

741.5

**SAMURAI ROMEO:
PRINCE OF
CATS**

RON WIMBERLY'S HIP HOP SHAKESPEARE SMACKDOWN!

FEBRUARY 2017— NO. TWO

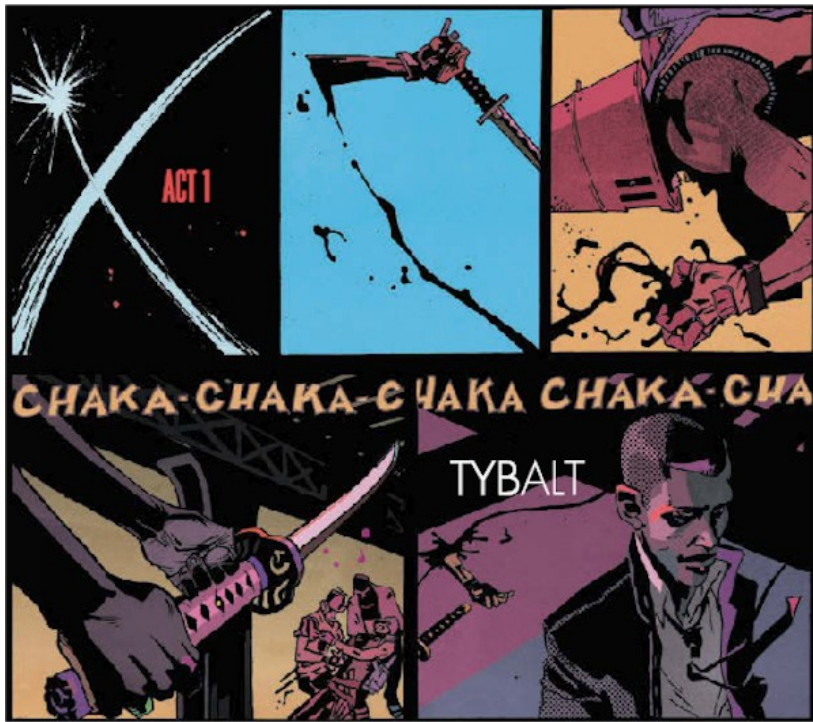
PLUS...MOORE, WOOD & MORE!



The Comics & Graphic Novel Bulletin of



Lexington Public Library
Reading Is Just the Beginning!



Prince of Cats by Ronald Wimberly (Image Books)

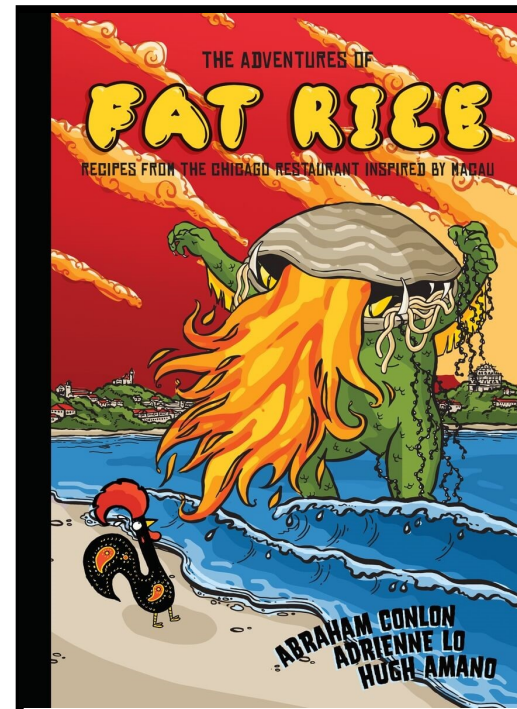
741.5 W715p OVERSIZE—Central, Eastside, Northside. Tates Creek

The pages were HUGE. Hanging in a special display at the Columbus Museum of Art, the posters, illustrations and comics of Ron Wimberly filled the walls all the way down the hall. And each page of comics was huge, at least twice, if not thrice, the size of paper



used by most modern cartoonists. And they were beautiful. Well-designed, with perfect placement of blacks and a bold use of color, including lots of purplish hues, of bruised blues, punk rock plums, lascivious lavenders. The subject matter was radical as well, an unapologetic, even aggressive presentation of contemporary urban style, of street attitude, of black pride and brown power. And VIOLENT: a massive, page-filling punch, a multi-paneled riot of murder and mayhem. It was overwhelming, it was operatic, it was, one might even say...*Shakespearean*.

