

Everyone's a Critic: The Ultimate Cartoon Book

Bob Eckstein

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Bob Eckstein selects cartoons whose themes are critics and criticism in the collection *Everyone's a Critic*. Eckstein, whose work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and *MAD Magazine*, has picked a perfect topic: in the internet age, criticizing, rating, and ranking the work of others has become easier and more widespread, and the opportunities for humorous observations about that phenomenon have multiplied as well. The list of creators featured here includes notables like Roz Chast, but with the work of thirty-six different cartoonists, the book serves as an excellent introduction and a sampler of varied styles of art and humor.

The cartoons, as one might expect, deliver plenty of laughs. One entry has Santa Claus sitting with a few other people at "Santa's Workshop," a gathering of aspiring dramatists at which Santa is told, "The 'ho ho ho' thing—we get it. By Act II I'm looking for it to have evolved." In another, a director tells his actor between takes, "All right, let's do it again. This time, you're good at acting."

Other comic situations include criticisms of a court jester, a bartender, movie-theater popcorn, and even heaven, where an angel complains, "Somehow I thought the coffee would be better." The humor succeeds by being just barely ridiculous, sometimes going so slightly beyond real life that the parallels to our own day-to-day lives scream for recognition.

The book isn't just a collection of reprints: more than half of these cartoons have never been published before, making this volume a worthwhile purchase for casual and die-hard cartoon fans alike. Funny and insightful, topical in its scenarios yet timeless in its treatment of them, *Everyone's a Critic* holds up well to criticism.

PETER DABBENE (November / December 2019)

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