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★ Samples from every MAD artist profiled!

★ Artists discuss their influences, favorite pieces and MAD memories!

★ Sergio Aragonés, Al Jaffee, Bill Wray and 65 other MAD artists profiled and interviewed!

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★ Over 50 years of the best MAD artwork — including front and back covers, ad parodies and interior pages!

★ Special chapters on the creation of a MAD article and how MAD magazine is made!

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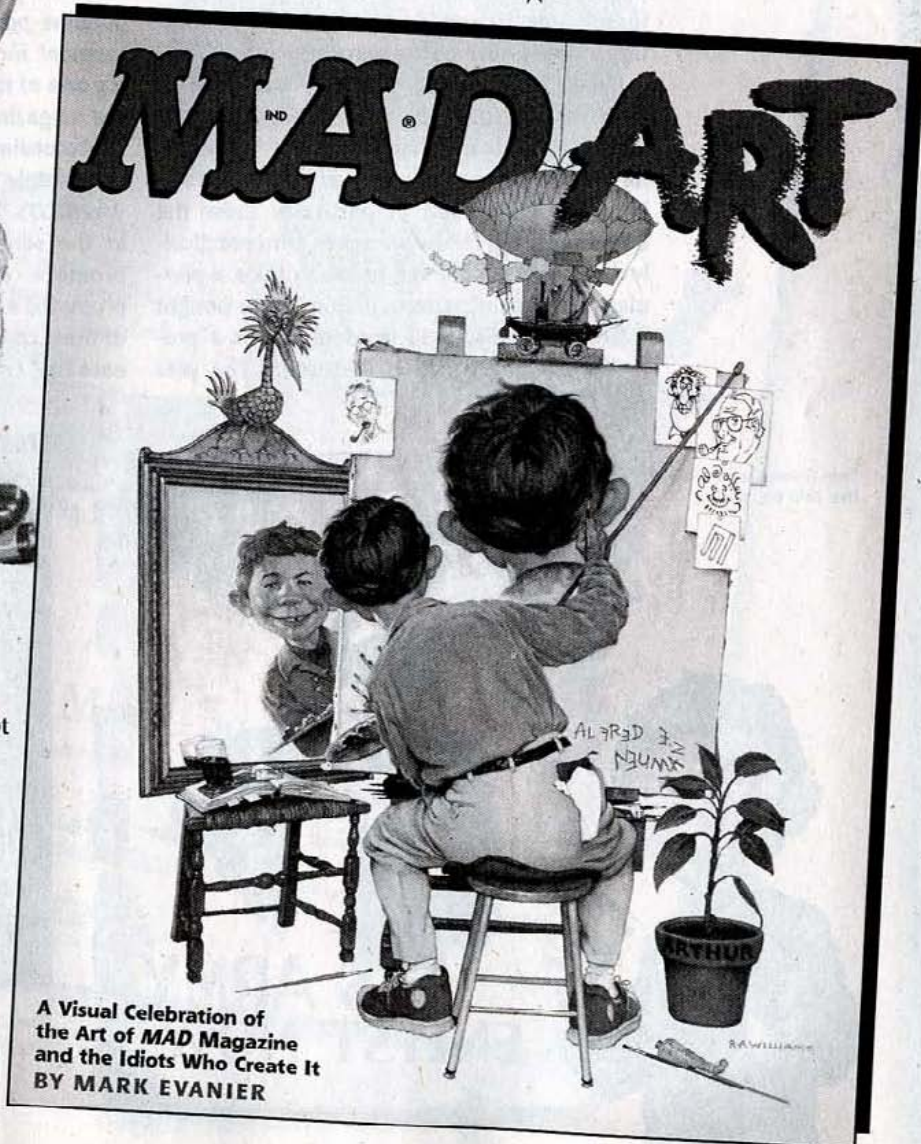
★ Much more!



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FRANK KELLY FREAS



YOUR CONCEPT of the definitive Alfred E. Neuman may depend on when you started reading *MAD*. If it was between the years of 1958 and 1962, you probably hold a warm spot for Alfred as rendered by Frank Kelly Freas. He was *MAD*'s cover artist during those key growth years, creating not only more than thirty classic portraits of the gap-toothed kid for the magazine, and almost as many more for *MAD* paperbacks and specials. Somehow, he also found time to render some of the publication's finest advertising parodies, as well.

