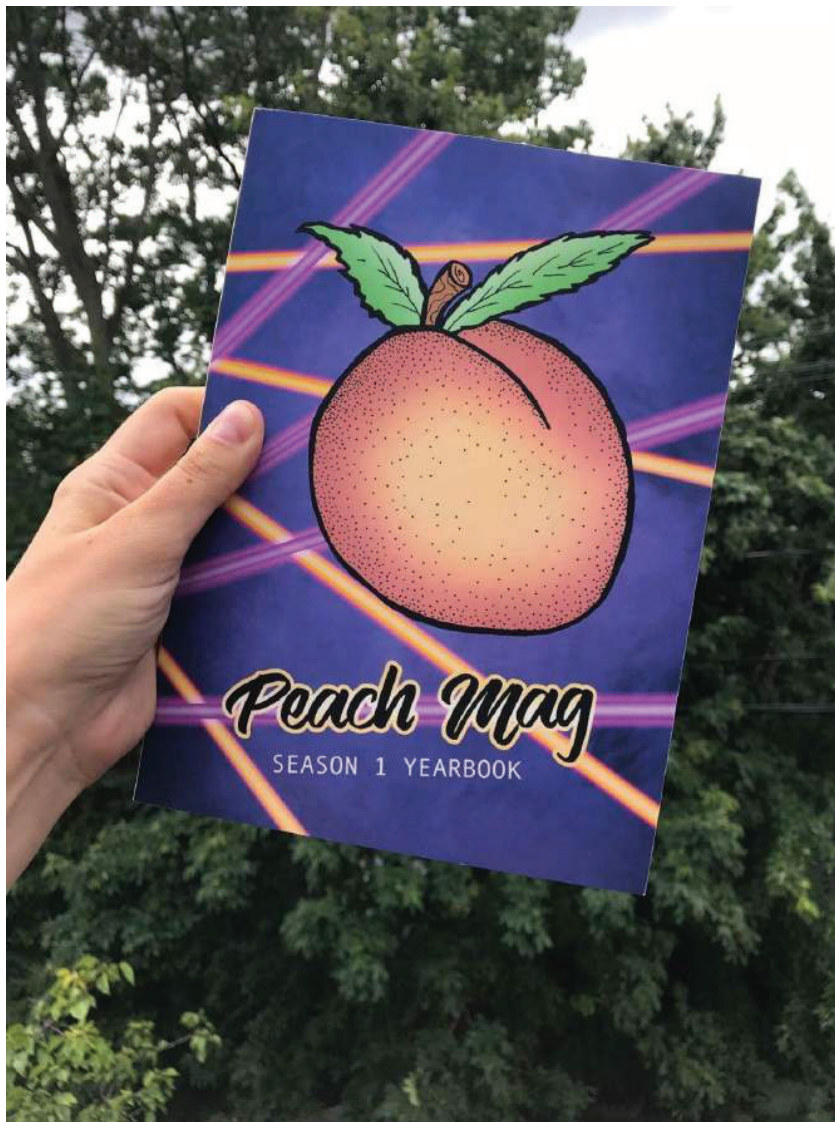




ISSUE 31
AUGUST 2017

THE SHABBY DOLL
READER

PEACH MAG'S SEASON ONE YEAR BOOK INTERVIEW



with editors, Rachelle Toarmino, Matthew Bookin & Bre Kiblin

LK: Congratulations on one year of Peach Mag and the publication of your yearbook! How does it feel to be one year old?

R: Tysm! <3 I feel tremendously proud of what we've managed to accomplish in the last year and I'm excited to reveal everything we have in store for *Season 2*. Peach is the love of my life.

M: I'm dumbfounded, in the best possible way, that we've been doing this for a full year. Peach has become the engine that drives most of my days forward. The last year has completely evaporated.

B: It's really the best feeling! We've gotten into a really great flow as a team and really established our brand. We're like new parents or something.

