



exotic adventures.

VOLUME 2 for **SPRING 2004** with a pirate clown and his funky crew of **ANIMEPLAY**

What I failed to write off ONE PIECE was how beautiful character in C, Luffy still looks prett with his blue hair, earrings, consistently intense glare, and three swords was the utter definition of Manga cool. Buggy the Clown's pimp like coat (fur trimmings and all) and Busta Rhymes like pig tails looked surprisingly menacing in a street cred hip hop kind of way...even if he had a bright red clown nose.

Eiichiro Oda's character designs are consistently inventive and borrow heavily from sources OUTSIDE of the boring limitations of manga/anime design. It's very exciting to see Oda's artwork in Volume 2 because it's where I can see the first signs of Oda's art style coming to its own. In Volume 2 Oda's linework has a very heavy Toriyama influence (it seems like most Manga artist begin as Dragonball clones), but the design work is 100% Oda.

Even Luffy's lame powers become entertaining when seen in action on the comics' page. When creating a special ability for Luffy, Oda's must have been thinking of how best to display his strengths as an artist. There's a consistent almost ignorant energy to Oda's illustrations which give every panel a very contagious energy. This energy is best displayed when Oda lets loose on Luffy's ability to stretch and contort his body.

At the end of it all, I began to really love Luffy. Yes, he looks pretty stupid, but much like Oda's amazing illustrative skills there's an innocent boisterous quality to Luffy that quickly becomes contagious. Luffy is that little kid that we all once were whose ignorance allows him to believe that he can accomplish anything. Unlike most people, he acts on

what he believes. I have to admire that.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed ONE PIECE. I'm glad I gave this manga a shot because it's the most fun I've had reading manga in a long time.

Grade: B+

BUDDHA VOL. 1-2
Reviewed by Bobby Silva

BUDDHA is one of many Manga created by "The God of Manga": Osamu Tezuka. Without Tezuka's there would probably be no Manga or Anime to enjoy. Japan was in shambles after World War II. Tezuka aspired to create animation that could compete with the works of Walt Disney but quickly turned to creating inexpensive Manga when he realized it would be impossible to gather enough money for animation in war ravaged Japan. What resulted was a Manga boom that would eventually lead to Tezuka's successful creation of a Japanese animation studio.

Okay, enough of the history lesson. Tezuka's immense collection of work is geared at anyone from the age of 5 to 80. He's taken a stab at covering everything from sci-fi to historical drama. Tezuka quickly became a master at everything he did. BUDDHA is as great a testament of his skill as anything out in the English reading market today.

BUDDHA centers on the friendship that develops between two young boys: Chapra and Tataa. Both come from great poverty and bond on their common drive to survive. I'm not sure how accurate Tezuka's portrayal of Buddha is, but it'd be difficult to argue that it wasn't a highly entertaining one. The first time we see Tataa (the boy that would eventually become Buddha), he's proudly stealing things from other people and orders his friends to pee on an intruder. As cruel as Buddha's actions are, Tezuka is able to illustrate the nobleness behind the devious exterior...a quality that becomes more and more obvious

as the story progresses.

Tezuka's genius can be seen on every panel of every page. Tezuka's characters breathe. Every character is a master actor that can evoke the most complex of emotions. Tezuka mixes tidbits of history with dramatic action in a way that never seems dull. Tezuka constantly finds innovative ways to dramatize a situation. One of my favorite moments is when Tataa, grief stricken and angry upon discovering that his mother and sister have died, runs so hard in desperation that he bounces off of a particular panel of the comic pages and actual breaks through only to be caught by the panel below him.

Vertical, Inc. has done the best job I have ever seen of packaging a Manga collection. The BUDDHA collection is perfect. It's an incredibly thick hardcover at the very affordable price of \$24.95. The Chip Kidd design is elegant enough to deserve a showcase in an art museum. The comic pages are printed on thick paper that does an excellent job of displaying the intricate lines of Tezuka's amazing illustrations. This is a work that deserves to be preserved. Vertical, Inc. has gone above and beyond my very high expectations to do so.

Everyone should buy BUDDHA. BUDDHA is Tezuka during a time when he was a true master of his craft. Vertical, Inc. packaging blows away anything else in the Manga market. It's too bad that we don't see more of Mangas' Best packaged with such great love and care.

Grade: A+

BERSERK BOX SET
Reviewed by Joshua Morales

Kicked ass! To date BERSERK has got to be one of the best series I have seen. BERSERK is an anime series based on the comic book created by Kentaro Mirua. The premise centers around a rogue swordsman named Guts, who wanders around gaining his fighting skills by way of a sword that's bigger than he is. He joins up with a group of mercenaries called, "The Band of Hawks", who are brought in by the King of Midlands to help out in the 100 year war Midlands is embroiled in with the Kingdom of Chuder.

