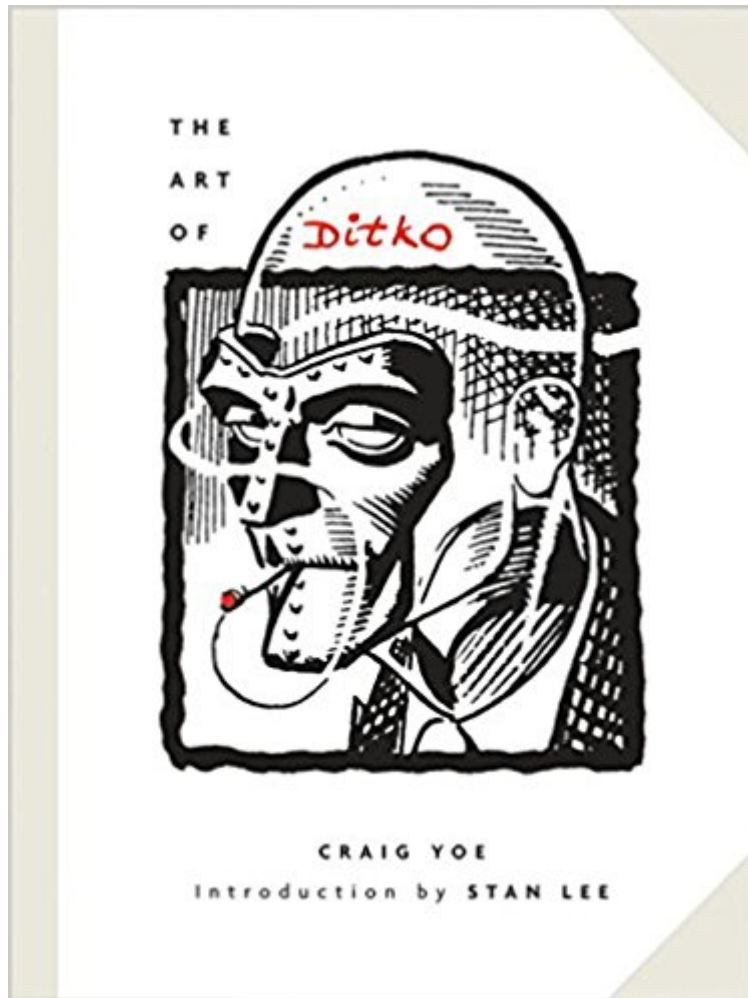




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The Art Of Steve Ditko



Synopsis

Steve Ditko, the co-creator of Spiderman and Dr. Strange, remains an enigma, though this book draws us closer to the artist and gives us a better understanding of his amazing work. Introducing the very best of rare and striking Steve Ditko comic book stories and original art, this large format beautifully showcases Ditko's work, with many reproductions of original art pieces by the master comic book artist. Includes essays on Ditko by Jerry Robinson, John Romita, and P. Craig Russell.

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Customer Reviews

It's a good time to be a fan of legendary comic book artist Ditko. Fantagraphics is reprinting his earliest work, starting with *Strange Suspense* (2009), and now comes this lavish collection of stories drawn for Charlton Comics in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Charlton paid bargain-basement rates but offered scant editorial interference, so it was there that Ditko's work was most unfettered. The scripts are simplistic tales relying on twist endings. Pretty much the whole show here is Ditko's jagged, off-kilter artwork. The 1950s stories possess an appealing polish lacking in the later ones, which often seem rushed and unfinished. All, however, display Ditko's unmistakable style. Scanned directly from the published comics, the images suffer from Charlton's muddy printing, though that somehow makes them seem more authentic. Rounding out the collection are a handful of pages drawn for other publishers and shot from the original artwork, and tributes written by Ditko's artistic colleagues, which applaud his work but reveal little personal detail about the notoriously reclusive artist. --Gordon

Vice's magazine has called Craig Yoe the "Indiana Jones of comics historians." Publisher Weekly says he's the "archivist of the ridiculous and the sublime" and calls his work "brilliant." The Onion calls him "the celebrated designer," The Library Journal, "a comics guru." BoingBoing hails him "a fine cartoonist and a comic book historian of the first water." Yoe was Creative Director/Vice President/ General Manager of Jim Henson's Muppets, and a Creative Director at Nickelodeon and Disney. Craig has won an Eisner Award and the Gold Medal from the Society of Illustrators.

