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**SHEENA...TIGER GIRL...FIREHAIR:
FICTION HOUSE**
AND THE FEMALE FURIES OF THE GOLDEN AGE
PLUS...HEAVEN LIVES AND HELL RISES
IN PORTUGAL AND SATANIA

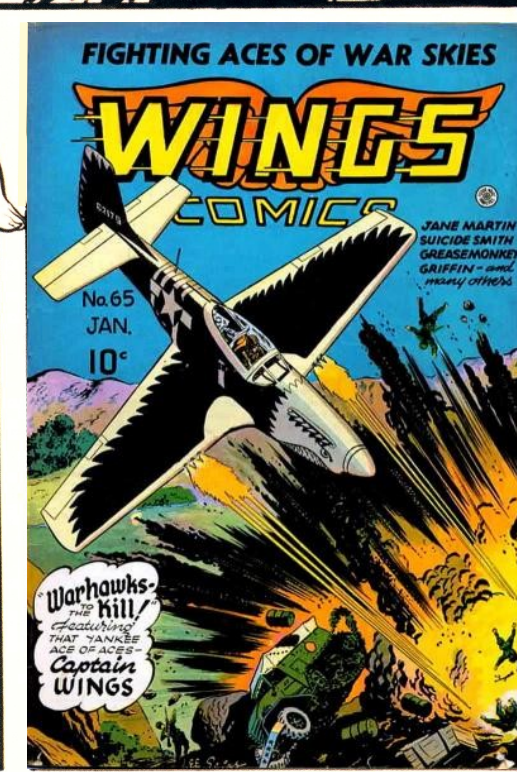
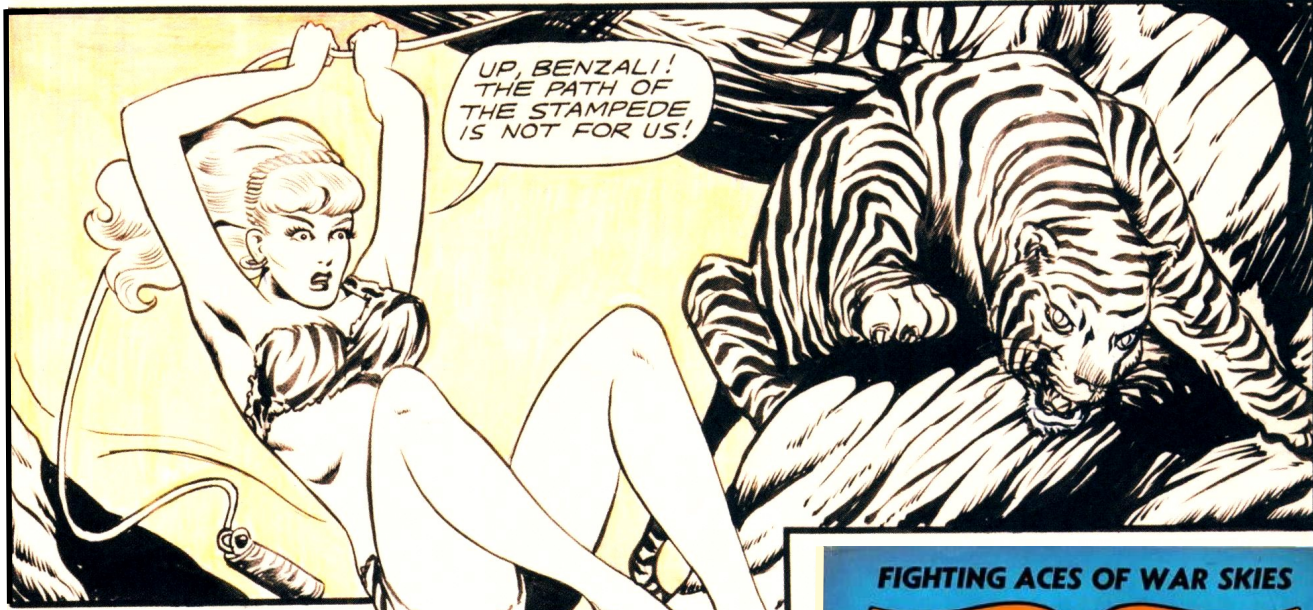


