A HISTORY OF IRISH ZINES
ALTERNATE VOICES TO THE CULTURE INDUSTRY
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A History of Irish Zines: Alternate Voices to the Cultural Industries

“study submitted in part fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Communication Studies”
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Abstract

Zines have existed in Ireland for twenty-eight years. These unprofessional, home-made small circulation magazines eschew features on local music scenes, documentaries from daily life, art and political commentary that are out of bounds for mainstream media outlets such as national media institutions and transnational cultural industries. The cultural industries meanwhile offer cultural forms that are of increasingly blatant commercialism and leading to the commodification of human life. By exploring the theoretical basis behind the classical notion of the Culture Industry as espoused by Adorno and Horkheimer, and updating this approach with the political economy analysis of the ownership and control of the cultural industries offered by Hesmondhalgh, alternative models of communication are looked at such as those put forth by Enzenberger and Habermas. Zines are compared with these models, through historical investigation of their origins in Ireland aswell as ethnographic interviews with Irish zine producer’s right up to the modern day. By studying a cultural medium such as zines and investigating its existence as free from the commercial imperative taken for granted in cultural industry’ forms; lessons might be learned for human and community communication models. It is also evident through examining the history of Irish zine production, attempts to record and document lived realities and histories outside of those written by the cultural industries and national institutions.
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Chapter 1: Introducing the topic

1.1 What are zines1?
Zines are “non-commercial, non-professional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish and distribute by themselves” (Duncombe, 1997, p.6)².

1.2 Where do they come from? What are their origins?
Wright (1997) and Perkins (1992) document the roots of zines as coming from Russian Samizdat material, Dada and avant garde art/social movements’ magazines and manifestos, Beat poetry chapbooks, 1960s/70s counter-culture and underground press, alternative art publishing books (1960-80), and other alternative publications.

In the Irish sense zines might be argued as being the descendents of Jonathan Swift’s anonymously published *The Drapier Letters* (1724), Irish 19th century rebel publications such as *The Nation* and *The United Irishmen*, as well as the long tradition of Irish literature and creativity of the written word³.

It is highly acknowledged that the direct lineage of zines comes from Science Fiction fan-magazines, originating in America during the 1930s. Connected with science fiction fan clubs, professional commercial science fiction magazines began to publish readers letters and including with these the addresses of letter-writers. Science Fiction fans hungry with enthusiasm began to write not only to magazines but one another directly. As this frenzy grew fan-mags developed to which all levels of writers contributed (amateurs, semi-amateurs, professional, semi-professional) (Perkins, 1992). Perkins highlights three features that were apparent of this network:

“Fanzines are uncommercial, unprofessional and irregular small run publications which have taken advantage of the cheapest and most accessible technologies … as well as more traditional printing methods. Fanzines are published by and for special interest groups and they provide a physical link between these communities and, equally importantly they provide a network and exchange within this community… The distribution of fanzines takes place principally within the community that generated it…” (ibid).

Fanzines later diverged into other niche areas such as football, music, film, poetry and with this shift from the fantasy/science-fiction domains, they “became much less fan publications, and much

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1 Zine is pronounced ‘zeen’, like the ‘zine’ at the end of ‘magazine’; never pronounced so that it rhymes with ‘line’.
2 In recent times it is common to refer to internet/ online fan-pages and websites as ‘zines’, but I want to make the important distinction that these are ‘e-zines’ or ‘electronic zines’, which is another area altogether; although they will receive some discussion in later chapters.
3 While zines may encompass this spirit they have not had such wide readership as much of these publications.
more of a mongrel breed of publication all their own” (Wright, 1997). Hence the term ‘zine’, as Wright notes “the evolution from fanzine to zine saw the elimination of the fan” (ibid)4.

1.3 Punk Rock and the Do-It-Yourself ethic
Towards the end of the 1970s rock music (glam, prog-rock) had become tired, complex and alienating, its technical superiority of guitar and drum solos an impossible feat for anyone without ten years of musical schooling. Its' immediacy was over. Punk Rock filled this gaping vacuum with excitement, rage; promising that it was not technical know-how or professionalism that was important but originality, drive, passion – punk music delivered short loud abrasive blasts of energy, vocals were shouted or screamed, the observer was shook to reaction.

Instrumental to this was the Do-It-Yourself (D.I.Y.) ethic; that anyone can play guitar, can start a band, produce a magazine, make their own fashion/style and create their own culture. So it was when punk rockers tired of their music and point of views being ignored by the mainstream music media that they began to publish their own magazines documenting their music and cultural scene5 (Duncombe, 1997, p.7). The first punk fanzine was Punk from New York City in early January 1976 with features on the band the Ramones, musician Lou Reed, comic strips and more; while Sniffin’ Glue came out in Britain seven months later (ibid, p.118). Duncombe notes “soon the punk fanzine was a fixture at every show and in every hip record store, and joined the ranks of science fiction and SF-derivative fanzines” (ibid, p.118). From the outset the idea of taking part in the act of cultural creation was made explicit as Mark P of Sniffin’ Glue gave the advice:

“All you kids out there who read ‘SG’ don’t be satisfied with what we write. Go out and start you own fanzines” (in Duncombe, 1997, p.119).

1.4 How are zines distributed? Where are they available?
Print-runs of zines, can figure from the low hundreds or less to the thousands for bigger zines, dependent on the level of investment by the author/s. Traditionally the best places to find zines are independent record shops, at gigs6 and mail-order through the post. Other possible spots for finding zines might include comic shops and small bookshops, dependent on the policy of owners. The postal service persists as an important avenue for zine distribution, this takes various forms: through independent distribution networks (“distro’s”) set up by other zine-writers (or D.I.Y. enthusiasts) which might distribute a list of zines (and/or records, patches, badges, etc.); from review sections in each others zines, zine-writers can identify zines they might like and write to each other directly; through trading/swapping one zine for another.

4 While the term ‘zine’ is technically more correct, in that it eliminates the notion of the fan/ fanatic; zine-writers often use the terms ‘zine’ and ‘fanzine’ interchangeably in referring to their publications and those of fellow producers.
5 Duncombe defines ‘scene’ as “the loose confederation of self-consciously “alternative” publications, bands, shows, radio stations, cafés, bookstores, and people that make up modern bohemia” (Duncombe, 1997, p.53).
6 The hassles of selling zines are humorously illustrated in a comic from Nosebleed#5 (Fig.1, overleaf).
Of recent times there have been encouraging developments for the availability of zines and alternative publishing, these include: the rise of “Infoshops” or D.I.Y. radical bookshops across North America, in Britain and even in Dublin; the formation of zine archives/libraries from donations of collections by interested parties; day long fairs/conventions with stalls, workshops and other activities called Zine Symposia.

7 Red Ink Zines & Radical Books (4 Upper Fownes St., Temple Bar, Dublin 2) opened in May 2004, offering print media on such diverse subjects as media, society, music, politics, do-it-yourself, sex, sexuality, gender issues, art and fiction.  

8 In Dublin from Sept. 1996-Sept. 1997 existed the Garden Of Delight, a collectively run bookshop and café/space which first housed an Irish zine archive/library. When the space eventually closed down, the archive was moved to Giro’s Community Centre in Belfast (dubbed the “Warzone Centre”, a co-operatively run centre that housed a vegan restaurant, a recording studio/practice rooms, venue, as well as book library). Giro’s closed down in December 2003 and the archive is now housed in the Catalyst Arts Belfast where it sits in storage. In May 2004 (the initial process having started in Sept. 2003) The Forgotten Zine Library was set up by a small group of people living in a shared warehouse in Dublin’s North Inner-city where it exists at time of writing (email: forgotten_zines@graffiti.net for information).

9 The recent dvd documentary on zines in Portland, USA $100 And A T-Shirt (2004, dir. Joe Biel, Microcosm) features the Portland Zine Symposium as well as discussions with zine producers. The first Zine Symposium in Britain took place recently in London on the 16th April 2005 offering zine stalls, workshops, teach-ins and films.

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Fig.1 Let It Rain the hassles of selling zines illustrated from Nosebleed#5 (Boz)
1.5 Books and other studies on zines
By the early 1990’s a certain level of momentum had built up within the D.I.Y. scene and “alternative” culture\textsuperscript{10}. This came to a head between 1991-94 with the signing to major record labels of the grunge band Nirvana and numerous others and the massive commercial success they achieved (see Appendices 1). Along with this popularising of “alternative” culture came features in mainstream media publications on zines\textsuperscript{11}; the flirtations of marketing departments with underground aesthetics such as zines and fashion (Duncombe, 1997, p.136); a huge increase in the level of zine production\textsuperscript{12} and later a batch of published books on zines\textsuperscript{13}. The most important of these for the purpose of this study is Stephen Duncombe’s \textit{Notes From Underground Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture} (1997, Verso) in which he offers analysis of zines as an embodiment of “alternative”/ underground culture\textsuperscript{14}.

As part of her 1998 Communications degree, Clodagh Murphy analysed the beliefs held and part played by women in the punk subculture through an analysis of zine texts. While this study was primarily concerned with the global “punk subculture” it still raises some relevant points for the roles of women in zine production in Ireland, as will be examined later.

