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COMIC-CON 2026

JULY 23-26

PREVIEW NIGHT JULY 22
SAN DIEGO CONVENTION CENTER

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2026 SOUVENIR BOOK

JULY 23-26
PREVIEW NIGHT JULY 22
SAN DIEGO CONVENTION CENTER

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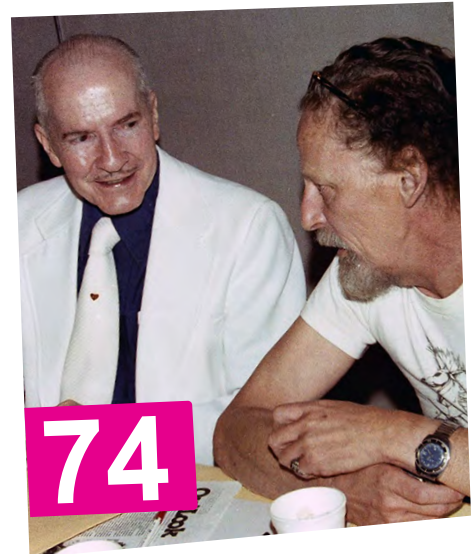
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THE SAN DIEGO COMIC CONVENTION
(Comic-Con International)

is a California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation organized for charitable purposes and dedicated to creating the general public's awareness of and appreciation for comics and related popular art forms, including participation in and support of public presentations, conventions, exhibits, museums, and other public outreach activities which celebrate the historic and ongoing contribution of comics to art and culture.

79 EISNER AWARDS
2026 NOMINATIONS • HALL OF FAME • 2025 WINNERS

91 IN MEMORIAM



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

WELCOME BACK!

Welcome to Comic-Con 2026! We welcome you all to beautiful San Diego and our amazing convention center for another fabulous Comic-Con! Once again, it is time for us to come together and celebrate the amazing world of popular arts and all its various fandoms that we love so well. And we are grateful to be able to share this opportunity with you, our community that is the heart of this event. Thank you for joining us.

Now in its 57th version, Comic-Con has always been about that community and the diverse fandoms that it represents. It is a place where fans gather to make new friends and reconnect with old ones, to learn new things and discover new fandoms, and to share stories and experiences with like-minded fans and friends you have yet to meet. From its earliest days, this event has always had the popular-arts community at its core. It's a place to renew old friendships and make new ones, to share your expertise and learn from others, to meet with others to celebrate the amazing world of fandom. Within the many venues of our wide-flung campus, you will find a huge variety of events and opportunities that cover a diversity of interests ... it's a place where you can truly find your "tribe." No matter what your goal is ... to meet a favorite artist, spend time in a Program room, shop in the Exhibit Hall, join a tournament in the Games area, watch the amazing talent at the Masquerade, donate at the Blood Drive (which celebrates its 50th this year), watch the Eisner Awards ceremony, or connect with friends at one of the many activations, there are a variety of ways to enjoy your time at Comic-Con. We know we are only able to do what we do because of you, the fans, and we appreciate all of you ... exhibitors, professionals, panelists, press, and attendees alike. As we begin our yearly celebration, we are honored that you have chosen to spend this time with us.

We also know that this event is only possible because of the dedication and love of the many, many volunteers and staff who work year-round to make this the best show ever, and for whom we are truly grateful. We could not do what we do without them. On behalf of Team Comic-Con, we all welcome you into our "village" for another year and share its wonders with you. We thank you all and hope you have a fantastic Comic-Con 2026.

Robin Donlan

President
San Diego Comic Convention





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Vol. 2: Abomination



Vol. 3: Devil's Workshop
On Sale September

NO MANSION. NO MONEY. ABSOLUTE WARRIOR.

Written by **SCOTT SNYDER** • Art and cover by **NICK DRAGOTTA**

ABOUT THE SOUVENIR BOOK COVER

We are extremely grateful to our friends and colleagues at Paramount for the visual feast they provided for this year's Souvenir Book cover. You'll no doubt recognize it from your Comic-Con 2026 badge. Seeing it bigger is even better.

It is a breathtaking visage for Comic-Con enthusiasts who consider themselves fans of Star Trek, one of the most beloved, durable, and groundbreaking science-fiction universes ever created. Evening is quickly turning to night as the late-stage sunset shifts from shades of pink to deep, dark purple. Dominating the sky over the city of San Diego looms the Starship Enterprise, easily the most famous of all spacecraft, hovering low enough to cast a deep and distinct shadow over the easily recognizable San Diego Convention Center and nearby Harbor Drive.

For Star Trek fans, it is stunning to see the Enterprise interact directly with the universe we live in. Even in *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, there were no scenes where the Enterprise visited 20th-century Earth. The cover tickles and provokes our imaginations. Something truly momentous is about to happen.

The impact of the arrival of Star Trek on world-wide television screens, invading our living rooms, dens, and bedrooms, cannot be overstated. Its survival was far from certain. It was the fans and fandom, like the amazing and dedicated folks who walk through the doors of Comic-Con every year, who saved it from disappearing into obscurity.

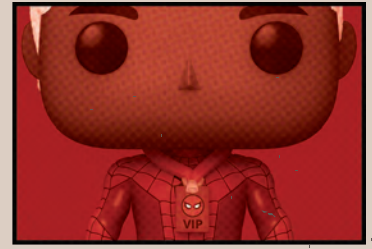
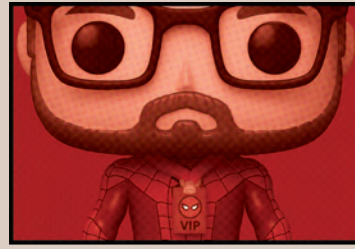
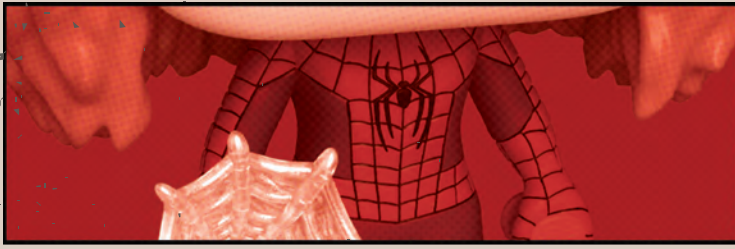
We can all appreciate the long, challenging road that makes this 60th Anniversary of Star Trek an event worth celebrating. Thank goodness for the ongoing encouragement to "Boldly go ..."

As you saw on the table of contents, you can read our special 60th Anniversary Star Trek article on the following pages, plus feature articles about Dennis the Menace, Fantagraphics Books, *Amazing Stories* magazine, *Ultimate X-Men*, the 50th Comic-Con Robert A. Heinlein Blood Drive, and a very special look at the 50th Anniversary of *Superman vs Amazing Spider-Man: The Battle of the Century* (which includes an interview with writer Gerry Conway).

Do you want the art for yourself, a version you can take home and brag to your friends? Our Star Trek cover art is featured on the 2026 Convention Event T-shirt available during the convention at the Comic-Con Merch Store in Pacific Ballroom 23-26 of the Marriott Marquis San Diego.

Thanks for being here. I hope you enjoy this Comic-Con 2026 Souvenir Book. We made it just for you.





THE Funko Crown

VOL. 1

JULY 23-26, 2026

25¢

NEW HEROES EMERGE AT SDCC '26

By Freddy Funko

SAN DIEGO, CA - It seems Spider-Man isn't the only friendly neighbor on the West Coast! A web of new recruits has adopted the hero's iconic red and blue suit thanks to Funko's improved POP! Yourself technology.

Citizens looking to join the cause may create their own custom Funko POP! collectible by visiting booth #5045 at San Diego Comic Con 2026. The hero package comes with a personalized POP! Yourself figure with limited edition Spider-Man options, exclusive packaging, a POP! Protector, and a Bitty POP! Hulk collectible.

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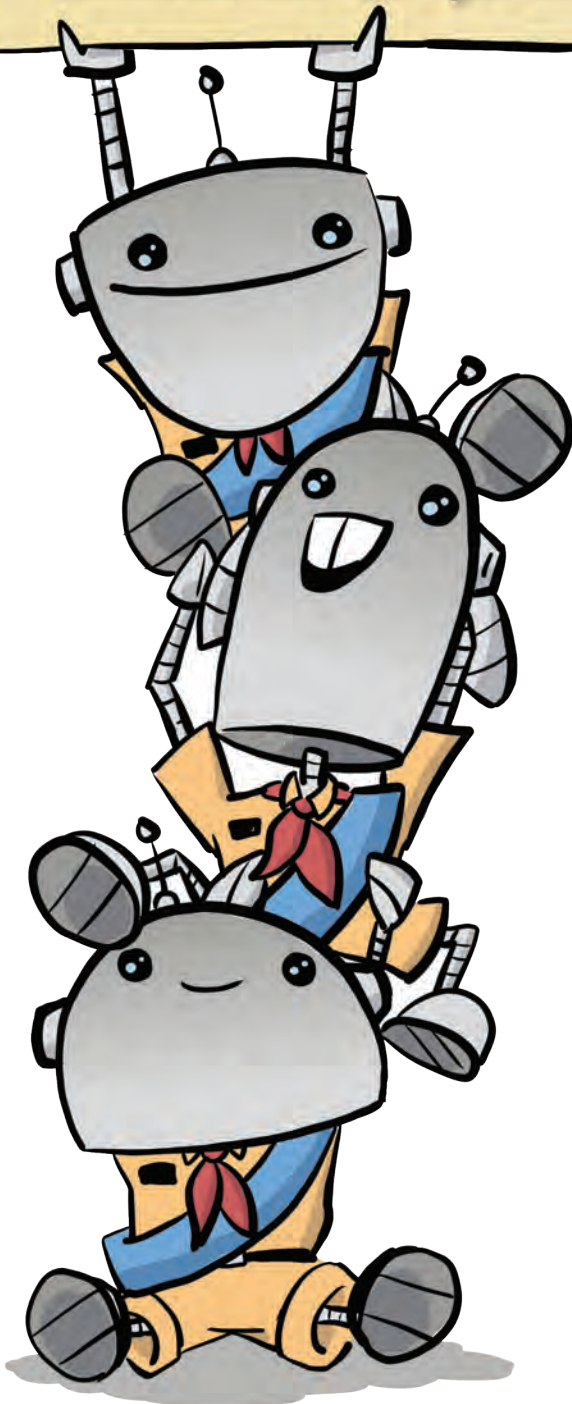


**Dr. Anita
Sengupta**



**Ursula
Vernon**
(aka T. Kingfisher)

**and
more...**



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SPECIAL GUESTS



2026

Peter Bagge

Peter Bagge is an American cartoonist specializing in alternative comics, best known for his satirical series *Neat Stuff* (1985–1991) and *Hate* (1990–1998), which featured exaggerated depictions of dysfunctional suburban families and grunge-era youth through characters like Buddy Bradley and his slacker associates. Bagge has also produced graphic biographies of historical figures, including Margaret Sanger in *Woman Rebel* (2013), Zora Neale Hurston in *Fire!!* (2017), and Rose Wilder Lane in *Credo* (2019), emphasizing their independent lives and ideological contributions. A self-identified libertarian, Bagge contributes political cartoons to *Reason* magazine. Peter received Comic-Con's Inkpot Award in 2010, has received numerous Eisner Award nominations, and has taught at institutions like Seattle University.

Steven Butler

Steven Butler is a 37-year comic book veteran whose credits span the industry, including *The Badger* for First Comics; *Web of Spider-Man*, *Silver Sable and the Wildpack*, and *Punisher War Journal* for Marvel Comics; *Superman* for DC Comics; *Sonic The Hedgehog and Betty and Veronica: The New Look* for Archie Comics; many stories for *Disney Adventures Magazine*, and more. Currently, Steven is teaming up with his daughter, Lily Butler, to work for Archie on comics featuring stories of the classic Archie gang as well as creating new and original comics for their DUO Publishing imprint.

Deniz Camp

Deniz Camp writes comics. The son of Turkish and Filipina immigrants, he was born in the Philippines but raised in the American Midwest. Deniz is known for *20th Century Men* (Image Comics), *Ultimates* (Marvel), *Absolute Martian Manhunter* (DC), *Bleeding Hearts* (Vertigo), and *Assorted Crisis Events* (Image Comics). He has been nominated for five 2026 Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards. Deniz lives in Brooklyn with his wife and a handful of hope.

Jim Cummings

Legendary voice actor Jim Cummings' award-winning career spans more than four decades as the auditory talent behind such landmark animated characters as Winnie the Pooh, Tigger, Darkwing Duck, and Star Wars' Hondo Ohnaka, as well as providing the singing voice of Scar in *The Lion King*. Cummings has given life to more than 1,500 different animated characters across nearly 200 films, 134 television series (2,500+ episodes), 175 video games, and 25 animated shorts. A two-time Annie Award winner and recipient of the prestigious Winsor McCay Award, Cummings also serves as the host of the popular Toon'd In! with Jim Cummings podcast, where he shares behind-the-scenes stories, interviews industry legends, and offers fans an inside look at the world of animation and voice acting.

Kelly Sue DeConnick

Kelly Sue DeConnick is a comics writer best known for reinventing Carol Danvers as Captain Marvel at Marvel and for the Black Label standard-setting *Wonder Woman Historia: The Amazons* at DC. Her independent comics *Bitch Planet* and *Pretty Deadly* (both from Image) have ranked as *New York Times* bestsellers, and her current series, *FML* (Dark Horse Comics), debuted in 2024 and is nominated for the 2026 Best Continuing Series Eisner Award. DeConnick's screen work includes stints on *Captain Marvel* and 2023's *The Marvels* with Marvel Studios, in addition to having consulted on features for Skydance and ARRAY and developing television for NBCUniversal, Legendary Entertainment, Amazon Studios, and HBO Max.

Matt Dinniman

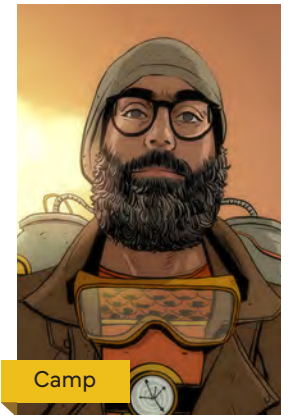
Matt Dinniman is a writer and artist from Gig Harbor, Washington. He is the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestselling *Dungeon Crawler Carl* series, along with several other books about the end of the world. He doesn't really hate cocker spaniels, and he plays bass in one band.



Bagge



Butler



Camp



Cummings



DeConnick



Dinniman

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Mark Evanier

Mark Evanier attended his first San Diego Comic-Con in 1970 and hasn't missed one since. He was then an assistant to the great Jack Kirby, whom he wrote about in his book *Kirby, King of Comics*. Mark has also written for live-action TV shows, animated TV shows (including various *Garfield* cartoons), and tons of comic books. The comics include working on *Groo the Wanderer* with Sergio Aragonés for 40 years, and many others. He is also a historian of comic books and animation.

Huda Fahmy

Huda Fahmy was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. She is the author and illustrator of the webcomic series *Yes, I'm Hot in This*, the graphic memoir *That Can Be Arranged*, and the widely popular Huda F graphic novel series. Her book *Huda F Cares?* was a 2023 finalist for the National Book Award for Young People's Literature. The final book in the *Huda F* series will be out in October. She is currently working on a horror anthology and a middle-grade vampire series slated for 2028.

Javier Fernández

Javier (Javi) Fernández is a comic book artist from Granada, Spain, best known for his interior art and covers for DC Comics. He began working for Marvel Comics in 2011, on *Captain America*, and then a series of *Magneto* issues in 2014. He has been a regular on such DC titles as *Batman*, *Nightwing*, *Detective Comics*, *Justice League*, and *Green Arrow*. In 2021, Javier began working as lead artist on *King Spawn*, one of Todd McFarlane's expanded Spawn Universe titles. In 2024, he returned to DC to take charge of the *Batman and Robin* series. Javi is the main artist for DC's big crossover event *DC K.O.*, also known as *Crisis of Absolute Proportions*.

Matt Fraction

Matt Fraction co-created the *New York Times* bestselling books *Sex Criminals* and *Hawkeye*. He co-created and worked as a writer and executive producer on Apple TV's *Monarch: Legacy of Monsters* and is executive producer on the adaptation of *Sex Criminals* coming to Amazon Prime next year. He currently writes *Adventureman* at Image Comics and *Batman* for DC Comics. Matt lives with his wife, writer Kelly Sue DeConnick, their children, and their dogs in Portland, Oregon.

David Gerrold

David Gerrold has been writing professionally for more than half a century. He created the tribbles for *Star Trek* and the Sleestaks for *Land of the Lost*. He has written for *Babylon 5*, *Twilight Zone*, and other TV series. His most famous novel is *The Man Who Folded Himself*. His semi-autobiographical tale of his son's adoption, "The Martian Child," won both the Hugo and the Nebula awards and was the basis for the 2007 movie starring John Cusack and Amanda Peet. His latest novel is *Hella*, about a world where dinosaurs still roam. He lives in Vermont and still writes stories and novels. He was a frequent guest at the earliest San Diego Comic-Cons.

Nicole Goux

Nicole Goux (she/her) is an Eisner Award-nominated illustrator and cartoonist from Los Angeles. She's the artist of DC's *Shadow of the Batgirl* and co-creator with Dave Baker of *Forest Hills Bootleg Society* (Simon & Schuster: Atheneum). She has been published by DC, Dark Horse, IDW, Oni, and Avery Hill. Her most recent graphic novel, *This Place Kills Me* in collaboration with Mariko Tamaki (Abrams Fanfare), is nominated for the 2026 Eisner Award for Best Publication for Teens. Her newest book, *Punk'n Heads* with Dave Baker, was published in April by Top Shelf Publishing.



Evanier



Fahmy



Fernández



Fraction



Gerrold



Goux

Desserts and Discipline

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Production and Studio Workflow

📅 7 / 25 [Sat] 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM



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Jim Lee

Jim Lee, the world-renowned comic book artist, writer, editor, and publisher, is currently president, publisher, and chief creative officer of DC Comics. He leads creative efforts to integrate DC's portfolio of characters and stories across all media, supporting Warner Bros. Discovery's family of brands and studios. Jim joined DC in 1998 and has overseen many of the company's highly successful publishing programs, including the Rebirth line of comics and The New 52 initiative that relaunched the entire line of monthly superhero comic books. As part of the revamp, Lee designed and reimagined the new, more contemporary costumes for some of the DC Universe's most iconic characters, including Batman, Superman, and Wonder Woman. Jim holds a BA in psychology from Princeton University and started his professional career at Marvel Comics, where his work on the X-Men continues to hold the all-time sales record for single-issue sales.

Paul Levitz

Paul Levitz has been a comics fan (*The Comic Reader*), editor (*Batman*), writer (*Legion of Super-Heroes*), executive (decades at DC Comics, ending as president & publisher), historian (*Will Eisner: Champion of the Graphic Novel*), and now teacher of subjects related to comics and transmedia at Pace University and Columbia University. His *75 Years of DC Comics: The Art of Modern Mythmaking* won an Eisner Award and international awards. Paul has been inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards Hall of Fame. A new edition of his acclaimed collaboration with Keith Giffen, *Legion of Super-Heroes: The Great Darkness Saga*, was published by DC in 2025.

Briana Loewinsohn

Briana Loewinsohn is the author of the graphic memoir *Ephemera* (Fantagraphics, 2023), which was listed as one of the American Library Association's top graphic novels of 2023 and was awarded the 2023 Foreword Indies Editors Prize for nonfiction. Her latest book, *Raised by Ghosts* (Fantagraphics, 2025), won the Harvey Award for Best Young Adult Graphic Novel of 2025 as well as the ALA GNCRT Best Young Adult Graphic Novel of 2025. Briana lives in Oakland with her husband and two kids and a cat named Gary.

Howard Mackie

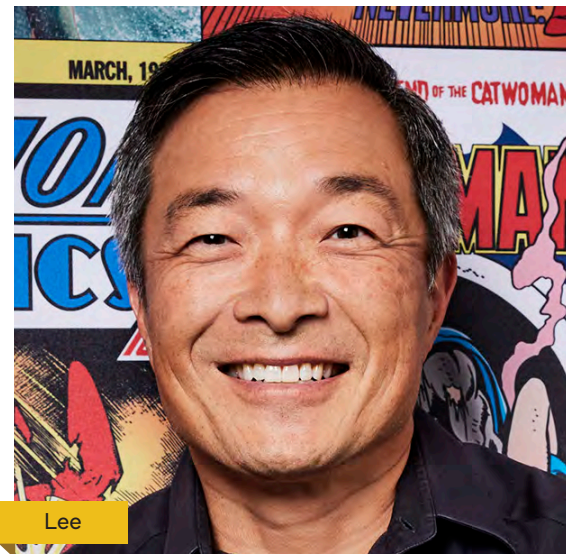
Howard Mackie was dragged—kicking and screaming—into writing his first comic book (*Iron Man* #211) by legendary writer/editor Mark Gruenwald in 1986, and he went on to chronicle the adventures of Ghost Rider, Spider-Man, Hawkeye, The X-Men, X-Factor, Mutant-X, Gambit, Wolverine, Batman, and countless others for Marvel, DC, and other publishers. Howard's most recent work for Marvel was *Ghost Rider: Return of Vengeance* and *Ghost Rider: Blood and Vengeance*. He is currently developing four projects for 247 Comics.

Shawn Martinbrough

Shawn Martinbrough is an Eisner Award-nominated artist whose comic book projects include *Detective Comics* (featuring Batman), *Luke Cage Noir*, *The Black Panther*, *Hellboy: Thief of Thieves*, *Promethee 13:13*, *Anansi Boys*, and the NAACP Image Award-nominated, best-selling kids' book *Like Lava in My Veins* (published by Nancy Paulsen Books/Penguin Kids). He is the writer of *Red Hood: The Hill* for DC Comics, is co-author of *Judge Kim and the Kids' Court* for Simon & Schuster, and is currently writing and illustrating original graphic novels for Megascope/Abrams Books, Image Comics, Ignition Press, and First Second/23rd Street Books.

Frank Miller

Frank Miller is the award-winning comic book writer, artist, novelist, screenwriter, film director, and producer best known for *Daredevil: Born Again*, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, *Elektra Assassin*, *Sin City*, and *300*, among others. He co-authored with Tom Wheeler the young adult novel *Cursed*, which was adapted to a Netflix show. His projects have been nominated for the Palme d'Or and have won Harvey and Eisner Awards, including those for Best Writer/Artist, Best Graphic Album—Reprint, Best Cartoonist, Best Cover Artist, Best Limited Series, and Best Short Story. In 2015, Miller was inducted into the Will Eisner Award Hall of Fame.



Lee



Levitz



Loewinsohn



Mackie



Martinbrough



Miller

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Booth # 607



Absolute Batman #22
Artist Alan Quah

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Knull #1
Artist Skan



Godzilla Kai-Sen #7
Artist Rachta Lin



Invincible Returns #1
Artist Rachta Lin

Yoichi Nishikawa

Yoichi Nishikawa is a celebrated Japanese background artist and painter who has contributed to all Studio Ghibli productions, from *Howl's Moving Castle* to *The Boy and the Heron*. He has also worked as art director on such acclaimed films as *Summer Wars* and *Wolf Children*. Known as "the painter of clouds," Nishikawa is recognized for his masterful use of light, atmosphere, and color. His fine art exhibitions and publications have earned him an international following, showcasing the same sense of beauty and emotional storytelling that defines his work in animation, transforming everyday landscapes into scenes of quiet wonder and nostalgia.

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Belén Ortega

Belén Ortega is a Spanish artist who made her American comics debut in 2019 with Marvel Comics as both a cover and interior artist on *Miles Morales: Spider-Man*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *Captain Marvel*, and more. In 2021, she began collaborating with DC Comics as an artist on *Batman: Urban Legends* and other Batman Universe books while she continued to provide covers for such publishers as Marvel, Image, and BOOM! Studios. In 2024, she signed an exclusive contract with DC. Belén's most recent work in the American market includes backup stories in the *Trinity: Daughter of Wonder Woman* miniseries. Throughout her career, she has collaborated with many brands, including Megadeth, Fortnite, FNAC, Joyería Suárez, Tezucomi Magazine, and Riot Games.

Ryan Ottley

Ryan Ottley is an American comic book artist best known for his work on the *Invincible* series. He is a contributing creator on the series who designed and co-created large parts of the *Invincible* universe with writer Robert Kirkman and served as primary artist for 127 issues of the 144-issue first series. *Invincible* is now an animated TV series on Amazon Prime, with Ottley acting as a consultant. After *Invincible*, Ottley went to Marvel and did 20 issues of *Amazing Spider-Man* with writer Nick Spencer, then served as artist on *HULK* with writer Donny Cates, where he finished the run as both writer and artist.

Stephan Pastis

Stephan Pastis is the creator of the syndicated comic strip *Pearls Before Swine*, which appears in over 900 newspapers. There were more than 40 *Pearls* book collections published by Andrews McMeel Publishing. In 2003, 2006, and 2014, the National Cartoonists Society named *Pearls Before Swine* the Best Newspaper Comic Strip, and in 2019, Stephan won the Society's highest honor, the Reuben for Cartoonist of the Year. He is also the creator of the Timmy Failure book series, the Trubble Town graphic novel series, and the middle-grade book *Looking Up*, as well as being co-writer of the Disney movie *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made*. He lives in Northern California and is really good at playing Boggle With Friends on his phone.

John J. Pearson

John J. Pearson is an Eisner Award-winning artist and illustrator based in Leeds, UK. He is the artist and co-creator of *The Patron* (with Christian Ward), *The Smart Division* (with Zack Kaplan) and *In Bloom* (with Michael Conrad). He has worked on *Hellblazer: Dead in America* and *Batman: Urban Legends* for DC Comics and *The Department of Truth*, *Razorblades*, *The Infernals*, and *Blue in Green* for Image Comics, as well as contributing to works published by Dark Horse, IDW, Heavy Metal, and BOOM! Studios, among others.

LeUyen Pham

LeUyen Pham is the artist of over 120 books for adults and children. Her graphic novels include the multi-Eisner Award-winning *Lunar New Year Love Story* with Gene Yang, the Eisner Award-nominated *Templar*, and the bestselling *Friends* series with Shannon Hale. She is the recipient of several awards, including the Caldecott Honor, the Society of Illustrators' Bronze Medal, and the Fay B. Kaigler Southern Miss Medallion. She is the creator of the *Vampirina* book series, which has been adapted to both animation and live action with Disney. Her latest graphic novel is *As I Dream of You*, written by Jenn Lee, the creator of *Frozen*.



Nishikawa



Ortega



Ottley



Pastis



Pearson



Pham

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Pornsak Pichetshote

Pornsak Pichetshote is an award-winning Thai American writer of comics and television. Beginning as an editor for DC's Vertigo imprint, he then oversaw DC Entertainment's TV department, spearheading The CW's Arrowverse. As a comics writer, he is known for *Infidel*, which was selected for NPR's 100 Favorite Horror Stories of all Time, and the Eisner and Harvey Award-winning *The Good Asian*. As a TV writer, he's best known for *Marvel's Cloak & Dagger* and *Two Sentence Horror Stories*. He currently writes *Absolute Green Arrow* for DC Comics and the upcoming *Exquisite Corpses: Lone Gunman* for Image Comics.

Bud Plant

Bud Plant has been collecting, buying, and selling comics since 1968. In 2010's *Founders of Comic Fandom*, Bill Schelly wrote, "Few comic art enthusiasts have had a more visionary and entrepreneurial impact on the hobby than Plant." In high school, the pioneering retailer ran a mail-order comics sales business. He co-founded comics shops in 1968 and 1969, began exhibiting at Comic-Con at its start in 1970, and, more than half a century ago, he established Bud Plant, Inc. He published comics and a retailing trade publication and eventually became an independent comics distributor himself. After selling that portion of his business in 1988, he continued to provide mail-order comics catalogs, now available via Bud Plant Comic Art/Bud's Art Books in Grass Valley, California. This year he is being inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

Mimi Pond

Mimi Pond is an American cartoonist, humorist, and writer. In 1982, her book *The Valley Girls' Guide to Life* (Dell) became a bestseller and launched her career. Her works include humor books such as *Secrets of the Powder Room* (1983) and *Splitting Hairs* (1998) as well as acclaimed graphic novels *Over Easy*, *The Customer Is Always Wrong*, and *Do Admit: The Mitford Sisters and Me*. Pond also wrote scripts for several TV series, including *Designing Women*, *Pee-wee's Playhouse*, and the 1989 pilot episode of *The Simpsons*: "Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire." She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, the artist Wayne White.

Gordon Purcell

Gordon Purcell is a comic book artist perhaps best known for his Star Trek work, in particular his realistic renditions of the actors who play that franchise's characters, as well as those of similarly licensed comic books, such as *The X-Files*, *Xena, Lost in Space*, *Godzilla*, *Young Indiana Jones*, *Barb Wire*, and *Stargate Atlantis*. His many other credits include *Deep Space Nine*, *Voyager*, *Soulsearchers and Company*, *The Flash*, *Fantastic Four*, *Superman*, *Robin*, *Wonder Man*, *What If?*, *Kolchak*, *Justice League*, *Ben 10*, and *Elvira*. He's currently working on *Hollow Healer* for Apex and *Flare* for Heroic.

Mike Royer

Michael ("Mike") Royer is a comics penciler, inker, and letterer known for being Jack Kirby's main artistic collaborator at DC Comics in the 1970s. Those works include the Fourth World Saga (*Mister Miracle*; *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen*; *Forever People*; *New Gods*), *The Demon*, and *Kamandi*, among others. When Kirby returned to Marvel Comics later that decade, Royer was there with him, inking and lettering dozens of titles. Royer is also highly regarded for his work with Russ Manning on *Magnus, Robot Fighter*, and as a staff artist and designer at The Walt Disney Company for more than 14 years. Mike was a special guest at the first Comic-Con in 1970 and received the Inkpot Award in 1978. This year he is being inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

Victoria "V. E." Schwab

Victoria "V. E." Schwab is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of more than 20 books. Schwab's series and standalone titles for readers of all ages have made her a major literary figure, whose notable works include the Villains series, the Shades of Magic universe, *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue*, and *Bury Our Bones in the Midnight Soil*. When not haunting Paris streets or writing in the corner of her favorite coffee shop, she lives in Edinburgh, Scotland.



Pichetshote



Plant



Pond



Purcell



Royer



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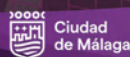
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Scott Shaw!

For over half a century, Scott Shaw! has worked on underground comix, mainstream comics, cartoon shows, and advertisements for TV and print. His credits include DC Comics' *Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew*, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, the Cocoa/Fruity Pebbles commercials on 1980s/90s Saturday morning cartoon networks, and animated cartoon series including Jim Henson's *Muppet Babies* and *Hey Arnold!*. Scott also produced Martin Short's *The Completely Mental Misadventures of Ed Grimley* and John Candy's *Camp Candy* cartoon series. Favorite annual events at Comic-Con are his Oddball Comics show and his contributions to the Quick Draw! panel hosted by Mark Evanier. His latest book is *Scott Shaw!'s Sonic Days*, a collection and recoloring of his illustrated stories from the early 1990s.

Katie Skelly

Katie Skelly is a cartoonist based in Los Angeles. Her latest graphic novel, *Heaven*, will be released in July 2026 by Fantagraphics. Her previous titles include *My Pretty Vampire*, *The Agency*, and *Maids*, also from Fantagraphics. She is the co-host of the comics podcast *Thick Lines* with Sally Madden, editor of the *Viscere* horror anthology series, and creator of *Bad Girl Tarot*. She holds a B.A. in art history from Syracuse University.

Jeff Smith

Jeff Smith is the writer and artist of such comics and graphic novels as *BONE*, *RASL*, *TUKI*, *SHAZAM: The Monster Society of Evil*, and *Little Mouse Gets Ready!* Both *BONE* and *RASL* were self-published (Cartoon Books) and are *New York Times* bestsellers. *BONE* began the current YA graphic novel popularity explosion by launching Scholastic Books' Graphix imprint. It won 52 national and international awards, including 11 Eisner Awards and 11 Harvey Awards, and has been published in 33 countries. CXC, the Columbus comics festival co-founded by Jeff, Vijaya Iyer, and Lucy Caswell, celebrated its 12th year in April. Jeff continues to work on Deluxe Library Editions of his catalog, with *BONE Part Two: Phoney Strikes Back* shipping this year.

Derek V. Song

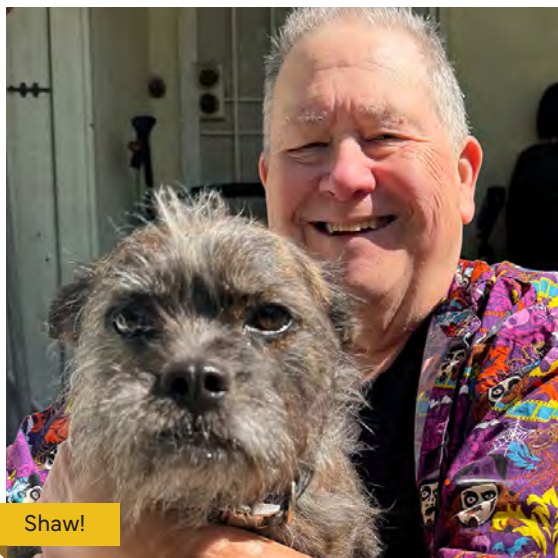
Derek V. Song is an Asian American writer from Boston. Since debuting in 2023, Derek has amassed millions of readers across various titles on WEBTOON, including *The Last Bloodline*, *The Primal Hunter*, *Paranoid Mage*, and the recent adaptation of Dimension 20's hit D&D series, *Fantasy High*.

William Stout

Artist William Stout has worked with Russ Manning, Harvey Kurtzman, Will Elder, Jean "Moebius" Giraud, Will Eisner, Jack Kirby, and Al Williamson. His studiomates included Dave Stevens and Paul Chadwick. Bill co-founded the Comic Art Professional Society and served as their tenth president. He created the iconic *Wizards* movie poster, then worked on over 70 movies, including *Return of the Living Dead* and *Masters of the Universe*. He helped *Pan's Labyrinth* win two Oscars. Michael Crichton claimed Stout's dinosaur reconstructions inspired *Jurassic Park*. Bill's 50+-year career overview, *Fantastic Worlds: The Art of William Stout*, was published in 2018. Coming out from Flesk just in time for Comic-Con 2026 is *William Stout's Comics* volume 1.

J. Michael Straczynski

J. Michael Straczynski created *Babylon 5*, co-created *Sense8*, wrote the Clint Eastwood film *Changeling*, and worked on *Thor* (the movie and the comic), *World War Z*, and the upcoming films *One Second After* and *Liminal*. He has written over 300 comics for Marvel, DC, Image, and Dark Horse, penning *Amazing Spider-Man* for Marvel for six years and recently returning for *Amazing Spider-Man: TORN*. Recipient of the Eisner, Saturn, Inkpot, Eagle, SDCC Icon, and Ray Bradbury Awards, he was also nominated for a British Academy Award (BAFTA). His newest novel, *The Max*, will appear spring/summer 2027. After moving to London, he is developing several TV series there.



Shaw!



