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**On Our Cover:** *We've been waiting a long time to do this one! We first printed this drawing by multi-talented Marie Severin back in A/E #16—and we've known ever since that, when we finally got around to doing an issue on Marvel's Not Brand Echh comic, it was the illo we wanted to use as our cover. Nothing else would've made any sense. Thanks, Marie—for everything!* [Marvel heroes TM & ©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.; other art ©2010 Marie Severin.]

**Above:** *When we were forced, regrettably, to delay this issue's letters section till next month, we were left with this fine take on Forbush-Man with our maskots Alter and Captain Ego by Shane Foley—done as an homage to the Stuporman and cub reporter figures on the cover of 1968's NBE #7. We suspect ultimate lampooner Marie Severin will get a kick out of being lampooned just a wee bit herself—with the added help of colorist Randy Sargent.* [Alter & Captain Ego TM & © 2010 Roy Thomas & Bill Schelly; created by Biljo White; Forbush-Man TM & ©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.; other art elements ©2010 Shane Foley.]

This issue is dedicated to the memory of  
**Shel Dorf & Jim Harmon**



# “Not A Spittoon – Not A Cartoon – Not A Harpoon – But a LAMPOON!”

Comics fans of a certain age and inclination will probably recognize the above as one of the many humorous billboards and background bits (a.k.a. “chicken fat”—see p. 7) which festoon the eight-page parody “Bat Boy and Rubin!” in *Mad* #8 (Dec. 1953-Jan. 1954).

When he and artist Wally Wood stuck those notices throughout that classic takeoff on “Batman and Robin,” editor/writer/layout artist Harvey Kurtzman was both hedging his bets *and* sticking out his figurative tongue at National/DC. Earlier in 1953, after all, DC had threatened EC publisher William M. Gaines with grievous bodily legal harm after the publication of the even more classic “Superduperman!” in *Mad* #4... and eight months later, EC wanted to do everything it could to deflect the wrath of the older, far bigger, and deeper-pocketed DC.

It apparently worked. DC seems not to have bothered Gaines over “Bat Boy” or the later “Woman Wonder”—and it would be left for the venerable but clearly humorless *Life* magazine to feel strongly enough about EC’s parody (on the cover of *Mad* #11) of its general cover format to actually sue Entertaining Comics.

And, happily, lose... just as DC would’ve deserved to, a year earlier.

The courts decided there was little danger the reading public would confuse a 7"x10½" color comic book (with a cover composed of a white-on-red logo above a cityscape photo behind the ugliest female head that even Basil Wolverton could draw) with a 10"x13" tabloid magazine.

For *Life* to have won, justice would have needed to be not only blind but deaf and, especially, dumb.

What that all means to us is that, ever since, parody has thrived in

comics, freed from the danger that some overly touchy target would deprive US citizens of that most basic of human rights—namely, the right to laugh their butts off.

Recalling how all those early *Mad* wannabes were allowed to publish and perish on their own merits and demerits back in the mid-1950s (as seen in *A/E* #86 & 91)... and how many copycats there were later of the even more successful black-&-white *Mad*... and how Marvel was able to launch (*Not*) *Brand Echh* in 1967 with no real worries about a lawsuit... I am joyed and buoyed both by nostalgia, and by historical perspective... except when I see what the “political correctness” crowd is doing in the alleged name of multi-culturalism and “good taste.”

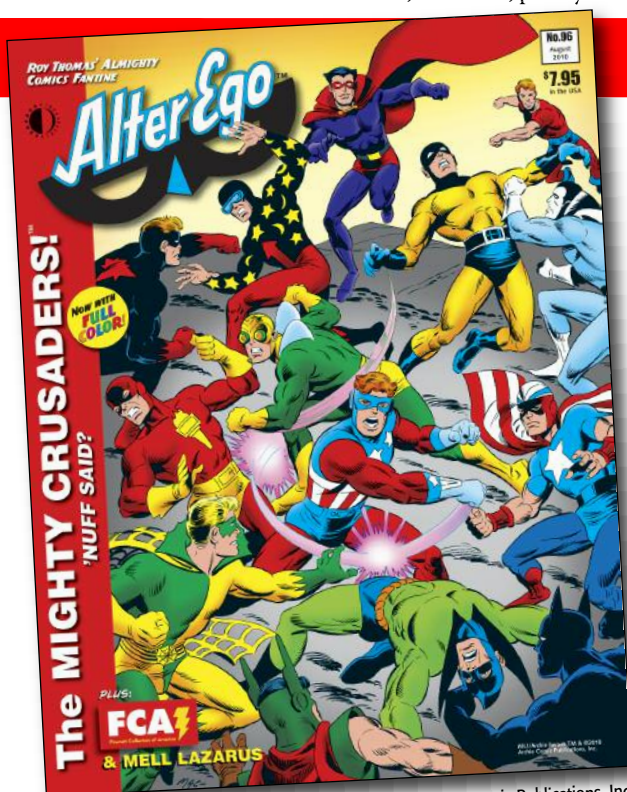
Also, of course, it’s amusingly ironic that, nowadays, *Mad* is basically owned by DC Comics... while both are now part of a conglomerate once known as “Time-Life, Inc.” partly after the very publication that sued Gaines.

What goes around comes around.

And *keeps* going round... and round... and round....

Bestest,

P.S.: Alas, we had to forego our letters section again this issue... and even delay the conclusion of our three-part George Kashdan interview till, well, Part 4, next month. Bear with us—we’ll catch up soon (it says here)!



[Heroes TM & ©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

## COMING IN AUGUST

## #96

### THE MIGHTY CRUSADERS! Archie Comics' 1960s Team Extreme!

- Color-splashed cover by **MIKE MACHLAN**—an homage to the work of **PAUL REINMAN**!
- “*Too Many Super-Heroes!*” *The Fly* (a.k.a. *Fly Man*) & *Fly Girl*—*The Jaguar*—*The Shield*—*Hangman*—*Black Hood*—and many, many more! **WILL MURRAY** introduces us to the 1960s+ annals of **JERRY SIEGEL** • **PAUL REINMAN** • **JOE SIMON** & **JACK KIRBY** • **JOHN ROSENBERGER** • **JOHN GIUNTA** • **GEORGE TUSKA** • **AL WILLIAMSON** • **RICH BUCKLER** • **GRAY MORROW** • **BOB FUJITANI**, et al.!
- Golden Age artist/writer **MELL LAZARUS** talks to **JIM AMASH** about the 1950s at Toby Press alongside **CAPP** • **FRAZETTA** • **CAPLIN** • **SULTAN** • **SPARLING** • **BOLLE** • **KEEFER** • **BROWN & GANTZ** • **GILL** • **SCHROEDER**, & others—plus the beginnings of his long-running comic strips *Miss Peach* and *Momma!*
- The cosmic conclusion of **JIM AMASH**’s interview with **GEORGE KASHDAN**!
- **FCA** with **MARC SWAYZE**, plus **DARRELL McNEIL** on doing *Shazam!* at Filmmation—**MICHAEL T. GILBERT** on *Jimmy Corrigan*, *The Super-Man*—& **MORE!!**

Edited by **ROY THOMAS**

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# “ECHH” Marks The Spot!

## A Goofy, Gregarious Guide To Marvel's NOT BRAND ECHH - 1967-69

by Roy Thomas  
(Who Was There!)

**W**elcome aboard! Step lively now, 'cause this locomotive's about to leave the station at bullet-train speed, to cover the 13 issues of Not Brand Echh in a single trip. This will be a distinctly personal tour, since so many of the people involved are no longer with us, and Marie Severin's health did not allow for a new interview. But, adding to my own travelogue, co-engineers Gary Friedrich and Bill Peckmann offered up a few welcome reminiscences... so at least this whistlestop tour will be conducted by folks who rode this route on the maiden voyage. If anything gets skipped or wrongly identified as we roll merrily along, hopefully some alert passenger will pull the cord overhead and clue us in. End of tortured metaphor... beginning of journey.

### Brand Echh A-Borning

Guess you might call it a “power lunch,” 1967 style... at least within the narrow confines of Marvel Comics as it then was.

It may well have been the only time that editor/chief writer Stan Lee, new editorial assistant Gary Friedrich, and I ever went out to eat as a threesome. In fact, that might've even been the same day that, out of the cerulean blue, Stan abruptly announced to us: “Y'know, we need some titles around here. I'm the editor... so I guess that makes Roy the associate editor... and Gary the assistant editor.” And lo, it suddenly was so.

For the past year-plus, ever



### They Had Us Covered!

The Jack Kirby-penciled, Stan Lee-dialogued cover of *Brand Echh* #1 (Aug. 1967)—plus clockwise images of Stan the Man and King Kirby—plus Rascally Roy Thomas, Groovy Gary Friedrich, and Jolly Solly Brodsky, who are spuriously “quoted” on it. The photos first appeared in the 1969 *Fantastic Four Annual*; our thanks to Bob Bailey and J. Fairfax. The cover scan is courtesy of the Grand Comics Database (see p. 76 for more info). And see p. 10 for commentary on the cover of *Brand Echh* #1. [©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.]



“Daredevil” co-creator Bill Everett as staff artist...

...and maybe one or two others.

since I'd quickly ceased being a salaried “staff writer” in favor of performing proofreading and other menial editorial chores, I hadn't had any title, not even “editorial assistant.” Marvel in the latter '60s, only slowly beginning to expand again after the skeleton crew of the late '50s and early '60s, didn't bother much with formal job descriptions, since there were maybe a dozen people on staff. By the turn of 1967 those included, besides Stan, Gary, and me, the following intrepid souls:

Production manager Sol Brodsky...

Production staffer Marie Severin (who'd recently begun doubling as artist of the 10-page “Dr. Strange” and “Incredible Hulk” features)...

