

GREATEST STORIES NEVER TOLD: Aquaman II • Black Canary miniseries •
Cat #5 • FF Graphic Novel • Miracleman Triumphant •
Star Reach Batman • Warlock #16 & more

TWO MONTHS
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RACKISSUE!

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**MIKE GRELL'S
SAVAGE EMPIRE**



1

Volume 1,
Number 46
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**Celebrating
the Best
Comics of
the '70s,
'80s, and Beyond!**

EDITOR
Michael Eury

PUBLISHER
John Morrow

DESIGNER
Rich J. Fowlks

COVER ARTIST
Mike Grell

COVER DESIGNER
Michael Kronenberg

PROOFREADER
Rob Smentek

SPECIAL THANKS

Bob Anderson
Bret Blevins
Tom Brevort
Fred Burke
Mike Burke
Jarrod Buttery
John Byrne
Dewey Cassell
DC Comics
Jon B. Cooke and
Comic Book Artist
Mike Deodato
Steve Englehart
Danny Fingerroth
Tom Fleming
Jim Ford
Ramona Fradon
Mike Friedrich
Grand Comic-Book
Database
Bob Greenberger
Mike Grell
Heritage Auction
Galleries
Jonathan Hickman
Phil Jimenez
Barbara Kesel
Sean Kleefeld
Michael Kronenberg
Alan Kupperberg
Paul Kupperberg
Andy Mangels
Jim Manner



BACK ISSUE
The Retro Comics Experience!

Greatest Stories

NEVER TOLD ISSUE!

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by **Michael Eury**

BACK seat driver

Some readers of BACK ISSUE #43 got a few unexpected “Greatest Stories Never Told”—incomplete and missing articles, and duplicated pages! This was an unfortunate printer’s error, beyond our control, which omitted a signature (a page grouping) and duplicated another signature in its place. Fortunately, this only affected part of the print run. If you purchased one of these misprinted copies, please contact TwoMorrows at twomorrows@aol.com with your name, mailing address, and e-mail address, and you’ll receive a replacement copy.

This issue, we take a look at unpublished projects, aborted concepts, and lost issues as we dedicate most of our pages to one of our departments: “Greatest Stories Never Told.” Our theme evokes some personal recollections, if you’ll allow me a moment of self-indulgence to add these GSNT footnotes.

In 1987–1988, when I was writing “Peter Porker: The Spectacular Spider-Ham” backup stories for *Marvel Tales*, editor Jim Salicrup and I talked about Marvel publishing a funny-animal super-team book featuring Spider-Ham, Captain Americat, Mighty Mouse (who was on Saturday morning TV at the time in *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures*), Underdog, and Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse. The licensing lunacy attached to such a gathering quickly dissuaded us from anything other than a few phone chats about it.

During my stint (1989–1992) as a DC Comics editor, I was planning a few series that never saw the light of day. One was a miniseries titled *Legionnaires*, to be written and illustrated by Steve Lightle. Lightle’s *Legionnaires*, which was being developed before the Chris Sprouse-drawn *Legionnaires* monthly series, ran out of steam when I took a sidestep to become then-editorial director Dick Giordano’s assistant, and unfortunately withered away after that.

As a writer, I proposed a monthly series titled *Shazam!: The Word of Power*, to be penciled by Joe Phillips and edited by Mike Gold (this proposal was covered by Dan Johnson a few years back in *Alter Ego*). My take on Captain Marvel was inspired by Tom Hanks’ performance as an “adult” in the movie *Big*, but it was sidelined first by John Byrne’s jettisoned *Shazam!* series, then by Jerry Ordway’s *Power of Shazam!*, and also by my own inadequacies as a neo-writer taking on a major character.

During my last year at DC I returned to being the *Legion* editor, launching the aforementioned *Legionnaires* monthly to stand alongside the “Five Year Gap” adult Legion of Super-Heroes title (if you weren’t reading *Legion* back then, this was an interesting but convoluted period of LSH history). I had hoped to add two other series to DC’s “futureverse,” predating Marvel’s 2099 brand: *Batman 3000* and *Justice League 3000*. These never went past the talking

stages and had some internal editorial resistance since they involved other editors’ characters, but the initial concept for *Justice League 3000* would have included a mix of descendants of original JLA members, Jo Nah (the adult Ultra Boy), an alien Captain Marvel, and a still-living Martian Manhunter.

I was ribbed by some editors when they learned, back in early 1992, that I had placed an editorial development “reserve” on Uncle Sam. The character was considered anachronistic. (DC’s recent *Freedom Fighters* miniseries and ongoing series have proved those hecklers wrong.) I’d approached Matt Wagner about writing an *Uncle Sam* mini, and his brief outline involved Ol’ Red, White, and Blue’s antithesis, Amerika. Knowing Matt’s unique voice, this one boggles the mind. Too bad it didn’t happen.

I dropped the ball on all of these projects when I left the company in August 1992, and apologize to any writer, artist, or fellow editor I disappointed by leaving those series hanging.

More “Greatest Stories Never Told” occurred at Dark Horse Comics in the mid-1990s, where I landed after DC. I was group editor of licensed titles when the *Star Trek* franchise was up for grabs. Since Dark Horse was the comic-book home of many of Hollywood’s most popular sci-fi series—*Star Wars*, *Predator*, and *Aliens* among them—the crew of the *Enterprise* would have been in good company there. I lobbied for a *Star Wars/Star Trek* crossover to launch the company’s ST titles (just imagine a Kirk vs. Darth Vader phaser/light saber battle!), but the franchise went elsewhere. Another offbeat editorial suggestion, which I made only half-jokingly, was a tongue-in-cheek one-shot, *Predator on Gilligan’s Island*, but my bosses didn’t take it seriously. (Heck, I’d still shell out five bucks to read that.) And in 1996, while writing the ‘toon tie-in *The Adventures of the Mask*, I pitched an “animated” *Batman/Mask* DC/Dark Horse crossover involving Clayface’s



Batman and Clayface TM & © DC Comics. The Mask TM & © Dark Horse Comics.

attempts to obtain Stanley Ipkiss’ mask that might have gone the distance had I not developed cold feet about writing *Batman*. Artist Dev Madan was on board and drew the promo image seen on this page.

