

coalition

The magazine of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People

Coalition: The magazine of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People

May 2008

Price £3

THE GREAT UNDEAD



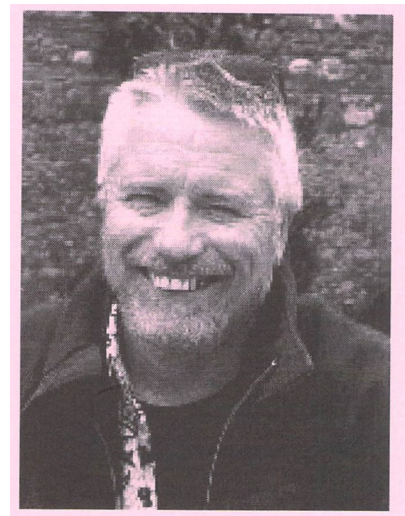
... a horror story with unfortunate implications!!

Plus quick on the draw...

An Interview With

Crippen

meet Dave Lupton, the man behind the laughter and the controversy



Also this issue: The Sting / Graeae Theatre's Static / Penny Pepper's Desires / The Skeleton in the Corner / Write To Reply / Cartoons, Poetry & more!

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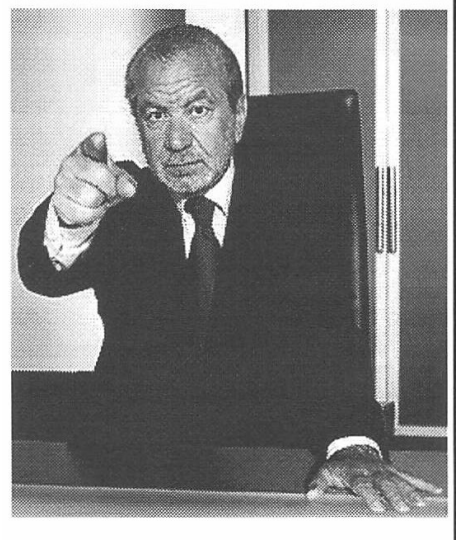
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What Do You Think?

Who was Sir Alan Sugar referring to when he was reported as describing someone as "Long John Silver's great-granddaughter"?

Answer on page 11



EDITORIAL COMMENT

I had to pinch myself frequently and ask am I really reading this article, 'Retraining our allies' by Andy Rickell of Scope in the April 2008 issue of 'Disability Now'. The substance of the article focused on introducing the concept of 'ally' as part of a strategy for disabled people to have choice and control in their lives. He says, "The word "ally" best summarises a new, positive role for people involved in disabled people's lives, where the parent, service-provider, professional, etc, supports the disabled person to maximise their choice and control and supports their putting their decisions into action. An "ally" is someone on your side, committed to your interests, who recognises and expands your autonomy." What is astonishing here and deeply patronizing, is his apparent belief that this idea is new when disabled people and their organisations have worked with allies for over thirty years.

For example, in the mid seventies (when disabled people only received grant monies to set up social clubs) in Greater Manchester we used facilities and administrative support of voluntary organisations like Councils for Voluntary Service when setting up groups campaigning around housing, transport and access. In supporting disabled people to leave (or stay out of) residential institutions we worked with architects, a doctor, housing associations and law centres.

In the early eighties when setting up GMCDP we received crucial support throughout from the Greater Manchester Council for Voluntary Service and from a key worker within the Council. Later in the eighties disabled people in Manchester and other nearby boroughs had support from local politicians and key local authority administrator's in making the most of the development of equal opportunity units.

In Derbyshire the involvement of allies was similarly extensive from the setting up of the ground breaking Grove Road Project to the development of the Centre for Integrated Living.

Whilst the extent and nature of support from allies may have changed in recent years at GMCDP it has nevertheless continued to have positive outcomes in the work of various projects.

Could it be that Andy Rickell is ignorant of this history? It's probably true that the involvement of allies in the development, growth, and work of organisations of disabled people has not been an issue of frequent analysis, debate or documentation, but it has been there to be observed, and we have had significant articles on the subject in this magazine. Moreover as Chief Executive Officer of the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP), a role he held prior to his move to Scope, situated him ideally to know of the workings and history of organisations of disabled people.

The article then moves on to justify Scope's involvement in Disability LIB (Listen, Include, Build), a capacity building project for disabled people's organisations (DPO's) in England which has received £4.2 million of lottery funding. Other organisations in LIB are the Alliance for Inclusive Education, Disability Awareness in Action, Equality National Council, People First, Preston Disc, and the United Kingdom Disabled People's Council (once known as BCODP). This project is viewed by Andy Rickell as an experiment, a sort of case study. He says, "The process of running this project, with Scope helping to lever DPO's into the driving seat, will provide a case study of how service providers can be corporate "allies" to disabled people."

The first flaw here is that allies don't impose themselves on others, they make themselves available. Moreover, if Scope are to carry out experiments in how to be an 'ally' you would have thought that priority would have been given to the major challenges which their own organisation presents rather than experimenting on organisations of disabled people..

The dilemma for those organisations of disabled people who are participating in this alliance was outlined by Mike Oliver and Colin Barnes in a recent 'Coalition'* when they said, "To collaborate too eagerly with the organisations for disabled people risks having our agendas taken over by them, and having them presented both to us and to politicians as

theirs. To remain aloof risks appearing unrealistic and/or unreasonable, and denies possible access to much needed resources'." It seems that the choice made here by organisations of disabled people was access to resources. However at a time when a number of organisations of disabled people have folded, and when others are struggling to exist due to lack of funding there's something distasteful about £4.4 million being cornered for a training project. It's a bit like offering cookery lessons to starving people.

* (Disability Politics and the Disability Movement in Britain: Where did it all go wrong by Mike Oliver and Colin Barnes, 'Coalition', August 2006.)

Ken Lumb

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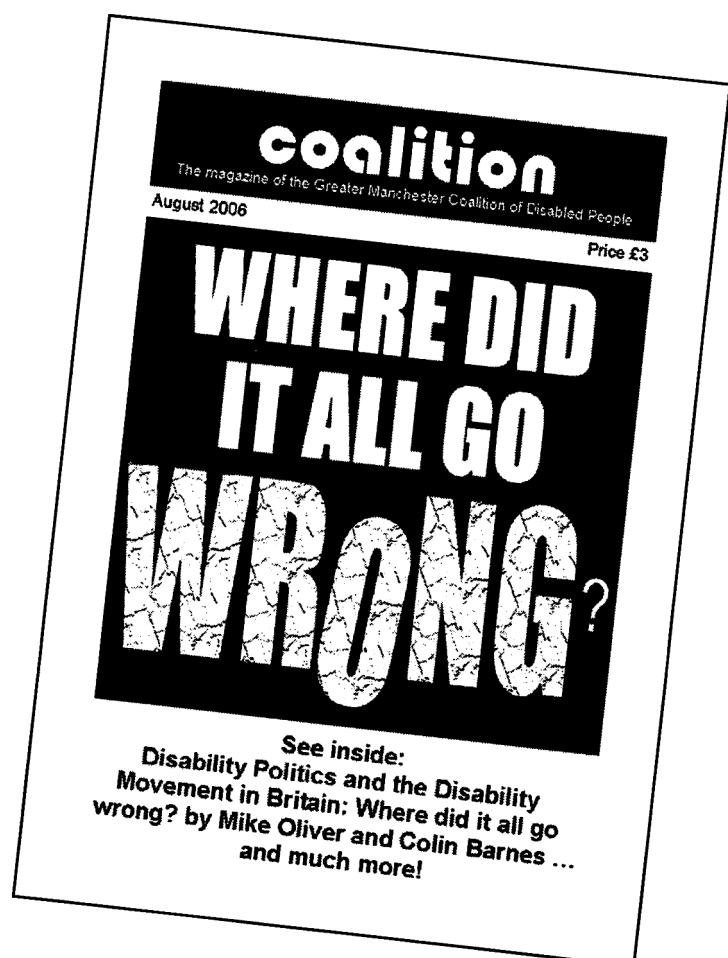
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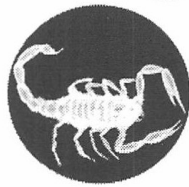
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The Sting



