

October 21, 2008

Media Release – Ampersand Magazine

'Edition Zero', the first issue of the new literary quarterly, Ampersand Magazine, has been released in stores in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth.

Launches –

Melbourne: Thursday October 30 Wardlow Gallery, 4 Wood St Fitzroy 6pm

Sydney: Thursday November 6 Pigeon Ground, 102 Salisbury Rd Camperdown 6pm

Ampersand Magazine is a response to the desperate need for an innovative publishing endeavour in this country, with glossy fashion stalwarts on one side and business old guards on the other, providing a meagre cultural diet in comparison to that offered in the US or Europe.

Speaking at the National Young Writers Festival in early October, founding editor Alice Gage discussed the motivation for Ampersand.

"I realised that the publications available that discussed cultural, political and artistic concepts were clearly for an older audience – you can tell by the Lexis ads. In my research I also found that young people are reading these publications in scores: last year 42% of *Monthly* readers were under 35. Young people want their minds filled rather than their pockets emptied. So I thought I'd give it a crack."

The result was Ampersand, a self titled 'curiosity journal', made possible by an Australia Council grant. Its hugely diverse content in the varied formats of columns, essays, short-fiction, creative non-fiction, poetry, illustration, interviews and visual art places it somewhere between *The New Yorker*, *Oz Magazine* and *Art Monthly*. Playful and serious, nerdy and sexy, Ampersand is a new type of magazine that will find fans in a diverse range of readers and art lovers.

The first issue, Edition Zero, is a testament to the 25-year-old's vision for a publication that would treat readers to content curated with a hybrid sensibility of academia and popular culture. Visually exemplifying this aim is the design of the magazine, which uses the geeky aesthetic of a second-hand Penguin Classic; its iconic orange colouration and Futura typeface, with an artwork by anarchist street artist Tom Civil seamlessly integrated on its front cover, and the bright juxtaposition of a psychedelic multi-coloured collage of an intergalactic chocolate donut health spa on its back cover.

A glance at the contents and contributors pages further gives away her success in achieving this vision. The Drones frontman Gareth Liddiard answers one of the 1960 Oxford Men's College entrance exam questions. A former diplomat to Sri Lanka writes on the secret history of Tamarama Gully in Sydney. A speechwriter for Hillary Clinton speaks on the topic of political tokenism. Much-loved children's entertainer Peter Combe imparts advice about making music for kids. The secretary of the Dry Stone Wall Association explains why the practice is not a man's world. A theatre maker writes an erotic fan fiction piece about a tryst between two prominent Australian film critics. A PhD student presents a scholarly essay on filth. An anarchist discusses the custom and etymology of networking. And this is but a snapshot of the written content.

The art, jutting out like devil's marbles on a 24-page full colour section, exhibits the work of three young artists, including the creator of the back cover alongside a traditional figurative painter, and an absurd photographic comic strip featuring Melbourne's marvellous junkyard theatre impresario's Suitcase Royale.

And with all of Melbourne's four stockists selling out in less than a month of it appearing on the shelves, it seems that those hungry readers have already found this unique, intelligent, independent publication – and they're telling their friends.

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