Skelly



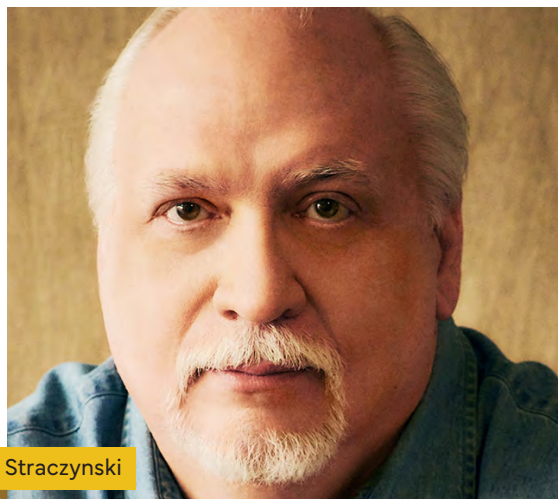
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Maggie Thompson

The first ongoing comics fanzines were published in 1961. That was 65 years ago—when Maggie and Don Thompson published the first issue of *Comic Art*. Five years later in New York City, they attended the first multi-day comics convention. In 1976—two decades after *Comic Art* #1—they attended their first San Diego Comic-Con with their kids, Valerie and Stephen, and received Inkpot Awards. In 1983, they became co-editors of *Comics Buyer's Guide* and attended Comic-Con, as they wrote both for and about comics. Now, more than 30 years after Don's death, Maggie Thompson shares Comic-Con fan fun annually. She was inducted into the Eisner Awards Hall of Fame in 2020 and currently serves as a judge on the Hall of Fame committee.

Mark Waid

Over the course of his four decades in the comic book industry, *New York Times* bestselling author Mark Waid has developed characters and written stories for Batman, Superman, Spider-Man, The Avengers, X-Men, Archie, Star Wars, The Incredibles, Fantastic Four, Wonder Woman, Daredevil, Captain America, and almost every other franchise currently enjoying success across all media platforms. *Kingdom Come*, which he co-created for DC Comics, has become one of the best-selling graphic novels in history.

Caspar Wijngaard

Caspar Wijngaard is an award-winning, Eisner and Hugo Award-nominated comics artist from the U.K. Best known for his work on the critically acclaimed Image Comics series *The Power Fantasy*, which he co-creates with writer Kieron Gillen, his other notable creator-owned titles include *All Against All*, *Home Sick Pilots*, and *Limbo*. Caspar has also contributed to Marvel's *Star Wars*, DC's *Batman: Detective Comics* and *Knight Terrors*, and the metaclassic *Peter Cannon, Thunderbolt: Watch*.

Scott Williams

Scott Williams is a fan-favorite comic book artist whose career spans more than 40 years. Best known as the inker on such hit titles as *X-Men* (including *X-Men* #1 in 1991, the single largest-selling comic in history) and *Batman: Hush*, Williams has won numerous awards for his groundbreaking embellishment style. Having collaborated with dozens of top artists in the field, Scott's symbiotic partnership with superstar Jim Lee, in particular, is one of the longest-lasting pairings in comics. Scott has also been a featured cover artist for Marvel and DC over the last ten years, showcasing his dynamic pencil style alongside his lush inks. Currently the inker on DC's hit series *Batman: Hush 2*, Scott continues to ply his craft with no signs of slowing down anytime soon.

Stephanie Williams

Stephanie Williams is a research scientist turned prolific comics writer. She's best known for helping to bring Nubia back to relevancy for DC Comics with *Nubia and the Amazons* and *Nubia: Queen of the Amazons*. She has worked on such titles as *Moon Girl* and *Devil Dinosaur: Wreck and Roll*, *My Little Pony*, *The Raven Boys*, and *Wonder Woman*. She is currently writing *Street Sharks* for IDW Publishing, *Roots of Madness* with Ignition Press, and *Temporal* at Mad Cave Studios. Stephanie has been nominated for Best Writer in the 2026 Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards for those titles.



Thompson



Waid



Wijngaard



Scott Williams



Stephanie Williams

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THE

60

YEAR

LEGACY

OF

STAR TREK

by RICH HANDLEY

LIVE LONG AND PROSPER!

The year 1966 was a significant one for television. *Mission: Impossible*, *Dark Shadows*, *The Monkees*, *Batman*, *Time Tunnel*, *The Green Hornet*, and *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.* all debuted. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* and *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown* aired for the first time. And *Mr. Ed*, *The Flintstones*, *The Addams Family*, *The Munsters*, and *My Favorite Martian* reached their end. Yet one new arrival would eclipse them all: *Star Trek*.

In September of that year, producer Gene Roddenberry's space Western premiered on NBC with "The Man Trap," written by George Clayton Johnson and directed by Marc Daniels. After a false-start pilot, 1965's "The Cage," *Star Trek* (since rechristened *The Original Series*) hit the airwaves featuring a powerful starship, a diverse crew, philosophical debates, and a daring captain who spoke as though every sentence were a declaration of destiny.

Star Trek, Roddenberry's famous conception, was a rather radical idea for mid-1960s television. The Great Bird of the Galaxy, as associate producer Robert H. Justman famously nicknamed him, wanted to tell stories about the future, but not the dystopian kind popular in that era's science fiction. He described the show as "*Wagon Train* to the stars," citing ABC's classic Western TV series, but beneath his pitch was an ambitious weekly morality play, wrapped in just enough aliens and space battles to slip past network censors.

Roddenberry imagined a humanity that had solved many of its problems and set out to explore the galaxy. He assembled an imaginative stable of writers and editors to help him chronicle that world, including Gene L. Coon, Dorothy "D.C." Fontana, Jerome Bixby, Robert Bloch, John Meredyth Lucas, Theodore Sturgeon, and others, along with guest writers such as Harlan Ellison, David Gerrold, and Art Wallace. Together, this talented bullpen forged the voyages of the starship *Enterprise*.

This was not a show about a cosmos-conquering warship. Despite its military trappings (weapons, ranks, courts-martial), Starfleet was, first and foremost, an instrument of exploration, diplomacy, and curiosity. It represented peace. *Star Trek* wasn't just *Wagon Train*. It was Fred M. Wilcox's *Forbidden Planet*. C. S. Forester's *Horatio Hornblower*. Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Even *Have Gun—Will Travel*, from

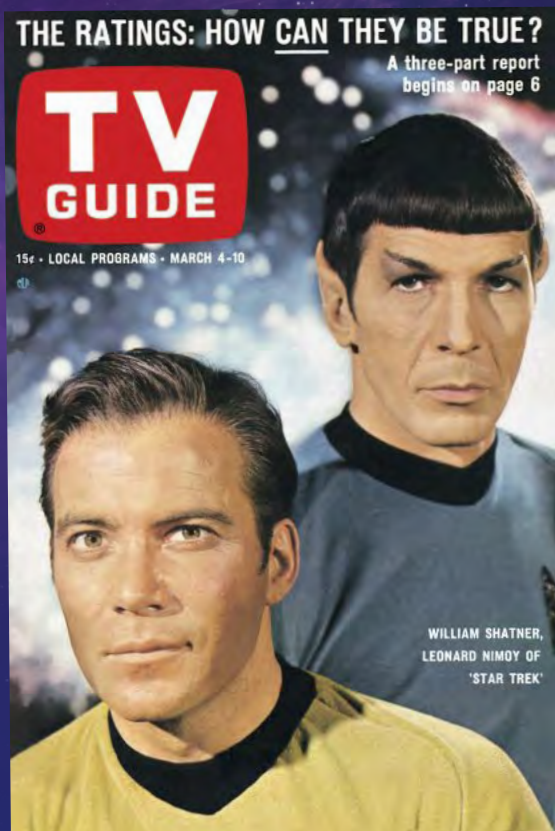


TOP

Season One *Star Trek* cast (from left to right): James Doohan, DeForest Kelley, Walter Koenig, Majel Barrett, William Shatner, Nichelle Nichols, Leonard Nimoy, and George Takei

BOTTOM

The Constitution-class Starship Enterprise NCC-1701



TOP

Fan art reimagining Captain Pike (Jeffrey Hunter), Spock, and Number One (Majel Barrett) from "The Cage," the original 1964 *Star Trek* pilot

BOTTOM

William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy as Kirk and Spock on the cover of *TV Guide* magazine in March 1967.

Sam Rolfe and Herb Meadow, for which Roddenberry had been a prolific writer.

While *Star Trek* is admittedly famous for its space battles and alien empires, its greatest strength has always been its progressive ideas. *Enterprise's* intrepid explorers encountered strange new worlds weekly and, just as often, encountered reflections of humanity itself. *Star Trek* embraced cultural diversity and denounced fascism, racism, misogyny, religious fanaticism, and social injustice. Science fiction as a mirror for contemporary society was—and remains—the saga's beating heart.

Like *Planet of the Apes*, *The Twilight Zone*, and comic books, *Star Trek* was socially conscious from the outset. Episodes tackled important issues like warmongering, colonialism, artificial intelligence, authoritarianism, nuclear annihilation, gender roles, interference in native cultures, and what it means to be human—topics strikingly relevant today. "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield," for instance, depicted aliens fighting a bitter, racist war despite being physically identical aside from facial coloring two-toned on opposite sides. The message was hardly subtle, but that was the point.

Roddenberry believed science fiction could explore controversial topics more easily by setting stories on distant worlds while disguising the social commentary. With *Star Trek*, he commented on the Vietnam War, the rise of Nazism, the greed driving capitalism, interracial romance, the danger of willingly sacrificing one's freedoms to fascistic demagogues, and

From the NASA public domain
archives: Gene Roddenberry
visiting NASA in 1967.



***STARFLEET WAS, FIRST AND FOREMOST,
AN INSTRUMENT OF EXPLORATION, DIPLOMACY,
AND CURIOSITY. IT REPRESENTED PEACE.CE.***



STAR TREK IMAGINE A BETTER IT HELPED T

profound inspirational weight. The actor nearly left after the first season, until Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. told her that *Star Trek* was the only program he allowed his children to watch, since it portrayed a future in which people of all backgrounds worked together. Nichols stayed with the show, and she later helped NASA recruit women and minorities into the U.S. space program, including Sally Ride and Mae Jemison.

It's no surprise NASA named its first Space Shuttle orbiter *Enterprise*. *Star Trek* didn't just imagine a better world. It helped to shape it. These days, *Trek*'s legacy is everywhere: in the gadgets we carry, the ideals to which we aspire, and the cosplayers wandering Comic-Con International, tricorders in hand and comm badges gleaming. The modest television experiment has evolved into an unstoppable cultural force.

No *Star Trek* discussion would be complete without its two most iconic characters: the bold, emotional, and improvisational Captain Kirk and the calm, logical Mister Spock. These two formed an enduring brotherhood, at the core of which was compelling philosophical tension. Kirk represented intuition and humanity, whereas Spock epitomized logic and discipline, and their debates mirrored the very questions *Star Trek* sought to explore: Is logic enough? Is emotion necessary? Can the two coexist?

As a Vulcan, Spock embraced IDIC ("infinite diversity in infinite combinations"), though he found humanity's steady stream of illogic distasteful and denounced the violence of our tumultuous history. This often put him at odds with the third member of the main cast's triumvirate, Leonard "Bones" McCoy, who reveled in teasing Spock with pointed barbs about his pointed ears, eliciting a raised eyebrow of annoyance. The trio's heated arguments were a *Star Trek* hallmark, yet fans knew that beneath any hurtful words was a deep, abiding friendship consistent with *Trek*'s core themes.

Viewers wholeheartedly embraced the Kirk-Spock-McCoy dynamic, due in no small part to Spock's awkward

more. The crew didn't represent a *perfect* humanity, for, despite common misconceptions, *Star Trek* was not utopian. They argued, made mistakes, and faced impossible dilemmas. Yet they kept exploring, learning, and believing tomorrow could be better.

What's remarkable about *The Original Series* is its bold casting. The *Enterprise* crew included not only Captain James T. Kirk (William Shatner) and his friends Spock (Leonard Nimoy), Leonard McCoy (DeForest Kelley), and Montgomery Scott (James Doohan), but also a Japanese-American helmsman (George Takei's Hikaru Sulu), a Russian navigator (Walter Koenig's Pavel Chekov), and an African communications officer (Nichelle Nichols' Nyota Uhura). Despite her skin color, Uhura was a woman placed in a position of authority, then unheard of on prime-time TV. All this, even though the show aired at the height of both the Cold War and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement.

At a time when 1960s television rarely cast Black performers in professional roles, Nichols' prominent place on the bridge of a paramilitary starship carried

TOP

Promotional photo: George Takei (Lieutenant Hikaru Sulu) and Walter Koenig (Ensign Pavel Chekov)

BOTTOM

On the bridge of the Enterprise: Nichelle Nichols (Lieutenant Nyota Uhura) and George Takei (Lieutenant Hikaru Sulu)

DIDN'T JUST BETTER WORLD. TO SHAPE IT.

interactions with his shipmates, his cultural catchphrase “Live long and prosper,” and, of course, the Vulcan salute. Interestingly, it was neither Roddenberry nor the show’s writers who came up with that salute. Nimoy created it himself, inspired by a blessing he’d witnessed Jewish priests deliver in synagogue ceremonies during his childhood. That small improvisation spawned one of science fiction’s most recognizable hand gestures.

Despite its creativity and loyal fan base, *Star Trek* was not a ratings powerhouse. NBC canceled it after only three seasons. But then, the unexpected happened. In the early 1970s, the show entered syndication, airing repeatedly on local stations throughout the United States. Suddenly, viewers who missed the original broadcasts discovered its message. College students embraced the show, inspired by its optimism, and universities hosted screenings that resembled the fan conventions that would bloom in the coming years.

The first large *Star Trek* convention took place in New York in 1972. Organizers expected a few hundred fans, but thousands showed up. No one—not NBC, nor Roddenberry, nor even the cast—had anticipated that *Trek* would become TV’s first true fandom phenomenon of the modern age. Suddenly, everyone involved realized their audience was far larger than expected. *Star Trek* had made its way into the zeitgeist, and the fan culture that thrives at Comic-Con today owes a debt to those early gatherings.

One of Hollywood’s most oft-repeated anecdotes involves fans saving *Star Trek* from cancellation. When declining ratings prompted NBC to pull the plug on *Star Trek* during its second season, even the backing of Desilu cofounder Lucille Ball wasn’t enough to change the network’s mind. So fans organized a massive letter-writing campaign, one of the earliest coordinated efforts of its kind. Thousands of letters flooded NBC headquarters, causing the network to relent and grant a third season.

Sadly, victory was short-lived, for *Star Trek* ended the following year. Nonetheless, the campaign demon-



strated that with determination, fans could mobilize. They could influence network executives’ decisions. They could be heard. Such campaigns have since saved many shows. Yet *Star Trek* fandom did it first.

Network shortsightedness had led to *Trek*’s premature cancellation in 1969, but good stories refuse to stay dead. Four years later, the show resumed for two more seasons in animated format, rounding out *Enterprise*’s five-year mission to explore strange new worlds, seek out new life and new civilizations, and boldly go where none had gone before. *Star Trek* was back, and the Filimation cartoon’s quick demise did little to impede its longevity, for the franchise’s popularity had so expanded by the mid-1970s that Hollywood reconsidered its outlook.

Following the unprecedented success of George Lucas’s *Star Wars*, plans for a new series, *Star Trek: Phase II*, were repurposed as the 1979 feature film *Star Trek:*

ABOVE
James Kirk, Leonard (Bones)
McCoy and Spock: The triangular
relationship that anchored
the original series

WHILE SCIENCE DEPICTS BLEAK FUT HUMANITY CAN GROW,



TOP
Nimoy and Shatner as Spock and Kirk in an early promotional photo.

BOTTOM
Gold Key moved fast to publish *Star Trek*. This first issue is from July 1967.

The Motion Picture, directed by Robert Wise. The movie brought the *Enterprise* to the big screen with cutting-edge visual effects, while reuniting the original cast, including Majel Barrett Roddenberry (Christine Chapel) and Grace Lee Whitney (Janice Rand). It was a major box-office success and deservedly so. It proved *Star Trek* was not just a nostalgic curiosity but a viable cinematic franchise.

That success led to more films, starting with *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, directed by Nicholas Meyer. Often cited as the best *Trek* film and one of the greatest science fiction movies ever made, *The Wrath of Khan* provided a sequel to the episode “Space Seed,” with Ricardo Montalbán returning as genetically engineered tyrant Khan Noonien Singh. The movie also brought back John Winston as Kyle,

The Original Series’ sole regular character absent from *The Motion Picture*.

The saga returned to television in 1987 as *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, starring Patrick Stewart as Captain Jean-Luc Picard, whose extraordinary performance elevated the franchise to the status of cultural icon.

Astounding as it may sound, it has been sixty years since “The Man Trap” awed viewers that first night in 1966. In that time, *Star Trek* has grown far beyond its innovative roots. *The Original Series*, *The Animated Series*, and *The Next Generation* led to three more shows in the franchise’s classic years—*Deep Space Nine*, *Voyager*, and *Enterprise*—alongside the ten films featuring the Kirk and Picard casts. The once-dead property had attained a legacy.

One intriguing aspect of that legacy is how often its fictional technologies have become real. Consider communicators, which looked much like the early flip phones that followed. That resemblance was no coincidence, for engineer Martin Cooper, who invented the first handheld cellular phone (the Motorola DynaTAC, prototyped in 1973), had been inspired by the communicator’s design.

Other *Trek* technologies have followed similar paths. Tablet computers resemble the Personal Access Display Device (PADD). Voice assistants like Siri and Alexa echo *Enterprise’s* computer interface. Video calls and flatscreen televisions mirror starship viewscreens. Even modern medical imaging tech has been compared to McCoy’s diagnostic scanners and Starfleet tricorders. Transporters are unlikely any time soon—reality has limits, after all—but *Star Trek* has inspired countless other innovations, with many researchers openly citing the saga as their impetus for developing real-world tools.

After *Enterprise’s* controversial 2005 finale, *Star*

**FICTION OFTEN
ENTERTAINS, TREK INSISTS
ON TEACHING, AND IMPROVES.**

Trek remained dormant for a dozen years, except for a film trilogy by director J.J. Abrams, set in the so-called “Kelvin timeline.” History tends to repeat itself, however, and what goes dormant often does not stay that way forever. Just as *The Animated Series* had revived a dead property, as *The Motion Picture* had given the franchise new life on the silver screen, as *The Next Generation* had ushered in a two-decade *Star Trek* golden age, and as Abrams had brought *Trek* back to theaters, *Discovery* revived Starfleet once more in 2017.

The adventures of the mutineer Michael Burnham (Sonequa Martin-Green) opened the doors wide, resulting in eight more *Star Trek* shows—*Short Treks*, *Picard*, *Lower Decks*, *Prodigy*, *Strange New Worlds*, *Starfleet Academy*, and YouTube's *Very Short Treks* and *Scouts*—in less than a decade, along with the telefilm *Section 31*. Despite the 1965 pilot's failure to thrill network executives, and despite the short lifespans of both the 1966 and 1973 shows, *Star Trek* remains one of the most celebrated and enduring franchises of all time. More than half a century after "The Cage" was shelved, *Strange New Worlds* has finally given its characters the screen time they deserved all along.

The foundation of all those shows remains the same: Roddenberry's optimistic vision. That is perhaps *Star Trek's* most distinctive element. While science fiction often depicts bleak futures, *Trek* insists humanity can grow, learn, and improve. In the twenty-first century, an era dominated by darker sci-fi, such hopefulness feels more radical than ever. In *Star Trek's* fictional world, the twenty-first century was a dangerous time, and the same is true in the real world. We need the Great Bird's vision now more than ever.

As of 2026, the *Star Trek* brand encompasses an unprecedented fifteen shows and fourteen films, more than a thousand episodes throughout a fifty-five-season span, with the promise of more to come. Meanwhile,



fans have enjoyed more than a thousand comics, nearly that many novels, hundreds of short stories, more than a hundred video games, and multiple role-playing games. *Star Trek* wears the undisputed crown for science fiction longevity, rivalling even the BBC's long-lived *Doctor Who* for sheer story number.

Thanks to the infinite diversity in its infinite combinations, *Star Trek* has lived long, and it has most definitely prospered. Even as the current era wraps up with the final seasons of *Strange New Worlds* and *Starfleet Academy*, another rebirth is inevitable. New

ABOVE
The movie poster for *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* from 1979.

BOTTOM
The cast model art for
Filmation's Emmy-winning
Star Trek: The Animated Series
from 1973.



TOP LEFT

Promotional art of the cast of *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*, Season Three.

TOP RIGHT

The *Star Trek* novels adapted episodes as well as expanding *Star Trek* with original adventures.

MIDDLE

The promotional cast photo for the launch of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*.

BOTTOM

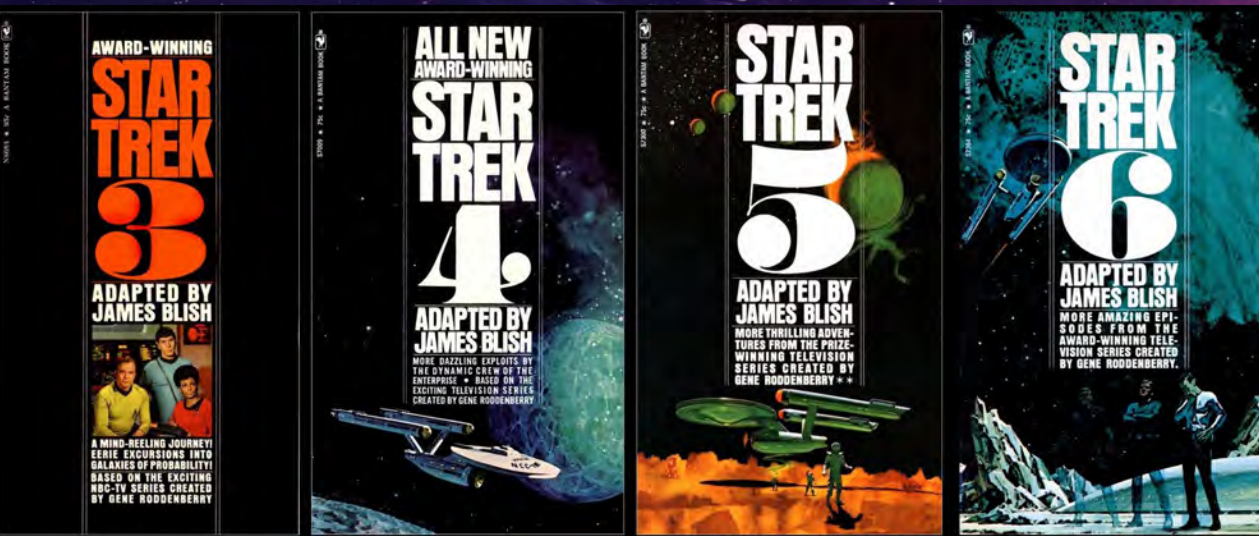
IDW has a relaunch of a new *Star Trek* comic scheduled for Fall 2026.



shows, new characters, and new interpretations will keep the concepts alive for the next generations. In every new *Star Trek*, the DNA of *The Original Series* has remained unmistakable. It's in the spirit of curiosity, the belief that diversity is strength, and the idea that the explorations of space, of science, and of ourselves are among humanity's greatest adventures.

Every year, *Star Trek* fans gather at Comic-Con, wearing Starfleet insignias and debating the finer points of warp theory as they attend panels and wander the halls. They're participating in something remarkable: a sixty-year conversation that started with a show most folks expected to vanish after only a few seasons. Fandom has become a multi-generational legacy, and if this franchise has taught us anything, it's that the journey is far from over. *Star Trek*'s human adventure is just beginning, and the final frontier still awaits.

Rich Handley (richhandley.com) has authored numerous books and essays for IDW, BOOM! Studios, DC Comics, Topps, Dark Horse, Titan, and more. His anthology Musings on Monsters: Observations on the World of Classic Horror (with Lou Tambone) was nominated for a Rondo Award for Book of the Year; his prose anthology Planet of the Apes: Tales from the Forbidden Zone (with Jim Beard) received multiple Scribe Award nods; and he co-edited (with Dean Mullaney) IDW's Eisner Award-winning Star Wars: The Classic Newspaper Strips collections. Rich edited Eaglemoss's Star Trek Graphic Novel Collection; co-edited (with Mullaney) IDW's five Star Trek newspaper strip reprint hardcovers; co-wrote Magnetic Press's Planet of the



STAR TREK

STATISTICS

(A lot can happen in 60 years)



01



TELEVISION

- 13 TV Series
- 960 TV episodes
- 51 Seasons

02



MOVIES

- 14 (Six Original Series, four counted as Next Generation, three in the "Kelvin" timeline, and one Section 31, associated with *Star Trek: Discovery*)

03



BOOKS

- More than 850 original novels, short story collections, episode and film novelizations, and omnibus editions have been published

04



COMIC BOOKS

- Gold Key Comics (1967-1979)
- Marvel Comics - First Run (1979-1982)
- DC Comics (1984-1995)
- Malibu Comics (1993-1995)
- Marvel Comics - Second Run (1996-1998)
- WildStrom Comics (1999-2002)
- TokyoPop (2006-2008)
- IDW Publishing (2007-present)

(Approximately 1,000 different comic books, and counting)

DC
AND
MARVEL
PRESENT

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THE BATTLE OF THE CENTURY

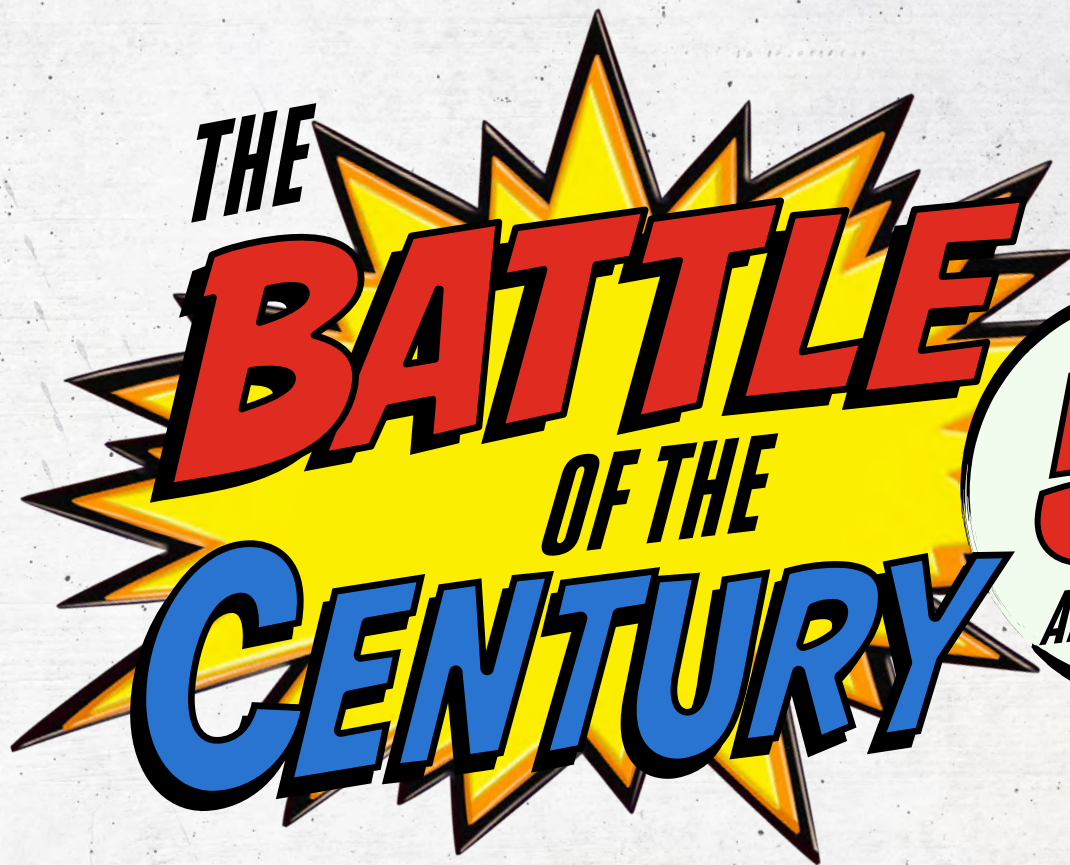
\$2⁰⁰

37995

SUPERMAN ^{the} AMAZING VS SPIDER-MAN®



THE **BATTLE** OF THE **CENTURY**



**An unlikely crossover built
an exciting road to the future.**

You would think that two really talented creative people who had collaborated on comics stories and spent time together in conference rooms discussing the state of their industry might have come up with the idea. After all, many thousands of young readers had imagined what it might be like for two of their great heroes to meet. But part of the magic of being young is that you don't know what's impossible.

The idea of crossovers between fictional characters wasn't new. There were examples in the old-time radio dramas, newspaper strips, and even in that unique, wonderful comic book, *The Spirit* (look up the tale of Denny Colt's failed crossover with *Li'l Abner* sometime). Within their lines, DC and Marvel had done it back to their earliest days: the tale of the Sub-Mariner's battle with the original Human Torch and its chaotic creation is one of the most vivid pictures of the Golden Age of comics.

But in the mid-1970s, DC and Marvel were definitely "frenemies," linked together in many ways, but perceiving themselves in a battle for survival as the newsstand sales of comic books spiraled downward. Their leaders conspired in the Comics Magazine Association of America, sharing information that at the very least bent the rules constraining businesses. The older staffers had very little to do with each other,

looking on the other company's publications as badly done, but the younger ones formed friendships across boundaries, playing poker and volleyball, and partying together. They even quietly snuck connections into stories in which the writers and artists crossed over, and brought with them the other companies' heroes in early cosplay.

There were few bright spots in the marketplace. Paper costs had accelerated rapidly in recent years, along with general inflation in America, pushing prices up (30¢ for a comic book, outrageous!). Comic shops were few and very far between, barely a rounding error for the bookkeepers, not so much "the direct market." The several hundred regional distribution wholesalers were less and less interested in comic books, especially as the founders of the family businesses retired, died off, or sold out to corporations.

One bright spot was a much larger printed format that had emerged in the early seventies, simply by unfolding the printed signatures of the standard comic book and adding a thin cardboard cover to support it. Pioneered at DC, which called the format "tabloids" in the office (about as literal and dull a term as imaginable) or "Limited Collectors' Editions" on the covers. The format was also adopted at Marvel, where it gained the dignity of "Treasury Editions" (Stan Lee was always the better marketer in those decades).



Physical production and coordination with the printers and color separators would be done by DC, which had a reputation as the most polished at those skills. Perhaps because of that, coloring would be done by Jerry Serpe, a longtime DC contributor receiving what was probably his first credit in a printed comic. Serpe was a total professional, deeply knowledgeable from his time as a separator. With the very limited palette available, coloring was regarded as a service craft, not a true creative contributor by much of the field. And distribution would be by DC's sister company, Independent News,

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which had decades more experience with comics than Marvel's corporate relative, Curtis Circulation.

By this time, both Marvel and DC had some experience with publicity, and Stan had shown a natural talent as a public figure, but neither company had done a real publicity campaign for a comic book series. The Obsts stepped in to fill that gap, arranging a level of real-world promotion that was unprecedented for a mere comic book.

Of course, *Superman vs Spider-Man* wasn't mere. It was 92 tabloid pages, a longer story on a bigger canvas than anything people had seen before. It not only broke the imagination barrier that had separated the worlds of these two heroes, but everything about it screamed event. Even the cover price of \$2.00 demanded attention, particularly from retailers who gave it very prominent display on the newsstands across the country and Canada. Put it all together, and unsurprisingly, it was probably the most profitable comic book published in its era.

Unfortunately, it was a success in the waning years of the "page rate" era of comics. While there had been occasional royalty deals going back to the earliest days (Marston on *Wonder Woman*, Simon & Kirby on much of their work, and others), there was no general standard for talent to share in the success of this book. One of the executives who might have been expected to benefit had reached the end of his management career, as Carmine Infantino was fired two weeks after *Superman vs Spider-Man* was released, for completely unrelated reasons.

Superman vs Spider-Man: Battle of the Century Treasury Edition set some precedents that still ripple through the comics world: there are now crossovers between unrelated characters from competing companies in every niche of the field. They're rarely done the way that first crossover was, with talent from both houses collaborating, if only because

that was such a complex process. More often, the simple solution we devised for the sequel books a few years later is used: agree on two titles, have one produced by each of the partners, and split the profits. While these more recent projects aren't shocking events since they happen so often, they still fuel the imaginations of readers who endlessly ponder the relative strength, speed, or skill of their heroes.

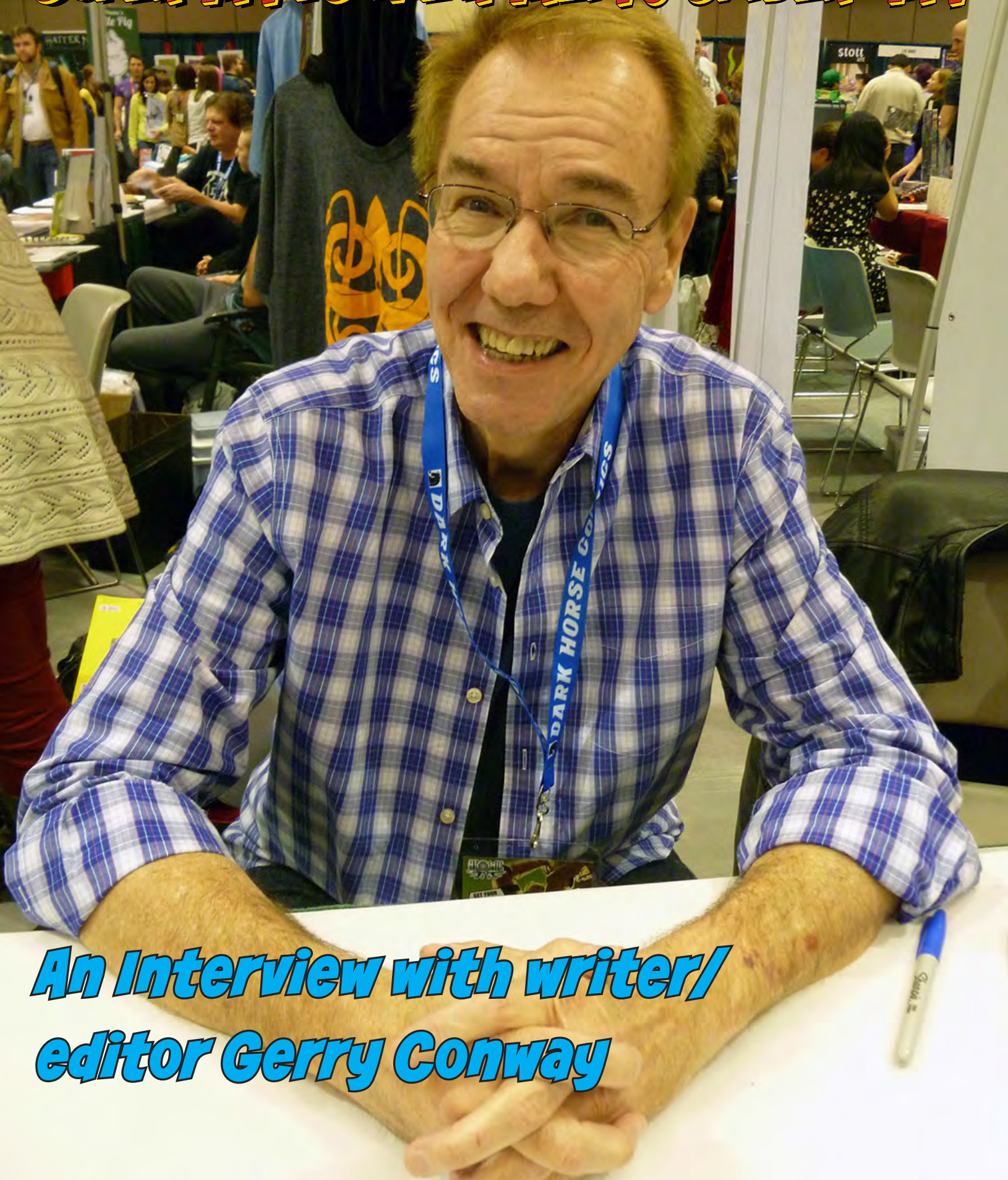
Five decades later, it would take many pages just to list all the crossovers that have followed in its wake. Some wonderful, some bizarre, some obviously cash grabs. But none with the singular impact of that first *Superman vs Spider-Man*. That was a crossover that really shattered worlds.

