



## The Complete Peanuts, Vol. 19: 1987-1988

*Charles M. Schulz, G.B. Trudeau (Introduction)*

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## **The Complete Peanuts, Vol. 19: 1987-1988** Charles M. Schulz , G.B. Trudeau (Introduction)

So what do we have for Peanuts fans this time around? An ill-considered attempt at flirting sends Charlie Brown to the school doctor... Linus's ongoing romance with the too-young "Lydia" of the many names continues... Snoopy is joined in the trenches by his brother Spike... Sally engages in a career as a playwright by penning the school Christmas play but mixes up Gabriel and Geronimo... A hockey mishap sends Snoopy to the doctor for knee surgery, in a (clearly autobiographical) sequence that lasts only until everyone figures out that dogs don't have knees... Linus and Lucy's kid brother Rerun begins to take on the greater role that will lead to him being one of the dominant characters in the 1990s... and Snoopy, inevitably, writes a "kiss and tell" book. As we reach the 19th (!) book in this epochal, best-selling series collecting arguably the greatest comic strip of all time and head toward the end of the 1980s, Charles Schulz is still as inventive, hilarious, and touching as ever... and this volume even features a surprise format change, as the daily strip switches from its trademark four-square-panels format to a more flexible one-to-four-variable-panels format which, along with Schulz's increased use of gray tones, give this volume a striking, distinctive look.

## **The Complete Peanuts, Vol. 19: 1987-1988 Details**

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### Erik says

An up and down collection. I don't know if the panel reduction was a request from newspapers or if Schulz just couldn't keep up with doing 4 panels a day anymore. It also occasionally drops to 2 or even 1 panel strips that come off as lazy. Peppermint Patty is starting to get too much focus and is losing her effectiveness as a result. At the same time, Marcie gets better and better through her increased use. Spike also shows up more, but his jokes are so dumb they're some of my favorites.

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### Travis says

The 19th volume is one of the better collections from the 1980s.

The strips on 4/19/1987 and 4/28/1987 feature puns worthy of Pearls Before Swine.

The strips on 5/11/1987 through 5/16/1987 are actually astonishing because they combine two of the less funny recurring elements, Spike and WWII Snoopy, into a genuinely amusing story. If only Peanuts played with its characters and settings as much as this week of strips.

Linus' relationship with the mysterious Lydia (or Ophelia? or Rebecca? or Rachel?) has its ups and downs as it occupies a sizeable portion of the storylines. It's nice to see Linus playing front and center without involving the Great Pumpkin or his blanket. And the "aren't you kind of old for me?" gag manages to stay just funny enough not to outstay its welcome.

Speaking of recurring gags, the annual ones such as the Great Pumpkin, kicking the football, and Beethoven's birthday, are all greatly underplayed in both 1987 and 1988. There's practically no build up either year. 1988 in particular feels like the Great Pumpkin was included on Halloween simply to maintain annual consistency. This isn't necessarily a bad thing as it allows other, fresher elements and stories more room to develop.

Sadly, there's no truly classic strips or moments. And some of the Peppermint Patty strips wear thin, presumably as the character reached her popularity zenith in the 1980s (that's a total guess, by the way).

A classic strip remains in a solid holding pattern after 30 years.

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### Dylan says

I read this a long time ago but it made me laugh out loud. This book contains comics that inspired the peanut films. It is overall a funny book that quickly passes time.

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## Dan says

Imagine doing the same thing for 38 years, and then being told you have to make a significant change. I don't know about you, but I'd be pretty upset. Well, on February 29, 1988, Charles Schulz suddenly had to draw his daily strips in a much smaller size, as did all other comic strips. The exception was Gary Trudeau's *Doonesbury*, which Trudeau successfully argued needed more space because it was political.

No doubt Schulz was upset and complained about the shrinkage of space. But a remarkable thing happened – his strips suddenly became a lot better. They don't come anywhere close to the pinnacle of the seventies' strips. But the change in size seems to have sparked Schulz's creativity.

The most obvious change on 2/29/88 strip is that the number of panels has gone from four squares to three. But then on 3/11 he decided to squeeze in four squares, each of uneven size. On 4/2 he does something quite remarkable for him, and makes the strip a single panel. Did he do this before the size change? If so, I don't remember it. On 4/16 he tries out a two-square strip.

The size of the squares has a dramatic effect on his artwork. I'm no artist, but even I can see that the bigger squares allow Schulz to play around with perspective. Some of the strips lose their flat two-dimensional looks and actually look somewhat three-dimensional. This seems most evident when he has his characters sit in oversized chairs.

