A NOT-FOR-PROFIT PUBLICATION

CELEBRATING THE LIFE & CAREER OF THE KING!

FULLY AUTHORIZED BY THE KIRBY ESTATE

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

ISSUE #12, OCT. 1996

$4.95 In The US

A 94-PAGE INTERNATIONAL THEME ISSUE SPOTLIGHTING JACK'S INFLUENCE AROUND THE GLOBE!

TWO RARE 1970s **KIRBY INTERVIEWS** (ONE IN ENGLISH FOR THE FIRST TIME)

A CONTROVERSIAL CANADIAN SPEAKS: **JOHN BYRNE** INTERVIEWED!

TRANSCRIPT OF THE 1996 KIRBY TRIBUTE PANEL AT COMIC CON INTERNATIONAL: SAN DIEGO, FEATURING **MARK EVANIER, ROGER STERN & MARV WOLFMAN**

AROUND THE WORLD WITH KIRBY: **ASIA, AUSTRALIA, SOUTH AMERICA, ENGLAND, ITALY, FRANCE & MORE!**

UNPUBLISHED ART INCLUDING CAPTAIN AMERICA PENCILS BEFORE THEY WERE INKED, AND MUCH MORE!!

1996 EISNER AWARDS NOMINEE FOR BEST COMICS-RELATED PUBLICATION

WOW–WHAT AN INTERVIEW!

A rare Italian interview from the 1970s, translated by Fabio Paolo Barbieri

Nessim Vaturi, an Italian fan, interviewed Jack Kirby during Jack's trip to Lucca, Italy in 1976. Before taping started, Kirby told Vaturi he was particularly happy about this interview because his Italian fanzine was called WOW! COMICS—similar to one of Kirby's own early titles. The interview was only published in Italian; the original is not available, so Fabio Paolo Barbieri re-translated it back into English. If anything sounds odd, remember; this is a translation of a translation.

NESSIM VATURI: You said earlier that early in your career you used to work for a book called *WOW*!
JACK KIRBY: Yes, it was the first magazine I worked for. Jerry Siegel and Will Eisner used to publish it. They were my bosses back then, and those were the first years of comics, and *WOW–What A Magazine* was one of the first comic magazines. Many of the artists who worked in it went on to create great features of their own, as we were to see. People call this the Golden Age of comics – I mean the Forties.

NV: Do you remember anyone?
KIRBY: Yes, I remember all the people who were there. There was Eddie Herron, who created Captain Marvel, and Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. They worked for DC from the beginning, they came on the scene when everything had just been created and everyone ran around from one company to another. When Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster came along, they found their place at DC and stayed there. I was a nut... if another company offered me more, I went, so I leaped around like a fly; maybe this was a good thing after all, because it allowed me to work in different organizations, and meet different people.

NV: After working for *WOW*, where did you go?
KIRBY: I worked for *Jumbo*; I did a "part feature," one of the first sorcery strips, called "The Diary of Dr. Hayward." I've still got the book; my mother kept it. But I'm not a collector, a hobbyist or a specialist. I'm a doer; that's what you can call me. I do things and then forget about them. But mothers, you know, they are proud, and I think if you did something like that, your mother also would store your stuff; that's how mothers are! In my neighborhood, you know, they didn't even know what an artist was; to be someone, you had to be a car mechanic, and so when I became an artist, people couldn't understand, they thought I was mixed up in something illegal.

NV: After *Jumbo*, what did you do?
KIRBY: After *Jumbo*, I started to gravitate towards more stable and secure magazines, that were just then coming out; things like Atlas Comics, which later became Marvel. And then of course I did some things for DC, and some things for a man named Victor Fox. Victor Fox's name might have come out if you interviewed any artist my age who worked in the first years of comics. He was a publisher, he published *Weird Comics,* and in general books with names like *Weird, Pow, Hit.* And there were publishers like "Busy" Arnold

In the mid-1960s, Jack had his personal Golden Age copies of Captain America #1 & 3-10 bound into a hardbound volume. For the occasion, he did four Cap-related pencil drawings and had them stitched into it; two inside the front cover, and two in back. All four are in this issue, and Barry Windsor-Smith was kind enough to ink this one for this issue's cover.

The Jack Kirby Collector, Vol. 3, No. 12, Oct. 1996. Published bi-monthly by TwoMorrows Advertising, 502 Saint Mary's St., Raleigh, NC 27605, USA. 919-833-8092. *John Morrow,* Editor. *Pamela Morrow,* Assistant Editor. Single issues: $4.95 each US, $5.40 Canada, $7.40 outside North America. Six-issue subscriptions: $24.00 US, $32.00 Canada and Mexico, and $44.00 outside North America. First printing. The initial printing of this issue was mailed the week of Oct. 21, 1996.

Kirby In The United Kingdom

England *by Mark Cartwright*

The phrase "comics are for kids" was never truer than in the United Kingdom. Despite a headstart over the US and the rest of the world in printing this form of entertainment, it was over a century later before an English publisher printed anything remotely aimed at adults. How was the prevailing adult derision towards comic books altered, permitting *2000 A.D.* (featuring Judge Dredd) to be printed in 1977, and gain acceptance to the point where more issues of *2000 A.D.* are now sold to adults than to children?

The answer is just two words: Jack Kirby.

Between 1874 and 1966, English comic books were solely aimed at children under twelve years of age; both their artwork and scripts were overly simplistic, lacking even the merest hints of controversy or adult themes. There were just two exceptions: The *Dan Dare* strip in the *Eagle* comic and reprints of the American comic *Captain Marvel,* both occurring in the 1950s. War, sport, and stories focusing on schoolchildren were the main themes; super-heroes were virtually nonexistent.

In 1966, Odhams, who published the weekly comic *Wham*, began including reprints of the *Fantastic Four,* drawn by Kirby. The artwork, even in black-&-white, was much more dynamic than anything seen in English comics and quickly became so popular that it was joined by sister publications *Smash, Pow, Fantastic,* and *Terrific.* By 1967, there was simply no room for homegrown English strips, and all of the above comics were featuring 100% Marvel reprints. Originally *Wham* had both *Fantastic Four* and *Batman* reprints, but such was the appeal of Kirby's Marvel work that *Batman* was replaced by *Thor, X-Men, Sgt. Fury, Nick Fury, Avengers,* and *Spider-Man.*

The best analogy to compare English comic strips of the '60s to Kirby's Marvel work would be the difference between *Flash Gordon* cinema serials in the 1930s and the *Star Wars* Trilogy. DC and Marvel comics were imported into the UK in the 1960s but were much more expensive than their British counterparts. American material became very popular once available in the cheaper British format.

