



McSweeney's #13

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Chris Ware has gathered some of the world's best writers who can also draw and presents here the first comprehensive collection of their work. Contributors include Daniel Clowes, Gary Panter, Charles Burns, Art Spiegelman, Ben Katchor, Kim Deitch, Adrian Tomine, Joe Sacco, Seth, Joe Matt, Chester Brown, Kaz, and many others.

McSweeney's #13 Details

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Author : Chris Ware (Editor) , Dave Eggers (Editor) , Lawrence Weschler , Sean Wilsey , McSweeney's Publishing

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From Reader Review McSweeney's #13 for online ebook

Lui Vega says

Man this collection was cool as hell.

Jennifer says

I really don't understand how this book sat on my shelves so long before I read it. When I first heard about it, I wanted it immediately. But I was in a cheap phase, so I only put it on my paperbackswap wishlist. After a *lot* of patience, I finally scored a copy, but it languished, unread, until I put it on my to-read shelf this year to rectify the situation.

This really is an incredibly interesting sampler of comics. From the inventor of the form, through some classic newspaper strips, to an impressive variety of modern comics, it's hard to fault this collection for its contents. The only thing that grated for me was the editorial writing, which felt casually misogynist. Descriptions of female characters were exclusively restricted to reports on their figures (and not kindly, one woman is described as being the size of an upright Naugahyde couch, even though the actual drawings of said woman seemed not nearly so exaggerated, nor was her size every played derogatively in the printed comics.) There were some female comic writers included, and some "women's stories," but much of the text seemed to reinforce the idea of comics as a boy's club, which disappointed me.

I wouldn't say it was worth passing this book over for, it just could have been better.

David Schaafsma says

One of the best comics collections ever, a must for serious comics scholars and fans. Eloquently edited and put together, a treat in every way. I've owned it since it came out in 2004 from Egger's outfit, but I thought if anyone is reading about comics that I know, they should know about this, and it is typically immaculate for that press, but even better because The Champ Ware puts it together.

Included are essays by Ira Glass, Chris Ware, John Updike, and others. You get a sense of history because there are pieces on Rodolphe Topffer, George Herriman, and Charles Schulz.

Faves: Charles Burns, Seth, Joe Matt, Art Spiegelman, Joe Sacco, Adrian Tomine, R. Crumb, Dan Clowes, Lynda Barry, Julie Doucet, and Chester Brown. You can't possibly read the selections and dismiss comics. You have to see this work as serious art. (Okay, sometimes silly, but you know . . .).

At the very least check it out of the library to see whose work you want to read more deeply.

Heather says

Absolutely gorgeous and the second most impressive looking item on my bookshelf (following only Building Stories). I would give it a 5 based on appearance alone. Obviously, I love Building Stories so was delighted to see that Chris Ware was the editor. Ware's dust jacket is amazing and I was super pleased to discover the mini-comics hidden in its folds.

My tastes do run a little on the heart-wrenchingly miserable side, so I really enjoyed the more crushing comics chosen for this anthology. Charles Burn - check! Underworld series - check! Richard McGuire does an even better job than Ware of making me feel so very, very small. I didn't love everything in this collection, of course, but it would have been unreasonable to expect to. Beautiful addition to my library, for sure.

Alan says

This is, perhaps, the book that I wanted Arie Kaplan's recently-read Masters of the Comic Book Universe Revealed! to be... a chunky anthology of graphic art pieces and essays about graphic arts, put together by Chris Ware for McSweeney's and full to bursting with examples both historical and contemporary... with nary a superhero in tights to be seen.

Some of my own favorites are here, such as Ben Katchor, Robert Crumb and Chris Ware himself, as well as some surprising entries—who knew that John Updike had started out as a cartoonist? There's also some interest in Ware's essays about Charles Schulz' methods and about the "inventor of comics," Rodolphe Töpffer.

My only real complaint about this book is that the reproductions are tiny, and therefore sometimes hard for my aging eyes to read... something to be aware of if you're in similar straits. Other than that, though... pick it up!

MacDara Conroy says

If you're snobbish about the comic book medium, then this might just change your mind; it's certainly given me an invaluable primer. Even if it does curiously ignore the superhero genre, the exquisite design and layout and the sheer quality of the work contained within should immunise it against most criticism.

Bert says

Very glad to have found this! Wonderfully published book (as only Chris Ware can, you can just feel his love for books). The dust jacket is a fold-out Chris Ware comic, and it's got some small comic books with it. Interesting collection of American comics creators and artists inside along with passionately written articles on comics history and artists. To read and enjoy again and again...

Kevin says

I recently wrote a short thing about Dave Eggers and then realized that I hadn't rated or reviewed the many issues of *McSweeney's* I've read. The early issues were especially influential and inspiring to me. This comics one is aces.

Bryan says

I would like to congratulate Dave Eggers for letting Chris Ware ruin what could have been one of the most memorable issues of *McSweeney's* ever. Ware hates humanity and likes to force the reader to hate it too by making his texts completely inaccessible both emotionally and (sometimes) visually. The essays interspersed between the comics might be insightful, poignant, or (typical of Ware) absurdly humorous but printing them in four point font sort of spoils the entire deal. I get the joke but the joke is over.