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SHEENA, JUNGLE QUEEN,
Outwits the thousand-year-old
WITCH-MAIDEN of the
BURNING GLADE

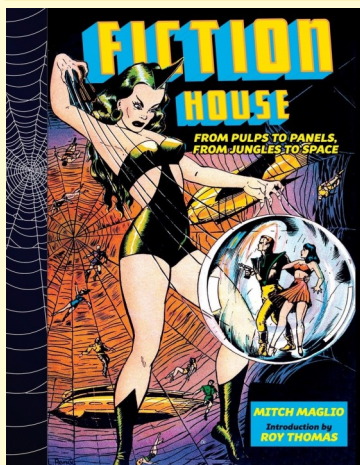
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The aptly named **Fiction House** was one of the leading publishers of pulp magazines in the 1930s. The line was famous for its liberal use of “cheesecake” art to sell such titles as *Fight* and *Jungle Stories*. That emphasis on sex appeal carried over when **Fiction House** leapt into the burgeoning comic book market of the late 1930s. The line’s costumed characters flopped, so **Fiction House** stuck with basic adventure fare jazzed up with lots of skin. **Sheena, Queen of the Jungle**, became the brand’s biggest star, setting the standard for other distaff dynamos like secret agent **Senorita Rio**, war nurse **Jane Martin** and super-scientist **Mysta of the Moon**. Though meant for a male readership, two-fisted heroines such as **Tiger Girl** (above) and ginger avenger **Firehair** not only inspired little girls like future

FICTION HOUSE
From Pulp to Panels,
From Jungles to Space
 By Mitch Maglio (Yoe Books)
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CENTRAL



(Above: animals & airplanes also sold comics!) cartoonist **Trina Robbins**, but were created by women such as the prolific writer **Audrey Blum** and artist **Lily Renee** (photo left). She drew the cover used for this fabulous tome. Originally from an issue of *Planet Comics*, the first true science fiction comic, this piece exemplifies the combination of sex and menace that suffused every **Fiction House** title from *Jumbo Comics* to *Cowgirl Romances*. Such gorgeously outrageous covers fill this big book, along with complete stories and examples of sketches and original artwork from the fabled likes of **Lou Fine**, **Matt Baker**, **Nick Cardy** and **Murphy Anderson**. His *Star Pirate* joined jungle king **Kaanga** and Axis-busting aviator **Captain Wings** in providing beefcake to supplement the cheese. Long dismissed by both fans and foes of comics as salacious tripe, **Fiction House** finally gets some respect thanks to **Mitch Maglio** and **Yoe Books**. “Look for the **BULL’S-EYE**”

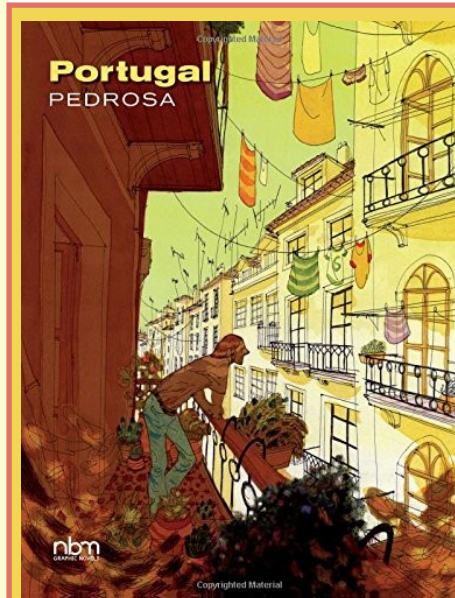
Published annually since 2006 by Houghton-Mifflin, **The Best American Comics** anthologies always reflect the outlook of each year’s guest editor. Harvey Pekar had a different vision of comics than Charles Burns, and it showed. This year’s editor, Ben Katchor, is best known for his *Village Voice* strip, *Julius Knipf*, *Real Estate Photographer*. A gray, murky strip that dwelled on the everyday travails of its schlump of a hero, *Knipf* looks like Lee & Kirby’s *Thor* compared to the comics Katchor’s selected for the 2017 *Best American Comics*. When the slickest artist in the book is Joe (Palestine) Sacco, you’ve got a raw-(and Raw)-looking book. Up-and-coming alt-stars like Gabrielle Bell, Ed Piskor and Michael Deforge join



