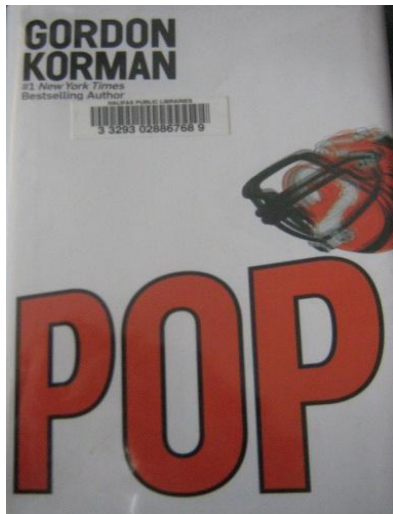


Book Reviews

By Mark Black



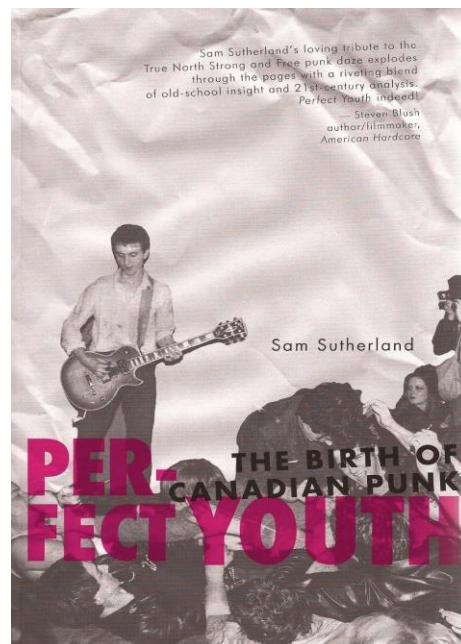
Korman, G. (2009). *Pop*. Toronto: Scholastic Canada. 272 pp.

With concussions in sports becoming big news, *Pop* and its story of a former NFL linebacker battling Alzheimer's brought on by numerous tackles throughout his career is incredibly relevant, especially in light of the deaths of athletes like Junior Seau.

Marcus Jordan moves to a new town and has designs on being named his school's quarterback. In a stroke of luck, he manages to find himself being mentored by former NFL linebacker, Charlie "Pop" Popovich — father of Marcus's chief rival. All isn't quite right with Charlie, and his son Troy appears dead-set on keeping Charlie away from Marcus. Marcus realizes that Charlie's problem isn't an overprotective son, but Alzheimer's brought on by football injuries. Marcus does his best to help Charlie, but their schemes put them at odds with a family on the edge of heartbreak and tests the limits of their friendship.

Pop is at times a little corny, a little out of date, and a little lacking, but overall it's a sweet and often sad story about a complex issue that affects more than just former NFL players. The hook (former NFLer befriends and mentors young boy) might seem a bit far-fetched, but the issue - what do with a loved one when Alzheimer's sets in - is sadly relatable to many. Not necessarily a Korman classic, but worth a read for teens looking for something realistic and melancholic.

Suggested Audience: 12-18



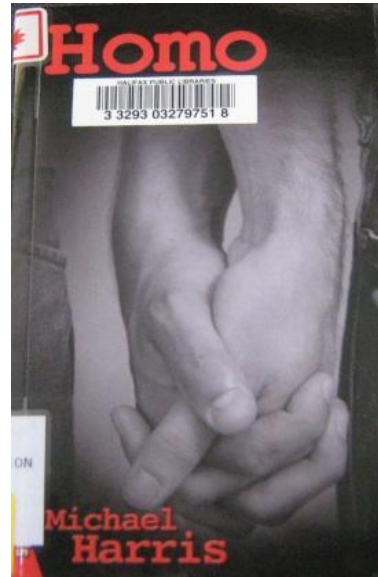
Sutherland, S. (2012). *Perfect Youth: The Birth of Canadian Punk*. Toronto: ECW Press. 368 pp.

Sam Sutherland had the unenviable job of giving a coherent narrative to the early punk scenes across Canada. Trying to figure out what disaffected teens in Winnipeg in the late 70s and early 80s had in common with their brethren in St. John's, Saint John,

Victoria, Ottawa and all parts in between had never really been done until Sutherland embarked upon the task. The result is *Perfect Youth*: an almost exhaustive account of the emergence of Canadian punk rock that covers everything from Newfoundland's the Reaction to Regina's The Extroverts to Victoria's Dishrags. *Perfect Youth* never purports to be a comprehensive Bible for Northern punk, but it does fill in a lot of blanks.

