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Posted on 18 August 2019 By Harvey Pekar

R.I.P Mr Pekar. Harvey Pekar is that guy you know the one Irritated, opinionated he has a dead end job that he s really pretty good at although he s educated far beyond what the work requires , but that s almost beside the point, because what s interesting about him isn t what he does, it s what he says Harvey Pekar s audience includes graphic artists like Robert Crumb and Robert Armstrong, and his work inspired a very good, award winning film also called American Splendor , starring Paul Giamatti and featuring appearances by Pekar himself These are the original strips that inspired such a following, bringing the first two American Splendor collections together into a single volume, with a cover taken from the poster for the 2003 film.Pekar is a rare and special talent, a keen eyed observer and reporter of minutiae, who can make the mundane interesting He is, to reverse a science fictional conceit, the opposite of a Mute Inglorious Tam scroll down a bit on that page Tam being the medieval serf in a brilliant short story by Frederick Pohl and C.M Kornbluth Tam finds himself compelled to make up stories about an existence beyond his own Like Tam, Harvey Pekar is caught in a mundane, unadventurous and unappreciative society however, Harvey Pekar tells stories about his own existence, utterly mundane as that is, and also unlike Tam s uncaring fellow serfs, Pekar somehow manages to find an audience for these stories.I remember seeing Pekar once on TV, in an appearance on Late Night with David Letterman which must have been the one on August 31, 1988, according to an article by James Hynes, about whose own work I ve written before Pekar s unscripted

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and authentic interaction with Letterman's attempts at humor and ingratiation was much closer to what the average man on the street might say than to what a seasoned television personality could come up with. Letterman didn't handle Pekar well, at all, and the interview ended in confusion and anger. It was a rare instance of reality breaking through into the scripted world of TV. You won't find a lot of explosions here, no high-tech weaponry or alien machines, no skin-tight uniforms or capes fluttering in the breeze from a faraway planet. You might see a city bus, or the inside of a V.A. hospital's file room, though you might see something real. Harvey Pekar is a true American original, known by many as the blue-collar Mark Twain. For over years he's been writing comic books about his life, chronicling the ordinary and everyday in stories both funny and moving. This page collection was issued on the heels of the film *American Splendor*, and it includes material previously published in the first two collected volumes in the *American Splendor* series. The I read of Harvey Pekar: the I appreciate his gentle wisdom and genius for revealing the magic of mundane life. Inspired by the success of his friend Robert Crumb, Pekar decided to start writing underground comics himself in the 70s, toiling in relative obscurity until the movie based on his comics opened to critical raves. Pekar's own work deserves even praise, for taking the comics medium seriously. The antithesis of superhero dreck, *American Splendor* singles out the heroism of everyday life for study. Radically departing from traditional narrative, Pekar relates seemingly simple anecdotes from losing the gas cap to his car to pondering death on a walk home from work that nail the truth about what is joyful and painful in this life than anyone I have read in a long time. It doesn't matter if you like comics or not, Harvey Pekar is a writer worth reading. Harvey Pekar is one of the few ordinary, every-day heroes out there that's actually managed to get media attention. His contemplative, relatable stories about every-day life give the reader room to reflect on their own ordinary surroundings and friends in a way that gives them great meaning. In a culture that is and driven and dominated by celebrities and media hype, it is refreshing to read a book like *American Splendor* that insists on the beauty and intelligence of regular people. Look there's so much here that it is gonna take me a long time to read from go to woe. But

