



# The Best American Comics Criticism

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**The Best American Comics Criticism** From *Fantagraphics*

**An immediate perennial, documenting the critical rise of the graphic novel.**

Conventional wisdom states that cartooning and graphic novels exist in a golden age of creativity, popularity, and critical acceptance. But why? Today, the signal is stronger than ever, but so is the noise. *New York Times*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Bookforum* critic Ben Schwartz assembles the greatest lineup of comics critics the world has yet seen to testify on behalf of this increasingly vital medium. *The Best American Comics Writing* is the first attempt to collate the best criticism to date of the graphic novel boom in a way that contextualizes and codifies one of the most important literary movements of the last 60 years.

This collection begins in 2000, the game changing year that Pantheon released the graphic novels *Jimmy Corrigan* and *David Boring*. Originally serialized as “alternative” comics, they went on to confirm the critical and commercial viability of graphic literature. Via its various authors, this collection functions as a valuable readers’ guide for fans, academics, and librarians, tracing the current comics renaissance from its beginnings and creative growth to the cutting edge of today’s artists. This volume includes Daniel Clowes (*Ghost World*) in conversation with novelist Jonathan Lethem (*Fortress of Solitude*), Chris Ware, Jonathan Franzen (*The Corrections*), John Hodgman (*The Daily Show*, *The Areas of My Expertise*, *The New York Times Book Review*), David Hajdu (*The 10-Cent Plague*), Douglas Wolk (*Publishers Weekly*, author of the Eisner award-winning *Reading Comics*), Frank Miller (*Sin City* and *The Spirit* film director) in conversation with Will Eisner (The Spirit’s creator), Gerard Jones’ (*Men of Tomorrow*), Brian Doherty (author *Radicals of Capitalism*, *This is Burning Man*) and critics Ken Parille (*Comic Art*), Jeet Heer (*The National Post*), R.C. Harvey (biographer of Milton Caniff), and Donald Phelps (author of the landmark book of comics criticism, *Reading the Funnies*). *Best American Comics Writing* also features a cover by nationally known satirist Drew Friedman (*The New York Observer*, *Old Jewish Comedians*) in which Friedman asks, “tongue-in-cheek,” if cartoonists are the new literati, what must their critics look like?



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“Editor Ben Schwartz did a great job selecting pieces that comprise a vibrant narrative of the industry. From graphic novels with literary aspirations to comics about capes, the breadth of content in here is really fantastic.” (Erin Polgreen - Attackerman)

“While there’s a great deal to be learned by reading any such collection, Schwartz’s editorial approach makes *The Best American Comics Criticism* far more entertaining than I would have thought a collection of criticism could be.” (Ken Parille - Blog Flume)

#### About the Author

Ben Schwartz is an essayist and screenwriter who has written for The New York Times, Bookforum, LA Weekly, and TV shows too embarrassing to mention. He is working on The Lost Laugh, a history of American humor set between the world wars, for 2011 from Fantagraphics Books.

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