



The Best American Comics 2006

Harvey Pekar (Editor) , Anne Elizabeth Moore (Series Editor) , Esther Pearl Watson , Lilli Carré , Robert Crumb , Chris Ware , Kim Deitch , Jaime Hernández , more... Alison Bechdel , Joe Sacco , Lynda Barry , Justin Hall , Joel Priddy , Anders Nilsen , David Lasky , Ben Katchor , Rebecca Dart , Ivan Brunetti , Jonathan Bennett , John Porcellino , David Heatley , Lloyd Dangle , Hob , Gilbert Shelton , Olivia Schanzer , Alex Robinson , Jessica Abel , Seth Tobocman , Rick Geary , Tom Hart , Kurt Wolfgang , Jesse Reklaw
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The popularity of the graphic genre continues to rage, and *The Best American Comics* is a diverse, exciting annual selection for fans and newcomers alike. The inaugural volume includes stories culled from graphic novels, pamphlet comics, newspapers, magazines, mini-comics, and the Web.

Contributors include Robert Crumb, Chris Ware, Kim Deitch, Jaime Hernandez, Alison Bechdel, Joe Sacco, and Lynda Barry—and unique discoveries such as Justin Hall, Esther Pearl Watson, and Lilli Carré.

The Best American Comics 2006 Details

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Author : Harvey Pekar (Editor) , Anne Elizabeth Moore (Series Editor) , Esther Pearl Watson , Lilli Carré , Robert Crumb , Chris Ware , Kim Deitch , Jaime Hernández , more... Alison Bechdel , Joe Sacco , Lynda Barry , Justin Hall , Joel Priddy , Anders Nilsen , David Lasky , Ben Katchor , Rebecca Dart , Ivan Brunetti , Jonathan Bennett , John Porcellino , David Heatley , Lloyd Dangle , Hob , Gilbert Shelton , Olivia Schanzer , Alex Robinson , Jessica Abel , Seth Tobocman , Rick Geary , Tom Hart , Kurt Wolfgang , Jesse Reklaw ...less

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From Reader Review The Best American Comics 2006 for online ebook

Bethany says

This whole series is so well done. Love the presentation, the scope of contributors, and guest editor forwards. Now to hunt down all the years ;)

R Del Mar says

My book number one. This book is excellent.

~Knoctise00~Lookout 4 gems says

An interesting collection that recopilates the best comics that have ever existed in the human kind.

Josephus FromPlacitas says

Houghton Mifflin don't know comics almost like Bo don't know diddley. There are a ton of great artists and neat little vignettes in here, but there are also some really token-ized appearances by The Great Ones that don't make a whole lot of sense outside of their broader storylines.

For example, there's an excerpt from Jessica Abel's La Perdida, from maybe one-half or two-thirds of the way through the story. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't imagine that a collection of great fiction writing would reprint, say, Chapter 13 of Jonathan Franzen's latest novel. What kind of sense would it make to include a snippet of a novel with stretches of dialogue about characters you could have only met in previous chapters, with references to major plot points that have already taken place, and with tense discussions over incidents that have already occurred, but that the reader of the collection could not have read yet BECAUSE IT'S AN EXCERPT FROM THE MIDDLE OF A LONG STORY?

Same thing goes for the mid-story chapters taken from Dogs and Water by Anders Nilsen, and Tricked by Alex Robinson. Even the Alison Bechdel one-pager is a page from a long serial saga that has no context in which to place it!

You can almost hear a condescending editor looking at those and saying, "Oh well, that doesn't make much sense out of context, but who really cares? They're just comics. Only the *feeling* of the thing really matters."

Naturally, I could be guilty of pretentious hipsterism here, pontificating from on high: "This collection is not up to the standard of the true connoisseur of the almighty art form of graphic narrative. Also, I hated Pearl Jam long before it was *cool* to hate Pearl Jam, man."

Maybe I'm wrong, maybe the entire The Best American Series is just a hodge-podge of opportunistically

slapped-together chunks of stories, essays, mystery, fiction, spiritual, or travel writing and "nonrequired reading," whatever the hell that means. Maybe they don't only butcher comics, but also every genre they think they can make a quick publishing buck off of.

That said, Rebecca Dart's "Rabbithead" is amazing and creepy, Kim Deitch has a nice little piece of death row journalism, "La Rubia Loca" by Justin Hall was a really strong, complete story, and I thought Joel Priddy's "The Amazing Life of Onion Jack" was a **lot** of fun.

