When I first considered the idea of doing my zine solo—after the other founding members were either driven away by my abrasive personality or simply lost interest—I conceived of it as a place to dump writing I didn't have anyplace else to send. Half-finished essays, rough drafts of fiction, experiments gone wrong—The Inner Swine would absorb all this chaff and maybe I'd get some interesting feedback. Over time, I adjusted my attitude towards TIS and started putting some effort into making it interesting, polished, and original.

Now, due to my increasingly compressed free time, all that is changing back again: Pretty soon you'll be getting short stories that stop in the middle of sentences, essays that degenerate into nonsense, and even a few padded articles that literally reprint the first six paragraphs at the end in order to gain a page. Plus I'll probably have to set the font to eighteen point and use lots of nonsequitous images stolen from the web, too.

Gimme. Unless, of course, y'all would like to support me a little so I could quit my job. I recently read about a kid who raised money for college about 20 years ago by writing in to a newspaper column and asking that everyone reading send him one penny. Just one penny (<http://www.snopes.com/college/admin/cent.asp>). He eventually received about \$30,000.00 in various forms—not everyone sent pennies—from about 2.8 million people. Which is pretty fucking amazing.

So, I figure maybe I could ask everyone out there who reads The Inner Swine in any way shape or form to send me a nickel, if you haven't already paid me somehow. One nickel! Why not? If 500 of you send me a nickel, I'll have \$25. I'm not sure how that'll help me, but it's a start. And if 2.8 million of you send me a nickel, well, you'll never ever hear from me again. Your first clue that this has happened will be the automated voice telling you that my phone has been disconnected, and the 404 page you get when surfing to this web page. Believe me, I'll already be out of the country by the time you hear about the nickels.

June 20, 2005

## **The James A. Farley Post Office Building been Very, Very Good to Me**

Automated Postal Machines Confuse the Masses

I AM a zine publisher. You've seen us, scuttling around with piles of paper in our hands, ink toner all over us, being ejected from office buildings by security after being fired for copier abuse. You've also seen us, friend, at the post office. We're always at the post office. You may breeze in and out for stamps, tsking your tongue at the shabby people stuffing envelopes and hanging ominously around the PO boxes. We are, in case you were wondering, the people who actually purchase PO boxes. Zine publishers are like the Oompah Lompahs of the post office—including a tendency to make up cruel rhymes about you people, the Normals and sing them while performing very lame, uncoordinated dance numbers.

Oh, I know the post office. I love the post office, and I hate the post office. More accurately, I love the post office, and I hate everyone in the post office. Well, not the employees, strangely enough, who are, by and large, helpful, cheerful, and largely incurious about strange, scruffy envelopes being mailed off to Switzerland. No, I hate the customers. If we could reduce the population of the post offices of the world to employees and zine publishers, I'd be very, very happy.

See, zine publishers appreciate the post office. We're amazed that this huge national organization exists that takes our scrawled crap and brings it to the other dysfunctional people in the world. To their door. I write "Here I am pantsless again" on Monday, and on Friday you're sitting over coffee and reading those very words, and thinking, Jesus, does Somers have anything else to write about? Normal people, they don't appreciate the post office. They see it as a chore, one more damn thing they have to do in their day. They see long lines, grouchy unhelpful employees, and of course they see the scruffy, unbatched zine publishers singing doggerel and trying unsuccessfully to create a human pyramid.

Bitch, bitch bitch—but that's okay, because I've suddenly seen proof that everyone but me is a moron. That proof comes in the form of the new Automated Postage Machines.

Automated postage! What a time to be alive! These new machines are a simple concept: For basic postal transactions, like buying first-class postage and mailing out items that weigh

under a certain amount, you can do all the work yourself. On its surface, this might seem bad, since you're not getting any price break. But in reality you do get a refund of time, because you don't have to wait on a ridiculously long line to inch forward so you can have someone else perform the complex task of weighing your parcel, typing in a Zip Code, and printing out a label. You can just walk up to the machine, perform these tasks yourself, and get on with your day.

Of course, nothing stops the lines for the machines from getting onerously long as well, which would negate the only benefit they really offer (well, the only benefit aside from not having to deal with your fellow human beings, which I think is worth almost any amount of money or inconvenience). In the best of possible worlds, the line would be split evenly between people with simple transactions that could use the machines and people with more complex mailing needs who would need human beings. But the strange fact is, I can walk into the post office at any time of the day, and no matter how long the line for the windows is, there will be almost no one at the machines. The only explanation for this is that most people are too dumb to realize that the machines offer an alternative and can be much much faster than the human lines. The machines do have their limitations, of course; You can only perform one transaction at a time, which means if you have three parcels to mail you have to swipe your debit/credit card three separate times, and there are sometimes mysterious delays while the machine dials home. Also, each machine is equipped with a camera that takes your photo in case you turn out to be a terrorist using the machine to mail bombs around the country. But even so, I have walked into the post office with an armful of TIS mailings headed for Europe, Japan, and Asia, breezed by a lengthy line of dispirited people waiting, and mailed 13 airmail packages from the machines in ten minutes, while three or four people have been served on the main line.

I do this in front of everyone. It's no secret. Does no one else know this? Is no one else even curious enough about these machines to give them a shot, find out how easy they are to use? Or is the idea that you might need to make some decisions yourself far too difficult? I mean, the machine weighs the package for you, asks you how you want it mailed (giving you estimated delivery time frames), asks you if you want any supplementary services (delivery confirmation, etc.), asks you to dip your debit/credit card, and prints out an adhesive label to stick on your mailing. That's not difficult. Except, maybe it is, and maybe that's my answer: People are dumb.

In fairness, the requirement of a debit/credit card precludes some people who don't have these financial conveniences. And some people may prefer to pay cash so as not to be tracked by the Illuminati, who obviously track every insignificant person's financial transactions all over the world because you, with your iron will and unique mind, are a threat to their world empire. That's fine—if you know about a convenience, a time-saving option, and choose knowingly to bypass it for what you consider to be good reason, then that's fine. But I suspect most people simply fear the machines and refuse to even go near them, afraid that legs and arms will sprout from them and the machine will grab them and eat them, slurping “Terminate! Terminate!” as it does so.

I am, of course, not so secretly arrogant and elitist and I like to discuss endlessly how I am smarter than everyone else. So perhaps you should take all this with a grain of salt. Anything which reduces the amount of time I have to spend away from my beer and pornography sources is welcomed, and anything that also reduces my contact with the teeming millions is doubly welcomed—these Automated Postage Machines are a wonder! I will worship them in cargo-cult fashion until the authorities figure out who is leaving dead animals and flowers at their feet every week.





JEFF SEZ: "So what does that mean? It means it's wank." Vic Flange, [www.fleshmouth.co.uk](http://www.fleshmouth.co.uk), describing my zine.

# IT MEANS IT'S WANK

From *Xerography Debt*

## WHY I LOVE BAD REVIEWS...

*...in which Jeff Somers plucks his head out of his own ass for a moment to explain why he wishes all the reviews he got were bad reviews*

I AM NOT a proud man. I've begged for my drinks. I've crawled on the floor looking for loose change. I've begged people to read my zine<sup>[1]</sup>. Lord knows there isn't much I'm ashamed of any more, and pretty soon I expect all that residual shame from childhood to be burned out, leaving me as some sort of Homo Superior, ready and willing to take charge of this planet. Until I evolve those Jedi Mind tricks, however, I bide my time publishing and contemplating the world around me. And drinking<sup>[2]</sup>.

Not being a proud man, I've never worried much over reviews. A zine is usually such an idiosyncratic production that it cannot, by nature, achieve a large audience. That's why movies and bestselling books suck so badly: in order to appeal to that many paying customers, the Entertainment in question has to satisfy a broad range of tastes and expectations. In other words, in order to appeal to that broad an audience, most stuff has to be bland, obvious crap. It has to suck. Zines, for the most part, are far too personal, and far too specific in their appeal, to ever garner nationwide love<sup>[3]</sup>. This usually means that even in the relatively small world of zine publishing it's hard to please a large number of people, and even the most well-regarded zines or ziney-writers have their detractors<sup>[4]</sup>.

Add in the fact that everyone in zinedom seems to be reviewing everyone else—and I mean *everyone*—and you're pretty much guaranteed to receive some bad reviews in your time. I, for one, don't view this as a bad thing. I *like* bad reviews. I prefer them, actually. Good reviews are nice and all, but give me a snappy, well-written bad review and I'm much happier. The reason for this is simple: bad reviews offer much more by way of snappy advertising slogans. Like Matt Dillion's character Cliff in *Singles* says: *all this negative energy just makes me stronger*<sup>[5]</sup>.

## BAD REVIEWS A-GO-GO

The best bad review I ever received is easily from Vic Flange on the web site [fleshmouth.co.uk](http://fleshmouth.co.uk). This inspired little gem went: “*Inner Swine* is a site about a zine about something or another, and unfortunately tries to be a catalogue for various publications, plus a sampler, plus a web site. There is much that suggests this should be good...but it tries too fucking hard to stay on the right side of mass appeal. So what does that mean? It means it’s wank. Come on, stick your fucking necks out. You have nothing to lose but your fucking heads.” It gives me the instantly memorable slogan *The Inner Swine: It Means it’s Wank!* The second-best bad review I ever got appeared in *Ten Things Jesus Wants You to Know*: “This is an honest zine, so I will be honest. Most everything in here I didn’t need to read.” This gives us the equally snappy *The Inner Swine: Most Everything in Here, You Don’t Need to Read*. See how this works? Good reviews, while heartwarming, don’t offer up this kind of advertising fodder, and lord knows accolades don’t pay the bills. I mean, a slogan like *The Inner Swine: Not Bad for a Jersey Zine* just isn’t snappy, dammit, and *The Inner Swine: Jeff Somers is a damn fine looking man* just sounds made up<sup>[6]</sup>.

Plus, good reviews are wasted on a smug bastard such as myself, because they simply meld in with the chorus of congratulatory voices in my head, singing Oompa-Loompa songs which rhyme *zine* with *keen*<sup>[7]</sup>.

