



AN *IN-DEPTH*
LOOK AT *KIRBY'S TWI-*
LIGHT YEARS
FEATURING:

AN UNPRECEDENTED
EXAMINATION OF
KIRBY'S 1980s
CAREER
INCLUDING HIS
WORK ON
CAPTAIN VICTORY
SILVER STAR
HUNGER DOGS
SUPER POWERS
ANIMATION
AND MORE!

INTERVIEW WITH
SUPERSTAR WRITER
ALAN MOORE
ABOUT HIS *KIRBY*
INFLUENCES

JACK'S NEPHEW
ROBERT KATZ
TALKS ABOUT
HIS DUTIES AS
CO-TRUSTEE OF THE
KIRBY ESTATE

KIRBY AS A GENRE

STORYBOARDS
FROM THE
FANTASTIC FOUR
ANIMATED SERIES

UNPUBLISHED ART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

FULLY
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KIRBY
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THE
JACK KIRBY
COLLECTOR

ISSUE #30, NOV. 2000

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In The US



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Back cover inks: Al Gordon

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THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

THE ONLY 'ZINE
AUTHORIZED BY THE
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ISSUE #30, NOV. 2000



Our front cover sports new Paul Smith inks and colors over this 1980s Kirby recreation of the cover of Amazing Fantasy #15, featuring Spidey carrying (we're told) Steve Ditko (note the pencil!)

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EIGHTIES UPS & DOWNS

A look at one of Kirby's most prolific—and least documented—decades, by Chris Knowles

CHAPTER 1: HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD!

Jack's career in animation began in the late 1970s. Saturday morning cartoon powerhouse Hanna-Barbera had decided they wanted to do a new version of the *Fantastic Four* cartoon, which had a successful run in the mid-'60s. At about the same time, Mark Evanier, Kirby's friend and confidant, had a somewhat disheartening dinner with the Kirbys. Jack had apparently decided that there wasn't a place left for him in the increasingly constrictive world of comics, and he had decided that he would not renew his contract with Marvel, which was due to expire in 1978. Jack had found that Marvel was a different world now, and he was having difficulty dealing with the disrespectful young

staffers who were handling his work. This was also the dawn of a new regime at Marvel and Jack was facing the prospect of greater editorial interference. The House That Jack Built no longer had a place for him.

Evanier had gotten wind that Hanna-Barbera was doing presentation art for NBC for the *Fantastic Four* proposal and called his friend Iwo Takamato, who was in charge of the project.

"I said 'Why don't you get Jack Kirby to do the presentation art?'" Evanier recalls, "and Iwo said, 'Well, doesn't Jack Kirby live in New York?' and I said 'No, he lives in Thousand Oaks. Here's his number.' They called him and Jack came down the next day and he ended up doing a bunch of big presentation art for Hanna-Barbera, and they loved him."

There was a snag in the works, however. Marvel had made a deal

with H-B competitor DePatie-Freling for the rights to the FF, as well as other Marvel properties. At the time, comics artist Doug Wildey was working at D-P on a proposed *Godzilla* 'toon. In an arrangement reminiscent of "The Pact," DePatie-Freling sent Wildey and *Godzilla* over to Hanna-Barbera and got Kirby and his co-creation the *Fantastic Four* in exchange. Jack worked with Stan Lee developing the FF 'toon for DePatie-Freling, which was later bought out by Marvel. Since Marvel's relations with D-P were already cozy, Jack was able to have the work he did in animation count towards the terms of his Marvel contract. But all did not go smoothly. "DePatie-Freling used him very foolishly," Evanier recounts. "They had him as a storyboard artist, which he couldn't do. He simply didn't have the background in animation to do that."

The *Fantastic Four* cartoon itself was similarly ill-starred. Remembered principally for the absence of the Human Torch, and the presence of the absurd Herbie the Robot, the series ran for two seasons and had little impact. Jack left the studio at the end of the show's production run and did some freelance work for Hanna-Barbera. At the same time, he worked on an abortive line of comics proposed by an entrepreneur, tentatively called "Kirby Comics." This is where the genesis for such concepts as *Captain Victory*, *Satan's Six*, and *Thunderfoot* lies.

Soon, however, the world of animation beckoned anew. Fellow comics exile Steve Gerber had created a new science-fiction



Thundarr and crew fight an overgrown arachnid in a post-apocalyptic subway in this presentation art from the series. Other artists would take these pencil pieces and add polish with inks and airbrush color.

Thundarr and Ookla fight the Hydra in this Kamandi-esque scene.



cartoon with studio honcho Joe Ruby of the house known as Ruby-Spears Productions.

STEVE GERBER: "The first time I met Jack was at Ruby-Spears. We had sold a show called *Thundarr the Barbarian* and the original character designs were done by Alex Toth. At some point or another Mark Evanier suggested to Joe Ruby that we bring Jack Kirby in to design the settings, the characters, the weapons, all of the villains—all the incidental stuff in that show basically. Everything other than the three main characters. I heard about (Evanier's proposal) and just thought it was a wonderful idea. Joe asked me what I thought and I said it was an incredible idea and that's how Jack came aboard."

According to Evanier, *Thundarr* was created and then pitched to NBC. After some hemming and hawing by the network, Ruby-Spears was asked to do more presentation work. Toth was busy so Jack was called in on Mark Evanier's recommendation. Jack's presentation was what helped sell the show. "Every time an episode of *Thundarr* would be written, Jack would be given a list of all the new characters, props, machinery, and he would go home and do sketches which would be adapted into model sheets. He was basically a concept designer," Evanier recounts. Unlike Toth, who usually drew the models that the animators used, Jack's ideas would be further refined by a team of specialists. Ruby-Spears also initially made the same mistake DePatie-Freling had.

Comics genius Jim Woodring was working in the storyboard department for Ruby-Spears at the time. "Jack tried his hand at a couple of storyboards, but he couldn't really do it. He just didn't understand

the concept," Jim recalls. "You have to be familiar with cinematic technique and vocabulary, just to know the way scenes have to work off each other. You have to know cutting rhythms and that sort of stuff."

Thundarr went on to be a cult favorite cartoon, and Jack's ideas found a much larger audience, and subsequently, a whole new generation of young minds to warp. After *Thundarr* ended its run, Jack was offered a contract with Ruby-Spears. He was paid a weekly salary and was given a host of duties, most in the design and development arena. "Ruby-Spears was kind of a development-happy studio," Evanier says. "They would spend an awful lot of time and money designing art and doing scripts for dozens and dozens of shows that never made it."

From his vantage-point in the storyboard department, Woodring seemed to notice this process was somewhat troubling to Jack. "As time went on and none of Jack's (cartoon property) ideas were actually used, I think he began to feel a little desperate about his situation. I think it bothered him that he was giving them all these ideas and they were just ending up in a closet somewhere."

