

2022  
**COMIC-CON**  
INTERNATIONAL: SAN DIEGO



**Souvenir Book**

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Represent

**Remember: These are the only OFFICIAL Comic-Con Apparel and Merchandise...accept no substitutes.**

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



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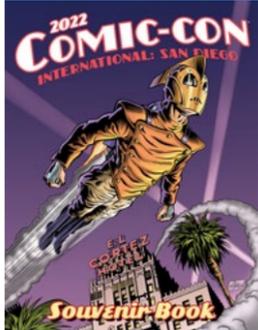
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**2022**

**JULY 21-24**

PREVIEW NIGHT: JULY 20

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## MISSION STATEMENT

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

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### 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



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# COMIC CON 2022

# SPECIAL GUESTS

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Guest Attendees



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**Tomi Adeyemi**  
Named one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people, Tomi Champion-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. Its 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 in 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.

Photo: Joan Allen

### 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 and *New York Times* bestselling author of books and graphic novels for young adults, including *Shade*, *The Changing Girl*, *Boy Proof*, *The Plain Janes*, *Soupy Leaves Home*, *The Year of the Beasts*, *Female Furies*, *Batgirl*, and *Odd Duck*. Her newest graphic novel is *Shifting Earth*. Her short stories have been published in *Strange Horizons*, *Tor.com*, and other anthologies. She spends her time between Los Angeles and Montreal.

### Soman Chainani

Soman Chainani's debut series, *The School for Good & Evil*, has sold more than 3 million copies, has been translated into more than 30 languages across six continents, and will be a major motion picture from Netflix in 2022, starring Charlize Theron and Kerry Washington. His anthology of retold fairytales, *Beasts & Beauty*, was an instant *New York Times* best-seller, his seventh in a

row. His next novel, *Rise of the School For Good & Evil*, will go on sale May 31, kickstarting a new series in his EverNever World universe

### Amy Chu

Amy Chu is a writer for comics and TV and is 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 Clayton Daniels

Ezra Clayton Daniels is a biracial (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 audiobooks, 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



CASTELLUCCI



CHAINANI



GARRITY



HEMPEL



CHU



HERNANDEZ, G



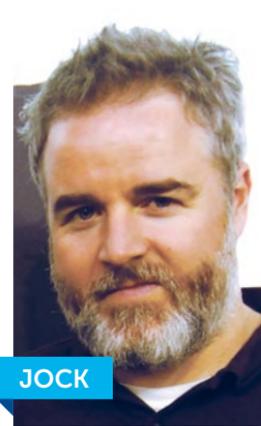
DANIELS



EVANIER



HERNANDEZ, J



JOCK



FINGEROTH



JONES

the Year for *The Times of London*. Currently, he's working on *Wild Card!* *Jack Ruby's Assault on History*, to be published by Chicago Review Press.

### Shaenon Garrity

Shaenon K. Garrity is a cartoonist and writer best known for *Narbonic*, *Skin Horse* (co-written with Jeffrey C. Wells), and *The Dire Days of Willowweep Manor* (with art by Christopher Baldwin). Her upcoming graphic novels include *Steam* (with art by Emily Holden) 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 *Breathaker*, *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*. Marc is a recipient of the Speakeasy Award and the Inkpot Award.

### Gilbert Hernandez

Gilbert Hernandez has been the co-creator of the comic book series *Love and Rockets* for 40 years. He was raised in Oxnard, California, with a comic book in his hand. He grew up loving comics and put all his comics influences into his work for his readers' enjoyment. He is best known for his Palomar stories about magic realism among the folks in a small Latin American town.

### Jaime Hernandez

As a young aimless Latino punk rocker, Jaime Hernandez, along with his brothers Gilbert and Mario, self-published the first issue of *Love and Rockets* in 1981. It was picked up by Fantagraphics Books in 1982, and he has been doing comics since. He has also done illustrations for album covers and magazines and has won numerous awards, including being inducted into The Eisner Hall of Fame along with his brother Gilbert.

### Jock

Jock is a three-time *New York Times* bestselling British artist best known for his comics work with writer Andy Diggle on DC/Vertigo's *The Losers*, the award-winning *Batman: The Black Mirror*, and *Wytches* with writer Scott Snyder. Jock has also produced key art and concept design for such films as *Dredd*, *Annihilation*, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, and the Oscar-winning *Ex Machina*. Details on his new Comixology Originals project will be revealed at Comic-Con 2022! *Sponsored by Comixology*

### 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*, 1982, and he has been doing comics since. He has also done illustrations for album covers and magazines and has won numerous awards, including being inducted into The Eisner Hall of Fame along with his brother Gilbert. He is also the current artist for Vortex 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*, *The Book of Boba Fett*, *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*



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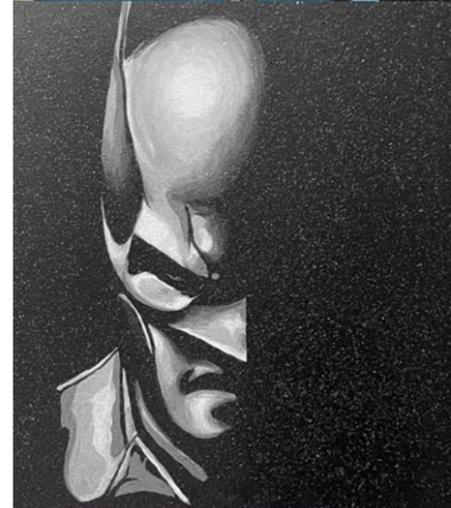
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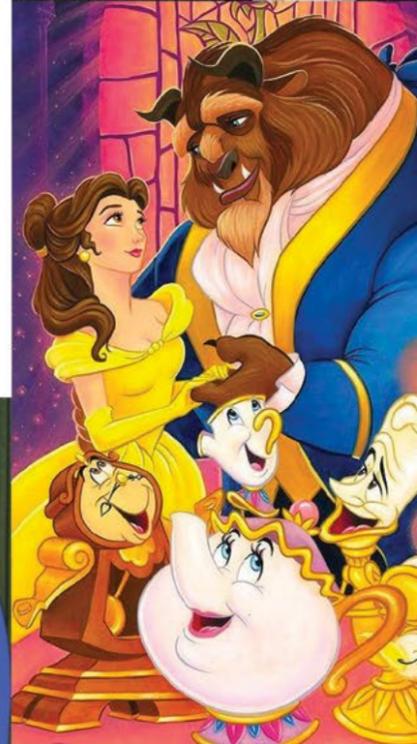
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### Kevin Maguire

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*, *Godzilla*, *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*, *Monster & Madman*, *Winnebago Graveyard*, *Batman: Gotham County*



MAGUIRE



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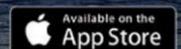
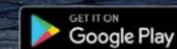
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*Line*, and recently *A Town Called Terror*. His work has been published by Dark Horse, DC, IDW, Image, Marvel, and Storm King. His comics series *The October Faction* was made into a Netflix show in 2020, while *30 Days of Night* was released as a 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 comix (*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* magazine's 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



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with DC Comics on such titles as *Batman*, *Detective Comics*, and *Justice League*. He has also written *American Vampire* for DC/Vertigo and *Wytches* 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 Datson and the Forever Machine* with Jamal Igle. *Sponsored by Comixology*

### 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 *B5* 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.



STOUT



STRACZYNSKI



STURGES



TAMAKI



TELGEMEIER



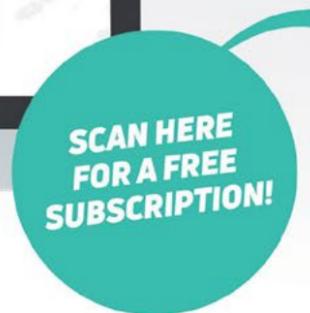
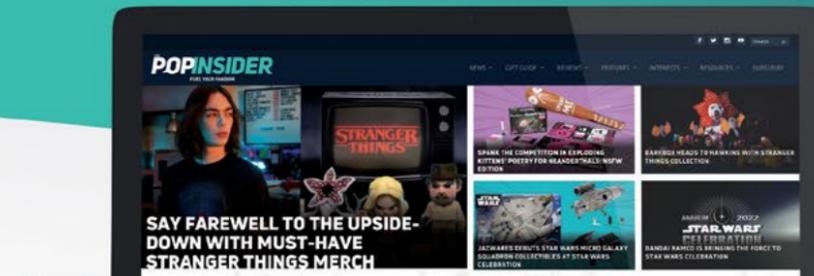
TENJIN

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### 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 videogames 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 *Yasuke*, and mechanical imagery and animation direction on *Star Blazers 2205*. *Sponsored by UDON Entertainment*

### Trino (José Trinidad Camacho)

Cartoonist José Trinidad Camacho, better known as Trino, is co-creator (along with Jis) of the comic strip series and 2012 movie *El Santos vs la Tetona Mendoza*. He and Jis co-host the radio show *La Chora Interminable* and talk show *La Chora TV* on Mexican TV and YouTube. Trino has illustrated dozens of children's books, including 11 volumes of the *El Santos* series. He has

exhibited his strips at the Mexican consulates in Atlanta, El Paso, Salt Lake City, and San Diego. He is a recipient of the National Prize of Journalism for Political Cartoon (2000, Mexico). *Sponsored by Casa Mexico at Comic-Con & Consulate General of Mexico in San Diego*

### Maggie Thompson

Adult fans of comic books didn't begin to contact each other in any organized way until 1960. Among those pop culture fans were 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.maggiethompson.com](http://www.maggiethompson.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 Cthulittle*, and *Tarzan and the Dark Heart of Time*. Past comics creations include *Breathmaker*, *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.



TRINO



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# WHEN SCHULZ CAME TO COMIC-CON

CELEBRATING  
100 YEARS OF  
CHARLES M. SCHULZ

BY ALEXIS E. FAJARDO

**C**harles 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*, *Skippy*, *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



OPPOSITE:  
Charles M. Schulz in his  
Studio circa 1971.  
Photo: Richard Rowen



**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 ran 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.

real well—I could never paint or anything like that—but I could draw." His parents nurtured this interest. Even during the Depression (and on a barber's modest income) his father and his mother, Dena, made sure Sparky got the instruction he needed. They signed him up for correspondence classes from Art Instruction School across the river in Minneapolis.

Despite the confidence he felt with a pencil in his hand, it took time before Schulz felt comfortable in his own skin. Athletics helped, but skipping grades, schoolyard slights, and being the short one on the ballfield all made an impact. Throughout his whole life, Sparky remembered the pain and humiliation of growing up. When he lost his mother to cancer shortly after being

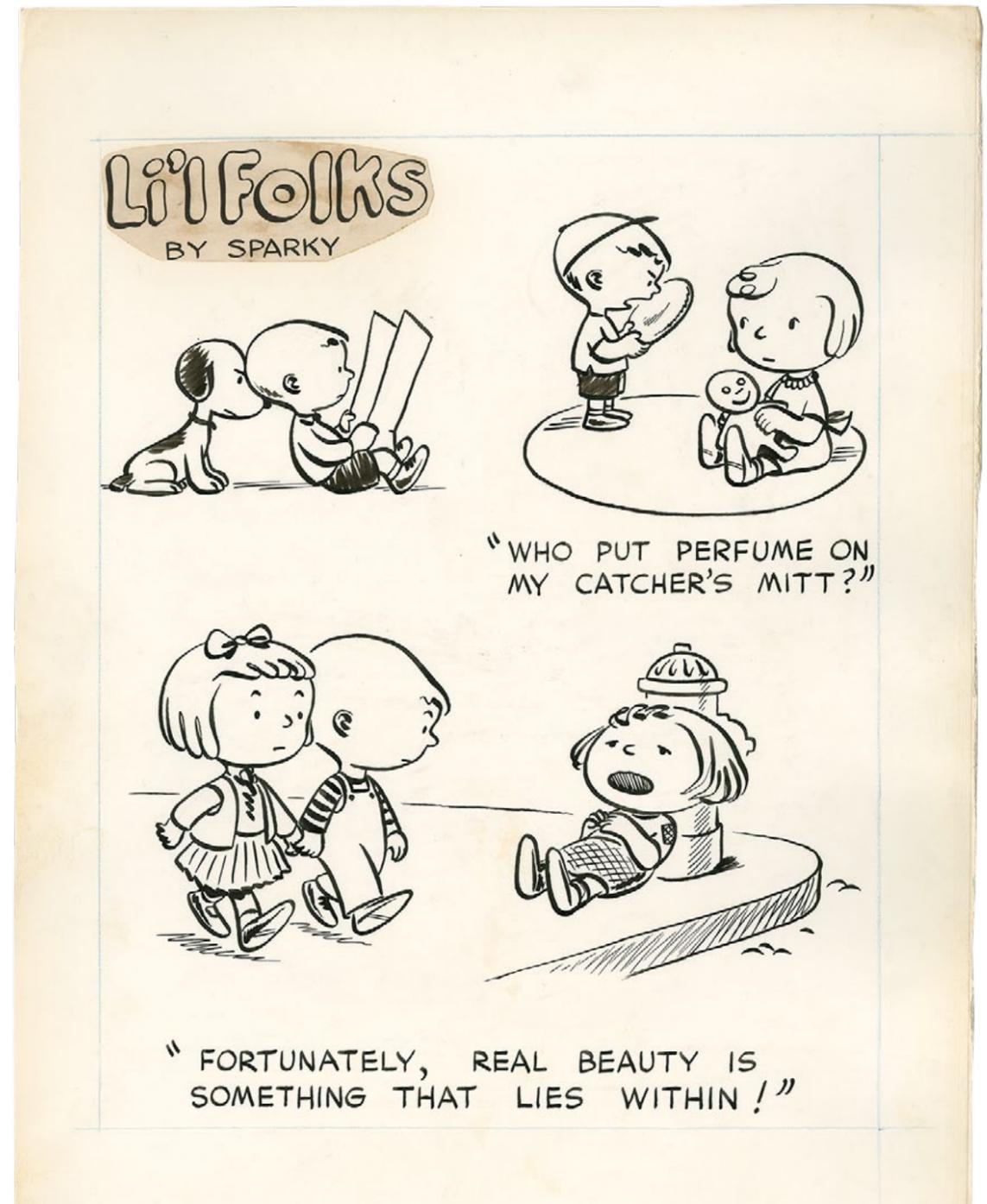
drafted into World War II, he was heartbroken. "The three years I spent in the Army taught me all I needed to know about loneliness, and my sympathy for the loneliness that all of us experience is dropped heavily upon poor Charlie Brown." He found solace in his sketchbook and made lasting friendships 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;





**“...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.”**

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 foisted 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, Shermie, 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.”

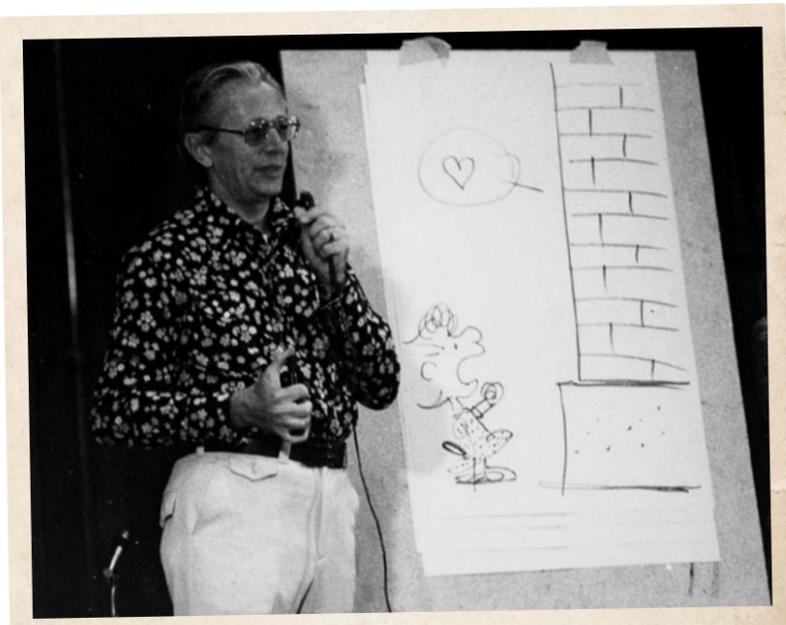
Schulz added a fifth character to the ensemble too—an irrepressible puppy named Snoopy. In the early months of the strip, Snoopy palled around with all of the kids as the neighborhood dog. Eventually, Schulz gave him an owner in Charlie Brown. This pairing of boy and dog would become the nucleus of the 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

**ABOVE:** A sampling of Peanuts comic strips through the decades. Schulz’s style was always evolving as he fine-tuned his craft over the strip’s fifty year run.

**OPPOSITE:** Schulz at Comic-con in 1974.



Schulz at Comic-con in 1974.

“IT WAS A RATHER HEADY WEEKEND FOR ME BECAUSE I HADN’T BEEN AROUND CARTOONISTS UNTIL THEN. WE HAD A LARGE ROOM AND ONE OF THE EVENINGS SPARKY INVITED A GROUP TO THE ROOM AND WE ALL SAT AROUND WHILE THE CARTOONISTS TALKED. I REMEMBER RUSS MYERS (BROOM-HILDA) AND THE WRITER OF STEVE CANYON, MILTON CANIFF. IT WAS WONDERFUL TO HEAR THESE ARTISTS TALKING SHOP AND SHARING STORIES OF THEIR CRAFT AND EXPRESSING THEIR MUTUAL ADMIRATION.”

—Jean Schulz on her memories of the 1974 San Diego Comic-Con

“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.

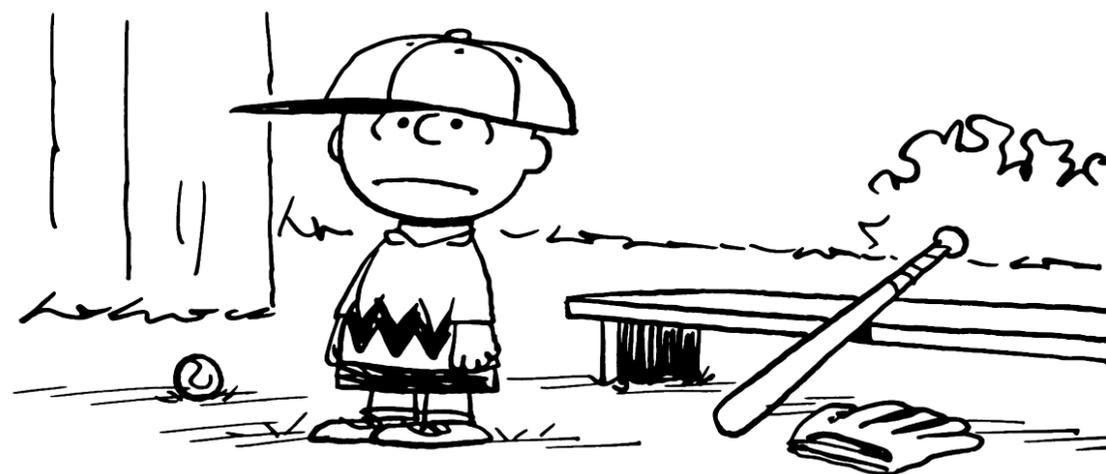
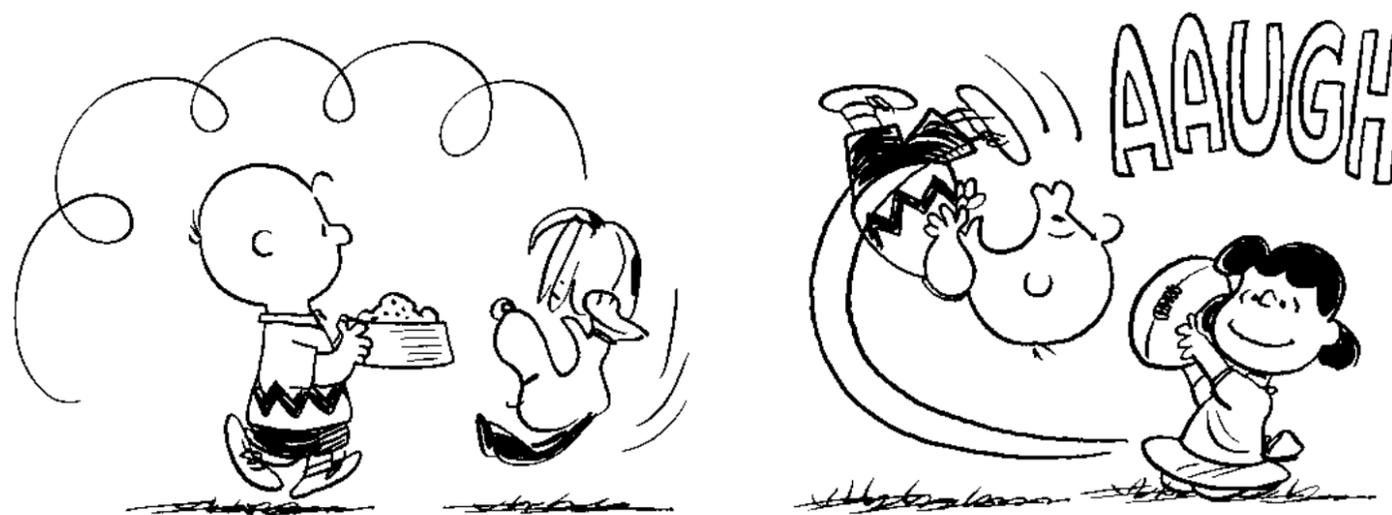
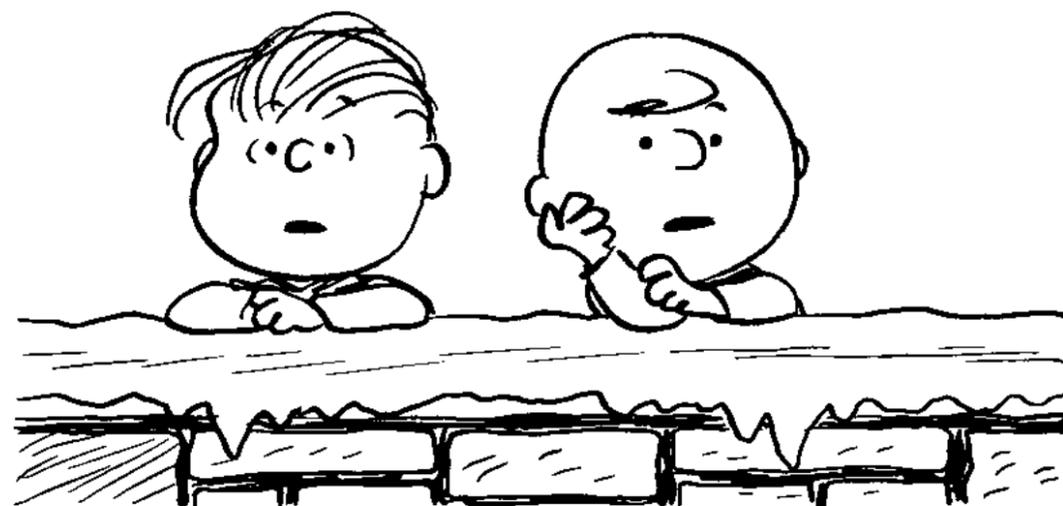
Despite the full slate of projects, Schulz continued to produce his comic strip as he always did: day in and day out, in his studio, alone at his drawing board. He had no assistants or writing partners, no gag-men or sounding boards unlike some of his peers (a tradition in cartooning). It wasn’t that 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.”

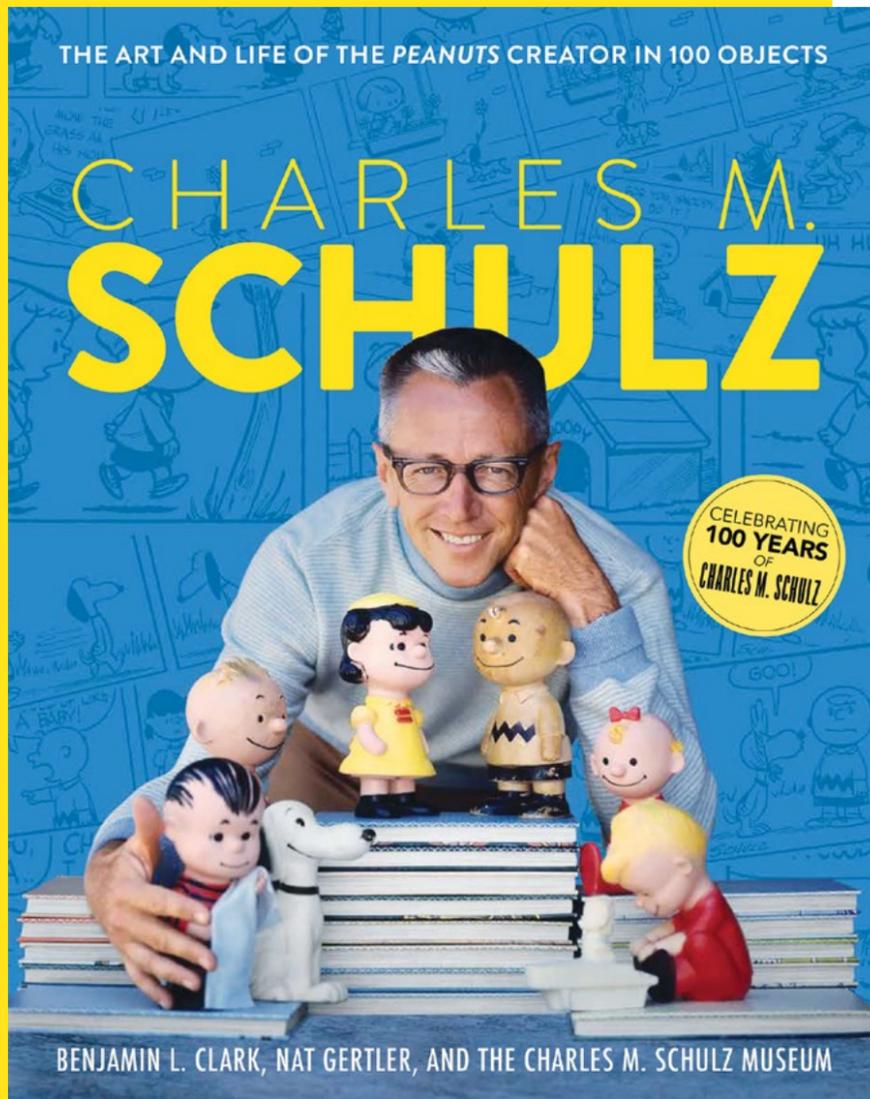
It was precisely this recall of his past and remix in his art that made Schulz’s brand of humor so unique. The humiliation Charlie Brown feels after losing a ballgame 40-0 is the same Schulz felt when he was growing up. The unrequited love Charlie Brown holds for the Little Red-Haired Girl (or Lucy has 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,



Alexis E. Fajardo is a cartoonist and Editorial Director for the Charles M. Schulz Studio in Santa Rosa, California where he edits Peanuts comic books and storybooks, written exhibition material for the Charles M. Schulz Museum and Snoopy Museum Tokyo, and won the 2018 Eisner Award for co-editing the Best Archival Project, "Celebrating Snoopy."



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.

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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.

"I am very proud of the comic strip medium and am never ashamed to admit that I draw a comic strip. I do not regard it as great art, but I have always felt it is certainly on the level with other entertainment mediums which are part of the so-called 'popular arts.' In many ways, I do not think we have realized the potential of the comic strip, but sometimes I feel it is too late. Many regard the comic page as a necessary evil and a nuisance, but it is there and it helps sell newspapers. With a little more tolerance and with a little more dedication on the part of those who create the comics, perhaps we could do better."

Now, a full century since Schulz's birth, the syndicated newspaper comic strip—once the dominant publication space for comics and the ultimate marker for success—has been upended. Thankfully, the art form Schulz loved since childhood has remained and has adapted to the changing times. Instead of the daily routine of reading newspaper comics with your Cheerios, we scroll through comics on our phones via Twitter, Instagram, and elsewhere online. Comic strips have given way to webcomics and bestselling graphic novels. And even if many of these readers are not intimately familiar with Charlie Brown and Snoopy, the ripple effect of Schulz's artistic influence is seen in today's cartooning stars like Dav Pilkey, Raina Telgemeier, Jeff Kinney, Dana Simpson, and so many others.

When speaking with young cartoonists, Schulz would often quiz them if they knew who Percy Crosby, Elzie Segar, or George Herriman were. It was a test of cartooning knowledge and history that helped Schulz determine if he was talking to a serious student. As we celebrate this centennial year of Schulz's birth, "Charles M. Schulz" has become like the cartooning idols of his youth—a master of the form whose work continues to be read, enjoyed, and analyzed all over the world. Not a bad outcome for a kid who just wanted to make comics. 🐾



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# CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF





## BY DANNY FINGEROTH

**W**ith 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, moreso now 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

Hi, Marvelites! This is the ol' cornball, Stan Lee, taking you on a nostalgic journey to yesterday's fantasy wonderland! But, before we shove off, I'd like to give you my personal impressions of the Marvel madmen whose work you're about to thrill to! So FACE FRONT! And awaaaay we go—

"BEWARE!! THE GHOSTS SURROUND ME!"

This great yarn, which might have taken place today, gives concrete evidence to the claim that dashin' DONNIE HECK is perhaps our most sophisticated artist! Notice his factual, photographic treatment of the swingin' characters in the tale, together with a deft, decorative quality which has become his trademark in today's mighty AVENGERS!

"I SAW THE OTHER WORLD!"

As every SGT. FURY fan knows, if ever a man was born to draw comics, darlin' DICK AYERS is that pussy-cat! He's still as much of a comic book fan as any of our most rollickin' readers! Dick blends his powerful pencilling style with a bold, punchy inking treatment that makes him an editor's delight! Like our other Marvel greats, the darlin' one has drawn just about every type of feature imaginable, and this is one of his most representative fantasy gems!

"I FOUND THE THINGS FROM NOWHERE!"

Not only is jolly JACK KIRBY the undisputed king of superhero artwork, from the FANTASTIC FOUR to long-haired THOR, but he is equally without peer in almost every type of imaginative, far-out fantasy! Since his early days at Marvel—with the creation of CAPTAIN AMERICA, more than two decades ago—Jack has proven time and again that his mighty pencil can make the simplest drawing fairly pulsate with unbridled excitement!

"THOSE WHO CHANGE!"

Sturdy STEVEY DITKO is considered by many pros to be an artist's artist. An imaginative, inventive perfectionist, he combines the skill of a master storyteller with the eye of a dazzling designer! From his earliest fantasy classics of many years ago, to his widely-acclaimed SPIDER-MAN and DR. STRANGE epics of today, Steve's style is as enjoyable as it is original!

"I BECAME A HUMAN ROBOT!"

Although jovial JOE SINNOTT is presently best known as the FANTASTIC FOUR'S newest and most heralded inker, his pencilling too has thrilled audiences everywhere in the early days of Marvel! Employing a style which combines decorative embellishment with crisp, clear, no-nonsense story-telling, this talented artisan has long been one of the most durable and dependable of illustrators!

Well, that wraps up the intros for now! So, there's nothing left for you to do but start reading and Marvel-ing! The whole gang here in the bullpen, from SOLLY BRODSKY, FLO STEINBERG, MARIE SEVERIN, ROY THOMAS, ARTIE, SAM, and STAN G., to our meritorious mentor, merrie MARTY GOODMAN, all hope you'll have a ball! And remember, there'll be more of the same coming your way next ish! So, till then, happy readin', frantic one! 'Nuff said!

PAGE 7:  
Stan Lee illustration  
by Vince Alvendia.

PREVIOUS:  
Comic book creator  
Stan Lee and artist John  
Romita, Sr., go over a  
daily strip featuring  
Spider-Man at their  
office on Madison  
Avenue in Manhattan,  
New York on May 23,  
1978. (Photo by Gerald  
S. Williams/Newsday  
RM via Getty Images).

ABOVE:  
Stan Lee at Comic-Con  
in 2017.



**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.

So, with what seems no clear goal, in December 1940, Stan took a job as an assistant editor at a new comic book company, Timely, which was an offshoot of the company’s pulp magazine division. Publisher Martin Goodman was looking to cash in on the comic book fad, especially the superhero craze that had set in with Superman’s

debut in *Action Comics* #1 in 1938. This was a case of double-nepotism, since Martin’s wife was Stan’s mother’s first cousin, and Stan’s uncle, Timely staffer Robbie Solomon, was married to Martin’s sister. This kind of thing was quite common at companies that were started by first-generation American-born children of immigrants, especially the company started by Goodman. Many of Timely’s employees were Goodman relatives.

Stan was assigned to the comics division’s editor, Joe Simon, and art director, Jack Kirby, as an assistant. In addition to their day jobs at Timely, Simon and Kirby were prolific comic book creators. For Goodman, they had just invented Captain America, whose first issue was then appearing on newsstands.

There was no reason to think this 18-year-old, looking for direction, would stay with this job any longer than he stayed with the other flunky jobs he’d gone through, such as delivering sandwiches for a midtown lunch counter and tagging garments in a pants factory. 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 down (booming through the mid-fifties, followed by a slow revival



**OPPOSITE:**  
Stan Lee stands in front of the Marvel booth at Comic-Con in 2016.

# The SECRETS of SPIDER-MAN!

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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 phenomenon, and Stan Lee became the face of Marvel 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 hit 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 after two years or three years. Or ever. Their popularity would grow and would spread to other media, as continues—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 to the West Coast, where he spent the next few decades,

with mixed success, trying to sell Marvel's characters—as well as concepts of his own—for movies and animated and live-action TV.

Though he didn't achieve the mega-success in Hollywood that Marvel would realize in the 21st century, he did manage to be deeply involved in the *Spider-Man* live-action TV show, the Bixby-Ferrigno *Hulk* series, and the success of Marvel as an animation house, producing not only Marvel-based shows but series with other popular characters as well. He survived numerous sales of the company and multiple corporate upheavals where adversaries a lot tougher than Conan or the Hulk tried to oust him. Apparently—though he never stopped participating in side-gigs—he seems to have decided that his life's work was, indeed, Marvel and its characters.

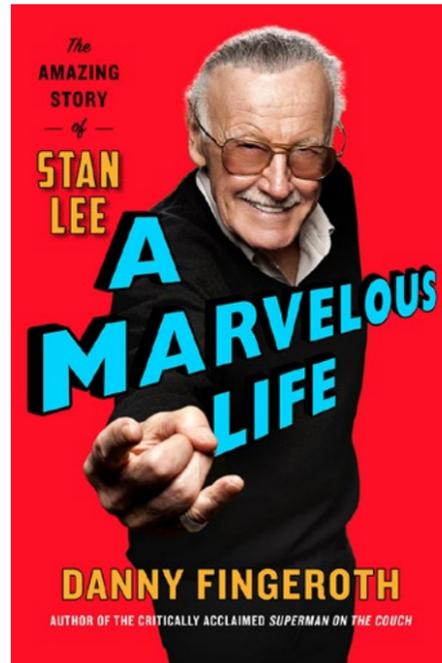
In the 2000s, while still under contract to Marvel, Stan formed a couple of companies, one named after him and one specifically *not* named after him but of which he was the chief asset. (Did I mention that in 2000, he turned 78? Clearly, though, retirement was not what he was after.) He had an 18-year 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. 🕷️

*Danny Fingeroth worked at Marvel Comics as an editor and writer from 1977 to 1995. He is the author of A Marvelous Life: The Amazing Story of Stan Lee (St. Martin's Press/Macmillan, 2019), chosen as an entertainment book of the year by The Times of London and Syfy.*



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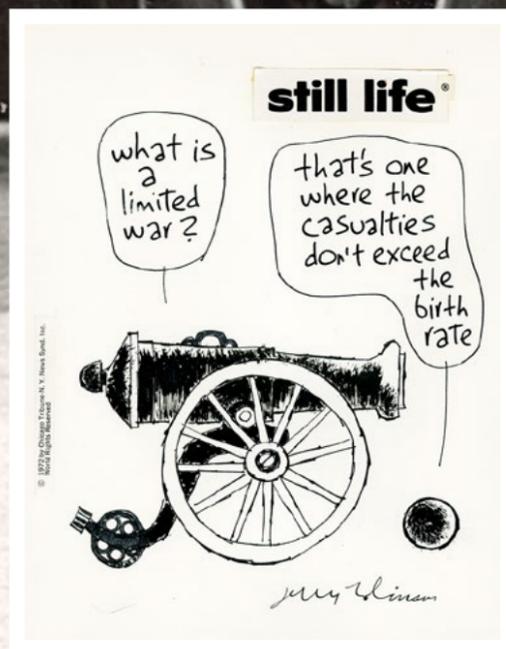


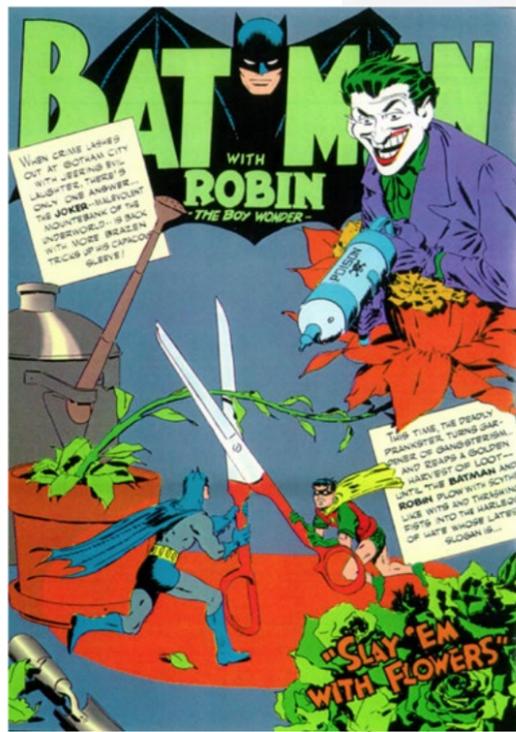
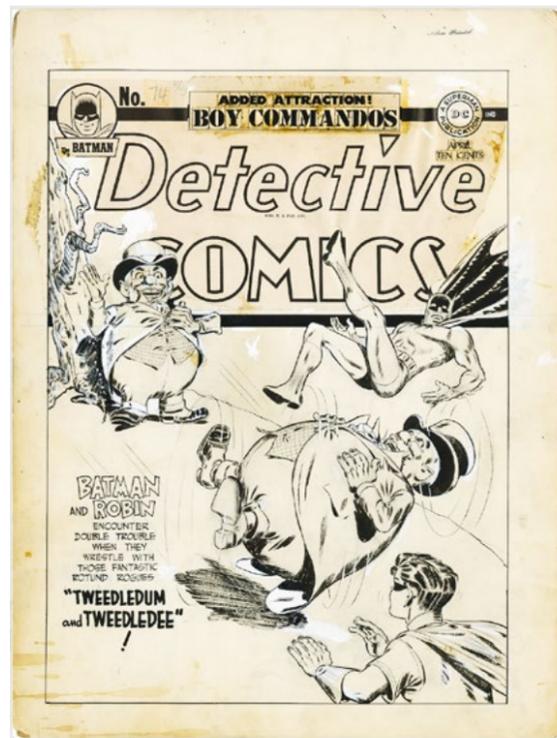
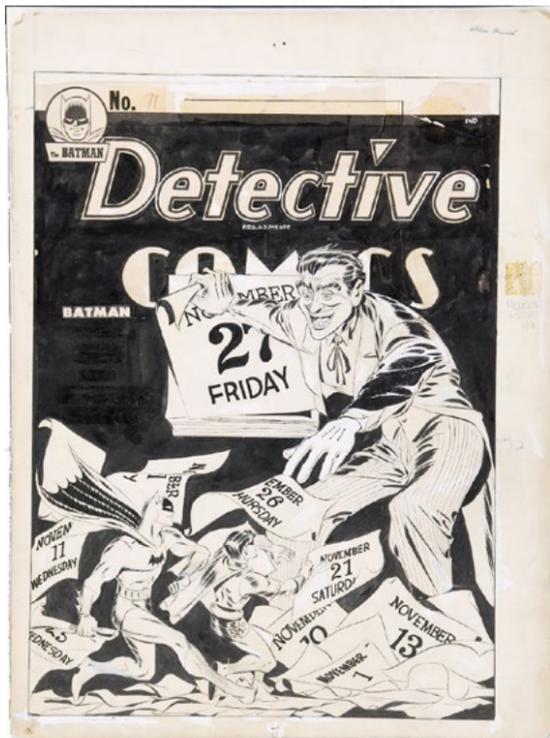
# JERRY ROBINSON

## A RENAISSANCE MAN FOR COMICS

BY KAREN L. GREEN  
AND JENS ROBINSON

**T**his 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

**PREVIOUS:**

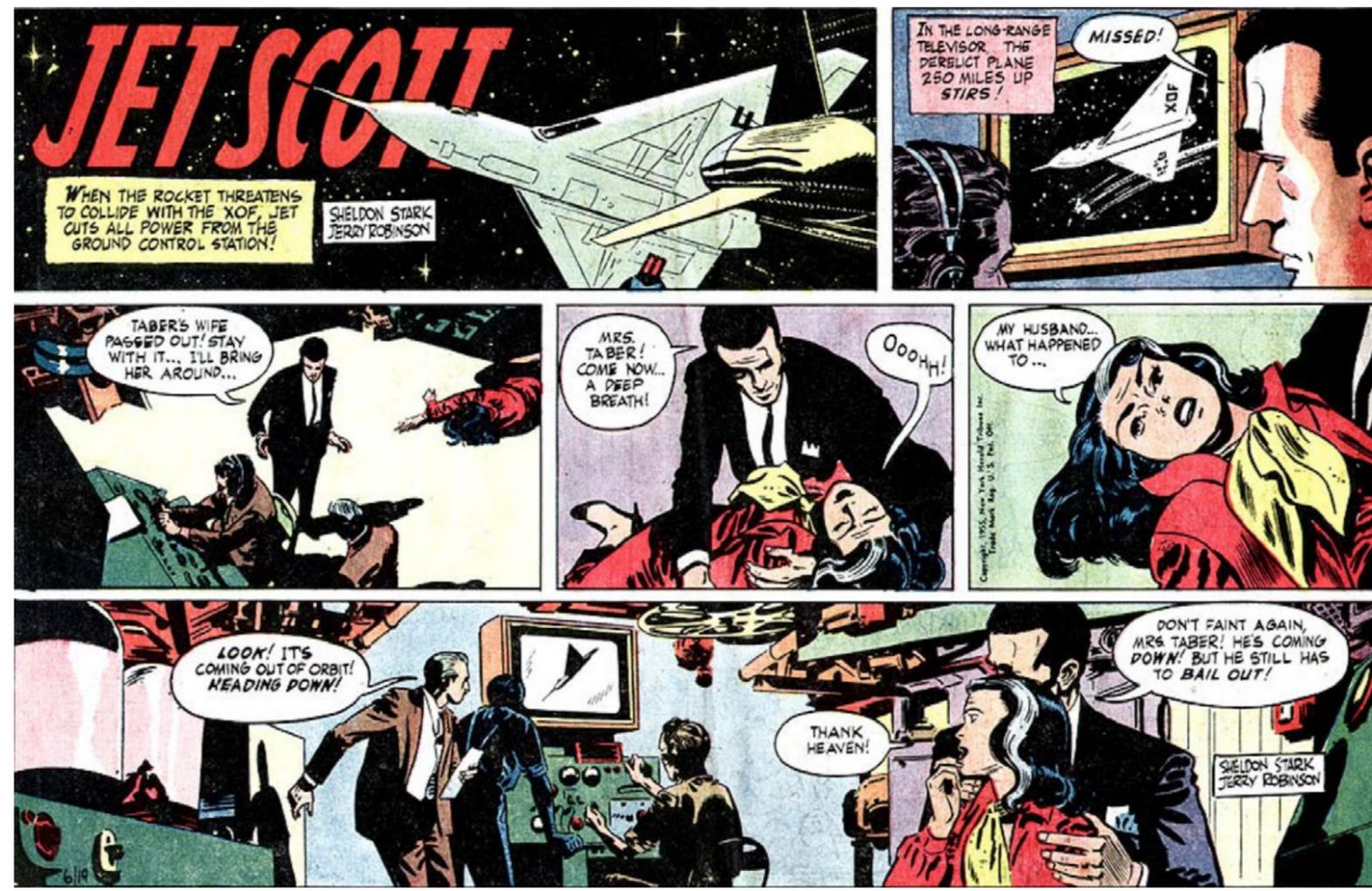
Jerry with a N.Y. Daily News truck promoting his feature, "Still Life," 1963.

