



The Acme Novelty Library #16

Chris Ware

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The creator of *Jimmy Corrigan* begins a new story.

This newest edition of *The ACME Novelty Library* features the first serial installment of "Rusty Brown," Ware's first major lengthy "narrative indulgence" since his *Jimmy Corrigan* graphic novel. *The ACME Novelty Library* is Chris Ware's ongoing comic book/art object series, which he has been creating for Fantagraphics since 1993. It is also where Corrigan was serialized to great acclaim and success before going supernova when collected by Pantheon in 2000, selling over 70,000 copies in four hardcover printings.

"Rusty Brown" will be serialized in *ACME* over the course of several issues (and Pantheon will similarly collect the story in hardcover sometime upon completion, several years from now). The first installment begins with young Rusty, an outcast in his suburban Chicago elementary school, befriended solely by his Supergirl action figure until he meets new kid on the block and fellow comic nerd, Chalky White. Rusty's story is an uncomfortably vivid and uncompromising look into the life of a social outcast. Ultimately, *Rusty Brown* will run longer than *Jimmy Corrigan*, tracing Brown's life through adulthood, along with every excruciating moment of failure it brings.

The ACME Novelty Library series has been the most acclaimed comic book series of the last ten years, as well as one of the bestselling contemporary comics on the racks. This is only the second issue, however, that has been available to the general book trade, enabling booksellers to satisfy demand for Ware's work post-*Jimmy Corrigan* while Ware builds toward the next collection. The format also allows Ware to indulge us with many surprises as well, from Ware's faux-advertising sections and elaborate three-dimensional cut-out designs.

Author Biography: *Chris Ware* published his first comic strip in *The Daily Texan*, the student newspaper serving The University of Texas at Austin. He relocated to Chicago to attend the Art Institute in the late 1980s; he continues to reside there with his wife, Marnie. In his spare time, he creates *The Ragtime Ephemeralist*, a journal devoted to vintage ragtime music.

The Acme Novelty Library #16 Details

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Author : Chris Ware

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From Reader Review The Acme Novelty Library #16 for online ebook

Paul says

When Chris Ware announced that his next long work after "Jimmy Corrigan" would be "Rusty Brown," it seemed odd. Rusty had previously appeared in gag strips making fun of the collector mentality. And Rusty--an obese middle-aged man who constantly conspires to rip off his only friend, Chalky White--appeared to be an unlikely candidate to be fleshed out in long form. But I shouldn't have doubted Ware.

This first chapter of what looks to be a very long work (six years later, he's only on the fourth chapter) takes us in awesome cinematic fashion back to Rusty's childhood, on the day he meets Chalky. The eccentricities that come up later in adulthood are still there in childhood. Rusty's friendless, painfully introverted, and obsessed with his toys. But while Rusty himself is still kind of a disagreeable kid, the characters around him, like his father and his teacher, come to life. Knowing now that these supporting characters will largely take over the narrative in later chapters, I really appreciate the quiet groundwork Ware set up with this opening chapter.

Tania says

I think Chris Ware is my favorite cartoonist. I think it may be the subject matter (lonely people who lead disappointing lives...) but also his drawing style. In this one, it truly feels like you are watching a movie rather than merely reading, and his attention to certain details makes it very compelling. I've read much of the last part with the Rusty Brown character out of order, but it didn't affect the impact of the story line. Although you think one might get tired of the same themes of loneliness, Ware actually is able to make it refreshing in every novel. In 18 (which is my favorite) he is able to evoke this feeling of a static emotion throughout that isn't really used in 16. Overall, It's not my favorite one, but I liked it a lot, and I know I'll read it again.

Jacobi says

Ware is crazy good at what he does. He's a master at the design elements of comics, dealing with complex page layouts as if they were playthings. It's great fun seeing him push the limits of comic design. It's easy to get a little lost in his pages, having to really focus to get just what he's trying to convey (and I'm not embarrassed to admit those last pages gave me a headache). Even though this is my first time reading a Ware book, I have a feeling even if I don't like the narrative, I'm still going to love the art.

The story of ANL#16: Rusty Brown deals with a group of loosely connected characters and their morning getting to school, as well as the early parts of the school day. I didn't mind the story. I like these sorts of understated comics. The story feels a bit half-baked (by design surely), but I'm not the biggest fan of that. But I appreciate that Ware seems to have something going on behind these panels, I just think I prefer when Adrian Tomine does this sort of thing a bit better.

But that design? Wonderful. Even the book itself is satisfying to hold and handle.

Jeff says

Another astonishing title from Chris Ware, one of the handful of real geniuses working in the medium of graphic novels today. While thematically similar to *Jimmy Corrigan*, Ware's earlier and longer work in the same medium, *The ACME Novelty Library #16* is perhaps even more melancholy. Ware's technique is familiar to anyone who has read *Jimmy Corrigan*, in that he weaves together the separate story lines of several characters who are all living diminished lives, full of regret and loss. Nonetheless, as with *Jimmy Corrigan*, there is a note of hopefulness here, a sense that these unhappy lives can be salvaged if these wounded characters can just learn to acknowledge and communicate with each other. This sort of emotionally charged narrative can be fraught with mushiness, silliness, and simple mindedness, but Ware is talented enough and sure enough in his aim to hit the target without bringing along the detritus so familiar from similar tales born of lesser creators. Taken altogether, *The ACME Novelty Library #16* is another triumph for the hugely talented Ware.