Freas (pronounced "freeze") was born in New York in 1922. His art schooling came at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh and, while there, he dazzled others with his painting and drawing. One illustration in particular drew the attention of his fellow students, who practically dared him to submit it to *Weird Tales*, a popular magazine of science fiction. "They bought it," Freas recalls, "and suddenly I was a professional science fiction illustrator." The year was 1950.

Before long he was near the top of that field, winning the Hugo Award in 1956 and again in 1957 for his stunning illustrations and cover paintings. That honor got him in the door at *MAD*, where he did several interior art jobs before cover artist Norman Mingo departed on what would turn out to be a four-year leave-of-absence.

"Frank imparted everything he did with a great credibility," wrote Jerry DeFuccio, who was *MAD*'s assistant editor at the time. "His rendition of 'Presenting the Bill—a Great Moment in Medicine,' looks so much like a genuine portrait of Americana that it takes a moment for the gag to hit you. When it does, it's one of the funniest jokes to ever appear in the magazine."

According to Maria Reidelbach in *Completely MAD* [Little, Brown, 1991], this ad was *MAD*'s "antidote to an overdose of schmaltz in the sentimental Parke-Davis campaign to promote doctor worship. This parody... prompted a number of letters from doctors. One of them congratulated Freas on inventing a disease that could be treated with the instruments

Cover, illustrated by Frank Kelly Freas (*MAD* #48, July 1959)



Cover, illustrated by Frank Kelly Freas (*MAD* #64, July 1961)

shown, one of which is a gauge used in aircraft manufacture."

While working for *MAD*, Freas continued to illustrate science fiction books and magazines (and win more Hugos) before deciding to focus on that field. "I was burning out on Alfred," he

recalls. "I was afraid everyone I painted would wind up looking like him." Freas took his leave and never looked back... except that fans are always telling him which of his *MAD* covers were their favorites. "And I'm always flattered that they remember them," he says.

"Crust," illustrated by Frank Kelly
Freas (*MAD* #43, December 1958)



POTRZERIE HIGH SCHOOL
To the parents of *Melvin Furd*
*Your son is running around with
a teen-age gang...one of these days,
he'll get his teeth knocked out!*
Herman Klotz
Principal

Nirman
Rockwell

"Look, Mom—no more cavities!"
Crust Gumpaste helps guns take the place of teeth by coating them with a hard
white enamel finish! Just the
thing for punks who get their
teeth knocked out from running
around with teen-age gangs.



© 1948, The Procter & Rumble Co.

Guaranteed by
Good Housekeeping

Fluidsteel is a trademark for
Procter & Rumble's exclusive
liquid metal gum-coater.

BASIL & MONTE WOLVERTON



BASIL WOLVERTON didn't do much work for *MAD*: A few pages and one cover for Kurtzman, six short pieces under Feldstein. Still, he may hold the *per capita* record for influencing more readers to become cartoonists than any other *MAD* artist. Most of the artists interviewed for this book mentioned falling in love with his work—an amazing achievement, given how generally unavailable the majority of his output was.

Wolverton was another comic book veteran—born in Oregon, he grew up in nearby Washington, where he lived most of his life. Most comic book artists resided within commuting distance of Manhattan. Wolverton cited his geographic disadvantage as a key reason why his work looked like no one else's: "I didn't draw like other artists because I didn't know other artists."

The ornate, exaggerated Wolverton style fomented controversy among those who argue about such things. Roy Crane, the prominent syndicated cartoonist and creator of "Buz Sawyer," is said to have claimed physical illness at the sight of a Wolverton drawing. This, fortunately, was a minority viewpoint. Editors loved the artist's wicked sense of humor and how things looked in a whacked-out and wonderfully-weird Wolverton world. One editor loved the fact that Wolverton, living as far from

the industry as he did, was unaware of going rates, and would usually accept less.