"It depends on what Jim means by that," Gerber offers. "Jack would come in occasionally with original ideas for series or he would be given ideas by Joe Ruby and Ken Spears or whoever and take those ideas home and develop visuals for them. But most of the stuff that came out of the studio never sold. That's the case with any animation studio."

But concept creation for new series was only a part of Jack's duties for Ruby-Spears. Kirby collaborator and historian Greg Theakston observes that "Kirby was an idea guy. So when he went into the animation



(above) I pity the fool who doesn't get a kick out of this riff lifted from My Bodyguard. (below) Example of the thumbnails Jack would be given to work from at Ruby-Spears.

work, that's all that it was: Strictly ideas. My favorite example [is] Mr. Crab's Car. 'Give us four Crab Cars.' So for four hours, Kirby would sit there and knock out an incredible variety of four different vehicles that Mr. Crab would be driving in."

Jack worked on development all year 'round but would also work on production for current shows when the studio was busy for production season (usually a period from March to October).

"I believe Jack did some presentation art and model sketches on the *Mr. T* show and God only knows what else," Gerber recalls. "He worked on a lot of things." Though Jack had the privilege of doing the majority of his work at home, he also would work on-site during busy times. "Jack would work in the studio occasionally when there was something that had to be done quickly or if changes had to be made," Jim Woodring remembers.

At those times, Woodring would get to watch Jack in action. "I was never a comics fan," Jim recalls, "so when Jack came to work there, I knew he was a famous comic book artist—but I wasn't even that familiar with his work. So I was seeing him without the gloss of his reputation. What I saw was this energetic man in his sixties who seemed to be hermetically sealed in his own imagination—and was like a fountainhead when it came to generating ideas and designs and concepts. It almost seemed that as fast as he could draw, he could think of things to draw. I would occasionally watch him at work and he was like a plotting machine, as they used to call those old computer-drawing devices. He would just start in the upper left hand corner and end up in the lower right hand corner and without any sketching, or laying-out or proportion guidelines or anything, he just knocked out these incredible, complex pictures."

THE GREAT ESCAPE

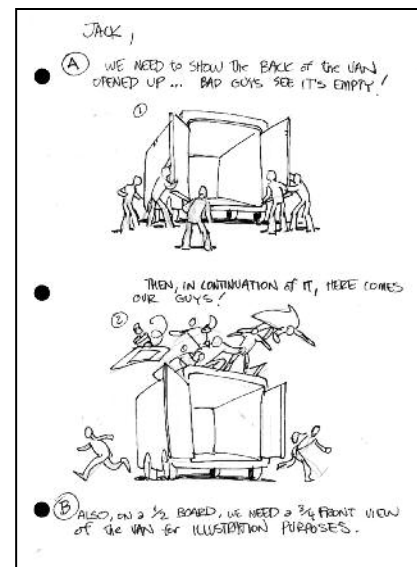
Escaping what Jack had called the "Viper's Nest" of Marvel Comics and being embraced by Hollywood's open arms was important

to Jack. Jack had risen to the pinnacle of success in his field in the previous decade and there was nowhere else to go, especially at that time. Comics had peaked and begun their decline in popularity in the '70s, and there was no incentive for publishers to treat their talent decently (not yet, at least—Jack would later help break down the walls of the comic book monopoly of the Big Two).

MARK EVANIER: "Jack was very happy working in animation. He felt much more welcome at Ruby-Spears than he did when he went to a comic company at that point, because Ruby-Spears—and Hanna-Barbera for that matter—was filled with new young artists who grew up on his work. And he'd walk into the room and they'd start bowing and scraping and saying 'Here's the greatest artist who ever lived!' Jack felt enormously proud and honored to be around that crop of people.

"Jack had gone through times in his life when he thought he was a prisoner for DC or Marvel. The idea that he was making a very solid living, providing for his family, getting a health plan and vacation pay—he never had vacation pay in his life—and working in television, he was making a living doing something different and he no longer felt trapped in the [comics] business.

"It was very important for Jack on a personal level



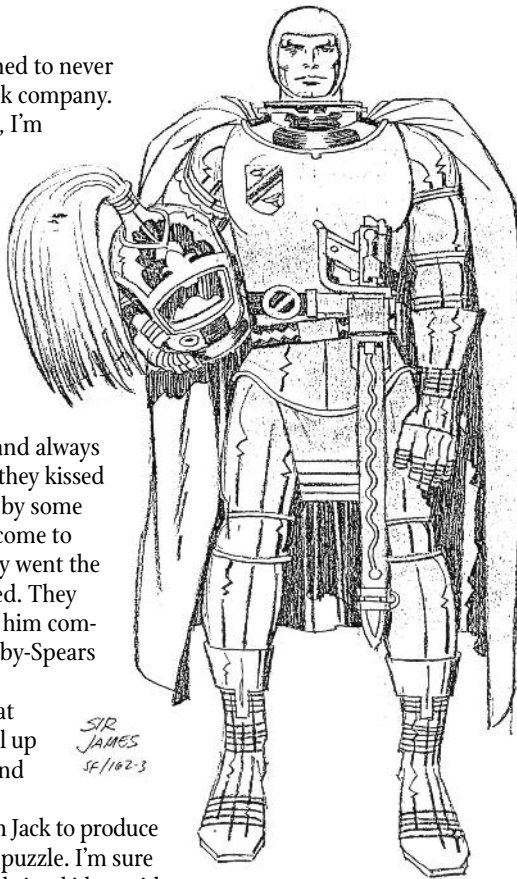
to say 'I'm out of Comics.' He was quite determined to never again have his income dependent on a comic book company. He liked the notion of saying 'I got out of comics, I'm now a TV producer'. Ruby-Spears gave him the title of Producer after a couple of years, and that meant something to him."

GREG THEAKSTON: "He had a contract. It was something Jack was always concerned with. He was a child of the depression. He had an impoverished, in the classic sense of the word, childhood. His brother and mother and dad and he all lived in one room. He said that 'My vacations in the Summer were going out on the fire escape!' So the fact that he was working and always had money coming in... and they respected him, they kissed his feet at these places. Unlike being chewed-out by some two-bit editor, the heads of the company would come to greet him and make sure that he was happy. They went the extra effort at Ruby-Spears or wherever he worked. They acknowledged him as the King and always made him comfortable when he was there. Taking work into Ruby-Spears was always a very happy experience [for Jack].

"There were some real nightmare situations at comics companies—having unnamed editors call up Kirby and telling him how terrible his work was and how dare he turn in such a crummy job.