1.6 Ireland’s Zine History
The first Irish punk fanzine was produced in March 1977 (\textit{Raw Power}) although lasting only two issues it managed to inspire another to start (\textit{Heat}), and hence the creative spiral began. From these humble beginnings a long tradition of self-publishing in the form of zines has taken place in this country. From the high production standards of a fanzine like \textit{Vox} in the early 80s featuring new wave/post-punk bands, avant garde poetry and performance art; to the cut and pasted layouts of the personal zine \textit{Lucidity} in recent years, the newsletters and freesheets such as \textit{React} and \textit{Gearhead Nation} that spread around Dublin city like wildfire during the mid/late-90s period brandishing news of independent music/events as well as political boycotts and views, the quality interviews and highly original artwork in \textit{Nosebleed} the longest running Irish zine from 1990-2002. These are just a minute few of the Irish fanzines that have been produced over the years since \textit{Raw Power} in 1977. In these publications

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{10} The term ‘alternative’ during the 1990s became synonymous with marketing and commercialisation as documented by Duncombe (1997, p.134) hence the use of inverted commas.
\item\textsuperscript{11} Stephen Duncombe documents this phase of zine exposure in the mainstream media in such publications as \textit{Time}, \textit{USA Today}, \textit{New York Times}, \textit{Washington Post} during the 1989-95 period (Duncombe, 1997, p.132-145; notes 7-10 p.219).
\item\textsuperscript{12} The zine-review zine Factsheet Five #44 (summer 1994) included 1,259 zine reviews; while #56 (summer 1995) included 1,466 zine reviews (Duncombe, 1997, p.157-158).
\item\textsuperscript{14} Stephen Duncombe signals that underground culture (zines, music, art, etc.) offers an alternative “\textit{way of understanding and acting in the world that operates with different rules and upon different values than those of consumer capitalism}” (Duncombe, 1997, p.6).
\end{itemize}
authors share excerpts from their lives, present behind the scenes insights on such things as music
gigs, temporary employment positions, travelling adventures, bizarre experiences, political information
and cryptic commentaries on the state of the country as a whole that are intriguing to decipher. For
Boz, author of *Nosebleed*:

“If you were to read the first issue of *Heat* it gives you an idea of what the sort of people were
like who were going to see the Boomtown Rats and the Radiators playing in Morans, a review of the
same gig in *Hot Press* would not give an idea of anything except for a professional journalists’
viewpoint of how he enjoyed or didn’t enjoy the gig on the night; it doesn’t give you an idea of the
culture, the vibe, the lifestyle that people are perpetuating. Fanzines give you an idea of the psyche of
the people into that music on ground level. (Boz, interview).

Perhaps it is the nature of underground culture that the knowledge banks of scenes and
creative periods (as regards creating fanzines, organising independent gigs) are kept from general
discourse to some extent, or that levels of energy of participants rise and fall as new people become
involved and others move on; what is certain is that these happenings are left undocumented and their
creative energies are left untapped for the general populace of society. Information documented in
zines over the years (in respect to events, cultural forms and lived experiences) could offer intriguing
and inspiring reading for interested parties; recordings that are alternate to those of the mainstream
media and national culture institutions.

1.7 Thesis Research Question

By investigating the history of zine production in Ireland from the late 1970s through to the present day,
it will be examined whether Irish zines offer an alternative model of communication to that of the
commercial imperative inherent in the cultural industries’ model of mass communication. Issues
intrinsic in this investigation are in regards to public access to media and means of expression, media
as a democratic all inclusive model, as well as individuals and communities taking control of the
discourses that affect their day-to-day lives, their recorded histories and the perceptions of their
collective identities.

The theoretical framework for this investigation will be set out in Chapter Two by examining the
institutions known as the cultural industries; its development from a cultural theory as set forth by
Adorno et al to the very real political economy ownership of media that is issue today, this will be
compared to other possible models of communication such as those put forth by Enzenberger and
Habermas. In Chapter Three the method of Communications analysis will be set forth, how this
research will be carried out along with practical factors on the ground. Chapter Four will present the
findings of research; principally Ireland’s zine history by looking at the first Irish zines produced aswell
as case studies of eight Irish zine producers bringing the practice up to the modern day. In Chapter
Five the theory set forth in Chapter Two will be analysed in conjunction with the research findings of
Chapter Four; examining zines in relation to the communications models already presented. Part of
this investigation will consider zines as an alternative source of information to the mainstream media, zines as male-dominated/patriarchal sphere and the implications of new technology on zine production. Finally in the Conclusion the overall question is considered and conclusions drawn are offered.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 The Cultural Industries

Two German-Jewish intellectuals of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, in their 1944 book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* first coined the term ‘the Culture Industry’, having settled in the USA after escaping Nazi Germany. The book delivered a scathing and pessimistic critique of mass produced cultural forms (such as radio, films, magazines, phonographs) and that the capitalist democracy of the USA was as empty, superficial and stifling of artistic creativity as the Germany they had fled. For Adorno and Horkheimer art and culture were sacred spheres that could offer critiques of the social order, of relationships between people to each other and nature, triumphs of beauty and human creativity; as had been possible in the periods from Romanticism to Expressionism. Mass-produced forms and those supplied by the Culture Industry on the other hand, offered a process of commodification and standardisation, making up a uniform system of “obedience to the social hierarchy” (Adorno, & Horkheimer, 1979, p.131).

This system of commodification and standardisation not only functioned to enforce the status quo but made passive consumers of the general public. The motive of the creation of financial profit meant that “the mechanical reproduction of beauty ... leaves no room for that unconscious idolatry which was once essential to beauty” (ibid, p.140). Adorno and Horkheimers’ failing was in only counting their own personal cultural preferences such as classical music, jazz, academic philosophy and movements of modern art against popular cultural forms such as Donald Duck cartoons, Charlie Chaplin films, movie soundtracks and other forms of mass entertainment. While this is often critiqued, their thesis remains a valid one more so than of personal preference; that the public is being duped to the servitude of the status quo by their consumption of mass cultural forms. Art had before:

“...asserted itself as free expression, as a vehicle of protest against the organisation. In music the single harmonic effect obliterated the awareness of form as a whole; in painting the individual colour was stressed at the expense of pictorial composition; and in the novel psychology became more important than structure. The totality of the culture industry has put an end to this.” (ibid, p.125-126).

The term grew in significance as culture, society and business became more connected by the 1960s with increasing investment by transnational corporations in film, television and record companies (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.15). Adopted as its plural ‘the cultural industries’, by sociologists, activists and policy makers¹⁵; to encompass the complex and different working logistics of its many facets (press, broadcasting, the record industry). The cultural-industries sociologists first rejected Adorno and Horkheimers’ cultural pessimism for the mass produced text which could provide exciting new directions and innovations (ibid, p.16). Secondly the cultural industries were a contested zone of

continuing struggle against capitalism, a battle which was not yet over, although indicated as such by Adorno and Horkheimer (ibid, p.16). David Hesmondhalgh (2002) updates these approaches with an exhaustive combination of political economy and historical analysis of the ownership, control and cultural shifts in the cultural industries. He does this by examining the role of symbol creators and their position in creating texts; historicising the emergence of the cultural industries and their organisation of symbolic creativity; the changes in eras of cultural production and texts produced through government communications policies, industrial and organisational changes, internationalism and new communications technologies. Hesmondhalgh’s research question is whether texts produced by the cultural industries promote or inhibit issues of social justice; he does not come up with a definitive answer to this question but does deliver some insightful points along the way as well as thorough analysis.

Hesmondhalgh notes the three stages of cultural production within the cultural industry: creation, reproduction and circulation. Unlike the obvious profit motives and position of workers in factory production (of textiles for example), symbol creators and project managers are given a large degree of autonomy, perhaps under the supervision of creative managers. The cultural-industry companies exert more control after creation, in the reproduction and circulation stages. The reproduction stage is strongly reliant on industrial or strongly electronic systems (mass producing CDs, film reels, the publishing of books etc.), while the workings for the circulation and distribution of cultural forms is usually decided by senior management within the cultural industries (the artist/symbol creator has little say in this stage) (ibid, p.55). Hesmondhalgh highlights the increasing importance of marketing in cultural production in traditional areas such as advertising, design, package and publicity which have soared, but also in the conception stage as marketing departments develop more clout and influence (ibid, p.157-159). Although for Hesmondhalgh the possibilities for “complexity, richness and ambivalence” of symbolic creativity are not impossible through this process, he writes that while “marketers are quite happy to promote original products as distinctive and unique, there is a strong tendency in marketing to embrace the familiar” (ibid, p.159). Other factors have also contributed to the debate over the autonomy of cultural production, such as the outsourcing to smaller independent companies. Workers, although more independent, are greater slaves to administrative standards (insecurity of employment, the need to raise funds themselves, more responsibility). In journalism the re-emergence of the media mogul (such as Rupert Murdoch of the News Corporation and BSkyB companies) can obscure the operational autonomy of journalists who may be inclined to self-censorship rather than clash with corporate culture (ibid, p.165). While symbol creators on one level may struggle with financial difficulties and on the other be lauded as celebrity superstars once “success” has been achieved.

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16 Hesmondhalgh uses the term ‘symbol creators’ for artists and ‘symbolic creativity’ for art.
Through historical analysis of the political economy of the cultural industries Hesmondhalgh shows the increasing shifts of ownership and involvement of corporations in cultural production. With the period the Long Downturn\(^1\), the diminishing margins of the manufacturing industry, business interests shifted to the potential profits to be made in cultural, communication and leisure industries. The trend towards a decline in working hours, growth in leisure time and an increase in recreation spending; all contributing to the growth of the cultural industries (ibid, p.98-112). With the general turn of governments towards neoliberalism\(^2\) in the 1980s and 1990s periods, although with considerable obstacles in place by activist groups and national governments (such as public service broadcasting and telecommunications policy), the world has looked to the free market as a model to regulate culture, policy changes having massive consequences for the cultural industries and their growth (ibid, p.133). The emergence of bigger-than-ever corporations to tower over this new terrain, specifically the Big 48\(^3\) in 1999/2000 (ibid, p.137) that collectively

“…have an enormous impact on the cultural-industry landscape, in terms of policy lobbying, and in terms of the standards set for what constitutes standard practice in the cultural industries” (ibid, p.137).

