

AN *ALL-STAR*
LOOK AT THE
KIRBY INFLUENCE
FEATURING:

KURT BUSIEK

STEVE ENGLEHART

NEIL GAIMAN

RON GARNEY

DAVE GIBBONS

TONY ISABELLA

DAN JURGENS

MICHAEL KALUTA

ERIK LARSEN

FABIAN NICIEZA

JOHN OSTRANDER

BRIAN PULIDO

JOE QUESADA

DAVE SIM

JEFF SMITH

ROGER STERN

JOHN TOTLEBEN

JIM VALENTINO

RICK VEITCH

CHARLES VESS

MARK WAID

BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH

MARY WOLFMAN

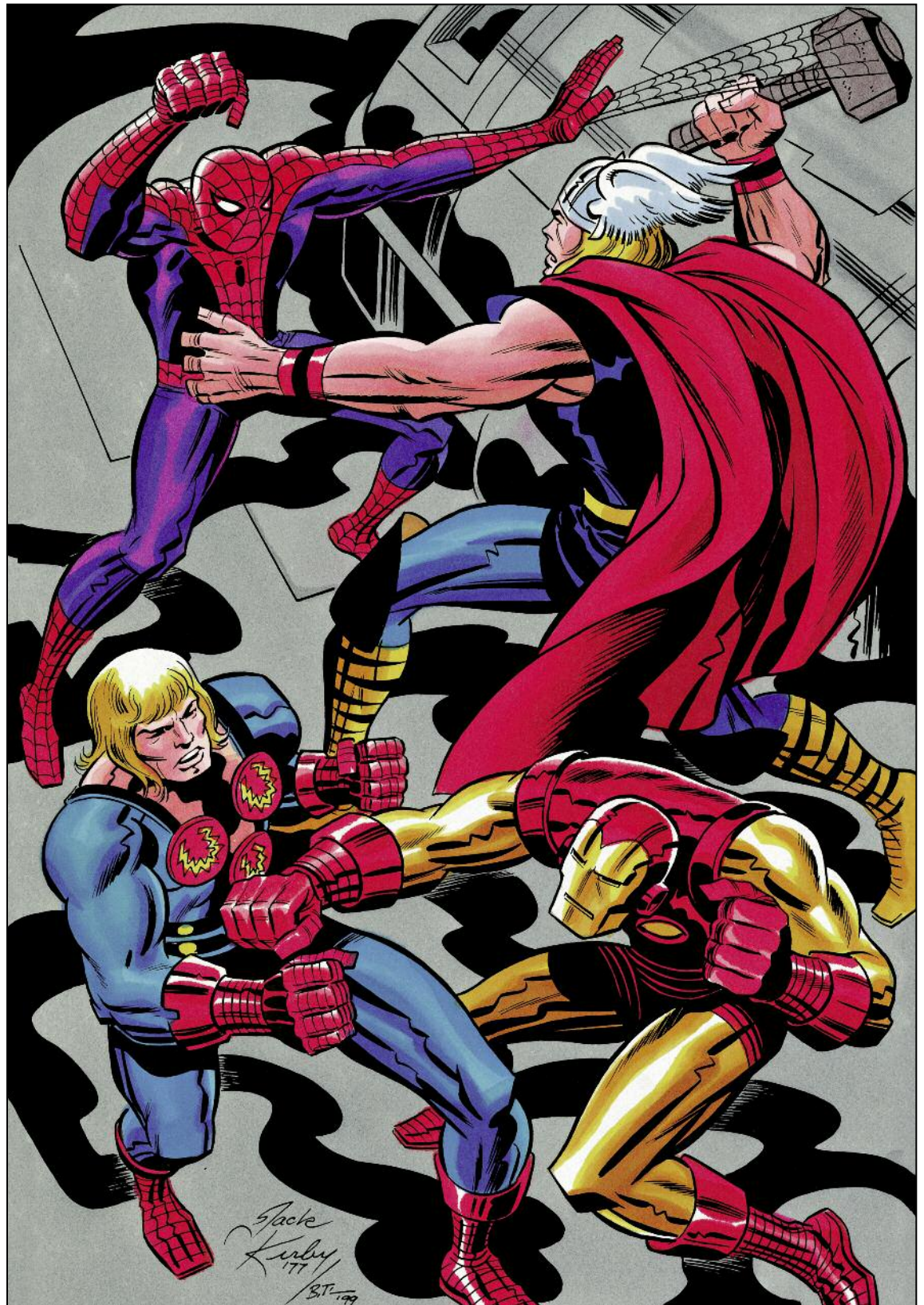
AND *MUCH MORE!*

FULLY
AUTHORIZED
BY THE
KIRBY
ESTATE

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

ISSUE #27, FEB. 2000

\$5.95
In The US



ISSUE #27 CONTENTS

SIDE ONE:

The 2000 Virtual Kirby Panel5
(an all-star line-up tells us how Kirby influenced them—featuring Kurt Busiek, Steve Englehart, Neil Gaiman, Bob Gale, Ron Garney, Dave Gibbons, Tony Isabella, Dan Jurgens, Michael Kaluta, Erik Larsen, Fabian Nicieza, John Ostrander, Brian Pulido, Joe Quesada, Dave Sim, Jeff Smith, Roger Stern, John Totleben, Jim Valentino, Rick Veitch, Charles Vess, Mark Waid, Barry Windsor-Smith, and Marv Wolfman)

Collector Comments.....32

SIDE TWO:

Kirby Family Roundtable3
(a discussion with Lisa Kirby, Mike Thibodeaux, Richard French, and Steve Robertson about what's going on with Genesis West and the Kirby Estate)

Jack Kirby On: WWII Influences16
(second in a series—this time featuring a frank, firsthand account of Jack's war experiences; for mature audiences only)

Alex Ross Interview24
(the renowned painter discusses how Kirby influenced him)

Kirby's Fine Art Influences30
(a look at the "two Jacks"; Pollack and Kirby)

Kirby Cakes31
(a French Kirby fan's wife(!) tells of Jack's influence on French pastry)

There Is No Hiatus31
(believe it or not, Jack's influence even extends into the music business)

Kirby Collector Com collage34
(enter our contest by naming the characters on this issue's centerfold)

Side One cover inks and colors: Bruce Timm

Side Two cover inks: Mike Thibodeaux

Color on all Genesis West art: Rick French

Photocopies of Jack's uninked pencils from published comics are reproduced here courtesy of the Kirby Estate, which has our thanks for their continued support.



THE ONLY 'ZINE
 AUTHORIZED BY THE
 KIRBY ESTATE

THE JACK KIRBY

COLLECTOR

ISSUE #27, FEB. 2000



Our thanks to Bruce Timm for inking and coloring this 1977 Kirby pencil drawing for our Side One cover.
 Our Side Two cover is of various Genesis West characters; pencils by Kirby, inks by Thibodeaux, and colors by Rick French.

COPYRIGHTS: Ajak, Avengers Forever, Bucky, Captain America, Crystal, Dr. Doom, Eternals, Fantastic Four, Galactus, Giant-Man, Hulk, Human Torch, Ikaris, Iron Man, Klaw, Lockjaw, Magnir, Mr. Buddha, Mr. Fantastic, Prof. Damian, Red Skull, Silver Surfer, Spider-Man, Sub-Mariner, Thing, Thor, 2001: A Space Odyssey, Wasp, Watcher, Yellow Claw TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. • Batman, Big Barda, Boy Commandos, Brute, Burnadeth, Challengers of the Unknown, Count Dragoon, Darkseid, Demon, Female Furies, Flash, Glob, Green Arrow, Guardian, Hawkman, Henry Jones, Jed, Jimmy Olsen, Lashina, Lightyear, Losers, Lupek, Mad Harriet, Mr. Miracle, New Gods, Newsboy Legion, Orion, Richard Dragon, Kung Fu Fighter, Rose/Thorn, Sandman, Sandy, Scott Free, Spectre, Speedy, Stompa, Superman TM & © DC Comics, Inc. • Face studies, Gladiators, Great Gatsby art, Huns, Lisa Kirby's birthday card, Mindmaster, Sky Masters, Thunder Foot, Toys for Tots art, Wonder Warriors, © Jack Kirby • Darkfyre, Descendants of Atlantis, Disciples of the Dragon, Gin Seng, Knight & Day, Kublak, Last of the Viking Heroes, Malibu Maniacs, Phantom Force, Phoebos and his Galactic Bounty Hunters, Rineon, Rudolph Ludwig, Slug, Thunder Hunter, Whitestar Knight TM & © Genesis West and the Jack Kirby Estate • Captain 3-D © Harvey Comics, Inc. • Blue Bolt, Boy Explorers, Fighting American, Speedboy, Stuntman © Joe Simon & Jack Kirby • Shield/Pvt. Strong © Joe Simon • Fone Bone and Smiley Bone TM & © Jeff Smith • Evil Ernie TM & © Chaos Comics • Savage Dragon TM & © Erik Larsen • Rare Bit Fiends TM & © Rick Veitch • Cerebus TM & © Dave Sim.

The Jack Kirby Collector, Vol. 8, No. 27, Feb. 2000. Published bi-monthly by & © TwoMorrow Publishing, 1812 Park Drive, Raleigh, NC 27605, USA. 919-833-8092. John Morrow, Editor. Pamela Morrow, Asst. Editor. Jon B. Cooke, Assoc. Editor. Single issues: \$5.95 (\$7.00 Canada, \$9.00 elsewhere). Six-issue subscriptions: \$24.00 US, \$32.00 Canada and Mexico, \$44.00 outside North America. First printing. All characters are trademarks of their respective companies. All artwork is © Jack Kirby unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter is © the respective authors. PRINTED IN CANADA.

