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This year we’re offering several new apparel items in various styles and sizes, a specialty tie-dye shirt, hooded hoodies, exclusives prints, masks, lanyards, drinkware, hats, duffle bags, and pins. These official Comic-Con products are available on-site and online!

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Welcome Back!

We are overjoyed to be able to welcome you all back to our first in-person Comic-Con in three years! After such a long absence, we are excited to once again be able to come together in person to celebrate all that is popular arts as well as this community that we all love and have sorely missed during the past three years.

2022 will mark our 53rd Comic-Con event (our 51st in person), and we are excited to share this return with all those who attend, you who are the heart of this show: exhibitors and professionals, program participants, press, volunteers, and most especially you, the attendees. You have all helped to make this one of the very best shows in the country, and your patience and dedication during what has been an incredibly challenging time have been awe-inspiring. Thank you for sticking with us on the roller-coaster ride these past few years have been.

From its beginnings, Comic-Con has been known as a place to renew old friendships and make new ones, a place for fans to gather with others to celebrate. We have been as much about the social connections as we are about programmed events or offerings in the Exhibit Hall. It is truly a community, an opportunity to learn new things, explore new fandoms and interests, meet new people, or share stories and experiences with like-minded fans. At Comic-Con, you will find an amazing diversity of interests—there is truly something for everyone, the place where you may just discover your new favorite fandom. It is truly a yearly gathering of the tribe that is popular arts and culture, and we are thrilled to be meeting again.

As always, we are excited to see fans once again gather throughout the entire campus of Comic-Con, whether it be socializing in the lobbies of the host hotels, taking a break in the Sails, photographing the many costumes in the lobby or hallways, taking in a program or a workshop, learning a new game, watching the Masquerade, visiting one of the many activations outside the Center, or simply meeting friends and others at the end of each day. To share in the joy of seeing those spaces that have been vacant for far too long teeming with activity and creativity. A return to the hustle and bustle that is Comic-Con. We look forward to this opportunity to spend time with all of you who make the magic happen. We realize that there are many other shows that you could choose to attend, and we are grateful that you have chosen to spend your time with us. Your loyalty and support are the reason for our longevity and success. We thank you all, and hope you enjoy Comic-Con 2022 as much as we've enjoyed putting it together.

Robin Donlan
President,
Comic-Con Board of Directors
Thank You to all of the Comic-Con Special Guest Attendees

Tomi Adeyemi
Tomi Adeyemi is a Hugo and Nebula Award–winning Nigerian-American writer and storyteller based in Los Angeles. Her first novel, Children of Blood and Bone, debuted at #1 on the New York Times best-seller list and is being developed into a movie by Paramount Pictures with Champion-Adeyemi writing and executive producing. It’s highly anticipated sequel, Children of Virtue and Vengeance, was also a New York Times best-seller. When she’s not working on her novels or watching BTS music videos, she can be found teaching creative writing at thethewritersroadmap.net.

Lorena Alvarez
Lorena Alvarez Gómez was born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia, and studied Graphic Design and Arts at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. She alternates her work as a freelance illustrator with writing and drawing her own stories, combining her interest in the interaction between arts and science, color language, graphic storytelling, and its formal qualities. Lorena’s first comic, Nightlights, was nominated for two Eisner Awards in 2017. In 2019 she won the Russ Manning Promising Newcomer Award with her second book, Hicotea. She’s currently working on the third book of the Nightlights series, which has already translated to five languages.

Jane Shattuck-Takamoto-Baer
Jane began her career as an assistant animator on Disney’s Sleeping Beauty. She later animated on The Rescuers, The Fox & The Hound, and The Black Cauldron. Jane established Baer Animation Studios with her husband, Dale, where she supervised animation on “Bennie-the-Cab” and produced the Toontown sequences for Who Framed Roger Rabbit? Later, as sole owner of Baer Animation, Jane produced for Sesame Street, animated the Freemont Street Experience in Las Vegas, and supervised animation on such films as Fletch Lives, Rover Dangerfield, Last Action Hero, and The Beautician and the Beast and was writer/producer on Annabelle’s Wish.

Henry Barajas
Henry Barajas is a Latinx author based in Los Angeles. He is best known for his graphic memoir about his great-grandfather Ramon Jaurigue, titled La Voz De M.A.Y.O. Tata Rambo, and for the Latinx fantasy Helm Greycastle. Recently, Barajas wrote the Marvel/SOMOS Healthcare Avengers #1 issue aimed to inspire the people of New York City to get vaccinated, particularly the Latinx community that was disproportionately impacted by COVID.

Tom Batiuk
Tom Batiuk was born in Akron, Ohio, in 1947 and graduated from Kent State University in 1969 with a BFA and a certificate in education. In 1970, while he was teaching, he began drawing a panel for the Teen Page of the Elyria Chronicle-Telegram. Those strips led to the creation of Funky Winkerbean in 1972. In 1979, he launched John Darling into syndication with Tom Armstrong. Another character from Funky, Ed Crankshaft, soloed in his own strip in 1987. Tom’s collaborator on Crankshaft was Chuck Ayers and is now Dan Davis. Batiuk was honored with an Inkpot Award from Comic-Con International in 1999, and in 2008, the Lisa’s story arc from Funky was a Pulitzer finalist.
Pierce Brown

Pierce Brown is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of the Red Rising series. Pierce’s work has been published in 33 languages and 35 territories. He lives in Los Angeles.

Cecil Castellucci

Cecil Castellucci is the award-winning, bestselling author of books and graphic novels for young adults, including Shade, The Changing Girl, Boy, The Disenchanting of the Girl, The End of the World (with art by Jeffrey Wicks), and Odd Duck. His newest graphic novel is Shifting Earth. His short stories have been published in Strange Horizons, Tor.com, and other anthologies. He spent his time between Los Angeles and Montreal.

Soman Chainani

Soman Chainani is the author of the EverNever series, The School for Good & Evil, and 35 territories. He is in the permanent collection of the Whitney Museum. He currently resides in Los Angeles, California. His next novel, Rise of the School For Good & Evil, will go on sale May 31, 2022, the first book in his EverNever World universe.

Amy Chu

Amy Chu is a writer for comics and TV and a member of the faculty at the Kubert School and the School of Visual Arts. Her most recent work is the Netflix anime series Dota: Dragon’s Blood, along with writing for Rick & Morty and Archie comics. For DC and Marvel she has written popular characters such as Wonder Woman, Poison Ivy, Deadpool, Ant-Man, and Iron Man. She is also known for her Kiss, DMC, Red Sonja, and Green Hornet series and the children’s graphic novels Sea Sirens and Sky Island with Eisner winner Janet Lee.

Ezra Claytan Daniels

Ezra Claytan Daniels is a bricoleur (Black/white American multidisciplinary artist and creator of the Eisner-nominated graphic novels Upgrade Soul and BTTM FDRS (with artist Ben Passmore). Ezra’s work has been featured on the Criterion Channel and at Chicago’s Museum of Contemporary Art and is in the permanent collection of the Whitney Museum. He currently resides in Los Angeles, where he writes for film and television, including Doom Patrol for HBO Max, Horror Noire for Shudder, and Amazon Prime’s Night Sky.

Mark Evanier

Mark Evanier attended his first San Diego Comic-Con in 1970 and has been to every one of these annual events ever 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 with Sergio Aragonés for 40 years on Groo the Wanderer, and many more. He is also a historian of comic books and animation and hosts a mess of panels at every Comic-Con.

Danny Fingeroth

Danny Fingeroth was a writer and Group Editor at Marvel from 1977 to 1995. A consultant to Will Eisner Studios, Danny’s prose books include Superman on the Couch and Disguised as Clark Kent, of which audio books, read by him, will be released this year. His most recent book is A Marvelous Life: The Amazing Story of Stan Lee (St. Martin’s, 2019), an entertainment Book of the Year for The Times of London. Currently, he’s working on Wild Card! Jock is a recipient of the Speakeasy Award and the Inkpot Award.

Shannon Garrity

Shannon K. Garrity is an Eisner winner and writer best known for Narbonic, Skin Horse (co-written with Jeffrey C. Wells), and The Dine Days of Willowweep Manor (with art by Christopher Baldwin). Her upcoming graphic novels include Steampunk (with art by Emily Holder) and her next Willowweep Manor book with Baldwin, The Nefarious Nights of Willowweep Manor. She lives in Berkeley with a cat, a man, and a boy.

Marc Hempel

In addition to his collaboration with Neil Gaiman on The Sandman, artist and writer Marc Hempel is known for his work with Mark Wheatley on the comics series Breathtaker, Mars, and Blood of the Innocent. His books Gregory and Tug & Buster have been nominated for industry awards, and his work has appeared in such titles as Marvel Fanfare, Epic Illustrated, Heavy Metal, Jonny Quest, Tarzan the Warrior, Clive Barker’s Hellraiser, The Dreaming, Lucifer, Disney Adventures, The Escapist, MAD, Nickelodeon Magazine, Little Nemo: Dream Another Dream, and SpongeBob Comics. Jock is a three-time New York Times bestselling British artist best known for his comic work with writer Andy Diggle on DC/Vertigo’s The Losers, the award-winning Batman: The Black Mirror, and Witchs with writer Scott Snyder. Jock has also produced key art and concept design for such films as Dredd, Anamholiti, Star Wars: The Last Jedi, and the Oscar-winning Ex Machina. Details on his new Cosmology Originals project will be revealed at Comic-Con 2022 sponsored by Cosmology.

Keithan Jones

Keithan Jones is the founder of KID, an independent publisher based in San Diego. The mantra behind KID is “The Kid in You Never Dies,” a reminder that our childhood spirit is at the core of who we are, no matter how old we get. KID’s first publication was Power Knights, which he writes and draws. Keithan created San Diego’s Black Comic Day: Heroes Rise, an annual Black History Month celebration of Afro-centric comics. He is also the current artist for Vertigo Comics’ Chaos Breaker series. He served as an Eisner Awards judge in 2021.
Barbara Randall Kesel
Barbara Randall Kesel’s comics career started in the mid-1980s at DC Comics, where she went from freelance writer to editor before heading west. She joined Dark Horse Comics in the early ‘90s as an editor before returning to the freelance life. An unexpected meeting at Comic-Con led to the challenge of helping to start up CrossGen Comics in Florida in 2000. A few freelancing years later, she’s now working for a tech startup (Urus Entertainment—watch for the comics app!) that’s creating a new twist on comics.

Phil LaMarr
For over 30 years, Phil LaMarr has thrilled audiences with his work on camera and behind the mic on TV shows such as Mad TV, Futurama, Justice League, Samurai Jack, Static Shock, Family Guy, Star Wars: The Clone Wars, Young Justice, The CW’s The Flash and Supergirl, Veep, Masters of the Universe: Revelation, Murderville, and Better Things; in such feature films as Pulp Fiction, Madagascar 2, Incredibles 2, The Lion King (2019), and My Little Pony: A New Generation; and video games including the Metal Gear Solid, Darksiders, Injustice, and Mortal Kombat series.

Jim Lee
Jim Lee is a world-renowned comic book artist, writer, and editor, and the Publisher and Chief Creative Officer of DC, a division of Warner Bros. Discovery. Known for his incredibly detailed and dynamic artistic style, Lee is one of the most revered and respected artists in American comics. Lee started his professional career at Marvel, where his work on X-Men continues to hold the all-time sales record for single-issue sales. Prior to his current post at DC, Jim served as Editorial Director, where he oversaw WildStorm Studios and was also the artist for many of DC’s bestselling comic books and graphic novels. He has received numerous accolades and recognition for his work, including a Harvey Award, an Inkpot Award, Diamond Gemstone Awards and Wizard Fan Awards.

Miriam Libicki
Miriam Libicki is an Eisner-nominated cartoonist specializing in the nonfictional and the Jewy. Her first book, 2008’s Israeli Army memoir JOBNIK!, has been used in numerous university courses. A collection of graphic essays, Toward a Hot Jew, followed in 2016, winning the Vine Award for Canadian Jewish literature. This year saw the publication of But I Live, a trio of illustrated accounts by child Holocaust survivors. Miriam collaborated with survivor David Schaffer to paint his story for this volume, aimed at general readership and high school classrooms. With her husband, Mike Yoshioka, Miriam also designs and hand-screenprints cute ecological-themed clothes.

Tula Lotay
Tula Lotay is the pen name of illustrator Lisa Wood. Born and raised in Yorkshire, England, Tula specializes in comics, film, and editorial illustration, as well as being the founder and director of the world-renowned Thought Bubble Festival. In 2019 Tula was awarded the Bob Clampett Humanitarian Award for her charitable and fundraising work. Her new Comixology Originals book, Barnstormers, is set to debut at Comic-Con. Her clients include DC Comics, Marvel Entertainment, Image Comics, Warner Brothers, Disney, Playboy, Entertainment Weekly, Variety, Mondo, Simon and Schuster, NBA, Rebellion, Valiant
Kevin Maguire
Kevin is a comic book creator whose career has spanned over 35 years. He debuted as the penciller in DC’s 1986 series Justice League. Since then he has worked on numerous series, including Adventures of Captain America, Man Of Steel, Supergirl, Metal Men, World’s Finest, Guardians of the Galaxy, The Defenders, Team Titans, X-Men Forever, Batman Confidential, Godzillas, Trinity Angels, Strikeback, and Tanga.

Barbara “Willy” Mendes
Barbara Mendes studied art throughout her NYC youth, then published work in underground Comics as “Willy Mendes” in NY and San Francisco in the 1970s. Ms. Mendes has created epic narrative paintings, exhibited in the U.S. and Israel. Her Los Angeles studio/gallery corner, with “Angel Wall” outdoor mural, was designated “Barbara Mendes Square,” and she was declared a “Los Angeles Cultural Treasure” in 2016. Her Queen of Cosmos Comix was published in 2020 by Red 5 Comics, the full-color Queen of Cosmos Comix 2 launches at SDCC 2022.

Shannon Messenger
Shannon is the New York Times and USA TODAY bestselling author of the award-winning middle-grade series Keeper of the Lost Cities, as well as the YA Sky Fall series. Her books have been featured on multiple state reading lists, published in numerous countries, and translated into many languages. She lives in Southern California with her family—and an embarrassing number of cats.

Frank Miller
Frank Miller first gained notoriety in the late 1970s as the artist and later writer of Daredevil for Marvel. Next came the sf samurai drama Ronin, followed by the groundbreaking Batman: The Dark Knight and Batman: Year One. He next fulfilled a lifelong dream by doing the all-out crime series Sin City, which was an instant success and spawned two blockbuster films, which he co-directed with Robert Rodriguez. His graphic novel 300 was also adapted into a highly successful film by Zack Snyder. Recently, Miller, alongside Dan DiDio and Silenn Thomas, launched Frank Miller Presents, an independent publishing company focused on creating and curating a new line of comics.

Bill Morrison
Bill has spent his career as an artist and writer working with the most iconic characters in popular culture. He began his career painting movie posters, including many for Walt Disney, such as The Little Mermaid, Bambi, and The Jungle Book. He also spent years drawing The Simpsons for all kinds of merchandise and writing, drawing, and editing The Simpsons and Futurama comics for Bongo Comics. He was also art director on the Futurama TV series and character artist on Disenchantment. Recently he created a graphic novel adaptation of The Beatles’ Yellow Submarine, and was executive editor of MAD Magazine.

Steve Niles
Writer Steve Niles is best known for 30 Days of Night, Criminal Macabre, October Faction, Simon Dark, Mystery Society, Frankenstein Alive Alive, Monster & Madman, Winnebago Graveyard, Batman: Gotham County

MAGUIRE
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Line, and recently A Town Called Terror. His work has been published by Dark Horse, DC, IDW, Image, Marvel, and Storm King. His comics series The October Faction was made into a Netflix show in 2020, while 30 Days of Night was released as a major motion picture in 2007. Other comics by Niles that have been optioned for film include Aleister Arcane, and Freaks of the Heartland.

Nathan W. Pyle
Nathan Pyle is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of Strange Planet, Stranger Planet, NYC Basic Tips and Etiquette, and 99 Stories I Could Tell. He is a former staff writer and illustrator for BuzzFeed. He is based in Pennsylvania but travels the country speaking about creativity and storytelling.

Steve Saffel
Steve Saffel has attended every San Diego Comic-Con since 1984, first as promotions manager and an editor for Marvel Comics, then as an executive editor for Del Rey Books, and most recently as a senior acquisitions editor for Titan Books. At Marvel he was responsible for the company’s exhibits and guests, and at Del Rey he spearheaded the effort to bring mainstream book publishers to San Diego. He edits science fiction, fantasy, horror, and art books as well as licensed properties that include Alien, Gears of War, original Marvel novels, Mass Effect, and the new fiction initiative for Conan on the character’s 90th anniversary.

Scott Shaw!
For 50 years, Scott Shaw! has created underground comics (Fear and Laughter), mainstream comics (Captain Carrot, Sonic the Hedgehog, Simpsons Comics), children’s books (Marooned Lagoon) syndicated comic strips (Bugs Bunny), graphic novels (Annoying Orange), TV cartoons (Jim Henson’s Muppet Babies), advertising (Post Pebbles cereal), toys, trading cards, video games, packaging art and more. He’s known for his Oddball Comics Live! show and playing Quick Draw! with Mark Evanier and Sergio Aragonés.

Dan Slott
Dan Slott is best known for his 10-year run on Amazing Spider-Man, which featured The Superior Spider-Man saga, Go Down Swinging, and the original, New York Times bestselling story, Spider-Verse. His current work includes Fantastic Four for Marvel and new Doctor Who specials for Titan. Dan previously worked on 2014’s Silver Surfer, which won a 2016 Eisner for best single issue, and 2004’s She-Hulk, which will be one of the sources for the upcoming Disney+ TV series. He’s also worked on Tony Stark: Iron Man, Mighty Avengers, Avengers: The Initiative, Ren & Stimpy, Batman Adventures, and Arkham Asylum: Living Hell.

Jeff Smith
Jeff Smith is the New York Times bestselling author of the award-winning series Bone, which is published in over 30 countries and is among Time magazines Ten Best Graphic Novels of All Time. Bone was a pioneer in comics publishing for kids when it launched Scholastic’s graphic novel imprint Graphix Books in 2005. Smith’s other award-winning and acclaimed comics include SHAZAM! The Monster Society of Evil, RASL, Little Mouse Gets Ready!, ROSE and Bone: Tall Tales. Smith splits his time between Columbus and Key West with his wife and business partner, Vijaya Iyer, where he is working on his current project TUKI.

Scott Snyder
Scott Snyder is a celebrated comic book writer best known for his extensive work...
with DC Comics on such titles as Batman, Detective Comics, and Justice League. He has also written American Vampire for DC/Vertigo and Wythes for Image Comics. Scott recently teamed up with some of the comics industry’s finest artists to deliver eight new series through Comixology Originals, including We Have Demons with Greg Capullo, Barnstormers with Tula Lotay, and Dudley D’Atson and the Forever Machine with Jamal Igle.

William Stout
William Stout is one of a handful of people who have attended every San Diego Comic-Con. Early in his career he assisted Russ Manning, Harvey Kurtzman, and Will Elder. Stout drew the Wizards poster and about 120 other film ads. His 70+ film career includes both Conan movies, Predator, Masters of the Universe, Return of the Living Dead, and Pan’s Labyrinth. His book The Dinosaurs: A Fantastic New View of a Lost Era inspired Michael Crichton’s Jurassic Park. Bill has murals at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, Walt Disney’s Animal Kingdom, the San Diego Natural History Museum, and the San Diego Zoo. The hardcover Fantastic Worlds: The Art of William Stout covers his 50-year career.

J. Michael Straczynski
Just when you thought the plague was over, J. Michael Straczynski returns to SDCC. JMS is the Hugo, Inkpot, Eisner, Icon, and Saturn Award–winning creator/writer for Babylon 5 (and the upcoming BS reboot for The CW) and Sense8, wrote the Oscar-nominated Changeling (for which he received a British Academy Award Nomination), worked on such movies as WWZ and Thor, and has written 400+ comics for Marvel, DC, Image, and others. He created The Resistance shared universe for AWA, is writing two audio drama series for Penguin/Random House, and has two new films slated for production in 2023.

Lila Sturges
Lilah Sturges is the Eisner, Ignatz, and GLAAD Media Award–nominated writer of such graphic novels as Lumberjanes (BOOM!), The Magicians (Archaia), and Girl Haven (Oni), as well as the official Dune movie graphic novel adaptation and the upcoming The Science of Ghosts (Legendary). She has focused her career on creating stories that entertain and inspire the trans community, the larger LGBTQIA+ community, and everyone else as well. She lives in Austin, Texas.

Mariko Tamaki
Mariko Tamaki is a New York Times bestselling writer of comics and prose. She has received Eisner and Ignatz Awards as well as Caldecott and Printz honors for her works. She has had the pleasure of working for Marvel, DC, Abrams, and BOOM! Studios on various amazing superhero type things. She is the curator of the LGBTQIA+ graphic novel imprint Surely Books at Abrams.

Raina Telgemeier
Raina Telgemeier is the author and illustrator of the graphic novels Smile, Drama, Sisters, Ghosts, and Guts, all #1 New York Times bestsellers. She also adapted and illustrated four graphic novel versions of Ann M. Martin’s Baby-Sitters Club series and has contributed short stories to many anthologies. Raina’s accolades include five Eisner Awards, a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor, a Stonewall Honor, and many Best-of and Notables lists.
El Santos series. He has illustrated dozens of children’s books, including 11 volumes of the Aquarion, Macross Zero, and Frontier, mechanical art for animation. His work in anime includes comic books and model kit box art to video games and animation. Inspired by the original Super Dimension Fortress Macross, he has provided model kit illustrations for Hasegawa’s Macross line and Bandai Spirits’ Gundam and Star Wars lines. His work in anime includes mechanical art for Aquarion, Macross Zero, and Frontier, mechanical designs for Hellsing, MacrossΔ, Super Robot Wars T, Back Arrow, and Yassuke, and mechanical imagery and animation direction on Star Blazers 2205. Sponsored by UDON Entertainment and Gemstone Publishing, maintains online columns for Comic-Con International Buyer’s Guide and Old Pro with Maggie Curtis and Don Thompson, who’d begun collecting comic books before such accumulations were recognized as worthwhile. (She still owns the Dell Four Color #103 [Easter with Mother Goose] that she bought when she was 3.) After 30 years of co-editing Comics Buyer’s Guide, Maggie Thompson now writes online columns for Comic-Con International and Gemstone Publishing, maintains her website www.maggie-thompson.com, and is delighted that today’s readers get to see the best of what’s new—and old.

Mark Wheatley
Artist Mark Wheatley has created featured art for The Millers, 2 Broke Girls, and Super Clyde for CBS and Beauty and the Beast and Square Roots for ABC. He created set pieces for Black Eyed Peas and designed for Lady Gaga. His most recent print projects include Songs of Giants, Doctor Chulittle, and Tarzan and the Dark Heart of Time. Past comics creations include Breathtaker, Frankenstein Mobster, Mars, and EZ Street. An Overstreet Hall of Fame inductee, he is an Inkpot, Eisner, Mucker, Golden Lion, Gem, and Speakeasy Award winner. He has lectured and exhibited at the Library of Congress and the Norman Rockwell Museum.

Sophie Yanow
Sophie Yanow is the artist and writer behind The Contradictions (Drawn & Quarterly), winner of the 2019 Eisner for Best Webcomic. Her work has been nominated for the Lambda Literary Award for LGBTQ Comics, the Ringo, Harvey, and Ignatz awards, and it has been longlisted for the Believer Book Award. Her translation of Dominique Goblet’s Pretending Is Lying received the Scott Moncrieff Prize. She has been published by The New Yorker, The Guardian, The Nib, and The Paris Review, and she was a MacDowell Colony Fellow.

Hidetaka Tenjin
Renowned for his detailed and realistic mechanical illustrations, Hidetaka Tenjin has worked on various facets of many mecha franchises, from model kit box art to video games and animation. Inspired by the original Super Dimension Fortress Macross, he has provided model kit illustrations for Hasegawa’s Macross line and Bandai Spirits’ Gundam and Star Wars lines. His work in anime includes comic books and model kit box art to video games and animation. His work in anime includes comic books and model kit box art to video games and animation. His work in anime includes comic books and model kit box art to video games and animation. His work in anime includes comic books and model kit box art to video games and animation. His work in anime includes comic books and model kit box art to video games and animation.
Charles M. Schulz attended San Diego Comic-Con in 1974. He was approaching the 25th anniversary of his comic strip Peanuts and was a featured guest. There, Schulz took the stage to receive an Inkpot award, did a live-drawing of Linus, Snoopy, and Charlie Brown and talked about his work. Schulz even did some fan art and drew a spot-on Popeye for the crowd. The most fantastic piece of art was in that year’s program book—a one-of-a-kind jam piece featuring Russell Myers’s Broom-Hilda trading lightning bolts with Jack Kirby’s The Demon while Linus and Snoopy were caught in the crossfire.

Though it was Schulz’s one and only appearance at the show, that did not belie his lifelong love for all things comics. Born in 1922, at just two-days old Charles Monroe Schulz was immediately christened “Sparky” by an exuberant uncle. “Sparky” was “Spark Plug,” a comic-strip racehorse from the wildly popular newspaper comic strip Barney Google. It was only fitting Schulz would grow up loving comics.

When he was old enough, Sparky read Barney Google. He also read: Popeye, Skiopy, Wash Tubbs, Prince Valiant, and Buck Rogers. His father Carl, a working-class barber, made sure to buy all four weekend papers in St. Paul, Minnesota—not for the news, but for the comics. He and Sparky would pore over the funny pages on the living room rug. When comic books came on the scene Schulz bought those too: Famous Funnies, Tip-Top, “and I can still remember the day when Superman came out in Action Comics. I took it over to a friend of mine and we thought, wow … I knew this guy had something.” Schulz, by his own estimation, was a fanatic.

Growing up, Sparky drew a lot too. Like many aspiring artists, he copied what he saw. No one at school could draw a better-looking Popeye or Mickey Mouse. His classmates begged him to draw cartoon characters on their binders, and he obliged. His teachers recognized his ability too, and Sparky was quick to dive into projects when drawing was involved. At just fourteen years old, Schulz’s first submission to a newspaper was accepted for Ripley’s Believe It Or Not! It featured a stoic profile of his black-and-white dog Spike: “a hunting dog that eats pins, tacks, and razor blades.” The piece was signed by “Sparky” and published in 1937.

Schulz was a product of the times: “comic strips were very important when I was growing up … radio shows, Saturday afternoon movies, and comic strips were the real thing. And, of course, I could draw. I could never draw
Li’l Folks’ was a feature Schulz created in 1947. It was run in the St. Paul Pioneer Press and was developed into the feature that would become Peanuts.

Above: An in-class assignment from 1938. Schulz was instructed to draw ‘three of anything.’ Schulz’s rapid-fire drawing suggests a mind always at work.

Opposite Top: Li’l Folks’ was a feature Schulz created in 1947. It was run in the St. Paul Pioneer Press and was developed into the feature that would become Peanuts.

Opposite Below: A sample strip Schulz created for United Feature Syndicate to show his ability to draw recurring characters in comic strip form.

Schulz’s work ethic was paying off, and the gags he was developing—many of which featured precocious children spouting big ideas—were getting published in one of America’s premiere publications, The Saturday Evening Post. The prime publication real estate in the late 1940s was still the newspaper, and Schulz’s ambition to see his own strip “roll off the presses” drove him to submit his work to those newspaper syndicates. He packed his portfolio, hopped the train, and made the rounds of the midwest newspapers, where he shared what he was working on.

At just 27 years old, Schulz was still searching for his style. He had success with his sparsely drawn, “clear-line” gag cartoons, and it was that material he presented to editors. It was a drawing style in contrast to the fully-rendered, charismatic style of Milton Caniff, Al Capp, and Chester Gould—some of Schulz’s cartooning heroes and creators of the most popular comic strips at the time.

United Features Syndicate liked what they saw in Schulz’s samples and asked him to develop those one-off gags into a comic strip. Over the next few months, Schulz diligently incorporated his best ideas, panel gags, and character designs and developed a comic strip he was proud of. United Features in turn bought it as a “space-saver” strip so it could be arranged horizontally, vertically, or stacked; drafted into World War II, he was heartbroken. “The three years I spent in the Army taught me all I needed to know about loneliness, and my sympathy for the loneliness that all of us experience is dropped heavily upon poor Charlie Brown.” He found solace in his sketchbook and made lasting friendships in the Army. In 1946, finally discharged from the Army, Schulz returned home with newfound self-confidence, eager to pursue a career in the only thing he ever wanted to do: make comics.

Schulz got his foot in the door where he could. He began his comics career in production — lettering pages for Topix comics, a local publisher of Catholic-themed stories for children.

He also got a job working at Art Instruction School, now grading assignments on the other side of the correspondence school desk. It would still be several years before Schulz drew Charlie Brown’s oblong head, but he was making friends with similar goals. He was learning about the industry and he was ambitious to find a foothold. He found early success with single-panel gag cartoons, features called Just Keep Laughing and Li’l Folks appeared in Topix and the St. Paul Pioneer Press, respectively. Schulz always had an iron in the fire: “You should always have something in the mail working for you. As soon as you complete a dozen gag cartoon roughs and send them off to a magazine, you should forget about them and begin to work on a newspaper feature. If it is a comic strip, as soon as you complete two or three weeks’ material, mail it off to a syndicate and once again, forget about it.”

Schulz’s work ethic was paying off, and the gags he was developing—many of which featured precocious children spouting big ideas—were getting published in one of America’s premiere publications, The Saturday Evening Post. The prime publication real estate in the late 1940s was still the newspaper, and Schulz’s ambition to see his own strip “roll off the presses” drove him to submit his work to those newspaper syndicates. He packed his portfolio, hopped the train, and made the rounds of the midwest newspapers, where he shared what he was working on.

At just 27 years old, Schulz was still searching for his style. He had success with his sparsely drawn, “clear-line” gag cartoons, and it was that material he presented to editors. It was a drawing style in contrast to the fully-rendered, charismatic style of Milton Caniff, Al Capp, and Chester Gould—some of Schulz’s cartooning heroes and creators of the most popular comic strips at the time.

United Features Syndicate liked what they saw in Schulz’s samples and asked him to develop those one-off gags into a comic strip. Over the next few months, Schulz diligently incorporated his best ideas, panel gags, and character designs and developed a comic strip he was proud of. United Features in turn bought it as a “space-saver” strip so it could be arranged horizontally, vertically, or stacked;
they launched it in seven papers, and called it Peanuts.

“Right then was when they made this fateful decision that it was going to be a space-saving strip, which I have resented all my life. Now it may have gotten me started, but I’m not sure, so I had to overcome the fact that I was drawing a space-saving strip under the title Peanuts, which was the worst title ever thought up for a comic strip.”

Schulz’s Midwest modesty, combined with his internal desire to become the world’s best cartoonist, helped him persevere. He took the limitations imposed by the syndicate and made them work to his advantage. His “minimalist” approach helped the strip pop off the page against those larger, denser, comic strips that crowded around it. Schulz traded in the tight urban landscape of the comic strips of his childhood for a more open, residential setting. This subtle change made the strip new, refreshing, and topical; it matched the suburban landscape that was popping up across post-war America.

The cast was small at first, in stature and in numbers: Charlie Brown, Shermy, and Patty played on the sidewalks and empty streets of a nameless neighborhood. Schulz gave them big heads per his evolving style. This feature made the Peanuts characters look funny, but it also suggested these kids had big ideas. They rode tricycles and sold mud-pies, but their commentary about it was rarely childlike—they spoke like adults which replaced the need for adults in the strip.

