

zine & comics reviews

Mark Pawson

Apologies if you missed this column in the last issue, I had a late summer break and popped over to New York to search out and track down some interesting print creations...

Weird N.J.—Your Travel Guide to New Jersey's Local Legends and Best Kept Secrets is a round up of odd architecture, forgotten theme parks, urban folklore and just plain weird goings on in New York's ugly sister state. Issue 14 features the Palace of Depression—a quirky landmark built in the 1930s out of junk and old car parts—and has a round up of boat-shaped buildings, a Cemetery Safari round-up, local Pirate tales, Roadside weirdness, kid's attractions and telegraph poles mysteriously adorned with sculptures. There's lots of lively input from their readers—always the sign of a good zine—but it's odd that they're not wise to the Andre the Giant graffiti campaign. Immensely readable, *Weird N.J.* is an engrossing look at an American state that rarely receives anything other than bad press.

Tuli Kupferberg, best known as a member of The Fugs, is an East Village counter culture survivor. On previous visits to New York I've always spotted him selling tapes and booklets on SoHo street corners, but this time around he was nowhere to be seen, maybe Mayor Giuliani's zero tolerance policies have driven him off the streets. Tuli finally gets his very own *Teach Yourself* book, this collection of 200 collages and cartoons is called **Teach Yourself Fucking**. It's idiosyncratic, loosely drawn and scrappily thrown together—just like his booklets always were, but maybe losing the sharper edge of his earlier publications and with a heavy focus on New York politics. 'The old Fucks at Home' is his continuing series of two oldsters trying to make sense of the world as it comes through their TV. There's also the satirical 'Great Moments in the History of Politics, Art, Literature, Journalism and Capitalism' cartoons. A couple of my favourites; cockroaches standing around discussing the merits of 'People Motels—where people check in, but don't check out' and Tuli's ad for the Village Voice personal column; 'Beautiful Woman! I saw you walking down village streets in the sixties. I should have spoken, but didn't. Please contact me.'

Public Illumination Magazine, celebrates 20 years of publishing with issue 46, this 'non-occasional' print oddity is tiny—just larg-



er than a business card. Each issue is themed, 'Busts' this time around, 'Luxury' for the next issue, and contains a mix of bite size prose, drawings, sketches and haikus. Originally New York based, editor Zagreus Bowery has relocated to Italy and continues to assemble this cute curiosity from works by contributors with equally unlikely, and obligatory pseudonyms; Crispy Prawns, Rank Cologne and Gulley A. Rosebush all feature in this issue. I've got a treasured collection of previous *Public Illuminations* stashed away, picked up on previous visits to New York and bought here in the 80s when copies were on sale in London, and look forward to rediscovering them when I file this copy...

Cool (comics for you) is a free tabloid showcasing recent and forthcoming books by some of today's most interesting independent comic publishers from the US, UK and Canada. It's a collaboration between *Top Shelf*, *Drawn and Quarterly*, *Highwater Books* and *Slab-o-Concrete*. The low cost newspaper format means there's plenty of space to print sample strips from all of the books featured, some in full colour. It's a great idea that they could easily charge money for, and let's be honest, it's always better to see work for yourself than have it filtered and part-digested by some reviewer!

Vice is a freebie skate/hip hop lifestyle magazine out of Canaduh & Brooklyn that distinguishes itself with a varied range of articles to amuse, offend and puzzle. Interspersed between the ads for overbranded leisure clothing and skate shoes for non-skaters (it is, after all produced by a chain of clothing stores...) there's articles on 'The Joy of Eavesdropping', an interview with a Strawberry Farmer (a real farmer not a band name), A Backstreet Boys Impersonator, Horror Rap? (there's a whole lot more where chart-topping 'Nem' came from), "I didn't wear a shirt for a month", East Timor and Porno Reviews, plus there's a glossy colour comics section with short strips from Kaz, Kochalka and Fiona Smyth. *Vice* have a helluva lot of fun with their do's and don'ts pages, featuring photos of cute guys and girls on the 'do's' page and mercilessly picking on style atrocities on the 'don'ts' page. *Vice* embodies an anything goes spirit, occasionally going too far, but they've got their name to live up to.

Paper Rodeo, is another tabloid freebie, out of Providence,



Rhode Island. A collection of some of the most disconcerting, dream-like, tripped out comics to be seen since the demise of Brighton's *Watermelon Comic*. I honestly can't tell if the strips are all by the same artist or ten different people! Ultra scratchy drawing styles are reminiscent of Gary Panter's *Jimbo* and with a nice touch, the adverts for local Providence cafes, galleries and bookshops are all done in matching styles. Apparently they have a whole catalogue of other work by the artists involved.

Roctober is one of my favourite music zines, previous themed issues have focused on Masked rock'n'roll, Monkey rock'n'roll and Midget rock'n'roll! I missed the last few issues, so was pleased to find this one in the racks at See Hear, New York's zine shop. *Roctober* #28 maintains their track record for outstanding cover artwork coupled with refreshingly low production values of the interior pages! This issue has a long feature on the risqué comedy records of Redd Foxx—who also starred in the US TV remake of *Steptoe & Son*, and an exclusive interview with wholesome whitebread crooner Pat Boone! Plus there's articles on Dolemite, The Dickies, Andre Williams, Swamp Dogg, Maceo Parker and Brazilian superstar Xuxa. *Roctober* has a knack for finding interesting offbeat musicians neglected elsewhere and always has a dauntingly long reviews section.

I haven't reviewed any of **Mark Gonzales'** zines here, much as I'd like to, sorry Mark but at £20/\$20 a pop they're too expensive, hey but feel free to send review copies.

