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Siegel and Shuster's Funnyman: The First Jewish Superhero, from the Creators of Superman

Thomas Andrae, Mel Gordon

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Here is a kaleidoscopic analysis of Jewish humor as seen through *Funnyman*, a little-known super-heroic invention by the creators of *Superman*. Included are complete comic-book stories and daily and Sunday newspaper panels from Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's creative fiasco.

Siegel and Shuster, two Jewish teenagers from Cleveland, sold the rights to their amazing and astonishingly lucrative comic book superhero to Detective Comics for $130 in 1938. Not only did they lose the ownership of the Superman character, they also agreed to write and illustrate it for ten years at ten dollars per page. Their contract with the DC publishers was soon heralded as the most foolish agreement in the history of American popular culture.

After toiling on workman's wages for a decade, Siegel and Shuster struggled to come up with a new superhero, one that would right their wrongs and prove that justice, fair-play, and zany craftsmanship was the true American way and would lead to ultimate victory. But when the naïve duo launched their new comic character Funnyman in 1947, it failed miserably. All the turmoil and personal disasters in Siegel and Shuster's postwar life percolated into the comic strip.

This book tells the back story of the unsuccessful strip and Siegel and Shuster's ambition to have their funny Jewish superhero trump Superman.

Mel Gordon is the author of *Voluptuous Panic: The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin*.

Thomas Andrae is the author of *Batman and Me*.

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