established cartoonists **Bill Griffith**, **Kim Deitch** and **Gary Panter**. In fact, the scrawling, bawling spirit of Panter haunts most of this book: *Vide* the strip above by **Lale Westvind**, which almost serves as this edition’s *Statement of Purpose*. Desiring

work from far beyond the usual sources, Katchor has compiled a volume of cartooning as outsider art. Dapper **Bruce Lafitte**, **Sienna Cittadino**, **Gerone Spruill** and **William Tyler** can barely draw a lick, but in the end, their stuff is as much comics as that

of more technically accomplished, though no less bizarre, contributors like **Dan Zettwoch**, **Sami Alwani** and **Eli Valley**. *The Best American Comics 2017* is not an easy read, but it is fascinating. You can find a copy at **Central** and **Beaumont** or lexpublib.org.



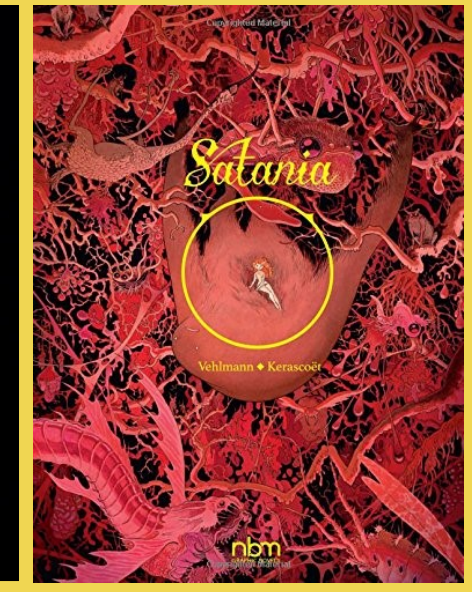
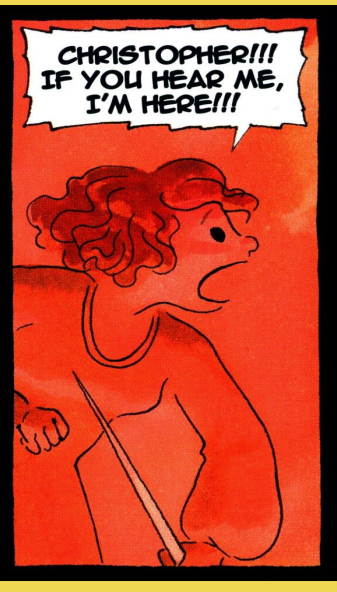
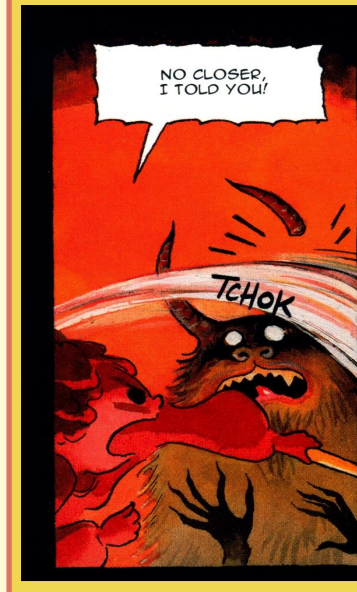
Cyril Pedrosa’s Portugal is the semi-autobiographical story of cartoonist **Simon Muchat**. Simon’s hung up, creatively, romantically, emotionally. So he takes a trip to Portugal, homeland of the family he hasn’t seen in decades. Like real life, the story meanders, unspooling like **Pedrosa’s** deceptively loose, thready pen line. It’s his use of color that mesmerizes the reader. The shadowy teals of **Muchat’s** self-image as a man submerged contrasts to the sullen taupes of his guilty memories; the ochres and olives of afternoon sun give way to the luscious plums and purples of twilight. Like the graveyard scene at right, every page is so alive. *Portugal* is a visually rich book that demands re-reading. Go get it at **Village!**