Now Wimberly's latest publication *Prince of Cats* literally and literally makes that description ring true as steel against steel. Originally released in 2012 by Vertigo, this new version from Image is another gorgeous example of that company's goal to become a game-changer in the comics industry. At 9.7 X 12.4 inches, this oversize volume gives Wimberly's art the room it needs to breathe...and move...and fight. And fight the characters do, in duels announced and critiqued in grimy little zines passed around by aficionados of swordplay in a New York City of an alternate Eighties. One of the greatest of these street punk samurai is Tybalt, the Prince of Cats. The cousin of Juliet Capulet, Tybalt steals the limelight from her and her beau in this Brooklyn-based remix of the Bard's classic drama of doomed young love. And this isn't your granddad's *Classics Illustrated*—Wimberly ain't playin' as he sets the dialogue in honest-to-Avon iambic pentameter. The results, a mash-up of b-boy braggadocio and high-flown poetry, is lovely, profane and hilarious by turns. Wimberly's visual chops are amazing, too. The action scenes flow like Kurasawa, limbs stretching cartoonishly to emphasize the physicality of every fist thrown, every blade swung. The quiet moments linger in the mind once the book is read, my favorite scene being Juliet copping a smoke with her homegirls in the school washroom, each simple action caught in a panel apiece as Wimberly freezes every second to focus on her emotions, both hidden and expressed. One of the leading lights of the African-American comics movement, Ronald Wimberly has produced a masterpiece.



NOT 741.5: COMICS BY ANY OTHER NUMBER

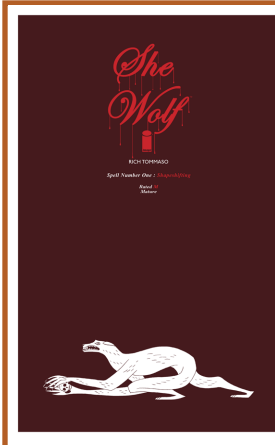
The name of this circular comes from the Dewey Decimal System, which classifies comics and cartoons, whether collections or original works, under the number 741.5. Yet as graphic novels grow in number, influence and popularity, many libraries have freed their comics collections from the non-fiction section. (Be sure to look over our Beaumont location's new shelf of graphic goodies for a example.) Meanwhile, an increasing assortment

of graphic works are being filed under the Dewey number of their subject. A new comics biography by Delalande and Liberge, *The Case of Alan Turing*, is an example. Turing was the godfather of thinking machines, so rather than sticking him with Daredevil, Garfield and Buddy Bradley, the ghost of Dewey assigned the book a place in the "Sciences" section, 510.92 T846l. Though one could argue it should be in Biography, the focus on Turing's work in code-breaking during World War II does make it a computer book, albeit one with a heart, broken by sorrow and pity. Turing's secret life as a gay man is also mentioned in *Queer: A Graphic History*, which you'll find in



the Social Sciences section, under 306.76 B243q. Artist Julia Scheele's expressive brushwork and open layouts makes reading Dr. Meg Barker's combination of history and theory a breeze, much like the work of Larry Gonick, whose *Cartoon Histories* set the standard for modern non-fiction comics. His *Modern World, Pt. 1* can be found under 909.08 G588c; his *Cartoon Guides*—to calculus, genetics

and more—can be found under their Dewey numbers in our TEEN sections. Meanwhile, *The Adventures of Fat Rice* (641.595 C761a) is a cookbook which uses a combination of photos, recipes and comics to introduce the bicultural dishes of Macau. Elsewhere and –when in Asia, *Such A Lovely Little War* (959.7043 T773s) shows the Vietnam War through the eyes of a South Vietnamese diplomat's son. Reserve now!

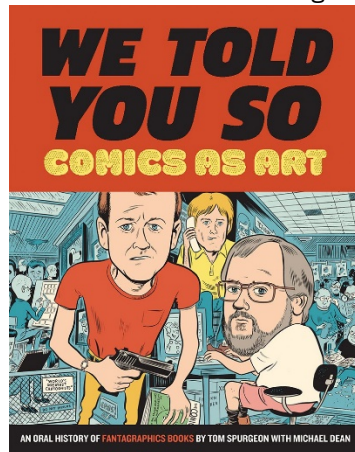


The latest in SERIES includes the first volume of Rich Tommaso's expressionistic werewolf tale, *She-Wolf*, the second of Skottie Young's crazed and candy-colored *I Hate Fairyland*, and the third volume of Lemire & Nguyen's boy-meets-robot epic *Descender*. Written by a former CIA agent, the second volume of *Sheriff of Babylon* continues the hard-boiled detective story set in the chaos of post-war Iraq. Superstar scribes Ed (Fatale, Velvet) Brubaker and Jonathan (Walking Dead, Invincible) Hickman each have new series: *Kill or Be Killed*, about a demon-driven vigilante, and *The Black Monday Murders*, in which the world is run by occult crime families. Meanwhile, Nineties powerhouse Valiant has returned from corporate limbo with updated versions of the old series *Ninjak V3: Operation Deadside*, *Rai V2: Battle for New Japan*, and *Bloodshot V2*.