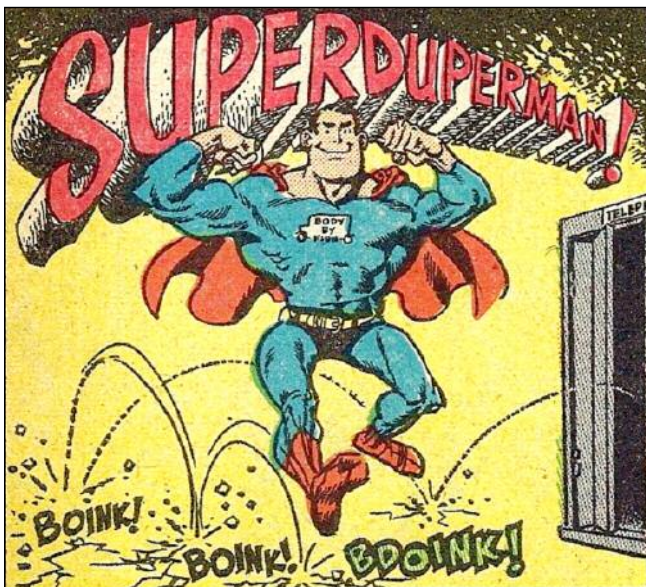
Staff artist John Romita (drawing *The Amazing Spider-Man*, and already being utilized as a sort of informal assistant art director)...

Corresponding secretary (what they then called a “gal Friday”) Flo Steinberg...

Morrie Kuramoto, staff letterer...

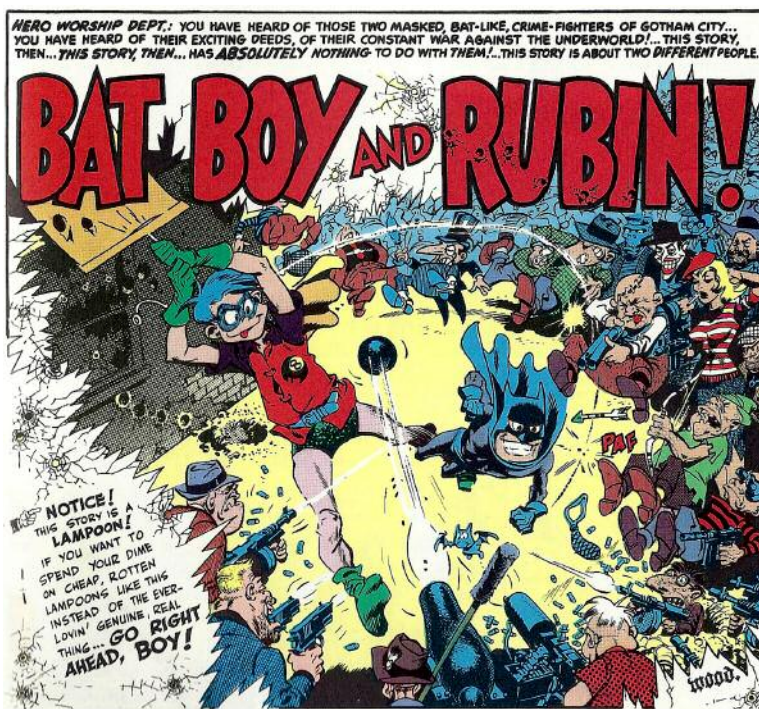
New production man John Verpoorten (if he was there by then)...

Gary had recently replaced short-time editorial assistant Ron Whyte, a talented young playwright who hadn't quite jelled on staff. In late '65 I'd persuaded Gary, who back in our hometown (Jackson,



**Mad About Super-Heroes**

Panels from two classic super-hero parodies in the four-color *Mad*—from #4 (April-May 1953) and #8 (Dec. 1953-Jan. 1954)—by the team of Harvey Kurtzman (editor/writer/layout artist) and Wally Wood (artist), with coloring by a very young Marie Severin. It doesn't get any better than this! [©2010 E.C. Publications, Inc.]



Whichever of the two of us first brought up the idea of Marvel doing a parody comic, Stan loved it—but instantly decided that, rather than poking fun at rival companies' heroes, or putting out a general satire/spoof title, it should be specifically devoted to burlesquing Marvel's own characters. At first blush, I didn't like that concept nearly as much as our original one—but in retrospect I realize it was a far better choice commercially. Our readers were far likelier to buy a comic featuring ribald renditions of *Marvel* heroes than one that showcased latter-day equivalents of Kurtzman & Wood's "Superduperman!" and "Bat Boy and Rubin!" In fact, since Marvel wouldn't have been able to publish *ongoing* adventures of parody versions of other companies' heroes without quickly encountering problems with their attorneys, under Gary's and my plan we'd soon have run out of characters we could lampoon!

For his part, Gary says, "I remember going into the meeting all pumped up about the possibility of doing a book like my old favorite *Mad* comic, and leaving it feeling like we'd made a really big mistake suggesting it in the first place." If I was initially disappointed at the direction Stan decided to take the proposed new title—and I *was*—Gary liked it even less. Stan had no immediate intention of our lampooning other companies' heroes... and indeed, there'd be precious little of that in the first issue.

Gary believes the idea of calling the mag "*Not Brand Echh*," rather than "*Brand Echh*," was brought up by Stan at that lunch—while, based on my own vague memories and a perusal of the comic's various indicia, I suspect the "*Not*" part came about a few weeks later, when Stan had to work up a cover logo and topline for the new title. (More on that in a minute.)

But—why *Brand Echh*... with or without the "*Not*"?

Since at least 1960, TV and print ads had been rife with references to "Brand X"—the always-unnamed competitor to whatever sponsor was buying the ad. Brand X's true moniker, wink wink nod nod, couldn't be revealed for legal reasons; but its merchandise—whether laundry detergent or mouthwash or whatever—was of course invariably and demonstrably inferior to the name brand. According to an article in the Oct. 31, 1960, issue of *Time* magazine, by then the phrase had even inspired a few enterprising companies to turn out actual "Brand X" cigarettes, cleaners, popcorn, and whiskey, with more suchlike on the way. (No real-life Brand X product of that era ever sold well, though—surprise,

Missouri) had been my best friend, a fellow movie usher, and rock-bandmate, to move to New York. There, he was soon banging out scripts for Charlton editor Dick Giordano till I could wangle him a shot at taking the Marvel "writer's test" and landing a job on Stan's little staff. Which he duly did by the latter part of '66.

Anyway, back to that lunch: Stan was looking for new concepts he could convince publisher Martin Goodman to put out. Besides super-heroes, Marvel still produced a handful of Westerns (mostly written by Stan's brother Larry Lieber, plus the new *Ghost Rider* by Gary and artist Dick Ayers), the two wilting "Millie the Model" titles, and the quasi-super-heroic war comic *Sgt. Fury*.

That day, over a meal probably at Schrafft's Restaurant (whose specialty was their ice cream), Gary and I tossed out to Stan the notion of doing a comic along the lines of the early *Mad*. I'd always believed it was Gary who brought it up; but, this past February, when I asked him for any anecdotal memories he had about *NBE*, Gary e-mailed: "I recall it having its genesis in several conversations you and I had about doing a book along the lines of the original *Mad* comic book, not the later b&w one. I remember you coming up with the idea to call it *Brand Echh*, which I thought was great, in that we'd be doing a lot of take-offs on DC characters." I myself have no recollection of the comic's title being my idea, though I'd be delighted to take credit for it—even if the phrase itself was totally Stan's, as detailed on the next page.

Since its early days, I'd been a rabid fan of Harvey Kurtzman's brilliant four-color *Mad* #1-23 published from 1952-55 before it metamorphosed into a black-&-white "magazine"... and, having also purchased Timely/Marvel/Atlas' own parody comics *Crazy*, *Wild*, and *Riot* in the mid-'50s, I knew they'd had a few good moments all their own (as detailed in *A/E* #86, hint, hint). Gary adds of his own days as a kid back in smalltown Missouri: "My friend Paul Roussel and I would get a new *Mad* and go over it word for word in the swing on his front porch. My early favorites were Melvin Mole and the *Shane* takeoff, 'Sane.' Also liked the Blackhawks story." That makes Gary, who's 3-4 years younger than I am, a *Mad* reader at least as early as I was! I'd been a whole twelve when *Mad* #5 & #4 (in that order) had suddenly hit me like a broadside. When I'd suddenly "got it."

surprise!—and ere long all had vanished into limbo.)

As unearthed by intrepid researchers Barry Pearl and Nick Caputo, it was a letter from two Forest Hills, NY, fans printed in *Fantastic Four* #7 (Oct. '62) that had first used the disapproving term "Echh" (yep, two "h's")—to refer, among other things, to Stan's ubiquitous "wisecracks." Our Leader himself introduced the phrase "Brand X" into Marvel in the letters page of *FF* #26 (May '64), though he used it there to refer to Marvel itself rather than to rival companies! The use of that term for the competition first popped up on the letters page of *Amazing Spider-Man* #31 (Dec. '65), where Stan wrote of one fictitious entity: "He must be a Brand X character—we don't remember using him."

In the meantime, beginning in the letters section of *FF* #43 (Oct. '65), Stan had added his own spin and begun referring to Marvel's competitors as "Brand Echh." In a boxed comment, he wrote:

**CHEE! Have you noticed the sorry mess of Marvel IMITATIONS making the scene lately? Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery and all that jazz, but we wanna make darn sure no dyed-in-the-wool Marvel madman gets stuck with one of those inferior "Brand Echh" versions of the real thing!**

**So, lull yourself to sleep each night with these imperishable words: "It isn't a Marvel masterpiece unless it SAYS Marvel on the cover trademark!" Don't ever settle for less—you're far too important to us! Remember—we found you first!**

The "Echh" was probably an unconscious riff on *Mad* magazine's frequent use of the term "Echh"—note the different spelling—to connote disdain or disgust. (Later, when a letter-writer referred in *Amazing Spider-Man* #34 to "Brand Echh," Stan good-naturedly corrected his spelling!)