**ABOVE:**

Cover art for *Detective Comics* #71 and #74; splash page from *Detective Comics* #76, all 1943.

**OPPOSITE:**

Self-portrait with Batman and Robin, holiday card, 1942; inset: original concept sketch of the Joker (1940).



**“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.”**

those characters with the classic early covers he drew of the Penguin (*Detective Comics* #67), Two-Face (*Detective Comics* #68), Scarecrow (*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

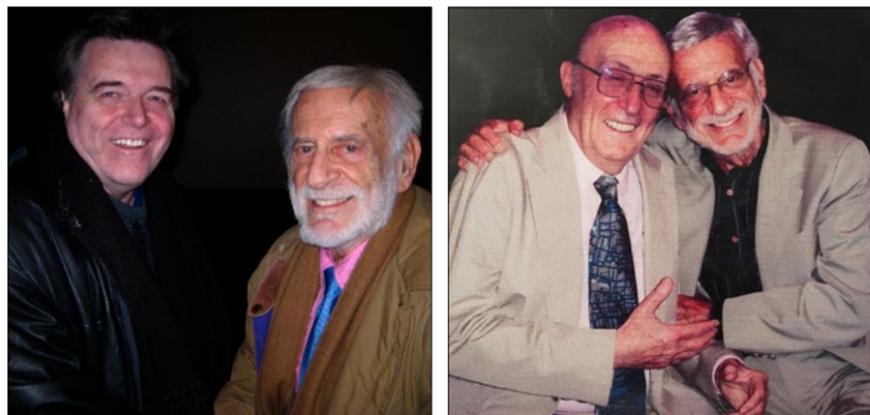
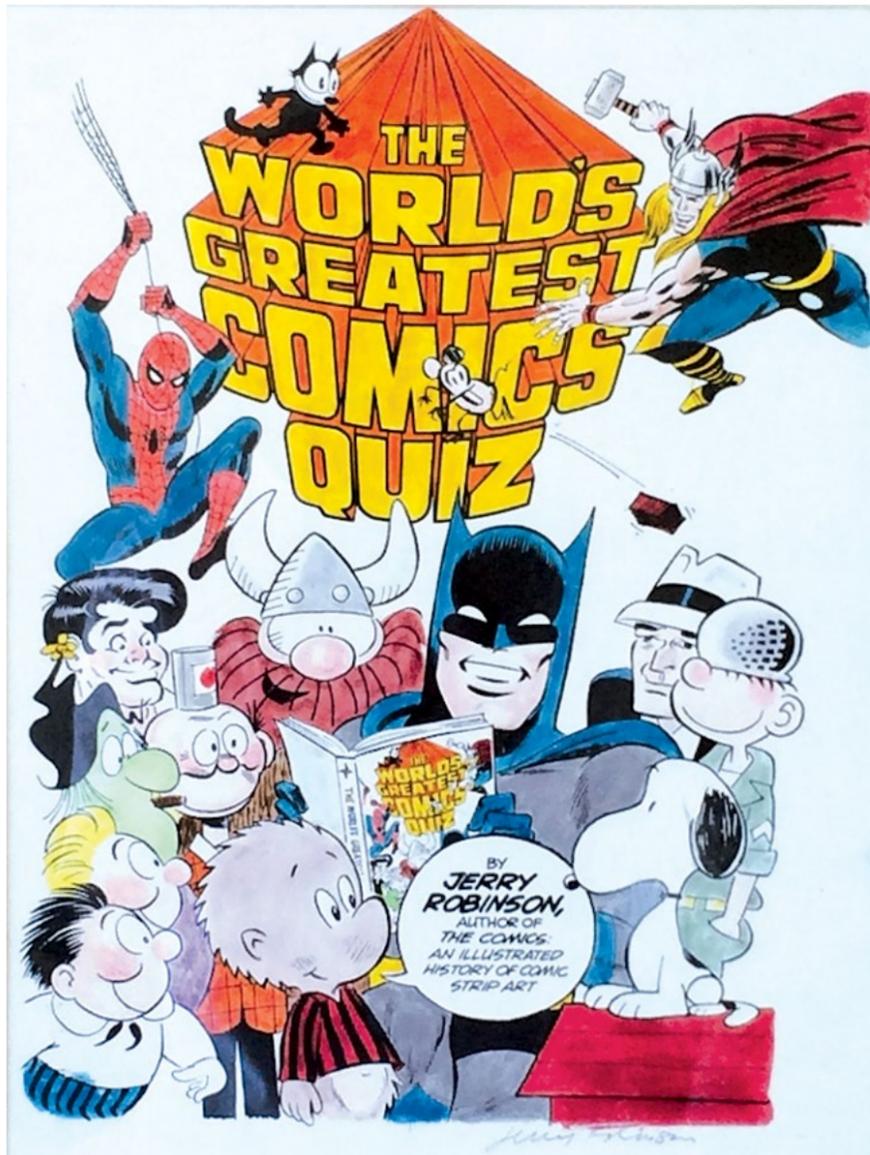
is the one I’m proudest of. While my time on *Batman* was important, exciting, and notable considering the characters that came out of it, it was really just the start of my life.” That delight in political cartooning would soon inspire an entirely new direction in Jerry’s life.

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 pools,” 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 car-

toonists 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

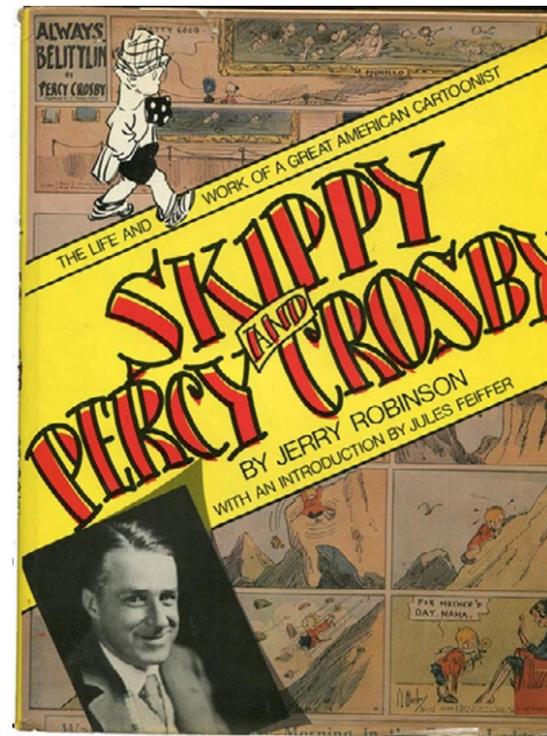


ABOVE:  
*The World's Greatest Comic Quiz*, a 1978 book.  
 Jerry with Neal Adams and Will Eisner.  
 (Photos: Jackie Estrada)

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 Comics 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 Comics: An Illustrated History of Comic Strip Art*, and honoring the life and career of a brilliant and influential artist in *Skippy and Percy Crosby: The Life and Work of a Great American Cartoonist*.



Even while working in the earliest days of the industry, 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, *Astra*, with the help of Japanese artists Go Nagai, Shojin Tanaka, and Ken-ichi Oishi. *Astra* was based on a "comic book opera" that Jerry co-wrote with Sidra Cohn—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 comics 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.*

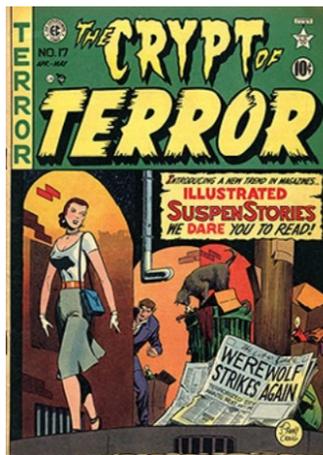
ABOVE:  
 Two comics histories  
 written by Jerry.

# HAPPY 100<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY, WILLIAM M. GAINES!

BY GRANT GEISSMAN

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.

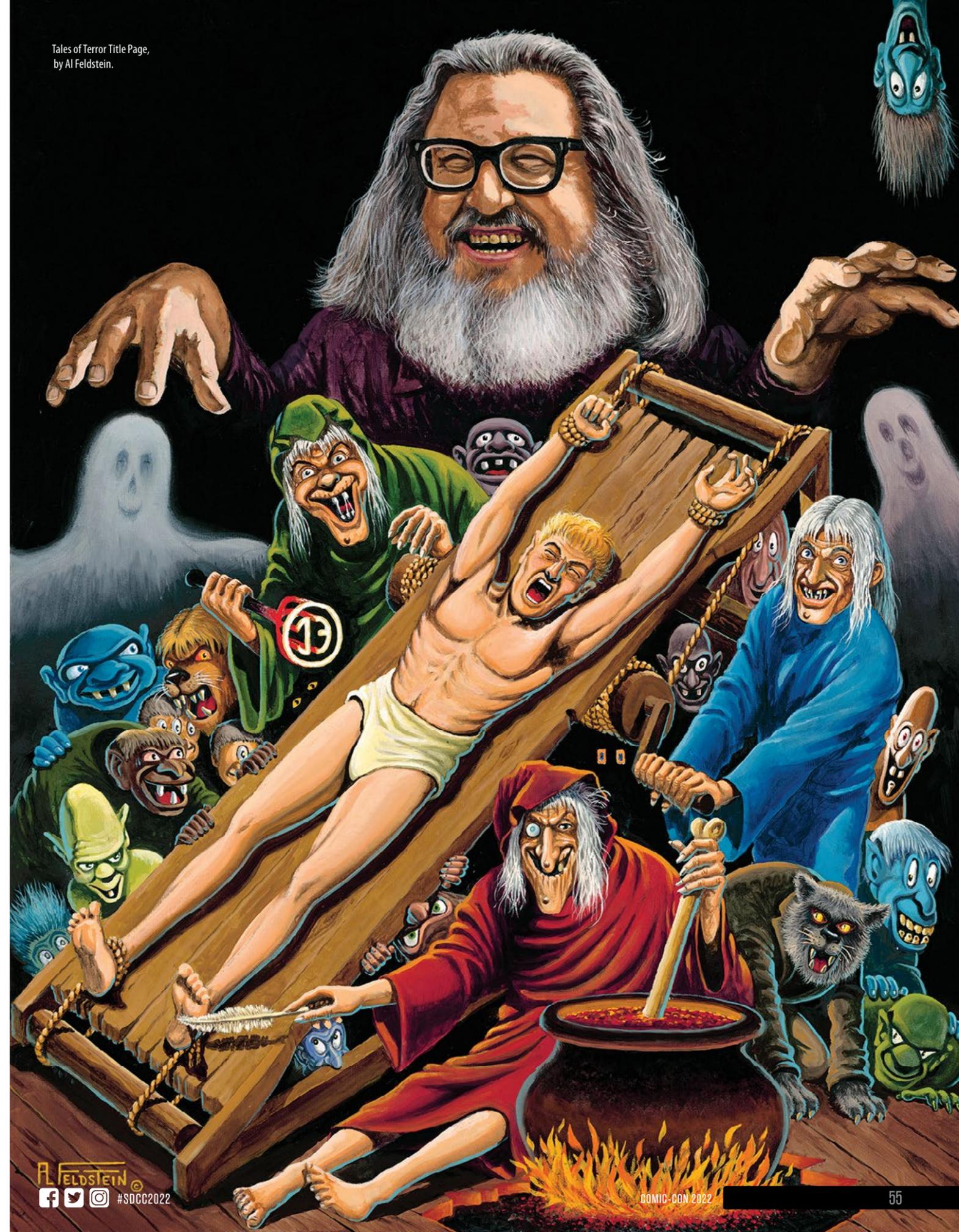
In 1947 the young Bill Gaines was finishing up his college studies on his way to becoming a chemistry teacher. On August 20, however, he got the news that his father, EC Comics publisher Max Gaines, had been killed in a tragic boating accident on Lake Placid. Although Bill was reluctant, his mother insisted 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.

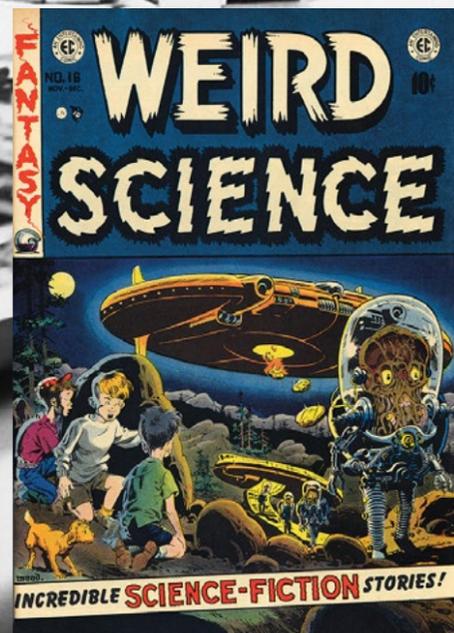
Bill began to assemble a new and younger staff (notably artist/writers Al Feldstein, Harvey Kurtzman, and Johnny Craig) and started replacing his father's titles with new ones. After several years of trying to keep up with the ever-changing trends in the comic book industry, EC tried out some experimental 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 GhouLunatics, the Crypt-Keeper, the Vault-Keeper, and the Old Witch) had become the flagships of the line.

Tales of Terror Title Page, by Al Feldstein.



AL FELDSTEIN  
f t i #SDCC2022

EC Comics publisher Bill Gaines (shown left) and writer/editor/artist Al Feldstein, 1953.



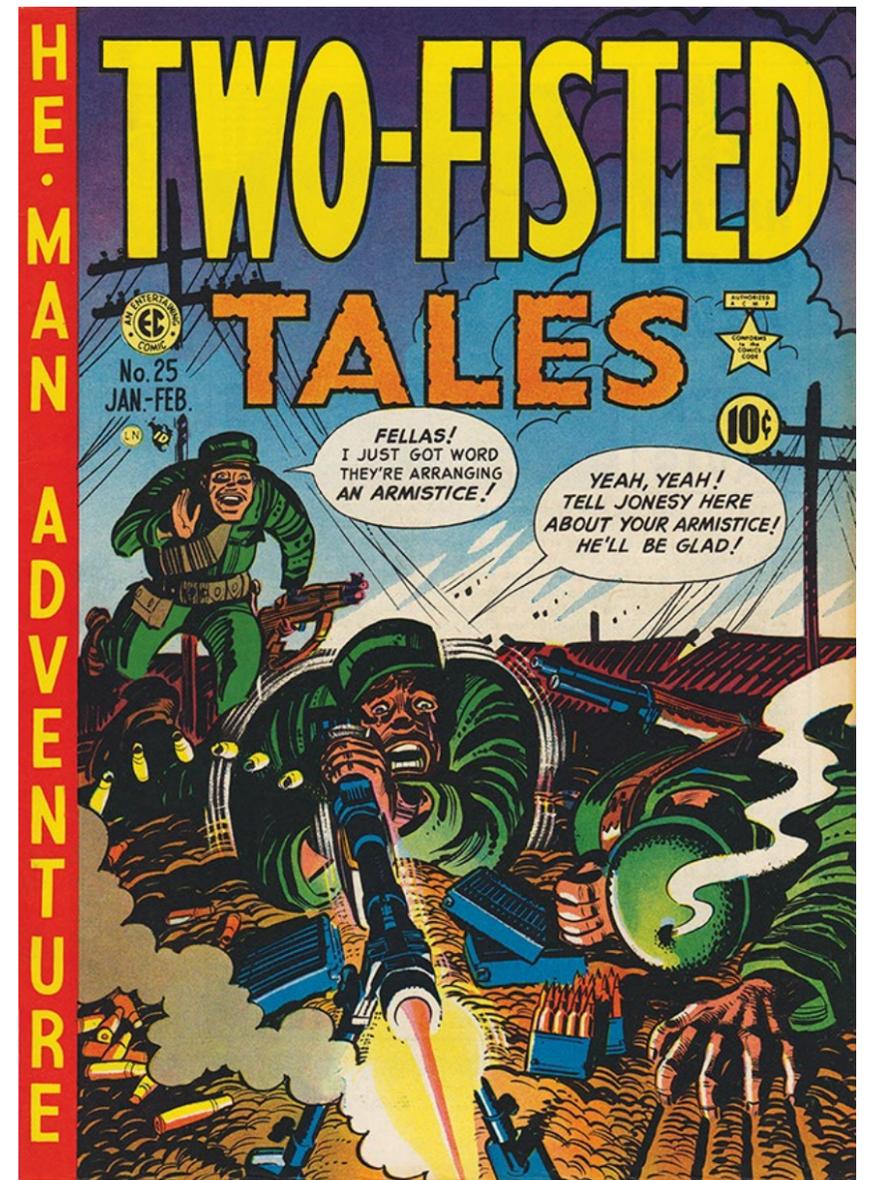
EC's small—but highly influential—"New Trend" line of comics consisted not only of horror but also of science fiction (*Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy*, which eventually merged into *Weird Science-Fantasy*, and finally became *Incredible Science Fiction*), crime (*Crime SuspensStories*), shock (*Shock SuspensStories*), 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 (*Piracy*), and even humor comics (*MAD* and *PANIC*). 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 "preachies." These stories were essentially parables about such

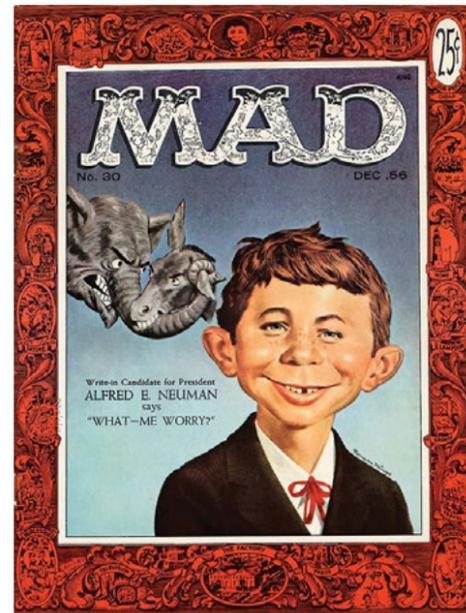
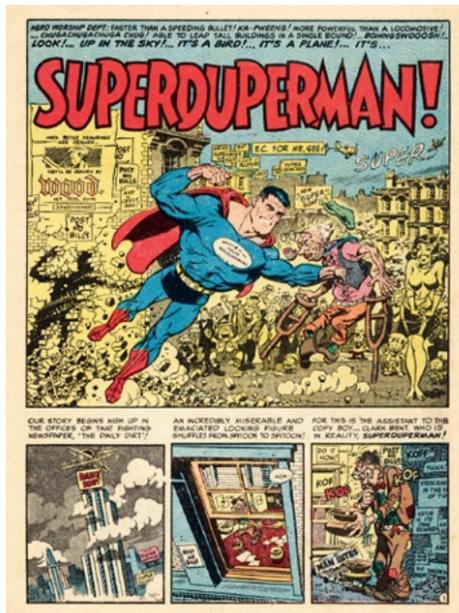


taboo subjects as racism, bigotry, vigilantism, drug addiction, police corruption, and anti-Semitism—something that had never been done in comics before this. These stories were quite controversial for the time, especially in certain areas of the country. The "preachie" stories provided Gaines and Feldstein 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.



Harvey Kurtzman, 1952



*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

**“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.”**

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.” *MAD*'s fourth issue contained the fledgling publication's first bona fide classic: “Superduperman.” With this story, *MAD* had found its

voice, satirizing specific comic book and comic strip features. 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 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



OPPOSITE:  
Gaines and the *MAD*  
staff circa 1964.



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 department: As long as the work got done, the dead-

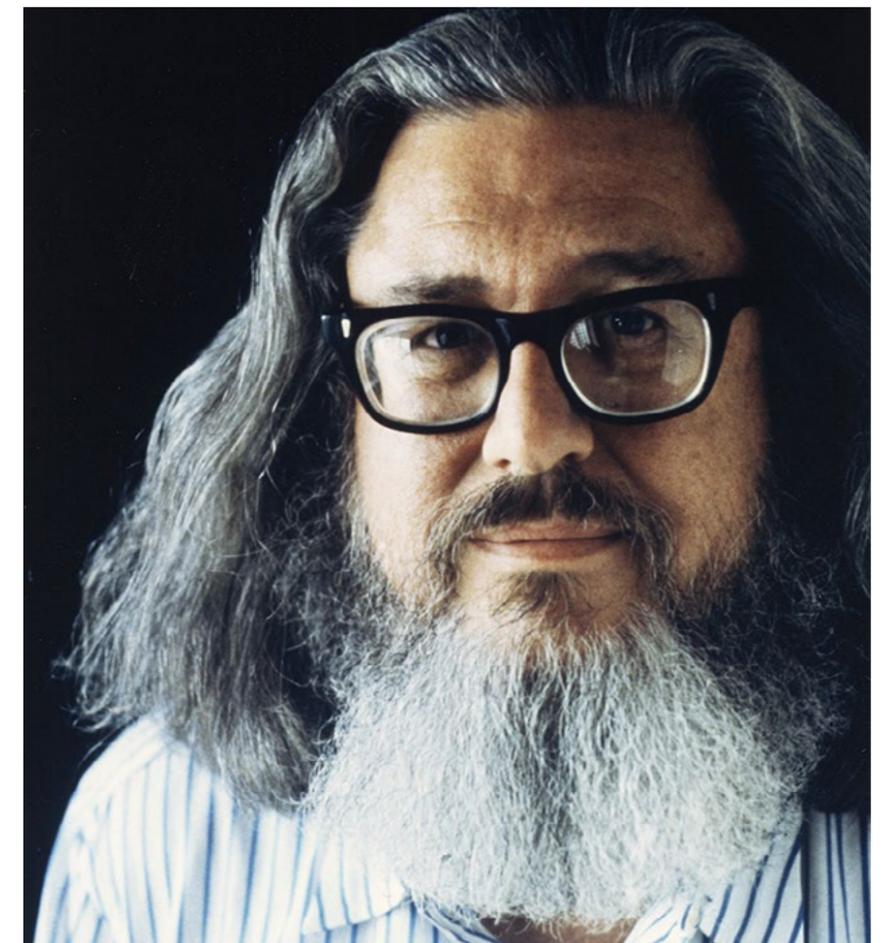
lines were met, and the magazine made money, he didn't care how long the lunch hours were, about the staff punching a time clock, or about any certain code of dress. Paradoxically, Gaines was also as cheap as he could be generous, and on one notorious occasion stopped work in the office for two days 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

OPPOSITE:  
*MAD* magazine house ad.

BELOW:  
Bill Gaines circa 1972.



the creative people around him to do their thing, and that's why he is a successful publisher." Longtime *MAD* writer Larry Siegel said, "You could write forever about Bill Gaines. There's always another side to Bill Gaines, you can keep peeling and peeling away the layers." (For instance, Gaines was a wine connoisseur, a zeppelin fanatic, and a collector of original Statue of Liberty sculptures by Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi.)

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 comix 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).*



INSET:  
Gaines buries horror  
comics by Jack Davis.

# KAZUNGUL

BOOK ONE: BLOOD TIES - AWAKENING OF THE ANCESTRAL CURSE



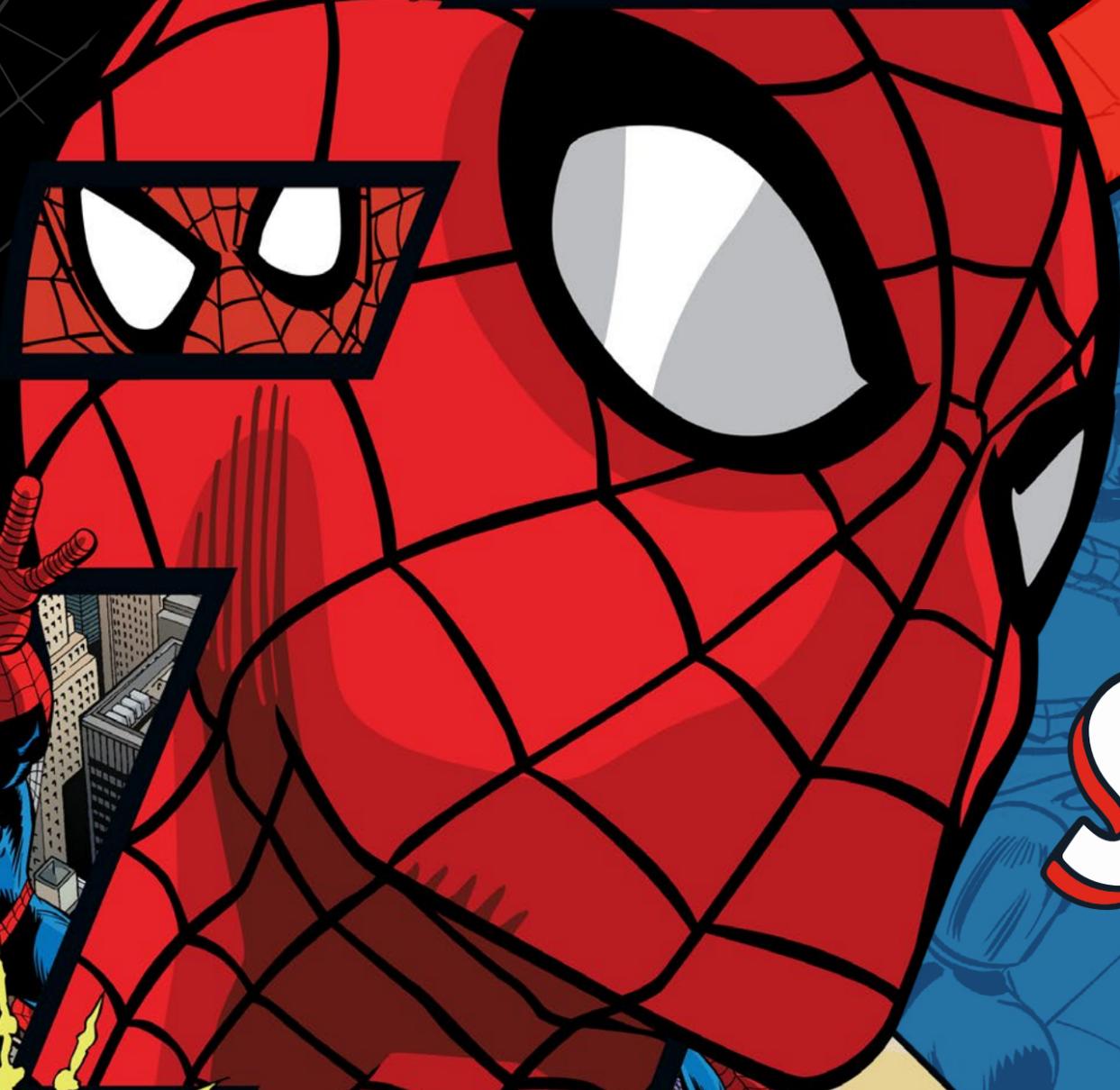
# MARCUS L. LUKUSA

# KAZUNGUL

BOOK THREE: CHRONOS' BLOOD THIRST - WAR OF THE ELEMENTALS



**MARVEL**



# 60 YEARS OF SPIDER-MAN



BY DOUGLAS WOLK



EXTRA ADDED ATTRACTION: SPIDER-MAN MEETS THE FANTASTIC FOUR, AS "the CHAMELEON STRIKES!"



Amazing Spider-Man Annual #1, 1964

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 Ditko had designed? Spider-Man's powers? The fact that he had money problems, like a normal person? What was genuinely novel about Peter Parker from his first appearance onward, though (and remains compelling now), is that he is not yet the



Amazing Spider-Man #50, 1967



Amazing Spider-Man #82, 1970



person he wants to be. For all his wisecracks, he's spent his life trying to overcome his guilt and shame, and he fails as often as he succeeds. And in that first decade of his story, he doesn't even know if the path he's chosen is a good idea. The image at the center of his first 100 issues—drawn by Romita, and endlessly homaged ever since—is Peter walking away from a trash can in which he's abandoned his costume.

**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 1988). 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 teens, 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 *Amazing Spider-Man* newspaper strip's 42-year run, as well as a two-season live-action *Amazing Spider-Man* TV series starring Nicholas Hammond. That was followed by two more animated shows in 1981: the syndicated *Spider-Man* and NBC's *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends*.

**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.

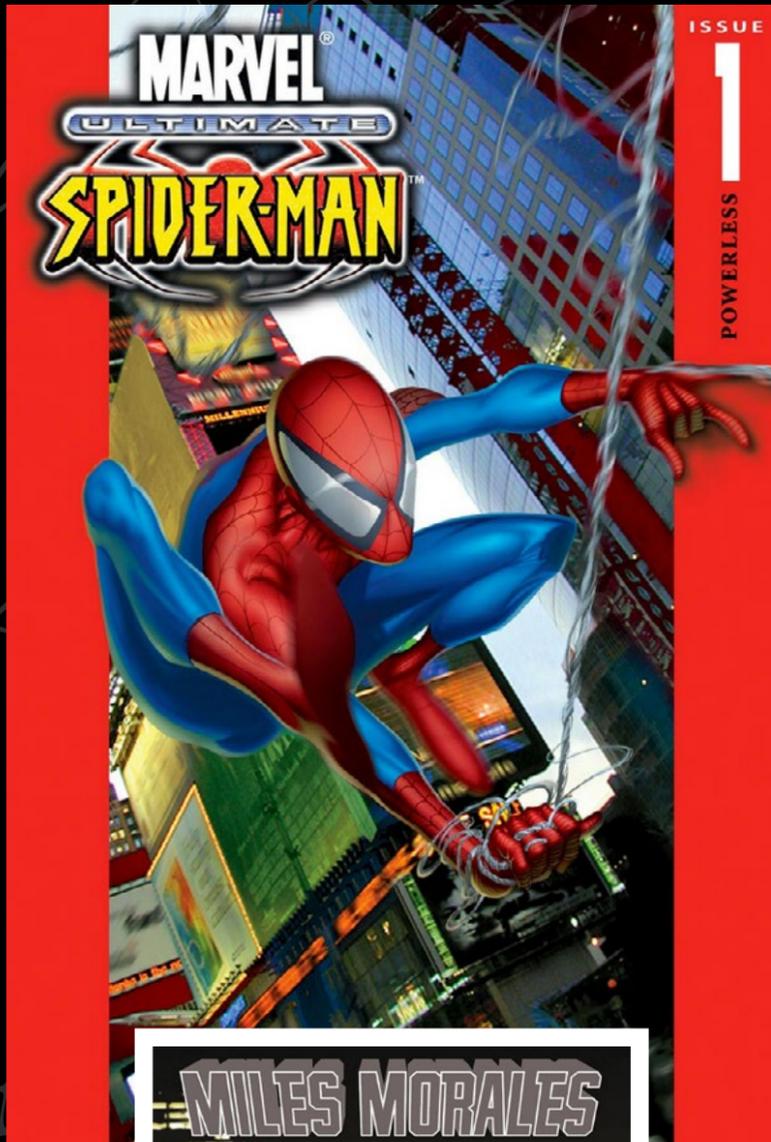
**1992-2002:**  
**"YOU CHANGED MY LIFE, BROTHER."**

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 is 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.



Amazing Spider-Man #252 and #316 — Romita!





Miles Morales in a collected edition of *Ultimate End*, 2011

# 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.

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. drawing.

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.

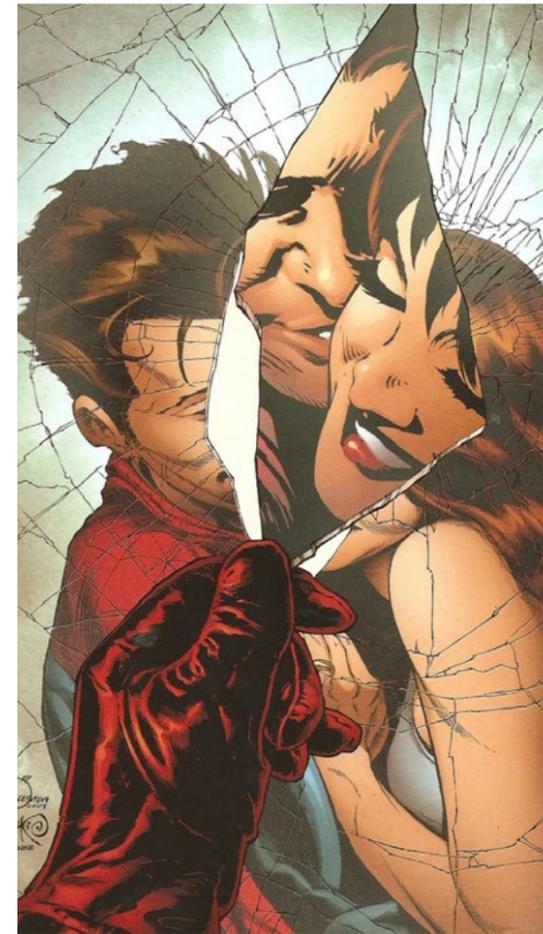
## 2002-2012: "MY NAME IS PETER PARKER, AND I'VE BEEN SPIDER-MAN SINCE I WAS FIFTEEN YEARS OLD."

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.

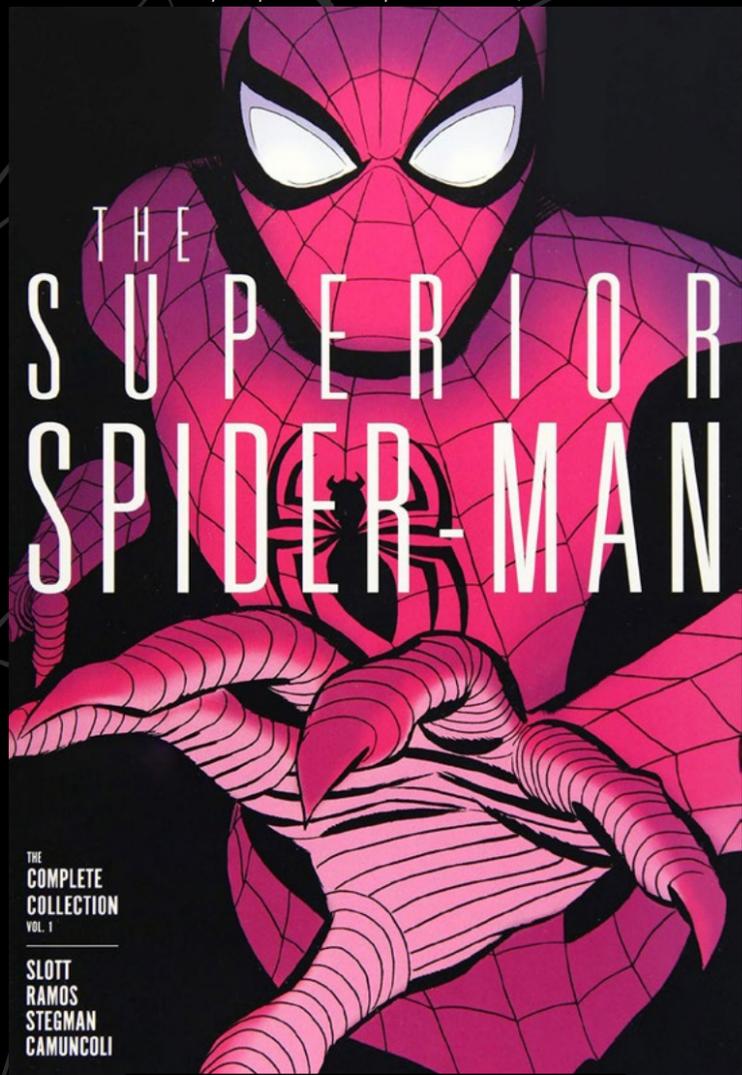
Brian Michael Bendis, meanwhile, killed off the Ultimate universe's Peter Parker in 2011, then introduced an entirely new Spidey: Miles Morales (co-created with artist Sara Pichelli), who became the star of a new *Ultimate Comics Spider-Man* series. Peter Parker found his way to another new medium with 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.



"One More Day," 2007



Ultimate Spider-Man interior page drawn by Mark Bagley, 2009



THE COMPLETE COLLECTION VOL. 1  
SLOTT RAMOS STEGMAN CAMUNCOLI



Amazing Spider-Man, #1, 2014

**2012-2022:**  
"ANYONE CAN WEAR THE MASK."

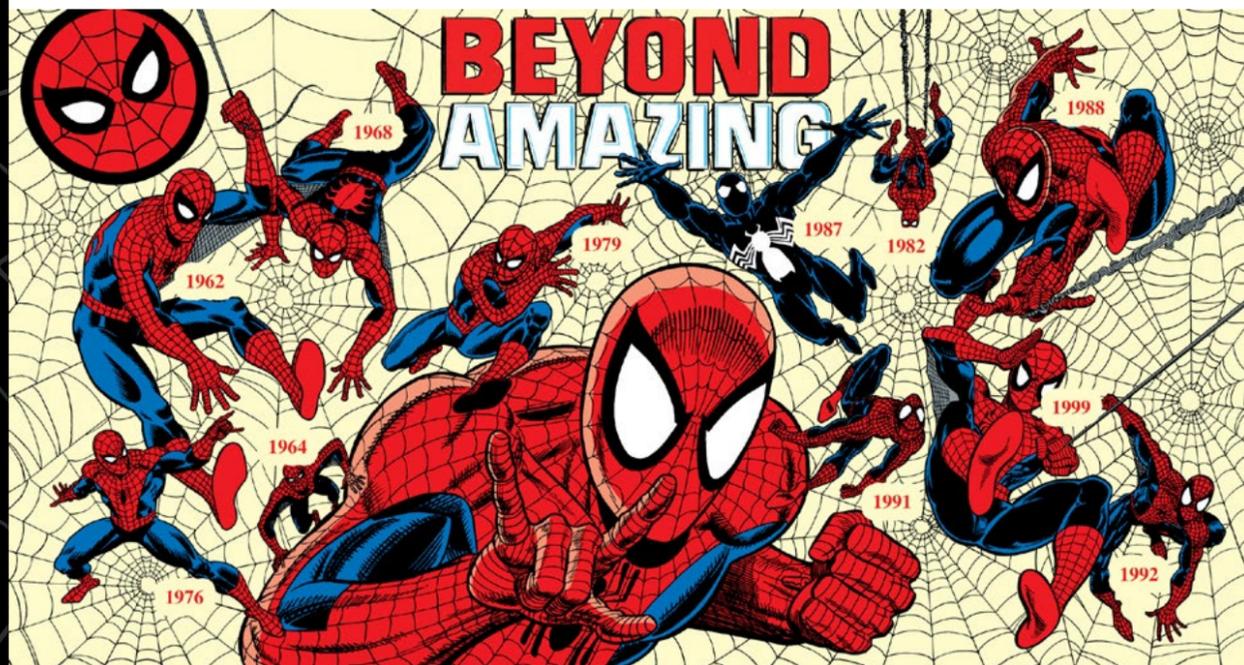
The past decade's worth of Spider-Man stories have been, more than anything else, about who can be Spider-Man, and what it means to accept that particular responsibility. At the end of 2012, Dan Slott and his frequent artistic collaborator Humberto Ramos concluded the *Amazing Spider-Man* series (or, 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.

Douglas Walk is the author of *All of the Marvels: A Journey to the Ends of the Biggest Story Ever Told* (Penguin Random House).

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 interpretation. 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. 🕸️



Spider-Man throughout the years



Spider-Man: No Way Home, 2021



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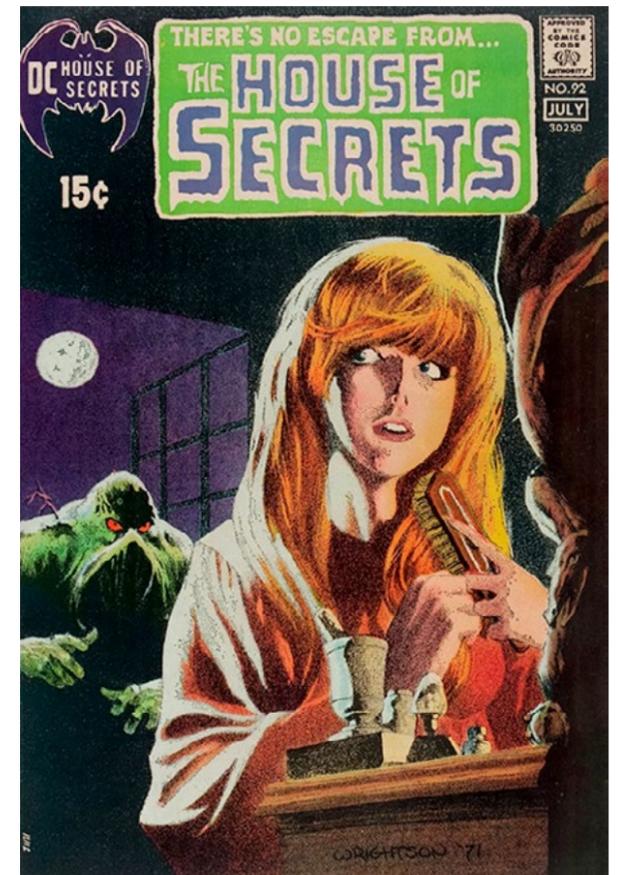
# SWAMP THING LIVES!

BY PAUL LEVITZ

**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





Len Wein



Bernie Wrightson

grace the front page of the *New York Times* magazine section, when the *Gray Lady* took note of the changes comics were going through.

Whatever Len Wein and Bernie Wrightson had done, it had certainly worked.

In the usual practice of that time, publisher Carmine

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 wagging 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?"

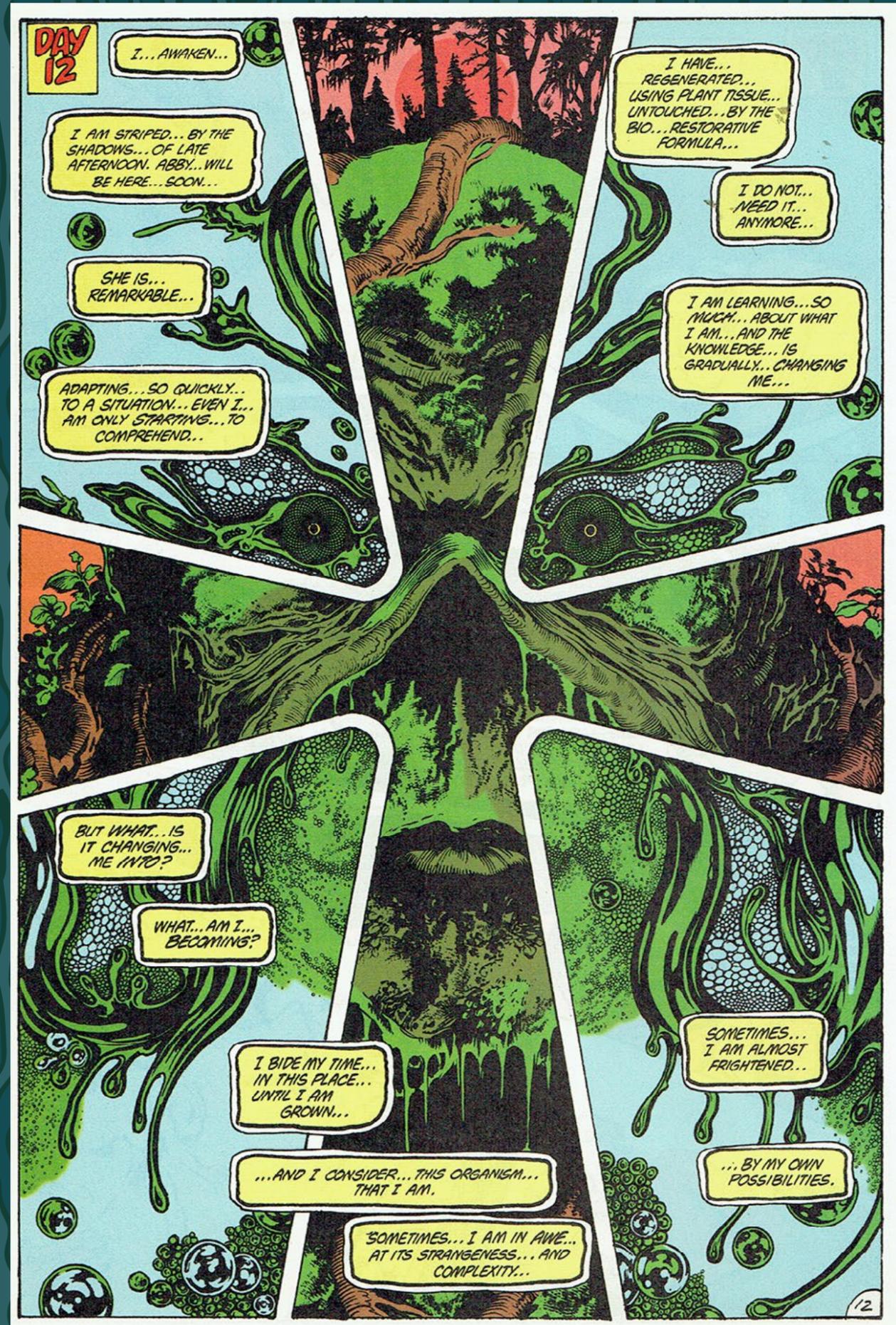
(It should be noted that this wasn't the only monster to shamble out of the swamps at that moment. A few months before, short-lived publisher Skywald had revived the Golden Age character The Heap, which had fallen into public domain as well as a swamp. And Wein's roommate, Gerry Conway, would publish 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



OPPOSITE:  
A page from *Saga of the Swamp Thing* #37, by Alan Moore, Rick Veitch, and John Totleben.

