

the best of
OBSOLETE!
the first two years ■



Edited by Rich Dana
Foreword by V. Vale
Illustrations by Blair Gauntt

obsolete-press.com

The best of **OBSOLETE!** The First Two Years

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Foreword by V. Vale

Design and Illustrations by Blair Gauntt

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Thanks to the “guerilla distributors”, and especially, thanks to the readers and lovers of paper.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Robert Dana.

Foreword

by v. vale

You are holding in your hands a real (not “virtual”), printed-on-paper, made-by-humans-working-with-machinery, book-compilation of the BEST OF OBSOLETE! which was created by Rich Dana, a zine maker for over 30 years.

As Socrates once said, “Before we can converse, we must first define our terms.” So, WHAT IS A “ZINE”? Here are some arbitrary defining characteristics:

- “Zine” is pronounced “zeen”—not “zyne”
- The term “zine” probably originated as an abbreviation of “magazine”
- A ZINE is done by ONE individual following the principle of “DO-IT-YOURSELF” (“D-I-Y”). An allied principle is, “Anyone Can Do It.”

Having said the above, there are 4 goals to strive for:

AUTONOMY. You must have 100% control. Avoid money-\$\$-partners.

PURPOSE. Your zine must reflect YOUR obsessions, your passions, your quirky likes and dislikes, your world view, your vision as a “curator” selecting what to look for, what to avoid and ignore, what to support and eschew, what to EXALT in the pages of your personal zine. The zine must reflect YOUR dreams, your desires, your goals. Ideally, the zine is full of YOUR creativity (writing, poetry, jokes, drawings, collages, paintings, appropriations, et al). Certainly, you can accept contributions from loved ones and close friends (well, even strangers, I suppose) but you are publishing this zine for YOUR SELF, so put yourself FIRST. And hopefully, you are trying to put something in print that the world has NEVER seen before, that involves “niche” knowledge and passion, that is kind of ORIGINAL in content and viewpoint, that is perhaps WEIRD and UNSETTLING. Why bother to do a zine if there are already a lot of mainstream magazines and books covering a given subject matter? No, YOUR purpose is to produce something nobody else has done, or to feature creative individuals who have not been documented-to-death, or historify that which has not yet gone down in official newspapers of record. In conclusion, there’s no point in producing a zine that celebrates the status quo; to be original, zines must be AGAINST the status quo. In fact, a parallel goal is to BE ANTI-BOURGEOIS. BE EXTREME! Don’t be afraid of shocking politicians, parents, cops, priests, teachers, and other authority figures.

MASTERY. Be determined to give the highest possible quality of CONTENT you can create. Strive to continually get “better” at everything you DO. Stay “insecure”—it drives you to continually DO BETTER, and to BETTER YOURSELF. Complacency / Self-Satisfaction is The Enemy! Even if you get praised by others, ignore this praise; you learn much more from your critics! So, to get better, do a lot of RESEARCH, daily. We can never know too much, no matter how long we live. And, funnel the “gems” of what you discover and learn into your ZINE. If you follow the Surrealist objective of “No Separation Between Art and Life,” you will constantly be working on your ZINE, no matter what else you ostensibly are doing. All

life is “grist” for your zine-making mill. Many people make zines to express “rotten things” that have happened to them, and by externalizing these traumas, unpleasant/”weird” experiences and disappointments, they often free themselves—to leave bad memories behind, and move on.

BLACK HUMOR. If you consciously strive to infuse your zine with dark, anti-bourgeois, anti-status-quo HUMOR, you will probably have more fun—and so will your readers! Humor is never an accident, even though it often appears accidentally, or unplanned, or by chance—just like PUNS often appear “accidentally” (supposedly) or unbidden. Freudian slips are often not only revealing, but revelatory on a much deeper level than originally suspected. A side project, to beef up one’s inborn sense of humor, is to research the entire world history of Black Humor, wherever it may be found. And anti-authoritarian, dark humor is often non-verbal, as can be illustrated by the silent (well, sound, too) films of Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, Jacques Tati, Monty Python and probably many others. Likewise, there is a history of Black Humor drawings illustrating the works of Jonathan Swift, Moliere, Rabelais, Cervantes, up to Hunter S. Thompson and beyond. Many artists can be inspiring, from Hieronymus Bosch and Brueghel through Hogarth to the creators of Bugs Bunny to Ralph Steadman, whose illustrations for Hunter S. Thompson (plus, Steadman’s oeuvre for newspapers and magazines) are classic. Probably entire libraries of Black Humor Artworks can be located by the diligent researcher.