“It was the way I drew the characters, they filled up the strip and I drew them from the side view. The type of humor that I was using did not call for camera angles. I liked drawing the characters from the same view all the way through because the ideas were very brief and I didn’t want anything in the drawing to interrupt the flow of what the characters were either saying or doing. So there was no room for adults in the strip.”

Schulz added a fifth character to the ensemble too—an irrepressible puppy named Snoopy. In the early months of the strip, Snoopy palled around with all of the kids as the neighborhood dog. Eventually, Schulz gave him an owner in Charlie Brown. This pairing of boy and dog would become the nucleus of the comic strip. United Features Syndicate launched Peanuts on October 2, 1950, to an inauspicious start—it was only seen in seven papers. By the end of its run approximately 50 years later, it would be printed in 2,600 newspapers, in 75 countries, and in 21 languages. Charlie Brown and Snoopy would become household names, and Charles M. Schulz would be one of the most highly renowned and recognized cartoonists in the world.

By 1974 the full cast of Peanuts had emerged and been on the scene for close to 25 years. Though the Sunday comics featured “Good Ol’ Charlie Brown” in the masthead, Snoopy and his pal Woodstock were center stage. Fan favorites like Peppermint Patty and Marcie proved a great source of inspiration for storylines and even long-time foil Lucy Van Pelt had softened. Snoopy had been to the moon, both figuratively in the comic strip as the...
“First beagle on the moon,” and literally as a NASA-named space module and astronaut lapel pin.

Buoyed by annual televised airings of It's the Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown and A Charlie Brown Christmas; the new animated specials that Schulz, animator Bill Melendez, and producer Lee Mendelson continued to make; a continuous stream of book collections and publications; and a vast licensing empire to oversee, Charles Schulz and Peanuts had become fixtures in the pop culture firmament.

Despite the full slate of projects, Schulz continued to produce his comic strip as he always did: day in and day out, in his studio, alone at his drawing board. He had no assistants or writing partners, no gag-men or sounding boards unlike some of his peers (a tradition in cartooning). It wasn’t that Schulz eschewed the practice, it was more that assistants would have had little to offer since the ideas, gags, and storylines Schulz was mining for Peanuts came directly from his own memory and life.

“Every thought that I have, and every remembrance, goes into this strip. [Once] I was sitting at my desk at the art instruction school—I suppose I was 26—and nothing had been going right lately. I hadn’t had any dates of any kind. I was lonely, and this very pretty young girl would come up with some letters to be signed. I’d see her walking around the room, day after day after day. It took me great courage, but I said, ‘Would you be interested in going out for dinner and a movie?’ and she said: ‘Aren’t you kind of old for me?’ Oh boy, it would have been better if she had just reached over and punched me in the nose.”

It was precisely this recall of his past and remix in his art that made Schulz’s brand of humor so unique. The humiliation Charlie Brown feels after losing a ballgame 40-0 is the same Schulz felt when he was growing up. The unrequited love Charlie Brown holds for the Little Red-Haired Girl (or Lucy has for Schroeder … or Sally has for Linus … or Linus for Lydia) are all shades of the same heartbreak Schulz endured. The melancholy Charlie Brown feels alone on the bench at recess is the same sort Schulz felt growing up.

The counterpoint to this grief and realism was the joy and fantasy that Schulz put into the strip. This exuberance was often embodied by Snoopy, whether he was “happy dancing” at suppertime or zooming the skies as the World War I Flying Ace. Happiness was a warm puppy after all, and whatever scenario Schulz produced at the tip of his pen was felt by his readers.

“I think that has been one of the secrets to whatever success I’ve had. Everything that I cartoon or write about is done with authenticity. The notes [in Schroeder’s music] are actually notes from different piano works, and I copy them out very carefully … So when I do things about medicine, or historical things from World War I,
Many of the objects and photographs used in the piece are featured in the upcoming book *Charles M. Schulz: The Art and Life of the Peanuts Creator in 100 Objects*, a heavily illustrated centennial volume in which Schulz’s family, friends, and colleagues share their favorite 100 objects from the Charles M. Schulz Museum collection. The book is curated by Benjamin L. Clark and written by Nat Gertler. All items and photographs shared here are used with permission by The Charles M. Schulz Museum.

Charles M. Schulz

**CHARLES M. SCHULZ**

**THE ART AND LIFE OF THE PEANUTS CREATOR IN 100 OBJECTS**

Benjamin L. Clark, Nat Gertler, and THE CHARLES M. SCHULZ MUSEUM

where Snoopy is over in France, it’s all very authentic. I think it’s important to try to break beneath the surface in everything you are doing, rather than just drawing surface cartoons.”

Schulz wasn’t the first “auteur” cartoonist, but his authentic approach to the craft of cartooning had a deep impact on a new generation of cartoonists. Lynn Johnston, Bill Watterson, Cathy Guisewite, Patrick McDonnell, and countless others have cited Schulz’s influence on their work. Ironically, the “space-saver” strip that the syndicate imposed on Schulz at the start of his career would become the template for most comic strips in the latter half of the 20th century. Those who could adapt their styles to accommodate the (increasingly) small real estate of the comics page saw success. These cartoonists often employed the same techniques Schulz developed.

“Ameri

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CELEBRATING
100
YEARS OF
STAN LEE
With what would have been Stan Lee's 100th birthday coming up on December 28, let's see why people can't stop talking about him.

In a nutshell, Stan figured out a way to combine his own vast talents with that of other enormous creative figures to produce characters that are world famous, more so than at any time in the decades since their creation. You know the characters' names: The Fantastic Four. Thor. The Hulk. Iron Man. The Avengers. The X-Men. Spider-Man.

Those are just some of the pantheon of what is now called the Marvel Universe—or even the Marvel Cinematic Universe. They were created by Stan Lee in collaboration with, mostly, Jack Kirby, with the notable exception of Spider-Man, created with Steve Ditko.

Of course, those characters are the source of controversy as well as celebration. Who did what and who contributed how much and who has been fairly compensated and recognized for the creation of those characters? How much of what Stan contributed was as a writer and as an editor? How much as a promoter and goodwill ambassador?

Although there are people who claim to know—including those who were in the rooms at the creation—we’ll never really know. Collaboration is a mysterious process, where the sum is greater than the individual parts.

Stan Lee invented and reinvented himself multiple times in a classic “Greatest Generation” story. Along the way he transformed the company that had been known as Timely and Atlas and even as Marvel into the entity known as Marvel Comics. Arguably, he can be said to have, with indispensable and brilliant collaborators, transformed the entire entertainment industry. In retrospect, those accomplishments can be seen as inevitable, but they weren’t. Neither Stan Lee, nor the phenomenon that is Marvel, were by any means inevitable.

Critic J. Hoberman has said of Bob Dylan, “No iron law of history demanded that a would-be Elvis from Hibbing, Minnesota, would swerve through the Greenwich Village folk revival to become the world’s first and greatest rock ‘n’ roll beatnik bard.” Likewise, no iron law of history demanded that a would-be novelist from West 170th Street would swerve through the comic book world of the 1940s superhero craze to become the most celebrated figure in the medium and business of comics.

Born Stanley Martin Lieber on Manhattan’s Upper West Side and growing up in the borough’s Washington Heights and the nearby Bronx, Stan spent his first nine years as a beloved only child before being joined by brother Larry. The family was desperately poor. Stan’s father Jack was a skilled garment worker but, by all accounts, difficult to get along with, including by prospective employers. The Great Depression that started in 1929 didn’t help. While prosperous relatives made sure the Liebers wouldn’t starve, they certainly didn’t live in the lap of luxury.

Stan was bright and enthusiastic and loved to read. He immersed himself in the popular culture of his era, with books from Tom Swift to the Jerry Todd series, as well as in the radio programs and movies of the day. But he was a pop culture aficionado who also enjoyed the cadences of Shakespeare.

Still, as much as he loved reading and seeing stories of drama and adventure, it didn’t seem he had a great desire to write them. His ambitions were toward acting and, as
He learned while he earned, and before too long, he had his first published writing byline in *Captain America* #3, on a two-page prose piece called “The Traitor’s Revenge.” It was the first time he would use the pen name “Stan Lee.”

President of his high school’s Future Lawyers Club, apparently, the law. He even worked on the school’s Magpie magazine—credited, interestingly, as its publicist. In his high school yearbook, he wrote that his ambition was to “reach the top—and STAY there!” So Stan was not without ambition. He was however, without focus.

Stan attended the Bronx’s legendary DeWitt Clinton High School—alma mater of such luminaries as Paddy Chayefsky, James Baldwin, and Dolph Schayes. Stan seemed to enjoy his high school experience—at least the social aspect. To the end of his life, he would speak of his adventures there—including painting “Stan Lieber is God” on a ceiling when painters took their lunch break and left their ladder and paints unattended. He would sing the Clinton school song at the drop of a hat.

Despite his obvious intelligence, academics weren’t in Stan’s future. After graduation, he attended one semester at New York’s City College where, he claims, he only enrolled because a girl he liked was going there. When they broke up, he dropped out of school.

Erasing stray pencil marks and filing scripts didn’t seem any more glamorous than running around with tickets at the factory.

But something about this job clicked with Stan. He would stay with the company for the rest of his life. He learned while he earned, and before too long, he had his first published writing byline in *Captain America* #3, on a two-page prose piece called “The Traitor’s Revenge.” It was the first time he would use the pen name “Stan Lee.” The story had illustrations by Kirby. Their names would eventually be linked together forever.

Stan would go on to write more text pieces and would also write scripts for comics featuring characters including super-beings like The Destroyer and Jack Frost, as well as more down-to-earth adventures featuring characters like Headline Hunter: Foreign Correspondent.

Meanwhile, Simon and Kirby, believing that Goodman had cheated them on a handshake royalty deal (always get it in writing, kids) for Captain America, secretly started doing freelance work for DC Comics on lunch hours, nights, and weekends. It would be a matter of months before their work for Timely’s competitor would appear, their well-earned fame used to promote the stories to readers. But the gun was jumped when Goodman somehow found out about it and fired them.

Lee was installed as “temporary” editor of the line, much of which was still being packaged by a company called Funnies, Inc. (though their participation would soon end). He was 18 years old, and Goodman needed an adult to do the job. Of course, with the exception of three years in the army—from which, stationed locally, Stan was still able to write scripts for the company—Lee would be that “grown-up” for the next three decades.

As comics went through their ups and downs (booming through the mid-fifties, followed by a slow revival...
starting in the later fifties and early sixties), Stan was the Timely/Atlas/Marvel chief editor. Whether they were putting out 75 titles a month (when he worked with a large staff of editors, artists, and writers) or 8 titles a month (when he worked with a skeleton staff and a handful of freelancers), Stan was the head guy, answerable only to Goodman. And as head guy—and as was standard in publishing at the time—he could assign himself as much freelance writing work as he wanted.

But what he really wanted was a way out of the comic book ghetto—which is what everyone who worked in comics (a field then only slightly more respectable than pornography) wanted. What he—and they—wanted was a foothold in advertising, book publishing, magazines, or, the most compatible (and potentially lucrative) fit, the syndicated comic strip business. Stan had some success in that area—Mrs. Lyons’ Cubs (with Joe Maneely and Al Hartley) and Willie Lumpkin (with Dan DeCarlo)—but never achieved the home run of a Dick Tracy or Li’l Abner; never enough success where he’d feel comfortable giving up the sure thing of his comic book roles.

Through comic books, Stan was able to support a family and maintain a suburban lifestyle. Problem was, the comics business regularly seemed to be on the verge of collapse. And experience had shown him that, despite Goodman now running a line of non-comics magazines, Stan wasn’t ever going to be in the running for a full-time job at them. For reasons unclear, Stan was always going to be the comic book guy.

So Stan was writing a lot of comics, mainly humor and teen comics, some horror, no superheroes (because the superhero fad had passed), and at some point he went from writing full scripts (like a screenplay, with panel descriptions accompanied by the dialogue for each panel) to a looser style in which he would discuss plots with artists, they would draw the stories (often filling in key plot details), and he would add the dialogue, which he considered the most important part of the stories. This would come to be called “the Marvel method.”

This approach continued to evolve when, in a unique confluence of events—including Atlas stalwart artist Maneely’s sudden death in a train accident and Kirby’s (no longer partnered with Simon) return to Atlas after a departure from DC Comics—Lee’s pool of artists came to include Kirby and Steve Ditko. Working relationships were developed between Lee and Kirby and Lee and Ditko. The artists took on more of the plotting, sometimes almost all of it. Stan edited and scripted, often changing the stories as he did so. Any credits came in the form of signatures on the stories, none indicating who did exactly what. That was the situation when Atlas/Marvel started reviving superheroes in a big way, thanks to suggestions from either Goodman or Kirby. (Interestingly, Stan never claimed it was his idea to bring them back.)

It was here—sometime in 1961—that magic happened. The kind of magic that comes from hard work and inspired collaboration. Stan and his collaborators decided to take more risks with the characters and stories, giving them more depth than superhero comic books had generally ever had. Simultaneously, he started promoting the comics aggressively, both in the comics’ own pages and in correspondence with prominent members
of fandom, in effect creating advertising and marketing campaigns for the company and its comics. Thanks to this cutting-edge content and shrewd salesmanship, as well as Stan’s outgoing personality, Marvel became a phenom and, eventually, of comics in general.

Marvel’s first success was, of course, 1961’s Fantastic Four, created by Lee and Kirby. Or Kirby and Lee, if you prefer. The following year, with Steve Ditko, Lee created Spider-Man. And then with Kirby came Thor (with a little help from Norse mythology), the Hulk, Ant-Man, and Iron Man. Soon after that the Avengers, the X-Men, and Daredevil appeared. By early 1964, they were all in existence.

Creators including Stan’s younger brother Larry Lieber, Don Heck, and Bill Everett were also heavily involved in the birthing of these icons.

Somewhere in the process, these men agreed on how they would be compensated for the work they were doing, and Lee started listing credits more clearly in the comics. Lee’s Marvel was the first company to regularly give credits in a way that was reminiscent of movie credits. The characters were seen as short-lived properties that would be forgotten in a few years. And if they did it big—there was precedent with Superman and Batman and Popeye—the work was owned by the publisher anyway.

Lee usually described himself in the credits as writer, and Kirby or Ditko as artist. Eventually, Ditko demanded, and received, plotting credit, and the Kirby-Lee collaborations were credited, for better or worse, as Lee-Kirby productions, with their individual duties left unspecified. Together, Stan Lee and his collaborators—with Stan as sort of player/manager, serving as art director and editor—created the characters named above, and these characters did not fade away for two years or three years. Or ever. Their popularity would grow and would spread to other media, as continuues—wildly—to this day.

After Goodman’s 1968 sale of the company, Stan used his accomplishments to become Marvel’s publisher in the 1970s, when, in a challenging time for the economy in general and comics in particular, he expanded Marvel’s line and the vision for the company. In 1980, he used his and the company’s higher profiles to get himself sent out on side-gigs—he seems to have decided that his life’s work was, indeed, Marvel and its characters.

In the 2000s, while still under contract to Marvel, Stan formed a couple of companies, one named after him and one specifically not named after him but of which he was the chief asset. (Did I mention that in 2000, he turned 78?) Clearly, though, retirement was not what he was after. He had an 18-year last act that ended with his 2018 death. While those years saw their share of controversy for Stan, they were also the years in which his vision—his desire to see Marvel as another Disney—came true, especially once Marvel was actually bought by Disney in 2009. Along the way, thanks largely to his cameos in Marvel’s movies and TV shows, Stan—realizing his childhood ambition of being an actor—became almost as famous as Spider-Man and the Hulk. Paradoxically (but maybe not unexpectedly) in this, his centenary year, Stan Lee is better known than ever.

Perhaps Stan Lee didn’t singlehandedly invent, sustain, and promote a company, a fictional universe, an industry, and a medium that are so important to our world today, but without Stan Lee, that company, universe, industry, and medium wouldn’t be anywhere near what they are. That’s a pretty good legacy.

Stan Lee reached the top—and STAYED there! Happy birthday, Stan. Thanks for everything.
This year, New Year’s Day marked the centenary of Jerry Robinson, born Sherrill David Robinson in Trenton, N.J. While fans may know him best as an artist on Golden Age Batman comics, his range, influence, and interests were considerably broader, taking twists and turns that often, although not always, brought him back to comics and cartoons: From newspaper strips to illustration, editorial cartooning to teaching, comics history to activism and advocacy, he was, to quote the title of Chris Couch’s chronicle of Jerry’s life, a true ambassador of comics. But let’s start with Batman, as did Jerry himself.
In 1939, Jerry was a 17-year-old journalism student at Columbia University when Bob Kane noticed Jerry’s hand-drawn painter’s jacket at a Poconos Mountains resort. Impressed, Kane asked him if he was interested in working in comics; Jerry’s “audition” was filling a sheet with imitations of some of the best-known comic strip artists, as well as the character that Kane, with Bill Finger, had just created for National Comics: Batman. He aced the audition, and Kane hired him to work as an inker and letterer. Within a year, Jerry became Batman’s primary inker, with George Roussos inking backgrounds. Batman quickly became a hit character, and Kane rented space for Robinson and Roussos in Times Square’s Times Tower.

By early 1940, Finger and Kane discussed adding a sidekick. Jerry suggested the name “Robin” after the Robin Hood books he had read during his boyhood, inspired in particular by one edition’s N.C. Wyeth illustration of Robin Hood meeting Maid Marian—an illustration that also served as a model for the Boy Wonder’s costume. The new character, orphaned circus performer Dick Grayson, came to live with Bruce Wayne as his young ward in Detective Comics #38 (April 1940). Robin would inspire many similar sidekicks throughout the remainder of the Golden Age of comic books.

Batman’s nemesis, the Joker, was introduced around the same time, in Batman #1 (Spring 1940). Recalling the Joker playing cards in the decks that were always present in his bridge-playing family home in Trenton, Jerry drew the initial concept sketch and excitedly showed it to Kane and Finger, who both immediately loved it. Hoping to spark inspiration for the character, Finger, a movie buff like many of the Golden Age comics creators, brought in a photograph of Conrad Veidt from The Man Who Laughs, a 1928 silent film based on a Victor Hugo novel. The resemblance between Veidt’s character, his disfigured face carved into a permanent smile as punishment, and the first renditions of the Joker are unmistakable. Although there has been debate on the issue—not uncommon in comicdom!—most comics historians credit Jerry for the visuals of the iconic villain.

Jerry introduced a Joker playing card as the super villain’s business card, an important addition to his visualization of the character. Jerry’s inspiration was two-fold. First, he wanted to introduce an antagonist worthy of Batman, a strong nemesis for the hero and not just another forgettable minor league crook, making him perhaps the first supervillain. Jerry wanted a strong antagonist to test the Dark Knight’s mettle—a Moriarty to Batman’s Sherlock Holmes. Second, he loved the counterintuitive idea of a villain with a sense of humor. Jerry further fleshed out the Batman universe when, in 1943, he collaborated with Bill Finger to adapt a minor character first created by Don Cameron and Bob Kane: Alfred, the Wayne Manor butler. Inspired by the appearance of the actor playing Alfred in the movie serial, Jerry slimmed down the hitherto portly butler; he and Finger also changed his surname from the comical Beagle to Pennyworth, a name with a touch more gravitas. In fact, Jerry had a hand in designing the entire villainous crew in the early Batman universe, shaping fans’ perceptions of
those characters with the classic early covers he drew of the Penguin (Detective Comics #67), Two-Face (Detective Comics #73), and Tweedle Dum & Tweedle Dee (Detective Comics #74).

Jerry’s comic book career lasted for roughly 20 years, during which time he was known best for Batman but also made forays into the Green Hornet, the Green Lama, and his own original superheroes Atoman and London. He also worked on genre comics with Stan Lee at Timely: Westerns, crime comics, romance comics, and a host of other genres, occasionally collaborating with his roommate and studio partner, Mort Meskin. In fact, they worked on over 40 stories together throughout the 1940s—notably on Black Terror and Fighting Yank, for Nedor Publications—usually with Mort inking Jerry’s pencils, but sometimes vice versa.

Jerry’s career, however, was just getting started. His pal Meskin had left comics for advertising, and, about a decade later, Jerry weaned himself from a focus on comics art, eager to explore other avenues. One such avenue was newspaper syndication. The first newspaper strip he worked on was a Cold War–era science fiction story written by Sheldon Stark: “Jet Scott.” From 1953 to 1955, he brought the same visual storytelling verve to this daily strip as he’d brought to his comic book stories. And the SF cred “Jet Scott” gave him may have led to his renowned 1959 cover for Robert Heinlein’s Starship Troopers.

Two later newspaper features reflected Jerry’s growing interest in political commentary and education. One, “Still Life,” which began in 1963, featured no people: the speech balloons with Jerry’s satiric commentary emanated from inanimate objects: umbrellas, buildings, weapons. Eventually, it would evolve into “Life with Robinson,” which allowed him to draw more traditional editorial cartoons, still with his signature wit. This, he considered his best work: “I did 32 years of political cartoons, one every day, six days a week. That body of work is the one I’m proudest of. While my time on Batman was important, exciting, and notable considering the characters that came out of it, it was really just the start of my life.” That delight in political cartooning would soon inspire an entirely new direction in Jerry’s life.

But, meanwhile, his Sunday strip “True Classroom Flubs & Fluffs,” drew upon suggestions from teachers, parents, and students alike, who mailed in student responses that went, let’s say, slightly wide of the mark. The New York Sunday News paid $10 for any submission that was used; so, for example, when one student wrote, “It was a perfect day for voting and thousands went to the polls,” Jerry drew a swimming pool crowded with Bobby and Teddy Kennedy, Nelson Rockefeller, John Lindsay, Barry Goldwater, Charles de Gaulle, and more, neck deep in the chlorinated water. “I like a clean election,” says RFK. The interest in education this strip demonstrated would also come into play as Jerry’s career progressed and expanded, eventually teaching scores of aspiring cartoonists at Pratt, Parsons, and the School of Visual Arts.

Jerry was a prolific book illustrator as well as a chronicler of Broadway for Playbill. The theatrical work was a good fit for a comics artist, requiring as it did the ability to encapsulate action in a moment and render it dynamic in two dimensions. Jerry would attend rehearsals and performances of everything from Hamlet to Oh! Calcutta!, doing loose sketches and often filling the blank space with notes to use on the finished drawing. He captured scenes, portraits, and even stage crew busy in the wings, all with his easy, fluid lines and appreciation for the absurd.

Devotion to comics and cartoons wasn’t only evidenced in his art; Jerry was president of the National Cartoonists Society from 1967 to 1969 and served a two-year term as president of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists starting in 1973. These organizations provided a powerful platform for him to meet cartoonists from all over the world, which eventually led him to
create a global cartoon syndicate and distribute Views of the World. In 1978, Jerry founded Cartoonists & Writers Syndicate to distribute his own work. Six years later, he partnered with his son, Jens, to launch CartoonArts International as another outlet for scores of the finest political cartoonists working with the most influential publications worldwide. The company would go on to represent over 100 artists from dozens of countries and later expanded to include freelancers (a nod to the declining number of newspapers and magazines) and humor panel cartoonists. Works from the feature Wit of the World appeared in publications from The New Yorker to MAD, as well as in satirical magazines from abroad. CartoonArts has partnered with organizations as varied as Hallmark and the United Nations to create cartoon projects, from books and award-winning comics calendars, and from the 1978 book World’s Greatest Comic Quiz to exhibitions at world conferences such as the Rio Earth Summit and the Vienna Conference on Human Rights. Jerry traveled the world, meeting editorial cartoonists in numerous countries, promoting freedom of speech and expression, and extending his support to their endeavors.

That interest in advocacy and his career in comics merged in perhaps Jerry’s best known campaign. In this year that marks both the centenary of Jerry Robinson and the passing of Neal Adams, it’s impossible to forget their joint efforts, in the mid-1970s, to bring financial support and artistic recognition to the creators of Superman. Jerry and Neal organized key support around Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, resulting in lifetime stipends from DC Comics, and guaranteeing that they would be credited as Superman’s creators in all publications featuring the Man of Steel, and in both film and television adaptations. Honoring the Golden Age creators he’d grown up with, however, was far from a one-time thing. In 2005, Jerry created the Bill Finger Award for Excellence in Comic Book Writing in honor of his early and less renowned writing partner. Given out annually at the Eisner Awards ceremony at Comic-Con, the award spotlights both Finger himself and similarly underappreciated writers. Recipients have ranged from Harvey Kurtzman to Otto Binder to Steve Gerber—household names to hardcore fans, but perhaps lesser known to the wider comics-reading public.

But, beyond that well-known example, Jerry was tireless in that role of ambassador for comics. With Will Eisner and others, he was one of the early and constant champions of the medium’s artistic value and created some of the first high-end gallery and museum exhibitions for comic art. He became a comics historian, doing meticulous research for his book The Life and Work of a Great American Cartoonist: Skippy and Percy Crosby: Views of the World. With his understanding of the aesthetic value of the work led him both to demand from publishers the return of his own artwork and to rescue his own and his colleagues’ original art from destruction by the printers after publication. These efforts at original art preservation, complemented by his recognition of the works’ historical value, resulted in an impressive collection of his own. As the decades passed, he watched the collectors market grow exponentially for these once-discarded pages, fetching auction prices in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Yet another example of Jerry’s love and respect for the comics medium as an art form is the role he played in Mort Walker’s Museum of Cartoon Art. Serving on the Board of Directors from its start in Connecticut and then Rye Brook (NY), then as the museum—now the International Museum of Comic Art—moved, along with Mort, to Boca Raton (FL), he was generous with advice and busy with curating exhibitions of cartoons from all over the globe. Jerry’s interest in comics from around the world led him to assemble an International Advisory Board. Sadly, the museum closed in the 2000s, but the entire collection was donated to the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum, at Ohio State University, where visitors can still view the remarkable collection that Walker assembled.

Respect for the medium and years of foreign travel resulted in a perhaps less widely known undertaking. In 1999, Jerry created an original manga series, Astro, with the help of Japanese artists Go Nagai, Shojin Tanaka, and Ken-ichi Oishi. Astro was based on a “comic book opera” that Jerry co-wrote with Sidra Gohn—another example of his combination of theatricality and comic art. Jerry was undeniably a major force in the world of comics and was inducted into the Will Eisner Awards Hall of Fame in 2004. Throughout his long life he worked at elevating comics from pulp fiction to a recognized form of art. He was urbane and well-read, with an appreciation for theater and film, literature and art (including the giants of the Golden Age of illustration) that could often be detected in his own work. His tireless devotion to a wide range of pioneering activities benefited not only his own career but also the lives and careers of his colleagues worldwide. His personal library, now at Columbia University, along with a selection of his papers and art collection, attests to the breadth of his curiosity, with books and magazines from around the world. That collection allows his influence to continue even after his death; for example, the recent collection of “Friday Foster” Sunday strips from Spanish publisher Norma used an original by Jorge Longarón, one of Jerry’s favorite artists.

Not only did Jerry find success in comics, he gave back to the medium he loved in every way possible, through teaching, advocacy, lectures, history, and more. He stands as an aspirational model for subsequent generations of comic artists—and, really, for us all.

Karen Green is the Curator for Comics and Cartoons at Columbia University, where she also founded the graphic novels collection. President of the CartoonArts International CWS agency, featured on GoComics.com, Jens Robinson (son of Jerry Robinson) maintains a collection of vintage original superhero art that he lends to exhibitions such as The Art of DC, currently in the Netherlands.
EC Comics and MAD magazine publisher William M. “Bill” Gaines was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. on March 1, 1922. By the time he died on June 3, 1992 at the age of 70, his various publications had influenced multiple generations, and with MAD he had changed the course of humor in America.

In 1947 the young Bill Gaines was finishing up his college studies on his way to becoming a chemistry teacher. On August 20, however, he got the news that his father, EC Comics publisher Max Gaines, had been killed in a tragic boating accident on Lake Placid. Although Bill was reluctant, his mother insisted that he step in to run the company, even though he had little interest in comic books and knew next to nothing about publishing. The company was not profitable; at the time of his father’s death, EC was running about $100,000 in the red. “In the beginning,” Bill later wrote in Writer’s Digest, “I hated the business so much that I visited the office only once a week to sign the payroll checks.” As he began feeling his way through the ins and outs of being a publisher, though, his attitude began to change. “First thing I knew, I had to read our comics. Next thing I knew, I was in love with them.” He soon found that he thrived in a creative environment, and started making changes.

Bill began to assemble a new and younger staff (notably artist/writers Al Feldstein, Harvey Kurtzman, and Johnny Craig) and started replacing his father’s titles with new ones. After several years of trying to keep up with the ever-changing trends in the comic book industry, EC tried out some experimental horror stories in the final two issues of Crime Patrol and War Against Crime! These stories were quite popular, so EC dropped their other titles and replaced them with horror. Almost overnight, Tales from the Crypt (formerly The Crypt of Terror), The Vault of Horror, and The Haunt of Fear (hosted by the Three GhoulLunatics, the Crypt-Keeper, the Vault-Keeper, and the Old Witch) had become the flagships of the line.
EC’s small—but highly influential—“New Trend” line of comics consisted not only of horror but also of science fiction (Weird Science and Weird Fantasy), which eventually merged into Word Science-Fantasy, and finally became Incredible Science Fiction, crime (Crime SuspenStories), shock (Shock SuspenStories), war (Two-Fisted Tales and Frontline Combat), edited by Kurtzman and considered to be the first comics to show the actual realities of war, adventure (Pirate), and even humor comics (MAD and PANK). The list of freelance artists who worked for EC is among the crème de la crème of comic book and magazine illustrators in the mid-twentieth century: Jack Davis, Wallace Wood, Graham Ingels, Will Elder, Reed Crandall, Frank Frazetta, Al Williamson, Joe Orlando, Jack Kamen, George Evans, Bernie Krigstein, and John Severin. Bill, whose father had repeatedly told him that he would never amount to anything, had been able to do what even his father could not do: make EC a success.

Gaines had a unique, almost unheard of, publishing philosophy. He told John Benson, “We really published for ourselves . . . I was playing at publisher, you know; it was like a game, and we published what we liked. Just because something started losing money was no reason to drop it, if we liked it . . . . The business was making a profit, the horror books were carrying it, and I was perfectly content to keep the other [less profitable] titles there. . . . As long as EC was making money we were OK.”

Gaines and Feldstein’s approach to comics was also unusual: They essentially did what pleased them, and they put as much emphasis on the scripts as on the artwork, which was not particularly common in the 1950s. Bill wrote in Writer’s Digest, “The EC approach in all these books is to offer better stories than can be found in other comics. At EC the copy itself—both caption and dialogue—has taken the number one position. This is a switch from the old days of comics when the art was most important and the story secondary. We take our stories very seriously. They are true-to-life adult stories ending in a surprise.” In fact, EC’s comics were very often a spectacular combination of both story and artwork. Artists were encouraged to work in their own style and to sign their work so the readers could easily identify which artist was which. Also unusual was that Gaines paid his artists upon delivery of a job, not weeks or months later, at rates among the highest in the industry—a rarity in the comics game.

Gaines and Feldstein had fun with the horrific-but-tongue-in-cheek horror comics, but they loved doing Weird Science and Weird Fantasy, considered to be the first true science fiction comic books. Before long, EC’s house ads for them read: “We at EC are proudest of our science-fiction magazines!”

