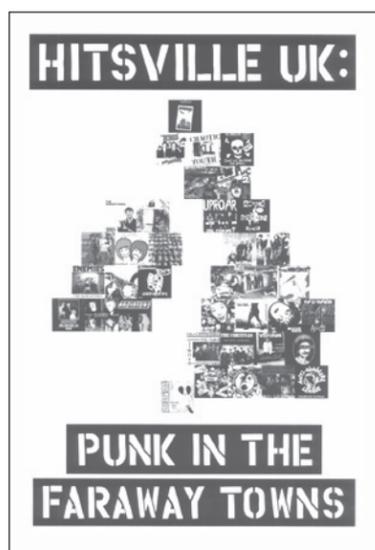


Comic & Zine Reviews

Mark Pawson



Hitsville UK: Punk in the Faraway Towns is an examination of the UK's punk music boom from 1976 to 1984 which avoids the usual clichés and stereotypes. Instead of concentrating on the Sex Pistols, The Clash and The Damned triumvirate as recent publications have tended to do, old punk, lecturer and graphic designer Russell Bestley aims to focus attention on the groundswell of punk bands, including all the uncelebrated provincial punks and none-hit wonders. This booklet and three-poster package examines punk via 7 inch picture sleeves. At the time most chart singles came in plain sleeves with record company logos. Picture sleeves were initially a sales gimmick, but punk bands quickly seized the opportunity to create bold, colourful, eye-catching sleeve designs giving a flavour of the exuberant music inside and picture sleeves quickly became *de rigeur*.

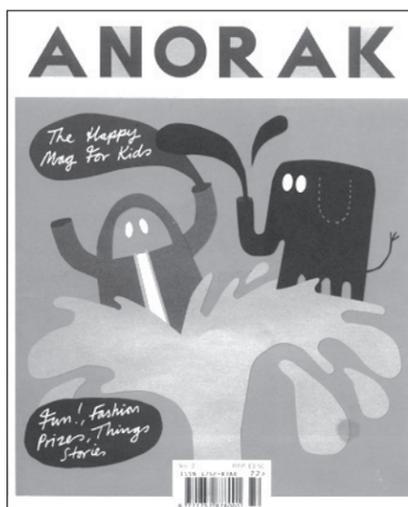
One side of the posters has a gallery of singles' sleeves; put these up at home and you'll instantly recreate the atmosphere of a late-'70s/early-'80s independent record shop. You'll be transported back to Saturdays spent gazing up at walls festooned with record sleeves knowing you wanted all of them but had enough pocket money for just one single and the bus fare home. The reverse side of these posters joins up to make an enormous punkiodic table: a graph with tiny pictures of hundreds of single sleeves mapped out by release date and geographic location. Most 40-/50-somethings will find this completely absorbing, poring over the posters for hours mentally ticking off all the bands you saw and records you bought. The wealth of information on the posters (the result of many hours of research and scouring eBay) is accompanied by a booklet which covers all possible categories of UK punk, with succinct articles on each: Proto Punk, Pub Rock, New Wave, Novelty Rock, DIY, Post Punk, the Avant Garde, Oi, Street Punk, Real Punk, New Punk, Hardcore and Anarcho Punk – labels which might seem blurred and irrelevant now, but which were fiercely argued and fought over at the time.

This is an excellent package of nostalgia-inducing historical research, all for the doing-it-for-the-kids price of £3.50 – echoing the “pay no more than 99p” slogan that certain punk bands always printed on their records.

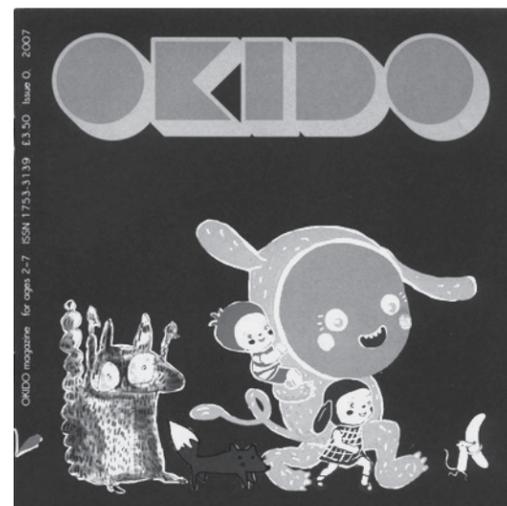
Hitsville UK: Punk in the Faraway Towns accompanied an exhibition in May at Millais Gallery, Southampton, but Russell Bestley is looking for other venues for the exhibition to tour to, particularly in faraway towns.