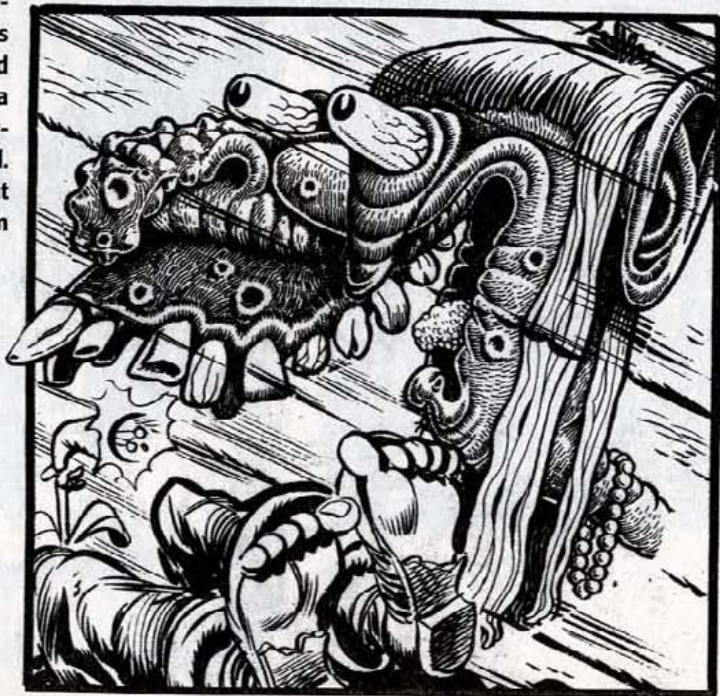
That wasn't why they wanted him in *MAD*, but regardless, they didn't want him for long. "I loved Wolverton" Kurtzman once explained, "but once I saw the printed comic, I said, 'Hmm...this doesn't really fit in.'" Ultimately, Feldstein came to much the same conclusion; as a result, the artist contented himself with other work—a local radio show and, of all things, comic book Bible tales. (From *MAD* to Moses...)

Basil Wolverton passed away in 1978. Sixteen years later, his son Monte began proving that a weird cartooning style can be hereditary. "I was nine when my father bought me a little drawing board and urged me to start drawing," he recalls. "He didn't care what I drew or even if I drew like him, but he wanted me to draw. So I drew." Eventually, the younger Wolverton would become a professional artist, working primarily in graphic design and magazine art direction.



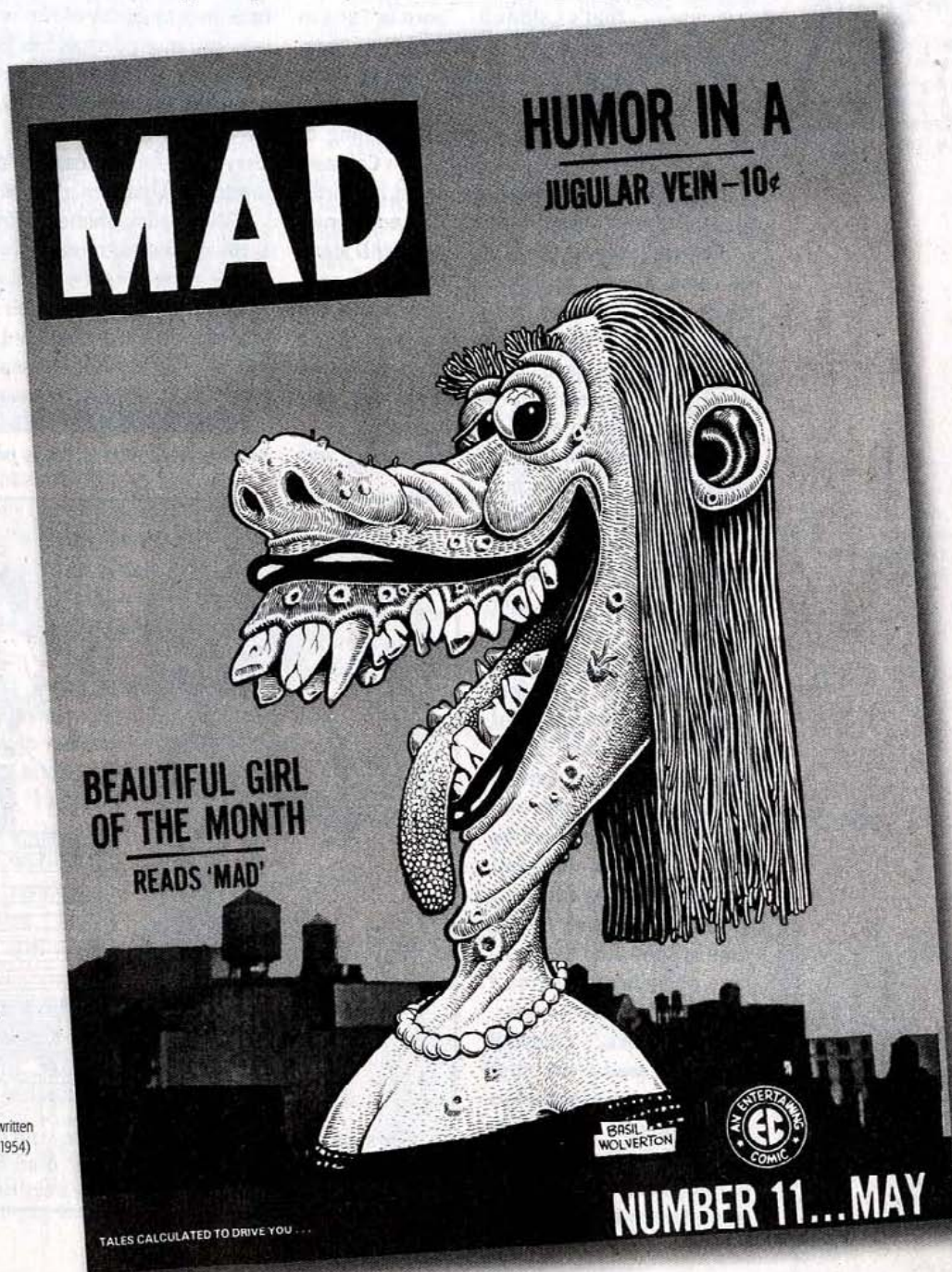
"The Face Upon the Floor," illustrated by Basil Wolverton, written by H. Antoine D'Arcy (*MAD* #10, April 1954)

