

Joshua Finnell

SK8 zines

“The craze and menace of skateboards”

“Two hundred years of American technology has unwittingly created a massive cement playground of unlimited potential, but it was the minds of 11-year-olds that could see that potential.”—C. R. Stecyk III

From its very inception, the phenomenon of skateboarding was received with caution and worry concerning its disruptive approach to mainstream culture. The oft-cited May 1965 *LIFE Magazine* cover spoke directly to this distress when it featured a skateboarder with the tagline: “The craze and menace of skateboards.”

As a corollary, skateboarding became a subculture with fluctuating and contradictory interests within its ranks, contributing to boom and bust cycles of popularity and influence. Initial excitement over the newness of skateboarding created a fad in the 1960s, but the limitations in manufacturing technology stunted its evolution. Skateboarding’s first publication, *Skateboarder Magazine*, ceased publication in 1965. The introduction of urethane wheels and the popularity of the Zephyr skateboard team, famously captured in Stacey Peralta’s *Dogtown and Z-Boys* documentary, reinvigorated skateboarding in the late 1970s. The evolution of street skating, coupled with the popularity of the skateboarding team Bones Brigade, built upon this success in the early 1980s.

The 1980s would also produce two of skateboarding most recognized publications: *Thrasher Magazine* and *Transworld*

Magazine. *Thrasher* was founded in 1981, tapping into the anarchistic tone of skateboarding by promulgating the ethos of “skate and destroy.” Concerned with the singular, rebellious representation of skateboarding, *Transworld* was founded in 1983 with the moniker, “skate and create.” The growing skateboarding subculture is well-archived in the pages of these two magazines, but by the late 1980s interest in skateboarding was waning again.

The mid-1990s saw a renaissance in skateboarding, resulting in a proliferation of skateboard companies such as World Industries and Element Skateboards. These companies significantly increased the number of sponsored skateboarders and laid the groundwork for some of skateboarding’s most impactful cultural contributions in the form of fashion and art, captured in Aaron Rose and Joshua Leonard’s documentary, *Beautiful Losers*. Magazines such as *Big Brother* began circulating with *Thrasher* and *Transworld* during this decade, alongside the revived *Skateboarder Magazine*. This boom period of skateboarding also attracted increased commercial interest in the form of the inaugural ESPN X-Games in 1995. Skateboarders were evolving from anarchists to athletes. However, the professionalization of skateboarding became a controversial issue.

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Today, the mantra of *Transworld* to “skate and create” has been embraced by skateboarders like Tony Hawk, with his successful video game franchise, and Rob Dyrdek, the creator of the DC Pro Street League. In the 21st century, skateboarders have risen from the underground to becoming stars of their own reality television shows. What started in the empty pools of southern California has become a billion dollar industry.

However, throughout the 50-year history of skateboarding, an ethos of resistance to consumer and commercial culture has always been articulated. Against a homogenous, global vision of professional skateboarding, an amateur, local experience has been expressed in the form of zines. These free, self-published, Xeroxed missives capture the voices of the many who skate in anonymity.

As Stephen Duncombe writes in *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*, “In an era marked by the rapid centralization of corporate media, zines are independent and localized, coming out of cities, suburbs and small towns across the USA, assembled on kitchen tables. They celebrate the every person in a world of celebrity, losers in a society that rewards the best and the brightest.... zinesters are speaking to and for an underground culture.”¹ While the sport of skateboarding has gone through cycles, the spirit and frenetic energy of skateboarding zines has remained consistent.

There are many useful skateboard zine resources online, including individual and institutional archives. The collection below is an attempt at providing a brief overview of the depth and breadth of skateboarding zines, in addition to culturally significant, mainstream magazines.²

Zine archives

- **Barnard Zine Library.** Barnard College’s collection is focused on zines written by women with an emphasis on zines by women of color. As a corollary, this collection contains many zines focusing on female skateboarders, such as *Bruisers* and *Skate*

Tough You Little Girls. This site also serves as a comprehensive directory for locating zine libraries in individual states. Access: <http://zines.barnard.edu>.

- **Local Chaos Zine Archive.** Maintained by a former author of the Ann Arbor-based zine, *Local Chaos*, this full-text archive contains skate zines from around the country. The collection captures the highpoint of zine culture in the 1980s, with zines ranging from San Jose, California, to Columbus, Mississippi. Of particular interest are the religiously affiliated skate zines, like *Live It Out* from Delphos, Ohio. Access: http://localchaos.com/zine_listing.html.

- **Paper Cut Zine Library.** Located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, this archive contains more than 15,000 zines and counting. A majority of the collection can be browsed by a comprehensive spreadsheet categorized by title, author, genre, and date. Skate zines of note in this collection are *Crete Skate Zine*, *Shred of Dignity*, and *Skaters Union Ragazine*. Access: <http://www.papercutzinelibrary.org/>.

- **Skate and Annoy 80’s Zine Archive.** A full-text collection consisting of a single issue from 25 different zines from the 1980s. Though lacking in size, the collection is unique in that each issue cataloged includes



the original format used to produce the zine, as well as any use of local slang. Of particular interest is *Swank Zine*, created by famed photographer and current owner of Tum Yeto skateboard distributors, Tod Swank. Access: <http://skateandannoy.com/galleries/zines/>.

- **Zine Wiki.** Created by Alan Lastufka and Kate Sandler in 2006, *Zine Wiki* is a comprehensive, open-source encyclopedia of zines and zinesters. Zines are categorized alphabetically and link



to full-text archives when available. Skateboarding zines of note in this collection are *No Scene Zine* from Washington, D.C., and *So, Why Worry?* from Texas. Access: <http://zinewiki.com>.