You've been publishing new stuff online twice a week for the past year. What made you want to... get physical? (Sorry.)

R: Publishing online is very important to us because it makes Peach accessible, free, and potentially limitless. We want our writers to be able to immediately share their work with friends or colleagues and to be able to access their features at any time. That being said, creating an anthology as a sort of artifact has been something we had always hoped to do. Bre and I worked together for many years at Buffalo's oldest independent bookstore, Talking Leaves...Books, so we know firsthand the ways in which print is struggling, and while I believe in the power that ebooks and digital magazines have in making access to literature and information more democratic, I still really treasure my book collection and the sentimental and aesthetic appeal of being surrounded by physical books. I also have an amateur interest in book arts and design, and the yearbook has given me an outlet to experiment with that.

M: Putting out a physical edition at some point was something we talked about doing even before the magazine had a name. The idea's always been there. Rachele's vision for the yearbook was so crystal clear and compelling, that I just implicitly trusted her and what she wanted to accomplish with it. The Peach yearbook theme is something that could continue to resonate every year from here on out, and I see now that we really needed to introduce it during our debut year for it to make sense going forward.

And it's a yearbook? So you wanted to show some growth in every writer/artist's work?

R: Exactly! The theme of our freshman yearbook is growth. We asked thirty-three *Season 1* contributors to submit a second poem, story, or visual art series to be published alongside the original that we published at Peach. The only guideline for the second piece is that it must be either very new or very old relative to the original. In this way, just as we're considering how much we've grown in the last year, we asked our contributors to do the same with regard to their own work. So the yearbook is like a *Then and Now* of style, content, and form. Something I've been thinking about a lot in the last year is how

uncomfortable and strange it often feels to have an older piece of writing published. I wanted to somehow recreate that sentiment by confronting our contributors with it.

Any big surprises in terms of how the work has tended to develop?

R: For the contributors who chose to submit a very new second piece, it's interesting to see how the politics and pop culture of the last year have made an impression on their work--Leah Clancy and Noah Falck immediately come to mind--which really makes the yearbook feel like a historical memento. We've seen some contributors get more personal with their work, while others have tried to focus on broader themes. We've seen poets experiment with new forms--Caroline Rayner submitted an essay-like second piece, and Hannah Nathanson and Sage Enderton submitted list-style prose poems. Lydia Hounat, one of our visual art contributors, originally submitted these technicolor kaleidoscopic photographs to Peach that had a very man-versus-nature feel to them, but for her second series, she seemed to explore the impact of single colors on bare portraits.

This isn't a question as such, but when I was flicking through the book, I loved knowing that there were two pieces from every person... so when I had finished one, I immediately had another piece to look at. I think this is a great way to introduce writers & artists.

R: I think so too. It wasn't part of my main ambition with the concept, but the book now seems like an effort to fight against pigeonholing artists.

Tell us some highlights from the first year of Peach?

R: Having the opportunity to publish people who have been great inspirations and mentors to me: RE Katz, Janet McNally (forthcoming), and Noah Falck are all good friends and amazing Buffalo-based writers who I cherish and respect a ton. Establishing a local scene and making space for younger or underrepresented writers. Making new friends! <3 Meeting people IRL through our *Episodes* reading series. Likewise, going on tour and meeting all these people we've published. And doing all of this with two of my best friends.

M: Seeing our own tiny community of published writers online & irl slowly develop over the year has been really exciting. I feel like we have a small, but highly devoted, group of people that always interact with what we're doing, and it's been amazing to support each other.

B: Along with what Rachele and Matt said, I think it's been really cool to combine our two worlds, the online literary scene with what's going on in Buffalo. Introducing locals to online writers and vice versa has been the coolest part of what we do for me.

And some challenges?

R: Time management! Peach and my own writing aside, I'm a full-time teacher and a part-time graduate student, and I often struggle with finding time. Also when everyone was using the peach emoji to talk about impeaching Trump. That was a low.

