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DIY'ing in the Bedroom – Yorkshire's Fanzines

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The punk rock era saw an explosion of homemade xeroxed magazines touted by varmints full of vim and vitriol. **Sid** gets ink on his fingers.

The legacy of Punk has given us plenty to be thankful for, and one can't help trolling through its past. Once seen as the phlegm on the back of society, it has now become the established "The Best Ever – Nostalgia aint what it used to be!" CD compilation. Although the press would have us believe that Punk lived and died in London, Yorkshire received its intake of fresh air too.

Most people will be aware of the main bands that appeared at the time, but I'm not here to dwell on that. Instead I'm going to focus on the printed word of enthusiasm, the fanzine. These were as every bit as valid as the bands that were created in the bedrooms. The fanzine editors were armed with either a John Bull printing kit, letraset or spittle – and should be regarded as the 'heir-apparent' to Caxton.

All over Yorkshire, erratic editors sprung up to cut and paste their words and sometimes wisdom on all subjects printable or otherwise. Although there were a few petty rivalries, in the main, most were prepared to help each other, with reviews and advice. Love, enthusiasm and career prospects were the prime movers, as the 'zines were priced at only a few pence (many were still less than TM1 well into the mid-80s). Initially they were sold amongst friends, and then at a few record stores that would stock them. Soon it would become a national network via mail order. The following is in no way a complete list just a few pebbles on the beach . . . Lest they be forgotten.

Sheffield (1977-80s): Sheffield was originally home to four fanzines, but neither of them lasted longer than a year. In February 1977 *Gun Rubber's* first issue, a stapled collection of hand-written Xerox sheets, was handed out free at the Craisy Daisy. It was followed by *Steve's Papers*, *Home Groan* and *Submission*.

Gun Rubber managed to produce 7 issues before folding at Christmas '77. It was roughly put together by the likes of Bert Vinyl and Co. It's content showed diversity and by number 5, it included interviews with the Ramones, Rat Scabies and to broaden people's horizons . . . the storyline to the film *Deep Throat* (gulp!). With No.6 it had *The Stranglers*, *The Saints* and an early guide to 'Who's Who in Sheffield' (featuring probably Sheffield's first punk band to appear and disappear, that of '2 Point 3').

Their final issue had local hero Paul Shaft on the cover. By the end of '77, though, *Gun Rubber* had become disillusioned with the Punk scene. For them it had become stagnant and began to lament the past. And then Marc Bolan's death seemed to be the final straw for them. Even though GR was on its last legs, Bert and Co. still had enough conviction to attack the rise of the National Front.

Stevens Papers first issue was listed as number 3. The man behind it was Steve Media ne:Singleton, soon to be of ABC fame. SP's print was usually hand-written and at times totally illegible, and required the aid of a magnifying glass to read it. The content revolved around what he had been doing the previous week, even though it was always out of date by the time it was in the record shops. Steve kept promising to produce a souvenir Clash booklet, but I never saw it.

His second issue (No.4) was easier to read, and featured an interview with Deaf School along with an article on Sheffield's first punk shop – *Asylum*. By October it had evolved into *The Paper*, but with no marked improvement to the quality. Also, Steve had run out of steam just at the point where his world became dull and repetitive.

Home Groan lasted for seven issues (July '77 – April '78). It was well printed on various coloured papers with sketches that ran wild over the text. HG tried to be more than just a collection of observations, as they attempted to help local bands. They fully supported 'Reactor' with a souvenir concert programme, stickers and posters – but did anyone actually see them. A more worthwhile band, *The Extras*, received the same treatment from HG. Issue No1 was already three months out of date by the time it was available.

Sniffin' Glue (And other Rock'n'Roll Habits) was the daddy of them all. No contest. Original and genuine. Produced by Mark P in South London along with Danny Baker (yes, the guy from the telly) way back in 1976. A classic Xerox job inspired by the Ramones first album.

