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JACK

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Thor TM & ©2002 Marvel Characters, Inc.



JACK KIRBY

VON



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Front cover inks: TREVOR VON EEDEN  
 Back cover inks: MIKE ROYER  
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# THE NEW JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

#36, SUMMER 2002



(above) Thor battles some unknown menaces in this 1982 fan commission drawing.

Thor TM & ©2002 Marvel Characters, Inc.



# OPENING SHOT

(background) Various *Thor* pages.

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If you really stop to think about it, *Thor* is a little like *The Wizard of Oz*. Besides the fact that the late John Buscema drew both for Marvel Comics, you've got a lot of similarities. Volstagg is the Cowardly Lion. Odin is the Wizard himself, always maneuvering things behind the scenes. Heck, the assorted trolls are the

started as a fairly humdrum strip in the mind-boggling directions it went—

—but it wouldn't have happened if not for Jane Foster, the Dorothy of Jack's *Thor* books.

Never in the history of comics has such an ever-present character been so quickly shunted away—and completely forgotten about—as Jane Foster. I mean, after more than four years of the typical Stan Lee “Oh, if he only knew how I really felt” ’60s Marvel melodrama, she was eliminated from the strip, and even replaced with a new love interest in the same issue.

# SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW

Munchkins, Loki is the Wicked Witch of the West, and...

...okay, it's not a perfect analogy, but stick with me here; I think there's a point to this.

Here's a guy (Kirby) from the Lower East Side of New York, about as far removed from Asgard as a human could be. In the same way Dorothy was swept up from her Kansas existence by a tornado to guide the Oz characters down the Yellow Brick Road, Kirby was a former street kid, suddenly using his cyclonic imagination to direct the actions—of all things—of a bunch of Norse gods (or at least his versions of them). Talk about being out of place; it's amazing Jack was able to steer what

Poof. She's gone. Didn't even have to click her heels together.

I know most readers consider issue #126 to be the real turning point of the series, in more ways than one. Not only was that when the book changed titles from *Journey Into Mystery* to *Thor*, it marked the moment the strip's emphasis began shifting from mundane earthly conflicts to more Asgardian fare, commencing with the epic Thor/Hercules saga (sort of *Thor*'s “Galactus Trilogy,” not-so-coincidentally drawn at the same time by Jack). Certainly, Jane Foster was the impetus to get Thor and Herc to duke it out and get that storyline rolling, but ol' Jane made a more important mark than that.

I'm here to say that the real change in the *Thor* series took place in issue #136, when our Dorothy—Jane Foster—finally got her Asgardian ruby slippers, and discovered that Asgard was no place like home. In that one issue, Jack managed to remove the Thunder God's last tie to Earth from the series, and hardly a reader complained. From there on it was gods, gods, and more gods. Sure, his adventures took him back to Earth, but for several years it was always some kind of Asgardian menace that was the crux of the storylines, not a standard Marvel villain like the Cobra or Mr. Hyde.

Then, during Jack's final year on *Thor*, Dorothy woke up from her dream.

Making a brief return appearance in *Thor* #172, Jane Foster—missing for 3 years, except for a brief cameo in #146—heralded a return to those boring, mundane Earth stories that had started the series. Surely it wasn't Jack's idea to bring her back, or to rehash dozens of old villains (and plots) from earlier in the series' run. Just like at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, the series was back in Kansas, and the show was over. A few feeble attempts were made to return the focus to Asgard in Kirby's waning issues, but again, it was pretty much just rehashes of what had gone before.

(For that matter, why was Vinnie Colletta replaced as inker? No one would ever call me a Colletta fan, but the strip sure could've used his inks to at least maintain a little consistency that final year. The Everett, Klein, and Verpoorten inks just didn't seem to work for me on this strip, in the

same way those two Royer-inked issues of *Jimmy Olsen*

(this spread, large images) Pages from *Thor* #136 showing, respectively, how Jane Foster got the boot from the strip, and how she was replaced by Sif, Thor's new love interest.

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(next page, top) Uncredited cover painting, based on the splash page of *Journey Into Mystery* #83, used on a 1968 British *Fantastic Annual*, reprinting *Thor* stories.

(next page, bottom) Cover to *Thor* #172, marking Jane Foster's brief return to the series.

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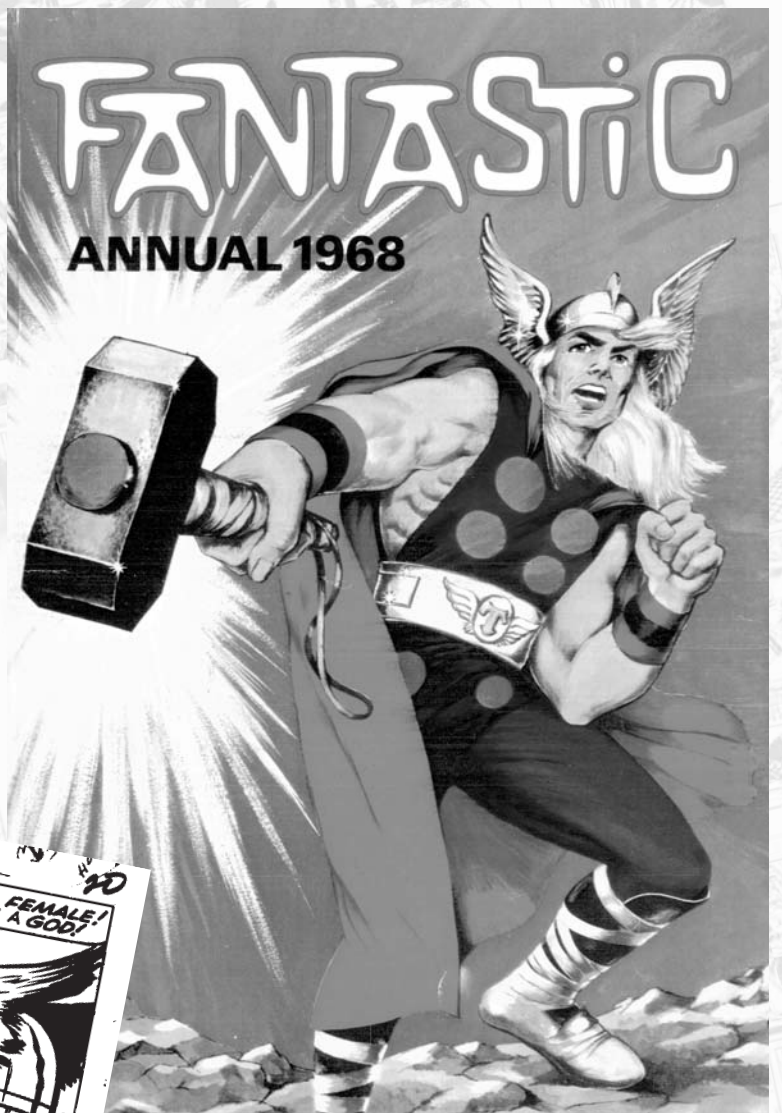


seemed out of place. Colletta's inks, for better or worse, became identified with the strip.)

Where am I going with all this? Simply put, Jack found—metaphorically, at least—like Dorothy, that once he'd traveled the Yellow Brick Road (Rainbow Bridge) to the Emerald City (Asgard—or maybe Marvel Comics?), you can stay a while, take in the sights, even learn to like it; but sooner or later, you're going to find the cracks in its foundations, and you've got to come back down to Earth—and that's a long, long way to fall.

I feel a little like Dorothy myself now. After learning something about what went on behind the scenes, I've discovered that on *Thor*, the wizard behind the curtain, directing all the action, was just a man after all. Jack used all the pyrotechnics at his disposal, but the more unhappy he got at Marvel, the more the work suffered, and we were plopped right back where we started.

# Rainbow Bridge



With that in mind, this issue isn't meant to really be a standalone Thor issue. *TJKC* #14 did a pretty dandy job of covering the highs and lows of Jack's *Thor* run, I thought, so why rehash a lot of what we already covered there? No, this issue is meant more as a supplement to #14, where we're showing art, art, and more art, and keeping the text to a few choice areas that we haven't explored as fully—mainly, the “Tales of Asgard” back-ups.

This month is Thor's 40th anniversary. Let's celebrate by remembering all the amazing new vistas Kirby explored in his *Thor* run; and don't forget that without plain Jane Foster, we wouldn't have taken nearly as many trips over the rainbow bridge. ★





# JACK F.A.Q.S



A column answering Frequently Asked Questions about Kirby by Mark Evanier

I dunno if what Kirk Groeneveld sends me are “frequently-asked questions” about Jack Kirby, but he sure has a lot of them—which is fine but I’m only going to answer this column’s worth of his (plus one from Roger Weems) before I give someone else a chance. This time, Kirk starts by asking:

“Was Jack’s work sometimes truncated? That is, was a page or two eliminated from an issue or two? For example, *Fantastic Four* #36 seems to end very abruptly, with the escape occurring off-panel and an explosion to cover their escape. Was this planned—or a rush job?”

Pretty much everything Jack did throughout his career was a rush job, in that he had to output 3-6 pages a day (occasionally, more) and leap directly from one job to the next. When you look at the pace at which he worked, it’s amazing any of those stories made any sense at all.

I have no info about that issue in particular but it was not uncommon for Jack to finish

a story and then to suddenly realize he’d miscounted. As I have described elsewhere, he was a page short on *Mister Miracle* #6 and asked me to figure out where one could be inserted and to write it. The result was the scene in which Big Barda took a bath—a page which you may note, could be completely omitted without affecting the story in any way.

