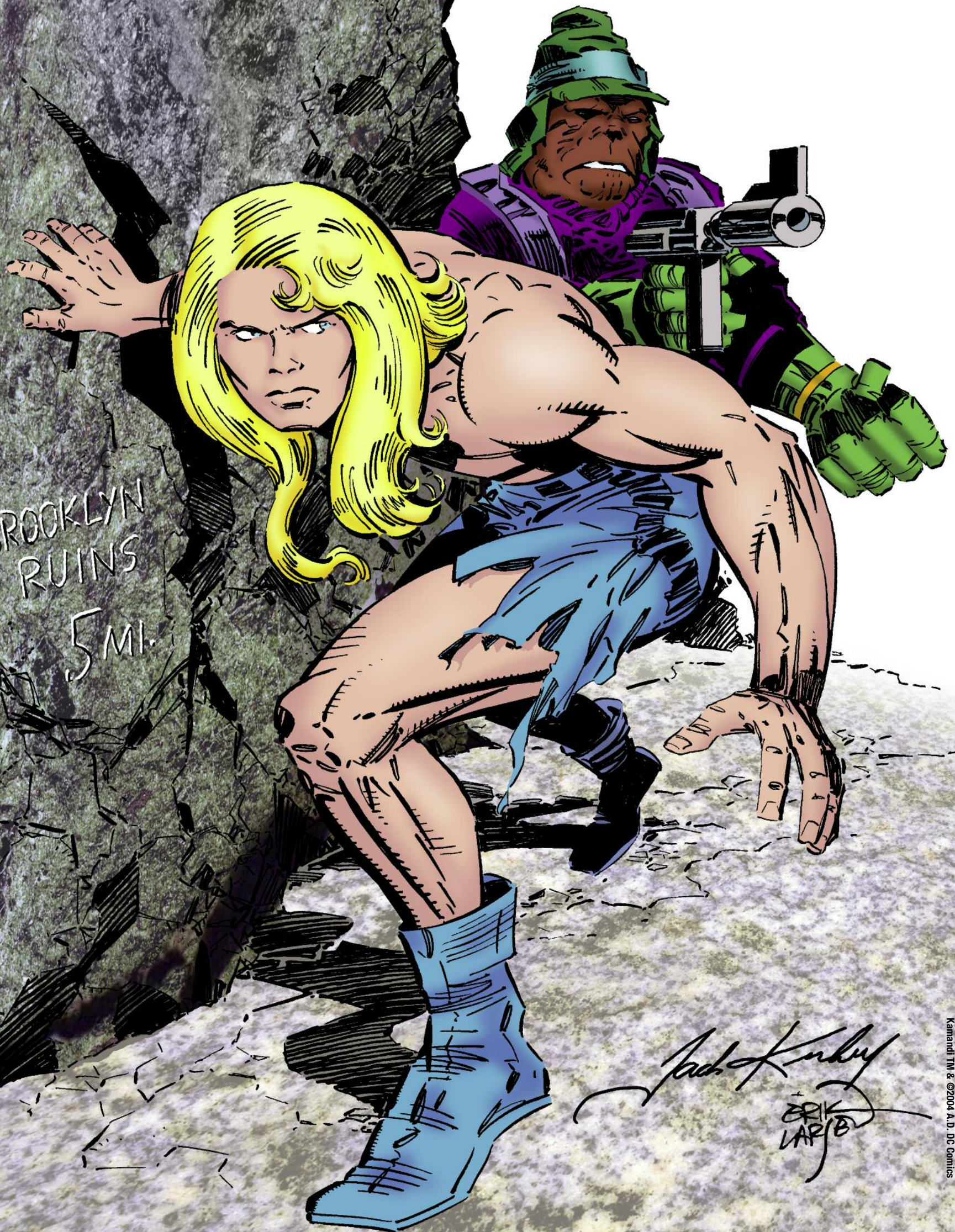


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THE NEW JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

#40, SUMMER 2004

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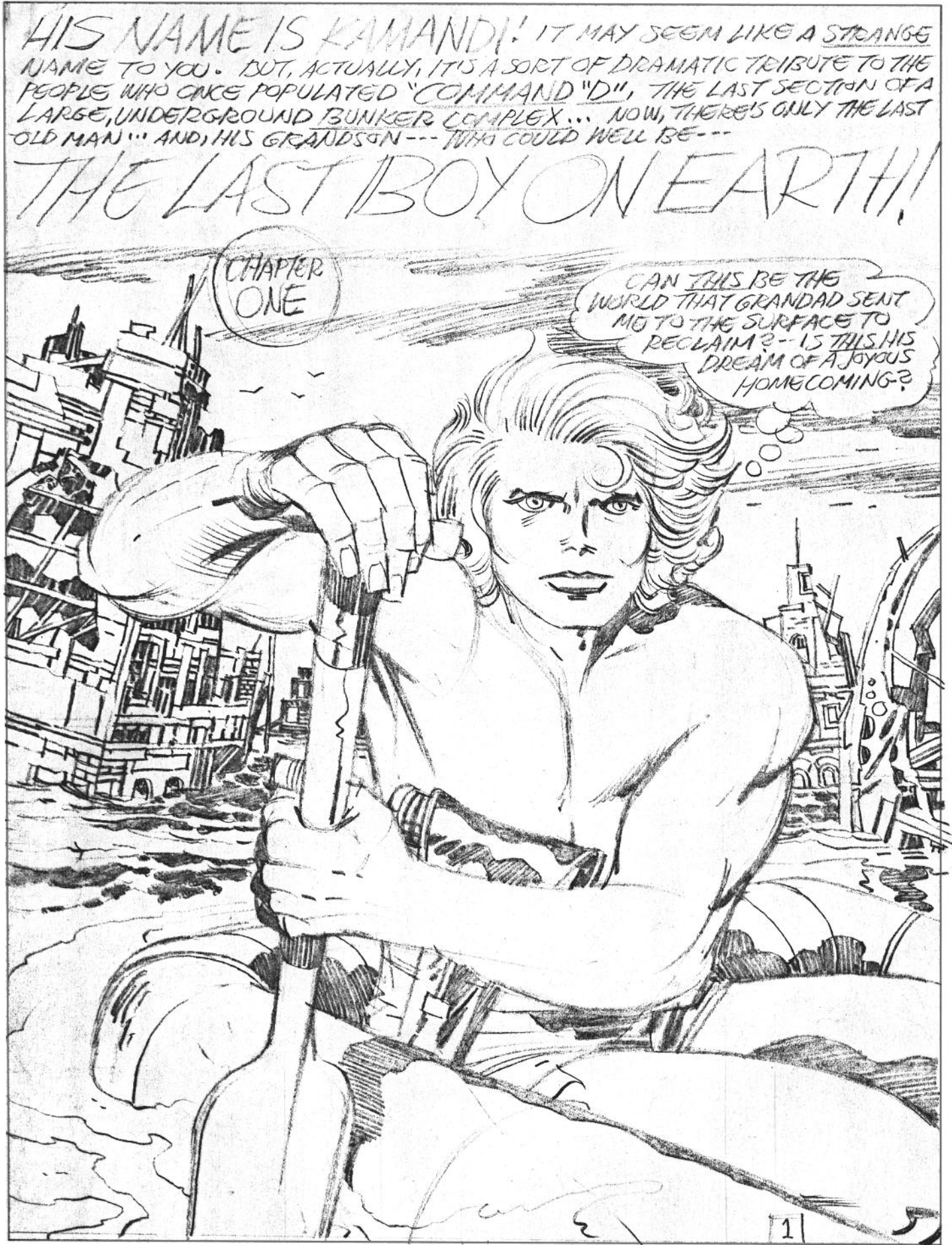
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Front cover colors: TOM ZIUKO
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(above) What better way to start this issue than with the pencils to the splash page of *Kamandi* #1 (Oct. 1972)?

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OPENING SHOT

by John Morrow, editor of TJKC

(background) Kamandi was a big hit over in Italy, as evidenced by these mid-1970s Italian *Kamandi* covers (published after Jack had left the series). The issues also featured reprints of other Kirby stories from his 1970s DC run.

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This issue's been a long time coming, folks! I'm not specifically talking about how long it's been since last issue—although that's quite a story in and of itself. Our move to a new location this Spring, mixed with family commitments, and keeping our line of magazines and books (plus our ad agency work) coming out, meant basically no time to work on our not-for-profit publication, as much fun as it is for me to produce. (Alas, we've gotta put the paying work first.) To give you an idea of how crazy things are at TwoMorrows these days, I'm writing these words as I start work on this issue, on Memorial Day 2004. I wrapped up last issue and sent it to press last fall, and literally haven't had a day to work on TJKC until now. And I've got roughly three weeks to get this one to press, if it's going to be out in time for the San Diego Con in July (where there'll be a big to-do over Kirby, so I've absolutely *got* to get it done). So while you were (hopefully) sunning at the beach over the

read the little four-color monstrosity.