EC also published what they referred to as “preach-ies.” These stories were essentially parables about such taboo subjects as racism, bigotry, vigilantism, drug addiction, police corruption, and anti-Semitism—something that had never been done in comics before this. These stories were quite controversial for the time, especially in certain areas of the country. The “preachie” stories provided Gaines and Feldstein a forum to comment on the human condition, something of a parallel to what Kurtzman was doing in his war comics.

EC was also the first company to do officially sanctioned comic book adaptations of the works of Ray Bradbury. Gaines and Feldstein had already “borrowed” two of Bradbury’s stories for inspiration, but rather than sue them, Bradbury mailed a letter (dated April 19, 1952) asking for a $25 payment for each story and suggesting that many other of his stories might be adaptable into comics form. Gaines and Feldstein were overjoyed, and EC began a long series of classic adaptations of Bradbury stories.
MAD, which would become an American institution, was begun for a simple reason: Harvey Kurtzman wasn’t earning enough money. Although Kurtzman’s war comics, Two-Fisted Tales and Frontline Combat, were the best books of their kind, the heavy research required took up a lot of Kurtzman’s time, and they were only moderately profitable compared with EC’s flagship horror titles. Gaines recognized that Kurtzman’s work was exceptional, but he couldn’t reconcile the quality/quantity equation. However, if Harvey could crank out another book, his income would go up by 50 percent. Kurtzman was good with humor, so why not try that? And so MAD was born, the first of its kind: a satire comic book.

The first issue of MAD, a 10¢ comic book, hit the newsstands in August 1952. The initial concept was to satirize the typical stories that EC had been turning out. MAD’s artists were the core group of who had been working on Kurtzman’s war comics: Bill Elder, John Severin, Jack Davis, and Wallace Wood. The stories, while comedic, were nonetheless aimed at an older, more sophisticated reader than the average “funny book.” Kurtzman soon began taking on movies, television, politics, and various other aspects of popular culture. Although EC’s comic book line was thriving, it couldn’t last. Attacks on comics had existed about as long as comics themselves, but it finally came to a head with a head with psychologist Dr. Fredric Wertham’s 1954 book Seduction of the Innocent. The book was touted as being based on case histories of children who had been emotionally damaged by comic books. Wertham’s theories basically boiled down to this: Because juvenile delinquents read comic books, comic books cause juvenile delinquency. All of this led to a full Senate Subcommittee investigation of the alleged (but obviously ridiculous) link between comic books and juvenile delinquency. Gaines asked to appear before the Subcommittee to defend his comics. His prepared statement to the Subcommittee (written by Gaines and his business manager, Lyle Stuart) was quite brilliant, but as a result of the Subcommittee’s subsequent pummeling, Gaines inadvertently became the personification of the irresponsible horror comic publisher. The damage was done.

Forced to “clean up” his comics or go out of business, Gaines dropped most of his titles and in 1955 began a “New Direction” in comics, emphasizing that these would be a “clean, clean line.” These titles (Impact, Valor, Aces High, Extra!, Psychoanalysis, and M.D., along with Piracy, Panic, and the retitled Incredible Science Fiction, carried over from the New Trend comics) ran into retailer and distributor resistance, and much of the print run never even made it onto the newsstands. Many news dealers were sending back anything that had an EC logo.
on it. Needless to say, they were a money-losing proposition. A magazine-sized experiment for adult readers (Shock Illustrated, Crime Illustrated, Terror Illustrated, and Confessions Illustrated), called “Picto-Fiction,” was also attempted; this too proved to be unsuccessful. The end was near; EC was hemorrhaging red ink.

By 1956, all that remained of Gaines’s publishing empire was MAD, which Gaines had allowed Kurtzman to turn into a magazine with issue 24 (July 1955) to keep him from leaving. There were problems, though: The perfectionist Kurtzman just could not meet his deadlines. And he was demanding more money—not for himself, but to spend on the magazine. But it was money Gaines couldn’t spare. The Gaines/Kurtzman relationship, which had been quite friendly, became increasingly strained.

After Kurtzman had produced five magazine issues of MAD he found that he had attracted the attention of Playboy magazine’s Hugh Hefner. Hef made Kurtzman an offer that seemed like he couldn’t refuse: to take the MAD concept and expand it with more risqué subject matter and a big budget, printing in full color on expensive slick paper. Kurtzman went to Gaines and demanded 51% of MAD in exchange for staying. (Kurtzman later said it was editorial control he was after, a distinction without a difference.) Gaines refused, and Kurtzman walked, taking with him most of MAD’s artists. Gaines was distraught, convinced that MAD could not continue without Kurtzman. On the advice of close friend Lyle Stuart, Gaines enlisted former right-hand-man Al Feldstein to take the editorial helm.

Shortly thereafter, the public domain face of a grinning idiot boy that Kurtzman had peppered through the magazine under various names was married together by Feldstein with the name “Alfred E. Neuman.” Feldstein commissioned artist Norman Mingo to create a full color rendering of Alfred for the cover of MAD number 30 (December 1956), an image that would serve to be the archetypal version of him from then on.

By about 1958, MAD was selling a million copies a month, and by the dawn of the 1960s, the magazine was regarded by many as a national treasure (and by some as a national disgrace). By 1972 the magazine was selling over two million copies per issue. Gaines, after being vilified for his horror comics and abandoned by Kurtzman, had triumphed. He began to reward his staffers and the freelancers who had met a minimum yearly page count by taking them on lavish, all-expense-paid group trips to exotic locales. Gaines, Feldstein, and staff would, over the course of the next several decades, turn MAD magazine into an American institution.

A large, gruff-but-affable man with a paternal nature, Gaines had an unusual policy regarding office deportment: As long as the work got done, the deadlines were met, and the magazine made money, he didn’t care how long the lunch hours were, about the staff punching a time clock, or about any certain code of dress. Paradoxically, Gaines was also as cheap as he could be generous, and on one notorious occasion stopped work in the office for two days to track down a personal long-distance phone call no one would admit to. As a lark, he once filled up the office water cooler with wine and spent the day watching his staff get even nuttier than usual. “I create the atmosphere, the staff creates the magazine,” said Gaines, a perfect summation.

By the early 1970s Gaines had come to be regarded as one of the world’s great eccentrics. He loved talking about the old EC days and was interviewed countless times about his comics, artists, and contributions as publisher and co-writer of many of the stories. Gaines told Rich Hauser in 1966, “Those were the happiest days. We make a lot more money with MAD magazine, but I always had more fun with the comics. Probably the reason is that with MAD I’m about 90% business and 10% creative, but back with the comics I was about 95% creative and 5% business. Of course, it’s a lot more fun to be creative.”

Al Feldstein said, “Bill Gaines is a creative publisher, and there are very few creative publishers . . . Bill allows...
In his early days, Gaines looked something like an accountant, with his horn-rimmed, Clark Kent–style glasses and short hair. In his later years, though, he let his freak flag fly and sported a beard and long, fairly unruly hair. Marie Severin, EC’s colorist (and one of the few female artists working in comics in the 1950s) said in 1972 that Gaines “dressed then the way he thinks now, and looks and dresses now the way he thought then.”

By the time of his death in 1992 Gaines had become a full-blown American cultural icon. While Gaines had been in declining health for several years, his death was a huge shock nonetheless. There was a substantial outpouring of grief, sympathy, and sadness at Gaines’s passing from several generations of MAD and EC Comics fans, many of whom had gone on to careers in the media and wrote loving tributes to Gaines and the magazine he fostered.

With the loss of Bill Gaines MAD lost not only its biggest fan and cheerleader, it lost its protector. Gaines instinctively knew that MAD was unique, something bigger than the sum of its parts. He also knew that MAD (and by extension, its staff) needed to be protected from outside corporate meddling, even if well intentioned.

Eight days after his death, the staff ran a full-page ad in the June 10, 1992 edition of the New York Times, which depicted a weeping Alfred E. Neuman and which read “We’ll carry on with the laughter, the irreverence, the mischief, and, oh yeah, the magazine, too. Love, The Usual Gang of Idiots.” And carry on they did: the magazine is still being published after 70 years, even though it now consists mostly of reprints and the distribution is currently limited to subscriptions and comic shops.

Students of history that might want to get a feel for the mores, attitudes, pop culture, and politics of a given decade could do far worse than to study the material published in MAD, because the tenor of the times is all there, albeit seen through the eyes of “the usual gang of idiots.”

For millions of people, the world would not be the same if their minds hadn’t been rotted by MAD. Kurtzman’s comic-book MAD was a seminal influence on such future sixties underground comics cartoonists as Robert Crumb, Gilbert Shelton, Bill Griffith, and Rick Griffin, as well as on future “Monty Python” member/visionary film director Terry Gilliam. The Feldstein-edited version of MAD has had an equally profound effect upon its readership as an indispensable rite of passage, a kind of funhouse mirror looking into the ways of the world. MAD’s message was, in a nutshell: Don’t believe what the politicians tell you, Madison Avenue is lying to you, don’t believe everything you read, and absurdity abounds.

And the EC comics have influenced various aspects of pop culture. Mega-selling author Stephen King counts them as an important early influence, as does Night of the Living Dead filmmaker George Romero, who often said, “I grew up on EC Comics.” Other major EC fans include author R. L. Stine and filmmakers John Carpenter, John Landis, Joe Dante, George Lucas, and Steven Spielberg, who owns the original Harvey Kurtzman cover art to MAD No. 1. The late Jerry Garcia of The Grateful Dead said that EC was “The Grateful Dead of the fifties” and that EC fans “are like Deadheads.” The EC comic book line has returned from the grave again and again through a vast—and ongoing—series of high-quality reprints and high-profile spinoffs (like HBO’s Tales from the Crypt series), with no end in sight.

And so we celebrate the 100th birthday of the legendary, iconoclastic Bill Gaines, whose many publications inspired multiple generations, and in a not-insignificant way actually changed the world.

Grant Geissman is the four-time Eisner Award–nominated author of several books about the EC Comics and MAD magazine, including The History of EC Comics (TASCHEN) and Feldstein: The Mad Life and Fantastic Art of Al Feldstein! (IDW).
60 YEARS OF SPIDER-MAN

BY DOUGLAS WOLK
Amusing Spider-Man #1, 1963

**OVER 120 COMIC BOOKS APPEARED ON AMERICAN newsstands in June 1962, and fewer than a fifth of them were Super Hero stories—a genre that appeared to have peaked decades earlier. But the still-nameless publisher that would soon start calling itself Marvel Comics Group was getting back into the Super Hero game that month, adding costumed adventurers to the sci-fi and horror anthologies that were the core of its line. Ant-Man got a recurring feature in Tales to Astonish as of issue #35. Journey Into Mystery #83 introduced Thor. And Amazing Fantasy #15 featured “Spider-Man”: an 11-page story by Steve Ditko and Stan Lee about a fragile, nerdy kid named Peter Parker who accidentally gets a spider powers and nearly ruins his life through a moment of hubristic irresponsibility.**

Amazing Fantasy’s editorial page declared that Spider-Man was “one of the most unusual new fantasy characters of all time” (true enough) and that he would “appear every month in AMAZING.” That didn’t happen: #15 was the final issue. The character didn’t appear again until The Amazing Spider-Man #1, six months later—but he stuck around after that. In the subsequent 60 years, Peter Parker has appeared in more than 4,200 comic books. If each of them documented one day in his life, that would account for 11 ½ years’ worth of adventures—and Peter’s only been Spider-Man for around 14 years at this point in the story.) Here’s an overview of Spider-Man’s history, decade by decade.

**1962-1972:***

“They don’t suspect my real power!”

Steve Ditko drew, and Stan Lee scripted, the first 38 issues (and first two Annuals) of The Amazing Spider-Man, an extraordinary body of work that set the tone for everything that followed. Their first story set up the tragedy that would drive Peter Parker for the rest of his life, but the rest of the Lee/Ditko run fleshed it out into a perpetual story-generating machine, building the core of the series’ cast: J. Jonah Jameson, Flash Thompson, Norman and Harry Osborn, Doctor Octopus, the Vulture, the Lizard, the Sandman, Mysterio, Electro, Kraven, Gwen Stacy, and—though Ditko never drew her face—Mary Jane Watson.

Ditko’s artwork was crabbed, eccentric, and utterly masterful in its storytelling. By the time he left in early 1966, The Amazing Spider-Man was Marvel’s biggest series, selling more than a third of a million copies each month. John Romita, who took over from Ditko, was a radically different sort of artist and (often) plotter; with his background in romance comics, he shifted the series’ focus toward Peter Parker’s love life and played up its soap-opera elements. It worked: Sales kept rising, and the animated Spider-Man TV show that debuted in 1967 brought the character to a whole new audience. (The magazine-sized Spectacular Spider-Man series launched in 1968 was less successful, lasting only two issues.)

It was clear from the get-go that Spider-Man was “just a bit… different” from other Super Heroes, as his first story had put it, but it took a while for Lee and Ditko’s imitators to figure out how. Was it the peculiar outfit the character wore? Spider-Man’s powers? The fact that he had money problems, like a normal person? What was compelling about Peter Parker from his first appearance onward, though (and remains compelling now), is that he is not yet the...
1972–1982:  
**“MY SPIDER SENSE IS NEVER WRONG!”**

Almost exactly as Spider-Man turned ten, Lee handed over The Amazing Spider-Man to its new regular writer, actual teenager Gerry Conway (he was 19 at the time). That was also when a second Spider-Man comic book began: Marvel Team-Up, which featured Spidey and a guest star in almost every issue. (Early on, it was usually written by Conway and drawn by one of his Amazing collaborators: Ross Andru, Gil Kane, or Jim Mooney.) Within a year, Conway and Kane gave Peter Parker the biggest shock of his second decade, as his girlfriend Gwen Stacy was murdered by his nemesis the Green Goblin in Amazing Spider-Man #121.

A third series, Spidey Super Stories, ran from 1974 to 1982, aimed at beginning readers. It was a tie-in with the Spidey segments on the children’s TV show The Electric Company. And a fourth series, Peter Parker, the Spectacular Spider-Man, began in 1976; its initial artist, Sal Buscema, drew most of its first 20 issues (he returned for an eight-year stint beginning in 1980). A handful of notable new characters turned up in the course of the decade (The Punisher and Black Cat in Amazing, Cloak and Dagger in Spectacular), and there was an intriguing 1975 storyline involving a clone of Peter Parker. Once Peter was out of his teenage years, though, his comics settled into something of a holding pattern for their teens, although a few remarkable young artists put their stamp on them, including John Romita Jr. and (briefly) Frank Miller.

Meanwhile, the Spider-Man franchise kept expanding. 1977 saw the beginning of the “Clone Saga”—a 1994–1996 sequence in which the clone of Peter from 1975 returned, now calling himself Ben Reilly. Initially, the idea was that Ben would turn out to be the real Peter and take over the Spider-Man role, while the Peter who’d starred in the past 20 years’ worth of comics would move to Portland with the pregnant Mary Jane and quit Super Heroing. As with most changes to Spider-Man’s story at the time, that was soon walked back. The retirement didn’t stick, Ben died, and Peter and Mary Jane’s daughter was stillborn. Doctor Octopus died, then turned to life; Aunt May apparently died, then turned out to be alive.

1982–1992:  
**“I CAN’T LET MY FEAR STOP ME.”**

As Spider-Man’s third decade began, Amazing’s writer Roger Stern and artist John Romita Jr. introduced a new arch-rival for him: the Hobgoblin, whose true identity remained a mystery for years (in fact, there was disagreement at Marvel about what that true identity should be). The Spider-Man comics’ first big change of that period, though, came in 1984, when he got a new costume: a spooky black suit with white highlights, modified from an idea suggested by fan Randy Schueller. (Shortly thereafter, Marvel Team-Up was replaced by the solo series Web of Spider-Man.)

Another major shift came in 1987, when writer David Michelinie began his nearly-100-issue-long run on Amazing Spider-Man, and Peter Parker and Mary Jane Watson were married after a decades-long, on-and-off courtship. The ceremony took place in Amazing Spider-Man Annual #21, as well as in the newspaper strip and at a New York Mets game at Shea Stadium. (Their honeymoon was immediately followed by “Kraven’s Last Hunt,” a fondly remembered storyline that was about as grim as Spider-Man’s comics had ever been.)

Eight months after Michelinie’s debut, he began collaborating with artist Todd McFarlane, one of the most distinctive stylists of his era. In Amazing Spider-Man #300, they introduced Venom: a bloodthirsty alien symbiote that had disguised itself as Spider-Man’s black costume. Both McFarlane and Venom immediately became hugely popular. In 1990, Amazing, Spectacular, and Web were joined by another monthly series, initially written and drawn by McFarlane and simply called Spider-Man. Two years later, Amazing Spider-Man ended the character’s 30th year of publication by introducing Venom’s offspring Carnage, designed by Mark Bagley, an artist who was just beginning his long association with Spider-Man.

1992–2002:  
**“YOU CHANGED MY LIFE, BROTHER.”**

The Nineties were a relatively rough patch for Spider-Man comics. McFarlane had moved on from Marvel to become one of the founders of Image Comics, and while new Spider-Man comic books still appeared weekly (or more), their creators went through a time of transition. That era was best remembered for the “Clone Saga”—a 1994–1996 sequence in which the clone of Peter from 1975 returned, now calling himself Ben Reilly. Initially, the idea was that Ben would turn out to be the real Peter and take over the Spider-Man role, while the Peter who’d starred in the past 20 years’ worth of comics would move to Portland with the pregnant Mary Jane and quit Super Heroing. As with most changes to Spider-Man’s story at the time, that was soon walked back. The retirement didn’t stick, Ben died, and Peter and Mary Jane’s daughter was stillborn. Doctor Octopus died, then returned to life; Aunt May apparently died, then turned out to be alive.
Image based on the 1992 Spider-Man cartoon series, drawn by Ty Templeton and colored by Paul Mounts.

At the end of 1998, the Spider-Man titles were relaunched by a team of creators including John Byrne, Howard Mackie, and John Romita Jr. Two and a half years later—after a long sequence in which Mary Jane apparently died, then turned out to be alive—writer J. Michael Straczynski took over Amazing Spider-Man for a very successful 7-year run, initially with Romita Jr. drawng.

The biggest Spider-Man comics launch of the era was actually a full reboot: Ultimate Spider-Man, following the teenage Peter Parker of an alternate universe from the spider-bite onward, debuted in 2000. Writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Mark Bagley would go on to collaborate on its first 111 issues, setting a record for Super Hero comics. And the character ended his fourth decade in triumph with the May 2002 release of Spider-Man, the first of a film trilogy starring Tobey Maguire and directed by Sam Raimi.


The 2006 comics crossover Civil War gave Peter Parker his biggest shakeup of the decade, as he revealed his dual identity to the world with disastrous consequences. That plotline was resolved at the end of 2007 with J. Michael Straczynski’s final Spider-Man story, “One More Day,” in which Peter and Mary Jane make a deal with a devil: His identity becomes secret again, in exchange for their marriage retroactively never having happened.

Immediately after that, the Spider-Man comics line was consolidated: Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man and Sensational Spider-Man both ended, and Amazing Spider-Man went thrice-monthly from 2008 to 2010. Now written by a “braintrust” (including Dan Slott, Zeb Wells, Marc Guggenheim, Mark Waid, and occasionally others) and drawn by a rotating crew of artists, the “Brand New Day” period of Amazing cleverly messed with the series’ longstanding tropes over the course of more than a hundred issues. “Brand New Day” was followed by the twice-monthly, two-year-long “Big Time” sequence, for which Slott became the lead Spider-writer.

Brian Michael Bendis, meanwhile, killed off the Ultimate universe’s Peter Parker in 2011, then introduced an entirely new Spider: Miles Morales (co-created with artist Sara Pichelli), who became the star of a new Ultimate Comics Spider-Man series. Peter Parker found his way to another new medium with the Broadway musical Spider-Man: Turn Off The Dark, which officially opened in 2011 after 182 preview performances. And the Spider-Man film franchise was rebooted with The Amazing Spider-Man, starring Andrew Garfield, released to coincide with Spidey’s 50th anniversary in 2012.
The past decade’s worth of Spider-Man stories have been, more than anything else, about who can be Spider-Man, and what it means to accept that particular responsibility. At the end of 2012, Dan Slott and his frequent artistic collaborator Humberto Ramos concluded the Amazing Spider-Man series (or, at least, pretended to) with issue #700, in which Otto Octavius, the villainous Doctor Octopus, kills Peter Parker and takes over his body, declaring that he’ll be a better Spider-Man than Peter ever was. The Superior Spider-Man, in which Otto tries to play a hero’s role, replaced Amazing for 31 issues (accompanied by Superior Spider-Man Team-Up and The Superior Foes of Spider-Man), before Peter returned for the third Amazing Spider-Man #1 in 2014.

The centerpiece of that brief run (before another relaunch in 2015) was “Spider-Verse,” a storyline that teamed up “every Spider-Man ever,” from Peter, Miles and Otto to the incarnations that had appeared in movies, manga, and cupcake ads. “Spider-Verse” also introduced Jason Latour and Robbi Rodriguez’s character Spider-Gwen—(now known as Ghost-Spider) an alternate-universe Gwen Stacy who had been bitten by the radioactive spider instead of Peter; she went on to a series of her own. And its central concept spun into the Academy Award–winning 2018 animated film Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse, which put the spotlight on Miles.

Both Peter and Miles have continued to star in their own ongoing comic book series, and both of them also appeared in the 2018 PlayStation game Marvel’s Spider-Man—the most successful Spidey video game to date. Ben Reilly returned in the comics, too, and took over the Spider-Man role for the “Beyond” storyline that ran in Amazing-Spider-Man from last fall to this spring. (In Spider-Man stories, the specter of death hovers over everything, but nobody disappears from the narrative forever.) A sixth Amazing-Spider-Man #1 appeared this spring, by a pair of veteran Spider-creators: writer Zeb Wells and artist John Romita Jr.

Still, screens were where Spider-Man made his biggest impact in the past decade. Following 2014’s Amazing Spider-Man 2, the web-slinger moved into the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Tom Holland first put on the costume in 2016’s Captain America: Civil War and has since appeared in two Avengers movies and three live-action films: Marvel Studios’ Spider-Man: Homecoming, Spider-Man: Far from Home and Spider-Man: No Way Home. The last of those co-starred Maguire and Garfield alongside Holland, all playing their own versions of Peter Parker; the point was that every version of the character is a meaningful interpretion. The relationship between power and responsibility that Stan Lee and Steve Ditko’s very first Spider-Man story spelled out 60 years ago—the conflict between what he can do and what he must do—is what matters, even more than who’s beneath his mask.

Douglas Wolk is the author of All of the Marvels: A Journey to the Ends of the Biggest Story Ever Told (Penguin Random House).
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No one expected it to be consequential. It was one of literally a few thousand short stories to run in DC’s anthologies. The writer was just graduating from doing these simple tales to his first series assignment for the company (he’d collaborated on a Batman issue, but it was a spec story that only got published through Neal Adams’s intervention). The artist showed potential but hadn’t been given any prominent assignments either. Eight pages. A brief interval in careers that were accelerating towards take-off, but this was unlikely to add fuel to their fires.

Except it did.

“Swamp Thing” debuted in House of Secrets #92 on April 1, 1971, playing an April Fool’s joke on the comics industry by surprising everyone with its sales. In the newsstand years, there were two ways to look at the sales power of a comic: one was the absolute number of copies sold, but that was powerfully affected by the long-term strength of a title or character (distributors would take many more copies of Superman or Spider-Man than an anthology, so they would usually sell more); the other was the efficiency, measured in what percentage of copies distributed were actually sold. In the 1970s that often hovered well below 50 percent, as tidal shifts were beginning a decade-long decline. House of Secrets #92 might have had the highest sell-through percentage of any DC that month, surprising in itself, but shocking when you consider how many other memorable comics were coming out that month: issues of Jack Kirby’s Fourth World Saga, an issue of Denny O’Neil & Neal Adams’s legendary Green Lantern/Green Arrow collaboration as well as their “Daughter of the Demon” tale making Talia Al Ghul a vital part of the Batman mythos, and even a chapter of the “Sandman Superman” storyline that was attempting to revitalize DC’s star character. And even a Sgt. Rock story whose cover would
Infantino would have shared the good news with editor Joe Orlando by poking his head into Joe's office, flipping the pinned-up covers on the bulletin board to the relevant issue, and waggling his cigar enthusiastically. First, usually imprecise estimates would have come in by early July, with more precise results over the next few months. At some point, the two of them started chuckling, enjoying a rare moment of success, and figuring out, “How do we do more of this?”

(Perhaps this wasn't the only monster to shamble out of the swamps at that moment. A few months before, short-lived publisher Skywald had revived the Golden Age character The Heap, which had fallen into public domain as well as a swamp, and Wein's roommate, Gerry Conway, would publish the first story of Man-Thing over in Marvel's new Savage Tales magazine the month after. Utter coincidence, of course. And Marvel would adapt Theodore Sturgeon's classic It just as Swamp Thing debuted as a regular series.)

Wein and Wrightson were willing, unsurprisingly. They were part of a generational transition that was sweeping through the handful of comics companies that had endured into the '70s. Writers and artists who had survived from the earliest days of the American comic book were starting to fade away, nursing their scars from the anti-comics crusades of the '50s and finding other work or retiring. A fresh, younger group were stepping up to take their place, and bringing with them new styles, new genres, new attitudes, and, most important, new aspirations.

The characters and storyline of the eight-pager would have to change a bit to become an ongoing series, of course. Classic mystery stories in comics like House of Secrets were structured for closure, and series publication would require an open-ended structure. Orlando, Wein, and Wrightson set to work—a collaborative approach that was even newer to DC than the idea of a comic with a monster as its star. For decades, DC writers and artists had functioned separately, and this would be the first time an idea might be spun back and forth between them (well, except for Kirby's work, since he was both writer and artist).

It would take a while. Sales reports had taken months after House of Secrets' release, and DC operated on what would seem to twenty-first-century comics creators an immeasurably long lead time. But on August 10, 1972, Swamp Thing debuted.

It's common now to debate whether collaborative comics can achieve the level of artistic brilliance that authorial works sometimes reach. Academics and critics alike tend to favor the inspirational qualities demonstrated by legends like Harvey Kurtzman, Will Eisner, or Carl Barks, and discussions of the great collaborations like Stan Lee and Jack Kirby devolve into arguments over
which of the two contributed more important elements to the final work. But there’s no debate that the ten issues produced by Wein and Wrightson over the next two years were magnificent. Their peers would honor them with the Academy of Comic Book Arts’s Shazam Award for Best Story (for “Dark Genesis” in #1), and fans would vote the problems during the demanding run. But the team held together, until it didn’t.

Wrightson moved on first, and wouldn’t take on a work of similar length for decades. Wein stayed for another three issues, paired now with leading Filipino artist Nestor Redondo—a combination that would require a far less collaborative process than before, in an era where a phone call between continents was a major expense. Wein felt he’d been offered the series’ editorship if it succeeded, and then was never given it, so an editorial role at Marvel was appealing.

The remaining run of the series in the 1970s had some solid work, and some issues that are best not re-examined, suffering from common flaws of the production processes of the time. But the magic of those first ten

issues remained a high-water mark for the decade. And it stuck in the mind of Michael Uslan, who had briefly been a DC staffer and writer at the time while completing law school.

Uslan went on to secure the rights to produce Batman movies with his partner, Benjamin Melnick, a long-time Hollywood executive. Getting the Dark Knight onto the screen would be a long process, though, and Uslan used his credibility from the Batman deal to get the film and television rights to Swamp Thing. That deal was far less expensive than the Batman rights, unsurprisingly, allowing Uslan the flexibility to make a cheaper project come together quickly, and by 1982 a film version written and directed by Wes Craven hit the screens. Perhaps most noteworthy as being the first modern film based on a comic book that didn’t feature a legendary character…
would go on to have a sequel and spawn a 72-episode live television series in the 1990s, a short animated series, and even a toy line.

Looking to capitalize on the film’s modest success, DC relaunched the monster in Saga of the Swamp Thing, now edited by Wein, who had returned to the company as a staffer. Wein brought on Martin Pasko as writer (with a few fill-ins by others) and turned to artists from the first graduating class of the new Kubert School: Tom Yeates, Stephen Bissette, and John Totelben. It was credible, professional work but didn’t set the world on fire. And then a new writer signed on.

Alan Moore had been writing comics in England for a few years, including for the trend-setting 2000 A.D. weekly, but while artists from the U.K., Spain, and the Philippines had been crossing over into American comics, no writers had yet. Offered the title (now called Saga of the Swamp Thing) by Wein, Moore first did an issue tying up “Loose Ends” and then turned the whole premise and the comics industry upside down with “The Anatomy Lesson” in #21. Over the next 40-odd issues working with editor Karen Berger and artists from that first star generation of Kubies, Moore would tackle subject matter never approached in mainstream American comics, from nuclear waste to the prejudices around menstruation. And he would clearly establish himself as the premiere comics writer of his generation.

The themes explored would motivate DC to lead discussions about how to modernize the Comics Code that had restricted newspaper comics for a generation, and when those conversations failed to achieve consensus, to withdraw Swamp Thing from the Code process and newspaperstands, labeling it “sophisticated suspense” and moving towards the evolution of the legendary Vertigo imprint.

Powerful subject matter like that would bring the risk of challenges and controversy, and Moore’s successor, Rick Veitch, would angrily depart the assignment when a story arc that was to include Swamp Thing meeting Jesus Christ in the time of the Last Supper was vetoed in progress by DC management. But other writers and artists would step in, continuing the series, and repeatedly reviving it again and again after the ‘80s cycle wrapped up. Many would be strong voices that would go on to make their mark of the field.

And on a personal note, as the last survivor of that original editorial office of the ’70s series (I became the assistant editor midway through Wein and Wrightson’s run), it’s appropriate that I confess my recurring Swamp Thing nightmare and its resolution. Back in those days, long before the digital revolution, original artwork wasn’t yet being returned to artists at most of the American comic companies and was treated casually, as a work product. Most of the pages I worked on were proofread with a nonreproducing blue marker—the common tool at DC for the purpose at the time. In the years after, I would wake, shuddering, thinking I had done that to Wrightson’s incredible pages on the series. Happily, when I confessed my nightmare to Len Wein, he laughed and told me he’d taught me to switch to the far gentler (and erasable) nonreproducing blue pencil for the series.

So the consequences of a monster arising from the swamp didn’t include the desecration of one of comics’ artistic triumphs, but the complex ripples from that one short story had myriad effects on the whole field, from establishing creators as leaders in their crafts to changing the relationship between comics’ oldest publisher with the Code that had suppressed a level of creativity for decades. Not bad, for something that wasn’t originally intended to have a sequel or matter much at all.
Today’s comics fans might well wonder what went into making a strip that turned out to be destined to run for half a century—and is, yes, still running. Fans who have been around for a while might add what they’ve observed in the course of those decades: Newspapers and their comics pages have experienced an unending series of challenges. Such creators as Tom Batiuk have had to come up with accompanying strategies to solve problems.

Among his strategies has been a Funky Winkerbean website, and, in 2006, he provided an internet peek into his background for those looking for a brief summary: “Okay, here we go, gang, biography lite. I was born in Akron, Ohio, in 1947. After graduating from Kent State University in 1969 with a bachelor of fine arts degree and a certificate in education I taught art in Elyria, Ohio, at Eastern Heights Jr. High.

“In 1970, while I was teaching, I began drawing a panel for the teen page of the Elyria Chronicle-Telegram. Those strips led to the creation of Funky Winkerbean in 1972. Funky is syndicated by King Features Syndicate to more than 400 newspapers nationwide. I skipped over a lot of hard work in the middle there, but that’s basically the gist of it for those of you doing term papers.”