While the Big 48 are a long way from matching the annual revenues of the largest corporations of the world such as Exxon Mobil (US$210.4) and General Electric (US$129.9), there is little doubt from the financial figures involved in mergers, acquisitions and revenue sizes that the cultural industries are taking increasing importance in the centrality of global business (ibid, p. 138).

According to Hesmondhalgh the cultural industries have brought about “an unprecedented commercialisation of our everyday lives” increasing the promotion of their own interests and that of business in general (ibid, p. 238). Strategies such as conglomeration, vertical integration and cross-promotion\(^4\), mean the resultant texts produced are undoubtedly commercialised with a

“…continuing shift in the conception of political subjects under neoliberalism: we are less and less encouraged to think of ourselves as citizens: more and more we are treated as consumers” (ibid, p. 240).

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\(^{1}\) Hesmondhalgh signals the Long Downturn as the period from the early 1970s when the golden ages boom and bust that had characterised the previous 150 years of industrial capitalism began to take a downward turn, reasons attributed to this include: international financial markets undermining the financial systems stability, the increasing levels of working-class wages disturbed the capital/ labour balance, the tendency of capitalists to compete with each other without regard for the system as a whole leading to a crisis of over-capacity and production of the key sector of manufacturing (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.85-87).

\(^{2}\) Neoliberalism: “a modern politico-economic theory favouring free trade, privatization, minimal government intervention in business, reduced public expenditure on social services, etc.” (Collins English Dictionary, 2003, p.1092)

\(^{3}\) The Big 48 consists of 6 vast cultural industry corporations with annual revenues of over US$10 billion and a second tier of 42 regional giants with annual revenues of over US$1 billion (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.165).

\(^{4}\) Conglomeration: “a conglomerate is a corporation that consists of a group of companies, dealing in different products or services” ((Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.59). Vertical integration: combining the ownership of companies to reflect a highly diversified integration of product content and distribution (eg: Disney ownership of films and recordings, theme parks, hotels, television network, cable channel, and international distribution company (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.143). Cross promotion: for example such strategies as the use of product placement in film, texts containing references that promote other texts by the same cultural-industry company and conglomerates promoting their entertainment products (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.238-239).
For Hesmondhalgh’s question of whether texts produced by the cultural industries promote or inhibit issues of social justice (as noted earlier) he takes a cultural studies approach as to the value of the text. He assesses diversity, quality and the extent of whether texts serve the interests of cultural-industry businesses and their political allies (ibid, p. 11). He finds final assessments a difficult proposition to make but part of the solution is that study of the cultural industries must take into account creativity, artistic expressions of life, and the ‘text’ (symbolic creativity), in combination with analysis of big corporations (business, economics, politics) (ibid, p.254).

2.2 Public Access To Media – Ideal Speech Situation

For this study the question towards the value of cultural-industry texts as a contested zone is not on issue but rather that of access to the media for the general public, of freedom and diversity of expression and the possibilities for alternate viewpoints of public life and a wide range of voices. The issue of public access to the media is one which is lacking in Hesmondhalgh’s study and also that of previous work by Adorno et al. Perhaps it is that when issues of ownership and control of the cultural industries are so vast, such questions seem punitive or even naive. One could argue that the main opportunities for the expression of artistic creation, to offer alternate viewpoints or to take part in symbolic creativity within the cultural industry is through avenues such as taking part in reality game/talent shows, through letters pages in newspapers and phone-in radio talk shows, or the lottery-like chances of rising through the ranks (music, acting, dance) to become a celebrity superstar. While it is often pointed that the cultural-industries do present all types of exceptional views and ways of life; Hesmondhalgh notes that

“cultural-industry companies are happy enough to disseminate cynical or even angrily political works, as long as it produces a profit (or prestige that can be turned indirectly into profit). However they are less happy to allow for the provision of information which provides an analysis of overall power relations” (ibid, p. 241).

This in-accessibility for the public to forms of expression and the so-called “creative” outlets that are invasive throughout their lives (advertising, TV, radio, music), leads to auras surrounding positions such as ‘artist’, ‘celebrity’, ‘star’, and that success and happiness are dictated by the cultural industries. Hesmondhalgh also takes up this point:

“the role of the media – especially that of television – in our leisure and entertainment means that we generally let other people be creative for us. It is hard not to see our own forms of creativity as inferior to the work of the ‘real’ creators, who are part of the cultural industries” (ibid, p. 74).

21 For Hesmondhalgh “the point at which the cultural industries have arguably their most profound effects on social and cultural life” (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.11).

22 For reasons such that the concept of diversity is elusive, little substantial evidence exists to claim homogenisation, the gauging of transhistorical concepts of quality impossible, textual evaluation is haunted by taste, and that the focus on ethical questions for the portrayal of social justice issues is marginalising to the intended experience of people – that of aesthetic pleasure (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.254).
Hans Magnus Enzenberger in a 1970 article offers the important socialist analysis that the problem with the media and cultural industries is that there is “no reciprocal action between transmitter and receiver”, functioning as a distribution medium rather than a communications medium, that this technical distinction “reflects the social division of labour into producers and consumers” (Enzenberger, 1970, p. 101). For Enzenberger this imbalance can potentially be broken by the mass availability of media equipment: a photocopier potentially makes everyone a printer, so too with Super-8 film cameras can everyone become a film-maker, as with CB radio everyone can become a radio broadcaster. He writes: “A revolutionary plan should not require the manipulators to disappear; on the contrary, it must make everyone a manipulator” (ibid, p. 107). Enzenberger’s vision is one in which the isolation of the individual is broken down, that the media is a two-way dialogical, decentralised programme – he puts forth the idea of a “network-like communications model” possibilities that would include “a mass newspaper, written and distributed by its readers, a video network of politically active groups” (ibid, p 112).

Taking this point further German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas writes of a communications model in which all members of society have the ability and access to take part in discussion and the dialogues that effect their lives, that of society, and the search for rational agreement. These ideals of ethical discourse, the practise “in which we suspend action so as to mutually question our basic assumptions and commitments” are manifest “in ordinary social interaction between ordinary people”, and not just the specialized work of intellectuals (Pusey, 1987, p.74). Habermas articulates an ‘Ideal Speech Situation’ (I.S.S.) for the rules of discourse, for which: “(3.1) Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse. (3.2) a. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever. b. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertions whatever into the discourse. c. Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires, and needs. (3.3) No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (3.1) and (3.2).” (Habermas, 1990, p.89).

Though Habermas does not offer any concrete examples of how this ideal might take shape his articulation of such is interesting in itself. It is clear from the analysis of ownership and control of the media (as already discussed) that the mass media and cultural forms offered by the cultural industries are not an ‘ideal speech situation’ as of Habermas’ vision. While Habermas idealist vision may not seem relevant in comparison to the day-to-day workings of the cultural industries, it is worth taking into account in consideration of the zine format, whose theoretical ability to exist as an ideal speech situation will be examined later.

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23 Enzenberger uses the term “the consciousness industry” (Enzenberger, 1970, p. 101).
24 For Habermas through a system of dialogue, “disagreements and conflicts are rationally resolved … in which only the force of the better argument may prevail”. (Pusey, 1987, p.73).
2.3 Creative Expression

Access to means of expression, of opportunity to take part in dialogue with one's own culture and community as well as outlets for creative expression that are autonomous from external forces which perhaps hold ulterior motives (such as profit gain, manipulation of content etc.) are important issues for human communication and existence in general. Fritjof Capra writes of culture, humanity, nature and all the earth being embedded in systems that are intertwined in their functioning (Capra, 1988, p.295). Language and conceptual thinking that cannot be expressed verbally are all distinct systems that are essential to our understanding and values of each other, of society and the world. Art, culture, music and other forms of creativity are essential for the expression of these abstract ideas. Capra states:

“More than any other social species we engage in collective thinking, and in doing so we create a world of culture and values that becomes an integral part of our natural environment. Thus biological and cultural characteristics of human nature cannot be separated. Humankind emerged through the very process of creating culture and needs this culture for its survival and further evolution.” (ibid, p. 298).

Other studies of the dynamics of creativity show that creativity is an innate part of humankind (Dorris, 2004\(^{25}\)), the attempts by the cultural industries to ascertain ownership of avenues for the expression of this natural and indeed essential ability is highly sinister. The question for this study is whether zines offer an alternative model to those forms offered by the cultural industries as regards such issues as the commodification and standardisation of culture; the sole purposes of financial gain or the achievement of fame and superstardom; as a possible outlet for individual and collective creative expression and a two-way dialogical model for communication; of the possibility of empowerment and mobilisation\(^{26}\) from the states of apathy and consumption.

\(^{25}\) Bill Dorris through the examination of three case studies (Marilyn Monroe, Alfred Hitchcock, Woody Guthrie as well as mention of numerous others) shows how a combination of key innate characteristics can lead to ‘greatness’ (Dorris, 2004).

