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Fritz the cat full comics

Ah, the charismatic, legendary Fritz the Cat. Robert Crumb was a mere lad of 16 in 1959 when he created what would become his most famous cartoon character during his early career. Through the 1960s, Crumb crafted chaotic adventures featuring Fritz strictly for his own enjoyment. In the mid to late '60s, he began sharing those adventures in publications like Help!, Cavalier, Head Comix, and R. Crumb's Fritz the Cat (pictured above). But when Fritz was featured in a landmark animated movie, Crumb was so disgusted by the film that he murdered his own character in pen and ink and never drew him again. While Fritz may be dead to Crumb, the cat's legacy still burns strong and his saga is well worth retelling to those yet unaware of his meteoric rise to fame. Fritz the Cat was incarnated in 1959 as a normal cat named Fred in a comic story called "Cat Life," a long-form adventure based on Crumb's family cat and the cats that inhabited his neighborhood. In a subsequent story called "Robin Hood," Crumb changed the cat's name to Fritz and made him fully anthropomorphic (talking balloons instead of just thought balloons). Crumb developed some of Fritz's quirky personality traits in several early 1960s comics. In the mid '60s, Crumb began producing more mature and sophisticated Fritz the Cat stories that would later be published in Help! and Cavalier magazines, as well as the 1969 Rip Off Press comic digest, R. Crumb's Comics and Stories. All of these early Fritz stories were drawn well before Crumb drew Zap Comix #0 and #1. Fritz the Cat's first public appearance came in January, 1965 in Harvey Kurtzman's Help! magazine. In that debut, "Fritz Comes on Strong," Fritz brings a female cat home and strips off her clothes before mounting her and...picking off her fleas. After reading this submission from Crumb, Kurtzman sent Crumb a letter that read, "Dear R. Crumb, we think the little pussycat drawings you sent us were just great. Question is, how do we print them without going to jail?" The May 1965 issue of Help! contained another Fritz story, "Fred, the Teen-Age Girl Pigeon," in which Fritz is a guitar-playing pop star. After Fritz flies into one city on his concert tour, a fanatical groupie goes wild and desperately chases Fritz across town. Fritz takes pity on her and eventually brings the teen-age pigeon up to his hotel room...where he proceeds to eat her. Three years later, while Crumb was selling Zap Comix #1 for a quarter a copy in San Francisco, Fritz the Cat remained his most successful cartoon character and continued to provide a significant source of personal income. After all, the shitty page rates from EVO were not about to pay the bills. Even in 1969, when Crumb had become a prolific counterculture superstar, he still welcomed the money when Ballantine Books paid him a \$10,000 advance for publication rights to three stories featuring Fritz. An additional \$50,000 flowed Crumb's way when Fritz starred in Ralph Bakshi's infamous animated movie, Fritz the Cat (a film Crumb may despise, but he certainly found a way to spend the money). R. Crumb's Fritz the Cat Book Review Fritz the Cat compiles three multi-page Fritz stories, including two from 1965 and one from 1968. At 10 by 13 inches, it's an oversize book, which makes it fun to hold and easy to read. The first story, "Fritz Bugs Out," features Fritz in college, where he is in despair after being dumped by his girlfriend, Winston. His buddies, Fuzzy the Bunny and Heinz the Pig, console him by arranging a rockin' beer bash, where Fritz meets a new girl named Charlene and they soon take off to her apartment, where they fuck like bunnies (or cats, as it were). The next morning, still woozy from his sex hangover, Fritz is entirely unmotivated to study for final exams, so he sets all his books and papers on fire in his dorm room, subsequently burning down the entire building. He escapes the wrath of his now-homeless neighbors by heading out to a local bar, where he befriends a black crow who advises him to "bug out" (split the scene) to clear his head. After bonding over booze, Fritz and the crow steal and crash a car before hitting up a blacks-only party, where Fritz smokes dope for the first time and experiences an epiphany that convince him that the revolution is nigh. He incites a small riot with his