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44-PAGE ISSUE
FEATURING:

AN INTERVIEW
WITH VETERAN
MARVEL ARTIST
& KIRBY INKER
JOE SINNOTT

UNPUBLISHED PENCILS

AS WE RESTORE
FF #108 TO ITS
ORIGINAL FORM

SPECIAL FEATURES:

BLACK PANTHER
ROLE MODEL FOR
A GENERATION

THE INHUMANS
JACK'S ENIGMATIC
SUPER GROUP

FF #48-50: THE
GALACTUS SAGA

ENTIRELY
INCONSEQUENTIAL
FF TRIVIA

UNUSED
**FANTASTIC FOUR
#20 COVER**

UNPUBLISHED ART
INCLUDING JACK'S
FF PENCILS
BEFORE THEY
WERE INKED, AND
MUCH MORE!!



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KIRBY (THE MAN) **LEE**

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Jack Kirby at the 1971 San Diego
Comic Con. (Photo by Jim Klein)

*Jack
Kirby
'77*

(Our back cover is Jack's original, unpublished cover to the
1977 Silver Surfer Graphic Novel.)

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FANTASTIC TIDBITS

Morsels of FF info by Steve Sherman, Richard Kyle, and Richard Howell

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Jack's father's name was Ben. His oldest daughter's name is Susan (born in 1945). If Jack wasn't directly involved in the FF's creation, isn't it a weird coincidence that two of the FF share these names?

WHERE'D EVERYBODY GO?

Here's the number of lasting characters (ones that reappeared after their first use) created during each of Jack's nine years on the FF: 10, 8, 4, 7, 15, 7, 1, 0, 1. After four years of establishing the book with villains and supporting characters, that magical fifth year brought a surge of new characters like The Inhumans, Silver Surfer, Galactus, Black Panther, etc. The number tapered off in year six, and except for Annihilus and Agatha Harkness (which some think was Stan's idea), no notable new characters appear in the last three years of the strip.

What's the explanation for the absence of new characters after that sixth year? Maybe Jack simply refused to create any. "Him" in #67 was the last one Jack created before the drought. He didn't like Stan's characterization on the Silver Surfer, and he may have felt similarly about the dialogue on the "Him" storyline (there were some odd discrepancies between the art and the words on those issues). I've heard Jack had hopes for the Him character to be used in a more adult magazine format (perhaps like the two later 35¢ Spider-Man tryouts). It's plausible that in the Him storyline, Jack saw more characters that weren't being handled the way he wanted, so he refused to create any new ones after that. (This would be about the time he began formulating his ideas for what would later become his Fourth World series.)

WITCHY WOMAN

An unpublished page from FF #94 shows an early version of Agatha Harkness, and she looks a lot like Rosalind Kirby! Jack must've decided no one would believe a witch could be as lovely as Roz, and opted for the look that finally appeared in #94.

DOUBLING UP

What was with all the 9-panel pages in FF #100, and the choppy pacing? Was this a Marvel hatchet job, a la FF #108? The owner of one of the 9-panel originals says it isn't pieced together, but it appears #100 was originally going to be a double-size anniversary issue. The



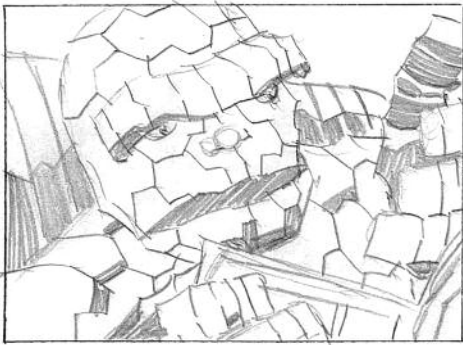
Brace yourself; this unused page from FF #100 was incompetently inked by the purchaser, right over Jack's pencils! Not content just to butcher the art, this genius wrote supposedly funny captions in the word balloons (which we've eliminated in the interest of good taste). May his dog get fleas...

unused page shown here demonstrates one of the original, more leisurely-paced 6-panel pages. Apparently the page count was changed partway through, and Jack had to go back and redraw certain multi-page sequences, condensing them to fit on single pages. ④

(this page and next) Jack's storyboards from "The F.F. Meet Doctor Doom" episode of The New Fantastic Four animated series.



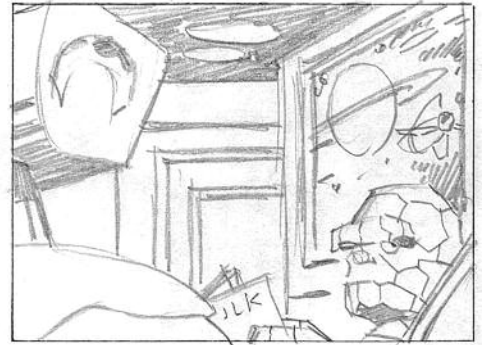
FF. AT PEACE IN H.Q. -- SUE ASKS BEN ABOUT COPY OF "HULK?"



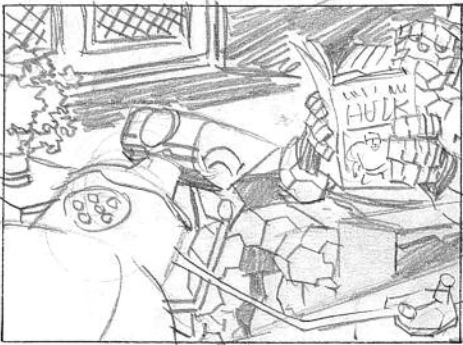
GREENSKIN IS SILLY...



REED PLAYING CHESS WITH HERBIE



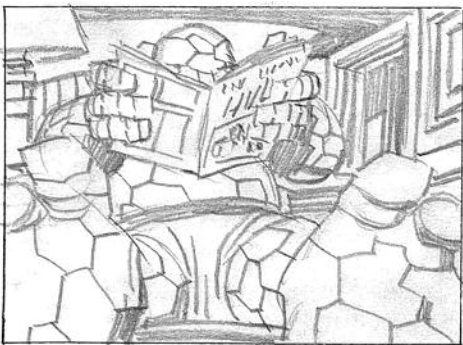
HERBIE SAYS BEN HAS ORANGE SKIN



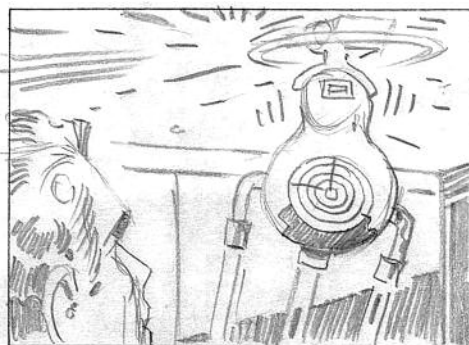
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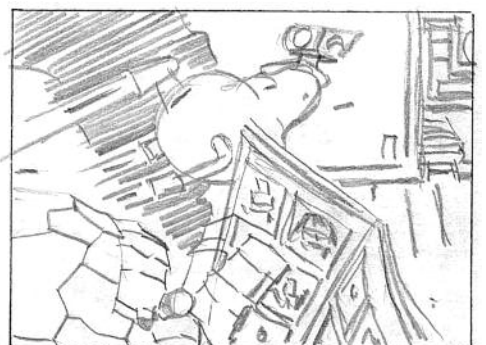
SHEESH!