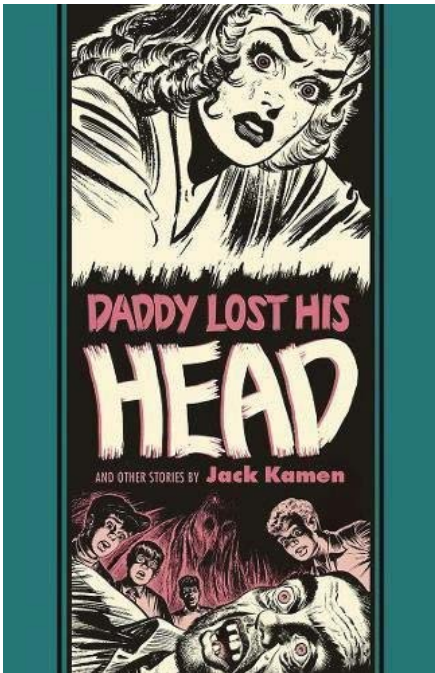
Longtime leader in the American market for European comics **NBM** has released two magnificent graphic novels, one a low-key slice-of-life, the other a manic fantasy, that represent how far ahead Continental cartoonists are in the artistic use of color in creating comics.



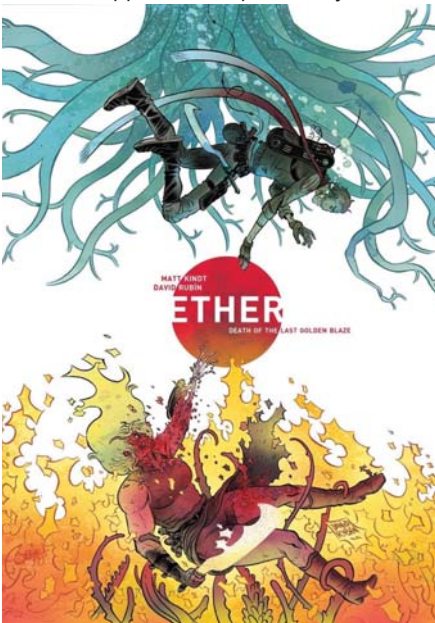
The *Hollow Earth* story is as old as humanity. Most cultures located the Land of the Dead in a literal underworld. Now **NBM** presents a new take on that ancient belief from the creators of *Beautiful Darkness*, the cult graphic novel about the Wee Folk (still available at **Central**, **Eastside** and **Tates Creek**). In *Satania*, writer **Fabien Vehlmann** twists *Hollow Earth* tropes like the *Hidden City of Ultima Thule* and the horned beast-men our heroes name “*Satanians*” so the hoary colonialist clichés of adventure

pulp are swept away by the sheer force of weirdness. And *Satania* is a deeply weird book, conceptually and visually. The matrimonial duo that works under the name **Kerascoet** create a stunning world that blends and transcends the boundaries between animal, vegetable and mineral. It’s as elegant as anatomy, as visceral as roadkill. A tale driven by love, pride and lunacy, it’s a bloody, beautiful mess, playfully cartoonish and madly psychedelic. You can find it at our **Tates Creek** branch!





So you made it through the holidays without killing your family, huh? That can't be said of the many protagonists of *Daddy Lost His Head* (Fantagraphics). The latest volume from the EC Comics Library reprints short stories drawn by **Jack Kamen**. Long a fan-"unfavorite" among the legendary stable of EC artists, a new generation of readers and creators now admire his work—so detailed but expressive, superficially banal yet subtly unnerving—as an exquisite representation of mid-century style. Culled from EC's horror titles, these compact fables of domestic angst illustrate the undercurrent of murderous hostility seething behind the suburban façade of post-war America. Another daddy loses his head in the *Ether*, the name of both an alien dimension of fairies and monsters and the new Dark Horse series about same written by **Matt (MIND MGMT) Kindt**. Convinced the magical worlds of the Ether can be mapped and explained by science,

