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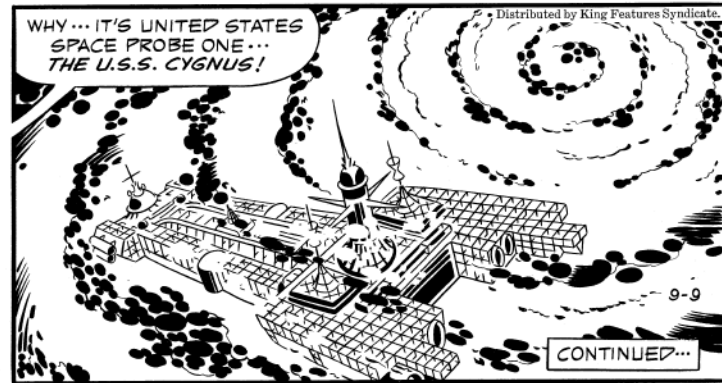
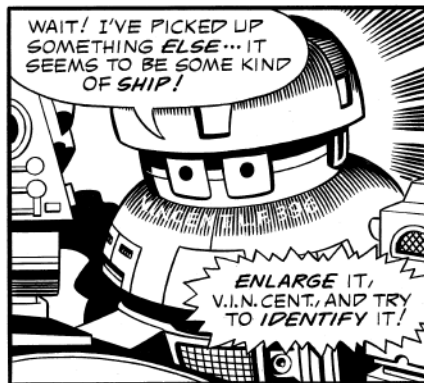
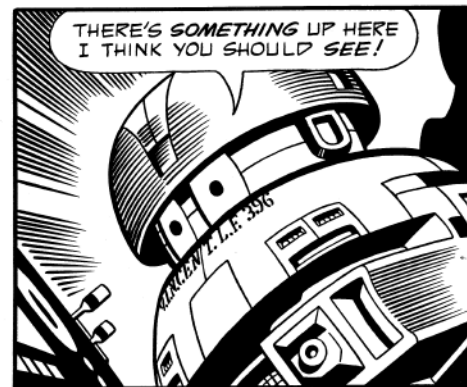




# THE NEW JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

ISSUE #54, SPRING 2010

2



(above) Mike Royer inks (and minor corrections to keep the characters "on model") from the September 9, 1979 *Black Hole* Sunday strip. See the pencils on pages 2-3 of this issue.

Black Hole TM & ©2010 Walt Disney Productions.

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Front cover recreation:  
**GEORGE TUSKA**  
Back cover inks: **JOE SINNOTT**  
Cover colors: **TOM ZIUOKO**



# OPENING SHOT

by John Morrow,  
editor of TJKC

(below) Wesley C. Winters, Jr., a dealer in paper memorabilia, came across this interesting artifact in a recent purchase. It's an issue of the *Los Angeles Times*' Sunday *West* magazine supplement, dated October 13, 1968. But while we know Jack contributed an art/prose piece on the Pioneer 10 Jupiter probe to a 1972 issue of *West*, it's not this issue that's Kirby-centric. Check out the note to "Jack Kirby" from H.L. "Robbie" Robinson, dated October 23, 1969. Jack was definitely living in the Los Angeles area by then; was he considering some work for Disney at that time? Or was this directed to a different "Jack Kirby"? If you have any clues, let us know!

A lot's happened between this issue and last: (and thanks for your patience during the delay). The Kirby family made a legal filing to reclaim Jack's share of copyrights on 45 characters he created or co-created at Marvel Comics. If approved by a judge, those rights would revert from Marvel to Jack's estate over the next decade. The filing took place shortly after the late August announcement that the Walt Disney Company had agreed to buy Marvel Comics for \$4 billion. (Yes, BILLION, with a "B." You've gotta figure Stan, Jack, Steve Ditko, and all the other Bullpen stalwarts had no idea what they were creating in the 1960s would ever garner that kind of a payoff for the company...)

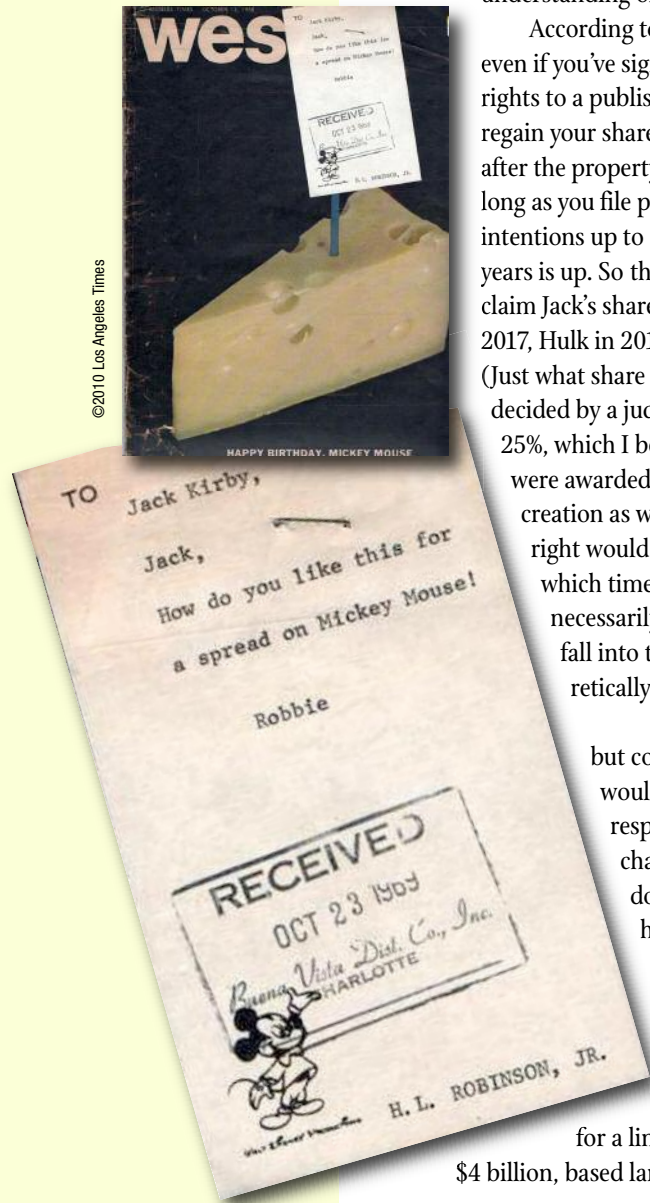
Let me clear up one very important distinction here: the Kirbys are not suing anyone. This isn't a lawsuit; it's simply an author/co-author utilizing a contingency in copyright law. (This "loophole," by my understanding, was ironically brought about due to lobbying by Disney, who feared losing Mickey Mouse to Public Domain, and succeeded in getting copyright law changed in the late 1990s.) Jerry Siegel's family set a precedent by using this contingency to regain a share of the copyright on Superman, and the Kirbys have hired Marc Toberoff—the same attorney the Siegels used—for these proceedings. Toberoff won or settled cases on *Lassie*, *Get Smart*, *The Dukes of Hazzard*, and *The Wild Wild West*. And while I'm no lawyer, here's my understanding of the situation.

According to current copyright law, even if you've signed away your ownership rights to a publisher, you or your heirs can regain your share of ownership 56 years after the property's first publication, as long as you file papers giving notice of your intentions up to 10 years before that 56 years is up. So the Kirby family is eligible to claim Jack's share of the *Fantastic Four* in 2017, *Hulk* in 2018, and *X-Men* in 2019. (Just what share is Jack's would have to be decided by a judge, but let's assume it's 25%, which I believe is what the Siegels were awarded since Superman was a co-creation as well.) The reclaimed copyright would then last 39 more years, at which time the characters (but not necessarily the trademarks) would fall into the Public Domain, theoretically for anyone to use.

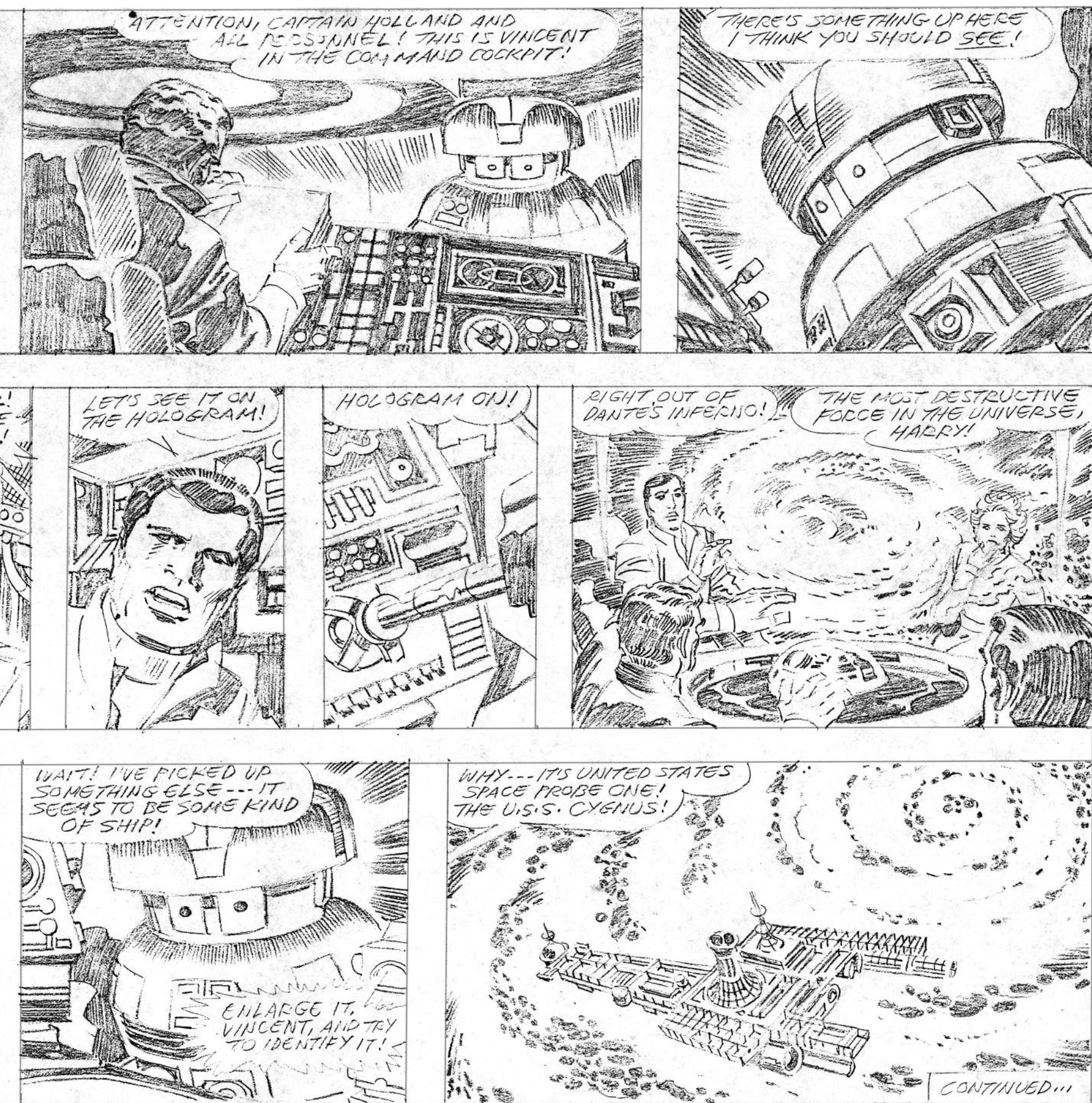
Was it a coincidence that the Kirbys would file when they did? I'm not speaking with any firsthand knowledge, but common sense would dictate that, if you wanted to press your advantage in this situation, the perfect time to file would be when such a huge business deal was about to go down, in hopes of a quick settlement. A Disney spokesman responded to the news of the filing, saying that they had fully considered this happening when they decided to purchase Marvel, so they weren't surprised. (Although, as the Siegel case has shown, there's not a lot a corporation can do to fight this legally; the law's pretty clear, and it's basically up to a judge to decide what exactly is covered, and how it's to be divided. But they can certainly tie it up with expensive legal maneuvers for a lot of years.)