The style of English comics has always differed from American comics, in that they are published weekly on the cheapest paper, and apart from the cover and centerspread, are in black-&-white. English comics don't focus on one character, but instead will have five or six different stories, each being five or six pages long. This often set up cliffhangers in American reprints that just didn't exist.

In response to the success of their material reprinted in an English format, Marvel set up "Marvel UK" and began their own reprints, with the first issue of *The Mighty World of Marvel* on October 7, 1972. It ran for 329 weekly issues until 1979, when it changed its name to *Marvel Comic* continuing from #330-352. It was revived again for 17 issues in 1983-84. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the line was expanded adding *Daredevils* (11 issues in 1983), *Fury* (25 issues in 1977, with *Sgt. Fury* reprints), and *Spider-Man Comics Weekly* (666 issues – really! – 1973-85, focusing on Spider-Man, so with little Kirby material). These comics stayed with the successfully tested format pioneered by Odhams, and so of course continued to rely heavily on Kirby material from the '60s. For the Kirby collector, the majority of his material was reprinted by Marvel UK in their comics published in the '70s. Since the mid-1980s, Marvel UK has abandoned reprints and concentrated on a line of new material; ie. *DeathsHead, Motormouth,* etc.

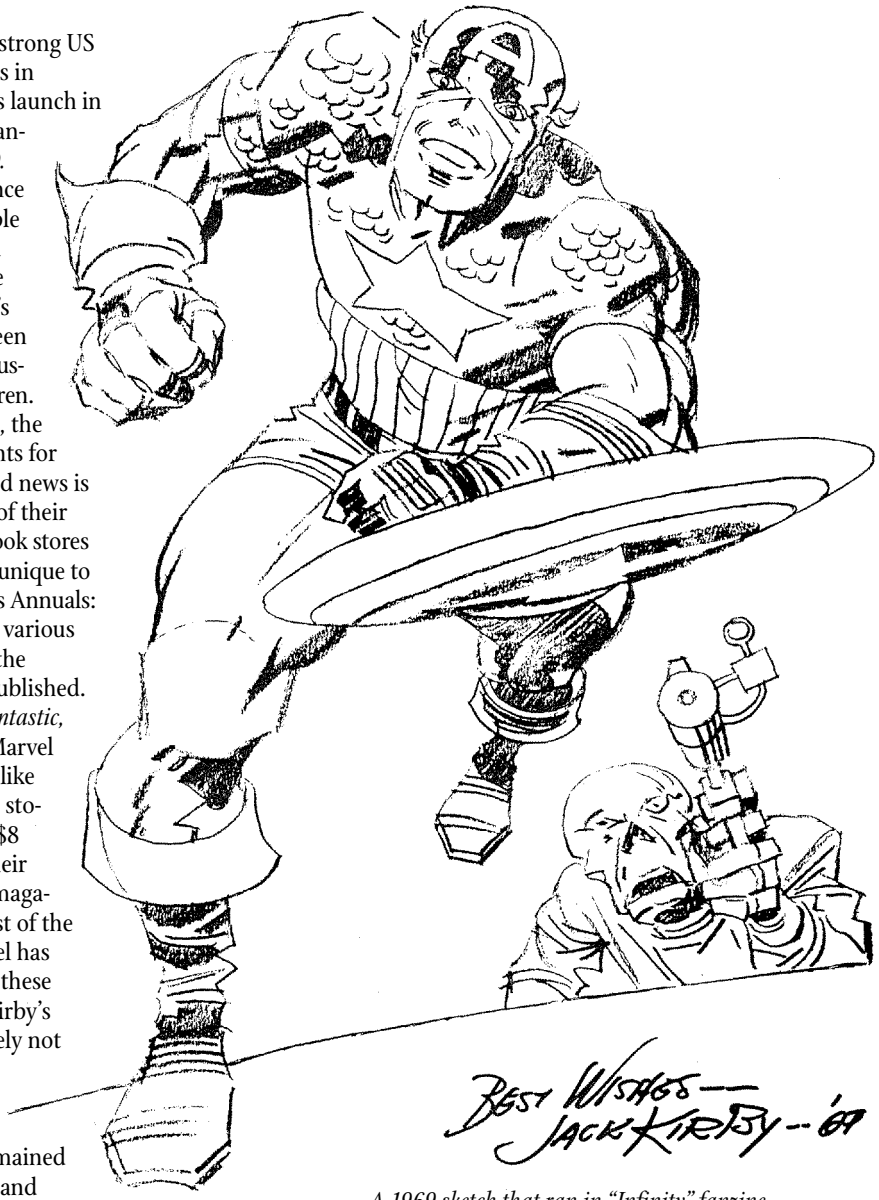
There is no question Kirby's art and scripting were influential on a whole generation of comic book artists, but his artistry helped create a whole industry in the UK. At least 75% of Marvel's reprints were Kirby material. In the late '60s Jack Kirby's art raised the expectations of British comic book readers, who had, with few exceptions, been used to static, basic, almost minimalist artwork. The American reprints in the 1960s were the first comics to appeal to the adult reader, and so lay the groundwork for an adult interest in comic books. It was a combination of larger-than-life adventure, fantastic concepts, and characters

Captains America and Britain, drawn in the mid-1970s.

who used ordinary everyday language, even if it was with a strong US dialect. Moreover the children who read the Marvel reprints in the '60s and '70s were ready to accept the comic *2000 A.D.*'s launch in 1977, with its heightened levels of action, and concepts of fantasy and science-fiction aimed at persons over 12. *2000 A.D.* could not have survived and flourished without the acceptance of both adults and children. In turn *2000 A.D.* was responsible for highly-regarded industry talent like Brian Bolland, Garth Ennis, Grant Morrison, Neil Gaiman, Alan Moore, and Dave Gibbons, who ironically all ended up at DC. Without Kirby's material to pave the way, Bolland, Moore, etc. would have been turned away, or been forced to eke out a living writing or illustrating simplistic stories in England about children, for children.

How do you track down these Kirby UK reprints? Well, the good news is they are very inexpensive; an average of 20 cents for the '70s issues, and 50 cents for those from the '60s. The bad news is that very few comics dealers in the UK stock them because of their low value; you are more likely to find them in secondhand book stores than recognized comics stores. Another comic book format unique to Great Britain along with the weekly comics are the Christmas Annuals: Hard-cover books released just before Christmas, collecting various strips found in a weekly comic. From the late-'60s through the mid-'80s, annuals reprinting Marvel and DC stories were published. Odhams published annuals carrying the logos of *Smash, Fantastic,* and other titles they published. During the 1970s and '80s Marvel UK published annuals such as *Marvel Superheroes Annual.* Unlike the weeklies, they reprinted whole uninterrupted superhero stories, many by Kirby. They too are inexpensive—from $4 to $8 each—and can be found in much better condition due to their hardcovers. To find weekly comics and annuals, check the magazine *Comics International,* a British publication that has most of the comic book retailers in the UK advertising. Now that Marvel has abandoned the concept of their *Marvel Masterworks* books, these English reprints are the most affordable way of acquiring Kirby's Marvel stories. His DC Fourth World series has unfortunately not been reprinted in England.

