

741.5

SANTA'S GRAB BAG!

COMICS WE OVERLOOKED

DECEMBER 2019 - NO. 36

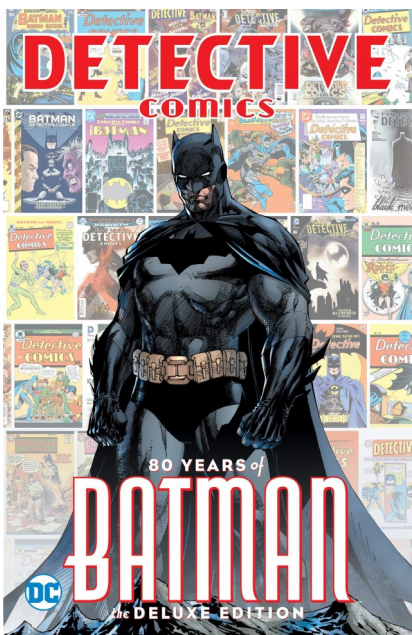
PLUS... ALL-STARS & SCREWBALLS



The Comics & Graphic Novel Bulletin of

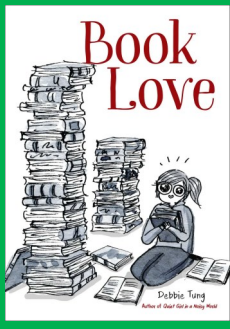


Lexington Public Library
Reading Is Just the Beginning!



One of the seminal comic books, so important its publisher took on its initials as the company name, Detective Comics has lasted 80 years and nearly 1000 issues. This tome pays tribute to not only Batman, the headliner since 1937, but to the back-up features from across the decades: Slam Bradley, the Boy Commandos, Air Wave, Pow Wow Smith and more. From the Golden Age to the future, DC: 80 Years of Batman takes you on a journey into mystery and adventure!

"How about you? What does your fantasy home look like?" Cartoonist Debbie Tung replies "A library!" If that's your answer, too, then check out *Book Love* from your favorite LPL location. This collection of utterly charming cartoons and strips is a romp through the heart and mind of a true bibliophile. Some detail "A Bookworm's Essentials" and "How to Get Out of A Reading Slump." Others are just visual expressions of the oft inexpressible love for books. And funny, too!

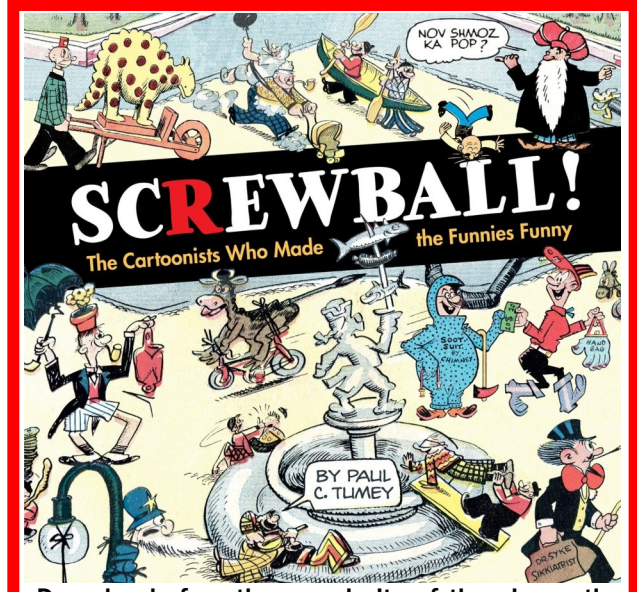
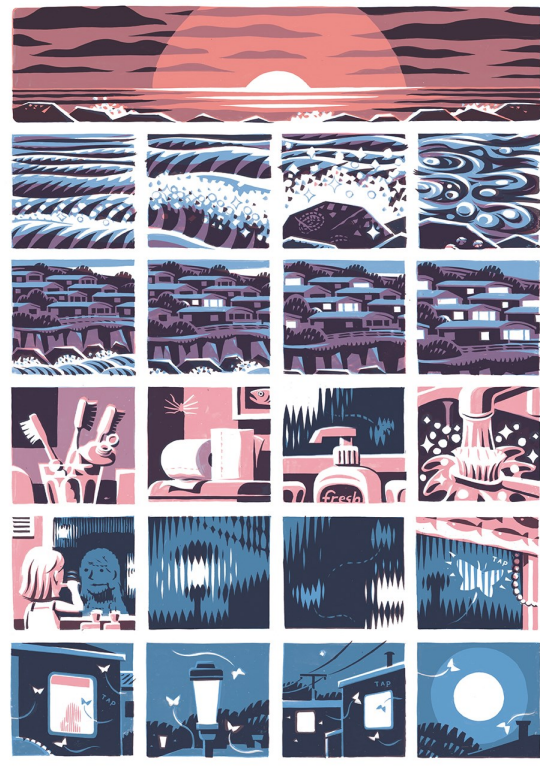


