Remember *The Whole Earth Catalog*? Self-sufficiency, personal growth, utopian visions, innovative technology? That was then and now, it’s today. Not all that different in many of its listings but very different in point of view is the 1994 Main Catalog of Loompanics Unlimited, the dark side of the Power. It is the *Whole Earth Catalog* ruthlessly re-edited by Friedrich Nietzsche.

Somewhere in this catalog there must be a cookbook with a recipe for Hobbit *Tartare*. This is either the worst or, as it modestly proposes, “The Best Book Catalog in the World.” It is by and for people who want freedom, unabashedly understood as a question of power. (The distinction was always an elusive one.) Loompanics is visionary, almost mystical in its own way, but not *tunnel*-visionary. The Catalog pushes pragmatism past the point of fantasy to a place where its archetypal user, the soul of Rimbaud in the body of Rambo, struts unobtrusively — a Road Warrior with outside interests.

On paper at least, Loompanics and its customers are not too particular about what it takes to get what they want. Many of the
books available in this 254 page catalog (and in precious few other places) tell how to do the sort of things best left undone in a better world, and even in this one. Consider John Minnery’s 512-page “Kill Without Joy”: The Complete How to Kill Book; or Secrets of Methamphetamine Manufacture by “Uncle Fester”; or the lockpicking manuals of “Eddie the Wire,” one of which was Loompanics’ all-time bestseller until recently edged by the catalog itself. There are books on home-made guns and ammo — and home-made money (in the vulgate, counterfeiting). Often it is point/counterpoint: assassination manuals but also Dead Clients Don’t Pay (bodyguarding); lock-picking manuals but also home and business security manuals. On which side of the divide to place the formerly available How to Rip Off a Drug Dealer — by “Rex Feral” — is not my call, happily.

So many Loompanics authors (the discerning reader will have surmised) employ pseudonyms — or, to put it another way, have something to hide — that I propose hereafter to dispense with quotation marks when I mention authors like Adam Cash (Guerrilla Capitalism and How to Do Business “Off the Books”), Tony Newborn (Secrets of International Identity Change) and Judge X who, if he really is a judge as he says, has good cause to postpone past retirement taking credit for How to Avoid a Drunk Driving Conviction.

Pretty scary stuff, eh? Not to worry — too much, anyway. Loompanics mail-order mayhem hasn’t launched the 50,000 recipients of its catalog — up 100% in three years — on any apparent crime wave. Or maybe it’s point/counterpoint so let’s call it a wash. Then again, the mischief-minded might have bought Ninja: The Invisible Assassins so how are we to know? Admittedly this book no longer appears, as it did in past years, in the catalog (or is it still there but nobody can see it?)

Avowedly egoist and amoralist, Loompanics has a reputation as more reliable than many mail-order outfits, much the way atheists usually lead more ethical lives than Christians. Self-interest is the reason. “So controversial are the books we offer,” writes founder-owner Michael Hoy, “that most magazines will not allow us to ad-
and Science of Dumpster Diving is not only practical, it's hilarious: the author grew up in a family of super-scroungers who lived like lords. It is not exaggerating too much to praise this book as both a critique of our world of waste and an aspect of what we can — what we'll have to — do about it.

For Loompanics, victimization is voluntary insofar as it is avoidable. You can survive and even prosper during the bad times while awaiting utopian salvation (whether or not it ever comes to pass). “Be here now” — or make my day! The title of a crime-prevention volume by an ex-con says it all, almost: Don’t Become the Victim.

How does it all cash out? Surely not in martial-arts marauding. With schoolchildren running amok with assault rifles it’s silly to fret about Loompanics selling instructions for homemade zip guns. A goodly share of homicides are committed by the police. Having read they originals, they have no need for the Loompanics reprints. Like pornography, Loompanics looks like an incitement to sin but it’s really a substitute for it. Its important self-defense books are the ones, not about throwing knives or razor-fighting, but about how to stay out of kill-or-be-killed situations in the first place. To these, no one should object, and I know of no other source for so many of them.

If Loompanics readers are attuned to its wavelength as I receive it, they pursue liberty through privacy, more by avoidance than approach. That is what relates a book on how to hide stuff to a book on how to live year-round in an RV.

