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As Batman's archenemy, the Joker is the antithesis of the Dark Knight. Fueled by lunacy, the Clown Prince of Crime thrives in a world of chaos and disorder. In THE GREATEST JOKER STORIES EVER TOLD, the Joker's insanity is displayed in full color. Collecting tales from the last five decades, this book shows that from his earliest appearances to his most recent exploits, he has been a dynamic and deadly adversary. Whether involved in classic campy stories or legendary dark tales, the Joker's insane brilliance has been more than a match for Batman's keen intellect.

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From Reader Review The Greatest Joker Stories Ever Told for online ebook

Paul says

My edition seems a little bit different:

It is a hardcover edition, but is not a leatherbound one.

Witness the Joker's greatest feats of criminal merriment and sordid crimes against the denizens of Gotham in stories from BATMAN #1, 66, 73, 110, 321, and 613, DETECTIVE COMICS #332, 475, 613, BATMAN BLACK AND WHITE VOL. 2, BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #4 and BATMAN ADVENTURES ANNUAL #1!

As Batman's archenemy, the Joker is the antithesis of the Dark Knight. Fueled by lunacy, the Clown Prince of Crime thrives in a world of chaos and disorder. In THE GREATEST JOKER STORIES EVER TOLD, the Joker's insanity is displayed in full color. Collecting tales from the last five decades, this book shows that from his earliest appearances to his most recent exploits, he has been a dynamic and deadly adversary. Whether involved in classic campy stories or legendary dark tales, the Joker's insane brilliance has been more than a match for Batman's keen intellect.

Kari Trenten says

A collection of comics from the very beginning up to the 1980's, showing the Joker's evolution as a villain, Batman's opposite, rival, and arch nemesis. From his beginnings as a killer clown who left his victims dead with a smile on their faces, through his stints as a comedic character specializing in bizarre, spectacular crimes, to his plots over the years to set elaborate traps for his enemies, particularly Batman, this book showcases the growth and changes of a villain who's been opposing the Caped Crusader almost as long as Batman has been stalking the night. Over the years, in this collection of comics, the Joker is hilarious, terrifying, or both, but he's never boring.

Readers get to read how this premier member of the Batman's Rogues' Gallery has been shaped over the years, how the Joker's adversity with Batman has defined the Joker as the madman he is today and how, he, the Joker has defined Batman, ever the grinning colorful clown to his enemy's caped enigma. Anyone who finds this particular relationship fascination and would like to learn more about its various incarnations won't want to miss this book.

Mloy says

What's better than a collection of the Greatest Batman Stories ever told? A collection of the Greatest Joker stories ever told! Oh how I do love the Joker, who in my humble opinion is the greatest villain ever created- better than Lex Luthor, better than Gallactus, better than Thanos and a whole lot more entertaining to boot! This was a really great book to own and read (it's a shame it took me this long to read since I've had the book forever) but like a fine wine, I guess I needed to age a little more to appreciate this book. My only complaint

is that there was so much of the old Golden Age Joker who I really wasn't a fan of since he was more campy than gritty. I love the 80's era Joker best, he's a little more manic and dark but still pretty zany and can be somewhat silly but still edgy. You never know with that Joker if he's gonna zig or zag and how far off the edge he's willing to go. It is kind of disappointing that "A Death In the Family" and "The Killing Joke" isn't included in this book but understandably, those titles, aside from retaining their popularity with the fans are better appreciated a stand-alone story-line with the spotlight solely focused on them. I can respect that. So, in short, I love this book: loved the fact that DC took the time to make a gorgeous leather-bound edition (because I do so love a pretty book), love the stories, love the subject and made me appreciate the villainy of the Joker even more. I may have become a bigger fan of his and the Bats, if that's even possible! Awesome book, absolutely terrific!

Nicky says

This collection is great not primarily because every story in it is sublime, but because it gives an excellent historical overview of the treatment of The Joker in comics from just plain silly to dark humor. Published in 1990, this collection spans 50 years of Joker tales. And of course, there are some great stories. My favorites include:

"The Man Behind the Red Hood," in which The Joker is given an origin. Writer: Bill Finger; Artists: Sheldon Moldoff & George Roussos.

"The Crazy Crime Clown," in which The Joker steals a bunch of worthless junk. Writer: Alvin Schwartz; Artists: Dick Sprang & Charles Paris.

"The Joker's Happy Victims," in which people are amused when The Joker steals from them. Writer: E. Nelson Bridwell; Artists: Carmine Infantino & Murphy Anderson.

"The Joker's Five-Way Revenge," in which The Joker takes vengeance on former henchmen. This story's conclusion is an obvious influence on Dini's "The Laughing Fish" episode of the animated series. Writer: Dennis O'Neil; Artist: Neal Adams.

