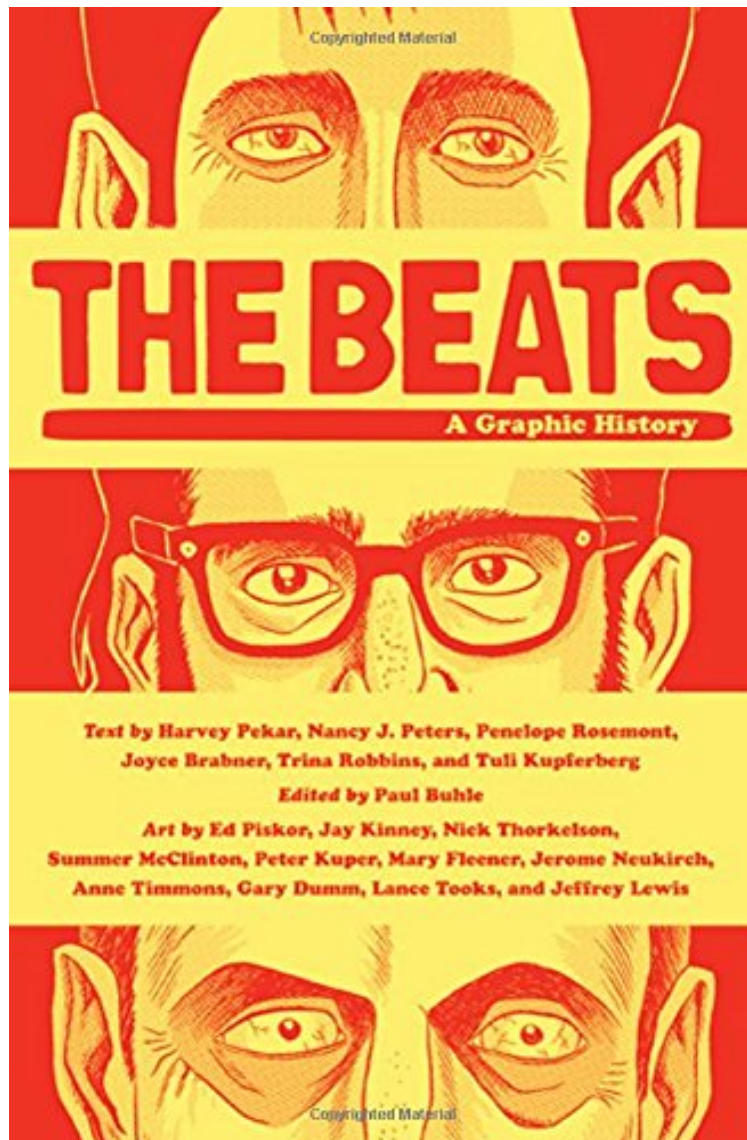


The Beats: A Graphic History

Harvey Pekar

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#267259 in Books Harvey Pekar Paul Buhle 2010-04-13 2010-04-13 Original language: English PDF # 1
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Harvey Pekar : The Beats: A Graphic History before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Beats: A Graphic History:

26 of 26 people found the following review helpful. Can't Beat This By J. Brennan In The Beats, as in Students for a Democratic Society and Macedonia, Pekar is dealing with pivotal events that shaped his life and times on and off the streets of Cleveland. In these works are essential companions to American Splendor. Readers are fortunate that a

