



A 52-PAGE
SUPERNATURAL
THEME ISSUE
SPOTLIGHTING
JACK'S WORK ON
MONSTERS,
MAGIC, AND
MYSTERY!

AN INTERVIEW WITH
JACK AND THE
CREATOR OF
THE SHADOW:

WALTER GIBSON

AN UNPUBLISHED
SEVEN-PAGE KIRBY
MYSTERY STORY!

INTERVIEW WITH
KIRBY INKER

DICK AYERS

THE RHYME &
REASON BEHIND

THE DEMON

SPECIAL FEATURES:

**BLACK MAGIC,
THE VISION,
SPIRIT WORLD,
1960s MONSTERS
AND MORE!**

KIRBY COSTUMES

UNPUBLISHED ART

INCLUDING JACK'S
PENCILS *BEFORE*
THEY WERE INKED,
AND *MUCH MORE!!*



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THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

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Jack Kirby
Dick Ayers



THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

13 DEC.

(left) A Kirby self-portrait (with modified dialogue!) from Tales of Suspense #25.

(below) The Genie - use and date unknown.

ISSUE #13 CONTENTS:

The Kirby Files	4
(an overview of Jack's occult themes)	
The Golden Age Vision	7
(a look at S&K's supernatural hero)	
Monsters from Tales of Suspense ...	11
(relive Jack's greatest Monster yarns)	
Were They Prototypes?	15
(one collector's concerns about dealers)	
Dick Ayers Interview	16
(the veteran Kirby inker speaks)	
The Demon	20
(Jack's DC horror book explored)	
The Monster of Moraggia	24
(an unpublished 1969 Kirby horror story from Chamber of Darkness #4)	
Speak of the Devil	29
(the oft-maligned Devil Dinosaur)	
Young Werewolves In Love!	30
(delve into that old Black Magic)	
Kirby & Gibson Interview	34
(Jack meets the creator of The Shadow)	
The Secret Origin of the Hulk?	39
(Scott Shaw! gives us his theory)	
Spirit World	40
(secrets of Jack's b&w DC magazine)	
Kirby's Monster Mash	43
(a review of Jimmy Olsen #142-143)	
Spotlight on: Kirby Costumes	44
(here's a few we bet you've never seen)	
An Audience With The King	46
(a fan's dual encounters with Jack)	
Jack's Back?	48
(do you believe in reincarnation?)	
Contest Winners!	48
Collector Comments	49

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THE KIRBY-FILES

An Overview of Jack's Occult and Supernatural Themes, by Chris Knowles

With the millennium fast approaching, there has been a mass revival of interest in all things occult or paranormal. The astounding success of the TV program *The X-Files* (strangely foreshadowed by Kirby as SHIELD's "File 116" in *Captain America*) has spawned multiple imitators. UFOs, ghosts, ESP and other arcane topics have become mainstream media fodder. There is a growing interest in all the various fields of metaphysics, from shopping mall neo-Paganism to conspiracy theory newsgroups focused on occult secret societies like the Illuminati. Social scientists have many hypotheses for this phenomenon. Some posit that the dehumanizing effect of the technological revolution has inspired an irrational backlash. Others state the hysteria is caused by the uncertainty of the new millennium and its attendant apocalyptic jitters, even though the year 2000 has no Biblical significance. Followers of the Swiss psychological pioneer Carl Jung theorize that human interest in the paranormal is an expression of subconscious symbols and yearnings. Still others simply see it as a recurring fad.

A casual review of Jack Kirby's enormous output will quickly show that occult, mythological and paranormal themes were featured in his work too. Perhaps someday Jungian scholars will analyze his work and present theories on the deep psychological motivations and repressed subconscious symbols of Jack's space age mythology. I have no such expertise. If pressed, I would simply guess that Jack recognized that mysticism and the occult have always been the basis for entertaining stories since the time of Gilgamesh, and he saw himself in that hoary tradition. However, glimmers of a deeper interest sometimes peek through.

In Ray Wyman's biography of Jack Kirby, there is a revealing episode that in many ways foreshadowed Jack's life and career. Wyman recounts how young Jacob Kurtzberg lay dying of pneumonia, a very serious disease in a time where antibiotics were not readily available, and quality health care was not available to poor immigrant families like his own. A group of rabbis were called in to perform an exorcism, in a last ditch effort to save Jacob's life. They chanted in Hebrew, demanding that the demons leave Jack's body. In the type of ritual that is recounted in the Gospels, the rabbis demanded the names of the demons, which in classical Jewish exorcisms allowed the rabbis to gain control over the demons. This ritual is the kind of religious custom that modern man scoffs at, of course. The only problem is, it worked.

Wyman states quite clearly in *The Art of Jack Kirby* that "Kirby's life was filled

with the mysticism of faith and superstition." Although that assertion may seem obvious to serious Kirby fans, it would seem that a further investigation of Kirby's work could reveal just how serious Jack's mystic interests were, and how in some cases his mysticism was deeper than what he may have realized himself.

(Note: In today's idiomatic English, certain terms have taken on meanings that vary greatly from their original definition. Apocalypse, for example, does not mean End of the World or Doomsday, it simply means "to be revealed." Mysticism has become virtually synonymous with magic or divination but it means "the doctrine of an immediate spiritual intuition of truths said to transcend ordinary understanding." Occult is another word whose meaning has been distorted. Many people today, particularly the uneducated, think "occult" means devil-worship or sorcery. But if one takes the time to look up Occult, the term actually means "beyond the range of ordinary knowledge.")



An early Merlin concept drawing which probably originally fit between pages 21 and 22 of Demon #1.

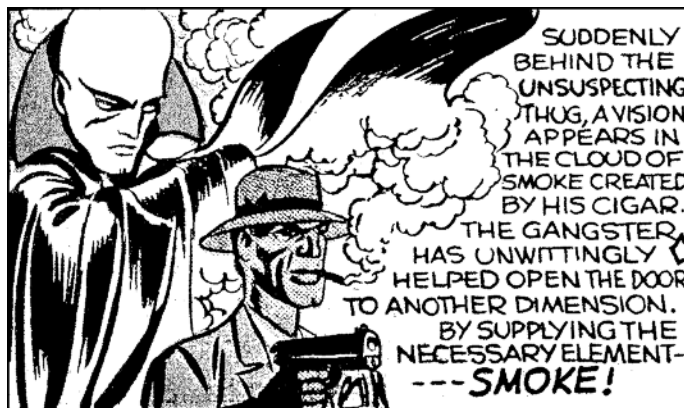
SIMON & KIRBY'S VISION OF THE GOLDEN AGE!

by R.J. Vitone

For years Jack Kirby said that Joe Simon was the major moving business force of their team. Early in 1940, Simon established that rep by finding freelance work for both at multiple comics publishers. Their art and stories appeared in *Blue Bolt* at Novelty, *Champion Comics* at Harvey, and *Red Raven* #1 at Timely. In quick order, S&K began producing more material for Timely, moving over to that publisher's flagship title. *Marvel Mystery* #12 (10/'40) features a classic Angel cover by Kirby. (The interior Angel story was by Paul Gustavson, the artist who created the character. Oddly enough, this was the last time The Angel would be cover featured.) Everything was set. Simon & Kirby had arrived. But what would they do?