"The Laughing Fish," in which The Joker tries to copyright fish that bear his likeness. Paul Dini adapted this into a brilliant episode of *Batman: The Animated Series*. Writer: Steve Englehart; Artist: Marshall Rogers.

"Catch as Catscan," in which The Joker captures Catwoman after she tries going straight. Writer: Mike W. Barr; Artists: Alan Davis & Paul Neary.

Also not to be missed is "Stacking the Deck," an essay on Joker stories by comics historian and writer par excellence Mark Waid.

Kevin Rubin says

"The Greatest Joker Stories Ever Told" was okay. It's divided into roughly three sections, the first are the earlier Joker comics, mostly from "Detective Comics", then the middle half of it are ones where the Joker was appearing frequently in "Batman" comics, followed by the last quarter from later on, the 70's.

In the first quarter, the earlier stories, the Joker is a killer, like we expect, with all his victims dying from his

Joker venom or gas. Those stories are okay.

The middle half, the longest section, is the most kid-friendly, where the Joker never kills or even threatens to kill. Most of the stories revolve around the Joker announcing he's going to steal something and then trying to do it. Many times they're based on some pun from his message. Batman in those is a hero, hanging out at City Hall and teaching criminology classes, in costume, at Gotham University.

Finally the last few stories are much darker. The Joker is again a killer, and Batman is much darker, much more troubled, with the ears on his cowl longer and his cape billowing out behind him like he's almost a gigantic bat.

It's the last ones that are best stories, of course, but also the most confusingly drawn, with lots of things in frames I simply couldn't identify. In one, for instance, I couldn't tell what the Joker pushed his associate in front of, I had to go back to the page before to recognize it as a moving truck.

Overall it's entertaining, though the middle half was kind of dull, wearing thin after a few stories that were mostly the same, with little variation in plot. The beginning and the end are fantastic.

Jdetrick says

There are good Joker stories in here and bad ones, but if for nothing else, this is a great historical document. Watching how the Joker (and comics themselves) changed over the decades is fascinating in its own right.

Sascha says

Gute Sammlung, aber vielleicht eher was für Kenner & Fans

Wie schon bei der Batman Anthologie zuvor, ist hier eine Sammlung verschiedenster Geschichten rund um den "Clownprinzen des Verbrechens" zusammen getragen worden, die, mithilfe vorangehender Infos und Fakten, die Entwicklung des Jokers als Figur in den letzten 70 Jahren darstellen.

Zum Buch: Ein tolles Hardcover, schlicht in schwarz gehalten, darauf prangt vorne das charmante Lächeln des wohl beliebtesten Psychopaten der Comicwelt. Doch auch innen gefällt mir die Aufmachung. Das Buch ist in drei Teile geteilt, jeder Teil beinhaltet Geschichten eines bestimmten Stadiums der Joker-Entwicklung. Diese wird durch kurze Einleitungen und Fakten näher erläutert. Die Fakten sind dabei nicht zu überschwänglich und die kurzen Infos werden meist mit Covern von wichtigen Werken unterstützt, meist Meilensteine und Eckpfeiler in der gemeinsamen Historie des dunklen Ritters und seines ärgsten Gegenspielers.

Die Zusammenstellung der Geschichten hat mir gut gefallen und sie sind meines Empfindens alle lesenswert. Die Entwicklung der Figur und der Branche an sich ist erkennbar. Die bekannteste Story ist sicherlich "The Man Who Laughs", die ein erstes Zusammentreffen der beiden Widersacher schildert. Aber auch "The Laughing Fish" war mir vorher nicht unbekannt. Richtige Hardcore-Fans werden vielleicht noch mehr bekanntes Material vorfinden. Ansonsten bekommt der Leser hier etwas geboten, das man vermutlich so schnell nicht auf dem Schirm gehabt hätte. Die besten Geschichten rund um den mörderischen Clown sind aber nicht enthalten. Das behauptet das Buch aber auch nicht.

Und das ist genau der Knackpunkt, warum ich diese Anthologie eher Kennern empfehlen würde. Entscheidende Werke wie "A Death In The Family" oder "The Killing Joke" werden erwähnt, sind aber nicht in dieser Sammlung. Wer in Sachen Batman bei Null anfängt, ist mit Klassikern wie "Year one" und den oben genannten Perlen wahrscheinlich besser beraten. Wer von Fledermaus und Clown dann immer noch nicht genug bekommen kann, der wird diese Sammlung bestimmt ganz anders zu schätzen wissen. Für mich als Fan ist diese Anthologie jedenfalls eine tolle Ergänzung!

