



A 68-PAGE ISSUE
ON KIRBY'S
WACKEST WORK!!

AN UNPUBLISHED
KIRBY INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWS WITH
**GIL KANE &
BRUCE TIMM**

COMPARING KIRBY'S
MARGIN NOTES TO
STAN LEE'S WORDS

KIRBY'S WORK AT
TOPPS COMICS

JACK'S **WACKEST**
DIALOGUE AND
BLOOPERS

SPECIAL FEATURES:

**SILVER SURFER,
BLACK RACER,
OMAC, &
GOODY RICKELS**

KIRBY'S UNSEEN
SCREENPLAY FOR
SILVER STAR

UNPUBLISHED ART

INCLUDING PENCIL
PAGES **BEFORE**
THEY WERE INKED,
AND **MUCH MORE!!**



JACK KIRBY

ISSUE #21, OCT. 1998

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THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

THE ONLY 'ZINE
AUTHORIZED BY THE
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This Mister Miracle drawing was part of the Kirby Unleashed portfolio. Our thanks to Bob Wiacek for inking it for this issue's front cover! Our back cover is Jack's poster art for the 1960s Captain Nice TV show, inked by Chic Stone and colored by Kirby! Bob Latimer is selling the original and is accepting offers on it; call him at (305)759-4991.

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THE WACKY DC YEARS

by Mark Coale

Over the many years of Jack Kirby's career, he worked numerous times for the various incarnations of DC Comics, from the Golden Age exploits of the Sandman and Manhunter to the three *Super Powers* mini-series of the mid-1980s with stops in almost every decade in-between. Arguably his most imaginative period at National/DC was the 1970s, which can be broken down further to smaller subcategories.

The first stage consists of the Fourth World books. The second contains *The Demon* and *Kamandi*, which started in mid-to-late 1972. The third stage deals with the various books Kirby worked on until his return to Marvel in 1975. Chronologically, the first Kirby book in the final stage of his 1970s DC stay was the futuristic *OMAC*.

As is often the case with his work, Kirby built the foundation of *OMAC* on previously explored territory: Nebbish everyman is selected by scientist and government agency to be super-human fighting machine. After hero's creation, scientist is murdered, taking secrets of experiment with him. This not only describes Buddy Blank's transformation into the OMAC, but Steve Rogers becoming Captain America.

Due to the times in which they were created, the similarities between the two ends at their creations. Even though Captain America has evolved into a moral hero, he was given the Super-Soldier Formula for the US to use against the Axis powers. OMAC, on the other hand, was created by the Global Peace Agency "to control conflict before it grows" into full-blown war, a pre-emptive weapon to be used to keep power-hungry dictators and crazy scientists in check. In doing so, OMAC was given the rank of five-star general, credentials that authorized him "to stop flare-ups which endanger world peace."

The other hallmark of *OMAC* was Kirby's ability to introduce fantastic technology that has now become part of everyday life. Kirby could easily be considered a futurist, given the number of gadgets that have shown up in his work that have actually been invented.

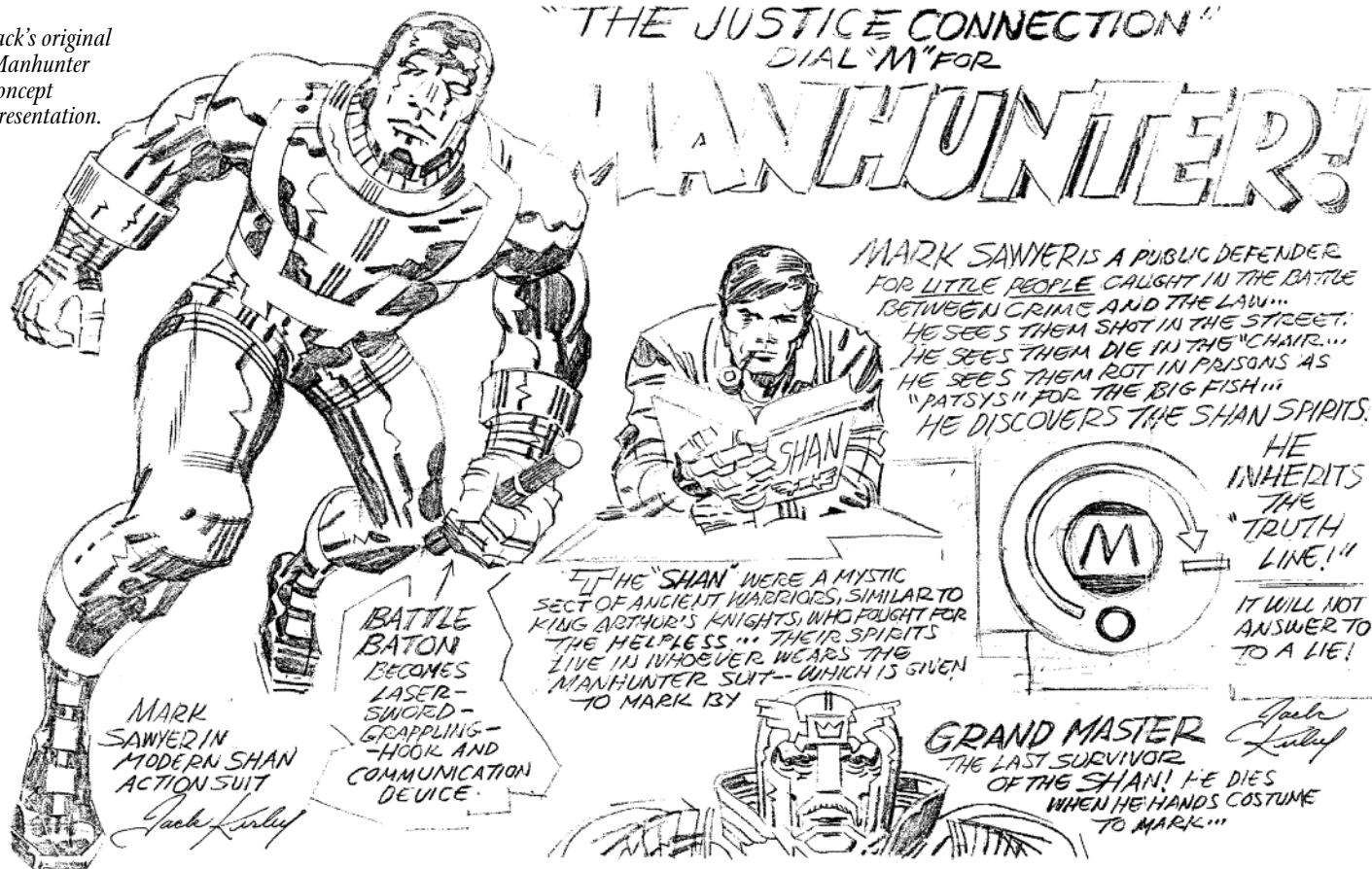
Some of the ones in *OMAC* include: "Mind phones" that allow the viewer to enter a fantasy world and experience what is going on (otherwise known as virtual reality), vitamin light baths that restore energy (tanning beds), holographic arcades (video games), and "pocket phones" used to communicate away from home (cellular phones). However, modern science still hasn't managed to perfect some of the things found in the book, including brain transplants, assault chairs, weight neutralizers that can shrink bodies of water into small bars, bio-organic nuclear assassins, or synthetic women designed to seduce world leaders.

Soon after *OMAC* came *Sandman*, reuniting Kirby with former collaborator Joe Simon. Simon & Kirby worked on the Golden Age Sandman; however, the new Sandman had nothing in common with his namesake. Instead of being a down-to-earth scourge of the underworld, this Sandman was the "Universal Master of Dreams." From his Dream Dome, Sandman watched over people's dreams, thanks to his Universal Dream Monitor. When there was trouble, he could enter Dreamland or the real world and called on his minions, Brute and Glob (with their bags of nightmares) to fight aliens, despots (including General Electric, former leader of the Kamikazes), and mad scientists like Doctor Spider using his Dream Whistle and Sleeping Sand.

Response to *Sandman* was, according to the letter column in #2, tremendous. Unfortunately, the first issue was designed as a one-shot, so when the time came to continue the series, neither Simon nor Kirby were available. So, the creative team for #2 and #3 was editor Joe Orlando, writer Michael Fleisher, artist Ernie Chua [later Chan] and inker Mike Royer, although Kirby still did the covers. With #4, Kirby returned to do the pencils on *Sandman* with Fleisher remaining as the book's writer. #6 saw Kirby inked by the legendary Wally Wood.

During the period between *Sandman* #1 and #2, DC debuted *First Issue Special*, a try-out book much like *Showcase* in the 1950s and 1960s. To kick off the title, the company turned to Kirby. Again returning to familiar territory, Kirby went back to the mythic hero concept and created Atlas, the same kind of larger-than-life character as the Mighty Thor. Here, our hero was a child who saw his family murdered by a ruthless tyrant named Hyssa. A man named Chagra

Jack's original
Manhunter
concept
presentation.



MONDO KIRBY

*A previously-unpublished interview with Jack Kirby,
by Randy Hoppe and Andrew Mayer*

Randy Hoppe explains: "In the early Nineties I was an avid consumer of Mondo 2000, a wildly glossy magazine filled with digital eye-candy, day-glo tressed and tattooed models draped in computer gear, and techno-hippie political screeds. The folks who published Mondo 2000 from their communal home in the San Francisco Bay area were inspired by the science-fiction novels of Bruce Sterling and William Gibson, the punk DIY ethic, and the seemingly non-stop advances in computer graphics, virtual reality, and smart drug technology. These people seemed to me, at the time, to be the embodiment of some of the future people I'd read about in comic books.

"I was also beginning my travels in cyberspace and became a member of a San Francisco-based conferencing system called The Well, run by the folks who published the Whole Earth Review. Mondo 2000 soon had its own forum on The Well, and one Well-ite made mention of some of the concepts in The Eternals. Our discussion of Kirby's work went on—his use of Virtual Reality in OMAC, the bio-engineering of Arnim Zola and the High Evolutionary—and one of the editors posted that his interest was piqued and that perhaps there was an article in it. Eventually Andrew Mayer, a writer and programmer, pitched the article to the editorial tribunal and got an OK. Andrew and I felt this was a great opportunity to meet and interview Kirby, so Andrew made arrangements with the Kirbys to meet at that Summer's San Diego Comic-Con. It was my first San Diego Con, and I was going to interview the King! Life was good!

