

BOOG CITY

A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER FROM A GROUP OF ARTISTS AND WRITERS BASED IN AND AROUND NEW YORK CITY'S EAST VILLAGE

ISSUE 69.1

Smells Like Roberto Clemente Two from Indie Great Fantagraphics

These two books are from indie stalwart Fantagraphics Books. Boog City editor David A. Kirschenbaum asked its associate publisher Eric Reynolds to answer a few questions. Here are his replies:

Edited by Jacob McMurray,
Senior Curator of EMP
Fantagraphics Books

If you haven't had the chance to visit Seattle's Experience Music Project (EMP), then you can get a good taste of the type of collections they have amassed through *Taking Punk to the Masses*, *From Nowhere to Nevermind*. The book is assembled by Jacob McMurray, a senior curator at the EMP. The book is packed with full-page photos of punk rock memorabilia with a facing two-paragraph story about the item and supplementary paragraph-long quotations from musicians and music industry workers. And did I mention that there is a DVD full of oral history

interviews from punk insiders?

Despite its coffee table book appearance, McMurray tries to keep the punk rock do-

it-yourself ethic by letting the artifacts and punk denizens speak for themselves. There is something appropriately humorous about seeing pages of cut-and-paste zines and rock show posters

on a full page in crisp full-color photographs. The quotes from the publisher/artists who created them and musicians who were featured weave together nicely to give a sense of moment. And sometimes the creator and object merge, such as the Nirvana show posters hand-drawn by Kurt Cobain.

As the title acknowledges, the vantage point of punk taken spirals out from Nirvana's Seattle. But it would be a mistake to think that this is just a Nirvana, or a Sub Pop, a Seattle, or a grunge rock book. McMurray makes a point of connecting the artifacts collected to

Despite its coffee table book appearance, McMurray tries to keep the punk rock do-it-yourself ethic by letting the artifacts and punk denizens speak for themselves.

punk rockers in other cities and countries. He thoroughly explores who the predecessors who influenced the Seattle scene.

McMurray's thesis, if there is one, is that punk rock is about the do-it-yourself ethic more than any particular time, place, or sound. Everything from the under-appreciated genius of Elliott Smith to the anti-war roots of Devo are explored within. I learned from this book that Devo were students at Kent State when their fellow students were massacred by the Ohio National Guard. In this context, the band's eponymous concept of "de-evolution" made perfect sense as a "lament against the growing conformity in contemporary American society."

In addition, McMurray's proves his thesis by showing that bands like Devo and Blondie

who are now considered New Wave belong in a discussion of punk as much as Black Flag or The Patti Smith Group. He also works hard to prove that unlike metal or glam rock, there was less of a barrier to women making punk rock.

All in all, the book and dvd comes across like a great independent record store. You can methodically go through them in order, trusting the proprietor to fill out your knowledge of punk. Or you jump around, knowing you will find rarities to fill out your collection of favorites.

BY DAVID A. KIRSCHENBAUM

21: The Story of Roberto Clemente

By Wilfred Santiago
Fantagraphics Books

The first year I followed major league baseball was 1973, spurred on by the Mets playoff run and my sister and

Santiago's baseball action scenes are often depicted in a seemingly photo-realistic style, with ballplayers drawn against what appears to be a collaged photo background of a baseball setting but is instead a note perfect drawing.

brother jumping on the Shea Stadium field when the Mets won the National League Championship and coming home with a hunk of grass as a souvenir. I was six and didn't know Roberto Clemente had ever existed. That didn't last long.

I've been eagerly anticipating Wilfred Santiago's graphic biography *21: The Story of Roberto Clemente* since I first hear it was in the works three years ago. For a kid my age, baseball education was pretty straight ahead—saturation job on your hometown team, in my case, the Mets; and then Babe Ruth; Jackie Robinson; and the great Clemente.

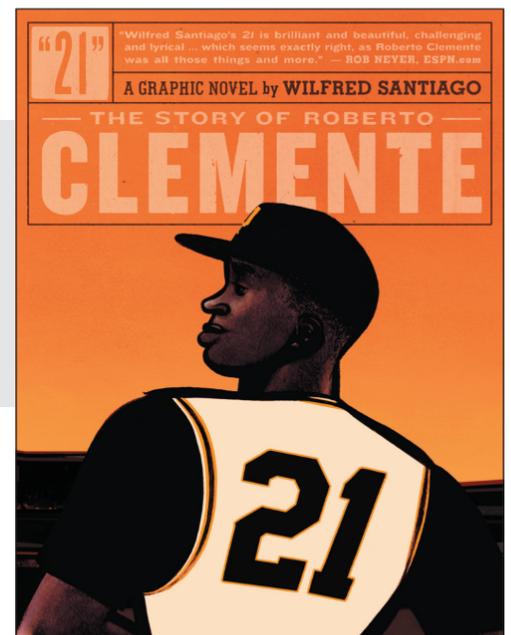
It's the mythology of Clemente that brings you right in, his death upon an airplane ferrying supplies from his native Puerto Rico to Nicaragua to the earthquake victims there.

