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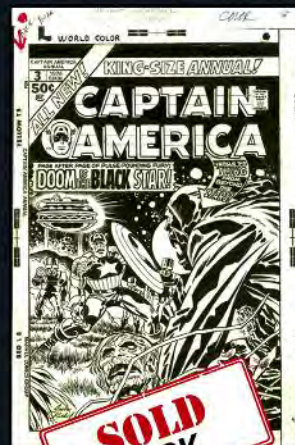
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This issue dedicated to our pal Adam McGovern. Hang in there, buddy!

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THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

ISSUE #66, FALL 2015



This issue's cover art first saw publication on the envelope that held the four plates in Jack's GODS Portfolio (above) in the early 1970s. Turns out there was an unused Thor page, still in pencil form in Jack's files, which got used as a plate in the Marvelmania Portfolio. So Jack had Mike Royer ink it, altering it to turn Galactus into a more generic character, and completely eliminating a Thor figure that was lurking in the background. Joe Rubinstein did this fantastic inked version of the original pencils in 2007 for Ferran Delgado, and Ferran inked and added the erased Thor back in. Enjoy this double-take of two great inkers!



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DOUBLE VISION

by editor John Morrow



Kirby's mid-'60s redesign for Captain America, and (below) the character's star-spangled origins.



Remember all the hubbub about “Marvel Prototypes,” which we covered as far back as *TJKC* #13 in 1996? For those that don’t, in the late-1950s/early-1960s pre-hero Marvel/Atlas comics, there were characters that some collectors (and more prominently, some opportunistic comics dealers) were passing off as directly linked to the later Magneto, Sandman, Electro, Iron Man, Watcher, and even Spider-Man. In reality, the connection was usually just their name—but those issues went for a higher price on the back issue market.

While it was a fun game for well-meaning collectors and historians to track these down, I have no doubt that money was at the root of the trend—just as it’s been at the root of some efforts to rewrite history, and cause people to develop a case of “single vision” about creator credits.

See, Jack Kirby had his own well-documented “prototypes” for many of the major Marvel characters, and those ties are much less tenuous than the ones in monster stories from *Tales To Astonish* and its ilk. Spidey, the FF, Thor, Hulk; there’re just too many coincidences to be coincidences. In all these instances, there appears to be a direct Kirby forebear of the characters we know and love today—and not in name only.

Which doesn’t mean Stan Lee wasn’t involved; quite the contrary. The fact that Jack had an earlier version of each only confirms that Stan’s input was crucial to the success of the eventual end-product. But Stan hardly needs my help in getting the credit he deserves; the point I’m trying to make here is, these earlier versions help prove that *Jack* was an intricate part of the creation of these characters, and not just as a hired-hand, told exactly what to draw by a writer/editor/publisher, after the act of creation was completed.

First, some background: In the mid-1960s, Kirby signed a legal document, basically stating that he and Joe Simon worked in the Timely offices in the 1940s, developed Captain America in those offices as part of their daily work routine, and that he felt that everything he did then was Timely’s, to do with as they pleased. We’re not certain how Timely owner Martin Goodman got Jack to sign such a release (although Jack was *persona non grata* at DC at the time, so didn’t have many other avenues to earn an income), but it’s pretty evident that some of the statements made there weren’t based on facts as we know them today. In 1941, Joe Simon presented Captain America to Goodman, and negotiated a deal for a percentage of the profits on the character for he and Kirby—something Goodman would simply have never done for a couple of paid staffers





As you can see, we are introducing one of the most unusual new fantasy characters of all time—The SPIDERMAN, who will appear every month in AMAZING. Perhaps, if your letters request it, we will make his stories even longer, or have TWO Spiderman stories per issue.

BE SURE TO SEE THE NEXT ISSUE OF AMAZING FANTASY --- FOR THE FURTHER AMAZING EXPLOITS OF AMERICA'S MOST DIFFERENT NEW TEEN-AGE IDOL-- SPIDERMAN! *the End*

who were creating characters as part of their job description. While Joe was the staff editor and Jack the art director during the era, they were also working freelance, and they clearly developed Captain America on their own time, outside of Timely. Goodman's failure to live up to the profit deal was the reason Simon & Kirby left Timely for DC.

That 1966 document was related to money, of course. Goodman was making in-roads towards selling Marvel, and wanted to secure documentation that would tie up any loose ends which might hurt a possible sale. Joe Simon was then striking fear into Marvel with the announcement of his impending line of superheroes at Harvey Comics (Joe's successful track record was enough to give any publisher pause), and Jack—no doubt at Goodman's request—developed a new costume for Captain America (as shown on the previous page), likely to be used if Simon decided to cause trouble over the ownership of Cap and kill a sale.

But Cap wasn't Goodman's only concern. It's been documented that Jack was in possession of a "Spiderman" logo from the last days of his partnership with Joe Simon, so a character by that name existed in some form prior to Stan Lee's involvement (albeit without a hyphen in its name). Jim Shooter is on record as having seen a Spiderman presentation drawing up at Marvel (different from the fabled rejected five-page story Jack did before Steve Ditko was involved). His recollection is that the character carried a "web-gun" and wore trunks and flapped boots like Captain America, and bore no similarity to Ditko's later Spider-Man, in costume or in concept (there were margin notes describing some ideas for the character). Shooter's description matches Ditko's own visual remembrance of Jack's character, as he first recounted in *Robin Snyder's History of Comics* Vol. 1, #5 in 1990 (shown here).

The pre-existence of this logo and presentation drawing always got conveniently omitted from the old Marvel party line, which stated:

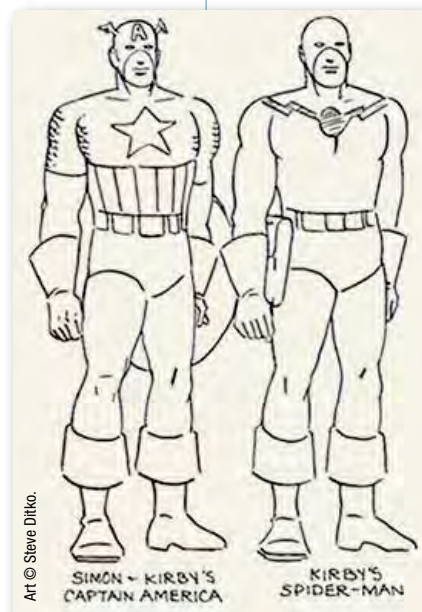
Stan Lee came up with the idea of Spider-Man, presented it to Kirby, who then drew a story which Stan rejected because Jack's rendition was "too heroic-looking," leading Stan to turn the job over to Steve Ditko, whose style was more in keeping with what Stan had in mind for his brainstorm. [Whew!]

We now know that, while it wasn't the version that we see today, Jack came to Stan first with the idea of a "Spiderman" before Stan ran in a different direction with the concept (and as you'll see in Jean Delpey's article this issue, it's not as simple as saying Stan rejected Jack's version, then turned it completely over to Ditko). But ask yourself: Jack was producing one great new series after another in the first half of the 1960s. Why would Stan think he'd have a dud with this one? What we deem a surefire flop now, might've been at least a modest hit, had it ever actually been published. (The Hulk initially bombed, and is huge—no pun intended—today).

We look back fondly on *Challengers of the Unknown* due to the quality of Kirby's work, even though that concept isn't setting the comics world on fire now. You could even argue the real success of *Challengers* was *Fantastic Four*, since it is in many ways a prototype of the FF. But *Challengers* was a solid performer for a long time at DC, well after Kirby left it. That couldn't have happened if, like Jack's Spiderman, it never got to newsstands.

Maybe, just maybe, "too heroic looking" wasn't the real reason Jack's Spiderman didn't get used.

(top left) Simon & Kirby's "Fly" for Archie Comics, 1959, whose first arch nemesis was Spider Spry, which could've been a springboard for... oh, my head hurts. In a nice bit of irony, Ditko eventually drew Archie's Fly in the 1980s (below).



(top) Despite Stan Lee's past assertion that they tossed Spidey into *Amazing Fantasy* #15 because they knew it was the final issue and had nothing to lose, the AF #15 letters page blurb and "next issue" announcement show otherwise. But a last-minute logo change aside (left), the character remained hyphen-less throughout his debut.





over to artists" is not accurate. Thankfully, there's a *new* company attitude now, in light of the legal settlement between Marvel and the Kirby Estate. Jack's co-creator credit is appearing on Marvel comics that feature his characters, as well as on TV shows and movies. And nothing could be more evident of the new tone than the *Jack Kirby Crash Course* video that debuted on Marvel.com on Jack's 98th birthday in August. For three-and-a-half minutes, Marvel gave a loving shout-out to Jack, using



the term "co-creator" constantly (all without a single mention of Stan Lee as the other "co-").

My one Holy Grail left in Kirbyland is to find even a single page of Jack's Spiderman story, or that presentation piece. Now that Marvel feels it's appropriate to give Kirby proper credit, I'm hopeful that eventually I'll be able to present an example of that Grail here, so we can all see that "double vision" of Spiderman/Spider-Man. ★

For some other revealing double-takes and other comics-related history, check out Nick Caputo's blog: <http://nick-caputo.blogspot.com/> where these two examples of Stan Lee reusing the same plot are detailed:

(left) "I Discovered the Secret of the Flying Saucers!" from *Strange Worlds* #1, Dec. 1958, by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby.

(below) "I Know the Secret of the Flying Saucer!" from *Tales of Suspense* #11, Sept. 1960, by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko.

And Kate Willaert pointed me to an earlier and a later example of this same plot being reused, making it a quadruple-take: "The Secret of the Flying Saucer" by Stan Lee and Fred Kida from *Men's Adventures* #21 (1953), and "The Impossible Spaceship" from *Strange Tales* #101 (1962) by Stan Lee and Don Heck. These two can be found at <http://atocom.blogspot.com>.

Remember how Simon & Kirby presented Captain America to Martin Goodman in 1941? MLJ (now Archie Comics) had already launched their patriotic Shield character in *Pep Comics* #1 a year earlier, and when Captain America hit big by hitting Hitler on its debut cover, Martin Goodman had to make peace with MLJ to avoid a lawsuit. It resulted in Simon & Kirby changing Cap's shield to a round shape (to better distance him visually from the Shield).

I suspect it was Martin Goodman who nixed Jack's Spiderman after seeing it (and told Stan to get another artist to do it, so it would look less like *The Fly*—which Kirby and Simon had just created for Archie in 1959). After avoiding one potential lawsuit in 1941, Goodman simply decided not to risk being called onto the mat at Archie again. And for a company legend, "Jack's character looked too heroic" sure sounds better than "We were afraid we'd get sued."

(Another thing I've always wondered: Why didn't Marvel get a better inker for *Fantastic Four* #1? It's some of the crudest Kirby art ever, almost as if they wanted it to look as different from the slick Kirby/Wood *Challengers* as they could. Stan or Martin Goodman could've made the same call and turned FF over to Ditko to keep it from looking like *Challengers*, and didn't—but *did* insist initially that they not have costumes, and showed a big monster on the debut cover so it wouldn't look too much like a DC super-hero comic.)

So, does this "Spiderman's" pre-existence mean that Jack (and Joe Simon as well) created the web-spinner we all know today? I think not, any more than Martin Goodman deserves creator credit for telling Stan Lee to add a hyphen to the character's name to keep Joe Simon from complaining. To my mind, to earn a creator credit, you need to be intrinsically involved in the conceptualizing and execution of at least the basic raw version of a character. While Jack (and Joe) fit that description for *a* Spiderman, it's just not the same character. The credit should go to Lee and Ditko.

But Spiderman (no hyphen) shows that the old Marvel line of "Stan Lee came up with all these ideas by himself, then turned them





**STAN LEE TOLD STORIES WITH WORDS.
JACK KIRBY TOLD STORIES WITH PICTURES.
THE TWO DIDN'T ALWAYS AGREE.**

If you look closely at early Marvel comics, there are moments when the words and pictures aren't telling the same story.



HEAD-TO-HEAD

KIRBY WITHOUT WORDS

by Kate Willaert, excerpted from the original online examination of the same name, found at: <http://kirbywithoutwords.tumblr.com/tagged/kirbywithoutwords/chrono>



(above & below) Can you spot the typos in each example? These and more can be found on Kate's blog.



Stan Lee and Jack Kirby were the chief architects of the Marvel universe. Like most collaborations, there were times when the two disagreed. Unlike most collaborations, their disagreements sometimes made it onto the printed page. The purpose of this article is to document and analyze these instances of Lee-Kirby Dissonance. Tight deadlines meant there wasn't always time for Lee to get an art correction when it didn't match his sensibilities, so he'd try to change it with text. In later years, the two sometimes just willfully ignored each other's ideas, which they were able to do because they collaborated using the Marvel Method.

WHAT'S THE MARVEL METHOD?

Originally a writer would write a script and the artist would draw it. Since Jack Kirby and Spider-Man co-creator Steve Ditko were accomplished storytellers rather than just illustrators, Stan Lee devised a way to hand off some of the story creation to them so that he could write more books.

In the Marvel Method (also called working "Marvel Style"), the writer gives the artist a basic plot summary, and the artist fleshes it out into a story. Once the pages are drawn, the writer then adds dialogue to each panel.

It's important to note that the writer was not always the one coming up with the initial plot. Lee and Kirby would often discuss the plot together before Kirby went off to draw it. Steve Ditko went one step further, eventually plotting his own stories and leaving the dialogue to Lee.



FANTASTIC FOUR #1 (PAGE 13)



The first time the Human Torch uses his powers, he accidentally starts a forest fire!

Stan Lee attempts to downplay it, describing it as a "small fire he had started in the underbrush." Also note how the thought balloon is strategically placed to try and obscure the burning trees and smoke in the sky.

FANTASTIC FOUR #1 (PAGE 25)

On their Baxter Building podcast, Jeff Lester and Graeme McMillan wondered whether Jack Kirby might have intended the explosion in the second to last panel to have been caused by the Human Torch.

The team do appear to be trying to get out of there fast, as if they're anticipating something. Stan's text is saying,



"We did it... we're free!" but Jack's art is saying, "We have to get out of here quickly!"

The other question is whether Kirby intended for the Mole Man to have been killed in that giant explosion, which would've made more sense as a conclusion.

Reed not only seems certain that the Mole Man is alive and merely locked underground, but strangely considers this outcome a win, apparently having forgotten that the Mole Man's underground tunnels branching all over the world were the entire problem.

Locking Mole Man underground is like saying, "Oh good, the villain has sealed himself in that missile launch control center! We'll never hear from him again!"



FANTASTIC FOUR #2 (PAGE 10)

One of the trickier aspects of the Marvel Method is that it's up to the artist to determine who's talking or not.

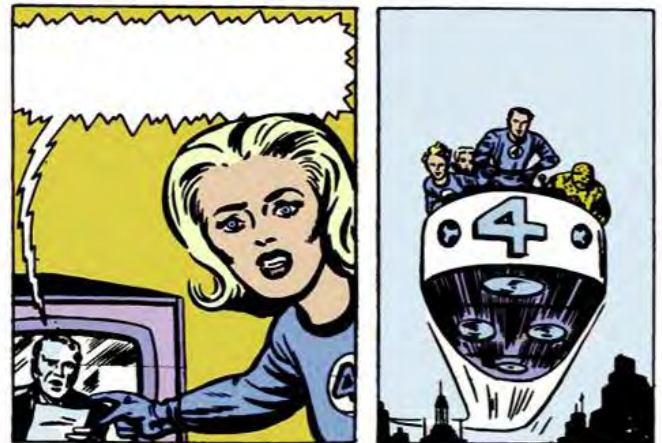
Most readers won't notice when a word balloon is given to a character whose mouth is closed, but it can look pretty awkward when someone who clearly is talking (or shouting) isn't given a balloon, as in the second panel.



FANTASTIC FOUR #8 (PAGE 15)

While Sue was a prisoner of the Puppet Master, she saw him playing with a prison playset and his magical puppet figurines.

Here she appears to be telling the team that the prisoner outbreak reported on the news was the Puppet Master's doing.



Instead, Stan Lee has Reed deduce it himself without any knowledge to base it on.

This is the first hint of what will become a recurring pattern of Stan Lee preventing a female character from having agency in a story, even when Jack Kirby has drawn it in. Such an example is *Fantastic Four* #12, where Stan Lee in his dialogue views Sue Storm's purpose as keeping the men's morale up, while Jack Kirby draws Sue Storm getting in the final blow, disarming the villain before they





capture him.

Another example:

Fantastic Four #14 (page 4). It's been a rough day for the Fantastic Four, and everyone looks worn out, except Sue, whose body language as drawn by Kirby appears to indicate that

she's tougher than these lazy bums. Stan Lee corrects this by clarifying that she's anxious to get some housework done.



FANTASTIC FOUR #14 (PAGE 9)

The art strongly suggests that the Puppet Master has just finished creating magical puppets of the Fantastic Four so that he can manipulate them into fighting Namor (having already manipulated Namor into kidnapping Sue). It's strange that the Puppet Master would insist he does not want to manipulate the Fantastic Four at the same time that he's playing with their puppets.



FANTASTIC FOUR #18 (PAGES 20 & 21)

This is a very strange sequence. Kirby has Sue leading the Super-Skrull into a crater as part of a plan to seal him in, but then Stan Lee does something uncharacteristic.

Kirby has drawn the Super-Skrull leaping at Sue, and Reed pulling her out at the last minute, while Lee has added a caption to say that Sue actually tripped him! Strangely, Lee has her say "Reed!! Oh, thank heavens!," which would've made sense in the context of Kirby's version, but makes much less sense if she tripped him. Lee has actually created caption-dialogue dissonance with *himself*.



AVENGERS #2 (PAGE 19)

If the Wasp was in the other room while Don Blake transformed into Thor, why is he still down on one knee in the last panel?

It looks like Jack Kirby possibly didn't see the point in a superteam that keeps its secret identities from each other, while Stan Lee apparently wanted to hold onto it.

This becomes slightly comical when Iron Man has to explain to the team that they're meeting in Stark's building



because he's totally just a good friend who's allowing them to use his stuff, and no one questions that Stark is never around for their meetings and is never in the same room as Iron Man.

ART CORRECTIONS

Sometimes Stan Lee would request "art corrections." Often these were done via a paste-up, where a piece of empty board would be glued over the original panel, and a new panel drawn over it.

The two images below from *Journey Into Mystery* #88 (page 13) are one of the few rare before-and-after examples available, since removing the paste-up is technically a destructive process and may devalue the art.



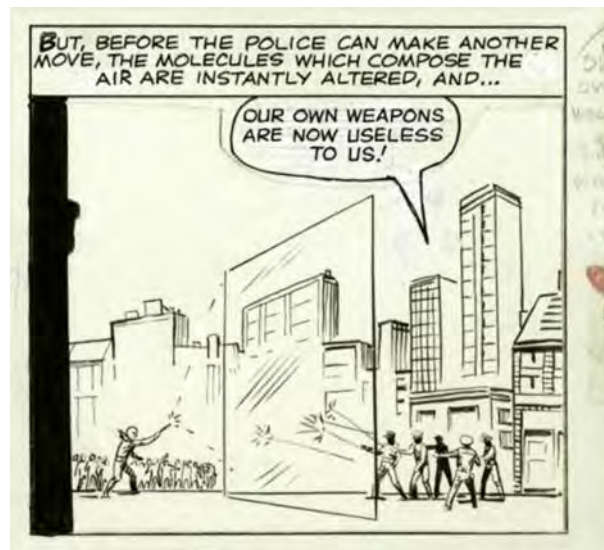
In the "before" panel you can clearly see Earth on the left and the Rainbow Bridge on the right. I guess Stan felt it wasn't clear enough that they were leaving Earth? But in removing the Rainbow Bridge from this panel, it becomes a little confusing why he's suddenly on a Rainbow Bridge in the panel that comes after.

According to Nick Caputo and Nigel Kitching, this correction was made by Steve Ditko, as was the third image below, which is from *Fantastic Four* #20 (page 17). This is an example of what a paste-up looks like when it hasn't been removed. You can see the board cut around the word balloon so that it didn't have to be relettered.

While we're looking at this image, note the text to the right of the panel. This isn't Jack Kirby's handwriting, but rather Stan Lee's. Later on Jack would start writing notes for Stan in the margins, but at this stage he apparently explained to Stan verbally what was happening on each page when handing the pages in.

It's theorized that it was during these meetings that Stan would quickly jot down these notes to himself, most of which are barely legible. Fortunately, this note is easy to make out (despite being cut off), because Stan was jotting down a dialogue note. It says, "Our own weapons are now useless to us," just like in the word balloon. Some might even speculate that Jack suggested this line to him during the meeting.

The final image comes from the same page of *Fantastic Four* #20, but contains a different type of



mystery. If you look very closely, you can make out the not-fully-erased faces of Reed and Ben below the word balloon, and Johnny to the far right.

Thankfully, at this time Stan only seemed to request about one panel change per issue, being that time was tight. If a change was going to require more work than that, he seemed more than happy to just change the intent with creative use of captions and dialogue, which is what makes this article possible.

However, when art corrections do pop up, it presents a number of mysteries. In the case of the final image, the mystery is whether Stan suggested a change before the art was inked, or whether Jack changed his mind and redrew the panel before ever showing it to Stan.

In contrast, every paste-up I encounter presents a mystery of whether Stan used this particular art correction to change the intent of a sequence, or if, like the *Journey Into Mystery* example, he was just wasting everyone's valuable time. ★

This is just the tip of the iceberg; for more great examples of Kirby Without Words, go to: <http://kirbywithoutwords.tumblr.com/tagged/kirbywithoutwords/chrono>

Also of great interest to readers of this article (and of great help to its author) are the Baxter Building podcasts. Find out more at: <http://www.waitwhatpodcast.com/baxter-building-ep-1-what-in-blazes-does-it-mean/>



SEEING DOUBLE?

Commentary by
Shane Foley

There are many examples of artists' work being editorially altered for publication, and Kirby was no exception. Whether the changes were for better or worse was the editor's subjective call. Here are some examples from Marvel in the '60s of Kirby work being "fixed." It seems many of the changes occurred late in the production process, with copies of the work having already been made before final editing, because most of the examples shown here come from Marvel itself using unaltered masters when issuing reprint material. Here are 15 examples, in roughly chronological order:

**Avengers #19 cover
(Aug. 1965):**

I think this change is a good call—but it's not because of a subjective feeling about a cover. It's all about a design element that Kirby probably did which Stan or someone felt needed to be improved on. In the reprint of this issue in Essential Avengers #1, we see the Swordsman with really different, clunky headgear. I remember seeing this version in an Aussie reprint somewhere years ago and being mystified by it, since I knew these issues well in their original form. Could Don Heck have made Kirby's helmet version work? Was it Lee or Heck who wanted a more straightforward hood? And look—he's even smiling in the revised version, maybe to appear more like the mocking, swashbuckler type.





**Avengers #23 cover
(Dec. 1965):**

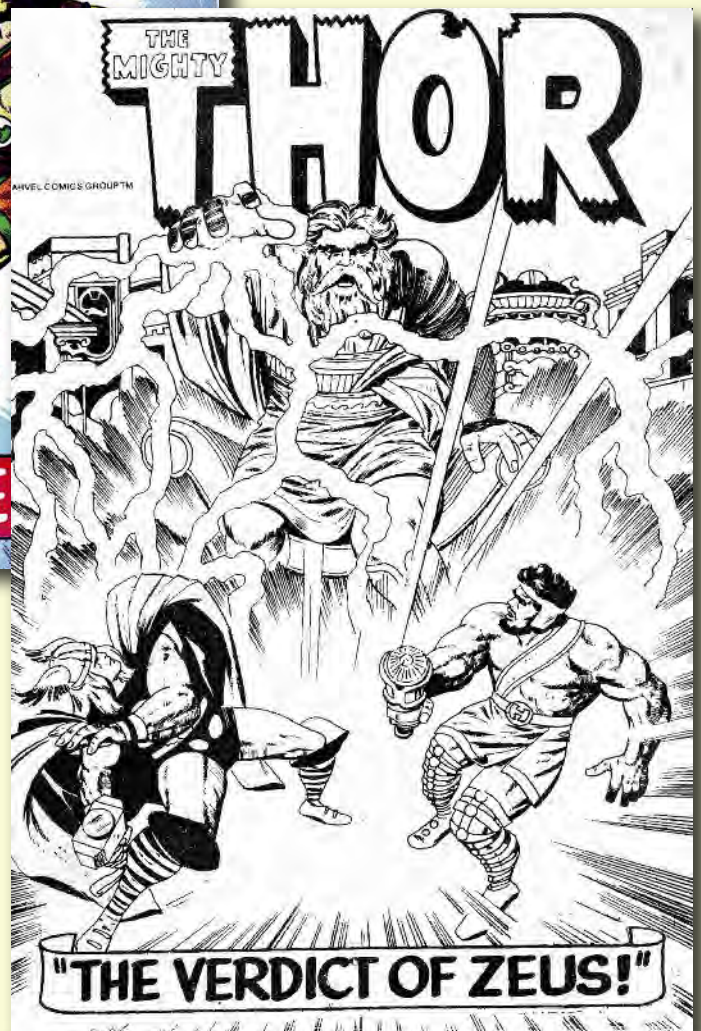
*First noted by Roy Thomas
years ago in Alter Ego, it
was evidently the Comics
Code that insisted Kang's
outstretched hand be
reduced to be less frightful!*





**Avengers #28 cover
(May 1966):**

It seems the background blacks were eliminated here to help the figures "pop" more, with the grey background receding and the bold blacks pushing the Avengers forward. Not a bad reason for the change—and one that I guess worked okay.



Thor #129 cover (June 1966):

Marvel decreed the background on this cover of this issue be all black. Perhaps this was in the interest of clarity, yet looking at the unaltered version, one can only wonder why this was preferred when a simple monotone color scheme (usually grey in those days) would have worked a treat. I don't see any confusion in Kirby's original pic and prefer it. This scan was taken from an Australian reprint years ago (now on quite yellowed paper), but the same unaltered version, with corner box and numbering intact—but with poorer, faded linework—appears in *Essential Thor* #2.



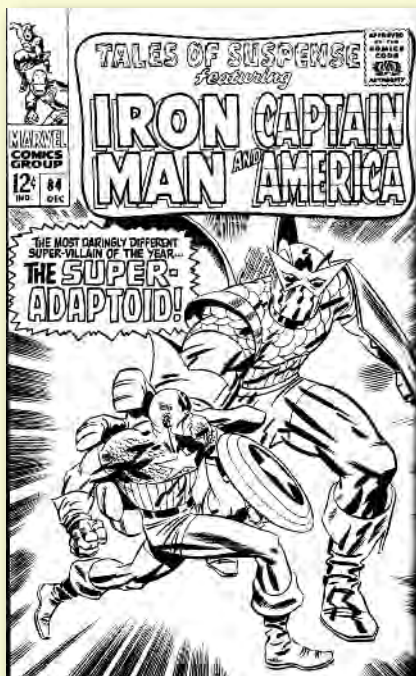
**Thor #133 cover
(Oct. 1966):**

When Marvel reprinted this issue in Marvel Spectacular #4 in 1973, Ego's face on the cover was very different. Since the reprint version sports a Kirby face, we can only presume that the reprint is how Kirby actually drew it. Is the slightly more "alien" face on the alteration better?

Thor #133, page 16, panel 4 (Oct. 1966):

A change of pace—an interior panel this time. This final story panel looks to me like it is not a Kirby panel at all. Someone's done reasonably Kirbyesque figures, then inked them in an un-Colletta-ish way. Presumably this was because Stan wanted something different to what Kirby had drawn there. So what did Kirby draw there for this artistically amazing and imaginative tale? Perhaps a final shot of Ego, distant and alone in the cosmos? Perhaps a tiny Thor flying off into the distance?





Tales of Suspense #84 cover (Dec. 1966):

This wonderful Kirby cover went through both artistic and lettering changes. Preserved in Essential Iron Man #2 (and in the first printing of Essential Cap #1, though not in the second) is the cover as first prepared. Apart from changing how the caption was (why change that? The first version with the jagged outline looks fine to me), it was decided one of the Adaptoid's wings should be repositioned, and that both wings should be without their blacks. Talk about being pedantic! In the end, I think the first version, shown in the reprint, is best.



Fantastic Four #57, page 14, panel 1 (Dec. 1966):

Another interior panel—here, the same artist who inked that final Thor panel in Thor #133 a month earlier is at work. Look at the Surfer's hands! They are not Kirby/Sinnott. It seems Kirby had only the Surfer's face. Adding those hands works well.



Tales of Suspense #92 cover (Aug. 1967):

Again, it is Essential Iron Man #2 that preserves the original version of this cover for us. From what I can see, everything is there as drawn by Kirby except the flash lines. And then black is added behind the logo. I was one who liked white covers (I remember someone decrying them in a LOC somewhere back then), and to me this one works well without those lines. But was deleting them really that necessary?





Thor #148 cover
(Jan. 1968):

I guess one of Stan Lee's desires was to open up cover pics for bold color. I can't see any other reason for deleting the black sky on the right side of this illo, since it's not as if the black obscures any action. (But then, this opinion is directly at odds with the blackening of Thor #129's cover!) A little more understandable is the repositioning of Thor himself. Kirby's figure is unbalanced, as though shocked by what he's seeing, whereas the replacement figure is nicely done and far more dramatic. (That's definitely Romita hair there, so maybe the whole figure is Kirby-ized Romita?)

(The next 3 examples were referred to briefly in TJKC #21—but here they are again:)





Fantastic Four #71 cover (Feb. 1968):

Already a second version of a cover for this issue (the first being shown in TJKC #18), this cover also had black removed to 'open it up'. The original was preserved in Marvel's Greatest Comics #54 when the issue was reprinted in 1975. Yet it was opened, not for color, but to be left white. Is the new version more effective? Editorial opinion was also that the android facing the Torch at bottom left shouldn't have its face obscured.



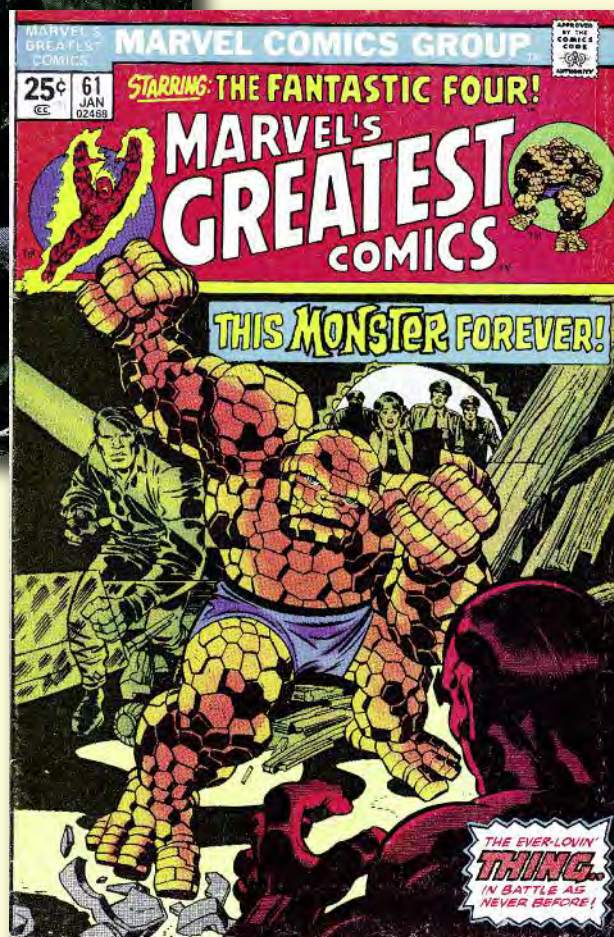
**Fantastic Four #78
cover (Sept. 1968):**

Increasingly, from the mid '60s onwards, Kirby loved his heavy blacks. They certainly add to a somber or mysterious atmosphere, though sometimes they maybe got a bit too heavy. Here, he drew the downcast Ben Grimm in deep shadow. But Stan or someone must have thought it obscured a bit too much detail and had Ben's lower face lightened somewhat. The original art appeared when FF #78 was reprinted in MGC #60. Interestingly, to offset this, more background blacks were added behind the Wizard and title and to our right of Ben's face. Fair call? Necessary call?



Fantastic Four #79 cover (Oct. 1968):

I find this a very strange cover. I feel it's unusual to have a powerful cover colored in a soft, pale green. Where's the oomph in that? (A Captain Marvel around the same time had its Colan cover in greens too—but at least they were unmuted!) Since there is a partial light ray across the Ben Grimm figure on the published cover, it seems to me that the black background and full light ray that appeared in the reprint version of MGC #61 is probably as Kirby drew it. The halo effect around Alicia and the policemen is also pure Kirby, deleted off the original printing. To my eye, the coloring of the reprint, with the darker background intact, is much more dynamic.





**Fantastic Four #85
cover (April 1969):**

Another cover where I don't understand the logic behind the change. Why would Stan—or whoever—prefer the heroes to be “sleeping peacefully,” rather than being in pain or stressed? Or did he think that Kirby's open-mouthed heroes didn't really look stressed, just—open-mouthed? I would have thought it preferable, if more drama was deemed necessary, to have had Romita or someone make them gritting their teeth. As it is, I can't see an improvement in the change.



Thor #166 cover (July 1969):

This time, we have no original to compare and I am unaware if one exists. But there are clear Romita revisions to the Him figure. The raised fist and visible part of Him's back are pure Romita. I'm tempted to think that there are Romita changes to the right leg too, mainly because of the type of bold ink lines around the ankle. But the head, hair, front fist, and left leg anatomy are Kirby-Colletta. And so is Thor himself. What did Kirby have there originally? I'd love to know.

Of course it wasn't just Kirby that was edited in this way. Two examples of John Buscema's covers that were altered are Avengers #42 and #46, both seen in original form in Essential Avengers #2, having details and blacks removed. And no doubt there are many more examples we'll never be aware of. All this comes from an era where it was known that a powerful cover image is what sold on newsstands. I'm very glad that these and other examples exist of the unedited versions for us to see and wonder at. ★





Barry Forshaw is the author of *British Gothic Cinema* and *The Rough Guide to Crime Fiction* (available from Amazon) and the editor of *Crime Time* (www.crimetime.co.uk). He lives in London.