Vonu: The Search for Personal Freedom may express the core Loompanics aspiration. During the 1960’s the author, “Rayo,” espoused the rational transformation of one’s lifestyle to gain liberty through self-sufficiency. Since authority is too strong to resist, the Vonuan becomes invisible to it by removing to the wilderness, alone or with his mate. Finally Rayo, who was rigorously logical, acted on his own logic. In 1974 he vanished. As his editor says, “his goal was always to become invisible to coercers (meaning mainly Government). He might have come to believe that this required
could only be the Promethean right for you to know anything that
They know.

As befits the self-styled “lunatic fringe of the libertarian move-
ment,” Loompanics insists that since governments know all about
violence and dirty tricks, individuals too had better learn the score.
Is such rhetoric too facile to excuse a torture manual? Maybe, but
isn’t it a pensive point that many Loompanics manuals on the Dark
Arts are simply reprints of government publications like Covert
Surveillance and Electronic Penetration and CIA Field Expedient
Incendiary Manual (“An excellent manual for fire departments and
law enforcement,” says the catalog)? Other titles raise real creden-
tials challenges. Is it absurd to consider How to Start Your Own
Country? It’s been done before: we’re living in one. Basement
Nukes, a classic of Loompanics deadpan dadaism, ostentatiously
eschews all emotion and all ethics, yet this futurist fantasy forces
reflection about just who is qualified to possess nuclear weapons
if you and I aren’t.

Libertarianism is no longer the Loompanics reference point it
once was. The Case Against a Libertarian Political Party wasn’t
reprinted, according to Loompanics editor Steve O’Keefe, proba-
bly because there are not many libertarians left who need convinc-
ing. Loompanics departs from the uptight anality typical of liber-
tarians who would rather not know How to Collect Illegal Debts (the
author is in the pen) and who’d never even consider Fighting Back
on the Job. The libertarian glossy Reason banned all Loompanics ad-
cvertising because it adjudged one ad for The Right to Be Greedy “mis-
leading” (translation: disconcerting to libertarians), which seems to
bespeak a certain lack of faith in the self-corrective harmony of the
free market.

While self-empowerment is the primal product — 54 titles be-
gin with the words How to — Loompanics is doing increasingly
good service as an original and reprint publisher of pure ideas.
The line includes a photoreprint of Eunice Minette Schuster, Na-
tive American Anarchism (1932) and an essay collection by Bolton
Hall, a Henry Georgist who anticipated several New Age and Green
themes. Loompanics reset and reprinted Ragnar Redbeard’s Social
Darwinist diatribe Might Is Right (1896) and The Autobiography of a
Criminal (1807) by Henry Tufts, the earliest American career crim-
inal to have published his autobiography.

More often the heretics who scale the soapbox are contemporary.
There’s the World Power Foundation calling for a new, colorblind
slave society to meets the needs of the many to submit and, more
important, the few to dominate. Two of its postulates: “Excitement
is more important than equality” and “Might and right are not ex-
actly the same, but after a few years no one will notice the differ-
ence.” Or Principia Discordia, a speedball concocted of Zen, conspir-
acy theory and American whose mythos inspired Illuminatus! by
Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson. One of its authors, Kerry
Wendell Thornley, testified before the Warren Commission about
a Marine Corps buddy he wrote a novel about: Lee Harvey Oswald.

Rip-off manuals — bread-and-butter stuff for Loompanics — are
the perfect product from the vendor’s viewpoint. No need for
planned obsolescence: the better they sell, the sooner they evoke
counter-measures which compel their frequent revision or replace-
ment. Thus The Paper Trip I begat The Paper Trip II and some
spinoffs, all explaining how to document a new identity. Act now
before Congress finally mandates a national ID! New ID in America
is one of the best (more realistic, less boosteristic). The tax loop-
hole books wear out even faster. How to Find Missing Persons, an
eye-opening introduction to the methods of private investigators,
has an aura of authenticity, although it grossly overestimates the
number of states where arrest records are open to the public.

If a lot of these books promise more than they deliver, that may
be their most important message: to accept no authority at face
value, not even their own. Take two of the more notorious recent
releases. How to Sell Yourself to Science disabused me of what little
interest that held for me, although if I didn’t have scarred kidneys,
I could see selling one in some circumstances. Whereas The Art