Work Sets You Free

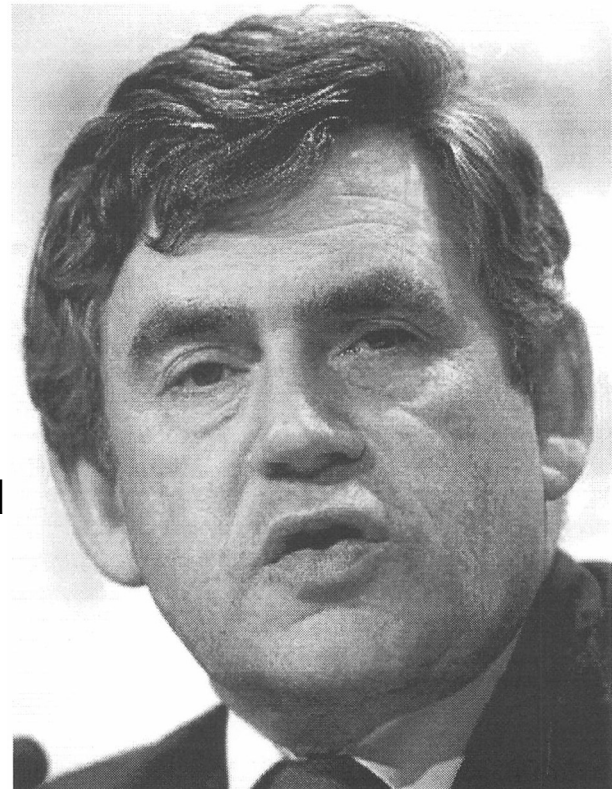
As he approaches his first anniversary as Prime Minister I hope that Gordon Brown takes the opportunity to reflect upon the incredible loss of popularity he has managed in such a short period of time.

Last autumn he was riding high in the polls and taking on every conceivable disaster that nature could throw at him.

The son of the Manse seemed to be unassailable; economic miracle worker, flood hero and not being Tony Blair - what more could be asked for!

Not so today. Critics point to the global credit crunch (or greedy bastard bankers) and a growing reputation for prevarication as the reason for the shocking stripping away of his perceived golden sheen. I think that there is another, more fundamental, reason for the fall in support - people are finally waking up to the fact that Gordon Brown is nothing more than an appalling bully.

I've never understood why people have had the view that Brown is some form of radical crusader for social justice and



Gordon Brown

equality. Ok I have to concede that he probably does care about child poverty, but you can't forget that he was as integral to the so-called "New Labour" project as Tony Blair.

In case you forget, the essence of "New Labour" is to court the support of Daily Mail-reading, middle-England. This explains the drive towards demonising benefits claimants and especially Incapacity Benefit claimants. Over the last few months there has been an awful auction in spite being conducted between Brown and Cameron; "I see your million scrounging, work-shy bastards and raise you another million".

Why not go the whole-hog and re-open the workhouse for the feckless, wastrels who undermine society.

Brown argues that it is a duty to contribute to society and that work offers the additional reward of self-respect. You can't argue with that. But what can be argued with is the threatening behaviour and the bullying that has underpinned many of the pronouncements of late. Over the last decade unprecedented numbers of disabled people have entered employment. Many, however, have equally found themselves being sacked, made redundant or forced out of work through inadequate support. The government's own research has also clearly demonstrated that many employers simply refuse to employ disabled workers. Instead of getting into the gutter to trade insults with the Tories it's time for Brown to put into practice the declared

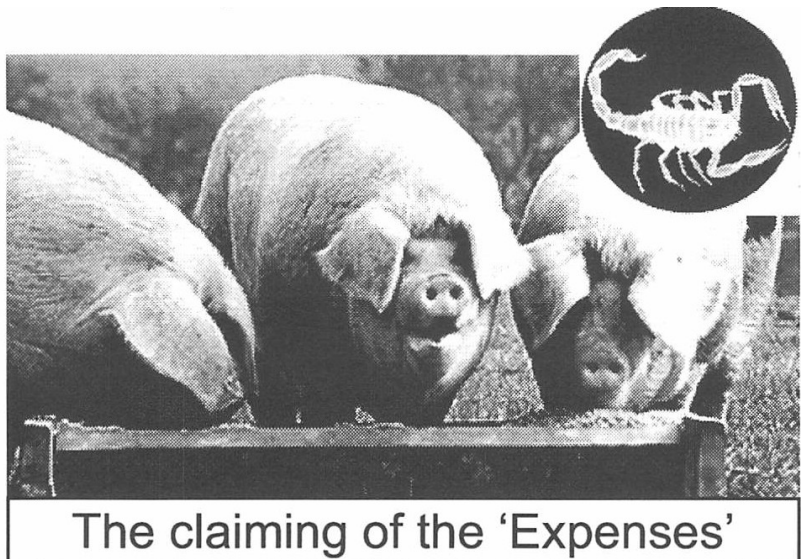
aim of the Labour Party, to not only create a society based on rights and responsibility but "where we live together, freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect".

Over the last 12 months there has been precious little tolerance and respect shown to disabled people.

At the risk of being totally offensive I would remind Brown that it was the gates of the Nazi death camps that promised "work sets you free".

Thieving Bastards

It beggars belief that at the same time as condemning benefit claimants as parasitic swine that MPs have been ramming their snouts



The claiming of the 'Expenses'

into the trough and claiming thousands of pounds in dubious "expenses".

If we abuse the system we are dragged to court and face the possibility of prison, if an MP does the same then the Freedom of Information Act is suspended in order to cover it up!

It reminds me of the days when the poor were transported for stealing food and the rich were rewarded for stealing land. Oh happy days.

21st century Robin Hood?



The Disability Outlaw's Lotus Elise

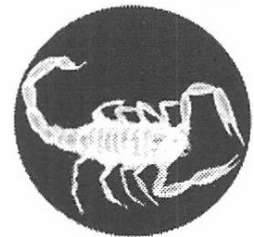
I find it very difficult to get wound up by the case of John Cunningham who was recently convicted of stealing £150,000 from Scope, unlike Detective Garrett who declared, "stealing from a charity is despicable".

It could be argued that charities themselves are guilty of stealing money away from disabled people.

I would also question how it was possible to take £150,000 without the loss being noticed. You see Cunningham wasn't

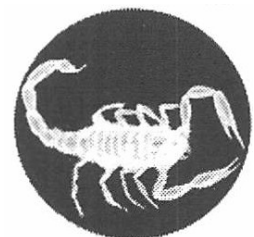
caught-out, he turned himself in after suffering a crisis of conscience.

You might like to know that the money was used to rent a luxury flat, buy a Lotus Elise and take flying lessons. Seems better use of the money than much of the nonsense that Scope would have spent it on!



Driven To Distraction

Meanwhile over at Remploy 441 managers and sales staff are driving around in over £8m worth of top-of-the-range motors. You'll be pleased to know that "only about 50 of the top management had expensive cars", the rest were merely average cars with all the add-ons.



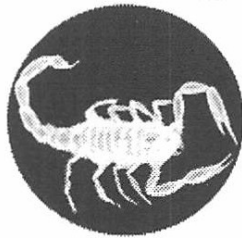
Starved To Death

Gillian Pottinger starved to death, sleeping on a sofa with her husband sleeping on the floor next to her. Jailing her husband for 18 months the judge said that "at any stage, you could have called for help, but you did not".

There is no record of what the judge said about social services that had apparently visited the house but were turned away.

I'd like to know why Social Services didn't return and if necessary force entry.