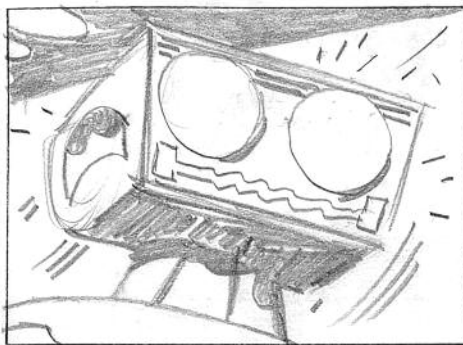
CAN'T READ A COMIC BOOK IN PEACE



HERBIE SENSES DANGER...



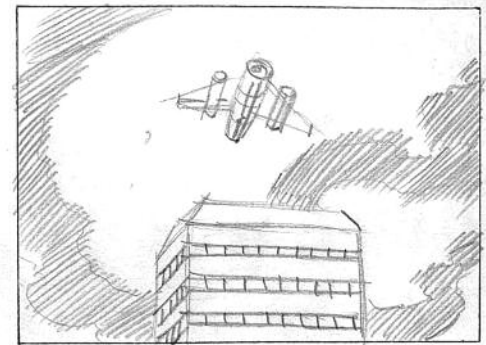
BEN SCOFFS.



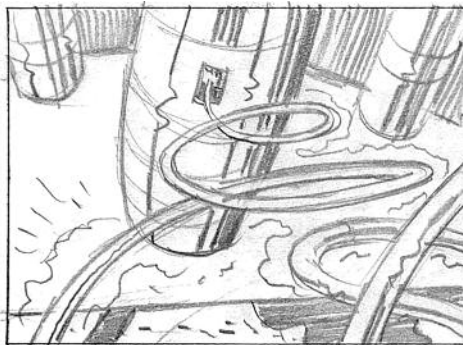
CIRCUITS ARE REACTING



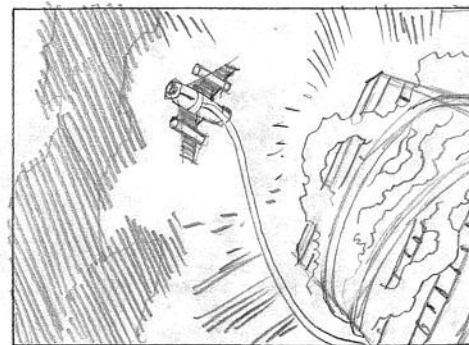
DOCTOR DOOM'S JET COMES INTO VIEW...



HOVERS OVER BAXTER BLDG...



DROPS GLOWING CABLE



CABLE WRAPS ITSELF AROUND BAXTER BLDG...



GRAPHIC STORY REVIEW

by Richard Kyle

(Originally published in *Fantasy Illustrated* #7, Spring 1967)

© 1967 by William W. Spicer

(Editor's Note: I recently received a letter from a TJKC subscriber Bob Cosgrove, commenting that this article by Richard Kyle was one of the finest examinations he'd ever read of what made the FF as good as it was. I have to agree. Since it was originally written around the time FF #60 came out—just following Jack's most prolific period of character creation on the book—I couldn't pass up the opportunity to re-present an extremely literate fan's views of the FF, formed during the heyday of the series. This article should be viewed in light of the fact that it was written almost 30 years ago, while Jack still had many more issues of FF to go before he left the book.)

As a kid, I loved comic books. *Action Comics*, where Superman was born; *Detective Comics*, with Bob Kane's Batman; *Marvel Mystery Comics*, which featured the Human Torch and Sub-Mariner; *Whiz Comics*, starring Captain Marvel; and *Big Shot* and *Smash* and *Blue Bolt* and *Daredevil*—I loved them all. So did all the kids I knew.

And one of our dreams in the "Golden Age of Comic Books" was that somebody would do a comic book strip "right." Not just one episode, or a half-dozen episodes, but fifteen or twenty, at movie-serial length. We all talked about it. We really dug comic book strips, and we wanted one that was as good as it could be, issue after issue. Not a serious, adult graphic story—*The Spirit* by Will Eisner satisfied us there, in those days—but a *comic book strip*, with all the wild, dumb-founding plots and the lay-it-on-the-line good-vs (pronounced "vee-ess" because we'd never heard of that strange word "versus")-evil characterization, and all the freight-train subtlety of regular comic book strips. But nobody did a comic book strip "right," not issue after issue, not then. A few good episodes, sure, but always just a few. "Gee,