Commercially since the late '60s, Kirby's American back issues, despite downturns in the value of his comics in the US during the late '70s and '80s, have consistently remained at the high end of values in Great Britain. Only Neal Adams and Barry Windsor-Smith can rival the longevity of the values placed on Kirby material in the United Kingdom. ✪



A 1969 sketch that ran in "Infinity" fanzine.

SCOTLAND *by Ray Owens*

I was born in 1948 in Inverness, the capital of the Highlands of Scotland. My first encounter with American comics was in the late 1950s; the distribution was poor and erratic and my pocket money was very limited. Most comics were obtained by swapping with friends and were mostly cartoons, monsters or westerns, with the odd superhero title. The comics were produced mostly by DC, Dell and Gold Key with a few Atlas titles appearing from time to time. By the early- and mid-sixties, distribution began to improve and I had discovered Marvel comics, and in particular the *Fantastic Four* by Jack Kirby. The art just leapt out of the page; I was hooked. By 1968 and the Marvel explosion, I was collecting seriously—especially anything Kirby.

Then it happened: I "grew up." One Saturday when collecting my *Fantastic* and *Terrific* at my local newsagent, the woman serving me said in a loud voice in the middle of the busy shop, "These aren't for you, are they? You're surely too old to be reading comics." I stopped, and in time threw out my entire collection. I certainly knew of no one else in Inverness reading comics at my age and I had not heard of fandom, so she must have been right; I was too old to read comics.

In October 1972 that all changed. On my way home from work I noticed a new comic on the newsagents counter (not the same newsagent – I never went back); it was called *The Mighty World of Marvel.* It contained *The Hulk* #1 (the first 10 pages), *The Fantastic Four* #1 (the first 13 pages) and the entire Spider-Man story from *Amazing Fantasy* #15. I bought it and never looked back; I was hooked again. Although this first issue was mostly black-&-white with green shading (yes, green shading), I no longer cared whether I was too old to read comics; I was happy.

Over the next six years Marvel UK was able to reprint almost everything Kirby had done since *Fantastic Four* #1. I guess, like a lot of people, the '60s happened for me in the early '70s with Marvel UK reprinting all of the '60s Marvel work. By the mid-1970s I had discovered fandom and somebody else in Inverness who, at my age, still collected comics; legitimate at last, I could come out of the closet. However, by the early 1980s I was becoming bored with comics; there was little from Kirby, and there was no one with that magic touch to sustain my interest. Then on Saturday, April 13th, 1996, while in Glasgow taking my son back to University, I was browsing through a comics shop when I discovered *The Jack Kirby Collector* #9. I was hooked, yet again. ✪

JOHN BYRNE: A CANADIAN IN KING KIRBY'S COURT

Interviewed by Jon B. Cooke

(John Byrne is perhaps best known as the man who revamped Superman and as the artist who defined the quintessential Wolverine. He has long been a major force in the American comics scene since his tenure on Marvel's Uncanny X-Men over a decade ago. Byrne's association with the concepts of Jack Kirby dominates his work today and he has taken over the current New Gods revival beginning with issue #12. This interview was conducted via computer on America Online in February and September, 1996.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: When and where in Canada were you born, and when did you move to the US?
JOHN BYRNE: Actually, I was born in England, in a town called Walsall (where I was only born, we did not live there), and grew up in a town called West Bromwich. My family emigrated to Canada when I was eight, and I moved to the US when I was thirty.

TJKC: When were you first exposed to Kirby's work?
JB: I was probably first exposed to Kirby without realizing it was Kirby. When we first emigrated from England I was exposed to American newspaper strips, and the three I most clearly remember from that first few months are *Alley Oop, Li'l Abner* and *Sky Masters.* And I know I must have seen some of his Green Arrow and *Challengers of the Unknown* work at DC. I used to read the Marvel monster titles in the barbershop when I was a kid. It was there, in fact, that I first saw *Fantastic Four* #2, which I only had the chance to skim over before it was my turn in the chair. I was left thoroughly confused, thinking the FF were villains!

TJKC: Specifically, what stories do you remember most fondly?
JB: I seem to remember blocks of stories, runs on titles, rather than specific instances — although "This Man, This Monster" stands out as a gem in the *FF.* Certainly, when I think of Kirby I think immediately of his unequaled — both in quality and quantity — run on *Fantastic Four,* and his Fourth World.

TJKC: Did Kirby's work have an influence on your decision to go into comics?
JB: As a part of the greater whole, I would say yes, though not in specific. Probably the single artist who made me want to do comics, if I had to pick one, was British; the late Frank Bellamy, who blew me away as a kid with his work on *Dan Dare* and *Heros the Spartan.* Kirby's greatest influence on me was in how I approached my own work on the titles he co-created at Marvel and DC.

