

FASHION

VICTIM

Pavement, a youth bible notorious for its provocative shots of young models, folded late last year. Simon Farrell-Green charts the rise and fall of the magazine, and its founder Barney McDonald.

In the end, *Pavement* magazine closed quite suddenly. In November, the news was announced: the street culture magazine, which had just released its 74th issue, would be closing after 13 years.

The previous week, editor Bernard “Barney” McDonald and creative director Glenn Hunt, who own the company which ran the magazine, ordered everyone out of the office for an afternoon, locked the door and had a terrific argument. A few days later, one staff member was told not to come in any more. Then the magazine closed.

Fashionable feathers were ruffled. Fashion editor Rob Niwa, who also works for menswear designer Murray Crane, found out the magazine had closed only after a friend read about it in the newspapers. Business manager Roger Murray had worked at the magazine for only five weeks after leaving a lucrative marketing job at CanWest. At least one employee would wait several months to get their final pay.

Interviewed in *The Herald on Sunday* that weekend, McDonald cited financial reasons: advertising was dropping off; it had been a hard year for all magazines; independent publishing is difficult, etcetera.

He struck a slightly bitter note, claiming the readership had not fallen but that, rather, advertisers had abandoned the youth market as if being marketed at was an issue of equality. “Maybe now,” he said with characteristic hyperbole, “advertisers don’t see the



BARNEY McDONALD, SEPTEMBER 2005.

SIMON FARRELL-GREEN IS A METRO STAFF WRITER. HIS LAST STORY WAS ABOUT MOTORHOMES.

potential in youth any more and market to upper-middle-class suburbanites who watch reality TV shows and want nice Italian basins.”

A few months later, in January, McDonald and Hunt threw the “Fuck Off *Pavement* Party” at Fu Bar, on Queen St. McDonald had been handing out fliers at the Big Day Out; an ad on bFM and George, voiced by Barney, proclaimed that “girls under 18 get in for free!” Tickets were \$10.

Doors opened at nine; of course, no one was there much before midnight, including the hosts. When I arrived at 11.30, a bunch of young hipsters stood around on the street, smoking. They were waifish, with black hair, long fringes and skinny jeans.

Downstairs, McDonald — who is short, quite stout and balding, with a spiked quiff of hair at the front surrounded by a moat of scalp — was bustling about, organising things. At one point he fetched himself a beer, went on stage and waved a strobe light around. He pushed assertively through the crowd, bobbing and ducking with swift, deft movements.

Hunt is short and skinny, with a thick fringe and almost furtive movements; he stood on a chair with a camera. I had half-expected them to be surrounded by admirers or, at the very least, a throng of past collaborators. Instead, few at the party seemed to care who they were.

A band, the White Birds and Lemons, started up. As they played, McDonald was down the front; at one point, he held up his right fist, with one finger extended, as if he was at a rave in the 1990s.

After an hour of this, a man with a big gap between his front teeth approached me as I stood in the corner, making notes.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

I’m researching a story on *Pavement*, I said.

“What?”

Pavement.

“Is that the band that’s playing?” he asked.

Er, no, it’s the magazine hosting this party.

“Oh,” he said.

PHOTOGRAPHER CHARLES HOWELLS, MODEL RACHEL LILLY FROM RED 11, STYLIST MARIAN SIMMS,
ASSISTANT TORI HOLDEN, MAKEUP MICHELLE L. THE COVER OF PAVEMENT HAS BEEN PHOTOGRAPHED BY RANJIT GREENWALL. DRESS BY CYBELE





TOP: A SPREAD FROM THE "LOST YOUTH" SPECIAL TEEN ISSUE, SPRING 2006. SECOND FROM TOP: FROM THE SEXY 69 ISSUE, SPRING 2005. ABOVE: PARIS HILTON IN THE AUTUMN 2004 ISSUE. RIGHT: THE COVER, WINTER 2004.

