



Start Here

Hello there and thanks for bothering to write for this information booklet. Before I start I'll say that this is all based purely on my experience of running a fanzine over the last 20 months or so. I knew nothing about doing one before I started but after reading this you will. I would like to produce further editions of this in the future so if anyone has any advice, ideas, help, information, criticism etc it would be welcome. You will find my address at the end of this booklet. If anyone wants a copy of the current issue of "Alternative Sounds", they can get one for 30p plus 20p postage (also T-shirts, posters, T.V. sets, used cars - very reasonable).

Right, let's get on with it. Well if you are reading this you are either interested in starting a fanzine, or you are already involved with one (or you picked this up by mistake) - in which case you should have some idea of what you want to write in it - I can't tell you that. There are fanzines on music, politics, Sci-Fi - they can be on absolutely anything. Mine has been on the local music scene (mainly but not entirely). What you can do is decide what the main aims and ideas of the 'zine are (if there's a group of you you will probably have to compromise in some way) and what other things would make occasional articles, who is going to do what, whether you want contributions from other people - readers etc, how it could develop, what sort of people it would be aimed at (everybody) etc, etc. You can get into a big argument over whether you like the term "fanzine" too, but I couldn't care about that.

GETTING INFORMATION....

What are you going to write - reviews of bands, gigs, records. Interviews with people, articles or your ideas on various topics, poems, lyrics. What about pictures - drawings? collages, photos of your own, pretty patterns. It is up to you whether you want to rip-off photos from other sources to go in your mag, I personally try to do that as little as possible, but some people do, especially for their own collages

of photos (that's photo-montage to all you art students).

You are going to need some equipment to do all this - pens and paper obviously, drawing stuff, a cassette recorder if you want to record your interviews. Typewriters are handy but if your handwriting looks good then that's OK. It's worth buying a new ribbon for your typewriter now (and practising a bit). The hard bit is getting someone to take photos for you, it can be expensive too - try your best and in emergency photo booths and polaroids have aided many fanzines - just don't use them too much as they don't look very good. If you're having trouble try asking in your first issue for help.

You really could do with something pictorial in your mag but then again it's up to you.

LAYOUT....

You will need to decide what size your fanzine is going to be. A4 (the size of this page) is the usual magazine size, but A5 (half the size) is not uncommon, and A3 (twice the size) is rare. You will have to check with your printers what size they can print. A4 is by far the most common, or A3 folded to make an A4 magazine.

COMMON TYPES



A3 folded to make A4



A4 (stapled down side)



A4 folded to make A5



A2 folded to make A3

fold

The bigger the pages the harder it is to make them look good usually, although if you get too small it is fiddly and too bitty.

Assuming you've got all your information, now you come on to layout which entails deciding how you are going to put everything on the (at the moment blank) pages you have got. I stick my typed articles, pictures etc onto thickish paper to the size of the page (a drawing pad will do) - use glue that won't warp your pages, and even if you want pages that when they are finally printed will be back to back, don't stick your pages like that in the layout stage as you can muck up whatever is on the other side.

You will have to decide on your own layout style of course - you can do anything, mixing ripped up, roughly written collages with neatly typed and letrasetted pages, if you like. For my printers I have

to leave a gap of about $\frac{1}{4}$ " around each page - check about that. Do your layout - make it interesting and don't have big blocks of type that no-one wants to read

and then a few scrappy pictures - try to break everything up into readable blocks. Put a bit of extra effort into your cover as this will help to sell your mag and it is the image everyone has of your mag too.

Some hints - make sure all your typing/writing is in the darkest ink possible (within reason) as there is nothing worse than pages that are too feint to read when printed. Do not use biro as this does not reproduce very well - get an ink pen/rotring pen with black ink. Colour photos generally reproduce badly too so get black and white ones wherever possible. Colours on your original layout reproduce varingly, but red and yellow usually come out dark, and pale blue comes out light. So beware and again check with your printer - it's worth it.

I use 'Blu-tack' to stick in my photos so they can be removed to be half-toned. This gives the dot-picture which you see in most magazines. You can leave them as they are in which case they come out reduced to black and white only, no grey.

Black/white EXAMPLE in dots.



Here again you will need some equipment - felt pens, pencils, ink pens, glue, stencils, Letraset or similar rub-down lettering - try any large stationers. It shouldn't cost too much and you build up your equipment as you go along. You can always cut out letters, words and pictures from other papers.

Finally, read and look through your finished magazine before you take it to be printed. It's easy to correct one error, not so easy when there's hundreds of 'em (a stitch in time blah blah blah).