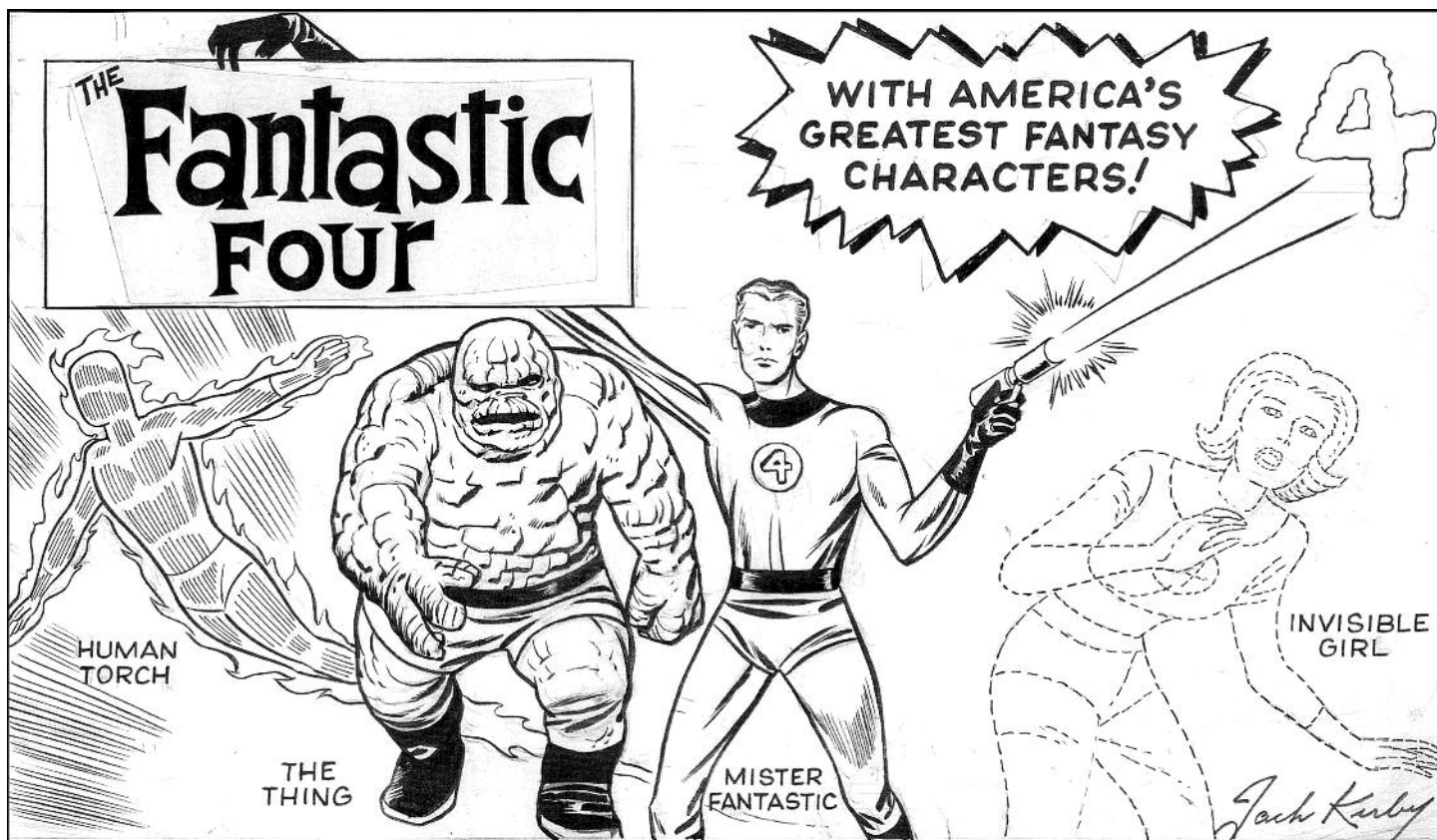
remember how great *Superman* used to be?" "Yeah, and he used to jump and now he just flies." "And Batman—remember when the Joker..." "What're they making Captain Marvel so fat for?" "Hey, wasn't that old Human Torch vee-ess Sub-Marine-er story terrific?" A few good issues, but always just a few. And so we dreamed, until most of us forgot all about the comic books...

And then *The Fantastic Four* arrived. Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, who were in on that "Golden Age," had pursued our dream, too, somehow—but with more fidelity, and maybe even more love. After twenty-five years, somebody had done a comic book strip "right."

The Fantastic Four reversed the pattern of those first great strips. Almost without exception, they had begun at their peak and then slowly declined. Leaping from the hasty womb of a one-page origin, they became grown men before their time and decrepit before they'd reached their teens. But *The Fantastic Four* was born feeble and grew healthier with every passing issue. Time seemed to turn about and march back along its fading tracks, recalling the great days with the heightened awareness of pleasurable memories. Forty issues after *The Fantastic Four* began—when almost all of the Golden Age strips had long been over the hill—it really hit its stride. Today, twenty issues after that, it surely ranks as one of the five great comic book strips of all time, and the only one that has ever been done "right."

Without becoming art, it could be no better. And if it became art, it would be far less than it is. The wild, ad lib, fact-defying plots, the quick spontaneity of the drawings, the wonderfully impossible characters, the splendid and absurd dialogue—they would all be destroyed if any of them were taken seriously for a single moment. Somehow, however, out of the jury-rigged yarns and the preposterous characters, something serious and valuable emerges. Like the *Fantastic Four* themselves, it is the collective effort that makes the strip outstanding, not merely one member of the team, no matter how eye-catching.

Unlike National Publication's revived versions of their pre-war strips, which wearily project all the pre-war values in a pseudo-contemporary guise—like middle-aged women in miniskirts—Marvel's



A 1/2 page ad from *Incredible Hulk* #1 (May, 1962). This original art was recently sold at auction, and is one of the earliest remaining pieces of FF art.

AN INHUMAN ACT

by Jon C. Cooke (with thanks to Ed Fuqua for filling in some blank spots)

The First Cosmic Age of Kirby, which began in the forty-fourth issue of the *Fantastic Four*, was ushered in by those incredible beings called the Incomparable Inhumans, a family of characters that rival any real-life royal dynasty for oddness and sheer originality. These super-men and women were a part of a new cosmic mythology Kirby was creating in "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine," a mythos that, combined with the epic happenings in the *Mighty Thor*, would forever expand the possibilities of adventure comics, exploring questions of cosmic (and moral) importance never before examined in our ill-considered art form. Black Bolt and his subjects, while helping to pave the way for Galactus, Ragnarok, and the Fourth World, prove a potent enough concept worthy of examination.

Having to open for one of the greatest Cosmic acts in comics history (the advent of Galactus and his sullen herald, the Silver Surfer) is daunting when we consider the Kirby Inhumans stories. They were overshadowed by the Marvel versions of God and Jesus Christ, for heaven's sake! The cloak and dagger intrigues of the Attilan Royal Court pale in comparison to the awesome indifferent omnipotence of that ultimate consumer, Galactus, but to relegate the Inhumans to also-ran status does Kirby's concept a disservice.

These Inhumans were New Characters, archetypal yet alien, concerned not with the defeat of a nemesis super hero team or a bank heist to fund world conquest, but with simple survival in a world of hostile prejudice, and the threat of their own fantastic powers to themselves. Their struggle was fundamentally with their own superhuman race, and they shunned the attention of mankind, including the curiosity of the *Fantastic Four*. Yet in spite of their shyness, they became regular co-stars with the team for the most pivotal time in the book's history.

They became virtual family to the super hero group, with the young Crystal actually replacing Sue Richards as team member for a time (while Invisible Girl was on maternity leave). They remained to the very end of Kirby's phenomenal 102-issue consecutive run on the book. They became co-stars, especially before and during the introduction of the Silver Surfer to the series, with Triton and, separately, Lockjaw joining the team for extended visits. At times the book became more about the inhabitants of the Great Refuge than it did the tenants of the Baxter Building.

