

741.5

TAKE THAT, ADOLF! WW2 COMICS AND THE ART OF **PUNCHING NAZIS** **FOR FUN AND PROFIT**

MAY 2017— NO. FIVE

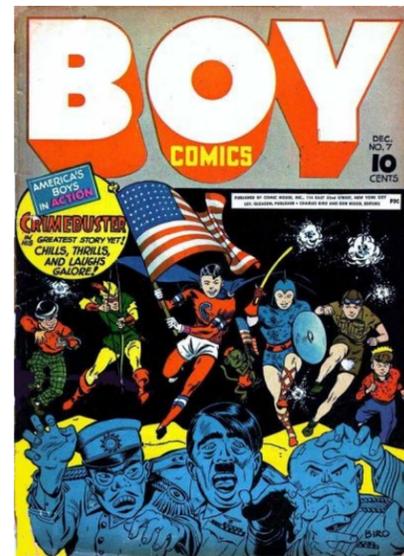
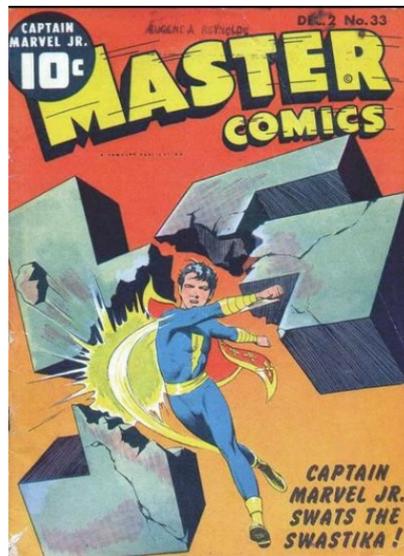
PLUS...**VICTORY IN EUROPE!**



The Comics & Graphic Novel Bulletin of



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Take That, Adolf!

The Fighting Comic Books of

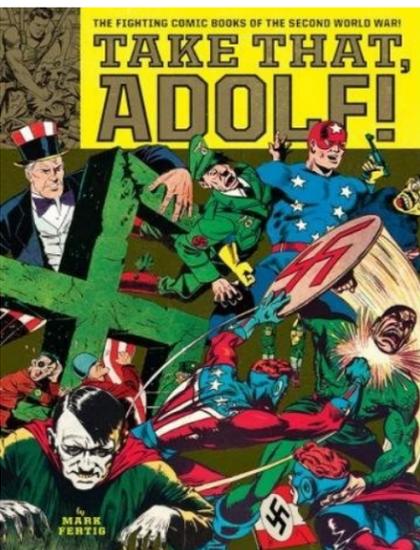
The Second World War

By Mike Fertig

(Fantagraphics)

Central, Eastside

One of the greatest propaganda operations in history operated without government support or control. It was a spontaneous, street level movement, motivated by two things: patriotism...and profit. Faced with the threat of world war, many Americans ducked their heads and hoped for the best.



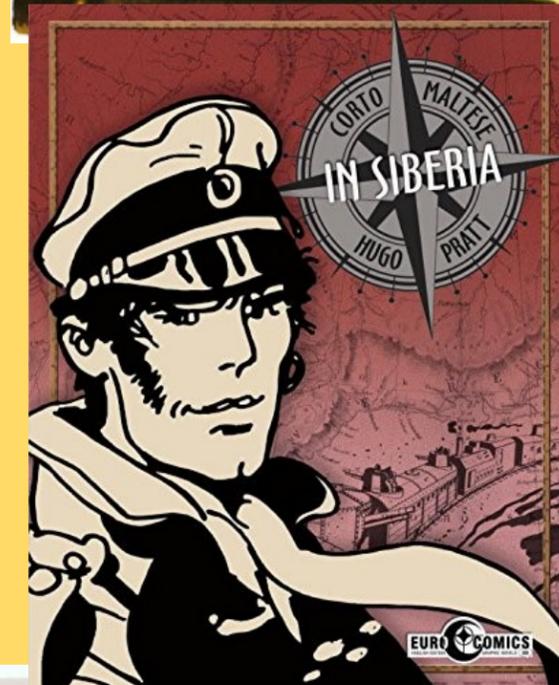
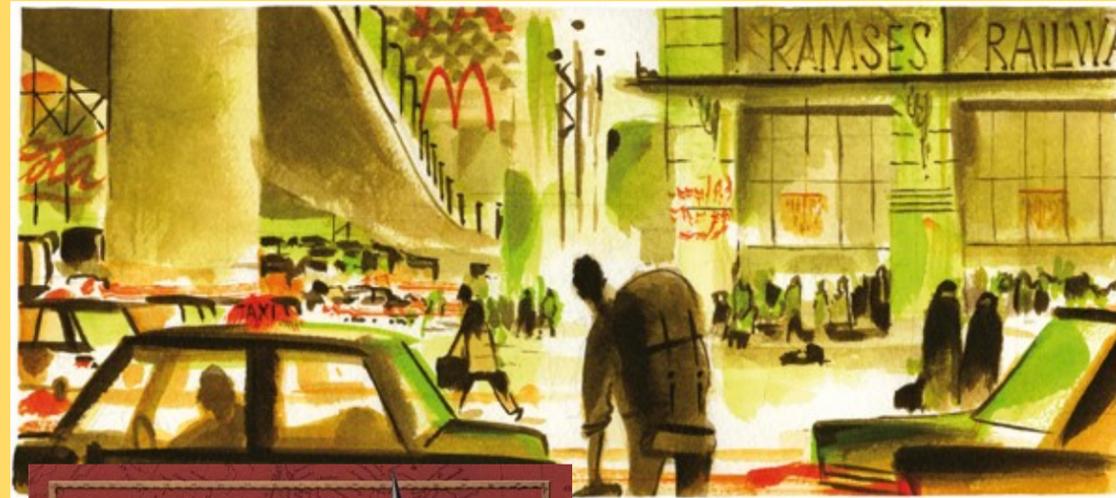
Not the fledgling comic book industry. Years before the United States' official entry into WW2, comic books turned newsstands into war zones as a hundred heroes - masked marvels and men in mufti, androids and aviators - took the fight to the Axis. And as every fist flew right in the Fuhrer's face, a million dimes cascaded into the pocketbooks of publishers (though not creators). Now this outburst of premature anti-Fascism gets its due in *Take That Adolf!* Curated by Mike Fertig, who compiled the poster book *Film Noir 101*, this tome features 500 comic book covers from the dozens of titles that

