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Alan Zale for The New York Times

ON HIS OWN Adam Stone at his Mount Kisco home, where he works on The Examiner.
By JOSEPH BERGER
Published: November 18, 2007

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CALL its number and The Examiner sounds like a bustling metropolitan newspaper.

"You have reached The Examiner," says the chirpy recorded voice. "For

advertising, press 1. For business inquiries, including billing, press 2. For news, press 3 ... "

When you learn that these extensions lead to a couple of cellphones, and that the paper is actually run from Adam Stone's basement in Mount Kisco, you realize that The Examiner operates with more than a few of the megaphones and billows of smoke that gave the wizard of Oz his illusion of grandeur.

Nevertheless, in two months, this improbable newspaper, with a dozen refugees from the Yorktown Heights-based North County News, has managed every week to hit the diners and delis of Mount Kisco and Pleasantville. It has attracted enough advertisements to pay two employees — the publisher, Mr. Stone, and the editor, Martin Wilbur — assorted freelancers and the bills for printing two 24-page color editions every week that compete with a weekly published by the Gannett chain. The Examiner's articles have already struck a few nerves.

The Examiner proves that even in the Internet age, there is still a deep craving in suburban villages for a newspaper made of actual pulp that has stories about zoning and parking controversies, features photographs of high school athletes, and allows Main

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Street merchants and pols to advertise. "Build it and they will come" turns out to be true when a village has no weekly newspaper it can argue about.

It is also testimony to the audacity of Mr. Stone, its rangy, rumpled 29-year-old founder who fled the North County News in January. In early August, with Jimmy Stewart earnestness, he started scribbling on a legal pad what it might take to start a newspaper. Five weeks later, he was hand-delivering 2,000 copies from his Honda Accord.

"It's chutzpah," said his neighbor and business manager, Donna Cravotta. "He thinks he can do it, so he will."

In The Examiner's first editorial, Mr. Stone declared: "We're here to photograph your triumphs, to chronicle your tragedies, pay tribute to your good deeds, and capture your misdeeds." Sounding as sincere and portentous as Charles Foster Kane's first editorial, he added: "Newspapers aren't dead. They'll only perish if those who run them suffocate them."

The Examiner has risen amid the dust of a shakeout at the North County News, a 41-year-old weekly in the Yorktown and Peekskill area. The News had traditionally attracted a stable of underpaid and overworked journalists who, for the most part, liked working there. But after the owner, John Chase, died in 2006, his daughter, Carla Chase, took command and brought in new managers, including Bruce Apar as publisher and chief editor. As he said on his résumé, Mr. Apar had a track record of "targeting and monetizing market-driven audiences through print, event, on-line."

Writers not comfortable with regimentation rebelled. "We started hearing about synergy and matrix and all this stuff that was foreign to us," Mr. Stone said — and they chafed at the new rules. The most memorable, according to Mr. Stone and Mr. Wilbur, required female reporters to wear stockings in summer unless the temperature passed 90 degrees.

Mr. Apar said that he knew nothing of such a rule and that the departures of people who couldn't abide a new regime that was "holding people accountable for performance" had "worked out well for everyone."

After he left the North County News, Mr. Stone knocked about as a freelance writer (including for The New York Times). But as someone who had had a transformative experience starting a magazine as an undergraduate at [Hofstra University](#), he decided he could put out a newspaper.

"I thought he was a little bit crazy," Mr. Wilbur admitted.

Guileless Mr. Stone may seem, but like a fox. To attract young readers, he got high school students to contribute to a column, "Notes From the Teenage Underground." He learned that his mother-in-law's friend appreciated fine wines, so he got him to write "You Heard It Through the Grapevine." He recruited a retired New York Post columnist, Maury Allen, to write a sports column.

Ever since, it's been a day-to-day effort, with Mr. Stone and Mr. Wilbur claiming that they are putting in 100-hour weeks. Still, Mr. Stone, whose wife's teacher's salary helps the family's income, loves when a stack of papers is dropped off at the Pleasantville diner and people gather round to discuss its front-page articles. That picture was part of his founding fantasy.

We know what happened to Citizen Kane's vision, but luckily Mr. Stone doesn't have a copper fortune to allow him to spend wildly for oversize enterprises. Depending on the newspaper he turns out, the local communities will either keep him humble or humble him.

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