What I really enjoy about bad reviews are when they’re wrong. Not about the quality of my writing or of my zine, which is wholly subjective, but about actual facts. Checkable things. Like once a reviewer from *maximumrocknroll* got all bent out of shape because the ‘fake letters to the editor’ weren’t very funny. This was best explained by the fact that they weren’t fake<sup>[8]</sup>, which I think would have been obvious to a gas huffing moron. Or when the reviewer for *Punk Planet* recently worried over the DIY nature of my zine because it’s distroed in Tower Records, when *Punk Planet* itself is distroed in Tower Records. Things like that made my day, because it gives me an opportunity to be sarcastic. Nothing gives me greater joy in life than being sarcastic<sup>[9]</sup>.

It’s one thing if a bad review discusses specifics in an intelligent and critical manner—I’ve had plenty of bad reviews I can’t really argue with. It’s the smug, no-substance reviews that boil down to “I didn’t like this because I got a bad feeling from the cover, so I didn’t actually read it, and you shouldn’t either” that bring me joy, because quoting them in big block letters just makes the *reviewer* look bad. Joy! I mean, how hard is it to do basic factchecking with zines? Okay, considering that most of our zine publishers pack up and move every three months, I guess it could be kind of hard to factcheck a review. Of course, you could actually *read the damn zine*, even if you were handed twenty zines and asked for reviews in three days. But then, I suppose having the correct information and informed opinions goes against everything that zines stand for. They certainly go against everything *my zine* stands for.

Until next time, friends, treasure your bad reviews. Paste them in big letters on the front covers of your zines. Print up vinyl stickers at [stickerguy.com](http://stickerguy.com) with choice phrases. March into your local libraries and shout them out at the top of your lungs until the cops drag you

away. Be proud of your bad reviews, because you can measure how cool you are by how many people hate you.

## FOOTNOTES

---

[1] please read my zine

[2] Jack Daniels, yum

[3] which is not to suggest that zines cannot suck, because many—oh so many, and probably yours—do

[4] even I have my detractors, which is shocking to me every time I think of it

[5] Matt Dillon is one fine-looking man

[6] which it is.

[7] *Charlie and the Glass Elevator* is the little-known sequel to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, on which the film *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* was based. Little known because it sucked.

[8] though they were right about one thing, they weren't very funny

[9] except buying liquor and cigarettes for underage kids, of course

## PERSONA NON GRATA

*...in which Jeff Somers ruminates on people believing anything he writes in his zine to be the total, unadulterated truth.*

Friends, I've written a lot of crazy shit in my zine. It's my zine, and I have fun with it, and the people who actually come back for a second issue usually enjoy at least some of the shenanigans. I've written about being paid billions of dollars by Microsoft for the rights to my zine. I've written about forming a worldwide Organization of Evil modeled on James Bond villains, with me securely running the show from a secret underground bunker. I've often exaggerated my boozing to truly heroic levels that would have left me dead long ago if they were true. From pretty much page one of every issue, with a few shining exceptions, I am piling on bullshit in a breathtakingly brazen manner. I'd think it would be obvious.

And yet, people believe a lot of it.

Not the Organization of Evil, of course. Even the dimmest people reviewing my zine ignore those sorts of things, often with thinly-disguised contempt. People often believe the binge-drinking, the loss of my pants on a regular basis, the arrests for public urination or lewdness. Certainly if I had any pride to speak of I'd be insulted that people so readily believe that I spend all my time passing out from liquor and wetting myself. That's supposed to be funny, damn your eyes. While it's true that I enjoy the occasional dignified entire bottle of Jack Daniels in one sitting, and it's also true that once or twice I've lost my pants under mysterious circumstances while out living the high life with *The Inner Swine* Inner Circle (TISIC), neither happens as often or as egregiously as I pretend in my zine.

And yet...

I get reviews sometimes that take everything said in the zine WAY too seriously. Now, I'm not upset that people don't appreciate the humor. Every zine is a unique snowflake and not everyone is going to like it, and I've already discussed how I love bad reviews (see *It Means it's Wank #1, XD#9*). What bothers me is that I can write the most ridiculous bullshit and people just take it seriously. And what really bothers me is when they chastize me for the Error of My Ways.

Here's a quote from one of my favorite emails on the subject:

*"You "May not" live long enough....although you should. Alcohol is wonderful for slowing down your never ending thoughts of the moment as well as the next 20 years. The best relaxer ever invented for the thinking man. Especially at night when your brain will not shut off and let you sleep...It's not so much a crutch for you as a tool, however it can get out of control and will during your youth....Pay attention to your body signs and read up on the subject... it is a life and death matter! I did not have blackouts till I was close to 40 yrs old, lots of tolerance over my 20 years of Harley riding and non stop drinking in the Navy. It was an accepted way of life at the time."*

Wasn't that fun? The incoherency aside, I really enjoyed the fact that he completely missed the joke. Now, I know that it's almost a cliché in zinedom (and other artistic cliques) to write about being a hard drinker, living on the razor's edge, punishing yourself for your brilliance, yada yada. I often have reviewers mention that fact that I write about being drunk in dismissive, been-there-done-that tones. This bugs me, because it should be the effectiveness of the joke, or the quality of the writing that gets judged, not whether or not I'm the millionth zine writer to delightedly describe his puking habits in public toilets. The question should be, do I describe my public-toilet puking habits *more entertainingly than the rest of you bozos*.

In my zine, Your Humble Editor is a persona. Many, if not most, perzines are pretty raw and honest, and you can usually assume that there is minimal filtering. If they're writing about being beat up in school, or dying slowly at their day job, or drinking too much and yakking on a public bus, you can usually assume that events and feelings described are pretty true to what really happened. This may be where the trouble starts: lazy readers assume certain things about *all* zines, and certain things about *all* perzines—like you can believe everything in it 100% because, heck, it's a perzine. While my zine is often described as a perzine, you don't get much honesty from it. A lot of times there are true, actual events and honest feelings at the base of the essays in each issue, but it's all buried under layers of sweet, thick bullshit. To get to Your Humble Editor, you have to imagine me, then take away any sense of responsibility or restraint, pickle in booze, and come up with a special effects budget. It's about as far away from me as you can get and still be recognizable.

I guess if someone isn't amused by the persona, it's natural that they give me a bad review, and that's fair, and fine with me. All I really ask is that people realize there is, in fact, a persona. If it amuses you to imagine that I lose my pants on a regular basis, fine; I'm only here to amuse you, anyway. Bastards.

## NO BITCHING ZONE

*...in which Jeff Somers considers the folly of talking back to a bad review.*

Shockingly, even mega-talented hipster-doofus Zine publishers who look good in tight pants, like me, get bad reviews sometimes. I'll give you a moment to recover from the shock. Now, I've already discussed the proper response to a bad review: Take it like an adult and use it as ironic advertising fodder. Or, simply ignore it with the serene confidence of cult leaders and geniuses alike. Sure, reading that you write like your ass chews gum\* is no fun, but the words lose some of their power if you just smile mockingly and let it slide over you. It's even better if you take no notice of reviews at all, aside from the aforementioned advertising-fodder. Life's too short to be worrying over what other people think of your stuff. Unless, of course, no one is actually reading it, and you're greeted by the calming noise of crickets in the night whenever you release a new issue. That's a problem, I'll grant you, much worse than bad reviews.

Sadly, a lot of people can't seem to control themselves, and they spend a lot of time and energy *responding* to bad reviews. They write indignant letters to the reviewing publication, they post angry rebuttals on their web sites. This is not only silly, it's counter-productive. Like playing tic-tac-toe with a huge supercomputer, there is no winning, only degrees of losing.

First of all, for the most part the people reviewing zines are doing so because a) they think their opinions are worth hearing or b) out of a sense of serving the zine community. While I think a lot of zines use reviews of whatever they can think of just to fill some scary white space in their idea-challenged zines, a lot of fine publications review zines earnestly, and there is certainly a value to these reviews, especially if the reviews come from a respected place like, say, *Xerography Debt* or *Zine World*. Or even *maximumrocknroll*, which has never given me a good review, ever. A good review gives you an idea of the content and tone of the zine in question, and a decent recommendation

---

\*This is a quote from a rejection letter I got from a magazine called *Samzidat* when I was about thirteen years old.

of whether it's worth your dollars in the mail. After a while you get to know which reviewers you find to be reliable, and can make decisions based on their opinions. This is all a Good Thing. None of these people are getting paid to review zines, I don't think. There's nothing in it for them but giving honest opinions.

So why bother complaining? One of the most entertaining aspects of *Zine World*, for me at least, is the pathetic letters in the beginning of each issue complaining about bad reviews. The indignant protests! The insults! Every time I read these letters, I hear a baby crying in the background (but I'm prone to these sorts of audio/visual hallucinations, so that's not too surprising; sometimes entire issues of my zine are dictated to me by a small Leprechaun named McEgo. So what? Doesn't make me a bad guy). Same thing goes for screaming updates to web sites which hurl vitriol at the shadowy conspiracy of reviewers bent on undermining people's hard work and genius—they resemble all too well the pathetic flame wars you witness in chat rooms, forums, and newsgroups. No one wins, no one admits being wrong, and everyone else just killfiles the idiots.

First of all, complaining about a bad review just makes it seem like the reviewer hit a sore spot. It's like admitting that people have been telling you that your writing blows since third grade, and you can't take it any more. People get testy about things they're insecure about, after all. If you're confident about something, you can accept criticism about it serenely, sure that everyone else is a moron if they don't like your work. Complaining about a review, in my opinion, just confirms that the reviewer got something right about you.

Second, arguing about an *opinion* is ignorant and a waste of time. If someone thinks your zine sucks, that's what they *think*. It's like arguing over their favorite color. Don't waste your time.