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

**PERHAPS MOST NOTEWORTHY AS BEING THE FIRST MODERN FILM BASED ON A COMIC BOOK THAT DIDN'T FEATURE A LEGENDARY CHARACTER...**

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 Melniker, 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, it



**ABOVE:**  
Official movie poster for the 1982 film release of Swamp Thing

**OPPOSITE:**  
Swamp Thing 50th Anniversary illustration by Josh McGill

run Best Series. Even the lettering, by Gaspar Saladino, would be distinctive, bringing varied styles for the characters voices in a way that mainstream collaborations never did in those years.

There were arguments, however. Close collaborations stir strong emotions, and Wein and Wrightson had their frustrations with each other, exaggerated by health





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.

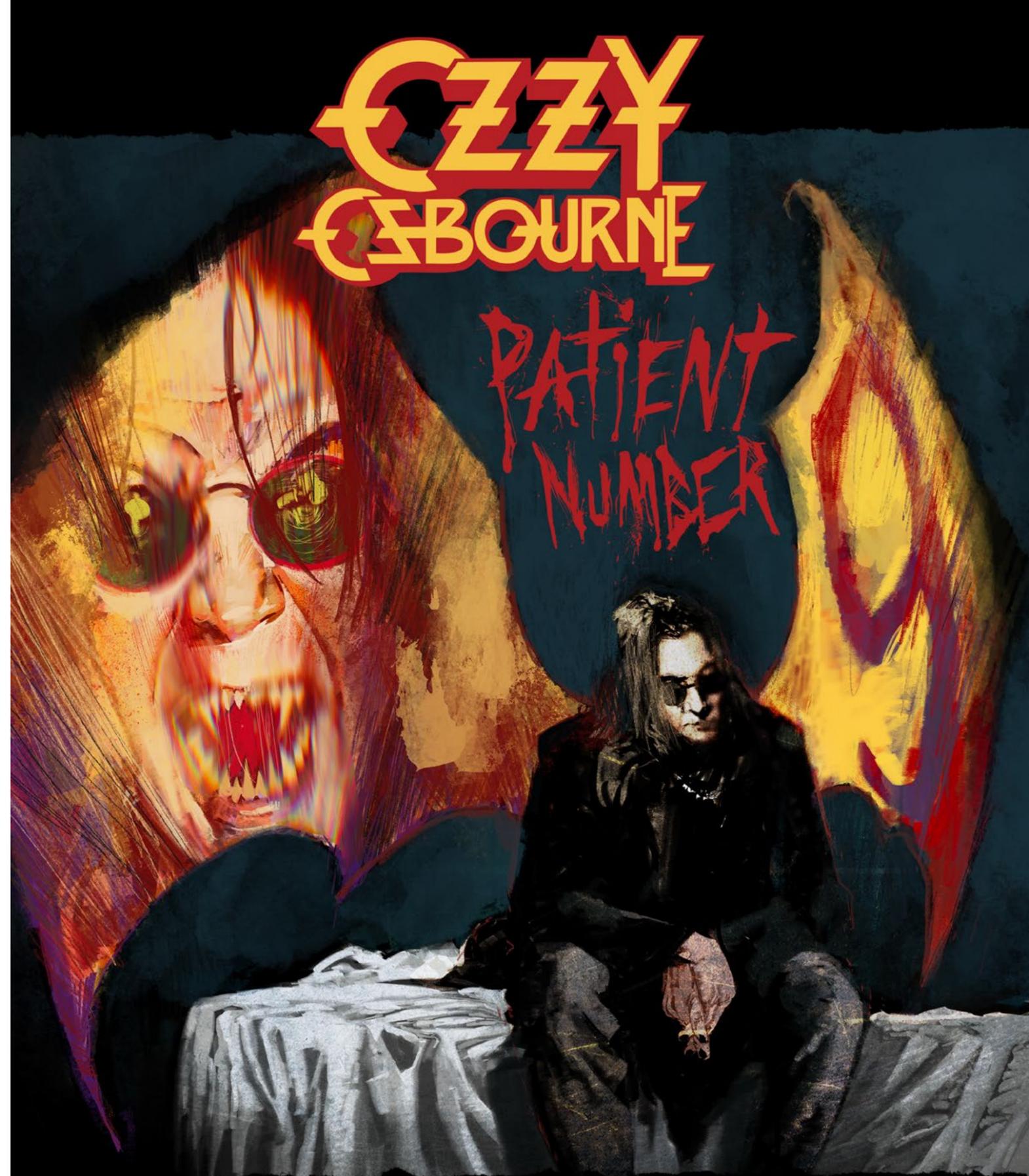
The themes explored would motivate DC to lead discussions about how to modernize the Comics Code that had restricted newsstand comics for a generation, and when those conversations failed to achieve consensus, to withdraw *Swamp Thing* from the Code process and newsstands, labeling it "sophisticated 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. 🐛

*Paul Levitz has been contributing to convention program books for 50 years. He was inducted into the Eisner Awards Hall of Fame for his work as a comics writer, editor, executive, and historian.*



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## FUNKY WINKERBEAN



# STILL FUNKY IN THE FUNKYVERSE

BY MAGGIE THOMPSON

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.

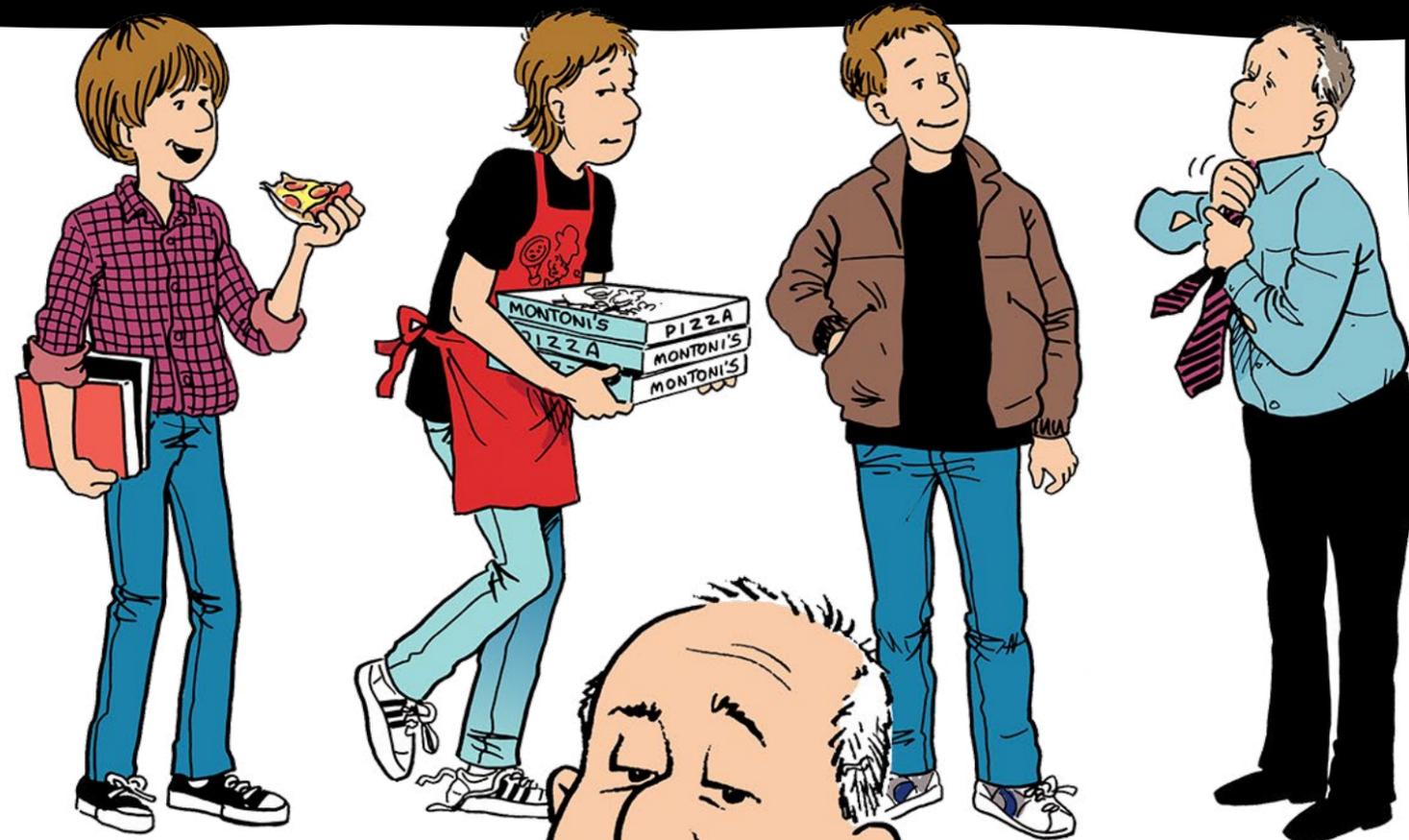
Among his strategies has been a *Funky Winkerbean* website, and, in 2006, he provided an internet peek into his background for those looking for a brief summary:

"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.

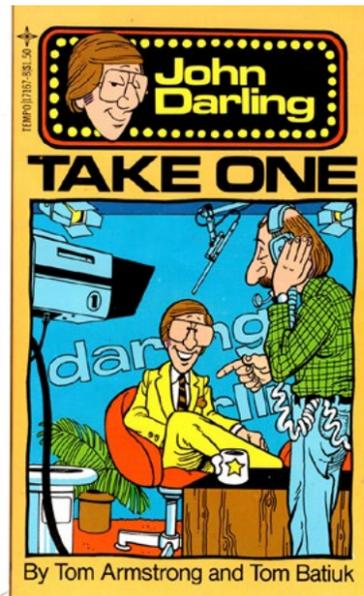
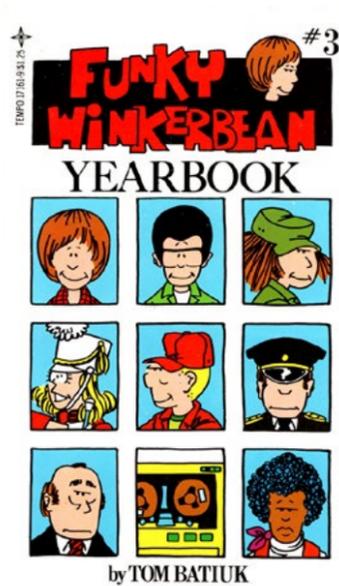
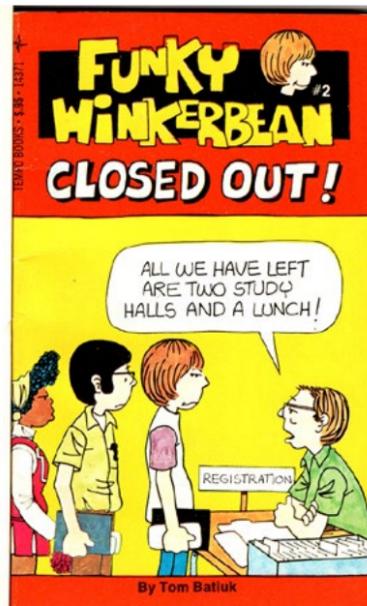
"In 1970, while I was teaching, I began drawing a panel for the teen page of the *Elyria Chronicle-Telegram*. Those strips led to the creation of *Funky Winkerbean* in 1972. *Funky* is syndicated by King Features Syndicate to more than 400 newspapers nationwide. I skipped over a lot of hard work in the 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."



BATIUK

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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* 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.

(To digress: fans of another *Funky* spinoff project will note that the *John Darling* strip ran from March 25, 1979 to August 4, 1990. But [spoiler!] it obviously didn't last.) Oh, and long-time readers may remember that there were *Funky* time jumps in 30-years-ago 1992 and 15-years-ago 2007. We'll get back to that, too.

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 that 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 denigrated) 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. They're all here: Crazy Harry, Marcia and Jan, Les, The Coach, and many more. Add quips from a crazy computer and the wacky 'wisdom' of the 'I Chong,' and you've got *Play It Again, Funky*. Sometimes hip, always hilarious—Funky's fun for everybody!"

Following 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*

**"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...."**

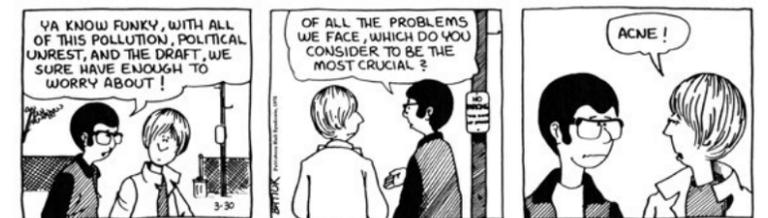
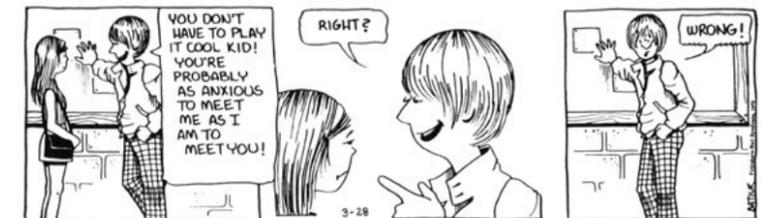
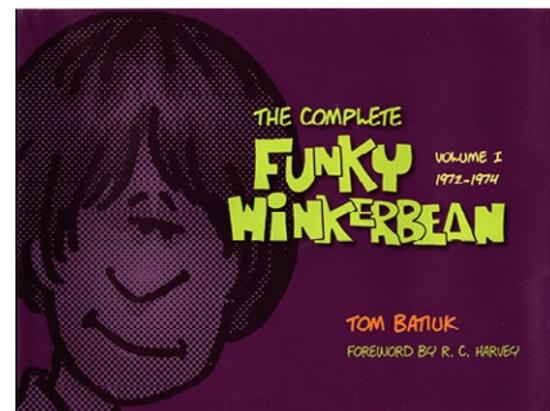
*Winkerbean* trade paperback (1984, subtitled "You Know You've Got Trouble When Your School Mascot Is a Scapegoat"), Erma Bombeck wrote that Batiuk was "more than a cartoonist": "He chronicles probably one of the most difficult times of our lives... a time when our insecurities stand out like a piece 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 1 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]).

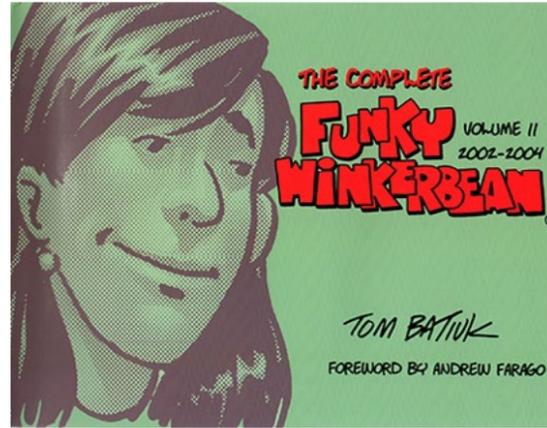
As he revealed in that first volume of complete *Funky Winkerbean*, the other pop culture experiences influencing him were many and varied.

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." 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* 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 Shamray (1985–1990), and *Crankshaft* collaborators Chuck Ayers (1987–2017) and Dan Davis (2017–).

If the characters had aged in real time, Funky would be—what?—maybe 65. But *Funky Winkerbean* went from being frozen in time to 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. His

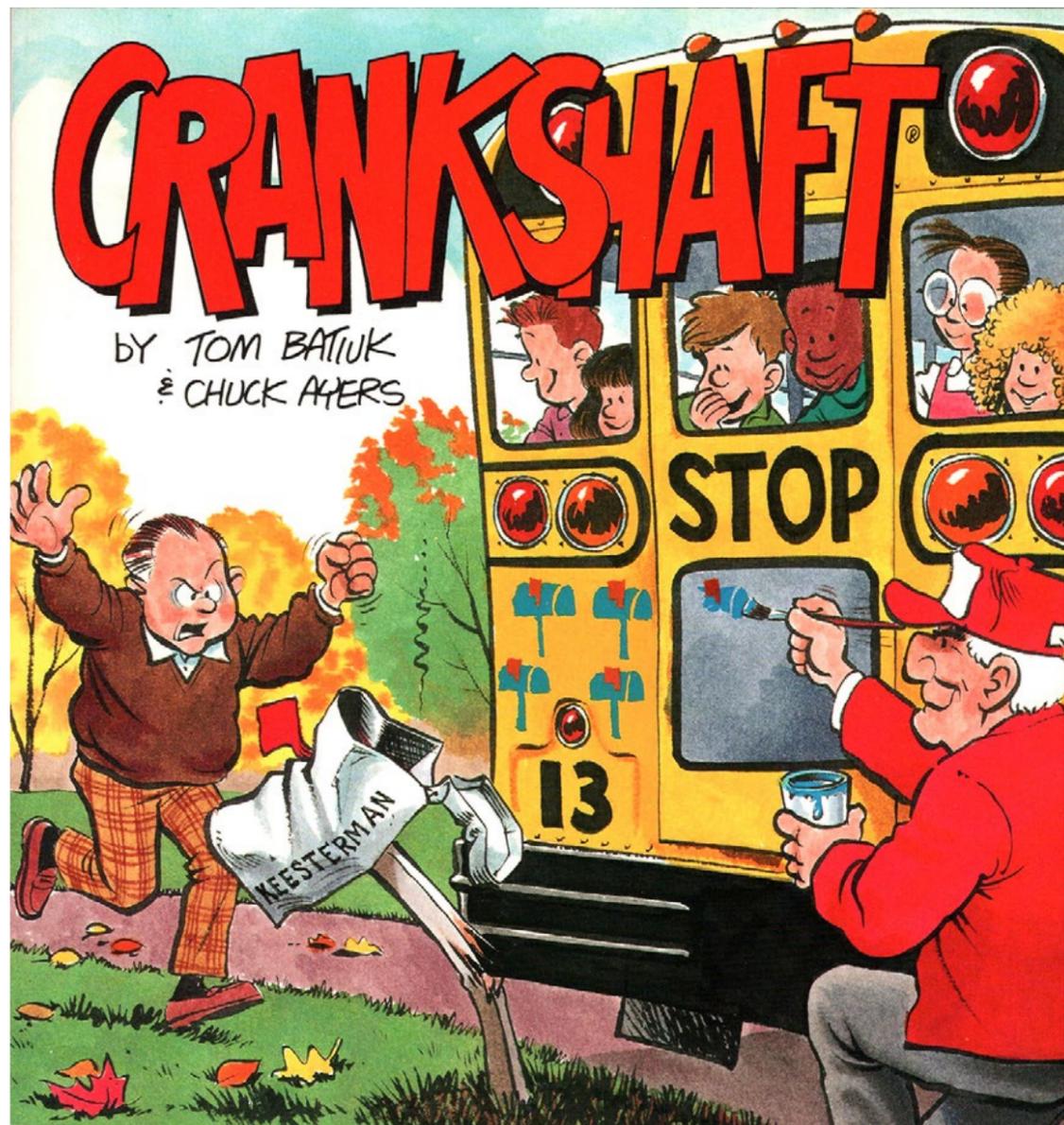
**"MY NORMAL METHOD WHEN DEVELOPING A CHARACTER IS TO TAKE SOMEONE'S QUIRKS AND PERSONALITY TRAITS AND EXAGGERATE AND EXPAND UPON THEM TO CREATE THE CHARACTER."**

TOM CREATES THE FIRST  
FUNKY WINKERBEAN  
COMIC STRIP PANEL  
ALL THOSE YEARS AGO...

HAPPY 50th!



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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](http://maggiethompson.com).

# FEATURED ITEM

VANGUARD FOLLOWS LAST YEAR'S HIT FANTASTIC PAINTINGS BOOK WITH NEW COMPLETE COLLECTION DEFINITIVE REFERENCE ON FRAZETTA BOOK COVER ART



184 PG SLIPCASD  
DELUXE HC  
WITH BONUS FOLIO.  
GOLD METALLIC INK  
ENHANCED COVER W/  
GLOSS LAMINATION  
\$69.95  
ISBN:978-1934331859

168 PG \$39.95 HC  
ISBN:978-1934331842

# MAD, MÖD AND STRADDLING: 50 YEARS OF

# GHOST RIDER

BY JIM THOMPSON

**S**ince 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



ILLUSTRATION BY MATT EMMONS

## FANCIFUL FACT AND FRUMIOUS FABLES FOR FRIEND AND FOE ALIKE!

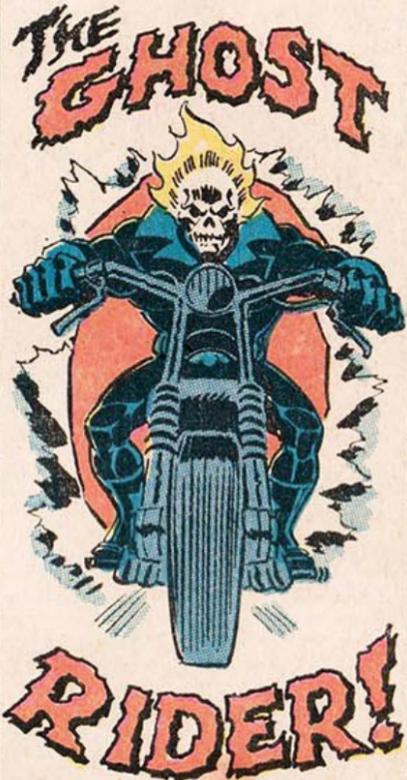
**ITEM!** Notice anything *different* about this month's Bullpen Page, observant one? You *know* it: there's no color-splashed box headed by the wondrous words, "STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX"! But fear not — Our Leader hasn't forsaken us as a result of that Carnegie Hall debut we gushed about last month. Partly, there's no Soapbox because Stan has winged his way southward for his first real vacation in many a moon — and it's kinda hard to plug an electric typewriter into the sand-castles at Miami Beach! More than that, though: he's already hard at work (mentally, at least) preparing a prodigious pronouncement which will stun your bedazzled senses next month! Sorry — we can't tell you what it's all about just now; but we hereby promise and proclaim that our very next Bullpen Bulletins will herald a brand-new era for Marvel — one that looks to be even greater, groovier, and more gargantuan than the one just past! And you'll be in on the ground floor if you tune in next month — same time, same place! Don't let us down, hear? We're nothing without you, pilgrim — and we mean that!

**ITEM!** Meanwhile, just to prove to you that mighty Marvel's not exactly standing still for the next few weeks: by now, you've doubtless already noticed the spectacular illo elsewhere on this self-same page and been wondering what's the buzz, right? So here's where we end the suspense. The current ish of MARVEL SPOTLIGHT debuts a far-out new feature which we think you're gopna dig. It's called GHOST RIDER — but, as anybody with 20-20 vision can plainly see, he's no blood relation to the western hero we sprung on you some time back. Nope — this GR is a mad, mod, mystic hero who straddles both the world of motorcycles — and the supernatural! (And that's some job of straddling!) It's by the titanic team of Groovy GARY FRIEDRICH, who dreamed the whole thing up, and Mad-cap MIKE PLOOG, whose own "Were-wolf By Night" series is scheduled to gain its very own mag in a month or two! Oh yes, and for those of you who've been writing in to comment on the uncanny resemblance between Mike's artwork and that of the great WILL EISNER, creator of the Spirit during the 1940's — it's no news either to us or to Mike, people, 'cause Mike was indeed Mr. E's artistic assistant for a couple of years, just prior to his joining our beleaguered little crew! But thanks for noticing!

**ITEM:** Two of Marvel's own boy prodigies, Merry GERRY CONWAY and Sturdy STEVE ENGLEHART, recently hopped a fast 727 and flew out to address Indiana University's fully-accredited course on comix, which will soon be offered thru international correspondence as well. They held forth for three hours, followed by a lengthy rap session — and even turned up on the local TV channel to spread the word to acolyte and infidel alike! With Steve a native Hoosier, the

whole thing was virtually a triumphal homecoming — except that, because of the hectic schedule, he never got around to visiting the ol' homestead!

**ITEM!** How about this tidbit: The much-lionized Mr. Lee did his own lecture-circuit thing a couple of months back at the prestigious University of Puget Sound (that's in the snow-capped state of Washington, natch). A few of the flame-keepers took Stan to the city's well-known, well-stocked zoo, where he got his first close-up look at a certain breed of awesome anthropoid. And, if you've guessed by now that that's how Smiley dreamed up the free-swingin' Gibbon, who's given Spidey such a hassle these past two issues — go to the head of the class, perspicacious one! (That's just an aside for those of you who keep writing in to ask us where we get all our nutty ideas! Where we can, pal — where we can!)



**ITEM!** Oh yeah, and we just had to mention that this month's Checklist heralds a couple of real collectors'-item issues now on the stands — fabulous premier issues of both THE DEFENDERS and WARLOCK in their own mags! And what about this little bombshell to close with: in a month or two, the tempest-tossed team of THOMAS, ANDRU, and SEVERIN will be joining forces to bring you the adventures of one of the first and foremost super-stars of all — none other than the one and only DOC SAVAGE, MAN OF BRONZE! Marvel is really movin' out, effendi — so grab your ticket and welcome aboard! 'Nuff said!

### THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST Now On Sale!

**FANTASTIC FOUR #125:** The Secret of the Monster! More mind-staggering action than mortal mind can conceive!

**SPIDER-MAN #111:** The Gibbon needs help, and he gets it — from none other than Kraven the Hunter! A must!

**THOR #202:** This is it! The battle to the finish with Ego-Prime! Wonders beyond measure — but who's counting?

**AVENGERS #102:** From out of the sun, they strike again — the sinister Sentinels! Plus — the Grim Reaper!

**HULK #154:** The astonishing Ant-Man! The Chameleon! And the hordes of Hydra! Does that clue you in, believer?

**CAPT. AMERICA & THE FALCON #152:** The Falcon fights alone! But alas — Mr. Hyde and the Scorpion don't!

**SUB-MARINER #52:** The most powerful mutant of all returns! Don't miss the deadly challenge of — Sunfire!

**DAREDEVIL #90:** The mysteries of Project Four! But, what happens when the Man Without Fear becomes — a coward?

**IRON MAN #49:** The Adaptoid is back! How do you fight a guy who combines the power of all the Avengers?

**CONAN THE BARBARIAN #17:** Monthly again — and greater than ever! Conan takes on the Grim Gods of Bal-Sagoth!

**LUKE CAGE, HERO FOR HIRE: #2:** Marvel's newest, nitty-grittiest super-star yet! But has he met his match in Diamondback?

**ASTONISHING TALES #13:** Ka-Zar vs. the misanthropic Man-Thing! And when AIM drops in, to boot — look out!

**MARVEL SPOTLIGHT #5:** The world has never seen anything like the mysterious new Ghost Rider — and neither have you!

**THE DEFENDERS #1:** The Hulk! Sub-Mariner! Dr. Strange! Together again, against the man called Necrodamus! Off-beat!

**WARLOCK #1:** Perhaps the strangest hero ever — on the world called Counter-Earth! And wait'll you meet — the Prophet!

**SGT. FURY #101:** By popular demand! The origin of the Howling Commandos — ripped from the holocaust of World War II!

**COMBAT KELLY #2:** The Deadly Dozen really go to town — as Jay Little Bear takes on the whole blamed Nazi army!

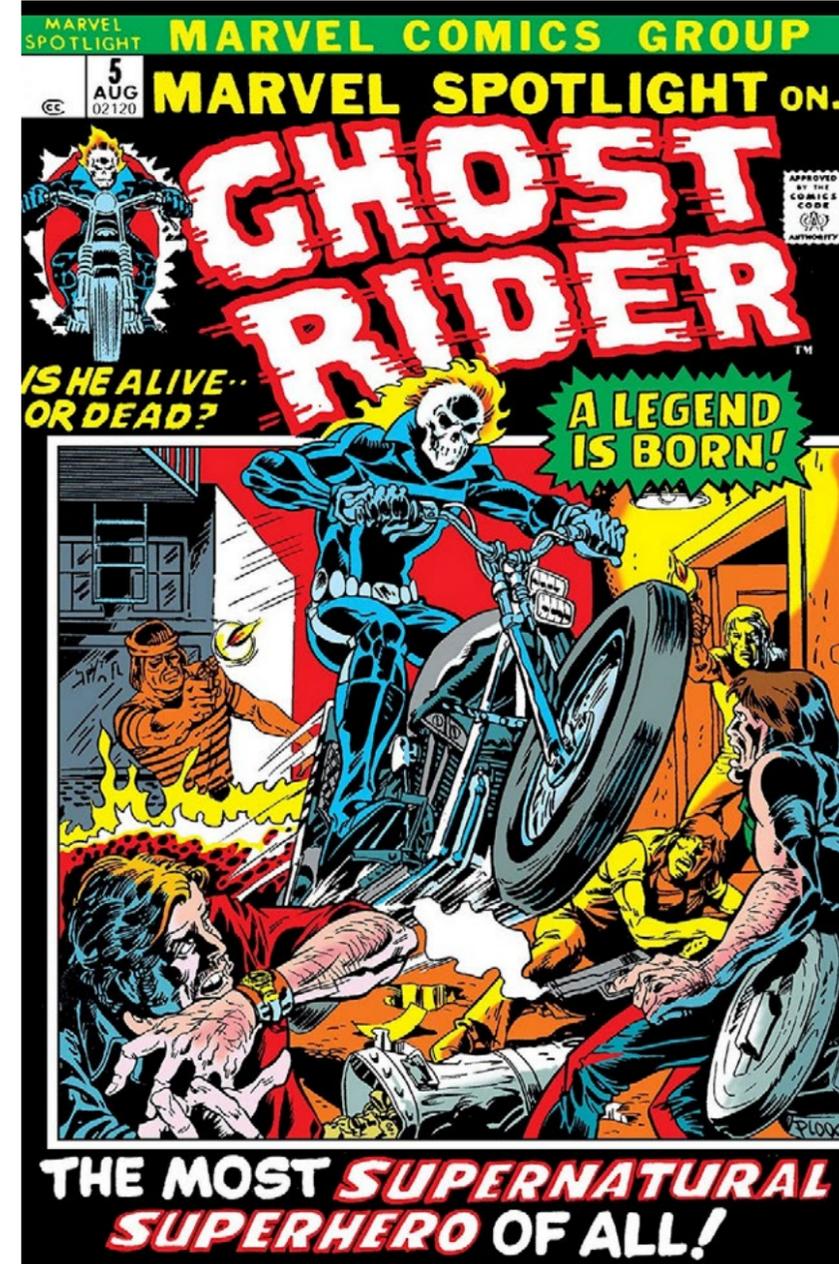
Plus these wondrous winners: X-MEN #77 — MONSTERS ON THE PROWL #18 — RAWHIDE KID # 102 — MARVEL TRIPLE ACTION #4 — OUTLAW KID #11 — FEAR #9 — WESTERN KID #5 — MARVEL TALES #36 — KID COLT OUTLAW #161 — OUR LOVE STORY #18 — LI'L KIDS #7 — HARVEY #4 — plus the usual MILLIE and CHILI madness! Collect 'em all — why not?

I saw the image of that "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 his feelings about the character. And where the road took us all in between.

It begins in May 1972, when that month's *Bullpen Bulletins* featured a black/blue leather-clad biker with a flaming skull and the accompanying copy: "The current issue of MARVEL SPOTLIGHT debuts a far-out new feature which we think you're going to dig. It's called GHOST RIDER — but as anybody with 20/20 vision can plainly see, he's no blood relation to the western hero we sprung on you some time back. Nope — this GR is a mad, mod, mystic hero who straddles the world of motorcycles — and the supernatural!! (And that's some job of straddling!) "Mad"? "Mod"? "Straddling"? Holy Smokes, that was ME! I could not wait for that book to hit the stands. Plus, Stan Lee sounds really excited about this one.

Finally, it's the last day of the month and *Marvel Spotlight* #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-process. 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!" Hellfire shoots from his gloved fingers. The Ghost Rider easily escapes, and with the morning sun, he reverts back to Johnny Blaze, "the world's greatest cycle daredevil."

Cut to origin flashback: When young Johnny's father, Barton Blaze, is killed, fellow trick cyclist Crash Simpson and his family take Johnny in as their own. At age 10 Johnny begins training for the family business, but at age 15 he must promise his fatally injured foster mother that he'll never become a stunt rider. Johnny attempts to stay true to his word (secret for no discernable reason), while Crash and his daughter Roxanne spend the next few years calling him a coward. Eventually, Johnny resumes practicing, and perfecting, jumps and stunts — not for the show, but just for ... the Hell of it. Skip to the present: 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 ...

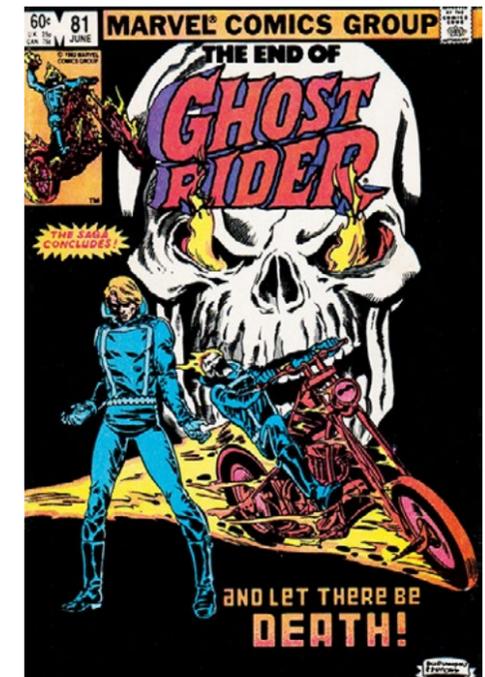
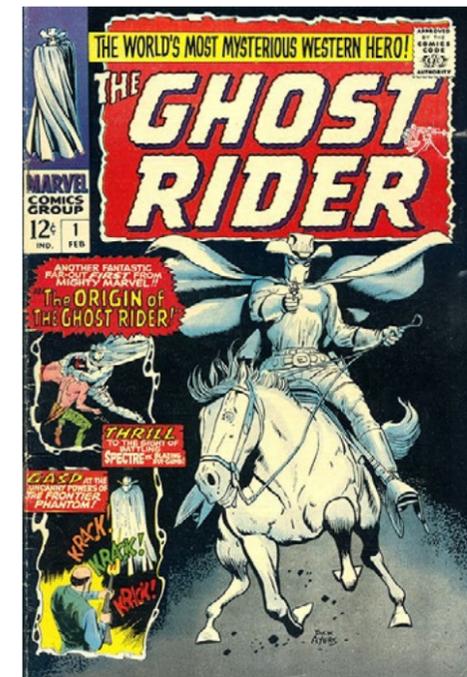


for a COWARD, huh?" Apparently, Johnny Blaze is a jerk, as well as a Satanist.

Roxanne storms off and Satan comes for the soul he's due, having ensured that Crash didn't die ... of CANCER! Stating the obvious, Johnny declares, "You got a lot of gall, Devil!" after which the "Master" explains that henceforth Johnny will be spending his days in Hell and his nights as Satan's emissary on Earth. Luckily, Roxanne returns and casts Satan out with the power of her pure heart, and whatever else she learned from Johnny's Satan books. At dusk, however, Johnny discovers that while Satan can't take his soul, or whisk him off to Hell, Johnny's still going to become a flaming skeleton each evening. Hence "the Ghost Rider," and the message that

ABOVE:  
First appearance of the Johnny Blaze Ghost Rider, *Marvel Spotlight* #5, cover date August 1972, cover art by Mike Ploog.

OPPOSITE:  
Bullpen Bulletins page from *Marvel Comics* with August 1972 cover dates, announcing the arrival of Ghost Rider that month.



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 werewolfism." *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/Aid 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*), It! the Living Colossus (*Astonishing 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

ABOVE:

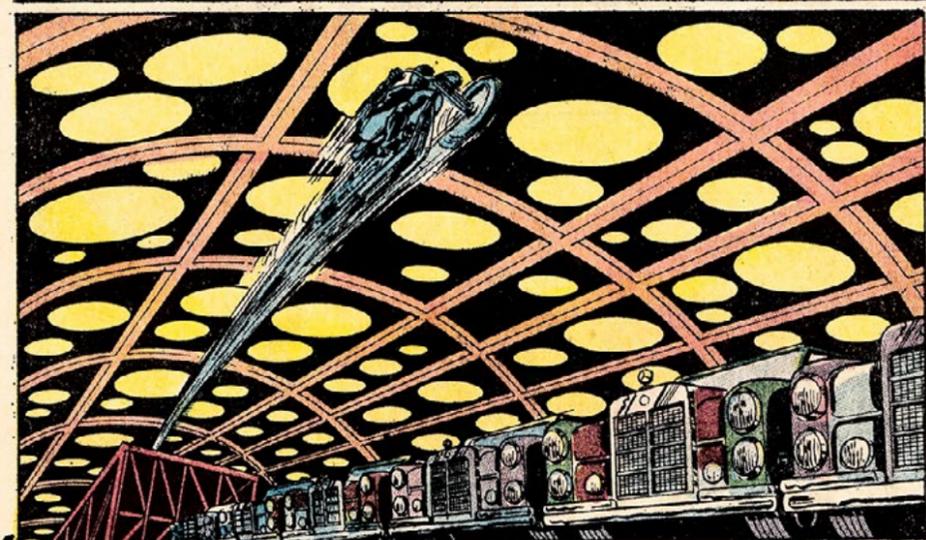
LEFT: Marvel Pin-up of the Rawhide Kid, wearing a prototype for Johnny Blaze.

MIDDLE: Cover of *Marvel Ghost Rider*, February 1967, art by Dick Ayers.

RIGHT: *Ghost Rider* #81, June 1983, with cover art by Bob Budiansky and Dave Simons.

OPPOSITE:

Ghost Rider illustration by Liana Kangas



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 Dern, and films like *Wild Angels* (1966), *Hell's Angels on Wheels* (1967), *Rebel Rousers* (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, minions, and minor villains, stunt performer Evel Knievel had the starring role as the inspiration for Johnny Blaze. During the late 1960s, Knievel built a fan following by jumping lines of cars. His crashes and injuries brought as much fame as his successes. On January 7–8, 1971, Knievel sold a record-breaking 100,000 tickets to back-to-back performances at 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 introduced an earlier trick cyclist character, the Stunt-Master, as a villain/foil in *Daredevil* #58 (November 1969), somewhat rehabilitated in *Daredevil* #64, and he recalled Friedrich proposing another, weirder 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.

Ploog only drew those first four appearances in *Marvel*

**"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."**

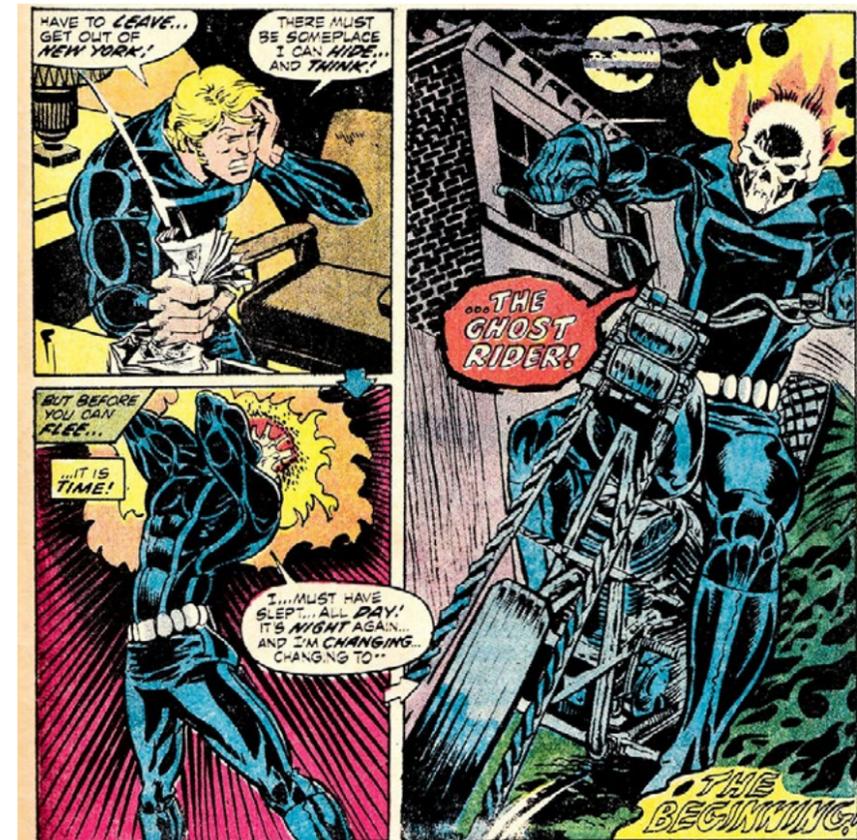
*Spotlight* and the cover to *Ghost Rider* #1, but his depiction was the definitive Johnny Blaze version. Other writers and artists added to the imagery and mythos of the Ghost Rider during that initial run. Don Perlin drew the most issues, while Bob Budiansky did the most covers, more than half at 44; 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-heroics, even making the Ghost Rider a founding member of the Champions. Michael Fleisher 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 edgy version of Blaze, an alter ego/or the other persona; Ghost Rider was the demon 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 hon-

est 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 "mad," "mod," flaming skull guy is still with us 50 years later. Happy anniversary. ☞

*Jim Thompson is an independent comics scholar, 2021 Will Eisner Industry Awards Judge, co-creator of the Comics Historians podcast, and founder of A People's History of Comics group.*



**ABOVE:**

The motorcycle jumps and stunts featured in the *Ghost Rider* comics were designed to emulate the career and crashes of real life Evel Knievel. From *Marvel Spotlight* #5, 1972.

**OPPOSITE:**

A panel from *Avengers* #97, March 1972. Art by John Buscema and Tom Palmer.

to Night Rider, then to Phantom Rider. This western heritage is actually detectable in Johnny Blaze's own origin: One can easily see the Rawhide Kid's outfit as a precursor to Blaze's black/blue leathers, but there's also the plot device of the young hero promising a dying loved one not to become a gunfighter, but secretly practicing to become the fastest gun in the West. This gave Ghost Rider an instant familiarity, a recognizable thread.

There was another more obscure Golden Age comic connection, a superhero called Blazing Skull from Timely's *Mystic Comics* #5–9 (1941–1942). He was memorable only for having ... a blazing skull. Significantly, after a 30-year absence, Roy Thomas reintroduced a simulacrum of Blazing Skull in *Avengers* #97 (December 1971),



# LUKE CAGE AT 50

## CELEBRATING A COMPLICATED MAN

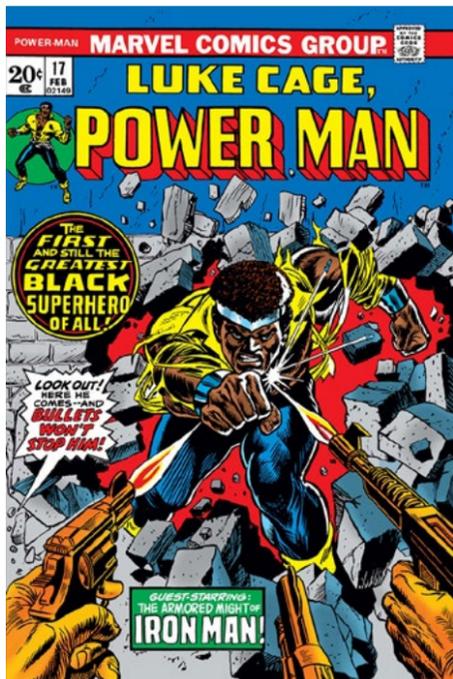
BY JOHN JENNINGS

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*.

