



For London Zinefest 2010 I was invited to run a discussion group about *Creating Our Own Culture*.

The idea was for zinesters such as myself (*Colouring Outside The Lines* zine), Patrick (*Ricochet! Ricochet!* zine), Em (*The World's A Mess & You're My Only Cure* zine), and Debi (*Self-Publishing and Empowerment* zine) to get together to discuss taking the DIY ethos of zine-making and applying it to becoming creative producers and creative consumers.

Discussing *\*how\** and *\*why\** we are creating our own cultural environments / cultures / worlds, we wanted to discuss how others could and can do things we had done (make zines / organise gigs / open an independent gallery space / start a publishing house / curate exhibitions / organise spoken word tours / write and publish own books / etc) to try and demystify the processes, and encourage others to take cultural production into their own hands.

We're not 'the experts' though, there's so many people making their own exciting and important contributions to culture, so I invited some of them to write down their own hows and whys, and put them in this zine.

This zine is a way to show how we can make the changes we want to see in our culture, by ourselves.

- To inspire others
- To show how easy it can be
- To harness potentials
- To show DIY-in-action
- To show that we all have the potential to be creative producers and creative consumers everyday
- To share tips
- To explore how and why we do the things we do
- To show creative alternatives to blind consumption of mainstream culture

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# Booking and organising spoken-word tours

*Em Ledger*



**Em, *\*why\** did you start booking and organising spoken word tours?**

This is my most recent venture after 3 years in promoting gigs, clubnights, putting out a zine and running a distro. All of these things together gave me the interest and motivated me to go ahead and try and start something. I had been reading so many zines sharing feelings and passions about riot grrrl and so many inspiring stories of survival, power and creativity and loved the idea of Sister Spit: The Next Generation when I came across their website online. I decided to email Michelle Tea and we chatted about an interview for my zine. The emails turned into me gushing about how we really need this in the UK and then Michelle brought up the idea that maybe if should book and manage a Euro tour. The fact that Michelle trusted me to do this was incredible and even though I'd never 'done Europe' like a lot of my friends, (I'd only ever been to Paris for a school trip in year 9), I thought, let's take on the challenge and make the best of it. I loved Sister Spit and I plan to carry on delving more into writing and spoken performances as I love to hear people share their stories, it's so inspiring, funny, heart-warming and honest. Hearing the ways people heal, the ways they cope, the ways they survive is so important and cathartic for them and for the listener. Also, I'm a massive advocate for starting a zine and sharing your experience, it's so empowering to put your thoughts and feelings out there regardless of ability, who you know, how much money you have, how much ass you've kissed. It's just you and it's raw and nobody can compare.

**How do you make it happen?**

I would totally urge people to run local spoken word nights on the one side and then on the other, try and write something and go ahead and hunt down rad open mic nights to try out your material. Again, the internet is golden, set something up and see what comes back from it, put out that you're looking for zinesters, performers etc and run with it, leave an open mic section for people who are nervous and might be inspired after hearing others and again, plug plug plug! International events are actually pretty easy too, as readers don't have any items that would cause concern at customs like instruments and stuff so you can avoid VISAs (shhh!)

**What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

Just go ahead and do it, be bolshy, send emails aplenty to people you'd love to see read, they'll probably love it and say HELL YES! It's such an easy way to get into running events as you only need to provide a PA and mic plus a screen to project onto (or a white sheet!!)

### **Links to upcoming tours...**

We're running the second Sister Spit tour this November featuring Michelle Tea, Ali Liebegott, Beth Lisick, Nicole J Georges, Annie Danger and myself plus free slots for local folks to get up and read with us! Check out the Sister Spit website on [radarproductions.org](http://radarproductions.org) for artist info and tour dates as they're announced. Also, you can join the facebook group for constant updates and also, if you want to host a show, we're still taking bookings so contact through the above or email me!

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## **Curating Art Shows**

*Camilla Stacey*



### **Camilla, \*why\* did you start curating art shows?**

I studied art at university and after graduating I decided that I was sick of it and spent several years not having anything to do with art, although I was still making zines, going to gigs, putting on shows etc etc. In 2002 I became part of Ladyfest Bristol and along with Lady Lucy took on the role of organising the visual arts side of things. Partly through reading and writing zines and partly from spending way too much time on the internet I already knew a lot of women who were artists, so I started to email them and see if they would be interested in sending some work to be part of Ladyfest Bristol in 2003. Never having curated anything before I had no idea if I was going about things the right or wrong way, I just contacted people and asked if they wanted to send me some work to show- lots of them did. One of the venues we used for the festival was a big arts organisation that had it's own way of doing things and I got stressed out about having to jump through their hoops in order to do something that I thought should be totally diy- in retrospect jumping through the hoops did lead to an amazing looking show, that was far more polished and possibly better attended than had I just done it myself, but I'm still not 100% sure how I feel about that.

One of the exhibitions that was part of Ladyfest was called 'From the West Coast to the West Country' and featured work from several Californian artists. We needed a space to show this work in and Heather Barham, a fellow Ladyfest member, managed to track down the

landlords of an empty property in Stokes Croft, Bristol and sweet talk them into letting us use it for a couple of weeks during Ladyfest. We cleaned the place out, moved a sofa and some comics in, stuck up artwork and nearly 7 years later the *here shop and gallery* as it became known is still there. For several years I ran the gallery and curated shows there- putting on work by artists who I wanted people to see, local artists who couldn't afford to pay to hire other gallery spaces in Bristol and international artists who had their first UK show with us. A lot of the time my intentions were selfish- I wanted to see someone's art in person, maybe even buy a piece, so I organised exhibitions for them!

There has been a strong bias in favour of female artists in the shows I've curated- this was never a well thought out policy, although starting out my 'career' during Ladyfest might've given things a push in that direction. I know that women are under represented in all areas of art and whilst not explicitly making shows that solely feature female artists I tend to focus on them by default. I wouldn't rule out showing work by men, but over the last year in the space I now curate (Bath Spa Gallery at Weston College) I've shown work by 5 women and 1 man. Interestingly this gender bias doesn't seem to have been picked up on by the college or the people viewing the shows.

I think the main reason thought why I curate is that I also collect, and I want to share these collections with everyone else- I collect artists 'virtually' and save them up until I can find a venue to show them in, my own art practice often involves collections of objects and I think that I just like sharing things with people- I want people to be as excited as I am about the treasures I find, be they artists or junk.

### **How do you make them happen?**

At first by pure and simple ignorance of the system- I had no real idea that there were right and wrong ways of doing things. I just emailed people, asked if they wanted to show their work and nine times out of ten they said yes. A lot of the artists I approached were from overseas and relished the chance to show in the UK, no matter how small the basement gallery at *here* was. I spent a hell of a lot of my own money paying customs charges and shipping work back to people, and once I moved away from Bristol I realised that I wasn't able to stay involved in the gallery as I simply couldn't afford to keep travelling to Bristol. Ben O'Leary has now been running *here* for several years and it's thriving under his control- it's a very different creature to how it first started out, but at least Ben can pay his rent.

Last year I put on '*The Mythical Beast Sweet Shoppe*' a collaboration with American artist Edith Abeyta. Edith had run the project in Los Angeles the year before and I was keen to see it transfer to the UK, so after much negotiation we managed to find an amazing venue in the form of an empty building in Weston-super-Mare and open up and run the show during Weston Arts Festival. I relied strongly on Edith's original vision for the project, alongside contributions from other artists, in particular Simon Daly who did lots of the images for postcards etc and made a short film to promote the event.

In September 2009 I got offered the job of running the gallery space at Weston College's University Campus, an unpaid and hugely stressful undertaking, but one that I'm glad I took on as it confirmed for me once again that working with big organisations is not the way I want to do things. Once again I am jumping through hoops, with no financial reward, and very little recognition for what I'm doing. In curating shows at the gallery I have relied on email again- and networking via the internet. I hate using the phone, which really slows things down, but manage to get most things sorted online.

As well as curating on my own I have formed a partnership with artist Claire Elizabeth Platt and we put on shows together under the 'Calm Air All Ice' name, most recently a show featuring 52 of our favourite artists. We pick small gallery spaces that have a minimal hire charge and put on short shows. At the moment we are looking into applying for funding to create a travelling exhibition, featuring a lot of the artists from '52'. We veer from wanting to do things very professionally, getting paid for them, swanky postcards, to paying everything out of our own pocket and hand printing invites.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

On the one hand I think you need to just jump right in with your eyes closed and hold your breath and hope it works out ok. Just do something, anything and that's a start. On the other hand I've realised there are certain things that do make things easier- don't spend all your own money on the project unless you really are able to afford it- I ended up with huge debts,

partly because of this. Artists deserve to be treated well, they are taking a lot on trust when they mail something out to a stranger, you owe them an email to say it reached you, and if anything gets damaged you need to let them know right away- burying your head in the sand does not help and as someone who has done this over and over again I'm only just learning that sometimes it's easiest to just be upfront about stuff. Send work back to people when you said you would (again something I've been guilty of failing to do). If things are getting tough then let people know sooner rather than later- I have Bipolar disorder and sometimes I just can't cope, but it's taken me years to realise that if I can just let people know then most of them will be ok and happy to wait.

Form a community- in Bristol I was lucky because I already knew a lot of the d-i-y kids and following on from Ladyfest there was a lot going on, Cafe Kino (vegan cafe), Local Kid (promotions) and Stitch-Stitch (record label) were all key partners in crime in the early days of the here shop. Go to other people's shows and they will come to yours. Offer free booze and EVERYONE will come to yours. I get a lot from networking, not in a sleazy 80s power suit kind of way, but in a 'hey this person needs to know how to record the sound of their pet pig and this person makes mics and this person mixes records for people' lets throw them all together kind of way.

Lots of people go for sponsorship and this can help a lot, but be careful who you accept sponsorship from- I remember when we were organising Ladyfest having big discussions over who would be an outright 'no' (Mc Donalds) and who would be a maybe (Ikea). There are schemes to support arts in business and if you want to be a bit more 'professional' than I've been then it may be worth looking into them.

In October I'm going to start an MA in Curatorial Practice, in a way it seems a backwards move- I've now been curating shows for 7 years, so why should I learn how to do it? But I want to learn how all those white cube galleries do it, how the arts organisations run, so I can use that information to my advantage and eventually maybe end up making a living from art.

### **Links to your shows...**

[www.facebook.com/BathSpaGallery.UniversityCampus.WestonsuperMare](http://www.facebook.com/BathSpaGallery.UniversityCampus.WestonsuperMare) - Details of the shows at the Bath Spa Gallery at Weston College.

[www.weston.ac.uk/college/bathspa/archive](http://www.weston.ac.uk/college/bathspa/archive) - An archive of exhibitions on the college website

<http://calmairalice.blogspot.com/> - My collaborations with Claire Platt

<http://themythicalbeastsweetshoppe.blogspot.com/> - My collaboration with Edith Abeyta

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## **Being a queer femme performance artist**

*Emma CA*

### **Emma, \*why\* did you start performing?**

(my performance name is Goldie Dartmouth by the way ;) )

I started performing entirely by accident. I was living in Berlin (I still am) I'd just been through a catastrophic break up and I was still really new in town, I barely knew anybody. I was brimming with angst which, as it turned out, is the perfect recipe for a performance career! Queer and Rebel was taking place in Berlin at the time, based largely around trying to preserve schwarzer kanal, the queer wagon platz. They were planning a cabaret as part of the evening and a friend of mine asked me "are you going to perform?" I had never performed before but it was such a natural question that I said yes without thinking about it. Then of course I had to figure out what I was going to do. I'd always been fascinated with burlesque but hadn't given it much thought - I hadn't had much exposure to burlesque and I really didn't realise its full potential. Its more than just fancy strip tease, I know that now.

Berlin has a very strong performance scene which I immersed myself in. My burlesque education really came that way.

I did see some very amateur burlesque in Glasgow once (two young girls, just starting out, no disrespect to them, I'm sure they greatly improved!) and what I noticed was a) people really loved it, even though, to be frank, it wasn't that good. And b) it looked really fun. I was pretty young, I think around 23 or 24 and I would never of or anything involving nudity. I actually remember thinking how radical it would be perform fat burlesque (unaware as I was at the time that this was already happening! Like I said I didn't have much exposure) but then I forgot all about it.