Jack spent his life creating work to support his family. But since Roz Kirby died, the Kirby family has not received one cent in royalties for the multitude of reprints of Jack's work being produced. Meanwhile, other writers and artists who followed Kirby on *X-Men*, *Fantastic Four*, etc. have continued getting royalty payments (as they should; I think all of them should profit for the continued use of their work, including the creator of the strips). This is because Marvel adopted a new policy after Roz's passing, that heirs would only get royalties for a limited number of years after a creator dies, and then nothing after that. *Nada. Zilch.* So if Disney buys you out for \$4 billion, based largely on the characters you created or co-created, Marvel doesn't feel your family's entitled to even the measliest

# OF MICE & MEN







royalty payment on reprint books.

Such is the way of corporate America, I know. But such is the way of copyright law as well. I wish Marvel had made a good faith effort to take care of one of its founding fathers long ago, rather than bullying Jack because they had the resources to do so. Now, I guess it's up to the courts to decide what's right.

However it turns out, hopefully Marvel (and thereby Disney) will learn from this experience, and see that taking care of the people that created your properties is not only ethical, it's good business. A simple thing like a generous ongoing pension and royalties for creators and their heirs—particularly of someone as influential as Kirby—would've gone a

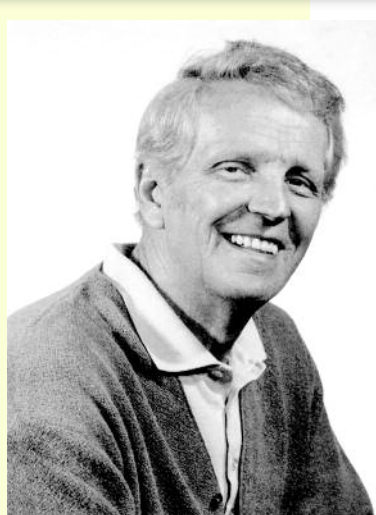
long way toward circumventing this current situation. I hope that, as he was in so many other areas, Jack can again be a pioneer, if this case causes companies to initiate new policies that will take care of their talent, and prevent the need for future filings that will only do much worse damage to their bottom lines...

...but don't hold your breath. Rather than settle this once and for all, as of this writing, Marvel (now owned by Disney) has just filed suit in federal court, claiming Kirby's contributions to Marvel were "work-for-hire," and that Marvel is the sole owner of the copyrights—that in spite of all those legal documents they had him sign over the years (in exchange for a meager loan payment to help his

family move to a healthier climate, or to get his rightful artwork back), he never had any rights to sign away to begin with. So it's the same old story, but now it's on Marvel's shoulders to prove that Jack—working from home, with no company medical coverage or paid vacation time, or taxes taken from his check—was somehow a Marvel employee, just like the staff artists that worked in the bullpen in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s. I, for one, hope the courts can see through that argument, and finally reward the Kirbys for all the years of dedication and creativity Jack gave to Marvel as a freelancer. ★







*[Editor's Note: This issue's front cover was originally planned to feature the Joe Sinnott-inked Silver Surfer piece that's on our back cover. However, after reading the piece that follows, I decided that my sometimes grumpy, but always well-intentioned buddy Mike Gartland was dead-on; I screwed up. So I swapped the two pieces, and used George Tuska's recreation of the Captain America #112 Kirby page he originally inked, to adorn this issue's frontispiece. It's too late to do right by George, but Mike, you've helped me remember that there's a time when I need to take off my publisher's hat, and put on my fanboy beanie, in order to do the right thing.]*

## THE LAST INTERVIEW GEORGE GAVE

by Mike Gartland

*(This was more of a 'chat' between friends rather than a direct Q&A. I knew George Tuska for many years and we were always comfortable in each other's company. In such instances of trust one tends to relate opinions "unedited" as it were, i.e. expressing your true feelings; with that in mind the following is unedited.)*

MIKE GARTLAND: How're ya feelin', George?

GEORGE TUSKA: *[Shakes his head "no"]*

MIKE: George, what do you remember about Kirby?

GEORGE: Very fast drawing, always fast!

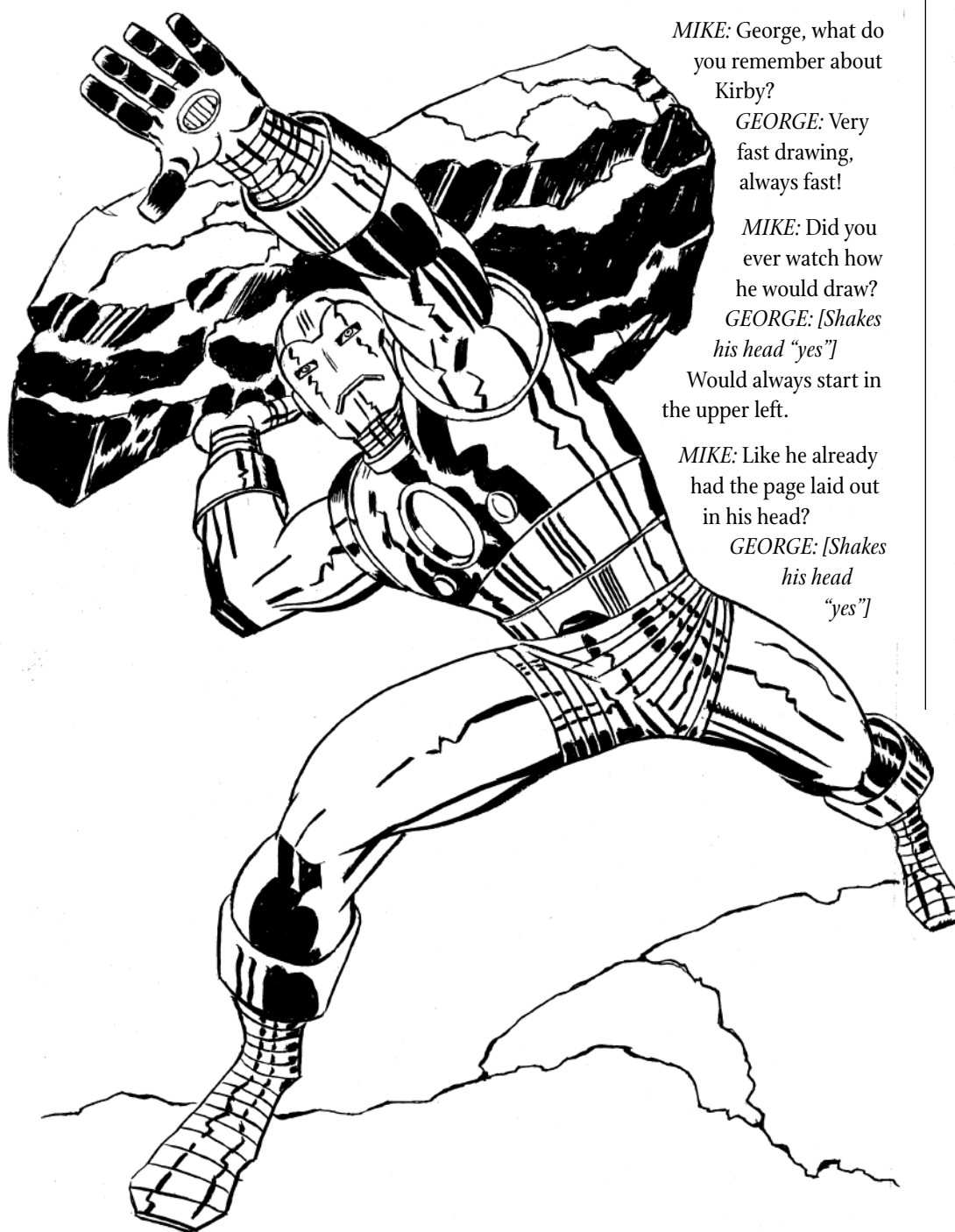
MIKE: Did you ever watch how he would draw?

GEORGE: *[Shakes his head "yes"]*

Would always start in the upper left.

MIKE: Like he already had the page laid out in his head?

GEORGE: *[Shakes his head "yes"]*



Here I briefly reminded George of, while he was drawing Buck Rogers in the Sixties, that he was picking up extra work at Marvel.

MIKE: Why did you go to Marvel and not DC?

GEORGE: Stan wanted me; we golfed together and he was asking me to come up and work for him.

MIKE: When you went back you were introduced to the way Stan was working at that time. *[I briefly covered the "Marvel Method" with George.]*

GEORGE: *[Shakes his head "yes"]* I liked that; it freed you up.

MIKE: You were given pages laid out by Kirby; do you remember working on those? *[I show George stats of the layout pages followed by his finished ones]*

GEORGE: Very loose layout.

MIKE: Do you remember how you were given these layouts? Did you get them from Kirby?

GEORGE: No. I went into the offices and got them.

MIKE: When you would go in to get the pages, would you have a story conference with Stan?

GEORGE: Don't remember; usually.

MIKE: Did you follow those notes on the borders?

GEORGE: Sometimes.

MIKE: You were being asked to draw using Kirby's dynamics; did that bother you at all?

GEORGE: *[Shakes his head "no"]* Kirby was always like that.

MIKE: Even in his romance stories?

GEORGE: *[Frowns]* I hated romance stories...

MIKE: You saw Kirby's drawing style change over the years; what did you think of Kirby's drawing?

GEORGE: A lot of foreshortening, always foreshortening, blocky and square.

MIKE: It became more geometric than anatomical.

GEORGE: *[Shakes his head "yes"]* Square, flat fingers...

MIKE: It wasn't "true" anatomy?

GEORGE: Kirby never was. It was action, not anatomy—that was Kirby!

MIKE: What do you remember about Jack as a person?

GEORGE: *[Smiles]* Tough!

MIKE: Tough little guy!

GEORGE: *[Shakes his head "yes"]*

MIKE: Will Eisner said he was the feisty little guy and you were the quiet giant!

GEORGE: *[Smiles]* I liked Eisner.

MIKE: You lived on Long Island the same time as Jack; did you ever socialize?

GEORGE: *[Shakes his head "no"]* I would see him in New York [City] sometimes.

MIKE: Do you remember going out to lunch with Jack and other artists?

GEORGE: Whoever was around then, we would go out...

MIKE: You used to golf with Stan?

GEORGE: *[Shakes his head "yes"]* He was good!

MT: He says you always would beat him.

GEORGE: I was being nice... *[Both laugh].*



# JACK F.A.Q.S



(this page) Jack always found time for his fans, including answering fan mail. Here's his response to questions a fan asked about a 1972 term paper he was writing. Also shown is Jack signing autographs at the 1978 San Diego Comic-Con.

(next page, top) Cover to *Welcome Back, Kotter* #4 (May 1977), which was both written by Mark Evanier, and featured an angry gym teacher on the cover!