\(^{26}\) The term used by Enzenberger (1970, p.115).
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Approaches to Communication Research

According to Deacon et al (1999) there are principally three approaches when conducting communications research; the Positivist approach which focuses on scientific explanations (such as statistics and the cause/effect model), to answer research questions; the Interpretative approach which aims to explain the ways people make sense of their social worlds and how these understandings manifest through language, imagery, style and social rituals; and the Critical Realist tradition which takes a combination of both these approaches and holds that while

“the social world is reproduced and transformed in daily life … [critical realists] insist that everyday action cannot be properly understood without taking account of the broader social and cultural formations that envelop and shape it” (Deacon et al, 1999, p.10).

This approach takes into account the broader historical context, ideological concerns (whether in the analysis provided or that already in existence), and quantitative research as in the Positivist tradition but hand-in-hand with qualitative interpretative findings. It is the Critical Realist approach that I have used for this study: by examining historical approaches to the culture industry as those by Adorno et al, the political economy analysis of the ownership of the cultural industries provided by Hesmondhalgh, as well as an interpretative approach through the conducted ethnographic interviews with Irish zine producers over the years of their existence in Ireland and some content analysis of Irish zines.

The Critical Realist approach offers advantages over both of the other schools of communication research; primarily it gives a more solid analysis to the Interpretative/Phenomenology approach which is all too often easily dismissible; while the scientific maths-like findings of the Positivist school can be construed as cold, humourless and too rigid.

The main primary research used was derived from ethnographic interviews and content analysis of zine texts, while secondary sources included previous studies and accounts of zines and zine-making.
3.2 Interviews

In conducting the interviews with zine-producers, I decided to choose case studies of eight producers; these were selected after some deliberation but mainly to cover the years of zine output, which looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Author (Zine/s produced)</th>
<th>Years published</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>PA (A New Clear Threat)</td>
<td>1980-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Niall (Whose Life Is It Anyway / Sketch / React)</td>
<td>1984-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Derek (Gearhead Nation)</td>
<td>early 1990s-98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Etain (Mind Riot / Hoyden)</td>
<td>1995-1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Eric (Cotton Fist)</td>
<td>1997-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Ed (Lucidity)</td>
<td>2001-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These were conducted as face-to-face, in-depth and semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviewing “abandons concerns with standardisation and control and seeks to promote an active, open-ended dialogue” (Deacon et al, 1999, p.65). The advantages of semi-structured interviews as opposed to structured and unstructured are that it allows flexibility to focus on certain issues that may arise. For the most part a general interview question plan was drawn up; this was then adapted for each interviewee as to my engagement with their zine output and relevant questions to these, as well as during the interviews themselves as different issues arose or were covered throughout conversations.

The interviews were conducted over a period of months; all were recorded with a tape recorder in a place of the interviewees choosing. The exception to this was interview no.4 Derek which was conducted through email (as the interviewee is living in France). This was conducted over numerous contacts and specifically three interview stages to build up a level of dialogue.

In choosing zine producers for interview, I realise the fact that this group of eight is but a tiny fraction of all Irish zine-writers and that for many some zines are more important than others. It is not my intention to give more importance to one zine over another, but rather the chosen zine-writers are the results of the practical imperative of completing this study. That said it was intentional to limit interviews to zine-producers as opposed to solely collectors/connoisseurs of zines; it was also my intention to interview zine-writers who have had a consistent output of zines (at least six) over a number of years. In this case (i.e. zine producers of at least six zines) I believe the sample of zine writers chosen to be representative of the whole.
3.3 Bias/Objectivity
According to Becker (1967) “sociological analysis is always from someone’s point of view, and is therefore partisan” (in O’Reilly, 2004, p.17). While this may be true I realise given the fact that I am personally a zine-producer of nine years that the charge of bias and lack of objectivity may be directed towards this study. Bias refers to the positive tendency towards a particular but false conclusion. With this in mind I wish to refer to my own experience as merely a backdrop, a doorway to insider knowledge that might not be readily available to an outsider and also reiterate my intention to be objective and sincere with my conclusions. It also would not serve the purpose of my study (i.e. to provide a history of zine production with the backdrop of the cultural industries) to be biased or lack objectivity. On the contrary I believe my own knowledge and experience of both zine producing and the D.I.Y. scene give the study weight on numerous points such that: much of the content of the introduction chapter and footnotes is derived from my own knowledge, an outsider may have become sidetracked with such background information and be sent on a different journey; my own involvement with zines/D.I.Y. serves to allay any suspicions my fellow zine writers might have of my intentions (i.e. to treat zines as novelty, quirk, the subject of ridicule) and provides for an immediate sense of rapport with interview subjects.

3.4 Factors on the ground
One of my original intentions was to collate a list of Irish zines produced, for this I had intended to spend time in both Irish zine archives (in Dublin and Belfast) and Trinity College Library (which it is purported has a fine collection), and to provide this information in a graphic format (a map of Ireland of zine production perhaps). I quickly learned that an idea such as this had many faults: time-consuming and impractical; impossible due to zines’ sometime small print-runs/distribution between friends27; and that it also was perhaps against the nature of zines for there to exist a collected list of zines (that are by their nature unaccountable, sometimes anonymous and not bound by such collectable notions). Instead I realised that there was ample subject matter available to me through my own collection and those of friends/acquaintances. Two of my interviewees were of substantial help in providing information on early Irish zine production, both Niall and Boz. Both somewhat Irish punk historians themselves, Boz in particular provided me with copies of the first Irish zines as shall be discussed in the following chapter.

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27 This point was literally brought home to me one day as my 15 year old sister, from her school bag pulled a zine made by a classmate.
4.1 Early Irish Fanzines

The first Irish punk fanzine was in March 1977 by Stephen Rapid, a member of local band the Radiators. Raw Power #1 (Fig.2) was eleven A4 single-sided photocopied, stapled pages, handwritten and typed featuring a Radiators interview, reviews, local news, rumours and snide remarks! From the outset the tone was encouraging of others getting involved:

“And most of all don’t sit around doing nothing. If you want to see these bands let them know, if you’re in school organize a dance, get them to play. Form your own bands if you don’t like any around at the moment. Write your own fanzine so that other people will know that there are others around like them. Don’t follow fashions start your own. But do something positive NOW.” (Intro, Raw Power#1).

Raw Power lasted two issues, the second issue containing the first ever interview with Derry band the Undertones. The idea had been sparked though; Heat (Fig. 3-7) was the next Irish fanzine in July ’77. Heat’s creators Pete Nasty and Ray Gunne, had a more graphics/print background, and were more influenced by the New York fanzine Punk than the very basic photocopy-staple job of English Sniffin’ Glue*. The text was handwritten while pages were well designed, laid-out and printed with a colour cover. The subject matter covered new wave/punk band interviews, articles, reviews and later comic strips and films. Having secured advertising funding and distribution from Better Badges

(button badge producers), the magazine's circulation was increasing by 200 each issue; jumping to 2000 copies when they tried to secure proper nationwide distribution through Easons newsagents. By *Heat* Vol.2 issue 2, the magazine was gathering momentum, but a published article “McGuiness is good for U2” lead to the end of the road. The article alleged that U2 manager Paul McGuiness had succeeded in getting a band pulled from a support slot at a gig for U2 instead, McGuiness threatened to sue *Heat* unless the article was pulled but a batch had already gone to Easons. McGuiness subsequently found out and sued the magazine ensuring its closure and place in Irish music folklore’s history, although a benefit gig for *Heat* managed to cover the costs*. *Heat*’s two writers later started another fanzine called *Black & White* (Fig.8), this time laying out contributions from bands rather than featuring their own articles, which didn’t receive quite as a good a reaction.

By 1980 there was a burgeoning growth in fanzine production; *Imprint #11* features *Zerox Irish Fanzine Directory* (Fig.9-10) showing names and dates of their release. *Vox* (Fig.11-17) which started in March ’80 became a significant cultural publication of the era combining punk, electronic and progressive music, underground poets, performance artists and fringe entities*. Dave Clifford, its editor, was himself a printer and this is reflected in its sophisticated, clean layouts, printed pages and two-colour cover as well as high

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* According to Boz (ibid)
quality writing and journalism. Although with such high aesthetics it may have bordered towards being a magazine, PA of *A New Clear Threat* zine explains:

“In reality it was a fanzine, in real terms Dave Clifford was a fan of punk bands, he did a magazine for punk bands as a man into punk doing it himself, nobody censoring it, editing it, he interviewed totally outrageous bands.” (PA, interview).

Vox lasted until 1983. Other fanzines around at the time included *Neu Carnage* and *Jitter 8*. 

Fig. 11 Vox #2; Fig 12 from Vox #6; Fig 13 from Vox #7; Fig 14 Vox #9; Fig 15 from Vox 10; Fig 16 from Vox #11; Fig 17 Vox #13
4.2 Case Studies of Irish Zines and Zine writers

There now follows eight ethnographic interviews with zine producers, covering the years 1981 up to the present day.

1. A New Clear Threat (PA)

Sometime in 1981 PA started his zine A New Clear Threat, he explains how he got involved in it:

“There wasn’t many other ones around in Dublin, I had got into UK fanzines – I thought it’d be a good idea to do one, why should they be in England and not over here, I wanted to put some creativity into layouts, I was into designing covers, it was expressing that and at the same time getting a few points across. Other people were doing it so why shouldn’t I. I thought the distribution of ideas and music was really good” (PA, interview).

The subject matter was band interviews, some politics, reviews and an intro. After the third issue PA’s friend Deko got involved as he had access to a photocopier; they would do 16-20 pages each and fill in the rest with lyrics and images. PA got more into the design side of it: “…the main thing for me was getting the cover right, the cover had to be right – no handwriting on the cover – stencilling, images, cut-out things, borders, it had to be right” (ibid).