Basil Wolverton only drew this one panel in a story for *MAD* that was otherwise drawn by Jack Davis. Reader response ran the gamut: Some were utterly delighted; a few ripped the panel from their comics and mailed it back to register disgust. His subsequent appearances evoked similar feelings, which may explain why he didn't do more for the magazine.



"Around 1974, my father had a stroke and he wasn't able to draw much after that," he recalls. "It occurred to me that now no one was doing that style, and I felt it was up to me to keep the family tradition alive." Monte Wolverton began drawing like his father—but not all the time because, as he explains, "Other magazines demand a cleaner, happier style."

But not *MAD*. In 1994, the editors there decided the time was right for the Wolverton style to resurface in their magazine, and contacted Monte. Today, he keeps it in the family, taking his father's approach but putting his own, unique twist on whatever he does. Readers seem quite happy to be witnessing *Wolverton: The Next Generation*.



Cover, illustrated by Basil Wolverton, written by Harvey Kurtzman (*MAD* #11, May 1954)

JOHN CALDWELL



FUNNY GUY, THAT CALDWELL. Draws weird cartoons about people who are narrow in the head and wide in their lower extremities.

That's Caldwell... born in 1946 in Cohoes, a city in upstate New York. "Cohoes is an ancient Indian word that means, 'Landfill,'" he explains.

He is lying. It means nothing of the sort. But leave it to John Caldwell to have an edgy line about his birthplace. The man even *draws* with an edgy line.

Caldwell was six years old when *MAD* started (nine when it morphed into a black-and-white mag). "I was a fan of everyone in the magazine," he says, telling the truth for a change. Special faves were the guys whose work most resembled magazine gag cartoons—Don Martin and Sergio Aragonés.

As he grew up, magazine cartooning was where he was headed but not right away. He worked as a cartographer and a short-order cook. He labored on a produce truck and operated a handkerchief-folding machine and somehow squeezed in a few terms at Parsons School of Design, an art school. While working at a civil service job, he found the time and courage to start submitting gags to several different periodicals of the day.

That day was some time in 1969, and the leading periodicals weren't buying...but *Screw* was. "Just my luck," Caldwell sighs. "I made my first sales to a newspaper so vile I couldn't show it to my family." (The publisher of *Screw*, Al Goldstein, was a close buddy of Bill

Gaines, but that didn't get the kid into *MAD*. That wouldn't happen for a while.)

In the meantime, Caldwell began turning up in magazines he could show his family. He became a mainstay of *National Lampoon*, which was extremely popular in the late sixties/early seventies. Therein, his irreverent drawings appeared amidst work by two of his cartooning heroes: Gahan Wilson and Charlie Rodriguez. They brought him many a fan, but the one that mattered most was a guy named Meglin.

