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**Houdini: The Handcuff King** Jason Lutes (Writer) , Nick Bertozzi (Illustrator)

Harry Houdini mesmerized a generation of Americans when he was alive, and continues to do so 80 years after his death. This is a snapshot of Houdini's life, centering on one of his most famous jumps. As Houdini prepares for a death-defying leap into the icy Charles River in Boston, biographer Jason Lutes and artist Nick Bertozzi reveal Houdini's life and influence: from the anti-Semitism Houdini fought all his life, to the adulation of the American public; from his hounding by the press, to his loving relationship with his wife Bess; from his egoism to his insecurity; from his public persona -- to the secret behind his most amazing trick! And it's all in graphic form, so it's fresh, original, and unlike anything previously published about this most fascinating of American showmen.

## Houdini: The Handcuff King Details

Date : Published April 1st 2007 by Disney Press

ISBN : 9780786839025

Author : Jason Lutes (Writer) , Nick Bertozzi (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 81 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Comics, Biography, Nonfiction, History

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**Download and Read Free Online Houdini: The Handcuff King Jason Lutes (Writer) , Nick Bertozzi (Illustrator)**

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# From Reader Review Houdini: The Handcuff King for online ebook

## Jon(athan) Nakapalau says

Great overview of Houdini and the challenges he faced in his life.

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## Sarah Sammis says

<http://pussreboots.pair.com/blog/2015...>

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## Brenda Lower says

Kind of interesting- gave you a good feel for how people reacted to Houdini, and his flare for drama. But oddly lacking in more significant details. Needs to be paired with a more fact heavy book for more balanced information.

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## Erin Forson says

Houdini The Handcuff King

by Jason Lutes and Nick BertozziPart

I found this story about Ehrich Weiss, a.k.a. Houdini, very interesting and easy to read, even though the writers aren't exactly sure if they guessed Houdini's escape methods accurately. In this day and age, Magician Chris Angel is burning up the tube, but back then, before T.V., the entire nation (and the world actually) all knew who the Magician Houdini was. It was said that no bonds, no matter how strong, could hold him. The only bonds that got him in the end were the bonds of death—but even that didn't come through one of his escape artist routines. In fact, his death has a lot to do with his personality. If you want to know more, read this short little number and maybe you can guess the reason for Houdini's demise.

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## Stewart Tame says

Being myself a magician--strictly amateur--for around forty years now, give or take, I was predisposed to like this. This is obviously not a full biography of Houdini, more an account of a single day--not even a full one--in his life. The story is well told. Both Lutes and Bertozzi are old hands at this sort of tale. There are some fascinating end notes after the story. If this has a major fault, it's that it's a little too short. It feels more like the prelude to a full-blown graphic novel biography of Houdini rather than a stand-alone tale. It's over almost as soon as you start it, but it's still worth reading if you've any interest in the topic.

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## Forrest says

I suppose that when I read a book wherein the structure of the story itself reflects the tone, I should be appreciative. In this case, I'm just annoyed. The artwork in *Houdini: The Handcuff King* is sparse, not very structured, and, honestly, a bit trite. The story is much of the same. It's a little slice of biography about Houdini's chained and handcuffed jump at Harvard Bridge. One of Houdini's minor feats, though he plied it as a marketing opportunity, which, as the book relates, he was always seeking. Unfortunately, I felt that this was only a minor graphic novel that acts as a (rather expensive) advertisement for The Center for Cartoon Studies, which holds the copyright.

I wanted to like this book more than I did. The foreshortened story was stilted, even jarring sometimes in its incompleteness. This shoddy storytelling wasn't, unfortunately, made up for by stunning artwork. Outside of the panel of Houdini jumping from Philadelphia's Market Street bridge, the artwork was pedestrian and uninspiring.

This is a book that could have breathed and been full of life. Instead, I felt much like Houdini must have while he was sinking into the cold water, struggling to be free of the claustrophobia of the story in which he found himself. He escaped. I didn't.