Of course, many wanna-be Zine Creators ask, “Where do you get ideas? How do you get inspired? How do you get motivated?” Here, it helps to be underprivileged—i.e., not born wealthy, not born privileged, not born with movie-star looks, et al. Remember that “Privilege Confers Blinders.” ANGER and RESENTMENT are powerful motivators to DO A ZINE—especially anger. Anger is a drive. The urge to “right” Injustice is a drive. In fact, you can create many zines based on “what’s wrong with the world” (as well as “what would happen in my perfect world”). Curiosity is also a powerful drive. Therefore, ANGER and CURIOSITY are great motivators to do art, write, and make your own ZINE you have 100% control over. In fact, it is a necessary precondition that NOBODY ELSE have any say over what goes into YOUR zine.

It was Thomas de Quincey who long ago said [paraphrased], “The machinery implanted in your brain for dreaming and imagination was not implanted for nothing!” Anything worth doing is worth doing well, including dreaming. So, it is necessary to keep a notebook/pen by your bed to harvest the dreams you had last night—uncensored. Dreams are a great source of plots, visual ideas, poetry, music... but they must be harvested on a regular basis.

The imagination must be cultivated, and that too is a lifetime’s work-and-play. As J.G. Ballard put it, “Every time I walk down a street I re-invent it in my mind.” You could imagine that street with all the buildings painted red, or bright orange, or neon green, or filled with sailors, or strippers, or circus sideshow performers in cages or on stages... the sky’s the limit! But it’s necessary to REMEMBER: “Every time you leave your house, re-invent the streets in your mind.” A simple but fun exercise...

CHANCE is another source of inspiration. Every person you see as you walk down the street (we're talking about walkable cities here, not desolate suburbs totally devoid of pedestrians)—are they here by CHANCE? What if you consciously walked down different streets every time you set forth on an errand? Perhaps soon it would be impossible to count the number of times your life and destiny had been altered—forever—by a chance walk down a different street. It is advisable to keep a notebook of CHANCE ENCOUNTERS, for future correlation, tabulation and exploitation. You may discover that many of the most important “things” that have happened to you have occurred by chance.

Hopefully, by now you may have at least started to become inspired to do your own ZINE—if you haven't already done so. Well, now is the perfect time to lose yourself in the pages of one man's zine. It presumably was 100% controlled and dictated by Rich Dana, letting his imagination and sense of play and whimsy GO! It's the WORLD OF PLAY which creates the zines which are the most fun to read, study, and appreciate. Money is not the obstacle; you can (almost) always find enough money to express your unique vision and sense of beauty. In fact, it's not a bad idea to strive to do a BEAUTIFUL ZINE, on BEAUTIFUL PAPER, or in a BEAUTIFUL ENVELOPE... just to Please YOURSELF.

So, as parting suggestions:

- DEVELOP ****ALL**** Your Talents!
- Create As Much As Possible!
- Work All the Time & Don't Slack Off!
- No Separation Between ART & LIFE!
- As Much Humor As Possible.
- Harness Curiosity, Anger & Outrage to Write Against Injustice (But, with Humor)
- Remember THE LAW OF 3; Dialectics Rules Life, Art, & Publishing!
- Cherish DREAMING & IMAGINATION (Imagination Creates The Future).

Good Luck, and remember to:

- Strive to do your writing the FIRST HOUR of the DAY.
- Silence Is Your Muse. So NO email/phone/Internet/radio -- just WRITE!
- Solitude is the Mother of Original Creativity! Impose LIMITS on Music, Computer, Phone.
- Your Only Freedom Is Your POWER TO SAY NO! Study the Art of Saying NO, fast!
- Seize Opportunity. Be Alert to Chance, Serendipity, The Chance Encounter
- Remember, “Your Desires Magnetize the Universe!”
- And strive to always BE CHEERFUL. Without Hope You Have Nothing!

Au Revoir & Bonne Chance,

V. Vale,

Founder, RE/Search

www.researchpubs.com

Author of *Zines, Volume One* and *Zines, Volume Two*

WELCOME
TO THE
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MAGAZINE

*Life in
Post-Imperial*
AMERIKA



Photo by Christopher Schipper

sweet home alamo gordo

WELCOME TO THE PREMIERE ISSUE OF OBSOLETE Magazine.