"Once the interview started, I didn't really get a word in edgewise, but Andrew asked the right Mondo-like questions, and Jack took it from there! We submitted the article, including some quotes, but it wasn't published. We were told one of the editorial tribunal didn't really like comics. Go figure—Neil Gaiman and Dave Sim were later featured in the mag."

14 August 1992: The Kirbys' hotel room

ANDREW MAYER: I was reading the *Hunger Dogs* last night and I was really blown away with the way in that book that you were dealing with issues. You were taking some of the issues you were dealt with earlier and then saying what's happening now—what's changed now.

JACK KIRBY: What's changed now is that story-telling has changed. Like you said, you talk about technology—we don't write on pads anymore. We write on computers, we write on word processors. Actually, our language may be crisper and maybe a little more urgent. Maybe we're just not as leisurely as we used to be.

MAYER: Have you noticed a change in the way people...?

KIRBY: No, it's not a great change. People remain people through all kinds of technologies. Sure, we had technology, too. We called 'em pencils, and we tried for effects, even with pencils. We tried for halftones. Didn't we have Ben-day?

RANDY HOPPE: Sure. Surprints.

KIRBY: Right. So if you wanted a halftone, it was just a series of dots. Really. If you analyze it and put it under a microscope, you've got these dots spread all the way out. Put 'em together and you get a nice halftone. In other words, it isn't black, it isn't white, but it'll look great on pants! (laughter) So yes, I believe we had our own technology, but it was a simple technology.

MAYER: For instance, the Micro-Mark you were talking about in the *Hunger Dogs* book; Darkseid had come up with this new technology that was going to change...!

KIRBY: Yes, I was trying to stay 30 years ahead. I always try to stay about 30 years ahead doing my stories. In other words, I wouldn't write a story about things people already knew.

MAYER: I came across something that blew my mind in *OMAC* where



Original pencils from the Fighting American poster sold with the Kirby Masterworks portfolio.

he's got these goggles on and he's going into this movie in his dreams. That's predicting something that they're coming along with now: Virtual Reality.

KIRBY: Of course, of course—but it's something which at that period could have been ridiculed. "Those things are never going to happen."

HOPPE: And here we are.

KIRBY: And here we are. The technology is so simple to us that we readily accept it as part of our lives. I can't use it as well as you, but it's your generation that's grown up with it. So, it lives with you fellows and

it's as natural as anything.

MAYER: Like video games or whatever.

KIRBY: I envy you in a way because you can live a lot more reasonably in a contemporary world than I do.

MAYER: But there's a lot of issues that you brought up through all the work that you did, where sometimes it makes your life more difficult.

KIRBY: Well, of course it would! Because a lot of people wouldn't accept what you're doing. They say, "Well, you must be a daydreamer. Give us facts." And, of course, the facts would be very simple for that particular day. But somehow they accepted

mine, because I took those fantastic facts and put them in a good story. And if the story sold magazines, I was doing my job. My job was to sell magazines.

MAYER: When you were doing those, did you think how you were affecting your audience—what somebody would be thinking about when they were reading them?

KIRBY: Sure! I felt that the audience would feel the same astonishment that I did—astonishment in these particular developments. Now, in my day the subway was a big thing, right? But today we have modes of transportation that outstrip the common subway. We can look forward to techno-tubes and things like that. We can look forward to crossing New York in 45 minutes when it takes us 2 hours now.

MAYER: So you were always looking ahead over the horizon and just pulling that back.

KIRBY: Yes, I always drew a story 30 years ahead—what I considered 30 years ahead.

MAYER: So then, somehow you mixed that in with mythology as well.

KIRBY: Oh, yes I did. I brought mythology into modern times. I brought in Hercules. I brought in Samson.

MAYER: And the New Gods.

KIRBY: Well, the New Gods were a 30 years ahead thing! (laughter) The New Gods was, "What was that mythology all about? There's gotta be a new mythology!"

MAYER: Reading it even now, it's exciting.

KIRBY: I was creating a mythology for the '70s, which the '70s didn't have. Not only that, it was acceptable in the fact that it was a battle between father and son.

MAYER: That's very classic.

KIRBY: It is classic! Show me the son that doesn't defy the father! (laughter)

MAYER: And then you switch them so they have this urge from the other side.



Unpublished page from Devil Dinosaur. Was Jack 30 years ahead, or 2,000,000 years behind with this idea?

BRUCE TIMM INTERVIEWED

by George Khoury with Pedro Khoury III

(He is the backbone of The Batman and Superman Adventures and the new animated show Batman: Beyond. His long Emmy award-winning animation career began somewhat by accident; what he really wanted to be was a comic book artist. So this man, along with his partner-in-crime Paul Dini, created the Eisner and Harvey award-winning comic book, The Batman Adventures: Mad Love. If you've enjoyed his work, you would have long noted the Kirby influence within him and how he's kept the King's memory alive on the small screen. From Jack's in-your-face action in Batman to Kirby's massive armory collection in Superman—it's all so very Jack Kirby, yet so very much a part of Bruce Timm.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: What are your artistic influences?

BRUCE TIMM: Well, mostly comic book guys. *(laughter)* Obviously Kirby is a huge influence on me, but I've gone through phases where I was really into one artist or another at a different time. Frazetta, Toth, Kurtzman, and a lot of Marvel guys—John Buscema was my god for the longest time. *Silver Surfer* #6 was my bible; I used to trace the whole book over and over again.

TJKC: Alex Ross described your style as part Alex Toth, part Jack Kirby.

BRUCE: Yeah, I guess that's true. It's a funny thing about Alex Toth; I never really tried to sit down and copy what he did—never sat down and learned to draw from looking at his stuff. To this day, I've never understood the key that makes his stuff so wonderful. Everyone thinks his stuff is just really simple, but it isn't. He's one of the finest draftsmen to ever work in the business. If you really look at his drawing, they're photographically sound—very realistic—but somehow when he does the ink and the clean-up, he puts this thin cartoony line on it that kinda reduces everything to a real simplistic formula; but the underlying drawing is really complex. So when people say they see a lot of Toth in my work, I don't really know what they are responding to; maybe it's just the simplicity of it.

TJKC: Which art school did you attend?

BRUCE: I never went to art school. I'm completely self-taught. I learned how to draw from drawing *Silver Surfer* #6 over and over again. *(laughter)* Basically I learned how to draw from copying comic books, literally. My parents were always very supportive of me. They said, "Well, if you wanna be an artist that's fine, but we understand that it's kind of a risky business, and maybe you should have something to fall back on." When I went to college, I foolishly didn't go to art school; I just went to regular college. Fortunately college gave up on me about the same time I gave up on college.

TJKC: When was the first time you saw Kirby's artwork?

BRUCE: It had to have been in the Sixties, without knowing who Jack Kirby was or anything. I was too young to really appreciate it. I was born in '61; you can do the math. When I was younger, we didn't really have a lot of comic books in the house; we weren't poor, but we weren't well-to-do. I would only get comics occasionally when I was sick. My mom would get me some comics to get my mind off being sick and things like that. My allowance was only twenty five cents a week *(laughter)*, so I really couldn't afford comic books. But I'd see all the super-hero shows on TV like *Batman* and *Space Ghost*, and the Marvel cartoons. The very first time I saw Jack Kirby was probably the *Marvel Super-Heroes Show*: An adaptation of the first Sleeper story they did in *Captain America*. They just took still images from the comics and put them on cels and just kinda pulled the background. Occasionally, they'd animate an arm; but I loved those films when I was a kid.

TJKC: Did you own any Kirby comics?

BRUCE: When I was a kid, I probably didn't own a single Kirby comic—there's not one that I can remember. When I was thirteen, there was this guy on the street that had a drawer full of comics his cousin had given him and he said, "You want 'em?" I said, "Sure!" He had just a little bit of everything: Kirby reprints, the legendary *Silver Surfer* #6, and a whole bunch of other stuff—mostly Marvel from around 1972. One of them was a *Marvel's Greatest Comics* reprint with the first Black Panther story. That probably was actually the first Kirby comic I ever got. Actually in the same drawer full of comics there were a couple of *Mister Miracles* and the *Demon*, so that kinda put the zap on my head.

TJKC: Is there any artistic image that comes to you when you think of Kirby?

BRUCE: Not really. I don't know how he did so many things and did them all so well. He did stuff that nobody would have considered doing, especially at Marvel in the Sixties.

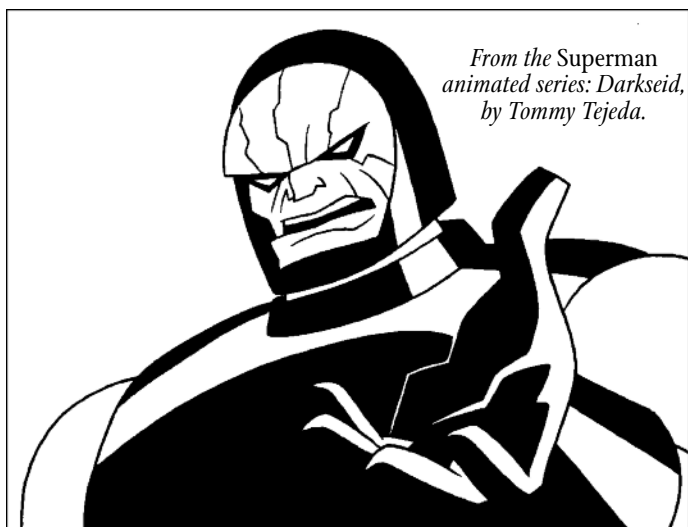
TJKC: What do you think made his art so unique?

BRUCE: Well again, you could really focus on the action and the fantastic elements that stick out: The zig-zaggy lines, the fantastic machinery, and everything else. A lot of that is wonderful stuff—it's stuff that I kinda appropriated into my own comic book work—but the wonderful thing about Kirby is he was a born storyteller; he could make anything look interesting even if he didn't have super-heroes to play with.

It's funny; one of the guys and I just the other day were looking at an issue of *Justice Inc.* he did. You could tell it was at the end of his tenure at DC and he didn't really give a sh*t about it. The Fourth World had already gone away and *Kamandi* was about the only thing



Bruce's inks of a Kirby pencil drawing.