The Human Torch and Sub-Mariner were the stars of the book, and The Angel was also highly rated. Past that, the rest of *Marvel Mystery*'s 64 pages was filler. Timely had more second- and third-rate heroes than just about any Golden Age publisher, a fact proven by how few were ever given their own titles. With virtually no restrictions, S&K set out to fill the void for a strong new character. The cover of *Marvel Mystery* #13 (11/'40) featured the Torch, but something new had been added. A strip along the spine showed other featured stars of the book. On top was the legend "Sensational New Feature...The Vision."

With no other fanfare, The Vision's first story was a slick combo of super-science and the supernatural. The elements are appealing: A famous scientist's life work to break the dimensional barrier between our world and "the so-called beyond" is interrupted by vengeful gangsters. (Basically, a similar theme would be used in the near future in the first *Captain America* story, with a Nazi agent doing the damage.) The experiment is a success, as the bridge to other dimensions turns



out to be simple smoke. Out of the thick swirling mists rises a cloaked, green-skinned figure who calls himself Aarkus, Destroyer of Evil.

Pretty heady stuff! Remember, this is 1940. For the most part, there were not many ghostly figures rising out of smoke as avenging angels of death on comics pages! Over at DC in early 1940, *More Fun Comics* #52 & #53 had begun the long-running Spectre series. In style and appearance, The Vision is quite similar. The Spectre was a grim, humorless hero, who assumed the human identity of police detective Jim Corrigan. As the Spectre, he used a variety of supernatural powers to destroy crime. The body count of early Spectre stories was high, but the house style at DC soon changed, and the grim character softened much over the next few years. If Simon & Kirby had seen and talked about the Spectre strip before creating The Vision, then they distilled the best the DC feature had to offer, and added their own power and style to the mix.

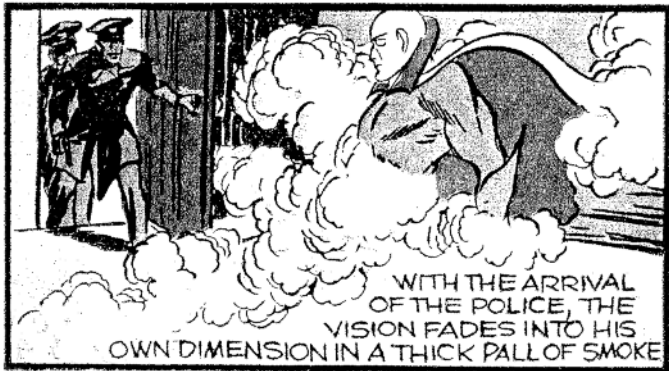
For the first time anywhere, here's a full run-down of the Simon & Kirby classic Vision series:

- *Marvel Mystery* #13 (11/'40, 8 pages, unsigned): The fast-paced origin story opens with a 2/3 splash page and weaves a neat path between the scientific aspects and the earth-bound plans of some stock Kirby hoods. The Vision quickly dispatches a few thugs and assumes a "secret identity" as a suit-wearing gent. In no time at all, he throws off the disguise and saves the young daughter of the head scientist, then captures the remaining hoods. (He ties them up in their own pants!) The story ends with the grateful pair wondering if The Vision will return. The art on this first strip is strictly Simon & Kirby, very similar in style to their *Blue Bolt* work. The layouts are rushed (8 pages, remember?), and their trademark action is in full force. Not the team's best work of this period, but above average. By the way, The Vision was never called "Aarkus" again.

- *Marvel Mystery* #14 (12/'40, 7 pages, unsigned): Another fast-paced story opens with a 2/3 splash, with a tormented man accosting an expert on "occult research" at his home. As midnight tolls the man turns into a drooling werewolf. As the two struggle, The Vision rises out of the smoke of the doctor's pipe. The doctor is dead, the wolf escapes. But The Vision is on his trail. The story becomes a talky showdown between an evil female werewolf and the first werewolf. The Vision arrives in time to kill the worst one and wrap it up. The rushed pace shows in the art, with more Kirby pencils showing through than in the first story. The inks, heavy over the first few pages, lighten



(top) The Vision's first appearance, from *Marvel Mystery* #13. (above) MM #13 2/3 splash.



markedly near the end. All in all, an average story.

- *Marvel Mystery* #15 (1/41, 7 pages, unsigned): The series begins its best streak with this entry. A great 2/3 splash signals a deadly conflict between a fake fortune teller and The Vision. A greedy family member plots to steal his aged aunt's fortune via her belief in the occult. The Vision arrives to stop the plot. A very *Captain America*-like battle is the result, but The Vision still has to crash a spooky seance to save the day. This is almost pure Kirby. The art and story are wide open and running in every direction. More stock characters show up. You'd recognize the sweet old rich aunt from countless Kirby pages. The young ward is 100% Betty Ross from the *Cap* strip. And some slick smoke effects that signal the arrival of The Vision are used to fine effect. Above average!
- *Marvel Mystery* #16 (2/41, 7 pages, unsigned): The cover strip with a Vision logo is used again, and the interior story (with 2/3 splash) is the best of the run. The Barney Bailey Circus has a unique new attraction: Living, breathing dinosaurs hatched from eggs found in Siberian ice! Even as the press interviews the promoter, an electrical storm causes the scared giants to bust out. Panic spreads as they destroy the city, and The Vision takes action. He quickly destroys one of the beasts, then brushes aside some petty thugs to toss a case of TNT down the throat of a tyrannosaurus. The Vision exits via the smoke from the blast. This is what Simon & Kirby built their reps on: A superhero battling giant foes that are beyond our wildest dreams. The combination of *The Lost World* and the rampaging destruction caused by the dinosaurs creates a vivid, unforgettable image. The art is comparable to the first few issues of *Captain America* (CA #1 was released within a month of this story), with the influence of other inkers clearly showing. But the power of Kirby's pencils remains, and the rushed drama hits home. This is perhaps the highest point of

the run. Also note that while "Barney Bailey" could refer to the popular circus, it also is the name of the artist of the DC Spectre strip!