talent like Pekar is allowed a platform to explain why what happened to millions in his era happened. It would be hard to truly understand Pekar and the peers he generally speaks for, common folk, without some background on the context. Pekar puts on the same glasses he uses to discern his own life to discern this group. His vision is intentionally stripped of fawning, platitudes, and the intellectual apologetics that often dominate accounts of the more famous beat characters. The fusion of music, literature, film, politics, and just enough, but not too much mass media, is what grabbed us and changed our lives. Pekar tells the story the way we heard the story, and saw parts of it, in the 50's, 60's, and 70's. Other than in often hard to find Beat writings, which tended to make big names like Kerouac seem a constant romantic wanderer, minimizing the sad, right-wing, drunken momma's boy, all we heard were bits and pieces about their lives. Certain books we were fortunate enough to find, like Lawrence Lipton's *The Holy Barbarians*, focused on Beat unknowns and presented a lifestyle that was alluring as well as repellent. (Though Ginsberg is inspiring at times, Burroughs makes me want to get a government job and go to church.) This tension made most of us, after brief flings in hippiedom, spend our lives as VA file clerks, teachers, social workers, nurses, small business coffee house and used bookstore owners. Pekar eloquently depicts this tension in simple panels, such as on page 20, with Kerouac's mom saying, "Welcome back!" on one of the many occasions when Jack returns broke to her door. Page 59 has him afraid to visit with Allen Ginsberg, who is hiding in the bushes because momma would be upset, as well as the stress, decadence and death that plagued these writer's lives. There is great power in reading about these events in Pekar's pithy prose and seeing them in the artist's panels. It all appears very intentional, without a wasted word or drawn line. Pekar, as always, speaks more for the majority that didn't make it so big. This book really gets going on page 95 when Pekar and partners get into the lesser known, but perhaps even more essential, beat community. Pekar reminds us that with or without the three "giants" of beatdom there was a vibrant San Francisco scene that was flourishing long before a handful of screwed up guys hit town from New York. We get introduced to folk like d.a. levy from Cleveland, outstanding, and Slim Brundage from Chicago, fantastically portrayed by Jerome Neukirch. I had never heard of him before and just ordered a book of his writings from -thanks Jerome. Joyce Brabner does a great job on *Beatnik Chicks*. I enjoyed her feminist point of view on the "top guys" and only wish there was more from her perspective. Tuli Kupferberg helped write about himself, and that was great. These are just some of the folk that made this a real movement, who were into community organizing, the people, and not just out for themselves. Pekar and crew do here what was done in Pekar's *Macedonia*. They don't just focus on the train wrecks but on the folks and places that are doing things right, staying out of war and creating spaces for us to get involved with making the world a better place. *The Beats: A Graphic History* is an inspirational five star book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good introduction to a different era. By Customer I bought this in a wave of re-discovering Burroughs. At least this book didn't use modern sensibilities to wash over Burroughs. Can't believe all the apologists out there. Burroughs was awesome, but he was the king of "Don't be me!" And I have this next to my collection of Burroughs books. This is a good graphic representation of the lives of a bunch of writers who more or less re-shaped modern literature for better...or worse for America. Makes them more human versus the "Gods" some rabid fans who are often college professors put them out to be! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I gave as a gift. My friend likes it ...By Cheryl I gave as a gift. My friend likes it.

In *The Beats: A Graphic History*, those who were mad to live have come back to life through artwork as vibrant as the Beat movement itself. Told by the comic legend Harvey Pekar, his frequent artistic collaborator Ed Piskor, and a range of artists and writers, including the feminist comic creator Trina Robbins and the *Mad* magazine artist Peter Kuper, *The Beats* takes us on a wild tour of a generation that, in the face of mainstream American conformity and conservatism, became known for its determined uprootedness, aggressive addictions, and startling creativity and experimentation. What began among a small circle of friends in New York and San Francisco during the late 1940s and early 1950s laid the groundwork for a literary explosion, and this striking anthology captures the storied era in all its incarnations from the Benzedrine-fueled antics of Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs to the painting sessions of Jay DeFeo's disheveled studio, from the jazz hipsters to the beatnik chicks, from Chicago's College of Complexes to San Francisco's famed City Lights bookstore. Snapshots of lesser-known poets and writers sit alongside frank and compelling looks at the Beats' most recognizable faces. What emerges is a brilliant collage of and tribute to a generation, in a form and style that is as original as its subject.

From Publishers Weekly Well researched and earnest, this book might work best as a superficial Cliffs Notes on the beats, but in no way does it inspire or open the mind as the works of the authors covered do. Much of this volume feels like leftovers from coauthor Pekar's *American Splendor*, and one wonders if that magazine's "drab and normal" style of illustration is appropriate for the more adventurous/experimental/flamboyant beats. Nor does it help that the art used on the best-known authors (Kerouac, Ginsberg and Burroughs) feels rushed, with little detail and little variation. Because Joyce Brabner's script about "Beatnik Chicks" takes a genuinely critical eye to an aspect of the beats others prefer to ignore their rampant sexism it's probably the best and most passionate writing in the collection, with Jerome Neukirch's art for the bio of proto-beat Slim Brundage being the artistic standout illustrations. Lance Took, Peter