A regular column focusing on Kirby's least known work, by Barry Forshaw

KIRBY

OBSCURA



REVISITING THE UNACCEPTABLE

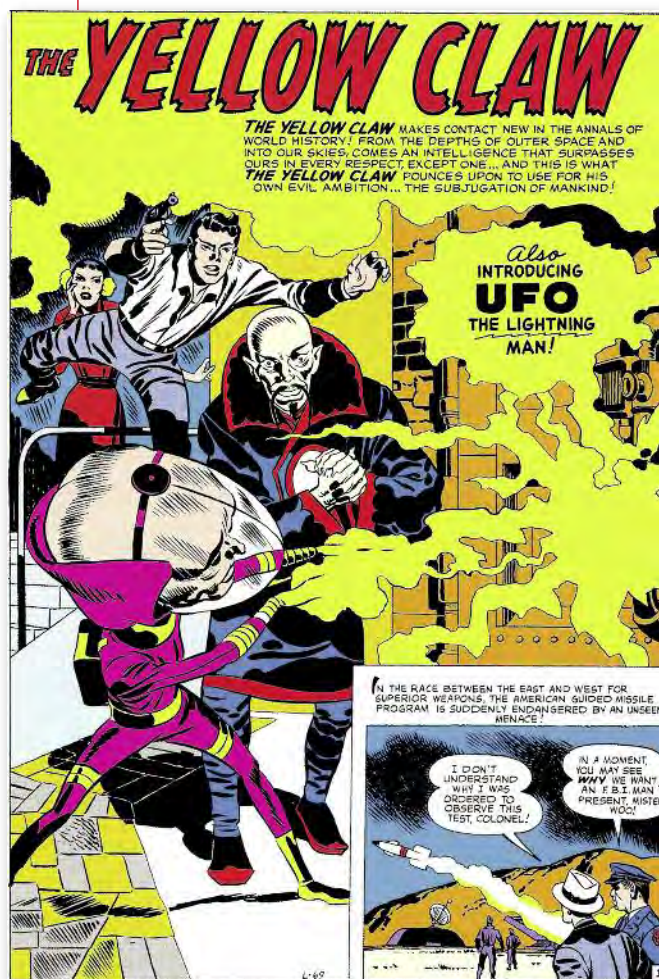
I've discussed in this column before one short-lived comic book series, which undoubtedly justifies the description of "Kirby Obscura": his stint on the Stan Lee and Al Feldstein's 1950s knockoff of the Oriental criminal mastermind Fu Manchu, *The Yellow Claw*. With its now unacceptable portrayal of the Chinese menace (actually built into the name of the one-dimensional villain), one has to applaud *Marvel Masterworks*' ingenuity in finding a way to reprint the now-unacceptable strips—by insinuating them into the same book as the top-billed (and unproblematic) historical strip *Black Knight*, drawn by Atlas workhorse Joe Maneely—but this medieval book set in the time of King Arthur's Court was originally something of a flop, though it has its adherents. The artwork, though as professional as anything by the reliable Maneely, was not a patch on similar efforts being commissioned by Robert Kanigher from some stellar artists in DC's *The Brave and the Bold*, which (pre-Justice League) was a historical adventure book, with Joe Kubert's *Viking Prince* and Russ Heath's *Robin Hood*.

But back to the tricky issue of the now-politically-incorrect *Yellow Claw*. The addition of a Chinese hero as a counterpart to the villainous title character, FBI agent Jimmy Woo, never quite worked simply because Jimmy was so under-characterized. But the strip is still worth a look—not least for Jack Kirby's imaginative artwork—which is why I'm giving it a second notice here.

MICROSCOPIC ARMIES

Pedestrian covers by Bill Everett and John Severin for the book, while efficient, give no hint of the far-superior dramatic and surrealistic work by Kirby inside. The story "The Microscopic Army" is lively but very brief, but a subsequent tale which pulls in some classic Kirby science-fiction imagery ("Introducing UFO, The Lightning Man") is much better, with the bizarre giant-headed alien issuing crackling energy from his hands. The panels in this

brief tale have all the dynamism of Kirby at his best, and page layout is more innovative than virtually any other artist was doing for Stan Lee at the time. Similar dynamism is to be found in another story, "Sleeping City." But artwork aside, what makes the series such a compromised one is not just its politically incorrect treatment of its Chinese heavy, but the almost ludicrous brevity of the stories which simply have no time to develop; just one intriguing idea per story: that's it—usually ending with the Yellow Claw defeated, but threatening to return, Fu-Manchu-style ("The world shall hear from me again!"). But the tales had barely registered before they are over—"The Yellow Claw Captured," for instance, which in a mere



four pages is gone in the blink of an eye, even though we have a nice giant Kirby robot making a one-panel appearance. But if you're a real Kirby aficionado, you'll know that despite all these caveats, this is still a book that should be in your collection.

THE DYNAMIC DUO

"Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive," wrote William Wordsworth. He wasn't talking about the period when Jack Kirby and Wally Wood were creating together the Challengers

of the Unknown, but my version of the poem might include that sentiment. It was bliss for me as a Liverpool schoolboy! In fact, though, I was only getting this apogee of the comics art medium at one remove—and not all of it at that. By the time this particular dynamic

with us, and with whom I spoke some months ago). Every so often, I examine those three Brit issues I have—in mint condition (not the books I had as a boy!)—but I confess that if I want to read the stories, it will be in the *DC Comics Archives* edition from now on.

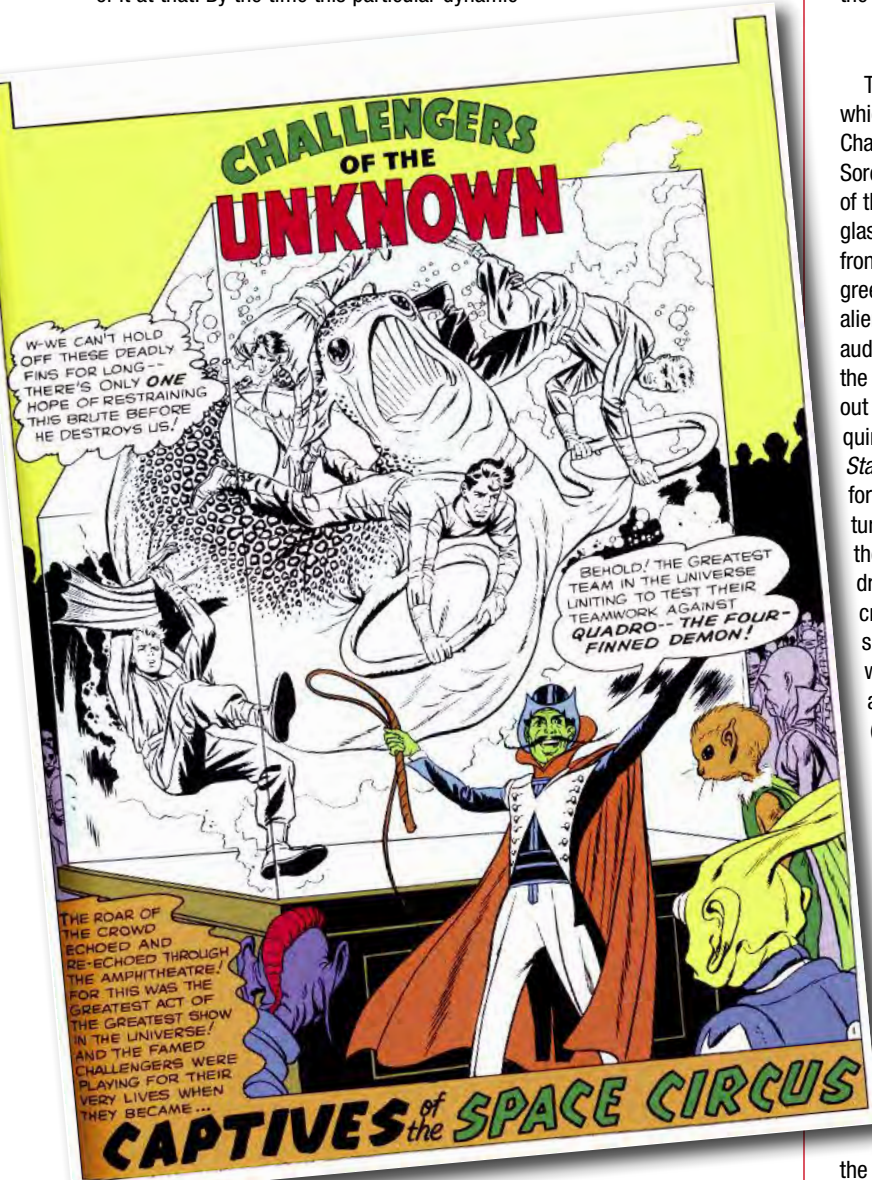
KIRBY'S PRE-STAR WARS CANTINA

Take, for example, issue number six of *Challengers of the Unknown*, which shows a bizarrely costumed June Robbins (the honorary female Challenger) turning Rocky and Red into stone figures à la Medusa (“The Sorceress of Forbidden Valley”). And the first story of this issue, “Captives of the Space Circus,” is both vintage Kirby and vintage Wood. In a gigantic glass tank, the Challs wrestle a grotesquely finned alien sea-creature (its front fins are hoops) while a green-skinned, top-hatted alien ringmaster whips up audience excitement—and the audience (as throughout the story) are aliens as quirky as any seen in that *Star Wars* cantina. Take, for instance, the creatures who (along with the Challs) have been dragooned for the criminal space circus: small, pink spheroids whose bodies are also their faces (utterly comic, in fact), and giant green bird men. Both are co-opted by the Challs to effect an escape.

Such is the sheer verve and energy of the piece, that one readily forgives it all its absurdities (how come, for instance, all these alien races appear to speak English—or for that matter, even have the kind of throat and lips that could produce human language?).

But who cares? Once again, this is the perfect match of pencils and inks, and Kirby by now has perfected the most dynamic action sequences for the human figure in comics—such as the panel on page 9 (below) with the Challengers bursting out of a cage towards the reader, each delineated with the kind of energy and fluidity that was rarely to be found in any other artist of the period, not even such masters as the great Gil Kane. The second story in the issue, the title tale, is equally good—notably the splash panel with the costumed June Robbins, gesturing at a hillside to create a river to deluge the Challs. It’s absolutely superlative stuff, and further proof (if proof were needed) that even those who possess the original books need to buy the two *DC Archives* editions (which reprint Kirby’s complete run on the title) to see something close to the artwork as originally created. And regarding the artwork, I’ve done something only a dedicated fan would do: I’ve had several of the stories

(notably the superb “Wizard of Time”) blown up on glossy art quality paper to something like the original size that Kirby and Wood had drawn it. Expensive, yes, but worth doing (I thought) for a comic which has left an indelible impression on me both as a child and as an adult. ★



duo's collaboration on the strip was at full throttle, British comics fans like myself had no access to that material—US color comics only appeared (like manna from heaven) as ballast on ships coming into the port of Liverpool (it was an important port then).

But then—coming to the aid of US comics-hungry readers—the UK comics reprint company Thorpe and Porter chose to issue just three issues (only three, dammit!) of the *Challengers* magazine in their chunky shilling editions of 68 pages. And although the Bob Brown era had already taken over in the US book, back-up strips in these cherishable Brit mags (The *Flash* had a similarly short run) were the Kirby/Wood stories: I'd not hitherto seen anything so accomplished in the comics medium apart from a solitary UK reprint of *Tales from the Crypt*—and I really didn't miss the US color of the Challs leaping into action, given that exquisite crisp black-and-white art was showcased on relatively good quality paper stock (later British reprints on poorer quality paper were provided by the distributor Alan Class—a man who is still





Checklist of Kirby art on display:

2001: A Space Odyssey (Treasury)
Page 45 & 64-65 spread

2001: A Space Odyssey #2
Pages 2-3 spread

Big Barda and Her Female Furies
Unpublished Mock-up

Black Magic #16
Cover

Black Panther #2
Page 26

Boy Commandos #3
Page 11

Captain America #211
Page 7

Captain America #212
Page 14

Darkseid
Unpublished sketch

Demon #6
Page 7

Demon #7
Page 21

Demon #14
Page 15

Devil Dinosaur #3
Unpublished pencil page

Devil Dinosaur #4
Pages 2-3 spread

Devil Dinosaur #5
Pages 2-3 spread

Dream Machine
1975, ink and watercolor

Eternals #9
Pages 2-3 spread

Fantastic Four #51
Page 14

Fantastic Four #78
Pages 11-12

Fantastic Four #82
Pages 1-3, 8, and 11

Fantastic Four #94
Page 2

Forever People #7
Lonar backup, pages 1-2

(continued on page 32)



The CSUN exhibit ("Comic Book Apocalypse: The Graphic World of Jack Kirby") ran from August 24–October 10, 2015. Next issue, I'll have a transcript of the panel discussion on Jack that was held on Sept. 26.

And if you couldn't get to CSUN, the Jack Kirby Museum is putting on another Kirby Pop-Up Exhibition in New York City beginning on Wednesday, November 11, running through Thanksgiving weekend, and ending on Sunday, November 29. If you're on the East Coast during that time, go to www.kirbymuseum.org for details on attending!

KIRBY CURATOR TALK

Held at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, August 31, 2015 as part of the exhibit "Comic Book Apocalypse: The Graphic World of Jack Kirby" at the California State University, Northridge (CSUN) Art Galleries in Northridge, California, curated by Charles Hatfield. This talk was transcribed by Steven Tice, edited by John Morrow and copyedited by Mark Evanier. Photos and video provided by Kevin Shaw, and audio by Tom Kraft. Please note that some of the audience questions were unintelligible due to the recording acoustics in the room.

CHARLES HATFIELD: [introducing Mark Evanier] Here's his biography. He worked with Jack Kirby at a young age, and that's been part of Mark's career path. Mark is the author of a splendid book from about six years ago called *Kirby: King of Comics*. He's also the editor of another splendid book that came out just last year called *The Art of the Simon and Kirby Studio*, which is the early days of Kirby's career in the Forties and Fifties. You see some of it right here on this wall, for example. Mark's a prolific writer for comics and for television and for various media and forms, but he's particularly

known for television—for example, animated television series like *Garfield*. I know him from comic book work: *Groo the Wanderer*, *DNAgents*, *Crossfire*, a number of comics that he's written over the years. Mark's blogs and columns are a trove of information about television, comedy, voice acting, you name it. And, of course, comics. Mark has researched Jack's life and work for many years and is working on a definitive biographical tome about Jack Kirby that we will see in the coming years. I asked Mark here today to share with us some thoughts about Kirby's extraordinary life and work. So please join me in welcoming our guest, Mark Evanier. [applause]

MARK EVANIER: I feel like I'm in a little crummy karaoke bar right now. I'll favor you with a few numbers later, okay? [laughter]

I'm not the only person in this room who knew Jack Kirby. There are a number of people here I've recognized. You will notice these people because, as I talk about what a wonderful human being Jack was, those will be the people nodding their heads in agreement. I





The Public Reception was Saturday, August 29 from 4-7 p.m., and attendees included Bruce Timm...

don't know anybody who ever met Jack who wasn't amazed by how generous he was, how nice he was. People joked he was the King of the Comics. If he was the King of the Comics, he was a king who did not believe in a caste system. Everybody was equal. The youngest beginning artist who was just struggling to start learning how to put the pencil to the paper—Jack treated him like he would a fellow professional, like he treated everyone around him. It was one of the most amazing things about Jack.

Another amazing thing about Jack was his brain. A lot of people didn't immediately pick up on how smart Jack was. I've met some pretty smart people in my life. Jack was probably the one most deserving of that oft-maligned word, "genius." The reasons people didn't always understand how smart he was were twofold. One is that Jack grew up on the Lower East Side of New York and he was reared on Warner Brothers gangster movies, and he talked sometimes like someone in one of those movies. If you don't believe me, if you go over to YouTube, there are interviews with Jack there. In the interviews Jack is always a little stiffer, and the sense of humor went away once you put a camera on him, and he talked very seriously. But he was a brilliant, funny man.

The other thing was that his brain operated in several worlds at the same time—occasionally this one, but not always. And he was always fantasizing and thinking of story ideas and jumping around. Jack was not allowed to drive a car because, the few times he tried it, he would forget he was on a road, think he was on a Rainbow Bridge, and drive off somewhere. [laughter]

So when you talked to Jack, his mind just leaped from concept to concept, and he didn't bother with these things that some of us mere mortals call "segues." He would start talking to you about one thing, and then he'd immediately be talking about something else. And there was a connection there, somehow, in his mind, but we weren't smart enough—at least, I wasn't smart enough—to pick up on what it was. The way I tell this to people sometimes is, most people, when they talk to you, their minds go from A, to B, to C, to D. Jack would start with A, go to R, come back and do G, jump around later and do K, and at some point he would have you On Beyond

Zebra in a whole new language. That was part of the man's genius as a creator.

I believe—and you have to know a lot of these comics in detail to understand why I feel this way—but a lot of what Jack did was to take two different things, two absolutely different things which nobody would ever associate, and he would put them together, and he would get something that resembled neither of the components and was a brilliant concept. Here is an example and this is quite a reach. If you ever read the first Thor story, the first Thor, God of Thunder, you all know the character. In the first story, Thor fought the giant Stone Men, these aliens that looked like the stone men on Easter Island. Now, if you came to any writer and said, "We're going to do Thor, the God of Thunder. What should the first story be about?" I don't think too many other people would say, "Let's have space aliens who look like the Easter Island statues." And yet, that's what came into Jack's brain and the story was wonderful. It worked perfectly that way. How did he get to it? Believe it or not, I think this is the reason, and this is one of the few times I think I've ever followed the whole path. Jack had read the book *Kon Tiki*, which was about Easter Island and things around there. Who wrote the book, *Kon Tiki*? Thor Heyerdahl. [laughter]

A lot of his work had these things working on different levels. Infrequently, I did manage to track what he was doing and sometimes, he would explain it to me. It didn't matter. I still wouldn't understand it. He would lose me at some point. When I worked for Jack for a few years in the early Seventies, my major contribution



...Len Wein...

was to stay out of his way. People say to me, “Oh, you were Jack Kirby’s assistant,” and on Saturday night we’re at this exhibit here and people were asking me, “Did you work on this page?” There are actually pages on these walls that I handled, and touched, and did production work on, and there’s even one where I drew a tiny part of the page. That’s the closest I will ever in my life come to having my artwork hung in an art gallery. It’s right on this wall where I did some of the backgrounds. But I always try to emphasize to people that, for the wonderment of the work that was produced while I was in his employ, I deserve absolutely zero credit, not a bit of it. My main contribution was that Jack would tell me the story that he was going to do, and I’d say, “Hey, Jack, that sounds great!” And then I would leave. *[laughter]* And I think I deserve enormous credit for not doing anything. *[laughter]* And then I’d come back the next week. I was working with a fellow named Steve Sherman who was also here Saturday night *[for the exhibit opening]*. He was my partner at the time and Jack would show us the issue that he had drawn, the one he’d told us the story of the week before, and it would have nothing



...Martin Pasko, and Mark Badger, to name just a few.



...Larry Houston and Jack's daughter Lisa Kirby...

to do with what he’d told us. I’d say, “Gee, Jack, that’s great.” And it was probably better. It was arguably better. It was brilliant in a different way. It was just another great Kirby story. And I’d say, “So, uh, where’s the part of the story with those aliens you told us about?” and he’d go *[shrugs]*. He had no idea how he got from where he had started. He had not created the story he had intended to. His brain had just raced ahead of him and put things together, and the story was perfectly fine for that.

Years later, I worked a lot with improvisational comedians and I taught improv comedy for a while, and I found a parallel to what Jack did on the page to what improv comedians do. Jack, because of the nature of the comic book business, had to work very fast. These pages here... with a few exceptions, Jack would draw the page in pencil and another artist would ink the page in later. Others would put in the lettering. Jack would not letter and he rarely inked. That *Black Magic* cover right there is one of the few pieces in this gallery he actually inked. He didn’t want to ink because once he’d drawn the story in pencil, he was done with it. He didn’t want to spend time working on the same story. He wanted to go on to the next story. But even the work he just did in pencil—most artists doing work this detailed would take all day to do two pages. Jack would do at least three, sometimes four, occasionally six. Now, obviously, he was very fast, and what he did—if you’re going to do six pages a day, you can’t sit around for hours thinking about what goes in each panel. You just have to go and do it, like an improvisational comedian. In improv we teach people to not think and then talk but to think as you’re talking. Just become the character, get into the scene, and just say whatever the character would say. And Jack did that with his characters. You could sit there and watch him work.

The description that Charles said earlier about how someone had seen him start in one corner of the page and just fill in—that was me describing that. I watched him draw, and it looked like there was a hidden drawing on that blank paper that only he could see, and he was just tracing it. He could start in any part of the page and the perspective would all work for him, and when he finished, the whole scene would have a totality. And as he sat there working on it, every so often you’d see his body language, and that was the body language of Captain America punching someone. Or he would have this anger would well up in him while he was drawing a scene and—I have this theory. This was back in the 1970s, and most of the villains in Jack’s work were on some level Richard Nixon. *[laughter]* He hated Richard Nixon and he talked about Nixon a lot, and I think Nixon informed a lot of Jack’s work. Any time in these pages, if you look around the wall, and you see a really horrible villain who was drawn between about 1968 and 1976, it’s Nixon. Trust me.

And the thing about Jack was not only that he was fast. His amazing lifetime output was a function of two things. One was how fast he was. The second was how hard he worked. When people ask

ORIGINAL
COLLAGE USED
IN FF COMICS

1 SQ HT 65 screen

1/2 SIZE

TO CARPENTER 10/10/78



REED DRIFTS IN DIMENSIONAL
SPACE -- IT'S BOTH WEIRD AND BEAUTIFUL

me, "What did you learn from Jack?" Well, I could spend three days telling you things I learned from Jack. I think I'm still learning from Jack. But there was one time when I looked at Jack. I was a beginning writer and had a little bit of a career, but in your first few years as a professional writer, you're never sure when they're not going to tap you on the shoulder and say, "Okay, that's enough. Go get a job at Sears." [laughter] I looked at Jack and I said to myself, "You know, I'm never going to be able to be as brilliant at that. I'm certainly not going to draw as well as he does, I'll never write as well as he does, but I think I could work that hard." That was possible for me, to make that kind of commitment.

And Jack worked like nobody you've ever seen. He would get up in the morning about 11:00 AM, because he worked evenings, and he'd putter around for an hour having breakfast, reading the newspaper, things of that sort, and then he would go to the drawing board, and he would essentially stay there until four in the morning. He would take an hour off for dinner, he might take a half hour off to watch a TV show he liked, but he just worked and worked and worked in his little office in his home. And he loved it. And he got lost in it. His wife Rosalind, his wonderful life partner, Roz was one of the sweetest women. This was an inseparable couple. A year or so after Jack passed away in 1994, a bunch of us were sitting around and somebody asked Roz, "Do you think Jack ever cheated on you?" And she said, "When?!" [laughter] "He would have to have had someone stashed in the car outside while I went to Ralph's and be through with her by the time I got back with the pot roast!" [laughter] She would wake up at four in the morning and realize that his side of the bed was empty, and she would get up and walk into his studio and say, "Come on, Kirby. Come to bed. It's time to sleep." He'd go, "Just give me five more minutes. I gotta save the universe here." He just worked like crazy, and when you look at these pages, I think one of the things you'll see is hard work.

Let me tell you about the only problem with this wonderful show here—and I'm not faulting it, I love this place—is that to really appreciate Jack's brilliance, you have to read whole stories. Looking at individual pages is wonderful. You see the wonderful technique and you'll see storytelling in those pages. In the background you'll see things happening. You'll see characters in a crowd scene who were adlibbed, they were only in that one panel, but they have a story,

they have a purpose. Jack never drew anything without knowing who the people were, what they were doing, making up a little story and context. You have to see the stories, because the stories were brilliant, and the stories were what captivated us. And if you are not familiar with Jack's work and you love these pictures, go find whole books. Almost everything he did is in print now, and he has had an enduring quality that people still buy—generations unborn when he did the work are buying hardcover collections of Jack's work.

And this is another thing that's interesting. As Charles was noting, these pages were done for crummy little newsprint comics and Jack was paid bad money. When I first read Jack Kirby comics, they were a dime. When I was working for him, they were fifteen cents. They were printed on the cheapest paper possible. If you had gone to the publisher and said, "Hey, we've got a cheaper way to print the comics," they would have said, "Fine," no matter what it did to the imagery there. Jack put in a lot more work, as you can see on these pages, than the printing techniques of the time would allow you to see because he knew that stuff was going to be reprinted someday in hardcover, on big pages, with white paper and good printing. He knew that.

He knew a lot of stuff. He was so prescient. People said to me Saturday night, "What do you think Jack would say about this gallery show?" He would have probably said, "I told you so." And that's the kind of question people put to me, "Do you think that Jack would have known someday that *Thor* would be a multi-million dollar movie, that the *Avengers* would be a multi-million dollar movie?" I said, "Of course! He said constantly that would be." But back in the Seventies and the Sixties, when he told that to the publishers, they went, "Yeah, Jack, sure. Go home and draw the next issue." They didn't believe him. He was really a prophet whose genius was not recognized at the time, which is one of the reasons that he didn't get the kind of monetary rewards he deserved. You can't get people of no vision to pay you based on what the work's going to be worth in five years or ten years. You can't. And that's why, among his many talents, was not making himself wealthy. He was really good at making his publishers wealthy. He was really good at giving some of his associates more credit than they deserved. He just had that little problem of getting anything for himself.

Now, the other thing about this exhibit—I'll tell you what Jack would have liked best at this exhibit. I realized this Saturday night, and I'm absolutely certain of this. I always hear people say, "What do you think Jack would have thought about this?" Because his mind was so brilliant, I can't usually—how do you predict a mind that's that brilliant? But I'll tell you what he would have loved about this exhibit. It's right in front of you. He would have walked into this room and loved this big red wall. He loved things right in your face, and he would have loved this panel being blown up so much. He

would have said, "That's the size comics should always be!" [laughter] "I should draw them that size and they should print them bigger!" He hated the idea of digest-sized comics, the teeny tiny paperback comics. He wanted them big. The only thing wrong with this drawing is it's not in color, but fortunately it's the Silver Surfer who is almost all white anyway, so it doesn't matter. He would have loved this.

You can see this page over around the corner, and if you take a moment to read that page, you will see a moment of comic book history. This is the Silver Surfer who was born as a character of infinite peace and naiveté. The original story in which the Silver Surfer first appeared was one of those cases where Jack did not get a writing credit on that issue but that was his idea, his concept, his storytelling. The Silver Surfer was later described, I think stretching things maybe a little bit, as a Christ figure. The Silver Surfer was this creature born out of pure energy who was running around the universe trying to understand us strange mortals, trying to understand what love was, and what hate was, and why we went to war, why we tried to kill one another, and such. And then later other people handled the character and the character went off in different directions, and it wasn't the same character Jack drew. He was very upset about

that from a creative standpoint because while he didn't get paid well for the work and didn't get proper credit for the work sometimes, he generally still got to tell his stories, which meant a lot to him. You can't really tell your stories when your characters are being inverted and turned into something you didn't intend.

So others had done the *Silver Surfer* comic and it wasn't selling. They put Jack back on the *Silver Surfer* for one issue, and he did this one story. This is the last page of that one issue that he did where he was kind of trying to course correct the character and set him up in a new direction. And everybody said, "You've got to make the character harsher and more powerful."

The reason the book isn't selling is because the character's too weak and ineffectual." Jack didn't think there was anything wrong with weak and ineffectual because people in this world are weak and ineffectual, and the character had power. He just didn't use it with anger. He was a character who did not know anger. They gave him anger. During the drawing of this story, Jack had some business-type problems at Marvel. It's a very long story. He got really, really mad at Marvel. He was really, really mad when he drew this page, and he wrote approximations of the dialogue in the margins, for the dialogue writer to polish and finesse and paraphrase. The dialogue on this page sounds to me like it was written by Jack vowing to lash out at his enemies. Take a moment before you leave here and read it. That's the anger of Jack Kirby coming through. I can't think of a drawing in my life I've ever seen by any artist that captured the pain of anger, anguish, because anger can be a function of pain. It can be a cry for help at the same time. That's this drawing. It's an amazing drawing.





HATFIELD: We can go to questions, sure. Questions, anybody?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have a question. Whenever they show pictures of Jack at his home, they always show him with his art. Did he surround himself with any artists that he liked?

EVANIER: Did Jack surround himself with other artists' work? Yeah, he loved everything. That was one of the great things about him. He loved everything. I never heard Jack say a disparaging word about another artist. The only type of artwork that he ever faulted was if it was lazy, or dull, or imitative. If it was original, he loved it. In his studio he had lots of old pulp magazines. He loved the old science-fiction pulps, particularly the *Shadow*. He loved books of comics by other artists. He loved Milton Caniff, he loved Hal Foster. There was an artist, and I don't think I've ever seen any of the many articles about Jack mention this, but there was a comic strip artist by the name of Will Gould. No relation to Chester. You look at Will Gould, you understand where Jack got a few of his ideas, also. And he loved old science-fiction movies. Someone should write a treatise about how the early Marvel super-heroes have scenes and ideas taken from *The Amazing Colossal Man* and all of these Saturday matinees.

HATFIELD: Right here, yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was wondering about the dialogue. [rest of question is unintelligible]

EVANIER: Well, a lot of these pages—the question was, who wrote the dialogue with Jack? Jack worked with other people a lot because it was the nature of the business. Everything in this gallery after about 1970, with maybe one or two exceptions, Jack wrote the dialogue. Prior to that, he worked with other writers. When they gave him scripts, he didn't follow them very closely, if at all. On a lot of the Marvel stuff, they would have a plot conference. Sometimes they discussed it, made some notes, and then Jack would go home. When I write a script for another artist today, it says "Panel One: the character's running down the street and he does this and says this." I write it out. "Then, in Panel Two, this happens." Jack decided what happened as he went. He controlled the action. And he would write notes to the dialogue writer saying, "Here's what I was thinking." If you get it, if you look at some of these pages, you'll see his notes in the margins. This stuff was pre-1970.

HATFIELD: If you look at this *Thor* story from 1968, you see the penciled notes written in those margins, those are in Jack Kirby's handwriting. The finished dialogue was written by Stan Lee, who's rather famous in his own right. You can see the kind of cueing that Kirby

provided in the margin, but you can also see over here in the first gallery, just behind the painting here, that the *Fantastic Four* pages from 1967, 1968, you can see that, whereas by the time he got to this kind of work in the gallery behind us, he was, as Mark said, entirely writing the dialogue on his own because he was tired of working with that arrangement.

EVANIER: Well, he didn't feel it was effective for him. He didn't feel it was fair. He was doing somebody else's work and not getting the credit and money for it, he felt. And also, the analogy I give people is the great songwriter Irving Berlin. People would say to Irving Berlin, "Did you write the lyrics first or the music?" and the answer was, "I don't separate them in my mind. They come to me as one. I can't write lyrics to somebody else's music. I can't write music to somebody else's lyrics. The way my mind works, they're a single process." And Jack was like that with comics. When he drew a story for somebody

EVANIER: What character caught his attention the most that he created? Well, there's two or three—actually, every character that Jack did was him in some way, particularly the ones who have cigars. He had a character called Sgt. Fury, who was Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. And then he also had the Thing, a big monster who also smoked cigars. And Jack would go, "Nick Fury's the way I wish people saw me. The Thing's probably the way they do see me." And they both talked a little like Jack. They both had autobiographical elements. Sgt. Fury's early adventures, the ones which Jack worked on himself, are autobiographical in some way to Jack's wartime experiences. If we had more time, I'd talk more about the impact of World War II on Jack. He served with honor. He saw people die at his feet. He came back a very different man and to his dying day he would have nightmares about World War II. He would wake up in a cold sweat in the middle of the night thinking he was back out there with people trying to kill him, and him trying to kill them.



else, he was still writing his version, just trying to use as much of their input as worked for him or as he was required to. And he never followed scripts exactly because he was basically a writer/artist. That's why I keep urging people, yes, look at the pretty pictures, but go read some Kirby comics, because you're missing a whole level of his brilliance by looking at the individual pages.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What character caught his attention the most that he created?

But every Kirby character has autobiographical elements to it. And one of the most amazing things to me is that I will these days read a Kirby comic done in 1964, 1963, '62, whatever it is, that I've read twelve times or something, and I'll go, "Oh, that's Jack. Oh, there he is there. Oh, that's—." I keep seeing parts of life and seeing elements I don't know why I didn't see it the last six times through. If a measure of great art is that it speaks to you on repeated viewings and says new things, that's where he measures up, because I keep finding that. One of Charles' favorite Kirby comics is *Kamandi*, and there's a lot of *Kamandi* in this exhibit. I worked on the first two

THE THING THAT SCREAMS



THREE AGES OF KIRBY A CAREER OVERVIEW

This iPad is a library of comics pages and images drawn by Kirby between 1940 and 1975. It is divided into three books, each covering a different era:

1. The Golden Age (1940-1959)
2. Marvel (1960-1970)
3. DC Comics (1970-1975)

Instructions: To turn pages (i.e. move back and forth in the books), swipe right or left. Or use the thumbnail images at the bottom of the screen to swipe through the book more quickly. Tapping the thumbnails will bring up the images at full size. You can also open or close images by pinching and zooming on the thumbnails.

All three books can be accessed through the iPad's Library. To navigate back to the Library, tap the open book once, which will bring up a menu bar at the top of the screen. Look for the Library button in the upper left corner.

Also, next to the Library button is a Table of Contents icon (a bulleted list). Use Table of Contents to pull up the thumbnails at the bottom of the screen.

Books 2 and 3 are divided into sections by character or title, such as *Avengers*. Tap the dots at the bottom of the screen to move between sections, or flip to the sections by swiping the thumbnails. When you come to a new section, you'll feel a slight resistance (swipe a bit harder).

Thanks to Tom Kraft and the Jack Kirby Museum and Research Center for providing this display.

(continued from page 24)

Forever People #8
Pages 24-25

Foxhole #2
Pages 2-3

Futuristic Cityscape
1966, pencil drawing

The Hunger Dogs
photo collage

In Love #1
Page 1

Kamandi #7
Page 1 & 2-3 spread

Kamandi #8
Pages 2-3 spread

Kamandi #14
cover and complete story

Machine Man #3
Page 1

Mister Miracle #4
Page 14

Mister Miracle #11
Pages 2-3 spread & 22

New Gods #1
Page 1

New Gods #9
Page 18

OMAC #2
Pages 2-3 spread

OMAC #3
Page 6

OMAC #4
Page 13

Rawhide Kid #32
Page 3

Silver Star #6
Page 14

Silver Surfer Graphic Novel
Page 37

Silver Surfer #18
Page 19

Sky Masters
March 8, 1959 Sunday

Spirit World #1
Pages 2-3 spread

"Street Code"
Page 7

Stuntman #2
Page 8

Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen #133
Pages 2-3 spread

Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen #146
DNA backup pages 1-2

Tales of Suspense #85
Page 2

Thor #144
Unpublished pencil cover

Thor #155
Cover and complete story

Untitled collage

Weird Mystery Tales #2
"Toxi" pages 7, 10, & 11

Tom Kraft donated an iPad display called "Three Ages of Kirby," which allows viewers to see a lot of other Kirby art from three periods (Golden Age, Marvel in the '60s, and DC in the '70s).

issues and then I left Jack's employment and I wasn't a big fan of *Kamandi* when it was done. Years later, I had to do a *Kamandi* book for DC after Jack left the project, and I went back and reread all of these *Kamandi* comics, and I was stunned. I said, "How did I miss these?" When I read them initially, I didn't like them, and now I love them. Am I suddenly understanding the stories? The ultimate answer I can get for myself is I was too damned stupid to figure these things out the first time I read them. I didn't understand what was happening in some of those stories.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [unintelligible, question about whether Jack did art for himself.]

EVANIER: [points at collages] Right there. When Jack made art for himself—Jack was very motivated about earning a living. Jack believed the most important thing in the entire world was to provide for your family. To some extent I had a connection with him via my father, who was roughly Jack's age. My father was Jewish. My father had grown up in a similar impoverished childhood. My father had to work for a living at a very early age. My father was obsessed with,



"I have to have a paycheck every Friday."

