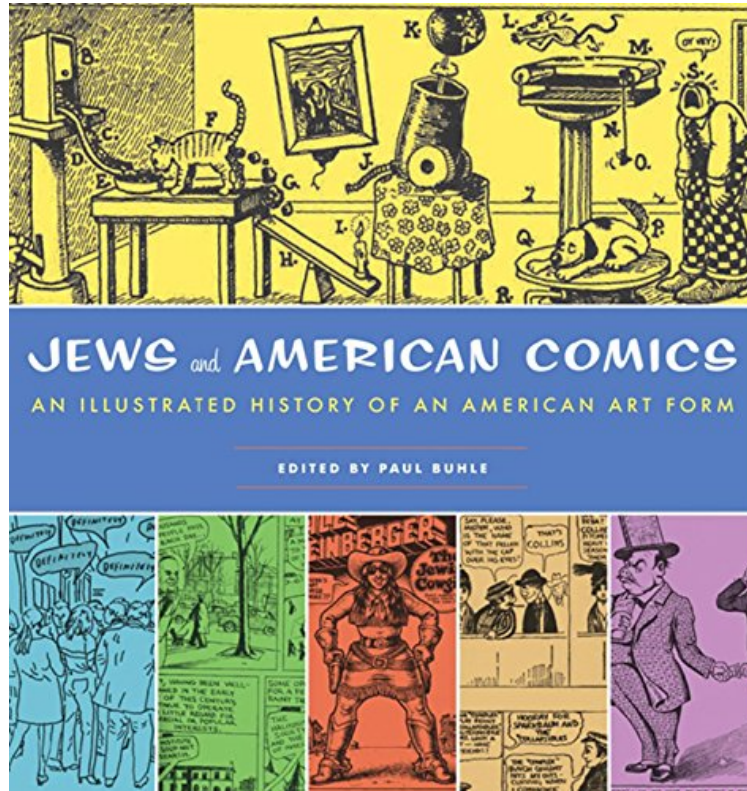


Jews and American Comics: An Illustrated History of an American Art Form

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From Brand: New Press, The : Jews and American Comics: An Illustrated History of an American Art Form before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jews and American Comics: An Illustrated History of an American Art Form:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Graphics or commentary? By Sam Clemens I had heard an interview by the author, Buhle, and I was delighted to receive this book. Yet, I found it somewhat disappointing, in that I had expected trenchant commentary in a volume JAM-PACKED with graphics. There are some graphic gems, but too few, and some of the examples are of recent vintage, not classics. Plus, the narrative was on the plodding, cumbersome side. From reviews, it appears that another book, "From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books," might be more what I had in mind. 11 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Hard Read. Quit midway through. By Mike I bought this book on the suggestion of when I sought to buy Krakow to Krypton. From the beginning, the author's style of writing was very hard for me to follow let alone enjoy. I don't think it was too technical, but seemed very 'high brow' with many citations noted. It was a drudgery to read. I enjoyed most of the comic strip examples until the end with all the Anti-Israel, Anti-Jewish comics by ultra liberal, left wing Jewish artists. Unfortunately, I do not recommend. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Promising, Worthwhile guide, but could be more comprehensive. By Angus T. Cat I looked forward to reading Paul Buhle's Jews and American Comics. Ultimately, I

found it disappointing. The book is well researched and contains an impressive collection of Yiddish cartoons, some by artists I didn't know before. But overall the work is weakened by Buhle's turgid prose style. I found his essays hard to follow and confusing in places: the chapter on comic strips gave me the impression Milton Caniff was Jewish (a look on the internet confirmed that Caniff wasn't Jewish; he was Catholic). Buhle speeds through the birth of the comic book and hardly considers that most of the creators of superheroes were Jewish. He discusses Jerry Siegel, Joe Shuster and Joe Simon briefly but spends little time on Bob Kane and doesn't mention Gil Kane, Jerry Robinson, Bill Finger, Julius Schwartz, Joe Kubert, Mort Weisinger, Robert Kanigher, and many other great comic artists, writers, and editors who were Jewish. Buhle's account of the history of EC comics and the impact of Fredrick Wertham on the comics industry in the 1950s is imprecise and unclear. I found it puzzling that Buhle discusses Mad comics intensively but doesn't allude to Harvey Kurtzman's use of Yiddish in its take offs of American popular culture icons, and notes Mad's huge influence on its readers, especially the readers who became underground cartoonists in the 60s and 70s, but says little about Mad after it became a magazine in 1955. He misses opportunities to consider Mad magazine's satirical examination of American Jewish life in its parodies of "Fiddler on the Roof" and features such as its primer about Judaism in the U.S. Likewise, he alludes to EC's "preachy" social message stories but doesn't mention EC stories in which characters who were Anti Semitic discovered their origins were actually Jewish. The illustrations from comics and comix artists are worth the price of the book. Unfortunately many of them are less powerful than they could be by not being reproduced in full: the volume includes only two pages of Trina's Robbins "Triangle Fire" and one page of Bernard Krigstein's "Master Race". One of the highlights of the comics is Jeffrey Lewis' "Ghost Stories" which says more about Jews in American comics, the history of American comics, and the current state of comics in America than Buhle's essays do. "Jews and American Comics" is worth reading, but the abstruse essays and haphazard representation of the comics diminish the work's consideration of the history of comics and Jews representing themselves and their viewpoints of American life in popular culture.

Readers have long cherished the work of comic masters such as Will Eisner, Jules Feiffer, and Art Spiegelman, all of whom happen to be Jewish. Few, however, are probably aware that the Jewish role in creating the American comic art form is no less significant than the Jewish influence on Hollywood filmmaking. Filled with the most stunning examples of this vital artistic tradition, *Jews and American Comics* tells us how the people of the book became the people of the comic book. With three brief essays by Paul Buhle, the well-known historian of American Jewish life, *Jews and American Comics* offers readers a pictorial backstory tracing Jewish involvement in comic art from several little-known strips in Yiddish newspapers of the early twentieth century through the mid-century origins of the modern comic book and finally to contemporary comic art, which has at last found its place in museums, in private collections, and on the bookshelves of both critics and millions of avid readers. Featuring more than two hundred examples of the work of Jewish comic artists going back a century much of which has been unavailable to the general public for decades this extraordinary collection will be a major contribution to Jewish and American cultural history. *Jews and American Comics* is also a gorgeous package, sure to be treasured by comic art lovers and fans of Jewish culture and destined to become the bar and bat mitzvah gift of the decade.

About the Author Paul Buhle is a retired senior lecturer in the American studies department at Brown University. He is a co-author, with Dave Wagner, of *Radical Hollywood: The Untold Story Behind America's Favorite Movies* and the editor of *Jews and American Comics: An Illustrated History of an American Art Form*, Studs Terkel's *Working: A Graphic Adaptation*, and *A Dangerous Woman: The Graphic Biography of Emma Goldman*, all published by The New Press. Buhle is the founder of the Oral History of the American Left archive at New York University and a co-editor of *The Encyclopedia of the American Left*. He lives in Madison, Wisconsin, and has continued actively producing books of comic art, including *Yiddishkeit: Jewish Vernacular* and *The New Land and Bohemians: A Graphic History*.