THE 2000 VIRTUAL KIRBY TRIBUTE PANEL

Conducted by George Khoury

WHO'S WHO ON THE PANEL

In Alphabetical Order:

- Kurt Busiek (writer of Astro City and Marvels)
- Steve Englehart (writer of The Avengers and Captain America)
- Neil Gaiman (writer/creator of Sandman)
- Bob Gale (screenwriter of Back to the Future)
- Ron Garney (artist of Captain America and The Hulk)
- Dave Gibbons (writer/artist of Watchmen and World's Finest)
- Tony Isabella (writer of Satan's Six and Comics Buyer's Guide columnist)
- Dan Jurgens (writer/artist of Superman and Thor)
- Michael Kaluta (artist of The Shadow and House of Mystery)
- Erik Larsen (creator of Savage Dragon)
- Fabian Nicieza (writer of X-Men and Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty)
- John Ostrander (writer of Spectre and Martian Manhunter)
- Brian Pulido (creator of Chaos Comics)
- Joe Quesada (artist of Daredevil and Ash)
- Dave Sim (creator of Cerebus)
- Jeff Smith (creator of Bone)
- Roger Stern (writer of Captain America and Iron Man)
- John Tottleben (artist of Miracleman and Swamp Thing)
- Jim Valentino (publisher of Image Comics)
- Rick Veitch (writer/artist of Swamp Thing and artist on ABC's Tomorrow Stories)
- Charles Vess (artist of Stardust and Sandman)
- Mark Waid (writer of Kingdom Come)
- Barry Windsor-Smith (of Conan and Storyteller fame)
- Marv Wolfman (writer of Crisis and The New Teen Titans)



A couple of gladiators
duke it out in these 1970s
Kirby pencils.

(Welcome all to the 2000 Virtual Jack Kirby Tribute Panel. Don't be shy, we've saved a special seat in the front row just for you!)

Many fans were left disappointed when the 1999 San Diego Comicon decided not to conduct its annual Kirby Tribute Panel, so we've decided to feature our own by contacting some of the top writers and artists in the industry via in-person, phone, fax, e-mail, and snail mail interviews for you, our ever-loyal readers and Kirby lovers everywhere. Given that all the members of our distinguished panel weren't assembled together in the same room, we ask you to give us your imaginations just for a short while, and it'll seem like we're all magically together in an enormous auditorium for one special moment in time. So close your eyes, join us, and picture this:

The spacious hall is filled to capacity with fellow Kirby fans, young and old, as you take a seat down front. You overhear a few fans behind you discussing who is the better villain, Dr. Doom or Darkseid. While the guy next to you reminisces about his love for Moonboy and his loyal friend Devil Dinosaur, the people in front of you talk about Vinnie Colletta's eraser and chuckle. Then suddenly the lights dim down and you feel a tingle on the back of your neck as the guests all arrive together and take their seats on the largest stage you've ever seen. In all, you see twenty-four gentlemen behind a long row of tables—twenty-four of the best creators who have ever contributed to our four-color medium. In an instant a sense of nostalgia overcomes you; you remember the great

tales and beautiful artwork that have at one moment or another touched your heart and entertained your mind. How can you forget the wonders of Marvels or the beauty of "Red Nails," or where you were when even a Superman could die and infinite Earths became one? Who in this room can say he hasn't laughed or cried with either Fone Bone or Cerebus? You could go on and on remembering something special about each of the panelists, but today we are all together for one reason: To celebrate the man who has brought us all together, the King of Comics, Jack Kirby.

The room is electric. You feel a special kinship with everyone there. The hall is now Standing Room Only. The hubbub quickly dies down as the emcee approaches the podium, and the spotlight shines brightly at center-stage—and now the panel is ready to begin:

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: Welcome to the 2000 Virtual Kirby Tribute Panel. (applause) For the next two hours we're going to discuss the works of Kirby and the influence that he has had upon our panelists. My first question: What was your first Kirby comic book, and why did it have such an impact on you? Kurt?

KURT BUSIEK: I don't remember what my first Kirby book was, though it may have been FF

#66—"What Lurks Behind The Beehive?" What I do remember is that when I started reading comics regularly, Marvel was running Lee/Kirby FF reprints in *Marvel's Greatest Comics*, and Thomas/Buckler new material in *Fantastic Four*. While I liked them both, I didn't yet understand the concept of reprints—and I wondered how the people at Marvel knew to put the really good stuff into *Marvel's Greatest Comics*. (laughter) I mean, it said "greatest" right on it, so clearly they were choosing the better ones, but what happened when a continued story came in, and half of it was one of the greatest and the other half was only good? Did they split it across *Fantastic Four* and *Marvel's Greatest Comics*?

Eventually I figured it out and felt really stupid. But even to my young and befuddled mind, the Lee/Kirby stuff was just head-and-shoulders better—the power of it, the emotion, the characterization, the breathless pace. It all just hit harder.

DAN JURGENS: My first Kirby comic was *Fantastic Four* #58. Strangely enough, I remember not really liking it much. I was a total DC reader at the time, and I just found it all too strange and alien to embrace.

The first Kirby comic I remember really going nuts over was Jack's first *Jimmy Olsen* when he came to DC. I quickly hunted down all the other Fourth World books and became a devoted follower of the Kirby Magic.

MARK WAID: An avowed DC fan during the 1960s, I shamefully admit that I missed all of Jack's work from that period the first time around. Like Dan, my first exposure to Jack was *Jimmy Olsen* #133—and at age eight, I thought it was the weirdest stuff I'd ever seen! Where was Curt Swan? Where was Pete Costanza? What is *this*? Nonetheless, Kirby got me. I bought all the Fourth World books—even though I didn't love them yet, I'm grateful that some small part of me was pounding on the Al Plastino-ized part of my brain and screaming, "You lunthead! This is genius!" (laughter)

I wish I could say that he was an early influence on me, but thanks to my own *naiveté*, he wasn't—at least not directly. Only in my teenage years did I come to realize how influential he was on the entire industry and everyone in it—past, present, and future.

TONY ISABELLA: My first Jack Kirby comic was an issue of *Fighting American*, though I didn't realize it until years later when Harvey reprinted some stories and I found that I remembered a couple of them. Next was probably *Challengers of the Unknown*, which remained one of my favorite titles even after Kirby left. Again, I wasn't aware of Jack Kirby *per se*.

I really became aware of Kirby with the Marvel Age of Comics and, most especially, *Fantastic Four Annual* #1, which I consider the greatest comic book of all time. (applause)

DAVE SIM: I'm not really sure which were the first Kirby comics that I saw. I was a DC, primarily Superman-family-under-the-editorship-of-Mort-Weisinger fan, and Mort told us all not to read those other comics, so I thought the least I could do for Superman was to obey. A friend of mind, Dave Kelso, was exactly the opposite—Marvel fan through and through—so it was largely through him that I got persuaded to look at Marvel comics

x-166
FIGURE 4 HEAD
TO BE
PLACED AS 1
LAYOUT
BELOW

Kirby's production guide for assembling the collage on the cover of *Jimmy Olsen* #138, including finished inks by Neal Adams.



Size of original is
10x15



← LAYOUT

← COVER COPY



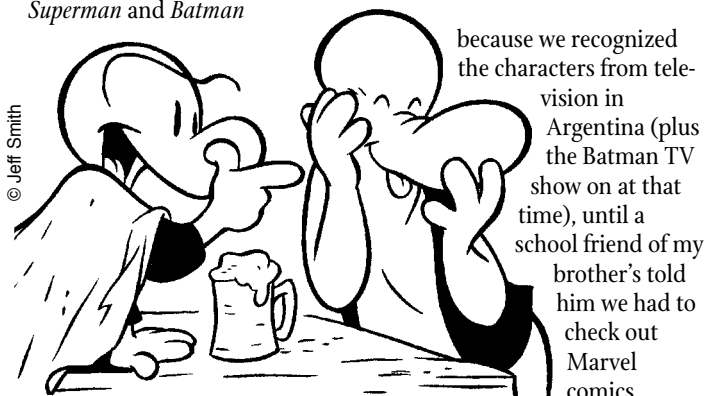
(literally, up to the age of ten I would shield my eyes so as not to accidentally see a Marvel comic). I guess one of the first Kirby books I saw was *Fantasy Masterpieces* when they reprinted the first few issues of *Captain America* from the '40s—or a few stories, anyway—all with dates and issue numbers attached. It was really ugly, muddy stuff, but ugly and muddy in a way that I definitely responded to with the first Red Skull story and all the Nazis and shooting and screaming and so on. People didn't scream much in the Superman family books back in '67 or so, so I found it to be attention-getting. A year or so later, I met Max Southall and John Cabeke and Manny and John Balge and other guys who all had these extensive Marvel collections since, back in 1967-68 it was a lot easier to have a complete run of Marvel comics than any of the major DC books. Max had an extra copy of *FF* #1 that he wanted ten bucks for, and I thought and thought and thought about it. I stole it from him at one point, but I felt bad after and gave it back to him with some lame story I don't think he believed. As a newcomer to Marvel in 1967-68, I thought the 1961-63 books were the best, with the fat outlines around the word balloons on the cover and strange pinks and oranges and things like the cover to *FF* #9 and the flat yellow background on the cover of *FF* #4. That was really how I related to comic books around then. The stories seemed really sort of juvenile but the covers on *Spider-Man* #8 or *FF* #4 just looked like something I wanted to own and have with my Golden Age DC books, which also had very grabby covers.

JEFF SMITH: For me, it was in 1964, a copy of the *Fantastic Four*. Ben Grimm wasn't a comics icon then; he was truly grotesque and frightening. The tragic case of *The Thing* was really something new in comics.

STEVE ENGLEHART: I started buying all the Marvels in the spring of '65. I believe my first Kirby was *FF* #49, with Galactus and the Silver Surfer. A hell of a place to start.

JOE QUESADA: My first recollection of Jack's work was during his stint at DC: All the Fourth World stuff, *Kamandi*, *OMAC* and the rest. I noticed Jack's impact from the get-go; it was the stuff that separated the men from the boys in the super-hero genre.