Bloody Barbaric



It's not often that I struggle for words, but I have struggled to find the words with which to express my disgust and loathing for the scum who used two women with learning disabilities as human bombs in Iraq.



Gillian Pottinger

It is believed that the women would not have known that they were going to die in the remote-controlled explosion!

Is it possible for mankind to sink any lower?

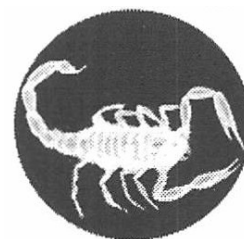
guardian.co.uk

Bombs strapped to Down's syndrome women kill scores in Baghdad markets

- Deadliest day in Iraq since start of US surge a year ago
- Mobile phones used to set off devices, say military

Michael Howard in Baghdad
The Guardian, Saturday February 2 2008

Remote-controlled explosives were strapped to two women with Down's syndrome and detonated in coordinated attacks on two Friday morning markets in central Baghdad yesterday, killing at least 73 people and wounding nearly 150.



20 Years Old

It's hard to believe but by the time the next magazine appears The Sting will have graced Coalition for 20 years. Do you have a favourite article you want to see re-printed or a particular topic you want to see tackled? Let me know.

Scorpio

My Lot

Hoorah!

It was me mate's, cousin's, sister's, brother's sister...
And I've got an allotment!

I thanked Mr. Moorcroft on the Allotment next to me...

Mr. Moorcroft said I'd find it difficult...

He knew that I'd not even be able to decide whether to grow
flowers, or vegetables, first.

I wanted to do both, etc. etc. etc.

In an uninspired moment I grew two seedlings-
And decided to race them -

It took four years!

Dennis grew Dahlias and Dandelions, Currants and
Cabbages...

Slowly nothing much happened on my side.

The Agricultural Show is discontinued now.

2003 it was.

"Best in Show"

The headlines read,

"Schizophrenic wins Best in Show.

Doctor Smith, the psychiatrist says,
"He shouldn't have. He's delusional.
He should have known it's impossible to grow a
Kiwi Fruit, in Salton, England".

Dennis says, "I didn't know what it was - he's a top man is
Sandy".

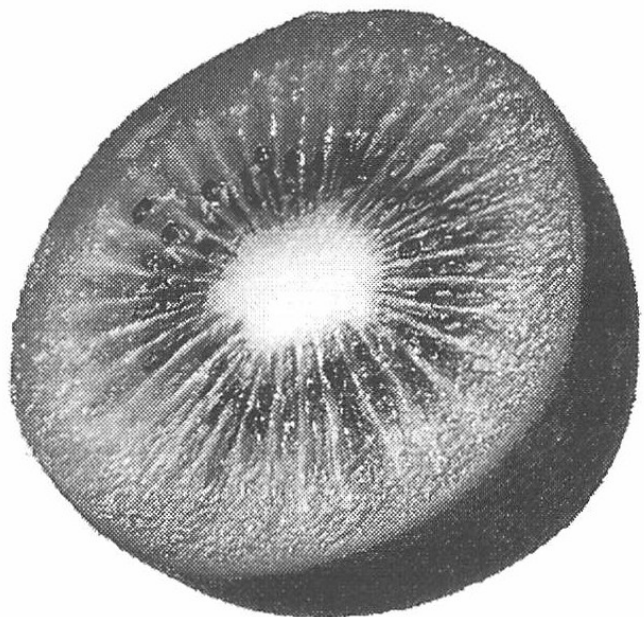
The newspapers went bananas over Sandy Anderson's Kiwi
Fruit.

"Schizophrenics threat on local Allotment"! "Care in the
Community gone wrong".

I put my 5 prize in my pocket.

"If they let me, I think I'll grow Roses next time...
'Peace' is a good variety"?

Carol Batton



THE GREAT UNDEAD

The recent alliance between the United Kingdom Disabled People's Council and Scope is imagined here by Pam Thomas as a horror story with unfortunate implications, not least of which is that it is unlikely to breathe new life into UKDPC, or offer appropriate support to other organisations of disabled people.

Need a job? Well it looks like any chance of working in an organisation controlled by disabled people is now even further from our reach. We all know that our organisations



have been folding all around the country, being out-bid by business charities, that are not in the least interested in equality for disabled people and ensuring access requirements are met. They know how to tick boxes and are interested in feathering their own nest and outbidding local disabled people's groups.

The final frontier for our old adversary Scope is that they have now taken the remains of BCODP. I thought they had changed their name to UKCODP, and that Scope was like the vicar at a funeral that did not know the deceased and gets the name mixed up. But I checked and it had changed its name is "United Kingdom Disabled People's Council". Yet worse, we all know BCODP as we knew it is long gone, GMCDP said goodbye years ago, but it has been kept in suspended animation. Why didn't they let it go, have closure and move on? But no - Scope is now attempting to bring it back to life, - and - well I'm sorry, but I would have preferred it to be laid to rest than to be kept going like a zombie, by Scope. I guess we saw it coming, but still to see it in print is really like a horror movie, they have assimilated the empty shell of BCODP and other struggling disabled people's organisations into its great bilious belly. Do people really think this will breathe life into the remains of BCODP? Scope has advertised four capacity building jobs supposedly as part of an alliance with the Alliance for Inclusive Education, Disability Awareness in Action, Equalities National Council, People First, Preston DISC, and the United Kingdom Disabled Peoples Council. They have

called themselves Listen Include Build (L.I.B.) it would have been better to let BCODP R.I.P. than exhume it to go into L.I.B.

Apparently Disability LIB "is a new strategic alliance of seven organisations that have joined together to capacity build Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) across England." But how things have changed, nowadays Scope often tells us "These posts are reserved for disabled people" - but then they are for a fixed term of three years.

So how far will Scope go in its imaginary rebirth? Not so far as using its influence and resources to give control to disabled people. We are told "Scope now wishes to recruit to key posts to run this exciting new project under the direction of the alliance". But these jobs are in the bowels of Scope's Market Road head office, hardly neutral territory.

A funny thing though is these jobs are not on the Scope website, you have to request the pack, nor does a search for "Listen Include Build" bring anything up. The website reveals that it is business as usual in the homes and charity shops, here are some examples:

- Laundry assistant, £5.74 per hour
- Care bank staff £6.47 per hour
- Care manager £26,317

- Assistant shop manager salary, £11,739 a year
- Support staff £13,121 per year

Had the capacity building jobs been in the control of disabled people to conceive new life, and not too far from Manchester, my job application form would be well on its way by now. But this? No I could not live with myself.

The sad truth is we all know that you cannot bring life back once it is gone, we hold memories, and mementos of our loved ones, but they cannot be brought back. We move on and others come into our lives, we start to smile again - but the departed are not coming back, and they are never replaced.

What Do You Think?

Continued from page 3

Who was Sir Alan Sugar referring to when he was reported as describing someone as: "Long John Silver's great-granddaughter"?

Answer: Heather Mills



AN INTERVIEW WITH CRIPPEN

Over the last twenty years 'Crippen' aka Dave Lupton has been prolific in producing cartoons of the barriers and prejudice confronting disabled people, along with some key moments of political struggle. This interview attempts to find out more of the emergence and development of 'Crippen'.



Ed: When did you develop your ability to draw?

Crippen: I first started creating cartoons when I was about nine or ten years of age. I'd been off school a lot due to various problems with my health and used to amuse myself by creating my own cartoon adventure strips. I was actually at the same junior school in Leeds as Colin Barnes for a while and remember him as a gifted artist. I also remember drawing my first caricature of one of the teachers then, a mad individual who used to delight in bouncing blackboard

cleaners off our heads if he didn't think we were paying attention. The cartoon of him throwing one at the Headmaster got me into some trouble as I recall, but gained me some status with the other pupils!

Ed: Having the ability to draw could lead you in any number of directions artistically. Why did you choose to become a cartoonist?

