



Teens AND Zines

► SARAH HANNAH GÓMEZ

I've never heard of radical gardening, but apparently there's a subculture of people who enjoy it. They probably read the zine called **The Anarchist's Victory Garden**.

Those who think zombies are cool probably don't find many magazines at newsstands about their passions, but they could read **Cerveauxxxx**, a zine by Mae Undead of San Jose, California.

The self-published magazines that grew out of the 1970s punk movement still go strong today, and they're as niche-y and personal as ever.

WHAT THEY ARE

Zines, or 'zines (pronounced "zeen"), exist in countless subcultures created around the zines, or they grow out of subcultures created around other interests such as radical gardening or zombies. In simplest terms, zines are low-budget magazines published by anyone about anything. "If it exists," says Becca, eighteen, of Fort Worth, Texas, "even if it only exists in someone's mind, there is probably a zine out there about it."

Zines are the raw version of the glossy periodicals. Diehard fans will insist that they are better than regular magazines because they are all about personal expression. Others, though, just acknowledge that they're different. For the librarian who tries to fill the YA shelves with everything from traditional books to magazines to graphic novels, zines are a great addition.

"Not everybody's ideas will be heard if we rely on publishing companies and professionals," says Zoe, fifteen, of Hopwood, Pennsylvania. "Everybody works at a different pace and with different subject matter and with different intentions. The word of many is to be heard, not just the word of the lucky or the glamorous. People have to start somewhere. Maybe all they want to do is make zines and feed the culture. It's about passion and equality, bottom line; the zine culture helps to propagate those ideals."

HOW THEY'RE MADE

Each zine varies, and clearly some zine authors are a lot more painstaking with their work than others. Their zines are the ones that you want to order for your library, but it also takes some research. The prettiest zines may be attractive, but some of the slightly rarer ones might have better content.

Generally zines are the size of a folded 8 1/2 by 11-inch piece of paper. Inside is everything from art to recipes to journal entries. Pages can be handwritten, typewritten, or printed from a computer, depending on the zinester's preference.

The easiest way to make a zine is to put together a mock-up by cutting and pasting, flattening everything, and taking it to Kinko's to photocopy, collate, and staple. A nice change from mainstream magazines, zines rarely waste paper with ads (except for other zines or for zine distros, to be explained later) and they don't come with the annoying subscription inserts that **Seventeen** and **CosmoGIRL!** seem to have in such abundance.

Laura den Edel, twenty-five, of the Netherlands, studied zines and journalism in college. The real difference between a magazine and a zine, she says, is that "magazine makers intend to make issues until eternity (they make up a formula that you can use in every issue). Zines are made by people who only lose money on them; they make them while no one asks them to. They don't have to worry about pleasing anyone but themselves." Don't knock the professional magazines, she says, because you can get plenty of information from them, but zines are refreshing.

ZINE DISTRIBUTION AND BUYING

Naturally it's not as easy to gain subscribers for zines as it is for magazines. There are three main ways that zine authors get their zines out there in the world—aside from word of mouth, which does, surprisingly, sometimes work.

Zine World. Compare **Zine World** to a trade publication. Anyone who makes a zine can send a copy to the publishers, who

review independently published zines, books, music, and more. Any zine sent (that abides by the few guidelines available on the Web site at <http://www.undergroundpress.org>) is reviewed in one of the four issues published each year.

Zine distros. The word “distro” comes from “distribution,” and distros do just that. All over the world are nice people who take upon themselves the buying and reselling of zines from their Web sites. Well-made sites will have alphabetized catalogs of zine inventory, along with summaries of the content in each zine. Some zines are one-time shots; others have been going for years and will continue to send subsequent issues to the same distro. Distros are probably the best bet for librarians looking to begin their zine collection. A list of distros in the United States is available at Moon Rocket Distro’s Web site at <http://moonrocket.co.nz/links/distro-america.html>.

Zine communities. Because many zine distros open and close without much prior notice, a good bet is to open a free **LiveJournal** account and join a community such as *zine_scene* (http://www.livejournal.com/community/zine_scene). Zine creators and distro owners alike post whenever there are sales, new issues, or other zine news such as conventions. (San Francisco and Portland are great areas for zine conventions.) Zine creators are personable and give plenty of contact information so that you can always e-mail to ask for more information before ordering.

Most zines cost between \$1 and \$3, usually with postage included. Buying in bulk from a distro decreases the cost of shipping. Although it’s not usually possible to have a subscription to one zine, it’s always recommended to contact the creator of the zine personally before buying. Zinesters are so eager to have their work out there that they’re usually willing to work with someone who is genuinely interested in putting their zines in a library.