ILLUSTRATION BY  
SINA M. GRACE



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 newsstands 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 McEntire, leaving him and ending up in the arms of Carl. While inside the walls of Seagate, Carl endured not only horrible violence and danger meted out by other convicts but was also constantly harassed, tortured, and attacked by a racist white guard named Rackham. To survive and escape this 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.

Lucas 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. Carl 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. Lucas is in total shock but soon ends up back in New York. After making an assessment of his situation, he takes on the pseudonym Luke Cage and opens up a business called “Hero for Hire.” The story setup is definitely inspired by Shaft and other hardboiled, neo-noir fare. Essentially, Luke Cage becomes “Shaft with super-powers.”

Cage first takes to exacting revenge against his old running buddy Willis Stryker, now 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. Other notable artists who lent their superb abilities to Luke Cage were Ron Wilson, Rich Buckler, and the late, great George Pérez. Basically, 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 straits 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

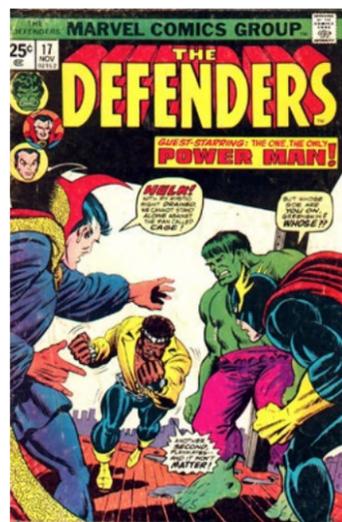




**HE WASN'T A RICH AND POWERFUL SOCIALITE AND HE WASN'T AN ALIEN FROM ANOTHER PLANET WHO WAS SENT HERE TO OFFER US HOPE. HE WAS A BLACK MAN WHO CAME UP TOUGH IN THE STREETS OF NEW YORK AND WAS JUST TRYING TO SURVIVE IN A SYSTEM THAT WAS DESIGNED TO DESTROY HIM AND TO HOPEFULLY CHANGE THE STATUS QUO.**

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



APOLLO

# LUKE CAGE

HARLEM'S SUPER HERO



A NETFLIX ORIGINAL SERIES

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COMIC-CON 2022

comic-con.org

Universe and in tandem with his own solo book, he had appeared as a popular guest star in many other comics over the years. This included a temporary replacement for The Thing in the ranks of the Fantastic Four after Ben Grimm had lost his superhuman form. In order to bring the character into modern times, in 1992 his design was updated and his classic headband enlarged and migrated to his waist as a belt. His yellow disco shirt was replaced by a black leather jacket and red undershirt. For 20 issues, Cage operated out of another big city: Chicago, where writer Marc McLaurin and artists Dwayne Turner and Scott Benefiel and others took Cage into a new chapter before he headed back to New York. Constantly evolving with Black cultural shifts, Cage of the 21st century shaved his head, grew a goatee, and opted for Timberland boots, jeans, and a yellow T-shirt. His style shifted and changed with Black popular culture because that's what he has always represented in the Marvel Universe.

Luke Cage has become a fan favorite and this was totally put to the forefront during the COVID pandemic via an event sponsored by the historic Apollo Theater. Luke Cage: Harlem's SuperHero—Harlem Week (streamed live on August 14, 2021) was organized and brilliantly moderated by former DC Comics editor L. Adé Williams, now director of community programs for the Apollo Theater. The event featured Jo Duffy, David F. Walker, comics scholar and activist Dr. Jonathan Gray (John Jay College), fan-favorite writer Brian Michael Bendis, and the former showrunner of Netflix's *Marvel's Luke Cage* series, Cheo Hodari Coker. The event was a stunning retrospective of the character and his importance to not only comics history but broader ideas related to mainstream popular culture.

Brian Michael Bendis had never written a Luke Cage solo title like the other comics writers on this panel. However, Bendis believed that Luke Cage's perspective was very different from what had gone on before in the Marvel Universe, and he wanted to showcase that perspective as much as possible whenever he wrote the character. It's obvious that Bendis really loves Luke Cage. When he co-created Jessica Jones for the adult-oriented Marvel MAX line title *Alias* (2001), he had Jones share a one night stand with Cage. However, over the course of the title we begin to see a more nuanced relationship blossoming. By then end of the series (#28), we discover

that Jessica is pregnant with Luke's baby. Luke professes his feelings for Jessica, and the two move in together. Under Bendis' pen, Luke Cage also became a huge character in *The New Avengers* and was a fan favorite almost overnight in that title. He eventually even led an Avengers team.

Bendis also changed the trajectory of the character by not only having him marry Jessica but become 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*.

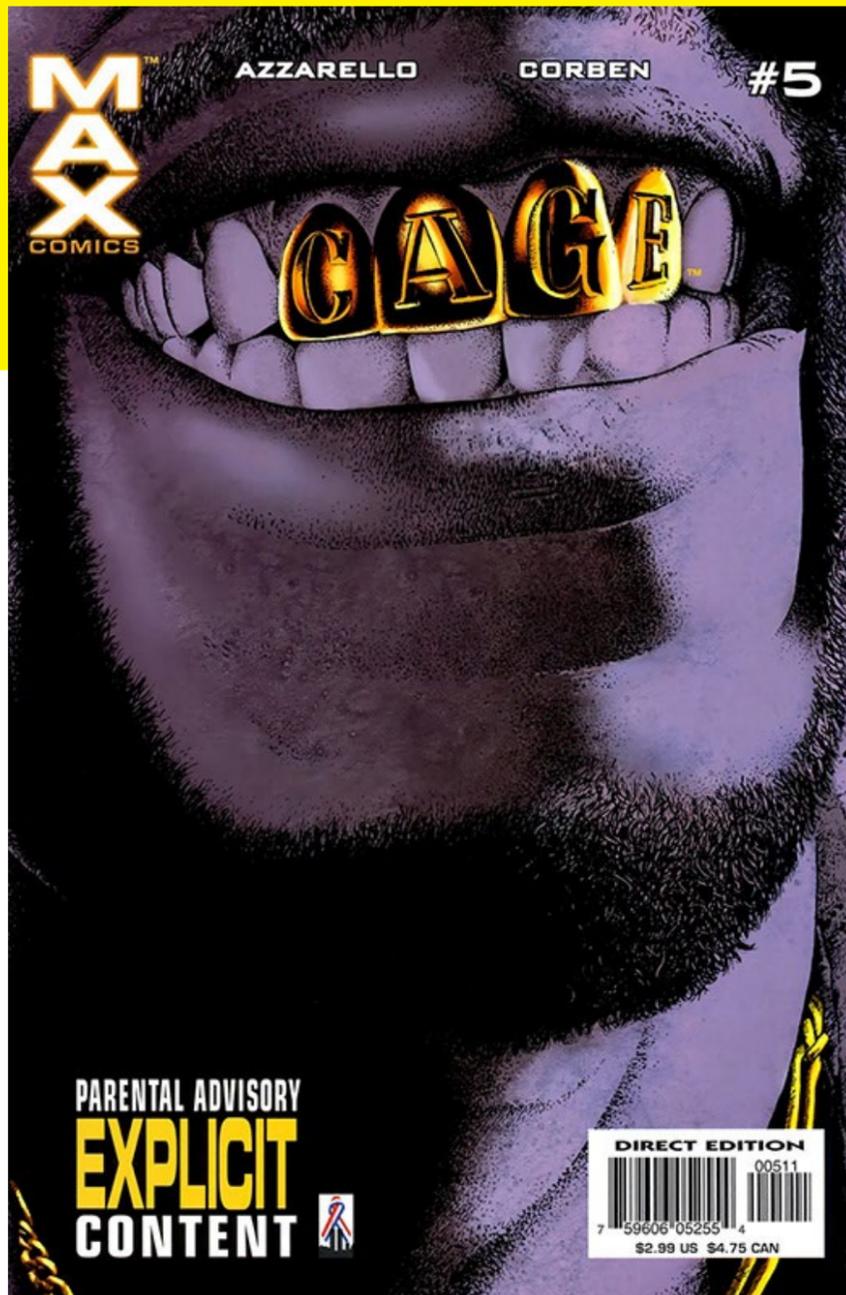
I've often thought that Luke Cage was the proxy for all the desires and fears of Black male bodies and how they are used as an index of the fantastic by the white audiences.

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 screens! 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 Megascopes line of graphic novels.*

THE LAST BOY ON EARTH!

# KAMANDI AT 50

BY MARK EVANIER

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.

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





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 if/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 I contact 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.*

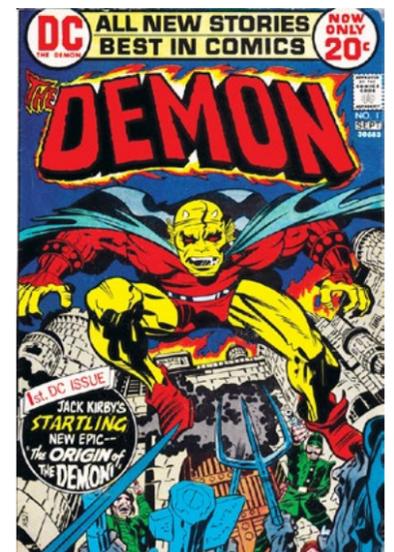
Still with me? Fine. The title planet of the film—the world overrun and ruled by intelligent, articulate apes—turns out to be Earth. But you knew that all along.

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 editorial wing. A week or two later, Infantino asks Jack to come up with another new comic, this time

OPPOSITE:  
Jack Kirby at the 1975  
Comic-Con.



SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED IN THE DIM PAST...! A NATURAL DISASTER LINKED WITH RADIATION! THE PEOPLE IN THE BUNKERS 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...

DC KAMANDI

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

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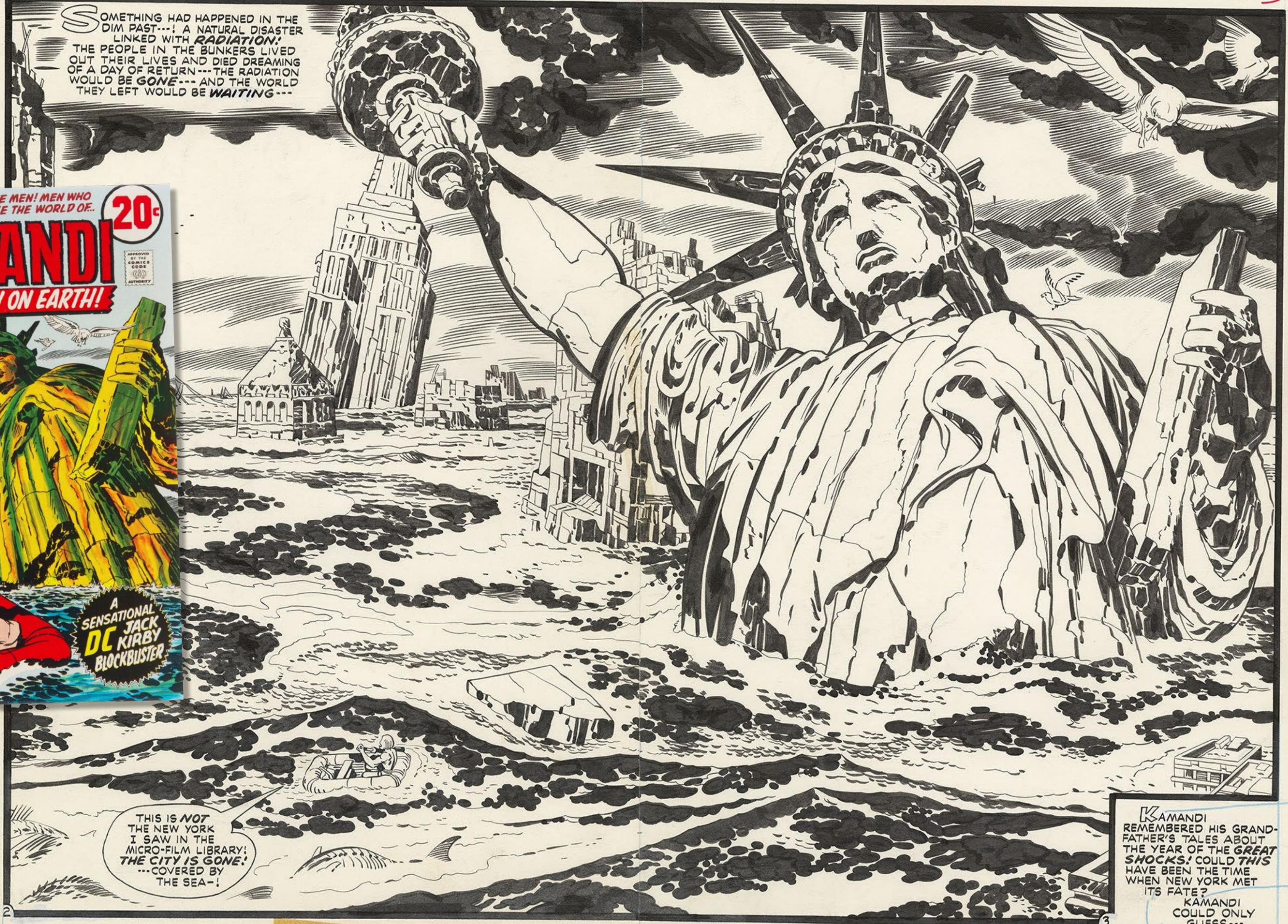
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

**KAMANDI**

THE LAST BOY ON EARTH!

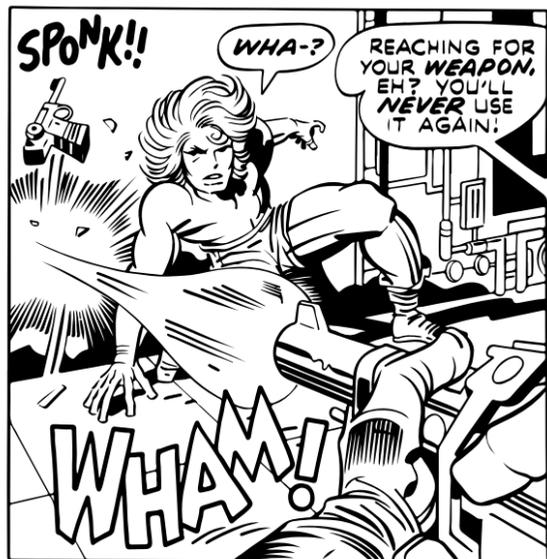
1st DC ISSUE

A SENSATIONAL JACK KIRBY BLOCKBUSTER



THIS IS NOT THE NEW YORK I SAW 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 SHOCKS! 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 Spigle. They meet. Jack loves Dan's work. Dan is excited at the prospect. (Spigle 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 Spigle 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.

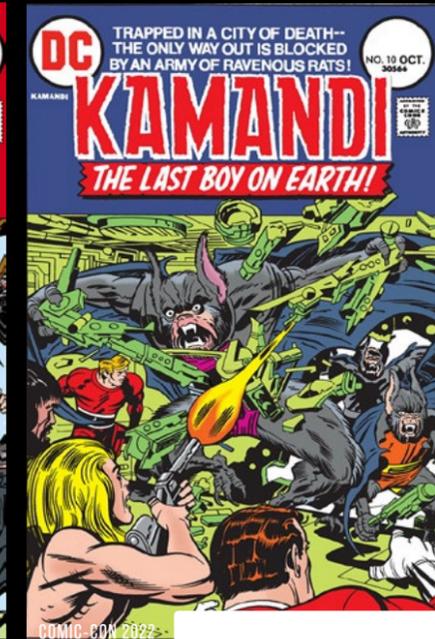
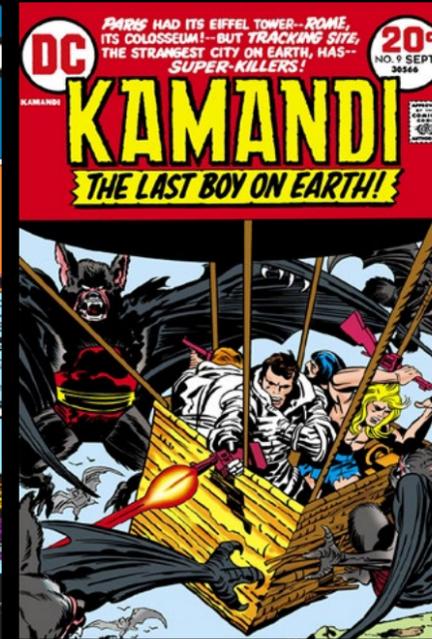
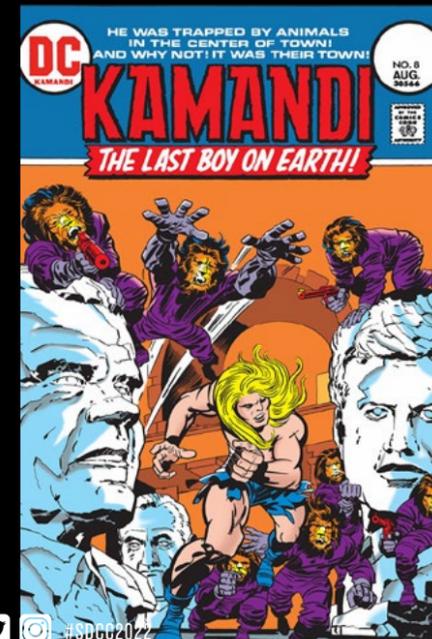
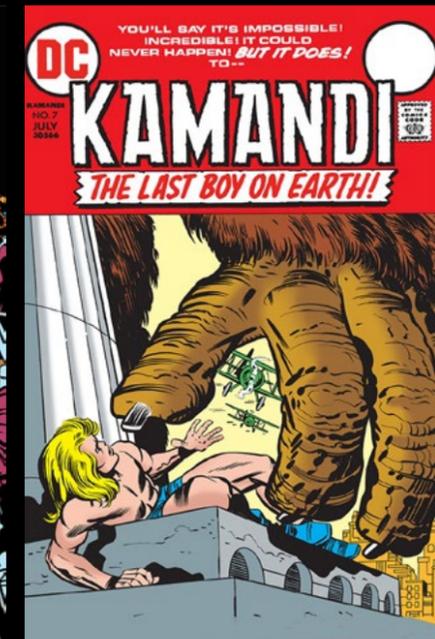
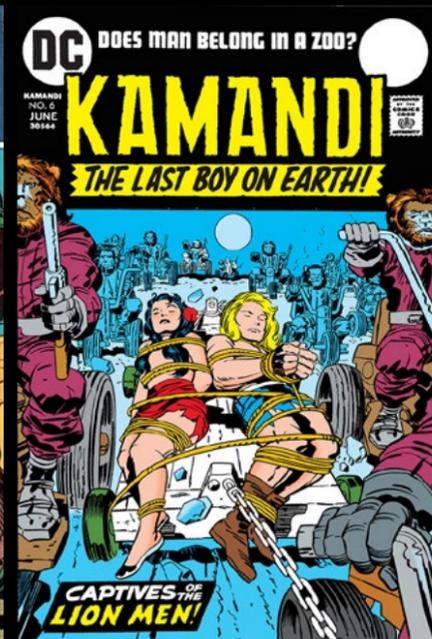
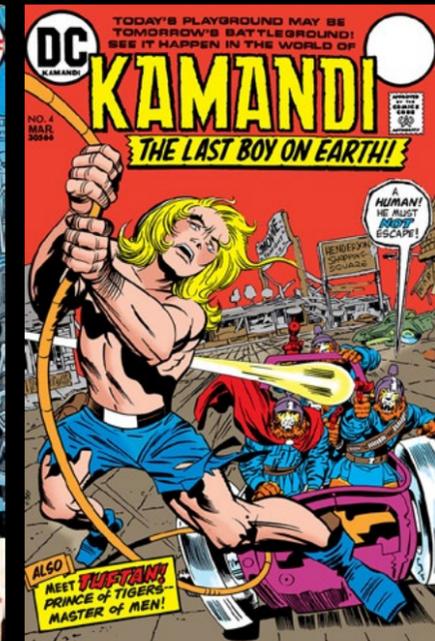
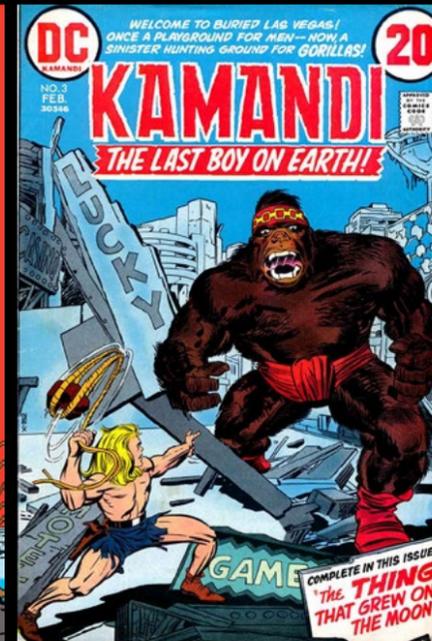
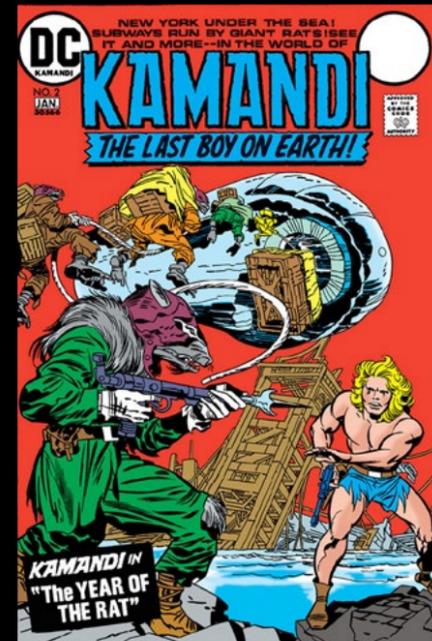
And to make room on Jack's schedule so he can do them every month, *New Gods* and *Forever People* will be "suspended" for a while—which, as Jack well knew, was a nicer way of saying "canceled, probably forever."

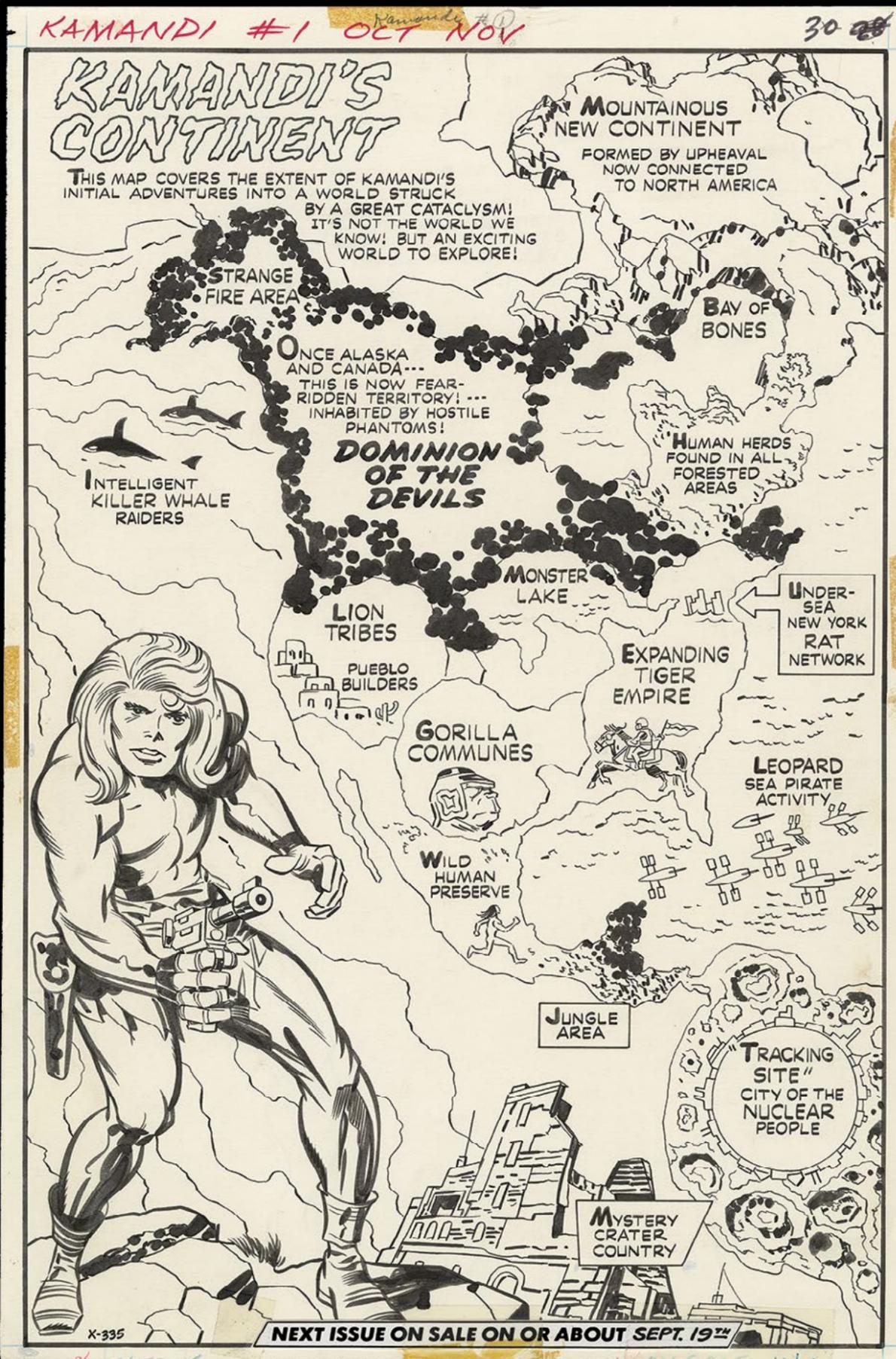
Jack is devastated. I cannot describe just how unhappy this moment is for him. But among the big things that could be learned from him are persistence, not giving up, hard work and "try, try again." Soon after, Mike Royer, who's lettering and inking whatever Jack draws, gets a call from him. He tells 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 memorable 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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# EL CORTEZ HOTEL SAN DIEGO.

## Memories

STORY AND PHOTOS BY **JACKIE ESTRADA**

**Fifty 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 Convention was finally over. It was close to midnight, and I found myself sitting on the floor in the Heinleins' 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.

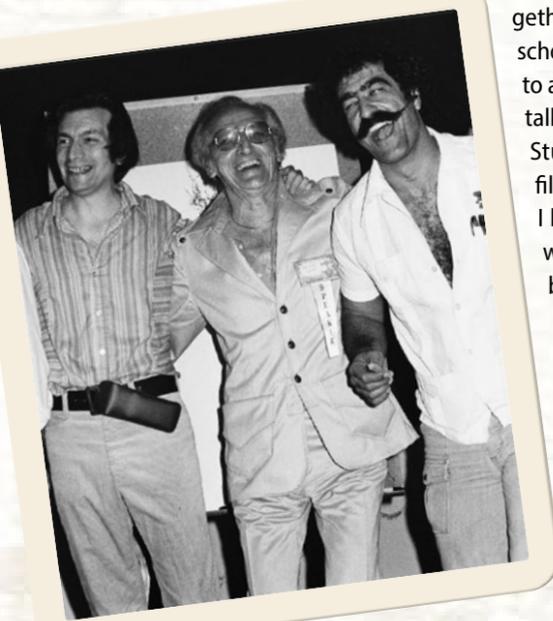
He's a tall, good-looking man in his late 30s who for some reason reminds most people of a mercenary soldier. Maybe it's because he wears shades most of the time, has a closely trimmed beard and mustache, and has a thin, brown Shermans cigarette in his hand or mouth at all times. We sat there on the 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 millionth 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—of never having said a nasty word about anyone. Ted immediately proved me wrong by defaming Adolf Hitler.

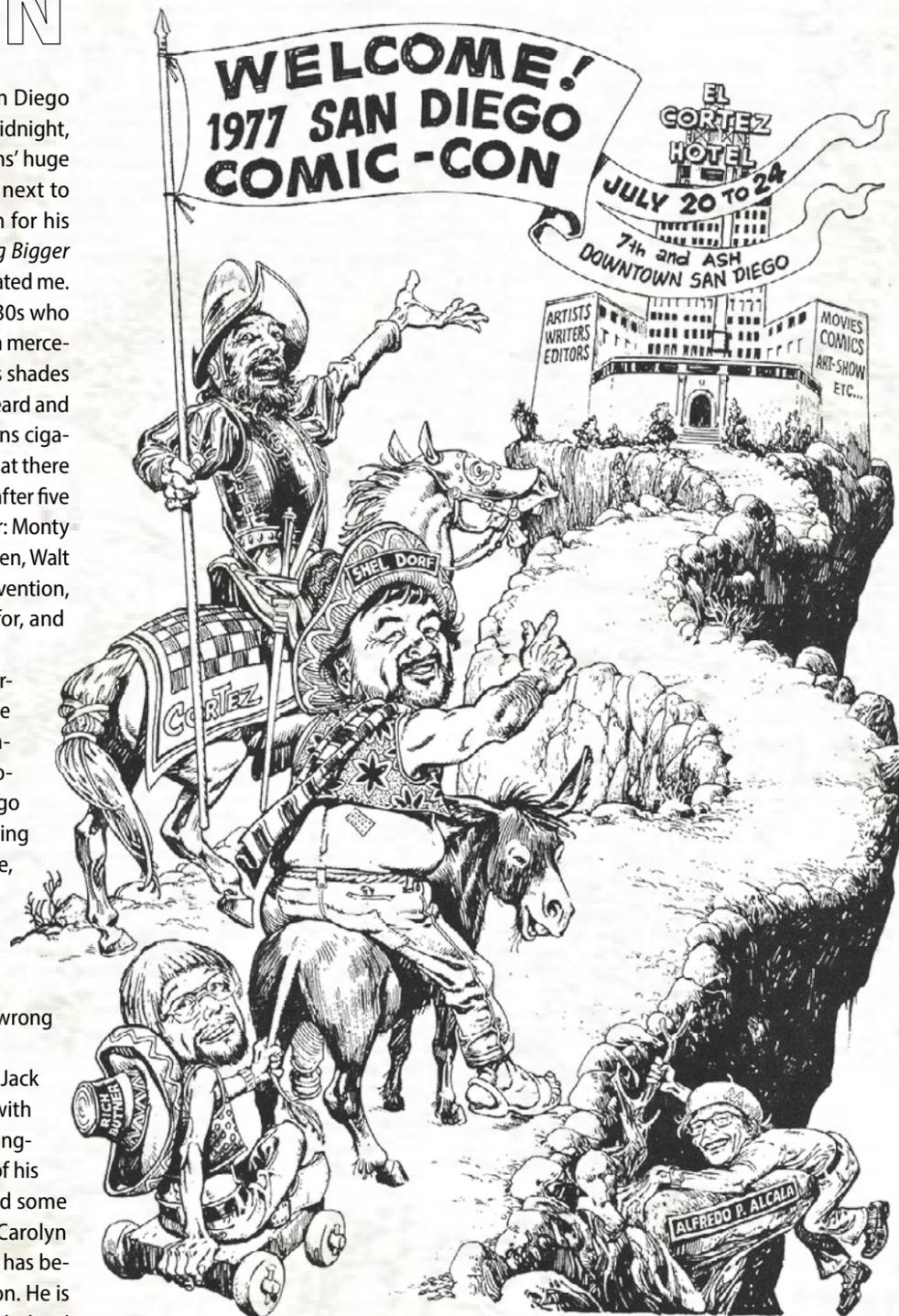
Sitting at the table with the Sturgeons were Jack and Carolyn Katz. Jack was still bubbling over with excitement over the fact that Pocket Books is bringing out a deluxe version of the first six books of his graphic novel *The First Kingdom*. Jack also had some pages from Book 7 with him, which he and Carolyn showed lovingly and guarded jealously. Jack has become a major galvanizing force at Comic-Con. He is always full of ideas for programming, he works hard to help line up celebrity guests, and he has been instrumental in setting up the art auctions that have helped to keep this expensive con from going into the red the past two years.



"Cat" cartoonist B. Kliban could usually be found hanging out around the El Cortez pool. Here he is with underground cartoonist Trina Robbins.



Jack Katz (*The First Kingdom*), Don Rico (co-creator of Marvel's *Black Widow*), and Sergio Aragonés had a ball at the show.



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 prolific and very funny science fiction cartoonist.

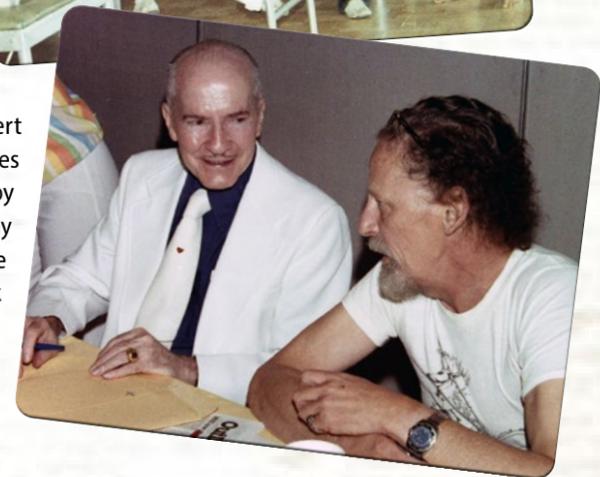
Many of the cartoons were on the theme of blood donation—after all, the main reason the Heinleins had come to the con was to promote their major charity, the nation's blood banks. Comic-Con's first blood drive (on Thursday) had been a big success: 74 people donated blood. As the fans were having their 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 Heinlein's 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—an event he usually misses at cons. Art show coordinator Craig Anderson had put together a very impressive collection, emphasizing paintings and fine art. Among the features of the show were a complete Harvey Kurtzman "Annie Fanny" strip, some colorful John Pound paintings, several beautiful Michael Kaluta originals, a long table full of Steranko art, some fascinating art museum studies by Joe Kubert, and Dave Stevens' impressive paintings of horror movie actors.

Speaking of Stevens, he was kept busy at the Heinleins' party drawing pictures in various committee members' mem-

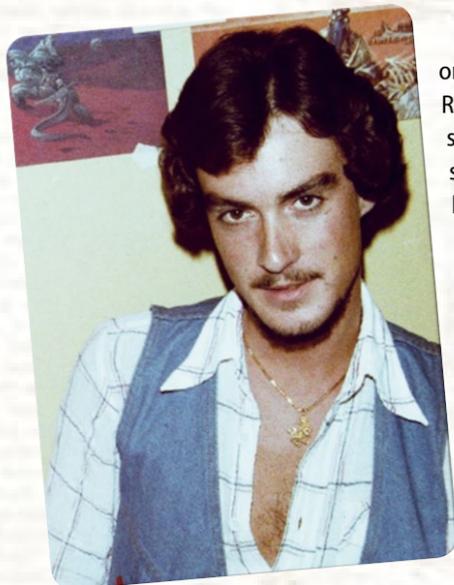
Blood donors were entertained by Smegma the Barbarian and the Princess Ipecac.



Special guests Robert Heinlein and Theodore Sturgeon signed autographs for blood donors at Comic-Con's first blood drive.

INSET CENTER:

The first page in the program book was this piece by Alfredo Alcala, portraying Shel Dorf and Richard Butner on their way to the El Cortez.



Dave Stevens had been a local volunteer working on the Art Show in 1975, but by 1977 his work was on display there; he would soon head north to work as Russ Manning's assistant on the Tarzan newspaper strip.

**INSET:** DC artist Joe Kubert (who later started the Kubert School) brought his whole family from New Jersey; two of his sons went on to follow in his footsteps.

One of the big hits of the 1977 con was Rocky Horror, on a par with Star Wars. In those days this wasn't called cosplay, it was called "hall costumes."



ory books. As he drew his character Aurora for go-fer Andrew Ramstedt, a weary Richard Butner [Comic-Con vice president] sat in a nearby corner and slowly nodded off. Convention secretary Vicky Kelso and meal functions coordinator Maeheah 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.

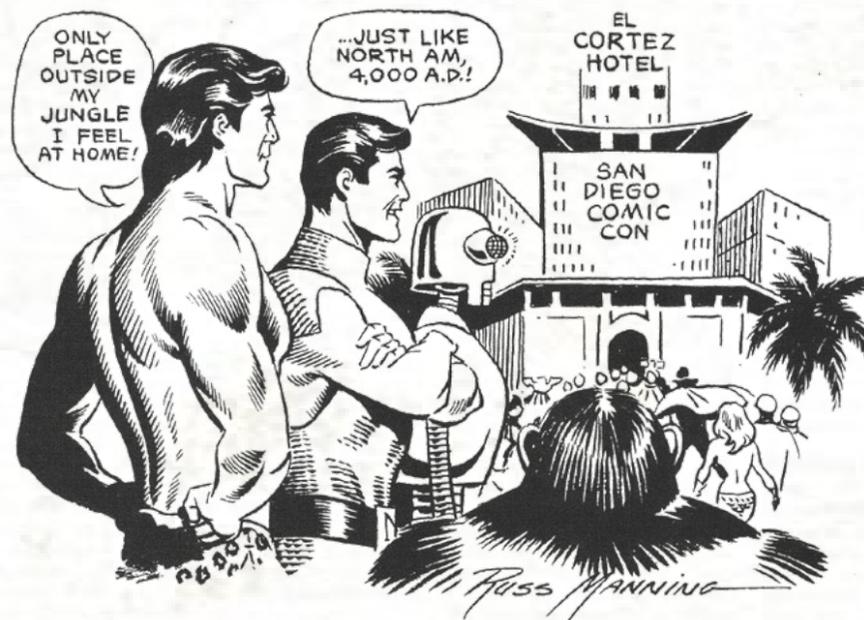
At about 1:00 A.M. we all began to file out of the suite. Go-fer Mike Toledo looked dazed, having spent the last few hours in the presence of Heinlein and Sturgeon, two of his idols. Program director David Scroggy was in a state of euphoria—all the convention's programs had gone well, and he still seemed to be going strong. We were all reluctant to say goodbye, for the dead dog party had been the last real "event" of the con. A few films were still being shown in one of the small meeting rooms (films had run pretty much 24 hours throughout the convention), but we still had one last "program" we could watch: convention videotape wizard Scott Smith was planning to broadcast *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* over the hotel's TV system. Throughout the convention Scott and his staff had been showing movies, cartoons, and live programs over the hotel's system. Guests could turn on their TVs at 2 A.M. and see Vaughn Bode's Cartoon Concert or a live interview with one of the convention guests.

So I finally left the party and went back to my room and waited for *Rocky Horror* to begin. As I 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 to registration.) That night film historian Eric Hoffman had unveiled this year's serial: *The Spider*. But the main activity that day had taken place in the

hucksters' room," where dealers at 200 tables were selling everything from Wookiee masks to feather jewelry. Thursday had been the day of the blood drive, but it was also the day for some unusual programs: Leslie Cabarga's musical tribute to the Fleischer Studios was followed by "The Sergio Aragonés Hour" and then Trina Robbins' entertaining slide show about women in comics. Next up was Scott Shaw's popular slide show on esoteric comics. Scott outdid himself in finding bizarre, obscure comics to highlight, and his patter had the audience in stitches. Thursday night was the kickoff for Carl Macek's film noir festival, which ran throughout the con. Carl brought a number of late 1940s and early 1950s films that he considered to be representative of this recently "discovered" genre. Friday had been a big day for panels: an alternative publishing panel, the Tarzan panel, and a humor panel that featured Harvey Kurtzman, B. Kliban, Bill Scott (of Jay Ward Studios), Gilbert Shelton (*Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*), Lee Marrs (*Pudge, Girl Blimp*), and Mark Evanier. The panel ended with a cartoonists' jam on a 13-foot piece of photo backdrop paper. Joining the panelists in covering the paper with characters and balloons 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 of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. At noon easels were set up by the hotel pool and artists began to draw for the auction. The drawing and auctioning went on for most of the day—in fact, auctioneer Dr. Raul Duke finally had to quit when he lost his



# San Diego Comic-Con 1977

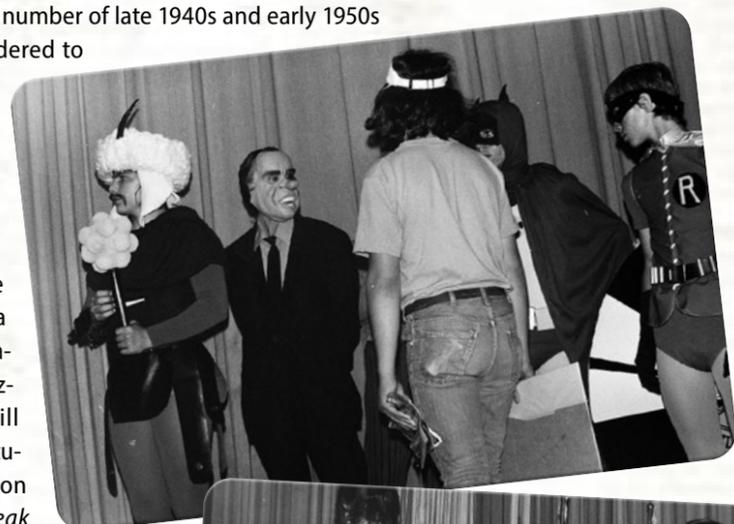


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You never know what you're going to see backstage at the Comic-Con costume contest. In 1977 it was held on Friday night.

**INSET CENTER:** The 1977 program book was comic book size, sporting a cover painting by Alex Niño.

**INSET CENTER:** Manning's contribution to the program book.

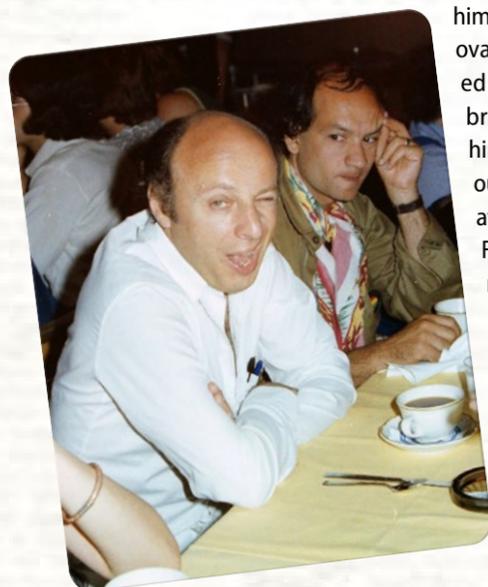


**LEFT TO RIGHT:**  
Dr. Raul Duke (a.k.a. Roger Freedman) was the auctioneer for the poolside art auction.

The co-creator of Superman, Joe Shuster, drew this fabulous piece for the poolside art auction.

Bill Scott, voice of Bullwinkle J. Moose, also drew him.

Cartoonist Lee Marrs drew her character Pudge, Girl Blimp for the poolside art auction.



Comics giant Harvey Kurtzman entertained folks at his Saturday night banquet table.

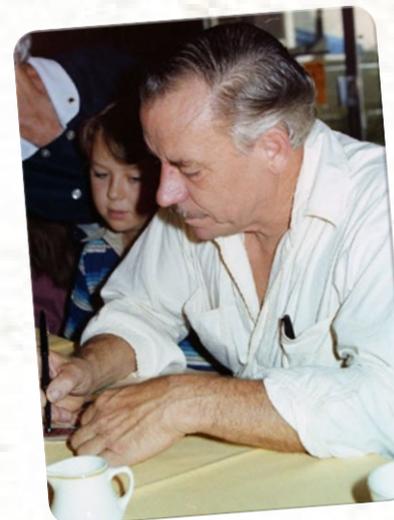
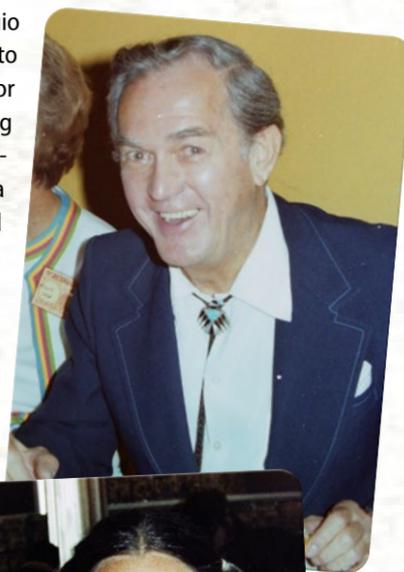
**INSET RIGHT:**  
Superman of the serials Kirk Alyn was another of the many guests feted at the awards banquet.