The opposite was also sometimes the case: Jack discovering he was a page over on an issue and having to omit one. It would join a pile he kept by his drawing table containing orphaned material. In that stack were pages in various states of completion—some finished, some barely begun, most somewhere between those extremes. Many were whole, multi-page sequences that he’d drawn or at least laid-out before deciding to change courses. From time to time, he’d shuffle through the material in that pile, seeing what ideas were triggered. Quite often, he’d find a way to

use a page or pages in another story—sometimes with major alterations, sometimes not.

(Anyone who’s interested can do the exacting research and/or speculation on these: Jack once told me that he’d deleted a long sequence with The Watcher from an issue of *Fantastic Four* and later used it in *Thor*. Also, when he was planning on relating his origin of the Silver Surfer in *Fantastic Four*, he’d penciled a number of pages before learning that Stan Lee and John Buscema were doing their own origin in the new *Silver Surfer* comic. Kirby had to drop his plans and he recycled the pages—presumably with many changes—into another story. I have no idea which one.)

It also happened that, with Jack’s famously-faulty memory, he sometimes just plain forgot some part of a story. My guess would be that it happened in the issue you mentioned; that he handed it in and Stan read it over and said, “Hey, wait a minute... you didn’t include a scene where they escaped.” When that kind of thing happened, Stan and/or Jack had to figure out a way to shoehorn the absent info into the narrative, preferably altering as little of the art as possible. The “Marvel method” of writing a comic has often forced writers to awkwardly insert expository dialogue to compensate for some scene that didn’t get drawn.



(below) The final page of *Fantastic Four* #36, with its very abrupt ending.

Fantastic Four TM & ©2002 Marvel Characters, Inc.

(next page) It appears when the cover for *Thor* #133 was originally published in Oct. 1966, the face of Ego was altered, as evidenced by this later reprinting in *Marvel Spectacular* #4 (Nov. 1973). Marvel must’ve had a stat of the original inks on file for the reprint.

Thor, Ego, Recorder TM & ©2002 Marvel Characters, Inc.

Then Kirk asks:

How did Jack feel about whole pages being removed upon reprinting his *Thor* and FF adventures when the issue page counts didn’t match due to advertising?



(this page) Scenes from Charlton's *Unusual Tales* #18 (Sept. 1959), which appeared a full three years before *Journey Into Mystery* #83 (Aug. 1962) with Thor's debut. See the similarities?

or, "Who Came Up With That Gnarled Wooden Stick?!"  
by Bryan Middleton

Back in August 1962, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created a ground-breaking character by the name of Thor. Well, they didn't invent him so much as adapt an old Norse mythological character into a modern-day hero. This wasn't Jack's first take on Thor. Kirby introduced his first Thor adaptation in *Adventure Comics* #75 (May 1942) followed by *Boy Commandos* #7 (Summer 1944) and *The Unexpected* #16 (August 1957). I was always intrigued by the soap-opera scenarios that Stan Lee came up with in most Marvel comics at the time. Don Blake, as an everyday "Joe," has obstacles to overcome: Great power and the life of a mortal man.

I recently came across a Charlton comic in a 25¢ bin at my local comics shop that has brought some questions to mind over where Stan (or Jack) came up with the idea of incredible power

## UNUSUAL TALES THE INCREDIBLE WALKING STICK

THOR, THE MIGHTY NORSE GOD OF THUNDER, WREAKED GREAT HAVOC WHEN HE THREW HIS HAMMER AT FOES! BUT WHAT WAS HIS HAMMER? OF WHAT WONDROUS METAL WAS IT MADE? IS THE HAMMER IN EXISTENCE TODAY?



hidden in a stick. As Don Blake put it in *Journey Into Mystery* #84 (Sept 1962), "I carry within this cane the greatest power ever known to mortal man!"

In *Unusual Tales* #18 (September '59), hidden near the back of the comic was a six-page story titled "The Incredible Walking Stick" that seemed a little too familiar. *Unusual Tales*, published by Charlton from Nov. 1955 to March-April 1965, ran 49 issues, changing its title to *Blue Beetle* (#50-54) and then *Ghostly Tales* (#55-125). The story began with the caption "Thor, The Mighty Norse God of Thunder, wreaked great havoc when he threw his hammer at foes! But what was his hammer? Of what wondrous metal was it made? Is the hammer in existence today?"

Sound Familiar? It

should; Lee came up with the magic metal that Thor's hammer is made of called "Uru" in *Journey Into Mystery*. Now reading this first page with a really poorly drawn caveman version of Thor, I figured the story's similarities with the Marvel character would end there. Boy was I wrong!

The story went as follows: Alvin Johnson, at home with his wife, asked if they had a cane lying around the house. He was complaining about his sprained ankle he injured the night before. After limping into town, Alvin comes across an antique tent in the middle of town. He purchases an old cane for three dollars from a young boy inside the tent. Alvin notices the cane's light weight and its miraculous healing factors. Soon he can walk perfectly and his leg is healed. Alvin starts to swing the stick around to cut weeds on his walk home and then playfully taps a tree, and the tree is cleanly severed in half. The visual here is similar to Don Blake striking



his "useless" cane against a boulder in the memorable scene from *Journey Into Mystery* #83. Thor even severs his own tree four pages later! "This cane has some strange power! Like REAL MAGIC!" exclaims Alvin. He then proceeds to knock a barn over with the cane.

The scene cuts back to the boy in the tent telling his father about the sale of a cane. The father calls him a careless boy,



"You sold him THE cane." The boy proceeds to exchange the cane, unnoticed by Alvin, and returns to his father. The father says, "I'll never let that stick out of my sight again! It could be most dangerous in the wrong hands." Alvin picks up his new stick but is surprised that it has no magic powers. He

goes back to where the tent was to find it gone. The final caption reads "Alvin was never to learn that the cane he had owned was fashioned from The Hammer of Thor, The Viking God!"

This had to be one of the lamest stories ever, with art on which my three-year-old daughter Gabrielle could have done a better job! Even the cover of the comic, drawn by Nicholas Alascia (who?) was poorly drawn—all in all, a regular Charlton comic from the '50s.

The similarities are there. Thor, a magic hammer, a guy with a bad leg, a walking stick, "Hey look at me, I have great power!" Could Stan Lee have seen this story and four years later come up with a similar story without even knowing it? Comics in the '50s and '60s clearly swiped stories from other comics. The monster, mystery, romance, and science-fiction comics from this timeline repeated the same stories in numerous comics from different publishers. So it is interesting that the idea of Thor, by Lee and Kirby, could have come from an unknown writer from Charlton.

I have another interesting twist to this story. Steve Ditko worked for Charlton at the time this story was created. He was the artist on *Unusual Tales* #7-11, 14, 15 and 29 while working on covers for #6, 22, 23, 25-27 and 31. Although he didn't work on issue #18, who knows when the story was commissioned, or if Ditko himself ever saw this particular issue on the newsstands, or at the Charlton offices? Ditko did work on *Journey Into Mystery* for issues #83 and #84. Kirby and Ditko are each credited with art on these issues. Could he have brought the concept of Thor to Marvel? Should Thor be credited to Steve Ditko? Who knows?

Should *Unusual Tales* #18 go down in comics history as a prototype of Thor? Only Kirby, Lee, Ditko, and an unknown writer can tell. It's an interesting discovery in comics. If what I have discovered becomes part of Marvel's history, I hope that a crappy comic such as *Unusual Tales* #18 doesn't go up in value.

Leave it as an interesting historical note and let the comic stay in the 25¢ bin. ★





# JOE SINNOTT: AN

Interviewed and transcribed by Jim Amash

(Not much needs to be said to Kirby fans about the credentials of Joe Sinnott. Hailed by many as Jack's finest inker, Joe is also an accomplished penciler in his own right, and drew many of Thor's early adventures after Jack got the ball rolling, as well as inking numerous artists who followed Kirby on the strip. Joe kindly consented to discuss

his long tenure with the character for this issue, and this interview was conducted in April 2002 by telephone.)

**THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR:** You inked Thor's first appearance in *Journey Into Mystery* #83.

**JOE:** Yes, I did. I also inked the cover to it and #84, though for years, Dick Ayers has received those credits. The nice thing about

(next page, top) Photo of Joe Sinnott at his drawing board in 1961, around the time he would've been inking *Journey Into Mystery* #83.

(right) Sinnott solo splash to *Journey Into Mystery* #92 (May 1963), during Joe's brief run as artist on the Thor strip.

Thor, Loki TM & ©2002 Marvel Characters, Inc.

(next page, bottom) A recent Thor drawing by Joe.

Thor, Loki TM & ©2002 Marvel Characters, Inc. Art ©2002 Joe Sinnott.





# ASGARDIAN ARTIST

inking Jack Kirby was that you got the whole story at once. Most pencilers don't do that; they give it to you in dribbles and drabs and not always in sequential order. I was extremely impressed by Jack's splash pages for this book. Jack was great at those.

*TJKC:* Did Stan talk to you about the character before you inked this story?

*JOE:* Nope. Stan would never do that. I never talked to Jack about it. Of course, you know I didn't have any contact with Jack until the 1975 Marvel convention. I had never even talked to him on the phone and we had been working together since 1961; I inked a couple of things in 1960. I never discussed scripts with Stan or Jack. They figured I was a professional and that I should handle it. Even when I penciled the stories, Stan never called to discuss the scripts—even when the pencils were a little vague (I'm not talking about Jack's work now), like if a character was supposed to be smiling or sneering or whatever, because there were no captions or dialogue to follow. I'd be left in the dark and had to figure it out myself.