And in the “Frequently Asked Questions” portion of the Funky website is—hmm—"Q. Am I planning to do a complete collection of the Funky strips? A. Sorry, but no. While that might be an interesting thing to see happen, it’s pretty much out of my hands."
Well, hey. Maybe not everything is up to date on the website in early 2022. We'll get back to that.

In the meantime, as he hinted then, there's lots more to know. Lots.

Looking back, consider the 2022 anniversaries: Tom Batiuk was born March 14, 1947; that's 75 years ago. His Funky Winkerbean began March 27, 1972; that's 50 years ago. Initially, it was syndicated by Publishers-Hall (1972–1986), then by King Features/North America. The spinoff Crankshaft began June 8, 1987; that's 35 years ago. All of which is to note that there are many opportunities to celebrate this year.

To digress: fans of another Funky spinoff project will note that the John Darling strip ran from March 25, 1979 to August 27, 1972; that's 50 years ago. [Initially, it was syndicated by Publishers-Hall (1972–1986), then by King Features/North America.] The spinoff Crankshaft strip began June 8, 1987; that's 35 years ago. All of which is to note that there are many opportunities to celebrate this year.

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"Funky's just an average guy, trying to cope with high school, love, a summer job, and more than a little help from his friends...."

If you were in junior high or high school in the spring of 1972, you were part of the Baby Boom or Gen X generation—and you were dealing with a vast variety of pressures and challenges. Because, let's face it, you were in junior high or high school. And, if Funky Winkerbean was running in your daily newspaper and you were already enjoying the comics pages, chances are you soon found kinship with one or more of the characters Batiuk was bringing to life.

Comic strips can be elusive in content and readership. They're often taken for granted (and sometimes derided) by folks who see them in daily newspapers. And they're often almost unknown to people who don't get whichever daily newspaper carries the strip in question.

Mind you, in the days of mass-market paperbacks on newsstand spinner racks, some strips received additional circulation (and potential for longer life) via reprints in that format. In 1975, three years after readers first met Funky, Les, and the others, a few of their strips showed up in newsstands in Funky Winkerbean: Play It Again, Funky! The first-page welcome to readers said, "Funky's just an average guy, trying to cope with high school, love, a summer job, and more than a little help from his friends...."

Finding that and other small collections of excerpts came the trade paperbacks—in a larger size, more adapted to fitting on a bookshelf, but still consisting of focused selections. Nevertheless, in her foreword to the first Funky Winkerbean trade paperback (1984, subtitled "You Know You've Got Trouble When Your School Mascot Is a Scapegoat"), Erma Bombeck wrote that Batiuk was "more than a cartoonist": "He chronicles probably one of the most difficult times of our lives...a time when our insecurities stand out like a piece of toilet tissue on our shoes...our apprehension grows daily and we are like children on a ferris wheel who would like to get off and be sick, but all the adults keep telling us what a good time we're having."

The back cover to that slim volume published a dozen years after the strip had begun—identified the focal characters as Les, Holly, Crazy Harry, Mr. Dinkle, The Coach, and Funky, "The kid with the strangest name in the school." And—as Bombeck indicated—the Funky Winkerbean strip itself focused on high school, high school, high school. Until it didn't.

Since then, the "more than a cartoonist" Batiuk has provided insights about what made him that way. He and his strips have provided a variety of pop culture perspectives, as well as perspectives on the complications of life in general. That might have been because he had been so influenced himself by a variety of pop culture entertainments.

He told readers about it in the first of the hardcover series that started a decade ago. At that point, new fans could join long-time readers, thanks to the release by The Kent State University Press's Black Squirrel Books of The Complete Funky Winkerbean Volume I 1972-1974. It came complete with a critical analysis by R. C. Harvey and an autobiographical introduction by Batiuk, who took readers new and old behind the scenes.

This and later volumes do, to be sure, contain forewords from an assortment of commentators, each providing a personal view of the strip. But a major bonus is the addition of revealing autobiographical and analytical essays by Batiuk himself. Those provide insights into the world of comics creation and influences and what amounts to an analysis of the strip's evolution over the decades.
For example, what readers in the earlier selected-strip collections would have guessed was that Batiuk was, himself, a comic book fan? Or knew about his first nationally published writing? (He was a fan of costumes and superheroes and wanted to produce his own such stories. That first publication of his work was of his fan letter in DC’s The Flash #121 [June 1961].)

As he revealed in that first volume of complete Funky Winkerbean, the other pop culture experiences influencing him were many and varied.

Gene Autry in the 1935 Mascot 12-chapter movie serial The Phantom Empire? Yes, indeed—though he’d been born a dozen years after it first ran in theaters. “I became fascinated with the idea of taking what was considered to be a low art form and creating something of substance within those confines, of trying to take what others considered junk and turning it into something more. That thought continued to inform my cartooning choices for the next fifty years. It’s hard to overestimate the impact that The Phantom Empire has had on my developing brain.”

He continued, “The clincher came when I got my hands on my first comic book.” It was Tom Corbett Space Cadet, presumably one of the Dell or Prize issues from 1952–1955.

And, of course, there have clearly been many other influences. One of the most popular characters coming from Batiuk’s own high school experiences was the band director, Mr. Dinkle. (People who experienced the real-world aspects of high school bands found many of them in Mr. Dinkle’s appearances. He was even featured in motivational posters aimed at music educators.)

Readers may have taken it for granted that such a popular character as the school-bus driver Crankshaft had been in the strip from the start, but Batiuk’s introduction to the fourth volume pointed out that he’d been added years later. “My normal method when developing a character is to take someone’s quirks and personality traits and exaggerate and expand upon them to create the character.”

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The inspirational bus driver he had known in real life was different. “In this case, I had to take the personality of my bus driver and tone it down quite a bit to make it believable enough for a comic strip.” He continued, “I immediately began hearing from readers who recognized that surly old curmudgeon. . . . Much like John Darling before him, Crankshaft was becoming a strip within a strip.” Not introduced until April 24, 1985, the bus driver earned his own continuity two years later in yet another strip. (Who was John Darling? Another denizen of the Funkyverse, he had a comparatively short existence, and—wary of spoilers—let’s leave it at that.)

These days? There are still newspapers, and Funky Winkerbean is still running, long beyond that character’s high school years. It is to be hoped that those who appreciate comic art are already supporting local newspapers that still carry comic strips—especially Funky Winkerbean.

Do pick up a copy of that introductory first volume to see both the foundation of the strip and Batiuk’s account of his motivations and creative inspirations. (If you hesitate initially to invest in your own copy, see whether your local library has one in its collection or can get it for you on interlibrary loan, if necessary.) And, yes, you can orient yourself via online information, thanks to search engines. You’ll learn that Batiuk has worked with a number of collaborators on both the Funky strip and its spinoffs, credited online and in collections. Among those involved have been John Darling collaborators Tom Armstrong (1979–1985) and Gerry Shemaray (1985–1990), and Crankshaft collaborators Chuck Ayers (1987–2017) and Dan Davis (2017–). If the characters had aged in real time, Funky Winkerbean would have been frozen in time for two time jumps, and the characters are now in a designated “Act III.” Funky and the teens of “Act I” are now 46, and the adult Funky presides over Montoni’s restaurants in a variety of franchises.

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15-year-old son is Cory. Les Moore is the single parent (following the breast-cancer death of Lisa) of 15-year-old daughter Summer. Crazy Harry Klinghorn is also the parent of a 15-year-old daughter; her name is Maddie. And there are more, more, more in a diverse cast with changing relationships. It’s a cast that has dealt with losses as well as additions—and society’s challenges as well as its norms.

In his strips, Batiuk has provided perspectives on the complications of life: some merely annoying, some thought-provoking, some downright devastating. He tells readers without being preachy that they are not alone. His comic-strip characters have experienced challenges, have dealt with them, laughed about them, wept about them, celebrated them. And have often—though not invariably—survived them.

Anyone wanting to know more about Funky, Batiuk, the history of the strip itself, upcoming storylines, and/or more would do well to start the project by exploring https://www.funkywinkerbean.com. In any case, it’s a great time to celebrate the strip that has brought so much entertainment to so many. Here’s to Funky Winkerbean—and its variety. We’re lucky, indeed, to have so many ways to savor its Funky decades of insights. And laughs.

After 30 years of co-editing Comics Buyer’s Guide, Maggie Thompson now writes online columns for Comic-Con International and Gemstone Publishing and maintains her website maggiethompson.com.
Since the demonic version of Ghost Rider first premiered 50 years ago, Marvel has published over a dozen Ghost Rider series, plus one-shots, miniseries, and What If’s. Some have run for nearly a decade; others haven’t made it past the first year. The character has had multiple human hosts: Johnny Blaze, Danny Ketch, Alejandra Jones, Robbie Reyes, even Frank Castle. Weapons and strength levels vary from series to series, decade to decade. One Ghost Rider might have mystical chains and flame breath, or rely mainly on his Penance Stare; another might be at Hulk-class strength levels. Even modes of transportation can change, from motorcycle to a 1969 Dodge Charger RT. Ghost Rider has also been an enduring enough character to transcend its original comics medium over to film and television: Nicholas Cage starred as Johnny Blaze twice, in the 2007 film Ghost Rider and its 2012 sequel Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance, while the Robbie Reyes incarnation (played by Gabriel Luna) was featured in season four of Marvel’s Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. (ABC). There’s a lot of history to absorb.

But its volume or complexity is not what made me want to write about the Ghost Rider for the character’s golden anniversary. Rather, it’s because of the first time...
ABOVE: First appearance of the "fellow" biker with the flaming head—I had a Honda Trail 70 at the time. And because of the final page of the final issue of that first series, 11 years later, with writer J. M. DeMatteis quoting Dostoyevsky's "Good and Evil are so monstrously mixed up in man" to sum up the hero's feeling, the character. And where the road took us all is between.

It begins in May 1972, when that month's Bullpen Bulletins #5 arrives, with the cover blurbs "A Legend is Born!" and "The Most Supernatural Superhero of All!"
The story opens with the Ghost Rider speeding through rain-drenched streets, directly past a murder-in-progress. Our unconcerned "hero" just keeps on going, but the killers, fearful of leaving any witnesses, follow and trap him in an alley. "How much trouble can one cycle jock be?" asks the gunman; the Ghost Rider answers, "More trouble than you can IMAGINE … especially when he is … THE SERVANT OF SATAN!"

The cycle show finally hits the big time, but Crash has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Johnny knows just what he has to do: summon Satan and offer him eternal service in exchange for sparing Crash from cancer. The deal is struck, but Crash (prophetically named) is killed attempting a 22-car jump at Madison Square Gardens. Johnny responds by making the jump Crash couldn't, then saying to the grieving daughter, "How was that … not BAD … for a COWARD, huh?" Apparently, Johnny Blaze is a jerk, as well as a Satanist.
with Great Satan, there must also come … Nothing Good!
Fifty years later, Silver Age fans might wonder how the Devil came to replace radioactive spiders and cosmic rays as Marvel’s purveyor of powers. Probably the biggest factor was that the CMAA’s Comics Code was modified in 1971, eliminating the prohibition against “scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with walking dead, torture, vampires and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism and were-wolfs.” Marvel Spotlight #2 (September 1971) opened the horror floodgates with the introduction of werewolf Jack Russell. Tomb of Dracula was released two months later.
Suddenly, monsters were in vogue and comic readers like 12-year-old me were hungry for more. After a three-issue try-out in Marvel Spotlight, Werewolf by Night was greenlit for its own title and introduced Marvel’s first real horror/superhero hybrid, with credits reading “Edited by Stan Lee/Conceived and Written by Gary Friedrich/Drawn by Mike Ploog/Ad and Abetment by Roy Thomas.” (More on these credits to follow).
During Ghost Rider’s run in Marvel Spotlight #5-10 through the first issue of the character’s own title (June 1973 sale date), Marvel kept horror series coming: “Man-Thing” began in Adventure into Fear before receiving its own title, The Monster of Frankenstein received its own title from the start, “Son of Satan” took over Marvel Spotlight, and the returning Strange Tales debuted Brother Voodoo. In the first year of Ghost Rider, even more horror characters/titles appeared, including the Living Mummy (Supernatural Thrillers), If the Living Colossus (Astounding Tales), Morbius, the Living Vampire (Adventure into Fear), and Man-Wolf (Creatures on the Loose).
Ultimately, the initial Ghost Rider series had a longer run, through issue #81 (1983), than any of those other Marvel horror series, with only Tomb of Dracula and Werewolf by Night even coming close. Why? What distinguished Ghost Rider from the rest of the pack?
First of all, most of the other 1970s Marvel monsters were adaptations or spin-offs from gothic novels, legends, folklore, or the 1930s Universal monster films. But Satanism was a fresher horror in films and novels of that era; the critical success of Roman Polanski’s Rosemary’s Baby (1969) fostered a string of similar films like Mark of the Devil (1970) and The Brotherhood of Satan (1971). In addition, William Peter Blatty’s 1971 novel, The Exorcist topped the New York Times bestseller list for 17 weeks, remained on the list for 57 consecutive weeks, and sold more than 13 million copies in the U.S. alone. Satan was hot and was only going to get hotter with the theatrical release of The Exorcist.
Second, there was the familiar name, Ghost Rider, which actually had comic book cred going back to the end of the 1940s. The original Magazine Enterprises’ Ghost Rider (Rex Fury), created by Ray Krank and Dick Ayers—likely inspired by Vaughn Monroe’s 1949 chart-topper version of “(Ghost) Riders in the Sky”—first appeared in Tim Holt #11 (1949) and continued to star in horror-themed westerns in Tim Holt, Red Mask, A-1 Comics, and other books until the Comics Code Authority hobbled horror for decades. After the trademark lapsed, Marvel Comics released its own version of basically the same western character, with Ghost Rider #1 (1967), by original artist Ayers and writers Gary Friedrich and Roy Thomas. With the advent of Johnny Blaze’s modern-day Ghost Rider, the western character’s name was changed.
six months prior to the publication of Marvel Spotlight #5.

The idea of a motorcyclist superhero wasn’t new either. Golden Age heroes like Captain America, Wildcat, and Black Canary rode them, while DC’s Vigilante and Harvey’s Black Cat were equally proficient on horses or motorcycles. But the Johnny Blaze Ghost Rider wasn’t just riding a motorcycle, he was riding a wave, a “biker” culture that Johnny (Marlon Brando) from The Wild One (1953) birthed, and that had caught fire by 1970, thanks to director Roger Corman, actors Peter Fonda, Jack Nicholson, and Bruce Derr, and films like Wild Angels (1966), Melf’s Angels on Wheels (1967), Rebel Riders (1967), and Savages from Hell (1968), culminating with Easy Rider (1969). Notice how many titles contained the word Hell, but it took Marvel’s Ghost Rider to literally go there.

While bikers were always part of Ghost Rider, as a supporting cast of extras, minors, and minor villains, stunt performer Evel Knievel had the inspiration for Johnny Blaze. During the late 1960s, Knieval had a fan following by jumping lining cars of his. His crashes and injuries brought as much fame as his successes. On January 7–8, 1971, Knieval sold a record-breaking 101,000 tickets to back-to-back performances in the Houston Astrodome. The following month, he set a world record by jumping 19 cars, while filming his biopic, Evel Knievel. He was a Stan Lee-level showman/promoter, dressed like a mix of Liberace and the white jumpsuit Elvis of 1970 onward. Thomas instead envisioned the Ghost Rider as a skeleton, wearing Elvis’ black jumpsuit from the 1968 Elvis NBC TV Special.

Thomas’s recollections on “who came up with what” differ from Gary Friedrich’s. Thomas had an earlier trick cyclist character, the Stunt-Master, as a villain/soul in Daredevil #58 (November 1969), somewhat rehabilitated in Daredevil #64, and he recalled Friedrich proposing another, wilder motorcycle villain for DD named Ghost Rider, but Thomas thought the concept had more potential. According to a 2001 Comic Book Artist interview, Thomas designed the Ghost Rider’s general appearance, Mike Ploog thought of the flaming head, and Stan Lee insisted on the name Johnny Blaze. Friedrich stated that he had Ghost Rider all fleshed out before he ever brought it to Thomas, including the black leather suit, the blazing skull, the supernatural origin. Friedrich had previously created a Vietnam veteran vigilante called Hell-Rider for Skywald Publications in 1971. Hell-Rider was super-strong, wore black leather and a helmet-mask with a pitchfork emblem, and rode a motorcycle equipped with a flame-thrower. The differing recollections of Thomas and Friedrich eventually devolved into Gary Friedrich Enterprises, LLC v. Marvel Enterprises, Inc, et al. which ended in a confidential settlement after almost a decade of litigation.

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Ploog only drew those first four appearances in Marvel Spotlight and the cover to Ghost Rider #1, but his depiction was the definitive Johnny Blaze version. Other writers and artists added to the imagery and mythos of the Ghost Rider during that initial run. Don Perlin drew the most issues, while Bob Budiansky did the most covers, more than half at 44; he was also the interior artist the last two years. Both Perlin and Budiansky received co-plotting credit at various times. Tony Isabella emphasized super-heroes, even making the Ghost Rider a founding member of the Champions. Michael Finisher focused on the demonic spirit of vengeance aspect, putting more distance between the Blaze and Ghost Rider personas. Roger Stern made it even more clear that the demonic Ghost Rider was a completely different entity, having Blaze acknowledge that “He’s a cursed spirit of vengeance … The only real pleasure he gets is from the guilty … and that punishment is awful to watch! What’s more, he doesn’t care if something happens to innocent bystanders, while he’s on a rampage.” (Ghost Rider #68, 1982).

J. M. DeMatteis closed out the series building upon Stern’s run, while providing the demon with a name and his own origin story. By the end, the Ghost Rider wasn’t an edgier version of Blaze, an alter ego/or the other personas; Ghost Rider was the demons Zarathos, and Johnny Blaze was no longer the guy who could ride past a murder-in-progress, coldly mock a grief-stricken daughter, or make a deal with Satan. Johnny Blaze, over those five Marvel Spotlights and 81 issues of Ghost Rider, had become what was initially advertised: A Supernatural Superhero—not because he was the Ghost Rider, but because he resisted the Ghost Rider inside him.

The final issue of Ghost Rider, #81 (1983), ended with a text piece by DeMatteis titled “Travels with Zarathos, or Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye.” DeMatteis wrote, “Here in this one character, we have the personification of Man’s eternal grappling with the Evil within … Poor Johnny Blaze. He’s a simple man in many ways; the archetypal regular guy. Oh, sure, he’s got his talents (he is, after all, the preeminent stunt-biker in the world) and he’s got his problems … But what sets Blaze off from the rest of the human race is that demon living inside of him. The flaming, skull-headed spawn of Evil that forces its way to the fore of Blaze’s consciousness, usurps his body, and urges him toward actions that are, at their mildest, anti-social, and at their worst … depraved. Now be honest with yourself. Haven’t you ever found yourself doing something you knew, deep in your heart, wasn’t right? … I’m talking about the moment when you step over the shadow line—and see the awful things inside your soul that you never knew were there … That’s a hard moment to face. Because you’ve met your own personal Ghost Rider.” I remember reading this as a struggling 23-year old, as clearly as I remember that Bullpen Bulletins column from 11 years earlier, and likely thinking “Anti-social”?

“Depraved”? “Stepping over the shadow line”? Holy Smokes, that’s ME! Well, sometimes. And sometimes I’m Johnny Blaze. We all are. And that internal battle is the real reason that we’re on this Earth. We all share, struggle, and value, and are often driven by the duality of the other half of ourselves. Gotta love a little psychology in comics, right? Right! The character I love the most, and hope I write about one day, is what I’ve been referred to as the “Supernatural Superhero.” I think it’s a term I’ve seen used before, but I respect the first person to use it, and that’s DeMatteis.

What’s cool is that for 50 years Marvel Spotlight has been producing the comics that we love, and I hope to continue that tradition in the coming 50 years. And I’d love you all to come to Marvel’s Comic-Con booth and pick up a new copy of Marvel Spotlight #68. I can’t wait to see what Marvel Spotlight #70 will be, but I’m sure it’ll be something great. Marvel Spotlight, as a publication, and as a comic, has been a huge part of my life, so I’m grateful to be able to continue this tradition. Marvel Spotlight, thank you for the memories.

Jim Thompson is an independent comics scholar, 2021 Will Eisner Industry Award judge, co-founder of the Comics Historians Project, and a member of A People’s History of Comics group.?
The subtitle of this article refers to a lyric from the *Shaft* theme by Isaac Hayes. *Shaft* (1971), a film based on a series of novels by Ernest Tidyman, was one of the most celebrated and financially successful “Blaxploitation” films of the era. The genre was spearheaded by the very successful independent film by Melvin Van Peebles, *Sweet Sweetback’s Badassss Song*.

Hollywood was ailing financially at the time and was looking for trends to support in hopes of revitalizing ticket sales. *Sweetback* was eventually a smash hit and exposed mainstream white audiences to the possibilities of Black protagonists and demonstrated to movie executives that people were not only interested in Black subject matter, they would pay to see it. Thus, they “exploited” the Black subject for their own gains. *Shaft* and other Blaxploitation films were the scions of this groundbreaking film. Marvel Comics also saw this trend and wanted to capitalize on this phenomenon. The result was the first African American superpowered character to have his own solo series in the mainstream comics industry: Luke Cage, Hero for Hire.
Luke Cage (a.k.a. Carl Lucas) was created in 1972 by Roy Thomas, Archie Goodwin, George Tuska, and John Romita Sr. and burst onto the newstands and spinner racks in his own title. The first page of the comic depicted an enraged Luke Cage in the splash page with the title “Out of Hell, A Hero!” Little did Marvel know, they were about to make history with Luke Cage and that their own universe would never be the same. With his metal headband, yellow boots, and disco shirt, and the improbable catchphrase “Sweet Christmas!” Luke Cage was ready to smash his way into the hearts and minds of every Marvel reader.

In the initial story, Carl Lucas was sentenced to Seagate Prison for a crime that he didn’t commit, having been framed by his former best friend, Willis Stryker. Stryker blamed Lucas for his former girlfriend, Reba McIntyre, leaving him and ending up in the arms of Carl. While inside the walls of Seagate, Carl endured not only horrible violence and danger but was also constantly harassed, tortured, and attacked by a racist white guard named Rackham. To survive and escape the abuse, Carl allows himself to become part of a study by one Dr. Noah Burstein. Burstein was trying to duplicate the process by which Steve Rogers was turned into the patriotic powerhouse called Captain America.

Luke Cage subjects himself to an experiment because of the possibility of easy parole. It’s not an accident that gives him his powers. It’s an act of racist malice. Carl Lucas is given an injection and then submerged in a chemical bath by Burstein. The scientist steps out for a minute and then Rackham takes this opportunity to try and kill Carl Lucas while he is helplessly locked inside the chemical bath. Rackham tampers with the controls of the machine, thus bombarding Carl’s body with an untold array of energies. Lucas discovers that, due to this treatment, he is able to not only punch his way out of the machine but to use his newfound strength to escape by breaking the prison walls itself. Lucas is shot by guards as he escapes and plummets to the water below—only to discover that, despite a few bruises, the bullets did not pierce his skin.


Cage first takes to exacting revenge against his old running buddy Willis Stryker, who is known as Diamondback. Later, case by case, he is inundated with all manner of odd weapons-named characters, animal-themed villains like Mr. Fish, and stereotypical antagonists like Black Mariah. A very memorable issue (#8) focuses on Cage borrowing a vehicle from the Fantastic Four to chase down Doctor Doom for the $200 he’s owed by the despot. In spite of problematic “adventures” like this, Marvel seems to have wanted him to be more like their other superheroes later on, and Luke Cage takes on the moniker “Powerman” in issue 17. It’s hard for me not to link the sociopolitical subtexts of an unbreakable Black man in the age of Black Power and the post–Civil Rights era to Luke Cage after this name change.

Although there was a revolving door of creators associated with Luke Cage, it is a list of some of the most legendary creators in American comics. They include Roy Thomas, Archie Goodwin, Steve Englehart, Gerry Conway, Billy Graham, and Tony Isabella as writers. Art chores on the book were handled by John Romita Sr., George Tuska, and Billy Graham. Powerman was also written by Len Wein, Ed Hannigan, and Marv Wolfman.

Another notable artist who lent their superb abilities to Luke Cage were Ron Wilson, Rich Buckler, and the late, great George Pérez. Essentially, Marvel had a lot of their top talent working on this hero’s adventures.

Despite this fact and building a relatively strong fan base, Luke Cage: Powerman wasn’t really profitable. Another exploitation film-inspired title, the martial arts adventure comic Iron Fist, was also in dire straights financially. In a stroke of pure editorial genius, it was decided to combine the two heroes into one book; Powerman and Iron Fist. By doing so, Marvel opened up an opportunity that made both characters stronger by playing off of each other. After a key adventure written by Chris Claremont and drawn by John Byrne, in issue #50 of his title, Luke Cage takes on a partner, and Daniel Rand (a.k.a. Iron Fist) becomes another Hero for Hire alongside him.

Master comics scribe Chris Claremont started out on this aspect of the series, but it was the empathetic and energetic writing of Jo Duffy that really breathed life into both Luke Cage and Danny Rand. She absolutely loved these characters and displayed that alongside the wonderful art of Kerry Gammill, Denys Cowan, Keith Pollard, Ernie Chan, Frank Miller, John Byrne, and others each month in Powerman and Iron Fist. It was definitely...
one of my favorite titles as a young comics reader, and it left a huge impression on me as a Black reader. Jo Duffy put her stamp on the characters and wrote issue numbers 56–84.

Former Powerman and Iron Fist writer David Walker states that “Jo Duffy made Power Man and Iron Fist real to me.” It’s probably because, despite his Blaxploitation beginnings, Luke Cage was constructed to represent the everyman and Jo Duffy was able to key in on that. Cage is more aligned with a character like Spider-Man because of his working-class background and his connection to the spaces in which he resides. He wasn’t a rich and powerful socialite and he wasn’t an alien from another planet who was sent here to offer us hope. He was a Black man who came up tough in the streets of New York and was just trying to survive in a system that was designed to destroy him and to hopefully change the status quo. Jo Duffy states, “He was helping people because he had been the little guy.”

Powerman and Iron Fist’s initial run ended in 1986 with issue number 125. Despite this cancellation, Cage was now a big part of the Marvel
Bendis also changed the trajectory of the character by not only having him marry Jessica but becoming a loving father. For me, this is when Luke Cage truly became a "superhero." His origins as a mercenary have been stripped away, and now, finally, he has something to fight for outside of himself. He now has a purpose that is bigger than vengeance. He changes from just an index or proxy for Black masculinity in the Marvel Universe into a fully realized character who now has another weakness: his daughter, Danielle. Showing Luke Cage as a father is one of the best aspects of Bendis’s perspectives on the character, and that was picked up by David F. Walker on his run with artist Sanford Greene on the character in their wonderful take on Powerman and Iron Fist.

I’ve often thought that Luke Cage was the proxy for all the desires and fears of Black male bodies and how they are used as an index of the fantastic by the white audience.

Cage, although touted for his steel-hard skin, actually becomes very malleable in the stories written about him. Duffy, of course, gave us the most consistency regarding who this character is and should be. However, later incarnations by different creative teams in various "universes" were able to give their takes on Luke. For instance, there is a perspective of Luke Cage as an urban legend whose powers are more folklore than science fiction in Luke Cage: Noir (2009). In this take by writers Adam Glass and Mike Benson and artist Shawn Martinbrough, we see a version of Luke Cage that, in some ways, reminds us of Black folk legends like Stagger Lee, John Henry, or High John the Conqueror. His "power" comes from how people, even his enemies, imagine him. His legacy is that of a communal story.

Another notable, and contentious, version of the character is the Marvel MAX four-issue miniseries by writer Brian Azzarello and artist Richard Corben. Simply called CAGE, it borrowed a great deal from the then contemporary, gangsta-rap visual idioms like shiny gold front teeth, massive gold and diamond necklaces, and the
all-too-familiar visual language of the prison industrial complex. It leaned into Luke Cage as a frightening and imposing figure and, again, played up the fantasies projected upon him.

In 2016, Genndy Tartakovsky and Stephen DeStefano’s satirical take on Luke Cage took a “Cartoon Network” aesthetic to the character and focused on some of the more problematic elements of the Hero for Hire. It was not one of my favorite runs; however, it did remind us of how far Luke Cage had come.

Then, also in 2016, Luke Cage fans received a very sweet Christmas gift indeed. Netflix partnered with Marvel Entertainment to create a series of Marvel Comics-inspired streaming shows that focused on a collection of their “street level” characters. They included Daredevil (my favorite superhero), Jessica Jones, The Punisher, Iron Fist, and yes: Luke Cage. Although, for some reason, the decision was made to not have Cage as a Hero for Hire, there was still a lot of the original character in the live-action depiction played by Michael Coulter. It was as if he stepped out of the comics onto our screen! Showrunner Cheo Hodari Coker found himself partially inspired by what was happening in the prison industrial complex to inmates across our country, the history of medical apartheid related to Black people and the medical field, and also the movement for Black Lives. He asked during the Apollo panel, “How does a bulletproof Black man change the ecology of a neighborhood?”

Artist and associate professor Stacey Robinson (UIUC) often states that it was both painful and empowering to see a Luke Cage television show. He states that “you basically had a Black man who was indestructible on screen but simultaneously had an instance of a Black man being killed in real time on Facebook. Luke Cage’s indestructible nature had to be tested every episode, which meant that, some time during every adventure, his Black body had to be shot by a hail of bullets in order to show his power set in the most spectacular method possible.” What does it mean for a Black man to have bulletproof skin in the age of the Black Lives Matter movement? Cage was created to capitalize on a trend but has now become a symbol of resistance in an age where people who look like him are being killed in supermarkets by white supremacists. He’s still a complicated man for more than complicated times.

John Jennings is a professor of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of California at Riverside and co-editor of the Eisner Award-winning collection The Blacker the Ink: Constructions of the Black Identity in Comics and Sequential Art. He is also founder and curator of the ABRAMS Megascope line of graphic novels.
But that experiment is history, DC is down to 20 cents, too, and lost customers are slowly trickling back. Kirby is urging DC to do two things to his Fourth World comics. One is to up them to monthly. He believes that the readers of the day are more apt to buy any comic when they don’t have to wait eight weeks for the next issue. All the top-selling Marvels are monthlies.

Second, he wants DC to let him begin turning over the Fourth World comics to other artists. He would continue to edit and to break in and supervise other writers, but, as planned from Day One, he will do less on each issue so as to free up time for even newer projects. Jack has concepts and ideas for dozens of ‘em—many in new, upscale formats—that he wants to explore. The folks at DC have professed serious interest in many of these ideas, but it’s one thing to say you want to do it and quite another to actually do it. Just saying you’ll do it “someday” doesn’t cost any money or incur any risk. Kirby believes the industry needs to take some risks if it’s going to grow—and it needs to grow to survive.

DC Management refuses both requests. They have Jack under a

It’s early 1972 and Jack Kirby is doing his acclaimed “Fourth World” comics: New Gods, Forever People, and Mister Miracle. They are bimonthly and they are, he is told, selling decently. They aren’t, as some at DC had hoped, putting Marvel outta business, but they’re selling decently. Like just about everything else the company was publishing, Jack’s books took a major hit during a disastrous experiment in which DC’s comics cost 25 cents each while Marvel was at 20 cents. A kid with a quarter, given the choice of buying a comic book or a comic book and a candy bar, usually opted for the two-fer.
contract that calls for him to edit, write, and pencil around 15 pages of comics per week, and that’s really all they want from the man. They don’t flat-out tell him (though he increasingly senses it) that they don’t want him editing or supervising comics he doesn’t write or draw. They said they did. It was one of the reasons he agreed to defect from Marvel. But they’ve since decided it would shift too much editorial control (and maybe credit for it) when things go right! from the DC offices in New York to Jack’s studio in Southern California.

