

history of the hot comb

The Enduring Legacy: A Deep Dive into the History of the Hot Comb

history of the hot comb traces back over a century, revealing a fascinating journey intertwined with culture, innovation, and identity. Often overlooked as just a hairstyling tool, the hot comb holds a significant place in the stories of beauty and self-expression, especially within African American communities. Understanding its origins and evolution offers a richer appreciation for this simple yet transformative device.

The Origins of the Hot Comb: Where It All Began

The hot comb, also known as a pressing comb or straightening comb, was initially developed as a practical solution to manage and style naturally curly or coiled hair textures. The earliest versions date to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a period marked by significant social and technological changes.

Early Designs and Inventors

The first hot combs were made entirely of metal and required heating over an open flame or stove. This rudimentary design was not only challenging to use safely but also demanded skill and patience. One key figure in popularizing the hot comb was Madam C.J. Walker, an African American entrepreneur and inventor. While she didn't invent the hot comb, she improved its design and incorporated it into her hair care products, helping it gain widespread acceptance.

The Significance of Madam C.J. Walker

Madam C.J. Walker's contribution to the history of the hot comb goes beyond product innovation. She built a business empire around haircare for Black women, empowering many through employment and education. Her advocacy for beauty and grooming tools like the hot comb signaled a shift in how Black hair was perceived, moving towards embracing style and professionalism despite societal pressures.

How the Hot Comb Changed Haircare Practices

Before the hot comb, managing tightly coiled hair was often time-consuming and limited to natural styles or temporary methods like wrapping hair. The hot comb revolutionized hair care by allowing individuals

to straighten hair more permanently and achieve sleek, polished looks.

Technology Meets Tradition

The transition from heating a metal comb over a stove to electric versions made the hot comb much more accessible and safer. By the mid-20th century, electric hot combs became common household items, enabling daily hair styling routines. This technological advancement enhanced convenience and helped the hot comb cement its role in personal grooming.

Styling and Cultural Identity

Using the hot comb was not merely about aesthetics; it was deeply tied to cultural identity and social mobility. For many African Americans, straightened hair was a way to conform to mainstream beauty standards, which often favored Eurocentric features. At the same time, the hot comb became a symbol of pride, resilience, and creativity within the community, as hairstyles evolved into expressions of individuality.

Materials and Design Evolution

The history of the hot comb reflects ongoing improvements in the materials and craftsmanship used to make the tool. Early hot combs were cast iron or steel, heavy and prone to uneven heating. Contemporary designs utilize lighter metals, ceramic coatings, and temperature controls to protect hair from damage.

From Cast Iron to Ceramic Plates

Modern hot combs often feature ceramic or tourmaline plates, which distribute heat more evenly and reduce the risk of burns. These materials also help lock in moisture, making hair straighter and shinier without excessive dryness. This evolution mirrors broader trends in haircare technology prioritizing hair health alongside styling efficiency.

Ergonomics and User-Friendly Features

Another significant shift in the design of hot combs is the focus on ergonomics. Handles are now designed for comfortable grips, and electric models include adjustable heat settings to cater to different hair types. These innovations make the hot comb safer and more effective, encouraging more people to embrace its

styling potential.

The Hot Comb in Popular Culture and Media

The journey of the hot comb is also a story told through music, film, and fashion, where it has been both a practical tool and a cultural icon.

Representation in Music and Film

Artists and celebrities have often referenced or showcased the hot comb in their work, highlighting its role in grooming rituals and identity. For example, the imagery of a hot comb can evoke themes of heritage, beauty standards, and personal empowerment in hip-hop and R&B culture.

Fashion Statements and Trends

Hairstyles achieved with the hot comb have inspired fashion trends worldwide. From the sleek, straightened hair of the 1940s and '50s to contemporary styles blending natural and straight textures, the hot comb has remained relevant across generations. Its ability to transform hair texture continues to inspire stylists and individuals alike.

Tips for Using a Hot Comb Safely and Effectively

For those interested in incorporating the hot comb into their haircare routine, understanding its proper use is essential to avoid damage and achieve the best results.

- **Heat Control:** Always use a temperature setting appropriate for your hair type to prevent burns or dryness.
- **Protective Products:** Apply heat protectants before using the hot comb to shield hair from excessive heat.
- **Gentle Handling:** Avoid pulling or tugging hair; use slow, smooth passes with the comb.
- **Regular Maintenance:** Clean the comb regularly to remove product buildup and ensure even heating.

These practical tips help maintain healthy hair while enjoying the styling versatility offered by the hot comb.

