Ah, summer vacation! No more pencils, no more books, no more teacher's dirty looks! It's the freedom to frolic, the time to hang with your friends and family...if you're lucky. Two new graphic novels explore two different experiences with summer vacation. Published by Farrar Straus Giroux, All Summer Long is the new book from Hope Larson, the artist responsible for the best-selling graphic adaptation of A Wrinkle in Time. Thirteen-year-old Bina is on that uncomfortable cusp between child and teenager. She wants to continue the Summer Fun Index she’s kept for years with her neighbor and best friend, Aaron. But Aaron thinks they're too old for that stuff; besides, he’s off to soccer camp. Stuck home by herself and cut off from the internet by her parents, Bina finds a new friend in Aaron’s older sister, Charlie. Bina and Charlie bond over their mutual interest in alternative rock (right) and help each other get through the summer. All Summer Long is a meditation on friendship and a testament to the transformative power of music. Elsewhere and —when in Be Prepared (First Second), Vera Brosgol spends summer at Russian Camp, a remnant of pre-Communist scouting maintained by emigres. Unfortunately, nine-year-old Vera is also caught between ages, too old to be with the little kids, but never really fitting in with the older girls who share her tent. Vera tries her best, tries to be the good scout, tries to be grown-up. But it's rough. She keeps messing up and breaking rules and getting the rest of the girls in trouble. But through pluck and luck, Vera Brosgol the character eventually finds her place in this little world. Vera Brosgol the cartoonist (and author of Anya’s Ghost) does a wonderful job with this graphic memoir. Her script is heart-warming and hilarious in turns, and her art captures both the beauty and scariness of nature in the raw (left). Be Prepared and All Summer Long are available from several LPL locations; go to lexpublib.org for the details!

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Eisner Award-winning cartoonist Michael Kupperman is known for his mixture of trash culture tropes and egghead irony. In such strips as “Hercules and Dracula” and “Magritte the Surrealist Crime Dog”, Kupperman used a style based on the stiff, over-rendered figures of hack comics from the mid-20th Century. That connection to the corny yet potent past of American mass media serves Kupperman well in All the Answers (Galley 13). Michael’s father, Joel Kupperman, was one of the Quiz Kids. A game show starring child prodigies, Quiz Kids was one of the most popular programs in the Golden Age of Radio. Though one of hundreds of Quiz Kids, Joel Kupperman was the most famous. A math prodigy from a Jewish family, Kupperman was exploited by every adult he met. He was a cash cow for his mother, the producers, even the government once the U.S. went to war with the Nazis. During WW2 the Quiz Kids sold $125 million in war bonds while traveling across the nation. But while his fellow Quiz Kids moved on with their lives, Joel remained on the show, stuck in an eternal childhood. He eventually achieved a different kind of fame and fortune as a professor of philosophy. But Kupperman’s youthful trials affected him — and his family — forever after. Ostensibly a biography of his father, All the Answers becomes a quest by Kupperman fils to solve the puzzle of his own relationship with his distant, mysterious forebear. But even as Michael digs into his father’s past, Joel’s mind flees even further from reality as he succumbs to dementia. A history, memoir and lament in one, All the Answers is available at Central, Eastside and Beaumont.
Meanwhile

re-introducing Golden Age stars like Patsy Walker and the original Human Torch to the Marvel Universe. He also took Marvel’s patented “Continued Next Issue!” story-telling to the next level with increasingly complex epics such as the “Phantom Empire” and “Cosmic Madonna” sagas. The latter got started during the run of Avengers reprinted in that group’s latest Epic Collection, available from the TEEN section at all LPL locations. The Avengers-Defenders War set the two teams Englehart was writing against each other. At a time when such “events” happen every summer whether readers want them or not, it’s hard to understand just how radical this crossover was. It lasted only five issues (two Defenders, three Avengers), but made a huge impact on future creators. This compilation also introduces the character Mantis, who would play a huge part in the Bronze Age Avengers. Unfortunately, once you read the kung fu clichés spouted by “this one”, you’ll understand why they made her an alien for the movies. But, hey, it was the Seventies, man! That weird, wild decade lives again in the aptly entitled Age of Disenchantment (EuroComics). The second collection of Alack Sinner stories by Jose Munoz and Carlos Sampayo starts in the 1970s and ends in the first decade of this century. Sinner continues to work as a private detective, whether the cops like it or not. His cases get stranger— a failed cartoonist hunts the man who has swiped his work to great success, the hallucinogenic “North Americans”- and more political—the growing incarceration of women, “Nicaragua.” But it’s the art that amazes in this volume. Unlike most comics, the name of the artist, Jose Munoz, comes first. That’s because he is the star of the duo. Other series with new volumes out include Warren Ellis’ The Wild Storm, the slam-bang fantasy Curse Words, sci-fi shoot-em-up Horizon and volumes 3-5 of the graphic adaptation of the occult detective series Rivers of London from Titan. That imprint’s collaboration with Hard Case Crime continues with comics based on Stieg Larsson’s best-selling Girl Who...series, available from Beaumont, Central, Eastside and Tates Creek. Speaking of the 1970s, one of the iconic film franchises of that era was Planet of the Apes. So popular were those movies that Marvel Comics jumped on the bandwagon. One of Marvel’s black & white magazine-sized comics like Dracula Lives! and Deadly Hands of Kung Fu, Planet of the Apes featured new stories set in the Apes universe (which finally introduced gibbons into the mix) and adaptations of the films. The Marvel take on the first film and its sequel, Beneath…, make up the bulk of Apes Archive Volume 2 (BOOM! Studios), available from Northside. Meanwhile, we still feel our past as primates in our body and bones when we stand, walk…and draw comics! Published by Uncivilized Books, Draw Stronger schools inkslingers on the physical dos and don’ts of drawing. Massage therapist and health teacher—and cartoonist—Kriota Willberg discusses the physical issues inherent to being a cartoonist while giving advice on how to keep the body limber and the mind clear. Go to lexpublib.org to reserve your copy!