But then I'd also seen a lot of these pieces before in the publications they first published in: Joe Sacco's Iraq occupation piece from The Guardian, the pieces by Chris Ware and Tom Hart and Jaime Hernandez, and of course I'd already read La Perdida. So I'm glad I got this from the library, it'd be kind of stupid to pay money for it. Of course, if it means that the artists got paid twice for the same comic, I'm **always** in favor of that. (If they *didn't* pay the artists, then fuck Houghton Mifflin in the ass with a red-hot iron spike.)

Also, reading the introduction by Harvey Pekar-- who co-edited and co-compiled the thing -- reminded me of a question that frequently comes up in my mind when I read many (but not all) of the things he writes: how is it that this guy is regarded as a writer? Sweet God, his earlessness can be painful and his boring, utilitarian descriptions of what he does really don't work for me about, let's say, half of the time. Maybe there was something attractive about a no-frills, nearly artless description of mundane Cleveland existence, but adding a little poetic phrasing once in a while can really make your writing worth reading, Harv.

Jess Alonso T10 says

This content brings back many memories.

Scott Longo says

Picked up all the books in the "Best American Comics" series over the weekend. \$4 on the ultra-clearance rack for all of them! Well, also, an ex co-worker hooked it up pretty hard. So, that was cool.

But yeah, this series... I've always felt a little underwhelmed with these books when I run across 'em. There's usually some really good stuff, some decent stuff, but all totally jumbled. When I look at the list of 100 comics that they narrowed down to arrive at the final...25(?) I can't help but feel like there's been some crucial missteps. But that all comes with making a book of this nature and it's nice to see Harvey Pekar, in his introduction, acknowledge the kind of inherent flaw in most broadly defined anthologies, of any sort. So, I figured I might as well read through all of these cover to cover and just see what's up. I feel like they came about at a weird time where comics were trying to make this big crossover to a literary audience and a lot of this book's aims seem to obviously be designed around that principal. I dunno, I found the choices kinda interesting, but not particularly enjoyable.

Uh, I'm not going to go crazy into this but... maybe I'll just list the highlights.

Anne Elizabeth Moore's introduction is kind of depressingly inspired. Basically, she kinda says cartooning, by virtue of its undervalued and underrepresented status can operate as a form of defiance. But like, not

really. I mean, I think she's using that idea as a kind of springboard to.. inspire in a general sense? Offering up "The Air Pirates"/Disney lawsuit as a kind of premiere standard? I dunno, whatever. It seemed like a kind of.. defeat, or something, to me. Or, I think she's trying to say, or show, if cartooning is truly inspired, it's on a weird personal level. An idea that ultimately gets reflected in Pekar's choices for the comics that make the final cut. Like, he picks a lot of strips that touch on America's irresponsibility abroad, and the vague frustrations and loneliness of home... but the stories represented here are always very small scale at heart, which I think fits. A good thing. So, I dunno, I guess the strips that worked best for me touch on that kind of helplessness in the face of our insane world... but through an intensely personal lens. Haha, or something. Yeeeeeeah. This ^^ was jumbled. Maybe I'll define these ideas as I review the rest of this series.

These were my favorite strips:

Jesse Reklaw's "Thirteen Cats of My Childhood" might be good enough to make the whole book worth buying. So good... but I'm a biased California boy. Crumb's "Walkin' the Streets", very similar. Moving. John Porcellino has one of my favorite strips from his "Mosquito Abatement Man" book, "Chemical Plant/Another World". Joe Sacco's strip, "Complacency Kills" felt really appropriate for the themes the anthology adopts. I guess I also like the short-burst reportage nature of it, standing alongside the fictional comics, instead of in a fatty standalone graphic novel. In a weird way it felt even more connected to a "reality" when seen like that, at least for me. Also, the very first comic, "The Amazing Life of Onion Jack", from Joel Priddy (one of the only artists whose name I didn't recognize), was cute and a good opener.

Michael says

Uh..., the content definitely doesn't live up to the title. You can see guest editor Harvey Pekar's preference for autobio material stamped all over the book, but few stories that capture the wit or the humanity of his work.

The standards - Bob Crumb, Jamie Hernandez, Chris Ware, Joe Sacco, and Kim Deitch turn in pretty enjoyable work, but there are too many "here's something that happened to me, which is neither funny nor enlightening" indulgences.

Some winners, but not enough to make it pay off.