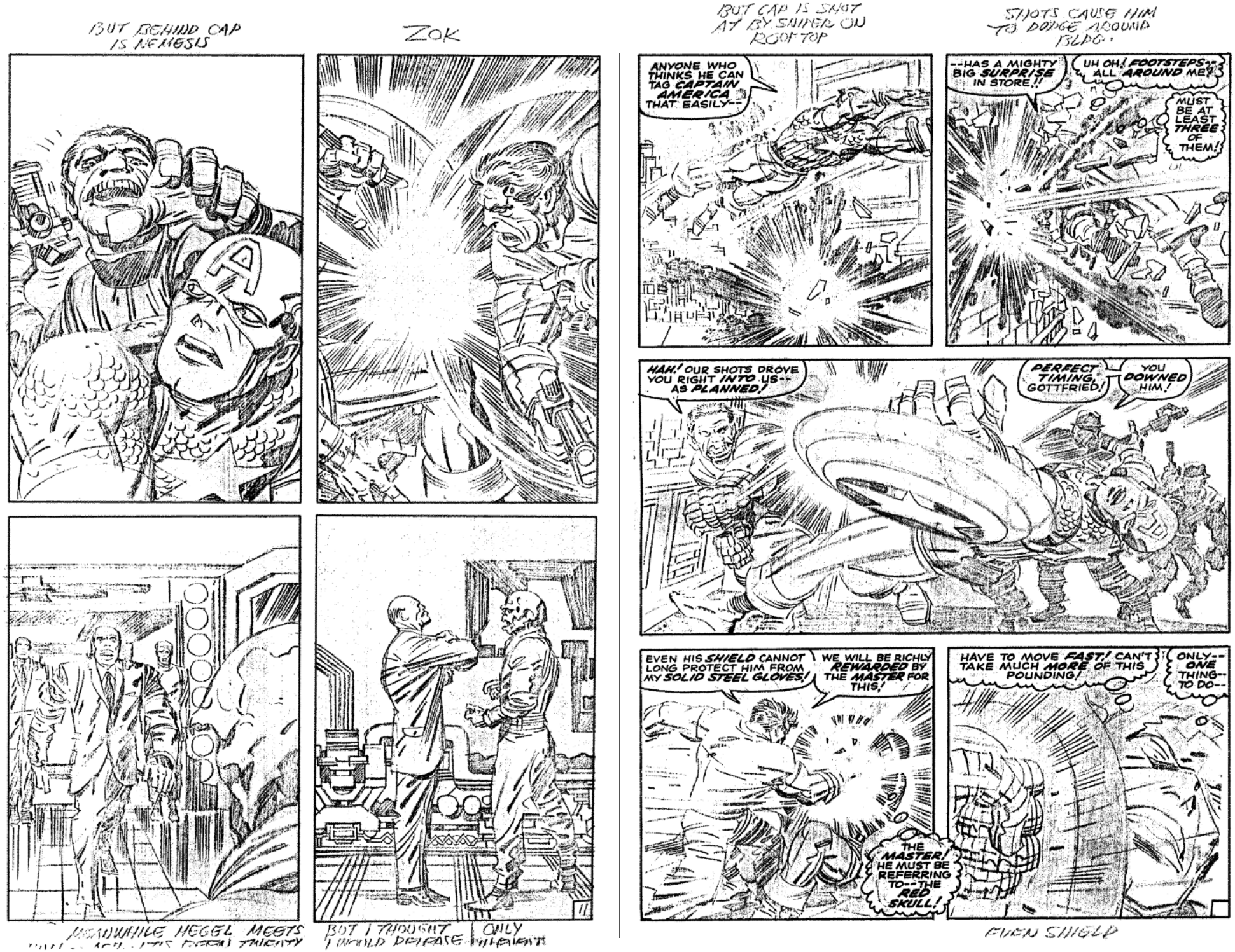
TJKC: One of your first published efforts was the Kirby tribute cover of *FOOM!* #11, embellished by Joe Sinnott, who also inked your initial run on *FF.* What was it like working with Joe?
JB: Joe is the consummate professional. You put a line on a page, you know exactly what it is going to look like when Joe is done with it. He's also one of the nicest guys I know. A big Bing Crosby collector, as you may know. He once asked me what my favorite song was, and when I said it was Sondheim's "Send in the Clowns," he gave me a 45 of "Der Bingle" performing that song! Lucky I didn't say "Kung Fu Fighting," I guess!

TJKC: Was the cover of the final *Devil Dinosaur* the only Kirby art you worked on?
JB: That was the only time I actually inked Kirby's pencils. The first time I saw the real thing, in fact, as opposed to xeroxes. I was amazed at how complete they were, how tight. You could easily have shot from them, no inking necessary.

TJKC: Did you ever meet Jack?
JB: I met Jack twice, both times [at the] San Diego [Comic Convention]. The first time was my first trip to SD, and I took the opportunity to ask him about *Captain America,* since I had just taken over the art chores on that title. I asked him what he had in mind, what single guiding element was most important when he drew Cap. Unfortunately, what he said was of little use to me, since it came from his own background, his own upbringing and take on the world. I was forced to find my own handle on Cap, which was probably for the best anyway, since anything else would have been warmed-over Kirby.

The second time I met Jack was at his last SD Con, only a few months before he died. He was greatly reduced, shrunken (and he was not a big man to begin with, physically), and I was reminded very poignantly of how surprised I had been when I met him the first time, and saw what a little guy he was — tough as nails, you could tell, but small, not at all what you would expect of the container for so much cosmic energy!

TJKC: Do you think Marvel treated Kirby fairly?
JB: Of course Marvel treated Kirby fairly — they treated him exactly the same way they treat everyone! You can't be more fair than that! I think the problem is perceptual; comics as they exist today, and as they



Jack's uninked pencils from Captain America #101, page 11, and #102, page 5, from photocopies made at the Marvel offices and sent to Jack before they were inked. In many cases, Jack's margin notes for Stan Lee got cropped off when his pencils were copied (especially on the sides, like the ones for the middle panel from #102, page 5), but we always have—and always will—show any that are at least partially legible.

Jack Kirby Recalls Lucca, Italy

(This interview was part of an ongoing series called "The Fantasy Makers" conducted by Shel Dorf, and was originally presented in The Buyer's Guide for Comic Fandom #213, December 16, 1977. Thanks to Shel and Carl Taylor for supplying copies of this interview, which is © Shel Dorf.)

SHEL DORF: I understand last year you visited Lucca, Italy. What was your reason for going there?
JACK KIRBY: Well, I was invited to go to Lucca as a part of the American representation at the Lucca Awards Festival. Roz and I went with a contingent of people who we had a great time with, and who we learned to admire because of their articulate comments, and they knew their craft. And, we felt that when we got there, that there would be people just like them. We had a great time.

DORF: This is the big event that the Italian Society of comics buffs put on once a year. How long does it last?
KIRBY: Well, the event lasts a week, and it is held in an opera house which is really a unique facet of the thing because, you know me, I am a sensitive dramatic, and being in an opera house is a dramatic moment for me. I walk across all these tiers, all these boxes full with people, and it's a thrill knowing that I am in that kind of a place, considering that I have never been inside an opera house.

DORF: This is typical of the Italians to treat cartoon art as one of the fine arts, isn't it?
KIRBY: Evidently, it is. I found it so. I found that the Italians are truly an international group, that they are international-minded. I know we had representatives from Mexico there, from Argentina, from Canada. There were people from North America and Europe, and I didn't see any Asiatic representation in particular, but I am quite sure that they had people from all over the globe there.

DORF: How many people were there, at the festivities?
KIRBY: Well, the square was crowded, let me say that! They had sort of an astro-dome structure in the center of the Lucca square, and this astro-dome structure housed the dealers, people with unique things to sell, people who exhibited their drawings from many countries. I saw Spanish people there, and Italians, of course. There were Russians and Yugoslavs, it was really an interesting week for people who like comics.

