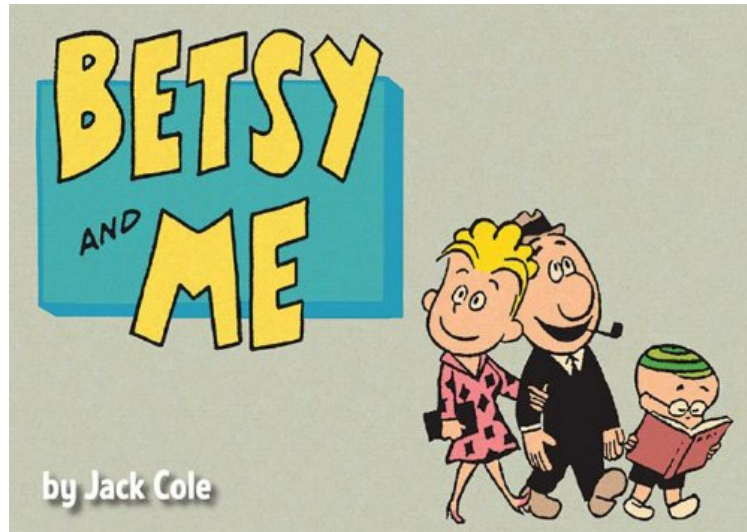


[Free] Betsy and Me

Betsy and Me

Jack Cole

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Jack Cole : Betsy and Me before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Betsy and Me:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Jack Cole's So-So Swan Song By P. Ryan Anthony Despite being an innovator in the Golden Age of Comic Books and the creator of an inarguable superhero masterpiece, Plastic Man, cartoonist Jack Cole's greatest ambition from the very beginning was to create a syndicated newspaper strip. He finally achieved his dream when the Chicago Sun-Times syndicate bought BETSY AND ME in 1958. Having employed different drawing styles, including big-foot and realistic, throughout his career, Cole changed again by stripping his style down to the bare essentials. He also departed somewhat from the usual newsprint narrative conventions by having the pictures belie the narration delivered by somewhat-delusional and self-denying protagonist Chet Tibbit, spouse of Betsy and father to genuine boy genius Farley. But, despite having reached his career goal, Cole inexplicably committed suicide only two and a half months into BETSY AND ME, and the strip was turned over to the inferior Dwight Parks until it, too, died a few months later. It's uncertain if even the incomparable Cole could have sustained his creation if he'd lived. BETSY AND ME is only a mildly interesting, if twisted, sitcom; the banal situations might have come off better if the humor were more inventive. Even the art is kind of boring. In the end, this small volume, which doesn't even contain the full run of the series, will only be indispensable to Jack Cole completists and those interested in the last work of an unqualified comic genius. 0 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Incomplete By Chud If this had truly been complete, I would have rated it five stars. While it isn't Cole's greatest work, most Cole fans will want to read it. The strip is not an awesome strip, but I enjoyed it. The big problem is that the book purports to be complete, but it is not. Most of it is there, of course.

The famed cartoonist's last hurrah. Having mastered comic books and gag cartoons, in 1958 Jack Cole set his sights on the cartoonist's pot of gold a syndicated newspaper strip. He hit the bull's-eye with Betsy and Me, a breezy domestic farce focusing on a middle-class urban couple and their smart-aleck genius son. Betsy and Me was an instant success

and newspapers were lining up to buy it. Then, with only two-and-a-half month's worth of strips completed, Cole purchased a .22 caliber pistol and ended his life. Born in 1914 in New Castle, PA, Jack Cole was first inspired to become a cartoonist during childhood by one of his sister's suitors, who would draw cartoons for the boy as a bribe to leave them alone. At 15, Cole used his high-school lunch money to enroll in the Charles N. Landon Correspondence School of Cartooning. Eleven years later, in 1936, emboldened by the sale of a few gag cartoons, Cole and his wife left New Castle and arrived in New York. Cole was eventually hired by Harry "A" Chester to work for \$20 a week at one of the many comic-book "sweatshops" scattered throughout the Times Square area. In a few years he had mastered his craft and was the featured artist on *Midnight*, a virtual clone of Will Eisner's *Spirit*. In late 1940, Cole unveiled *Plastic Man*, a refreshing departure from the ultra-serious superhero persona at last, a superman who used his powers with imagination and a sense of play. Cole developed a rubbery amalgam of action, sight-gags, melodrama, comedy, and sex, coupled with a storytelling prowess rivaling that of Eisner himself. By the mid-1950s, Cole began distancing himself from comics to return to an earlier love, single-page gag cartoons, and his timing couldn't have been better. Hugh Hefner had launched *Playboy* in late 1954, and Cole's first cartoon appeared in its fifth issue. With Hefner's strong encouragement, Cole developed a luscious sexy painterly technique, establishing the classic *Playboy* cartooning style that remains to this day. For *Betsy and Me*, featuring city dweller Chet Tibbit's day-to-day struggles and achievements, Cole stripped his style down to its bare essentials, creating a strip that sparkles with economy, wit, and charm. What gave the strip its edge, however, was Cole's innovative storytelling. As R.C. Harvey writes in his introduction, "Cole's storytelling manner was unique: the comedy arose from the pictures' contradicting the narrative prose. Cole's fatuous protagonist and narrator would say one thing in the captions accompanying the drawings, but the pictures of his actions showed the opposite, revealing [him] to be a trifle pretentious and wholly delusional." Harvey's intro also serves as a biographical sketch and sheds light on the circumstances surrounding Cole's suicide.

From *Publishers Weekly* This collection of a failed, forgotten 1958 comic strip only exists today for two reasons: we're living in the Golden Age of comic reprints, with all kinds of amazing material from the last seven decades coming back into print, and we still don't know exactly why author Cole killed himself. He's much better known for creating the wacky and wonderful *Plastic Man*, but as the lengthy introduction by comic historian R.C. Harvey details, this strip was the goal toward which [he] had been striving all his professional life.... It is tempting to suppose that [it] must somehow contain the explanation for Cole's taking his own life. The comic itself, only four months' worth, isn't particularly memorable, although it's a bit different from the usual family humor. The comedy comes from the contrast between father Chet's narration and what's really shown happening. He plays up his family, but the only part of his epic fantasies he gets right is that his five-year-old son is a genius. The art is deceptively simple. Chet has the face of a Muppet, but with '50s design charm. It's rather refreshing in its jaded take on the American dream, almost postmodern in its approach, as the family stumbles through house-hunting, car-buying and child-raising. (Dec.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Jack Cole created *Plastic Man* and invented the classic richly watercolored *Playboy* style of cartooning.