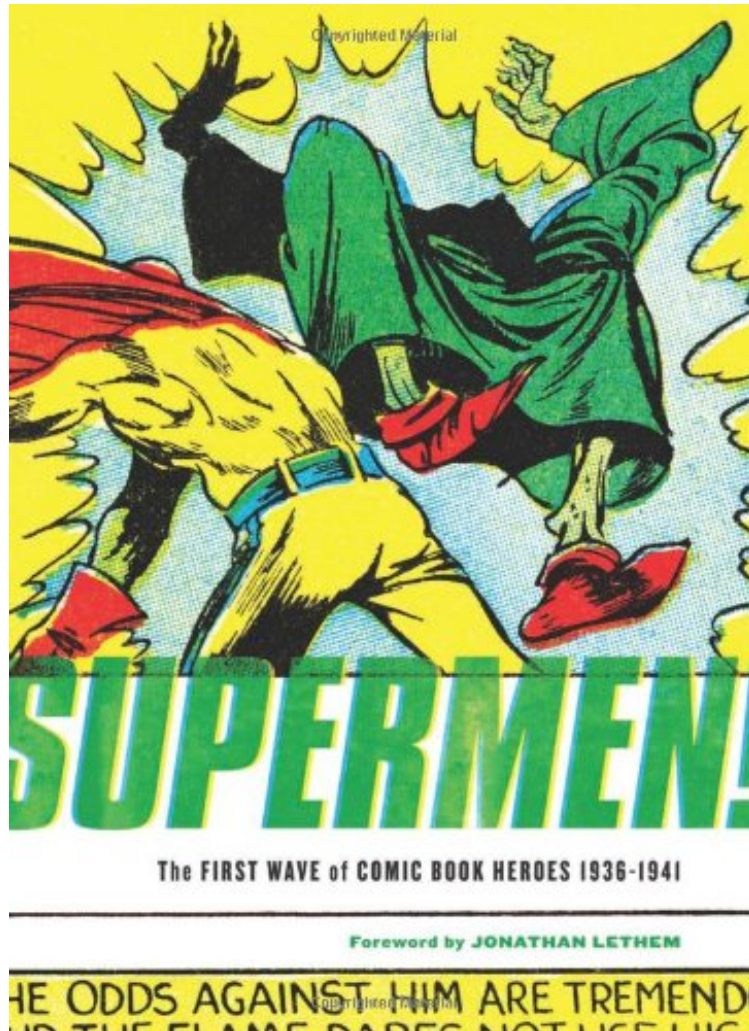


(Download pdf) Supermen!: The First Wave Of Comic Book Heroes 1936-1941

Supermen!: The First Wave Of Comic Book Heroes 1936-1941

Greg Sadowski

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Greg Sadowski : Supermen!: The First Wave Of Comic Book Heroes 1936-1941 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Supermen!: The First Wave Of Comic Book Heroes 1936-1941:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Want a cool collection of super-hero comics? Here's your chance. By Uncle Mickey An outstanding sampler of Golden Age super-hero comic books. Just a few years ago, such a collection was beyond most people's pocket books. Well, you can have it at an affordable price. Included are such treasures as "Blue Bolt" by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby ("Captain America," "The Boy Commandos"), "Daredevil versus The Yellow Claw" by Jack Cole ("Plastic Man"), "The Flame" by Will Eisner ("The Spirit") and Lou Fine ("Black Condor" "The Ray"), "Cosmic Carson" by Kirby, "Silver Streak" by Cole, "Sub-Zero" by Bill Everett ("Sub-Mariner," "The