Thanks for your patience while I detoured off of Memory Lane and down Could’a/Should’a/Would’a Street. I look back at those projects with a twinge of regret. That’s a sentiment shared by several of the creators who participate in this issue. As you’ll discover while reading these “Greatest Stories Never Told,” there are myriad reasons why promised projects go unrealized. Often they’re painful ones, as editorial decisions, deadline disasters, and economic downturns dash dreams, causing hard work to be shelved. While these comics never came to pass, for a moment, at least, we—and their artists and writers—can vicariously enjoy what might have been.

THE LADY AND THE CAT

**Greatest
Stories**
NEVER TOLD

THE STORY BEHIND THE UNPUBLISHED FIFTH ISSUE OF MARVEL COMICS'

THE CAT

by Dewey Cassell



RAMONA FRADON

When you think of "The Greatest Stories Never Told," it leads you to ponder "what if?" What if the sales figures on Marvel Comics' *The Cat* had been better? What if the fifth issue of *The Cat* had been finished? What if Ramona Fradon had become a regular at Marvel, instead of returning to DC Comics? As it was, she didn't stand a chance—Fradon, that is. The Cat would find another life with Marvel—two, in fact—as Tigra and Hellcat. But after *The Cat* and one issue of *Fantastic Four*, Fradon never worked for Marvel again. What if the gifted artist who brought Aquaman and Metamorpho and the Super Friends to life for DC had found her niche at Marvel?

But I'm getting ahead of myself. I should start at the beginning. This "greatest story never told" is as much about Ramona Fradon as it is about *The Cat*. And Fradon found her way into comics through love. She explains, "I went to art school at the Art Students League and studied fine arts, but spent a lot of time doing figure drawing. When I got out of school, I had no idea what I was going to do and I happened to marry a cartoonist [for *The New Yorker*, Dana Fradon]. So, he and a friend of his [letterer George Ward] kind of steered me into doing some samples and taking them around. Which I did and I got jobs wherever I went. I had never thought of becoming a cartoonist up until that point."

Ramona Fradon found a home at DC Comics. Starting in 1950, she illustrated a variety of features for DC over the next decade, including Westerns and detective stories, but she is perhaps best known for her Aquaman stories in *Adventure Comics*, where she is credited with co-creating the character Aqualad. When her daughter was born, Fradon left comics, returning briefly in the mid-1960s to co-create Metamorpho with writer Bob Haney. She then retired from comics in 1965 to raise her daughter.

In 1973, Marvel Comics editor Roy Thomas contacted Fradon and lured her out of retirement. Marvel had recently launched several new comic books designed to attract more female readers, including *Night Nurse*, *Shanna the She-Devil*, and *The Cat*. With the latter title in particular, Marvel was striving to use a female creative team. Marie Severin had started out illustrating *The Cat*, but she was going to be leaving the title, so Thomas wanted Fradon to take up the reins on the fledgling female

Pensive Pussycat

Detail from the splash page of the unpublished *The Cat* #5. Unless otherwise noted, scans in this article are courtesy of Dewey Cassell.

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Written by: INDA FITE
Pencilled by: RAMONA FRADON
Inked by: NOEL MONNET
Colorist: JOHN COSTANZA
Edited by: ROY THOMAS



RAMONA FRADON.



Fabulous Fradon

(left) An undated sketch of the artist and the Cat, courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com). (right) Greer Nelson springs into action on the Fradon-penciled page 2 of *The Cat* #5.

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superheroine. Thomas recalls, "I was a big fan of Ramona's work. I don't recall the precise circumstances of how I located her, alas... but I thought it would be a good idea from a potential publicity viewpoint to have a woman artist on the mag... and I liked the idea of having Ramona draw for Marvel anyway, so it was a perfect fit. I was delighted when she accepted." Severin and Fradon had several things in common, not the least of which was having achieved prominence in a field traditionally reserved for men, and they became friends later in life. As Fradon notes, "It's funny; Marie and I both worked on *The Cat*. And then she was working on *Sub-Mariner* and I was working on *Aquaman*. There was some sort of a thing going on there."

The first issue of *The Cat* introduced a shy, insecure young woman, Greer Nelson, whose husband was a policeman killed in the line of duty. Greer encountered an old professor named Dr. Joanne Tumolo, who encouraged her to participate in an experiment to heighten the natural abilities of women, including the "sixth sense" of intuition. But it turned out that the experiment was being funded by a madman with plans to create an army of superwomen. Dr. Tumolo stole one of the costumes created for the recruits and gave it to Greer, who donned it and defeated the villain. In subsequent issues, the Cat went on to battle the Owl, Commander Kraken, and the Man-Bull. The Cat also joined Spider-Man to fight a female villain named Man-Killer in issue #8 of *Marvel Team-Up*.

For Fradon, working for Marvel proved to be something of a culture shock, in more ways than one. She recalls, "I worked at home. I would just go in once in a while. I must say I was really shocked when I went to Marvel after having worked at DC all those years. By then, the '60s had done their work. Everything was so different up there. It was totally free-form. There didn't seem to be any organization or order to the Marvel offices. It looked like mayhem to me. They didn't have any offices. It was all just cubicles and there were papers all over the place and it just seemed like total confusion. It was hard for me to adapt to that. I guess by that time I was getting too old to fit into the kind of hippie atmosphere there."