And Jack was like that. One of the many reasons that I think Jack did not get his due financially in the business was that he was too afraid of not having a paycheck. Sometimes you can't get your due if you're afraid to walk out the door. Jack had four children and a lot of expenses. He never spent, didn't live extravagantly. And all the time he was fighting for more money. This is key to know about Jack. In the Eighties there were a lot of battles when the industry was rallying people about how his artwork was being stolen from him, etc. When he was fighting for more money, he was not fighting for what some of us might say: "I should have more money because I want a bigger house with servants and I want a yacht." He wanted to leave his widow with enough money that she would never need. He wanted to leave his kids money so they could have medical expenses covered. The basic necessities of life were what he was always fighting for. And when he started having problems with his eyes in the Seventies, his eyesight was not going well, he got terrified. "What happens if I can't draw? What's going to become of my family?" And that was a big motivator and is a major theme in his stories. There was a character he did named Orion who represented Jack. The underlying theme, if you ever read the *New Gods* comics, one of the underlying themes of Orion was that sometimes in this world you have to do things you're not happy with for a bigger purpose. You have to surrender, make certain compromises, or fight certain battles that you wish you hadn't, because your Number One priority is to provide for your family.

HATFIELD: You can see Orion in the big mural over here, the figure with the orange hair and his head bowed. Mark, can you comment on the collage front?

EVANIER: Yeah. Well, Jack did these collages. The one over there I actually cut out some of the pieces for, and I'll tell you a secret here. I hope we don't get the gallery shut down. Some of these pictures were cut out of issues of *Playboy*. [laughter] There are pictures of naked women that are now meteors in those collages. But he liked doing that, and to some extent it was for himself. "I want to do different things than comics. Where can I use this?" In the *Fantastic Four* there was a thing called the Negative Zone. It was a story device. It was another dimension in which weird monsters would come out and weird things happened when you went into it. The



Photo cover, *Headline Comics* #37
Prize/Crestwood, Sept. - Oct. 1949

Jack Kirby plays the burglar, Joe Simon the cop.
Simon & Kirby began using photocovers in 1949.



Negative Zone was kind of created because Jack wanted to use his collages. In the back of his mind—this was never actually realized—he wanted the Negative Zone to become the collages. Whenever the characters went into there, he wanted all the background to be collages. Now, it didn't work, because, as I mentioned, comics were printed by the lousiest method possible. A lot of these collages looked terrible in the printed comics. They really looked awful. And he kind of had to abandon his idea because the industry was not mature enough. Today it would work, because today we have much better printing of comics. But back then, the industry hadn't caught up with Jack in terms of reproduction, so it was an idea—but he still did the collages for himself.

He used to complain, because he was living in Thousand Oaks, and he'd ask my friend Steve, "Would you bring me some magazines? All you can get in Thousand Oaks is knitting magazines. [laughter] And you can't make good monsters out of wool." [laughter]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [unintelligible question about Marvel Comics]

EVANIER: Marvel was Jack's publisher a number of times. He

worked for Marvel three times. In the early Forties, he and Joe Simon were on staff there. Joe was the Senior Editor and Jack was the Art Director, and that was when the first *Captain America* comics were done. He left Marvel because both he and Joe believed they were being cheated on their percentage of the profits. You've all heard of Hollywood accounting where they give you 25% of the profits and then say, "Oh, there are no profits. Yes, we know the movie grossed \$3 billion dollars, but somehow there are no profits." So he left Marvel because of that. He went back to Marvel in the mid-Fifties, because the industry was kind of collapsing and he needed work. He worked for them until 1970. And he left them because they wanted him to sign an onerous contract that he thought was insulting and impossible. He went to DC, and it didn't work out at DC, so he went back to Marvel in 1975 and wasn't very happy there. He wasn't treated very well at that point. He had a lot of problems with the in-house staff at that time. Some of them really didn't like his work—didn't like his independence, mostly. They wanted him drawing their stories instead of writing his own. And around the late Seventies I got Jack a connection with the animation business, and he left comics for animation. He never really worked for Marvel again. And he worked for most of the major publishers. He worked with DC on three different tours of duty, also. He worked for the Archie people briefly. He worked for just about every company that was around at that time. He worked for Harvey.

Let me go through these things. [points to the wall] *Black Magic* was from a company called Prize Comics, which he and Joe Simon packaged stuff for. That page over there from *In Love*, that page was from a company called Mainline, which was Jack and Joe's own company. They tried publishing. The *Sky Masters* strip, that's from a newspaper strip that he did for a while. One page—and you've got to see it before you leave here, that page over there, the horizontal composition in pencil—that's from a story called "Street Code," one of the last stories that Jack did. A very wise publisher named Richard Kyle went to Jack, gave him the money, and said, "Draw me a ten-page story about anything that isn't Marvel or DC comics. Whatever you want to do. Something personal." Jack had told Richard stories about growing up on the Lower East Side, his childhood, and Richard encouraged him to either do that or one of his war stories. And he did this beautiful, magnificent story. If you pick up my book, *Kirby: King of*

the Comics, which is becoming cheaper and cheaper on Amazon as we speak [laughter], you can read the whole story of the original negatives, and it is an amazing story.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [unintelligible question about Jack's family]

EVANIER: Well, yeah. Jack's family has money now. There was finally a—you may have read about this lawsuit that was... it's very complicated. I think I paid Jack back for a lot of what he gave me by giving two six-hour depositions in this lawsuit. And his family settled for a very, very large amount of money from Marvel and now their needs are all taken care of. But they almost went to the Supreme Court in this case. It stopped one day short of the Supreme Court agreeing to hear the case or not hear the case. They settled out of court.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [unintelligible question about James Garner suing for royalties]

EVANIER: Yeah. James Garner used to do a TV show called *The Rockford Files*. It was one of the most successful TV shows ever done, and he had a percent of the profits, and they told him, "There are no

profits,” so he didn’t make any money. And he sued them. There were a bunch of these lawsuits where someone—Alan Alda did this on *M*A*S*H*. Yeah, this was... I think William Shatner sued over *Star Trek* about 33 times. [laughter] So, yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [unintelligible question about comic strip artists, and the strip *Bizarro*]

EVANIER: Well, I work for a man named Jim Davis, who did *Garfield*, and he—yeah, Jim can buy this whole campus. [laughter] So those are the lottery winners. People think, “Oh, every newspaper strip makes that much.” Yeah, yeah, because they hear one guy wins the lottery. Most comic strip artists do not make that kind of money. The *Bizarro* strip you mentioned is a very successful strip. It doesn’t have the kind of merchandising that *Garfield* and *Peanuts* has, but it’s a fascinating—.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So do you think Dan Piraro makes a good living?

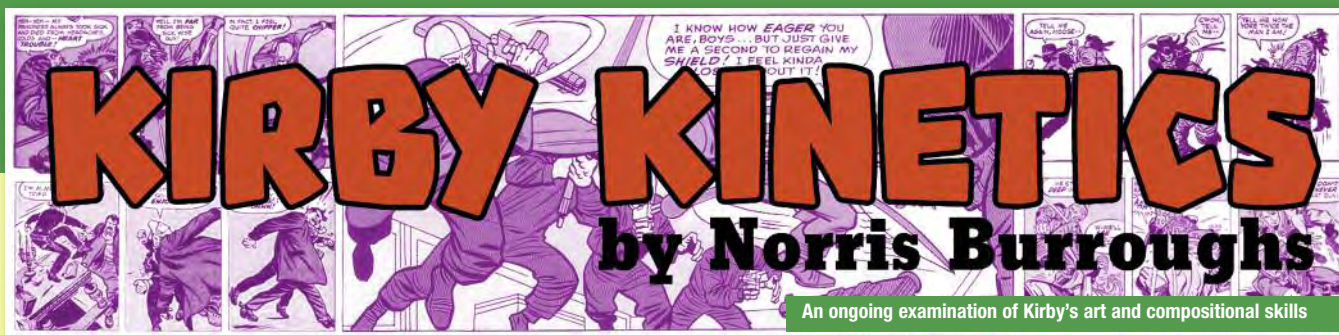
EVANIER: Dan Piraro makes a very good living. And he deserves to. But one of the reasons that comic book artists make a decent living today is that Jack Kirby said no to a lot of rotten deals. And in the motion picture business you now hear about Adam Sandler or Will Ferrell making \$83 million dollars a movie, and you look back whereas Spencer Tracy and Clark Gable didn’t make that kind of money even proportionately, and it’s only the later people who break out. Jack did the same thing. Jack didn’t benefit from all the changes in the business. He didn’t get anything directly from it. But he was a big champion of it, and some of the pages on these walls were loaned by a fellow named Erik Larsen, his name is listed as the loaner. And Erik was and is a superstar comic artist who got in later, benefited and acknowledges what Jack did, and his people tried to give back to Jack in many ways. They found a way to make Jack some money in his later years and shared the profits with him.

There’s a very nice story here where the people who grew up on Jack’s work to a large extent took care of him and honored him, and we run around to exhibits at ten o’clock in the morning and do talks about him and such because we love him so much. I cannot find you somebody in the motion picture or television industry or any other medium who is comparable to Jack in their importance and how much they are adored. There’s lots of great movie stars who are adored and honored, and lots of great directors and such. I can’t find a comparable person to Jack, who dominated his own field so much.

HATFIELD: Let’s end it at that. Thank you, Mark Evanier. [applause] ★

In addition to over 100 pieces of original comic book art and six Giclée prints, the exhibit included 52 published Kirby comics, ranging from Young Romance #1 (1947) to The Hunger Dogs (1985); the first Golden State Comic-Con (i.e. San Diego Con) program booklet from 1970, with wraparound cover by Jack; a second iPad display of the complete pencils and inks from Kamandi #14, and various photos. At right is curator Charles Hatfield, a longtime contributor to TJKC, who deserves major accolades for assembling such a wonderful exhibit of Jack’s work.





(below) After Jack angrily stormed out of a conference with Stan, he tore several rejected Hulk pages in half. Here's one that Larry Lieber rescued.

(bottom) "Hulk" from Journey Into Mystery #62 and #66: inspiration in name only.

OF MIDNIGHT MONSTERS & MEN

It is a great relief to know that Disney/Marvel has finally settled with the Kirby family on the issue of creator or co-creator status of the various characters that the King had a hand in bringing forth. However, it still leaves us to speculate about how much input Kirby had in the creation of said characters. Many believe that

when Kirby returned to Marvel in the late 1950s, he was usually working from scripts provided by Stan Lee or other writers. While being open to the notion that this occasionally happened, I think that this was the exception rather than the rule.

Kirby insisted that he never worked from a script and that he always worked at home, conceiving and executing his stories and then coming into the Marvel office to deliver them to Lee. Evidence such as the rejected and torn pages that were crafted for an early issue of *The Incredible Hulk* suggest that this was usually the case. This Hulk story would have appeared as early as 1962. It was reported that the pages were taken from the trash after Kirby ripped them in half and stormed out of Stan Lee's office. The pages in question have Lee's notes written on them, as though the two were discussing the dialog before the communication broke down.

Let us look specifically at the creation of The Hulk and decide who is the prime creator, Lee or Kirby. When examining the working relationship between the two men, it makes sense to consider the way in which Kirby habitually worked throughout his long career. He was essentially a writer/creator as well as a visual artist, and did these things as naturally as breathing. Often he would plot a story while drawing, and dialog it later, or in the case with most of the Marvel work, have Stan Lee dialog it later. Kim Aamodt, writer for Simon & Kirby studios in the 1950s, spoke of how prolific Kirby was in an interview conducted by Jim Amash that appeared in issue #30 of *Alter Ego* magazine: "I really sweated out plots, unlike Jack Kirby. Jack just ignited and came out with ideas. Joe Simon would just nod his head in agreement."

Stan Goldberg, artist and col-





orist for Atlas and Marvel, also spoke to Amash about Kirby's amazing creative abilities in *Alter Ego* #18, describing Kirby's visits to the Marvel office: "Jack would just sit there at lunch and tell us all these great ideas about what he was going to do next. It was like ideas were bursting from every pore of his body. It was fascinating because he was a fountain of ideas."

When asked who did most of the creating, Goldberg stated, "I think it was Jack. But Stan was great at plotting, concepts and dialogue. Stan could direct me or Jack Kirby into thinking and developing, and Jack just ran with it."

When addressing the question of Lee presenting artists with full scripts, Goldberg replied, "I know Jack was getting full outlines even when they started doing the *Fantastic Four*. Whether they had talked the story out before, that is something I can't be sure of."



The original art of Kirby's mid-to-late Sixties stories has a profusion of margin notes, a clear indication that he was doing the lion's share of the plotting at that point. It is the earlier period that is somewhat in question, but we still have evidence such as the torn *Hulk* pages to show that

Kirby was already bringing Lee nearly complete stories fairly early on, for the latter to dialog. This is not much more than a year after the *Fantastic Four* was first published.

At that point, Kirby was still drawing the lead story in a series of monster comics. Such an example in the April 1962 issue of *Journey Into Mystery* #79 was entitled "The Midnight Monster" [left].

The main character in this story bears more than a passing resemblance to the Incredible Hulk, whose first issue appeared a few scant months later. Note in particular the similarity in the transformation scenes of the two comics, appearing on page five of the *Hulk* and page three of "The Midnight Monster," where we see both scientists transforming into strange and frightening creatures. Kirby excels at this sort of thing, with his three-panel sequence from human to beast man in either comic.

This was a period when monsters were very much the rage. I remember about this time I saw the 1961 Hammer film *Curse of the Werewolf* starring a very young Oliver Reed, and I was taken with the way Kirby was able to bring a similar gothic feel to his atmospheric stories. *The Hulk* was one of my first Kirby comics, and his way of staging the story became very much a part of my artistic education.

The fact that Kirby was involved in two stories with such similar approaches within such a short time period speaks volumes. In a note written by Kirby that was used as evidence in the recent (and resolved) legal action between Disney/Marvel and the Kirby heirs, the King stated that he had created the Hulk, which was a spin-off of a single story that he did for Marvel. This story, "The Midnight Monster," may very well be the one he refers to. The characters in



both tales are infused with a similar menace and with an old-world gothic aura that is so much a part of Kirby as to be an indelible signature. Kirby is such a powerful visceral and visual storyteller that his spirit infuses the narrative with his essence. In most cases, it is not so much the concept that is important, but the style and vitality of the creator that makes the character come alive for the reader.

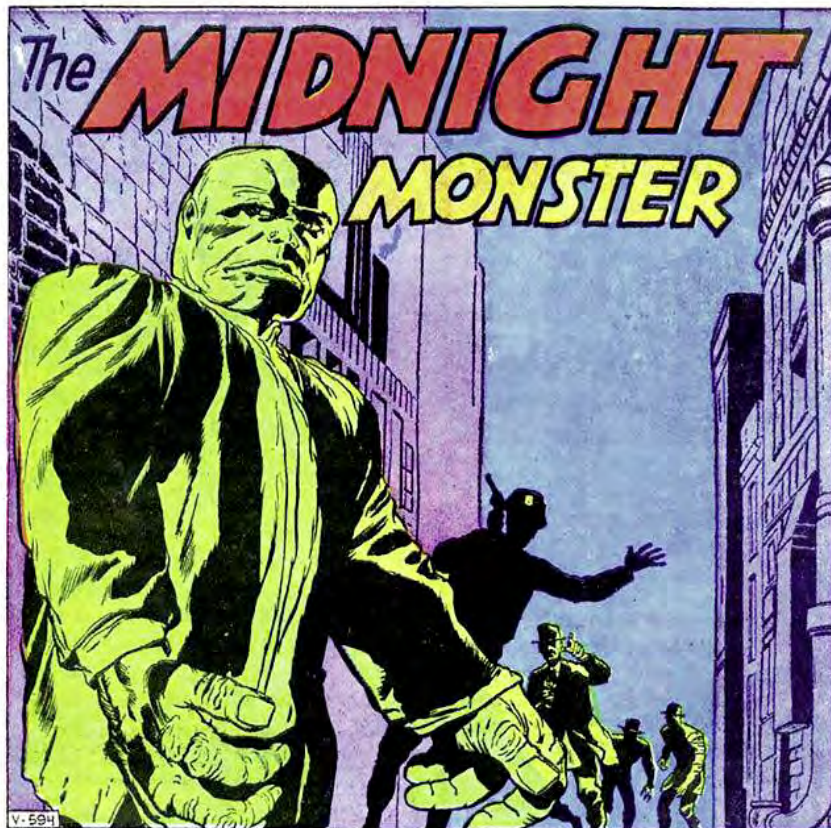
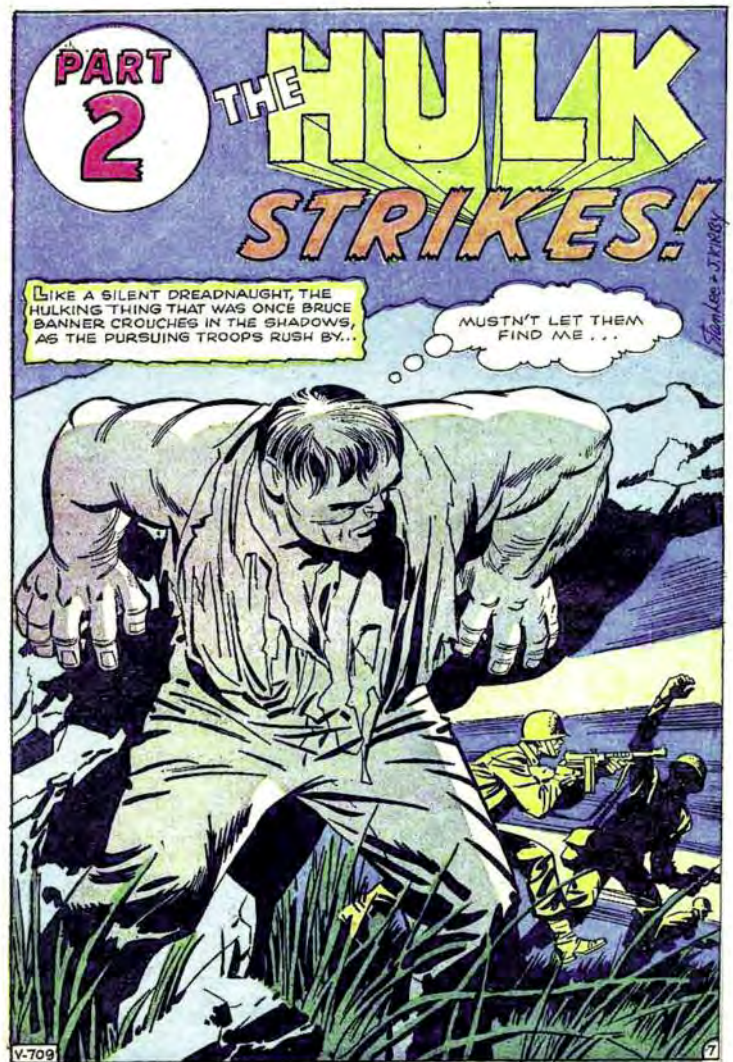
This of course brings us to the philosophical argument over which aspect of creation is more important, the conception or the realization. With an artist as closely connected to the collective unconscious as Kirby was, conception and realization often occurred at the same moment in the process of putting pencil to paper.

In various publications such as *Origins of Marvel Comics*, Stan Lee writes about creating the Hulk as a combination of Frankenstein and Jekyll and Hyde. The Midnight Monster is just that, and yet Lee has never made mention of this story or his connection to it, either with or without reference to the Hulk.

In his article "Challenging the Unknown" in *The Jack Kirby Collector* #62, Mike Breen looks carefully at Kirby's plotting and characterization in early issues of *The Fantastic Four* and compares them to those previously used in Kirby's *Challengers of the Unknown* comic. While the Challengers themselves are similar in many ways to the FF, there are also multiple concepts and characters that Breen points to that occur in both series.

One has to bear this sort of comparison in mind when one encounters the similarity and proximity of two stories such as the origin of the Hulk and "The Midnight Monster." Artists and writers have stylistic tendencies that stamp themselves on the work and are clear indicators that they are involved. For one whose body of work is as consistent and voluminous as Kirby's is, it is relatively easy to plot these reoccurring themes throughout his career.

Kirby has spoken often of his powerful connection to the myths and legends of the Eastern European culture of his forbears and its preoccupation with ghosts, werewolves, vampires, and



other creatures that transform with the coming of night. He wrote and drew scores of these creatures while working with Joe Simon in the 1950s. Kirby has also spoken of the monster within a man, when addressing his own anger issues. In *The Comics Journal* #30 (1976), in an interview conducted by Mark Hebert, Kirby said, "I created the Hulk too, and I saw him as a kind of handsome Frankenstein. I never felt the Hulk was a monster, because I felt the Hulk was me."

In a later interview in *Comics Journal* #134 (1990) conducted by Gary Groth, Kirby stated, "It suddenly came to me that in desperation we can all do that—we can knock down walls, we can go berserk, which we do. You know what happens when we're in a rage—you can tear a house down. I created a character who did all that and called him the Hulk."

In his words here, one can clearly see that Kirby harnessed his own anger and channeled it into his work. The dynamic energy and life force infused into both the Hulk and the Midnight Monster are quintessential Kirby. Such beings as these are archetypes of the collective unconscious that the King was tapping directly into, and bringing to vivid life on his pages. He created the dark and sinister atmosphere that pervades the story and he animated the characters and gave them the motivation to behave as they did. The stamp of Kirby's psyche is all over the work, as unmistakable as that of any other distinctive creator. ★

JACK KIRBY MUSEUM Newsletter

www.kirbymuseum.org

Kirby In The Valley

Longtime Kirby Collector contributor and Professor of English Charles Hatfield has curated the largest-ever exhibit of Jack Kirby original art in the United States in the Main Gallery at California State University Northridge. Smack dab in the middle of Los

Angeles' San Fernando Valley, the show, "Comic Book Apocalypse: The Graphic World of Jack Kirby" is a wonder to behold.

Focusing on Kirby's later work, from about 1965-on, his entire career is documented as well. The Kirby Museum supported the exhibit with interactive iPad displays designed by Tom Kraft, and files from our Digital Archive for inclusion in the display and the catalog.



Photo by Kevin Shaw

(above) Exhibit curator Charles Hatfield discusses all things Kirby at the packed opening of "Comic Book Apocalypse" on August 29th.

The opening reception on August 29th was well-attended, with Lisa Kirby, Steve Sherman, David Folkman, Mike Thibodeaux, Mark Evanier, Rand Hoppe, and Tom Kraft attending. Mark's curator talk on Monday also filled the house.



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Board News

We hope you all will welcome Mike Cecchini to our Board of Trustees. As soon as he became a member in 2008, Mike asked how he could help. Since then, he's volunteered at various NY conventions, was our first summer intern, and not only helped arrange our Pop-Up Prototype: Alpha in 2013, but worked the event the whole week. He's been a big help to our efforts, and we're pleased to have him aboard. Mike is editor of *Den of Geek*, a pop culture news website.

Special thanks to outgoing board members John Morrow and David Schwartz for their efforts while on the Board. Their support for our programs has been instrumental in getting us where we are today, and we look forward to continuing to work together as they transition to our newly-minted Advisory Board along with Charles Hatfield.

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TJKC Edition
Fall 2015

The Jack Kirby Museum and Research Center is organized exclusively for educational purposes; more specifically, to promote and encourage the study, understanding, preservation and appreciation of the work of Jack Kirby by:

- illustrating the scope of Kirby's multi-faceted career,
- communicating the stories, inspirations and influences of Jack Kirby,
- celebrating the life of Jack Kirby and his creations, and
- building understanding of comic books and comic book creators.

To this end, the Museum will sponsor and otherwise support study, teaching, conferences, discussion groups, exhibitions, displays, publications and cinematic or multimedia productions.

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Galactic Head—18" x 20" color



Incan Visitation—24" x 18" color

(right) Early Timely pulp illustration by Jack.

(below) Baron Von Richthofen (better known as the Red Baron) stuck in Jack's memory, even as late as Kamandi #22 (Oct. 1974),

[Leonard Pitts, Jr., a commentator, journalist, and novelist, interviewed Jack Kirby circa 1986 for a book titled *Conversations with the Comic Book Creators*. A nationally syndicated columnist, Pitts was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 2004. Thanks to Leonard for allowing this interview to be presented here.]

LEONARD PITTS: Let's start with a little background—the "origin" of Jack Kirby.

JACK KIRBY: I was born on the Lower East Side of New York. It was a restricted area in the sense that it was an ethnic area. And it was at a



"Don't ask any questions," I snapped. "Just get those horseshoes off as fast as you can!"

time when the immigrants were still coming in and they settled in certain parts of New York City, among their own kind.

We had blocks of Italians and blocks of Irish and blocks of Jews. I was born among the blocks of Jews. Strangely enough, our school curriculum was very good and our subject matter was very good. We had fine teachers. And so, despite the fact that we'd be running loose, just doing what we liked, like any other kids—playing stickball or baseball or boxing somewhere—we had a fine schooling. I had Shakespeare in the eighth grade. I had a really good history course.

I can't say I was great in math [laughter], but in a very strange sense, my schooling was very good—all through junior high and high school and elementary. Later on, I even went to industrial school, because I understood that they had drawing tables there and I wanted to practice drawing.

PITTS: What years are we talking about?

KIRBY: We're talking about the middle '30s. I was born in 1917. I'm a first world war baby and I was brought up with two wing airplanes... the Empire State Building wasn't there yet, the Chrysler building wasn't there when I was born, and Von Richthofen was the guy they were all talking about... flying aces and pulp magazines.

The strange fact was that, on my block, we hadn't even gotten to the pulp magazines. I found my first pulp magazine floating down the gutter on a rainy day

toward the sewer and I picked it up because it had a strange looking object on it. It turned out to be a rocket ship. It was one of the first Hugo Gernsback *Wonder Stories*. I didn't dare to be seen with it, so I



just picked it up and hid it under my arm, took it home and I began reading it and I learned to love science-fiction.

PITTS: That was your first exposure to sci-fi?

KIRBY: Yes. I wouldn't say it was an intellectual explosion. I'm still bad in math. I'm a lousy electrician—I couldn't fix a plug. But I am interested in the other side of knowledge, the cultural side of knowledge and the truthful side of knowledge. I'm looking for the gaps that I know exist, and of course, I'll never get the answers, like everybody else. So I feel I live with very interesting questions.

PITTS: It's more fun living with the questions for you, I gather.

KIRBY: Well, the questions are the things that make good stories, in my opinion.

PITTS: Getting back to your early years, it must have been tough, coming up in an already poor neighborhood during the Depression.

KIRBY: And I also made another mistake.

PITTS: What was that?

KIRBY: Being born short.

PITTS: Why was that a mistake?

KIRBY: On the East Side that was a mistake because, well, the big guys beat up on the little guys. But I made up for it, as much as I could, in meanness. And of course, that's very stimulating.

I was still being brought up on peasant stories; my mother came from Europe and she'd been a peasant and that was the area where the Frankenssteins and the Draculas came from, and it was entertainment for the people. Nobody had TV, and that was the way peasants would entertain themselves—by telling these stories.

PITTS: Was that your main form of entertainment?

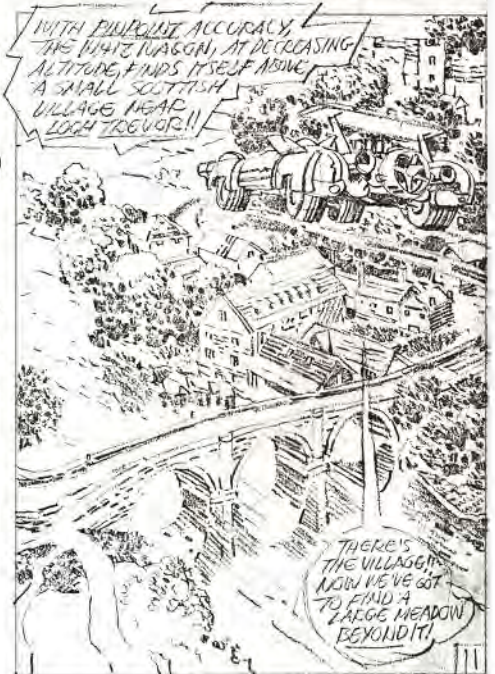
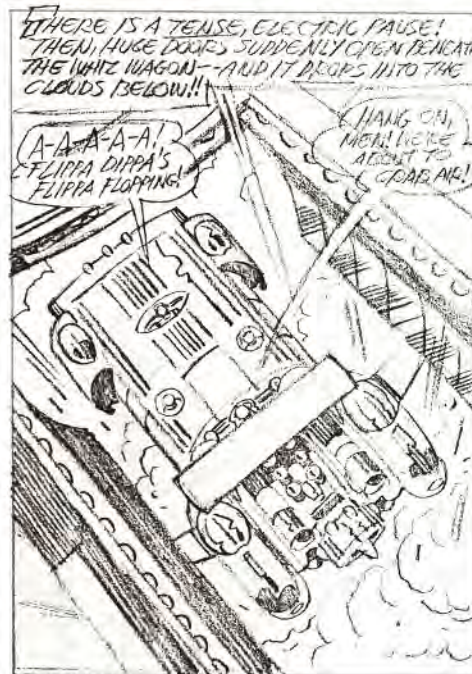
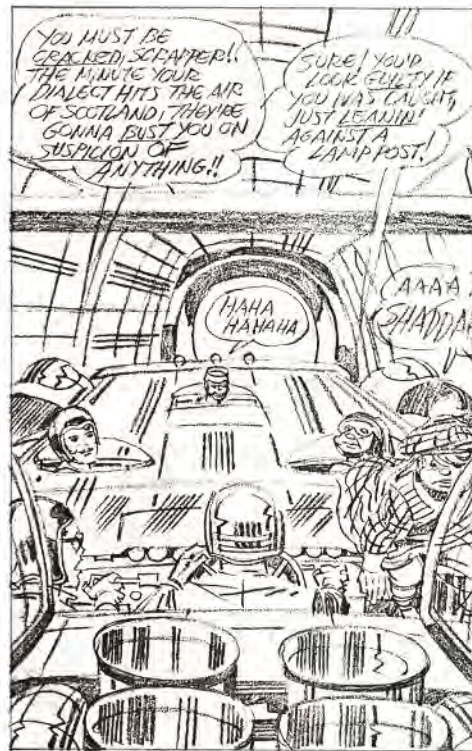
KIRBY: My main form of entertainment was the early movies, in which I could see Cagney, or Edward G. Robinson, or the Marx Brothers—all those old films, which I loved. My mother would have to come get me out of the theatre after the seventh

performance.

I like entertainment. I'm an innate admirer of good entertainment. I'll listen to MTV, I'll listen to Mozart, I'll listen to anything that has a good element in it. You know as well as I do that any kind of music can be written badly and it can be written wonderfully. I admire a top performer in any field.

I once drove a beat-up-Chevy, which was given to me by a garage man because he was fixing my car. And that beat-up Chevy was the best car I ever drove, because his son loved engines and he was an artist with an engine. There was nothing, absolutely, wrong with that car except a few dents. It was a joy driving that car, because whatever he did to that engine would transmit itself to the wheel and I could feel that, and I enjoyed it. That fella was an artist in his own right, and he didn't have to play a note on a flute. An artist, to me, is someone—a professional—who does his work well.

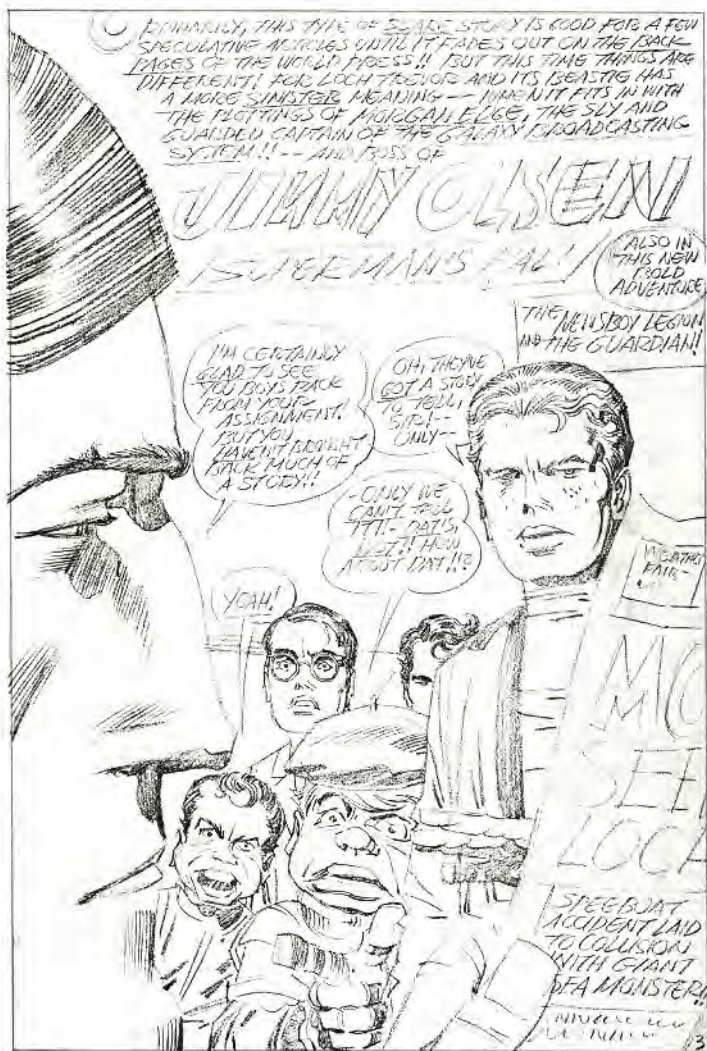
PITTS: There was not a lot of money rolling around your neighborhood, so I



(above) It sure ain't a beat-up Chevy! The Whiz Wagon from Jimmy Olsen #144 (Dec. 1971).

(below, second from right) Young Jack at the Boys Brotherhood Republic.





guess any entertainment you got could not be too expensive.

KIRBY: I can tell you that I fought my old man for a copy of a quarterly *Wonder Stories*, which I never got, 'cause it cost 15 cents. I later bought that magazine. Maybe 30 years later, I bought that same magazine for 5 dollars. By chance I came across it in a bookstore. That was the issue I'd wanted, and I'd missed it.

ROZ KIRBY: As a youth, you were working, selling papers and all that stuff...

KIRBY: I admired all the Sunday papers. I admired the comics, because the comics were large and they were colored beautifully and they held an attraction for me. Possibly, that may be the reason I gravitated toward them, like a lot of fans gravitate toward comics today. I get letters from brain surgeons and I get letters from guys in drunk tanks; they all admire comics. That runs a large gamut.

ROZ KIRBY: [TO KIRBY] I think he wants to know what you did in those days to make a dollar.

KIRBY: What I did in those days to make a dollar? Nothing. I played handball, until, at the age of 17, it was traditional for your mother to roll you out of bed and tell you to get a job.

ROZ: [TO KIRBY] Didn't you help your father with the pushcart? You did a lot of those things.

KIRBY: Oh, yes, I delivered papers. I could go through the whole routine. I drew numbers on paper bags so they could be put on pushcarts—"Onions: 10¢ a pound" or something like that. I delivered papers and, being the smallest guy there, when they threw the papers off the truck at the news building, all the big guys would step right over me and get their papers first.

PITTS: That's the second time you've mentioned being a smaller guy and implied something about having to be tough. Did you fancy yourself a scrapper?

KIRBY: Yeah. I would wait behind a brick wall for three guys to pass and I'd beat the crap out of them and run like hell. I refined the meanness to help my own ego. I think everybody needs a little ego. I felt that I deserved an ego as well as the next guy. That's why I also gravitated toward the gym. I was a very good boxer. I was a good wrestler. When I was drafted in the Army, out of a class of 27, just me and another fellow graduated from a judo class.

