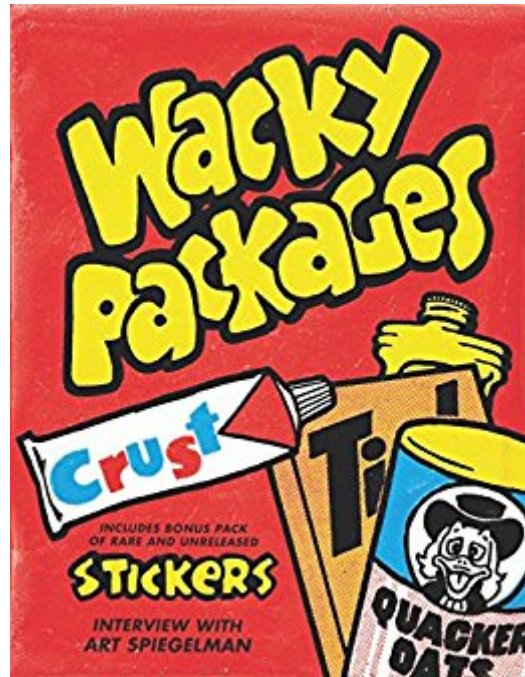


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Wacky Packages



Synopsis

Wacky Packages--a series of collectible stickers featuring parodies of consumer products and well-known brands and packaging--were first produced by the Topps company in 1967, then revived in 1973 for a highly successful run. In fact, for the first two years they were published, Wacky Packages were the only Topps product to achieve higher sales than their flagship line of baseball cards. The series has been relaunched several times over the years, most recently to great success in 2007. Known affectionately among collectors as "Wacky Packs," as a creative force with artist Art Spiegelman, the stickers were illustrated by such notable comics artists as Kim Deitch, Bill Griffith, Jay Lynch, and Norm Saunders. This first-ever collection of Series One through Series Seven (from 1973 and 1974) celebrates the 35th anniversary of Wacky Packages and is sure to amuse collectors and fans young and old.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This beautiful little coffee table book is a finely printed Wacky Packages photo album. Covering Series 1 through 7 (1973-74), each 5-1/2" X 7-1/8" page reproduces one larger-than-actual-size Wacky sticker. (All 223 of them! -- even the Choke Wagon and Bum Chex rarities from Series

4). The beautiful thing about this book is the high-quality production (printed and bound in China). The dust jacket effectively replicates an original wax wrapper. The indicia states "Most of the images in this book were reproduced from transparencies made off the original art," and it really shows: Not only is the artwork 150-200% larger than the actual stickers, the four-color printing is very fine -- looks to be 400-line resolution. Super pretty -- even if not bubblegum scented! There's an interesting foreword and afterword here, too, by original Wacky illustrators Art Spiegelman and Jay Lynch respectively. A concise image index completes the 240-page book. Topps would go on to produce nine more of these "original" series of Wacky Packages; not covered here are Series 8 through 16, ending in 1976. But Wacky Packages stickers never truly went away, having appeared and re-appeared sporadically as sets during 35 years ever since. In fact, they're currently enjoying a bit of a renaissance in the form of the 2008 'Flashback' series -- a 'new' collection of 72 Wacky Packages stickers that, in fact, reproduce quite a few of the original old Wackies as shown in this book. But besides tickling the nostalgia of anyone who was around back then, who appreciated the nutty gross-out humor of these parodies, it's these remarkably skilled illustrations that still prove worthy.

What a treat to see a little corner of American pop culture get a decent looking book. Normally this sort of title would be produced by well meaning amateurs with no professional publishing experience or put out as just one of a cascade of titles from the American collectors press. Abrams seemed to have timed it just right by celebrating the thirty-fifth anniversary of Wacky Packs. Art Spiegelman in his intro gives a little background to the origins of the idea and I was interested to learn that artist Norm Saunders painted some of the packs, I had always associated him with the over-the-top lurid covers for the pulp men's adventure magazine market of the fifties and sixties. Spiegelman also mentions his affection for Mad magazine and long before he actually worked at Topps Mad had a stab at their own color product parodies. In their 1959 More Trash reprint a handsome sheet of life-size labels printed on gummed paper was the bonus item (have a look at 'customer images' where you'll see the sheet). Produced to a slightly different criteria than the Topps packs who, after all, had to produce a regular flow of artwork over a short period, the 223 illustrations in the book were issued from 1973 and '74. Looking through the pages it's amazing to think that they are all well-known national brands firmly fixed in everybody's mind because of advertising. I wonder if any brand ever complained to Topps, probably not but we're hardly likely to find out. Missing from the book, I thought, is some trivia about the series: what was the average print run, are there any rarities and why, were any products turned down for whatever reason or stickers printed but junked.

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