FABIAN NICIEZA: I don't remember the exact issue because I was too young and had just come to this country, so my English wasn't that good, but I am positive it was an issue of *Fantastic Four* around #60-something. My older brother and I had been reading DC comics like *Superman* and *Batman*



Bone by Jeff Smith; not very Kirbyesque, but one heckuva book!



Simon & Kirby splash to *Fighting American* #1.

JOHN TOTLEBEN: I was always aware of Kirby's work and even read his Captain America stories in *Tales of Suspense* around 1967-68. I didn't care much for books like *The Fantastic Four*, *The Avengers*, *Thor* or *The Hulk* so obviously I never read them. Kirby's work really began to grab my attention when he made the move to DC in 1970 and took over *Jimmy Olsen*. What was once one of the most droll and boring comics around suddenly became one of the most interesting. When he launched into the Fourth World trilogy—especially *The New Gods*—I was hooked and stayed hooked right to the end.

ROGER STERN: The first Kirby story I read was probably "The Case of the Super-Arrows" in *Adventure Comics* #251. That had a cover date of August 1958, which meant that I would have read it in the Spring of that year. That was a great Summer, as there was a Kirby Green Arrow story coming out every month. I definitely remember reading "The Green Arrow's First Case" in *Adventure Comics* #256. Comics distribution was always spotty where I grew up in central Indiana, so I never saw



Splash for S&K's
Double Life of Private
Strong (oft called Private
Life of Double Strong).

Jack's *Challengers of the Unknown* until one of his stories turned up in the *Secret Origins Annual* in the Summer of 1961. My exposure to Jack's work was the *Sky Masters* comic strip, the first few months of which actually ran in my hometown paper. The first issue of Simon & Kirby work that I actually bought was *The Double Life Of Private Strong*, fresh off the comics spinner in the Spring of 1959. Man, what a comic! I read it so much that the cover fell off—and I read it some more!

Does that give you an inkling of the impact those stories had on me? By the time I was eight, I was a Kirby fan, and I didn't yet know who Kirby was or what all he had already done. With *Green Arrow*, he took a character that even the seven-year-old me recognized as a second-rate Batman, and turned him into something special. I'd been watching Rocky Jones, Space Ranger fly to the stars on TV, but *Sky Masters* made space travel seem more real and more exciting! And *Private Strong*? I'd never heard of Captain America or Fighting American, so I didn't know that Joe and Jack were revising their own concepts. All I knew was that I couldn't get enough of this Shield guy.

JOHN OSTRANDER: Jack wasn't the first artist that I read in comics.

He wasn't even the first Marvel artist I saw, but he was the most indelible. I suspect that my first Kirby book was either *Fantastic Four* or *Thor*. I think it was Jack's work on *FF* that was the greatest influence on me at first. It was the concepts and amazing visuals that got to me as well as the pell mell sense of story. So much energy and yet, at the same time, he was a consummate storyteller. I think it was the combination of the visual, big idea, along with the real storytelling that appealed to me. Later, I felt much the same way about his Fourth World books over at DC, especially *New Gods* and most especially "The Pact." He gave us a story that was truly epic.

MARV WOLFMAN: It'd be too difficult to remember the first Kirby story I saw because I didn't know who Kirby was. The first I remember was his work on *Green Arrow*, especially a story about a giant arrow being shot into the city. I remember it was like no other GA story I'd ever seen and for the first time I actually enjoyed the character. Later on I saw *Boys' Ranch*, *Bullseye*, *Challengers*, and then his '40s stuff and his '60s stuff. I guess the reason it made an impact was he didn't believe in doing the small, usually boring stories I'd been reading, but insisted on having GA do something big, powerful, and at that time beyond my imagination.

BOB GALE: I discovered super-hero comics in 1961 when I was 10, and DC was really the only choice at the time. Having watched the Superman TV show, the *Superman* books were where I started, but I quickly became curious about other characters.

My first Kirby book would have probably been a *Challengers of the Unknown*, possibly the origin reprint in *Secret Origins*. I was aware that there was something different about the way this artwork looked compared to what I considered the "usual" DC look at the time—which would have been exemplified by Curt Swan—but I didn't really think about it consciously. One thing I do remember from those *Challengers* books were the really incredible monsters! Kirby's monsters were very organic and formidable—I think it was a combination of the monster itself and how Kirby depicted characters reacting to the monster.

TJKC: When you hear Jack's name, what comes to mind?

WAID: That he never ran out of ideas. Fifty years, never ran out of ideas. I think I'm completely dry and start to freak out about it every, oh, four months. Not Jack. For Jack, writer's block came and went in the time it took to sharpen his pencil. (laughter)



A sample of John Ostrander's Spectre, featuring art by Tom Mandrake.

RICK VEITCH: Kind of a huge, complex, explosive and abstract bundle of wild mental images and outrageous concepts imprinted by the hundreds of thousands of Kirby panels (and outrageous ideas) my young mind absorbed over the years. Jack also served as an inspiration when I got into the comics business, being the quintessential professional that he was.

BRIAN PULIDO: I worship Jack Kirby. He was a fountain of ideas and his imagination was boundless. His output was incredible.

DAVE GIBBONS: Jack Kirby means excitement, action and invention! *Race For The Moon* blended all these things together with the smooth line of inker Al Williamson. I loved anything to do with "outer space" at the time and was also intrigued that *Sky Masters* appeared simultaneously in an English weekly, causing the fanboy in me great interest as to whether the artist was English or American and why his art looked different in each feature. *Sky Masters* was inked by Wally Wood, so I was also struck by the resemblance to stuff I'd seen in *Mad* magazine. The notion of inkers was completely unknown to me then! But, these



Detail of Brian Pulido's Evil Ernie.

fannish musings aside, it was the rock 'em-sock 'em feel that Kirby had that set the work apart from the usual staid, worthy English science-fiction strips.

TJKC: How important an influence was Kirby on you?

BUSIEK: Considering how much work I've done for Marvel, he'd have been an important influence even if I didn't like his work. But I love it, and it informed my sense of how a story should be told visually, so it influences everything I do, everything I write in comics. Kirby is virtually the starting point for me, and everything else is a variation from that beginning.

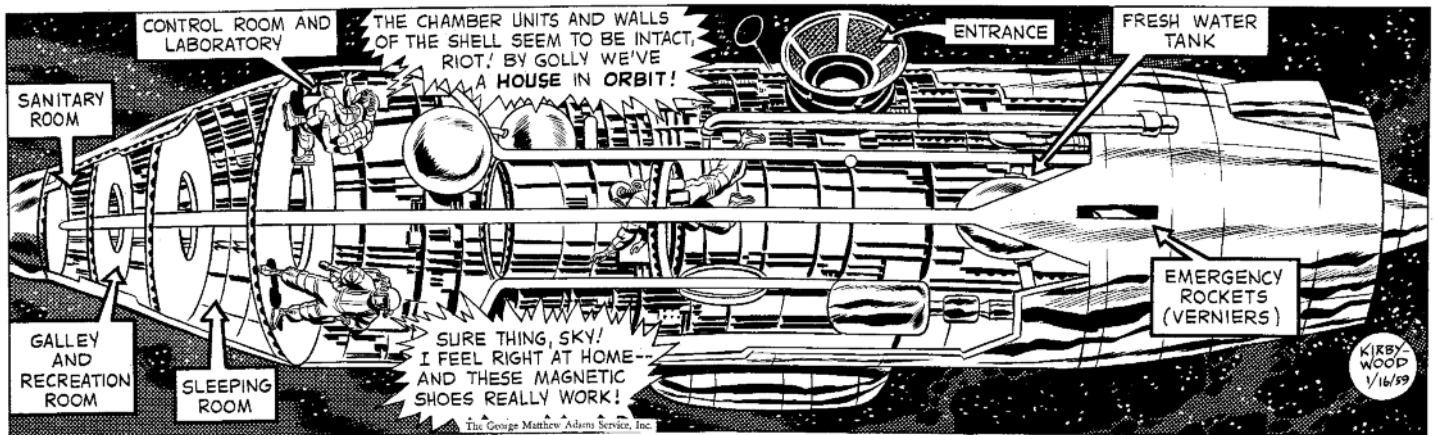
BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH: I take it that you mean my comics work. Out of a hundred percent I'd say 95%. Kirby's mid-to-late-'60s work completely enthralled me.

JURGENS: I've always had a hard time pinpointing influences. I was, and am, in awe of Jack's vision and capacity for creativity, as well as his sheer drawing ability. I believe one of the things about him that influences me most was his devotion to a title for long runs in which he'd go without fill-ins, all the while maintaining a remarkable level of quality. That breeds a more complete effect of illusion for any comic, and also rewards the readers.

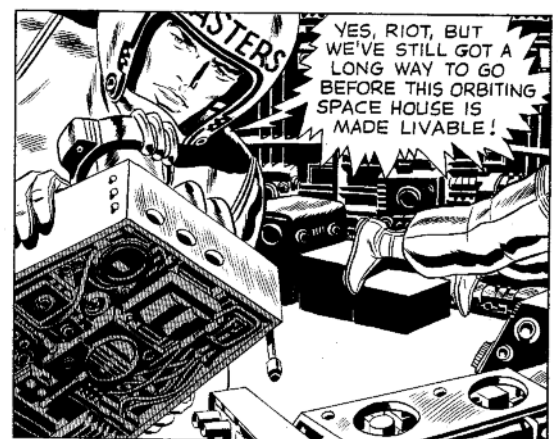
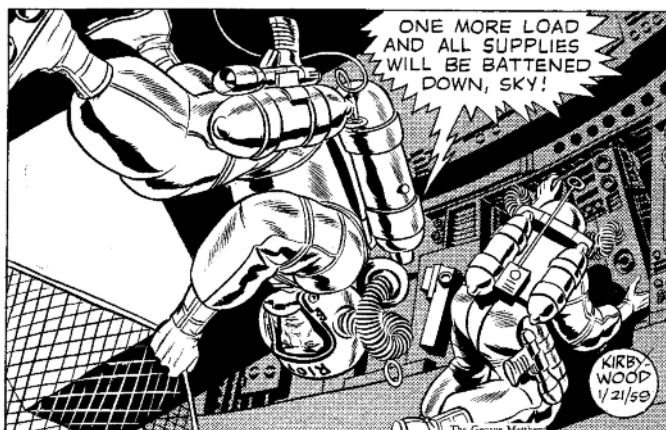
With the exception of a recent *FF* mini-series I just completed, my art isn't much like Jack's. However, since Jack helped create the blueprint of how modern super-hero comics tell their stories, it would be unrealistic of me to say there's no influence whatsoever. It tends to be more subtle in nature, though.