*TJKC:* Do you remember if Kirby wrote margin notes for Stan on the first Thor story?

*JOE:* A lot of times, Stan would write margin notes, too, and Stan's lettering was very hard to understand sometimes. It's been a long time, but I don't remember Jack writing any margin notes on that story. As far as I can remember, Jack never wrote

any margin notes to me.

*TJKC:* Since Larry Lieber wrote the dialogue for this first story, that may explain why there were no margin notes.

*JOE:* It could be. In the early days, Jack was working off of full scripts, so there was no need at the time for Jack to make margin notes. Stan would write notes in the margins sometimes. In those days, I erased my pages so thoroughly, that a lot of those notes disappeared. I know collectors today wish they could read those notes.

*TJKC:* Yeah, but how were you supposed to know it'd be important years later?

*JOE:* Of course. We couldn't care less back in those days.

*TJKC:* What was your initial reaction to Thor?

*JOE:* I thought he was terrific. I liked the idea of Don Blake stamping his cane on the floor and turning into Thor. It was like Shazam!, the original Captain Marvel.

*TJKC:* I always thought Thor was invented to be Marvel's answer to Superman. Marvel didn't have a super-strong, good-looking hero before that. You know, the Thing was ugly and the Hulk was no prize either. Thor had a blue uniform like Superman and also had the red cape, too.

*JOE:* That's true. Of course, Thor was nothing without his hammer, you know. I never made that connection with Superman, though.

*TJKC:* Thor was the first long-haired super-hero.

*JOE:* He sure was. Jack drew him so well and John Buscema did a great Thor. They did great, well-built super-heroes. Jack Kirby and John Buscema were made for Thor much more than they were for *Spider-Man*.

*TJKC:* Since this was pre-Beatles, did you think the long hair was odd?

*JOE:* No, he had to have long hair, because he was a Viking.

*TJKC:* And with that helmet, he'd have looked funny with short hair.

*JOE:* Right. I think Roy Thomas eliminated the helmet for a while, which to



me was like taking the "S" off of Superman's chest. The helmet, long hair and cape gave

Thor a real flair. I always liked drawing characters with capes. It lends a lot of action to the panel, as does Thor's long hair and the wings on his helmet. It was a great character design.

You know, I've done so many characters for Marvel and sometimes, you go a while where you don't work on a certain character. Well, that character's costume may change a little over time and if you don't have recent reference, you may not be aware of the changes. You remember that Thor originally had a "T" on his belt buckle? Well, one time, I was drawing Thor and my son Mark, who knows all about these things, looked at the drawing and said, "Dad, Thor doesn't have that 'T' on the belt buckle anymore. That went out with issue so and so." [laughs]

*TJKC:* You did a slight bit of work on *Journey Into Mystery* #84, right?

*JOE:* Right. I inked the cover to #84, though Dick Ayers usually gets the credit. I started to ink the inside story, but had committed myself to a sixty-four page *Treasure Chest* story, so I had to send the story back to Stan. I only inked a couple of panels. You know, I never inked the splash page first, even if I had the whole story. I always started with page two and the splash page would always be the last page I'd ink.

*TJKC:* Why was that?

*JOE:* I don't know. I figured I was on a roll, so to speak. Some people peter out when they've got twenty pages or so, but I felt I was getting stronger because I was more into the character. I did the splash last so my strongest work was seen first, and I never start inking at the top of the page. I always start from the bottom up.

I read in *Draw!* magazine where Dick Giordano said he started at panel one and then went to panel two, and so forth. I didn't do that. Many years ago, I discovered that by inking from the bottom up, you didn't get the moisture from your hand or arm on the page and smear the pencils. Of course, back in those days, we didn't have air conditioning and it'd get hot in the room. It was like slave labor back then, Jim. There were times that it was so hot and my studio was upstairs, that I used to take my drawing board outside, under the shade of a big maple tree and ink there.

*TJKC:* It's funny, but I ink the same way, from the bottom up, though I usually work on two pages at a time. While one is drying, I'm working on another.

*JOE:* So do I. I didn't so much in the old days but I did in more recent times.





Know of some Kirby-inspired work that should be covered here? Send to:

Adam McGovern  
PO Box 257  
Mt. Tabor, NJ 07878

# KIRBY AS A Genre

A regular feature examining Kirby-inspired work, by Adam McGovern

## FUN & GAMES

Make light of the King, will you? Well, they do call 'em "funny books" after all, and our sovereign was neither averse to comedy of the intentional kind nor immune to the unintentional variety. Hence, this issue's compendium of a million laughs (give or take a hundred thousand) at our leader's service and occasional expense.

### Superpower Conflict

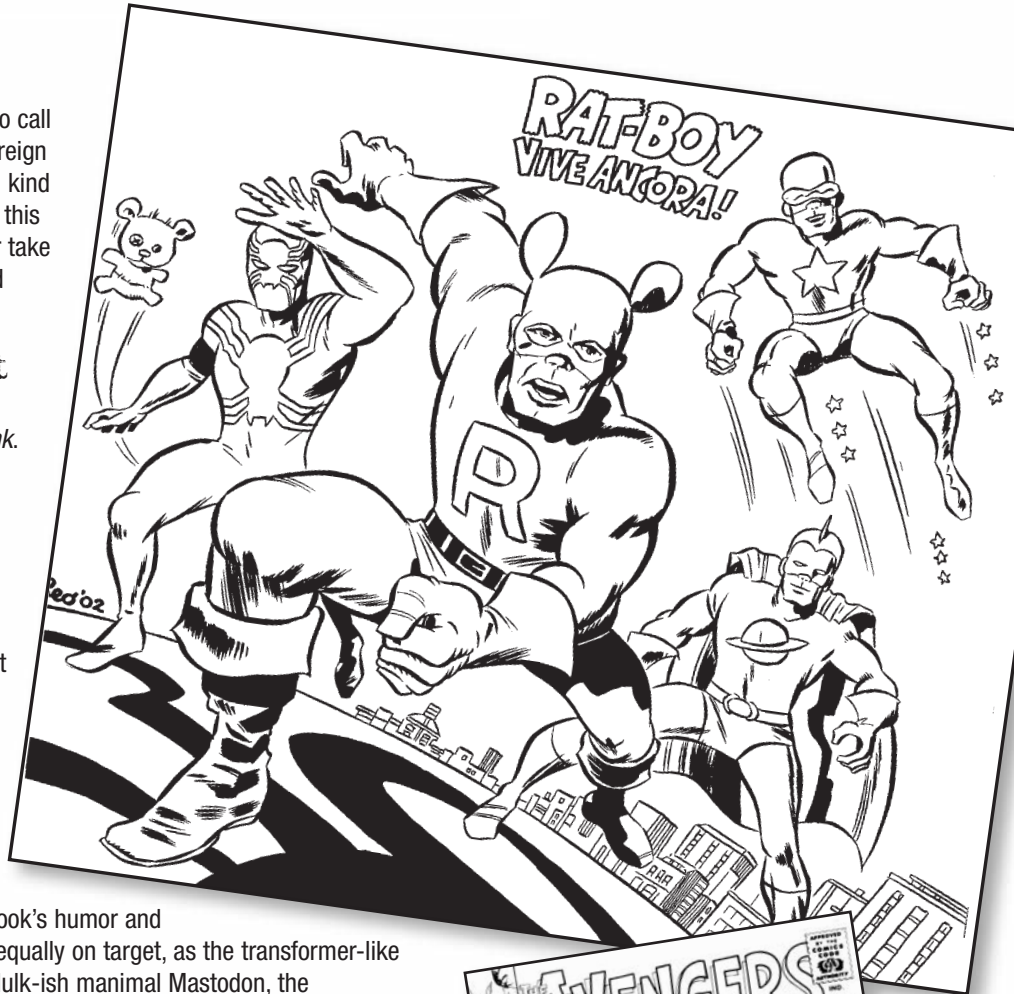
Two issues ago we spotlighted AC Comics' satirical Cold War commie-crusher, *Fighting Yank*. In addition to the Lee/Kirby extravaganzas that title evoked, another hallmark of 1960s media was the "equal time" doctrine, in which any political perspective presented on TV had to be balanced with its opposite. Just in time to be true to period etiquette, we received a package from the ambitious Scotland-based independent Rough Cut Comics previewing their hilarious *Freedom Collective*, a note-perfect parallel-universe parody exploring how it would read if

Lee and Kirby had produced *Avengers* #1 in Communist

Russia. The book's humor and homage are equally on target, as the transformer-like MiG-4, the Hulk-ish manimal Mastodon, the Asgard-worthy ice goddess Ajys, the soil-commanding sentient stoneheap Homeland, and the Captain-America-gone-wrong Krimson Kommisar set out against a fortress-like White House and its sinister occupant in a grainy pulp blockbuster you'll swear Kirby and Ayers knocked out one afternoon when it looked like the U.S. would lose the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the best tradition of Alan Moore-level recombinant pop, the book is a pointed pastiche which is also so thoroughly imagined that it serves as a serious stand-alone creation—though even the creators can be thankful that the Freedom Collective never, um, beat the original. Brought to you by

El Sloano, Colin Barr and

Dominic Regan, this (hopefully not just) one-shot is available from Rough Cut Comics, [www.roughcutcomics.com](http://www.roughcutcomics.com).



(right) *Rat-Man*, doing a takeoff on the cover of *Avengers* #4.

*Rat-Man* TM & ©2002 Leo Ortolani. *Avengers* TM & ©2002 Marvel Characters, Inc.

(below) Cover to *Freedom Collective*, as compared to *Avengers* #1.

