

WRITING WITHOUT LIMITS: 20 YEARS OF ABOVE/GROUND PRESS



The literature business is a long, hard game, according to Rob McLennan, the founder of the Ottawa-based indie lit press above/ground. "The biggest thing I've learned as a writer, editor, publisher and all the rest has to be the combination of patience and persistence. Both are rewarded in time." His persistence and passion will be celebrated this August, when above/ground turns 20.

In the early '90s, McLennan had already been writing for a few years, and was serving as a co-editor for *The Carleton Arts Review*. He was part of a small network of people who traded poetry, but he noticed a gap.

"Wandering through the library stacks at the University of Ottawa Library, I saw a number of small press publications produced over the years in other places, and thought, why can't that happen here?" he recalls. Later, he became the co-organizer of Ottawa's TREE Reading

Series, and published a few event-specific chapbooks.

After producing more chapbooks under various press names, he published the first above/ground press books in 1993. He began with an anthology of 40 poets and a chapbook by David Collins. From those first two titles, above/ground has gone on to produce more than 675 publications, including chapbooks, broadsides and various magazines and journals. Above/ground poet Cameron Anstee — who runs his own small press, Apt. 9, out of Ottawa — notes that he's already received "at least eight" chapbooks only a few months into his 2013 subscription — and there's lots more yet to come.

Production has always deliberately stayed simple — photocopy, fold and staple — so that a percentage of each print run can be given away. "I like the idea of small books that I can hand directly to

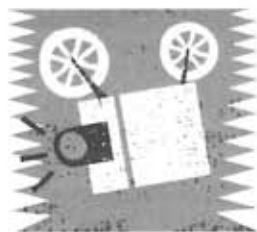
people, face to face. It makes literature more immediate," says McLennan.

While McLennan does take open submissions, he solicits most publications directly, both from experienced and emerging writers.

"Being solicited rather than submitting and waiting makes one feel that someone is reading and that someone cares. This is especially valuable to young writers," says Anstee. "There is an openness to the press, a spaciousness that makes room for disparate and varied voices. Above/ground is inclusive, not exclusive," adds poet and independent curator Gil McElroy.

Though above/ground has been publishing for two decades, it doesn't feel like it to McLennan. "It doesn't even feel like half that," he says. "I told myself moons ago that I would continue this until it is no longer fun. I don't see that changing." (Nico Mara-McKay)

REWIND MOVIE REVIEWS



Filmage: The Story of the Descendents/All

Dir. Deedle LaCour and Matt Riggle,
filmagemovie.com

Filmage follows a more-or-less chronological order, tracking the beginnings of the Descendents in Manhattan Beach, California, and the fateful inclusion of the nerdy, studious Milo Aukerman, who has since gone down in history as one of the most beloved "anti-frontmen" of punk rock. Above all else, the band's close, respectful

and even loving relationship comes through in spades, and it's this obvious warmth that truly gives *Filmage* its heart. (Alison Lang)

The Punk Singer

Dir. Sini Anderson,
thepunksinger.com

Kathleen Hanna is, among other things, the oft-cited driving force behind the feminist punk movement Riot Grrrl. In 80 minutes, director Sini Anderson — a friend of Hanna — lets Hanna tell her story of being a feminist in a male dominated music scene, the weirdness of falling in love and marrying Beastie Boy Adam Horovitz and becoming an activist for a mysterious illness that caused her to lose the power over her own body. Above all, this documentary is compelling because it is the story of an incredibly charismatic, passionate and fascinating person. (Lindsay Gibb)

Occupy: The Movie

Dir. Corey Ogilvie,
occupythemovie.com

When Occupy started in 2011, the mainstream media's typical complaint was that no one really knew what the protests were about. Using a chapter structure, this smart documentary proves that there are very real reasons behind the movement, including the "toxic relationship between big business, media and [the] government," bank bail outs and the rich-get-richer formula. Rather than look at the chronology of the movement from Wall Street to the world, the director focuses more closely on its beginnings, the reasons it continues to exist, and how, like the civil rights movement, many of the founders of Occupy may not live to see the change come, but they make sacrifices to help forward it anyway. (Lindsay Gibb)