A column answering Frequently Asked Questions about Kirby  
by Mark Evanier

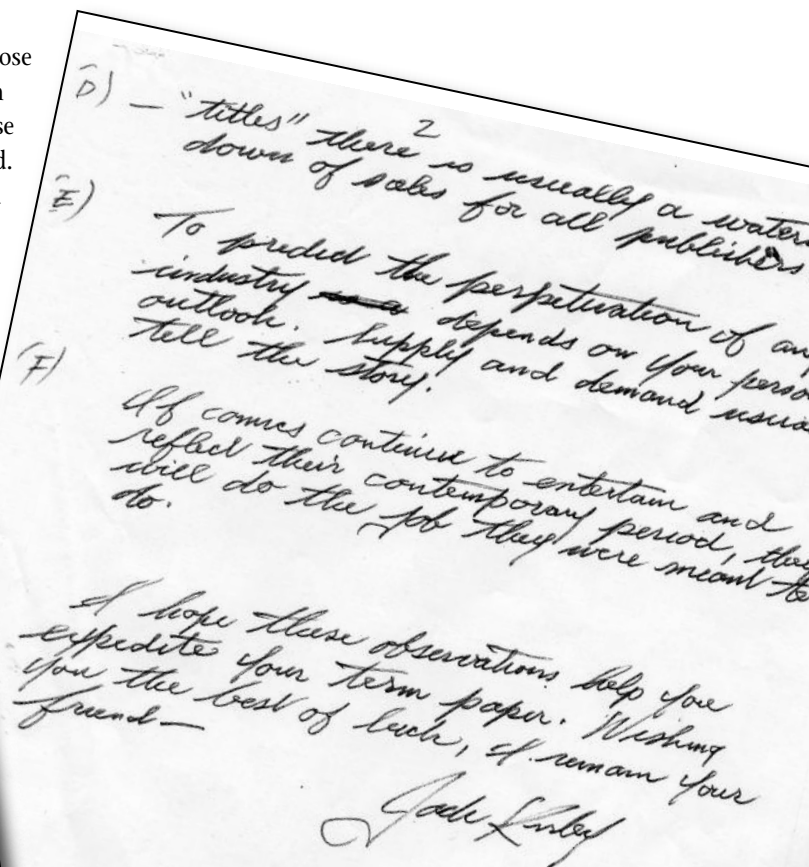
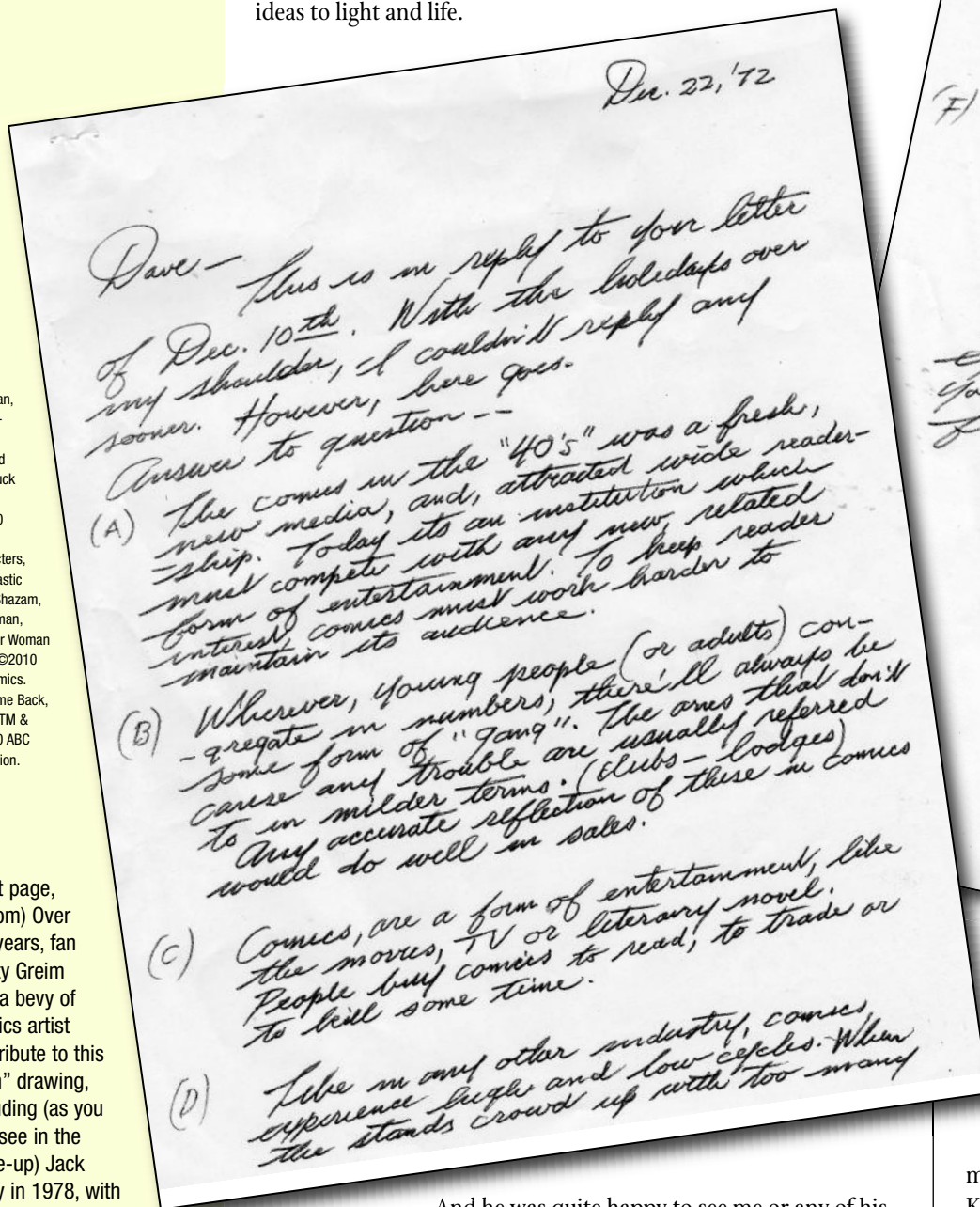
Jim Williman writes to ask...

*I loved your book about Jack but longed for more stories about his relationships with his fans and with writers and artists who were inspired by him, and especially yours. Could we have more stories about your relationship with Jack? Very few of the comic books you've worked on in your career have been of the Marvel or super-hero variety, which were his specialties. How did he feel about the fact that you didn't follow very closely in his footsteps?*

Well, I don't think anyone could have followed that closely in those footsteps. Whatever else Jack was, he was unique. He was also not, in his mind, a guy who specialized in Marvel or super-hero comics. Those were merely the most commercial things he did for an extended period. He saw himself as a creator of ideas and concepts and characters and as a guy who put pencil to paper to bring those ideas to light and life.

Hulk, Ant-Man, Spider-Man, Howard The Duck TM & ©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc. Plastic Man, Shazam, Superman, Wonder Woman TM & ©2010 DC Comics. *Welcome Back, Kotter* TM & ©2010 ABC Television.

(next page, bottom) Over the years, fan Marty Greim had a bevy of comics artist contribute to this "jam" drawing, including (as you can see in the close-up) Jack Kirby in 1978, with inks by Joe Sinnott. Joe Simon also signed it, and other artists featured include Tom Sutton, Ernie Chan, Michael Golden, Curt Swan (inked by Wally Wood), Joe Staton, Dick Giordano, Gene Colan, John Byrne, Terry Austin, Jim Steranko, and Jim Aparo.



decision to leave myself out of it. I only had so many words in which to recount Jack's life and I figured the book was supposed to be about him, not me. He's a lot more interesting, anyway.

When I handed in what I thought was the final manuscript, my fine editor and friend (those don't always go together) Charlie Kochman called. He was very happy (he said) but, uh, why didn't I say something about knowing Jack, working with him, being around him and so forth? I explained to him why I'd sidestepped the topic. He said, "I understand but I think we need it. We can squeeze in a few more pages." So that's when I wrote the Afterword that's in the book. It really was an Afterword.

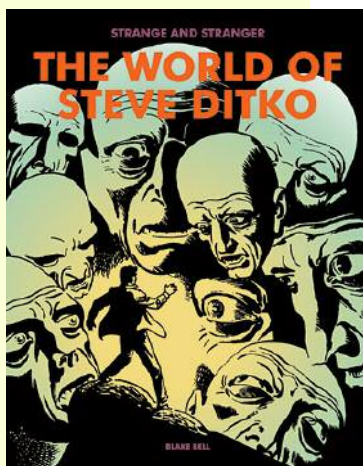
For the bigger, forthcoming (don't ask me when) bio, I'm including some anecdotes that involve me because they're unavoidable when telling Jack's life in fine detail. Others I think are worth telling but since they're not primarily about Jack, maybe not in that book. This is one I've decided not to include...

And he was quite happy to see me or any of his fans/friends not wind up, as he often felt, trapped in a situation where all you can do in the world is work for DC or Marvel, Marvel or DC. Today, most of us who do comics also do other things—movies, TV, animation, videogames, whatever. Jack worked in a time and day where he did not have those opportunities. He was quite happy to see that changing for subsequent generations.

Here's a story that may illuminate some of this, though I'm afraid it's more about me than it is about him. Still, telling it here solves a problem I'm having as I work on the long-promised "big" biography of the man. In *Kirby: King of Comics*, I made a conscious



# STAN & STEVE & JACK



Most of Jack's attempts at drawing Spider-Man, like the cover of *Marvelmania Magazine* #5 (1970, below), while dynamic, just don't ring true. The same can be said of Ditko's Hulk, a character Kirby's known for. Full stats (right) from *Tales to Astonish* #67 (May 1965), were sent to Kirby, who was taking over the art with the next issue.

Spider-Man, Hulk TM & ©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc. Captain Glory TM & ©2010 Jack Kirby Estate.

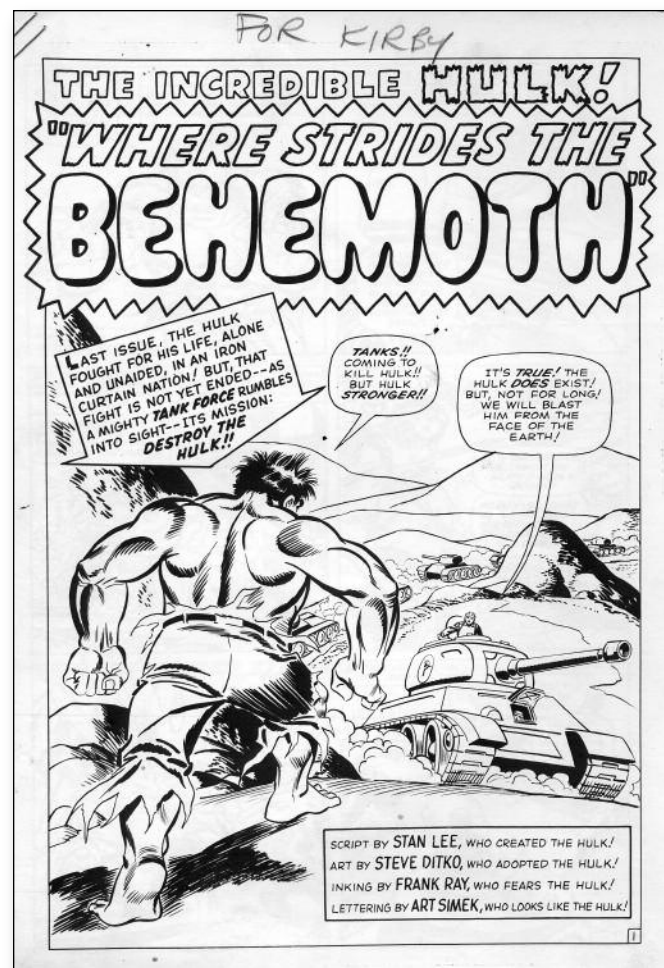
by Robert L. Bryant Jr.

Just try to write a book about Silver Age comics creators without talking about Jack Kirby. You can't do it. Kirby is always there; he's always the giant sun whose gravity keeps pulling your ship from its original course.

In 1996, Marvel published an art book on John Romita Sr., and much of the interview was about Kirby's influence ("He really was like an explosion on paper"). In 2000, David Spurlock collaborated with Carmine Infantino on an Infantino art book, and parts of it were devoted to Kirby ("The artwork Jack was doing was just incredible"). In 2002, Daniel Herman published an art book on Gil Kane, and parts of the interview were about Kirby ("He was so filled up with an intensity and heat... so it just came out in his work").

Now comes Blake Bell's lavish and engrossing coffee-table book on Steve Ditko (*Strange and Stranger: The World of Steve Ditko*, Fantagraphics, 2008), and the Kirby Effect happens again—pieces of the book are about how Ditko's quirky, idiosyncratic style managed to find a following at a Marvel Comics dominated by Kirby's slamming fists and sculpted bodies.

Bell doesn't engage in Jack-bashing; he just makes it clear how different Ditko was from the Kirby model at Marvel. (*X-Men* artist Paul Smith is quoted: "I acknowledge that Kirby is the King, but when you draw Ben Grimm reaching for the salt with the same intensity as you draw Armageddon, it lacks the impact Ditko could create.")



Spider-Man became a sort of flashpoint for the two styles, each of which won and lost a battle over defining Spider-Man's first appearance in *Amazing Fantasy* #15 in 1962.

