

ANSWER Me!

WE HARDLY KNEW YE'



Illustration by Billy Spicer

ANSWER Me!'s first three issues were conceived, hatched, and rose from the pterodactyl's nest during the technologically decrepit era of the early 1990s. Just as I was unaware of "zines" when the first issue took wing, it wasn't until I bought a Mac Quadra and desktop-published issue 4 that I went online and started threatening people's lives in cyberspace, too.

In issue 4 (1994), long before the term "webpage" was as familiar a part of the common parlance as "blumpkin" and "Cleveland Steamer," I announced my intentions to publish an online newsletter called NETJERK. Due to the exigencies of marital infidelity, mounting scandals, and a savage-yet-lean-muscle-mass-building incarceration, my quaint electro-epistle was never to be.

In 2003 I opened a message board called the NetJerk Lounge on the site that is now www.jimgoad.net, inviting only friends and acquaintances whose verbal skills I respected—mostly. To be frank, one of the guys was a shady physician who'd kick me down free Viagra. I recently asked the NetJerks for their thoughts about ANSWER Me!, particularly the Myth of the Goads.

Alas, born of circumstance and timing, my immediate memories of Debbie Goad will always be fond ones. I had the great good fortune to know her in her absolute heyday, when she was an inextricable member of the irreverent finger-flipping duo who had recently captivated Hollywood. All our interplay during that period was fun and exciting.

I still get a warm sensation recalling how amazed I was to learn that, of all places in the Los Angeles area for the freshly printed, unassembled pages of *ANSWER Me!* to be stored, it turned out to be a workshop that was a literal stone's throw from my Burbank apartment. My girlfriend Sandy and I were able to casually saunter over and help new friends Jim and Debbie collate and staple issues until the wee hours. We were all rollicking and acting giddy throughout the process, yet deep down, I had a nagging sense that we were doing something terribly subversive like building bombs.

As it turns out, we were.

I also think back to the night when a big group of us piled onto the plush couches in the lobby of the famed Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. We all lit up big, foul stogies, causing everyone in a hundred-foot radius to immediately withdraw. After a few cocktails, I began grumbling about a personal situation that happened to involve the very landmark hotel we had just invaded. Months earlier, a female stranger had approached me about loaning some of my rare film memorabilia to the Roosevelt for their "Temporary History of Hollywood" exhibit. I was assured that the items would be securely displayed behind heavy Plexiglas® sheets. The gal making the pitch was a smartly dressed professional from a noted ad agency. I felt there wouldn't be any harm in allowing a few of my stored collectibles to get a little fresh air, so I innocently agreed. I later learned that the gal represented the items as her own and sold them to the hotel for a sizable sum. What's more, the exhibit was a permanent one. When contacting the thieving party proved futile, I went straight to the hotel and told them the story of my fleecing.

Not only were they unimpressed by my tale of woe, they outright threatened to sue if I ever attempted to extract my goods from their impressive display. Now, here I sat in their lobby, flanked by a herd of cigar-chomping friends, privately formulating a plan to rescue my purloined property so lovingly encased on a hallway wall upstairs.

Debbie got a glimpse of me muttering to Sandy in a sly fashion and became curious. She wandered over and quietly asked, "Is something wrong, Nick?"

"Yeah," I replied, "and I'm seriously thinkin' about making it right." Sandy explained the situation. Debbie did her familiar intake of breath that signified outrage and blurted out, "That's terrible! Do you need some help?" One can't easily forget an impromptu offer like that, but this was a personal vendetta. I asked Sandy to watch the hallway for me and, in a matter of minutes, I had boldly unscrewed and pried the thick and expensive Plexi-sheets away from my goods and reclaimed them.

Soon, Jim and Deb would move away and we began hearing dribs and



drabs about how miserable their personal situation was becoming. It was difficult for Sandy and I to digest, as we had come to think of Jimbo and Debbie as kind of a unit like we had become. Their legacy was strong, even for those of us who had intently watched it take root. Sandy and I would later realize that a great deal of our Pollyannathink was due to the fact that neither of us had ever been classically restless souls nor terminally ill, elements that inevitably turn routine into agony. Near the end, Debbie began desperately grasping at uncharacteristic cures and hurtling down dead-end avenues to soothe her pain and quell her fears. Perhaps that was the saddest aspect of her demise—she didn't die "hard" like celebrated rebels are expected to do.