Sutherland is quick to assert that he may annoy a few opinionated readers for overlooking some bands or combining the Atlantic Provinces into a single chapter, but *Perfect Youth* fills a hole that has long existed in Canadian punk history. There have been documents of specific regional scenes—like Liz Worth's excellent *Treat Me Like Dirt: An Oral History of Punk in Toronto and Beyond* and AYECH International's short but astute volume on Victoria, *All Your Ears Can Hear*—but no work has ever tried to connect scene to shining scene before. Sutherland showcases colorful and enduring figures from those scenes like Moncton's Mark Gaudet, Toronto's Nazi Dog, Calgary's Warren Kinsella, Vancouver's Art Bergmann (by way of Surrey and White Rock) and Victoria's Jade Blade. *Perfect Youth* is an essential and hilarious look at an important cultural whole and a great addition to any Young Adult collection for young punk readers wondering what came before.

Suggested Audience: 15-18



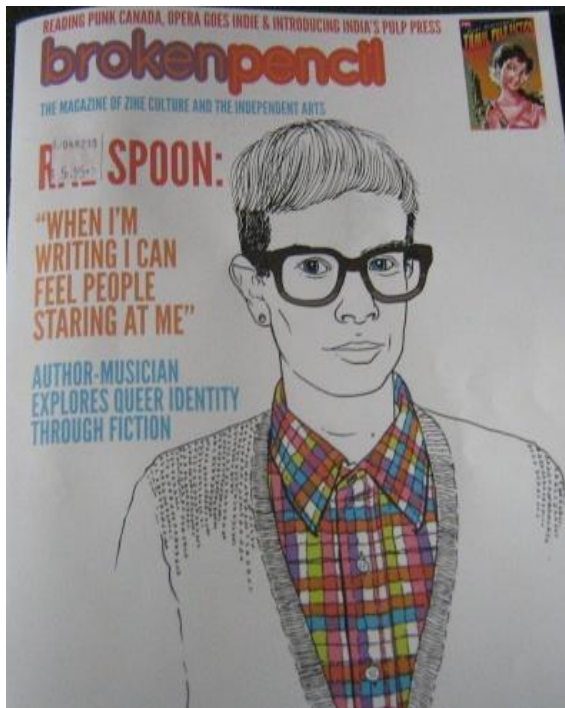
Harris, M. (2013). *Homo*. Toronto: James Lorimar & Company Ltd. 144 pp.

Will Johnson has the unenviable task of coming out in Chilliwack, BC. It is never easy and *Homo* charts Will's coming-of-age and his coming out as he discovers gay culture and online dating, confronts his fears and homophobia, and learns to stand up for his friends. Along the way, Will learns to accept himself while asking, what exactly does it mean to tolerate someone's sexuality or orientation? Is the word 'tolerate' even positive?

Homo is at its best when dealing with the inner turmoil of its young lead, Will Johnson. Michael Harris captures his voice and inner workings perfectly and creates a likeable young hero struggling to do right by himself and those he loves. *Homo* hits snags when it comes to dealing with the characterization of its supporting cast - no one is very fully formed, and by the conclusion of the novel the reader begins to feel that there are a few dangling plot lines

and unresolved conflicts. Homo may be a tad short, but it covers a lot of ground from AIDS and HIV to LGBTQ solidarity to the problems of tolerance.

Suggested Audience: 16-18 (mild language and depictions of sex)



Gibb, L. ed. (2013). *Broken Pencil, volume 1* Toronto: Broken Pencil.

From the article *Zine Philosophy*: "What interests me about zines is that they carry an aura unlike anything else. It's impossible to grab a zine and not feel like you can make one too. They look easy. They look personal. And their significance is double: they deliver content and a quiet call to the reader to make their own." (Aquino, p. 33)

Broken Pencil's primary focus is on zine culture, but it also covers independent arts, culture and music. This issue of *Broken Pencil* has a strong LGBTQ focus, but also

includes the regular comics, reviews of zines, books, comics, graphic novels and music, as well as short stories exclusive to *Broken Pencil*. There's also a great guide to the underground/alternative/arts culture of Banff, Alberta and an inspiring interview with transgendered Canadian musician and author, Rae Spoon

There is no better document of zine culture in Canada. *Broken Pencil* covers the margins and then some. The magazine is incredibly inclusive and no subculture should feel overlooked. This is a great accessible magazine that really attempts to great cross-country links between regional art and culture scenes. It attempts to showcase the best in underground culture while at the same time shining a spotlight on artists and projects that may as well exist in the fringes if it wasn't for *Broken Pencil*. It's a great guide for arts-oriented teens who are wondering what is happening in the rest of the country.

Suggested Audience (age range): 14+ Mildly offensive language and some mature content.