Stan's earliest "Brand Echh" digs were doubtless aimed mostly at DC Comics' belated attempts to emulate certain Marvel traits (like hip buzzwords, an informal editorial attitude, and, yes, character development)—but the origins of what would soon be the Archie group's Radio Comics line (starting with *Fly Man*) had gone on sale by spring of '65, as well. Still, when a fan-letter from future *Dr. Strange* artist Frank Brunner, printed in *The X-Men* #20 (May '66), challenged him to name Marvel's "competitor" and "stop beating around the bush (FORbush?)," Stan responded: "As for why we don't name Brand Echh, it's because we have more than one competitor—so Brand Echh stands for all of 'em. You pays yer money and you takes yer choice! Besides, we did name 'em—who do you think made up the appellation 'Brand Echh'?? (Nyahh!)"

Two months later, in the Bullpen Bulletins page that appeared in all Marvel comics dated July 1966, he responded to letter-scribe Mike Murano's admonition to cease and desist with the "name-calling" thusly:

**Actually, we've never tried to single out any one competitor for criticism. By BRAND ECHH, we really meant all of them. But, that's beside the point. What we want to know is—do most of you**

**agree with Mike? If so, we won't mention Brand Echh again. Personally, we get a kick out of the mutual letter-col needing that goes on—but, as always, our job is to please YOU!! So, clue us in, frantic ones—and we'll announce your decision as soon as the mail is in.**

For, by now, along with a Marvelesque series or three at National/DC (e.g., *Doom Patrol*, *Metamorpho*, and "Eclipso") and the burgeoning cast of Archie's *Fly Man* that would soon coalesce into *The Mighty Crusaders* (a source of supreme annoyance to both Goodman and Stan because of its over-the-top attempts to appropriate the Marvel style), a new if less imitative company called Tower had recently introduced the super-hero comic *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, under the artistic aegis of living legend (and recent *Daredevil* artist!) Wally Wood. And still more companies, it seemed, were entering the super-hero sweepstakes every month, especially since the recent blockbuster success of *Batman* on TV, a phenomenon which during 1966-67 dwarfed even the powerful effect Marvel was having on the comics field.

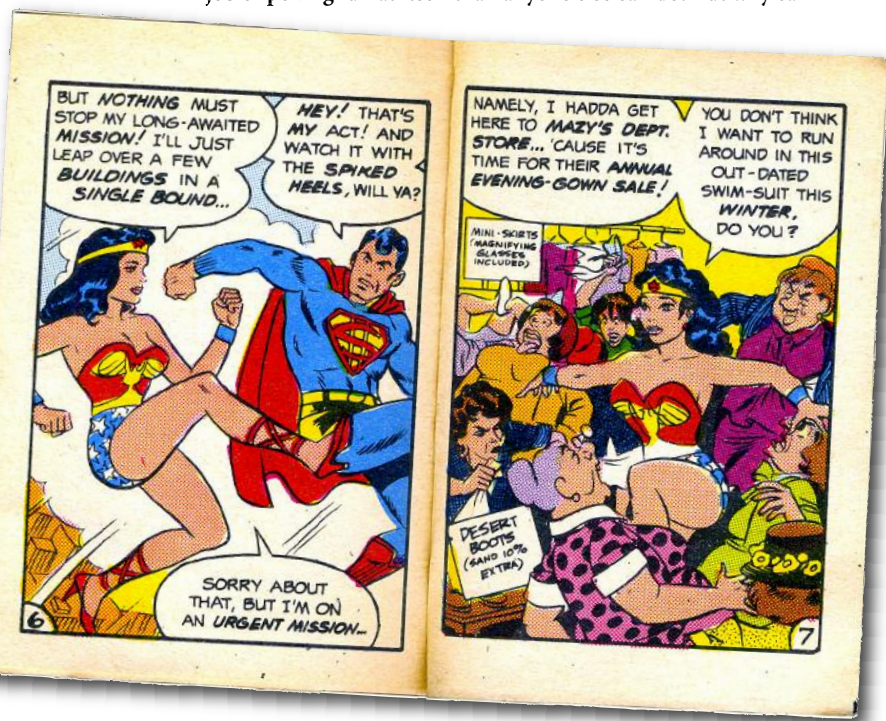
On the Oct. '66 Bulletins page, after giving readers time to respond to his "poll," Stan announced that the resultant mail had left him "more confused than ever!"

**[The mail is] evenly divided—fifty percent in FAVOR of our roasting our competition every chance we get, and fifty percent OPPOSED to our carrying the batty bickering on any longer! It looks as though there's nothing left to do but play it by ear—we'll mention 'em when we feel so justified—and ignore 'em when we think they deserve it (like most of the time)!**

While I myself mostly read Marvel fan-mail only when Stan or Flo routed letters to me, I suspect his estimate was a fairly accurate reflection of readers' response. After that, true to his word, he did use the term "Brand Echh" less often in Bullpen Bulletins and letters pages.

Then, in all Aug. '67 issues (after a teaser mini-ad the month before), Stan led off the Bullpens page with a self-proclaimed "BOMBSHELL!" item which announced that Marvel's new mag *Brand Echh* #1 was on sale. Why this title and its humorous format, whose cover was depicted in a full-page house ad earlier in the same comics? Smiley explained:

**If everyone else is determined to imitate Marvel, we figure that your ol' Bullpen can do a better, nuttier, funnier, more exciting job of poking fun at itself than anyone else can do! But why call**



### Stupor Market

A few months before *Brand Echh* was launched, Roy T. alternated with Topps Chewing Gum Co. exec (and friend) Len Brown on a series of sixteen tiny 8-page color parody comics, each with one panel to a page and packaged like Bazooka bubble gum cards. The artists were Wally Wood and Gil Kane. Len worked out the covers and titles with future Pulitzer winner (for *Maus*) Art Spiegelman. One of those Roy wrote was "Blunder Woman," drawn by Wood... which came'd Topps' own Stuporman in one panel. [©2010 T.C.G.]

it **BRAND ECHH**? Because we've been steadily making those two words the most famous title in comicdom—so we figured we might as well cash in on the publicity ourselves!

Stan declared that the new title was “jam-packed with Marvel's mightiest super-heroes” (with no indication that their names would be altered into parody versions) and would be “loaded with block-busting bellylaughs in every incredible panel! It's the mag you never expected to see—created by the only cavortin' crew of creative cornballs who could have done it!” And so on.

That lead item, plus a small repro of the mag's logo near the bottom, took up roughly a quarter of that Bullpen Bulletins page. Stan was promoting *Brand Echh*'s debut far more than he had, say, that of the Western *Ghost Rider* a few months earlier. I don't recall ever knowing if he'd had any difficulty talking Goodman into adding the new comic to the schedule... but, unlike most new Marvel titles of that era, *Brand Echh* started life not as a bimonthly, but on an 8-times-a-year schedule. Which, probably coincidentally, was the frequency with which National/DC, not Marvel, issued a number of its titles.

But—why is that mag invariably referred to above as “*Brand Echh*” and not as “*Not Brand Echh*,” the name by which it's almost universally been known for the past four-plus decades?

The reason, of course, is that the comic's official title for its first four issues was indeed simply *Brand Echh*, as a peek at the various indicia will verify. However, because the topline on all its covers read “Who Says A Comic Book Has To Be Good??” above the larger words “NOT BRAND ECHH,” most fans from the outset treated that three-word phrase as if it were the actual title.

Proof you want? In issue #4, all three comments from readers printed on the series' very first letters page would refer to it as “*Not Brand Echh*.” By then, even the writer of that page's answers—probably Stan himself—refers to the comic by that

title, although he also instantly latched onto one letter-scribe's reference to it as “*Brechh*.” And, with the indicia of #5, the title would indeed become, officially, *Not Brand Echh*.

Now—what about the *contents* of that first issue, which set the style, and of the others that followed?

## BRAND ECHH #1 (Aug. 1967)

The stories, of course, were produced before the cover. For some reason, it was decided there'd be four of them in #1—and that I'd write two of them, a parody of Marvel's Westerns and (I probably volunteered for this one) a take-off on the Golden Age reprints then appearing in *Fantasy Masterpieces*. Stan would script the lead feature lampooning *Fantastic Four*, and Gary would do a takeoff on the *Sgt. Fury* comic he'd recently begun scripting.

We wound up in that first issue with a wonderful mix of artists, all of whom, as it happened, had been associated with color parody comics in the mid-'50s: Jack Kirby (who, with then-partner Joe Simon, had produced Charlton's *From Here to Insanity* #11, Aug. 1955)... John Severin (who'd contributed “Melvin of the Apes,” etc., to the very early *Mad*)... Bill Everett (a regular in Timely/Atlas' aforementioned trio of *Mad* imitations)... the team of Ross Andru & Mike Esposito (artists and even publishers of the three issues of *Get Lost*)... and Marie Severin (who'd colored each and every story in those first 23 issues of *Mad*).

