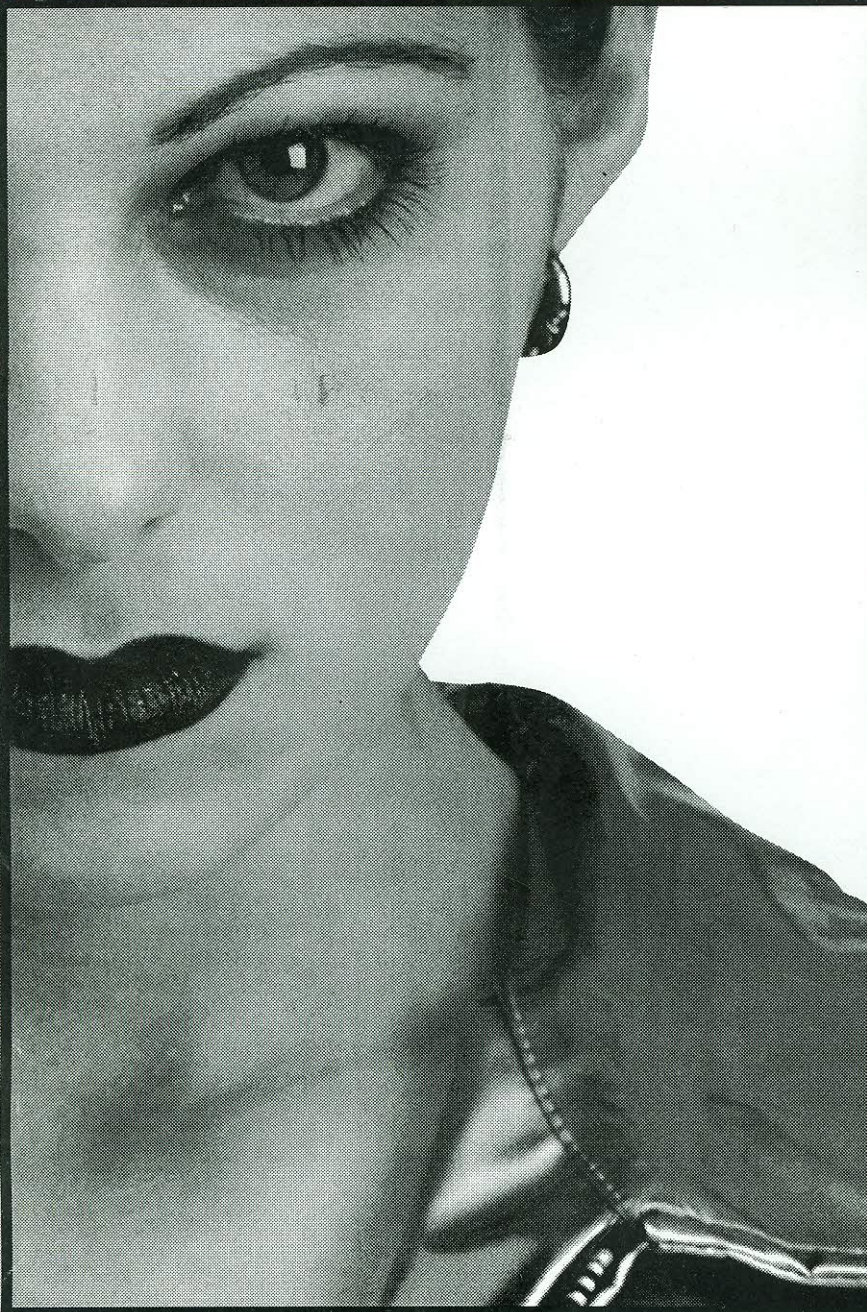


ZINES • COMICS • MICROCINEMA • MULTIMEDIA

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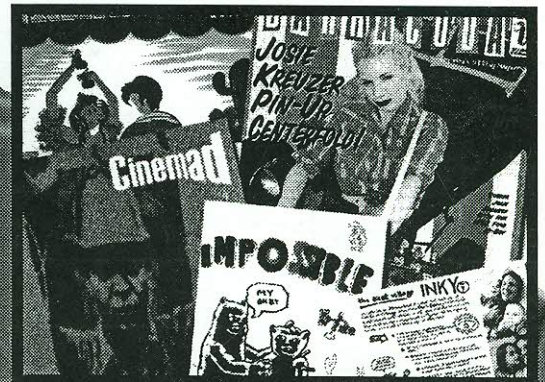
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LOTS of reviews!!!