"[At Ruby-Spears] there wasn't this demand on Jack to produce 22 pages of continuity that locked together like a puzzle. I'm sure it was extremely refreshing to be able to just do wild visual ideas without being locked to a series or a story. Of course, the downside of that was that he had less creative control over what it was that he was doing. On the other hand, I imagine that there was such a variety of material and close enough to his interests that he was more than happy to sit there every day and draw these incredible... I mean, most of that material has never been seen by the public. I was looking at a stack of maybe 100 scene illustrations from the *Thundarr* series. They're all just completely finished, beautiful, could-be-a-splash-page or double-page spread—everyone of 'em and no one will get to see them."

Ruby-Spears was later bought by Taft Broadcasting, which also owned Hanna-Barbera, and the two studios became closely aligned. Ruby-Spears moved across the street from Hanna-Barbera and their operations became interlocked. During a slow season, Jack and many other artists were loaned out to Hanna-Barbera and Jack began work on H-B mainstays like the alliterative trio of *Super Friends*, *Scooby-Doo* and *Space Ghost*.



JACK KIRBY: THE UNPUBLISHED ARCHIVES

My first contribution to THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR was a lengthy and erudite appreciation of the JACK KIRBY: THE UNPUBLISHED ARCHIVES card set, but my magnum opus was pared down to a single paragraph. Now, at long last, am I vindicated!

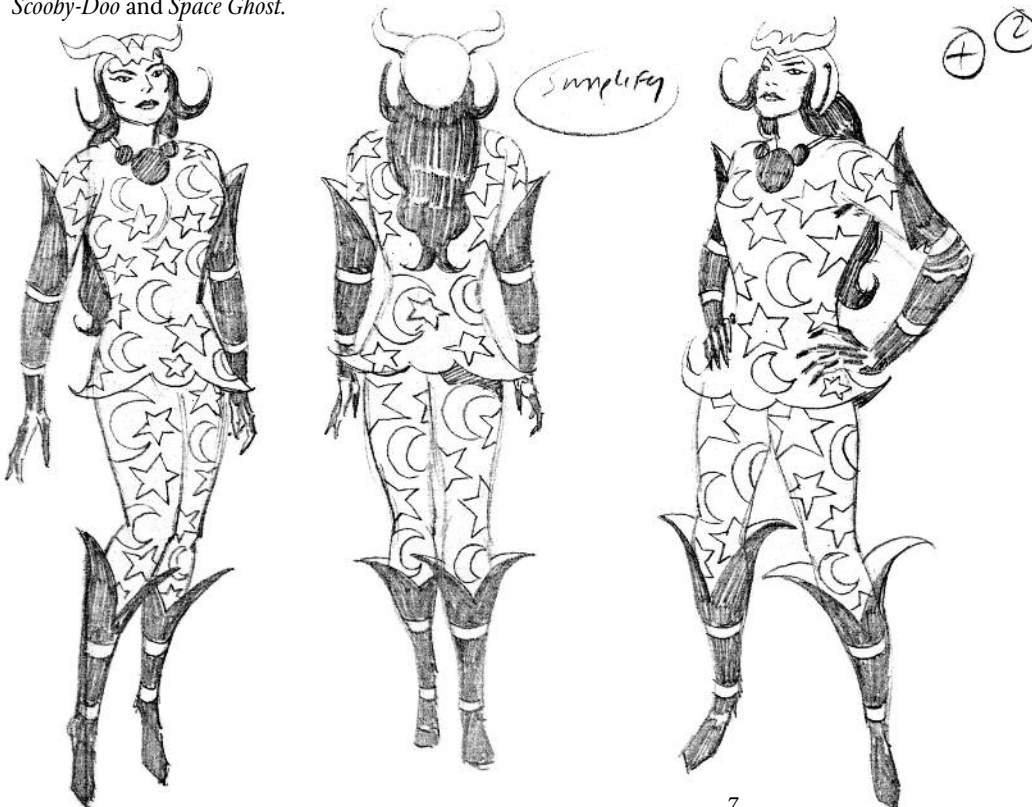
Suffice it to say that if you don't yet have that aforementioned card set, drop whatever you are doing and hunt it down. Now. This set is an invaluable, priceless document of an important, and yet under-publicized phase of Jack's career. Perhaps more than any of Jack's comics work, this card set gives you a potent dose of "Kirby Unleashed."

Which is exactly what he was. Jack's bosses (it's not yet established whether or not they were angels sent by the Almighty to reward Jack for a life of toil) basically told Jack to go to town, to let it all hang out, to "go for it, you mad dog!"...just as long as he did so with a pencil on a large piece of illustration board. Jack would get his list of assignments from the bosses, then would go home and mine his bottomless imagination—bringing up concepts, characters, situations, and machinery for whatever project was at hand. The drawing would be brought in and worked on by a team of talented finishing artists who would prepare the boards for pitch meetings.

The card set prints many, though certainly not all, of those efforts. There are legions of bizarre characters, arsenals of wacky weaponry and vehicles, countless contingents of critters and scads of strange situations all handsomely inked and colored. And most of the work is of considerably higher quality than his comics work of the time. This, after all, was Jack's day job, and he obviously worked very hard to please his paymasters.

I really cannot recommend this card set highly enough. Aside from the unbridled creativity the cards show, the images themselves are just plain pleasurable to look at. They are also pretty darn wacky, and the slick finishing only heightens Jack's inherent surrealism.

It's amazing to think, in this day and age, that a senior citizen was producing the volume and quality of work he did at Ruby-Spears, and still managed to produce comics on a more or less monthly basis. In these days, when fan-favorite artists can take up to a year between issues, you wonder—what's their excuse? - CK



(top) Balder-like character for *Super Friends*.

(left) Sartorially-challenged sorceress character for *Space Ghost*. Note the scribble to "simplify."



Raiding the King Features catalog: Prince Valiant and The Phantom get ready for their close-ups in these presentation boards for unrealized animated series.



"GET OUT OF COMICS!"

said Kirby, and my heart nearly stopped, by Steve Garris

It's 1978 at the San Diego Comic Con; my comic book *One* had been published a year earlier by Pacific Comics and I was excited as I handed a copy to Jack Kirby. Those were the days when you could just walk up to famous artists who were attending the convention and engage in real conversations with them. Jack Kirby was always gracious and friendly and I had spoken with him several times in years past. Now I had finally produced my one comic book and I was eager to bring my product to the attention of the King!

He studied my comic book for a minute or two, then said to me, "You've done it. Now you're one of us."

"One of us." Ahh, yes; here was the King of Comics welcoming me to the enchanted realm. This was the high point of my entire life at the time. I was "in."

Jack Kirby looked into my eyes with a stare that seemed to penetrate my very soul as he continued: "Now I've got some advice for you. Get out of comics."

