

Synopsis

Comic artist Ivan Brunetti, the creator of Schizo, offers a best-of anthology of contemporary art comics, along with some classic comic strips and other historical materials that have retained a modern sensibility. As with Chris Ware's selections for his best-selling McSweeney's anthology, Brunetti's choices make for a highly personal book (his criteria were simple: these are comics that I savor and often revisit) that serves as a broad historical overview of the medium and a round-up of some of today's best and most interesting North American comic artists. Included here are works from such well-known artists as Robert Crumb, Kim Deitch, Art Spiegelman, Chris Ware, Ben Katchor, Charles Burns, Gary Panter, Seth, Phoebe Gloeckner, Daniel Clowes, Lynda Barry, Joe Sacco, and Jaime and Gilbert Hernandez, as well as many other pioneers whose names may be less familiar. Brunetti offers selections from the works of more than seventy-five avant-garde comic artists. His selections are arranged by genre and grouped thematically. Luxuriously produced and printed in four-color throughout, the book is a must-have for collectors, aficionados, readers of comics, and those generally interested in cutting-edge art and literature.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I knew this book would be great, but I didn't quite imagine it would be THIS amazing. Perfect choices of stellar material from the cream of the 'alt' comics creators (or insert buzzword of choice here). Beautifully packaged, enticingly laid out, just an amazing confection of visuals presented in a

treasure of a book. Perfect for the newcomer hoping to investigate this convoluted 'new' graphic novel phenomenon, and a necessary teaser to entice further investigation. Just right for the dabbler or anyone returning to comix after laying them down however many years ago. - - And a 'must-have' for aging life-long comics nerds like me. Over the years I'd already seen much of the stuff reprinted here, but was very pleased by both the choices of material and the choices of how to sequence them. There's also some amazing pieces by newer, younger creators that I wasn't familiar with at all. There is a flow of subject matter, styles or 'schools' that make this a difficult book to put down. Also the choices of the more vintage material and where they're placed, the placement of the colored pages, and the pages that require you to turn the book sideways. The occasional thoughtful text pieces & Ivan Brunetti's compelling introduction - - Just enough, not too much in a book that remains visual. The particular choices for material excerpted from longer stories - - where in the story it brings you in, how it sucks you in, and the way it ends leaving you wanting more.....and the printing! The end papers, the dust jacket! It doesn't stop. The choices for how much of a page count certain artists receive are also significant, as well as who gets omitted altogether.

Ivan Brunetti, best known for his simplistic Misery Loves Comedy series from the 1980s, has compiled one of the more compelling tomes of graphic fiction in recent days. But what is it that differentiates this book from the dozens of similarly-themed books available? There are a number of things...First of all, most of the artists and writers featured in An Anthology of Graphic Fiction are cream-of-the-crop when it comes to independent (read: mainly self-produced) material. A cursory glance through this book will expose the eye to the free-flowing styles of James Kochalka, Mark Beyer, and John Porcellino mingling merrily alongside the relatively more stringent Seth, Chester Brown, and R. Crumb. However, there are a few wild cards, such as the unknown "secret" (almost pornographic) work of reclusive Henry Darver, discovered in his cluttered apartment shortly after the deranged man's death, and a dated magazine cover illustration by the late Gene Deitch. Though much rarer amongst the bigger name talent, these "outsiders" add a definite flavour to the more popularly known artists. Secondly, the book itself is quite stylishly designed. An elegant tri-colour dust jacket by Canada's own Seth graciously invites the reader to investigate the outside of the book as well as the inside. For a book of its size compiled by one of the big names in the business, one might expect to pay a premium, yet it retails for less than \$30 (American). And thirdly, while Mr. Brunetti makes no bones about this not being a "definitive" collection of independent cartoonists and comics, he (along with the likes of Tom Devlin, Kim Thompson, Chris Ware, Fantagraphics' Gary Groth, and several others) does a fine job of selecting some of the best pieces and excerpts by the

artists featured therein.

There is a stark difference between mainstream commercial graphic fiction and the alternative or independent variety featured here. The difference is between Michael Bay and Darren Aronofsky although maybe even Aronofsky is too commercial. In many cases it's the difference between Bay and a college film maker. The point is that mainstream comics are generally intended for safe consumption by a mass audience while independents tend to reflect an artists true vision. Let me just say that this collection is not for everyone and it most certainly is not for children. The stories feature molestation, pedophilia, raw language and graphic nudity both male and female. Don't be fooled by the whimsical cover. Ironically what got me interested in independent artists was a collection from DC comics called 'Bizarro Comics' which featured alternate-comic creators doing their takes on the DC characters. Inspired by the unique stories in Bizarro I purchased 'McSweeney's Issue 13' which absolutely blew me away. However, my next purchase, 'The Best American Comics - 2006' was a big disappointment and led me to wonder if there just weren't enough quality alternative comics produced in a single year to create an entire 300+ page book. Some of the stories were entirely too long and left me wishing they were over. 'An Anthology of Graphic Fiction' is an out of the park home run. The author presents comics going back to the 1940's but leaning decidedly towards current stuff. They run the gamut from Aline Crumbs primitive scratchings to Chris Ware meticulous works that look like they came straight from a graphic design class. The writing is much more profane and a helluva lot more gloomy than what you find in mainstream graphic fiction. Someone should do a study on why alternative artists are so depressed.

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