None of this would matter if the strips themselves weren't funny. My theory is that the shake-up in the art inspired him to shake up his gags. We're still stuck with lots of un-funny Spike strips, but there are some real gems in between. My favorite are the strips with Linus and Lydia, a girl who completely messes with his head. When she's not coming up with creative ways of telling him that he's too old for him, she's constantly changing her name. "Tomorrow my name will be Ophelia..As my character grows and my beauty increases, so will my names change..." Pretty meta thing to say for a Peanuts character. Lucy asks Linus, "Why do you bother with her." Linus replies "She fascinates me." (In a four-panel strip – so much for my theory. Although, to be fair, it happens a couple of months before the change, so maybe Schulz was already inspired to shake things up.)

Anyway, it's unfair to say Schulz wasn't funny after the seventies. The fact is that he's always had dry spells in his humor. In the eighties, these dry spells can last over a year. But what the 1988-89 edition proves is that those dry spells weren't permanent, and he still had a few good gags up his sleeve.

One last note – Gary Trudeau is an asshole. The prefaces to the Complete Peanuts series have been uniformly abysmal, with the exception of Robert Smigel's entry in 75-76. Why did they give Trudeau the 88-89 slot? Did Trudeau ask for it or was it randomly assigned. Trudeau is a fellow cartoonist closely associated with the size change. Does he bring it up at all? No. Because he's an asshole. Instead he writes some tripe about how famous Schulz is. Well, no kidding. Nobody's clamoring for "The Complete *Doonesbury*." Why on earth did they give Trudeau a preface slot when Schulz was on record that he thought *Doonesbury* sucked. Trudeau's lame preface was probably his way of sticking it back at Schulz. He doesn't deign to talk about Schulz's craft, doesn't analyze how he tackled the change. That would force Trudeau to come to terms with how Schulz's craft completely obliterates his own.

I understand that Tom Tomorrow is doing the preface for 91-92 book. I can't wait.

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## **Heather says**

Back to funny! Or maybe it's just my mindset when I'm reading these. At any rate, the references dating this volume were fairly minimal. There was a reference to Crocodile Dundee and a couple of other very-80s things, but it wasn't dripping with the 1980s like the 1970s volume was. We got to Peppermint Patty attend several "Tiny Tots" concerts, much to her chagrin; there were several check-ins with Spike in Needles, CA; and there was even a Sunday comic (April 19, 1987) about enlightenment that seemed like Zen Comics had taken over Peanuts for the day. Sally wrote a play, Peppermint Patty was laughed offstage during her theater debut as an amusingly drawn sheep, and of course Snoopy quaffed a few root beers with Bill Mauldin (who I just recently learned was a real person!). One of the better volumes, I think, in terms of timelessness and humor.

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## **Baal Of says**

There is something comforting about reading these strips were initially run after I had stopped actively following Peanuts. Schulz's gentle touch is fully evident, and he still has the ability to make me laugh out loud a few times, for example the strip with Peppermint Patty as a sheep in a play forgetting her line. This volume also featured the transition from 4 panels to 3 panels (with occasional variances), which was probably due to the shrinking space made available by the newspapers to cartoonists. Also interesting was Schulz's first use of screentone for shading things like Snoopy's doghouse, and some furniture.

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## **Kelly says**

February 29, 1988 the daily strips went from 4 panels to 3 panels. There are even some that are two panels, and a couple that are only one panel. It is almost exactly at this time that the humor seemed to really come down. It almost seemed forced. There are many notable moments, but I really found it to be disappointing.

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## **Matt Carton says**

Amazing that Schulz just kept better and better. And I have to say - after reading every single comic he did up to this point, Marcie has to be one of the best characters Schulz created.

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## **Jennifer says**

Best things about this collection: The introduction of Linus' cute and oh, so frustrating schoolmate (and sort of crush), Lydia ("Today my name is ..."), and perhaps my all-time favorite Peanuts strip (from 2/29/88): Patty (staring in dismay at her test paper): *Rats! Another "D-minus"!*

Marcie: *Life has its sunshine and its rain, sir..its days and its nights..its peaks and its valleys...*

Patty (appearing even more despondent): *It's raining tonight in my valley!*

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### **Greg Brozeit says**

On February 29, 1988, the daily strips (excluding Sundays) went from an average of four frames to three frames. Somehow it doesn't seem fair. Best quote from Lucy: "Nothing that's going on in the world today is my fault!"

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### **Steven Hill says**

10 out of 10

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### **Lee Anne says**

Monday, February 29th, 1988: that was the day the daily strips went from 4 panels to three, and occasionally two. Discombobulating at first.