Pavement was a street culture magazine, which from the beginning specialised in grainy, black and white or muted colour photography, often with young models looking po-faced and with very little on. Up front, were short pieces on trainers, hoodies, shops, bands, labels or, oddly, models the magazine thought might be worth noting. In the middle, fashion shoots and, usually, a brainless transcription of an interview with a celebrity of some description. At the back, music and movie reviews.

It started in 1993, when Bernard D. McDonald (whose real name is the more prosaic Dean Michael McDonald) and Glenn Hunt started the magazine on a shoestring. The myth is well known. McDonald, then aged 26 and a freelance journalist, had been interviewing director Vincent Ward and declared that he wished he could interview such inspiring people all the time. He met Hunt, and they started work on the first issue, a black-and-white, staple-bound edition. They did it on a shoestring, with McDonald persuading a printer to print it on credit.

Street magazines flourished in the early nineties: as well as *Pavement*, there was *Stamp*, which McDonald had written for but become disillusioned with; *Planet*, edited by Russell Brown, and *Swerve*, edited by David McNickel. New technology, in the form of relatively cheap desktop publishing and personal computers, meant you could start a magazine for next to nothing. "We're only here," Russell Brown told this magazine in a story on the new publications, "because of new technology. And a sense of community."

McDonald, typically, was more forthright. "You have to believe in what you're doing," he said. "That's why you do it. You're filling a void, or at least going counter to the prevailing culture. You're attacking the mainstream culture just by existing."

Perhaps more importantly, the magazines gave advertisers access to a new, fragmented and cynical youth culture that had hitherto proved elusive. "We're all materialists," McDonald said. "Teenagers are now incredibly discerning because they are the experts of the advertising age. And twentysomethings are getting the income to support their aspirations... The youth market is probably the most volatile, but it's also the market that most readily spends money. They can't have a house so they'll buy clothes."

Love and belief aside, Hunt and McDonald were ambitious, shrewd businessmen. Grant Fell and Rachael Churchward were publishing *Planet* at the time. Things had not been going particularly well at their magazine for some time — it never had any capital and nearly folded a couple of times — but the arrival of *Pavement* hastened its demise. "They came along and got off the ground and just went," says Fell.

They had a strong business model, and were very organised. "They literally picked up a lot of our clients off us. Literally. Went along and said, 'We're the young fashion guys, these guys are all old'. By that stage we were about 30. They were really aggressive. We were really taken aback."

TOP LAYOUT: PHOTOGRAPHER KAREN INDERBITZEN-WALLER. SECOND FROM TOP: PHOTOGRAPHER ALEX FREUND. THIRD FROM TOP: PARIS HILTON BY LIONEL DELUY. BOTTOM: COVER PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROBERTO DESTI.



BERNARD D. McDONALD IN HAPPIER TIMES: LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHED FOR METRO IN 1994. ABOVE: OUT AND ABOUT WITH EMMA HARRISON, MARCH 2001, CAPTURED IN METRO'S SOCIAL PAGES.

When Fell and Churchward returned to publishing last year with *Black*, a fashion magazine, many saw them as competition for *Pavement*. Fell says they're different markets but notes the role reversal, 14 years on. He bumped into McDonald recently. "The irony is not lost on me," McDonald told him.

From the start, the magazine didn't pay stylists, photographers, models or writers — although they did start to pay contributors by the late 1990s, around 15 cents a word (low, given that the industry standard is between 40 and 50 cents a word). Many were irked over the years as the magazine got fatter and glossier: the tenth anniversary issue, its biggest ever, ran to an enormous 258 pages.

McDonald has defended this by saying that if they had to pay everyone, they couldn't run the magazine. Indeed, when a similar youth magazine, *Staple*, started in Wellington, it attempted to pay everyone and failed quickly. Which raises the question of precisely why, if the business model wasn't viable, they kept *Pavement* open.

Despite — or perhaps because — of this, *Pavement* flourished. Rachael King joined the magazine as the sales manager in 1996, after working at *Rip it Up* and in the next four years the magazine went from black and white to colour, from staple bound to perfect-bound. She remembers McDonald and Hunt as principled; they refused all advertorial. They were hard-working and passionate. "Sometimes those passions would overrun a little," she says. "Sometimes, we'd have to get out of the way of those passions."