It bit the dust when his band, Alternative TV began to attract attention in their own right. Baker went on to write for the music press proper, then became a DJ and broadcaster. He's now the power behind the throne on TFI Friday.

No.5 the Christmas issue, proudly announced the start of an off shoot, *Lookout* magazine, which was to be free. However, this died a quick death. No. 7 signalled its end, the main writer, Kid Turd, was moving onto higher things (did he?). The issue was full of sentimentality as it disappeared up its own arse. What had started out as a well-intentioned informative 'zine had ended as a collection of in-jokes and a third rate gossip column. *Submission* – Unfortunately I never saw it as it had died almost prematurely.

But these four 'zines had laid the foundations for what was to follow:-*Wagging Tongues* from Kit, Jane and Michelle, *Kiss The Carpet* – a likeable 'zine from Mick Buxton and John Tunnicliffe, which offered info on their favourite bands. *NMX* – a shot across the bow of the NME, *Pink Flag* brought politics out onto the streets. Then there was *Tigers on the Moor*, *Skullcrusher* and *Grey Matter* to name just a few that continued to pick at the bones of music.

However, if there was a fanzine which could sum up as Sheffield, then it would have to be *ProperGander*. It was very arty, very political and serious about both. It was not possible to read PG and at the same time, declare yourself to be uninformed. Whether it was expressing its thoughts on the Bauhaus art movement or the latest Troops Out of Ireland campaign. Whatever the topic, ProperGander had an opinion on it and it was not going to be quiet. Needless to say, it only lasted a few issues before it too joined the ranks of the disappeared, along with its anonymous writers.

Barnsley: *Chicken Wardance* arrived to put Barnsley on the map. Tim Robinson, Chris and Paul Edison wrote about the likes of King Kurt, the Vibrators and Amazulu. Aswell as actively encouraging the local talent; such as the Creatures of Habit and Party Day. Their resident artist, Dean, would later surface within the hallowed sheets of 2000AD.

Chesterfield: *Dressed to Kill* from Bense. He also favoured King Kurt, and mixed it with the Criminal Justice Bill and vivisection. Bense presented it as an eco-friendly 'zine. Whilst Steve Woodhouse's *Return of the Naive's* was more indie orientated.

Leeds: *Roar* from the hands of the immortal Len Liggins, along with the excellent illustrations by AJ Quinn. This contained a cornucopia of music within the classic cut and paste style, with reduced font size that was clearly in the region of '5'. But it was worth losing your sight over. It contained reviews, interviews with local bands, a chart list from a city record shop and it even had real advertising so that *Roar* could be given away free. This man was seriously having fun on a regular basis.

Attack on Bzag (<https://web.archive.org/web/20130828042824/http://www.ayup.co.uk/turn/turn0-5x.html>). This was hand written with enthusiasm, the editor wrote with a passion bordering on lunacy. It contained the unforgettable 'Adventures of Zelda's Stomach', interviews with the likes of John Peel, the Redskins and in-depth coverage of the miners strike. He preferred The Membranes and The Three Johns to any of the current trendy 'soft southern bands'. The editor, James Brown would later become the editor of the NME and the man behind *Loaded* and *Laddism*.

Leeds Other Paper. Although the LOP had the format of a weekly newspaper, it's heart was in fanzine territory. LOP busied itself with local issues; both political and musical. Even though it received a grant from the local council, it was never slow to expose Town Hall tomfoolery. Musically it filled the gap between real magazines and their irregular cousins.

Molotov Comics. Steven 'Seething' Wells, later of the NME, was airing not only his own brand of ranting poetry, but those too of Joolz, Mark Miwurdz (later Mark Hurst, comedian), Benjamin Zephania and Nick Tozcek. These were all printed on top of a cacophony of disturbing graphics. ^

Whippings and Apologies. The editors Steve Trattle, Mick Carrit and Mark Johnson followed the developing Goth scene which was beginning to establish itself in Leeds. It was a fairly regular 'zine with no-nonsense typeface on glossy paper. It contained all the Goth Bands you needed to know about. *Groin*, popped its head above the crowd, but its appearance was too brief to be noticed.