PITTS: Superman came out when you were in your early teens—your adolescence. Were you at all aware of him at the time?

KIRBY: Everybody was. Superman was an immediate hit. From what I understand, these two messenger boys came in from Ohio and they submitted this 10-page script called "Superman." In order to fit it in the magazine, they cut it down to six, and they put the magazine out and the magazine sold out. They didn't know what sold the magazine out, so they put out another issue and included Superman and the magazine sold out. That went on for three issues, until they found out it was Superman that was doing it. Superman was the psychological backbone for a lot of fellows who couldn't make it—or felt they couldn't make it.

PITTS: What did you think of it? Did it encourage you to become involved with comics?

KIRBY: Yes, of course. It galvanized me.

My first job was with Max Fleischer, the Fleischer Studios, animating Popeye. I was about 18. And of course, that meant working

ABDUL JONES



By Ted Grey

at a light table. There were rows and rows of tables, and that began to look like my father's garment factory. I felt, that's not what I wanted to do. I didn't want to work in that kind of place—although it was a very nice place, the executives were fine people. And of course, the Fleischer Studios were noted for their wonderful animation and *Popeye* speaks for itself. Their animation speaks for itself. But it wasn't my kind of thing.

Then I went to a small syndicate called the Lincoln Features syndicate. They had 700 weekly papers, and I had the opportunity to do editorial cartoons, sports cartoons. I did a thing called "Your Health Comes First," in which I was a doctor and I gathered information on how to cure your colds and what to do for the vapors. Of course, I didn't do anything that was critical in any way. I don't think I was knowledgeable enough. I just stuck to the things I knew, and I got as much information on them as I could.

I did a cartoon on Neville Chamberlain when England and the Allies gave Czechoslovakia to Hitler. Having been raised in a gangster area, and knowing gangsters as I did, I knew Hitler. And so, I did a cartoon in which I showed Chamberlain patting this big boa constrictor on the head, and there was a bulge in the center of the boa constrictor, which I labeled Czechoslovakia.

I got bawled out for that. My boss said, "You're only 19 years old. You don't know much about politics and these things." And I said, "That's true. But I do know a lot about gangsters. And I do know a lot about politicians because I've seen them in my friend's restaurant." I said, "I feel I can do editorial cartoons fairly well." He said, "Spring is coming up—why don't you stick to baseball and spring training?" And of course, I did. I didn't want to have any large contention with my boss and, times being as they were, I did as I was told.

PITTS: Before we talk about the next step in your career, let's back up a little and talk about your training.

KIRBY: I went to industrial school. I had to take auto mechanics in the morning and art in the afternoon. This was after I graduated high school. I understood they had drawing desks there and they had art materials. That was fine for me, because that was what I was looking for. It wasn't an extensive art course, but I'm glad, because it allowed me to do what I thought was right in my own way. I began to evolve my own style, with the smattering of anatomy that I got.

So, in the morning, I had to haul trucks out of the East River with the other fellas. Then in the afternoon, I took an art course—such as it was.

PITTS: So you were already fascinated by art even before you got to school.

KIRBY: Yes I was. I liked art. I liked good illustrations. They got me praise, they got me trouble. I suppose that's life.

I belonged to the Boy's Brotherhood Republic. It still exists today. We had our own mayor. A fella called Harry Slonaker, he came from the Midwest, where they had a BBR. And he organized a BBR there. He got us our own building, and we took care of our own gym, we had our own mayor, we had our own judge and prosecuting attorney. If anyone defiled the building, he went on trial. I became the editor in chief.

And of course, naturally, we began to act out our own opinion of ourselves. We copied the people we saw in the movies, so when a fella



came down for trial, they came down with eight lawyers and an overcoat hanging over his shoulder like Edward G. Robinson. That was a lot of fun.

Our athletics consisted of playing football with-

(previous page) This mag's editor passed up buying this Jimmy Olsen #144 splash for \$25 at his first big convention in the 1970s.

(above) Jack cut his teeth on strips like Abdul Jones.

(below) Gangsters played a role in his comics life with *In The Days Of The Mob* (#1, 1971).

(bottom left) 18-year-old Kirby in 1935, working at the BBR.





out equipment. That's where we got bruised up, because we would play teams that did have equipment. It was in that kind of atmosphere that I was brought up. I idolized my mother and father. Everybody else did. You'll find that the gangsters did. Mothers were sacred.

PITTS: You keep mentioning the gangsters. Were they the heroes of a poor neighborhood like yours?

KIRBY: No. They weren't the heroes. The gangsters were just guys who wanted the \$400 suits, and they wanted them now. I didn't care when I got mine. I didn't care what I wore. The gangsters—contrary to people's opinions—were just ordinary guys who died very young getting their \$400 suits. They were guys who wanted money fast, and they paid for it.

PITTS: Are we talking about any of the "name" gangsters?

KIRBY: Yes, there were big-name gangsters. Murder, Inc. came out of my area. A lot of other gangs. There were shootings every Friday night in the candy store. I once got locked in a wooden telephone booth. Fifteen guys began to kick the booth and kick the door down; I was a nine-year-old kid and scared stiff, but they did it for kicks.

Around the East Side, there wasn't too much to do, and you had to find something to do. These fellows developed rough games and they lived a rough life and they died in a rough manner.

PITTS: What happened for you careerwise after the Fleischer studios?

KIRBY: Comics is strictly an American invention. The first comic, I believe, was an editorial cartoon done by Benjamin Franklin who had a contention with a businessman. If you add two or three panels to an editorial cartoon, you'll get a comic strip. In 1903, I think, they had the *Yellow Kid* which was the first American comic strip. If you add pages onto that, you get a comic book.

PITTS: When was it that you created Captain America?

KIRBY: Captain America actually came in late '39. I originated Captain America with Joe Simon. Joe Simon and I got a studio apartment and we were turning out comics. Joe is a big guy; he was a middle class guy, and I had never seen middle class guys. They all wore great suits and were taller

than I was. I gravitated to Joe, who is a wonderful guy and a good friend, and he had a rapport with the publishers. Joe did the business, actually, for us both. I did the stories and the pencils. Joe was just as good at it as I was—he could pencil and ink and write stories, as well. We were both creating things to sell to publishers and Captain America was one of them. We sold Captain America to Atlas, which later became Marvel.

PITTS: Let me just toss out the names of some of your most famous characters and, if you would, just give me an idea of what thought process went into creating them. Let's start with Cap.

KIRBY: Captain America was myself. Captain America was my own anger coming to the surface and saying, "What if I could fight 25 guys? How would I do it?" And I figured it out and it would become sort of a ballet, in which Captain America would fight 25 guys and I'd work it out so he could lick 'em all. Of course, in real life, I'd probably get smeared. In real life, it doesn't work out that way. You can't keep track of everybody and you don't know what the next guy is doing, but over here, I could.

What I did, was an artistic punch-out. That kind of thing was very popular then. I didn't realize it until I was told about the sales figures.

PITTS: I have heard that you haven't always been particularly pleased with the way the character has been handled since you created him.





I'm thinking specifically of the storyline Steve Englehart did in the '70s, wherein Steve Rogers was disillusioned by government corruption and gave up his Captain America identity.

KIRBY: Well... I haven't kept in touch with comics for a long time. I leave Englehart's version to Englehart. I respect Englehart—Englehart is an individual and I feel every individual should do his own version. Englehart isn't Jack Kirby. Englehart hasn't got my background, Englehart hasn't got my feelings. And so, of course, I'm going to do a different version of Captain America. Englehart will do his own.

I always felt my job was selling magazines, which I did. I put all the ingredients that I thought would sell that magazine, and they sold. *Captain America* sold 900,000 a month at one time. Of course, I don't know what it's selling today.

PITTS: So, you're saying you've never had any problems with any of the different versions of your characters?

KIRBY: No. I respect the individual. If that's the way he sees it, he's got the right to call it, because he's hired to do it.

PITTS: Let's talk about the Boy Commandos.

KIRBY: The Commandos were my own friends, my own street gang. Except that at that time, I felt it was timely to make them Europeans because that was what was going on. It was a timely subject. They had Commandos

at that time. They were small bands against great armies and I respected them. I felt they were a reflection of my own gang. Us against the world. Us against the guys on the next block.

I was the first one to introduce kid gangs in comics, because that's the way kids are. They'll hang around in groups and they'll exclude who they want and they'll include who they want. It's the kind of atmosphere I was brought up in and it hadn't been done in comics. They sold very well. "The Newsboy Legion" was the same kind of comic strip. They were my own friends. And of course, we all called each other nicknames; we all had nicknames—Spike and Mike, Slink.

PITTS: You weren't cool without a nickname.

KIRBY: Oh, sure. I was the only one who didn't; they called me Jackie. But that was the way things were, and I accepted it. I think in a way, it was a good thing. Although different ethnic groups fought each other, we got to know each other. We got to know each other in the classrooms, we got to know each other in the subway.

An Italian woman came over to me and asked directions. And of course, without any knowledge of Italian, I couldn't tell her. But in a way, I treated her like my own mother. I felt that mothers are wonderful and it didn't matter what ethnic group they belonged to. I felt if they were the mothers of these boys, there was no reason I couldn't be friends with them.

(previous page, top) Look closely, and you'll see an erased policeman's head on this original art from "The Ant Extract," an early use of ant powers in a character. From Harvey's *Black Cat Mystic* #60 (Nov. 1957).

(previous page, bottom) Just discovered by Rand Hoppe of the Jack Kirby Museum, is this preview of what Kirby had planned for the never-published in *The Days Of The Mob* #3. The X-number makes Rand think it was originally a preview for #2, and then Jack changed course.

(above) Kirby's splash page for *Journey Into Mystery* #82 (July 1962) underwent some major revisions, we assume to pass the Comics Code. Jack's original version (left) sure was scarier!

PITTS: Let's skip ahead and talk about your time at Marvel in the '60s. I'd like to get your version of the famous tale of the creation of the Fantastic Four.

KIRBY: My version is simple: I saved Marvel's ass. When I came up to Marvel, it was closing that same afternoon, Stan Lee had his head on the desk and was crying. It all looked very dramatic to me, but I needed the job. I was a guy with a wife and three kids and a house, and I wanted to keep it. And so, having no rapport with Martin Goodman, who was the publisher—Stan Lee was his cousin—I told Stan Lee that we could keep the place going. And I told him to try to tell Martin to keep it going, because we could possibly revive it.

It was a bad time. It was a time when major publishers were folding and comics in general suffered bad press. It was a time when the public itself was being anti-comics-ized by people like Frederic Wertham and the movies. It was an unregulated industry. Finally, we did get a board to regulate the industry and put down rules; we formulated an atmosphere of legitimacy, but that had to take time and meanwhile, the comics were folding right and left.



KIRBY: The idea for the FF was my idea. My own anger against radiation. Radiation was the big subject at that time, because we still don't know what radiation can do to people. It can be beneficial, it can be very harmful. In the case of Ben Grimm, Ben Grimm was a college man, he was a World War II flyer. He was everything that was good in America. And radiation made a monster out of him—made an angry monster out of him, because of his own frustration.

If you had to see yourself in the mirror, and the Thing looked back at you, you'd feel frustrated. Let's say you'd feel alienated from the rest of the species. Of course, radiation had the effect on all of the FF—the girl became invisible, Reed became very plastic. And of course, the Human Torch, which was created by Carl Burgos, was thrown in for good measure, to help the entertainment value.

I began to evolve the FF. I made the Thing a little pimply at first, and I felt that the pimples were a little ugly, so I changed him to a different pattern and that pattern became more popular, so I kept it that way and the Thing has been



Of course, Marvel had magazines and didn't need comics, so they were ready to fold. They had other things to rely on. I began with doing monster stories and westerns; I did my best on the *Rawhide Kid*, and I did my best on the monster stories. This was in '59. Joe and I had our own publishing company which we dissolved; Joe went to work for one of the Rockefellers and I went back to Marvel. Comics was the only thing I knew, really, and could do well.

They had nothing for me at that time except those particular strips, which were just going on momentum. So, I began to galvanize those strips and they began to sell a little better, but it wasn't enough to keep the company going. And it suddenly struck me that the thing that hadn't been done since the days I returned from the service was the superheroes. And so, I came up with Spider-Man. I got it from a strip called the Silver Spider. And I presented Spider-Man to Stan Lee and I presented the Hulk to Stanley. I did a story called "The Hulk"—a small feature, and it was quite different from the Hulk that we know. But I felt that the Hulk had possibilities, and I took this little character from the small feature and I transformed it into the Hulk that we know today.

Of course, I was experimenting with it. I thought the Hulk might be a good-looking Frankenstein. I felt there's a Frankenstein in all of us; I've seen it demonstrated. And I felt that the Hulk had the element of truth in it, and anything to me with the element of truth is valid and the reader relates to that. And if you dramatize it, the reader will enjoy it.

Sleaziness and reality, you can walk out in the street anywhere and get that. But to get good, dramatized entertainment was very rare. What I did was take what I know and dramatize it.

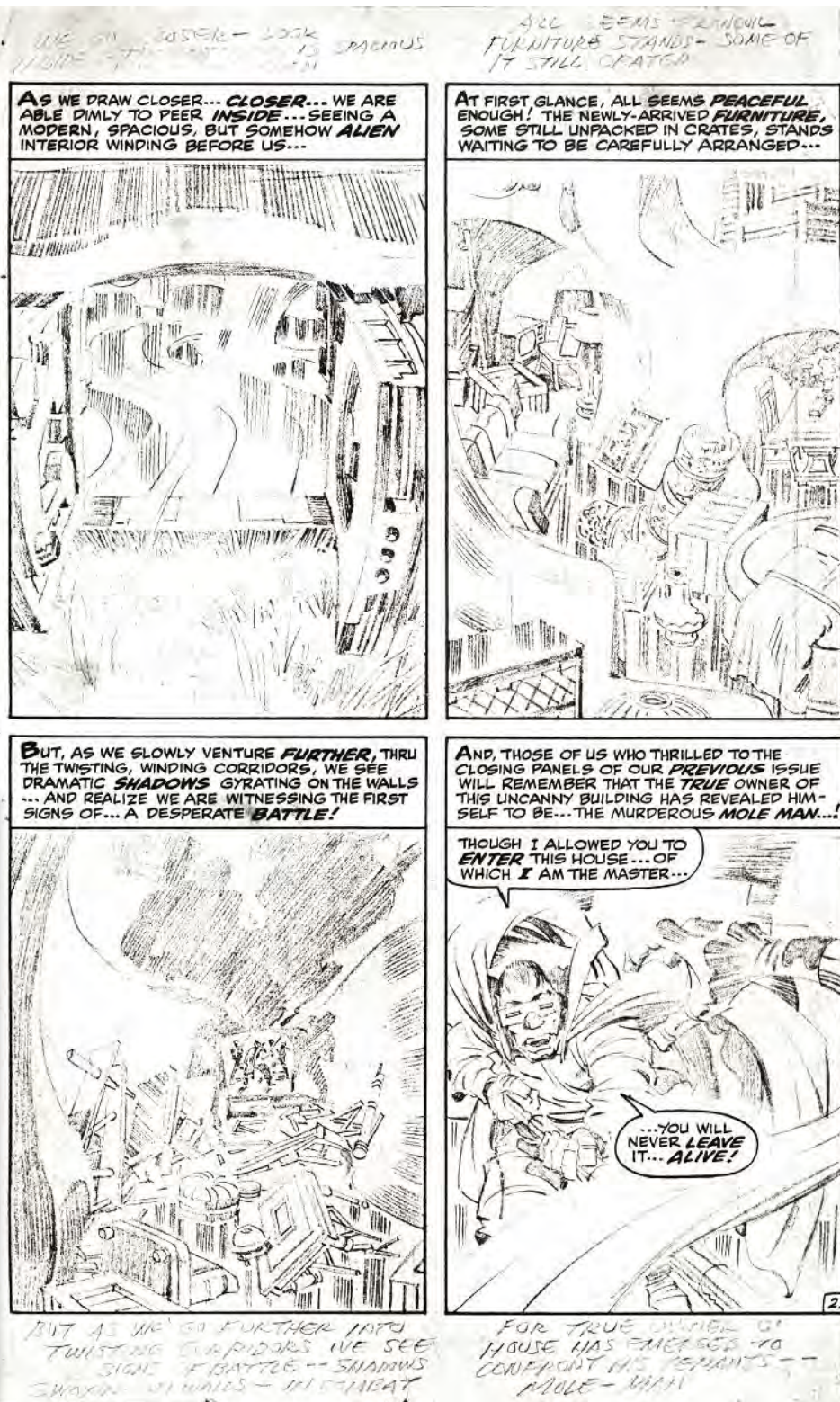
PITTS: So, you're saying the idea for these characters—the FF, for instance—was yours?



KIRBY: I didn't present it to Ditko. I presented everything to Stan Lee. I drew up the costume, I gave him the character and I put it in the hands of Marvel. By giving it to Stan Lee, I put it in the hands of Marvel, because Stan Lee had contact with the publisher. I didn't. Stan Lee gave it to Steve Ditko because I was doing everything else, until Johnny Romita came in to take up some of the slack. There were very few people up at Marvel; Artie Simek did all

¹*KIRBY*: Stan Lee had never created anything up to that

(below) Page 2 pencils for Fantastic Four #89 (Aug. 1969).



moment. And here was Marvel with characters like the Sub-Mariner, which they never used. Stan Lee didn't create that; that was created by Bill Everett. Stan Lee didn't create the Human Torch; that was created by Carl Burgos. It was the artists that were creating everything. Stan Lee—I don't know if he had other duties... or whatever he did there...

ROZ: Maybe we shouldn't get into... too much characterization. I mean...

KIRBY: What I'm trying to do is give the atmosphere up at Marvel. I'm not trying to attack Stan Lee. I'm not trying to put any onus on Stan Lee. All I'm saying is: Stan Lee was a busy man with other duties who couldn't possibly have the time to suddenly create all these ideas that he's said he created. And I can tell you that he never wrote the stories—although he wouldn't allow us to write the dialogue in the balloons. He didn't write my stories.

PITTS: You plotted and he did the dialogue?

KIRBY: You can call it plotted. I call it script. I



(above) Fragment of pencils from FF Annual #5 (1967). This copy was made just as Frank Giacoia had begun inking.



wrote the script and I drew the story. I mean, there was nothing on the first or second page that Stan Lee ever knew would go there. But I knew what would go there. I knew how to begin the story. I wrote it in my house. Nobody was there around to tell me. I worked strictly in my house; I always did. I worked in a small basement in Long Island.

PITTS: Okay, take me through a typical Lee-Kirby comic. Say, from start to finish, an issue of the FF.
KIRBY: Okay, I'll give it to you in very short terms: I told Stan Lee what I wrote and what he was gonna get and Stan Lee accepted it, because Stan Lee knew my reputation. By that time, I had created or helped create so many different other features that Stan Lee had infinite confidence in what I was doing.

Actually, we were pretty good friends. I know Stan Lee better than probably any other person. I know Stan Lee as a person... I never was angry with him in any way. He was never angry with me in any way. We went to the Cartoonists' Society together.

Watching Marvel grow was beneficial for both our egos. They wanted to discontinue *The Hulk* after the third issue and the day they wanted to discontinue it, some college fellas came up

from either NYU or Columbia—I forget which college it was—and they had a petition of 200 names and they said the Hulk was the mascot of the dormitory. I didn't realize up to that moment that we had the college crowd.

PITTS: You're given credit; both you and Stan, for the first "human" heroes. Where did that concept come from?

KIRBY: What do you mean, the first human heroes?

PITTS: The first heroes that argued amongst themselves, the first heroes where the characterization was more or less believable, as opposed to the flawless Superman type.

KIRBY: That was my idea. Strictly my idea. I felt that that was the truth. I had done the same thing for DC. I did a thing called "Mile-A-Minute Jones" where this black American Ranger had met up with this German SS man. They had been in the 1936 Olympics and nobody knew who won their race because it was a draw. In the story, they act like two friends who had met after a period of years when they suddenly realize that they're on opposite sides and that to complete their mission, one would have to kill the other. And so, they run along this engineer's tape, and as they chase each other, it becomes the race all over again. And the element of truth is there.

These two men, although they're enemies, were once friends. Each one is a patriot for their own country [but] they're still friends in a past-tense. And of course, that's a contradiction too, and yet here they are with these feelings. The German runs on the wrong side of the tape and gets blown up. Mile-A-Minute Jones completes his mission and is taken away by airplane, but as he looks down and he knows the German is dead down there, lying in the field, he knows he'll never know who won that race. It's a dramatic story of mine... I got a lot of response on it, and yet it's a very real story, because I myself talked to the SS men; and they were people.

ROZ: [TO KIRBY] Honey, what he's trying to point out is the relationships—like the Fantastic Four... they became more humanized, more complex.

KIRBY: Well of course, I did all the stories. I created all the stories.

PITTS: Okay, but where did you get the inspiration to do—?

KIRBY: Because I wanted to do a satire of Stan and I getting thrown out of a wedding, so I got Reed and Sue married. I love satire. I did *Fighting American* and had a wonderful time with it. So I felt, Stan Lee and I were good friends, it would be fun to have us thrown out of a wedding.

ROZ: [TO KIRBY] But even at the beginning, you had the Fantastic Four, they were always arguing about—.

KIRBY: Yeah. The Thing had problems...

PITTS: Johnny was immature, Reed was a stuffed shirt—.

KIRBY: Yes. They were people to me. I write from a people's point of view. I love people because I understand them. I understand an enemy, I understand a friend, I understand grey areas, and I understand black areas. I understand when it's you *or* me and I understand when it's you *and* me. I'm a fellow who was raised in that kind of atmosphere, and it will reflect in the kinds of stories that I write.

PITTS: Are there any other Marvel flagship characters that you feel you created and didn't get the credit for?

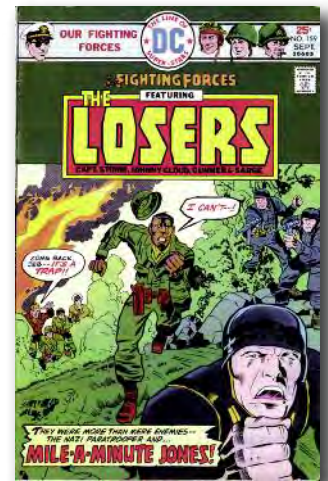
KIRBY: Yes, I created the Young Allies.

PITTS: No, I'm talking about the Marvel Age heroes... the X-Men, the Avengers...

KIRBY: All of them. All of them came from my basement.

The Avengers, Daredevil, the X-Men... all of them. The X-Men, I did the natural thing there. What would you do with mutants who were just plain boys and girls and certainly not dangerous? You school them. You develop their skills. So I gave them a teacher, Professor X.

Of course, it was the natural thing to do, instead of disorienting or alienating people who were different from us, I made the X-Men part of the human race, which they were. Possibly, radiation, if it is beneficial, may create mutants that'll save us instead of doing us harm. I felt that if we train the mutants our way, they'll help us—and not only help us, but achieve a measure of growth in their own sense. And so, we could all live together.



(above) Mile-A-Minute Jones, from Our Fighting Forces #159 (Sept. 1975).

PITTS: You obviously feel that you haven't gotten the credit that's due you for the contributions you've made. How does that fact set with you?
KIRBY: Well, it's painful. They've kept my pages from me. I have people coming up who want pages signed... a little boy'll come up with a page of mine that I know is stolen art and I haven't got the heart not to sign it, so I sign it.

ROZ: What's painful is that he's never received his due after helping create Marvel.

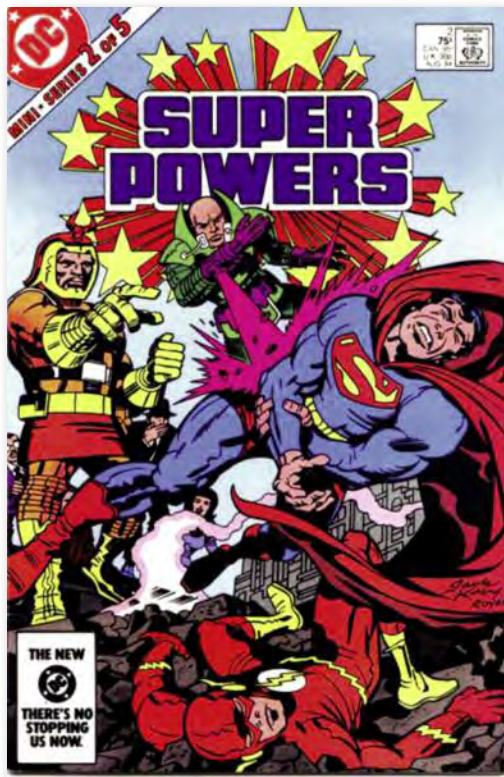
PITTS: Yes, that's what I'm trying to get at.

KIRBY: I'm not interested in the ego trip of creating or not creating. I'm interested in selling a magazine. Rock-bottom, I sell magazines. I'm a thorough professional who does his job. In the Army, I remember, Stan Lee was in the photographic division. They gave him a whole movie studio—this is the story he told me. And Stan Lee didn't produce one picture. I would've produced five. It's the will to create that tells the truth.

ROZ: [TO KIRBY] What he's trying to bring out is... we are hurt about how Marvel treated you.

KIRBY: Well, yes, I am hurt because up at Marvel, I'm a non-person. They say Stan Lee created everything. And of course, Stan Lee didn't. And Ditko is hurt; Ditko never got his due. The fellas who did make all the sales for the magazines were never given credit for them. They were abused in one way or another. I can tell you that that's painful. You live with that. You live with that all your life. I have to live with the fact of all those lies, which are being done for pure hype.

The people at Marvel (now) weren't there at that period. The new kids weren't there. The new kids didn't feel that desperation—never felt any desperation. In a way, they don't care. Why should they? They have their lives ahead of them.



You may not see Darkseid until the fifth issue of Super Powers, but he's running things behind the scenes. Here's pencils from the cover of issue #2.

(next page, top) Originally to be called Return of the Gods, Jack's new 1970s series for Marvel got redubbed Eternals before the first issue hit newsstands.

(next page, bottom) Jack at work in his basement studio in the mid-1960s.



Nobody will get involved or go on crusades. "Truth, justice and the American way" is just a childish slogan to a lot of people. But I can tell you that a lot of guys died for it. Superman created an attitude that helped many Americans in a very bad spot.

PITTS: If you were that unhappy with Marvel, why did you stay there until over 8 years after the creation of the FF?

ROZ: During the time with Marvel, the Fantastic Four, he was making a living. He was building a family, making a living. There weren't too many places to go in comic books.

KIRBY: Right. And there still isn't too many places to go. And I had gotten too used to liking to work alone. I don't like to work in an office. I like to work in my house, to be among my own thoughts. The idea is for an editor to let his artist alone, let them be themselves—an artist or a writer—let them alone, let them exchange their own ideas and you'll come up with something salable.

PITTS: Why did you leave the FF and Marvel that first time?

KIRBY: Because I could see things changing and I could see that Stan Lee was going in directions that I couldn't. I came in one night and there was Stan Lee talking into a record-

ing machine, sitting in the dark there. It was strange to me and I felt that we were going in different directions.

ROZ: [TO KIRBY] Well, you also wanted to go on to new situations. That's why—.

KIRBY: I wanted to do the same thing I had always done—just sell magazines and create my own ideas. The first thing I did when I got to DC was create the comic novel. The first comic novel was mine. That's the *New Gods*. I took four magazines to make an entire novel.

They wanted me to work with Superman, but I didn't want to interfere with the work that was being done by the other men. I felt I could create my own novel. I love the young people, so I did the *Forever People*. I had a good planet and an evil planet... a parable on our own society.

Darkseid is a man you will never see; Darkseid runs our world. Highfather runs our world. These two men run our world; you'll

never see who they are. I put them together in two individuals. A part of our society runs this world and they run it for good or evil. The evil side will harm us, the good side of it will help us. So far, we've been skirting in the middle and making out.

PITTS: Okay, you mentioned earlier walking into an office and seeing Stan talking into a recorder one night and I got the impression that was some sort of turning point for you.

KIRBY: Well, I realized I was creating something I didn't want to create.

PITTS: But, how did—?

KIRBY: Did you ever read *What Makes Sammy Run* by Budd Schulberg?

PITTS: No.

KIRBY: Read *What Makes Sammy Run*. [Ed. Note: Take Jack's advice! Great book!] Sammy, in that book, is the kind of a character you wouldn't want to be responsible for developing. I felt that I was developing a Sammy—which I was, in Stan Lee. I felt it was my time to go.

PITTS: You're very cryptic, Mr. Kirby.

KIRBY: Well, I feel I can only be responsible to the company in a business sort of way, never in a personal sort of way. And incidentally, they've looked on it differently. I can tell you that, besides being a non-person up there, I've had adverse personal incidents... which I won't tell you about. And they've hurt me badly.

It's something you don't like to live with. If I cut off your arm, you're going to live with that forever. Even if they put a false arm on you, you're never going to have a right or left arm. And that's what they've done to me. They've cut off one of my limbs. Keeping my pages... spreading lies. Blatant lies.

They just advertised the fact that Stan Lee created Captain America. This was in *Variety*. And it said, "Based on a character created by Stan Lee." Stan Lee didn't create Captain America.

PITTS: That has to be a mistake.

KIRBY: We'll show you the ad.

PITTS: Somebody goofed somewhere. I mean, that one is already on the record books as a Kirby-Simon creation.

KIRBY: No.

PITTS: Let's talk about some of the later creations—again, the story behind the story. Let's begin with the *New Gods*.

KIRBY: The *New Gods* went into my feelings about

the world around me. There's an element of truth in that. The fact that Darkseid exchanged sons with Highfather—that's taken from history. Kings in the past have exchanged sons so that they never have wars in the future, lest they harm these children. A father will not harm his son.

PITTS: *The Forever People*.

KIRBY: The Forever People were the wonderful people of the '60s, who I loved.

If you'll watch the actions of the Forever People, you'll see the reflection of the '60s in their attitudes, in the backgrounds, in their clothes. You'll see the '60s. I felt I would leave a record of the '60s in their adventures.

PITTS: *The Eternals*. [Ed. Note: Originally *Return of the Gods*, above.]

KIRBY: The Eternals? The Eternals are the gap that we can't fill. We don't know what happened back in the Biblical days. We've killed a lot of people because of it, but we don't know what happened back then. Did Joshua blow down Jericho with forty trumpets? I'd like to see someone do it. I feel that, from time to time, mankind has risen and destroyed itself and left something for the survivors...

PITTS: What do you think of the current state of comics, as opposed to what it was in your heyday?

KIRBY: I really can't say. I wish the artists well, I wish the publishers well. It's an industry that's given me a good life.

PITTS: But, how do you like the books?

KIRBY: The books? They're different from the kind of books that we did. I find a little less discipline, a little more illustration. They're filling up the panels so the eye can't focus on certain characters. If you go in a New Year's crowd in New York, you won't be able to focus on anything, except that ball in the tower, because there'll be so many people there that you wouldn't be able to concentrate on anything.

PITTS: So, are you saying that the quality of the artwork in comics has deteriorated?

KIRBY: A crowd is faceless. If you put a hero among a crowd, he won't stand out. He'll become part of the crowd.

PITTS: Do you read many books?

KIRBY: No I don't. I used to read a lot of books. I read what's important to me. I'll read a lot of scientific articles—not a lot of comics. I get a lot of comics, and I can look at a comic and tell immediately whether I'll enjoy it or not. I've had 50 years of doing that.



(this page) Pencils from 2001: A Space Odyssey #6 (May 1977), featuring a character very reminiscent of Tana Nile from Thor.

(next page) Jack's unused 1970s Bruce Lee comic story got reworked into 1993's Phantom Force at Image Comics, with a variety of Image artists each inking a page.

There are elements in the stories now that I have no rapport with. I see dirty language, I see sleazy backgrounds; I see it reflected in the movies—the movies are comics to me. And I don't see a sleazy world. I see hope. I see a positive world.
PITTS: Do you read your own characters—the current versions?
KIRBY: Yes I do, because I feel my characters are valid, my characters are people, my characters have hope. Hope is the thing that'll take us through.

PITTS: Okay, when I say your characters, I'm referring to the ones you created at Marvel in the '60s.

KIRBY: No. I'm not interested in their version. It has nothing to do with me.

PITTS: With every artist you talk to, if you ask them who their biggest influence is, the name Kirby will be at or very near the top of the list. How does it feel to be so revered by a generation of comics artists?



KIRBY: Well... I wouldn't consider myself in that light. I feel that every professional is the art school for the next guy. In other words, in my early days, I would cannibalize the shading done by Milton Caniff. I would cannibalize the natural stance of Alex Raymond's figures, because I felt that's how people stood, that's how people gestured.

And of course, I feel that maybe a lot of the dynamism in my own work, having been felt by the rest of the artists, they'll react to it and put elements of that in their own work, feeling that it'll help it.

PITTS: Are there any of today's artists that you're particularly impressed by?

KIRBY: Well, I'm impressed with the character of Frank Miller, who I feel is a very gutsy and intelligent guy. Frankly, I'm biased in that direction because he seems to feel that I'm right in my demands from Marvel. He sympathizes. He feels that in some way maybe I've helped him to make a better deal.

PITTS: What do you think of [John] Byrne?

KIRBY: Byrne, I... I feel that any man that tries, any man that comes out with something we like, is a good man. A man doesn't have to be Leonardo Da Vinci to be sincere. Everybody can draw, in my estimation. If you give a man 50 years, he'll come up with the Mona Lisa.

PITTS: What makes you so good?

KIRBY: The willingness to compete. I want to be better than five guys. I was that way when I used to box, I was that way in any sport. I want to compete with five other guys. If I beat five other guys, I'd like to see if I can beat six.

PITTS: There's not a lot of subtlety in your work. I think that's what many people have

gravitated toward. Everything is larger than life. I remember one artist—I forget which one—talking about how he and everybody else has copied the way in which you draw a punch. It's where the legs are slightly wider apart in the stance, and there's more body behind the blow—a real power punch. Where does this larger-than-life outlook come from? When I met you, I was expecting to see a man 7' tall.

KIRBY: On the contrary, it'll come from a man who's 5' 6", 5' 7" and has to fight a man 7' tall. And of course, he knows he's gonna get creamed, so he dramatizes his own strength and in dramatizing his own strength, he becomes a lot stronger than he really is.

I've bent steel. I've done things that I wouldn't ordinarily seem capable of doing. And I've proven myself in situations where there's life and death at stake. And so, I can live with myself knowing that it's not a matter of guts or anything like that. It's a matter of willingness to go the length—to transcend yourself.

PITTS: Do you see life itself in larger-than-life terms?

KIRBY: Yes, I do. I feel that man can transcend himself to a point where he can accomplish greater things than he thinks. I see people depressed and I see people who devalue themselves and I feel that's a terrible, terrible waste. But I love the people who try. But try fairly, try honestly.

PITTS: Which one of your characters is most like you? I've got suspicions of my own, but I'd like to hear what you say.

KIRBY: Oh, I feel that they all have some part of my character. I feel that they're all me in some way—certainly not in individuality, but they all bear elements of what I feel.

PITTS: You don't think Ben Grimm's a little more like you?



