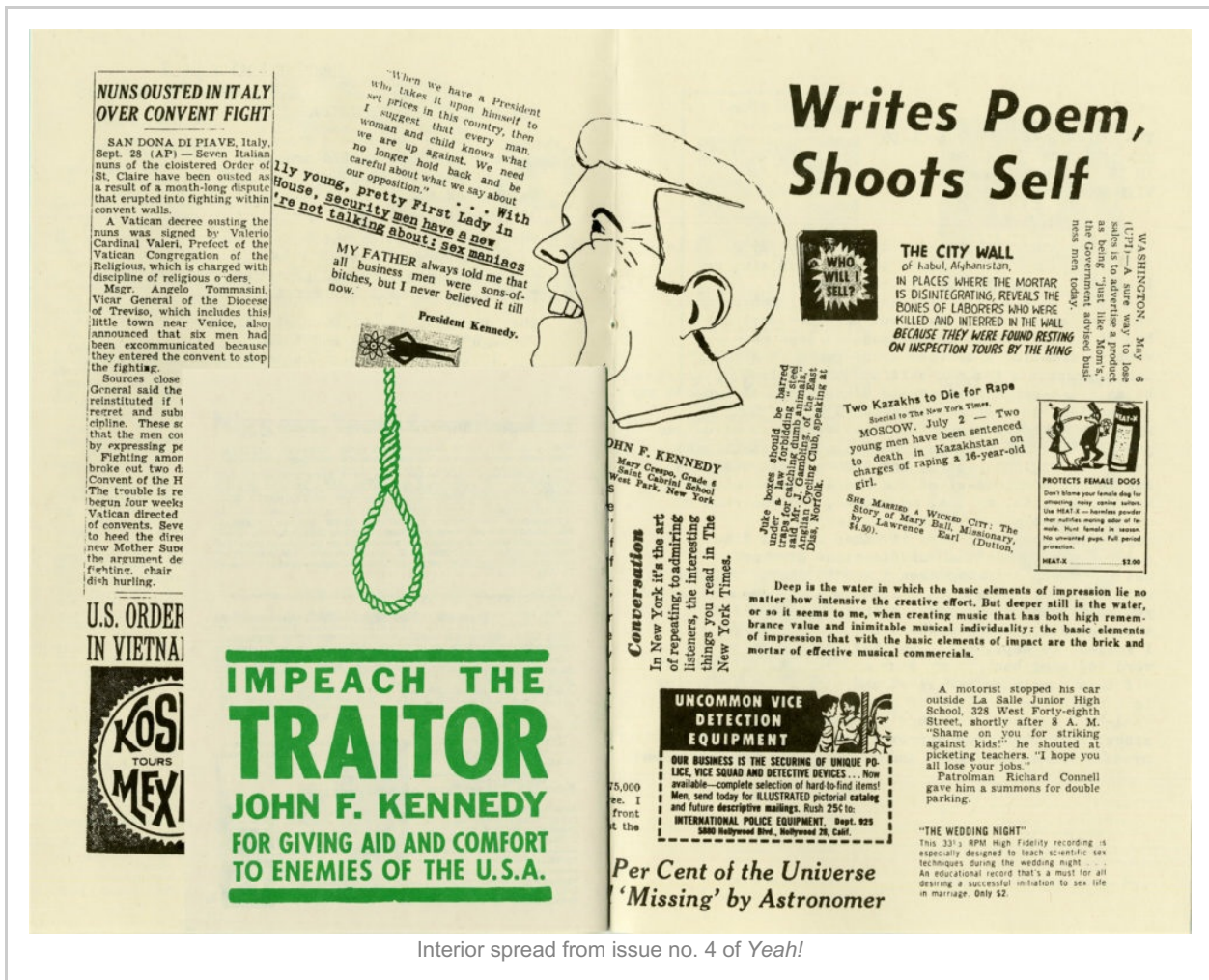


Tuli Kupferberg's Yeah!: The Tiny Magazine That Captured the 1960s

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By Alex Zafiris

11/30/2017



Interior spread from issue no. 4 of *Yeah!*

It was 1961. Eisenhower had cut ties with Cuba, JFK was sworn in, the Berlin Wall went up, the Shirelles were in the top ten for "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow," and America fizzed with the unchartered sexual dynamics created by the newly introduced pill. Meanwhile, on Manhattan's Lower East Side, the homegrown poet-anarchist Tuli Kupferberg—already immortalized as the figure who survived after leaping off the Brooklyn Bridge in Allen Ginsberg's 1955 poem "Howl"—put out the first issue of *Yeah!* The opening page presented the zine as "a satyric excursion published at will," and it begins:

I want
to put
the revolution
at the service of poetry.

