



# The Acme Novelty Library

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Utterly eschewing the general bonhomie surrounding the newly-minted contemporary regard for the comic strip medium as a language of complicated personal expression and artistic sophistication, professional colorist and award-winning letterer F. C. Ware returns to the book trade with "The ACME Novelty Library," a hardcover distillation of all his surviving one-page cartoon jokes with which he tuckpointed the holes of his regular comic book periodical over the past decade.

Sometimes claimed to be his "best work" by those who really don't know any better, this definitive conglomeration of stories of the future, the old west, and even of modern life nonetheless tries to stay interesting by including a luminescent map of the heavens, a chart of the general structure of the universe, assorted cut-out activities, and a complete history of The ACME Novelty Company itself, decorated by rare photographs, early business ventures, not to mention the smallest example of a Comic Strip ever before offered to the general public. All in all, it will likely prove a rather mild disappointment, but at least it catches the light in a nice way and may force a smile here and there before being shelved for the next generation's ultimate disregard and/or disposal.

## The Acme Novelty Library Details

Date : Published September 20th 2005 by Pantheon Books (first published 2005)

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Author : Chris Ware

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## From Reader Review The Acme Novelty Library for online ebook

### Kirk says

There's a little bit of Ware's Rusty Brown and Chalky White in all of us. Well, there's a little bit of both of them in me, anyway. And then there's a part of me unlike them who desperately wants to be like them, even though they are at times shallow and pathetic characters. Let me explain employing single-word transitions in the vein of Ware's work:

Most people dream about riches and fame. I've been there. I used to want to be a rock star when I was 14. Then my father told me that the number of people who want to be rock stars could hold hands and circle the world twice, and achieving my dream would be impossible. So I started collecting comics and soliciting obscure bands for signed postcards . . . then my house burned down and I lost everything. As a result, I'm convinced during occasional bouts of delusion that Chris Ware was writing my life back then.

AND

There used to be a joke among the band kids back in high school that if you can't play an instrument they give you two sticks and you play drums. If you can't play drums they take one stick away and make you a conductor. The same thing applies to writing. If you can't write professionally, you teach others how to write. You become a glorified conductor. So now I have a job teaching writing. Don't get me wrong, I love it. But the Rusty Brown in me, or the Rusty Brown that isn't in me perhaps, wishes he could just sit around and collect old cereal boxes with his parents' social security money. Part of me wishes I could live in the past. Not my own past, but a past beyond this lifetime, a past glorified in film and other media that harbors no negative connotations for me. It is this wish that makes me feel nostalgia for history I was never a part of.

SO

If you have ever felt this way, then you can rest comfortably knowing that Chris Ware brings this history to us through his work. You open this book and suddenly you're transported to this strange hybrid of modernity and the golden age of comics. The artistic rendering of the fake comic ads quenches that thirst for the past we were never a part of, and the elements of parody in the accompanying writing allows us to laugh at ourselves.

CONSEQUENTLY

This isn't just a comic. This is therapy for the disillusioned, for those who have lost hope of achieving their dreams, whether those dreams be of success or failure. If I had become what I thought I'd become when I was a teenager (Rusty Brown), rather than what I had hoped to become (a writer), I think I'd read this book every day, surrounded by a pile of generic cola cans and fast food wrappers. And I think, after reading, I'd probably believe for a short while that life wasn't all that bad. Ware's book would reinforce my negative outlook on the world, and I'd be happy I never took a leap of faith . . . because I'd probably just end up like Mr. Brown, trying to stuff mangled Barbie dolls under someone's door in a desperate attempt to establish rapport with them.

BUT

I didn't become what I thought I'd be. I became, for the most part, what I had hoped to become. Sure, they took one of my sticks away, but I'm comfortable and happy. And when responsibility begins to bog me

down, I flip through this book and think about what it would be like on the other side, if I had become Rusty Brown, or even Chalky White. I'm glad to be a visitor in passing rather than a full-time inhabitant, and I have Ware to thank for the opportunity to explore what I could have become from a safe distance.

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### **Dana Jerman says**

very first I ever bought and really read from Chris Ware.. amazing amazing, and a great man.

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### **Bryan says**

The design work is beautiful, superior, every superlative you can imagine, but the how miserable we all are attitude of the content I can do without. Todd Solondz, David Foster Wallace, and Chris Ware all walk into a bar... the joke is on them. Mark Twain had more hope for humanity than this. I love myself. I love being alive. The R. Crumb worshipping, self loathing, misanthropic, stunted adolescent comics auteur crowd has wore itself thin with me.

