

Brainwashed - Nigel Ayers, "Network News"

Written by Justin Patrick

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My reading habits are especially flippant, in that I flip through the pages of books in no prescribed order. Since I am usually engaged in reading multiple books at one time, things can get confusing. I have since given up for the most part, trying to read books in any kind of order, but just open them up at random and start with whatever interests me, except if they are fiction where a linear read is generally (but not always) necessary to get the story. More often than not when I open up to a random page I find something that is extremely relevant for me personally.

Network News

is perfect for this kind of divinatory reading.

[Earthly Delights](#)

Originally *Network News* was a 'zine featuring contributions from various authors associated with the Nocturnal Emissions project. Distributed by Earthly Delights between 1990 and 1999, it spanned 14 issues. For those who didn't receive the original transmissions in the mail, or for people who want a fresh copy Nigel Ayers kindly assembled all the material together in a trade paperback book weighing in at close to 350 pages. While a few documents had to be removed for legal reasons, most remain intact; and tactfully Nigel preserved the original feel of the 'zine with its blotchy typefaces, smeared and at times overly darkened black and white pictures, even the outdated addresses and contact information.

Reading through the listings for other old 'zines and distros recalled my own initial excitement when I first discovered the world of photocopied fan literature when I was in junior high, eagerly awaiting the mail each day for things I'd sent off for. Some of the names in this compilation are now well known, like *Factsheet Five*, and an ad for the original print version of *Boing Boing* before it became the online phenomenon it is today. Others like

Occulture

,
Spiral Scratch

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, and

Raw Vision

will have by now languished into obscurity, due to the limited print runs and networked distribution methods, though I am sure many have been preserved by their creators, stacked in yellowing piles with other paper fragments from the halcyon days of mail art and culture. It is important to remember how these kinds of publications supported and bred the growth of underground and independent music, art, writing, culture, and the alternate lifestyles. Fanzines were a common denominator among punk rockers, science fiction freaks, queers, and activists on the radical left. Seeking out information written by people who had bypassed by the gatekeepers to the print trade was an engaging process. Reading a new 'zine, perhaps picked up at a show, often felt like being given the keys to a kingdom. New doors were opened and new ideas were tested out as like minds mingled together.

'Zines that lasted longer than a few issues generally developed and grew their own quirky style and personality. *Network News* was no different. The material in its pages is certainly of a different wavelength than even most other Xeroxed literature. For the fan of Nocturnal Emissions the collection of writings offers further clues to the ideas back of the music, and helps to glue some recurring motifs in Nigel's work together. For instance, the frequent reports on cryptozoological anomalies in Cornwall written about here as "Beast God News," are taken up musically in the album *Invocation of the Beast Gods*. There are also a few interviews with Nigel. Other interviews are with the likes of Muslimgauze, Zoviet France, John Waterman and Walter Alter.

A casual glance through the book may lead a person to construe the texts as conspiratorial screeds. It purports knowledge of the occult powers of money, and shows how supermarket transactions are actually a part of a solar ritual. The cult surrounding Princess Diana is examined and analyzed. It tells you how to "Use Techniques of Raw Sex and Gun Worship to decode the Mystery of the Runes," showing off Nigel's wry humor. Some of his short funny fictions are also included, making up the majority of the last issue. Another issue is dedicated to the landscape zodiacs in Cornwall, an interest that finds its culmination in the activities and workings chronicled in [The Bodmin Moor Zodiac](#). The entire collection packs quite a wallop, and is a perfect companion for a long commute, a rainy evening at home, or in bed to get the juices flowing before sleep.