I want
Comrade Stalin
to say
Tuli, tell me how to revive
the bodies of my dead Ukrainian peasants
with your magic words

Recently re-released in facsimile edition by the publishing non-profit Primary Information, the original ten issues of *Yeah!* were made at Kupferberg's home on Tenth Street and Avenue B with the help of his wife, Sylvia Topp, and printed on a mimeograph. Kupferberg asked his friends to contribute. Many delivered poetry and art, such as Allan Sillitoe, Judson Crews, Brigid Murnaghan, Peter Schumann, Anita Steckel, William Wantling; others facilitated. Jonas Mekas submitted a poem from *Der Spiegel* by Yevgeny Yevtushenko; Ken Jacobs provided newspaper clip collages of absurd, tone-deaf reporting. Other sourced items—a misogynist cartoon from the *Yale Record*, a *New York Times* correction detailing the war injuries of a Vietnamese child, happy news of an anti-crossdressing electric shock treatment—are laid bare, their absurdity and cruelty thrown into sharp relief.

The pages of *Yeah!* are a mix of charm and rage. By issue 4, Kupferberg was printing extracts from the previous generation's cultural critics, condemning their academia: "Its nice to call for ideates, philosophies, profundities, saintniks, romantic (no) lovers & c but what if they just don't appear? What if all we get now is a chance at the sensual joys. (And aren't all joys (even the ideational ones) sensual?) & good and wonderful & if you will it so: holy? Carpe penem!" The seventh issue is named "A Look at the White Problem": on the cover, a racist 1852 drawing from *Yankee Notions*; on the back, a photograph of a grinning white cop with a lurching, snapping dog. Issues 8 and 9 (at which point, Kupferberg showed only his own work) lampoon the medical and beauty industries; the cover of issue 10, the longest and most affecting, shouts the words "Kill For Peace." After that, Kupferberg wanted to get even louder, so he started the band the Fugs with fellow poet, activist, and Peace Eye bookstore founder Ed Sanders, eventually performing at national antiwar protests and irritating the FBI.

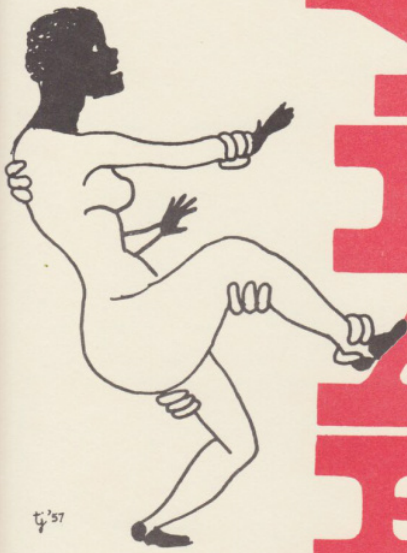
Back then, the printed word had irrefutable authority. Artist magazines and books were a simple way to take back power and, in the process, reinforce community. Kupferberg's editorship was both journalistic and deeply emotional. His satire was a reverse tactic: all political leaders are mentally ill, and the poets—the apparently mad and dispossessed—have the answers.

James Hoff, who cofounded Primary Information with Miriam Katzeff, explained, “Part of our mission is to pull stuff from the past that we think is still relevant to contemporary discussions and put out editions that feel exactly like the originals—so there’s no filter.” In 2007, as an employee of the nonprofit bookstore and gallery Printed Matter, Hoff curated a retrospective of the Fugs’ materials. Over at Kupferberg’s house one day, he had watched him pull fifty-year-old, dead-stock copies of *Yeah!* out of storage. Topp warned him about the fragile binding, but Kupferberg gleefully cracked them, saying, “Five hundred years from now, we are all going to be dust, and so will these books. It doesn’t matter.” Hoff was impressed: “There was very much an archival spirit, but he also believed in books being able to live in the world.”

Many of the contributors to *Yeah!* went on to become famous, and many disappeared. Before the reissue, Hoff and Katzeff attempted to get permission from everyone, but they were not always successful; some, it turned out, were secret pseudonyms for Kupferberg himself. *Yeah!* was one of many series that he published on his imprint Birth Press, but possibly both the most local and simultaneously far flung: *Yeah!* was the only place where you could read an old poem by Jim Tully about the hell of waiting in line at the DMV, a rhyme from Bertolt Brecht about evil, a lustful ode by an unknown Village resident, and peruse a pre-punk, anti–Cold War collage. In its way, it was a paper of record, capturing the longings, fears, and fantasies of those who needed to believe in a better world, one that would only be found through self-expression. Those fears and fantasies resonate as strongly today. *Yeah!* presents something inherently valuable and historical in an entirely different context: it’s a personal documentary of a vast network of friends and collaborators who would not, or could not, accept the stifling values of the 1950s. Kupferberg was a generous man—“he was the type of person who would always hand you five drawings when you saw him,” says Hoff—and this sense of him at once coheres and softens some of the harsher and more jarring imagery and ideas in *Yeah!* An essential feeling of freedom permeates throughout. As Lawrence Ferlinghetti once wrote: “Truth is not a secret of the few.”