I knew that for me, any performance of mine would be burlesque. Its so me. dramatic, over-dressed, sexy and smartly aware of how it's inherently ridiculous. After 2 years working as a naked life model (for high school students no less!) my self consciousness was gone. Fuck that. I mean its about context, I wouldn't just strip down in town centre Leeds or while waiting for the U bahn, but I enjoy being publicly naked, I enjoyed modelling. There's something satisfying about feeling the breeze in unconventional places in public. I'm not a hippy, but its very zen.

So I figured out a performance. I chose a theme that was very pertinent to me at the time (anti romance) and worked it into a performance. And I'm really proud of what I came up with, to this day I think its one of my best. Whenever I go to a new town, I perform it again because there it will still be fresh. It was actually very brutal, very aesethic but very brutal. But it was funny. It totally suited my state of mind at the time. Angst is an amazing creative catalyst, that is the biggest lesson I have learned as a performer. And there is something particularly liberating about using your body, about physicality. By its very nature, something releases. I'm not a dancer, I went to a contemporary dance class for fun in my teens, but I'm not a dancer. I don't know if a purist would call me burlesque. I don't feel polished enough to present myself in an established burlesque arena, I've only ever performed in queer feminist spaces. My performance isn't very dancey, and its not very polished. It's a lot about theatre and comedy. I think I gauged a lot on that first performance. If it hadn't really come off I probably would have been discouraged. I wouldn't have done it again. It was the reaction of the audience and the encouragement I got afterwards that made me realise that I was onto something. I had never been onstage before, not since ballet recital age 11. I felt fucking great. It turned me on to performing and how powerful it is. It was something that enabled me, in a town where few people knew me, to show a part of my potential and my personality that they would never have known otherwise. I could show what I'm capable of, and that's a very addictive feeling, especially for something who has spent a lot of time feeling invisible.

I'm quite snooty about performance. I mean I respect everyones right to express themselves and do their thing, but I also believe that you should respect your audience and not just throw some half baked nonsense at them. Be yourself, raise the bar. Push the boundaries. Challenge yourself! Challenging yourself is magic because you challenge more than just you. A truly great boundary pushing performance will not just entertain people for 4 minutes (though that's no mean feat!) it can inspire them, get them talking and maybe even change the cultural landscape and open new doors.

### **How did you make it happen; how do you do what you do?**

Practically speaking, you have to start asking. People will also start getting in touch with you very quickly if they like what you do. I've certainly had no trouble getting performance gigs. On the night of my first performance, I got invited to 3 other shows. It depends where you see yourself. As I said, I have only so far performed in implicitly queer or feminist venues, so that was where I asked! If you want to break into the mainstream I imagine that's very different. But I've steered clear of that so far.



For me the biggest practical concern has been props - burlesque uses a lot of props! It gets crazy. Even the outfit involves multiple parts, (bra, suspenderbelt, stockings, corset, fancy knickers and that's before we've even begun on the outer costume!). The times when I've performed and not felt so happy about it is when something's gone wrong with my props and something's been forgotten or isn't where it should be - which is understandable considering I sometimes have more than 20. It helps to have an assistant. But all of that is by the by. Ultimately, you just need to be prepared to get up on stage and perform what you want to perform. And if you make mistakes, improvise.

You need to develop an identity for what you want to do. This isn't hard - just be yourself except a blown up version! You want to be different, you don't want to be like every other performer. But at the same time, if you're truly being yourself then that is potent and will be read as such. Even if literally speaking you're another girl in a red bra or another fat girl doing burlesque or another person using XYZ as a prop, if you are yourself this will translate and you won't be a clone. You'll be you.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

Think about what it is that you want to do and what you want to get out of it. There are no rules, it's entirely down to you and your personal take on things. If you want to just have fun - great! Go for it. Perform just for friends (my first effort was for my friends 30th birthday!) or perform just for yourself even. If you have further ambitions about breaking into the mainstream or being an underground cult figure - well that requires a concentrated approach. And I also think that being in the right place and finding the right audience quickly (both key factors in achieving either of those things) is a matter of luck as well as plain old persistence. Consider forming a performance group with others - this sounds like great fun to me, I really hope to find someone I can collaborate with one day. Give your ideas a chance to develop also. If you have a knack for this, the ideas will come. If you want to make a living out of it - wow, I don't personally know anyone who makes a living just from being a burlesque performer. But getting paid is fairly standard, you can reasonably expect to be paid or at least very well compensated for most of the gigs that you do.

Above all, I would encourage you to let your own fantasies run wild. Growing up as a lonely fat kid watching Judy Garland movies on repeat, I feel a strong sense of fulfilment that I have found my own piece of stage, just for me. And I don't envy Judy one bit ;)

### **Webpage...**

[www.emmacorbettashby.co.uk](http://www.emmacorbettashby.co.uk)

I am also currently working on a documentary about fat performance activists, the details of which can be found on the website.

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## **Making Comics**

*Edd Baldry*  
(Hey Monkey Riot)



**Edd, \*why\* do you make comics?**

I got in to comics when I got into punk music. I liked Johnny the Homicidal Maniac and stuff like that. I got pretty hooked on them after that, and think they're a really awesome means to communicate. I think there are some comics - David B's 'Epileptic', Alison Bechdel's 'Fun House' or Joe Sacco's 'Palestine' - that are able to communicate more than any other medium. So I guess I make them to try and communicate stuff that I think, and I definitely think they're a great way to get anti-authoritarian/ radical messages into the world without people being totally turned off. Unfortunately they're really slow to make, and I never seem to get the time to focus on them properly

### **How did you make them?**

I made them the same way as I have any other zine, just by getting down and doing them. With the comics though it's sometimes harder because it's just me motivating me to do it. It's sometimes easier with larger projects - Last Hours, the London Zine Symposium - to get on it because you know there are other people waiting on it. The only person I'm letting down if I don't do the comic is me, so it sometimes slides! In terms of the mechanics of production so of them I've done on a photocopier, others on a risograph duplicator, all the posters are screenprinted and the Year of the Monkey book I got printed at a 'proper' printers so I could get it perfect bound with a square spine.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

In some ways comics zines are even more esoteric than zine zines so everyone's different. But I think if you're into comics just make some. It doesn't matter if they're scrappily drawn, or you hand writing isn't neat, just draw something (and plus your drawing will get better as time goes on - just look at my diary comics if you don't believe me!) Oh but, do put staples in. I don't know why but I've been given/bought loads of cool comics zines which weren't properly bound together and have ended up slowly disintegrating in my zine boxes.

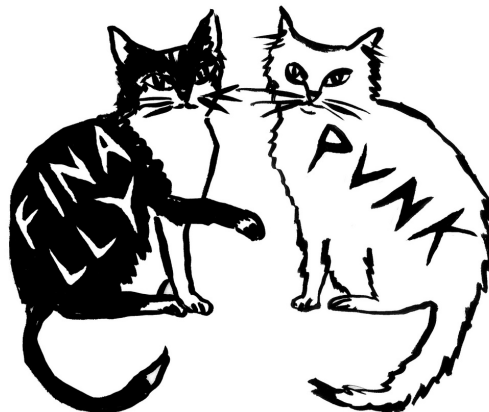
### **Links to Hey Monkey Riot...**

<http://www.lasthours.org.uk/content/blogs/heymonkeyriot/>

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## **Making poster artwork for gigs and events**

*Charlotte Proctor*



### **Charlotte, \*why\* do you make and print artwork for gigs/bands/events/etc?**

After dropping out of art school at 18, I completely lost confidence in my creative ability. I was working boring office jobs and not really feeling connected to anything. I then got involved with Ladyfest Brighton 2005, primarily to organise bands and arrange benefit shows. I organised the first benefit so to save time made the poster myself. I really didn't feel very confident and the poster is pretty bad, but everyone was still nice about it so when it came for



another poster to be made I was asked. They were a bit dodgy for a while but with each new 'happening' they improved.

The experience of Ladyfest gave me the support and confidence I think I really needed at the time to remind myself that I wasn't hopeless, but more than that it made me realise I really enjoy collaborating and having a sense of community. I then started a part-time screen-printing course on Saturdays whilst continuing to work full-time. I continued to make posters for shows and it also enabled me to put a portfolio together to return to art school.

### **How do you make it happen?**

I either use the facilities at university or more recently used a friend's studio for free (in return for artwork for his band/ d.i.y record label) which is a very sweet deal! He is also lucky as he shares it with a painter who he in turns does printing jobs for, so it's a circle of skill sharing I guess.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

If you want to make posters and you don't have friends asking you to make them then I would suggest putting on your shows/readings/events or at least finding other people locally who are just starting out too. Or finding other people who are better at the organising side so you can work together.

I find this a bit difficult to answer because it depends on what it is you are hoping to achieve. I see making posters/artwork for bands as a separate entity from the work as I make as an artist. I really do, do this for fun. It is definitely nice to get paid but it is definitely not my motivation. Because I don't see this as a 'job' I don't advertise myself for this kind of thing, but if you just want your work to be seen, a blog is a good idea. Scour the internet and shows for people with similar interests in your are.

In terms of printing your artwork, if you're an art student taking advantage of art school facilities is definitely the way to go as you will miss them when they are gone! Alternatively, you can set up a simple home studio and there are tons of youtube tutorials and websites for this kind of thing. I am way too messy for this option though so using the studio mentioned before is ideal. There are studios where you can pay to use for a day which may be cost effective until you are involved with enough printing to arrange your own studio.

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## **Making your own animations**

*Andy Sykes*



### **Andy, \*why\* did you start making your own animations?**

I've always enjoyed making my own version of things. I used to make a lot of comics and pretend radio shows when I was kid. I loved making up stories and comedy skits. Animation is

kind of a combination of those two things. It allows me to tell very visual stories, wholly crafted out of my imagination. Animation is free from the limitations of live action and is the most direct way I can communicate a story.

### **How did you make them happen?**

I use Flash and a graphics tablet to make my animations. I come up with an idea, storyboard and script it, get the audio recorded, then start on the animation. I animate on my own, but I tend to get music and sound effects done by my friend Matt Baldwinson, who plays in bands. It's great to be able to team up with people you know to make up for the skills you don't have.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

Don't be intimidated by animation. It's actually very accessible. I've taught it to 10 year olds:) I recommend downloading a free trial version of Flash, or Toon Boom Animate and just trying to make something move. Use online tutorials to help get you started. Check out my Youtube page for my video tutorials and [http://hexjibber.com/ia\\_mmu\\_flash\\_worksheets\\_full.pdf](http://hexjibber.com/ia_mmu_flash_worksheets_full.pdf) for my Flash beginner worksheets. You can scan in drawings, use a graphics tablet (I use a Wacom) or even use pictures from the internet. Give it a go and see where it takes you!

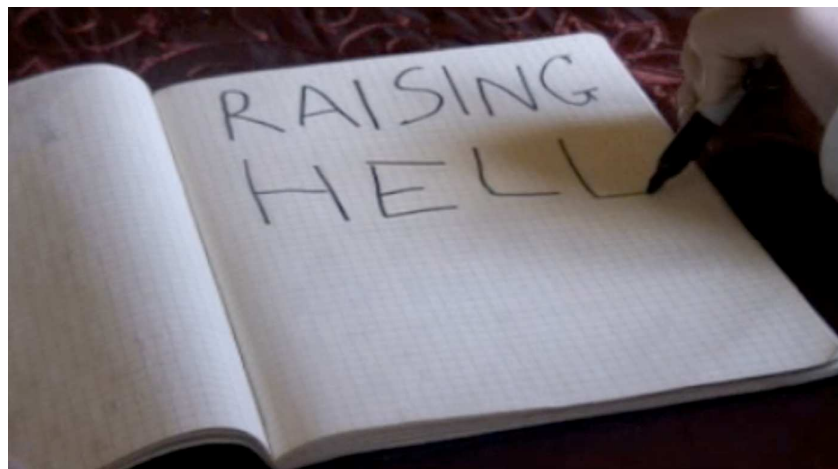
### **Links to your animations...**

<http://hexjibber.com/anim.html>

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## **Making your own [documentary] films**

*Ed Webb-ingall*



### **Ed, \*why\* do you make your own films?**

I guess it's a mixture of things, I started working in film not through the traditional system by working my way up from a runner to researcher etc... instead working with friends with the project at the centre as opposed to the traditional hierarchy associated with the, often, macho film industry. Because of this I was inspired and urged to try everything, it was more of a "why not" situation, making my own films felt like a natural progression, it was a case of "what's the best way to communicate this idea I have" or "how best can I pull together all the things I like about the creative things I have been involved with" it could just have easily been a 'zine, article, event or social group.