ISABELLA: I'm influenced by the excitement, emotion, and humor he brought to his super-hero tales. I, like every other writer or artist working in that genre, have found myself solving a story problem here and there by trying to think like Jack.

When I actually got a chance to work with Jack on *Satan's Six*, I tried bringing something of myself to the work—at Jack's urging—



WITH THE MAJESTIC PANORAMA OF THE UNIVERSE AS A BACKDROP, MINUTE HUMANS, LIKE WORKER ANTS, STORE SUPPLIES IN THE FIRST SPACE COLONY!



Wally Wood's gorgeous inking on Kirby's *Sky Masters* strip influenced numerous artists. Shown here are dailies from 1/16/59 and 1/21/59.



FULLY
AUTHORIZED
BY THE
KIRBY
ESTATE

\$5.95
In The US

AN **ALL-STAR**
LOOK AT THE
KIRBY INFLUENCE
FEATURING:

A ROUNDTABLE
DISCUSSION WITH
MIKE THIBODEAUX,
RICHARD FRENCH,
LISA KIRBY, &
STEVE ROBERTSON

ABOUT **WHAT'S**
NEW WITH
GENESIS WEST
AND THE
KIRBY ESTATE

JACK KIRBY
TALKS ABOUT HIS
WORLD WAR II
INFLUENCES

INTERVIEW WITH
ALEX ROSS
ABOUT HIS **KIRBY**
INFLUENCES

EXAMINING KIRBY'S
INFLUENCE ON
FINE ART

BIG BONUS
COLOR SECTION
PLUS A **CONTEST!**

UNPUBLISHED ART
INCLUDING PUBLISHED
PAGES **BEFORE** THEY
WERE INKED, AND
MUCH MORE!!



ISSUE #27, FEB. 2000

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR



A KIRBY FAMILY ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

featuring Lisa Kirby, Mike Thibodeaux, Richard French, and Steve Robertson
Conducted at the Los Angeles home of Richard French in August 1999 by John Morrow

(Following last Summer's San Diego Comicon, my wife Pam and I were treated to an afternoon of warm hospitality with the Kirby family. It's all too easy to forget that the term "Kirby Estate" doesn't refer to some cold, impersonal corporation, but rather Jack and Roz's children and grandchildren. Although only one of those relatives was present—Lisa, Jack and Roz's youngest daughter, and the Estate's co-executor—it's not a stretch to use the word "family" to describe how the Kirbys felt about the others sitting around the dining room table that day. Mike Thibodeaux is a long-time friend and confidant of Jack and Roz, who still acts as agent for selling the family's original art. Rick French is Mike's friend and partner, who got to know Roz and Jack well, and worked with Jack developing ideas for their comic book company Genesis West. Steve Robertson became close with the Kirbys through regular visits since the 1970s, and has been Mike's inking assistant, idea springboard, and close friend just as long. Together, they form an extended family whose goal is to further Jack's reputation and legacy through the development of his unused concepts in Hollywood and the comics industry. We extend our sincere thanks to them for taking time out for this roundtable discussion.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: To start off, let's get an idea of what's going on with the Kirby Estate. Here's a stack of Kirby-based ideas; are you pitching these for animation?

RICK FRENCH: Animation or live action. On several of the concepts, we've already started production of comics stories, like the *Malibu Maniacs*.

TJKC: Was this stuff intended specifically for *Malibu Maniacs*, or is it unused stuff of Jack's that you're recycling?

MIKE THIBODEAUX: We've completed four of the twelve scheduled issues of *Malibu Maniacs*, and part of it's Jack's artwork. There are six double-spreads and a handful of pages penciled by Jack, while half of the twelve covers are also drawn by Jack. Being as prolific as Jack was, if I came across unused material that could be worked into *Malibu Maniacs*, Jack gave me permission, saying, "If it fits, use it." But the bulk of the artwork to these stories is mine.

TJKC: Did Jack assist you guys in coming up with any of the concepts in these? Did you discuss them with him at all?



Jack with Mike Thibodeaux at one of Roz Kirby's birthday parties in the late 1980s.



(l to r) Richard French, Steve Robertson, Lisa Kirby, and Mike Thibodeaux.

MIKE: Yeah. We would show up at the Kirby home once a week and spread the artwork out on the kitchen table. Jack was amazing. We'd hold up a drawing of a character and, lo and behold, Jack solidified the phrase "a picture is worth a thousand words." Jack had a thousand words, instantly creating character names and attributes, like he'd been rehearsing for this moment for weeks. Every detail was impeccable. He would then segue into his version of the story without missing a beat.

TJKC: You had ads for *Malibu Maniacs* out at one time, but the books never appeared; what happened?

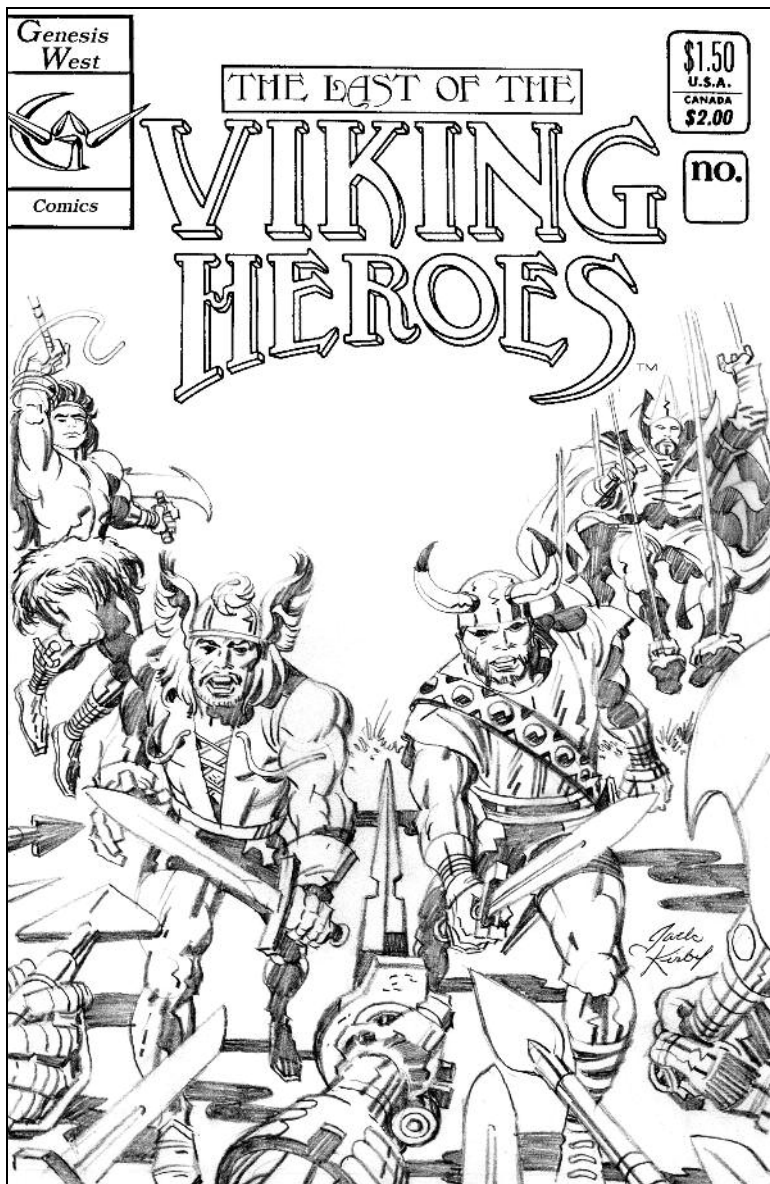
MIKE: I wasn't able to finish the project. My hand problems kind of shot that down. I stupidly undertook too many projects at one time. I was working about twelve to fourteen hours a day, seven days a week. My ulnar nerve and my radial nerve gave out. I quickly realized I could never produce even half the volume of work that Jack could. To this day, finishing *Malibu Maniacs* is my priority.

RICK: It's hard to keep Mike concentrated on more lucrative projects. He's always working on *Malibu Maniacs* in one way or another.