Kuper and Nick Thorkelson also make strong contributions, while Jeffrey Lewis's story on poet/musician Tuli Kupferberg is a wonderful puzzle piece to work through; it's the most ambitious entry and may be the truest to the artistic vision of the beats themselves. (Mar.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From School Library Journal Grade 10 Up Buhle has brought together a heady group of writers and artists to create a well-informed, engaging, and dynamic presentation of the core precursors and descendants of the Beat ethos in both literary and popular American life. The first half of the volume, drawn by Piskor, interweaves the development, achievements, and interactions of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and, to a lesser degree, William S. Burroughs. Details such as Kerouac's left-handedness and Ginsberg's changing physique across his life span are shown, while snippets from their writings are suitably incorporated into the text, which is both discursive and critical. The remainder of the volume comprises 22 pieces, most by Pekar, exploring related figures, like Michael McClure and Lawrence Ferlinghetti; contemporaries whose personal circumstances varied enough from the core of Beats to demand artistic and life expressions that differed from the canonical Beat identity, including LeRoi Jones, Diane di Prima, and Kenneth Patchen; and related arts including visual and jazz. Joyce Brabner, Trina Robbins, Peter Kuper, and Lance Took are among the 17 contributors to the volume, which belongs in every library where any Beat literature has a home. This is a perfect gateway to both the art and the era for today's teens to access the Beat world. Francisca Goldsmith, Halifax Public Libraries, Nova Scotia END Editor Paul Buhle's graphic history *The Beats*--with riffs from cats such as Harvey Pekar and Trina Robbins--burns like a Roman candle. *Vanity Fair* *The Beats* is as fresh and pertinent as the latest scholarly history, only far more entertaining. Studs Terkel A new angle on a familiar story . . . [The Beats] gives the hipsters back their body language. In a book that is largely about license and the enlightened rebel, it is easy to find reflections of both in the graphic form. John Leland, *The New York Times Book Well* researched and . . . absorbing. Richard Pachter, *The Miami Herald* Eye-catching . . . An illustrated look back at a very real part of American pop-culture history, when beat culture of the '40s and '50s--sandwiched between the improvisational nature of jazz and the recklessness of rock 'n' roll--began to speak to a part of a generation at odds with mainstream society. One word sums it up: Cool. Cary Darling, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* *The Beats: A Graphic History* is everything a radical history should be: critical, admiring, quirky and apologetic . . . From cover to cover, *The Beats* is a wonderful history of a complicated and misunderstood cultural movement--its achievements, its place in history, its flaws and its brilliance. The graphic novel format is perfect for the subject--straddling the line between respectability and disreputableness just as the Beats themselves did. Cory Doctorow, *BoingBoing* History with a deeper perspective . . . This fearless, substantial history entertains as it uncovers. Carlo Wolff, *The Boston Globe* Combines nuts-and-bolts prose with outstanding art . . . *The Beats* manages to make the scene new again on the sheer strength of artistic play. Richard Gehr, *Columbia Journalism* This lively graphic history spotlights the 1950s youth revolt that said no to conformity and opened the way to a new world of unfettered imagination. Franklin Rosemont, cofounder of the Chicago Surrealist Group Capturing the flavor of that poetic era with style and wit, *The Beats* is a slice of countercultural history that's enhanced by its unique visual format. Paul Krassner, author of *One Hand Jerking: Reports from an Investigative Satirist* This graphic history has a grittiness and attention to difficult anecdote that brings a classic American romantic venture, with all its deviant sexual and economic crazy wisdom, down to the gritty realism of pen-and-ink earth. Edward Sanders, author of *America: A History in Verse* Turns hipster history into a digestible, fun read. Kathleen Pierce, Lowell Sun (Massachusetts) At its best, which is quite good indeed, *The Beats* reflects the creative energy of the movement it chronicles. Peter Gutierrez, *Graphic Novel Reporter* *The Beats* stands as an ambitiously constructed, clever tribute. Matthew Schniper, *Colorado Springs Independent* *The Beats* serves to introduce an American cultural phenomenon to a new audience while giving some of its less well-known players fresh exposure . . . The comics celebrate the individuals that made up the anti-establishment of the times and whose art and social action outlives them. The stories are drawn by an eclectic mix of cartoonists and told by characters--including Pekar--every bit as individualistic as their subjects. Cabbage Rabbit, *Cabbage Rabbit of Books Music* A well-informed, engaging, and dynamic presentation of the core precursors and descendants of the Beat ethos in both literary and popular American life . . . Belongs in every library where any Beat literature has a home. This is a perfect gateway to both the art and the era for today's teens to access the Beat world. Francisca Goldsmith, *School Library Journal*