

Let Them Eat Kake

Tom of Finland's Comics

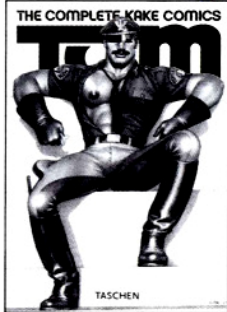
The Complete Kake Comics

Tom of Finland. Taschen. £16.99

When one thinks about Finland, one tends to conjure up images of fjords, fir trees, fish and, oh yeah, really massive cocks.

The legendary Tom made comic book fantasy a major national export and his famous character-based panel series proved that you could have your Kake and eat it. This new volume of the complete Kake comics, 1968-1986, beautifully reproduces the most famous and arguably the best cartoon series in the history of gay art.

The son of academics, he was born in a small Nordic village in 1920 and kept indoors for much of his childhood,



some indecently horny mischief.

In 1965 he decided to create an ongoing character for his stories, initially working on a blonde called Vicky - then a common Finnish boy's name. After quickly revisiting the drawing board, he came up with the swarthy Kake, the ultimate leatherman, often depicted in a tight white t-shirt emblazoned with the word 'Fuckers'.

Despite the fact that Tom's characters often looked brutal and imposing and were more than likely to tie you up and fuck you raw, they always appear open and warm: they are proud men having happy, unashamed sex.

The fantastic Kake series may typically begin with an abduction scene, but the main character is always generous enough to turn the other cheek and after everyone has shot their load, these

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away from the rough boys and rugged men who would preoccupy his thoughts and secret drawings. He produced his first comic strips at eight-years-old, and at ten, with puberty simmering, came his first sketches of loggers and manual labourers.

In 1939 he attended art school in the port city Helsinki, drawing inspiration from the uniforms and physiques of policeman, construction workers and sailors. When Russia invaded that year, Finland formed a pact with Germany and the influx of soldiers, with their fine uniforms and shiny black boots, provided the young Lieutenant Laaksonen with his first direct exposure to genuinely masculine homoeroticism, power-play and sex.

When the Germans finally withdrew in 1945, Touko was left sexually empty. He never totally felt at home in the Helsinki gay scene which considered effeminacy a norm, and spent much of his time reliving his wartime fantasies through drawing and masturbation.

In 1956 he sent some of his drawings to Physique Pictorial in the U.S. and founder Bob Mizer was so taken with them he gave Laaksonen his first magazine cover and a new name: Tom of Finland. Tom's drawings were a sexual revelation, and being laced with a fetish for the dress of Luftwaffe pilots and the Wehrmacht high command, not without political and moral controversy.

Tom soon became Physique Pictorial's main artist and began working on his comic series, which usually depicted bikers and sailors getting up to

men do something truly pioneering in gay art: they kiss affectionately.

The Tom of Finland Foundation was founded in 1984 and after a prolific life producing a portfolio of iconic, enduringly sexy, and often witty artwork, sadly Tom died from emphysema in 1991. From Cock-Hungry Cops to Greasy Rider, they are all lovingly reproduced in this quality Taschen volume, which no gay man should be without.

The introduction by Dian Hanson is excellent and the inclusion of photographic images from his scrapbook provides a fascinating extra. Some footnotes on the individual cartoons at the back would have given this book a ten-out-of-ten, but even without them, Tom's artwork is of such brawny brilliance this book is fantastic.

Competition

Win copies of Complete Kake Comics

Who allegedly said 'Let them eat cake'?

- A Jo Brand
- B Marie Antoinette, or
- C Jane Asher.

Email your answer, plus name and contact details, to sales@gaystheword.co.uk, putting 'Kake' in the subject header.

Last week's answer: Stanley Kubrick directed the film Spartacus.