### **How do you make them happen?**

I ask around, see who might be interested in working on the project, we work out who is best suited to doing what I suppose, on any project whether its professional or personal I try and keep things as democratic and open as possible, I am still very new to it all so am keen to learn from the people I surround myself with.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

I am very keen on small teams and crews and inspired by making a lack of something, whether that be time, money or resources into something that can be used positively to benefit the project. Whatever your role on any film don't be afraid to ask questions and have a go.

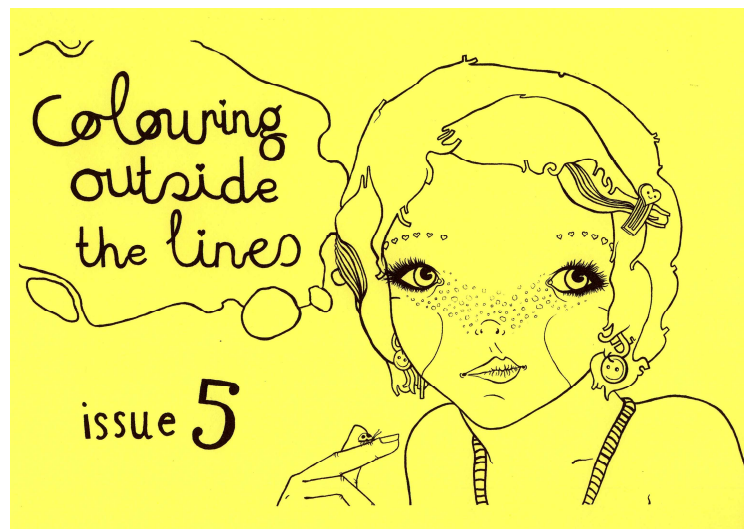
### **Links to your films...**

<http://raisinghellfilm.wordpress.com/>

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## **Making Zines**

*Melanie Maddison*



### **\*Why\* do you make zines?**

I've made lots of zines, for many different reasons. I like to self-publish information that is difficult to access in more mainstream publications, acknowledge the fact that we all have lives and voices that are worth knowing about, hearing about, and reading about. The majority of my zines are from a queer feminist perspective on art and culture.

Usually it's to share information and individuals voices that are under-represented in culture. I make a lot of interview zines to try and communicate ideas, acknowledge peoples work and thoughts, and further validate our individual actions and work. As such I've made zines interviewing the creators of artwork for UK Ladyfests 2001-2007 "*UK Ladyfest Artwork Zine*"; edited the collective and collaborative zine of Manifesta (a once happening Leeds-based feminist collective), "*Reassess Your Weapons*"; made an interview zine, "*With Arms Outstretched*" interviewing people who have acted as personal inspiration to me. I've also contributed to 101 other peoples zines, made zines to accompany exhibitions, disseminated my MA dissertation via a zine, and created "*Colouring Outside The Lines*" a bumper zine of interviews with contemporary female artists. This last zine came into being as there were so many female artists out there whose work I was finding it difficult to access a lot of information about, so decided to go straight to the horses mouth myself and ask the women about their artwork, and share their responses as a zine. I've interviewed over seventy women for that zine so far.

### **How do you make them?**

A lot of the time, my zines start with a very basic idea of me wanting to get in touch with people who inspire the hell out of me, or who are doing things that I want to acknowledge, interview them, and distribute their responses and spread the word. I usually interview people

by email – it's crazy what can come from an innocent email to somebody saying "hey, I think you're rad, I wanna interview you", I've made some crazy friendships this way, and have got to speak to some hella amazing people. There's very few people that have turned me down – and even then it's usually because of time constraints and work commitments that mean that they can't be a part of the zine.

As for the mechanics of making zines, a zine like the one in your hands was done in an ultra fast cut-and-paste way (hence the typos and my scrappy drawings!) – taking the information emailed to me from a host of different people, printing it out, glueing it down onto paper pages and then taking the master copy of the zine to *Footprint* printing co-op in Leeds for them to print up the zines from the originals. This is how '*Reassess Your Weapons*' zine was done too (the earlier issues of that zine were done at photocopying places though – spending many an hour slaving over a hot photocopier trying to figure out which way up paper should be inserted into the machine to get the zine to print double-sided...)

Zines can be done in lots of different ways though. There's no blueprint or limit to what can be held in those stapled-together pages.

My main zine, *Colouring Outside The Lines* is a zine that I create on my computer, laying out pages of interviews with contemporary female artists, alongside examples of their work, and then printing the zine in full colour on my home printer (it worked out that printing the zines myself this way was cheaper than getting the zine printed elsewhere [colour printing/photocopying is hella expensive and I could do these myself in small batches selling zines to pay for more ink to print more zines], though printing an A4 full-colour zine of up to 100 pages per issue yourself can be incredibly time consuming – especially as I was then binding them myself too – and after going through three printers in the space of five issues (high print-runs literally burned my trusty Canons out), I have had to knock the zine on the head for the time being 'til I can figure out another affordable way of printing in full-colour.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

Really, if there's something you want to communicate, go ahead and make a zine!

If you're stuck with layout issues or how to actually construct a zine, take a look at a zine you own, take its pages apart and figure out how it was put together. Figure it out, and be creative with how you want yours to look/be.

Similarly, there's also many zine and book resources available that show how and why zine making can be so great, and that can act as how-to guides to democratise the skills and techniques of zine making, and to inspire and further encourage self-publishing by demystifying the process.

See, for example: '*Stolen Sharpie Revolution*' by Alex Wreck, '*Self-Publishing & Empowerment*' by Debi Withers, '*Zine Revolution*' by Nina Nijsten, '*Make Your Own Minicomic*' by Jeremy Dennis, and '*How To Make This Very Zine*' by Elizabeth Anne Moore, amongst others.

I make and edit a lot of collaborative zines that require the input of others. I was once asked for my top editing tips in this capacity. I said:

1. If you're making a zine collaboratively or that involves the input of others (whether they be interviewees, article writers, etc) expect to overshoot your deadline – folks get busy / cold feet / writer's block / have their own lives and deadlines.
2. Always send feedback and encouragement about people's submissions. People not only need to know that you received their words/work, but also need the support of an editor. This aspect, I believe, is community building in itself – forging creative relationships, encouraging further contributions, letting people know they're valued and that their voices are important.
3. Don't underestimate the power of contacting (pestering!) folks you'd like to write for/feature in the zine. More than likely, folks will be honoured to be thought of and approached.
4. While you're an editor in name, never 'edit' people's work – you're there to facilitate, encourage and co-ordinate; not control it.
5. Encourage contributors to include contacts/links so that readers can further join the conversation / get in touch for further thoughts/advice. Similarly, respect confidentiality to the utmost – if people want their article/contribution to be 'anon', keep your mouth shut!

## Links to your zines...

[www.myspace.com/colouringoutsidethelines](http://www.myspace.com/colouringoutsidethelines)  
[www.cotlzine.blogspot.com](http://www.cotlzine.blogspot.com)

[www.grrrlzines.net/writing/melanie\\_maddison\\_ladyfestzine.pdf](http://www.grrrlzines.net/writing/melanie_maddison_ladyfestzine.pdf)  
<http://www.grassrootsfeminism.net/cms/node/302>  
<http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=117975535309&ref=ts>

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# Opening Your Own Independent Gallery Space

*Patrick Staff*



## Patrick, *\*why\** did you start your own independent gallery space?

Myself and two friends, who are also artists, decided we wanted to create a project space and room to create art, respond to the recent push for pop up gallery projects in empty shops and also engage in our local area in a critical way.

## How did you make it happen?

We convinced a landlord to let us use a shop for 6 months rent-free, however we still had to pay insurance, tax and bills, so we organised for part of the space to be artist studios and 'hired' them out at prices cheap enough that we could cover our expenses. We became friendly with local businesses and residents and managed to get donations to the space and things like cheap print, paint, free chairs and loads of free equipment such as monitors and a projector. We organised a 10 week arts programme featuring art, performances, lectures, singing workshops and folklore nights, all kept under a tight thematic framework that aimed to question the function and role of such a space, and create a dialogue around local histories, performativity, folklore, storytelling and myths.

## What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same:

Be persistent, but make sure you protect yourself! We taught ourselves how to re-write a lease so we were protected, we had meetings to figure out how to register as an organised group and we found ways to reduce bills. Pool your resources and ask everyone you know (or approach those you don't) for help. And don't be put off if at first nobody comes to your opening, or if the landlord isn't keen or if the council give you a cold reply!

## Links to your gallery:

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# Organising a Zine Fest

*Red Chidgey*



*People, scissors, and clothes pegs: how to organise a Zine Fest in your town*

If zine cultures give you a thrill, then maybe organizing a zine festival is for you. As with all things DIY, your event can be as elaborate or small-scale as you like. Putting together a zine fest can be a really fun way of bringing people together. You can co-create a mini mall of indie publications, learn new skills, make links between zines and other publishing ventures/generations, and puff up with the feel-good factor of showcasing DIY cultures to brand new audiences. Zine fests are great galvanisers – this zine is just one example of a project that came into being for today's events – and they often inspire spin off projects too.

Of course, there's no single template for how to do a zine event, and my general advice would be to follow your interests, instincts and imagination. But as a couple of pointers, here's some notes on how I organized two one-day Zine Fests in 2007 and 2009 at The Women's Library, London (google "zine symposium" or "zine fest" and check out other zine events for more tips!)

## **Find a space and think about how to make use of it**

The Women's Library, an old washhouse in East London, is a great venue for a zine fest. It boasts lots of rooms, disabled access, technical equipment, and plenty of space – last year we commandeered a disused canteen on the first floor for a comic exhibition, stalls and a photo booth, using some of the old kitchen equipment as display units. The library also worked well because it's an established venue with its own publicity machines- this helped attract people of different ages completely new to zines (awesome!). Find whatever venue you can within your timeframe, budget, and political leanings (some zine fests have been held in squats, art centres, parks, converted trailers, community halls, university buildings, and people's basements). Remember that venues can get booked up quite in advance. Also think about setting up a crèche and designated spaces/activities for kids during the fest (and say on the programme if a particular session is not suitable for children). Whatever you do, make the space look good. Decorate, change the feel and structure of the rooms, have fun.

## **Crack out the spread sheets**

Early on in the organizational process, I made an excel spread sheet with people's contact details and logged my correspondence with them. This helped me stay on top of who was



coming, who had queries, etc. If your new to the zine scene, you can find contacts through links on distros, myspace pages, or check out We Make Zines, <http://wemakezines.ning.com> (here you can hit people up for advice and also see if they have a zine festival organisers group, or set one up!).

### **Working out the \$\$\$\$**

How will you finance your zine fest? I had the library's support- they printed programmes, provided equipment, leased the venue, and paid expenses (and even gave me some money as an organizer in the second year). You could charge stalls a small fee for their pitch and/or sell the event programme (or ask for a recommended donation). If a particular workshop has resources costs- like silk screening etc- you could ask for a small cover charge. But keep everything cheap. This is DIY! If it can't be done cheaply, descale your plans or do something else. You might wanna do fundraising events in the run up to the event or make some simple merch like patches or badges.

