



Mail Order Geniuses

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Spotlighting the legendary cartoonists' courses.

This glorious history-and-compilation from Marschall Books is long overdue — filling a hole in the chronicle of America's cartoon and comics heritage. For generations, there was hardly a major cartoonist or animator in American who had not been a youthful "student" of the many mail-order cartooning "schools" and correspondence courses. At one time these institutions provided rites of passage for aspiring cartoonists, illustrators, and animators.

Instant discovery of, and cultivation of, talent invariably was promised by these schools and books... as was success ("Cartoonists Make Big Money!!!"). Thousands of youngsters, over several decades, dutifully bought their tools, set up their bedroom or basement "studios," and laboriously copied the lessons about perspective, anatomy, shading, wrinkles, folds, action, animals, the human form (ah, the human form)... even those little shadows under characters' shoes. Many students mailed their drawings in and anxiously awaited corrections by the masters themselves (or reasonable facsimiles of celebrity cartoonists).

Mail-Order Geniuses surveys the legendary correspondence courses of the Landon School, the Federal School, W L Evans, ZIM, Clare Briggs, Billy DeBeck, Russell Patterson, Jefferson Machamer, Charles Kuhn, Bill Nolan, Joe Musial, Art Instruction Institute, Famous Cartoonists, and others.

The book will reproduce the lessons — in truth, many of these courses were excellent teaching tools — including tips, sketches, wisdom, and drawing-board photos of the great cartoonists of their time. Some lesson books will be reprinted in facsimile. The book will also document the many success stories and accomplished students who "graduated" from the American institutions of another day — Roy Crane and Milton Caniff were Landon School students; the W L Evans School touted a letter from the satisfied, but barely published, student Chester Gould; Charles Schulz's work as a student so impressed what is now the Art Instruction Institute that they hired him as an instructor of students' work.

This "class reunion" is more than good history, good art, and good fun: it is a vital piece of cartooning history, never documented until this landmark volume. 48 pages of color, black-and-white illustrations throughout

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