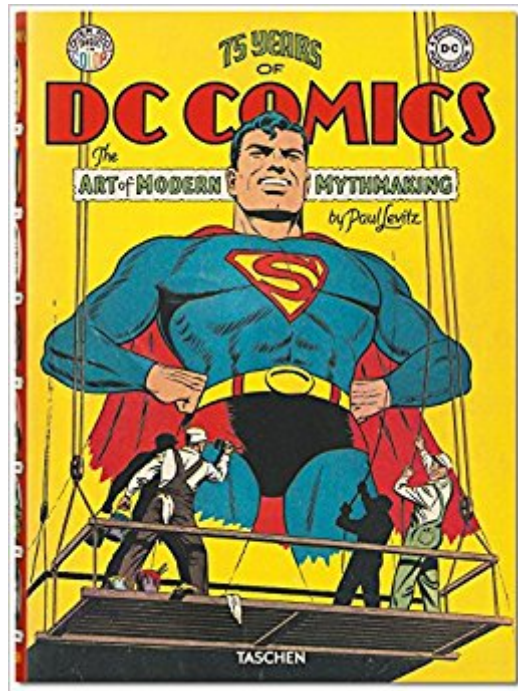




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75 Years Of DC Comics: The Art Of Modern Mythmaking



Synopsis

The Crown Jewel of Comics The DC universe as never seen before In 1935, DC Comics founder Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson published New Fun No. 1—the first comic book with all-new, original material—at a time when comic books were mere repositories for the castoffs of the newspaper strips. What was initially considered to be disposable media for children was well on its way to becoming the mythology of our time—the 20th century’s answer to Atlas or Zorro. More than 40,000 comic books later, TASCHEN has produced the single most comprehensive book on DC Comics. More than 2,000 images—covers and interiors, original illustrations, photographs, film stills, and collectibles—are reproduced using the latest technology to bring the story lines, the characters, and their creators to vibrant life as they’ve never been seen before. Telling the tales behind the tomes is 38-year DC veteran Paul Levitz, whose in-depth essays trace the company’s history, from its pulp origins through to the future of digital publishing, alongside year-by-year timelines and biographies of DC legends. The original XL edition of 75 Years of DC Comics was winner of the 2011 Eisner Comic Industry Award for Best Comics-Related Book of the Year. This new edition brings you all the same DC glory in a more compact format.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Paul Levitz is a comic book fan who has worked as editor/publisher of The Comic Reader, editor of the Batman titles and others, writer of more than 300 stories—including an acclaimed run on

Legion of Super-Heroes” and a DC Comics executive, finishing his 38-year stint with the company as President and Publisher. He returned to writing in 2010 with a new series of Legion stories and other projects. Four of his books have been New York Times best sellers.

Let me start off by disclosing that I’m really more of a book collector than a comics guy. Exploring the world of comics is something I look forward to doing in the future, but right now I really don’t know much. I do know spectacular books, however, and this book is clearly that. This is not just huge, it is sophisticated in a dozen other ways. Let me just run through a quick list of superlatives here:1) This is a cloth-covered hardback. Cloth is harder and harder to get nowadays, and it really harkens back to the days of better book binding. This book is so massive you will need to assure that it is properly supported while you are perusing it, but the book meets you half-way by giving you a bona fide binding.2) Paper quality is first-rate. Each section (Black Age, Silver Age, Bronze Age, etc.) is divided by ultra-thick metallic paper of corresponding color. This is a totally innovative flourish, it really upgrades the book’s sophistication. The colors used in reproduction of graphics and covers are almost certainly perfect and true; this is something for which Taschen is known. There are also numerous fold-out pages with chronologies of the characters and the innovators of these comics.3)The book has a thick paper dust jacket. Since we are talking about an almost-certain valuable collectable here, I suggest getting the dust jacket into a Brodart mylar cover protector. You can buy it by the roll, or perhaps your local librarian will help you out. You’ll be glad you made the effort to protect your investment. The book has a gorgeous ribbon book mark built in. There are indexes galore for you comics scholars and geeks.4)Even for a comics novice like myself, the orgy of spectacular comics images is truly amazing. Wonder Woman, Batman, Superman...dozens more. I spent half a day just flipping through the pages. Your kids will certainly fighting over this massive tome some day unless you specify who gets it in your will! I have several of the Taschen "XL" titles, and I never cease to be amazed. They are all great. Taschen has blown the doors off the publishing industry in recent years with these "XL" titles and many other creative publication efforts. They generate one fabulous book after another, and the price points make almost all of them inevitable purchases for me. I just wish Taschen was an American company. (They have US facilities, but they are German.) It begs the question, however: Why can’t American manufacturers of products progress so innovatively ?Taschen is iconic in my mind because they have entered their market with the idea of blowing off all constraints and preconceptions. Their only habit is experimentation, trying new things. They are revolutionary publishers in an era where many people are predicting the imminent demise of the book. Taschen should be a role model for all industries and manufacturers

because of their emphasis on audacity and innovation, with a loyalty to traditional aspects of quality and value. The Taschens (a husband and wife who own and run the company) are the first people I would chose to take with me to a foreign galaxy for purposes of establishing an economic infrastructure on some remote planet. They look to precedent only for purposes of bettering it.