### **Brainstorm your programme**

Zine fests often have open calls for people to submit workshop ideas. This is awesome as you get a good variety of suggestions. As I was organizing on my todd, I invited people specifically to get involved- either suggesting something I knew they would be interested in or giving them free reign to come up with sessions. However, there's a couple of staples for any zine fest: try to cater for the complete beginner as well as the old-hand. We always started the day with a group zine making session. I'd mail out an invitation to zinesters asking who would be interested in co-facilitating. Then we'd have about four or five different people presenting on a certain aspect of zines for about 5 minutes. This works well cos people hear different experiences and get loads of practical info—all the people who have co-facilitated these zine 101s have been totally amazing, even preparing handouts for folks. Its impressive how much of the pleasure of zine making can be conveyed in these workshops as well as the nuts and bolts practical issues.

It's also really cool to think about zines as multi-sensory objects. I try and include zine exhibitions, zine performances, and film screenings in the programme, alongside discussions and skill-share practical sessions. The participatory part is also super important. As the ZineFest was promoting the zine collection at the library we had some yarn pinned up with clothes pegs for people to leave copies of their zines to be added to the collection. It's also a cool idea to have zine making tables- with supplies- set up around the venue for people to chill out and make pages throughout the day. You could leave a labelled cardboard box or more clotheslines strung up so people leave their pages to be collated into a collective zine (I scanned this in last year, put the paper copy in the library and put the PDF online so people could see the finished result).

### **Make unexpected connections**

One of my favourite things to do at ZineFest is organizing panel discussions/presentations with women involved in feminist publishing projects over the years- Women's Liberation Movements meets Riot Grrrls. Zines can often be characterized as subcultural and youth-made publications, and it's fascinating to think of some of the links and breaks between zines and broader feminist self-publishing. Inter-generational discussions are also very cool!

### **Grease the DIY publicity machine**

Make flyers, spread rumours, buddy up on MySpace, make a facebook event, list your Zine Fest in listings (like Time Out), talk to your journalist friends to see if they wanna do a preview, etc. Having a logo also helps, Zine Fest! has a cool typewriter logo made by Edd from *Last Hours*. The Portland Zine Symposium has annual poster competitions to generate new artwork and keep ideas and aesthetics tumbling.

### **Keep in touch**

Recruit people to help you on the day to set up, welcome people in, clean up, etc. Before the day, send out emails to everyone involved with clear information about the venue (include a map), times, what you will provide, what they should bring, and a contact number in case of emergencies. After the event, send an email (or cut and paste e-card) to thank everyone involved in making the day happen. DIY events thrive on collaborations and shared energy and it's nice to show people you appreciate their time and efforts. Participation and reciprocity make the DIY world go round.

### **Archive**

Photos, sound recordings from panels, links to people's blog reviews, collective zines, how-to guides...this is DIY history and our make-shift legacies. Let's create cultural memories!



## More info

*ZineFest!*, [www.myspace.com/zinefest](http://www.myspace.com/zinefest) (happening at The Women's Library Sat. 12<sup>th</sup> June 2010, organized by Nat from *Last Hours* and London Zine Symposium)

Tips on organizing *zine making workshops*, [www.gzagg.org/diyworkshop.htm](http://www.gzagg.org/diyworkshop.htm) (by Grrrl Zines A Go-Go)

*Films about zine-making*: Grrly Show ([www.grrlyshow.com](http://www.grrlyshow.com)); \$100 & a T-Shirt (<http://microcosmpublishing.com/catalog/videos/1011>)

Check out some visual inspiration for *making DIY zine exhibitions*: [www.grrrlzines.net/zines/exhibits.htm](http://www.grrrlzines.net/zines/exhibits.htm) (from the Grrrl Zine Network)

For an indispensable guide to a zillion things zine related (including a section on "Zine Symposium Skill Share Booklet" and how to organise a zine fair) check out Alex Wreck's *Stolen Sharpie Revolution: A DIY Zine Resource*, <http://stolensharpierrevolution.wordpress.com>

Have fun and good luck!!

Red Chidgey: <http://feministmemory.wordpress.com>

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# Organising comedy nights

*Hazel O'Keefe*

## Hazel, *\*why\** did you start your own comedy nights?

I wouldn't call the nights my own, quite the opposite. We didn't link up with a big chain back in the day because it was about filling a gap in the market. We were fighting against comedy clubs who wouldn't put more than one woman on the bill. We still are, things have changed but not enough so we are still ploughing on! It is about equality of opportunity and challenging stereotypes.

We operate as a not for profit DIY collective, hundreds of people have been involved in the development of Laughing Cows. We work with the acts, venues, charities who think similar to us, it's really important to stay independent so we can work on our own political agenda.

## How did you make it happen?

With every spare second I had, working really hard, believing in what we were doing, talking to like minded people and sharing ideas and not expecting things to happen overnight.

Trying, failing, struggling, succeeding in no particular order, learning from the challenges, reflecting and adapting. 'Seeing opportunities in difficulties not difficulties in opportunities'. Churchill (the prime minister not the nodding dog)

It started because I was disappointed with a society that didn't value women as equally as men and I rose to the challenge in the hope I could make some kind of difference.

## What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?

If you want to run a comedy night get in contact with Maureen or myself, [info@laughingcowscomedy.co.uk](mailto:info@laughingcowscomedy.co.uk) / 07958 642090 and we will help you all we can.

I enjoy the process as much as the end result so maybe think about how you are going to do something not just what you are going to do.

## Links to Laughing Cows:

[www.laughingcowscomedy.co.uk](http://www.laughingcowscomedy.co.uk)

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# Putting on gigs

*Cara Corden*



## Cara, *\*why\** did you start putting on gigs?

I'd not been in Sheffield very long but I'd noticed that it was missing out on some of the sorts of shows I wanted to go to that other cities were having. I grew up in Reading going to loads of diy shows there and in London, watching regular people with regular jobs put on all these events. I got to know some of them and I figured if they could then I could too. It was inspiring to believe I could organise something and that people might just show up and have fun with me!

## How do you make them happen?

The first show was a little bit by accident following a drunken meeting at a camera obscura show - where I agreed to promote a show that had already been booked in Sheffield. That one was pretty easy I guess as most of the work had been done for me, but it was a great learning experience and gave me the confidence and initial connections to keep going. It spurred me on to just give things a go. Sometimes I get emails off bands/booking agents about shows, or sometimes I contact a band and ask. Venues are still always a problem in Sheffield, opening and shutting and changing they way they work, its been tough at times. I don't put on as many shows as I used to, but its always exciting to get that buzz of organising something new again and I think as long as I still get that I'll still keep going.

## What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?

Be realistic about it, but ask bands you love, find a venue and get all the details sussed out. Don't be afraid of admitting you don't really know what yr doing but ask bands/other people and promoters for advice if yr not sure about something. Be aware it might not always be a success, there's a lot of effort and trying and failing. Some people get disillusioned and don't stick with it but seven years later I'm still here, I think mostly for me its always been totally worthwhile because of the people I've met along the way and the adventures.

**Links to your gig promotion...**

[www.myspace.com/daisydaisydoes](http://www.myspace.com/daisydaisydoes)

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## **Putting on gigs**

*Em Ledger*



**Em, *\*why\** did you start putting on gigs?**

I started putting gigs on in Sheffield as at the time, I was getting really tired of the lack of artists being booked that I could really engage with. The very few promoters around who were putting on shows I would go to, focused mostly on punk/hardcore, which saw very minimal feminist or queer artists perform. I had finished university and really wanted to find other people I could get together with and work on new challenging projects like the work and events I had seen going on elsewhere. Behind all of my work is a desire to support, showcase and celebrate; safe spaces, supportive communities and positive role models within the DIY queer/feminist community. I wanted to create a space for us to get together, as like minded people, to share our passions, watch bands we can engage with, play the songs we love and make us the people we are and dance as ridiculous as we want to with no judgement or ego's to contend with. It's so vital for us and especially for young people to be surrounded by positive influences, especially feminist and queer people to look up to and to give us strength and faith in ourselves and our abilities. It is also important that we facilitate space to support and showcase their work, help them to travel and perform their work far and wide and encourage and support any individual's desires to make things happen. Whenever things get stressful or I lose money or I get disillusioned, this is what I think about, I remember the amazing people we've had perform in our city, the skills and workshops taught, the amazing people we've met and how this has made me and so many others feel.

**How do you make them happen?**

That's the beauty of DIY, it's something you can just walk into, what you put into it, is what you get out of it. When I started out, I couldn't believe how easy things could be and the height of things you can achieve. It's such an empowering thing to be a part of. You can literally give anything a bash, just email or phone whoever you want to play your event, sign up to international booking mailouts, check up and register your interests with record labels and follow/be friends with/join groups on social networking sites. The next stage is all about promo, it is vital you plug plug plug any event you do, especially if it's a DIY one. The importance on making money on the door, even just to cover your artists expenses is imperative, it's down to you as a promoter to keep the door paying public in by keeping prices as low as possible but you NEED to make sure you make enough to keep your guests happy too, the internet is golden for promo, networking, direct reminders and cross-posting, but you should never forget to advertise in print, litter your city with eye catching posters and flyers.

**What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

My top tip is learn to market yourself or your collective/venture, use a group name or pseudonym, create an internet presence and before you do anything, before you have any

events, really gather at least a small following and a clear identity. If the public know the sort of events you put on and the politics you align yourself with, chances are they will support your work, whether they like the bands you put on or even more vital, they'll give bands they've never heard before a chance. A friendly collective approach can make people much more likely to get in touch about being involved, have their say and maybe come and help out. What can be better than inspiring others to go on and add to the city's scene themselves too?

#### **Links to your gig promotion.**

I'm currently on hiatus in terms of putting on bands right now but I am working with Purple Rhinestone Eagle, a band from Portland USA, who are coming over for a European/UK tour in September 2010. I'm gonna be managing the UK leg of it and going on the road as the tour manager too. You can join the group on facebook for more info, just search the band name and look for euro tour. Also, if you wanna put on a show in your city, maybe you can run this show as your debut, then contact us through the group or email me.

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## **Putting on your own Club Night**

*Tamsin and Ruth  
(Unskinny Bop)*



#### **\*Why\* did you start your own club night?**

Several reasons! In the early 00s London discos had become totally fashion driven and soulless. Clubs like Trash and Nag Nag Nag were operating a strict dress code. We hated the idea that to get into clubs playing the sort of music we wanted to dance to – Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Le Tigre, Peaches - you had to be deemed cool enough to get in, and then if you were one of the elite to make it through the golden gates you generally had to endure icy stares and bitching in place of people throwing themselves around the dancefloor with glee. So we felt like we had to create our own space for that, somewhere where being friendly and getting excited about the music and dancing was the focus rather than what you looked like or how cool you dressed. The emphasis on surface was completely odious to us, and still is.

#### **How do you make it happen?**

The first ever UBop happened as part of Ladyfest London 2002 and I think being part of a larger event or community can definitely help in building a night and getting the word out.

Once you have something of an audience all you really need is a space with DJ equipment and you're ready to go! It took us until 2004 to find a regular venue in the right size, shape and location that we wanted though, and we did various one off events and guest DJ slots before settling in at the Pleasure Unit (now the Star of Bethnal Green) one Saturday a month.

Now the night has been going for so long we concentrate mainly on finding excellent music to play to get people dancing and feeling fine! We spend the whole weekend of UBop talking and thinking about songs we'll be playing and getting records together.