"Get out of comics"? I was severely shocked. Had my god spoken these words? Did my comic miss the mark and was I to be exiled from the comic book kingdom before I'd even entered that hallowed place?

I was probably the picture of insecurity at that moment, as Jack continued, "Get out of comics because they will rip you off."

"Not my publisher!" I defended.

"They're all the same," Kirby insisted. "How do you think I feel when I see the Hulk on television and I get nothing for it?"

I hadn't realized; my mind was paralyzed with fear and I was unable to respond for a few seconds. I'm sure the King saw my confusion.

"You should get out of comics and go into rock 'n' roll videos," Kirby explained. "The world has changed since comic books began. We didn't have television then. These televised rock music videos are

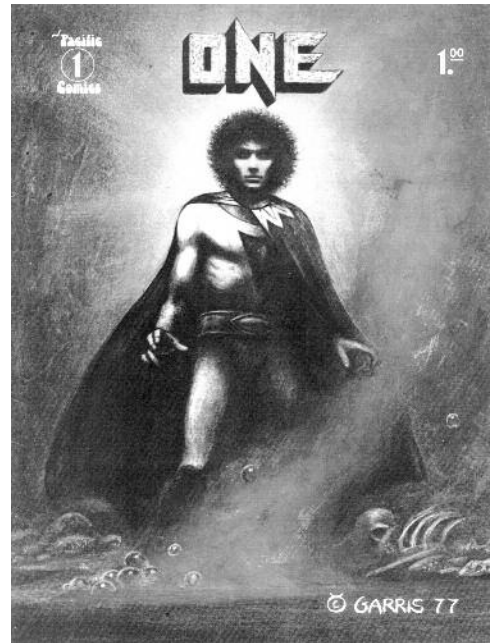
sure to become the social equivalent to what comic books were in the past. If I was a young man today, I'd probably be involved in the creation of rock videos."

Thus spake Jack Kirby in 1978 A.D., and music videos were in their extreme infancy at that time. MTV didn't even exist yet! The man was a prophet with an eye on the future.

For ages afterward, Kirby's words "Get out of comics... they'll rip you off" echoed in my mind.

I had dreamed of becoming a comic book genius like Jack Kirby, yet I suspected that he had said those things to me because the comic I had shown him was a travesty. Many of my friends were top notch comics and commercial arts professionals, but I was becoming the Ed Wood of comics. I believe that Jack Kirby had diplomatically told me the truth. I took his advice and got out of comics.

Three year later my old publisher Pacific Comics released a new series titled *Captain Victory* by—you guessed it—Jack Kirby! It was 1981 and ironically, that same year, a new television sensation burst upon the world. It was called MTV. Go figure! ★



(above) The cover of *One* #1 (1977). ©Steve Garris.

(below) Dailies from Kirby's proposed *Valley Girl* comic strip, suggested by a 1980s meeting with Frank Zappa.



THE SUPREME WRITER: ALAN MOORE

Interviewed by George Khoury

(Interviewer's note: Lately I'm finding that the more interviews I do, the more difficult it becomes to write these introductions. Maybe it's because you never want to overlook the accomplishments of the subject, but when the subject is Alan Moore it literally becomes impossible and nerve wrecking. No matter what dictionary you look in, there are no words that can capture either who Alan Moore is or what he means to comics. But that doesn't mean we aren't going to give this the old college try.

Alan Moore did something to comic books that was wonderful, magical and beautiful. He brought a renaissance—a revolution to the art form, armed only with his vision and his pen. Moore brought a cerebral edge to comics, the likes of which have never been seen, making innovations and bringing back imagination. He expanded the boundaries and destroyed any limitations with his storytelling. His writing gained the love of the fanboys and the respect of the mainstream because he is a great writer in any medium.

The British six-foot-two resident of Northampton has earned a well-deserved place in comics folklore alongside Jack Kirby and Harvey Kurtzman. His work on *Swamp Thing*, *Watchmen*, *From Hell* and other classics will forever stand as a testimony to the kind of greatness comics

can achieve. And every month, a whole new generation of readers continue to get dazzled by his work on *America's Best Comics*.

Moore like Kirby is a pioneer and a gentleman. And like the King, we are all better for having known him and his work. This interview was conducted in two sessions during a rainy November in 1999.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: How powerful an influence was Jack Kirby for you?

ALAN MOORE: Well, I'll have to go all the way back to my very early childhood for that. I first discovered comics when I was about seven; this would have been around 1959 or 1960. When I said "comics" I meant American comics; I had read the homegrown British fare before that, but when I first came across the *Superman* and *Batman* comics of the time, the first couple of appearances of the Flash, things like that, these were a revelation. I became completely addicted to American comics, or specifically to the DC Comics that were available at the time. I can remember that I'd seen this peculiar-looking comic that I knew wasn't DC hanging around on the newsstand and it looked too alien. I didn't want to risk spending money upon it when it wasn't stuff that I was already familiar with. And then I can recall on one day, I think I was ill in bed—I'd been seven or eight at the time—and my mother said that'd she get me a comic to cheer me up while I was confined to the bed. I knew that the only comic that I could think of that I hadn't actually bought was a *Blackhawk* comic that I'd seen around. So I was trying to convince her to sort of pick up this *Blackhawk* comic, kind of explaining to her what it was and that it was a bunch of people in blue uniforms. Much to my initial disappointment she brought back *Fantastic Four* #3, which I read. It did something to me. It was the artwork mainly. It was a kind of texture and style that I've just never seen before. The DC artists at the time, I didn't really know their names, but their style was the one I was accustomed to: Very clean, very wholesome looking, and here was something with craggy shadows with almost a kind of rundown look to a lot of it. It was immediate; literally, from that moment I became a devoted fan of the *Fantastic Four* and the other Marvel books when they came out—particularly those by Kirby. I mean, it was Kirby's work that I followed more than anybody else as I was growing up. Just the work in *Thor* and "Tales of Asgard," the *Fantastic Four* during that long classic stretch in the middle, and then when Kirby went over to DC and the Fourth World books. This was around the time that I was approaching my psychedelic teenage years and the subject matter of these books seems to be changing along with me. I absorbed actively every line he drew in those years, or at least the ones that I was able to lay my hands on. There's something about the dynamism of Kirby's storytelling. You never even think of it as an influence. It's something that you grew up with, kind of understanding that this is just the way that comics were done. So I'd say yeah, that I would account for the influence of Jack Kirby upon my own work. It's almost like a default setting for my own storytelling. It's sort of like if you can tell a story the way Kirby would have, then at least that's proper comics; you're doing your job okay.

TJKC: Had you read *Challengers of the Unknown* prior to *Fantastic Four*?

