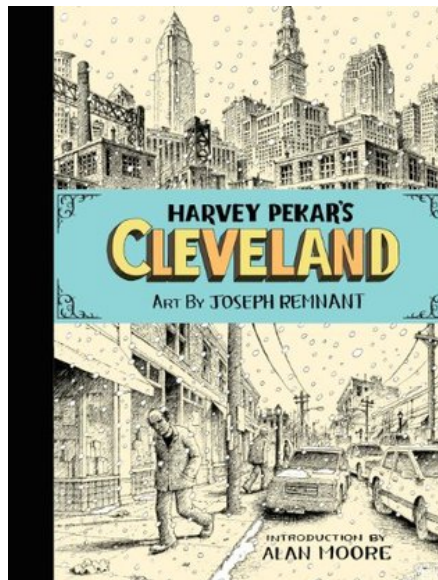




Harvey Pekar's Cleveland

Harvey Pekar , Joseph Remnant (Illustrator) , Alan Moore (Foreward)

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A lifelong Cleveland resident, Harvey Pekar (1939-2010) pioneered autobiographical comics, mining the mundane for magic since 1976 in his ongoing American Splendor series. Harvey Pekar's Cleveland is sadly one of his last, but happily one of his most definitive graphic novels. It combines classic American Splendorous autobiographical anecdotes with key moments and characters in the city's history as relayed to us by Our Man and meticulously researched and rendered by artist Joseph Remnant. With an introduction by Alan Moore to boot Published by ZIP Comics and Top Shelf Productions.

Harvey Pekar's Cleveland Details

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Author : Harvey Pekar , Joseph Remnant (Illustrator) , Alan Moore (Foreward)

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From Reader Review Harvey Pekar's Cleveland for online ebook

Abbey says

I'm a sucker for all things Pekar and for all things Cleveland, thus five stars is the obvious rating. Seriously though, the book is broken into two parts - a nice history of the rise (and fall) of Cleveland and Pekar's experiences as a Clevelander. He tells it like it is - challenging, ugly, but with some glimmering moment - much like his outlook on life. Harvey has always felt like a weird uncle to me, totally inappropriate at times, wildly brilliant at others - but over all, a powerhouse of knowledge and part of the family. Us Midwesterners (and Clevelanders, especially) gotta stick up for our hometowns, cause no one else is gonna do it for us.

If there's anything else left in his vault, I hope they release it - I miss this guy.

Charles Hatfield says

Another rambling, garrulous book from Pekar, stronger than *The Quitter*, but still a bit shapeless and randomly edited, with uneven and flickering emphasis on topics both political and personal. JR's artwork has the lumpy, crumpled, Crumb-like look, often quite effective in spite of its familiarity. The book ambles and gets around and finally, simply, ends, up in the air as is so often the case with Pekar. But it's hard to dislike, and hard to regret having read, because of its insistent localism, its louche charm, and, of course, its big-hearted honesty. A testament!

Jeffrey says

I think this might be the last full book Harvey Pekar completed scripting before passing away. *Joseph Remnant* may have been my favorite Pekar collaborator since *Crumb*, and while this book does re-hash some standard Pekar mythology - appearances on *Letterman*, meeting and marrying Joyce - it's a solid look at both Cleveland as well as Pekar's place in the city.

Chad Jordahl says

This was my first Harvey Pekar book. I really liked his easy-going style. *Joseph Remnant's* art was fantastic and really suited Pekar's writing.

Layla says

I really, really love Harvey Pekar. I've even met him. There is no one, and I do mean NO ONE, whose writing hits me straight through the heart like Harvey's. Always described as a "curmudgeon" or a grump, he's also got a pretty darn sweet side to him. This side is evident when reading this book. He's got a love of history and deep respect for the town that Cleveland was and is now. That city sure has some problems, especially where economics and race relations are concerned. It was once a thriving community with a strong appreciation of arts and literature. I found Cleveland's history to be really interesting as they had a few

mayors before the depression who were basically socialists and did amazing things for the public. The depression hit and it seems they never fully recovered. But despite that, Harvey chose to stay. His books make it clear that he was fine with his government job and liked the security, despite how mundane working as a file clerk was. He kept writing and that kept him going.

Last week was Harvey's birthday. RIP, "our man". We miss you.

Corinna Bechko says

I'm a huge Harvey Pekar fan, and this book is no exception. I love Pekar's tone and ability to reach beyond the page and really talk to you as if you're sitting down having a conversation. Joseph Remnant's art is a great fit, with lots of nice touches. It's funny, and touching, and gruff. It also made me a bit misty-eyed, knowing that Harvey is no longer with us.

Don says

Probably the only thing Harvey Pekar and I have in common is the city of Cleveland.

