

Dear Reader,

I'm excited to announce that our next Spotlight Selection for hoopla's Graphic Novel Book Club is a classic: *Usagi Yojimbo Book 1 – The Ronin*, written and drawn by legendary comics creator Stan Sakai.

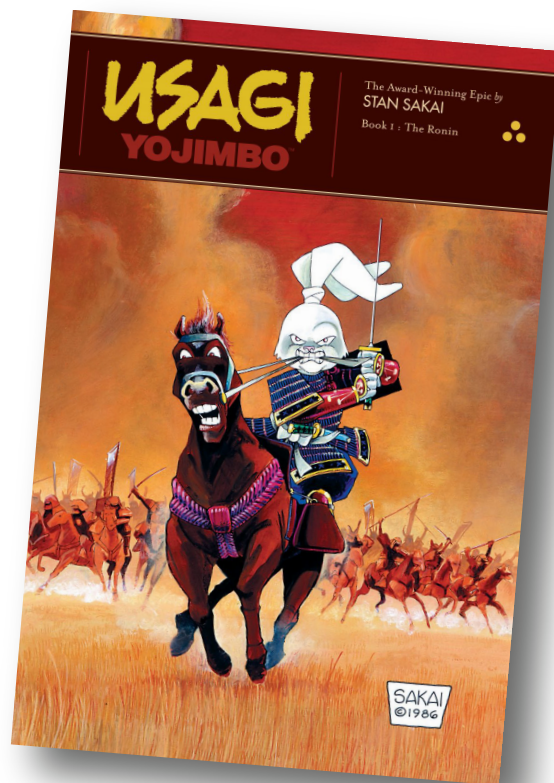
Sakai's career in comics has spanned nearly 40 years. He got his start lettering *Groo the Wanderer* from another comics legend, Sergio Aragones. The character of Miyamoto Usagi first appeared in 1984 and got his own series in 1987. This first volume sets the stage and introduces a number of characters that will appear throughout the long-running series, including our honorable hero. Deeply rooted in history, the *Usagi Yojimbo* comics are the result of painstaking research and attention to detail. The result of this labor of love is one of the longest-running series in comics.

It's also worth noting that Sakai serves as both the writer and the artist for these comics. His elegant artwork draws the reader in with establishing "shots" that set the tone, then follows through with masterful fight scene choreography and beautiful panels that evoke a clear mood with their simplicity. And the story and art both draw inspiration from several of Sakai's passions: westerns and samurai films, and Japanese history and folklore.

This story is perfect for readers of any age. The characters are anthropomorphic (the title translates to "Rabbit Bodyguard") but somehow it manages to be incredibly serious. It deals with violence and war but never loses its humorous edge. Usagi is even a popular recurring character in the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles storyline, interacting with the turtles in their time and his through a variety of time travel and mystical shenanigans.

Now is a perfect time to dive into *Usagi Yojimbo*: a new TV adaptation, *Samurai Rabbit: The Usagi Chronicles*, began streaming in April. We can't recommend this book enough and we hope you find it as fun and enjoyable as we did. Let us know what you think @hoopladigital, and join the online discussion using #hooplaGNBC.

Ray Barry, hoopla digital



STAN SAKAI

WRITER/ARTIST

Stan Sakai is a Japanese-born American artist and comic book creator. His creation, *Usagi Yojimbo*, first appeared in 1984. He is a multiple Eisner Award-winning cartoonist and the recipient of numerous national awards including an American Library Association Award and a Cultural Ambassador Award from the Japanese American National Museum. In 2020, Sakai was inducted into the Eisner Award Hall of Fame. He currently is an executive producer on the Netflix original CGI animated series *Samurai Rabbit: The Usagi Chronicles*, which is based on *Usagi Yojimbo*. He lives in Pasadena, CA.



Photo credit: Emi Fujii Photography