ALAN: I'd seen the *Challengers of the Unknown* but I don't think I'd seen the Kirby issues, I'd only seen a couple of the later ones. If it had been the Kirby issues for some reason they haven't clicked with me, but I rather think they were some of his lighter stuff. I saw the Kirby *Challengers* stuff later and loved it, but I think the only *Challengers of the Unknown* that I had seen at that point was by the later artist that took over after Kirby moved on from the book.



Alan Moore & Dave Gibbon's *Watchmen*. This Gibbons image was adapted from DC's *Who's Who* #5 to be used as a t-shirt design.

TJKC: What exactly made those classic Marvel stories so revolutionary? Was it that the storytelling was more mature than DC?

ALAN: An extra dimension had been added to both the storytelling and the art. In a sense the DC characters at the time were archetypes to a certain degree. Archetype means they are one-dimensional. Stan Lee and his collaborators in terms of the story overlaid a second dimension of character. He gave them a few human problems. These weren't three-dimensional characters but they were of a dimension more than what we'd been used to, and something about the art kind of corresponded with that. With Kirby there was a level of attention to detail and texture and intensity about the art that seemed to give another dimension to the super-hero—to the comic book—than what was used at the time. It just seemed to be much more visceral, much more real. The Human Torch finding the Sub-Mariner in a bowery slum; that kind of had a visceral reality to it that was much more engaging.

TJKC: It seems that everyone at the beginning finds Kirby's artwork a bit awkward. Did it take you a while to get used to it?

ALAN: Well for a while, probably seven or eight pages, but yes there was that kind of shock of something unfamiliar. But then again, in my life that's generally been a sign; something I'm almost repulsed by to start with will be something I'll be enduringly fascinated by later. Some of the underground artists, the first time I saw their work, genuinely repulsed me, but later I became addicted to them and the same is true to a different degree with Kirby. Yeah, looking at his art for the first time there is that shock of something that is unfamiliar, and at first the shock might feel unpleasant, but pretty soon it's a strong acquired taste and you have to have more of that.



(above) The first appearance of that spoof of a spoof, *First American* from *Tomorrow Stories* #1. Art by Jim Baikie.

(below) The spoofee, *Simon & Kirby's Fighting American*, showing his stuff.

TJKC: You used to draw more often when you were younger?

ALAN: Yeah, I used to sort of draw. I did my share of Kirby swipes and sort of old exercise books and that sort of stuff. Yeah, I had delusions of adequacy as an artist right until the start of my comic book career. It was only then I realized that I could never draw quickly enough or well enough to actually make a living on that so I switched over to being a writer.

TJKC: Do you think your style of comics writing is a natural progression to what Lee and Kirby did in the Sixties?

ALAN: I guess it must be to a degree. That's some of the early stuff that I saw, so like I said, that's almost a kind of default setting.

TJKC: But namely with your super-hero work....

ALAN: Yeah, but there again that was the only kind of comic I'd seen at the time: Super-hero comics, really. Even war and western comics were super-hero comics in drag, so basically that is almost a default storytelling style. Lee and Kirby: It's just basic. It's something that's omnipresent—you don't even think about it. You don't even notice it. It's there like air is there.

TJKC: Have you ever tried writing in the Marvel style? Scripting to already plotted and illustrated artwork?

ALAN: The nearest I ever got to that is when we were doing *1963*; partly that was a matter of expediency. We needed to be able to do these things quite fast, without a huge amount of extra typing work for me. Also, it was appropriate that we did them in a Marvel style. I'd layout a page with, say, six panels in it. I did two or three pages like that. I phoned them through to Rick Veitch or Steve Bisette. So what we did was I'd read them the panel descriptions over the phone like there's somebody in the left foreground, or there's somebody in the right background. We're in this kind of setting. These are who the characters are. This is kind of roughly what they're saying to each other. One of them looks angry. The other one looks impassive. Then I go through that bit and they send the artwork. Probably before I'd even seen the artwork, I'd touch up the dialogue and send that over to them. So I'd get the dialogue done and they'd have to work from that



GLOW LIGHTS INTERIOR OF DOOM'S SHIP

ANOTHER MARVEL MYTH

by Jon B. Cooke

1981 was a tough time to be a Kirby fan, with Jack's work to be found only every so often on the comics racks. So naturally it was a delight to read the cover of the 20th anniversary issue of *Fantastic Four* (#236, November 1981). Not only was it a "Special Triple-Sized Issue" of Kirby swipes by one of his better substitutes, John Byrne, but another blurb on the bottom announced, "Plus: An all-new F.F. Blockbuster by Stan (The Man) Lee and Jack (King) Kirby!" This was a treat even at the then-pricey cost of \$1. (Imagine! 64 color pages for a dollar!)

Most had to have been disappointed when they opened the back pages to find the story "The Challenge of Dr. Doom," a 14-page glorified storyboard of Kirby "breakdowns" of a DePatie-Freleng *Fantastic Four* cartoon, uninspiringly inked by a crew that includes some of Jack's least embellishers: Stone, Ayers, Milgrom, Sinnott, Roussos, Brodsky, Colletta, Giacoia, Marcos, and Byrne. It was a second-rate adaptation of the *Fantastic Four*'s first encounter with Dr. Doom from *FF* #5 written by Smilin' Stan, and featuring the insipid addition of Herbie the Robot, the Human Torch's replacement. This was hardly "all-new," certainly not a "blockbuster," and not even the true *FF*! The blurb was (surprise!) typical Marvel hyperbole.

Still, it was unseen Kirby art, and this reader took it to heart when he read the unsigned "A Note on Our Special Feature":

"This issue's anniversary story by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby represents the first collaboration by that titanicly talented duo since King Kirby left Marvel some years ago for the woolly wilds of animation studios... When DePatie-Freleng started their Saturday morning cartoon show version of the FF, that story was among the first adapted... with storyboards by Jack, no less. When we were looking for a special feature, someone suggested we

modify Jack's storyboard into a comics format, and voila! (A tip of the hat and many thanks to David DePatie and Jack Kirby for their consent and cooperation in this somewhat unusual undertaking.)"

There was a certain gratification in believing that while Jack slaved away in Hollywood, he still thought well enough of his old pals at Marvel to grant his "consent and cooperation" to help celebrate the coming of the third decade of the Marvel Age of Comics. While hundreds of thousands of readers ate up this Bullpen Bull, a later interview with Kirby (published for a much smaller audience) proved it to be just that: Bull.

In the Spring of 1982, Fantaco Enterprises published *The Fantastic Four Chronicles*, their own loving 20th anniversary tribute to Reed Richards & Company. Featured is a two-page article by Roger Green, "Questions and Answers With Jack Kirby, Version Two," (a title which got this Kirby Kompletist almost scrambling for the imaginary first part), which showed an artist very reluctant to talk about some old work.

