

Introduction

Bruce LaBruce 2008

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Cast your mind back, if you dare, to a time before the Internet, when you actually had to put pen to paper, buy a stamp, lick an envelope, walk to the post office, and mail your musings or drawings or manifestos to other like-minded individuals in equally isolated areas around the globe, impatiently waiting weeks, sometimes months, for something in return to validate your obsessions. That's how perverse the fanzine world was, and it goes a long way toward explaining the plaintive, intense, and yearning quality of many of these historical artifacts. DIY wasn't just a philosophy, it was a necessity. You had a day job so that you could afford to produce your own fanzine or band or music label, and you used any available means—Kinko's, the local bookstore, the mail—to get it out there. You were probably a punk, so you had very strong notions about nonconformity, aesthetic terrorism, and revolution. You believed intensely in what you were doing, and a political consciousness was de rigueur.

How quickly things change. When my comrades and I started making fanzines and Super-8 movies in the eighties, the corporate regulation of dissent seemed more like science fiction than the harsh reality that it has become. We operated outside of corporate media control, avoiding censure by staying underground, and, more importantly, by evading the kind of self-censorship that the new regimes of social networking—MySpace, YouTube, etc.—encourage. There was a militancy and a political urgency to what we were doing, whether it be railing against the dominant ideology or the gay establishment or any other ruling class that tried to dismiss us: the misfits, the sissies, the plague-ridden faggots.

Our revolution was brewed in lipstick-stained take-out coffee containers, overflowing ashtrays, cockroach infested slum houses, and deserted twenty-four-hour Kinko's. It was a romantic insurgency in a paper cup that could use a proper comeback.