The Future of the Hot Comb: Innovation Meets Tradition

While the hot comb has a long history rooted in tradition, it continues to evolve with emerging technologies and changing beauty standards. Innovations like digital temperature displays, cordless designs, and more eco-friendly materials are on the horizon, promising even more user-friendly experiences.

At the same time, there is a growing movement embracing natural hair textures, which influences how tools like the hot comb are used and perceived. Rather than solely a tool for straightening, the hot comb is being reimagined as part of a broader toolkit for diverse styling options, blending heritage with modern expression.

Exploring the history of the hot comb reveals more than just the story of a hairstyling device—it uncovers a rich narrative of cultural identity, technological progress, and personal empowerment that continues to unfold today.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the origin of the hot comb?

The hot comb, also known as the straightening comb, originated in the late 19th century and was invented by African American inventor Madam C.J. Walker to help smooth and straighten natural hair.

Who is credited with popularizing the hot comb?

Madam C.J. Walker is credited with popularizing the hot comb as part of her hair care products aimed at African American women in the early 1900s.

How did the hot comb impact African American hair care?

The hot comb revolutionized African American hair care by providing a method to straighten tightly coiled hair, allowing for more versatile hairstyles and greater social acceptance during a time of racial discrimination.

What materials were early hot combs made from?

Early hot combs were typically made from metal, such as steel or brass, which was heated over a stove or open flame before use.

How has the design of the hot comb evolved over time?

The hot comb has evolved from a simple metal comb heated manually to electric versions with temperature controls, improving safety and ease of use.

Why was the hot comb considered a symbol of beauty and status in the early 20th century?

The hot comb was seen as a symbol of beauty and social status because it allowed African American women to conform to mainstream beauty standards, which often favored straighter hair textures.

What are some modern alternatives to the traditional hot comb?

Modern alternatives include flat irons, chemical relaxers, and heat styling tools that offer more efficient, safer, and diverse hair straightening options compared to the traditional hot comb.

Additional Resources

History of the Hot Comb: An Analytical Review of Its Origins and Evolution

history of the hot comb traces back to centuries ago, representing a significant cultural and technological development in hair care practices, particularly within African and African-American communities. This seemingly simple tool has played an influential role in personal grooming, identity expression, and social dynamics. Understanding the historical context of the hot comb reveals its profound impact on beauty standards, technological advancement, and cultural adaptation.

The Origins of the Hot Comb

The hot comb, also known as the pressing comb, originated long before its widespread commercial production in the 19th and 20th centuries. Early forms of heated combs were used in various cultures to straighten hair or manage curls, with rudimentary designs dating back to ancient civilizations. However, the modern hot comb as we recognize it today is most closely linked to African-American hair care practices.

In the late 1800s, African-American women faced unique challenges in maintaining their natural hair

textures amid prevailing Eurocentric beauty ideals. The hot comb emerged as a practical solution to straighten tightly coiled hair, enabling users to achieve a smooth, polished look without chemical relaxers, which were either unavailable or harsh at the time. Early hot combs were metal tools heated over an open flame or stove, requiring skill and caution to avoid burns.

Early Innovations and Patents

The commercial development of the hot comb accelerated in the early 20th century. One of the most notable figures in its history is Madam C.J. Walker, an African-American entrepreneur and inventor. Although Walker did not invent the hot comb, she significantly popularized it through her haircare product line and salon services. Her contributions helped transition the hot comb from a homemade tool to a marketable product accessible to a wider audience.

In 1909, Walker patented a metal comb with a detachable wooden handle designed to be heated on a stove, which improved usability and safety. This design innovation marked a pivotal moment in the history of the hot comb, laying the groundwork for subsequent electric models.

Technological Evolution and Features

The history of the hot comb is also a story of technological progression, reflecting broader trends in consumer goods and personal care devices. Initially reliant on external heat sources, hot combs evolved alongside electrification in the 20th century.

Transition to Electric Hot Combs

By the 1930s and 1940s, electric hot combs began to enter the market, offering consistent heat and easier handling compared to their stovetop predecessors. These devices featured built-in heating elements powered by household electricity, enhancing safety and convenience. The introduction of temperature controls further refined their functionality, allowing users to adjust heat levels according to hair type and texture.

Electric hot combs became an essential tool for African-American haircare regimens, with brands such as Magic Comb and Lustrasilk leading the industry. Their widespread adoption underscored the intersection of cultural identity and technological innovation.