Crippen: I think this was because cartooning had a bit of an anti-establishment element about it. I recall getting straight A's with my arts exams in secondary school and being encouraged, along with others to draw 'serious' compositions. This seemed to be more about the school being able to hold them up as examples of their own teaching abilities rather than as examples of our artistic talents. Even at this tender age I was aware that I wasn't going to be anyone's 'pet' and became more determined to create the less acceptable cartoon style drawings. Having missed a lot of school time I also found that cartoons gave me a unique way to express myself, which deflected attention from my lack of academic achievements. Over the years my drawings took on more and more of a cartoon element, until now I find it extremely difficult to draw anything other than in this style.

Ed: When and why did you start producing cartoons with a disability theme.

Crippen: It was after I'd had quite a serious car accident in my forties and I ended up using a wheelchair for a while. I got thoroughly pissed off with the attitude of non-disabled people towards me whenever I was out in the chair, and so started creating cartoons about these situations. I soon began to meet other Disabled people who, in turn began to feed me ideas for other cartoons. I learned about the Social Model understanding of Disability and got more involved in the Disabled People's Movement which enabled me to create more disability cartoons with a political theme. It was then that I came up with the name Crippen which seemed to fit me like a second skin and I've not really looked back since!

Ed: Why do think there has been so few cartoonists in the disabled people's movement?

Crippen: I've been asked this question before and I'm not sure what the answer is. It might be something to do with the fact that creating cartoons around a subject like disability can often cause as much of an angry reaction as it does a receptive one. Being a Disabled cartoonist often means putting yourself in the firing line by creating an image that cuts through all the crap and tells it like it is. Sometimes this is not an easy position to be in, and for some Disabled people perhaps the thought of this is just a step too far. I don't know. I actually enjoy doing this. Being able to wave the red rag at a Charity for example and seeing their reaction! There are some really good Disabled cartoonists

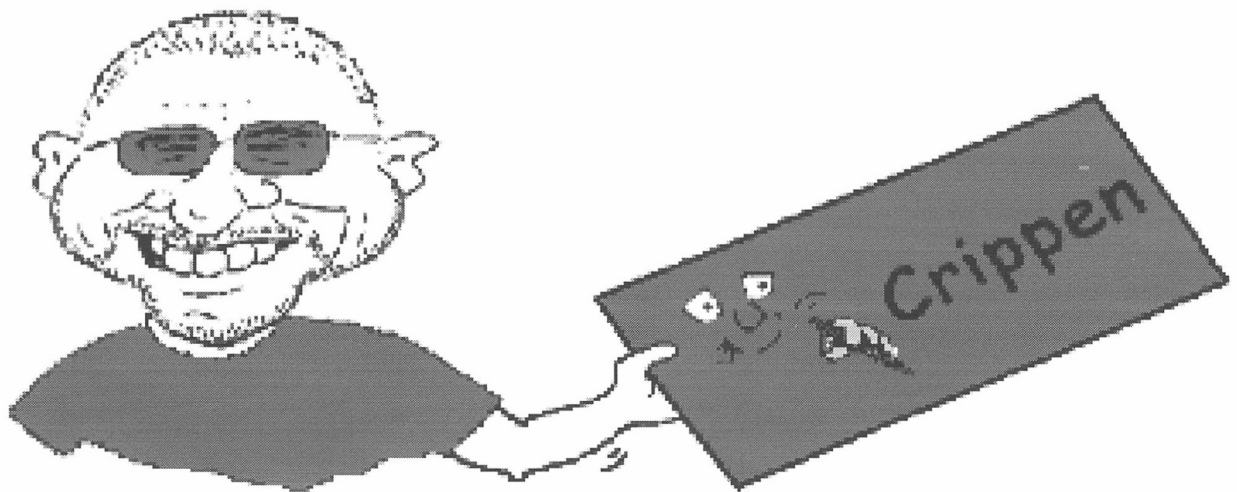
around though, people like Eddie Freeman for example, but for some reason their work doesn't seem to get much prominence. The late Steve Cribb was also a very gifted cartoonist but his work is probably only known to a small group within the disability arts movement.

Ed: Have any of your cartoons caused controversy?

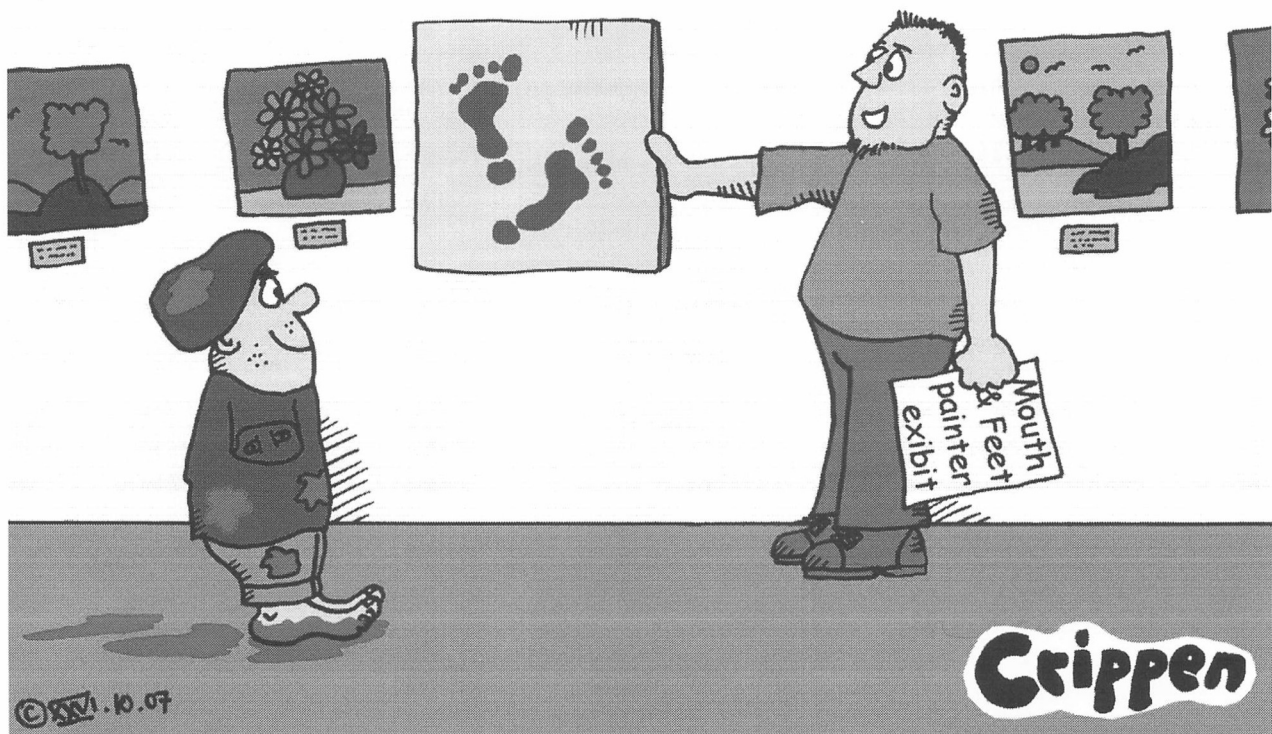
Crippen: I hope so, especially as this is what the intention is for much of my work. I can remember on one occasion creating a cartoon for a group of Disabled people with restricted growth. It showed up the non-disabled organisers of their organisation in a bad light and as a result I got some heavy responses from these managers with threats of litigation and the like. The end result though was that a large proportion of the members split away and formed their own group - this time run and controlled by Disabled people! I like to think that my cartoon was the catalyst for this.

