

Continued from page 23

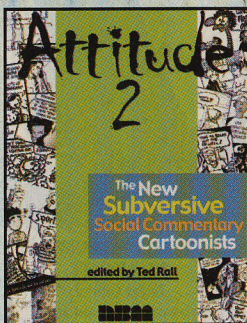
gins. "Black-and-white, large-format, trade book graphic novels aren't generally the norm [in the U.S. comics market], but they have a following," said Rospond. BL's graphic novels sell 1,500 to 3,000 copies across all channels in the U.S., said Rospond. "We've had some interest from libraries because of that, and the fact that we appeal to boys 12-18, which is a neglected area of the market." The books are also very popular with the military; Rospond noted, "Our books and graphic novels have even ended up in Afghanistan."

For 2004, the Black Library will be publishing follow-ups to some of its most successful books: *Daemonifuge III*, *Lone Wolves II* and three fantasy anthologies that tie into the new Storm of Chaos game campaign are on tap. The publisher is also considering "pocket editions" of its graphic novels and products to tie into the launch of Games Workshop's online first-person game at the end of the year.

The imprint will also have an increased presence at trade shows, with booths at Book Expo, Comicon and Wizard World.

—H.M.

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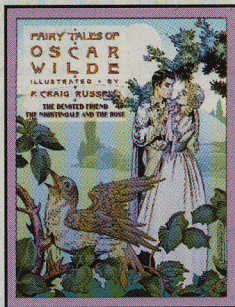
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Manga

Buddha Comes to America

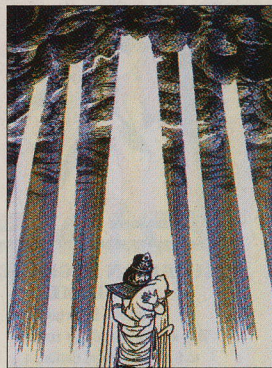
Doctor-turned-comics artist Osamu Tezuka (1928-1989) is regarded as the godfather of manga. Although some of his work is available in the U.S.—Dark Horse publishes the *Astro Boy* and *Next World* series; *Viz* does *Phoenix*—his eight-volume classic, *Buddha*, hasn't been translated into English.

That's about to change with the publication of the first two volumes, *Kapilavastu* (Oct.) and *The Four Encounters* (Nov.), this fall by Vertical Inc., a New York City press that publishes contemporary Japanese best-sellers in English, like Koji Suzuki's *Ring* (Apr.), on which the DreamWorks film

The Ring is based. *Buddha* would be an ambitious project for any house, but is especially so for Vertical, which launched its first list last spring and is still in the process of building its program to 20 books a year.

For Micah Burch, one of the directors of Vertical, *Buddha* is a logical extension of the company's mission. "Much like the gems of contemporary fiction, these classic manga books got overlooked," he told *PW*. And Vertical is determined to make *Buddha* as appealing to an American audience as possible. For starters, it has deliberately chosen to buck the trend among manga publishers—the images in *Buddha* are flipped so that they read in typical English fashion, rather than Japanese-style, right to left. "This was an effort to make it a little bit more universal," said Burch, who regards the art as an integral part of the translation process. "We translated artwork in Japanese into artwork in English."

The hardest part of the translation process may have been preserving Tezuka's puns and the onomatopoeia of the thuds, slashes and whooshes of the action frames. "It was written in a slang Japanese," noted



Tezuka's eight-volume Buddhist classic.

Burch, raising another issue that the company grappled with: "Do we want a literal translation? How would it sound to the Japanese?" In the end, Vertical chose to stay true to Tezuka's playful spirit. In one of his many humorous touches, Tezuka wrote himself into the book and can be spotted wearing glasses and his signature beret. The company has also received some flack for its decision to use American

slang, such as "Bro," "Moms" and "Peeps." But, as Burch noted, "Tezuka takes liberties with the stories that devout Buddhists may take issue with as well."

Like the other titles on Vertical's list, *Buddha* is being issued first in hardcover, even though most manga is typically published in paperback original. Vertical is not the only one facing a set of firsts to get *Buddha* to market. This is National Book Network's first manga; long-time comics distributor Diamond is handling sales to comics accounts.

Vertical is just starting to line up publicity for the books. Acclaimed book designer Chip Kidd, who reportedly joined the company largely for the opportunity to work on *Buddha*, will be the primary spokesperson going forward. Three more volumes of *Buddha* are due out in the spring; the final three volumes will be published in fall 2004.

—JUDITH ROSEN

Nonfiction Comics

Pantheon Re-Offers 'For Beginners' Series

Pantheon's For Beginners line has engendered something of a cult following. Presenting biographies and analyses of key figures in the history of thought, the series used a comics-like format: a breezy graphical hybrid presenting cartoon imagery along with text.

Originally published in the U.K., the line was picked up by Pantheon and published in the U.S. in 1979. This year, Pan-

theon has reissued four of the books in new editions: *Freud for Beginners* by Richard Appignanesi and Oscar Zarate; *Marx for Beginners* by Rius; *Einstein for Beginners* by Joseph Schwarz and Michael McGuinness; and *Darwin for Beginners* by Jonathan Miller and Borin van Loon.

Although the line originally featured nearly 20 titles, these four have had the strongest sales history, said Suzanne