Mainly selling it through the local record shops Freebird and Base X at the time, creating a fanzine or being in a band was all part of the anarcho-punk thing for PA; “…people started to write to me to swap fanzines, they’d send theirs and I’d send over mine, you’d see all the addresses for a load of bands, you’d write to them, they’d write back, it was a huge network” (ibid). According to PA the radio, TV, even pirate radio were all “no use” at the time all playing the same thing with nothing different:

“doing a fanzine or being in a band was the only way you could express yourself and hopefully use that as a platform to express yourself through something else – building credibility for yourself” (ibid).

Fig. 18 A New Clear Threat #1; Fig 19 A New Clear Threat #4; Fig 20 from A New Clear Threat #4
PA explains that the whole process of designing fanzines, gig posters and tape/record covers was to stand to him as an introduction into printing which he is still involved with. Looking back on the fanzine:

“...I am proud of the fact that I managed to put it together, I did express myself and my opinion, my creativity on paper, people read it, listened and talked about it, in one case criticised it... until you actually get a negative reaction off somebody then you know you’ve done something right” (ibid).

PA believes that the internet could have vast implications for fanzines, as an avenue for mass distribution of information, perhaps with e-zines or zines online as PDF files, that if (seminal) anarcho-punk band Crass were around now, instead of making records they’d be distributing free information for everybody through the internet. A New Clear Threat lasted for 5 or 6 issues until 1984/5.

2. Whose Life Is It Anyway / Sketch / React (Niall)

Niall since 1984 has produced numerous zines, starting with Whose Life Is It Anyway in 1984 which lasted for six issues and Sketch (Fig.18) in 1989 for three issues. React (Fig.19-20) was a newsletter that Niall started in 1991 primarily as a monthly (later bi-monthly) way of promoting D.I.Y. gigs, Niall was involved in organising with Hope Promotions, which lasted for about thirty five issues. During the ‘90s producing a (Bray Wanderers) football fanzine called No Way Referee/Wide (Fig.21) and recently in 2002 a book Document about independent music gigs in Dublin with vegan recipes.

[Fig. 21 Whose Life Is It Anyway?; Fig 22 Sketch!; Fig 23 React #1]

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28 PDF file (Portable Document Format): A type of downloadable computer file that is already laid-out and designed for print format.
29 Hope Promotions first started organising gigs in Dublin in 1984 for independent Irish bands and foreign touring bands (such as Fugazi, NOFX, The Ex, Therapy?, Jawbreaker, Green Day etc.) on a not-for-profit basis meaning that any money made was ploughed back into a fund (for future gigs, local projects and to help with fanzine printing), long before it became profitable for corporate promoters such as MCD to get involved in this type of music. The name ‘Hope’ was originally used “to give a name that people could identify with and to put on different bands, big and small, with the hope that people will go along because we’re putting them on” (Niall, interview in Nosebleed #1, Dec. 1990). After a hiatus in 1994 Hope regrouped in 1996 as the Hope Collective and continued organising gigs in the same manner until Dec. 1999 (McGuirk, 2002).

contributed by each band. Having first got into fanzines from reading others and finding out about bands, Niall wanted to pass that around; initially sold to friends and at local gigs, after awhile sending it off to fanzine distros and doing swaps with other fanzine writers. Niall explains:

“Once I wrote the fanzine and put it out that was nearly it done – I could move onto the next one. Getting people to read it and buy it wasn’t that high a priority for me. Also it was something I didn’t like doing [having to sell it to people] and still wouldn’t like doing.” (Niall, interview).

Initially the subject matter along with music interviews and reviews, was “fairly straight forward political rhetoric”, reprinted leaflets and campaigns at the time; “About the third fanzine I started doing things a little more personal, because I felt more comfortable expressing myself. I was always happy to have my own views; it was more: vivisection is wrong, extradition, Fianna Fáil are wrong. It got more personal like ‘I don’t drink if you don’t like it well hard luck’... Stuff that meant more to me.”

For Niall the process of making a zine was the ability to express oneself creatively: “you have this feeling in your stomach … a creative feeling inside you … something I want to say and want to express in this way, somehow kind of creatively. Looking back on them now, they’re not masterpieces or anything; I felt I wanted … to take a stand on certain things, put my opinion out there…” (ibid).

More than documenting the state of the nation or even as timeless documents, Niall finds that zines document a time personally and give a picture of events that were happening locally. A very important idea throughout Niall’s fanzines and writing was to get across that everyone should look to take control of their lives, or if there was something they felt was wrong they should work towards changing it. With the football fanzine were these ideas also present and what was the difference between the different readerships?

“It was easier to get football readers to buy it than punks, they wouldn’t complain about it being 50p or 70p. I found it [No Way Referee/Wide] a bit of a challenge. I was into going to see Bray...
Wanderers and there wasn't a fanzine about them, there were other football fanzines, so I thought I'll do one, also using it to get certain ideas across so it wasn't only football, there'd be little bits put in, interviews with players, the manager … it was the same ideas though and it would have been similar things, not overtly political, but it certainly would have been a political football fanzine, by normal football fanzine standards … there'd always be bits there to try to get people to take control of their own lives – you didn't have to accept everything you're given, even football results. It was probably my most enjoyable fanzine writing time, because I had this idea that I'd do a football fanzine, put a bit of politics in there, try and get people interested, to be honest I don't think it worked [laughs]. It probably got the best reaction of all the fanzines I've done. Like I did React for awhile so a couple of issues of React would have got more reaction …, though you'd get a steady reaction to every issue which you wouldn't get to React… It got to the stage where people would see me and ask when the next issue was coming out. It was good that people of all ages would buy it, all backgrounds, with punk zines at a gig or whatever it's a fairly limited culture of people. Whereas the football thing didn't matter what music they listen to, they were interested in reading it. It still wasn't any fun to sell it.” (ibid).

Although Niall hasn't produced a zine for a good few years, he has one in the works about a vegan family holiday; feeling there'll always be a place for printed media such as zines, for practical instances such as waiting for the bus and sitting in the bath.

3. Nosebleed (Boz)

*Nosebleed* (Fig.22-31) is the longest running consistently-released Irish zine. What started as a fairly average punk zine in December 1990 would carve out a very definite identity for itself, in terms of an artwork style that is highly distinctive and general quality of publication that developed in steps and bounds with each issue until reaching issue 22 in April, 2002. From scrawny cartoon figures to nasty edged illustrations, Boz’s artwork is original and well known in the punk world as well as receiving publication in mainstream outlets such as *The Irish Times* webpage –Ireland.com and *The Phoenix* magazine. In-depth quality interviews, “tippex punk-journalism” and reviews were also mainstays of *Nosebleed*. Always having a drive towards artistic inclination, Boz used put together hand-drawn comics with his brother from the middle pages of school copybooks; later at local gigs in McGonagles he came across punk fanzines realising; “there’s something I like about this, the idea of a cheap photocopied magazine that you sell for 30p at a gig” (Boz, interview). In college and broke at the time, Boz managed to juggle his ESF college grant and get the first issue photocopied up, put together and sold in time to get the money back for the rent money. Most of the other zines around at the time were not very imaginative and pretty “samey” according to Boz – the same band interviews, recipes for vegan slop, poetry and bad art, Boz was more
interested in writing about bands and a medium for his ink drawing which the photocopied format was perfect for. The early issues were mainly sold at gigs and through local record shops. Getting orders from reviews in other zines did not really happen until later issues; back then as records were still quite cheap, people often spent their remaining change (after bus fare) on a zine for 30p or 40p for the bus journey ride home. The first four issues came out pretty quickly in the first year (as well as a comic called Spidermites), after which Boz decided to take more time to improve the content of the zine – of layout, interview quality, bands interviewed and artwork which was improving anyway:

“You’re always trying to improve your quality of information, give people a reason to go back and buy the thing. By the time I got to #5/6 I was selling 300 copies per issue which is a lot for a fanzine in Dublin. You can go into a gig and sell 200 of them, get rid of them easy. I think there were people buying it because it was Nosebleed, because it had proven itself a certain quality that didn’t exist in other fanzines at the time.” (ibid).

Having got interviews with bands Sonic Youth and Therapy? who were both at the time becoming more popular, the intention was to continue with this progression, Boz explains the routine:

“I used give myself a definite deadline to have it out by, band interviews done first ‘cos that’d be the stuff you’d be waiting for. They would take up the bulk of the writing in the meanwhile you’d be working on the artwork, figuring’ out what else fits in around the place” (ibid).

At the time (’95-’97) Boz’s other main activity was playing in a band and signing on the dole, the fanzine was: “the pride of my life, it was a small source of income as well” (ibid). Loud music was getting popular again and certain labels and promoters (such as Epitaph records, Fat Wreck Chords) were consciously sending promo CDs to fanzines for review. This also proved to be an incentive to keep output consistent. As time went on it became apparent to Boz that a big part of people’s interest in Nosebleed was for the artwork. As the A5 format of the zine meant the artwork was losing quality by being reduced from an original A3 print, so the obvious step was to increase Nosebleed’s format to A4, eventually working it up to colour covers for the later issues. In looking at the complete issues of Nosebleed it is apparent that more than any other Irish zine, Nosebleed stands as a body of work, documenting punk and general goings on in Ireland, was this intentional?