At first I couldn't get past how much I hated all the square fingers and squiggly knees, and I genuinely believed this guy "Kirby" couldn't draw his way out of a paper bag. But after reading only a few pages, I was so engrossed in the comic that I forgot all about Jack's anatomy (or lack thereof), and fell prey to the intense power of Kirby's work. (See this issue's "Parting Shot" on page 80 for an example of what I'm talking about.)

Don't forget, folks, this wasn't a book written by Stan Lee. In fact, not being raised on the Lee/Kirby collaborations, it was some time before I could appreciate the earlier FFs, *Thors*, and other Marvel masterpieces. No, this was pure Kirby, warts and all, and after a couple of re-readings, I was hooked. I ran out and tracked down every issue of *Kamandi* I could find, hunted back issue ads in *The Buyer's Guide for Comic Fandom* for more, and so began my lifelong quest for the ultimate Kirby fix.

Kamandi was a supremely simple, powerful, kid-friendly comic that totally blew me away. It didn't take itself too seriously in those 1970s days of relevancy in comics. It simply whisked you away to a cockamamie place of action and adventure with

THE LAST FANZINE ON EARTH!

long holiday weekend, I was glued to my computer, clicking away.

But don't feel too bad for me; this issue's really near and dear to my heart, and it's one I (and many of our readers) have longed to see since... well, since TJKC #1 (which, coincidentally, I began work on exactly 10 years ago to this day, in 1994). I've got a stack of *Kamandi*-related articles dating back literally to 1994, but we simply never had what I felt was an adequate supply of art to make an interesting issue—until now.

Kamandi has a lot of loyal fans out there, and it's the comic that introduced me to Jack Kirby's work. As kids, my buddy Matt Turner and I were working out a trade of comics one Saturday, and he threw a copy of *Kamandi* #12 into the deal. I said, "No thanks, the art's too ugly," but somehow I ended up with it. After poring over the others, I got bored and decided to actually sit down and



(this page) Detail of Jack's pencils from page 18 of *OMAC* #6 (July 1975).

(next page) Near as we can figure, this is an unused page from *Kamandi* #23 (Nov. 1974).

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KIRBY NEWS!

ITEM! Back in print are COLLECTED JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR, VOL. 1-3, reprinting TJKC #1-9, 10-12, and 13-15, respectively! And by the time you read this, a new VOLUME 4 will be out, reprinting TJKC #16-19! Each volume contains over 30 pages of Kirby art never before published in TJKC, so don't miss your chance to complete your TJKC collection (#20-up are still available as back issues, except for that pesky #28, which just sold out)! VOLUME 1 & 4 are **\$29 US postpaid each**, VOLUME 2 is **\$22**, and VOLUME 3 is **\$24**.



ITEM! Get your copy of CAPTAIN VICTORY: GRAPHITE EDITION before it sells out! This all-pencil version of Jack's original Captain Victory graphic novel (in its original form, before being split up at Pacific Comics) is only **\$8 US postpaid**, and all proceeds go toward the scanning and archiving of the 5000+ page Kirby pencil xerox files. **ITEM!** Joe Simon has reached a settlement with Marvel Comics on the copyright for Captain America! Terms are confidential, but part of the agreement requires Marvel to include the Simon & Kirby byline on all Cap books. Great work,

Joe! (You too, Marvel!)

ITEM! In cooperation with the Jack Kirby estate, master sculptor Randy Bowen has sculpted a 5" tall likeness of Jack Kirby, and Bowen Designs began offering this piece to the public in December 2003 for \$45.00 (plus shipping). All proceeds from this project are being donated to the Children's Miracle Network in Jack's



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a lead character I could identify with, and a seemingly never-ending host of animal adversaries.

Jack followed up with *OMAC*, which I consider to be the Kirby series with the most untapped potential. (And am I the only one who views it as Jack's updated version of Captain Marvel? I mean, Buddy Blank is Billy Batson, Brother Eye stands in for the old wizard Shazam, and of course *OMAC* is the Big Red Cheese.) But for me personally, once Jack left DC, nothing he did ever had quite the same magic again. Maybe I just got older and more discriminating. Or maybe Jack got older and more disinterested. Either way, something changed. Jack didn't seem to be looking to the future anymore; his subsequent series were mostly either set in the here and now, or the past, and I wonder if that is a reflection of his mindset after things didn't work out quite as planned at DC.

In any case, here we are with an entire issue devoted to *Kamandi* and *OMAC*. Our recent acquisition of Kirby pencil copies (see issue #37 and #38) means for the first time, we have ample *Kamandi* and *OMAC* art to put this baby together, and I couldn't be happier to finally get it in print.

With the long lag between the last two *TJKC* issues, a lot of readers may be wondering what the future holds for this magazine. I'm getting older, and raising a soon-to-be three-year-old on top of everything else that's going on often intrudes on the other things that bring me joy. But rest assured; I'm as committed to this publication as ever. I have the best of intentions to get it out sooner rather than later, but regardless, I'm here for the long run. We've got lots of Kirby territory left to cover, and gobs of unseen art to show. So when all the other magazines and fanzines out there have crumbled to dust, you'll still see this one standing in the rubble of the industry, emerging from my figurative "Command D," ready to lay claim to the title "Last Fanzine On Earth." I hope you'll be with me for the ride!

Long live the King!



honor, so for more info or ordering, call 503-786-0542 or email sales@bowendesigns.com.

ITEM! Speaking of likenesses, sculptor Andrew Wiernicki has made a masterful likeness of everybody's favorite Last Boy On Earth (right)! For more info, call 508-823-1846 or go to www.nohtv.com/aw.

ITEM! MoCCA (The Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art) in New York City needs help with two of its upcoming exhibitions. MoCCA will open its new 1,800-square foot gallery space in SoHo on Oct. 6 with a major new exhibition entitled *Toon Town: Comic and Cartoon Art in New York City*, and would love to have New York native Jack Kirby represented. If you have any Kirby pieces depicting any part of New York City or NYC-like themes (such as the "Suicide Slum" of Newsboy Legion) and would be interested in lending them for the show, contact show curator Fred Van Lente, at fvanlente@moccany.org for more details. Of



particular interest would be pages from the Marvel super-hero era or any NYC-set romance comic work, but any of the King's many other genres (crime, romance, kid gang, even science fiction) would be appreciated. (All artwork will be treated with the utmost care and security.) Also, MoCCA wants to mount a major retrospective of Kirby's work in 2005, and collectors interested in participating in that show should email Mr. Van Lente at the address above for more details. To learn more about MoCCA, please visit www.moccany.org.



UNDER THE COVERS



Erik "Savage Dragon" Larsen returns for a second outing at Kirby cover inks, this time with a Kamandi piece from the fabled sketchbook Jack did as a Valentine's Day present for Roz (see the pencils below). Erik's first shot at a *TJKC* cover (#33) garnered rave reviews, as have his Kirby-inspired covers on his Savage Dragon comic for Image. Below is an example of one of his homages to Jack, and the *Kamandi* cover it pays tribute to.

Lest we forget, Tom Ziuko lovingly added the colors and textures to our front cover, making an already remarkable piece a real standout.

At left is the same drawing, this time inked by Richard Howell. Longtime *TJKC* readers will remember Richard as our proofreader from early-on, and Richard's also had a distinguished career as an artist for DC and Marvel Comics, and currently for Claypool Comics.

On the previous page are Jack's pencils for an unused *Kamandi* cover. European superstar Reedman has a long history of paying tribute to Jack in his work, so when he sent this piece in fully inked and colored, we couldn't resist showing it off. It's a shining example of how Kirby, and *Kamandi*, are immensely popular overseas. ★



JACK F.A.Q.S



A column answering Frequently Asked Questions about Kirby by Mark Evanier

(this page and next) The original concept drawings for the *Kamandi* cast. Notice how many of the early series plot twists were already conceived at this developmental stage.

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I can tell you exactly how *Kamandi, the Last Boy of Earth*, came to be. And while we're at it, you're going to have to hear about *The Demon* and a little about my relationship with Jack Kirby since it's all one story.

It began around September of 1971. Jack was writing and drawing *New Gods*, *Forever People* and *Mister Miracle* for DC and they'd been coming out for almost a year. He was working ahead of schedule so he was finishing the eighth or ninth issues around this time.

They were all bi-monthly books so they didn't fully consume his quota, which called for a minimum of fifteen pages a week. Previously, the overage was occupied by *Jimmy Olsen* and by the black-and-white magazines (*In the Day of the Mob*, *Spirit World* and the ones that never even made it that

Initially, Jack had not expected *New Gods* and its allied titles to become his main project at DC. When he realized that it was becoming that, he threw himself fully into the endeavor, determined to fashion some kind of masterpiece. But the original idea, at least from his end, was that he'd launch the three comics, then hand them off to others. He had talked of trying to get Wally Wood to draw *New Gods*, Don Heck or John Romita to draw *Forever People* and Steve Ditko to draw *Mr. Miracle*. Steve and I would probably have written some of them under his tutelage and supervision.