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## ||Swaroop|| says

Break a Leg, Mr. Houdini!

*Houdini: The Handcuff King* by Jason Lutes is a quick, short and a brief book on Harry Houdini. The introduction does has a lot of information on Houdini but the graphic content as such is on one of his acts (the death-defying jump!) that he performs in Boston. Simple and Crisp.

"I have escaped out of more handcuffs, manacles, and leg shackles than any other human being living." ~ Harry Houdini (1874-1926).

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## Mariel says

What are secrets worth?

I'm doing my mean Michael Caine from *The Prestige* impersonation now. You can't hear me if you are reading this (because you are reading and not listening to me). This is an example. (The clip is of Michael Caine speaking in his own Cockney accent [more or less dampened by years of living in California smog].) "Once they know the secret the trick is worthless!" is what I'm getting around to.

If you care about secrets *Houdini: The Handcuff King* is not a book for you. It spills the secrets to one of his famous tricks (diving off a bridge into a freezing river and removing his shackles underwater). His wife delivers him a pick with a kiss. I'm surprised no one contracted lock jaw! har har har. Mariel, you are too damned funny. Sobs.

I don't really care about secrets. I could figure out that there was a trick in there somehow and not NEED to

know how they were pulling off the trick. I'm impressed with the skill it takes to pull off tricks. What would drive a person to spend their lives thinking of ways to fool everybody else? Are they pleased by the illusion and skill or are they happy to fool people for its own sake?

Jason Lutes wrote 'Houdini' and Nick Bertozzi illustrated. I had been looking forward to reading this comic book for weeks. I liked Lutes's 'Berlin' comics a whole lot. If you care about this sort of thing (I do!), those were comics about life in Berlin before the Nazis came to power. Outside forces and inside forces pulling out the people insides and outsides and forcing them to splatter on the same walls they'd rather not touch (that's why they have walls). The drawings were the expressions I could go into a temporary visual coma staring at as the body language spoke over the panels into pages. Reading the story through words and then there's another layer of subtext through subtly changing landscapes. I'd compare Lutes's work to the Hernandez brothers of Love and Rockets fame. Growing to love the characters as if you were living with them. That sounds easy but it isn't something I get every day. Knowing Maggie through her weight ups and downs as if watching her body was a visual timer of the good and bad of her friendships and love lives. If L&R is your type of comic I'd suggest taking up the 'Berlin' stories. According to wikipedia, Lutes was influenced by the Tin Tin comics (I love those too). This is probably true about 'Handcuff'. It's kinda deliberately old fashioned.

Bertozzi's Houdini illustrations were something else. I want to say this is a kiddie style without really knowing what that means. Like if you read a so-so young adult book and think "that's for young adults" and it doesn't mean that other ya isn't completely awesome that anyone could love. It has a precursory feel to it. Introductory level. Harry Houdini, introductory level. The scenes with his wife are "Oh honey" sitcom style. Harry Houdini: asshole to journalists and brags about himself a lot. Yeah, he did that. But there were other sides. Harry Houdini who worked to expose others and thought of himself as a criminal too. Maybe he wanted to be caught too. Maybe the con and the praise were the whole trick for him.

I wouldn't have chosen to write about an outside surface look at a happy marriage. Since when are marriages ever what they appear on the inside? To give an outside look as inside felt really kiddie look to me.

The pictures are colored as if in a black and white film (not black and white. Painted a blueish gray and sometimes colored black). It felt like the stylistic choice when you watch new films that are black and white because films from that period were black and white. Why are they trying to emulate the films of the period, basing life off of a copy? I think too much. Maybe they want to be like their old idols like a kid magician becomes a magician because they had believed in the illusion to begin with. They get stuck in the past that way, though. The expressions were ego and triumph. Boring. How about a like bodied (like like minded) Houdini pose? Escaping bonds of a regular job. He represented a lot to a lot of people (escape!) and yet he did not want anyone else to be him. The wonderful thing about Tigger is that he's the only one? What did he represent to himself? Houdini: The Handcuff King is never more than a facade. The mystery is better than this. I would at least want a wow! to make me wonder about how he did it (being him).