But it wasn't just the atmosphere in the Marvel offices that was a difficult adjustment. Fradon found it hard to adapt to the "Marvel method" of comic-book production. At DC Comics, artists were presented with a full script, describing in detail what was to appear in each panel of the story. But at Marvel, Stan Lee had introduced the "Marvel method" years before, in which the writer provided only a synopsis or plot for the story—sometimes as little as one paragraph—and the artist was expected to extrapolate the idea into a complete story. The writer would then take the penciled pages and pen the dialogue based on the artist's rendition. It required the artist to interject many of the details into the story, essentially writing as well as drawing it. The only real requirement was that you include a lot of action. Fradon remarks, "If you go back and look at some of those stories, you'll see that there's like five pages in the middle where everybody is

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO

WARLOCK[®] NUMBER 16?

Alan Weiss is pretty tired of answering the questions and insinuations.

No, he wasn't absentminded or irresponsible.

No, he wasn't drunk and forgetful.

And no, he wasn't high on drugs.

If none of those is the answer, then what befell the preliminary layouts for *Warlock* #16?

Artist Weiss knows the answer, but remains secretive out of respect for a friend. He would rather let the person responsible for the oversight remain unnamed and to continue deflecting blame rather than bring shame on a friend.

"It's not a complex story, but no one seems to want to remember it," Weiss says. "Everybody just seems to want to keep asking me how could I lose those pages."

The last known place for the early drafts of what was to be *Warlock* issue #16 was the back seat of a taxi cab in New York City. Their fate, however, is misunderstood by many people, and is also partly a secret...

Jim Starlin was a popular artist in the comic-book industry when he was given free reign over *Warlock*, and he didn't mind experimenting or having fun. He handpicked the character because Warlock wasn't limited by a detailed or convoluted history within the Marvel Universe. [Editor's note: See BACK ISSUE #34 for a Warlock history.]

"I could pretty well do whatever I wanted with him," Starlin says. "Roy [Thomas] and other writers had finished off the 'Jesus Christ Superstar' storyline they'd been running [in earlier Warlock stories in *Strange Tales*], so there weren't any real problems taking Warlock where I wanted."

Jim Starlin took over the character in a four-issue run in *Strange Tales*, running from issue #178 (cover-dated Feb. 1975) to issue 181 (Aug. 1975). He enjoyed the responsibility of writing on the title, and was joined in the artistic duties by notables such as Al Milgrom.

Warlock's popularity launched him back into his own title in late 1975. Starlin's story didn't begin with issue #1, but picked up on issue #9 after the title had been canceled two years earlier after an eight-issue stint. Steve Leialoha shared inking and drawing duties with Starlin for much of the run.

More Than a "Minor" Incident...

...all of Alan Weiss' penciled pages to *Warlock* #16 disappeared! Detail from the splash page.

All pencil scans in this article courtesy of Jon B. Cooke and *Comic Book Artist*. Thanks, Jon!

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by Jim Manner



OH, SAY, CAN YOU SING...?

THE MYSTERY OF THE

CAPTAIN AMERICA

by Andy Mangels

MUSICAL

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NEVER TOLD

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Do it today. You wouldn't want to let Cap down, would you?

Marvel fans reading their March 1986 cover-dated comics were greeted by an unusual image: Captain America with a top hat and cane, soft-shoeing his way across a stage. "Cap's Gonna Star in a Broadway Show... and maybe YOU can star WITH him!" promised the ad, which then invited girls between the ages of ten and fourteen to send photos and background info to a New York casting representative. Other than this advertisement, little was heard again of the planned *Captain America* musical. But at this writing, only a few weeks before *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* is set to open on Broadway (by the time you read this, the success of that show will be known), *BACK ISSUE* has delved into the history of this most patriotic Greatest Story Never Told...

Although the show was optioned in 1983, the first public news about the *Captain America* musical appears to have been on April 5, 1985, when the *New York Times* announced that production for a \$4 million show was underway. Production was headed by Shari Upbin, working with Marvel Comics and its president, James Galton. Songwriters Norman Sachs and Mel Mandel, whose only prior major show was *My Old Friends* in 1979, were credited with the music, lyrics, and book (script), while producer Philip Rose was also slated to direct. Rose was known mostly for his racially and socially conscious productions such as *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Owl and the Pussycat*, *Does a Tiger Wear a Necktie?*, *Purlie*, and *Shenandoah*. Plans were announced to open the show out of town in Fall 1985 and then on Broadway by year's end. On the short-list to play the lead were John Cullum, Ken Howard, Richard Kiley, and Hal Linden, while the female lead was discussed as being open for Linda Lavin or Cloris Leachman.

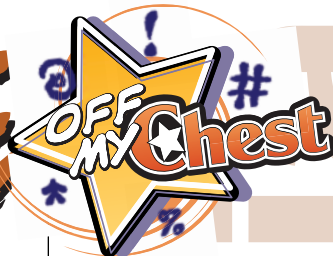
A brief discussion of the storyline revealed that a paunchy Captain America would be facing a midlife crisis because he felt unnecessary, especially when the woman he loved, Sharon Phillips, was set to become president of the United States! "This is essentially a love story about a man who's always been strong, independent—even macho—and a sensitive, assertive, bright and political woman," Mandel would later tell Geoff Gehman for *The Morning Call* newspaper in its March 27, 1988 edition. But when Sharon is captured by

You Make Me Feel Like Dancin'

In case you think this article is a hoax, here it is—the 1986 Marvel Comics house ad that informed fans of the *Captain America* musical.

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From **SAVAGE EMPIRE**
to **THE WARLORD**



by Mike Grell



***Jason Cord of the
Savage Empire***

Travis Morgan's
predecessor, from
the Mike Grell

Warriors portfolio,
produced in
1980 by Oracle
Enterprises.

