



Mad Archives, The: Volume 1 - Issues 1-6

The Usual Gang of Idiots

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Before Mad was the black-and-white magazine that has been on the newsstands seemingly forever, it was a 10-cent color comic book, primarily the handiwork of cartoonist-humorist Harvey Kurtzman, who wrote and designed every page during the publication's first four years. The first few issues featured broad send-ups of mass-entertainment genres (westerns, horror flicks, etc.), but gradually the contents shifted to burlesques of particular movies, comics, and--the year was 1952--radio shows, entitled "Superduperman," "Melvin of the Apes," "Dragged Net," and so forth. Kurtzman's mastery of the comics medium was a major element in the stories' effectiveness, and his humor was fresher and brasher than anything else in any medium; it became a major influence on successive generations of humorists, including the 1960s underground cartoonists and the writers of Saturday Night Live. After Kurtzman's departure, Mad was . . . different. The Mad Archives, the first of four volumes collecting the entire comic-book run of Mad, is a valuable reminder of just how gloriously mad it was.



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