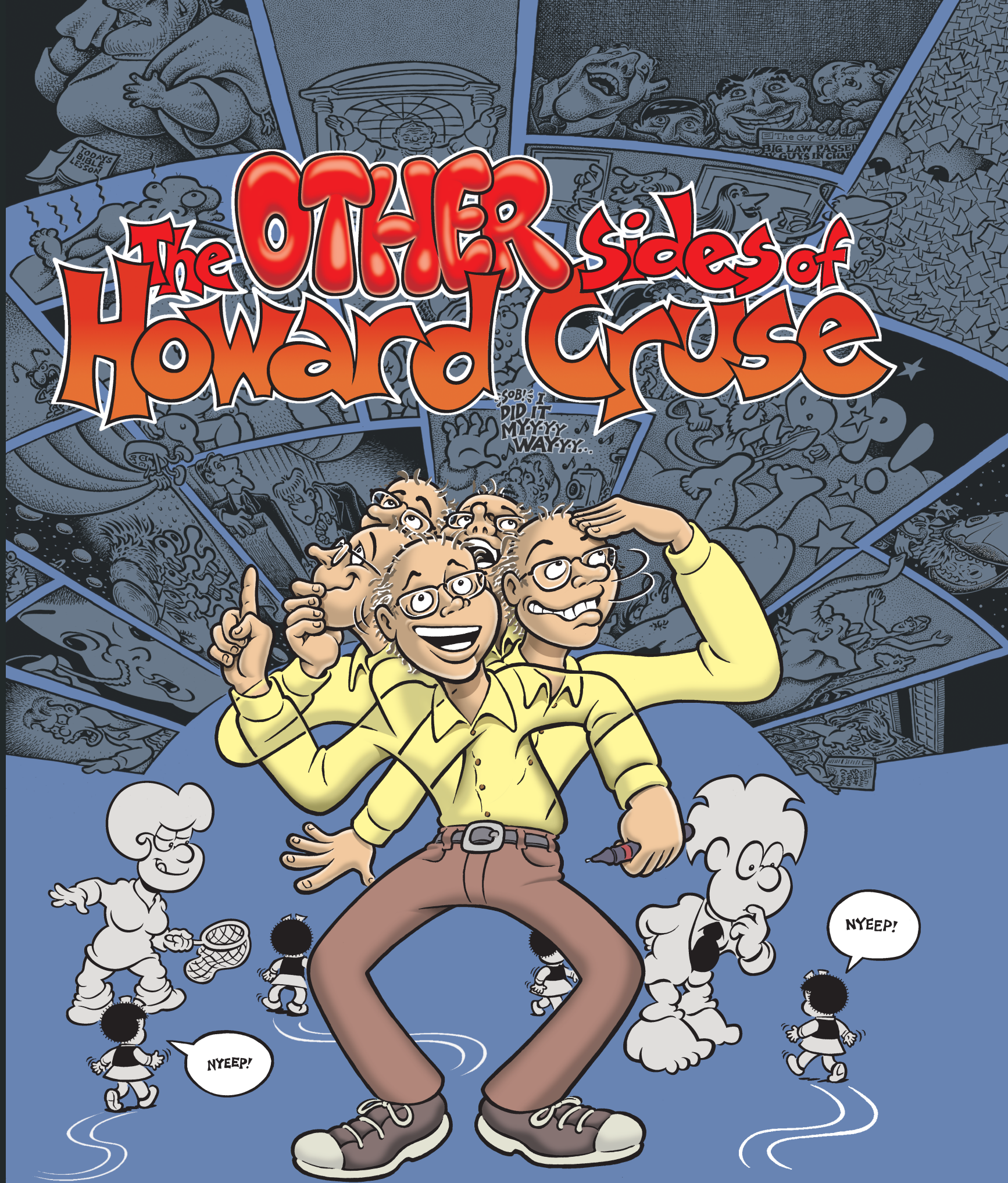


The OTHER Sides of Howard Cruse



Introduction by Jay Lynch



COVERED WITH DENSE, TINY LETTERING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE!

BY DAWN THEY HAD BLOSSOMED INTO CUNNING MINIATURE APPROXIMATIONS OF THEIR FINAL FORM!



