

Popeye the sailor gets a makeover for his 90th birthday

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The world's most popular sailor man may be "strong to the finish," but he shows no signs of nearing the finish line any time soon. Popeye, who turned 90 years old this month, is still going strong, an iconic cartoon character who has nearly 10 million fans on Facebook. And for his birthday, he's being reintroduced in comics and videos for a new generation.



Popeye debuted in E.C. Segar's comic strip "Thimble Theatre" in 1929 in the New York Journal-American newspaper and several years later starred in his first theatrical cartoon. The dynamic was soon set: He would eat spinach to gain strength, beat rival and bully Bluto, and save his girlfriend, Olive Oyl.

Now, King Features is celebrating the sailor — who still has his trademark bulging forearms, though not always his corncob pipe — with a new series of animated shorts, "Popeye's Island Adventures," on the Popeye and Friends YouTube channel.

Plus, King is letting top guest artists draw the comic as a nod to Segar's famous "Popeye's Cartoon Club," where fan art was shared in the strip.

One of those guest artists is the Argentine cartoonist Liniers (the pen name of Ricardo Siri), whose popular comic "Macanudo" is carried by King. Liniers talked to KidsPost about his love of Popeye. Q: When did your history of Popeye begin? A: When I was a kid in Buenos Aires, they showed the Fleischer Studios [animated] shorts after school, and I loved them. I remember eating some spinach, which I hated, thinking I was going to grow instant muscles. It didn't happen, and I hated spinach for a long time. I loved Popeye, though! Q: Why do you think Popeye endures as a pop icon at age 90? What magic makes him last?

Kids love adventures. And isn't that what sailors are supposed to be? Professional risk-takers! World travelers! Venturers into the unknown! Also, he was funny. Superman wasn't

funny. Batman wasn't funny. This guy was yuckyking through every dangerous ordeal he encountered.

How did you react when King asked you to create your own Popeye strip?

It took me awhile to muster the courage to put the pencil on the paper and draw Popeye, but as soon as I started, I realized this is an old friend. I loved doing the strip. The way Segar draws has been an influence of mine since I bought a collection of Popeye strips. It was the 60th anniversary collection edited by Mike Higgs. I studied the way he scribbled and scratched the paper. I think those old strips are why I still work with ink and nibs. Q: Who renders your favorite Popeye, from any era, and why?

Segar. I loved that he created this wacky and huge alternate universe. All those weird characters poured out of that inkpot and populated that strip so absurdly and naturally. Some incredible inkpot it must've been.

Is there any aspect of Popeye that has influenced or infused your work?

I guess the most impactful influence is that of trying to create a world that can stand on its own. With characters that seem to exist almost separated from its creator. Q: Why do you think Popeye eternally appeals to kids? A: Those incredible forearms! Kids know he can accomplish anything with those things! Also, the cool anchor [tattoos]!