Santiago takes a nice route in unspooling the Clemente legend. He begins with September 30, 1972 and a trip to the Pittsburgh Pirates last regular season game of the year, and Clemente's attempt to get one hit to make him the 11th player, and first Latino ever, to reach the 3,000 hit milestone. Adding to the legend, this would wind up being Clemente's last regular season game.

We then skip back to Clemente as an 8-year-old growing up in Puerto Rico, touching on his religious upbringing, the politics of Puerto Rico, the death of a

sister, segregation, being signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers and beginning play with their Montreal Royals farm team (the same place the Dodgers had assigned Robinson eight years earlier), before being selected in the Rule 5 draft from the Dodgers by the Pittsburgh Pirates' representative Branch Rickey (the same man who had brought Jackie Robinson to the Dodgers, breaking the color barrier for the first time in the modern era).

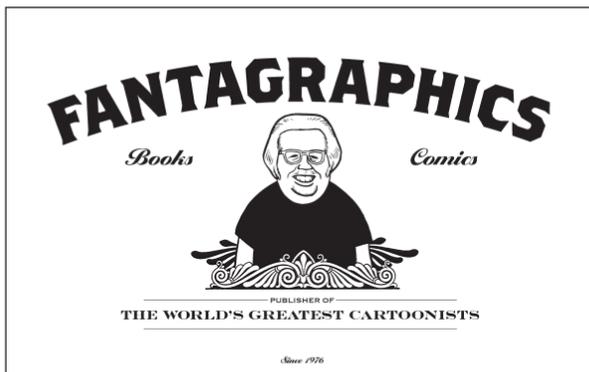
Santiago uses black and white and some yellow-orange fill-ins, but really that's all he needs. His style is clean, ranging in depiction of Clemente throughout the years to religious leaders to baseball action scenes, which he often depicts in a seemingly photo-realistic style with ballplayers drawn against what appears to be a collaged photo background of a baseball setting but is instead a note perfect



drawing. Add that to his reproduction of old newspaper headlines, 45s, scoreboards, and programs and Santiago does Clemente proud with *21*.

Sean Cole
The East Village
Chloroform

Fat mannequins. God bless the bastard who decided that. Every body rates plaster. I want a mannequin of Earth. All is sound. Round plump prow. Now, a regular couple compares paunches. Promising leisurely punches on cattle. Calgary. The future's enormous together. This giant country and its belly of flowers. A meadow sidles up and tackles your garden. Four grasshoppers don't scare me as much as five. Saturated cactus in aspic, O this caribou ablution. Tomorrow: work. Right now, officially no reason to stay thin.



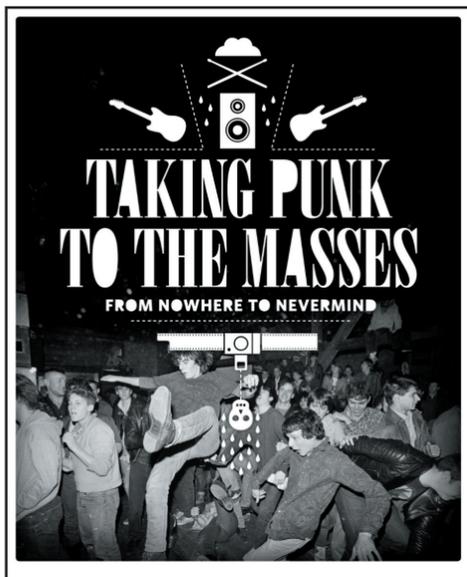
We are a publisher that is primarily devoted to publishing the very best of the history of cartooning and related arts, whether they be comic books, graphic novels, classic newspaper strips, related fine art, etc. We arrogantly refer to ourselves as "The Publisher of the World's Greatest Cartoonists."

I've been here almost 20 years now. I moved to Seattle straight out of college to pursue work at Fantagraphics because they were my favorite publisher; I grew up reading a number of iconic Fantagraphics' works such as *Love & Rockets*, *Eightball*, *Lloyd Lewellyn*, and *The Comics Journal*.

I'm involved with most aspects of the company, from acquisition to publication. I especially enjoy the actual act of making the books become a reality: shepherding a book to publication, editorially and production-wise. There's no greater thrill than actually seeing a published book that you've helped acquire and become a real object.