It's supposedly the hipster thing to do nowadays to declare Pekar a genius while admitting you've never read his work. Fine, guilty. But at least I'm not one of those folks who came to his work as a direct result of watching the *American Splendor* biopic (still haven't seen it, but soon). Anyway, my previous experiences of Pekar were his appearances on David Letterman in the 80s. (As a kid, it seemed for years that the only guests Letterman had were Pekar, Fran Lebowitz, and Howard Stern. More likely, these were the only guests that were memorable, having held my interest and attention.) The fact that he was from Cleveland and talked about Cleveland didn't mean that much to me at the time.

It's to my everlasting regret that I never came to underground comics at an earlier age. I just couldn't brave the densely-drawn comics in "that section" of the comics store where *American Splendor*, *Heavy Metal*, and others were shelved, near the porn comics. But better late than never, and I'm glad my first real taste was from *Harvey Pekar's Cleveland*.

The fact that the book gives a good-enough history of the City of Cleveland over the years is almost beside the point. It, like most of Pekar's work in *American Splendor* is really about Pekar alone and his observations. It just so happens that there are years where his observations on Cleveland and mine coincide.

When he talks about the things that happened in the late 80s/early 90s--Toby Radloff's 5 minutes of fame, the decline of Cleveland schools to the point where the State of Ohio took them over, the hospitals taking over the local economy, etc.--he's talking about a time when Cleveland was my home, during years when there was every chance that we might've bumped shoulders walking down Coventry, or up the steps of the main branch of the Cleveland Public Library. Some of the times that were his own, like the experience of running up the stairs of Cleveland's (Old) Arcade, I independently experienced (as did a lot of Clevelanders) 40-some years later. To me, Pekar isn't to be praised just for speaking general truth, but for speaking some truths that I can verify.

So, I have to give Cleveland a very biased 5* out of 5.

Cyndi says

A curmudgeonly love letter to the author's roots and the history of his city.

Russell Grant says

I really liked this one. Maybe from being underwhelmed by reading the short story collections previously but this one hit all the right notes. It reads like a final summation of his life, as related to the city he spent that life in. The historical information about the city is great and the autobiographical stuff is just as great. Something that struck me odd though is despite not being overly long, there are bits that repeat. It seems like a mistake but it really ends up giving the feeling that you're having a chat with Harvey. It made this one feel more personal than his other writing and really elevated it for me. Great stuff, it's a shame it's one of his last.

This is my first time seeing Joseph Remnants art and I have to say it's pretty great. Very much in the R. Crumb mode, but minus the obsession that makes R. Crumb great but a bit overwhelming at times. It allows the book to fit right in with the best of Pekar's work while still having a flair of its own. I'm looking forward to checking out more from this artist and plan on seeking out his self published work.

Sam Quixote says

I wish I could be more positive about one of Harvey Pekar's final books but I can't. "Cleveland" is too full of dry information, and re-heated stories Pekar has gone over before in other books.

The first 40 pages is the history of Cleveland and reads like an illustrated Wikipedia entry. This is a full third of the book. Pekar then proceeds to tell his life story in relation to Cleveland. He was born, raised, and spent his whole life in Cleveland. But his life story, particularly his childhood, etc. is already written about in his David Copperfield-esque "The Quitter".

Pekar skims over stuff most readers of his will be familiar with already: the griping about money and having to write his comics to keep his head above water post-retirement, how most indie comics don't make money, how he got started reviewing books and music, his start in comics and meeting R. Crumb, and meeting his wife Joyce Brabner.

The only stories I hadn't heard before were those of his second wife (nameless) who was more ambitious than Pekar and left him for an academic career in New England (something Pekar is still grouchy about - he refused to ever leave his "cushy" admin clerk job), and the story of his friend who ran a large used bookstore. Out of 120 pages though it's not enough new content especially when mixed in with a lot of stories he's told before and page upon page of dull history of a fairly ordinary city.

But that's probably why it suits Pekar so much - he is Cleveland. It has culture but it's essentially ordinary, much like the writer. Unfortunately Pekar is unable to make the book about his hometown particularly interesting because nothing really interesting or unique has ever happened in Cleveland. I love most of Pekar's work but "Cleveland" is an unsatisfactory and disappointing coda to an excellent writer. For better Pekar books, try his various "American Splendor" books to get a better picture of the man and his work.

Meghan says

The story of Cleveland is the story of most large American cities, especially those that were once prosperous because of manufacturing and factories. So this is specifically about the rise and fall of one city but also universal, and it makes me feel a little bad and guilty about enjoying that 'Hastily Made Cleveland Tourism Video' on YouTube and that hilarious 30 Rock episode where Liz and Floyd dream the dream of moving from New York City to Cleveland. Cleveland really does have some noteworthy urban attractions like a great public library and citywide parks system.