WHY THEY BELONG IN YOUR LIBRARY

Take it from Loren, eighteen, of Lone Oak, Texas: “Young adults are at an awkward stage in life (I should know—I’m one!) and they need something that can relate to them. When I first read a zine, I was AMAZED at what these people were writing! I kept thinking, ‘You’ll never find this in a book!’ Zines should never be kept secret.”

Or, Zoe says, “Perhaps libraries should stock a specific zine section, but no one should ever be given the impression that these things are for young people only.”

Annie Yu, eighteen, of San Francisco, publishes the zine **Nonsensical**, which is filled with her journal entries and collages. “I like that when you make a zine, you are the writer, artist, editor, and publisher,” she says. “I believe that a lot of teens can relate to zines—since zines are very expressive in their opinions. [Stocking them in libraries] also encourages teens to make their own, which gets them writing and making art.”

These zines are not Pulitzer candidates. There are spelling mistakes. Sometimes the photocopies are crooked. All zinesters want is to be read. And all teens want is someone to understand.

ZINESTER INTERVIEW

Ramsey Beyer, twenty-one, originally from Paw Paw, Michigan, is majoring in experimental animation at Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. Her zine is called **[list.]** and features nothing but lists—from shopping lists to lists found in crazy places to the places she wants to travel.

SARAH HANNAH GÓMEZ: *Do you remember the first zine that you ever read?*

RAMSEY BEYER: The first zine I ever read was a punk photo and music zine called **Worthless**. I was in seventh grade. It was written by Zach Worthless, the merch guy for Catch-22, a New Jersey ska band. He was selling their merch and selling his zine on the side. He convinced me to buy it by saying he was poor and that I’d be helping him buy a Pepsi. I had no idea what a zine was but I was really intrigued by it. I even asked what it was, and

he just said it was a collection of photos and interviews that he had photocopied. “Like a magazine,” he said. At that time I was just getting into punk rock, so I had never heard of zines or really knew much about that sort of DIY culture. I remember really liking his “magazine” and keeping in touch with him, ordering future issues, and writing letters.

After that, I never really heard much about that type of “magazine” and didn’t look out for any more. I just thought it was this one guy doing his own thing. Over time, though, I got into punk more and more and zines started popping up. I also read this teenage girl book called **Hard Love** by Ellen Wittlinger [Simon & Schuster, 1999/**VOYA** August 1999], which was about two zine writers. That was in eleventh grade. I never thought of Zach Worthless at that point, not until I really got into zines and found more punk rock zines. Then suddenly it clicked: “Oh yeah, that ‘magazine’ was a *zine*!”

SHG: *For the first issue of your zine, what was your process in putting it together?*

RB: There was a lot of learning and fumbling around along the way. My zine is called **[list.]** and it’s just filled with lists that I write about my life. I’ve written lists all through high school, so the writing process is just something I did naturally, in my free time, in class, etc. For my first issue, I already had a notebook filled with lists and I just chose what I thought would be the most interesting ones for people to read. It was probably about twelve of my own lists in the first issue, pretty slim. I also would find lists and tape them into the notebook, so I knew that I wanted a section for those. Once I started picking out lists, my friends wanted to write lists, too! So I decided to add another section as well, for guest lists. That helped me decide to have my zine in three sections: my lists, found lists, and guest lists, which is how it remains today.

I only made fifty copies at first, for free, in the office where I worked. After making copies, I’d have to cut off all the excess and then fold the zine so it would fit in my stapler. I gave them all away to friends and family, and left them around my school. All fifty were gone really fast, so I made twenty-five more. They disappeared quickly, too, and that was the end of **[list.]** #1.



SHG: *Should libraries with YA (young adult) sections stock their shelves with zines?*

RB: Yes! Many times, zinesters write about things that wouldn't generally get published in books or magazines stocked in libraries. Important issues—such as sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual assault, female empowerment, and political views outside the mainstream—are common topics for zines because zine writers feel that they can't find or write about such information anywhere else. These issues are extremely important for young adults to be thinking about, most often going untouched in public school systems and public libraries as well. If we could get our youth thinking about these things at earlier ages, we'd most likely be helping to ease the confusion, frustration, and anger that come with the teenage years. Obviously zines would only be a small step in helping teens confront these personal and important issues, but it's one step further!

Ramsey's zine, [list.], can be ordered by contacting rbeyer@mica.edu.

ZINE PROFILES

Mermaid by Elizabeth Smith

Content highlights of Mermaid #1: Explanation of the manga of Yazawa Ai; a list of ten things to do before you die; a paper doll to cut out; a how-to on henna tattoos.