The basics of what happened are so well-known they have almost become dogma. Somebody—maybe Stan Lee, maybe Jack—pitches an idea for a character called Spiderman (no hyphen yet). Stan decides Jack will draw it. Jack draws about 5 pages of a story about a teenager whose magic ring turns him into an adult hero with spider-powers. Stan doesn't like it. Maybe too similar to Jack's earlier effort *The Fly*, or maybe not. Stan tosses the Jack pages and gives the project to Steve, who takes it in a different direction. Stan likes it! Steve gets the project. He turns in his full story and a cover. Stan doesn't like the cover. He taps Jack to do a new cover. The rest is Spidey history.

This is a famous story in comics fandom, a game of fruitbasket turnover played out on one issue of one legendary comic—I want Kirby! No, Ditko! No, Kirby (just for the cover)!—and it always mystified me. Ditko was good enough for the comic, but not the cover? Kirby was good enough for the cover, but not the comic? It seemed like madness.

Until I read Bell's Ditko book, and saw the cover Ditko did, the one Stan rejected in favor of the Kirby approach. I'd never seen the original Ditko cover despite a lifetime of grasping after tattered comics histories. It came as a little bit of a revelation, like the time Neal Adams drew Batman with chest hair and nipples, just like your old man's!

("It's not the first appearance [of the Ditko cover]," Bell told *TJCK* in an e-mail. "I believe that distinction belongs to *Marvelmania* #2 (1970). I think that was in black-&-white, and then a color version appeared in an issue of *Marvel Tales* in the 1980s.")

Compare the Jack cover, which ran, to the Steve cover, which didn't. Compare the Kirby cover, wrapped around what is now one of the most valuable comics on Earth, and the Ditko cover, a rarely seen relic.

On one, Spidey swings across the city, casually carrying a thug under one arm like a bag of groceries, while making his vow: "THOUGH THE WORLD MAY MOCK PETER PARKER, THE TIMID TEEN-AGER... IT WILL SOON MARVEL AT THE AWESOME MIGHT OF... SPIDER-MAN!" On the other, Spidey swings across the city, casually carrying a thug under one arm



## MARVEL AGE OF INKERS 2

Another round-up of some of the key inkers assigned by Stan Lee to work over Jack's pencils during the 1960s "Marvel Age."  
Original art scans courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



**S**teve Ditko  
(born November 2, 1927)

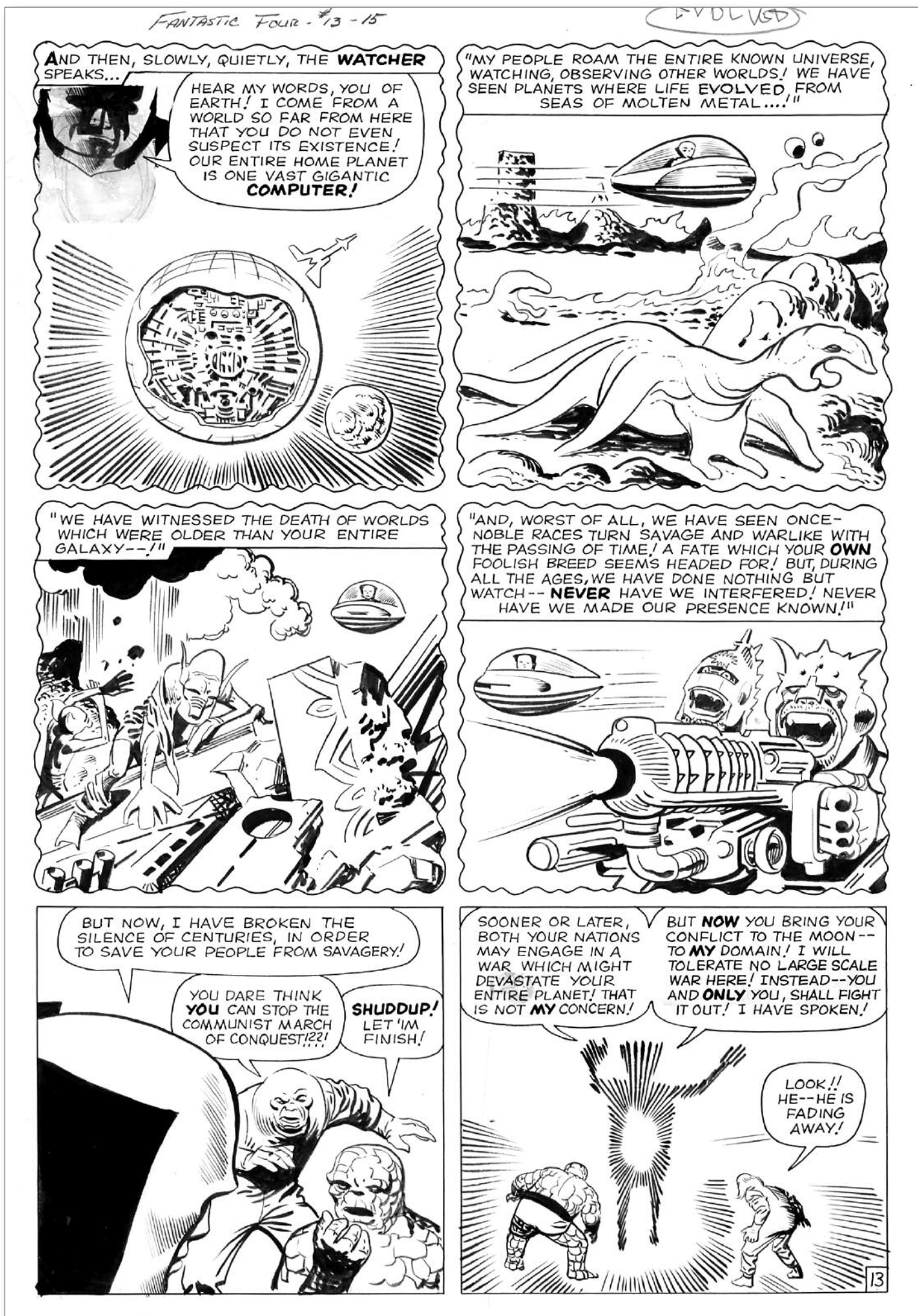
Ditko studied at the Cartoonists and Illustrators School in New York City under Jerry Robinson and began professionally illustrating comic books in 1953. Much of his early work was for Charlton Comics (for whom he continued to work intermittently until the company's demise in 1986), producing science-fiction, horror and mystery stories. In the late 1950s, he also began working for Atlas Comics, the 1950s precursor of Marvel Comics.

Ditko and writer-editor Stan Lee created Spider-Man in *Amazing Fantasy* #15 (Aug. 1962), and shortly thereafter Doctor Strange, in *Strange Tales* #110 (July 1963). Ditko also drew many stories of the Hulk, first in the final issue of *The Incredible Hulk* (#6, March 1963), and then in *Tales to Astonish*, relaunching the character's series in issue #60 (Oct. 1964) and continuing through #67 (May 1965, succeeded by Jack Kirby).

After leaving Marvel and *Spider-Man* in 1966, Ditko went to Charlton Comics, where he worked on *Captain Atom*, *Blue Beetle*, writer Joe Gill's "Liberty Belle" (a backup feature in the comic *E-Man*), and Ditko's own "Killjoy" (also in *E-Man*) and "The Question." Also at Charlton, Ditko did much work on their science-fiction and horror titles. In addition, Ditko drew 16 stories for Warren Publishing's horror-comic magazines, most of which were done using ink-wash.

By 1968, Ditko was producing work for DC Comics, creating or co-creating the Creeper and The Hawk and the Dove, then going back to Charlton through the mid-1970s. He returned to DC in the mid-1970s, then to Marvel in 1979, taking over Kirby's *Machine Man* title and working on such titles as *Rom*, *Spaceknight* and *Speedball*.

Ditko retired from the mainstream in 1998. Since then, his strictly solo work has been published intermittently by independent publisher and long-time friend Robin Snyder, who was his editor at Charlton and Archie Comics. The Snyder-published books have included *Static*, *The Missing Man*, *The Mockery* and, more recently, *Avenging World*,



a giant collection of stories and essays spanning 30 years. [source: [www.comicbookdb.com](http://www.comicbookdb.com)]

(this page) *Fantastic Four* #13 (April 1963), as Ditko inks Kirby.

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featuring bios by  
Dr. Michael J. Vassallo  
and Dewey Cassell.



**S**ol Brodsky  
(April 22, 1923 -  
June 4, 1984)

Sol Brodsky was born in Brooklyn and by age 17 was at Archie (MLJ) learning the ropes on house ads and production. For most of the early 1940s he bounced around the industry at Fox, Holyoke, and Lev Gleason, although Timely's *Comedy Comics* #11 (Sept. 42) sports an unidentified singular "Inky Dinky" feature mysteriously signed "Sol." By the later 1940s Brodsky was on the Timely staff and spent most of his tenure on teen humor features like *Millie* and *Patsy Walker*, while simultaneously cranking out crime thrillers for the 1949-1950 crime titles.

When the staff was let go, Sol freelanced primarily on war and spy titles for Atlas, was the artist on the "Clark Mason Spy Fighter" feature in *Spy Fighters* in 1951, and at some point mid-decade joined the production staff, becoming one of the handful of cover artists for Atlas, aligning with Joe Maneely, Bill Everett, Carl Burgos and Russ Heath for cover duties. Brodsky also lined up commercial comic side products for the company like *The Adventures of Big Boy* and *The Birds Eye Kids* giveaway comics.

After Atlas imploded, Sol launched *Cracked* magazine in 1958 and helped post-implosion Atlas artists secure work from Dick Giordano at Charlton before returning to Stan Lee in the early 1960s to do production work. He designed the logos for many of the early Marvel titles including the *Fantastic Four* and inked the title's third and fourth issues. By 1964 he was on staff again as production manager and drew the occasional teen feature and western filler, as well as inking the occasional cover, his last being John Buscema's cover to *Sub-Mariner* #1 in 1968.

In 1970 Brodsky left to form a new company called Skywald with Israel Waldman and returned to Marvel in the mid-1970s to spend the rest of his career pushing Marvel into new commercial endeavors outside the comic books, also appearing as the Human Torch in Jack



Kirby's *What If?* #11 in 1978. Well liked by everyone in the industry, he passed away in 1984, and according to his friend and fellow Timely alumnus Allen Bellman, "There was never a friend like Sol Brodsky." [source: Dr. Michael J. Vassallo]

(this page) *Tales to Astonish* #40 (Feb. 1963).

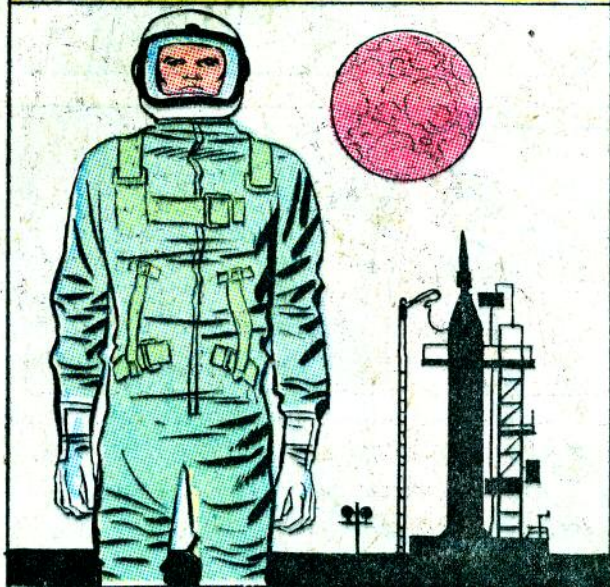
Characters TM & ©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.