Our beloved Doctor Bill Savage makes beautiful posters and decorations for us to adorn the venue with and make the space our own. We use the facebook group which was created for us by some of our regular Boppers to advertise the monthly discos and additional events, and we also have a lovely website too designed by our friend and guest DJ Alex (of Creep Club: <http://www.creepclub.co.uk>) which we try and update regularly.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

- Start small and don't give up
- Create something that you would love if you were attending rather than organising - there's no point trying to second guess what will be successful and what will appeal to people, it has to come from a genuine place of loving what you're doing and hopefully then others will catch on eventually
- Work out what you will charge on the door, and how many people you think you can (realistically) attract and always bear this figure in mind when talking hire fees with venues - you don't want to end up in debt as a result of your disco endeavours
- Enlist your friends for support
- Don't rip off what other people do - be inspired, but not derivative
- Own the whole process yourself, everything from the concept and politics to the finance and admin
- Provide as much 'added value' as you can muster to help spread your message and give people an opportunity to get to know what you're about (we do this with occasional zines, collaborations, badges, giveaways, goodies...)
- Don't expect people to work for you for free - though people will often volunteer, DIY is not a licence to exploit their skills and talent, especially bands
- Don't be a flake! Lateness, slackness, unresponsiveness are not cool. Be clear about what you are prepared to do, and do it

### **Links to Unskinny Bop:**

[www.unskinnybop.co.uk](http://www.unskinnybop.co.uk)

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=7026907099&ref=ts>

<http://www.myspace.com/ubop>

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## **Running a magazine**

*Edd Baldry  
(Last Hours)*

### **Edd, \*why\* did you start making your own magazine?**

The arrogance of youth I guess. I was really passionate about punk music, radical culture and revolutionary politics and I didn't feel there was a zine out there that addressed all of those aspects. With Last Hours in particular it was also an attempt to make something that would match all the different personalities of the people involved with the project.

### **How did you make it happen?**

Lots of work. That's pretty much the only way to make anything happen I think. That and a combination of luck. I was lucky to meet with lots of cool people who were interested in helping out, and working on it. From there it pulled itself together for the most part, it just needed quite a few all night edited sessions throughout it's history to get it there!



### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

Annoyingly I don't have a handy set of top tips. I think zines are really esoteric and each zine has its own different way of being created. Two tips that have always served me okay are:

1. Just do it, it'll work out in the end; and
2. Everything takes double the amount of time than it's supposed to (hence the all-nighters to get stuff done sometimes!)

### **Links to Last Hours...**

[www.lasthours.org.uk](http://www.lasthours.org.uk)

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## **Running a Zine Distro**

*Colette Rosa*

### **Colly, \*why\* do you run a zine distro?**

I run Ricochet! Ricochet! Distro with my friend Patrick. I think we ran a zine distro first and realised why afterwards; it's a great excuse to read new zines all the time, get stuff for free/trades and make yourself look interesting by selling other people's good ideas.

### **How did you make the Ricochet! Ricochet! distro happen?**

It sort of happened organically around the same time that we started making a zine. I guess that's why it has the same name. I think back then there were distros which were essentially the same people who made a zine of the same name, not that I can actually think of any examples right now! But yeah the distro was part of a massive empire that we had sort of dreamed up (releasing records and putting on shows and other stuff) and the distro just sort of worked out (whereas the others didn't!) when we swapped our zines for others. Back then it seemed like we could get our hands on either good quality leeds stuff like chic alors and

reassess your weapons or self indulgent brighton illustration zines, we were even quite delighted with the latter back then. I think when we lived in different places the distro mainly physically existed at Patrick's house in Brighton, I think the only times we actually took the distro out before we both moved to London was to the London Zine Symposium and Ladyfest Cardiff, both in 2006.



#### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

I think totally do it YOUR way. Like decide if you just want to have a box of zines you take to shows or at the other extreme have a proper online webstore with paypal buttons etc. I don't know personally I like it when people send me a message and ask for a zine and I can look for it there and then to let them know, rather than thinking about how much stock we have and updating websites and stuff (also paypal – ick, send me 50p on a bit of card and I'll send you anything!). If you have a fancy website with a cart option I think people can expect you to be Tesco Delivery or something and send you the correct order within a short amount of time. I think another danger is taking your distro just about everywhere, like is it worth spending your whole Saturday selling about 3 zines at an art book fair? Sometimes I think its worth it, sometimes I dont. It can be cool to stick to distroing in DIY environments but also exposing zines to new people can feel pretty rewarding. I guess just know how much you can afford from the off and how much time you can put into something. Totally I would say that running a distro is part of my radical DIY lifestyle choice but I have to fit it in with my zine, band, volunteering, friends and real job too! And I wouldn't want to compromise those things (well maybe the last one).

#### **Links to R!R! distro...**

<http://www.ricochet-ricochet.co.uk>

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## **Running Your Own Record Label**

*Michal William*

local kid



### **Michal, *\*why\** did you start your own record label?**

We never really planned to start a record label. Rosie and I began Local Kid, after working together on Ladyfest Bristol in 2003, as a way of continuing to hang out together and scheme crazy schemes. Besides our own kicks, the main driving principle behind everything we did was to help create and sustain the strong DIY/feminist/queer/punk community that we saw really remerge around the Ladyfests at that time. I suppose we mostly saw ourselves in a supportive role - making things happen, keeping a fire a flame - and this mostly involved organising tours and putting on gigs. We were quite surprised when people started approaching us to put out their records, as this had never been the plan, but it made sense in the way that everything we were doing revolved around music being the catalyst for action and the gathering of like-minded folks. Until then, the things we were doing were purposely place-situated and physically transient. Making records appealed to me as a way of creating more permanent glue for the scene. Good records will out-live us all, and will be there for future kids to stoke the burning places that make the revolutionary dance-floors and bedroom bomb-plots.

### **How do you do what you do?**

Everything we learnt, we learnt from our friends. Or by jumping into hot water and having to swim. Sometimes when you drive tired, you drive into brick walls. At those times, you have to know to stay laying down - your friends will pick you up because you picked up your friends already.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same...**

Love every record you make like it was your baby-born, cos it will take that bit of you to make it.

### **Links to your record label:**

[www.localkid.co.uk](http://www.localkid.co.uk)

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## ***Recording Albums***

*Michal William*

### **Michal, *\*why\** do you record albums for bands?**

So that they can happen. So I can attempt to capture, as best I can, the spirit of why people are in bands.

### **How do you do what you do?**

I've been lucky to be in situations where I've been able to learn how to manipulate sound in a room, whether live or in recording. But everything is trial and error - I'm still learning all the time.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

1. Be very patient.
2. No one really knows what they're doing unless they make mistakes first.
3. Learn to cook. You need to taste from the sauce-pan and know how to season. You only need to put in what needs to go in.

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# Opening Own Vegan Café

*Michal and Rosie*



**Michal, *\*why\** did you open Café Kino?**

To create a more permanent safe-space for community to gather and things to happen. We also felt it was important to take our 'work' lives into our own hands. Cafe Kino is a not-for-profit workers' co-operative, and while we exist within a capitalist society, we can demonstrate a way of working in a non-capitalist structure and anti-competitive way.

**How did you make it happen?**

We spent a LOT of time planning, doing catering, gathering money, looking at buildings. It is full-time, and there is no other way around it. We only made it happen with the support of our friends and families.

**What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

You have to want it more than anything else in the world.  
Attention to detail is the non-negotiable.

**Links to Café Kino:**

[www.cafe-kino.com](http://www.cafe-kino.com)

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## Screenprinting

*Emma Thatcher*

**Emma, *\*why\** do you ScreenPrint?**

We (myself and Eva Megias) just decided to have a go at it last year with no experience of doing it before. Since then we've made tshirts and fabrics to wear, sell and give to friends. We were both unemployed last year and wanted to spend more time doing creative things.

Screenprinting can be really energising, messy, childlike fun, you don't need to have to learn much to do it and you get instant results. Its actually a really physical process which can be quite therapeutic to participate in, as you're sweating a lot, putting a lot of energy into something you've made - its good for replacing negative thoughts and you can express yourself as loud as you want through the designs.

We both like clothes a lot - with the tshirt designs we wanted to draw things which were funny and trash but were also illustrating ideas coming from an explicitly feminist/queer/anti body norms place and celebrating that - It feels nice I guess to express that with fashion because t-shirts are closer to peoples bodies and hearts then most forms of artwork/words and move around the world more..

We sold one 'I support female facial hair' tshirt to a super high fashion woman in Camden market who went away wearing it proudly - that was one of the glamorous highlights so far!



### How do you do it?

I don't really know that much about it technically really but ultimately screen printing is easy - its just putting ink onto a fabric or paper!

Here' what you need:

1. A place to work - this can be a club where you rent the space (I use [www.printclublondon.com](http://www.printclublondon.com) and there are several such clubs round the country) or it can be anywhere really that you have room, are able to make a mess and have running water. Check here for more DIY screen printing tips, you really can do it in your house if you want! <http://www.instructables.com/id/Screen-Printing:-Cheap,-Dirty,-and-At-Home/>

2. Designs - anything you like to imagine, drawings, scribbles, cartoons, words, slogans, photographs\*

(\* To have a photograph come out well on a screen print you need to convert the image into dots - you can do this digitally using the Photoshop program like this:

- 1.- File-Open

2. Convert file like this: go to Image-Mode-Grayscale

3. Then again like this: go to Image-Mode-Bitmap

4. Now a dialog will pop up - set the Output: 300 and Method: HalftoneScreen

5. A second dialogue will pop up - set like this: Frequency: 35, Angle: 35, Shape: Round.)

3. A screen - this is basically a wooden or metal frame with a piece of silk screen material stretched over it, you can get a ready made one from an art supply shop or make yourself.

4. Printing ink (from a paint or craft shop) - get water based, its better for the environment and for fabric.

5. A Squeegee for pressing the ink down on the screen.

6. Transparent paper to put your design on - use acetate (which you can get in stationers) You can draw directly on to it, copy your design using a photocopier or give your local reprographics shop your paper or computer files and they'll copy it for about 50p.

7. A bottle of photo emulsion liquid - with this you coat the screen before exposing it to light. (from art supply shop)

When the emulsion is dry place the acetate onto the screen the same way round you want the design and expose the screen to light - using a exposure machine this takes few seconds, or if your doing it DIY you leave in the sun for few hours until the emulsion has hardened.

Then you remove the emulsion by washing the screen with a hard jet of water and you have an inverted image remaining like a photograph negative or stencil.

Dry the screen with hairdryer and put tape over the edges of the image so ink doesn't seep through then you are ready to print!

If you use a studio with equipment you can use an ink carousel if you want to print several colours or images on one fabric - if not the floor or table is fine.. you just need to keep the cloth still!

Put ink onto the back of the screen with the fabric beneath, then press down hard with a Squeegee and spread the ink over 2 or 3 times.

That's it - you have a printed image!

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?:**

- Be ready to get very very dirty
- Simple designs are okay - even the smallest things look great when printed in bright ink!
- You'll make mistakes with printing at first but there's a beauty in this - we have made some great things by doing multiple prints to cover mistakes and just generally throwing the ink on the fabric.
- If you can't be bothered to make two screens to print multiple colours don't worry! Just put lots of different inks on one screen for unpredictable results.

I strongly believe the most challenging thing of the creative process is feeling confident to do something, don't worry if you think what you have to say is unimportant or your drawing skills aren't that great - do it anyway, its never a waste of time.

### **Links to your screenprinted work:**

[www.twtee.co.uk](http://www.twtee.co.uk)

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## **Setting up a zine library**

*Colette Rosa*

### **Colly, \*why\* did you set up a zine library?**

I think the 56a zine library has existed in some form since the 56a infoshop opened in the early nineties. A lot of the current members of the wider collective have contributed to it over the years as well as many zinesters just passing through. It is part of the larger 56a Archive which includes books, magazines, pamphlets, meeting notes.... Just so many many things from over the years. I think I visited 56a in my first week of living in London and I soon just found myself visiting to read old zines and books there on a regular basis. I think I was looking for an excuse to get more involved all along.

### **How did you set up the 56a Zine Library?**

I got involved with it a couple of years ago when Melissa from Cherry Bomb Comics moved to town and roped me in to help sort it into some sort of order. Together we tried to basically narrow the contents into as narrow subjects as possible and have re-organise and label all the zines into new magazine boxes. It has been pretty fun working out cheap, practical and anarchic ways of cataloguing! I am trying to make a database as I go along too, I like the idea that someone could be searching for a certain zine on the internet, find that it's at 56a and come and visit! I have put a few of these entries on ZineWiki also. I am continuing on a lot of the repetitive cataloguing and inputting and one day it might be "finished".