He also had in mind that the Fourth World would expand into more titles. "You can do a whole book about any of these characters," he said on several occasions. Actually, Jack thought you could do a whole book about almost any character he'd ever drawn. If you'd pointed to some nameless person he drew once in a crowd scene and asked, "How about a book starring him?," Jack would have said, "Sure. I could do an epic about that guy." Given Jack's endless imagination, I wouldn't have bet he couldn't.

One of the reasons the Fourth World seemed so crammed full of supporting players in its early issues was that Jack was trying to set up new titles and spin-offs, preferably to be done by others. He wanted to devote his writing/drawing time to new ideas, few of which would have resembled any past Kirby creation... or comic books as we then knew them. Right then, alas, Jack's ideas for bigger, upscale projects did not fit into DC's game plan.

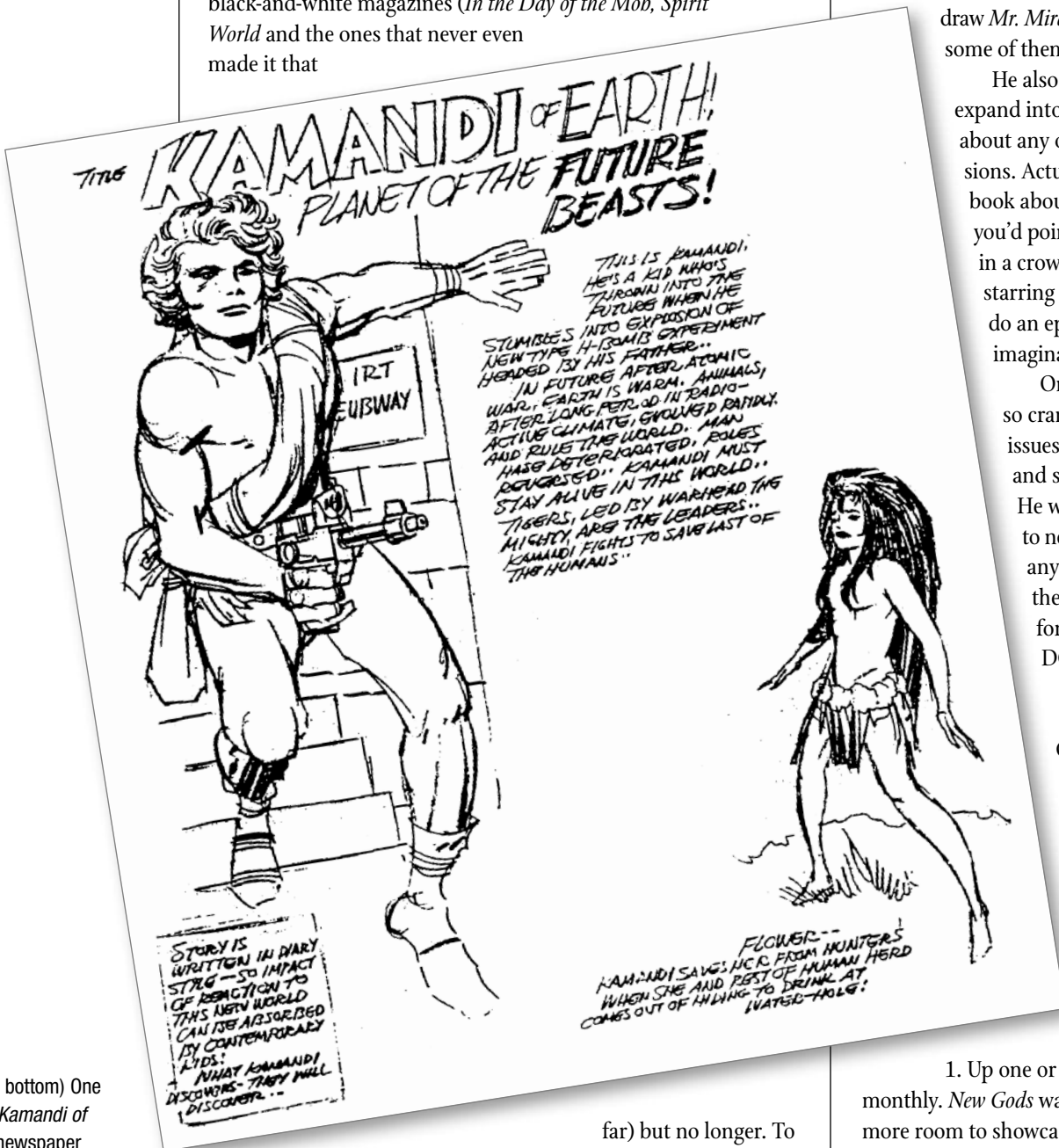
Around this time, DC Publisher Carmine Infantino was a guest at a Los Angeles comic convention, and a meeting was planned to discuss what would be added to Kirby's roster of projects. Jack asked Steve and me to sit in on this conference and we did... saying, as I recall, absolutely nothing. No final decision was made but the prevailing idea seemed to be to do at least two of the following three things...

1. Up one or two of the ongoing Fourth World books to monthly. *New Gods* was the keystone book and it seemed to need more room to showcase its hefty cast. Then again, *Mister Miracle* seemed to be selling a bit better.

2. Add a new book called something like *Big Barda and Her Female Furies*, based around those characters.

3. Add a new book called *Lonar*, featuring a new hero who'd appeared in a few back-up stories. This was the idea Jack was pushing for but, as he kept saying over and over, any player in the New Genesis-Apokolips War was worthy of his own comic.

Jack asked about the idea of handing some of these titles off to other writers and artists once he had other projects to fill out his quota. Infantino said he was against it at that time. The Fourth World books were Kirby books, and he wasn't certain how the readers would react to anyone else. He suggested that it would be easier to have Jack edit a book he didn't write and draw



(next page, bottom) One of the few *Kamandi of the Caves* newspaper strip pencil samples Jack did in the 1950s before abandoning the idea. Other than the name, the two *Kamandis* share little in common.

Kamandi of the Caves TM & ©2004 Jack Kirby Estate.

far) but no longer. To Jack's general displeasure, the magazine endeavor had been quickly aborted. Then again, to his general pleasure, he no longer had to write and draw the *Olsen* book. He and DC were trying to decide what he'd add to his workload.

Steve Sherman and I were Kirby's occasional assistants. I say "occasional" because there was never all that much for us to do. Jack was keeping us around partly because he liked the company—we saw him once a week or so—and partly because he was still hoping to change his job description a bit, drawing fewer pages a week and doing some editing of comics he would neither draw nor write. Neither Steve nor I ever counted on this happening but we did want to see Jack get what he wanted. What he wanted, by and large, was to get away from drawing conventional comic books.

RUSSELL WRESTLES WITH KIRBY

Conducted by Eric Nolen-Weathington

(P. Craig Russell started as an assistant to Dan Adkins, and quickly blossomed into one of the industry's top artistic talents, with acclaimed work on such characters as Killraven, Elric, and Dr. Strange. This interview was conducted by phone in October 2003.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: When did you first develop an interest in comics?

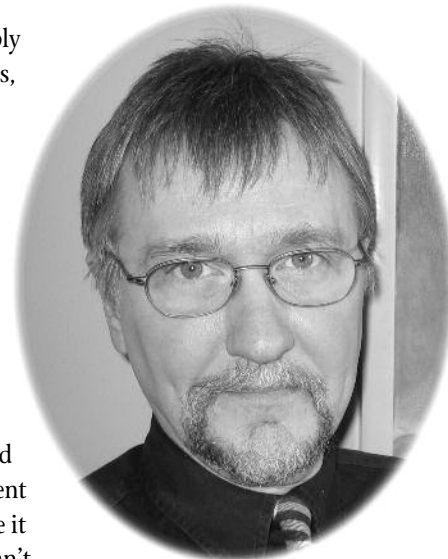
P. CRAIG RUSSELL: My first memory of comics... well, we always had comics around. A little table between our twin beds—my brother and I—and there was always a little stack of comic books there, mostly Walt Disney and Harvey and some of his *Roy Rogers* comics. He was four years older than me and really into the Saturday morning westerns—*Gene Autry* and *Roy Rogers* and the *Lone Ranger*. We always had those comic books around. So they were just always there and I think I finally took more of an interest in them than he did, or any other kid in the neighborhood. I started mostly with Carl Barks' Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge stories. Then I followed the same trajectory as anybody else, I guess. A little bit after that I got a little bit older and it was Archie comics, and then a little bit older and it was Marvel comics.

TJKC: How old were you when you first saw the Marvel comics?

(below) A prime example of Russell's work on Killraven, from 1982.

(next page) Russell's ink interpretation of some Kirby pencils we ran in *TJKC* #30.

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RUSSELL: I was probably around 12 or 13, I guess, just when the Marvel Age was starting or the first year after. It was around '63, '64. I was at a friend's house and they had issues #3-14 of the *Fantastic Four*. I picked that up and I was just completely hooked—lost right away. I had to read all of them and then went to the newsstand where it was up to around—I can't believe I remember these numbers—

#29 of *Fantastic Four* was out. So then it was *Spider-Man* and everything else, and then becoming a collector and having to get everything that was published before I started buying them—which at that point it was only a few dozen, I guess.

