

Dick Tracy The Official Biography

Jay Maeder

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Jay Maeder : Dick Tracy The Official Biography before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dick Tracy The Official Biography:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Rare used book at good price By L.T. Hanlon I'd been looking for "Dick Tracy: The Official Biography" for a while and finally found it at a good price. It arrived quickly and nicely packed. Satisfying experience all around. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A half-century of crime fighting by Dick Tracy and friends By Lawrance Bernabo On August 13, 1931, Captain Joseph Medill Patterson of the "New York Daily News" sent a telegram to Chester Gould, the man who created Dick Tracy, that read: YOUR PLAINCLOTHES TRACY HAS POSSIBILITIES STOP. Within the pages of "Dick Tracy: The Official Biography" you will find the great adventures of the greatest detective in the funny pages, his unforgettable enemies from Flattop to Pruneface, his allies from Pat Patton to Diet Smith, his 2-way radio (late 2-way TV), and Tess Trueheart, his long-suffering sweetheart and eventual mate. Jay Maeder, a top editor at "The New York Daily News" might be providing an official biography, but he is doing so from a pop culture perspective. Consequently, we begin with Dick Tracy, square-jawed and straight-shooting, a creation of the time when crime was rampant in 1931, but trace his entire career, both in comics, radio and the movies. As you would expect, this book is loaded with black white strips as well as 24 pages in color. The character that Chester Gould created was absolutely dedicated to getting rid of the crime gangs afflicting the big city. Like the real-life Eliot Ness, Dick Tracy was brave, incorruptible, and sworn to making the world clean again. The catalyst for his career was the murder of Tess Trueheart's father in his deli by a robber. Gould had worked on earlier comic strips, "The Radio Cats" and "The Girl Friends," when he came up with the submission

idea for "Plainclothes Tracy." The idea was refined before the first strip appeared on October 12, 1931, with Dick calling on the Truehearts for dinner. But the Big Boy, the first official Tracy villain, sent some boys to rob the Truehearts deli and Emil Trueheart ended up dead with Tracy vowing a blood oath over the body. The rest is the history that Maeder is detailing. The approach of "Dick Tracy: The Official Biography" is basically chronological, beginning with the effort to bring Big Boy to justice, which was followed over the years by the Buddy Waldorf kidnapping, working as a G-Man across state lines, and, of course, all those battles with the Grotesques which would end up defining the strip for the world: The Blank, Pruneface, Flattop, Wormy, Flayface, and the rest. Maeder also devotes chapters to not only Tess and Junior, but the atonement of Stooze Viller and Steve the Tramp, which shows there was rehabilitation as well as justice in the Dick Tracy universe. Then there is Sparkle, B.O., and the other Plentys, along with Moon Maid and the whole Space Period of the strip. The result is not a strict chronology, but more of a constant circling forward, which reflect an effort to provide each chapter with thematic unity. Bu the primary goal remains to tell the story of how Chester Gould created a great and enduring American icon. However, Maeder deals as well with the twilight period of the story of Dick Tracy when the culture turned against the character as he does with the original glory days and the later period of cultural retrieval. The major strength of the book is the way he puts all the pieces together, so that there is a sense of progression and character growth. Maeder is able to not only provide a concise description of Dick Tracy dealing with a terrorist-bomb incident or an adventure with Nilon Hoze, but also takes pain to show what was different or special that time around. I did not exactly work it out, but it sure looks like Maeder literally accounted for every "Dick Tracy" strip ever drawn by Gould. While I was never all that interested in the comic strip I found this to be a fascinating look at the over half-century that Dick Tracy fought his never-ending battles against the most memorable bad guys ever to embody evil. Oh, and do not forget to pay attention to the great tips provided in those Crimestoppers Textbooks! 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A pop life. By Mister Chris This overview of the DICK TRACY comic strip coincided with a plethora of books that were part of the hype machine for Disney's movie extravagaza, and it was the best. Written by Jay Maeder, an historian of sorts for New York's Daily News, this "Official Biography" lovingly revisits the plot lines and characters of Chester Gould's 70 year old comic strip and brilliantly summarizes what it has become: an enduring pop cultural epic. When Gould first created the exploits of his young gangbuster he was merely following the crime filled headlines of the day with crude, childlike artwork and a storytelling style that read like a cornball silent matinee. This, however, was the Depression and readers starving for breathless thrills found themselves hooked. Gould, who himself stated he never knew how the plotlines would evolve, became both a master puppeteer and an enthusiastic front row spectator. Soon, the plots became more intricate, the criminals became uglier, the violence became unflinchingly bloodier (a bold move when you consider today's hightened sensitivity), and the crude artwork became a style onto its own. All the while Dick Tracy, and his immediate family of cops and others became like friends we earnestly knew. That was the beauty of comic strip storytelling from its golden age in that it was to unfold like a saga and in the case of DICK TRACY it was a saga that spanned the life of the 20th Century. The Depression, World War 2, Eisenhower's 50's, the psychedelic 60's- Tracy rode his police car through all of this and writer Maeder critically keeps his eyes on how the strip stayed the course (or derailed in the 60's...remember the Moon Maid?) and managed to entertain ever changing taste. With plenty of illustrations and a breezy reading style, this out of print book is an underrated gem.

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