Zinesters and other kooks gather for 4th annual Beantown Zinetown



Clockwise from top left: Jeff Hall (*My Bad Poetry*), co-emcee of BZ4; Dan the Bagel Man and Vermin Supreme; A browser looks over the impressive selection at the Pander Zine Distro table; Ben T "BenT" Steckler (*Get BenT*, *Unshaven Chi*) and his display; A bunch of radical left magazines sold by people who refused to be photographed; zinesters Maria Gaughan (*Your Mama's Not Home*), Marla Tiara (*So Tough*) and Katharine Kasper.

Photos by Chad Parenteau



by Chad Parenteau

March 18 was the day after St. Patrick's Day, and for Boston, the holiday is a very big deal. Even though I don't drink, as a waiter I too suffered a hangover just from spending about 12 straight hours serving the holiday crowd and woke up just after eleven in the morning with no hope of making the Fourth Annual Beantown Zinetown early; opening time was scheduled to happen in another half hour. Even before that morning, I wondered if any of the zinesters would be late due to any actual inebriation. For the first three years, Zinetown's main emcee, Consumer Defense Corporate Poet and *Book of Letters* zinester Rich Mackin, had run the free event in the Massachusetts School of Art, his alma mater. Not only was he holding it in a different area, this was also the first one that ran so close to a holiday.

When I finally approached 98 Beacon Street I imagined that I was in no way even eligible for fashionable tardiness (this was after having to double back for my camera; like I

said, it was a rough morning), but as I was heading closer, I noticed a group of people (a group called the Guerrilla Poets, I later learned) staging a open-invitation poetry slam just outside the main entrance to the befuddlement of some passersby. I knew then this was still going to be a fun day.

"This is cool because people keep coming in," said Mackin as we took some time to go over the obvious pros of this new location as we stood by the couch he had casually placed his zines and free stickers on to give others more prominent table space. The only big downside, he told this latecomer, was that they were kept out of the building at first due to "miscommunication" about when they could come into the building.

98 Beacon Street Building is part of Emerson College and reserved mostly as a meeting place for the school's various clubs and for literary readings. Mackin had acquired the space with the help of his roommate and co-emcee for the day, Jeff Hall, a fellow zinester who puts out his own collection of punk-activist prose

entitled *My Bad Poetry*. I went to Emerson for graduate studies and even gave a couple of poetry readings on the second floor, where the tables were. So I knew before arriving that this was a far better location than that of last year's event, which had ended up being placed in a MassArt cafeteria and was extremely crowded. Imagine trying to relocate a last minute convention in some off-highway diner, and you'll get a little idea of how hard it was to move around from table to table.

"I was kind of unhappy with how last year's organization, or lack thereof, worked where I was being told contrary things by different people on an almost daily basis," said Mackin. This included a misinterpretation of a rule involving the paying of hired performers, stating that money taken at the door had to be put in an account and a check be written to the performer. This "logical rule" according to him, was interpreted by officials as meaning no money could be exchanged for the purchasing of zines.

He gives credit to Hall, an Emerson student who was able to acquire the free space "with little effort." With the Emerson building, not only was there more room to stretch out on the second floor, but the first floor was completely open for the fair-goers to sit and examine their purchases, adding to comfort level for the whole day.

One of the downsides was the absence of a stage. The second Beantown Zinetown actually being placed near a stage where a various number of musical and spoken word acts got up to perform. The third Zinetown, in spite of its cramped location, enjoyed a small show the night before, but this resulted in one of the performers spraining his ankle when the stage collapsed. Mackin had been hoping to set up an event this time where multiple things could happen all at once. A performance in one room, a workshop he would hold in another. "Unfortunately, the fairly late [news]... that we weren't going to do Mass Art suddenly set me back that I had to start from scratch

NEWS

on a lot of things. So I was more happy to be able to have a space to do this event at all.”