*Freedom Collective* ©2002 Rough Cut Comics. *Avengers* & *Loki* TM & ©2002 Marvel Characters, Inc.

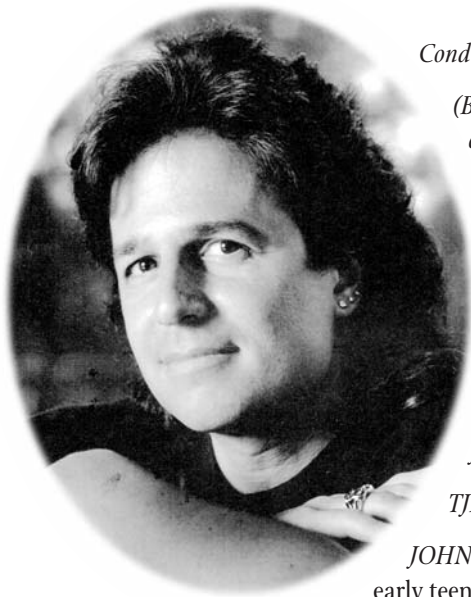


### Like a Vermin

Homage and gentle irreverence toward the King seem to be a universal language; from Scotland with laughs we go to Italy, and Leo Ortolani's *Rat-Man*. In past issues this column and correspondent Stefano Priarone have covered Ortolani's hapless hero in his encounter with a thinly disguised Fantastic Four and in a hilarious Silver Surfer send-up (the Rodent of Righteousness' only known misadventure yet translated into English). Ortolani is keeping himself in the Kirby-homage headlines with a multi-part secret origin of *Rat-Man* modeled after Captain America comics from the 1940s onward—the strongest embodiment yet of Ortolani's love for the American branch of the artform. The images reproduced here give a taste; now will someone return this compliment with the main



# JOHN ROMITA JR. SPEAKS



Conducted and transcribed by Eric Nolen-Weathington

*(Being the son of one of the artistic legends of Marvel Comics can be tough shoes to fill, but John Romita Jr. has managed just fine, thank you! After early successes on X-Men and other Marvel strips—including Spider-Man, the one most identified with his father—JR Jr. has become a fan favorite, and recently completed a run on Thor himself. This interview took place by telephone in April 2002.)*

**THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR:** How old were you when you decided to follow in your dad's footsteps?

**JOHN ROMITA JR.:** You mean as a comic book artist?

**TJKC:** Yeah.

**JOHN:** That was actually later on. Let's see... I was in my early teens, but I had been drawing since I was a lot younger than that. I guess I realized I wanted to be a cartoonist when I was about 12 or 13.

**TJKC:** Did you go in to the Marvel offices with your dad much?

**JOHN:** Yeah, during the Summer I'd go up and hang out with him all day and sit and just watch.

**TJKC:** Did you get to meet Kirby before he moved out to California?

**JOHN:** I actually did. It was a brief meeting; I met Stan and Marie Severin and a lot of people up in the office—Herb Trimpe—great, great people.

**TJKC:** You've mentioned that your three big influences were your dad, Kirby, and John Buscema—

**JOHN:** In the comics field, yes, absolutely.

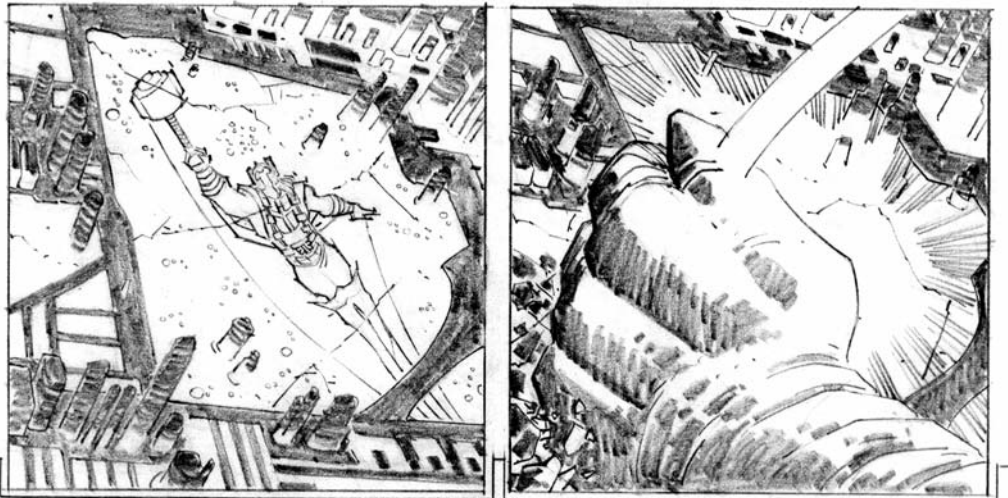
**TJKC:** So what was it about Kirby that you liked so much? What did you get from him?

**JOHN:** I guess it was the complicated machinery and the power of it. My father always admired Kirby's work. I think in the context of me being an awestruck kid, the three artists—John Romita, John Buscema, and Jack Kirby—I was lucky enough to see those three guys up-

close, artwork-wise. I'd see their pencils, copies of it from my father who would bring it home. So I think the influence may have been just, right off the bat, boom, this is what I saw because my father worked in the business. If I'd seen other guys' stuff as an impressionable teenager, maybe they would have been impressed upon me. But at first it was because that was there; that's what my father showed me. And then realizing the quality of the work shortly after—the power of Kirby, the grace of Buscema, and the out-and-out brilliance of my father—it was pretty easy to pick up, even for a non-impressionable kid.

**TJKC:** Was there any particular title that really stood out more than others for you?

**JOHN:** Well, with my father it was the first cover I saw him do with *Daredevil*, which was *Daredevil* #12, and that story about Ka-Zar and the Plunderer. That locked me in to the comics industry. When I heard the story—he [*Romita Sr.*] explained the whole



(above) Recent photo of JR Jr., courtesy of the artist. For more on the artist and his famous father, check out *Comic Book Artist* #20 (featuring the Romitas and the Kuberts in a special Fathers & Sons issue), on sale now from TwoMorrows.

(right, and next page, top) John Jr.'s pencils from his one-shot DC/Marvel collaboration *Thorion*, featuring his melding of the Fourth World and Thor mythologies.

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(next page, bottom) John Jr.'s pencils from his recent *Thor* work.

Thor TM & ©2002 Marvel Characters, Inc.



HAMMER SMASHES INTO LIGHT-FORCE -- DISSOLVES LIVING TALISMAN

TWO BROTHERS, MAGNIR AND BRONA SPOT FLASH IN BLDG --- TONE SAYS -- TALISMAN HAS FOUND 'EM -- OTHER SAYS -- NOW WE FIGHT -- POWER OF ENCHANTERS - AGAIN -- THOR



THINE HAMMER HATH PENETRATED THE SHIMMERING LIGHT.. THUS DISSOLVING THE IMAGE OF YON LIVING TALISMAN!

BUT, THE TALISMAN IS BUT A WARNING... 'TIS THE ENCHANTERS THEMSELVES WHO DO POSE THE DANGER MOST DEADLY!



AND, EVEN AS THE ASGARDIANS SPEAK...

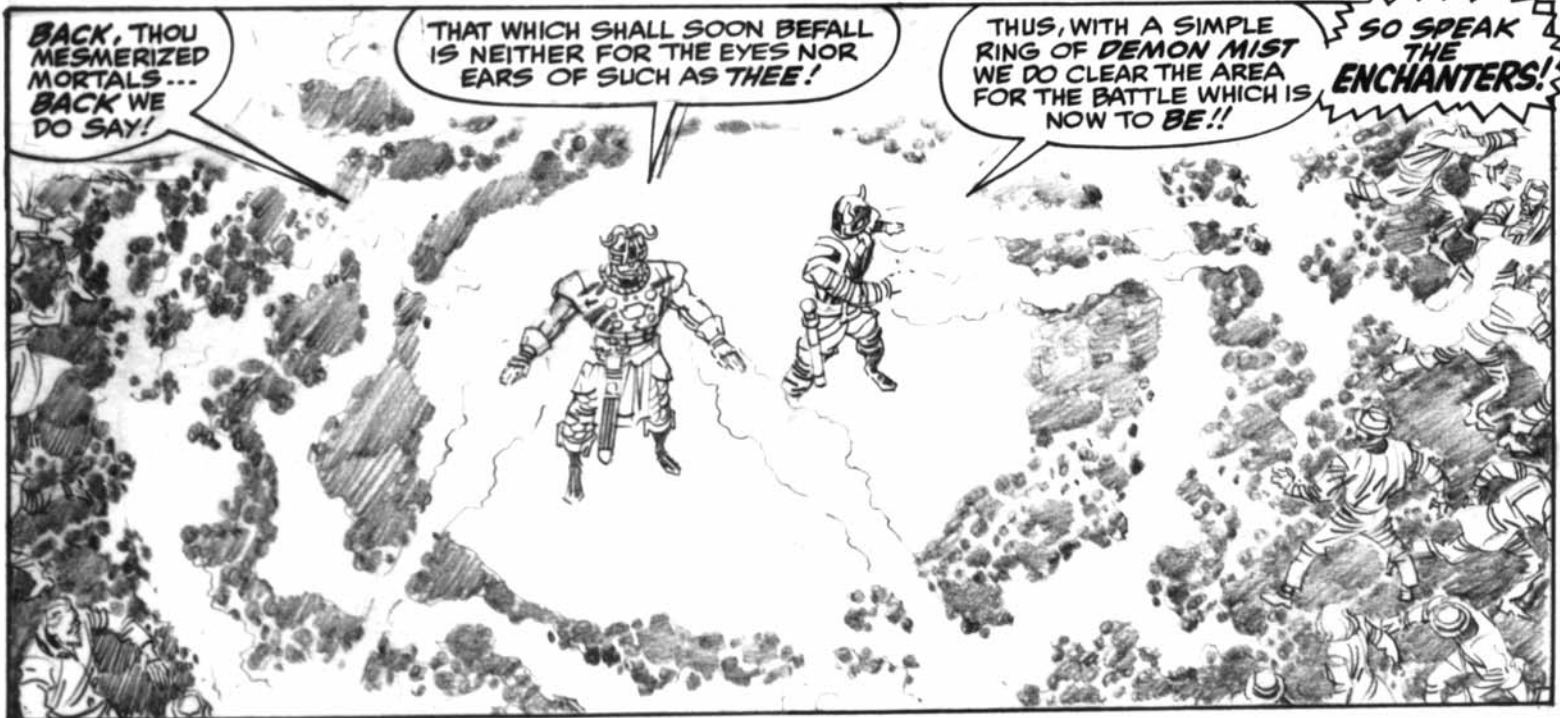
NOW THAT OUR TALISMAN HAS LOCATED THE PREY...