Ilkley: *Tongue in Cheek* from the grubby hands of Ian Cheek, a loveable enthusiast who's erratic issues were well worth the wait. Each issue was of excellent quality and his editorial policy was straightforward – "TIC is not a business nor a hobby – it is a love, a passion, a way of life, and cliched as it may seem, when the day comes when it is anything less, that will be the day to wind things up". At one point, Ian could be found doing a spot of DJ'ing on Pennine Radio. His 'Long Hair and Leather show' was the vinyl version of his 'zine, but his reign was far too brief.

Noise in the Valleys was a 'zine by Ruth Johnson which had passed me by. Apparently the contents were a mixture of bands like Black Roots, the Sisters of Mercy and some scintillating football news.

Monk Fryston: *Rouska: 'the Real Alternative'* – This was an ambitious glossy from Richard 'Seething Rouskateer' Paddison (amongst other alias's). Richard Rouska had loads of enthusiasm for the local scene.

Wakefield: *Positive Touch* – This was an indie 'zine covering the likes of Fiat Lux and Party Day. I'm not sure how long either editor Chris or PT survived, but the quality was good. From another part of the town, *Slag* appeared as did *Lens*.

In **Harrogate**, editor Clare Wadd launched *Kvatch*. (which stood for Kool Vikings Always Take Cheese Home!) This was bursting at the seams with indie pop, green politics, bags of humour and oddball articles on Herbal Tea, Imagination (the band).

And the rest: *Filthy Trash*, an A4 sized punkzine screamed out "I'm so individual' from **Batley**, but didn't last any longer than a Chinese meal from the takeaway. *Ludd's Mill* from **Ossett**, was an intelligent 'zine, the brainchild of Andrew Darlington. In **Hull**, Swift Nick deliberated on politics and ranting poetry with his 'zine *New Youth*. These fanzines have now moved on to that Paper Mill in the sky.

So what of their descendants?

Do the Paper-Fiends of today prefer to publish a commercial glossy magazine rather than a fanzine. It's true to say that DTP has made the job much easier to produce a classy looking mag. And the racks in the newsagents are certainly full of short-lived magazines. Or has the format now changed to the very thing you're reading? . . . The Web Page!

What the f@*k's a fanzine when it's at home?

"It was easy, It was cheap, go and do it" announced one of the early self-made punk singles. So do it they did.

Who knows where the idea came from. Maybe it was the pamphleteers of 17th century England, the Situationist/Surrealist/Dadaists in Europe or the hippie presses of the 1960s. Or maybe it was simply that the proliferation of cheap Xerox machines on the high street that inspired a few angry souls to knock off their own personal manifestos. ^

The Comet (later renamed to Cosmology) probably went down in history as the world's first fanzine. It was part of an unexplained boom in Science Fiction fanatics in the era of black and white movies and pulp fiction paperbacks. The mimeograph duplicating machine had emerged to change the way printing was done, and, hundreds took advantage and published their own sci-fi fanzines.

Mid 1960s America saw thousands of people starting up alternative newspapers. The best and most committed formed the UPS (Underground Press Syndicate) in 1967 and would include the Los Angeles Free Press, the East Village Other, the Berkeley Barb, San Francisco's Oracle, Detroit's Fifth Estate, Chicago's Seed, and Austin's Rag growing to include a whole heap of hippie mumblings. England had its own equivalents, including OZ and London Alternative Press. Time Out grew from a small handout into one of the world's most successful listings mags.

The punk thing seemed to grow out of nowhere as youngsters caught the DIY bug. Jamie Reid's Sex Pistols artwork certainly was quick to draw on this new cut and paste ethic, and soon there were a thousand copydex cowboys scribbling gibberish and flogging them around the punk and new wave club both here and in the states.

