



The Art of Harvey Kurtzman: The Mad Genius of Comics

Harvey Kurtzman , Denis Kitchen , Paul M. Buhle , Harry Shearer (Introduction)

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Harvey Kurtzman discovered Robert Crumb and gave Gloria Steinem her first job in publishing when he hired her as his assistant. Terry Gilliam also started at his side, met an unknown John Cleese in the process, and the genesis of Monty Python was formed. Art Spiegelman has stated on record that he owes his career to him. And he's one of *Playboy* publisher Hugh Hefner's favorite artists.

Harvey Kurtzman had a Midas touch for talent, but was himself an astonishingly talented and influential artist, writer, editor, and satirist. The creator of *MAD* and *Playboy*'s "Little Annie Fanny" was called, "One of the most important figures in postwar America" by the *New York Times*. Kurtzman's groundbreaking "realistic" war comics of the early '50s and various satirical publications (*MAD*, *Trump*, *Humbug*, and *Help!*) had an immense impact on popular culture, inspiring a generation of underground cartoonists. Without Kurtzman, it's unlikely we'd have had *Airplane*, *SNL*, or *National Lampoon*.

The Art of Harvey Kurtzman is the first and only authorized celebration of this "Master of American Comics." This definitive book includes hundreds of never-before-seen illustrations, paintings, pencil sketches, newly discovered lost E.C. Comics layouts, color compositions, illustrated correspondence, and vintage photos from the rich Kurtzman archives

The Art of Harvey Kurtzman: The Mad Genius of Comics Details

Date : Published July 1st 2009 by Harry N. Abrams (first published November 1st 2008)

ISBN : 9780810972964

Author : Harvey Kurtzman , Denis Kitchen , Paul M. Buhle , Harry Shearer (Introduction)

Format : Hardcover 256 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Comics, Biography, Nonfiction, Art, Graphic Novels Comics, Humor, History

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From Reader Review **The Art of Harvey Kurtzman: The Mad Genius of Comics** for online ebook

Russell Grant says

Just about as perfect a review of Kurtzman's work as you could want. Covers all the bases with lots of unpublished examples of his creations. Not much else to say, if you ever wondered what the big deal was about the man and his art, this will fill you in. If you're a fan of Kurtzman, it's a must read as it really gives you an appreciation of everything he did.

My nitpick negatives is that there are numerous instances of art examples that appear before you read about the period in the text that make it a little disjointed and kind of repetitive. There is also numerous examples of art and stories from *Trump*, *Help* and other magazines Kurtzman worked on that are so far out of print it leaves you aching a little inside.

Brenna says

True to its title, *The Art of Harvey Kurtzman* focuses primarily on the creative output of the famed satirist and cartoonist, rather than the personal circumstances which afflict every person. Authors Denis Kitchen and Paul Buhle spend a little time on Kurtzman's upbringing, education, family life, and professional careers, but delve much further into the work itself, keeping the mindset of Kurtzman clearly in focus.

This book features a number of treats for the Kurtzman fan, including rare thumbnail sketches from his days with E.C. war comics, through to preliminary tracings of *Playboy's* "Little Annie Fanny" feature - behind-the-scenes type material which Kurtzman may never have intended for the world to see, but which add considerable depth to the work because of this. Other features include reprints of magazine covers (including those during his tenure at *MAD Magazine*, and the ill-fated *Trump* and *Help!* publications), never-before-published material (amongst which are his rejected drawings for his proposed graphic novelization of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, many years before Will Eisner's *A Contract with God* broke the proverbial ice), and uncropped original artwork which had appeared in truncated form elsewhere.

The Art of Harvey Kurtzman: The Mad Genius of Comics delves into Kurtzman's output, but in doing so, cannot refrain but detail the somewhat tragic element of his own undoing. That is, the indigenous depression of having made poor decisions regarding his own professional direction from the ongoing *MAD* through a miscellany of doomed periodicals which were destined to hemorrhage money. And yet, Kurtzman's buoyant and driven personality would not allow him to slink into the frame of self-pity often attributed to more popular, well-known cartoonists.

A fine tribute to a respected artist, this book does a great service to Kurtzman's lesser-known work, as well as to the man's memory itself.

Karl Moore says

The cover is ugly, but the artwork inside is really good. Some drawings more so than others. Once Kurtzman and Elder started doing Mad and Little Annie Fanny, they were pretty untouchable as a comic book artists. Wicked Wanda was comparable, but more vulgar, and it didn't have the Disney for adults magic that Kurtzman delivered.

The writing is good. It could be improved by adding all of the comics he did, merging it with all of Little Annie Fanny, Goodman Beaver, and the first few issues of Mad, in an epic view of his life.