In his introduction, Green wrote: "I asked him about (*FF* #236)... (and) Jack said, 'I had nothing to do with it. Some friend of John Byrne's called and asked if I would do something for the 20th anniversary issue. I said no. So they [*Marvel*] took the roughs I did for DePatie and put six [actually ten] inkers on it. I didn't know anything about it until the goddamn thing was published.' He received a copy from a friend who thought he had worked on it. Jack received no additional remuneration for the reuse of the storyboards, either from Marvel or DePatie-Freleng, he said."

"Consent and cooperation," indeed.★



Note the blank spot next to Stan Lee where Jack was originally drawn by John Byrne, then removed by Marvel.



SUE GETS STUNG WHEN SHE TOUCHES VASE

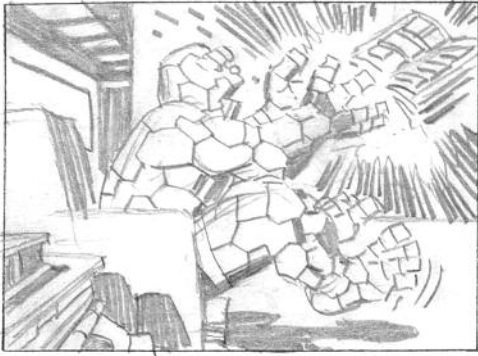


DROPS VASE AND BREAKS IT

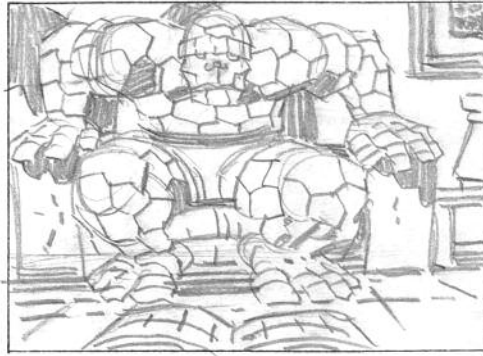


SUE MYSTIFIED

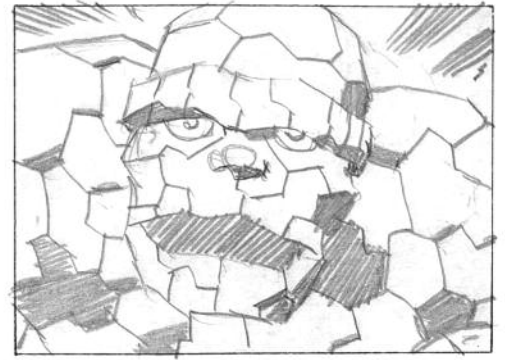
(above) Some of Jack's *FF* animated series storyboards that were inked by various artists, and reworked into a story for *FF* #236 without Jack's consent.



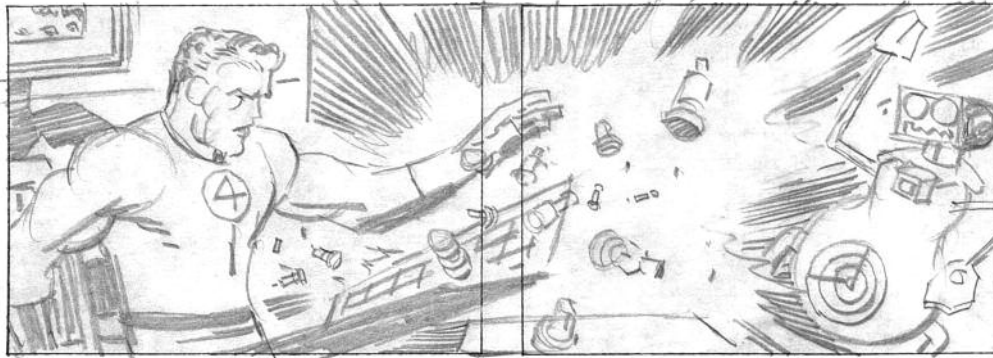
BEN IS STUNG AS HE HOLDS COMIC BOOK



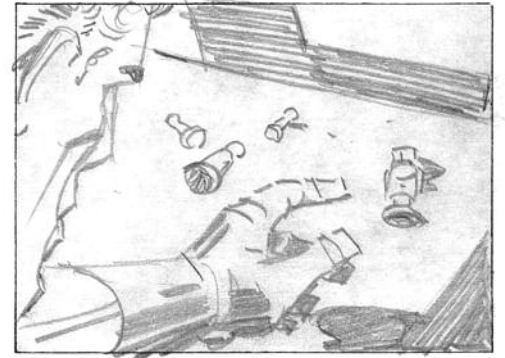
DROPS IT...



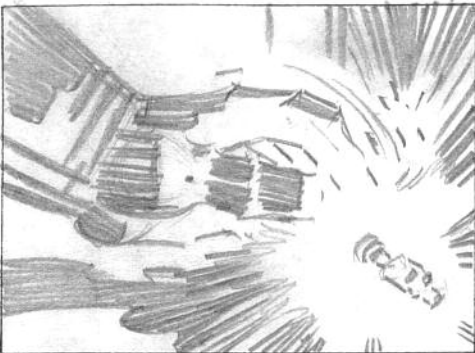
WHAT'S GOIN' ON?



REED STUNG WHEN PLAYING CHESS



HE REACHES OUT TO TOUCH FALLEN FIGURES.



CHESSMAN REACTS



REED SUDDENLY REALIZES WHAT'S HAPPENED



HE ONCE AGAIN TOUCHES OBJECT IN ROOM.



THE RESULT IS THE SAME



WE CAN'T TOUCH ANYTHING IN THIS ROOM..

(A sincere tip of the hat to the staff at Fantaco Enterprises who contributed a copy of their 'zine for this article, after the author's copy was devoured by a household of three boys. Last time we checked, copies were still available at a measly \$1.50 (plus—yikes!—\$5 shipping) from Fantaco, 21 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210. The interview primarily includes discussion of Captain Victory, Destroyer Duck, animation, inkers, and his philosophy of creativity.)

THE GOOD, THE BAD, & THE UNFORTUNATE

My View of Kirby After '78, by Shane Foley

Yes, “The Good, the Bad and the Unfortunate” is an extremely weak title, but Jack liked using movie titles—even those that were overused to death like this one—and he used a similar version of this one himself (next issue blurb in *Silver Star* #4). Because it sums up the three very different points that come to my mind about this period of Jack Kirby’s career, I thought I’d use it.

I hate to end negatively, so let’s turn the order around a bit:

THE BAD

Whereas Jack had difficulty having commercially successful work after leaving Marvel in 1970, it seemed things got even worse after he left them for the second time in '78.