“I always figured that if anything I was documenting the key local bands at the time because nobody was documenting them…Striknien DC
in 1994/95 when they were important and at their best, Gout, etc...the only other signs of their existence is the releases they put out which are probably long gone at this stage. I made an effort to make local bands the main focus of the larger interviews being that it was probably the only press they’d ever get” (ibid).

Nosebleed according to Boz, as a continuous publication is finished for the moment, but Boz is still involved in D.I.Y. publishing in the form of collections of his artwork under the title Human Stew, artwork for music releases, posters as well as graphics work for other publications both mainstream and underground. There is the possibility of Boz putting together a collected Nosebleed publication but the irony in such a move as this is not lost on Boz:

“Something in me thinks the idea of them [fanzines, zines] is actually bigger than the actual product – even if you look at the special glossy coffee table edition of Sniffin’ Glue – you look at it and it looks great but you open it up and its just shit, its bollox from years ago” (ibid).

4. Gearhead Nation (Derek)

In the early ‘90s Derek, Alan and Finbar started a fanzine called Catharsis. Somewhere between issue 3 and 4 of that, both Derek and Finbar started the monthly freesheet31/newsletter Gearhead Nation (GN) (Fig.32-34) that would prove a mainstay for three and half years in pre-internet Dublin lasting until the end of 1997 at issue 42. GN was consistently published, offered reviews of independent music and publications, news, informative columns and information, as well as opinions. Having learned of the existence of zines through punk/hardcore gigs and records, for Derek:

“one of the most prevalent and viral ideas in that subgrouping at the time was not to be happy to live as a consumer, but to find your means of expression and to create something – music, words, art – whatever. The most important part of Do It Yourself was the Do. It seemed to be impossible not to create – for me writing/publishing was the obvious choice – I’ve always been an avid reader and hoarder of

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30 That irony is not lost here either, in this a college thesis on zines; i.e. the immediacy, undefined, ‘undocumentable’ nature of zines versus the attempt to study zines and to reach conclusions as to their relevance, etc.

31 Freesheet: photocopied A4 sheet folded to make a 4 page A5 zine, usually left for free in record shops, cafés etc. During the late ‘90s there was a boom in freesheets in Dublin, with such titles as Slanted & Enchanted, Loserdom, Helium Bong, Planet Fish, the world won’t listen, Analogue Bubblebath, etc.
information – putting out a fanzine was a way to share the info with others, free of the commercial/financial/political limits that mainstream (I use the word in the broadest possible sense) media had/have” (Derek, interview).

Hence GN hit the streets, left for free around Dublin in cafés, record shops, buses, colleges, wherever possible; its contents were overtly political with features on boycott campaigns (of Nestlé, McDonalds, Unilever, etc.), the assimilation of independent culture into large business, sexuality, lifestyle choices and a wide range of other topics. As regards the levels of debate and discussion, Derek makes it clear that GN was principally

“a means of expression for us, not a representation of a scene or a public space – in saying that, we published everything that we were sent, unedited (except for some really bad poetry) and we tried to get differing viewpoints when we did theme issues later on.” (ibid).

During GN’s publication, its consistency and very clear standards of operation perhaps made it a target as it became for some factions of the Dublin punk/independent music scene which at the time were very evidently split down the middle. For Derek, GN did not have any “intended audience the more the merrier. We just wanted it out there with people reading it, no target groups – nobody to answer to.” (ibid). Without getting into the ins and outs of such squabbles GN without a doubt was a quality publication, its consistency of publication in terms of the workload involved, as well as the fact that much creativity went into its layouts while maintaining a clean methodical newsletter spread has not been matched since in Irish D.I.Y. publishing. One testament to its effect in Dublin at the time was the success of pranks carried out particularly in April issues – one such instance was the infamous selling out prank in #24 April ’96 in which the editors proclaimed to have been bought over by a major record label as a promotional device, only to announce a month later, having received numerous correspondence that it was an April

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32 Although there are no clear accounts of the split apart from passing comments in zines over the years, by all accounts there was a definite split (although perhaps for imaginary reasons on some peoples part) between two factions of those involved in what could be called ‘punk’ in Dublin at the time: those of the gigs organised by Hope (dubbed the “no-Hopers”, “students”) and those gigs organised in the venue The Olde Chinaman (dubbed the “chaos crew”).
fools joke. By the end of 1997, it was apparent that GN was losing some of its steam\textsuperscript{33} which is understandable enough given the level of commitment needed by both involved; according to Derek:

"...we stopped doing GN when we decided we didn’t want to do it anymore, which was linked to me leaving for France – it’s not something I feel good or bad about, it’s just life – the day l/we miss it, l/we will start publishing a freesheet again, it’s that simple. The ideas and ideals I had at the time are still pretty much intact, if not rooted deeper, I just express them through other activities and in other ways – through Red F Records\textsuperscript{34}, university teaching, and on a day to day level with the people around me.” (ibid).

While Derek does not still produce a zine, he states: "the idea of independently produced, free, accessible, high quality, intelligent, ethical, independent media takes up more space in my life than ever before” (ibid).

5. Mind Riot /Hoyden (Etain)

Etain with her friend Orla started Mind Riot (Fig.35) in 1995. Initially writing was very music oriented, accounts of gigs along with reviews of releases, zines, books; the writing veered more towards the personal at times and reviews throughout were full of personality. The initial reason for starting it was that: "at the time there wasn’t a whole lot being done by girls, Orla and I wanted to change that, it was a medium for getting your thoughts out there” (Etain, interview). Later in Hoyden (Fig.36), Etain moved more to personal journal style writing as well as riot girl-feminist type informative pieces. Having spent a year studying in Germany much of the writing was related to thoughts and feelings of this time spent away from home. While the earlier issues of Mind Riot were mainly distributed locally, Etain sent Hoyden to a zine distro in New Zealand called Moon Rocket which “sent it everywhere it could be sent” (ibid). From this Etain received many responses from readers who related to the content. Although Etain doesn’t produce a zine anymore she still writes

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{Mind_Riot_51.png}
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{Hoyden_1.png}
\caption{Mind Riot #51 and Hoyden #1}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{33} The last two or so issues were slightly less regular than monthly, in some of the writing there was a definite sense of jadedness.

\textsuperscript{34} Red F Records is an independent record label based in France that Derek runs whose releases include three cd/lp’s by Dublin band The Redneck Manifesto.
both in the form of short stories and for a weblog\(^{35}\), for her the process of producing a zine was perhaps

“…about getting my own thoughts out of my head, put them down, structure them on paper. It was nice to know people were reading, identifying with it. I think I stopped doing it because even now when writing short stories if I’m ever going to do something with them, I’d prefer to do it under a pseudonym – as a way of hiding behind it” (ibid).

Having produced a zine Etain states that rather than looking to mainstream media as a main source of information:

“…I’m always curious to see different and realistic methods of media that tells the truth, rather than telling you what you should be told…it makes me curious to see other peoples worldviews… for people on the ground, that’s what I look for, what is a random person feeling…” (ibid).

While Etain admits that maybe her zine days are over, she feels the advantage of writing a weblog is the immediacy, that writing won’t have to go out of date before it’s put out: “I feel this now, in five minutes its there, I can go back and change it if I want” (ibid).

6. Jake’s Wrath (Liadain)

In 2001 Jake’s Wrath (Fig.37-40) hit the Irish scene, produced by Liadain it was A4 in size, very well laid out – almost professional like in later issues, and had a very definite hardcore\(^{36}\) influence in layout with columns by local scenesters, band interviews, music, gig and zine reviews. According to Liadain:

“When I started getting into the punk scene, I think I’d seen about two other zines (Unfit For Consumption and With Harmful Intent), I just figured it looked like something I could do, ‘cos I always wrote a lot, usually just diaries, but I’d always written my entire life, it looked like an interesting outlet. I just started without knowing what I was doing and made it up as I went along” (Liadain, interview).

Although Jake’s Wrath seemed to get around, Liadain admits she never had a big plan behind the distribution, that it was mainly through the usual avenues of local record shops, at gigs and through the post. Apart from band interviews and music related stuff in the zine there was a lot of varied articles like interviews with a Christian punk, a tattooist, a body piercer aswell as features on friends’ record collections. Throughout Jake’s Wrath it’s obvious that a lot of work went into both its design (which makes great use of new desktop publishing software) as well as into band interviews, for Liadain:

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\(^{35}\) Weblog or blog is an online diary/ e-journal with dated entries in chronological order often featuring a links page, photos, archive of older entries; “a free medium of self-publishing that has the advantage of linking your audience directly to the sources you are gathering information from” (Hockin, Spring 2005, Zerokills#1).

\(^{36}\) Hardcore: a subgenre of punk. Other subgenres might include: crust, emo, straight edge, screamo, ska; each with their own recognisable aesthetics in print layout, record design, etc.
“It was a document of stuff happening in my head, of things I wanted to think/talk about. I did always put a lot of effort into it as I didn’t see any point in putting out something that was half-arsed, (the Sir Killalot interview from #4 took me eighteen hours to transcribe for a two hour interview). It was nearly all done when I was living at home with my parents and there was nothing to do which probably had a big bearing, that’s why not much has been done in the last few years since I’ve been living in Dublin, in college.” (ibid).

Completion of a zine for Liadain is a “nice sense of achievement” and a great way to get in touch with people; the process “makes you a lot more conscious of the fact that you can do whatever you want, put out whatever you want to put out, you don’t have to wait around for somebody to go I like that, you can do it yourself” (ibid).