heaped abuse on Hitler and his nation of goons. Some only saw the money to be made, especially once Captain America arrived with a sock on Schicklgruber's jaw. Many, with names like Eisner, Simon and Mayer, had a personal stake. Whatever their reasons, these men (and a handful of women) unleashed a four-color apocalypse that contributed to the Allied war effort at home and abroad. Reserve your copy at lexpublib.org and enjoy the two-fisted agitprop of the Golden Age! **Above:** examples of wartime comic covers. **Front:** art by the greatest cover artist of his era, Alex Schomburg. **BW**

Below: Superhero titles weren't the only ones to fight the good fight, as shown by this ad from *Crime Does Not Pay* Jan 1943. >



May 8 is V-E Day, celebrating the Allied Victory in Europe. The defeat of Nazism brought many things to the Continent: democracy, the Cold War...and totally awesome comics! Postwar European comics were little influenced by the heroes-and-monsters tropes of American comic books. Thematically and graphically, Euro-comics took their cues from classic American newspaper strips. The influence of such past masters as Caniff and Crane is evident in the work of Hugo Pratt, whose stark, inky art had a huge impact on a young Frank Miller. Pratt's best known for the globe-trotting adventures of Corto Maltese. A laconic antihero chasing a buck at the sunset of European empire, Maltese finds himself mixed up in the madness of the Russian Civil War *In Siberia* (IDW). You can find this new release at Beaumont, along with the previous Corto Maltese books published under IDW's "Euro-Comics" imprint, which is bringing us other European classics such as *Flight of the Raven* by Jean-Pierre Gibrat. Gibrat (*below*) is admired by fans and pros alike for his astonishing use of watercolor, shown to good effect in this tense tale of the French Resistance. Gibrat's work also highlights another thing that sets European comics apart—attention to background. Unlike the



generic cityscapes of most American comics, Gibrat's Paris is a character in itself. This aspect of Euro-comics is at the heart of Benoit Peeters' "Obscure Cities" series, the first volume of which, *Samaris*, will be on LPL shelves soon. Another fine example of European cartoonists' sense of place is the winner of the prestigious Grand Prize of the 2010 Angouleme Comics Festival, *5,000 km Per Second* by Manuele Fior. A love triangle waxes and wanes over the years and kilometers as two men and the woman they both love travel from Italy to Egypt (*above*) to Norway and then back home again. Fior's watercolored pages are a joy to behold, one's eye bewitched by the moon reflected off an icy fjord or a skiff gliding upon the Nile. His latest, *The Interview*, is the exact opposite, a shadow-haunted tale of attraction and obsession set in a future Italy and rendered in deep blacks and smoky ink washes. And there's spaceships! Though not like the ones in *The World of Edena* by Moebius (Dark Horse). Available from Eastside, this standalone novel by the master of European science fiction comics showcases his exquisite draftsmanship and gorgeous use of color. Similarly, it's his moody gouache technique that sets the work of Enki Bilal apart, as you can see in *The Nikopol Trilogy* (Titan), compiling the saga of the reluctantly resurrected Alcide Nikopol and his dealings with a degraded future Earth. And for a more contemporary look at European comics, check out the anthology *Spanish Fever* (FG) from Central and Village. *Viva tebeos!*