But the idea of Jack Kirby creating new DC properties? That, they like.

Remember: It’s 1972. There is no deal in place, as there later would be, for the creator or co-creator of a successful new comic to share in that success. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster are both alive and enduring financial hardships because no matter how much money the big guy in the blue costume with an “S” on his chest makes, they don’t see a nickel of it. Their names aren’t on the strip either, and they usually go unmentioned in historical articles about Superman. Given that example, not many creators in comics want to create new comics.

But Jack Kirby does.

Actually, around this time he pitches publisher Carmine Infantino on an old creation: What about obtaining the rights to the original Captain Marvel—the one who outsold Superman in the forties, the one who displaced Billy Batson when young Billy said that most magical of words, “Shazam”? Jack would edit it, my partner Steve Sherman and I (or someone) could write it, and we’d get C.C. Beck, the artist who co-created this comic that had been discontinued in 1953, to draw it again.

Infantino likes the idea and obtains the rights while he contacts Mr. Beck, who says “Sure.” Then DC proclaims that the revival—named Shazam! because Marvel now owns the good name of Captain Marvel—has to be edited in New York under the supervision of the staff back there. So all Jack has to do with it is to send them Beck’s phone number.

Disappointed, he decides to come up with a completely new comic that he could launch for DC and then hand off to writers and artists who’ll work under his editorship. He calls Infantino and asks him what kind of comic would most interest him. Some accounts say Infantino tells Jack how he had tried and failed to obtain the rights to do a comic based on the movie Planet of the Apes, which made a huge splash in 1968 and has since spawned a series of high-grossing sequels. According to these accounts, Infantino suggests that since they can’t get the rights, Jack should do something similar. My understanding was that Infantino didn’t say anything about bidding for the rights and failing to get them; that he just wanted a knockoff of a popular film series. (Did I mention that my pal Steve and I were working for Jack at the time? Steve Sherman is sadly eulogized elsewhere in this souvenir book.)

Jack decides he’ll give Carmine what he wants but he won’t give Carmine what he wants. He’ll cobble up something a bit like Planet of the Apes but not nearly as close as Infantino is expecting. For a starting point, he hauls out some unfinished samples of a newspaper strip that, back in the fifties, he never finished and therefore never submitted anywhere. It’s called “Kamandi of the Caves” and Kamandi is an adult caveman warrior in the wrong time and place. And with that, Jack Kirby sets to work …

Now, Jack has not seen Planet of the Apes—I’m not sure he ever saw it—but he certainly knows the basic storyline. It’s such a well-publicized (and parodied) film that everyone knows the basic storyline, and most of them know its shock/surprise ending before they go in to see it for the first time. Since over a half century has passed, the statute of limitations on Spoiler Alerts has run out, and I can and will reveal the surprise in the following paragraph. Stop reading now if you don’t want to know.

Still with me? Fine. The title planet of the film—the world overrun and ruled by intelligent, articulate apes—turns out to be Earth. But you knew that all along.

Jack decides we’ll know all along that his comic is set on a post-apocalyptic Earth. He makes the lead character a young boy and dubs him “The Last Boy on Earth.” Said planet is now peopled largely by non-people: sentient mutated animals of all kinds, making for a savage, mysterious setting for a human being like Kamandi to live in and have to fight to live in.

In way less time than it would take anyone else to work out all the details (who, what, where, when) Jack has it all in his head. He calls Steve and me into his studio, describes the whole series to us, and invites us to ask questions, poke holes in it, add on other elements, etc. We don’t have much to offer, partly because Jack’s idea is so fully formed and packed with elements on which to build, and partly because I am furiously scribbling, taking notes. My assignment: Take those notes home, make some sense out of them, and write up a presentation including an outline of the first issue we discussed.

I do this. Jack meanwhile does some presentation drawings of the characters and what things will look like in Kamandi’s world, formerly known as our world. Before long, all of this is dispatched to New York, where Infantino and others declare it a “sure hit.” In the near-future, they’ll have Jack do the first issue or two to set things in motion, then there are vague plans of someone else taking over the writing and drawing under his editorship. A week or two later, Infantino asks Jack to come up with another new comic, this time...
SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED IN THE CITY... A NATURAL DISASTER... LINKED WITH RADIATION... THE PEOPLE IN THE SKINNERS LIVED OUT THEIR LIVES AND DIED DREAMING OF A DAY OF RETURN... THE RADIATION WOULD BE GONE... AND THE WORLD THEY LEFT WOULD BE WAITING...

KAMANDI, THE LAST BOY ON EARTH!

BEASTS THAT ACT LIKE MEN! MEN WHO ACT LIKE BEASTS! SEE THE WORLD LIKE...

SENSATIONAL JIMMY DURY DANZIKER!

DC COMICS

NO.1

1ST ISSUE

20¢

THIS IS NOT THE NEW YORK I KNEW IN THE MICRO-FILM LIBRARY: THE CITY IS GONE... COVERED BY THE SEA.

KAMANDI REMEMBERED HIS GRANDFATHER'S TALES ABOUT THE YEAR OF THE GREAT EARTHQUACK: COULD THIS HAVE BEEN THE TIME WHEN NEW YORK MET ITS FATE?

KAMANDI COULD ONLY GUESS...
something in the monster/horror vein. The thinking up at DC is that's the coming trend: heroes who are less super, more creepy.

The process is repeated as Jack, over dinner at a Howard Johnson's restaurant, thinks up all the basics of a new book that will be called The Demon. Steve and I help him again, only this time it goes faster. (I've written about this elsewhere. Jack literally came up with all the essentials of this new comic between the time we ordered and the time dessert arrived.)

Back in New York, they love The Demon even more than they loved Kamandi. Interspersed between outputting issues of the Fourth World books, Jack is asked to do up a first issue of The Demon. They are thrilled with it and they ask for a second issue, and for Jack to do up a first issue of Kamandi, with one little adjustment …

Carmine Infantino, in addition to being the publisher, is also the designer of most of DC's covers. He sends Jack a rough sketch for a cover to adorn Kamandi #1 featuring the Statue of Liberty, partially destroyed, and he tells Jack to also work that visual into the opening of the first story. This does not please Jack. He feels he has taken the original marching order of "something like Planet of the Apes" and innovated so much that he now has a completely original series. The wrecked Miss Liberty was the key visual image of the movie, and to display it prominently in the comic, as requested, is just going to make the new comic look more like an imitation.

Words are exchanged. Jack argues but, as usual, Carmine gets what he wants. Later on in interviews, Infantino will claim that he, not Jack, created Kamandi; the Last Boy on Earth. Put it this way: I contributed more to the creation of that comic than he did and I don't think I deserve any sort of creator or co-creator credit. But it does look like both comics are "go" projects, so we start discussing who will wind up writing and drawing them when, as he expects, Kirby becomes just their editor, not their editor/writer/artist. For Kamandi, it looks like I'm going to write it and to draw it. Jack wants to engage another artist based in Southern California, Dan Spiegel. They meet. Jack loves Dan's work. Dan is excited at the prospect. (Spiegel and I would soon become close friends and collaborators, but at this stage, we hadn't even met.)

Other names are discussed for The Demon, but Infantino vetoes all of them and vetoes Spiegel for Kamandi. Carmine is arranging for a bevy of talented—and by American standards, low-paid—artists in the Philippines to draw for DC. Two of them will draw the new books. And then a week or two later, he calls Jack to say he's changed his mind and made a firm decision as to who will write and draw the new books …

Jack will write and draw the new books. They are such rich, promising ideas that Carmine doesn't want to gamble on anyone but Kirby, he says. Not only that, but DC wants to launch them and move them to monthly publication as rapidly as possible. And to make room on Jack's schedule so he can do them every month, New Gods and Forever People will be "suspended" for a while—which, as Jack well knew, was a nicer way of saying "canceled, probably forever."

Jack is devastated. I cannot describe just how unhappy this moment is for him. But among the big things that could be learned from him are persistence, not giving up, hard work and "try, try again." Soon after, Mike Royer, who's lettering and inking whatever Jack draws, gets a call from him. He tells Mike about the "suspended" books but says they'll do something new and it'll be great … and it is.

Kirby does 40 issues about "The Last Boy on Earth." He would do more, but feeling unappreciated at DC, he heads back to Marvel, where he is a bit more welcome. When I meet fans of his work these days, the topic invariably turns to "What was your favorite series Kirby ever did?" You'd be surprised how often their answer to that is Kamandi, and some explain why, citing its depiction of a feeling they know too well. It's that feeling like you don't belong in the world and that you have to constantly be on the alert and even go into battle when necessary to survive in it. Kamandi's struggle often resembles our own—and when it does, it grabs you like few other comics can.

No wonder we're saluting it now, 40 years after that first one came out. It's an important comic, a memora- ble comic, a comic that has been reprinted over and over because those who remember it want to remember it, and those who are new to it want to experience it, perhaps more so than they did 40 years ago. 🙏

Mark Evanier apprenticed with Jack Kirby and has written tons of comic books and other things since those days.
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Fiinety years ago, the San Diego Comic-Con was held at the El Cortez Hotel for the first time. There had been two previous SDCCs, held at the U.S. Grant Hotel (1970) and then on the campus of the University of California, San Diego (1971), but the El Cortez proved to be the perfect fit for the show, and for most of the 1970s it was Comic-Con’s home.

Located at Ash Street and 7th Avenue, the El Cortez was already a downtown landmark. Built in 1926–1927, it was the tallest building in San Diego when it opened. The large “El Cortez” sign, which is illuminated at night, was added in 1937 and could be seen for miles. The art deco–style Sky Room, added in 1940, became renowned for its glass walls and 360-degree view of the city. In 1956, the world’s first outside glass elevator was added. Later, a bridge across 7th Avenue was built to connect the hotel to a two-story convention facility. Today, the building lives on, as condominiums.

When those of us who have been around for a long time reminisce about the “old days” of Comic-Con, the El Cortez years always stand out in our memories. What was it about those conventions that made them so special? I tried to figure out a way to describe what it felt like to be there and to distill all of the aspects down into one article, and then I discovered I had already done it! In 1977 I wrote a post-con wrap-up piece for The Buyer’s Guide comics fanzine, and rereading it, 45 years later, I think it provides a pretty good picture of what the con was like at its peak in the El Cortez years, from the guests and programs to the poolside art auction and nighttime activities. And I just happened to have a lot of photos to go with it. So here you go …
INSIDE THE 1977 COMIC-CON

It was Sunday night, July 24, and the eighth San Diego Comic-Con was finally over. It was close to midnight, and I found myself sitting on the floor in the Heinlein’s huge two-bedroom suite at the El Cortez Hotel. Sitting next to me was B. Kliban, the enigmatic cartoonist known for his best-selling collections Cat and Never Eat Anything Bigger Than Your Head. Kliban (pronounced Klee-ban) fascinated me. He’s a tall, good-looking man in his late 30s who for some reason reminds most people of a mercenary soldier. Maybe it’s because he wears shades most of the time, has a closely trimmed beard and mustache, and has a thin, brown Shermans cigarette in his hand or mouth at all times. We sat there on the floor, somewhat the worse for wear after five days of convention, and talked about humor: Monty Python, Ernie Kovacs, Mel Brooks, Woody Allen, Walt Kelly. For the millenium time during the convention, someone asked him what the “B.” stands for, and once again he refused to say.

At the table next to us was Theodore Sturgeon, a giant in science fiction and a long-time friend of Comic-Con. Sturgeon feels he is forever indebted to the convention for having brought him together with his new wife, Jayne [she was a San Diego schoolteacher]. Now that the convention was drawing to a close, the Sturgeons were looking to the future, talking about their planned trip to Europe, where Sturgeon’s novel More Than Human is to be filmed. I accused Ted of being the nicest man I had ever met—if never having said a nasty word about anyone. Ted immediately proved me wrong by denning Adolf Hitler.

Sitting at the table with the Sturgeons were Jack and Carolyn Katz. Jack was still bubbling over with excitement over the fact that Pocket Books is bringing out a deluxe version of his novel The First Kingdom with a package of goodies that included the first six books of his graphic novel The First Kingdom. Jack also had some pages from Book 7 with him, which he and Carolyn showed lovingly and guarded jealously. Jack has become a major galvanizing force at Comic-Con. He is a tall, good-looking man in his late 30s who, with his white suits and regal bearing, and a certain degree of playfulness, had really gotten into the spirit of the convention and even did a drawing for the fans at the celebrity brunch. Robert’s wife, Ginny, had prepared for the party by taping up cartoons all over the suite—most of them by Bill Rotsler, the proker and very funny science fiction cartoonist.

Many of the cartoons were on the theme of blood donation—for all, the main reason the Heinleins had come to the con was to promote their major charity, the nation’s blood banks. Comic-Con’s first blood drive (on Thursday) had been a big success: 74 people donated blood. As the fans were having their blood removed, they were serenaded by cartoonist Leslie Cabarga on the piano and then by Smegma the Barbarian (John Hostetter) and the Princess Ipecac, who did Frank Zappa tunes. Toward the end of the day underground cartoonist Larry Todd (“Dr. Atomic”), arrived with a belly dancing troupe, much to Heinlein’s delight.

Blood donors were treated royally. Robert gave autographs, and Sturgeon signed copies of his novel Some of Your Blood (donated by Ballantine Books). Donors also walked away with a package of goodies that included the latest Heavy Metal, Pacific Comics’ new book One, a signed print by Larry Todd, a free comic from Ron Turner’s Last Gasp Comics, and a drawing by Rotsler or by cartoonist Lee Marrs on the envelope it all came in.

The Heinleins were very pleased with the success of the blood drive, and they were even more pleased that they had the rest of the convention to themselves. They moved about relatively freely (comics fans are not as aggressive as sf fans, says Ginny), pestered mostly by press people. Robert was particularly glad to be able to see the art show—at an event he usually misses at cons. Art show coordinator Craig Marrs on the envelope it all came in.

The Heinleins were the perfect host and hostess at this “dead dog” party [a tradition they brought to Comic-Con from science fiction conventions]. Robert stayed in the kitchenette, playing the role of bartender. Throughout the convention he had alternated between the awesome dignity he is noted for (with his white suits and regal bearing) and a certain degree of playfulness. Robert had really gotten into the spirit of the convention and even did a drawing for the fans at the celebrity brunch. Robert’s wife, Ginny, had prepared for the party by taping up cartoons all over the suite—most of them by Bill Rotsler, the proker and very funny science fiction cartoonist.

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Speaking of Stevens, he was kept busy at the Heinleins’ party drawing pictures in various committee members’ mem-
ory books. As he drew his character Aurora for go-fer Andrew Ramstedt, a weary Richard Butler (Comic-Con vice president) sat in a nearby corner and slowly nodded off. Convention secretary Vicky Kelso and meal functions coordinator Mae- heah Alzmann eyed him from time to time as they sat on the couch trying to decide whether to order a pizza. At the other end of the room, convention president Shel Dorf was conversing with Joe Kubert and his wife, Muriel. Joe had brought most of his family to San Diego, making the trip a well-deserved vacation. Joe was an ideal guest—we were all impressed with his enthusiasm, his warmth, and his willingness to go along with whatever was required of him. He did a wonderful drawing of Tarzan for the art auction, and he, Russ Manning, and Roy Thomas presented one of the most interesting programs of the convention: a discussion of the Tarzan character and the way each comic company had handled him.

At about 1:00 A.M. we all began to file out of the suite. Go-fer Mike Toledo looked dazed, having spent the last few hours in the presence of Heinlein and Sturgeon, two of his idols. Program director David Scroggy was in a state of euphoria—all the convention’s programs had gone well, and he still seemed to be going strong. We were all reluctant to say goodbye, for the dead dog party had been the last of the convention guests.

So I finally left the party and went back to my room and waited for Rocky Horror to begin. As a sat there, I tried to sort out all the things that had gone one during the previous week, trying to latch on to the highlights of the convention. It had begun on Wednesday, with lines stretched around the block in two directions as the doors opened at 2:00 P.M. (Before the con was over, more than 4,000 people had been through those doors.) That night film historian Eric Hoff- man unveiled this year’s serial: The Rocky Horror Picture Show. At noon easels were set up by the hotel’s TV system. Guests could turn on their TVs at 2 A.M. and see Vaughn Bode’s Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers, Lee Marrs (Pudge, Girl Blimp), and Mark Evanier. The panel ended with a cartoons’ jam on a 13-foot piece of photo back-drop paper. Joining the panelists in illustrating the piece were Dan O’Neill, Scott Shaw, Larry Todd, Bill Stout, and several others. Later, Stout and Todd were joined by Jack Katz at easels to illustrate two Theodore Sturgeon stories as Ted read them aloud. Of course, the big event on Friday night was the masquerade, MC’d by the mighty Thunder God Thor (KGB disc jockey Gabriel Wisdom). The most popular costume themes were Star Wars and Rocky Horror, although first prize went to a group dressed as Dr. Strange, Valkyrie, and the Hulk. At midnight the films room was jammed for a special showing of Rocky Horror Picture Show.

Saturday saw another crush in the registration area, as members of the general public showed up in droves to see the special Star Wars program presented by Charlie Lippincott backstage at the Comic-Con costume contest. In 1977 it was held on Friday night.
voice. Artwork auctioned off included pieces by Alex Nino, Jim Steranko, Jack Kirby, Joe Kubert, Kliban, Steve Leialoha, Don Rico, Jack Katz, Bill Scott, Shary Flenniken, Rus Manning, Sergio, Larry Todd, and a Superman plaque. I'm told that the cocktail party went on until 5 a.m., with C. C. Beck playing his guitar and other musicians joining in to keep things going. But there were other things going on that night as well. John Field showed Superman shorts, Mark Shepard was screening his four-hour 2001: A Space Odyssey, consisting of hundreds of movie trailers strung together, and there was a special sneak preview of Allegro Non Troppo (an Italian animated take-off on Fantasia) at a local theater. I ended up going with Steranko and Pauline Bigornia to see Allegro, and we were really impressed with the animation and the humor.

Sunday had begun with the celebrity brunch, one of the convention's most popular events, since fans could choose which special guest they'd like to sit with. Carl Barks did duck drawings for all who asked, including several for the hardworking convention go-fers. I was surprised at how tall and robust Barks is—for some reason I expected a shy little old man. He was a little self-conscious, but he seemed to enjoy himself immensely. It was interesting to glance around the room and see the celebrities at each table, surrounded by their fans seeking autographs and photographs. As usual, Jack Kirby was mobbed, and Kliban wore out his hand drawing cats for an endless stream of fans with notebooks, sketchpads, pieces of paper, and even T-shirts. When the meal was over, Shel Dorf called various artists onto the stage to do drawings that were later auctioned off. Jack Katz did a spectacular piece that sold for what many considered to be a low price: $100. Among the many other impressive artworks produced that morning was a Chandler drawing by Steranko that sold for $180. After the banquet Bob Clampett did a multimedia show on the history of animation, and Bill Scott and June Foray went through many voices in re-creating some Jay Ward scripts. Walter Gibson, who had talked about The Shadow at programs earlier in the convention, held a discussion with actor/magician Patrick Culliton on the great Houdini. One of the last programs of the convention had been a reunion between filmmaker George Pal and Robert Heinlein, who had collaborated on Destination Moon in 1950.

INSET LEFT: Jim Steranko drew Chandler, his hardboiled detective character, for a graphic novel published by Byron Preiss.

C. C. Beck (right) and co-creator of Captain Marvel played guitar at an impromptu jam session.
There had been a variety of other programs during the con—for too many for any one person to see. I would have liked to have seen cartoonist Stan Lynde talk about his strip “Rick O’Shay,” Byron Preiss present his newest publications, Stanley Ralph Ross reveal the secrets behind the Batman TV show, George Clayton Johnson read from his works, Forry Ackerman give his keynote address, and Michael Kaluta and others discuss current trends in illustrating.

But as I sat there Sunday night, watching Riff Raff do the Time Warp, I realized that even if I hadn’t seen a single program, the whole convention would still have been worthwhile. Because what the San Diego con is all about is the people, and I had the opportunity to meet some very special ones. People like Carl Barks, Joe Kubert, the Heinleins, C. C. Beck, Shary Flenniken, Harvey Kurtzman, Alan Dean Foster, Howard Chaykin, Bill Scott, and Lee Marrs. I was also able to renew old friendships with some other special people, such as the Sturgeons, Bob Clampett, and Hap Kilban, and to spend some time with other pros and fans who use the San Diego con as a breather from the rigors of daily life and as a chance to relax with people who share the same interests and loves.

Cartoonists, comic book writers and artists, animators, science fiction and fantasy authors, and other creators in the popular arts make up a group that contains a disproportionate number of nice people. In no other field have I encountered such genuine benevolence, kindness, and generosity as I’ve found among these creative individuals. They put up with the roughest of fans, seem to find time to converse with and give autographs and even drawings to all who ask, answer the same questions over and over again, give advice to aspiring writers and artists, and still remain pleasant after five days.

So as Rocky Horror ended at 3:00 a.m. and the 1977 Comic-Con was over at last, I turned off the television and went to bed knowing one thing: I’ll be back again next year.
Forty years of Groo? Nope, sorry. Not possible. I mean, it’s just not possible if only because I feel like I’m in my mid-20s and Sergio is even younger than I am. You do realize that “40 years” would mean that we’ve done four decades of comic books featuring the world’s all-time stupidest barbarian—a “hero” (I’m using the word loosely) whose I.Q. is the same as the temperature at which water freezes … at Celsius!

So let’s dispense with that “40 years” nonsense here and now. You just think that because Groo first appeared in print in the first issue of *Destroyer Duck* and that was published in … Hold on. Let me consult Wikipedia … “1982?” Really? I thought it was more recent than that, but Wikipedia is never wrong about anything. So it was 1982. Do the math for yourself. Get out a calculator or use the app on your phone and subtract 1982 from 2022. See if you get 40 as your answer. I’ll wait.

Actually, since it may take you a while—and since I agreed to write 2000 words here and I’m only up to 163 or so at the moment—I’ll tell you a little about Groo while you work on that arithmetic homework I just gave you.

Groo the Wanderer was created by that friend of mine, Sergio Aragonés. In the early 1960s, Sergio journeyed from Mexico, where he grew up mostly, to the United States, where he became a vital part of *MAD* magazine. (I won’t go through the story of how he got that job; it’s only a matter of public record in about ninety-dozen places.) Later in the ’60s, he began doing work for DC Comics. And he began traveling, meeting his fellow cartoonists all around the world.

When he did, he learned a lot, but two main points stood out. One was that humor comics—funny funny books that aimed for a slightly older audience than the Disney comics, Bugs Bunny comics, Casper the Friendly Ghost comics, etc.—were very popular and very plentiful worldwide. Since humor was what Sergio did best, this was a very good thing to know. And the other thing was that the cartoonists who’d created those comics for the most part owned their own creations. There were obvious financial advantages to this but also ones having to do with creative control. The characters could not be wrested away from the creators and sold to others and changed by others; at least, not without the creators’ consent.

He learned other lessons in his travels but those two were the most vital. They led him to make two decisions: (1) He would create his own humor comic and the char-
acters in it, and (2) he would not allow anyone to publish it if they insisted on owning his creation. He would own his creation.

Decision #1 was not all that difficult. He was, after all, a very prolific cartoonist. For MAD alone, he came up with more than a dozen ideas for each issue, and he did it for a very long time. In fact, he’s still doing it. So creating a new and funny comic book was largely a matter of deciding which of his umpteen ideas to run with. He finally settled on a parody of Edgar Rice Burroughs’ beloved hero, Tarzan—a character Sergio had loved since he was a young muchacho in Mexico.

It was a good idea—so good that, he discovered one day, someone else had come up with it. In 1975, that someone made a not-very-good animated movie of the idea, leading the Señor to chuck that plan. It didn’t take long for him to seize upon the notion of, instead, a very silly version of a character not unlike Robert E. Howard’s Conan the Barbarian. He chose the name “Groo” on the belief that the name existed nowhere else and would be easily translatable in other countries that might wish to purchase publishing rights.

As for Decision #2 … well, that was a lot more difficult. It wouldn’t be difficult today and it wasn’t, late in the 20th century. But in the late 70s, the companies that published comic books were more or less aligned on a basic principle: “We don’t publish it unless we own it.” That was, verbatim, how one prominent comic book publisher put it back then. The publisher didn’t mean that literally. His company published Tarzan and they didn’t own Tarzan. They published Star Trek comic books and they didn’t own Star Trek. They published plenty of comics by licensing the rights from companies that owned popular characters. He just meant that they wouldn’t license, say, Groo the Wanderer from Sergio Aragones—or any other property from a writer and/or artist. The writer and/or artist would have to deed over the ownership to the publisher.

Well, Sergio wouldn’t do that. Let us pause to consider why that was a smart thing insofar as the ongoing health of the series was concerned.

The first Groo story was printed in the aforementioned Destroyer Duck #1 published by Eclipse Comics. Then there was a Groo the Wanderer comic book from Pacific Comics. Then when Pacific folded, there was one special issue from Eclipse followed by 120 issues plus some specials put out by Marvel Comics under their Epic banner. Then there were 12 issues published by Image, and, since 1998, Groo has been published by Dark Horse Comics.

Can you imagine what would have happened if any of those publishers had owned the property and Sergio couldn’t have taken it elsewhere? For one thing, it might have been severed from Sergio and vice-versa. Think of some comic book writer who has no sense of humor (I can name a few) and an artist whose work you think really sucks. There would have been nothing stopping a publisher who owned Groo from hiring those two clowns to do the comic. And changing it their way. I’m sure you
can also think of a favorite corporate-owned comic book character that has been utterly ruined for a time by being placed into the wrong hands. (You might have a hard time naming one that wasn’t.)

But you can’t take Groo away from Sergio or Sergio away from Groo. Or the Groo Crew. I guess I should talk about us.

That first Groo story in Destroyer Duck was very short and had almost no words. Thus, it didn’t need a letterer and it didn’t need a dialogue assist. It was colored by Gordon Kent, a friend of mine from the animation business who colored a lot of Destroyer Duck #1. He was therefore the person who decided that Groo’s jerkin would be orange.

Why orange? Because I was the co-editor of that comic and Gordon—a lovely gent who sadly passed away in 2015—wanted to please me. Orange is my favorite color. It has occasionally been suggested that the color of Groo’s outfit could change from time to time. I mean, do you wear the same color every day? But then we think it’s kinda funny—and utterly in character—that Groo just has the one outfit and wears it forever. Every so often, he gets dumped in a river or a lake so it gets washed (kind of), but sometimes when people are wildly fleeing from our inept warrior, it isn’t his swords they fear. It’s his (ahem) pungent body aroma.

Groo’s appearance in Destroyer Duck led to demands for more Groo, more Groo, more Groo, and even more Groo. Sergio knew longer stories would have actual plots, so words would be necessary. He had seen the work of a rather-new cartoonist named Stan Sakai and liked his lettering. Stan didn’t tell us at the time that he would soon take the comic industry by storm with his Usagi Yojimbo book, but as busy as that has kept him, he has always made time for Groo.

And so that Stan would have something to letter, I signed on. Just what I do on the comic remains a mystery even to me, but I seem to do something and it involves dialogue, writing poems where applicable (and the letters page), and kind of editing what Sergio comes up with. Or sometimes, I come up with things and Sergio edits me. It is often difficult to tell which of us did what with regard to the plot and the words. Note, please: I have not done any of the artwork unless you count occasionally drawing in the spot under Rufferto’s eye when you-know-who forgets it.

Sergio, Stan, Gordon, and I were the Groo Crew for the first few Pacific issues, then Gordon begged off due to demands on his services in the animation field. Enter Tom Luth, who stepped in to tackle what some have called the hardest job in the comic book business. You see, if Sergio puts 19 people in a panel, the colorist has to color 19 people—plus there’s all that scenery, all those props, all those intricate designs …

I once had to step in and color just a few pages for one issue and believe me: It took for-freakin’-ever. Every time I thought a given panel was done, I’d look closer and see three more people in it.

Tom did a magnificent job, but he has other skills and other interests, and so he recently retired from coloring Groo. The next miniseries to hit the stands will display coloring by Carrie Strachan, and she’s also doing a great job.

Groo continues to be a unique comic book for many reasons, not the least of which is the longevity of Sergio,
Stan, Myself, and up until recently, Tom. In a correspond-
ing amount of time, Batman has been written and drawn
by 87,215 people. I am reminded of when we started with
Epic/Marvel. There was a gent on the staff then—no one
important, no one still with the firm—who didn’t like the
idea of creator-owned comics. I suspect it was because
he lacked the capacity to create one that anyone would
want to read. But he didn’t say that. He complained that
“creator-owned comics never come out on time … and
you can’t bring in someone to do a fill-in issue if only the
creator can write or draw it.”

Well, Groo was at Epic/Marvel for 120 months during
which we produced 120 issues and met 120 deadlines.
Another thing that sets Groo apart from most other
comics: Stan Sakai does not do lettering on a computer
screen. He letters with a pen right onto the same pieces
of illustration board that Sergio draws on—the way it was
done for years before computers came along.

And yet another thing is that we usually have letter
pages. I’ve gotten some folks steamed at me for say-
ing things like, “That’s because we care about you, our
readers. When you see a comic these days with no letter
column (i.e., most comics), you know that the folks who
do it just want your money and don’t want to have to read
what you liked or didn’t like about the book.” That’s said
in jest, but there is this much truth in it: I used to love let-
ter pages in comics. I more or less got my start as a writer,
or at least some encouragement, by sending in letters to
comics and having a goodly percentage of them selected
for publication. Seeing my first letter in print (it was in an
issue of Aquaman when I was very young) was a bigger
thrill than the one at age 17 when I first received a check
for something I’d written. Every time I assemble one of
those pages for Groo, I think about that and hope that I
give someone else a comparable thrill.

But the most notable unique thing about Groo is that
this guy named Sergio Aragonés invented it, draws it,
writes it, makes it like his baby. And he’s been doing this
for …

Did you ever calculate how long? Remember, earlier
in this piece I asked you to grab a calculator and see how
long it’s been since Groo started. You subtract the cur-
rent year (2022) from the year in which the minus-minded
wanderer first appeared (1982) and here, I’ll try it now and
it turns out to be … Hmm. Well, how about that? It still
seems like we started it early last year.

Mark Evanier has been writing comic books and other stuff since 1969
The origin story of Love and Rockets has been told so many times, it’s almost legend, yet as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of one of the most successful independent comics in the medium’s history, it’s worth taking a fresh look back at how three Mexican-American brothers transformed the American comics industry.

Comic books were a part of the Hernandez brothers’ lives from their earliest days. The family of eight lived in Oxnard, an ethnically diverse suburb of Los Angeles made up of several immigrant communities. With six young kids in an overcrowded house, comics were one of their parents’ tactics for maintaining sanity. “We got into the comics and drawing partially because my dad wanted to keep it quiet,” eldest brother Mario explained. It didn’t hurt that their mother was also a comics fan. “[She was] the one who inspired us to get into doing our own little comics,” Jaime recalled, “because she had done a lot of drawing and grew up with Captain Marvel, Superman, and all that stuff.”

