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Kirby: King Of Comics



Synopsis

Jack Kirby created or co-created some of comic books' most popular characters including Captain America, The X-Men, The Hulk, The Fantastic Four, The Mighty Thor, Darkseid, and The New Gods. More significantly, he created much of the visual language for fantasy and adventure comics. There were comics before Kirby, but for the most part their page layout, graphics, and visual dynamic aped what was being done in syndicated newspaper strips. Almost everything that was different about comic books began in the forties on the drawing table of Jack Kirby. This is his story by one who knew him well; the authorized celebration of the one and only 'King of Comics' and his groundbreaking work. I don't think it's any accident that . . . the entire Marvel universe and the entire DC universe are all pinned or rooted on Kirby's concepts. Michael Chabon

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Customer Reviews

As a teenager, future television and comics writer Evanier became an assistant to Jack Kirby, one of the foremost artists in the history of American comics. Kirby played a major role in shaping the superhero genre, not only through his innovative, dynamic artwork but through collaborating with Stan Lee to create classic Marvel characters like the Fantastic Four, the Hulk and the X-Men. Evanier has now written this magnificently illustrated biography of his mentor. Rather than employing the academic prose that one might expect from an art book, Evanier, a talented raconteur, tells Kirby's life story in an informal, entertaining manner. Although Evanier does not

delve into psychological analysis, he brings Kirby's personality vividly alive: a child of the Great Depression, a creative visionary who struggled most of his life to support his family. The book recounts how Kirby was insufficiently appreciated by clueless corporate executives and close-minded comics professionals. But the stunning artwork in this book, taken from private collections, makes the case for Kirby's genius. A landmark work, this is essential reading for comics fans and those who want to better understand the history of the comics medium or those who just want to enjoy Kirby's incredible artwork. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

the best part of "Kirby: King of Comics" is the beautiful color art found throughout. There are almost as many pages of art as there are pages of text, which makes the book a treasure. (The Cleveland Plain Dealer 2017-08-02) --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Reading about history is fascinating; seeing history spring to life can at times be even better. King of Comics uses words & images of various kinds to *depict* the life of Kirby: visual reproductions, photos, pencils, inks, colors, and original comic art are all represented here. Highlights here for me... *Vintage photos & scans- check out the early, black & white images on pages 34, 67, and 211. Photos like these go a long way to making history spring to life.* Original artwork- I love Kirby's graphite & cream-colored army drawings on pages 66 & 67. I also like the Sandman sketch on page 10, the Popeye sketch on page 35, Kirby's Marines Toys for Tots poster on page 157, and the many scans of inked original comic pages. The Jimmy Olsen scans on pages 166 & 167 are particularly eye-grabbing & highly stylized. Many images in these pages are rare & highly collectible. It's virtually a Kirby museum in print, at about 9-1/2"W x 12-1/2"L, and 220+ pages. Famous comics covers are also reproduced, like Action Comics #1, Marvel Comics #1, Captain America Comics #1, Brave & the Bold #28, Fantastic Four #1, New Gods #1, etc. These images are landmarks in comicbook history, and Kirby's impact in comics' Golden & Silver Ages is amazing to say the least. Objectively speaking, as far as I can understand, there can be only one, *real* King of Comics. Jack Kirby certainly gets my vote! P.S. Also recommended is Excelsior! : The Amazing Life of Stan Lee by Stan Lee & George Mair. It's still available today.

I read Jack Kirby's comics for Marvel as a kid, and loved the action and dynamism, especially as his characterizations of the FF and all the others rapidly grew. Once I opened this book, Kirby, King of

Comics, I couldn't stop smiling. Jack Kirby was great, even as a kid, and his early work's maturity was a pleasant revelation. The hard work being an illustrator for the comics from the 1930s to the 1980s was, for me, riveting. The letter to home with a drawing (one page shown) to his wife from the war front in France in 1944 was poignant and reminded me a bit of Mauldin's famous work. Kirby and wife, aided by people who grew up loving his work and could help, thankfully changed things for the better for him and perhaps other comic artists - after decades of economic worry and trust in the wrong people. I finished this late at night, the same evening it arrived. Thank you, Mark Evanier, for this book.

Let me preface this review by saying the hard core Jack Kirby fan may not be that impressed with this book; if you have more than a handful of the Jack Kirby Collector issues, you may be familiar with most of the text and images that this book presents. For the neophyte or moderate Kirby fan, this is really an outstanding book. The 2 page spread of pencils for "Street Code" that begins on page 28 is jaw dropping and worth the price of admission. There are a lot of scans of Kirby's original penciled pages; you can see where he erased and touched up lines and it provided me with more than a few "wow" moments as someone who draws and likes to study others' work. The text of Kirby's history can be a bit depressing and it is presented in detail here:- (un)steady work in the 40s and 50s that doesn't bring steady finances.- Break through characters, art and comics with Marvel in the 60s that do not bring recognition to Kirby among the public at that time.- Editors liking Kirby's page layouts, but bringing in other artists to change faces of prominent characters with before and after illustrative examples. Finally in 1978, Kirby got some animation jobs with "young artists who'd grown up on his work and old-timers who valued the hell out of him." Combined with the popularity of comic book conventions and demand for artists' work (though Kirby had to hire lawyers to get pages back from Marvel) finally brought him some well deserved recognition and finances. Have you read this far? I'll close by saying that this is an amazing book if you aren't already well immersed with Jack Kirby's history.

A good read.

Filled with phenomenal examples of Kirby's art, KIRBY: KING OF COMICS is a great primer to the work of one of comics' true legends. "Street Code," Kirby's look at childhood on the mean streets of NY, alone is worth the price of admission, but the book is filled any number of rarely published pieces, often from the original pencils. The text from Mark Evanier, a talented writer and longtime

Kirby associate, proves to be a bit of a disappointment. Evanier does a fine job of encapsulating Kirby's life, focusing on the high and low points of Kirby's storied career, but the work is simply lacking in the depth that I have come to expect from current biographies. Simon and Kirby, the Marvel years, the creation of the "Fourth World" are looked at, but it's little more than a cursory glance. Less than half the book is text, and even with the oversize pages, (Great for the art repros!) it still feels skimpy on details. Maybe, at some point in the future a definitive bio will come out; until then fans will have to make due with this loving tribute.

This is a very interesting and easy behind the scenes read about a historical character in comics history. Lots of great full color and B&W art to pour over too. Only mystery about the book is, that with all the wonderful pages and covers Kirby drew, why on earth is the cover so ugly? I mean really, the most important selling point of the book and it's just this big ugly gray fist and little else. Thousands of pages to choose from.....copyright issues maybe, but this is one ugly cover. Take off the dust cover and theres a nice blue hardcover with an embossed Kirby signature and profile headshot.....they could have just gone with that.

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