M: Of course, escaping the ever looming specter of the (basically) dead Peach social network. It was my greatest point of stress when we decided to name ourselves PEACH MAG, and to be honest, I still worry about being associated with it. But, whatever, we are the one true Peach.

B: I second time management, also I wish people associated the peach with butts more.

Lol.

What's the most valuable thing you've learned in this first year? (Is this question too hard?)

R: Learning how to recognize and work with other people's strengths, thereby bringing them out and making the best collaboration possible. Of course, we have to do this when selecting and publishing work, but I also mean this in regard to working with my fellow editors. We're a great team. We each excel in different areas, and because we have such a small staff, it's possible to take preferences into account, i.e. *you seem to like to doing this kind of thing that you're also good at, so how about you take care of this*. In this way, a lot of what I've learned in the last year is about managing and delegating.

M: Learning true collaboration with other people has been a huge thing. I think in the past, it's been easy for me to "tune out" when things aren't going the way I'd want them to in a creative situation, but that isn't possible with Peach. There are aspects of the magazine that require absolutely honest input from all three of us, and that isn't always easy, but I think the push-and-pull of working together in that way has made the entire project a success.

B: The most important thing I've come to realize this year is just how incredible the online and local (Buffalo) poetry communities are. We've gotten so much love and support from our friends and one another, it's really been amazing.

How has working on the magazine affected your own writing?

R: In a big way, I have had to learn to make time for it. I can be a bit of a workaholic, and Peach is a great outlet for that, so the balance is tough. I also might have a better editing eye now. As for publishing, I do more research now into a mag or press before submitting. It's important to me that editors and publishers represent and promote their people well, and with kindness. I also take rejections much less seriously, as I know that there are millions of reasons a piece might be rejected: wanting to make more room for specific themes, the particular interests of the editors at the time of submitting, or lack of actual space, which is the most common for us at Peach, as we only publish eight people every month.

M: I'm far more critical of my own writing now. Also, for some reason, I feel myself becoming less interested in writing autobiographically.

It seems you've really been able to cultivate a scene in Buffalo, as well as an online community... We already know about the online stuff, but can you talk a little about your experience of launching the magazine on a local level? What has it meant for you IRL?

R: We've been really lucky. I think our community has been missing something like Peach for a while, and so when we launched, we saw a lot of immediate support. I think our focus on younger writers, underrepresented themes, and publishing online has made us seem like a fun and inclusive alternative to what can often feel like a stiff and established scene that can be too dominated by a certain type of writing or writer. Local organizations like Just Buffalo Literary Center, *The Public*, Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center, *The Buffalo News*, and others have helped us tremendously with their collaboration and promotion.

M: I feel more aware of all the different ways in which Buffalo is a creative space, since launching Peach. I think I had a very narrow view, somewhat self-imposed maybe, of the lit culture in the city, and now that we're very much a part of it I can better appreciate the other people and institutions working toward similar artistic goals. Buffalo seems more expansive, but also somehow more intimate, because of Peach.

Will there be a yearbook launch?

R: Heck yeah, [come through](#).

So what happens after this? Season 2? Will submissions be open?