From the Superman animated series: Darkseid, by Tommy Tejada.

he had created that was still going strong, and he was just waiting out time so he could go back to Marvel. He was doing this *Justice Inc.* book and he really didn't care about it but he just couldn't help but do a good drawing. It's not his best work but even so, there are still gems on every page, even if it's not an action scene. There's just a natural sense of composition and a natural sense of drama.

TJKC: Did you try to get into comics before getting into animation?

BRUCE: Actually, yeah. My whole career in animation has kind of been a fluke. I never was a huge cartoon fan; there are people in this business who live and breathe cartoons. They studied and analyzed. They studied all the Disney movies; went to animation school and stuff.

TJKC: That's probably what makes *Batman* unique; you don't have that traditional animation background.

BRUCE: Yeah, I basically wanted to be a comic book artist when I grew up. I think at some point I realized that I wasn't quite good enough to get into comics. I realized my own limitations. But I saw these really, really crappy cartoons on TV and I said, "Well, at least I can draw *that* good." (laughter) So I applied at one of the local animation studios. It was this company called Filmation—my very first paying art job. It was 1981 and the show was called *Blackstar*.

TJKC: Did you ever meet Jack at a convention?

BRUCE: Yeah. I wish I could say I had a wonderful conversation but I met him only a couple of times, and just long enough to say, "Oh Jack, I just wanted to shake your hand and tell you I think you're wonderful." I didn't know what to say to him. I did not know how to have a conversation with him; I regret that. The thing is, for years before he died, I was living in Agoura Hills—which is five minutes away from where he lived—and there were plenty of opportunities I could have easily gotten and introduced myself to him. I could have spent an evening and had a conversation with him but I never ever did. I really regret it.

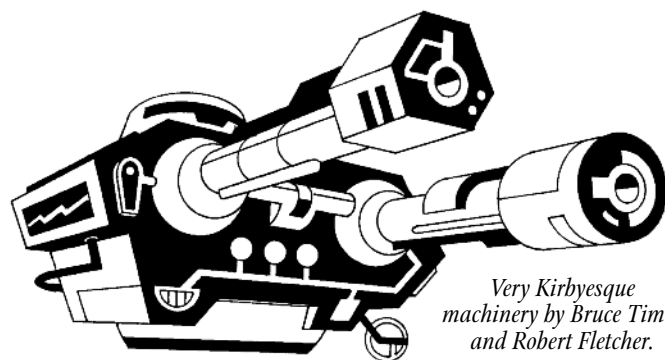
I actually have to drive past Jack's grave every morning on my way to work! It haunts me.

TJKC: How would you describe your role on the *Batman/Superman* show now? I've noticed you don't direct as much as you used to.

BRUCE: Yeah, I don't have the time. Basically producer/designer; I still end up designing a lot of the main characters for the series, but I do a little of everything. My fingerprints are all over the show. From the minute the script gets written, I'm giving the other producers my story notes and talking about casting with the casting director, overseeing the voice recording with the voice director, overseeing the art-work of the series and storyboards. Then when the show comes back, I'm kind of in charge of putting it all together in the editing room.

TJKC: Are there any Kirby elements in the show?

BRUCE: Absolutely, especially on the *Superman* series—less so on the *Batman* show. We knew exactly what we wanted to do with *Batman*—you know, the Film Noir/Art Deco kind of look on it. When the time came to do *Superman*, we really didn't know what to do that would make it visually different from *Batman* but at the same time just as cool. We didn't wanna go back and make it look just like the Fleischer cartoons; I didn't want anybody to put our show up against Fleischer's and say, "Well look, they're doing the Fleischers, just not as well." One of the things we wanted to do with *Superman* was to kind of "Marvelize" Superman a little bit. That's why the police don't just carry handguns, but these Kirby-like weapons. All of the science-fictional elements in



Very Kirbyesque machinery by Bruce Timm and Robert Fletcher.

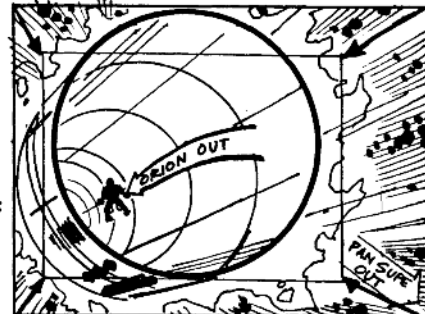
this series—whether it's a tank or something from outer space—has a kind of Kirby feel to it, or at least we try to. Even in the pilot, the origin story, there's this Brainiac satellite floating around Krypton and we tried for the longest time to come up with a design for it, and we didn't come up with anything I really liked. I found this Kirby gizmo in one of the Kirby comics and I turned it upside-down and said, "Hey! That's our satellite." There are things like that all the way through the show where we would just find Kirby-ish elements and turn them into things in the *Superman* show. I also try to do that with some of the villains. A lot of the Superman villains aren't nearly as interesting as the Batman villains. Batman has the best rogues gallery in comics and the Superman



A BLINDING LIGHT ERUPTS BEHIND ORION ...!



WIDER—A BOOM TUBE HAS OPENED UP—ORION TURNS AND FLIES UP INTO IT... SUPERMAN WATCHES, BUFFETED BY A COSMIC WIND



TRUCK IN ON BOOM TUBE AS ORION ACCELERATES RAPIDLY INTO THE DISTANCE...

HOW I CAUGHT THE MYTHOLOGY BUG FROM THOR

By Eddie Campbell, award-winning artist of *Bacchus* and *From Hell*

I've been drawing *Bacchus*, my irreverent take on Greek mythology, for some ten years now but have never had the opportunity to recognize, for the record, the source of my inspiration for it—namely a run of half a dozen issues of *Thor*: #124-130. This was the unforgettable meeting of Thor and Hercules in the first half of 1966. I was ten years old. I would have first come across the story in *Fantastic*, one of five weekly comics published by Odhams Press re-packaging Marvel material in black-&-white for British readers. Most of my generation discovered Marvel this way (ask Moore, Gibbons, etc.) between '63 and '69, and we were able to familiarize ourselves with the black-&-white inking techniques of the likes of Colletta at a time when you guys in the US were not able to.

(I've never understood the volume of dislike for Colletta's inking. For me he was the only inker for *Thor*. Where Sinnott created a surface that was glossy and futuristic, Colletta's work—equally individualistic and accomplished in its own way—was matte and rustic, the perfect complement to the *Thor* style with all its lovable cockeyed antiquities. Moreover, Sinnott has his stylistic descendants—Royer, etc.—while Colletta's style defies analysis. The brush and pen lines themselves do not add up to that particular matte look. For comparison, see Kubert's deliberate rendering of a coarse surface in DC's *Firehair*, with his use of drybrush and crayon.)

Lee and Kirby were just getting into those everyday-life touches that make their work from this period so special. Thus #124 kicks off with a big splash of Thor stopping to pick up a newspaper on a New York street corner. We talk about 'story-arcs' nowadays, but back then I think the model was the TV soap opera, with a whole bunch of story-threads interweaving, phasing in and out. Thor goes off to the Far East to tie up a loose end regarding a lost Nornstone, while on Mount Olympus a new thread is introduced when Zeus sends his son Hercules to Earth. While the Far East plot gives us the monthly dose of action, the scenes of Hercules just being hedonistic are a thrill to see. Hercules is a delightful Lee-Kirby character interpretation; a big, bluff, lovable hunk of granite who makes Thor a tight-assed prima donna.

COP: "Let's see your license to give a public demonstration in the street."

THOR: "License? I have no license. I am THOR."

COP: "I don't care if you're Mother Hubbard," etc.

What confidence, eh?—to make your title character come off second-best to another hero. While Hercules wows the girls in a restaurant (#125), the plot is set in motion by a Hollywood movie scout.

"Now, get this, J.B. I spotted just the one we're looking for! He'll make the greatest Hercules ever filmed."

When hold-up men bust into the restaurant, Stan Lee's daft anachronisms can only add to the charm of the scene.

Hercules: "Though the words be strange, the tone is unmistakable! And worse, they interrupt my madrigal."

Another great thing about the Lee-Kirby style, which I find joyously funny now, is the way the battle of 1966 is set up. In one of their typical oddball coincidences, Hercules is wooing Jane Foster.

JANE: "That large, powerful figure in the center of the crowd! It can only be Thor! I must get to him..." right at the point where Thor returns to Earth.
THOR: "Jane! I have returned"

JANE: "Really? I forgot you had been away!"

THOR: "How came you to be here with HIM?"

The crucial thing I learned from these guys is that you can be funny



IF MY BODY WAS NOT WRACKED WITH A THOUSAND WOUNDS IN ODIN'S SERVICE I WOULD HAVE RUSHED THOSE RUFFIANS

IN EVERY CHARGE AGAINST THE STORM GIANTS-- I WAS EVER IN THE FORE FRONT BEAH- BEAH--

BUT YOU'VE GOTTEN KINDER FAT SINCE

Volstagg debuts in this back-up story from *Journey Into Mystery* #119; the humor was pure Kirby.

"FIXING" KIRBY'S ART

Submitted by Shane Foley, Al Gordon, Tom Horvitz, Albert Moy, and Fred Smith

Here are some instances of Kirby art submitted by our observant readers that, for one reason or another, was altered from its original form before publication:

- *Captain America* #100, cover (shown at right)
Major inking changes are evident on Cap when compared to the original art, as well as the addition of the Wasp where Baron Zemo's shadow used to be.
- *Captain America* #107, page 20 (shown below)
The final 2 panels are by Romita. What were Jack's?



- *Eternals* #15, cover (shown at left)
Hulk's face and right hand, Ikaris' left hand, and buildings in the background are by Romita.

- *Fantastic Four* #37 & #38, covers
The published versions are different

from the original versions shown in house ads from around that time. On #38, the Thing figure on the published cover has been redrawn (possibly by Dick Ayers), the Torch figure has been repositioned, Medusa's hair has changed, etc.

- *Fantastic Four* #52, cover
Who changed the Panther's face? *FF Index* #4, the cover reprint in *Marvel's Greatest Comics* #39, and the alternate, unpublished cover all show that same Panther figure with a mouth showing.
- *Fantastic Four* #60, cover
The "glow" around Dr. Doom was added. The original is in *FF Index* #4.