*National Lampoon* cartoonist Shary Flenniken ("Trots and Bonnie") did sketches for fans.

voice. Artwork auctioned off included pieces by Alex Niño, Jim Steranko, Jack Kirby, Joe Kubert, Kliban, Lee Marrs, Trina Robbins, Ted Richards, Alfredo Alcalá, Ernie Chan, Stan Lynde, Carl Potts, Steve Leialoha, Don Rico, Jack Katz, Bill Scott, Shary Flenniken, Rus Manning, Sergio, Larry Todd, and a Superman by Joe Shuster that went for \$225.

Saturday night was the big awards banquet, with Sergio as host. Sergio was a great MC, although he paused often to apologize for the jokes that Mark Evanier had written for him. Guest of honor Carl Barks received several standing ovations in the course of the evening, and he enchanted us all with his humor and his humbleness during a brief program in which Bruce Hamilton interviewed him. The bulk of the evening was devoted to handing out the convention's Inkpot Awards to deserving creators in the popular arts and to awarding "Friend of Fandom" certificates to individuals who have made major contributions to fan activities or to the San Diego Comic-Con. I was late in getting a seat for the banquet and was surprised to find myself sitting between Mrs. Lester Dent (widow of the creator of Doc Savage) and Shary Flenniken, while John Pound nodded to me from across the table. Shary (best known for her "Trots and Bonnie" strip in *National Lampoon*) impressed me with her total freshness and vitality.

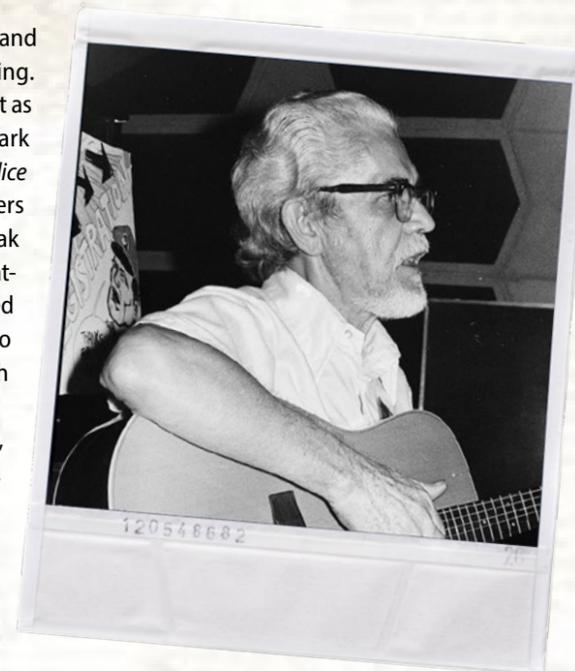
Following the banquet was a cocktail party for convention guests, where I had a chance to talk to Bill Scott, who was not only the voice of Bullwinkle Moose but also wrote a large percentage of the Jay Ward programs and did the voices of a number of the characters. Bill was thrilled at having received an Inkpot—he thought he was going to have to settle for a share of Jay Ward's 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.

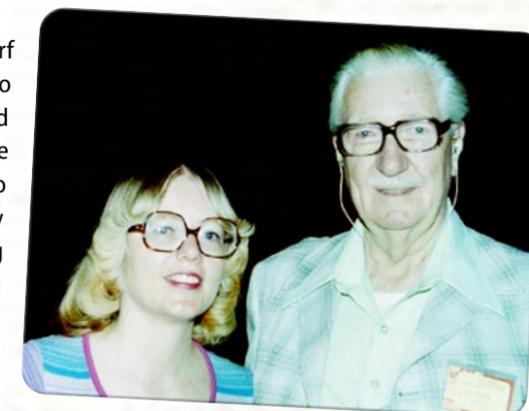
Sunday had begun with the celebrity brunch, one of the convention's most popular events, since fans could choose which special guest they'd like to sit with. Carl Barks did duck drawings for all who asked, including several for the hardworking convention go-fers. I was surprised at how tall and robust 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.



C. C. Beck (artist and co-creator of Captain Marvel) played guitar whenever he got a chance.

**INSET LEFT:**  
Writer/artist Russ Manning (Tarzan, Magnus, Star Wars) drew for fans at the Sunday celebrity brunch.

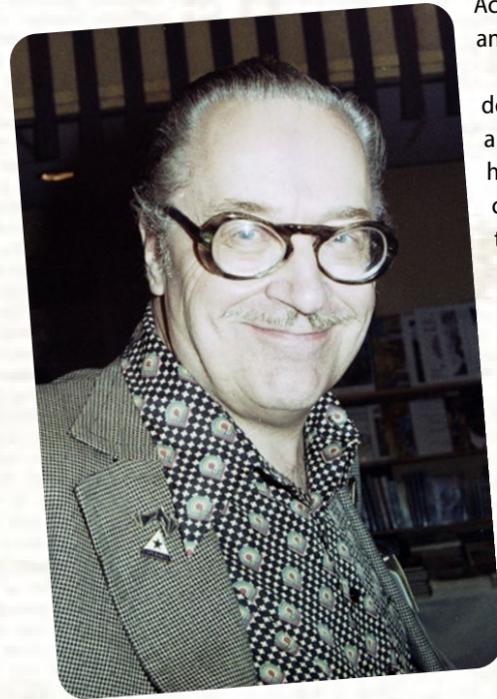


Jackie Estrada got to meet many of her idols at the show, including guest of honor Carl Barks.

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

# LAKE COMO COMIC ART

FESTIVAL



Perennial guest Forrest J Ackerman gave the keynote address to kick off the convention.

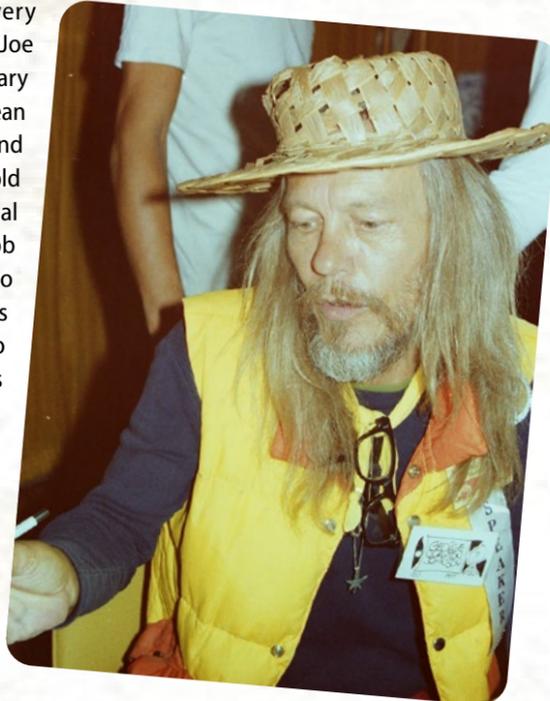
**INSET RIGHT:**  
Film/TV writer George Clayton Johnson (*Logan's Run*, *Twilight Zone*) delighted fans with his many stories.

There had been a variety of other programs during the con—far 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 Kliban, 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 rudest 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. 📺



Jackie Estrada is one of five people who have been to every San Diego Comic-Con; she has been the administrator of the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards since 1990. Her SDCC photos have been collected into two books: *Comic Book People: The 1970s and 1980s* and *Comic Book People: The 1990s*.

2018

ADAMS  
ALBERTI  
ALICE  
BERTOLUCCI  
CAPULLO  
CHO  
COIPEL  
COMOLO  
DELL’OTTO  
FRANK  
GIANFELICE  
GIBBONS  
GRANOV  
GUARNIDO  
HUGHES  
IVANOVA  
LAUFFRAY  
LEE  
LOISEL  
MARINI  
MERLI  
PÉ  
RAATS  
RAFFAELE  
RISSO  
SHARP  
WENDLING

2019

ADAMS  
ALICE  
ANDOLFO  
BENJAMIN  
BERMEJO  
BIANCHI  
CHAREST  
CHIN  
CHO  
COMOLO  
DEKAL  
DIMEO  
FRANK  
GRANOV  
GUARNIDO  
GUGLIOTTA  
HOMS  
HUGHES  
JONES  
KALVACHEV  
LAUFFRAY  
LOISEL  
MACK  
MANNION  
MARCH  
MARINI

2022

MCKEAN  
MIGNOLA  
MUNUERA  
ORZU  
PÉ  
PRADO  
RAATS  
RAMOS  
ROSA  
RUAN  
SANJULIAN  
SERPIERI  
SIENKIEWICZ  
VALENCIA

ADAMS  
ANDOLFO  
BENJAMIN  
BERTOLUCCI  
BIANCHI  
BOOG  
BROOKS  
BUCKINGHAM  
CAVAZZANO  
CHIN  
CHO  
COELLO  
COIPEL  
COMOLO  
CUCCHI  
DARROW  
DAVIS  
DELL’OTTO  
FEDERICI  
FORNÉS  
GAUDIANO  
GRANOV  
GUARNIDO  
HAIRSINE  
JANSON  
KUBERT

LAISO  
LIBERATORE  
LUPACCHINO  
MALEEV  
MANARA  
MARCH  
MARINI  
BUENO  
MASELLIS  
MAYHEW  
MCKEAN  
MOREY  
ORZU  
PARSONS  
PHILLIPS  
PICHELLI  
RAATS  
REDONDO  
RIBIC  
RICCARDI  
RUAN  
SAMPERE  
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BY MARK EVANIER

**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.

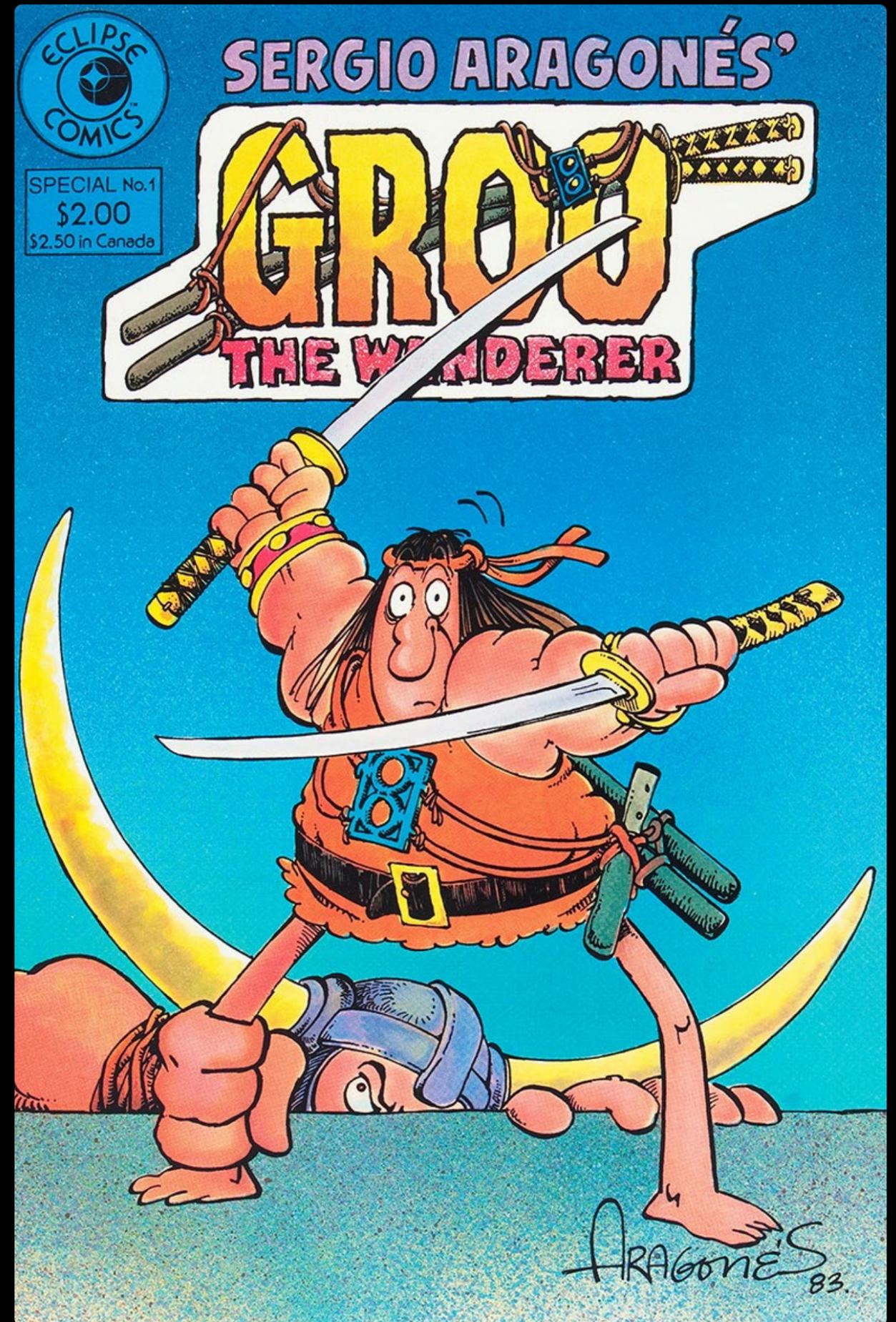
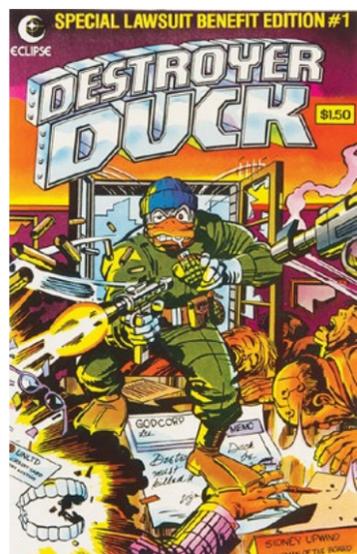
As for Decision #2 ... well, that was a lot more difficult. It wouldn't be difficult today and it wasn't, late in the 20th century. But in the late '70s, the companies that published comic books were more or less aligned on a basic principle: "We don't publish it unless we own it." That was, verbatim, how one prominent comic book pub-

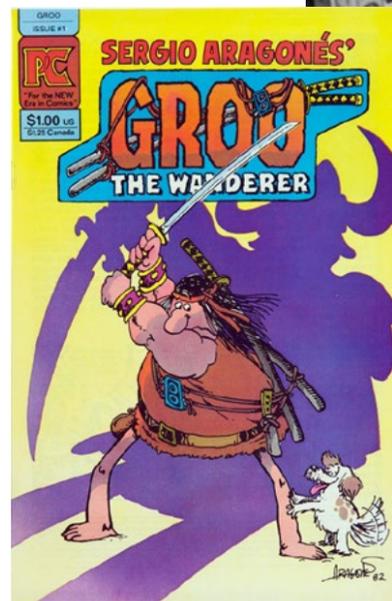
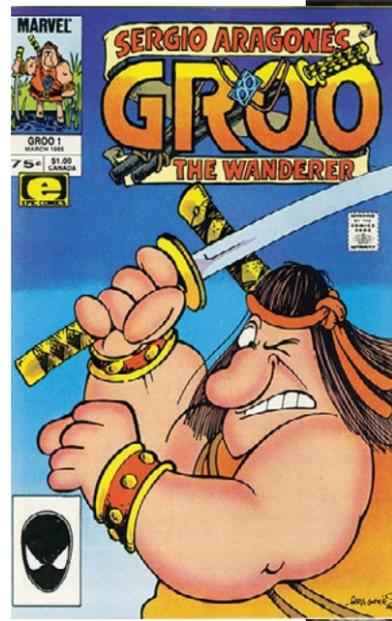
lisher put it back then. The publisher didn't mean that literally. His company published Tarzan and they didn't own Tarzan. They published Star Trek comic books and they didn't own Star Trek. They published plenty of comics by licensing the rights from companies that owned popular characters. He just meant that they wouldn't license, say, *Groo the Wanderer* from Sergio Aragonés—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,

ABOVE:  
The Groo Crew: Stan Sakai,  
Tom Luth, Mark Evanier, and  
Sergio Aragones.



GROO  
AND  
THE THOUGHT PATROL

ARAGONÉS 87©



ABOVE:  
Sergio Aragonés at  
WonderCon in 2007.

Stan, Myself, and up until recently, Tom. In a corresponding 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 saying 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 letter 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, watches over 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 current 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 and attending comic book conventions in San Diego since 1970.

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# CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF LOVE AND ROCKETS

BY MARC SOBEL

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."

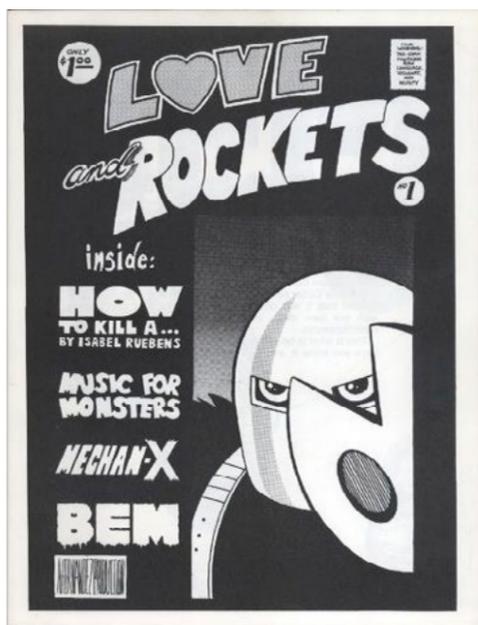
With this early encouragement, comic books became the Hernandez brothers' favorite hobby, with Mario and Gilbert, as the eldest, serving as the pri-

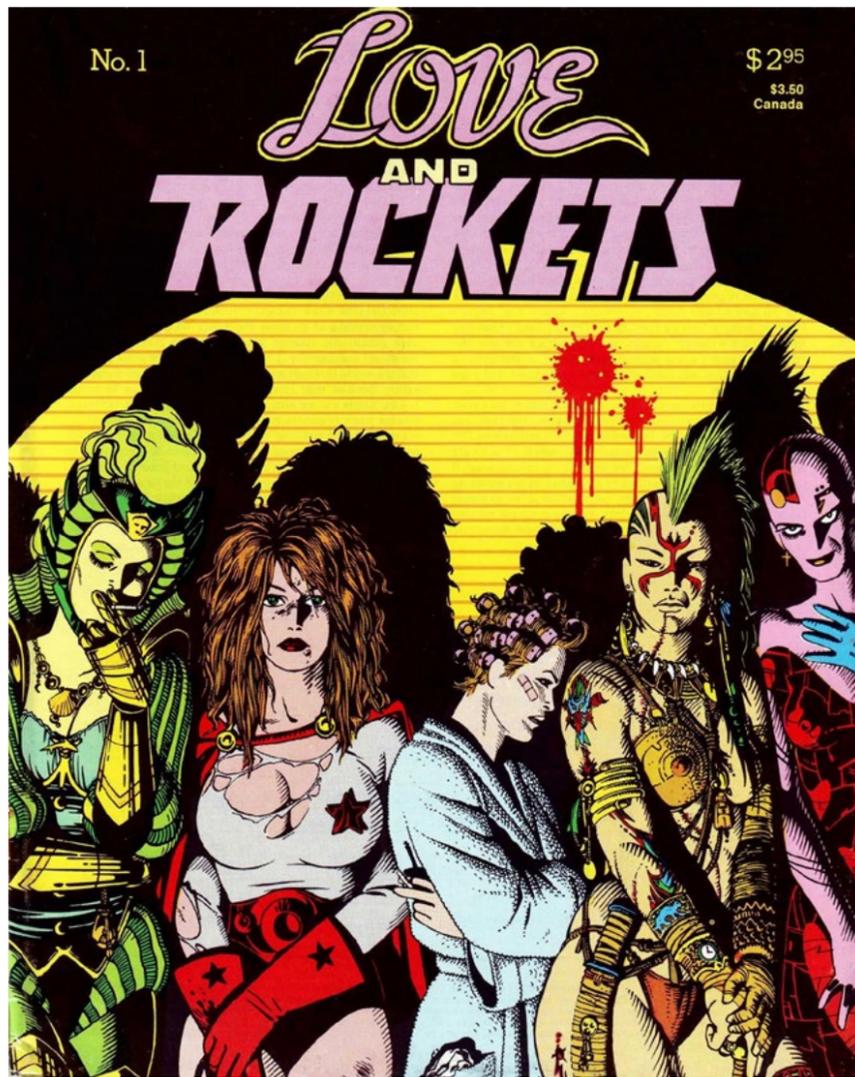
mary suppliers of the family's collection. "Comics were everywhere," Mario recalled. "You'd go to the bathroom with comics, you'd eat dinner with comics." Gilbert joked that "I was born with one in my hand."

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 both Gilbert and Jaime was transformative (Mario, older and already settled into a career, was not involved).

If there was one thing that appealed to the Hernandez brothers about punk besides the music and lifestyle, it was the DIY aesthetic. Short for “do it yourself,” this individualist philosophy was usually applied to the music side of the scene, inspiring amateur bands to set up their own gigs, establish their own record labels, advertise their own shows, and book their own tours. However, there was also a thriving DIY culture in comics, with hundreds of self-published ‘zines traded and sold through the mail. Both brothers submitted to various fanzines during the late ‘70s and had several illustrations and a few early stories published. At the same time, they also contributed doz-

ens of illustrations to industry magazines including *Comics Buyer’s Guide*, *Amazing Heroes*, and *The Comics Journal*.

As Gilbert and Jaime became more and more involved in the comics scene, Mario noticed a shift in their art styles. “I was starting to see that Gilbert was getting pretty good, more professional. ... But the thing is that Jaime’s talent went from sort of fannish-looking art to this chiaroscuro style. I picked it up and I was doing flips in my head. I thought, ‘This is professional art.’” After seeing his brothers’ improvement, Mario had his now legendary idea to self-publish their own comic book.

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. Jaime didn’t have much work at the time, so that’s when he started Maggie and Hopey.” Gilbert, in 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 pulpit 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 Hernandezes’ 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

## “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...”

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 storytelling in the series. Of all the stories that appeared in *Love and Rockets* Volume 1, “Sopa de Gran Pena” was the most important in defining 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. I think I’ve felt that since I was a kid.”

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 Weddall wrote that “the label ‘comics’ doesn’t seem to fit” anymore, while Jon Turnbow proclaimed that Los Bros had, in just a few issues, “literacized the medium.” As the cartoonist Mark Wheatley pointed



Mario Hernandez

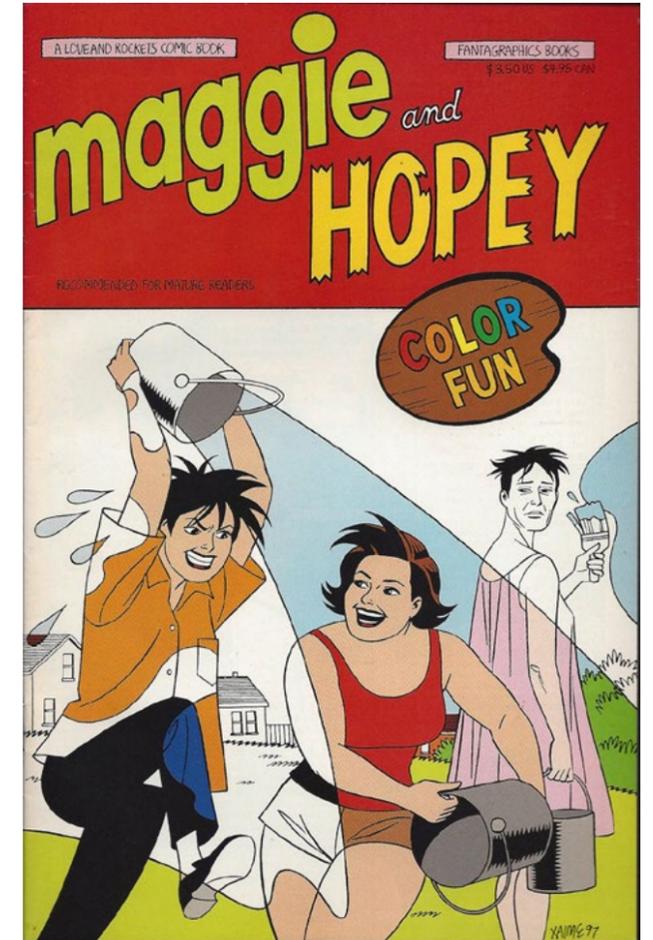
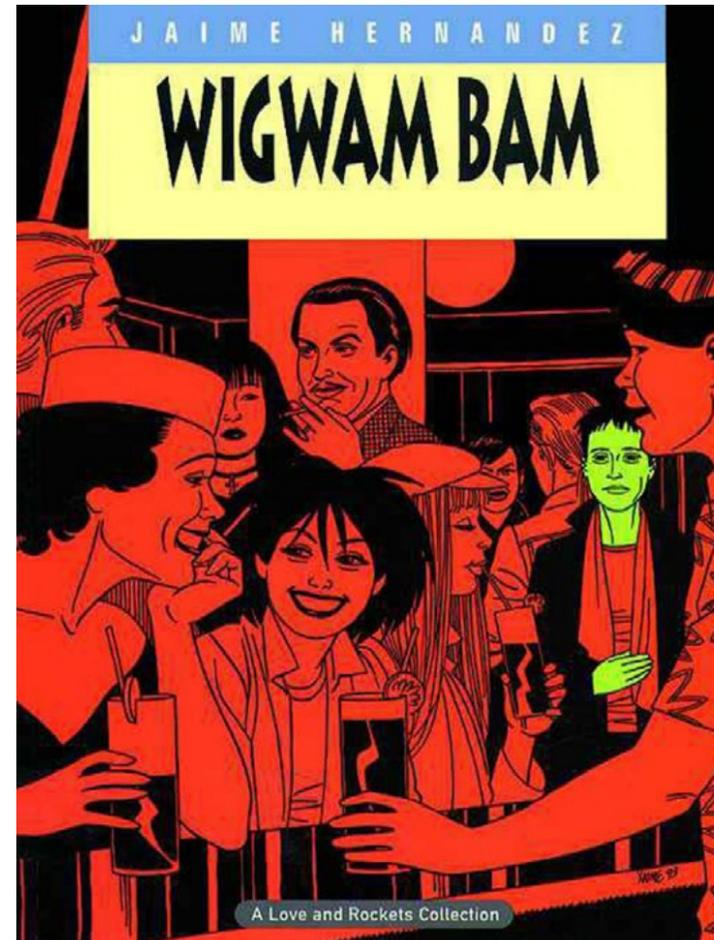
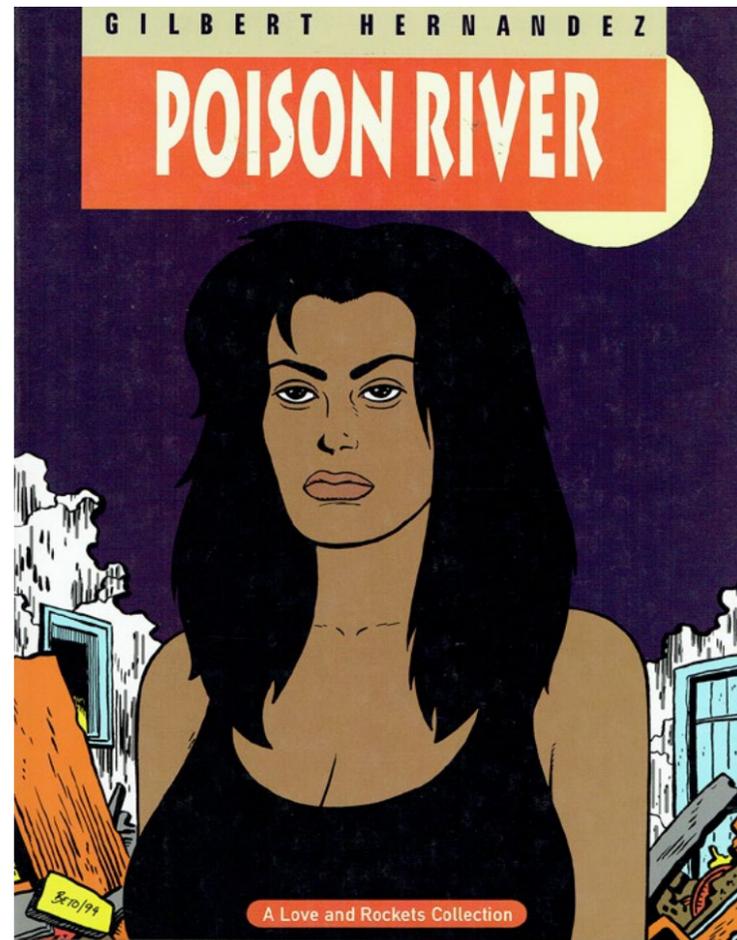
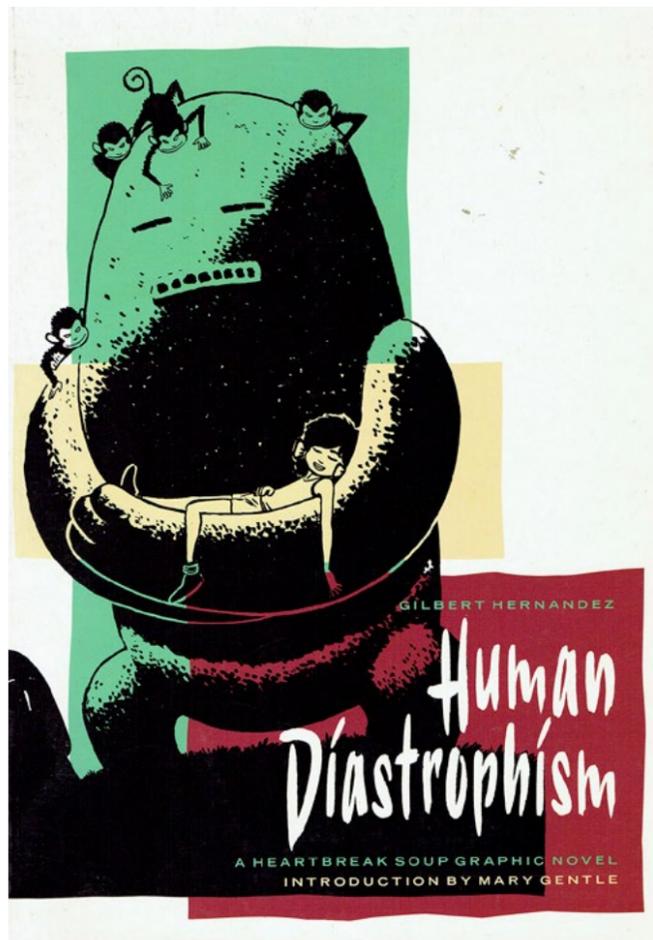


Jaime Hernandez



Gilbert Hernandez





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, came fully to life. This story was also a deeply personal one for Jaime, and his firsthand experiences with lowrider gangs added a sense of street-level authenticity.

Meanwhile, Gilbert’s ambitious graphic novel *Human Diastrophism* represented the culmination of the “Heartbreak Soup” stories. A sweeping panorama of

literary, artistic, and philosophical ideas, it is one of the most sophisticated and rewarding comic book stories of its era. Following its completion in 1989, Gilbert won the Harvey Award for Best Writer (beating out Alan Moore), and *Love and Rockets* won the Harvey for Best Continuing or Limited Series.

Building on the success of *Human Diastrophism*, Gilbert extrapolated 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 or 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).

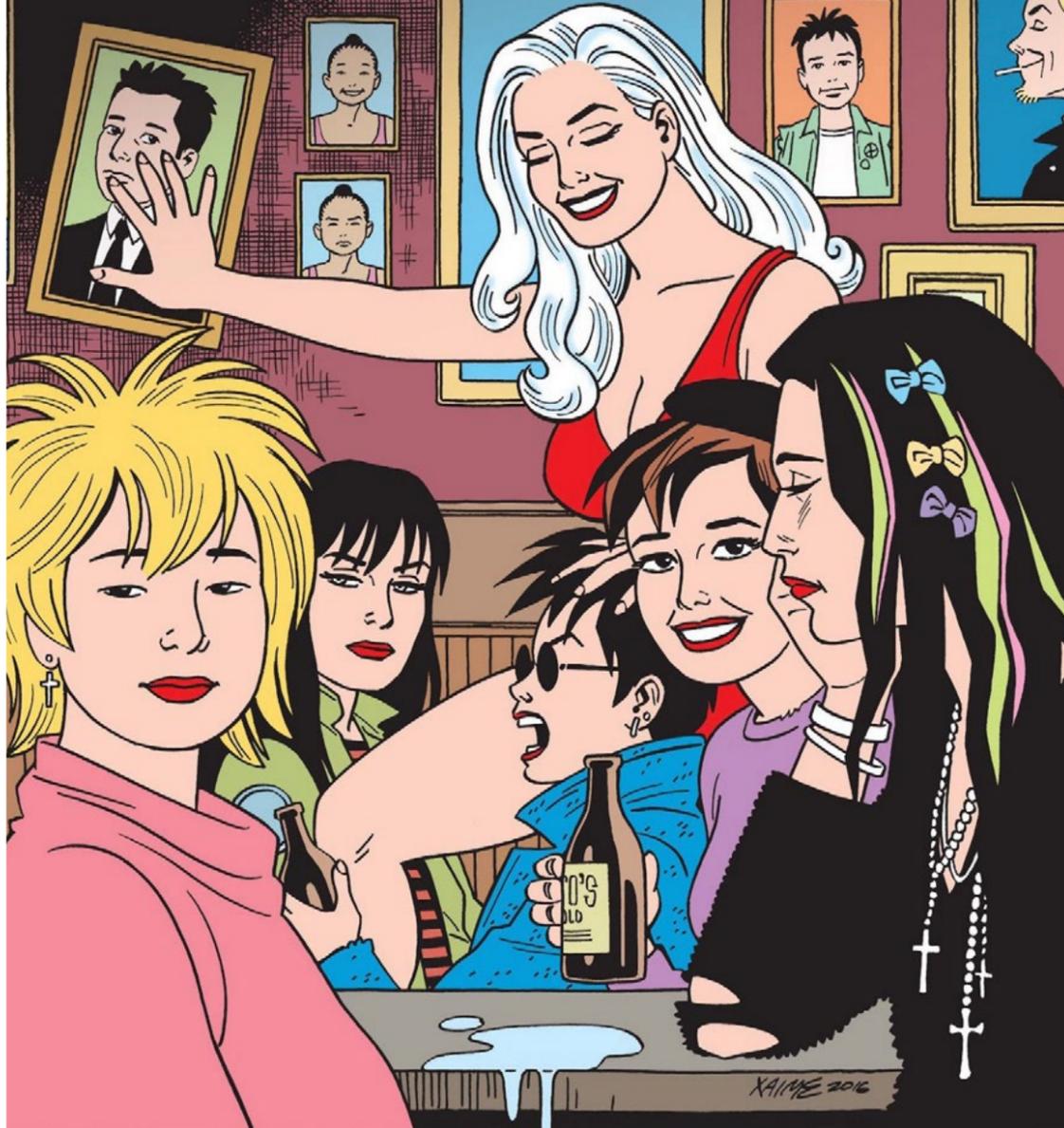
In 1996, Gilbert and Jaime decided to go solo and ended the first volume of *Love and Rockets* with its 50th issue. By then the brothers had ascended to the vanguard of the medium and *Love and Rockets* had become the signature success story in alternative comics, but when the series wrapped, the brothers 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 Volume 2*, a pamphlet-sized comic book that ran for 20 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 unprecedented 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.*



*Camilla*  
**CAMILLA d'ERRICO**

**BOOTH #4723**

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[camilladerrico.com](http://camilladerrico.com)

# THE ROCKETEER



by  
Dave  
Stevens  
© 1982



## 40 YEARS OF THE ROCKETEER

BY WILLIAM STOUT

**I was fortunate to witness to 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.

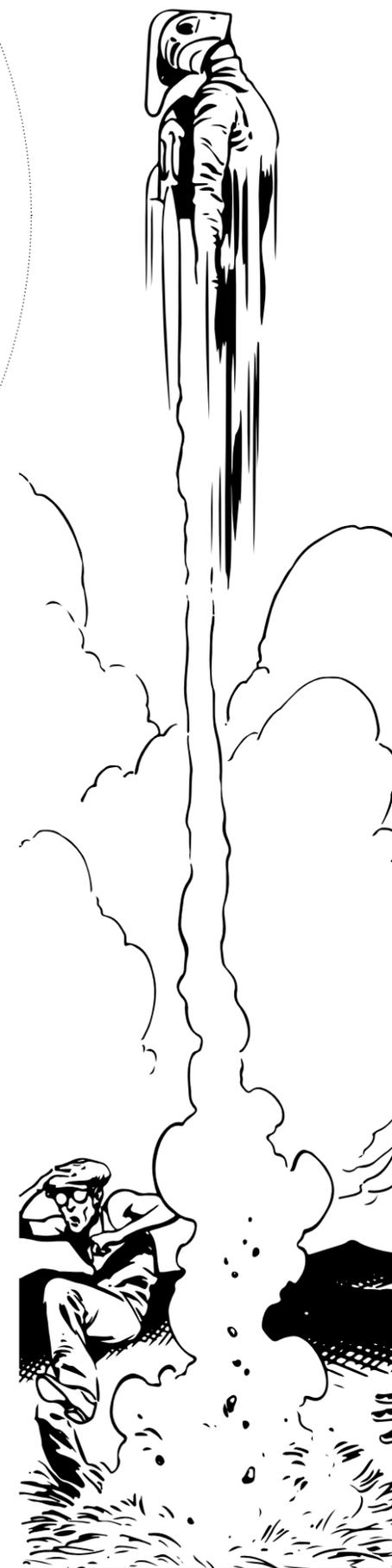
I had been working as Russ Manning's assistant on the *Tarzan of the Apes* Sunday and daily newspaper strips. Russ was taken by surprise when, in 1971, I left him for a few weeks to join a hippy caravan to an eight-day rock festival in Louisiana. My art career outside of Russ had also begun to take off. 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.

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

**"... 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."**

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

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. To his amazement, he found out she was still alive and living somewhat nearby. He provided her with personal assistance and was the first to compensate her for the use of her image. Dave also set up her licensing business and got the rest of those who were exploiting her image without paying for it to finally cough up the dough that she was due.

*Starslayer*, the first comic book containing the adven-



**ABOVE:**  
Left: Dave Stevens at the 1985 Comic-Con. Right: Silver Surfer inked by Dave Stevens (original pencil by Jack Kirby).

**OPPOSITE:**  
Stevens based the look of the Rocketeer's girlfriend on pinup queen Bettie Page.





tures of The Rocketeer as a back-up feature, dropped on the comics scene like a bomb in 1982. Dazzling art, entertaining stories. Who could resist? Dave became famous with the comic-collecting crowd almost instantly. Each appearance of The Rocketeer quickly added to Dave's popularity.

Anyone who has read *The Rocketeer* knows that Dave was pretty nuts for vintage aircraft. For one of his birthdays, a girlfriend of his bought him a flight on a biplane over at the Van Nuys Airport. Dave enthusiastically asked the pilot for "the works." The pilot did barrel

provided. Hell, he could have taught at any art school in the country. The humility he displayed in that decision made my opinion of him soar even higher.

The greatness Dave maintained as an artist and writer did not translate into business acumen, however. He always marched to his own drummer whether it benefited him financially or not. He turned down many lucrative job offers—including a monthly pin-up assignment for *Playboy* offered by Hugh Hefner as a replacement for their regular Alberto Vargas feature—when they didn't jibe with his own highly personal vision of what he should be doing. Dave's lack of a solid business sense often drove his close friends nuts. We'd watch in astonishment at the riches passing him by. We'd try to

**DAVE HAD MORE ARTISTIC INTEGRITY THAN ANYONE I'VE EVER KNOWN. AT THE PEAK OF HIS CAREER, HE ENROLLED IN ART SCHOOL. HE FELT HE HAD NEVER LEARNED THE BASIC ACADEMIC TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE THAT HE THOUGHT ATTENDING AN ART SCHOOL PROVIDED.**

rolls, dives, outside loops, and other harrowing maneuvers, all to Dave's sheer delight.

Dave had more artistic integrity than anyone I've ever known. At the peak of his career, he enrolled in art school. He felt he had never learned the basic academic training and knowledge that he thought attending an art school

guide him toward financial success, but Dave would usually have none of it. After years of pestering him, I finally convinced him to publish a sketchbook. It sold out immediately. I pointed out that obvious success to Dave.

"Aww, that was just a fluke."

That was the first of many Dave Stevens "flukes."

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 Peevy character completely on Wildey. Richard Hescox's wife Alice posed for the Bulldog Café's Millie. 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 Shrank 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 about an arduous nine months to make. At the Hollywood premiere of *The Rocketeer* I congratulated Dave and warned him about the forthcoming post-partum 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 legendarily 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 bet-

ter 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.