With this early encouragement, comic books became the Hernandez brothers’ favorite hobby, with Mario and Gilbert, as the eldest, serving as the primary suppliers of the family’s collection. “Comics were everywhere,” Mario recalled. “You’d go to the bathroom with comics, you’d eat dinner with comics.” Gilbert joked that “I was born with one in my hand.”

In 1967, their father suddenly passed away at the age of 48. Mario was 14 at the time, Gilbert was 10, and Jaime was almost 8. Many family members, all women, stepped in to help, but a single mother raising six kids inevitably meant that the Hernandez children spent long hours unsupervised. To entertain themselves, they became immersed not only in the world of comic books, but in all forms of popular culture, especially movies and TV shows.

By the time Gilbert graduated from high school in 1975, he had little ambition for anything resembling a career. Following a stint in college, Jaime also found himself directionless. But just in the nick of time, punk rock exploded in Southern California, and the brothers’ lives would never be the same.

Although it initially arrived in L.A. in the mid-’70s, by 1979 punk had spread to the surrounding suburbs, where bored kids found an outlet for their anger and suspicions about
the future. The scene that emerged in Oxnard was an offshoot of LA punk known as ‘hardcore.’ As music critic Barney Hoskyns put it, the hardcore scene was ‘younger, faster, angrier, full of the pent-up rage of dysfunctional Orange County adolescents who’d had enough of living in a bland, Republican paradise.’ The impact punk had on Orange County adolescents who’d had enough of living in a bland, Republican paradise. ‘That’s when I saw the punk ethic, and I thought, “This is professional art.”’

Mario had been reading Love and Rockets since the beginning of 1982, all three brothers began working on the 32 pages of material that would be reprinted from additional stories to appear in the first issue alongside the first Fantagraphics issue debuted at Comic-Con. During the year that followed, from 1980 to 1981, the brothers worked diligently on their respective stories. "We didn’t know what the hell we were doing! So we just gathered together what we had. We didn’t have much work at the time, so that’s when he started Maggie and Hoppy.”

Gary Groth, the meantime, began “BEM,” a kitchen sink mash-up of various pop culture influences. Today the self-published issue of Love and Rockets is recognized as a landmark in the history of the medium, but when the brothers first started pushing it out into the world, it received a lukewarm response. It wasn’t until Gilbert’s fateful decision to send a copy to The Comics Journal that the series began to get any critical attention.

Gary Groth’s reputation for writing scathing reviews was well known by followers of the comics industry of the late ‘70s. But as publisher of The Comics Journal, he was also a passionate, outspoken advocate for the medium. In addition to reviews, Groth conducted extensive interviews and wrote insightful and often blistering editorials imploring creators, publishers, and readers to explore the literary possibilities of the medium. After years of shouting from their pulpits in The Comics Journal, Groth and his business partner, Kim Thompson, made the decision to start their own comics publishing company.

Groth’s review of the Hernandez’ comic, which ran in The Comics Journal #67 (October 1981), was the only printed review of the original self-published issue, and its title, “Love, Rockets and Thinking Artists,” revealed the budding publisher’s unbridled enthusiasm for the work of Los Bros. “Love and Rockets is a most impressive debut of, not one, but two very promising young artist-writers,” Groth proclaimed. Shortly after the review was published, Groth offered the brothers an opportunity they couldn’t refuse: their own regular book to showcase their unique style of comics with complete creative freedom. In the early ‘80s, these were rare concessions.

As part of their contract with Fantagraphics, the Hernandez brothers agreed to expand Love and Rockets to 64 pages, so during the latter half of 1981 and the beginning of 1982, all three brothers began working on additional stories to appear in the first issue alongside the 32 pages of material that would be reprinted from their self-published comic. In the meantime, Groth and Fantagraphics began furiously promoting the new series that they hoped would catch fire. In the Summer of 1982, the first Fantagraphics issue debuted at Comic-Con. A few months later, Love and Rockets #1 arrived in comic shops. Retailers had never seen anything like it, and fans did not immediately embrace the series. According to Groth, “I think we only printed about 4,000 copies of the first issue … It was pretty much ignored at first, perhaps due to its unorthodox format and content.” That “unorthodox” format included black-and-white interior pages, which rarely sold well compared to the bright, eye-popping, four-color superhero books, and oversized dimensions (Love and Rockets was a magazine-sized book).

Yet Love and Rockets’ format also signaled just how much of a departure from mainstream comic books this series was. The synergy between Fantagraphics and the Hernandez brothers was one that gelled right from the start. According to Todd Hignite, author of The Art of Jaime Hernandez, “Love and Rockets was the manifestation of what Groth felt comics could be, and the Hernandez brothers were in turn provided with an immediate intellectual context for their work, which truly had no context.”

Jaime’s signature characters, Maggie Chascarrillo and Hopey Glass, debuted in the first issue. Maggie’s endearingly sweet, yet distinctly punk personality, and her complex co-dependent relationship with Hopey, her bombastic best friend and occasional lover, captured the hearts of fans right from the start.

In the third and fourth issues, Gilbert’s “Sopa de Gran Pena” ushered in a new paradigm of more literate story-telling in the series. Of all the stories that appeared in Love and Rockets Volume 1, “Sopa de Gran Pena” was the most important in driving the direction the series eventually took. Spanish for “Heartbreak Soup,” this two-part magic realist tale introduced readers to the fictional Latin American village of Palomar and laid the foundation for Gilbert’s half of the series.

Among the many groundbreaking aspects of “Heartbreak Soup,” its focus on ethnicity was paramount. For most of the history of the American comic book industry, Hispanic characters were depicted in a stereotypical light. “When Hispanic characters are used,” Gilbert observed back in 1984, “they are usually banditos or in a revolution or they’re starving or something like that.” Of course, Gilbert’s decision to tell stories from a Latino perspective was influenced by his own experiences growing up as a Chicano in Southern California, but he was also reacting to the lack of positive Hispanic role models in popular culture. “With Heartbreak Soup, I had an agenda of sorts. I’m trying to get non-Latinos, for lack of a better word, to identify with Latinos as human beings. Simple as that.”

As Love and Rockets’ popularity grew, it was increasingly referenced by enthusiastic fans as evidence of the literary potential of the medium. This excitement is preserved like flies in amber in the series’ letters pages. For example, Roger Wessell wrote that “the label ‘comics’ doesn’t seem to fit anymore, while Jon Turnbow proclaimed that Los Bros had, in just a few issues, ‘literarized the medium.’ As the cartoonist Mark Wheatley pointed out, “With ‘Heartbreak Soup,’ I had an agenda of sorts, I’m trying to get non-Latinos, for lack of a better word, to identify with Latinos as human beings. Simple as that....”
out in the ninth issue, “a new gestalt” was beginning to take hold on the fringes of the comics industry, with the Hernandez brothers leading the charge.

By 1985, Love and Rockets was so popular, the early issues had sold out, leading Fantagraphics to begin reprinting the series in upscale square-bound volumes. Groth recalled, “We were part of an experimental distribution arrangement with Berkley Books. I was convinced that if we could get our graphic novels and book collections in bookstores, they were so obviously good that they would be embraced by the literate reading public.”

By the time Love and Rockets reached its milestone 20th issue, the brothers had become the torchbearers for Groth’s vision of literary comics. For Jaime, it was “The Death of Speedy Ortiz” that permanently elevated his status. For the first time, there was a deeper complexity to his stories, a more ambitious psychological tapestry against which his characters, at that point already well-defined, would come to terms with the hardcore scene’s disintegration and its core premise—how individuals and their communities are affected by social, political, and economic forces—into two wildly ambitious graphic novels, both set in the real world. Mirroring the two halves of his identity, Love and Rockets X took place on Hernandez’s home turf in Southern California, while Poison River was set in several Latin American countries.

At the same time, Jaime’s “Locas” series entered its post-punk phase, culminating in the six-part masterpiece “Wigwam Bam,” in which the characters’ struggles to come to terms with the hardcore scene’s disintegration became the overarching context. In 1990, Love and Rockets again won the Harvey Award for Best Continuing Limited Series, beating out a formidable list of nominees, including Cerebus (Dave Sim), Sandman (Neil Gaiman), Yummy Fur (Chester Brown), Neat Stuff (Peter Bagge), and Animal Man (Grant Morrison).

In 1996, Gilbert and Jaime decided to go solo and ended the first volume of Love and Rockets with its 50th issue. By then the brothers had ascended to the vanguard of the medium and Love and Rockets had become the signature success story in alternative comics, but when the series wrapped, the brothers did not stop to look back. Rather, Gilbert produced a flurry of short stories starting with Girl Crazy, a mélange of sci-fi, superheroes, and B-movies that reads like a distant cousin of “BEM.” Jaime continued where he left off with Whoa Nellie!, another love letter to women’s wrestling. A couple of months later, Gilbert launched New Love, his eclectic one-man anthology series which ran for six issues, while Jaime returned in 1997 with the Maggie and Hopey Color Special. Over the next several years, the indefatigable brothers created a variety of ongoing series and specials, including everything from children’s comics, superheroes, and folk tales to B-movies, autobiographies, and undergrounds.

In 2001, Gilbert, Jaime, and Mario reunited to launch Love and Rockets: New Stories Volume 2, a pamphlet-sized comic book that ran for four issues through 2007. In 2008, the series shifted to an annual bookshelf format called Love and Rockets: New Stories, running for eight years until, in 2016, they returned to their roots and launched Love and Rockets Volume 4, a retro magazine-sized comic that mirrors their early days. Although they had previously been nominated, in 2014 Jaime and Gilbert won their first-ever Eisner Awards: Jaime for Best Writer/Artist behind his work in Love & Rockets: New Stories #6, and Gilbert for Best Short Story for that same issue’s “Untitled.” In 2017, the brothers were inducted into the Eisner Awards Hall of Fame.

Four decades after it began, Love and Rockets is still going strong, yet everything else about the comics industry has changed. Since it began in 1982, alternative comics in the United States have mushroomed from a scattered scene of talented enthusiasts into a booming industry. Today, the awareness of, passion for, and overall level of creativity in the medium far exceeds any point in its history. There are thousands of creators, hundreds of publishers, and countless schools devoted to teaching the craft of cartooning. Comics from around the world are routinely translated, and all the masterpieces of the past have been exhumed and lovingly repackaged for modern audiences. Colleges and universities have integrated comics studies into their curricula, and Hollywood studios mine comics past and present for film ideas. Of course, it is unfair to single out the Hernandez
"(WE'RE JUST) HAPPY TO HAVE BROKEN DOWN A ROADBLOCK WITH THE KIND OF COMICS THAT WE WANTED TO DO. I'M PRETTY PROUD OF THE FACT THAT SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS DOING OUR OWN KIND OF COMIC INSPIRED AND OPENED UP DOORS FOR SO MANY OTHER PEOPLE."

brothers as solely responsible for this cultural revolution, but their partnership with Fantagraphics was an unprec- edented success that kicked the gates open for future generations of cartoonists. "(We're just) happy to have broken down a roadblock with the kind of comics that we wanted to do," Gilbert reflected, when prematurely asked to describe Love and Rockets' legacy in 2012. "I'm pretty proud of the fact that something as simple as doing our own kind of comic inspired and opened up doors for so many other people."

As they enter their fifth decade in comics, the brothers remain among the most versatile, visionary, and prolific artists ever to work in the medium. Love and Rockets not only stands as some of the most compelling sequential art ever created, it ranks among the most important artistic achievements in American popular culture.

Marc Sobel is the two-time Eisner-nominated editor of The Love and Rockets Companion (Fantagraphics) and the author of Brighter Than You Think: Ten Short Works by Alan Moore (Uncivilized Books). His new book, The Love and Rockets Reader, focusing on the first volume of the Hernandez brothers' classic series, is forthcoming from Fantagraphics.
I was fortunate to witness the birth of The Rocketeer. The character was created in the confines of my studio by the abundantly talented Dave Stevens.

Dave and I had met several times at Comic-Con prior to his joining my La Brea studio. Now here was a charmed guy, I thought. He’s got the looks of Tyrone Power on top of these amazing art skills.

I had been working as Russ Manning’s assistant on the Tarzan of the Apes Sunday and daily newspaper strips. Russ was taken by surprise when, in 1971, I left him for a few weeks to join a hippy caravan to an eight-day rock festival in Louisiana. My art career outside of Russ had also begun to take off. Russ needed a regular assistant who wouldn’t run away with the circus, so a few years later Russ eventually replaced me with Dave. Russ proved to be a great and very kind and generous mentor to us both. Dave also worked with Russ on the Star Wars newspaper strips. It was quite appropriate that Dave Stevens was awarded Comic-Con’s very first Russ Manning Newcomer Award in 1982.

Stevens was an integral part of the early years of Comic-Con. He regularly inked Jack Kirby’s contributions (usually pencil drawings that Jack had created for the show’s program book or badge art) to the Con.

Dave and I hit it off from the start. We had that Manning training and history going for both of us as well as a passion for the art of Jack Kirby, Frank Frazetta, Al Williamson, Russ Heath, and Reed Crandall. When Dave discovered Crandall’s early work, he told me it was like finding the father he never knew he had.

Dave and I exhibited next door to each other at Comic-Con for years and I eventually took over Dave’s space when his fatal illness began exerting a toll on him.

It was the brilliant sci-fi and fantasy painter Richard Hescox who originally invited Dave to join our studio. I rented out the front room space to Richard; he split it: half for himself and half for Dave. A casual goal of ours was to become the west coast version of The Studio, an east coast art phenomenon populated by the incredibly talented artists Bernie Wrightson, Barry Smith, Jeffrey (Catherine) Jones, and the guy who would become one of Dave’s very best friends, Michael Kaluta.
During our studio’s beginning, I had loads of extra work, some of which I was able to pass on to Richie and Dave. The two talented artists very quickly began getting jobs on their own and our studio took off. We were suddenly one of the hottest places for entertainment talent to visit in Los Angeles.

A parade of creative folks came through our workplace for well over a decade: famous directors, producers, actors, comedians, writers, artists, and musicians. I connected Dave with John Landis and Michael Jackson, who hired Stevens to storyboard Michael’s “Thriller” video.

Then, I recommended Dave to Steven Spielberg to take over from me (I was already engaged on the Conan the Barbarian movie) as the storyboard artist for Raiders of the Lost Ark.

Meanwhile, Dave was hard at work in between jobs creating The Rocketeer. It was a joy to come to work each day and see what Dave had drawn the previous evening. Dave’s art had ascended to a new level, rivaling any comics work that had been done in the past. His brushmanship as an inker began to approach a Frazetta level of quality. His writing was superb; in addition to the 1930s serial-like drama of each story arc, the panels joyfully included Dave’s great sense of humor.

One of Dave’s non-1930s obsessions was the 1950s pin-up queen Bettie Page, whom he cast as the Rocketeer’s girlfriend, Betty. Despite the risqué nature of so many of her photos, Page always seemed to beam with a happy fresh-faced cheer and innocence. I had an old 16mm projector at the studio on which Stevens used to show us his collection of Bettie movies in the evenings.

The popularity of The Rocketeer comic book and Dave’s delectable and recognizable renderings of Bettie brought a new focus of public interest and attention to Page, single-handedly reviving her career. I think if it wasn’t for Dave, Page might have been forgotten forever.

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But, I've read all the papers on it—seems simple enough, anyway...

I really don't have much of a choice at this point...

...or the wildest ride of my life.

This could be a quick ticket to hell...

CONTINUED...
NEXT CHAPTER.
Dave Stevens: Drawn to Perfection is a new feature-length documentary celebrating Dave’s brilliant art and life. While carving out his own unique corner of importance in comic book and illustration art, he showed the world what it’s like to pursue the life of a creative individual. The debut screening is at Comic-Con on Saturday night in Room 29AB.

There was a lot of interest in turning The Rocketeer into a movie from directors like Spielberg and Steve Miner. Miner met Dave not long after he had made me the production designer for Miner’s American Godzilla: King of the Monsters film project. We hired special makeup effects genius Rick Baker to create a large robotic Godzilla head. The legendary Dave Allen was brought aboard to perform the stop-motion animation effects we needed. Our Godzilla was not going to be a guy in a baggy rubber suit. I also hired Dave and one of Dave’s best friends, Doug Wildey (the creator of Jonny Quest), to help storyboard the film.

Dave had worked with Wildey in the animated cartoon business and they were the best of friends. In fact, he based the Rocketeer’s Pevvy character completely on Wildey. Richard Hescox’s wife Alice posed for the Bulldog Cafe’s Miller, Dave Stevens, of course, was Cliff Secord, a.k.a., The Rocketeer.

We spent about two years on the ill-fated Godzilla film project. It was going to be a very expensive film with special effects in almost every shot. At that time, four big budget films (Heaven’s Gate being the most notable of the batch) had just flopped. So, all of the studios were rejecting any big budget film projects at the time. Everyone involved in our Godzilla project licked their wounds as we returned to our freelance lives.

Then, finally, the Walt Disney Company expressed interest in producing The Rocketeer. They chose a fine director for the project: Joe (Honey, I Shrink the Kids) Johnston. Joe fought hard to retain every aspect of Dave’s wondrous vision. Stevens became a hands-on producer on the film, mostly to protect his baby. The Rocketeer took an abysmally nine months to make. At the Hollywood premiere of The Rocketeer I congratulated Dave and warned him about the forthcoming post-par t rum blues that accompanies each film release. I advised him to jump into his next project as soon as possible. In making The Rocketeer, the production rented the only Gee Bee Racer (a ludicrously dangerous airplane) still in functioning existence. After the film had been shot, Johnston considered buying the plane, perhaps to use in a Rocketeer sequel. He consulted with Disney who advised him not to buy it. As soon as Joe had backed away from the deal, Disney snuck in and purchased it the plane anyway.

Rocketeer trivia note: Dave Stevens briefly appears in the movie. He’s the Nazi who explodes. The Rocketeer movie is a joy to watch. It is amazing to contemplate that there are no CGI effects in the film at all—CGI hadn’t been invented yet. All of the special effects are Old Hollywood movie tricks, something that Joe, Dave, and I loved. The new print, struck for The Rocketeer’s 20th anniversary, is gorgeous. It looks better than the movie looked at its premiere. Unfortunately, Dave did not live to see this print; he passed away in March 2008 after a long battle with leukemia.

Sitting next to Johnston at the anniversary event held on June 21, 2011, I saw him being amazed by the quality of the film. It had been 20 years since he had seen it and I guess he had forgotten just how great it was.

Dave’s mom was invited to attend that anniversary screening. A nicely designed pop-up Rocketeer museum was set up for the event. Many of Dave’s friends and the folks involved in the making of The Rocketeer were in attendance. We had a panel hosted by Kevin Smith just prior to the screening. It gave us all great pleasure for her to see how much her son was idolized, revered and loved for himself and his creations. We felt emotionally touched that she got to witness that entire theater full of love for Dave on that special night.

Dave’s mother died the very next day.

Dave Stevens lived nine years longer than his doctors had predicted. His friends and fans savored his presence; he always seemed to be smiling or laughing. I got used to seeing him each year at Comic-Con. It often seemed like he had beaten the damned leukemia and we occasionally forgot that he might be leaving us soon.

Leave us he did, though, but not before his creation of a comic book and movie legend that touched us all: The Rocketeer.
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Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards Nominations 2022

Best Short Story
• “Funeral in Foam,” by Casey Gilly and Raina Telgemeier, in You Died: An Anthology of the Afterlife (Iron Circus)
• “Generations,” by Daniel Warren Johnson, in Superman: Red & Blue #5 (DC)
• “I Wanna Be a Slob,” by Michael Jamison and Steven Arnold, in Too Tired to Die (Birdcage Bottom Books)
• “Tap, Tap, Tap,” by Larry Niven and Jorge Fornés, in Green Arrow 80th Anniversary Special #5 (DC)
• “Trickster, Traitor, Dummy,” by Richard Tynes, in Wolfvendaughter, translation by Dave Sim and Kim Anderrson (SelfMadeHero)

Best Single Issue/One-Shot
• Man’s Voice: Identity #1, edited by Daren Shan (Marvel)
• Mouse Guard: The Owls een’s Caregiver and Other Tales, by David Petersen (BOOM! Studios)
• Nightwing #88: “Get Grayson,” by Tom Taylor and Bruno Redondo (DC)

Best New Series
• Bitter Root, by David F. Walker, Chuck Brown, and Sanford Greene (Image)
• The Department of Truth, by James Tynion IV and Martin Simmonds (Image)
• Immortal Hulk, by Al Ewing, Joe Bennett, et al. (Marvel)
• Nightwing, by Tom Taylor and Bruno Redondo (DC)
• Something Is Killing the Children, by James Tynion IV and Werther Dell’Edera (BOOM! Studios)

Best Limited Series
• Beta Ray Bill: Argent Star, by Daniel Warren Johnson (Marvel)
• The Good Asian, by Pornsak Pichetshote and Alexandre Tefenkgi (Image)
• Hocus Pocus, by Richard Wisenman, Rick Riordan, and Jordan Collier, hocuspocus-comic.spaces.com
• The Many Deaths of Lalia Starr, by Rem V and Fijipe Andrade (BOOM! Studios)
• Steer Dogs, by Tony Fleecs and Trish Forstner (Image)
• Surprent: Woman of Tomorrow, by Tom King and Bilquis Evely (DC)

Best New Books
• The Human Target, by Tom King and Greg Smallwood (DC)
• The Nice House on the Lake, by James Tynion IV and Álvaro Martínez Bueno (DC Black Label)
• Not All Robots, by Mark Russell and Mike Deodato Jr. (AWA Upholt)
• Rainbow Bridge, by Steve Orlando, Steve Foxe, and Valentine Brancati (AfterShock)
• Saving Soraya: Chang and the Sun Bear, by Trang Nguyen and Jeet Zdung (Dial Books for Young Readers)

Best Humor Publication
• Bubbles, by Jordan Morris, Sarah Morgan, and Tony Cliff (First Second/Macmillan)
• Cyropolita Erotica, by Aminder Dhaliwal (Drawn & Quarterly)
• Not All Robots, by Mark Russell and Mike Deodato Jr. (AWA Upholt)
• The Sphumug, by Rick Remender and various (Image)

Best Publication for Teens
• Adora and the Distance, by Marc Bernardin and Ariel Kristanina (Comixology Originals)
• Clockwork Curandera, vol. 1: The Witch Owl Parliament, by David Bowles and Raúl the Third (Tu Books)/Lee & Low Books
• The Legend of Auntie Po, by Shing Yen Khor (Katoka/Penguin Random House)
• Monster Friends, by Kaeti Vandorn (Random House Graphic)
• Tiny Tails: Shell Quest, by Steph Waido (HarperAlley)

Best Publication for Kids
• Alleogyn, by Megan L. Lloyd and Michelle Mee Nutter (Scholastic)
• Four-Fisted Tales: Animals in Combat, by Ben Towle (Dread Reckoning)
• Rainbow Bridge, by Steve Orlando, Steve Foxe, and Valentine Brancati (AfterShock)
• Save the Soraya: Chang and the Sun Bear, by Trang Nguyen and Jeet Zdung (Dial Books for Young Readers)
• The Science of Surfing: A Surfside Comic, by Dave Sim and Carson Grubba (Living the Line)

Best Anthology
• Flash Forward: An Illustrated Guide to Possible (And Not So Possible) Tomorrows, by Rose Halvorsen and various, edited by Laura Donner (Abrams ComiXology)
• My Only Child, by Wang Ning and various, edited by Wang Sall, translation by Emma Massara (LCAll-Fanfare Top Prett)
• The Silver Coin, by Michael Walsh and various (Image)
• Superman: Red & Blue, edited by Jamie S. Rich, Brittany Holzhauser, and Diesg Lopez (DC)
• You Died: An Anthology of the Afterlife, edited by Kel McDonald and Andrea Purrell (Iron Circus)

Best Reality-Based Work
• The Black Panther Party: A Graphic History, by David F. Walker and Marcus Kwame Anderson (Ten Speed Press)
• Haken’s Odyssey, Book 1: From Syria to Turkey, by Fabien Toulme, translation by Hannah Chute (Graphic Mundi/Penn State University Press)
• The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, by J.B. Priestley, translated by Jocelyne Allen (VIZ Media)

Best Graphic Album—New
• Ballad For Sophie, by Filip Melo and Juan Cavia, translation by Gabriela Soares (Top Shelf)
• Destroy All Monsters (A Reckless Book), by Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips (Image)
• Meadowland: A Coming-of-Age Memoir, by Ethan Hawke and Greg Ruth (Grand Central Publishing)
• Monstrous, by Barry Windsor-Smith (Fantagraphics)

Best Graphic Album—Preprint
• The Complete American Gods, by Neil Gaiman, P. Craig Russell, and Scott Hampton (Dark Horse)

Best Graphic Memoir
• Factory Summers, by Guy Delisle, translated by Helge Dascher and Rob Nixon (Drawn & Quarterly)
• Parenthood, by Elliee Durand, translation by Emma Massara (LCAll-Fanfare Top Prett)

Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Asia
• Chainsaw Man, by Tatsuki Fujimoto, translation by Amanda Halsey (VIZ Media)
• Rurouni Kenshin, by Masamune Shirow, translation by Dave Reynolds (VIZ Media)

Best U.S. Edition of International Material
• Ballad For Sophie, by Filip Melo and Juan Cavia, translation by Gabriela Soares (Top Shelf)
• Between Snow and Wolf, by Agnes Domergue and Helene Canac, translation by Mania Vahrehnbor (Magnetic)

Best Adaptation from Another Medium
• After the Rain, by Nirei Okoaraf, adapted by John Jennings and Dami Brame (Megalops/Abrams ComiXology)
• Bubble by Jordan Morris, Sarah Morgan, and Tony Cliff (First Second/Macmillan)

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• “I Wanna Be a Slob,” by Michael Jamison and Steven Arnold, in Too Tired to Die (Birdcage Bottom Books)
• “Tap, Tap, Tap,” by Larry Niven and Jorge Fornés, in Green Arrow 80th Anniversary Special #5 (DC)
• “Trickster, Traitor, Dummy,” by Richard Tynes, in Wolfvendaughter, translation by Dave Sim and Kim Anderrson (SelfMadeHero)
Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards Nominations 2022

Best Archival Collection/Project—Strips
- Friday Foster: The Sunday Strips, by Jim Lawrence and Jorge Longarín, edited by Christopher Marlon, Rich Young, and Kevin Ketner (Ablaze)
- Trots and Bonnie, by Shary Fienkien, edited by Norman Hathaway (New York Review Comics)
- The Way of Zen, adapted and illustrated by C. C. Tsiol, translated by Brian Bruya (Pineapple University Press)

Best Archival Collection/Project—Comic Books
- EC Covers Artist’s Edition, by Scott Dunbier (IDW)
- Farewell, Bradavonite, by Tardis, translation by Jenna Allen, edited by Conrad Groth (Fantagraphics)
- Uncle Scrooge: Island in the Sky, by Carl Barks, edited by J. Michael Catron (Fantagraphics)

Best Writer
- Ed Brubaker, Destroy All Monsters, Friend of the Devil (Image)
- Kelly Sue DeConnick, Wonder Woman: The Amazons Book One (DC)
- Filipe Melo, Ballad for Sophie (Top Shelf)
- Ran V, The Many Deaths of Laila Starr (BOOM! Studios), The Swamp Thing (DC), Cagim: Black, White & Blood (Venom (Marvel)
- James Tyrson IV, House of Slaughter, Something is Killing the Children, Wynd (BOOM! Studios); The Nice House on the Lake, The Joler, Batman, DC Pride 2021 (DC), The Department of Truth (Image), Blue Book, Razorblades (Tiny Onion Studios)

Best Writer/Artist
- Alison Bechdel, superhero (Mariner Books)
- Junji Ito, Deserter (Fantagraphics)
- Daniel Warren Johnson, Superman: Red & Blue (DC), Beta Ray Bill (Marvel)
- Will Midlands, In A Graphic Novel (Mariner Books)
- Barry Windsor-Smith, Monsters (Fantagraphics)

Best Comic Strip
- Kurt Busiek, Astro City (Image Skybound)
- Outland, by Esad Ribic, Marvels (Marvel)
- Uncle Scrooge, by J.oscott Mallory
- The Many Deaths of Laila Starr (BOOM! Studios)
- The Nice House on the Lake, The Joler, Batman, DC Pride 2021 (DC), The Department of Truth (Image), Blue Book, Razorblades (Tiny Onion Studios)

Best Penciller/Inker or Penciller/Inker Team
- Filipe Andrade, The Many Deaths of Laila Starr (BOOM! Studios)
- Phil Jimenez, Wonder Woman: The Amazons (DC)
- Bruno Redondo, Nightwing (DC)
- Esad Ribic, Eternals (Marvel)

Best Painter/Multimedia Artist (interior art)
- Federico Bertolucci, Brindille, Love: The Mastiff (Manga about Love)
- John Bolton, Heft’s Flaw (Fregen Arts Engeement)
- Juan Cavia, Ballad for Sophie (Top Shelf)
- Frank Pe, Little Nemo (Manga)
- Beana Sudarcian, The Lost Sunday (Pronoia AB)
- Sana Takeda, Monsters (Image)

Best Cover Artist
- Jen Bartel, Future State: Immortal Wonder Woman #1 (DC), Wonder Woman 100th Anniversary (DC); Women’s History Month variant covers (Marvel)
- David Mack, Nymoth Mythology (Dark Horse)
- Bruno Redondo, Nightwing (DC)
- Alex Ross, Black Panther, Captain America, Captain America: Iron Man #2, Immortal Hulk, Iron Man, The U.S. Of The Marvels (Marvel)

Best Lettering
- Wes Abbott, Future State, Nightwing, Suicide Squad, Wonder Woman Black & Gold (Marvel)
- Clayton Cawley, The Amazons, Batman, Batman/Catwoman, Strange Adventures, Wonder Woman Historia (DC), Adventurerama (Image)
- Daredevil, Eternals, King in Black, Strange Academy, Venom, X-Men Hickman, X-Men Duggan (Marvel)

Best Creative-Related Periodical/Journalism
- Alter Ego, edited by Roy Thomas (TwoMorrows)
- The Columbus Scribbler, edited by Brian Canin, Jack Wallace, and Steve Steiner, columbuscribbler.com
- Fanbase Press, edited by Barbra Dillon, fanbasepress.com
- fc2.com, edited by Tucker Stone and Joe McCulloch (Fantagraphics)
- WomenWriteAboutComics, edited by Wendy Brown and Nola Phau (WWWAC)

Best Comics-Related Book
- All of the Marvels, by Douglas Wolk (Penguin Press)
- The Art of Thai Comics: A Century of Strips and Stripes, by Nicolas Verstappen (River Books)
- Fantastic Four No. 1: Panel by Panel, by Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Chip Kidd, and Geoff Spar (Abrams ComicArts)
- True Believer: The Rise and Fall of Stan Lee, by Abraham Reisman (Crown)

Best Academic/Scholarly Work
- Comics and the Origins of Manga: A Revisionist History, by Eike Ener (Rutgers University Press)
- The Life and Comics of Howard Cruse: Taking Risks in the Service of Truth, by Andrew J. Kianka (Rutgers University Press)
- Mysterious Travellers: Steve Ditko and the Search for a New Legal Identity, by Zack Kruse (University Press of Mississippi)
- Rebirth of the English Comic Strip: A Kaleidoscope, 1867–1870, by David Kunde (University Press of Mississippi)

Best Digital Comic
- Days of Sand, by Aimee de Jongh, translation by Christopher Bradley (Europe Comics)
- Everyone is Tulp, by Dave Baker and Nicole Goux, eveyones-tulp.com
- It’s Jeff, by Kelly Thompson and Gunhru (Marvel)
- Love After World Domination 1-3, by Hiroshi Noda and Takanori Watanuki, translation by Steven LeCroy (Kodansha)
- Snow Angels, by Jeff Lemire and Joelle Jones, translation by Joelle Jones (Oni Press)

Best Publisher
- The Complete Lives and Deaths of Scrooge McDuck Deluxe Edition, designed by Justin Allan-Spencer (Fantagraphics)
- Crashpad, designed by Gary Panter and Justin Allan-Spencer (Fantagraphics)
- Machine Gun Kelly’s Hotel Diablo, designed by Tyler Boss (IDW)
- Spider-Man vol. 1: 1962–1964 (TASCHEN)
- Popeye vol. 1 by E.C. Segar, designed by Jacob Covey (Fantagraphics)

Hall of Fame Inductees chosen by judges:
- Max Gaines
- Mark Gruenwald
- Marie Duval
- Rose O’Neill
- Alex Nino
- P. Craig Russell

Nominees:
- Howard Chaykin
- Gerry Conway
- Kevin Eastman
- Steve Englehart
- Moto Hagio
- Larry Hama
- Jeffrey Catherine Jones
- David Mazziotti
- Jean-Claude Mézières
- Grant Morrison
- Gaspar Saladino
- Jim Shooter
- Gary Trudue
- Ron Turner
- George Tuska
- Mark Wat!
- Cat Yronwode
Due to COVID-19, the 2020 and 2021 awards were given out in virtual ceremonies online as part Comic-Con@Home. We are pleased to acknowledge the winners below.
IN MEMORIAM

NEAL ADAMS: A FORCE OF NATURE (1941–2022) by Paul Levitz

Comic books lost a force of nature. Neal Adams was a magnificent artist, but that might have been the least of his talents. It would have been enough if he had just been an artist, of course: being one of the two newcomers to comics in the 1960s (with Jim Steranko) that rekindled the aspirations of a generation to reshape the pages of comics; drawing the definitive Batman that Neal would argue with his customary modesty would make possible billions of dollars of revenue for the company; moving the world of American comic art back from design (exemplified by Carmine Infantino) and exaggerated cartooning (as leaped from the pencil of Jack Kirby) to a new balance of dynamism and illustration, and entertaining so many millions of us.

