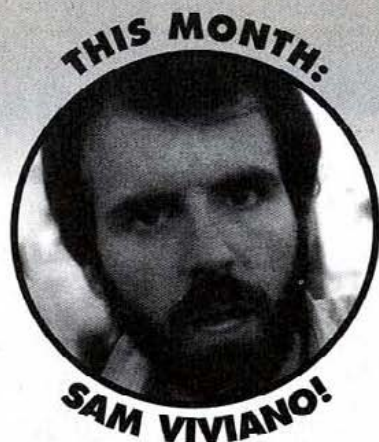


# MAD's IDIOT OF THE ISSUE!

## SAM VIVIANO FAQs (Frivolous, Alienating Questions we asked Sam!)



**Q:** What is your favorite MAD article that you drew?

**A:** I have a great deal of fondness for the *Titanic* parody in issue #369.

**Q:** Who do you consider your influences?

**A:** In vaguely chronological order: Tom Viviano (my dad), Dave Fleischer, Carl Barks, Roy Crane, Carmine Infantino, Jack Davis, Mort Drucker, David Levine, Norman Rockwell, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Velasquez and many more.

**Q:** Who is your favorite non-MAD artist?

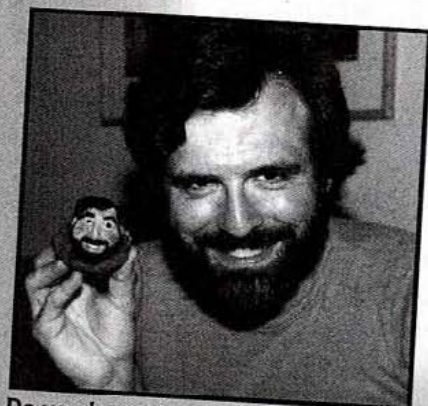
**A:** If we stick to the world of humorous illustration, my answer today would be Ronald Searle. Ask me again tomorrow, and I might say Robert Crumb.

**Q:** Who is your favorite non-MAD writer?

**A:** It may be a toss-up between William Shakespeare and John Donne, but I have a great liking for Raymond Chandler as well.

**Q:** What constitutes "beret weather"?

**A:** One drop of rain will do it.



Do you know the muffin MAD? Sam with a pastry doppelgänger created by one of his students. Oddly, Sam was not teaching a cooking class at the time.

**Q:** Tell us about your teaching career.

**A:** I taught a class in caricature at New York's School of Visual Arts from 1981 through 1992. Among the students who took my class and went on to professional careers (although the two events are not really related) were Jeffrey Wong, Hanoch Piven, Eric Palma, André LeRoy Davis, Ray Alma, and James Bennett. Among SVA students at the time who did not take my class were Bob Fingerman, Kyle Baker and Drew Friedman. (I wonder what ever became of them?)

**Q:** Name some other magazines you've drawn covers for.

**A:** A lot you've never heard of, trade magazines like *Hits* and *Institutional Investor*, as well as practically every title published by Scholastic Magazines between 1980 and 1990.

**Q:** You live in New York City — do you have any outstanding parking fines?

**A:** No, they're all inside sitting down.

**Q:** Who is your favorite Marx Brother — and why?

**A:** I was going to give you a joke response and say Gummo, but the honest answer would be Harpo.

**Q:** Wayans Brother?

**A:** Also Harpo.

**Q:** Who is your favorite Muppet?

**A:** Oh, I love them all...but Rowlf the dog is special for me because I remember him from way back on the Jimmy Dean show in the sixties.

**Q:** Pick a MAD contributor and describe them in one word.

**A:** Hermann Mejia: unbelievable. Al Jaffee: inspirational. Johnny-Boy Caldwell: HAMMERHEAD! (That's three, isn't it?)

**Q:** What was your favorite MAD trip?

**A:** My first one, to Switzerland and France in 1987, remains dear to my heart not only because it was my first, but because I also got to bring my wife-to-be, Diane, to Paris. (The Swiss part of the trip was for MAD staffers only; no significant others!)

**Q:** Does anything that happened on a MAD trip stand out in your memory?

**A:** Many of the stories, such as making Bill Gaines the foil of our re-enactment of *A Night At the Opera's* stateroom scene during the Bermuda cruise in 1991, have been better told by others. (See Dick DeBartolo's *Good Days and MAD!*) But my most vivid memory may be of Bill bringing us for lunch to his favorite restaurant in the world, a tiny little place in Paris called "Chez l'Ami Louis." There, we ate enormous portions of paté de foies gras, confit de canard, roast chicken and frogs' legs, washed down with plenty of wine — and then, because only half the MAD gang could fit in the place at one time, Bill returned with the rest of the crew and had the full meal again for dinner!