It also contains one of my all-time favorite panels, which I used to have cut out and saved on my refrigerator for many years: Lucy, saying to Linus, as he sits in the beanbag chair, "How would you like to have someone like myself remind you of all your faults?"

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### **Rugg Ruggedo says**

A lot happening in these two years of Peanuts, and the volume starts with a very cool intro by Garry Trudeau. Mr Trudeau compares Schultz to Bill Mauldin a famous cartoonist from WW II, and one of Charles heroes, and then "blamed" his own career on his love of Charles Schultz. A fun way to start the volume off. 1087 starts off with Charlie Brown winking at the little red haired girl and ends up with him in the eye doctors office having it checked out. Romance is in the air as Linus is having his first problems with Lydia who doesn't know who he is, even tho he sat in front of her all year in school. Snoopy is prominent all thru the volume as a surgeon, a member of the foreign legion, the flyin ace and a patient with knee surgery.

Peppermint Patty tries for May Queen again and falls far short. Rerun learns the finger snap. Marcie tells Charlie Brown that her and Peppermint Patty "love him" and PP worries about it the whole time they're at camp, as swim instructors. In fact the PP/Marcie/"Chuck" triangle keeps coming up thru the whole volume. There's a new character that wants to be part of a non-existent football team, Leland, who is a helmet with feet. On the holiday gets out Christmased and the problem continues on Valentines Day. I also found PP's wig to be a fun little run.

It was during this period that Charles Schultz started to experiment with the format of the dailies. Sometimes using just three panels, sometimes just using one long panel. Very creative and interesting lesson for anyone interested in cartooning.

This is a great series for fans and a lot of fun for anyone who happens upon it. I recommend it but I am that a huge fan of Schulz and Maudlin too.

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## Rick says

With this volume, Schulz is heading for the final lap of his fourth decade with one more decade to go after. This volume boasts the best introduction of the series to date, by Garry Trudeau, and has some great strips among others that are just so-so. Trudeau: “Peanuts was the first post-modern comic strip. Everything about it was different. The drawing was graphically austere but beautifully nuanced. It was populated with complicated, neurotic characters speaking smart, haiku-perfect dialogue. The stories were interwoven with allusions from religion, classical music, psychiatry, and philosophy.”

In Peanuts there was nothing unusual about Peppermint Patty doing (poorly) a book report on *War and Peace*. Or a bilingual text as Snoopy, downed World War I ace, wandering the French countryside, consulting his phrase book as Marcie speaks abundantly in French. Or this Beckett-like exchange between Sally Brown and Linus: “What are you doing here?” asks Linus. “I’m practicing waiting for the school bus,” replies Sally. “Is that something you have to practice?” “It is if you want to be good at it.”

Familiar tropes abound but work freshly: Nearly forty years in and Snoopy, writing his tell-all book, can’t remember the little round headed kid’s name; Charlie Brown’s baseball team (Peppermint Patty trades Marcie for Lucy and both managers regret the trade); Snoopy’s fantasy life (he’s a surgeon as well as the usual cast of characters, including sand trap violating leader of the French Foreign Legion); Lucy is a shrink, football holder, and know it all (Linus volunteers to bring the world together so Lucy can improve it with her wisdom—try to get them all in one room, says Lucy, I hate to say things twice).

Peppermint Patty and Marcie call Charlie Brown from camp to ask if she misses them. He turns to his baby sister for advice. “I think Peppermint Patty and Marcie like me but I don’t know why...I wish I could ask them.” Sally nixes the idea, “It’s all right to ask somebody why they hate you, but you should never ask somebody why they like you.” “Why is that?” Says Sally, “It’s a harder question.”

Charlie Brown takes Snoopy to city hall to get him a dog license but first he comes away with a driving and fishing license for his dog. After securing the dog license, they go up to one more counter but Charlie Brown turns back to Snoopy. “No, she says you don’t need a license for that.” He and Snoopy leave city hall with Snoopy shouldering an assault rifle.

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## Mark Schlatter says

A few notes:

- 1) Definitely the best introduction of the Fantagraphics series --- G.B. Trudeau does an excellent job of placing Schulz's work in context.
- 2) As a few other reviewers have noted, this is the volume where Schulz switches away from four-panels-a-day weekday strips. What I find amazing is that Schulz still delivers the laughs and timing despite changing his approach after decades.
- 3) Lots of Spike Sunday strips!

4) A weekday strip where Snoopy appears to be wielding an AK-47 --- it's the culmination of a week where a quest for a dog license goes awry. Very strange to see in Peanuts.

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