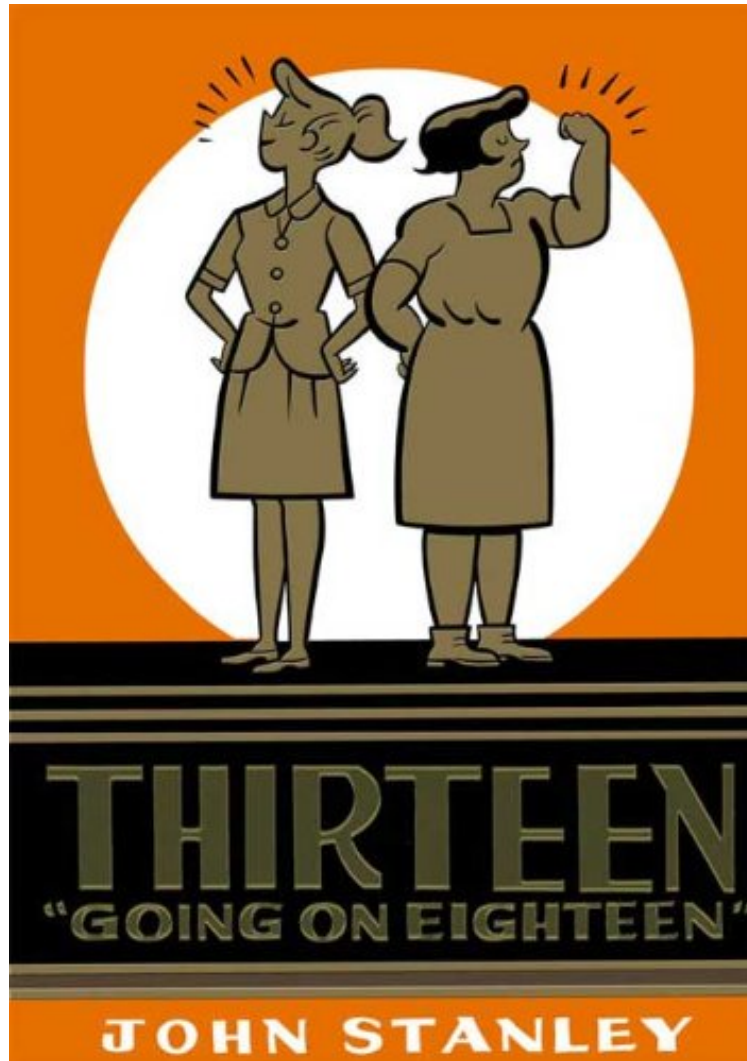


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Thirteen Going on Eighteen: The John Stanley Library

John Stanley

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John Stanley : Thirteen Going on Eighteen: The John Stanley Library before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Thirteen Going on Eighteen: The John Stanley Library:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Make a Date with ValBy Gord WilsonI can't write about this comic book series better than Seth, the designer of this set, does in the introduction. He helped me see things in it I'd not seen before. But what I did see before was the same whimsical, wonderful writing that animates John Stanley's Little Lulu comics, and the first time I came upon a Thirteen comic, I said, 'Wow, where have you been all my life?' That said, it was the last of the Drawn and Quarterly collections I bought, for the simple reason that it's the most expensive (although I bought a new copy rather reasonably from a seller on). The first of the John Stanley Library volumes I bought was the first of the three Melvin Monster editions, as that has always been my favorite comic Melvin Monster:

Volume One, Melvin Monster, Volume 2, Melvin Monster, Volume 3: The John Stanley Library. For whatever reason, DQ chose to spread the nine issues of MM over three hardback volumes (the tenth MM comic was a reprint of the first). The only downside to these editions is you don't get the covers of the comic books, which, in some cases, were the best part. However, the 9 MM covers are reproduced in the third volume of Melvin Monster. Instead of only giving you three comics, the first volume of Thirteen includes nine comics, so it's much thicker than the MM or Nancy volumes. The downside (and why it's four stars) is you don't get the comic book covers. Maybe you will in the last volume, if the DQ series makes it that far. There would have to be two more volumes this thick (and a bit thicker), as Thirteen ran for 29 issues. Volume One collects nine comics from 1961- '64. In his introduction to the Archie Americana series Best of the Sixties Best of the Sixties / Book #1 (Archie Americana Series), Frankie Avalon portrays the early 'sixties as being more like what we think of as the 'fifties-- innocent and clean cut, when teens looked forward to growing up. It's only half way through the 'sixties-- after the Beatles in 1964-- that grown ups looked forward to always being teens. This is the only way that Val and Judy, the female leads of Thirteen, could ever be thought of as that age. Now the comic would have to be called Eighteen (Going on Thirteen), since modern girls do not desire to grow up and become wives and mothers, but simply to stay young forever. As Seth points out, even at the time, Thirteen was an amazing comic, and it must have struck a chord to have stuck around for 29 issues, since most comic books at the time weren't monthly, but alternated with other titles (as with the numerous Archie comics variations). After the second comic, Seth notes, John Stanley took over the art as well as the writing of this series, and it shows. The simple, loose line doodling style perfectly counterpoints his story lines and easy, lyrical dialog. The guys, like Val's next door neighbor, Billy, have not yet shifted to crew cuts and surfer gear, instead being clad in sports coats and slacks, with slick, combed 'fiftes hairstyles, but other than that, the TV show this comic most reminds me of is Sally Field's brilliant, understated "Gidget" Gidget - The Complete Series, spun off or inspired by the films with Sandra Dee. Seth also notes that John Stanley gets up to speed, and in the zone, later in the comic, and by the time you reach issue seven in this volume, he is completely in his element, and owns the comics. Seth is right. Thirteen really is a delightful comic. This DQ volume really is a delightful way to read it. If it helps, editors, I will assuredly purchase the next volumes, which I hope will continue to appear, and which I hope will include the covers, which are truly inspired. Seth also alerted me that there are eight issues of Around the Block with Dunc and Loo, these being sort of the male buddies counterpart series (which could all be collected in one volume, hint, hint). What, then to do with the two issues of Kookie? Surprise us, DQ. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. John Stanley - Comic Genius By Tim Field I'm a big fan of John Stanley's work on Little Lulu and Melvin Monster, so I must admit to being negligent in seeking out his other comics work. Thank goodness for Drawn and Quarterly books for publishing hard to find Stanley works. Thirteen Going on Eighteen collects the first nine issues of the series and is hilarious. I love Stanley's dialogue, quirky characters and his use of lettering to get laughs. Who knew that non-Archie teen comics could be so fun. I hope there's enough interest and sales to warrant future volumes collecting the rest of the series. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Stanley's teen comic -- a real revelation! By Christopher Barat Drawn Quarterly has already done well enough by John Stanley with its collections of the creator's work on Dell's NANCY and MELVIN MONSTER. What those earlier volumes (especially the latter) lacked was a sense of perspective for those of us who are still catching up with Stanley's LITTLE LULU work and want to know how, exactly, these lesser-known efforts compare with that justly celebrated series. For its third (and thickest) STANLEY LIBRARY offering, DQ makes up for past omissions by fronting the first nine issues of THIRTEEN "GOING ON EIGHTEEN" -- by far, Stanley's most successful original creation -- with an essay by cartoonist and graphic designer Seth, who ranks this 1960s series among the best "mainstream" comics ever produced. As things turned out, I would have liked the collection under any circumstances, but I appreciate Seth's pointing out how THIRTEEN ties in with themes inherent in Stanley's earlier work. I've never been a big fan of "teenage" comics, but THIRTEEN already ranks as one of my two favorites of that genre, along with Harvey's BUNNY. Those familiar with both will probably laugh, but I'm serious. I like BUNNY, that well-meaning and completely addle-pated Valentine to the groovy, ginchy late 60s, precisely because it's so truly bizarre. (That, plus the fact that uncredited artist Hy Eisman, bless him, didn't fall into the trap of ripping off ARCHIE character designs, as Tower, Marvel, and DC so conspicuously did during that same period.) THIRTEEN, by contrast, is much more down-to-earth and believable, tracing as it does the lives and loves of a pair of occasionally lovable, occasionally aggravating teenage girls. Stereotyping of the ARCHIE variety is nowhere to be seen, though I'm sure Stanley must have received some pressure from the folks at Dell to compete directly with the Riverdale behemoth. Stanley takes a while to get into a groove with Val and Judy, his teen stars. Issues #1-#2 of THIRTEEN, drawn by Tony Tallarico, are easily the weakest of the nine reproduced here. The gags aren't great, and Tallarico -- an artist about whom I've literally never heard a kind word -- draws petite blond Val and chunky brunette Judy as though they're somewhere around 11 or 12. Stanley himself takes over the drawing chores with #3, and the extra burden, oddly enough, appears to have liberated him a bit. Funny supporting characters begin to appear -- Judy's annoying boyfriend-for-lack-of-a-better-alternative Wilbur, an equally slothful loser named Charlie -- and Val's next-door neighbor Billy, who rotates between the roles of "good friend" and fallback date option, develops a wickedly impish sense of humor. Frenetic action and controlled hysteria of the LULU variety become a standard ingredient of most

