



UMBRELLA



NUMBER SEVEN

POWELL'S SMALL PRESS AND ZINE NEWSLETTER

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Hello and welcome to the seventh installment of the Umbrella newsletter. Remember, you can always read about us on the vast Powell's web site at <http://www.powells.com/express/picks/SmallPress.1.html>

We believe that the small press is vital to today's literary landscape and we are enthusiastic in helping you discover some of today's most exciting and passionate writing. Look for further editions of Umbrella about every four months in the Small Press section of the Blue Room or by the zines in the Green Room. Questions and comments are welcome. Kevin Sampsell: kevin.sampsell@powells.com

This issue's reviewers: Cassidy DeMarco, Jae Choi, Heather Gaddy, and Elizabeth Miller.

NEW IN FEATURED

Greatest Hits 1976-2000

(Pudding House)

By Dan Raphael

Even before I moved to Portland ten years ago I knew who Dan Raphael was from seeing his poetry in a bunch of lit zines. The first time I saw the big guy perform, towering over the mic and gesticulating wildly, it was like seeing some demented northwest version of Allen Ginsberg. But instead of sexuality, Raphael seems more interested in language and how it can be twisted. Some of his poems even have northwest themes (he makes rain more like an acid trip) or ecological concerns (making the destruction of our planet more entertaining than it should be). This special edition of selected "hits" by Pudding House is a good place to get many Raphael poems that may be impossible to find. It's like language poetry filled with heart. (KS)

Please Don't Kill the Eshman

(Future Tense)

By Zoe Trope

This high school memoir by Zoe Trope takes on all the cliched aspects of high school, but its form dissolves the catalogued pop culture references and the near universal alienation felt by high school misanthropes and pulls off a precise critique. Trope edges poetics up against descriptive laundry lists of daily events and the result is an alluring portrait of dissatisfaction in the face of the banal intricacies of the daily high school experience. In between all the lifeless trend-setting and social elbowing, Zoe finds moments of beauty and describes them with an almost unintentionally nostalgic tone. Underneath the text of this largely personal account of high school there are moments of razor sharp commentary. Zoe

slices open the belly of the Gap-laden and television saturated world and exposes a buzzing tension largely ignored as she soberly explores the violence of a constantly accelerating culture. (CD)

User

(Versus Press)

By Blake Nelson

Nelson's third novel was perhaps too dark for his former mainstream publisher but it fits in well with the new Versus Press out of San Francisco. Acting as a sort of third part in Nelson's Portland-themed books, *User* tells the story of a group of guys and their rather empty, directionless lives. Nelson works in a minimalist style that after a few chapters percolates nicely into an involved Woody Allen-like angst and reflection. The boys seem cruel and Nelson lets their philosophies come unabated, but the women come off as equally mean. Some of the best laughs in the book come from this tension. *User* is a gloomy but captivating story about the uncertainties of youth. (KS)

Peterson's Incident Report Book

(Register Jockey Press)

By Ms. George Black

It's clear that the lives of 24-hour convenience store workers are an underexplored sub-culture. There was the movie *Clerks*, but George Black, our compiler and editor of *Peterson's Incident Report Book*, goes deeper. She takes us into the stream of cranked out, liquored up, candy bar lovers with schemes of lotto ticket theft and let's it all speak for itself in the format of a shared diary of the stores' workers. Peterson's isn't just any convenience store, it's a homegrown 24hr piece of Portland history providing a special service for PDX nightcrawlers. (HG)

Making Scenes

(Alt-X Press)

By Adrienne Eisen

Eisen's first novel is a staggering tale of one woman's topsy turvy life. Although much of it has to do with her bold sex life, just as interesting are the subplots: the woman's bulimia, her love for books, her shoplifting schemes, her twisted relationship with her father, her overbearing Jewish relatives, her dream of playing pro volleyball, her job in a stock market "pit". It's one of those books that are so full of drama, danger, and raw emotion you can't help but to believe that it's real. Eisen is definitely a smart writer, and one to watch out for. (KS)

Miss America

(Fence Books)

By Catherine Wagner

Fence Books is a new division of the great literary magazine *Fence* and *Miss America* (along with Chelsea Minnis's *Zirconia*) launches this venture nicely. Wagner's poems are playful and whimsical and sharply stylish (especially the last series of "Fraction Anthems"). Many of the poems are used to directly (or indirectly) address magazines (*Time*, *Social Text*, *Art in America*, *Entertainment Weekly*) in funny, slightly fun-loving ways. This is a book of concept poems of the best kind. When, in a series of "White Man Poems", Wagner writes "Must write poems to fill the huge demand for them", you love the irony, but also you love Wagner for being so precocious. (KS)

NEW IN PROSE

Scholarship 3

(Joyride Press)

By Cecilia Storey & Gustaf Mortier

The obsession of a crush that goes nowhere gets finely drawn and snoken in a stiff necked girl

whose vulnerability is all too familiar and close to the bone. The humanity of her misdirected loving is leaking all over the place. Even though they're in art school and being nervous about being alive no one can help but try. Earnest and spooky. (HG)