At that time, she says, the magazine was beginning to turn over a reasonable amount of money. "Most of it went back into the magazine," she says. "The more advertising they had, the bigger the magazine got." Everyone worked very hard: there were only three or four full-time staff.

They weren't rich, by any means: when she left in 2000, McDonald was driving a small Peugeot. "In fact I think he may have shared it with Glenn."

In 1997 and 1998, *Pavement* won the Magazine Publishers Association consumer magazine of the year, beating many established, mainstream magazines run by large corporations. For local fashion designers and model agencies, the magazine was important: the relationships have always been close. Karen Walker remembers opening her first shop, in Newmarket, around the same time as the magazine opened. "I thought it was a good idea as a magazine," she wrote recently in an email. "In its second issue it started to find its aesthetic qualities and started looking good really early on."

Magazines and fashion labels are often engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship. The magazines need the designers to give them product; the designers need their clothes in magazines. "The designer needs the right media to show their product and the magazine need[s] the right product and the right names to be in their pages," Walker says. "In the fashion business the relationships between fashion media and fashion brands are symbiotic."

There's a wonderful sort of circularity to it. *Pavement* is cool because it has the right labels. Then, when it says something is cool, people believe it and then that label goes on to be cool, proving that *Pavement* knew what it was talking about. Still, the magazine was very discerning, and it was difficult to get into their pages.

"Barney is very very opinionated and he wouldn't mince his words," says Murray Bevan, of fashion public relations house Showroom 22. If a client got a mention, they were thrilled. "It was an indicator that maybe it did have the street cred you thought it did."

Did it lead to sales? "Unequivocally, no," he says. The

magazine refused to publish prices or stockist details. Where featuring in other magazines might lead to more sales, getting in *Pavement* was more about credibility. "[Its readers] are either the ones that already know," he says, "or they want the coffee-table chat."

Because the magazine's owners liked to find new talent, they did launch a lot of careers. Penny Pickard, now 26, was approached by Glenn Hunt and wife Amanda Hunt in the street, aged 14. She'd never thought of modelling before, but went on to do three or four shoots with them and then used that as the basis for an international career. "Glenn was really happy that I didn't have any modelling experience," she says now. The magazine liked its shoots to look "real". "Well, as close to realism as you can get with the fashion industry." It didn't bother her that the magazine didn't pay. "That's just kind of how it works," she says. "Even if you work for international magazines, it's pretty marginal."

Rather, the models and the model agencies were looking for the tear sheets, in much the same way as the fashion designers want their clothes in the pages. "*Pavement* was the only magazine that would pick up a brand new girl," says Amanda Betts, co-owner of Red Eleven Models, who placed a lot of models through the magazine in its last couple of years. A *Pavement* model had personality: McDonald and Hunt didn't want perfect, glossy girls; they wanted quirky, unusual models. Models with flat chests or freckles or no hair. "They quite liked big noses," she says.

Possibly the most high-profile of those models, in recent times, is the unlikely named Ziporra Seven, who featured on the cover of the magazine's "Lost Youth" issue, themed around teenagers. Betts found her at the Freemans Bay School fair, aged 14 and five foot three — hardly model material. Still, Betts liked the look of her. In the months since, there have been approaches

from international media, international ad campaigns and Dreamworks. "It has catapulted her career." One suspects it has also catapulted Red Eleven.

That issue, however, ran a photoshoot with 10-year-old Jess Thompson, and a rather racy shoot with Megan Hind called "Metamorphosis", which was meant to show a teenager's progression to sexual maturity — but really just showed Hind staring with bare breasts and dead-fish eyes at the camera.

ECPAT, which works to end the sexual exploitation of children, took issue. A complaint was made to the censor's office; *The Herald on Sunday* ran a picture of Thompson on its front page and a profile of Barney in which he said he'd go to jail rather than pull the issue, which was beside the point because by the time the censor made a decision, the magazine had folded.

