

MAD's IDIOT OF THE ISSUE!

BARRY LIEBMANN FAQs (Forgettable, Ailing Questions we asked Barry!)



Q: What is your favorite MAD article that you wrote?

A: Only one? I have a lot of favorites. "The Lost Playground of Kids Your Parents Always Told You About" is one. (Editor's note: see it on page 42!) "MAD Weighs the Pros and Cons" is another one. (I've been reusing its format quite a bit.) And I'm especially proud of my 9/11-related articles, such as, "What is a Terrorist?" and "How Everything Changed after 9/11" (which I dropped off less than a week afterwards). That I was able to mine any humor out of that tragedy still amazes me.

Q: Who do you consider your influences?

A: Outside of MAD magazine itself, writers such as Robert Benchley and Woody Allen. Classic comedy performers such as Bob Hope, Jack Benny and, of course, Groucho. In fact, anybody at all, known or unknown, who made me laugh.

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

A: Moses, Jesus and Buddha — I want to see who grabs the check first.

Q: Would you just split the bill four ways or would you figure it out item by item?

A: With Moses, Jesus and Buddha, you'd think one of them would spring for the whole table.

Q: If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

A: My image as the first great sex symbol of the 21st century. It's sooooo shallow!

Q: Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Sylvester — are speech impediments just naturally funny?

A: Only if they're caused by a falling anvil.

Q: Tell us about some of your non-MAD work.

A: As a freelancer, I've had articles printed in *The New York Daily News*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and other publications where the editor went temporarily insane. I've also done a number of projects for DC Comics, of which *Bugs Bunny Magazine* and the *Looney Tunes* comic book were the most fun.

Q: Is it hard to write for the Roadrunner?

A: Yes, especially his dialogue. It's a challenge to phrase "Beep! Beep!" properly, so that it reflects his inner turmoil and deep-seated frustration at not being able to settle down.

Q: You wrote for the comic book *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* — now that it's all over, where the hell was she all that time?

A: Behind the refrigerator — next to the coleslaw.

Q: You still use a typewriter to write MAD scripts — where do you buy your ribbons?

A: Porno book stores. At least that's what I say I'm buying when I'm caught going into one.

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

A: Timothy Shamey: Da Vinci-esque. (Anybody who can draw a caricature of me that doesn't make me want to run immediately to a plastic surgeon is a genius in my book.)



Barry as George Burns in a garden production of the play "Serpent's Tooth" in New York.

Barry visiting Groucho Marx's childhood home — right before the unfortunate "flaming bag of dog poo" incident.



Q: We understand you do work in theater — what are some of the productions you've been part of?

A: I'm glad you consider acting "work." Most people don't. Anyway, I've performed in classics, such as "Uncle Vanya," "Our Town" and "The Comedy of Errors" (but not the original productions). I've also done children's plays, improv, radio plays and readings with The Instant Shakespeare Company. But the play I most enjoyed acting in was "A Night in Elsinore," which was "Hamlet" as rewritten for Groucho Marx (and other comedy characters). I was a Stan Laurel-ish Guildenstern.

Q: Have you ever had a folding chair thrown at you?

A: No, but when my theater group performed in a community garden, a can of soda and a fire cracker were thrown at us from the surrounding buildings. Another time, dead pigeons were found on the stage arranged in what appeared to be some sort of voodoo sign. But it happened in New York, so we took it in stride.

Q: What actor should play you in a movie about your life?

A: Me, I could use the work.

Q: Who is your favorite Stooze?

A: George W. Bush — he's provided me with lots of comedy material. Okay, okay, I'm kidding. I meant to say Curly. (He's the Vice President, right?)

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

A: The Donnell Library has been showing a series of old musicals, so the last movie I saw was some silly old piece of fluff called, *If I Had My Way*. (I never heard of it either.) I like old movies because I don't have to keep saying, "Can you believe that somebody's getting paid for this crap, and I'm still plugging away for MAD?!" (Boy, that really bugs other moviegoers.)

Q: Who would you not want to be stranded on a desert island with?

A: A cannibal, a leper or Sean Hannity. (On second thought, the leper can stay.)

Q: Finish this sentence: It was so cold...

A: I thought I was married to Martha Stewart.

Q: What is your favorite book?

A: My bank book.

Q: What is the worst gift you ever received?

A: An old book that I had left over a friend's house and that, months later, was given back to me as a Christmas/Hannukah present. On the plus side, the gift-wrapping was nice. Otherwise, no gift you receive from a friend can really be considered bad...because nowadays you can sell any old crap on eBay.

Q: And that you've ever given?

A: Anything MAD-related.

Q: The biggest misconception about you is...

A: That because I write for MAD and Looney Tunes, I don't do what could be considered "real work." You get no sympathy from people when you tell them that you were slaving away all day on that Pepe LePew joke.

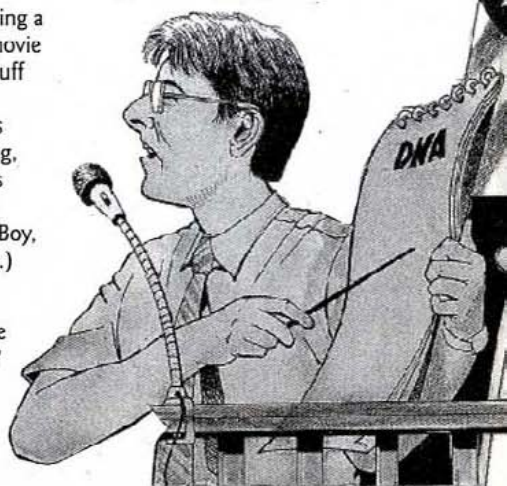
Q: Do you have a nickname?

A: Studsly. But, unfortunately, I'm the only person who calls me that. Is "Hey, Shmendrick" considered a nickname?

Q: Bigger appeal of The Olive Garden: unlimited salad or unlimited breadsticks?

A: Breadsticks — you can swat the roaches with them.

Timothy Shamey's "Da Vinci-esque" depiction of Barry in MAD #363.



Q: What constitutes hat and scarf weather?

A: When I walk outside in a t-shirt and shorts.

Q: Who will you miss more, Dan Rather or Tom Brokaw?

A: Neither. We're all forming a heavy metal ska band.

Q: Have you ever "Googled" yourself?

A: Yes, and it's better than computer sex. (At least I think it's better than computer sex, since I've never actually had sex with a computer.)

Q: Lindsay Lohan — overexposed strumpet or promising ingénue?

A: What's the difference? By the way, I always wanted to play the overexposed strumpet in my high school band.

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

A: Why did you spend so much effort on this interview when no one's going to read past the second question?

THE STATS:

First MAD article: "If Children Treated Their Parents the Way Their Parents Treat Them" (MAD #208, July, 1979)

Number of MAD issues appeared in: 52

Number of articles in this spotlight section: 9

SALUD, BARRY!

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