



Schulz and Peanuts: A Biography

By David Michaelis

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Charles Schulz, the most widely syndicated and beloved cartoonist of all time, is also one of the most misunderstood figures in American culture. Now, acclaimed biographer David Michaelis gives us the first full-length biography of Schulz: at once a creation story, a portrait of a hidden American genius, and a chronicle contrasting the private man with the central role he played in shaping the national imagination. The son of a barber, Schulz was born in Minnesota to modest, working class roots. In 1943, just three days after his mother's tragic death from cancer, Schulz, a private in the army, shipped out for boot camp and the war in Europe. The sense of shock and separation never left him. And these early experiences would shape his entire life.

With Peanuts, Schulz embedded adult ideas in a world of small children to remind the reader that character flaws and childhood wounds are with us always. It was the central truth of his own life, that as the adults we've become and as the children we always will be, we can free ourselves, if only we can see the humour in the predicaments of funny-looking kids. Schulz's Peanuts profoundly influenced the country in the second half of the 20th century. But the strip was anchored in the collective experience and hardships of Schulz's generation—the generation that survived the Great Depression and liberated Europe and the Pacific and came home to build the post-war world.

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Schulz and Peanuts: A Biography By David Michaelis **Bibliography**

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Significant Seven, October 2007: There's no book this year that made people's eyes light up when I told them about it more than *Schulz and Peanuts*, David Michaelis's new biography of cartoonist Charles Schulz. (And when they saw the obvious-but-brilliant Chip Kidd-designed cover, their eyes got even brighter.) Everyone, it seems, feels a personal connection to Peanuts (a name, by the way, that Schulz always hated), but few have a sense of the artist whose small troupe of big-headed characters still lives at the center of our imagination. If some mystery about the man still remains after reading Michaelis's sharp, engaging, and level-headed biography that's no fault of the biographer--in fact, it's to his credit. Michaelis parses Schulz's particular combination of Midwestern reserve and steely determination and the strip's still-surprising balance of exuberance and misery, and he reminds us what a colossal cultural force it became, especially in the 1960s. But even as he ingeniously finds sources for Schulz's four-panel vignettes in the events of his biography, he recognizes that the true, sometimes inexplicable drama of his life took place when he sat down every day for 50 years to trace Linus's wobbly strands of hair, fill in Snoopy's black nose, and, time and again, letter the words "Good grief." --*Tom Nissley*

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. For all the joy Charlie Brown and the gang gave readers over half a century, their creator, Charles Schulz, was a profoundly unhappy man. It's widely known that he hated the name Peanuts, which was foisted on the strip by his syndicate. But Michaelis (*N.C. Wyeth: A Biography*), given access to family, friends and personal papers, reveals the full extent of Schulz's depression, tracing its origins in his Minnesota childhood, with parents reluctant to encourage his artistic dreams and yearbook editors who scrapped his illustrations without explanation. Nearly 250 Peanuts strips are woven into the biography, demonstrating just how much of his life story Schulz poured into the cartoon. In one sequence, Snoopy's crush on a girl dog is revealed as a barely disguised retelling of the artist's extramarital affair. Michaelis is especially strong in recounting Schulz's artistic development, teasing out the influences on his unique characterization of children. And Michaelis makes plain the full impact of Peanuts' first decades and how much it puzzled and unnerved other cartoonists. This is a fascinating account of an artist who devoted his life to his work in the painful belief that it was all he had. 16 pages of b&w photos; 240 b&w comic strips throughout. (Oct. 16)

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

David Michaelis's book, the first full-scale biography of Charles Schulz, is almost as universally adored as his subject's comic strips. The former biographer of N. C. Wyeth (whose son Andrew was a hero of Schulz's) takes on America's best-known cartoonist, drawing on exclusive access to Schulz's papers and interviews with nearly every living Schulz acquaintance. Erring on the side of inclusion, the book sometimes seems too rich with detail, and one reviewer faults Michaelis's focus on Schulz's gloomier side (a criticism that Schulz's own daughter has made about the book). Otherwise, reviewers are riveted by the revelatory correspondences between Schulz's groundbreaking work and the man who brought it to life.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jason Villalobos:

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