In the beginning,...

25¢



tg '57

YEAH!

If you alls do's this you alls will be spoil de hue of mah skin. Den youse want know who is block or white. I know can't argue'n win cause I is you alls slave - but damn if time wont bring sorry to you all.

At Last A Perfect Bowel Cleanser

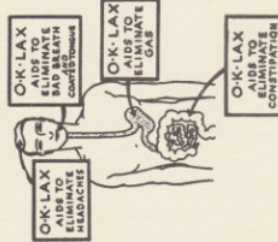
A Safe Natural Laxative has been perfected that absolutely banishes Constipation and Gas—leaving no bad after-effects. Formerly known as Allax, this perfected bowel cleanser with a U. S. Government copyrighted name of

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brings to the public one of the greatest of health discoveries. Why not put an end to the poisons and gas that are making you feel miserable!

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One Trial of O.K.-Lax and You'll Feel Like a Million Dollars

When your bowels are working perfectly and there is no gas bothering you you'll feel like a new person, you will have pep, zip and feel like a kid.

Free sample will prove that O.K.-Lax will end Constipation and Gas.

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Gentlemen:
I am anxious to banish my constipation and gas forever. Will you, therefore, please send me your free sample of O.K.-LAX.

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Address
City..... State.....

Front and back covers from issue no. 1 of Yeah!

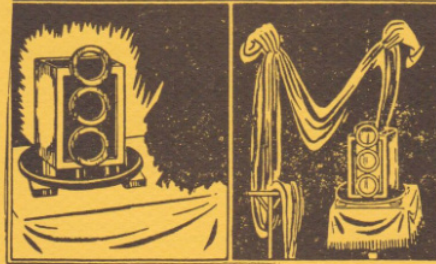
25 cents

YEAH 6

**A FRIGID
WIFE
RUINED
ME**

NOTE: For your own privacy do not lay this folder around where visiting children or others can see and read it.

WANT TO BE LOVED



Let me Dress your Stockings, Socks, Handkerchief, Slips, Gowns, Shorts, Undershirts, Bra, Panties, Garters, Girdles, Headcloths, Combs, Hairbrushes, Hats, Caps, Scarves, Sheets, Pillow Cases, Blankets, Quilts, Bath Cloths, Towels, Dishes, Spoons, Forks, Knives, Pots, Pans, Light Bulbs, Door Knobs, Locks, Keys, Auto Keys, Pictures, Candles, Pocket Mirrors, Earrings, Bracelets, Pens, Pencils, Writing Papers, Cosmetics, etc.

I'll Dress each item in MY POWERFUL ATTRACTING MAGNETIC FLUID for 7 days and 7 nights and return them to you within 9 days. Start now to make people love you, admire you, respect you. Start now to influence people, control people, attract people of your desire. Society people are relying upon MY POWERFUL ATTRACTING MAGNETIC FLUID.

Send yours now and start being more irresistible. Send a donation of \$5.00 or more with each item to cover processing, handling and shipping charges. A process is said to last and last for years.

None will be processed without a donation for each item. Send as many items you want to send. Be sure to send a donation of \$5.00 or more with each item. Send now!

Send to: ANN JONES
624 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago 5, Illinois
(over)

Front and back covers from issue no. 6 of Yeah!

True Professions

25 cents



DO YOU FIT THIS PICTURE?

being **YEAH 8**

The patients are coming!

A militant band of patients has appeared on the medical horizon in Britain. Beating the drum to which they march is Mrs. Helen Hodgson, founder of the Patients' Association, and the medical profession is stirring uneasily at the sound. In addition to serving as the voice of the patient in medical affairs and a channel for patients' complaints, the association aspires to promote understanding and good will.

Modern Medicine, December 9, 1963

See pp. 6-14

GOOD LUCK and GOOD HEALTH to the ARMY.

I took Beecham's Pills not a private & am now a Sgt-major

LITTLE
A
Nempey may deem of the usefulness of our Volunteer Force, and imagine that in actual warfare they would be of use, but there is no doubt that in all our recent difficulties, and they have been many, the fact that the

BRITISH ARMY
is so well prepared for all contingencies that we need not have worried ourselves with the possibility of our being taken by surprise.

GOES
without saying that in every emergency, we need long health, a good appetite, and a good constitution, and general strength and endurance that will be of use in every way.