Why buy: **Mermaid** has beautiful drawings and the content is solid and well-written. It will appeal to teens with a variety of interests.

Contact: thewingedwitch@hotmail.com or <http://www.freewebs.com/mermaidzine>

Cerveauxxxx by Mae Undead

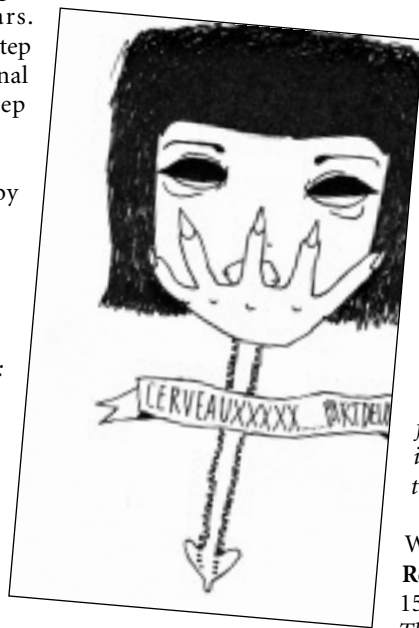
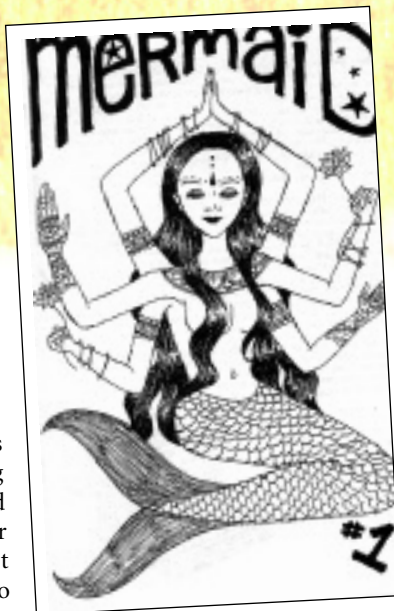
Content highlights of Cerveauxxxx part deux: How-to on zombie makeup; a zombie-themed playlist; pictures from a zombie party; a zombie survey answered by readers.

Why buy: Quirky **Cerveauxxxx** is the perfect example of a niche zine that can be published about any topic, no matter how weird or how small.

Contact: youreinsanehoney@gmail.com or <http://www.youreinsanehoney.com>

Mmmph Zine by Carolyn C.

Content highlights of Mmmph Zine #1: Full-color back and front covers; a Web site review for **Swapping Town**; reviews of other zines; journal entry titled "What I never thought of as feminist opinions."



Why buy: It's free! **Mmmph Zine** is very personal and unassuming. It's the kind of zine that shows that anyone can make one.

Contact: mmmph_zine@hotmail.com

Nonsensical by Annie Yu

Content highlights of Nonsensical #9: Anecdote about meeting a man in an elevator; an explanation of why she chose community college; a journal about her internship for WritersCorps.

Why buy: Annie's journal entries are descriptive and beautiful to read. The pages of **Nonsensical** are visually appealing with collages and patterns everywhere, without being too cluttered or hard to read.

Contact: seasecrets@gmail.com

OTHER ZINE RESOURCES

Block, Francesca Lia, and Hillary Carlip. **Zine Scene: The Do-It-Yourself Guide**. Girl Press, 1998. 121p. \$14.95 Oversize pb. 978-0-9659754-3-8. VOYA August 1999.

Although published almost a decade ago, Zine Scene still gives amazing insight into the riot grrrl zine scene of the 1990s. Excerpts from zines and details on how to make your own zine make this book the perfect addition to a library zine collection.

Watson, Esther Pearl. **Whatcha Mean, What's a Zine? The Art of Making Zines and Mini-Comics**. Mark Todd, Illus. Graphia/Houghton Mifflin, 2006. 112p. \$12.99 Trade pb. 978-0-618-56315-9. VOYA June 2006.

This guide to making and reading zines is written in the form of a zine itself. Offering it along with actual zines in your YA section will ensure that readers have what they need to start their own zine.

Wreck, Alex. **Stolen Sharpie Revolution: A DIY Zine Resource Guide**, 3rd Ed. Microcosm Publishing, 2003. 150p. \$4. 978-0-9726967-2-2.

This great and economical guide for novice zinesters will also help librarians to find distros and zines to add to their collection. ■

Sarah Hannah Gómez is a senior at St. Gregory College Preparatory School in Tucson, Arizona. She enjoys writing poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, and is working on her first novel. When she is not writing, she plays the piano, makes mix CDs, or dances. Her first VOYA article, My Bennington Summer, appeared in the June 2006 issue.