As epitomized on the classic cover of *Fantastic Four* #46, these new characters possessed a majestic nobility. These folk were strange. And very cool. And the coolest was the enigmatic Black Bolt, the tragic

mute (whose name harkens back to one of Kirby's first super hero art assignments, the Blue Bolt). On that cover (obviously favored by Stan the Man himself as he appears clutching that same number in the "Cool Cat" publicity photo found, if memory serves, in the *FOOM* issue devoted to Lee), there stands the grim Black Bolt, limbs outstretched revealing his pleated artificial wings, with a strange force emanating from his "tuning fork" mask gear. This was one dude to be reckoned with.

It was this same character's incredible dilemma which gave Kirby's concept resonance which transcends the genre. Few heroes in comics are as tragic as Black Bolt. His continuing despair that a mere whisper from his lips will cause unspeakable destruction to the very subjects he lives to serve, his affliction earlier causing his only sibling's madness, and his unresolved love for his cousin Medusa, add a Shakespearean dimension to the opus not often found in funny books.

Black Bolt's curse of speechlessness is the essence of the character's appeal. (Talk about your strong, silent type!) It is, too, his brooding nature, the aftermath of his voice's fury having driven his own brother insane, which adds dimension to the character.

As a group, the Inhumans are truly awesome. Well, at least some of them are. Others can be rather one-note, but all but one are most unusual. The aforementioned brother Maximus (the original Mad Max maybe?), effete, conniving, and cursed with lunatic genius, is pure stereotype. His motivation is sheer lunacy. And beyond that, he simply giggles a lot. His power, it seems, is confined to the cranium.

Kirby's taken a rap for poor female character development, as his "girls" usually serve as (yawn) victims or hostages in his superhero stories. While the argument is certainly not without merit, there is an exception to be found in Madam Medusa. She was the first Inhuman to encounter the *Fantastic Four*, even before her super-human pedigree is revealed, and she proves an impressive foil to the FF as the central member of the otherwise dull Frightful Four. Medusa is the only interesting character in the super villain doppelganger team of *Fantastic Four* rivals. (The other "frightful" three are second-rate bad guys from *Strange Tales*: the Wingless

Wizard (and his Wonder Gloves!), the Sandman (okay, from Spider-man), and Paste-Pot Pete (a.k.a., the Trapster)). Her red, super-powered hair, and her confident, regal manner rates her as no girl, but a woman able to stand her own beside, this Kirby fan easily imagines, Big Barda. (As near as I can figure, Medusa is the only other Kirby female that I would call sexy, besides Missus Miracle.) But the promise of her development as more than a femme fatale was stunted with the coming Inhumans saga. She became merely, alas, a romantic interest for Black Bolt and so thus one-dimensional as a good guy.

The sudden change in her portrayal came after the second arc of



THE GALACTUS TRILOGY: AN APPRECIATION

by Charles Hatfield

My vote for the Definitive Marvel Story, the one that best distills the most exciting ingredients of vintage Marvel comics, would have to go to what we now call The Galactus Trilogy, a three-issue story arc which originally appeared in *Fantastic Four* #48 (“The Coming of Galactus”), #49 (“If This Be Doomsday”), and #50 (“The Startling Saga of the Silver Surfer”) in 1966. In this radically inventive story, Jack Kirby, along with scripter Stan Lee, discarded conventional superheroics in favor of a mythic approach which, for better or worse, changed superhero comics forever after. As a wellspring of future comics, it has a claim to being one of the most historically significant moments of Marvel’s Silver Age; as a story in its own right, it remains impressive, not only for its epic scope, but also for its narrative economy, its surprising subtleties, and its humanity.

ENTER THE SILVER SURFER—AND GALACTUS

The Galactus Trilogy is remembered, obviously, as the story which introduced two Marvel icons, the godlike Galactus and his herald, the Silver Surfer. Among comics fans the story enjoys fame for its unprecedented sense of scale: Galactus intends to devour the Earth’s energy, not because he is evil or malicious, but because he is a force “above good or evil,” to whom the Earth’s inhabitants are simply beneath notice. Besides Galactus himself, of course, the Silver Surfer is a remarkable creation, one who unpredictably blossoms from a mere functionary of the plot—a cold, enigmatic harbinger of doom—into one of Marvel’s most noble, articulate, and tormented heroes.

Much of the story’s drama in fact stems from the Surfer, who makes a strong impression, both as a dramatic device to introduce his master and, eventually, as a character in his own right. The Surfer, as eccentric a figure as any the FF had encountered, was a brilliant narrative stroke on Kirby’s part. Without the Surfer the story would have little dramatic oomph, for the reader needs something to prepare the way for Galactus, something or someone to foreshadow his coming on a more human, more accessible scale. The Surfer allows us to approach the menace of Galactus obliquely, to imagine what kind of being would need a herald this awesome to prepare for his coming.

Re-reading the story’s first chapter, “The Coming of Galactus,” I’m still startled by the dramatic power of the climactic splash panel, as Galactus steps forth from his craft, uttering his now-familiar lines:

“My journey is ended! This planet shall sustain me until it has been drained of all elemental life! So speaks Galactus!”

What makes this such a powerful moment, and such a wicked cliffhanger, is not simply Kirby’s composition of the panel (Galactus with arm outstretched, towering over even the giant figure of the Watcher). After all, Kirby often used full-page or near full-page drawings for effect. Rather, it’s the way this panel fulfills the suspense maintained throughout the first chapter, without letting up a bit. The

figure of Galactus appears even more powerful because of the preparation we’ve had.

Specifically, “The Coming of Galactus” prepares us in two ways: first, by following the Surfer’s progress through space toward Earth, and second, through two apocalyptic signs which strike terror into the New York City populace—the sky fills, first with flames, then with floating rocks or “debris.” These unexplained phenomena inspire general panic in the streets, provoking memorable confrontations between Johnny, Ben, and a fearful crowd. (The brief “fight” between Ben and a bare-knuckled civilian is particularly droll, in comic contrast to the huge, operatic conflicts to come.) Afterwards, the omniscient being known as the Watcher appears at the Baxter Building, and reveals that the “fire-shield” and the orbiting debris were his own unsuccessful attempts to conceal the Earth from the Silver Surfer, “the advance scout for Galactus.”

Even as the Watcher speaks, the Surfer negotiates the barrier of debris, and lands, conveniently enough, on the roof of the Baxter Building. Though Ben quickly dispatches the Surfer with a single punch, the greater danger, Galactus, arrives suddenly—announced by a full-page photo montage which shows the opening of his spherical craft. The chapter ends as he disembarks, in a costume as odd and as elaborate as any heretofore seen in comics. The cumulative effect of hearing about Galactus prior to his arrival, then finally *seeing* him in the chapter’s last panel, underscores his size, power, and menace.

Man, what a stunner that last page must have been to readers in 1966!

