



Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture

By Stephen Duncombe

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Much history and theory is uncovered here in the first comprehensive study of zine publishing. From their origins in early 20th century science fiction cults, their more proximate roots in '60s counter-culture and their rapid proliferation in the wake of punk rock, Stephen Duncombe pays full due to the political importance of zines as a vital network of popular culture. He also analyzes how zines measure up to their utopian and escapist outlook in achieving fundamental social change. Packed with extracts and illustrations, he provides a useful overview of the contemporary underground in all its splendor and misery.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A timely new critical study, Stephen Duncombe's *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (1997), throws some light on the current state of zines and what's at stake. Duncombe, a professor of American Studies and a zine-maker himself, locates zines within a wider bohemian tradition, and maps out both the potential and the limits of their cultural radicalism." —The Atlantic

"Duncombe retains his respect and even admiration for the utopian sentiments that animate the 'zine world, even as he unblinkingly diagnoses the contradictions and limitations of the political vision these publications offer." —Weekly Wire

"Here is an extensive analysis and critique of the zine as a whole by a professor, activist, and zine maker himself. Originally published in 1997, it gives many references to the broad world of zines at the time and even dating back to the 1930s. All subject remains timeless in effect and Duncombe espouses on each careful selection as it relates to the subject he is tackling. As a former self-publisher and now contributor, I never gave much thought to the history. For example, originating in the sci-fi world, the zine was birthed as a means to connect with like minded people to share ideas about stories read in glossier magazines, and even to self publish their own. The anti-consumerist nature of DIY publishing is a rebellion in itself and yet has a major craving for connection at the same time. Duncombe delves into this oxymoron and raises the questions: do zines make the difference it set out to do? Can they actually effect social change or rather implode in it's underground world? He sites arguments for both, afterall he IS part of it himself. These are all important queries that raised my eyebrows and had me pondering the broader effect of zines on our culture and society as large. Recommended." —Profance Existance

"This book took me a little by surprise with its in depth and analytical look at zine culture and it's place in alternative culture. This zine starts with a great overview of what exactly zines are and then moves into discussing the community around zines and other aspects of their place in culture." —410Media

"Duncombe professes American Studies at SUNY Old Westbury and *Notes From Underground* is a work of very impressive scholarship: there are 32 pages of notes, many of them gathered during 'weeks on end' when he studied at the NY State Library among 'hundreds of cubic feet of zines housed in their Factsheet Five Collection.' He's also a longtime zinester and has created a labor of love here, meant to be read. Don't be intimidated by the scholarly apparatus or the occasionally highfalutin language (zines are 'repositories of nonalienated creation and media for nonalienating communication') -- there's a lot here to interest the general reader. There's dozens of well-chosen illustrations. Almost all from zines published in the early 1990s. A pretty good index despite the omission of *Tussin Up* and *MSRRT*'s Chris Dodge. I recommend *Notes From Underground* very highly." —The Ten Page News

About the Author

Stephen Duncombe is an Assistant Professor of American Studies at the State University of New York,

College at Old Westbury. He co-edits and publishes a zine, Primary Documents, and writes regularly on culture and politics for The Baffler.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Fletcher:

Often the book Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture has a lot info on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of gain. The book was authored by the very famous author. Tom makes some research before write this book. This particular book very easy to read you may get the point easily after scanning this book.

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The book untitled Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture contain a lot of information on the item. The writer explains her idea with easy means. The language is very clear and understandable all the people, so do not worry, you can easy to read the item. The book was written by famous author. The author provides you in the new period of literary works. It is possible to read this book because you can read more your smart phone, or device, so you can read the book in anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can open up their official web-site along with order it. Have a nice read.

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