Joni says

Primera de las antologías que sigue haciendo cada año una editorial que no se dedica a los cómics, Houghton Mifflin, donde la premisa es tener un editor y ayudante para seleccionar creadores desconocidos, distintos, por fuera de todo convencionalismo. El resultado es dispar y poco premonitorio teniendo en cuenta que doce años después sigue siendo poco lo que se sabe de casi todos estos artistas. El compilador es ni mas ni menos que Harvey Pekar, una gloria de los bajos mundos del noveno arte, tan costilla como corazón del depravado fantástico Robert Crumb. Se destacan ideas más que estilos y no siempre se llega a contar algo bueno por más original la forma que se lo presente. Para destacar por sobre todo a quien ya era conocido por entonces, Joe Sacco que fue soldado yanqui en Iraq y combina de forma maravillosa la crónica de denuncia con su arte. Está también Kim Deitch, el ya consagrado por entonces Jaime Hernandez, el genial Chris Ware siempre tan original y atractivo y hasta Robert Crumb dice presente en varias páginas. Hay mucho material y

refresca la búsqueda de nuevos horizontes, no siempre pueden sustentar una carrera pero pueden mantenerlos en boca de los submundos editoriales independientes. Es una lectura muy interesante en general así como algunas obras puedan resultar malas al menos se rescata la puesta en escena de la mayoría.

Courtney Johnson says

I smiled a few times while reading this but most of the comics included were very depressing and dark. I guess I like my comics with talking animals, little kids, and superheroes, exactly what the intro to this book said wasn't good.

Christine says

There is a lot that can be said about "the best American comics". Some words that come to mind are humorous, ironic, weird, sad, angry, painfully truthful, informational and above all, creative. Let me repeat myself, these comics were exceptionally creative from their stories to their artwork. For a long time I have wanted to experience some of Robert Crumb's work and this book gave me a small taste and I do want to read more. This is the perfect venue for someone who hasn't read many comics or graphic novels. My biggest complaint is the writing was too small for me to read on some of them. Does this mean I am too old for this kind of reading? I sure hope not, lol.

David says

As a collection, I give this an even lower rating. Because of its heavy emphasis on the dreary, the depressing, and the angry hippies, I think it's a pretty terrible sampling of all of the wonderful things we call "comics." Then again editor Pekar as much as admits that he's really into dreary, depressing, and angry hippie comics.

As a collection, I must protest the placement of the artist bios and comments at the back of the book. While the comics themselves are presented in random (?) order in the book, the bios and comments by the artists which accompany them are in alphabetical order at the very end. Clearly these should have been placed either before or after each piece (my vote is for *after* so that I could make up my own mind about each comic before reading about it).

As comics, I give this collection a 3/5 star rating because I loved some of it and I hated some of it. Since I have no problem enjoying the stuff I loved and ignoring the stuff I hated, I 'liked' the lot of 'em.

I really enjoyed a lot of the art. I also really enjoyed (more than I expected) a lot of the stories. Brief rundown of each for an idea of what I thought while reading this:

1. Onion Jack by Joel Priddy - clean, simple, funny. I liked it.
2. Ready to Die by Kim Deitch - thankfully not preachy and therefore effective.
3. Dogs and Water by Anders Nilsen - sparse and bleak like Edward Gorey but without the humor. Meh.

4. Adventures of Paul Bunyan(...) by Lilli Carre - I liked the art.
5. Diary of a Bread Delivery Guy by David Lasky - one page, entertaining.
6. Goner Pillow Company by Ben Katchor - short with interesting art and interesting theme.
7. Only Disconnect by Alison Bechdel - slice of lesbian life.
8. Complacency Kills by Joe Sacco - great illustrations and good reporting/storytelling.
9. La Rubia Loca by Justin Hall - a rather long story, but engrossing. Art okay, but a little sloppy for my tastes.
10. Comics: A History by Chris Ware - I'll admit, I'm not sure I get Chris Ware. I love his style, but this pair of dense panels left me cold.
11. RabbitHead by Rebecca Dart - damned hard to follow wordless story in an experimental timeline format. Absolutely loved the art and all of the inventive creatures and such!
12. Untitled by Ivan Brunetti - absolutely amazing single page shows how much you can tell with so little. Loved it.
13. Dance with the Ventures by Jonathan Bennett - quirky hipster story. Really enjoyed the humor and art.
14. Day by Day with Hopey by Jaime Hernandez - I've only seen bits and pieces of Love and Rockets but I don't think this short snippet does the series much favor because this feels very incomplete.
15. Busted by Esther Pearl Watson - Okay, seriously. What the hell? Worst comic ever made. Including my own vomit and farting comics I made when I was eight years old.
16. Chemical Plant by John Porcellino - kinda fun little vignette with the art of an exceptionally neat sixth grade girl.
17. Portrait of my Dad by David Heatley - probably the highlight of the book for me. I really enjoyed the hell out of this. Packed with funny little mini-comics.
18. Street-Level View...Republican...Convention by Lloyd Dangle - so childish. Shitty art. Can anybody defend this piece as adult thinking on any level? Fuck this uninsightful drivel. I'm not a Republican, nor am I defending them. Trust me, I would say the same about a conservative comic that was just as bad.
19. The Supervisor by Hob - funny little thingy.
20. Wonder Warthog by Gilbert Shelton - what year is this again? I can't imagine anyone enjoying this except out of a sense of nostalgia. Did like some of the art, though.
21. Solidarity Forever by Olivia Schanzer - crudely drawn nonsense.
22. Thirty-Three by Alex Robinson - one of those little slice-of-life relationship type stories. Love the clean line-work and solid blacks and whites (think Bone).