The *ANSWER Me!* mythos has been a huge burden for Jimbo as well. Although he's the consummate adventurer, he's curiously consumed by a notion that people he holds dear will judge him harshly for his new enthusiasms and pursuits if they aren't as extreme or shocking as past endeavors. It's a comical curse, for Jim appears endlessly unaware that someone possessing his unique spirit, insight and honesty couldn't take a false step if he wanted to. Those who love him simply expect fresh territory to be covered in his inimitable passionate fashion, no matter how it has evolved. It's the trademark intensity with which he forges new ground that ultimately defines him to his good friends and true fans. Jimbo, we love ya for who you were, are and will be.

For a treasured moment in time, you defiantly challenged the world to *ANSWER You!* The replies flooded in, ranging from the sublime to the absurd. Some were grisly, and even dangerous, but a single, supremely satisfying answer never arrived. Sadly, it never does. Those of us who have surgically studied mankind's folly know a terrible secret—yours will be that particularly cruel and demanding fate that is reserved for only the deepest and most enduring of artists, and the persons, places and things that have wounded you will be praised, as well as damned, for all eternity, for they have prompted you to provide us all with a picture window into a breathtakingly remarkable soul.

—Nick Bougas

Periodicals Land in the 90s was nothing but a smug parade of alternative newspapers and 'zine-culture doodles.

In this suffocating moment, *ANSWER Me!* came on like a no-popes crusade to blast through the vacuum and kill or convert the czars of political and aesthetic correctitude.

Jim and Debbie Goad were a memorable team—and as much a team as 20 Mule Team Borax—comprised of a self-hating yid attached to a revved-up romantic goy. With *ANSWER Me!*, they hit the ball out of the park and affected our culture in countless ways.

I feel grateful to have known them and to have participated in the *ANSWER Me!* crusade.

—Adam "Uncool Me" Parfrey

I felt pretty sad when I first read that Jim and Debbie divorced, because part of the narrative appeal of *ANSWER Me!* was the rather romantic idea that it was the Goads—two demented but sharp-as-nails geniuses—against the world. The writing is what made *ANSWER Me!* special, but the romantic "frame" was very compelling.

Jim made Debbie seem wholly likable within the pages of *ANSWER Me!* I've often wondered if the "Debbie" and the relationship that was presented in the mags were things he *wanted*, but didn't really have, so he fleshed it out in print. Either way, he had ME convinced that Debbie rocked, and I totally believed he and Debbie were a destined match based on *ANSWER Me!*'s narrative.

It was only after Jim was convicted that I truly realized—based on her own unedited behavior—that Debbie kinda sucked.

Anyway, although I think *ANSWER Me!* is due for a reprint in a really big way, I've suspected with sadness in my heart that the original romantic trappings of *ANSWER Me!* will be, once and for all, bludgeoned beyond recognition. That's probably for the best, and it's definitely more honest and realistic, but it's still sad. Because when *ANSWER Me!* was coming out, the husband/wife frame was enchanting, and it appears to be something that will only ever be fully appreciated by those who read *ANSWER Me!* in the early/mid-1990s.

ANSWER Me! initially became a personal obsession because of its creative clarity and overall excellence in craftsmanship. *ANSWER Me!* landed in my lap because of its quality, not as a result of any controversy. I mean, I was fresh out of college when I first grabbed *ANSWER Me!*, and the quality of the writing and publishing set a standard for me to aspire to.

I'm glad I caught *ANSWER Me!* while in my early 20s, because I know I was at a point where I wanted to be an open-minded individual, while *ANSWER Me!* defined what it really meant to be open-minded.

—Patty Breen

I'm pretty sure I met Jim and Debbie before I saw a copy of *ANSWER Me!* Before that, I think I'd read enough mentions of it to pick up on the effect it had on others, but I never ordered a copy, and I doubt I saw it on the stands anywhere. My tastes at the time tended toward the idiosyncratic rather than the extreme. *ANSWER Me!* exists at the intersection, but having never held a copy, I had no idea.

I was aware that strangers who were most outraged by the Goads and *ANSWER Me!* seemed to be very pissy about it. People took personal offense. Their reviews and comments suspiciously never addressed the



THE NETJERKS REMINISCE ABOUT JIM, DEBBIE, AND THEIR ONLY CHILD

writing. Acquaintances would make brief negative comments, too, but they'd use surprisingly prudish phrases. Lots of people got very Victorian about it.

At the same time, a lot of people who were (let's face it) total twats were TOTALLY INTO IT. *ANSWER Me!* was mentioned in certain circles as fuckin' incredible fuckin' shit.

A few of my best friends gave me the clearest idea of what it was like. They would mention it whenever they talked about the best zines out there and who was most professional in self-publishing. They were aware of the Goads' reputation but didn't consider it all that relevant to whether or not *ANSWER Me!* was any good.

