

Yeah, Yeah, Yeah

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Alex Abramovich

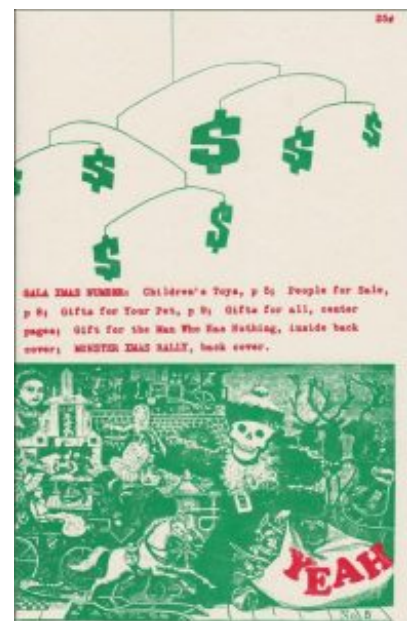
Tuli Kupferberg and Ed Sanders met in New York City in 1962, in front of the Charles Theater, two blocks north of Tompkins Square Park. Kupferberg was selling issues of *Birth*, a mimeographed publication he'd started in the 1950s. Sanders, who'd just launched his own mimeographed magazine, knew a few things about him. 'I'd seen his picture in a number of books,' Sanders later recalled. 'I learned a little bit later that he was the guy "who'd jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge", as described in *Howl*. (Actually it was the Manhattan Bridge.) I later asked him why. He replied, "I wasn't being loved enough."

A few years later, Sanders and Kupferberg formed the Fugs. They paid homage to Allen Ginsberg and *Howl* with a song called 'The Best Minds of My Generation Rock', played together for a few more years, broke up, and reformed, from time to time, as the years and decades went by. The third founding member, Ken Weaver, went on to work as a translator for the CIA and other government agencies.

The Fugs were loved. In 2007, Printed Matter mounted an exhibition – *Fuck For Peace: A History of the Fugs* – that doubled as a history of New York in the 1960s, and of a certain, scabrous sensibility that continues to inform and (one hopes) autocorrect the national psyche. This year, it published a facsimile edition of *Yeah*, a mimeographed magazine Kupferberg put out in the early 1960s, and sold for 25 cents.

There are ten issues, of various lengths, with contributions by Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Alan Sillitoe, and other knowns and unknowns. (Robert Murray's 'Poem I', in *Yeah #4*, reads, in its entirety: 'Sure I scream./Why not?') By the eighth issue, Kupferberg was doing all the work, which consisted, now, of freestanding inserts, cut-and-paste collages, repurposed headlines, appropriated comics, ads, and articles drawn from other publications. He called the effort 'a satyrical excursion', but the warmongers, white supremacists and capitalist crooks that he targets are real, as are the raw materials. 'This shit, you can't make it up on your own,' each issue says, in so many words and illustrations.

Yeah is frightening, brilliant, about as nuts as the country itself. The boxed edition, printed by Container Corps, is honest and beautifully made, and the odd thing about reading it, in today's America, is that so little has changed. If Kupferberg were around and working right now, with his scissors and glue stick, his targets would all be the same, and the *New York Times* would give him



as much material to work with as Breitbart or the *Daily Stormer*.