MIKE: *Malibu Maniacs* was born out of my desire to breathe new life

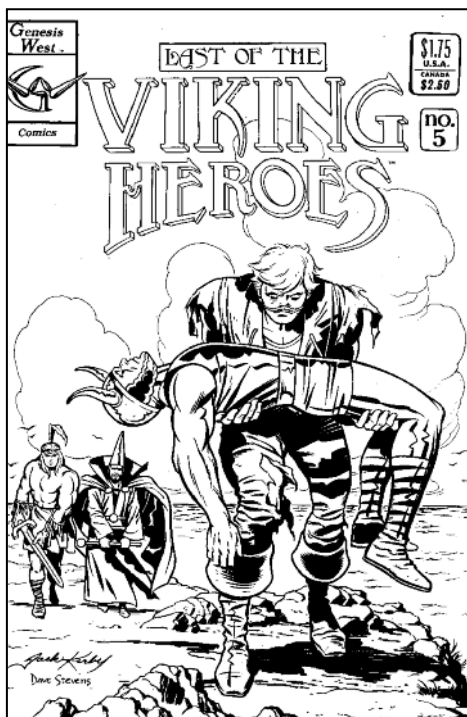
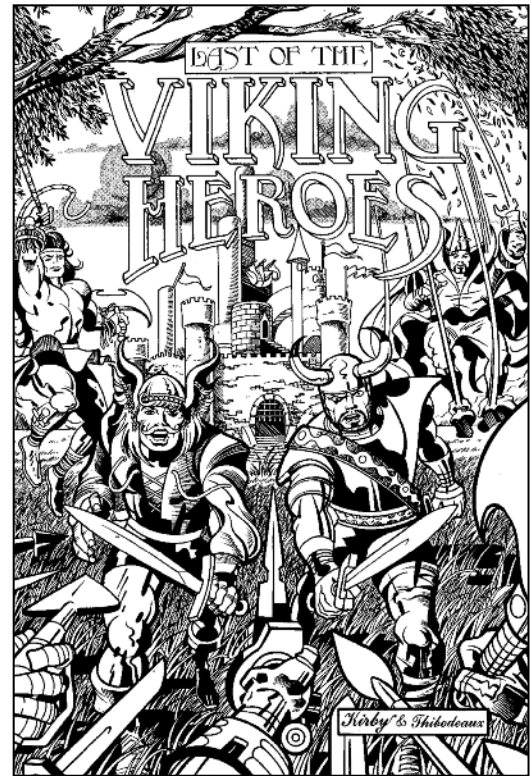


Cover for *Rincon*—formerly *Malibu Maniacs*—#6 (pencils by Kirby, inks by Marty Lasick).



(top) Kirby pencils and Thibodeaux inks for the cover of Last of the Viking Heroes #1.

(bottom) Dave Stevens inked these Kirby pencils for the cover of Last of the Viking Heroes #5.



back into *Last of the Viking Heroes*. Jack was aware of my passion for the comic and told me there's nothing like creating new interest in an old title by developing a new set of exciting contemporary heroes. Once you've established the new characters, then revert the spotlight back onto the characters of the *Viking Heroes*, and *wham!*, you've introduced a new set of fans to the *Viking Heroes* that might not have normally picked up this period-piece comic. For emotional drama, the plan was to kill off a few members from *Malibu Maniacs*, but I don't think I can destroy any character that Jack had a hand in creating. I wouldn't normally attempt such an intricate, complex story with two dozen characters, but I thought Jack's story plot was so exceptional; I'm determined to attempt it.

RICK: This is a group of characters who are all surfing maniacs, but they each have their own special sport identity. Thrasher competes with his skateboard, Andre is a jet-ski stuntman, and Helen Wheels is the roller-blade queen. *(laughter)*

TJKC: That's a great name!

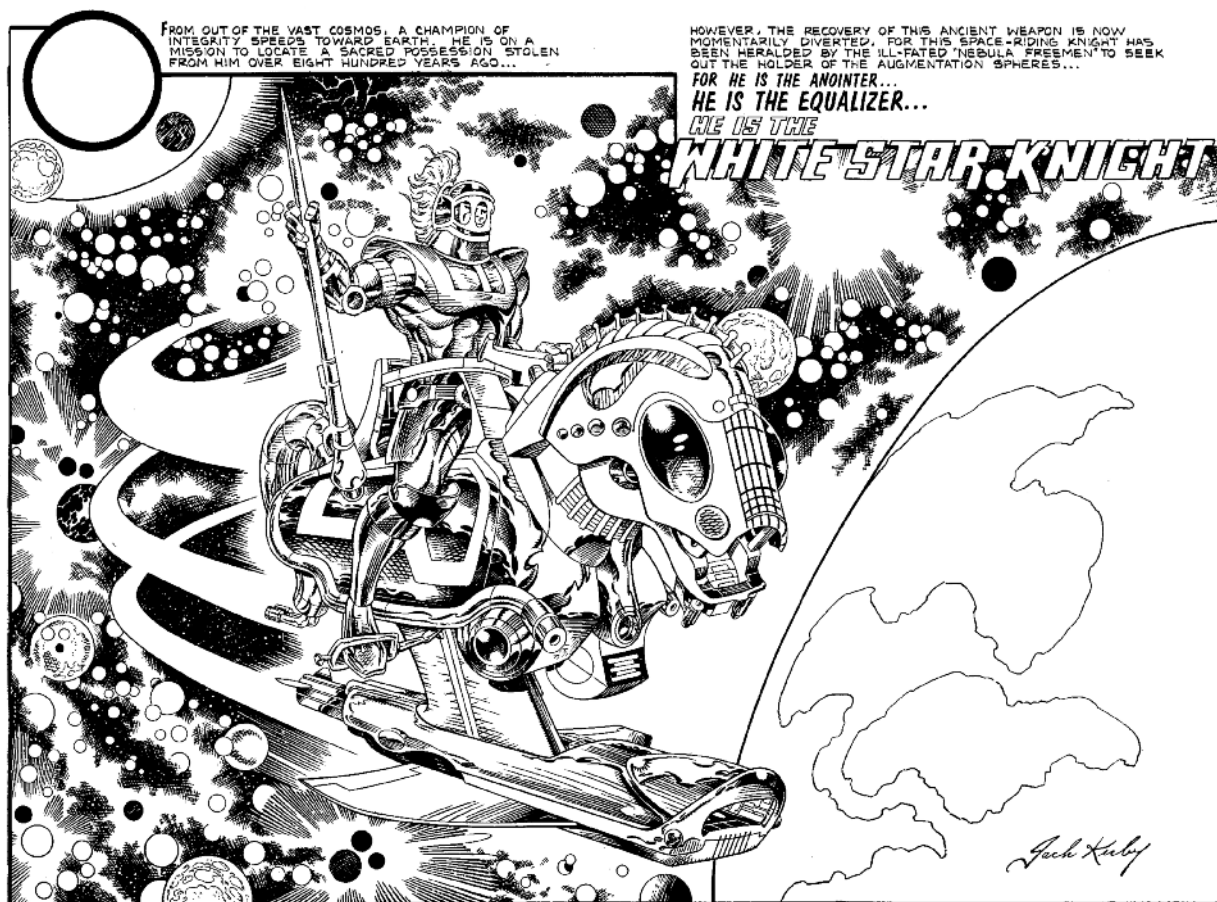
RICK: We were all sitting around one day at Jack's house and Mike pulled out a drawing from his portfolio. I said, "Jack, look at this," and before the drawing hit the table, Jack had her name, character traits, and what she was going to have for dinner that night. *(laughter)* Typical of Jack's witty mind.

TJKC: At one point, weren't you concerned about Malibu Comics getting upset about the name *Malibu Maniacs*?

MIKE: Somewhat; that's why we toyed with Jack's name of the *Rincon Raiders*—we eventually dropped the name "Raiders." *Rincon*—I love it! It's such a powerful name and such a classic surf break here in California. So if you hear us refer to *Rincon*, it's actually *Malibu Maniacs*, they're one and the same. The title issue is an ongoing battle between me and Rick. I prefer *Rincon*. I brought these characters of *Rincon* into the last pages of *Phantom Force* #8. Had the series continued, all of the characters from *Viking Heroes* and *Phantom Force* would have been combined with common ties in the *Rincon* series.

STEVE ROBERTSON: Jack wasn't actively drawing at that time, so he couldn't launch into it. Only he could've done it; juggled three or four different books at one time.

MIKE: Yeah, Jack wanted me to put out three or four books per month and I said, "Jack, I'm not fast enough." Jack said, "Mike, you have an epic brewing here. Start with the *Malibu Maniacs*, then bring in *Darkfyre*



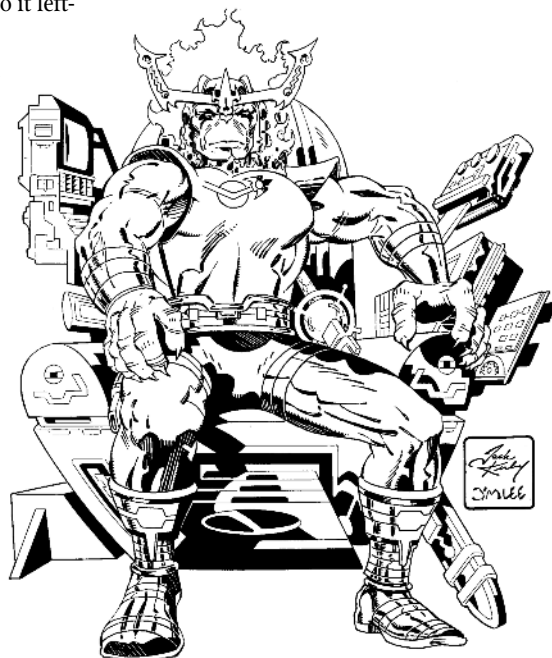
Double-spread for *Malibu Maniacs* #2. Kirby pencils, Marty Lasick inks. (below) *Darkfyre*, from *Phantom Force*. Pencils by Kirby, inks by Jim Lee.