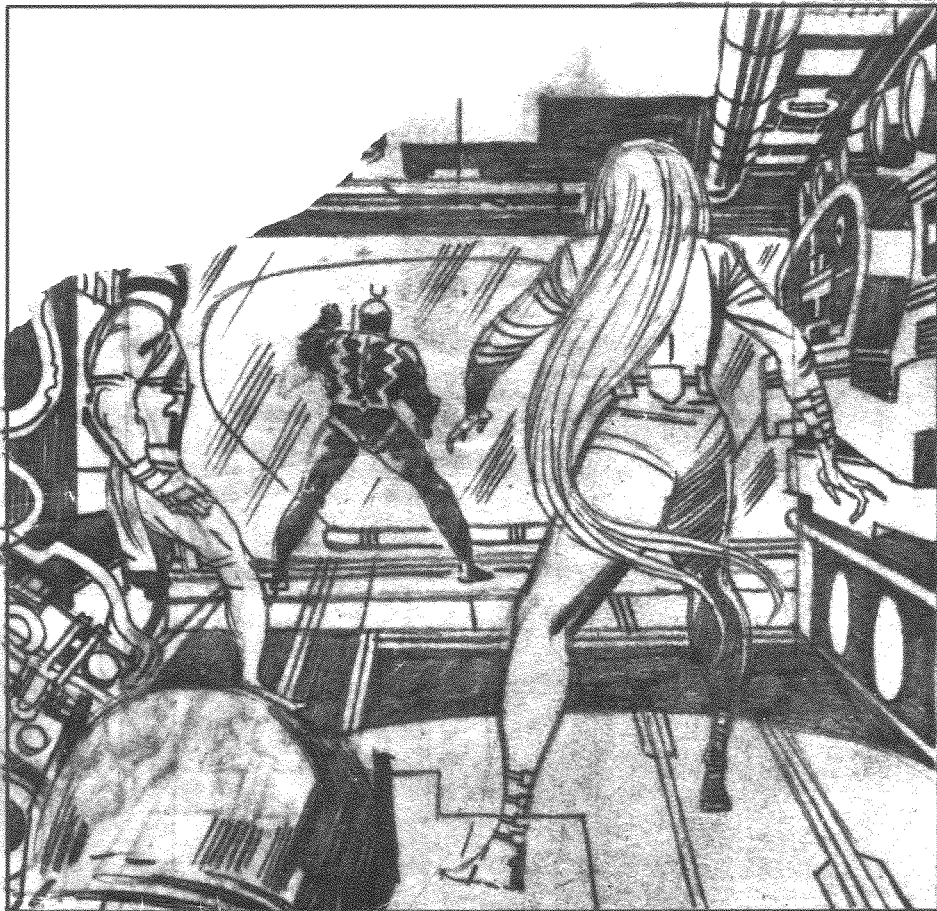
- *Fantastic Four* #64, cover
The Torch's blast has been changed to a fireball. The original is preserved in *FF Index* #4.
- *Fantastic Four* #65, cover (shown on next page)
Ronan's "Kirby Krackle" was replaced with a paste-over of some buildings. The original inks were underneath.
- *Fantastic Four* #70, cover
Sue's legs/hips; Johnny's flame. *FF Index* #5 is different from *Marvel's Greatest Comics* #53. Which is the original?



Jack's uninked pencils from Fantastic Four Annual #5. (This one's just for you, Bruce Timm!)

APPEARS WITH THING, I THINK,
TRITON

LOCKJAW HAS ZEROED IN ON
THOUGHTS OF BLACK BOLT AND HAS
BROUGHT GANG INTO PSYCHONIS
HIDEOUT



THEY
SAY
WHAT
IS
THIS
PLACE?
THING
SAYS
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THIS
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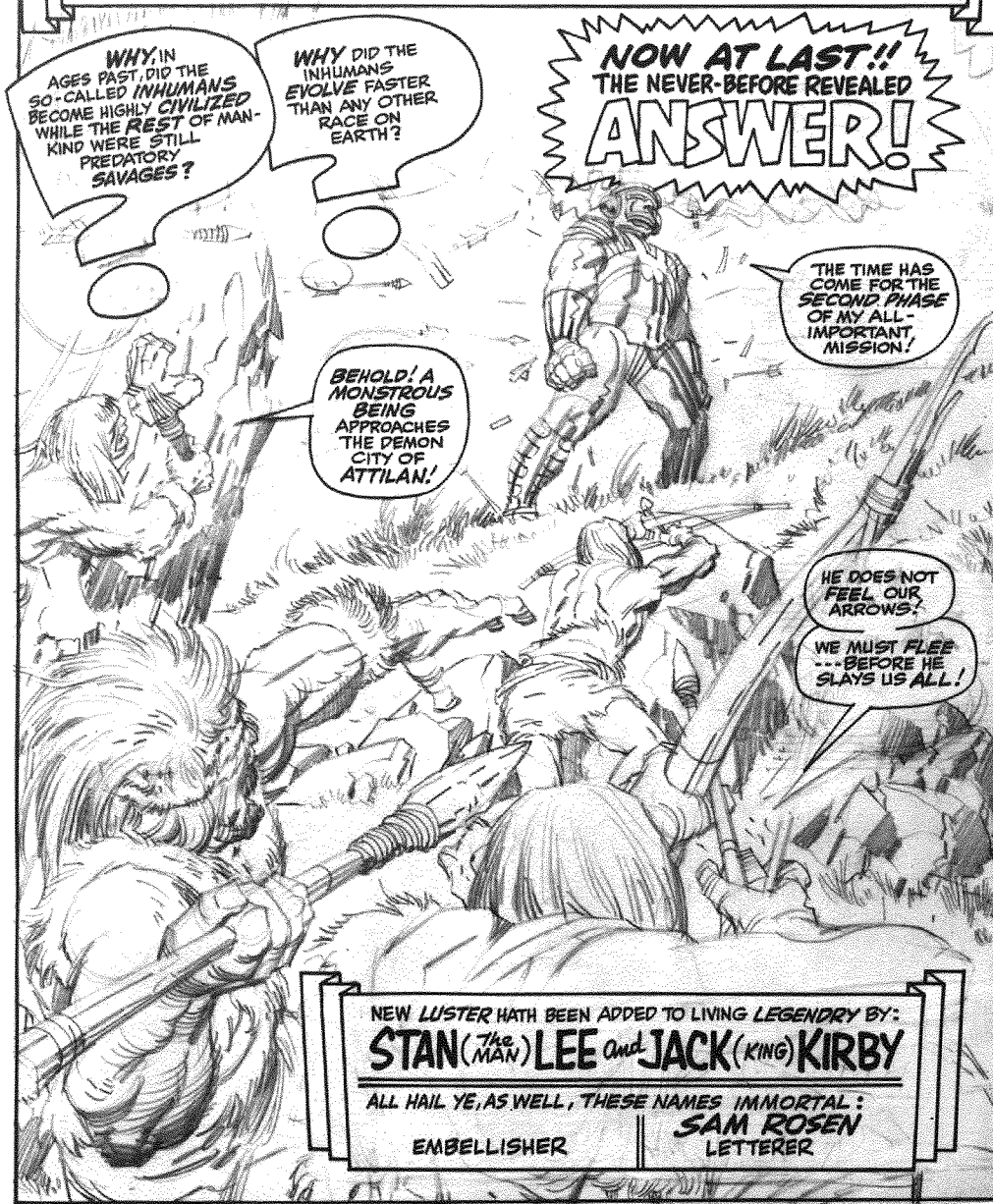
A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE: PART ONE

by Mike Gartland

IN THE DAWN WORLD OF EARTH PRE-HISTORY, AN
AWE SOME FIGURE STRIDES UNAFRAID THRU SAVAGE
TERRITORY

THE ORIGIN OF: THE INCOMPARABLE INHUMANS!

THE REASON WHY!



HUNTERS SAY - HE IS GREAT BREEG SPIRIT WHO
GOVERNS THE POWERFUL WITCH
PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN GLEAMING CAVES ON A
RONDOL-KING GREAT ISLAND TERRIBLY MIST
SUSPICION RE MIS

This started out simply enough; I was reading *FF Annual* #3 when I noticed on page 2 that Doctor Doom wasn't using his hands to operate his machine. The owner of the original art was nice enough to send me a copy and upon viewing, my suspicions were confirmed. Kirby's margin notes had Doom still recovering from his battle with the Thing in *FF* #40, so he couldn't fully use his hands yet. To Kirby, this was the reason Doom used a machine to attempt to ruin the wedding. Lee, however, ignored this totally in favor of high drama, thereby changing Kirby's reasoning for Doom's motive. Thus Lee has Doom using the machine as a grand gesture of revenge and contempt; Kirby had him use it because he couldn't attack the *FF* personally.

There are many examples of art and dialogue not meshing correctly in the Kirby/Lee books. Some may cite the "Marvel Method" of producing the books as the reason. There are small examples in the early years, becoming more noticeable in the books produced between '64-'70, books where Kirby was pretty much plotting the stories on his own. This also helps to explain why there are so many more Kirby margin notes on the art from this period. Once Kirby had his story established on paper, he sent it to Lee, who as editor and dialogue writer would keep what he considered essential (or couldn't change because the accompanying visuals were too obvious to alter through dialogue) and change what he wished for reasons of drama, continuity, or whatever his intention was at the time.

With this in mind, we begin a series of articles showcasing stories and/or separate examples of art and words not mixing correctly; or one man's view of the story differing from the other's. We are not attempting to prove that either man was right or wrong, or deserved more credit than the other; it is simply an ongoing dissertation of facts that will be presented for you, the reader, to draw your own conclusions from. Of course, we hope you enjoy it as well.

Before going further, I would advise you to read the accompanying story of the origin of the Inhumans by Kirby/Lee. First read it using Jack's margin notes only, as this is how Kirby intended the story to go and how Lee received it before making changes. Then go over the story again, this time reading Lee's dialogue. Then if you wish, go back to this article where my opinions are. I want the reader to draw their own conclusions before reading mine.

(continued on third page following)

The five-page origin of the Inhumans, from *Thor* #147.
Read it first using only Jack's margin notes, then again using Stan's dialogue, and you'll see the difference.