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### **Will says**

I like the tragic and beer-bellied super hero story a lot. I appreciated Rusty Brown's selfish cruelty and loved, loved, loved Brittany White the teenage broken-hearted lesbian! Oh, and the Rocket Sam chronicles are the saddest robot tales you'll ever read. Poor robots! Learn your lesson, robots! Your creator is heartless!!! He will betray you and treat you like a slave tool every time!

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### **Zenpvnk says**

If you're only gonna own one Chris Ware, it should probably be this one. But, you really should own more than one Chris Ware. You should have ALL the ones listed on my goodreads list.. they're awesome .. they feed the soul... they lighten the mind .. they will get you laid.. they will get you into the pearly gates. Seriouly, get them, and show them to company when they come over.. they won't believe they've never heard of him.

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### **Onur Y says**

Burada buçuklu puan verebilmemiz laz?m. 3 puan ile 4 puan aras?nda öylesine karars?z kald?m ki.. daha önce de benzer karars?z? klar çok ya?ad?m o nedenle buçuklu puan istiyoruz efendim. En do?al hakk?m?zd?r, yürütmeyin ?imdi ankaradan, konyadan... :)  
Chris Ware'in bu eserini be?enmi? olanlar var yazd?klar?m? takip eden de?erli arkada?lar bu türde daha önce çok be?endi?im eserler oldu?unu biliyor, onlar?n yan?nda buçuklu ?ekilde geride kal?yor. EN büyük handikap? da mikro ölçekli çizimler. Okuma gözlü?üm bile yeti?medi, bir lup laz?md? muhakkak, eh sahil kenarlar?na ta??m?yoruz öyle ?eyler.

Unutmadan bu eseri Best Art Comics 2010s seçkisi bölümünde okudum. Bu seçkideki diğer okumaların devam etmeyecektir. Peyderpey burada paylaştırmam sevgili okur..

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### **David Schaafsma says**

I have had this out of the library on a few occasions. It's damnably hard to read without a magnifying glass sometimes, but the close scrutiny is always worth the time. This is a collection of various cartoons and maps and ads and short comics. Often, these are hilarious. Ware's rep is to Charlie Brown level sadness and misery, but here you see how funny he can be. And always, the best artist, just amazing. I guess this isn't "readable" in the way of his other works, it's not a novel, but it's great to have around, a pleasure.

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### **Leon says**

Beautiful, intricate and meticulously crafted. But nihilist and so damn depressing. Consume in parts.

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### **Batmark says**

<http://morethansuperhumans.blogspot.com>...

The ACME Novelty Library begins with a satirical study of "Our History of Art," which starts with Pre-Cambrian art and proceeds all the way to the Contemporary Age (though in fact the story covers Ware's speculation on the future of art as well).

The book also contains several short pieces featuring some of Ware's recurring characters, including Big Tex (a dopey farmboy desperate for the love of his father, who hates him utterly), Rocket Sam (a Robinson Crusoe on Mars-type character who builds affectionate robot companions for himself, only to destroy them when they do not live up to his expectations), Rusty Brown (an obnoxious collector of old toys and vintage cereal boxes, etc., who still lives with his mother well into late middle age) and his only friend Chalky White (a slightly more well-adjusted collector--and perhaps the only truly unqualified sympathetic character in Ware's oeuvre--who eventually gets married and has a daughter who, naturally, comes to hate him as much as any rebellious teenager could hate her father), Quimby (an anthropomorphic mouse who tries, and fails, to relive the joys of childhood), and the unnamed character in the "Tales of Tomorrow" strips (which foretell the impersonal and solitary nature of mankind's consumer-based future). There are also several text-based features, including a fictional illustrated history of the ACME Novelty Co., a strip titled "Ruin Your Life: Draw Cartoons and Doom Yourself to Decades of Isolation, Solipsism, and Utter Social Disregard," and another called "Collectors: A Guide."

Finally, The ACME Novelty Library is bookended by an untitled Moebius strip of a story that follows Ware's "Super-Man" character, a slightly feral, overweight pastiche of DC Comics's Superman character (and who has much in common with Rick Veitch's Maximortal). This wordless sequence follows Super-Man's eternal life through the birth and death (and rebirth, ad infinitum) of the universe as he ponders his time on earth and the one true love that he once had and rejected.

This book is funny, in a "life is a lonely series of bitter disappointments strung together with moments of

existential humiliation and terror--isn't that hilarious?" kind of way. In other words, the comedy is about as black as black comedy can get. However, this book is also one of the most beautiful examples of contemporary comic book art available, particularly in its design. Ware takes design very seriously, and every single page in *The ACME Novelty Library* rewards those who take the time to study them carefully. In this way, the page count is misleading; despite being a slim 108 pages, each page contains at least three times as much content as the average comic book page. Plus, the book is oversized (9" x 15"), making it well worth the price.