TJKC: Was Kirby one of your favorites at the time or was he just "one of the Marvel artists"?

RUSSELL: Oh, no. He was the fountainhead. He was the King. It was immediately obvious, as young as I was, who had the chops and who didn't. It was Kirby and Ditko.

TJKC: Did you have a particular issue or series by Kirby that was your favorite?

RUSSELL: Oh, *Fantastic Four* was always my favorite. When they said "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine," to me it was just like, "Well, duh." [laughter]

TJKC: I would be very surprised if you didn't like the "Tales of Asgard" back-ups.

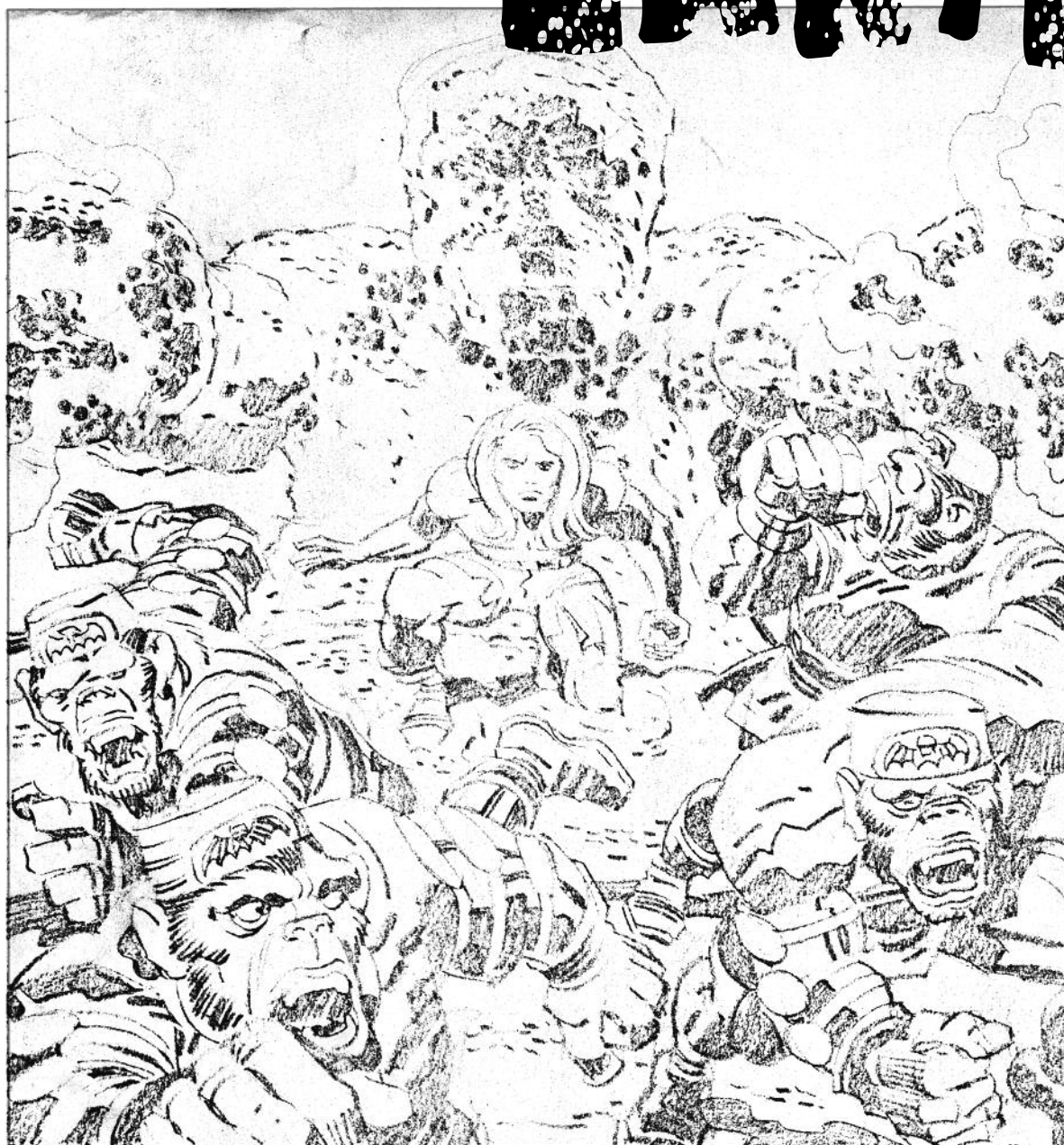
RUSSELL: I liked that, too. I liked 'em all. I mean, I was a True Believer. I even got *Kid Colt*, *Outlaw* and *Millie the Model*. [laughter] I bought absolutely everything and read it all. I was not too discerning about what wasn't good. I knew what was the best, and then there was everything else, and I enjoyed that, too. Anything Kirby did. Early on I started getting wise to the ways of inkers, and that made a big difference. To me Sinnott was the final word and everything else was judged against that. I was quite hardline about it. Of course, now I can see the relative merits of other people. Giacoia's inks were always wonderful, but I knew right from the beginning that Colletta sucked. [laughter]

TJKC: Did you follow Kirby when he went to DC? It sounds like you were strictly a Marvel kind of guy.

RUSSELL: Oh, no. I also became a fanatic comic person and I bought everything. Although I started with the Archies and Marvels, then I moved over to DC and it became an art thing. Anything Joe Kubert did, that pulled me into it. And I remember, actually, my first DC comic was *Superman* #153 or #154—the death of Kal-El, I think it was. He was in this glass box on the cover, dying of some mysterious illness. Again, it was at the friend's house that had the *Fantastic Fours*, and I read that. And of course, when you're a kid, you don't realize that no one is ever really going to die in a comic book, so it was like reading *King Lear*. [laughter] So I was into the DC books, too. Kubert's war books and then all the stuff that Gil Kane was doing over there. And then when he made a jump over to Marvel, that was really exciting to me.

TJKC: When Kirby went over and started the *New Gods*, did you like that as much as his Marvel stuff?

EARTH A.D.



KIRBY'S PLAYGROUND OF IMAGINATION

by Charles Hatfield

(Most of the following essay appeared over ten years ago, in the second issue of Jim Kingman's mail-order 'zine Comic Effect (Summer 1993). In the years since I have often revisited Kamandi, rereading and reconsidering it; in fact some five years ago I read Kirby's entire run to my eldest son, then age ten. At that time my thinking about Kamandi began to change, and I began to rediscover things my memory had blurred. For example, I realized that the Kamandi I had remembered as an idealized storybook "boy" was often angry, pugnacious, even ferocious; I realized too that the series was terrifically violent, with an at-times brutal edge. This didn't bother me—the series is still my favorite of Kirby's, and I find its violence bracing—but I began to want to write about the series again, hopefully from a new, less purely nostalgic perspective. I still want to do that—I'm not done with Kamandi by any means—but in the following I have resisted the urge to make drastic changes, preserving the shape and flavor of the original essay with only minor editorial changes. Some of my more recent musings on the series are appended in a sidebar, as a sort of update from work-in-progress.)

I can't remember the first comic I ever read, but I'm almost certain that the first I bought myself, new, from the stands, was issue #32 of Jack Kirby's *Kamandi, The Last Boy on Earth* (August 1975). Issue #32 was a double-sized issue, including a

new, full-length Kirby story as well as a reprint of *Kamandi's* first issue, a map of Kamandi's world, and a four-page text feature on Kirby ("A Man with a Pencil") by Steve Sherman.

I had seen *Kamandi* before—I think—because a schoolmate, before moving away, had bequeathed to me a stack of comics, among them *Kamandi* #22-24. I believe this must have happened not long before #32 hit the stands. In hindsight I suppose those few issues whetted my interest, priming me to buy the next issue I saw—that would be #32, which, as it happened, was an excellent introduction to Kamandi's world, and to Kirby's solo work in general. It fired my imagination and provoked a comic-buying habit that lasted several years, exhausting my allowance and setting me up for my second plunge into comics, almost a decade later. Jack Kirby became my favorite comics artist, the center of my ragtag collection, the one artist I followed faithfully—and this devotion crystallized with *Kamandi* #32. It confirmed me, not only as a Kirby fan, but as a comics fan.

I came too late for Kirby's acclaimed "Fourth World" books, and certainly too late to read his groundbreaking work on *The Fantastic Four* and *Thor* when it was new (I did see reprints). *Kamandi* was my point of entry into Kirby's enormous body of work—*Kamandi*, and then *OMAC* and *The Eternals*. My passion for Kirby was based largely on this mid-'70s work, stuff often dismissed by collectors and fans as anti-climactic. For me, the

(above) Cover pencils from *Kamandi* #32 (August 1975), the double-size issue featuring a reprint of *Kamandi* #1.

(next four pages) Pencils from the first issue of *Kamandi*.

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world he created in *Kamandi* was magic: enough like our own to invite recognition, yet populated with talking animals, bizarre natural phenomena and enough unsolved mysteries to inspire endless speculation.