GIL KANE ON JACK KIRBY

Interviewed by Jon B. Cooke

(Gil Kane is, along with Joe Kubert, Will Eisner, and Alex Toth, one of the grand old masters of comics, having started in the early years of the industry. Born Eli Katz, he worked as a “mediocre” artist (his words) until virtually



Gil circa 1975.

re inventing himself in dynamic fashion in the mid-1950s. He is best known for his work on DC’s Green Lantern, but has drawn remarkable stints on Spider-Man, Superman, Warlock, and his own creations, Blackmark and His Name Is... Savage. After nearly 60 years in the business(!), Gil continues to be a notable creative force in the field—and a frank and passionate commentator on the history of the art form. This interview, which occasionally switches subjects in midstream, was conducted via telephone on August 24 and 29, 1998.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: Did Jack change over the years that you knew him?

GIL KANE: It was the same Jack thirty years later at Marvel as when he started. At Marvel, he was more refined but it was essentially the same thing. He had the same basic approaches to machinery, to action, and to the figure. Actually to tell you the truth, he lost a little when he got more and more into it. When he was doing the early *Captain Americas*, “Hurricane,” and *Blue Bolt*, he was doing figures that were the envy of everybody. The figures had a great spontaneity and naturalism, but years later he got it to the point that it became just the idea of a figure. Time gave him more power but it also took away from the meaningful quality of his work, as far as I was concerned. But none of us were geniuses and he held forth for 30 or 40 years as one of the ranking guys. He made some money and now he’s seen as practically a religious figure. What else can you want?

TJKC: In many ways, for me, you come closest in your sense of action and your figures.

GIL: There were many others. I always liked two things: Power and grace. I couldn’t think of one without the other. When I was a kid, I loved gymnastics (even though I was too big for it—but I was a good track man), and I loved ballet and dancing. I used to go to the ballet regularly from the time I was in my early twenties, and I loved Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire—that was my whole world. If I went to a Broadway musical, I would light up like a bulb! I was living at the height of my pleasure and satisfaction. So that’s what I would try to bring to the material.

I was always fair at horses even when I couldn’t draw them; but I could feel horses. I had to learn how to draw them so I could put my feeling into them. There are a lot of guys who can draw a horse but they don’t have any life or vitality.

TJKC: You’ve mentioned to me that you read *Amazing-Man Comics* as a kid. Were you reading comics for entertainment when you were in your teens?

GIL: I don’t think that kids have a concept of entertainment; they read for pleasure. I would read comic strips as a kid; in school I read *Dr. Doolittle*, *Tom Sawyer*—that was good—and I also started reading pulps. *The Shadow* came out in 1932 as a monthly, heavily promoted by a radio program starring Orson Welles. The

magazine started to get very popular and it began to come out every two weeks. In 1938, I started to read it and I read every issue back to 1932. In those days they had a million stores that did nothing except sell back issues. I read most of *Doc Savage*, some of *Operator 5* (but I wasn’t terribly interested), some of the *Spider*, *G-8*. That was when I was twelve years old.

TJKC: Did you immediately recognize the potential of “Superman”?

GIL: Sure. I was very excited about “Superman.” And it wasn’t just “Superman”; Siegel & Shuster were my favorite creative team in comics. There was “Slam Bradley,” “Spy,” and “Radio Squad.” In 1937, they did “Dr. Occult.” I followed them but didn’t realize that what I liked about them was that Shuster was a very watered-down version of Roy Crane and that “Superman” was influenced by *Captain Easy*.

TJKC: When did you first recognize Jack Kirby’s work?

GIL: The first time I saw his stuff was the third issue of *Blue Bolt*. He did the *Red Raven* cover for Joe Simon. Bits and pieces of Jack and Joe appeared in different things; and, of course, when they started *Captain America* and settled in at Marvel.

TJKC: When did you realize that Jack had a unique style?

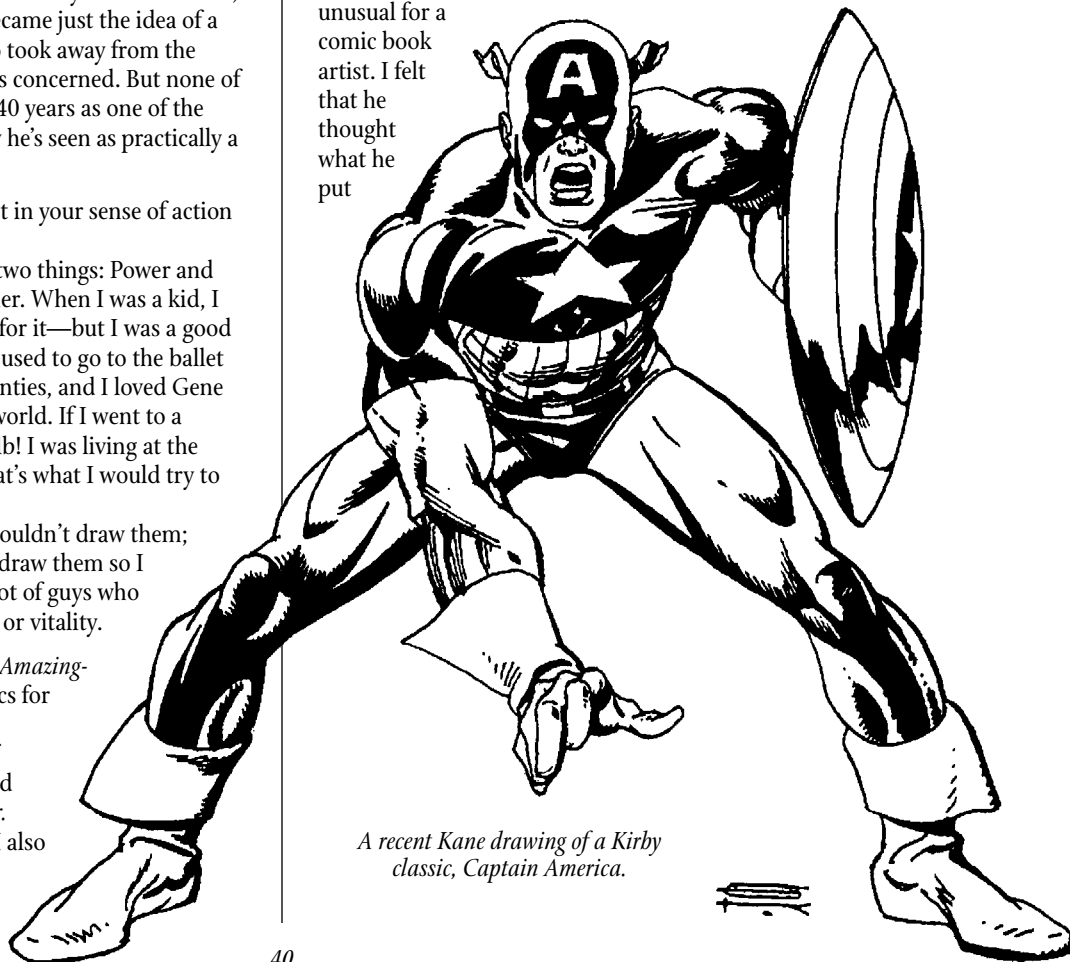
GIL: Right from the first. In fact, the early stuff (as raw as it was) was even better than his last stuff because later he became so mannered and abstract. The figures became bigger and bigger, and they couldn’t be contained by a single panel or even a single page—eventually he had to have two pages and still he could barely get a picture in!

TJKC: Do you think there was a change in his psyche as he got older?

GIL: Sure. He used to do many panels to a page with everything proportionate—there was a lot of air around the figures. Then, when he really started getting out there in the ’70s, the amount of space around the figures became less and less until finally each head would fill up a panel. He would do only four panels to a page.

This is nothing against Jack; first of all, Jack was getting older and second, he was enjoying a degree of fame that was

unusual for a comic book artist. I felt that he thought what he put



A recent Kane drawing of a Kirby classic, Captain America.

ON THE TELEVISION SCREEN, THIS STORY OF ONE MAN'S BATTLE AGAINST INSIDIOUS POWER, ENTHRALLED MILLIONS OF VIEWERS. IN THIS AGE, WHEN THE INDIVIDUAL CAN FIND HIMSELF AT THE MERCY OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY WELDED BY AN ORGANIZED AND RUTHLESS ENEMY, THIS BOOK BECOMES IMPORTANT TO ALL OF US!!! THIS MAN IS IMPORTANT TO ALL OF US... HE IS SIMPLY CALLED--

THE PRISONER



sort of low key, understated. When a person would come out to greet you, they spoke in understated tones. You took your hat off before you went in there. That's where I first met Joe Kubert.

TJKC: What was Tudor City like?

GIL: It was a luxury apartment building that must have been hot stuff in the late '20s. It just absolutely screams Art Deco. There was a special entrance: You had to drive in on a special street, and if you walked, you had to go over a foot bridge. It was almost like a walk across a moat just to get there. It was right where the United Nations building is today. Jack and Joe took an apartment that had one large room, bathroom, and a small kitchen behind some closet doors. It couldn't have cost too much to rent; the building was coming out of the Depression. (But when I came out of the Army, you couldn't get in there for the love of money! It became one of the tightest places in the world to get into.)

TJKC: Letterer Howard Ferguson was there?

GIL: Howard and a guy named Charles Nicholas who was a penciler for Fox (I think he did the *Blue Beetle*). He and Jack and Joe had some arrangement that wherever Simon & Kirby went, there was Charlie Nicholas inking their stuff. Jack would turn out so much work!

TJKC: What were your job duties with S&K?

GIL: Mine was penciling. I would try to turn out a job every week or so. [They were] 12-page stories. I was copying—tracing—Jack's work.

TJKC: What was the relationship between Joe and Jack at the time?

GIL: Joe was involved in the creative process and he was the one who made all the deals. Joe would ink all the splashes and occasionally he would pencil a job and ink it. He didn't write—it was Jack who wrote. Jack would either write a script or get one and adjust it as he saw fit.

TJKC: Was [writer France] Ed Herron up there much?

GIL: I never saw Ed but they had a whole bunch of writers. They had four strips they had to do—"Manhunter," "Boy Commandos," the Guardian ["*The Newsboy Legion*"], and "Sandman."

TJKC: What was Jack like?