Note: The full title of this particular book (perhaps in an effort to distinguish it from Ware's regular *ACME Novelty Library* series) is *The ACME Novelty Library Final Report to Shareholders and Rainy Day Saturday Afternoon Fun Book*.

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### **Calista says**

I have seen people enjoy this book and I found this in the book 100 greatest graphic novels of all time. I didn't get it and I didn't like it. There wasn't anything I enjoyed about this. I am not a fan. This is not for me.

There is no real story. It is a bunch of one page stories with characters that do go through the book. I guess it's like adult Sunday morning comics. They are really bad comics with curse words in them and depressing situations - and nudity. None of that bothers me - cursing, and nudity accept that it was all poor taste and terrible. Blarg!

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### **Neil says**

I guess I like it better when Ware sustains a narrative, like in *Jimmy Corrigan the Smartest Kid on Earth* (one of my all-time favorite books) or the "Building Stories" series he did for the *New York Times Magazine*. So this collection of works doesn't quite have the same emotional resonance for me that some of his other work has.

But that doesn't mean there isn't a ton to like here. Ware is often funny, and some of the false advertisements are laugh-out loud hilarious, if you can work your way through the tiny type. And the way he builds frames to show the passage of time or relationships in space is not only fascinating, it is also often in service of a melancholy mood.

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### **Emilio says**

Serie de tiras cómicas y variedades.

Son pequeñas historias de una página con varios personajes y cada página es de uno de ellos. Hay historias de un futuro lejano con una estética preciosa pero aburrido de guión. La historia de una rata que no acabo de comprender. Y la historia de un friky al estilo Joe Matt pero que no dice nada nuevo. Y por en medio pequeños juegos de ingenio que tampoco me han divertido

No lo veo recomendable o yo no les veo nada. Tienen una buena narrativa, la estética es preciosa, pero no me

dice nada.

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### **Raina says**

I really want to like Chris Ware. And Sometimes I do.

But sometimes I feel like the the way he subdivides panels into oblivion, twists perspective so that you have the literally twist the book, and adds so much detail that you couldn't possibly read it all, is a little self-defeatist.

I feel like a wimp for not reading every article on every newspaper collage spread in this book, and I wonder if I'm not the only reader who "finishes" the book feeling that way. And I skipped all of the pages that wanted me to tip the book or read teensy panels. And maybe that makes me a wimp. But I like the stuff I can read without distraction.

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### **Nate D says**

Are you:

- A failure?
- Terminally lonely?
- Miserable?
- A miserable failure?
- Miserably lonely?
- Failing and alone?
- A miserable, terminally lonely failure?
- Depressed?
- Dissatisfied with getting what you always wanted?
- A collector of defunct happy meal toys?
- A collector of vintage advertising?
- Depressed about your dissatisfaction with getting what you'd always wanted?
- Miserable and depressed?
- A depressive, terminally alone failure?
- A completely OCD comic designer?
- All of the above?

If you answered YES to THREE OR MORE of the above, you could ALREADY BE A WINNER of a BRAND NEW collection of TOTALLY MISERABLE LARGE FORMAT COMICS which almost entirely forgo punch lines in favor of PIERCING INSIGHT into the (your?) HUMAN CONDITION and OVERWHELMING SADNESS.

(Chris Ware is scathing and incredible (almost typed "inedible" which may also be true). A little piecemeal here, but there a couple pretty priceless story arcs (and even an endless loop) strung throughout this volume).

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## **Andrew says**

this review first appeared on [<http://intraspace.blogspot.com>]

chris ware's 'jimmy corrigan' is on my list of favourite books. i really like ware's drawing style and his use of bold outlines.

jimmy corrigan blew me away as being a thoroughly excellent post-modern novel quite apart from its being a graphic novel to boot. it deserved all the accolades it got.

so i was tremendously excited when i found that the local library had anticipated my request and already got 'the acme novelty library' in. hurrah!

the novelty library is a kind of annual, featuring a range of cartoons and all the usual ware graphical trappings that make his books so fascinating, and mean that his cartoons always take a lot longer to read than you thought they would. the novelty library is a brilliant example of graphical work.

if jimmy corrigan constantly verges on the tragic, then this book could be accused of wallowing in it. i must admit that i got a little depressed by the end of it. the main story that weaves through all of ware's cartoons (regardless of the characters) is about a little boy who got picked on at school then grew up to be disenchanted lonely adult.

maybe there is a high degree of authenticity in ware's work, but i can't help wishing that he would balance out the sadness a bit more. for me the balancing is in his beautiful drawing style, but at times i think that is overcome by the sheer weight of the tragedy.

i still think ware is a genius, but hope that his genius will be revealed more when he goes on to exhibit an ability to portray the hopeful, more beautiful aspects of life with the same accuracy as tragedy in future works.

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