THE QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP

If the Silver Surfer, Jack Kirby’s brainchild, is the cornerstone of this suspenseful first chapter, then Kirby should be recognized as the Trilogy’s chief architect, the one who conceived the story, shaped it, and brought its abstractions to vivid life. Stan Lee himself, in his

book *Son of Origins of Marvel Comics*, credits

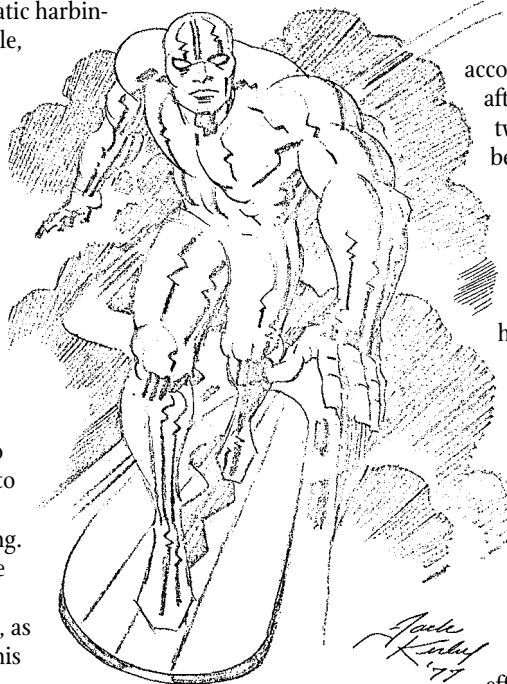
Kirby with creating the Surfer: According to Lee’s account, Kirby penciled the first chapter of the Trilogy after a brief story conference with Lee, in which the two agreed on the broad concept of a huge, godlike being threatening Earth with destruction. When Kirby eventually delivered the pages, Lee was startled to see an unfamiliar figure on a flying surfboard, upon which Kirby matter-of-factly explained that a being as powerful as Galactus ought to have a herald, a being to come before him and pave the way for him. (This idea, of course, makes no practical sense, but perfect dramatic sense.) Lee recalls being intrigued by, even “wild” about, the Silver Surfer, whom Kirby had created on his own, out of whole cloth.

Now, given that the Surfer is crucial to the dramatic structure of the Trilogy’s first chapter—and later proves crucial to the resolution of the plot—Lee’s account of the character’s creation inadvertently says much about the central role Kirby played in writing *The*

Fantastic Four. By inventing the Surfer, Kirby in

effect plotted the story: he provided the dramatic device which drove the story; he paced the telling; he even provided the character who, ultimately, would steal the show, in “The Startling Saga of the Silver Surfer.”

In the Kirby/Lee collaborations, as this example suggests, much of the “writing” is in the art. Character design and movement, facial expressions, the composition of panels, the relationships between panels—all of these crucial storytelling elements are the province of Kirby the cartoonist. To these elements in Kirby’s art one can sense Lee as scripter responding, sometimes playfully, sometimes seriously,



THE JOE SINNOTT INTERVIEW

Interviewed by John Morrow on December 18, 1995

TJKC: *THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR:* Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

JOE SINNOTT: Right here in Saugerties, NY. October 16, 1926. Seems like eons ago! (*laughter*) There are quite a few artists who live up here: Bernie Wrightson, Barry Windsor-Smith, Bob Oskner, Joe Staton, Jim Starlin. But I'm the only one born here. The rest migrated here from other places. I must've exploited the great things about Saugerties, and people heard it. I should have kept it quiet! (*laughter*)

TJKC: Did you grow up reading comic books?

JOE: The thirties were a great time for a kid to be growing up, aside from the Depression. When I was eight or nine years old, *Terry And The Pirates* and *Flash Gordon* came out. I couldn't wait from one day to the next to see how Terry was going to get out of some of the exploits he was involved in. We got the *New York Daily News*, which had *Terry And The Pirates*. Our next-door neighbor got the *New York Mirror*, which had *Tarzan* and *Bronco Billy* and *Mandrake the Magician*. Each paper had different strips, so you'd go around to the neighbors and trade with your buddies. It was a great period.

TJKC: Did those strips make you want to go into comics?

JOE: It's funny. You had no idea you had a chance of ever being an artist. I drew ever since I was young. Once for my birthday, I got a great big box of crayons. It had an Indian on the front, and I drew that Indian until I could draw it with my eyes shut. (*laughter*) I think that was the impetus that got me interested in comics. So I copied Terry, and Flash Gordon, and Smilin' Jack. I used to draw all the time, drawing all the newspaper strip characters.

The comic books didn't come along until later. I really don't remember reading comic books until around 1939, when I was 12 years old. My favorite early comic book was *Action Comics*. I used to love Congo Bill, more so than Superman. (*laughter*) I also loved Zatarra the Magician. I really liked Batman, that was my favorite, because it was well drawn. Bob Kane did a great job. And also I liked Hawkman, because it reminded me a lot of Alex Raymond's style. And the Timely books; we bought them and passed them around until they wore out. I would read the *Human Torch* and *Captain America*. *Captain America* was quite popular.

TJKC: Do you remember reading Simon & Kirby's *Captain America*?

JOE: I'm sure I did, but I didn't know who was doing it at the time. I remember *Boy Commandos*, but I never really associated the names. I just knew that it was a good comic book, and I liked the characters. I liked the way it was inked, but the names didn't mean anything to me.

TJKC: How'd you get started in comics? What was your big break?

JOE: Well, after I came out of the service, I saw a newspaper ad for

the Cartoonists and Illustrators School in New York City, run by Burne Hogarth. I had a lot of samples that I'd done of syndicated type strips, so I went down and they appeared to be highly impressed with them. They said I was a natural-born cartoonist; I thought they were pulling my leg so I would come to the school. But I signed up, and later on I realized I had a foot up on some of the other students as far as the cartoon field. I took a year of foundation, where we drew anatomy, and the second year I took cartooning.

In late 1949, one of my instructors there, Tom Gill, asked me if I'd like to work as his assistant. I learned more from Tom than I did from the school. I was actually doing professional work, and I had someone looking over my shoulder, making sure I did it right. Tom had accounts with Timely and Dell and Fawcett. He was a prodigious worker; he worked all day at the school, and at night he drew his strips. He even had a syndicated strip going. I was doing *Kent Black* and *Red Warrior* for Timely. We were also doing some movie adaptations for Dell. He was also working on the *Lone Ranger*, which I helped him on. It got to the point where I was doing all his work. At first he'd just do the heads to make it look like his work, and later he let me do the heads. I worked with him about nine months while I was still at school. I got married in the meantime, and I decided that if Stan Lee was buying my work from Tom, why not buy it from me? So I went over to Stan, and he gave me work right away. And that was really the beginning, in 1950.

