



The Life and Death of Fritz the Cat

Robert Crumb

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Crumb's most notorious character, Fritz the Cat, actually appeared in only a handful of stories in the 1960s and '70s, yet his legend lives on, largely in part to Ralph Bakshi's atrocious animated film based on the strip (and which prompted Crumb to immediately kill the character upon the film's release). All of Fritz's appearances are collected here for the first time.

The Life and Death of Fritz the Cat Details

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Author : Robert Crumb

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From Reader Review *The Life and Death of Fritz the Cat* for online ebook

Lindsay says

I read this as part of Panels' 2015 Read Harder Challenge for the anthropomorphic animals category. Me...I'm not much a fan of the more realistic portrayals of anthropomorphism, but I welcomed the idea of getting to know R. Crumb's work better.

Artistically, I like Crumb, especially as his style got cleaner over the course. Content-wise, I'm not sure this is really for me, mostly because it often makes me uneasy. On one hand, reading *Fritz the Cat* feels like a rather authentic glimpse into the seedy side of the Sixties, but I'm not familiar enough with Crumb's work to know where he draws the line between social commentary/satire and earnestness. Perhaps that's the point? The whole crows-as-Black-people, rats-as-Chinese, the role of any woman, period (why hello, incest and rape). Fritz is funny mostly because his schtick is just so over-the-top. The parts I liked best were his womanizing in "Fritz Bugs Out" and the James Bond thing going on in "Special Agent for the CIA" (poop jokes also get me every time). I can appreciate the general story arcs from starting simply to devolving into utter madness by the end, but it became redundant to me after a while. I'm sure that worked better as read in its original, sporadic publications rather than in a graphic novel compilation.

So, ultimately, I'm glad I read some *Fritz the Cat* comics, but I might just stick to Mr. Natural.

Brian Fagan says

Good read but limited. Start out with the Crumb collections from his work in the 60s, 70s, and early 80s before hitting the *Fritz the Cat* collection.

Kim says

Crumb shows great understanding of comics language. But the content ??.

Xisix says

Adequate steps towards Crumb's more developed style. Picked up on whim and although it hints at wild acerbic sexist racist wild humor it doesn't go as all out as S. Clay Wilson for example. Didn't empathize or care too much about what happened to sexing partying Fritz that aimless feline.

Marc Weidenbaum says

So many years after its publication, *Fritz the Cat* can still shock. I re-read it after a very long gap -- long

enough that I'm not quite sure when I last read it, easily a decade. There's more collected than just this volume, but it's a good start. There's kind of a dual shock to Fritz, partly the idea it could shock at all. It's a comic about a cat, in the literal and slang sense of the word, who does most of his thinking below his belt. The animated series Archer some 40 years later makes Fritz look like Archie by comparison -- most but not all of the time.

But shock it once did -- and, in the other half of this dual shock, occasionally still can: an incest scene in one of the earliest stories makes it clear, even this many decades on (it dates to the mid-1960s), why. Well, not exactly why. The boundaries Crumb was pushing at at the time, while well cataloged, are very different to consider as categories than to have experienced first hand, which I was certainly too young to have done when it was first being released.

Key among the pleasures of reading it today is watching how quickly, in a matter of mere years, Crumb went from rough line drawings to both the visual style and obsessive cues we associate him with to this day. The stories are often rambling, made up it seems as they go along, but that very sloppiness is another of its pleasures. While set on the idea that comics could be far more than they had been, aspiring to self-evidently "literary" value was not on Crumb's mind. Not yet.

Part of the reason I wanted to revisit Fritz the Cat was to see a quasi-documentary look at mid-60s proto-hipster life, the grungy reality of the lumpen slackers of the day. And this it provides in (to use an alternate definition of a word that in Fritz still shocks to see in print) spades.

BMK says

Not bad. Some good funny comics, but maybe a bit too much rape and incest for my tastes.

Eve Kay says

I can appreciate Crumb. But that's it, I just can't enjoy his work.

Melki says

I'm not sure why Fritz is considered a classic. Poorly drawn and not funny, perhaps the 1972 Ralph Bakshi movie, the first *animated* film to earn an X rating, adds to the notoriety.

Fritz hangs out with his pals, smokes weed, and does a good job of sticking it to the man. And speaking of sticking it to...

He doesn't appear to be anatomically correct, yet he has no trouble making it with a huge variety of female critters, all of whom have lovely, curvy "lady" bodies - even the ostrich.

Fritz also has no qualms about rape or incest when it comes to his quest to mount all of the animal kingdom.

If the casual treatment of either of these subjects bothers you, stay **FAR** away from this book.

James says

Better than I expected. Ever since I was a little kid and heard that there was a dirty comic book called *Fritz the Cat*, reading it has been on my to-do list. Then, as now, I was interested in all things dirty, and I had a dog named Fritz, so, if you'll pardon the simultaneous dirty/cat metaphor, it was right up my alley. I love Robert Crumb and have since he was R. Crumb and one examined his work in head shops rather than the *New Yorker*. I read that in later years, as his cultural cachet increased, he more or less disowned Fritz as embarrassing juvenilia. If that's so, I think it's unfortunate, because the Fritz comics are a skillful, pointed skewering of self-absorbed hipsters that scooped *Hate* by twenty years and the *Scott Pilgrim* books by thirty.

As another reviewer here has pointed out, one of the pleasures of reading this volume is watching the richly textured, mature Crumb style emerge from the comparatively crude line drawings of the early strips. I also enjoyed the appearance of familiar Crumb icons/fetish objects, for example the mightily-thewed alligator girl in platform sandals.

I'm glad I finally got around to it. Some things really are worth the wait.

Cwn_annwn_13 says

Fritz the Cat was some of Crumb's most famous work but not his best. There is good satire/parody of the so-called counterculture but most of it is Crumb projecting his self onto Fritz. Fritz fluctuates between whining and feeling sorry for himself because he's such a misunderstood artistic type but when he gets in situations where he has the upper hand he's a misanthropic jerk to everybody around him. Although it was universally hated, especially by Crumb himself, I actually liked the Fritz the Cat movie better than the comic.

Erik says

R. Crumb said that after he took acid, the idea of having a career seemed absurd to him.

Alexa says

So so so so so so so scummy. Still glad I read it finally though.

Daniel says

Crumb hated Bakshi's movie, in part perhaps because it softened Fritz and made him a little less despicable and more sympathetic character. This book is not for squeamish or those who romanticize the revolution, as the comic book story arch was too Sado masochistic for a Traditional Hollywood film, even if it was an X-rated cartoon. In what must be interpreted as career self-immolation, Crumb kills Fritz in the end, and anti-climactically. It makes for a neat but abrupt conclusion to the universe created by Crumb, but perhaps this

was a universe which could only exist in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and which could not survive in today's world of man-bun hipsters, intersectional SJWs, and folks who dig Christian Gray, but wonder why they can't meet anyone nice.

Erik says

The first story is completely amateurish, but Crumb has developed into a really talented artist by the end. The storytelling is pretty good too, but I just couldn't get into what he was actually doing.

Richard says

Uh, uh, well what can you say about R. Crumb that hasn't already been said. This was a guilty pleasure gift for an old friends birthday and I had to read it first. If you remember the 60's then you probably weren't there. But if not, this gem will give you a glimpse of what you may have missed.