TVNZ's current affairs show *Sunday* ran a story called "Too Sexy, Too Soon" on how magazines exploited youth: Thompson and Rose's mothers defended their daughters' involvement in the shoots. "We don't really look at teenagers' sexuality in our culture," said Ursula Dixon, Rose's mother. It also interviewed John McCarthy, a psychologist who works with sex offenders. "Images of a 10-year-old girl," he said, "exist in a magazine where there is quite sexually explicit material, so the positioning of the material in that magazine with the implied sexual content and the implicit sexual content that goes with it, I think, is the problem."

McDonald rejected that. "I can see their point but this issue and *Pavement* in general is not produced for men who get off on images of under-aged children and who abuse under-aged children. That's not what we do, that's not what we're trying to appeal to. If in fact anyone does, that's incredibly unfortunate." Later, he suggested Maureen Crombie, the chairwoman of ECPAT, should have got a share of the profits of that issue.

It wasn't the first time: McDonald has always raised the ire of conservatives and the magazine has been taken to the censor's office four times. One wonders if it was simply an attempt to prove that, indeed, it was sticking it to the mainstream. For the 69th issue, Spring 2005, the magazine ran the "Sexy 69 Issue". On the cover, it featured a nubile young couple who, on page — ha! — 69 were featured simulating sex on a mattress in homage to Andy Warhol's film *Blue Movie*. Warhol's film outraged the public in its time. *Pavement's* version is contrived, awkward and numbingly banal.

Sometimes the magazine was brilliant. It related things that, as culturally interested citizens, it's good to know. It ran pieces on young artists. It unearthed trends, bands and fashion types that mainstream media — whatever that means — missed. Somehow, McDonald managed to convince major international celebrities as diverse as Paris Hilton and Naomi Campbell to appear on its cover. For no fee. (Quite how Paris Hilton isn't "mainstream" I don't know. But it was still a coup given that she recently charged an Australian beer company a fee estimated to be between \$500,000 and \$5 million to wander around Bondi with an extraordinarily large handbag.)



SPRING 2006: A LAYOUT FROM THE "LOST YOUTH" SPECIAL TEEN ISSUE. OPPOSITE PAGE: THE COVER OF THE SEXY 69 SPRING 2005 ISSUE. BOTTOM: A LAYOUT FROM THAT ISSUE.

It had an obsession with nudity. It could be relentlessly upbeat, almost desperate to be as much a part of the scene as the young actors and fashion types it sought to anoint. And because of that tendency, it could be horribly self-referential. In the last issue, Barney interviewed Australian actress Melissa George, who then interviews McDonald. (Half way through, "B" for Barney changes to "P" for *Pavement*, which seemed somehow appropriate.) "*Pavement* will always be with me in one way or another," he said. "It's more than just a magazine, it's a state of mind, a call to arms, a rebellion against mediocrity."

In the same issue, the letters page, amid letters from readers complaining or raving about the teen issue, there were letters that seemed to have been dumped from Barney's inbox. "We've been indeed busy and touring Paris," began one, from "Colder", before describing making an album and how good it sounds. "And you? When do you invite us to New Zealand? Ah ah ah! Any plans in Europe or France soon? Let me know! Hope all is well with you."

At other times, *Pavement* was just stupid. In the last issue, the magazine ran a verbatim conversation between New Zealand actress Amber Sainsbury and her co-star Josh Hartnett; the pair were in New Zealand for the shooting of the horror flick *Thirty Days of Night*.

"That was fun going to see some local Kiwi bands last night!" says Hartnett mid-conversation, apropos of nothing.

AS: Yeah, The Tutts and Motorcade [sic]. They were fucking great.

JH: They were, weren't they?

AS: Genuinely good. I'd never heard of them before. People recommended them. I went in and I was rocking my arse off, although I did get whacked in the face by an enthusiastic dancer with a scarf.

JH: Was that the guy in the light blue?

AS: Yeah the guy in the light blue!