GIL: We were friendly but not intimates. He may have been more open with others. He was like an accountant: Always chewing on his cigar and always working. When you looked at his taboret, it was just littered with dozens of No. 2 pencil stubs. He would just wear them down, put 'em aside, until ultimately there was a logjam on top of his board! They would build up so quickly. It was a soft pencil and I never knew the guy to use up less than five pencils a day. Very often he would go through one an hour! He would just wear the pencils down, talking while he was working. He would talk everyday stuff, nothing of consequence—I came away with no bits of wisdom. Mostly Jack saw himself as the star of his own work. When guys came along like Frank Frazetta or Neal Adams, he'd never say what was obvious: That both of those guys, in different ways, were sensational.

TJKC: So he saw them as competition?

GIL: I think that he saw everybody as competition; that was the thing that finally dawned on me. It was Jack against the world.

TJKC: Was Jack one to ever look back at the printed comics?

GIL: I don't know, but I know one thing: He had practically everything

Page one of Jack's *Prisoner* adaptation, inked by Royer. Gil did his own rejected version of the series.

down on paper would do. I saw it in the animation presentations and his comic book work. Ultimately his stuff was so uneven that I felt it was not something he was deliberately doing, but just something that was happening to him. There was the decline that happens to most artists sooner or later. Age usually neutralizes most people.

TJKC: Your first professional job was with MLJ [later *Archie Comics*]. Editor John Beardsley recommended you as an art assistant to Joe Simon?

GIL: After I was with MLJ for about six months and out of work for awhile, Beardsley recommended me to Joe. He was close to Joe.

TJKC: Do you remember going down to Simon & Kirby's Tudor City art studio? Did you bring a portfolio?

GIL: Of course. You always had a portfolio because that was the only way to get work. I can't tell you how many times, from fifteen onward, when I would end up in DC's waiting room with my portfolio. Murray Boltinoff usually came out. It was like a cathedral.

TJKC: Who did that legendary six-foot-tall painting of Superman [which hung in the waiting room]?

GIL: I never knew. Even though it wasn't the biggest room at DC, it was the most impressive because it was simple. You walked in and saw this six-foot portrait of Superman (I don't think they lighted it in any special way—it just looked that way). There was a little window with a receptionist behind it. There were couches and everything was

SILVER STAR, SUPER-HERO!

The Original Screenplay © Jack Kirby and Steve Sherman

(Like Captain Victory, the concept of Silver Star began in the mid-1970s as a movie screenplay by Jack and Steve Sherman. This first draft story treatment was initially submitted on March 11, 1977 (VGAW Reg. #166408). As you'll see, the final comics series was based on it, but this original version helps to flesh out some of the characterizations that were missing from the comic. Our thanks to Steve Sherman for sharing this with us.)

The film opens with a small, bright spot on an empty screen. It is the image of a pretty girl, which is enlarged with a smooth rapidity in view of the audience, until it attains a reasonable level of clarity. She's a lovely brunette, with a round, serene face which bears slight traces of concern. She is young (no more than 20 or 22 years of age).

She looks at the audience, searchingly—seeking but not finding. Her face is beautiful in sadness, but even more so, as she hides it with a cool grace.

This is KATHY LORRAINE, who shares the love of the film's principal character, MORGAN MILLER. KATHY is a special person who has the ability to transmit her image via mental projection. This ability is as natural to her as flexing a limb. And, in the uncanny refinements of this facility, there are spin-offs which provide an ample variety of effects, both spectacular and innovative. (Girl faces audience in entire cameo)

KATHY says, "I don't know where you are, Morgan. I've been reaching out to you, but you haven't responded." She lowers her eyes as the sadness returns. When it's been replaced by some sort of resolve, she again raises her head.

"But, I understand, Morgan," she continues. "I-I just hope—well—" she pauses, trying to maintain her composure. "Well—as soon as you can, Morgan, please reach out to me. I've written a song for your birthday, and I'm projecting it on the slim chance that you may hear it—I love you, Morgan..."

The girl begins to fade in a sort of electrical display as the music starts. And, as she dissolves to make way for the succeeding scene, the music remains to flow across the action which follows.

The song should be synchronized to end when the action is over.

★★★★★

This scene follows, with the view of a beleaguered American position on a chewed-up landscape in Vietnam. The camera sweeps the field like a swiveling cannon (which it is) and catches the reaction of the dug-in riflemen to the intensity of action during the height of a tank attack. Some of the men cower in their holes, others fire; a few break cover and leap into the open to escape the murderous cannon fire.

Attention is drawn to the lead tank—the bouncing, crunching, relentless forward movement of its treads—the crusty, primeval effect of its armor—and above all, its coughing cannon which seeks out its victims and blasts them out of the soil. Each time the gun spits, a man dies. Bodies take aimless flight, performing crazy acrobatics in the light of cruel, red flashes which dissolve in oily smoke.

And each time this happens, the camera quickly shifts to one

face barely seen above its ground shelter. And each time this happens, the view of that helmeted head grows larger in the field of view, so that the rise of some terrible emotion can be registered in reaction to what is taking place.

The audience is watching young MORGAN MILLER, twenty-five years of age and in sudden confrontation with the outrage of war. He is our principal character. And, he carries within his gene structure an extraordinary biological scenario. Like information fed to a computer, violent emotion initiates the activation of this strange process, which must run its course, comparable to a natural reflex.

MORGAN MILLER is not an ordinary guy. His is not an ordinary anger. When his emotions peak, they trigger a white flash in his brain which spreads like an electrical storm to the other parts of his body. White flashes erupt in dramatic succession in his vital centers until the interior of his body seethes with pyrotechnic effect.

This is the moment when MORGAN MILLER earns his Silver Star, a military decoration won by many men before him, but never in the manner peculiar to MORGAN MILLER alone. He is suddenly galvanized into action. His entire body glows like a newly-stoked furnace and a radiating nimbus effect has outlined him in motion. MORGAN looks like a comet gone berserk. In the face of devastating cannon

fire, he flings his rifle away and races directly at the enemy. Morgan's squad looks on in disbelief as he suffers two hits with heavy caliber stuff which ricochets off his body. MORGAN is staggered but seemingly unhurt. He resumes his run and reaches the closest tank.

MORGAN seizes the steel monster with one hand and throws it at the tanks behind it. The camera catches it arching through the air as it lands upon another tank in an explosive gush of sound and flame and twisted metal.

The last we see of MORGAN in this scene is his attempt to smother the flames from his burning clothes. He writhes and rolls in a paroxysm generated by the war and his own maturing body. The scene dissolves as he lies panting on the ground, face up, eyes closed, mouth open; the charred, smoking fabric of his clothes has peeled away from his heaving chest to reveal not a wound suffered in this astounding action.

★★★★★

The film's storyline officially begins at this point. The logo and list of credits pass across a large dramatic shot of MORGAN MILLER, positioned to be fitted with the silver suit and helmet he will wear throughout the film. (See accompanying drawings for design.)

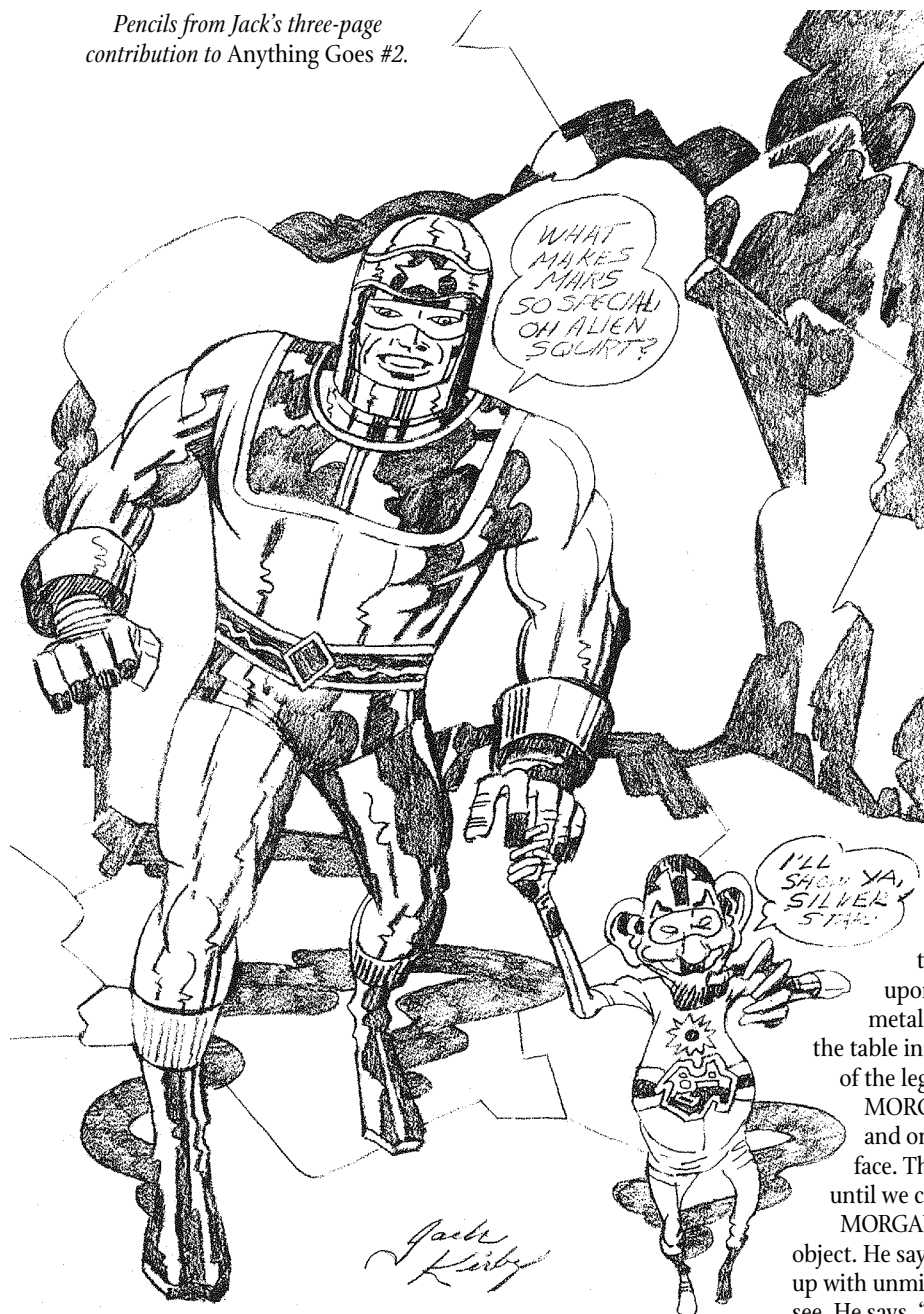
MORGAN is given the unique outfit

by people off-screen. Represented by their hands alone, these helpers aid him in this dressing ritual, tugging, tightening, running fingers expertly to mold fabric to contour, and finally bringing the gleaming silver helmet into view. As it is placed and secured to MORGAN's head, the credits have run their course and the scene is enlarged to reveal MORGAN's immediate surroundings. He is the lone occupant of an isolation ward supervised by COLONEL WALTER HAMMER, M.D., who stands by as ward men complete the job on MORGAN.