Bad Weekend is a simple story behind which looms a long and complex history. Set in 1997, it's a one-off from Brubaker & Phillips's CRIMINAL series. Our thief hero is asked to babysit his former artistic mentor, Hal Crane, at a comic con. A cynical burn-out, Crane's history is that of the 20th Century comics industry with all its highs and lows.



A family trip to the seaside is broken down to its smallest parts in *Kingdom* by British cartoonist Jon McNaught. Andy and his little sister Suzie are dragged hours away from home to visit their mum's childhood get-away. McNaught follows the kids on their separate journeys, the ebb and flow of time matching the waves of the sea (right). His use of color, simple yet rich, is as impressive as that of Ware or Seth. This lovely graphic novel is available at Beaumont and Central.

French superstar Jacques Tardi continues his graphic rendition of his father's misadventures during WW2 in volume 2 of *I, Rene Tardi, Prisoner of War: The Return Home*. After Rene and his captors flee Stalag IIB ahead of the Red Army, the prisoners take matters into their own hands...



Decades before the popularity of the cinematic genre called "screwball comedies", the funny pages were wracked with riotous ribaldry thanks to screwball comics. Paul C. Tummy's *Screwball!* exposes and explores—and explodes!—the *Cartoonists Who Made the Funnies Funny*. This gorgeous book from IDW's Library of American Comics covers the work of screwball cartoonists both celebrated and forgotten. George (*Krazy Kat*) Herriman and E.C. (*Popeye*) Segar are represented, as are Milt (*Count Screwloose*) Gross and Rube Goldberg, with examples of the over-complicated machines that bear his name. More obscure inkslingers like Ving Fuller and monkey-loving Gus Mager get their due, as do such wonderfully drawn and hysterically funny strips as *Jerry On the Job* and my favorite, George Swanson's antic *Salesman Sam* (below). From Zim and Dwig to the origin of Major Hoople to how "foo fighters" were inspired by the long-lived firehouse farce *Smokey Stover* (image beneath), *Screwball!* is a zany treasure available at Central. Nov shmoz kapop?



The latest from prolific alt-cartoonist Michael DeForge, *Stunt* is the story of a Hollywood stunt double who begins to sabotage his client's career...at the request of the client. This Jack Chick pamphlet-sized comic is a rumination on fame and identity rendered with DeForge's manic fluidity.



Manuele Fior (see 741.5 #5 and #20) returns to LPL shelves with *Red Ultramarine*. A mash-up of the myths of Faust and Daedalus, this graphic novel shifts between modernity and antiquity. Our heroine Sylvia (left) fears for the sanity of her beau, Fausto the architect. But his devilish doctor has his own ideas. So does King Minos of Crete. The story winds around itself like the labyrinth that ends up a prison for its builder, while Fior's fierce red-n-black art provides drive, heart, and even joy.