Music was represented, however, though Wonderdrug Records, whose table was being handled by spoken word performer and self-proclaimed Wonderdrug “Rock Stooze” Duncan Wilder Johnson, whose album *Heavy Metal Spoken Word* was put out by them last year. The short time I spent with him was pretty good example of how a lot of creative energy can be thrown around during these type of events. He reflected with me the decision he and Mackin made the night before to have compilation “best of...” books out by the next Zinetown. This was, of course, the beginning phases, so Duncan was still deciding whether to call his book *Onslaught* or *Sick* (he even suggested the title *Here's Too Much Duncan!* as a joke). He also ended up striking a friendly conversation with Nate Gibson, who was passing around his

book *101 Pirate Jokes*.

The activist front was also well represented, thanks to ample copies of the Boston University indie publication *Student Underground* and a table featuring a variety of leftist revolutionary literature including the slick looking *Barricuda*. I'm not sure if the people who minded the table put out everything there, but they didn't even want to be photographed, so I didn't press them for info. Information was being passed out planning for the International Day of Action Against Starbucks that following Tuesday, revolving around their stance towards genetically engineered food and fair trade coffee. Boston's Food Not Bombs had set up free food concession stand asking only for donations. Their most prominent spokesman, Dan The Bagel Man, had a separate table up for his buttons and bumper stickers with various campaign messages. Right beside him, offering to sign his name on any

zine we wanted was clown/activist Vermin Supreme, the Emperor for a New Millennium mock-candidate of last year, who had his own kind of zine, a stapled compilation of news stories revolving around his appearances at various political demonstrations, actually becoming the voice of reason with his First Amendment readings. His zine also included a copy of an arrest report with all his clown paraphernalia listed and a photo of him posing with the police officer—both smiling. The audio side of his act was represented with his *Greatest Hits of the 1900's* audio tape.

If there was any pessimism involved, I only found it at the near-empty table of Michael S. Baker and Sean Ryan, who put out *Fortune 2001* (formerly *Fortune 2000*) and didn't have much to offer save for his most recent issue (7), which wasn't so recent, and a sample page of artwork for a future project. Baker stated that he and his collaborators were focusing more on future projects on their web sites (www.fortunatepipedream.com and www.pencilbrain.com). Overall, they said they are looking into different medias. “We don't think there's a lot of... reality in zines in terms of trying to make a future for yourself,” Baker told me “Self-publishing has it's limits when you're doing it in the whole zine format. You're biggest adventure is something like this.” He added, referring to his *Fortune 2001*. “You can't go too far with that.”

Despite some of the abysmal truths touched on by Baker, there were others who were more optimistically into the routine, like Ben T. “BenT” Steckler, who along with his zines *Get BenT* and *Unshaven Chi* among others, also sported one of the best displays, which included his various t-shirts. Hailing from York, Pennsylvania, he said this was the first time he had brought his zines into Boston, and he was getting a good response. He rated it better than the comic conventions he goes to, which feature stars to draw a crowd.

“Here, no one really outranks one another,” Stickler pointed out.

Also noteworthy was the presence of presence of cartoonists of *Angst Boy* cartoonist Karl Christian, Bruce Orr with his *Bucket Loader* mini, and Shawn Granton with his impressive double volume second issue of *Modern Industry*. The non-spoken word poets were in full force inside with published works in formats ranging from zines to postcards. One them even went around vigorously handing out mini-pamphlets (made from folded single sheets of paper) to anyone in his path.

The Pander Zine Distro had come all the way from the Wyoming with a amazing selection that could have cleaned me out. As it is, they're the main reason I haven't finished reading all my purchases yet, even though I initially opted for just zine journals and copies of *The Assassin* and *The Whiner* to catch up with Carrie McNinch's life. One of the larger highlights, on a more personal level, was meeting up with the first zinesters I ever met in Boston. Known to her peers only as Marla Tiara, she originally put out her diary-style zine *Rats Live On No Evil Star*, but now had the zine *So Tough*, which, by the time I got there, was sold out. We met when we were both taking the same publishing class. We exchanged contact info and promised to keep in touch with our various projects, encouraging me to finally put out my own zine.

That's the kind of energy that Mackin has encouraged since the beginning. “The most important thing about what I really do is I set a date and a time and I say ‘Everyone show up here, now,’ and then all these people get together,” he told me. “To a great extent, I don't really need to hold everyone's hands and say, ‘Let's all do these activities’ because you get all these people together, and they'll just kind of make these things up on their own.”

RUNNING WITH THE DEAD...



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