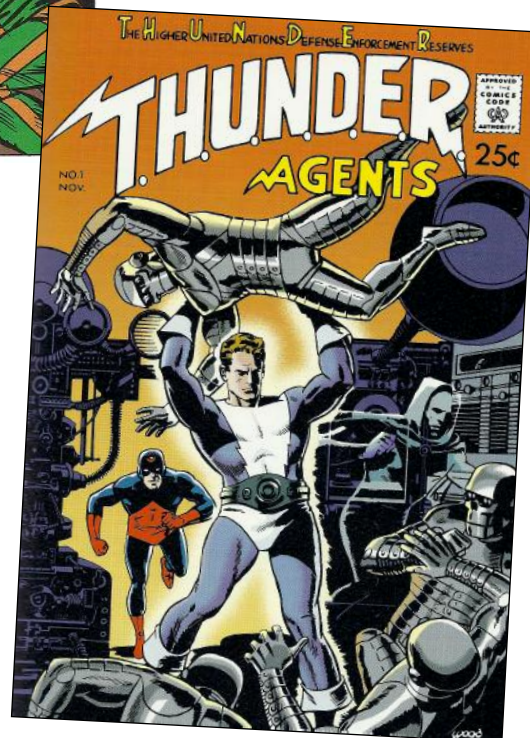
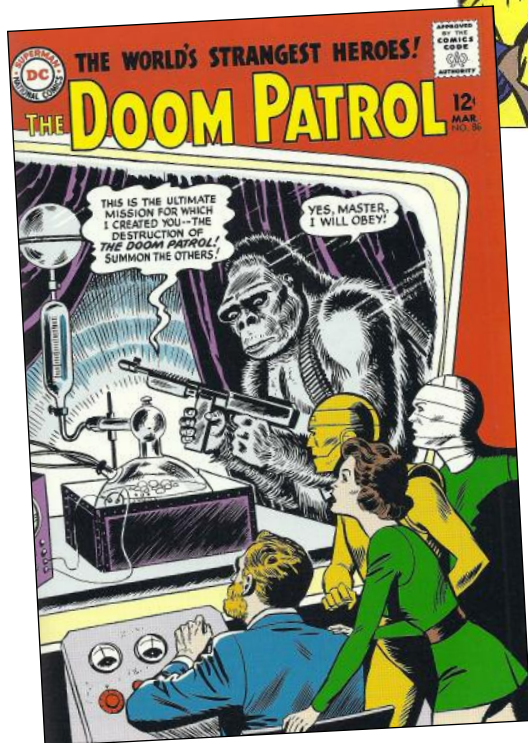
Ironic that it would be Marie—the only one of the half dozen named above who hadn't contributed actual *art* to a 1950s satire comic—who'd become *NBE*'s stand-out artist... the one who gave it, most of us feel, its soul, its best moments, and its prime justification for existence!

Not that that was immediately clear in *Brand Echh* #1, which opened with...



### What The Echh Is Going On Here?

Three titles that Smilin' Stan may have considered in 1965 to deserve the label of “Brand Echh” were DC's *Doom Patrol*, Archie/Radio's *Fly Man* (forerunner of the *Mighty Crusaders*), and Tower's *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*. Of course, many readers then and now felt that *Doom Patrol* (and its fellow DC title *Metamorpho*) and *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* were more than just pale imitations of Marvel—and even *The Mighty Crusaders* has its defenders, as you'll see next issue. The cover of *Doom Patrol* #86 (March 1964) is by Bruno Premiani... the splash from *Fly Man* #31 (May 1965) by Paul Reinman (with script by Jerry Siegel)... and the cover of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* #1 by Wally Wood. All three of these pieces have been reproduced from currently available hardcover or trade paperback reprintings... so clearly, somebody liked 'em! [©2010 DC Comics; Archie Comic Publications, Inc.; & Estate of John Carbonaro, respectively.]







**Slimely/Marble's "Big Three"**  
 (Above & bottom flight:) The splash page of the Golden Age spoof in *Brand Echh* #1 was probably partly drawn by Wild Bill Everett—hence the credit—but the entrance of Chaplain America four pages later was pure Andru & Esposito. [©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

theme climaxed with one that read: "Forget the whole thing, Shane! We just rented your room!" Still, it shows our early-*Mad* roots that our big running gag referenced a movie nearly a decade and a half old, rather than a current Western. Anyway, we closed the story by sticking an "Approved by the Comics Code Authority" sticker on sidekick Bum Bum's hat. We feared the Code might make us remove it, but since we hadn't made any disparaging references to the Code itself in the story, we hoped they'd be good sports about it. And damned if they weren't!

There was a fiery aftermath to this story—but we'll get to that.

**"The Human Scorch versus The Sunk-Mariner"**  
 Roy Thomas (writer) – Ross Andru & Bill Everett (pencilers/  
 co-plotters) Mike Esposito (inker) – 6 pp.

This is a hard one to write about. You'll see why.

A year or so earlier, Stan had decided to re-present vintage stories of Timely's 1940s super-heroes in our reprint title *Fantasy Masterpieces*. Since Marvel didn't have black-&-white proofs going back that far, copies of the actual old comics were found and Photostatted, with the color washed out to the extent possible; then the art was retouched... not always with proper care, given our hectic pace. *FM* #7 (April '67) had reprinted the 22-page "The Human Torch versus The Sub-Mariner"

slugfest from *Marvel Mystery Comics* #9 (July 1940). That issue was hitting the newsstands around the time we were prepping *Brand Echh* #1... so it was the perfect story to lampoon.

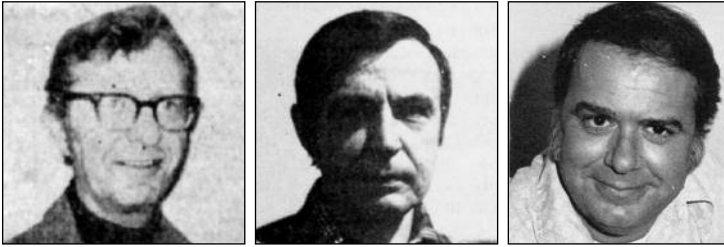
Stan had assigned staffer Bill Everett as artist. That made perfect sense, since Bill, Gary's and my sometime roommate over the past year or two, had created Namor and had drawn the Sub-Mariner figures in the 1940 story (Torch creator Carl Burgos had drawn his flaming foe). I wrote up a page or two of plot notes for Bill, which basically exhorted him to just draw a humorous 6-page version of the original story. I don't know how specific I was about the gags—but I suspect I included the tale's climax, in which "Chaplain America" leaps in from his 1967 adventures, informs the battling duo that they're passé, and sends them off to an old-folks' home.

If that ending sounds a bit familiar to someone who read "Captain Marble Flies Again!" (from *Nuts!* #5, Nov. 1954) when we reprinted it back in *A/E* #33—well, that old spoof (in which Golden Age heroes wound up confined in padded cells) was definitely on my mind when I wrote those notes for Bill. However, since Stan had been fairly non-directional about the precise way we should handle the stories, one sentence in my "synopsis" read, in essence: "I'm not quite sure of what Stan wants, so let's treat this story as if we were doing it for Harvey Kurtzman for one of the early color issues of *Mad*." I was mostly just trying to inspire both Bill and myself.

Bill, however, wasn't in a mood to be inspired that year. This was during the period when he was doing a lot of drinking, as he himself was the first to admit later... and, frankly, I've always felt he was just looking for an excuse not to do this assignment. He roughly penciled the splash page... after which, instead of asking me for more details or a story conference, he charged with it into Stan's office and, to punctuate whatever precise complaint he made, shoved my typed notes under Stan's nose.

Stan read them... and saw red. He quickly relieved Bill of the assignment, called me in, and proceeded to rake me over the coals—not about the plot, but about my statement that I'd write it as if I were doing it for Kurtzman's *Mad*. "Did Harvey Kurtzman get you a raise?" was one of the questions he fired at me. I didn't know how to respond, since I'd meant no disrespect and had no idea what I'd done wrong. But I left, chastened... and Ross Andru was quickly lined up to pencil the rest of the story. Since Ross and partner/inker Mike Esposito had drawn the "Captain Marble" spoof mentioned above (though I don't think I knew that till later), it was right up their alley... and things went off without a further hitch.





Artists Alley

(L. to r.): Bill Everett... Ross Andru... Mickey Demeo (alias Mike Esposito)—the artists of "The Human Scorch versus The Sunk-Mariner." Wild Bill clearly wanted no part of Brand Echh—but it's strange that veteran parodists Andru & Esposito weren't tapped to draw more for the mag. [©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Later, I pieced together what might've happened: Stan had written a lot of humor during his career to that date, and had had a fair degree of success with it, mostly for Timely/Atlas, but occasionally for outside media, as well. And, back in the 1940s, Kurtzman had written and drawn humor material for Timely; Stan had appreciated his "Hey Look!" and had found space for it in Atlas comics. But then Kurtzman had left to edit, write, and draw for EC Comics and, in short order, had created Mad, which even in its four-color incarnation was something of a sales phenomenon by 1954. Stan and Timely had responded with no fewer than three parody titles, and there was some good stuff in them, but they'd all failed in short order. Perhaps, I reasoned, Stan felt I was unfavorably comparing him with Kurtzman, who by 1967 had risen to iconic status among comics fans and the burgeoning underground "comix" creators. But I had far too much respect for Stan to try to "bait" him that way; and he himself was well on his way, of course, to becoming another "legend in his own time." In any event, to my relief, the whole thing quickly blew over, and was never mentioned again till now... as a frabjous footnote of comics history.

For my part, I was proud of the finished story, as drawn by Andru, Everett (maybe the figures on the splash page?), and Esposito (as "Mickey Demeo"). I felt "Chaplain America" was the perfect riff on the name of Captain America, who was given to pontifical ultra-patriotic pronouncements. And, even if I'd "borrowed" the general notion of the ending from Nuts! #4, I loved working takeoffs on Charlie Brown, Little Orphan Annie, Dick Tracy, Archie, The



Phantom, Mickey Mouse, The Little King, Little Lulu, and, yes, Batman into the final panel (as seen in A/E #33). As it turned out, that glimpse of an obvious Batman type smoking a stogie (along with passing verbal mentions of "Green Lampburn" and "The Dash" here, and of "Blatman and Robert" in the following story) would be the only hint in Brand Echh #1 of Gary's and my original plan for the mag. And that was probably for the best.

Interestingly, too, on the story's splash page I referred to the 1940 comic being lampooned as "Marble Mystery #9"—which seems to be the first use (and the only use, in #1) of the obvious term "Marble" as the official Brand Echh version of "Marvel."

"Sgt. Furious and His Hostile Commandos!! 'A Day of Blunder!'"

Gary Friedrich (writer) – John Severin (artist/co-plotter) – 5 pp.