There were two things that held me back from preordering this book. First was the price and the second larger reason was the unbelievable size. Perhaps the most stunning statistic is the colossal weight that checks in at an astounding SIXTEEN pounds. I read somewhere that the average weight of a comic book is 2 ounces which would mean this book is the weight of 128 comics (well over a decade of Action Comics) and trust me I don't doubt it. The storage for this monstrosity is not inconsequential and definitely factored into my thinking. Someone once said this isn't a coffee table book it's a coffee table. The largest comic related material I ever bought was the recent Wednesday Comics but that one pales in comparison to this leviathan. I suppose you could just lay it on the floor and read it on your stomach or seated Indian style but I fear for the spine of this very expensive book (although I suspect the book would handle it fine). I ended up sitting it next to me on the couch with the front cover resting on my right leg and the back cover propped up with pillows. With no intent towards exaggeration you will serious need a certain level of strength to read this book and I wouldn't recommend giving this as a gift to a small child. What changed my mind about getting this book was this thought. How often can you own the best of anything? I can't afford the best watch ever made or the best car or the best pair of shoes but I can afford arguably the best book ever devoted to the history of DC Comics. The Art of Modern Mythmaking is 720 pages of glossy, heavy stock paper (hence the unbelievable weight) featuring thousands of images of comics from slightly prior to the existence of National Publications (DC Comics) up until today. The book generally features one full page spread of a comic cover or inside page and then a series of three or four smaller images on the opposite page. Each image will have a small paragraph of associated text listing the artist and some tidbits of related comic information. Interspersed throughout the book is the history of comics (with focus on DC) written by Paul Levitz. The book includes all DC history not just superheroes and even includes any publishers bought up by DC including Charlton, Fawcett and EC. Don't expect to see much at all on Marvel Comics. So let me talk about the elephant in the room, the final worry I had about this book. Comic books are, by there very nature, printed to be disposable. The philosophy has generally been quantity over quality. Through much of its history comic books were printed on cheap quality paper with all sorts of errors in color separation with a paper stock so thin you could often see the image on the opposite side of the page bleed through.

The goal was to keep the cost low so children could afford it and they could sell hundreds of thousands. Reproducing these images on high quality paper with the latest printing and photo technology is not going to magically turn them into high quality images. That's just a fact. The images from the 1940's with Action Comic covers from legends like Wayne Boring are awesome. The artists used a very clean bold style that holds up well but a lot of the art from the late 60's, 70's and 80's are pretty messy and lacking in charm. The 70's and 80's were when I was collecting but I actually don't hold much nostalgia for that era (up until the mid 80's when DC produced some of the best comics of all time) leading into the disastrous 90's. The clean, simplistic art of Curt Swan and CC. Beck lent themselves well to the printing limitations of their era and current artists like J.H. Williams III or Frank Quitely benefit from modern technology and higher grade paper but when I look at art from say Neil Adams on Green Lantern or George Perez when he worked on the Teen Titans it looks very messy and it all comes down to the printing not being up to the task of presenting the more complex art. There is nothing Taschen can do but reproduce the art as is and often times blowing it up only magnifies the printing limitations. That is not to diminish what Taschen has done which is produce the most accurate, most stunning book of comic book images ever. You really do feel like you are holding the physical embodiment of DC Comics and I loved some of the black and white images from newsstands in the 40's stocked with More Fun Comics and All-Star Comics and Action Comics. For me the earlier images in the book really sold it for me. The book comes in a protective cardboard case from Taschen which unfortunately came with more than a few dents (thanks) and it even appears someone used it to write something on. I was disappointed because I consider this an awesome collectable but at least the book itself was protected. I wouldn't be surprised if years from now this book is looked back on as the de facto book on DC Comics history and perhaps THE premium comic history book (I'm also sure that a book with a mint condition cardboard case will be worth considerably more). Despite the massive weight and sometimes less than gorgeous source material I would consider this a must have for comic book fans if you have the cash to spend. This is one I will probably treasure for years to come although pulling this behemoth off a bookshelf for some casual reading might take a few minutes of limbering up lest I throw my back out. More often than not when I buy a high ticket item I tend to have at least a twinge of buyers remorse but in this case after more than a week I haven't for even a second regretted my purchase.

Most people probably wouldn't pay \$125 for a historical tome on comic books, let alone the \$200 list price. But honestly, this was worth every penny. Levitz does an amazing job of providing rich, deep

context, going beyond the typical "comic-book books" by looking thoroughly into the roots of the industry before DC, the power players behind the scenes over 75 years, and enough of the corporate shifts that had significant impact on what fans read every week, month or two months. It's exhaustive, but not exhausting. (Well ... except for trying to lift the 16-pound thing! *That's* exhausting!) Other reviews are right on about the gorgeousness of the book, so I won't repeat. I will say the carrying case is as beautiful as it is necessary and functional. (No small benefit for a book this massive.) DC fans, and even casual comic fans who are pop-culture lovers, will be thoroughly impressed.

This book is superlative! The reproduction illustrations overall are the best I have seen. Many of the pages have double sized comic cover illustrations in full colour. The contents are a true feast for the eyes of any beholder. Anyone who loves DC comics or comics in general will be most delighted. Media historians and researchers or all related subject matter will find this to be a rare priceless resource for years to come. Perhaps such resource books for each of the most significant individual DC comic series will follow in the near future. The only complaint I have relates to the shipping packaging by . The shipping box used for my shipment was too small and very little protective packing was used which resulted in the book's outer illustrated box being slightly crushed. This might only be an issue for future value.

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