Paul Levitz is a comic fan (The Comic Reader), editor (Batman), writer (Legion of Super-Heroes), executive (DC Comics' President & Publisher), historian (upcoming: Marvel Explodes, From Bullpen to Big Business), and educator (Pace, Columbia, and New York University). He has been inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame and has been awarded a Doctorate of Humane Letters.



ers between
competing companies
of the field."

SUPERMAN VS THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN



***An Interview with writer/
editor Gerry Conway***

This interview was conducted in December 2025, when Gerry Conway was kind enough to sit down over Zoom despite not feeling well. He spoke with enthusiasm, candor, and humor for well over an hour. Gerry passed away in April 2026. We gratefully share this conversation as both a celebration of his work and an acknowledgement of his enormous contribution to comic books.

D.OLBRICH: What can you tell us about the origins of the *Superman vs Spider-Man: The Battle of the Century* Treasury Edition comic book? How did you get involved? Was there competition for the job?

G.CONWAY: The story of how it came about involved a guy named David Obst, who was Stan Lee's literary agent. David later went on to become an entertainment executive. His wife, Lynda Obst, became a well-known film producer.¹

Anyway, David Obst was Stan's agent. At a lunch or something that the two of them had, he asked Stan why there had never been a crossover between Marvel and DC's biggest characters. And Stan was like, well, DC would never agree.

David said, let me give him a shot. Let me try to see if I can make this happen. So, he approached Carmine Infantino, who was the president of DC Comics. Carmine was like, well, you know, we would do it, but I'm sure Marvel will never agree.

D.OLBRICH: : That's really funny.

G.CONWAY: So, basically, it was a dare by the two companies, and neither of them chickened out. They finally came to an agreement that David Obst hammered out. Marvel would provide the artist. DC would provide the writer. The editorial work would be overseen by Carmine. Stan would write an introduction. This is kind of how it happened; it sort of came together. Now, at that point, I was at DC as an editor.

There was a lot of competition between Carmine and Stan, not just as publishers, but personal competition. And Carmine was very competitive. I don't think Stan felt the same competitiveness.

¹ David Obst also represented Woodward and Bernstein for *All the President's Men*. He was also a producer/writer on a number of feature films, including *Revenge of the Nerds*. Lynda Obst was an Emmy-nominated producer of many feature films and television shows, including *Adventures in Babysitting* (1987) and *Interstellar* (2014).

Carmine figured signing Jack Kirby had been a big get for DC in 1970. I was a couple of years later, and they saw me as a big get for DC. I had been the main writer on *Amazing Spider-Man* for several years. So, the rationale was, let's get Gerry, who has written both Spider-Man and Superman.

I suggested Ross Andru, who had drawn both Spider-Man and Superman. Then ... we set off to do the book with Roy Thomas as a consulting editor. Basically, Roy's input was, well, yeah, I'm here, you know, if you need me.

And, so it was ... it was Ross and I who did the book. We broke it down together.

We plotted it, a lot of it, together. We had constraints that were kind of self-imposed. Again, because nobody had ever done it before.

By this point, DC and Marvel both did not want to get the blame if it didn't turn out. They both sort of stayed away from the book.

D.OLBRICH: : Really? Hard to imagine editorial provided no input.

G.CONWAY: We did pretty much what we wanted to do. Marv (Wolfman) and Len (Wein) were the editors at that point, and they both basically didn't want to be involved. I was an editor at DC, so I certainly didn't want to step on my own toes. And we worked it out. I mean, Ross and I collaborated very closely. How the story would be told. Basically, it was an excuse to do a lot of fighting. They're both Superman and Spider-Man; they had nothing against each other, so we had to get them confused.

We broke down each page and each sequence of pages so that each hero could have their own weight. And have the same number of appearances and pages. It was a close collaboration. Ross and I would get together every week or two to plan out the next few pages.

D.OLBRICH: : How long do you think it took?



G.CONWAY: Well, let's see, 92 pages. Ross is fairly fast as an artist. Two or three months. Somewhere in there. Then production was done by DC. Lettering was done by DC.

D.OLBRICH: I read this website that wanted everybody to know that you were basically the acting editor; you did all the trafficking, did all the heavy lifting, to complete the book.

G.CONWAY: That's basically true. Okay, I think Julie (DC editor Julius Schwartz) had input in the story, because he was a great plotter, and I respected him so much.

(Editor) Roy (Thomas) had been my editor and mentor at Marvel, so I wanted him to be involved. I don't recall Marv (Wolfman) and Len (Wein) having anything to do with it.

Let's just say there were a lot of landmines that you could step on, you know? There was going to be feedback from the fans, positive and negative. We were fans, all of us. We were big fans of both of those characters. We were trying to service those fans, sure. We were also aware that there would be negative feedback.

Surprisingly, the only real negative feedback I've heard, and this may be a complete misunderstanding, was from (Marvel editor) Mark Gruenwald. He objected to the idea that we skated over to a reality in which Superman and Spider-Man both existed side-by-side without explaining it.

D.OLBRICH: I was just gonna ask you about that, because that seems like the big hurdle ...

G.CONWAY: Yeah. The story just happens.

D.OLBRICH: That was maybe the best part about the book for me. You didn't go into all this trickery to crash their worlds together.

G.CONWAY: I think that was Mark's objection, that we did not deal with that, but it was intentional that we didn't do it. There's no fun in talking about that.



D.OLBRICH: Do you remember if there were any discussions, like, how did it get to be a treasury-sized book?

G.CONWAY: I think at that point, both companies were looking at that format. This was a bad time in the comic book field. They were trying to find any format that would get good racking and move more copies ...

D.OLBRICH: Marvel and DC had just released a *Wizard of Oz* book that they worked on together in that size, so it was just kind of following that?

G.CONWAY: It's kind of similar to what Marvel and DC are doing now, with the different formats, publishing DC Finest, and Marvel Universe. This has all come around again and again. At that time, it was really new, and hopefully a way for both companies to boost their audience. And it worked.

D.OLBRICH: Do you remember anything about the sales?

G.CONWAY: I only know that they were really good. So good, they almost immediately started talking about doing other crossovers.

D.OLBRICH: Do you know if (Marvel art director John) Romita stepped in and fixed some of the faces? Because it all looks like Dick Giordano inking to me, until it gets to Peter Parker's face in a few places.

G.CONWAY: Yeah, I think that was the case. I mean, I know Neal Adams did that without encouragement. Honestly, given that he didn't ask, I thought that was disrespectful to Ross. To not go through the process of asking.

I think John (Romita Sr.) was the face of Spider-Man and Peter Parker. He had done the book for 60 issues at that point, I think?



He would also redraw sequences when writers asked for a revision: In a couple of cases, I asked them to do that. He was the anchor.

As art director, John basically had prior permission to do that. Neal did not. I don't think that Dick Giordano even knew. They shared a studio and even a business together. Dick would bring his art to the studio and ink at the studio. He had assistants who helped him. Neal was just one of them.

D.OLBRICH: What was your reaction when Carmine Infantino asked you to write it?

G.CONWAY: I was like, oh my god, this is great. I could not believe my luck. I was a huge fanboy, and what fanboy would not have wanted that assignment? I think it was the most fun that I had at DC during that first year, before I went back to Marvel briefly. I created stories for DC, brought back *The New Gods*, and did my first *Justice League* stories, during that year and a quarter that I was there as writer-editor. But this was the crème de la crème. This was BIG. The big quesadilla. I don't know what you'd call it.

Roy (Thomas) told me that Stan (Lee) was actually very ambivalent about the crossover. He didn't think that there was any advantage to putting Superman in a Spider-Man comic. You know, because Spider-Man was his baby, and he thought this was the flagship.

But Roy told him Superman is better known to more people than Spider-Man, and having the two of them on equal footing is going to raise our market, the visibility for Spider-Man. There's no downside to this, so ...

I mean, look at that cover. Ross and I had to design the cover in a way that put both characters in equal proportion. There was, I think, discussion over

whose name goes first, you know, like on a movie production.

But it was obvious we were going to put Superman's name first, because he'd been around longer, and he was the face of comics. He got the top position in the frame, but as a fan, I just wanted to see them together.

D.OLBRICH: Did that attitude in the office kind of change once the book was out? Do you remember what the reception was by fans? Because it sold very well.

G.CONWAY: Yeah, it did sell well. I think that is reflected by the fact that they did many more. Once the finished artwork by Dick (Giordano) started to come in, the enthusiasm level started to go up, because people could see what it was going to be. Whatever in-house conflicts there were just went away.

D.OLBRICH: Do people come and ask you about it at conventions?

G.CONWAY: Oh, yeah. People bring me copies to sign, talk to me about how it was a really great book. They loved it. You know what? I get asked about a lot of different things at conventions.

D.OLBRICH: Oh, well, killing Gwen Stacy, I'm sure, made you very popular.

G.CONWAY: The weirdest thing to me in my life is that the Gwen story has flipped in its impact in the first several years after.

D.OLBRICH: How old were you when you killed Gwen?



"Roy (Thomas) told me that Stan (Lee) was actually very ambivalent about the crossover."



--WITH
THE
FORCE
OF A
COMPACT
HURRICANE!

POW

G.CONWAY: Let's see ... I was probably 20. Maybe 21?

D.OLBRICH: I was messed up for a week.

G.CONWAY: You take something and give it real emotional weight. That's what's lacking in comics now. Because we know that these are brand characters. We know that they're not going to die. I think comics were more realistic in the 70s than they are today. And it's weird to say that, when the artwork looks so good now.

I love Tom King's writing, and I really enjoyed his Batman run and the Supergirl arc that he did. But I know instinctively that it's a round ... that it's just going to be a circle. There's a limit to it. It's unlikely to change anything. I mean, Court of Owls has definitely changed things. That's Scott Snyder writing. That changed the mythos a bit.²

D.OLBRICH: You must, at some level, be kind of grateful that you worked in comics when you did.

G.CONWAY: Yes. We were the first generation of fans to come into comics. You know, we were not cynical, we were not ashamed? Certainly not. I wanted to do it.

D.OLBRICH: Do you remember any fan response back when it originally came out, *Superman vs Spider-Man*? Were you in a place where you could get some feedback?

G.CONWAY: Whatever vocal feedback was pretty positive, except for the people who were purists and couldn't figure out how Superman and Spider-Man could be in the same universe.

It doesn't matter. In the grand scheme of things, they're just there. That's how it is. If you can believe a man can fly, and if you believe a radioactive spider can give a human being spider-like powers, then why can't you believe that.

D.OLBRICH: Putting it in a historical context, what do you think the real historical importance of the book is?

G.CONWAY: It was historic. As the first meetup between these two heroes. Right. Establishing that Superman could be in a Marvel book. That you could do Superman stories Marvel-style. And that opened the door for people like Marv and Len to come in and write Marvel-style stories. And of course, me, to do Marvel-style stories.

The Superman and Spider-Man crossover had a huge impact on the creators, on the two companies, in terms of them looking at what their properties were. I think Marvel started to recognize they were real players. It wasn't just this small company. That willingness to just open that door was good for both companies. To

² Batman's initial Court of Owls storyline ran in *Batman* Vol. 2 #1-11, and was featured in two collections *The Court of Owls* and *The City of Owls*.



the extent that it has a historical value, it's that it's very sweet, you know? It's like ... naive and boyish.

D.OLBRICH: Reading it, suddenly I was 16 again.

G.CONWAY: Yeah. It's a reminder of where comics were at that particular moment in time. And because it's being reprinted endlessly, that helps remind us of where comics were.

You know, I'm the last surviving member of that crew. It saddens me that Ross is not here to appreciate this. Dick is not here. Even Neal is not here.

So I'm glad that we are remembered, that this book is remembered. It's a window into a different time.

D.OLBRICH: Thanks for your time today Gerry.

YOU WILL BELIEVE TIME CAN FLY FANTAGRAPHICS

BY STEVEN THOMPSON

AT 50



On *The Comics Reporter* website, the late owner Tom Spurgeon, former editor of Fantagraphics' *Comics Journal*, would give shout-outs to birthdays and anniversaries in the comics industry. It's too bad he isn't here for this one because it's a big one!

Do you know the name of the person who currently runs Simon & Schuster or any other major publisher? Of course not. Why would you? A rare exception to that would be Gary Groth, whose name—like Hugh Hefner with *Playboy*—is synonymous with Fantagraphics and its half-century of books and periodicals!

I started collecting comic books in 1966 at the age of seven. I discovered comics fandom and its fanzines in the early '70s. One of the very first 'zines I ever encountered was Gary's *Fantastic Fanzine* #11, from 1970, pre-Fantagraphics. I bought it because of Jim Steranko's elegant depiction of the Black Condor on its cover. It opened up a whole new world to me! The articles, and even the interior Steranko interview by Groth, were on a higher level than I had ever encountered in comics. It made me want to write about comics!

Time flying as it does, 2026 marks 50 years since Gary and Mike Catron—

and soon Kim Thompson (no relation)—decided to test their theory that not only were comic books not just for kids, but intelligent journalistic coverage and criticism of the field and the industry was overdue. The fact that *The Comics Journal* (TCJ) is still around today, albeit as a softcover annual, vastly evolved from its roots as *The Nostalgia Journal* ad-zine, proves that they were correct.

Groth developed a reputation as combative and elitist. His interviews with comics legends from Harvey Kurtzman and Jack Kirby to Jim Shooter and Charles Schulz were events! People talked about his Harlan Ellison interview for years. The *Journal* also championed Kirby's efforts to get his original art pages returned from Marvel Comics.

The letters pages of TCJ were often filled with riveting debates. Groth attracted criticism like a magnet, even ending up in several well-known feuds with popular industry folks. What anyone said about him never deterred him from speaking his mind, and his

reviews—especially of mainstream comics—became renowned for their negativity.

By 1988, I had read a lot of negative press about Gary Groth and had seen plenty of his scathing editorials and reviews. That summer, I found myself standing in front of the Fantagraphics booth at San Diego, enjoying a most pleasant conversation with a man behind the table regarding the great comics artist Wallace Wood. At that time, Fantagraphics was looking to publish Bhubh Stewart's then-upcoming book on Wood. After about half an hour, I noticed the man's name on his badge. "You're Gary Groth!" I exclaimed.

"I know," he calmly replied.

"I just...I mean...It's just that I had heard...You aren't so... Sorry! Hey, nice talking with you!" With that, I slunk away, quickly and awkwardly.

A year later, Gary's name was signed to the bottom of the check that made me a professional writer when I sold an article to Fantagraphics' *Amazing Heroes* magazine.

Fantagraphics was and is so much more than Gary Groth. The publishing machine he and Mike Catron created in 1976 has grown into something bigger and more

"I wasn't thinking in terms of a career; I had no long-term plans. I had like, a 30-day plan. Which was how could I pay my rent the next month and do something that I cared about."

—Gary Groth

important to the comics industry than those two idealistic young men ever could have imagined. As Gary said in a 2005 Associated Press article, "We're still a bunch of weirdos. We just hide it better these days."

Over time, Fantagraphics has consistently received more nominations and wins in the Kirby, Harvey, and Eisner Awards than any other independent publisher. In 2025 alone, the company had 26 Eisner nominations. In 1999, an article in Cleveland's *Plain Dealer* noted that Fantagraphics had dominated the Harvey Awards nominations that year with around 40! The company's Eric Reynolds told the paper, "It's great to be recognized, but we were somewhat taken aback by the number of nominations we got. It actually turned out to be bad publicity for us—people thought we stuffed the ballot box."

That year, all five Best Artist nominations were for work in Fantagraphics publications. Jaime Hernandez won. Jaime, along with the runners-up Chris Ware, Charles Burns, Dan Clowes, and Jim Woodring, are all familiar names now, unique artists whose work might have



gone forever unrecognized if Fantagraphics hadn't published their comics.

Think of all we would have missed if Fantagraphics had not existed! *Love and Rockets* by Los Bros Hernandez was like nothing ever seen in U.S. comics. It quickly evolved into a groundbreaking publication. Jaime Hernandez chronicled the ongoing adventures of two young Chicana women, Maggie and Hopey, in his "Locas" stories. Jaime's brother, Gilbert, introduced the world to his Central-American saga of Luba in "Heartbreak Soup." *Love and Rockets* defined what a successful alternative comic looked like and influenced many other creators.

Peter Bagge and Daniel Clowes were also influential, with the former's *Neat Stuff* and *Hate* coming from Fantagraphics while the latter's *Eightball* introduced readers to Rebecca Doppelmeyer and Enid Coleslaw, the non-conformist, proto-emo young ladies later brought to life by Scarlett Johansson and Thora Birch in the cult-favorite movie *Ghost World*. Without *Ghost World*, the movie, would Ms. Johansson have become as big a star as she has? Starred in the MCU? Who can say?

Fantagraphics has also published numerous wonderful one-off graphic novels, many

of European origin, translated into English, and written and drawn by creators unknown in this country. The translators have long been busy bringing to America, for the first time, the exciting Italian, German, and Dutch adventures of Scrooge McDuck and the classic Disney trio of Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and Goofy. The likes of Romano Scarpa, Luciano Bottaro, and Marco Rota are legends in their own right, and Fantagraphics has collected many of their stories in books and albums. The company has also reprinted many of the great comic strip and comic book classics from Floyd Gottfredson and Carl Barks, as well as beautiful collections of the acknowledged modern "Duck Man," Don Rosa. Early on, Fantagraphics even published *Don Rosa's Comics & Stories*, a volume of his early fan comic strips.

The fact that Fantagraphics was able to ride out the low points in the American comic book market multiple times says something



TOP LEFT

Eisner Award-winning publisher Gary Groth, holding his trophy.

CORNER RIGHT

Fantagraphics Books editor, the late Kim Thompson

SECOND TOP LEFT

Fantagraphics Books editor Kim Thompson with Gary Groth.

RIGHT SECOND

Daniel Clowes and Eric Reynolds. (2016) Photo by Kevin Sampsell.

THIRD TOP LEFT

A youthful Gary Groth, surrounded by stacks of comics, reading *Steranko's History of Comics 2*.

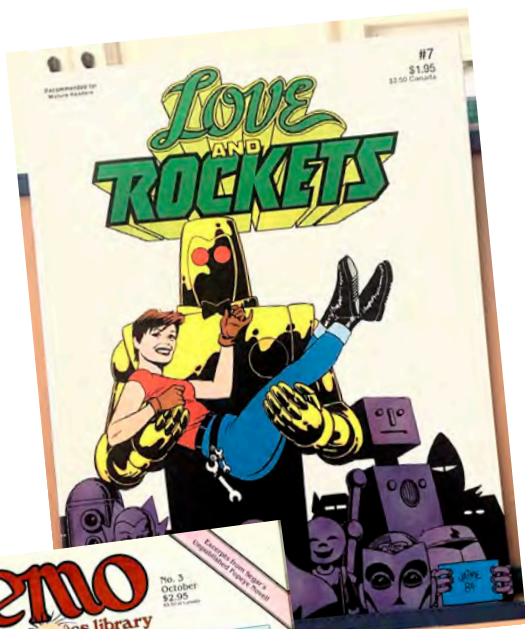
RIGHT THIRD

Left to right: Kim Thompson, Eric Reynolds, Rhea Patton, and Gary Groth. (2004) Photo by Carol Gnojewski.

BOTTOM

Left to right: Mike Catron, Gary Groth, Suzanne Williams, Robert Williams, and Eric Reynolds. (2019)





about the tenacity of all involved.

Despite *The Comics Journal*'s reputation for talking smack against most conventional comic books, the early 1980s boom in the field saw Fantagraphics debuting *Amazing Heroes*, a popular magazine aimed at the very audience *TCJ* had either avoided or alienated.

Amazing Heroes offered coverage of Marvel and DC as well as the new players like *First*, *Eclipse*, *Comico*, *Blackthorne*, *Continuity*, and many more, with news, histories, reviews, and interviews. *Amazing Heroes* even had regular Preview Specials and the always-fun summer swimsuit issues, featuring tons of all-new illustrations and cartoons by some of the best in the business!

Mike Catron gave *Amazing Heroes* its start and then passed it over to Kim Thompson, who helmed it as executive editor for the remainder of its existence, aided and abetted by such notable names as Dave Olbrich, Tom Mason, Heidi MacDonald, Kevin Dooley, Mark Waid, and Tom Heintjes, all of whom went on to success elsewhere! Embracing fanboy interests, the mag proved a steady seller for about a decade, serving as a vehicle to introduce numerous fan writers, including R.A. Jones, Andy Mangels, Gerard Jones, Lou Mougin, and many others, including myself.

Another time, Gary and Kim decided to follow a different route to keep their machine rolling. This time, they turned to erotica—not traditional underground comix but black and white comic books with unapologetic adult, sexual content. Eros Comix was undeniably a hit, raking in sales from new and reprinted adults-only comics and albums by the likes of Wallace Wood, Frank Thorne, Bill Willingham, and the pseudonymous (but easily recognizable) work of Anton Drek and Dementia.

Impressive new artists like the mysterious, mononymous "Rebecca" were prolific from the line. The translators were brought in again for some of the

thousands of pre-existing European hardcore stories. These included the beautifully drawn (by Francisco Solano Lopez) *Young Witches* series, which I used to buy for my 40-year-old female co-worker who was too embarrassed to buy them herself. For nearly 15 years, beginning in 1990, Eros Comix released more than a thousand publications, including the popular *Ironwood* and *Forbidden Frankenstein*.

If it's due to Eros that Fantagraphics was able to continue to publish E.C. Segar's complete *Popeye* run, Walt Kelly's soon-to-be-completed *Pogo* run, and the truly magnificent *Complete Peanuts* series, then I, for one, am grateful.

They've also given us lasting, curated collections of the newspaper versions of Donald and Mickey, *Prince Valiant*, *Krazy Kat*, *Dennis the Menace*, *Barnaby*, *Nancy*, *Buz Sawyer*, *Captain Easy*, and *Little Nemo in Slumberland*! Treasures all!

In the 1980s, only Fantagraphics would put out *Nemo*, a national magazine devoted to the history and preservation of the comic strip, aimed squarely at adults. Rick Marschall, one of the great comic strip scholars of our times, served as editor and art director, with Gary, Kim, Mike, and *TCJ* veteran Peppy White among those behind the scenes. Contributors to the relatively short-lived magazine included Ron Goulart, Don Phelps, Thomas Andrae, Bill Crouch, Rick Norwood, Leonard Maltin, Brian Walker, and Bill Blackbeard.

Each issue of *Nemo* contained historical articles as well as some strip reprints. *Flash Gordon*, *Alley Oop*, and *Little Orphan Annie* are well-represented, as are lesser-remembered strips such as *Moon Mullins* and *Sam's Strip*. Editorial cartoonists get their due as well. One of my favorite pieces in the entire run is "The Art Deco World of George McManus," the cover story in 1985's *Nemo* # 14.

If your idea of comics treasures is a bit more esoteric, Fantagraphics has also collected works by a number of classic era underground comix creators, including Kim Deitch, Spain Rodriguez, Roberta Gregory, and,

TOP LEFT

Iconic cover to *Love and Rockets* #7 (July 1984), art by Jaime Hernandez featuring Maggie the Mechanic.

BOTTOM LEFT

Nemo: The Classic Comics Library #3 (October 1983). Fantagraphics Books published this journal, edited by Rick Marschall, dedicated to classic newspaper strips.

TOP MIDDLE

The Comics Journal #100 cover features characters from *Love & Rockets* (Maggie, Hopey, and Penny Century)

TOP RIGHT

Pete Bagge's long-running Fantagraphics series, *Hate*, issue #28 featuring lead character, Buddy Bradley.



naturally, Robert Crumb. This is all work that no one expected would ever be collected! *Zap Comix* set the pace for the undergrounds in the late '60s, and this year, 2026, Fantagraphics is releasing *The Complete Zap Comix*!

In fact, did you know that Fantagraphics has published more work by R. Crumb than any other publisher? There were 17 volumes of the Harvey- and Eisner-winning *Complete Crumb Comics* alone, even a couple of expanded editions, plus multiple volumes of the artist's sketchbooks! Once derided as just a dirty, inappropriate cartoonist, Crumb is currently respected as one of the great artists of his time.

In 2022, the estimable illustrator Drew Friedman, like Crumb, the subject of a documentary film, celebrated the creator of Mr. Natural and Fritz the Cat, along with scores of other essential underground creators in *Maverix and Lunatix: Icons of Underground Comix*, one of several highly praised books of Friedman's from Fantagraphics.

For all their mainstream success, Gary and the gang still champion graphic novels of outsider art that other publishers won't touch. One recent example would be the disturbing *Red Room* books by the late Ed Piskor, whose trend-setting *Hip Hop Family Tree* the company had already collected.

I was barely a teen when I first ran across that issue of Gary Groth's *Fantastic Fanzine* with its Steranko cover, interview, and portfolio all those years ago. Now I'm a retired old man on Medicare, but excited to note that this very special year is expected to conclude the way it all started for me, with Fantagraphics' publication of *The Complete Jim Steranko at Marvel*, one of a series of hardcover books published in an arrangement with Marvel Comics.

After numerous delays on the Bhub Stewart Wallace Wood project I had spoken with Groth about in 1988, that book was finally released more than a decade later by TwoMorrows Publishing. Despite his later health battles, Bhub solicited some additional writers, myself included, to contribute to a revised and expanded version of the Wood book. After Bhub's untimely passing, that

project was put in the capable hands of Mike Catron and eventually released in 2016 in two Eisner-nominated volumes as *The Life and Legend of Wallace Wood*. By that point, I was regularly writing about comics elsewhere, but it marked my second time being published by Fantagraphics, my first in nearly 25 years.

I may never have been a major cog in Fantagraphics' publishing side, but I was there with Gary and his crew when it came to the consumer side. As a mainstream comics fan of long standing, I disagreed with many of the *Journal's* incendiary reviews and editorials, but I've always said you never learn anything by only reading the works of people who share your opinions.

Surrounded here by my collection of Fantagraphics books and Journals, I feel proprietary about this celebration, too. So, a toast to you, Gary, and to Mike, Kim, Eric, and to all the others I never got to meet. Thank you for taking the heat and fostering the growth of comics. People age, but publishers evolve. I can't even begin to imagine what the next 50 years will bring from Fantagraphics.

For more information about Fantagraphics—and there's a LOT more—see the 600+ page oral history from 2016, *We Told You So - Comics as Art*, by Tom Spurgeon and Michael Dean.

STEVEN THOMPSON, aka "Booksteve," is not related to the CBG Thompsons, nor is he a comic book artist, and he did not write the Introductions to Fantagraphics' Our Gang reprint collections. He has, however, worked on well over a hundred comics-related books and magazines, maintains a dozen blogs, and currently writes a regular nostalgia column for TwoMorrows' Comic Book Creator, all because he got his start from Fantagraphics. His most recent book is Set Sail With McHale, written with Denny Reese and available from Bear Manor Media.

TOP LEFT

The Comics Journal #70, Winter 1981-1982, featuring Daredevil penciled by Frank Miller and inked by Wallace Wood.

TOP MIDDLE

The George Pérez cover for *Amazing Heroes* #50 (July 1, 1984)

TOP RIGHT

The Comics Journal #35, published in June 1977, featured a Batman art portfolio.

100 YEARS OF AMAZING STORIES



LEFT
Amazing Stories
Vol. 1 #12 from
May 1927.
Cover by T.S. Stribling

TOP RIGHT
The first issue of
Amazing Stories
magazine
from April 1926.

BOTTOM RIGHT
First Buck Rogers cover.
Art by Frank R. Paul.
Amazing Stories Vol. 3 #12

Overview and intro

April 1926 marked the 100th anniversary of Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories*, the first magazine completely dedicated to science fiction. *Amazing* gave rise to science fiction fandom, and science fiction fandom gave rise to conventions, comics fandom, and eventually Comic-Con. In a real sense, *Amazing Stories* is one of the grandfathers of Comic-Con.

Before *Amazing*, there had been scientific romances, like Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, and Edisonades about young inventors and their brilliant inventions in adventure magazines like *Argosy*. There was fiction like "Baron Munchhausen's New Scientific Adventures" in Gernsback's *The Electrical Experimenter*, but nowhere was there a publication dedicated to what was then called "scientifiction". Until *Amazing Stories*.

Gernsback's first editorial is bold: "Many great science stories destined to be of an historical interest are still to be written, and AMAZING STORIES magazine will be the medium through which such stories will come to you. Posterity will point to them as having blazed a new trail, not only in literature and fiction, but in progress as well."

Impact on science fiction

Gernsback was right. *Amazing* defined the field. It published new fiction by authors like George Allen England and Austin Hall, and reprints of stories by Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe. By 1928, Hugo Gernsback was publishing new authors who would go on to be mainstays of early science fiction and fundamental to the way the field developed. E.E. "Doc" Smith's space opera, *Skylark of Space*, appeared in the August 1928 issue, paving the way for generations of space operas, including *Star Trek* and *Firefly*. Jack Williamson's first story, *The Metal Man*, appeared in December 1928. Jack's last novel was published in 2005, with his last Nebula award nomination in 2001. In January 1930, *Amazing* published the first story of John W. Campbell, who would shape the field for decades as editor of *Astounding Science Fiction*.

Amazing Stories looked like science fiction. From the first cover in April of 1926 until June 1929, every *Amazing* bore a Frank R. Paul cover illustration, marking the contents as exotic and alien. In his masterful history of science fiction illustration, *Infinite Worlds*, artist

Vincent di Fate comments, "...the importance of his work to the evolution of science fiction art cannot be overstressed...it fell to Paul, with the editorial guidance of Gernsback, to create the basic images that consumers would come to identify with science fiction. His illustrations portrayed huge, complex machines, titanic spaceships, outlandishly strange aliens and vast sprawling cityscapes...". In 2025, Frank R. Paul was posthumously inducted into the Society of Illustrators' Hall of Fame.

Introducing... Buck Rogers

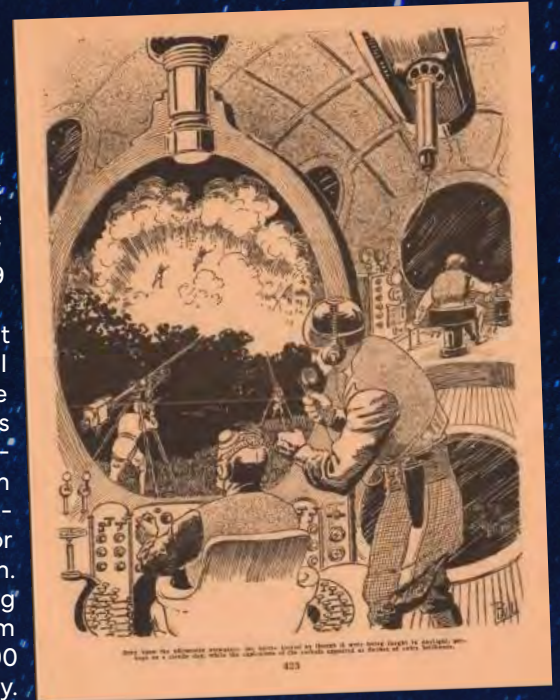
Before the first Buck Rogers comic strip appeared in January 1929, Anthony Rogers was introduced to the world in the August 1928 issue of *Amazing Stories*, in "Armageddon - 2419 A.D." by Philip Francis Nowlan.

"I should state, therefore, that I, Anthony Rogers, am, so far as I know, the only man alive whose normal span of eighty-one years of life has been spread over a period of 573 years." Buck had been caught in a cave-in while investigating unusual phenomena for the Radioactive Gas Corporation. Breathing the naturally occurring radioactive gas had placed him in suspended animation for 500 years, and into the 25th century.

The Buck Rogers comics strips were published from 1929 to 1967, and spawned imitators like Flash Gordon and Don Dixon. Buck continued in movies, radio and television. He was so identified with science fiction that generations of dismissive literati identified science fiction as "that crazy Buck Rogers stuff".

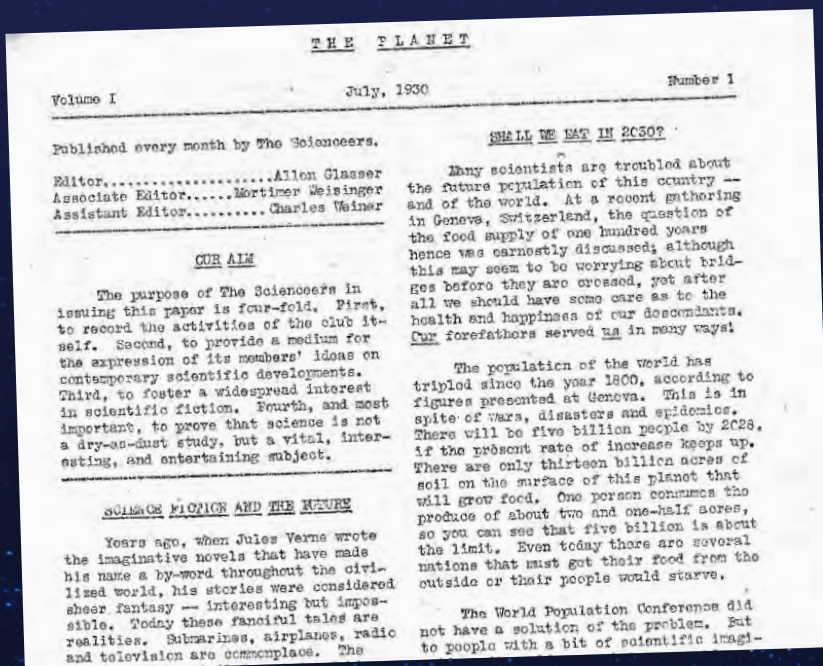
Origin of fandom

Readers responded. *Amazing*'s letter column, "Discussions", began in January 1927, with readers encouraged to write. The letters commented on everything from the science in the stories to the magazine itself.



ABOVE
First appearance
of Buck Rogers in
Amazing Stories Vol. 3 #5

"FROM THE FIRST COVER IN APRIL OF 1926 UNTIL JUNE 1929, EVERY AMAZING (STORIES MAGAZINE) BORE A FRANK R. PAUL COVER ILLUSTRATION ..."



They were serious and constructive. The most significant feature of the letter column was that Gernsback printed the name and address of the writers. Initially, just the town was listed, but by January 1928, some street addresses appeared. Now, enthusiasts had a way to find others with the same passion.

"The beginning of all fandom can be attributed to Hugo Gernsback...he used to publish letters in the back of the magazine...It was really a foundation of fandom, because here you had names of fans and addresses that you could actually correspond with, and that's how a lot of this correspondence started." – Dave Kyle, interviewed at Philcon 2012 by Joe Siclari.

First correspondence club, and maybe the first fanzine

Not every fan was fortunate enough to live in a city where there might be other "scientifiction" enthusiasts. In 1928, the idea for correspondence clubs had sprung up. The first was most likely in Alabama. In Spring 1928, the Science Correspondence Club (SCC) was



founded by Aubrey Clements of Montgomery. The club believed that reading "scientifiction" was likely to result in the reader finding a career in science. A month later, a similar club was founded in Chicago. The next year, the clubs merged, with a national membership roster. (Alabama)

In May 1930, issue #1 of *The Comet* appeared, arguably the first fanzine—the "Science Correspondence Club Bulletin", edited by Walter Dennis and Ray Palmer, who later had a dramatic impact on *Amazing Stories*. The first article in the *Comet*, "A Brief History of the Science Correspondence Club" tells the tale: "In the spring of 1928 while discussing a copy of the current *Amazing Stories*, Mr. Sydney Gerson and Mr. Walter Dennis conceived the idea of a club whose central idea was to spread science and scientific thought among the laymen of the world so inclined, by means of correspondence." There was a poem, illustration, club election business, and an article on trends in psychology. Fanzines became a good way to let people know about your interests, and soon these amateur publications proliferated. In 1940, Russ Chauvenet coined a word for it—fanzine! Eventually, hundreds of thousands of fanzines were published. Today, "zines" cover every topic you can imagine.