Initially, there evidently was talk of a “Kirby Comics” line. Jack proposed *Captain Victory*, *Thunderfoot*, and *Satan’s Six*, but the money was never forthcoming and the comics never happened.¹ Then Jack’s career as a conceptualizer for an animation company began well, with him happily producing drawings and ideas with an imaginative flair that was usually missing from his last DC and Marvel work. (Just look at the difference between his vehicles in *OMAC* and *Captain America* and those seen in *TJKC* #21.)

But as time went on,

very few were actually picked up and produced—and Jack knew it.² Then came Pacific Comics. *Captain Victory* evidently began strongly, but folded due to lack of sales.³ In 1984, DC agreed to let Jack finish his *New Gods* storyline, which Jack said he was very happy about,⁴ but the limitations, editorial demands and final product were not what either party had expected or really wanted.⁵

Evidently, Jack had long wanted to act in a more advisory/creative-only capacity for other writers and artists. It seems he enjoyed his input into Mike Thibodeaux’s *Phantom Force* concepts⁶ and at least his career ended on a relatively high note, for at the time of his passing, his creations for Topps (his old *Secret City Saga* ideas) were reportedly selling well.⁷

But how great it would have been if more of his creativity had been able to be harnessed and marketed as he had wished.

THE UNFORTUNATE

I know others I’ve spoken to don’t quite see things my way here—and all this has no bearing on the quality of Jack’s comics or animation work—but for years I have felt uncomfortable with two characteristics that permeated his interviews in his later years.

To me it seems that, from the '80s onwards, Jack allowed some of the injustices and disappointments that had happened to him to color what he thought and said (and I’m in no way trying to minimize or trivialize those injustices). I find it terribly frustrating when reading in many of those interviews that the great man was incapable of admitting, or at least extremely reluctant to admit, that this work may not always be the fan-favorites that he would like them to be.

Jack has always maintained (and rightly so) that he did much more writing at Marvel (in particular) than was usually admitted. As he says, of course ‘plotting’ is ‘writing’, and plotting involves, at the very least, a suggested script; but as the years went by, it seems to me, Jack lost perspective. In 1970, he talked in one interview about his huge creative role at Marvel, but added, “I’m not saying Stan had nothing to do with it. Of course he did. We talked things out.”⁸

In later interviews—mostly after the legal hassles with Marvel were in full swing—he seems less and less willing to give Stan any credit. “I was penciler and a storyteller and I insisted on doing my own writing. I always wrote my own story, no matter what it was. Nobody ever wrote a story for me.”⁹ In the same piece there were lines like “Nobody’s ever seen Stan Lee write a story” which he goes on to qualify a little, but the intention is clear. Even Joe Simon, for whom Jack always seemed to have the highest regard, felt that some of Jack’s comments in reference to his co-writers was “a little crazy.”¹⁰ He seemed to talk like he was the editor making the decisions (“I came in with presentations. I’m not

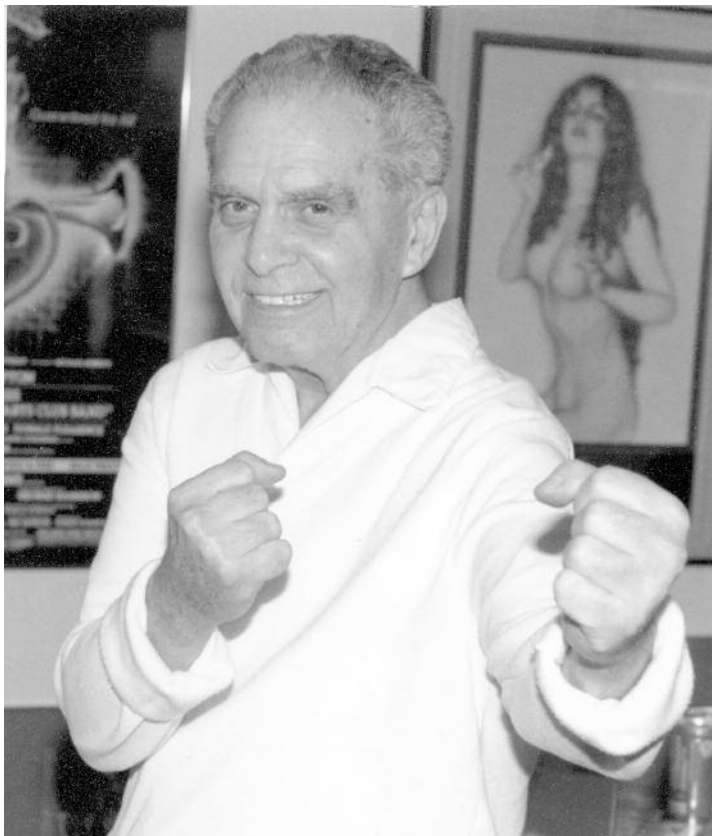


Amazing Heroes #47 cover. That stick of dynamite confused many a reader when it was colored pink at publication.

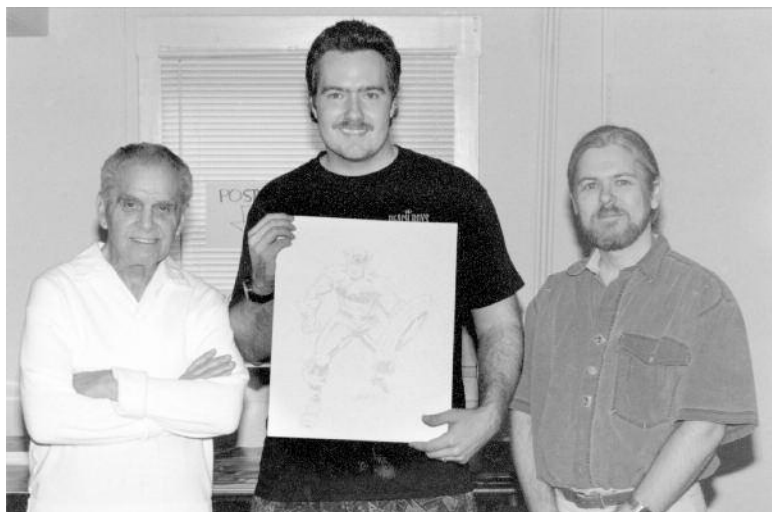
MEET JACK KIRBY

A photo-essay by Cindy Bruns

In Jack's later years, he made numerous appearances at comics shops in the Los Angeles area as well as conventions. On Saturday November 7th, 1992, he made a visit to 20th Century Comics in order to meet some of his fans and promote his then-new book, *The Art of Jack Kirby*. As part of the day's events, Jack and store owner Barry Short raffled off a few comics and a pencil drawing of Captain America. These photos were taken that day and used for a photography class project by Cindy Bruns, and we've excerpted a few here. Our thanks to Cindy and her husband, Scott, for this submission.