Ironically, I came onboard just as Kirby was getting ready to pull out—he was on the verge of returning to Marvel for one last tenure. *Kamandi* #30-36 made up Kirby's last arc. (He ceded the editorship to DC's Gerry Conway with #34, the writing with #38, and finally bowed out altogether after issue #40, having penciled three Conway-written issues.) Issue #32 was a pivotal chapter in this final arc, as it formally introduced a new character while bringing together many of *Kamandi*'s already large supporting cast.

Issue #32's lead story involves the collision of two distinct plotlines: Kamandi's encounter with an extraterrestrial (first glimpsed in #30), and an escalating military confrontation between (yow!) tigers and gorillas. The alien, having already transformed Kamandi's mutant friend, Ben Boxer, into a rampaging giant (#31), seems to be a threat, though no one knows exactly what it is. Issue #32 begins with Kamandi leading the tiger prince Tuftan to the island to find both the E.T. and Dr. Canus, the curious canine genius who has gone to study the creature.

Dr. Canus, a step ahead of everyone, has learned to communicate with the alien—a floating ball of energy who proves peaceful, if unpredictable. In fact the extraterrestrial comes to the aid of Kamandi and friends by routing a band of "gorilla commandos," ape pirates led by one Ramjam, a typically gruff, cigar-smoking heavy of the Kirby school. (Ramjam is introduced in an unforgettable splash: a fierce ape with a Nick Fury-ish eyepatch and, of course, a smoldering, Kirbyesque stogie.)

At the story's climax, the alien assumes physical form to repel Ramjam and his commandos. Sinking into the beach, the E.T. takes on a gigantic body of sand, then advances on the gorillas in a memorable 2/3-page splash, firing gouts of sand at the panic-stricken apes. Thus the alien's benevolent character is established beyond doubt, and Kamandi's antagonists are put to flight, at least for a while. The episode ends with Dr. Canus hinting that the alien will soon take a permanent physical body.

Issue #32's lead story spilled over into several months' worth of new adventures, as Kirby balanced two contrasting plots: The doctor's efforts to assist the alien's transformation, and an ongoing naval battle between Tuftan's tigers and the piratical gorillas. In these issues—which I was buying fresh off the stands, breath bated—scenes of nautical action alternate with scenes of Kamandi, Dr. Canus and the extraterrestrial. *It* becomes a *she*—namely, Pyra, a sleek, red-skinned female—in issue #34, just in time for Kamandi to commandeer her spaceship for a desperate attack on the gorillas. *Then* things start to get complicated....

The lead story in *Kamandi* #32 will probably not be remembered as one of Kirby's best. Yet, characteristically, it bristles with energy, and includes several



memorable scenes: Panels and pages full of character and oomph. The opening splash, with Kamandi and Prince Tuftan racing toward the island in a speedboat, has stayed with me ever since; likewise the sight of the alien, a coruscating globe of Kirby-fizz. When I close my eyes I can see these images inside my head.

Ah, but it was #32's reprint of *Kamandi* #1 that fully snared me. It left a cluster of vivid impressions that have permanently taken up residence in some foyer of my mind: That fantastic spread of Kamandi paddling through a half-submerged New York skyline, like a scene out of *When Worlds Collide*; Kamandi's sudden meeting with a talking, gun-wielding wolf, frightfully rendered in a half-page panel; a cavalry charge by armored tigers on horseback, "Great Caesar" in the lead; and the final, spirit-boosting

meeting of Kamandi and newfound friend Ben Boxer, just as things seem hopeless. Despite obvious nods to other stories, other sources, the first *Kamandi* strikes me now, as it did then, as a remarkably rich and original comic, crazy, headlong, breathtaking, packed with spectacle and danger.

The map included in #32 (superceding a smaller map from way back in #1) promised more of the same: Further travels, further adventures. Poring over said map, I realized that Kirby had a whole world to play with, and, man, was I hooked.

I suspect I wasn't the only one so affected. *Kamandi* seems to have been a popular book, one that snared a lot of future Kirby enthusiasts. Consider: It was the only book from Kirby's early-'70s tenure at DC to last beyond Kirby's departure.

KIRBY'S KREATIVE KARICATURE

by Shane Foley

To me, *Kamandi* is a fascinating glimpse into the fertile mind of the King. Producing an even 40 issues, the series was the only real commercial success the King had in comics after leaving Marvel in 1970—(although, judging by the reactivation of *New Gods* and *Mister Miracle* in 1975, it seems they too were more successful than first acknowledged. I believe that *Machine Man* at Marvel may also have had a longer life, had Kirby stayed).

I find this success—and my fascination with the book—intriguing, because in no way was *Kamandi* as well executed as many of Jack's other works. After the first year or so of the book's life, many of the issues lacked his normal polish—both artwise and in his plotting and scripting. A similar phenomenon had been seen before—in the plotting and

to a lesser degree, the penciling in some of Jack's '60s *Captain Americas*, *Thors* and a few *FFs* when he was clearly uninterested, and it would be seen again in the later '70s—but now it was as if Jack's disappointment with his DC deal was finally starting to be felt. To me, it showed mainly in the plotting and scripting. He seemed to be writing in shorthand. The emphasis on action increased. Forays into *Kamandi*'s feelings grew sketchier and sketchier as the series progressed and characters such as Spirit and Flower were no longer present. There was less and less care in character development. It was as if the King was saying, "DC management wants straightforward action—as opposed to the more 'complicated' epic action of the Fourth World—I'll give it to 'em!"

And though his layouts and pacing were as great as ever, the art didn't look as good either—though whether this was down to Jack or D. Bruce Berry's inks is often hard to tell. (I often wonder why there is so much more comment on the merits of Vince Colletta than Bruce Berry—to my mind, Berry was a very poor interpreter of Jack's pencils, even though "in spirit," he was more like Mike Royer and clearly, Jack himself must have been happy with him.)

Whatever Jack's reasons for this, his fertile, unfettered imagination continued to shine. If you wanted character development or mythic subtext, *Kamandi* was not the place. But if you wanted Kirby creativity, it abounded. What was held in awe from the *FF*, *Thor* and *New Gods* was, at times, positively running wild in *Kamandi*. And to me, it is here that the strip shines as brightly as any other.

The best example of Kirby's creativity of wild concepts was probably "Tracking Site" in issues #9 and 10. Jack was giving his all here and had all the ingredients (it seems to me) of a setting that he had previously thought through

(below) A pencil page from *Kamandi*'s memorable visit to "Tracking Site" in issue #10 (Oct. 1973).

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The Man of Tomorrow in Kamandi's future, by Jerry Boyd

During the early years of the House of Ideas (or in Stan Lee's wonderful verbiage, "when Marvel was in flower..."), DC Comics was enjoying its place at the top of the heap. Julius Schwartz, Gil Kane, Joe Kubert, Infantino, Anderson, Swan, and others had successfully retooled the old JSA members into JLA members and their team tussles and individual titles were igniting the hopes and dreams of fandom.

Moreover, Superman and Batman (and *Action* and *Detective*) were nearing 30 continuous years of publication. This was quite an accomplishment in the world of comic magazines. National's icons had withstood the Depression years, WWII, new genres (love comics, crime, horror, war, satire, and sci-fi) and fickle tastes, Senate investigations on the "evil influences" of the medium, and more. The World's Finest heroes were here, it seemed, to stay. However, as the new decade began, the Dynamic Duo had definitely lost their way. Excellent detective stories by Finger, Sprang, Moldoff, Mooney, and Paris had given way to "alien Batmans" on futuristic and forbidden worlds, sending readers away in droves. Talk began circulating that the masked manhunters' books might not make it to 1969 with Batman and Robin in them. The Superman family of books were more solvent, and Supes was right at home on other worlds, making his transition into the science-fiction realm (which moviegoers were feasting on) much easier. Still, the Man of Tomorrow and the Dark Knight were "long in the tooth," so while Kirby and Lee were trying out the possibilities for their new heroes, DC's creators were contemplating stories that could be their characters' final cases.

(below) Unused two-page spread from *Kamandi* #29. Jack replaced this with a two-pager detailing Superman's efforts in the last days before the Great Disaster, but apparently liked the piece well enough to get Mike Royer to ink it later.

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For the uninitiated, they were called "imaginary stories," and in them, Superman could and did die. However, these alternative histories pumped new life into Batman, Robin, and Superman. "What If...?" (to cop a Marvel-ized wording of the yarn improbable) Bruce Wayne and Clark Kent were raised as brothers by the Kents? What if Superman had married Lois Lane? Or Lana Lang? In one instance, Dick Grayson grew up and became Batman II with Bruce and Kathy (Batwoman) Kane's son filling in as Robin II.

Mighty Marvel wasn't in the habit of "dreaming up" separate realities. Kirby and Lee were interested in infusing as much realism into their characters as they could. Many of them fought momentous battles in Central Park, on the Statue of Liberty, around Times Square, and the George Washington Bridge. Spider-Man even slugged it out with Kraven the Hunter at the N.Y. World's Fair in his first *Annual*. Tony Stark, Henry Pym, and Reed Richards were "cold warriors," leading the way in their inventiveness and heroism against Communism.