Material Improvements and Design

Advancements in materials science also influenced the design and effectiveness of hot combs. Early models were made primarily of steel or iron, which conducted heat efficiently but posed burn risks. Later iterations incorporated materials like aluminum for lighter weight and better heat distribution.

Modern hot combs often feature ceramic or tourmaline plates, which help reduce heat damage and static electricity. Ergonomic handles and longer power cords have improved user experience, reflecting an emphasis on comfort and safety. These innovations demonstrate how the history of the hot comb parallels broader trends in personal grooming technology.

Cultural Significance and Social Implications

Beyond its technical aspects, the hot comb holds deep cultural significance. It is more than a hairstyling implement; it embodies complex narratives about race, beauty standards, and social acceptance.

Beauty Standards and Identity

In the context of African-American history, the hot comb symbolizes both adaptation and resistance. On one hand, it facilitated conformity to mainstream beauty ideals that favored straight hair, often seen as a prerequisite for professional and social acceptance. On the other hand, it enabled individuals to exercise agency over their appearance, navigating societal pressures with a tool uniquely suited to their hair texture.

The hot comb's role in hair straightening also sparked debates about authenticity and cultural pride, particularly during the Black is Beautiful movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which encouraged embracing natural hair textures. Despite shifts in fashion and ideology, the hot comb remains a cherished tool for many, valued for its versatility and heritage.

Economic Impact and Entrepreneurship

The history of the hot comb is intertwined with African-American entrepreneurship. The tool's popularity spurred the growth of hair salons, product lines, and related businesses, creating economic opportunities within Black communities. Entrepreneurs like Madam C.J. Walker exemplified this dynamic, building empires around haircare products and services that included the hot comb.

This economic dimension underscores how a simple grooming tool contributed to community

empowerment and the development of a distinct cultural industry.

Pros and Cons of the Hot Comb in Contemporary Use

As haircare technology continues to evolve, the hot comb remains relevant but not without criticism. Understanding its advantages and drawbacks offers insight into its enduring place in beauty routines.

- **Pros:**

- Effective for straightening tightly coiled hair without chemicals.
- Provides a sleek, polished finish preferred by many users.
- Offers a quick styling option compared to some modern alternatives.
- Durable and often more affordable than high-end flat irons.

- **Cons:**

- Risk of heat damage and scalp burns if not used properly.
- Requires skill and attention for safe and effective use.
- Less versatile than some contemporary styling devices.
- Can perpetuate Eurocentric beauty standards at the expense of natural hair acceptance.

Comparisons with Modern Hair Straightening Tools

Compared to ceramic flat irons and chemical relaxers, hot combs offer a middle ground in terms of heat exposure and hair texture preservation. While flat irons provide precision and versatility, they can be expensive and require careful temperature management. Chemical relaxers permanently alter hair structure, posing long-term health and hair integrity risks.

The hot comb, by contrast, delivers temporary straightening that can be reversed by washing, allowing users to switch between natural and styled looks. This flexibility continues to make it a valuable tool for many, particularly those who prefer less invasive styling methods.

The history of the hot comb reveals a nuanced narrative that blends innovation, culture, and identity. From its humble beginnings as a heated metal tool to its status as a symbol of resilience and style, the hot comb remains a fascinating subject within the broader story of haircare technology and cultural expression.

History Of The Hot Comb

history of the hot comb: *A Cultural History of Hair in the Modern Age* Geraldine Biddle-Perry, 2020-12-10 Over the last century, there has been a revolution in self-presentation and social attitudes towards hair. Developments in mass manufacturing, advances in chemical science and new understandings of bodies and minds have been embraced by new kinds of hairdressers and their clientele and embodied in styles that reflect shifting ideals of what it is to be and to look modern. The emergence of the ladies hairdressing salon, the rise of the celebrity stylist, the impact of Hollywood, an expanding mass media, and a new synergy between fashions in clothing and hairstyles have rippled out globally. Fashions in hair styles and their representation have taken on new meanings as a way of resisting dominant social structures, experimenting with social taboos, and expressing a modern sense of self. From the 1920s bob to the punk cut, hair has continued to be deeply involved in society's larger issues. Drawing on a wealth of visual, textual and object sources, and illustrated with 75 images, *A Cultural History of Hair in the Modern Age* presents essays that explore how politics, science, religion, fashion, beauty, the visual arts, and popular culture have reshaped modern hair and its significance as an agent of social change.

