

animal characters more humanity than any human characters to grace the pages of comics. These have been reprinted in hundreds of different formats over the years, but are about to get their due in a series of reprints from Fantagraphics starting this year.

My earliest solo reading was aided more by Peanuts than any other single work, and this is not an uncommon recollection. Schulz's work, extending over nearly fifty years, is being reprinted in wonderful two-year chunks also by Fantagraphics, designed (like the Stanley reprints) by Canadian cartoonist Seth. The mixture of humour and melancholy in these strips appeals to young and old, and can be put safely in anyone's hands. The elegant simplicity of the art and the small four panel chunks of the daily strip make this perfect material for a very young reader without ever seeming too juvenile for an older, struggling reader.

While unknown to most Canadians under 40, *Doug Wright's Family* (also known as *Nipper*), one of Canada's best known comics years ago, was a masterpiece of wordless or pantomime cartooning. Fortunately, it has been resurrected by Drawn and Quarterly with both a giant coffee table book and another collection of these strips that is more friendly to young readers. Portraying a suburban

family with two young sons (Why are so many of the boys in great comics bald?), Wright's work is timeless in its appeal, even if many of the cars still have fins.

There are treasures beyond our continent as well. Some people are hesitant to explore classic works of the comic realm because of fears of outdated material. The racial and cultural stereotypes of the earliest Tintin volumes are the most commonly cited examples. They provide reason enough to be cautious, but dismissing the entirety of those generations' work represents a real missed opportunity. The current reprints of the Moomin comics from Finnish cartoonist Tove Janson are a perfect example of children's comic classics. They feature an eccentric family of trolls whose interactions with their neighbours provide a subtle satire of modern life. While the chapter books have been around in English for decades, the comics were known only to academics in North America until recently.

Time is demonstrating that it is an effective filter in helping selectors make good choices when adding comics to their libraries. As lesser comics from ages past simply end up forgotten, many essential comics and true classics, are getting the reprints they deserve. ■



**The Beguiling booth at Super Expo**

**Photo by: Brian Pudden**