Amazing Man"), "Spacehawk, Cosmic Enemy of Crime" by Basil Wolverton and many more. Also included are eye-popping covers from the era. You cannot go wrong with this one! 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Great Golden Age Sampler By L. Johnson I love this book! I read it through cover-to-cover twice during the first week I owned it. "Supermen! The First Wave of Comic Book Heroes 1836-1941" is a great collection, and in a way is kind of nostalgic for me. That may sound kind of funny considering I am from the baby boomer generation (I'm 55). That means I was a kid during the Marvel Age of Comics. In the late 60s their title Fantasy Masterpieces ran Golden Age stories of Captain America, Human Torch, Submariner and others. These tales, 25 years old at the time, were so foreign from the 60s comics that I was immediately taken with them. The art on Captain America just flowed, liquid-like from panel to panel - sheer action. It was fascinating to see where Jack Kirby came from in his early days, and Bill Everett's Submariner had such an elegant style to it. And being an aspiring comic book artist myself I remember looking at Carl Burgos' primitive efforts on The Human Torch and thinking, "I could do better than that!" At around that time I got introduced to comics fandom, subscribing to "fanzines" with articles about the Golden Age of Comics written by readers who happened to be kids at the time. And even the self-published comics of the day had a "gutsy" quality to them, akin to the Golden Age. Anyone remember Biljo White's "The Eye"? It was just a few years later when DC experimented with a 48-page format filling the extra pages with more Golden Age material, and then their 100 page spectaculars. These efforts were quite exciting to behold, but the Comics Code Authority at the time wouldn't allow the more gruesome and off-the-wall type of comics popular in those early days. Not so in "Supermen!" This is a fine sampling of the early medium, touching on the evolution from newspaper comics to the comic book format. Considering some of the greats of the era are represented, you can see how their earlier efforts contributed to later developments. Take Jack Cole, for example. On the heels of his Plastic Man, he is represented in this collection by three different stories, which he both wrote and drew, and his direct, exciting cartoon-y look reminds me a lot of self-published efforts. Take The Comet, a "hero" with the power of his eyes giving off a disintegrating ray. He is hypnotized by a crook and murders a bunch of people, and finally the crook himself by looking at him with his visor up, melting him into a puddle! Jack Cole's experimental layout is seen on page 5 of this story when he abandons the three-tier panel format for a diagonally placed center panel of The Comet blasting policemen! Twenty years later Marvel's X-men had the character Cyclops and I don't recall him murdering anyone with his eye power! Silver Streak is Jack Cole's second effort from about the same time. He's one of those fast running heroes like the Flash. Jack draws really primitive insect monsters in this one, obviously with no reference material. They look so ridiculous, but then these creatures are like something a 10-year-old would come up with. This naive approach has its own charm and even though the art has a primitive look throughout the story moves along at a fast pace. But Jack Cole's real tour-de-force here is his 16-page epic "The Claw Versus Daredevil!" In this tale he really hits his stride, and believe me the Comics Code Authority would never go for this one. The Claw is a monstrous being about 50 feet tall - Asian - from a hidden land in Tibet intent on conquering America. He would be considered a racist caricature today, and he is depicted crushing a disciple in his claw-like hand until the unfortunate individual is bleeding profusely before he dies. He also steps on some of his men and grinds them into the ground much like King Kong does to the jungle natives in the classic film. And like King Kong The Claw shows up in New York City (he's arrived by a drilling machine that he used to go under Europe and the Atlantic Ocean). He channels electricity from under the ground and hurls lightning bolts at skyscrapers wrecking them, arousing the attention of the Daredevil, a harlequin costumed wisecracking hero. The two engage in a spectacular battle more wild than anything seen in the Marvel Age of Comics. This is inspired work, and typical of most of the comics seen in this collection. It's interesting to see some of Bill Everett's early efforts just before The Submariner; in a 3-page Dirk The Demon from 1939, he has kind of fairy tale like illustration style. It looks like he'd fit in with all the animators on Disney's Snow White (Dirk, the boy hero I first thought was a girl - he has this huge pompadour hairdo). But then in Sub-Zero - a hero with a "cold" touch - he has adapted a more "heroic" I'd say style, a little awkward - and you can see he's heading toward the angular type of drawing that he utilized on The Submariner. It's a bit messy, but to my eye it tells me that he's experimenting, and that's the mark of a good artist, pushing beyond one established style into something new. There are plenty of notes in the back of the book giving background for each story and the surrounding history of the fledgling comic book industry. The Iger-Eisner studio is mentioned. Will Eisner, as a young man realized that the newspaper comics reprints would soon run out of material and hired a staff of artists on salary so he could oversee the quality. One of his artists was the young Lou Fine represented here in the high adventure tale The Flame. It has a sort of Zorro like quality to it, and soon Lou Fine would go on to more elegant illustration in The Ray and The Black Condor. Eisner himself illustrates Yarko The Great Master of Magic. His artistic approach is unlike The Spirit here but clear and accessible. There's plenty of science fiction based strips as well, the children of Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon. Rex Dexter of Mars is illustrated by Dick Briefer. He draws heroic proportioned people with some imaginative looking robots. And Basil Wolverton's classic Spacehawk is here as well. Each panel is a beautifully rendered detailed piece of art. Fletcher Hanks, a true "outsider" artist checks in with a Stardust episode (see "I Shall Destroy All The Civilized Planets") where the super being encounters a girl and takes her to his paradise like domain, unusual for this character to hint at any romantic interest, and his Fantomah Mystery Woman of the Jungle is the only female "superman" in the whole collection and probably