Marjorie C. Deeb says

Il est impossible d'aimer le Joker sans le détester et de le détester sans l'aimer. Le Joker est un personnage totalement fou. Et encore, le mot fou est un mot relativement faible pour définir ce personnage si particulier. D'ailleurs, je pense, que même lui-même ignore qui il est (ou était) et que le lecteur ne saura jamais la vérité sur le Joker. Au fur et à mesure des années, les planches deviennent de plus en plus travaillées et splendides. En bref, un comics à lire si vous aimez le personnage du Joker !

Bryce Wilson says

Good Collection of Joker Stories covering his career from his origins to the present day.

It's a pretty awesome and fascinating look at how many variations and warpings an icon can take and still be among the most potent pop myths. The book to it's credit isn't afraid of the fact that the Joker was kind of well a Joke for plenty of years. Take this line of dialouge from a comic from the fifties where The Joker rants about well, his Giant Boner.

(Note This Is Not Made Up. Or even edited. I'm Not That Funny)

"So they laugh at my Boner will they? I'll show them! I'll show them how many boners The Joker can make! This emphasis on Boner's has given me an idea for a new adventure in crime Gotham city will rue the day it mentioned the word Boner! I will take the greatest boners of all time and turn them into crimes!! See this picture it shows a big boner of a modern vintage!!"

Call me an arrested adolescent but that's some pretty fucking funny unintentional sexual innuendo (Disclaimer I may or may not be smoking some of the devil's weed while writing this.)

Also one thing this collection brought up again is something I've long wondered about. The Joker's always got like a couple dozen guys following him around. Honestly why? If they're true believers then that just speaks to a sad lack of ambition. "Yeah I'm crazy enough to follow this guy in a clown suit, but I just don't have the nerve to put on a costume and start doing improbable shit on my own." Read The Secret pal. You're already half way there just you know reach for the stars.

But think about it, if this guy is just some mercenary well that's even fucking sadder. How bad do you have to be where no one will hire you except a psychopathic clown who almost always kills his henchmen and has freaking Batman after him the entire damn time. I mean how desperately is he in need of a job where that looks like a kickass option. Is he just saying to himself "Well I really didn't want to help The Joker rob a toy store damnit but the kid's need braces."

Either way it's a sad situation. I want to read a book about that guy.

Rachel Dows says

An excellent collection, though far from complete (which the intro/outro go to great lengths to remind us). However, I think an individual intro as to why each story was selected would have gone a long way, rather than the extended ramblings before and after the collection.

Charles says

The Batman (a.k.a. The Dark Knight) series contains some of the best villains ever to appear in comic books. In my opinion, one of the primary reasons why the television series was so successful was due to the excellent casting of the villains. The primary ones were the Penguin, Riddler, Catwoman and the Joker. All were a few cards short of a full deck, but the Joker was by far the one farthest away. This obvious instability made him a stronger villain and I also think that was why the Joker character was selected as the foil for Batman in the first Batman movie. Jack Nicholson was superb as the Joker, capturing the homicidal insanity that was depicted in the comic books.

This book is a collection of the best stories of Batman (generally but not always with Robin), going up against the Joker. They capture the clever insanity of the Joker, but like all that go up against the heroes, he is never quite clever enough. While he outwits Batman at the beginning of the story, by the end, he has made foolish mistakes that lead to his defeat. These are also the best Batman stories, because he is the strongest of the villains, and as has been pointed out, a hero can only shine when going up against a worthy adversary. Batman is like all of the rest of us. To see him at his best, he has to be facing the worst. Since the Joker is the worst of the villains, these are the best Batman stories and I enjoyed reading most of these stories for the second time. The first time was in the original comic books, as I never missed a story that involved the Joker.

This review also appears on Amazon

Tosh says

This collection of Joker comic stories came out when the first Tim Burton film came out. I was living in a small town in Japan and luckily a friend of mine sent me a copy of this book. It was the most precious thing I owned in Moji-Ku Japan.

Excellent survey of Joker stories that appeared in Batman. The early ones of course are more sinister and the later ones got kind of silly. But as I mentioned before (the review down below) I more interested in The Joker as a character than the story or how he's placed in the story. Basically I just like to look at him and make up my own stories about this character.

Christian McKay says

Really? This is the best The Joker has to offer?

The Dark Knight whet my appetite for some chilling Joker tales, so I went on the hunt. Clearly, a collection

of the madman's finest would be the best way to go, right?

Unfortunately, most of these stories come from the tongue in cheek age of Batman where it was all about clever puns (Batman shouts, "If you're the Joker, then I'm the King of Clubs!" while punching him in the face) and gadgets that were a little too convenient (the laughing gas detector).