"When Nick phoned, I knew who that was," Caldwell smiles, remembering a call that came in the early-to-mid-seventies. "I was very flattered that someone on the staff of *MAD* knew me, knew my work." Indeed, Meglin was calling not to offer work—*MAD* was then overstocked with artists—but just to praise a good cartoonist.

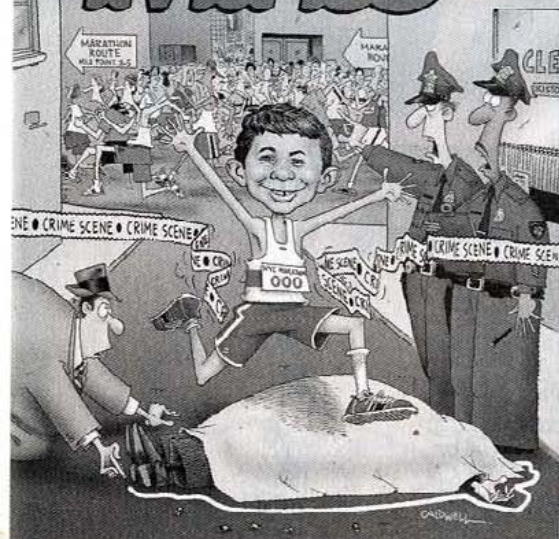
Caldwell wangled an invitation to tour the *MAD* offices where, he is proud to say, "I even

"Gross and Beyond Gross," illustrated and written by John Caldwell (*MAD* #307, December 1991)



THE NEW YORK CITY MARATHON
GEORGE W. BUSH vs. TV'S WEST WING
THE 25 LEAST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN SHOW BIZ!

MAD



editors thought, and one that would require a certain style. So instead of giving it to Clarke or Jaffee to finish, they assigned the art job to—John Caldwell.

At 36 years of age he became a *MAD* artist, but due to success elsewhere, it was just for one issue. He'd sold a syndicated panel cartoon which, in a fit of ingenuity, someone named "Caldwell." That kept him busy and away from *MAD* for a few years. When the strip ended, the *MAD* editors were delighted to have his undivided attention.

Nowadays, the guy is oft-seen in their pages. Sometimes, others draw his warped ideas. Usually, he does. "The gags themselves—they're the fun part—pour out of me fairly fast," he says. "When it comes time to do the finished drawing, I slow way down."

MAD doesn't occupy his every waking free-lance minute. "Some weeks I work on nothing but *MAD*, but I make time to submit gags to other magazines." Caldwell cartoons appear in *Playboy*, *The New Yorker*, and all the major publications. He's even turned up in that repository of unrestrained hilarity, *The Wall Street Journal*. (Laughing at Caldwell is a nice counterpoint to weeping over the stock market listings.)

Least favorite *MAD* jobs: "Anything involving likenesses. I'm not a caricature artist like Torres or Drucker. When I'm finished, it sorta looks like the person but it really doesn't."

Favorite *MAD* job: "The one I'm working on...or maybe the next." Funny guy, that Caldwell.

Unpublished cover, illustrated and written by John Caldwell (*MAD* #411, November 2001)

This cover by John Caldwell was off to the printers for *MAD* #411 when the events of September 11, 2001 occurred. It seemed like the wrong time to be jesting about crime and death in New York, especially with this image of yellow police tape, so the cover was changed—to an extreme close-up of Alfred with the American flag filling his dental gap.

got to meet Don Martin." But, as he goes on to explain, "They didn't need any artists. My style didn't seem to be the 'look' they wanted, and I didn't draw that well." He adds: "I don't draw that well now, either. But I was worse then." (Some would quibble with the first part of that statement.)

Still, you can't keep a good cartoonist down. By 1975, Caldwell was selling his bizarre drawings to enough outlets so that he was able to flee civil service and become a full-time cartoonist. That's going from the Most Secure Job in the world to the Least, but it worked. Every magazine, it seemed, was full of Caldwell humor...

Every one except *MAD*. He sold them a couple of articles, but they were drawn by others, including Don Martin. Then, in 1982, he submitted a gag in his usual rough-sketch manner...a darn good gag the

A PASSING GAS DOG...



A ROVING EYE DOG...



"Specially Trained Dogs for Everyone," illustrated and written by John Caldwell (*MAD* #333, January-February 1995)