plots. Reminiscent of LULU, as well, is the book's decidedly distaff-friendly perspective (no big surprise, given that teenage girls were the target audience). Val may be a "drama queen" -- her occasional bouts of weeping and wailing on her bed are hilarious -- and Judy a bit mean-spirited, but they shine in contrast to the totem-like Paul Vayne (a "dreamboat" who becomes Val's first semi-serious steady), the calculatedly "kooky" Billy, and the utterly hopeless Wilbur and Charlie. To be sure, everyone has good and bad moments in these pages, but the girls -- including Val's older sister Evie, who sometimes functions as goad, sometimes as sounding-board, for her flightier younger sister -- come off better most of the time. Sometimes too much better, as I'll explain below. THIRTEEN is very much a work powered by the "gas fumes" of the 1950s, those pleasant (for the most part) "happy days" of yore. That in itself is a reason for me to enjoy the series; though the title's first issue appeared in 1961, it radiates that 50s sense of cultural contentment that drives the Left so crazy about any era over which it does not hold hegemony. Don't be fooled by the well-groomed setting, though. In this title, Stanley has some rather raw things to say about the quest for love, suggesting that, while unrequited love may be painful, requited love may be just as harsh. Val's relationship with Paul Vayne ends up causing no small amount of stress; she worries about losing him and is not a little nervous about what her relationship with Paul might do to her tie with Billy. Judy, less attractive than Val even after she suddenly drops a few dozen pounds, is desperate for the "right guy" but winds up settling for Wilbur, an oaf who refuses to pay for Judy on dates and insists on wearing a filthy hat everywhere he goes. Even Evie gets the fuzzy end of the lollipop when her steady throws her over (and we don't even get to see it "live"). Sure, some may carp that Val and Judy care more about impressing boys than they do about maximizing their career options or "finding their voices," but the former is where the "funny" is, no matter what era you're living in. As with most Stanley collections I've read, the collective effect of reading Stanley stories is more significant than the impact of any one story. I do have some favorites in this collection, though. "A Maiden's Prayer" finds Val trying to enjoy a picnic with Paul Vayne even as she desperately tries to steer him away from trees, walls, and any other places where "Val and [fill in the blank]" carvings are present. We do get an odd moment when lightning strikes a shelter where Paul and Val are hiding from the rain. The way Stanley depicts the accident, the duo are lucky to have survived unscathed! Next thing you know, turkeys will start flying (yes, Mr. Stanley, I remember well that goof from a LULU story). The stories in which Val tries to dodge the unwanted attentions of a bespectacled "admirer" named "Sticky Stu" bring back wistful memories of a time when I, myself, was enamored with a high-school classmate and always had to be around her. I'd like to think that I was better company than the poker-faced Stu, however. THIRTEEN does have one feature that I don't care for at all. Thanks to those strange postal regulations that gifted us with GYRO GEARLOOSE backup features in UNCLE SCROOGE and GOOFY quickies in DONALD DUCK, the title concludes every issue with a brief story starring Judy Junior (who looks like a younger, shorter, and even chunkier Judy) and a little boy, Jimmy Fuzzi. I've read those GYRO and GOOFY stories, however, and Judy Junior is no Gyro or Goofy. What she is is a painfully pushy, overbearing brat whose apparent sole purpose in life is to make Jimmy miserable. Sure, Stanley wanted to make the girls the star characters of the title, but this is going too far. Seth claims that he could read a "whole book" of these supposedly hilarious tales. They may work for him, but, for me, they simply seem cruel -- like an endless string of Lucy-pulls-the-football-away-from-Charlie-Brown gags without the pathos (and infrequency) that made those PEANUTS gags memorable (and tolerable). At least in LULU stories, put-upon characters generally get a chance for revenge; Jimmy almost never does. To make matters worse, the characters constantly refer to one another by name, a gambit which gets to be like Chinese water torture after a while. Stanley's LULU stories had an edge to them; the JUDY JUNIOR tales hone that edge down to razor-sharpness and then ask you to perch on same. I'll pass. In his Introduction, Seth comments that Stanley wasn't greatly affected by the oncoming post-Camelot cultural tsunami in later issues of THIRTEEN, apart from an occasional Beatles reference. But then, Stanley's comics always seem to take place at a certain remove from the topical concerns of the real world -- all the better for Stanley to concentrate on his plots and characterizations. The fact that he can make this approach work in a quasi-realistic comic like this one is a considerable tribute to his talents. I'm definitely on board for future collections of this title -- and, if Dark Horse or someone else would only agree to publish the collected BUNNY, my "teen comics dream," such as it is, would be complete.