"The Art Of Ditko" Edited by Craig Yoe (IDW Books, 2010). . . This is an excellent collection of short-story horror, crime and sci-fi genre comics that the legendary Steve Ditko drew (and often wrote) for Charleton Comics in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. Charleton was a notoriously low-quality, bargain-basement company which paid its artists poorly and produced books that were almost comically low-quality. Because comicbooks were not the main part of the company's business, they also didn't really care if they were good or not, and exerted little editorial control over their artists -- it was a situation that a young Steve Ditko absolutely thrived in. Even though he was being paid peanuts for his work, Ditko threw himself into it, producing countless stories with artwork that was as innovative as it was exciting. The stories are standard genre-comics fare - preposterous set-ups with zinger endings - but Ditko's artwork makes them vibrant and alive. The stories are lavishly reproduced on heavy stock paper in a ginormous, coffee-table size -- you could read this book from across the room, or physically immerse yourself in each and every page. Editor Craig Yoe wisely made the choice not to clean the artwork up, to work off the original artwork (which probably wasn't available anyway, lost to the tides of time and the collector art market...) or use computer graphics to clean up the artwork and coloring. That's become the norm for many archival reprint projects, and sometimes it's great, but in the case of these Charleton oldies, I think leaving things messy and imperfect is great. In the old days, the comic book business was a low-rent, pulpy enterprise, and many titles looked garish and cheap. Charleton, in particular, was known for its slapdash coloring jobs and misprinted editions, with smeared ink and missed registration marks: this edition looks like the original comics, and it reminds you of how cheap and trashy these comics really were. I love it. It's a big part of the pop-culture appeal, and it's a lot of fun. The stories themselves are a hoot as well, and Yoe did an excellent job selective a strong representation of Ditko's best work from 1954 to the early '70s, when he was developing his uniquely bold and influential visual style. The testimonial

essays, from Stan Lee, John Romita and Craig P. Russell, are all pretty short and perfunctory, and don't really add much to the Ditko lore (there are other books that do that better) and Yoe himself sticks to a reverential tone, even though Ditko was by all accounts a very prickly and peculiar individual. No matter. It's appropriate to be upbeat and reverential about these stories: there's a lot to celebrate here! (DJ Joe Sixpack, ReadThatAgain book reviews)

I pre-ordered this book some time back and when the book arrived was pleasantly blown away at the large page size... this is a hefty book with a generous and intriguing assortment of Ditko science fiction and horror stories. The story selection is fantastic, each one a winner and some worthy of extra time contemplating the work of the master. A fantastic voyage.

If I had to sum up this book in a single word it would be 'slapdash', something done in a hurry in an effort to meet a deadline. The single worst example is Page 99, ostensibly the third page of the story 'The Desert Spell' -- except that it is nothing of the sort. It is a page from another story altogether, making zero sense in this context. The arrangement of the stories makes no sense either. There is no attempt to present them in chronological order, which might have shown Ditko's evolution as an artist. The first story is from 1957 and the second from 1958 but the third is from 1967 and the fourth jumps back to 1958. (Are all of these from Craig Yoe's own collection?) Even the name of the book is misleading. It should actually be 'The Art of Ditko *In Charlton Comics*' (barring his superhero work where D.C. Comics probably has the copyright). Most of the book seems to have been scanned directly from the comics -- brown paper, colour bleeds, and all. (Charlton was notorious for shoddy quality so that is probably faithful enough.) The bleeds definitely weren't Ditko's intention so *some* reconstruction was in order. All that said, I don't regret buying this book because it reprints some of Ditko's lesser-known work. The details really pop out at this giant size -- it is about an inch and a half taller than Marvel Omnibus editions -- and the heavy matte paper is an excellent choice. Lastly, at 's discount it is an absolute bargain. All of that deserves some stars I guess. Craig Yoe says a second Ditko book is around the corner. I will probably buy that too but I do hope it is done with the care that Ditko's work deserves.

I'm a huge Ditko fan, and wanted this book for a while, especially after reading Blake Bell's excellent studies of Ditko. This compilation looks like little more than an attempt to make money off Ditko's name. The stories reprinted here seem to be chosen totally at random. They're not Ditko's best work nor are they particularly illustrative of any aspect of his career or development. The scans are awful,

so that most of the stories look like ugly smudges. The little commentary essays by people like P. Craig Russell and John Romita read like three- minute phone conversations transcribed into interview form. Just awful -- the finished product of this book serves to embarrass any and all who have their names on this.

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