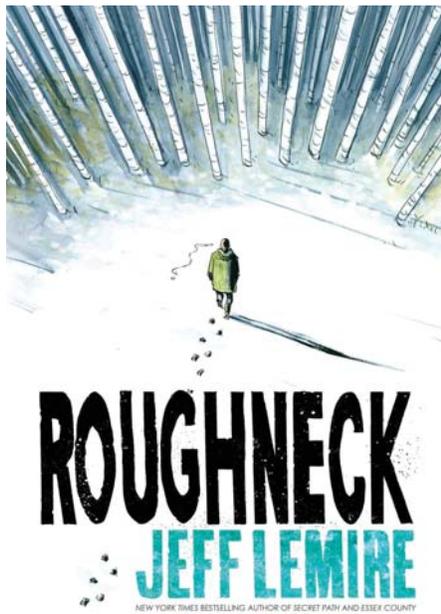


MEANWHILE

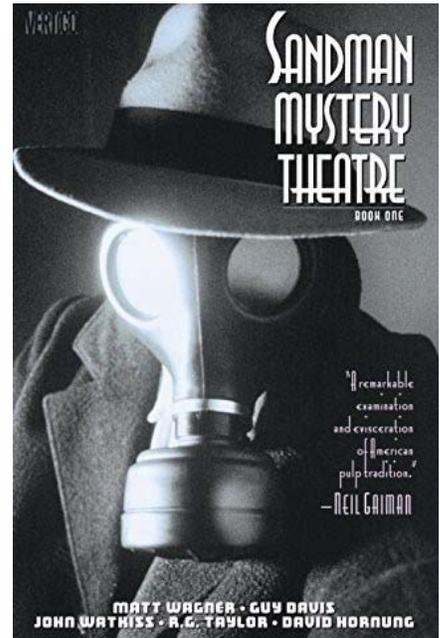
These kids today, am I right? With the Snapchat and the swiping and the posting of every minute detail of their lives...can ya imagine what it's gonna be like when they take over? Well, writer Mark Russell already has with the DC series *PREZ*, and it's a hoot and a horror. A mod reimagining of the cult Seventies series about America's "First Teen President", *PREZ* is set in a not very distant future where social media have completely taken over the American system of government. So much that a deadlocked election gets won by an outsider candidate known as "Corndog Girl" because her video was trending on Youtube. Once in office, Beth Ross begins to turn things upside down to the consternation of the corporate powers behind the American throne. The detailed but rubbery art of Ben Caldwell and Mike Morales brings to life this sci-fi burlesque of the issues roiling



our nation, in which cat flu, a cult that believes every microbe is sacred and a runaway warbot that decides it wants to be called "Tina" further complicate our screen-addled descent into idiocracy. But...that screen's just so...shiny, isn't it? Everbeckoning, a will-o-the-wisp drawing us always deeper into the cybernetic swamp. That's where they live, these kids today, kids like Lottie Person, the heroine of *Snotgirl*, the latest from the creator of *Scott Pilgrim* and *Seconds*, Bryan Lee O'Malley. Lottie is a fashion blogger. She lives her life post to post, selfie to selfie, desperately maintaining a picture-perfect façade only to be constantly undermined IRL by her gruesome allergies. Volume 1 of of this Image series, "Green Hair Don't Care", is a slick mix of romance, satire and mystery. The art by Leslie Hung is a perfect example of 21st Century "girl" comics, two parts Betty & Veronica to two parts anime and manga with a twist of Timm to give it some bite. And like old school teen comics, there's plenty of cheesecake, beefcake



and pretty clothes to keep your runny, itchy eyes glued to the page. But living your life in the public eye has never been easy, even in the pre-digital days, as former pro hockey player Derek Ouellette knows very well. Too much a mess to be called a hero, Derek is the protagonist of Jeff (Sweet Tooth) Lemire's latest standalone novel, *Roughneck* (Gallery 13). Even living in the middle of nowhere in the Great White North, Ouelette is dogged by his violent reputation. Derek's dreary life of booze and brawls is interrupted by the arrival of his kid sister Beth, who hit the road years ago. She's still on the run, from her immediate past of abuse and addiction, and from the tragic childhood she shares with her brother. It's a chilly book, blue as a breath caught in the winter wind. Lemire's art looks carved from the white birch trees that crowd in from the snowy



woods, except when memories come alive in bright and bloody color. Comics' own Golden Age is remade as *noir* nightmare in Matt Wagner's *Sandman Mystery Theatre* Book One. One of the inaugural Vertigo titles, *SMT* is set in the late Thirties at the birth of the DC Universe and stars the original Sandman, who started out in a suit, not spandex. Armed with only his gas gun, dream-haunted Wesley Dodds deals out poetic justice to monsters like the Face and the Tarantula, bizarre avatars of banal evils such as incest, racism and child abuse. Each story arc is ably rendered in differing styles, from Guy Davis' spidery penline to the slashing brushwork of John Watkiss to R.G. Taylor's airy illustrations. Meanwhile, Will Elder was one of the widest-ranging artists in the legendary EC bullpen, working in crime and horror to science fiction and, of course, parody, Elder's specialty. Gorgeous examples of each genre fill Fantagraphics' newest "EC Artist" collection, available now at lexpubl.org. 741.5 is by Bill Widener, CL LA