—Sean Tejaratchi

I received a copy of *ANSWER Me!* sometime in the mid-90s from a political cartoonist whose work I was web-publishing on a weekly basis. I had never

seen anything quite like *AM!* It seemed an amazing compound of the cringe-inducing humor of Doug Kenney combined with the malevolent intellect of the Marquis de Sade. Sure, there were plenty of poorly produced and even more poorly edited zinester screeds circulating, filled with tawdry electrostatic gore and middle-school enthusiasm for serial killers and such things.

Invariably, these were all entirely devoid of irony because they were all entirely devoid of brains. I scoured *AM!* for misspellings and grammatical lapses but couldn't find any; worse, this writer, one "Jim Goad," really knew how to turn a phrase. More to the point, *AM!* was a standout in pushing the limits of satire into areas that touch nerves and test souls. I know humor is deep when I have to ask myself why I'm laughing so hard. Naturally, I made a mental note to watch for what would be forthcoming from this talented author.

The news picked up the rest, mostly, in what was to follow the "Rape Issue," which I never saw, and prison, etc., ad hominem, ad nauseam. This is the lot of my favorite satirist? All I wanted was to read more of his stuff, not to read humorless accounts of what happened to it.

I was fortunate in that I happened to relocate to Portland during such time as I could find Goad's work in a local stripper rag. I found something in one of those that made me laugh out loud, written by a guy with a predilection for women with missing teeth. I only found out later it was Goad who had written it. By happenstance I met Jim on the street, and he later made me a NetJerk. Such an honor.

It may seem hard to believe, but there was a time when people could not comfortably discuss—even in jest—such matters as racial differences in ability, intelligence and criminality; that many women often fantasize about being raped; that domestic violence often results from predatory, aggressive females; that there is heavy ethnic Jewish influence in American media and politics; that slavery in the antebellum South wasn't entirely a white-on-black horror story, etc. People could even lose their jobs or get into serious trouble on account of going public on topics such as these, believe it or not. Jim Goad changed all that. By his example, we now know that anyone can write and publish with complete candor on such matters

as these—and more—with complete impunity and fully secure in the knowledge that he will be treated fairly and reasonably by both the public and the authorities. Thank you, Jim Goad! Thank you!

—Stump

I know Jim post-Debbie, knowing only what I read about her in *Shit Magnet*. Jim isn't particularly kind to her but I like Debbie. And I think he still loved her when he wrote it.

I like that their first date was a Johnny Thunders show. I guess I first heard their name in connection with the obscenity trial and "zinesters." I remember thinking, "You know, I could go for a nice grilled-cheese sandwich about now."

Then I first read him in a letter he wrote to judge's son Jim Redden's self-published *PDXS*, a horrifying/unintentionally hilarious little "alt"-rag I would read with something like morbid incredulity. That anyone else was "buying" what these half-baked decrepit hippie anachronisms were pushing was unbelievable.

Jim likened the reception to *ANSWER Me!* #4 to "throwing battery acid" in his fans' faces.

I suspect he might have influenced his world in the way that some people think if they go on the radio and are merely crude and vulgar, they're being Howard Stern.

Part of that world thinks that Jim Goad and Jim Redden are the same because neither one of them is George Bush or Carrot Top.

And his fame/infamy is like Howard Stern's and only a few others in that it wasn't manufactured by a studio or publisher or record company, etc. It was in spite of that lot. Even Simon & Schuster bailed on promoting him.

Something visceral happened. But nothing's for its own sake or not toward an intelligent and/or hilarious end.

To me, he was someone saying, "Quote Voltaire on my behalf, motherfuckers."
—Shift

I'll always remember when I got my first *ANSWER Me!*—issue number three. Michael Moynihan told me about *ANSWER Me!* and showed me the first two issues. He said the third was just about to come out so I gave Jim—what?—three dollars or something, some insane price. Jim should have always charged at least \$10 per issue, considering how much work and perfection went into each one—especially when you think of all of the subhumans that put out zines that charge five to seven dollars for nothing, but I guess that was Jim's weird way of showing the sub-cunts how it's done.

Anyway, a few months went by and Michael Moynihan and I were going on a road trip for a couple of weeks. We stopped by Moynihan's PO box before we left, and there were five issues. Perfect. For the next two weeks, I was delirious, hung over, no sleep, and with *ANSWER Me!* number three constantly at my disposal. I laughed and laughed and laughed and laughed.

Then I heard that the next issue was going to be a Rape Issue. I couldn't believe it. I had just made rape T-shirts and done some obnoxious rape

spoken word. I sent Jim some funny-head stories, then later Boyd Rice told him about a thing that I had written called "Rape is Love."

One day Jim sent me \$50 for the "Rape is Love" article. I was completely confused. I had never been paid money for writing, let alone something about rape. I would have been happy with just having my story in the Rape Issue.

