



Baby's in Black: Astrid Kirchherr, Stuart Sutcliffe, and The Beatles

Arne Bellstorf

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Baby's in Black: Astrid Kirchherr, Stuart Sutcliffe, and The Beatles

Arne Bellstorf

Baby's in Black: Astrid Kirchherr, Stuart Sutcliffe, and The Beatles Arne Bellstorf
A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

A fascinating, exhilarating portrait of the Beatles in their early years.

Meet the Beatles . . . right at the beginning of their careers. This gorgeous, high-energy graphic novel is an intimate peek into the early years of the world's greatest rock band.

The heart of *Baby's In Black* is a love story. The "fifth Beatle," Stuart Sutcliffe, falls in love with the beautiful Astrid Kirchherr when she recruits the Beatles for a sensational (and famous) photography session during their time in Hamburg. When the band returns to the UK, Sutcliffe quits, becomes engaged to Kirchherr, and stays in Hamburg. A year later, his meteoric career as a modern artist is cut short when he dies unexpectedly.

The book ends as it begins, with Astrid, alone and adrift; but with a note of hope: her life is incomparably richer and more directed thanks to her friendship with the Beatles and her love affair with Sutcliffe. This tender story is rendered in lush, romantic black-and-white artwork.

Baby's In Black is based on a true story.

Baby's in Black: Astrid Kirchherr, Stuart Sutcliffe, and The Beatles Details

Date : Published May 8th 2012 by First Second (first published October 1st 2010)

ISBN : 9781596437715

Author : Arne Bellstorf

Format : Hardcover 208 pages

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

 [Download Baby's in Black: Astrid Kirchherr, Stuart Sutcliff ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Baby's in Black: Astrid Kirchherr, Stuart Sutcli ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Baby's in Black: Astrid Kirchherr, Stuart Sutcliffe, and The Beatles
Arne Bellstorf

From Reader Review *Baby's in Black: Astrid Kirchherr, Stuart Sutcliffe, and The Beatles* for online ebook

Maribel says

Black turtlenecks. That's what I've got on this. Okay, cigarettes dangling from arms that dangle from turtlenecks that are plucked out of someone's idea of 1960s European cool. Stick your arms inside the hidey hole sleeves and wait it all out. Smoke chains and hair tendrils of girl chic short 'dos and don'ts of Hamburg night life in the 1960s. Hooting and clubs you aren't going to. Yawn. That's what I've got. Okay, stretch your arms over the backs of the movie theatre seat and you can't cop a feel because the other seat is a long time cold. Astrid favored black a lot. Black as a scene, black as something to do. Black as waiting, endlessly. Mysterious and contained. That's my barely contained sigh. I like my black as a blanket. Arne Bellstorf fancies black and white pixie pixels, clearly. They float over your bar stool.

Boyfriend Klaus out the door. New boyfriend auditioning on stage with an instrument he can't play. (Murray on Flight of the Conchords called the bass "the dad guitar". Ha! Paul resumed the instrument and later, after the loss of Brian Epstein, the boys would rebel when he takes old Murray too seriously about being the dad.) *Baby's In Black* is a lot of the same look of Astrid looking up at Stuart Sutcliffe as he doesn't play the bass with The Beatles. Wait a minute! I thought they made Stuart turn his back so one would figure out he couldn't play. He must've had a terrific butt (Ringo wasn't around yet. We all know he followed the music from their bouncing buns like he was Helen Keller. Deaf from the screams, y'know). Anyway, it's hard work. The boys couldn't have played those marathon shows for those angry Germans without doping up on pills and booze. Stomach lining sic and it's all black and white drawings that don't pulse. Shirley Temple's good ship lollipop never had seas so rough. Wittle George was still the baby. Twenty-one, officers, really. Paul the devil on John's leather clad shoulder. John the devil on John's leather clad other shoulder. Too much burden to bear. Judy Garland had it so unwholesome. Stuart the art school buddy brought along. They weren't unlike Astrid and her former flame Klaus that way, I guess. Like minds clicking like a cuckoo clock on their same dots. A hard rock choir of little birdies (and plenty of chicks). Uniformed unisex unitards in unison. Bo-ring.