- *Marvel Mystery* #17 (3/41, 7 pages, 2/3 splash, unsigned): At this point the art style of the strip turns sharply downward. Pushing out the new monthly *Cap* title must have forced Jack to devote much less time to the Vision than before, and this episode shows it! The villain is a stock gangster, intent on taking over the Nationwide Trucking business. The war that ensues draws the Vision who helps the honest truckers defeat the thugs. The climax of the story shows the unheroic image of the Vision chasing the head hood to his doom in a sleek red sports car. In a scene right out of the Spectre, the Vision's eyes scare the crook off the road to his death. Static and stilted, the art is bare S&K layouts with house inkers doing most of the damage. A sudden low point for the series, right down to a final blurb that calls the Vision the "Master Ghost!"
- *Marvel Mystery* #18 (4/41, 7 pages, unsigned): The Vision makes his final cover appearance with this issue. He rises from the smoke of a murderer's gun in a dramatic 2/3 splash. The plot creaks: Shifty politicians and greedy hoods bump off a rival and frame a dedicated D.A. Out of the smoke comes our hero, who mops up the mob and vindicates the wrongly accused. Kirby did more in this story than the last, but overall it's still a weak effort. The layouts are thin and the story offers little chance for dramatic impact. Below average.
- *Marvel Mystery* #19 (5/41, 6 pages, unsigned): War fever finally catches up with the strip, as the Vision appears over a Nazi concentration camp in France. The 2/3 splash shows a giant Vision menacing tiny Germans firing up at him. The story opens fast, as a Nazi executioner is about to cut short the life of a freedom-loving author. The Vision bursts in and his attack sparks the prisoners to rise up. Once again we're treated to the sight of the Vision at the wheel of a vehicle as he and the author make their escape. They blast their way out and fly off in a Stuka. Case closed. Kirby took a vacation on this one, as



(top) MM #13: Classic Kirby humor and swirling smoke! (above) 2/3 splash from MM #15.

CLASSIC MONSTERS FROM TALES OF SUSPENSE!

by Tony Seybert

In late 1958, Jack Kirby moved from DC to Marvel and began collaborating with Stan Lee on, well, everything. Kirby penciled dozens, maybe hundreds, of westerns, war comics, and horror/fantasy tales for Marvel in the three years before the first issue of *The Fantastic Four* appeared in the last half of 1961.

The debut issues of three new horror/fantasy/science-fiction titles coincided rather neatly with Kirby's return. *Strange Worlds* #1 was cover-dated December 1958 and the first issues of *Tales of Suspense* and *Tales To Astonish* appeared soon after with a January 1959 date. All three of the new periodicals were similar in format to the long-running *Strange Tales* and *Journey Into Mystery*. *Strange Worlds* only lasted five issues and was cancelled the same month as yet another fantasy series, *World of Fantasy*. It seems likely that the number of weird comics was reduced to four so that the prolific but not super-human Kirby (who was working on several non-fantasy titles as well) could contribute to every issue of the remaining titles. From late 1959 to late 1961, Kirby provided the art for at least one story, sometimes two, to almost every issue of *Tales of Suspense*, *Tales To Astonish*, *Strange Tales*, and *Journey Into Mystery*. He drew all but a handful of the covers as well.

The 'classic monsters' for which this period is remembered developed gradually. There were monsters of one sort or another in many of the earliest of the Kirby stories, such as "The Creature from Planet X" in *Strange Worlds* #4, or the benevolent luna lizards in *Tales of Suspense* #6. In *TOS* #7, The Molten Man-Thing appears and scares everybody before wandering amiably back to his volcano. Monstro, from *TOS* #8, is the first Kirby monster to be given a proper name (instead of merely described, like "The Molten Man-Thing") in the pages of *Tales of Suspense*. However, Monstro seems to be lacking a certain something as a candidate for classic monster status; he turns out to be a confused, mutant octopus who shrinks back to his normal size after a few days and swims away. It was with *Tales of Suspense* #9 that the classic monsters began their bi-monthly (soon to be monthly) invasions of Earth.

In judging monsters, I have a list of characteristics that each must possess before it can be considered a 'classic monster':

- The monster must be the cover feature.
- The creature must have a proper name (example: Colossus) and not merely be described in the title (like "The Creature From Nowhere").
- It must be a menace to Earth.

- The monster must be an alien (although I some times use a broad sense of the term).
- The story in which the monster appears must be a ripping good yarn (which is why I don't include the dreary Gor-kill story from *TOS* #12).
- It must be drawn by Jack Kirby.

If 4 or 5 of these criteria can be applied to a particular creature, the lucky beastie can be considered a classic monster!

DIABLO

How well I remember coming across *Tales of Suspense* #9 (May '60) at a convention in Indianapolis in the late '70s. I was 14 or 15, a big

Iron Man fan, looking for early *TOS* appearances of the Golden Avenger. Iron Man was completely forgotten when I discovered... "DIABLO! The Demon From The Fifth Dimension!!" (That cover has 14 exclamation points, including 6 in a single balloon of only 7 words!!!)

I'm reluctant to say the cover is one of Kirby's best because all of Kirby's covers are

great, but it certainly made an impression on me. Diablo is a horrible creature of dark

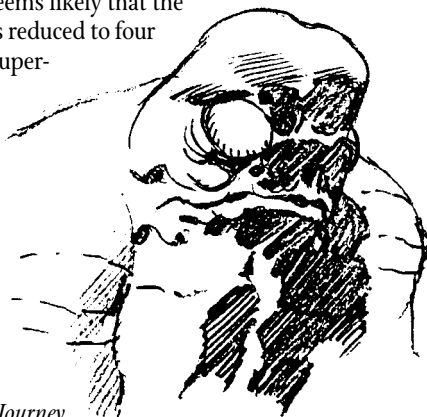
smoke, colored black, purple, and dark blue as he rises from behind an outcropping of stone and menaces a search party of four Kirby stock characters. The city, presumably Diablo's eventual target, lies unprotected in the distance. The background is an irresistible bright red. I had to have it!!

(Actually, I had seen Diablo before. In *Hulk Annual* #5,

Xemnu, The Living Titan—himself a refugee of pre-hero Marvel monster comics and known originally as The Hulk—had made replicas of other aliens of the period, including Diablo. I had long been curious about these ancient beings.)

