

Comic books aren't just for kids

Many adult-oriented comic books are on the market, and the number rises daily. Here are a few of the best.

Cerebus, by Dave Sim, Aardvark-Vanahelm Books

Cerebus is a 3-foot-tall, English-speaking aardvark. He is a former tax collector, former mercenary, former prime minister, currently Pope and always a con man. In 10 years, this book has developed from a simple sword-and-sorcery parody into a deft, occasionally brilliant political satire.

American Flaggi, by Howard Chaykin, First Comics

American Flagg is a typical comic book — colorful, violent, sexy, fantastic, funny. The only thing it isn't is silly.

It is a top-notch science fiction adventure. Chaykin has plenty to say about issues such as prejudice, politics and the American dream, but he says it in a way that's fresh, exciting and a lot of fun.

Elfquest, by Wendy and Richard Pini, W&P Graphics

W&P Graphics recently published the 20th and final issue of Elfquest. However the entire run still is available in several different formats. Don't be put off by the cuteness of the elves, this is not a kiddie book. It is a meticulously conceived, masterfully executed science-fiction novel. Wendy Pini's artwork is stunningly beautiful. This may be the best comic book ever produced.

Love and Rockets, by Gilbert Jaime and Mario Hernandez, Fzuts-graphics Books.

Undescribable. Each of the Hernandez brothers has created his own world where fantasy and reality blend uniquely and brilliantly. So warped, this one carries a "recommended for mature readers" disclaimer on the cover. L&E can get a little raw, folks.

The X-Men, by Chris Claremont and John Romita Jr., Marvel

For almost a decade this has been one of the most popular books in the country. Chris Claremont has set the standard for the modern superhero adventure. Although much maligned because of its phenomenal success, this is still one of the most addictive comics around.

The Fantastic Four, by John Byrne, Marvel

John Byrne is probably the most popular artist in comics today. Here he's trying to evoke the spontaneity and sense of wonder of the classic Lee-Kirby Fantastic Four of the '60s. More than that he brings in a warmth and maturity all his own.

Batman and Detective, by Gene Colan and Doug Moench, DC

The Batman is a classic, and Colan and Moench treat him with the respect he deserves. Nothing like the old T.V. show. Today's Batman more closely resembles the dark avenger that the character was created to be.

Fans remain loyal to old comics

Comic books have many different readers — some are nostalgic. They collect comics for innocence and charm.

The entrepreneurial fans collect the books because they expect them to increase in value in a few years.

Some fans are the tragic types, who cannot deal with reality so they escape into the fantasy world of the comics. And there is another kind of fan — a new kind — the intelligent, literate, well-adjusted adult who reads and enjoys the sort of comic that is written for an intelligent, literate, well-adjusted adult.

Larry Lorenz owns Trade-a-Tape & Comicenter, 227 No. 11th St. It is Lincoln's only comics specialty shop.

Lorenz says comics have changed in the last 15 years. When he started reading comic books, they all had the same format and were all the same price — 12 cents. Now you can find comics in all sizes and prices, although you won't find any for 12 cents. Today comics range in price from 65 cents to \$3.

The average comics reader has not

changed as much. Superheroes were what Lorenz read as a kid, and, he said, they are still what sells best.

When asked about the average today, Tangeman points to "Secret Wars." "It's the worst drawn, worst written, worst plotted thing I've ever read," he said. "It's hot, it's popular but it's bad."

Lorenz says comic books should not be all a person reads, but he does think they are a good source of light entertainment for adults. He says shops like the Comicenter have saved comics by stocking and selling quality comic books for adults.

Unlike Larry Lorenz, Jeff Tangeman does not make a living from comic books. Tangeman is a sophomore at UNL and is also the host and programmer of Radio Free Lincoln, a weekly program on KZUM radio.

Tangeman said he has been reading comics his whole life. He says he reads more for the art than the story, but he does not consider good art an excuse for bad writing.

Tangeman also collects comics. His oldest comics are from the early '60s, he said. The most he has ever paid for a comic book is \$24 for a less-than-perfect copy of "X-Men" no. 4.

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