Finally, and most importantly, it's useless. The reviewer is not going to publish a retraction. They are not going to apologize. And, most likely, you're not going to change anyone else's mind about your zine. Chances are the readers of the reviewing publication are familiar with it and have learned to trust it's reviews—they have a relationship with it. If they're not already familiar with your zine, they have no reason to believe anything you say, and since you're all pissed off and self-righteous about a bad review, it's doubtful they'll take you seriously anyway. All you'll probably do is convince them that the review was right. Complaining about a review will, most likely, just embarrass you.

Obviously, since the world is still a madhouse and I have not yet been named the Poet Laureate of Hoboken, New Jersey, with the associated liquor and beer stipend, no one is taking what I say very seriously. That's probably for the best. Still, I think if people would listen to me on this one thing and stop bitching about bad reviews, we'd have a better world. Plus, that liquor and beer stipend would be good, too.

## THE LONG DARK TEA TIME OF THE SOUL

*...in which Jeff Somers considers the horror of a paucity of reviews. And indulges in some postmodern-lite footnotes, like David Foster Wallace, natch.*

THE only thing worse than a bad review, really, is no review at all. I remember the first issue of my little zine: I printed up about 50 issues, mailed them out to whoever I could think of (mainly friends, family, and my seventh-grade teacher who once advised me that I was ruining my life by quitting the crossing guards<sup>[1]</sup>—somehow I don't think the zine thing convinced her otherwise). There followed a Great Silence, wherein you could detect, if you listened very closely, the faint sound of crickets.

We've all been there. After a while, and about ten more issues, I started to figure out that there was an entire zine community<sup>[2]</sup> out there, complete with review zines and such, and I started getting some reviews, some notice, and the occasional two bucks in the mail, quickly spent on liquor and forgotten. For a while my zine seemed to get reviews, good and otherwise, every few weeks. I became obsessed with it, for here was proof, finally, that I did actually exist, that I wasn't a spirit fooled into believing he was real. It also confirmed that I had actually produced a zine and mailed it out to people, that it hadn't all been a DTs hallucination, like that time I conquered the world with an army of winged monkeys—damn, I had some explaining to do after that bender, when I kept wearing the crown and commanding that people be executed on the spot.

I searched for reviews of my zine constantly, and began reproducing them in my zine for a bizarrely egocentric mirror-into-mirror effect that I'm still quite fond of<sup>[3]</sup>.

And then, around issue 25 or so, I stopped getting reviews—not entirely, but it definitely throttled down a little.

The simplest explanation makes sense: Everyone had already reviewed the damn thing, and saw no reason to keep reviewing it. In my fevered brain, however, it quickly became an existential crisis: I'd been relying on a steady stream of reviews to prove to myself that I was actually doing these things. The sudden lack of reviews made me doubt my own existence. Anyone who's put out a zine and gotten no response back knows the



terrible, black feeling that a lack of interest inspired within you—this is, in some sense, *you* that you're putting out there. Even if it's not a perzine, even if it's a zine dedicated to the study of tiny furniture craved out of soap<sup>[4]</sup>, it still represents a part of you. To have it coldly ignored is horrible.

Of course, there's not much you can do about it aside from getting the emergency bottle of cheap whiskey from the toilet tank and doing some hard drinking...um, thinking<sup>[5]</sup>. Begging for reviews is undignified, and likely to get you nowhere fast, since reviews are provided not as free advertising for you, or as a stroke to your ego, but as a service to the readers out there with two dollars to spare and in need of good advice on how to spend it. The one spark of hope, of course, is that eventually it will all come back around to you, because there're always new reviewers out there, and sometimes veterans will re-examine your zine from time to time. The Long, Dark Tea-Time of the Soul will end, eventually<sup>[6]</sup>.

This is why it's always a mistake to underestimate the power and value of reviews in zinedom. Not only are reviews a great way of getting info about new zines, and a great way to get some promotion for your zine, but they also serve as a barometer of the attention you're getting for your efforts—and let's face it, if you didn't want attention, you whore, you wouldn't be putting out a zine. or at least you'd be doing something like putting out six issues to close intimate friends and burning the masters afterwards. A lack of reviews can be an invaluable indication of your penetration into the psyche of the reader, good or bad. Personally, I'd much rather get a ton of really bad reviews than no reviews at all. Polite, dutiful reviews which boil down to mere acknowledgments that the author received your zine in the mail are almost as depressing as no reviews at all...but not quite. The Long Dark Tea Time of the Soul is a much blacker force in the Universe; if we could somehow harness the Long Dark Tea Time of the Soul and convert it into electrical energy, we could probably solve the world's energy problems.

Some zines, I suppose, move past the need for reviews, in a sense. I've heard that *Cometbus* is pretty good, for example, and I doubt people need one more review to convince them that it's a quality publication. Of course, people new to zines might not have the benefit of the previous twenty years of reviews moldering away in past issues of review zines, so new reviews always serve a purpose, and I want everyone to remember that next time you see Yet Another Review of My Zine and want to tear the page out and burn it, it makes you so mad<sup>[7]</sup>. I guess the basic rule you can take away from this column is: Reviews, good. No reviews, Long Dark Tea Time of the Soul.

---

## FOOTNOTES

[1] True story: I was a crossing guard, which meant I wore a bright orange belt and helped the crossing guard manage all the younger kids. I thought it would be fun and they really dressed it up as an honor, but it was boring and I had better things to do, like drink blackberry brandy on street corners, so I quit. Looking back, I guess it was kind of the beginning of a downward spiral of sorts.

[2] No shit—I had no idea I was putting out a *zine*. I had no idea so many other people had used sophisticated time-travel devices to steal my idea for ‘zines’ and begin producing them decades before I was even born. I didn’t find out about zines until long after that first issue, and was, of course, delighted. And litigious, but so far no lawyer will take the case.

[3] I briefly considered putting a review of my zine that appeared in Xerography Debt, and was subsequently reprinted in my zine, in this footnote, but that suddenly seemed *too* self-indulgent, if such a thing exists.

[4] Such a zine, to my knowledge, does not exist. But what a magical world this would be if it did!

[5] This kind of lame play on words is normally beneath me.

[6] *The Long Dark Tea Time of the Soul* is, of course, a title of a book by Douglas Adams, stolen quite brazenly.

[7] Although I certainly won’t. Remember it, that is.

## THE PRICE OF EVERYTHING AND THE VALUE OF NOTHING

*...in which your intrepid columnist wonders just how useful a review is to a zine publisher, and ponders whether good reviews or bad reviews are more useful.*

My zine got a bad review the other day. In and of itself this is not news, as my zine gets a lot of bad reviews, and the source of this particular review has never liked my zine anyway. And as far as I can tell, bad reviews of my zine are a fundamental building block of the universe, like quarks or light quanta—ubiquitous and necessary. Years from now, when super-scientists finally solve all the riddles of the cosmos and figure out what dark matter is, I'm sure they'll find it's made up of bad reviews of my zine. Okay, so what—Take it in stride, what's the big deal, all this negative energy just makes me stronger—but this particular review wasn't so much a review as one long insult directed towards me. You know the type of review I'm talking about; the review that basically calls you lame and boring seven different ways before wrapping up.

This got me to thinking: What was the value of that review? On a basic level it did its job: It communicated the reviewer's opinion of my zine to the reader (in this case, potentially summed up with a pithy *it sucked* that would have saved time, paper, and energy). But that's about it; while a reader will know what the reviewer thinks of my zine, they don't get a lot of clues as to *why* the reviewer hated it so much. Maybe I ran over the reviewer's dog and they're getting back at me. Maybe they don't care for foppish alcoholic hipster doofuses and the humor they prefer (fey, giggling, and incoherent). Maybe they hate anything with fiction in it. Who knows? That's the point. No one knows. All you know is that they didn't like it.

Of course, if you've grown to trust that reviewer, that may be all you need. Much in the same way I trust the bartender at Stinky Sullivan's in Hoboken when they silently shake their head at the new beer I've gestured at and grunted for.

But a review is a tool, and like all tools you need to know a lot about its parameters before you can really use it. Assuming that the review itself at least contains some hints as to

the reasoning behind the reviewer's recommendation, I started to wonder what the best approach was: Postive, negative, or a mixture?

**The Good.** Some reviewing publications only print good reviews—not in the sense of liking everything that's sent to them and publishing useless rubber-stamp reviews, but in the sense of only printing reviews of zines they recommend. The commonsense theory here is that there's no reason to tell people what you hate; they're reading reviews in order to find something they *want* to read. The good part about this is, since you know that every zine in there is recommended by someone, you can quickly scan the titles until something catches your eye, and you know that it's being recommended to you. The value here is no wasted time, in the sense that reading about what *not* to buy is a waste of time, since you can safely assume that anything not in that publication isn't being recommended to you, thus saving you the trouble of sifting reviews.

The problem, of course, is the insular, clubby feeling such publications can get, when the lovefest gets a little thick. After dozens of pages of happy happy reviews, you can't help but wonder how high the bar is. It's like one hand clapping: If you can't *see* the bad reviews, how do you know there *are* bad reviews? In other words, how can you be sure these happy happy people dislike *anything*?

That's the problem: The Control. Everything needs a Control against which to measure, to make sure you're getting accurate results. A reviewer's positive review can be said to only be valuable if they can demonstrate that they do, in fact, dislike something. A reviewer who likes everything is useless. When a review zine only prints positive reviews, you have to assume there's a huge pile of rejected zines that *would* have gotten bad reviews. If you assume that, it still works, so the question becomes whether assuming something is a good way to operate.

**The Bad.** Other review zines take the opposite approach: They pride themselves in the harshness of their reviews. While not having bad reviews as an editorial policy, these reviewers take the stance that a tough standard means only truly amazing zines get their approval, while any sort of mediocrity or lackluster effort is punished ruthlessly.

Of course, snarkiness often becomes a goal in and of itself. Like at the lunch table I sat at during High School, insult-comedy quickly becomes a competition of wit, speed, and viciousness: Whoever got off the nastiest one-liner won. You read some of the harder-edged review zines, and you get the feeling the reviewers aren't really reviewing zines, they're scanning them for material for their pithy barbs. *The bastards.*

It seems pretty obvious that the only way to really know the value of a reviewer is to read both what they like and what they didn't like, and, most importantly, *why* they liked or didn't like something. I think the reason someone doesn't like a zine is often the whole point of a review. I mean, if someone starts off a negative review of *The Whirligig* by saying, "I don't like litzines..." you know the poor zine didn't have a chance, and that colors your appreciation of the review. On the other hand, if you've read ten reviews of litzines by that reviewer and they always hate them, and then they review *The Whirligig* and love it, that

review tells you a lot more.