Personally, I found Klaus's discovery of The Beatles more exciting. He HAD to take the reeperbahn night after night to see the boys in that rat trap cellar filled with all of those unimpressed Germans. They'd probably break into a fight if John didn't honestly and truly mean it. What if one of them sobered enough to discover that Stuart couldn't properly play out of his ass? Huh? What then? But what was he thinking bringing along the girl he liked to watch these cute guys on stage (not Paul. He was kind of rodenty). Astrid thought Stuart was much cuter than James Dean! Cue one of MANY same stills of Astrid looking up at Stuart. She is looking up at Stuart even when she is not looking up at Stuart. You could ask her what she was thinking and you wouldn't know even if she told you. Cool girls. I never know what a groovy girl would think about. My staring problem had a problem here. Nothing to look at!

Astrid is the cool older sister who goes out every night without you. You want to come along. It's past your bed time. Get lost, runt! She falls in love without you. She plans her future without you. Sure, she was a pretty blond German girl. She always looked lovely in the photographs in Beatles books. You don't actually know her. She loved her mom. She wanted to make a life with Stuart and take photographs. I have no idea what made her tick. Author Arne Bellstorf worked closely with her in the making of his graphic novel. It can't be a case like anything made about The Runaways (a bunch of egos scrambling like roaches away from the light so that they, and only they, will look fab). She must have told him something. Made you look!

The future planned their future without Stuart. He died of a brain hemorrhage. Causes unknown. (The popular myth goes that John Lennon kicked him in the head with his Beatle boots.) This just in.... Causes unknown.

Astrid Kirchherr declined all offers for further Beatles association after 1964 because she was a friend to The Beatles and not the "mop tops' hairdresser". I gotta respect that (many made their bread and butter just for being at the right time and place when The Beatles were starting out). Personally, I never liked that look. It really isn't cute on child stars the world over. I'm sure many a disaffected and unemployed has-been cutie has cursed Astrid's name over empty containers of Rogaine. Barry Wom (doppelgänger to Ringo Starr in The Beatles spoof The Rutles, for the lay person. Astrid and Stu like the word doppelgänger. Me too) wanted to be a hairdresser. He would like to be two hairdressers. He hears their pain. It must be tough to stand beside the spotlight. I wouldn't know. Why not shine a different kind of light on things? Stage lights, dressing room lights, city lights, torch lights. There's more than just the stage. Who cares if Paul and John walk off into the sunset (for a time)? Baby's In Black wanted to carry the flame of Stuart and Astrid for a little bit longer. It could have done, a bit, like when Astrid wanders through those empty woods alone. Astrid in the woods with Stuart. Astrid seeing herself in those woods alone again, before Stuart is gone for good. Stuart could have been buried in a box made out of one of those pines, if they had seen it coming. Baby's In Black lost a little something because I did see it coming. Maybe something sweeter? Two kids who could barely speak each other's language being together. It's there, unfortunately dressed in cool black and cool sheets. Can I just say the art wasn't that good to sustain a love story? No slipping between these pages, no sir.

I don't know, if she didn't want to be their hairdresser shouldn't a story about their love story had been about their love story? That might be silly to say because no one would be talking about them at all without The Beatles. Still, a love story is a love story. Astrid was what Stuart had. He dropped out of art school in Liverpool when he was so close to finishing to follow John to be in a band. He felt shame about not being able to play. Paul was a bitch about it. You fucked up a note, you fucker! He lost his closeness with John to the pull of something John was so good at. John and Paul had the creative spark between them. Stuart had his own art. Before he died he was making more work than ever. He couldn't turn it off even as his own legs couldn't support his weight. He wanted to go to Paris. He loved Astrid. They were going to have a life. He died. I knew all of that. How did it feel? When they didn't know they were going to lose it all? There's one panel of them sharing an umbrella (I know that's Romantic because my ex didn't share his). Stuart tells Astrid he doesn't regret a single day they spent together. Baby's In Black should have been days. The art was turtlenecks and smoke. I could have been choking in a bar, looking into stone faces of Germans. Are they angry? Does the music move them? Are they going to dance or is that bottle going over my head? No idea. I don't even own a turtleneck. My neck is cold from craning to see Love.

I do know that the Hamburg period was the Beatles favorite time. It was hard, it was grime under the nails. Scorch marks on the dirty cellar mental walls. They had each other, then. It felt like you could be there when reading them talk about in Anthology. That's love to me. Baby's In Black didn't have that. I'm not cool so I'm bitching (what do you expect? I don't own a single turtleneck, let alone turtlenecks for two). Wait for me? Fuck it, I'm sitting next to Klaus. I need it. Bring the bottle over my head. It is 1960. I'm in love. Music is my black blanket. Cover me.

