

## Seasoned prankster Joey Skaggs chides rookie Zaida Pugh for unleashing crickets on packed D train: 'You gotta realize there are consequences'



(TODD MAISEL/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS)

Zaida Pugh, 21, faces charges of reckless endangerment after she released crickets on a crowded D train and chaos ensued Aug. 24.



(ERRAY/FACEBOOK)

BY  
GRAHAM RAYMAN

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As a prankster, Zaida Pugh — who terrified straphangers in August when she released live crickets on a packed subway train — is no more than a misguided rookie.

And Joey Skaggs should know.

For the past 40 years, Skaggs, 70, a New Yorker who now lives "somewhere in the south," has conned the media into reporting fake stories as fact.

His elaborate pranks include creating a brothel for dogs and posing as a man who invented a vitamin pill made of cockroaches which supposedly would make people invulnerable to radiation. The press bought it.

### [Cricket-flinging woman sends D train riders into chaos](#)

He got the press to buy that he had windsurfed from Hawaii to California. He created a Celebrity Sperm Bank, and a "Fat Squad," made up of commandos who supposedly physically restrained people from breaking their diets.



For the past 40 years, Joey Skaggs, 70, a New Yorker who now lives "somewhere in the south," has conned the media into reporting fake stories as fact. JOEY SKAGGS ARCHIVE

He unrepentantly posed as a priest and pedaled a full-size confessional booth around St. Patrick's Cathedral, and got on the news for that, too.

Author Andrea Juno once wrote that he "uses the media as a painter uses a canvas."

Skaggs told the Daily News on Saturday even though Pugh claimed to be making a statement about homelessness, her stunt on the Manhattan Bridge on Aug. 24 was "irresponsible and dangerous."

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#### Subway cricket prankster Zaida Pugh's alleged accomplice arrested

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"To me, the expose' is the most important part," he said. "It's not the 'hahaha, I got you.' It's the 'Aha.' When they realize they have put aside critical thinking.



"The goal is to get people to become more media literate and more skeptical about information that's given to them by governments and corporations. And you have to be ethical and careful in going about it."

But Pugh, like many of today's pranksters, just wanted to build up hits on YouTube and go viral, rather than make a coherent point, he said.

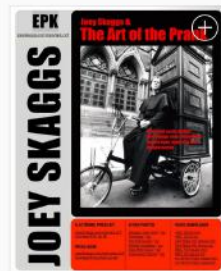
"With lots of people with access to the media trying to get attention, with that explosion of pranks, comes a lot of idiots doing irresponsible, stupid things," he said. "It really lowers the bar from my perspective."

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#### Subway cricket prankster Zaida Pugh ordered held on \$56 bail

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Skaggs knows just where that bar should be. He recalled once being so angry at the ever-fickle art scene that he wanted to make up a new movement called "The Bowel Movement," and create a series of large pieces called "obstruction art."



Skaggs is currently on the road in support of a documentary on his life, "Art of the Prank."

"The idea was I would put, for example, a giant tampon on a truck and drive it into a tunnel and block traffic," he said. "Then we would leave the tunnel and film the traffic back-up, the police going in."

But, when he considered the possible outcomes, he decided to drop the project.

"Of course, I realized what if there's a fire, what if someone gets hurt, what if I contribute to someone's death," he said. "I didn't want to face that. I look at all the things I did that way."

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#### Subway cricket prankster arrested, says she fears for her life

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That was something that Pugh, 21, never really considered, he says.





"To me, the exposé is the most important part," he said. "It's not the 'hahaha, I got you.' It's the 'Aha.' When they realize they have put aside critical thinking." (ART OF THE PRANK)

She and a cohort, Jahkif Wright, 20, are now facing charges of reckless endangerment for turning the Brooklyn-bound D train into a house of horrors Aug. 24.

"You gotta realize there are consequences," Skaggs said. "And you have to have a clear intent. The little word with the big meaning. You can't ascribe intent after the fact."

Skaggs is currently on the road in support of a documentary on his life, "Art of the Prank," which has been touring the festival circuit this year and has won a number of awards.

"I wish she had seen the movie before doing this," he said.

As rewarding as it is to have his life portrayed on film, Skaggs isn't hanging up his quill.

"It's not like I'm finished," he said mischievously. "There's more to come."







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