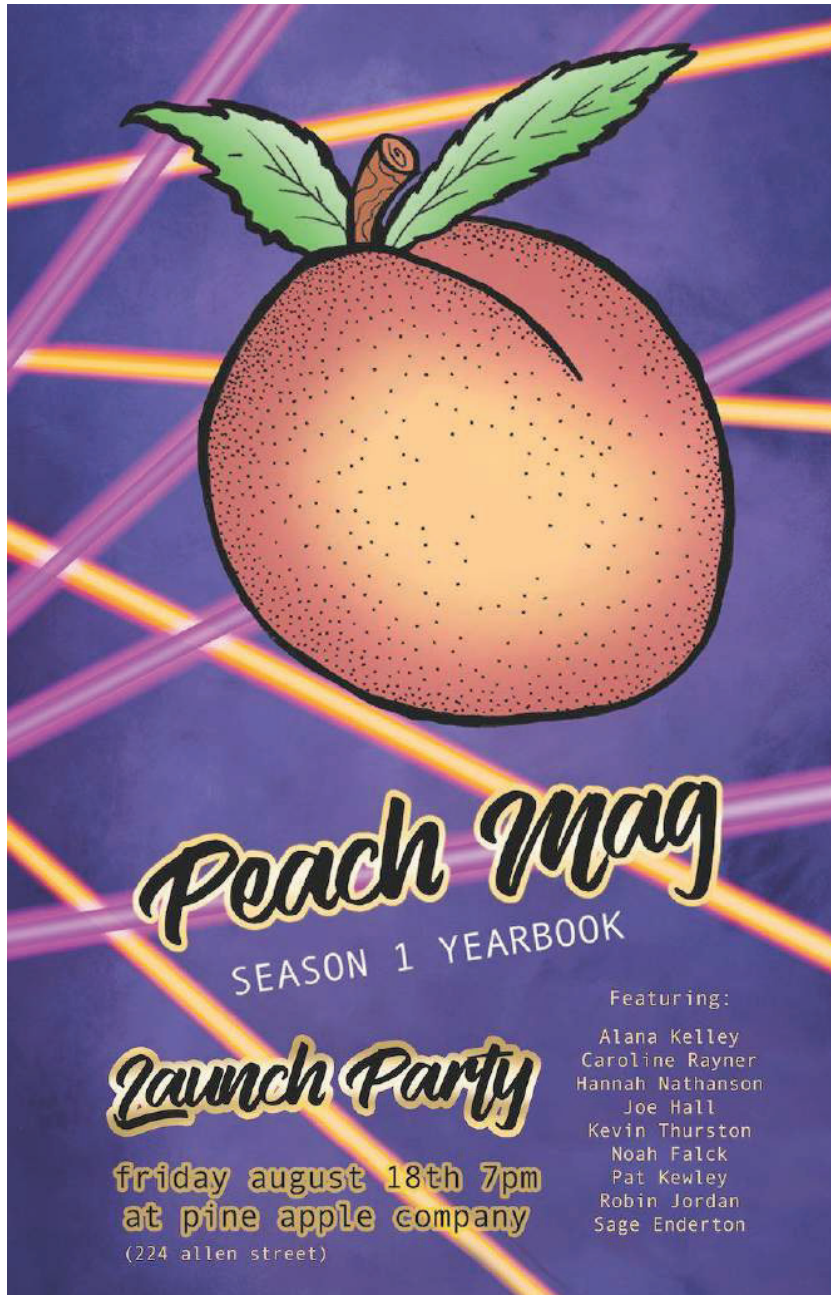
R: Submissions just closed and won't be open again until sometime in the Fall. *Season 2* has a new color scheme and feel to it; *Season 1* was very fresh and summery so we wanted to play with some warmer blushes and bronzers. More *Episodes*, another tour (preceded by a Peach Goth summer camp probably), a second yearbook with a new concept, and some exciting stuff that I'm not allowed to share yet. I'd also love to bring on another editor or two. More local outreach to high schools, more collaborations with local arts organizations. Some plans for funding.

How recently did you eat a Peach?

R: I ate some slices of peach loaf (~banana bread, highly recommend) yesterday and a nectarine this morning. *Punchy Peach* vaping as I type this. One of our friends works at the local grocery co-op and peers into my basket with a knowing grin every time I'm in there. I'm very committed to our brand.

M: I bought a mixed bag of dried peaches and mangoes the other day. Despite what the packaging claims, I suspect the bag is fully peached.

B: Eating a peach as I type this. Always repping our brand.



Peach Mag's season one Year Book is [available to order now](#)
You can follow [Peach Mag on Twitter](#)

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