The do-it-yourself ethics of punk rock quite naturally spread across the board. Musicians took to the stage with musical instruments they clearly couldn't play. Records were pressed with white labels, and John Bull toy printing pads provided labelling. And to complete the package, a quick trip down to the photocopier provided a neat record sleeve.

It became an amateur press corps using the most basic of office methodology. Some were printed on those hideous inked-roller duplicators in the backs of offices when the boss wasn't looking, or on school photocopiers. They were instant and fired by the anti-establishment ethos of the punk scene they wrote about. Anti-profit they were sold for next to nothing and generally lost more money than they made. Some were given away on principle.

Sniffin' Glue was the first and best, but they were quickly followed by Ripped And Torn, Out There, Buzz, Self Abuse, No Future, Sounds of the Westway, Alternative Ulster, City Fun, Bondage, In The City, I Wanna be your Dog, Negative Reaction, London's Burning.

In the United States there were Teenage Rampage, Punk Lust, Blister, Public Threat, Smegma Journal, Inaudible Noise, Rag In Chains, and a whole heap of others. Many of these writers, like Yorkshire's own James Brown(who would go found Loaded magazine and Lad culture), would go on to become noted journalists and publishers in their own right..

But it was all about spirit and attitude and the fact that they were completely non-commercial. Before long the whole thing was ripped off by the record companies and soon the familiar fanzine ransom-note style was plastered on major label record sleeves. Bands such as the Tom Robinson Band, whose sleeve came with a free clenched-fist TRB logo stencil came packaged wholesale in fanzine chic.

Others, such as underground anarchist band Crass, would provide a fanzine with their record releases and publish lengthy polemics against everything from police brutality to meat eating. Some of these fanzines – Blitz and I-d being the most notable – got so professional that they became mass market colour glossies, indistinguishable from the real thing, with distribution deals and shelf space.

Now in the year 2000 Fanzines have moved onto other areas of culture. Football fanzines are touted around every football ground in the country full of alternative views of each football club. Some, like those devoted to Leeds United and Man Utd are slick and full of photographs. Others are rougher and full of vitriol. Check out When Saturday Comes, the best of the lot, and their links section. Areas like Skateboarding are a growth area too.

So now we wait for the one area of publishing to really get into the grass roots. The Internet. Homepages. Webzines. Some of the footie ones are ahead of the game here as hundreds of Unofficial sites like Copacabarnsley, City Gent, and The Greasy Chip Butty and Jamie Wilson's Barmy Army Online are having a good go. And a quick trawl through Ayup's Music Links finds sites devoted to Embrace, The Long Pigs and Terrorvision that aren't entirely serious.

The guy who wrote the main article writes his own website HTML in a notebook on the train to work. He uploads it using Internet Cafes. And now he's getting commissions from Academic Institutions! Sure beats reading your Stephen King bestseller. ISPs give free web space, so get cracking!! What are you waiting for.

We at Ayup! can only paraphrase the Desperate Bicycles. "It was easy, It was cheap, Go and Do it!"

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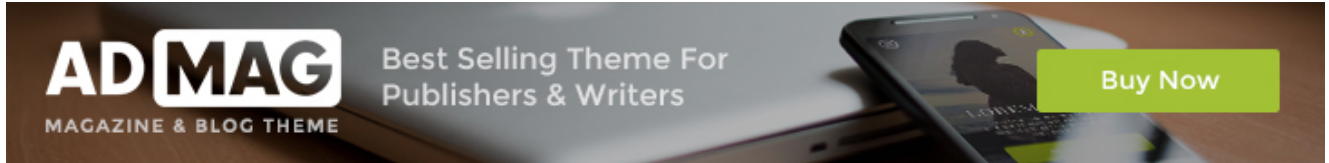
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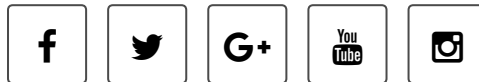




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