Hey, guys, let's form a club

Gernsback lost control of *Amazing* in 1929, when his company, *The Electrical Experimenter*, went bankrupt, but by then the connection between readers was established. In large population centers, fans started visiting each other in their homes and started clubs. The first local science fiction club was most likely the Scienceers in New York City. It was founded in December 1929 by readers of Gernsback's new magazine, *Science Wonder Stories*. *The Planet* was the publication (zine) of the Scienceers, perhaps a better candidate for the first true fanzine. From the first issue (July 1930), it featured material on both science and scientific fiction. The Scienceers met until September 1930, when the first fan feud, over paying the bill for a meeting hall, split the club. The Associate Editor of the *Planet* was Mort Weisinger of DC Comics fame.

ABOVE
Masthead of *The Planet* (Vol. I, No. 1, July 1930), the fanzine of The Scienceers.

BELOW
The logo for "The Clubhouse," an *Amazing Stories* column about fandom by Rog Phillips.



Science Fiction Convention

First convention, first Worldcon, and first cosplay

The very first science fiction convention was held on October 22, 1936, in Philadelphia. There were ten attendees (or maybe 11—accounts vary). Other conventions followed, and in 1939, the first World Science Fiction Convention, NYCon 1, was held in New York City, with Guest of Honor *Amazing Stories* cover artist Frank R. Paul. Attendance reached about 200. Cosplay got its start at NYCon, with “futuristic” costumes designed by Los Angeles fan Morojo (Myrtle Douglas), which she and #1 fan Forrest J Ackerman wore.

Here comes comics fandom

In the 40s, there was little discussion of Buck Rogers, except as a point of comparison. “The atomic age promises to outdistance Buck within the lifetimes of many folks now living” (Selby Maxwell, 1947, *Tympany* 4). However, comic strips were now a viable market for science fiction illustrators like John Giunta and Mac Raboy. In 1944, Frank Frazetta inked his first comic under the supervision of Giunta. By 1949, Giunta was doing Superman strips, and Frazetta was working on *White Indian* and *The Durango Kid*.

In the 1950s, EC Comics provoked a focused fannish response. EC specialized in serious science fiction and horror, adding compelling stories to great art. Fans responded, publishing dedicated zines including *EC Fan Journal* and the *EC Fan Bulletin*.

In September 1960, Dick and Pat Lupoff published the first issue of their science fiction fanzine

Xero, with Dick’s column “And All in Color for a Dime” dedicated to serious discussion about the comics. In Spring 1961, Don and Maggie Thompson published *Comics Art*, covering all aspects of comic art.

EC Comics had brought both classic and new stories to life, with outstanding pencilers and inkers like Wally Wood, Marie (and Johnny) Severin and Jack Davis.

More than 10 years after EC Comics stopped production under pressure from the Comics Code Authority, dedicated EC Fanzines blossomed. Fanzine editors Rich Hauser and Jerry Weist created fine offset publications in *Spa Fon* (Hauser, 1966) and *Squa Tront* (Weist, 1967), with in-depth analysis and interviews, plus incredible art by professionals, and by fans that quickly went professional. *Spa Fon* and *Squa Tront* featured art by Frank Frazetta, Jim Steranko, Bernie Wrightson, Roy Krenkel, and Steve Hickman.

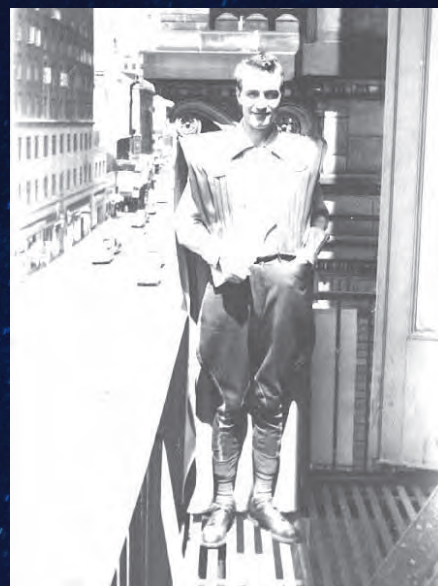
Comics fandom and fanzines had separated themselves from the science fiction fandom birthed by the readers of *Amazing Stories*.

Meanwhile, at Amazing...

In 1938, *Amazing Stories* was acquired by Ziff Davis, and Ray Palmer, co-editor of that first fanzine, *The Comet*, became its editor. For ten years, he brought both glory and shame to the magazine. Ray was a man with energy and grand ideas. His impact cannot be overemphasized, and not all of it was positive. He encouraged his writers to write for younger readers, with more high adventure and lots of story, and less adherence to known science.

ABOVE

Logo/illustration by Frank R. Paul for NYCon 1 (World Science Fiction Convention, 1939)



ABOVE

Forrest J. Ackerman at 1939 World Science Fiction Convention. Photo by Robert Madle

"IN SPRING 1961, DON AND MAGGIE THOMPSON PUBLISHED COMICS ART, COVERING ALL ASPECTS OF COMIC ART."

Amazing published stories about cities in the sky, bug-eyed monsters, and entrances to the center of the earth.

He gave a warm welcome to the Shaver Mystery and to mystical and occult forms of Cosmic Wisdom. The Shaver Mystery centered around the existence of a civilization beneath the earth's surface, threatening the world we know. Within two Palmer issues, *Amazing's* motto "Every Story Scientifically Accurate" disappeared from the cover. In the Palmer biography, *The Man From Mars*, Fred Nadis describes how Palmer would feed story ideas to writers and then rewrite the completed stories to make them even more outrageous. Unsurprisingly, fans had serious problems with Palmer. In 1949, he left Ziff Davis and published his own magazines, including science fiction.

In March 1948, still under Ray Palmer's editorship, *Amazing Stories* started running a monthly column on fanzines and fandom. Rog Phillips, a professional who wrote fiction for the magazine, began writing "The Clubhouse", in some sense closing the loop that *Amazing* had started by publishing letter writers' addresses. In June 1948, Phillips wrote, "I, like many of you, have known in a vague way that fandom exists. It was only when I actually went into the thing—subscribed to a couple of fanzines, that I really knew what a dynamic, alive group fandom is. Those of you who are not in fandom in some way are much like the wallflowers at a dance. You may be enjoying the dance music (in this case, the prozines). You might even be having fun watching the dancers (the fans). But unless you get on the floor and dance, you aren't getting all you should out of science fiction and fantasy." That participatory aspect is perhaps the defining feature of fandom through the current day.

The column, "The Clubhouse", was published until 1953, and later revived in *Universe Science Fiction* (1954–1955) and in *Other Worlds Science Stories* (1955–1956). It was credited by Ray Palmer for bringing many new people into fandom, including now-Grandmaster

Robert Silverberg, and, indeed, Silverberg counts this as his entry into the field. In 1969, John D. Berry, under the editorship of Ted White, brought "The Clubhouse" back again.

Amazing after Palmer

The next few decades of *Amazing Stories* found the pulp magazine changing with the times, with publishers seeking profitability and editors seeking to achieve their vision. Howard Browne took over as editor of *Amazing* for Ziff-Davis in January 1950, with the hopes of creating a more sophisticated magazine and competing with both paperbacks and digests. In 1952, a digest-sized sister of *Amazing Stories* called *Fantastic* was started, also edited by Browne, focused on fantasy rather than science fiction, with authors such as Walter Miller Jr., Ray Bradbury, and Isaac Asimov. *Amazing* soon switched to digest size as well in March 1953. Browne was replaced in September 1956 by Paul Fairman and, in turn, in 1958 by Cele Goldsmith. Goldsmith brought new talent to *Amazing* and *Fantastic*, publishing stories by Ursula K. Le Guin (April 1964, *Fantastic*), Roger Zelazny (August 1962, *Amazing*), and Thomas Disch (October 1962, *Fantastic*). In 1965, the magazines changed hands, sold to Ultimate Publishing.

Amazing, from Ultimate Publishing and, ultimately, Ted White

When Ultimate Publishing bought the magazine, reprint rights went with the sale. Publisher Sol Cohen shifted *Amazing* to primarily a reprint magazine, with one new story per issue. No payment was made to the authors for any of the reprints, which led to conflict with SFWA, the Science Fiction Writers of America. Cohen resolved the dispute by agreeing to pay a fee to the authors whose work was reprinted in the zines.

**"HOWARD BROWNE TOOK OVER
AMAZING (STORIES) FOR ZIFF-DA
1950, WITH THE HOPES OF CREA
SOPHISTICATED MAGAZI**

The editorial staff changed rapidly as Cohen stuck with reprints and, in quick succession, editors Harry Harrison and Barry Malzberg came and left.

In May 1969, Ted White became editor, and under his leadership, *Amazing Stories* benefited from the skilled efforts of White and his friends. John D. Berry restarted "The Clubhouse" once again exposing a generation of readers to fandom and fanzines. White published now-well-known writers including Philip K. Dick, Piers Anthony, and Ursula K. Le Guin, as well as his own stories. Despite difficulties and frequent disagreements with publisher Sol Cohen, White stayed until 1979. Following White's tenure, *Amazing's* publication schedule became spotty and insecure, often changing publishers and editors. Circulation remained a challenge.

Amazing changes hands, and more than once

In 1978, Cohen sold his interest in the magazines to his partner Arthur Bernhard. Bernhard combined the magazines and took them bi-monthly in 1980, changing the title of the merged magazine to *Amazing Science Fiction Stories*. By 1982, circulation was down to 11,000 in newsstand sales. Gaming company TSR, Inc acquired *Amazing* in May 1982. George Scithers began as editor in November 1982 and remained for four years, followed by editors Patrick Lucian Price and then by Kim Mohan. TSR ceased publication of *Amazing* in winter 1995. In 1997, *Amazing* was acquired by Wizards of the Coast, which published 10 issues. The title went to Paizo Publishing in 2004, and the magazine was published for another year. In 2011, the trademark was acquired by Steve Davidson. Davidson issued four magazines online over three years and created a website (<https://amazingstories.com/>). In 2022, Davidson stepped down and Kermit Woodall took over

as publisher. Davidson has continued his interest in the magazine, including promoting the 100th anniversary of the magazine this year at RavenCon in Richmond, VA.

Amazing Stories reaches 100

In the last 100 years, *Amazing Stories* has been a magazine of "scientifiction", a mouthpiece for the UFO stories of its time, the first publication to print fiction by Isaac Asimov, John W. Campbell, Howard Fast and Jack Williamson, a hotbed of experimental science fiction, a reprint factory, a three-time Hugo nominated Best Professional Magazine, an Emmy nominated TV series (1985–1987), and an Apple TV+ series. It spawned superheroes, science fiction fandom, comics, comics fandom, and eventually conventions. Today, this venerable title is no longer a print magazine, but the website is still soliciting submissions. Many of the inventions in its pages are now real. Gernsback said, "Posterity will point to them [these stories] as having blazed a new trail, not only in literature and fiction, but in progress as well." Popular culture would not be the same without it.

Further Reading (or watching!)

AmazingStories.com

FANAC.org – fanzine archives, including issues of *The Comet*, *The Planet*, *Fantasy World*, *EC Fan Journal* and *Xero*

Fancyclopedia.org – an encyclopedia of science fiction fandom

Di Fate, Vincent (1997), *Infinite Worlds: The Fantastic Visions of Science Fiction Art*. Wonderland Press.

Nadis, Fred (2013), *The Man From Mars*, Ray Palmer's *Amazing Pulp Journey*, Penguin Group.

Ricca, Brad (2013), *Super Boys, the Amazing Adventures of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster*, St. Martin's Press.

Dave Kyle, interviewed at Philcon 2012 by Joe Siclari. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dbu50Nrx94w>

Edie Stern is webmaster for the FanHistory Project (FANAC.org), the archive of science fiction fandom, with over 30,000 fanzines online. She has run clubs, conventions, pubbed her ish, started a FanHistory YouTube channel, and Zoom series. With her husband, Joe, she is a recipient of the Big Heart Award and the Moskowitz Archivist Award. In 2022, Edie and Joe were Worldcon Fan Guests of Honor. Edie is an inventor on 200+ patents.

Joe Siclari has been a fan for 60 years, chaired MagiCon the 50th Worldcon (1992) and 20 other conventions, written for several reference books, nominated for the Hugo Award for Best Related Book (2007), won the Down Under Fan Fund (2005), co-won with his wife, Edie Stern, the Big Heart Award (2016), the Moskowitz Archivist Award (2024), Corflu Lifetime Achievement Award (2024), selected as the Worldcon Fan Guest of Honor for Chicon 8 (2022), and six other conventions. For the last 30 years, chairing the Fan History Project (FANAC.org).

**AS EDITOR OF
FANZINES IN JANUARY
CREATING A MORE
FANZINE ..."**

ONE MAN, ONE KID, ONE SLINGSHOT

Dennis

the
MENACE

CELEBRATING

75

YEARS!



THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF HANK KETCHAM'S DENNIS THE MENACE

By Mark Arnold



Many people don't realize how much cultural impact Hank Ketcham's *Dennis the Menace* had, especially from the 1950s through the 1980s. Its success rivaled Charles M. Schulz's *Peanuts*. Not every comic strip, no matter how popular, proves adaptable enough to thrive across the many forms of media that *Dennis the Menace* conquered. Both *Dennis the Menace* and *Peanuts* were successful on TV and in the movies, Dennis with the live-action TV series and films, and *Peanuts* with numerous animated specials and features. Both were sponsors of major products: Dennis with Dairy Queen and *Peanuts* with Dolly Madison and MetLife.

Both Ketcham and Schulz transcended their strips to become cultural personalities themselves, making personal appearances and playing in golf tournaments and more. Dennis was more successful than *Peanuts* in comic books, but *Peanuts* was more successful in merchandising. In their heyday, no other comic strips could rival their success and impact on society.

When I completed my book on Dennis the Menace called *Pocket Full of Dennis* in 2017, the comic strip character had just passed its 65th anniversary. Ten years later, Dennis is still with us, more now as a cultural icon than a popular comic panel, strip, or book. My introduction to the character happened in several ways. I grew up in the 1970s in the San Francisco Bay Area. There was the Dennis the Menace Playground in Monterey, California, where my parents and I visited frequently. Comic books were being published by Fawcett, the same company that used to publish *Captain Marvel* (the Shazam! one).



On TV, reruns of the 1959–1963 series starring Jay North still aired regularly, and animated versions of Dennis appeared on the 1971–1973 ABC Saturday morning show, *Curiosity Shop*, produced by Chuck

Jones of Looney Tunes fame. He appeared in Dairy Queen commercials. The original comic panel that debuted on March 12, 1951, was still being produced daily by its creator, Hank Ketcham, with Sunday strips produced by his staff.

Flash forward 50 years, and the playground is still there, but many of the rides have been replaced due to age and safety concerns. The comic books ceased publication in 1982, although Papercutz released three compilations of these comics from 2015–2017, which I helped with. Of all the various Dennis incarnations, my favorite

has always been the comic book series, especially the ones in which Dennis traveled somewhere. Since Hank Ketcham's studio was based in Monterey, California, most of these issues concentrated on what could be considered day trips from the studio. As I lived in California, many of these were day trips for me, too. Dennis went to Frontier Village, Winchester Mystery House, Great America, Marine World Africa USA, the Half Moon Bay Pumpkin Festival, Queen Mary, Marineland, and many more. He even went to Hawaii and Mexico.

Henry King Ketcham was born in Seattle, Washington, on March 14, 1920. He graduated from Queen Anne High School in 1937 and enrolled in the University of Washington in the fall of that year. After college, Ketcham went to work at Universal

Studios with Walter Lantz (famous for creating Woody Woodpecker), and eventually went to work for Disney.

Less than a month after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Ketcham enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserve. During this period, Ketcham met Alice Mahar, and they were married on March 10, 1942. In November 1946, their son, Dennis Ketcham, was born.

After the war, Ketcham's family migrated to New York, and he began a successful career as a gag cartoonist for magazines such as *Collier's*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

After three years of freelancing, Ketcham put the family in a car, drove to California, and settled in Carmel. It was here that Ketcham and his wife came up with the idea for *Dennis the Menace*.

The first *Dennis the Menace* anthology book from 1952 states this about the panel's origins, "One evening a couple of years ago, Hank Ketcham's wife, Alice, said with the resignation only a parent can have, 'Hank, our son Dennis is a menace.' That was the beginning. Hank and Alice laughed together, realizing they had found a perfect title for *something*."

In *Hank Ketcham's Complete Dennis the Menace: 1951–1952 (Volume 1)*, Scott Walker describes the basic cast of the comic:

"Dennis Mitchell, who is an only child, has always been a spunky 'five-and-a-half' years old. He has an unruly shock of blond hair, a freckled face with a smudged nose, and button eyes. His favorite outfit is a striped shirt, worn with overalls and crepe-soled saddle shoes. Dennis' constant companion is Ruff, a big, fluffy mutt who doesn't mind being bossed around. "Henry Mitchell is a 32-year-old W.A.S.P. who was born in a bustling mill town in central Minnesota. He is six feet tall, weighs 162 pounds, wears horn-rimmed glasses, suffers from allergies, and is an avid weekend golfer. After a stint in the US Naval Reserve, he majored in business administration in college. He now earns a decent income from an aeronautical engineering company, which enables Alice Mitchell to stay at home and take care of their rambunctious offspring. "The former Alice Johnson



TOP LEFT

Dennis the Menace
Giant Vacation Special #6
(Pine Comics)
Cover art by Al Wiseman

TOP RIGHT

Early Dairy Queen promo art
(1970s or 1980s) featuring
Dennis's dog Ruff, Dennis, and
his friend Joey.

BOTTOM LEFT

Clockwise from front center
are Jay North, Herbert
Anderson, Gloria Henry, Sylvia
Field, and Joseph Kearns,
photographed around 1960,
from the CBS TV show.

**"(HANK KETCHAM) PENCILED
AND INKED VIRTUALLY EVERY
DAILY DENNIS THE MENACE
PANEL FROM 1951 TO 1994..."**



studied diet and nutrition at the state university, was a good tennis player, and managed to maintain her trim figure and perky good looks. She also works hard to keep the house clean and her family fed.

"George Wilson is a retired US Post Office worker who collects stamps, plays the ukulele, and putters in the garden. George and his wife, Martha, don't have any children of their own, so Martha more than makes up for it by doting on the neighborhood kids and pets. Dennis' next-door neighbors are among his closest friends and provide him with an endless source of wisdom and conversation. Dennis never has any qualms about making himself at home in their house.

"... Dennis' nemesis, Margaret Wade, is attracted to him because she thinks she can mold him into her ideal of a respectable young boy. Although her curly red hair, good grades, clean room, accomplished piano playing, and ballet dancing do not impress Dennis, she never gives up. The constant rejection only encourages her unshakable self-confidence and bossy nature.

Dennis the Menace debuted in approximately 15 to 18 newspapers, increasing to over 100 papers by year's end.

Ketcham won the Outstanding Cartoonist of the Year award from the National Cartoonists Society in 1952, also called the Reuben Award. He penciled and inked virtually every daily *Dennis the Menace* panel from 1951 to 1994, when he announced his retirement. The Post-Hall Syndicate originally picked up *Dennis the Menace* as a daily comic panel, but over the years, it has changed syndicates due to various corporate acquisitions. The feature is now distributed by King Features Syndicate.

The American debut of *Dennis the Menace* came with a curious twist of fate. In the United Kingdom, *The Beano*, a comic magazine cover-dated March 17, 1951, also featured the debut of *Dennis the Menace*. This was not the blond Dennis the Menace with a red-and-white striped shirt and overalls. This Dennis had black curly hair, a black-and-red striped rugby jersey, and black shorts. This "Dennis" was supposed to be 12 years old, unlike Ketcham's five-year-old.

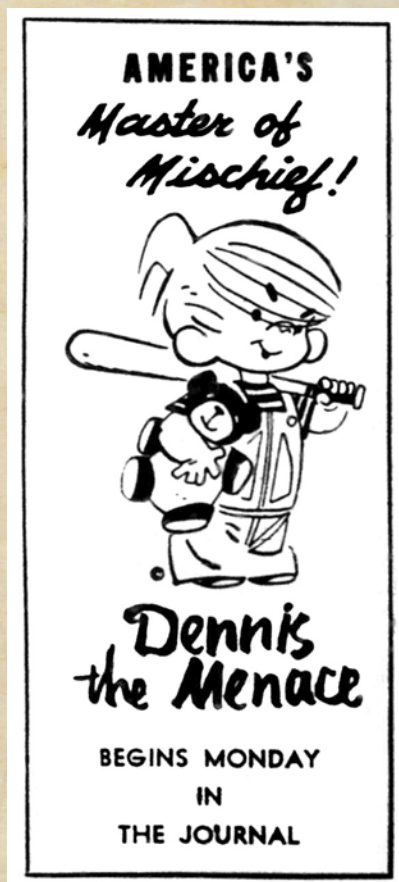
So popular was this U.K. Dennis that the strip graduated from a half-page black-and-white strip to a two-color full page in 1953, and eventually became a full-color regular cover feature in 1974, where he remains to this day. Ketcham tried to file suit against "U.K. Dennis," but there was no way to tell who came up with the idea first since they both debuted virtually on the same day, in their respective countries.

As the popularity of Ketcham's *Dennis the Menace* expanded, Ketcham was not shy about adding talent to the roster to help him write and draw the panel. A Sunday page for Dennis was added on January 13, 1952. Ketcham drew the Sundays for the first few months, but soon needed help. Despite the Sunday strip contributing to half his income, Ketcham soon brought on Al Wiseman to take care of it. When the comic books first appeared in 1953, Wiseman was also assigned to work on them with writer Fred Toole. As Wiseman's workload on the comic book increased, he was relieved of Sunday comic duties, replaced by artist Lee Holley. Holldrew the Sunday pages from 1958 to 1962.

In 1962, Holley turned his time and attention to his own comic panel called *Ponytail*. Ketcham needed another replacement, so Holley recommended Owen Fitzgerald to replace him on the *Dennis* Sunday.

Fitzgerald took over the Sunday comic upon his arrival and also worked on the *Dennis the Menace* comic book, taking over the main title while Al Wiseman moved to the *Dennis the Menace Giant* series. He worked on the comic book and Sunday until 1972, when Fitzgerald was replaced by Bob Bugg on the Sundays.

Standard Comics initially published the *Dennis the Menace* comic books. and then Pines Comics.



TOP RIGHT
Dennis the Menace puppet set, released to coincide with the TV show. Highly collectible.
By Dennis Play Products

BOTTOM RIGHT
Advertisement for the 1955 debut of *Dennis the Menace* in the Lorain (Ohio) Journal.



Hallden/Fawcett acquired the comic book license in 1959 and published *Dennis the Menace* for 19 years. In 1977, Fawcett was bought by CBS Publications, which published *Dennis* through the conclusion of the original series (1980). Then, Marvel Comics ran with it for a little over a year in 1981–1982. “In 1965, Al Wiseman quit *Dennis* unexpectedly after having a disagreement with Ketcham about working conditions,” with Ketcham. Owen Fitzgerald continued working regularly on both the comics and the Sunday strip. It was too daunting a task for one individual, so Ketcham contacted a new artist, Frank Hill, to become the next regular *Dennis the Menace* comic book artist, starting in 1966.

Frank Hill continued to be the primary *Dennis the Menace* comic book artist from 1966 to 1972, with some support from Owen Fitzgerald. Bill Williams started in 1972 and replaced Fitzgerald on the series. Williams

and Hill worked in tandem on the comic books from 1972 to 1977.

In 1977, Hill assumed control of the comic strip *Short Ribs* and left Bill Williams to draw the remainder of the books published from 1977 to 1980.

Meanwhile, Ketcham took a major trip through Europe in 1959 as part of a cultural exchange program, spending extensive time in the USSR. This followed the recent death of his wife, the inspiration for Alice Mitchell. Alice Ketcham died on June 22, 1959, after suffering a brain hemorrhage in Castella, California.

Hank and Alice were separated at the time of her death, and Ketcham went on a European trip with his soon-to-be second wife, Jo Anne. This trip encouraged Ketcham to move to Switzerland in 1960, where he lived until June 1977.

ABOVE
Dennis the Menace was a licensing juggernaut. Pictured is the Pressman's *Dennis the Menace Silver Instrument Dentist Set*, circa the mid-1950s.



In the late 1950s, with *Dennis the Menace* thriving across daily panels, Sunday strips, comic books, paperbacks, and merchandise, Ketcham turned his attention to the logical next step: a television series. Originally wanting an animated series, Ketcham was convinced by CBS television that a live-action series was the way to go.

Dennis the Menace premiered on October 5, 1959, and ran for four seasons, through July 7, 1963, starring Jay North, Gloria Henry, Herbert Anderson, Sylvia Field, Joseph Kearns, and, later, Gale Gordon.

Merchandising was an integral aspect of *Dennis the Menace* almost from the very beginning. We've seen Dennis promoting U.S. Savings Bonds, Encyclopedia Britannica, Cream of Wheat, A&W Root Beer, Del Monte, Schaeffer Pen, UNICEF, Red Cross, Sears, Carpet Care, Rhuli Jelly, Kellogg's Rice Krispies, Ralston Morning Funnies Cereal, and Dairy Queen.

The first appearance in animated form of *Dennis the Menace* appeared on a short-lived Saturday morning TV series called *Curiosity Shop* (1971–1973), produced by animator and director Chuck Jones, who is best known for his work on *Looney Tunes*.

In 1980, Dennis was being animated for a TV special entitled *Mayday for Mother* from the DePatie-Freleng animation studio, which soon became Marvel Studios. Coincidentally, the comic book found a new home at Marvel Comics.

For this new comic series, Hank Ketcham hired some new talent: Brian Lum, Karen Donovan, and Ron Ferdinand as artists. Fred Toole was kept on as a writer. An adaptation of *Mayday for Mother* appeared in issue #10, August 1982, of the Marvel *Dennis the Menace*

comic book series. Building on the special's success, DiC Entertainment produced an animated *Dennis the Menace* series that ran from 1986 to 1988. A second animated series, *The All-New Dennis the Menace*, aired in 1993, which CBS ran on Saturday mornings. It was again animated by DiC. There was also an animated TV movie called *Dennis the Menace: Cruise Control* released in 2002.

As for live action, there was a *Dennis the Menace* TV movie called *Dennis the Menace: Dinosaur Hunter* that first aired in 1987. The *Dennis the Menace* live-action theatrical movie was released in 1993, featuring Walter Matthau as Mr. Wilson. The success of the first movie begat a sequel called *Dennis the Menace Strikes Again*, released in 1998. *Strikes Again* cast Don Rickles as Mr. Wilson.

In 2007, the third and most recent live-action film was released: *A Dennis the Menace Christmas*, with Mr. Wilson played by Robert Wagner.

In 1994, Hank Ketcham announced his retirement. Before he did, he wanted to have a suitable replacement in place. After a mention on *The 700 Club*, Ketcham found his man, Marcus Hamilton. Hamilton was assigned to work alongside Ron Ferdinand, creating new panels and Sunday strips.



TOP LEFT

Two very different characters called Dennis the Menace. A blonde, young version from the U.S., and an older, dark-haired version from the U.K. — both launched on virtually the same day.

BOTTOM RIGHT

DVD cover for *A Dennis the Menace Christmas*, the 2007 direct-to-video film, with Robert Wagner as Mr. Wilson, Louise Fletcher as Mrs. Wilson, and Maxwell Perry Cotton playing Dennis.

**"AFTER 75 YEARS, DENNIS THE MENACE
IS STILL GOING STRONG, APPEARING
IN OVER 1,000 NEWSPAPERS
IN 48 COUNTRIES AND IN 19 LANGUAGES."**

Karen Matchette, Dan Johnson, Dave Swartz, and Carson Demmans are among those who still submit gags to *Dennis the Menace*. Ketcham passed away in 2001, and Ketcham's youngest son, Scott, joined the team in 2010.

After 75 years, *Dennis the Menace* is still going strong, appearing in over 1,000 newspapers in 48 countries and in 19 languages.

Mark Arnold is a pop culture historian with over 20 books to his credit on subjects such as *Underdog*, *The Pink Panther*, *Cracked*, *MAD*, *Crazy*, *The Beatles*, *The Monkees*, *The Turtles*, *The Chipmunks*, *Pac-Man*, *Harvey Comics*, *Disney*, and *Dennis the Menace*. He also hosts his own *Fun Ideas Podcast* covering these same sorts of topics.





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25 YEARS OF ULTIMATE X-MEN

By Scott Braden

In 2000, Marvel Comics' Joe Quesada and Bill Jemas asked Mark Millar if he wanted to be the launch writer for *Ultimate X-Men* #1.

He said no.

Then he wrote it for almost three years.

In 2026, the series that Mark Millar didn't want to write celebrates its 25th anniversary.

Marvel's continuity can make their comics a hard entry point for new readers. Finding a way to attract new readers is the holy grail that both Marvel and DC regularly seek.

Marvel had been stung by the failure of its New Universe in the 1980s, a separate imprint that featured all-new characters. They had lost some of their high-profile creators when those artists left to launch Image Comics in the early 1990s. The comic book collectible bubble popped in the mid-1990s. In late 1994, Marvel bought comic book distributor Heroes World, which proved disastrous. An attempted reboot called "Heroes Reborn" in 1996 failed both critically and financially.



**“SOMETIMES, IT’S DANGEROUS
TO BE A LITTLE DIFFERENT.”**



ABOVE

*The X-men of Marvel's Earth-1610
(clockwise from top left): Storm,
Nightcrawler, Iceman, Colossus, Beast,
Cyclops, and Wolverine.*

“BY MAKING THE CHARACTERS YOUNGER AND STARTING AT THE BEGINNING, NOBODY HAD TO READ TONS OF BACK ISSUES OR MEMORIZE LONG-STANDING CONTINUITY TO UNDERSTAND THE STORIES.”

Marvel declared bankruptcy in 1996 and emerged from it by 1998. Then, in 1999, DC Comics became the industry leader in market share, knocking Marvel from its traditional first position.

Marvel needed a win.

In 2000, Bill Jemas became president of consumer products, publishing, and new media. Though without the official title, he was Marvel Comics' publisher.

He recruited acclaimed creator Joe Quesada to be Editor-in-Chief. With Jimmy Palmiotti, Quesada launched an independent publishing company, Event Comics, and later launched their own imprint at Marvel, Marvel Knights.

Jemas was eager to make some changes.

His big idea was to sweep away Marvel continuity and start over. That would be a complete reset that would solve Marvel's continuity problems and appeal to possible new readers. Quesada didn't want to risk alienating Marvel's existing audience. The compromise that would change Marvel's fortunes was an imprint eventually called Ultimate Comics.

Instead of using all-new characters or cancelling existing titles and starting over, the line would be just a small step away from the familiar. It would use alternative, "re-imagined" versions of existing characters.

By making the characters younger and starting at the beginning, nobody had to read tons of back issues or memorize long-standing continuity to understand the stories. It was a Marvel comic, but it was also a fresh start.

It was a strong jumping-on point designed to appeal to new readers.

Traditional readers could also still find their favorite titles side-by-side. It looked like a win-win for everyone.

The first title, *Ultimate Spider-Man* by Brian Bendis and artist Mark Bagley, debuted in the fall of 2000. It was an immediate success. Jemas and Quesada were clearly onto something.

Following *Ultimate Spider-Man*, Jemas and Quesada agreed their sophomore title would be *Ultimate X-Men* to debut in early 2001. As fans of DC's *The Authority*, they reached out to its writer, Mark Millar.

And he turned them down.

Millar's reasoning was pretty sound. He had only read a total of three X-Men comics—all written by Chris Claremont—and didn't know the characters. He was told to see the recent *X-Men* movie and submit a proposal anyway.

Millar did as requested. The result was a series that would more closely follow the tone and characters of the popular movie franchise. It was quite different from the foundational *Uncanny X-Men* comic that co-creator Stan Lee had originally wanted to call "The Merry Mutants."

Making its four-color debut in February of 2001, *Ultimate X-Men* proved the Ultimate imprint had been just what Marvel wanted and needed—runaway hits and critical successes.

Initially, comic book direct-market retailers got on board. People were talking about Marvel comics with enthusiasm. New readers came through the door. Boosted by a giveaway on Free Comic Book Day, *Ultimate X-Men* would quickly outsell Marvel's traditional *X-Men* comics, including the long-standing *Uncanny X-Men*. *Ultimate X-Men* even sold more copies than





Ultimate Spider-Man. *Ultimate X-Men* would eventually sell close to 100,000 copies per issue.

Fueled by an aggressive script by Millar and dynamic art by the team of Adam Kubert and inker Art Thibert, the chart-topping *Ultimate X-Men* title also received positive responses from critics and readers alike, as they praised both the artwork and the writing.

In an interview with Sequential Tart's Barb Lien-Coooper in 2002, Millar said, "This just proves the importance of a liberal management. Joe [Quesada] and Bill [Jemas] literally turned Marvel around in the space of a few

months. Two guys. That's all it takes."

Fans responded to the character development and the makeup of the mutant team. Millar developed unique and interesting twists on conventional X-Men themes and concepts—modernizing them while, at the same time, re-imagining the cherished mythos for a new generation of readers.

The new *X-Men* team was a mix of classic characters from the original Stan Lee-Jack Kirby series of the 1960s, mixed with characters from the Claremont-Byrne era.

Led by their mentor Professor Charles Xavier, the *X-Men* Millar and Kubert chose to use at their launch of the series included: leader Cyclops (Scott Summers), beautiful Jean Grey, temperamental Wolverine (Logan), regal Storm (Ororo Munroe), highly intelligent Beast (Hank McCoy), stoic Colossus (Piotr Nikolayevich "Peter" Rasputin), and kid-like Iceman (Bobby Drake). The roster soon expanded to include humanistic Nightcrawler (Kurt Wagner), shy Kitty Pryde, roguish Gambit (Remy Étienne LeBeau), and quiet Rogue (Marian Carlyle, a major name change from the Marvel Universe).

Mark Millar treated the young mutant team as fallible kids. He wrote fast-paced stories about those teens that had an edgy tone and action-packed plots.

In that same Sequential Tart interview, Millar explained his approach to the characters. "You're not competing with Cartoon Network on these books; you're competing with *Buffy* (the Vampire Slayer)... Superhero comics aren't adult, but they shouldn't be written for five-year-olds either."



BOTTOM

Cyclops orders an X-Men roll call, for himself and for new readers. Art by Adam Kubert, Art Thibert & Richard Isanove

TOP LEFT

Team uniforms were inspired by the first X-Men feature film. Art by David Finch and Art Thibert.

TOP RIGHT

Ultimate Wolverine on the cover of issue #1. Art by Joe Quesada and Steve Fichow.



ABOVE
Magneto continued as a major villain, even on Earth-1610. From *Ultimate X-Men* #62. Art by Stuart Immonen and Richard Isanove.

Millar was right that *Ultimate X-Men* wasn't necessarily for young children. He gave the series a dark and gritty tone. There are political undertones relevant to the early 2000s. Millar further polarized the ongoing distrust between humans and mutants. Wolverine plots to kill Xavier. There's also a love triangle between Wolverine, Jean Grey, and Scott Summers, who are all teenagers in this new Ultimate universe.

After issue #33, Millar left. He had written all issues thus far except for a two-issue side quest written by Chuck Austen. *Ultimate Spider-Man's* Bendis took over for a brief run in issues #34–45.

Since he was writing both *Ultimate Spider-Man* and *Ultimate X-Men*, Bendis began his run with a multi-part team-up that also introduced Ultimate Daredevil

as well as Dum Dum Dugan. Ultimate Dugan was now S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Director of Mutant Operations.