Of course, what I think would be total *genius* would be a review zine that only prints positive reviews of *The Inner Swine*. Oh wait...that **is** *The Inner Swine*. Never mind.

## A WORLD OF PEOPLE COOLER THAN ME

*...in which your intrepid wanky columnist wonders about all the zines and DIY projects that don't get reviewed.*

I'm usually the least cool, hip person in the room. It's okay—I'm used to it. By the time I discover a trend or fad, it's usually been out of style for years and little kids—with whom I've been waging a quiet war of attrition these past few years—make fun of me, mercilessly. They call me Bathrobe Guy because I walk around in a tattered bathrobe all day, muttering and they like to throw rocks at me when I shuffle home from the liquor store—but I digress; the point is I am woefully uncool. Heck, the whole DIY publishing world should have washed its hands and left zining behind when I started publishing my little magazine, as I was obviously the last kid in the room.

My brand of all-purpose ignorance is breathtaking, in a way, and extends to just about everything, including the wealth of zines out there in the world. Basically, if it isn't mentioned on alt.zines or reviewed in Zine World or Xerography Debt or some of the other well-known review zines, I haven't heard of it. Which means, since those august publications can't possibly review every zine out there—and probably not even half—there is a huge cloud of Dark Matter zines out there that seem to be existing without my knowledge or approval—a previously unthinkable proposition. There could be thousands of zines out there that I've never heard of, and probably won't ever hear of. There could be this whole Philip K. Dick shadow universe of zines, a doppelganger of my own zine out there, a mirror image pamphlet produced by a flabby nerd with a colorful drinking problem—why not? We're talking Dark Matter zines, after all. Anything's possible. And if a zine doesn't get reviewed in the major review pubs, does that zine actually exist?

Consider this: Most zines, over time, disappear. People tend to view zines as disposable, after all; they're cheap toilet reading. Zine libraries generally—though not universally—suffer from the same transience and impermanence as the publications they aim to preserve, and fade away with a shocking suddenness all too often. The publishers themselves often print just enough to fill their orders, give a few more away, and as often as not don't have

any copies of issues left over, unless you're like me and lack basic math skills and wildly overprint every issue in an orgy of financial ruination. And, of course, a large number of zines don't even get to issue #2, and their publisher doesn't consider issue #1 worth saving. Poof! The zine is gone, and after a few years it may as well have never been published.

I suppose zine review zines can suffer the same fate, and a few probably have. Even major ones can disappear—Factsheet 5, anyone?—and a few years down the pike and already Factsheet 5 seems like a ghost, a memory, and there're probably scads of zine publishers who've never heard of it. But at least zine-review zines concentrate a large number of zine titles into one slim publication, so if just one issue survives the microscopic traces of a hundred zines survive with it, proof of life.

So what happens to Dark Matter zines that don't get reviewed? What if they're not even reviewed in the Dark Matter review zines? Many zine publishers are islands of perversity in the straight world, without bridges or trade routes between. Zines are born, live briefly, and die, often—maybe usually—without notice or record. Maybe people find a box of them ten, twenty years down the road—and then what? If you find at fifty something you wrote at twenty, what will your reaction be? And what about the small-run zines, where maybe twenty copies are produced and distributed by hand to people of varying reliability, varying interest?

Maybe none of these Dark Matter zines are worthwhile. Maybe most of them, like most of everything, suck. But still, it bothers me that so many are potentially chum, potentially lost, never known beyond a tiny and mortal group of people. Even with all DIY publicity resources firing full blast we'll be lucky if anyone remembers our zine a hundred years from now. If you don't even have that going for you, who'll ever know? There are plenty of things out there that are obscure: Novels, music, poems, political movements that have faded into the dustbin of history, and few people realize they ever existed, or care. But at least there is some record of them, some dusty old repository where their impact on the world, if any, is recorded and can be accessed if you're curious. If a couple of kids somewhere bang out five issues of *We Haven't Learned the True Meaning of Rebellion* and then slowly drift apart and never speak again and two years later their parents sell the house and a box containing the last existing issues is tossed into the garbage. . .did the zine ever actually exist?

The same question, of course, can be applied to people. This is why I drink.

There are, of course, no guarantees. You can get reviewed everywhere, get lots of distribution, and fill out the copyright forms and send copies of everything to the Library of Congress and every zine library around, and still you maybe forgotten, and still your zine may disappear. But the more places your work is reproduced, the more places it is mentioned, set in writing and discussed, the better chance you have, I think. And a chance is all you ever get, anyway, in anything. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to put on my bathrobe and go to the liquor store for dinner.

## FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT

*...in which your intrepid wanky columnist seeks an answer to the burning question: Is there such a thing as too many reviews?*

I'm a busy, busy man. Between holding down the day job, keeping up with enough boozing to stave off the shakes without descending into Prestone-guzzling delirium, and making the celebrity party scene on a regular basis, I barely have time to produce my zine, much less do any sort of quality control. Most of my days are blurs, either pleasant or unpleasant, crammed full of activity. It's little wonder, then, that the mailing list for my zine is one of the most neglected aspects of my whole operation—once you get on my mailing list, chances are you will always be on my mailing list, forever and ever. I just never seem to have the time to adjust it—I barely summon the energy to print out the damn labels from it every few months. The only time it gets attention is when someone actually asks to be taken off, or when I get a returned issue. Waste \$1.06 on you once, shame on you for moving without giving notice. Waste \$1.06 on you twice, and that's half a beer I could have bought.

As a result, there are addresses on there from the beginning of time. Most of the addresses that have never been cleaned off belong to review sources—magazines that, back in the misty beginnings of my zine, seemed like good places to send TIS for a review. As long as those publications haven't gone out of business—heck, as long as one lone survivor of the zine bubble still maintains the PO Box—they're gonna get a copy of my zine. The really amazing thing is, some of these publications still review my zine. Maybe not every single issue, but pretty frequently. There are a couple of places that have probably reviewed my zine fifteen or twenty times. Maximumrocknroll, for example, has reviewed my zine at least fifteen times.

Now, I am renowned throughout zinedom as a humble, unassuming guy who would kill his loved ones and small, cute animals in exchange for his name in print. So the fact that some publications have reviewed my zine dozens of times is delightful, and not something I'd complain about—but it does make me wonder when the law of diminishing returns means these reviews become largely meaningless.



Most publications have a personality, of sorts. The people involved with it give it a flavor, a collective mentality. With the smaller zines, this is usually one or two people doing all the zine reviews, but even in a larger publication you tend to get a definable voice out of the mix, a cohesive attitude. After getting a bunch of reviews from one source, I start to wonder if there's really any value in getting more reviews from that source—not value to me, of course, as anything with my name in it, even a police summons, is valuable to me—but value to the objective reader seeking opinions of my zine.

The problem is that the reviews from a single source are pretty uniform. They say basically the same things with minor variations (sort of like my zine, but that's a subject for another column). This, of course, is wonderful if what they're saying is that I am a Golden God of Zines and deserve all your cash, love, and strength in service to me. It's slightly less wonderful if the reviews boil down to "Somers sucks" and there are twenty-three of them. After a while you know how that particular publication just doesn't dig your action, or loves you to pieces—you can predict what they're going to say about my zine with a disturbing amount of accuracy. This could be because my zine is depressingly predictable in its subject matter and level of entertainment, but really I think it's simple: If you hated it last month, you're gonna hate it this month, and vice versa. There're diminishing returns here, I think.

There is, of course, the slight possibility that an aberrant review will prove to have value—that after a long string of monochromatic reviews, one will suddenly appear that is radically different, indicating that maybe the particular issue being reviewed is special, somehow (especially bad, or especially good). I'd argue that the time and patience required for this to be possible isn't worth the reward. I mean, if it takes three years of scanning similar reviews to find that one that suddenly makes the needle jump in one direction or the other, have you really gained anything? Aside from an encyclopedic knowledge of reviews that grant you a Rain Man-like ability to tell me the contents of every issue of my zine, even issues I've forgotten existed, even issues I wish everyone would forget existed, I don't think so. After a certain point—which I will now arbitrarily decide, via my god-like power as a columnist for Xerography Debt, is five reviews—the sameness of the reviews blurs into useless cacophony.

Of course I'm going to just keep sending my issues out to anyplace that'll review 'em, because I am wallpapering my bedroom with every mention of my name in print, ever. And maybe there's a point where there are so many reviews of my zine out there that it won't matter any more what they say, individually, because I'll have reached the level of a meme, worming my way into everyone's brain and taking root, causing irritation, madness, and much suffering. Now that I think about it, I wonder if that wasn't my actual purpose, all those years ago when I first published my zine, forgotten over the years as a result of heroic alcohol abuse.

I suppose I ought to be grateful that anyone has ever considered my zine to be worthy of a review, but I cannot help this massive brain and the constant, searching thoughts it sends up the dumbwaiter, demanding investigation and answer. Also, the Xerography Debt folks would kick my ass if I failed to come up with a column as ordered, and I am frail and easily broken due to the aforementioned heroic alcohol abuse. Pray for me.

## ZINE SUPERSTAR

*...in which your intrepid wanky columnist disabuses you of the notion that zine reviews count for anything, in the larger view of things*

I think it's safe to say that no one publishes a zine because they think it will make them rich. Hell, I had to get a job just to be able to publish my zine; the lax security around my first company's copiers is what made my zine possible in the beginning. While plenty of people manage to print and mail their zine despite living in poverty, I am just not willing to give up the essentials (beer and. . .okay, just beer—but, Bubba, that's a lot of beer) so my zine empire had to wait until some unsuspecting corporation could underwrite my expenses. I work in publishing, which is perfect for under-the-radar zine making, because everything you're doing for your zine looks just like your work duties. Until people began noticing how much time I spent at the copier and how I never seemed to know anything about the projects I was supposedly working on, they all thought I was the busiest motherfucker on the planet.