The back of the book comes with blurbs from scenes of the books with their historical contexts. A reporter delivering his story by phone because there was no internet in those days. One box is of Houdini running past a wall of advertisements for his stunt (the one he is racing too). I thought it would have been cool if Houdini advertised by running through the streets. "I'm Houdini!"

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**Calista says**

This is a snapshot into one stunt Harry Houdini pulled off a bridge in Cambridge, MA. It is simply a day in the life picture. Great for young people interested in who this man was. It doesn't give away his secrets really.

For me it was too short and it didn't me enough about Harry. He was worried about being remembered by history. He loved his wife and she was part of his act. He drew huge crowds of people to see him almost drown. The art was ok with 3 colors throughout.

It's a nice little story.

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## **Patrice Sartor says**

GENRE: Fiction, graphic novel, magic. This book also has some non-fiction, biographical elements to it.

SUMMARY: This story centers on one event in the life of master magician Harry Houdini: his jumping handcuffed from a bridge in Boston into the nearly freezing water below. At the beginning we get to see a tender scene between Harry and his wife, Bess. We know that he gives her a pick, though we don't know exactly how it relates to Harry's future trick. Harry does some training, involving exercising and practicing jumping from the bridge, with the full cooperation of the police. Harry must contend with blows to his ego, as people from the press harangue him over how popular he currently is. The climax of the book arrives during the big jump, though we worry whether or not Bess will make it to Harry in time; he has cautioned her not to be late, no matter what!

EVALUATION: This book reads very quickly and smoothly, and never loses its upbeat pacing. I enjoyed the black, white, and what looks almost like periwinkle tones. While it doesn't tell very much about Mr. Houdini, it's not designed to do so, and relates this bridge-jumping section in Harry's life very well.

WHY I WOULD INCLUDE IT: This would be an excellent book for students interested in famous magicians that have shied away from more traditional books. After reading it, you will truly have a good idea of what Harry was like at this moment in time, and you may even be hungry for more.

READER'S ANNOTATION: One of Harry Houdini's most daring stunts, a handcuffed dive from a Boston bridge into nearly-freezing water, is told in a brisk and true fashion.

### **ITEMS WITH SIMILAR APPEAL:**

- Satchel Paige: Striking Out Jim Crow by James Sturm.
  - The Arrival by Shaun Tan.
  - Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson.
  - The Houdini Box by Brian Selznick.
  - The Secret of the Great Houdini by Robert Burleigh.
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## **Kate says**

This took me maybe 30 minutes to read, and I really enjoyed it! Bess and Harry were absolutely the cutest

and I want to read more about Houdini now! The only aspect of this that I didn't like was that it was really text-heavy at times. Apart from that, I loved the art style and the story!

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### **Lorraine says**

This was great. I gave it to a magician friend as a gift, and thought I should probably check it out myself. I'm not particularly a big magic or Houdini fan but found this graphic novel to be compelling and entertaining. It's really more about the man, Houdini— his struggles with ego and fame, the antisemitism he faced, and his relationship with his wife. The artwork is beautiful; very clean and expressive.

My only complaint is I wish the story was longer. I realize it is meant to focus on one particular event-- one of his famous tricks/stunts-- but I would have appreciated a more extensive look at his life and career. It was such a quick read (even for me,) that when I was finished I immediately wanted more.

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### **Rebecca says**

This graphic novel biography presents one of Houdini's most famous escapes -- jumping, handcuffed, off the Harvard Bridge into the freezing Charles River -- and a theory of how it was done.

The grayscale pictures are very fitting, and the artwork reminds me of Persepolis. Nick Bertozzi really captures Houdini's glowering looks, dark brows, and famously parted black hair. He also does some nice things with empty white space (and, in the case of the underwater scenes, black space). The only criticism I have of the art is that Bess seems to be perpetually wearing the same expression. But then again, when you read how she was one of Houdini's few trusted accomplices, maybe that makes sense. Who'd suspect the silly, pretty wife?