Courtesy of Heritage
Comics Auctions
(www.ha.com).

Savage Empire TM & © Mike Grell.



Travis Morgan is dead.

Yes, I really killed him off. I planned it from the start and plotted his death with the patience of Michael Corleone.

The Warlord had its genesis as a comic strip called *Savage Empire*, which I created while attending the Chicago Academy of Fine Art and moonlighting as a commercial artist for a couple of local ad agencies. I love the comic-strip medium and always hoped to have my own syndicated feature. *Savage Empire* was born of my admiration for Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant* and Burne Hogarth's *Tarzan*, combined with my fascination with archaeology and lost civilizations.

Savage Empire is the story of archaeologist Jason Cord, who, while exploring the ruins of the ancient city of Akrotiri buried for thousands of years under volcanic ash, stumbles on a portal to the past and is cast back in time to the lost continent of Atlantis. It has all the elements of high adventure: lost cities, dangerous jungles, strange beasts of myth and legend, beautiful warrior women, evil wizards, and a modern-day protagonist trying to survive in a savage, primitive world.

I had completed a couple weeks of daily continuity and half a dozen Sunday pages along with a detailed outline for the first year's storyline and, in the summer of 1973, boldly set out for the New York where I was sure *Savage Empire* would be snapped up by the first syndicate editor I showed it to.

Except I couldn't even get an appointment to show it! Former *Tarzan* artist John Celardo, now a syndicate editor, declared, "Adventure strips are dead." [Humor strips] *Peanuts*, *Beetle Bailey*, *The Wizard of ID*, and *Funky Winkerbean* had driven the nails in the coffin.

Fortunately, I had scheduled my New York trip to coincide with the New York Comicon, where I met a lot of great people, passed up the opportunity to buy Frank Frazetta's original painting of *Death Dealer* for \$3,500 (the fellow who was offering it for sale pointed out that it had been designed as a book cover and recommended I improve the composition by cutting several inches off the top before framing), and left a copy of my portfolio containing *Savage Empire* with DC Comics' [then-president] Sol Harrison. I also had the great good fortune to run into Batman artist Irv Novick and Allan Asherman, who was Joe Kubert's assistant at the time. Both offered encouragement, but Irv cut to the chase: "You need to get your carcass up to Julie Schwartz's office." That's how I wound up in comic books.

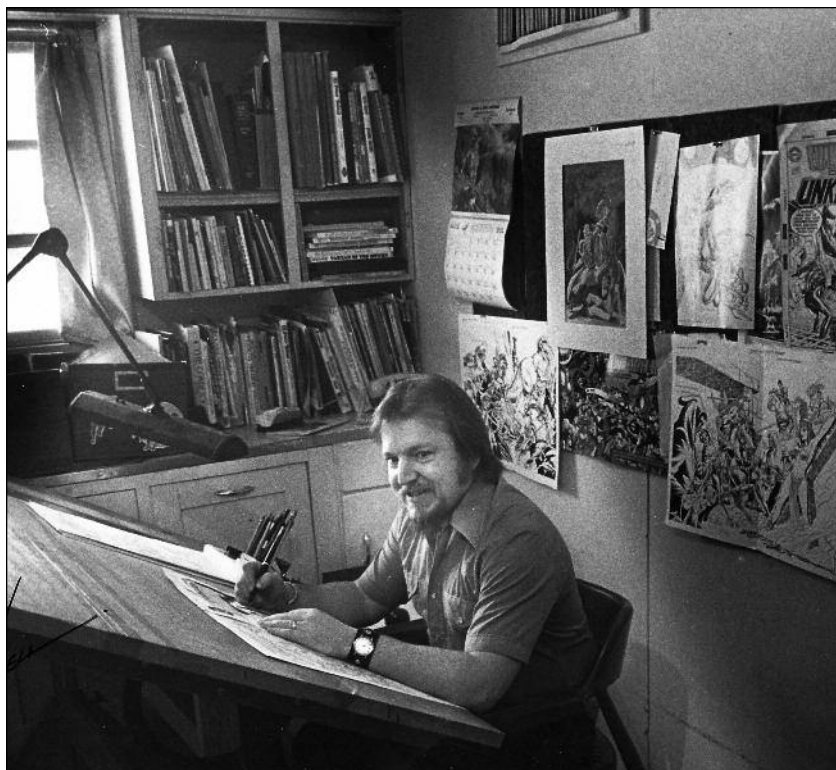
Not long afterward, while I was working on *Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes* and doing various backup features like "Green Arrow," "Aquaman,"

Enter the Savage Empire

(above left) Mike Grell's one-page promo for *Savage Empire*, courtesy of Tom Fleming (www.fanfare-se.com).

(left) Grell in his Florence, Wisconsin, studio, circa 1978. Photo by Bob Anderson. Courtesy of www.mikegrell.com.

Savage Empire TM & © Mike Grell.



HOW THE BATMAN



NEARLY STEPPED OUT OF THE MAINSTREAM AND INTO INDEPENDENT COMICS

by Michael Kronenberg



It is arguably believed that from 1977 to 1978, Steve Englehart, Marshall Rogers, and Terry Austin transformed six issues of *Detective Comics* into the definitive version of *the Batman*. Those stories have been reprinted numerous times and even spawned a sequel 27 years later titled *Dark Detective*. Earlier, in 1974, former DC Comics writer Mike Friedrich (*Justice League of America*, *World's Finest*, and "Robin" backups) launched *Star*Reach*, a black-and-white comic-book anthology that would bridge the gap between the counterculture's underground comics and mainstream publishers Marvel and DC. *Star*Reach* published mature, genre stories by some of the best up-and-coming talents in the business. *Star*Reach* became the precursor to the rise of the graphic novel and independent comics in the 1980s. And in 1978, Englehart, Rogers, and Friedrich planned to team up for an unprecedented, adult version of Batman to appear in a *Star*Reach* publication.

