

## **Survival Scrapbooks**

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The Survival Scrapbooks are a series of six books published in the early-1970s covering different aspects of autonomous living from a practical perspective. Several authors contributed to the series, often with additional input from others. The titles in the series, and their authors, were:

volume 1: Shelter, 1972 - Stefan Szczelkun

contents: different forms of wild, mobile, or simple-to-build accommodation including caves, hand-made tents, wooden huts, and vans.

volume 2: Food, 1972 - Stefan Szczelkun

contents: ways of harvesting rainwater, small-scale farming, poaching, growing mushrooms, as well as advice on nutrients and different forms of diet, and fresh air as food.

volume 3: Access to Tools, 1973 - Dave Williams and Stephanie Munro

contents: a directory of books, resources, organisations and where to buy tools for farming, building, publishing etc. Each entry includes some small example of useful information to illustrate it.

volume 3 1/2: Play: Ways and Means, 1973 - Pauline Vincent and Ann Winn

contents: different play and self-made learning activities "for kids, parents, teachers, anybody". These include textile and paper making but also recycling junk, basic photography and electronics and, according to the subject listing, the "mastery of elegant insults".

volume 4: Paper Houses, 1974 - Roger Sheppard, Richard Threadgill, and John Holmes

contents: a detailed instruction guide to building geodesic domes from paper and cardboard, including how to make the paper.

volume 5: Energy - Stefan Szczelkun

contents: various DIY energy systems such as wind turbines, waterwheels, bio-gas, and home-built solar panels, but also a section on psychic energies. Includes maps of naturally available energy sources (such as wind, water, wood) in Britain and the States.

The books were published by the Unicorn Bookshop in Brighton, with some titles re-printed in the States by Shocken. It started as an ongoing project and other titles were planned, such as one on squatting, one on communications and publishing, and one called "Cracks in the Earth" on what to do when "attacked by teenage vampires from Outer Space" amongst other things.

The styles of the different authors vary, as do the format of the books. Szczelkun's titles were all published with punch-holes in the pages so they could be removed from their cover and combined with other material in a ring-binder. The sections are each printed in a different coloured ink (purple, blue, red, brown, orange, etc) with a coloured strip and graphic icon in each outer edge to make it easy to flick through and find stuff. The texts are hand-written and a variety of different visual styles are used in the illustrations, including drawings by Clifford Harper, photographs, Victorian etchings and newspaper clippings. "Access To Tools" follows the format of the Whole Earth Catalogue, lots of compact boxes of information on each page a bit like the classified adds in a newspaper. This also has page-holes for a ring-binder. The other two books depart from this. "Paper Houses" is more like a conventional instruction manual with step-by-step diagrams and photographs, whilst "Play" is printed in landscape format typical of school activity-books at that

time, although it is also the most visually intense with tons of drawings, photographs and pasted texts cramming the pages.

The scrapbook idea and ring-binder format utilises a particular form of information system that has a loose structure, and is intended to be re-edited. As such it is typical of many of the experiments with the book format that were explored in its day, and which led towards some of the structures that now characterise online publication, such as the Wiki. Classic examples of such texts are Ted Nelson's "Computer Lib" (1974 and 1975), Marvin Minsky's "Society of Mind" (from early 1970's onwards), and the Whole Earth Catalogue (1968 - 1998). Whilst volume 3, "Access to Tools" is clearly a British version of the Whole Earth Catalogue - its title is the slogan from the Catalogue's cover - there is also a shared set of themes between the Catalogue and the Scrapbooks as a whole: both share a strong influence of Buckminster Fuller's ideas, evident in themes such as knowledge as a tool, social-ecological systems, shelter, energy, and geodesic domes. In this sense they are equivalent US and British statements of early-1970's counterculture and alternative living. They differ in that most of the Scrapbooks provide more detailed explorations of particular topics, rather than general compendiums of knowledge. They also differ in terms of their textual archaeologies.

The Whole Earth Catalogue occupies a strata resting on 1960's radicalism, cybernetics and the emergence of the modern ecological movements, and is then layered-over by the rise of digital culture and the internet. The Survival Scrapbooks share much of this, but are also mixed in with fragments and shards of other discourses. The three books that Szczelkun worked on grew out of a period of living nomadically in a van (advice on which is given in volume 1: "Shelter"). Prior to this he had been involved in several collective projects, beginning with a version of Jim Haynes' Art Lab that he initiated whilst studying architecture at Portsmouth Polytechnic, followed by the Scratch Orchestra in London, and then the EarthWorkshop in Wales which accompanied his work on the Scrapbooks. Later, he went on to be involved in squatting and self-build projects in London, the Brixton Artist's Collective, Mail Art projects, set up Working Press, which published early texts by Matthew Fuller and Graham Harwood amongst others, and was part of the Exploding Cinema group [1]. Pauline Vincent and Ann Winn, authors of volume 3 1/2: "Play", were members of the Froebel Institute, an institute for training teachers based on the theories of Friedrich Froebel who was an early proponent of learning through play and activity, in which knowledge is a tactile experience [2]. This principle of learning through doing, of knowledge through action, is at the forefront of the Scrapbooks. Whereas the Whole Earth Catalogue provided a 'store' of knowledge tools, the Survival Scrapbooks is perhaps more a set of knowledge practices, ones which involve making your own tools:

"After you have changed it and made it work for your needs; GET OUT; make yourself a reality. Then tell everybody else about how you did it." [3]

The Survival Scrapbooks present a form of distributive practice. A distributive practice can be understood as a "way of doing" that seeks to propagate the knowledge and resources through which it is generated, and which itself also generates, so that others may adopt and adapt it. The principle of distributiveness entails that the practice should be self-legitimizing, adoption of the practice should not be dependent on passing tests, acquiring certification or the approval of governing bodies. A distributive practice is not a doctrine or discipline, with a set of canonical principles to be adhered to, nor does it require institutional representation, such as an academic qualification, martial art, or religious practice might. It allows for unplanned future mutations and re-inventions rather than seeking to guard against them.

The Scratch Orchestra was a group formed around the composers Cornelius Cardew, Michael Parsons and Howard Skempton in 1969. It became a platform in which a diverse range of people from various backgrounds, including trained musicians, artists and those outside of institutional

arts, explored forms of collective improvisational music and performance. One of the main activities of the Orchestra were the creation of Scratch-books. Each member of the Orchestra kept their own Scratch-book which could be any kind of book (jotter, notebook, one member used a copy of the Radio Times) in which they produced their own experimental scores for performances - known as Scratch Music. The Scratch-books were representative of the general interest in new forms of musical notation that many composers were exploring in that time. Composers, such as John Cage, were trying to create forms of music that could not be expressed by conventional Western notation and so had turned to developing new notational systems to compose with, often inventing a new notation for each new piece of work. In the years leading up to the formation of the Scratch Orchestra, Cardew had produced a massive 200 page graphical score called "Treatise" which was his own attempt to exhaustively explore the creation of a musical practice that would "encourage improvisation" [4] through a new graphical language.

In today's terms, we might say that the Scratch-books were a way of turning the "Treatise" project over to a form of 'open source' development. The Scratch Orchestra employed a loose collaborative process of many individuals working in their own way towards a shared end. The analogy does not follow through entirely, Scratch-books were, on the whole, not exchanged between members, and there was little sense of incremental development or peer-review that exists in software development. As a form of authorship, however, certain parallels can be found: there was a conscious decision to keep Scratch-books unrestricted by copyright, and each score was seen as a possible accompaniment to another person's performance as well as a potential solo in its own right. This latter aspect can be compared to a common feature of Free and Open Source Software in that projects are frequently built as libraries that can be used as components in other projects ('accompaniments') as well as self-contained tools in their own right ('solos').

The contents of Scratch-books were hugely varied including adaptations of conventional music notation, abstract geometric shapes, flow diagrams, doodles, written instructions, and newspaper cuttings [5]. Although individuals were free to create scores in any manner they chose, the Scratch Orchestra's constitution, written by Cardew, defined how the production of Scratch-books fitted into the general practice of the Orchestra - members, for example, were advised to write no more than one piece per day [6]. This is one indicator of the internal conflicts and contradictions in the Scratch Orchestra which led to its break up in 1971. Although the Scratch Orchestra was loosely defined as an open platform, and a high degree of consensual autonomy between members was encouraged, there are many signs that Cardew looked upon it, perhaps unconsciously, as his own 'composition'. This is evident in aspects of the constitution and also in Cardew's own later criticisms of the Orchestra, in which he saw the spontaneous actions of some members, particularly a sub-group known as the Slippery Merchants of which Szczelkun was a part, as undermining the Scratch Orchestra project as a whole [7]. The demise of the Orchestra came when Cardew, under the encouragement of John Tilbury and Keith Rowe, began to apply Maoist ideological principles to the running of the group, which to many seemed like an attempt to assert authority over it thus leading to a split [8].

The conflicts in the Scratch Orchestra are possibly presaged in Cardew's working notes to "Treatise". In these he struggles with the potential contradictions of creating a definitive document, a music score, for an open-ended form of practice, improvisation. Cardew's desire to encourage improvisation is haunted by a fear of the arbitrary:

"The score must govern the music. It must have authority, and not merely be an arbitrary jumping-off point for improvisation, with no internal consistency." [9]

The issue of governance is not simply one of how things sound but rather of how people behave. For Cardew, notations do not describe sound directly, but rather suggest possible practices through

which sounds may emerge. In his references to Wittgenstein, "to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life", Cardew's reflections on Treatise and improvisation move towards seeing this in terms of social praxis. The transition from the solitary composer working on a score to an ensemble collectively generating many scores follows from this, as do, perhaps, the problems of governance that arose along with that.