THE LATEST TITLE IN THE JOHN STANLEY LIBRARY DESIGNED BY THE CARTOONIST SETH In the early to mid-1960s, John Stanley turned his attention to drawing and writing his own series rather than working with the already established licensed characters he is most well-known for, such as Little Lulu. D+Q has embarked on an archival series of Stanley's comics, including Melvin Monster, Around the Block with Dunc and Loo, Kookie, and Thirteen Going on Eighteen. Thirteen Going on Eighteen focuses on the friendship and rivalry of two teenage girls, Val and Judy. Each comic is a darkly hilarious look at the social maneuverings and betrayals of the teen set. Stanley's stripped down approach perfectly captures the fever pitch of the teenage years. He creates a teenage sitcom and turns it into an anguished character study.

From Booklist After Stanley left Little Lulu, around 1960, he created other comic books in various genres. Most were

short-lived, but *Thirteen (Going on Eighteen)* lasted 29 issues. It centers on boy-crazy tweens Val and Judy, whom its tempting to view as a grown-further-up Lulu and Annie, but as alt-cartoonist Seth observes in his introduction, they're more like Archies Betty and Veronica with an inner life (Stanley revisits childhood in backup stories featuring Judy Jr. apparently a younger version of Judy a despotic tyke who makes Lucy Van Pelt look like Gandhi). The main agenda of *Thirteen* is humor, ranging from gently observed to flat-out wacky, but there's a warmth and genuineness here that their Riverdale counterparts lacked. The first two issues are drawn in a slightly realistic style by a different artist, but after that Stanley took over the artwork as well as the writing. It turns out that pure Stanley (he provided only the rough layouts for his Lulu stories) is a pure delight that may be a revelation to fans of his Lulu. --Gordon Flagg

About the Author John Stanley (1914-1993) was a journeyman comics scripter in the 1950s and 1960s. He is most famous for his scripts for the Little Lulu comics produced by Dell, and is considered by many comics historians to be the most consistently funny and idiosyncratic writer to ever work in comics. He left comics bitterly in the late 1960s, never to return.