Gary had been as thrilled as Stan or I when, a few months earlier, artist John Severin had suddenly popped up, with a bit of time to spare from his workload for the black-&-white satire mag Cracked. Stan had instantly hired him to pencil and ink the monthly Sgt. Fury, which Gary now scripted. Gary had seen Severin's two "Melvin of the Apes" parodies in early Mad, as well as his takeoffs on Robin Hood, Westerns, et al.

Gary decided to basically parody "A Day of Thunder!," the D-Day story I had scripted (with artists Ayers and John Tartaglione) for the 1966 Sgt. Fury Annual. The Brechh tale's splash, though, spoofed that of Sgt. Fury #42 (May 1967), the very first issue Gary himself had written. The story was quite successful, to my way of thinking, right up through Happy Slam Sawbuck revealing on the final page that "D-Day" actually stands for "Desertion Day," so that the Commandos all split for parts unknown and



Heck Hath No Fury

(Above left:) The splash page of Sgt. Fury #42 (May 1967), by scripter Gary Friedrich, plotter/penciler Dick Ayers, & inker John Tartaglione. Too bad Dick, who'd drawn for Charlton's Eh! in the mid-'50s, never got a chance to draw a story for NBE.

(Above right:) The splash for Gary's and artist John Severin's parody from Brand Echh #1. You can tell the difference—can't you? At far left is Marie's big brother John, from that 1969 Fantastic Four Annual. [©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

# “I Learned To Do A Little Bit Of Everything”

## A 1977 Interview With Artist MARIE SEVERIN About NOT BRAND ECHH, Spider-Man, And Lots More

Interview Conducted and Transcribed by Bernie Hogya

# A/E

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For the March 1977 issue of the fanzine Fans of Central Jersey, comics enthusiast Bernie Hogya interviewed Marie

Severin at the Marvel offices. Our thanks to Barry Pearl and Nick Caputo for providing us with a copy of that mag, and to Bernie for permission to reprint it. This piece is a snapshot of its era, when Marvel was struggling to emerge from the related problems of shrinking sales outlets and the relative lack of profitability of comic books due to their low cover price. Of course, no one knew at that time that Marvel was about to get at least a temporary reprieve from those problems as the company's six-issue adaptation of the 1977 film Star Wars, whose first issue had just gone on sale, would go on to seven figures' worth of reprinting.]

### “I Started Doing Comics At EC”

**BERNIE HOGYA:** Where were you born?

**MARIE SEVERIN:** They did an interview with me in the newest *FOOM* magazine [#16], and their first dumb question was, “Where were you born?” Now, nobody cares about that, do they? What they really want to know is how old I am, and I'm not going to tell them that. [laughter]

BULK



To get into a past history of myself, as you may or may not know, I started doing comics at EC. My brother John was working there, and I came as a girl Friday, but I soon progressed to full-time production and coloring. EC had such a small staff that we had a lot of fun, but we also learned a lot—it was early in the game, and EC was the only com-

#### Buying Things In Bulk

A latter-day sketch by Marie of The Inedible Bulk of Not Brand Echh fame, provided by both Dewey Cassell and Jerry K. Boyd. [Bulk TM & ©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.]



#### Marie, The Dawn Is Breaking...

Editor David Anthony Kraft's interview with Mirthful Marie Severin for *FOOM* #16 (Dec. 1976) did indeed begin with the query: “Where were you born?” Her answer was “Oceanside, Long Island”—and that when she was born was nobody's business but her own. *FOOM*, of course, was the magazine published by Marvel for members of its mid-1970s fan club.

That issue's cover was a wraparound schematic masterpiece (complete with staff and freelancers) of the Marvel offices; it also showed how much Marvel had grown in the decade-plus since she had come to work there on staff in 1964-65. Curiously, despite her unwillingness to provide interviewers a birth date, Marie had provided the photo above right of herself as a toddler, so it could be printed in *FOOM* #8 (Dec. 1974), along with the more recent snapshot.

[©2010 Marie Severin.]

pany at that time to work for that was really doing storytelling.

I was at EC till the beginnings of *Mad* magazine, and after that, I worked for Stan Lee at Timely. There, I learned to do a little bit of everything—lettering, designing mastheads, coloring, writing, costume design, comics production—the line of it is, I'm a jack-of-all-trades. That's good today, because we lost a whole generation of people when comic groups went out of business in the '50s. A lot of, for instance, letterers—there wasn't anyplace for them to work then, so now we have to scrounge around for letterers. We have so many books, but not enough letterers. It's the same with writers. It isn't too bad with artists, because a lot of artists have no place to go but comics. In the old days, there was magazine art, like in *The Saturday Evening Post*. Very few artists do magazine fillers today. There's really no need for it. A lot of the guys that would be working there are seeking out comics. So we get a lot from that crowd.

Also, there's a resurgence of interest in comics. People your age like them.

Our readership ranges from little kids, age nine up, to and past your forties. Anyway, because I've been in comics so long, and know the different aspects of it, I'm very handy to have around. I can jump in at almost any instance, to help someone out. I know I can't do it as good, as if, say, a correction is needed on a Neal Adams story—well, I don't draw like Neal Adams, but I can sort of know maybe a shortcut of how he might draw an arm turned a different way. I'd prefer if he'd do it himself, but if he wasn't around, I could do it.

So, that's my history in comics. In short, I began doing comic work for EC. After that, I did some stuff for Timely. When comics went out of



### Strange But True

By 1967 Marie had succeeded Steve Ditko and Bill Everett on the "Dr. Strange" feature in *Strange Tales*. She seems to have penciled this drawing for a fanzine in 2000. Thanks to the Golden Age Comic Book Stories website. [Dr. Strange TM & ©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

business in the '50s, I did some work in a couple of places, freelancing, and finally ended up in the offices here, and haven't left since!

**HOGYA:** *They didn't let you out!*

**SEVERIN:** [laughs] No, actually, they were desperate. When comics began mushrooming again in the '60s, a lot of people didn't think that they were going to take off. I reentered comics around 1964, and have been busy ever since.

**HOGYA:** *What's your present title at Marvel?*

**SEVERIN:** Assistant Art Director, or Associate Assistant, I don't know; titles don't mean that much to me. A lot of people get titles, and you never see them again. John Romita is my immediate boss—he is the Marvel image—he knows what sells comic books. He and I were both trained by Stan Lee as to what Marvel was expected to produce, and what Marvel was selling at the time. The Kirby-Lee dynamics of comic production was passed on to us directly from Stan.

Now, Stan doesn't have the time to work with every young artist, but we can now project Stan's feelings to them. Stan used to run the whole place, but it's gotten so big now, that he has to have people that understand and can carry out his expertise in comic understanding. If you could clone Stan, John Romita, Roy Thomas, and people like that, you know you'll be able to do good, with no sweat, but you can't—you've only got one of each of them and, they're specialists—excellent at what they do.

Jack Kirby, too, if you could clone him—now he's doing everything. He writes his own stuff, draws and everything. He's an entity in his own self.

### Old King Kull

A Kull pencil illo by Marie, provided by Barry Pearl and Nick Caputo—from this interview as originally printed in *FCJ* #13. [Kull TM & © Kull Properties, Inc.]

Stan and Jack, when they started out, worked a lot in collaboration. Stan would tell Jack what he had in mind for a new character, and Jack would draw it up. It's the same thing now. A writer would say, "I want a guy that does this and that, let's play around with a costume." An artist, for instance, like Dave Cockrum, who's working on *The X-Men*, would come to a writer with an idea sketch for a new character, and together, they'd rework it till it came out to what they wanted. It's that combination that has made Marvel comics interesting. If the writers and artists get enthused about a creation of theirs, it's plausible to believe that the readers will be enthused as well.

## "I Really Never Had That Much Of A Yen To Write"

**HOGYA:** *A lot of artists have gotten into writing, or would like to try writing. Are you one of them?*

**SEVERIN:** Let me see, a long time ago, in one of the *Spidey Annuals* [#5, Nov. 1968], I did a story on how *Spider-Man* was written. I drew it and wrote it; Stan edited the heck out of it, but the essence was mine. But, well, he edited everything because he's a better writer than anybody. Then in *Not Brand Echh* [#12, Feb. 1969], I did a thing on how to be an artist. I've never written that much dialog, but I've plotted lots of things with writers beforehand. I really never had that much of a yen to write.

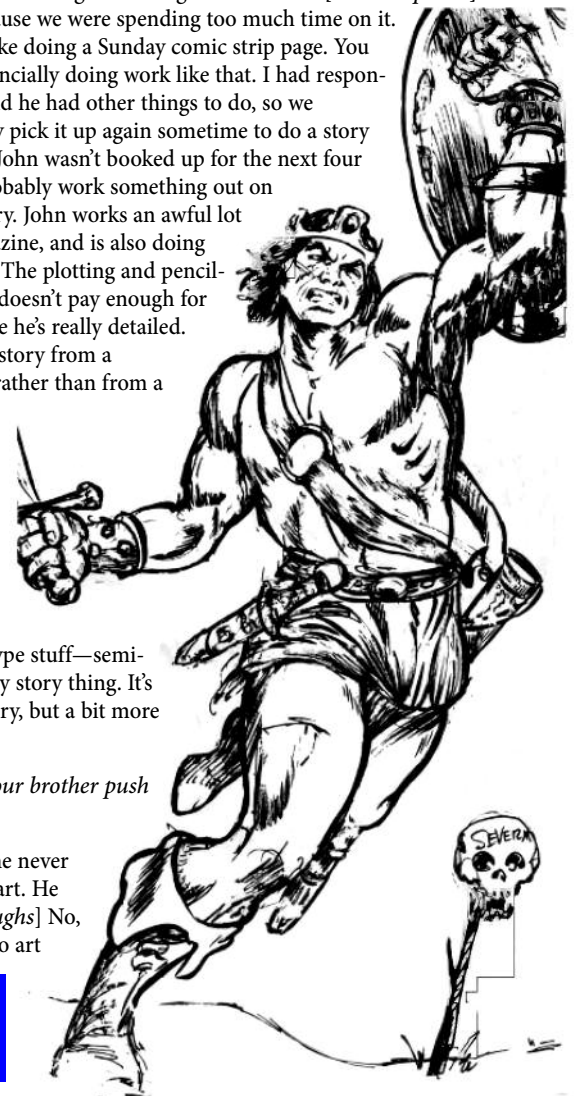
**HOGYA:** *What was the first thing you and your brother worked on together?*

**SEVERIN:** The first thing we did together was *Kull [the Conqueror]*. We had to stop, because we were spending too much time on it. Each page was like doing a Sunday comic strip page. You cannot exist financially doing work like that. I had responsibilities here, and he had other things to do, so we stopped. We may pick it up again sometime to do a story here or there. If John wasn't booked up for the next four months, we'd probably work something out on a new "Kull" story. John works an awful lot at *Cracked* magazine, and is also doing work at Warren. The plotting and penciling here, really, doesn't pay enough for his work, because he's really detailed. He'd rather do a story from a complete script rather than from a story plot. He's very good, and I like him very much.