Bendis, with new regular artist David Finch, focused on making his run on the book more character-driven, with a focus on Wolverine.

He also introduced Ultimate versions of the high-flying Angel (Warren Worthington III) and spell-binding Dazzler (Allison Blaire) to the team. Bendis even killed off a major character. Hank McCoy—The Beast—became the first dead *Ultimate X-Man* in the series. The perpetual fan favorite was killed by a Sentinel attacking the White House.

After 12 issues, Bendis was gone. He was then replaced by critically-acclaimed writer Brian K. Vaughan with *Ultimate X-Men* #46. Vaughan was best known for the sleeper hit from DC Comics' Vertigo imprint, *Y: The Last Man*.

Vaughan's tenure on the title found Wolverine disappearing into the background. Up front, Vaughan focused on various second-string characters, pushing them into the spotlight.

Vaughan has stated that rather than retell classic X-Men continuity with an Ultimate twist, he wanted to reinvent "cool old heroes and villains who never got a chance to fire on all cylinders in the 'classic' Marvel Universe." In addition, he introduced such mainstays of the X-Men books into the Ultimate universe as Mr. Sinister, Lady Deathstrike, Mojo, and Longshot.

In the Ultimate universe, though, Mojo and Longshot were not aliens. They were a corrupt TV producer and a mutant felon, and both were given civilian names: Mojo Adams and Arthur Centino, respectively.

Vaughan also took jabs at reality TV, reintroduced Magneto to the Ultimate universe continuity, and revealed that Ultimate Colossus was gay.

On his approach to the series, Vaughn wrote in his introduction to the *Ultimate X-Men* Volume 5 collection that: "In my mind, the X-Men shouldn't be teachers or celebrities or even traditional superheroes. They're students, confused, sometimes reckless teenagers who are feared and hated because their bodies are undergoing frightening changes... the Ultimate Universe restores that small but crucial element." Vaughan's run lasted 20 issues. After leaving *Ultimate X-Men*, Vaughan would become a producer and writer on the TV series *Lost*, balancing his comic book work with a TV career.

With *Ultimate X-Men* #66, writer Robert Kirkman, creator of the runaway hit *The Walking Dead* for Image Comics, took over as writer. During his tenure, Kirkman adapted some of the major story arcs from classic X-Men continuity and characters into the Ultimate universe.

“IN MY MIND, THE X-MEN SHOULDN’T BE TEACHERS OR CELEBRITIES OR EVEN TRADITIONAL SUPERHEROES. THEY’RE STUDENTS, CONFUSED, SOMETIMES RECKLESS TEENAGERS ...”

Among them were Jean Grey’s stunning transformation into Phoenix, the coming of mutant militia characters Cable and Bishop from the X-Men’s dystopian future, and the arrival of major X-Men villain Apocalypse (En Sabah Nur).

Other shake-ups included Wolverine returning as an important member of the team (and its story arcs), Emma Frost joining the team, and the departure of Nightcrawler and Colossus from the series. It also found Cyclops transforming Charles Xavier’s mutant academy into a traditional school and, thus, disbanding the X-Men.

Kirkman stayed on the book until issue #93, titled “Apocalypse Conclusion.” It was the longest uninterrupted run on *Uncanny X-Men* by any of the writers.

With issue #94, Aron Coleite took over as writer, guiding the series toward its final issues. He began with a 4-part story called “Absolute Power.” The last three issues of the series were crossovers as part of “Ultimatum,” a big Ultimate universe event. Bishop created his own X-Men team to fight Apocalypse for the good of both humanity and mutantkind. The team was decimated, and the remaining members disbanded the mutant action team and went out to rebuild their lives.

Ultimate X-Men was cancelled with issue #100, its last tie-in comic to “Ultimatum.” It was an impressive run for comics from that era.

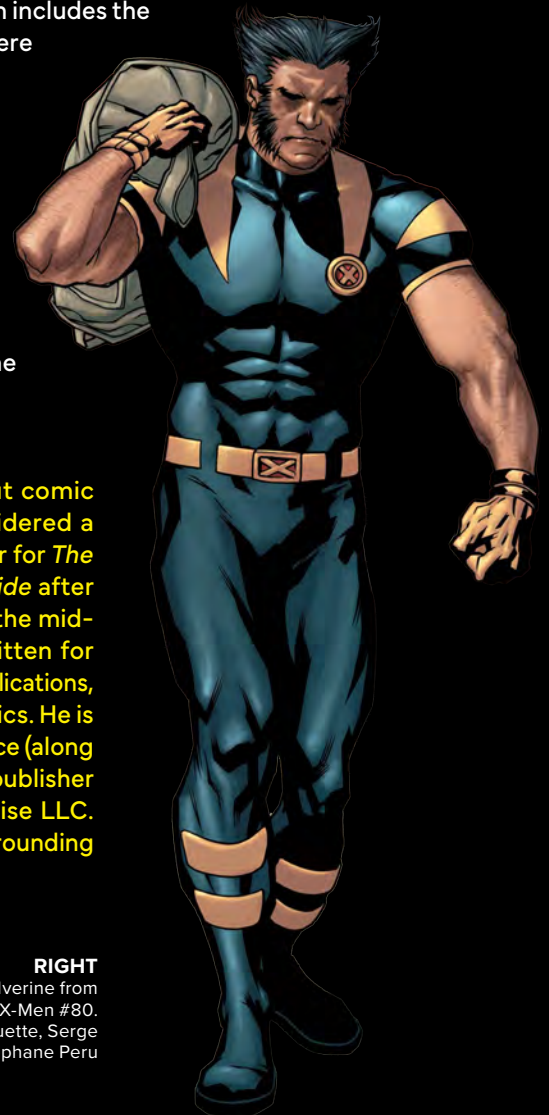
The original run of *Ultimate X-Men* may be over, but 25 years later, it’s not forgotten. What kept the series fresh for eight years and still finds fans clamoring for the collected editions are the young, fiery writers who were chosen to carefully cultivate the best-selling series’ refreshed mythos. Mark Millar, Brian Michael Bendis, Brian K. Vaughn, and Robert Kirkman were not necessarily big names within the Marvel universe when they started, but they elevated their game with *Ultimate X-Men*.

That’s true of the artists as well. Adam Kubert, Andy Kubert, David Finch, Brandon Peterson, Tom Raney, Yanick Paquette, Ben Oliver, Salvador Larroca, and the rest added something unique and exciting to the mix.

The writers and artists (which includes the colorists and letterers as well) were a team of modern-day Marvel mythmakers, who took what came before and made it shiny and new again for readers who only heard tales of the excitement generated by original X-Men continuity.

It’s been 25 years since *Ultimate X-Men* #1, and we still remember and celebrate the groundbreaking title.

Scott Braden has written about comic books for 30 years and is considered a comic book historian and advisor for *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* after serving as its research editor in the mid-1990s. A journalist, he’s also written for newspapers, magazines, trade publications, and books on the subject of comics. He is also the co-creator of *Kent Menace* (along with Mike Malbrough) and is the publisher and founder of Brilliant Enterprise LLC. He’s really having a good time surrounding himself with funny books.



RIGHT
Ultimate Wolverine from
Ultimate X-Men #80.
Art by Yanick Paquette, Serge
LaPointe, and Stephane Peru

THE 50TH ANNUAL ROBERT A. HEINLEIN BLOOD DRIVE BE A HERO! | DONATE! | SAVE A LIFE!

BY CRAIG FELLOWS, VP COMIC-CON OPERATIONS

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

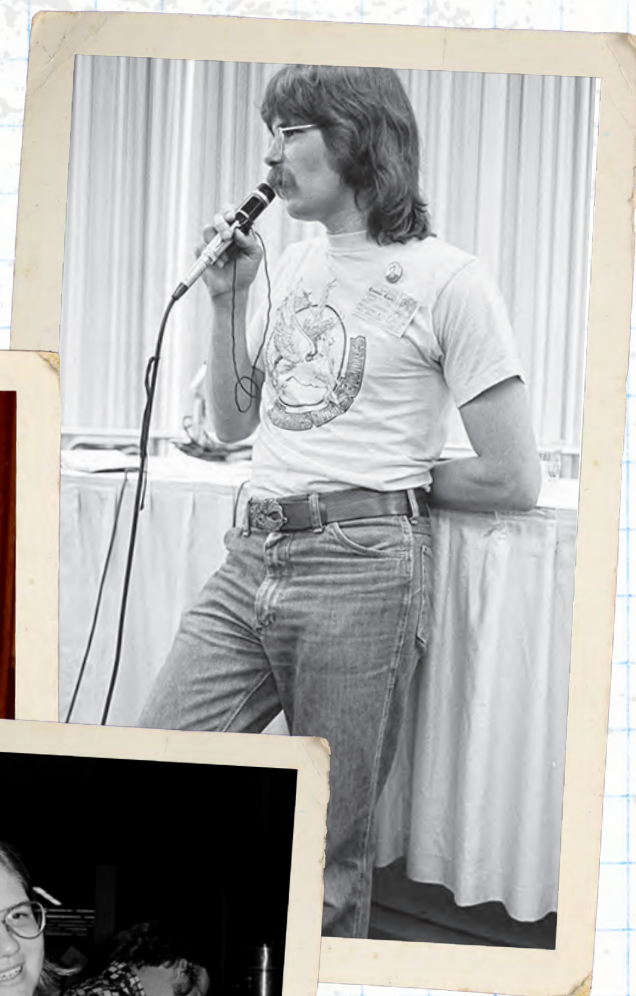
1977. The Atari 2600 game system was released, the first test flight of the Space Shuttle Enterprise and the Voyager space probes were launched, and the Apple II personal computer was released. Lynda Carter was Wonder Woman, Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno were The Incredible Hulk, and nearly everyone was watching *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *The Bionic Woman*, and *Happy Days*.

Comic-Con's eighth year (July 1977) was the convention's sixth year at the El Cortez Hotel. Tickets were sold at the door, and about 4,000 attendees enjoyed the convention. Just two months earlier, the highest-grossing film of the year, *Star Wars*, was released, and Comic-Con was the first convention to have a "Making of *Star Wars*" panel.

Attendees met guests like Robert A. Heinlein, Jack Kirby, Bob Kane, C.C. Beck, and Joe Kubert. Heinlein, first published in 1939, was one of the "Big Three" authors of golden-age science fiction (Heinlein, Asimov, Clarke), and was among the first to emphasize scientific accuracy in his fiction. He rarely attended conventions.

Comic-Con's Jackie Estrada attended Worldcon in 1976, where she learned Heinlein had recently recovered from a serious illness, and blood donors had saved his life. She heard Heinlein would only sign autographs for people who donated blood. Later, Jackie proposed a blood drive to the Comic-Con Committee. She organized the drive, Heinlein was invited, and he said yes. (Read Jackie Estrada's "Origin of the Blood Drive" article, also in this *Souvenir Book*.)

According to the San Diego Blood Bank, the Comic-Con Blood Drive has positively impacted more than **325,000 lives** through donations over the last **49 years**.



In 1977, the very first Robert A. Heinlein Blood Drive took place. It was a one-day blood drive with San Diego Blood Bank, coordinated by Comic-Con volunteer, David Scroggy. Heinlein had a great time. He and author Theodore Sturgeon signed autographs, and Heinlein even drew sketches for the Art Auction. The blood drive was a huge success, collecting 148 units.

Our second blood drive coordinator was Mikee Ritter. Mikee shares: *"From 1979 to 1980, it was my pleasure to be the blood drive coordinator for Comic-Con. I had been a blood donor for a few years and thought I knew the importance of donating. Well, was I mistaken! Working with the people from the blood bank, talking with Robert Heinlein and hearing his story, meeting others, fans and professionals, who were directly affected by blood donations was incredible. It didn't matter if it was themselves, a family member, or a friend; the gratitude towards those who donated blood was inspiring."*

"Our numbers in those early days may not seem impressive, but every donation made, and still makes, a difference in someone's life. It is very humbling to realize the potential difference between life or death for someone because of a single donation. What a privilege to be part of the blood drive's early days! Every year, people take the time before, during, and after the convention to give literally of themselves and make a difference. Comic-Con has grown from those early days, but the awesomeness and generosity of everyone involved with Comic-Con remains the same."

EXCLUSIVE ARTIST PACKETS

In 1980, the blood drive also began giving out an exclusive artist packet, with drawings especially created for blood donors by many of the famous artists attending the convention, like Jack Kirby, Sergio Aragonés, Milton Caniff, Mort Walker, and Bil Keane. The artist packets continued for the next 10 years.

Mikee currently runs the Hospitality Suite with her daughter, Robyn. Our third coordinator, in 1981, was Kathy Davis. Our fourth was Janice Guy in 1984. In 1986, Therese Moore was our fifth. Richard Campbell was our sixth in 1988. Sadly, Robert A. Heinlein passed away on May 8, 1988.

TOP LEFT
Fourth Blood Drive coordinator
Janice Guy (1983)

TOP RIGHT
First Blood Drive coordinator
David Scroggy (1979)

BOTTOM CENTER
Second Blood Drive coordinator
Mikee Ritter (1980)



TOP Right
Ninth Blood Drive coordinator
Christina Caloroso
with Marno Miller-Bridgewater,
San Diego Blood Bank

MIDDLE LEFT
Sixth Blood Drive coordinator
Richard Campbell (1989)

BOTTOM CENTER
Comic-Con VP Craig Fellows
holding the 2007 San Diego
Blood Drive Difference
Maker Award

The Comic-Con Blood Drive became a two-day event in 1990, now with three bloodmobiles. Our seventh coordinator was Robbie Atkinson-Wachtler. 1990 was the final year the artist packets were given to blood donors.

Robbie remembers, "As a nurse at Rady Children's Hospital, I knew how important a resource blood was and is. So many of our patients would die without this finite resource. Holly and I worked together to increase awareness of the blood drive, as it is a much-needed resource. Many volunteer staff members had family and friends who had needed a transfusion in the past, and we were pleased to honor Robert Heinlein."

Holly had many artistic contacts, as did many of the Comic-Con volunteers, who were willing to give from their hearts and skills. We problem-solved and asked for Comic-Con's backing to become creative (i.e., loud) about the blood drive. We wanted to bring in as many units as possible, as well as put the word out to the community about the importance of blood donation. To this day, people are donating blood once they are reminded that we, a member of the community, are working with them to help others in need."

Robbie currently volunteers in Badge Solutions. In 1991, Holly Dosie became our eighth coordinator. A

fourth bloodmobile was added, and the blood drive collected a new record of 209 units. Donors received a Life in Hell T-shirt featuring art by future Simpsons creator Matt Groening, as well as other goodies, including raffle prizes.

Christina Caloroso was coordinator number nine, beginning in 1993. The giveaways and raffles continued. In 1994, blood drive donations reached 300 units!

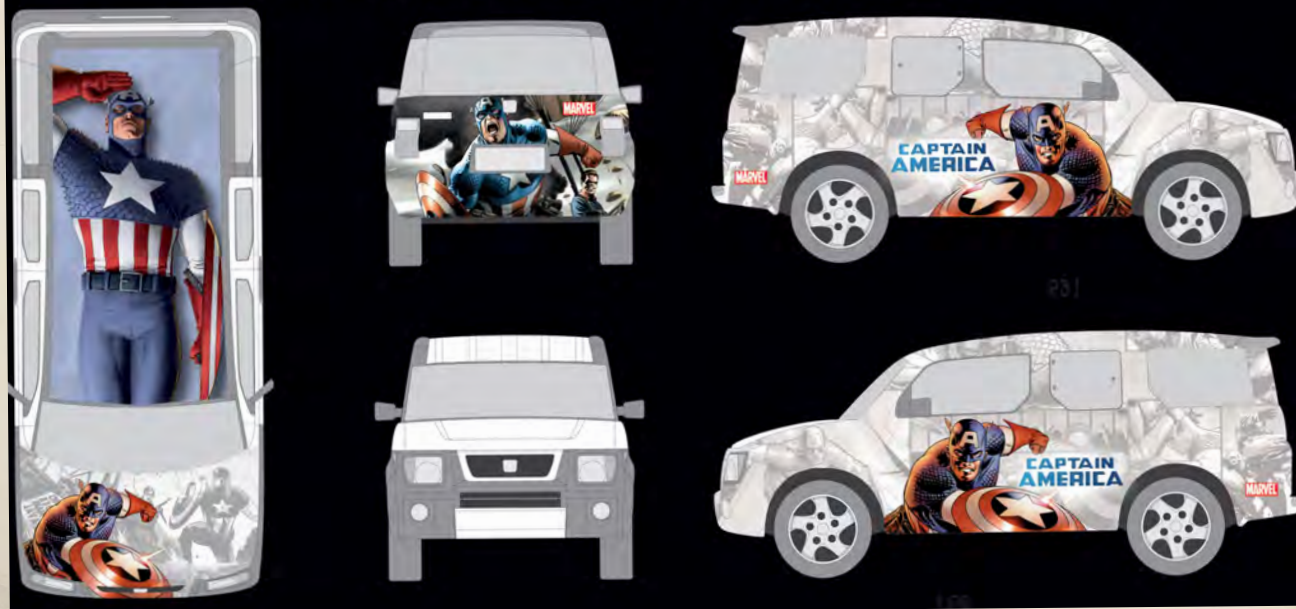
Christina said, "I remember being in the committee meeting in 1992. Someone asked me if I could run the blood drive. I said yes. From 1993 through 1995, Regina Reynante and I served as co-coordinators for the Comic-Con Blood Drive. We worked with San Diego Blood Bank to continue the tradition inspired by Robert A. Heinlein's personal commitment to blood donation. The goal was simple but meaningful: encourage more convention attendees to donate blood and help save lives."

We increased donor participation by treating the blood drive as both a service project and a community effort. Donors were excited to give blood and receive a thank-you gift or prize in return.

Our success came from teamwork, early planning, strong communication, generous donors, and the enthusiasm of Comic-Con attendees. By combining fandom, service, and meaningful incentives, the blood drive saw significant growth during our years as coordinators and helped strengthen a tradition that continues to benefit San Diego Blood Bank and the community."

Christina was also instrumental in developing the Deaf Program at Comic-Con in the late '80s and ran it for many years. Christina is currently back volunteering in the blood drive. Paul Krask became the 10th coordinator

CAPTAIN AMERICA HONDA ELEMENT



in 1996, and 341 units were collected. In 1997, the blood drive became part of the Materials department run by the Materials Chief, Barry Bard, with Jesus Melendez coordinating. All donors received a goodie bag, a raffle ticket, and their choice of an Eisner-nominated book. Raffle prizes are donated by exhibitors. During this time, the blood drive moved inside the convention center.

In 2004, Barry retired, and Craig Fellows became Materials Chief. Comic-Con received the Outstanding Community Partner Award from San Diego Blood Bank for 362 units.

Jack Plummer and Cecile Fleetwood became co-coordinators in 2005. The drive became a three-day affair and hit 590 units with the help of Diamond Select Toys providing a limited-edition action figure to all donors. They also received their choice of an Eisner-nominated book and received a ticket for a chance to win a prize donated by exhibitors. Winning ticket numbers were posted one hour before the hall closed, rather than having a must-be-present-to-win raffle.

In 2006, the blood drive moved to the Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina hotel, and Diamond Select Toys helped donations reach 592 units. During the four-day blood drive in 2007, Diamond Select Toys helped out again, and 841 units were collected. That year, San Diego Blood Bank awarded Comic-Con its Difference Maker Award.

BLOOD DRIVE GIVES AWAY CARS

The following year, 2008, San Diego Blood Bank needed to raise money to refurbish one of its bloodmobiles. They teamed up with Marvel Comics and Honda to produce a Captain America Honda Element and sold raffle tickets to win the car. Stan Lee came over and signed the dashboard. The car was won by Marine

Corps Sergeant Major Jayme Winders, and 1,070 units were collected.

In 2009, the businesses teamed up again and raffled off another Honda Element celebrating 70 years of Marvel Comics, and Diamond Select Toys provided a giveaway figure. The car was won by John "Peter" Judd, 1201 units were collected, and Comic-Con received another San Diego Blood Bank Difference Maker Award.

The blood drive moved to the Omni Hotel in 2010. HBO's True Blood became the blood drive's sponsor, providing goodie bags that included a True Blood T-shirt and other cool stuff, with donations going as high as 1,497. In 2012, the cast of the TV show Hannibal visited donors as they gave blood.

In 2016, the Robert A. Heinlein Blood Drive was awarded Outstanding Blood Drive of the Year from America's Blood Centers. This was also the first year that San Diego Blood Bank partnered with Marvel for a T-shirt. It was Captain America, and 1,295 units were collected.

The blood bank's partnership with Marvel for T-shirts then started producing phenomenal results: 2017 Guardians of the Galaxy - 1,855 units, 2018 Avengers: Infinity War - 2,804 units, and then in 2019, expanding to a five-day blood drive, the Avengers: End Game T-shirt brought in 3,343 units.

COVID-19 was not going to stop the blood drive in 2020. We couldn't have a convention, so Comic-Con Madness was created for Comic-Con@Home. It was a 26-day drive from bloodmobiles and collection centers, giving away a Marvel Black Widow T-shirt, and collecting 8,872 units. In 2021, still no convention, but we had a 38-day @Home Comic-Con Madness drive. Marvel provided a new Black Widow T-shirt, and that drive pulled in 12,894 units.

In November of 2021, Comic-Con returned with Special Edition, including a three-day blood drive at the Marriott, plus 14 days of Comic-Con Madness, and collected 5,991 more units. Robert Ramos joined Cecile Fleetwood as co-coordinator. We

TOP
Artist design of the Captain America Honda Element that was a raffle prize for the 2008 Comic-Con Blood Drive



ABOVE
 "While supplies last ..."
 Marvel has been a
 Comic-Con Blood Drive
 partner for many
 years, providing T-shirts

stopped posting winning prize numbers on a board and started selecting winners using the mysterious Box of Decision.

The San Diego City Council declared November 26, 2021, as Robert A. Heinlein for Comic-Con Day and presented a proclamation to the Comic-Con Special Edition Heinlein blood drive. The County Board of Supervisors also issued a proclamation to the Heinlein Comic-Con@Home blood drive. They were happy to have us back.

In summer 2022, Comic-Con returned in full. The blood drive was able to do a five-day drive, plus 21 days of madness, with everyone getting a Thor: Love and Thunder T-shirt, collecting 9,118 units. The blood drive became its own Comic-Con department in 2023, and Cecile Fleetwood became the new blood drive department head. The Guardians of the Galaxy T-shirts were very popular. The five-day on-site drive and 39 days of Madness produced 14,748 donations.

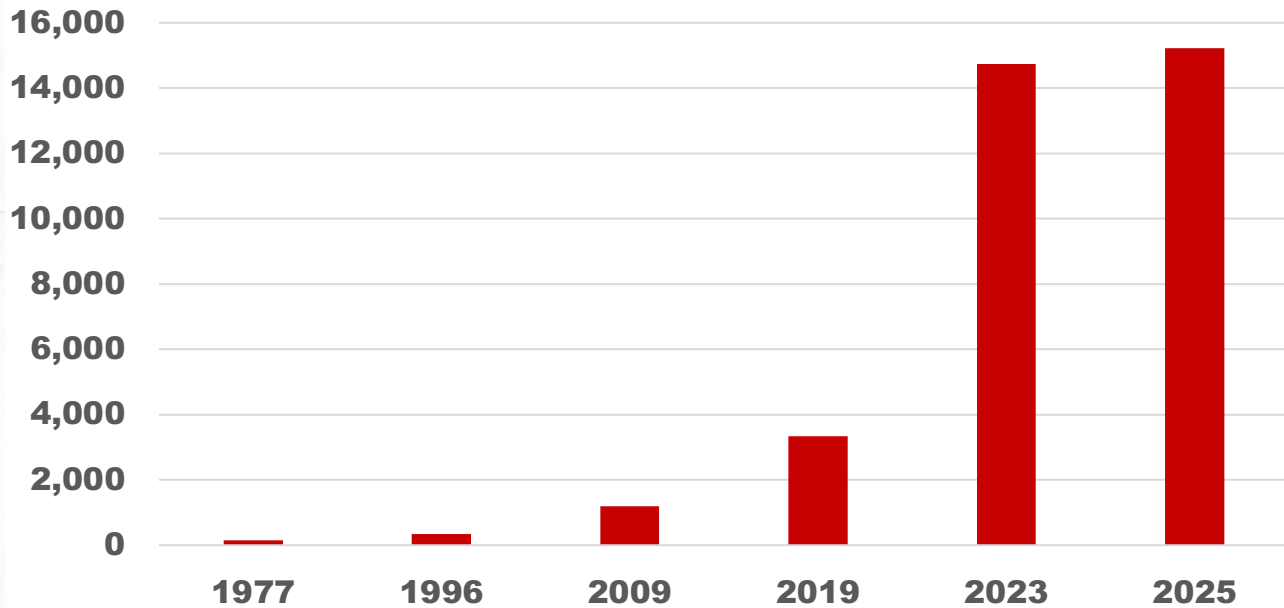
Cecile recalls: *"My first year as a department volunteer at Comic-Con was in Materials in 1998. When the bag stuffing was done, they asked me to go to the Blood Drive desk in Lobby A to tell people about the Robert A. Heinlein Blood Drive, and nudge them towards donating. The drive was a two-day drive back then, and collected 216 units."*

"I had tried to donate blood several times but didn't pass the screening for various reasons. Later, we discovered that my husband, Lou, had a condition that eliminated us from donating. I wanted to do something! Volunteering for the blood drive made so much sense, and over these last 37 years, I've watched it slowly build into the wonderful drive we have now! For me, it's the people! Meeting the donors! The recipients! The San Diego Blood Bank workers, and most of all, my helpers in both the Sails Pavilion Blood Drive booth and at the Hyatt in the blood drive room!"

"Blood is one of the few body parts that most people can donate and rebuild. If you are reading this, I encourage you to take a little time to donate and make a huge difference in someone's life."

COMIC-CON'S ROBERT A. HEINLEIN BLOOD DRIVE

Units of Blood Donated



IT FEELS GOOD TO DO GOOD

In 2024, five days on-site and 34 days of Madness, plus a Deadpool & Wolverine T-shirt, and the blood drive reached 15,631 units. A Fantastic Four T-shirt, five days, and 35 days of Madness provided 15,216 units last year. The Comic-Con Robert A. Heinlein Blood Drive has exceeded 100,000 donations in its lifetime—a total of 108,420 units since its beginnings in 1977. The blood bank tells us our little blood drive has impacted more than 325,000 lives in the last 49 years.

Here we are, celebrating our 50th blood drive. The 50th Robert A. Heinlein Blood Drive will be at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, 1 Market Place, in San Diego. When you arrive at the Hyatt, you can find the blood drive on the ground level in Grand Hall A. Anyone can donate; a convention badge is not needed.

On-site donors will receive a Marvel Spider-Man T-shirt, an Eisner-nominated book, a chance to win amazing prizes from exhibitors, plus **for the first time since 1990, donors will receive an exclusive artist packet from the clever folks at Image Comics.** All giveaways are while supplies last.

You can make an appointment on the Comic-Con website at <https://www.comic-con.org/cc/plan-your-visit/blood-drive/> or at the Blood Drive booth in the Sails Pavilion. They take walk-ins too, so if you're near the Hyatt, stop in. (Sorry, Comic-Con Madness donors will only receive the Spider-Man T-shirt.)

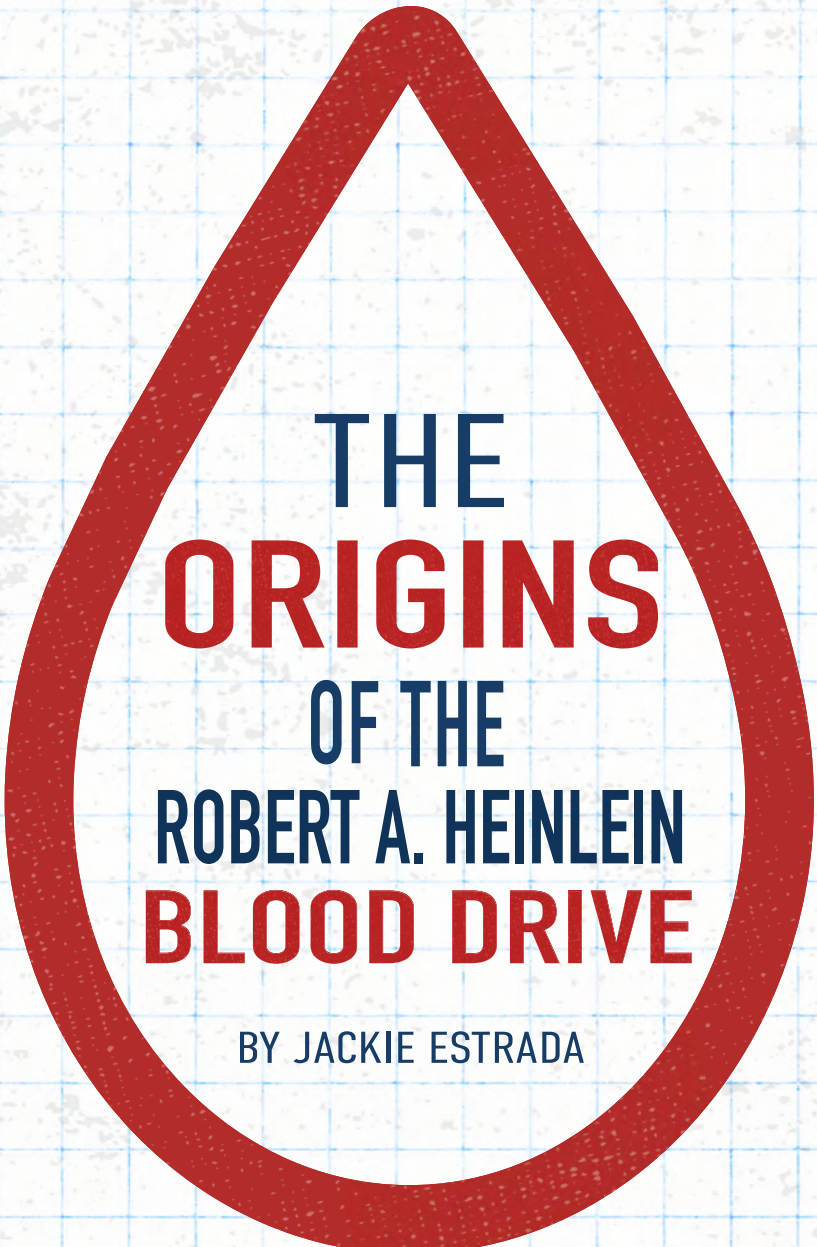
Please consider donating this year. Remember, a single donation from you helps to save the lives of three people, and those three are depending on people like you.

The Blood Drive has exceeded **100,000 donations** in its lifetime—a total of **108,420 units** since its beginnings in 1977



ABOVE

Cecile Fleetwood and her blood drive volunteers urge you to donate this year!



THE ORIGINS OF THE ROBERT A. HEINLEIN BLOOD DRIVE

BY JACKIE ESTRADA

How a trek to a science fiction convention in Kansas City led to the first SDCC blood drive

The first Robert A. Heinlein Blood Drive at Comic-Con happened in 1977, and it has been held every year since. How exactly did that first one come about? Here's the back story on the Blood Drive's origins ...

My Involvement with the Early Comic-Cons

Just to set the stage, back in the late 1960s, Davey Estrada (my boyfriend and then husband at the time) and I were hardcore comics and science fiction fans. We made regular trips to used bookstores and newsstands in San Diego and Los Angeles, and we subscribed to all sorts of fanzines.

In 1970, I heard about the San Diego Golden State Comic-Con happening at the U.S. Grant Hotel, with Ray

Bradbury and Jack Kirby as special guests, so I went for one day to check it out. Needless to say, it was a life-changing experience, and I went back the next year and the next—and have been to all of them ever since.

I earned a degree in journalism from San Diego State in 1968 and was a freelance journalist and magazine article writer for the next decade. In 1974, I pitched an article to *Rolling Stone* about San Diego Comic-Con (SDCC) and got the go-ahead to write it. I went to some of the organizing meetings and got a glimpse at the behind-the-scenes volunteer work that went into putting on the event. The article never got written, but I got sucked into volunteering with Comic-Con, doing public relations, editing publications, and helping with guests, among other things. Davey also served on the committee in various roles, including running programming.

1976 Kansas City Worldcon

Davey and I headed to Kansas City in the fall of 1976 for the MidAmeriCon World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon). We made the trek for one main reason: Robert A. Heinlein was the guest of honor. He hadn't been a Worldcon guest since 1961, but Kansas City was his hometown, and he took the event as an opportunity to launch his new passion: blood donation. Following a life-threatening illness, he had needed massive blood transfusions, and as he put it, he wanted to "pay it forward."

Robert announced ahead of time that he would only sign autographs for fans who donated blood. He wrote: *I am especially anxious to meet personally every blood donor.*

... If you are not a donor simply because no one ever asked you to become one, simply phone the Red Cross, any blood center, any blood bank, any hospital, your own doctor, or your local medical society and ask how and where—then donate a pint of blood. (Ask for written receipt as proof.) I want to meet blood donors because five of them, strangers to me, saved my life.

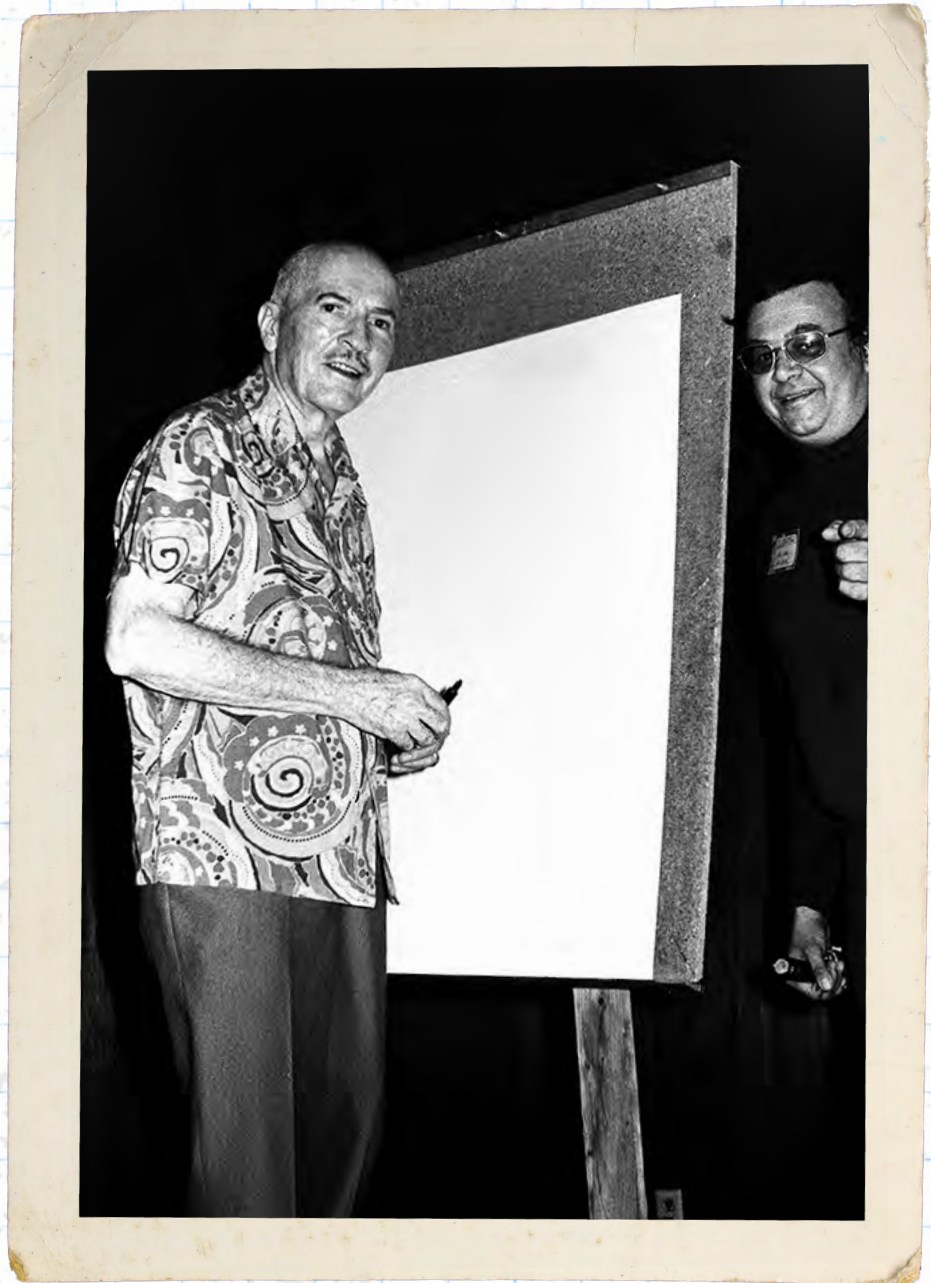
Davey and I weren't able to donate blood, so we didn't get an autograph, but we did get to hear Robert speak. That was a thrill for us because we had read all of his books and now experienced what a delight he was in person. When we got home from that trip, I started thinking, "HmMMM ... how could we get Heinlein to come to San Diego?" Lightbulb goes off: "Let's start a blood drive!"