Neal was unstoppable. Barred from showing his portfolio at DC by production artist Walter Hurlie, check, told not to ruin his life by going into comics by legendary writer-artist-entrepreneur Joe Simon, Neal persevered. If the path into comics required Archie gag pages or Jerry laws stories at DC, he'd do them as well as he executed Ben Casey for the newspapers. It was all a path to what he most wanted to do, and nothing could block him.

I met him through his art when I was 11—a startling departure from Murphy Anderson’s beautiful but very traditional work that had previously filled the pages of The Spectre, and that may have made him the first comic artist whose name I noticed. His talent began to explode on covers as well, a shocking combination of the designs of then-new DC cover editor Carmine Infantino and Neal’s powerful characters interacting in ways that simply weren’t very DC. I followed him through Green Lantern/Green Arrow,现代化 and at once more traditional and outlandish, and his take on Batman in The Brave and The Bold, encountering his groundbreaking collaboration with Denny O’Neil on Green Lantern/Green Arrow, and crossed over to delight in his X-Men and Avengers at Marvel.

What I didn’t know is that as Neal began shaking up the look of comics, he began devoting much of his energy to shaking up the processes. Creative companies and the creators was an immeasurable gap, and at its base waited likely consequences. The disparity of power between the owners of the comics publishing company, the results were less than epic, and the dealings from that open door would be longer than this document, but just start with Frank Miller, Bill Sinkiewicz, Denys Cowan … so, so many more. Like all of us, he was impatient and enigmatic. When he briefly formed a comics publishing company, the results were less epic, and the dealings with talent didn’t always live up to the principles he’d campaigned for publishers to adopt. But we got Bushy O’Hair out of it.

He was idiosyncratic: he wore cornflower blue shirts like a uniform to business meetings and conventions, having researched that it was the color that made him most convincing. Beaming with a smile as he presided over his convention bylines, neuralized, or Warren or Gold Key, opening the door with a phone call ahead that had the power of the most powerful力, the list of people who benefitted from that open door would be longer than this document, but just start with Frank Miller, Bill Sinkiewicz, Denys Cowan … so, so many more.

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Marv Wolfman and George Pérez at the 2006 Comic-Con. (Photo: Jackie Estrada)

One day in 1964, a nine-year old kid from Chicago picked up his first comic. That wasn’t so unique. Kids everywhere had been plunking down bottle deposit refunds on funnybooks for decades. But what made this kid’s impulse purchase different is in the way it eventually ended up impacting, significantly, the destiny of many nascent writers and artists than I can count.

From that day forward, Brian Augustyn grew up loving comics and wanted to be part of that world. After college, he became an industry professional as an editor for ‘Fan Studios’ (follwed, then went on to edit ‘Green Ronin’ and ‘Mighty World of Heroes’ Comics. In 1987, at age 32, he joined the editorial staff at DC Comics alongside a fresh class of ambitious twenty-somethings and immediately established himself as the wisest elder statesperson of the group — and think me much of it. I say this because I was one of those tyros, and very early on, Brian became not only my best friend but my older brother, which — as a headstrong, opinionated kid who led with his face — I very dearly needed. Brian’s primary role in our relationship was to keep me from running into traffic. This, I should add, was a role he maintained throughout my fifties.

While on staff, Brian and I teamed up to write a couple of scripts, but he didn’t need me — anyone who’s read his 1989 masterpiece with Mike Mignola and P. Craig Russell, Batman: Gotham By Gaslight, knows this. Still, we shared a profound enthusiasm for storytelling, and he saw something worth celebrating in me. Brian had a keen eye for spotting diamonds in the rough. He took deserved pride in using his editorial role to forever change the lives of aspiring creators. Mike Parabuck, Mike Wieringo, Dicar Jimenez, Dan Robertson, Travis Charest … that’s only a partial list of pros who got their big break from Brian. As an editor for DC’s impact line, he likewise worked with — and brought out the best in — newcomers like Tom Lyle, Tom Artis, Grant Miehm, Len Strazewski, and — for good or ill — me.

In 1992, Brian handed me the job of writing The Flash. Together, for the next eight years — first as editor and writer, later as official co-writer — we worked together on some near-daily phone calls to plot that month’s Flash adventure, and I can say without exaggeration that what came out of those sessions led me to every other professional opportunity I’ve ever enjoyed. In all that time, there never was a single issue without a long, energetic conversation where the two of us tried to figure out some never-ending, impossible question. The Flash has a profound enthusiasm for storytelling, and he saw something worth molding. Brian was a great storyteller. He could plus a scene by adding just the right touch. One of the best scenes in The New Teen Titans was of a young boy in a park walking up to Cyborg, who was afraid that the boy would be scared by all of Vic’s robotic parts. Instead, the boy held up his own prosthetic hand, bringing them together, and showing they were more than just different. That was George taking a good scene and making it so much stronger.

Someone who made you instantly feel not like a stranger but more like a niece or nephew or cousin or aunt or uncle that you simply didn’t remember you had and now can’t remember a time when your lives weren’t joined. You needed something, he was there to help you. With whatever was required. Often putting his own needs aside in order to help his brand-new sister/brother from another mother.

You may have started out as a fan of his profession — or work but you became a family member. He was one of those people who truly could just get better and better how long he knew you. I’ve done lots of cons and at pretty much all of them, someone will come by and, knowing that George and I not only worked together but were friends, they’d tell me their story about how the Superman of Earth-2 became such an important part of their lives. Everyone whom he saved from some difficulty or how they just loved being with him and his wonderful wife, Carol, because they were and are true, good people who also made you feel good about yourself.

I don’t know how George did it, but God, he had that ability. He was the kind of person everyone just liked. A young kid in a homemade Teen Titans Gor costume would come up to him at a con, and George would not only sign their books, he’d chop out of his chair and get someone to take photos of them and entertain the kids they did. I think kids especially liked George because he was a big kid himself. They were essentially the same.

Just like that kid.

And that’s just one of the thousands of reasons why George was so beloved, not only by the fans, but by his fellow professionals, too. Yes, they, too, loved his art, but they loved him for being his unique and generous and caring self even more.

Now he’s gone. And far too young.

Love to you, Carol.

Love to you, George.

We will miss you forever.

Mark Wolfman, as co-founder, managing editor, American comic book writer best known for his long runs on The Tomb of Dracula, for creating Blade for Marvel Comics, and for The New Teen Titans at DC Comics.

When I think of George Pérez, I think of two different people. The first is the one everyone here knows. The artist. The amazing illustrator who could find a way to draw anything asked of him no matter how complex or impossible it seemed.

This is George the wizard. The artist who not only drew beautiful pictures — and yes, his drawings were beautiful and magnificent and powerful and sensitive, and heartfelt, somehow at all the same time — but as an artist in comics he understood that as a storyteller his job was to visually engage the reader and to tell a story that would reel them in and never let go, and he did that better than just about anyone.

He drew people you could believe were real. Every man, woman, child or even alien species, was unique. For years comics treated female characters as pretty much identical except for hair color, and male characters all possessed the same set of 12-pack muscles, but everyone George drew had their own physique, facial structure, and unique way or standing and moving.

Crisis on Infinite Earths was a comic that the two of us worked on together, me — as co-planner and writer — and George as co-plotter and artist. George not only drew every single character. He decided he was going to draw comics and he taught himself how. He became an artist. He decided he was going to make it as a comic book artist, absolutely determined that he was going to make it as a comic book artist, and he did that better than pretty much anyone.

One everyone here knows. The artist. The amazing illustrator who could find a way to draw anything asked of him no matter how complex or impossible it seemed.

He was a loyal friend, a wise counsel, and he wholeheartedly embodied the role he maintained through my fifties. That’s a straightforward sentence that should not be surprising. Yes, we’d been friends for close to 50 years, and collaborators on so many wonderful projects, but the reason I say being George’s friend is not surprising is because if you ever met him, he very quickly became your friend, too.

I don’t mean friend just in name. You knew, you had, “Hey, friend. How are you?”

It was of the Superman from Earth-1, but was his own self. Somehow George was driven to make both Superman different yet both definitely Superman. 40-plus years later I still don’t know how he did that.

He was the kind of person everyone just liked. A young kid in a homemade Teen Titans Gor costume would come up to him at a con, and George would not only sign their books, he’d chop out of his chair and get someone to take photos of them and entertain the kids they did. I think kids especially liked George because he was a big kid himself. They were essentially the same.

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Crisis on Infinite Earths was a comic that the two of us worked on together, me — as co-planner and writer — and George as co-plotter and artist. The book literally had hundreds of characters, and George not only drew every single one, but were all well-drawn and fully in character. Superman of Earth-2 was not just an older version of the Superman from Earth-1, but was his own self. Somehow George was driven to make both Superman different yet both definitely Superman.

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Anne Bernstein, an influential and talented cartoonist, illustrator, comics editor, and magazine and animation writer, passed away in February at age 68 in Brooklyn, New York, from complications of Multiple System Atrophy.

Anne is most known to many as a writer for the MTV's Daria, but among many other creative and professional highlights, she was an important figure in comics, including contributing to the earliest issues of Drown & Quarterly magazine. She drew the cover to the first issue of that seminal anthology as well as contributing to many of its early issues. Later she created and edited Nickelodeon Magazine's comic sections (called The Comic Book), a vibrant and creator-driven portion of that periodical that harnessed the power and inspired silliness of alternative cartoonists, many of whom had never drawn a story for kids before.

Anne grew up in Rockville Center on Long Island's South Shore and attended New York's School of Visual Arts from 1979 to 1983, where she majored in design. During the 1980s she did layouts at Redbook magazine, drew freelance illustration and comics, and wrote for the comedy group A-game, and her A-game was near perfect. She would turn in comics, articles, scripts and they'd need almost no editing. She was kind, generous, and supportive. She broke new ground for women in comics and animation and was usually better than all the men in the room. But also: She was so fun. She was the first person you wanted to find the new coolest neighborhood, shops, flea markets, out-of-town day trips. She had the most interesting collections and clothes and furniture. She always looked great. And most of all, Anne loved life. As someone who knew her not that well but who admired and liked her tremendously, I can say yes. She really did. Life was an adventure full of possibilities for Anne. You got that whenever you talked to her or saw her at a party talking about comics or art or swing dancing. And she loved bringing people along on her journeys. I've written a bunch about Anne after her passing, and I'll never get across who she was quite well enough. Comics has lost someone very important and in many ways selfless. Someone who championed the best cartoonists when the world didn't care all that much, because she knew it was right and she knew we all have fun reading their comics.

Anne Bernstein (right) with Megan Kato and Heidi MacDonald at the 1998 Comic-Con. (Photo: Heidi MacDonald)

Chris Duffy has written comic books for Marvel and DC and has edited comics and graphic novels for Nickelodeon Magazine, United Plankton Pictures, DC Comics, and First Second, where he edited the New York Times bestseller Fairy Tale Comics.

Chris Duffy (right) with his wife Angela and his daughter Booker at the 2022 San Diego Comic-Con. (Photo: Jackie Estrada)

Meloney Crawford came of age as a comic book fan at a time when young women comics fans were still very much a minority. She belonged to a circle of peers largely united by their admiration of and eventual friendship with the writer Don McGregor. The group included Dean Mullaney, Mark Gruenwald, Peter Sanderson, Peter Gillis, Richard Bruning, and Frank Lovece, all of whom went on to become professionals in the field.

Meloney was a voracious reader beyond comics. She attended Temple University Law School in Philadelphia, where she graduated in 1981. A career in law, legal publishing, and sales followed. In the 1980s, she was successfully selling online law libraries long before most people had even heard of the internet. In 1991, she made a major career shift into comics. She joined Nickelodeon, the Nick Magazine audience, and her A-game was near perfect. She would turn in comics, articles, scripts and they’d need almost no editing. She was kind, generous, and supportive. She broke new ground for women in comics and animation and was usually better than all the men in the room. But also: She was so fun. She was the first person you wanted to find the new coolest neighborhood, shops, flea markets, out-of-town day trips. She had the most interesting collections and clothes and furniture. She always looked great. And most of all, Anne loved life. As someone who knew her not that well but who admired and liked her tremendously, I can say yes. She really did. Life was an adventure full of possibilities for Anne. You got that whenever you talked to her or saw her at a party talking about comics or art or swing dancing. And she loved bringing people along on her journeys. I've written a bunch about Anne after her passing, and I'll never get across who she was quite well enough. Comics has lost someone very important and in many ways selfless. Someone who championed the best cartoonists when the world didn't care all that much, because she knew it was right and she knew we all have fun reading their comics.

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Meloney at the 1998 San Diego Comic-Con. (Photo: Jackie Estrada)
REMEMBERING ANN EISNER (1923–2020) by Denis Kitchen

Ann Eisner died at the age of 97 in 2020. The vast majority of fans reading this souvenir book didn’t know Ann, or maybe only saw her superficially at a convention or two, perhaps when she sat proudly during SDCC’s annual Will Eisner Awards ceremony where her husband took center stage for many years. So perhaps the best way to remember Ann and to provide some insight about her is to tell an anecdote or two. One of my favorite memories must be told in three distinct but linked parts.

Part One
Some time in the early 1970s I visited the Eisner’s home in White Plains, NY for the first time, as a dapper guest. I had already made a business arrangement with Will allowing Kitchen Sink Press to reprint some of his classic Spirit stories. Ann prepared dinner. As the three of us engaged in table conversation, I turned to Ann at one point and very innocently asked, “What’s your favorite Spirit story?”

There was silence. A long moment passed. Will said nothing either. Then she replied, “I’ve never read any Spirit stories.”

She no doubt saw my eyes widen and my jaw hit the plate and she realized that she’d shocked the young fanboy. Ann then followed with a shoulder shrug and said, “Whatever is your favorite Spirit story?”

“Spirit,” I said, “the all-time great.”

It was brilliant and put everything in proper perspective about their happy relationship. Will was a multifaceted and cultured man, as was the better-educated Ann. Whenever I saw them together at their home they discussed politics and history and theater and cultural matters, but Will never “talked shop” with her, and he never expected her to have any particular interest in comics.

When Ann married Will in 1950, comic books were under withering public attack and were looked down upon by nearly all adults. The Spirit, of course, was not technically a comic book, it was a comic section inserted into Sunday newspapers and not a pulp magazine. When she was just getting to know Will, his weekly Spirit feature was winding down, and by the time they married she knew her husband was primarily producing educational illustration work for corporate clients and the Armed Forces. It would never have occurred to a cultured woman like Ann to actually read any comics he had created, most of them created long before they met.

Part Two
Flash forward to the early 1980s. I’ve made another visit to their home, still in New York. By this time comics were gaining respect. Articles of praise punctuated the media, rapidly was expanding, and Will was getting more and more attention as a progenitor of what was increasingly being viewed as a true art form.

Will had nearly completed his full-color science fiction thriller Signal from Space (later republished in black & white in Life on Another Planet). In the studio adjacent to their home, I viewed the original he’d completed and I commented on certain ones that really jumped out at me, including the opening page of Chapter 6. I told him I loved the way the downpour of rain at the top of the page ran down as a liquid framing device for all of the panels. It was a perfect example of what his friend Harvey Kurtzman dubbed “Eisnerpint.”

“Oh, tharp page,” he chuckled. “It’s not all rainwater. I had to revise it a bit. My first version had Rosie [a morose in sunglasses] pissing in the next-to-last panel to merge with the flow of rain. But it’s all reflective background and I noticed that detail. She said, ‘Will, that’s not you!’ I changed it. Now the pissing implication is much more subtle.”

“I wish, I wish you had retained the more overt passing version. But I’m also confused—I thought Ann didn’t even look at your work, and now she’s considering it!”

“You’re not censoring, he said, still smiling. “She’s trying to protect my reputation. Remember, I’m not an underground cartoonist.”

Part Three
Flash forward one more time, now to the mid-1980s. This time I’m visiting the pair in Sarasota, Florida, home where they’ve recently moved. We’re having dinner. Will had just done a sequence called “Sunshine in Sunset City” that appeared in Kitchen Sink’s Will Eisner’s Quarterly. It’s a story about a lifelong New Yorker, Henry Klisp, who sold his business in the city and retired to Florida after his wife has died. The retiree gets involved in an adventure and has a brief fling with a younger woman. I had seen an earlier rough of the story but this was the finished one was expanded, with new front matter.

“During dinner,” said, “Will, I really love the final version of ‘Sunset.’ I especially like how Will breaks his flashbacks in as he walks through the old neighborhood in a blizzard, with vignettes showing us his earlier life in the city. It put the rest of the story in a much better perspective for me.”

A bit startled, said, “Ann Whis. When I first got to know you, you’d never read any of Will’s comics and you weren’t interested in them. And now you’re collaborating with him!” She smiled, acknowledging the slow transmogrification, and clearly pleased that her plot suggestion had been well-received by Will’s publisher. Will was also smiling. Happy that her contributing role came up and could be acknowledged.

Then I turned to Will and with a deliberately deadpan expression said, “You’re correct, Ann. If you don’t need to change the name of the magazine to Ann & Will Eisner’s Quarterly!”

For just a second or two I saw Will’s eyes dart at me and saw at his brow that he was surprised by the suggestion. But it was Ann, an emergency lawyer at the time, who quickly realized what was afoot.

After Will died in early 2005, Ann said the home they had designed and built from scratch near Fort Lauderdale and moved to a large retirement community in Parkland. When the couple lived in New York Ann had maintained a separate active life, working for many years in an unpaid role supervising “canaries in the coal mine” at New York hospitals. A longtime Kitchen Sink Press employee and a key backer for many of Will’s projects, Ann was always something of a legend among comics aficionados and collectors. The very short person, Ann could barely see above the car’s dashboard, even with the aid of a seat cushion. But she had a “lead foot”—heavy on the gas—with a very short temper and harsh words for any slower drivers ahead of her. I used to joke that she may have moved to Florida but driving brought out the New Yorker in her. Eventually, when she approached 90, she stopped driving, but Ann explained that she had this medical issue and had an email from her just days before she died. Though dealing with macular degeneration in later years, and a fractured pelvis from a fall near the end, Ann remained doggedly persistent. She was pleased to cast an enthusiastic Joe Biden vote as her final political act.

When I became aware that her eyesight was worsening, I started sending Ann emails with a greatly enlarged font so the text would be easier for her to read. Initially, I bumped my email letters to 18-point, then 24-point, then 28. Oddly, I always got her replies in 12-point. Then, only a few months before she died, Ann revealed that she was blind for all practical purposes. I was indicated that her personal caretaker Serena had—for a long time—a been reading all incoming emails aloud and Ann would then dictate to Serena’s replies. She then informed me, in a still quite firm voice, “You don’t have to use such gigantic letters. Denis … Serena’s vision is 20/20!”

Will Eisner was famous, a legendary figure in comics. Ann was not famous. But in my view she was crucial to his success. She unwaveringly supported him at all stages of his mature career. Together they survived the deep trauma of losing a teenage daughter to cancer and other child for mental health reasons. She patiently indulged her husband when he basked in the attentive adoration of fans at conventions while she made new and close friends in the world of comics. She always indulged me in a short fling with a new woman. I had an idea! I turned to Ann at one point and said, “Ann, I’m also confused—I thought Ann never met you or me—they once knew him through his work.”

Will worked for just about every comic book publisher except DC throughout his career. Let me provide you with one of his most memorable compositions.

Flash Gordon was his first creation and he drew the strip. But he was also working on his first important project. He was at the center of the importance of Comic-Con, and finally went. He was amazed at the scale of the show and how many fans he had. What amazed me was that his most ardently fans were not just other professionals who worked in the comic book field, and many of his contemporaries who had never met him over the years—they only knew him through his work.

Bob Fujitani started his career at the birth of the Golden Age of Comics when he joined Will Eisner’s studio in the spring of 1941. He began at a drawing board, sitting across from Nick Viscardi (who would later change his name to simply Prince V). Bob had an interest in Oriental art. It was here that Harry P. Lucy offered Bob the job of penciling The Hangman feature at MLJ. Signing his name simply as Denis Kitchen, I turned to Ann at one point and said, “Ann, I’m also confused—I thought Ann never met you or me—they once knew him through his work.”

Bob Fujitani will be remembered for his ability to meet all his deadlines and in 1960, he started oil painting again, although he was occasion-}

In 1962 Matt Murphy gave him the assignment to help create Dr. Solar, Man of The Atom. Bob illustrated the first five issues, demonstrating a style that had radically changed from his early days. The free-flowing brush ink line of his early Hangman days was replaced with a beautifully rendered illustrative style that featured tight pen inks that were the envy of his contemporaries.

By 1963, Dan Barry had hired Bob to help on the Flash Gordon strip. Bob would eventually take over penciling and inking the daily and Sunday comics, never to return to comic books again. The inking style he used for Flash Gordon now utilized a unique curling mark hash mark to give his illustrations volume. Bob continued his most memorable job until the 1980s, when he started oil painting again, although he was occasion-
DANA GABBARD (1962–2022) by John Lustig

What’s your longest Comic-Con friend? Mine was Dana Gabbard.

I first met Dana through the mail (snail, not email back in the late 1980s). I was a huge fan of Disney comics legend Carl Barks and was just beginning my career as a Disney comics writer. So, I wrote to Dana hoping to snag some back issues of his Barks fanzine, The Duckburg Times. I got them. But, more importantly, I ended up making friends with Dana.

Actually, it was more like Dana made friends with me. I was an introvert and nerd. Dana was also a nerd—in fact a fact a fact a nerd. But he was also incredibly outgoing, enthusiastic, and super knowledgeable about Barks and so many other aspects of comics. We finally met in person at the 1988 Comic-Con—and suddenly I had a lifelong friend. And, because Dana was a veritable nexus for Disney fans and pros, I soon had many other friends.

Dana always pursued his passions with vigor and backed it up with an encyclopedic knowledge and memory. I think research came to him naturally. But his decades working as an assistant legal librarian probably helped.


From 1986 to 1991 he produced the weekly Karmatrón. He did another comic book called The Great Comic Book Artists. Most of the people I had mentioned my interest to at that point didn’t know much about comics. Some were generally ignorant, and many had been relatively recently turned on to comics. I was anxious to be of help. He gave me his contact information and asked me to send a complimentary signed copy. Over the years we remained in touch. As I started making appearances at regional and national comic cons, I kept him informed. It was important to me to keep him posted on my progress.

We found we had a number of favorite comic books and artists in common. He gave me credit for the knowledge I had and gauged that my interest in the topic was genuine. He wouldn’t let me wave unless he made it clear he was anxious to be of help. He gave me his contact information and asked me to get in touch if I had any questions. Suddenly, like Luke Skywalker, I was just the Obi-Wan I was searching for. Right time, right place.

In 2020 the comic book industry lost another stellar contributor, comic book historian Ron Goulart. When I heard the news of his passing, I felt incredibly sad. He was a friend, and an important mentor.

We were first introduced on March 29, 1995. I was attending a small comic con show run by a friend in East Hartford, Connecticut. I had made my rounds of the dealer tables and was headed out the door to say goodbye to my friend and owner of the comic show, Hal Kinney. He had been helpful in directing me to local comics by small presses, exactly the kind of genre I was excited to add to my collection. We did our usual small talk about the recent trends by the comic book companies. I was turning to leave when Hal stopped me, and said he had someone I should meet. My curiosity was piqued.

He led me over to an average looking but distinguished gentleman who was standing in front of one vendor and jotted down notes. I assumed he was checking an inventory list of comic books to purchase. When Hal got his attention, he seemed to look up from what he was doing. Hal made a brief intro to the gentleman and said, "Remember who you are talking to? me. The gentleman turned to me and said, "What kind of comic books I was looking for? I told him I was interested in comics that featured Black characters. Our conversation came to life. We began exchanging comments in earnest. Eventually he asked me what kind of luck I was having. I told him the truth. I hadn't been too successful.

Most of the people I had approached hadn't even pretended to be interested in my topic. Frankly, because I didn't know him or his reputation as a long-time comic book historian or film author, I didn’t think this encounter was going to be any different. I was wrong. Immediately after this meeting, I had written important research sources that he thought would be helpful, as well as the names of a number of comic book creators whose work I should look up. I was struck dumb. Who was this guy? I later learned that he had written important research sources that he thought would be helpful, as well as the names of a number of comic book creators whose work I should look up. I was struck dumb. Who was this guy? I later learned that he had written important research sources that he thought would be helpful, as well as the names of a number of comic book creators whose work I should look up. I was struck dumb. Who was this guy? I later learned that he had written important research sources that he thought would be helpful, as well as the names of a number of comic book creators whose work I should look up. I was struck dumb. Who was this guy? I later learned that he had written important research sources that he thought would be helpful, as well as the names of a number of comic book creators whose work I should look up. I was struck dumb. Who was this guy? I later learned that he had written important research sources that he thought would be helpful, as well as the names of a number of comic book creators whose work I should look up. I was struck dumb. Who was this guy? I later learned that he had written important research sources that he thought would be helpful, as well as the names of a number of comic book creators whose work I should look up. I was struck dumb. Who was this guy? I later learned that he had written important research sources that he thought would be helpful, as well as the names of a number of comic book creators whose work I should look up. I was struck dumb. Who was this guy? I later learned that he had written important research sources that he thought would be helpful, as well as the names of a number of comic book creators whose work I should look up. I was struck dumb. Who was this guy? I later learned that he had written important research sources that he thought would be helpful, as well as the names of a number of comic book creators whose work I should look up. I was struck dumb.

One of the very first people I sent a complimentary signed copy.

By all means this was Ron's name in my Acknowledgements. He was one of the first people I

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Justin Green was one of the founders of the underground comix during the late 1960s and early 1970s. He and his colleagues rejected all the comic-convention world of publishing, bringing that insight and understanding of human beings I’ve ever known.

Before I was an editor at Marvel Comics, I was familiar with his name from the indicia, but I wasn’t sure what an executive vice president actually did. Turns out, it was a lot! At Marvel he oversaw the editorial, marketing, and distribution of all the titles as well as Marvel’s international business, covering publishing and licensing worldwide, from 1981 to 1994. The brave part was that he attempted to expand Marvel—not just in sales and exposure, but also content. Marvel had the superheros figured out (mostly), but they were underestimating potential readers by not having a variety of genres for people not into the super-cataclysmic epic battles with guys in their underwear and arm zapping each other. Mike did his best to introduce the market to long-neglected genres like religious comics, sports, and—whee—radio comics. There were byline articles in the organization that said they would never work . . . and they were right, but for the wrong reasons.

In 1993 I was headhunted by Marvel to run a new imprint featuring lesser-known comics where I would work closely with musicians and rock bands to create graphic novels that would captivate their fans. It was Marvel president Terry Stewart who came up with the idea (and later went on to become president and CEO of the Rock and Roll hall of Fame and Museum).

Starting up what became the Marvel Music imprint took a lot of preparation, and I spent about a year developing contracts with the bands and determining what kind of comic they wanted to do to represent their image. I would plot the story with them and then turn it over to the comic creators.

Traditionally I’d have some adversarial relationships with bosses, but that was never the case with Mike (or Terry, for that matter). He was such a gracious individual and worked out sticky situations. Even though we were separated by a generation, Mike respected my opinions and treated me as a colleague. My duties at Marvel included a lot of traveling around the globe to meet with rock luminaries from Alice Cooper and Mick Jagger to the infamous Suzi Knight and the Bob Marley family. Most of my negotiations happened in Los Angeles, so I asked Mike to recommend a place to stay and he suggested that the famed Chateau Marmont on Sunset Blvd, where many celebrities stayed—plus Marvel got a discount! Once while I was staying there, I heard “Mort!” Mike was heading to his bungalow with his luggage. “I’ve been trying to get in touch with you,” he said. “Well, here I am!” I thought he might be angry with me for goofing off in L.A., but he was legitimately happy to see me and we had some fun in his old hometown.

Many might not be aware Mike was the adopted son of the talented Laura Z. Hobson, writer of Gentleman’s Agreement and other books. When we were in L.A., we’d drive around and Mike would show me Hollywood landmarks, existing and gone, from what must have been a very interesting childhood. Ultimately, the byline articles were right and Marvel Music was a tough sell.

Even though we had so many of the greatest creators in comics doing these releases, comic shop owners weren’t buying anything that didn’t have mutants. I was upset. Elvis and Marley in particular were licensing powerhouses with tons of merchandise products. When I realigned my line was doomed, I decided not to renew my contract at Marvel. (Note: the creative art team on the Elvis book was John Severin and Gene Colan doing alternate chapters moving from real-life to fantasy. It looked fantastic!) After I left Marvel, Mike and I would meet for lunch every now and then, discussing publishing and media in general while he was at Parachute Press.

A few years later, Mike was an advisor to the relaunch of a new Cracked magazine, where I also did some consulting. I lost touch with him after that but thought of him often. Though not the public face of Marvel, Mike Hobson did some incredible unheralded things for the company and for the industry on the whole that enriched the comics world while he was riding the boom and busts of comics in the 1990s.

You should be so lucky to work for, and with, such an uplifting talent. He bridged the traditional world of publishing, bringing that insight and experience into the new modern era. And if you’re reading this, he affected you whether you know it or not.