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

Get involved in your local radical social centre and start/continue a zine collection there. Or just put your own collection to good use, lend and copy zines! Or if you are feeling generous donate your zines to a zine collection for others to use (as long as you don't give them to a mega academic library you can come and read them again whenever you want and they won't be taking up space in your bedroom – a win win situation). Definitely at 56a we need a lot of work to be done and experts in obscure zine genres are always welcome, I have written instructions (in a black and red book, kept in the zine library shelves) so that anyone can just come along and contribute.

#### **Links to zine library...**

[www.56a.org.uk](http://www.56a.org.uk)

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## **Setting Up A Zine Library**

*Leila Kassir*

*(London College of Communication Zine Collection)*



**Background to the Collection:** The zine library is really a zine collection, as it is located within the larger library of the London College of Communication. As a librarian there I look after and promote the Printing Historical Collection (PHC) which shows the development of printing from the 15th century onwards. The zine collection is an offshoot of the PHC.

#### **Why did you set up a zine library?**

A number of students mentioned to me that they either created zines or were interested in them and as I have for many years had a personal interest in zines and alternative presses I was keen to set up a zine collection. I see the zines as a continuation of many aspects of the PHC. The PHC contains a number of books from the British private press movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> / early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which was heralded by William Morris's Kelmscott Press. The movement was a reaction against mass-production so the inks, paper, typeface and design were created by the individuals at the presses. This reaction against mass-production and consumerism is apparent in the production of zines today. This reaction also often informs content; in the PHC we have copies of what were, in their day, controversial magazines: the Yellow Book (1890s decadent) and Oz (1960s counter-culture). The alternative views often expressed in zines seem a natural step on from these. I know how inspired the students are by the PHC and I see the zines as part of that, and as an important expression of diverse viewpoints. I also (and here is my librarian voice speaking) think it is important to document the zines in some way.

#### **How did you set up your zine library?**

As the collection is within an academic library I have the benefit of a location and budget. I would say, however, that the single most important thing setting up the collection has been

getting to know the people making the zines. Everybody I have met within the zine community has been open and willing to help in any way they can, be it donating items, putting me in touch with other zinesters, spreading the word about the zine collection, or generally keeping me informed. Particular mention and huge thanks should go to Jimi, Peter and Gareth of the Alternative Press Fair who have been supportive from day one.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

This follows on from my previous answer as the main tip is to get to know others in the zine community and to get involved in what is going on. There are a number of zine events to attend but, even if this is not possible, lots of zine creators now have websites or you can get in touch with them via various zine distros. Whilst it is great and a real advantage to have a budget and a location for the zines, I should think it is possible to build a zine library without necessarily having either. Lots of zines will come your way via donation and there may well be spaces within social centres or info-shops or, if not, it is possible to have mobile or pop-up zine libraries. In many ways, the latter type of zine library would seem more in keeping with the DIY nature of the zines themselves.

### **Links to zine library**

The collection can be searched via the general library catalogue <http://voyager.arts.ac.uk>. Type in 'zines' and change the collection drop-down to 'London College of Communication'. Contact me at [l.kassir@lcc.arts.ac.uk](mailto:l.kassir@lcc.arts.ac.uk) if you are interested in finding out more about the LCC Library zine collection.

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## **Starting your own publishing house**

*Debi Withers*



### **Debi, \*why\* did you start and set up your own publishing house?**

I set up my own publishing house for professional and practical reasons. I knew that if I was to self-publish my book I would need to have a 'professional identity' to present to the world so that it would seem viable to audiences outside of DIY subcultures. I wanted publishing a book to be a grander venture than, say, putting out a zine. Or, at least, more a performance of grandeur. These are my shallow 'capitalist' reasons for setting up a publishing house – even though HammerOn is a DIY venture it still circulates within, and is subsumed by, the wider capitalist economy. I think it's very difficult to negotiate this economy and not get sucked into its logics. I would love to read about people who have managed to do differently.

The other – and far more important reason – is about taking back power. The power to self-represent, the power to not wait for validation, and, hopefully for the future, the power of facilitating others' publishing desires (but for now HammerOn is not wealthy enough to publish other works, but I definitely hope to in the future).

Having a publishing house also cuts out a lot of the worry of having to fit into somebody else's idea of what is marketable and sadly, by extension, what is legitimate. If I want to write and publish another book – which I do and will – I now don't have to worry about who will publish



it. I can just do it myself on my own terms and learn a whole lot more about the publishing industry, design and marketing in the process. Also, granting yourself the capacity to publish books I think it gives you a lot of inventive currency to experiment with writing styles – to do something different to what is normally permissible within the book form. That is very exciting. Of course it is a lot of work publishing a book but the important thing is you are in control, you can listen to others' advice about what you should do with your publishing project – and listen you must – but no one is going to reject you at the final hurdle.

### **How did you make it happen?**

Alot of the time setting up HammerOn I didn't really know what I was doing. I learnt on the job as it were, but it really isn't rocket science. The first thing I did was buy some ISBNs – the classificatory mark that books need to have if you want to sell them or get them stocked in libraries. I bought 10 of these, the smallest amount you can buy and they cost 108£. Secondly, I needed a logo so I asked Michal William from Semi-Square design to help me, and he produced a really stunning, professional-looking logo which is actually based on my girlfriend's hand (so creating a lesbian counter-symbolic in the process – hooray!) I then bought a website (from Mr. Site), and defined the concept of HammerOn and added content to it.

Because I was using the Print-on-Demand book method I signed up for a Lightning Source account – the POD printers who only deal with publishers. This took some form filling but then my application was accepted and I was ready to embark on a publishing adventure.

I am sure there are more efficient ways to do what I have done, but really all you need is some ISBNs and a website to sell your books through using Pay Pal and you can be operational as a publisher.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

Think about what kind of books you want publish and write a manifesto. Create a 'brand identity' for yourself. What is your overall vision? Who do you want to reach?

Decide how you are going to print your books – offset lithography or print on demand? This will have a major impact on your budget, how many copies you print (if any!), how you will handle distribution and storage. There are advantages and disadvantages to both methods, but work out what best suits you. If you are on a low budget, POD makes publishing far more viable.

### **Links to your publishing house...**

[www.hammeronpress.net](http://www.hammeronpress.net)

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## **Starting Your Own Band**

*Natalie Brown*





### **Nat, \*why\* did you form your own band?**

We started The Jelas when Aled, Colin and I were in sixth form. We also had another member then, his name is Matthew. We had all just started going to shows and showing an interest in music that no-one else seemed to share. Talking about what bands we wanted to see play and what records we had just bought is what brought us together. We started the band because we all wanted to play music with people who were excited by the same things that we were.

### **How did you make it happen?**

We started out using what equipment we did have and borrowing the rest. I decided I wanted to play bass long before I had one, so I just used a regular guitar at first, in a kind of bassy way. We borrowed amps, guitars and drums from friends and family as we slowly acquired our own things.

We practiced in Matthew's garage and each others' bedrooms.

We would record albums in our parents' houses when they went away on holiday. The first thing we recorded at home, we only used a headset microphone and a downloaded programme for the PC. It was pretty tricky doing the drums that way. Aled somehow had to record the bass drum first and then overdub the snare.

We started putting on shows in Yate after we'd all read the book *Our Band Could Be Your Life*, an amazing and totally inspiring book about the DIY scene in (mostly) Washington DC. We decided to hire a venue and PA, but as not many people in Yate were really into the kind of music we were making, we had to play our first show with four metal bands who thought our set sounded like "pussy ass shit" to use their words!

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

My top tips would be to make sure you're in a band with people you like spending lots of time with. Life in The Jelas is pretty easy because I like my bandmates. I probably even love them. Don't let others tell you that there's a certain way of playing your instrument or writing a song. When we used to practise in the function room of a social club, we'd often have the drunks pop in and tell us our songs needed more/better structure. Part of the fun of writing music is making something unlike anybody else, playing about with the structure of a song was how we did that.

Make sure you're doing it for yourself and making the kind of music you want to make. If you're playing music that you really believe in, you'll be much happier with it, and it's lots easier to accept it when nobody turns up to your shows! If you're having a good time that's all that matters, eventually someone will want to join in.

### **Links to your band**

[www.myspace.com/thejelas](http://www.myspace.com/thejelas)

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## **Starting Your Own Band**

*Jenny Howe*  
(Vile Vile Creatures)

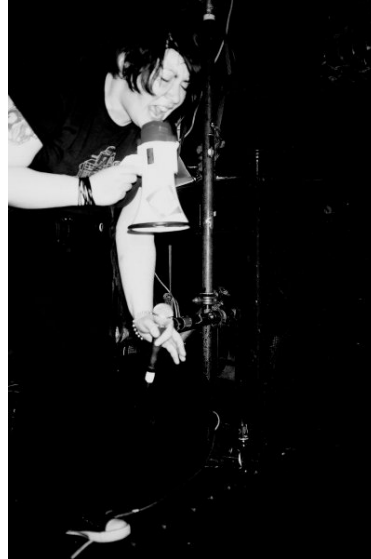
### **Jenny, \*why\* did you form your own band?**

I've always found so much inspiration from music and when I was growing up all my friends were into boybands - I wasn't. My first crush was Justine Frischmann from Elastica but it was more than just thinking she was attractive, it was her stance, she played guitar and she looked androgynous. From then on I wanted to play guitar.

I wanted to form a band because it's a way of having a conversation with someone through being creative. I'm shy and sometimes I find it easier to put my point across through lyrics or music. Sian and I would come up with riffs and ideas and we have similar musical influences. It just seemed a natural progression for us to start playing. I would say that it was also a way to vent frustration, frustration aimed at years of going to gigs and not being represented on stage (or in the crowd), my ideas not being reflected in the music or lyrics that were being played.

and sung. Years of not being visible and my life and relationships not being sung about or even recognised.

As a band starting out, we wanted to mix ideas of feminist ideas, queer politics with music to dance to. Above all going to see a band should be enjoyable, an experience in itself but also singing and playing music our way with no concessions. Forming your own band is about creating your own gang, being creative and getting your point across - a soundtrack to your ideas and putting on a show is part of that. I wanted to have a space that even just for the length of a set, people who felt disenfranchised or felt they had no voice or viable recognisable space within society could dance, hold hands and have a good time.



### **How did you make it happen?**

Our first gig was at Ladyfest Cardiff and being part of the diy community we were able to get gigs on a regular basis. People would suggest us as a band. We used social networking sites but also the more traditional tools of zines and playing lots and lots of gigs. We also put on our own gigs and sorted out a mini tour with London based Sad Shields. I think the diy community is fundamental in terms of getting to know other bands and collectives and being able to borrow equipment, sleep on people's floors after gigs and loaning equipment is all part of the huge support system that's in place.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

Enjoy playing gigs, it's nerve wracking but you have to enjoy it in order to get your music across. It shouldn't become a chore.

Learn how to set up gigs and equipment and also how to promote your gigs.

Put on/swap gigs with bands in other cities. Get to know other bands and work together, it's great fun and you get to know lots of people on your wavelength.

Have fun.

### **Links to your band...**

[www.myspace.com/vilevilecreatures](http://www.myspace.com/vilevilecreatures)  
[www.vilevilecreatures.co.uk](http://www.vilevilecreatures.co.uk)

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## **Starting your own clubnight**

*Ema Stafford*



### **Ema, \*why\* did you start your own club night?**

It was really born out of a frustration with the gay scene. I was fed up with the sexism and the phobia's I experienced as a queer person on Leeds gay scene. It made me so angry that people weren't concerned with any sort of politics, pride events were sponsored by the breweries and yet had trans-gendered folks getting punched in the face on marches. It was a mess of gender inequality and corporate big wigs creaming off the pink pound.

I wanted to create a space where people could come and feel free to express themselves without fear of ridicule and abuse. I defiantly had a feminist agenda, it was like my dirty little secret at first. A lot of the gay scene is an environment that doesn't even acknowledge women. Slowly I became more comfortable with the idea that I could change that.

### **How do you make it happen?**

Leeds is a small city, it's not been difficult to find people to take part. I find that when I ask individuals for help directly, more often then not people are more than willing. The venue is important, the first venue I held an event in was really happy to take people's money but didn't acknowledge the hard work I had put into making the event work.