In a letter written in 1978, *Star*Reach* publisher Mike Friedrich wrote to his one-time mentor and editor at DC Comics, Julius Schwartz: "Finger and Kane. Broome and Infantino. O'Neil and Adams. Englehart and Rogers. THE BATMAN LIVES AGAIN! (And you can quote me.)" Friedrich was very impressed with the Englehart/Rogers version of the Batman, saying, "I remember enjoying it thoroughly. The use of repressed intense romantic emotion on the part of Batman was a signature contribution to the evolution of the character. The romantic side of the character had never been explored to this degree before. Englehart was a key player in helping to turn Batman from a character popular with children into one popular with young adults."

Friedrich made an attempt to bring Englehart, Rogers, and Austin together for a mature version of Batman to appear as a *Star*Reach* publication. Friedrich recalls, "I was inspired by the first Eclipse graphic novel *Sabre* (1978), by Don McGregor and Paul Gulacy. It occurred to me that the recently ended Englehart/Rogers 'Batman' would be a good concept in this format. DC Comics, at the time, was totally ignoring the comic-shop market and readers. I knew this was a frustration to then-junior executive Paul Levitz. I contacted Paul and asked if the rights were available. He indicated they were. We progressed to the point of a licensing agreement draft when the deal fell apart.

"The problem proved not to be with DC, but with the talent," Friedrich continues. "While *Sabre* had been in black and white, Englehart and Rogers only wanted to do their story if it was in color. I didn't have the money to invest in this level of production, so it died.

Reach for the Stars, Batman!

Marshall Rogers' beautifully painted rendition of Batman and the Joker's confrontation from the classic two-part *Detective Comics* story "The Laughing Fish." Plate from Rogers' *The Batman* portfolio (Sal Quartuccio Publishing, 1981).

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Fantastic Four

Fathers and Sons

Greatest
Stories
NEVER TOLD

by Jarrod Buttery

The irony has not escaped me that I write this whilst sat beside my son's hospital bed. He's asleep, and fine, but I'm staying the night and there's work to be done. BACK ISSUE's current theme of "The Greatest Stories Never Told" has piqued a recollection from over 20 years ago and the pages of Marvel Age.

During the 1980s, *Marvel Age* was a fascinating and invaluable tool for behind-the-scenes and up-and-coming information about Marvel Comics. Particularly enjoyable were the *Marvel Age* Annuals, highlighting plots and projects for each forthcoming year. Within the 1988 Annual was a promotion for the *Fantastic Four: Fathers and Sons* graphic novel (GN), written by Danny Fingerioth and penciled by Mark Bright. However, after 22 years, the GN has never been published and very few people are even aware of its existence. *BACK ISSUE* now brings you the inside story.

Danny Fingerioth's name initially elicits thoughts of Spider-Man. Fingerioth edited Spidey's books from 1983–1985 and again from 1991–1995. However, he always harbored a fascination with Marvel's First Family. "I started reading Marvel comics with *Fantastic Four* #4 (May 1962), and that series was always my favorite as a kid," reveals Fingerioth. "I love those characters and their interpersonal dynamics, as well as the ease with which the stories could move from the mundane to the cosmic to all points in between. And the Thing reminded me of my father."

Indeed, Fingerioth almost became the FF's scripter: "I also came close to being the book's regular writer for five minutes in the 1980s. Then-FF editor Don Daley loved my take on the characters, but it didn't come to pass." Instead, Fingerioth developed an idea for an original graphic novel. Despite ushering in the *Marvel Age* of Comics, long being Marvel's flagship title, and always recognized as Marvel's First Family, the *Fantastic Four* have received little in the way of premier events or showcase publications. Fingerioth's *Fathers and Sons* would have been the FF's first original graphic novel.

First Family

Page 4 of Fingerioth and Milgrom's *Fathers and Sons* shows the one thing that takes Reed Richards' mind off of science. Courtesy of Danny Fingerioth.

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rough Stuff

by Tom Ziuko

Psssst! Hey, you ... c'mere! Keep it quiet—I've got some incredible art here I'd like to share with you that no one's supposed to see. It's unpublished and rejected material that—wait, what? We're doing an entire issue based on this stuff? Oh, well, in that case... call your friends, shout it from the rooftops, and everyone gather 'round—you're gonna love this stuff!

Our first two pages are both rejected covers—Ms. Marvel #4 by John Buscema, and Hot Wheels #1 by Alex Toth. Wow—could you have rejected these...? (Hot Wheels cover courtesy of Mike Burkey at romitaman.com.)



FAILURE TO LAUNCH



THE BLACK CANARY

MINISERIES THAT NEVER TOOK FLIGHT

by John Wells

In 1984, Black Canary had seen better days. She and most of her Justice League teammates were virtually evicted from the team in favor of an X-Men/Teen Titans mix of newcomers and hangers-on. And while her boyfriend Green Arrow forged on in a *Detective Comics* backup strip, the heroine with the blonde wig and sonic scream was conspicuously absent.

Created in 1947, Black Canary began as a co-star in the "Johnny Thunder" strip before starring in her own series in the last 13 issues of *Flash Comics*. Revived in 1963, the female martial artist was back to being a co-star, whether with the Justice Society, Starman, or the Justice League of America, a team she joined in 1969 to fill the token female role recently vacated by Wonder Woman. In the League, Black Canary struck up a romance with Green Arrow and the two were by one another's side more often than not, whether in *JLA*, *Green Lantern*, or the Ace Archer's

own feature. Despite relatively few solo outings during the 1970s, the heroine's prominence in multiple series easily made her DC's most-recognized non-derivative costumed heroine after Wonder Woman.