Kirby never seemed interested in "dream situations" that allowed his creations a freedom neither he nor Stan could give them. Captain America dreamed as Kirby did, reliving the nightmares of the battlefield. When Steve Rogers awoke, Bucky Barnes was still gone and the Star-spangled Avenger still had to face reality in an unfamiliar, modernized atomic age. Thor's "dream world" was in reality his home. Lastly, no sequences were arranged that saw the Thing unconsciously witnessing the marriage of the sightless Alicia to his human form.

"I tell things the way they are... and the way I see them," the King told a bunch of conventioners in 1977.

I enjoyed the "final" Batman cases and the "last" Superman



SECOND BANANAS

Ipes ran rampant in Kamandi's world, and so did Kirby's splash pages. While these bold, full-page images are meant to lure readers into buying a comic by looking at its first page, Jack took them a step further, burying some of his finest full-pagers later in the book. So this issue's Gallery looks at some of the "second banana" splashes that may not be quite as well remembered, but are certainly deserving of our attention.

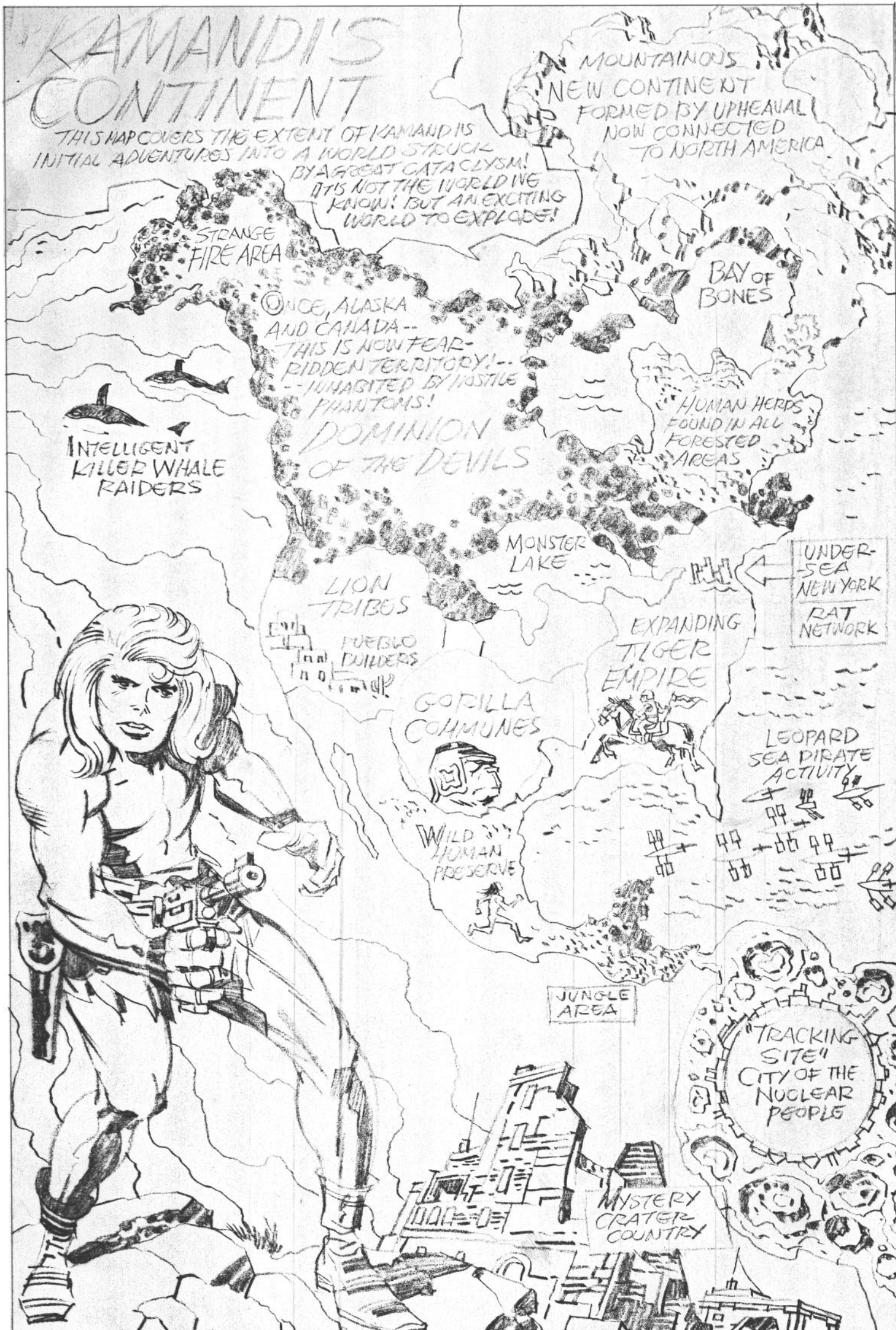
Page 30: This page literally laid the road map for Jack's *Kamandi* run. This simple one-pager contained an entire series' worth of story ideas. From *Kamandi* #1 (Nov. 1972).

Page 31: *Kamandi* #6, page 17 (June 1973). Note the heavy spotting of blacks on Kamandi's figure, foreshadowing Flower's eventual fate.

Page 32: *Kamandi* #7, page 14 (July 1973). Jack's love of old movies shines through in this homage to *King Kong*.

Page 33: *Kamandi* #9, page 11 (Sept. 1973). The Misfit is just one in a long line of Kirby's "big-head" characters.

Page 34: *Kamandi* #10, page 6 (Oct. 1973). Compare these pencils to ones from earlier issues; the loose, fluid penciling conveys swift motion, even on a still page. But while it's solid draftsmanship, the level of detail from the first few issues is beginning to fade.



2003 KIRBY TRIBUTE PANEL

(right) A dashing shot of Jack at the 1988 San Diego Comicon.



(Held July 18, 2003 at Comicon International: San Diego, featuring (below, left to right): Michael Chabon, a surprise mystery guest, Sal Buscema, Larry Lieber, Stan Goldberg, Mark Evanier, (bottom row) Wendy Pini, and Mike Royer. The panel was moderated by Mark Evanier, and transcribed by Brian K. Morris.)

MARK EVANIER: Jack was so much a part of our lives, and his work is still with us. I never get through a day without, at some point, either being asked about Jack or seeing something where

I think, "Oh, Jack told me that. I'm using his advice," and not always advice related to comics. I'm amazed as I get older and older how much of things that Jack told me in 1971 suddenly apply to my life. I was thinking of a comment somebody made earlier today:

One of the reasons I think Jack, sometimes, had enormous problems dealing with the business end of things with people—you all know, he did not get as good as he gave—was that Jack was quickly out of sync with the present day. When he talked to someone, he was always seeing a bigger picture. If he negotiated with somebody about a business deal, they were always looking at how much money this thing was going to make next

Tuesday and Jack, in 1963 or '64, was envisioning the *Hulk* movie. He knew there was going to be a *Hulk* movie. He'd known there would be a multi-hundred million, whatever it is, dollar thing, and he was negotiating from that standpoint. So he was kind of out of sync with the language of people he was talking to. And in the same way, when he gave advice about life, and relationships, and getting along in the world, even political commentary—you should have heard Jack talk about Richard Nixon. [chuckles] It was

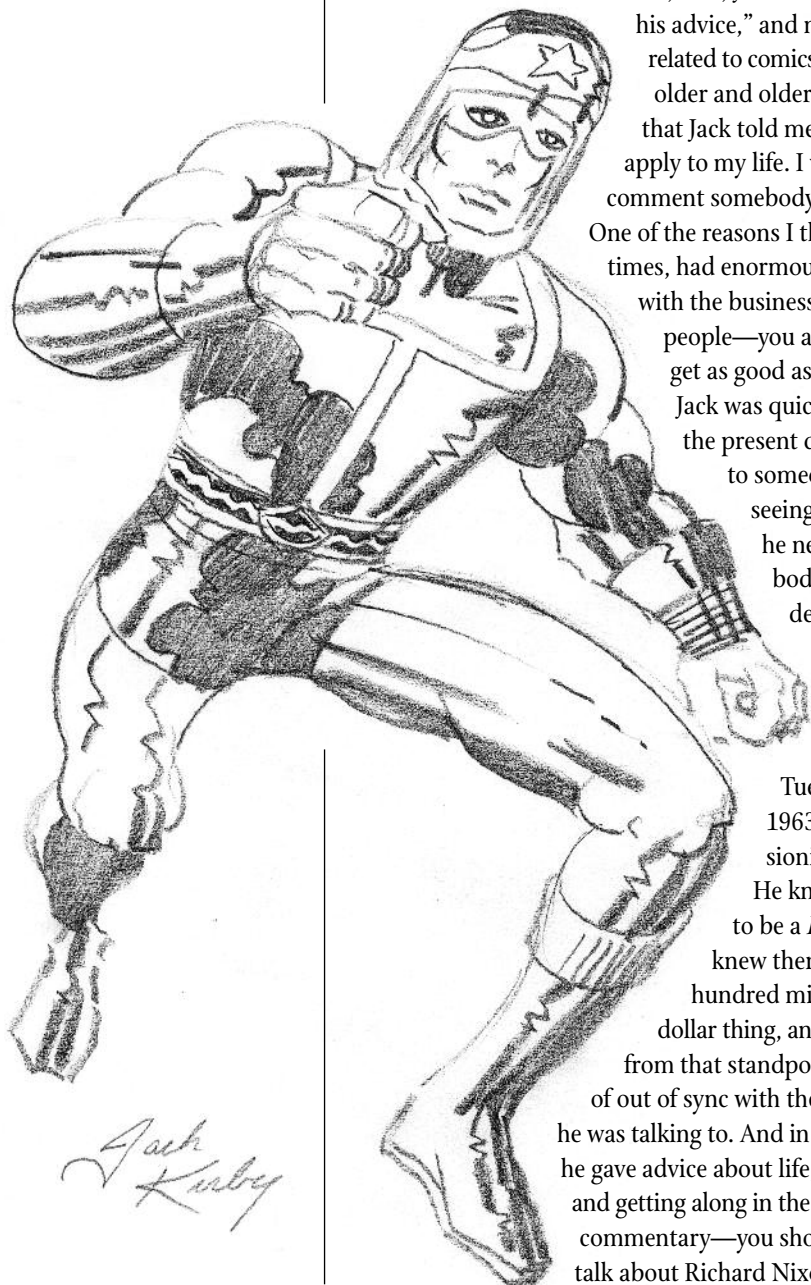
an amazing experience. And the more I read about Nixon, the more I see how right Jack was, and the more I realized where Darkseid's dialogue came from. [laughs] So we're going to talk about Jack for a while here. We've invited some people who either worked with Jack or, in one case, never met him, but who obviously carried on his tradition greatly.

