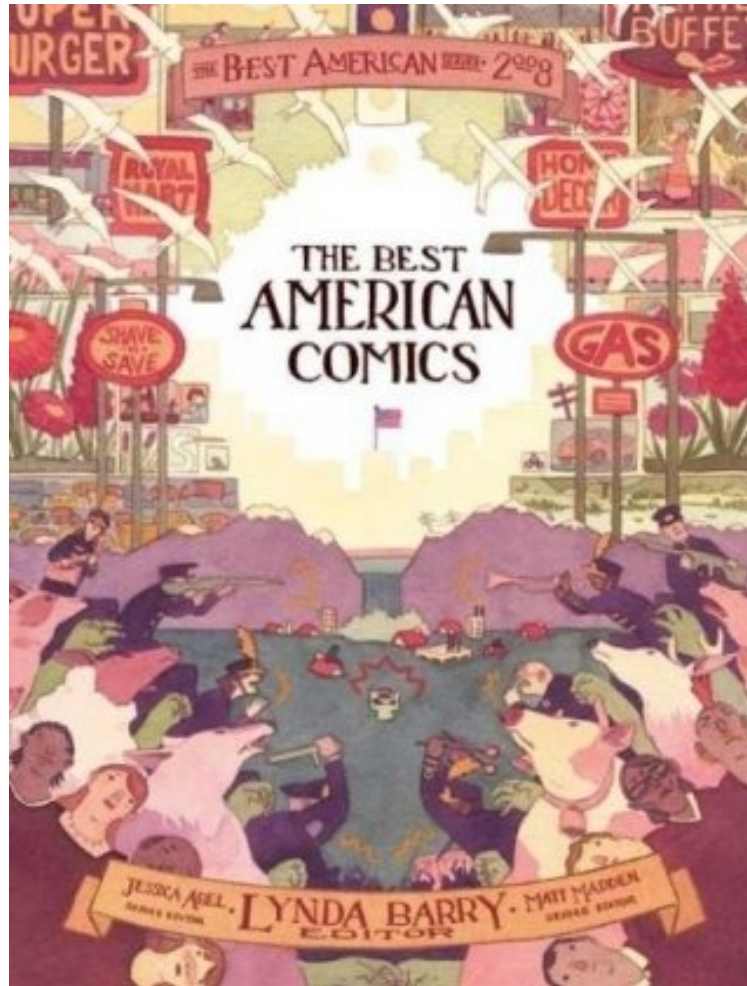


## The Best American Comics 2008

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**From Houghton Mifflin Harcourt : The Best American Comics 2008** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Best American Comics 2008:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Second Year of Improvement for Best American Comics By David Swan The competition between Best American Comics and the Anthology of Graphic Fiction, Cartoons, and True Stories now moves into its second year. I can't compare the two for 2008 just yet because so far I've only read the Best American version but I'm pleased to announce so far it's a good year. For the second straight year since its debut in 2006 the quality of BAC has improved, hopefully the portent of a bright future for alternative comics. This volume features the triumphant return of 'Kaz' whom I haven't seen in a compilation since the legendary McSweeney's Issue 13. Kaz is one of the very few alternative cartoonists who made enough of an impact on me that I went out and bought more of his works. Only Kaz can make me laugh out loud and then feel I need to take a hot shower for laughing. His