The medics are in a jovial mood. They treat MORGAN as if he was some awesome company mascot. They call him SILVER STAR and make reference to the symbol of that decoration which has been embossed on the suit. They also indicate that MORGAN is the subject



Pencils from Jack's three-page contribution to Anything Goes #2.



of some pretty tall stories which have evidently been passed on by personal testimony of the men who witnessed the initial action.

The COLONEL and MORGAN are left to face each other when the ward men are dismissed. HAMMER studies the young man's reactions to what is seemingly a ridiculous development. Although MORGAN looks magnificent in the outfit, he expresses his unease and is told that the suit was designed to save his life. The silver in its fabric is utilized in the same fashion as the lead rods in an atomic reactor. MORGAN learns that he could become the victim of a runaway metabolism which must be limited by the presence of silver.

The COLONEL asks for MORGAN's trust. He refrains from patronizing him or probing too deeply into his personal background. He tells him that his condition will disqualify him from further military duty and that the prospects of a medical discharge are in the offing.

MORGAN is neither overjoyed nor disconsolate. He projects the image of a self-contained young man caught in a bizarre situation. The silver suit absorbs his attention and he inquires if it's to be worn continuously. The COLONEL repeats its importance and its function. He cautions MORGAN against stress situations and commends the suit problem to the young man's own judgment. He can wear it beneath ordinary clothes or take his chances on leading a placid life. His great

enemy is emotional disturbance. Without the suit to protect him, MORGAN can be consumed by an energy level that could burn down a forest.

HAMMER congratulates MORGAN for winning the Silver Star and speculates upon an exploit which has inspired a legend among the men. Officially, it is accepted that MORGAN, single-handedly, stopped a tank attack with a recoilless rifle (a bazooka-type weapon). However, the COLONEL is certain this is not true, and MORGAN himself will not challenge the version recorded by the Army. He meets all inquiry with silence until the issue is withdrawn.

At this point, the COLONEL apologizes for restricting MORGAN to the isolation ward and its small, surrounding camp area. But MORGAN indicates that he's not unhappy. The food's okay and the ward men are good handball partners. In fact, the very idea of restriction causes MORGAN to smile. For, he harbors a secret the COLONEL is not yet aware of. As for HAMMER, he reflects upon that smile, but decides against further inquiry. He ends the conversation and leaves the ward.

MORGAN watches the COLONEL close the ward door behind him and is left to himself in the silence of the large room. He then examines his silver suit, raising one arm and then the other to his enigmatic scrutiny. His eyes travel down his own length and his head moves slowly from side to side. An undefinable sadness seems to overtake his entire being as he slowly seats himself upon his bunk bed. MORGAN unsnaps his helmet, removes it, and puts it at his side.

For a moment, MORGAN stares ahead, preoccupied with some unnameable thought. He turns his head in the direction the COLONEL had taken and locks his gaze upon the closed door. Slowly, his head swivels to a nearby metal table. He moves with the swiftness of a cobra and tears the table in half as one would a sheet of paper. He then tears off two of the legs and tosses the entire mess into a corner of the room.

MORGAN has made his statement on this segment of his life, and on war. The camera moves in for a close-up of MORGAN's face. The beginning of a smile is forming on his lips. It broadens until we can see his teeth.

MORGAN, suddenly, looks at the camera. His eyes seek some unseen object. He says, "Kathy! Kathy! I'm reaching for you!" His face lights up with unmistakable happiness. He is looking at a person we cannot see. He says, "Oh, there you are. Guess what, Kathy? I'm going home."

★★★★★

CUT TO: A hand slamming shut a door. COLONEL HAMMER stands at the closed door, staring at two men waiting for him in his office. One is his executive medical officer, MAJOR JOHN LAWRENCE. The other man is from the Intelligence sector. His name is FLOYD CUSTER. HAMMER regards them with equal distaste.

He chews out LAWRENCE, his exec. "You had to do it," he says. "You had to make big ones out of little ones—and now, he's here."

LAWRENCE retorts that there is something the Medical outfit has charge of that's too complex for them to handle—that it has ramifications which extend far beyond its existing image. The COLONEL calls him a quaking, shaking, little jerk. "What we've got here is a boy—who needs cool and rational treatment, and that's what he's been given," the COLONEL says.

"Don't want to spook the kid, is that it, Colonel?" says CUSTER.

The EXECUTIVE OFFICER rushes in on the heels of CUSTER's query. "You bet he doesn't!" says LAWRENCE. Then, to the COLONEL, "Tell him! Tell him about the case history we've amassed on this kid. Tell him about the X-Factors! The wild, regenerative blood cells! The tendency of the tissue fibers to attain a steel-like hardness! And the brain! Tell him about the brain! Tell him about the

TWILIGHT AT TOPPS

by Jon B. Cooke

In the final years of his life, the most significant event of Jack Kirby's career was the advent of Topps' "Kirbyverse." A series of three one-shot comic books, *Captain Glory*, *Night Glider*, and *Bombast* were all released in April 1993, and were quickly followed up with the 4-issue mini-series, *Jack Kirby's Secret City Saga* (plus the oh-so-collectible premium, *Secret City* #0, available only through a coupon rebate). Sold in sealed plastic bags (emblazoned with enough hyperbole to make Jack proud) with "Kirbychrome" cards, the comics were actually promoted as Kirby comics—all part of the "Kirbyverse"—but though based on Jack's concepts and drawings (sometimes thinly) from various stages of his career, they were Kirby comics in name, lacking the main ingredient: The art of Kirby himself. The mini-series was quickly followed up by another, the strange and satirical *Satan's Six*, and then *Jack Kirby's Teen Agents*, each running a mere four issues. But the industry was in flux, and by 1994, although two mini-series were released—*Victory* and a revival of *Silver Star*—both were cancelled after only one issue. Jack Kirby passed away in February and thus never saw his Kirbyverse end. This is the story of that brief period, but our tale begins in the early 1940s, with the origin of Topps.

Topps began producing chewing gum during World War II. "We made a Chicklets-type bubble gum," Topps Creative Director Len Brown explains, "and our first foray into comics was in the early '50s with the *Bazooka Joe* and newspaper strip reprints we would include with the gum." But it was the release of a set of boxing trading cards (called *Ringside*) in 1949 which set the company's direction as the premiere bubble gum card company. The heart of the company was the new product development department, headed for a time by humorist Stan Hart and, by the late '50s, Woody Gelman. In 1959, Woody hired the 18-year-old Len Brown as his assistant. "Len helped produce *Mars Attacks*, *Wacky Packs*, *Garbage Pail Kids*," lifelong friend and sometime associate Roy Thomas explains. "Woody retired by the early '70s and Len was left in charge and he has been for a couple of decades now."

"Len was always trying to get Topps into the comics business," Roy continued. "Wally Wood, Bob Powell, Jack Davis, Art Spiegelman, Gil Kane, and a lot of other comic book people were in and out of there doing work in the '60s and before. Jack Davis always said that Topps practically kept him alive during the bad period after he left *Mad* and before he hit it big with the *TV Guide* covers."

"In the early '60s, Woody and I would talk about wanting to get into comics but it just never materialized," Len said (though Len had a foothold in the business as a sometime comics writer, most significantly for Tower Comics and *Creepy* magazine). "Ira Friedman joined the company in the mid-'80s and he had a big publishing background. A consulting group we hired suggested looking for something synergistic for Topps to do, and with the customers buying trading cards being young kids, comics seemed a natural."

A comics line was given the go-ahead and "Len Brown was assigned the job to find an editor-in-chief. His first choice was Roy Thomas, the guy who hired me at Marvel in 1972 in the first place,"

future Topps Editor-in-Chief Jim Salicrup said. "But Roy didn't want to come back to New York City so he gave a list to Len of people to contact. I was on that list along with Tony Isabella (who didn't want to move back to New York either). So I got a call almost out of nowhere."

While still on staff at Marvel, Jim said, "I was off the Spider-Man titles [after successfully helping Spider-Man to phenomenal sales of 3,000,000 for the first issue]. I don't think they knew what to do with me anymore. I was doing the custom comics line with books featuring pro-social issues and advertising comics. I wrote the *Kool-Aid Man* comics and the *Spider-Man/Hulk* toilet-paper comic (and if people didn't like that story, they knew what they could do with it)."

"The atmosphere at Marvel wasn't the best for me, Todd [McFarlane], or a lot of other people," Jim continued. "But outside there were plenty of companies who would like to have editors who could put together books that sell that well. That's around the time that Todd and others went on to form Image Comics, and I got an offer from Topps to help them start up a line of comic books."

Jim explained the appeal of the comic book market to the trading

card company: "In regards to the entertainment cards, Topps would get the card license and somebody else would get the comic book license. They asked themselves, 'Why don't we do the comic books as well?'"

What a great market it was—it was nonreturnable! Unlike when Marvel wanted to get into the card business and invested hundreds of millions buying existing card companies, Topps didn't have to do much more than hire me and a couple of other guys."

Jim was unsure whether Topps should follow the Image lead. "I felt that we probably shouldn't do super-heroes because it was a genre [where] all the other big companies already had incredibly famous characters; how could we compete with that? So our first title was an adaptation of a *Dracula* movie. If I had to compare us to any company at that point, I think we were going in the direction of being almost another Dark Horse. We did books that were very classy projects, like the Ray Bradbury story anthologies and movie adaptations. The Kirby thing was just irresistible to me."