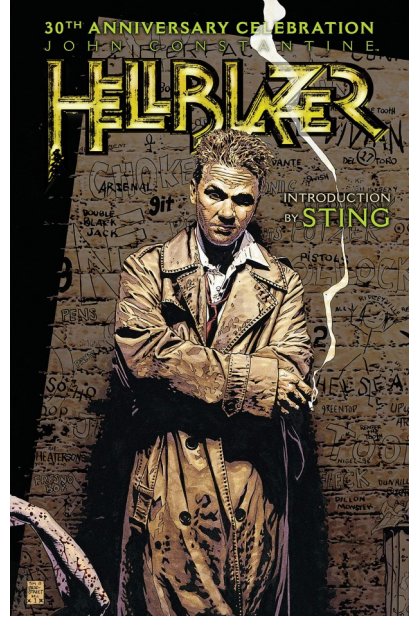


Austrian cartoonist Ulli Lust is a modern woman in a modern nation. In her relationships with men, she eschews monogamy. She likes and loves her older guy pal Georg. She likes and lusts for her new friend Kimata. At first, Kimata, an immigrant from Nigeria, is cool with all that. Until he isn't. Rendered in Lust's scrawly naturalism, *How I Tried to Be A Good Person* is a raw, honest account of sexual obsession and cultural conflict.

Memoirs of a Book Thief

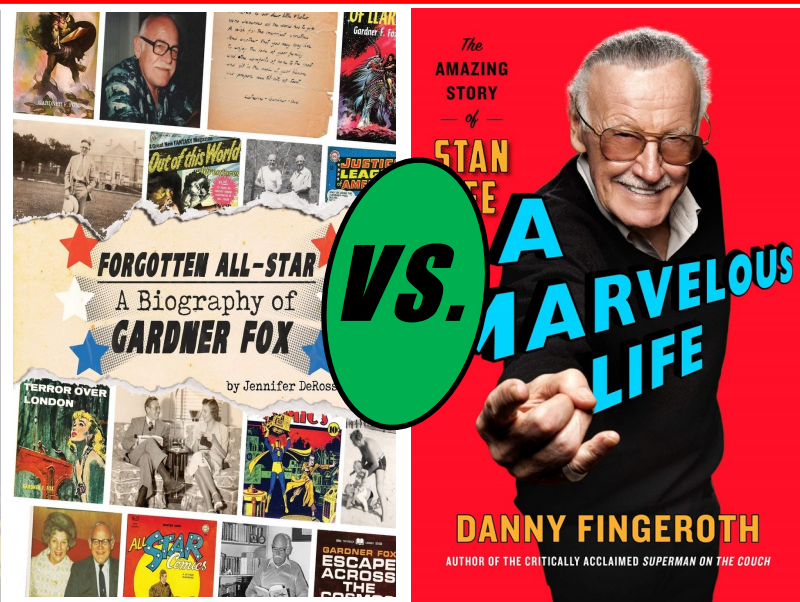


Sticky-fingered bohemian Daniel Brodin stumbles into a poetry reading at the headquarters of the Parisian literati. Offered a chance to take the stage, Brodin recites a poem that lights up the room. Thing is, it wasn't his poem. Now a sure-as-Sartre scenester, Brodin hangs with the thuggish Jean Michel, provocateur Gilles, and Daniel's crush Collette. But a life based on literary thievery comes ever closer to the real thing. *Memoirs...* is a candid but loving look at the artistic life of 1960s France.



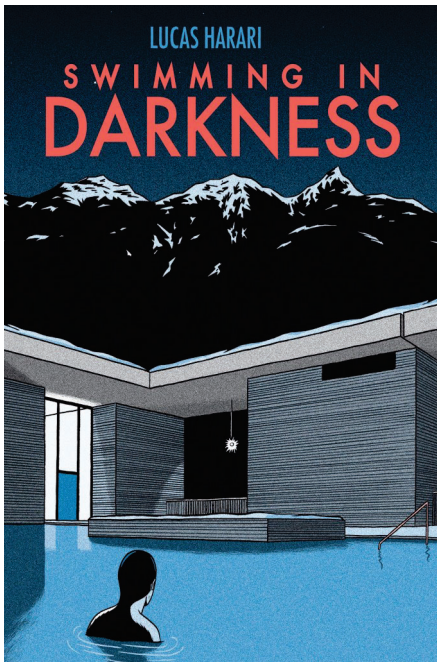
Created by Alan Moore because his artists wanted to draw Sting as a character, John Constantine has gone on to be the most popular funnybook occultist since Doctor Strange. Both trickster and avenger, the hero of *Hellblazer* has battled Amazonian warlocks, skinhead golems and his own filthy habits. This massive compilation starts with John's intro in *Swamp Thing* and features many of his wildest, weirdest tales by Moore, Delano, Gaiman and many more!

