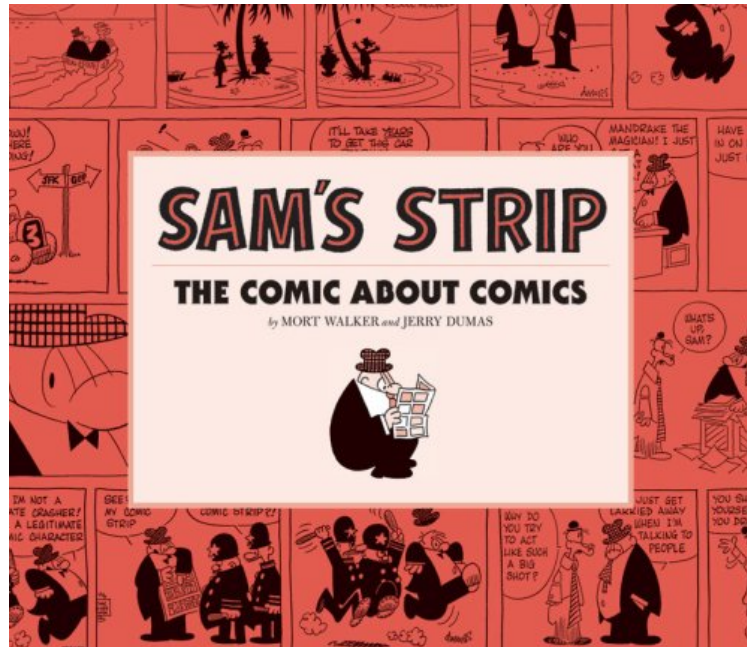


Sam's Strip

Mort Walker

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#1900769 in Books Fantagraphics Books 2008-12-15 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .80 x 9.301, 1.49 #File Name: 1560979720208 pages | File size: 72.Mb

Mort Walker : Sam's Strip before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sam's Strip:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. For Die-Hard Comic-Strip Fans By P. Ryan Anthony In the very first strip of the series SAM'S STRIP, there are three panels of arrows pointing toward the right and, in the final panel, we find the title character still being drawn by his artist, a cartoon version of Jerry Dumas. "Just a minute!" barks Sam. "I'm not ready yet!" This is a good indication of what's coming. Then, in the next day's installment, Sam is visited by Happy Hooligan, and...What's that? You've never heard of Happy Hooligan? How about Tillie the Toiler? Harold Teen? Krazy Kat and Ignatz Mouse? The Gumps? Well, that's probably why SAM'S STRIP had such a hard time when it originally ran, and why this Fantagraphics Books collection will always have a small readership: the humor was predicated on knowing who these classic comic-strip stars were. Originated by Dumas with frequent collaborator Mort Walker, the prolific creator of BEETLE BAILEY, SAM'S STRIP ran from October 1961 to June 1963. The conceit was that businessman Sam and his unnamed assistant owned and operated the comic strip in which they existed, and they were fully aware of their status as funny drawings. The creative team played around with the cartoon form's basic elements, having the protagonists talk to the readers, fight with their artist, shove sound effects and word balloons into the storage closet, try scheme after unsuccessful scheme to increase subscriptions, and welcome cameos by characters as famous as Blondie, Charlie Brown, and Mickey Mouse. Unfortunately, while this meta-humor appealed to cartoonists and comics aficionados, it baffled the mainstream readers, and the unfunny (now terribly-dated) real-world political strips didn't help. Its circulation never reached more than about 60 newspapers, and SAM'S STRIP was cancelled after almost 510 installments. This collection includes the complete 20-month run of what's become a cult classic. There are short essays by the creators along with other special features that should appeal to the