Let me start at the far end here and introduce to you a lady who has a wonderful story to tell, and I'm going to say this as accurately as I can. Every single person who ever went to Jack and showed him the artwork they were doing, got encouragement. You could have done the worst drawing in the world and taken it to Jack and he would have said, "That's great! Keep at it, work hard," because he loved the enthusiasm of people that wanted to create. Privately, though, there were a few select people who came to him, who he indicated—if not to them, at least to me—he thought they were a class above the norm of people who came to him with their artwork. And this lady became one of the outstanding illustrators of her time, for her strip *Elfquest*. This is Wendy Pini, ladies and gentlemen. [applause]

Next to Wendy is a gentleman I've known since 1969. When I met him, he was inking Russ Manning and Disney comics, and such. Shortly after that, he became, I think, one of Jack's two greatest inkers of all time. Over the years—I've said this before, I'm going to keep saying it every time he talks on one of these panels—I don't think people realize how hard he worked to be faithful to the pencils. He could have done a lot less and probably collected the same rotten money, but he had a work ethic and a devotion to do the job right that shows in every page of *New Gods*, and *Forever People*, *Kamandi*, and all those books. Those of you who loved those comics, you should be real grateful to Mr. Mike Royer. [applause]

I don't have to tell you about the book this man wrote because probably everyone here has read it, or owns a copy of it and is saving it for that right moment to read. This book kind of took the industry by storm a couple of years ago. Is it two years ago now, or ...?

MICHAEL CHABON: Yeah.



(above) A sketch of Silver Star done for a fan.

(right) The illustrious 2003 panel. Thanks to Chris Ng for all the photos of the event.



Silver Star TM & ©2004 Jack Kirby Estate.



EVANIER: People I know who don't read comics, who don't go to these conventions, called me up and said, "Have you read this extraordinary book? You must read this book," and such. It really touched an

awful lot of people; and of course I'm talking about *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, a book which has more than a little to do with Jack Kirby and he'll tell us a little about that. The award-winning Michael Chabon. [applause]

When you look at Marvel comics of the Sixties, you look at wonderful artwork. You'll also look at this man's work usually because he colored most of Jack's work in the Sixties. He was Marvel's Coloring Department for a long time until he got too busy drawing *Millie the Model*, and things like that, and had to pass some of that work on other people. But I don't think Jack's work was ever colored better than when it was in his hands. He made a lot of key decisions; what color will the Thing be, what color would the Fantastic Four's uniforms

obviously understood what Jack did. He drew every Marvel Comic at one time or another anyway, but drew every book that Jack did at one point. If there was anyone out there who managed to consistently capture what Jack invented in terms of storytelling, and putting energy on the page, and making characters dynamic and interesting—and also having a Kirbysque work output—it's this gentleman, Mr. Sal Buscema, ladies and gentlemen. [applause]

And now, let me talk about Larry Lieber, the man who wrote "Fin Fang Foom." [laughs] The man who wrote all those early Marvel monsters—people think Stan wrote all those early Marvel monster comics, out of which the Marvel super-heroes evolved. Actually, Larry wrote them. Larry wrote the first couple of Thor stories, the first couple of Iron Man stories, the first couple of Human Torch stories in *Strange Tales*; the other writer Jack worked with in this seminal period of Marvel. He later segued over to drawing more, and unfortunately, we lost him to super-hero books for a long time when he was doing westerns and *The Rawhide Kid*. But he segued back to

become the longest-running Spider-Man artist in the history of mankind, drawing the most widely circulated appearance of Spider-Man, and he's a hell of a nice guy, Mr. Larry Lieber. [applause]

I'd also like to briefly introduce a couple of people in the audience who are with us today. As most of you know, Jack, over the years, had a lot of legal problems. He had a lot of fights with different people.

Fortunately, his affairs are now watched over by a couple of people who handle the Jack Kirby Estate, and do a wonderful job of watching

out for Jack's and Roz's posthumous interests, protecting copyrights and names, and making sure that the Kirby name is kept in front of the world. The gentleman who's the—is "administrator" the proper title? Whatever it is, when they say the "Kirby Estate," they mean this gentleman: Roz and Jack's nephew, Mr. Robert Katz, ladies and gentlemen. [applause]

Another one of Jack's wonderful inkers, and an enormous friend of the Kirby family who helped with everything, Mr. Mike Thibodeaux, ladies and gentlemen. [applause] You would think with all he did for the family, he'd get a better seat at this panel. [laughs]

Also, I'd like to lastly introduce—the Kirby tradition, the Kirby name is carried on by a wonderful publication. The publisher/editor is here, John Morrow of *The Jack Kirby Collector*. [applause]

Let's start with Wendy. Wendy and I were having lunch at the Magic Castle a couple of weeks ago and she suggested that she should tell her Jack Kirby story to you all. I give you Wendy Pini.