As a writer, artist or editor, Mort Todd has worked at just about every comic book company, contributing to various categories, from Superman and Spider-Man to Batman and Looney Tunes. Newspaper comic strips Mort has written and drawn include Speed racer, Hot Rod, and Moby the Model.
One of MAD magazine’s star talents, Frank Jacobs, passed away April 5, 2021 at the age of 91. The first of Frank’s 312 pieces for the magazine appeared in issue #33, cover dated June 1957. The last was in #529 with a cover date of October 2014. Many highlights of his work followed, and they’d doubtlessly continue as long as MAD is published in any form. He was the magazine’s seventh most prolific contributor.

Frank was the first freelance writer hired by editor Al Feldstein after assuming the editorship of the magazine, and Frank earned a reputation being the least-funny member of his own marriage. “I have to work very hard at being funny,” he confessed, “But for Adele it comes naturally.”

Frank had left Nebraska, graduated from college the same day the editor of the local humor magazine, and later, when he went into the Army, was an army reporter and editor for the military newspaper, Star and Stripes. After he joined MAD, his writing also appeared in dozens of other magazines, including Playboy, New York, Sports Illustrated, Saturday Review, and Punch. In 1972, he authored The MAD World of William M. Gaines, the first (and some would say, definitive) book on the history of the magazine and publisher that kept him busy all those years. And at Comic-Con International in 2009, where Frank received the Bill Finger Award for Excellence in Comic Book Writing, he delivered one of the finest acceptance speeches ever. He was real good at Funny.

Mark Evanier has written for live-action TV shows, animated TV shows and tours of comic books. He is also a historian of comic books and animation and hosts a mess of panels at every Comic-Con.

REMEMBERING ADELE KURTZMAN

Adele Kurtzman, Harvey’s widow, passed away just two months after her friend, Eisner. Both women lived well into their mid-90s and had rich, full lives. I met both of these remarkable women while I was in my 20s, so I enjoyed decades filled with priceless conversations. Paying tribute in a limited format requires great condensation.

Adele allowed the spotlight to be focused on her famous husband, but for those of us who got to know her and enjoy our interactions, Adele was an amazing cook, so visits were always a culinary delight. Several times over the meal, Frank made audacious and witty remarks that made me smile or laugh. And when he talked about Harvey and said, “You know … she’s the funny one!” “Yeah,” I knew, he said, with a resignation that made clear he’d heard the same observation before. It was instantly ironic that the profession of a markup and wearing a trench coat, Adele quickly realized that she and Wolf/Willie were not destined for romance, but she was very attracted to Harvey. “I thought he was cute,” she said, “and I loved his sense of humor.” Later she told Al Jaffee in the bullpen that Harvey “was the kind of guy I’d like to marry.”

Stan Lee and publisher/owner Martin Goodman were shrewd marketers, always watching comic industry trends and keeping an eye on the competition. Competitors regarded them as egregious copycats. The pair also wanted to know what their readers wanted, and the cheapest way to conduct a market survey was via readers of Timely’s own publications. In early 1964 they ran free-page house ads headlined, “Now You CAN be the Editor!” Readers were presumed to be “kids,” were invited to return a coupon noting their favorite and least favorite features, and with the submission of a “$1 BUCK” … … a new one-dollar bill to the “50 Neatest and most interesting” responses. Stan told Adele that she would have the tedious task of sorting and tallying the market survey responses. Her first thought was that she hoped readers liked Harvey’s “Hey Look!” pages as much as she did. Alas, they did not.

The actual balloting, in fact, showed that almost no young readers were excited by Kurtzman’s infrequent one-page contributions. Adele, who viewed her job as a mere temporary gig before attending college upstate, never regretted what she did next. She discarded the ballots and “stuffed the ballot box” to indicate that Harvey’s short features were the favorite choice of hundreds of respondents. When she nervously presented her final tally to Stan, who could be volatile, he was understandably shocked. But number one? His pride, the one he didn’t, do they? So, Stan, who had no clue his personal assistant was smitten with Harvey and his creations, responded practically and decisively, saying, “We’ve got to get that guy more work!”

Impressed by Kurtzman’s (false) popularity, Lee assigned more work to the freelancer. Longer feature assignments included “Rusty,” a “Blondie” copycat that Harvey hated; a funky-animal series called “Pigtails,” and more “Hey Look!” pages, now on a weekly basis. As a result, Kurtzman came to the Timely/Marvel office far more frequently, where he and Adele would unreadably flirt. In their free time they dated. Two years later, they married. Following Adele’s ballot stuffing, Harvey’s previously precarious career was launched into overdrive. It was the “Hey Look!” samples that wowed publisher Bill Gaines not long afterward and gave Kurtzman entrée to EC Comics. Had Harvey’s first “fan” and company insider, not inserted her well-intentioned advocacy, Harvey’s career might have been less than meteoric.

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Adele Miller, Jay Lynch, myself, and others. The successful fund-raising events were the direct result of Adele’s long term and warm connections with artists and the comics community.

Her overall health declined in her last decade, but Adele’s dark wit was not expedited even a bit. She loved industry gossip, especially involving cer¬tain individuals she didn’t like. She unapologetically enjoyed nursing old grudges as much as maintaining close friendships. I’ll never forget her as an enervate reader, consuming books, magazine articles, and the New York Times on a seemingly nonstop basis. She often recommended novels and articles and in turn welcomed the clippings and publications I’d periodically send to her. Adele was an articulate, funny, and insightful woman, in another lifetime, one with equal opportunity, it might have been she who started a humor magazine.

Denish Eisen published several of Harvey Kurtzman’s books, co-wrote The Art of Harvey Kurtzman (Abrams), represents Adele’s estate for original art sales, and co-represents the intellectual property.

Frank Jacobs (1931–2021) by Mark Evanier

Adele Kurtzman with Bruce Canaday at the 2015 Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards ceremony. (Photo: Jacki Ethier)
When asked to write a tribute for John Paul Leach, I was literally at a loss for words. What do you say about a talent that was so great so transcendent and to me obvious to anyone who had the good fortune to experience his art? His great work speaks for itself. Great comics like the first nine issues of Shadow Cabinet (Milestone, 1994–95), the first 12 issues of Marvel’s Earth X (1999–2000), WildStorm’s limited series: The W, the DC limited series Batman: Creature of the Night (2017–2019) are just some of my favorite experiencings and meeting with John. I met him during the very early days of Milestone, around 1991 when we had our offices in NYC. I believe he was one of fellow Milestone founder Michael Davis’s students at the Art Carnival, Michael taught comics illustration and storytelling. Several great creators came out of that class and JPL was one of them. I’m pretty sure Michael told me about him and said that we should definitely check out his portfolio. JPL was also talking Singapore class at the time. He was really young and I remember him at the top of his game, so I had no trouble identifying talent at such a young age. I asked John who his influences were and I mentioned a few names. Have you heard of John Alex? No, he was one of the many greats from the MBB! Camelot, Noel Sickles and John Zaffrino? ‘Nope’ to all of these, he shocked me!

I had him try on a shirt that I had in front of him and he said ‘No, my Mum’s got it.” I couldn’t believe how genuine and kind he was. John Paul was always so humble and soft-spoken, and a great listener. He would always take the time to listen to what you had to say before offering his own opinion. He was a great collaborator and always had a gentle,宽容的态度. When working with him, it was always a pleasure to see his art come to life on the page. He had a unique way of making his stories more relatable and engaging for the reader. He was always willing to try new things and experiment with different styles. He was a true artist who never lost his passion for creating art.

I am deeply saddened by the news of John Paul Leach’s passing. He was a true talent and a great friend of mine. He had a profound impact on the comic book industry and will be greatly missed. I will always remember the times we spent together, working on projects and sharing stories. He was a true artist who never lost his passion for creating art. I am deeply saddened by the news of John Paul Leach’s passing. He was a true talent and a great friend of mine. He had a profound impact on the comic book industry and will be greatly missed. I will always remember the times we spent together, working on projects and sharing stories. He was a true artist who never lost his passion for creating art.
Wikipedia’s entry opens describing her as “an American science-fiction author, who also wrote, humor, satire, nonfiction and reviews.” In addition to itemizing his editorial credits, it notes, “He also co-edited the nonfiction anthology All in Color for a Dime (with Don Thompson), which has been described as ‘the very first published volume dedicated to comic book criticism,’ as well as its sequel, The Comic-Book Book.” Those who are unfamiliar with Dick Lupoff’s work as a writer, historian, and editor specializing in fantasy, science fiction, and mystery should look for it in all those fields. His writing, research, and editing were outstanding. In addition, the fanzine Xero, produced with his wife, Pat, was historic. 

Fanzines were so important to the development of the field that in 1990 the Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA) established the “First Fann writable” award to honor extraordinary fans. Xero was inducted into the Fanzine Hall of Fame in 1997. Lupoff was so proud of Xero that he included it in his list of personal achievements in the introduction to Imaginary Worlds, a 1992 collection of his essays on genre culture.

In 1993, he was inducted into the Pulp Hall of Fame, an honor reserved for accomplished authors and artists of the pulps, the genre of “lowbrow” fiction that flourished from the 1920s to the 1950s. Lupoff was the first fanzine editor to receive such an honor.

“Petra Mayer loved the speculative fiction genres, and passionately celebrated them throughout her career in the news media. In choosing what writers she worked with and what books to feature, she paid close attention to the emerging trends, new favorites. Her work and joy were gifts to the industry.” This tribute from The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America came in 2014 in a post by Michael Crompton that was one of three recipients of its 2022 Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award. The award is given for “distinguished contributions to the science fiction, fantasy, and horror communities.”

SFWA President Jeff Edmons described the three award-winners as “shining examples of how people contribute to the greater genre community by pursuing their own personal passions.” His statement added, “I mourn the loss of Petra and all the co-contributors to the SF genre and community. I hope this award will help put a light on someone we lost far too young.”

Petra’s self-description on Twitter was: “Editor. NPR Books. Sneaking Oxford commas past the copy desk since 2012. Busted Keaton’s secret girlfriend. TOS is the One True Trek, don’t @ me. She/her.”

Petra’s death on May 10, 2014, was a shock to the science fiction and fantasy community. She was the best and rarest species of nerd, whose enthusiasm was eager and sincere and open and inviting. She wanted you to love the stuff she loved, and supplied you hard incontrovertible evidence to support her thesis.

Rachel Martín wrote, “Petra was a bright light of originality.”

Neda Ulaby tweeted a photo of treats with the note, “Petra Mayer was a treasure and a torch. After my mother was robbed last week, she brought me these cookies she made every Christmas, because she knew how much I loved them. I really can’t believe she’s gone.” That was the sort of thing Petra did for her friends. Stephen Thompson tweeted, “Petra Mayer baked for lots of people, for lots of reasons.

A few years back, she showed up at my Super Bowl party—“Chicken Bowl,” which includes a fried-chicken-eating contest—hosting this masterpiece—“it was a chicken cake, as far as I’m concerned.” You can tell it’s Petra’s handwork from that perfectly sardonic eye.” She was an enthusiastic cosplayer, skilled in designing both her outfits and performances. As auctioneer, she was famous for her “oh my god” delivery.

NPR’s Mallory Hu tweeted a photograph in which Hu appeared in cosplay with Petra at the 2018 Comic-Con. “Because (a) her Spider Jerusalem was so good and (b) she showed me there was space for the journalist and the joyful irrepressible fan girl in me. It’s why I wanted—still want—to be like her when I grow up.” A Twitter search will add more, more, including Petra in Rose Quartz cosplay.

When I first met Ivy, in 1978, our first year at Syracuse University, it was as if we were instant lifelong friends. I don’t remember quite how it happened. I just know that kind of effect on people.

Ivy continued working in children’s theater over the years, stage managing, acting, directing, teaching improv classes—helping kids harness their own creativity in shows from Madagascar Jr to The Little Prince. She was also an Omni project coordinator, at the start of the Museum of Science, which led to her doing film assembly on 70mm movies including The Hateful Eight and Dunkirk.

She was part of a southern California curling team (“You have to see it, it’s called Benn with Brooms, you’ll love it!”)

In 2020, when folks were attending Comic-Con on Zoom and I was a mere pop culture commentator-editor (and Stephen Thompson’s mom) Maggie Thompson was lucky enough to hang out with Petra and then at Comic-Con, where they shared a table at the Eisner Awards starting in 2014. She was part of a southern California curling team (“You have to see it, it’s called Benn with Brooms, you’ll love it!”)

Ivy wasn’t just selling Scott’s work—she was talking up other creators, comics, other works of art in any media that you just had to know, had to know, and understand. And you, too, may have found yourself instant friends, without knowing how it happened. Ivy had that kind of effect on people.

Ivy loved people. She loved art. She was an ambassador of joy, bringing people who loved together with art, or with other people, they knew they loved it.

Ivy died on April 28, 2022 in a traffic accident. She is survived by her husband, Scott, her mother, Carol, her siblings Holly and Marcus, her children Sky and Winter—and by hundreds of grateful students, friends, creators and fans, whose worlds would be smaller without her.

Kurt Busiek is an award-winning writer best known for his work on Avengers, the series Marvel, and his creator-owned Astro City, Airmenow, and others.

In 2020, when folks were attending Comic-Con on Zoom and I recommended Mark Evanier’s “Cartoony Voices” panel, she emailed, “I want to be one of the voice artist panels later this year so you recommend and I LOVED—I mean—you know it is for me at SDCD, if I get to see one or two panels just for myself it’s a luxury. But that one’s gonna be on my list from now on.” You do know how it was. Petra was a fan and a professional—and the world was always enriched when she shared her enthusiasms via her work.

Pop culture commentator-editor (and Stephen Thompson’s mom) Maggie Thompson was lucky enough to hang out with Petra and then at Comic-Con, where they shared a table at the Eisner Awards starting in 2014.

RICHARD LUPOFF (1935—2020) by Maggie Thompson

PETRA MAYER (1974—2021) by Maggie Thompson

IVY RATAFIA MCLEOD (1960—2022) by Kurt Busiek

PETER RICHARD LUPOFF at the 1981 Comic-Con.

(Chicago Tribune)

Ivy Ratafia McLeod was a novelist, comic book editor, pop culture commentator and a member of the Stan LeeVERSE, which is a group of comic book fans who also happen to be creators. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE since it was founded in 2000 and became an active member in 2005.

Ivy was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE for almost 20 years. She was a member of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” and was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2014. She was also the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2015. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2016. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2017. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2018. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2019. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2020. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2021.

Ivy was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE since its inception in 2000. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2000. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2001. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2002. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2003. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2004. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2005. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2006. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2007. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2008. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2009. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2010. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2011. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2012. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2013. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2014. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2015. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2016. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2017. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2018. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2019. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2020. She was a part of the Stan LeeVERSE’s “A-List” in 2021.
Pat McGreal was one of the foremost writers of Disney comic books in the world. With his wife and collaborators, Carol, he penned more than 600 comedy adventures starring Mickey and Donald and their assorted pals for Egmont Comic Creations in Copenhagen, Denmark. His and Carol’s work appeared in more than 30 countries throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Many of their stories have been reprinted in America by Gladstone, Gemstone Publishing, and IDW.

An Eisner Award winner and one of the authors of three critically acclaimed graphic novels from DC/Vertigo: Chiaroscuro: The Private Lives of Leonardo da Vinci (with co-author Anina Bennett), The New York Times (with co-author Bill Morrison), and Fighting American, and The Simpsons, Pat was a thoroughly dedicated and respected professional. He was the loving husband of Carol, his partner of more than 30 years, and the father of Kevin McGreal, an accomplished musician and sound engineer. Pat passed away in December 2022.

After graduating from Los Angeles County College, Pat landed his first job at Mad Magazine in 1965. During his 15 years at Mad, Pat honed his writing skills by writing thou-

By Bill Morrison

minds on writing comedic material, which was a constant challenge. However, he never lost sight of the importance of storytelling and character development. Pat’s writing was always grounded in strong, relatable characters, even in the most absurd situations. His ability to create humor through physical comedy was a hallmark of his work.

Pat was a tireless worker who never shied away from challenges. He was known for his meticulous approach to writing, spending countless hours breathing life into his characters. Pat was also an avid reader and a lifelong student of humor, always seeking to refine his craft.

In addition to his work at Mad Magazine, Pat wrote for a variety of other outlets, including comics, television, and film. He was a co-writer on the classic sci-fi series “Fighting American,” where he developed characters and wrote scripts that were both funny and thought-provoking. Pat also wrote for The Simpsons, a show that he adored and was passionate about. His work on The Simpsons was recognized by the industry, and he received numerous awards for his contributions.

Throughout his career, Pat was a beloved colleague and friend to many. He was known for his generosity and willingness to share his knowledge and experiences with others. His influence on the industry and the people he worked with will be long remembered.

We lost a Golden Age trailblazer last year: Joye Hummel Murchison, the first woman to write Wonder Woman comics. Under the name Joye Hummel, she wrote in the 1940s she penned more than 70 fantastic tales of Wonder Woman’s adventures—and she went uncredited for decades. It was my good fortune to meet Joye in 2018, when she made her first and only Comic-Con appearance. Born in 1924 in Long Island, New York, Joye never set out to write superheroes. She was the daughter of a car salesman and a homemaker, she enrolled in the Katherine Gibbs School to stay near her mother and learn some marketable skills. A girl’s gotta do what a girl’s gotta do, so on the weekends she hand to take on the office, Pat raised. That’s the sort of guy you got (he then succumbed into being his visor president).

The second area of our relationship was in business. As editor of Bongo Comics, I had the pleasure of hiring Pat to write Simpsons comics stories. Some writers make an editor really work for their paycheck, but with Pat it was a cutie! He had already served a term as CAPS president years earlier, so he always came with a lot of enthusiasm. We lost a Golden Age trailblazer last year: Joye Hummel Murchison, the first woman to write Wonder Woman comics. Under the name Joye Hummel, she wrote in the 1940s she penned more than 70 fantastic tales of Wonder Woman’s adventures—and she went uncredited for decades. It was my good fortune to meet Joye in 2018, when she made her first and only Comic-Con appearance. Born in 1924 in Long Island, New York, Joye never set out to write superheroes. She was the daughter of a car salesman and a homemaker, she enrolled in the Katherine Gibbs School to stay near her mother and learn some marketable skills. A girl’s gotta do what a girl’s gotta do, so on the weekends she hand to take on the office, Pat raised. That’s the sort of guy you got (he then succumbed into being his visor president).

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Charles S. Novinskis, better known as Charles to his many friends, a veteran comic book letter head who turned his passion into his profession and then into the ability to help comic creators in need, passed away suddenly in his sleep on May 9, 2022. He was 64 years old.

Charles grew up in Shaminok, PA, and attended nearby Bloomsburg University.

Never losing his love of comics, he became a prolific letter writer (authoring hundreds), particularly to Marvel titles. While opening the mail on the comics I wrote and received from Charles had sent—had to do with comics—presenting in person, I was more often than not astounded to see him, as he so vividly relayed the boy flying down the road on his bike in Kansas City all those years ago. My later years have brought me much happiness, I will note, especially my current family, Jason and Sunni Brock. We've been a unit for nearly 15 years, and it has been one of the best times of my life.

Jason V. Brock is a writer, filmmaker, and artist. He lives in Washington State with his wife, Sunni, and their band of reptiles.

Everett Peck

TIM SALE

The entertainment pitch was successful, and the resulting series was released on USA Network in 1994. With the then little known Jason Alexander memorably voicing the lead, the钾被 pop culture on its ear and earned an audience of millions. It was nominated for three Emmy Awards. Everett also created a follow-up series, Squint, Boy, for USA, which ran from 2006 to 2008.

Peck subsequently provided character designs and other creative artwork on the Netflix series Daredevil, working from his home in Occ mascara in San Diego’s North County. He was honored with a career retrospective in 2011: a solo exhibition at the Ohio Art Museum, curated by the late graphic designer and film producer Michael Gross. A catalog compiled with Everett’s drawings and cartoons, it’s Not My Fault, was published in conjunction with the show. It joined a journal and stationery set of the same name, published by Dark Horse.

A genuine hometown boy, Everett Peck embodied the laid-back Southern California lifestyle, and was a strong supporter of Comic-Con. We wish him well.

David Scrooge

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, I was self-employed as an illustrator’s representative in San Diego. There were few practicing that vocation, but another was a fellow named Richard Saltzman. Although technically competitors, we realized we had more to gain by cooperating than competing. So we did. Richard’s star pupil was Everett Peck. Everett was a top illustration talent. He did work for Time, Playboy, The New Yorker—even illustrating P.O. Box 147, a series of ten 1980s covers for The New York Times. He did ads for many a top client, including Nike and Honda. Everett was the goods.

I’d never met an unique cartoonist as well. He had a sort of scratchy style, but it spoke volumes. His wit could be savage but was always underpinned with good humor. One day Richard called me. Knowing I was well connect-ed in comics, he said that Everett had a comic book idea that he wanted to get published right away. They intended to use it as a basis for a pitch for an animated television show. Could I help? I thought of my then-friend and future employ-ee Mike Richard. Mike had wide-ranging tastes, and if the idea was a good one, he could help get the company, Dark Horse Comics, to move fast. I happily hooked them up.

The result was a one-shot comic called Duckman, published in 1990.

Jason V. Brock is a writer, filmmaker, and artist. He lives in Washington State with his wife, Sunni, and their band of reptiles.

I first met Tim Sale at Comic-Con in 1987 when his then-agent brought him by my table with some sample pages that Tim had drawn for Grendel. I was already familiar with Tim’s talents due to his illustrated adaptations of Robert Asprin’s, published by Starblaze Graphics, which had also produced the collected editions of my own epic heroic, Mage: The Hero Discoverd. I chatted briefly at the time and I remember feeling some professional connection with the new up-and-coming demeanor, his obvious smarts, and his casual grin. We eventually struck up a friendship, and, even though we never lived near each other, we spent countless hours on the phone or online, endlessly yakking about comics, art, fiction, music, food, life and love. And we logged many days parked next to each other at various cons while both of our careers continued to blossom and grow. Tim became like a brother to me. He was always there with unconditional support and he inevitably challenged me in all the right ways.

In the course of our friendship, I did finally have the pleasure of collaborating with Tim on a variety of projects. He provided the art for the chal-lenging dual narratives of the consequential story arc Grendel Devil’s Reign. And later, we again combined our talents to produce the Eisner Award-winning short story for 1999’s Best Anthology series, Grendel Black, White & Red; and he would eventually return to the world of Grendel with Devil Child, written by longtime Grendel editor Diana Schutz.

As far as Tim’s most significant collaborations over the years were with Jeph Loeb, an unforgettable pairing of artist and writer that ranked among the most distinctive comics artists of his day. His legacy will be felt for many years to come. Tim also became renowned for his gracious demeanor when meeting and interacting with fans. So much so that a kind of loose fraternity eventually emerged, a kind of wide-bred bonding that proudly declared themselves as Fans of Tim Sale. Tim’s consideration even extended beyond our own relationship. So much so that he eventually returned to the world of Grendel with Devil Child, written by longtime Grendel editor Diana Schutz.

The day after Tim passed away, I was searching through some photo albums and found a shot of the two of us taken around 1990. We both looked so young and dauntless, eager and rare to take on the whole comics industry by telling and drawing the sort of stories that we wanted to read. And by doing it our way, regardless of the current trends or prevailing style. It’s in this very style and the comics industry and the artforms so rich for all of your beautiful efforts … and seem so much emptier now that you’re gone.

Matt Wagner is the creator of treasured indie titles Grendel and Mage as well as the writer and artist of many works with other established characters.
And through it all, he continued to work with Jack. They co-created the popular DC Comics character Kobra and collaborated on screenplays that turned into the popular Kirby-drawn comics, Captain Victory and the Galactic Rangers and Silver Star. You may have seen Steve on convention panels about Jack here at Comic-Con or elsewhere. Here’s Bruce Simon again: “Being friends with Steve and his brother Gary over the years, many many years, was always a … riot of laughs in venues as far afield the regular comic-con events’ halls of book and comic-stores, film and television studios, and the tiny cocktail lounges and Mexican restaurants near those same studios. Gary and Steve shared a practicality and pragmatism of thinking, they were clear-eyed and unsentimental about the so-called glamorous businesses they were in.” “And another thing about the Sherman Brothers: They were so temperamentally different; Steve laid back and Gary loud and boisterous, but no two brothers were close, no one’s laughs were louder and, when Gary left us, decades too soon in 2009, a light in Steve’s life dimmed. He was never the same.” Back to M.E. Fortunately, Steve had a wonderful life partner in Diana Mercer, whom he married on Christmas Eve of 1999, and a lot of friends—not just Bruce, not just me; everyone liked the guy: smart, friendly, trustworthy, funny—there was nothing there not to love. Steve and Diana took really good care of each other.

I could write about Steve for days but it’s all of a piece—what a terrific guy he was—and just over twenty room here. So I’ll give Bruce the final word on our friend, adding that I echo the last two sentences especially. “Steve passed sadly and unexpectedly on June 24, 2021 at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. He was my partner, my best friend for 53 years. He still has a drawer in the bedside table of my guest room full of stuff that he left behind from when he’d visit. It still stays. I loved him and I loved Gary. I’ll always miss them both.”

Mark Evanier has been a professional writer since 1969 and if you’re reading this you, we did very little for Jack that made it into print, but we learned so very much. Hanging around a genius will do that for you.

In 2019, Jack was appointed to the president of the International Brotherhood of Magicians. But just months after taking on the position, he suffered a spinal stroke that put him in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. But that didn’t stop him. He bought a van that he could drive from his wheelchair, and he kept up an active schedule of social events. And he always had a smile on his face. Jackie Estrada is one of a handful of people who have been to every San Diego Comic-Con. She was instrumental in founding the Robert A. Heinlein Blood Drive at the Comic-Con. In 1977, she was one of a handful of people who have been to every San Diego Comic-Con. She was instrumental in founding the Robert A. Heinlein Blood Drive at the Comic-Con. She was instrumental in founding the Robert A. Heinlein Blood Drive at the Comic-Con.
In the world of comics, which was Chris’s first love, he redefined the boundaries of art in general and comics in particular. His extreme depictions of sex and violence, deliberately offensive, encouraged many of his underground comic peers to explore these themes in their own work.

Growing up in Nebraska and Kansas, he began drawing at an early age, filling up reams of notebooks with his homemade comics stories. I recall one year he brought a bunch of these, which he had recently redone, to Comic-Con for sale. One could see the seeds of his later work in them, mostly his violence themes, and the originality of his unique style. I asked him what his mother thought about them, and he replied that she was always supportive of his artwork, happy to see him engaged in a constructive pursuit instead of getting into trouble.

Having moved to San Francisco in the late 60’s, he self-published a portfolio (subsequently reprinted in comic book form), which led to meeting Robert Crumb. Crumb often cites Wilson as an inspiration, showing him that he could go wild with his own themes.

Chris Yambar

Chris Yambar was unique among comic book creators. He was an indie artist/ writer/publisher, a mainstream comic writer, a pop art painter, an entrepreneur, and a minister and police chaplain, a children’s book author, and a nurse. He got along with everyone, filling up reams of notebooks with his art, and he had a special connection with people.

In November 2008, after spending the day at Alternative Press Expo (APE) in San Francisco, Wilson suffered severe brain injury while heading home; the result was a lengthy hospital stay and surgery and time in intensive care, he recovered to a degree. He returned home in the care of longtime partner Lorraine Chamberlain, who he married in 2010. Lorraine tirelessly cared for him, raising funds and nursing Wilson, through both critical and day-to-day needs. She navigated and often fought the healthcare establishment as Wilson’s advocate. He died at home in San Francisco on February 1, 2021.

As you travel through your life journey, you will hopefully meet some people who will become very special to you. For me, two such people were Mary and Gene Henderson.

I was just 12 years old when I met them at the El Cortez Hotel in San Diego at the 1974 Comic-Con. My oldest brother, Scott Smith, who had just started the media department, introduced me to Gene first. To be accurate, he didn’t actually “introduce” me so much as show me in his direction and say, “You’re going to work for him!” Which I did, for the next 15 years. Gene was in charge of security for the con, and he assigned the volunteers and made sure everyone had a job to do. He was a tireless worker throughout the hotel. However, since 1913 was the age you needed to be to work “officially” as security, I was assigned to work my first year as a “gofer.” Rather ironically, the first task I was given was to sit outside the Dealers’ Room and make sure everyone had gone inside a concheid badge. Which sure seemed like a “security” job to me!

Later that day, I mentioned to Gene that my brother said that someone in his company could stay at the hotel. And that is when I met Mary. She had the unequaled task of finding a space for volunteers like me to sleep. She was in charge of the security room itself, and she actually did much much more. I can vividly recall going with her to this room many times, helping her know her way around the hotel. When it opened, I saw that there were at least six inside boxes. Mary looked at them for a moment and then said, “Hey there, fellas! I see you’ve got enough for one for now, but before any of them could respond, she backed out and closed the door.

Gene and Mary’s relationship would last for almost 50 years! When I first met them, they came across to my young self as rather gruff, rough, get-it-done type persons. Over time though, I would find them to be two of the nicest, kindest, and caring people I’ve known.

Throughout the years, I worked for Comic-Con transitions to a few different shows and day-to-day needs. She navigated and often fought the healthcare establishment as Wilson’s advocate. He died at home in San Francisco on February 1, 2021.

By Bill Morrison
Gene has been a part of our life forever, ever since I first came aboard the wild ride that is Comic-Con. As a teenager, I was a constant force of acceptance and support, of guidance and wisdom, and was a valued voice as the convention evolved over the years. I am grateful that the bond with him, the younger one, under her wing and me made me feel a part of the “family.” Gene Henderson was Comic-Con’s Grandpa. He was a natural choice for Archivist, a position he held and continued throughout the many decades of the convention as it evolved and grew— was a gift we all benefited from and one he was glad to share. He’s up there plotting how to trick me into getting my photo taken (a decades-long cat-and-mouse game we played) or waiting to give me a word of encouragement. Rest in peace, Gene, and please give my love to Mary. That your con “kid” misses you very, very much.

Robin Donlan in president of the Comic-Con Board of Directors. The passion and advice he had dedicated for this organization were greatly appreciated. His knowledge and appreciation of the comics industry made him a natural choice for Archivist, a position he held and continued throughout the many decades of the convention as it evolved and grew— was a gift we all benefited from and one he was glad to share.

I am happy he’s finally reunited with his beloved Mary and no longer in ill health, and I’m sure he’s up there plotting how to trick me into getting my photo taken (a decades-long cat-and-mouse game we played) or waiting to give me a word of encouragement. Rest in peace, Gene, and please give my love to Mary. That your con “kid” misses you very, very much.

Robin Donlan in president of the Comic-Con Board of Directors.

To so many of us, it was a luck of fate to make sure things were oky, and either he or his wife Mary would ask, but through the lens of its history. He was respected by most everyone (which of view always encouraged the convention’s current and future development. To so many of us, it was a luck of fate to make sure things were oky, and either he or his wife Mary would ask, but through the lens of its history. He was respected by most everyone (which of view always encouraged the convention’s current and future development. To so many of us, it was a luck of fate to make sure things were oky, and either he or his wife Mary would ask, but through the lens of its history. He was respected by most everyone (which of view always encouraged the convention’s current and future development. To so many of us, it was a luck of fate to make sure things were oky, and either he or his wife Mary would ask, but through the lens of its history. He was respected by most everyone (which of view always encouraged the convention’s current and future development. To so many of us, it was a luck of fate to make sure things were oky, and either he or his wife Mary would ask, but through the lens of its history. He was respected by most everyone (which of view always encouraged the convention’s current and future development.
You’ve already visited the locations in your favorite films...now visit them for real!

You call it the Temple of the Holy Grail
We call it 30°19’20” N, 35°27’6” E