Chris says

I knew a decent amount about Harvey Kurtzman before reading this book (did War Comics in the 50's, created MAD, left MAD and floundered, ended up on Little Annie Fanny), but this book definitely fleshed out the picture with a lot of nice reproductions.

It's an art book so the focus was on individual images and short excerpts, but I would have enjoyed seeing more of the comics in their entirety. Highlights were seeing his earlier drawings and working process on the war comics. I've never been a big fan of Little Annie Fanny, and that hasn't changed.

Alex Robinson says

Fascinating look inside the brain of a cartooning great, also somewhat depressing because it seems like MAD was his genius idea and after he walked away from it he spent the rest of his career trying to recapture that lightning in a bottle.

Dominick says

Very good coffee-table format book on Kurtzman's art and career. Light on personal details (don't come here if you want an in-depth biography), this book is very strong on art, often reproducing very good images of original art and occasionally including things that have either never been published before or have not been reprinted in decades. The decision to include the entire *Grasshopper and the Ant* is a tad odd, all things considered. It is pure Kurtzman, unlike most of his work, so that is a good reason, to be sure, but perhaps an entire *Jungle Book* chapter, or even a Goodman Beaver story, might have been a better choice, significance-wise. Nevertheless, that's a quibble. There's a ton of lovely stuff to see here, both drawn by Kurtzman himself and produced by other artists over Kurtzman's layouts. A must-have for Kurtzman fans, and a worthwhile book for anyone interested in the art of comics.

Erik says

Kurtzman's art is fantastic, but this comics in this book never made me chuckle at all. Most of his jokes are

just horribly unfunny.

Rog Harrison says

"Some wonderful artwork in this book." was what I wrote on 8 October 2011.

On reading this again I would also say that the story of Kurtzman's life is fascinating too.

Orion says

The Art of Harvey Kurtzman is a large-format well-illustrated overview of Harvey Kurtzman's work. The book is divided into 5 chronological chapters based on major periods in his life. Each chapter is illustrated with rough sketches from Kurtzman's personal archives and other half-finished pieces or sections, as well as at least one finished work from the period.

Chapter 1 is entitled "Hey Look! It's the '40s" and is an outline of his earliest work in cartooning. Included are six of the 150 "Hey Look!" one-page comics he did for Stan Lee's Marvel.

Chapter 2 reviews his work with Bill Gaines' E.C. Comics, mostly doing war comics. There is a 7 page section where his story "Corpse on the Imjin" (from *Two-Fisted Tales* #25, January 1952) is reproduced in black & white drawings.

Chapter 3 is the heart of the book and devoted to his pioneering work with MAD magazine. Over 30 MAD covers are reproduced as well as the complete "SUPERDUPERMAN!" comic (from *MAD* #4, April 1953).

Kurtzman left MAD after disagreements with Gaines; and Chapter 4 covers the period in Kurtzman's life when he put out three other magazines: *Trump*, *Humbug* and *Help!* Two *Trump* covers, 14 *Humbug* covers, and 15 *Help!* covers are included as well as a complete 11 page cartoon called "The Grasshopper and the Ant" (from *Esquire*, May 1960) featuring a beatnik grasshopper and a workaholic ant.

Chapter 5 is mostly about Kurtzman's 25 years producing "Little Annie Fanny" comics for *Playboy*. A three page "Little Annie Fanny" origin story, which traces her life from a childhood in Al Capp's Dogpatch, through her growing up in "Peanuts" and "Little Orphan Annie," and ending with one-panel affairs with "Dick Tracy," "Beetle Bailey," and "Mandrake the Magician," appears here for the first time. Also reproduced is the Little Annie Fanny "Americans in Paris" (from *Playboy*, August 1967) and two cartoons on Dracula and Women that he did for French alternative comics.

This book, with its cartoonist-at-work sketches, roughs and thumbnails, will appeal especially to readers interested in Kurtzman's creative process. It may not be the best introduction to Kurtzman, but its finished pieces will provide enough for someone new to Kurtzman to grasp the importance of the man to the 20th century comics industry.

Steve says

I read this before.

Wayne says

Books about comics or about specific creators can't get any better than this. Genius! Exhaustive! Complete! What more can I say ? This Kurtzman guy must have been really great. Until last year when I met Spiegelman, I didn't realize just how many great Jews there were in comics. Trust me , I don't mean that in a bad way. It just didn't really occur to me. Obviously, Kurtzman was one of the greatest of all. If you want to talk about influencing a generation, he has to be near the top of the list. This book is flat out brilliant and the best of it's kind on the planet. Looking through it, you'll go - he did that, he did that ? Over and over ad nauseum. The design of this book is perfect. It belongs on every coffee table. They should rename coffee table books Kurtzman tables. Can you tell I love this book ? Any serious comic book fan, past or present (or future) should own this book.