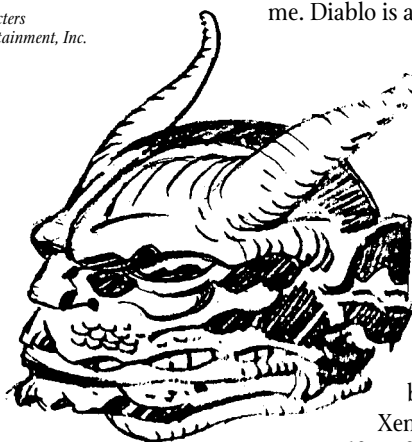
The narrator is an unnamed adventurer whose curiosity is aroused by a story overheard in a Trinidad cafe. The Aztecs of the Sierra Madre mountains have reported a giant smoke demon lurking near their village. Within days, the impetuous protagonist has found the village at the same moment as its inhabitants are hurriedly evacuating. The Smoke Demon is coming! The villagers call it Diablo and tell the hero to flee.

Diablo appears, and through mental telepathy explains that he has travelled the furthest reaches of space for untold ages, searching for a new planet for his over-populated people. Diablo plans to wipe



A collection of classic Kirby monsters.

Characters
© Marvel Entertainment, Inc.



Jack Kirby



Dick Ayers, at the
1996 Heroes Convention in Charlotte, NC

DICK AYERS INTERVIEW

Interviewed by James Cassara

To those comic fans first exposed to the work of Jack Kirby during the late 1950s and early 1960s, no name is more synonymous to his than that of Dick Ayers. For a half dozen years, Ayers inked virtually every story Kirby drew for Marvel, from westerns to the so-called monster books—with their bizarre-looking and even more bizarrely-named creatures of fright—to the earliest superhero titles. With his delicate and deft brush work, Ayers, who first broke into the comics field in the late 1940s with the Magazine Enterprise (M.E.) group, gave to Kirby's work a sense of realism and volume few inkers could. While Kirby's figures seemed to literally leap off the page with an energy of their own, Ayers inks seemed to maintain that authority while anchoring them firmly to the ground. The two styles complemented one another perfectly, each drawing out the strengths of the other.

For all his contributions to the field, Ayers is most proud of his dependability and work ethic. "Jack and I never missed a deadline," he proudly proclaims. "We had to bust our humps, but the work was turned in on time, and it was done right." Today Ayers continues to find work as both a pencil and ink artist. While his work is not seen as frequently as it once was (or as some might wish), he nevertheless continues to add to the legacy that is his, rightfully taking his place as a vital and distinctive figure in the history of comics.

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: Let's talk about your early days in comics. Although this magazine is for fans of Jack Kirby, your career has certainly been distinguished. Who influenced you early on?

DICK AYERS: Well, I've been friends with Burne Hogarth, the famed Tarzan artist, for a long time. (*Editor's note: Sadly, Hogarth passed away shortly after this interview was completed.*) He's my wife's favorite house guest, he's been up to our place many times. He can talk on just about any subject; a very knowledgeable man. He loves to talk about the arts, he really knows his stuff. Some people get bored with that, but not me. I really thrive on it!

TJKC: So he helped you get started?

AYERS: He was my teacher in the late 1940s. I was in the first class of the school he started (The School Of Visual Arts). It was stupendous, you really learned. He talked, and you listened, and if you didn't learn you weren't paying attention!

TJKC: You first broke into comics with Magazine Enterprises?

AYERS: It didn't get published, but actually my first introduction into comics was with Western Publishing, Dell. They did the Disneys of course, as well as a lot of westerns and things. I approached them, I had a story written and drawn. They wanted to wrap a book around it... I got into it but Dell decided to scrap the project. So that got me started.

TJKC: This was an adventure strip?

AYERS: It was an adventure thing, boy and girl, the boy wanted to be a trumpet player. The girl kept feeding the jukebox and he'd play along to Harry James or whoever, that sort of thing. It would go over well today, with all the teenagers into music and everything! It didn't make it but it got me started where I wanted to be in the business.

TJKC: Your foot in the door, so to speak.

AYERS: Right. It was after that I went to Burne Hogarth's school. While I was there at night Joe Shuster visited the class. I started to go down to Shuster's studio, which wasn't far away. Next thing I knew I was penciling a bit here and there. He recommended me to Vince Sullivan, the publisher at M.E., who let me try the *Jimmy Durante* strip. I submitted my work and got the job.

TJKC: So early on you're doing westerns!

AYERS: The humor genre was dying out, so to speak. Westerns were really popular; I had already

done one for them while waiting for the *Jimmy Durante* book to start. That got me going, and from there I did *The Calico Kid*, who of course became *The Ghost Rider*.

TJKC: In many ways that's still the strip you're most closely associated with.

AYERS: It was really a break for me. Sullivan was very good to me, an excellent publisher to work for. He put *Ghost Rider* into the *Tim Holt* comic, *Best Of The West*, and *Bobby Benson*. He gave it very good exposure. I got to do that strip for close to eight years. It started in 1949 as *The Calico Kid* and became *The Ghost Rider* in 1950.

TJKC: So it overlapped some of your work for Timely?

AYERS: Oh yeah, by 1951 I had started doing horror stories for Stan Lee, about one a week. The next year I started doing *Human Torch* for the *Young Men* title. I was still working for M.E., as well as some stuff for Charlton comics at the same time. I did a lot of their horror books, including *The Thing*, which had Steve Ditko's first work... I did quite a few of those, mostly shorter stories.

TJKC: What else for them? Any of the Hot Rod books?

AYERS: No, but I liked what I did for them, a book called *Eh! Dig This Crazy Comic!* Humor stuff, that was a good one. I still have the cover for the first issue hanging on my wall; not the original art, which I didn't get back, but the comic itself. I'm so proud of it.

TJKC: Do you have many of the originals from back then?

AYERS: No, they didn't return them. The only things I got back from the 1950s were *Wyatt Earp*, from Marvel.

TJKC: I know the returning of original art is a real delicate subject for a lot of the Marvel artists.

AYERS: Well, when they started returning the pages, a lot of it ended up missing, lost, or accidentally destroyed. We never saw much of it.

TJKC: I think you're being charitable. Sorry to say, I believe many pages were stolen.

AYERS: The strange thing is that Marvel never returned entire stories; they were split fifty-fifty between the inker and the penciler. But then I see whole stories being advertised for sale; it just doesn't add up.