7. Cotton Fist (Eric)

Eric started writing Cotton Fist (Fig. 41-43) in 1997, as he’d come across various zines and freesheets but felt they weren’t dealing with subjects that he was interested in such as animal liberation/rights and anti-fascism which would make up the content of early issues along with record and cider reviews. Getting more aware of other zines, and avenues of writing, Eric tried to put more of a personal perspective on political issues, feeling that

“...there was enough literature that’s purely political, looking at things from a very black and white point of view, whereas a personal zine dealing with political issues can really touch home with people” (Eric, interview).

Over the years of doing Cotton Fist Eric has expanded its
distribution from purely local, by sending it for trade/review to other zines, to various shops, distros and individuals in Australia, North America and all over Europe. As Eric is also in a band [Easpa Measa] he realises that some people, in the music obsessed culture that is punk/D.I.Y., will still attribute more importance to bands than zines he feels though, that:

“[zines are] a great outlet for people, in some ways the same as being in a band, where you get to express yourself, vent yourself about whatever things are enraging you at the time. With a zine it really helps for people who don’t want to stand up in front of people and shout about it… they can sit in their own home, go over their own thoughts, really pinpoint what they want to say and do it in their own time, then actually distributing it to as many people as they want…” (ibid).

Eric feels there is a place for both mediums and when on tour with the band tries to bring a distro of zines, music and the “thoughts and ideas from the people back home out to people when we’re travelling” (ibid). In early 2005 Eric was involved in putting together This Frantic Silence, a contribution based zine dealing with issues of depression, anxiety, suicide and mental health. The idea Eric says was that “people could share ways of dealing with depression, anxiety and with friends who wanted to commit suicide. It half achieved that but it at least served as a blank slate for people to get it off their chest”. Although the project was pretty strenuous the plan is to follow it up with a “response to the issues that were actually talked about” (ibid). Creating a zine for Eric is a way to document both his growth as a human being as well as events and activities in Dublin, which has become a “more active place for anarchists and punks, there’s more going on now than there was then – in a positive way” (ibid).

8. Lucidity (Ed)

Ed first started making zines under the name Under The Radar in 2001, since then with his Lucidity (Fig.44-46) zine he’s carved out a very distinct identity for himself in zine-land. Using cut and paste aesthetics through cutting lines of text from a page and pasting them back onto a page over a photocopied image, and very personal journal-style writing that at times makes the reader uncomfortable to be reading, or at least worried for the well-being of the writer. He explains that at first
he found it difficult to put himself “out there” and stuck with traditional zine topics such as music and articles, since then he has become more personal in his zines and admits that some people have misinterpreted or taken offence to his writing. He feels though, that it's better to put a zine straight out rather than spending too much time in deliberation over whether its good enough or not, through this method he's had some worthwhile correspondence and conversations to stuff he has written. For Ed:

“the photocopier is an absolutely deadly invention; people don’t really use it that much. I think they’re [zines] an art form in themselves too, I love seeing zine libraries starting up, people starting to document the zine community…” (Ed, interview).

Although Ed is not a fan of e-zines, he realised how helpful the internet could be for the distribution of zines, as it has been helpful for the distribution of music and for bands to organise tours. With this in mind he set up a webpage (www.zinetrade.net) that could serve as a distribution point for zine writers to contact other zine writers directly and to trade zines. The basic idea is that interested zine writers post details of their zine on the page with an email contact, if other zine writers like the description of the zine and are interested in trading their zine for it, they email the first zine writer and set up the trade which will subsequently happen through the post. The advantages for Ed of this method is that, it is a faster more immediate way of contacting other zine writers – less time consuming than through the post, and with ever increasing worldwide postal rates it saves postal money for zine writers – the same interaction might take numerous correspondence by post. Part of the webpage also includes contact details for zine distros as well as zine libraries, and it is Ed’s hope that the Zinetrade webpage could serve as a major resource for zines and zine writers in
the distribution of their work.

Although Ed feels the rise of postage rates will hit zine writers hard, he believes the future of zines to be a bright one, with such ideas as zine symposiums taking off. For Ed zines should continue to be individual, to resist sticking to a format and to be as diverse and creative as possible. This is what he intends for his own zine writing – his next issue will move away from personal topics and centre on music censorship.

4.3 Chapter Summary
This chapter has focused on the birth of Irish zines in the format they are now known, and brought this activity up to the present day through case studies of eight Irish zine writers. By giving a basic overview of each zine writer’s experience of producing a zine, some particularities they brought to the activity, and touched on some of their philosophies as regards the mainstream media, life and future implications for zines. To offer a crude summary of each zine writer and their experience with zines: PA – only outlet accessible for creativity in print/graphic design; Niall – creative outlet and avenue to express self-empowerment philosophy; Boz – avenue to explore artistic talent, write about music in an underground tradition; Derek – politically oriented to create cultural network based on ethical independent values; Etain – medium to find personal voice and writing style; Liadain – way of taking part in music scene, outlet for writing and design creativity; Eric – outlet for personal/ community, creative, political expression and discussion; Ed – communicative device for personal issues and blank slate for creative expression. Through these different zine writers we can see different uses of the medium as well as how it has progressed to where it is today. In the next chapter issues (such as the standardisation/commodification of cultural industry forms, public access to the media and means of creative expression) brought up in Chapter Two will be discussed and whether zines offer an alternative mode of operation and communication as regards these issues.
Chapter 5: Contextualising Zines

5.1 In relation to the Cultural Industries

Zines actively break the model of the forms produced by the cultural industries, as set forth by Hesmondhalgh and Adorno et al. As zines are produced by individuals rather than by mass production methods they are not subject to a standardisation process. The zine producers interviewed in the last chapter each explained their own angle on what zines meant to them; as their ‘zine’ is testimony to. In this sense the creation, reproduction and circulation stages of zine production exist autonomously; entirely dependent on the whim of the zine writer, i.e. content, level of distribution, etc.

Zines are of low monetary value and exist outside the realms of collector fetish (e.g. they are always re-photocopy-able) so are in defiance of the notion of art/culture as commodity. They actively break with the trends in cultural industry forms for the commercialisation of everyday life and the individual as consumer rather than citizen. Instead the individual is viewed as a fellow human being with the potential to become a producer or creator.

Zines provide views that are not frequently available in mainstream media; such as: worker rather than business interest, protestors rather than government, music fan rather than journalist. In many instances zines provide (sometimes angry) critiques of the status quo and visions for alternative political models.

Rather than the situation in the cultural industries where owners of media are vast corporations, the communicative model offered by zines is that everyone is or has the potential to be an owner of their own media. With this vision is the possibility of a wider diversity of viewpoints given, the reality is that those aired are only as diverse as the amount of people taking up the form of expression and with sufficient interest to do so. The majority of those interviewed accounted their initial contact with zines as through punk rock music and it is fair to say that ‘punk rock’ is an important part of their culture. There is little doubt from all evidence presented that the activity of making zines is connected with special interest groups/ subcultures to the mainstream society.

In Enzenberger’s model of media that is a two-way dialogical communicative, decentralised programme; the mass availability of media equipment makes everyone a media maker, manipulator even. Zines do fit this model, again the extent of success for the mobilisation and empowerment of the masses (as such) only depends on the amount of people who are aware of the activity with sufficient inclination to take part. Two of those interviewed expressed the need for quality control and that not everyone should make a zine as there are a lot of bad zines out there (Derek, Boz, separate interviews). Boz also highlighted the fact that there is too much emphasis put on the philosophies of D.I.Y. rather than the active part of it – Do; in some cases it being Talk About It and Never Do It which clearly has too many letters (Boz, interview).

38 Ed of Lucidity zine (interview no.8) admitted his first contact was through football fanzines until later discovering football and punk zines such as King Of The Sad People (Co. Wexford, Ireland).
39 While there are other cultures that produce zines/fanzines (science fiction, football, heavy metal, techno, goth etc.) it was this area that the author felt most familiar with and hence became the subject of this study. In D.I.Y. zines there is an evident critique of mainstream media/culture that is perhaps lacking in other subcultures.
5.2 Zines as Ideal Speech Situation
For Habermas an Ideal Speech Situation (I.S.S) is when all members of a culture have access and the ability to take part in rational discourse and debate on matters of concern to that culture. On whether zines could be an I.S.S. and whether dialogue can take place between zines, in regard to reviews sections as dialogues between zines, Derek answers (interview no. 4):

“I don’t think so, and we had absolutely no interest in starting a “dialogue” in print – I don’t think you have a “dialogue” spread out over two or more print publications – it’s too slow and for me, the medium is ill adapted – it invariably degenerates into a Maximumrocknroll (MRR) vs. Flipside kinda shitfest or what happened between Tim Yohannon and Lawrence Livermore in the pages of MRR and Punk Planet.40.”

Derek raises very practical points here; while zines certainly could theoretically be an I.S.S.; the practical realities of day-to-day issues such as earning a living, human relationships, putting food on the table will naturally get more importance than creating alternative modes of discourse through zines and non-profit/hobby-type media. It is also fair to say that zines contain more of a creative imperative than a discursive one and while discourse/communication is of high importance it is through creative means (such as art, writing, photography, music). In this regard the internet offers greater possibilities as an I.S.S. model of communication.

5.3 Zines as Alternative to the media
Interviewees agreed that zines can in some cases offer an alternative source of information to the media, but in a broader sense (philosophically, politically) than the practical reality of a thirty-two page daily broadsheet newspaper, in which case the internet (e.g. the webpage Indymedia) offers more realistic possibilities as a disseminator of news and current affairs analysis etc.