Robert Heinlein: SDCC Special Guest

I went to the Comic-Con committee with my idea of inviting Robert and his wife, Ginny, as guests, luring him to come to the show by establishing a blood drive. Contacts were made with the San Diego Blood Bank about the logistics of doing so, and they came on board. The invitation went out to the Heinleins, and they accepted! Not only that, they insisted on coming to the show at their own expense, which included getting a suite at the El Cortez Hotel, the site of the convention.

When the couple arrived at the airport, I was there to meet them and take them to the hotel. I borrowed my mother's powder-blue Mercedes (she called it her "Bluebird of Happiness") to pick them up, and when Robert sent us his thank-you note after the show, he made a point of mentioning the car!

At the Kansas City show, Robert had always been dressed in suits and formal clothing, and he started that way in San Diego as well. By Sunday of the show, he was wearing Hawaiian shirts and other casual clothes, having a wonderful time. He even got up on stage and did a drawing for Comic-Con's fundraiser Art Auction (when he was a cadet at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, he had drawn cartoons for the newspaper). On Sunday night, he and Ginny threw a "dead dog party" in their suite for friends and Comic-Con staffers. (Such



parties were a tradition at science fiction conventions, but this was a first for us.) He later wrote to us that it was "the best fun of any con we've ever attended."

That was the first and only time the Heinleins came to San Diego, but they continued to support the blood drive. When Robert had other commitments in 1978, Comic-Con requested that his publisher send 100 copies of his latest book (*The Notebooks of Lazarus Long*) to give to donors, but they said no. Informed of this, the author phoned his publisher, and it wasn't long before several cartons arrived.

ABOVE

Robert Heinlein at the 1977 fundraiser Art Auction, ready to draw a cartoon to be auctioned.

Photo by Jackie Estrada



“By Sunday of the show, he was wearing Hawaiian shirts and other casual clothes, having a wonderful time.”

The First Blood Drive

Programming director David Scroggy was put in charge of that first event. He remembers working with the San Diego Blood Bank: “We received invaluable help and support from Lynn Stedd, who coordinated special event blood drives.

As Scroggy recounts:

We realized that we would need to work hard to entice Comic-Con’s attendees to donate during their busy week at the El Cortez, so we conjured up whatever incentives we could: Heinlein and fellow science fiction grandmaster Ted Sturgeon would attend to sign books, cartoonists would be on hand to sketch for the donors, various publishers would donate freebie copies for a gift bag, and to top it all off, a group of bellydancers, featuring Molly Bode and her pals from San Francisco, would perform for the donors as they waited and during the mandatory recovery period.

A room was set up at the El Cortez with donors lying on portable beds. Along one wall were tables where Heinlein, Sturgeon, and other authors signed their books. Ted’s publisher supplied copies of his book *Some of Your Blood* (which was not about blood donation), and a costumed guy calling himself Smegma the Barbarian serenaded everyone with his guitar, aided by the Princess Ipecac. Also on hand to entertain were cartoonist Leslie Cabarga (more recently known as Xavier Leslie Cabarga) on the piano and Captain Marvel artist C. C. Beck on guitar.



ABOVE

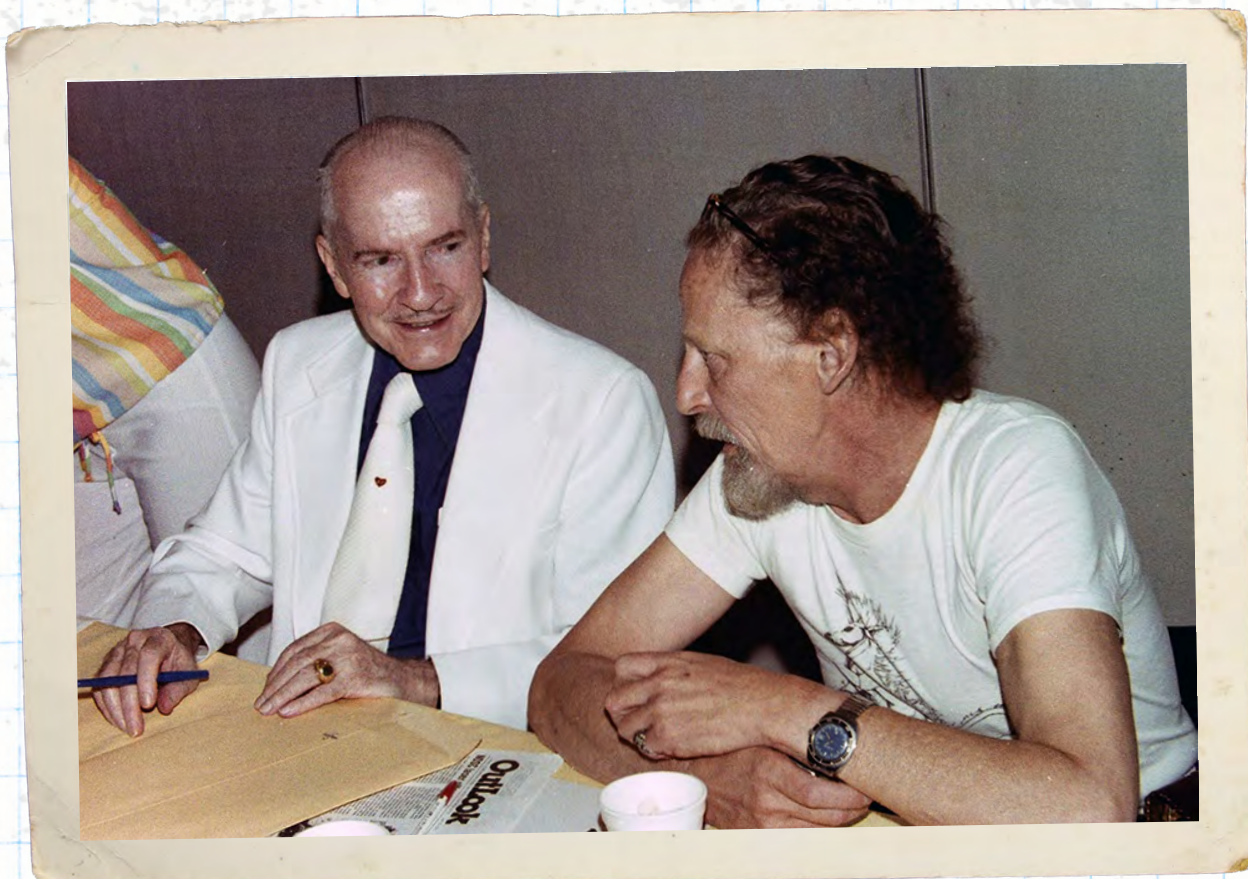
Bellydancers entertained blood donors as well as Robert and other authors who signed items for donors.

Photo by Jackie Estrada

BOTTOM

Smegma the Barbarian and the Princess Ipecac entertained donors.

Photo by Jackie Estrada



And the Rest Is History . . .

As Scroggy sums it up:

The initial blood drive was deemed a success by all concerned. The next year, given more lead time, we were also able to significantly expand the comics publisher donations. This resulted in a gift bag worth over \$100, which was a lot of money back in 1978.

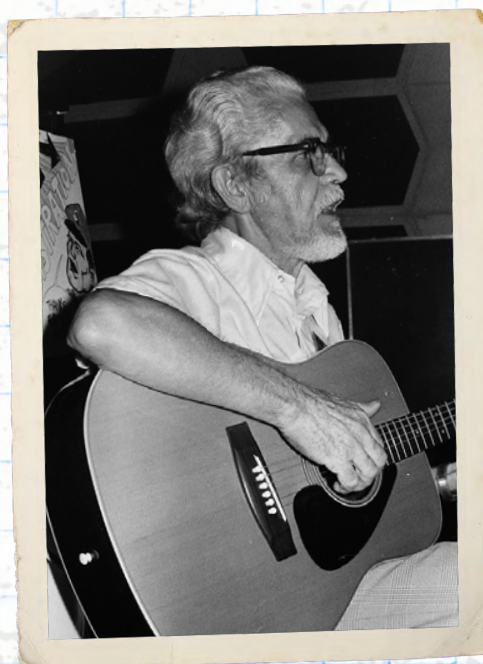
The Blood Bank realized they were onto something good, and really helped to publicize the blood drive, and therefore Comic-Con, at a time when the event was largely unknown, even locally in San Diego. It was a genuine "win-win."

The fact that the Robert A. Heinlein blood drive has continued for 50 years is a testament to that cooperation, the many fans and committee members who have carried the torch, and, of course, Mr. Heinlein himself.

I personally went on to give blood for a few decades after that. I cannot find words to express my thanks to Comic-Con for continuing this important event and to all the donors who have saved thousands of lives over these five decades.

Jackie Estrada has been with Comic-Con since its beginnings, and from 1990 to 2025, she served as administrator of the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards for 35 years.

"Along one wall were tables where Heinlein, Sturgeon, and other authors signed their books."



ABOVE

Robert Heinlein was joined by fellow science fiction author Theodore Sturgeon to sign books for the blood donors.

Photo by Jackie Estrada

BOTTOM

Captain Marvel creator C.C. Beck entertained donors on his guitar.

COVER STORY

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Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards

NOMINATIONS | 2026

Best Short Story

- ▶ "Blood Harvest," in *Brain Damage*, by Shintaro Kago, translated by Zack Davisson (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ "The Curse Room," in *Brain Damage*, by Shintaro Kago, translated by Zack Davisson (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ "Football Is Not War," by R. K. Russell and Wilfred Santiago, in *Come Out and Play: The Queer Sports Project* (Stacked Deck Press)
- ▶ "Red Snapper in the Rea," by Michael D. Kennedy, in *Milk White Steed* (Drawn & Quarterly)
- ▶ "trAPped" by Anand RK, Suparna Sharma, and Natalie Obiko Pearson (Bloomberg News)

Best Continuing Series

- ▶ *Absolute Batman*, by Scott Snyder, Nick Dragotta, and others (DC)
- ▶ *Absolute Wonder Woman*, by Kelly Thompson, Hayden Sherman, and Mattia De Iulio (DC)
- ▶ *The Department of Truth*, by James Tynion IV and Martin Simmonds (Image)
- ▶ *FML*, by Kelly Sue DeConnick and David Lopez (Dark Horse)
- ▶ *The Power Fantasy*, by Kieron Gillen and Caspar Wijngaard (Image)
- ▶ *Storm*, by Murewa Ayodele, Lucas Werneck, and others (Marvel)

Best Limited Series

- ▶ *Absolute Martian Manhunter*, by Deniz Camp and Javier Rodriguez (DC)
- ▶ *Beneath The Trees Where Nobody Sees: Rite of Spring*, by Patrick Horvath (IDW)
- ▶ *Bronze Faces*, by Shobo, Shof, and Alexandre Tefenkgi (BOOM! Studios)
- ▶ *Crownsville*, by Rodney Barnes and Elia Bonetti (Oni Press)
- ▶ *Everything Dead and Dying*, by Tate Brombal and Jacob Phillips (Image)
- ▶ *Out of Alcatraz*, by Christopher Cantwell & Tyler Crook (Oni Press)

Best New Series

- ▶ *Assorted Crisis Events*, by Deniz Camp and Eric Zawadzki (Image)
- ▶ *Batman Vol. 4*, by Matt Fraction and Jorge Jiménez (DC)
- ▶ *Black Cat*, by G. Willow Wilson and Gleb Melnikov (Marvel)
- ▶ *Exquisite Corpses*, by James Tynion IV, Michael Walsh, Pornsak Pichetshote, and others (Image)
- ▶ *Ghost Pepper*, by Ludo Lullabi (Image)
- ▶ *Temporal*, by Stephanie Williams and Asiah Fulmore (Mad Cave)

Best Publication for Early Readers

- ▶ *All the Hulk Feels*, by Dan Santat (Abrams Fanfare/Marvel)
- ▶ *The Faraway Forest: Wally's Route*, by Debbie Fong (Chronicle Books)
- ▶ *The Fire-Breathing Duckling*, by Frank Cammuso (TOON Books)
- ▶ *Night Light*, by Michael Emberley (Holiday House)
- ▶ *Steve, A Rare Egg*, by Kelly Collier (Kids Can Press)

Best Publication for Kids

- ▶ *The Cartoonists Club*, by Raina Telgemeier and Scott McCloud (Scholastic Graphix)
- ▶ *Chickenpox*, by Remy Lai (Henry Holt Books for Young Readers)
- ▶ *Creature Clinic*, by Gavin Aung Than (First Second)
- ▶ *Night Chef: An Epic Tale of Friendship with a Side of Deliciousness!* By Mika Song (Random House Graphic)
- ▶ *Oasis*, by Guojing (Godwin Books/Henry Holt Books for Young Readers)
- ▶ *A Song for You and I*, by K. O'Neill (Random House Graphic)



Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards

NOMINATIONS | 2026

Best Publication for Teens

- ▶ *Angelica and the Bear Prince*, by Trung Le Nguyen (Random House Graphic)
- ▶ *Clementine: Book Three*, by Tillie Walden (Image Skybound)
- ▶ *Everyone Sux But You*, by K. Wroten (Henry Holt Books for Young Readers)
- ▶ *Hello Sunshine*, by Keezy Young (Little, Brown Ink)
- ▶ *This Place Kills Me*, by Mariko Tamaki and Nicole Goux (Abrams Fanfare)
- ▶ *Trumpets of Death*, by Simon Bournel-Bosson, translated by Edward Gauvin (Graphic Universe/Lerner)

Best Humor Publication

- ▶ *And to Think We Started as a Book Club*, by Tom Toro (Andrews McMeel Universal)
- ▶ *Ew, It's Beautiful: A False Knees Comics Collection*, by Joshua Barkman (Andrews McMeel Universal)
- ▶ *The Great British Bump-Off: Kill or Be Quilt*, by John Allison and Max Sarin (Dark Horse)
- ▶ *Jeff the Land Shark*, by Kelly Thompson and Tokitokoro (Marvel)
- ▶ *Physics for Cats*, by Tom Gauld (Drawn & Quarterly)
- ▶ *Spent: A Comic Novel*, by Alison Bechdel (Mariner Books)

Best Anthology

- ▶ *Come Out and Play: The Queer Sports Project*, edited by Meghan Kemp-Gee and Megan Praz (Stacked Deck Press)
- ▶ *DC Pride 2025*, edited by Andrea Shea and Jillian Grant (DC)
- ▶ *Noir Is the New Black Season 2* (FairSquare Graphics)
- ▶ *2000AD 2026 Annual Featuring Judge Dredd*, edited by Oliver Pickles (Rebellion)

Best Reality-Based Work

- ▶ *Black Arms to Hold You Up: A History of Black Resistance*, by Ben Passmore (Pantheon)
- ▶ *Do Admit: The Mitford Sisters and Me*, by Mimi Pond (Drawn & Quarterly)
- ▶ *Fela: Music Is the Weapon*, by Jibola Fagbamiye and Conor McCreery (Amistad)
- ▶ *Globetrotters: Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland's World Tour*, by Julian Voloj and Julie Rocheleau (Abrams ComicArts)
- ▶ *Muybridge*, by Guy Delisle, translated by Helge Daschert and Rob Aspinall (Drawn & Quarterly)
- ▶ *Surrounded: America's First School for Black Girls, 1832*, by Wilfrid Lupano and Stéphane Fert, translated by Montana Kane (ABLAZE)

Best Graphic Memoir

- ▶ *The Ephemerata: Shaping the Exquisite Nature of Grief*, by Carol Tyler (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ *My Life in 24 Frames Per Second*, by Rintaro, translated by Montana Kane (Kana Manga US)
- ▶ *It Rhymes with Takei*, by George Takei, Harmony Becker, Steven Scott, and Justin Eisinger (Top Shelf)
- ▶ *Precious Rubbish*, by Kayla E. (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ *Raised by Ghosts*, by Briana Loewinsohn (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ *Talking to My Father's Ghost: An Almost True Story*, by Alex Krokus (Chronicle)

Best Graphic Album—New

- ▶ *Cannon*, by Lee Lai (Drawn & Quarterly)
- ▶ *Drome*, by Jesse Lonergan (23rd St. Books)
- ▶ *The Fables of Erlking Wood*, by Juni Ba (Goats Flying Press)
- ▶ *A Garden of Spheres*, by Linnea Sterte (Peow2)
- ▶ *More Weight: A Salem Story*, by Ben Wickey (Top Shelf)
- ▶ *Shadows of the Sea*, by Cathy Malkasian (Fantagraphics)



Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards

NOMINATIONS | 2026

Best Graphic Album—Reprint

- ▶ *Beneath the Trees Where Nobody Sees: Storybook Edition*, by Patrick Horvath (IDW)
- ▶ *Ginseng Roots: A Memoir*, by Craig Thompson (Pantheon)
- ▶ *Goes Like This*, by Jordan Crane (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen: The Deluxe Edition*, by Matt Fraction and Steve Lieber (DC)
- ▶ *Tongues*, by Anders Nilsen (Pantheon)

Best Adaptation from Another Medium

- ▶ *Alanna: The First Adventure (Song of the Lioness, Book 1)*, by Tamora Pierce, adapted by Vita Ayala and Sama Beck (Abrams Fanfare)
- ▶ *The Compleat Angler: A Graphic Adaptation*, by Izaak Walton, adapted by Gareth Brookes (SelfMadeHero)
- ▶ *Dead Man Walking: Graphic Edition*, by Sister Helen Prejean, adapted by Rose Vines and Catherine Anyango Grünwald (Random House)
- ▶ *Ghost Boys: The Graphic Novel*, by Jewell Parker Rhodes and Setor Fiadzigbey (Little, Brown Ink)
- ▶ *Lord of the Flies: The Graphic Novel*, by William Golding, adapted by Aimée De Jongh (Penguin Classics)
- ▶ *A Wizard of Earthsea: A Graphic Novel*, by Ursula K. Le Guin, adapted by Fred Fordham (Clarion Books)

Best U.S. Edition of International Material

- ▶ *Buff Soul*, by Moa Romanova, translated by Melissa Bowers (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ *Cornelius: The Merry Life of a Wretched Dog*, by Marc Torices, translated by Andrea Rosenberg (Drawn & Quarterly)
- ▶ *In the End We All Die*, by Tobias Aeschbacher, translated by Andrew Shields (Helvetiq)
- ▶ *Nocturnos*, by Laura Perez, translated by Andrea Rosenberg (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ *Raging Clouds*, by Yudori (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes*, by Anaïs Flogny, translated by Dan Christensen (Abrams ComicArts)

Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Asia

- ▶ *Hirayasumi*, vols. 4–7, by Keigo Shinzo, translated by Jan Mitsuko Cash (VIZ Media)
- ▶ *Land*, vol. 1, by Kazumi Yamashita, translated by Kevin Gifford (Yen Press)
- ▶ *Purgatory Funeral Cakes*, by Sanho, translated by Danny Lim (Dark Horse)
- ▶ *Tokyo Alien Bros.*, vols. 1–3, by Keigo Shinzo, translated by Casey Loe (VIZ Media)
- ▶ *Yan*, vols. 1–2, by Chang Sheng, translated by Vanessa Liu (Titan Manga)

Best Archival Collection/Project—Strips

- ▶ *Arthur Ferrier's Pin-Up Parade Box Set*, edited by Rian Hughes (Korero Press)
- ▶ *Barnaby*, vol. 5: 1950–1952, by Crockett Johnson, edited by Eric Reynolds and Philip Nel (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ *The George Herriman Library: Krazy & Ignatz 1928–1930*, edited by J. Michael Catron and Bill Blackbeard (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ *Rea Irvin's The Smythes*, edited by R. Kikuo Johnson and Dash Shaw (NYRC)
- ▶ *Terminal Exposure: Comics, Sculpture, and Risky Behavior*, by Michael McMillan, edited by Lucas Adams (NYRC)

Best Archival Collection/Project—Comic Books

- ▶ *AKIRA Volumes 1–5 Hardcover Collection*, by Katsuhiro Otomo, edited by Haruko Hashimoto, Ajani Oloye, and Lauren Scanlan (Kodansha USA Publishing)
- ▶ *The Atlas Comics Library No. 7: Girl Comics*, edited by Dr. Michael J. Vassallo (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ *Comics of the Movement #1*, by Courtland Cox, Jennifer Lawson, Alfred Hassler, and Benton Resnik (Good Trouble Comics)
- ▶ *Hothead Paisan*, by Diane DiMassa, organized by Anika Banister (NYRC)
- ▶ *Scream! The Specials 1985–2024*, edited by Chiara Mestieri (Rebellion)
- ▶ *Weird Science Vol. 1 XXL*, edited by Grant Geissman (TASCHEN)



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Best Academic/Scholarly Work

- ▶ *Comic Art in Korea*, by John A. Lent (University Press of Mississippi)
- ▶ *Comics of the Anthropocene: Graphic Narrative at the End of Nature*, by José Alaniz (University Press of Mississippi)
- ▶ *Graphic Narratives of Resistance*, by Jennifer Boum Make and Charly Verstraet (Edinburgh University Press)
- ▶ *Latinx Comics Studies: Critical and Creative Crossings*, edited by Fernanda Díaz-Basteris and Maite Urcaregui (Rutgers University Press)
- ▶ *Manga's First Century: How Creators and Fans Made Japanese Comics, 1905–1989*, by Andrea Horbinski (University of California Press)

Best Comics-Related Periodical/Journalism

- ▶ *CANON*, by Colin Blanchette and Alex Eklund
- ▶ *Comic Book Creator*, edited by Jon B. Cooke (TwoMorrows)
- ▶ *Dummy*, edited by John Kelly (The Dummy Corporation)
- ▶ *Shelfdust*, edited by Steve Morris, www.shelfdust.com
- ▶ *SKTCHD*, by David Harper, www.sktchd.com
- ▶ *SOLRAD: The Online Literary Magazine for Comics*, edited by Daniel Elkin, www.solrad.com (Fieldmouse Press)

Best Comics-Related Book

- ▶ *Crumb: A Cartoonist's Life*, by Dan Nadel (Scribner)
- ▶ *Facing Feelings: Inside the World of Raina Telgemeier*, by Raina Telgemeier (Scholastic)
- ▶ *How Comics Are Made*, by Glenn Fleishman (Andrews McMeel)
- ▶ *Making Nonfiction Comics: A Guide to Graphic Narrative*, by Eleri Harris and Shay Mirk (Abrams ComicArts)
- ▶ *Only What's Necessary: Charles M. Schulz and the Art of Peanuts*, by Chip Kidd (Abrams ComicArts)
- ▶ *Ooops...I Just Catharted!: Fifty Years of Cathartic Comics*, by Rupert Kinnard, edited by William O. Tyler (Stacked Deck Press)

Best Publication Design

- ▶ *The Art of Manga*, designed by Tessa Lee (Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco/VIZ Media)
- ▶ *The Essential Peanuts*, designed by Shawn Dahl with Chip Kidd (Abrams ComicArts)
- ▶ *Fruits Basket: The Complete Box Set* (Collector's Edition #13), designed by Wendy Chan (Yen Press)
- ▶ *Red Light Properties: Unfinished Business*, designed by Dan Goldman (Kinjin Storylab)
- ▶ *The Marvel Art of Michael Allred Slipcase Edition*, designed by Kurtis Findlay (Clover Press)
- ▶ *Weird Science Vol. 1 XXL*, designed by Anna-Tina Kessler (TASCHEN)

Best Webcomic

- ▶ *The Accidental Undergrad* by Christian Giroux (Fieldmouse Press)
- ▶ *Keeping Time* by Kody Okamoto (keepingtimecomic.com)
- ▶ *The Legend of Parvaterra* by Raúl Arnáiz (WEBTOON)
- ▶ *Sable: A Ghost Story*, by Ethan M. Aldridge (sablecomic.com)
- ▶ *Superfish*, by Peglo (WEBTOON)
- ▶ *Terran Omega: The Ghosts of War*, by PJ Holden (pauljholden.com)
- ▶ *Tiger, Tiger* by Petra Erika Nordlund (tigertigercomic.com)

Best Digital Comic

- ▶ *DeadAss*, by hakei (VIZ Media)
- ▶ *In the Real Dark Night*, by Jimmy Gownley (G-Ville Comics)
- ▶ *The Lycan*, by Mike Carey, Thomas Jane, David James Kelly, and Diego Yapur (Comixology Originals)
- ▶ *Overwatch 2: Against the Tide*, by Brandon Chen and Velinxi (Blizzard Entertainment)
- ▶ *Practical Defense Against Piracy*, by Tony Cliff (delilahdirk.com)
- ▶ *The World of Lublu*, by Charbak Dipta (The Charbax Store)



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GULL ST (LOCATED ON HB LAWN)

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Best Writer

- ▶ Deniz Camp,
Absolute Martian Manhunter (DC);
Assorted Crisis Events (Image);
The Ultimates (Marvel)
- ▶ Scott Snyder,
Absolute Batman, *Batman/Deadpool* (DC);
By a Thread: Book 2 (Comixology Originals);
You Won't Feel a Thing (DSTLRY)
- ▶ Mariko Tamaki,
This Place Kills Me (Abrams Fanfare)
- ▶ Kelly Thompson,
Absolute Wonder Woman,
Birds of Prey (DC);
Jeff the Land Shark (Marvel)
- ▶ James Tynion IV,
Something Is Killing the Children,
Wynd: The Power of the Blood (BOOM! Studios);
Let This One Be a Devil, *Red Book* (Dark Horse);
The City Beneath Her Feet (DSTLRY);
The Department of Truth, *Exquisite Corpses*, *WORLDTR33* (Image);
Universal Monsters: The Invisible Man (Image Skybound)
- ▶ Stephanie Williams,
Street Sharks (IDW);
Roots of Madness (Ignition Press);
Temporal (Mad Cave)

Best Writer/Artist

- ▶ Juni Ba, *The Boy Wonder* (DC);
The Fables of Erlking Wood (Goats Flying Press);
Monkey Meat Summer Batch (Image)
- ▶ Jamal Campbell,
Zatanna (DC)
- ▶ Jesse Lonergan,
Drome (23rd St. Books)
- ▶ Chang Sheng,
Yan, vols. 1–2 (Titan Manga)
- ▶ Linnea Sterte,
A Garden of Spheres (Peow2)
- ▶ Kazumi Yamashita,
Land, vol. 1 (Yen Press)

Best Penciller/Inker

- ▶ Elsa Charetier,
The City Beneath Her Feet (DSTLRY)
- ▶ Sean Phillips,
Giant Size Criminal #1,
The Knives: A Criminal Book (Image)
- ▶ Javier Rodriguez,
Absolute Martian Manhunter (DC)
- ▶ Chris Samnee,
Batman and Robin: Year One (DC)
- ▶ Hayden Sherman,
Absolute Wonder Woman,
Batman: Dark Patterns (DC)
- ▶ Eric Zawadzki,
Assorted Crisis Events (Image)

Best Painter/Multimedia Artist

- ▶ Teddy Kristiansen,
Black Hammer: Spiral City (Dark Horse)
- ▶ Cathy Malkasian,
Shadows of the Sea (Fantagraphics)
- ▶ Qu,
Slices of Life: A Comic Montage (Bulgilhan Press)
- ▶ Martin Simmonds,
The Department of Truth (Image)
- ▶ Mika Song,
Night Chef: An Epic Tale of Friendship with a Side of Deliciousness! (Random House Graphic)
- ▶ Linnea Sterte,
A Garden of Spheres (Peow)

Best Cover Artist

- ▶ Juni Ba,
The Boy Wonder (DC);
The Fable of Erklings Woods (Goats Flying Press);
TMNT Nightwatcher, *TMNT Godzilla* (IDW);
Monkey Meat Summer Batch (Image)
- ▶ Nick Dragotta,
Absolute Batman, *Absolute Batman 2025 Annual*, *Batman #1*,
Batman/Deadpool (DC)
- ▶ Francesco Francavilla,
Cyberpunk 2077,
Star Wars: Tales from the Nightlands (Dark Horse);
Absolute Batman, *Absolute Martian Manhunter*, *Batman: Full Moon*,
Nightwing variants (DC);
Green Hornet/Miss Fury (Dynamite);
Star Trek: The Last Starship,
Twilight Zone (IDW);
Dick Tracy (Mad Cave)
- ▶ Mateus Manhanini,
Absolute Superman, *Absolute Wonder Woman*, *Mr. Terrific: Year One* variants (DC);
Doctor Strange, *Ironheart: Bad Chemistry*, *Miles Morales: Spider-Man*, *Phases of the Moon Knight*, *Star Wars: The High Republic*,
Storm, *The Ultimates* (Marvel)
- ▶ Javier Rodriguez,
Absolute Martian Manhunter,
Batman & Robin: Year One #7,
The New Gods #8 (DC)
- ▶ Hayden Sherman,
Absolute Wonder Woman,
Batman: Dark Patterns #3-12 (DC)



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Best Coloring

- ▶ Jordie Bellaire,
Absolute Wonder Woman,
The Nice House by the Sea
(DC);
The Exorcism at 1600 Penn
(IDW);
Assorted Crisis Events,
The Department of Truth,
Exquisite Corpses,
WORLDTR33
(Image);
GI Joe
(Image/Skybound);
EC Catacomb of Torment,
EC Epitaphs from the Abyss
(Oni Press)
- ▶ Ninakupenda Gaillard,
Chickenpox
(Henry Holt Books for Young Readers)
- ▶ Jesse Lonergan,
Drome
(23rd St. Books)
- ▶ Matheus Lopes,
Batman and Robin Year One
(DC);
The Seasons
(Image)
- ▶ Javier Rodriguez,
Absolute Martian Manhunter
(DC)

- ▶ José Villarrubia,
This Ink Runs Cold
(Alan Spiegel Fine Arts);
Ghostbox
(Comixology Originals);
Dracula Book 2: The Brides,
The Witcher: The Bear and the Butterfly
(Dark Horse);
Hunger
(The Lab Press);
It Rhymes with Takei
(Top Shelf)

Best Lettering

- ▶ Janice Chiang,
Acro and the Cat, *All Upon a Time*,
Beyond the Aural Vault,
Republica, *Solarblader*
(Sandstorm);
John Carpenter's Blood of the Taken:
Next of Kin,
Pause, *Tales of Science Fiction*
(Storm King)
- ▶ Clayton Cowles,
Absolute Batman,
Batman, *Batman & Robin: Year One*,
Birds of Prey,
Black Canary: Best of the Best,
Trinity: Daughter of Wonder Woman,
Wonder Woman,
(DC);
Daredevil: Cold Day in Hell #1-3
(Marvel)

- ▶ Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou,
Ill Vacation, *Stillman*
(Comixology Originals);
Absolute Martian Manhunter,
Challengers of the Unknown,
DC K.O.,
The Flash,
Green Arrow,
Poison Ivy
(DC);
Beneath the Trees,
Where Nobody Sees,
The Exorcism at 1600 Penn,
Starship Godzilla,
(IDW);
Author Immortal
(Image);
Our-Soot-Stained Heart
(Mad Cave)
- ▶ Nate Piekos,
American Caper #1,
Archie Vs. Minor Threats,
Black Hammer:
Spiral City, *The Brood*,
Minor Threats: T
he Last Devil Left Alive,
Stranger Things
and Dungeons & Dragons,
The Umbrella Academy, *Plan B*,
Welcome to Twilight
(Dark Horse);
I Hate Fairyland
(Image)
- ▶ Ben Wickey,
More Weight: A Salem Story
(Top Shelf)



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The following 19 people are being inducted into the 2026 Eisner Hall of Fame, as chosen by the Hall of Fame judges: Michael T. Gilbert, Karen Green, Alonso Nuñez, Maggie Thompson, and James Thompson.

Bob Bolling (1928–)

Bob Bolling spent most of his career at Archie Comics and is best known for creating *Little Archie*. From its launch in 1956, the series was such a success that Bolling was assigned to the title full-time and was allowed to sign his name to his work. His versatile art played to diverse genres or settings, and his stories could be funny, scary, deeply moving, or bizarre—as likely to feature a pirate or a spaceship as a walk home or a lost pet. Over the decades, he worked on such other titles as *Archie's Pals 'n' Gals*, *Archie and Me*, and Marvel's Star Comics feature *Wally the Wizard*, but his achievement on *Little Archie* places him securely in company with Carl Barks and Walt Kelly.

Gerry Conway (1952–2026)

Gerard ("Gerry") Conway was the co-creator of a plethora of characters at both Marvel and DC, including The Punisher, Spider-Man's clone Ben Reilly, and Ms. Marvel for Marvel and Firestorm, Power Girl, and Jason Todd for DC. Conway was the writer selected for the first intercompany crossover between DC and Marvel, *Superman vs. The Amazing Spider-Man*, in 1976. He is remembered for an eight-year narrative on *Justice League of America* and for one of the most groundbreaking two-issue stories in superhero comics: "The Death of Gwen Stacy" in *The Amazing Spider-Man*.

Denys Cowan (1961–)

Denys Cowan rose to prominence for his work on DC Comics' *The Question*, beginning in 1987, which was followed by kinetic and inspired runs on *Detective Comics*, *Black Panther*, and *Deathlok*. In 1993, he was one of the co-founders of Milestone Media, a pioneering company that, in its comics division, Milestone Comics, prioritized diverse representation in its characters, its creators, and its narratives. Cowan later worked as executive producer on *Static Shock*, an animated series based on a Milestone character he had helped to create.

Edwina Dumm (1893–1990)

Edwina Dumm was a pioneering female cartoonist. Whereas Wikipedia says she was "America's first full-time female editorial cartoonist," it is for her dog-focused comic strips that she is best remembered. Tippiie, Sinbad, and Alec the Great were her stars, and some *Tippiie* strips were reprinted in comic books. With Hilda Terry and Barbara Shermund, Dumm was one of the first three women to be admitted to the National Cartoonists Society; in 1978, she was the first woman to receive the NCS Gold Key Award. She produced the syndicated *Tippiie* strip until she retired in 1966.

Mike Friedrich (1949–)

Mike Friedrich began writing comics in 1967, including DC's *The Spectre*, *Batman*, *Teen Titans*, *Justice League*, and *The Flash*, as well as Marvel's *Iron Man* and *Captain America*. In 1974, he created Star*Reach, a pioneering independent comics publisher with titles including *Star*Reach*, *Imagine*, and *Quack!* along with *Pudge*, *Girl Blimp* by future partner and this year's fellow Hall of Fame inductee Lee Marrs. When economic woes sank his company, rather than declare bankruptcy (and leave creators in the lurch), Friedrich paid his bills by working as Marvel's first direct sales manager. He became an agent representing comic book creators and, after leaving the comics field, became a deacon in the United Methodist Church.