By the mid-1980s, that no longer seemed to count for much. Dinah (Black Canary) Lance was virtually homeless while a new crop of heroines that included the likes of Starfire, Raven, Firebrand, Katana, and Vixen were at the forefront of DC's team books.

DC's hallways also had their share of newcomers, among them Greg Weisman. The 19-year-old college student had "started freelancing for DC in '83" and fallen under the watchful eye of DC executive editor Dick Giordano. Pressed by his new mentor on what character he'd like to write, Weisman enthusiastically answered "Black Canary."

"I never felt Black Canary really got her due," Weisman told *BACK ISSUE* on May 14, 2010. "At most, she was sort of Green Arrow's girlfriend or a member of the League, and even Green Arrow wasn't getting that much attention back in those days. So I said, 'Green Arrow and Black Canary have been boyfriend/girlfriend for a hell of a long time. What if we took them to the next level, sort of did a miniseries about their relationship.' It was really Black Canary's story,

Claws of the Catman

Black Canary vs. a strangely garbed Catman on page 9 of issue #1 of her aborted miniseries. Pencils by Mike Sekowsky.

All pencil scans courtesy of Paul Kupperberg.

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THE AQUAMAN[®]

Greatest
Stories
NEVER TOLD

SEQUEL THAT WASN'T

by **Richard A. Scott**



The years 1986–1987 were very big years for comics in general. During this time DC Comics published Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' Charlton Comics-inspired *Watchmen*. There were also the revamps for most of the stable of DC characters after the universe-shaking events of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. A lot was going on at DC. Then, from out of the blue (literally), came another unexpected hit, the *Aquaman* four-issue miniseries (Feb. 1986–May 1986), by writer Neal Pozner, penciler Craig Hamilton, and inker Steve Montano. *Aquaman* was one of the most popular DC books that year.

However, what began as a strong outing for the 1986 *Aquaman* miniseries then took an unfortunate downturn for its intended 1987 follow-up series.

SOME BACKGROUND

Neal Pozner and Craig Hamilton had introduced some radical, but very appropriate, concepts to the Aquaman mythos in the first *Aquaman* miniseries, giving the Sea King a new outfit inspired by art nouveau artist Leon Bakst's Russian ballet *Nijinsky and the Ballets Russes*. Pozner also gave Arthur (Aquaman) Curry a change in attitude, allowing for further growth of his character.

Pozner's brilliant master stroke, however, was adding necessary depth to Atlantean lore, which was sorely lacking before this juncture. It seems rather astounding that there was little backstory for Atlantis before this. Pozner made a point of integrating several different Atlantises from DC's cosmology. It took several years before these concepts were expanded upon



For Atlantis!

Aquaman and Mera rally the citizenry of the underwater civilization on page 11 of the unpublished *Aquaman II* #2.

Art by Craig Hamilton, with art restoration by Richard A. Scott.

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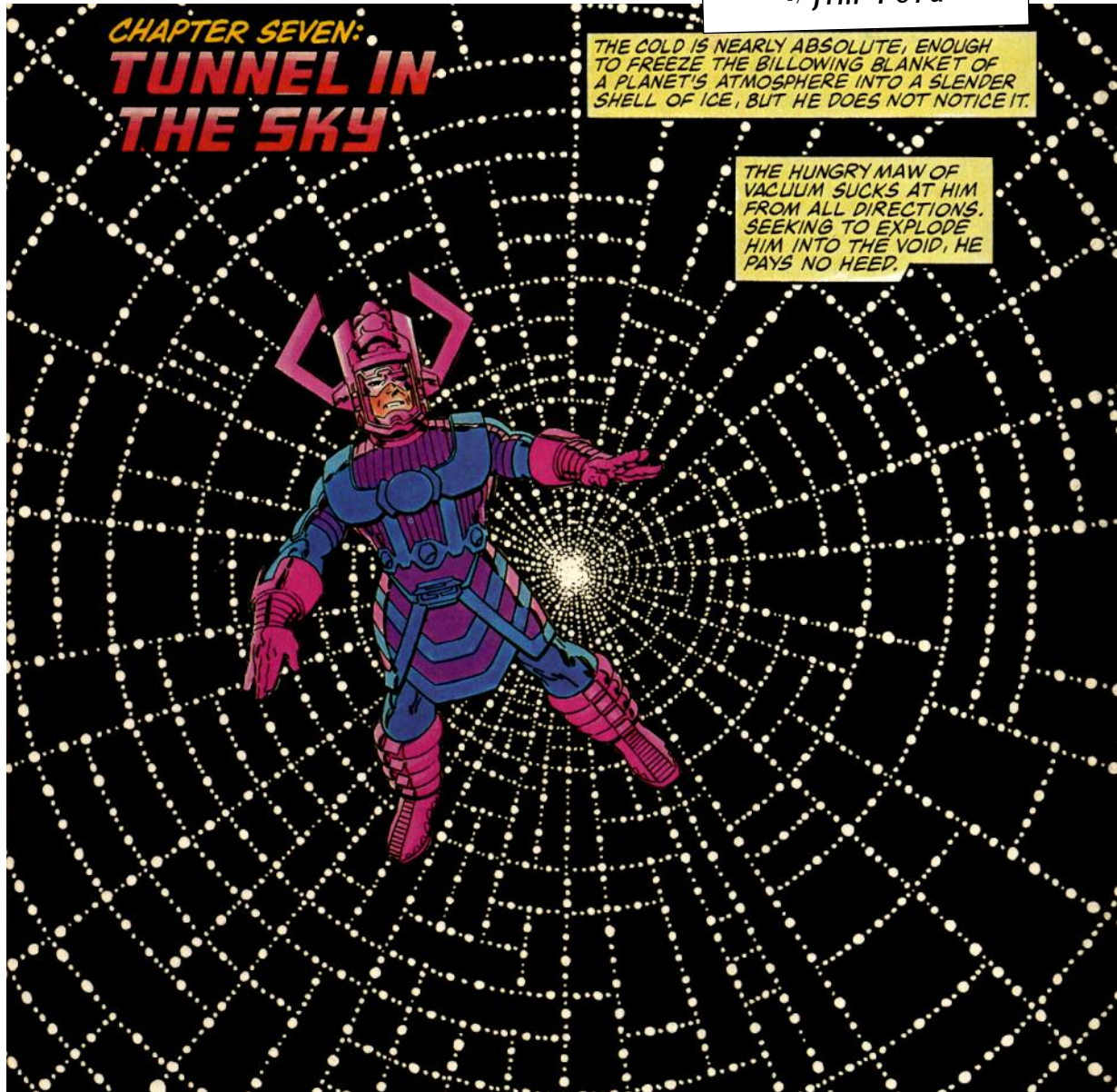
THE LAST GALACTUS STORY