And then the Rape Issue became some full-blown free-speech issue. So that was a nice rape sundae with a tight little cunt cherry on top.

Magic times and magic memories.

However, I have fond memories about Jim and Debbie. They really did seem like some superhero team. Debbie with her weird New Jersey housewife look. Those big, thick shoulders and that hideous leather jacket. Her voice—what can you say about her voice?

"Hey, Shaun. Jimmy doesn't like it when I listen to Nirvana. But they have a lot of pain like I have a lot of pain, Shaun. I can relate, you know what I mean?"

She would say things like this to me while Jim would be downstairs in the basement, I believe, working on *The Redneck Manifesto*.

ANSWER Me! was so wonderful because it reminded me of when my sadistic uncle Joey turned me on to *National Lampoon* when I was eight years old. After *National Lampoon*, I was always looking for uglier forms of humor, and then along comes *ANSWER Me!*

One of my favorite *ANSWER Me!* memories was when I got the Rape Issue. I was reading it on the bus on the way to my telemarketing job. I was sitting next to this huge Russian-type foreigner woman. She looked at the Trevor Brown picture on the back. Then she peered over my shoulders into the issue. With a thick, hideous foreign accent she said,

"Vat are you veading?"

I shook my shoulders and said, "Oh, just a magazine."

Her eyes narrowed and she said, "You are veading somet'ing horrrrrrrible...aren't you?"

I didn't know what to say because she was absolutely right. She just shook her head, looked at me one more time with piercing disgust and looked away. It was a perfect *ANSWER Me!* moment.

—Shaun Partridge

Ya know, one of my favorite things about *ANSWER Me!* is perhaps the most overlooked aspect as well as the most revealing glimpse into Jimkata's character: the goofy names.

In each of the first three issues, there were lists of "contributors" to the magazine—all these goony-bird fucked-up names like Blaise Namphis, Freaky Deke Caledonia, Poody Sterling, etc. I regarded them as not only hilarious (silly shit slays me), but proof that this psycho-eyes bomb of bile and hatred had a goofball sense of humor. In this respect, I immediately regarded him as kin.

—Lorin Partridge

Ah, those silly names. I recall lingering over those back in the day when I got *ANSWER Me!* chucked in my lap. What is this? "I'm a piece of shit, suicide murder cutting up kids, Jews suck I'm a sucky Jew...*Beverly Anschluss?!'*" How nice to learn Jim was the cheery one of the couple! Indeed, a man who can cavort like such a silly, silly muffin, on top of exploring what it might feel like to rape a cheerleader, is a good enuff man by my book.

I had a very similar bus experience as Shaun's when coming out of Chicago where this fellow had given me a copy of the Rape Issue reprint. I had the second-to-last seat and the guy in the last seat was a burly ugly great fur clumps bursting from his shoulders American flag hat wearing dumb ass piece of turd, and as the bus was loading up he told a joke about how could you tell someone from Montana they fuck sheep or something,

and driving through the night I was reading "My Sick Mommy" quietly enjoying my magazine, like, golly dig this, when turd burglar behind me goes, "Excuse me, what are you reading? That is some sick shit." I said, "Sir, you don't know what it's about, how did you know—" this man was flushed and angry, he said, "I can see the reflection of it as I'm trying to look out the window. That is SICK SHIT." I laughed and turned and continued reading. He said nothing else the entire trip.

—Josh Simmons

I now see *ANSWER Me!* as the eulogy to the Goads and, indeed, I now see the *AM!* phenomenon as both a kind of eternal word (the magazine itself) which alludes to perfect male-female unions, and a word-made-flesh (the real-life history of the authors) which testifies to a temporal corruption first sown in Eden.

ANSWER Me! is bigger than both Debbie and Jim. Goad has no doubt written *better* since *AM!*, yet he will never escape its shadow.

ANSWER Me! is the myth Goad can never escape. He can deconstruct the myth a hundred different ways, but whenever one holds a copy of *AM!* in their hands and sees Jim and Debbie's words living together so idyllically, the myth is instantly reborn—even among those who know the real-life story.

So I now perceive the great attraction of *AM!* as an allusion to Biblical male-female relations heterosexuals wish for but can never return to:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

ANSWER Me!, in short, was the Edenic vision of man and woman together—the reality surrounding it, the real lives of Jim and Debbie, is but sad testimony to the corruption of the one flesh.

Four or five years ago, at the height of the Goad scandals, I penned my own little eulogy to the Goads. My conclusion, though for somewhat different reasons, still fits:

They were one flesh. And now they are torn asunder. Examine the results. This, then, is the tragedy that is Goad.

—The J Man

