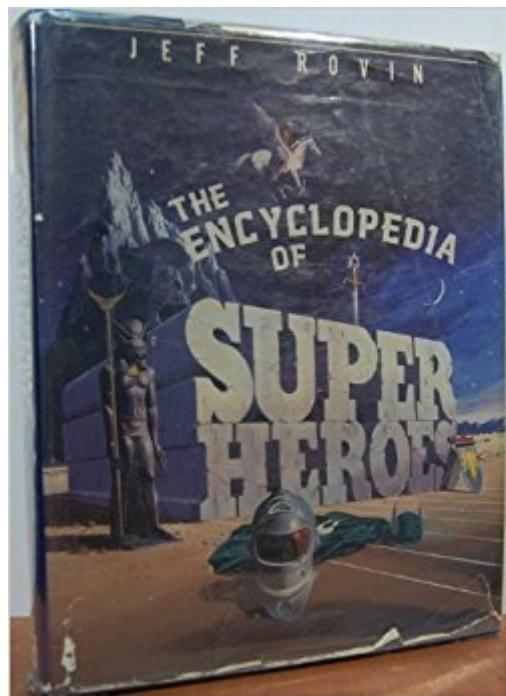


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The Encyclopedia Of Superheroes



Synopsis

Book by Rovin, Jeff

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Book by Rovin, Jeff

Great information resource for character research. While I don't like all the stickers on the cover or the tape to keep it in place (I realize this is something libraries do, but I wish they would remove it all and clean the books up before giving them up for selling), it is still in good condition and makes for a good replacement for my original copy.

When I first came across this encyclopedia years ago I thought that it was one of the greatest research books that you could find on the subject of super heroes. And there has been nothing in the ensuing years to change my opinion. This book covers more than just the obvious comic book heroes like Superman, Captain America, Batman and Captain Marvel. It also includes the biblical hero Samson and the western hero the Lone Ranger. Of course there isn't a listing for every super hero, but realistically that couldn't have been done in a single volume. I for one lament that not one Mexiluchahero was listed in this book. But there are enough listings of obscure and one-shot heroes like Hell-Rider and the Copperhead to make up for it. I highly recommend this book. Actually I can't recommend this book enough.

My husband collects comic books. He loved it.

For years, I have read that this was THE superheroes book. Well, it is light on the minor and some major 40's superheroes and and heavy on both major and minor 70's and 80's types. Plus, the few color covers feature either bizarre picks...off-beat, "joke", wimpy types or, as I said, the 70's-80's. A book on superheroes should have, at least, line drawings of the bulk of them and the color pages (which in this book are few) should be of, as an example of an egregious omission, the JSA. If you want the color pics of the superheroes plus color, try Mike Benton's books!

Back in the mid-1980s when this book was originally published, I received it as a gift for my 14th birthday. As a teenager who liked comic books at the time, in those days back before the internet, I expected it to be THE definitive resource about the then-relatively obscure topic of super heroes. But as a kid, I was disappointed that there were so many entries about obscure, short-lived heroes from the 1970s (and early 1980s), and surprisingly less detailed (and/or not illustrated) entries about the most prominent super heroes of all-time like Spider-Man and Batman and Wolverine. There were also some surprising entry title choices. For example, the "Six Million Dollar Man" is covered in an entry titled "Cyborg" (after the much less well known original novels). This book is also very sparsely illustrated. Almost all the illustrations that are included in the book are photos of vintage comic book covers. Vastly disproportionately represented among them are covers of obscure Atlas comics from 1975 and AC Comics from 1982, for whatever reason. Any work like this would inevitably also lead to disappointment about personal favorite characters who were left out. For me, it seemed odd that there was an extensive entry about Conan and another one about a short lived 1970s comic book (published by short-lived publisher Atlas Comics in 1975) called "Ironjaw," but no entry at all for the classic 1980s Saturday morning cartoon "Thundarr the Barbarian." There is also an extensive entry about the 1960s toy "Captain Action," but "G.I. Joe" is mentioned only in passing at the end in a reference to the 1980s cartoon "G.I. Joe: The Real American Hero," and "no mention of "Big Jim" at all. That being said, this book did introduce me to a number of pulp heroes for the first time back as a kid in the 1980s, and it did reveal to me how a number of the super heroes I liked as a kid at the time actually had their origins in characters published decades earlier. In conclusion, it's also hard to imagine today, when super heroes are so much more prevalent on TV and in the movies, and with the profusion of websites devoted to super heroes, comic books and vintage toys on the internet in recent years, what a unique resource this book was when it was originally published 30 years ago, albeit a flawed one.

Being published in 1985, this book is now over 30 years old and pretty dated. However, it's a big, colorful, fun book to own if you're into pop culture, comic books, or just random trivia. Jeff Rovin is a pop culture journalist who has written articles in the past on comic books, video games, technology, among others, and this is his collection of superheros past and "present" (as of the day it went to print). The book gives descriptions of the standards: Superman, Batman, Captain America, Spider-Man, X-Men, etc. What makes it interesting are some of the more obscure ones that get descriptions (Super Pickle, Captain 3-D, etc.) It even gives descriptions for folklore or legendary "super" heroes like Sampson and Robin Hood. For the true comic book junkie, they might roll their eyes, but for someone like myself that looks at this book more of a reflection of the history of what was popular at different times, it's pretty interesting and enjoyable. Obviously, like I said earlier, this book was last printed in 1985, so there are many missing items. The "newest" superheroes are Luke Skywalker, He-Man, and the Greatest American Hero. The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles didn't exist yet, neither did Super Mario (though both were launched in 1985). The only Batman movie out yet was the one in the 60s based off the campy TV show. The Marvel movies weren't even a blip on the screen. A lot has changed in 30 years, from advancement in movies, TV, publishing and video games that really transformed the superhero landscape, and based solely on the print date of this book, those items go missing. It would be nice to have a new edition come out, but likely as it's been 30 years, I doubt that will happen. This is a good coffee table book to own and a fun one to use to quiz friends on different characters. Don't expect anything earth shattering, but it's a fun book to skim through when you are looking for something to do.

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