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The Complete Peanuts 1957-1958 (Vol. 4) (The Complete Peanuts)



Synopsis

Peanuts definitively enters its golden age. Linus becomes more eloquent, and more neurotic; Charlie Brown cascades further down the hill to loserdom; but the rising star is master mimic and blanket thief Snoopy. As the 1950s close down, Peanuts definitively enters its golden age. Linus, who had just learned to speak in the previous volume, becomes downright eloquent and even begins to fend off Lucy's bullying; even so, his security neurosis becomes more pronounced, including a harrowing two-week "Lost Weekend" sequence of blanketlessness. Charlie Brown cascades further down the hill to loserdom, with spectacularly lost kites, humiliating baseball losses (including one where he becomes "the Goat" and is driven from the field in a chorus of BAAAAHs); at least his newly acquired "pencil pal" affords him some comfort. Pig-Pen, Shermey, Violet, and Patty are also around, as is an increasingly Beethoven-fixated Schroeder. But the rising star is undoubtedly Snoopy. He's at the center of the most graphically dynamic and action-packed episodes (the ones in which he attempts to grab Linus's blanket at a dead run). He even tentatively tries to sleep on the crest of his doghouse roof once or twice, with mixed results. And his imitations continue apace, including penguins, anteaters, sea monsters, vultures and (much to her chagrin) Lucy. No wonder the beagle is the cover star of this volume. 730 b/w comic strips

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Customer Reviews

This fourth volume shows Peanuts keeping the stride it slowly established over the first six years of its existence. Here the characters pretty much look as they will look for decades to come. The cast also becomes more solidified with Charlie Brown, Lucy, Linus, Schroeder, Pig Pen, and of course Snoopy. Sherry, Violet, and Patty show up far less frequently than earlier. Schulz would add more characters later (most notably Woodstock, Peppermint Patty, and Marcie), but here he established his core cast. Snoopy completely comes into his own here, and his image on the cover couldn't be more appropriate. He appears with startlingly more frequency throughout 1957 and 1958. By the end of this volume his top spot gets nearly set in stone. And it's not hard to see why. Here the long transformation from the "real" pet dog of the early 1950s to an almost surreal fantasm of a dog nears fruition (he still hasn't put on his WWI goggles or quaffed root beer yet, though). The imitations that began in the last volume continue inexorably here. He becomes a polar bear, a pouncing wild animal, a sea monster, he imitates Lucy, he gets called "ol' Dime a Dozen" and "Fuzzy Face", he imitates a penguin, and, best of all, a vulture. He also begins to really appreciate classical music (he even accompanies Schroeder on violin), sleeps with his head in his dog dish, and violently whips Linus around by his blanket. The extent of his transformation shows on the January 7th, 1958 strip where Charlie Brown says "The teacher told us to make a drawing of a real dog." Snoopy has truly come into his own. And later on, he became the most recognizable character of the Twentieth Century apart from Mickey Mouse. Charlie Brown continues his quest for something meaningful and positive. But, as usual, some snags occur. He singlehandedly loses the baseball championship, is absent for his team's first win, gets tangled up in a truss of kite strings, and says "rats!" an awful lot. The strip on September 4th, 1957 shows Charlie Brown acquiescing in the very depths of his misery. Linus asks him "Doesn't looking at all these stars make you feel sort of insignificant, Charlie Brown?" He answers, "No, I'm so insignificant already it doesn't bother me." Like most of Peanuts, Schulz brilliantly mixes the sad with the funny. Some of Schulz's legacy also shows in this volume. At least two cartoons appear here that must have provided some inspiration for Bill Watterson, creator of the incredible "Calvin And Hobbes". A Sunday strip from January 26, 1958 shows Linus vengefully sculpting a hideous snow monster to devour Lucy's "snow bunnies". And, on January 18th, 1958 Linus and Charlie Brown wax historical while wiping out on a snowsled. These remind us that Schulz had great influence on more or less all late twentieth century comic strip art. No one yet has emerged from the enormous shadow that "Peanuts" cast on the medium. One of the volume's absolute highlights is the February 23rd, 1959 Sunday strip. Charlie Brown walks through the neighborhood while the other children scorn, mock, and laugh at

him. when he finally arrives home he switches on a radio to hear "...and what, in this world, is more delightful than the gay wonderful laughter of little children?" He gives the radio a good boot. This masterpiece of a strip encapsulates the entire story of Charlie Brown. And this volume helps encapsulate the legacy left by one of the greatest comic strips ever created. Not only that, "Peanuts" not only influenced its own medium, but in the 1960s it influenced television, music, Broadway, and humor in general (especially of the self-deprecating sort). As each volume of this great series by Fantagraphics appears, that influence becomes easier and easier to appreciate.

