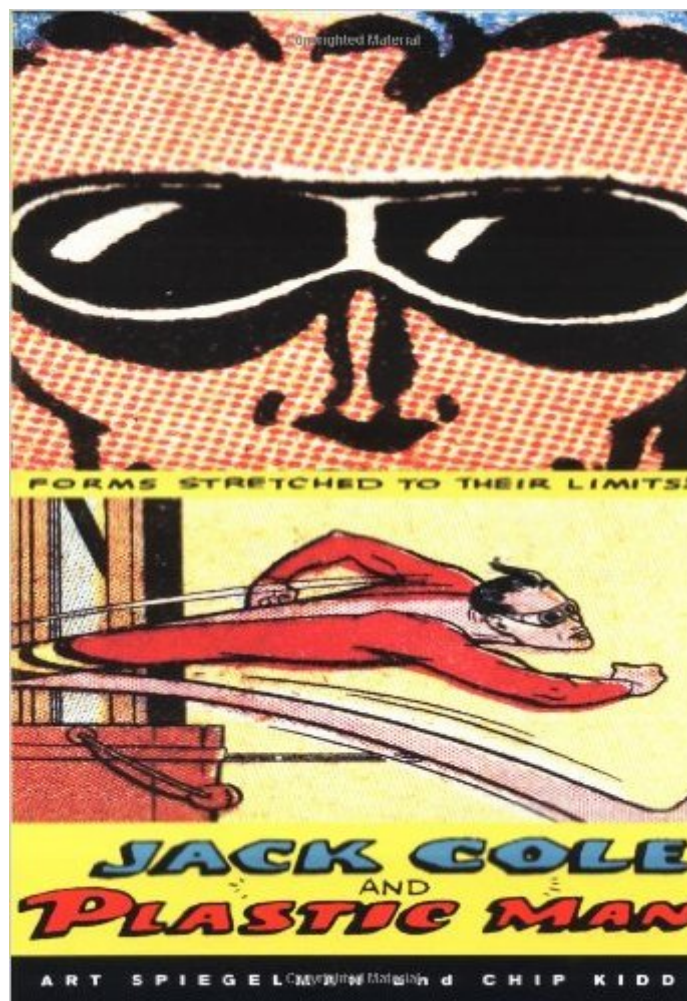


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Jack Cole And Plastic Man: Forms Stretched To Their Limits



Synopsis

Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and illustrator Art Spiegelman joins forces with designer Chip Kidd to pay homage to the comic book hero Plastic Man and his creator, Jack Cole. Plastic Man is more than just a putty face--with his bad-boy past, he literally embodies the comic book form: the exuberant energy, flexibility, boyishness, and subtle hints of sexuality. And as cartoonists "become" each character they create, it can be said that Jack Cole himself resembles Plastic Man. Cole revealed the true magnitude and intensity of his imagination and inner thoughts as Plastic Man slithered from panel to panel--shifting forms and dashing from male to female, or freely morphing from a stiff upright figure to a being as soft as a Dali clock. With a compelling history, a V-necked red rubber leotard, a black-and-yellow striped belt, and very cool tinted goggles, Plastic Man is truly a cult classic, and this art-packed book will delight any fan.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was surprisingly disappointed by this book, not, mind you, by the art and writing of Jack Cole, but by the book itself. I found this book to be one of those productions that is too clever by half. Neither fish nor fowl, Mr. Spiegelman's writing is too skimpy to be considered a complete biography and the art design by Mr. Kidd is so "artistically" (re)produced that it distracts from the person who should be the real star of this book, Jack Cole. This is the type of book that book reviewers who have no knowledge of sequential art call "daring" and "cutting edge". While Mr. Spiegelman's writing is basic and informative, it almost causes one pain to look at the bountiful list of comic book legends that he had access to and yet still failed to produce a more gripping and insightful look into Cole's life. And

while Mr. Kidd's flair for artistic direction and experimentation is unassailable, a much lighter touch was called for as to not distract from the original artist and his work. If you are looking for a quick read with an interesting layout, you might enjoy this book. If you are looking for an in-depth biography of Jack Cole, I would suggest looking elsewhere. And, if you are looking for real Jack Cole storytelling, I would recommend that you check out Plastic Man Archives, Vol. 1 (also sold by).

I've never seen a book quite like this one. The text by Art Spiegelman is one of the best examples of comic book history I've read (it's entertaining and informative) and at the same time it's a fascinating biography of one of the comic book industry's least recognized (and most troubled) geniuses: Jack Cole. There are dozens of examples of Cole's greatest work, including the incomparably weird and funny Plastic Man, along with several examples of his Playboy work, which I instantly recognized but never knew were by Cole. Finally, there's this book's incredible design work by Chip Kidd, who did that great book on Batman toys. This book even comes with a very cool plastic cover. I wasn't all that familiar with Jack Cole's career before I read this book, but now I want to read everything he ever did. This might be my favorite book of the year.

Art Spiegelman and Chip Kidd have produced a unique tome to the one-of-a-kind comics and illustrations of near-forgotten artist Jack Cole. In the schizo spirit of Cole's greatest creation, PLASTIC MAN, the book is a blend of complete strips, historical text, and magnified collage, an unorthodox method that is at once eye-catching and odd. As one might expect, the reprinted comics portions are diligently reproduced, down to the paper quality, which is juxtaposed against the glossy text pages. For the longest time, I only knew PLASTIC MAN from that wretched late-1970's Saturday morning cartoon (the one which made Plas a harried, domesticated father figure to a cutesy child, Baby Plas[!]), so my discovery of Cole's comics was a revelation that puts other, far more conservative (and often derivative) comics of the same era to shame. Of course this book is way too brief, yet it's a fitting tribute, one that, in an ideal world, would open the eyes of a lot of comics fans unfamiliar with this neglected master.

I have no doubt that Art Spiegelman loves Jack Cole and his classic creation, Plastic Man; however, I don't think that this book does a good job of explaining to readers why THEY should love them, too. Granted, Cole was one of the pioneers of comics, and his place in their history is cemented, but Spiegelman's praise of Cole and his visual style/storytelling could easily be used for any number of other comic creators (Will Eisner, Harvey Kurtzman, Bob Kane, etc.). The text is very generic in

trying to explain Cole's genius, and I, a comics history buff, was quickly bored by it. As for Chip Kidd's book design... thumbs up for the plastic cover, but the intentionally poor reproduction quality (for nostalgic purposes, I assume) only hinders the appeal of the art and makes for a very ugly book. Kidd's design style caught my attention when it first hit the scene, but after numerous retrospective hardcovers for DC Comics and a Peanuts collection, it just gives me a headache. If you want a real lesson on the talent of Jack Cole and wish to revel in the adventures of Plastic Man, pick up any volume of the Plastic Man Archives, available from at a very reasonable price.

Jack Cole is better served by this fairly strange book than many other great cartoonists of the golden age of the medium have been in print. Spiegelman's somewhat sparse text is full of useful information and valid critique, but he wisely lets the material speak for itself, and that's the main attraction here, though those words and the book's design seem to have distracted some readers. This is not an anthology of "Plastic Man"- that can be found elsewhere, fortunately- nor is it an in-depth biography of Jack Cole. It's more like a large catalogue for an exhibition, covering all aspects of his varied career. Material seems to be reproduced from original art in a few cases- mainly his Playboy stuff- but the comic book stories are shot from original issues, with four-color separation and page-yellowing quite evident- and speaking as a sometimes-comic artist, that's close to the way I think they should be seen (I HATE modern re-coloring, and especially airbrushes!). And as for the book's unconventional design.....I like it. (Would've preferred a hardcover, though!)

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