KIRBY: [laughs] Yes, everybody I've talked to has compared me to Ben Grimm and perhaps I've got his temperament, I've got his stubbornness, probably, and I suppose if I had his strength, I'd be conservative with it. Ben Grimm is that way. Ben Grimm has always been conservative with his strength. You'll find that, actually, he's the original Rambo. If he uses his strength, he'll use it in a justifiable manner—to save somebody, or to help somebody, or to see that fairness grows and evolves and helps people.

PITTS: Where do you see this medium headed?

KIRBY: I have some ideas, but I wouldn't like to express them. I'll save it for my novel.

PITTS: Okay, let's put it like this, then: in the best of all possible worlds for Jack Kirby, what would be different?

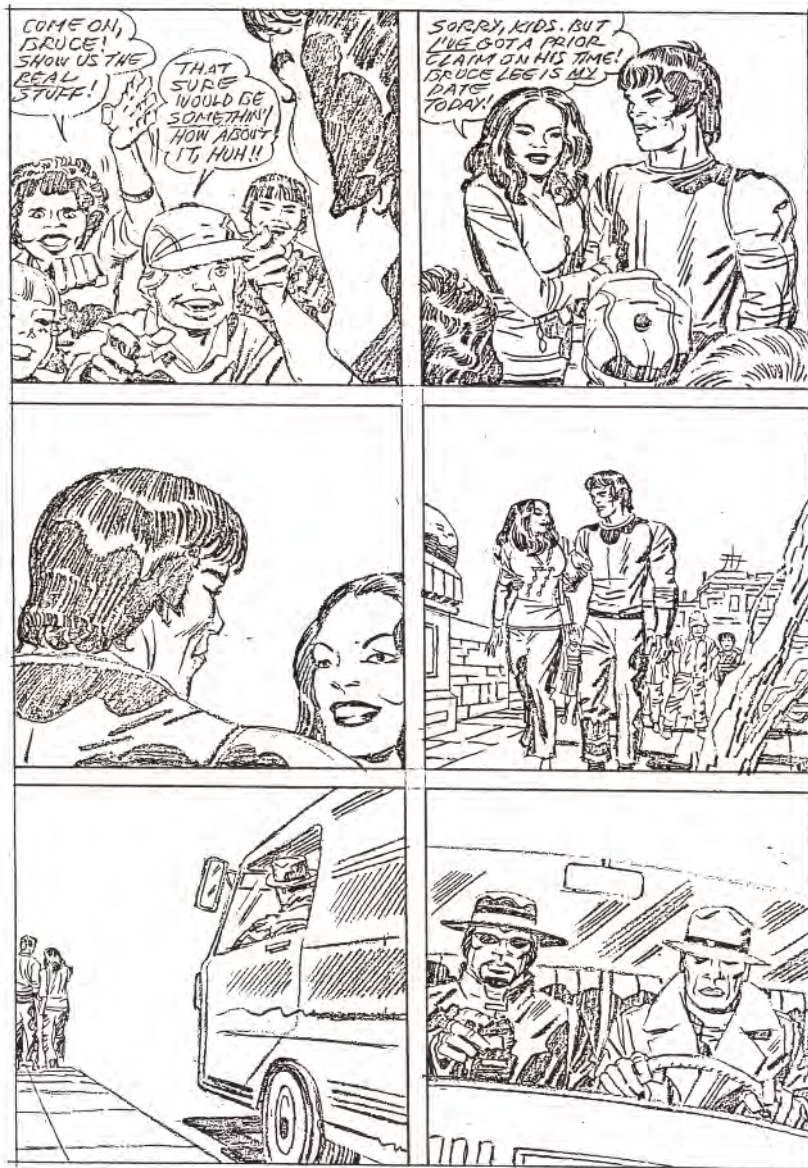
ROZ: He'd be a better businessman.

KIRBY: I would've liked to have been a better businessman when I was younger. And of course, I couldn't, because it wasn't part of my atmosphere. I never lived with accountants, I never lived with lawyers, I never sued anybody, I never fought anybody or was in conflict or contention with any other party in a legal way. I feel that it hurts people, it hurts their families.

My family's hurt. It's not that I consider myself; I've been hurt in the past many times, but I never consider myself. My wife is hurt, I know other members of my family will be hurt, and I feel that's wrong.

PITTS: It's quite a stupid question, in light of all you've said, but let me ask it anyway: can you see yourself working with Stan Lee ever again?

KIRBY: No. No. It'll never happen. No more than I would work with the SS. Stan Lee is what he is. I'm not going to change him, I'm not going to dehumanize him, I'm not going to default him. He has his own dreams and he has his own way of getting them. I have my own dreams but I



get them my own way. We're two different people. I feel that he's in direct opposition to me.

There's no way I could reach the SS. I tried to reach them. I used to talk with them and say, "Hey, fellas, you don't believe in all this horsesh*t." And they said, "Oh, yes, we do." They were profound beliefs. They became indoctrinated.

And Stan Lee's the same way. He's indoctrinated one way and he's gonna live that way. He's gonna benefit from it in some ways and I think he'll lose in others. But he doesn't have to believe me. Nobody else'll believe me if they don't want to, but that's my opinion. I can only speak for myself.

PITTS: Are you claiming that ego has run away with him?

KIRBY: Not ego. Oh, there's ego in it, but he's running away from some deep pain or hurt and I don't know what it is. I feel sympathy for him in that respect. I have an idea of what it is, but it's not my right to analyze Stan Lee.

If he wants to lionize himself or if he wants others to lionize him or if he feels a lack of something, it's a problem.

PITTS: I'm almost done. Is there anything you'd like to add to what we've already discussed?

KIRBY: No. The only thing I can add is that I've been telling the truth and I'll never speak to another person without telling the truth. I've been a cruel man in my time, I've been a devious man in my time, like everybody else. I've told lies in my time. But I've seen enough suffering to experiment with the truth.

Since I've matured, since the War itself—I've always been a feisty guy, but since the War itself, there are people that I didn't like, but I saw them suffer and it changed me. I promised myself that I would never tell a lie, never hurt another human being, and I would try to make the world as positive as I could.



There's a lot of guys that might feel [laughter]... My own son feels I'm uncool but my grandson loves me. Being cool or uncool is a generational thing. But as a personal thing, I really love everybody in sight. I'd love to see Stan Lee at peace with himself. I mean, really at peace with himself. Not money-wise, not ambition-wise, not being driven—whatever drives him. But I'd like to see him at peace as a human being.

PITTS: If I asked you for one word to describe Jack Kirby, what would that word be?

KIRBY: Human being.

PITTS: That's two words.

KIRBY: Human. Okay! ★

(above) Pencils from Captain Victory #3 (March 1982). This mag's editor heartily endorses the recent six-issue Captain Victory mini-series from Dynamite Entertainment (below). Writer Joe Casey really "gets" Kirby.



DITKO VS. KIRBY ON SPIDER-MAN

by Jean Depelley



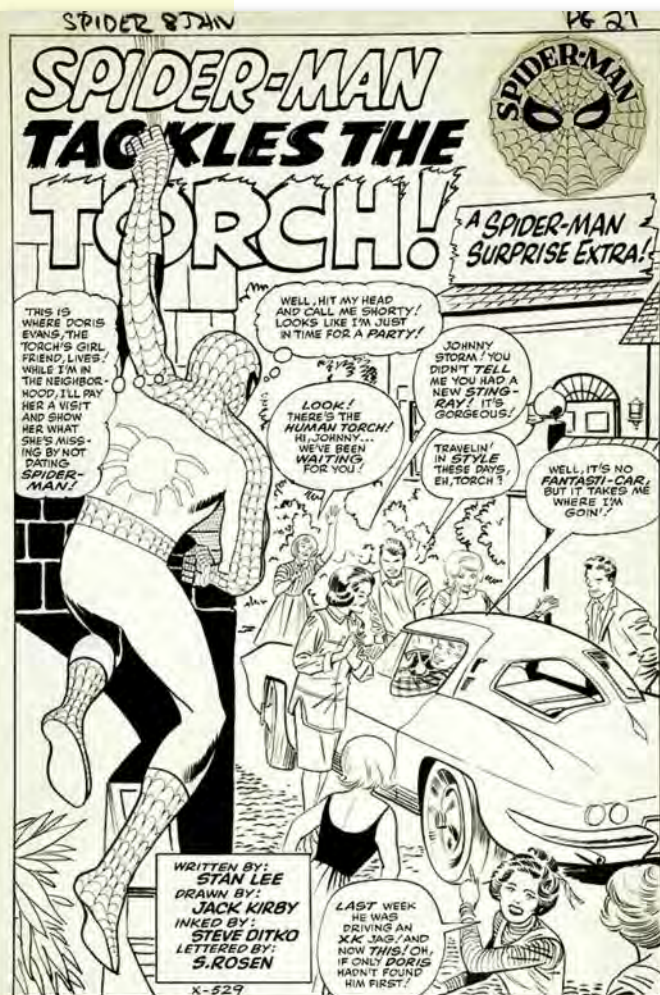
(below) Splash pages of *Amazing Spider-Man* #9 and *Strange Tales* Annual #2.

[After the origins of "Spiderman" by Simon and Oleck in 1953, its recycling by Kirby (in a lost 5-page story) and its eventual transformation into "Spider-Man" at Marvel in 1962 by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko, a detailed study of some Spidey episodes drawn by Jack Kirby may help us better understand the hero's development, and to discover if it's possible Stan Lee didn't hand off Spider-Man to Steve Ditko right away.]

CONSIDER THE THREE 1963 SPIDER-MAN STORIES PRODUCED BY LEE & KIRBY:

The six-page back-up from *Amazing Spider-Man* #8 (January 1964), "Spider-Man Tackles the Torch," seems to have been initially intended for *Strange Tales* (which had published the solo adventures of the Torch by Kirby since #101, October 1962), because it clearly focuses on the Fantastic Four's youngest member. *Strange Tales* Annual #2's main feature, "On the Trail of the Amazing Spider-Man" (18 pages), came out months earlier (in the Summer of 1963), but seems to be a continuation of the *Spider-Man* #8 story (both characters know each other and the episode progresses their mutual friendship). These two stories seem to be Jack obeying Stan's instructions to integrate the Ditko Spider-Man version into the rising Marvel Universe. Moreover, they are among the first Marvel crossovers (after the Hulk in *Fantastic Four* #12, March 1963).

The third 1963 story, "The Fabulous Fantastic Four Meet Spider-Man," appeared in *Fantastic Four* Annual #1 (Summer 1963, like *Strange Tales* Annual #2). From a strictly chronological point of view, this six-page episode by Lee and Kirby (with inks by Ditko) is chronologically situated *before* the other two stories (it tells the first encounter of Spider-Man and the Torch). As it focuses on Ditko's Spider-Man, it was probably planned for *Amazing Fantasy* (before Goodman decided to can-





(above) Splash page of "Spider-Man Vs. the Chameleon" and the Amazing Spider-Man #1 cover.

(below) The story's last panel, guest-starring the FF, from Amazing Spider-Man #1.

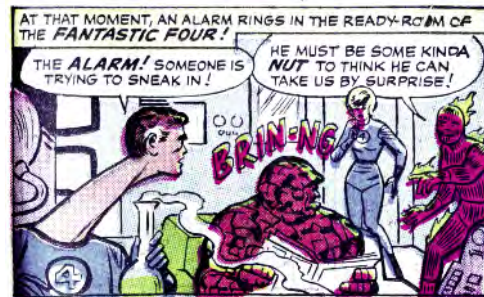
(right) The Thing reading a newspaper by Kirby and Ditko. Kirby images are scanned from the original comic, while the Ditko ones are from newer reprints.

cel the title after issue #15). And, oddly enough, this story is also present as a sub-plot in an episode called "Spider-Man Vs. The Chameleon," which came out six months earlier in *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 (March 1963), a story drawn by Steve Ditko. This story is also depicted on *Amazing Spider-Man* #1's cover by Jack Kirby!

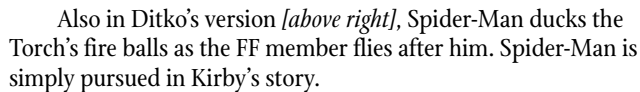
The *Fantastic Four Annual* #1 episode by Kirby starts with text that says: "This memorable incident (the meeting of Spider-Man with the FF), one of the high points in comic magazine history, first occurred in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #1, March! It was merely a two-page episode which began one of Spider-Man's greatest adventures! However, we have received countless requests asking us to re-do this famous encounter, but to devote more space to it, showing it in all its exciting details!" and a footnote from the editor: "By special arrangement with *Spider-Man* magazine where this episode, by Lee and Ditko, first appeared in a condensed form."

Reading these lines, one would think that Kirby swiped Lee and Ditko's story, amplifying it in the process. But what really happened? After a closer look, some facts stand out:

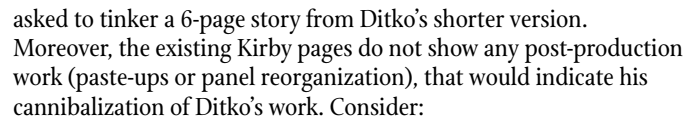
- In the 10-page "Spider-Man Vs. the Chameleon" episode by Ditko in *Amazing Spider-Man* #1, the meeting between Spider-Man and FF is brief (only two pages long) and is perfectly integrated into a general plot involving the Chameleon, with the Fantastic Four returning at the end of the story, giving it a conclusion.
- 18 panels are identical in Kirby's and Ditko's versions. Apparently, one swiped the other's work (on Stan Lee's instructions). Furthermore, Lee's dialogue is almost the same.



In Ditko's version [*far right*], the Thing's fight with webhead concludes with his falling backwards, knocking the Torch out, while he is simply pushed aside in Kirby's version.



Therefore, the FF sequence was probably incorporated afterwards into the episode featuring the Chameleon, Ditko producing *a posteriori* his pages from Kirby's version. Also, it seems unlikely that Jack, with his preponderant status at Atlas/Marvel, would have been



- As Mark Evanier already stated, these two facts strongly support a story originally built on 14 pages (with the same pagination as “Freak! Public Menace!” and “Duel to the Death with the Vulture,” in *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 and #2) and reworked to only 10 pages.

We'll never know for sure. Steve won't speak, Stan forgot, and Jack is no longer with us. But here are the conclusions I propose:

[illegible]

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(*Amazing Spider-Man* #1) and “Duel to the Death with the Vulture” (ASM #2), intending them to be published respectively in *Amazing Fantasy* #16 and #18. Between these two episodes, he envisioned “The Fabulous Fantastic Four Meet Spider-Man” (FF *Annual* #1), maybe under a different/inverted title, for *Amazing Fantasy* #17. That story directly followed “Freak! Public Menace!” since it shows how Spider-Man tries to make a living by working for the Fantastic Four.

Stan gave the assignment to Jack, maybe to make amends for rejecting his own Spider-Man concept, or because Steve was already busy. In any case, Lee was convinced that Jack was best-suited for such a story (a very graphic confrontation between super-heroes he co-invented). Was it initially planned as another 14-page story? Was it already intended as a back-up? It's difficult to say.

Stan also asked Kirby to produce a cover (eventually used on ASM #1) for the projected *Amazing Fantasy* #17, and he gave the whole inking job to Ditko, certainly to maintain artistic continuity. If this hypothesis is correct, this would imply that in July-August 1962, before the discontinuation of *Amazing Fantasy*, Stan Lee had not fully decided yet on whom, Ditko or Kirby, would definitely draw Spider-Man. Lee finally opted for Ditko, convinced by the strangeness and the originality of his art, and the rest is history.

But why was the FF crossover drawn a second time? Did Ditko complain and lobby Stan to get his baby back? ¹

Eventually, Ditko redrew Kirby's FF sequence, shortening it and using the same



dialogue. He eventually incorporated it in a new 14-page story, with his unique style (with Stan's usual communist villain in the end), “Spider-Man Vs. the Chameleon” (ASM #1).

That's when publisher Martin Goodman indirectly played his part in that already confusing story, by canceling *Amazing Fantasy* after issue #15 (a decision he took after discovering the low sales of issue #13, June 1962) and by relaunching *Two-Gun Kid* in its place (with #60, drawn by none other than Kirby!).

Jack was fully occupied and did not have time to draw Spider-Man anymore... with the exception of some touch-ups at the office, asked for by Lee on upcoming Ditko *Amazing Spider-Man* issues (which may have bothered Steve at the time).

When the relative success of *Amazing Fantasy* #15 was known in September 1962, Spider-Man's return was logically scheduled in his own magazine, and it was to Ditko that the assignment fell.

Stan and Goodman needed a hit with the first issue of *Amazing Spider-Man*. To capitalize on Fantastic Four, they decided to start the title with the episode intended for *Amazing Fantasy* #17, with Kirby's cover featuring the quartet.

In that first issue, the 14-page story “Freak! Public Menace!” appeared first, and the Chameleon piece, guest-starring the FF, ended up as a back-up. With a maximum of 24 comic pages per book, “Spider-Man Vs. the Chameleon” was too long to fit in *Amazing Spider-Man* #1. Production man Sol Brodsky reorganized its panel composition to make a 10-page story out of it, condensing the fight against the FF into two pages.

Jack's original version, having been bought by Marvel, was eventually published six months later, during the Summer of 1963, in *Fantastic Four Annual* #1, Kirby's emblematic title. The pride of both artists was respected.



This theory might seem a bit provocative. We won't be able to prove it, unless Ditko's original pages resurface.

Anyway, such processes became commonplace in 1965-66, when Stan started using Jack's layouts on new series, so as to teach how to tell stories to Marvel's second generation of artists. Who would have thought this technique, in an embryonic form, was already tested in 1962? ★

¹ Ditko's exclusive attitude regarding Spider-Man might explain the post-production work on *Fantastic Four Annual* #3, produced at the beginning of 1965. Spider-Man made a very brief appearance at the Richards' wedding on page 14. This grand story, co-written and drawn by Jack Kirby (and unfortunately inked by Vince Colletta) presents a Spider-Man curiously redrawn and inked by Steve Ditko (!), thanks to a paste-up (by Sol Brodsky?) of *Amazing Spider-Man* #19's cover...

Stan may have also interfered to preserve the character's look as it was published in *Amazing Spider-Man*. Anyway, the paste-up job seems rushed and awkward, certainly hiding a more than decent Spider-Man pencil by Kirby. Ditko was evidently touchy about his creation at the beginning of 1965... but that's another story!



(previous page) Page 3 of *Amazing Spider-Man* #1's FF retelling, and the splash page for "Freak! Public Menace!"

(above) Kirby's cover for *Strange Tales Annual* #2, which featured the story, "On the Trail of the Amazing Spider-Man!"

(below) The panel with Ditko's Spider-Man from *Fantastic Four Annual* #3 (1965), and the cover to *Amazing Spider-Man* #19 that the images was lifted from.



HE TOOK
COMMAND

OF THEIR
LOOK!

INCIDENTAL ICONOGRAPHY

An ongoing analysis of Kirby's visual shorthand,
and how he inadvertently used it to develop his characters,
by Sean Kleefeld



When Jack Kirby and Joe Simon created the Boy Commandos in 1942, even though Jack was only 25, he was no stranger to the kid gang concept, already having created the Sentinels of Liberty (soon rechristened as the Young Allies) the year before, and the Newsboy Legion in first half of '42. Those were both reasonably successful, so the challenge with the Commandos, then, was in emulating the basic formula, but to still make them distinctive.

Conceptually, that piece was relatively easy. Unlike the two previous groups of All-American boys, the Commandos were international. With World War II well underway, each member of the team could represent one of the Allied powers: America, England, France, and the Netherlands. It also appears that Jack had



some stereotypical visuals in mind at the outset to accompany those nationalities, as André is given a beret and Jan a "Dutch Boy" haircut and wooden clogs on the cover and opening splash (above)

of *Detective Comics* #65. However, only a few pages later, with the exception of Brooklyn and his derby, the team is dressed identically in military uniforms.

It's a curious change, as it almost immediately makes the four kids more difficult to distinguish from one another. Jan's haircut sets him apart, but that's about it. As I've noted in this column many times before, Jack's character designs tended to be created in broad strokes with a handful of iconic visual signifiers that were easily recognized (by readers) and remembered (by him). Even when working on a team of uniformed characters, like the Challengers of the Unknown or the Fantastic Four, Jack would still frequently try to make each character visually more distinctive from the others. Obviously, Jack had nearly two decades of additional experience by the time he created the Challs or the FF, so it's perhaps a lesson that he first learned on *Boy Commandos*.

I think that, given the visual stereotypes Jack played into for those initial illustrations, he had some notion of that idea even at this early stage in his career. I suspect the change was not one he initiated, but a "suggestion" that came from either Joe Simon or, more likely, editor Jack Schiff, perhaps to reinforce the notion that

these weren't just random kids operating on the front lines of their own accord, but that they had the backing and support of the military. Pure speculation on my part, honestly, but in Mark Evanier's biography of Jack, he does note the editors at DC tried to exert a fair amount of control over Joe and Jack's work at the outset before finally allowing them to do what they wished. Whether such a request was done to provide more in-story logic, or simply to exert editorial power, would only be additional speculation.

But it appears that by the time the creative team was given some degree of autonomy, the basic visuals of the Boy Commandos was set. So Jack's new challenge was making the four characters readily identifiable, despite their wearing the same uniform, as shown below. Brooklyn managed to keep his hat, and required no additional work, but if you look closely, the faces of Alfie, André, and Jan become more distinct from one another. André's nose sharpens up considerably, while Jan's becomes rounder. Alfie, already shown to be a little pudgier than the other three, gains noticeably more



weight. So even as soon as their appearance in *Detective Comics* #68, where all four are shown together in nothing other than loincloths, there's little difficulty figuring out who's who.

This refinement continues as the stories progress, although not always smoothly. In *Boy Commandos* #1 (the classic "Satan

Wears a Swastika" story in which the Newsboy Legion, Sandman, as well as Joe and Jack make cameos!), the Commandos are given identical flight suits and in many panels, it's almost impossible to tell one character from another if they're not actually speaking. Brooklyn doesn't even get to wear his derby in the story!

As the team's own title progresses, and perhaps to help with the assistants and ghost artists Joe and Jack had to start employing to keep up, there seems to be more visual distinctions given. All of Jan's features soften, and all of André's become more angular. Alfie continues to gain weight.

By the time Jack is drafted in mid-1943 and forced to turn all of the artistic duties over to other artists, they'd already built a reasonable stockpile of stories to run while Jack went off to "kill Hitler, and get back before readers missed us." But more importantly, Jack had managed to define the characters enough that the other artists filling in for him had distinguished enough features that they could be identified more readily on casual inspection, despite not having Jack's usual iconographic touches. ★





A mid-1940s Kirby model sheet for the Boy Commandos, created so assistants could keep characters looking consistent. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

(right) Steve Rude gives us the fiercest Etrigan we've seen since Kirby!

(below) TJKC editor John Morrow's favorite inked Kirby illo ever.

(next page, top) Before Frank Brunner got Ka-Zar and Shanna the She-Devil, Lord Kevin Plunder was revamped for the '60s and done for *Astonishing Tales* in '70 by the King. Brunner provided this beautiful illo (with the Man-Thing and Zabu, also) for us. The master artist does reasonably-priced commissions and can be reached via his website at www.frankbrunner.net

[Gathering comments from various professionals and fans can be demanding (and sometimes frustrating work, when some contributors change their minds about participating), but the finished product is always rewarding. For this compilation, similar in scope to my pieces in TJKC #39 and #50, I got my queries going in '09 concerning viewpoints on Jack as a writer and/or editor. All respondents were asked to be respectful but honest, and to cite specific writing examples of the King's body of work (mostly during Kirby's time as a solo writer-artist-editor) if they wanted to bolster their claims, whether they loved his solo material or not.

Thanks to the miracle of e-mail, most of the people I wanted came through. However, I lost phone call comments from Carmine Infantino and Joe Kubert in the process and since they were jotted down on paper, they'd be lost forever. My fault, entirely, and that held me up while I searched high and low for them. I'd planned this to be in Kirby Collector #61, since the theme was 'Kirby, the Writer' but the continued hunt for the words from those two DC greats kicked me past the deadline for that issue. But, here it is now, tailored for the "double-takes" issue and my thanks go out to all who contributed their overviews, recollections, perspectives, and art.]

STEVE RUDE

WRITER/ARTIST/CREATOR

People, it seems mostly professional writers, are always the first to discredit Jack's dialogue and editing. I've always seen Jack's comics on two levels: one was the



surface excitement that made his work grab you instantly. The other was just below the printed line.

There are certain lines of dialogue from *New Gods*, down to *OMAC*, and up to *The Eternals* and beyond that could only resonate from a guy who has observed, felt, and lived life as we know Jack had. Imagine walking

into a destroyed and deserted foreign village, completely alone, as an Army scout assigned to report back on the enemy. It's not a job with a high return rate. Or hiding in a ditch where things are so cold that your feet are turning black. Try and stand up to circulate and your head might get blown off. No doubt much inner dialogue was taking place at these times.

As few artists can project an image onto paper and begin to draw starting at the top left corner, so it is with Kirby's writing process. It was idiosyncratic. And that is what made it fun, urgent, and unique. From Jack and his writing, I have learned the profound truths of life. For those able to correctly tune in, you can share the same frequency.

JOHN MORROW

PUBLISHER/EDITOR/WRITER

Kirby's writing didn't just start with his move to DC Comics in 1970 to produce the Fourth World. Sure, at the time it seemed to me like that was the first time Jack wrote his own work, but in the course of producing this maga-



zine, I've learned differently. He was first *credited* with writing on a couple of horror strips for Marvel right before he made the jump to DC, and there was that one 1960s "Nick Fury" story he wrote while Stan was on vacation. But really, he was writing all along, usually uncredited, from even his first work. He wrote columns and articles for the Boys Brotherhood Republic newspaper as a boy. He wrote many of those early newspaper strips he drew in the 1930s, and he was writing on *Captain America* #1-10 (as was Joe Simon—sometimes both on the same story). You can see from unused 1940s and '50s pages that his handwriting is in the balloons. He wrote many of the *Sky Masters* strips when Dick and Dave Wood couldn't make their deadlines. And with all the plotting and margin notes he contributed at Marvel in the 1960s, he was obviously handling his share of the writing, even if his words weren't used verbatim in the word balloons (although on occasion, they were).

But since many folks consider 1970 the start of Jack's career as a writer (instead of solely as an artist), here's my take. He was trying to send comics somewhere they'd not been before with the *New Gods*, *Forever People*, *Mister Miracle*, and *Jimmy Olsen*. And they needed, not just some unconventional art and concepts to break the mold, but some unique scripting as well. He approached writing as he did his art; start in the top left, and work your way down the page, then move on to the next page. There wasn't a lot (if any) advance planning, at least not on paper. As a new image popped into his head, he put it on paper—and when the story popped into his head, he put the words down just as spontaneously. It's jarring to people who are used to a more polished and planned style of writing, but it doesn't bother me a bit. Here's why.

Try this exercise: compare Jack's solo 1970s DC work to any of those contemporaneous DC stories where someone else scripted, such as *Justice Inc.*, *Richard Dragon*, or the last few *Kamandis*. The words, taken apart from the art, stand fine on their own—probably better than Jack's solo writing does in most cases. This was the work of some very skilled writers, like Gerry Conway and Denny O'Neil, and it's likely that



any number of other artists could've illustrated those scripts, and they'd hold up very well.

But does anyone recall those issues as fondly, or cherish or respect them as much, as any issue of *New Gods*, or the other *Kamandi* issues—or even later issues of *Devil Dinosaur*—where Jack both wrote and drew? Personally, I feel issues with Jack also handling the writing, warts and all, are much more powerful, more memorable, and just plain better comics than when he collaborated with more technically proficient "writers" from that same period. The whole (i.e. Jack's solo work as writer and artist) is greater than the sum of its parts (i.e. Jack's art with someone else's scripting).

If you analyze the dialogue separate from the art, sure, it doesn't hold up as well—and you're missing the point entirely by doing that. Comics is a collaborative medium, with art and words working together. When Kirby was handling both, the result was awe-inspiring, amazing stuff, that's never been equaled.

FRANK BRUNNER

WRITER/ARTIST/CREATOR

Jack Kirby was a modern visual poet, easily it seems [when] creating new worlds and new universes. He was a great idea man, however, his dialogue and captions were sparse and lacked that visual poetry. I found his scripting just not up to what he was presenting visually to the readers. His best work still remains that which he did for Marvel with Stan Lee.

LEE HESTER

TWOMORROWS CONTRIBUTOR

In 1970, the Bullpen Bulletins announced that Jack 'King' Kirby would be doing the art chores for "The Inhumans" in *Amazing Adventures* and "Ka-Zar" in *Astonishing Tales*.

A calm fell over me—split books again! Alright! We were back to the days of *Strange Tales*, *TTA*, and *TOS*! Some short time later, I wheeled the spinner rack



around and there was a split-cover on AA #1; Kirby's Attilans next to a Romita Black Widow!

And inside—a revelation! Wait! Kirby was *writing it*, also??!! Kirby could *write*? I plopped down at the nearby lunch counter after purchasing AA #1 and God knows what else. I devoured a plump hot dog, fries, and a large, freezing soda while this mystery tumbled about in my little head. Kirby... a *writer*? I couldn't really leaf through this comic mag at the time. I didn't want a glob of mustard or ketchup to splatter on the pages. The mystery would have to wait.

I sat down on a bench near the bustling parking lot later and devoured the comic. Kirby *can write*! I biked home in a happy daze. *Kirby can write*! I couldn't let it go. His words were being utilized and they worked out fine! Stan was a wordsmith—his dialogue was and is better than Jack's. He added romance, down-to-earth situations, drama, etc. But Jack was capable of concocting magnificent dramatic scenarios also, as later achievements we praise and are known as "Himon!," "The Pact," etc., attest.

For many of us, the King's "writing" was a hidden talent. We had no idea how much he'd co-plotted, conceptualized super powers, special abilities, devices, or paced the actions to create wonderful cliffhangers or exciting conclusions. His work on the "Inhumans" strip was short-lived, but all the elements that were worked into that "old-time Marvel magic" were there—same with "Ka-Zar." These were tales of suspense, indeed!

In years to come, I'd look forward to the *First Issue Special* one-shots over at DC. Manhunter, the Dingbats of Danger Street, and Atlas the Great—Kirby the *Writer* and *Editor* made them all work. Yeah, Kirby could *write*.



STEVE ENGLEHART

WRITER/ARTIST/CREATOR

I was very much looking forward to Jack's Fourth World books, but was quickly disillusioned as I learned he couldn't write dialogue at all; as a writer, I need more than art. Still, *Mister Miracle* was my favorite because, well, it was the least bad. *Forever People* was populated by dull people with dull powers, *New Gods* had exciting concepts but Jack couldn't really make them come alive in comparison with *Thor*, and *Jimmy Olsen* was not really Fourth World—but *MM* had an interesting set-up with Scott, Barda, the little manager, the circus atmosphere... I say again, it wasn't done well, but it had the most hooks.

ADAM MCGOVERN

INDIE COMICS WRITER AND TWOMORROWS CONTRIBUTOR

Kirby's text was the cave markings carved by random cosmic-ray providence; the gene-sequence of story burned into the circuitry of adventurous spirits. Transcending expression to mainline straight to primal understanding, it loomed in the holy tablets of heroic panels—the savior with a thousand names, all in incantatory quote-marks to contain their post-logical power. Words collided in runic source-code from the mouths of ideas made flesh—hard language piercing consciousness like flat fingertips and square knees. The thundering libretto of living doomsday, unstoppable existence, creation's dawning cry. Trance-speech, thudding as commands on mountain massifs and lyrical as the delirium of waking prophecy. Puzzle pieces of awareness ricocheting together from staggered supernovas like parallel processors, collaged molecules, and costume-adorning tinker-toy trees of life. A recitation of myth-in-progress, larger-than-reality paragons narrating themselves and us into the next patch of lucid universe; flashing neon symbols spelled out in stars. How the inconceivable divinities would talk and how the unimaginable truths would sound; the automatically activating echoes of unspoken existential questions from the other end of time—spontaneously generating in the laser-bombarded brainpan, the self-aware captions of the spheres!

RICH BUCKLER

CREATOR /ARTIST/INKER

Jack Kirby was an idea man. He was a creator. His concepts and character creations were both epic and iconic. I never had any problem with his writing, and I have always thought, who better to flesh out his ideas than Jack himself?

Who knows how much of *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* and *X-Men* were products of Jack's fertile imagination? How can we separate words from pictures when analyzing Jack's contribution to the comics genre? How do we unravel who did what? Stan Lee was an idea man. Joe Simon was both writer and artist. Both were collaborators with Jack.

On Jack Kirby's solo work, I never wondered why he was not working with a writer. When Jack wrote his own scripts, it was Jack Kirby unleashed! Maybe other authors were more erudite or articulate, but Jack's storytelling was always engaging, passionate, and thought provoking. And it was fun!

His stories for *New Gods*, *Forever People* and *Captain America* were among my favorites. There was always an honesty and freshness to his writing, as if he didn't concern himself with literary conventions or fancy prose so much, but rather concentrated in bringing the characters to life and captivating us with his storytelling. His style was always unpretentious, dynamic, and thoroughly engaging.

I have long admired his dynamic drawing, but Jack was powered by ideas and he seemed to always have epic stories to tell. There

seemed to be no concept or subject Jack wouldn't tackle. An incredible mind! He was truly a "challenger of the unknown."

DICK AYERS

WRITER/ARTIST/INKER/CREATOR

The Kirby-created character/series I liked the most and enjoyed doing the penciling breakdowns was for DC in the '70s. It was *Kamandi*! The story and characters seemed real to me very rapidly. My tricky memory cites issue #48 as the first. Alfredo Alcala was my first embellisher and I was thrilled with his finishing of the tightly penciled breakdowns. Kirby's plots for the beginning books of *Kamandi* were so strong and vivid, carrying on with the theme was easy and stimulating to develop further. I sure do wish that the book lasted right through the current time and I was still working on *Kamandi* stories.

DWIGHT BOYD

TWOMORROWS CONTRIBUTOR

I'm going with *The Forever People* first as the greatest of 'King' Kirby's solo efforts, followed closely by *The Demon*.

Jack's "New Agers" took on Darkseid face-to-face, power-to-power more than Olsen and the Newsboys, Orion and Lightray, and Scott and Oberon. Because of those tension-filled confrontations, those stories of Jack's were the most suspenseful of the tetralogy, and the stakes were never greater in that overall masterpiece.

I read "The Power!" (FP #8, of course) years after it'd appeared on the spinner racks and yet (even though I read FP #11 before it), I had sweat running down my back! What was this?! Was I this unnerved by a Code-approved comic book?! Yes, I was!

Billion-Dollar Bates, Desaad, the youngsters from Supertown, armed slave-guards of Bates, and a mysterious, masked order called the Sect—as Stan Lee might've added to the cover blurbs, "This One Has It ALL!" And to add to the drama, in comes Darkseid, closer than ever to acquiring the Anti-Life Equation!

This tale, subtle and over-the-top where needed, was Kirby writ large. And I still get unnerved when reading it.

The Demon was Kirby gothic. I loved the foreboding castles, surrounded by the twisted limbs of trees that seemed to want to warn those who approached them, the mysticism, the revamping of Universal's *Phantom of the Opera* and *Frankenstein* to meet the Kirby mindset! Teekl, the Witchboy was a welcome, irregular presence. He struck me as a "midnight movie Bat-Mite," in a way.