The annoying bit, as you've finished your work of art and it's all over with isn't it. Your printers may take a few hours or they may take a few weeks so be prepared to pester them. First decide how many copies you want printing. This will depend on what's in your mag, where you are going to sell it, how often it will come out, what you can afford etc. With my first issue I got 100 photocopies - sold them all locally, then got another 100 done and sold them, all in a month. I now sell around 800 copies of each issue which comes out every 2 or 3 months, some of the big name 'zines in London sell considerably more though.

How will you get it printed? You might be able to get hold of a spirit duplicator (at a school perhaps) to run some copies off, but the quality isn't too good and they can only print a small amount. The two commonest means of getting fanzines printed are either 1. Photocopying or 2. Offset-duplicating. Photocopying is the best method for small amounts. There are two types - direct and indirect. The direct photocopying is one sided on treated paper and is pretty crap. Indirect photocopying can be quite good but photos don't come out very well at all. If you are talking about amounts up to 100 maybe 200 then see about photocopying, otherwise offset-duplicating is for you (both ways are expensive mind - prices vary greatly, it cost me £25 to get those 100 photocopies done 20 months ago - that was for a 12 page 'zine - it would now cost me £35).

With Offset, you pay for some printing plates to be made which are expensive, but on top of that the ink, paper and time adds very little. The quality is much better and you can go into the realms of variety of paper, glossy covers, colour prints etc. I have sometimes used 2 colour prints on the cover of my mags and if you want to do this you will have to do separate layout for each colour, yet still in black, and make sure they match up!

There is no easy or cheap way to get your mag printed - try the yellow pages and compare quotes. It will seem a lot but if you ask around you might be able to get some community centre to print your mag for you at a reduced rate, or find a friend who works at a printers who can get it done on the cheap for you. See if you can pay the bill some time after you've had the mags to sell. As you go on you should hopefully find a printers that suits you. Our last issue, an Offset affair, cost £140 for 700 copies.



You collect a heavy pile of paper from the printers... Collating means putting your mag into order, folding and stapling it - remember to make sure to tell your printer exactly what pages are to be printed on the back of what or you'll find you have articles out of order now. The printers can often do the collating for you but we saved £10 a time by doing it ourselves. To do this we invested £10 in a long-arm stapler which will reach across the width of a page this size and staple it in the middle (We have A3 paper folded to make an A4 mag usually, although we have done a couple of A2 to A3 papers). You can staple A4 sheets in the corner or (better) down the side, with a normal stapler. You might think up a whole new way of folding/stapling, some people don't bother to staple at all, and if you think of some wierd and wonderful shape for your 'zine bear in mind that the novelty soon wears off.

folding and Stapling - examples.



loose sheets.
Downside - in corner
(bit weak)



in middle (need
long arm stapler for
larger mags).

Selling it

Now your magazine is ready to be sold to an unsuspecting public, but you will need to advertise it a bit. Posters are your best bet locally - in record shops, book shops, anywhere that agrees to sell it of course and anywhere that doesn't. Remember that you can get done for fly-posting so that makes it all the more challenging doesn't it. You can try placing small ads in various magazines, send other fanzines copies to review (they'll probably send you a copy of theirs back for you to review too!). I put an Ad in N.M.E. and got 6 replies, oh well, it depends on what you've got in it again and you never know what useful person might just reply.

Selling fanzines comes in all shapes and forms - by hand in the street, at gigs, in your local shops, and in not so local shops. Places in London that will sell and maybe even distribute your fanzines for you include...Rough Trade, Better Badges, Compendium Books (addresses at back). These shops, except for a few very friendly local ones perhaps, will all want to take a cut of the price of your magazine. It may be a few pence or it may be up to a third of the cost price. Local places usually deal on a sale or return basis but the places in London will buy them off you. Remember to check up on the shops in a week or so to see how well your 'zines are selling. If you have a few left they will do nicely as back issues, and if you have a lot left you can redecorate your house - you can't lose! Well you can and this is the reason for many a fanzine never getting off the ground.

When you work out the price of your 'zine make sure you have enough to cover all costs. Mine costs 20p each for printing, shops take 5p on average, then there's money on transport and materials, and inevitably a few copies are given away or not sold. I charge 30p for it and over 17 issues I have come out with about £20 more than I

started off with. You don't want to rip anyone off do you - especially not yourself.

One way of supplementing income to pay for your magazine is to take adverts. There are mixed feelings on this - I used to take them and got a few quid, but I don't now - if I like something myself I will write about it and that will be the publicity it gets. Small Ads are a different thing and for anything like "musicians wanted" I allow them for nothing. Make up your own mind on that - if it keeps your 'zine going and perhaps pays for extra pages then it is no doubt worth it.

THINGS IN GENERAL...

