EDWARD BARKER (1950-1997)

Moseley Road Art School 1962-1966

Cartoonist & Art Director Underground Press

"The wittiest & most idiosyncratic cartoonist to emerge from the British underground press in the late 1960s and early 1970s" Felix Dennis (Dennis Publishing)



One of the greatest British underground cartoonists

Edward is best known for his work published in the fortnightly *International Times* in the late 1960's and *The Observer* in 1970. He illustrated the first seminal book of the British underground 'Watch Out Kids' in 1972. He also designed album covers and published comic books. He was a humorist and satirist.

After attending the School, Edward joined Birmingham Arts Lab, an experimental arts centre and artist collective founded in 1968.

In 1969 he was invited to join *IT* as joint editor in London. From America came an alternative comics culture, when this arrived in Britain in 1970 the effect was dramatic. Imported cartoon strips were copied into newspapers like *IT* & *Oz*.

Nasty Tales followed in 1971 and lasted for seven issues. Co-edited by Edward as an anthology, it was England's first home grown underground comic and the most popular at the time. Unfortunately, together with the editors, he was charged under the Obscene Publications Act. It was the first such trial of a comic in British History. The Old Bailey returned a majority verdict of not guilty in January 1973 and it became a cause célèbre for the freedom of the underground press.

Edward was the first underground cartoonist to be employed by mainstream media

At *The Observer*, Edward introduced a comic strip called the 'Largactilites', cone-shaped creatures who did very little and said even less. Unfortunately the drug Largactil was used to treat mental illness and Edward had to change the name to the 'Galactilites'. Following a four-frame strip which consisted solely of three horizon-lines, *The Observer* cancelled his contract.

In 1974 an anthology called Edward's Heave Comics was published during the Conservative premiership of Edward Heath, whose vomiting portrait is on the front cover. The first edition was seized by police.

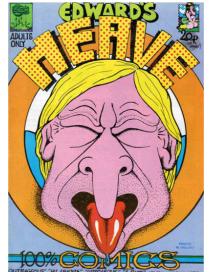
Barker became art director for *Seed, The Journal of Organic Living*, from 1976-1977. This was an early pioneer for green consciousness and environmentalists. He created the Whole Earth brand logo.

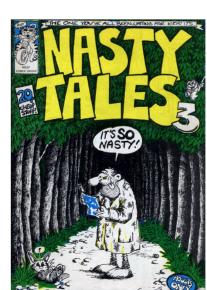
His last collection of cartoons, A Murder of Crows, published in 1991, featured anthropomorphic birds in a number of unfortunate circumstances.

Edward's early death was from heart failure at the age of 46. At the end of *Edward's Heave Comics* is depicted a tombstone in which he provided his own epitaph:

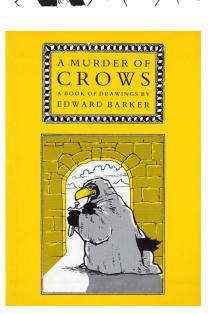
"Here Lies Edward, Stick No Bills."







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