Even though I like doing super-hero stuff, I'm more tuned into the "Kull" type stuff—semi-super-hero—fairy story thing. It's sword-and-sorcery, but a bit more realistic.

**HOGYA:** *Did your brother push you into art?*

**SEVERIN:** No, he never pushed me into art. He dragged me. [laughs] No, he had sent me to art

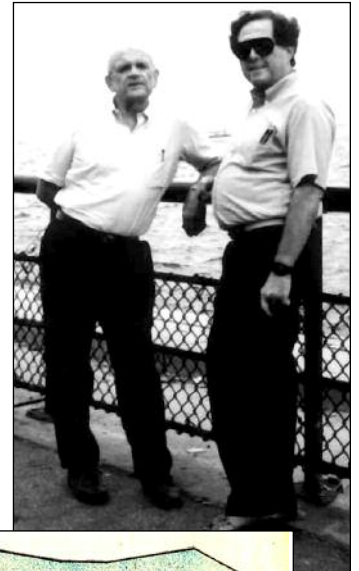


# “[The DC Editors] Got Into Arguments”

## GEORGE KASHDAN On Editing And Writing Comics In The Golden Age – Part III

Conducted by Jim Amash Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

**G**eorge Kashdan (1928-2006) was a writer and editor for DC Comics from 1947 until sometime in the 1970s, and later wrote for the comics of Western Publishing and for Fimation TV animation. As editor and/or writer, he handled many of DC's top characters at one time or another, including Superman, Batman, and Aquaman. Although, as related more fully in our previous issues, he was a bedridden stroke victim when this interview was conducted by telephone in bits and pieces, he felt it was important to relate his version of the history of DC as a company... even if his view of some of his associates was less than flattering. Last issue contained much of Kashdan's discussion of artist Jack Kirby's serious, even legal, differences with DC editor Jack Schiff over monetary arrangements for the comic strip Sky Masters. —Jim.



### George Does It Again!

George Kashdan (on right in photo at top) with his brother Larry, who kindly provided us all photos of George used in conjunction with this several-part interview. Since George was both an editor and a writer, here is an introductory glimpse of his work in both capacities:

(Left:) A dynamic action page from *The Brave and the Bold* #58 (Feb.-March 1956), the second "Metamorpho" issue. Script by Bob Haney; pencils by Ramona Fradon; inks by Charles Paris. Editor GK was proud of this series, which he says was his original conception. Thanks to Stephan Friedt. The covers of *B&B* #57 & 58 were seen last issue. [©2010 DC Comics.]

(Above:) The splash page of an adaptation of renowned science-fiction great Poul Anderson's short story "Call Me Joe," scripted by GK and drawn by Adolf Buylla for Western Publishing's *Starstream* #4 (1976). For more about Kashdan's experiences writing for Western, see next issue. [©2010 Western Publishing Co., Inc., or its successors in interest.]

## "As Long As I Work Here, Jack Kirby Will Not Work Here"

JA: Supposedly, there was an editorial conference to discuss why Marvel was doing so much better. And either [editor] Bob Kanigher or Irwin [Donenfeld, co-publisher] held up a Jack Kirby comic book, and said the secret of Marvel is "bad art." Were you there?

KASHDAN: [groans] I don't remember anyone saying that. It was probably an idea I would have agreed with.

JA: You did not like Jack Kirby's artwork?

KASHDAN: I can't say I didn't like it. He hit on a nerve that the fans all liked. I could see where it was eye-catching, and fans would find that really appealing.

JA: Was there any pressure to imitate Marvel?

KASHDAN: They never said "imitated." People were angry at [editor Jack] Schiff for letting Kirby get away from National, for virtually kicking him out. I think Irwin Donenfeld may have blamed Schiff for that.

JA: And now it came back to bite DC in a big way, because Kirby was creating a lot of characters that could have been DC's.

KASHDAN: Right. After I left, Carmine [Infantino] and Irwin were running the firm. Carmine brought in Jack Kirby to draw for them. DC tried to imitate Kirby's success at Marvel. That didn't succeed too well. And they had an artist named Jay Scott Pike, who was an excellent artist. He drew some damn good covers for them.

JA: By the mid-'60s, Carmine had begun having more input into covers.

KASHDAN: He was there to guide them. I had been saying to Irwin that he needed good artists to do good covers, and draw some ballsy stories. And when Carmine was hired [as cover editor], Irwin said, "Well, your wish is going to come true. Carmine's gonna be that artist you wanted." The next thing I knew is that Carmine and Irwin were running the company like a pair of Army generals: the General and his adjutant.

JA: I've heard that Jack Schiff had said, "As long as I work here, Jack Kirby will not work here."

KASHDAN: He may have. I could believe it. Schiff was mad at Kirby over [the comic strip] *Sky Masters*, as we've discussed. Schiff's lawyer told him to make short shrift of Kirby. And Schiff was a temperamental

man. One day, Kirby asked Schiff for some assignments, and Schiff virtually kicked him out and shouted at him, "What the hell do you want here with me?" Kirby says, "I'm just trying to make a living, Jack." And Schiff said, "Well, go make a living somewhere else." And they wound up on non-speaking terms. Once, as we were all heading to lunch, Kirby walked past us and totally ignored us. He showed his hostility in other ways.

JA: What other ways?

KASHDAN: Like going to Marvel. [chuckles]

JA: Well, he had to make a living.

KASHDAN: That he did.

JA: Obviously the bad blood went both ways at that point.

KASHDAN: Oh, Schiff had no bad blood. He expected Kirby to cooperate, and take it like a man... like a gentleman.

JA: Did Schiff feel he was entitled to money because he got them the *Sky Masters* assignment?

KASHDAN: Yes, he gave it all over to them. It wasn't a finder's fee or a kickback. It was a commission. And the court supported Schiff.

JA: Marvel was paying about half the rate DC was paying, but Kirby couldn't get work at DC from any other editor. Do you think Schiff had something to do with that?

KASHDAN: The other editors joined ranks at the request of Schiff. I knew Kirby, and I kind of liked him. We had lunch together a couple of



### Challenging The Unknown—One Comics Company At A Time

(Left:) Jack Kirby's last comic done for DC for more than a decade was *Challengers of the Unknown* #8 (June-July 1959), which he both scripted and illustrated. Repro'd from the hardcover *Challengers of the Unknown Archives, Vol. 2* (2004). [©2010 DC Comics.]

(Right:) Kirby's first new art for the company for which he'd co-created Captain America in 1940—an outfit that would, in 1963, be rechristened Marvel—was the credit-bereft tale "I Discovered the Secret of the Flying Saucers" for *Strange Worlds* #1 (Dec. 1958). Kirby's story art and related cover were inked by Christopher Rule. Thanks to Dr. Michael J. Vassallo for the scan and inker ID. [©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

times, and some pleasant conversations. I didn't ask him about *Sky Masters*, and he never cared to talk about it.

JA: *Would Schiff have been mad at you if you'd hired Kirby?*

KASHDAN: I couldn't have done it with Schiff around there.

JA: *So Kirby was blackballed.*

KASHDAN: Yes, virtually, he was.

JA: *Kirby said Schiff demanded a percentage of Sky Masters, and that he [Kirby] was forced into an agreement to pay Schiff royalties because Schiff had intimated that [otherwise] he wouldn't hire Jack for other work. I was wondering if that sounded like Jack Schiff to you.*

KASHDAN: That's not the sort of thing that I would expect of Schiff. What did Kirby say to him, and what did Schiff say?

JA: *There's actually a transcript of the pre-trial depositions, and Kirby on the witness stand said that Schiff told him he wanted a percentage, and that basically Schiff let Kirby know that if he didn't sign it, he wouldn't get work from DC anymore.*

KASHDAN: They let him know that? I don't see how he [Schiff] could have done that.

JA: *Kirby said that Schiff said he would not think well of Kirby if he didn't sign the agreement. So Kirby felt pressured to sign an agreement because he didn't want to lose his income. That's what he claimed, anyway. Since you knew Jack Schiff, and I did not, I was wondering if this sounded like Jack Schiff to you.*

KASHDAN: No, it doesn't.

## “They Took Kickbacks?”

JA: *I've been debating whether or not to ask you about this, but in fairness, I almost have to, since you've been so open with everything else I've asked you. I know there were some editors who took kickbacks from their freelancers. Do you think that this was a widespread thing?*

KASHDAN: It wasn't widespread up there.

JA: *I've heard that [DC editors] Kanigher and Jack Miller did it.*

KASHDAN: They took kickbacks? Oh, my!

JA: *But I never heard it about you or Jack Schiff or [fellow DC editors] Julie [Schwartz] or Mort Weisinger. I just heard it about those two. Did you ever hear of kickbacks being done?*

KASHDAN: No, no. [Writer] Ed Herron used to buy me drinks when he took me to a bar. But that had nothing to do with whether or not I or anyone else hired him. I never asked him to do that. It had nothing to do with business. Phyllis [Reed, DC romance editor] used to be a very careful person about things like that.