NAUGHT REMAINS FOR US BUT TO DISPOSE OF IT!

THY WORDS POSSESS THE RING OF TRUTH, MYSTIC MAGNIR!

ONCE THOR HATH BEEN ETERNALLY CRUSHED, NOT A SWORD IN ASGARD WILL DARE BE UNSHEATHED AGAINST US!

BUT SEE... THE INCONSEQUENTIAL HUMANS DO CLUSTER ABOUT US.. AS UNCOMPREHENDING AS EVER!



BACK, THOU MESMERIZED MORTALS... BACK WE DO SAY!

THAT WHICH SHALL SOON BEFALL IS NEITHER FOR THE EYES NOR EARS OF SUCH AS THEE!

THUS, WITH A SIMPLE RING OF DEMON MIST WE DO CLEAR THE AREA FOR THE BATTLE WHICH IS NOW TO BE!!

SO SPEAK THE ENCHANTERS!

THE CLEAR UP FROM AREA WITH DEMON FIRE



PREPARE THYSELF, BRONA!

THE GOD OF THUNDER DOETH APPROACH!

AND, AT HIS SIDE, THE LOYAL BALDER... AND SHE WHOM ODIN'S SON DOETH HOLD MOST DEAR!

PREPARE TO DIE, ASGARDIANS!



IF SUCH BE ODIN'S WILL... SO BE IT!

NOT E'EN THE SPECTER OF DEATH SHALL STAY OUR ATTACK WHEN EVIL THREATENS!

BRONA SIK... THOR

HERE COME ASGARDIANS -- THIS IS IT

BALDER -- I'VE GOT NO SWORD BUT THAT WON'T STOP ME THOR -- OKAY ENCHANTERS -- I'LL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU CAME FOR



THE TALISMAN IN HUMAN FORM IS BUT AN IMAGE  
 MY POWER SCEPTRE CAN TAKE CARE OF-- YOU ARE BUT A  
 MERE FACE ON A MEDALLION ON YOUR MASTER'S CHEST--

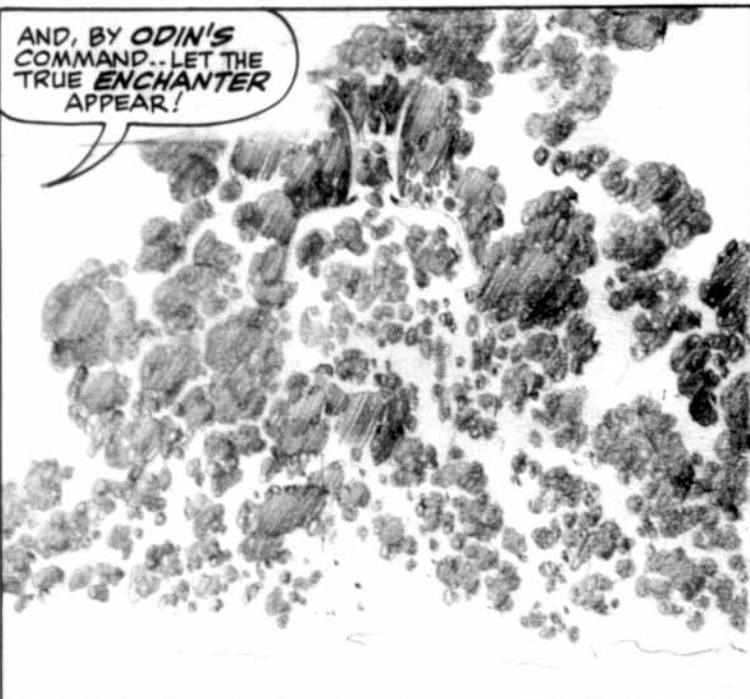


SO! THOU  
 DOST CHOOSE  
 SILENCE WHILST  
 DARING TO  
 ADVANCE!

THEN LET MY SCEPTER  
 OF POWER GIVE TONGUE--  
 FOR BOTH THEE...AND  
 ME!

FOR, FULL WELL DO I  
 KNOW THAT THOU  
 ART NO MORE THAN  
 A FACE.. EXISTING  
 WITHIN THE MYSTIC  
 MEDALLION, WORN  
 UPON THY MASTER'S  
 CHEST!

THUS, LET THE EVIL IMAGE VANISH...



THE  
 NEW  
 FORM  
 MER-  
 GES

AND, BY ODIN'S  
 COMMAND.. LET THE  
 TRUE ENCHANTER  
 APPEAR!



BEHOLD FEARSOME  
 FORSUNG ... ELDEST  
 OF THE THREE  
 ENCHANTERS!

I  
 AM  
 FORSUNG  
 ELDEST  
 OF  
 THREE  
 EN-  
 CHAN-  
 TERS  
 I  
 CHAL-  
 LANGE  
 YOUR  
 POWERS  
 ODIN

I HAVE COME  
 TO CHALLENGE  
 THEE.. FOR  
 SUPREMACY  
 OF ALL THE  
 FABLED REALM!



WHAT?!!  
 THOU DAREST  
 MATCH THY  
 POWERS AGAINST  
 THE OMNIPOTENT  
 ODIN?!!

AY! IN PUBLIC ASSEMBLY I DO MOUTH  
 THE WORDS! BY IMPERIAL COVENANT,  
 THOU CANST NOT REFUSE!



I SHALL PIT MY POWER OF SUPREME  
 ENCHANTMENT AGAINST THINE  
 AND THE VICTOR'S PRIZE SHALL BE...

BUT, KNOW YOU,  
 FORSUNG...  
 WHEN THE ODIN-  
 SWORD MOVES,  
 IT WILL MAY  
 SIGNAL THE END  
 OF THE WORLD!

THE ALL-POWERFUL ODIN-SWORD,  
 WHICH DOTHS REPOSE WITHIN YON  
 VAULT!

NO MATTER!  
 'T WILL BE THE  
 END OF THY  
 WORLD..NOT MINE!

ODIN SAYS - I EXPECTED YOU TO  
 SHOW UPSTART! FORSUNG - SAY  
 LET'S DUEL -

WINNER TAKES WHAT'S IN THAT  
 BLDG. -- THE GREAT ODIN'S WORD!  
 OF COURSE -- MOVING IT MEANS END  
 OF YOUR ~~WORLD~~ WORLD!



# THE QUEST!

(right) A slightly modified version of the inside cover art from *Tales of Asgard* #1 (Oct. 1968).



(below) The saga begins (*JIM* #97, Oct. 1963). Like Harold Foster's *Prince Valiant* strip, "ToA"'s absence of dialogue balloons (and Kirby's book-illustration" style of art) gave the series' early installments an added visual panache.

(next page, top) Before Kirby and Lee returned to *Journey Into Mystery* with "Tales of Asgard," the Thor strip lacked the dynamics and intensity it deserved. This panel from *Journey Into Mystery* #90 (March 1963) shows perhaps the series' weakest point.

(far right) Page 2 pencils from the "Tales of Asgard" story in *Journey Into Mystery* #111 (Dec. 1964).

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THE  
POWER  
AND  
PAGEANTRY  
OF  
THOR'S  
ETERNAL  
HOMELAND  
EXAMINED  
(FROM MIDGARD) BY  
MARK ALEXANDER!



## PROLOGUE

"Beware! The day of Ragnarok draws ever closer!"  
—Volla, the Prophetess, *Thor* #127, April 1966

In the Year of Our Lord 1963, readers of *Journey Into Mystery* should have been wondering why The Mighty Thor, an immortal deity, was wasting his time battling contrived communist stereotypes, and run-of-the-mill gangsters with names like "Thug Thatcher." When the son of Odin wasn't busy pursuing small-time hoods (or costumed criminals who were far beneath him), he spent his time pining over a registered nurse. It all seemed rather uninspired.

Kirby and Lee, Marvel's protean creative duo, had pulled out of the series early, leaving the fate of their Thunder God in the hands of various other writers and artists, often with disastrous results.

Meanwhile, something odd and wondrous was happening, in *Journey Into Mystery*'s back pages.

Out of nowhere, in issue #97, a Lee/Kirby back-up series called "Tales of Asgard" appeared. This five-page "featurette" (which often outshone the book's main feature) would become the key to Thor's future success. Its unassuming, yet oddly-impressive debut gave hints of its later potential; and if its

creators seemed unsure of where the series was going, where it had come from was notably evident, if one cared to trek back to 1937.

## I: IN THE DAYS OF KING ARTHUR

"The pauper prince captures a horse, constructs his own armor, then sets out to become a knight."

