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Complete Chester Gould's Dick Tracy Volume 9



Synopsis

Chester Gould's fertile imagination continues at a breakneck pace, as he introduces The Brow, Flattop, Shaky, Breathless Mahoney, Measles, Gravel Gertie, B.O. Plenty, and the Summer Sisters! Edited and designed by Eisner Award-winner Dean Mullaney, and containing all daily and Sunday comic strips from March 23, 1944 through September 19, 1945, this volume features an introduction by Max Allan Collins, and includes a special feature by Jeff Kersten of the Dick Tracy Museum about the famous radio program, "Dick Tracy in B-Flat," starring Bing Crosby, Dinah Shore, Frank Sinatra, Jimmy Durante, and Bob Hope! -The Library of American Comics is the world's #1 publisher of classic newspaper comic strips, with 14 Eisner Award nominations and three wins for best book. LOAC has become "the gold standard for archival comic strip reprints...The research and articles provide insight and context, and most importantly the glorious reproduction of the material has preserved these strips for those who knew them and offers a new gateway to adventure for those discovering them for the first time." - Scoop

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Customer Reviews

Chester Gould's World War II era "wave of creativity" reaches its crest in this collection of 1944-45 strips. On the dark side of the ledger, we get Flattop ("Take II"), The Brow, and Breathless Mahoney, and even such relatively minor players as the trembling extortionist Shaky and the acne-scarred drug dealer Measles make solid impressions. At the same time, Gould suddenly broadens his supporting cast with the introduction of two classic characters, B.O. Plenty and Gravel

Gertie, and gives brief yet memorable life to a third, Vitamin Flintheart. Gould's willingness to expand his "character base" -- a decision that slipped through a perilously narrow "window of opportunity," given that only a few years later, Gould would be creating and discarding strong one-shot supporting players with a breezy insouciance matched only by the producers of Disney TV's TALE SPIN -- shows just how confident and "in tune" he was with his audience at this time. Gould certainly had his ear finely tuned to the popular culture of the war years: he drew upon the popularity of The Andrews Sisters to create the ill-fated Summer Sisters, dredged the emerging teenager culture to fashion his first under-20 villain (the smirking, wise-guy Measles), and responded to the brief heyday of faux-hillbilly singer Judy Canova by introducing B.O. and Gertie (as villains, originally, but, hey, they "got better"). At the same time -- as reflected in the all-star radio play DICK TRACY IN B-FLAT (1944), not to mention the ultimate tribute delivered by Bob Clampett and Daffy Duck, THE GREAT PIGGY BANK ROBBERY (1946) -- Gould's own pop influence was never greater than at this moment. Given that TRACY was competing with a global conflict, Gould's rising to the occasion was no small trick. As beloved as B.O.

Volume 9 continues the storyline with Flattop Jones that started in volume 8. Flattop ends up in a most unexpected team-up with the overacting ham, Vitamin Flintheart. Having finished the story I'm curious as to how Flattop became so famous as compared to his gruesome contemporaries. He's not the most ruthless villain, in fact The Brow who shows up in the next story line is considerably more ruthless. The storyline is fairly standard with Flattop committing a crime, getting caught, escaping and then dying at the end. Perhaps his popularity is due to the fact that Flattop was younger than most of the other grotesque villains. Maybe it was his inexplicably congenial relationship with Flintheart that came from out of left field. Whatever it is Flattop Jones remains the most recognizable of all the Dick Tracy villains and that alone makes volume 9 a must have. The next story features the Summer sisters, May and June but more importantly The Brow. The Brow is another foreign spy although Gould always keeps the counties his spies are working for a mystery. The Brow is up there with the cruelest villains Gould has ever created and the naive Summer sisters bear the brunt of his wraith. As with many villains Gould set The Brow up as a truly evil person in order to spend most of the story torturing him to the delight of readers. The Brow is the victim of one of the most gruesome and certainly the most unlikely death ever inflicted on a Dick Tracy villain. Let me put it this way. There is no way the physics of our universe would ever permit what happens to The Brow to actually happen. Nor even close.

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