Ollie Harrington (1912–1995)

Langston Hughes called Oliver "Ollie" Harrington the greatest Black cartoonist of the 20th century. Harrington used his expressive line to document Black life in America, primarily for the *Amsterdam News* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*, two of America's historically Black newspapers. His 1935 comic strip *Dark Laughter*, chronicling Harlem life, featured a character named Bootsie, whose popularity led to the strip being renamed for him. Shortly before Pearl Harbor, Harrington introduced *Jive Grey*, a strip about a Black aviator. Harrington's involvement

in the American civil rights movement and his activism with the NAACP led to an investigation by the FBI and HUAC, causing him to emigrate to Paris in 1951.

Don Heck (1929–1995)

As a key agent in Marvel's Silver Age, artist Don Heck co-created Tony Stark, Hawkeye, Black Widow, The Mandarin, Wonderman, The Swordsman, Lorna Dane, Havok, and Sunfire during his formative runs on *Iron Man*, *The Avengers*, and *X-Men*. He was more than proficient at working via the "Marvel Method" and was, therefore, one of the Marvel Universe's earliest architects. Before Marvel, he was also one of Atlas's most versatile staff artists, adept at romance, war, horror, science fiction, and westerns. He also ghosted Lee Falk's *Phantom* strip for five years and drew DC's *Batgirl*, *Wonder Woman*, *The Flash*, and *Justice League of America*.

Abe Kanegson (1921–1965)

If Will Eisner was the brains behind *The Spirit*, Abe Kanegson was the voice. From 1947 to shortly before the feature ended in 1952, Kanegson was the primary letterer for the acclaimed series. Eisner roughed out the letters of the feature famous for its lush splash pages and intricate display lettering; Kanegson then executed Eisner's vision with skill. He also sometimes contributed by inking backgrounds or figures and occasionally editing a caption. Kanegson also lettered "The Secret Files of Dr. Drew" in Fiction House's *Rangers Comics* #47–60 and such other Eisner Studio projects as *John Law*.

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Lee Marrs (1945–)

Beginning her comics career assisting on *Little Orphan Annie*, *Prince Valiant*, and *Hi & Lois*, Lee Marrs went on to co-found Alternative Features Service. She is one of the godmothers of the underground comix movement, a “founding mommy” for underground women cartoonists. Creator of the underground comic *The Further Fattening Adventures of Pudge*, *Girl Blimp*, she also contributed to a variety of series, notably DC’s *Plop!*, but also *Wimmen’s Comix*, *Wet Satin*, and *Gay Comix*, as well as *Star*Reach*, which was published by future partner and fellow Hall of Fame inductee Mike Friedrich.

Go Nagai (1945–)

Of the many genres of manga popular today in the United States, there are few that Go Nagai (Kyoshi Nagai) has not either influenced or outright created. On *Mazinger Z*, he created the first mecha robots—a genre centered on piloted giant robots—popular now more than ever. With *Cutie Honey*, he helped pioneer the “magical girl” genre. The postapocalyptic visions, dark violence, and psychological depth present in works such as *Violence Jack* and *Devilman* were hugely influential, not only in his native Japan, but also the world over. Much of his work continues to be adapted across other media to this day.

Paul S. Newman (1924–1999)

When Paul S. Newman died at age 75, *The New York Times* and CNN carried the news, including that he had been listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the world’s most prolific comic book writer. His official credits began with DC in 1947, and the man whom historian Robin Snyder dubbed “King of the Comic Book Writers” often worked without credit on a variety of story types for a variety of publishers. To put his work in perspective, Newman said in 1977 that, to get his 4,121 stories approved for publication, “I had to submit an additional 5,000 plot ideas, which were rejected.”

Héctor Germán Oesterheld (1919–1977)

Lambiek describes Héctor Germán Oesterheld as “the most important comic writer from South America.” The Argentinian tackled almost every genre, instilling each with social and political substance. His works between 1952 and 1968 include the revisionist western *El Sargento Kirk*, the war comic with no battles *Ernie Pike*, the popular *El Eternauta* science fiction strip, the horror-adventure title *Mort Cinder*, and the biography *Vida del Che*. Oesterheld was subsequently arrested and presumed killed. An Italian journalist was later told, “We did away with him because he wrote the most beautiful story of Che Guevara ever done.” Oesterheld understood the risks he was taking but always wrote what he believed.

Tom Palmer, Sr. (1942–2022)

Tom Palmer Sr. was an accomplished penciler, colorist, and painter, as well as a successful advertising illustrator, but he will best be remembered in the comics world for his transformative inking. Arriving at the end of classic 1960s-era Marvel, then-newcomer Palmer’s mix of commercial and ad agency experience and art studio training brought an illustrative sophistication to his inks, combining a painterly sensibility in his brushwork with a fine-line pen technique that was perfect for artists as varied as Gene Colan, Neal Adams, and John Buscema. Palmer’s work during this period challenged the more traditional styles of established inkers and inspired the Bronze Age Marvel style of inkers like Klaus Janson.

Bud Plant (1952–)

Bud Plant has been collecting, buying, and selling comics since 1968. In 2010’s *Founders of Comic Fandom*, Bill Schelly wrote, “Few comic art enthusiasts have had a more visionary and entrepreneurial impact on the hobby than Plant.” Even in high school, the pioneering retailer ran a mail-order comics sales business. He co-founded comics shops in 1968 and 1969, began exhibiting at Comic-Con at its start in 1970, and, more than half a century ago, established Bud Plant, Inc. He published comics and a retailing trade publication and eventually became an independent comics distributor himself. After selling that portion of his business in 1988, he continued to provide mail-order comics catalogs via Bud’s Art Books. He is now retired.

Mike Royer (1941–)

Michael (“Mike”) Royer is a comics penciler, inker, and letterer known for being Jack Kirby’s main artistic collaborator at DC Comics in the 1970s. Those works included the Fourth World Saga (*Mister Miracle*; *Superman’s Pal, Jimmy Olsen*; *Forever People*; *New Gods*), *The Demon*, and *Kamandi*, among many others. When Kirby returned to Marvel Comics later that decade, Royer was there with him as well, inking and lettering dozens of titles. A man to whom Kirby would refer as “my favorite inker,” Royer is also highly regarded for his work with Russ Manning on *Magnus, Robot Fighter*, and as a staff artist and designer at The Walt Disney Company for more than 14 years.

Dave Sim (1956–)

Dave Sim is the outspoken Canadian creator of *Cerebus the Aardvark*, a black-and-white, 300-issue comic book, self-published from 1977 to 2004 through his own Aardvark-Vanaheim Inc. banner. What began as a funny-animal parody of 1970s sword-and-sorcery comics evolved into a complex commentary on politics, society, and religion. Noted for his artistic experimentation, trenchant satire, and self-publishing advocacy, Sim helped shape the 1988 Creator’s Bill of Rights and, through his *Cerebus* “phone books,” provided an early model of the industry’s shift toward perennial publishing in addition to traditional periodicals. Following *Cerebus*, Sim produced the serious *Judenhass* and the satirical *Glamourpuss* comics, and in 2021 (with Carson Grubaugh), the hardcover *The Strange Death of Alex Raymond*.



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Jimmy Swinnerton (1875–1974)

James “Jimmy” Swinnerton was a prolific newspaper strip creator whose career began with comics targeted to children, which was unusual for the period. He was still a teenager when the *San Francisco Examiner* carried his *Little Bears* strip, inspired by the bear on the California flag and/or the bear mascot for the San Francisco Mid-Winter Exposition of 1894. An early multi-panel strip using speech balloons, *Little Bears* might be considered the first “talking animal” comic. For the *New York Journal*, Swinnerton introduced *The Little Tigers* and, later, *Little Jimmy*. While in New York and after a move to Arizona, he introduced *Mr. Jack*, *Mount Ararat*, and *Rocky Mason*, *Government Marshal*, and he painted backgrounds for dozens of Warner Bros. cartoons.

Carol Tyler (1951–)

Carol Tyler is a cartoonist, painter, and comics educator whose interest in undergrounds led her to San Francisco and her 1987 debut in *Weirdo* magazine. Collections of short pieces, such as *The Job Thing* and *Late Bloomer*, would follow, setting the groundwork for her first long-form narrative, the Eisner Award-nominated biography of her father, whose three color volumes were collected as *Soldier's Heart*. *The New York Times* described it as “a vivid, affecting, eccentrically stylish frame built around a terrible silence.” *Married to Comics*, a 2023 documentary about Tyler’s life with her late husband, fellow cartoonist Justin Green, was released to rave reviews. Her Eisner Award-nominated 2025 work, *The Ephemerata*, is a sensitive reflection on the nature of grief.

Rick Veitch (1951–)

A member of the inaugural class of the Joe Kubert School, Rick Veitch was the 2020 Vermont Cartoonist Laureate. His career extends over 50 years in a wide variety of comics, from mainstream to underground, educational, and beyond. In high school, he and his older brother Tom created *Crazymouse*, which was published in *The Vermont Cynic*. His credits include *Heavy Metal*, Marvel’s *Epic Comics*, *Army@Love*, and a well-known run on *Swamp Thing*, both with Alan Moore and as a solo writer/artist. Through his own King Hell Press, he’s published such innovative titles as *Brat Pack*, *The Maximortal*, and *Roarin’ Rick’s Rare Bit Fiends*. His *Greyshirt* series was created as an homage to Will Eisner.



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WINNERS | 2025

Best Short Story

"Spaces," by Phil Jimenez,
in *DC Pride 2024* #1 (DC)

Best Single Issue/One-Shot

The War on Gaza,
by Joe Sacco (Fantagraphics)

Best Continuing Series

Santos Sisters,
by Greg & Fake, Graham Smith,
Dave Landsberger, and
Marc Koprinarov (Floating World)

Best Limited Series

Zatanna: Bring Down the House,
by Mariko Tamaki
and Javier Rodriguez (DC)

Best New Series

Absolute Wonder Woman,
by Kelly Thompson
and Hayden Sherman (DC)

Best Publication for Early Readers

*Hilda and Twig Hide from the
Rain*, by Luke Pearson (Flying Eye)

Best Publication for Kids

Plain Jane and the Mermaid,
by Vera Brosgol
(First Second/Macmillan)

Best Publication for Teens

Lunar New Year Love Story,
by Gene Luen Yang
and LeUyen Pham
(First Second/Macmillan)

Best Humor Publication

*Processing: 100 Comics That
Got Me Through It*, by Tara Booth
(Drawn & Quarterly)

Best Anthology

Godzilla's 70th Anniversary,
edited by Jake Williams
and others (IDW)

Best Reality-Based Work

*Suffrage Song: The Haunted
History of Gender, Race,
and Voting Rights in the U.S.*,
by Caitlin Cass (Fantagraphics)

Best Graphic Memoir

*Feeding Ghosts: A Graphic
Memoir*, by Tessa Hulls
(MCD/Farrar, Straus & Giroux)

Best Graphic Album—New

Lunar New Year Love Story,
by Gene Luen Yang
and LeUyen Pham
(First Second/Macmillan)

Best Graphic Album—Reprint (tie)

*The One Hand and The Six
Fingers*, by Ram V, Dan Watters,
Laurence Campbell,
and Sumit Kumar (Image)

Best Adaptation from Another Medium

The Road,
by Cormac McCarthy, adapted by
Manu Larcenet (Abrams)

Best U.S. Edition of International Material

The Jellyfish,
by Boum, translated
by Robin Lang and Helge Dascher
(Pow Pow Press)

Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Asia

Tokyo These Days, vols. 1–3,
by Taiyo Matsumoto, translated
by Michael Arias (VIZ Media)

Best Archival Collection/Proj- ect—Strips

*The Complete Proto-BONE
Strips 1982–1986,
and Other Early Drawings*,
by Jeff Smith (Cartoon Books)

Best Archival Collection/Proj- ect—Comic Books

*David Mazzucchelli's Batman
Year One Artist's Edition*,
by Frank Miller
and David Mazzucchelli,
edited by Scott Dunbier (IDW)

Best Comics-Related Periodical/Journalism:

The Beat, edited by
Heidi MacDonald and others,
<https://www.comicsbeat.com>

Best Comics-Related Book

*Tell Me a Story Where the Bad
Girl Wins: The Life and Art
of Barbara Shermund*,
by Caitlin McGurk
(Fantagraphics)

Best Academic/ Scholarly Work

*Drawing (in) the Feminine: Bande
Dessinée and Women*,
edited by Margaret C. Flinn
(Ohio State University Press)

Best Publication Design

*David Mazzucchelli's Batman
Year One Artist's Edition*,
designed by Chip Kidd (IDW)

Best Digital Comic

My Journey to Her,
by Yuna Hirasawa (Kodansha)

Best Webcomic

Life After Life,
by Joshua Barkman,
<https://falseknees.com/comics/24ink1.html> (False Knees)

Best Writer

Gene Luen Yang,
Lunar New Year Love Story
(First Second/Macmillan)

Best Writer/Artist

Charles Burns,
Kommix (Fantagraphics);
Final Cut (Pantheon);
Unwholesome Love
(co-published with Partners & Son)

Best Penciller/Inker or Penciller/Inker Team

Bilquis Evelyn,
Helen of Wyndhorn (Dark Horse)

Best Painter/ Multimedia Artist

Eduardo Riso,
The Blood Brothers Mother
(DSTLRY)

Best Cover Artist

Tula Lotay, *Groupies*
(Comixology Originals),
Helen of Wyndhorn #1,

*Count Crowley: Mediocre
Midnight Monster Hunter* #3,
Dawnrunner #1, *Barnstormers
TPB* (Dark Horse); *Somna*
and other titles (DSTLRY);
The Horizon Experiment (Image)

Best Coloring

Jordie Bellaire,
*Absolute Wonder Woman, Birds
of Prey, John Constantine, Hell-
blazer: Dead in America, The Nice
House by the Sea* (DC); *The City
Beneath Her Feet* (DSTLRY);
The Exorcism at 1600 Penn (IDW);
W0rldtr33 (Image);
G.I. Joe, Duke (Image Skybound)

Best Lettering

Clayton Cowles, *Animal Pound*
(BOOM! Studios); *FML, Helen of
Wyndhorn* (Dark Horse); *Absolute
Batman, Batman, Batman
& Robin: Year One, Birds of Prey,
Jenny Sparks, Wonder Woman*
(DC); *Strange Academy, Venom*
(Marvel)

Hall of Fame:

Judges' Choices: Peter Arno,
Gus Arriola, Steve Bissette,
Wilhelm Busch, Lucy Shelton
Caswell, Philippe Druillet,
Phoebe Gloeckner, Richard
"Grass" Green, Rea Irvin,
Jack Kamen, Joe Maneely,
Shigeru Mizuki, Bob Oksner,
Bob Powell, Joe Sacco,
Bill Schanes, Steve Schanes,
Ira Schnapp, Phil Seuling,
Frank Stack, and Angelo Torres.

Voters' Choices: Kyle Baker,
Eddie Campbell, Roz Chast,
Dan Clowes, Junji Ito, Todd Klein,
John Romita, Jr.

**Bob Clampett Humanitarian
Award:** *L.A. Strong* charity comic
by Mad Cave Studios

**Russ Manning Promising New-
comer Award:** Richard Blake

**Bill Finger Award
for Excellence in
Comic Book Writing:**

Don Glut and Sheldon Mayer

**Spirit of Comics
Retailer Award:**

Akira Comics, Madrid, Spain

In Memoriam

Remembering those we've lost

REMEMBERING GIB BICKEL (1961–2026)

By Jeff Smith



Columbus, Ohio is a city that has changed in the last 40 years. We have chef-driven restaurants of the highest quality, a beautiful and growing downtown, changing demographics from around the world, and for folks like me, a garden of wonderful comic book stores.

All of the stores I've had the privilege to visit share aspects of the owner/operator's personality. Some still cling to the beloved flea market/attic headshop feel of the early years of comic shops, but most have modernized. This is

true across the country. But the very first store I ever saw that looked like a bookstore, with neat, organized shelves, clean carpets on the floor, and a staff that welcomed old and new customers, both male and female, into the comic book world was The Laughing Ogre in the north Columbus neighborhood of Clintonville. Owners Gib Bickel and Daryn Guarino loved comics and loved comics readers.

Both Gib and Daryn were outgoing, knowledgeable, and fun to be around as well as helpful to all their customers, but when I walked in with an issue of my first ever *BONE* comic book, I was surprised and relieved at how excited, helpful, and encouraging Gib

was. I left a copy with him and came back a week later. He loved it and shared many facts about the workings of the network of Direct Market comic book stores, the distribution system of some 15 or so entities that offered catalogs and deliveries from their warehouses all over the country and the world. This was a level of detail that I hadn't been able to penetrate. He even told me that two of the bigger distributors, Capital and Diamond, had office warehouses in Columbus, and he offered to call them and introduce me! It was from that moment that my life in comics began to take off. This was a turning point, and I am eternally grateful to Gib for that.

Gib was one of the nicest, kindest people I ever met. Not just in comics but anywhere. He was that way to everyone. He loved all comics, the artform of the comic book, the characters and creators, and his customers, the comics readers. His store wasn't just superheroes as most stores were back then, but he shelved and highlighted indie and alternative comics. He loved them both! It was at his store that I bought my first copies of *Cerebus*, *Love & Rockets*, *Hate*, *Eightball*, *The Comics Journal*, and so much more.

As time went on, the Ogre was sold to a larger group of stores, but Gib became the manager and the store maintained his veneer and vibe with the help of co-worker Lauren McCallister, who described Gib as being "like a master salesman." In 2005, he served as a judge for the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards, and The Laughing Ogre received the 2021 Will Eisner Spirit of Comics Retailer Award.

Gib was a community leader in the world of Columbus comics, an advisor to many, including myself, and a good friend. He went too soon. I miss him a lot.

Jeff Smith is the award-winning creator of *BONE*, *RASL*, and *TUKI* and co-founder of *Cartoon Crossroads Columbus*.

REMEMBERING ELIJAH BRUBAKER (1975–2025)

by Jesse Reklaw

Cartoonist Elijah Brubaker was a very private person and did not like others writing about him, so this memorial will stick to facts and direct quotes from him.

Born and raised on the Oregon coast, Elijah later lived in Los Angeles; Eugene, Oregon; Olympia, Washington; Seattle; and Portland—where he died on his birthday, August 28. "It's also Jack Kirby's birthday . . . he's the guy who died, broke, creating all that [stuff] we spend billions of dollars to watch at the movies now. In other words, you all should be reading more comic books."

In the early 2000s Elijah was part of a group of Seattle cartoonists who published an anthology called *Moxie*. He volunteered at the Zine Archive and Publishing Project (ZAPP) and worked at the nonprofit literary



arts organization Hugo House. He self-published seven issues of a minicomic series called *Blue Moon* and co-ran The Movie Show Podcast with his childhood friend Robin Morrison. "I should be a lot more worried about life. I have no money and no prospect of getting by. My brain has shut down though. I've given up. I did that a long time ago actually. . . . I've just been drawing, y'know? It's the only thing I've ever enjoyed. It's the thing that calms me. It's the thing that keeps me alive."

In a 2011 interview Elijah said, "It really wasn't until recently . . . that I think my skill and my ambition are creeping close enough that I can call myself a cartoonist. I have no education at all, so it's taken me a long time to hone my skills, even to the rough level they are now. I'm sure in another 20 years I'll produce a good comic. Right now, though, it's all study and practice."

His graphic novel *Reich* was serialized by Sparkplug Comic Books from 2007 to 2014 and will be collected and republished in a book by Neoglyphic Media. *Reich* was nominated for a Best Series Ignatz Award in 2008, 2009, and 2011, as well as the Outstanding Comic Ignatz for issue #6 in 2009. Elijah's graphic novel *The Story of Jezebel*, published by Uncivilized Books, was an Eisner Award nominee for Best Graphic Album—New in 2018. His final works were released on his Patreon account and in the self-published minicomic series *Aftermath*. "Without me [my drawings] are useless. Without my drawing I am useless..."

He left behind an unpublished 600-plus page graphic novel

about his roman à clef character Hubert, as well as a nearly complete issue of *Aftermath* about an infamous LA bank heist duo.

"I don't think comics are better or worse suited to telling the type of story I have to tell. I don't play with the medium in any formal way. Comics are just my chosen form of expression usually. Whenever I write anything, a story, a blog post, a grocery list, I always think 'this would be better as a comic.'"

Jesse Reklaw is the author of seven books, including *Couch Tag*, *LOVE*, and *The Night of Your Life*.

REMEMBERING SAL BUSCEMA (1936–2026)

by Chris Ryall

During a career in comics that spanned a staggering 70 years, Sal Buscema (brother of Marvel artist John Buscema) got his start inking backgrounds for Dell Comics in the 1950s and continued inking other artists' pencils for the entirety of his career. But it was during a 20-year span as penciler for Marvel Comics that Buscema truly came into his own as a complete creator. He was a true workhorse in the most positive sense, able to pencil multiple titles a month while keeping the quality of his pencils consistently high.

The thing about a Sal Buscema comic was, you knew what you were getting when he signed on to draw a title: a long, unbroken run filled with clear, concise storytelling and moments of power and grandeur that showed an understanding of the comics medium and all the requisite fireworks that superhero comics at their best would deliver month in and month out.

And each issue might contain a variation on the "Buscema punch," an oft-used bit of visual dynamism where one of Buscema's heroes would punch a villain so hard there would be an explosion of energy resulting in said villain flying upside down right at the reader. It was one of many things comic fans loved about Buscema's work.

Sal enjoyed long stints on assorted Spider-Man books, with *Marvel Team-Up* and *Spectacular Spider-Man* being the most lengthy; he also had notable runs on *Captain America* and *The Avengers*. It was his work with writer Bill Mantlo on *The Incredible Hulk* that defined Buscema's work throughout the Bronze Age. On that title, Buscema brought brute force and humanity both to the titular character. While his pencils on that series were occasionally inked by Joe Staton, Joe Sinnott, and others, Buscema penciled and inked the bulk of the issues. In all, he maintained his position as the series' regular penciler for over 100 issues (and assorted annuals, too).

At the same time that he was penciling *Hulk*, Buscema's work as artist on *Rom*, *Spaceknight* for its first five years was also particularly resonant. Again working alongside writer Bill Mantlo, Buscema helped create the blueprint for a successful licensed tie-in comic, creating a new mythology that resonates with fans to this day.

In the 1990s, there was a changing of the artistic guard, as more straightforward storytelling of the kind perfected by Buscema gave

way to comics full of extremely dynamic, exaggerated images. Facing possible irrelevancy as he neared age 60, Buscema instead refined his work even more, bringing new life to a second stint on *Spectacular Spider-Man* that remains some of his most beloved work. His pencils got sharper, his inks even more crisp, and he showed that he could

still compete in a major way with younger artists while staying true to the style he'd honed over the years. It was an impressive evolution.

While Buscema will forever be considered a Marvel artist, and rightfully so, he did venture "across the street" and try his hand at some of DC's core titles, too, most notably *Superman*.

In the 21st century, he "retired" from comics, which for a workhorse like him meant scaling back his penciling and instead becoming the primary inker for artists Ron Frenz, Pat Oliffe, and Guy Dorian Sr. Still, when I headed up a revival of *Rom*, *Spaceknight*, Buscema was quick to come on board and again offer his art to the character he had popularized decades before. He also made a return to the kinds of superhero comics he most enjoyed, inking a number of indie publisher Sitcomics' titles that displayed a storytelling and art style harkening back to Buscema's 1970s heyday.

One of the joys in a career in comics is the occasional chance to get to know beloved creators on a personal level, and Sal was one of

those creators for me. We enjoyed long talks on the phone over the years and dined together the few times I saw him in person. I was happy to sign comics alongside Sal at his announced final comic shop signing in 2021.

When I asked about his retirement from comics, Sal replied, "Babe,"—he called everyone in his orbit "Babe," an affectation I was all too happy to have applied to me—"I'm an artist. We might slow down, but we don't actually retire. I'll be doing this until they take the brush from my hand." And so he did. The entire comic industry is all the better for it.

Chris Ryall is a veteran comic book writer, editor, publisher, and executive producer and is co-creator of *Dread the Hall H*, a comic book celebrating all things wonderful and terrifying about comic conventions.



John Buscema and Chris Ryall



Gerry Conway was a unique figure in the wave of young people who came into the comics field in the late 1960s. Before even making his first comics sale, he was a published science fiction writer, and in an era when the limitations of comics freelancing (poor pay, creative restrictions under the Comics Code, publishers' perception of their audience, and lack of public recognition) led many in that wave to aspire to moving west for more fertile fields, Gerry was perhaps the person who most thoroughly made that dream a reality.

He came from a working-class Irish family in Queens, probably the opposite of being a nepo baby. His connections to the professional side of comics came from taking the tours that DC offered in those years, and he made his first sale (to an editor who legendarily refused to break in new talent) because he'd been seen talking to editor Dick Giordano so much it was assumed he'd already had stories accepted. That persistence would mark Gerry's long career.

In comics, Gerry moved back and forth between Marvel and DC, writing virtually every one of their major series. Among his over-1,000 published comics scripts were also contributions to First Comics and Warren. His *Spider-Man* run was notable for what remains one of its most dramatic moments: the death of Gwen Stacey. At the time, changing the dynamic of a franchise character by killing off their love interest was unprecedented, and structuring the event so it was debatable whether the villain or the hero was responsible

added power to the scene. Gerry's then-unique experience writing both heroes made him the choice to script the first, phenomenally successful inter-company crossover, *Superman vs. Amazing Spider-Man: The Battle of the Century* (1976).

Gerry created several enduring characters—most notably The Punisher for Marvel, Firestorm for DC, and dozens more—when many of his contemporaries were simply refusing to add to the mythologies because of the limited financial rewards offered. He would serve as an editor at DC, as a writer/editor for both major companies, and even briefly as Marvel's editor-in-chief. In short, he was one of the most productive and financially successful comics writers of his generation.

Moving west, he would succeed as a writer in filmed entertainment beyond any of his comics peers, serving as the co-writer of *Conan the Destroyer*, a big-budget Hollywood movie, and then moving into a decades-long run doing television and animation. Comics credentials were not a plus in opening doors in writing for live performers in those years, but Gerry persevered. His TV work included over a hundred produced episodes of *Law & Order*, *The Father Dowling Mysteries*, *Diagnosis: Murder*, and cartoons ranging from *My Little Pony* to *Batman*.

By his own description, Gerry was often most comfortable and successful writing "in other people's voices"—whether capturing Stan Lee's style on *Spider-Man* and *Thor* or Dick Wolf's on *Law & Order*. Despite having lived the fantasies of his cohort of comics creators, he was modest about his accomplishments and generous with his time and teaching to those who followed him. After a long battle with pancreatic cancer, he signed off to his friends and colleagues with an email clip that began with Groucho's legendary, "Hello, I must be going . . ." routine. That kind of understatement was of the essence of Gerry Conway.

Paul Levitz has been a comics writer, executive (decades at DC Comics), historian, and now teacher of subjects related to comics and transmedia at Pace University and Columbia University.

REMEMBERING ANNA-MARIA B. COOL (1956–2026)

by Hildy (Mesnik) DeFalco

I can't believe Anna-Maria B. Cool is gone. What a terrible loss. A beautiful person, amazing artist, a treasured friend—loved by so many. Vivacious, talented, gorgeous, funny, sweet; a "bonnie lass" in the pirate lingo she so delighted in!

I was privileged to be the *Barbie* editor at Marvel Comics in the early 1990s when Anna was one of the enormously talented *Barbie* artists. She beautifully illustrated so many wonderful *Barbie* covers and stories. Receiving her pages was a joy, and the fans adored her! Her art and technical skills, heartfelt storytelling, and in-vogue fashions for *Barbie* made her stories jump off the page and forever into the hearts of her loyal readers. Tough licensor Mattel only had one *Barbie* correction during Anna's entire run: As Anna said it herself, she drew the "boobs" too big! Anna's effervescent art contributed to *Barbie* and *Barbie Fashion* comics being awarded Parents' Choice Honors.

Before and after Marvel, Anna's illustration talent dazzled at publishers such as Hallmark greeting cards, where she drew many licensed characters and created Charles Schulz-approved "Baby Snoopy" for the cards. She illustrated *Elvira* comics and children's books such as *Oz* and *The Real Tooth Fairy*, and so much more.

I was lucky to call Anna friend. I got to spend time with her when her travels brought her from Kansas City to New York City.

We'd mingle in the halls of Marvel, where she'd greet everybody with her million-dollar smile, and then we'd go be tourists all over Manhattan. We'd chat on the phone occasionally, we'd share our pet cat photos (Anna had a soft spot for animals), and I was thrilled to join her on a fun *Barbie* comics podcast shortly after the phenomenal success of the *Barbie* movie.

I read several loving tributes to Anna recently on social media and I've appropriated snippets that perfectly capture her: "radiant soul," "one of the



kindest people I have ever interacted with," "she was a mentor to me and such a big encouragement to my life," "ray of light," "always charming and fun," and "there will be a big hole in Artists' Alley."

After *Barbie*, we all went our different ways in life, but we always had the bond of Barbie:

"The first time I saw Anna-Maria's beautiful artwork was at the Joe Kubert School, where we were both students. I'm so lucky I got to know her later when we were both drawing *Barbie* comics at Marvel. An amazing artist, but even more of an amazing person—extremely talented, so fun, and so funny, too." —Amanda Conner, artist and *Barbie* penciler

"Anna-Maria was well known in the Oz community. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, L. Frank Baum wrote: 'A heart is not judged by how much you love; but by how much you are loved by others.'"

REMEMBERING JOHN DAVIS (1944–2026)

I first met John Davis in my role as comics manager at distribution co-op Wisconsin Independent News Distributors in Madison, Wisconsin in the mid-1970s, when he was suggested as a potential second employee for the comics department, which was growing rapidly. John had attended the University of Wisconsin in the 1960s, where he studied film, founded the campus's first private film society, and became book editor and later editor of scholarly film journal *The Velvet Light Trap*. He was also a big comics fan and had helped to catalog the August Derleth comic collection for the Wisconsin Historical Society, which received the donation.

He knew more than I did about parts of the comics world I wasn't familiar with and seemed like a great hire. W.I.N.D. shut down not long thereafter, and we moved to Big Rapids Distribution Company, which in the late 1970s was briefly the largest direct comic distributor in the U.S., helping to build their regional and national comics business.

Shortly after BRDC shut down in 1980, while we were both on unemployment, John came over to my apartment and convinced me that we could start a small comics distribution company to supply the stores we knew and buy from other distributors until we could open direct supply. We founded Capital City Distribution, which started small but then started tripling every year and ultimately became one of the two largest comic distributors in the U.S., with over 20 domestic locations and a large international business.

In his role as a key executive of Capital (president at first, and then vice-president beginning a few years later), John was friend to publishers, retailers, artists, writers, and other distributors around the world and to our fellow Capitalistas. He brought his warm personality, love for the products we sold, and great people skills to the job, and from our earliest year until we sold out in 1996 he was a huge part of our connections to the industry.

Capital was known for its broad range of comics offerings, including indies, its early embrace of manga and Franco-Belgian comics, and its firm support of the First Amendment rights of comics, all things that John felt strongly about.

We also co-founded, with Richard Bruning (who was publisher), Capital Publications, a groundbreaking independent comics publisher and one of the first to begin publishing direct-market-focused color comics. Capital Publications was the publisher of *Nexus*, by Mike Baron and Steve Rude; *Badger*, by Mike Baron and Jeffrey Butler; and *Whisper*, by Steven Grant and Rich Larson. *Nexus* is still being published over 40 years later.

We instituted many innovations that survive today and were able to thrive through good times and bad, but we met our final challenge beginning in 1994 when first Marvel and then DC and others dismantled the successful direct-market distribution system they had helped to build, reducing Capital's supply lines substantially. We fought on, using every tool at our disposal, but eventually decided to sell.

Anna-Maria of the pure, brave, gentle, and dearly loved heart, you will be sorely missed. —Barb Kaalberg, artist and inker, *Barbie* comics "So sad that she was taken away with still so much love and art to give."

—Barbara Slate, writer/artist and writer, *Barbie* comics

"I am honored Anna-Maria B. Cool brought so many of my *Barbie* comics stories to life. Her characters were exquisitely rendered and expressive. Talented, smart and kind —Anna's spirit will live forever in her beautiful artwork." —Lisa Trusiani, writer, *Barbie* comics "I had such respect for Anna-Maria and her work and it seems so unfair that she should be gone so soon." —Mary Wilshire, artist and *Barbie* penciler

Hildy (Mesnik) DeFalco was editor of *Barbie* and *Barbie Fashion comics*, as well as the *Disney* titles, at *Marvel Comics*.

by Milton Griepp

After Diamond Comic Distributors' 1996 acquisition of Capital City, its last competitor after the distribution wars of the 1980s and 1990s, John took a role as director of special projects with Diamond for several years, then founded Davis Marketing Services, which represented companies seeking distribution in the U.S. In this period, he also served as a board member of the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund and as an Eisner Awards judge.

John was also a blues guitarist and vocalist throughout his life and frequently played at Capital City Distribution events as part of the Capital City All Stars. His love of music also manifested in other ways at Capital, which employed many musicians he'd known through the years in a variety of nonmusician roles and which frequently featured live music at parties thrown at conventions, at sales conferences, and for employees and business associates in Madison.

It's been heartwarming to hear from so many of John's old friends and associates, and to see the tributes to him on social media. He was a great partner and a great friend, and the world is a poorer place without him.

Milton Griepp was the co-founder of *Capital City Distribution* and is the CEO of *ICv2*, the *Internal Correspondence* website covering the business of geek culture.

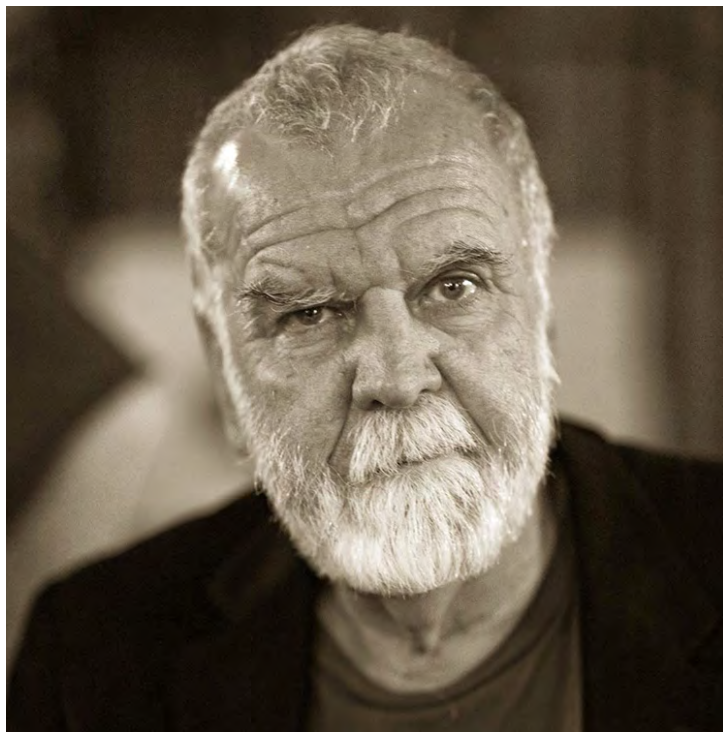


Photo by Maurice Thaler

Brian Doherty was definitely one of a kind. He was a journalist, a historian, a musician, a hardcore comics fan, a hardcore rock 'n' roller, an adventurer, and much, much more. To give you just an idea, here's what he posted on his Facebook page to start off 2026:

"2025 was a decent year creatively/professionally. Published 6th book; did a mini promo tour resulting in over 100 tickets sold to hear me speak in Manhattan, and a D.C. appearance that aired for at least 8 hours on C-SPAN."