LONG
and admirably, there is a medicine ready at hand, in every form, and in every way, to be of use in every way.

WAY
is well in the hands of every soldier, and in every way, to be of use in every way.

BEECHAM'S PILLS are prepared only by the Proprietor, THOMAS BEECHAM, at the Works, Epsom, Surrey, England.

SOLD EVERYWHERE IN GREAT BRITAIN, IRELAND, AUSTRALIA, and IN THE EAST.

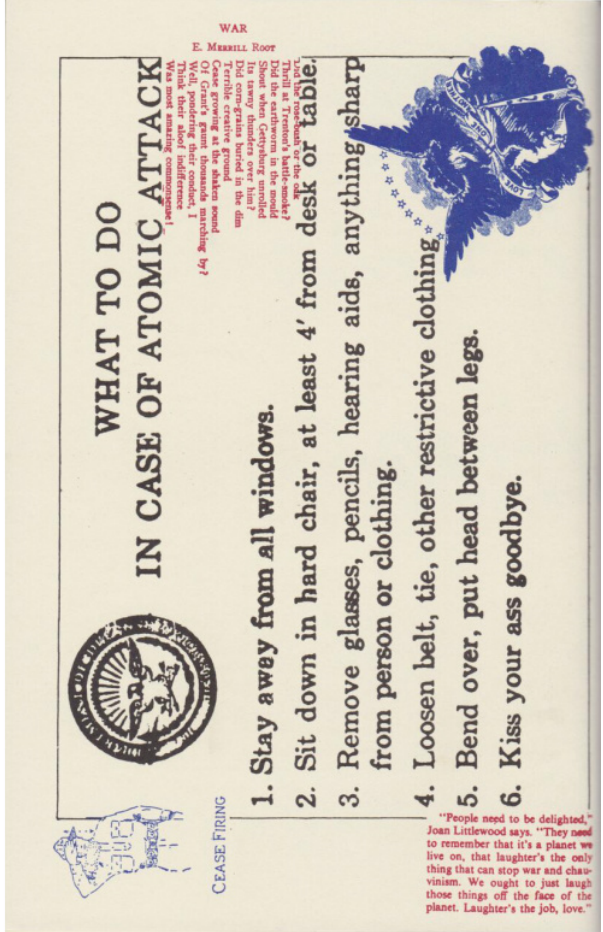
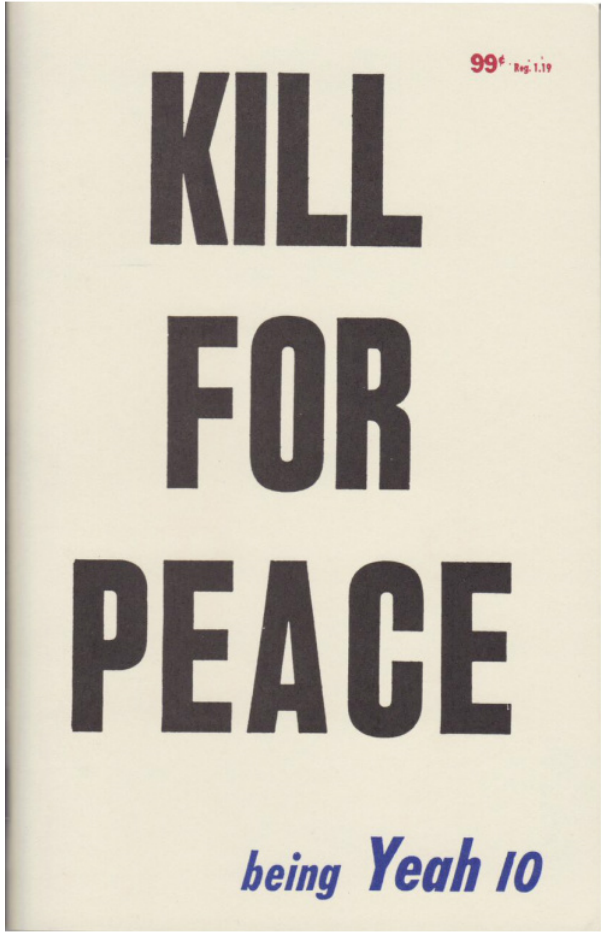
See pp. 15-18

WHOEVER carries this book with him, is safe from all his enemies, visible or invisible; and whoever has this book with him cannot die without the holy corpse of Jesus Christ, nor drowned in any water, nor burn up in any fire, nor can any unjust sentence be passed upon him. So help me.

via PD



Front and back covers from issue no. 8 of Yeah!



Front and back covers from issue no. 10 of Yeah!

Yeah! is available at Primary Information.

Alex Zafiris is a writer based in New York.