(view spoiler)

Ryn McAttee says

Honestly, I found myself disappointed with this book. I'm quite familiar with the story of the Beatles in Hamburg, as well as the story of Stuart and Astrid, and I was hoping that this book could expand it, show it in a new light, whatever. No? Well, that's okay; even if I didn't learn anything new, it still would have been nice to see a good, literary interpretation of my favorite people. Except that was not delivered either. Most of

the characters were quite two-dimensional (with the exception of Pete, who didn't even get that much), and even the "main" characters (John, Klaus, Stu and Astrid) could have been fleshed out much, much more. The actual story of all of these people and these events are fascinating; the author had so much to work with and he chose not to.

Michelle says

This is an absolutely gorgeous, heartbreaking book detailing the love of Stu Sutcliffe and Astrid Kirchherr. Stu was the real fifth Beatle, the original bass player of the band and best friend to one John Winston Lennon. During their time in Hamburg Stu and Astrid meet and fall in love, but this book is so much more than that. It is a tale of love, loss, friendship and a band at its beginning.

"I think of her, but she thinks only of him, and though it's only a whim, she thinks of him..."

Astrid and Stu's love may seem rather fast to some, and I guess since they could hardly speak each other's respective languages then you may well be justified in thinking that. However, in each other they saw something; there was chemistry. They were both passionate artists and this was something they could share only with each other. In fact, Stu only joined the band because he could afford to buy a bass – he couldn't play and would always keep his back to the audience.

This book, however, is not just a love story of the romantic kind. It also shows the incredible bond and friendship The Beatles shared, in particular the bond between Stu and John.

"She thinks of him, and so she dresses in black, and though he'll never come back, she's dressed in black..."

The ending of this book is heartbreaking. I knew it was coming, but I still had tears in my eyes as I finished it. The simple way it was portrayed made it so much more poignant. Yet, as the synopsis says, Astrid's life is richer for knowing The Beatles and loving Stu, so there is a touch of hope in this desperately sad and tragic ending.

This book is so gorgeously illustrated; the drawings instantly brought the story to life. While I read this as a digital galley, I will certainly be buying the hardcopy. It will be a beautiful addition to my Beatles collection.

I think it is also appropriate to tell you the song I had in my head the entire time I read this: *Baby's In Black*. Also, I think I should share the song I think is beyond perfect for Astrid and Stu's story. Take it away Mr McCartney...(blame the 70's for the hair).

Now, I just have one question to ask: can we please, please have a sequel for John and Cynthia?

A copy of this book was provided by the publishers via Netgalley.com

This review and many more can be found at Maree's Musings.

Seth T. says

There's no two ways about it: adaptations of non-fictional stories are a tough beast to approach—and doubly so when the non-fictional account revolves about a tragic death. The trick, see, is the fact that anyone who's aware of history, of the story being unveiled, will know how the retelling will end. When we watched *The Perfect Storm*, most of us were well aware that George Clooney and Marky Mark wouldn't make it to the film's credits (save perhaps through some kind of treacle flashback montage). We may know how *Milk*, *Zodiac*, *Schindler's List*, and *Downfall* end—depending on how aware of twentieth century history and culture played out.

So for the sake of the high percentage of those for whom the ending is spoiled years before ever seeing the based-on-a-true story,* authors of stories based on actual historical events *must* ground their narrative on something beyond the typical need to know What Happens Next. If surprise and anticipation are removed from the storytellers' arsenal, they need focus on something outside an envigourating plotline. Certainly, plots are still valuable—most true-to-life stories are interesting because of how they surprise us in their extraordinariness—but that's not all they can rely upon. It's kind of like how thrillers that rely wholly on their game-shifting story twist suffer in terms of rewatchability.

Instead, in historical adaptations, we look for things like ambitious character portraits, fascinating authorial technique, cinematic flourish, or some kind of thematic framework to add meaning to the whole enterprise. Maybe even some kind of historical fabrication to change the story's ending entirely (a la Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds*). In any case, the author's got to make it so that an audience's knowledge of the finale won't be related at all to the power of the story. So then, what does *Baby's in Black* offer, being a recountment of the ill-fated Stuart Sutcliffe and the Beatles' time in Hamburg?

First an excursus. Because I'm like that.