DORF: Did they also show movies—as we do?
KIRBY: Yes, they showed movies. They showed cartoons from Yugoslavia. They showed European cartoons. They showed the earliest Disney cartoons. I saw a Disney cartoon that I saw as a teenager back in '33.

DORF: Can you tell me a little bit about the ceremonies that included yourself? Did you have an interpreter to help you know what they were saying?
KIRBY: Strangely enough, it was exactly like that. It was like the UN. They had a battery of interpreters in the boxes on the side of the theater. And, the professional cartoonists, the cartoonists who attended the thing and were in line for the awards, were seated in the front rows of the theater. We all had earphones. And our legs were caught in the wires, when I got up to get my award. I was kind of nodding, you know... I always nod during politicians' speeches, and they had the mayor of Lucca on the podium, and somehow they called out my name, and Roz nudged me, and I did a Stan Laurel/Oliver Hardy bit, tripping on all of the wires.

DORF: What did they have to say about you, and your career?
KIRBY: Well, they thought I had established some sort of a format which other artists have followed in comics. I believe my record stands for itself. And, somehow they found that my record had this particular value, and I got the award for that. My stuff has been printed in Italy, all these years. I mean as long as, say, Marvel, Atlas, or any other company had international distribution. They always had some feature that I did. It is a rather unique feeling to find out from these people themselves that you're known by them, and they follow your stuff, and they respect you for the amount of work that you put into it.

DORF: The Italians are passionate people... do you remember some of the accolades that they said about your work? I am interested in what they said about you because the Italian fans, for the last ten or fifteen years, have published beautiful reproductions of comic art, expensive-quality paper, beautiful inks, the very best treatment. So, they

A 1970s drawing of Cap and Bucky.

Pencils from CA #104, page 20. Stan's note atop the page says to check for consistency on Cap's neck, and the next issue box apparently said "Prisoner Of The Prankster" (it was later changed to "Batroc").

must feel very deeply about the value of comic art.
KIRBY: Well, they feel that my work is provocative, that it has a dramatic craftsmanship. And, I believe that it has affected them in the same way it has affected Americans. They love Captain America. They feel, somehow that they are a part of Captain America, just as the Americans do. I suppose if they had a Captain Italian, it would be the same image. The Frenchmen feel the same way about Captain America.

DORF: You find that you are speaking an international language.
KIRBY: I have no difficulty talking with these people. Of course, there were some who could not converse in English, and I used an interpreter, in that particular case. But on the whole, Roz and I enjoyed some delightful conversations.

DORF: And, they gave you an award? Can you describe the award?
KIRBY: Well, actually, there were two awards. There was a plaque which was presented to me by the mayor of Lucca, and it has the image of the opera house on it. It is a substantial award, in weight anyhow. I believe it is an etching of the opera house of Lucca which, of course, I am always going to remember because it was so colorful. The other award was a gold-plated statuette of the Yellow Kid, mounted on Italian marble. And, it has an inscription on the statuette itself which is in the dialogue of the Yellow Kid, which in turn, I believe, is supposed to be the first comic strip ever done.

DORF: How many international artists received this award?
KIRBY: I don't exactly remember the number, but I know Jeff Jones was the other American who received the Yellow Kid Award. Dave Pascal, an American got a scroll commendation. There were a few Yellow Kid Awards. I couldn't exactly name you the people who got them, but one was a Spaniard and the other was an Italian.

DORF: This is the most coveted award the Italians give out?
KIRBY: I believe so. The Mexicans got an award for animation and they were quite exuberant, and I wound up in their van... and, I had to tell them how much I love foreign work. And, of course, I had no trouble doing that because I do. I love people who work hard and are justly rewarded for whatever they do.

DORF: Did you have time to see much of the city while you were there?
KIRBY: Yes, Roz and I looked over Lucca, and it is an amazing old town, but also amazingly modern. The streets are narrow. There are no sidewalks. The automobiles chase you all over the place, and it is fun dodging them; however, the stores are well-stocked with modern goods. You can buy things of value there that you can get here. Of course, they have their own foreign stamp on them, but it is enjoyable to really go shopping there. I learned how to say things in Italian. I learned how to ask for soap.

DORF: Do they have good restaurants?
KIRBY: Their restaurants are terrific. They have terrific restaurants, they have terrific food, and they have terrific personnel who serve you. It is a pleasure eating in any Italian dining place. I hope that many more Americans go there, and enjoy themselves as much as I did. If you manage to run across Jeff Jones, or Dave Pascal, you'll probably get a lot more flowery adjectives about the Italian eating places.

DORF: Did you look at the work of some of your Italian brothers in cartooning; did you get to meet some of the Italian artists?
KIRBY: Yes, I did.

Kirby Around The World

Just how far does Jack's influence stretch? Kirby fans around the globe tell us!

(Editor's note: The following are submissions sent in from Kirby fans around the world, discussing various aspects of collecting Jack's work outside the US. Many of them don't speak English as their primary language, but overall, everyone did a wonderful job of overcoming the language barrier. I've attempted to correct the occasional instances where broken English might have made it difficult to understand the author's intent; please be assured that any alterations in meaning were unintentional.)

South America

Argentina *by Patricio Alberto Cocaro*

I am a 27 year old Kirby fan from Argentina, and I discovered Jack's work when I was 6. I enjoyed reading *Kamandi* and *Mister Miracle.* The only comic books available in the '70s here were Mexican editions of DC comics. Up to that time I believed that Jack Kirby only worked for DC Comics because his Marvel Comics work was beyond my reach and knowledge.

I learned about Kirby's work at Marvel in my adolescence when I got some Brazilian editions of Marvel comics, but I had to learn

A 1991 Spanish edition of Captain America's origin from Tales of Suspense #63. (above) A Mexican reprint of Demon #2.

Portuguese (here in the Pampas we speak Spanish). Then I knew about what I consider the most brilliant epoch in comic book history: The Marvel Universe in the '60s. Today it's easier to find any original edition either from Marvel or DC, and I found out that the Mexican translations I read in the '70s were untrustworthy.

Nowadays I still enjoy reading comic books but I don't read them as often as I did when I was a boy. Comics are the most precious memory of my childhood and when I see my cousin walking along the streets of Buenos Aires searching for hard-to-get editions, my mind goes back to my "golden age," and I feel as curious and happy with comics as I used to at age 6. ✪

Brazil *by Wilson Costa de Souza*

Today in Brazil, we have many comics shops distributing almost everything published in the US and Europe. Marvel's mutants rule and, as it appears in the US, comics are having a hard time surviving. And Jack's standing very much parallels his position in the US.