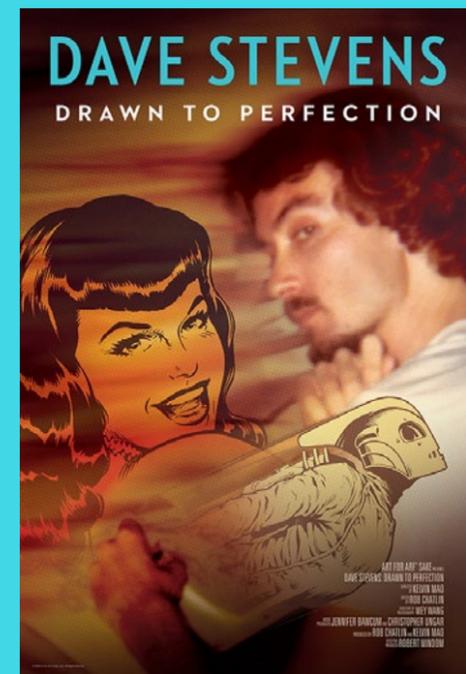
Dave Stevens lived nine years longer than his doctors had predicted. His friends and fans savored his presence; he always seemed to be smiling or laughing. I got used to seeing him each year at Comic-Con. It often seemed like he had beaten the damned leukemia and we occasionally forgot that he might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

*William Stout author blurb here. It should be about this long. William Stout author blurb here. It should be about this long. William Stout author blurb here. It should be about this long. William Stout author blurb here. It should be about this long. William Stout author blurb here. It should be about this long.*

**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.



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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 Kamison and Steven Arnold, in *Too Tough to Die* (Birdcage Bottom Books)
- “Tap, Tap, Tap,” by Larry O’Neil and Jorge Fornés, in *Green Arrow 80th Anniversary* (DC)
- “Trickster, Traitor, Dummy, Doll,” by Triple Dream (Mel Hilario, Katie Longua, and Lauren Davis), in *The Nib Vol 9: Secrets* (The Nib)

## Best Single Issue/One-Shot

- *Marvel’s Voices: Identity #1*, edited by Darren Shan (Marvel)
- *Mouse Guard: The Owlhen Caregiver and Other Tales*, by David Petersen (BOOM!/Archaia)
- *Nightwing #87: “Get Grayson,”* by Tom Taylor and Bruno Redondo (DC)
- *Wolvendaughter*, by Ver (Quindrie Press)
- *Wonder Woman Historia: The Amazons*, by Kelly Sue DeConnick and Phil Jimenez (DC)

## Best Continuing 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 Wiseman, Rik Worth, and Jordan Collver, hocuspocus-comic.squarespace.com
- *The Many Deaths of Laila Starr*, by Ram V and Filipe Andrade (BOOM! Studios)
- *Stray Dogs*, by Tony Fleecs and Trish Forstner (Image)
- *Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow*, by Tom King and Bilquis Evely (DC)

## Best New Series

- *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 Upshot)
- *Radiant Black*, by Kyle Higgins and Marcelo Costa (Image)

- *Ultramega*, by James Harren (Image Skybound)

## Best Publication for Early Readers

- *Arlo & Pips #2: Join the Crow Crowd!*, by Elise Gravel (HarperAlley)
- *Chibi Usagi: Attack of the Heebie Chibis*, by Julie and Stan Sakai (IDW)
- *I Am Oprah Winfrey*, by Brad Meltzer and Christopher Eliopoulos (Dial Books for Young Readers)
- *Monster Friends*, by Kaeti Vandorn (Random House Graphic)
- *Tiny Tales: Shell Quest*, by Steph Waldo (HarperAlley)

## Best Publication for Kids

- *Allergic*, by Megan Wagner Lloyd and Michelle Mee Nutter (Scholastic)
- *Four-Fisted Tales: Animals in Combat*, by Ben Towle (Dead Reckoning)
- *Rainbow Bridge*, by Steve Orlando, Steve Foxe, and Valentina Brancati (AfterShock)
- *Salt Magic*, by Hope Larson and Rebecca Mock (Margaret Ferguson Books/Holiday House)
- *Saving Sorya: Chang and the Sun Bear*, by Trang Nguyen and Jeet Zdung (Dial Books for Young Readers)
- *The Science of Surfing: A Surfside Girls Guide to the Ocean*, by Kim Dwinell (Top Shelf)

## Best Publication for Teens

- *Adora and the Distance*, by Marc Bernardin and Ariela Kristantina (Comixology Originals)
- *Clockwork Curandera, vol. 1: The Witch Owl Parliament*, by David Bowles and Raul the Third (Tu Books/Lee & Low Books)
- *The Legend of Auntie Po*, by Shing Yin Khor (Kokila/Penguin Random House)
- *Strange Academy*, by Skottie Young and Humberto Ramos (Marvel)
- *Wynd*, by James Tynion IV and Michael Dialynas (BOOM! Box)

## Best Humor Publication

- *Bubble*, by Jordan Morris, Sarah Morgan, and Tony Cliff (First Second/Macmillan)
- *Cyclopedia Exotica*, by Aminder Dhaliwal (Drawn & Quarterly)
- *Not All Robots*, by Mark Russell and Mike Deodato Jr. (AWA Upshot)
- *The Scumbag*, by Rick Remender and various (Image)
- *Thirsty Mermaids*, by Kat Leyh (Gallery 13/Simon and Schuster)
- *Zom 100: Bucket List of the Dead*, by Haro Aso and Kotaro Takata, translation by Nova Skipper (VIZ Media)

## Best Anthology

- *Flash Forward: An Illustrated Guide to Possible (And Not So Possible) Tomorrows*, by Rose

- Eveleth and various, edited by Laura Dozier (Abrams ComicArts)
- *My Only Child*, by Wang Ning and various, edited by Wang Saili, translation by Emma Massara (LICAF/Fanfare Presents)
- *The Silver Coin*, by Michael Walsh and various (Image)
- *Superman: Red & Blue*, edited by Jamie S. Rich, Brittany Holzherr, and Diegs Lopez (DC)
- *You Died: An Anthology of the Afterlife*, edited by Kel McDonald and Andrea Purcell (Iron Circus)

## Best Reality-Based Work

- *The Black Panther Party: A Graphic History*, by David F. Walker and Marcus Kwame Anderson (Ten Speed Press)
- *Hakim’s Odyssey, Book 1: From Syria to Turkey*, by Fabien Toulmé, translation by Hannah Chute (Graphic Mundi/Penn State University Press)
- *Lugosi: The Rise and Fall of Hollywood’s Dracula*, by Koren Shadmi (Humanoids)
- *Orwell*, by Pierre Christin and Sébastien Verdier, translation by Edward Gauvin (SelfMadeHero)
- *Seek You: A Journey Through American Loneliness*, by Kristen Radtke (Pantheon/Penguin Random House)
- *The Strange Death of Alex Raymond*, by Dave Sim and Carson Grubaugh (Living the Line)

## Best Graphic Memoir

- *Factory Summers*, by Guy Delisle, translated by Helge Dascher and Rob Aspinall (Drawn & Quarterly)
- *Parenthesis*, by Élodie Durand, translation by Edward Gauvin (Top Shelf)
- *Run: Book One*, by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, L. Fury, and Nate Powell (Abrams ComicArts)
- *Save It for Later: Promises, Parenthood, and the Urgency of Protest*, by Nate Powell (Abrams ComicArts)
- *The Secret to Superhuman Strength*, by Alison Bechdel (Mariner Books)

## Best Graphic Album—New

- *Ballad For Sophie*, by Filipe Melo and Juan Cavia, translation by Gabriela Soares (Top Shelf)
- *Destroy All Monsters* (A Reckless Book), by Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips (Image)
- *In.*, by Will McPhail (Mariner Books)
- *Meadowlark: A Coming-of-Age Crime Story*, by Ethan Hawke and Greg Ruth (Grand Central Publishing)
- *Monsters*, by Barry Windsor-Smith (Fantagraphics)

## Best Graphic Album—Reprint

- *The Complete American Gods*, by Neil Gaiman, P. Craig Russell, and Scott Hampton (Dark Horse)

- *Locke & Key: Keyhouse Compendium*, by Joe Hill and Gabriel Rodriguez (IDW)
- *Middlewest: The Complete Tale*, by Skottie Young and Jorge Corona (Image)
- *Rick and Morty vs Dungeons and Dragons Deluxe Edition*, by Patrick Rothfuss, Jim Zub, and Troy Little (Oni/IDW)
- *The True Lives of the Fabulous Killjoys: California Deluxe Edition*, by Gerard Way, Shaun Simon, and Becky Cloonan (Dark Horse)

## Best Adaptation from Another Medium

- *After the Rain*, by Nnedi Okorafor, adapted by John Jennings and David Brame (Megascop/Abrams ComicArts)
- *Bubble* by Jordan Morris, Sarah Morgan, and Tony Cliff (First Second/Macmillan)
- *Disney Cruella: Black, White, and Red*, adapted by Hachi Ishie (VIZ Media)
- *George Orwell’s 1984: The Graphic Novel*, adapted by Fido Nesti (Mariner Books)
- *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, by Robert Tressell, adapted by Sophie and Scarlett Rickard (SelfMadeHero)

## Best U.S. Edition of International Material

- *Ballad For Sophie*, by Filipe Melo and Juan Cavia, transla-

- tion by Gabriela Soares (Top Shelf)
- *Between Snow and Wolf*, by Agnes Domergue and Helene Canac, translation by Maria Vahrenhorst (Magnetic)
- *Love: The Mastiff*, by Frederic Brrémaud and Federico Bertolucci (Magnetic)
- *The Parakeet*, by Espé, translation by Hannah Chute ((Graphic Mundi/Penn State University Press)
- *The Shadow of a Man*, by Benoît Peeters and François Schuiten, translation by Stephen D. Smith (IDW)

## Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Asia

- *Chainsaw Man*, by Tatsuki Fujimoto, translation by Amanda Haley (VIZ Media)
- *Kaiju No. 8*, by Naoya Matsumoto, translation by David Evelyn (VIZ Media)
- *Lovesickness: Junji Ito Story Collection*, by Junji Ito, translation by Jocelyne Allen (VIZ Media)
- *Robo Sapiens: Tales of Tomorrow (Omnibus)*, by Toranosuke Shimada, translation by Adrienne Beck (Seven Seas)
- *Spy x Family*, by Tatsuya Endo, translation by Casey Loe (VIZ Media)
- *Zom 100: Bucket List of the Dead*, by Haro Aso and Kotaro Takata, translation by Nova Skipper (VIZ Media)



# Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards Nominations 2022

## Best Archival Collection/Project—Strips

- *Friday Foster: The Sunday Strips*, by Jim Lawrence and Jorge Longarón, edited by Christopher Marlon, Rich Young, and Kevin Ketner (Ablaze)
- *Popeye: The E.C. Segar Sundays*, vol. 1 by E.C. Segar, edited by Gary Groth and Conrad Groth (Fantagraphics)
- *Trots and Bonnie*, by Shary Flenniken, edited by Norman Hathaway (New York Review Comics)
- *The Way of Zen*, adapted and illustrated by C. C. Tsai, translated by Brian Bruya (Princeton University Press)

## Best Archival Collection/Project—Comic Books

- *EC Covers Artist's Edition*, edited by Scott Dunbier (IDW)
- *Farewell, Brindavoine*, by Tardi, translation by Jenna Allen, edited by Conrad Groth (Fantagraphics)
- *Marvel Comics Library: Spider-Man vol. 1: 1962–1964*, by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko, edited by Steve Korté (TASCHEN)
- *Spain Rodriguez: My Life and Times*, vol. 3, edited by Patrick Rosenkranz (Fantagraphics)
- *Steranko Nick Fury: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. Artisan Edition*, edited by Scott Dunbier (IDW)
- *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 Historia: The Amazons Book One* (DC)
- Filipe Melo, *Ballad for Sophie* (Top Shelf)
- Ram V, *The Many Deaths of Laila Starr* (BOOM! Studios); *The Swamp Thing* (DC); *Carnage: Black, White & Blood, Venom* (Marvel)
- James Tynion IV, *House of Slaughter, Something Is Killing the Children, Wynd* (BOOM! Studios); *The Nice House on the Lake, The Joker, Batman, DC Pride 2021* (DC); *The Department of Truth* (Image); *Blue Book, Razorblades* (Tiny Onion Studios)

## Best Writer/Artist

- Alison Bechdel, *The Secret to Superhuman Strength* (Mariner Books)
- Junji Ito, *Deserter: Junji Ito Story Collection, Lovesickness: Junji Ito Story Collection, Sensor* (VIZ Media)
- Daniel Warren Johnson, *Superman: Red & Blue* (DC); *Beta Ray Bill* (Marvel)
- Will McPhail, *In: A Graphic Novel* (Mariner Books)
- Barry Windsor-Smith, *Monsters* (Fantagraphics)

## Best Penciller/Inker or Penciller/Inker Team

- Filipe Andrade, *The Many Deaths of Laila Starr* (BOOM! Studios)
- Phil Jimenez, *Wonder Woman Historia: The Amazons* (DC)
- Bruno Redondo, *Nightwing* (DC)
- Esad Ribic, *Eternals* (Marvel)

## Best Painter/Multimedia Artist (interior art)

- Federico Bertolucci, *Brindille, Love: The Mastiff* (Magnetic)
- John Bolton, *Hell's Flaw* (Renegade Arts Entertainment)
- Juan Cavia, *Ballad for Sophie* (Top Shelf)
- Frank Pe, *Little Nemo* (Magnetic)
- Ileana Surducian, *The Lost Sunday* (Pronoia AB)
- Sana Takeda, *Monstress* (Image)

## Best Cover Artist

- Jen Bartel, *Future State Immortal Wonder Woman #1 & 2, Wonder Woman Black & Gold #1, Wonder Woman 80th Anniversary* (DC); *Women's History Month variant covers* (Marvel)
- David Mack, *Norse 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)

- Julian Totino Tedesco, *Just Beyond: Monstrosity* (BOOM!/KaBoom!); *Dune: House Atreides* (BOOM! Studios); *Action Comics* (DC); *The Walking Dead Deluxe* (Image Skybound)
- Yoshi Yoshitani, *I Am Not Starfire* (DC); *The Blue Flame, Giga, Witchblood* (Vault)

## Best Coloring

- Filipe Andrade/Inês Amaro, *The Many Deaths of Laila Starr* (BOOM! Studios)
- Terry Dodson, *Adventureman* (Image Comics)
- K. O'Neill, *The Tea Dragon Tapestry* (Oni)
- Jacob Phillips, *Destroy All Monsters, Friend of the Devil* (Image)
- Matt Wilson, *Undiscovered Country* (Image); *Fire Power* (Image Skybound); *Eternals, Thor, Wolverine* (Marvel); *Jonna and the Impossible Monsters* (Oni)

## Best Lettering

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

- Crank!, *Jonna and the Impossible Monsters, The Tea Dragon Tapestry* (Oni); *Money Shot* (Vault)
- Ed Dukeshire, *Once & Future, Seven Secrets* (BOOM Studios)
- Barry Windsor-Smith, *Monsters* (Fantagraphics)

## Best Comics-Related Periodical/Journalism

- *Alter Ego*, edited by Roy Thomas (TwoMorrows)
- *The Columbus Scribbler*, edited by Brian Canini, Jack Wallace, and Steve Steiner, columbusscribbler.com
- Fanbase Press, edited by Barbra Dillon, fanbasepress.com
- tcj.com, edited by Tucker Stone and Joe McCulloch (Fantagraphics)
- WomenWriteAboutComics.com, edited by Wendy Browne and Nola Pfau (WWAC)

## 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 Spear (Abrams ComicArts)
- *Old Gods & New: A Companion to Jack Kirby's Fourth World*, by John Morrow, with Jon B. Cooke (TwoMorrows)

- *True Believer: The Rise and Fall of Stan Lee*, by Abraham Riesman (Crown)

## Best Academic/Scholarly Work

- *Comics and the Origins of Manga: A Revisionist History*, by Eike Exner (Rutgers University Press)
- *The Life and Comics of Howard Cruse: Taking Risks in the Service of Truth*, by Andrew J. Kunka (Rutgers University Press)
- *Mysterious Travelers: Steve Ditko and the Search for a New Liberal Identity*, by Zack Kruse (University Press of Mississippi)
- *Pulp Empire: The Secret History of Comics Imperialism*, by Paul S. Hirsch (University of Chicago Press)
- *Rebirth of the English Comic Strip: A Kaleidoscope, 1847–1870*, by David Kunzle (University Press of Mississippi)

## Best Publication Design

- *The Complete American Gods*, designed by Ethan Kimberling (Dark Horse)
- *The Complete Life and Times 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 (Z2)

- *Marvel Comics Library: Spider-Man vol. 1: 1962–1964* (TASCHEN)
- *Popeye Vol. 1* by E.C. Segar, designed by Jacob Covey (Fantagraphics)

## Best Webcomic

- *Batman: Wayne Family Adventures*, by CRC Payne and StarBite (DC/WEBTOON)
- *Isle of Elsi*, by Alec Longstreth, www.isleofelsi.com
- *Lore Olympus*, by Rachel Smythe (WEBTOON)
- *Navillera: Like a Butterfly*, by Hun and Jimmy, translation by Kristianna Lee (Tapas Media/Kakao Entertainment)
- *Unmasked*, by Breri and Nuitt (WebToon Factory/Europe Comics)

## Best Digital Comic

- *Days of Sand*, by Aimée de Jongh, translation by Christopher Bradley (Europe Comics)
- *Everyone Is Tulip*, by Dave Baker and Nicole Goux, everyoneistulip.com
- *It's Jeff*, by Kelly Thompson and Gurihiru (Marvel)
- *Love After World Domination 1-3*, by Hiroshi Noda and Takahiro Wakamatsu, translation by Steven LeCroy (Kodansha)
- *Snow Angels*, by Jeff Lemire and Jock (Comixology Originals)

## Hall of Fame

### Inductees chosen by judges:

- Max Gaines
- Mark Gruenwald
- Marie Duval
- Rose O'Neill
- Alex Niño
- P. Craig Russell

### Nominees:

- Howard Chaykin
- Gerry Conway
- Kevin Eastman
- Steve Englehart
- Moto Hagio
- Larry Hama
- Jeffrey Catherine Jones
- David Mazzucchelli
- Jean-Claude Mézières
- Grant Morrison
- Gaspar Saladino
- Jim Shooter
- Garry Trudeau
- Ron Turner
- George Tuska
- Mark Waid
- Cat Yronwode



# Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards Winners 2020-2021

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.

## 2020

### Best Short Story

"Hot Comb," by Ebony Flowers, in *Hot Comb* (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Single Issue/One-Shot

*Our Favorite Thing Is My Favorite Thing Is Monsters*, by Emil Ferris (Fantagraphics)

### Best Continuing Series

*Bitter Root*, by David Walker, Chuck Brown, and Sanford Greene (Image)

### Best Limited Series

*Little Bird* by Darcy Van Poelgeest and Ian Bertram (Image)

### Best New Series

*Invisible Kingdom*, by G. Willow Wilson and Christian Ward (Berger Books/Dark Horse)

### Best Publication for Early Readers

*Comics: Easy as ABC*, by Ivan Brunetti (TOON)

### Best Publication for Kids

*Guts*, by Raina Telgemeier (Scholastic Graphix)

### Best Publication for Teens

*Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me*, by Mariko Tamaki and Rosemary Valero-O'Connell (First Second/Macmillan)

### Best Humor Publication

*The Way of the Househusband*, vol. 1, by Kousuke Oono, translation by Sheldon Drzka (VIZ Media)

### Best Anthology

*Drawing Power: Women's Stories of Sexual Violence, Harassment, and Survival*, edited by Diane Noomin (Abrams)

### Best Reality-Based Work

*They Called Us Enemy*, by George Takei, Justin Eisinger, Steven Scott, and Harmony Becker (Top Shelf)

### Best Graphic Album—New

*Are You Listening?* by Tillie Walden (First Second/Macmillan)

### Best Graphic Album—Reprint

*LaGuardia*, by Nnedi Okorafor and Tana Ford (Berger Books/Dark Horse)

### Best Adaptation from Another Medium

*Snow, Glass, Apples*, by Neil Gaiman and Colleen Doran (Dark Horse Books)

### Best U.S. Edition of International Material

*The House*, by Paco Roca, translation by Andrea Rosenberg (Fantagraphics)

### Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Asia (TIE)

*Cats of the Louvre*, by Taiyo Matsumoto, translation by Michael Arias (VIZ Media) AND *Witch Hat Atelier*, by Kamome Shirahama, translation by Stephen Kohler (Kodansha)

### Best Archival Collection/Project—Strips

*Krazy Kat: The Complete Color Sundays*, by George Herriman, edited by Alexander Braun (TASCHEN)

### Best Archival Collection/Project—Comic Books

*Stan Sakai's Usagi Yojimbo: The Complete Grasscutter Artist Select*, by Stan Sakai, edited by Scott Dunbier (IDW)

### Best Writer

Mariko Tamaki, *Harley Quinn: Breaking Glass* (DC); Laura Dean *Keeps Breaking Up with Me* (First Second/Macmillan); Archie (Archie)

### Best Writer/Artist

Raina Telgemeier, *Guts* (Scholastic Graphix)

### Best Penciller/Inker

Rosemary Valero-O'Connell, *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me* (First Second/Macmillan)

### Best Painter/Digital Artist

Christian Ward, *Invisible Kingdom* (Berger Books/Dark Horse)

### Best Cover Artist

Emma Rios, *Pretty Deadly* (Image)

### Best Coloring

Dave Stewart, *Black Hammer*, *B.P.R.D.: The Devil You Know*, *Hellboy and the BPRD* (Dark Horse); *Gideon Falls* (Image); *Silver Surfer Black*, *Spider-Man* (Marvel)

### Best Lettering

Stan Sakai, *Usagi Yojimbo* (IDW)

### Best Comics-Related Periodical/Journalism

*Women Write About Comics*, edited by Nola Pfau and Wendy Browne, [WomenWriteAboutComics.com](http://WomenWriteAboutComics.com)

### Best Comics-Related Book:

*Making Comics*, by Lynda Barry (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Academic/Scholarly Work

*EC Comics: Race, Shock, and Social Protest*, by Qiana Whitted (Rutgers University Press)

### Best Publication Design

*Making Comics*, designed by Lynda Barry (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Digital Comic

*Afterlift*, by Chip Zdarsky and Jason Loo (comiXology Originals)

### Best Webcomic

Fried Rice Comic, by Erica Eng, <https://friedricecomic.tumblr.com>

### Hall of Fame

**Judges' choices:** Nell Brinkley, E. Simms Campbell

**Voters' choices:**

Alison Bechdel, Howard Cruse, Stan Sakai, Louise Simonson, Don and Maggie Thompson, Bill Watterson

### Bob Clampett Humanitarian Award

Hero Initiative; Creators4Comics; Comic Book United Fund

### Bill Finger Award for Excellence in Comic Book Writing

Virginia Hubbell Bloch, Nicola Cuti, Leo Dorfman, Gaylord DuBois, Joe Gill, France Edward Herron

## 2021

### Best Short Story

"When the Menopausal Carnival Comes to Town," by Mimi Pond, in *Menopause: A Comic Treatment* (Graphic Medicine/Pennsylvania State University Press)

### Best Single Issue

*Sports Is Hell*, by Ben Passmore (Koyama Press)

### Best Continuing Series

*Usagi Yojimbo*, by Stan Sakai (IDW)

### Best Limited Series

*Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen*, by Matt Fraction and Steve Lieber (DC)

### Best New Series

*Black Widow*, by Kelly Thompson and Elena Casagrande (Marvel)

### Best Publication for Early Readers

*Our Little Kitchen*, by Jillian Tamaki (Abrams Books for Young Readers)

### Best Publication for Kids

*Superman Smashes the Klan*, by Gene Luen Yang and Gurihiru (DC)

### Best Publication for Teens

*Dragon Hoops*, by Gene Luen Yang (First Second/Macmillan)

### Best Humor Publication

*Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen*, by Matt Fraction and Steve Lieber (DC)

### Best Anthology

*Menopause: A Comic Treatment*, edited by MK Czerwiec (Graphic Medicine/Pennsylvania State University Press)

### Best Reality-Based Work

*Kent State: Four Dead in Ohio*, by Derf Backderf (Abrams)

### Best Graphic Memoir

*The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Cartoonist*, by Adrian Tomine (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Graphic Album—New

*Pulp*, by Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips (Image)

### Best Graphic Album—Reprint

*Seeds and Stems*, by Simon Hanselmann (Fantagraphics)

### Best Adaptation from Another Medium

*Superman Smashes the Klan*, adapted by Gene Luen Yang and Gurihiru (DC)

### Best U.S. Edition of International Material

*Goblin Girl*, by Moa Romanova, translation by Melissa Bowers (Fantagraphics)

### Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Asia

*Remina*, by Junji Ito, translation by Jocelyne Allen (VIZ Media)

### Best Archival Collection/Project—Strips

*The Flapper Queens: Women Cartoonists of the Jazz Age*, edited by Trina Robbins (Fantagraphics)

### Best Archival Collection/Project—Comic Books

*The Complete Hate*, by Peter Bagge, edited by Eric Reynolds (Fantagraphics)

### Best Writer

James Tynion IV, *Something Is Killing the Children*, Wynd (BOOM! Studios); Batman (DC); *The Department of Truth* (Image); *Razorblades* (Tiny Onion)

### Best Writer/Artist

Junji Ito, *Remina*, *Venus in the Blind Spot* (VIZ Media)

### Best Penciller/Inker

Michael Allred, *Bowie: Stardust*, *Rayguns & Moonage Daydreams* (Insight Editions)

### Best Painter/Multimedia Artist

Anand RK/John Pearson, *Blue in Green* (Image)

### Best Cover Artist

Peach Momoko, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer #19*, *Mighty Morphin #2*, *Something Is Killing the Children #12*, *Power Rangers #1* (BOOM! Studios); *DIENamite*, *Vampirella* (Dynamite); *The Crow: Lethe* (IDW); Marvel Variants (Marvel)

### Best Coloring

Laura Allred, *X-Ray Robot* (Dark Horse); *Bowie: Stardust*, *Rayguns & Moonage Daydreams* (Insight Editions)

### Best Lettering

Stan Sakai, *Usagi Yojimbo* (IDW)

### Best Comics-Related Journalism/Periodical

*Women Write About Comics*, edited by Nola Pfau and Wendy Browne, [WomenWriteAboutComics.com](http://WomenWriteAboutComics.com)

### Best Comics-Related Book

*Invisible Men: The Trailblazing Black Artists of Comic Books*, by Ken Quattro (Yoe Books/IDW)

### Best Academic/Scholarly Work

*The Content of Our Caricature: African American Comic Art and Political Belonging*, by Rebecca Wanzo (New York University Press)

### Best Publication Design

*The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Cartoonist*, designed by Adrian Tomine and Tracy Huron (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Digital Comic

*Friday*, by Ed Brubaker and Marcos Martin (Panel Syndicate)

### Best Webcomic

*Crisis Zone*, by Simon Hanselmann

### Hall of Fame

**Pioneers:** Thomas Nast, Rodolphe Töpffer

**Judges' Choices:** Alberto Breccia, Stan Goldberg, Françoise Mouly, Lily Renée Phillips

**Voters' Choices:** Ruth Atkinson, Dave Cockrum, Neil Gaiman, Scott McCloud

### Bob Clampett Humanitarian Award

Mike and Christine Mignola

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

Audrey "Toni" Blum  
Vic Lockman  
Robert Morales  
Paul S. Newman  
Robert "Bob" White

### Will Eisner Spirit of Comics Retailer Award

The Laughing Ogre, Columbus, Ohio (Chris Lloyd, owner)



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# IN MEMORIAM

REMEMBERING THOSE WE LOST

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

Comics has 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 Hurlcheck, 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 Lewis* 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 *Deadman*, met his *Green Arrow* modernization and his take on Batman in *The Brave and The Bold*, encountered 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 people were treated very poorly in the field in those years, and most of the leaders in the community were afraid to champion the cause because of the likely consequences. The disparity of power between the owners of the comics companies and the creators was an immeasurable gap, and at its base waited carnivores ready to devour agitators. But a modern Don Quixote had no fear.

Neal wasn't a perfect crusader. As my roles in the industry evolved, we'd spend decades arguing about principles and practices. He was idealistic, occasionally ill-informed or illogical, and often so impractical that he wasn't able to forge the consensus that might have enabled him to accomplish more. Someone else might have been able to build the guild that the comics creators really needed in those years (and would still be benefiting from), but no one else had a fraction of Neal's courage or commitment to charge against the stone ceiling holding his fellows down.

Of the many fights won or ignored, the one that was most visible was being part of the team (with Jerry Robinson and Ed Preiss) that labored to restore

Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's credit to *Superman*, and economic dignity to their lives. Robinson was probably the more suave negotiator, Ed the wise lawyer—but Neal roared the loudest. And they won.

Principles mattered. Our first argument was the dressing down he gave me for using his Superman sketch (bought from him for \$6 at my first comic con) as the cover of my fanzine: "Didn't you know the difference between buying a piece of art and buying rights?" Actually, at age 14, I didn't. But I learned.

Over the years, we'd wrestle over contracts and sometimes fail to reach agreement because it didn't matter that what was being offered to him was financially better, but didn't conform to the structure he wanted to make a precedent.

But I'm proud that when I presented him a bonus check for our use of Ra's Al Ghul in *Batman Begins* he felt it was fair—possibly the first such payment he'd ever been willing to characterize that way, and even put the moment up on his website in celebration.

Neal was a born teacher who needed no classroom. Bring a portfolio to his desk at Continuity Associates, and you'd leave humbled, with art lessons and advice that might last a lifetime. And after your second or third return, improved but assaulted anew each time, he might send you up to DC or Marvel or Warren or Gold Key, opening the door with a phone call ahead that had the power of the most



Neal Adams at the 1987 Comic-Con. Photo: Jackie Estrada

talented endorsing the next up-and-comer. 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.

Like all of us, he was imperfect and inconsistent. When he briefly formed a comics publishing company, the results were less than epic, and the dealings with talent didn't always live up to the principles he'd campaigned for publishers to adopt. But we got *Bucky O'Hare* 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 was most convincing. Beaming with a smile as he presided over his convention tables, confident in his authority as a grand master of the field. His devoted fans, old friends, and aspiring artists all queueing up to pay their respects.

He was a family man who ran his studio as a very extended family: a circus managed by his daughter Kris, filled with his wife, ex-wife, children-turned-artists, and the many, many lost boys who'd found it their Neverland, a place where dreams really did come true and you never had to grow old. We didn't think he would—does the enfant terrible ever mature?

He'd been ill for several months, but I'm still shocked at his passing. How did the Angel of Death ever win that inevitable argument, and why did it have to be so soon?

Paul Levitz is a comics fan (*The Comic Reader*), editor (*Batman*), writer (*Legion of Super-Heroes*), executive (30 years at DC, ending as president and publisher), and historian (*75 Years of DC Comics: The Art of Modern Myth-Making*, Taschen, 2010). He and Neal Adams were both guests at the 2019 San Diego Comic-Con.

## GEORGE PÉREZ (1954–2022) by Marv Wolfman

**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 the George who not only drew beautiful pictures—and yes, his drawings were beautiful and magnificent and powerful and sensitive, and heartfelt, somehow all at the same time—but as an artist in comics he understood 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 pretty much 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-plotter and writer, George as co-plotter and artist. The book literally had hundreds of characters, and George not only drew every one different, but they were all unique 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 still able to make both Supermans different yet both definitely Superman; 40-plus years later I still don't know how he did that.

George was a great storyteller. He could plus a scene by adding just the right human 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 alike than different. That was George taking a good scene and making it so much stronger.

One of the amazing things about George is that he was a self-taught artist. He decided he was going to draw comics and he taught himself how. As Marvel editor-in-chief I was given the opportunity to watch him learn in real time, and it was amazing. Over the period of just a year or so he grew from promising newbie to one of the very best artists in the business. He was absolutely determined that he was going to make it as a comic book artist, and wow, did he ever.

But the thing about George was that even before his drawing ability matured, he was able to visually tell a story better than almost anyone. Looking at his early art, crude as it might have been, you saw his spot-on storytelling ability and you just knew he was going to keep getting better.

But the second George Pérez is much more important to me. Much more

important than all our work together. I want to talk about The George Pérez who was my friend.

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 know, a "Hi, friend. How are you?" kind of friend. But someone who invited you 100% into his life and home.

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 professional work but you became a family member. He was one of those people who truly cared about you no matter 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 he

became such an important part of their lives, and how he saved them 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 Go! costume would come up to him at a con, and George would not only sign their books, he'd hop out of his chair and get someone to take photos of them and entertain the kid as they did. I think kids especially liked George because he was a big kid himself. They were essentially the same.

Just like that kid in the park with Cyborg.

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.

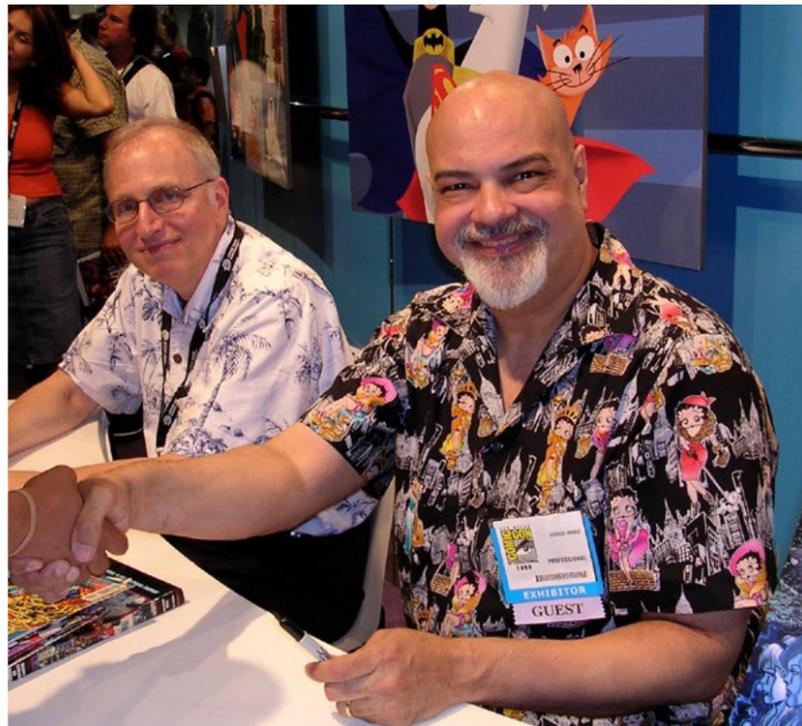
Now he's gone. And far too young.

Love to you, Carol.

Love to you, George.

We will miss you forever.

**Marv Wolfman** is an award-winning American comic book writer best known for his long run on *The Tomb of Dracula*, for creating *Blade* for Marvel Comics, and for *The New Teen Titans* at DC Comics.



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

## BRIAN AUGUSTYN (1954–2022) by Mark Waid

**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 more 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 Tru Studios' *Trollords*, then went on to edit *Speed Racer* for NOW Comics. In 1987, at age 32, he joined the editorial staff at DC Comics alongside a freshman class of ambitious twentysomethings and immediately established himself as the wise elder statesperson of the group—and thank God for that. 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 molding. 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 Parobeck, Mike Wieringo, Oscar Jimenez, Darick 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-writers—we used one of our 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, I never scripted one issue without a long, energetic conversation where the two of us tried to top one another rapid-fire with outlandish ideas, meaning Brian's creative DNA was in every story. He used to call it "riding the lightning." The Speed Force, Max Mercury, "The Return of Barry Allen," Impulse—and, bluntly, anything I may have accomplished professionally over the last three decades—*none* of that exists without Brian Augustyn.

In later years, Brian established a successful solo career as a writer for Marvel, Event, Valiant, Dark Horse, Wildstorm, Chaos, Red Giant, and many other publishers. Still, whenever I was lucky enough to be able to team up with him on some new project somewhere, he used to joke that if anyone accused him of riding my coattails, he'd remind them that he made the coat. He was absolutely right.

Beyond that—beyond all that—Brian was loved and admired by so many, and for good reason. There were certainly people he didn't care for, but he made no enemies as far as I know; I can't remember anyone ever saying anything about him that wasn't complimentary. He was kind, he was thoughtful and terrifyingly smart, he was charming and funny and witty, with a laugh that would fill a room. He was a loyal friend, a wise counsel, and he wholeheartedly embodied the character trait that I most admire in people: the inability to simply sit back and watch whenever something unfair was unfolding in front of him.

Brian passed away of a stroke on February 2, leaving behind a loving family, thousands of fans, his co-author and closest friend, and a deeply felt legacy both in fiction and in the real world. In my dreams, though, he's still out there somewhere, ready for another phone call—happy, at peace, and riding the lightning.

**Mark Waid**, best known for *Kingdom Come*, his collaboration with Alex Ross, has enjoyed a four-decade career as a writer, editor, and publisher in comics.

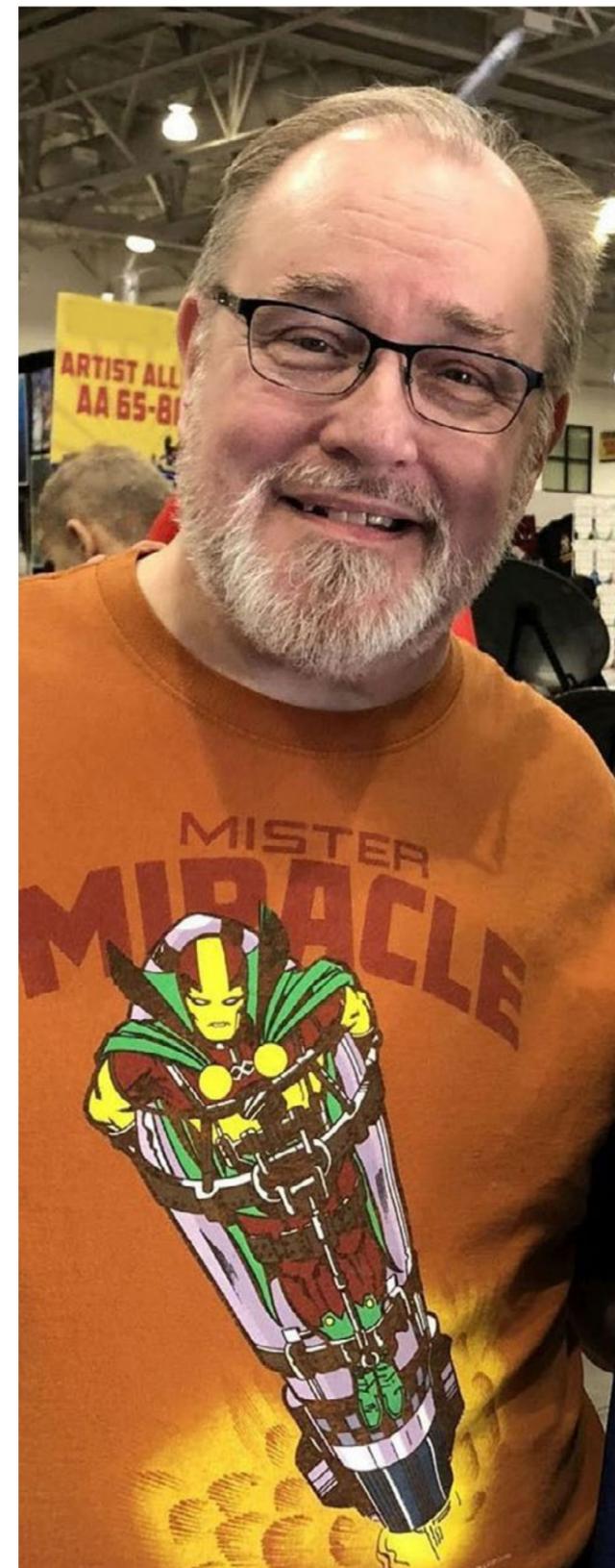


Photo: Mark Waid

## ANNE D. BERNSTEIN (1961–2022) by Chris Duffy

**Anne Bernstein**, an influential and talented cartoonist, illustrator, comics editor, and magazine and animation writer, passed away in February at age 60 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 *Drawn & Quarterly* magazine. She drew the cover to the first issue of that seminal anthology as well as contributing comics to many of its early issues. Later she created and edited *Nickelodeon Magazine's* comics section (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 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 Chucklehead. In the early 1990s she illustrated for the *New York Times*, was a contributing editor for *National Lampoon*, and wrote for several MTV shows. Throughout this period and beyond, she was very much a part of the New York City comics scene, a pre-internet time when only a few scattered events per year brought cartoonists together. Anne is remembered particularly by this writer for organizing a party for New York's comics scene in the Village—a characteristic act for someone who loved putting people together. (At the time, she said the party was a ploy to find a boyfriend. I don't know if she was kidding!)

*Nickelodeon Magazine* editor-in-chief Laura Galen hired Anne as one of the first staffers in 1992, and in addition to writing and editing for the magazine, Anne developed the comics section. Kaz, Richard Sala, Sam Henderson, Jason Lutes, Heather McAdams, and Kim Deitch were just a few regular contributors during this time—and that list exemplifies the freewheeling, idiosyncratic tone of that section, called "The Comic Book," which came with a stunning "cover" every issue. (Anne's idea.) Anne pushed for first-rights-only

contracts for all cartoonists at Nick Mag, meaning they could retain copyright and would be motivated to do their best work.

After four years, she left the magazine to work at MTV Animation, a New York City-based studio, where Anne scripted many shows. These included *Daria*, which she became much associated with after the fact, though she would take pains to explain that she hadn't created the character. During this time, she also wrote and helped develop MTV's *Downtown* and worked with Peter Bagge to pitch his *Hate* comic as an animated series. After MTV closed the animation studio in 2001, Anne continued writing for animation, including for many preschool shows, a new audience for her.

At a memorial and in social media remembrances, her friends and colleagues came back many times to the same themes: Anne always brought her 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 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 someone joyful 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'd all have fun reading their comics.

**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*.



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

## MELONEY CRAWFORD (1955–2021) By Jim Chadwick

**Meloney Crawford came of age** as a comics 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 New York-based Harris Publications, who had acquired the rights to the old Warren Publishing line, best remembered for *Vampirella*. There she served as associate publisher and editorial director and led the expansion of the line beyond just the Warren titles. In 1996 she moved to Portland, Oregon, where she joined Dark Horse Comics as their Director of Editorial Administration. After leaving Dark Horse, she worked on a freelance basis for a number of years for Inkworks trading cards, selecting images and writing copy for several licensed properties, including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Lost*, and *Supernatural*.

Starting in the late 1990s, Meloney returned to world of the law, becoming an attorney counselor for the Oregon Bar Association, conducting crisis counseling, intervention, assessment, and referral for lawyers experiencing alcohol and chemical dependence and other addictions. In this role, she conducted frequent presentations and wrote many articles. Her professionalism, dedication, and empathy made a positive change in the lives of many.

Meloney began attending San Diego Comic-Con in 1987 and continued to attend every year through the beginning of the 2010s. She was an Eisner Award Judge in 2004. She passed away on February 7, 2021, after battling a long illness.

**Jim Chadwick**, currently a Group Editor with DC Comics, was Meloney Crawford's first husband. They remained close friends after their marriage.



Meloney at the 1998 San Diego Comic-Con. (Photo: Jackie Estrada)

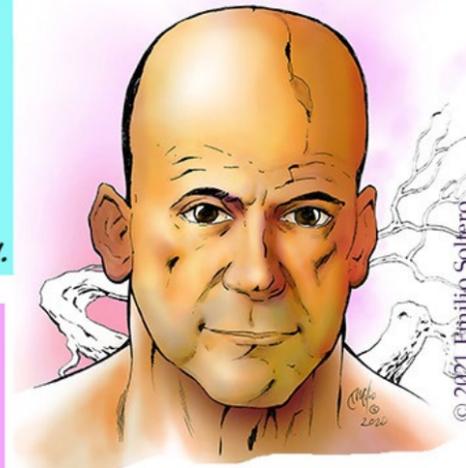
## RICHARD CORBEN (1940–2020)



RICHARD CORBEN'S WORK PRESENTS A DICHOTOMY, FROM UNDERGROUND TO MAINSTREAM; FROM BLACK AND WHITE TO COLOR; FROM THE VIOLENT TO THE SUBLIME; AND FROM DEN TO BATMAN.

IN 2012, TOGETHER WITH MIKE MIGNOLA, CORBEN WON AN EISNER AWARD FOR *HELLBOY: THE CROOKED MAN*.

IN 2018, CORBEN WON THE GRAND PRIX AT ANGOULÊME.



RICHARD CORBEN  
1940 - 2020

CORBEN WAS INDUCTED INTO THE WILL EISNER HALL OF FAME IN 2012.

## 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 remembrances must be told in three distinct but linked parts.

### Part One

Sometime in the early 1970s I visited the Eisner home in White Plains, NY for the first time, as a dinner 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 response I've never forgotten.

"I married the *man*," she said, "Not the *cartoonist*."

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 comics section inserted into Sunday newspapers and not itself controversial. 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 US Army. 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, fandom was rapidly expanding, and Will was getting more and more attention as a progenitor of what was increasingly being viewed as an emerging literary artform. At the time of this particular visit, Will had nearly completed his full-color science fiction thriller *Signal from Space* (later reprinted in black & white as *Life on Another Planet*). In the studio adjacent

to their home, I viewed the originals 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 "Eisenshrpritz."

"Oh, *that page*," he chuckled. "It's not all rainwater. I had to revise it a bit. My first version had Rocco [a *mafioso* in sunglasses] pissing in the next-to-last panel to merge with the flow of rain. But Ann came by, looked over my shoulder, and noticed that detail. She said, 'Will, that's not you! ... so I changed it. Now the pissing implication is much more subtle.'"

I said, "Will, I wish you *had* retained the more overt pissing version. But I'm also confused—I thought Ann didn't even *look* at your work, and now she's *censoring* it?!"

"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 at their Tamarac, 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* magazine. It was a story about a lifelong New Yorker, Henry Klop, 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 new woman. I had seen an earlier rough of the story but the finished one was expanded, with new front matter.

During dinner I said, "Will, I really love the final version of 'Sunset.' I especially

like the new pages at the beginning where Klop has flashbacks 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. It made me care more about what happens to the lead character."

Will and Ann glanced at each other. Then after a moment Ann announced with some clear pride, "That part was *my idea*!"

A bit startled, I said, "Ann! Whoa ... When I first got to know you, you had never read any of Will's comics and you had no interest in them. And now you're *collaborating* with him!?" She smiled, acknowledging the slow transformation, 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, "I think now we 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 his brow wrinkle till he quickly realized I was only kidding.

After Will died in early 2005, Ann sold the home they had designed and built from scratch near Fort Lauderdale and moved to a large retirement com-



Will and Ann Eisner at Comic-Con, 2004.

munity 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 "candy striper" volunteers in New York hospitals. Alone in Parkland Ann organized a book club within her social circle and edited and contributed to a newsletter. She even wrote a book. I visited her once a year or so. I was always amused when she chauffeured me around to restaurants or flea markets. A 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 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 remained involved and active till the end. I received 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 plugged-in. 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 for all practical purposes blind and indicated that her personal caretaker Serena had—for a quite long time—been reading all incoming emails aloud and Ann would then dictate 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 is 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 leukemia and almost simultaneously their 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 engineered their move to Florida and took personal charge of the sale of Will's original art. Will always acknowledged that Ann was his anchor and his primary intellectual stimulant. That she eventually took interest in his graphic novels and then even provided editorial input was a delicious bonus neither ever expected. They were arguably the First Couple of Comics and I adored them both.

**Denis Kitchen** published Will Eisner's *Spirit* and most of his 20 or so graphic novels, represents Ann's estate for original art, and co-represents the intellectual property.

## BOB FUJITANI (1921–2020) by Marc Svensson

**Bob Fujitani's first and only** visit to Comic-Con came in 2005, when he was honored with an Inkpot award. It took a couple of years to convince Bob to go to Comic-Con. He refused to accept that anyone would be interested in his work. This was despite having worked in comics and newspaper strips since the Golden Age of Comics and being in demand for his entire professional career. Bob had lived in Old Greenwich, Connecticut since he was two and really had no desire to leave his home on the ocean, where he had lived throughout his career. Bob's friends, who loved him, were persistent and, in the end, convinced him of the importance of Comic-Con, and he finally went.