history of the hot comb: *Historical Archaeology* Charles E. Orser, Jr., 2016-08-05 This book provides a short, readable introduction to historical archaeology, which focuses on modern history in all its fascinating regional, cultural, and ethnic diversity. Accessibly covering key methods and concepts, including fundamental theories and principles, the history of the field, and basic definitions, *Historical Archaeology* also includes a practical look at career prospects for interested readers. Orser discusses central topics of archaeological research such as time and space, survey and excavation methods, and analytical techniques, encouraging readers to consider the possible meanings of artifacts. Drawing on the author's extensive experience as an historical archaeologist, the book's perspective ranges from the local to the global in order to demonstrate the real importance of this subject to our understanding of the world in which we live today. The third edition of this popular textbook has been significantly revised and expanded to reflect recent developments and discoveries in this exciting area of study. Each chapter includes updated case studies which demonstrate the research conducted by professional historical archaeologists. With its engaging approach to the subject, *Historical Archaeology* continues to be an ideal resource for readers who wish to be introduced to this rapidly expanding global field.

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chapters highlights a particularly important event or theme, which is then complemented by a detailed discussion of a particular methodological approach. Key features include: • An overarching narrative that helps readers address historical arguments; • Relevant primary documents or artifacts, plus a discussion of a particular historical method well-suited to teaching about them; • Lesson plans suitable for both middle and secondary level classrooms; • Document-based questions and short bibliographies for further research on the topic. This invaluable book is ideal for any aspiring or current teacher who wants to think critically about how to teach world history and make historical discussions come alive for students.

history of the hot comb: African Skin and Hair Disorders, An Issue of Dermatologic Clinics Nonhlanhla P Khumalo, 2014-04-28 People of African ancestry have sensitive skin and may suffer from a wide variety of skin disorders. Hair disorders are also common and differ from those suffered by Caucasians. This issue of the Dermatologic Clinics focuses on the most common skin and hair disorders seen in black skin, with articles focusing on acne scarring, alopecia, keloids, and skin pigmentation. There are also articles addressing moisturizers for the skin and the effect of hair treatments on the hair and scalp. Also discussed is the sociohistoric issues that can cloud the scientific understanding of clinical entities. Emphasis is often put on race and yet a very clear distinction should be made between race and quantifiable entities such as pigment and hair curl as determinants for skin/hair disease predilection; this is quite distinct from race as a surrogate for social class and a disease determinant for most medical conditions and malignancies.

history of the hot comb: Narratives of Resistance Ana María Manzanás Calvo, Jesús Benito Sánchez, 1999 The articles included in this collection cover a wide range of literatures and topics, but most of them address the ways in which ethnic writers create themselves in opposition and resistance to the mainstream. These narratives of opposition and resistance do not equate protest narratives but represent a consciously subversive effort. There is agency and creativity in the confrontation, for the majority of these narratives are not only demystifying an old world and order but creating a new one; these narratives are not reproducing as much as producing and forging culture and literature. The articles we present resist not only the politics of traditional canon formation but the politics of cultural nationalism as well; they challenge the margins as well as the center. With this revisionist agenda, the aim of this collection is to invite readers to further their rethinking of American and Caribbean literatures.

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lives of 100 female artists, activists, scientists, and icons who left their mark on history. Organized chronologically, this thoroughly researched biography collection offers a look at the contributions these women made and how their talents, discoveries, and ideas have helped guide humanity for thousands of years.

history of the hot comb: *Hair Story* Ayana D. Byrd, Lori L. Tharps, 2014-04-15 “As far as neatly and efficiently chronicling African Americans and the importance of their hair, *Hair Story* gets to the root of things.” —*Philadelphiaweekly.com* *Hair Story* is a historical and anecdotal exploration of Black Americans’ tangled hair roots. A chronological look at the culture and politics behind the ever-changing state of Black hair from fifteenth-century Africa to the present-day United States, it ties the personal to the political and the popular. Read about: Why Black American slaves used items like axle grease and eel skin to straighten their hair. How a Mexican chemist straightened Black hair using his formula for turning sheep’s wool into a minklike fur. How the Afro evolved from militant style to mainstream fashion trend. What prompted the creation of the Jheri curl and the popular style’s fall from grace. The story behind Bo Derek’s controversial cornrows and the range of reactions they garnered. Major figures in the history of Black hair are presented, from early hair-care entrepreneurs Annie Turnbo Malone and Madam C. J. Walker to unintended hair heroes like Angela Davis and Bob Marley. Celebrities, stylists, and cultural critics weigh in on the burgeoning sociopolitical issues surrounding Black hair, from the historically loaded terms “good” and “bad” hair, to Black hair in the workplace, to mainstream society’s misrepresentation and misunderstanding of kinky locks. *Hair Story* is the book that Black Americans can use as a benchmark for tracing a unique aspect of their history, and it’s a book that people of all races will celebrate as the reference guide for understanding Black hair. “A comprehensive and colorful look at a very touchy subject.” —*Essence*