I can't help but sympathize though. It must be difficult to compile a "best of" in less than three-hundred pages. That all but eliminates any full issue Joker stories, which I assure you, can be fantastic.

The reason I give this a two instead of a one is out of sheer nostalgia . . . and for moments like the Joker not being able to start the Batmobile to make his dramatic getaway. When Batman finally catches up and socks him in the face, he shows the Joker the six digit code that unlocks the ignition: B-A-T-M-A-N. Brilliant.

Jace says

I had high hopes for this collection. The Joker is my favorite DC villain, and this is, after all, his self-proclaimed greatest hits. But overall, this volume was less than impressive. It starts off strong with early-40's stories where the maniacal Joker--gasp!--*murdered* people to achieve his criminal agenda. And it finishes off strong with his crafty 1970's resurgence in the hands of classic Batman writers such as O'Neill, Englehart, and Wein. But the meat of the book is filled with 50's and 60's Joker tales, an era in which his character was dumbed-down and cleaned under the auspices of the Comics Code. The Joker of that era was a bumbling clown who employed elaborate schemes and wacky devices that always tripped him up in the end. I had heard that this was a bad era for the Joker, but I had to read it to believe it. One or two examples of this type of story from the Joker's past would be fine, but this collection contains no less than 8 of them. The writing is incredibly hokey and full of puns, making them almost painful to read. And considering that the introduction and the afterword to the book both allude to a number of quality Joker stories that had to be left out due to page constraints, it's unacceptable that so many 60's stories are included. And this criticism is coming someone who *loved* watching re-runs of the campy Adam West Batman series growing up. Ultimately, the title of this collection is misleading. While it does include some of the greatest Joker stories ever told, it also contains far too many of the worst Joker stories ever written.

Brad says

My disappointment in this volume echoes my disappointment in *The Greatest Batman Stories Ever Told*. Of the 19 stories collected here, I could only say two felt worth keeping--the first and the last--which is to say they weren't totally terrible by modern standards. Those are the only stories where Joker (a) is a villain, instead of just an eccentric trickster or vandalizing thief and (b) is unpredictable in a manner that makes him seem dangerous. "The Laughing Fish" almost gets there were it not for the convoluted-out-of-context serial plots running throughout the story that and the glaring flaws: (view spoiler)

You can blame the Comic Book Code or you can blame how desensitized movies have made us, but if the Joker isn't seriously threatening lives, having a clown-faced villain is kind of cheesy. In those cheesy pages, the Joker gets fussy about his reputation, steals random stuff from rich people or museums (after you read one or two of these, who cares about another rich person's ruined party?) and engages in ludicrous acts that are mostly just annoying. Some of this is dreadful writing, like when the writers over explain things that are not complex or build an entire plot around ham-fisted wordplay. (One part that made me wince the most is when the Joker enters a production of "Hamlet" dressed as Falstaff and a faceless background audience

member exclaims, "Ha! Ha! Falstaff! He's in the wrong play! He should be in 'Henry the Fourth' or 'Fifth'! Ha! Ha!" Besides this weak attempt at giving the Joker a comic twist, if the writers felt the need to explain it, why not simply do a joke that didn't need explaining?) Most attempts to make the Joker funny generally fall flat, except those few times he kills people who are not expecting it; those moments aren't funny, but the Joker's laughter at those moments are affectively unsettling. Finally, every single story in this volume (even the first and last one, which I think are worth reading) has a moment that is cringe-worthy, like Batman trusting the Joker in a completely naive way or the Joker's getaway being foiled by suddenly being totally dim-witted.

Admittedly, it is difficult for me to appreciate some of this early-era Batman stuff. In it, Batman is never conflicted, acting downright cheery at times and smiling a lot. Those stories do not even hint at the complex character he would become. He's like a costumed one-percenter in a hokey "It's curtains for you" melodrama. (In this volume, Robin has some line about having a speaking engagement at a yacht club. *gag*) In addition, his "detective" work in this collection mostly consists of conveniently effective guessing (which is less deductive reasoning, so much as it is "and here's a less-than-tidy attempt at a resolution"). Nowadays, storytelling styles have changed in comics so that things are shown more than explained, affecting both dialogue (while the witty turn-of-phrase still makes an appearance, nowadays natural speech is patterned and exclamation points used sparingly...rather than flagrantly) and expository text boxes (which no longer appears in nearly every panel, nor features radio drama-like narration. Nowadays, those boxes of text are mostly just functional, like when naming a setting).

Ultimately, what makes these stories "the greatest" is lost on this casual comics fan. Perhaps if each of the stories were give a mini-introduction that explained its significance (to both the choosing committee and Batman lore) I could understand the reason why some of this bilge was reprinted.