I'm a late-comer to the Beatles party. I hit kindergarten in the late '70s, had a hippie for a father (he still retains the remnant long hair and beard), and was exposed to a fair amount of classic rock. Still, despite understanding that the Beatles were a Big band (like the New Kids, right?), I remained pretty thoroughly unaware of their body of work. By junior high, I had figured out that the Beatles were responsible for "I Wanna Hold Your Hand." By high school, when I was waist-deep in Metallica and Motorhead, I had heard stodgy churchgoers—who evidently feared the pernicious influence of rock'n'roll—remark in solemn tones that John Lennon had declared the Beatles more popular than Jesus. I had a hard time seeing the I-wanna-hold-your-hand band being in the same league of perniciousness as Motorhead, who sang about Orgasmatron, but what did I know.** Finally, in college I heard some *Sergeant Pepper's* while working at a restaurant that had the album installed in its jukebox—this was where I discovered that the Beatles did that whole I-am-the-walrus bit.

Pitiful, right? In fact, I wasn't to come to realize my interest and enjoyment in the Beatles until a particular videogame was released a little while years back. My wife and I, coming off a couple years of enjoying *Guitar Hero*, discovered *Rock Band* and enjoyed the division of labours allowed by the game. The only problem was that while I knew most of the songs featured, my wife didn't. Call it a lapse in her education*** or call it serendipity—the result was that when the Beatles edition of the game was released, we jumped on the opportunity because our distinct musical educations filled in each other's gaps. She was a fan and would finally be able to take real joy in the *Rock Band* experience. Because it's my way, the day after we first played the game, I spent an afternoon googling all their songs—so that I'd be able to sing along passably well. That led, *obviously*, to becoming a fan. And that new-found fan's interest led me to read their band's history, as related on Wikipedia.

So yes, by the time I picked up *Baby's in Black*, I was aware of Sutcliffe and Astrid and Klaus and the bare bones of what went on in Hamburg. I was looking for something that would take what I already knew and do

something special with it. *Baby's in Black* succeeds wildly.

Apart from relating what in many ways is a doleful tale (the book is titled after the Beatles' song, "Baby's in Black," a song about Astrid Kirchherr mourning for the departed Sutcliffe), Arne Bellstorf's adaptation creates a lively mise-en-scene, filled with breathing characters whose lives, dreams, and hopes are affixed to reality without becoming sentimentalized. This last part may be the book's chief charm—that a book principally founded on unfulfilled longing could avoid sentimentalization is mark of distinction. It would have been easy for *Baby's in Black* to play to manipulation; that the book remains honest throughout is to Bellstorf's credit.

Baby's in Black is told through Astrid's eyes. It is more her story than Sutcliffe's. And while Sutcliffe may fill the principal male role, as the object of her attentions, John, Paul, George, and Klaus feature only as supporting figures, filling the background and painting a raucous sort of peoplescope over which the story's romance blooms. Pete Best flits through the book almost entirely unseen and Ringo was not yet a part of history. Still, for all these small parts, Bellstorf does well in choosing these sidemen's character moments and gives the reader a sense of who these clowns were during the Hamburg era.

[*Oh John—you cad.*]

Visually, *Baby's in Black* develops its story through wonderful cartooning. The powerful black-and-white drawing helps underscore how indelibly this historical moment will carve itself into Astrid's life. While Sutcliffe admits an affinity for the colour red in his art, Astrid prefers black. For this, it's fitting that her tale should be told without colour—save for an appropriate dash of red text on the book's cover on the US edition.**** Despite the book's cartoony character designs, the figures' simplicity never threatens to diminish the story. Bellstorf conveys almost the whole of the burgeoning romance in a series of looks that pass between the eyes. We are allowed to see so much in such simple line gestures.

The writing, translated, functions perfectly. It's always difficult to tell where to pin responsibility for a translated text, but whether on Bellstorf or on his interlocutor, the English version is a success. The words conveyed suit the story, mixing appropriately the melancholy, joviality, and beauty of life. Perhaps the most powerful moment of *Baby's in Black* occurs in a segment needing no translation, being wholly conveyed through appropriate punctuation.

My one struggle with the book, perhaps, is in its choice of text-type for the word balloons. I don't know what was present in the original, but at least in this US edition, dialogue plays out in a sans-serifed font. It's not as unsuitable as a roman font would have been, but it still feels ungainly and unfairly austere. But with such an enjoyable work, this is a single small complaint.