...EXCEPT FOR ONE OR TWO THAT TURNED PUTRID AND HAD TO BE FLUSHED!



IF YOU COULD OVERLOOK THEIR OFF-PUTTING ODOR OF GASEOUS AMMONIA, YOU'D FIND YOURSELF ENDLESSLY AMUSED BY THEIR ANTICS!



HOWARD CRUSE
COVER ARTIST
ADAM STAFFARONI
ASSISTANT EDITOR
STEPHANIE GONZAGA
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

THEIR MOST UNEXPECTED ATTRIBUTE WAS A WEIRD, SCREECHING NOISE THEY RELENTLESSLY EMITTED—A CROSS BETWEEN A HIGH-PITCHED BELCH AND THE SOUND PRODUCED BY RUBBING THE SURFACE OF A BALLOON!

UH...
THEY DO
STOP DOING
THAT WHEN THEY
GET OLDER!

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THE
GRO
LOS
THEIR

I USED
BOOKS

WHAT A
WORLD T

MATURE
HUNDRED
CREATING
FEEDERS
TO

NYEEP!

1

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Any list of individuals who have made my life in comics possible would have to both begin and end with Denis Kitchen. I say that not only because Denis gave me my start in the field by including me among his *Kitchen Sink Press* stable of underground comix contributors, but also because he has remained my friend and colleague and continued to provide new opportunities ever since, most recently by joining with John Lind, his Kitchen and Lind Associates Agency partner, in negotiating the contract for the BOOM! Town book you're holding in your hands.

My comics career began, as does this collection, with the *Barefootz* series I introduced to Alabama in 1971. *Barefootz* had time to find its footing while appearing in a series of publications that began with the University of Alabama's Tuscaloosa-campus student newspaper, the *Crimson White*, where Despina Vodantis was then serving as editor. In the years that followed, platforms in Birmingham-based weeklies were provided by the *Alternate's* Ken Forbes Jr., then by *Paperman's* Randall Williams, and finally by *Birmingham After Dark's* Stephen Jerrell.