disturbing, generally disgusting humor is definitely not for everyone but I'm personally thrilled to see him included again. Arguably the biggest name in alternative comics, Matt Groening, makes a surprising appearance showing he's still on top of his game. We also get the inevitable appearances by Seth and Chris Ware who always put in great performances. Seth's story is a near carbon copy of his book 'Wimbledon Green' which I gave a generous four out of five stars to while Mr. Ware's entry is very typical of his work with a bleak, depressing tone contrasting against his bright, technically precise visuals. This is when I like to give a shout out to stories I particularly enjoyed. Graham Annable illustrates the dark tale of a man who literally carries the burden of his brother on his back while he tries to right his brother's wrongs. In 'The Thing About Madeline', Lillie Carre tells a tale of a woman who finds herself on the outside of her life looking in. Jamie Hernandez writes a nice retro story in 'Gold Diggers of 1969' emulating the look of a 1960's comic albeit with a modern theme. One of my favorites was the surreal 'Percy Gloom' by Cathy Malkasian. This is one that was interesting enough that I might consider looking into picking up more of Ms. Malkasian's works. The Forbidden Zone by Kevin Pyle was a short but interesting retro comic. There was nothing in this compilation that really leaped out at me. The quality remains steady throughout but never knocks it out of the park. If I was to describe this collection in one word it would be 'Solid'. Last year I felt that the Anthology of Graphic Fiction put together a better collection although it may be an unfair comparison since Best American Comics limits itself to a single year. I'll have to see how they stack up this year. 16 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Third Time's a Charm By Ryan Noonan This was definitely the best in the series so far. Lynda Barry turns out to have been a really inspired choice for guest editor, because she picks a set of entries that are virtually all outstanding. She even illustrates her introduction, which is both a nice touch and a clever way of pulling together a lot of the ideas about anxieties and self-reflection that pervade the pieces she's chosen to include. All in all, this volume is a tour-de-force. I only hope BAC 2009 is half as good. My favorite pieces: "Burden" by Graham Annable. A young man trying nobly to tie up his brother's loose ends turns into something completely different at the end. The reveal reverberates through the entire story and really does pose a difficult - and interesting - moral question. "Seven Sacks" by Eleanor Davis. This story about a boatman ferrying some unsavory characters also poses a good, tough moral question and forces some self-reflection. But, more importantly, it's absolutely gorgeous. Davis calls up an increasingly wicked-looking set of creatures that just absolutely pour atmosphere into her little fable. And, is it just me, or does she pay homage to both Jeff Smith and Neil Gaiman in the process? "Mammalogy" by Eric Haven has terrific art and makes for a hilarious romp through time, space, imagination, television, the superhero genre, and gastronomy. The best part may be the blurb in the back of the book detailing Haven's inspiration for the story. "Turtle, Keep it Steady!" by Joseph Lambert. A very clever retelling of the Tortoise and the Hare with absolutely outstanding art. The grooving animals send the music right off the page, and the hilarious metaphor about the speed at which the Hare lives his life is very well-chosen. As is the whale in the last panel. I have no idea why that whale cracks me up so much, but it really does. "Cupid's Day Off" by Evan Larson is really pretty trifling, but his art and his imagination had me laughing uproariously throughout the whole thing. Who knew that an alien fornicating with a football could be so funny? I guess probably everyone, but still... "George Sprott" by Seth. A really fascinating and postmodern journey through the life of a washed-up Arctic explorer cum TV man. The art is lovely, the layouts are very well done, and the emotional impact hits all the right notes. Now, there are lots more things I liked too. Alison Bechdel is here, and so is Chris Ware. And Gene Luen Yang's "American Born Chinese". And lots more. They're all good (although I don't understand Jaime Hernandez and probably never will) and they're well worth your money. This is just a great anthology. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Anthologies are a great way to get more bang for your comic buck... By ESME... This comic anthology certainly gives up more entertainment than the meagre cover price would indicate. I've always liked Lynda Barry, so I was doubly grateful to see what exceptional pieces she included for my perusal, as well as being completely blown away by her incredible intro. My gosh that lady can...er...comicate...comuculate(?)...I dunno, whatever it is, she can do it and I enjoy the heck outa' it! Anyhoo', I really enjoyed the works included in this quite hefty tome, and the balance between tried and true, familiar (at least to me!) and brand new, and unknown was really quite refreshing and welcome. Kudos should be given to layout as well, since the stories flowed smoothly, and at the end of the book I felt well satisfied with the read, and hopeful for the next edition. The "Best American" series has always been a good "go-to" resource, especially if one is looking to expand "favorite authors/artists" list, and this edition is no exception. Once you've gotten from the front cover to the back, then I would recommend you check out The Best American Comics 2007 (The Best American Series (TM)), as well as The Best American Comics 2006 (Best American), and if you enjoyed Ms. Barry's intro as much as I did, you really should also take a look at What It Is, which is an absolutely incredible "book" (I think the term "work of art" is more correct here) about...about what, really...? Writing? Illustrating? Creating? I guess I'd say all that and more, but you'll have to decide for yourself, and either way, you get a brief look in this edition's intro. All in all, this is a wonderful collection of works, and a great introduction to the world of sequential art, for those among us who are yet uninitiated. Come on in, the water's fine!