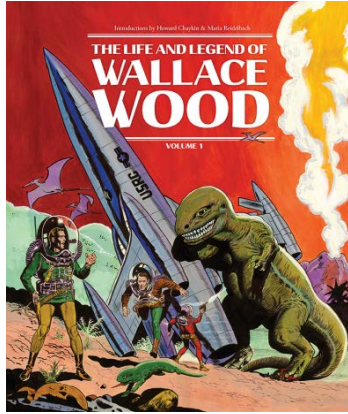


MEANWHILE...

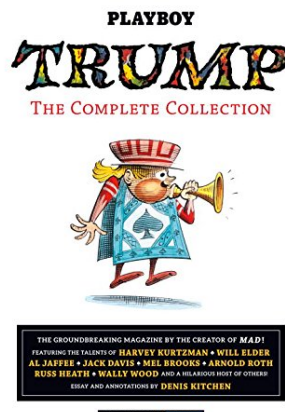
The oral history of the ragtag band of misfits who changed American comics forever is detailed in *We Told You So: Comics as Art* by Tom Spurgeon. A longtime member of the group of critics and creators who united under the banner of Fantagraphics, Spurgeon gets the lowdown from the men and women who sought to raise American comics to a higher artistic standard and the comics business to a higher



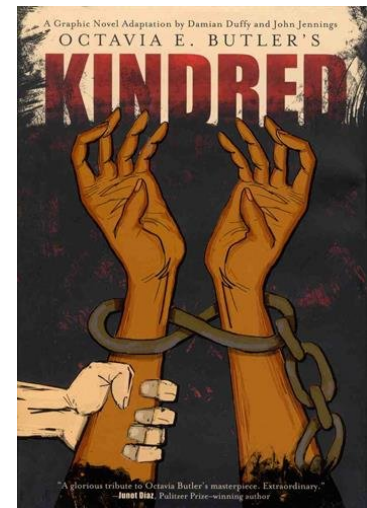
ethical standard. From the early days of the company's flagship publication, the joyously combative *Comics Journal*, to the current era of alternative icons and *Peanuts* reprints, *We Told You So* is a tribute to the ability of driven, dedicated individuals to transform their world for the better. Unfortunately for some creators, the changes wrought in the industry by the influence of Fantagraphics and other rebels came too late. One case in particular was cartoonist Wallace Wood. Beloved for his tough but sensual art, notorious for his contempt for editorial interference, Wood lived at his drawing board – and died at it, too, as chronicled in *The Life and Legend of Wallace Wood* (Fantagraphics). Wood worked for magazines from *Weird Science* to *Playboy*, *MAD* to *Galaxy*, and was an inspira-



ation to cartoonists serious and silly. Wood also drew an early run of Marvel's *Daredevil*, which you can find in the "Epic Collection", *Man Without Fear*. Be sure to check out the two collections of Wood's work for EC, *Spawn of Mars* and *Came the Dawn*, available from *Tates Creek*, *Eastside* and *Beaumont*. As part of the original staff of *MAD*, Wood worked with the magazine's legendary creator, Harvey Kurtzman. And Wood was the only one who stayed at *MAD* when Kurtzman fell out with *MAD*'s publisher. One of Kurtzman's biggest fans was Hugh Hefner, who had just hit the jackpot with *Playboy* and wanted Harvey to do for humor what Hefner had done for sex. The awesome results can be seen in *TRUMP: The Complete Collection* (*Playboy*/Fantagraphics). "I gave Harvey Kurtzman an unlimited budget," Hefner said, "And he exceeded it."



Though he's washed his hands of comics, Alan Moore still has a new book out. *Brighter Than You Think* compiles older short works, with art from not only regular Moore associates such as Veitch and Bissette, but weird little turns by '90s alt-comix creeps Peter Bagge and Mark Beyer. The highlight of the book is "In Pictopia", Moore's scathing commentary on the aesthetic and moral decline of mainstream comics in the '80s.



One thing Moore and other creators shared with the folks at the *Comics Journal* was a disgust with what critics called the "plantation mentality" of comic book publishers. Now an adaptation of Octavia Butler's time travel novel *Kindred* takes the reader back to a time when said mentality ruled over half of our nation in body and soul. The raw but often beautiful art by John Jennings perfectly captures both the disjunction and commonality between the heroine's present day life as a free black citizen and her experiences in the slave state of the past. A worthy tribute to a writer who passed away just as her work began to make an impact, *Kindred* is available at all LPL locations. For more information or to place a reserve, please go to lexpublib.org. 741.5 written & designed by Bill Widener @ Central.