TJKC: This brings us up to when you started with Jack. By the time you began inking the monster books for Marvel, you had been in comics for at least a



"SOME WEIRDO WITH A THING FOR HALLOWEEN"

An examination of *The Demon*, by Richard Kolkman

There came a day when the New Gods died... prodded into a premature burial by DC, The Fourth World fell silent:

"Change! Change, o' form of man! Release the might from fleshy mire!
Boil the blood in heart of fire! Gone! Gone! — The form of man!

Rise, The Demon Etrigan!!"

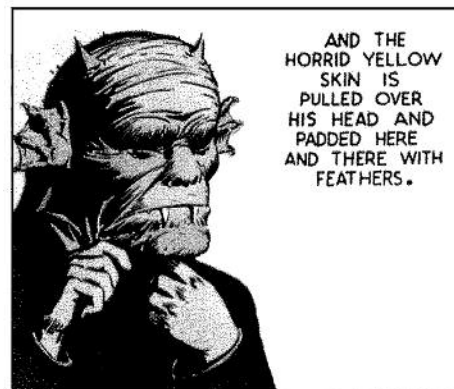
With these words, Jack Kirby spawned the mythology of *The Demon*. Initially asked by DC to take over *Deadman*, Jack declined, opting to create a supernatural character of his own (he did end up doing a take on *Deadman* in *Forever People* #9-10).

According to Steve Sherman's "Demonology" (*Demon* #6), Jack's initial rendition of his demon-type character was covered with scales, had claws on his hands and feet, and had a human-type face covered with fur (resembling Simyan, from Jack's *Jimmy Olsen*). Jack drew the inspiration for his final demon concept from Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant*. While researching architecture and costuming for King Arthur's era, Jack came across the sequence from December 25, 1937. Val drives an ogre and his henchmen from a castle by donning a gruesome mask fashioned from a dead goose, the webbed feet becoming the classic Demon ears. Jack thought it would be funny to tie his mythos of King Arthur, Mordred, and Merlin into *Prince Valiant*. According to Steve Sherman, "after the *New Gods* cancellation, Jack didn't take these things as seriously as before. *New Gods* was an epic, and Jack was

laying a lot of subtext into it about things that were on his mind. With *Kamandi* and *The Demon*, he was having fun."

Demonologist Jason Blood awaits Merlin's call through the centuries by dabbling in everything from "poetry to piracy," and is aided by his Gotham City

friends. First, there is Randu Singh, an ESP practitioner, who is more in touch with Jason's creepy vocation than are Jason's other friends. Next is Glenda Mark, who, upon being introduced, is fascinated by Jason. (Of course, his having an apartment filled with priceless historical artifacts probably helps.) And finally, there's Harry Matthews. Harry has some strange habits; he constantly repeats his full name for his friends' benefit, and goes jogging in his dress shoes (#3). Jack's irrepressible humor is often reflected through Harry, such as when he says that at his advertising firm, "he needs a vacation every five minutes!"



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Perhaps these pencils from *Demon* #1, page 24 best show Jack's homage to Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant*. Jack based the look of his Demon on the December 25, 1937 sequence (shown above) where *Prince Valiant* donned a mask made from a dead goose to scare evildoers.

Jack's *Demon* stories repeatedly drew upon his love of old horror movies. Plots from *The Wolfman*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and *Frankenstein* dominated the title. In "The Howler," (#6) Jason encounters another poor soul tormented by an age-old possession. In this case, wolf-like ferocity is no match for The Demon. The Howler's end draws from the phenomenon of exorcism. When a man on the street encounters the crumpled form of the Howler, a spiritual exchange takes place.

In the saga of Farley Fairfax (#8-10), Greek mythology meets *Phantom of the Opera*. Galatea was a woman brought to life by Aphrodite from a statue carved by Pygmalion. Mix this with *Phantom of the Opera*, add a dash of *Dorian Grey*, and you have the "Phantom of the Sewers!"

The extended story of Dr. Evilstein (#11-13) morphs *Beauty & the Beast* and *Frankenstein* into a supernatural thriller including ESP, with underpinnings of *Dr. Moreau*. The monster with the inner beauty and heart of a child cannot be restrained simply and quietly. He must endure Kirby's veritable fireworks display of blazing electricity and shock waves. Jack always gave readers more than their money's worth! Being a DC book, Jack's treatment of horror was surprisingly over-the-top. A perfect example is the murderous Kamara (#4, pg. 10).

Initially, *The Demon* was a wordless fury, striking at Merlin's magical enemies with a relentless animal ferocity. As the series progressed, he became more sociable, moving one reader to reflect, "The Demon sounds like a taunting linebacker." Many readers also expressed their dismay at Merlin both narrating and taking part in the stories. Another reader complained about the classic, action-less

THE MONSTER OF MORAGGIA

Examining Marvel's revisions to Jack's story for *Chamber of Darkness* #4, by Jon B. Cooke

(Editor's Note: I suggest you read the penciled story on the following pages BEFORE you read this article, to keep from spoiling Jack's surprise ending!)

In what set out to be a standard article — a sidebar, really — on Jack Kirby's pair of stories for *Chamber of Darkness* #4 and #5, an interesting mystery unravelled. During an interview that mostly concerned *Spirit World*, I asked Mark Evanier, longtime Kirby associate, what he knew about those tales. Here the article really begins.

Evanier told a story (one he will elaborate on in his forthcoming biography of the King) that related one of several events that might have led Jack to quit Marvel Comics in 1970. When Evanier and Steve Sherman visited Jack in Irvine, California during the summer of '69, Jack told his guests that "he wrote a story that he was in love with," Evanier said, "that Roz thought was the best story that he had ever done, and he sent this thing off, and he was very proud of it. He got back a call from some editorial assistant, whose name to this day is unknown, that was very rude, telling him how he felt he should rewrite his story. 'We don't like it this way... change this, change this...' and Jack took the eraser and just destroyed this story he loved, and turned it into the version that they wanted."

That version was "The Monster," a seven-page horror short from *Chamber Of Darkness* #4, April, 1970. As printed, it is an unremarkable tale of ugly, misunderstood Andreas Flec (the "Monster"), an arrogant Eastern European nobleman, whose mysterious ways and contemptuous treatment of neighboring villagers provoke the lethal wrath of the townsfolk seeking justice for a perceived abomination.

Kirby historian Greg Theakston was contacted in hopes of tracking down photocopies of the unaltered story, and while they couldn't be found, he remembered seeing copies in the '70s. "This was one of the best horror jobs I had ever seen him do," Theakston said, "and yet completely corrupted in print." In comparing photocopies to the published version, Theakston opined, "It seems remarkable to me that [Marvel] put so much effort into changing what amounted to a perfectly fine story — there's no reason why it couldn't have run as it was." He suggested contacting Marie Severin who worked in the production department at Marvel during the affair, and was cover artist for *COD* #4.

