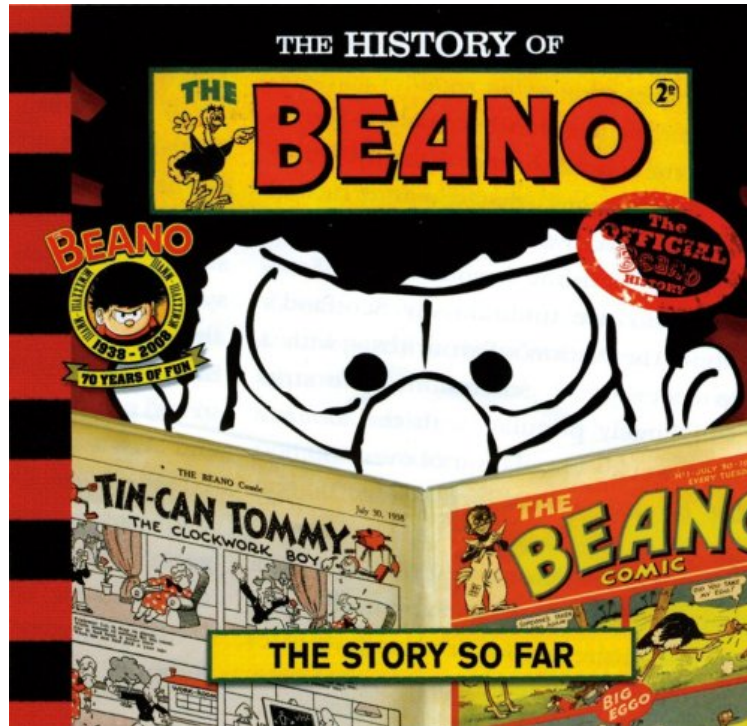


The History of the Beano: The Story So Far

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Waverley Books : The History of the Beano: The Story So Far before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The History of the Beano: The Story So Far:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A good history of a classic British comic paperBy Christopher BaratThis lavishly illustrated volume traces the saga of Britain's most durable and popular weekly "comic paper," which debuted in July 1938. My own view of British comics, apart from the sober-sided JUDGE DREDD, could never be mistaken for rampant enthusiasm. The few contemporary British "funnies" that I've seen have struck me as indifferently drawn (and tending towards a certain sameness of style, to boot) and thematically shallow. THE BEANO, however, does seem to be one comic that has held up well over time, despite dramatic changes in taste and, I still stubbornly maintain, a definite "regression to the mean" in terms of unanimity of drawing style.This book identifies the 1950s as THE BEANO's "Golden Age," which sounds mighty familiar; on this side of the pond, the same sort of nostalgic glow shrouds memories of WALT DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES and UNCLE SCROOGE. For sure, the weekly's best artists were on the job during that time: Dudley Watkins and Ken Reid, in particular, can certainly be rated with any American comic artist of that period. Compared to Dell's omnibus "funny animal" titles, which shifted character lineups only at intervals, THE BEANO's roster contained more turnover than a typical "banana republic," though such long-running stalwarts as Biffo the Bear, Roger the Dodger, Minnie the Minx, and Dennis the Menace (no, not the Hank Ketcham character -- the British version, "the world's wildest boy," looks like the unkempt love child of SESAME STREET'S Ernie and Bert and lives to pester people to distraction) served as anchors amidst the phoenix-like rises and falls of lesser lights. Somewhat to my surprise, THE BEANO, up until the mid-1970s, also

featured action-adventure strips, including a couple that brushed up against the superhero genre (e.g., BILLY THE CAT, about an acrobatic youth who fights evil while dressed up in a cat suit -- Selena Kyle, aka Catwoman, must not have been amused). When these strips left the premises, the "creeping sameness" that I mentioned earlier appears to have become the mag's "default setting". The strip samples featured herein show a pretty dramatic falling-off in quality as we enter the 1980s. Though reading this book has given me a new-found sense of respect regarding THE BEANO's long-lived, much-loved stars, I still can't rate them on the same level with the best of American "funny comics." The reason is simple: American "funny-animal" heroes could -- and did -- engage in all manner of adventure stories, whereas it's impossible to imagine the stars of THE BEANO pulling off such a trick. Indeed, given the magazine's maintenance of its short gag-strip format for so long (slightly more elaborate versions in "annuals" aside), the thought of stretching the characters' boundaries to such an extent seems never to have occurred to the editors and writers. Of course, I can't fairly criticize THE BEANO for what it never saw fit to attempt, and what the magazine did choose to do, it did reasonably well. In that respect, its 70-year life span is a tribute to the simple virtue of recognizing what your readers want and giving it to them on a regular basis.

The first issue of The Beano was published on July 30th 1938. This is the first-ever history of the best-known British comic of all time, reflecting on 70 memorable years. The book tracks the evolution of The Beano, decade by decade, from the period leading up to its launch The Beano at war, the fabulous fifties right through to the present day: an extensive in-depth look at the development, rise and enduring success of the most influential British comic of all time. The book includes a facsimile of the original 28-page issue, entitled The Beano Comic, featuring Eggo the Ostrich on the cover, and showing the full text and traditional narrative under picture style stories and the introduction of the speech balloons only format. The History Of The Beano, published during the 70th anniversary of the creation of the comic, has an insider's view, with previously unpublished material. It charts all the characters who have appeared over the years, as well as the editors, artists and writers past and present who have contributed to this great comic institution. Reg Carter's Big Eggo was on the very first cover, and remained there for 10 years to be replaced by Biffo the Bear. Lord Snooty, created by Dudley Watkins, and Pansy Potter played their part in the war effort along with Musso the Wop and Winken Blinken, created by artist Sam Fair. Dennis the Menace arrived in March 1951, closely followed by Ken Reid's Roger the Dodger in 1953. This is a history which will bring back many memories. The Beano has touched every boy and girl growing up in the UK and many overseas readers, who will remember Tom Thumb, Jonah, Little Plum, The Bash Street Kids (which started out as When The Bell Rings), Minnie the Minx, Jimmy and His Magic Patch, Strang the Terrible, General Jumbo, Billy Whizz, Billy the Cat, Ivy the Terrible, Calamity James, and many, many more. Terrible, Calamity James, and many, many more.