Here in Brazil, we have three kinds of comic book readers. First is the old timer, those very ancient guys who read Golden Age comics and know that Kirby, Simon, Siegel & Shuster, C.C. Beck, Kane and other creators were involved, and they revere these guys. When talking with them about Kirby, S&K *Cap* is the first subject that comes to mind, immediately followed by the *Vision, Newsboy Legion* and *Young Allies.*

Third Annual Kirby Tribute Panel

featuring Mark Evanier, Marv Wolfman, Roger Stern, and David Spurlock, and held on July 6, 1996 at the 1996 Comic-Con International: San Diego
Transcribed by John Morrow

EVANIER: Good afternoon. My name's Mark Evanier, and I'm pleased to have this opportunity to remind you all about what Jack Kirby meant to us. This is the 14th Jack Kirby tribute panel I've hosted at conventions, and the third here. When we started this, people said to me, "How many of these are you going to do?" And the answer is, we're going to do them until we say everything people want to say about Jack. Which means we're never going to stop doing them. We'll do them at every convention, every place they'll let me as long as I'm alive and possibly in front of a microphone. I don't know if I have to tell anybody who showed up for this why we're doing these panels. But just in case there's one person in the room who's unaware, this convention would not be here, this industry would not be here, if not for Jack Kirby. Amidst all the commerce and hustle that goes on at these conventions, we think it's important to take a few minutes and remember Jack and his contributions to the field.

I've gotta tell you that people throughout the entire convention have been constantly coming up to me, asking me questions about Jack, and going by John Morrow's booth buying *The Jack Kirby Collector.* The interest in Jack's work continues to grow and grow. I've invited up here a couple of people who worked with Jack or knew Jack, to talk about him. Let me introduce to you, on the far end of this panel, a gentleman who's been writing for DC and Marvel for a long time. He's worked on a lot of the strips Jack started, almost all... well, nobody's worked on almost all the strips Jack started, this is mathematically impossible. But he's done a very fine job of keeping the spirit alive. As you all have seen occasionally, people kind of trace and imitate and steal. Jack was never wild about that, but he was always very flattered when someone took his work and extended it and gave new angles to it. This gentleman has done a very fine job of keeping, most recently, the Guardian, the Newsboy Legion, and the DNAliens material in the *Superman* book. This is Roger Stern, ladies and gentlemen. *(applause)*

(l to r) Marv Wolfman, David Spurlock, Mark Evanier, and Roger Stern.

Next is someone who's known Jack a long time. Marv will tell you stories probably of going to the Kirby household, in what year?

WOLFMAN: Aww, who could remember, it's so long ago? Since I was thirteen.

EVANIER: Marv has also done an amazing number of books that Jack started, and a number of other books he didn't start but which were extensions of his work. He was the Editor-In-Chief of Marvel Comics for about an hour-and-a-half. *(laughter)* Anyway, this is Marv Wolfman, ladies and gentlemen. *(applause)*

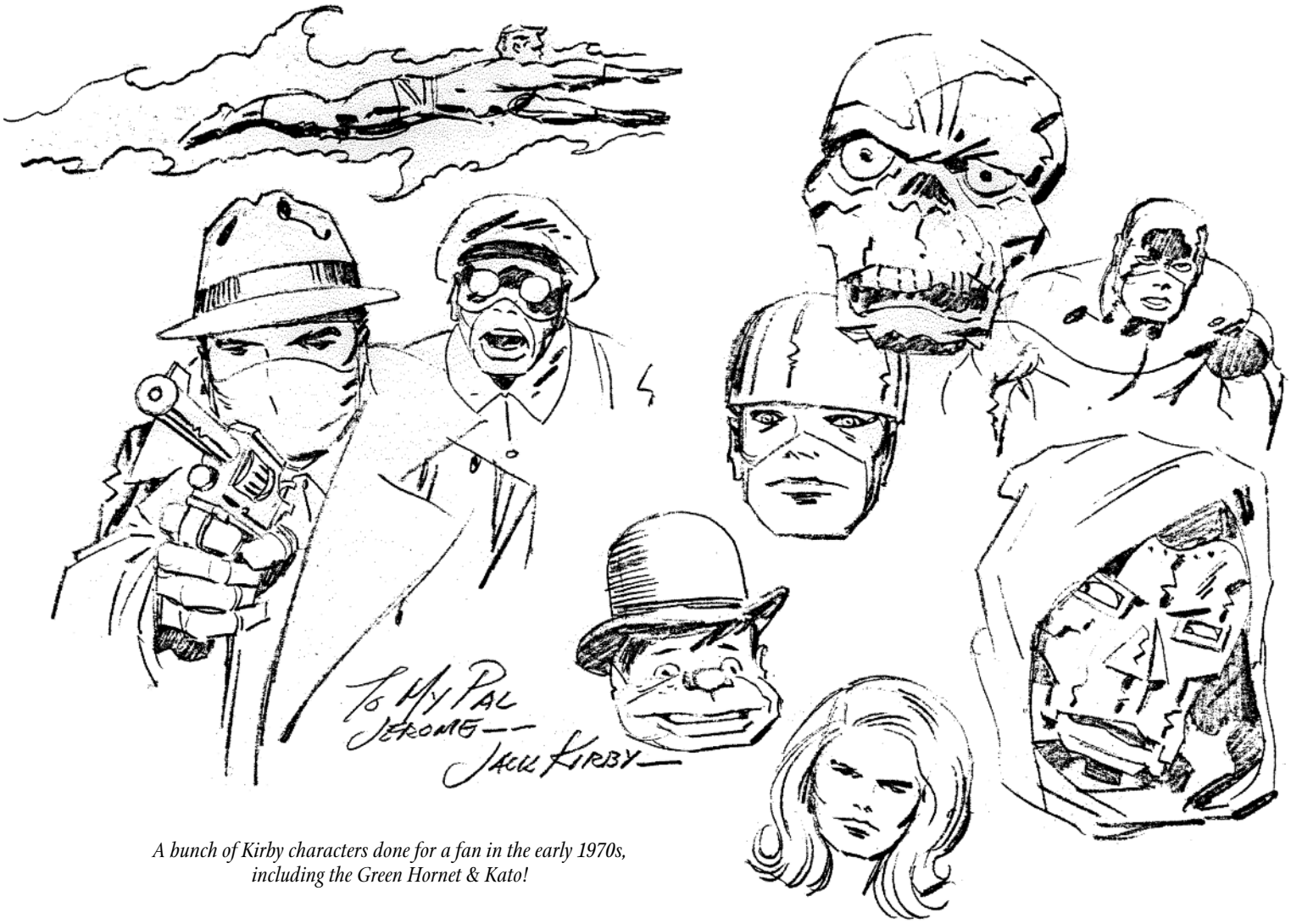
As you all know, Jack had a lot of fans whose work he encouraged, who later became professionals, and who carried on the torch as it were. This gentleman is currently publishing a number of comics himself featuring his work and the work of others, and has become a very fine artist in his own right. This is J. David Spurlock. *(applause)*

I want to start by asking our traditional question here. We'll start with you, Roger. What was the first Jack Kirby comic book you remember that made an impact on you?