Current zines

- **43 Magazine.** Funded by more than 300 donations on Kickstarter, *43 Magazine* launched in 2011 as an independent, non-profit, skateboard zine dedicated to quality, photography, and arts. Under the artistic direction of photographer Allen Ying, *43 Magazine's* mission is to ensure that the magic of skateboarding is not completely forgotten in its mainstream emergence. The zine itself is purposely the size of a vinyl record, to signal an emphasis on material quality over lower-quality digital formats. Access: <http://43magazine.com>.

- **Escape Route.** This zine is the product of Seattle based nonprofit, *Skate Like a Girl*. All content is produced by female skateboarders, with an aim to empower women to promote and implement social equality through skateboarding. The first issue is available for purchase through their Web site. Access:



<http://skatelikegirls.bigcartel.com/product/escape-route-zine-1>.

- **Sauce Magazine.** Based out of Portland, Oregon, this zine covers everything from local skate crews to DIY skateparks. Copies can be obtained for free in local skateshops or through mail order. Their archive is limited to a mere four issues but is fully accessible from their Web site. Access: http://www.sauceskateboardzine.com/SAUCE/Past_Issues.html.

- **Scallywag Zine.** The unofficial zine of skater-owned and-operated Jolly Roger Skateboards in Belleville, Illinois. Content is locally focused, with emphasis on DIY skateparks and skaters from around southern Illinois and

St. Louis. Every issue is available in full-text through issuu.com and is an excellent resource for discovering self-archived zines. Access: <http://issuu.com/jollyrogersskateboards>.

- **Skate Jawn.** Created in the wake of hip hop artist Lil' Wayne's espoused interest in becoming a skater and Ryan Sheckler's MTV reality show, *Skate Jawn* has been distributed since 2010. Based out of Philadelphia and created by Marcuse Waldron, the zine currently has a 2,000 print run per issue. All back issues are available on their Web site. Access: <http://www.skatejawn.com/backissues/>.

Current and historical mainstream magazines

- **RAD Magazine.** During the late 1980s, *RAD Magazine* evolved out of *BMX Magazine*. The magazine was published from 1987 to 1993, covering the growth of skateboarding in the United Kingdom. Over time, the magazine evolved into *Sidewalk Skateboarding Magazine* (<http://sidewalk.mpora.com/>). However, the short-lived magazine created a devoted following. Access: <http://www.whenwewasrad.co.uk/>.

- **Skateboard! Europe's Hottest Magazine.** The global phenomenon of skateboarding is well archived in this 1970s publication. *Skateboard!* showcased the talent of European skaters, such as Neville Rada and Chris Sullivan. The advertisements reflect the evolving technology and experimentation with skateboard equipment during the 1970s. Numerous ads feature new and improved polyurethane wheels, as well as decks made from Finnish birch plywood. A complete, full-text archive of volumes 1 through 19 was compiled from approximately 80 incomplete issues. Access: <http://www.skateboardmagazine.co.uk/>.

- **Thrasher Magazine.** A monthly publication since 1981, *Thrasher* consists of interviews, photograph, music reviews, and regular editorial columns concerning skate culture. Of particular interest is Wez Lundry's column entitled, "Zine Thing." Himself the creator of the *Pool Dust* zine (www.pooldust.com), Lundry uses the column to showcase

and review reader submitted skateboard zines from around the globe. Thrasher hosts a complete archive of past covers, with many full-text issues, on their Web site. Access: <http://www.thrasher magazine.com/articles/covers/covers-index/>.

- **Transworld Magazine.** A monthly publication since 1983, *Transworld* was created by Larry Balma and Peggy Cozens as an alternative to the portrayal of skateboarding culture in *Thrasher*.

Consisting of interviews and columns, *Transworld* is perhaps best known for featuring the early work of popular photographers, such as J. Grant Brittain. Several members of the editorial board formed *The Skateboard Mag* (<http://theskateboardmag.com/>) in 2003. *Transworld* does not host its own archive, but full-text issues can be browsed and purchased back to 2008 through Zinio. Access: <http://au.zinio.com>.

- **Vintage Skateboard Magazines.** Dating back to the 1960s, this archive has full-text skateboard magazines from around the world. Of particular interest are the first six volumes of *Skateboarder Magazine* as well as early issues of both *Thrasher* and *Transworld*. Though not all magazines

are full-text, the rarity of publications in this collection is impressive. Included in this collection is the 1964 four-issue run of *Skateboarder Magazine*. In addition to magazines, the site also aggregates vintage poster, advertisements, and books. Access: <http://vintageskateboardmagazines.com/index.html>.



Notes

1. S. Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (New York: Verso, 1997), 2–3.

2. For an expanded research guide on skateboarding from the perspectives of history, architecture, art, health, gender, and race please see <http://libguides.denison.edu/skateboarding>.

Those wishing to access or contribute to a collective bibliography of skateboarding should join the Zotero group, SK8 (www.zotero.org/groups/sk8). Those wishing to know why so much energy has been dedicated to archiving and researching skateboarding should buy a board and start skating. *~*

Submit topic ideas for Internet Resources articles

C&RL News is seeking topic ideas for future editions of the Internet Resources column. Internet Resources articles are 2,000 words in length and cover content from all areas of the Internet.

While all topic ideas will be considered, preference will be given to topics related to professional issues in librarianship and higher education. Recent examples of professional-related Internet Resources

articles include “Virtual worlds and libraries,” “From bibliometrics to altmetrics,” and “digital humanities.”

Submit topic ideas, including brief information about the compiler’s knowledge of the proposed topic, to David

Free at dfree@ala.org.

Compilers whose topics are selected will receive specific manuscript preparation information.