Although I stopped publishing new *Barefootz* stories in 1979, limited reprints of the existing material have surfaced a time or two since then. I'm grateful to Deni Loubert for including a one-shot title called *Barefootz: The Comix Book Stories*, in her Renegade Comics line in 1986; and to Kim Thompson for publishing the Fantagraphics Books collection *Early Barefootz* in 1990.

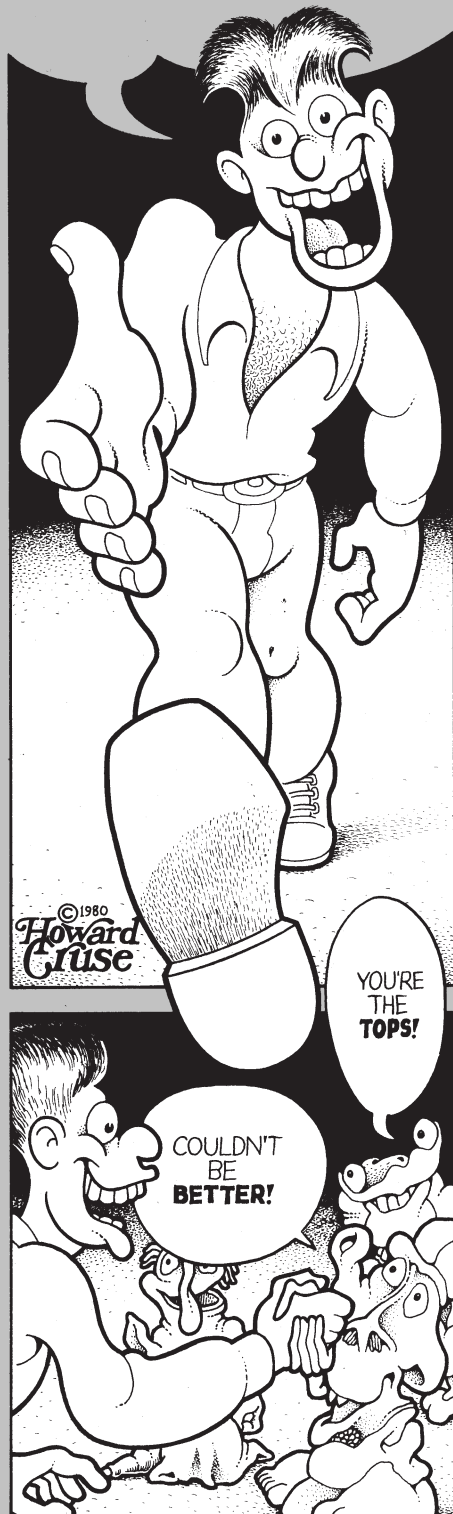
As I moved through my post-*Barefootz* phase of comics creation, a number of other individuals have earned my gratitude for the roles they have played in placing this book's strips and stories in the hands of readers. Among them are Howard Zimmerman, the founding editor at *Starlog*, Ted White, who welcomed me into *Heavy Metal*, and Julie Simmons-Lynch, who also used my work during her subsequent editorship of that magazine. Dean Mullaney and Larry Shall made room for me in their respective magazines *Eclipse* and *Alien Encounters*. Editor Richard Goldstein and art director George Delmerico gave my visibility a huge boost by soliciting my comics for the *Village Voice*. I'm grateful to Trina Robbins for enlisting me as a contributor to *Choices*, the pro-choice benefit book she edited; to Tom Toldrian and Jacqueline Jouret for giving me regular showcases in *Harpoon* during its too-brief life span; to Jennifer Camper for bringing me into her *Juicy Mother* anthologies; and to Mykl Sivak, who did the same for his *Nib-Lit* project.