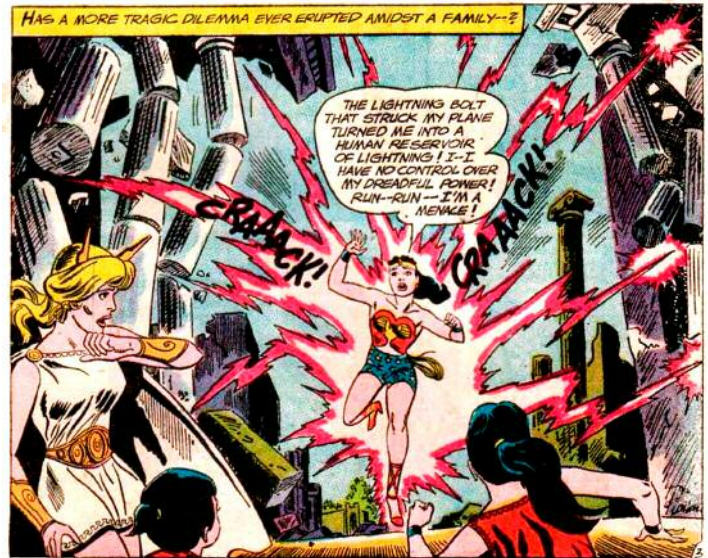
JA: *Did anyone ever offer kickbacks to you?*

KASHDAN: No, no one said they'll give me 10% of what they earned, or something like that. [chuckles]

JA: *I know these things happened at some companies. [Artist] Mike Esposito told me [in his interview for A/E #53-54] that Kanigher put out his Christmas list, and you were expected to buy him something off that list.*

KASHDAN: That sounds like Kanigher.

JA: *But you and Jack Schiff don't strike me as the type of people that would have done that.*



### The “Wonder” Years, For Sure!

For *Wonder Woman*, Kanigher birthed the offbeat concept of the “Impossible Story”—yarns in which the Amazon seemed to coexist as her adult star-spangled self, as a teenager (“Wonder Girl”), and as a toddler (“Wonder Tot”)—with her mother Hippolyte often showing up and being dubbed “Wonder Queen.” “Captives of the Mirage World!” in *WW* #140 (Aug. 1963) was the fourth of this series. Pencils by Ross Andru, inks by Mike Esposito. Thanks to Bob Bailey. [©2010 DC Comics.]

KASHDAN: I certainly would not. Neither would Jack. He was a very moral man.

JA: *I don't think [DC co-publisher] Jack Liebowitz would have taken too kindly to the idea of kickbacks.*

KASHDAN: Definitely not.

JA: *And even Mort, the way he was with a dollar—no one's ever reported that he asked for kickbacks.*

KASHDAN: Mort was money-hungry, and he used to tell us how much he earned for an article that got printed in *Collier's*. He once said to Jack Miller, “You think I'm happy with all this money? How could I be happy when every morning, I look in the mirror, and what do I see looking back at me? A fat, bald schlubb?”

JA: *Didn't he and his wife get along?*

KASHDAN: They apparently got along, but he felt he had to live the life of a playboy. All playboys get mistresses. Kanigher was an operator, too.

JA: *Kanigher had an apartment near the office for that, didn't he?*

KASHDAN: Yes. Kanigher had a very cocky exterior. He was always talking about how brilliant he was, and how well-adjusted he was. He had been getting some psychoanalysis, and he went around psychoanalyzing people. Kanigher, I remember, hated Mort.

JA: *Kanigher had a reputation for being real rough on the people who worked for him.*

KASHDAN: He had that reputation, but if he needed a man badly, he wasn't rough on him. I think Kanigher was very deferential to [artist Bob] Oksner. He was in awe of Joe Kubert. You could ask Kubert to give you a cover, and it would come out strong. Kubert was an excellent artist.

JA: *But I know that Kanigher mistreated people like [artist] Mort Meskin, for instance.*

KASHDAN: Well, Meskin was terribly sensitive. He couldn't take Kanigher with a sense of humor, or like all the writers who hated Mort.

DOG STEARN

MR. MONSTER'S

COMIC CRYPT!

BY MICHAEL T. GILBERT

MR. MONSTER © AND © 2010



HEY KIDS! IT'S TWICE-TOLD TALES TIME AGAIN! HEY KIDS! IT'S TWICE-TOLD TALES TIME AGAIN! IN AE #84 WE DISCUSSED HOW EC RECYCLED SOME EXISTING STORIES TO QUICKLY CASH IN ON THE RED-HOT 3-D COMICS FAD! BUT THAT WASN'T THE ONLY TIME EC REWORKED THEIR OLD TALES! SHORTLY BEFORE PULLING THE PLUG ON THEIR COMIC LINE, THEY PRODUCED FOUR "PICTO-FICTION" MAGAZINES: TERROR ILLUSTRATED, CRIME ILLUSTRATED, SHOCK ILLUSTRATED, AND CONFESSIONS ILLUSTRATED. THE BLACK-AND-WHITE PICTO-FICTION TITLES TRADED WORD BALLOONS FOR TYPE TO GIVE THEM A MORE SOPHISTICATED LOOK.

LIKE THE 3-D BOOKS, SOME SCRIPTS WERE RECYCLED FROM OLD EC COMICS, THOUGH NEWLY REDRAWN. THIS ISH WE'LL COMPARE OLD AND NEW VERSIONS OF THE SAME STORY -- SOMETIMES DRAWN BY THE SAME ARTIST! TAKE, FOR INSTANCE, JACK DAVIS' ART ON "CUT!" (CRIME SUSPENSTORIES #9, FEB. 1952). IT'S SOLID ENOUGH. BUT JACK'S RE-DO OF THE SAME STORY (RENAMED "SCREENPLAY FOR MURDER!") FROM CRIME ILLUSTRATED #2 (APRIL, 1956), IS NOTHING SHORT OF SPECTACULAR! BUT JUDGE FOR YOURSELF IN . . .

**TWICE-TOLD EC - PART TWO!**



FADE IN TO SCENE 1... A SOUND-STAGE OF A FAMOUS HOLLYWOOD STUDIO! JOHN HAMMOND, SCREEN IDOL, IS SEATED BESIDE HIS DIRECTOR, EMERY EDWARDS! THE CREW OF TECHNICIANS... LIGHTING-MEN, PROP-MEN, AND OTHERS... ARE BUSY SETTING UP FOR THE NEXT "TAKE"!

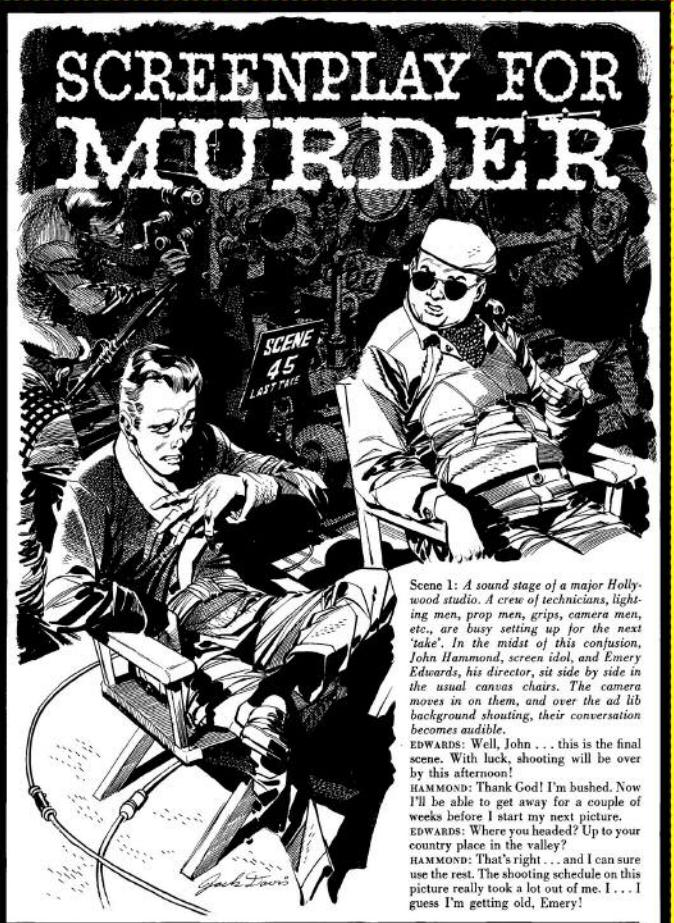
WELL, JOHN! THIS IS THE FINAL SCENE! WITH LUCK, SHOOTING WILL BE OVER BY THIS AFTERNOON!



GOING UP TO YOUR COUNTRY PLACE. EH, JOHN?



YEP! I CAN USE A REST, TOO! THE SHOOTING SCHEDULE ON THIS PICTURE REALLY TOOK A LOT OUT OF ME! I GUESS I'M GETTING OLD!



Scene 1: A sound stage of a major Hollywood studio. A crew of technicians, lighting men, prop men, grips, camera men, etc., are busy setting up for the next 'take'. In the midst of this confusion, John Hammond, screen idol, and Emery Edwards, his director, sit side by side in the usual canvas chairs. The camera moves in on them, and over the ad lib background shouting, their conversation becomes audible.  
EDWARDS: Well, John . . . this is the final scene. With luck, shooting will be over by this afternoon!  
HAMMOND: Thank God! I'm bushed. Now I'll be able to get away for a couple of weeks before I start my next picture.  
EDWARDS: Where you headed? Up to your country place in the valley?  
HAMMOND: That's right . . . and I can sure use the rest. The shooting schedule on this picture really took a lot out of me. . . . I guess I'm getting old, Emery!