Another occasion I remember was when I created a cartoon of the late Ian Stanton entering heaven. Waiting to greet him were lots of other crips who were picketing the pearly gates due to the poor access. Two angels are stood at the top of a flight of stairs leading up to the gates, with one of them saying: "Not another bloody trouble maker!" This was published in the Disability Arts in London Magazine (DAIL) and got some responses from seriously upset clergy who demanded that I apologise (to God presumably?!) as heaven was accessible to everyone, "even to the poor handicapped!" Oh, and I mustn't forget upsetting New

Labour, the Leonard Cheshire Foundation, Scope, The Tories, Children in Need, The National Lottery, The Arts Council, etc, etc!



Well, it's
not really what we
had in mind!



Ed: Which is your favourite cartoon?

Crippen: It's one by Steve Bell, the Guardian cartoonist, and shows a hand holding an eyeball. The exact shadow of it on the wall behind though is a mad Tony Blair! A very simple, but very effective image. However, if you mean which of the Crippen cartoons is my favourite, I'd have to say that it's a fairly recent one depicting a mouth and foot painting exhibition that I did for the Disability Arts on Line web site.

Ed: What are you currently working on?

Crippen: I've finally got around to creating some more collections of my work which are going to be made available on my web site www.daveluptoncartoons.co.uk as ebooks (downloadable as pdf files). I'm also writing some new material, accompanied by new cartoons which will also be available on the site in ebook form. As well as this I also produce a regular cartoon on my blog site, hosted by Disability Arts on Line, and which can be found at www.disabilityarts.org/site/Crippen_blog

Ed: Where do you see yourself in another ten years?

Crippen: Well, in ten years time I'll be 70 (bloody hell!) and hopefully still shouting at the injustices within society that are aimed at Disabled people. However, someone once noticed that the Crippen signature on my cartoons has got

bigger over the years, so probably in another decade I'll be just producing cartoons made up with the signature!

Crippen

Find Crippen online at:

www.daveluptoncartoons.co.uk/crippen

and at

www.disabilityarts.org/site/Crippen_blog



skyriders

spinning wheelchairs, chairs with wings
windswept wingchair users wheeling across the skies

raised beds rising, taking off with a roar
beds ridden into the blue yonder,
sheets flying in the wind
people riding the airways as though they were riding
on birds, not beds
wheelchairs bound for the stars spiralling
into the stratosphere
it seems
and circling gracefully down to land

high powered zimmers soaring beyond the clouds
arcing across the skyline
skywalkers shimmering in the sun,
or backlit by the moon
for all the world like Mary Poppins or ET

people clinging to their crutches outstretched ahead
crutches pulling them over the horizon
zooming like superman as they fly

witchly sisters and their brother warlocks
riding and whooping through the skies on
their walking sticks,

not walking but flying high , swooping free,
skydiving
to skim over the chimneys

with propellers strapped to their backs and motors
fixed to callipers, people lifting off
at the click of a switch,
whirring overhead
as though they were helicopters or dragonflies
not people taking flight

some were streaking across the sky in winged
boots, like mercury, moving here there
and everywhere,
in boots made for walking,
but fitted with wings on their heels
for streaking not walking

people at play, gliding with the speed of light
it seems.

skydancing to the music of the spheres
we fill the skies
swinging on stars and sliding down rainbows
riding the winds,
people taking flight, somersaulting
over the moon
accessing the air in transports of delight

Ann Torode



Static by Dan Rebellato

A Suspect Culture and Graeae Theatre Production In
Association with Tron Theatre Glasgow, Saturday 15th
March 2008 at Contact Theatre Manchester
Review by E J Frank

Cast

Chris - Steven Webb

Julia - Jeni Draper

Martin - Tom Thomasson

Sarah - Pauline Lockhart



Static is an interesting, innovative and multi layered production which employs use of a variety of methods of communication - spoken dialogue, BSL and music.

The play is subtitled ' A story of Love, Loss and Compilation Tapes' and is ostensibly a story about the death of a young man - Chris, and the way his wife Sarah, best friend Martin and sister Julia come to terms with their loss. Whilst Sarah is in the process of grieving for Chris, she finds a compilation tape which he made but never gave to her. As she listens to the tape, she becomes convinced he is trying to contact her from beyond the grave.

There are numerous musical references throughout the drama and an interesting selection of music including tracks by Aimee Mann, Rufus Wainwright and The Smiths. have to say that I didn't recognise a lot of the music. Maybe it's because I am an old rocker or maybe because I'm just plain old! But it was certainly interesting to be given the opportunity to hear some new music and I will definitely be

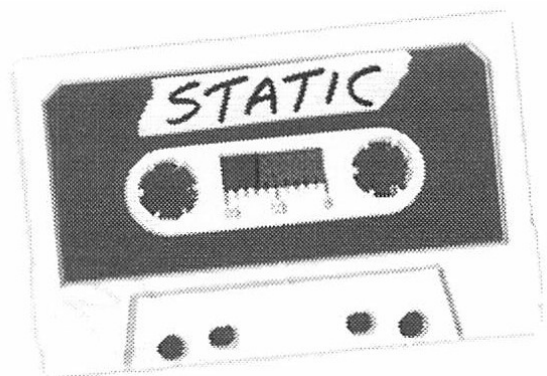
checking out the Aimee Mann and Rufus Wainwright tracks in the near future.

If you are a lover of music, you will enjoy 'Static'. Throughout the play the characters talk about the music they enjoy, the numerous gigs they have been to and there is even a mysterious web site called 'impossiblegigs.com' which plays a key role in the final outcome of the play. I won't tell you what this is as I don't want to spoil it.

I have to say that the play was a little confusing to start off with but it's like a ball of string which gradually unwinds throughout the performance and all becomes clear at the end. I had a horrible feeling it was going to have one of those 'Day of the Triffids' endings - you know the one - 'someday we will defeat the Triffids...' or 'we'll never know what happens to Sarah and Chris...' or worse still 'it was all a dream' - but don't worry there is a conclusive ending which is sure to surprise you so stick with it - the writing is extremely clever.

The play deals with the theme of loss on different levels. There is the most obvious level - Sarah dealing with the loss of her husband, but there is another thread of loss which runs

throughout the play as it emerges that some years before his death, Chris had been in a road accident which had



resulted in him losing his hearing, and we find out how he comes to terms with this as being able to listen to music becomes more and more difficult for him. As a huge music fan myself, I found this particularly interesting as I know that this is one thing I would find difficult if I ever lost my hearing. The writer, Dan Rebellato, resists the temptation to become maudlin or to dwell on Chris's deafness. I liked the fact that the deafness was part of the story and not the whole of the story, unlike some dramas where the whole of the story surrounds a character's impairment and the way they have been so 'brave' in overcoming it - cue sad music... etc. etc I do have a couple of criticisms. Firstly, the performances aren't going to win any Oscars. My favourite character was Martin and I thought that Tom Thomasson's portrayal of a young man who has just lost his best friend was convincing. The same can not be said of Pauline Lockhart, who played Sarah, who seemed in parts to be either too distraught or not distraught enough! My main source of annoyance was that dead Chris was constantly onstage and even signed some parts of the performance. I imagine this was to show that Chris was omnipresent in the thoughts of the other characters but I didn't feel that this was needed. In the scenes where Sarah is desperately calling out for Chris to give her a sign that he is there, the temptation to shout 'he's behind you!' was overwhelming!

Having said that, I feel this is worth going to see and was disappointed that on a Saturday night there were only

around 30 - 40 people in the audience. Maybe there are other ways this show can be given more publicity.

If you are just looking to see a play which is solely 'entertainment' or 'action' then this might not be the play for you, but If you like your theatre a little edgy and a little unusual and if you enjoy different types of music then you will love 'Static'.