I owe special thanks, of course, to Adam Staffaroni of BOOM! Town for being as thoughtful and creative an editor as anyone could ask in assembling the comics in this book; and to designer Stephanie Gonzaga for making the finished product look terrific.

And finally, I am grateful to my husband, Ed Sedarbaum, for providing support and encouragement to me while I've been working on this collection, as he has done during all of the various cartooning projects I've undertaken during our thirty-three years together.

Howard Cruse
Williamstown, MA, 2012

HOW'M I DOWN?

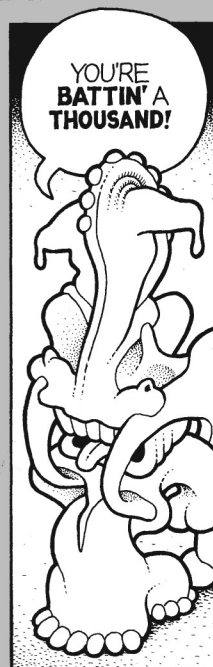
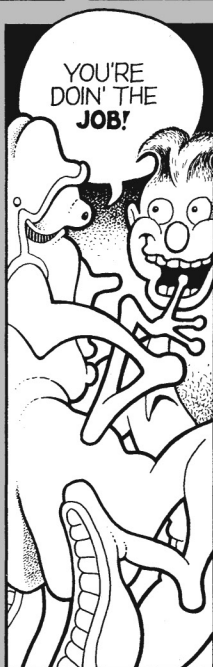
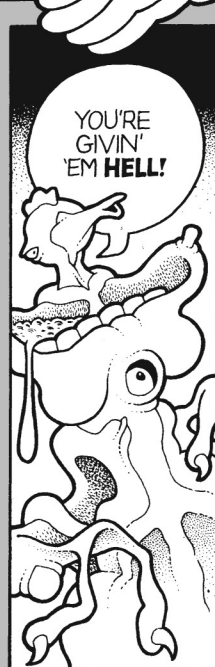
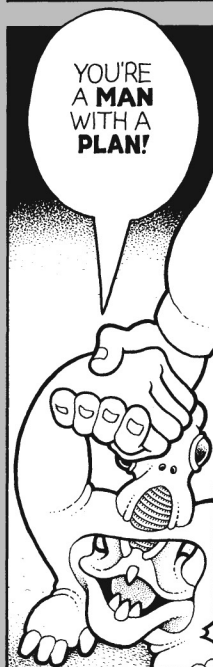
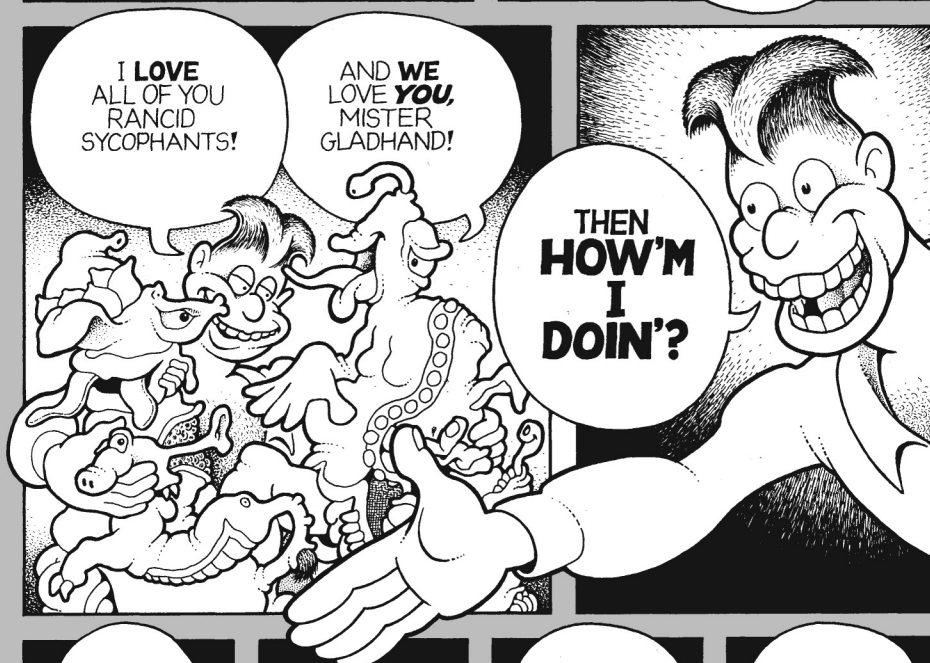
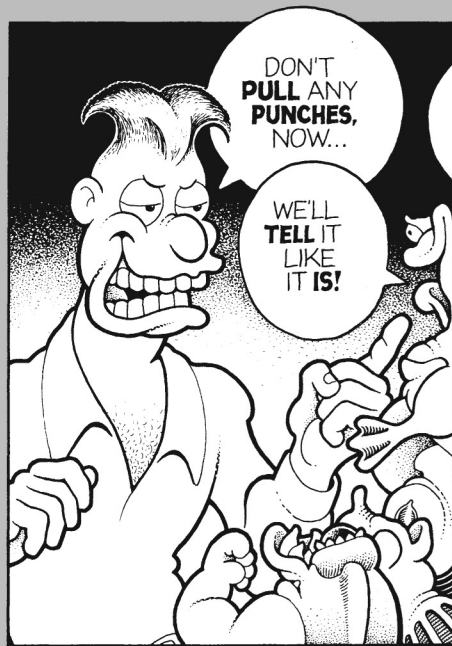