He's one of the titans of American comics history, and you've probably never heard of him. Erstwhile lawyer Gardner F. Fox found a lifeline out of the Depression writing for comic books, ultimately penning 4000 stories. Fox had a hand in the creation of many Golden Age icons such as the Flash, Hawkman, Doctor Fate and the Sandman. He invented Batman's utility belt and the Batarang. Fox wrote both the adventures of the *Justice Society of America* and its Silver Age successor, the *Justice League of America*. From baseball pulps to sci-fi comics to the paperback peregrinations of Kothar, Barbarian Swordsman, Gardner Fox wrote the book on pop fiction. Now *Forgotten All-Star* writes the book on Fox.

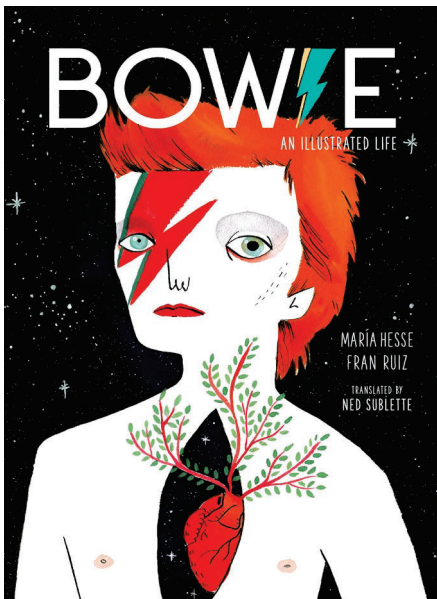


Stan Lee was the subject of several biographies even before his passing in 2018. Some have been reviewed in this publication (see 741.5 #12 and Special Issue Nov 2018! — *Bodacious Bill*). So why read another one? Danny Fingerroth actually worked at Marvel for many years; he edited the work of his subject on various projects. Fingerroth has a closer perspective on the comics biz than most biographers. He draws from both previous bios and historical material that's only recently become available. *A Marvelous Life* candidly looks behind the myth of "the Man" while explaining how, through experience, instinct and enthusiasm, Stanley Lieber became Stan Lee, the pied piper of popular culture.





American comics are about *bodies*: the pratfall-powered ruckus of the funnies, the lithe, muscular physicality of superhero comics, the curvaceous pulchritude of teen and romance comics, the grisly, gory flesh and blood of horror comics. Japanese comics are about *faces*: panel after panel, page after page of close-ups, even in the action-oriented *manga*, so much of the story told by the sparkle of an eye, the curl of a lip. And European comics are about *places*: the roofs of wartime Paris, the sights and sounds of Tintin's travels, the bustling, steaming alien worlds of *Valerian*. **Lucas Harari's** *Swimming in Darkness* could be a thesis on the subject. The plot— a young man with telekinetic powers explores the origin of his wild talents while being pursued by wicked men— could be told in a six-page back-up story in a Silver Age issue of *X-Men*. It's the hero's architectural obsessions that transform the tale into something more mysterious, more...*European*. The mountains and villages, bathhouses and bar-rooms through which our hero pursues his quest are characters in themselves. Drawn