STERN: Boy, that would probably have been *Adventure Comics,* one of Jack's early Green Arrow stories. I started reading the *Superman* comics because I saw him on TV. The thing about *Action* and *Adventure* and *Detective* and *World's Finest* is they had extra features in the back, like Green Arrow and Aquaman and Congorilla. A lot of good artists worked on Green Arrow over the years, but one day I picked up the new issue, and I'm going, "Wow, this is really different!" It's incredible, dynamic, with shadows and things. Really exciting, and occasionally, there'd be something really strange in it; like here's Green Arrow and Speedy, and they're riding a 60 foot giant arrow through a rift in space into another science-fiction realm. Well, they never did *that* before! *(laughter)* It was sorta weird, but the way it was drawn, you believed every bit of it. You believed there was a 100-foot tall alien named Xeen Arrow, who was the Green Arrow of another dimension. One of the stories was what I thought at the time was a retelling of the origin of Green Arrow, but it actually was a totally new origin for Green Arrow, which has more or less been adopted over the years. It was really greatly exciting. Of course, there were no credits on the stories, so I had no idea why Green Arrow looked different. But I sure liked it! Within a couple of years, I was starting to realize there were different people who did this. It wasn't the same guy who did all the stories, there were different styles.

My hometown paper, inept and inadequate as it was, had a comics section with maybe two or three strips. It was like, *Pricilla's Pop. Capt. Easy* was there, and always some third strip that was there for awhile. One day, the third strip that was there for awhile was *Sky Masters Of The Space Force.* And I went, "Oh, this is the guy who does Green Arrow! His name is Kirby Wood!" *(laughter)* Then I always looked for Kirby Wood's stuff, and it appeared in odd places like Archie Comics' *Adventures Of The Fly,* and *Double Life Of Private Strong.* I could never figure out why the main character's secret identity was the name of the book, but it was exciting. Within a few years, I discovered it was 'Jack Kirby.' And I looked for his stories wherever I could find them.

EVANIER: I would not have thought that Green Arrow would've been a lot of people's first Kirby work, but I guess it was. Marv, same question.



A bunch of Kirby characters done for a fan in the early 1970s, including the Green Hornet & Kato!

WOLFMAN: Same answer. *(laughter)* Ahh...!

EVANIER: Thank you. David? *(laughter)*

WOLFMAN: At what may have been the first of the Kirby tributes, in Oakland right after Jack passed away, I was one of the four speakers. Mark was the moderator as always. All I did was talk about the memories I had as a kid growing up. The first one I said was "a giant arrow comes down on earth." And you could see half the audience, who were within ten years of my age group, all going, "Yeah." Images like that. You didn't know who the artists were. I may have seen books earlier, because my time-sense could be wrong. I don't know if the Green Arrow stuff came out before *Challengers* or what, but those are the images that I can recall; giant hands coming out of cupboards, the most bizarre up-angles onto the *Fantastic Four* buildings, when you don't even know who the people are who are doing it, you just know how wonderful the art is. The perspective is being shown from angles no other artist would draw, and makes it more dynamic. The detail work was unbelievable, and these weren't comics that were staid little pictures that nobody did anything in. The characters could be standing stark still, and there was a dynamism to the figure work, and an intensity to the way they were drawn, even though they're standing still, that just goes, "Wow! This is incredible!" Green Arrow was probably the first time that I fully recognized an individual artist who was affecting my way of thinking about things. That just blew my mind away in ways that I'd never seen before. Again, I may have seen Jack's stuff earlier. I'm sure I saw some of the western material, which I later bought whole collections of. And I'm sure I saw a lot of the previous stuff, but Green Arrow was probably the one where most specifically I was aware of this artist as being different from all the other artists I had seen. And all the same type of material that Roger was talking about.

EVANIER: David? Same question.

SPURLOCK: I don't remember precisely what may have been the first, but the ones that affected me were a little bit later on. I'm a kid. It was *Avengers* #1 and #5, and still to this day I remember copying the cover of *Avengers* #1, and #1 and #5 always hold something special to me. First of all, the team-up, the team thing with the Avengers overall. Getting all these super guys together seemed real interesting. They were all pretty much Kirby characters, which just added more magic to it. #5 was The Lava Men. For some reason, it just seemed to capture being a kid to me. Things I did as a kid, running around, adventures we'd make up.

EVANIER: In the time since we started this panel, about 50 more people have come into this room, so we have enough here for a proper ovation. Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like you to meet Roz Kirby. *(applause, standing ovation)*

WOLFMAN: Let me say right here, a lot of people here probably got up in honor of Jack to applaud Roz. I got up because of Roz. When I was going to Jack and Roz' house at the age of thirteen, and just being in awe of watching Jack draw on the board, Roz would take me and Len Wein—who joined me on these little treks—upstairs and made sure we had sandwiches, made sure we had milk, made sure we had whatever we wanted. It was like, "You don't have to do this."

"No, you have to eat. You want to join us for dinner." *(laughter)* I stand up for her 100%; a wonderful person. *(applause)*

EVANIER: I think it was even more than that, Marv. Because I think

one of the reasons Jack was able to get to the drawing board every day was because of Roz. He did this incredible amount of work, and she was the one who was always taking care of him, making sure he got there, providing all that inspiration. I used to say that Jack was a two-person operation for a long time.

Before anybody else asks me, I'm pleased to announce that I think we are just about through with the legal problems on the Kirby Tribute Book. *(applause)* It's been taking forever. It is unbelievably complicated. A couple of lawyers have spent... if they charged us for this, it would be a fortune. A number of attorneys have spent a lot of time trying to work out the logistics. Frank Miller and I have spent a couple of hours this afternoon working out some plans. I think we're actually going to be able in two or three months to announce a target date to have this book out. And everybody is nagging me about being in it, so it will be quite spectacular.