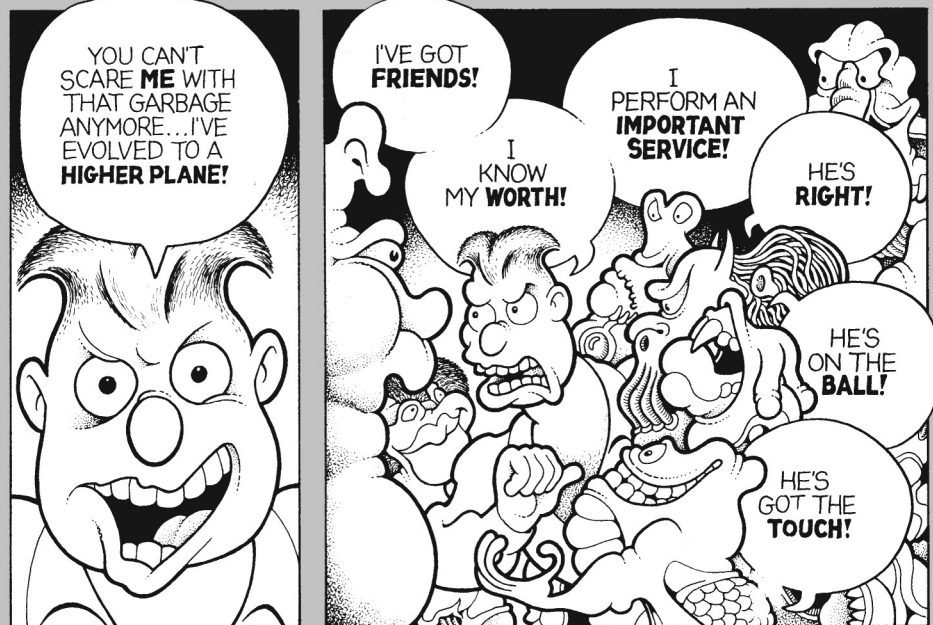
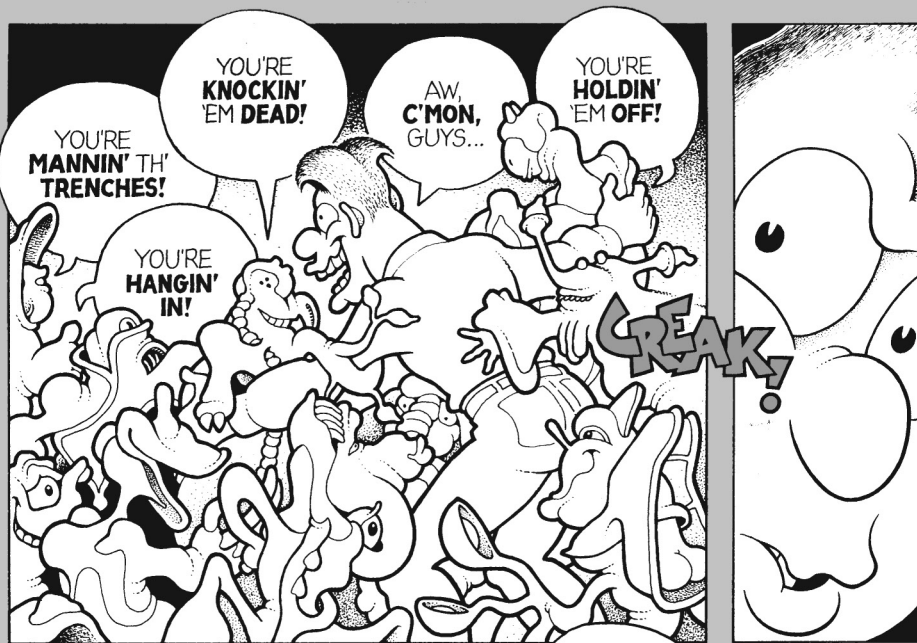
INTRODUCTION

By Jay Lynch

I was first introduced to Howard Cruse's work in the pages of *Snarf* and other underground anthology comix published by Denis Kitchen's Krupp Comic Works around 1972. In 1975, Cruse's *Barefootz* got his own book and became a regular Krupp title. But the printed history, and the early development of this cast of characters, goes back to 1971, when the strip first appeared in The University of Alabama's college newspaper *The Crimson White*. It was there that the players evolved their personas, their interrelationships, their schtick, so to speak. So the *Barefootz* gang entered the world of underground comic books fully developed, and a weird development it was indeed! On first glance, it looks like a *Love Is* kind of cutezoid *Happiness Is A Warm Puppy* type of thing, but on an unhurried reading, one can not help but feel the looming presence of a cosmic dark side in the *Barefootz* universe. Behind our first impression of surface cuteness, there lurks a disquieting thread of anxiety with a voracious appetite, poised to devour the sweetness and extinguish the light of one's initial impression of the strip.