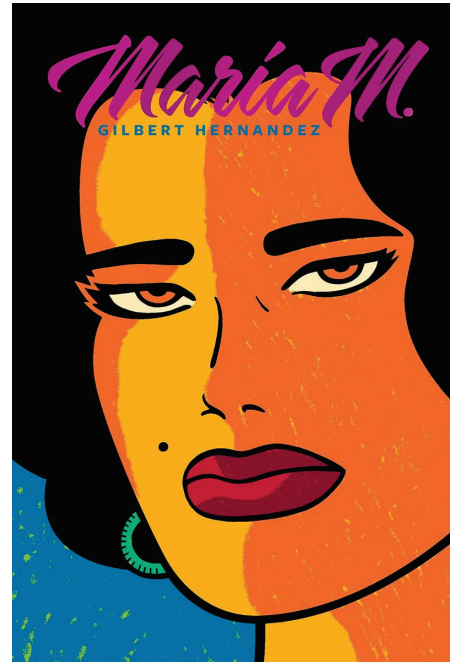


MEANWHILE

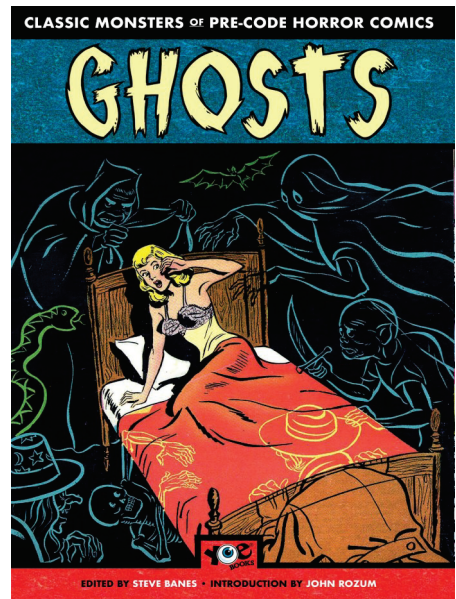
in a schematic take on the clean line (*clair ligne*) style, colored in the bright, flat, subtly grainy look of lithographs, this Oversize release from Arsenal Pulp Press is a lovely thing indeed. As is *Bowie: An Illustrated Life* (University of Texas Press). Translated from the Spanish by cult musician **Ned Sublette**, *Bowie* is more like a picture book than a comic book. But the expressionistic water-color drawings of **Maria** (*Frida Kahlo: An Illustrated Life*) **Hesse** are so intrinsic to the first-person story told by **Fran Ruiz** that it becomes a kind of comics. And **David Bowie's** lifelong quest to unleash the alien within is a kind of sci-fi superhero epic. This artful—and honest, so reader beware— delight can be found in Biographies under B679he at Central, Eastside and Tates Creek. Next we go from from the Man Who Fell to Earth to a woman falling through forever. "I was dreaming I was falling," says Amelia Eichenwald in the opening pages of *Plummet* (Conundrum Press). "You know those dreams...you're falling, but then you wake up before you hit the ground. And I did wake up. But I was still falling."



For days, in fact; Mel falls and falls, surrounded by the detritus of modern civilization. Notebooks, egg cartons, park benches, entire apartment buildings: all are falling like Mel. She lives off candy liberated from a vending machine thanks to a random high-heeled shoe. She deals with bodily functions complicated by the fact of falling. She "climbs" a tree—"Trees fall faster than anything else," Mel discovers— and finds a treehouse. Then the tree hits the first sign of human society...which immediately endangers her. Eventually Mel allies with Kenichi, as the pair fall into further peril. Award-winning Canadian cartoonist **Sherwin Tjia** draws in a rough-n-tumble variation on the *clair ligne* style that grounds this surrealist saga, available at Beaumont, Central and Tates Creek. Meanwhile, **Los Hermanos Hernandez** are justly adored for their seminal indie comic *Love and Rockets*. The most prolific of the pair, **Gilbert**, alias **Beto**, has finally released the complete edition of *Maria M.* (Fantagraphics). Originally promised for the summer of 2018 (see 741.5 #18), it's worth the wait. As noted in the previous review, *Maria M.* is



one of **Beto's** "movie novels"— that is, graphic adaptations of the B-films made by his character, the buxom bombshell "Fritz" Martinez. Like previous "adaptations" such as *King Vampire* and *The Troublemakers*, *Maria M.* features the cast of regulars that work with Fritz. And to make matters even more meta, *Maria M.* is based on the violent life of Fritz's grandmother...whose "real" story was told in **Gilbert's** "Palomar" novel, *Poison River*. As sordid and brutal as a great cult film should be, *Maria M.* is definitely "Rated M" for Mature. Kids of all ages should revive the old tradition of telling ghost stories during the Christmas holidays with *Ghosts* (Yoe!). Drawing on work from the 1950s heyday of horror comics, *Ghosts* is a bit classier than previous Yoe reprints, probably because ghost stories have a longer history than, say, zombies or swamp monsters. Such greats as **Mike Sekowsky** and **Ross Andru** are joined by now-forgotten artists such as **Ken Landau**, **Lin Streeter** and the nameless hands of the **Iger Shop**. Get in the Christmas spirit— get *Ghosts* from Central and Village! **Ho Ho BOO!**



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