Comic books (and their readers) grow up

Comics have long had a reputation of childhoodness and simplicity which was perpetuated in the late 60's and early 70's when the BFP, POW and ZOWIE of Batman and the Boy Wonder graced the television. The tube projected an image of superheroes as idiosyncratic do-gooders who took on powerful villains while always triumphing through perseverance, superior intelligence, and perhaps a little brute force. Comics were for kids. If as an adult you wanted to read one, you would buy it hastily and hide it under your teecloth.

If comics had a bad reputation, they deserved it. With few exceptions, the mainstream magazines mirrored what was on television. But comics has since gained respectability. Take the 'T' on a Friday afternoon and you are bound to see a few yuppie commuters browsing through the latest "X-Men", The New York Metropolitan Museum of Art recently ran an exhibit of Al Capo's comic strips, concentrating mostly on "Li'l Abner", these humorously hillbilly tales, and I would not be surprised if in the future they have similar displays featuring Windsor McKay ("Little Nemo"), Harold Foster ("Tarzan" and "Prince Valiant"), or Jack Kirby.