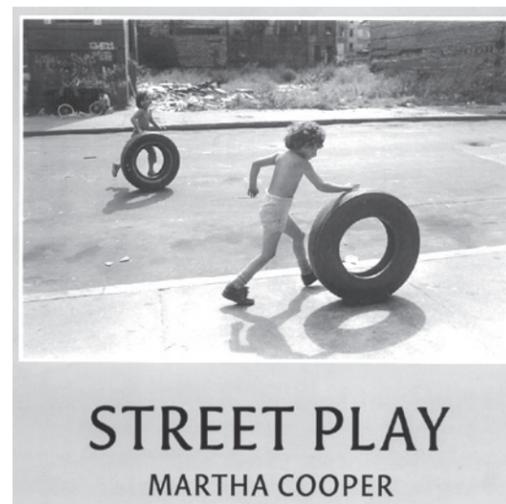
Duke is a glossy, full-color, lifestyle magazine – if your chosen lifestyle is that of an '80s obsessed Australian charity shop addict! Put together by the hyperenergetic duo of Raquel Welch and Emily Hunt (yes, really), it's a 64 page glimpse into their world of glamour on a budget, outrageous dressing up, dance-offs, crazy theme parties and extreme devotion to duty in the cause of scouring Sydney's charity shops. There's interviews with extreme hoarders; chats with grannies in the street; a scary article on stoner style; Raquel & Emily's A-Z of collecting, a four page guide to their museum-like apartment which I can personally very strongly identify with; a “We live here so you don't have to” guide to every shop and restaurant in their local scuzzy neighbourhood of Parramatta Road; and a feature on Lady Di's hats, frilly frocks and pregnancy dresses! Plus plenty of contributions by their artist and illustrator friends, and an all too familiar guide to “Things that ruin our lives in opshops” (trans. ‘charity shops’): the endless who-would-ever-even-wanted-that-when-it-was-new items that pointlessly clutter up charity shops creating obstacles and making the hardcore thrifter's mission to find the good stuff harder. After reading **Duke** I was exhausted and needed a little rest. There have been charity/thrift shopping zines before, but with **Thrift Score** and **Cheap Date** both now defunct, Raquel & Emily have inherited the ill-fitting, slightly scratched charity shopping zine queen crown.



There's a new wave of magazines for kids around. I picked up bright, eye-catching copies of **Anorak** and **Okido** recently. They're both crammed full of things to make, do, draw, colour, eat and read/get your parents to read to you. These two independently produced mags are refreshingly free of any TV series spin offs or licensed characters. **Okido** is completely advert free. **Anorak** which is the same price with twice as many pages has lot of ads, but they're aimed at parents rather than kids themselves and there's several competitions with good prizes, so that kind of balances things out.



Neither is overtly educational, worthy or preachy, and they don't even say “After you've finished enjoying this magazine please recycle it”. Perhaps kids just recycle things automatically these days? I prefer the clearer layout of **Okido**, which is aimed at ages 2-7. **Anorak** is aimed at older children, more like 6-11, and at times gets a bit too illustratory (artists not software) for my liking (sorry Rob). Beware: there's a photo-strip story in **Anorak** about a stuffed toy bear pissing himself with excitement!



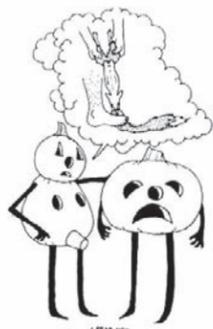
Martha Cooper is best known for her photographs capturing the very early days of the New York Hip Hop and Graffiti scene. As a staff photographer for a New York newspaper in the late '70s she spent all day criss-crossing Manhattan to cover news stories. In quiet moments whilst waiting for assignments to come through she headed down to photograph everyday life in the squalid Lower East Side. **Street Play** is a collection of her previously unpublished photos of kids playing in the streets of New York – tiny, scruffy, kids making the dirty sidewalks, debris-strewn empty lots and abandoned buildings their playground: building dens, racing go-carts, cobbling together customised bikes from scavenged parts, and improvising fairground rides. It's a fascinating and fun document of a New York that no longer exists, and two seemingly opposite, incompatible elements of big city and small kids interacting free of any adult supervision. Sesame Street it is not! A few of my favourite photos: a small boy and girl concentrating intently on the task of catching flies in pop bottles, making their own mini zoo of imprisoned insects; a group of young entrepreneurs setting up their own ‘bar’ on the pavement using empty beer bottles and playing at being drunk; a gang of pre-teen Latino lads defiantly posing, displaying their rifles made out of broken pieces of wood and bits of string. Meeting these street kids was Martha Cooper's introduction to the emerging Hip Hop/Graffiti culture, and her work documenting that world are acknowledged classics, but for me **Street Play** is a much more interesting and enjoyable book. File next to Nils Norman's **An architecture of Play: A Survey of London's Adventure Playgrounds**.

Tour De Fence is a different approach to using the city as your playground. Heath Bunting and Kayle Brandon took a map of their home town, Bristol, and drew a large circle on it. Then, having remapped the city to suit themselves, set out to walk through Bristol following the circle as precisely as possible, going over underpasses, scaling walls and walking along fences where necessary. **Tour De Fence** is a book and set of too-

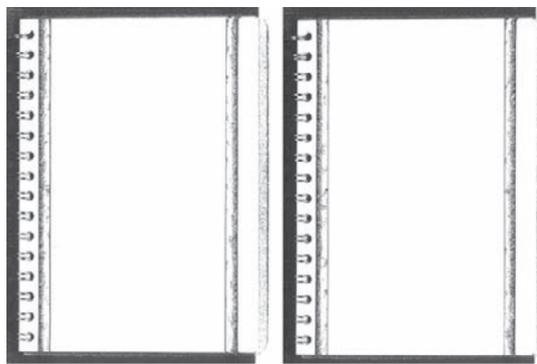
nice-to-tear-out postcards documenting this action which successfully blends urban exploration and civil disobedience. The kids in **Street Play** don't need any encouragement to make up their own games, but as adults we forget how to play purely for its own sake. **Tour De Fence** encourages us to start playing again by turning the city into a free playground and playing with no particular goal or aim in sight. Simultaneously, it engages with pertinent issues of increasing surveillance and control of public space, and the policing and control of state borders. I'm reviewing a printed publication here but should mention that Heath Bunting's projects exist both online and on the streets of the real world; both spheres feeding into and informing each other.