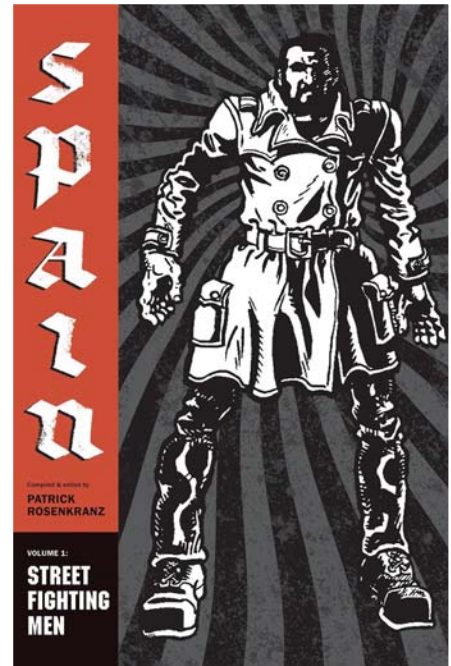


MEANWHILE

Boone Diaz repeatedly takes the plunge into the otherworld, even as his earthly life—and the wife and kids that come with it—is swept away in the furious flow of terrene time. *Death of the Last Golden Blaze* drops us in the middle of Boone's story while introducing the charming and terrifying universe of the Ether. It's a maniacal candyland of snail cabs, streetwise minotaurs and the tentacular cherubs called "dewies" who work for the Bad Guy—an evil librarian! **Daniel Rubin** does pencils, inks, colors, the total package, and it is phenomenal. An amazing job of world-building also showcases **Rubin's** grasp of comics storytelling. He knows how to use multiple panels and when to hit you with a full page of pizzazz. The use of splash pages as a storytelling device was a trademark of **Jack Kirby** from the beginning of his career. But it was in the pages of *The Mighty Thor* that the King really started to swing with the big picture. The latest Epic Collection from Marvel compiles work from the period during which *Thor* transformed from a pompous superhero title into pure epic fantasy, a funnybook *Lord of*



the Rings. Tana Nile and the Colonizers of Rigel, Ego the Living Planet, the war between Asgard and the Trolls, Ulik and the Wrecker and Replicus—astounding concepts come flying at the reader on every page. The breakneck pace is slowed only by the half- and full-page drawings of cosmic tech and vengeful dragons and hordes of humanoid antibodies. And Odin. Many big, awesome pages of Odin. As befits *The Wrath of Odin*, the All-Father looms large over the action, rewarding Thor, punishing Thor, manipulating Thor, as the God of Thunder faces the choice between his mortal life and love and the call of the Realm Eternal and his new ally, Lady Sif. To be honest, I rarely read *Thor* as a kid—it could be overwhelming for such a sensitive lad. I mean, that full-page shot of the Enchanters still makes me want to hide under the covers! Meanwhile, on the opposite side of America in more ways than one, **Spain Rodriguez** was re-inventing comic books with his friends like **R. Crumb**, **Rick Griffin** and many others. Influenced by EC war comics, the tumult of the Sixties and his own violent history, **Spain** created the counter-cultural action hero, Trashman, Agent of the Sixth International!



Alone among his peers, **Spain** adapted the tropes of adventure comics to the radical ends of the underground. Like **Kirby**, **Spain** reveled in big battle scenes and lovingly rendered machines. Except in **Spain's** case, the battles are between mobs of anarchists and cops and the machines are motorcycles, the big hogs favored by biker gangs like the Road Vultures. **Rodriguez** ran with the RVMC in his youth and his comics about those years are included in *Street Fighting Men* (Fantagraphics). Some still show pencils beneath the inks. **Spain** kept drawing even as he was dying of cancer. Now that's one tough dude. So is Trace Morales. The former Special Forces man was one of the guardians of the *Ghost Fleet* that carries a cargo of secrets...until the day he looked in the back of the truck. The wild art of **Daniel Warren Johnson** explodes in motor-driven mayhem in **Donny Cates' The Whole Goddamned Thing** (Image). Get it at lexpublib.org now!