TJKC: What was your first published work?

JOE: I'd only been at the school for a couple of months, and I took my work down to a place called St. John's. There was a woman editor there who liked my samples, and she gave me a five-page story for a *Mopsie* comic book.

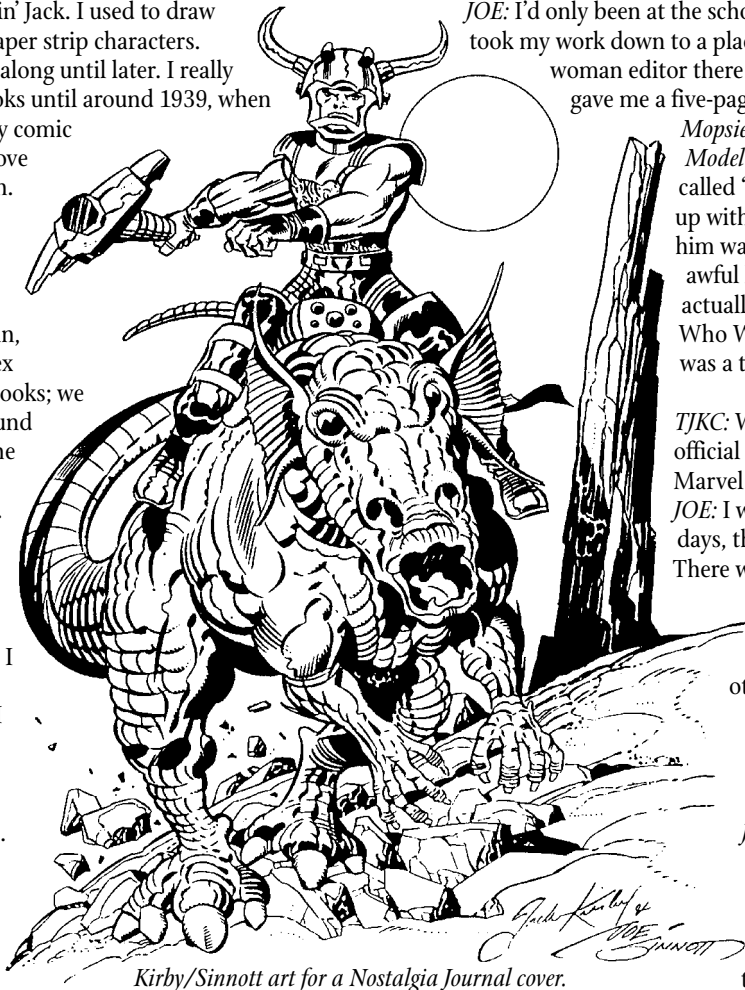
Mopsie was something like *Millie The Model* at Marvel. It was a five-page filler called "Trudy." Right after that I hooked up with Tom Gill. The first thing I did for him was *Red Warrior* for Stan. And I did an awful lot of *Kent Blake*. The first thing I actually did for Stan was called "The Man Who Wouldn't Die." It was a western. It was a three- or four-page filler.

TJKC: What did you do between your first official work for Marvel in 1950 and when Marvel really took off a decade later?

JOE: I worked just for Marvel. In those days, the stories were short, 5 or 6 pages. There was no continuity, so a story could go in any book; if you did a western for *Two-Gun Kid*, Stan could put it in *Rawhide Kid* or one of the other westerns.

TJKC: What was it like working for Marvel then? How did you get your assignments?

JOE: I'd go down to the city on Friday, and Stan would give me a script to take home. I'd start on Monday morning by lettering the balloons in pencil. Then I'd pencil the story from the script and ink it



Kirby/Sinnott art for a Nostalgia Journal cover.



Uninked pencils from *Fantastic Four* #86, page 17.

and leave the balloons penciled. I'd pencil a page in the morning, and ink it in the afternoon. I never burned the midnight oil; I'd start work at 7:45 in the morning, and I'd work until about 4:30 in the afternoon. I always figured if you couldn't make a living in eight hours a day, you shouldn't be in the business. I'd bring the story back on Friday and he'd give me another script. I never knew what kind of script I'd be getting. Stan had a big pile on his desk, and he used to write most of the stories himself in those days. You'd walk in, and he'd be banging away at his typewriter. He would finish a script and put it on the pile. Sometimes on his pile would be a western, then below it would be a science fiction, and a war story, and a romance. You never knew what you were getting, because he always took it off the top. And you were expected to do any type of story.

The Korean War was on at the time, so we did a lot of war stories. The westerns were the old staples. Then the horror trend came along, and we did the *Journey Into Mystery* books and *Strange Tales* and *Weird*

Worlds. The short stories were a lot of fun to do, because you got a lot of variety. You never got tired or bored because the stories were simple, but quite clever; although it's often been said of Stan that, back in those days, the stories were all the same, just the names were changed. (laughter) But he knocked those stories out like you wouldn't believe. It was a real fun time to work, and we had all the work we wanted. The rates were really good for that period, until the Comics Code came into being, and it almost killed comics. That's when things really went into a tailspin, and Marvel suspended operations for at least six months.

TJKC: What did you do once the Marvel work dried up?

JOE: Things started getting tough financially, so I went over to DC. I don't remember who I talked to at the time, but the guy was quite obnoxious. He said, "You guys from Marvel come over here because you don't have any work, and you expect us to give you work!" He was ranting and raving. I didn't get any work at DC, but I remember there was somebody else at the office. I think it was Julie Schwartz, but I can't be sure. He came over to me and said, "Don't pay any attention to him. Your stuff looks good, but we don't have any work for anybody." So I got work at *Classics Illustrated*. Then I sent some samples to a guy in Ohio who published *Treasure Chest* books. He had Reed Crandall working for him, and he said I'd fit into their plans. I used to do all the biographical stories for *Treasure Chest*; the life of Kennedy, and MacArthur, and Eisenhower. I did the Wright Brothers, Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb. These were all 64-page stories. It was a real fun book, but it was only distributed in the Catholic schools. It was doing quite well at the time, around 1959-1960.

I was doing all kinds of work at that time. Vince Colletta called and wanted to know if I'd pencil romance stories for him. So I was doing five romance pages a day for him for Charlton, and he was inking them. Even when Marvel started back up, I did that for Vinnie for about five years. They were easy to knock out; a lot of heads and clinch shots. Dick Giordano was the editor at Charlton at the time, and we had a good association. Dick and I did a lot of commercial work together, for Radio Shack and General Electric in the early-to-mid 1960s.

When Stan called me up and said Marvel was starting back up with the monster books, I told him I couldn't put all my eggs in one basket. I had a good account at *Treasure Chest*, and I liked the type of art I was doing there. So I kept the account at *Treasure Chest*. I was also ghosting some Archie stuff for a friend of mine.

