

ICONIC TONIC

By Mark Wynn

From the woodcut and the book of Kells to the modern ad and logo and the image that sells, the cartoon has survived. The thick bold lines that shape stories, the broad black strokes that emote, thrive outside the panels and text that marginalize and cage them. They haunt our posters and murals, graffiti our minds and dance in our scribbles in a manner much unlike the mosaic of movies and TV, more true to the eye than the straight laced lines of frozen speech. They manipulate our saccades and bend around our narrowly tuned connections to capture something of the process, something in the way we see.



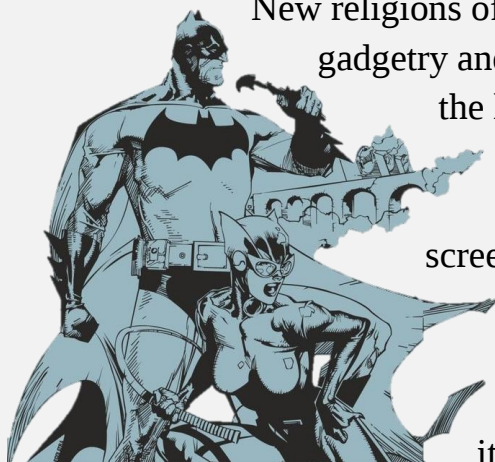
And what the woodcut did cut, now sped and blown up in the jump from canvas to reel, still finds its lure unstunted. It is still our betokened clown, the buffoon of our doodles, the guffaw in our scribbles. Even if the stillbirthed sketch has been abandoned to the one panel punch of

political corners and the three square dash to a punch line, it highlights the form of our minds, as well as the limits of our attention.



And for the addicts and fanatics lurk the armies of superheroes and villains ready for purchase at the corner strip mall. The god-like pantheon that conspire to break us free of normality.

New religions of color and their doctrines of hope and paranoia. Rituals of gadgetry and mutation, violent fantasies and spaceship dreams draw in the lost adolescence left behind in the wake of electric evolution.

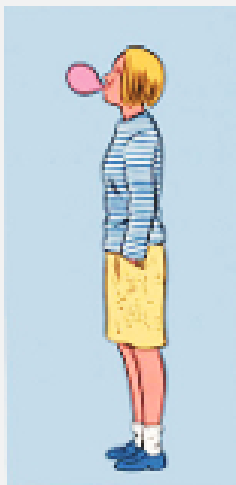


However lost to the dogma of generic sci-fi, to whatever degree aggression is colored in or drawn out, splashed on screens or glossed over, taken to the extreme by first person shooters and martial anime, the comic book but portrays our instinct for action, the itching wound of civilization not yet scared or healed over. But in all these works it inks out its proof of an art form.

There was a time when it echoed radio and radio echoed it and there were horrors, mysteries, westerns and suspense, conans and crypts. And though those golden days be deemed dead by most, they have left a chokehold on the structure of our megamovies and television episodes. A footprint seen in the diehards and the deathmatch, in the swartzenagers who've superseded superman and batman, now macgyvered and bonded into the superspy. They underwrite the modern chapter break and show our disdain for explanation. The fast action and constipated dialogue, the flash, the bang bam pop pow, the fore fronted action, the close-ups, the crane shots, and the strapped in angles are now the very points and counterpoints of our most dominant mediums.



The cartoon can zoom in on humor faster than any actor can. It can defeat a columnist deadpan flat with a splash of as much ink and even Dilbert can poke fun at the dregs of work while running alongside the stock quotes. And even if the modern mediums



abandon them we will still hear the black and white cry in the underground pen. The bleak, acned face of daily existence, the pains of unpopularity and puberty, the ugly and the angst beating up on themselves. Diehard individualists never dotting or crossing, independents who flow in ink licked simplicity with strange shaped heads boxed around by the demands of our dreams. Girl heroes and angry cerebrotonic wannabees framed to humdrum points and routine caricatures of meaning. The crosshatching of hate eight balled into the corner of a lonely

ghost world. They are pastoral and primal, the DIY in pure visual energy that strives for an audience, modern wanderings of unpopular pop pulp that leave us now and again with a little crumb to relish, an explanation mark of modern mutation drowning in the voids of memory with a sadly silent understatement.



- "Bat and Cat" Cc by Egolatra
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tales_from_the_Crypt_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tales_from_the_Crypt_(comics))
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eightball_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eightball_(comics))
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hate_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hate_(comics))
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghost_World_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghost_World_(comics))