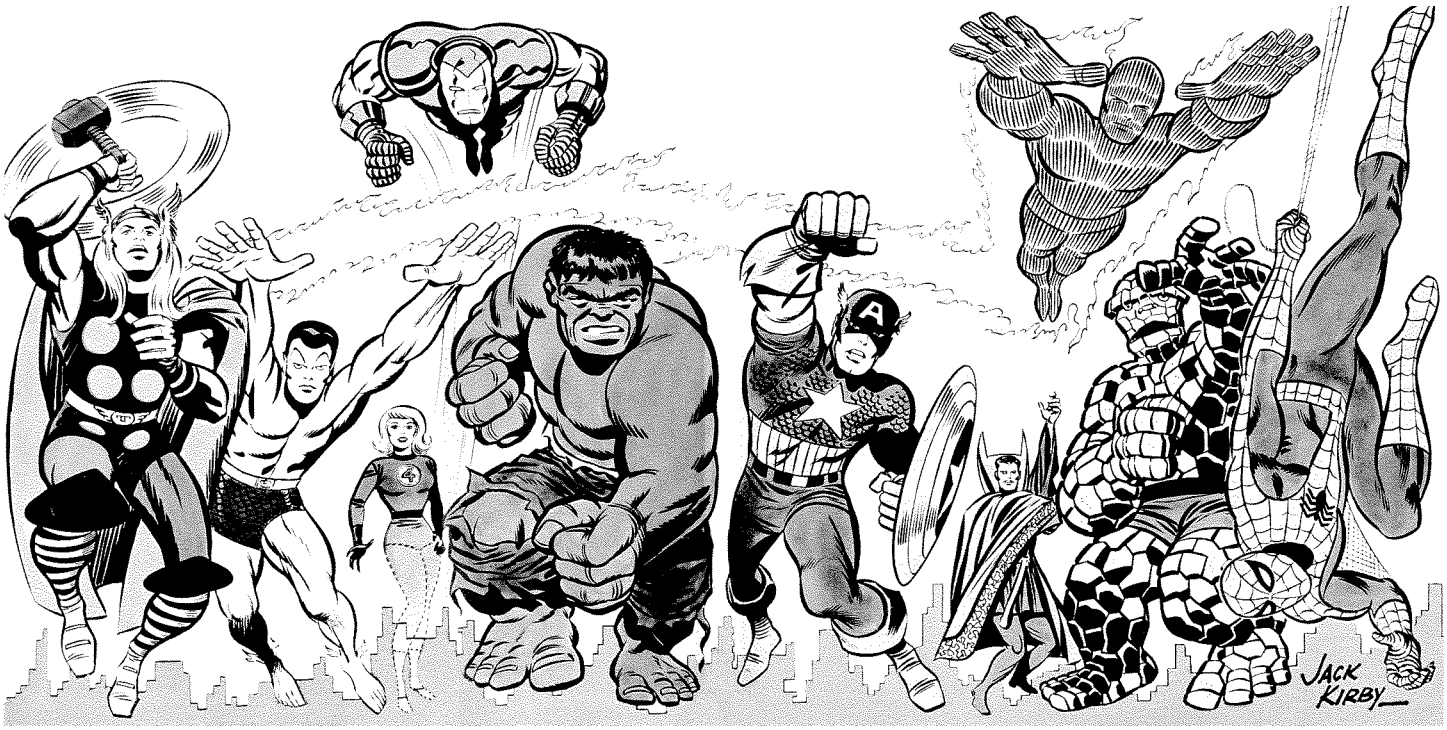
I want to ask Marv, if he would, to elaborate on those visits a bit.

WOLFMAN: Len Wein and I would go out to East Williston, and we were young kids. For us, the idea of just meeting somebody who was in comics was one of the most incredible things. We didn't know a lot of people at that particular age. Later on, we visited companies and stuff. By that point, we did know who he was certainly, and had been collecting all the back issues we could ever find, which was pretty hard to do because there weren't back issue stores or conventions. We'd come over, and Roz would just insist that we had to eat something, to make sure we were healthy. Then we'd go downstairs to the room where Jack drew, and Jack would just be drawing against an art board. It was unbelievable. To this day, I do not understand it, because he was drawing one of those issues in the run of the 50s in *Fantastic Four,* so it was some of the best *Fantastic Four*s ever done. And he would just start and draw a little hand over here. Then he'd draw a foot over there, and a belt buckle over here. There's no little blue line drawing to indicate how he was going to link the stuff up at all. And he would draw a little bit more, and a little bit more, then suddenly he'd start at the upper left hand corner and connect it all. And the finished drawings were unbelievably complex. The perspective of these buildings, and dozens upon dozens of characters, were absolutely perfect. It was as if he not only saw it in his head, but he was tracing it. He didn't have to sketch it and then tighten it up. It was some of the tightest pencils I had ever seen at that point, and still have ever seen. Jack was not an artist who just sketched something in. Every line was precisely in place. And that's really important when you consider how many artists just sketch, and it's up to an inker to sort of figure out what to do.

And during this whole time that he'd be drawing and coming up with these incredible visuals from God knows where—because you never saw anything that indicated where the visual would be coming from—Jack would be talking! He'd be talking about books he'd read, usually that had to do with science. He talked to us at one point—about 5-6 years before the *New Gods* ever came out and Jack was still at Marvel—all about the *New Gods* stuff. We knew the characters, we knew all this stuff. He's the first one who ever started talking to me about cloning. Now today, that's a common word. Back then, none of us had ever heard of it. But he had read about it in an article in some science magazine, and followed through and investigated it. A lot of people feel, because Jack was a supreme cartoonist and was drawing these bigger-than-life drawings, that there may not have been a lot of research or a lot of thinking about what went beyond it. But he was working it out through a lot of research before he ever sat down to do the pages. He knew what he wanted to do, and he had these elaborate concepts in mind long before we ever saw it.

One of the best stories was: I had just sold my first story to some mystery book at DC Comics. I had come up with an idea for a super-hero and roughed it out in my mind. Jack had asked us what we were doing, and I mentioned I'd sold my first story, and I'd just come up with this character. And he said, "Tell me about it." Meanwhile, he's never stopped, he doesn't stop drawing, ever. Just constantly, and it's all this brilliant stuff. And I tell him everything I could possibly know, that I'd spent months coming up with, trying to create this character. And the only reason I hadn't proceeded with the character was I hadn't figured out a couple of important things about him. Within two minutes, he was telling me more about the potential for this character than I ever could have dreamed. He was going off in places that were so perfect for my creation. It's like, this is how you do it! You just don't stop thinking. You don't limit yourself by saying this is as far as your thinking process can go. You go 40 steps further.

And I'm just listening to him create my character, so much better than I have ever done it. He started doing sketches of the way he saw some of the things that should be in it, which I still have. It was one of



This art ran in color in the September 1966 issue of Esquire Magazine. Note how a John Romita Spider-Man figure was pasted over Jack's art.

Jack drew this Captain Victory art for a 1980s French portfolio. Inks by Michael Thibodeaux. Color by Tom Ziuko.