rantings and escapes the cops only after they're overwhelmed by the frenzied crowd. Fritz hides from the cops for a few days, but then his old girlfriend Winston shows up and wants to join him when he bugs out of town. They hit the road together in Winston's car, but when it breaks down in the middle of the desert, they get into a fight and Fritz abandons her to strike out on his own. He rides the rails and wanders the streets, but after getting mugged he drags his ass back to college and his buddies. While "Fritz Bugs Out" skips around in a rambling plot and the drawings are a bit sloppy, one must remember that the 1965 story wasn't originally intended for publication when Crumb produced it. On the whole, "Fritz Bugs Out" is quite entertaining and, considering its February 1965 origin, remarkably insightful about the emerging counterculture. The second story in the book, "Fritz the Cat, Secret Agent for the CIA," is also from 1965. It's more of a lightweight tale in which Fritz is a suave government agent assigned to investigate reports of a "Chinese Ultimate Weapon." He travels to China and gets himself captured by the enemy, but a beautiful Chinese woman falls in love with him and together, with the help of China's master weapons scientist, they foil the Chinese government's plan to infiltrate the United States with 400 million Chinese people. The story meanders more than "Fritz Bugs Out" but it still provides plenty of laughs (e.g., Fritz telling the Chinese babe his name is Flitz in order to get her to pronounce it correctly is a clever bit). The third story in Fritz the Cat is "Fritz the No-Good," which was originally produced in 1968 for serialization in Cavalier and is significantly more mature than the previous 1965 stories. It features Fritz as an unemployed husband and father who likes to sit around doing nothing but get stoned. Utterly frustrated with his laziness, Fritz's wife finally throws him out of the house. Fritz hits the streets and runs into his old college buddy, Heinz (the pig), who shares a bottle of wine with him. Heinz gives Fritz a crumpled note from Fuzzy (the bunny) that says Fritz's old girlfriend Winston is in town and wants to hook up with him. Fritz gives her a call and they meet and eventually have sex at her apartment. The next morning when Winston heads off to work, Fritz takes to the streets and runs into Fuzzy, who is now a militant hippie revolutionary. Fritz goes to Fuzzy's apartment to meet up with a bunch of other revolutionaries (including Spick, a radical biker gang member who's a dead ringer for Spain Rodriguez) and they plot to blow up a bridge, shut down the city's utilities and overthrow the local government. During the meeting, Fuzzy's girlfriend (a cow) gets a little too mouthy and the entire group beats the crap out of her and Fritz rapes her. The next day, Fritz and Fuzzy sneak off to blow up the bridge, but they're caught by the cops and both end up in jail. Both Winston and Fritz's wife show up at the jailhouse, where the wife blames herself for Fritz getting tossed in the slammer. Spick quickly organizes a defense fund, and when Fritz gets bailed out of jail he finally goes back home to his wife and baby...until the wife throws him out again a couple months later because Fritz is, plain and simple, just a no-good. "Fritz the No-Good" is the best of the three stories in the book and the one that most reflects Crumb's mature storytelling sensibility, most easily evidenced by the gratuitous inclusion of a rape scene. The drawing is markedly more professional than the 1965 stories (which again, unlike the 1968 story, were not intended for publication) and the plotting, scenes and dialogue all exhibit the characteristics of Crumb's underground comic work. Alas, "Fritz the No-Good" was the last Fritz the Cat story Crumb would produce until four years later, when he penned the conclusion of Fritz's life in "Fritz the Cat, Superstar." The Death of Fritz the Cat Following the publication of Head Comix and Fritz the Cat, Fritz became one of the most familiar figures in the underground comics scene. In 1969, animator Ralph Bakshi bought Fritz the Cat in a New York book shop and soon approached producer Steve Krantz about turning the book into a movie. Krantz was all in, so they set out to secure the licensing rights to Fritz from Crumb. After a meeting with Bakshi, Crumb was enthusiastic