***Harmless Medicine* (Manic D Press)**

By Justin Chin

Although these look like poems and some of them even have that metaphoric tinge of dream-like poignancy, I am reluctant to categorize them as purely poetry. Many of Chin's lines are so funny, so off-the-wall, so weird, that it's almost like experimental humor. Even when he rhymes (like in "Beefy Fag"), you just have to love Chin's playfulness. Still, Chin manages to address all the issues he will always be passionate for: religious hypocrisy, food, being queer, being Asian American, and being HIV-positive. Be on the lookout for a nonfiction book by Chin coming out sometime in 2002. In the meantime, this book is a lot of fun. (KS)

***Synthetic Bi Products* (Akashic)**

By Sparrow L. Patterson

Synthetic Bi Products is Sparrow Patterson's first novel and tells the story of Orleigh, a bisexual hottie, on an odyssey through relationships, drugs, music, sex, scams, and herself. I've been waiting to read a book about a young woman clearing her head while traveling the country who revels in the simple of joy of taking it from behind in a motel shower while staying in her body and learning how to take care of her spirit. I loved reading this. (HG)

***Bridges With Spirit* (TNI Books)**

By Adam Voith

A couple of years ago there was a book called *Valley* by Mike Daily that was my favorite book of the year. This debut by young Adam Voith (he also edits *Little Engines*) reminds me a little of the grand spirit of *Valley*. It's a smattering of scenes and vignettes featuring young kids with bad habits but big hearts. There's also a lot of really cool music commentary as well. In fact, the first chapter is titled "George Harrison: The Beatle Everyone Forgets". And the fact that it's all in that crispy kind of typewriter font seems to make it all more interesting somehow. (KS)

NEW IN JOURNALS

Bridge

Bridge is a pretty new entry into the world of *McSweeney's*-influenced literary magazines. And I don't mean that in a demeaning bandwagon reference. I mean it in a good way. It's refreshing that many new literary magazine are finding new ways to entertain and not being so snooty about humor. Based in Chicago, *Bridge* has daring short stories, accessible poetry, innovative essays, interviews, illustrations, art, and even cool ads! Highlights for issue #2 include *8-Track Mind's* Russ Forster's article "The Selling of Experimental Film", an interview with Jack Grapes, the very funny personal ad comics of Carrie Golus and Patrick Welch, and Paul Maliszewski's long story, "Civil Unrest, Pittsburgh". A consistently strong publication. (KS)

Little Engines #2

Before *McSweeney's* hit the scene there was quite a discernible lull in anything happenin' in the world in literary journals. Boy howdy, is that not true anymore. The arrival of *Little Engines* has breathed new life into a once stagnant genre of reading, and it is a good life indeed. By managing to lasso together a wonderful compilation of writers, creative thinkers, and freewheelin' artists, the Seattle based *Little Engines* has already made a lasting impression after having published only two issues. Highlights of the latest issue include part two of Andy Jenkins' continuing short fiction adventure with a man named Adam Knowles, and a little piece about the frequently odd appearance of the number 63. (EM)

The Baffler

Fire attempted to destroy *The Baffler*, but the kids wouldn't have it. After nearly succumbing to a five-alarm death earlier in the year, *The Baffler* has risen out of its own ashes to set the world straight about just how powerful words can be. Continually blurring the lines between fact and fiction, *The Baffler* has long been a publisher of some of the most compelling non-fiction around. Never stuffy, always able to entertain, each issue features reportage at its best and brightest, peppered with delightful short fiction and random musings. The only thing wrong with *The Baffler* is the fact that it tends to come out very infrequently, due to the fact that it is published by two people who also work full time jobs and, you know, have a life. Nevertheless, it is without a doubt worth the wait, as each new issue never fails to deliver the goods. (EM)

NEW IN ZINES

Tonight, Tonight

Here's one of those zines created in one night. The kind with so much energy and honest emotion that you even fall in love with the type-os. Friends Meghan and Sarah talk about their relentless moving around, their first jobs, boys, bands, and what makes Portland so special. A feel-good typewriter demolition fueled by beer and coffee. (KS)

Her Side of the Sidewalk

Issue #1 and I'm already hook line & sunk. Part provocateur, part conspiratorial wink, reading *Her Side of the Sidewalk* is as quietly disconcerting as it is validating. A lovely and lyrical personal record of days, it moves from the events and dynamics of daily life to critical examinations of the will, heterosexuality, and the politics of food service with ease. What makes this zine so startlingly good is its honesty, its willingness to put all things under a critical lens. It asks good questions: How do you build a space that is not escapist? How do you build a home not based on fear? It tells good stories: Tornadoes on prom night; Frida Kahlo and a box of gold dust. Hand-sewn and handsomely bound with an old mining map legend. (JC)

Dogprint

This beautifully produced music magazine from New Jersey combines sharp *Bunnyhop*-like design qualities with smart in-the-know writing and a whole lot of to-the-point CD reviews. My only complaint is that it's fairly thin, but then again it's also very cheap. My favorite piece in current issue sixteen is the interview with Slumberland record label owner Mike Schulman. Good electronica bits too. (KS)

NEWS & WHATNOT...

The new issue of *2 girls review* will be their last (at least in print version). It seems they're running out of money. But instead of "throwing in the towel" they have instead left us with perhaps their best issue, titled, *Alien* . . . Steve Abee's book, *The Bus*, which was supposed to be published by Incommunicado in 2000, has just been released by emerging small press Phony Lid... The new issue of *Chunklet* is amazing. They may be the best indie music mag going now...The well-designed lit zine *Eye-Rhyme* is now making its home in Portland, alongside Pinball Publishing, a new printing outfit on SE 26th and Clinton.