Etrigan was a less destructive (and more eloquent) Hulk, screaming out in rhyme as he pounced upon his shuddering adversaries. Morgan le Fay, that demonic sorceress of King Arthur's time—beautiful, sinister, full of connivances.

Over the years, I've come to share the notion that the Demon would've been better served (artistically) by Alan Weiss or Ralph Reese, but Jack, despite the cartoony vocabulary he was and is famous for, still pulled it off nicely. For *The Demon* and *The Forever People* and all the happy chills and thrills those re-readings have given me, I thank him.

DOUG MOENCH

WRITER/CREATOR

I'm no different from anyone else with a deep love and appreciation of comics in general. From the moment of my first exposure to *Fantastic Four* #1, Jack Kirby claimed a huge portion of my consciousness for decades to come. He was quite simply a genius, and a genius indeed. Impact like that doesn't come from a piker.

I was recently honored to be a "Super Participant" in a Conference on the Paranormal at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, where one of the presentations (by Chris Knowles) hypothesized a connection between Kirby's works and the Universal Omni-Source of Weird-ass Ideas and Creativity. Even if it hadn't



(previous page) This image of Mister Miracle came from a DC Comics house ad in '77. It was done by the extraordinary Marshall Rogers and the title he and Steve Englehart produced for DC was another of their winners!

(above) Captain America, without the Falcon this time around, leaps into action in this impressive color painting by Rich Buckler, who sent it along for this article.

(left) The late, great Dick Ayers worked on *Kamandi*, and here's a portrait of the last boy on Earth, sent to Jerry Boyd by the artist.





CHRISSIE HARPER
EDITOR/WRITER,
JACK KIRBY
QUARTERLY

I guess I shall pick "Street Code" again. I always try to champion this one because, obviously, Kirby never addressed his own life directly on any other occasion; and given the problems with his hands, it came right before any such further opportunities could be explored to good effect. That makes it *special*. Someone got Jack to do something entirely personal while there

was still time; all hail Richard Kyle, whose place in Kirby History, for this one story alone, is not valued nearly enough.

The piece veers between a shorthand romanticism—this is mostly visual, as Kirby himself is the only character depicted as being less than somewhat grotesque—and brutal honesty. The core honesty is in the feelings Kirby puts across in his narrative captions. It's hard to know how greatly his expressions are influenced by hind-

been a fairly convincing hypothesis (which it was), the slides of Kirby panels and pages would have refreshed my appreciation of the work and reminded me why I loved it so profoundly in the first place.

Indeed, my connection and reaction to Kirby's mind and concepts is so keen and deeply felt as to be almost paranormal or supernatural in scope. There is a none-too-subtle sense of Larger Forces At Work, much like the feeling I've always derived from the Beatles and certain UFO reports.

The way it slammed my mind, Jack Kirby's work is best described, I guess, as otherworldly. Mysteriously tantalizing and exciting as hell.

As for Kirby's writing, I'd say the concepts and characters were unassailable, but I (like most everyone) preferred Stan Lee's actual dialoguing over Jack's own. Not that I hated or even disliked Jack's scripting, but I did find aspects of it—particularly his choice in bolded words—sometimes off-putting and/or jarring. If writing his own stories freed up his concepts, however, or simply made him approach the work with greater joy and satisfaction, then any perceived deficiencies in the scripting were more than worth it.

MIKE ROYER
ARTIST/INKER

What was my favorite Kirby-written story? "Gawrsh," as Goofy would say. It's been 30-35 years... and I try not to live in the past. I don't have the time to dig into the boxes labeled "Mike's life in a box" to refresh my memory so I'll just mention that "The Glory Boat" and "The Pact" come to mind. The former was one of my early *New Gods* lettering and inking jobs, and I think there was some pretty powerful stuff there. The latter, if memory serves me correctly, was about the Gods and seems to float around in my brain a little.



sight; I would say they are clearly *articulated* with hindsight, which is unavoidable. I suspect he recalls an inner turmoil that he could then express with *experience*, the passage of time. What comes through is his dislike of the life he had. He's expressing the feelings that spurred him to transcend the slums and make a better life for himself. As such, although ten pages may seem desperately brief, and thoughts of a 50-page graphic novel in this manner are tantalizing in the extreme—in truth, this is the *Origin of Jack Kirby*. 50 pages would be wonderful, but he says everything *important* that needs to be said—with blunt economy and precision.

The artwork is ragged, brilliant, battle-scarred, explosive, palpably tired yet full of energy... but the script could hardly be more perfect. In my view, if Kirby's drawing faculty hadn't waned, his very best writing still lay ahead. He never wrote anything better than this.

BILL MORRISON

EDITOR/WRITER/ARTIST

I've always felt that Jack Kirby did himself a disservice when he didn't have someone else edit his writing. As a writer and editor myself, I know how treacherous it can be to try to do both jobs at the same time. When I'm editing someone else's work, any problems in the script seem to jump right out at me, but when I'm writing a script of my own, I don't see the problems so easily. (Here's a great example; someone just pointed out that I awkwardly used the word "problem" twice in the same sentence!) So I always appreciate working with a good editor when I'm in the writer's chair. I always felt that when Jack was his own editor, or when he had a supervisor that was too intimidated to ask for changes, the work suffered, and mainly because of clunky dialogue.

However, his writing in terms of fantastic stories, concepts and characters more than made up for any deficiencies in the text. I think that's been proven by the fact that so many Kirby properties are insanely popular and beloved to this day.

GERRY CONWAY

EDITOR/WRITER/CREATOR

Jack was a terrific artist and a great storyteller. As an editor he had, what I believe, to be a great sense of scale and drama. When it came to writing dialogue I think Jack's strengths were more visual than verbal. Most of his dialogue sounded somewhat wooden to me, and structurally, a little archaic. That said, he wrote with passion and a strange kind of poetry. Some people love the way Jack wrote. I'm more fond of his art.

PAUL GULACY

ARTIST/INKER/CREATOR

Jack Kirby as a writer—well, he was my 'king' in that arena, also! I didn't know he was capable of stirring dialogue and exceptional editing until I came across *New Gods* and *Kamandi* in the early '70s.

Wow.

Jack delivered the words for those 'Fourth Worlders' and 'New Agers' and 'Futuristic Animals' (humans, apes, tigers, bears, rats, bats, and so on) and

though they didn't *sound* like '70s New Yorkers, that was okay. They were *aliens* and *mutations* or *residents* of an apocalyptic hell-to-come, and so their stilted speech-making was appropriate.

As far as Kirby's editing went, it went *just fine*! The King kept his add-ons to the DCU coherent and well-developed, bringing in mystery, romance, murder, high concept inventions, intrigue, and fallen heroes (the deaths of Seagrin, Flower, and the announcement that Jim Harper, the original Guardian, had been gunned down by an Intergang punk still resonate strongly) at times, proved that the war of the gods and the World To Come was going to/and would produce real casualties. *Grim-and-gritty* may have started with Jack, when you get down to it....

Tears flowed for the innocent Flower in the *Kamandi* series. Sure, it was somewhat derivative of the *Planet of the Apes* series, but *Kamandi* meant more to me. The twenty-ninth issue with the contest to decide who'd carry on for the legendary Man of Steel... I can only say, just super!

And Kirby's writing and editing on all of his solo '70s and '80s efforts were... equally super.

(previous page, top)
Just for Dwight Boyd:
cover art for Forever
People #8.

(previous page,
bottom) Mike Royer
recently inked over the
King's pencils yet
again for this wonder-
ful look at Lightray of
New Genesis.

(below) Even in full
body armor, Special
Powers Division lovely
Big Barda strikes a
sultry pose in this out-
standing 2012 illustra-
tion by Bill Morrison.



BILL MORRISON 2012



GILBERT 'BETO' HERNANDEZ

WRITER/ARTIST/CREATOR

Jack Kirby never gets enough credit as writer. I think Jack's always being compared to Stan Lee from the days when he scripted Jack's comics. Stan was real good at engaging us, bringing a humanity to the stories that might not have been so much in the forefront of the stories if they were told without Stan. On the other hand, a lot of the times Stan would go too soft and simplistic with the women characters as in them feeling 'faint' when up against the odds. Hooey! Jack's women, without Stan, stood up to the odds in a fun, exciting no-holds barred way. Big Barda was a great Wonder Woman substitute, whipping butt and taking names unlike WW, who was not allowed to enjoy knocking heads (except in the 1940s), but she was allowed to grit her teeth at least. Nyuk. Jack's dialogue was fine, purposefully tongue-in-cheek, which I think so many readers for years have misunderstood. It's supposed to read strange because super-hero comics are strange! These are nutty adventure comics and Jack took that all the way. That's my take on it, anyway. Long live the king!

ROY THOMAS

EDITOR/WRITER/CREATOR

I'll admit that I wasn't overly wild about Jack's dialogue in comics of the 1960s or after, whether in the occasional Marvel story before he left, or in his DC comics, or in his Marvel or other work later. His phrasing often got in my way of enjoying even *The New Gods*, my favorite of his "Fourth World" books—yet I did admire many of his concepts. But at least through *The Eternals*, I would always read them all the way





through because he would be telling an imaginative story. He was one of the greats... no doubt about it.

ROB KNUIST TWMORROWS CONTRIBUTOR

It's been decades, of course, but Kirby-the-writer/editor still blows my mind when the comic titles of *OMAC* and *The Eternals* come up in conversation.

OMAC was both the hope and the nightmare of an uncertain future to come. Jack had done a sequential art riff on Orwell's *1984* and given us a Brother Eye who could monitor human activity from far, far away. Today we can put micro-chips in our pets and locate them if they're within a decent range of us. Some inventors talk of being able to gift us with technology to keep us "permanently online" if we wish. Ye gads...

Kirby's high-tech concepts and the expansion of the notion of the modified super-human (a one-man army, in this case) resonate strongly today in a world that's in awe and trepidation of technological achievements that both aid and dwarf mere mortals.

When I first discovered *The Eternals* (issue #1, like a lot of you), I was somewhat chagrined, at first. I gritted my teeth. "If Jack still has stories to tell about the gods," I hissed, "why wasn't he at DC still continuing the cosmic conflicts between the warrior deities of New Genesis and Apokolips?!" My mood got worse as I flipped through the comic's first issue.

"Who was this *Ike Harris* character? Is he what Kirby fans really need right now?! I want more of Mister Miracle, Big Bear, Metron, Granny Goodness, Highfather, and the Infinity Man!"

Begrudgingly, I gave it a chance. And I loved it. Here was the King's take on Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods* with god-mutated baddies (the Deviants), new rifts on old gods/immortals/myths—Icarus, Mercury, Circe, and Zeus.

Unlike the New Gods, these Eternals are poised to *return* to Earth from times past, and the stage is set for a theater of war between powerful entities and their creations. 'King' Kirby carved out his own arenas for celestial conflicts *again*, as an inspired author-artist, and though the run was sadly short-lived (like *OMAC*), it ultimately paid big dividends for Marvel in the long run... as so many of Jack's characters and concepts would do.

One beautiful summer day, crowds may flock outside of multiplexes around the country to see Daniel Craig as Ikaris in a blockbuster science-fiction film called *The Eternals: Return of the Gods*...or Hugh Jackman, Vin Diesel, or Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson might suit up as *OMAC: One Man Army Corps*.

Don't count out Kirby concepts on things like that...

FRED HEMBECK WRITER/ARTIST/CREATOR

I was nine years old when I first encountered Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's work in 1962's *Fantastic Four* #4. I was immediately smitten, and for the next 8 years, I read every single story the pair produced for Marvel Comics. The last few years, while still solid, seemed pedestrian by comparison with their earlier work, so while I was disappointed with the news that the team was splitting up and that Jack would soon be writing his own material over at DC Comics, I recall being properly intrigued as well. After all, what could go wrong?

Well, maybe that 1970 *Amazing Adventures* Inhumans episode scripted by Jack (assigned perhaps as a last ditch attempt to hold onto their star artist?), the one that featured the perpetually silent Black Bolt with a thought balloon hovering over his head, maybe *that* might've provided a clue?

Look, I *wanted* to love the Fourth World books—and there was certainly a lot to like—but I just couldn't get into Jack's stilted, old-fashioned dialogue, with the lettering's oft-times inexplicable bold emphasis and odd use of quotation marks. By the time these books hit the stands, it seemed as if darn near every writer in the field was doing their own version of Stan Lee—everyone that is, except (ironically) the one man who worked closest with Lee for the longest time, Jack Kirby. (Okay, in

(previous page, top) No one opted to comment on the Black Panther, but Paul Gulacy opted (thanks, Paul) to let us use this Kirby-esque action pose of the Wakandan king to accompany his comments.

(previous page, bottom) Splash page pencils for Forever People #7. And *Beautiful Dreamer* gets the Gilbert 'Beto' Hernandez treatment (and great treatment, at that!) in this wonderful piece supplied by the artist for this article.

(left) A number of our respondents dug the Eternals, so we're showing the Baycon 3 cover (San Francisco-Oakland) for '77 which Kirby attended. Inks are by Steve Leialoha.



After Joe Kubert gave Jerry his comments about Jack's writing and editing (all positive), he sent this scan of the original art for the cover of *Our Fighting Forces* #135. Joe and Jack both made the Losers winners.



fairness, none of Ditko's later writing resembled Stan's either.) Beyond the actual quality of the word-smithing, the sprawling nature of the Fourth World was unfortunately ahead of its time, and ill-served by being released in mostly bi-monthly segments. While I stuck with the series until the bitter end, I'll admit to bailing out on later issues of *Kamandi*, *OMAC*, and "The Losers," something I would've thought heresy just a few years earlier.

However, I managed to re-rev my enthusiasm for Jack's work upon his return to Marvel in the mid-Seventies, even if his scripting seemed more out of step with his surroundings than ever. After all, following the extended inventiveness of Steve Englehart's run on *Captain America*, it was tough to work up any excitement for my favorite character's encounter with the Madbomb, y'know? But I tried to keep an open mind, and found I enjoyed Jack's work on new characters like *The Eternals* and *Machine Man* more than on his versions of old favorites. In particular, I thought his work—scripting included—on a pair of extended Treasury Editions (*Captain America's Bicentennial Battles* and a belated adaptation of the landmark film *2001: A Space Odyssey*) was exemplary. I watched the Kubrick flick recently for the first time in decades, and couldn't help but recall how impressed I was not only with Jack's visual interpretation, but also how he made an overload of verbiage in adapting a mostly silent cinematic experience actually work on the comics page!

In recent years, nearly all of the Kirby scripted material from the Seventies has found its way into deluxe hardcovers—and onto my bookshelf. I tell myself I need to give them all a fresh read and reassess his approach without the baggage of the pre-conceived notions of my teen years, and maybe someday, I'll actually find the time to do so. Somehow, though, that *Fantastic Four Omnibus* always seems to be the one I grab for a quick read...

DON GLUT

AUTHOR/COMIC WRITER/FILMMAKER

It's a given that, when it came to visualizing and drawing dynamic action in comic books and strips, Jack Kirby had few, if any, equals. But Jack was not *just* an illustrator; he was a fantastic storyteller, able to break down a typewritten script usually scribed by once-partner Joe Simon or, in later years, Stan Lee into

a series of connected panels that always advanced the narrative and were never dull. Sometimes, as with working with Stan, Jack had only a meager plot from which to work, which he then proceeded to flesh out into a complete visual story that flowed from one panel to the next, from beginning to end. Jack knew, learning from some of the best writers in the industry, how visually to depict a great yarn.

Not surprisingly, being well aware of his own ability to tell stories via a sequence of illustrated panels, Jack gradually developed a yearning to write and even edit his own original tales. He saw his wish fulfilled when, during the 1970s, Jack made a sweet deal with DC Comics to create *i.e.*, write, draw *and* edit—his own niche in that company's super-hero universe that he (or someone else) dubbed Kirby's Fourth World. From that point on in his career, having established his triple-threat talents with such titles as *Forever People*, *New Gods*, and *Mister Miracle*, and whether working for DC, Marvel, or the independent companies, Jack Kirby was his own boss, doing everything except inking and lettering.

Although few fans and professionals find fault with Jack Kirby's artistic skills, much criticism has been directed over the years towards his writing and editorial abilities. Although personally finding only few faults with his drawings, I have been one of many comic

(top) The King did a few *Inhumans* stories in 1970 before heading to DC, so Fred Hembeck gave us 'the lighter side' of the royal family in '08 and let us use this image for our article. He has our thanks.

(this page) More *Eternals*, this time cover pencils for issue #2.



book writers who have vocally noted weakness in Jack's ability to write believable dialogue and to name characters. But I believe we have not been considering the Big Picture, and as it applies to Jack, that picture is Enormous. Jack, in my opinion, was a macro—not micro—writer. Though not a physically large man, Jack's thought processes were gigantic, his mind and pencil creating entire species, races, pantheons, mythologies, worlds, and entire universes. His imagination was enormous, boundless; it was just with some minor details like naming a character (Granny Goodness?) or putting words into that character's mouth that he often had problems. Compared to the gestalt of his creative work, I think those problems can be forgiven.

The bottom line is that Jack Kirby knew better than most of his peers how to tell and delineate a good and often great story, whether he or someone else had written it; and when that tale happened to have been scribed by a Joe Simon (*Boys' Ranch*, *Sandman*, "Newsboy Legion," etc.) or Stan Lee (*Fantastic Four*, *Thor*, *Captain America*, etc.), the result was pure magic.

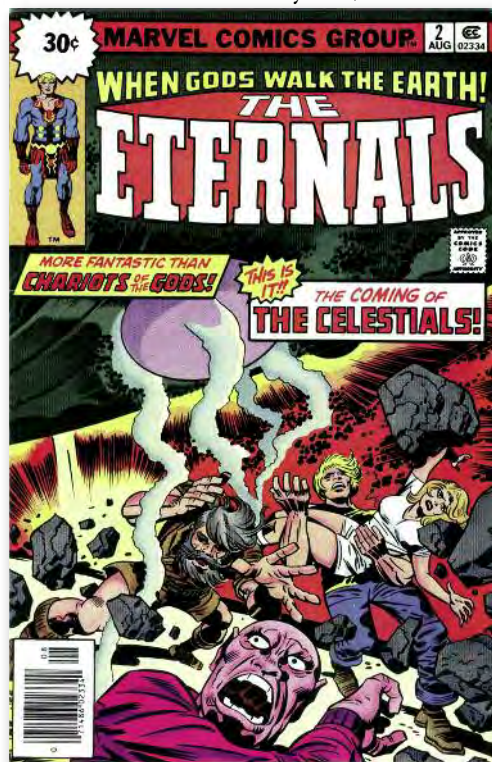
GEORGE PÉREZ CREATOR/ARTIST

I appreciate Jack as a storyteller, but trying to be as kind as possible, Jack was not the greatest writer. I could see what he was trying to do, and how he was accompanying that great cartooning with his concepts, costuming, etc., to his writing and editing, but it didn't work... for me, at least.

And Kirby was never formally trained to be a writer, so without Stan Lee or Joe Simon to guide him, you could really tell the difference.

SCOTT FRESINA TWMORROWS CONTRIBUTOR

Kirby's special function as a comic book writer/plotter/layout artist was very specific and unique to the form and its demographic at the time, which was almost solely young boys and the burgeoning teen comic book market. Jack was never really a scripter, in the usual sense. He's a comic book storyteller, and as such the mechanics of



his creative approach was different from most comic writers.

Jack understood better than anyone working in the field that to compete and succeed, a storyteller had to deliver the visual *wow* factor. In this way he shares the approach of another baby boomer icon, Ray Harryhausen—and that is, that ultimately, the story progresses through



(next page, top) George Pérez worked on the new X-Men in the late '70s, and here's an unpublished marker drawing from 1979 of Phoenix. Of course, Jack knew her as Marvel Girl in the '60s.

increasingly dramatic and exciting visual set pieces. This is why it's no surprise that characters like the Silver Surfer and many others are pure constructs that Jack came up with all on his own to give the story stronger visual appeal. This is the stuff we all remember.

I would include Kirby's imaginative machinery and weapons as part of this function as well. You'll notice that rarely in a super-hero story illustrated by Jack, does anyone just whip out a revolver when threatened. It's more often than not a real big heavy-duty asymmetrical blaster sporting a silencer or scope of some sort. Maybe it's even got a heavy cable running off the gun butt and attached to some kind of sci-fi power backpack! But that's Jack for ya—more bang for the buck... or in those days, only 12 cents.

Go back and look at a fairly early example in *FF* #10, page 15. Dr. Doom (disguised as Reed Richards) hypothesizes in just a couple panels about theories of alternate evolution. His explanation takes only about 4 or 5 sentences, but to give the sequence some graphic oomph, Jack gives us an establishing (flashback?) panel of dinosaurs battling on the primordial Earth before the dawn of man, followed by Doom's conjecture—a scene wherein a crew of man-sized astronaut dinosaurs set up equipment after landing on an alien world.

My point is, the artist of this story could have just given us Doom talking for a couple panels, but because of Kirby's lavish budget (his imagination), we get to see something far more interesting.

But if you need to hear a firsthand account of the man's genius for visually storytelling, just queue up the *Fantastic Four* 1.5 DVD and listen to Len Wein's telling anecdote about an unexpectedly dynamic splash page for *Captain America* that Kirby created based on Len's short description of the scene.

This is probably why when left to his own devices, Jack was more likely to give you a story big on action and scope, and less concerned with character, as he vaulted from one astonishing action piece to the next.

SERGIO ARAGONÉS

CREATOR/WRITER/ARTIST

I was a fan. *Kamandi* was one of my favorite comics and I was always amazed by the integrity of the man—the way he conducted himself all of his life.

The idea concepts, the stories, of course, the take he had [on the future] was different... and unique! It was believable! It was so incredible but so real!!

NEAL ADAMS

ARTIST/WRITER/CREATOR

Okay, obviously Jack was a good writer, but when you're overwhelmed by deadlines and less-time-to-get-it-done, well... Jack's dialoguing was what suffered in the long run. As a plotter and a storyteller, he was the best in the business. And everyone got used to, even spoiled by that, with Stan Lee at Marvel souping up the dialogue. So his dialogue wasn't



there. It really became quite primitive, at DC, and a lot of it came from the fact that he had to get out so many pages in those four gods books, so that the dialogue just didn't "sparkle"... like it did with Stan.

I think even Jack might've admitted the writing and concepts should've been tightened up. I believe Stan would readily admit that he wasn't doing the writing. He was co-plotting or just dialoguing and some people would say that the dialoguing wasn't really important, but it was—and Stan's contribution, in that aspect, and editing, etc., was tremendous.

JERRY BOYD

TWOMORROWS CONTRIBUTOR

"There came a time when the old gods died..." (*New Gods* #1, 1970) and there'd come a time when the new gods would die (*The Hunger Dogs*, 1985)... or would they?

Jack Kirby's 'ultimates' would die, temporarily, in print, with the wedding of Scott Free and Big Barda in *Mister Miracle* #18 in 1974. However, there'd be "new light" (again) in the 1980s and they'd get a new lease on their celestial lives with DC Comics green-lighting *The Hunger Dogs* graphic novel for publication.

Had the King ended his god-war circa 1978 or so, when that stunning pencil splash heralding "Last Battle" appeared (before the pleasantly surprised eyes of this Kirby fan and thousands of others), it would've been truly a climax for all time, worthy of the highest plaudits of comicdom, and served up by the master storyteller at another peak of his considerable powers.

Still, in '85, with action figures



named Steppenwolf, Orion, Desaad, Kalibak, etc., at toy stores, and his penciling no longer as tight as it once was, Jack's skills from a writing and editing standpoint could still reach up to the peaks of Mt. Olympus, or more apropos for this commentary and his "New Agers," the heights mounted by the soaring orbital city, Supertown.

Before going on, Jack's writing and dialogue worked for me in the 1970s. Aliens weren't supposed to sound like Reed Richards, Steve Rogers, Victor von Doom, or Jane Foster.

Lightray, in *New Gods* #3, observed, "Oblivion! I face oblivion!" It worked for me.

And, on the other hand, Jack's dialogue could soar at times as strongly as Stan Lee's Marvel-ous dialogue.

Shiloh Norman: "Wow! Hey man, were you caught out in the storm?!"

Darkseid: "I *am* the storm!" (*Mister Miracle* #18)

"No deal, Mister Miracle! We'll go down that old shark's mouth together!! — Then I'll beat her to death from the inside!!" (Barda to Scott in *Mister Miracle* #7)

"Izaya's whelp, eh? This will hurt him!! He's surrendered his prize lamb... for a tiger!!" (Darkseid to Granny Goodness in *New Gods* #7)

Good, bad, and *even ugly* dialogue aside, Kirby's editing was largely very solid. He understood history's lessons and felt familiar enough with the disparate elements he'd gathered in this cosmic struggle for his *magnum opus*. Other contributors to this magazine have linked his WWII experiences and those beyond his knowledge then (but reported by historians later), and monsters and his old gods for Marvel, the *Bible*, European histories, the *Torah*—all got stirred, stewed, and brewed into this "final, terrible war of the gods."

Though a brilliant, magnificent effort overall, some of the editing needed work, as I saw it. Why did the Infinity Man bother to come in to fight battles that the



young Forever People couldn't win? Why did the Black Racer, the harbinger of death for all men and gods, need a host body/secret identity? Where did the Anti-Life Equation go when Billion-Dollar Bates was killed *and* how many Earthmen had it? What, if any, was the secret super power of Scott Free? As the son of Highfather, it seemed logical for him to be a "power being" as Kirby succinctly described the New Gods in a caption.

Had the King had more time, I'm sure his growing editorial skills would've linked everything together nicely. Still, it's easy to conjecture Smiling Stan (as his editor) muttering in 1972, "Uh, Jack... this arrangement Mark Moonrider and his family unit has with... the Infinity Man... it should be explained in a pin-up page or in your letters column by now... something."

Overall, however, Kirby's editing was outstanding. He actually made Jimmy Olsen and Superman more *interesting* than they'd been in years, and overseeing his own writing, he came up with an impressive number of the most suspenseful, original, and dramatic moments of the super-hero *oeuvre* in the 1970s.

(previous page, top) It's the FF, drawn by Sergio Aragonés and inked by Joe Sinnott, from Sergio Aragonés Massacres Marvel.

(top) We never got The Hunger Dogs with all the "fangs" that Jack might've given the big finish, but this late '70s cover teaser still stands as one of the King's most powerful works, and one of Jerry Boyd's personal favorites.

(below) This striking portrait of Neal Adams' Deadman begged to be used for this piece! Kirby used the character in two issues of the Forever People, as shown in these pencils from issue #9 (previous page).

Jack resisted the urge to give Shilo Norman any "jive turkey" dialogue, and instead kept his patter quite readable, even by today's standards. Examples from *Mister Miracle* #16 (below) and #18 (right).

Back to *The Hunger Dogs*.

If Jack had been frustrated by commercial considerations to keep Orion, Darkseid, Steppenwolf, and their ilk alive in '85 and afterwards (Darkseid's uncle was killed in "The Pact" in *New Gods* #7), he didn't signal it to the fan press or in this majestic graphic novel at the time. He produced a masterful opus, reintroducing the pivotal visionaries of Himon and (surprise!) Esak, who'd sadly become a pitiable, twisted travesty of his once-optimistic and scientifically minded self.

We saw Lightray and Orion together again, standing in as the Allied pincers that crushed Hitler's forces between them as they marched to victory. In the end, the Reich pinned its hopes on "wonder weapons" like the V-1 and V-2, and Kirby unleashed Micro-mark's deadly potential onto New Genesis soil. Orion would find love in Bekka, Himon's daughter. The Hunger Dogs, shaken, shamed,



scarred, and scared of Darkseid's excesses, threw off their fears of him long enough to rise, attack his guards, and force a conflagration of their own upon the constructs and land dominated by the master of the holocaust.

Himon and Esak were killed. New Genesis was blown to atoms. Orion and Darkseid—the "Presence of Pure and Total Destruction" and his father, the Lord of "Total Power"—didn't kill or destroy each other. The King told *Amazing Heroes* in 1984 that his conclusion would answer a lot of questions and use most of the characters from the four titles he produced in the 1970s.

Unfortunately, this didn't come about. There'd be questions that would never be answered...

Still, *The Hunger Dogs*, as realized with warts and all, scales the plateaus of greatness, and as a singular work, provides the icing on a multi-layered cake filled with some of the finest storytelling imaginable at a king's table.

And I'll take this occasion to point out that I did contact Mr. Joe Simon and Mr. Stan Lee some years ago to ask them their thoughts about Mr. Kirby's editing and writing for this piece. Both men said they never read Jack's solo comics.

Go figure...

Again, special thanks go out to all involved and this is respectfully dedicated to Messieurs Infantino, Kubert, and Ayers—celestials all!

Thanks to Roy Thomas and Paul Sager for contact information. And special thanks to Michael Aushenker, who went above and beyond with his *Machine Man* piece, which unfortunately couldn't be included for space reasons. You'll see it in a future issue. ★

The latest on the search for Jack's Galactus origin, by Glen Gold

As we were hitting presstime for this issue, Glen had just tracked down the owner of a complete book from this Galactus story arc that we haven't seen pages from before. So hopefully the margin notes will reveal more details of what happened. Stay tuned for more!

[In TJKC #63, Glen Gold examined the connection between Fantastic Four #74-77 and Thor #158-169. Both of these runs appear to have major discrepancies, and Glen suggests it was due to Stan Lee rejecting material that Jack submitted. Stan had plans for the Silver Surfer solo title, without Jack's knowledge or involvement. Meanwhile, Jack had embarked on bringing back the Surfer in FF, planning to reveal his origin for the character. When Stan saw Jack's direction for the Surfer was in conflict with his own plans, he made Jack rework his FF story arc in midstream. Jack, upon discovering that his signature character was being taken from him, decided to revise his plans and the rejected FF artwork, and give Galactus an origin in Thor—which lead to more rejected and reworked issues (many pages from which ended up in the Marvelmania Portfolio), and a real mess of a storyline. Glen is still tracking down more details to support his hypothesis, as he shows here.]

So little art has surfaced from either of these storylines, it's frustrating—obviously, if you had complete issues of FF #74-77 and Thor #160-162 and #167-169 to look at, with margin notes and editorial fixes, you'd have a much better clue of what went wrong and where Kirby juggled pages in and out of the narrative.

I very much think that FF #76 was going to end with Galactus coming down to Earth to get the Surfer,

who would be fighting Psycho-Man. There are many permutations of how that could have gone (could Psycho-Man, with his control of emotions, compel Galactus to explain how the Surfer was created?). It could mean the Galactus pencil splash [see TJKC #63, page 89] would have been the ending of FF #76... or maybe Jack drew it for Thor #162. It's hard to say.

Interestingly, Jack originally intended that floating Psycho-Man head in the last panel of FF #76 to follow the other two panels in that bottom tier, and Stan made him erase it, to turn it into a "Coming Attractions" sort of thing. I think this supports my idea—Jack got part-way through that book, and had a phone call or something with Stan, who turned him around mid-page, pulled the rug out, and needed him to change course instantly. He uncharacteristically sent Jack a lettering script for the last page, to make sure Jack changed it to fit his plans.



Here's some more evidence about uprooting the FF story and putting it in Thor. You know how Jack was pathologically incapable of drawing tech the same way twice? Galactus never has the same spaceship from issue to issue, much less adventure to adventure. Except once.

Shown at left is the first panel from FF #74. The one at right is from Thor #160. How odd is that? ★

GALLERY 2

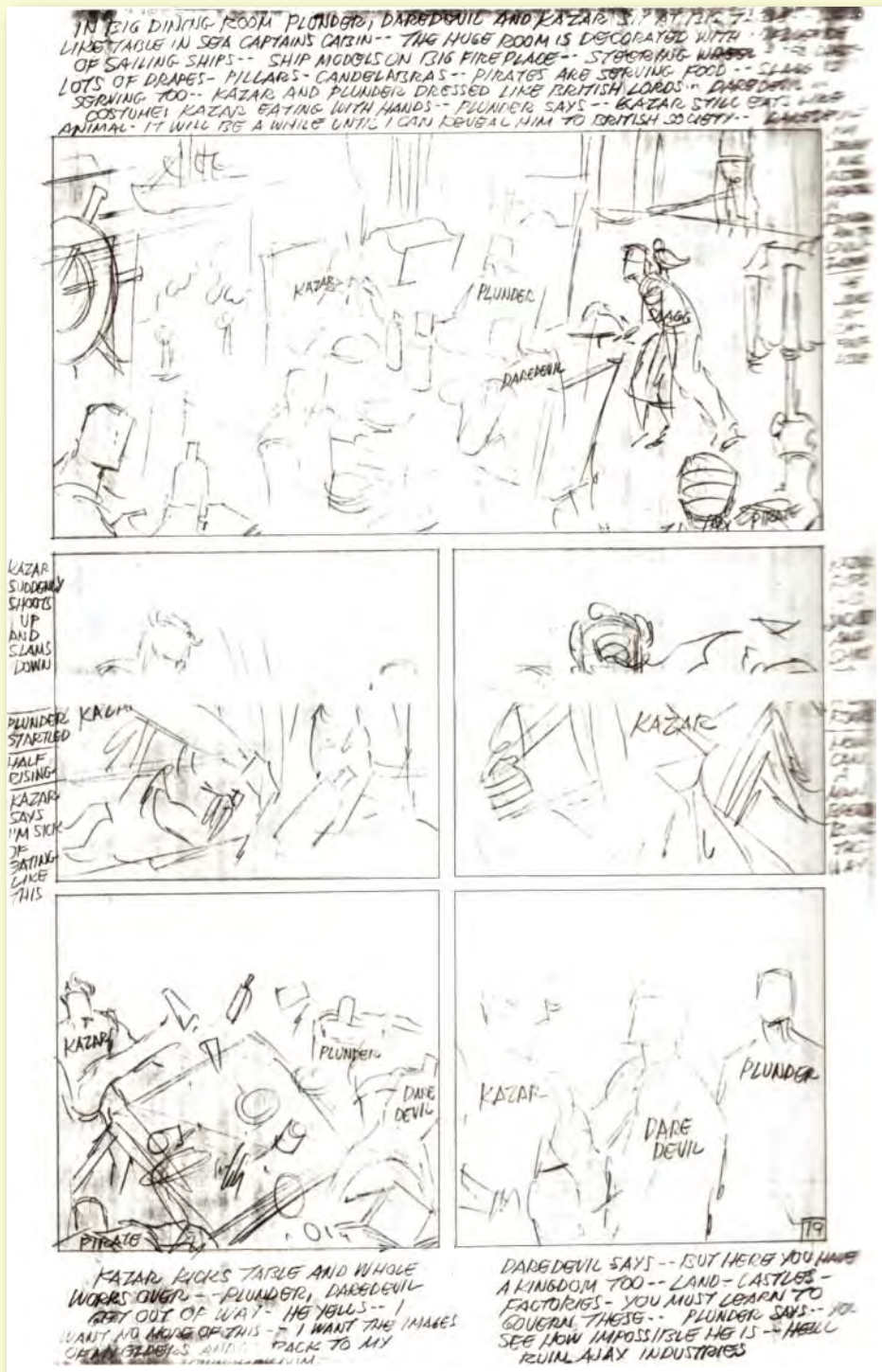
REWRITE OR REWRONG?