—Harold Foster, *Prince Valiant*, Feb. 1937

In 1937, Harold Foster, who for six years had produced a daily newspaper strip based on E.R. Burroughs' *Tarzan*, switched to a story of his own. *Prince Valiant* was the tale of a young knight in the time of King Arthur, and it appeared when the comic book was barely a year old.

Unlike the comics, which usually told a story with illustrations and elliptical speech-indicators



Prince Valiant art ©1938 King Features Syndicate.





known as “dialogue balloons,” Foster’s strip employed classically rendered drawings, which were accompanied only by captions (thereby leaving his highly-regarded artwork unmolested). This style of narration lent itself to the quasi-mythical themes in the subject matter, and gave Foster’s sequences a “once upon a time” quietude and grace.

In interviews over the years, both Lee and Kirby have expressed glowing admiration for Foster’s *Prince Valiant*, and “Tales of Asgard” seems to have its genesis in this elegant, old-world series. Its influence is reflected in Lee’s absence of word balloons, and Kirby’s attempt at a neo-classic “book-illustration” style of drawing, in “ToA”’s first three installments. This Hal Foster/*Prince Valiant* approach was to be short-lived. By *JIM* #100 (Jan. 1964), a new-phase of “ToA” had begun, and the creators decided that traditional dialogue balloons would be necessary after all. Their decision was most likely triggered by two events: A change in “ToA”’s storyline (to “the boyhood of Thor”), and an ingenious stroke of scripting by Stan Lee.

## II: SHAKESPEAREAN SOLILOQUIZING IN A 5-PAGE FORMAT

*“You’re wrong, Loki! Merlin lies in a crypt at the museum, dead as a doornail!”*

—Thor, (as scripted by R. Berns),  
*Journey Into Mystery* #96

*“I decided that I wanted our hammer-holder to speak like a god. And everyone knows that gods speak with biblical and Shakespearean phraseology.”*

—Stan Lee, 1991

It’s possible that the finest contribution Stan Lee ever made to Kirby’s artwork was the archaic scripting-style that he developed for *Thor*, which originated in “Tales Of Asgard.” Replete with “thees” and “thous,” it was usually referred to as “quasi-Biblical” or “neo-Shakespearean,” and it was ideally-suited for the Realm Eternal. It produced some of the finest pairings of art and dialogue ever rendered on a comics page: “Whate’er befalls, I shall not flinch!” cries the Thunder God. “Strike, thou creatures of darkness—Thor stands ready!” (“ToA,” Dec. 1965).

This newly-inspired articulateness was a breath of fresh air from Lee. He realized that the

economics of a five-page format didn’t leave room for his usual soap-opera dramatics: nor did the savagery and barbarianism inherent in Kirby’s panels. In a “mini-series” such as this, characterization—by necessity—boiled down to two distinctions: good or evil. In this fabled realm of demigods, temples, and titans, Donald Blake didn’t exist (nor did “Jane-my-darling” Foster). Consequently, Lee broke the bonds of habit, and syrupy melodrama gave way to a high-minded tone of writing, which reminded the reader that these were tales of veritable gods, not just costumed crimefighters.

With this newfound Shakespearean eloquence (bereft of his usual clichés), Stan had responded effectively to Kirby’s newly-expanded scope and vision. By doing so, Lee had carved a significant niche for himself in Jack Kirby’s Asgard.

## III: JACK KIRBY’S ASGARD: AN ARTIST’S VENUE

With the advent of this new series (and its new realms), Kirby was called upon to create strange, sprawling vistas, and hordes of bizarre beings never before seen in a comics magazine. The only type of storylines that could do justice to these otherworldly (often-terrifying) terrains were sweeping sagas of mythic proportion; epic battles and heroic quests, with the cosmos themselves as a vast and boundless backdrop. While *Journey Into Mystery*’s main feature had Thor ensconced in New York, dealing with a secret-identity and a love-struck nurse, Kirby’s back pages wrestled with a concept far beyond anything comics previously had to offer: godhood itself.

To effectively render his new Asgardian *tableaux*,





# "WE CREATE IMAGES, AND THEY JUST CONTINUE ON."



Part One of an August 1969 Interview with Jack Kirby  
 Conducted by Shel Dorf and Rich Rubinfeld, Transcribed by John Morrow

(Shel Dorf and Rich Rubinfeld set out from San Diego to Los Angeles in August 1969, intent on visiting Collector's Bookstore, and hoping to get interviews with Russ Manning and Jack Kirby. Neither knew where Manning or Kirby lived, but got their phone numbers from Directory Information. After the visit with Russ, they called Jack Kirby, who invited them over. They spent almost two hours at the Kirbys', and the result was this interview, which is previously unpublished. Our thanks to Shel Dorf for digging out his old reel-to-reel tapes for us, and if you're curious to hear Russ Manning's interview, be sure to pick up Comic Book Artist #22 in September, where it appears as part of our retrospective of Gold Key Comics.)

**SHEL DORF:** We're in Jack's little studio on the second floor of his new home. Right now he's digging in the back of his closet and showing us something. What have you got, Jack?

**JACK KIRBY:** This is a presentation I used for *Sky Masters* when I first sold the strip to the Matthew Adams Syndicate. I colored it myself; I used the dyes on it. Somehow the dyes have a brilliance of their own. I feel that it's a kind of medium I like to use. It always pleases me; it just appeals to me for some reason, because of its richness. If done right, it can give a drawing a lot of power.

(above) Early 1970s photo of Jack Kirby with Shel Dorf at the San Diego Comicon. Photo courtesy of Shel Dorf.

(right) 1930s *Socko the Seadog* panel, by "Teddy" (Kirby's pseudonym on the strip).  
 ©2002 Jack Kirby Estate.

(below) *Sky Masters* daily inked by Wally Wood.  
 ©2002 Jack Kirby Estate.

(next page) Jack's cover for the 1971 Disneyland comic convention, (bottom) Jack's collage from *Thor* #131.  
 Mister Miracle, Oberon TM & ©2002 DC Comics. Thor art © Marvel Characters, Inc.

**SHEL:** Just to bring us up to date, we've been talking to Jack about one of his newest ventures, and that's collage. Downstairs we just saw some enormous collages with the Jack Kirby approach, and eventually we'll see them in a museum someday, probably. What made you go into collage work?

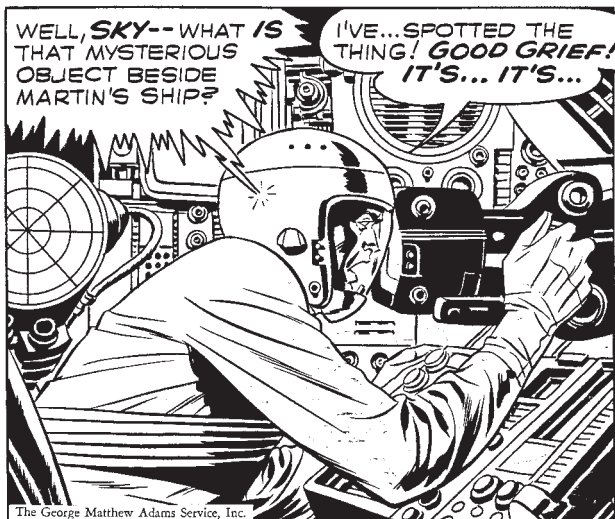
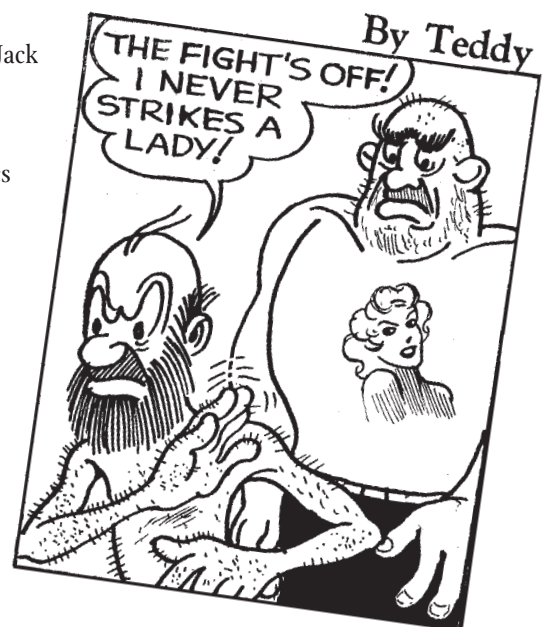
**JACK:** Basically, I'm an experimenter. I feel that there must be some extension of comics other than the pen and ink, or other materials that we use. I feel I should explore these channels. If a man truly likes comics, or is truly a comic artist, he has to explore all the dimensions of his art, because I feel comics is an art. That's how I think about it; looking for other ways to extend the medium.

**SHEL:** This is Jack Kirby 1969. Can we go back to Jack Kirby, about 1920? What was it like in the early days?

**JACK:** [laughs] It was bad, and it was like Warner Bros. said it was. It was John Garfield and James Cagney, and *Angels in Dirty Places*, and guys in turtle-neck sweaters and fellas fighting their father for a nickel, and your mother throwing you out of the house to "go to work, you bum!", and the fighters that hung around the block, and the gangsters getting shot in the corner candy store, and things like that.