My job and zine publishing have one thing in common: Neither will make you rich. Whenever I meet fellow publishing drones in the various dive bars around the Tri-State area—and I meet them often—we exchange the secret handshake, make the traditionally outrageous claims of money and cocktails owed to each other, and recite the motto: You won't get rich in publishing. Just because someone, somewhere is getting rich from publishing doesn't mean any of that trickles down. People fresh out of school or some disastrous career often think that publishing is exciting and glamorous, that you'll be doing lunch with high-powered writers and movie people, making deals, and living large on expense accounts—but the reality is that publishing is a relatively low-paying world, and that the majority of publishing is not very exciting—we're talking educational, medical, technical publishing and the like. I mean, you're talking about a field dominated by people who were English Majors back in school. None of us are worth anything in the business world.

Zines won't make you rich, either. People putting out their first zine sometimes assume that they are months away from having MTV News in their living room interviewing them, and they often labor under the misapprehension that zine reviews are an important link in this

chain of success. There's usually no budget for promotion—or if you're like me there was a sizable budget for promotion and you drank it away one crazy night, waking up in a cheap plywood coffin in Mexico, penniless and potentially brain-damaged—so zine reviews are a cheap way to get the word out. But don't think that if you can just get enough reviews in enough places, your zine will take on a sort of cultural escape velocity and become the new underground sensation, leading to hip underground notoriety, mention on lots of Blogs, and eventually the sort of book-deal fame of, say, Pagan Kennedy (Pagan who? Exactly!). It just won't happen.

Now, if this is what you're hoping for—certainly not everyone gives a rat's ass about being a published author and all that—then know this: The assumption that zine reviews help you sell zines or get notoriety is, as far as I can tell through my blurry vision and delirium-plagued experience, horseshit.

My zine's been reviewed in a lot of places, a lot of times. A comfortable estimate would be that my zine has been reviewed about 100 times since it's inception. This counts everything, from poorly-spelled and incoherent reviews tied to rocks and thrown through my windows to reviews in well-known publications. Also tied to rocks and thrown through my windows. That's a pretty good number. Despite all of those reviews, I've never experienced anything that could be called a spike in sales—and most of those reviews, if I can ditch the faux-modesty I usually clown around with, were good reviews. I've had plenty of good reviews, and they've had about zero impact on interest in my zine. The conclusion is pretty obvious: The main reason for zine reviews is to create content for zines.

Come on—who hasn't read a zine where the last four pages are sort of scattershot with zine reviews done in large type, and you can just tell the damn things were puked in there just to fill out the issue. This doesn't really apply to publications like Xerography Debt or Zine World, because their whole purpose is to review zines—you can't accuse a zine-review zine of including zine reviews just to fill out space. Well, I guess you could. But I'd only do so after a few stiff drinks and a swelling desire to pick a fight. When you're reading a zine that is preoccupied with, say, homosexual Mexican wrestlers for 40 pages and then suddenly includes five half-assed reviews in the back, you can guess what happened, can't you?

Reviews are great, of course. They're feedback, for one thing, and they certainly must in some way get the word out. But they're only getting the word out to people who are already looking for zines—maybe the first few good reviews in well-known places can bring you some new readers, but after a while I'll bet everyone who's ever going to buy a copy of your zine has already, and no amount of good reviews is going to change that. So while there's nothing wrong with reviews, you have to be prepared for the fact that they will result in little more than ego stroking.

Of course, if you're putting out a zine thinking it's going to make you rich and famous, you might as well give up now and put the money you're spending to better use: Buying me drinks. Feel free to mail me airline-bottles of liquor. I needs them.

## DO NOTHING, SAY NOTHING, AND BE NOTHING

*...in which your intrepid columnist explores what the term "review" means, and what is and isn't a review.*

One thing that never changes, aside from my gnawing hunger for beer, sweet life-giving beer, is the disruptive force of an opinion, any opinion. We're all taught from childhood that our opinion counts, that our vote counts, that we count. I'll leave whether this is true or not to another column; let's just stipulate that the whole world is made up of cheeky bastards who think their opinions matter, like me and you, you cheeky bastard. The end result? A lot of arguments. Say anything publicly that isn't plainly obvious or easily proved beyond any doubt and you are undoubtedly in for a fight, bubba, with at least one person who thinks you're talking out of your ass.

You get a lot of this with zine reviews, of course; I discussed in a previous column the futility of talking back to a bad review. What I'm wondering today is:

1. What, exactly, constitutes a review?

2. Can you catch a disease from drinking strangers' cocktails when they go to the bathroom, or does the alcohol kill their cooties?

But mainly the review definition thing. One burning (in the case of many diseases, literally) question at a time, though. I'm wondering about what constitutes a review because of an incident which occurred on the Internet newsgroup alt.zines—the Thunderdome of zine-related discussion—a few weeks ago. It went like this:

Whenever I get zines in my PO Box at home, I post a listing of the items received to the alt.zines newsgroup. If I've read something of the zine beforehand I'll comment on it sometimes, but often I just post contact info and a vague summary of contents, usually gleaned from the TOC and the cover. If I have an opinion on what I've read or gleaned, I'll express it. Recently, I posted the following about a zine that had arrived in my mailbox: "I didn't much care for this, but that's a personal opinion." The question is, was that a review?

The publisher of that zine didn't think so, and took umbrage with me for posting such an uninformative and slipshod review. I'd agree with him if I thought this represented a review.

It doesn't. It's an opinion, certainly, but if a review was just an unadorned opinion we'd call them opinions, and not reviews, wouldn't we? I do not consider these opinions to be reviews, even though an opinion, certainly, is the main component of a review. But it isn't the only component, and I feel very strongly that a simple opinion does not a review make.

What's the difference between a personal opinion and a review? Well, a review has to contain several components in order to be considered a review: An opinion on the material, certainly; a reason or reasons for having that opinion; an attempt at balance; a formal structure; and, most importantly, the intention of influencing your zine-reading decisions. If you'll excuse me while I spasm into italics for a moment, that is the whole goddamn point of a review. You can probably get away with leaving out one or two of those (and many reviews do indeed neglect the reasons for their opinions), but you can't leave out the last component. If the statement is not attempting to influence your choice in zines, then it is not a review. A bare personal opinion cannot be considered a review. It describes one man's gut reaction to something, with no attempt at justifying or explaining that reaction, or any expectation that the reader will use that opinion as a basis for their own choices.

As another example, I think *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* is one of the worst films I've ever seen. I actually saw this atrocity in a theater, and paid money for it, back in the lazy, hazy days of my childhood. All I recall is chewing through a seat cushion to escape. Is that a review? No, it's a personal opinion. Does it make you want to see the movie less? If it does, you're a lost cause anyway.

Of course, a publicly stated opinion can affect people's zine-reading decisions. The idea that someone is actually paying attention to what I say is frightening and exhilarating at the same time, making me feel like a Jim Jones-type cult may not be beyond my slim capabilities after all. If enough people, or even a single influential person, express an opinion about a zine, it certainly can affect how that zine is perceived. While this is true, it still doesn't make an opinion into a formal review, and you can't hold an opinion to the same standard.

As for my other burning question regarding yinked cocktails, I will now launch an exhaustive investigation which will probably leave me friendless, bloated, and possibly diseased, with a throbbing 32-pound liver. But it's worth it. I have dedicated my life to illuminating you cheeky bastards. Now, for god's sake, mail me some cocktails.

## THE HUMORLESS

*...in which I ponder those who review zines without any apparent sense of humor.*

In the word of the great and terrible Gary Coleman, it takes different strokes to move the world, and in the dim, perpetually twilit world of zines you meet most kinds. DIY publishers come in all shapes and sizes, from middle-aged novelists to teenaged pranksters, aging hippies and hardcore conservatives. The only thing linking all these disparate people is their love of self-publishing and their decision to give the straight world of print a big old fuck you and just mail out their photocopied publications despite strong indications that no one will care. In that sense, we all are Gumby, don't you think?

Of course, having a warm spot in your heart for your fellow DIYers does not necessarily mean that you love all zines equally, because only morons love all things equally. You're going to like some and dislike others, and that's natural. You might even write reviews, some positive and some negative, in order to help guide others towards publications that you think are worthy, and that's a great service to provide. I've never been one to demand that everyone love me, or my zine; I accept bad reviews with all the grace and aplomb that I possess, which, admittedly, ain't much. But I try. Just about the only negative reviews that get my panties in a bunch are what we'll group together under the heading of Humorless Reviews.

My zine isn't a 'humor' zine per se. I don't write it thinking it's comedy gold; rather, I try to be humorous while writing about opinions or theories or my latest drunken exploit ('humorous', for me, basically boiling down to repeated references to being pantsless and, when desperate, throwing out smoke grenade-like non-sequiturs to disappear behind) but I'd never kid myself that I'm actually funny. But there is a layer of irony and humorous intent in my zine—unless you think I actually drink entire bottle of bourbon, hallucinate a leprechaun named McEgo who dictates my zine articles to me, and then wake up pantsless in Mexico 'again'—and you have to be capable of sussing that subtle thread if you're going to give my zine a fair shake.

Don't get me wrong—giving my zine a fair shake doesn't mean you have to like it. You

can say the humor fails to be funny, or that my ironic pose is merely a technique for avoiding having to actually defend any of my ludicrous opinions. You can say that my writing is flabby, incoherent, or just not very interesting. All I'm saying is that you have to at least start with the acknowledgment that there are layers of intended humor and intended irony in my zine, that there's a persona being used there. Otherwise, your review is going to fall into the category of *The Humorless*, and not only is it useless as criticism, it's downright irritating to have to read.

The *Humorless* reviews fall into two categories: 1) those who do not get the joke, and 2) those who seem to believe there should never *be* jokes.