TJKC: At what point did you become aware of Simon & Kirby?

JOE: Through the late 1940s, I saw a lot of the romance books. The Kirby romances really stood out because of Jack's unique style. It was a very heavy-handed style, and Simon did a great job of inking Jack. That was the first thing. But then I lost contact with Jack's work, because when you're working professionally, you're not really paying that much attention to other people. I would look at a few other comics. I bought the EC books, because of John Severin especially. When Severin drew an M-1 rifle, you knew it was an M-1 rifle; he was so authentic. Stan always used to tell us to buy John Severin's stuff, because he never draws anything incorrectly. Stan was really impressed with John, and I certainly was.

TJKC: How did you start inking Jack's work?

JOE: Up until that point, around 1961 or so, I had never inked anyone else's work. When Stan called me, I thought I was doing him a favor. I

really didn't have the time to ink it, but I felt I was helping him out of a jam, because he didn't have anybody to ink it. So it was no problem. It was either a monster book or a western. I'm a little vague on which book it was, I'd have to look up my records.

TJKC: Were you ever concerned about getting pigeon-holed into doing only inking?

JOE: No. Work to me was work. I was long past the ego stage of wanting to see my art in comics; that happened twelve years before. It didn't matter, as long as the paycheck came in. From an artist's standpoint, I was doing my best stuff for *Treasure Chest*. The Marvel stuff was more of a production line type thing. We did the books quickly. It wasn't a piece of art, so to speak.

TJKC: After inking a few more monsters and westerns, how'd you get put on inks for *Fantastic Four* #5?

JOE: When Stan sent me the pages for *FF* #5, he didn't even tell me what it was. I didn't even know the *Fantastic Four* existed, because I didn't go to the newsstands and buy books. When you went to Stan's office to give him the work you'd completed, he had a rack on the wall with maybe 20 books in it. You'd look to see if your latest book was there, and if it was, Stan would let you take a copy. But you couldn't take anybody else's books, so I never looked to see what anybody else was doing. I wasn't aware the new age was coming. But I couldn't have been more impressed when I saw it. It knocked my socks off! It seemed like Stan was really hitting his stride as a writer. The characters were so great, even though you saw similarities between the old Human Torch and Johnny Storm, and Reed and Plastic Man. The way he put them together was just unbelievable.

TJKC: What do you remember about inking that first Thor story in *Journey Into Mystery* #83?

JOE: I probably remember that more than anything I ever worked on. When I got it, I said, "Gee, what a great character." Especially Dr. Blake slamming that hammer on the ground. I thought that was a great idea, like Captain Marvel saying "SHAZAM!" I thought that was a novel way for the incapacitated doctor to turn into this viking god. Stan and Jack just did a tremendous job on it.

For years, a lot of people thought that Dick Ayers inked it. He's probably gotten five or six reprint checks that should have come to me. (*laughter*) I did the cover and all the inside art. I also did the cover to #84, with the firing squad scene. I started to do the inside; I may have done two or three panels. I had committed myself to a story that *Treasure Chest* wanted me to do, a big 64-page story. It came in when I got the pages for *Journey Into Mystery* #84, so I sent them back to Stan and told him I had another commitment.

TJKC: Was this the same commitment that only allowed you to ink a couple of panels of *Fantastic Four* #6?

JOE: I don't think so. It could have been a similar situation, though.

TJKC: I've always wondered what you worked on between *Fantastic Four* #6 and when you came back to the book on #44.

JOE: It's funny. You do so much, you forget what you've done. I did a few Thor stories in *Journey Into Mystery*. (*Editors Note: These were in #91, 92, and 94-96.*) At the time, the rates at Marvel were terrible, and I was really rushing my work. Not that I wasn't trying my best at Marvel, but I did the best I could with the limited time we had. My main account artistically was *Treasure Chest*. Looking back I wish I'd done better work on Thor, but at the time it was just another job, and I certainly didn't think the character was going anyplace. At the time, I was probably penciling and inking one page of Thor a day, doing three or four pages of romance for Vince Colletta, and squeezing in some Archie after supper.

TJKC: From *Fantastic Four* #44-on, were you strictly a Marvel company man, or were you still doing a lot for other companies?

JOE: Oh, no. But Marvel was my biggest account. I did the *FF* every month, at 18-22 pages a month. It seems like I was always doing another book for Marvel. I was doing odds and ends like *Thor* and *Captain America*, inking different people like Gil Kane and Gene Colan. I remember one year I did over 100 covers for Marvel. But *Treasure Chest* was a steady account until they folded in the seventies.

TJKC: Let's talk about your work habits, particularly during your work over Jack's pencils on *Fantastic Four*. How many pages did you ink a day?

JOE: I could ink three Kirby pages a day by 4:30. Kirby was easy to ink. A lot of times he would throw in a big machine, and it would take time, just the mechanics of doing it. But we did it on the big pages. I could use a lot of brush; I really worked fast with a brush. At one time I probably worked 90% brush, if not more, with pens only on small heads and hands and straight line backgrounds. Jack did these big panels, maybe four panels to a page. He didn't have the eight and nine panels that came later. Those early days with the big pages, each one of his panels was like a splash page, they were just magnificent. And Jack's stuff was fully penciled; I could really knock them out.

Some of the stuff that I worked on years later was all from breakdowns; even John Buscema's work, except the early stuff, the *Silver Surfers* and some of the early *FFs*. Then John got into breakdowns, and nobody was looser than John. It didn't slow me up at all, but on some of the younger guys I worked with, it required an awful lot of work on my part. Some of them were feeling their way, and some threw everything but the kitchen sink in their work.

TJKC: You've mentioned that with Jack's *Fantastic Four* pages, you got the whole book at once. Did you read the entire story before you inked it? Were the pages already lettered when you got them?

JOE: In most cases, yes. Once in a great while, they wouldn't be, but that was very, very rare, because Stan was such a professional. He always got the work done. Later, I did a lot of work with people where the dialogue wasn't there, and that made it difficult because a lot of



Joe's art (pencils and inks) for a Dr. Doom toy package.

the art was vague. You didn't know what expression was supposed to be on the faces unless you had the script, and they didn't always send the script. But with the Kirby and Lee combination, they left nothing to be desired. Everything was there, and it was so easy for you. It was just the mechanics of doing it. Of course, you had to be careful. I always felt that I at least did what the penciler put down, but in most cases I probably added to it and made it a little bit better than it actually was originally. Certainly in Kirby's case, you didn't have to do any drawing. I did occasionally, but you really didn't have to.

TJKC: When the pencils came in, did the covers come with the stories, or were they sent later?

