



**BEST PICK  
for pop culture fans**

**The Playboy Book: 50 Years**, by Hugh M. Hefner and Gretchen Edgren (*Taschen*, \$39.99). With its trademark black cover, adorned with the trademark rabbit ears, you would expect to find pages and pages of the seductive nudes the magazine is known for. And, yes, there's plenty of that here. But there's also so much more: cartoons; interview snippets from a melange of subjects (including Princess Grace, Raquel Welch, Bob Dylan, Martin Luther King, Jr., Fidel Castro); amazing layouts that accompanied fiction by the likes of Joyce Carol Oates, Scott Turow and other literary lights; wonderfully detailed caricatures; provocative art illustrating articles on the Vietnam War, AIDS, the O.J. trial, and other issues of the day. It's a fevered, frenetic offering — and an intriguing way to track the cultural tides of the past 50 years. For Playboy die-hards, there's a fold-out at the end featuring stamp-sized photos of every Playmate from 1953 (Marilyn Monroe) to 2004 (Colleen Shannon) — but that's just the icing on this visual, pop culture treat.

*Patti Thorn*