

# HOLY GUANO BATMAN!

## COMICS HAVE SURE CH



"Batman: The Cult" from DC Comics

"Comics aren't just for kids anymore," proclaims the DC Comics advertising banner. Indeed, the world of comic books has gone through a radical metamorphosis since you were a kid.

A radical polarization has gripped the comics industry. Comics now fit into two categories: the original, camp, true-blue juvenile super-hero breed, and a darker, seamier, gritty set of stories. Comic collecting has spurred a resurgence of serious titles for adults.

These new comics are not bound by the all-American, apple pie morals that identified the comics of earlier days. They are often violent and sexually explicit. Some comics publishers have even taken to placing "Mature Audience Suggested" warnings on these comics. Comic store owners will not sell these titles to kids.

The new 'breed' of comics is not without its critics. In Calgary, one comic store was shut down for allegedly peddling 'obscenity'. This case is still in court.

### The Genesis of Comic Books

The history of comics dates far back to before the Second World War. Starting with what used to be called "funny-books" in the 1920's, artists drew series of comic strips with on-going characters. Initially they tried to be funny, but the 1930's brought the advent of adventure strips like *Tarzan*, and *Buck Rogers*.

With the onset of World War Two, the previously humorous exploits of these characters were bent to nationalistic propaganda. The heroes started fighting the Nazi forces. This was the origin of Superman, who made his first appearance in DC's *Action Comics* and was an overnight success in 1938. DC (*Detective Comics*) titles were published by National Periodicals. This success was quickly emulated by Cadence Communications, publishing Marvel comics with their *Captain Marvel* title.

Comics sales kept increasing. Many publishing companies dabbled in comic books. Then as sales began to slow, the novelty wore off. More violence appeared in the books as the publishers attempted to keep sales up. *Crime Comics* soon triggered a wave of parental concern with graphic violence and semi-nudity. This public outrage gave rise to self-censorship among publishers in 1954. An organization called the Comics Code Authority was created by the publishers. This group stifled favorable treatment of criminals, bad cops, or "sexy, wanton comics."



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"Conan Saga" from Marvel Comics