"Commissioned to write introductions to two other books in my specialties of libertarianism and comics."

"Conceived and executed three distinct performance art bits at three different events."

"Got back into music in various ways; wrote four new songs (collaboratively), recorded one and performed the other three in collaboration w/ Laura Hauther. Joined Stagefright, performed with them two and a half times (once just a non-musical stage appearance in my role as famous partyer)."

"Screenwriting, various new projects and possibilities laid out and semi-executed."

"As always, there is more that should have been done and more to do, and some of it will be done."

Alas, Brian didn't have the opportunity to do anything further, as he fell to his death in March while hiking in a park near Sausalito, California.

I knew of Brian going back to the mid-1990s when I read his articles and reviews in *Reason* magazine. He was a historian of the libertarian movement, but he also wrote about pop culture topics. As his editor Nick Gillespie wrote, Brian "chronicled the great, innovative weirdos who created things like Burning Man, underground comix, cryptocurrency, and the modern libertarian movement. He was every bit as weird, cranky, and wonderful as the people and movements he wrote about."

Brian's books included *This Is Burning Man: The Rise of a New American Underground* (2004), *Radicals for Capitalism* (2007), and *Dirty Pictures: How an Underground Network of Nerds, Feminists, Misfits, Geniuses, Bikers, Potheads, Printers, Intellectuals, and Art School Rebels Revolutionized Art and Invented Comix* (2022). He also wrote articles for such publications as *The Wall Street Journal*, *Mother Jones*, *The Washington Post*, and *Spin*.

Following Brian on Facebook was fun, because he had so many interests and activities to write about, from playing bass in a band called Stagefright to his all-time favorite record albums to the number of books he had read in the current year (in 2025 it was 174, with a lot of them being comics or about comics).

Brian regularly attended Comic-Con going back to the 1990s and appeared on a variety of panels. In 2014, he wrote an article in *Reason* comparing the trajectories of Burning Man and Comic-Con, summarizing: "But I'm here to tell you, both events are as awesome as they ever were, never mind the bigger numbers, increased expense, bigger tsuris in even getting tickets to two things whose glories have led them to becoming sold-out shows."

Over the years Brian and I engaged in many long conversations about comics. He was one of my Eisner Awards judges in 2016, and he impressed the other judges with his vast knowledge of the artform. That was also reflected in articles he wrote for *Reason* (most recently one on Steve Ditko) and his underground comix book, which he talked about in-depth on a panel at Comic-Con in 2024.

In an article Brian wrote about attending Comic-Con panels on the show's history in 2019, he concluded by saying, "SDCC remains the most copious gathering of fellow fans, entertaining panelists, and well-stocked dealers of art and artifacts to meet your comics needs—as long as that need isn't to be segregated from the many thousands of other people there for their own reasons."

To that I say, "ditto."

Brian, you were indeed one of a kind.

Jackie Estrada is one of four people who have been to every San Diego Comic-Con since the first one in 1970.



REMEMBERING SAM KIETH (1963–2026)

by Kelley Jones

For those of you who never met Sam Kieth, don't worry: You did. Other than his great love of pizza (and boy did he love pizza!), everything about himself he put to paper. His art was as unique as he was.

A true artist trapped in the body of a comic book genius. Sam would hate that I said that. He thought he was like the rest of us. I always smile when I think of his confused face when I first said this to him. Mind you, we were doing an issue of *The Hulk* together at the time, and in the kitchen of the little house I lived in. He had just been in my backyard looking for a twig that he wanted to use to ink a texture for a small panel he said must have this technique to work. Sam had ink all over his hands and some cobwebs from wherever he went to find his perfect twig. But damn, his stick really worked! The panel came out great!

Is there a good lazy? Cause Sam was that, too. Great at fiddling

around until he simply had to do the work. But it wasn't because he didn't want to. His reluctance to start was because he was calculating and fidgeting with the ideas in his head. Sam didn't want to begin until that chalkboard in his mind had the equations solved. And when he started to draw it was wonderful to see. Nothing got in his way, and the hours didn't matter until that image in his head was shoved into those pages and panels for the wonderment of us all.

Sam, you see, loved to draw things and make comics that made him solve problems. Textures and lighting and rendering were always his delight. Bending a figure's anatomy to make a pleasing composition.

I can tell you the hallmark of a Sam Kieth comic is that you will find at least one image that you've never seen before. Something you won't forget. Not many do that.

Yes, a lot of artists create with passion, but Sam drew with



courage. That's something many artists don't do. I saw his courage when we first met at 16 at a mutual friend's house, all our drawings in makeshift portfolios. Sam's drawings were all strange and wonderful and all on different sizes of paper—bizarre and fascinating and, best of all, so confident in execution.

He looked at what I'd done and said, "Your stuff's weird! I like that!" And I thought how truly funny that was, considering. But wisely for 16, I politely said thanks and we were friends from then on. And that kid I met all those long years ago was the same curious, sweet, courageous, generous, inventive genius until his so untimely passing. You do know Sam, you see.

So now order a large pizza and go take down some of Sam's great comics from your shelf (I personally love *Epicurus the Sage* and a big dose of *The Maxx* to start with). Better make it two large pizzas. Sam made a lot of great comics.

Comics artist Kelley Jones is best known for DC's Deadman, Sandman: Seasons of Mist, Swamp Thing, Batman/Dracula Red Rain, Batman Knightfall covers, and a three-year run on Batman. He is now working with Matt Wagner on a four-art graphic novel of Dracula.

REMEMBERING JOHN A. LENT (1936–2026)

by Charles Hatfield

For 27 years (1999–2026), Dr. John Lent published and edited the *International Journal of Comic Art*. Its title is no mere hype: *IJOCA* is the most cosmopolitan, geographically adventurous, truly global periodical ever devoted to comics and cartoon scholarship. Its editorial masthead represents a startling range of nations and cultures. Its contents include many special sections and symposia devoted to different comics traditions; its contributors include hundreds and hundreds of writers and artists (see www.ijoca.net/).

To create *IJOCA*, Dr. Lent (simply John to those who knew him) drew on the talents of comics experts from all over: scholars, teachers, critics, and cartoonists. He was able to do this because he traveled across the comics world and made friends with researchers and creators wherever he went. John got around, and he made a habit of reaching out to emerging scholars and encouraging their work. *IJOCA* published many scholars for the first time, alongside veteran scholars who gave John some of their most innovative and personal work. John welcomed everybody.

As impressive as *IJOCA* is, it is only part of John Lent's much longer story. In fact, John studied comics, and mass communications more broadly, for more than 60 years. He wrote or edited more than 90 books as well as countless articles. One of his latest books, *Comics Art in Korea*, is up for an Eisner Award this year in the Best Academic/Scholarly Work category. Another, *Comics Art in the Caribbean*, will be out this fall. For 18 years (1994–2012), he published and edited another journal, *Asian Cinema*; for 15 years (1986–2001), he edited *Witty World International Cartoon Magazine*.

John built organizations and communities; for instance, he was the longtime chair of the Asia Pacific Animation and Comics Association,

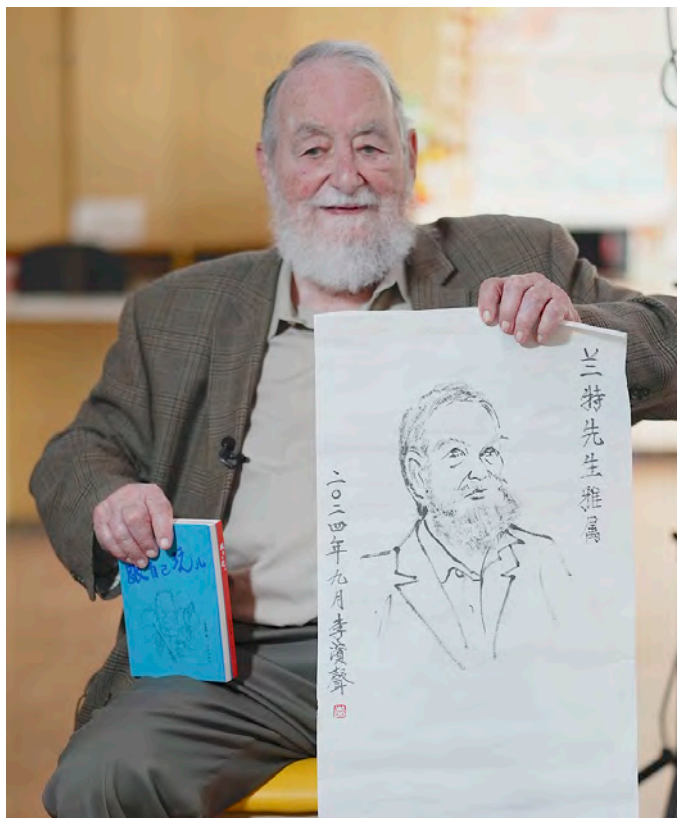
the Popular Culture Association's Asian Popular Culture area, and the Comic Art Working Group of the International Association for Media and Communication Research. In fact, he was as busy and connected as a scholar can be.

To John, comics scholarship belonged to critical communication studies. His impact on communications research was profound, not only in comics studies but generally, with special emphasis on cinema and media studies and on the study of Asian popular culture. John studied the political economy of media the world over, with an emphasis on the conditions that encourage (or discourage or prohibit) press freedom. He wanted to know why journalists, scholars, and creators were or were not able to speak their minds and do their work, what conditions enabled or disabled them, and what platforms were available to them.

He celebrated true creative and critical independence, studied propaganda with a wary eye, and fiercely opposed censorship and the suppression of journalists. He decried the monopolistic control of media content and the exploitative practices of publishers who profit from scholarly journals. Not for nothing did *IJOCA* proudly declare itself, with every issue, "an independent publication."

John had a lifelong commitment to social justice. Born and raised in a desperately poor mining town in Pennsylvania, where education was discouraged, he knew firsthand about econom-

ic exploitation, enforced privation, and narrow prospects. At a crucial moment, he benefited from a scholarship that put college within his reach—a rare thing in his community—and indeed that scholarship changed his life. But even so, he did not forget where he had come from. There were times when he risked everything to



John Lent holding a caricature of himself, Beijing, September 2024. The drawing was created on the spur of the moment by legendary artist Li Binsheng, who was then 99 years old. Photograph by Liu Haichen. Thank you to Xu Ying, John's widow and frequent collaborator, for providing this image.

do what was right. Even as John fought for academic recognition and freedom, he was willing to sacrifice comfort or a job to stand up for students and activists. He was antiwar, antiracist, decolonial, egalitarian, inclusive, and fair-minded.

Those qualities stand out in the pages of *IJOCA* and in his countless other projects (even he couldn't count them!). What also stands out are his pragmatism, his insistence on coupling theory to hard facts, and his determination to get to know as many artists as he could. No one traveled the comics and cartooning world the way John did: ceaselessly, joyfully, in pursuit of friendship and understanding. He seemed to know about, and know people in, every comics culture and comics scene on the planet.

John passed away on May 16 at the age of 89. Beyond the publications and organizations he made possible, his impact can be measured in the hundreds of scholars he encouraged and platformed. So many researchers now working owe their first publications or professional gigs to John's invitation. He was, in sum, one of the

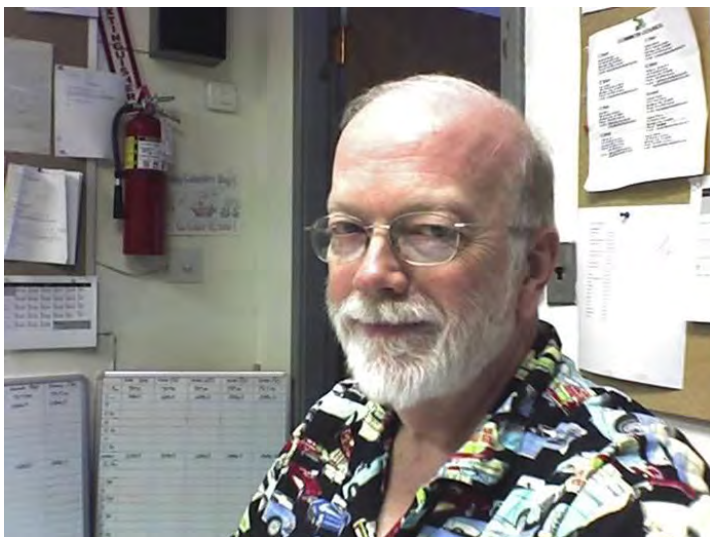
foundational organizers and thinkers in comics and media studies—indeed, the most generative figure in contemporary comics and cartoon research.

To learn more about Dr. John A. Lent's extraordinary career story, see his profile in the book *Key Thinkers in Critical Communication Scholarship* (2015), which he co-edited with Michelle A. Amazeen; Bart Beaty's obituary for John at the online *Comics Journal*; and the long series "Remembering John Lent" at the *International Journal of Comic Art Blog* (ijoca.blogspot.com), compiled by Mike Rhode and scores of other colleagues.

Charles Hatfield, author, scholar, and teacher, is a co-founder of the Comics Studies Society, a past Eisner Awards judge (2013), and winner of a 2012 Eisner Award for his book *Hand of Fire: The Comics Art of Jack Kirby*. He owes John Lent more than he can say.

REMEMBERING JOHN STERLING LUCAS (19??–2025)

by Alex Johnson



I never had the pleasure of meeting John Lucas face-to-face, but we corresponded over several years—mostly about Katy Keene.

Andrew Tallackson of *The Beacher*, John's hometown paper, wrote a feature on him when the Katy Keene television series was getting underway, and much of what I know about his early days comes from that article. It opens with a wonderful scene: When John was seven, his older sister hosted a slumber party. One of her friends brought along a stack of comics and handed them to John to keep him occupied. It was Katy who caught his eye—and no wonder. Bill Woggon's Katy Keene was a beautiful, vivacious young woman. As John put it, "She was beautiful, obviously, and she was having fun." A winning combination for any seven-year-old boy.

That first encounter set the course of his life. John became an accomplished artist with a deep devotion to Katy Keene and

a determination to learn everything about her. That determination led him, remarkably, to simply look up Bill Woggon in directory assistance and call him. The friendship that grew out of those conversations gave John an understanding of Katy Keene that no one has matched since Woggon himself. It also opened the door to working for Archie Comics—first on fan club ephemera in Craig Leavitt's *Katy Keene Fan Magazine*, then drawing and writing the revived comic book when it launched in 1983, a role Bill himself recommended.

Before and after the Katy Keene revival, John was involved in Katy-Kon, a short series of conventions started in Santa Barbara. As they grew, they merged into Comic-Con as a sub-convention within the bigger SDCC in the mid-1980s. It was in this venue that the Katy-Kon name became well-known. John became an important part of those meetings sharing his knowledge of Katy and Bill Woggon freely.

John's knowledge ran extraordinarily deep. Bill's studio had used several assistants and ghost artists over the years, most of whose work was signed by Bill alone. My own eye isn't good enough to say with confidence whose pencil work is whose. John could. He could identify the contributions of individual assistants—their specialties, their part of the production process, whether they handled complete art or just inks. When I came across a Katy Keene pin-up at auction and couldn't place the inking, I did what any sensible person would do: I wrote to John. He replied immediately.

After his years in comics, John settled into various marketing and community media roles around Michigan City, his lifelong hometown. But his love of Katy never faded. He continued sending newly designed Katy Keene Christmas cards to fans who wrote to him. I have mine. John Sterling Lucas was talented, energetic, and genuinely kind. Not a bad legacy at all.

Alex Johnson, electrical engineer by training, was hooked on comics at age eight in 1964 (JLA #29) and on comic art since 2005.

REMEMBERING FRANK STACK (1937–2026)

by Denis Kitchen

Frank Stack was a brilliant and unusually versatile artist. We in the comics community knew him as the prolific underground cartoonist who produced comic books on wildly diverse topics, most remaining timeless. I still find myself laughing out loud at his "Jesus" comics, where his version of the savior visits the current era only to be perpetually disappointed by the hippies and "Christians" he meets. Frank's chronicle of Pingy-Poo (a haplessly neurotic poodle) and

Dorman (his equally neurotic owner) can serve double time as cheap psychiatric therapy. Dr. Feelgood, an unorthodox shrink, is another creation that holds up as a hilarious read.

Alongside such funny material, Frank wrote and drew realistic comix featuring quite ferocious amazon battles. Simultaneously, he taught art for decades at the University of Missouri in Columbia, where he created vigorous figure drawings, bold impressionistic

paintings, and countless etchings and lithographs. I suspect that few who observed his output in one camp would recognize the same artist in the other context. Before he attained tenure at the university, he could not reveal his secret identity, certain he'd be fired if school authorities discovered he was slumming in comic books. Thus, Professor Frank Stack was the public academic while his underground comix stories appeared under the nom de plume Foolbert Sturgeon.

Frank had deep respect and love for the newspaper comics of his youth. When I was publishing some of the classic strips at Kitchen Sink Press, he lobbied heavily for me to get the rights to his favorite strip, *Alley Oop*. I did so, and then appointed him as the guest editor. Oop's creator, V. T. Hamlin, was still alive at that time, though bedridden and frail. It was wonderful to connect them and to see from afar that Hamlin got the devoted attention and praise

he deserved near the end of his life and to observe Frank making each *Alley Oop* volume a true labor of love and research.

Frank ordinarily wrote his own material, and his scripts were first rate, but he was also willing to collaborate with the right author. The ideal opportunity occurred when Harvey Pekar asked him to contribute to his ongoing *American Splendor* series and to illustrate Harvey's sober recounting of his health battle in their graphic novel *My Cancer Year*. Frank later joked to me that when he went to a Barnes & Noble to buy a copy for a friend, he found it in the Humor Section.

I was certainly among his biggest comix fans, but, separate from his work, I found Frank to be a remarkable raconteur. He could regale listeners for hours on all manner of topics, but especially history, politics, and art. We seldom crossed paths in person but often talked by phone when not exchanging old-fashioned letters. When I saw that an incoming call was from Frank, I knew that if I picked up it would be quite a while before I resumed whatever I was in the middle of. But I rarely let such calls go to a recorded message, because every conversation was certain to be an intellectual adventure. Frank spoke with confident authority, an acidic tongue, and biting humor, with me almost always learning something, gaining insights, and often just chuckling. I found his soft but distinctive Missouri twang soothing to my ears. It will always linger in my mind.

I became Frank's art agent twenty-some years ago, after the end of Kitchen Sink, and earlier I published as much of Frank's own work as I could, being particularly proud of *Dorman's Doggie* (collecting his Pingy Poo strips). But Frank went way back with fellow cartooning pioneer Gilbert Shelton, so the bulk of his early work was naturally published by Gilbert's Rip Off Press, a friendly rival of Kitchen Sink. The pair had been classmates at the University of Texas in Austin in the mid-1960s. It was Gilbert who assembled Xeroxed editions of Frank's first "Jesus" stories. Those stapled copies, numbering just a few dozen, are considered by many to be the very first underground comix.

But whether he was technically the first or not, Frank's importance in the underground comix movement is as unquestionable as his sustainability. I urge any reader of this brief remembrance who is unfamiliar with Frank Stack to take a dive. His work will not disappoint you.

Denis Kitchen is a cartoonist, agent, publisher, and the founder of the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.



REMEMBERING LEN STRAZEWSKI (1955–2026)

by Paul Kupperberg



I inherited Len Strazewski when I took over editing DC Comics' *Starman* in 1991. Len had been writing the title for almost a year at that point and, knowing the book was on sales life support and had only another six or seven months to go before it was cancelled, I saw no reason to make a change. Besides, I liked what Len was doing, and he was eager to be the one to close out the story of this character he had spent so much time with.

I'm pretty sure I must have met Len before we started working together—we had mutual friends in the Chicago comic book scene—which was, because of the distance between New York and Chicago, mostly by telephone and fax, but I could have told just from reading his scripts that this was a guy who knew and loved comic books. And, most important to me as an editor, he actually knew how to write them.

Reading his work also told me that Len was still a kid at heart. He brought that same sense of joy and wonder to his characters and stories that I remembered from my childhood comics, not coincidentally the very same ones Len (only a few months my senior) would have also been reading. And while Len is rightly remembered for his runs on Phantom Lady in *Action Comics Weekly*, *Justice Society of America*, *The W.E.B.*, *Prime*, and *Prototype*, I don't think anything exhibited Len's pure love for the form more than his scripts with JSA partner artist Mike Parobeck for

The Fly, one of DC's short-lived Impact! Comics titles. It was to my mind the best and most successful of those titles, which had been designed to appeal to younger, entry level comic book readers.

And I don't say that because I was editor of *The Fly* (again "inheriting" the writer when I took over the title with the seventh issue), but because Len just got it. His protagonist, Jason Troy, was a real, believable, likeable kid, and his Fly was that same real, believable, likeable kid learning how to deal with being in a superpowered adult body. And Len had a sense of humor about the work; he titled the last issue "Squash!" His model was obviously early-days Stan Lee and Steve Ditko Peter Parker/Spider-Man, but his interpretation was thoroughly updated and completely his own and a dynamic he would explore further in 1993's *Prime* for Malibu Comics.

In an obituary on the website of Chicago's Columbia College, where Len—an active journalist writing for the American Medical Association and on topics including health care, employee benefits,

and insurance—had been a professor of journalism for 30 years, one of his former students remembered, "He was so tough on us to make sure our writing was strong and succinct." That journalistic sensibility also served Len well in comic books. He knew how to pare a sentence down to the bare necessities without losing meaning or draining it of personality, a rare talent in the often-overwritten world of comics.

When people ask me what an editor's job is, I usually answer, "To hire the best people you can find and stay out of their way." In Len's case, I got lucky. He was already there waiting for me.

Paul Kupperberg is a veteran comic book writer, editor, and historian whose five-decade career has encompassed more than a thousand stories featuring some of comics' most iconic characters, as well as novels, nonfiction books, and extensive work chronicling the history of the medium.

REMEMBERING DREW STRUZAN (1947–2025)

by Chad Frye

Like seeing a magnificent shooting star streaking across the deep indigo sky with bright wonder and beauty for just a moment before it fades, we were privileged to have lived in the time of Drew Struzan.

Perhaps not since Norman Rockwell has an illustrator created art that so touched the whole of American society. Drew's work stunned whether it adorned the sides of skyscrapers in Times Square, theater displays, record albums, book covers, or the corners of envelopes. Best known for movie posters, his art would create a mythos about whatever subject he portrayed, making great movies more epic and elevating a languishing subject matter from a depth where it wallowed. It is no wonder that master filmmakers like Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Frank Darabont, and Guillermo del Toro desired to have Drew create for their films.

Drew's mastery was being able to combine likenesses, lighting, color, and composition into one distilled image that would remain the defining visual of any movie. Part of that expertise was magically manipulating common paint and colored pencil to actually look like denim on Michael J. Fox (*Back to the Future*), rusty metal and leather shoes on a turn-of-the-century gangplank (*An American Tail*), or lace curtains in a bedroom (*Batteries Not Included*), and Drew could make us feel the heat, sand, and sweat of an archaeological dig (*Indiana Jones*).

Perhaps his work made us think that the artist himself lived an epically adventurous life, but the truth was that he painted alone in a modest studio at his modest home with a humble air. He lived his life quietly, yet with much generosity. Always by his side, beginning with his meager days as a student at Pasadena's Art Center, was his

wife, Dylan. She inspired, encouraged, and loved him, and played a major role in his greatness. There was never a couple more in love and more in tune with each other as they traveled together through life.

Drew's work taught and inspired many artists, myself included, opening our eyes to what could be accomplished. However, no artist should strive to be a clone of their heroes. Many have tried. When Drew would see an imitator, he would often say, "Well, I guess I should quit since anyone can do it now." The message? As an artist, be influenced by your heroes, but then take what you learn and just be you. At the same time, when an artist is widely imitated, perhaps that is when they have become truly legendary. Indubitably, Drew was a legend in his own time.

In his later years, Drew began receiving well-deserved accolades such as Comic-Con's Inkpot Award, CAPS' Sergio Award, and the Society of Illustrators' Hall of Fame. When he got out of his studio and started doing convention appearances around North America, for the first time saw how much his work was truly appreciated. There was even a film music concert held at UCLA in Drew's honor, where composers showcased their music from films for which Drew had created the posters.

However, unknown to many, his creativity was slowly being silenced by the villainous Alzheimer's disease. That's when the world truly lost its most imaginative genius, a storied giant of a man.

On October 13, 2025, Drew's shooting star faded into the night, but it continues to burn brightly in our memories with the legacy of his creations' beauty, which has written him into the annals of history for all time.

Chad Frye is an illustrator and animation artist in Los Angeles, a friend with Drew Struzan for almost 30 years.



Drew and Dylan Struzan in Drew's studio.
Photo by Del Thompson.

REMEMBERING DAVE TAYLOR (1947–2025)

by David Scroggy

I was saddened to learn that artist Dave Taylor had succumbed to prostate cancer. I met Dave during my art agent days but really got to know him after I started at Dark Horse in 1993. My former colleagues, Starwatcher Graphics directors Jean-Marc and Randy Lofficier, had pitched an original comic to be drawn in a style similar to Moebius, but not a copy. They had an unusual story and had selected the other

key contributor: British artist Dave Taylor. A 1988 portfolio review with Jean Giraud had inspired Dave to study art and pursue comics initially, so it made perfect sense that he would fit the requirements of this particular story.

The project was accepted, and work began. Dave's pages were brilliant, with a clean, nuanced line and unique composition. Dave and

I had hit it off nicely, and had some good talks about constructing comics, art in general, the UK (he was in Yorkshire; I was a regular visitor to Scotland), and I'm not sure what all else. He came to San Diego one year for Comic-Con, and Rosemary and I wound up letting him crash in our big room at The Westgate. Dave's enthusiasm for Comic-Con, and his easygoing manner, made it a lot of fun.

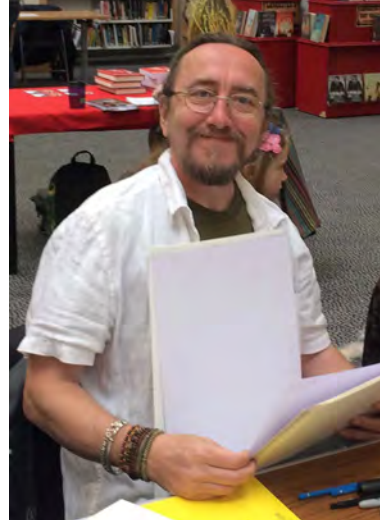
In 1995, he was headhunted by DC Comics, who had seen Taylor's work in Jim Shooter's short-lived Defiant Comics, to work with Matt Wagner on *Batman: The Riddle Factory*. That commission led to several Batman projects, including working with Alan Grant on the *Shadow of The Bat* series from 1996 to 1997, designing Batman and Robin logos for the Warner Bros. movie, and his best-selling collaboration with world-renowned graphic designer Chip Kidd on *Batman: Death by Design*, first published in 2012. A *World's Finest* miniseries, plagued by deadline issues, soured Dave on the constrictions of working for a mainstream publisher and conforming to a house style.

After a break from comics, working in the computer games industry, he returned with "Judge Anderson: Big Robots" for *2000AD*, which he co-wrote with Alan Grant, along with several other stories. Dave often cited Judge Dredd as his inspiration for getting into comics in the first place, so it felt like coming home. He also drew issues of *Doctor Who* for both IDW and Titan Comics.

Dave's acceptance of his prostate cancer condition, diagnosed late and costing him the use of his legs, was inspiring. He never lost his well-known sense of humor. He maintained a positive attitude and looked forward to the future. It was a future that was unfortunately cut short, as his condition took a turn for the worse. Dave left us with an impressive legacy of highest quality work.

David Scroggy is a retired comics professional and former vice president of product development for Dark Horse Comics; he enjoyed a varied career, beginning at Pacific Comics in 1975.

Photo by Geoffrey Ackers



REMEMBERING MORT TODD (1961–2025)

by Peter Bagge



Photo credit: Luigi Novi

Michael Jon DelleFemine, known professionally as Mort Todd ("Death Death," get it?), was an American cartoonist, writer, and media businessman, best known as an editor-in-chief of *Cracked* magazine in the late 1980s, starting at the tender age of 23. Prior to that, he co-founded Psycho Comics, along with then-unknowns Dan Clowes, Rick Altergott, and long-time *Cracked* art director Cliff Mott. Mort also illustrated many covers for the garage rock compilation

LPs *Back from the Grave* and later served as editor for Marvel's short-lived Marvel Music line.

Mort was also owner of Comicfix, a media company that developed licensed properties and encompassed TV, documentaries, animation, and publishing. His comic credits also include collaborations with Clowes in his *Lloyd Llewellyn* series, as well as a trio of comic strips for the *New York Post*, starting in 2000: An adaptation of *Speed Racer*, written and drawn by Mort; *Celebrity Biografix* by Mort and John Severin; and an interactive soap opera comic, *Molly the Model* by Mort, Cliff Mott, and Pat Redding.

Being a lifelong fan of Charlton Comics, Mort would often work to reprint, repackaging or simply champion that line throughout his career, particularly the work of Steve Ditko, with whom he even

collaborated. Mort also had a hand in countless other ventures—so many that it's impossible to list, let alone keep track of. This is all very reflective of his boundless hyperactivity—which, unfortunately for him, could make him somewhat distracted. He simply never met an opportunity that he could resist taking advantage of—unless and until it collided with yet another opportunity. This manic behavior is weirdly reflected in Mort's own drawing style, which more often than not depicted countless figures moving, fighting or writhing in all directions. "Mayhem" would be the best way to describe both Mort's work and his lifestyle!

I first met Mort at one of Phil Seuling's comic conventions (yes, I'm dating myself) in New York in the early 1980s. He was with his cohort of comics buddies and I was with mine. He was one of the most "on" people I'd ever met: promoting and/or pitching one thing after another with every breath. I liked him! He later gave me quite a bit of work during his stint as the editor of *Cracked*. Not great money, but to me at the time it was a much-needed fortune, and I was grateful to him because of it.

Mort was born and raised in Maine and moved to New York City when he was 17. (He told me that the model/singer Bebe Buell picked him up hitchhiking to the Big Apple, and the two remained friends ever since). He lived in New York until 2011, when he returned to his native state and resided in Portland until his death.

Even in these last years of his life Mort continued to cause trouble, such as offending vegans with a local TV ad he directed. Never a dull moment! The always wise-cracking and irreverent Mort Todd will sorely be missed.

Award-winning cartoonist Peter Bagge is an American cartoonist specializing in alternative comics, best known for his satirical series Neat Stuff (1985–1991) and Hate (1990–1998).

REMEMBERING AL WIESNER (1930–2025)

by Joshua H. Stulman

I couldn't believe that I was looking at an actual comic book for sale in my synagogue's gift shop. But there it was, a man in a white T-shirt emblazoned with a huge "Shin," blue trunks, and white pants. He struck the iconic Superman pose with his hands on his hips and stood atop a desert mountain. A clear blue sky was behind him with

large lettering above that read "Shaloman The Man of Stone." I was instantly hooked!

Al Wiesner's *Shaloman* (pronounced "Shalom-Man") was the perfect mix of action and adventure stories with a Jewish twist. I checked back often to see if there was a new issue out. Shaloman

stories covered every genre of comics, from adventure, time travel, outer space, parody, history and even horror. *Shaloman* books were “info-tainment,” perfect for teaching young Jewish kids about their rich history and traditions.

Shaloman’s origin was simple: He was hewn from the “Shin” stone by the three wise men: Justice, Equity, and Wisdom (J.E.W.). Like the mystic tale of the Golem, Shaloman was formed from the earth and summoned to life by the ancient Yiddish cry of despair “Oy Vey” to defend Jewish people and humanity.

The first time I met Al was as a kid at a charity event sponsored by my synagogue. He was an older man with immaculately cut grey hair. He spoke in a quick nervous fashion but was very social and loved to talk. I met him a number of times at local comic book conventions in the Philadelphia area over the years. I always felt a tremendous sense of pride, and maybe a hint of validation, especially when I would find *Shaloman* on display in a comic shop. Of all the famous Jewish comic book creators, none of them had spent the time and financial risk to make a superhero for me.

Al Wiesner was in his early 50s when he created Shaloman. Originally an anthology book called *Mark I Comics*, there were over 44 *Shaloman* comics. Al handled everything from the art and writing to formatting, marketing, and financing. He was a one-man shop and he had every right to be immensely proud of his creation.

Many years passed, and our paths crossed again as professional artists exhibiting in a group show sponsored by Chabad. We struck a great friendship over Golden Age comics, art, and Shaloman—and I’m sure he was taken back by my encyclopedic knowledge of his character.

I had already begun developing Israeli Defense Comics featuring my own Jewish superhero, Magen: The Shield of Israel. Since we were in the same field, it made sense to team up. I became his agent of sorts and for over a decade I handled promotions, online sales and marketing, and arranging convention appearances and gallery shows of his artwork.

At conventions, Al was in his element. He wore a Shaloman shirt, and sometimes a hand-painted Shaloman sweater and trucker hat. He was proud to tell people that *Shaloman* was listed in The Overstreet Price Guide and that he had been featured on the *To Tell The Truth* game show. In the downtime at cons, Al would pull out his

small black sketchbook and draw the scenes and celebrities around him.

One of Al’s career highlights was his appearance at the 2010 San Diego Comic-Con and receiving an Inkpot Award. He enjoyed recalling the energy and support of all the fans at his award presentation, but I think the treat he enjoyed the most was being seated in Artists’ Alley next to Jerry Robinson and Ray Bradbury. The three of them talked throughout the convention as if they had been long-time friends. Jerry and Ray treated Al as an equal and he found himself finally accepted, fulfilling his childhood dream.

Many years later I found the very first Shaloman story in Al’s studio. It had never seen print because it was too short to publish. So I incorporated it as a flashback sequence in a larger story that I illustrated teaming Magen with Al’s Shaloman. Al drew new artwork for the variant cover. *Israeli Defense Comics* #3 would become the final appearance of Shaloman, and I was happy to give my heroes (both Al and Shaloman) one last adventure.

Joshua H. Stulman is a comic book artist and publisher living in the Bronx, New York.



Photo credit: K. Green © 2010 SDCC

REMEMBERING JIM WHELOCK (1952–2026)

by Steve Smith

Comic book and storyboard artist Jim Wheelock passed away in Los Angeles on March 1 from an accumulation of long-standing health problems.

Jim grew up in Brattleboro, VT and attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY. We first met there at the campus radio station and found shared interests in music, comics, and movies. We remained friends, neighbors, and drinking buddies for much of the next 50 years.

After Pratt, Jim stayed in New York City to begin his cartooning career. He took advantage of the open door and relatively decent pay at *Screw* magazine, illustrating covers and contributing interior comics pages. Over the next decade and a half he wrote and drew stories for many indie anthologies, notably for Steve Bissette’s *Taboo*. He created and self-published an erotic miniseries, *The Aviatrix*, made several minicomics, and storyboarded on the TV series *Galaxy Rangers*.

Jim eventually made his way to Los Angeles to do boards for *G.I. Joe* and continued making comics, culminating in the graphic novel *Inferno Los Angeles*, written by Ron Bassilian. In his final years he was a prolific figure artist, participating in the Zoom life drawing sessions that mushroomed across the internet during Covid.

Jim was a frequent attendee at Comic-Con as well as the

festival in Angoulême. He was occasionally mistaken for George R. R. Martin and once, by Al Jaffee no less, for the ghost of William M. Gaines.

Steve Smith is a retired animation artist and comics creator, currently living in Massachusetts.



Jim Wheelock and Steve Smith hanging out at Comic-Con.