Some final points regarding access issues - the play uses spoken word and BSL, however, not all the spoken sections are signed and not all the signed sections are spoken. This did not spoil my enjoyment of the play but I could not say whether someone who uses BSL would be able to get the full impact or not. The Contact Theatre is accessible. The staff, in the past, have been very polite but I found that this had deteriorated since my last visit. Whilst I stood behind a lady in the queue for tickets, the man at the desk called over some other people who had just come in and ignored me! It was only when I objected and said 'Am I invisible now?' that he grudgingly served me first. also noticed that the 'greeters' who used to be on the door were not there anymore. Being visually impaired I had found this invaluable because they were able to show you where to go and I was disappointed that there no longer appeared to be any staff doing this. Two nights before the show I had popped into the theatre to see if I could buy a ticket beforehand but there appeared to be no staff around. There had been a man at the door, who I was told was a staff member, but he was on his mobile

phone and had ignored me, despite me looking lost and confused for some time.

On the positive side though, 'Space 1' has wheelchair spaces and access and there is a lift to get to it. The staff from the Graeae Theatre, who were inside the 'Space', were very friendly and they even had large print copies of their programme to buy on the night - amazing! It is also worth noting that even the standard print is fairly accessible as it is in good old black and white - hallelujah sense prevails! So well done to Graeae for thinking about this, and I look forward to seeing future productions from this company soon.



Desires by Penny Pepper

Published by Bejamo Press.

Price £6 incl. p&p. (cheques made payable to P. Pepper)

Order direct from: Penny Pepper, Box 304, Rosden House,
372 Old Street, London EC1V 9AU

Review by Linda Marsh

"Desires", which is currently being re-promoted, is a groundbreaking book of fictional short stories. The theme of the

book is sexual, erotic and emotional desires, needs and wants of disabled people - and their attempts to achieve these.

The book touches areas (no pun intended!) that many non-disabled people will not address about themselves, never mind the "shocking" combination of disabled people, masturbation, clitorises, penises, breasts and yearning naked bodies.

Each story highlights a different aspect of desire. From teenage girls in a rehab centre learning about masturbation from each other, via a woman's desire to lose her virginity with a hospital porter (which happens in the disused wing of the hospital), to more experienced disabled people's continuing (and quite "normal") anxieties about whether the focus of their desire is interested in them, how to get past the flirting stage and how to overcome the practicalities of "getting in the right position" for a kiss, a hug or a f**k.



Penny Pepper

Other issues are also raised in the stories - the infantilisation of disabled people; dependence of parents on disabled children and their refusal to "let go"; the persistence of physios and OTs to make disabled people "normal" through rehab, and many more of the negative experiences of disabled people's day-to-day lives.

It is good to see disabled people's sexuality explored in fiction, in a positive, go-getting way, although it should be noted that this book only deals with heterosexual desire. I also particularly liked the story ("Postcards For Joan) in which an older woman's situation is explored, although I suspect that "older" in this case isn't that old, maybe a woman in her mid 50s at most, it is hard to tell from the story.

I feel that some of the situations characters find themselves in are quite disturbing. For example, the woman who is date-raped, the loneliness of some characters, and the resentment and frustration on both sides in "caring for / cared for" relationships. All, unfortunately, too true for some disabled people.

The stories are well written, but I do feel that the emphasis on pointing out barriers, mobility issues and "getting in the right position", in many of the stories, do make the flow of the writing more stilted. Maybe because I'm a seasoned member of the Disabled People's Movement, many of the

ways things are written appear to be explanatory to a non-disabled audience, and make it feel like the flow isn't always as good as it could be.

I am disappointed in some of the stereotypes that came out in the stories. accept that disabled people do have prejudices and stereotyped views just as non-disabled people do, and the author will want to reflect this diversity, but it would have been good to see at least one story where a hairy or "overweight" woman explores her sexual desires rather than these body types being used mostly for the despised medical staff (so what if her eyebrows are bushy and meet in the middle?).

I am sure that, in some respects, the way I have accessed this book has influenced my view of it. I have listened to the audio version produced by the RNIB, which has a variety of readers (often swapping over in the middle of a story), non of whom are really suitable for reading this kind of book, although I am sure make excellent readers of non-fiction.



The funny side of it was listening to a middle-aged/older man with a very plummy accent reading a description of teenage girls masturbating and having orgasms.

I think it is an important book as it recognises disabled people's sexual desires, and I am sure we can look forward to more writing from Penny Pepper that will explore a wider range of settings and possibilities for disabled people's sexuality.

"Cognitive Behaviour Therapy"

(I am able to maintain a vegetarian diet)
I just call any ' Meat' on my plate - "Courgettes!"

Carol Batton

The 'Therapist' was a Patronizer' of the Arts.

Carol Batton

Who's Who of Madness...

A Psychotic is someone, who thinks
They aren't mad, when they are,

A person, who thinks you are mad,
When you're not, is a Psychiatrist.

Carol Batton

The Skeleton In The Corner

I was amazed when recently, during my first visit to an Audiology clinic at a major city hospital, I discovered that the only way used to get the attention of patients for their appointment is to call their name. No induction loop, no loud speakers, no written sign, no sign language.

This, of course, made me giggle. I had a picture in my mind of a skeleton in the corner. A Deaf person who had been sat there waiting for their appointment so long, without being able to hear their name being called, that they had died. This is when I very much regret my inability to draw cartoons.

Would anyone like to oblige?

OK, the NHS is strapped for cash, maybe a computer-assisted, electronic sign may be out of its price range, but what about a white board and pen? What about staff working with Deaf people being able to do at least finger spelling of the alphabet, if not BSL level 1 or 2?

OK, as a visually impaired person I am used to getting letters in print from hospitals and the local authority, so perhaps I shouldn't have expected anything better relating to a different access barrier, but I did find it very amusing - although, in reality, it isn't really funny... hee, hee, hee, hee!



Write to Reply

Exercise your write to reply. Send your comments and discussion points to:



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Or by post to:

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Shooting The Messenger

The three responses to Esther Franks' review of the Johnny Crescendo CD made pretty grim reading. The worst aspect of them was that the review was somehow 'personal' ; how could that be when she knows nothing personal about him? 'Personal attack' is too often the cry that goes up if any of us is less than enthusiastic about what some of us do, instead of a reasoned argument justifying the deed. I haven't heard this CD so have no opinion about it, but if Esther knew

nothing about J.C.'s history, had no knowledge of his previous work, that would not render her opinion on a standalone piece of his work invalid.

Nobody who is aware of the work Alan Holdsworth (professional name - Johnny Crescendo) has done through the Direct Action Network could do anything but applaud and appreciate it, but that does not mean that he cannot produce a bum CD in anyone's opinion, and Esther was not alone in thinking that this was indeed a bum CD. An extract from a review of it in 'Art Disability Culture' reads 'We get a mixture of Bob Dylan at his whiniest, the religiously converted Cat Stevens... Johnny is like the Oasis of Country, completely derivative... Johnny may not need sympathy, but I sure do. I'm the one listening to his album... they oughta provide a gun with this CD so anyone with critical faculties has the option of shooting themselves'. This review was anonymous, and that is cowardly. Nevertheless it was printed, and Esther is accused of being vitriolic? I don't think so.

What struck a chord with me about Esther's review was the fact that it depressed her. I too am depressed at all the lamenting currently going on. Disabled people seem to have slipped back in time to the early 1970's, when we started to understand the oppression and discrimination operating against us, writing it up, but not knowing what to do about it. There was very little proactive response from us, but that changed, pretty damned quickly, when we formed

organisations of disabled people. We challenged what was done to us, drew up our agenda and, by strategic working persuaded Local Authorities to adopt it, by designing disability service provision within the framework of the Social Model of Disability. The British Council of Organisations of Disabled People operated this way politically at national level, and the lives of thousands of disabled people improved dramatically.

Centres of Independent Living were founded to support people living in the community; get out of institutions, and campaign for Direct Payments to finance the support necessary for us to do that. It was all hard exhausting work, but it paid off. Now, as Dame Jane Campbell was quoted as saying in an issue of Disability Now' last year, 'It's all slipping from our grasp'. And it is. But the signs pointing to this situation have been there for the last five years or so - I've been saying so, and, being the messenger, I've the bullet holes to show for it.