23. Missing by Jessica Abel - I assume this is part of a greater whole. Good storytelling, but not much of a story, if that makes sense.

24. Nakedness and Power by Seth Tobocman et al - after a while, you just kinda get numb to the hippie nonsense in this collection. Interesting bold art style reminds me of wood block printing.

25. Recollection of Seduction by Rick Geary - I love Geary. This is a hilarious little one-pager.

26. The Executive Hour by Tom Hart - hippie nonsense, but it's all in good fun and the art style doesn't make it seem like its taking itself too seriously.

27. Passing Before Life's Very Eyes by Kurt Wolfgang - funny and interesting, love the bold yellow, white, and orange art.

28. Thirteen Cats of my Childhood by Jesse Reklaw - good art and an interesting way to tell a story about a childhood, but it's still hard to like if you pause to think about all of the stray/dead animals this family produced.

29. Two Questions by Lynda Barry - sloppy/shitty art that still manages to pack in some clever visuals and has a tale with which any creative person can identify.

30. Walkin' the Streets by Robert Crumb - ah, Crumb. I love ya, man. The art alone is worth it, but I also felt this was a pretty good short autobiography. There's not much of a conclusion, but oh well, right?

That's it. Call this thing Best American Hippie Comics.

Seth says

There's a copy of this laying around in the cafe connected to the Russian embassy in Guyana. I read it whenever I eat there and have made my way through most of it. I'm not a connoisseur of this type of literature so can't really comment on the quality of the anthology. But I did like a lot of it and the Robert Crumb selection is my favorite.

Stephanie (aka WW) says

(3.5 stars)

A solid collection of comics from 2006. Not sure why some artists get just one page while others get 20-30 pages, but I enjoyed all.

Onur Y says

Tüm seçki için güzel ?eyler söylemek mümkün de?il ama aralarda çok güzel hikayeler vard?. Baz? çizimlerin yaz?lar?n? okumak için okuma gözlü?üm bile çok yetersiz kald?, ancak hacimli bir büyüteç ile okunabilirdi, o derece miniminnac?k yaz?lar, kime neye nas?l hitap etti?i anla??lmaz i?ler.

Ama 2 hikaye beni benden ald?: ilki "rubia loca" ki uzun y?llar boyunca unutamayaca??m bu hikayeyi. çizimler ilkel olsa da anlat?lan hikaye -ki muhitemelen gerçek- öylesine çarp?c? ki kendinizi kapt?rmaman?z mümkün de?il. Di?eri ise çok sa?lam politik söylemi olan çok çarp?c? bir halk mücadeleini anlatan Nakedness and Power idi. Seth Tobocman'?n çok s?rad??? çizgileri ve Terisa Turner ve Leigh Brownhill'in öyküle?tirdi?i hikayesi ile her bir karesi çok de?erli bir eser benim aç?mdan. Bunun haricinde kareleri kaplayan devasa yaz? balonlar? ve lak?rd?dan çizgiye pek yer kalmayan hikayeler ve a??r? giriftle?mi?, çamura dönümü? çizimler ilgi alan?mdan çok uzak.

Veronica says

This one was especially good.

Some favorites:

La Rubia Loca by Justin Hall

Portraits of My Dad by David Heatley

Nakedness and Power by Seth Tobocman, Terisa Turner, and Leigh Brownhill

Thirteen Cats of my Childhood by Jesse Reklaw

Walkin' the Streets by Robert Crumb
