

HOW ZINE IS YOUR VALLEY?

The first Euzine Comics & Zine Fest comes to Eugene

In a coffeehouse downtown, local artist Alida Bevirt cradles a box in her arms like a delicate fawn. Setting the box on the table, she lovingly pulls out its papery contents: zine after zine after zine. She picks up one wrapped in protective plastic — *Apocalypse Dad* by Olympia artist Taylor Dow — and more follow, feathering out across the table in all sizes and colors, some as tiny as a matchbook, others larger, bound and glossy.

Joining Bevirt are fellow zine enthusiasts Jamie Walsh and Aaron Sullivan; Sullivan has created his own zine series, *Tectonic Jelly*. The trio, along with a few other artists and zinesters, has organized the inaugural (and free) Euzine Comics & Zine Fest Nov. 12 at the Broadway Commerce Center downtown.

They want to build up Eugene's own zine community. Half-joking about this maiden voyage, Bevirt wonders, "Does Eugene know what a zine is?"

It's a reasonable question; the historically underground DIY booklets are perfectly suited to this crafty corner of the PNW, a stone's throw from the birthplace of the legendary riot grrrl zines.

Yet what defines the medium seems up for grabs these days.

Some say zines must be handwritten, illustrated and published (traditionally photocopied and stapled) by one person, who in turn gives them away, trades them or sells them for peanuts. Others say they can be collaborative works, sent off to a publishing house or online printer.

Perhaps the line that distinguishes a zine from say, a magazine, is fuzzy because the art form is having a moment in mainstream culture, more than 80 years after the medium got its start with sci-fi fanzines.

Take Travel Portland. The slick tourism nonprofit up I-5 recently tapped a bunch of local "zine celebs" to produce zines to promote Portland. Travel Portland distributed them around the Pacific Northwest for free, with titles like *A Feminist's Guide to Beer Drinking* and *Unsung Food Trucks*.

Then there's Kim Kardashian's husband, who this summer started selling an \$80 "editorial zine" to promote his Yeezy fashion line.

"That's a very touchy subject for a lot of people," Gina Murrell tells *EW*. Murrell is a local librarian with a passion for zines dating back 20 years, to her first festival in New York City. She will be volunteering at Euzine.

To Murrell, Kanye West's project or, for example, fast-fashion goliath H&M's 2015 *Amped* "zine," are not zines. She says publications like these violate the DIY, low-production, low-budget and highly personal zine ethos.

"It's marketing," Murrell says. Zines are "not meant to be commercial."

Not to worry, you won't see much corporate co-opting at Euzine, which will host more than 50 regional artists including Alex Wrekk, founder of the Portland Zine Symposium, and former Eugenean (now Seattleite) Rosie Locke, creator of the *Lone Operator*.

The idea for Euzine came after Locke and Bevirt attended the Olympia Comics Festival this summer in Washington, falling hard for the inclusive community that values self-expression.

"We left that day feeling absolutely euphoric," Bevirt recalls. On the train home, Bevirt texted Sullivan, Walsh and the rest of the group, declaring it was time to start Eugene's own event.

"I always wanted an independent festival" for Eugene, adds Sullivan, who first came across the medium while leafing through the zine rack at Powell's Books. Walsh has traveled to fests across the country, from Seattle to Chicago.

As far as a zine's contents go, there really are no rules, though unfiltered self-expression — whether witty or heartbreaking — is a common fixture.

Sullivan explains that zines were born from a media landscape of censorship and gatekeepers. "People didn't see what they wanted to see, so they created their own," he says.

And while there are certainly parallels between zines and the proliferation of blogs and alt media in the internet age, zines remain popular, Sullivan says, because they are a tactile piece of art that you can touch and take with you.

"People want to turn the page," Sullivan says.



ILLUSTRATION BY: AARON SULLIVAN



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Euzine Comics and Zine Fest runs 11 am to 6 pm at the Broadway Commerce Center, 44 W. Broadway; FREE. For more info, visit Euzinefest.com.