Delta of Venus

Metamorphoses

Lady Chatterley's Lover

Kushiel's Dart

Sappho's Leap

Claudius the God and
His Wife Messalina

A Princess of Mars

The English Patient

Robert Mapplethorpe
and the Classical
Tradition

Tropic of Cancer

The Piano Teacher

I, Claudius

Sex and the City

The Nude: A Study in
Ideal Form

Thy Neighbor's Wife

I love it Pekar s way washes over you and American Splendor isn t so much a read but a hobby Of all the works I m at volume 9 or something..and I have them all No abridging There is no adventure and maybe the anecdotal way of it isn t the least bit exciting but as an exercise in life story telling Splendor is autobiographical gold One of the truly great comics Then go catch the film it s excellent. American Splendor was really my first self motivated exploration into the world of graphic novels With a mixture of thoughtfulness, neurosis, anger, and kindness, Pekar s anthologies read straight through provide one of the most poignant entries into the complexity of everyday American life that I have read Having been born in the early 90s, I will be the first to admit I know very little about the two decades that preceded my existence As Pekar says somewhere in this anthology, we think the world started when we were born This is the closest I have ever felt to those decades American Splendor earns the avant garde label that Pekar himself assumes in one of these strips, solely for the fact that these are comics a medium driven by fantasy and action where nothing really happens Conversations and anecdotes that are shared everyday, often in a disposable kind of way..i.e my car wouldn t start drive this strip Sometimes, this can be a bit dull and even a little preachy But then at the same time, it comes from the genuine place of one man with a sharp mind living a dull life The feeling of stasis that comes with a dead end job and a mind that is always turning is the beauty and tragedy of his life, and thus, the strip Often, Pekar s introspection and self awareness is disarming in the best way Any author that has the guts and thoughtfulness to close a story about being mugged with the line one thing you should not do is to take this story as a criticism of blacks in general So far as I can tell people react to circumstances about the same way no matter what their race has me hooked It s hardest to just say the thing, sometimes In every one of Pekar s comics, no matter what it is about, Pekar says the thing Also, it is my favorite thing to imagine Harvey constantly pestering artists to draw for him, seeing as he didn t do his own illustrations.If you have never seen Pekar s interviews with Letterman, do yourself the favor Pekar is the founder of literary graphic novels, so being a big fan of the genre I had to check out his work It s odd, I assumed his stuff would be pretty cynical, but it

Atomised

Les Liaisons
dangereuses

The Naked Woman: A
Study of the Female
Body

Atlas Shrugged

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Writings

s quite the opposite It holds a pulse to the everyday Joe and offers little tidbits of advice on life. By the time I reached the story I'll be Forty three on Friday I realized that this book has deep things to say about life than most real novels, and as a biographical work is as comprehensive in scope as anything I've ever read An amazing collection earlier impressions while reading I saw the fine film version of American Splendor Pekar, the angry everyman iconoclast, used to be one of my favorite talk show guests back in the rough and tumble days of David Letterman's old NBC late night show. So I'm belatedly entering into the world of graphic novels, partly to satisfy my curiosity but also to get some idea of what the rest of the world, especially the world that is younger than I am, are talking about And I know, Pekar and Crumb are old school, but gotta start somewhere just read two of Crumb's volumes, so I'm on my way The first story really sets the tone The poignancy of the mundane Pekar introduces himself, talks about how people mangled and made fun of this name, and then how he discovered that the Cleveland phone book sported another Harvey Pekar other than himself and then, oddly, yet another, despite the rarity of the name And then the sense of loss and heartbreak when the other two disappear from the book. So, I'm reading and enjoying these nostalgic panels of life on the ground Nerds doing nerdy things Creatives creating It's sweet. UPDATE So I'm rolling up to the halfway point of these and I have to say they weave a spell These are candid, honest looks at a real and ordinary American life, and yet there's so much wisdom and familiarity in the stories Wonderful dialogue snippets from places and people overlooked in most elitist art This is a rewarding experience. A perfect introduction to Harvey Pekar for those unfamiliar with his work or just curious to learn what he was all about Pekar wrote literature He was the unofficial poet laureate of Cleveland, Ohio A fabulous movie was made about his life It features his narration and snippets of him, you can't help but become endeared I first learned about him during the 1980s when he would appear on The David Letterman Show, which are also featured in the movie He was such an odd character that I had to run out and get his comic books. He used comic artists to convey his work, so part of the charm of his work is the diversity of artists who make the pictures that go with his words Make no mistake, he

belongs in the pantheon of accomplished American writers Let s hope that the Library of America will produce a volume or two of his work He deserves it.His gravesite is one of the most important places in Cleveland Worth a visit if you re ever in town.