comic-strip fan, but the series itself is strictly suited to those familiar with the early strip characters. However, to them, I can highly recommend this volume. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Great Book By H. Ashley If you enjoy reading about the background of comics and comics history, this is a rare book featuring compositions of old and new (for the sixties) comics characters in humorously unique situations. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Fourth wall? WHAT fourth wall? By Christopher Barat There's a reason why "conventional wisdom" is called "conventional" -- more often than not, it's passed the test of time and is sound. Sometimes, however, "conventional wisdom" takes on a life of its own and oversimplifies a situation that is really much more complicated than is commonly believed. Such appears to be the case with SAM'S STRIP, a short-lived but ingenious early-60s comic strip by Mort Walker and Jerry Dumas that, according to EVERY comment about it that I have ever read, prominently featured past comics characters doing constant "guest shots," yakking it up with the strip's protagonists (the bulb-nosed, apparently neckless Sam and his skinny, bespectacled, nameless sidekick/assistant), being feted at "comics characters' conventions," etc., etc. Well, this slender volume reprints the strip's entire run, and... remember what I said about "conventional wisdom"? The "comic about comics" (so claims this book's subtitle) did give other denizens of the funny papers a chance to "slum it" in Dumas' bare panels, but that conceit was only a small part of the fun. In fact, Walker and Dumas' inability to, in the immortal (albeit somewhat paraphrased) words of Gadget Hackwrench, "choose a thing... one thing... and stick with it" may be the reason why this witty, engaging effort never found an audience and ultimately died after a year and a half. The core idea of SAM'S STRIP is that Sam and "Silo" (who'd get that name in a later Walker-Dumas strip that resurrected the characters but otherwise bore little resemblance to the original) are proprietors of their strip and engage in near-incessant "fourth-wall" breaking and ruminations about the ups and downs of running a panelological concern. They have closets full of punctuation marks and cartoon props, debate about the appropriate format for the strip (with the somewhat egotistical Sam usually having the more inflated notions of what the subject matter should be), and are constantly aware of their pen-and-ink insistence. For the early 60s, this was high-concept indeed. It was only natural that Walker and Dumas should get the idea of featuring other characters in walk-on roles, though they did usually play it safe by employing fellow King Features characters (Blondie, Krazy Kat and Ignatz, Popeye) or figures who had long since vanished from the scene (with Fred Opper's Happy Hooligan -- whose attempts to "crash" the strip became a running gag -- getting the most "mug time"). On several glorious occasions, Walker and Dumas trotted out a big-league cameo, as when Sam sees Charlie Brown driving by (!) and muses, "I knew having that big automobile account [i.e. the PEANUTS Ford Falcon franchise] would change that kid." The problem was that the creators didn't use these inter-strip get-togethers nearly as much as they should have. Instead, they whiled away a lot of their time with politically themed, time-dependent gags trading on the "New Frontier" administration of John Kennedy and the contemporary Cold War atmosphere. There's even a diabolically obscure reference to Vaughn Meader, the comedian who had 15 minutes of fame because of his uncanny vocal imitation of JFK. At various times, Sam identified as a Republican (when he and "Silo" discuss a good GOP candidate for 1964, "Silo" suggests Walt Disney -- who definitely had the right ideology!) and "Silo" as a Democrat. A casual reader who stumbled upon the strip one day and assumed it was some kind of politically-charged strip a la POGO could be excused for the mistake. These Cold War gags not only date the strip to a certain extent, they also detract from the strip's "primary mission," i.e. its "meta-comical" explorations and those delightful crossover visits. Perhaps Mort and Jerry had trouble thinking up enough self-referential gags to fill six days' worth of strips each week (the strip never had a Sunday page); if so, more's the pity. SAM'S STRIP is definitely worth getting if you're a serious comics fan, or someone with an interest in the Kennedy era. The fact that I can logically recommend the volume to both groups, however, only points up how blurred the strip's focus could be at times. It's a highly fascinating misfire, but, I'm afraid, a misfire nonetheless.

A short-lived '60s comic strip starring the Yellow Kid, Jiggs and Charlie Brown!? Sam's Strip broke fourth wall to a new level, playing with the basic elements of the cartoon form, experimenting with different art styles and featuring famous characters from other strips. Sam and his cartoonist assistant owned and operated the comic strip they inhabited. Krazy Kat, Dagwood, Charlie Brown and many other characters made walk-on appearances. Sam and his assistant discussed the inner workings and hidden secrets of life within the panel borders. This collection features the cult-classic's complete 20-month run, almost 510 daily strips. Mort Walker and Jerry Dumas provide first-hand accounts of the creation of the strip and other rare, behind-the-scenes material, including unpublished sketches, original artwork, photographs and sales brochures.

A mixture of fourth-wall breaking, political commentary, and gag cartooning of both the highest and lowest order a cult classic. - Chad Nevett, Comic Book Resources If you ever had more than a passing interest in newspaper strips, you owe it to yourself to check out this collection. - KC Carlson, Comics Worth Reading Sam's Strip was an interesting comic in its own right. The phrase 'ahead of its own time' is one that's bandied about frequently when discussing it, and even now the juxtapositions within it are occasionally surreal enough to cause amusement through their sheer audacity... As small a fact as it may be, the near-flawless execution of the book helps to make it feel like more of a

prestige package, a celebration of the series rather than just a cheap cash-in... [T]his straightforward but well-made collection is a thoroughly worthy purchase. - Andrew Williams, Den of Geek

How on earth did Sams Strip fail to set the funny pages on fire back in 1961? The answer provided through this complete collection of 500 strips is that the time just wasn't right. Well, it certainly is now. - J. Caleb Mozzocco, Las Vegas Weekly

A cult favorite emerges into the bright light of reprintage. I didn't witness any of Sams Strip during its maiden voyage. I first saw a few of the daily releases and promptly, forthwith, joined the cult that feverish bank of comics cognoscenti who knew enough about the annals of the medium to relish every nuanced historical allusion that creators Mort Walker and Jerry Dumas were able to insinuate so fondly into this comic strip about being a comic strip. - R. C. Harvey, Rants & Raves

Walker and Dumas clearly take pleasure in working in callbacks to classic comic strips... [and] many of the metatextual gags are funny and fun. ... Dumas's drawings of classic comic-strip characters are excellent. - Shaenon Garrity, The Comics Journal

About the Author Jerry Dumas was born in Detroit. He is married, has three sons, has published two books, countless magazine articles and newspaper columns, and has worked with Mort Walker in many capacities since 1956. Mort Walker has had a guiding hand in nine syndicated comic strips since 1950 and has been drawing Beetle Bailey for almost 58 years - the longest run by any cartoonist on his original creation.