the most ruthless of the lot. She transforms into an evil-looking skull face being and captures a man who has engineered a terrible ape army and throws him to the mean apes themselves. There's a shot of the beasts setting upon him tearing him - literally - from limb to limb. You can see his arm and leg flying above them! Then there's the young Jack Kirby represented by Blue Bolt and a very early science fiction attempt "Cosmic Carson." Jack, unlike some of the other artists at the time didn't see comics as a stepping stone to a career in illustration. He loved the medium and his long career is evidence of that. "Supermen" is a great collection of the early efforts of imaginative artists of the era, some of whom went on to long careers and others forgotten. I'd love to see a second edition perhaps featuring some of the MLJ heroes like The Hangman, Mr. Justice, The Shield, The Web, The Black Hood and Steel Sterling. And how about Bulletman or the Green Lama? I can't say enough good things about this book! And I want to see more of the same!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It's great to be able to read golden age comics inexpensively. By Michael Dobey There's a lot of great stuff here and it's all in color. The main thing that I can't handle about a lot of non-Marvel and D.C. reprints is that they won't reprint them in color. They are out there in various forms but here we get them in color and they don't look bad either. You get great artists like Lou Fine, Jack Kirby, Bill Everett, Hank Fletcher and others too in some early superhero tales. This is a book too so it's going to last longer. You may not have heard of these heroes but they were enjoyable then and remain so now. I like Alex Ross too by the way. He's the modern artist that the first reviewer can't stand but that's neither here nor there. He's right about that we need to have MORE golden age heroes reprinted in COLOR and done with as good an editor as this book. The editor gives us the backstory on the heroes featured in here like the Flame, Blue Bolt, Fantomah, and others. This is an enjoyable book to have on your shelves and you can afford to read these stories! The original comics are just too expensive for most of us these days. And comics, film and books are art forms that are interrelated and these days the art of the form is not denied. This stuff still entertains a reader even though we live in a more sophisticated age as far as comic books are concerned. However we must never forget that these stories are art, comics are art and some of these people are as inventive as many acclaimed artists out there today.

The enduring cultural phenomenon of comic book heroes was invented in the late 1930s by a talented and hungry group of artists and writers barely out of their teens, flying by the seat of their pants to create something new, exciting, and above all profitable. The iconography and mythology they created flourishes to this day in comic books, video, movies, fine art, advertising, and practically all other media. *Supermen!* collects the best and the brightest of this first generation, including Jack Cole, Will Eisner, Bill Everett, Lou Fine, Fletcher Hanks, Jack Kirby, Jerry Siegel, Joe Shuster, and Basil Wolverton. If the reader is expecting to find an All-American group of altruistic do-gooders, he in for quite a jolt. As Jonathan Lethem writes in his Foreword, *A collection like Supermen! works like a reverse-neutron bomb to assumptions about the birth of the superhero image: it tears down the orderly structures of theory and history and leaves the figures standing in full view, staring back at us in all their defiant disorienting particularity, their blazing strangeness.* Beautifully designed and produced in full color, *Supermen!* contains twenty full-length stories, ten full-sized covers, and a generous selection of vintage promotional ads, and is indispensable to anyone interested in the origins of superheroes and the history of the comic book form.

From Booklist Superheroes have been the dominant comic-book genre ever since Superman transformed the industry in 1938. Other than a handful of hardy survivors, the hundreds of costumed crime fighters that sprang up in comics early era are long forgotten. *Supermen!* consists of vintage stories featuring a representative handful of those heroes. The earliest, some actually precursors of the Man of Steel, are Mandrake-inspired magicians (Yarko the Great), masked detectives (the Clock), space explorers (Cosmic Carson), and, occasionally, hybrids (Fero, Planet Detective). Later come cape-and-tights-clad stalwarts Skyman, Silver Streak, Daredevil, and Blue Bolt. Their primordial exploits may be crude, primitive even, but also quaintly entertaining and possessed of a brash, undeniable vitality. Often their naiveté is unintentionally hilarious, as in two stories by Fletcher Hanks, the Ed Wood of comics. But there's also incipient artistry in the early work of Jack Kirby, Will Eisner, Basil Wolverton, and Jack Cole, who developed into leading talents. These early examples of a genre still finding its way display conventions recognizable in their superpowered successors.