Paul in the country by Michel Rabagliati, is a delightful story which intersperses memories of the author growing up in french-speaking Quebec with a trip to the country, accompanied by his partner and young daughter, to visit his aging parents. Beautifully drawn in a clear-line european style, this is only the first comic book from Rabagliati—who has worked as an illustrator and graphic designer for the past 20 years. It's up to publisher Drawn and Quarterly's usual high standard, and on the basis of this comic I'm waiting eagerly for Rabagliati's forthcoming graphic novel *Paul has a Summer Job*.

Back in the UK now, **Weird Zines**, is a new reviews zine, Issue 1 covers some zines you'll be familiar with from this column (*Infiltration*, *Book Happy*, *From Parts Unknown*) together with an unhealthy dose of zines

focussing on trash, sleaze and exploitation cinema. Titles such as *Mansplait*, *Streetcleaner*, *The Exploitation Journal* and *Cashiers du Cinemart* give you a good idea of what these guys are into! Just 22 reviews seems a bit scanty, they could easily have squeezed a few more in here, but there's plenty of illustrations, and heck its only the first issue. Publishing a reviews zine is a thankless task at best, and previous attempts have fizzled out or floundered under mountains of mediocre zines sent to them, for this reason alone *Weird Zines* deserves your support.

Everything's a Pound, a survey of books weighing sixteen ounces avoirdupois, is both a practical examination of the size and weight of books (extremely pertinent to small publishers who rely on mailorder and are at the mercy of postage costs) and a homage to the Great British Pound Shop—which these days seems to be a global phenomena with every country having its equivalent, ¥100 shops in Japan and Americas 99¢ stores.

Everything's a Pound is a balanced mixture of artists' books produced specifically for the project and existing publications which happen to weigh a pound or have been chopped down to size. Rodger Brown contributes a set of books weighing 8, 4, and 2 ounces—which can be used as weights, a slightly overweight copy of 'SPAIN-the rough



guide' has a corner sawn off by Martin Rogers to arrive at the correct weight and in the process gets retitled 'PAIN-the rough guide'. Everything is in the catalogue, including work that fails miserably to adhere to the theme from contributors who couldn't be bothered to read the instructions properly and work from metric-minded Europeans who don't know what a pound is! This book weighs in on target but seems overpriced at £5.00.

UK small press comics' stalwart John Bagnall's **A Nation Of Shopkeepers**, takes us on a walk down an early 1970's northern high street, calling in at the supermarket, chip shop, butchers and boutique along the way. Each tableau is crammed full of accurately observed period details and hideous seventies styles, fish and chips wrapped in real newspaper, green shield stamps in the supermarket, listening booths in the Record Shop, Jimmy Saville hairdos, carcoats, tanktops and flares are regulation issue. It's a very British and decidedly unglamorous trip down memory lane.

The latest book from the original badly-drawn boy, Scottish doodlemeister David Shrigley, **Grip**, is his largest yet and even has a colour section. This selection of drawings, ponderings, wonderings and meanderings seem bleaker and loopier than his earlier work, if that's possi-

ble. Shrigley's work deserves a book this size, so you can flick back and forth through it several times choosing your favourite pages and gradually working round to the rest of the book, just reading from start to finish doesn't seem appropriate. Buy a copy so he can afford some more packs of felt-tip pens off the market. *Grip* is published by Edinburgh's pocketbooks; steered by Alec Finlay they've built up an interesting, eclectic list of titles in a short time, several come with accompanying CDs, check out their catalogue.

contacts

A Nation Of Shopkeepers, John Bagnall, 16 pgs, A5, £1.50, Beechnut Books. marc@corn-cob.co.uk

Everything's a Pound, A survey of books weighing sixteen ounces avoirdupois, 84 pgs, A4, £5.00. RGAP, Britannia Mill, Mackworth Road, Derby, DE22 3 BL. rgap@derby.ac.uk

Roctober Comics and Music, A4 80 pgs, \$4.00, 1507 E.53rd Street #617, Chicago, IL60615, USA. www.roctober.com

Grip, David Shrigley, 200pgs, £7.99+£1.20p+p, pocketbooks, Canongate Venture (5) New Street, Edinburgh, EH8 8BH. www.pbks.co.uk

Paper Rodeo, tabloid, 16pgs, free, send \$ for postage & a catalogue, Box 254, Allston, MA 02134, USA. Weird N.J.A4 80pgs,

\$4.00+postage, PO Box 1346, Bloomfield, NJ 07003, USA. www.weirdnj.com

Paul in the country, Michel Rabagliati, comic 32 pgs, \$3.50, Drawn and Quarterly, PO Box 48056, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2V 4S8. www.drawnandquarterly.com.

Teach Yourself Fucking, Tuli Kupferberg, A4 192 pgs, \$15.00, Autonomedia, PO Box 568, Brooklyn, New York 11211-0568 USA. www.autonomedia.org

Public Illumination Magazine, \$1.50, 24pgs. Casa Sorci, 06044 Castel Ritaldi (PG) Italy. casasorci@krenet.it

Weird Zines, A5 24pgs. £1.50+an S.A.E. Justin Marriott, 159 Falcondale Rd, Bristol, BS9 3JJ Cool (Comics for You), tabloid, 28 pgs, free, 1536 West Randolph Street, Chicago, IL 60607, USA. www.coolbooks.com

Vice, Free, look out for copies in likely central London Record shops, or send £ for postage to Vice, 43 Lexington Street, London, W1R 3LG See Hear, 59 E 7th Street, New York