The *Barefootz* mythos, as I understand it, goes kind of like this: Dolly is more or less the Daisy Mae to the shoeless Barefootz's Abner. 'Ceptin' it ain't a weddin' she's lookin' fo'. She's just in the market to satisfy her carnal lust. But Barefootz constantly rejects her advances. Then there is Headrack, the also-shoeless hippie artist. Possibly representing the bohemian side of Cruse's personality as Barefootz represents his compromise with society. Barefootz lives with, and is highly respected by a herd of roaches. But underneath Barefootz's bed resides an unseen, tentacled creature. This is the malevolent Glory, who when piqued coughs up live frogs which feed upon Barefootz's congregation of roaches. That is the basic setup of the Gospel According to Barefootz. Cute on the surface, but delving deeper it incorporates life, death, God and Devil and provides Cruse with an all-encompassing cosmology in which to convey his humor. Cruse admits that LSD did play a huge role in shaping the *Barefootz* universe. See "How Barefootz Was Created" (p. 87). In the '60s and '70s, it certainly played a major role in the shaping of all of our universes! In the early days of underground comix, Cruse's rep was more or less based on his *Barefootz* material - comics drawn in a cute style, but with a dark side to them as well.





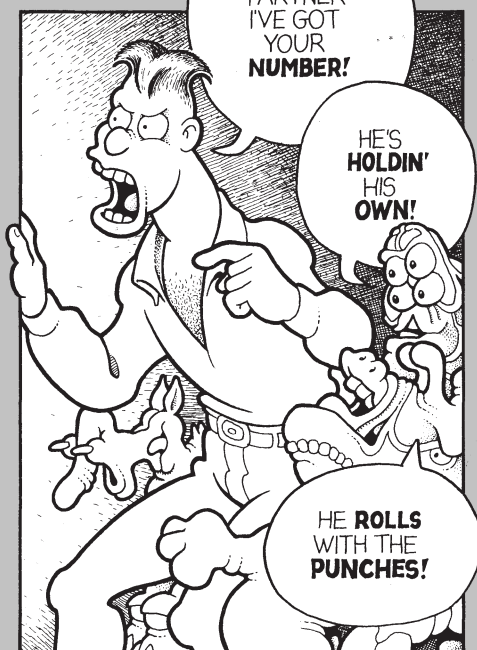
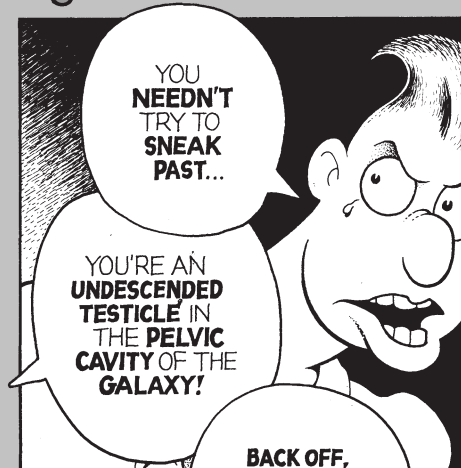
It was therefore little wonder that in 1985 Art Spiegelman, Mark Newgarden and Len Brown at Topps Chewing Gum called on Howard, along with several other cartoonist masters of the cute-yet-disturbing, to work on the original concepts for Garbage Pail Kids. Though the final design on the characters wound up being done by John Pound, Howard was among the artists chosen to do the comic strips on the backs of the Garbage Pail Kids cards. Prior to the Garbage Pail Kids project, in 1980, Howard had updated the designs on the characters and did the final art for two batches of the Bazooka Joe comic strips, that came with the Bazooka Bubble Gum, for Topps.

Like many of the seminal underground cartoonists, in the pre-hippie days Cruse's work appeared in the *MAD* imitator magazines. In the early and mid-1960s, this was a big market for the group of folks who would later become the underground comix pioneers. Robert Crumb's work appeared in *Yell* magazine. I wrote for *Sick* and *Cracked*, and Cruse wrote and drew for *Sick*, *Cracked*, and *Fooley*. But that material, like the Topps stuff, was just "commercial work" for us. It wasn't until the advent of the underground comix in the psychedelic latter part of the '60s that we found ourselves in a world where we were totally free to express our more disquieting ideas.

And it was fun, fun, fun 'til daddy took the t-square away. First came the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 ruling on obscenity that threw national standards of what constituted "socially-redeeming" content overboard and left it to the whims of local communities to decide what was and was not acceptable for publication. Then, during the Reagan administration, the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, a.k.a. The Meese Commission, stepped in to complete the demonization of sex in published words and pictures and further empower local censorship of our work. This event had a chilling effect on our editorial freedom, and caused many a retail outlet to cease carrying underground comix. Howard tackled the topic admirably in his "Creepy Snuff Porn" yarn (p. 176). Over the top? Maybe. But my verdict on the case is justifiable schadenfreude for the purpose of self-defense!