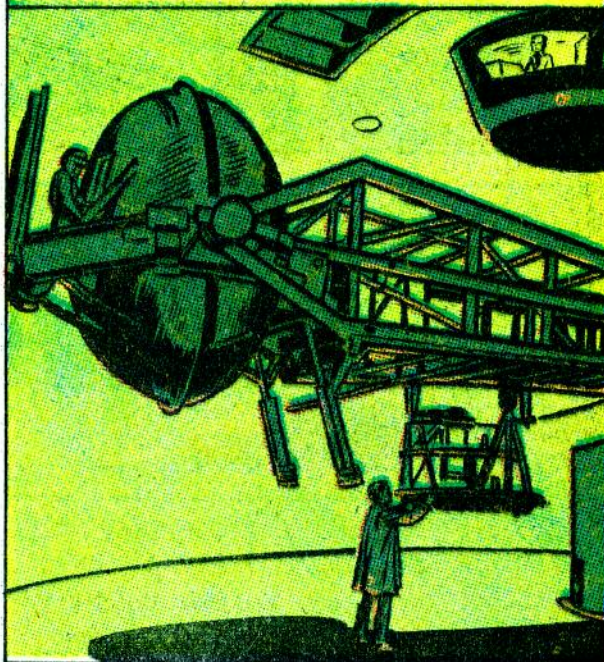
## THE CHALLENGE OF SPACE

*Aviation medicine, developed during World War I, became more important in World War II. It studied the effects upon humans of reduced oxygen, increased speeds and changes in altitude or barometric pressure. Today, aviation medicine has given way to space medicine.*

*Space medicine is concerned with how the body and mind of man will react under conditions never before experienced. In the United States, since 1959, seven male astronauts have undergone many tests which imitate an actual space flight. In 1960, a female astronaut was added to the group.*

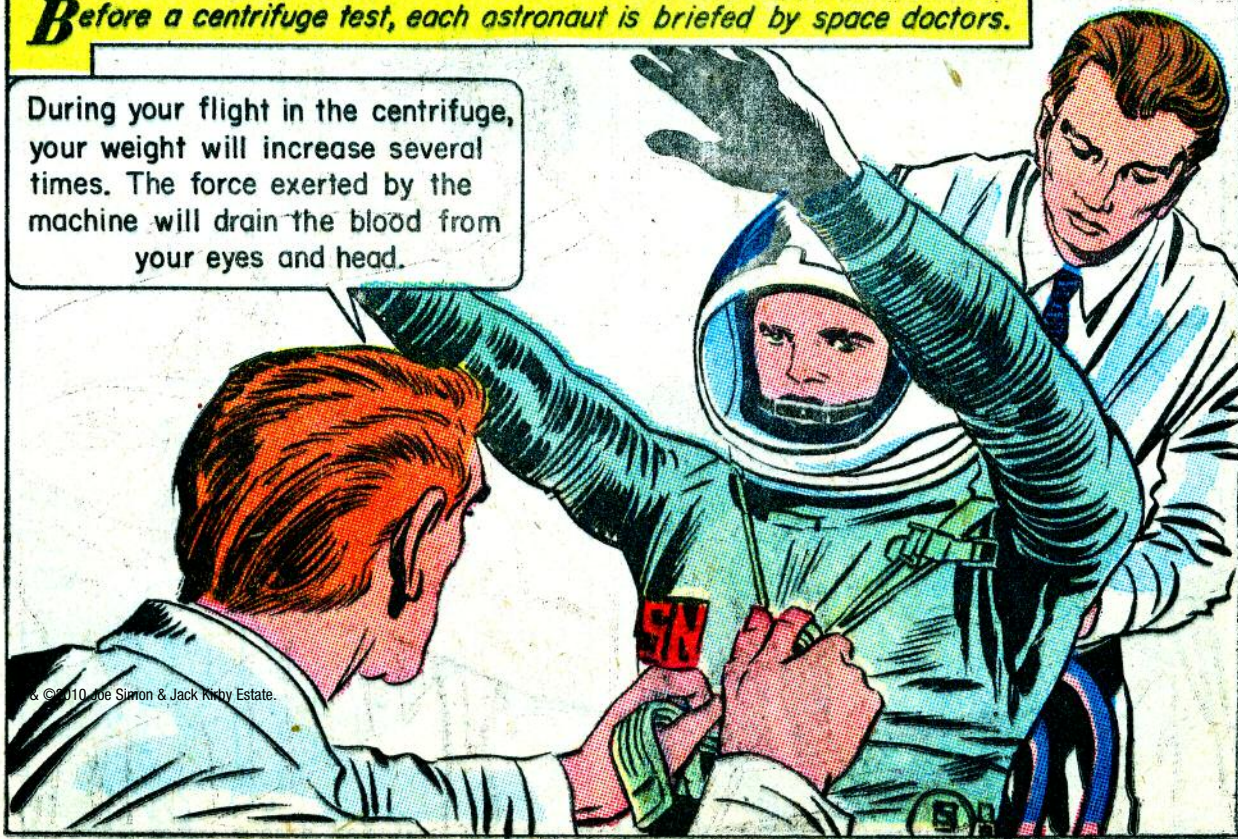


*Several of the tests use a centrifuge, a long-armed machine that whirls around at great speeds. The centrifuge duplicates the strains of increased gravity that the astronauts will experience while heading into space and returning.*



*Before a centrifuge test, each astronaut is briefed by space doctors.*

During your flight in the centrifuge, your weight will increase several times. The force exerted by the machine will drain the blood from your eyes and head.



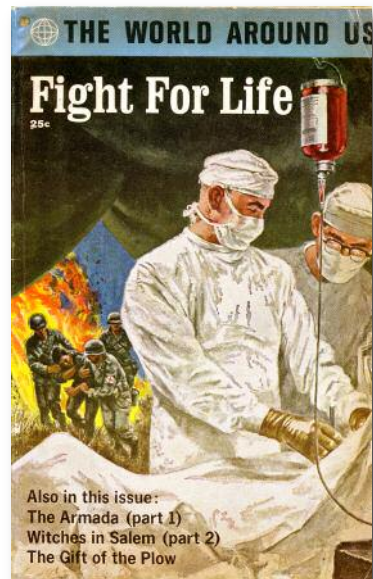
© 2010 Joe Simon & Jack Kirby Estate.

I'll say this for Gilberton Publications (home of the long running *Classics Illustrated* line of comic books): They did more than their share to make the comics medium acceptable to parents and educators. While ol' Freddie Wertham was wailing away about the dangers of comics causing juvenile delinquency, *Classics Illustrated* was exposing the youth of America to... er, the classics of literature. Only thing was, not even an artist with the vim and verve of Jack Kirby could manage to make the Gilberton comics anything but boring!

Take, for example, these pages from *The World Around Us* #36 (October 1961, subtitled "Fight For Life"), one of less than a dozen Gilberton issues Jack drew material for. This one's got it all: boring cover, boring theme, boring lettering, and unbelievably enough, boring Kirby art. Jack's been quoted on how much he hated working for the company, due to their insistence on making him render the artistic details with minute historical accuracy. For a "big picture" guy like Kirby, this must have been pure torture.

Now, compare this material to another little four-color pamphlet that came out one month later, entitled *Fantastic Four* #1. Certainly, the art on the first *FF* issue is more crude than what's shown here, but what it lacks in polish, it makes up for with about a zillion times the energy and excitement. With the industry in the doldrums at that point, and faced with the prospect of working on Gilberton material the rest of his career, it probably was sheer desperation that led Jack to put his heart and soul into the comic that started the Marvel Age.

So thanks, Gilberton! Your books not only helped educate a generation of kids, but you likely pushed Jack Kirby into his own "fight for life" and inadvertently nudged him into creating the best comics of his career. ★



Also in this issue:  
The Armada (part 1)  
Witches in Salem (part 2)  
The Gift of the Plow



## RETROSPECTIVE

(below) Kirby's signature character, The Thing, from the fabled "Black Book" Valentine's Day sketchbook he drew for wife Roz.

(next page) The early popularity of the FF led to the Torch getting his own series; here's a page from it in *Strange Tales* #108 (May 1963).

All characters shown TM & ©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.

## PART 1: COSMIC STORM

The World's Greatest Comic Magazine, ironically, emerged from the ruins of a comic book company in such disrepair it didn't even have a brand name. A titan of the Golden Age of Comics, what had been Timely Comics and later Atlas, was about to be reborn as Marvel Comics. And its flagship title would be *The Fantastic Four*.

Artist Jack Kirby had only just returned to the company after an absence of almost twenty years.

"Marvel had monster books, romance books, and westerns—and all of those weren't working any more," Kirby said of that time. "They didn't know what to do with them. Nobody there

could write them so that they didn't remain static. Marvel was stagnant."

In fact, Marvel sales had been dropping all through the last half of 1961.

"Well, we didn't have any super-hero books at the time," recalled Stan Lee, the company's editor and chief writer since 1941. "Primarily we were turning out a lot of monster magazines. Martin Goodman, who was the Publisher, called me in and said, 'You know, Stan, I think that the super-heroes are coming back. I was looking at the sales figures for DC's *Justice League*. Why don't we do a team of super-heroes? They are really selling well.' I had worked that way with Martin all the time. He would say to me, 'Why don't we do some westerns?' So I turned out 50 westerns. 'Why don't we do funny little animated books?' So I turned out 50 animated books. But by now after all those years I

was really ready to quit. I was unhappy and thought I was going nowhere, and my wife said to me, 'Look, instead of quitting, why don't you do the books the way you'd want to do them; just get it out of your system, and then quit. For once, do what you want.' And Martin really wasn't paying too much attention at the time.

"So I thought, okay, I'll do a team of super-heroes which he wants. But it'll be fun to try to do it in a different way. They won't always win at the end, they'll fight amongst themselves, and they'll talk like real people! And that was the Fantastic Four."

Jack Kirby also claimed his storytelling ideas were maturing. "I was beginning to find myself as a thinking human being," he revealed. "I began to think about things that were real. I didn't want to tell fairy tales. I wanted to tell things as they are. But I wanted to tell them in an entertaining way, and I told it in the *Fantastic Four*...."

Whether it was a natural maturation—both creators had entered middle age—or the need to better compete with powerhouse rival DC, they were about to irrevocably alter the comic book landscape. "I wasn't trying to revolutionize comics or anything," Lee admitted. "I just wanted to get something out of my system and get the hell out of there."

Kirby also wanted to escape the relentless rut of filling the pages of *Strange Tales* and *Journey into Mystery* with giant reptilian monsters like Grogg and Gargantus and the Two-Headed Thing every month. "I had to do something different," he once said. "The monster stories have their limitations—you can just do so many of them. And then it becomes a monster book month after month. So there had to be a switch, because the times weren't exactly conducive to good sales. So I felt the idea was to come up with new stuff all the time—in other words, there had to be a blitz. And I came up with this blitz. I came up with the Fantastic Four. I came up with Thor (I knew the Thor legends very well), and the Hulk, the X-Men and the Avengers. I revived what I could and I came up with what I could. I tried to blitz the stands with new stuff. The new stuff seemed to gain momentum."

Kirby insisted that the original Marvel character concepts were birthed on his basement drawing board.

THE THING--  
"FANTASTIC FOUR"

JACK KIRBY



# THE FORMATIVE

by Will Murray



"I did presentations," he asserted. "I'm not gonna wait around for conferences. I said, 'This is what you have to do.' I came in with Spider-Man, the Hulk and the Fantastic Four. I didn't fool around. I said 'you've got to do super-heroes.'"

According to Lee, they emerged white-hot from his poolside typewriter. Lee remembered Goodman suggesting, "You could use our old Human Torch and Sub-Mariner and maybe Captain America. That'll save you from having to dream up any new characters."

Lee demurred. "I really wanted to do something different," he said. "That's why I didn't want to do the Torch and the Sub-Mariner. I wanted to create a new group. I went home and wrote an outline, a synopsis for the Fantastic Four. And I called Jack, handed him the outline, and said: 'Read this. This is something I want to do. And you should draw a team.' But he never pushed me to do super-heroes. Jack was home drawing these monster stories, until the day I called him and said, 'Let's do the Fantastic Four.'"

