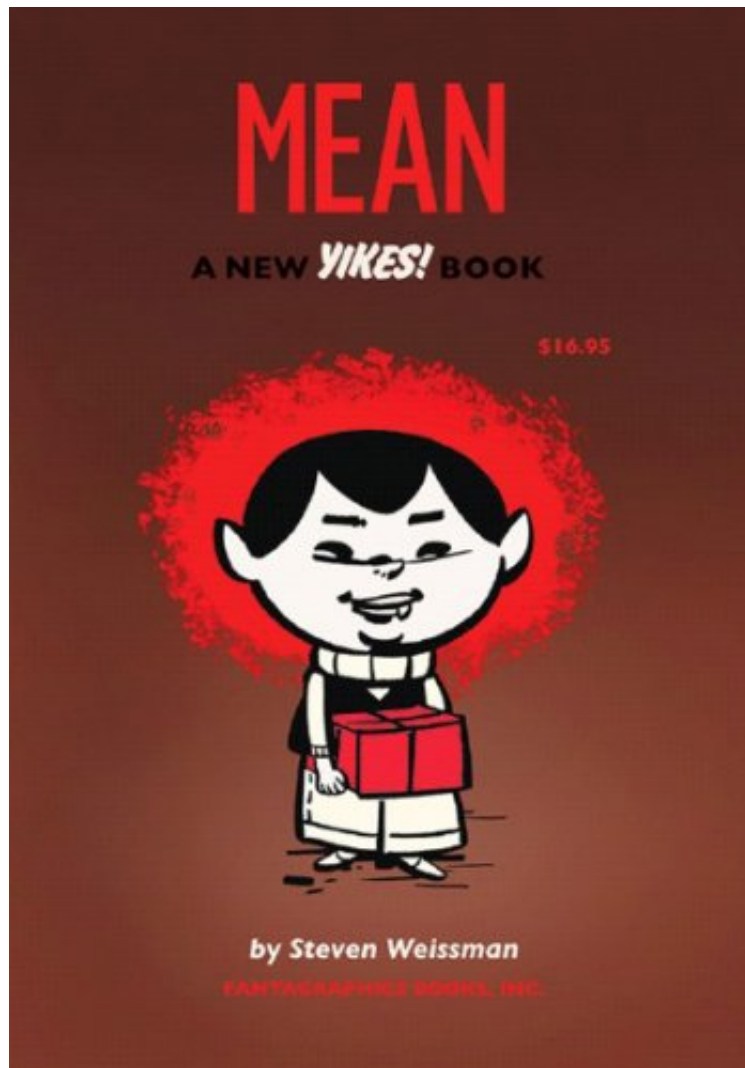


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## Mean

*Steven Weissman*

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**Steven Weissman : Mean** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mean:

Cruel has never been so cute and funny as in the hands of the "Yikes" gang. Steven Weissman's Yikes comics and characters are some of the most adorable and idiosyncratic cartoon creations in print today—beloved by the masses and the cognoscenti alike. Over the last decade, readers have been delighted by such strange and hilariously cruel books as *Don't Call Me Stupid*, *Champs*, *White Flower Day*, and *Chewing Gum In Church*. Like Huckleberry Finn,

Mickey Mouse, and Hannibal Lecter before them, his characters—Li'l Bloody, the Pullapart Boy, Kid Medusa, X-Ray Spence, and "Sweet" Chubby Cheeks (just to name a few)—have affixed themselves in our collective cultural imagination. Indeed, it's hard to recall a time when they weren't a part of our lives, hustling about "Milltown," perfectly drawn and perfectly awful. The cast seemed to appear fully formed by the end of the 1990s, and ready for their "close up." Every success story has its humble—or arrogant and mean-spirited—beginnings, and now Fantagraphics Books is tickled pink to present *Mean*, collecting Weissman's early, self-published, unpublished, and otherwise rare "Yikes" comics. Enjoy your favorite characters' awkward, embarrassing first appearances; watch them stumble from their early, crude glory into their mature sadistic and masochistic selves. Li'l Bloody and the Pullapart Boy steal candy, X-Ray Spence answers his fan mail, and Kid Medusa falls in love (twice!). Early critical attention, while overwhelmingly positive, often questioned what Weissman "was on" when he came up with these odd tales of young friendship. Read *Mean* and guess for yourself.

From Publishers Weekly This delightful collection spotlights early work by Weissman, whose recent *Chewing Gum in Church* and *Kid Firechief* have generated much deserved acclaim. Weissman is the increasingly rare cartoonist whose simple, lush works hide a wicked intelligence and biting wit. He employs a classic, almost 1950s graphic style to tell stories of mischievous children. In this collection, Weissman focuses on a cast of monster kids, including Li'l Bloody (a kid vampire), Kid Medusa (a child Medusa), Pullapart Boy (his limbs pop off) and others. These twisted little ones are like the Peanuts gang on a bad acid trip. They punch, bite, kick and abuse one another in their eternal quest for friendship and mayhem. Weissman always walks the line between the comedic and the corny, but his pacing, dialogue and drawing is spot-on throughout. There's nothing quite like Kid Medusa feeling lonely or Pullapart Boy in shambles. The characters heighten all the universal childhood feelings with grotesque flair. Also included is a lengthy adventure featuring Rip Van Helsing, which is must reading, as is the whole book. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist If you think the first Peanuts strips look rough, scan these early installments of *Yikes*, Weissman's parodic tribute to Schulz's monument. As fellow cartoonist Jaime Hernandez (*Love and Rockets*) notes in the diminutive introduction, the characters have sort of middle-aged faces. And they're kids, y' know. Of course, they're also a vampire (Li'l Bloody), a loosely stitched Frankenstein monster (Pullapart Boy), a gorgon (Kid Medusa), a . . . what? . . . mad scientist? (X-Ray Spence), and a zombie (Dead Boy, Pullapart's brother; their dad is Dr. Boy), so a certain incongruity with normal children isn't inapt. Weissman has since streamlined them into the malevolent Kewpie dolls they are today and their adventures into four-panel gag strips (see *Chewing Gum in Church*, 2006). Their early incarnations may be rickety, but Weissman deployed them in stories that go on for pages and even link together, as in Li'l Bloody and Pullapart's outrageous time-travel trip that eventually intersects with Adam and Eve in Eden. Charlie Brown and company never had this kind of fun. Olson, Ray A cartoonist who is so good, so funny, so original, he doesn't have to be serious to be taken seriously. -- Jaime Hernandez, , co-creator of *Love and Rockets* Steven Weissman is the best cartoonist to explore the fantastic world of children since John Stanley (*Little Lulu*). -- Gilbert Hernandez, co-creator of *Love and Rockets* Weissman indirectly captures childhood better than most literal representations do. -- The Onion