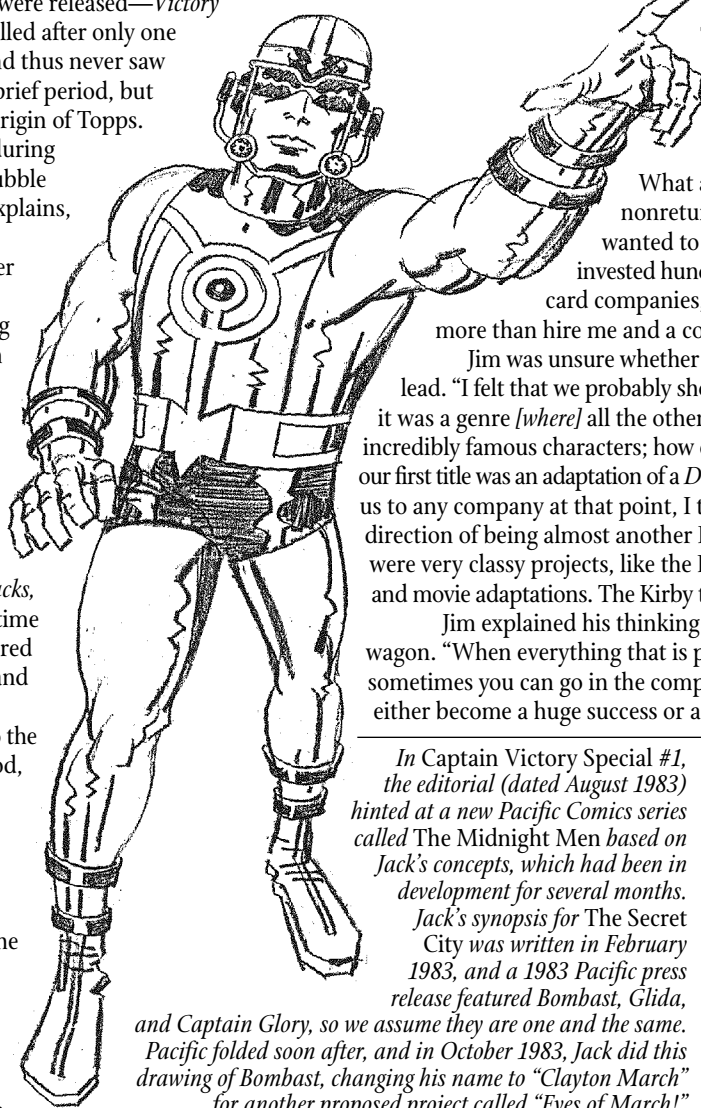
Jim explained his thinking on not jumping on the genre wagon. "When everything that is popular goes in one direction, sometimes you can go in the complete opposite direction and either become a huge success or a tremendous flop. Image was

becoming so hot, and everything was so dark in tone; as much as I liked the original material that inspired the trends, I don't like hopping on them. So Kirby to me was never anything like that—it was all very heroic, very noble, with a lot of solid underlying moral values. Even when we made the deal, there was a concern on Jack and Roz's part that they were letting us use his name and they didn't want

In Captain Victory Special #1, the editorial (dated August 1983) cited a new Pacific Comics series called The Midnight Men based on Jack's concepts, which had been in development for several months.

Jack's synopsis for The Secret City was written in February 1983, and a 1983 Pacific press release featured Bombast, Glida,

and Captain Glory, so we assume they are one and the same. Pacific folded soon after, and in October 1983, Jack did this drawing of Bombast, changing his name to "Clayton March" for another proposed project called "Eyes of March!"



us to be doing books that would reflect something that he wouldn't want to be associated with. I took that seriously and wouldn't have wanted to do that anyway."

By all accounts, the Kirby "thing" proved to be initially a lucrative deal for all involved, but the origins of the arrangement were, in Jim's words, "A little complicated. We were approach by a couple of guys who said they had all these rights to various Kirby material, calling themselves "The Kirby Company." They had a whole separate scheme worked out

General Ordiz began as a character in an unused animation idea involving the Martial Arts.

HAND POUNDER IS SAMURAI VERSION OF BRASS KNUCKLES.

(which was fine) as they had their deal-

ings with Jack and decided to represent him on some projects. I was more interested in putting together a deal with Jack directly, and we wound up putting together both deals. But we never published anything from the previous deal."

"We all wanted to talk to Jack directly," Jim said, "so Ira, Len, and I all went out with the Kirbys. In California, I got a little bit of insight into why Jack may not have had the best dealings with comic book companies over the years. There's a part of him that's just so sweet and trusting that in the back of my mind I was thinking, 'If we weren't offering a really great deal, it almost would be too easy to take advantage of this guy—he's so nice.'" Fortunately I felt that we were making him a deal he could be proud of."

As negotiations were finalized, Jim pored through the material Jack was offering to license. "We saw a lot of material that was initiated as animation pitches; that was what the new Kirby Company was pitching to us, and much of it felt like Ruby-Spears animated series," Jim said. "I felt nervous about that material because I got the impression that Jack had created some of it, but some of it may have been character designs for someone else's concepts. It was great to look at all the artwork, but at the time that didn't seem the direction for us to go in. I think bits and pieces worked its way into other work that he did. Some of the characters may have been part of the DC *Super Powers* stuff that Jack did (which we didn't find out about until we had already published the material)."

Was there any evidence of a grudge against Marvel? "Roz and Jack never for a second made me feel uncomfortable that I had worked at Marvel all during his art fight," Jim explained. "Everything we were trying to do was the type of deal Jack should have been getting all along. It worked out well. My idea of a great deal is one where everyone benefits—the publisher gets to publish great material and gets lots of money publishing it; the creators get lots of money through royalties. Everybody sharing creates incentive for more and more to happen. The only disadvantage I had was that, though we were a part of Topps, the comic book division was so understaffed—small yet scrappy—but we didn't have the resources available that the larger companies had that could've pushed a lot of these things up to the next level."

The woman behind the King was deeply involved in the negotiations.

WEARS NINJA BOXING MASK.

INFRA-RED GLASS FOR SEEING IN DARK.

STEALTH SUIT FOR INFORMATION GATHERING.

"95% of the time when I called, I dealt with Roz. As a negotiator she was almost like dealing with my mother. They were all very nice and happy about the whole deal. After we met with them, our Chairman shipped them out some fresh New York City bagels. There were a lot of nice gestures back and forth."

"In terms of the deal we struck," Jim said, "it was a deal he originally tried to get with DC [in 1970]: Go over to a publisher, sell a bunch of ideas, and then get people like Steve Ditko, Don Heck, and the old Marvel guys to actually draw the material."

The Kirby material contained not only full-blown concepts, such as a multi-page synopsis for *Secret City* (reprinted here), but also simple sketches. "A lot was based on just single illustrations, character and costume designs," Jim said. "*Teen Agents*, for example, may have been four or five illustrations and a cover mock-up. There was an unrelated illustration [of] a giant cosmic bus that we incorporated into *Teen Agents*. *Satan's Six* had a bunch of pages already completed, so sometimes there was material to go from. But much of the time the writers we hired had to develop a bunch of it. We tried to give credit as fairly as possible; so you'll see 'Created by Jack Kirby' and 'Developed by' whoever the writer was."

"The deal was to use material that he already had copyrights to," Jim said, "including a lot of the Pacific work. We could have reprinted that stuff and used the characters. One of the bizarre things is that we technically had the rights to reprint that *Silver Surfer* graphic novel which was copyrighted to both Stan and Jack, even though Marvel owns the character. When Marvel reprinted it, I reminded them that they needed not only Jack's permission but also our's—which we gave them, so it was no big deal."

Jack received a good piece of the pie with the Topps arrangement. "It was a very lucrative licensing deal as opposed to getting a large page rate," Jim said. "We approached him as if he was *Star Wars*, and in return for his properties we gave him a guarantee on what he would get. On every book we sold, he received royalties and got his name as creator. He had creative approval of everything and he owned the copyright to all the material. You just don't find too many deals like that anywhere."

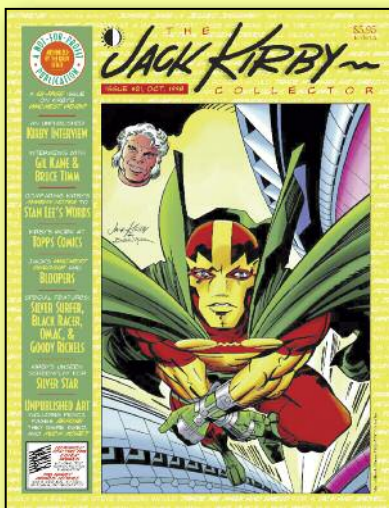
"I still think that Jack's initial concepts were very strong and the characters looked great—very different than everything else that was out at the time," Jim said. "One could fairly say that a lot of it was incredibly corny, but I made a trip out to Hollywood and spoke to people in animation, and there was a lot of interest in getting the rights to do those characters as an animated series. Unfortunately, I didn't have the time and we were too understaffed to really follow-up adequately. I think that would have made it all worthwhile. A dream scenario for [me] is for some of that material to have gone on as an animated TV series with Jack given all the credit; perhaps licensing and toy deals with Jack getting a big share of that. That would have been the realization of what I was trying to go for."

A big name also thought the execution too hackneyed. "We had gotten Harlan Ellison to do some adaptations of his stories, 'Demon with a Glass Hand' and 'Soldier,' and he was being incredibly helpful as a consultant and advisor. But when he saw the *Secret City* stuff come out, he started wondering what I was thinking. He said, 'This stuff is so corny! You should have called me and I could have helped you.' Not everything you do works out the way you want it to. I thought there was a way to do it if we had the right approach, but it came out at a time when so much was going on in the industry; Roy was so busy that I had to force him into doing it. Maybe that was me sticking to the concept of trying to get all these old Marvel people back together, despite the practicality of it. I even got Gary Friedrich and Gerry Conway to do some scripting."

In bringing in veteran writer Roy Thomas, Salicrup "wanted to stick fairly close to the synopsis and try to get the feel of Jack's writing in the late '60s and early '70s," Roy said. "Gil Kane was originally supposed to draw *Jack Kirby's Secret City Saga*. That title was a name I never really liked; I felt it was weak and that we needed a name of a group. I



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