A serendipitous chain of events then took rapid succession: Severin discovered original photocopies, along with her cover designs, and very kindly shared them with *TJKC*, adding pragmatically that "I was and am in awe of Jack Kirby, but even he was subject to changes and re-writes." It was then discovered that Mike Thibodeaux was in possession of four

pages from the published story and he graciously loaned the originals to *TJKC* for examination. The differences in the stories were devastating. The sheer inventiveness was diluted out of Jack's original, its grandiose action reduced to parlor room gunplay, and the finale seemed half-hearted. There was evidence of major revisions, and the final boards showed it. Entire pages were discarded, panels cut and rearranged, and remnants of original pencils could be detected under redrawn panels.

Jack's original submission confirms that Stan Lee was intended to dialogue the story, hopefully with "a touch of less standard pontifical oration" as Jack's margin note requests. (Jack apparently plotted the initial story since he had to explain to Stan that *they* were the witches). After being rejected, Jack got the art back and made changes, erasing most panels and rearranging others, even cutting up his art boards. Stan apparently was responsible for the replotting, since the final art's original — but pasted over — credit box lists Stan Lee as "plotter." But curiously, Jack did do the dialogue on this version, as proven by his handwriting in the balloons, and his erasing the original margin notes.

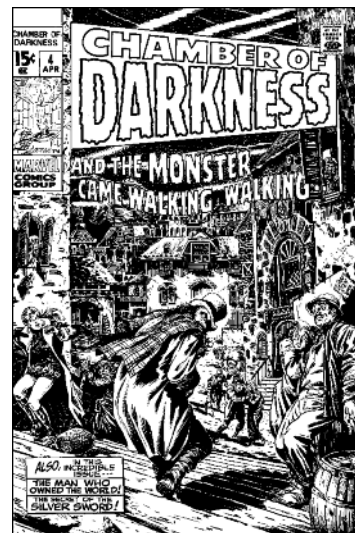
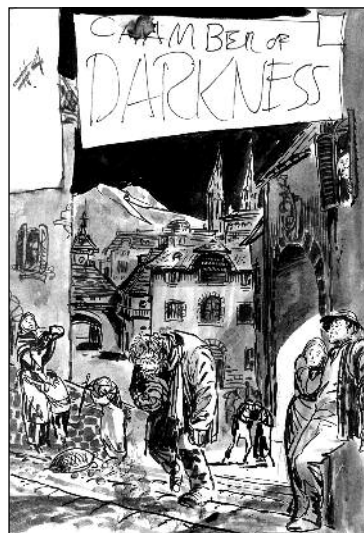
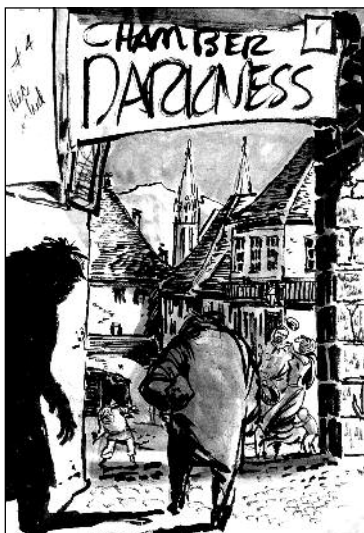
But the meddling didn't end there; someone at Marvel redrew the faces of the Monster and the mannequin. The revised pencils were then inked by John Verpoorten, and lettered with Jack's dialogue. This begs the question: Why were the faces redrawn? According to one of Severin's initial (but rejected) cover designs, the Monster's face is shown as Jack's "Hunchy" version but depicts a scene from the Lee-plotted story of the character walking through the village. (Could the face change have come about in fear of a Comics Code Authority rejection—or was the Monster's face too similar to another Marvel hunchback character, the CCA-approved villain from the *Fantastic Four Annuals*, Quasimodo?)

With the final revision, someone changed Jack's already-lettered dialogue in places, and whited out details on the Monster's face. Changes are not rare in the comics industry. (Severin mentioned one *X-Men* cover that was recolored *five* times.) But what ultimately concerns us, as Evanier said, is that Marvel transformed "a story that Jack was very proud of... into something he thought was lousy." Subjectively, many might agree that Jack's original *was* better and this chain of events may indicate more about a strained relationship between collaborators, rather than a substandard comics story.

Our investigation, as gratifying as it is to uncover past mysteries of Jack's career, was not without poignancy. In the original's final panel, the narrating "witches" (reminiscent of the EC horror comics

(continued on page 28)

Here are Marie Severin's two attempts at a *Chamber of Darkness* #4 cover layout based on Jack's story, and her final cover inked by Bill Everett. Marie comments, "There are many stories that have been redrawn, replotted, etc. We made time for these things and Stan was the boss, and he must have been doing something right. So many people have no idea how much there is to produce a comic, and it was possible then for the editor (in this case Stan) to control his product from plot to coloring—and he also was and is a pro."



TWO STRANGE FIGURES STIR THE FIRES THAT
CONJURE UP THE WEIRD EVENTS IN THE LIVES OF MEN



SIGN OF DEATH



I WANT TO RID THEMSELVES OF MONSTER



LET'S
GET HIM
NOW
END
HIS
TER-
ROR



I SAW HIM-- HE HAS ROOM WHERE
HE TINKERS WITH TOOLS OF THE
DEVIL



WHAT'S MORE HE HOLDS PRISONERS
WHO SERVE HIM AS SLAVES--

(Editor's Note: I obscured Jack's bottom margin notes on this page, so they wouldn't spoil the surprise ending. The notes are shown on page 28.)

YOUNG WEREWOLVES IN LOVE!

A Look At Simon & Kirby's Old Black Magic, by R.J. Vitone

By the mid-point of 1950, Jack Kirby had reached a position of relative comfort in the always rocky comic book industry. Although DC had testily dispensed with his services early in 1949, he and partner Joe Simon had rebounded nicely. Together they gathered a fine revolving team of artists, inkers, and writers to package and produce pages for the still-growing comics market. Business was good. The Simon & Kirby name on a title insured sales and earned the respect of a new wave of eager comics pros breaking into a field thirsty for new blood. Successful romance and crime titles flew off the Prize Group's drawing tables. Kirby's output, unhurried and enhanced by artists of similar style, was steady and top-notch. Rather than maintain the status quo, why not toss the dice again?