FREEBIES etc... There are a few perks in doing a fanzine - if you send a copy to record companies and grovel a bit they might send you some free records - they want you to review these and you might feel obliged to, but try to review just the ones you want to and you can slag them off if you feel like it anyway. Also useful is the info. and photos you can get from record companies. You might get free records/cassettes etc from your local groups too, and in a way it is the same thing - a bribe to help you write nice things about them. Why should you get anything free? Still, why should you buy something you haven't heard?

Getting in free to gigs is slightly different as everyone does anyway. This can be a real drag trying to interview famous names at your local hall - even with permission from their record company the tour manager doesn't usually want to know. Decide whether you can afford to pay to see a local band anyway as they make little enough as it is.

TAX...don't worry about that as you won't be making enough money for that and there is no V.A.T. on printed matter either.

IDEAS...An idea to help you get the cash for your initial printing is to apply for a grant for doing the magazine. A slim chance but I applied to the "Prince of Wales trust" saying how I was writing about local bands/helping them etc, detailing charges for £200 or so and they got in contact and gave me £100. There will be a local branch near you (ask at an information centre) but address of the Birmingham branch is.....

"Princes Trust",
c/o Eric Morrell,
1 Printing House St,
Birmingham.

In my mag I place great emphasis on

contacts - addresses and phone numbers, and I think these are very important to get things progressing and get people helping each other out. I wish magazines did it more and I hope you do.

Other ideas... why not get some badges or stickers done and give them away with your mag in one issue? See if a local band will get a poster printed of themselves which they can give to you to give away free with your mag - some 'zines have given away flexi-discs of bands but that does cost a bit.

FEEDBACK

As your mag goes on you should hopefully get more and more replies - letters, articles or offers of help - this should obviously result in improvements as some people get fed up and others start to help. You will probably find more places to sell it and eventually the groups or people you write about will start writing to you which will save you some of the work.

THE END

I hope you will start up your own fanzine and join the few hundred now in existence. I think they are a very important way of getting peoples views across, immediately and without censure. Don't sit and read what the big boys say - tell us what you think.

Get things moving - make a noise and get everyone else involved. Make sure your new issue is better than your last one. Take some risks and do something worthwhile. Next week you can form a band.

Pictures of pop Stars.

other fanzines

Finally, here are a few addresses that you might find come in handy. If there are some places you know of that you think should have been included - distributors, shops, printers, fanzines perhaps, then let me know and I'll see about compiling a fuller list....

Just a few of the more established 'zines which you may like to write to to get in touch with, or just to see a copy. Apologies to all the excellent

fanzines which I haven't had room to mention.

Firstly my address...

ALTERNATIVE SOUNDS
c/o Martin,
143 Moat Avenue,
Coventry,
West Midlands,
CV3 6BW.

Tel. (0203) 69642 if you like.

Selling your fanzine

Most important are your local shops, if you're going to be writing about local events, and only you know where they are (don't you?). If you don't live in London then here are a few more addresses of interest.....

BETTER BADGES

286 Portobello rd,
London,
W10.

Tel. 01-960-5513.

Better Badges sell and distribute fanzines through shops, mail order etc. They also print some 'zines at cheap price. It will be worth your while getting in touch.

ROUGH TRADE

202 Kensington Pk rd,
London,
W11.

Rough Trade sell/distribute? lots of fanzines too. Write and ask details such as how many they would take, at what cost etc - if you send them a copy of your first issue then they'll know what they are going to be selling won't they.

COMPENDIUM BOOKS

234 Camden High St,
London,
NW1.

Compendium sell some 'zines so try them as well.

JAMMING

5 Little Bornes, Alleyn Park,
London SE21 8SD

TOXIC GRAFFITI

7 St Marys Green, Biggin Hill,
Kent TN16

IN THE CITY

c/o Compendium Books

TEN COMMANDMENTS

953 Sauchiehall St, Basement,
Glasgow, G3 7TA.

SMART VERBAL

33 college Rd, Moseley
Birmingham 13.

MAKING TIME

34 Cobblers Bridge Rd, Herne Bay,
Kent.

CITY FUN

c/o R.F.P. Ground Floor, Ashleigh House
Booth Rd, Altrincham.

FLIPSIDE

P.O. Box 363,
Whittier, California, 90608 U.S.A.

0533

c/o "Cave Arms", Swinford,
Lutterworth, Leics.

DAMN LATIN

14 Kingsway, Nuneaton,
CV11 5LB.

READY TO RUCK

22 Brabner Close,
Folkestone, Kent.

...and the list goes on and on.

definitely finally...ta to the C.P.U.
(Community Programme Unit to you) for
making this possible.