

The Angriest Man in the World?

The Winnebago Man...

by Alex, Smile.ly Community Manager, 8/2/10

Imagine you're with your friends, killing time and browsing YouTube for a few cheap laughs. You watch a guy get hit in the crotch with a skateboard. You watch a defenseless fat kid get pushed into a river. You watch a mountaineer with a speech impediment burst into tears over the sight of a double rainbow. You laugh and laugh, because thankfully, these misfortunate people aren't you. But have you ever wondered who these Internet sensations are, beyond their pitiful portrayals on the Internet? No? Well that's not very nice.

But if you answered yes, consider the case of 80-year-old Jack Rebney, known throughout the YouTube circuits as "The Angriest Man in the World." Back in 1988, Jack was asked to film a series of commercials for the Winnebago motor homes manufacturer. During the shoot, Rebney famously lost his cool in the blazing summer heat of Forest City, Iowa. He frequently forgot his lines, and in between takes, he lashed out at himself, his film crew, and the flies buzzing in his ears, resulting in one of the funniest, most obscenity-laden unscripted outbursts ever caught on tape. Yet he never could have guessed that millions more people would end up watching [these hilarious, colorfully worded outtakes](#) rather than the completed professional product (Warning: contains strong language... obviously).

Back then, sharing a "viral video" meant giving your friend a VHS tape to watch on his VCR, and then he would create another copy to share with his friends until a few hundred people had seen it and the image quality had reduced to nearly nothing. The convenience of sending a YouTube link never emerged until 2005, when the "Winnebago Man" outtakes video was uploaded and shared at a faster rate than ever. The video grabbed the attention of documentary filmmaker Ben Steinbauer, who was determined to learn more about the foul-mouthed RV pitchman. Who is this guy and why is he so angry? Where does he live and what does he do? Is he aware of his fame as an Internet phenomenon?

What resulted was the hilarious documentary feature [Winnebago Man](#), in which Steinbauer seeks Rebney out to try and answer all of these questions. As it turns out, The Angriest Man in the World lives alone on a mountaintop in California. A self-described hermit, Rebney was oblivious to his notoriety on YouTube, a form of new media that he openly disdains. The film displays Rebney's kinder side while also giving the audience another glimpse of his famous brand of unrestrained anger. Overall, it's debatable whether the film accomplishes its ultimate goal - as funny as it is, it might not exactly change your opinion on Rebney since he still swears relentlessly throughout the movie's brief 85-minute runtime.

One thing it will change, however, is the way you look at Internet videos and their stars. *Winnebago Man* does humanize its title character, who was more or less just a geriatric with a dirty mouth before the film's release. The next time you're on YouTube watching some woman smack her head against a television set, go ahead and laugh. I do. But just be thankful that all the idiotic things *you've* done were never caught on tape... because the poor saps in those viral videos could just as easily be you.

(images courtesy of AintItCool.com)

Who are some of your favorite viral video stars?

Alex is a Smile.ly Community Manager. He once got bit by a duck and cried over it. Unfortunately, it was not caught on tape and occurred before YouTube existed. He sincerely regrets his poor timing and will make an effort to catch it on film the next time he trips into a pothole or gets hit in the head with something.

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