What the Disabled Peoples' Movement has done is let the big charities take over our politics, aided and abetted by erstwhile activists attracted by money, public visibility, and awards, working with them as 'consultants', arrogantly sure that they could change the vested interest of charity and politics to the altruistic aim of ending the discrimination and oppression of disabled people. Charity and the ending of the oppression of disadvantaged people is an utter

contradiction. Charity perpetuates oppression - it has to, to exist.

I don't need here to chart the threats we are under - the last edition of 'Coalition' carried explicit articles detailing the alarming cuts in funding for support in the community, and the dreadful spectre of new criteria for judging our ability to work tests. The question is - what to do? My response is to start rebuilding our organisations on the principles we founded them on, reclaim our national organisation before it becomes even more an extension of 'SCOPE', and to get back to direct action whilst we still have the means to get out of our homes to do so.

Anne Rae

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I have been a member of the GMCDP for some months now. I enjoy reading the magazine and would like to contribute more to the Coalition's activities. I say I'm a member of the GMCDP, but I'm not really a full member am I? I don't have voting rights and, if I ever wished to sit on the Executive I'd be barred for behind able bodied. For those who don't know the GMCDP runs a policy of tiered membership stating, 'Anyone can become a member of

GMCDP, although only disabled people are permitted to have voting rights or become Executive Members'.

The tiered level of membership seems outdated and wholly wrong. By making members define themselves as disabled or not presents a 'them and us' message that reinforces barriers and is more akin to the medical model than the social model. If a disabled person were informed that they could only be an associate member or a non voting member of an organisation purely because they're disabled they would be quite rightly outraged. Women are quite rightly outraged when they can't be full members of cricket or golf clubs. So why is the GMCDP different?

It also strikes me that if I had lied on the membership form and said that I was 'disabled' no one would have come and checked to see if this is the case.

I hope that this approach to membership is a remnant of the past (I can understand why such an approach to membership was required in the past) and that the current Executive understand my point of view. I believe I have something to offer the Coalition and that my views are in line with the outlook of the organisation. I urge the Executive of the GMCDP to review the policy of 'tiered membership'.

Regards

Graham Whitham

THE NEXT MAGAZINE

The August 2008 edition of 'Coalition' will focus on changes to incapacity benefit (IB) aimed at getting disabled people off IB and into work.

- Will testing what you can do, retesting all claimants, being regularly interviewed, having DWP reps in doctors' surgeries really help disabled people or subject them to more harassment?
- Could these changes lead to the further impoverishment of disabled people?
- If the government are serious at wanting to help disabled people what other measures should they have in place?

Material is also welcomed for consideration on any subject of your choice.

If you have any opinions on these or other issues please let us have your articles, poetry, cartoons, and photographs for consideration.

You can use a pen name or be anonymous in the magazine but please ensure the editor has your name and contact address.

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Or by email to:
coalition@gmcdp.com

Closing date for the
August 2008 edition of
'Coalition' is:
Friday 13th June 2008

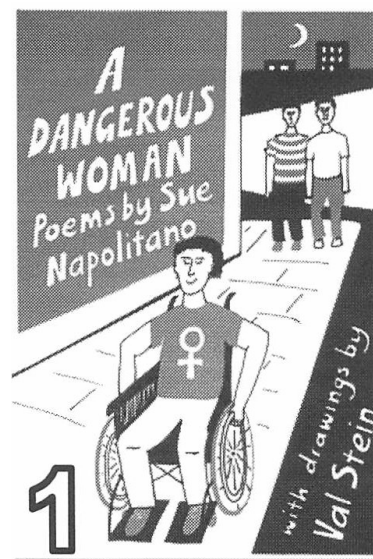


GMCDP PUBLICATIONS & MERCHANDISE

1. A Dangerous Woman. by Sue Napolitano.

A collection of witty, pithy, poignant and most of all POLITICAL poems.

Price: £2.50 + 75 p&p



2. Coalition Magazine

Price: £3 (Back Issues £1 + £1 p&p)

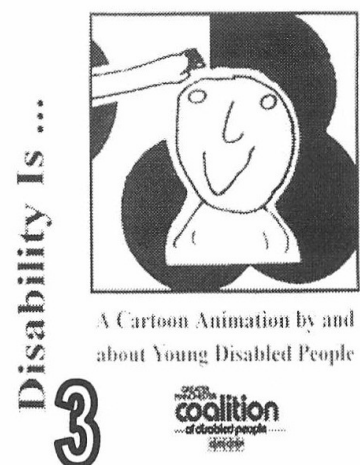


3. Disability Is...

A 4 minute animation video made by young disabled people, exploring the issues around positive imagery and role models as experienced by young disabled people.

Price: £20 to £50 + £4 p&p

Disability Is...



4. On Our Own Behalf by Martin Pagel

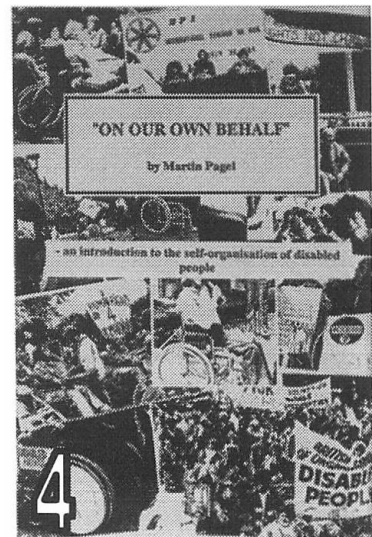
A starting point for anyone interested in the growth of the Disabled People's Movement.

Price: £2.50 + 60p p&p

5. "... distress or disability?" by Anne Plumb

A discussion paper laying out some issues, arguments and history from a Mental Health System Survivor's point of view.

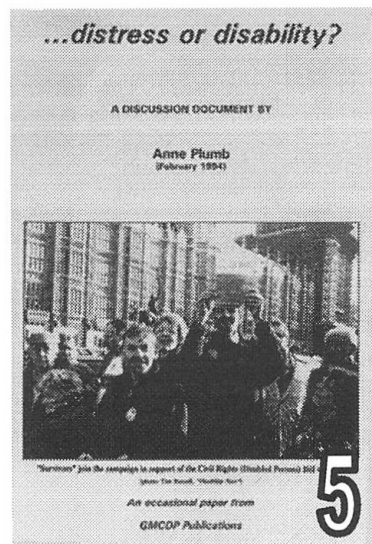
Price: £2 to £5 + 60p p&p



6. Over To Us... by Maureen Greene

A report of an advocacy project working with young disabled people living in residential institutions.

Price: £5.99 + £1.50 p&p



7. Positive Image Posters

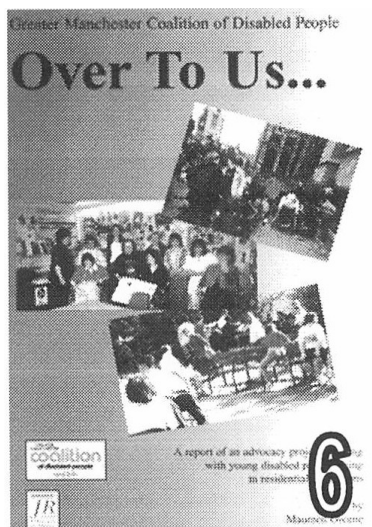
Produced by the Young Disabled Peoples Forum

Price £5 per set of 4 + £1.50 p&p

8. Disabled People Bite... The Hand That Patronises (poster)

A 594mm x 840mm poster taken from the 'Disability Is...' animation video.

Price £3.50 + £1.50 p&p



9. Disabled People Bite... The Hand That Patronises (postcard)

A full colour postcard taken from the "Disability Is..." animation video.