# Crudzine: Steve Gerber's Fanzine That Couldn't Shoot Straight

## A Ludicrous Landmark From The Golden Age of Comic Fandom

An Appreciation of Sorts by Roy Thomas  
(Presented by CFA Editor Bill Schelly)

In issues #89-91, Comic Fandom Archive presented John G. Pierce's examination of my old Missouri buddy Steve Gerber's early-1960s *Headline*, one of the first comics fanzines founded in the tradition of Jerry G. Bails' original *Alter-Ego*. John's three-part article, in turn, put me in mind of a particularly fond memory of Steve, from the 1962-65 days when, after a bit of correspondence between us, he and I and a few of his local friends would gather from time to time in his parents' home in University City, a suburb of St. Louis. Despite the age gap (being in my early twenties, I was a few years older than they were, at a time when that sort of thing made a difference), we enjoyed each other's company and shared several nice evenings discussing comics and related matters.

And in 1965, seven years before I hired him as an assistant editor and budding writer at Marvel and he started on his path to glory with *Man-Thing*, *Howard the Duck*, et al., Steve and his pals brought to fruition a concept that was dear to my fannish heart.

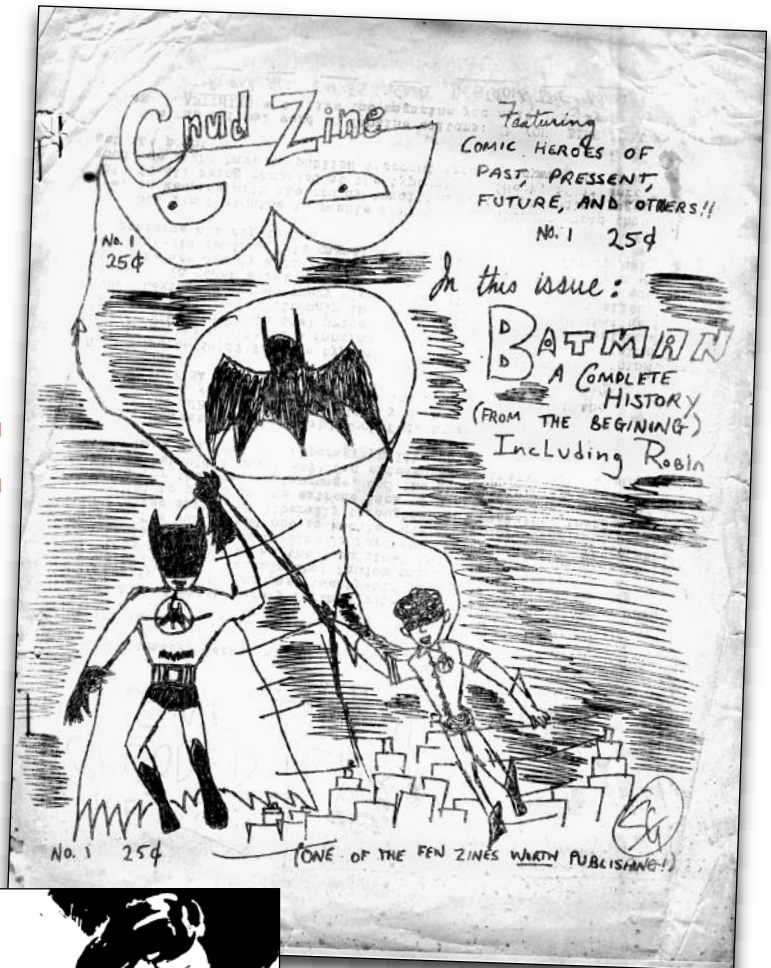
A little thing called... *Crudzine*.

At that time, the term "crudzine," now doubtless in disuse, referred to any fanzine—comics, science-fiction, or other—that was basically devoid of merit. At least to its more discerning readers, if not to its producers. Crudzines came in many varieties, but they all had several (sometimes *all*) of the following failings:

Virtually no imparting of useful or even merely interesting information (this was often because they covered topics already familiar even to a fledgling fandom, and yet did it badly).

Stylistic failures such as lousy sentence structure, poor punctuation, the division of one-syllable words at the ends of lines, and atrocious spelling.

Just plain bad writing, period.



### "One Of The Few Zines Worth Publishing!"

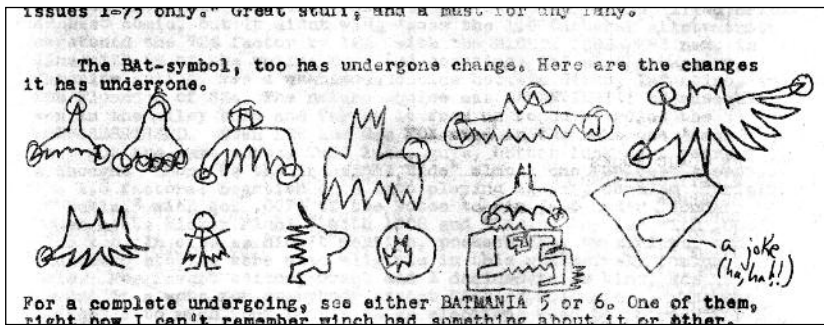
Steve Gerber—and his cover for *Crudzine* #1-and-only. The portrait was reprinted in the Marvel house-produced fanzine *FOOM* #15 (Sept. 1976); original source and artist uncertain. [Gerber pic ©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Terrible (i.e., below the standard "mediocre") fan artwork... whether accompanying historical articles or in the service of truly dreadful ama-strips (amateur comics stories).

Poor production standards: illegibility... pages printed out of order and/or upside down from each other... that kind of thing.

In short, crudzines—which in those days were usually printed with purple type and artwork on a spirit duplicator reproduction machine, though there were also mimeographed and even a few photo-offset specimens—had no reason for existence other than the egoboo (an old sf-fandom term meaning "ego boost") of their so-called "creators" (we might call them "perpetrators").

My idea was that Steve and I should team up to produce a prime specimen of a "bad fanzine," featuring all the above faults in a single one-shot publication, to be titled *Crudzine*. Its dual purpose would be to have a bit of fun (we all loved parody in general and the original four-color *Mad* in particular) and, perhaps, to give potential fan-publishers a yardstick against which to measure their own projected fanzines.



### Bat's All, Folks!

Steve surrounded this art spot with text: "The Bat-symbol, too has undergone changes. Here are the changes it has undergone." Reproduction of the art even from standard purple (as opposed to light "black") masters was poor on this page—but then, lousy printing was yet another hallmark of the true crudzine, so perhaps he did it on purpose?

I'm not 100% sure when I suggested this mini-brainstorm to Steve—surely sometime in 1964, around the time I began devoting my non-teaching time to editing and publishing the first volume of *Alter Ego*, starting with #7, which came out late that year. Steve, in turn, enlisted the aid of his friends Steve Grant, Bruce Carlin, and Allen Goffstein... though for some reason not Paul Seydor, his partner-in-crime in *Headline*. At first we were all going to do *Crudzine* together; but I quickly came to realize that *A/E* was sucking up every free moment I had or was likely to have. (Eventually, I didn't even find time to concoct my advertised "interview with Stan Lee's third cousin.") So Steve (and when I refer to "Steve" hereafter, I mean Gerber, not Grant, whom I don't specifically recall) decided he and his gang would produce the zine themselves... which, by that point, was exactly what I hoped he would say.

It took quite a few months for them to put it together, but it was apparently printed sometime in '65, and I've held on to my copy ever since. Simply to peruse it, even now, is to be reminded, albeit with a bit of wincing, of all the truly horrible fanzines that popped up in those days.

A brief overview of *Crudzine's* 26 pages, I suspect, will get the idea across. (And please forgive the fact that I didn't have the energy to type "[sic]" after every misspelled word!)

It begins with a cover by Steve (signed "SG"). The title logo is a parody of *Alter Ego's*, and of the slogan Ronn Foss had dreamed up for it: "Featuring Comic Heroes of the Past, Present, and Future." (See the first page of this article for the cover of *Crudzine* #1. That's far better than my describing it.)

As Steve told me later, he came to realize as he worked on the zine that he was, in part, burlesquing the faults of *Headline* and his own early comics creations. Of course, we'd *all* done things that veered too close for comfort to the contents of *Crudzine*. Hopefully, however, we'd learned from our mistakes. So did some other "crudzine" editor/publishers. But alas, not nearly all.

Actually, it's a bit tricky to read *Crudzine*—which may be part of the point—'cause when you open it, you discover the front cover is printed upside down to the rest of the issue, so that its final interior page is on the cover's back side. But, just for the sake of inconsistency (a true crudzine, you see, couldn't even be *wrong* with 100% consistency): on the third page is a pin-up... which few if any readers would've wanted to pin up anywhere, even on a dartboard. It sports a Gerber drawing of "The Green Lantern of 1960's"—"Fighter of Justice!"—"fighter of **realistic** alien menaces! Better than ever in 1965!"

Only when you flip the mag and ignore its nondescript back cover do you come face to face with Steve's two-page article: "A **Complete** History of BATMAN from the Beginning **and** including ROBIN!!!"

In it, Steve parodied the worst of the fan-historical writers. At that

time, with no real reference books on comics history in existence (that's what early fandom was leading up to, after all), a researcher could be forgiven for not having all the facts at his disposal, even for so seminal a feature as "Batman." Still, several of Steve's sentences were parodic gems which echoed the worst of the early zines (and which referenced Biljo White's *Batmania*, which was one of the *best*):

I think I read someplace that BATMAN began his career in the issue DETECTIVE COMICS #27. I think I read it in BATMANIA. In this issue (DETECTIVE COMICS #27, not BATMANIA), BATMAN did not have Robin. In fact, Batman never had Robin. His mother had him, though Dr. Wertham says this may not be so....

If I is to be a compleat BATMANIAC, he must have 100 comics of Batman to qualify for it. If not, he just can't and that's not fair, 'cause I have only three and need 97 more....

Mentioning that the "Batman" titles had recently been taken over by editor Julius Schwartz, he opined: "Our hero just isn't the same anymore. He now has a new look, but I thought he could see alright before." And:

BATman still appears monthly in two fine comics—DETECTIVE and BATMAN. He appears eight times a year in

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