I have been previously unaware of Bellstorf's work as a cartoonist, but *Baby's in Black* has made me interested in what other books he may have produced. I have not yet checked, but I hope there are many. And I hope they are even half as enjoyable as *Baby's in Black*. I can't think of how best to compliment this story, so perhaps this sentiment will suffice: that I want to read more from this creator.

Notes

* Now that I think about it, this probably goes the same for Nicholas Sparks stories (at least according to popular legend) and movies about dogs (dogs in drama never live and dogs in comedies will probably be injured but narrowly survive).

** I also have a hard time seeing how Jesus in 1960 could possibly have been more popular than the Beatles, so it's likely that however great Lennon's hubris, he spoke accurately.

*** Says the guy who didn't know the Beatles.

**** I prefer the German edition's cover but really do think the First Second edition's use of red is appropriate given some of Sutcliffe's statements about the colour included in the book.

[Review courtesy of Good Ok Bad]

Jenna says

I received an advanced reader's copy through a Goodreads Giveaway

As stated, I got this gem of a book through a giveaway, and lucky me! I can't say that I would normally buy this type of book, but I would definitely be up for it after reading this one.

This book tells the story of "the fifth Beatle", long before Ringo Starr ever entered the picture. However, this isn't the story of Pete, the drummer before Ringo, this is about Stuart who played the bass before Paul took over the role. The book takes place in Hamburg, Germany in the 1960's just before their big break, and although there is a lot of focus on the Beatles, the main story is about Stuart and a photographer named Astrid. The book follows their story and how they fell in love and does so in a very endearing way.

The stories in the book are told through black and white comic strips, and although I was a bit weary of this when I read the book's general synopsis, it ended up adding so much texture to the story. This was a very quick read but enjoyable nonetheless.

Jo says

"Love me tender, love me true, all my dreams fulfilled. For, my darling, I love you and I always will".

I am ambivalent towards the Beatles.

It's not that I don't like them, I just don't *love* them.

Throughout my life I seemed to have attracted Beatles fans as best friends. It's like they flock to me.

Whether it's my friend who knows every single word to every single song and whose mum once nearly got arrested outside one of their gigs, to the friend who has her picture up in the pub a young Mr Lennon used to drink in (Ye Cracke on Hope Street, if you're interested), to the friend who I have bought, without fail, Beatles related birthday presents for the last four years.

Some of my best memories involve the Beatles; dancing to "Twist and Shout" under the influence of one Appletini too many in my SU, spending the night in a Danish hotel room going through the Beatle's back catalogue to try and find the song I was trying to think of (I've still never remembered which one it was I was trying to think of but my cousin and I *did* discover we knew all the words to "All You Need is Love"), waiting for the taxi by the Yellow Submarine statue outside John Lennon airport after a holiday with four of my best friends and, of course, singing 'Hello, Goodbye' at my housemate when she would ignore me and

pretend not to want to play the “Let’s not do our dissertations, let’s just make cakes and watch Disney films!” game.

I would be a fool not to appreciate the unsurpassable effect they have had not just on British music and culture, but on music and culture all across the world. Maybe it’s impossible to be ambivalent towards the Beatles.

But even though I don’t *love* the Beatles, I am fascinated by them. So when I saw that there was a graphic novel about Astrid Kirchherr’s heartbreakingly short relationship with Stuart Sutcliffe and the Beatles’ early Hamburg days, I knew I wanted to read it immediately.

And, I knew from the cover illustration alone that I was in for a treat.

This book is glorious; both in story and in execution. Mr Bellstorf’s drawings were absolutely stunning and they perfectly captured the era. While I was reading this, I was instantly transported into 1960s Germany with all its smoke, girls in poofy skirts and cool make-up. The black and white tone (which reminded me of wax crayon, randomly) perfectly portrays the bitter-sweet tone of this story. Everyone knows how it’s going to end and yes, those last few panels broke my heart into tiny little pieces, but I loved how Mr Bellstorf didn’t let the harrowing ending overwhelm the entire story. Because *Baby’s in Black* is full of joy and love and passionate characters and it’s a celebration of a story that was cut too short and the start of one just begun.

But yeah, those last few panels. Wow.

Yes, this story is about *those* Northern lads, but it’s also a story of a wonderfully strong, fascinating and inspiring woman. And I hope it’s a story that’s never forgotten.

I would recommend this book for Beatles fans.

I know, I know.

I really strained myself coming up with that one didn’t I?