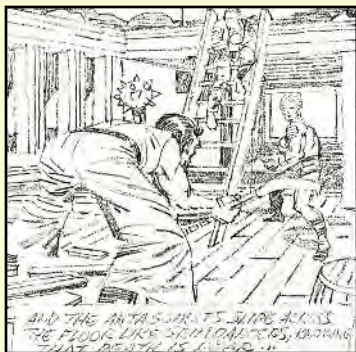
Commentary by Shane Foley

Jack Kirby had written hundreds of comics, either solo or with Joe Simon, by the time he returned to Marvel in the late 1950s. How well did he adapt to working with others?

Marvel layout pages (1960s)

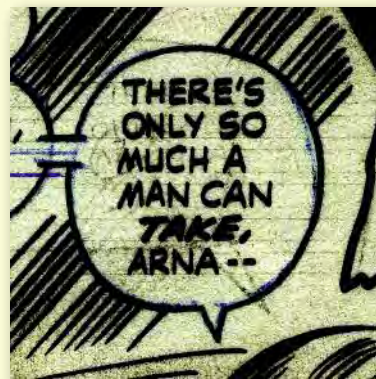
Presented here are two layout pages by Kirby—one that was used (from Tales of Suspense #70, page 8) and one that wasn't (from Daredevil #13). It's insightful to see how George Tuska took the already lettered rough layouts and redrew over the top of them. We see clearly how Kirby's power, but not artistic style, was preserved when another artist drew the final pencils from layouts like these. Both examples show voluminous notes regarding the plot, and since they don't read like simplified reminder notes, they are surely indicative that the scripter was being handed a story he wasn't familiar with.





DC 1970s work with other scripters

Sometimes, pencil copies of this period show that Kirby put the lettering from the script onto the page. Other copies show he hasn't done that. Why? Was it just because of how he felt on the day? Or were some writers working "Marvel Method" with Jack, giving him a plot only? Some Kamandi #39 & 40 panels show penciled lettering still visible that isn't Kirby's. Were these just Mike Royer's guidelines for himself? Or is there someone else involved? Notice how beautifully complete all the pages are. Note also how on the Justice Inc. page—marked as issue #5, but published as #4—Mike Royer, in his inking, omits the coattails in the final panel, presumably because previously the coat was drawn buttoned-up.



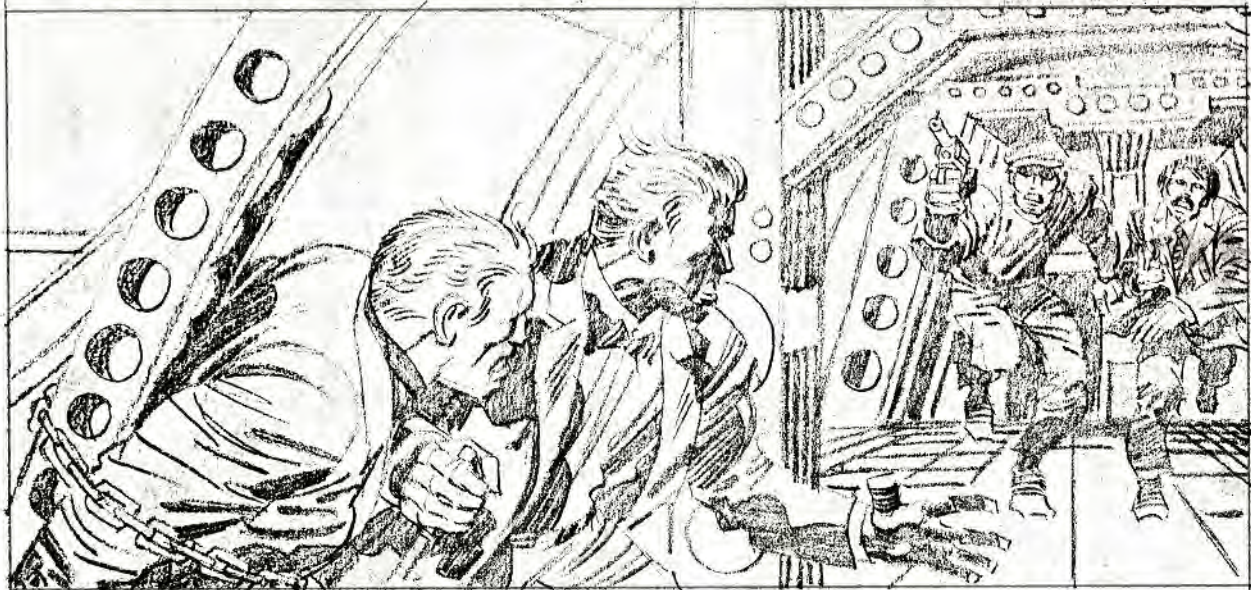
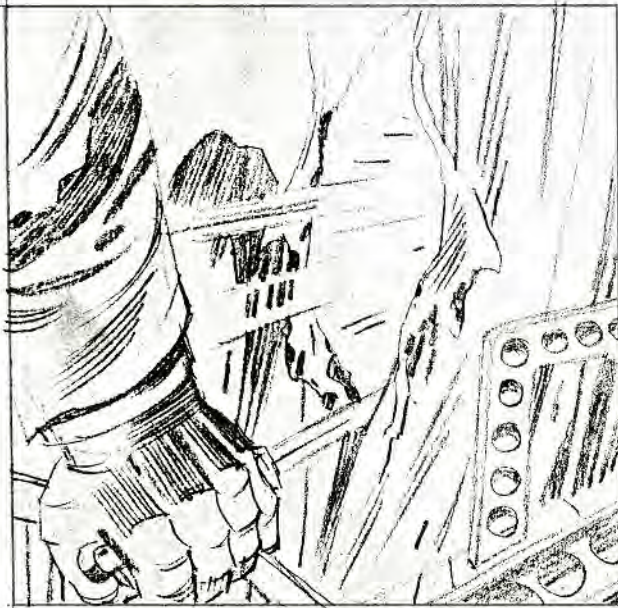
Tom Kraft enhanced some Kamandi original art pages, and this is what he found:

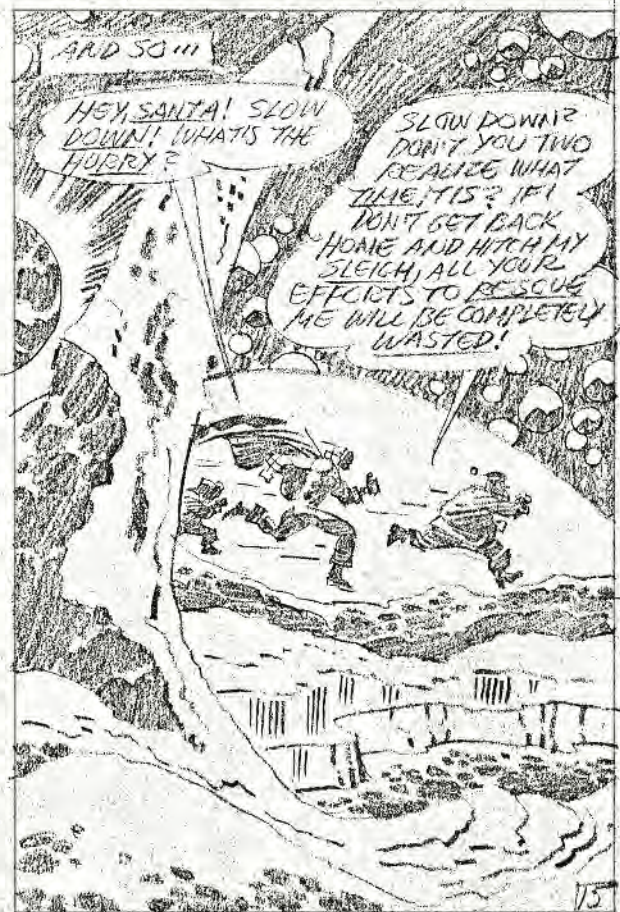
(above top) Kamandi #39, page 13:
You can see someone put the dialogue in here, but it doesn't look like Jack's writing, so likely Gerry Conway's. But Jack still left his mark on the pencils (left), by drawing a character in panel one that looks an awful lot like Kirby himself.

(above center) Kamandi #40, Page 14:
You can see Jack's writing labeling this as Chapter Three, but it was Chapter Four. And you can again see penciled writing that doesn't look like Jack's.

(top left) Richard Dragon, Kung Fu Fighter #3, page 16:
Denny O'Neil provided the scripting on this issue, while Jack chose to write the script onto the pencil art.

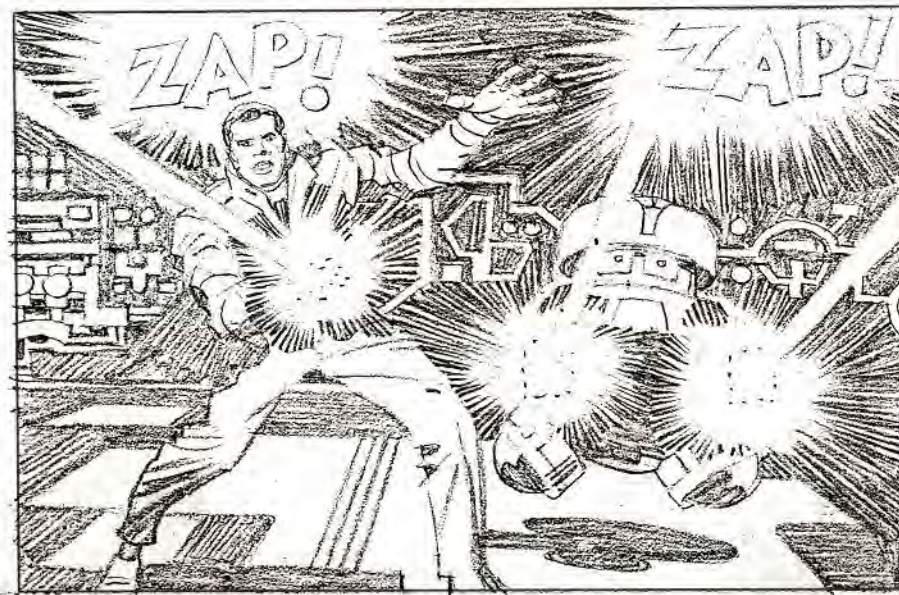
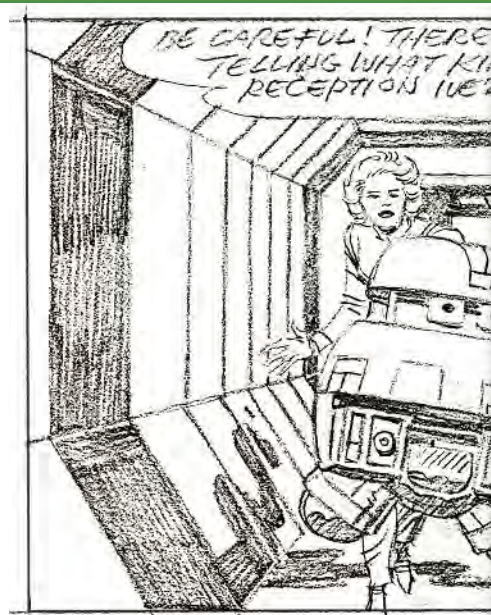
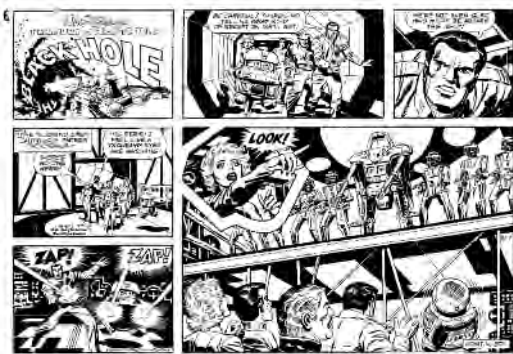
(next two pages) Justice Inc. #4, p age 14, and Sandman #7, page 15:
This time, Jack didn't write Denny O'Neil's script on the Justice Inc. art, but did jot down Michael Fleisher's script on the Sandman story.

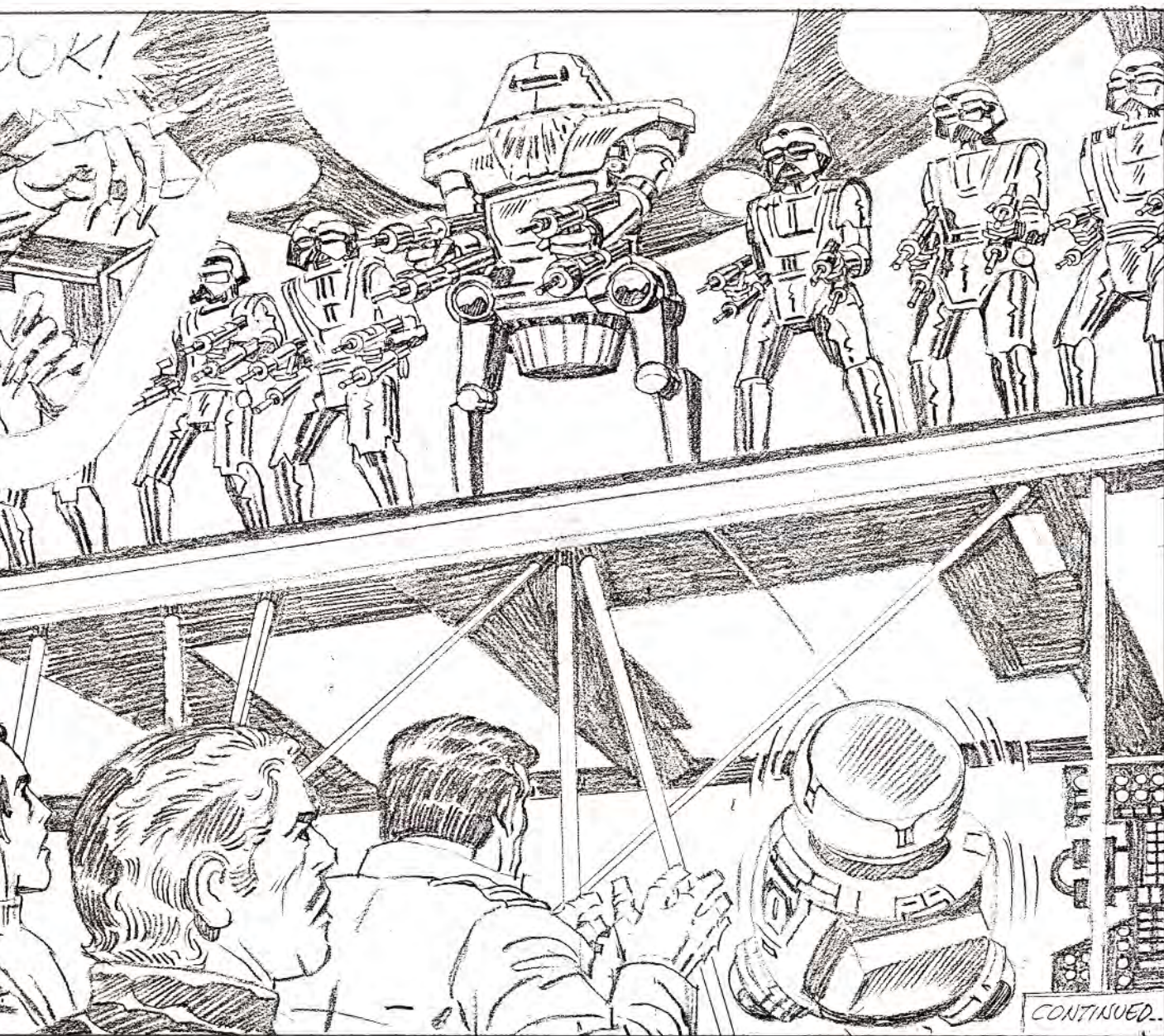




Disney's Black Hole Strip (Oct. 7, 1979)

Mike Royer has spoken about having to "correct" Kirby's Black Hole work, to keep the robots and other features "on model." Can we spot any need for that to happen in this episode? I wonder if Kirby found the limitations of this strip difficult, operating without the freedom of his own designs as well as having to be more consistent than normal, but then too having the enforced panel arrangement, so editorial hands could rearrange the strip into a vertical format.





CONTINUED..



Galactus has scored a direct hit! The Surfer reels, mortally wounded.

Dazed, weakened, out of control, he plummets to the ground, where--

His inert form strikes the side of a building, dislodging him from his omnipresent, space-spanning board.

Slowly, helplessly, he falls; till his battle-scarred body strikes the pavement below-- till the faint, remaining spark of life inexorably starts to fade...

Page Twenty

Panel One----- When the sinister light begins to fade the Surfer can once again be clearly seen by the crowds. He is sorely stricken and charred as if the very substances which drives and illuminates his presence has been savagely withdrawn from his body by that blinding force .

Panel Two----- Actually, this is what has happened. The Silver Surfer's vital spark is on the point of being snuffed out. He uses what fading energy he has left to make an erratic glide to the streets below. Life as he knows it, is leaving his body at a rapid rate.

Panel Three----- The Surfer and his board fairly bounce off the ground when they hit. At this ~~exact~~ point there could be a mention of the mystic rapport between the surfer and his board. It is like an extension of his own being and seems to have suffered in his own exact fashion.

Panel Four----- As a witness to the Surfer's plight, the onlooker can only suffer with him. The SS can hardly crawl, much less fly. He is a distorted, blackened lump who cries out against his fate and vents his unswerving defiance of Galactus.

Panel Five----- The Surfer is sinking into oblivion. A small bright spark of light in one of his eye sockets is the only part of him that still blazes with a steady flame. When that disappears he will be dead. Somewhere within him is his own desperate struggle to rally the reserve to to keep that spark alive.

Panel Six----- Dialogue reactions from unseen onlookers accompany the apparent death scene. The Surfer can no longer hold his head up. It is slowly lowered with grim implications.

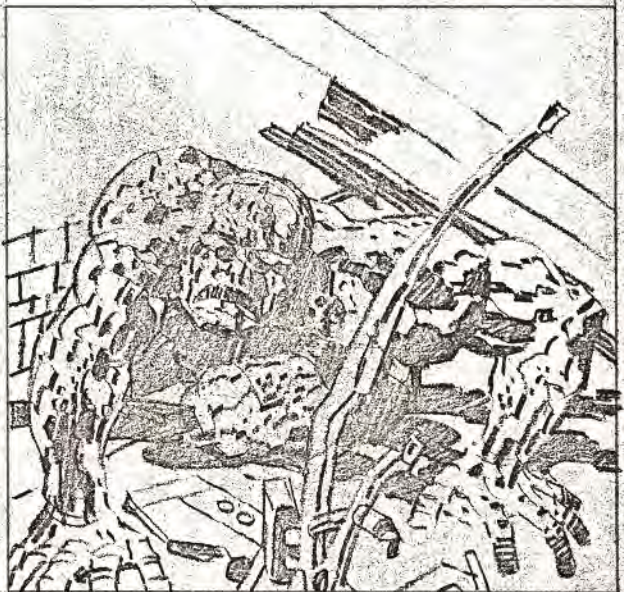
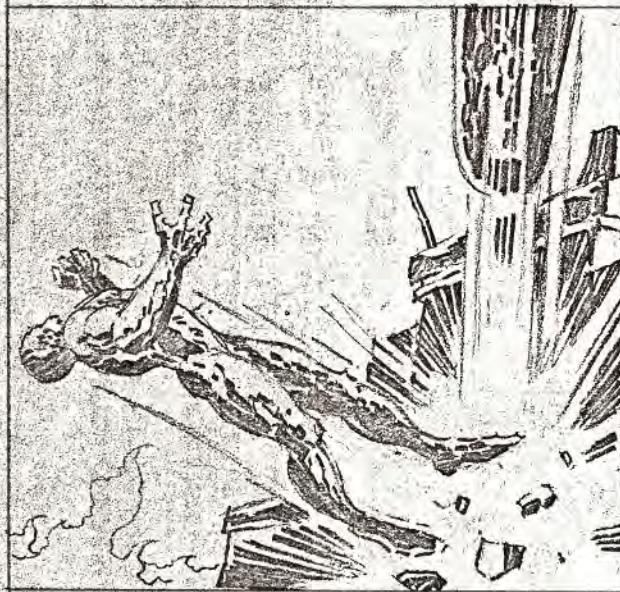
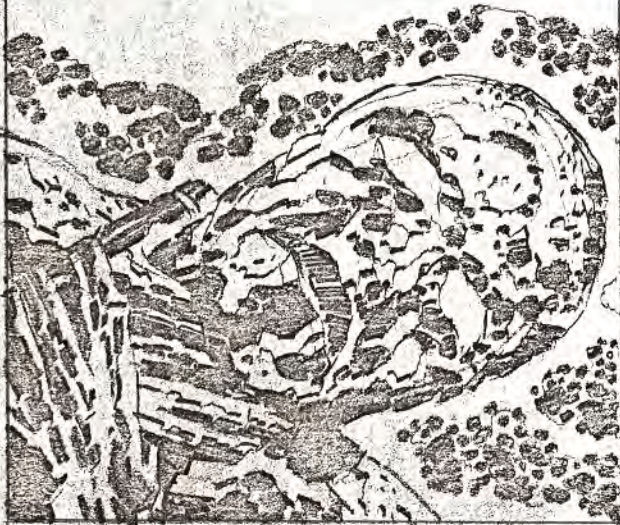


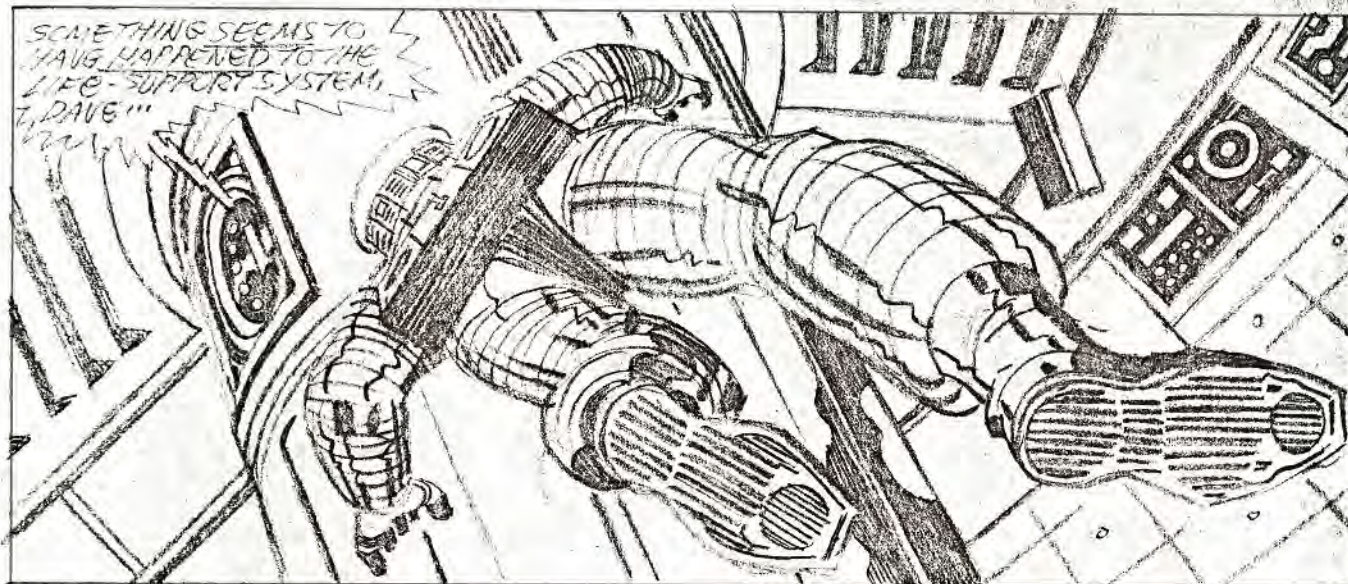
Marvel's Silver Surfer Graphic Novel (1978)

The difference between Kirby's typed, detailed plot (left) and what Stan Lee felt necessary to include in the final script (below) is clear from this comparison. Kirby wanted the crowd of onlookers involved from off-panel. Lee clearly didn't think so. Kirby felt explanation of what Galactus had done to the Surfer to be vital. Lee again disagreed. Lee's notes scribbled on the side of his copies show him getting a feel for what he thought he should script, and playing with the wording he'd eventually use.

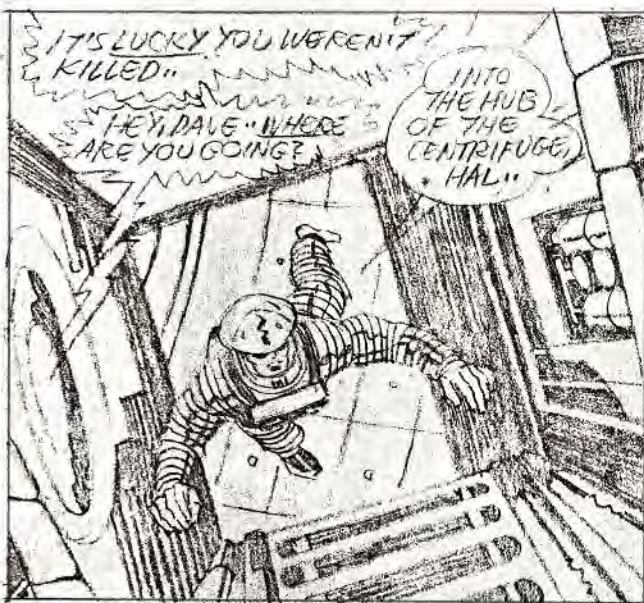
PAGE 20

1. CAPTION: Galactus has scored a DIRECT HIT! The Surfer reels, mortally wounded!
2. CAPTION: Dazed, weakened, out of control, he plummets to the ~~ground, where---~~
3. CAPTION: --His inert form strikes the side of a building, dislodging him ~~from~~ from his omnipresent, space-spanning board!
4. CAPTION: Slowly, helplessly, he falls; ~~he~~ till his battle-scarred body strikes the pavement below-- till the faint, remaining spark of life ~~inexorably starts to fade...~~
5. CAPTION: The end is near! The spark begins to fade! It grows dimmer, dimmer...
5. CAPTION: The end is near! The spark begins to dim! It grows weaker, fainter...
6. CAPTION: --Until, one final, haunting thought...
SS: ~~He~~ (THOT) My life-- is nothing! But-- if I perish-- Earth, and all its billions-- fall prey to Galactus!
SS: (THOT) It must not be! It-- must not-- be!





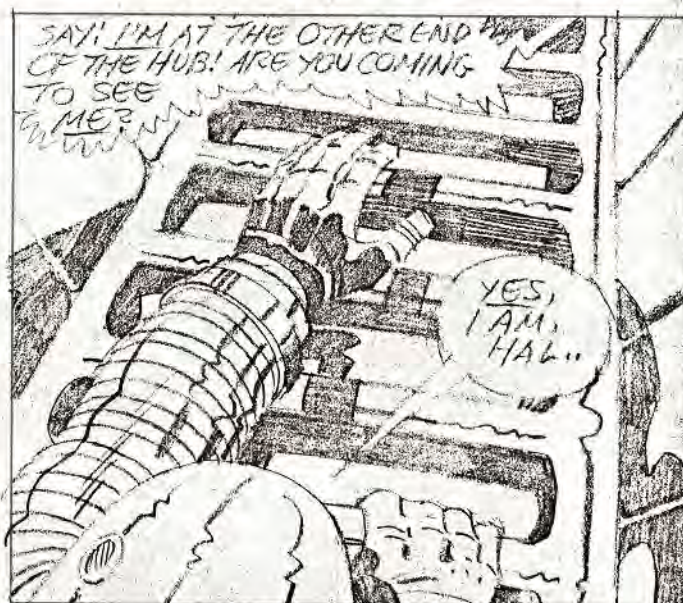
SOMETHING SEEMS TO
HAVE HAPPENED TO THE
LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEM,
DAVE!"



IT'S LUCKY YOU WEREN'T
KILLED!"

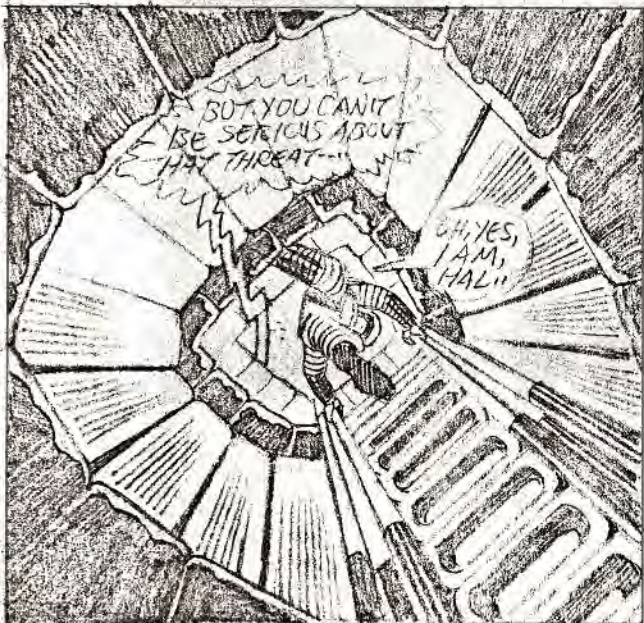
HEY, DAVE! WHERE
ARE YOU GOING?

INTO
THE HUB
OF THE
CENTRIFUGE,
HAL!"



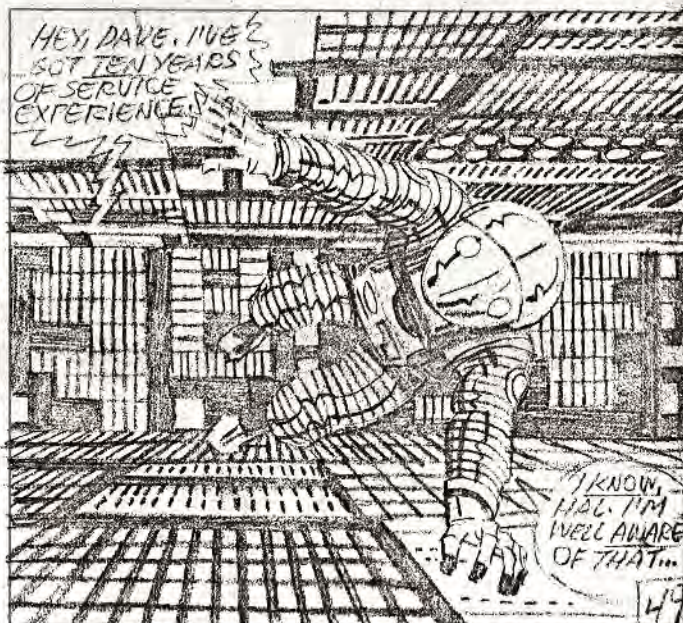
SAY, I'M AT THE OTHER END
OF THE HUB! ARE YOU COMING
TO SEE
ME?"

YES,
I AM,
HAL!"



BUT YOU CAN'T
BE SERIOUS ABOUT
THAT THREAT--"

OH, YES,
I AM,
HAL!"



HEY, DAVE, I'VE
GOT TEN YEARS
OF SERVICE
EXPERIENCE."

I KNOW,
HAL. I'M
WELL AWARE
OF THAT..."

49

(left) Marvel's 2001: A Space Odyssey Treasury Edition, page 49 (1976)

To quote Editor John Morrow: "Who better than Jack to take a film that not many people understood, and turn it into a comic that actually made more sense than the movie?" Beautifully tight pencil work from Kirby's first months back at Marvel mid-'70s, when he agreed to not only do this massive 70-page Treasury, but a 77-plus-page Captain America Treasury and a new Captain America Annual as well as his new regular comics. A staggering workload!



Eclipse's Destroyer Duck #3, page 13 (1983)

To think that Kirby, at this stage of his career and a master of the form, would work from a page layout given to him by another writer. But as we see, he's followed it to the letter. Was this a relief after all the years he'd composed his own pages? Or was it a difficulty, done only because he respected author Steve Gerber and his intentions? Alcala's inks made these pages look very different from Kirby's usual work, but as Wally Wood had done, created a wonderful and unique synthesis of styles. ★



PAGE THIRTEEN

(1)
ANGLE - BERYL'S DOOR.
As Duke rushes it, ramming it open with his shoulder.
DUKE: (GIST: OPEN UP! BRAD DESERVES EXPLANATION!)

(2)
INT. BERYL'S APARTMENT - HIGH ANGLE
As Duke comes bursting in -- and stops in his tracks, nonbatcock.
Beryl is taken not at all by surprise. She has planted herself in the center of the room, holding a red grenade over her head, poised to pull the pin if Duke comes one step closer. This would be shocking enough, but the room itself is also full of surprises.

It's a tiny efficiency, like Brad's, but its decor is even more spartan. There is no furniture, except in a cramped work area off to one side of the room. This consists of:

A drawing board, on which a large charcoal drawing of Vanilla Cupcake is in progress.

A work table piled with overstuffed loose-leaf and spiral notebooks.

A four-drawer file cabinet, the top drawer of which is open and overflowing with papers.

A steel secretarial chair. Art supplies -- tablets, charcoal pencils, brushes, paints, palette, etc. -- are strewn about the work area.

At the opposite end of the room is an exercise area, with gymnastic rings hung from the high ceiling, barbells of various sizes on the floor, etc.

Beryl's "bed" is three upended orange crates lined up lengthwise, with a pillow at one end.

The walls are virtually papered with pictures -- newspaper clippings, Beryl's own drawings, etc. -- of Godcorp employees! (Medea, Wobolina Strangelegs, Ned Packer, Sidney Upwind, etc.) On one wall hangs a picture of Vanilla Cupcake's mother. A dagger is stuck between the woman's eyes!

The window-shades are drawn to prevent anyone's seeing inside.

Except that the obsession is different, this could be the apartment of someone like Simon Wiesenthal, the Nazi-hunter.

DUKE: (DON'T WASTE A GOOD GRENADE, LADY...JUDGING FROM YER DECOR...WE'RE ON THE SAME SIDE...!)

(3)
ANGLE - DOOR OF APARTMENT

As Brad shakily enters. He looks pathetic. There are tears running down face.

BRAD: (I'LL ALWAYS BE ON YOUR SIDE, BERYL...ANY SIDE YOU WANT)

(4)
ANGLE FEATURING BERYL

As Brad approaches her, both hands extended, palms up, in bewilderment. She realizes she's made a mistake and is warily lowering the grenade. Duke watches her like a hawk, equally wary.

BERYL: (SORRY...I GO...A LITTLE BERSERK...WHEN I SEE THOSE HIDEOUS IMAGES...OF MY SISTER)

BERYL: (THEY TRIED TO DO THAT TO ME...GODCORP...MY MOTHER...)

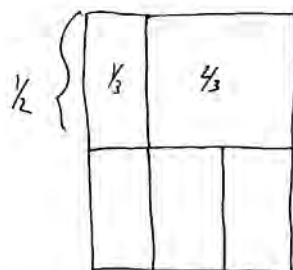
BRAD: (YOUR SISTER IS VANILLA CUPCAKE?! THAT'S WONDERFUL...!)

(5)
ANOTHER ANGLE - BERYL AND BRAD

She whirls on him, yelling, looking as if she's gonna shove the grenade down his throat.

BERYL: (IT'S REVOLTING -- HUMILIATING!! YOU DON'T KNOW...NOBODY KNOWS...EXCEPT MR...WHAT THEY PUT HER THRU...SO THEY CAN MAKE THEIR MILLIONS...!)