Those are my grumps. My grumps! my grumps! My gnarly manly grumps! There is some wizened wisdom to Ware's overall structure of the book. Case in point: closing the volume with contrasting biographic sketches; 1) David Heatley's loving, complex, vulnerable father (the kind of person me on a good day wishes there was more of in the world) and 2) the pitifully self-loathing masochist Soren Kierkegaard - whose true life biography mirrors the shame factory efficiency of one of Ware's fictional characters. (Is it necessary I indicate a biography as "true life?") [Was it as necessary to do that in *the past* as it is now?]

It would appear too that most American underground comics creators are as neurotic and self-obsessed as Ware. There are a handful though that have the bravery, talent, and vision to deal with issues bigger than themselves even when working in an autobiographical mode; namely, Joe Sacco (war), Debbie Drechsler (abortion), and Chester Brown (minority rights).

Aaron says

An anthology that starts out great and finishes lukewarm. I think I may lack context regarding when this was published, but surely there were more than three talented female cartoonists that could be included here. I also believe that Lynda Berry was the only cartoonist of color included. No anthology will be perfect in this regard, but I am happy that the explosion of comics creators in the years since this was published will change the demographics of future anthologies meant to invite new readers to this wonderful medium.

I found the selections here nearly identical to the other anthologies edited by Ware or Ivan Brunetti (and all other mainstream "alternative" comics anthologies, to be honest), including Ware's Best American entry and *The Anthology of Graphic Fiction, Cartoons, and True Stories*. I understand that Adrian Tomine is talented, but I swear if I see another excerpt from *Shortcomings* in an Anthology I'm going to scream. Some of the more creative writers had very short entries while others had very long excerpts that were less interesting.

The most valuable parts of this collection were, for me, the sections of drafts from Charles Schulz and George Herriman. It discusses their creative processes and the development of their work over time. They are very valuable sections and pieces that I'm happy to own now. Some of the essays were interesting, like

Ware's discussion of painter Philip Guston. However, many were less interesting anecdotes about reading super hero books as children. The attitude taken by Ware here in his approach to the book was very self-effacing, as he tends to be, and recently I've started to reject that attitude of comic artists as something more detrimental to the form than endearing. He is a genius, undoubtedly, and he could stand to be more proud of what he's done for the medium and it's place in the world of literature today.

Again, my expectations are based on what I want out of these books in 2018, but I am now committed to them and can't overlook these flaws any longer.

Second thought: I don't feel like rewriting this so I'll just admit that I should cut it some slack for being the first of its kind, just noting that it has not aged as well as it could have.

Sam Quixote says

Edited by Chris Ware, McSweeney's 13 is a beautifully produced hardback with a design your own wraparound cover by Chris Ware and 2 bonus mini-comics.

Inside are comics essays by Ira Glass, Chris Ware, John Updike, Glen David Gold, Malachi B. Cohen, and Chip Kidd. There are also appreciations of the work of Rodolphe Topffer (a 19th century cartoonist and arguably America's first comics artist), George Herriman, and Charles Schulz.

And onto the comics themselves! Most of the samples are of larger works by their authors which, if you're familiar with indie comics then you'll have already heard of/read them already: "Black Hole" by Charles Burns, "Clyde Fans" by Seth, "Spent" by Joe Matt, "Underworld" by Kaz, "In the Shadow of No Towers" by Art Spiegelman, "The Fixer" by Joe Sacco, "Shortcomings" by Adrian Tomine, and "Louis Riel" by Chester Brown.

There are also contributions from R. Crumb, Dan Clowes, Mark Newgarden, Jim Woodring, Archer Prewitt, Lynda Barry, Chris Ware, Mark Beyer, Richard Sala, Kim Deitch, Ben Katchor, Richard McGuire, Jeffrey Brown, Julie Doucet, Debbie Dreschler, David Heatley, Gilbert Hernandez, and Ivan Brunetti.

There's no better place to start if you're new and interested in comics. For those who are more familiar with a few of the names above, you'll find samples by all the artists and might discover some new ones for yourself. I discovered the work of the excellent Richard Sala and Kim Deitch through this issue. The samples of other artists also allowed me to get an idea of what their work was like and I ended up reading/buying most of the artists' books off the back of this issue!

An excellent volume from McSweeney's, one of their best in fact, and a totally engrossing read. Highly recommended.

Melina Martin says

I feel like this was a really brilliant idea that got tarnished by worries about 'attitude', but still came out rather decently.

Some of the stories grabbed my interest, others were (perhaps purposefully) bland. The articles were much the same way.

Unfortunately, I developed an insidious hatred for the dust jacket. I acknowledge that the design is clever and still plan to read Chris Ware's graphic novel "Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth," but it was a bad start. I did like his excerpt inside, though.

Favorites:

Ira Glass's preface

the article on Rodolphe Töpffer

Mark Newgarden's "The Little Nun"

feature on Charles Schulz (I've got a soft spot for "Peanuts")

Charles Burns's "Black Hole"

Glen David Gold's story "...nothing less than a bursting shell could penetrate his skin!"

Richard Sala's "Strange Question"

Ben Katchor's "Hotel & Farm"

Richard McGuire's work

Jamie and Gilbert Hernandez's juxtaposing comics

John says

The best and worst of comics -- mostly incredibly storytelling with a mix of whiny alternative cartoonists.

PS -- Chris Ware must love the fine print at the bottom of contracts.

Esther says

Heartbreak consolation through books. McSweeney's marathon makes it all better. Just the right dose of humour as band-aid!

Brian says

They can't all be winners.