But I *would* recommend this book for Beatles fans. I would *also* recommend this book to anyone who is looking for a love story because to me this book is a love story. It’s a love story between two people, it’s a love story between two best friends, it’s a love story between a man and his passion for art, it’s a love story between a woman and her photography and it’s a love story between five boys and music.

Saying that though, I’d pretty much recommend this book to anyone.

I received an advanced copy of this book from Netgalley.

Lisa says

Baby's In Black is the true story of Stuart Sutcliffe and Astrid Kirchherr. If you haven't heard of Stuart Sutcliffe, he was in a little band called The Beatles. He was one of the original band members. The original line-up was Paul, John, George, Stuart and Pete Best (the drummer before Ringo). This was the line-up who went to play in Hamburg in the early 1960's, before they became big. This is where Stuart met a beautiful photographer named Astrid Kirchherr and they quickly fell in love and became engaged.

I already knew this story because I'm a huge Beatles fan. I saw the movie *Backbeat* about 10 years ago, which is the same story as this, essentially (with slightly more emphasis on John and his relationship with

Stuart, as well as Stuart and Astrid's love story). So, I knew the story but this was a lovely way to re-live it. It's very well done and the drawings are striking.

Stuart Sutcliffe met John Lennon in Art College and John convinced Stuart to join his band. Once Stuart met Astrid, I think he met the other piece of himself and he realized that he wanted to be an artist and just live life with Astrid. Being in the band didn't really bring him much joy; he just wanted more time to paint and create all the things going on inside his head. So eventually, he told John he couldn't be in the band anymore.

From Wikipedia:

Sutcliffe's high spot was singing "Love Me Tender", which drew more applause than the other Beatles.

Yoko Ono remembered that Lennon mentioned Sutcliffe's name very often, saying that he was "[My] alter ego ... a spirit in his world ... a guiding force".

Stuart Sutcliffe also appears on the cover of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band. Astrid Kirchherr was one of the first people to properly photograph The Beatles(well, without Ringo anyways!) This was one of her shots from when The Beatles were in Hamburg(again, the original line-up without Ringo):

She was an incredibly talented photographer and artist. She also had a role in The Beatles famous "mop-top hairstyle", even if she won't take full credit for it. She says that it was a popular hairstyle in Germany but she cut Stuart's hair in that style, and later George asked for her to cut his hair.

Astrid's friend Klaus later cut John and Paul's hair in Paris. Klaus Voormann became friends with The Beatles and even lived with George and Ringo while he was looking for work as an artist. He designed the cover of Revolver. He was also a session musician who played bass with John Lennon and The Plastic Ono Band, Ringo Starr, George Harrison, Lou Reed, Carly Simon and Manfred Mann, to name a few.

I really enjoyed this graphic novel because it showed the story in a new way. I can never really get enough when it comes to The Beatles. I thought Backbeat was a good movie and I think this is a great graphic novel. It doesn't have a happy ending but it's a true story full of very talented people. I really enjoyed it.

Lynx says

Very cute graphic novel based on Stu Sutcliffe and Astrid Kirchherr's love affair and their impact on The Beatles. Check out my podcast Muses and Stuff for a more in depth look at both Astrid and Stuart.

3.5/5

First Second Books says

We love this book!

First love, music, The Beatles -- what more can you want out of a book? Especially when The Beatles are, as

Bryan Lee O'Malley said, "the most adorable Beatles ever." Arne Bellstorf's art really brings the first days of the band to live in a charming and wonderful way.

Paige says

If you follow me on Tumblr or Twitter, or have had the misfortune of interacting with me on any social capacity, then you know I have an obsession with this little band called The Beatles (sorry by the way to all the people I've tried to push their music on).

Anyways, when I found this little graphic novel about Astrid Kirchherr and Stuart Sutcliffe (he was the original Beatles bass player and Astrid was his fiancée/the one who inspired a lot of the Beatles' early looks and a kick ass photographer) and nearly screamed. This graphic novel felt like a split between Persepolis and Maus, though obviously with a much less serious topic.

I really enjoy these types of graphic novels where the art is more sketch based with some ink in there for contrast/depth. They're easy to read and especially for an era like this where all the photographs were in black and white it read as if I were diving into a photo from that time period and taking a peek at their lives.