enough about the idea to loan Bakshi one of his sketchbooks as a reference, but after two weeks of negotiations with Bakshi, he still wouldn't sign the licensing contract. But Steve Krantz surreptitiously secured the film rights from Crumb's wife, Dana, who had power of attorney for certain Crumb works. Crumb eventually received \$50,000 and 10% of Krantz's proceeds for the film. Fritz the Cat was released on April 12, 1972, opening simultaneously in Hollywood and Washington, D.C. It was the first animated feature to receive an X rating from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), which the publicity campaign for the film touted as a reason to see it. The film went on to become a worldwide hit, eventually grossing over \$190 million. Considering the budget for the film was less than a million dollars, the profits must have been huge, and Crumb was supposed to get 10% of Krantz's cut. But since Bakshi himself barely saw a dime from the movie proceeds, I doubt Crumb got his fair share, either. After seeing the finished movie, Crumb intensely disagreed with how it portrayed the sexual content and the politics of the characters. Crumb had long since grown out of any emotional connection with Fritz the Cat and wanted to do anything he could to circumvent additional movies, merchandising or other commercial exploitation of the character. So, shortly after the film's release, Crumb devised a surefire way to destroy the franchise of Fritz the Cat forevermore. In 1972, Crumb produced "Fritz the Cat, Superstar" for publication in The People's Comics. The 15-page story depicts Fritz as the type of spoiled, self-indulgent celebrity that Crumb loathes. The story includes a scene in which Fritz reluctantly joins a script conference with Krantz and Bakshi, portraying the movie producers as shallow money-grubbers. The tale ends with a neurotic ex-girlfriend stabbing Fritz with an ice pick in the back of the head, killing him. Crumb never drew Fritz the Cat again. In 1974, without any participation from either Bakshi or Crumb, Krantz produced the sequel The Nine Lives of Fritz the Cat. It was a poorly reviewed film that struggled mightily at the box office. Krantz did achieve notable success as a TV movie producer in the '80s and '90s (he was also a contributor to TV in the '60s), was married to author Judith Krantz for over 50 years, had two children, and served on the board of the California Mental Health Council. He passed away at the age of 83 in 2007. Ralph Bakshi continued with his career as an innovative yet underfunded and sometimes controversial animated film producer and director. His achievements include the animated films Heavy Traffic, The Lord of the Rings, Coonskin, Wizards, and Fire and Ice. After age 60, he became a successful fine artist (the foreward to a 2008 compilation book of his art was written by Quentin Tarantino) and in recent years he has returned to the movie business, negotiating sequels or remakes of his films Fire and Ice and Wizards. Robert Crumb also went on to a successful career without Fritz the Cat. HISTORICAL FOOTNOTES: It is currently unknown how many copies of this book were printed. It has not been reprinted. The \$10,000 advance Crumb got from Ballantine Books for Fritz the Cat set in motion a series of events that define his life to this day. Crumb used the \$10,000 to buy a three-acre plot of farm land in Potter Valley, California, a tiny community 130 miles north of San Francisco. Crumb's wife, Dana, and his baby, Jesse, moved into the house on the property. Not long after that, Crumb moved out of the house and began living in a small trailer behind the house. Aline Kominsky eventually moved into another trailer next to Crumb's, and that is where their 40-year romance took root. In 1974, Crumb moved with Aline about a hundred miles away to Madison, California, while Dana and Jesse stayed in Potter Valley. Robert and Dana Crumb divorced in 1977. Aline Kominsky and Robert Crumb married in 1978 and their daughter Sophie was born in 1981. In the late 1980s, Crumb traded six of his sketchbooks for a townhouse in Sauve, in the south of France. In 1991, Robert, Aline and Sophie moved permanently to their home in France, where Robert and Aline still live today. Dana Crumb still lives in the house in Potter Valley that Fritz the Cat made possible.

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