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# Superheroes!: Capes, Cowls, And The Creation Of Comic Book Culture



## Synopsis

Superman, Batman, Spider-Man, Iron Man, Wonder Woman, the Avengers, the X-Men, Watchmen, and more: the companion volume to the PBS documentary series of the same name that tells the story of the superhero in American popular culture. Together again for the first time, here come the greatest comic book superheroes ever assembled between two covers: down from the heavens - Superman and the Mighty Thor - or swinging over rooftops - the Batman and Spider-Man; star-spangled, like Captain America and Wonder Woman, or clad in darkness, like the Shadow and Spawn; facing down super-villains on their own, like the Flash and the Punisher or gathered together in a team of champions, like the Avengers and the X-Men! Based on the three-part PBS documentary series Superheroes, this companion volume chronicles the never-ending battle of the comic book industry, its greatest creators, and its greatest creations. Covering the effect of superheroes on American culture - in print, on film and television, and in digital media - and the effect of American culture on its superheroes, Superheroes: Capes, Cowls, and the Creation of Comic Book Culture appeals to readers of all ages, from the casual observer of the phenomenon to the most exacting fan of the genre. Drawing from more than 50 new interviews conducted expressly for Superheroes! - creators from Stan Lee to Grant Morrison, commentators from Michael Chabon to Jules Feiffer, actors from Adam West to Lynda Carter, and filmmakers such as Zach Snyder - this is an up-to-the-minute narrative history of the superhero, from the comic strip adventurers of the Great Depression, up to the blockbuster CGI movie superstars of the 21st Century. Featuring more than 500 full-color comic book panels, covers, sketches, photographs of both essential and rare artwork, Superheroes is the definitive story of this powerful presence in pop culture. **BONUS FEATURE:** Exclusive first-hand commentary from some of the greatest creators in comic book history, from Golden Age artists and writers (Carmine Infantino, Joe Kubert, Stan Lee) to the superstars of the Silver Age (Neal Adams, Jim Steranko, Denny O'Neil)--all the way up to the movers and shakers of the 21st Century (Todd McFarlane, Joe Quesada); plus luminaries such as Adam West, Jules Feiffer and Michael Chabon. Selected interviews from Superheroes: A Never-Ending Battle courtesy of Ghost Light Films, © 2013 Ghost Light Films.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Just a few days ago I caught up with the three-part SUPERHEROES TV documentary originally shown on PBS. Now I've had the chance to read the "companion book" to the show. My experience with such "companion books" to TV shows has been that they tend to be heavy on visuals and glitz and light on solid info about the topic. Not so with this one, however. Whether or not you've seen the TV show, it's a pretty good history of comic-book superheroes and their media spinoffs. I found it an entertaining read and learned a few new things (being, if I say so myself, an expert on the topic) and I could certainly recommend it to someone who didn't know a lot about the background of superheroes and wanted to bone up. Even if, as usually happens with this kind of book, I sometimes put the book down and thought about how I might have written it differently if somebody hired me to write a history of superheroes:-)No book could cover everything a lifelong superhero/comic book fan might want to see covered, but this one does a decent job, including expanding on certain topics I thought were slighted in the TV series, such as non-Marvel and DC superheroes and the details of the legal troubles of Superman creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, before they made a pension deal with DC Comics and got their creator credit restored.As another reviewer noted, the book has its share of minor factual errors and typos, such as stating that the original Captain Marvel comics ended in 1951, rather than late 1953 (maybe they confused the 1951 date with the end of ALL-STAR COMICS). But I didn't think the errors were too serious or egregious. I didn't enjoy the last third of the book dealing with the "Modern Age" treatment of superheroes as much as the earlier sections.

This is a beautiful book (although I could have done without the exclamation mark). Produced to accompany the superb three-part PBS documentary, it divides itself up into sensible and informative bite-size chunks and covers the development of (exclusively) super-hero comics from WWII to 9/11. The text is fine, and while making occasional value judgements is mostly impartial and

non-controversial, even when dealing with comics' laughably incompetent attempts to deal sensibly with death, romance, politics, female characters, or gay characters, the latter three either excruciatingly, patronisingly "right on" or embarrassingly ignorant or reactionary. As post-Silver Age comic book creators (and some of their readers) clearly don't get out much, they are at their brilliant best when dealing with the more imaginative and fantastic aspects of the super-hero world, which is where they excel. However, someone should clue them in that not all relationships have to end in death and fist-shaking, tear-stained agony ("Nnnnoooooo!!!!"); sometimes, people just move on. The first of the book's three segments deals with the charming innocence of the early years, a mix of happy, smiling faces, strutting bonhomie, and snarling wartime propaganda. Wertham and the book burnings are there, but so is the charm and naiveté, culminating in the George Reeves Superman series. The second covers the rise of Marvel and the arrival of pop art, the Batman TV series, and the beginning of introspective, self-questioning super-heroes, from the thoughtful soliloquies of the Spider-Man series and Lee and Colan's Captain America to the squirmy self-flagellating white liberal hand-wringing of Green Lantern/Green Arrow.

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