JOE: The cover was generally done first, because it required more production at Marvel than the actual artwork.

TJKC: Did that cause you any confusion? Especially on *Fantastic Four* #44; you wouldn't know who any of the characters were.

JOE: It could have, but it seems like it never did. Later on, when I was working with Buckler or people like that, I noticed some changes were done on covers at the Bullpen, and not always for the better. Sometimes they would make a stat of it and flop it, just to have the characters facing the other way. (laughter) This ruined the original art, so you hated to see corrections done for no particular purpose. It didn't improve the cover, it actually detracted from it.

TJKC: Did you ever use assistants on any of the Kirby stuff?

JOE: Never. Not one line.

TJKC: I've always wanted to know — when you ink an explosion, do you use a ruler for those straight, tapered explosion lines?

JOE: Oh, sure. I always used a ruler for those. Originally I used a 659 pen and a #3 Windsor Newton brush. They were the only tools I used other than a compass and a ruler. I never used a french curve; everything I did was freehand. After quite a few years, I discarded the 659 pen because the paper got so bad, and it would dig into the paper so much. I went with the 201 Hunt pen, and I was able to really press down on the Hunt without it splitting or breaking.

I had a certain technique for doing those lines; I would really press hard. I was able to get these really thick and thin lines, and I always went from the border-in, and flick it, so to speak. I would do it quite rapidly; I was quite fast with the ruler. And I'd use the Speedball pen for those little black dots you saw in galaxies and fireballs, and things like that. I had a couple of different size Speedballs.

There were a few things I did that I felt were innovative back in those days, that were picked up by other people. There was a certain way I used to treat dirt and rocks, which I loved to draw and render. I used to love it when Jack did an erupting volcano, because I loved getting in there with a brush and doing some heavy inking. I put a lot of detail into stuff like that. Of course, Jack had a lot of detail, but I probably even added more to his buildings. Jack was so great with those bricks he used to put in, and I'd put little cracks in the bricks and



More uninked pencils from *Fantastic Four* #86. Note Jack's request for a deadline extension!

things like that. Sometimes I may have overdone it, but I think it was creating a style kids loved in those days.

TJKC: As a kid I always wondered why his art didn't look that good in the other books! (laughter) Now I know it had a little to do with you. But how much "fixing" of Jack's work did you do when you inked?

JOE: Well, Stan told me anytime I wanted to take any liberties with Jack's work, to do it. Originally, I thought I was "fixing" his ears, or making his women a little prettier, or a little leaner in the hips. But I realized later, that was Jack's style, I shouldn't be doing it. Even when Jack's eyes weren't on the same plane, this was Kirby. So I reverted back, but probably not soon enough. Instead of drawing my Alex Raymond ears, I'd draw Kirby ears. But there were things that I really

FANTASTIC FOUR #108: JACK'S WAY

by John Morrow

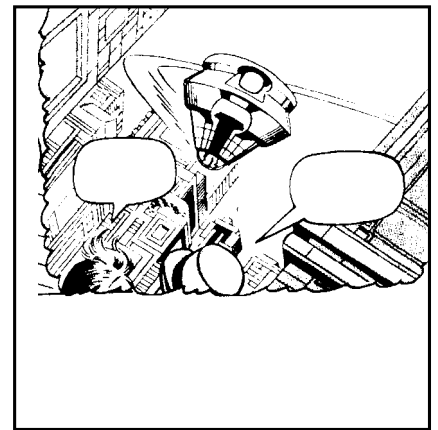
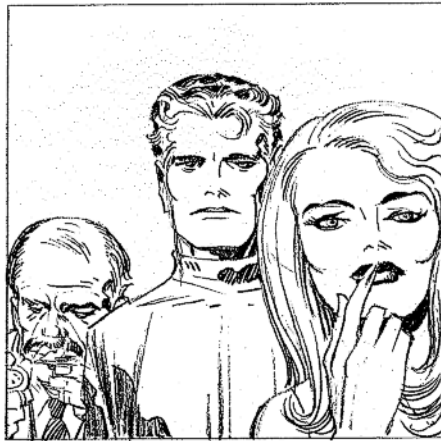
Fantastic Four #108 has quite a history behind it. It was originally meant to be #102, but supposedly someone at Marvel felt it wasn't dialogueable. So Marvel ran the art for #103 in #102, and put this art on the shelf for a few months. Then they chopped Jack's originals up, rearranged panels, added some John Buscema filler art, changed the ending, sent the whole thing to Joe Sinnott to ink, and published it (not so coincidentally) the same month Jack's *New Gods* #1 came out at DC. The end result was a real mess that didn't make much sense.

But just how bad was Jack's original story? Judge for yourself. Presented here is our attempt to put the story back into its original form, using the Kirby art that didn't make the cut. Mitch Itkowitz came across many of the discarded pencils in the Marvel files a few years ago, and had them returned to Jack. A few panels are still missing (most notably the splash page), and you'll see those indicated by question marks. Since Jack's original story and the published version had major differences, we deleted the published dialogue and page numbers to avoid confusion. In quotes (" ") accompanying the pencil panels are Jack's original margin notes for Stan Lee to dialogue by (these are numbered to coincide with the panel numbers). With just the few margin notes here to accompany Jack's powerful art, it's easy enough to get an idea of the

(continued on page 38)

SPLASH PAGE MISSING

?



PAGE 2
1 "EVEN ANCIENTS PONDERED PROBLEM THAT STILL PLAGUES MAN TODAY." 2 "THIS RADIATION TEST WILL PROVE DATE CONCLUSIVELY." 3 "THE RAYS REACT." 4 "THIS INTENSITY METER PLACES STATUE AT 4000 B.C." 5 "THAT FIERCE FACE-- THANK GOODNESS WE'VE PROGRESSED TODAY." 6. (FROM FF #108, PAGE 1. PANEL WAS CROPPED WHEN PUBLISHED.)

PAGES 3-7
(AS PUBLISHED IN FF #108, PAGES 2-6.)

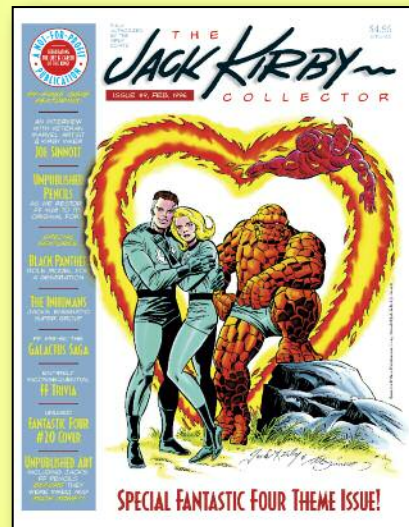


by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby

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