

MAD's IDIOT OF THE ISSUE!

JOHN CALDWELL FAQs (Fabulously Aberrant Questions we asked John!)



Q: Who do you consider your influences?

A: Besides the MAD pioneers and Woody Allen and B. Kliban, there was this guy on the old *Ed Sullivan Show* who would walk onstage wearing a big coat and pulling a wagon. His whole act consisted of filling up the wagon with large items he pulled out of the pockets of his coat. At the end, he would tip his hat to the audience and leave pulling this wagon that was chock full of bunches of bananas, musical instruments and a couple of live animals behind him. Today, that man would probably have his own hit sitcom.

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

A: Duck Edwing...AFLAC-ish.

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Q: Thanks. Care to attempt that in haiku form now?

A: I would, but my Haiku forms don't seem to be in order at present.

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Q: Who is your favorite non-MAD artist?

A: Red Skelton.

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Q: Who is your favorite non-MAD writer?

A: That would be Damon Runyon.

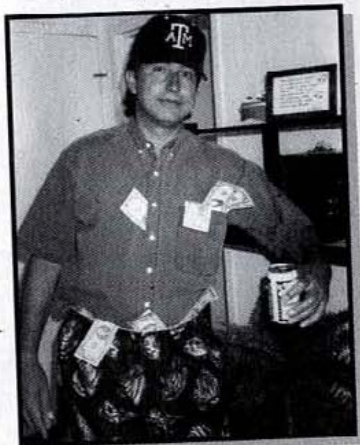
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Q: Which do you prefer: *The Bachelor* or *Joe Millionaire*?

A: Neither. I'm an Ozzy guy. I like my reality TV slightly unintelligible and profanity-driven.

Q: What was your favorite MAD trip?

A: I was only along for the last two: the cruise to Bermuda and the week in Monaco. While topless models on Mediterranean beaches generally have it over knock-kneed guys in ties and Bermuda shorts, I'd have to go with the cruise. That one was, sadly, Bill Gaines' final MAD trip and it was a pleasure spending even a little time with him and (his wife) Annie.



▲ We don't know the story behind this picture—but we suspect it's directly related to John's lifetime ban from both "Hooters" and the First Bank of Saratoga.

Q: Many of your characters wear giant plaid pants. Is there a related traumatic experience you'd like to share?

A: Well, as an infant I was trouser-fed, but I'd really rather not talk about it.

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Q: You used to work as a cartographer. Who do you prefer, Rand or McNally?

A: McNally, definitely. I have his bust in my study. He had a nice rack for an Irish guy.

Q: Where did you go to school?

A: St. Joseph's, St. Bernard's, Hudson Valley Community College and Parsons School of Design. (I would have included the Famous Artists Correspondence Course, but I didn't go to that school, it came to me.)

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

A: Anyone with a cell phone.

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Q: Could you name some other magazines you've drawn for?

A: Well, actually, they pretty much already have names, but I'll give it a try: *Naked-Women-So-Hot-They'd-Never-Give-You-A-Second-Look-Monthly*, *The-Yikes-My-Stock's-In-The-Toilet-Daily* as well as *The-Impossible-To-Get-Through-One-Lousy-Sentence-Without-Having-To-Look-Up-Some-Big-Word-Weekly*. There's more, but John Ficarra has drummed it into my head that things are funnier in threes.

(editor's note: until they take John's suggestions, those magazines are known as *Playboy*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New Yorker*, respectively)

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Q: At McDonald's, do you supersize?

A: Sometimes, but I thought we weren't going to delve into my sex life.

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Q: What's the strangest thing you've ever bid for on eBay?

A: A slightly-used lozenge once belonging to Willie Nelson.