Over at Educational Comics, Bill Gaines scrapped the remnants of a publishing company founded by his father (comics pioneer Max Gaines) and began his own titles reflecting his own vision. Early 1950 saw the release of *The Vault of Horror*, *The Haunt of Fear*, and *The Crypt of Terror*. No long-underwear heroes here! Just out-and-out old-fashioned blood and gore starring snarling werewolves, ravenous ghouls, dust-encrusted mummies, and assorted monstrosities, but with a huge difference; stories with style and wit! Twist endings with a tongue-in-cheek smirk! A house style that respected the reader's I.Q.! And the art... oh my, the art! Work was by some of the leading talents of the time, many of whom either had worked with Kirby at some time, or would, or owed him a huge measure of credit for inspiring their careers. Reed Crandall, Al Williamson, John Severin, Joe Orlando, Jack Davis, even Frank Frazetta, all helped establish and create an exciting new genre in comics. Success came swiftly. With success came profits. With both came imitation. And thus came *Black Magic*.

Produced at the peak of S&K's romance and crime period, *Black Magic* came out the same month as *Boys' Ranch* #1 (Oct. 1950). *Boys' Ranch* would run just six issues for Harvey Publications. It stands today as a major point of interest in the Kirby saga, despite the fact that Mort Meskin did major

amounts of work on the strip. But *Black Magic* is all but forgotten, even though Jack contributed some of his most striking art to the title, right through 1954. The book was strong enough to continue on without Jack and Joe for a few years until it finally ran out of gas in 1961.

Why *Black Magic* (and its sister mag *The Strange World of Your Dreams*) ranks so low to Kirby collectors is open to debate. Maybe it



An unused Black Magic splash page. The presence of Jack's handwriting indicates he wrote this story.

JACK KIRBY & WALTER GIBSON INTERVIEWED

Excerpts from the 1975 Comic Art Convention Awards Luncheon in New York • Original transcription by John Benson • ©1976 Phil Seuling

(Editor's Note: This is an edited—and shortened—version of the transcript that ran in the 1976 Comic Art Convention Program. However, all of Jack's comments are presented here in their entirety.)

PHIL SEULING: I don't think anybody can doubt that in the fields of the comic book and the pulp, Jack Kirby and Maxwell Grant—I say Maxwell Grant: Walter Gibson—these are the two grand masters. What relationship does the adventure novel or the adventure comic book have to our lives? What relationship is there in, let's say, the *Shadow* novel to our lives?

WALTER GIBSON: ...I tried to keep the things in tempo with the times, and really make them informative, and I think that gripped the readers and carried them along with it. I know that the comics are a great field for that because there you can actually... the thing is realized in a visual way.

I think that now the curious thing is that people are reading the stories for nostalgia. You pick up any of these *Shadows* that are coming out now, and you read about something happening on the Limited between New York and Savannah, why you'll find it's running exactly according to the timetable of 1936 or whenever the story was written. So maybe we're giving them information of a nostalgic type now.

SEULING: Jack, how about it? What meaning does the adventure comic book have for us?

JACK KIRBY: Well, we live in a functional world, we see functional things, and reality is a practical part of our lives that of course is necessary, but I believe that we're kind of a non-static animal; we just can't remain static on any level. So we have to have something to offset this practical world and I believe that's why we live this vicarious life in various media; the movies, the dance, concerts, and, of course, comics, which I feel is a very valid part of our cultural media.

But what Walter Gibson says is true; I feel that we have to be contemporary at all times. If you look at an old comic book or at a pulp, you'll find it's like a time machine. Whatever year it was published, you'll get a real glimpse of what people were like, how they dressed, the general atmosphere of the time, and the reason it causes nostalgia is that you can get a very accurate picture of what the time looked like through this medium. You'll see it in the cars, the buildings, and the people themselves. You'll see the sack dresses, I imagine, and you'll see the macho machines, the cars of the times, and you'll get a very good view of that period.

But aside from nostalgia, we have this craving for living more flamboyant lives, and comics supplies a lot of that. So if I've done an effective job in it, I feel that I've maybe contributed to an extra dimension that we all want and we all need.

SEULING: Like all literature, the pulps and the comic books broaden our experiences vicariously. ...As I look at the pulps and the comic books—and now we're talking about the 1930s—the big thing

then wasn't lasers, the big thing then was radio. Remember how many times villains were striking other people with radio rays, and radio patrols would catch them, and radio directional signals would be the means to the solution? I don't think television ever entered into pulps or comics the way radio did. And now it's lasers.

KIRBY: Radio communication rings, the FBI rings, I think they were all part of the radio epic. Because we hadn't known anything else; we just conjectured about jets and things to come of that sort, but we couldn't visualize. And radio, I think, was the newest thing in our lives at the time.



Pencils from *Demon* #10, page 12. Interestingly, it's numbered page 11 here, so Jack must've gone back and added a page to the story later. (next two pages) Hulk drawings done for fans in the 1970s.

SPIRIT WORLD & OTHER WEIRD MYSTERIES

by Jon B. Cooke

After feeling stifled at Marvel in the late '60s, Jack Kirby took on his new position as editor/writer/artist at DC with great creative energy. "He proposed a whole series of new format comics," Mark Evanier, former Kirby assistant said. "Big magazines, small magazines, tabloid-sized magazines, weekly comics, novels. Jack was really at that point of the belief that comics had to get out of the 32-page format to survive."

"What Jack wanted to do," Kirby associate Greg Theakston said, "as a one-time publisher and a guy who packaged his own books for years, was to package different *kinds* of books." And now the King had a receptive publisher and he was pitching ideas hand-over-fist, many of them non-superhero concepts. "Jack wanted to do a *Dracula* book, very similar with what Marvel came out with later [see sidebar]," Evanier explained. "A couple of characters Jack wanted to buy the rights to — *Doc Savage* was one of them. Mostly it was a matter of subject material. Jack was highest on the romance as an idea."

While the vampire and pulp material never got beyond the talking stage, DC did give the green light to two of Jack's ideas: *True Divorce Cases* and *In the Days of the Mob*. "He submitted a whole series of concepts, and DC picked what they wanted. They picked out of the dozen or two dozen ideas that he submitted. They picked to do *Mob* first, *Soul Romances* (a blaxploitation incarnation of *True Divorce Cases* that was completed but eventually scrapped), and then DC suggested *Spirit World*."