D.M. says

After all the anticipation and effort that went into me (belatedly) getting this book, it could only have been a disappointment. But a disappointment from Chris Ware is still better than most comic creators' best efforts! (It says a lot about both him & me that I just got the book yesterday and have already read it twice.) This volume covers the earliest tales of the previously-introduced ubergeeks Rusty Brown & Chalky White, and suggests how they first met. I love these characters (in a way that allows me to hate them viciously), so am completely delighted to get this largely dedicated view of them. The stories of Rusty and his disenchanted teacher father run large on every page, with the tale of Chalky & his sister Alice adjusting for the first day at a new school running as a sort of perpetual footnote simultaneous in timing to the 'main' story. Both tales offer that unique Ware style of ennui that has given him enough of a following to even attempt this self-published volume, though the Rusty story's got it a bit heavier than the Chalky one. The last few pages are dedicated to characters we'll meet further in a later volume, giving a brief, mainly wordless glimpse into their comingled existences living in the same building. These last few pages pack in more of the familiar Ware draughtsmanship and attention to detail than did anywhere else in the volume. This entire book is, as is usual with Ware, remarkable and unique. I would not recommend it to first-time Acme readers, but to a longtime fan it's a largely rewarding read...my own personal 'disappointment' aside.

Whatsupchuck says

I have a hard time knowing what to say about Chris Ware's work in general. His panel structure is very difficult for my brain to arrange easily which pulls me out of the narrative.

On the other hand the narratives are so compelling that it's hard to get pulled out. But what makes them compelling? These aren't exciting or epic tales.

The characters are what drive the stories. The characters are complex and utterly believable.

Another aspect that keeps me glued to the pages is the sad, melancholy feel of nearly every page. These aren't easy reads, they aren't feel-good reads, but they are very real and visceral.

Ben Bueno says

It was good. It's Chris Ware. But - as I don't own the rest of the Acme Novelty volumes, I didn't get the full story, and because the Acme Novelty books are really expensive, it's going to stay this way for now. A good reason for rating this 3 stars? Probably not, but I guess that's that.

Adan says

So dang depressing! Everything this man writes makes me want to kill myself, but it's still so damn good!

Joe Decie says

I love this story and I wish I still owned it. There's little point in me reviewing it as it's long out of print, so if you don't own it, you probably won't. Much as I love Mr Ware's books I can only take them in small doses, I find it tough going.

Cody says

I've always had an appreciation for Chris Ware's artwork. He has an innate skill for toying with the framing conventions of graphic novels/comics and precise linework that I have yet to see rivalled, but it took *Rusty Brown* to really win me over. It is probably because this story (which is still ongoing as part of the Acme Novelty Library) is the first of Ware's I've read in which I felt the connection between his technical brilliance and the human truth of his characters and stories. When that connection happens the feeling is profound and it reassures me that the graphic novel is indeed a valid artform. *Rusty Brown* is, to me, where Chris Ware strikes a wonderful balance between narrative trickery, quiet desperation, and desperate humor.

Barbara says

i came upon this book a number of times in the library. i didn't know what to think of it because there wasn't an obvious title on it with an author's name. i remember opening it for the first time in the library thinking, 'that jerk Jason Lint, Chalky White, and Rusty Brown wrote in this book (on the inside cover of the book, where it says 'This Book is The Property Of:' as if it's a classroom textbook), that's rude and they used the word sucks.' i didn't quite know what to think of this book, so i didn't check it out. As I flip through this book i think i love it more and more. Thinking back on my first impression of the inside cover makes me adore the book more. i like the Chris Ware has that trademark textbook inside cover from the book and vandalized it. Everyone has memories of writing inside that inside cover of a textbook when you're in grade school.

Chris Ware respects his audience and that is evident in how he is so thoughtful throughout the book. He has faith that his reader will make connections on their own.

Andrew says

There's a lot that annoys me about Chris Ware. He's precious and fetishistic about his formats to an obnoxious degree (referring to issues of his comics as 'objets d'art,' refusing to have them reprinted), and his constant, defensive self-deprecation often reads like the smuggest sort of humble-bragging ("Oh, I'm suuuuch a dork for knowing soooo much about philosophy and art. Nobody will like my books because they're just toooo esoteric").

But.

Goddamn, is he good at what he does. This issue contains the opening parts of "Rusty Brown" and "Building Stories." Each storyline uses ingenious layouts to present a dozen or so human lives. These lives often run parallel to one another. They occasionally intersect, but they never connect. We occupy the same time and space, and we influence each other in unseen ways, but we are each alone. It's a tragic concept, presented here with humor and grace. Chris Ware can go on annoying me forever if it means he keeps putting out 'objets d'art' this funny and moving.

Williwaw says

Classic Ware fare! The story focuses on an alienated, painfully introverted child (Rusty Brown) with an active fantasy life. Of particular interest here is how Ware illustrates two separate (but ultimately converging) story lines simultaneously. Rusty Brown's story line is the dominant one and the dynamic upper panels therefore dominate each page. Chalky White's story is shown in a single strip of smaller, subordinate panels at the bottom of each page. Characters from each story line frequently intersect and are shown from both perspectives, giving the reader a more multi-dimensional experience than is ordinarily found in the typical comic strip narrative.

As usual, Ware's layouts and colors are stunning. The wintry, Midwestern milieu is brilliantly conceived. Many panels are dominated by falling snow, and indeed, the entire narrative begins with some musings and questions concerning the putative individuality and uniqueness of every snow flake and every human being.

The action primarily concerns children and their parents getting ready for school during a heavy snow storm. Rusty Brown is a regular at his school, but it's Chalky White's first day at the same school. Presumably, the story of how the two characters meet will be taken up in Volume 17. The everyday terrors of being a child in a bland world that demands conformity could not be better delineated.

Emily says

love for its hints at my beloved "building"

Sze says

the simplicity of the drawings makes it more resonant somehow. i love the way he plays with layout, with stories running horizontally on the bottom, inverted directions on a page, zooming in and out, and the building stories at the back is excellent.