5.4 Zines as male-dominated/patriarchal sphere
In her 1998 study Clodagh Murphy highlighted an unequal male to female participation ratio in Irish zine production and while this was the case, Irish female zine writers were as equally intelligent, opinionated, politically minded, environmentally aware and held the D.I.Y. ethic as importantly as their worldwide peers (Murphy, 1998, p.57-58). Since Murphy’s study there is ample proof that the gender balance in general D.I.Y. activity in Dublin and Ireland has levelled. For Etain when producing her zine she was very aware of the gender imbalance “it was a male thing, maybe it was my perception…” (Etain, interview); Liadain also realised herself to be in the minority when starting off her zine, but points out that now:

“From a zine point of view there seems to be just as much girls doing zines as guys, especially if you compare it to something like bands (there’s obviously tonnes more guys in bands than girls)” (Liadain, interview).

40 Zine-feuds that took place between the bigger American zines Maximumrocknroll (MRR) and Flipside; and Larry Livermore in Punk Planet.
Etain points out the difference in the portrayal of women in zines to that of mainstream media specifically a newsagent’s magazine rack within view of our interview setting:

“In terms of if you are a woman – you’d be better off if you look like this, dress like that, nip & tuck this bit, boobs pushed up, boys will like you – that sort of thing. In my experience the zines that I’ve come across written by women are so positively feminist, not in a ball-breaking way – proud of culture, proud of not buying into a stereotype…” (Etain, interview).

As regards the fact that more of the longer running Irish zines have been made by males, both thought it a question of demographics which will change in time.

These points were confirmed by investigation into the history of Irish zine making. In the 1980 zine *Imprint* (already mentioned in Chapter 4.1, Fig.8-9); one of whose editors is a female (Barbara Fitz); numerous early Irish zines edited by women are documented in its *Zerox Irish Fanzine Directory* (including one by a Rock Against Sexism Collective) (Fitz, November 1980).

5.5 Zines and New Technology

There was definite consensus between all interviewees that the print medium was still very important in terms of a tradition and would not go away. While there’s no doubt that the internet offers vast possibilities in terms of access to and distribution of information, most interviewees expressed little patience for e-zines, but rather a preference of reading from paper as opposed to off a computer screen. Boz who put some of his zine output online found that “the hit-rate was actually really low” (Boz, interview); Liadain felt the internet impacted negatively on zines zapping one’s creative energy in dribs and drabs through chat-rooms and discussion boards; while Ed in setting up the Zinetrade webpage is attempting to harness the distribution possibilities of the internet for paper zines.

The mass availability of desktop publishing software has had vast impacts on zine creation; making it much easier and practical to disseminate information. Whether the zine writer prefers to use graphic design programmes or the cut’n’paste method is up to their own personal sense of aesthetics, there is little doubt that new technologies offer vast possibilities for both.

The copying quality offered by photocopying machines continually improves, while the cost is as cheap as ever. There has been a tendency by some Irish zine producers to use recycled paper, although it raises overall costs slightly it is definitely a worthwhile move.

As highlighted by Ed (interview no.8) the rise in global postage rates is something that is of definite concern for zine producers. Perhaps the inevitable adverse of the shift towards the internet as a communication device, it undoubtedly effects the feasibility for foreign distribution of zines. A point raised by PA (interview no.1) of using the internet directly as a distribution medium through the use of PDF files might counteract this somewhat if zine writers are willing to trust the technology. In the meantime the reality of higher postage rates hits them hard, as zine writers will hardly constitute a lobby to fight such; it’s something that they will have to live with.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Stephen Duncombe examines zines as the embodiment of alternative culture’s politics. He asks whether the vibrancy and levels of activity in abundance in zines could act as an invigorating force for radical politics whose energy levels are in decline. He finally wonders if zines are merely a form of political catharsis, a rebellious haven in a heartless world, that

“...since all this [zine production] happens on a purely cultural plane, it has little real effect on the causes of alienation in the greater society. In fact, one could argue that underground culture sublimates anger that otherwise might have been expressed in political action” (Duncombe, 1997, p.190).

For Duncombe the irony is that underground culture and zines need consumer capitalism for their survival, for without it what might they rally against or be underground from. In closing he realises that zines can at least offer a space for such possibilities to be imagined.

These points raised by Duncombe have not been the purpose of this study but rather to look at zines as a cultural form and communication model that actively breaks with the commercial imperative of the cultural industries model of communication and culture. It has not been my intention to present zines as the answer to the mass media, or as the hope for new standards of ethical living with the revolution they might bring. Rather that the communications model offered by zines might hold important lessons for community media and specifically as an example of cultural groups taking the control into their own hands for how their existence is documented, political views are recorded/discussed, passions written down, and cultural preferences given attention to. In this regard zines fit in with Capra’s notion of culture as integral systems of collective thinking that can be of benefit to the natural whole; he states:

“Human evolution ... progresses through an interplay of inner and outer worlds, individuals and societies, nature and culture” (Capra, 1988, p.298).

It is clear from analysis presented in Chapter Two that the unequal relationship between the public and the cultural industries is a far cry from being the integral systems of collective thinking to which Capra refers, while Habermas’ Ideal Speech Situation is also left wanting as regards public ability to take part in meaningful dialogue. Instead culture whose sole purpose is the production of financial gain and profit for shareholders of massive corporations is what is hoisted on the masses through the cultural industries. The cross pollination of advertising with so-called ‘art’ and cultural forms in evidence throughout modern life (in advertisements, product placements, sponsorship deals) are direct results of the cultural industries. When Adorno and Horkheimer wrote the original Culture Industry essay in 1944 they definitely had a point, but could not have foreseen the commercialisation and commodification that exists today in all aspects of daily life. Perhaps if they were around today to experience it; they too would be sitting at typewriters, hunched over photocopiers, stapling sheets and creating zines. Imagining existences without the cultural industries and documenting culture outside of
commercial imperatives. Such musings aside, the reality that the control of cultural creation might exist solely in the hands of massive corporate industries is a fearsome possibility. To this end zines, public service broadcasting, community media models and other such avenues are vastly important for the dissemination of information/culture free of vested interests.

Through research presented in Chapter 4 a strong tradition of Irish zine production has been shown. The fact that older zine writers move on is a loss to the zine community as a communication model – with the passing of their experience and knowledge. Still zines written exist as places of intrigue, inspiration, as attempts to document alternative histories and create new avenues of discourse. It is certain that zines have a transient nature, a passing time that once documented goes out of date quickly, even for the author, still it is the documenting of that transient moment that is itself interesting and important. It should also be noted that D.I.Y. aesthetics are not an excuse for poor quality, lack of effort and unoriginality; the tradition of zine production documented in this study certainly proves that. So too attitudes of “technophobia” miss the point, which is of communication rather than hankering back to an aesthetic that was created in the first place due to necessity rather than by design.

With the freedom that zines enjoy, from commercial imperatives such as the maintenance of stereotypes and drive for financial profit; of literal creative, expressive and communicative autonomy; long may they continue!
Bibliography:


Appendices 1:
After the initial wave of punk and new wave bands (the Sex Pistols, the Clash, the Ramones, the Undertones, Blondie, PiL, etc.), major labels became disinterested in signing borderline punk bands with the prospect of their production and marketability to a large and segmented music market. While in Britain, anarcho-punks such as Crass and Conflict vehemently paved their way through independence and the Do-It-Yourself ethic, it was more for necessity that American hardcore bands started their own record labels. Both Black Flag and the Dead Kennedys had major label contracts cancelled over censorship of artistic content, through this marginalization starting their SST and Alternative Tentacles record labels, they: “began to develop a critique of mass culture, a theory of entrepreneurial economic decentralization, and a theory of semi-proletarian ‘do it yourself’ aesthetics tailored for class conscious, anti-consumerist middle class adolescents and college students.” (Schalit, March/ April 1997, p.78). The miniscule financial success of independent labels by 1986, led major label executives to believe there to be reason enough to expand into this “once controversial, albeit fringe market for new music” (Schalit, March/ April 1997, p.76), by signing groups such as the Replacements and Hüsker Dü, though with little profit gain. Later as markets became ready, staunchly independent bands became disillusioned with their impoverishment on independent levels and began to entertain the idea of signing major label contracts, early signings by Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jnr and Nirvana opened the flood gates for virtually every vaguely successful alternative band at the end of the ‘80s/ early ‘90s period. The period passed into mass popular culture with the success of bands such as Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Alice In Chains, everything Seattle-like and grunge music. Alternative was the new “in”, the new vogue, under such terms as ‘generation x’, ‘slacker’ and ‘grunge’, marketers scrambled to identify, pillage and commodify this all of a sudden fashionable youth culture and style. Using images such as bohemian losers in urban settings and long-haired check-shirt wearing grunge rockers; “the underground’s condemnation of the dominant culture was being used to package and sell that very same culture” (Duncombe 1997, p.133). At the start of 1992, Nirvana’s song Smells Like Teen Spirit climbed into the American Top Ten and their album Nevermind knocked Michael Jackson’s album Dangerous off the top of the album charts; it reached the British Top Ten shortly afterward and by February of that year had been certified triple platinum (Vh1, 2005). The period climaxed in April 1994 with the highly significant suicide of grunge’s supposed leader and Nirvana frontman, Kurt Cobain, Nevermind as of 2001 had sold 7.65 million copies (Basham, 20/12/2001). As the ‘90s progressed major labels moved on from grunge bands and “alternative” became pop-punk, nu-metal, stoner rock, drum n’bass, emo, goth etc.