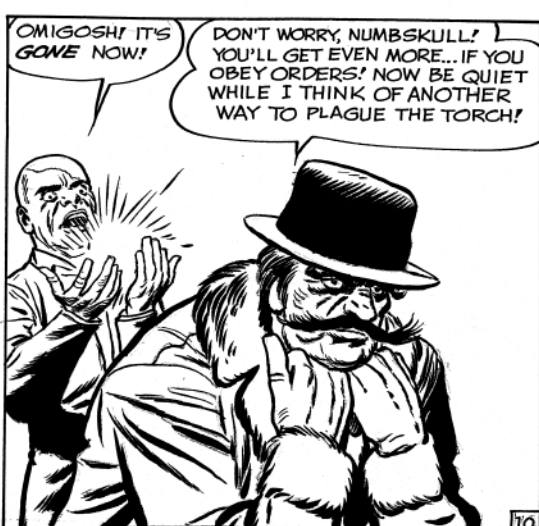
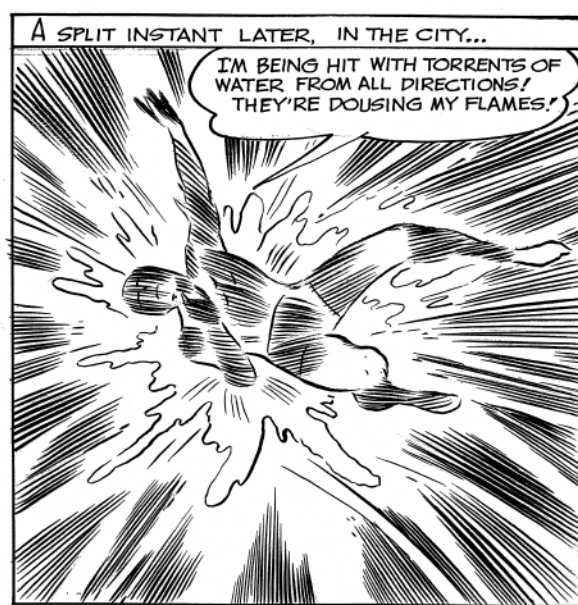
Speculation has persisted that the FF was originally planned as a lead feature in *Strange Tales* or one of the other fantasy titles, but Lee remains adamant that the strip was created for a title of its own from the beginning.

One undeniable truth was that the FF was an outgrowth of the Atlas monster era. "The monster phenomenon got started primarily just because people were concerned about... radiation," Kirby recalled, "and what would happen to animals and people who were exposed to that kind of thing... It was also a sign of the times. What does radiation do to people? And I took this valid question, which I felt had to be done in comics, and we got our Fantastic Four."

Although originally skeptical about new project—Goodman's last super-hero revival had flopped—Lee was determined to make the most of what he planned as his comic book swan song.

"I figured, 'All right, but this time I'm going to do it my way.' Instead of the typical heroes that have secret identities and nobody knows who they are, I did the Fantastic Four—where everybody knew who they were. Instead of the typical junior sidekick, I had a teenager who was also the brother of the heroine—and the hero would soon marry the heroine, so they would be brothers-in-law. The fourth member of the team was a monstrous-looking guy, called the Thing, which was not a typical super-hero type in those days. I also tried to give them fairly realistic dialogue, and I didn't have them wear colorful costumes."

In 1961, the Cold War was morphing into the Space Race. Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin had just become the first man in space. U.S. astronaut Alan Shepard soon followed him up. *The Fantastic Four* was torn from contemporary headlines.



Four ordinary humans brave the dangers of space in a secret launch. When their spacecraft encounters a cosmic-ray storm, they crashland back on Earth, forever changed. Scientist Reed Richards becomes the rubbery Mr. Fantastic. Sue Storm is the Invisible Girl. Brother Johnny Storm turns into the Human Torch. And pilot Ben Grimm transforms into a brownish-orange brute the others dub The Thing.

"I got the idea about the cosmic rays after

reading about the space program," Kirby remembered. "They were worried about what effect the Van Allen Belt radiation might have on astronauts. It turns out that the radiation was easily shielded, but it had everybody worried for a while. That's the way the Fantastic Four began... Ben Grimm who was a college man and a fine-looking man suddenly became the Thing. Susan Storm became invisible because of the atomic effects on her body. Reed Richards became flexible and became a character

# FANTASTIC FOUR



## KIRBY OBSCURA



Looking for inexpensive reprints of these issues? *Captain 3-D* unfortunately hasn't been reprinted, but below is the original art from page 12 of that issue (there are several layers of overlaid art). And on the next page, we present a Mort Meskin pencil page from the unpublished #2.

Challengers of the Unknown  
TM & ©2010 DC Comics.  
Captain 3-D TM & ©2010  
Harvey Comics. Yellow Claw  
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A regular column focusing on Kirby's least known work, by Barry Forshaw

## LAST HURRAH FOR THE CHALLENGERS

It was the end... the very end. Jack Kirby's glorious mid-1950s period working for DC Comics had produced a brace of wonderfully idiosyncratic fantasy and SF tales for editor Jack Schiff's popular books in that genre. But few would argue that Kirby's magnum opus in that era was his stint on his co-creation, the death-cheating *Challengers of The Unknown*, premiered in *Showcase* and subsequently burnished to perfection through the first eight issues of the Challs' own title. But as the editor of this magazine details in his introduction to DC's two splendid Archive editions collecting Kirby's work on the title (before Bob Brown took over the feature), Kirby's bitter dispute with editor Schiff over the newspaper strip *Sky Masters* that the latter facilitated was about to boil over—and his work on issue #8 of the Challs magazine was to be the Last Hurrah.

In some ways, it's a great shame that this last Kirby issue is not a final blaze of glory: it goes without saying that it's unmissable for Kirby fans, of course. And it's also unmissable for Wallace Wood fans, as his *nonpareil* inks were still bringing Kirby's dynamic pencils to a peak of perfection and adding a stunning gloss. But the story and art in the two tales in the issue don't attain the heights of the delirious "Wizard of Time" in issue #4, the apex of the team's run on *Challs*. While the title story "Prisoner of the Robot Planet" gives rise to a striking cover illo (with the Challs being launched into space encased in purple globes by a bizarre yellow-skinned alien), the tale itself is relatively routine. The most fully realized piece in the issue—and the penultimate Kirby/Wood *Challengers* tale—was the first story, "The Man who Stole the Future." Another 'track-down-the villain-in-pursuit-of arcane-powers' adventure, the piece

boasts the kind of kinetic draftsmanship that made the Kirby/Wood team such a hard act to follow for the efficient—but less inspired—Bob Brown. Take the splash page, for instance: as so often in JK/WW jobs, the sheer energy of the figure work positively (and almost literally) leaps off the page, with the jack-in-the-box physicality of the Challs foreshadowing the similarly eye-popping work that Kirby was soon to be essaying at Marvel for Stan Lee. Reading this final issue is a bittersweet experience (the artwork looks better in the more subtly colored original book than in the poster-colored hardback reprint, however glossy the pages of the latter). Perhaps if Wood and Kirby had stayed on the title, and the *Sky Masters* debacle had ended amicably rather than acrimoniously, there may have been another "Wizard of Time" up their sleeves. Who knows? It's one of the great might-have-beens of comics history.

## INTO THE THIRD DIMENSION

Ah... *Captain 3-D*. What a fondly remembered one-shot! It's certainly true that Jack Kirby inaugurated many short-lived projects (projects, at that, which far outlived their blink-of-an-eye appearances in terms of legendary status). But *Captain 3-D*—with its single published issue in 1953, at the height of the short lived 3-D craze—was really something special. And, interestingly, it could be said to be one of the few occasions in the Golden/Silver Age of comics which gave American comic buyers of the day a sense of the comic buying experience for Brits before American comics began to be imported in large quantities to the UK. Why? Well, UK comics fans of the late Fifties/early Sixties were used to a glorious eye-catching cover in full color which was wrapped around monochrome interiors (reprints were seldom in color—though George Evans' *Captain Video*, another SF Captain, ran to two-color overlays for the UK). This color cover/monochrome interior arrangement wasn't quite the case with *Captain 3-D*—the contents are a kind of muddy brown and green—but the eponymous Captain, with his yellow tunic and helmet, plus blue-striped tights and red boots, is only seen in that apparel on the cover; the contents (with the primitive 3-D effects of the day) were largely colorless when viewed through the requisite red and green glasses.

## KIRBY: THE ARTIST WHO DIDN'T NEED 3-D

This is not the place to rehearse the splendors and failures of the comics of the 3-D era (let's not even mention American Comics Group's cheating glasses-free 'Truvision' process—readers all knew that was a con), but to celebrate—as ever—the





(right) Just who did draw that close-up face of Thor on the cover of issue #158? We've heard Marie Severin, Vince Colletta, and even Tom Palmer. Anybody out there know for sure?

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Questions raised by Glen Gold and Tom Scioli

**N**ow that we've totally befuddled Kirby fandom about the "lost" *Fantastic Four* #108 story, it's time to move on to examine Jack's other main title of the 1960s, *Thor*. In *TJKC* #52, we addressed the mystery surrounding *Thor* #168-170, and reassembled it into its presumed original form.

Think that's the only *Thor* epic that was a patchwork job? Think again!

Our *Thor* reconstruction brought us a lot of mail, but none more interesting than an exchange with original art collector and author Glen Gold about an earlier hatchet job. "Richard Howell [has] said, as if everyone knew this already, that *Thor* #159 was in fact assembled from one or more unpublished "Tales of Asgard" stories," Gold told us. "I said, 'but the art is small.' He said that the art in the *Inhumans* back-up stories was small, too. Ooooh. Interesting." Glen is perplexed about the need for a fill-in issue around then—the obvious cause would've been the Kirbys' move from New York to California, but that didn't occur until 1969. Gold reasons, "The cover date is November 1968, which means he would have been drawing [#158] in May/June 1968... I always figured they were shopping for houses around *FF* #87-89 [cover-dated June-August 1969], when the *FF* move into the Mole Man's house."

We must admit, before this, we never considered there was any kind of mystery surrounding *Thor* #158-159, similar to #168-170. But after more consultation with Glen, we think it bears further scrutiny. "The more I look at them the more I think something similar was going on," said Gold. "There's a really strange feeling of recycled and rearranged pages with weird transitions.

"Alas, I have no answers, only questions, about the incredible weirdness that is *Thor* #158-159. This would be Thor's origin, reconsidered. And from the very first page, it's a bizarre mess. I suspect it was Frankensteined from multiple sources, possibly rewritten at the last moment.

"Oh wait, *before* the first page," Glen chimed, as he raised these valid questions to us about:

## THOR #158

- "The cover [above right]. There are three little Kirby/Colletta Thor vignettes that were drawn, I think, for this cover. They certainly don't appear anywhere in the previous dozen issues. When else did Kirby do vignettes for a cover? Also: who the heck drew that big Thor head? And why? Isn't this the first non-Kirby Thor on a *Thor* cover? Like, *ever*?"
- "On the title page [left], it says 'Pandemoniously produced by Stan and Jack.' Why Pandemonious? Because of some disaster during its creation? Or because of the quote on page 18? And what's going on with the head of Thor's hammer poking out of the bottom of the frame in the splash? That's never happened before. Why didn't Romita catch this?"



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Was *Thor* #159 assembled from unused "Tales of Asgard" stories, left over when the "Inhumans" back-ups started in *Thor* #146? And were those "Inhumans" back-ups in issues #146-152 originally meant to be the first two issues of a solo *Inhumans* series?

- "What's weird about the beginning? Only that for the first time since *Thor* #142, there's no attempt at continuity. (Really—every one of the previous 16 issues depends on you having purchased the prior one to figure out what's going on.) They just averted Ragnarok, for crying out loud! Shouldn't someone mention that? But no, this could have occurred any time. Almost as if it's a fill-in."
- "Where would the missing pencil panel [below] fit? Page 4? Why didn't Kirby finish this page?"

PAGE 5 OF ORIGINAL STORY--  
PART 2 (FLASH PAGE)  
TOP PANEL 1



BLAKE DESCRIBES EXHILARATION OF BECOMING THOR-- THE SURGE OF GREAT STRENGTH-- AND HIS THOUGHT OF MOVING FORWARD



## THOR #159

- "Thirteen pages of this is a reprint, which never happened in another Silver Age book by Marvel. If Jack needed to revisit an origin, he redrew it, as in *FF* #2, 3, 11, *Cap* #63, 100, 109, etc. Why the reprint here? Did he run out of time because he was also working on *FF Annual* #6?"

