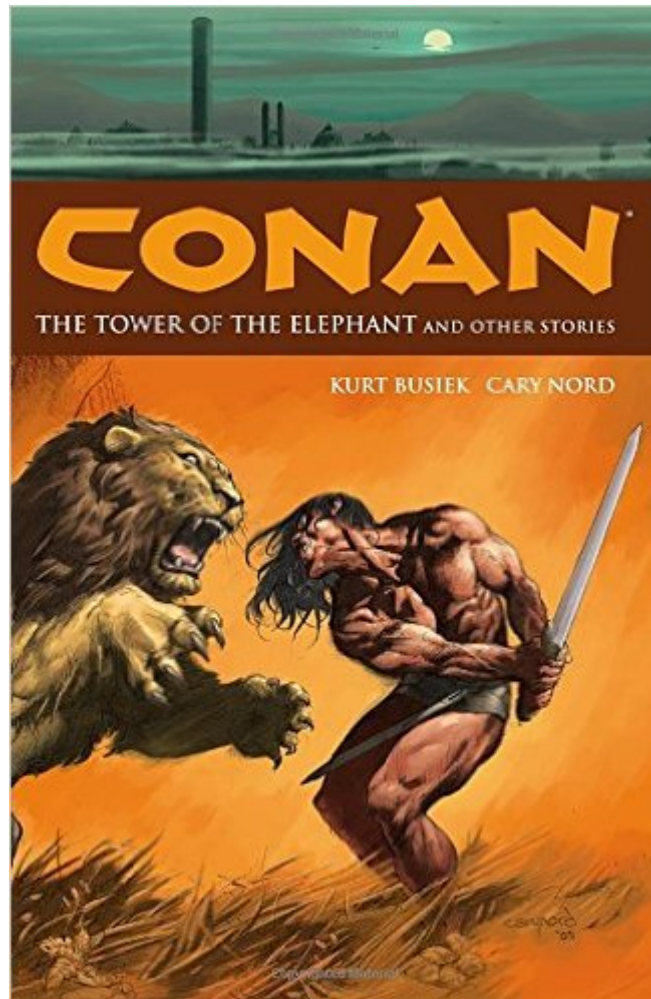


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The Chronicles Of Conan, Vol. 1: Tower Of The Elephant And Other Stories



Synopsis

In the early 1970s, Robert E. Howard's Conan the Barbarian exploded on to the comics scene. Writer Roy Thomas teamed with a young artist named Barry Smith, and together the two mapped out some of the most stirring and memorable Conan adventures to come along since those written by Howard himself. Over the course of their 24 issue run together, Thomas and Smith defined Conan for a generation of comics readers, and now those stories are collected in this series. Featuring completely remastered color and text corrections, and containing material not available for nearly thirty years.

Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Dark Horse Books (September 30, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1593070160

ISBN-13: 978-1593070168

Product Dimensions: 6.6 x 0.4 x 10.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (30 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Barry Windsor-Smith is my favorite comic book artist. Even though I have been selling off a lot of my old Marvel comic books, if Windsor-Smith drew the issue or just the cover, then that comic is a keeper. The irony is that when he drew his first comic book for Marvel comics, literally drawing his pages on park benches in Central Park, we all thought he was the worst artist in the history of the world. But as you can see in "Tower of the Elephant and Other Stories," the first volume in "The Chronicles of Conan," in which Dark Horse reprints the first eight issues of Marvel's "Conan the Barbarian," Barry Windsor-Smith was quickly developing one of the most distinctive drawing styles in the history of comic books. The key in these first eight issues of "Conan the Barbarian" are when Thomas and Windsor-Smith work from some of Robert E. Howard's original stories. Issue #4, "Tower of the Elephant" is prominent in the title of this collection because it is the first classic

"Conan" comic book, but the adaptations of "The Grey God Passes" (#3), the poem "Zuakal's Hour" (#5), "The God in the Bowl" (#7), and a synopsis by Howard that Thomas uncovered (#8), were all crucial in helping the team find their voice and look in these comics. Just as the writing by Thomas becomes more than standard comic book fare, so does the artwork by Windsor-Smith because more stylized. Sal Buscema's inking of Windsor-Smith's pencils clearly defines this period, but I like the pages done by Dan Atkins a little better. Frank Giacoia's inks were just too different, but the final story, inked by Tom Sutton and Tom Palmer, hints at what we would see when Windsor-Smith would ink himself (did I mention I have the splash page of issue #8 as a black light poster?).

When I was young I had read all of Howard's Conan stories and the DeCamp and Carter pastiches, so I was incredibly excited when Marvel brought out the Conan the Barbarian comic books. This volume is a compilation of the first eight issues (sans the covers, unfortunately - a big minus!). In Mark Schultz's foreword to "The Coming of Conan the Cimmerian," which compiles all of Howard's Conan stories in the order in which he wrote them, he observes that there is no mistaking a Howard story. Reading through that book I was shocked at how elegant and cleanly and clearly written were the Howard stories compared to later pastiches and original stories by other writers. Conan was Howard's and Howard's alone to write, it seems. That holds true in this volume, too. Although all of the stories are written by Roy Thomas, the absolute best (and memory tells me that they were the best when these were still new comics) are those originally written by Howard himself or derived from his material: "Twilight of the Grim Grey God," "Tower of the Elephant" (a very, very memorable piece, even thirty+ years later), "The Lurker Within" (from Howard's story, "The God in the Bowl," it is strong in the parts where it follows Howard's story, weak in the new additions), and one of the most memorable Conan comics of all, "Keepers of the Crypt," based on an original Howard synopsis. The latter especially suffers from the lack of its magnificent cover. Fortunately, the Afterword by Thomas helps to explain the history of the Marvel comic and the hows and whys of the ups and downs of the comic's popularity, and how it was tied to the (not published here!) covers.

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