Over the years, the magazine took the mainstream to task: for criticising it; for missing the point; for not being cool enough. Perhaps it is critical, or perhaps it is missing the point, or perhaps

I am not cool enough, but the thing that annoyed me, and many others with a modicum of understanding of the English language, was that it was so badly written. McDonald has an easy style, but the other stories were often set-pieces that started in a roundabout way, turned on a quick little point and then heaped praise upon the subject. It often appeared they had not been proofread and, indeed, writers you speak to say their stories usually ran just as they were submitted.

As a teenager, I liked the magazine although it always had the vaguely uncomfortable effect of making me feel like I was missing out on something. I remember distinctly that it announced the return of the hoodie, which shocked me at the time. But even then, and many times since, I wondered whether it wasn't too much to expect that a magazine, which in its last issue ran a full-page excerpt from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and purported to be a cultural organ, might possibly use apostrophes properly. Or is that too mainstream of me?

I rang Barney. He's an avuncular chap, with a baritone voice. He can be quite funny, self-deprecating and he asks intelligent and pointed questions. He does small talk well.

I wanted to ask him what he'd got from *Pavement*, what need it had fulfilled in him. I wanted to know why he would rather close it than let someone else younger and more relevant take over. I wanted to know what the magazine's closure said about youth today. I wanted to ask how he balanced his claim to be sticking it to the mainstream with regular features on

PHOTOGRAPHER KAREN INDEBITZEN-WALLER

hair product and nice trainers. I wanted to know why he sometimes comes across as a pretentious twit. I wanted to ask him if he was, as people have said, a control-freak.

He didn't want to be interviewed, although we spoke for 40 minutes — off the record — after he said he didn't really have anything more to say about *Pavement*. Understandable, really: he's said a lot over the years.

He's inclined to take himself, and his magazine, a little seriously. "For kids in their mid-to-late high school years, *Pavement* inspires the hell out of them," he told *The Sunday Star-Times* recently. "I hate to say this but I have become aware I have become somewhat of a hero to them — my work in the magazine, not just me. I live the life, I live the dream of what our magazine is."

McDonald turns 40 this year. He was born in Taihape, his father a sergeant in the army. They moved from there to Palmerston North and then to Papakura when he was nine. His parents separated when he was 12, and he hasn't seen his father since. "He wasn't a positive influence in my life or in my brother's life or in my mother's life," he told *The Herald on Sunday* last year.

He grew up in Papakura, obsessed with Joy Division and New Order — he took on the name Barney after the band's lead singer — and reading British street magazine *The Face*. He left school halfway through the sixth form, got a cadetship on *The Manukau Courier*, went overseas, came back and did a Bachelor of Arts in sociology at the University of Auckland, where he developed a deep interest in pop culture. He would go on to surf the trends, migrating from New Order, to drum and bass in the 1990s. At the Fuck Off *Pavement* Party, he was down the front, dancing with the throwback eighties pop crowd. Full circle.

Much less is known about Hunt: he is a brilliant designer, it's said — "Visually Glenn was years ahead of most magazine art directors in this country," says Karen Walker — and he worked for a time on *Cha Cha*, a 1980s magazine that didn't survive the crash of 1987. King always found the fact that McDonald did all the talking bemusing because Hunt was the one who picked the models. "It always amused me when Barney was called upon to talk about fashion," she says. "I didn't really think he had much fashion sense, honestly. That was all Glenn. Barney was the nerd who liked New Order."

McDonald has as many detractors as he does loyalists. Depending on who you talk to, he's either charming and easy to work with, or tyrannical and tantrum-throwing. He is also relentless in his obsession with the new.

Many were pleased to see the magazine go. As the years wore on, McDonald began to burn through people, and even wound up employing people he had disdained only years before. "There are so many people out there who don't have a nice word to say about Barney," one associate says. "And that's because of the way he operates."

McDonald has spent a good portion of the past 13 years partying, and it shows in his face. He was engaged for six years, but that fell apart. He could usually be seen around town with one or two models or women in tow. A one-time *Pavement* contributor recalls being at a party with Barney at the St James. He, she and a friend happened to be in a toilet cubicle, as you do, and

as a way of saying thank you, the girls gave Barney a kiss. "And then he slipped his tongue in!"

