

Charles Bukowski and the Art of Spain Rodriguez

While Charles Bukowski's collaborations with Robert Crumb are well known, Bukowski also collaborated Crumb's fellow Underground Comix artist, Spain Rodriguez.

CHARLOTTE, NC, UNITED STATES, October 14, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Many artists have illustrated Charles Bukowski and his work over the years, most notably [Robert Crumb](#). But Bukowski also collaborated Crumb's fellow Underground Comix artist, Spain Rodriguez.

Their first collaboration was for the German edition of *Women*, which was titled, "[Love Tale of the Hyena](#)". That was Bukowski's working title for the novel and some early excerpts from the book appeared under that name.

The other two collaborations were Bukowski short stories that appeared in *Fling Magazine* in 1986. Neither the stories nor the illustrations are that impressive, but you get a sense that the two artists were still sparring from their first encounter back in 1972.

The two first met at a cocktail party in Los Angeles. The party was hosted by Liza Williams, a successful record executive and on-and-off girlfriend of Bukowski. During the event Williams introduced Bukowski to Crumb and the two hit it off immediately. Hoping to keep Bukowski entertained, she decided to introduce him to Spain



Spain Rodriguez Portrait of Charles Bukowski



Spain Rodriguez Cover for Love Tale of the Hyena

next.

The drunken Bukowski didn't know who Spain was, but took an instant dislike to him, insulting him and challenging him to a fight. In the end, Bukowski was smart enough to back off his comments, but he still ended up wounded by his own antics, as described in the poem, trouble with Spain:

I got in the shower
and burned my balls
last Wednesday.
met this painter called Spain,
no, he was a cartoonist,
well, I met him at a party
and everybody got mad at me
because I didn't know who he was
or what he did.
he was rather a handsome guy
and I guess he was jealous because
I was so ugly.
they told me his name
and he was leaning against the wall
looking handsome, and I said:
hey, Spain, I like that name: Spain.
but I don't like you. why don't we step out
in the garden and I'll kick the shit out of your
ass?
this made the hostess angry
and she walked over and rubbed his pecker
while I went to the crapper
and heaved.
but everybody's angry at me.
Bukowski, he can't write, he's had it.
washed-up. look at him drink.
he never used to come to parties.
now he comes to parties and drinks everything
up and insults real talent.
I used to admire him when he cut his wrists
and when he tried to kill himself with



gas. look at him now leering at that 19 year old girl, and you know he can't get it up.

I not only burnt my balls in that shower last Wednesday, I spun around to get out of the burning water and burnt my bunghole too.

In retrospect, it's not at all surprising that the two men didn't hit it off. While Bukowski was notorious for getting into arguments and fights at parties, Spain was no angel himself. A former member of the Red Vultures Motorcycle Club, Spain was famously confrontational. In the documentary "[Bad Attitude](#)" Spain's wife Susan Stern (who directed the film) humorously described his antics.

"Spain was always trying to provoke me and everybody else," Stern recalled. "As far as I know, Spain was born bad."

Bukowski and Spain had other things in common as well. While Bukowski's father tore up his stories when he was a young man, Spain's father tried to discourage his interest in comics by ripping them up when he found them around the house.

Like Bukowski, Spain also had issues with what universities considered art. Spain dropped out of the Silvermine Guild Art School because his work was based in realism at a time when abstract was in fashion.

"You had to belong to the school of non-representational painting to be taken seriously," fellow Underground Comix artist Art Spiegelman explained. "Anyone who would do anything representational was dismissed as a mere illustrator."

Bukowski and Spain's work were also often autobiographical in nature, with Spain illustrating stories about events that happened when he was young -- some of which were troubling.

"Spain always told me that he drew autobiographical comics so he could stop telling certain stories," Stern recalled.

So, it's appropriate that Spain illustrated *Women*, perhaps Bukowski's most autobiographical novel. It was published in 1981 by Zweitausendeins and translated by his longtime friend and German agent, Carl Weissner. It's a beautiful book, with a color front cover, a stitched binding, and a cloth ribbon bookmark.

The front cover depicts a notorious argument Bukowski had with Linda King before they finally ended the relationship for good. The title page (also in color) shows an overweight Bukowski throwing up.

There are also seven black and white interior drawings in Love Tale of the Hyena. One drawing is a sex scene and the others are composed of individual portraits and figures of women depicted in the novel. Each has a unique visual persona adapted from Bukowski's descriptions in the book.

The other two Bukowski/Spain collaborations took place in the mid-1980s, when Bukowski began writing for adult magazines again

The May 1986 and November 1986 issues of Fling magazine featured full-length short stories by Bukowski, accompanied by multi-panel comic versions by Spain.

The May issue featured "Stud Service", a story about a man who brings a male stranger home to have sex with his wife. In this characterization, Spain makes Bukowski look like a redneck with a flannel shirt and baseball cap.

The November issue contained "The Cheese Bit", a story about a woman who brings a man home so her boyfriend can secretly watch them have sex. In this depiction, Spain makes Bukowski look half-ape and half-human.

Bukowski often made fun of his looks, so it's unlikely he was offended by Spain's depictions. But you do have to wonder if these depictions are Spain's way of sparring with Bukowski.

BAD ATTITUDE is available on Amazon and well worth the fee for the visual experience alone.

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