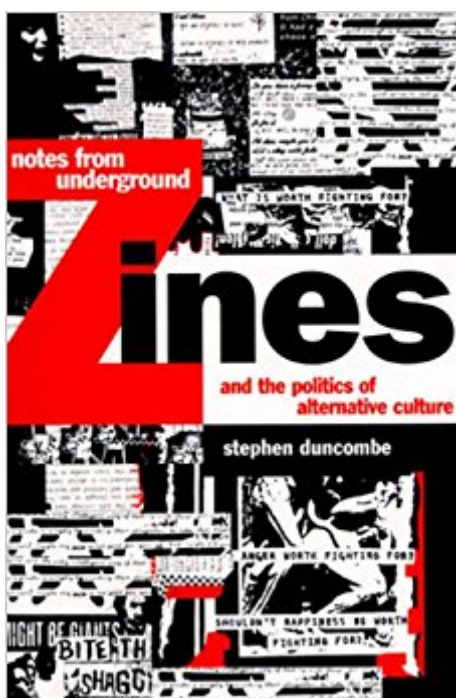


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Notes From Underground: Zines And The Politics Of Alternative Culture (The Haymarket Series)



Synopsis

Slug & Lettuce, Pathetic Life, I Hate Brenda, Dishwasher, Punk and Destroy, Sweet Jesus, Scrambled Eggs, Maximunrocknroll – these are among the thousands of publications which circulate in a subterranean world rarely illuminated by the searchlights of mainstream media commentary. In this multifarious underground, Pynchonesque misfits rant and rave, fans eulogize, hobbyists obsess. Together they form a low-tech publishing network of extraordinary richness and variety. Welcome to the realm of zines. In this, the first comprehensive study of zine publishing, Stephen Duncombe describes their origins in early-twentieth-century science fiction cults, their more proximate roots in 60s counter-culture and their rapid proliferation in the wake of punk rock. While Notes from Underground pays full due to the political importance of zines as a vital web of popular culture, it also notes the shortcomings of their utopian and escapist outlook in achieving fundamental social change. Duncombe's book raises the larger question of whether it is possible to rebel culturally within a consumer society that eats up cultural rebellion. Packed with extracts and illustrations from a wide array of publications, past and present, Notes from Underground is the first book to explore the full range of zine culture and provides a definitive portrait of the contemporary underground in all its splendor and misery.

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Customer Reviews

“Notes from Underground is an impressive book, illuminating the possibilities and limits of

democratic communication in a world where colossal media trusts make small-scale media activity both difficult and invisible. In its subject matter and its original conception, Duncombe's pioneering study engages some of the elemental issues of our time. "At long last, somebody's got it right. Duncombe does the essential work of cultural analysis that neither the national weeklies with their demographic fantasies, nor the czars of cultural studies with their determination to locate dissent in daytime television, can ever bring themselves to perform. •Tom Frank, *The Baffler*

Stephen Duncombe, an Associate Professor at the Gallatin School of New York University, is the author of *Dream and Notes from Underground*, editor of the *Cultural Resistance Reader*, and coeditor (with Maxwell Tremblay) of *White Riot*.

This book is a must-read for all art students and should also prove helpful to students of journalism and other fields. It offers an excellent insight into the whys and hows of zines while also maintaining a critical perspective. If you don't know what a zine is, you will find out. If you do know, you will get a deeper understanding of the history of zines and what they have morphed into since their heyday. Zines reflect what happens when anyone can publish. Much as we might like to believe that this is the answer to corporate news and other canned information, zines turn out to be more personal expression and less a matter of getting you better news than the big agencies. But, that said, they offer just about every perspective conceivable. And, for those self-publishers who stick with them, they can be the beginnings of projects that allow them to find a productive, creative place in society. Of course, some will keep doing zines forever and a day. Whether zines or a "real job" become one's destiny, zines still serve as a forum for dissent and dissemination. And they and the people behind them are worth knowing about.

Low-key changed my life. I was dimly aware of zines before but after reading this I'm obsessed with collecting zines and I've created a couple of my own. Opened my eyes to the rhetoric of participatory culture and celebrated amateurism. Real pivotal thing for me.

underground culture born out of opposition to the mainstream media of the consumer culture and the alienation caused by the whole capitalist culture is analysed in Duncombe's book in great detail. The making of it, the meaning of it and the paradoxes and drawbacks it has are all introduced. Pros and cons well defined. Duncombe also draws the limits of the underground scene. I

agree with his pessimism about fanzine writers doing nothing more than just being politics by themselves.[what i mean is fanzine writers dont need to take political action as making a fanzine is keeping them busy (mind and time)]What is most successful about this book is he didnt just write about the world of fanzines but explored through the social/economic/political structure of the USA. As a political science student and a fanzine writer i share his views concerning the new world order as an everchanging,imposing and even assimilating fact.(is it new?)Well, i really liked the book even though at times i felt like he is repeating all again well i guess this happens when explaining such complex things (as economic,olitical things not fanzines) Elif Ozgen

Disagreeing with a recent online review, this book is valuable for its sociological scholarly analysis. Essentially every other book currently existing on the topic of zines is nothing more than a very limited and stilted collection of samples from zines every zinester worth their salt has already heard of ad nauseum. While Duncombe is a little heavy on the utopic and overly optimistic naivete in regards to the ability of alternative media subcultures to change the dominant mainstream as we know it, it was very refreshing to read a book about zines that didn't seem to feel the necessity to "dumb it down" for the zine kids, many of whom are exceptionally bright. This is certainly worth checking out if you do a zine and are into thinking, instead of regurgitating the same old, same old, as far too many zines do.

An interesting overview of various zines, but there seemed to be something lacking from it... I'm not exactly sure what. Though I must agree with those that say that they were tempted to do a zine after reading _Notes From the Underground_, I'm sure that there are enough crappy zines with out my contribution. It is, however an excellent general resource, if you are doing research or are interested in zines from a sociological perspective. It seems suprisingly academic for its subject. However, I think that reading zines is a much better idea then reading about zines. The best part about the book was the pulled pages from other zines, but that is just my visually-stimulated, short-attention-spanned opinion...

This is a sobering, inspiring book. Duncombe shows us the boundless potential of zines and zine culture. At the same time he diagnoses the failure of zines to reach out and become relevant to people outside our little "underground". All the effort and enthusiasm that we pour into zines is a small revolution, but if we all joined forces and poured that effort into a movement, we could truly change the system rather than just complaining and waging futile rebellion against it. This book

should be required for any would-be revolutionaries, punks, zine creators, and thinking human beings.

I was happy to read that DIY communication is surviving amidst the clutches of Big Business! Having no idea what a "zine" was - in itself either tells you that I am completely removed from Bohemia and/or have been completely swallowed up by the mass of Big Business everything. But I clutched for that lifeline and reveled in the premise of freedom of speech as I read about the DIY zine creators/communicators. Individuality and originality still lives?

YYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEESSSSSSSSSSSSSTake a walk with Duncombe - it's worth it.

This certainly is one of the best works about Zines. Steve layout a bunch of topics which are rather unknown into zine's scene. The big ammount of quotes reflects his comitment and background to perform this book. I still amazed of the number of quotes and interviews, which provides a wide vision of zine culture spreaded in USA. Still I feel a bit disapointed because of Steve just suggests the Zine scene in other countries. I'd like he wrote more about. Though his work is bloody comprehensive and interesting for those into Zines world.

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