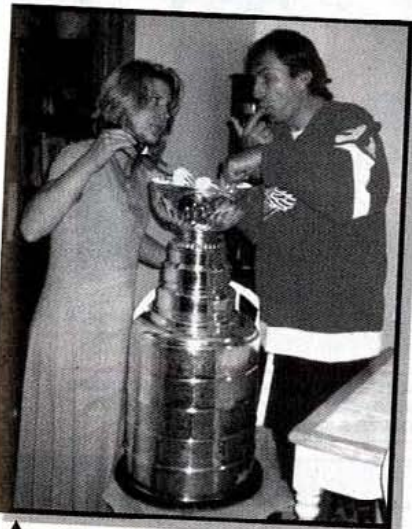
Q: Who is your favorite muppet?

A: The short one with the hairy body who's always rolling around on the floor drooling and...no, wait, that's my favorite MAD editor.

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Q: What is your link to the Stanley Cup?

A: My daughter Kristin's husband, Tim, is an equipment manager with the Detroit Red Wings. That makes my wife Diane and I Red Wings-in-law. When the team wins the Cup, as they have thrice in the last six years, Tim, Kristin and grandson Tyler get it for a day and throw a huge party. Diane and I assume the roles of the Randy Quaid-type relatives you're sort of obligated to invite to your Cup party to slobber over the free food and guzzle cheap liquor from organized sports' most coveted and tradition-rich trophy. We're proud to do our part.



▲ John and his daughter, Kristin, drinking from the Stanley Cup - tarnishing not only the trophy, but also the rich tradition that accompanies it.

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

A: Having had the opportunity to attend a big league Monaco vs. Lyonnais soccer game with Mike Snider, and both of us behaving like a couple of low-life Franco-trash Soccer hooligans, will stay with me forever. Incidentally, according to Mike, the final score of that game was 1-0, while I remember it as a 1-1 tie. This minor difference of opinion, brought up whenever we get together, is just enough fuel to keep our bleacher-clearing riot alive in perpetuity. Allez, Monaco!



◀ John, performing some routine road maintenance, we think as part of his court-mandated community service.

Q: What is the capital of Minnesota?

A: The name escapes me, but the longitude is around 93 degrees.

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Q: What is your favorite sport and team?

A: Football. And I've been following the Giants since I was ten years old. Nick Meglin is the serious Giants fan around MAD and for some reason, when I see him, I love shouting out the name of some long-forgotten Giants player to see if Nick remembers him. Hey, Nick...ARNIE GALIFFA!

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Q: Who is your favorite Keno Brother?

A: Ollie, the little-known third one they keep in the attic in a constant state of varnish.

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Q: What is the best MAD article you've ever wanted to write that MAD wouldn't let you?

A: "The 15 Surefire Nocturnally-Oozing Signs That You've Hired the Wrong Hooker." Sometimes I just don't know what they're thinking about.

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Q: What is the worst cartoon you've ever managed to sell?

A: There have been so many bad ones. My generally pathetic demeanor has led to a number of what I call "sympathy sales." But one that does come to mind right now (and I can't really describe the action in detail since MAD XL is distributed to so many church groups and youth organizations) carried the caption, "He likes you!" and pictured two men and a small dog on a leash.

Q: May we reproduce it?

A: Thankfully, no. It's been long ago spayed.

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Q: We understand that you enjoy the ponies. What is your one piece of advice to new bettors?

A: Don't wander too far. I may need a ride.

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Q: Starve a fever, feed a cold, or vice versa?

A: I prefer the former, you can count on much more interesting hallucinations.

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Q: You've written articles on "When Priests Go Bad" and "When Veterinarians Go Bad." Can you give us an example of "When Cartoonists Go Bad"?

A: Certainly: they crosshatch filthy messages into the backgrounds of otherwise innocent looking drawings. (See issues #383, #397, #405, #407, #412, #415, #422 and MAD *How To Be A Successful Dog* pgs. 27 thru 116.)

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

A: So, what's with the ascot, handsome?

THE STATS:

First Mad Article: "A MAD Look at Some Unfinished Sentences" (MAD #202, October, 1978)

Number of MAD issues appeared in: 117

Number of MAD articles in this spotlight section: 9

SALUD, JOHN!

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