The real question here is: should you read this if you're not a Beatle fan? Maybe. If you're a die-hard, overly obsessed Apple scruff like me, then absolutely pick this up. I finished it in about half an hour and was laughing and saying "aww" through the whole thing. Even if you're a casual fan it's a good read about the early "Teddy Boy" years when Ringo wasn't even in the band and there were 5 "Silver Beetles". But if you're not a huge fan (what is wrong with you) then I'd say perhaps give this one a pass.

You know, despite having no artistic or musical inclinations, I often want to chop off all my hair like Astrid and wear dark eyeliner, and go to little clubs to listen to rock and roll bands. Sigh, guess that's a by product of me not being born in the right time period. Darn it.

Mark says

"Then these five musicians slowly shuffled onto the stage. No one in the crowd was paying them any attention. They were messing around and didn't seem particularly nervous before their set.

They were all dressed the same, in cheap jackets, tight flannel trousers, and high, pointy buckled shoes. They looked very odd.

The bassist made me think of James Dean. He wore dark sunglasses the whole time and stood completely still on stage.

One of the other guitarists looked like he'd just turned fifteen. I didn't understand a word they were saying, but they were having fun."

This fantastic graphic biography details the early days of the Beatles, when they played seedy clubs in Hamburg. Specifically, the novel follows the brief and tragic love affair between Stuart Sutcliffe, the group's original bass player, and Astrid Kirchherr, a German photographer. Told through gorgeously-drawn black-and-white panels, the novel doesn't present any information that any hardcore Beatles fan doesn't already

know, but it frames the story of Sutcliffe and Kirchherr in a way that adds new depth and dimension to the "fifth Beatle," and the woman who would be his muse.

Leylak Dal? says

Çinden "Beatles" geçen, k?sa ama yo?un bir a?k? anlatan grafik roman...

Eunice Moral says

Beautiful and Heartbreaking

That ending crushed my heart. It was nice to know this part of history that not a lot of people know about. To be completely honest I didn't know about Astrid and Stuart or the original members of The Beatles for that matter, and this is the excellent book to explain the beginning of the legendary pop icon. Their struggles as musicians and the people behind their humble beginnings. I loved the fact that this graphic novel isn't solely focused on Astrid and Stu's love story but also the friendship between the members of The Beatles. The sadness in that ending was so potent I could almost feel the weight of grief on my shoulders. And I don't know if the fact that I know nothing about Astrid and Stu helped to alleviate the wave of sadness or worsen it, I'm glad I didn't know and at the same time cursing myself for not knowing their fate, I could have prepared myself, but I was left with unsettled emotions I cannot seem to shake off. Ugh. I don't know. I love it and hate it for betraying me. Haha! Okay enough with it! If you love The Beatles or just a curious human like I was, then go ahead and read it!.

Raina says

Before I read this book, I had only the vaguest possible awareness of Astrid Kirchherr, or even of Stuart Sutcliffe. I knew there had been some changes in the lineup of the Beatles in their early days, of course - and I knew that they had played in Germany.

I didn't realize how long they were playing in Hamburg, or the kinds of gigs they were playing.

This graphic novel (translated from its original German form) chronicles the time between October 1960 and April 1962 while the Beatles were basically a house band for a divey bar in Hamburg. We find out that Kirchherr found out about the Beatles through her friend Klaus.

As I read this, I found myself Googling images of Kirchherr, Sutcliffe, and the photos Kirchherr professionally took of the Beatles. It was a thoroughly educational experience.

Bellstorf impressively captures the feel of bar gig in the depictions of "Dizzy, Miss Lizzy" performances. Thick lyrical lines run above illustrations of the band, the audience, particular members. It feels loud, which is a good trick for a comic. The art is exclusively black and white, in what looks like scribbly pencil. Even though Bellstorf is covering such an illustrious topic, it feels like a quiet, personal story. A love story. A tragic love story. Ponderous and private. It makes you feel the loss of what could have been. For the Beatles, for Astrid, and for the art world.

Ω†β Folk Horror Baby β†Ω says

Before I say any of this I want to mention that **I would still say I really like this book.** honestly I would probably still buy it. You can take my rating with a grain of salt, I'm struggling to pin down my feelings toward it.

The concept is fantastic. Pre-fame Beatles, artists and all the struggles that come with the reality of a beginning artist.

But somehow it doesn't deliver. There were many things that I the characters only mention that I would have been far more interested in seeing than anything that was in the actual book. There are a lot of time skips that aren't signposted, so it feels as if you have missed a few pages. Stuff that ought to be important is skipped too, you never see the build up of Stuart and Astrid's connection.