- "On page 2, Blake mentions Mangog (oh, finally!), suggesting to me that the continuity here was originally different. Why skip an entire issue before mentioning him?"
- "What the *heck* is going on with the page 3 splash? [right] Thor, with his face turned away? Has Kirby ever drawn something so awkward, especially something that became a blacklight poster? And Don Blake dreams himself into Asgard? Huh? Has that ever happened before?"
- "On page 5 [next page, top], there's Loki. Why?"
- "Why exactly does Odin wake Blake up only to show him visions? That interaction



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

Adam McGovern  
PO Box 257  
Mt. Tabor, NJ 07878

## As A Genre

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



### PLAY IT AGAIN, JACK

Our retrospective box-set on the Lee/Kirby team stretched to a second issue, and there is just as fast-growing a canon of Kirby-influenced and comic-centric music so it seemed right to give the last column's survey a closely-matched companion. The musicians covered here are colliding visions like Lee & Kirby did, and collaborating with the King across space-time in a call-and-response of imagery and sensation that expands his creations to more of the dimensions he meant you to meet them in.

#### Straight Outta Cosmic

"Inspired by and dedicated to the genius of Jack Kirby," New England rapper Esoteric's first all-instrumental disk *Serve or Suffer* neatly rearranges the '60s *Silver Surfer* logo into an aphorism for Kirby's cosmic morality play. "Instrumental" doesn't do it justice; these are dense yet lean grooves rich in sonic samples and pulp references, like a comic page with just the sound effects and pictures, telling its own essential story like Kirby could before you even looked at the words.

Fans of the King will enjoy the magisterial "Shalla Ball" and the spirit-lifting "Steve Rodgers," the latter of which works a much-needed hip-hop beat makeover behind the old Captain America cartoon theme song. The whole collection is an audio pop-art collage of well-woven soundclips from those kitsch-classic '60s Marvel cartoons, which were often shot directly from Kirby's pages; the same cartoons were infamous for barely moving more than the pages themselves, so there's rich humor in hearing them reprocessed for this most kinetic of albums. A moving quote-sample from Kirby himself about how the characters he brings to life in this world "have already lived" endorses Esoteric's method of creative re-scoring and opens a great thundering background anthem of spiritual persistence, "Galactus Trilogy." And there's sheer non-genre joy in the sonic

reprint-pile of found sounds and revealed grooves in tracks like "Silence Is Golden," "Hero's Plight" and "Go Ask Malice."

Esoteric's like a one-man compilation of all my formative obsessions, with raps, remixes, and activism about everything from comics and Japanese monsters to Gary Numan and animal rights. The generous cross-section I got from his geek-friendly publicist included the "East Coast

(right) Chrome Plated Man: Esoteric pours on the galactic bling. ©2010 respective owner.

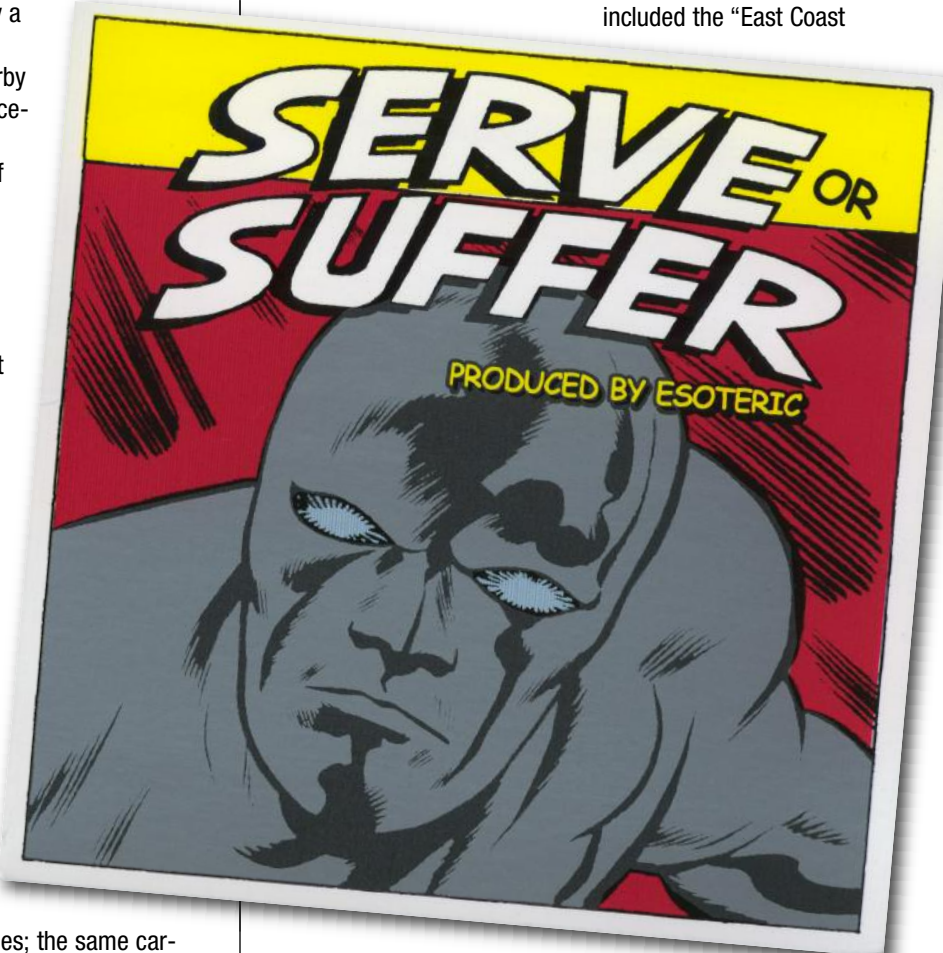
(below) Kind of Blue Beetle: the Nickel & Brass Septet jazz for Kirby. ©2010 respective owner.

(next page, top left) Ghost in the record machine: On the front cover of their CD, *The Gear* keep watch. ©2010 Mike Allred.

(next page, top right) Jam Comic: On *The Gear*'s back cover Atom Bomb, Mikey Hahn, Michael Allred, Connor Bond, Mr. Gum, Madman and the real-life Allred sons share space. ©2010 Mike Allred.

(next page, bottom) Courtesy of scanner Eric Nolen-Weathington, this unidentified Kirby concept has been dubbed "The Future of Country Music." ©2010 Jack Kirby Estate.

(Thanks to Rand Hoppe for cuing the turntable.)



Avengers" album *Prison Planet* (featuring the much-banned "Kill Bill O'Reilly"); *Esoteric vs. Japan: Pterodactyl Takes Tokyo*, with Gigantor and Mecha-Godzilla shooting it out in the audio arcade of kaiju heaven; and the turbulent soul-baring tour de force *Saving Seamus Ryan* (Esoteric's non-codename), all from within about a year (along with *Serve or Suffer*) and all showing acrobatic production and the clever, credible white rap that's more rare than *Whiz Comics* #1. Hear one disk and you may find yourself wanting to collect the whole stack. [www.esoterichiphop.com]

#### Gotham After Hours

The Kirby references are literal on *Four-Color Heroes!*, the debut disk from the improvisational jazz ensemble Nickel & Brass Septet, led by Andrew Boscardin. There's "The Miracle of Thaddeus Brown," "Grimm's Waltz" and "The King of Yancy Street" for the first three tracks (with homages to many another supercreator from Siegel & Shuster to Steve Gerber filling out the rest), though these titles represent a kinship as much as a companion-piece. Instrumental music will always by its nature be an abstract impression of its inspirations, though it's satisfying to listen to these tunes in their own right and fun to complete the circuit of imagination with the Septet's intent in ways which may be as varied as there are listeners and Kirby creations.

"Thaddeus Brown" breathes a certain smooth midcentury self-assurance as befits an extreme-stunt icon, and "Grimm's Waltz" casts Aunt Petunia's favorite boy as a kind of half-ton orange Pal





## FISH OUTTA WATER

(top) Here's Prince Namor, the Avenging Son, drawn in pencil by Jack, inside one of the King's own books.

(below) The original cover (left) for the first *FF Annual* was probably rejected because it put Sub-Mariner and his warriors too far into the background. The published version (right) is certainly more dynamic.

(next page, top) Atlantis attacks! Subby and his loyal followers trap the FF on this dramatic page from the first *Annual*.

(next page, bottom) Mighty Marvel reprinted *FF Annual* #1 in the summer of 1970. Jack's first successor for the book's art chores, John Romita Sr., did a stupendous new cover for that issue.

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# RAISING ATLANTIS

*When the lower depths arose, by Robert Knuist*

## A FICTIONAL REENACTMENT FOLLOWS:

Jack Kirby entered the Marvel offices at 655 Madison Avenue bright and early on the last day in February of 1963. His spiral sketchbook was under his arm and Flo Steinberg and Sol Brodsky smiled warmly at him when he came in.

They didn't begin their usual small talk with Kirby because they knew his meeting with Stan Lee would be taking up the early part of Stan's busy morning. There had been a few rumors about a very special project around the Bullpen, so there was no surprise when Jack angled his way toward Stan's office, only to see ol' Smiley step out when he heard Jack's name being mentioned.



STAN: Great! Jack's here. C'mon in, buddy. You're right on time.

JACK: Stan, how are you doing? Mind if I light up? (Kirby produces a cigar.)

STAN: Naahh, go ahead. Like I said in January, I'd like to push for an *FF Annual*, or special issue this summer. Martin's behind it. It's going to be the Sub-Mariner's show all the way, as we discussed.

JACK: Good. We can do it. I've been kicking around some ideas for that guy Namor. Let's make Atlantis,



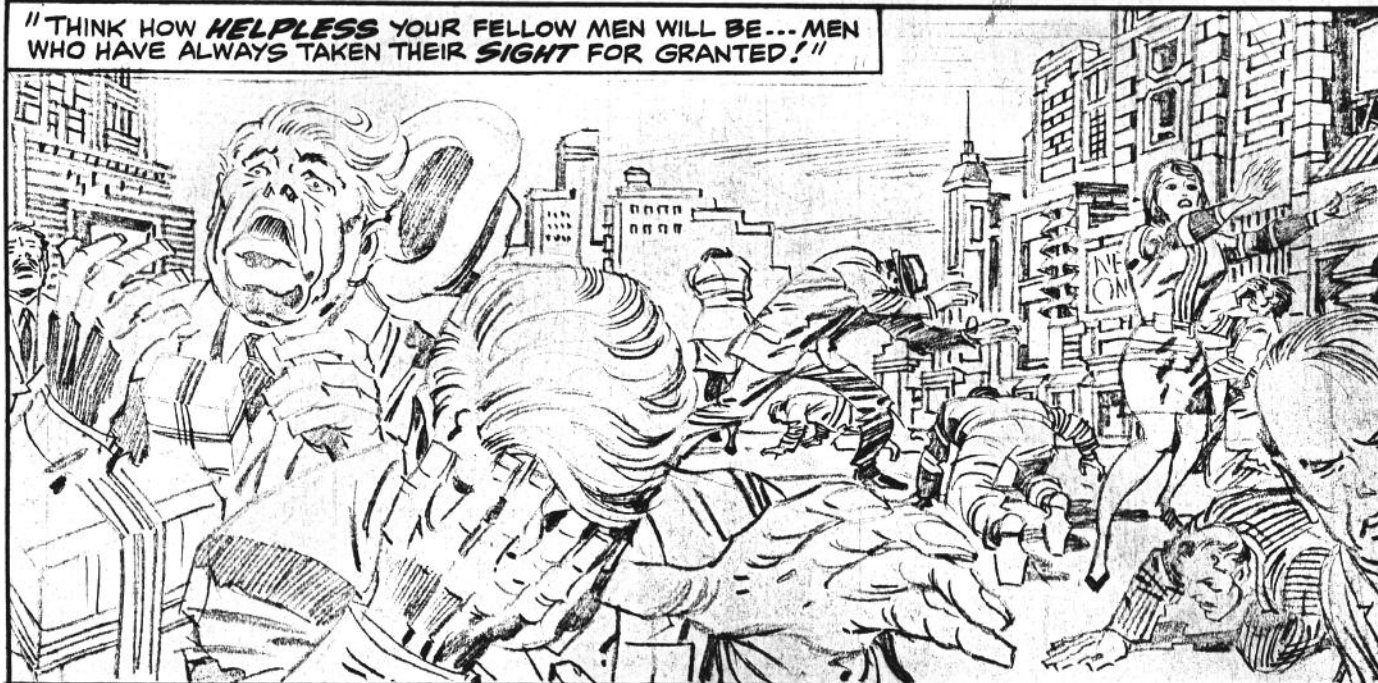


What would a Lee & Kirby issue be without the *Fantastic Four* being heavily represented? You won't find out here, as we proudly present a batch of Jack's penciling wizardry from *FF* issues #89-91, complete with Kirby's margin notes.