As information structures, the Scratch-books and Scrapbooks come from two quite different traditions. The Scratch-books are explorations in response to issues of notation, the abstract, formalised encoding of practices of production, whilst the Scrapbooks can be related to the chapbook as described by Szczelkun in his later analyses of the Exploding Cinema booklets [10]. Chapbooks were a form of mass publication that were popular in the 18th Century. They combined a variety of textual styles and content including histories, songs, and disparate types of artwork. Chapbooks were a part of both the popular and radical culture of their day, and are comparable to modern forms such as the fanzine. Notation and the chapbook can be related to James A. Scott's distinction between *techne* and *metis* as forms of knowledge practice [11]. He defines *techne* as a practice based around formal, abstract knowledge, and *metis* as one based around informal, situated, rule-of-thumb knowledge. The Scratch-books could be seen as an attempt to utilise *metis* in service of *techne*, whilst the Scrapbooks, in many ways do the opposite, appropriating *techne* in support of *metis*. Put another way, the Scratch Orchestra could be seen, from the perspective of Cardew's compositional interests, as an exploration of how to turn improvisational practice into formal knowledge, whilst the Scrapbooks seek to make aspects of formal knowledge available to improvisational practice. In both cases the improvisational is both an aesthetic and an ethic, social and artistic, but in the case of the Scrapbooks, the social potential is more clearly worked out and addressed, as Szczelkun was later to write: "aesthetics follows an integrity of action." [12] The aesthetics of the scrapbooks is not one of conventional artistic product, however, but one of survival, the sensuous appraisal of existence. It may be that the problems with the Scratch Orchestra, as Cardew saw them, came from an inability to match the contingencies of individual actions against the desired aesthetic integrity of notation and music as a communicative whole. In the Scrapbooks, the integrity of action arises, perhaps paradoxically, from the very un-integrated nature of the scrapbook format, one destined to fall apart and re-assemble in new unplanned-for structures. For the integrity of action in the Scrapbooks is the integrity of the distributive principle that underlines them:

"This is a guide to what is possible. The way to learn about these things is to do them. The way to change is through open action; so get out and do it, and let people know about it." [13]

## Notes

1. For Szczelkun's own analysis of his involvement in these different groups see his "Art Collectives: Exploding Cinema 1992 - 1999, culture and democracy", PhD thesis, 2002, available online at: <http://www.stefan-szczelkun.org.uk/>.
2. see Wikipedia entry on Friedrich Wilhelm August Fröbel, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Froebel>.
3. Stefan Szczelkun, 1972, *Survival Scrapbook 1: Shelter*, Brighton: Unicorn Bookshop, inside front cover.
4. Cornelius Cardew, 1974, *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*, p. 79, originally published by Latimer New Directions (London), available as an electronic document from <http://www.ubu.com/historical/cardew/cardew.html>.
5. A collection of examples from Scratch-books were published by Latimer New Directions in

1972, and later reprinted as: Cornelius Cardew, et al., 1974, *Scratch Music*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

6. The constitution is reproduced in the *Scratch Music* book.

7. For different views on the history and break up of the Scratch Orchestra see Cardew's self-criticism in "Stockhausen Serves Imperialism", Szczelkun's account in "Art Collectives" (<http://www.stefan-szczelkun.org.uk/phd102.htm>, and <http://www.stefan-szczelkun.org.uk/PHD-SCRATCH2.html>), John Tilbury's article on Cardew for the *Journal of Experimental Music Studies* (<http://www.users.waitrose.com/%7echobbs/tilburycardew.html>), and the films "Journey to the North Pole: Cornelius Cardew and the Scratch Orchestra", 1971, by Hanne Boenisch, and "Pilgrimage From Scattered Points", 2006, by Luke Fowler.

8. The break up of the Orchestra may also have been symptomatic of many of the problems that those experimenting with non-hierarchical collectives in this time experienced, such as discussed in Jo Freeman's "The Tyranny of Structurelessness", 1972, available online at: <http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm>.

9. Cornelius Cardew, 1971, *Treatise Handbook*, London: Edition Peters, p. iv.

10. part of "Art Collectives", <http://www.stefan-szczelkun.org.uk/phd701.htm>.

11. James C. Scott, 1998, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

12. Stefan Szczelkun, 1990, "Artists' Liberation", in *Class Myths and Culture*, London: Working Press, p. 28.

13. Stefan Szczelkun, 1972, *Survival Scrapbook 2: Food*, Brighton: Unicorn Bookshop, inside front cover.