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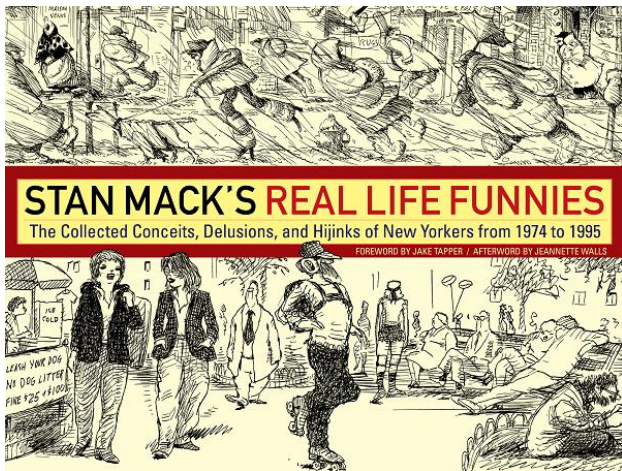
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Stan Mack's Real Life Funnies

The Collected Conceits, Delusions, and Hijinks of New Yorkers from 1974 to 1995

By Stan Mack

From 1974 to 1995, New Yorkers starred in their own comic strip in the weekly pages of the city's trailblazing alternative newsweekly, *The Village Voice*. Stan Mack's "Real Life Funnies" chronicled the everyday, the extraordinary, and the downright outlandish lives of New Yorkers, capturing their sardonic humor, sexual shenanigans, and exotic obsessions. Every story was told entirely in the subjects' own words. And New Yorkers ate it up.



For the first time, a significant collection of those comic strips has been included in one volume, *Stan Mack's Real Life Funnies* (Fantagraphics Books; ISBN 978-1-68396-916-7; on sale April 30; \$50.00). With a foreword by Jake Tapper and afterword by Jeannette Walls, this collection will be treasured not only by the strip's devoted followers and comics fans, but everyone fascinated by this revolutionary period in the life of the World's Greatest City.

Stan Mack, a RISD graduate and illustrator, started a newspaper career as an art director at the *New York Herald Tribune*—the cradle of New Journalism, with its iconoclastic writers like Tom Wolfe, Jimmy Breslin, and Gloria Steinem—then moved to *The New York Times* as art director of the Sunday magazine. In 1974, he combined his journalistic and artistic impulses at *The Village Voice*, where he pitched an original idea: "How about I wander the city, listening to people and sketching them, and do a piece on it?" The *Voice's* legendary art director, Milton Glaser, surprised him by saying yes...as long as Mack did it every week.

In the resulting comic strip, Mack made it a point to wander into places where he didn't belong: eavesdropping on a meeting of UFO believers; at the singles bar Maxwell's Plum; backstage with hardcore punk group The Plasmatics; in the Pink Pussycat boutique, where a salesgirl enthusiastically explains to an older couple how a cock ring works.

As the years go by and Mack adds interviews to his story-gathering method, the portraits become more intimate, even empathetic. In "Separated at Birth," a freckle-faced half-Black, half-Jewish comedian mines his life for jokes. A man who grew up in the circus recounts his struggle to belong in "Irving the Klutzy Unicyclist." And Mack's "nebbish-y alter ego" – as Jake Tapper describes him – appears more often in the strip, the readers' bemused surrogate. In "Tall and Short of It," Mack rides along with a 6'7" tall belly dancer, Ambrosia, and her diminutive admirer to a 70th birthday gig in Queens. He hangs with East Village squatters – memoirist Jeannette Walls' father appears in 1989's "The Hotseat" – as they battle drug dealers intent on taking over their building.



Mack's collected strips offer a slideshow of political and social change, as he covers national Democratic and Republican conventions, anti-nuke protests, and the devastating rise of AIDS and homelessness.

Real Life Funnies brilliantly captured two decades of life in New York City, from the 70s when it was a place of hedonism, crime, and cultural revolution, to the 80s of Yuppies, power shoulders, and cocaine, to the 90s, when a new generation of immigrants struggled to get a foothold and veteran New Yorkers watched their city change around them. New Yorkers are both the main actors and Greek chorus in a living, breathing city that itself might be the greatest comic character of all time.

Stan Mack's Real Life Funnies will delight fans of cartooning, 20th century history, and great graphic nonfiction, along with anyone who knew and loved—or who wishes they'd been there to witness—the "real" New York.

About Stan Mack:

Stan Mack is the author of *The Story of the Jews*; *Revolting Rebels: A History in Comics of the American Revolution*; *Janet & Me*, and 11 books for children and young adults including *Road to Revolution!* and *10 Bears in My Bed*. For more information visit: <https://www.stanmack.com/>