Layout

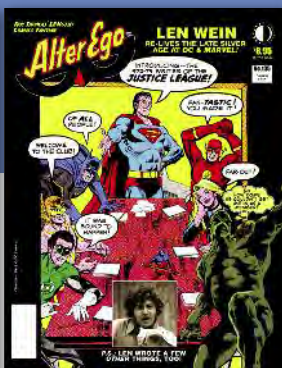




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LEN WEIN (writer/co-creator of Swamp Thing, Human Target, and Wolverine) talks about his early days in comics at DC and Marvel! Art by **WRIGHTSON, INFANTINO, TRIMPE, DILLON, CARDY, APARO, THORNE, MOONEY**, and others! Plus **FCA** (Fawcett Collectors of America), **MR. MONSTER's** Comic Crypt, the Comics Code, and **DAN BARRY!** Cover by **DICK GIORDANO** with **BERNIE WRIGHTSON!**

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BONUS 100-PAGE issue as **ROY THOMAS** talks to **JIM AMASH** about celebrating his 50th year in comics—and especially about the '90s at Marvel! Art by **TRIMPE, GUICE, RYAN, ROSS, BUCKLER, HOOVER, KAYANAN, BUSCEMA, CHAN, VALENTINO**, and others! Plus **FCA**, **MR. MONSTER's** Comic Crypt, **AMY KISTE NYBERG** on the Comics Code, and a cover caricature of Roy by **MARIE SEVERIN!**

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Science-fiction great (and erstwhile comics writer) **HARLAN ELLISON** talks about Captain Marvel and The Monster Society of Evil! Also, Captain Marvel artist/co-creator **C.C. BECK** writes about the infamous Superman-Captain Marvel lawsuit of the 1940s and '50s in a double-size **FCA** section! Plus two titanic tributes to Golden Age artist **FRED KIDA**, **MR. MONSTER, BILL SCHELLY**, and more!

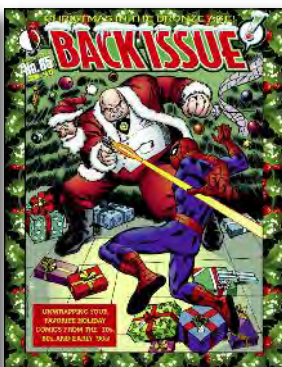
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(I'm *really* happy with how this issue turned out, and I hope you enjoyed taking a second look at some of Jack's work. In that vein, I wanted to mention that Barry Geller has teamed with the folks at HEAVY METAL magazine to produce a series of 14 psychedelic blacklight prints of Jack's *Lord of Light* art. If you felt the original Mike Royer-inked black-&-white images were gorgeous, wait till you see these beauties screaming at you in retina-scorching multi-color!



Our puny four-color printing doesn't do the above sample justice—I got to see them all up-close at Comic-Con this summer, and everyone I spoke to felt the same way. These prints are stunning, and the way Mark Englert colored them fits the material perfectly. They're beyond my budget at \$199 each, but it's quality reproduction all the way. And the August 2015 issue of HEAVY METAL (#276) features Jack's LOL work, and is only \$8 (there are two different covers available) at www.heavymetal.com. Now, on to our expanded letter column:)

Great editorial in issue #65 of TJKC. I can't believe either how the years have gone by. Discovered the first three issues (that is all that had come out up to that point) in a comic book shop in Beckley, WV (don't ask) and have bought every issue since—had a subscription at one point, but too much moving around; oh well, maybe some day again. Black-&-white, partial color, full-color, small size, big size, who cares? It's all good and always was and is a great publi-

cation. And now that the so-called battle of compensation to the Kirby Estate is over (I think you're too close to the situation and you deserve more credit than you state in the editorial; I've shown your publication to open more neophytes' eyes about Kirby than I care to count), I feel the publication is more important than ever. While Kirby didn't invent comics, he definitely codified the "language" of comics, with or without partners. No matter how Marvel (now Disney/Marvel) or Warner/DC tried to minimize Jack's contribution, they kept on using his concepts and creations to this day, like Eternals, New Gods, OMAC, etc., all the stuff they use to belittle when they were first published! I know all too well how much work goes into these publications (having toiled in ad production houses, and worked gratis on a couple of fanzines back in the day). I hope you and everyone involved in the work know it is appreciated. Thanks again to all in Raleigh.

Kevin Nicastre, Beckley, WV

A great surprise. The KIRBY COLLECTOR actually came out on the day promised. (Me, I always add a week to compensate for distribution delays.)

While I enjoyed the comparison between Jack and Alex Toth [TJKC #65], highlighting the many strengths of each, such contests seem to miss the point. That is, no one's obligated to buy only the work of one man. People can have many artists they enjoy and appreciate. And if it's neither Jack nor Alex, that's fine, too. It needn't be a consensus.

That's what I loved about comics: they had an abundance of terrific talents.

Trouble comes when any are praised or pushed as the absolute best. It invites dissension based on unrealistically high expectations. When I read in fanzines, decades back, that the best artists the medium ever had were Barks, Eisner, and Kurtzman, a trio I was only marginally familiar with at the time, I thought of numerous other artists I liked much better. In a choice of favorites, it's personal preference.

Choosing the "best" for one's own enjoyment is fine. But when it's a public proclamation, advocating one over another, it's not just sharing



a viewpoint, but attempting to influence opinion and purchases.

Saying someone is my favorite is one thing. Asserting they're the "best" may not be true for someone else with a different criteria or viewpoint.

Still, it was fun to be reminded of

their fleeting collaboration on X-MEN #12. Would have been interesting to see precisely what each man contributed. Of course, under Vince Colletta inks, probably a moot point.

Wonderful to see the Kirby/Wood SURF HUNTERS. Loved that!

Ditto for the many KAMANDI pencil pages. I can't go along with your (likely humorous) comparison with Jack's JIMMY OLSEN. KAMANDI was the clear lead with a rotating cast. He stood out. OLSEN was often lost with Superman taking center stage and the Newsboy Legion crowding him out.

Big treats were the early Cap cover from AURORA #4 and the Thor portrait with a sword. Beautifully done! The other unseen Thor pencil, several pages later, was interesting, but with something of a strange perspective.

I found the transcript of Kirby on the radio informative but, overall, a sort of slap at Jack. To me, ambush journalism. If Jack agreed to appear on the program, it wouldn't have been amiss to either have him as the sole guest, or tell him ahead of time of Stan's pending participation. There was known animosity, so why risk harsh words or awkward moments? That's not a pleasant surprise.

Sure enough, there was contention. Each disagreed about the contribution of the other. Fine;

but not on a show supposedly honoring Jack on his 70th birthday. The timing and lack of consideration was appalling. Was that really the best moment and place to get into it?

Also, I have to disagree, John, on one point you made in Stan's defense. To him, writing the story was plot involvement, and writing finished dialogue and captions. Okay, but without the action being fully plotted and drawn, prior, he had the beginnings of a story—the potential—but nothing in solid form. It wasn't as if he wrote a full script, alone, on those books.

Jack, both pre- and post-Marvel, had written his own material. For example, I particularly loved THE ETERNALS and that was all Kirby.

Stan wasn't writing novels. Additionally, any story has a detailed plot, not just formative suggestions.

Could Stan write a compelling novel solo? When he does, please let me know.

Yet, even Jack doesn't come off well at one point. When asked about Spider-Man, his involvement in the creation, he replied, "I can tell you that I was deeply involved with creating Spider-Man. And I can't go any further than that, really..."

He doesn't concede that his version (with the magic ring and child lead) was not the version that was ultimately done. So, a vague claim of importance when it was more like a fumbled first attempt that, ultimately, was not accepted.

Overall, an interesting issue with a nice wide range. And, in instances where I disagree with the premise, such as Kirby Vs. Toth, I just look at the cool drawings.

Joe Frank, Scottsdale, AZ

(Thanks for taking time to comment, Joe. I know Spidey's creation is a touchy point for many, as far as Jack claiming creator credit. And really, his absolute involvement in so many other characters means he doesn't really need to promote that; even without Spidey, Jack's solidly the co-creator of the Marvel Universe.

But what he actually said, "I was deeply involved with creating Spider-Man..." is true, based on what is recognized as how it went down. He was deeply involved, to the point of bringing the idea of a "Spiderman" to Stan, based on Joe Simon's recollections. Yeah, it spun off from Silver Spider, and then Ditko's version took another detour. But I don't think the assignment would've happened if Jack hadn't brought his version in to Stan. (And Stan has said in ORIGINS OF MARVEL COMICS that Jack showed him pages, and they were "too heroic" or something, but that does show that Jack did work on it; it just didn't get used as he presented it.) So I'd call that "deeply involved," even if he (or Joe Simon, or C.C. Beck) shouldn't be considered a true co-creator of the Spidey we know.

Yeah, that radio interview was awkward, to be sure. But I ran it, not to embarrass either guy, but to show how, in an unguarded moment, we got to see a glimpse of how both men felt about the work, their own involvement, and each other. Props to Stan for calling in to offer best wishes to Jack; I thought that was pretty decent of him. Others might call him a glory hound, trying to

horn-in on Jack's interview. But I got a sense that the discussion wasn't meant by either guy to get testy; it just kind of progressed that way, which is what made it so fascinating, and fundamentally honest, I think.)

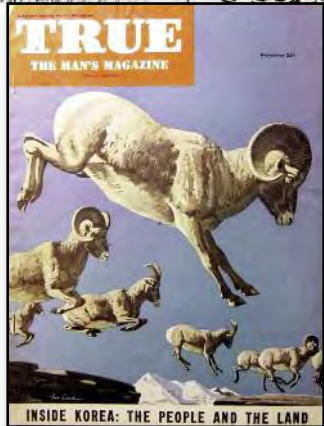
I'm a touch behind on TJKC issues; time does fly. I do catch up eventually. I did want to mention though that the DC issue (#62) has been one of the best issues I have read. There have of course been many, but this issue really stood out—stirring my imagination and memories of when I first came across Kirby's DC work.

I remember spotting FOREVER PEOPLE #6 on the comic book rack in a newsagents shop (I'm in the UK) and immediately thinking, "That's Jack Kirby."

I was about 12 years old and had no idea whatsoever that he had gone to DC when his Marvel work suddenly stopped. I had no inkling in my youthful mind that he may be doing work elsewhere. I knew Kirby's work though. I could recognise his work instantly. And so my Fourth World collection began (along with all the FFs, THORs, etc., I already had



Speed and strength are the qualities Fred Ludekens chose to emphasize in his picture of this Asiatic bighorn. The driving force of the entire body comes forward, flexed the Asiatic horns, and the animal seems to be charging right out of the page at us.



from Marvel).

I really found (and still do) the writing/scripting AND dialogue on his DC work to be probably the most original I have read in comics. Some people may disagree with that, but to me Kirby's dialogue is essential and original—I wouldn't want it any other way.

The OMAC piece by Robert Guffey was excellent, touching on elements I'd not considered. Living in a dystopian future that is the 'norm' seems a good subject for debate in itself. Sex toys in a crate? "Put me together, I will be your friend!"—how did that get past the Comics Code? I'm reading OMAC again!

David Driver, UNITED KINGDOM

Just a note on what some of us do, when we subscribe to the KIRBY COLLECTOR. I had just

slid into the sheets, around 4:15am the other night, when I realized that TJKC most likely would be arriving in a few hours, and I had forgotten to put a box with pillows under the mail slot, so no damage would be done to it. Thus, I had to get up and do that. Sure enough, it came that day, right on time. Great shape.

I have a suggestion for a reader survey, for those 55 and over, who were 1970 Kirby/Marvel fans. I've wondered over the years, what percentage of 1970 FF/THOR fans, upon reading of Kirby's departure to DC, quit those books then and there—as well as what percentage of Marvel fans still supported Kirby. I know many regarded him as a traitor to Marvel at the time. Marvel printed a few nasty letters. It took me two years to begin buying his DC books regularly. Overall, I wonder how big a hit Marvel took at the time. I know one fan who quit soon after.

David Jansen, Minneapolis, MN

As always, enjoyed the latest issue cover to cover. Usually takes me a couple of months to do that, treating each sit-down as if sipping a fine wine... don't want to blow through it, but rather savor all of the articles. Thanks for doing what you do.

This month I particularly liked the "Animatters: Kirby... King of Beasts!" by Marc Nadel. It encouraged me to send in these images. The first is from WESTERN TALES #32 (March 1956). The image of the ram by Fred Ludekens that I included is copied from "Lesson 12: Animal Drawing" from the FAMOUS ARTISTS COURSE books. While I don't believe that Jack had or used

a copy of that for reference, he probably used the actual TRUE MAGAZINE (November 1950) which featured the Ludekens painting. It is too coincidentally alike.

David Grisez, San Diego, CA

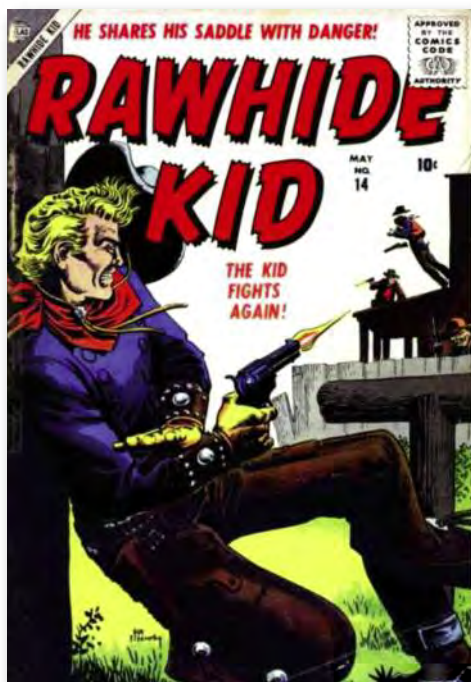
I've wondered for a long time about RAWHIDE KID covers #42, 43, 44 and 45. They are credited to Kirby, but almost look like someone trying to copy him. It might just be the inker making them look that way (Chic Stone). But I just stumbled across something about #42. It looks like Kirby

copied the cover from RAWHIDE KID #14, which was drawn by Joe Maneely. In your JACK KIRBY CHECKLIST, he is not credited for #42.

Do you know the story behind this cover art?

Randy Klauzer, Omaha, NE

(Randy, I think it's clear why RK #42 isn't listed in the KIRBY CHECKLIST as having a Kirby cover. While clearly a swipe (tracing?) of #14's Maneely cover, the only Kirbyesque thing about it is the Kid's face, and it's not dead-on Jack. I'd guess Larry Lieber may've drawn that face—I've been fooled before by some Lieber images that I thought were Kirby.)



Finally got around to reading TJKC #63 and 64 but have to say #63's all Silver Age Marvel issue got most of the love! It almost ranked up there with #58's incredible "Wonder Years" with half the pages devoted to Mark Alexander's "Universe a'Boorning!" And though the article was a little too Kirby-centric for me, I dug everything the author had to say with the exception of Marvel's early villains. For that, I say thee nay! Far from being lame, Marvel's early villains represented the most colorful array of bad guys anywhere, anytime. The Beetle, Plantman, Melter, Black Knight, Unus, Swordsman, Radioactive Man, Cobra and Mr. Hyde, Matador, Unicorn, Porcupine, Vanisher, Grey Gargoyle, Stiltman, Mad Thinker, Absorbing Man, Batroc, Gladiator, Mr. Fear, the Human Top, and the Mandarin were the spice of what made all those early issues a pure delight to read. Even our heroes' battles with the likes of the Red Barbarian and those other Commie villains were fun to read (after all, if we were going to sympathize with Marvel's new style heroes, then we needed a few bad guys we could boo and hiss without reservation). Furthermore, the very "lameness," or I should say, lack of world-beating ability by many of Marvel's early super villains, made it more of a challenge for writers to figure out creative ways that they could stand up to the heroes before their inevitable defeat. As a kid, I loved the ingenuity the Barracuda displayed

in finding ways to stymie both the Torch and Iceman in STRANGE TALES #120! Not every battle fought between hero and villain needs to involve the fate of the world or even the universe; sometimes it could just be DD trying to stop the Leap Frog from robbing a bank!

That said, I want to correct Mark's assertion that after his debut in AMAZING ADVENTURES, Dr. Droom was never heard from again. His original adventures were later reprinted under the *nom de guerre* Dr. Druid before he began appearing contemporaneously in AVENGERS stories of the 1980s.

Finally, I must take issue with comments by



Bruce Zick in issue #64. There's nothing wrong in taking a definite stand, pro or con, about comics. In fact, work dealing in all praise and no criticism gets boring fast. I should know, having been criticized myself on the same grounds of insensitivity. I suggest that Bruce look at comics criticism the way we look at film criticism—no one worries about hurting the feelings or legacy of the screenwriters, directors, or stars of a film being reviewed. That's because everyone knows that there's nothing personal in the criticism. So if Bruce could think of articles like those by Mark in that manner, I'm sure they could be approached with more enjoyment.

Pierre Comtois, Lowell, MA

I enjoyed TJKC #62. It was nice to read in your editorial that you cut out pictures from comics to indulge in creating your own imaginative stories. It brought back memories as I briefly did the same thing, except I called them "cut-outs." Of course, the price of comics in those days meant that I could buy a replacement at the time. It is interesting that it was NEW GODS #9, and I enjoyed seeing the pencil art of the Bug, but where, oh where, was the "Prime One"? He was a character that for some reason caught the imagination of me and my friends at the time. It is amazing how much work Jack put into designing what were, in essence, short-lived dis-

posable characters. How about doing a whole issue on some of those memorable characters from all eras? *[We're convinced; coming soon! - Ed.]* I can picture the front cover now: JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR #XX—The "Prime One"!

The articles on OMAC were interesting. I had never really thought of comparisons with Captain America before, but they are there. I guess it is a measure of Jack's talent that he could do an updated super-soldier story without people thinking it was simply a Captain America rip-off. When Captain America was created, he retained the name of Steve Rogers, but the original Steve Rogers effectively died at the time of Cap's creation. He was the runt of the litter who probably spent his life hiding in the shadows to avoid being bullied, and who physically was unable to be a sportsman or lead a life of activity. A lifetime of internal repressions and subsequent reactions to situations vanished when he became a super-soldier. Suddenly he was making instantaneous decisions in the heat of battle which saved his life, won fights and changed hopeless situations into winning ones. He was reborn mentally as well as physically, but had he returned to his lifelong family and friends at the time, would they have recognized him? He remained Steve Rogers in a mask, with his memories, ethics, values, and beliefs, because it was the comic convention at the time for a super-hero to have a secret identity, but was it really necessary?

Jack takes this thinking to its logical conclusion with OMAC. What is a super-soldier but a One Man Army Corps? This is something which Captain America had always been. If a government agency of today (or the near future) were to create a super-soldier, then why should they leave him his original identity when it was not necessary to his new role in life? It may even be counter-productive to what they ask him to do. So the runt of the litter is no longer given a name, but is simply Buddy Blank, as he could be anybody. Buddy Blank did not volunteer to be a super-soldier, as Steve Rogers had done, but was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I always found the end of issue #8 of OMAC to be very jarring and felt it was a shame that Jack was not allowed to finish the story with issue #9. Reading your article on KOBRA has given me a fresh theory on that. It seems obvious to me that DC re-jigged Kirby's original KOBRA story so that they could claim the character and bring him into their universe in a user-friendly format. They created a formula for the character which many writers and artists could use and it was successful. It worked and they have successfully used Kobra many times since then. I think the opposite was true for OMAC. Did the powers-that-were see the cliffhanger ending to issue #8 as a convenient place to remove OMAC from the DC Universe? With Brother Eye effectively destroyed and Buddy Blank seemingly killed along with the villain, there would be no clamour to bring OMAC back.

This is a tremendous shame because DC did not realize what a rich character and situation Jack was bequeathing to them. None of the "creative" talent in charge could see the potential for this updated super-soldier—which is sad

considering that since then, there has been a trilogy of very successful BOURNE movies about a modern day super-soldier seeking to find out who his "Buddy Blank" had been, and reclaim his humanity. Jack had created that scenario 30 years previously, but DC had just thrown it away!

Looking at OMAC now, we can see how farsighted Jack was in his thinking. We now live in a world of Super Rich who think that their money can buy or achieve anything. There are clinics which will create clones of loved pets for a price. Who is to say that the Super Rich, eager to prolong their lives, are not already paying for research to one day enable experimental clones of themselves to be developed?

There may not be robotic Lilas in existence at the moment, but is she really such a step from women on the Internet or TV who lie in provocative poses while speaking privately to clients on the phone? In both cases they are fantasies designed to fill a void in the lives of those unable to find real relationships or intimacies.

This gives me an idea for a theme issue of TJKC called simply "The World That's Coming" which could look at prophetic and far-reaching ideas Jack put into his stories, which are slowly coming true as we and technology catch up with his thinking. *[Coming soon! - Ed.]* Had he been a prose science-fiction writer, he would be spoken of as a visionary genius in the same breath as Asimov, Heinlein, Clarke, et al. Just because he created his stories in comics, does not mean that he should not stand beside them in reputation, and this may be a chance to help remedy that.

The key moments timeline you are compiling is fascinating reading. I had not realized that the "Return Of The New Gods" 1ST ISSUE SPECIAL was printed concurrently with KAMANDI #40. I had always thought that it was just unfortunate timing that a new management decided to bring the New Gods back after Jack left, which is true of the ongoing series, but now your timeline makes me wonder when the idea was originally planned and commissioned. Was it before or after Jack signed his deal to return to Marvel? If they were planning it before, then why not offer it to Jack to try and get him to stay with DC? Or did they want to bring the characters under their control, not Jack's, and his signing for Marvel gave them the green light? Considering that his Fourth World series was cancelled, and he was banned from using the characters in MISTER MIRACLE, it must have hurt Jack to see their return, knowing it had been worked on while he was seeing out his contract.

I enjoyed reading the Kirby Tribute Panel, but have a couple of observations to make. Firstly, Neil Gaiman mentions the Odhams POWER COMICS being black-and-white but with one colour. I think he may be mixing them up with the later Marvel UK reprint comics. We Brits were lucky as kids to have two sets of reprint comics a couple of years apart. First, in the late 1960s were the POWER COMICS and then, in the early 1970s, Marvel UK reprinted the same stories again in their range of British comics. These are the ones with

one colour. MIGHTY WORLD OF MARVEL was green and the later SPIDER-MAN comic was pink/red. These colours did not last long once they became too uneconomical to do.

Secondly, Mark Evanier says to Neil, "One of the appeals of Marvel... they had all those wonderful Bullpen pages and Stan's chatter in the books. You didn't get that. You didn't get all the clubby stuff." I liked Neil's reply, but I also have to say that we did get a variation of those things in the POWER COMICS line. I remember that FANTASTIC and TERRIFIC had a form of Bullpen page written by "Alf and Bart" (I wonder who they were inspired by?) which was in the same vein as the Marvel version. I have not thought of it for years, but memory seems to indicate that it was called something like "News from the floor of 64" (64 being the building number). They also answered letters in the same chummy style as Stan Lee. Do other readers remember this? Anyway, it meant that I felt at home with the originals of those things when I started buying American Marvel Comics with my pocket money in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Kevin Ainsworth, UNITED KINGDOM

(Speaking of reprints, we've just re-issued a limited edition of our sold-out 50th issue, the book-length tabloid KIRBY FIVE-OH!, but reduced down to a standard-size 8½" x 11" trade paperback. It's the same content, just at a more economical size to print—and the only affordable way we could get it back in stock. I feel like TJKC #50 has been a wonderful primer for comics fans who want to know all about this Kirby guy and why he's so important to comics. Hopefully this new edition will last at least till we release KIRBY ONE-OH! to celebrate Jack's centennial in 2017. I've got some BIG plans for that one!)

For all those who've been asking when we would continue our COLLECTED KIRBY COLLECTOR series past Volume 7, check out the KIRBY FIVE-OH! reprint, and let me know what you think. If the reduced size works for readers, we'll consider continuing those COLLECTED TJKC volumes, reprinting our later tabloid issues—#31-up—in this format.)



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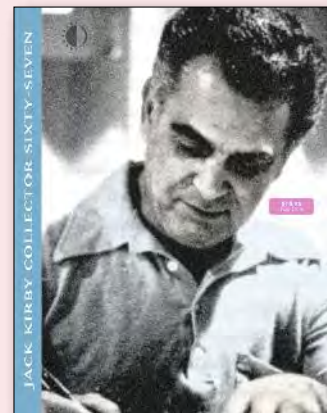
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The Jack Kirby Collector is put together with submissions from Jack's fans around the world. We don't pay for submissions, but if we print art or articles you submit, we'll send you a free copy of the issue it appears in.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

Submit artwork as 300ppi TIFF or JPEG scans or color or B&W photocopies. Submit articles by e-mail to: store@twomorrow.com



NEXT ISSUE: #67 gets UP-CLOSE & PERSONAL with Jack! It features Kirby interviews you weren't aware of, photos and recollections from fans who saw him in person, personal anecdotes from Jack's fellow pros, a look at comics cameo appearances by both STAN LEE and KIRBY, MARK EVANIER and our other regular columnists, and more! But don't let this issue's photo cover fool you; it's chockful of rare Kirby pencil art, both from ROZ KIRBY's private sketchbook, and Jack's most personal comics stories and characters! It ships February 2016.

Here's a tentative list of upcoming themes, but we treat these themes very loosely, and anything you submit may fit somewhere. So get writing, and send us copies of your art!

GOT A THEME IDEA? PLEASE WRITE US!

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THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR



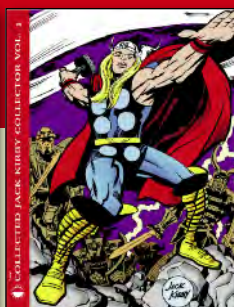
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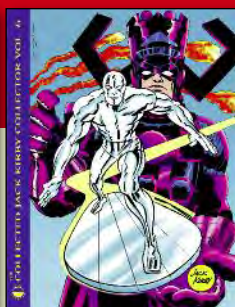
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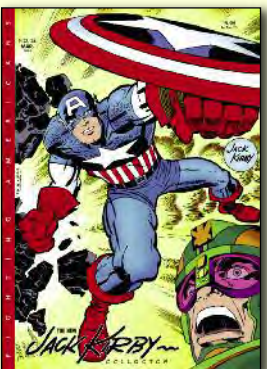
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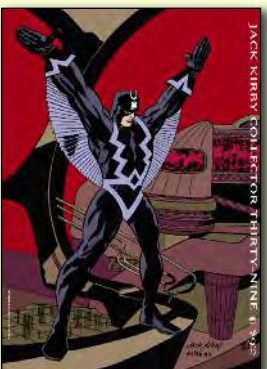
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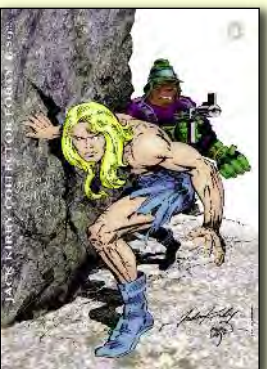
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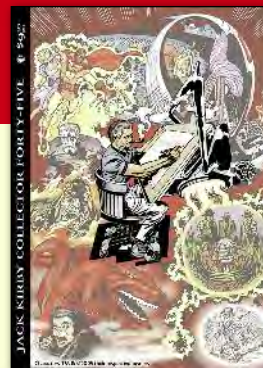
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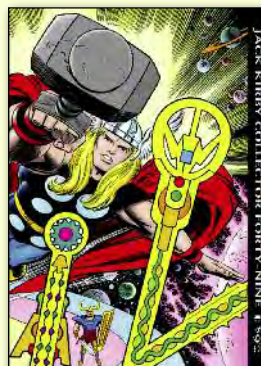
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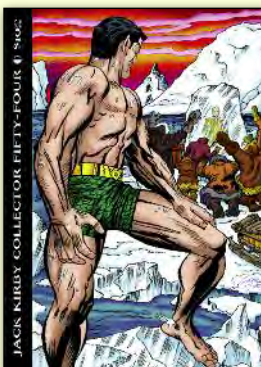
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THE MAGIC OF STAN & JACK! New interview with **STAN LEE**, walking tour of New York where Lee & Kirby lived and worked, re-evaluation of the "Lost" FF #108 story (including a new page that just surfaced), "What If Jack Hadn't Left Marvel In 1970?," plus **MARK EVANIER'S** regular column, a **KIRBY** pencil art gallery, a complete Golden Age Kirby story, and more, behind a color Kirby cover inked by **GEORGE PÉREZ!**

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STAN & JACK PART TWO! More on the co-creators of the Marvel Universe, final interview (and cover inks) by **GEORGE TUSKA**, differences between **KIRBY** and **DITKO'S** approaches, **WILL MURRAY** on the origin of the FF, the mystery of Marvel cover dates, **MARK EVANIER'S** regular column, a Kirby pencil art gallery, a complete Golden Age Kirby story, and more, behind a color Kirby back cover inked by **JOE SINNOTT!**

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"Kirby Goes To Hollywood!" **SERGIO ARAGONES** and **MELL LAZARUS** recall Kirby's **BOB NEWHART TV** show cameo, comparing the recent **STAR WARS** films to New Gods, **RUBY & SPEARS** interviewed, Jack's encounters with **FRANK ZAPPA**, **PAUL MCCARTNEY**, and **JOHN LENNON**, **MARK EVANIER'S** regular column, a Kirby pencil art gallery, a Golden Age Kirby story, and more! Kirby cover inked by **PAUL SMITH!**

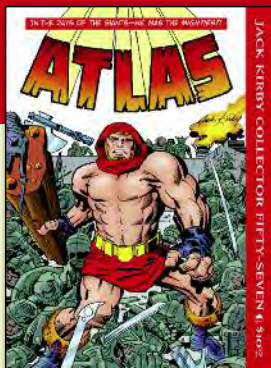
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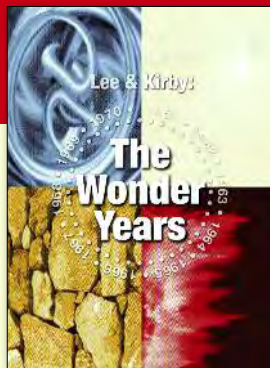
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"Legendary Kirby"—how Jack put his spin on classic folklore! **TONY ISABELLA** on **SATAN'S SIX** (with Kirby's unseen layouts), Biblical inspirations of **DEVIL DINOSAUR**, **THOR** through the eyes of mythologist **JOSEPH CAMPBELL**, a complete Golden Age Kirby story, rare Kirby interview, **MARK EVANIER** and other regular columnists, pencil art from **ETERNALS**, **DEMON**, **NEW GODS**, **THOR**, and Jack's **ATLAS** cover!

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KIRBY COLLECTOR #58

LEE & KIRBY: THE WONDER YEARS! Traces their history at Marvel, and what led them to conceive the Fantastic Four in 1961. Also documents the evolution of the FF throughout the 1960s, with plenty of Kirby art, plus previously unknown details about Lee and Kirby's working relationship, and their eventual parting of ways in 1970.

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"Kirby Vault!" Rareties from the "King" of comics: Personal correspondence, private photos, collages, rare Marvelmania art, bootleg album covers, sketches, transcript of a 1969 VISIT TO THE KIRBY HOME (where Jack answers the questions YOU'D ask in '69), **MARK EVANIER**, pencil art from the **FOURTH WORLD**, **CAPTAIN AMERICA**, **MACHINE MAN**, **SILVER SURFER** GRAPHIC NOVEL, and more!

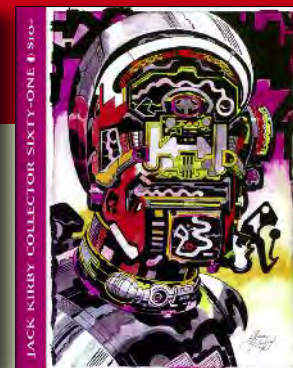
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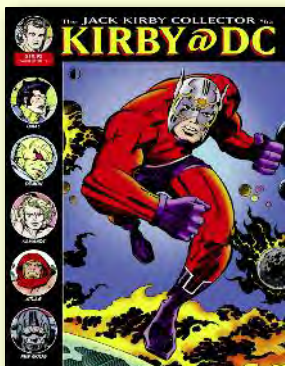
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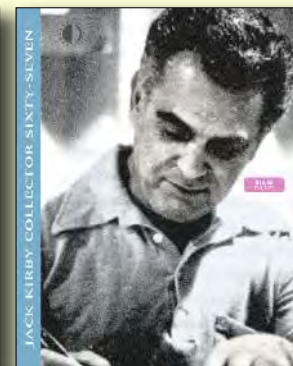
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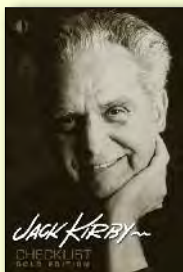
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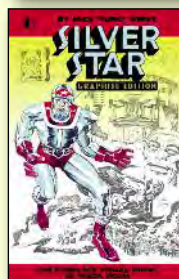
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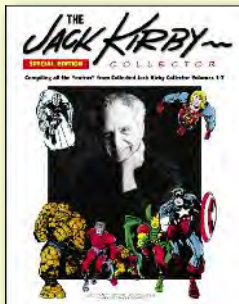


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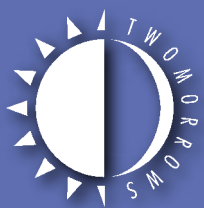
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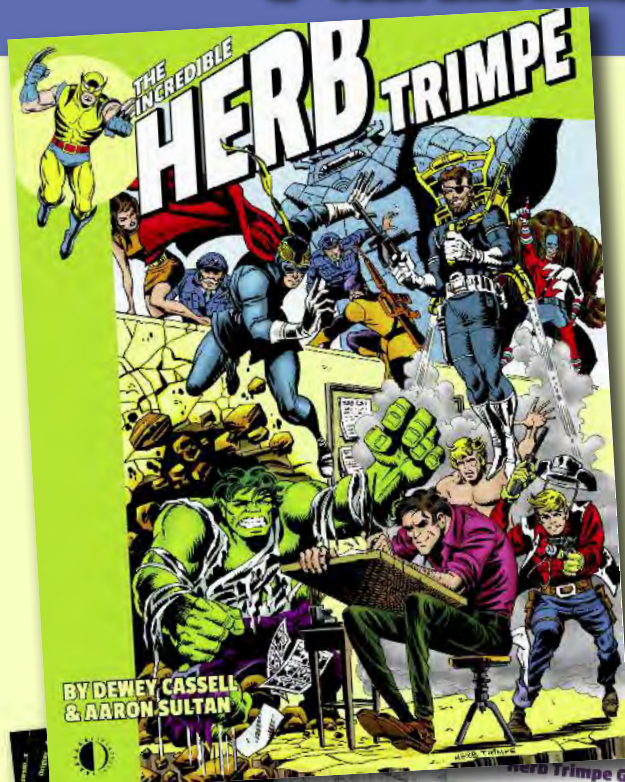


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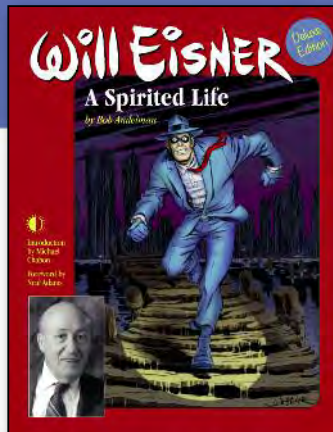
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PARTING SHOT

Okay, this is actually part of a triple-take: one of the three Tribes Trilogy pieces that Jack did in the 1970s. Still, it's easily worth another look, so we proudly present it here.

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THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

#4

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