**SHEL:** It's a pretty far cry from formal art training.

**JACK:** There was no such thing as formal art training. It seems to me what makes comic art unique is the fact that, like *Fahrenheit 451*,





each man is a book unto himself. He keeps that book, and he gives that book to the next man. There was no formal school for comic artists. I feel like one man must take from the next. Take the best of what that man has and integrate it into his own style. He gains something; sometimes it's the fluidity in the figure, sometimes it's accurate shading. A comic artist has to learn from somewhere, and he can't learn it at the National Academy of Design. He can utilize the National Academy, but it won't make him a comic artist. It's something that he must get from the next man, and take that thing and control it, and express himself with it.

*SHEL:* The earliest published works of Jack Kirby that I've seen don't have any resemblance to any of the well-known cartoonists you mentioned before that influenced you. Did you evolve into your own style before you became published?

*JACK:* I was pressured into it. I feel a man evolves a style when he's pressured into it, when he has to work constantly; when he has constant experience, and he must meet a constant deadline. He must say, "The hell with it, I'm not Leonardo DiVinci, but I'll do the best I can," and he does come up with a style, because in doing that, he begins to tell his own thing, in the only manner he knows: His own manner. That comes through in his style, his personality comes through. I can tell Caniff a mile away. I can tell another man a thousand miles away, because there's something of that man in the strip. It's in that style, and it's an identity.

*SHEL:* What was your first published drawing?

*JACK:* My first published drawing was a thing called *Socko the Seadog*. Then I went on to editorial cartoons, and I went into comic strips for a small feature syndicate that serviced 700 weekly papers.

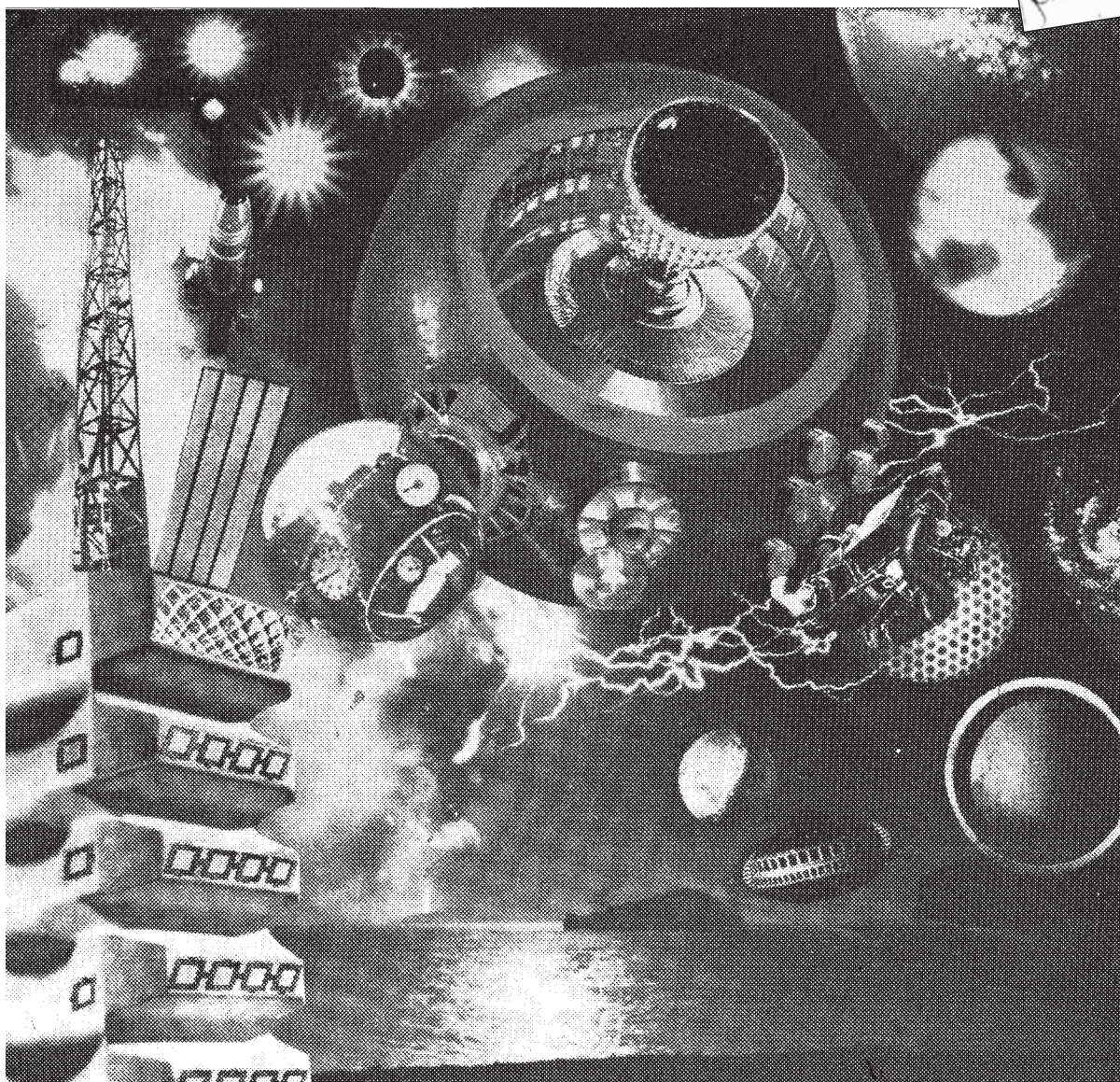
*SHEL:* How old were you at that time?

*JACK:* I was about eighteen.

*SHEL:* When you were growing up as a child, did you like to go off in a corner while the other kids were playing on the street, and just draw and draw and draw, or...?

*JACK:* No, I played in the street with the kids, as much as I could. I was no radical departure from any of the others. I got bounced when they got bounced, and I had a good time when they had a good time. I saw an ad in a pulp magazine; you know, "Draw this, and win a free pencil." I sent away for it, because for some reason it had some basic appeal for me, and I took the bait. I dug up enough money for the first lesson, and that's all I had. I had a great time with it, a wonderful time with it. I never drew so many comic heads in my life. I really enjoyed it.

*SHEL:* And that was the very beginning of your career, by answering this ad? Did you draw at all?



Did you doodle, did you sketch?

*JACK:* Yeah, I doodled on doors and I doodled on walls, and I wrote bad notes to the neighbors. [laughs] I said, "Mrs. McCloskey is a fink," and things like that, and I'd write it on the fence, and I'd draw some sort of a primitive cartoon, I suppose.

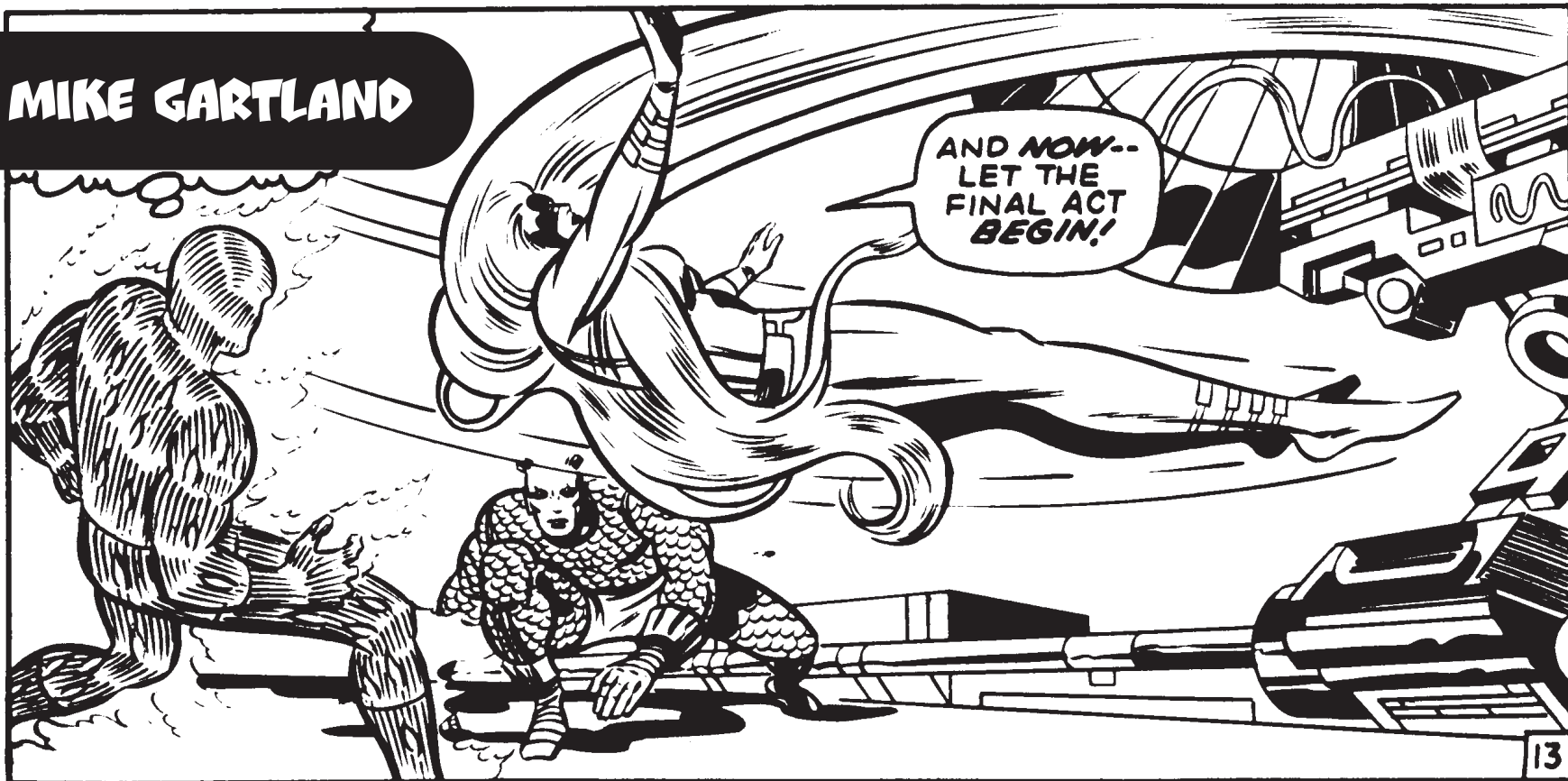
*SHEL:* Great, we isolated that Jack Kirby got his start doing graffiti. [laughs]

*JACK:* It's a valid form of expression, and in my neighborhood, graffiti was like doing a mural for the Sistine Chapel. [laughs]

*SHEL:* We were talking before about the average person's approach to comic art, and how it's sneered upon by the fine artists, but then there's Liechtenstein, who will take a panel from one of your comics and enlarge it to wall size, and silk-screen it and sell it for a few hundred thousand dollars. What is your opinion of comic art and these phonies who are getting by, if I'm not slanting the question too much?