Amanda Betts isn't having any of it. "He's never tried it on with my models," she says. "What he does in his personal life is his business." McDonald did invite girls to gigs, took them out on the town. "He always knew about them because he was interested in them as people," she says.

Rachael King talks often of the "myths" that surround *Pavement*. "I think people have this impression that it was party central, and there were young models hanging about getting corrupted," she says. People actually used to come up the stairs, looking for that sort of thing. They were disappointed, she reckons. "It was just a boring old office." McDonald and Hunt worked very hard.

McDonald lives in a house on Scenic Drive in Swanson that looks back to the city, has a large Helmut Newton black-and-white nude, thousands of CDs and is furnished with mid-century vintage furniture. "I remember driving along Scenic Drive, looking back at that view over Auckland and thinking 'This is the Mulholland Drive of Auckland,'" the *Sunday Star-Times* reported in 2005. "It really connected with me on an aesthetic and spiritual level."

In fact, the house is the focus of much opprobrium. "Like, he's got a house!" the fashion people exclaim when they're rounding on McDonald, as if after 13 years of running a reasonably successful business he should have no assets.

There are rumours. He and Hunt have made millions and are sitting on an enormous pot of money; they have several investment properties each; everything is in trust to protect them from creditors. Or, the other way: bankruptcy is imminent; insolvency looms. In fact, title searches show that they each own one house and both properties have mortgages. As far as can be ascertained, at best they're comfortable; at worst heavily mortgaged.

What is most surprising about *Pavement* is how few people were willing to talk about it. When I rang, there were shadows in their voices, second-guesses to their answers. Others, who I'd been told disliked McDonald, said they were on good terms with him and Hunt and didn't really want to be interviewed. Another told me being interviewed was seen as "backstabbing" the magazine. Even modelling agencies were reluctant to co-operate with *Metro* for the shoot for this story.

In the end, the youth culture that *Pavement* plumbed with such success moved on, and so did technology. Yoof these days don't buy magazines; they don't like to pay for their media. Instead, they're watching videos on Youtube and chatting with their friends on Myspace or, looking at photos of themselves from Friday night on partyphoto.co.nz. Advertisers, as a result, are shifting their advertising budgets into

public relations, hoping to embed their products rather than have them fenced off from editorial.

Nearly 15 years on from the founding of *Pavement*, the challenge for advertisers remains the same: how do they reach this shifting, amorphous crowd of young spenders? For a time, *Pavement* seemed to give them that access. Karen Walker is well aware of this. "If you look at what magazines are doing well they tend to be either collectable and visually magnificent," she says, "or middle-aged rather than youth driven. So even if the reader does think they're young and groovy, they're still also thinking about how the magazine will look on their coffee table in Meadowbank and that's probably not the *Pavement* reader."

"If you're in the business of telling people what's new you need to be telling them that every day now rather than every quarter."

But as well as a category decline, *Pavement* is seen as having peaked in about 2000 and slowly lost relevance as its owners aged. It stopped being audited several years ago, when its circulation was put at 12,500 and its readership at 89,000. It's seen as more teeny-bopper, less 20-something than it used to be.

Hunt left the magazine in 2001, only returning last year: reportedly, he and McDonald had begun to think in different ways; there was talk of McDonald buying Hunt out. (He resigned from the company that ran the magazine but is still a 40 per cent shareholder.)

Hunt and his wife Amanda moved to New York, where they ran a magazine called *Wish You Were Here*. Hunt returned to *Pavement* last year, reportedly as a last-ditch effort to save the magazine. Too late. "I think [McDonald] surrounded himself with people he could control in the end," says one insider. "Then there was no one standing up to him."

These days, McDonald is said to be writing a book on *Pavement* which will either be a glossy, coffee-table book, or a tell-all autobiography. Either way, you get the impression he can't really let go. The week before the Fuck... Party, he was interviewed by his friend, model Anna Fitzpatrick, on the fringe television station ALTTV. "*Pavement's* not dead," he told her. "It's dormant." •

