FROM POWER GIRL TO GIRL POWER:
WOMEN IN COMICS
CREATORS, READERS, CHARACTERS
MARCH 2017— NO. THREE
PLUS...25 YEARS OF IMAGE COMICS!
She Changed Comics: The Untold Story of the Women Who Changed Free Expression In Comics — Betsy Gomez, Editor (Image Comics)

741.5 Sh31—Central & Eastside

The history of women in comics is long, but too often overlooked and diminished. Now Image and the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund team up to present this volume which acts as both chronicle and guidebook. It’s a deep and diverse selection, from the creators of the Kewpies, Rose O’Neill, and the Campbell Kids, Grace Drayton, to underground trailblazers such as Diane Noomin and Trina Robbins (whose own history of women in American comics, Pretty In Ink, is available from Central). New attention is given to older cartoonists from the Golden Age of newspaper comics, including Dale (Brenda Starr) Messick, African American rebel Jackie Ormes and Tarpe Mills, whose self-inspired crimefighter Miss Fury, featured on the book’s cover (left), was the first female superhero, beating Wonder Woman to the newsstands by a few months. Alt-comix troublemakers such as Jessica Abel, Sue Coe and Julie Doucet join modern cartoonists like Fiona (Saga) Staples and Noelle (Lumberjanes) Stevenson. Plus lots of info on international artists, as well as the women behind the scenes such as DC’s Jenette Kahn, Diana Schutz of Dark Horse and Vertigo’s Karen Berger. She Changed Comics...for good!

While women working in the comics mainstream often deal with a hostile audience, that’s not the case with female creators working in the so-called “alternative” market. Probably because said “alternative” is to Nazi Germany, where Immi- closers to the actual market for books, which has long been the harsh winds of history, driven by women writers and readers. The variety of genres — Latin American and styles of the regular market — is also present in “alternatives,” trying to keep her family “native” comics. Real life come- dy can be found in Gina the Black Plague, Laid Waste is Wynbrandt’s Someone Please draw in a simple, sketchy Nurse With Me (2Dcloud), hand perfect for the homespun world of the late Middle Ages, a dirty lenticular look at the trials of a plus size girl looking for love. Travel cartoonist diny, not the case with female creo- who Changed Free Expression in Comics — Betsy Gomez, Editor (Image Comics)

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Image Comics turns 25 this year. The story began in 1992, when a gang of superstar artists led by Todd McFarlane, Eric Larsen and Rob Liefeld became fed up with making millions for Marvel Comics while earning only basic page rates and then-unimpressive royalties. Once Marvel refused their demands for more money and creative control, these artists and others formed Image Comics, an umbrella organization under which each artist’s personal studio (eg. Jim Lee’s Wildstorm and Marc Silvestri’s Top Cow) would produce creator-owned and operated content and titles. The results quickly upended the funnybook business, as Image became the third most powerful comics publisher in the nation. Admittedly, most of the early work, jacked-up “cutting edge” superhero books such as Spawn, Savage Dragon and Gen13, wowed fans more than critics and forward-thinking readers, who remained unimpressed by the flashy artwork and thin plots buoyed by hype and gimmicks. But as the company and its core concept of creator control matured, the output began to diversify, both aesthetically and politically. Founded as a boy’s club of “rock star” comics dudes, Image is now one of the leaders in the new market of comics made by women and read by women. The surprise hits Saga and Sex Criminals have made such an impact in large part because of their female readership, while the breakthrough book of 2015 was Bitch Planet, written by Kelly Sue DeConnick, a two-fisted polemic on bodies, gender and power disguised as a cross between Rollerball and The Handmaid’s Tale. Image continues this trend with the series The Beauty, co-written and drawn by Jeremy (Batwoman) Hahn, in which physical perfection becomes a transmissible disease, at first delightful, then horrifically dire. Unlike the original assortment of Image projects, though like many recent Image series such as The Wicked and the Divine and Warren Ellis’ Trees, The Beauty is similar to a Vertigo title, in that the art is secondary to the story. The first volume of Kill Six Billion Demons is more like the Image of old, in which insanely detailed art is the story. Collecting the popular web comic, Kill... comes on like Buffy the Vampire Slayer on ketamine, the art by Tom Parkinson-Morgan a hybrid of Frank Quitely’s hyper-realistm and the visceral dreamscapes of Jim Woodring. Elsewhere, demons both supernatural and everyday haunt the subject of The Abominable Mr. Seabrook (Drawn & Quarterly). A stone drunk and avid fetishist who introduced voodoo to the wider world, the once-celebrated, long-forgotten William Butler Seabrook gets his due courtesy of Joe Ollmann’s unflinching biography...which you’ll find in the Biographies. Meanwhile, from the land of trolls and house elves comes Hilda, the girl adventurer for our age. Luke Pearson’s blue-haired heroine finally shows her disbelieving mom the secret world of magic in Hilda and the Stone Forest from Flying Eye. It rocks! Composed by Bill Widener