**Q:** Where did you go to school?

**A:** St. Matthew's elementary and DeLaSalle high school, both in Detroit, and the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where I picked up that valuable Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

**Q:** If you could have dinner with three living or dead people, who would they be?

**A:** The three living ones. Dead people can be so picky about their food.

**Q:** What's your favorite musical about giant, singing cats?

**A:** Is there one?





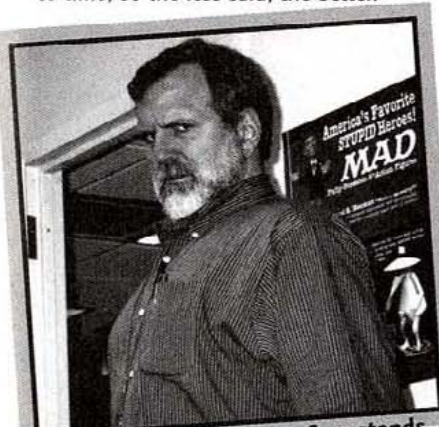
Not quite the 3 Tenors – (l. to r.) MAD co-editor Nick Meglin, MAD artist Tom Richmond and Sam all duded up for the National Cartoonists Society's 2003 Reuben Awards.



Sam with his wife, Diane, who, judging from her comfortable smile, has never seen the picture of his "Oberon" Halloween costume.

**Q:** The art of Jack Syracuse – loving homage or shameless hack-work?

**A:** As the present Art Director of MAD, it wouldn't be polite of me to criticize the work of a so-called artist whom my editors force me to assign work to from time to time, so the less said, the better.



Sensing a camera nearby, Sam stands perfectly still until the threat has passed.

**Q:** Is there a caricature you are particularly proud of?

**A:** I've always loved Al Hirschfeld's portrayal of Sammy Davis Jr. in concert.

**Q:** Let me rephrase that: is there a caricature you've drawn that you're particularly proud of?

**A:** In 1976, I saw John Lennon and Yoko Ono in a drug store in New York City and quickly drew them in the sketchbook I was carrying. It's a very rough doodle, but I got their autographs on it!

**Q:** You do a lot of cartoon and comic strip parodies – are you comfortable working in those different styles?

**A:** It's fun to explore what makes another artist's work tick, but I wouldn't want to make a career of it...

**Q:** Better "Popeye" foil – Alice the Goon or Bluto?

**A:** Alice is cute and Bluto is entertaining, but the Sea Hag is the real deal.

**Q:** Favorite *Trading Spaces* designer?

**A:** Was that the movie with Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd? If so, the person who designed Jamie Lee Curtis' costumes gets my vote.



As Shakespeare's Oberon, Sam gets into the Halloween spirit...and many fistfights, we imagine.

**Q:** What's your all-time favorite Halloween costume?

**A:** Oh, there have been so many...but portraying a half-naked Oberon on the stage at Irving Plaza in New York in front of hundreds of Graphic Artists Guild members in 1982 sticks in my mind. (And ours! See above!—Ed.)

**Q:** What's your favorite musical?

**A:** I should say something by Stephen Sondheim, but in truth I am a sucker for *The Fantasticks*, by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt.

**Q:** What do you feel when you bite into a York Peppermint Patty?

**A:** Mmm-mmmmm!

**Q:** What was the last movie you viewed or rented?

**A:** Well, my wife just rented *The Pianist* for me, but I was too busy playing Tetris on the computer to watch it. The last movie I actually sat all the way through in a movie theater was *Finding Nemo*. I was with my nine-year-old daughter Alicia at the time.

**Q:** What's the largest number of people you've ever drawn in one illustration?

**A:** For ten or fifteen years, I did the cover for *Institutional Investor's* annual issue naming the country's leading stock analysts. At one point, the list got up to 85 or 90 people.

**Q:** If you weren't an artist, what would you be?

**A:** Art Director of MAD Magazine.

**Q:** If you were conducting this interview, what question would you have asked yourself?

**A:** Can I treat you to lunch?

## THE STATS:

**First MAD appearance:** Cover of MAD #223 (June, 1981)

**Number of MAD issues appeared in:** 96

**Number of MAD articles in this spotlight section:** 6

**Number of MAD covers drawn:** 13

**Number of years as MAD's Art Director:** 5

**SALUD, SAM!**