I picked **Tour De Fence** up at **Here** in Bristol. **Here** is a small, collectively run shop with a gallery downstairs. They sell a great selection of carefully chosen, independently produced magazines, zines, comics, books, cards and badges from the UK and US, together with gig tickets, prints by Bristol artists, and handicrafts from local Craft Rebels. They've even managed to squeeze in a sofa to encourage comfy browsing and are just round the corner from the Cube Cinema Microplex, forming their very own cultural hub.



Foie Gras by Edie Fake is a psycho-sexual, pumpkin-carving, gender-reassigning, (s)witch-hitting, castration-fantasizing, fox-fucking, fairytale-cookbook, complete with an invitingly tactile screen printed cover which is perforated front and back with inviting openings.

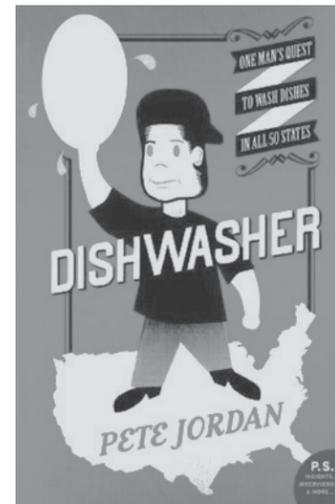


An envelope crammed full of nearly-impossible-to-describe comic booklets is a reviewer's nightmare – thanks go to Malcolm Duff for making this bad dream come true. **I Can't Draw** is a graphic meditation in which the artist repeatedly re-draws a set of goal posts in his notebook. Each successive drawing improves incrementally in quality and detail. Throughout this task he's repeatedly interrupted by a teacher towering over him, chiding "You're holding your pencil the wrong way" and offering helpful sounding but useless advice, such as how to hold a tennis racquet correctly. The artist gradually emerges from under his protective mane of shaggy hair and using the pencil as his weapon nullifies this overbearing authority figure by redrawing and reducing him to a simple diagram.



I discovered **Your Mum** buried in a slush pile of gig and club flyers in a branch of FOPP! It's a pocket-sized freebie crammed full of unfeasibly stupid stories: Noel Edmonds to buy Buck House; Winners Thinner ('Michael' and 'paint'); and updated personalised number plates (SUV TW8T, BL1NG SP4Z, F4T 2 J4G5). It's a pisstake of all those supermarket sleaze sheets and mid-market celeb-filled tabloids which everyone reads but nobody admits to buying; fertile sources for satire which have been well explored by **Viz**, **Bugs'n'Drugs** and **Hate**. Yes, it's still very silly. Yes, it's still very funny. **Your Mum** thoughtfully includes the list of your rights when arrested – maximum stupidity with helpful legal advice! I assumed **Your Mum** was just another one of those pseudozines that's really trying to sell alcohol/sweeties/clothes/

entertainment industry product to 18-25 yr-olds, but, unless I've been completely fooled, there's no product placement, not even a subtly placed website address. Maybe all those recent 'viral' marketing campaigns have infected each other with a deadly advert-flu and wiped themselves out?



Dishwasher Pete's classic **Dishwasher** zine combined his tales of dishwashing wanderlust and menial job madness together with articles on labour history and reviews of dishwashing in books and movies. It's long been out of print and unavailable, so I was excited to find out yesterday that his book **Dishwasher: One Man's Quest to Wash Dishes in All Fifty States** has just come out. I haven't seen a copy yet, but I'm sure it's good and will be indispensable. Published by Harper, it should be quite easy to get hold of. File next to other classic zine compilations: **the Temp Slave Book**, **Thrift Score book** and **Beer Frame book**.

Notes

Hitsville UK: Punk in the Faraway Towns – £3.50+postage; russwyd@hotmail.com

Duke – www.huntandwelch.com

Anorak – £3.50; www.anorak-magazine.com

Okido – £3.50; www.okido.uk www.myspace.com/okido

Street Play – £19.99; www.fromheretofame.com

Tour de Fence – £5.00; www.irational.org/fence

Here – 108 Stokes Croft, Bristol, BS1 3RU; 0117 942 2222

Foie Gras – \$2 + postage; ediefake@hotmail.com

I Can't Draw, and many other titles – malcyduff@hotmail.com

Your Mum – ???

Dishwasher: One Man's Quest to Wash Dishes in All Fifty States – Pete Jordan, Harper Perennial