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Top Hats and Flappers: The Art of Russell Patterson

Russell Patterson, Alex Chun (ed)

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The definitive collection of a legend from the golden age of magazine illustration.

Imagine America in the 1920s, the last stand of the Golden Age of Illustration and a time of tremendous social change. On one side of Paradise were the nationally known illustrators like Charles Dana Gibson, James Montgomery Flagg, and J.C. Leyendecker. But rapidly gaining in popularity were the young irreverent illustrators/cartoonists who worked for the emerging humor magazines *Judge*, *College Humor*, *Ballyhoo*, and *Life*.

These artists attempted to capture the verve and excitement of their times with an energetic line and frenzied pen-and-ink panels containing multitudes with the settings and dress—downtown speakeasy or uptown Stork Club, hot jazz bands or windy jump seats, slinky dresses set against top hat and tails—just as revealing as the lost souls of the Lost Generation.

Of these young ink-slingers, the one who came closest to capturing this white-hot age was a handsome man out of Omaha and Chicago named Russell Patterson. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Patterson didn't vanish after the Stock Market Crash in 1929. He just found new ways to keep his high style in front of a public desperate for light entertainment—in newspaper strips, magazine covers, posters, costumes and set designs for Hollywood and Broadway, amusement parks to WAC uniforms, all the way to the Atomic Age.

One of the most influential artists of his generation, Patterson's impact spanned decades. The list of Patterson's "alumni" ranged from virtually every published pin-up cartoonist to notables like Walt Disney and Hugh Hefner, who noted it was Patterson, not John Held, Jr. or F. Scott Fitzgerald, who best defined the strut and fret of American life between the two World Wars.

Along with an introductory essay by illustration art historian Armando Mendez, this volume showcases Patterson at his pinnacle, featuring many his most important and dynamic magazine covers and illustrations.

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