I would also say having an online presence is really important. It is really easy to be critical of social networking sites but this is the main way of communication today. I am all for methods of communication that make queer events more accessible to your average person. If a queer person in Leeds was looking for a safe place to meet people in a laid back environment, with good music, I would like to think that their Google search would bring them to us.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

I would say if you are thinking about it, do it. Obviously be sensitive to events that are already going on in your area, try and link up with other artists and promoters, try not to tread on anyones toes. Ultimately, It is only when I get a date for an event booked in the diary that I really organise things. I think about what I would want out of a club night and that is exactly what I deliver without compromise.

I aim to create affordable, safe and enjoyable events in which to dance, not-dance, drink, not-drink, talk, not-talk and experience music/arts in the company of like-minded types, spaces in which there are no presumptions, norms, or demands made of participants beyond extending respect to others involved. For all shapes, sizes, genders and persuasions. It's near impossible to deliver the perfect event but if you come close, it's an empowering feeling. GO FOR IT!

### **Links to Sapphic Traffic...**

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# Starting your own record label

*Rachael Neiman*



## **Why did you start Cherryade Records?**

I started Cherryade Records because I wanted to help some of the bands and artists I loved get heard by more people. Cherryade was never intended to be a business, the aim was always just to do as much as we could to promote bands we loved, we've never had a grand plan for the label, while we have enough time and resources and while there are still bands we love and who aren't getting the attention they deserve we'll keep doing what we're doing. I've never considered working with a band because I believe they're going to become 'the next big thing' and make us lots of money, I think that's really liberating because if profit was important to us we'd have to sign bands who we thought had a 'fashionable', 'commercial' sound but who we didn't feel passionate about and that would take all the joy out of running the label and we wouldn't be able to put the energy into it that we do now.

## **How do you make it happen?**

Well, Cherryade's been going for nearly five years but I'm still not sure exactly how we've managed to get this far because it really has been a case of learning as we go along. When I suggested to Adam Cherryade that we start a label he was understandably dubious. Neither of us had any idea how to go about it, running a label seemed like the kind of thing that people with loads of experience in the industry and business know-how did, not two students who hadn't the first clue about running anything. But, luckily we got a lot of great advice from inspirational people who'd been there before and who started us off on the right track. We're really lucky in that throughout our time running the label we've been able to work with brilliant bands, djs, journalists, promoters and other labels who have really helped us and made the whole experience so much fun. We know a bit more about getting records pressed, promotion, royalties and distribution than we used to, every time we release a new record we learn something else, but one of the most exciting things about doing something like this is that you never stop learning and developing new skills. I'm very keen on maintaining a DIY ethos and ideology in all we do, both because it allows you to take a hands-on proactive approach to all aspects of running a label but also because it's by far the best way to manage with very limited resources. We don't have a lot of money and so have to do all our promotion in-house, but I actually prefer it this way as I think we're best placed to tell the world about our bands as we feel so passionately about them. Since the label has grown we had to take on a distributor to handle our shop sales which I wasn't sure about at first as it would be like letting go of part of the label but in fact it's worked very well, the distributor we have got personally involved with all the records and really do understand what they're about, so, even though

we've had to let go of control over one bit of the process I feel it's worth it since we are able to get more records out there which is good for everybody and without compromising our aims or ethics.

We like to work in a really co-operative way with all the artists we work with, it's really important to us that the artist has a final say on how the record sounds and looks as we wouldn't be interested in releasing anything an artist was not completely happy with since the artists and their music are our number one priority and putting the possibility of making a more 'commercial' record before releasing a record that the artist loves and feels proud of just would not feel right and would definitely diminish the enjoyment we get out of running the label.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

Just give it a go. Don't put pressure on yourself to do everything right straight away. Get good advice from others who've been there before. Be realistic about what you hope to achieve and don't put pressure on yourself, the whole process should be fun and if it's not it's worth thinking about why you're doing what you're doing. Maintain a good relationship with the artists you work with, keep them informed of what you're planning on doing with the record, keep consulting them throughout the process and generally treat releasing each record as a collaborative process. Don't feel you have to know everything at the start, you'll have fun learning new skills as you go along!

### **Links to Cherryade:**

[www.cherryademusic.co.uk](http://www.cherryademusic.co.uk)  
[www.dandelionradio.com](http://www.dandelionradio.com)

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## **Starting your own theatre company**

*Joey Hateley*  
*(Artistic Director of TransAction Theatre)*



### **\*Why\* did you start the TransAction Theatre Company? How do you make it happen?**

I started TransAction Theatre Company because there wasn't any roles for me in the industry.... Or should I say no-one wanted to cast me, as I was a different kind of body. I also realised that in order to represent my own reality, community, stories and experiences I needed to write my own material. This material was of no interest to existing spaces and venues, so I created work that could be performed in queer cabaret venues or produced my own theatre productions in alternative spaces. To perform cabaret at a pre-existing event is much simpler than producing, marketing, touring my theatre pieces, which takes at least 3-4 years of work. There is only one of me to write, devise, collaborate with other artists, apply for Arts Council Funding in stages, create a work in progress, distribute a DVD, tour-book the show (theatres book a year in advance), apply for more funds for full production to tour with a

technician to cover transport, accommodation, publicity and marketing, employing visual artists, a graphic designer, photographer, freelance theatre marketing person, a videographer and DVD authorer to name but a few. I rarely pay myself properly as a tour-booker, producer, administrator and performer and all of the above is exhausting and is not sustainable financially. I run workshops and teach theatre for a living and have written devised and performed my own work for about 15 years now continually working to make things happen. I am only just starting to be part of a global interconnection of alternative gender-queer events where fellow artists, activists, part-time academics and producers are working hard to create socio-political performance spaces where it is lovely to be asked to perform. I no longer knock on doors that remain shut to me and my world as we create our own spaces to represent our own realities. As the mainstream assimilates our artistic, cultural, social and educational work I continue to challenge myself to push my own boundaries, to stay working on the periphery with very little support, funding or recognition. However I have come to learn that it must be a balance between working on the outside to make change from the inside. For example, I'll soon be teaching my own devising course at Manchester University called 'Performance from the Periphery', which being within such an institution is really a contradiction in terms!

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## Writing and Performing Poetry

*Swithun Cooper*

### **Swithun, \*why\* did you write and perform poetry?**

I started writing when I was a teenager because I wasn't very good at understanding what was going on around me. I felt like everyone else had been given a code of how to behave, like the right bands, not embarrass themselves in public etc, and I liked reading books and listening Patti Smith. (Then I got older and it turned out Patti Smith was cool to like. But she wasn't in suburban Reading in 1999.) Staying in my room reading and listening to Patti Smith somehow turned into doing the same, plus writing poems. I think I was about 14 when I started.

I didn't perform my poems until I was 17 and won a young writer's competition, where I had to read the poem out loud. I remember standing at the microphone in a strange posh building and suddenly realising, oh, it sounds like a much better poem if I read it like we have to do in school...

### **How do you make it happen?**

In terms of writing, I read everything I can, and put things in notebooks and have ideas and discard ideas and slowly over anything from 6 pages to 16 months I make a poem. Reading them is a whole different thing – there are people in the world whose biggest passion is performing or hearing other performers, and those people are really interesting and exciting to meet. In my first year of university I found the whole student-night thing boring, so I got together with a group of other people and helped organise a monthly open mic night. A few years later, while I was living in Leeds I used to go to a monthly night in Chapel Allerton with Matthew Bellwood and Len Lukowska (who are also great readers/writers), and after a few months I started doing my own stuff there too. After that, I got involved in another Leeds event, Raconnaissance, which has moved to London and is still happening.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

Definitely read a lot. All kinds of things –what you like, what you don't like, what you've never tried before. (Mid-20th century eastern european poems, for me at the moment.) And don't lose your nerve. Writing is incredibly lonely, it's not like a team sport or being in a band, so it can be easy to lose your nerve and your faith in yourself, and delete everything. That's why open mic nights and readings are good – it's a way of seeing what people react to in your writing, and improving your technique.

Reading-wise, there are so many people who are into live events – there's usually at least one open mic night in every town. At first it seems scary and cliquey, but when you get up to read, everyone claps and you feel a lot better about yourself.

And if there isn't an open mic night near you, they're very easy to start up: for our first one, I bought a £5 mic and jammed it into my guitar amp... If you put up posters saying OPEN MIC POETRY NIGHT you'll be surprised how many people turn up. Everyone is, or knows, a frustrated writer.

### Links to your poetry/work...

Two of my poems: [www.literateur.com/2009/07/keep-an-eye-on-swithun-cooper/](http://www.literateur.com/2009/07/keep-an-eye-on-swithun-cooper/)

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## Writing and publishing your own book

*Debi Withers*



### Debi, *\*why\** did you write and publish your own book?

I wrote *Adventures in Kate Bush and Theory*, which is a creative re-interpretation of my PhD thesis, because I wanted to experiment with the possibilities of critical writing and story-telling. I decided to publish it myself because I suddenly realised that I could. I had been involved in DIY cultural production for some years but it took a while for the lightbulb to flash in relation to publishing a book. Once I realised that DIY principles are totally applicable to book publishing I thought – why not? I didn't look back from there.

Because I wanted to do something that was a little different to the norm, I felt the book's message would be compromised were it published by an established publishing house. I also had experience of sending proposals out and not getting a reply (not even a rejection!) which was a massive energetic tax on my desire to produce the *actual* book. Better put that energy into making the book a material reality rather than sending off endless packages to people who would never give me the time of day. Further, in publishing my own book I knew I'd be in the very good company of Virginia Woolf, Walt Whitman and Anais Nin, so this also gave me the impetus to go out and do it as well.

### How did you make it happen?

I spent 6 months or so editing down my PhD thesis, which was a weighty academic tome. I was very lucky to have the good advice of Amy Spencer (author of *DIY and the Rise of Lo-Fi Culture*) who helped me develop my tone of address and overall writing style. In this sense I didn't really write my book as to edit it into being (but as any writer will tell you, editing is an essential part of successful writing). I made sure plenty of people read my text as well to give me feedback – it was crucial that I didn't just go and publish something which was incredibly self-indulgent. If you are to self-publish you really need to seek the advice of others and develop excellent listening skills in order to respond to their comments. These people will act as your editors/ phantom publishing company if you like – ignore them at your peril!

Once I had a final text I was happy with I then sent it to the designers for cleaning. I think putting out a book there is an element of being an auteur, it necessitates collaboration. The book is just the raw bones really; it needs to be dressed nicely! I strongly recommend that you design your book well – both in terms of font, typesetting and the cover. Image is everything!



So work with designers whose work you admire and who you know will help you deliver your message in print. It can't look shoddy because people will not take it seriously.

Once I had a final PDF of the cover and the interior I uploaded it to Lightning Source who then printed the book and delivered it to me. The book was then proof read by me and a hawk eyed grammar geek. The relevant changes were made and I sent it off again. When I got the book back the second time around I physically couldn't look at the insides in case there were more mistakes. Luckily the hawk was at hand to look through again. There were minimal mistakes so I decided to go ahead and make the order. The final book was delivered in a matter of days, giving me an enormous sense of pride and achievement in what was the culmination of many years hard work.

### What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?

Firstly, believe in what you say or write enough to publish it in book form. People need interesting things to read!

Secondly, build up a network of advisors who will act as critical friends to the project and listen to their advice.

Thirdly, have fun. Creating a book is an exciting thing to do and takes patience, hard work and care. Enjoy the process and learn as much as you can.

### Links to your book:

<http://www.hammeronpress.net/page2.htm>

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## Organising an Exhibition

*Terese and Anna*



### \*why\* did you start and set up the project?

**Terese:** *Outwrite Women's Newspaper* was a monthly anti-racist and internationalist feminist newspaper set up by a multi-racial feminist collective in London in the early 1980s (in publication 1982-88). I first came across the paper when I started researching British Women's Liberation histories (first as 'diy historian' but I am now also a PhD student

researching historical narratives of British feminism and race) and was so inspired to find out about the politics and collective working practices of the group of women who created *Outwrite*. I believe Anna had first found out about the paper while doing her PhD about Greenham Common.