history of the hot comb: *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History* Bonnie G. Smith, 2008 *The Encyclopedia of Women in World History* captures the experiences of women throughout world history in a comprehensive, 4-volume work. Although there has been extensive research on women in history by region, no text or reference work has comprehensively covered the role women have played throughout world history. The past thirty years have seen an explosion of research and effort to present the experiences and contributions of women not only in the Western world but across the globe. Historians have investigated women’s daily lives in virtually every region and have researched the leadership roles women have filled across time and region. They have found and demonstrated that there is virtually no historical, social, or demographic change in which women have not been involved and by which their lives have not been affected. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History* benefits greatly from these efforts and experiences, and illuminates how women worldwide have influenced and been influenced by these historical, social, and demographic changes. The Encyclopedia contains over 1,250 signed articles arranged in an A-Z format for ease of use. The entries cover six main areas: biographies; geography and history; comparative culture and society, including adoption, abortion, performing arts; organizations and movements, such as the Egyptian Uprising, and the Paris Commune; women and gender studies; and topics in world history that include slave trade, globalization, and disease. With its rich and insightful entries by leading scholars and experts, this reference work is sure to be a valued, go-to resource for scholars, college and high school students, and general readers alike.

history of the hot comb: *Rook's Textbook of Dermatology* Tony Burns, Stephen M. Breathnach, Neil Cox, Christopher Griffiths, 2008-04-15 The late Arthur Rook established the *Textbook of Dermatology* as the most comprehensive work of reference available to the dermatologist and it enjoys instant name recognition. Each subsequent edition has been expanded as the subject has developed and the book remains the ultimate source of clinical information for the trainee and practising dermatologist alike. *Rook's Textbook of Dermatology* covers all aspects of skin disease from basic science through pathology and epidemiology to clinical practice. Long recognized for its unparalleled coverage of diagnosis, this clinical classic earned its reputation as a definitive source of information. New features of this Seventh Edition include: Two new Editors, Neil Cox and

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history of the hot comb: *Black Communication Theory Volume 2* Kehbuma Langmia, 2024-10-12 This second volume of *Black Communication Theory* extends the Black communication sphere to include digital as well as non-digital modes of communication for the Black community on the continent of Africa and the Diaspora. The authors of this edition have been able to build on from the conceptualizations enshrined within the first volume and expanded it to include other Black communication contexts be they on gender, race, ethnicity, or class. Continuing the journey of populating the Black communication public and private sphere on the cyberspace as well as non-cyberspaces, this volume will provide an invaluable resource to students and researchers of Afrocentric communication theories. This is the moment for those examining Black communication related phenomena to harvest theories conceived and presented by Communication scholars actively engaged with pedagogy within the university system the world over.

history of the hot comb: *Conversations with Natasha Trethewey* Joan Wylie Hall, 2013-08-28 United States Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey (b. 1966) describes her mode as elegiac. Although the loss of her murdered mother informs each book, Trethewey's range of forms and subjects is wide. In compact sonnets, elegant villanelles, ballad stanzas, and free verse, she creates monuments to mixed-race children of colonial Mexico, African American soldiers from the Civil War, a beautiful prostitute in 1910 New Orleans, and domestic workers from the twentieth-century North and South. Because her white father and her black mother could not marry legally in Mississippi, Trethewey says she was given her subject matter as the daughter of miscegenation. A sense of psychological exile is evident from her first collection, *Domestic Work* (2000), to the recent *Thrall* (2012). Biracial people of the Americas are a major focus of her poetry and her prose book *Beyond Katrina*, a meditation on family, community, and the natural environment of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The interviews featured within *Conversations with Natasha Trethewey* provide intriguing artistic and biographical insights into her work. The Pulitzer Prize-winning poet cites diverse influences, from Anne Frank to Seamus Heaney. She emotionally acknowledges Rita Dove's large impact, and she boldly positions herself in the southern literary tradition of Faulkner and Robert Penn Warren. Commenting on *Pastoral*, *South*, and other poems, Trethewey guides readers to deeper perception and empathy.