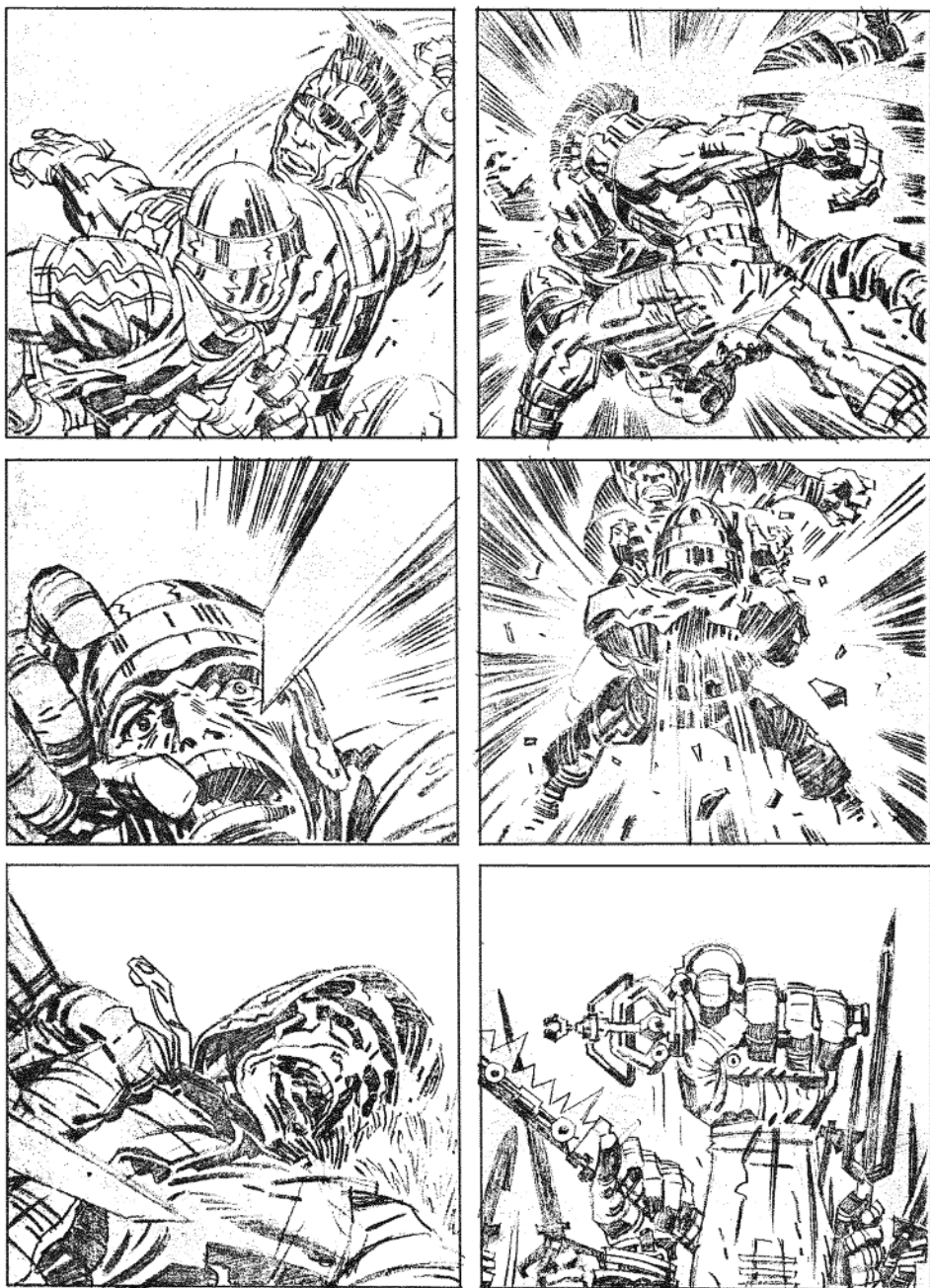
Jack advocated a new format for these magazines, one that would later be realized by others in *Heavy Metal*. "Something slick with upscale advertising for an older audience," Evanier said. Jack admired the European sophistication in subject matter and their expensive production values, and would haunt the shelves of *Graphic Story World*—Richard Kyle's Long Beach, CA comics shop—for international editions. And he certainly envisioned these projects in color, not the one-color tint that eventually saw print. "That was somebody's idea in New York and Jack didn't like it," Evanier said.

Unfortunately, DC kept scaling back the projects "into cheaper formats," Evanier explained. "To my knowledge, Jack never came in and said 'let's do black-&-white magazines.' Jack did not like black-&-white." In launching the pair of projects, the company inaugurated Hampshire Distribution, "just a fake name that DC set up," Evanier said. By not labeling the books as published by the nationally-recognized DC Comics, Theakston said, they revealed "how much faith they had." DC then christened their books the "Speak-Out Series."

"Prophecy! Reincarnation! Haunting! Black Magic!" screamed the cover copy of *Spirit World* #1 which was published in the Summer of 1971. "Jack did a cover [to *Spirit World*] that was part collage, part drawing," Evanier said. "Then they had Neal Adams re-draw the whole thing in New York with a similar layout. They changed a few

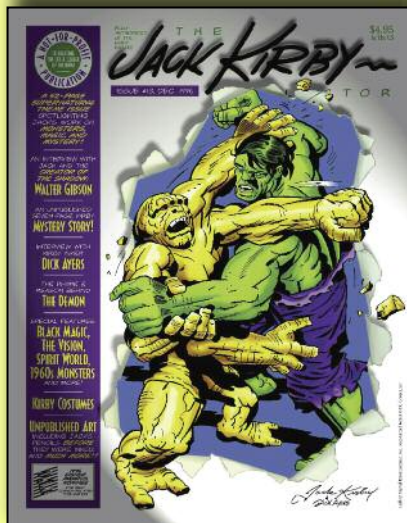
things." As with *Black Magic*, Jack's interest in the subject area continued to be in suggesting terror of the unknown, rather than the explicit gore and repulsive horror epitomized in EC Comics. In sharp contrast to the black-&-white Warren books and the garish *Terror* magazines sharing space on the stands, *Spirit World* delved into more supernatural aspects with its bespectacled and bearded host, Dr. E. Leopold Maas, paranormalist — it was more *X-Files* and less *Tales from the Crypt*.

The contents of #1 were mature and provocative, indicating that Jack was reaching out to a more adult audience. The initial story dealt with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, but exploited not the conspiracy angle, but the reported premonitions of "Lucille M." and her futile attempts to influence the White House to cancel the tragic Dallas visit. Aided with three pages of Jack's legendary collage



Pencils from "Toxl, The World Killer," intended for *Spirit World* #2. Mark Evanier dialogued this story.

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