We decided to create the exhibition because it's so important that contemporary feminists know about the history and politics of *Outwrite* – so much of its analysis of interconnected forms of oppression is still very relevant today. And the paper documented so many different struggles (in Britain as well as across the world) – it's a really important historical artefact documenting a wide range of women's activism in the 80s. It is really sad that so often *Outwrite* gets written out of the historical narrative of the British Women's Liberation Movement – there is a misconception that the movement ended by the end of the 1970s (in my opinion some of the most interesting and progressive coalitional work happened in the 80s). Plus, too often the only feminist publication from the British women's liberation movement that ever gets mentioned in popular histories of the movement is *Spare Rib*. We wanted to change that. *Outwrite* was really instrumental in developing a much needed anti-racist and anti-imperialist feminist perspective within British feminist politics, and many segments of the contemporary movement can learn so much from the work that they did. That's why we thought it was really important to make this exhibition – to spread the word out about this amazing and complex part of recent feminist history.

### **How did you make it happen?**

**Anna:** I can't remember what got the project initially off the ground other than that it come together following an inspiring—if exhausting year of starting up FAF (Feminist Activist Forum) and an email exchange I had with fellow zinester Red Chidgey in the summer of 2008. On a scorchingly hot August afternoon, while at home in New York City, I put together a 'working document' for an exhibition project on *Outwrite*. This initial project proposal tried to bring together ideas floating around FAF about anti-racist, anti-imperialist feminisms and think through possibilities for creating an exhibition that would work simultaneously as an activist history project and public story-telling. This was fuelled by a desire to bring the history of the paper to as broad an audience as possible, moving it outside of academy and our feminist subcultural spaces. I contacted the few collective members of *Outwrite* I could find via google, and after a couple moving and supportive responses, decided to give the project a go.

When I got back to England in the fall of 2008 a small group of us interested in *Outwrite* and doing work around anti-racist feminist activist histories got together and brainstormed the project further.

**Terese:** I had had email contact with the group developing ideas for this project, but basically Anna had done all the planning work up until this point and this was the first time we met.

**Anna:** We divvied up tasks and began trawling through the newspapers (at the Feminist Library and the Women's Library in London) to find key themes we wanted the exhibition to focus on. I put in a formal grant proposal to my university at the time, trying to win a £5000 funding bid for the project, which would have been enough to pay people for their work, create a digital archive and have 2 metre high waterproof canvas exhibition posters. One rejection letter and a few months later, three of us (Anna, Jeska and Terese) found ourselves sprawled across my bedroom floor with £25 worth of arts and crafts supplies from the local stationers and a bottle of red wine. With the help of ever-imaginative Mel vegan, we designed a series of posters for each of our themes. We used a scanner and sticker paper to cut and paste images of *Outwrite* newspapers alongside summary write-ups we'd done and extracted quotes. We first showed the exhibition at the Zine Fest at the Women's Library in January 2009, and then again at the Gender, Race and Class activist conference in London in February.

**Anna:** After this first showing, the exhibition grew and the team shrank. Terese and I became the main ones keeping the project going (to get involved, contact us!) with support from friends and whoever happens to be in the room when we are sticking stuff together. For each new event we exhibit at, we have added a piece to the exhibition. In December 2009 we made a transnational solidarity map of *Outwrite's* international coverage of campaigns for the Transnational Feminisms conference in Manchester, and in March 2010 we made a national campaign map for the Women's Liberation 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference in Oxford. Next month we'll be adding an anarchist-focused element for the Anarchism and World Politics symposium in Bristol June 17-18, 2010.

## What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?

**Terese:** Making an exhibition does not need to be difficult or done in a fancy way! I had never done anything like this before and don't think I'm a visually creative person, and I was surprised at how good the exhibition looks (at this stage, as Anna has described, it is very diy, but when it's hanging up on the wall I think it looks really neat). It's actually been really fun to work on something visual because I don't do this normally. So my top tip would be if you have an idea, even if you don't think you have the skills or funding, if you have the inspiration, a bit of time and a small amount of ££ (Anna explains more about the materials below) you can pull something quite simple together and it can be really effective.

Regarding the research aspect - I think it's a good idea at the start of the project to have a plan and to divide up the work in a way that suits everyone (which doesn't mean everyone has to do the same amount of work - just that you have an understanding between each other what each person is responsible for). In doing the research, we divided up the issues of *Outwrite* between us. Jeska looked at the early issues, Anna at the middle years and me the later years. It's a good idea to have a systematic way of collecting the information. We decided beforehand what types of things we were looking out for in particular (eg coverage of British feminist activism, analysis and critique of the Women's Liberation Movement, coverage of international campaigns, cartoons and interesting pictures, coverage of anti-racist campaigns etc.). We made a template that we all used to make notes about each issue. These were really useful when we were pulling the research together and pulling out themes when we were deciding what we wanted to include in the exhibition.

**Anna:** One of the things I try to do while travelling through a new city or town is to check out smaller, local museums, libraries, cafes, indy bookshops, etc. These kinds of spaces—whether they hold collections of the area's rock fragments or record sleeves from local bands' first albums—often work with few resources and small budgets, so the exhibitions and displays they offer are the kinds of things you can do yourself. When inside these spaces I literally get up really close to the labels, posters and hanging devices to look at how they've been put together. For example, either through observation or talking to people, I'll ask about the practical stuff: How did you get that wire to hang from the ceiling holding up clips that are attached to magazines? Is that sticker paper on foam board you're using for display labels? Often exhibitions—even at established, fancier museums—can look really shiny and perfect from a metre away, but if you get up close you can see how a timeline was made out of electrical tape or a collection of badges are held onto a corkboard with blu-tac. Using cheaper and found materials you can always put together something similar to what you see, changing the aesthetic to fit your budget and your vision.

**Anna:** Likewise, for content, I try to catch smaller exhibitions on activist histories to get ideas for ways that activist histories can be exhibited. These kinds of displays are often in social centres and anarchist infoshops, but can also be found in less likely spaces such as the foyers of major museums and at university archives. For example, last year a hallway in the Museum of London had a small but object and content rich exhibition of British solidarity campaigns during anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa. These exhibitions are usually free and open to the public, but often less well advertised in activist circles. To be kept posted of these events, I sometimes subscribe to museum and archives newsletter listserves.

Another trick of the DIY curator trade is to gather a collection of basic exhibition-friendly craft supplies. I save coloured folders, cardboard packaging and flat wood from old furniture (the backs of bookshelves and thick paper in picture frames and sheet sets are ace.) Other essentials in my tool kit are an x-acto knife, cutting mat, and t-square ruler for slicing things up in straight lines; blu-tac, masking tape, sticker paper for printers and double sided tape for all your pasting needs. (Sticker paper can be expensive but it saves loads of time and hassle so may be well worth the investment!); Screws, metal wire or fishing line, clothes pins and various kinds of paper clips for hanging and installing.

Having some of these tools on hand can be a show-saver when the unexpected happens! While ideally the space you'll be putting up your display in will be well equipped for your needs, doing things DIY means we never know quite what we're going to get until we get there. Lots of blu-tac, scrap paper and a marker come in handy when you've got to make last minute changes to how you are going to display a show. Try to use the space you have and don't be afraid to add things or move things around that weren't in your original vision of what the display would look like.

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# Opening Your Own Shop

*Seleena Daye*



## **Seleena, \*why\* did you open your own shop?**

Opening a shop is something I always wanted to do. When I worked at my previous job, me and my friend would often sit there and discuss what kind of shop we would like to open, obviously a sweet shop was one of mine. Something happened at work, I handed my notice in, then something else happened and so my months notice quickly turned into a weeks. I quit on the Friday, thought ARGH I NEED A JOB and so by Monday I was organising opening a shop!

I wanted a go a being my own boss.

## **How did you make it happen?**

Opening a shop is surprisingly easy! I had a little bit of money stashed away from when I used to be joint owner of a handmade accessories stall. Having this stall for a good few years helped me along with the business side of things.

It was as easy as finding a place (something I had kind of done before quitting my job!), finding a supplier, having a bit of cash and buying a load of stuff!

I then rang up the Inland revenue, told them I was self employed, sorted out a direct debit to pay my national insurance, the rest was just a case of making my shop look full and exciting!

## **What are your tips for others wanting to do the same?**

My top tips from the boring to the exciting:

-When it comes to doing your tax return DO IT ON LINE! As someone who is a bit of a technophobe and like to get things done as soon as, I thought I would do it the old fashioned paper way, but sheesh, that was just too confusing. Doing it on line means the only boxes you get given to fill in are the ones that apply, so much quicker and easier, especially for those last minute folks!

-Being organised is a huge help. I am a really organised (to the point of being anal) person, which made filing my tax return so much easier. Keep receipts form each month separate. At the end of each month work out your in comings and outgoings, that way when filing your tax return you just have to add it all up instead of try and make sense of 12 months worth of jumbled receipts and figures!

-You don't really need a business account. Despite what the banks tell you, I kept all my business money separate from my own money by keeping it all in my savings account. Just

see if you can open a separate bank account that has good interest rates. Business accounts tend to steal all your hard earned cash!

-Make a note of how much you pay yourself, you will need to add your wages onto your outgoings when doing your tax return.

-Keep your shop clean! Even if you hate cleaning, you'd be surprised how much more you sell from a clean and tidy shop.

-Have made up themed events with possible free stuff. Everyone loves free stuff, so much that they might get excited and buy actual stuff!

-Look happy (and busy)! This sounds like such a cheesy chain store thing to say, but I'd much rather buy something from someone who looks happy than a grump. Also don't look bored, it makes your shop look like it's boring. It's also OK to chat to customers, especially if you haven't spoken to someone in like half an hour, argh!!

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## Opening Your Own Comics Shop

*Melissa Steiner*



### **Melissa, \*why\* did you open your own comics shop?**

Me & my friend Tui opened Cherry Bomb Comics because we were excited by the idea of running our own space which would allow us to bring together elements of all the stuff we loved, like DIY music, queer & feminist politics, comics, people, libraries etc etc. Also, we were feeling the lack of a community hub in Auckland, and plus, we couldn't buy the comics that we liked anywhere, so we just decided to do it ourselves!

### **How do you make it happen?**

The actual setting up of the shop was a lot easier than I thought it'd be. We both had to put in money, which we've never got back, but it was a sacrifice we were willing to make at the time. After the initial money was put into the shop, we never had to put in more money again - it just became self-sustaining. We then found a space that had a shop in the front, and a flat in the back, so we moved in there with our partners, bought a whole bunch of stock from overseas and started building shelves & signs and painting the interior. Lucky for us, we have lots of

useful friends, so we had a database designed especially for us, and lots of help with painting etc, as well as volunteers to help run the shop when we finally opened. Tui learned how to do small business accounting and about all the tax stuff, and I learnt how to make a website (Cherry Bomb's current website & online shop is new though, and made by our mega-smart friend Katie, it's a lot better than my ramshackle earlier attempt!). We both had part time jobs as well, the shop is non-profit, so we were never in the position to quit our jobs or anything, but it managed to work quite nicely, we took turns having days in the shop. It helped that we lived there too, made the rent a lot cheaper. These days, now that the shop space has closed down and I live in London, it's become more about organising workshops & events (Tui in Auckland, and me in London), and doing stalls at zinefests. We're now also operating an online distro, so that's got a whole other set of issues to running a physical space, what with dealing with postage and packaging etc.

### **What are your top tips for others wanting to do the same?**

Be prepared to not make money (and maybe even lose money), otherwise you might feel frustrated with your project, or end up compromising your original ideas - just know why you want to do it, and do it for the love. Also, don't write off an idea just because it seems crazy, if you'd said to me a few years ago that I would be the co-owner of a non-profit, anarchist-feminist, queer comics & zine shop & reading library, I would've said no way! Lucky for me, Tui has a very "Can Do" DIY attitude, and encouraged me to actually believe we could do it! So...find a friend to share your project with, cos it totally helps to have more than one approach, and it's more fun!

### **Links to Cherry Bomb comics...**

[www.cherrybombcomics.co.nz](http://www.cherrybombcomics.co.nz)

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