



Rebel Visions: Underground Comix

By Patrick Rosenkranz

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The first major historical work about the most influential artistic movement in America since the Beat Generation revolutionized literature.

A provocative chronicle of the guerrilla art movement that changed comics forever, this comprehensive book follows the movements of 50 artists from 1967 to 1972, the heyday of the underground comix movement. Through interviews with the participants and other materials, *Rebel Visions* is the most intimate look ever at the people and events that forged the phenomenon known as underground comix, from New York to San Francisco, from the corn belt to deep in the heart of Texas, beginning that day in 1968 when R. Crumb debuted *Zap* #1 from a baby carriage on Haight Ashbury Street. Rosenkranz has spent 20 years researching this book and acquiring the cooperation of every significant underground cartoonist who worked throughout this period, including Crumb, Gilbert Shelton (*Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*), Bill Griffith (*Zippy the Pinhead*), Art Spiegelman (*Maus*), Jack Jackson, S. Clay Wilson, Robert Williams, and many more. The book is illustrated with many never-before-seen drawings by all of the underground cartoonists, and exclusive photographs.

The book focuses on San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, where Crumb and the rest of his *Zap* cronies commingled with the rest of the city's counter-cultural scene, notably musicians like the Grateful Dead and Janis Joplin. The counterculture was omnipresent in San Francisco for those few years, with underground tabloids like *Yellow Dog* and *Gothic Blimp Works* steering the zeitgeist out-of-control, along with the music, political, and psychedelic drug scenes, all of which found a group of unlikely revolutionaries who drew cartoons right at the epicenter.

"It did feel like this must have been what the cubists were going through, like all the magic of being in Paris for the post-Impressionistic movement did feel somehow like being in San Francisco in the early 1970s." — Art Spiegelman, from *Rebel Visions*

"Like any utopian experiment, ideals were challenged and rewritten in the face of the daily grind. It was a harsh life lesson for me, but there were lots of laughs and some beautiful times, too..." — Justin Green, from *Rebel Visions*

"Underground comics were more like art and less like comics." — Gilbert

Shelton, from Rebel Visions

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Moving from year to year and town to town, through a revolving cast of artists and publishers, this story of revolutionary 60s art-making seeks to capture some of the frenzied scope and communal bonhomie that made the hippie counterculture click. The big names here are Robert Crumb, Robert Williams and Art Spiegelman, who emerge from the postwar era of conformity and repression into a period of broad cultural experimentation and self-discovery. Once the text moves beyond boilerplate mythmaking about San Francisco in the free love era, an interesting portrait begins to emerge--of ambitious, committed artists seeking to push their own boundaries, and with them the boundaries of society at large. In its detailed account of an art that celebrated sweating burnouts and libidinous creeps, the volume gives all the anecdotes and minutiae a reader might want. Lavishly illustrated with pages and panels from the underground press of the time (at least one per page), the book serves as a solid reference point for the developing styles of hippie draftsmanship. Crumb and co. round out a decade one-upping each other in degrees of explicitness and self-revelation, and leave behind a massive inheritance for future generations of doodlers to draw from. Illus. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From [Booklist](#)

The most lasting artistic legacy of the 1960s hippie movement, other than its music, is its eye-poppingly transgressive underground comics--black-and-white pamphlets that spread the counterculture message of sex, drugs, and rebellion to freak and straight alike. Rosenkranz thoroughly documents the phenomenon, providing a year-by-year account of the underground scene, from 1968's *Zap #1*, which artist R. Crumb sold from a baby carriage on the streets of Haight Ashbury, to its crash in 1973 in the wake of obscenity rulings and a crackdown on head shops. During the period, the comics' subject matter mirrored countercultural concerns as they shifted from peace-and-love to antiwar, feminist, and other political messages. Rosenkranz's writing may lack flair, but with personalities this colorful (the artists themselves provide fly-on-the-wall reminiscences) and art this outrageous (reprinted on nearly every page) to write about, who needs it? Many underground veterans, especially Crumb and Art Spiegelman, continue to produce significant, high-profile work, but their most lasting influence is seen in today's alternative-comics artists, who followed them in placing artistic expression above commercialism. *Gordon Flagg*
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Review

A comprehensive overview of the genre hasn't been available until now....A superb overview. Grade: A+. -- *Comics Buyer's Guide* "Pick of the Week", Brett Frankenhoff, 31 January 2003

A fascinating and important volume. -- *Library Journal*, 1 May 2003

A profusely illustrated and thoroughly detailed history. -- *The New York Times Book Review*, Steven Heller, 16 February 2003

A triumph of research and generous observation, definitively documenting a scene of radical invention and subversive intent. -- *Bookforum*, Jon Raymond

A very cool look at the underground scene. Grade: A. -- *Robert Scott, Comics Buyer's Guide* #1499, 9 August 2002

As complete a picture as possible. Rosenkrantz is ideally suited to the task. -- *Comics Buyer's Guide*, 31 January 2003, Brent Frankenhoff

Deeply researched, profusely illustrated, and wonderfully readable, this is the definitive volume on the topic.... Grade: A. -- *Charlie Harris, Comics Buyers Guide*, 9 August 2002

Essential....this is a work that no serious comics fan should be without... Grade: A. -- *Phil Mateer, Comics Buyers Guide*, 9 August 2002

Fascinatingly informative...even fans with no interest in underground comics will have trouble putting this book down. Grade: A+. -- *Cliff Biggers, Comics Buyers Guide*, 9 August 2002

The book's thorough, unflinching presentation of this history...combined with a refreshingly clear, evenhanded prose makes this an absolute must-have. -- *Cinescape*, November 2002

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sandra Murray:

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Typically the book *Rebel Visions: Underground Comix* has a lot details on it. So when you make sure to read this book you can get a lot of advantage. The book was authored by the very famous author. This articles author makes some research prior to write this book. That book very easy to read you may get the point easily after looking over this book.

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Edward Carroll:

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