The underwater scene is heart-poundingly drawn out in a way that is hard to do with prose, but the silent, cinematic pictures force you to experience the minute as slowly as Houdini.

Both the intro and the end notes provide some fascinating insight into Houdini's life and times (he was obsessed with fame and self-promotion; he said "anyone could do what I do if they worked hard enough"; there were no sound systems or microphones; etc.). This would be good paired with *Escape!* by Sid Fleischman.

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### **Seth T. says**

On a recent busride down to San Diego to view the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit at the natural history museum, I figured it'd be good to bring some reading material. From my to-read pile I pulled the recently purchased *Houdini: The Handcuff King*. I was excited because I love Jason Lutes' work (as previously seen in *Jar of Fools* and *Berlin* ). And really, this book did not disappoint. There were, however, two surprises for me.

Surprise #1: While Jason Lutes penned the story that comprises the book's narrative, he did not contribute to

its art. Really this should not have been a surprise as the cover plainly says *Nick Bertozzi* immediately beneath Lutes' own name and the art on the cover is plainly not the work of Lutes' established style. At first, this surprise was a disappointment to me—like when you think your glass has Pepsi in it but your first sip reveals apple juice instead. But after my initial shock, I came to appreciate Bertozzi's line and recognized that he really was a good choice for the book.

Bertozzi does do some fantastic work in the book, managing crowd scene after crowd scene with enough visual grace that the reader never suspects just how terribly dull it must have been to compose these pages. And even in the midst of these ink-saturated pages, it is never difficult to see where the action is. Bertozzi does a stand-up job of directing the reader's eye and conveying the tension of the moments—moments that could easily have been lost had the artist been too detailed or too simplistic in his execution.

Surprise #2: I had brought a book to busy me during the ninety-minute drive, but finished it within forty-five minutes. *Houdini* is not a long book. There is plenty to look at but little text per page, which makes it a fairly quick read. Wholly apart from disappointing, the brisk pace of the story was refreshing. I closed the back cover satisfied with a mid-morning snack of graphic reading.

When initially approaching the book, I did not know what to expect. With the blue note set by Lutes' prior works, I thought this might be an exploration of Houdini's last days and unforeseen death. Instead the narrative picks up on a morning nearly a full decade before his mortality asserted itself and climaxes later that same day, presenting a slice of Houdini's life, a splash of what made him great. And a snapshot of the people Houdini relied upon to feed that greatness.

*Houdini: The Handcuff King* is really a charming little story and I would pleasantly recommend it to anyone with an hour to kill.

[review courtesy of Good Ok Bad]

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## **Nancy Meservier says**

*Houdini: The Handcuff King* is a graphic biography about master magician and escape artists, Harry Houdini. Instead of trying to tell about Houdini's entire life in an eighty-two page graphic novel, the comic instead tells the story behind one trick and how that one trick expressed so much about Houdini's life. Here we are able to learn about his daring, his devotion to his wife Bess, his sense of showmanship, his insatiable pride, and demand for loyalty from his employees. This paints us a picture of Houdini as a complex man, far from perfect, but no less interesting for it. The illustrations for this comic are done with minimal lines and color that successfully manage to personify the emotions of the character, as well as create tension during the actual trick when Houdini jumps off a bridge into the Charles River. The art is presented with several blocks on each page, except for a few important moments which are given full page spreads. The several pages of further back story and in depth introduction, is just as interesting as the comic itself. Though these pages we are able to see more information on Houdini's life and death, as well as life in Boston and Cambridge during the early 1900s. *Houdini: The Handcuff King* is an effective graphic novel, both educational and suspenseful, that effectively tells the tale of one larger than life man who's great works are still remembered



a hundred years later.

NOTE- This review was written for a class

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