**Those who do not get the joke.** These jolly reviewers are the ones who take every word I write literally. So if I say that I drank fifteen Tequila Fanny Bangers and spent the evening throwing up and wailing until I passed out and woke up in Mexico, pantsless, again, then they comment on my sad alcoholism and how horrible it is that I don't realize that I have a problem. If I write that I have invented a revolutionary engine that runs off of kittens, they write in horror at my terrible cruelty to animals. Since most of the writing in any given issue of my zine veers strongly towards the ridiculous, the unsanitary, and even the fundamentally impossible, this makes reading reviews of this ilk painful.

One of my favorite examples of this was the reviewer who complained that the "fake letters" were not very funny. This was possibly because the letters were not fake, despite various references to pantslessness, booze, and my worldwide empire of evil.

**Those who believe there should never *be* jokes.** Ah, my favorites: those who think that every zine should be politically charged, utterly sincere, and completely honest. I mean, I'll grant that I'm a privileged white male fop, I'll stipulate that I am pretty much full of shit, but I don't think the world needs more humorless pricks. Reviews that have as their starting point a belief that middle-class white men should be grateful and quiet bring only tears and recriminations, because no matter what I write in the zine the critical response boils down to "Shut up, oppressor!"

Great fun, indeed.

You should never complain about bad reviews, of course, but you can certainly complain about incoherent reviews. If you have no sense of humor whatsoever, you should probably not try to review any zines that use humor as a technique, or so it seems to me. But I am, after all, just a humble zine publisher, frequently inebriated, usually pantsless, and too busy oppressing those around me to try and change the world.

## STUBBORN IGNORANCE

*...in which I wonder if anyone ever learns anything  
from a bad review*

Americans can sometimes appear to take perverse pride and delight in their refusal to learn anything, and zine publishers are no exception. How else to explain regularly pouring money, time, and energy into a publication that in most cases will be read by a vanishingly small percentage of the population? It's either a sickness, or a complete inability to learn from past experience that results in thoughts like *okay, so I printed 5,000 copies of **Who Wants Cheeseballs #1** and sold thirteen copies, so I'm gonna print 10,000 copies of **WWC #2, baby!*** It's sad really, and evidence of this disorder can be seen throughout the desolate, ruined lives of zine publishers everywhere. Mainly, though, I think it can be seen most clearly in the defiant way we all ignore bad reviews.

Of course, we have an excuse: Zines are not, as a rule, published with an eye towards reaching a mass audience—or even of reaching *any* audience, necessarily. Many, if not most, zines are published purely for the personal satisfaction of its creator. Reaching some sort of audience is important, of course, and many zine publishers wouldn't mind waking up one day to find their PO box stuffed full of desperate pleas for copies of their zine, but they're not really trying to appeal to a mass audience—if they were, they probably would pursue some other form of media, and not *zines* for god's sake. They're satisfying themselves, and if they happen to attract like-minded freaks from around the world, well, all well and good. But it's pleasing yourself that matters—if you wanted to please thousands, you'd go scrape yourself off at some alt weekly or other straight publishing gig.

So, since zines are pretty desperately individual, it's not surprising, then, that zine publishers by and large treat bad reviews as interesting artifacts to be observed, cooed over, and then discarded, much like particularly gross roadkill: unpleasant and quickly forgotten no matter how startling it is at first flush. You read the bad review, go through the usual stages of Bad Review Denial (anger, mailing dead rat to reviewer, inebriation, drunken apologetic phone call to reviewer pledging eternal freindship, pantslessness) and then do absolutely nothing to change your zine, or to even consider what the reviewer has said.



Because it's your zine, and you probably don't give a fuck if someone at *Zine World* or *maximumrocknroll* likes it or not.

Zine reviews are for the benefit of the zine buyer, not the zine producer. Zine buyers are faced with a huge assortment of zines and don't want to throw their money away, so reviews are helpful in making that decision. But zine publishers? Bad reviews roll off our backs and leave no impression. We can't afford to think about them too hard, because even beneficial adjustments—like, maybe, not using the word “pantsless” six hundred times in each issue, as if it somehow gets funnier every time you use it—inch your zine towards blandness. Part of what makes a zine a beautiful snowflake are the frustrating bad decisions every zine publisher insists on making in every issue, the self-indulgences, the inside jokes no one else gets, the stubborn refusal to proofread or spellcheck. Smooth those kinks out and address reviewer's concerns, and the end result might be better in some sense of the word, but it will be appreciably less *yours*. And we all know that.

Me, I often regard bad reviews as signs that I'm doing something *right*. After all, a zine that pleases everyone is often the most boring zine in the room, so a little disapproval and sneering is good for the soul, because at least *somebody* is irritated at your presence. Besides, so far my zine has outlived 3 out of 4 of the zines that have reviewed it, and that feels pretty good, too, especially when I imagine myself in some sort of Idi Amin uniform, seated on a throne made from the cleaned skulls of those zines, chortling. But I tend to have that dream pretty often, so maybe you can't put much stock in that.

112 - YOU SHALL KNOW our zine making techniques

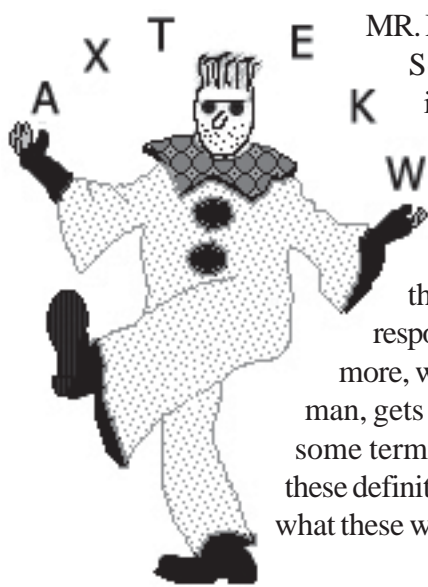


# GLOSSARY

JEFF SEZ: "My own La Campaña Para El Silencio is DIY--I do not shy away from blood on my own hands."



# MR. MUTE'S GLOSSARY OF TERMS



MR. MUTE HERE. Since Your Humble Editor Jeff Somers is generally incompetent and/or inebriated, it falls to me to address the fact that people who are a) not familiar with *The Inner Swine* and all the in-jokes it is usually filled with or b) not publishers of zines themselves may encounter terms in this book that mystify them. Jeff "Your Humble Editor" Somers' response to this was to grunt and soil himself a little more, which, to those of us who are familiar with the man, gets translated as apathy. So I set about defining some terms for you. Please do not assume that any of these definitions are *accurate* or *official*. They are merely what these words mean when Jeff Somers uses them.

## A

**ALT. ZINES:** An Internet newsgroup dedicated to the discussion of zines and DIY publishing in general. Newsgroups can be accessed by anybody via a computer program called a newsreader. Many modern browsers include newsreaders. A good freeware newsreader is Microplanet Gravity (<http://lightning.prohosting.com/~tbates/gravity/>). I disapprove, as there is much profanity and babble there.

**ARGTTUP:** *A Reader's Guide to the Underground Press*, otherwise known as *Zine World* (<http://www.undergroundpress.org>). Zine Review Publication.

## B

**BEER:** Beer is the life-giving nectar that Your Humble Editor's alcohol intake



most frequently takes the form of, as it is cheap, plentiful, and delicious. It does tend to bloat Jeff a little, though; he's lost that boyish figure of late, and is starting to resemble King Henry VIII.

**BINDING:** The way the gathered pages of a book or zine is held together. Examples are: Perfect-binding, saddle-stitched/stapled (also called booklet stapled), ring binding, or tape binding. People who use tape binding need to be silenced immediately, as it quickly devolves into a sticky mess.

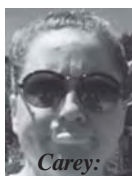
**BOURBON:** The preferred booze of *The Inner Swine* Inner Circle, usually in the form of Jack Daniels, proof that mankind will some day rule the universe. Booze is fine although it does inspire some people who are normally nicely quiet to speak up and speak loudly, which is undesirable.



**BOBBLEHEADS:** Jeff Somers is under the impression that his disembodied head floating on a page is hilarious, and he overuses it to the point of insanity. The goggle-eyed, shameless photo of his head was taken during a car ride at a moment when he thought a crash was imminent and he feared for his life. This actually adds to the humor quotient, for me.

**BUST:** *Bust* is a magazine that started out as a zine, or a zine that is simply incredibly successful, depending on how you look at it. The argument rages on. More info: <http://www.bust.com>.

## C



Carey:  
Mysterious  
'publisher'  
of TIS. Mr.  
Mute  
recommends:  
Fear her.

**CASSIE CAREY:** Listed as the 'Publisher' of *The Inner Swine*, Mrs. Carey's exact role within TISIC is shadowy and a little frightening. I've spent a lot of time observing TISIC and one thing I can say with confidence is that the female members are universally to be feared.

**CDR:** A recordable CD-Rom. There are also CD-RWs (recordable-writable), as well as DVD-Rs and DVD-RWs. These are mainly used to record stolen MP3 music files, contributing to the noise level of the universe, and are thus deprecated.



Download Mr. Mute's  
MP3s 'thirty minutes  
of complete silence'  
from KaZaa today!

**CLINT JOHNS:** 'Chief Dude' at Tower Magazines, although I strongly suspect the name is a universal pseudonym much like Kaiser Soze. Must be regarded with suspicion due to the support and interest he shows towards unreadable hack Somers; obviously the

man has a secret agenda. I suspect that whatever his agenda is, it's a noisy one, and so must oppose him.

**COMMODORE 64:** Early personal computer featuring built-in BASIC, an 8-bit architecture, and 64k of RAM. Deprecated due to its advanced sound-synthesis capabilities thanks to its SID chip.

**CONSIGNMENT:** Taking on zines to resell, paying for issues only if you sell them, as opposed to paying up-front. For example, Jeff Somers sends Jimbo Distro ten copies of *The Inner Swine*. Jimbo sells four copies, and then sends Jeff the agreed-upon percentage of that \$8. Most, although not all, distros and stores work this way with zines.