[Things that we're working on for the future are] *The Complete Barnaby*, *No Straight Lines: Four Decades of Queer Comics*, *The Crumb Compendium*, and a few other projects further off on the horizon.

BY IAN S. WILDER



**Taking Punk to the Masses:
From Nowhere to Nevermind -
A Visual History from the Permanent
Collection of Experience Music Project**

Saturnalia Books: A Day or Days Set Aside For Revelry, Debauchery and Disorder

BY DOUGLAS MANSON

Saturnalia Books wants to invert the typical relationship between publisher and poet. In ye olden days, a Saturnalia was a Greco-roman holiday festival of gift-giving and licentious, insolent behavior, where the masters had to cook food for the servants, listen to their insults, and wear their clothes. Everyone

As president of Saturnalia Books, Henry Israeli wants 'to treat overlooked talent with the same respect one would a celebrated poet.'

walked around wearing a special "liberty hat" called a pilleus. In The Gentleman's Magazine of 1788, the Saturnalia is described as a time during which young scholars gather to discuss questions of poetry, criticism and philosophy. It was also the custom for poets and writers to give books as gifts, and they could expect a book in return; that is, if they weren't getting drunk or rolling around in an orgy, wearing nothing but their liberty hats. As president of Saturnalia Books, Henry Israeli wants "to treat overlooked talent with the same respect one would a celebrated poet."

Israeli started out working for Fence Magazine as a graphic designer, while writing his own poetry. He began the business of making books with Fence in 2002, designing Elizabeth Robinson's *Apprehend* and Joyelle McSweeney's *The Red Bird* among other titles. In 2004 he published the first Saturnalia Books, bringing poetry and art together in a startlingly new way. *Blackboards*, by Tomaz Salamun (poetry) and Metka Krasovec (art), was the first of this impressive list of titles. "I had always envisioned mixing art and poetry, something that's been done before, but not in a consistent series," Israeli says. Poetry/art collaborations are most often found in very limited editions or on exhibit as a single-copy artist's book. Israeli's venture seeks to provide affordable, trade paperback books with large print-runs. "Unfortunately, I think I found out why [there isn't another book series like this]. They're expensive to make and don't necessarily sell well." While the series has been put on hold

for the present, Saturnalia has made books by John Yau (poetry) and Thomas Nozkowski (art), Timothy Liu and Greg Drasler (famous for painting hats), and two volumes by Bill Knott and Star Black, in which the poet and artist trade hats for the other's book.

Saturnalia's 2010 anthology of poetry written by women, *Gurlesque: the new grrly, grotesque, burlesque poetics*, has arguably drawn the most attention, garnering high praise and angry criticism. With 18 poets and 8 artists represented, the book investigates the constructed nature of the representation and self-representation of women in both playful and serious ways, and in a remarkable variety of styles. One poem, "Boobs Are Real" by Dorothea Lasky, illustrates just how much has changed in American women's poetry, especially in the gurlesque mode.

They stole my tires
They knocked down my house
They killed my father
They cut off my fingers
And I thought, "And I did like those fingers."

They pierced my eyelids. They scalped my brain.

They ran their sweaty fingers down my sweaty back.

They played me music but it wasn't music.
They loved me and then they didn't.

Somewhere in there I grew these enormous boobs.

At some point what they took away
Was given back
Just like, as Lydia Davis says,
When a limit has been reached
What is real but does not help
Is lost forever and replaced by the unreal.
The difference is: these boobs are real.

While giving credit to the finely-crafted ideas of an important writer from a previous generation, Lasky's first eight lines, weighty with images of traumatic violence and ersatz pleasure, overwhelm the pat utilitarian formulation that seems an attempt to justify the experience, and instead she concludes with an unreflective "I spect I grow'd" 'em simplicity that is anything but.

From the filmic storyboard narration of Brenda Coultas, the menageries and stone-cold revenge poems of Danielle Pofunda, the Konglish hip-hop karaoke of Cathy Park Hong, the surreal prose fables of Matthea Harvey, to the googly porn slices melted into Nada Gordon's pomewiches, *Gurlesque* is a new wave daughterhood response to the motherhood of feminism's second wave. Riding red thru the hood without the hood, with and without a net, with more teeth bared than bosoms, and more edgy lines than tender,



Saturnalia Books president Henry Israeli

tear-stained eyes, *Gurlesque* is weird and sometimes creepy, but even on the worst of mornings, it's beautiful. Its raw power lies in that, while reading it, you may not be sure whether to wear your pilleus, your thinking cap, or a helmet.

Douglas Manson is a writer who lives in Brooklyn near the Verrazano Narrows.

Saturnalia's anthology of poetry written by women, Gurlesque: the new grrly, grotesque, burlesque poetics, has drawn the most attention, garnering high praise and angry criticism.

d.a. levy lives

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