history of the hot comb: *We Are the Culture* Arionne Nettles, 2024-04-16 Black Chicago

culture is American culture. During the Great Migration, more than a half million Black Americans moved from the South to Chicago, and with them, they brought the blues, amplifying what would be one of the city's greatest musical art forms. In 1958, the iconic Johnson Publishing Company, the voice of Black America, launched the Ebony Fashion Fair show, leading to the creation of the first makeup brand for Black skin. For three decades starting in the 1970s, households across the country were transported to a stage birthed in Chicago as they moved their hips in front of TV screens airing Soul Train. Chicago is where Oprah Winfrey, a Black woman who did not have the traditional look TV managers pushed on talent, premiered her talk show, which went on to break every record possible and solidify her position as the Queen of Daytime TV. It's where Hall of Famer Michael Jordan led the Bulls to six championships, including two three-peats, making the NBA a must-see attraction worldwide and wearing Jordans a style symbol to this day. And it's home to Grammy winner Chance the Rapper, whose work honors the city's cultural institutions, from the White Sox to modern art superstar Hebru Brantley. Pop culture expert Arionne Nettles takes us through the history of how Black Chicagoans have led pop culture in America for decades, and gives insight into the ways culture spreads and influences our lives.

history of the hot comb: *Encyclopedia of Hair* Victoria Sherrow, 2023-03-30 This popular volume on the culture of hair through human history and around the globe has been updated and revised to include even more entries and current information. How we style our hair has the ability to shape the way others perceive us. For example, in 2017, the singer Macklemore denounced his hipster undercut hairstyle, a style that is associated with Hitler Youth and alt-right men, and in 2015, actress Rose McGowan shaved her head in order to take a stance against the traditional Hollywood sex symbol stereotype. This volume examines how hair-or lack thereof-can be an important symbol of gender, class, and culture around the world and through history. Hairstyles have come to represent cultural heritage and memory, and even political leanings, social beliefs, and identity. This second edition builds upon the original volume, updating all entries that have evolved over the last decade, such as by discussing hipster culture in the entries on beards and mustaches and recent medical breakthroughs in hair loss. New entries have been added that look at specific world regions, hair coverings, political symbolism behind certain styles, and other topics.

history of the hot comb: *The Cambridge Companion to the American Graphic Novel* Jan Baetens, Hugo Frey, Fabrice Leroy, 2023-09-28 The Cambridge Companion to the American Graphic Novel explores the important role of the graphic novel in reflecting American society and in the shaping of the American imagination. Using key examples, this volume reviews the historical development of various subgenres within the graphic novel tradition and examines how graphic novelists have created multiple and different accounts of the American experience, including that of African American, Asian American, Jewish, Latinx, and LGBTQ+ communities. Reading the American graphic novel opens a debate on how major works have changed the idea of America from that once found in the quintessential action or superhero comics to show new, different, intimate accounts of historical change as well as social and individual, personal experience. It guides readers through the theoretical text-image scholarship to explain the meaning of the complex borderlines between graphic novels, comics, newspaper strips, caricature, literature, and art.

history of the hot comb: *Ebony*, 1968-07 EBONY is the flagship magazine of Johnson Publishing. Founded in 1945 by John H. Johnson, it still maintains the highest global circulation of any African American-focused magazine.

history of the hot comb: *The Madonna Connection* Ramona Liera Schwichtenberg, Deidre Pribram, Dave Tetzlaff, Ron Scott, 2019-07-09 Various cultural theories (foremost among them, postmodernism) have figured in the debate over the politics of representation. These theories have tended to look at representation in the context of either audience enablement or commercial constraint; that is, do the images empower the public or inhibit it? One key area consistently overlooked has been the study of subcultural or subordinate groups who appropriate what is traditionally considered mainstream. The Madonna Connection is the first book to address the complexities of race, gender, and sexuality in popular culture by using the influence of a cultural

heroine to advance cultural theory. Madonna's use of various media—music, concert tour, film, and video—serves as a paradigm by which the authors study how images and symbols associated with subcultural groups (multiracial, gay and lesbian, feminist) are smuggled into the mainstream. Using a range of critical and interpretive approaches to this evolving and lively cultural phenomenon, the authors demonstrate the importance of personalities like Madonna to issues of enablement and constraint. Are others given voice by political interventions in mass popular culture? Or is their voice co-opted to provide mere titillation and maximum profit? What might the interplay of these views suggest? These are some of the questions the authors attempt to answer. Some celebrate Madonna's affirmation of cultural diversity. Others criticize her flagrant self-marketing strategies. And still others regard her as only a provisional challenge to the mainstream.

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