## D

**DANETTE SOMERS:** The lovely and talented wife of Somers, too good for him by far. I've learned to treat her with care, as she's crafty as well as easy on the eyes. Serves as TIS Legal Counsel as well as wife. Often referred to as: *The Duchess*.



**DIGEST:** 8.5x11-sized paper, folded in half. Usually booklet-stapled.

**DISTRO:** A person or persons who distribute zines to the waiting world. Some are very small, while others work with hundreds of titles. A large number of distros are staffed by one dedicated person, who takes on zines (usually on consignment, but occasionally with payment up-front) and sells them personally. Not a very high-income pursuit, to be sure, but also very quiet.



**DIY: Do-It-Yourself.** A philosophy often associated with, but not limited to, publishing. Any endeavor wherein the creators do not sit around waiting for some company or organization to manufacture and distribute their wares and instead perform all the labor themselves, on a low, self-financed budget, can be considered DIY. Zines are so DIY they hurt. My own **La Campaña Para El Silencio** is DIY--I do not shy away from

blood on my own hands.

**DOS: Disk Operating System.** The most common is Microsoft's MS-DOS, but PC-DOS, DR-DOS, and FreeDOS also exist. Operating system for PCs, happily nongraphical and silent. Replaced over the years by the uglier, noisier, and fatter GUI-based systems like Windows.

## E

**E-BOOK:** Electronic book. Any book-length work published in electronic format of any kind, requiring either a PC or a specific electronic device in order to read. This is what's wrong with the world: For hundreds of years we've had a perfect communication device: Writing. Thousands of years after creation, texts can still be decoded and read. Hundreds of years after their creation, the works of Shakespeare are still accessible. You can drop books into the toilet, and they are still usable. And best of all, there's no noise involved in reading, unless you're one of those mouth-breathers who has to whisper along with the words or they get lost--but we somehow think we need an advance in technology in order to continue reading. Assholes.

**E-PUBLISHING:** Any creation and distribution of written material via electronic media, such as: The Internet, floppy disks, or digital files. One thing to keep in mind is that Zines are paper, E-Zines are electronic, and never shall the two mix. On pain of death.

## F

**FRAME-BASED:** System of electronic typesetting which views aspects of a page--text boxes, picture boxes, etc--as separate and separately modified *frames*. Word-Processors are not frame-based, which is why they make piss-poor typesetting tools if you want to do more than just format text. This is what's known as **Obfuscating Jargon**, used by geeks to make everyone feel dumb, and to hide their own ignorance on subjects behind a screen of foppy words. This is why verbal communication stinks, because you can just drop these terms into a conversation and move quickly away from them before being forced to provide some sort of definition.

**FLOPPY:** 3.5" diskette used in PCs. The death of the floppy is always being heralded, and yet it survives. Sort of like Somers' unreadable zine.

**FONT:** Any digital typeface that can normally be rendered in a variety of sizes. Times New Roman is a font. This entire book uses three fonts: P22 Typewriter, Times New Roman, and Oz Handicraft. Some zine publishers (and DIY publishers in general) suffer from font diarrhea, wherein they use every font at their disposal, in wildly inappropriate ways. These people are basically making noise on page, and will be dealt with when the Glorious Silent Pogrom comes to their town.

**FREE AS IN BEER:** Taken from the Open-Source Software movement. Some things are 'Free' as in Speech, meaning free in the sense of your fundamental rights and freedoms, while others are 'Free' as in beer, meaning something you get for no money. This helps clarify statements like "I like free



*Mr. Mute likes beer fine.*

software” though it only complicates statements like “I like free beer.” Another reason, I think, to ritualistically cut out all your tongues.

**FREEMWARE:** Computer software that is given away, with no strings attached, as opposed to **Shareware**, which is given away for a limited time with the expectation (often enforced via disabling the software after a while) that you will eventually pay for it.

**FRONT-/END-MATTER:** The stuff at the beginning (Title page, table of contents, preface, etc) and end (index, appendices, etc) of a book, usually typeset and paginated separately from the text.

## G



**GEORGE “THE ANIMAL” STEELE:** A wrestler born in 1937 who was famous for being a wild, uncontrollable madman in the ring who would often eat stuffing out of the ring padding. He is also one of the hairiest men ever seen in the wild. He doesn’t say much, however, and for that reason I plan to make him Governor of The Eastern United State’s Territories after I seize power.



*I've been called The Gimp a few times in my life. All those people are...gone, now.*

**THE GIMP:** The GIMP is the **GNU Image Manipulation Program**. It is a freely distributed piece of software suitable for such tasks as photo retouching, image composition and image authoring. See <http://www.gimp.org> for more information.

**GUI:** **Graphical User Interface**. A picture-and-mouse based way of interacting with an electronic device, like a PC. Microsoft Windows, KDE, and Mac OS are examples of GUIs.

## H

**HARD DRIVE:** The secret cube inside your PC which stores all your secret information, apparently via black magic. I have no dispute with hard drives, as they are useful and more or less silent.

**HTML:** A *markup language* used in rendering web pages. You mark up strings of characters with codes that mean “bold” or “italic” or “centered” and when the browser loads the page it interprets and discards the codes, leaving only the formatted text. That’s technology for you: Everything a little more complex, every year.



## I

**IRC:** Internet Relay Chat. I had no idea what this is, so I had to look it up. Turns out, it's just a form of stealth-babbling. It's a client-server chat system of large (often worldwide) networks. IRC is structured as networks of Internet servers, each accepting connections from client programs, one per user. Used by a lot of underground-types precisely because people like you have no idea what it is.

**ISBN:** International Standard Book Number. A number voluntarily assigned to a published book, used by distributors, bookstores, and the Library of Congress to keep track of books. Paranoids see it as a conspiracy to keep small-fry DIY publishers out of the game. Me, I'm all for a ISHN--International Standard Human Number, tattooed on the back of everyone's neck. Every time you enter a public space your ISHN would be scanned, and if you made too much noise, you'd automatically be incinerated. Granted, the rate of false incinerations would be high, but it'd be well worth it.



*Well worth it,  
motherfuckers.*

## J

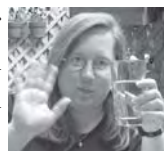
**JEFF SOMERS:** Under laboratory conditions I have nurtured my own ego into a huge, healthy beast with rippling muscles and thick, downy hair. But I have also entrusted servants with Elephant Guns to blow its brains out if it ever slips its chains and starts hurling feces around the place. That is all.



**JEOF VITA:** TIS Staff Artist, creator of most of the cover art associated with TIS-product (including the cover of this book), Founding Swine, and ancient member of TISIC. Jeof Vita's boastful bravado angers me. I intend to have him silenced as soon as I find a way to defeat his wife/bodyguard, Misty Quinn.

## K

**KAREN ACCAVALLO:** Reluctant member of TISIC and proofreader of most TIS-related material. Known for her white-hot rages and her desire for 'more order', I strongly suspect Karen would make an excellent ally, if not my Queen in a More Silent World.



**KEN WEST:** Founding Swine whose original role in TISIC is shrouded in mystery but who now handles security for notorious lush Somers, making sure Your Humble Editor remains unharmed when he appears in public, and cleaning

up his many public messes with ruthless efficiency. Known to be relatively quiet, I often think I could use someone like him on my own team.

**KEYBOARDING:** Manually typing text which only exists in hard copy format, usually into an electronic format. Typing is a noble art, as long as you don't have one of those clackety-clack keyboards that make a lot of noise, in which case I will make you eat it.

## L

**LASER PRINTER:** A laser printer is a popular type of personal computer printer that uses a non-impact (keys don't strike the paper), photocopier technology. When a document is sent to the printer, a laser beam "draws" the document on a selenium-coated drum using electrical charges. After the drum is charged, it is rolled in toner, a dry powder type of ink. The toner adheres to the charged image on the drum. The toner is transferred onto a piece of paper and fused to the paper with heat and pressure. Either that, or small Keebler Elves live within it and draw furiously.



**LAUREN BOLAND:** The Overall Official Cool Chick of TIS, whatever that means. Lauren moved from New Jersey to Colorado a few years ago and her TIS-related activities have diminished a great deal.

**LEADING:** Space added between lines of type to space out text and provide visual separation of the lines. Measured in points or fractions thereof. Named after the strips of lead which used to be inserted between lines of metal type. It's amazing how ancient reasons for things continue as terminology in the modern age. Plus, now you'll be imagining strips of lead between every line. Weirdo.

## M

**MANUFACTURING:** The process of taking printed pages and binding them together into a finished booklet. This includes gathering, sorting, binding (stapling, glueing, etc), and folding, and anything else you might do to the issues/books, like spilling beer on them, setting them accidentally on fire, or cutting yourself on something sharp and bleeding all over them. Which I assume must be part of the manufacturing process since Somers does this quite frequently and usually mails the issues anyway, sometimes with a lame apology note like *sorry about the blood*.

**MINI:** Used to describe all zines smaller than digest. Letter-sized pages folded into quarters, eighths, etc.

**MISTY QUINN, ESQ. :** A longtime member of TISIC, Misty is the wife of Staff Artist Jeof Vita and witness to many of Jeff Somers' more embarrassing or illegal exploits. Her dangerous knowledge is probably why Somers hides behind anything he can find when she walks into a room. Often this turns out to be a lamp or slender plant, leaving it obvious to everyone that Jeff is right there in the room. He continues to hide, however, and doesn't even respond when people start shouting at him to give it up, he's been seen. If anyone tries to physically accost him and drag him into the open, he feigns unconsciousness, goes limp, and doesn't wake up until everyone has left. He then claims no memory of the events. This is remarkably effective.



*Misty S. Quinn, Esq, looking spectacular! I can print this picture here because I, Mr. Mute, am the only one who is not afraid of her.*

**MR. MUTE:** That would be. I abhor noise. I think you're all a bunch of chattering monkeys. I am going to cleanse the world of chatter. Since you're all chattering monkeys, that pretty much means I'm going to cleanse the world of *you*. While I wait for the right moment to launch my Silent Revolution, I pay the bills by freelancing for *The Inner Swine*. Somers doesn't seem to mind my political views, despite the fact that I intend to gut him when I'm in control. He's funny that way.