--Gordon Flagg Pure pop culture heaven. - Kevin Church, *Beaucoup*Kevin.com What was once mundane had become utterly fascinating in Fantagraphics' superb collection *Supermen!* - Rob Lott, *Bookgasm* A beautifully designed volume of early American comics... The edition is both aesthetically pleasing and sturdy, featuring clarified reprinting of the colour strips, covers, and scattered elements of advertisements and back matter. - Michael Leader, *Den of Geek* *Supermen!*, this anthology lovingly assembled by Greg Sadowski, makes the case that these earliest endeavors by the future creators of masterworks like *The Spirit*, *Captain America*, and *Plastic Man* were more than crude throat-clearing—they were unfiltered manifestations of psyche, lousy with erotic charge and questionable politics. [Grade:] A. - Entertainment Weekly The biggest surprise might be how good these stories are, even if they failed to take off in the way that, say, Superman did... [T]he Notes section at the end, written by editor Greg Sadowski, ...is truly fantastic... His studious efforts are worth the price of the book alone... These stories deserved another look and more attention. Sadowski has done an admirable job of making *Supermen! The First Wave*

of Comic Book Heroes 1936-1941 not only reverent, but exciting and fun as well. - John Hogan, Graphic Novel Reporter A fun anthology that perfectly captures the experience of stumbling across a random stack of old comics in someones attic. - Tangognat.com Supermen! is a rambunctious anthology of the earliest superhero stories gaudy, crude, infernally potent things, cranked out by young cartoonists. - Douglas Wolk, The New York Times Book Supermen! provides a concise glimpse into what the early comic books were like back when the medium was really fresh... Today's readers will be surprised at how some of the material from a supposed more naive times really comes across rather grim and gritty... The 20 stories on view here provide an intriguing insight of where many of our modern day comic book heroes may have originated from, even if indirectly. - Kevin Mathews, The Power of Pop Excitingly surreal our appreciation for the bizarre otherness of these characters in retrospect suggests that our contemporary icons might well appear no less totally opaque and infinitely awkward to future readers. - The Village Voice I've always gotten a kick out of early comics. They're anti-art in action. Irrational, crude and daffily violent. Kinda like early punk rock. - M. Ace, Irregular Orbit Supermen! excited me... for suggesting a burning, manic soul of superhero comics... It felt like the start of a future, and the comedown only hit when I realized I enjoyed it more than any new superhero comic of 2009. - Joe McCulloch, Jog: The Blog Featuring an eclectic assortment of rare, long-out-of-print American superhero short stories... an all-star cast of early work from luminaries including Siegel and Shuster, Simon Kirby, Fine Eisner, Wolverton, Cole, Hanks, etc. The reproduction of each story is top notch, with bright, vivid colors, slightly oversized pages and thick paper stock. - Marc Sobel, Comic Book Galaxy [A]n amazing collection of Golden Age comics and heroes, beautifully restored. - Carol Borden, The Cultural Gutter I can't think of a better single volume of what the period style of fast looked like in practice than last year's Supermen! anthology. Yes, there's an added winnowing by genre but that just sharpens the sense of the reductive visual and narrative requirements that were standard for the hot new gravy train that hit the business. - Rich Kreiner, The Comics Journal A marvel... a non-stop visual delight as much for the art as for the colors as for the audacious (sometimes by default) layouts [T]he early days of comic books were like the underground: Everything was possible, especially the impossible. You absolutely must buy this book. - Jean-Pierre Dionnet, co-founder, Les Humanoïdes Associées About the Author Greg Sadowski is a writer, editor and designer (B. Krigstein, Supermen!, Four Color Fear, Setting the Standard: Alex Toth; Action! Mystery! Thrills!) living in Washington State. Jonathan Lethem is the author of six novels, including the bestsellers The Fortress of Solitude and Motherless Brooklyn, which won the National Book Critics Circle Award. He lives in Brooklyn and Maine.