Pekar highlights these attractions in a wistful way, and the story gradually changes from the history of the decline of the city to more about Pekar's life and his exploration of its meaning and what it means to be happy. It's similar to some of his other comics, but still a rarity: the overall question he contemplates is what it means to have a good life, and his answer is so mundane but at the same time so real. His life was being a file clerk, really being enmeshed in the city where he lived, and being totally engaged in obscure artistic pursuits (comics and jazz record reviewing) in his spare time. At the end of this graphic novel, he seems so grateful for the little things, like the fans who knock on his door, and his wife's newfound gardening hobby, that it made me feel better about some of the other darker-toned pieces he'd written elsewhere about his depression. For lack of a better term, it made me feel some 'closure' about his death from an accidental overdose in 2010.

Nicole Cushing says

I've lived in the Rustbelt Midwest/Biblebelt for about ten years now. I've never read Pekar before, but after hearing about him thought I'd give him a read. I guess I was looking for a bit of a kindred spirit. (Actually, now that I look at his bibliography here on Goodreads I realize I HAVE read him before...I read his book about the Beats a couple of years ago)

Anyway...there's some good stuff here. A few pieces of bleak humor that made me laugh out loud...There's also social commentary about the unfulfilled potential of the people and places of the Midwest...and the somewhat predictable / all-too-familiar story of Cleveland's 19th century rise and late-20th century fall.

But overall, I was just left with a sense of "meh".

Harvey's smart, depressed, and an underachiever -- but somehow manages to come across as simultaneously content with his lot in life and working hard to make the most of it. I guess there IS something remarkable about that...something we can all learn from it. The way individual ambitions rise and fall just as the ambitions of cities do.

But the writing here just seems so/so. For stretches of the book (particularly early on...when Pekar is giving an extended -- 40 page -- history of Cleveland...I felt I was just sort of slogging forward so I could get to the good stuff). And, sure, there WAS some good stuff. But then there were also pages on end that seemed to meander without really saying much.

But, yanno, it could be that this medium isn't a good fit for me. I remember recently giving three stars to Alison Bechdel's FUN HOME, too.

Jai says

I'm pretty disappointed in this book. I started reading it being a proud Clevelander and now I'm like Harvey was just another mediocre white man who held slightly racist views as usual. I should have known because it's nothing new when white men write about their experiences in Cleveland it has serious racist undertones. I will say one thing, I'm happy he gave some interesting history about my city. History that I never knew anything about so for that reason, and that reason alone I gave it an extra star...otherwise I'd give it one star on my review.

Matt says

Harvey Pekar's final (posthumous) work, and it's pretty satisfying. Growing up in the midwest I've always considered Cleveland to be a fairly minor city, but Pekar's history shows how the city was once one of the largest and important American industrial areas. It really tells the story the post-industrial U.S. in general -- think Detroit, Pittsburgh, and many more, primarily midwestern cities. It's the story of inception, industrial growth, glory years, changing demographics ('white flight' to the suburbs), decline, and now possible recovery.

Told through Harvey's eyes and family history, this seemingly dry subject takes on a vibrant life and sort of reads like an extended obituary, possibly due to the newsprint nature of comics. The illustration is proto-crumby, which always does him justice. In any case, I hope more young artists come up to take his place in this unique style of graphic novel -- we seem to be inundated by super-hero experts (what's new?) but very few who can or want to tell simple stories about their lives. Is that boring? I think Harvey proved that it doesn't have to be. He will be missed.

P.S. don't forget to save your drafts. For some reason I thought GR did this automatically but I lost a much longer review. Probably for the best, haha.

Thomas Andrikus says

"People don't come here to the Midwest to dream - they are here because it's cheap, and they stay because it's cheap..." - Jimi Izrael

The graphic novel *Cleveland* by the late famed comic artist Harvey Pekar shows the soul of Cleveland and how his entire life has always been bound to the city...having been born and raised there.

Though the pace of the book is a tad slow-paced with some of the historical narratives that tend to drag, it is compensated with interesting anecdotes that Pekar has on the quotidian lives of lifelong residents of Cleveland whom he has known personally.

Personally, I could somehow identify with the story, having lived in the outer suburbs of Cincinnati myself (in case you don't know, Cincinnati is the 3rd largest city in Ohio after Columbus and Cleveland). Hence there are a lot of similarities between the "souls" of these two Midwest cities. Such as how the residents of Cleveland and Cincinnati perceive themselves as living a somewhat mundane and monotonous lives. Or the way that both Cleveland and Cincinnati have their own fair share of racial tensions and their fondness for the Ohio River (in Cincinnati's case) or Lake Erie (in Cleveland's case) that somewhat also gives an identity to

the each city.