by Jim Ford

CHAPTER SEVEN: TUNNEL IN THE SKY

THE COLD IS NEARLY ABSOLUTE, ENOUGH TO FREEZE THE BILLOWING BLANKET OF A PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE INTO A SLENDER SHELL OF ICE, BUT HE DOES NOT NOTICE IT.

THE HUNGRY MAW OF VACUUM SUCKS AT HIM FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. SEEKING TO EXPLODE HIM INTO THE VOID, HE PAYS NO HEED.



"...A Handful of Colorful Beads"

(right) Some unknown force, mightier than even Galactus, has realigned the stars of the galaxy in *Epic Illustrated* #32 (Oct. 1985). Art by John Byrne and Terry Austin. (below) Galactus falls to Earth in *Fantastic Four* #243 (June 1982).

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Galactus is the last survivor of a collapsed universe. He was reborn during the "big bang" as the Devourer of Worlds. In *Fantastic Four* #50 (May 1966), the Watcher Uatu explained, "Galactus is not evil! He is above good... or evil! He does what he must... for he is Galactus!" John Byrne examined the true nature of Galactus throughout his period as both writer and artist of the *Fantastic Four* from #232 (July 1981) through 293 (Aug. 1986). How could a being that kills countless other sentient beings not be evil? The culmination of Byrne's exploration into what greater purpose Galactus serves was "The Last Galactus Story." The story was serialized for nine consecutive chapters in *Epic Illustrated*, "the Marvel Magazine of Fantasy and Science-Fiction," beginning in October 1984. Byrne was skillfully assisted by inker Terry Austin, letterer Jim Novak, and colorist Glynis Wein.

"The Last Galactus Story," and really, the last story of the Marvel Universe, begins like this...

Nova, the fiery herald of Galactus, soars through the tumultuous space between dying stars. The delicate balance of an entire galaxy has been shattered by some unknown force and she is there to determine its cause. Amongst the interstellar debris, Nova finds a sole planet that was once inhabited. Proud cities, now clearly lifeless, rise from the deserts. Millions of spaceships line gantries preparing for departure, but none have escaped. Within one city, she finds a central structure and enters down into the ancient, haunting corridors of darkness. Inside a chamber guarded by an immense door built to withstand the ages, she finds speaker-stones. Touching them reveals the story, through telepathic imagery, of a race of explorers who discovered a threat within the center of

THE WOLF MAN

by Brett Weiss

Far too many articles on Universal's *The Wolfman* begin with the original film's infamous, oft-quoted aphorism: "Even the man who's pure of heart and says his prayers at night may become a wolf when the wolfbane blooms and the autumn moon is bright." So I'll not do that here. Rather, I'll begin with:

Thanks to such popular titles as *Marvel Zombies*, *The Walking Dead*, and *30 Days of Night*, horror comics have enjoyed a monster-sized resurgence in recent years. However, the genre was at a lull in 1991, when Dark Horse Comics bucked current trends and released four square-bound movie adaptations based on classic films starring Universal's beloved monsters.

Included in the series of one-shots were comics based on *Dracula* (1931), *Frankenstein* (1931), *The Mummy* (1932), and *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954). The inside back cover of *The Mummy* made the tantalizing promise that *The Wolf Man* by Bret Blevins was coming soon. Unfortunately, that issue never saw the light of day (or the dark of night, for that matter).

When asked about the cancellation of *The Wolf Man*, writer/artist Blevins, who received the bad news by phone from editor Dan Thorland, was disappointed, but not terribly shocked.

"I was having a great deal of fun, and it was a nice change from the superhero work I had been doing for years," Blevins says, "but I had been around long enough by then to roll with the vicissitudes of comic-book publishing. I wasn't surprised, especially—the venture of adapting the Universal films seemed an oddity in the marketplace at the time."

Directed by George Waggner from a script by Curt Siodmak, *The Wolf Man* feature film hit theaters in 1941. It starred Lon Chaney, Jr. as Larry Talbot (the sympathetic title character), Evelyn Ankers as Gwen Conliffe (the beautiful love interest), and Claude Rains as Sir John Talbot (the concerned father).

The movie was remade in 2010 by Joe Johnston (from a screenplay by David Self and Andrew Kevin Walker), but it's the original that remains near and dear to the hearts of most monster fans, including baby boomer Blevins, who grew up watching the Universal horror classics at every opportunity. "I am still a fan, and always watch a few every Halloween," Blevins said. "My favorites are probably *The Bride of Frankenstein*, *The Invisible Man*, *The Wolf Man*, and *Creature from the Black Lagoon*."