This newest edition to the Best American Series--A genuine salute to comics" (Houston Chronicle)--returns with a set of both established and up-and-coming contributors. Editor Lynda Barry and brand new series editors Jessica Abel

and Matt Madden--acclaimed cartoonists in their own right-- have sought out the best stories culled from graphic novels, pamphlet comics, newspapers, magazines, mini-comics, and the Web to create this cutting-edge collection perfect for newbies as well as fans--The San Diego Union Tribune. This newest volume features luminaries like Chris Ware, Seth, and Alison Bechdel alongside Paul Pope's "Batman" and beloved daily cartoonists like Matt Groening. Lynda Barry is a writer and cartoonist whose comic strip, *Ernie Pook's Comeek* celebrates its 30th year in print in 2007. She is a recipient of the Washington State Governor's Award for her novel, *The Good Times are Killing Me*, which she adapted into a long-running off-broadway play. The New York Times called her second novel, *Cruddy*, A work of terrible beauty. She received the 2003 William Eisner award for Best Graphic Album and an American Library Association Alex award for her book, *One! Hundred! Demons!*. She lives and works in southern Wisconsin. Jessica Abel is the author of the graphic novel *La Perdida*, as well as two collections of stories and drawings from her comic zine *Artbabe*. Matt Madden is a cartoonist and author of *99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in Style*. Their textbook about making comics, *Drawing Words Writing Pictures*, is forthcoming.;

From Publishers Weekly Starred. The focus of this collection is not on any particular genre or style, but on stylistic and storytelling variety. There are slice-of-life stories, historical drama, humor, political satire, absurdist fables, serious autobiography and lighthearted ramblings. The art styles range from the tight, realistic precision of Jason Lute's *Berlin* to the raw style of John Mejjia's vignettes of life as a public school art teacher. With each story the reader is drawn into a different world or presented with another perspective of the same world. Yet despite the variety of the stories, they join as a display of the power of comics as a means of storytelling that can concisely present some aspect of human nature so the reader can digest it, contemplate it and, perhaps, understand it, as Barry, this edition's editor, suggests in her introduction. The variety conveys the continued growth of comics as a means of storytelling, growth brought about by a plethora of promising new creators and continued great work by established creators such as Jaime Hernandez, Matt Groening and Chris Ware. The book offers a strong sampling of the diversity available today and hints at more innovation and progression to come. (Oct.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist For the third Best American Comics, series editors Jessica Abel and Matt Madden made the initial selection, which alt-comics diva Lynda Barry, who contributes a sharp comics-format introduction, pared down to the final 26 choices. As might be expected from the editors' backgrounds, mainstream comics are snubbed in favor of graphic-novel excerpts, self-published mini-comics, Web comics, and, befitting Barry's start there, weekly strips from alternative newspapers, such as Alison Bechdel's *Dykes to Watch Out For*, *Derfs The City*, and *Kaz's Underworld*. Contributors include a number of inescapable usual suspects, who invariably turn up in such anthologies in this case, Chris Ware, Jaime Hernandez, and Seth but also a gratifying number of newcomers, most notably Gene Yang and Cathy Malkasian, represented by passages from *American Born Chinese* (2006) and *Percy Gloom* (2007), respectively, as well as underappreciated veterans like Rick Geary and Jason Lutes. The overall quality not a single entry is without merit testifies to the incontestable strength of the comics medium, and the impressive work of the talented tyros included bodes well for its continued health. --Gordon Flagg "There may be no better indicator of the growing legitimacy of comics in the literary world...A dazzling array of talent." (Kirkus) "Persuasive evidence that we're in a new golden age of comics." (Newsday)