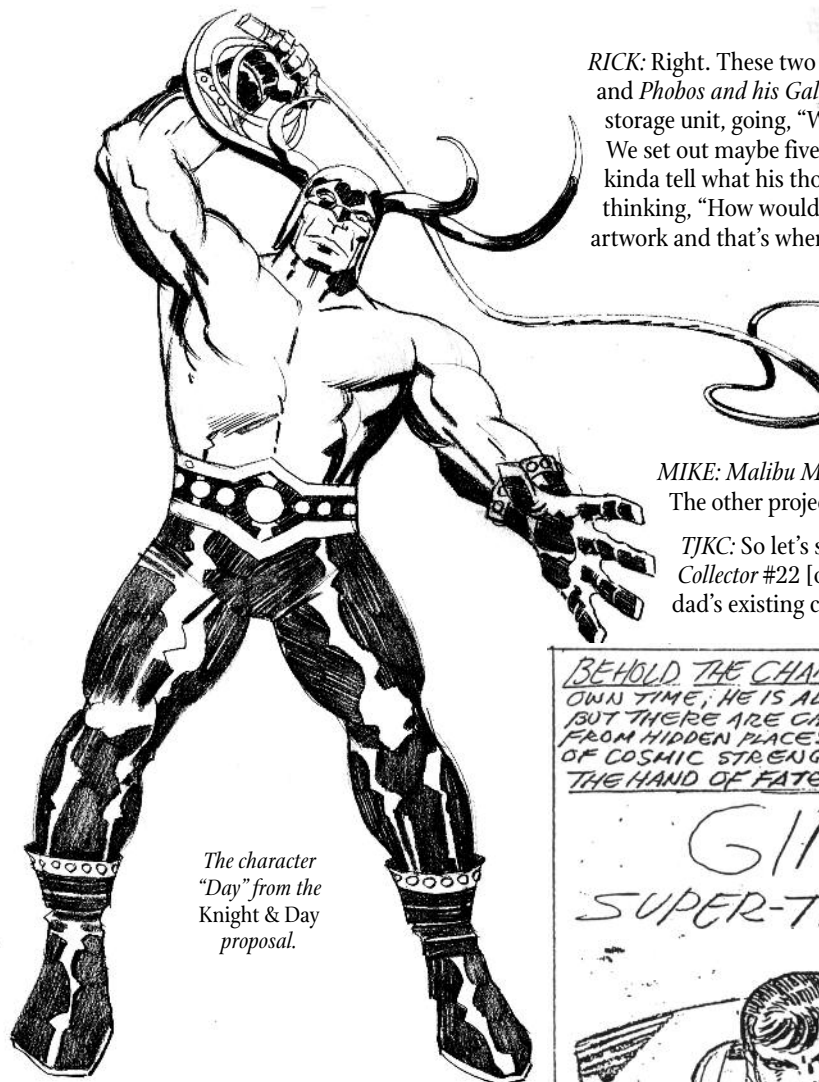
and *Mystiko* from *Phantom Force*. Slowly enter Windom into the main cast and then reintroduce the *Viking Heroes* with twists and turns to keep three monthly issues coming out simultaneously for two years, to culminate into a well-awaited emotionally charged climactic ending!" Sure, Jack could put out three quality books monthly, but even if I pushed it I would be lucky to get one book out a month. So I've combined Jack's bold multi-book crossover into a 12-issue (printed once a month) mini-series, hopefully without sacrificing story or detail.

RICK: I don't even know how it's going to go. Mike hasn't told me. I get little bits and pieces of it, but I wish he'd write it all down. *(laughter)*

MIKE: It's well written in my head. I'm gonna finish it sooner or later, even if I have to do it left-handed.

STEVE: Before we move on, I'd like to say something. There's some things I've seen on the Internet that I thought were really abrasive and unfair—and untrue—basically implying that somehow or other Mike was trying to rip Jack off, and pass off things as Jack's that weren't his. That is really just not true. I





The character
"Day" from the
Knight & Day
proposal.

saw some snickering about a pin-up in the back of *Phantom Force* that was taken from another drawing, and altered to look like one of the *Phantom Force* characters; like he was trying to get away with something. But Jack and Roz were both alive at the time, and that was under their auspices. No one seems to take that into account; that Jack would recycle concepts. There's nothing underhanded about that.

TJKC: That's an interesting point; there's all these leftover Kirby ideas that haven't been used....

MIKE: Let's use them!

RICK: Through the years, while we were developing *Phantom Force*, other characters mushroomed from our weekly sessions. That's where Darkfyre was created, and the Whitestar Knight, the Star Slavers, and Knight and Day, and all these other concepts we have. We did a lot of brainstorming with Jack on what we should do with it. After Jack passed away, Roz granted to us the rights to *Phantom Force*, *Malibu Maniacs*, and a handful of other characters and concepts co-created with Jack. Those concepts are what you see in some of these presentations. The other presentations are projects we developed with Lisa using some of the Kirby Estate concepts.

TJKC: Let's talk about those; this is a pretty huge stack here. These booklets are all proposals to try and sell the concepts?

RICK: Right. These two are ones Lisa has been involved with, *The Descendants of Atlantis* and *Phobos and his Galactic Bounty Hunters*. We were just digging through the files at the storage unit, going, "Wow! Isn't this cool? Set this aside, we can do something with this." We set out maybe five different unused concepts. Jack had notes on them, so you could kinda tell what his thought was behind the drawings. So we started combining them, thinking, "How would Jack continue this?" We all got together, and sat down with the artwork and that's when *The Descendants of Atlantis* was created.

LISA KIRBY: We kind of mixed and matched, and came up with our own twists to the concepts.

STEVE: Throughout we tried to remain true to the kind of things Jack would want, and the kind of things he would do.

TJKC: Which ones do you think are sold at this point?

MIKE: *Malibu Maniacs* and *Kublak* have been optioned for animation production. The other projects have not been shopped yet. We're in the process of doing it now.

TJKC: So let's see; *The Descendants of Atlantis* is one we ran a blurb for in *Kirby Collector* #22 [originally called *The Others*]. Lisa, basically you took some of your dad's existing concepts...?



Splash to an unused "Bruce Lee" story Jack gave to Mike to use in *Phantom Force*, as related in TJKC #15.

JACK KIRBY ON: WORLD WAR II INFLUENCES

The second installment from a work-in-progress entitled "Conversations with Jack" by Ray Wyman, Jr.

Essays in first person based upon interviews with Jack Kirby and his family between August 1989 through June 1992. Copyright 1999 by Ray Wyman, Jr.



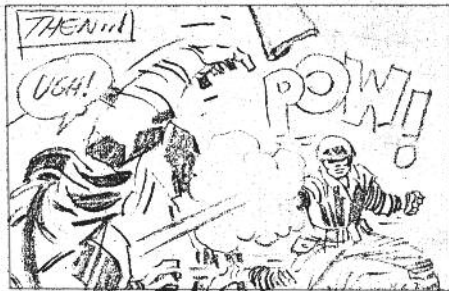
(Author's Note: Although always a gentleman when it came to the public, privately Jack could indulge in a bit of profanity from time to time, particularly when discussing his soldiering days. Couple that fact with my own propensity for the same linguistic crutch and there were times when the bluster of four- and five-letter words (and various combinations) was so thick that Roz—Jack's wife of 50+ years—had to step into the room and politely remind us that our voices were 'carrying.' We must have sounded like a couple of old GI's resting our bones on a park bench, cursing away the afternoon. Roz asked me to not encourage him, but really he needed no encouragement—in this he was fairly self-sufficient. So, sensitive readers, beware.)

GENERAL PATTON

Well, I can't remember what happened yesterday; I could not tell you what I ate for breakfast this morning, but I recall the faces of everybody that was in my unit. I recall their names, I recall where they came from, I recall the manner of their speech and even the common everyday things they did; unimportant things that make the whole event real. That is how the mind works: It retains the significant events of our lives by memorializing the important moments. It happens when we are faced with events that are pleasurable and those that are unpleasant, especially when we are faced with danger—at times when our lives are hanging by a thread. It was like that nearly every day of the war. The threat was never far from our thoughts, I can tell you.

I am not a master on how the human mind works but it seems fantastic that the mind stores all the little things that make up a period of your life; a string of incidents will fall into place, you know, from all your memories, and that is what produces the image we have of ourselves. Still, it kind of amazes me that I went through all of that. I'm amazed that I'm still here to tell you these things. These interviews, these questions are good for me to reflect and bring back all those times; small things, big things, sometimes insignificant, but all of them are stored right here for the asking.

For instance, you ask me how it was during the war and just the mention of the word brings to mind the first time that I saw General Patton. My outfit was lined up and Patton was there with my Colonel and all the other officers. We were all mustered together and the officers stood there talking. We were freezing our asses off; those French winters are extremely cold. A heavy coat is nothing; a heavy coat didn't mean a damn thing. Whatever you were wearing, it didn't matter. Only walking saved you from the cold; any physical exertion was better than just standing at attention



Kirby splash-page pencils from Our Fighting Forces #159.

in the cold. There was no snow yet, but it was unforgettably cold. It didn't matter to the officers; these guys were arguing over something, most of it I couldn't hear very well, so what I remember is what other guys told me.

We were in Northern France very close to the border of Germany and Belgium; and like I said, it was so cold, every one of us was shivering in our boots—not because we were afraid, you know. My outfit was a strong group of fighting men. Every one of them you could trust with your life; we had to, we had no choice.

Well, there was Patton, sore as hell. Sometimes he was agitated, but their voices kept low. We couldn't hear them very well. He wanted to know why we were screwing up his map. He came there with this big map and he spread it out over the hood of this jeep and got all the other officers in my outfit all around to look. Then he looked up at each one of them and said, "What the f*ck are these guys doing here?" and he pointed at the map again and yelled, "What is this? What is this? You're fouling up the whole f*cking thing! If you're here, then why the f*ck aren't they dead? They are all supposed to be dead." I myself was saying, "Well, sh*t on you. I feel great."

But like I said, I couldn't hear most of what he was saying, except when he raised his voice and all the other officers stepped back like he was going to slap them. Of course, that wouldn't happen in an American army, not in public at least where all the GIs could see. So, this went on for—I don't remember, I was too frozen to care, but it went on for quite a while. I heard that Patton ordered replacements. He thought my outfit had been wiped out. So some foul-up I guess, signals crossed, messages mixed up; it happened quite a lot during the war.