He was amazed at the scale of the show and how many fans he had. What amazed me was that his most ardent fans were 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 worked for just about every comic book publisher except DC throughout his career. Let me provide some of his most memorable highlights that helped shape and change the industry for the better.

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 Nick Cardy). It was here that Harry P. Lucy offered Bob the job of penciling *The Hangman* feature at MLJ. Signing his name simply as "Fuje," Bob excelled during this period. His pencil drawings and bold, masterful brushwork gave his figures fluidity and his backgrounds a moody life of their own. His *Hangman* stories had the energy of the work of contemporaries like Joe Simon and Jack Kirby combined with the expressive folds and detailed facial expressions influenced by Lou Fine.

By 1950, Bob was a freelancer working mostly for Charles Biro and Bob Wood at Lev Gleason, but he also worked for Matt Murphy at Dell/Western Comics and Al Stenzel at *Boys' Life*. At Lev Gleason, he illustrated *Crime Does Not Pay* and occasionally other features like *Crimebuster*, which was featured

in *Boy Comics*. He continued to deliver wonderful artwork, and he painted some great covers for Gleason. Bob was always connected to his hometown and in a few of his *Crime Does Not Pay* covers, he inserted his friends from Old Greenwich. For Matt Murphy, he drew *Prince Valiant* for the *Four Color Comics* title. He was the second artist to draw *Prince Valiant* after its creator Hal Foster.

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 brushed 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 pen inking style he used for *Flash Gordon* now utilized a unique curving hash mark to give his illustrations volume. Bob continued *Flash* until his retirement in 1985, when he started oil painting again, although he was occasionally pulled into ghosting for other strip artists, Bob's artistic energy was devoted to painting his surrounding seascapes and woods in oil.

It is of note that when Fujitani visited Comic-Con in 2005, he sat across from Nick Cardy, the very same person he had shared a desk with at his first job in 1941. Comic-Con brought the two artists together

again after 64 years. This is the magic of Comic-Con, and it still exists today.

Bob Fujitani will be remembered for his ability to meet all his deadlines without sacrificing the integrity of his work, and how he mastered radically different styles while maintaining his own identity as an artist. Bob died peacefully in Cos Cob, Connecticut, on September 6, 2020.

**Marc Svensson's** interest in comic book history started in the fourth grade with Jules Feiffer's *The Great Comic Book Heroes*. He has been preserving Comic-Con history on videotape since 1994.



## DANA GABBARD (1962–2022) by John Lustig

**Who'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 nerd's 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.

In comics—besides Barks stories—Dana loved the Little Lulu comics of John Stanley, as well as many of the other humor series published under the imprints of Dell, Gold Key, and Whitman. Humor was important to Dana. Wit made life bearable, fun, and interesting. (More about that later!)

After Dana and his brother Frank stopped publishing *The Duckburg Times*, Dana went on to write some prominent articles about comics for other publishers, but it was at Wikipedia that he found a creative outlet.

"Something about Wikipedia re-instilled the old fire from the 'zine days," wrote Brent Swanson in a Facebook post. Swanson said that besides authoring an extensively researched entry for John Stanley, Dana wrote Wikipedia pages about subjects such as "a short-lived Cirque Du Soleil wannabe called Barnum's Kalaidescape" and "The Royal Lichtenstein Quarter-Ring Circus."

"Honestly, I don't know how many Wikipedia articles Dana either authored or collaborated on. I'm thumping my head for not asking him," said Swanson. "Wikipedia was a surrogate fanzine for Dana."



John Lustig and Dana Gabbard

Certainly, Dana had other outlets for his passions. Perhaps most notably he was a big advocate for better public transit in Los Angeles. Dana didn't drive, so his dependence on public transit was absolute. And, just as he did with comics, Dana researched everything. According to fellow transit advocate Joe Linton, "Gabbard grew to be the go-to expert on Los Angeles transit, regularly quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*."

Unfortunately, one of Dana's other passions was food. Over the years, Dana's weight ballooned. It became increasingly difficult for him to get out and about. Attending Comic-Con was exhausting. And sometimes impossible.

The last time I saw Dana wasn't at Comic-Con, though. It was in August of 2019 when he managed a train trip to Washington state to visit relatives. (Dana's family was another of his passions!) During his stay, my wife and I had a joyful and often hilarious lunch with Dana on the Seattle waterfront. But before and afterward was an ordeal. Our table was at the end of the pier. Dana had become far more handicapped and weaker than I'd realized. My heart sank as he inched along with his walker—having to rest every two or three feet. But Dana didn't complain.

That didn't surprise me. Dana would never complain about anything. Ever. Unless, of course, he could turn it

into a really great wisecrack. And maybe make you laugh so hard you'd snort milk (or other fluids) out your nose. Then—look out!

If that doesn't tell you enough about Dana, then let me end with this quote from his brother Marc. We should all be so lucky to have this said about us:

"It's clear that there isn't a person you've befriended who doesn't love and admire you, your passion, conviction, kindness, knowledge, love, and the gentleness in your soul. Everyone, all of them . . . and as I read more and more posts and comments from others as the news spreads throughout your world, I continue to see the pattern. Talk about a life well lived."

**John Lustig** is best known as a writer of Disney comics and as the creator of the long-running webcomic *Last Kiss*, which uses old comic art with humorous new dialogue to spoof romance themes.

## OSCAR GONZÁLEZ LOYO (1959–2021) by Jackie Estrada

**Oscar González Loyó**, born in Mexico City, is primarily known for his creation *Karmatrón* y *Los Transformables* and as founder of ¡Ka-Boom! Estudio along with his father (legendary comics artist Oscar González Guerrero) and wife, Susy Romero.

Oscar started his comics career in 1973, when his art appeared in the Mexican comic *Las Aventuras de Capulina*, when he was only 14 years old.

Over the years, he worked on such titles as *Las Aventuras de Cepillín*, *Las Aventuras de Parchís*, *Katy la Oruga*, *El Monje Loco*, *The Flintstones*, *The New Speed Racer Color Book*, *Tiny Toons*, *Looney Tunes*, *The Simpsons Comics*, and *Bart Simpson Comics*.

From 1986 to 1991 he produced the weekly *Karmatrón* comic nonstop for five years, amounting to 298 issues.

From 1996 to 2000 Oscar storyboarded animations for the Latin American version of *Sesame Street*, including the show's opening credits. He also published the webcomic *Joe's World* (until 2014) and was working on the remake of *Karmatrón*.

In 2000, he received an Eisner Award for Best Humor Comic for his work



on *Bart Simpson's Treehouse of Horror*, along with Jill Thompson, Steve Steere Jr., Scott Shaw!, Sergio Aragonés, and Doug TenNapel.

Oscar started attending Comic-Con in the late 1980s, making the connections that led to assignments like doing the covers of the *Astroboy*, *Kimba*, and *Gigantor* American VHS and Laser Disc editions, and later to other work for U.S. publishers. He also contributed artwork to the Souvenir Book.

He, Susy, and their ¡Ka-Boom! contingency were a fixture at Comic-Con throughout the 1990s, and it was always a delight to see them at the show. They would stop by our booth (Exhibit A Press, with my husband, cartoonist Batton

Lash) to say hello, and Oscar would talk about how much he loved comics and Comic-Con. His smile and enthusiasm were contagious. Reposar en paz.

Aside from being the Eisner Awards administrator, **Jackie Estrada** is the publisher of Exhibit A Press, which produced her husband's comics series *Supernatural Law* as well as Jackie's own books of photographs taken at Comic-Con.

## RON GOULART (1933–2020) by William H. Foster III

**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 comics show run by a friend in East Harford, 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 gems 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 jotting down notes. I assumed he was checking an inventory list of comics to be purchased. When Hal got his attention, he looked up from what he was doing. Hal made a brief introduction and left us.

I remember he looked me right into my eyes and asked what my interests were and what kind of comics 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 previously met hadn't pretended to be interest in my topic. Frankly, because I didn't know him or his reputation as

a longtime comics historian or sci-fi author, I didn't think this encounter was going to be any different. I was wrong. He immediately mentioned several research sources that he thought would be helpful, as well as the names of a number of comic book researchers whose work I should look up. I was struck dumb. Who was this guy? I later learned that he had written such important books as *The Adventurous Decade: Comics Strips in the 1930s*, *Comic Book Culture: An Illustrated History*, and *The Great Comic Book Artists*.

He gave me a variety of resources without checking any notes, and seemingly without giving it much thought. He displayed an encyclopedic memory. Most people I had mentioned my interest to at that point didn't know much of what I was talking about and we never got into a deep conversation. Ron was different. The more he spoke, the more my brain was sparking and firing on all cylinders.

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 leave until 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 I felt like Luke Skywalker, and he was just the Obi-Wan I was searching for. Right time, right place.

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. I wanted to be sure he knew how valuable his help had been to get me started.

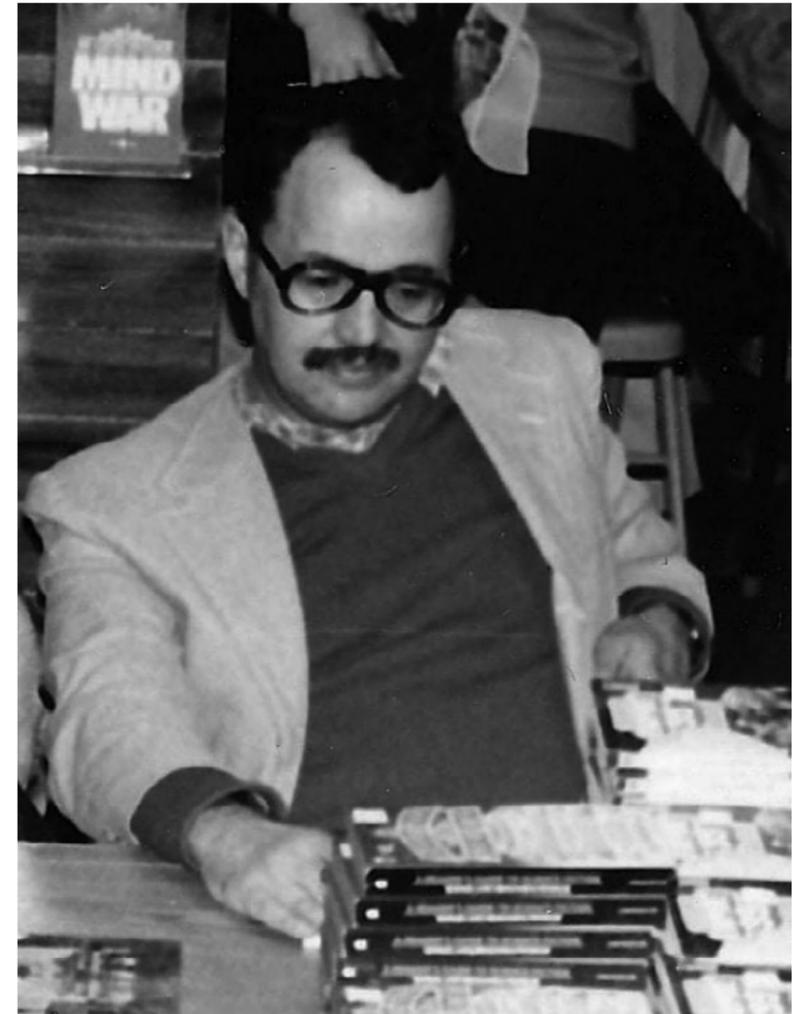
The last time I saw him in person was when we were both consultants for a comic book history exhibit at the Connecticut Historical Society Museum. I finally took the opportunity to thank him. I said, "Ron, if it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't be doing this work." And he went, "Pffft! Don't worry about it, kid. You're doing fine. And I'm always passing this information along." This was just his way of deflecting praise. I can't say enough about how it touched me to hear him say he was simply passing on the baton to me. "Look out for other pilgrims, and bring them along with you." I took that message seriously.

I do this when I meet young people who are on their way to creating new paths in comic book history. "Pass the baton." When I put together the manuscript for my first book on black comics, *Looking for a Face Like Mine*, I made sure to include Ron's name in my Acknowledgements. He was one of the first people I

sent a complimentary signed copy.

By the time of his demise, Ron Goulart had written 180 books in a number of genres and under a number of pen names. That is quite an impressive record. There's no way I will ever come close to that kind of publishing legend, but I have set myself the task of reading as much of his work as I can, and referring others to it as well. I can't think of a more fitting tribute to such a talented writer.

Professor **William H. Foster III** is a comic book historian who specializes in research on the changing image of African Americans and people of color in comics.



## JUSTIN GREEN (1945–2022) by Patrick Rosenkranz

**Justin Green** was one of the founders of the underground comix during the late 1960s and early 1970s. He and his colleagues rejected the formulaic style that had dominated the New York-based comics industry for more than 40 years and embraced more adult themes and unusual subject matters. His solo work included *Sacred and Profane* and *Show + Tell*, as well as contributions of anthology titles *Arcade*, *Bijou Funnies*, *Insect Fear*, *Laugh in the Dark*, *Tales of Sex and Death*, *San Francisco Comic Book*, *Snarf*, *Two Fools*, and *Young Lust*. But the book he was best known for creating is *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*, which is widely recognized as one of the most iconic creations of comics history. Green single-handedly invented the highly personal, confessional, autobiographical comic book and influenced subsequent generations of cartoonists to tell their own stories in comics form. He received fan letters about *Binky* from Kurt Vonnegut and Federico Fellini.

After underground comix peaked in the mid-1970s, Green became a commercial sign painter, and continued this career for the rest of his life. He chronicled some of his experiences in “Sign Game,” a regular feature for *Signs of the Times* magazine, offering technical tips and war stories. Green also did a strip called “Musical Legends of America” for *Pulse*, the magazine of the Tower Records/Video chain. Both strips were later collected and published in book form by Last Gasp: *Musical Legends* in 2004, and *Sign Game* in 2015.

Justin was born in Boston on July 27, 1945, and raised in Chicago. He attended art classes at the Rhode Island School of Design and the Art Institute of Chicago and was a teaching assistant at Syracuse University before dropping



(Photo: John Kinhart)

out to devote full time to cartooning. His earliest published work appeared in the underground tabloids *Yellow Dog* and *Gothic Blimp Works*, and in the *Providence Extra*. In 1970 he moved to San Francisco, the Mecca of underground comix, where “rents were still cheap, and a lid of decent weed went for \$25, the going page rate,” he remembered. “It was possible to live on seven 10-hour days a week. In exchange for the slave labor, we who comprised the United Cartoon Workers of America got total artistic freedom to unleash our graven fantasies on the counterculture.”

Filmmaker John Kephart has been at work on a documentary about Justin Green and Carol Tyler for several years, called *Married to Comics*, which is a biography of their relationship. He hopes to release it in 2023.

Tyler announced Justin’s death from color cancer on Facebook on April 23, 2022: “Our marriage was wonderfully nutty,” she said. They lived in a duplex in Cincinnati, she upstairs and he downstairs, “for my sanity,” she said. “Before the cancer, we had the most fun out at our farm in Kentucky during the summer. We had plans to turn the ‘Ink Farm’ into a comics workshop and retreat place. But then cancer and corona—it was beyond disappointing.

He was really looking forward to teaching comics out there. That dream was one of the things keeping him going.”

Green’s family is planning a memorial exhibit and celebration in early October 2022 at the (DSGN)CLLCTV gallery in Cincinnati.

**Patrick Rosenkranz** is the author of *Rebel Visions: The Underground Comix Revolution 1963–1975*.

## JESSE HAMM (1975–2021) by Steve Lieber

**At Helioscope, the Portland, Oregon, studio** I shared with Jesse Hamm, we used to say that if you wanted to know where Jesse was headed, just look for the Jesse-shaped hole in the nearest wall. That’s something we all admired about Jesse: his single-mindedness, his ability to focus. To make a choice and follow through. It could be frustrating, too, for those of us around him who loved him. He set his priorities, and if something wasn’t important to him, it was like it didn’t even exist.

I sat next to Jesse for a decade. He wasn’t always able to come to the studio in person. His public transit commute took a long time. He’d arrive with amazing stories involving bodily fluids, or a meth & machete guy, or some new and inventive violation of the social contract.

Jesse was like a conversational sniper. If you weren’t engaging him directly, he might stay silent for hours, waiting for the exact moment to say something absolutely devastating. His art was like that too. Maximum impact created by minimum lines. Not minimum effort. No, Jesse

worked like a fiend to achieve the simplicity, the economy that characterized his work. Jesse quoted the illustrator Robert Fawcett once to the mentees at our studio, something like: “Charm in art comes from achieving adequate ends by seemingly inadequate means.”

To pull off that trick, you need to know *everything* about your subject. Simplicity isn’t sterility. Jesse had a lot to say, and he had the hard-won ability to distill it all down to a few words in a sentence, or to a few marks on the paper.

I used to write a column for Comic-Con’s Toucan blog, discussing the art



and craft of making comics. When I was unable to continue, I had only one recommendation to take over my spot. Jesse was one of the best writers we have on the topic. I remember reading one of the instructional essays he

wrote, in which he was comparing and contrasting two artists’ approaches to similar subject matter. Both artists had huge bodies of work, and Jesse had managed to find several instances where they’d drawn similar subjects from similar angles. He would have had to sift through *thousands* of pages to find those matching panels, and I knew his deadlines didn’t allow for all that time-consuming research. I asked him how he did it. How did he find those perfect examples? He seemed surprised that anyone would ask. He just tapped his temple and said, “It’s all up here.”

We miss him terribly, everyone who knew and loved him. There’s a Jesse-shaped hole in all of our lives now. He was so knowledgeable, and so good at communicating that knowledge. It was wonderful to see him find his path

as an essayist and an educator. I think he enjoyed that role. He was better than anyone I’ve ever met at cracking the code of what an artist does, discerning and explaining what makes their work effective. And he could share that understanding with such warmth, such brevity and clarity. I learned a lot from Jesse, and I can’t ever repay him. Jesse left us, all of us, with so many lessons. And they aren’t gone. They’re all up here.

**Steve Lieber** is the Eisner Award-winning artist of *Superman’s Pal Jimmy Olsen*, *White-out*, and many other comics.

## MIKE HOBSON (1936–2020) by Mort Todd



Mike Hobson at the Marvel booth, San Diego Comic-Con 1992. (Photo: Jackie Estrada)

**Michael Z. Hobson** was one of the kindest, bravest, warmest, most wonderful 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, distribution, and production 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 superheroes figured out (mostly), but they were underselling potential readers by not having a variety of genres for people not into the super-cataclysmic epic battles with guys in their underwear and armor zapping each other. Mike did his best to introduce the market to long-neglected genres like religious comics, sports, and—where I came in—music comics. There were naysayers in the organization that said it 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 licensed 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 preproduction, 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 had 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 up with rock luminaries from Alice Cooper and Mick Jagger to the infamous Suge 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 the fabled Chateau Marmont on Sunset Blvd., where many celebrities stayed—plus Marvel got a discount there! 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 naysayers were right and Marvel Music was a tough sell. Even though we had some 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 merchandised products. When I realized 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 booms 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** he has worked at just about every comic book company contributing to a variety of characters, from Superman and Spider-Man to Barbie and Looney Tunes. Newspaper comic strips Mort has written and drawn include *Speed Racer*, *Rat Fink*, and *Molly the Model*.

## FRANK JACOBS (1931–2021) by Mark Evanier

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 reprints of his work followed, and they'll 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 from founding editor Harvey Kurtzman. How did that come to pass? Frank was bored silly writing copy for a public relations firm, and one day he picked up the latest issue of *MAD*, read it, said to himself "I could write this stuff" ... and then did for a long, long time. He was especially gifted when it came to humorous verse and song parodies. Most of the funny stuff in *MAD* that rhymed came from Frank Jacobs.

He wrote TV parodies and movie parodies. There wasn't much you could make fun of that Frank didn't make fun of. One of his finest achievements, reprinted in almost every book that purported to collect the best of *MAD* over the years, was "East Side Story," a parody of the musical and movie, that replaced the Jets and the Sharks with warring politicians of the world. First seen in *MAD* #78 (April 1963), it had President John F. Kennedy rumbling against the then-Premier of the Soviet Union,



Nikita Khrushchev. And for the songs, Jacobs went head-to-head with the lyricist for the original tunes, Stephen Sondheim—and many felt he'd equaled, if not bested, the lyrics he was spoofing. (Two years earlier, a group of songwriters including Irving Berlin sued over the kind of dead-on parodies that Jacobs and others penned for *MAD*. In 1964, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit ruled in favor of Alfred E. Neuman's favorite magazine.)

Frank hailed from Nebraska, graduated from college there, edited the college humor magazine, and later, when he went into the Army, was an editor and reporter for the military newspaper *Stars 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 funniest acceptance speeches ever. He was real good at Funny.

**Mark Evanier** has written for live-action TV shows, animated TV shows and tons 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 (1925–2021) by Denis Kitchen

**Adele Kurtzman**, Harvey's widow, passed away just two months after her friend Ann 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 five decades of their company and countless conversations. Paying tribute in a limited format requires great condensation.

Adele allowed the spotlight to be focused on her famous husband, but for those who got to know her, she had a remarkably dry and quite wicked sense of humor. Sometime in the 1980s I was dining with her and Harvey at their home in Mt. Vernon, NY. Adele was an amazing cook, so visits were always a culinary delight. Several times over the meal Adele made caustic and witty remarks that made me guffaw. Finally, I turned to Harvey and said, "You know ... she's the funny one!" "Yeah, I know," he said, with a resignation that made clear he'd heard the same observation before. It was supremely ironic that the professional humorist behind *MAD* and other important satire magazines was 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."

My favorite comics-related story of all time—and one with far-flung implications—revolves directly around Adele, although the story is only indirectly about her sense of humor. In the summer of 1945, looking for work after she'd completed high school, a teenaged Adele Hasan responded to a classified ad for a proofreader at Timely Comics, then located in the Empire State Building. She was hired and soon was working in the Timely/Marvel bullpen alongside Al Jaffee, George Klein, Syd Shores, Frank Giacoia, Violet Barkley, and other staff artists. Because of her versatile secretarial and social skills, she quickly became what was then known as the "righthand girl" to Stan Lee, performing a variety of tasks for Marvel's young editor and writer.

Adele admired the strangely funny and often surreal "Hey Look!" sin-

gle-page gags provided by a young, struggling freelancer named Harvey Kurtzman, discharged just a year earlier from the Army. The "Hey Look!" pages were what were known as "fillers": material that could be inserted at the last production moment to fill space if the advertising department fell short a page. In other words, when comic books were considered the lowest form of entertainment by most adults in the 1940s, filler pages would have been the lowest of the low.

Harvey periodically dropped off his fresh pages at the office, but he was just barely a member of the extended staff, and he and Adele had little opportunity to interact. Then her new friend Al Jaffee set Adele up on a blind date with another freelance cartoonist, Wolf Eisenberg (a.k.a. Will Elder). Her date with Wolf took them to a reunion of New York's High School of Music and Art, which Jaffee, Eisenberg, and Kurtzman had all attended. Harvey was at the reunion, smoking a pipe 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 comics 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 1946 they ran full-page house ads headlined, "Now YOU can be the Editor!" Readers, presumed to be "kids," were invited to return a coupon noting their favorite and least favorite features, with the enticement of a "BIG PRIZE ... a crisp new one-dollar bill" to the "50 neatest and most interesting" responses. Stan told



Adele Kurtzman with Ann Eisner at the 2006 Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards ceremony. (Photo: Jackie Estrada)

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 actual totals 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 numbers don't lie, 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 [faux] popularity, Lee assigned more work to the freelancer. Longer feature assignments included "Rusty," a "Blondie" copycat that Harvey hated; a funny 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 unabashedly 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 overtime. It was the "Hey Look!" samples that wowed publisher Bill Gaines not long afterward and gave Kurtzman entrée to EC Comics. Had Adele, Harvey's first "fan" and company insider, not inserted her well-intentioned larceny into the course of comics history (and western culture), we arguably would never have had the revolutionary *MAD* comic books and magazines, Harvey's classic EC war stories, his later publications *Humbug*, *Trump*, and *Help!*—or any of Harvey's other genius creations.

Comics history aside, Adele and Harvey had three daughters, Meredith, Elizabeth, and Nellie, who all became successful in their chosen fields. Their only son, Peter, was severely autistic at a time when autism was barely understood or a matter of popular discourse. In the 1950s they took young Peter to the leading authority at the time, the renowned Freudian psychologist Dr. Bruno Bettelheim. Sitting in his office, Adele was told by the esteemed

figure that her son's autism was the result of "poor mothering" and "emotional frigidity," a crushing indictment. Eventually Bettelheim and his quack diagnoses were discredited, but the early pronouncement from such an authority figure was devastating to Adele for quite some time. For many years Peter continued to live in their home until it became necessary for him to have professional care.

In 1958 Adele, Harvey, and the parents of nine other emotionally disturbed children founded the Association for Mentally Ill Children of Westchester, Inc. because they could find no meaningful help. This organization evolved by 1968 into the Clear View School in Briarcliff Manor, NY, one of the first programs in America for children with autism, mental illness, and emotional disabilities. Adele also worked at Clear View for many years as a fund raiser and event planner. An annual auction at the school was her specialty, featuring original cartoon art donated regularly by the likes of R. Crumb, Will Elder, Al Jaffee, Gilbert Shelton, Terry Gilliam, Mort Walker, Jack Davis, Bill Griffith, Frank 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 impeded even a bit. She loved industry gossip, especially involving certain individuals she didn't like. She unapologetically enjoyed nursing old grudges as much as maintaining close friendships. I'll never forget her as an inveterate 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.

**Denis Kitchen** 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.

## GARRY LEACH (1954–2022) by Scott Dunbier

**Garry Leach died this past March.** The world of comics lost a giant. Those of us who knew him lost something far greater.

He wasn't a "superstar" artist, he didn't draw the X-Men or Batman, but he will forever be known as the original artist of Marvelman (later rechristened as Miracleman, much to Garry's chagrin), the character he and Alan Moore co-created 40-years ago in *Warrior Magazine*.

I met Garry in 1986 while I was living in London and worked at Quality Comics. Upstairs was a comic shop, but I worked in the basement, in the production department of QC's publishing arm. My first memory of Garry was of him coming down one day with a gorgeous cover for the first issue of *The Steel Claw*, a reprint series featuring the brilliant work of Jesus Blasco. On his subsequent visits we bonded over our mutual love of comics and great comic artists. Later that year I moved back to New York, but Garry and I kept in touch. The following year he came over for a visit and stayed with me.

That same year, 1987, I started going to the United Kingdom Comic Art Convention, known as UKCAC. My friend Paul Hudson (the proprietor of Comic Showcase in Covent Garden) and I would set up next to each at the show and did so for nearly a decade, I was a comic book art dealer in those days. On those trips it became a tradition for me to visit Garry and his partner, the wonderful Una Fricker, and I would often stay in their flat in Brockley. Una would make delicious meat pies and the three of us, along with any numbers of friends who were also visiting for the show, would have a fine evening sitting in their living room eating, talking, arguing (about truly important things like who were Jack Kirby's best and worst inkers), and lots of laughter. These remain some of my most treasured memories.

In the late 1980s Garry co-created *A1* with Dave Elliott. For my money it remains one of the finest comics anthologies ever produced, featuring an incredible array of British and U.S. talents. It was a noble endeavor but unfortunately not the financial success it deserved to be. Garry was the editor and art director, as well as contributing a Warpsmith story with his Marvelman collaborator Alan Moore.

In 1995 I moved to San Diego to take a job at WildStorm Productions. My trips to London became less and less frequent, but we kept in touch. I hired Garry to draw the first issue of Warren Ellis' *Global Frequency*, a book with a different artist on each issue, and he, of course, turned in a stunning job.

Garry made two trips to the U.S. around this time. The first was in 2001 when he came over for my bachelor party, and then to attend my wedding to Amanda, where he was a groomsman. The second trip is one of my favorite memories of Garry, and I feel it really sums up his kind and generous heart.

In 2003 Garry had decided to come over to Comic-Con. The idea was for him to travel around a bit and visit friends like Doselle Young and, somewhere in that span, attend the show. His plan was to sell art, do commissions, make some money. Garry stayed with Amanda and me, and we moved our two-year old son into our bedroom and Garry stayed in Alex's room for the week.

Wednesday was preview night and Garry sold almost everything he had brought with him. Then he planned to do some Marvelman commissions the rest of the time—sure moneymakers. But Garry didn't even go to the convention for the next couple of days; instead he hung out for hours on end in his borrowed room. I remember getting miffed that he was wasting his opportunity to make some money, and I told him so. He gave me a familiar smirk then he turned and walked into Alex's room, returning a minute later holding a piece of illustration board and said "Here you go, Scottie." It turns out that over the previous days, rather than do images of Marvelman to sell, Garry had created a beautiful painting of Alex, flying through the sky, wearing

overalls and a cape tied around his neck. On the bottom it is titled "Awesome AI." I was uncharacteristically speechless.

This May I went to Garry's funeral. It was a sad affair but not somber. The service was lovely, as lovely as these things can be, and many people that I had not seen in decades were there. Later we went to a pub near his and Una's flat. There was much laughter and touching memories shared. My son Alex was there with me, "Awesome AI" himself.

One overriding theme among those in attendance was Garry's constant generosity, stories of all those he helped at the start of their careers. Woodrow Phoenix and Rufus Dayglo come to mind, but there were so many others. He freely shared his knowledge. He was a teacher, a friend, a father to his beloved son Adam, partner to his darling Una. He was unpretentious but always up for a good argument. And he didn't have a mean bone in his body. As I write this, I find myself wondering if I'm looking back through rose-colored glasses. I might be, but I honestly can't remember anything negative about him, except that he could be stubborn as hell. But that's something we had in common.

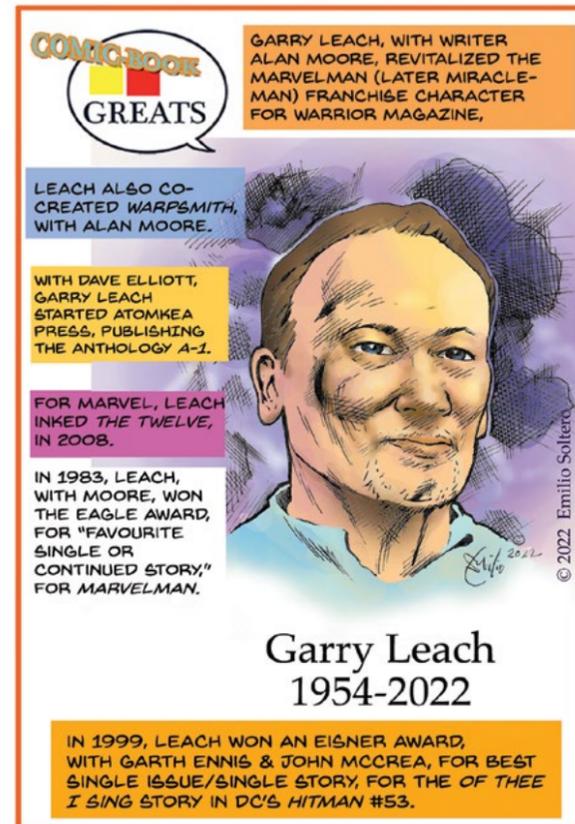
The last time I saw Garry was in 2019. I was invited by Joel Meadows to attend England's Portsmouth Comic Festival. Plans were made and we got together with other old friends (Una, Paul Hudson, Mike Lake, Woodrow Phoenix, Dave Elliott, Peter Hogan, Elaine Hughes) at an Indian restaurant in Covent Garden, just steps away from the old Comic Showcase, Paul's shop where we had spent so many hours.

I'm thankful that I had one last time to see my old friend.

**Scott Dunbier** is the Director of Special Projects at IDW Publishing.



(Photo: Una Fricker)



## JOHN PAUL LEON (1972–2021) by Denys Cowan

**When asked to write a tribute** for John Paul Leon, 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 *Static* (Milestone, 1994–1995), the first 17 issues of *Shadow Cabinet* (Milestone, 1994–1995), the first 12 issues of Marvel's *Earth X* (1999–2000), WildStorm's limited series *The Winter Men* (2005–2006), and the DC limited series *Batman: Creature of the Night* (2017–2019).

What I *can* talk about is some of my experiences meeting and working 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 taking Walt Simonson's class at the time. He was really young and I remember looking at his Superman samples, and they were really impressive. All the things he would eventually be known for were there at the very beginning. The angles, the composition, the storytelling and the high level of drawing skill were all there! It was remarkable to see that much talent at such a young age.

I asked John who his influences were and I mentioned a few names. Have you heard of Alex Toth? No, he shook his head. Mike Mignola? Nope again. Milt Canniff? Noel Sickels? Jorge Zaffino? "Nope" to all of these, he shook his

head almost apologetically. I'm thinking to myself: How can he be this good already and never studied any of these artists?

We were in my office and I think I called in Dwayne McDuffie and Matt Wayne and whoever else was around and we all looked at his art in amazement. When I was alone with John again I wrote down a list of the great artists including Toth etc. and gave him whatever art books I had in the office (Toth's *Bravo for Adventure*; *Modesty Blaise* by the great Jim Holdaway; *Seven Block* by Zaffino). "Go and study these guys," I told him as he looked through the books. "They will show you the right way ... Also, how would you like to draw one of our books? We have a character called Static and we think you would be perfect for it."

We were so fortunate that he took the assignment, and once he started he blazed an artistic trail that will never be matched. His art kept getting better and bet-

ter, and by the time he did *Earth X* for Marvel, he was a modern master of his craft! The thing is, he was also humble, quiet, soft spoken, and always trying to get better.

John has passed on and I'm still trying to process that fact. He was way too young and had so much more to give. It's a heartbreaking loss. However, I think that John Paul Leon is immortal because his talent was like the Sun and his art ... what he left for us will light the way and be an inspiration for all time.

**Denys Cowan**, one of the co-founders of Milestone Media, began drawing comics in 1980. His credits include DC's *The Question*, Marvel's *Deathlok*, and Milestone's *Hardware*.



Denys Cowan and John Paul Leon at Comic-Con, 1993. (Photo: Jackie Estrada)

## JOHN LEWIS (1940–2020) by Andrew Aydin

"Don't worry, son," Congressman Lewis said to me. "We're going to go back to Comic-Con." He had visited Black Lives Matter Plaza near the White House in Washington just a few days before in May of 2020, and we were talking about how much the new street painting looked like the cover of *MARCH: Book Three*.

Our conversation drifted, as it often did, from politics to comics and back again. He saw a generation that he had worked to inspire through comics standing up and fighting back against the systemic racism and class-based oppression that he had devoted his whole life to ending. And he knew that his fight was almost over. "Maybe I'll wear my trench coat again," he said, before going quiet, tired from his months long fight with his own body.

John Lewis reinvented himself many times in his life—from boy preacher to youth activist, from movement leader to campaign aide to Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, from voting rights leader to elected leader, from the conscience of the Congress to the conscience of Comic-Con. Much has been written about his life in the civil rights movement and his life in Congress. But I offer here a remembrance of the man who changed comics and who was changed by comics.

The truth is, he never really read comics as a young man. He recalled *Martin Luther King & the Montgomery Story*, but it was probably the only comic he ever read before I joined his staff. As he would say, there just wasn't the time, and there certainly wasn't the money.

But John Lewis *understood* comics. Yes, it took a little convincing, and I still believe it was his wife, Lillian, who was a librarian, who gave him that push to



Congressman Lewis cosplaying as himself at the 2016 Comic-Con. (Photo: B. Johnson ©2016 SDCC)

say yes and embark on our unlikeliest of journeys. But people forget how much of the movement's success came from their ability to find ingenious ways to tell their story. And in *that way*, John Lewis understood comics.

I'll never forget the morning he first set foot in the San Diego Convention Center for the 2013 Comic-Con, his first. His eyes went wide seeing so many people. He kept saying, "this is a *happening!*" When he saw all the people wearing costumes, he felt a little left out. He wanted to participate, he wanted to be a part of the "happening." So, when we came back in 2015, he brought along his own costume. We spent weeks trying to find the right backpack to complete the look.

He could sit with Presidents and heads of state, but when he went to Comic-Con he saw himself as one person among many, coming together to celebrate the love of reading, the love of people.

He won so many awards in his life. In his Congressional office the walls and shelves were lined floor to ceiling with plaques and trophies conferred upon him for his lifetime of service. But when I would sit with him at his home, his first Eisner award was always the only award on his mantle. Such was his love for comics. Such was his love for how comics embraced him.

There will always be many heroes at Comic-Con. But we've lost one of our greatest. While the nation mourned the loss of a statesman, we mourn the loss of our friend.

**Andrew Aydin** was a longtime Congressional aide and collaborator of Rep. John Lewis as well as co-author of his autobiographical graphic novels, *MARCH* and *RUN*.

## RICHARD LUPOFF (1935–2020) by Maggie Thompson

**Wikipedia's entry opens** describing him as “an American science-fiction and mystery 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.

Folks who were curious in 1960 about the history of American comics had three basic reference works: 1942's *Comics and Their Creators* by Martin Sheridan, 1947's *The Comics* by Coulton Waugh, and 1959's *Comic Art in America* by Stephen Becker. Each of them had (occasionally dismissive) entries about comic books. But Dick and Pat attended the 1960 “Pittcon” World Science Fiction Convention and, in the costume event, came as Fawcett comics' Captain and Mary Marvel. At other points in that convention, they handed out copies of the first issue of their fanzine *Xero*, which contained the first installment of the super-hero comics nostalgia series “All in Color for a Dime.”

Yes, there had been a few earlier amateur publications with a comics focus, but *Xero* provided an early gathering place that promoted comics nostalgia to a wider audience of genre-fiction fans.

*The Great Comic Book Heroes* anthology by Jules Feiffer featured comic

books as a separate artform. But that book didn't come until 1965—by which time, comic book fandom was in full swing. That was thanks in part to the example of the Lupoffs. *Xero* told fans of other genre storytelling—science-fiction and fantasy—that adults could appreciate, pay tribute to, and even research the graphic story and graphic novel formats. And that was before those terms were generated elsewhere by (*All in Color for a Dime* contributor) Richard Kyle.

Let's note that *Xero* itself won the “Best Fanzine” Hugo Award in 1963 and then add that Dick edited Edgar Rice Burroughs material for Canaveral Press and soon began writing his own fiction in the late 1960s. Look him up online and you'll find more, more, more.

Among his many, many skills were those that go into true friendship, and he and Pat were wonderful friends: friends who were part of the bonding that can come from a love of an assortment of entertainments known these days as “popular culture.” Conventions have been part of that world—and the delights of connecting again and sharing the fun in a few focused days have been pop culture mainstays in several fields to which Dick offered insights and entertainment.

We won't get to hang out with Dick at Comic-Con any more. But we are fortunate that he has given us the gifts of his researches, his creativity, and his inspiration: gifts that continue to enrich our lives.

Longtime *Comics Buyer's Guide* editor (1983–2013) **Maggie Thompson** illustrated Don Thompson's initial “All in Color for a Dime” entry in *Xero* #4 (April 1961) and was lucky enough to be inspired by—as well as to meet and hang out with—Dick and Pat Lupoff in the ensuing decades.



Pat and Dick Lupoff at the 1989 Comic-Con.  
(Photo: Jackie Estrada)

## PETRA MAYER (1974–2021) by Maggie Thompson

“**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 repeatedly uplifted marginalized creators and introduced a host of readers to their stories. Mayer made space for unheard voices and developed guides like the *Book Concierge*, that fans of all backgrounds could use to discover new favorites. Her work and joy were gifts to the industry.” This tribute from The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America came in its May 17 announcement that Petra was one of three recipients of its 2022 Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award. The award is given for “distinguished contributions to the science fiction and fantasy community.”

SFWA President Jeffe Kennedy described the three award-winners as “shining examples of how people contribute to the greater genre community by pursuing their own personal passions.” Her statement added, “I mourn the loss of Petra and all she contributed to the SFF 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. Buster Keaton's secret girlfriend. TOS is the One True Trek, don't @ me. She/her.”

National Public Radio informed the world of her loss in November with a notice that began, “Petra Mayer, a beloved books editor on NPR's Culture

desk, died on Saturday. ‘She died suddenly at Holy Cross Hospital in Maryland of what's believed to be a pulmonary embolism,’ said Nancy Barnes, NPR's senior vice president for news, in an email to staff. ‘Petra was NPR through and through,’ Barnes wrote. ‘To say that Petra will be missed simply seems inadequate.’”

Petra started working for NPR in 1994, eventually joining it full-time in 2000, and the news produced a shockwave in the world of popular culture.

Twitter quickly filled with tributes from her fans and co-workers. Glen Weldon wrote, “She was ferociously intelligent, sardonically funny and made your day better by merely existing. She was a passionate voice for genre content that NPR will miss like an ache... 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 Martin 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 house

was robbed last spring, 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.



Petra with her handmade chicken cake for Stephen Thompson's Super Bowl party.

A few years back, she showed up at my Super Bowl party—‘Chicken Bowl,’ which includes a fried-chicken-eating contest—hoisting this masterpiece.” It was a chicken cake, and he noted, “You can tell it's Petra's handiwork from that perfectly sardonic eye.”

She was an enthusiastic cosplayer, skilled in designing both her outfits and performances.

NPR's Mallory Yu tweeted a photo in which Yu 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, more, including Petra in Rose Quartz cosplay.

## IVY RATAFIA MCLEOD (1960–2022) by Kurt Busiek

**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. Ivy just had that kind of effect on people.

What I do remember is Ivy's unquenchable enthusiasm for what she liked, whether it was Little Tony DeFranco and the DeFranco Family (in her younger days), the TV series *Slings & Arrows* (in more recent years), the band Sparks (in between) or a million more. Ivy didn't just like things, she embraced them. And she shared that love with everyone she knew.

We used to call her ever-growing lists of favorites “Ivy's 100 Top Ten,” because they were always bursting at the seams.

Born in New York, Ivy was the daughter of an artist and a salesman, two strong influences in her life. The Ratafias traveled to art shows, dog shows, horse shows, and more, selling her mother's prints, and Ivy got a hands-on education in the power of art and in dealing with the public. I got to see that in action when I worked for the Ratafias in California in the summer of 1980—I learned a ton, but I'll never be anywhere near as good at it as Ivy was.

Even when she was feeling blue, the chance to connect, to share something she loved, was worth seizing, passing a spark of joy along to someone new.

At Syracuse, Ivy and I ran the classic movies program at the University Union Cinema Society—Ivy did all the announcements, I largely sold tickets—and her enthusiasm shone there, too, to the point that decades later, students she never actually met still remember “the girl in the hat” welcoming them all to that Friday night's entertainment.

After a year abroad, during which Ivy brought American enthusiasms to London and found new enthusiasms to turn us Yanks on to (“You *have* to listen to this; it's called *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, you'll love it!”), Ivy wasn't able to return to Syracuse, and all of us who knew her there were emptier for it.

Later, she moved back to the East Coast, working in educational children's theater in Rhode Island, and we got to reconnect. And when she and Scott

In 2020, when folks were attending Comic-Con on Zoom and I recommended Mark Evanier's “Cartoon Voices” panel, she emailed, “I went to one of the voice artist panels last year on your recommendation and I \*LOVED\* it—you know how it is for me at SDCC, 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 now and then at Comic-Con, where they shared a table at the Eisner Awards starting in 2014.

McLeod (McCloud, professionally) began dating, and married in 1988, it was like puzzle pieces clicking into place. They were perfect for each other. Then, and for all the years since.

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 projectionist, starting at the Boston Museum of Science, which led to her to doing film assembly on 70mm movies including *The Hateful Eight* and *Dunkirk*.

She was even part of a southern California curling team (“You have to see it, it's called *Men with Brooms*, you'll love it!”).

If you're reading this, you may have met Ivy at a San Diego con, or another show, where she was at Scott's table, watching the kids, talking to fans about Scott, hustling off to catch a panel on a TV show she loved or featuring friends she loved. So maybe you got to see her in action, too.

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 experience. And you, too, may have found yourself instant friends, without knowing quite 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 she loved together with art, or with other people, she knew they'd love.

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 have been smaller without her.

**Kurt Busiek** is an award-winning writer best known for his run on *Avengers*, the series *Marvels*, and his creator-owned *Astro City*, *Arrowsmith*, and others.