It is the later Cruse work that to me reflects the man's genius. His satirical take on corporate irresponsibility titled "Damage Control" (p. 199), originally published in *Harpoon* magazine in 1999, was eerily prophetic! Originally this tale was influenced by Union Carbide's improbable corporate rehabilitation after the fumes from their plant in Bhopal caused injuries to 200,000 local residents. In his version, Cruse has the disgruntled employee who caused the fictional accident in his coffee-maker plant assassinated, as





part of a public relations campaign, by a sympathetic little old lady who nursed orphaned baby seals back to health. Life copies art. In 2011, Coca-Cola, a corporation whose negative press includes an alleged role in the assassination of dozens of union organizers in Colombia and practices in India which are draining vast amounts of public groundwater and turning farming communities into virtual deserts, started a "Save the Polar Bear Fund" to take the heat off of them from easily-swayed environmentalists. Baby seals? Polar Bears? Are Coke's P.R. people reading Cruse's comics?

"The Nightmares of Little L*I*" (p. 129) and "Raising Nancies" (p. 193) put a hilarious yet eerie edge on the iconic comic characters of our youth as they drag fantasy down to the level of reality in the first strip and vice versa in the second. "Why Are We Losing The War on Art?" (p. 221) and "It's Orwell and Good" (p. 173) are classic satires.

And the autobiographical narrations by Cruse examining everything from Acid and UFOs, to TV Pundrity and death itself are priceless! So read on, and enjoy the work of a true master of wit, wisdom and weirdness! And tell your friends to buy this book! It's just a matter of time before all copies are seized and burned! For soon a cleansing will surely be upon us!

- Jay Lynch
Candor, NY, 2012

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BAREFOOTZ



OH,
WOW!

YEAH...
LIKE,
WOW!

WOW!

FAR
OUT!

FEW HOURS, WE
D TRANSPORTED
ONDROUS REALMS
N LIGHTENMENT!

FINALLY, IN THE DUSKY
MELLOW AFTERGLOW

cular motion...
a boat upon the sea...

...AN
...IS ARE DOIN'!

AH...
ST
OT

GASP!

VE ME, WE V
PREPARED F
GHT THAT GRE
EN WE OPEN
THE DO

HAD
RED POOR
NTRAILS
PE-PAPER
BIZARRE

THAT'S WHEN THE **REST** OF US FLIPPED OUT!

I
GUESS
I GOT
**CARRIED
AWAY!**

HEH
HEH!

OGGLE
NOOBLE
VOOP...

GIBBLE
SNERBLE...

...S WITH
...?

Crush

BAREFOOTZ

by Howard Cruse

TUSSY
Comes Back

**DON'T
OPEN
THAT
DOOR!**

**CAN'T YOU
SEE WE'RE
HAVING A
SEANCE?**

PASS
THE JOINT,
PLEASE...



DAMN! I WAS
REALLY **UP** FOR
A GLASS OF
MILK!



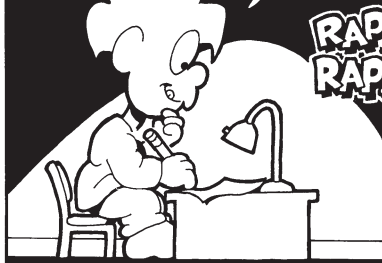
THOSE ROACHES ARE GONNA
HAVE TO LEARN THAT IT'S
MY KITCHEN
AS MUCH AS
THEIRS!



WE'LL DEFINITELY
HAVE TO HAVE A
MEETING ABOUT IT!



I'D BETTER START
WORKING OUT THE
AGENDA...



IT'S HARD TO
CONCENTRATE
WITH ALL THOSE
ROACHES **RAPPING**
IN THERE!



NO...
WAIT!...

IT'S
SOMEBODY
KNOCKING
AT THE
**FRONT
DOOR!**