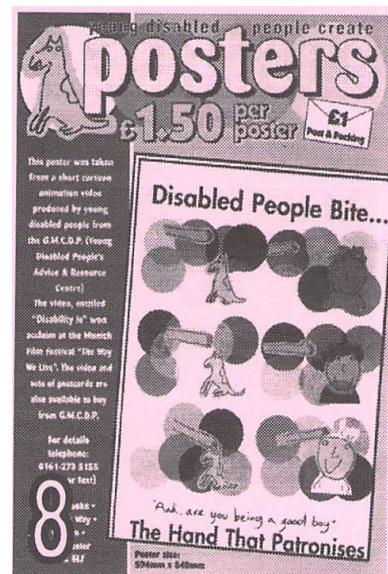
Price: £1 for a pack of 5 + 30p p&p



10. Take Action Now

Set of 4 Positive Image posters designed by Jacqui Tracey.

Price: £5 per set of 4 + £1.50 p&p

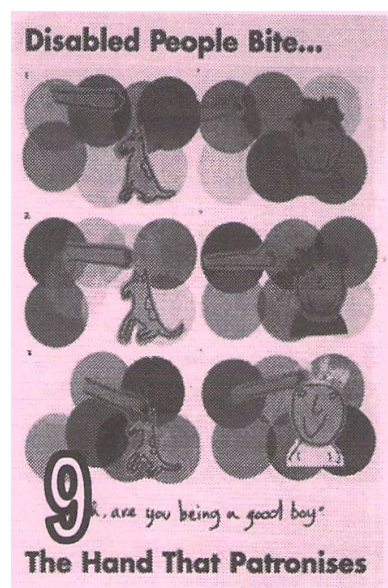


11. Peer Mentoring - A Good Practice Guide

CD-Rom produced by the Young Disabled Peoples Forum, discussing the merits and practicalities of peer mentoring for young disabled people.

Price: £10 to £20 + £2.00 P & P.

Accompanying report available from Pavilion Publishing on 01273-623222 or by email info@pavpub.com



12. Independent Living Skills

Training manual with video promoting independent living for young disabled people.

Price £20 to £40 + £3.50 p&p

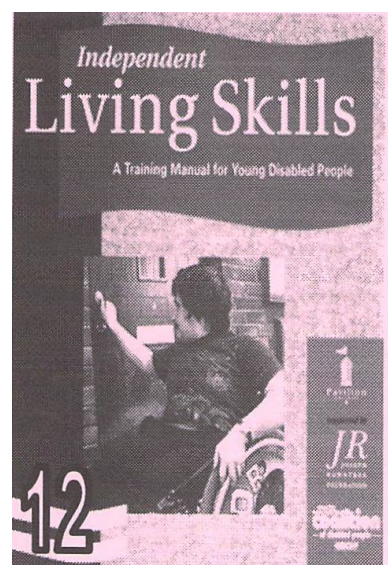
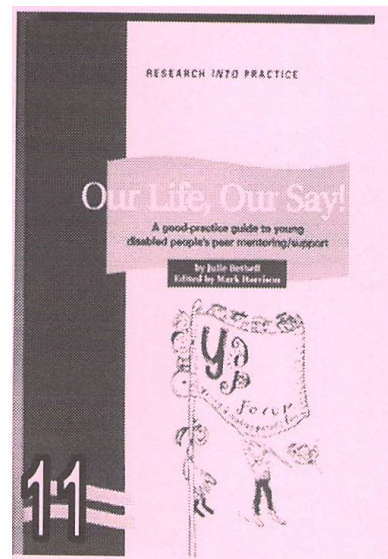
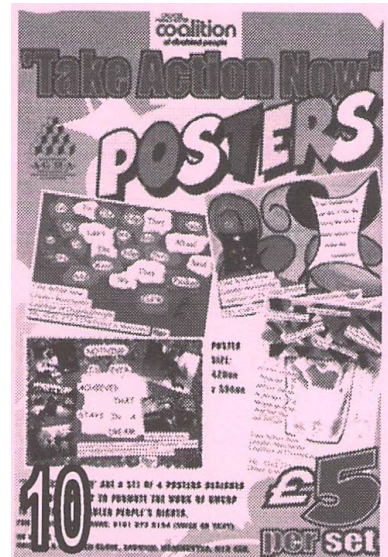
Where prices vary, this is dependent upon type of organisation wishing to purchase items.

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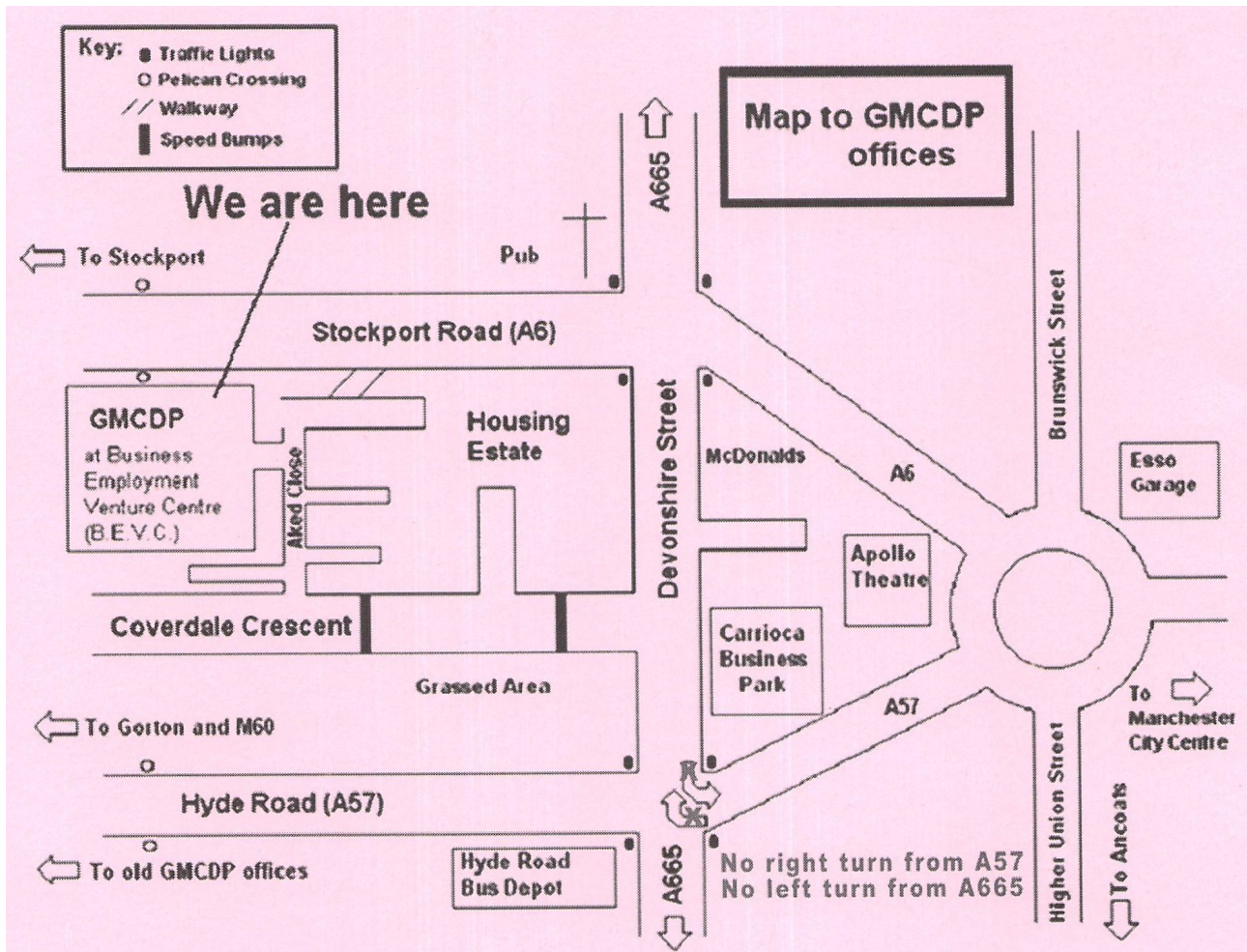
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