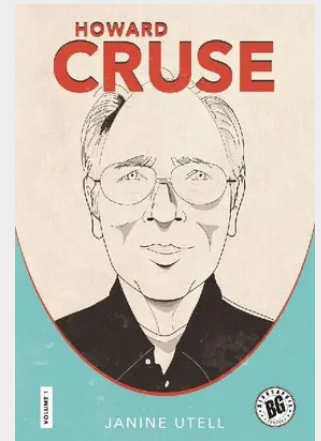


Howard Cruse

Howard Cruse is the first biography to tell the life story of one of the most important figures in LGBTQ+ comics. A preacher's kid from Alabama who became "the godfather of queer comics," Cruse (1944–2019) was a groundbreaking underground cartoonist, a wicked satirist, an LGBTQ+ activist, and a mentor to a vast network of queer comics artists. His comic strip *Wendel*, published in *The Advocate* throughout the 1980s, is considered a revolutionary moment in the development of LGBTQ+ comics, as is his inaugurating the editorship of *Gay Comix* with Kitchen Sink Press in 1979, which furthered the careers of important artists like Jennifer Camper and Alison Bechdel. Cruse's graphic novel *Stuck Rubber Baby*, published in 1995, fictionalizes his own coming out in the context of the civil rights movement in 1960s Birmingham and was a significant forerunner to contemporary graphic novels and memoirs. Howard Cruse draws on extensive archival research and interviews and covers Cruse's entire body of work: the cute and zany *Barefootz*, the unexpected innovations of the *Gay Comix* stories, the domestic intimacies of *Wendel*, and the complexity and power of *Stuck Rubber Baby*. The book places Cruse's art in the context of his life and his times, including the historic movements for gay rights and against the AIDS crisis, and it celebrates this extraordinary and essential figure of LGBTQ+ comics and American comics art more broadly.

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