*(above) Roz and Jack enjoying a break.
 (top right) Jack mugs for the camera.
 (middle right) Jack mingles with the fans, including store owner Barry Short (far right)
 (bottom left) And the winner is...
 (bottom right) ...Scott Bruns, displaying his prize alongside Jack and Barry Short.*



ROBERT KATZ INTERVIEW

Conducted by John Morrow, transcribed by Eric Nolen-Weathington

(Jack and Roz Kirby's nephew, Robert Katz, was born December 10, 1953 in the small town of Liberty, NY, about 100 miles from New York City. Soon to be 47 years old, Robert has been the Kirby Estate's co-trustee—along with Kirby daughter Lisa—since Roz's death in 1997. Our thanks go out to Robert for all his help with this magazine, and for taking time out for this interview, which was conducted by telephone on September 7, 2000, and was copy-edited by him.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: So in terms of the Kirby family tree, you mom was Roz's sister, Anita Katz?

ROBERT KATZ: Right. Anita Katz, who's maiden name was Anita Goldstein; of course, Aunt Rosalind was also a Goldstein.

TJKC: You grew up in New York. Were you near the Kirbys?

ROBERT: It was a long drive back then, before the Interstate system.

It was a good half day to drive to the Kirbys, who were living on Long Island when I was a kid. They lived in a town called East Williston, and we would drive there a few times a year, and they would drive up to visit us a few times a year. So we did see each other semi-often.

TJKC: As a child, did you read comics at all?

Were you aware of what your uncle did?

ROBERT: Yeah. I was very lucky as a kid, 'cause I was just at the right age, and Uncle Jack put me on the Marvel mailing list. So I got every title from *Avengers* to *X-Men*. I got 'em all.

TJKC: Wow! From the very early issues, then?

ROBERT: From the very early issues—and I not only got Uncle Jack's comics; I got *Spider-Man*, I got all the cowboy stuff. If Marvel put it out, I got it.

TJKC: Did you keep them, by any chance? Do you still have some of the original ones?

ROBERT: Some. Yeah, certainly. Absolutely.

TJKC: So you read pretty avidly?

ROBERT: Yes, I read everything. There wasn't a comic that came through the door that I didn't read. So I was quite the big man on the block, and that's where a lot of them went. I was very free about giving them away when I was real young. It was only later that I started hanging on to them, and when I got to college, even then I continued to—at that point I wasn't on the DC mailing list, but I was buying his DC stuff, so I still read *Kamandi*, *Demon*, and his Fourth World stuff.

TJKC: So obviously you were very aware of his career and into what he was doing.

ROBERT: Very much so. I was definitely. I'm sure, as far as the family goes, I'm the only one in the family who can truly say that I was a fan. I would read everything, even the *Jimmy Olsens*. I didn't read the later stuff. I never read *Captain Victory*, *Silver Star*, the Topps stuff; that's stuff that I did not read. After his DC career, I pretty much stopped reading comics.

TJKC: So you're not an avid comic book aficionado today?

ROBERT: No, I don't read any today at all. What I read today is—I still subscribe to comics for my son, who's nine years old, just so he can stay involved in that; and I do have a lot of the *Marvel Masterworks*. I'll pull those out and we'll read those together, which is fun for me to go back and reread the old comics and read them with him, and explain to him a lot of the stuff that went on then.



A 1983 Hulk drawn done as a fan commission.

TJKC: I guess that would spark some interesting memories.
ROBERT: Yeah, very much so; especially things like *The Hulk*.

TJKC: So back in the '60s—when you were getting all these comics and reading them—when you'd have family get-togethers, did you talk with your uncle about how they were made and what his involvement was?
ROBERT: I never really made the connection until later in life that they were the same person. It was his job. It's just what he did. Just like other dads have jobs, this was Uncle Jack's job; and it was a cool job, but it was pretty much that. I wasn't in awe of him at that point in time, because I didn't realize that other people weren't doing the same thing. I knew there were people who were drawing *Superman* and *Batman*, which I never read—I never read the DC stuff, 'cause I didn't have to. I had too much other stuff going on; but I knew those other things existed, so I knew there were other people out there doing comics and it never dawned on me that he was so unique and so much more prolific and better than anyone else out there. That didn't dawn on me until I got to college and beyond.

TJKC: But you were aware that he was the one drawing those books.
ROBERT: Oh yeah, absolutely. I mean, you go to his house and he was always drawing, and he was always drawing caricatures, and it was his life.

TJKC: So it was just "Oh, ho hum, here's another neat comic book that Uncle Jack drew?"
ROBERT: Absolutely. When I would go to his house in Long Island—I still remember the layout of the house and that there was a sunken room off the living room that had all of these World War II model airplanes hanging from the ceiling, and there were posters everywhere; and there were stacks and stacks of comic books. I now realize those were the older comics: Things like the *Yellow Claws* and the *Bullseyes*. I didn't realize at the time I was already reading the even older comics from the '40s and '50s—the *Boys' Ranches* and things of that nature—because they were always there in the house. Most of my vacations down there were pretty much spent reading comic books, because my cousins were girls and they didn't interest me that much. [John laughs] He did have a swimming pool out back; I do remember that. He always had a swimming pool.

TJKC: This is in New York?
ROBERT: This is in New York. I still remember a lot of times everybody would be out at the pool

swimming, but I would still be in that den. I don't recall if that was his studio or some sort of den.

TJKC: Was it down in a basement?
ROBERT: It wasn't the basement. They had a basement, also. This was two steps down out of the living room. It was a—what would you call it?

TJKC: A sunken living room?
ROBERT: It was just two steps down and it might have been an addition or something. It might have even been Neal's bedroom, for all I know.

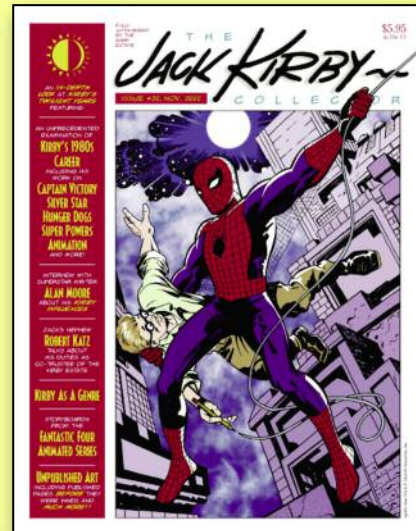


Our back cover is inked by Al Gordon, from this 1980s Kirby fan commission drawing. The inks are for sale at Al's booth at <www.comicon.com>

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