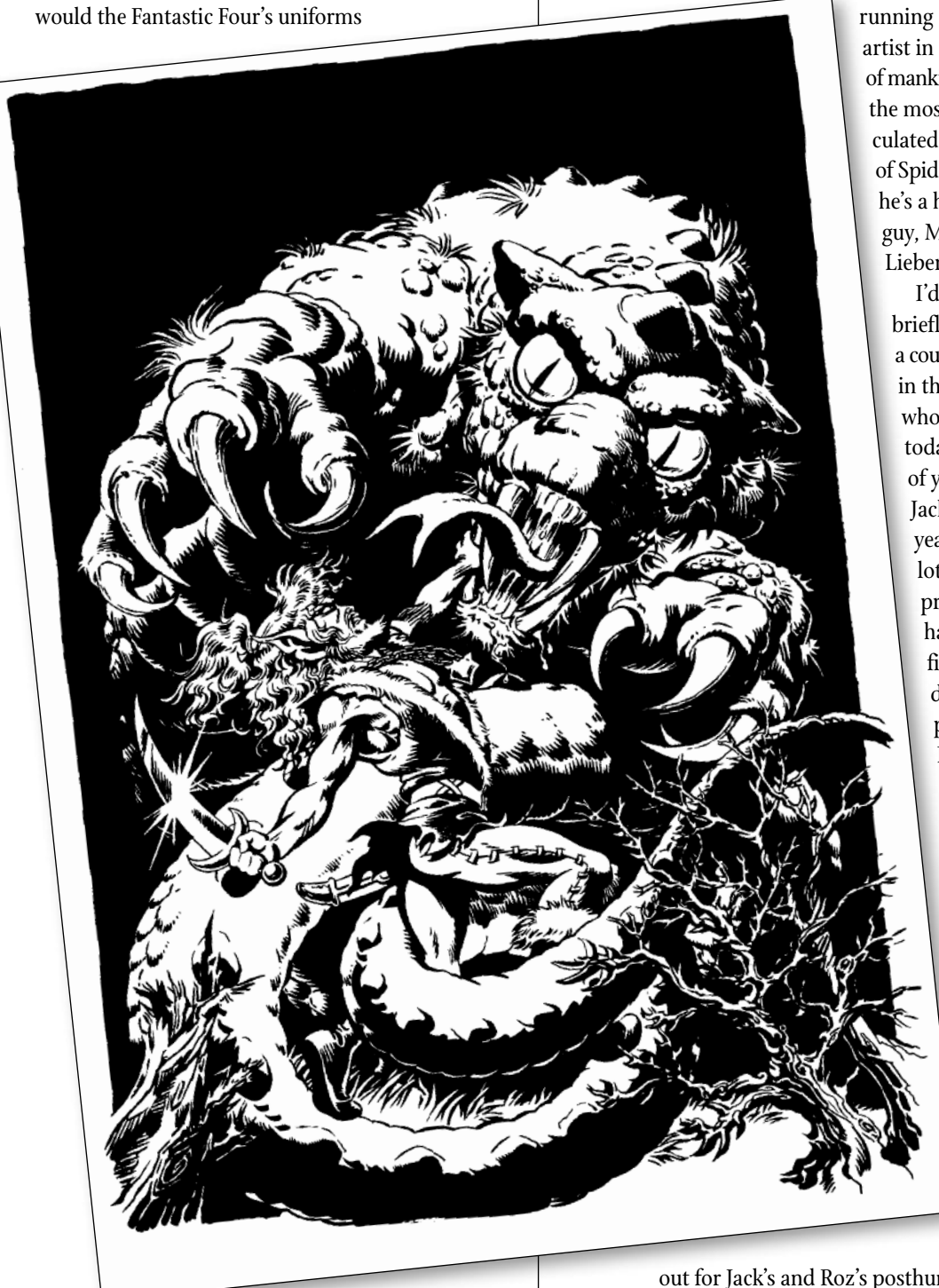


WENDY PINI: [laughs] Thank you so much, Mark. Well, actually, I came prepared to tell two Jack Kirby stories in one because I think that they provide a really interesting insight into the man's personality.

My first story happened when I was eighteen or nineteen years old, which is when I first met Jack. Jack was my first mentor in the comics, although he didn't set out to be or even know that he was. But I had been reading *The Fantastic Four* for some years and had received strong influences. Just the power of his artwork helped me to incorporate a bit more solidity and masculinity into my own drawing style, and I wanted to let him know how much I appreciated that. So when I met him, I was then working on a college project which was a short animated film, based on the writings of Michael Moorcock, called *Stormbringer*. I had many backdrops and character model charts, and so forth, for this film. This was the work that I brought to show Jack. This was all highly rendered work, it wasn't in comic book-style at all. It was in my style of watercolor paintings and was very highly-detailed. Jack went through this, and I've got to tell you something about Jack: Jack was not a misogynist. Anybody who could create Big Barda was not a misogynist. [laughs] However, Jack really did believe that comics was no place for women. He really didn't think that women, you know, could do the artwork. So he went through my portfolio, and he turned to me, and he said, "Kid, if I ever catch ya in comics, I'm gonna spank ya," [laughs] in his best Ben Grimm voice. [laughs]

Shift the scene to some years later. We're in Houston, Texas now at a big convention, and I have my table, and Jack's table is catty-corner to mine, and he's signing autographs, and talking to kids, and looking at their portfolios. And I keep leaning over to Jack and saying, [sweetly] "Jack, I'm still waiting for my spanking." [laughs] I don't know how many of you out there ever actually met the man, but yes, he could blush. [laughs]

That's not the end of it, though. Someone had brought me a large bouquet of carnations while I was doing my autographing. While Jack was busy looking at someone's portfolio, I took one of the carnations and stuck it behind his ear. Now, Jack Kirby was an intensely focused individual. Once he had his attention on something, everything else went away. So Jack did not notice he had a carnation in his ear for fifteen minutes. People were coming up to get their books signed and have him look at their portfolios, and they were giggling, and were looking at each other and snoring. Jack was looking around like, "What's the matter with these guys?" Finally, I think my husband Richard, who is right over there



be? He's now an outstanding illustrator for the Archie Comics Group. We're going to talk about his work at Marvel in the Sixties, Mr. Stan Goldberg. [applause]

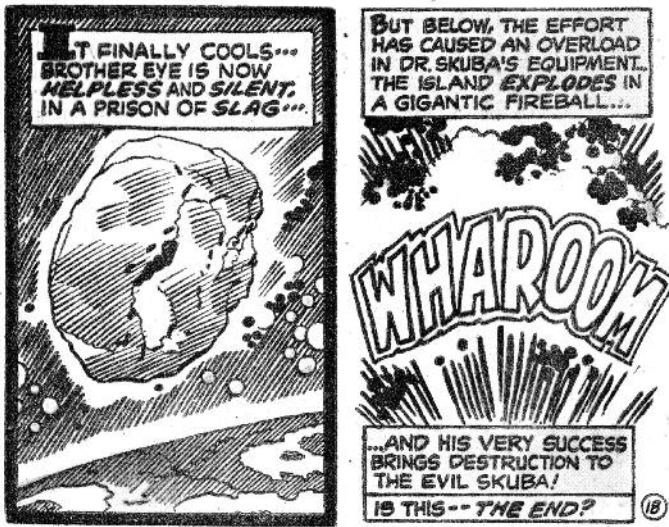
We have here a man who never met Jack Kirby, but you wouldn't know it from his work because he

CANCELLED KIRBY CAVALCADE

(previous page) Jack's original, unaltered final page for *OMAC* #8, the last issue of the series. As you can see, he'd planned to continue the Dr. Skuba story for one more issue, but when he made the decision to leave DC Comics, management must've felt the book's sales didn't warrant assigning a new creative team as they did with *Kamandi*, and simply covered over the "next issue" panel with a hastily constructed finale to the series (right).

(below) As editor of *Kamandi*, Gerry Conway modified some of Jack's dialogue. Check out the before-and-after from issue #34.

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The end of the line for *Kamandi* and *OMAC*, by John Morrow

With one hastily-lettered WHARROOM!, so ended *OMAC*, and Jack Kirby's 1970s stay at DC Comics. Near the end of his time at DC, he had begun to draw scripts written by others, in *Sandman* (by Michael Fleisher), plus *Justice Inc.* and a one-shot issue of *Richard Dragon, Kung Fu Fighter* (both penned by Denny O'Neil). It was a far cry from the situation he'd anticipated when first coming to DC in 1970, spearheading his own West Coast production office, overseeing new characters and kinds of books that others would write and draw. But even if Jack was just filling his page quota, many fans viewed it as a lull until the inevitable return of the Fourth World, or some even greater Kirby epic.

Then came the shocker: *Kamandi* #34 appeared, wrapped in the first non-Kirby cover of the series. Readers who suspected

something was up had to look no further than that issue's letters page for the big announcement: Kirby was leaving DC Comics.

From the Kirby side of things, it all happened quickly. Basically without warning, Jack told assistant Steve Sherman one day, "My contract at DC is done, I'm going back to Marvel." To Jack it was obvious there was no future for him at DC. They had been taking books away from him, editing him, and other things that made it clear the illusions he had when first coming to DC were just that: Illusions. Sherman says Jack's attitude for some time had been, "Just pay my rate, and I'll fill my page quota." Jack may not have liked writing from others' scripts, but as a professional, he fulfilled his contract to the best of his abilities. For his part, Sherman wasn't that upset when his duties handling the *Kamandi* letter column were yanked back, to be controlled in New York. He continued working with Jack on ideas for one-shots like *Kobra* and other script ideas; but with Jack returning to Marvel, it was clear there soon wouldn't be anything for him to do, so he gave up his career in comics, and began working full-time at Filmation animation.

A NEW EDITOR ARRIVES

Gerry Conway, a regular fixture at DC at the time, says Kirby seemed somewhat disengaged as his contract was coming to a close, probably knowing he wouldn't be staying with the company. Conway was the immediate beneficiary of Jack's departure, being handed the editor's slot on *Kamandi* as of #34.

Editing, and later writing *Kamandi* wasn't something Gerry sought out—he never particularly liked the series that much—but being a longtime Kirby fan, he was intrigued by the opportunity when Carmine Infantino offered it, seeing it as a great chance to work with an artist he admired. And since, like Jack, he had a



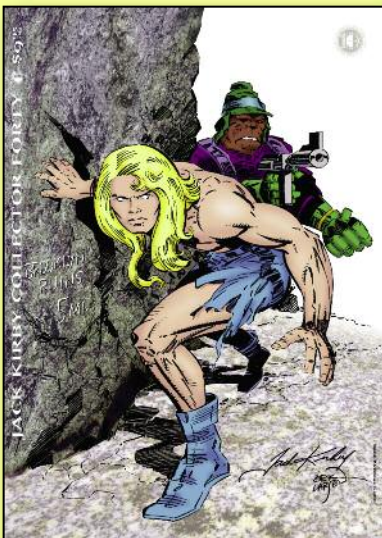
NATURE HAD PRODUCED SOMETHING
TOTALLY UNEXPECTED IN BOTH THE
DEVIL AND MISTER SACKER!

KAMANDI THE LAST BOY ON FARM

If Jack had never drawn this cover for *Kamandi* #12, it's doubtful you'd be reading *TJKC* today. This is the one that introduced me to Kirby, and burned an indelible image on my brain. To me, it epitomizes his in-your-face, powerful, dramatic style as well as anything he ever did.

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KIRBY COLLECTOR #40

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