## N

**NOTHING:** There are no entries here. Move along.

## O

**ONE SHOT:** A zine produced one-time only, not a serial title.

## P

**P2P:** Peer to Peer. Usual used to describe a distributed computer network in which each workstation has equivalent capabilities and responsibilities, unlike the Internet's client/server structure, wherein one computer is a server and the other a client--usually a browser. What? I'm sorry. I lost consciousness from boredom there for a moment.

**PAPER WEIGHT:** Expressed in pounds. The higher the number, the heavier and thicker the sheet. I think everyone knew that kind of instinctively, but I've never lost underestimating all of you chattering monkeys.



*Mr. Mute Sez: I'll happily execute each and every motherfucking one of ya.*

**PC:** Personal Computer. You know, the thing you get all your free pornography from.

**PDF:** Portable Document Format. Adobe file format using the postscript printer language to create an on-screen document that matches its eventual printed form, which can then be read across many platforms (Mac, Windows, Unix, etc). In other words the height of the electronic revolution, apparently, is to make the things you see on screen look *exactly like* the printed documents we've been working with since the year 1. No wonder you're all going straight to the gallows once I take control.

**PROCESSOR:** A processor is the logic circuitry that responds to and processes the basic instructions that drive a computer. When people refer to a *pentium* or a *486*, they're talking about a processor. Which means they're boring fucks, but at least they don't write endless *articles* about them, like Somers.

## Q

**QUIMBYS:** A legendary bookstore in Chicago, very DIY and zine-friendly. Stop in and say hi to Liz Saidel. 1854 W. North Street, Chicago, IL, 60622; [www.quimbys.com](http://www.quimbys.com).

## R

**RAM:** Random Access Memory. High-speed memory in your PC which is used to store temporary processes and data for use by programs. Either that, or a voodoo spell.



**RAMEN NOODLES:** God's perfect food: Dried noodles and a foil packet of sodium-heavy 'seasoning'. Boil, sprinkle, drain--delicious! All my Silent Shock Troops will eat these as their rations.

**REVIEW ZINE:** A zine which has as its main purpose reviewing other zines. Some of the major ones are *Xerography Debt*, *Broken Pencil*, and *Zine World*. The biggest one used to be *Factsheet Five*, but it's been so long since that published it's really a myth now. Review Zines are a good idea, since they discourage people from *talking* about what zines to read.

**ROB GALA:** Founding Swine, now living in Seattle. Rob did a lot of work with Somers on TIS prior to giving up in disgust due to Somers' heavy drinking and personal-space issues. Rob still occasionally contributes to the zine, though he won't enter New Jersey without a Police Escort, for fear of a drunken Somers attacking him.



## S

**SASE:** Self Addressed Stamped Envelope. Basically a way for someone to respond to something you've mailed them without incurring any expense. Kind of uppity, if you ask me.

**SELF-PUBLISH:** Do I really need to provide a definition of this? Fine. Any kind of publishing which does not involve a corporation or other entity putting up cash and services. If you're doing all the work or paying for all the work, you're self-publishing.

**SERVICE HOUSE:** A compositor or print shop which is taking electronic files (typeset files, images, etc) and producing a printed product. I know what you were all thinking, dirty monkeys. The good news is, I've got nothing against sex in the Coming Silent World. The bad news is, you're most likely not going to live through the Silent Pogroms which will usher in the Coming Silent World. Tough break.

**SIDE-STAPLED:** Stapled along one edge, in poor imitation of tape binding.

**STANDARD:** Your average eight-and-a-half by eleven inches. Either 11x17 pages folded in half, or letter-sized sheets stapled in some ugly manner.

## T

**THE USUAL:** An ever-changing term, but generally speaking this refers to enough postage to pay for someone sending you their zine, or a trade of your zine for their zine. A lot of zines will list their prices as "\$X or the Usual".



**THUNDERCATS:** An animated television show involving, as best as I can tell, a group of superhero cat people (one a Lion named Lion-O, one a Panther named...ah, who the fuck knows. Or cares). This shit is why the world needs an enema. Somers's giggling enjoyment of crap like this likely explains his childish and inexplicably popular zine. The bad guy in the show was a mummy named *Mumm-Ra*, and he gets mentioned a lot. You gonna tell me now that Somers doesn't deserve to have his tongue ripped out?

**TISIC:** *The Inner Swine's Inner Circle*, otherwise known as the loud, noisy group of boozehounds who continually conspire to make Somers think he's amusing. Bastards.



**TRADE:** An exchange of publications or other goods in lieu of paying money for a zine or other DIY product. Most zine publishers will happily trade their zines for yours. Some get a little uppity about the 'cash value' of their zine, and can complain if you send them a

four-page stapled photocopied zine in exchange for their 100-page, professionally typeset, full-color gem. Fuck ‘em.

**TRIM SIZE:** The size of a book or a page of a book after all excess material has been trimmed off--most books are printed on paper much larger than their final size, and the excess is cut off. This book, for example, has a trim size of 7x10 inches. Isn't the publishing world just wonderful?

**TOWER RECORDS:** Chain of record stores founded in the 1960s, with stores across the United States. Known for being cool, independent, and very, very zine-friendly. A lot of zines are primarily distributed by Tower Magazines, which stocks the magazine racks in Tower stores. Tower also printed this book, natch. Be nice to Tower. Although when it's all said and done, they're going to have to find something else to sell, since music won't be allowed once I'm in charge.

**TYPESETTING:** The art of arranging letters on a page to be printed, usually for a combination of aesthetic and functional goals. Includes: Thoughtful selection and use of typefaces (fonts); correct use of emphasis; optional decoration such as initials; adhering to rules of typographical syntax, such as when to use a hyphen vs. a dash, or what glyphs to use for quotation marks, which varies greatly among different languages. Boring as hell.

## U

**UNIX:** An Operating System for computers, initially developed at AT&T labs in the early 1970s. Still in very wide use today, and a number of systems based on it, most notably **Linux**, are positioned as realistic competitors to Microsoft Windows in the home desktop market. Ah, the cold, silent world of computer code: If only we could all live there.



**UPC:** Universal Product Code, commonly called a **bar code**. These are the weird-looking series of lines which appear on the price stickers on a lot of things, which get scanned at the cash register in most stores. Some DIY publishers disdain the UPC as a tool of corporations, designed as a barrier to small-time publishing, and some merely see it as a symbol of having sold out to The Man.

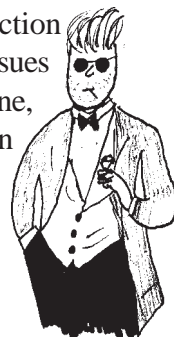


## V

**VGA:** Video Graphics Array. A display standard for PCs. Almost all modern graphics cards adhere to this standard (640 x 480 pixels in 16 colours and a 4:3 aspect ratio. There

is also a text mode with 720 x 400 pixels). I think I'm the only person in the world who knows this.

**VOLUME:** When you're talking about a periodical like a zine, it's a collection of issues, usually grouped by year. *The Inner Swine*, for example, has four issues to a volume every year. When you're not talking about a periodical like a zine, I hope to hell you know what the word *volume* means, otherwise you're in serious trouble. And I probably wouldn't help you anyway.



## W

**WIRED:** A magazine that is often mentioned in the age-old argument of what, exactly is a zine. Although it is undoubtedly a full-on advertising-soaked magazine owned by Conde Naste *now*, back in 1992 the first issue of *Wired* was initially cobbled together on an expensive color photocopier by two people. Does that make it a zine? Or does it make a lot of zine publishers jealous assholes? Shut up, you.

## X

**XENOBOMBULATE:** There are no entries here. Move along.

## Y

**YIN:** There are no entries here. Move along.

## Z

**ZINE:** Taken straight from the alt.zines FAQ: "With regards to form, most will agree that zines are paper publications with small print runs, usually serialized. With regards to spirit, most will agree that zines are driven by passion rather than profit. Beyond this, few blanket generalizations can be made, though people love to try. Some argue that a zine ceases to be a zine as soon as it sells more than 5,000 copies, or adopts a barcode or International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), or accepts advertising, or costs more than \$3, or has a glossy cover, or looks professionally done, or has readable text... and so on." Basically, a zine is a DIY publication, usually narrow in focus. *The Inner Swine* is a zine. What you're holding is a book.

**ZIP:** Either a disk or a compression format. Zip Disks are floppy-like disks that hold 100, 250, or 750 megabytes of data. A zip file is a file which has been compressed via an

algorithm to reduce its size on a disk. This is confusing, because geeks love that obfuscating jargon, don't they? I will spare the geeks, however, when the Silent Pogrom comes to town, because they will be instrumental in building my Spheres of Silence, and the Fortress of Solitude.



...until next time...shut the hell up.



128 - YOU SHALL KNOW our zine making techniques

From the beer added cars at

# *The Inner Swine*, what may be the world's least-necessary book!


"PEOPLE who don't publish zines frighten and confuse me."

-- Jeff Somers, from the preface

Every few years, a book is published that is important, small Cargo Cult religions are formed around the event of its publication. This is one of those books. Filled with everything that contained the word zine from the most popular zine in the world\*, *The Inner Swine*, this book will rob you of precious hours while teaching you almost nothing about zine-making techniques. But none of the other books around you will teach you that, either. It's a wash.

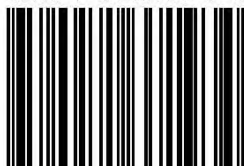
*The Inner Swine*, serving mankind since 1999

According to *Zine Guide* ([www.zineguide.com](http://www.zineguide.com)).



JEFF SEZ: This book was hand-crafted by runaway teenagers paid in food, local wines paid in fortified wines, and a family of trained helper monkeys not paid at all, resulting in a great deal of property damage. I was also drinking quite heavily during creation. Please excuse any defects, mistakes.

ISBN 0-9713719-3-8



9000