'741.5 SCH' That may be gibberish to some, but to me, it was the Dewey-decimal system location of the Peanuts strips in my Elementary school library. I really gained my love of Peanuts from those library-bound books, but always remembered coming back to 'The Peanuts Jubilee,' which was (at the time) the only way to find insight into the earlier strips. With Fantagraphics Books, we've been able to see what many of those early years were like. With the latest volume, we've moved into familiar territory with some of the more familiar characters and stories. In this volume, a number of revelations come about: -Lucy goes to extreme measures and throws Schroeder's piano to the kite-eating tree. -Snoopy befriends one of the many birds that hangs around his doghouse, and the friendship with Woodstock is born. -The Little Red-Haired Girl moves out of the neighborhood. -The Head-Beagle appears (in name only). Soon after his 'appearance,' Snoopy is promoted to the role...and finds out how hard a job it is. -Snoopy becomes the first beagle on the moon. Some of the comics in this collection have been seen in some previous collections, but most cut out some of the key bits. One example was a previous Peanuts collection that showed the aftermath of the Little Red-Haired Girl moving away, but not what came before. One note to make is that there appear to be two different versions of this volume. If you purchase the volume as a single book, it includes a 3-panel strip that was not included in the previous volume. The version that comes in the 2-book set (The Complete Peanuts 1967-1970) does not have the missing strip.

This is another transitional 2 years in Peanuts (with cartoons that appeared in You Need Help, Charlie Brown, The Unsinkable Charlie Brown and You'll Flip, Charlie Brown). Sally has lazy eye and has to wear an eye patch (which Snoopy often steals to play pirates, until he gets "scuttled" by Captain Sally). A bird who has trouble flying (he still has yet to make his formal debut, but he still looks like Woodstock) flies on Snoopy's nose ("Good grief, the return of the native!"). Snoopy debuts 2 of his alter ego's- a novel writer ("It was a dark and stormy night...") and the World War I Flying Ace ("Curse you, Red Baron and this stupid war!"). Charlie Brown watches in bemusement

and thinks "Some people have dogs who chase cars, some people have dogs who bite the mailman... I think MY dog has finally flipped!" Lucy is the arm-wrestling champion on her block (later used in *It Was a Short Summer, Charlie Brown*), but can she withstand the paw of the Masked Marvel? Charlie Brown tries his hand (or foot) again with the football with a new twist up his own sleeve. Also, he has to endure dandelions on his pitcher's mound is covered with dandelions, which Frieda and Lucy beg him not to cut because he looks so cute up there with them (even Schroeder agrees). Snoopy falls in love with a dog on the beach and tries to impress her with his surfing skills. The next winter, he's still not over her and tries to forget through... eating, what else? Also Snoopy's doghouse gets burned down (Schulz got a lot of sympathy cards in real life on behalf of the beagle!). Also, Linus and Lucy move away (later used in *Is This Goodbye, CB?*) and Schroeder reluctantly admits he misses her (he sees her face by the piano long after her demise and thinks "Don't tell me I've grown accustomed to THAT face!"). Charlie Brown deals with the loss of his buddy Linus by taking up blanket-toting and of course, gets clobbered by Snoopy, who thinks he's still playing games with Linus! Needless to say, the Van Pelts move back (Sparky got a lot of letters requesting their reinstatement, which he had planned all along!). Charlie Brown finds something he's good at- spelling, though he gets maze confused with Willy Mays' last name (later used in the bigscreen debut of *A Boy Named Charlie Brown*). In the fall of 1966, Charlie Brown is promoted to traffic director and takes his new job a little too seriously. 2 new characters make their debut- a kid named Roy (who looks a little like Shermie with wavy hair) whom we see in the camp episodes of 1965 and 1966 and Peppermint Patty, a tomboy who has a lot of athletic ability but not much on brains. Roy is introduced as a shy, lonely kid and Charlie Brown feels honored to have finally made a friend (after his cabin mates ridicule him and criticize his lack of baseball skills; doesn't he get enough of that at home?). Linus meets Roy the next year, whom he asks "Say, aren't you that weird kid who totes a blanket with him everywhere he goes?". Linus also gets a box of jelly-bread sandwiches from his otherwise crabby sister. Beyond that, Roy is also responsible for bringing Peppermint Patty to the neighborhood, who clobbers Charlie, or in her case, Chuck Brown at baseball (Charlie Brown gets a new nickname as does "Lucille" VanPelt). Linus fills Peppermint Patty's ears with stories of the Great Pumpkin. Later, at the end of 1966, the Sunday cartoons have the following caption: "Peanuts Featuring Good Ol' Charlie Brown." As if that's not enough, the Peanuts gang makes its television debut in 1965.

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