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PEOPLE EVERYWHERE WILL LOSE VISION  
THEY WILL PANIC-- CITIES WILL COME TO STANDSTILL

"THINK HOW **HELPLESS** YOUR FELLOW MEN WILL BE... MEN WHO HAVE ALWAYS TAKEN THEIR **SIGHT** FOR GRANTED!"



"HUMANITY WILL **PANIC!** CIVILIZATION WILL COME TO A **STANDSTILL!** IN A MATTER OF MINUTES, THE WORLD WILL BE IN **CHAOS!**"



"AND THEN, FROM BENEATH THE SURFACE... FROM WITHIN MY UNDERGROUND KINGDOM... MY **BLINDLY OBEDIENT SUBTERRANEANS** WILL EMERGE..."



MY CONQUEST WILL BE **COMPLETE!**

I, THE **MOLE MAN**, BANISHED FROM MY FELLOW MEN HALF A LIFETIME AGO... WILL RETURN AT LAST... AS **MASTER OF THE EARTH!**



HIS **SUBTERRANEANS** ARE ALMOST **LIMITLESS!**

WE HAVE TO STOP HIM... BEFORE THEY CAN BE **UNLEASHED!**

**STOPPIN' HIM** WILL BE A **CINCH...** IF WE CAN EVER **FIND 'IM!**

I ADMIRE YOUR **RESOLVE**, RICHARDS...

A **PITY** SUCH **VALOR** WILL SOON BE **LOST** TO THE WORLD FOREVER!



I WILL RULE-- MY YEARS UNDERGROUND WILL END

MY FIRST JOB WILL BE TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR KIND-- THE DO-GOOPERS--

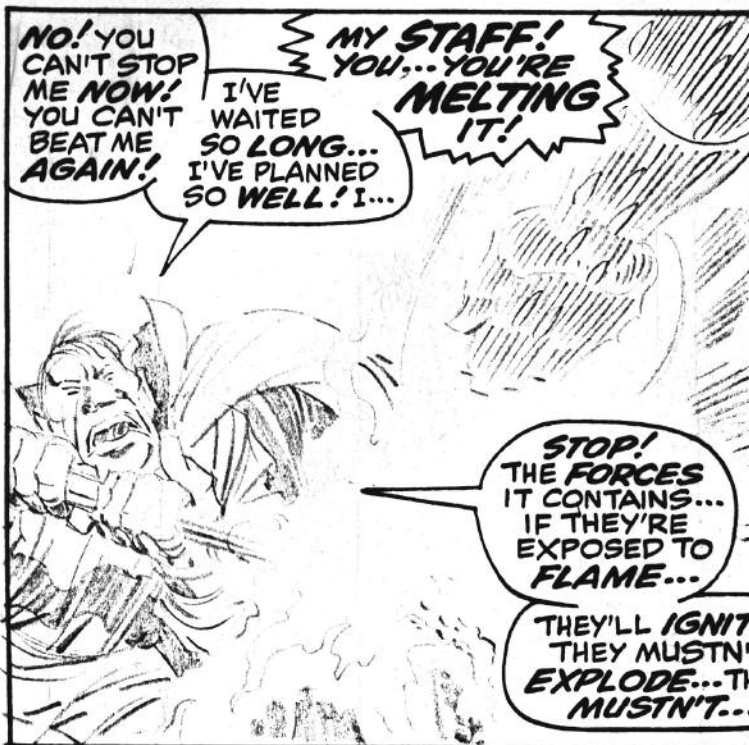
*Fantastic Four*  
#89, page 10.

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TORCH MELTS STAFF WHICH  
MOLEY IS FORCED TO DROP

AS IT LEAVES HIS HANDS,  
STAFF'S POWER BLOWS -- AND  
ROCKS FLY BACK



TORCH THROWS FIREBALL --  
MOLEY YELLS IN FRIGHT

ALL I WANTED WAS TO LIVE  
BENEATH SUN ONCE MORE --  
TOO SEE THE DAWN COME  
UP



# TALKIN' ABOUT THE MOST



Marvel madmen and Marvelites talk Lee and Kirby and '60s Marvel  
Compiled by Jerry Boyd

(The following comments were culled mostly by e-mail. Talking points were '60s Marvel in general, your favorite Stan and Jack material, and impressions of the team's 'magic'.)

(right) Here's Dick Ayers' favorite Lee-Kirby-Ayers effort, from *Tales to Astonish* #34.

(bottom) 'Mirthful' Marie Severin is surrounded by some of her unforgettable *Not Brand Echh* takes on the Marvel Super-Heroes in this 2001 self-portrait, which is featured on the cover of the upcoming *Alter Ego* #95, shipping this July from TwoMorrows. It even includes "Rational Comics' Gnatman" (top left).

(right) Thor battles Surtur in one of Jack and Stan's most dramatic three-parters, as shown on this Kirby-Everett masterpiece for *Thor* #176 (May 1970).

(next page, center) John Romita snuck a Kirby cameo into *Captain America* #143 (Nov. 1971), by basing police Sgt. Muldoon's likeness on Jack.

(next page, top) Herb Trimpe impressively penciled this unused *SHIELD* cover back in 1969.

(net page, bottom) Bring on the bad guys—in this case, The Ringmaster and Princess Python! Steve Rude did this commissioned portrait of the Lee-Kirby Circus of Crime members back in 1997.

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## DICK AYERS

The one (genre) that stands out in my memory of (Stan Lee's and) Jack Kirby's penciled stories I did would be all of the monster stories. One that jumps into my memory is "Monster at My Window." [*Tales to Astonish* #34, Aug. 1962] Not many months ago the *New Yorker*, on its last page, [featured] a contest cartoon to have a caption sent in to win a prize. A cartoonist chose to

copy the cover Jack penciled and I inked: "Monster at My Window." A fan e-mailed me and called my attention to it. Maybe Marvel got an apology from the *New Yorker*?! I applaud the choice of the cartoonist.

## STAN GOLDBERG

In 1949, when I was a very young man, I was very fortunate to get a job at Timely/Marvel Comics working in their bullpen. In two years I ran the coloring department and got to see all the art that came out of Timely. I was always a big fan of the comics. As a boy, my favorites were *Captain America*, *Young Allies*, etc.; needless to say, I loved Jack's work.

In the late '50s when I went freelance, I met the man. Many times we would meet at Marvel and a bunch of us would go out to lunch. They were fun times and Jack would entertain us with great new ideas for comic books. (Excuse me, graphic novels.) As a colorist, Jack's stories were the most fun to color. When we became friends, he was always good company.

There is not an artist in the business, who, when asked, "Who was their favorite comic book artist?"—they will always tell you it was Jack Kirby. *Long live the King*.

Jack Kirby and Stan Lee were a big part of what this industry has become.

## MARIE SEVERIN

I thought they were a dynamic team. They both were very creative and very innovative. It was very fortunate for the public that they did so well because it led to a resurgence in the industry... and the art form. They worked well together. They both had big egos, but they did



fantastic work. I always thought that *Thor*, with their interpretations of mythology and the way they'd (do their) take on the old legends, was incredible. And with the *FF*, they were so innovative with the depths of plots they'd come up with and spiral into.

## MICHAEL STEWART TWMORROWS CONTRIBUTOR

Looking back on *Thor* #175-177, one could say; "Odin goes to sleep, Kirby prepares to leave Marvel, and all hell breaks loose."

This 'hell' would include a 'devil' more evil and powerful than Loki, the Executioner, and Ulik combined! Surtur, the flame demon, got Lee and Kirby's 'ultimate menace' treatment and the giant sent sheets of mountain-reducing fire at the outskirts and finally to the spires of Asgard.

Mangog had been on a similar rampage (with the heat turned off) in 1968, but Jack had an affinity for myths and Surt (using the Norwegian pronunciation) was in on Ragnarok. Maybe Jack had thought of this story arc as an 'ending' of the Asgard Marvel wouldn't end in their comic reality. Jack was dreaming of the 'epilogue' (that would be printed over at DC in *New Gods* #1) that would end the lives of the immortals of antiquity and set the stage for his new age... of new gods.



Loki sat on Odin's throne but, in his cowardice, found it convenient to 'escape' to Earth when he learned Surtur was free of his Odin-forged bondage. Thor, Balder, Sif, and friends fought valiantly, only causing the gigantic fire god (the King gave the monster Goliath-like proportions for this endgame) to slow his advance. Loki had even, in his perfidy, jettisoned his stepfather into another dimension (!) to reclaim the throne. Balder went after him, courting certain death, since the space-time continuum was one only the lord of the Aesir could survive. Odin awakens from his Odin-Sleep, restores the godling's youth and strength, and dispatches Surtur back into the bowels of his planet with a



# TALKED-ABOUT TEAM IN COMICDOM

mere command! Kirby and Lee do it again.

(You've got to clap after seeing an act like that!) The beaten and burned Asgardian warriors rose... but still found the strength to raise their enchanted weapons and voices in praise to All-Father Odin.

I praise Stan and Jack.

## MARY WOLFMAN

The Stan Lee and Jack Kirby comics are still, to my thinking, the best super-hero comics ever done. Together, they broke the stereotype of super-hero comics, added powerful, emotional stories and strong characterization to what had been a medium for 8-12 year olds, experimented with new ideas and ways to tell stories, and introduced readers to a sense of imagination we had never been exposed to in comics before. The sheer number of new ideas and new characters bombarding readers all at once has not been equaled since and probably never will be. Individually, Stan and Jack were both incredible talents. Together they were comic book genius.



## HERB TRIMPE

One of the fun things about Marvel in those beginning and middle years, when most of the Marvel characters became household names, was the option, when drawing a particular Kirby/Lee creation, to add one's own "stamp" to the character. This allowed for a tremendous amount of creative leeway, making, in my opinion, not only the job easier, but more interest generated from the fans. It was exciting to see how each artist visualized the character they were bringing to life. No Kirby/Lee creation lent itself to this in a more dramatic way than

Spider-Man. Steve Ditko, Jack himself, and John Romita presented three of the most distinct versions of the character. Kirby's Spidey, with his blockish Kirby strength, Ditko with his nimble and almost pixie-like, angular Spidey, and Romita with his smooth-as-silk style Spidey effortlessly gliding from building top to lamppost, are images that tend to stick in my mind more than any other character.

Kirby could do more with a seemingly boring six equal-panel page than any artist who ever lived. He never needed to be tricky with his layouts—straightforward, no nonsense, but pure dynamic action spilling outside the confining lines of each panel.

Ditko had a movie director's approach, breaking panels down or blowing them up to fit the situation. His sense of drama and movement were hypnotic.



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There was an enchanted quality to his work.

Romita combined the elements of the two artists, while adding his own gift, beautifully executed figures, gracefully and accurately drawn, classically thought out. A brilliant draftsman and excellent story-teller, John gave the strip an authority that carried Spidey to the silver screen.

## STEVE RUDE

Over many years, most of us have had the chance to distill what we feel are the best of the Stan and Jack years of the 1960s. Though it isn't hard for me to recite specific examples, as with the 5-issue *Thor* #126-130 saga with Hercules, or such 10-page epics as the Cap WWII story in *Tales of Suspense* #86, their combined succession of achievements lay easily in the hundreds. (The Iron Man story in the same *TOS* issue had an equally powerful tale.)

Perhaps more important is what attributes each of these gents brought to their tales to make them more powerful as a whole, as a unit, and why Marvel's more institutionalized and more powerful competitor at the time, National Periodicals, was unable to adjust to the times as their toehold monopoly began to loosen.

Stan brought flashy relevance and a parable underpinning of story. Jack brought pencil drawings that careened our senses while always maintaining a simple and easy to follow storytelling sense. As much as everyone today claims to revere his art, these two simple factors in Kirby's art seem all but lost to current comic artists.

To me, the legacy of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby will always be the paragon of [the] 1960s.

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