The Colonel had fouled up Patton's schedule and his ability to predict what went on on the battlefield. This is a personal opinion, but I think he was a great General; he kept all of the outfits moving—you can't win a war just by digging in. He kept his troops moving constantly so the Germans never got any rest—never, at least not in my sector. So in that way Patton was a good leader, a soldier's General. While he kept us moving, he kept everything else moving with it; we got the best meals and medical care—and if his Colonels needed new troops, he'd bring them himself; and that's what happened. There he was, mad as hell with our replacements, and there was my Colonel standing there like a common private, scared sh*tless.

BOOT CAMP

World War II didn't happen overnight. There are layers of history, a whole series of occurrences that brought us to that critical moment when war was inevitable. I think the British actually knew that but were too proud to admit that they had already failed to contain Hitler. To understand what happened you would have to go back to Napoleon, the Kaiser, the Russian Czar, the British Royalty; these guys never liked each other, they were horrible to each other. They never could keep a promise.

They were so busy trying to outdo each other that they lost touch with their own people. Then there was the Great Depression; it hit everybody, not just here. In Germany it took 2 million marks to buy a loaf of bread. Hitler was an oppor-

tunist. He knew that people were about to revolt because things were so bad by then.

At that time, the common man felt downtrodden; it was the same for Americans, we were feeling the same pressures back then, but we had Roosevelt and they had Hitler. It almost happened here; Hughie Long tried the same approach as Hitler. He wanted to take things over and run things for himself. Guys were unemployed and would listen to anybody. They thought he had a better idea; that he could fix the situation. I forget where he came from, but he was always making a big deal about everything. Somebody finally got fed up with him and had him shot. Hitler was immune to this because he was the one doing the shooting.

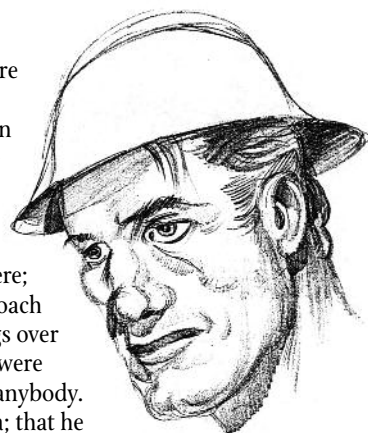
After he took over Germany he grabbed Czechoslovakia, Austria, Poland; he wanted everything and we all knew it was coming. Everybody could see that, but Chamberlain missed the signs. People do not think of him as a good leader because a good leader has to see all of this at once. Now, if you ask if I blame Chamberlain for this war—well, that is possible, but when something happens, who gets blamed? Usually the loser. If we had lost the war they would be blaming us for the whole thing. Poor judgment is only part of the whole story; the rest is buried in everything that happened before you were ever around and what comes out at the end.

I was drafted June 7, 1943. I found out the same way as everybody else: They sent a telegram. You get two free telegrams from the Army: One to tell you that you are drafted and one to tell your wife that you are coming home in a casket. Sure, I was drafted, but I didn't mind going. You didn't complain about it because it was the thing to do. All my friends were gone, even Joe. You did this sort of thing without asking questions. It was your duty—but, I can tell you that I wasn't happy about Basic Training. I was at Camp Stewart, Georgia during the Summer; it was always hot and humid. I hated it there and they always gave me a hard time. I am not a guy who likes to be disciplined. I hate discipline of any kind except the kind of discipline I make for myself, like when I draw. If it is not right I'll redraw it 19 times until I get it right, but Army discipline I wasn't ready for.

"Stand straight. Get up. Lay down. Do this. Do that." They would wake us up at two o'clock in the morning and make us hike 50 miles, 25 miles up and 25 miles back. That is a long walk with a full pack, a rifle and everything else—that's a long walk without them. And at two o'clock in the morning, are you sleeping or walking? And you are doing this all on roads as rough as hell.

I was not prepared for the military experience personally; most of what I knew about the world came from the papers, books and movies—mainly movies. Like everybody else I was fed stereotypes by the movies, by writers who were pulling down big dough for writing that stuff; they didn't realize that it was a kind of a beginning of an education for most of the country. There were very limited communications: A telephone was very hard to come by, not like today. To own an automobile you had to be semi-rich, and nobody ever took a cab; those were taken by rich people too. And airplanes? We all took trains back then and you only went on a train when you really had to go someplace. All the things we take for granted today were as far away from us as the sun. I know I may sound like an old rehashing-type, but those were different days.

But I did appreciate the opportunity to meet all sorts of people from all over the country. It was a great opportunity, I can tell you. There were guys from Florida, Michigan, Utah, Texas—I don't think there was one



*(this page and throughout this article)
Very early Kirby face studies, circa the late-1930s.*



ALEX ROSS INTERVIEW

Interviewed by George Khoury

(Who can forget the first time they saw an illustration by Alex Ross? He is quite possibly the most popular artist to arrive on the comics scene since the Neal Adams experience of the late Sixties. He blew us away with his romanticized vision of the Marvel Universe in Marvels. Kingdom Come caused shockwaves throughout the industry and fandom for its sheer power and epic storytelling. And with Earth X, Ross continues to develop as a storyteller, exploring the inner workings of Marvel's characters, especially many of the ones created by Jack Kirby. Our thanks to Alex for taking time out of his busy schedule to conduct this telephone interview in late 1999, and to Gary Land for supplying much of the Ross art that accompanies it here.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: How has Jack Kirby been an influence on you?

ALEX ROSS: For me, he's more of a direct influence upon artists who have influenced me. I'm one of those guys who grew up reading comics by guys who were influenced by Kirby. Even though I did see Kirby—I don't know; as early as when I was five when he was doing the *Sandman* comic for DC. I love that comic to this day; it's one of my favorite things that was forgotten about him. But guys like George Pérez, who he influenced heavily—just about everybody drawing comics post-1960s had a huge amount of Kirby in them, whether they like it or not. Even Neal Adams probably owes a great deal to Kirby because of the energy the man put into the entire nature of the art form.



TJKC: In your opinion, where does Jack Kirby fit into the history of comics?

ALEX: Well, I've said this before in interviews: I feel like Jack is, more or less, the Picasso of comics. He took the form from an infancy stage—you know, the basic illustrations—to all different levels till eventually creating his own form of art out of the language of comics. Also, his expression was indigenous to comics; the energy that he gave comics was unlike anything else, anywhere else.

TJKC: What were your first Kirby books? Was it mostly his '70s work?

ALEX: I had a handful of them, and very early on I was familiar with the stuff he was doing for Marvel in the Seventies. I was also equally familiar with reprints, the origin stories of this or that Marvel character (because Marvel was doing a lot of paperbacks at that time) and so I was seeing some of the earliest adventures he had drawn of the FF, Avengers, or whatever. At an early age I was seeing the stuff that really made him famous—really made him what he was to the comics industry.

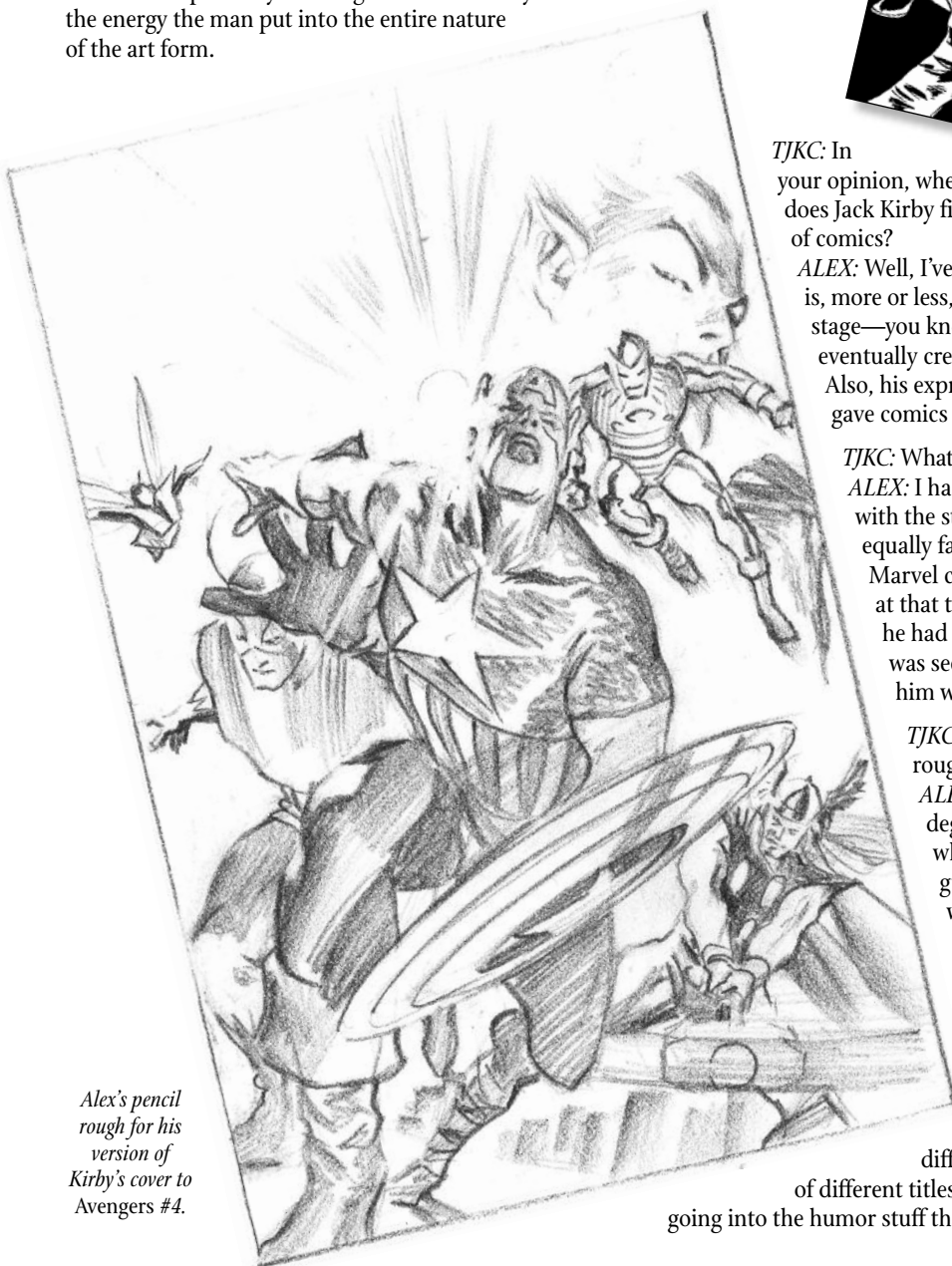
TJKC: Were you naturally drawn to his stuff, or was it too rough for your taste?