Editors Note: I started OBSOLETE! in 2010 with graphic designer Blair Gauntt. I've been a writer, artist and zine maker since I was a kid in the 70's, and Blair and I did our first zine together in college, in 1981. I wanted to do a free newsprint tabloid, a sort of throwback to the underground papers of the 60's and 70's, and Blair was into it. I picked the name as an homage to the Twilight Zone Episode "The Obsolete Man", in which Burgess Meredith plays a librarian who is judged to be "obsolete" in an Orwellian totalitarian future state. The Chancellor was played by the great Fritz Weaver. The idea of the printed word being obsolete was one I was struggling with- as we all are as writers and readers. It seemed like publishing a meta-paper to explore that theme, and the wider theme of obsolescence was worth a go.

We launched it on a shoestring and have been doing it ever since...This introduction to issue #1 serves as a bit of a manifesto for the project, and lays the groundwork for what was to follow.

-RD

If you are a perceptive and relatively unmedicated reader, you may have noticed by now that this is not an "E-Zine" or a blog. This is a real, turn your fingers black, pulpy paper product. If you have the curiosity to explore further, you may notice that it is, in fact, an old-school newsprint tabloid, complete with slapdash layout, smudgy printing and inflammatory rhetoric.

You may feel that a publication like this is an anachronistic throwback, a vestigial appendage on the body of the digital info-organism, a bit of paper best suited to line the cat box or wrap a fish. However, it's not just the newspaper that has become obsolete. In post-post-post-modern society even the term "obsolete" is becoming obsolete- products are obsolete before they hit the market-place, technology is only good as long as it's replacement is in beta-testing. Maybe it's time to re-examine the printed word. Perhaps the newspaper is for the "early adopters" of post-apocalyptic technology.

For now, I hope you will find it more of an informational eddy, a small backwater in the info-stream where ideas can slow down and swirl around before being used, or disposed of. On the other hand, if this paper is used for nothing more than lining the cat box, I posit that it has been more useful than 99% of the web content that you were exposed to this week.

In the early part of the 20th century, Harold Innis, a Canadian media theorist and predecessor of Marshall McLuhan, postulated that great civilizations were those that balanced "time-binding" media (which retain ideas and history), and "space-binding" media (which allows ideas to travel rapidly). He felt, back in the 50's, that western society was relying too much on time-binding media like radio and television, and that the over-exposure was leading to a culture where "... The emphasis on change is the only permanent characteristic." He felt that this trend would kill shared experience and local identity and create an atmosphere of paranoia and rigid political militarization. No one knows what Innis would have thought of the internet, but despite all of the great gifts of modern technology, some of Innis' warnings seem to be coming true. Despite the gushing flow of "free" information, cultural rigidity appears to be setting in.

As we go to print on the premier issue of OBSOLETE Magazine, “The Amerikan Empire” is in full decline. Despite the “best efforts” of the government, rich old white men continue to sell us out to multi-national corporations, forsaking humanity for the love of a strawman. The earth seems to be facing daily major assaults from it’s most troublesome species. The catastrophic oil-rig disaster in the Gulf of Mexico has officially eclipsed the Exxon-Valdez spill as our nations biggest man-made environmental disaster. Midwestern farmers report an onslaught of herbicide resistant “Super-weeds” - the product of over-reliance on chemical inputs in monoculture farming. Even humans attempts to adopt “green lifestyles” have unintended negative consequences-European drivers thirst for non-fossil-fuel-based biodiesel is causing rainforest deforestation throughout Indonesia, because of the increased demand for palm oil.

Even humans interactions with their own kind fail to live up to the definition of “civilization”. The human race has taken the idea of “evolution” in directions that Darwin never could have predicted, choosing to continue to leave the physical realm to the mercy of medieval feudal fiefdoms, while focusing on evolving the mutant offspring of their own misguided attempts at godhood. Corporations and “financial instruments” take on life, procreating through phallic 1s and yonic 0s in their digital primordial ooze. No wonder the late great comedian, Bill Hicks called humanity “just a virus - with shoes...”

“Okay, Captain Bringdown,” you say, “but I’m just trying to get by here!” You are doing the best that you can. We all are. What is an under-employed hipster with an over-extended credit card to do? More rushing ahead just seems to get us where we are right now. Perhaps it’s time for a lateral move.

Instead of sending new technology to the “developing world”, let’s look at the adaptation strategies that the 3rd world has adopted to survive the foreign technology onslaught. What we can learn? Let’s dumpster-dive our culture and see what the corpratocracy has left behind. Let’s make something new out of the empty vacu-form plastic package that they sold you your life in.

Let’s embrace the Obsolete.