Ivy Ratafia McLeod

## PAT MCGREAL (1953–2021) by Bill Morrison

Pat McGreal was one of the foremost writers of Disney comic books in the world. With his wife and collaborator, 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. And many of their stories have been reprinted in America by Gladstone, Gemstone Publishing, and IDW.

An Eisner Award nominee, Pat was also the author of three critically acclaimed graphic novels from DC/Vertigo: *Chiaroscuro: The Private Lives of Leonardo da Vinci* (with co-writer Dave Rawson), *Veils*, and *I, Paparazzi*. He also entertained mainstream comic fans with scripts for such iconic titles as *Justice League*, *Flash*, *Hawkman*, *Judge Dredd*, *Indiana Jones*, *Tarzan*, *Shazam*, *Martian Manhunter*, *Fighting American*, and *The Simpsons*.

I feel very blessed to have known Pat, in fact triply blessed because our friendship crossed over into three different areas. I met Pat through CAPS, the Comic Art Professional Society, where we were both members and also both had the distinction of being suckered into the job of president. Actually, that's not quite accurate. I was delighted to take on the job, but after a few years I was getting bogged down at work and needed someone else to take the reins. It was then that I suckered Pat into taking the position! He had already served a term as CAPS president years earlier, so he knew how much time and dedication was required to steer that rickety barge of unruly cartoonists. And yet when nobody else raised their hand to take on the office, Pat raised his. That's the sort of guy he was! (He then suckered me into being his *vice 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



Pat McGreal

like getting paid to read funny comics. I really didn't have to do much other than read a pitch, approve it with maybe a minor note (just to justify my cushy job), read the first draft script, request a minor line change (again, so I could feel like I wasn't taking charity from Bongo), approve the final script, and then accept the back pats and accolades for putting out such entertaining comics!

Lastly, I was honored to have spent a short amount of time playing music with Pat. A few years ago, I decided to take drum lessons in order to fill a vacancy in the band at my place of worship. Pat had been a musician for many years, but when I told him how excited I was to be taking drum lessons, he immediately invited me to play with him. I was amazed that he didn't seem to care about my lack of experience. He booked a rehearsal studio in Santa Monica, invited a few of his musician friends, and we jammed together for a few hours one night after work. It was amazingly great fun, so we did it a few times more. When I went to work for *MAD* magazine, it became difficult to get together after work because work for me was now in Burbank. But we often talked about trying to carve out some time to get together and play somehow. Then I moved to Michigan, which made it even harder to get to Santa Monica after work.

Pat McGreal left us on May 31, 2021. I miss socializing with him at CAPS, I miss working with him and watching him craft funny stories for beloved cartoon characters, and I miss banging out impromptu versions of Bowie's "Five Years" and Elvis's "Peace Love and Understanding" in a beat-up beachside rehearsal studio.

And I know the rest of the world is going to miss his wonderful stories.

Through his work with Bongo Comics, *MAD* magazine, Disney, and The Beatles, **Bill Morrison** has had the privilege of working with the best creators and most beloved cartoon characters in the world.

## JOYE HUMMEL MURCHISON KELLY (1924–2021) by Anina Bennett

We lost a Golden Age trailblazer last year: Joye Murchison Kelly, the first woman to write Wonder Woman comics. Under the name Joye Hummel, in the 1940s she penned more than 70 fantastical 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 superhero stories. After her parents divorced, she enrolled in the Katharine Gibbs School to stay near her mother and learn some marketable skills. A gal's got to make a living, after all. That's where Joye crossed paths with William Moulton Marston, the co-creator of Wonder Woman, who taught psychology at the school.

Joye took an essay test in Marston's class that proved to be fateful. At age 19, she not only aced the test, her answers impressed Marston so much that after graduation, he hired her to work on *Wonder Woman* scripts with him.

Joye apparently had just the right blend of high-flying imagination, rampant curiosity, and raw talent to write Golden Age superhero comics. She quickly progressed from typing Marston's scripts to contributing her own ideas and writing her own stories. Joye even reviewed the art and asked for changes to make sure it captured their scripts. (Wonder Woman artist/



Photo: Courtesy of Paul Guinan & Anina Bennett

co-creator Harry G. Peter, by the way, worked with two women art assistants who were also never credited.)

Joye Hummel's first published story, "The Winged Maidens of Venus," ran in issue 12 of *Wonder Woman* in 1945. This was only a few years after Wonder Woman's debut, so Joye's work had a formative influence on the Amazon Princess and her supporting cast of characters, such as Etta Candy, Queen Hippolyte, and Steve Trevor.

When Marston was stricken with polio and cancer, Joye started writing more Wonder Woman stories. While her stories are fanciful good fun—with winged space queens, mental radios, and ectoplasmic disguises—they also dealt with real-world issues and continued Marston's mission of portraying women as a powerful force for good.

After Marston's death in 1947, Joye married widower David Murchison and acquired a young stepdaughter. Faced with a choice between her writing job and caring for her new family, Joye chose family. She later said her decision was a surprise to herself as well as to DC/National Comics editor Sheldon Mayer.

Joye was several months ahead on scripts when she quit, so her Wonder Woman stories were published through at least 1948. Despite her crucial role, all the early WW stories were published under the pseudonym Charles

Moulton, and Joye's work went unheralded for many years.

Meantime, Joye raised kids, then at age 40 went back to work as a secretary. Ever a feminist, she demanded equal pay and training—and she forged a successful second career as a stockbroker. Her first husband died in 2000, and she married Jack Kelly two years later. She rarely talked about writing Wonder Woman.

Luckily, some dogged researchers preserved Joye's contributions. In the early 1970s, comics historian/fan Jerry Bails tracked her down after learning about her from Elizabeth Holloway, Marston's widow. Joye was finally credited for some of her stories when DC Comics published the *Wonder Woman Archive Edition* hardcovers in the early 2000s. Professor Jill Lepore's research brought her to wider public attention, and in 2014 Joye donated her Wonder Woman archives to the Smithsonian Libraries.

In 2018, at age 94, Joye was invited to Comic-Con International as an honored guest. When the convention needed a liaison for her and Jack Kelly, I leapt at the chance. As a writer, a feminist, and a lifelong Wonder Woman fan, I was thrilled to be their guide.

## DAN NAKROSIS (1963–2020) by Paul Castiglia

"It's the greatest gig in the world, being alive you get to eat at Denny's, wear a hat . . . whatever you wanna do."

I'm sure many would interpret the above interview quote from the late comedian Norm MacDonald as being said in jest or irony. However, based on accounts of his character from those who knew him, Norm meant it.

The thing is, I could hear my dear friend and collaborator Dan "Dano" Nakrosis uttering the same exact statement. Also without the irony.

Norm and Dan were onto something the majority of us often miss: It's the simple pleasures in life that count most.

This was particularly manifested by the times Dan spent at San Diego Comic-Con.

You see, Dan rolled like this: Get into comics for the love of the artform, then stay for the friendships. Dan didn't care about fame or fortune and knew full well only a scant few comics pros ever attain it. He just loved comics, and the people who made them, period.

He also loved fun. Mix Dan together with comic books, a community of fellow creators, and his fun-loving spirit and what do you get? The "greatest gig in the world" where you can do "whatever you wanna do!"

Dan's antics at Comic-Con are the stuff of legend. They include:

- Presenting Simpsons toys to John Kricfalusi to autograph, and Ren & Stimpy toys to Matt Groening to sign. Both complied, loving the gag.
- Planting himself in the audience at panels so he could ask his friends sitting onstage non sequitur questions to make them laugh or blush.
- All sorts of mischief with creators and fans while wearing giant Harvey and Archie Comics character costume heads.

. . . and so much more! Through it all, Dan was always good-natured, and always looking for the laugh.

Of course, hilarious hijinks were only part of what SDCC meant to Dan. He mapped out his schedule so the first day was for meeting editors to pick up as much freelance work as possible. Thereafter his time was devoted to either catching up with old friends or making new ones at the con.

It was the "friend factor" of SDCC that Dan appreciated most. Dan could make friends with just about anyone. As I like to say, I was just *one* of Dan's *many* "best friends"—I never knew anyone who had as many "best friends" as Dan. And the friends he made at SDCC became lifelong friends he cherished.



Dan Nakrosis (right) at Comic-Con.

I escorted Joye and Jack to panels where she got standing ovations, and an autograph session where people lined up to meet her. Joye shone resplendent at the Eisner Awards ceremony, where she was honored with the Bill Finger Award for Excellence in Comic Book Writing. She wanted to see the convention floor, so we braved the crowds to tour an area near the DC booth, stopping to look at Wonder Woman figures, banners, comics, clothes, and more. Everywhere, signs of Joye's legacy.

Along the way, we met Wonder Woman cosplayers of all ages. They were beyond excited to meet Joye, and she was equally excited to see them. As we left the convention center for the last time, Joye posed for a perfect photo with a statuesque, classic-costumed Wonder Woman.

That's the magic of Comic-Con: when people give back love to those whose creative work has inspired them. I'm so grateful that Joye got to experience all the best of Comic-Con and fandom that year. She knows we love her.

**Anina Bennett** is a writer (*Boilerplate*, *Frank Reade*, *Heartbreakers*), comics educator, historian, and erstwhile editor, and a co-founder of Friends of Lulu, a 1990s nonprofit dedicated to women comic book creators and readers.

Dan was most touched by meeting two of his biggest idols at SDCC, Sergio Aragonés and Scott Shaw! Especially Scott, since the *Conservation Corps* comic we co-created was heavily influenced by Scott's *Captain Carrot and the Zoo Crew*. But it was more than a mutual appreciation society for Dan. Folks he met became his *close, personal friends*. They could speak about anything and everything, in and outside of comics, in perpetuity. And if someone was a friend of Dan's, it wasn't long before he introduced you so you could become friends with that person, too!

Dan just loved living life, and for him that meant wringing as much enjoyment out of SDCC weekend as possible. If you were his friend and had never experienced something before, Dan was there to make sure you did. Especially in San Diego! That's how I ended up at that "sleazy bar where the *Top Gun* fight scene was filmed." In fact, it's only because of Dan that I got to go to my first Comic-Con at all. I couldn't have navigated it without him. It should be no surprise then that some of my greatest experiences, including visiting other countries, were due to Dan.

Dan was the center of all his friends' universes, the glue. I never knew someone who could bring so many disparate groups of people together. He was the head of the table, the

chief raconteur, holding court whenever any of us sat down with him. He brought people together. He regaled everyone with hilarious stories and an endless knowledge of *everything* that rendered obscure commonplace. He was truly the most extraordinary, larger-than-life person I've ever known.

Now, about that comics biz. No, Dan wasn't wealthy nor was he a household name. He was a journeyman comics creator, who could (and did!) do it all: writing, editing, penciling, inking, lettering, coloring, for publishers including Marvel, DC, Archie, Harvey, Disney, Dark Horse, WildStorm, Bongo, Topps, Viz, IDW—the list goes on and on and frankly dwarfs the contributions of many a famous "name."

I miss you beyond words, Dano. I look forward to seeing you again and attending comic cons beyond, ducking out for lunch at Denny's, doing anything we wanna! With hats on.

**Paul Castiglia** is a comic book writer, editor, and historian whose work has appeared in publications from Archie, DC, Dark Horse, Gemstone, TwoMorrows, and more.

## WILLIAM F. NOLAN (1928–2021) by Jason V. Brock

**Author, screenwriter, artist,** and occasional actor William Francis Nolan passed away without pain on July 15, 2021, during a brief stay in the hospital following complications from an infection.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, Nolan was an only child. His father, Michael Cahill Nolan, was an adventurer and sportsman. His mother, Bernadette Mariana Kelly Nolan, was a stenographer. The family resided on Forest Avenue in a predominantly Irish section of the city. An avid reader, he devoured Max Brand, comic books (especially *Batman*), the pulps, and any other books he could get his hands on. He held very fond memories of his childhood.

Later, the family moved to Chula Vista, California just after World War II (Nolan was unable to serve due to flat feet and poor vision). Though the times were hard, his cherished parents had unflinching Irish roots, and the family endured, eventually winding up in Los Angeles. It was during this time Nolan caught the science fiction fandom bug. Talented at drawing, Nolan spent many hours working as an artist (including a stint at Hallmark Cards in Kansas City), still enthralled with pulps such as *Black Mask*, *Weird Tales*, and comics, especially Jack Kirby's output. Movies eventually became his greatest enthusiasm, and for years he attended several a week.

Once established in L.A., he stumbled across a fresh new writer named Ray Bradbury, becoming an instant convert. By 1952 he had learned enough about the author to compile his first serious book, *Ray Bradbury Review*. It contained a mix of art, stories, and nonfiction, including pieces by Chad Oliver



William F. Nolan

and Bradbury. After a few years of doing art, active semi-pro fanzine work, and other fan-related organizing, Nolan made his first big professional sale, "The Darendinger Build-Up" to *Playboy*, and decided he wanted to be a writer full-time. Around this time, Bradbury introduced Nolan to the man who would become his best friend for ten years, until his untimely death, Charles Beaumont. Beaumont, Nolan, Richard Matheson, George Clayton Johnson, Chad Oliver, Charles E. Fritch, Kris Neville, John Tomerlin, Mari Wolf, and several others eventually comprised "The Group," meeting to discuss stories and hang out together.

Nolan's career flourished as a writer and later a screenwriter. *Logan's Run*, which he co-wrote with the late George Clayton Johnson, propelled both men into the public consciousness in a major way, especially after the release of the classic MGM film adaptation in 1976. Although Nolan has written roughly 2000 pieces (including biographies, short stories, poetry, and novels), *Logan's Run* retains its hold on the public consciousness as a political fable and dystopian warning. As Nolan stated: "That I am known at all is still astonishing to me, as I can so vividly recall 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.

## CHARLES S. NOVINSKIE (1959–2022) by Amanda Sheriff and J. C. Vaughn

**Charles S. Novinski**, better known as Charlie to his many friends, a veteran comic book letter hack 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.

Charlie grew up in Shamokin, PA, and attended nearby Bloomsburg University. Never losing his love of comics, he became a prolific letter writer (authoring hundreds), particularly to Marvel titles.

"When I first broke in as a writer, Charles was a prolific letter writer whose missives were smart and kind when praising, and smart and kind when criticizing. When opening the mail on the first comics I wrote and seeing Charles had sent—had it been praise or criticism—felt like a validation of my efforts," comic writer Fabian Nicieza said. "To have met him several times in person only confirmed what I knew from his written words: Charles was a smart and kind person. We need a lot more like him in this world, and losing that intelligence and humanity makes us all the poorer."

Through his letter writing, he made the acquaintance of editor Jim Salicrup. When Salicrup moved to Topps to start and head up their comic book line, he brought Charlie on board as assistant editor. There he worked on Kirbyverse books, including *Secret City Saga*, *TeenAgents*, and *Satan's Six*, as well as licensed titles like *Mars Attacks*, *The X-Files*, *Zorro*, *Jurassic Park*, and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*.

"On March 4, 2022, at the end of an email to me, Charlie wrote, 'Stay in touch, my friend. I miss our days at Topps, but will always cherish them. And always be thankful to you for dragging me in to the entire thing!'" said Salicrup, now Editor-in-Chief of PaperCutz. "Yes, we sure did have a lot of fun at



Photo: Michael Solof

Topps Comics. First Charlie was an assistant editor, and eventually he was in charge of direct sales. I still remember him telling me for the first time that he had a terrible fear of public speaking minutes before he was about to do the Topps Comics presentation at a Diamond Sales Conference. I have to hand to him, he faced his fear, and did it.

"Charlie loved comics, and everyone loved Charlie. I was happy to help him into the world he so wanted to be a part of. I miss him already," Salicrup said.

In the trading cards arena, Charlie was a regular contributor to *Non-Sport Update* on such topics as comics, *Star Wars*, and an in-depth look at how trading cards are made. He also wrote regularly for *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, and recently wrote and provided editorial contributions of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide to Lost Universes*. He was far from boastful, but he was proud of how many editions of the Comic-Con Souvenir Book he had contributed to over the years.

In addition to sharing his enthusiasm through documenting comics and comic character history, Charlie was active in supporting those who created in the medium he so enjoyed.

He actively served with the Hero Initiative until he passed, touching the lives of many when they most needed it.

Charlie is survived by his wife, Kristine, daughter Dana, son Charlie, and an extended family, as well as a legion of professionals, fellow fans, and dealers he called friends.

Amanda Sheriff (editor, digital) and J. C. Vaughn (vice-president of publishing) work at Gemstone Publishing, the home of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*.

## EVERETT PECK (1950–2022) by David Scroggy

**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 Salzman. Although technically competitors, we realized we had more to gain by cooperating when appropriate, so we did. Richard's star client was Everett Peck. Everett was a top illustration talent. He did work for *Time*, *Playboy*, *The New Yorker*—even illustrating P. J. O'Rourke's columns for *Rolling Stone*. He did print ads for many a top client, including Nike and Honda. Everett was the goods.

He was a unique cartoonist as well. He had a sort of scratchy line 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-connected 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 employer Mike Richardson. Mike had wide-ranging tastes, and if he liked something, he could get his company, Dark Horse Comics, to move fast. I happily hooked them up.

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



Everett Peck

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, it knocked pop culture on its ear and won an audience of millions. It was nominated for three Emmy Awards. Everett also created a follow-up series, *Squirrel Boy*, for USA, which ran from 2006 to 2008.

Peck subsequently provided character designs and other creative work for a parade of animated productions, working from his home in Oceanside in San Diego's North County. He was honored with a career retrospective in 2011: a solo exhibition at the Oceanside Museum of Art, curated by the late graphic designer and film producer Michael Gross. A catalog filled 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 miss him already.

**David Scroggy** served as programming director at Comic-Con in the 1970s before becoming editorial director at Pacific Comics, then an artists' agent and director of Comic-Con's Comic Book Expo, and finally putting in a long career at Dark Horse Comics.

## TIM SALE (1956–2022) By Matt Wagner

**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 *Thieves World* series, published by Starblaze Graphics, who'd also produced the collected editions of my own heroic epic, *Mage: The Hero Discovered*. We chatted briefly at the time and I remember feeling some immediate connection with Tim's easygoing 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 art, comics, 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.

Over 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 challenging 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.

But, of course, Tim's most significant collaborations over the years were with Jeph Loeb, an unforgettable pairing of artist and writer that ranks among the greatest creative teams in the history of our beloved art form. Together, the two of them breathed all-new life into a cavalcade of established mainstream characters by portraying a deeply felt pathos

and humanity alongside all the action, intrigue and adventure. In such now-classic series as *Batman: The Long Halloween*, *Batman: Dark Victory*, *Superman For All Seasons*, *Catwoman: When in Rome*, *Hulk: Gray*, *Captain America: White*, and (my personal favorite) *Daredevil: Yellow*, Tim and Jeph redefined these iconic characters.

Tim's unique visual style has provided inspiration for a host of younger artists who grew up enmeshed in the dramatic worlds that he so eloquently portrayed. His vibrant sense of cinema, pacing, setting, lighting, and scale, combined with his fresh and expressive drawing, all served to make Tim one of 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 developed, a widespread bonding that proudly declared themselves as Fans of Tim Sale. Tim's consideration even extended beyond our own relationship when, over the last several years, he struck up a partnership with my son, Brennan, as his colorist-of-choice—an alliance that brought a heartfelt and cyclical punctuation to our history together.

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 rarin' 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 styles. The comics industry and the artform are so much richer for all of your beautiful efforts... and seem so much emptier now that you're gone.

**Matt Wagner** is the creator of trailblazing indy titles *Grendel* and *Mage* as well the writer and artist of many works with other established characters.



(Photo: Jackie Estrada)

## STEVE SHERMAN (1949–2021) by Mark Evanier

Steve Sherman was a writer, cartoonist, graphic designer, master puppeteer, and puppet builder. There weren't a lot of things Steve couldn't do. He was also a great friend, not just to me but to a lot of people. That included Jack Kirby and the entire Kirby family.

I met Steve and his brother Gary in the late sixties when they joined the Los Angeles Comic Book Club, of which I was prez. Steve was the quiet guy at the meetings, often the only quiet guy. In 1969 we both went to work for Marvelmania, a not-very-honest mail order film that took money for Marvel posters and decals and such, and sometimes even delivered what was ordered. In early 1970, we also went to work as assistants to Mr. Kirby when he fled Marvel for DC. As Steve would tell 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 1970 we also did something that might be worth mentioning here: Steve, Gary, our mutual friend Bruce Simon, and I attended the very first Golden State Comic Con in San Diego. It's grown a lot since then and changed its name to Comic-Con International.

Bruce became a close buddy of Steve's, and I wanted to quote him a little here. This is Bruce: "Steve had talents that made him the go-to guy in our circle; his father, Eli, was an electrical engineer and had taught Steve how to do just about anything about everything; this guy knew how the world worked and in a practical sense Steve could MacGyver his way in and out of any situation. Cars, cameras, printing, anything with moving parts or arcane instructions Steve could master; a handy thing amongst a crew of dreamers, doofs, and dullards."

M.E. again: Steve's skills served him well in publishing, as in the book we put together about Jack, *Kirby Unleashed*. They enabled him to work in graphic and toy design, to work for the Filmation cartoon studio, and to eventually become one of the best builders and operators of puppets in the business. Working often with his partner, Greg Williams, they provided puppets and puppeteering for outfits like Mattel, Sid & Marty Krofft, Jim Henson, ABC Television, and so many more. They called their operation Puppet Studio, and you saw their puppets on *Pee-wee's Playhouse*, *Riders in the Sky*, *The Barbara Mandrell Show*, *ABC Weekend Specials*, *D.C. Follies*, *Mighty Joe Young*, and so many more.

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.



Steve Sherman with Jack Kirby.

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 nitwit's haunts 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 closer, 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 we're just about outta 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 friend, 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'll stay there. 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 during the con, he's currently upstairs in the Convention Center hosting a panel.

## FRANK THORNE: THE WIZARD (1930–2021) by Wendy Pini

Frank Thorne was always a wizard. He just projected that kind of energy. When my husband Richard and I met him in 1976 at a comic convention in Boston and he invited me to enter an upcoming Red Sonja look-alike contest, I had no idea what a wild adventure lay before the three of us. Getting to know Frank and his monumental obsession with his flame-haired muse was like being pulled into another world filled with the sounds of barbaric war drums and the clash of steel against steel. His was artwork that couldn't be dashed onto the page fast enough, he so longed to be manifesting Red Sonja herself in all her



Frank Thorne as The Wizard and Wendy Pini as Red Sonja at the 1978 Comic-Con. (Photo: Jackie Estrada)

exaggerated voluptuousness (which I, in my admittedly authentic steel bikini armor, could never hope to embody). I loved and still love Frank's flowing, organic drawing style which contains so much weight and raw power.

It was always such a delight to watch the impression Frank made on others—particularly at San Diego Comic-Con. Various industry peers and luminaries would discretely ask, "Is that how he always is? Is he really that crazy?" Tough question. Frank Thorne was one of a kind and a character like no one had ever seen before. Frenetic, outspoken, explosively joyous, he absolutely ate up any and all love

for Red Sonja, be it in the form of cosplay, fan art, autograph hounds, or praise from colleagues. To follow him about at the El Cortez was to be swept along in his wake, never to quite catch up. How we all loved his sense of humor, which was naughty, to be sure, but never offensive. That's another question I got asked a lot. "Does he ever ... you know ... come on to you?" Easy answer, there: No. All us Red Sonja impersonators, back then, felt there was more going on than mere exploitation of T&A. Frank used to say we must "protect Sonja's spirit." He felt that each one of us represented an aspect of the rogue warrior/goddess. There was a great deal of mutual respect all around.

My happiest memory was giving the final performance of "The Red Sonja and the Wizard Show" with Frank at SDCC in 1978. For its time, it was a fairly elaborate piece of theater unlike anything that had been seen at a comic con

before. Frank was a natural actor and a whiz at improvisation. Our banter onstage was half scripted, half me riffing off whatever Frank said. I nearly lost it when he looked out at the audience and accused George Clayton Johnson of being "the Clone Wizard." Yes, the two of them did indeed seem separated at birth. But no one, NO one was as quick as Frank. Or as gracious, as warm, or as complex. He had his demons, which only made sense because he was in the grip of intense obsession. An artist gets to feel like that maybe once in a lifetime. I know. It was wonderful to be consumed in his boiling wizard's cauldron of creation for a while.

Wendy Pini is the award-winning co-creator of *Elfquest*. She and her husband Richard were inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Industry Hall of Fame in 2019.

## JACK WHITE (1939–2021) by Jackie Estrada

Jack White was one of San Diego's most popular and enduring television news anchors from the late 1960s to his retirement in 2002. In fact, Will Ferrell sought him out as a consultant for *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*. In tribute, a photo of Jack hung on the wall in the newsroom set in the 2004 comedy.

Of course, Jack was nothing like the buffoon that Ferrell portrayed.

Jack was truly local. He grew up in Oceanside, in San Diego's North County. Before graduating in 1957 from Oceanside-Carlsbad High School, he worked at local movie theaters, which led to a job at a larger movie theater in Hollywood. While taking classes at Los Angeles City College, he enrolled in a broadcasting class and found his calling. When he was drafted into the Army a few years later, he got his first broadcasting job in the radio station at the Fort Bragg Army Base in North Carolina.

After the Army, he returned to L.A. and got a job as a page at NBC TV studios and worked his way up to a reporting position, where his first major assignment

was covering the Watts Riots in 1965. Three years later, he moved to San Diego for a weekend anchor position on KGTV Channel 10's "The News." Within a year, he was anchoring the evening broadcast.

The most life-changing assignment for Jack was in November 1979, when he covered the first San Diego Chargers blood drive. Lynn Stedd, then a year into her 36-year marketing career with the San Diego Blood Bank, caught his eye, and a few months later he asked her out on a date. They married in 1984.

Jack was an avid reader and movie buff who hosted annual western film festivals at their home for a decade. He was also an accomplished magician

who specialized in antique illusions, like card and sleight-of-hand tricks. He actually had a shop at a storefront in North Park, where the Southern California Cartoonists Society (a chapter of the National Cartoonists Society)

would have an annual Christmas party. The walls were filled with magic posters and props, some dating back a century. There were movie posters from westerns and display cases filled with old cars, toys, and soldiers. Jack and Lynn were great hosts for these gatherings. One way the members repaid their hospitality was to do drawings of blood donors at the San Diego Blood Bank at an annual "Cartoonists' Day."

I had seen Jack at Comic-Con, reporting on the event for the local news (and even got a photo of him in 1988), but I wasn't aware of all his pop culture interests until I got to know him and Lynn through the SCCS and the Blood Bank (I was one of the founders of Comic-Con's annual Blood Drive, for which Lynn served as liaison for many years).

In 2009, Jack was appointed 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 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 Comic-Con in 1977.



Jack White reporting from the Exhibit Hall floor at the 1988 Comic-Con.

(Photo: Jackie Estrada)

## S. CLAY WILSON (1941–2021) by David Scroggy

S. Clay Wilson inarguably 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 comix 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 rediscovered, to Comic-Con for sale. One could see the seeds of his later work in them, mainly his violence themes, and the origination 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 him meeting Robert Crumb. Crumb often cites Wilson as an inspiration, showing him that he could go wild with his own themes. Crumb asked Wilson to participate in *Zap Comix*, where he was a regular starting with issue #2.

Wilson was a frequent contributor to many underground comix, including several solo books. This work continued to obliterate the boundaries of the medium, combining intensely detailed imagery with witty and literate dialogue. Wilson created many memorable characters, perhaps the best-known being *The Checkered Demon*.

I was an avid reader and collector of these undergrounds. When I became active in Comic-Con in 1975, I was a little surprised to find that not very much of the focus was on this type of comic art. Since I had a few connections in that sphere due to collecting and editing *The Portfolio of Underground Art*, I decided to look into why these cartoonists did not attend. I heard that the underground artists felt excluded, feeling that Comic-Con only wanted

superhero or comic strip talents. Knowing this to be untrue, I traveled to the one-day Berkeley Con, which was centered on comix. I spoke to as many underground artists and publishers as I could, and assured them that they were welcome and wanted. I asked those I talked with to spread the word.

The next year, the floodgates opened. Among those who made the journey to San Diego was S. Clay Wilson. Wilson was an enthusiastic participant in the event and made many repeat visits in succeeding years. He became a fixture in the Exhibit Hall. He memorably shared table space with Robert Williams. The two of them had concocted a unique and inexpensive art collaboration called "Fanny Grams," which were an instant sell-out. They also self-published a two-sided comic: *Yama Yama/The Ugly Head*. Just as Wilson had expanded the edges of the comic art medium, he also expanded the edges of Comic-Con.

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 life-changing and severe. After surgeries 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 crises 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 7, 2021.

S. Clay Wilson carved out his own special place in the history of comics; we never saw his like before he came along, and are unlikely to see it ever again.

David Scroggy served as programming director at Comic-Con in the 1970s before becoming editorial director at Pacific Comics, then an artists' agent and director of Comic-Con's Comic Book Expo, and finally putting in a long career at Dark Horse Comics.



S. Clay Wilson at the 1979 Comic-Con. (Photo: Jackie Estrada)

## CHRIS YAMBAR (1961–2021) by Bill Morrison

Chris Yambar was unique among comic book creators. He was an indie artist/writer/publisher, a mainstream comics writer, a pop art painter, an ordained minister and police chaplain, a children's book author, an entrepreneur, and the best self-promoter I have ever seen. I've never known anyone quite like my friend Chris.

In 1987, after spending a decade working in advertising and marketing and editing/publishing an underground arts newspaper, Chris turned to pop-art painting. By 2020 he had reached his goal of 5000 works of art, many of which reside in numerous private, corporate, and celebrity collections, galleries, and museums around the globe. His paintings can be found in such diverse places as the Ronald Reagan Library, The P.T. Barnum Museum, The Butler Institute of American Art, the Hummel Museum, and the President Bill Clinton Time Capsule in the Smithsonian. I myself own two Yambar originals, a Tor Johnson portrait and a canvas featuring Kirk Alyn as Superman!

In the world of comics, which was Chris's first love, he enjoyed a rewarding career as a writer for some of the world's most beloved cartoon characters, including *Bart Simpson*, *Spongebob Squarepants*, *Popeye*, and *Mister Magoo*. His own award-winning stable of characters,

which includes *Mr. Beat*, *El Mucho Grande*—Wrestler for Hire, *The Fire-Breathing Pope*, and *Suicide Blonde*, have gained him a reputation as one of our most original and diverse independent creators.

Chris also had a passion for bringing forgotten classics to a comic-reading audience, as he proved in 2003 when his graphic novel *Edison's Frankenstein*, an adaptation of Thomas Edison's lost 1910 horror film, won him and his collaborators Frederick C. Wiebel and Robb Bihun the acclaim of horror historians and fans alike. More recently in 2020 he and artist Randy Bish brought back R. F. Outcault's infamous newspaper character, *The Yellow Kid*, in his first official comic book.

I first met this whirling dervish of art and comics around 1996 when I was invited to fly to Youngstown, Ohio, for a weekend of *Simpsons* Comics signings. The morning after arriving, I was greeted at my hotel by a uniformed chauffer who drove me to a comic shop/art gallery that Chris was managing. When we pulled up to the building, there was already a line in front. The

chauffer instructed me to remain in the car, and soon after, Chris got in and greeted me for the first time. I asked him the reason for the limo, as it seemed a bit much for an appearance at a comic shop. He told me that it makes people



curious and gets them talking. People wonder who's behind the smoked-glass windows and think it must be someone really important and famous. So, as we got to know each other, sure enough a crowd of curious onlookers gathered and tried to see who was inside the luxury car, and those people began to join the line of fans waiting for the signing to start. As I saw the queue begin to wrap around the building, I realized the genius of Chris Yambar.

We became instant friends that weekend and over the years enjoyed collaborating on indie projects and spent long hours on the phone talking while we worked about everything—religion, music, comics, Soaky bath toys, cereal boxes, Ben Cooper Halloween costumes . . . you name it.

In 2000, I invited Chris to pitch some story ideas for Bongo Comics's new *Bart Simpson* series, and this began a 16-year stint for Chris writing hilarious

stories for many of the company's titles. My favorite of his work for Bongo was in *Treehouse of Horror* #10 (our "Monsters of Rock" issue), for which Chris recruited rock legends Alice Cooper and Kiss's Gene Simmons to co-write stories with him!

With all that Chris Yambar accomplished as an artist and writer, I believe that he was just getting started. When he passed away on March 7, 2021, the comics industry and the art world lost one of its most original creators, with a potential that had not yet been fully realized.

Through his work with Bongo Comics, *MAD* magazine, Disney, and The Beatles, Bill Morrison has had the privilege of working with the best creators and most beloved cartoon characters in the world.

## MEMBERS OF THE COMIC-CON FAMILY WE'VE LOST

### GENE HENDERSON (1933–2021) by Anthony Keith

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 Gene and Mary 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 shove 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 working for him various positions throughout the hotel. However, since 13 was the age you needed to be to work "officially" as security, I was assigned to work my first year as a "gopher. Rather ironically, the first task I was given was to sit outside the Dealers' Room (Don Room) and make sure everyone going inside had a convention badge. Which sure seemed like a "security" job to me!

Later that day, I mentioned to Gene that my brother said that volunteers could stay at the hotel. And that is when I met Mary. She had the unenviable task of finding a space for volunteers like me to sleep (not that I actually did much sleeping). I can still vividly recall going with her to this room and her knocking loudly on the door. When it opened, I saw that there were at least six boys inside. Mary looked at them for a moment and then said, "Hey there fellas! Looks like you have room for one more." And 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, tough, 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.

Through the years I worked at Comic-Con I transitioned to a few different security positions. Then, for my last year as a volunteer, when the con was still at the Civic Center, I found myself taking Gene's job as Director of Security (he

told me that decided to "take a break," and he worked that year with the couple who managed the Dealers' Room, Tom and Virginia French.) As I quickly discovered, running convention security was a lot harder job than I had anticipated! Mostly because Gene had always made it seem easy. He gained even more respect from me that year, because I learned just how hard the job he'd been doing for so long actually was.

The following two years, I lived in San Francisco. After I moved back to San Diego, I continued to see Gene and Mary when they would be in town or when I was up in their area of Orange County. And as the years passed, I grew very close to both of them.

When Mary passed in 2016, it really devastated Gene and the family. And the realization she was gone also hit hard on all her con friends who cared so much for her. From that time on, I decided to get as many of our Comic-Con friends together as often as possible for various gatherings (lunches, dinners, movies, and events) because I felt that would help motivate Gene to stay active, and to help all of us with the loss of Mary. And also because it's always nice to spend time with friends!

I was out-of-state the last time I spoke with Gene. He started the conversation by saying that he was not happy about having to stay in the hospital for another week. We then

had a pleasant conversation talking about old and new movies and about comics (two things he truly loved). I also told him about the next gathering I was planning, and he said he was really looking forward to seeing everyone again. The call ended with my saying I would visit him in a few days. He passed away a little over an hour later.

I like to think that Gene drifted away with a smile on his face, picturing the good time he'd have at our next get-together, knowing he would be in the company of people who loved and cared for him.

Anthony Keith is an entrepreneur, producer, writer, and philanthropist who worked for many years as a Comic-Con volunteer.



Gene Henderson with then Comic-Con vice president Richard Butner, in 1980. (Photo: Jackie Estrada)

## GENE HENDERSON by Robin Donlan

Gene has been a part of my life forever, ever since I first came aboard the wild ride that is Comic-Con as a teenager. Together with his wife Mary, he 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 both of them took this young newbie under their wing and made me feel a part of the “family,” accepted and valued, something that continued throughout our many years together with the show even up until the last time I saw him, shortly before his passing. He always found time for others, even if it was just for a quick chat or a word of encouragement. Once you were one of the Henderson “kids,” they were in your corner no matter what.

Luckily for us, the convention was a major focus for Gene, and he was a constant at the many meetings and events through the years, even when his health interfered and made his participation challenging. The passion and dedication he had for this organization were remarkable and an inspiration



Gene and Mary Henderson at Comic-Con in 1989.  
Photo: Jackie Estrada

to many of us. I had the privilege of serving with him on both the Committee and on the Board of Directors for many years, and his wisdom and advice were greatly appreciated. His knowledge and appreciation of the comics industry made him a natural choice for Archivist, a position he held for decades. His knowledge of the history of Comic-Con—not just the early years, but also his firsthand experience of 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. Know that your con “kid” misses you very, very much.

**Robin Donlan** is president of the Comic-Con Board of Directors.

## MY REMEMBRANCES OF GENE HENDERSON by Mark Yturralde

To so many of us, Gene Henderson was Comic-Con's Grandpa. He was a longtime fixture at every meeting (even late in life when he wasn't feeling great) and served on the Board of Directors for decades. His voice and point of view always encouraged the convention's current and future development but through the lens of its history. He was respected by most everyone (which was well earned for his years of service to the con), but more than that, everyone cared about him. You were always happy to see him, even if only for a quick chat or passing in the hall during an event. The amount of energy that man had was astounding!

I remember volunteering for my first Comic-Con when I was 11 years old (back when you could do such a thing). I was sent along to Gene, who was handling security, and he had me watch the back door that opened into the plaza for a couple hours in exchange for a pass. He would check in occasionally to make sure things were ok, and either he or his wife Mary would ask if I'd eaten and made sure that I did. That's the kind of people the Gene and Mary were; they made you feel welcome and cared for even if you were an 11-year-old kid volunteering for the first time.

Another thing I remember fondly is my second or third Comic-Con when I was talking to Gene about my love for Jack Kirby and his work on *Fantastic Four*. Gene then made it a point to introduce me to Jack Kirby for my first time. As much as I was thrilled to meet Kirby, I think that Gene was just pleased to be able to introduce me.

It's hard to put into words how much Comic-Con has influenced my life and who I am. While the event itself is certainly a part of the impact, it's overshadowed by the people who made it then and now. There's the family you're born with and the family you choose, and I've been incredibly fortunate to have the relationships with so many people over the decades. Gene and Mary were a large part of that, and I hope they knew how grateful I was for them.

As much as Gene loved comics and Comic-Con, he adored his amazing wife Mary more. You'd be hard pressed to find a more devoted couple. Life goal: Find yourself someone who looks at you the way Gene looked at Mary.

**Mark Yturralde** is Chief Technical Officer for the San Diego Comic-Con.

## DAVE DAVIS (1953–2021) by William Clausen

**Dave Davis. Bluesman. Collector.** Early Comic-Con contributor. Friend.

I first met Dave Davis at an early Comic-Con meeting back in the 1970s. I had been convinced by Shel Dorf that I should get involved in the behind-the-scenes machinery that powered the convention on a daily basis. Being a teenager at the time with a great love for comics and some time on my hands, I agreed to assist for a while. About a decade it would turn out.

Dave was a rather strapping fellow. He could step into a position and make the most of it. I remember him standing there with a mic in his



Volunteers Dave and Kathy Davis at the 1982 Comic-Con.  
(Photo: Jackie Estrada)

competent hand, emceeding the Celebrity Art Auction, dealing with all the comic greats of the day as well as wearing many other hats, which was an unspoken requirement back in the day.

In 1980 Dave and Kathy Davis became the first couple ever to be married at Comic-Con. Shel was the best man, and Janice Guy was the maid of honor. This began an ongoing tradition of other couples tying the knot at the world's greatest comic book show.

In 1986 I left my position on the committee to be closer to the art and music industries in Los Angeles so I didn't get to see Dave and Kathy as

much as I would have liked. I would mostly run into them on the convention circuit. However, in 2014 I moved back to San Diego and would drop by their place with a guitar for jam sessions and playing catch up. Dave loved guitars and enjoyed building them as well. He loved to play the blues. We talked about fandom and jammed away. He'd show me his collection of swords and ceramics.

We would still see each other at conventions as well. I'd have a table and he'd come rolling up. We would talk and take a picture together, then often go on a break away from the main centers of activity for a relaxing lunch filled with laughter and entertaining conversation. It was like enjoying the eye of the hurricane before heading back into the storm.

When Dave became ill, fellow Comic-Con alumnus Anthony Keith and I took turns driving Kathy to the hospital for visitation. The day he passed I had driven Kathy to the medical center but had forgotten my Covid vaccination

card, so they wouldn't let me in. Fortunately, Anthony had his card and was able to be with Kathy when Dave made his final transition from this mortal coil.

Nowadays for every convention that I attend I bring a little bit of Dave along with me, whether it's a skull ring, a hat, or just a memory of him smiling. I also remember him every time I perform music on one of his guitars. While in the audience hanging around the pool, a cast of thousands including Jack and Roz Kirby, Will Eisner, Lola and George Clayton Johnson, Don Rico, Ray Bradbury, and the rest of the heavenly comic book hierarchy.

So here's to you, Dave Davis. May your sonic guitar and kind heart pave the path to our next meeting. Love you, Bro'.

**William Clausen** is an artist/writer/musician and early Comic-Con committee member who is best known for the first appearance of Leprechaun.

## MY SISTER, MARY ELLEN KEITH (1949–2020) by Joan Keith

**Mary Ellen always said** she was “hatched” on September 27, 1949. She was full of life, laughter, and most of all, love. No matter what happened that day, it was still a great day.

Mary Ellen was a people person, but discreet and private when it came to certain people's issues. She didn't gossip unless it was about Marvel movies or who she met at Comic-Con, and she loved ringing the bell for the Salvation Army at Christmas as well.

Mary Ellen admitted to being a tom-boy, but was be a lady too. She would tell the female volunteers, “Don't be too cute to get your hands dirty!”

As for getting old, her words of wisdom were, “I have an inner child with a young spirit. When you have that, you never grow old.”

Some years ago, three of us went to “Taste of San Diego.” One of the venues had been closed for a VIP event. We heard a song, from a nearby bar. It was loud, playing “Dancing in the Streets.” Mary Ellen started dancing, and so did we. People saw us and started



Mary Ellen Keith, **Joan Keith**, and their long-time roommate Diana Reaves worked at the Freebie Table as departmental volunteers for many, many years.

dancing too. Cars honked their horns, and people waved, filling the air with the fun of laughter. It was on the corner where the Tin Fish was. It was so fun, and a moment to remember.

For someone who was cancer-free for 26 years, every day was a blessing. Her faith in God was strong, and her prayers were simple but heartfelt. She always loved to help people.

She will be missed by her godchildren, Diatra Jauna and Tarzan. She loved them. She will also be missed by her friends at the Freebie Table, but most of all, by me, and the friend that became her sister, Diana. Our friendship was unique, and lasted through many obstacles.

A true friend is there for the good, the bad, and the ugly. That's what Mary Ellen was. A true friend.

May god bless you, Mary Ellen. We'll keep your spirit alive.

## GEORGE OLSHEVSKY (1946–2019) by Jackie Estrada

**I was heartbroken** when I learned that my dear friend George Olshevsky had passed away in December 2019. He had been dealing with complications from diabetes and heart problems and apparently passed away in the hospital, where he had contracted Covid.

I first met George back in the mid-1970s, when he was doing typesetting for Comic-Con, and I worked with him to produce the Program Book and other publications. In 1979 he and Jim Valentino co-edited the Program Book, unique that year for being in a newspaper format.

George, a graduate of MIT with a degree in mathematics and of The University of Toronto with a degree in computer sciences, was raised in Buffalo, NY, but moved to San Diego because he liked to ride his motorcycle year-round. (He could look quite menacing, but he was a teddybear.)

His two main interests were comics and dinosaurs. In comics, he produced the *Marvel Indexes* in the 1970s and 1980s, for which he catalogued all the Marvel comics going back to 1961. As George told a newspaper interviewer:



“When I was at MIT, people would bring in these new comics which had sprung up. Marvel was publishing *Spider-Man* and *The Fantastic Four*, and they were much better than any of the other comics being published at the time. Marvel comics all dealt with the same universe. What happened in one comic, say *Fantastic Four*, could easily affect what happens in *Spider-Man*. Finally, I decided I had to amass the whole set. Gradually, I was able to build up a complete collection of Marvel comics from the very first issue of *The Fantastic Four* in November 1961. From that point on, I bought every single issue off the stands for a period of 20 years.

“Being a computer programmer, one of the things I did was put together a list of the comic books I still needed for my collection. At that point, there were about 300 to 400 books I had to pick up. My final list was 666 pages long, and it listed all the

Marvel Comics from *Fantastic Four* No. 1 through comics dated April 1975. I had the issue number, the date, the subject of the cover, the cover artist, who wrote the story, who drew the story, who inked the story, who lettered the

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