ALEX: In a weird way I did have a natural draw to it to some degree. In that time period I was personally influenced by what John Romita or Neal Adams brought to art. Those guys were actually a bigger, more direct inspiration on what I thought was the ultimate comics style, but then Kirby had this unbelievable charm for me. I know it doesn't sound right to just put it in terms of charm, but that's really what it wound up being. I really loved what his stuff looked like.

TJKC: Do you ever wonder what drove him to do comics for over fifty years, in all different genres?

ALEX: It seems to me that he was always exploring different stuff. In the Forties, he bounced around with a lot of different titles other than *Captain America*. Then going into romance, going into the humor stuff that he did, going into all the stuff that occupied his time

Alex's pencil rough for his version of Kirby's cover to Avengers #4.

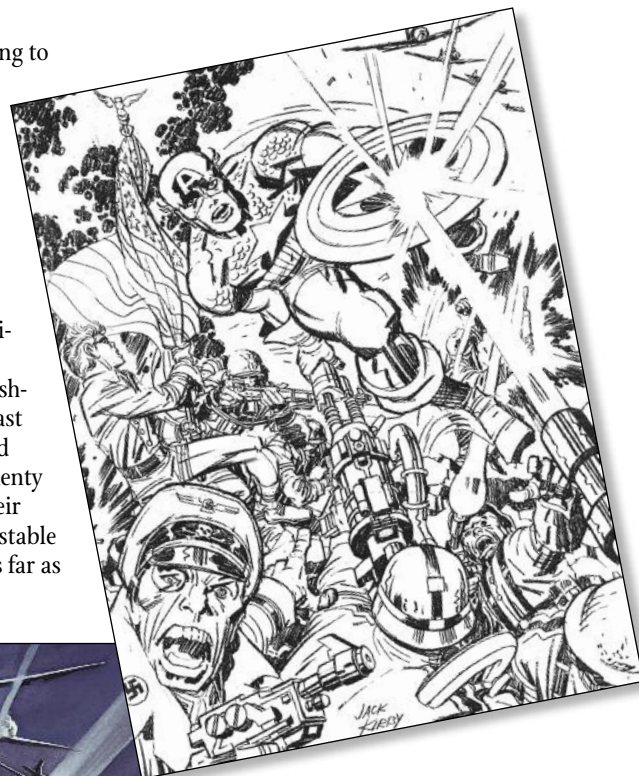


in the Fifties—I mean, the guy tried to do so many different things. He always kept trying to expand his horizons. The reason that he had such a long history of super-heroes is that he always found new concepts and new creative room to expand upon them.

TJKC: It appears that a person like Kirby only comes every hundred years. How desperately does this industry need a new Kirby to inject some life into it?

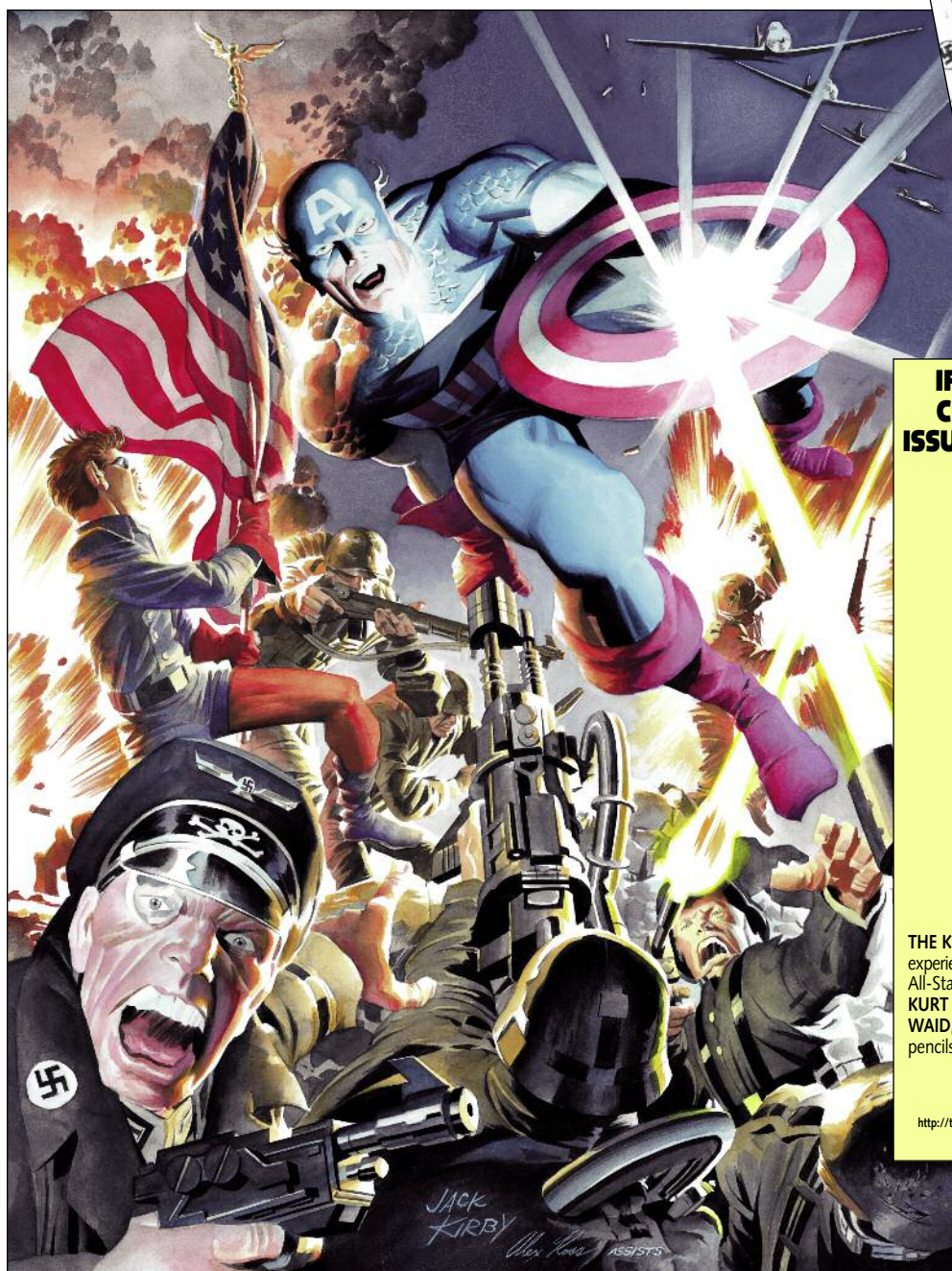
ALEX: I don't know if it's so much based upon just the talent of a talented individual, you know? Kirby wasn't the reason why comics sold in the first place; that can't be credited to him. Kirby has more to do with the greatest work, the most inspiring work, that happened within comics. He doesn't deserve the credit of being necessarily the juggernaut of why comics ever sold, period. In fact, the comics that Kirby is most associated with weren't often the best-selling comics of their time.

I don't need to argue what Kirby's worth was. In essence Kirby's greatest accomplishment was the degree to which one man could inspire so many others—that his works last for so long. There's simply no better creative force within American comics. Having said that, let me clarify this is American comics, not worldwide comics—because there are plenty of comics around the world, outside the fact that comics were invented in America. Their styles are not affected at all by whatever Kirby did, and in fact they have a better, more stable industry than we have. Japan is not really reeling because of what Jack Kirby did. But as far as America goes, he's tops. He's the thing.

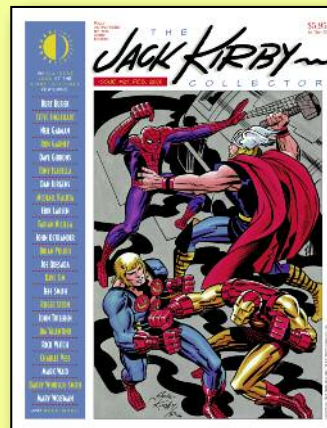


TJKC: With the Kirby recreations that you've done, you've had a chance to study his art a little closer than others. Where is the power inside his art?

ALEX: The layout. The energy that is in every single stroke the guy put in. You



**IF YOU ENJOYED THIS PREVIEW,
CLICK THE LINK TO ORDER THIS
ISSUE IN PRINT OR DIGITAL FORMAT!**



KIRBY COLLECTOR #27

THE KIRBY INFLUENCE! Interviews with KIRBY (on his WWII experiences) and ALEX ROSS, KIRBY FAMILY roundtable discussion, All-Star Tribute Panel (featuring NEIL GAIMAN, DAVE GIBBONS, KURT BUSIEK, JEFF SMITH, BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH, MARK WAID, and others), color section, features, art (including uninked pencils), and more! KIRBY/BRUCE TIMM cover!

(72-page magazine with COLOR) \$5.95
(Digital edition) \$2.95

http://twomorrows.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=98_57&products_id=453

In case you missed it: Alex's cover painting for TJKC #19. It's just been released as a full-color lithograph; check your local comics shop.