*JACK:* Well, I don't know if I'd call them phonies. I think maybe Liechtenstein in his own way is trying to find an extension of what I'm talking about. That might be an extension. I think it's rather a static thing, and certainly I feel that it must have an appeal to somebody, and must have value to somebody, because somebody is buying it, and they're paying good money for it. I'm not gonna put down anything that sells well, because if it's successful, who's going to argue with success? I never have.





(above) Detail from *Fantastic Four* #99 (June 1970), featuring the Inhumans (probably in an effort to reintroduce them to readers before they spun off into *Amazing Adventures* #1).

(next page) Jack's margin notes from *FF* #97 (April 1970) show he intended the Lagoon Creature—Jack named him "Eddie"—to speak, but Stan ignored it.

(below) Panels from *Fantastic Four* #100 (July 1970). Reed erroneously states that only the Puppet Master is capable of making such androids, when he should've said it was the Thinker. Since they'd just done a Thinker story in *FF* #96, it's an even sloppier mistake.

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## HOW COULD HE NOT KNOW?!

"Kirby is leaving Marvel." Stan Lee passed this information on to the Marvel readership in one of his Bullpen Bulletins editorials, and with his usual glib self-deprecating charm reassured the Marvelites that, although Jack would be seeking his fortunes elsewhere, the best was yet to come. Young readers had no reason to doubt Lee; sales were still going up along much of the Marvel line, and by 1970 the foundation of the "Marvel Zombie" had been laid, as many unsuspecting readers robotically swallowed Lee's flip preachings. Besides, Lee was still there, and Lee was the man, the creator, the innovator; Lee *was* Marvel, right? Professionals, hardcore fandom, and industry insiders knew better; they knew that, although Stan was indispensable, this just wasn't another artist leaving—this was the foundation to the "House of Ideas," and with a foundation gone, can a "house" stand for long?

As we've read in previous articles, Jack had reached a point by 1967 where he was fed up with Marvel, particularly with Goodman and Lee. He had seen his concepts and creations exploited and taken credit for by individuals who promised him much but delivered little or nothing. Goodman was becoming even more wealthy on mass marketing and merchandising the Marvel creations; whereas Lee continued to take credit for characters and concepts he had virtually no input on save to dialogue after the lion's share of the plot and story had been fleshed out

and drawn by the artist. Steve Ditko allegedly left for these self-same reasons a year before, suggesting to Jack to leave as well, but Jack was still under contract and was still being promised incentives. By the end of '67, however, Jack realized that outside of an increase in his page rate and contracts that were begun but never finished, he'd been shortchanged again by Goodman and Lee, his contract was coming to an end, and it was time to decide. Stay or go, but if he left, go where? As strange as it seemed, unbeknownst to Jack (or Stan for that matter), television would play an indirect pivotal role in Jack's decision.

By the end of '67, due to the tremendous success of the *Batman* TV show, investors began looking to comic book companies as reasonably good investments. Both Marvel and DC had good sales and had been in the business under the same publishers for decades. DC went first, being purchased by Kinney National, then Marvel was sold to Perfect Film and Chemical. In both instances, publishers Goodman and Liebowitz remained temporarily (approximately four years) as publishers to see through a smooth transition and pave the way for their successors. Lee of course was first in line at Marvel, but at DC things were changing that would eventually help smooth the way for Lee to lose his most valuable asset. During the '67-'68 period many of the "old guard" of DC's writers and editors were either retiring, looking elsewhere, or simply being let go. The end result would be that the new editorial structure at DC would be composed of their former artists, with one of their premier artists—Carmine Infantino—taking the helm as editorial director. Carmine knew about Marvel

what industry insiders knew for years:

That it was creatively driven by its artists, and he wanted to bring that to DC. That wasn't all he wanted to bring to DC. He had heard that Jack wasn't happy with his present situation, and what better way to dent the competition than to get their main gun and fire it back at them?

Meanwhile at Marvel, Jack had heard about the sale of the company (in late '68) and both welcomed and dreaded it. He'd hoped that this might give him someone other than Goodman to deal with, but these were corporate investors who knew nothing about the comic book industry and even less about Jack. Lee was nervous as well; he now had more than Goodman to please and might have to prove his worth all over again. By this





# A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE: PART 7

time Jack's contract had expired and he was working page-rate, story to story. Despite his attempts to renegotiate for another contract, Jack was either rebuffed or put on hold (indefinitely); he knew he wasn't going to see any percentage of merchandising or creative control of his work or even proper credit for it, but despite all that, Jack still would've stayed with Marvel if they'd only given him the thing that had always been most important to him: A promise of financial security.

More than anything else in his life, Jack had the constant need to make sure he could support his family. Family was everything to him; during this very time, Jack began taking steps to move out of New York where he'd lived all his life, and go to live in California (about as far removed from NY living as one could get), all for the sake of his family. Within the Marvel family however, Jack was becoming more and more isolated; Infantino had met with Jack during this time (while Jack was still in New York) and discussions began about Jack joining another kind of family.

While all of the aforementioned was going on, Stan was beginning to think of greener pastures. The success of the Marvel line had brought him the notoriety and recognition he so desperately sought during the years before the likes of a Jack Kirby or Steve Ditko came his way. Surprisingly, before his association with Jack and Steve which led to the Marvel successes, he languished for two decades pumping out average, topical, saleable plots and scripts for the Timely/Atlas books—but now by the mid-Sixties, *he* was being recognized by the general public as the creator of all these great characters and concepts. Contrary to what many may think about Lee hogging credit for himself, this may not have been *all* of Stan's doing as it most definitely was in the company's best interest to have one of their employees recognized as creator of the line, rather than a freelancer who might someday leave and try to take some of the creations with him. With the general—and some of the comic book-reading—public believing all of these great ideas came from Stan, offers began to come his way. Artists and Directors were asking to work with him. Colleges were approaching him to lecture to aspiring students on how to create. Newspapers and magazines were asking him for interviews and articles. Stan was finally reaching the point where he realized that his newfound status might be the ticket out of comics and into the big time. As Stan courted his celebrity, he began to slowly relinquish his scripting chores on various Marvel titles one by one.

Shortly before the Marvel purchase by Perfect Film, the title line was expanded; the characters showcased in the "split" books—*Tales to Astonish*, *Tales of Suspense*, and *Strange Tales*—were each given their own respective books, not to mention new titles being created like *Captain Marvel*, *Captain Savage* and *Combat Kelly*, and *Not Brand Echh*. Lee did the majority of the scripting (towards the end, some editing only) on the split books up until their transition, after which he left virtually all of them, handing the scripting reins over to guys like Roy Thomas, Gary Friedrich, Archie Goodwin, Arnold Drake, and others. He edited only, saving

his scripting hand for *Daredevil* (which he left in March '69), *Spider-Man*, *Fantastic Four*, *Thor*, and *Captain America*. Lee also had plans to script the upcoming *Spider-Man* b-&-w magazine, a mentioned *Inhumans* book, and of course the *Silver Surfer*. Of the five titles Lee was still scripting, Kirby was drawing three of them: *FF*, *Cap* and *Thor*. One wonders why Lee never relinquished scripting the titles on which he "collaborated" with Kirby. Some speculated that, since Jack was doing the lion's share of the work on those books with little or no input from Lee, and all Stan had to do was dialogue and edit an already

fleshed-out story, it was less work for him than with less experienced artists—but the longer they seemed to be working together, Jack grew more and more frustrated with Lee; their collaborations began to become more like grudging co-operations, with each man trying to put their own plotting into stories that were meant to be agreed upon. The new *Surfer* book was a particularly stinging slap in Jack's face; since many believe that Jack could've asked for and gotten any title in the Marvel line to work on, and this title was not mentioned or offered to him, it was pretty obvious to him that he wasn't wanted







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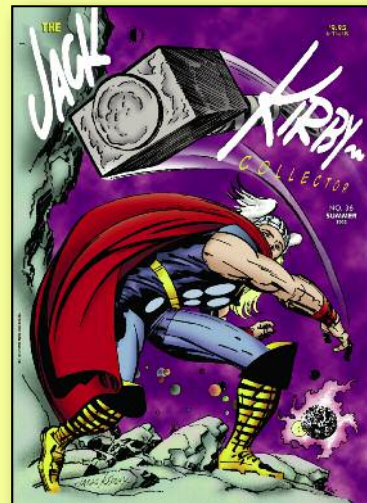


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Kirby took one last turn at *Thor* with a series of covers in the 1970s, and this one from *Thor Annual* #5 (1976) is perhaps the most reminiscent of his earlier work.



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