Elaborating on his interest in horror in general, Blevins says, "I was born in 1960, so I was barely in time to be aware of the monster fad that culminated in television shows like *The Munsters* and *The Addams*

Bad Moon Rising

Courtesy of Bret Blevins, the artist's roughs for one of Universal's most memorable monsters, the Wolf Man.

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MIRACLEMAN



Triumphant

by Keith Veronese

MIRACLEMAN[®] Triumphant!™

Combining the excitement and action of Alan Moore's Nietzschean superhero tale with the cerebral introspection of the ongoing Neil Gaiman series, **Miracleman Triumphant!** bridges the 10-year lacuna between the Golden and Silver Ages.

A god walks among us—
MIRACLEMAN Triumphant!

MIRACLEMAN Triumphant! #1

story Fred Burke
pencils Mike Deodato Jr.
inks Jason Minor



Miracleman Triumphant was to be Eclipse Comics' spin-off *Miracleman* title, filling the ten-year gap in history between the Golden Age and Silver Age storylines and fitting between issues #22 and 23 of the regular series. *Miracleman Triumphant*, however, simply wasn't, as the title was canceled prior to the release of the first issue due to Eclipse's financial troubles and eventual bankruptcy. The majority of issue #1 was finished and ready to be published in 1994, with a script by Fred Burke, pencils by Mike Deodato, and inks by Jason Temujin Minor. This series was one of the first US penciling jobs for Mike Deodato, then a little-known Brazilian artist who later exploded onto the scene with his work on DC's *Wonder Woman*.

The storyline, save for the time period and the solicitation details, until now was a complete unknown. Per *Advance Comics*, the solicitation stated:

The first issue of an all-new companion Miracleman series! With Neil Gaiman's Miracleman series officially on a three-times-a-year schedule, Eclipse proudly introduces an all-new companion title which will be published bi-monthly to start, and monthly after the second issue. Neil Gaiman is consulting with writer Fred Burke (Tapping the Vein, Hyperkind) to insure that this new series fits into overall Miracleman continuity.

THE STORY

Miracleman Triumphant #1, entitled "Oracles," begins where *Miracleman* #22 leaves off, focusing on the aftermath of the annual Carnival memorializing Kid Miracleman's slaughter of London in *Miracleman* #15. The opening pages were to show Miracleman, disguised as an ordinary human, surveying the closing moments of the Carnival, wondering to himself if the changes he has brought to the world were the right ones. While ruminating, he stumbles onto a flier advertising a family of fortune-tellers and, interested in their opinion, seeks them out.

Meanwhile, *Miraclewoman* is welcoming guests to a party at the home of the Miracle Family, Olympus. She is under the guise of her alter ego, Avril Lear, in order to entertain and converse with *Miracleman*'s ex-wife, Liz Moran, at the party. Liz believes that she is invited to celebrate the release of her book, *Winter's Tale*, a story that makes up a portion of *Miracleman* #20. Liz soon stumbles upon the true identity of Avril, and lashes out in anger at *Miraclewoman*, *Miracleman*'s current lover and companion in remaking the Earth in their image. This confrontation leads to the two being separated by Liz and *Miracleman*'s child, the ethereal Winter. *Miraclewoman* admits to inviting Liz out of a desire to befriend her lover's ex-wife and to involve her

Miracleman Triumphant

House ad for *Miracleman Triumphant*, printed in *Advance Comics*.

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Fred Burke
Miracleman #23A—full-script for 26 pages
"ORACLES"

PAGE ONE

Panel 1: Splash. We take up where *The Golden Age* left off—Carnival in the streets of London. In the foreground is Miracleman in his disguise from *Miracleman* #22—white short sleeve T-shirt, gold belt, tri-coloured baseball cap. He is squatting down to pick up a flyer which is beneath his red high-topped sneaker. The flyer is in the extreme foreground. Miracleman is impassive, as ever. Past him, we can see the sky over London at sunset, full of people floating, multi-colored helium balloons on strings pulling them skyward. The "spaceman" from #22 can be seen in a crumpled heap by a flooded garbage container. There are flyers all over the ground.

Caption:

They float skyward, deserting the Earth, taking for a time the power of birds, of planes...

Caption:

...of supermen...

Caption:

...and I am left to walk the emptied streets of London, as the tenth year of miracles begins.

Flyer/Title:

ORACLES
PAST—PRESENT—FUTURE

What change in direction does your life hold?
Our magic crystal answers all your questions!



Miracleman "#23A"

(left) The first page of the script for *Miracleman Triumphant* #1. It is numbered *Miracleman* #23A, possibly denoting that the series was not titled at the time the script was written. Courtesy of Fred Burke. (right) Page 7 of *Miracleman Triumphant* #1, recapping the events of *Miracleman* #15. Courtesy of Jason Temujin Minor.

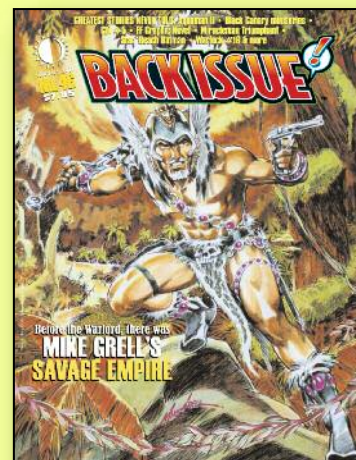
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with their menagerie of friends at Olympus. Liz has become reticent of her husband's work to change the world, and this feeling grows as the guest of honor for the party is revealed, a recently revived and rehabilitated Emil Gargunza. Gargunza kidnapped Liz in *Miracleman* #4 in the hope of transferring his consciousness into the then-unborn Winter. Liz confronts Miraclewoman for allowing the revival of Gargunza, the former arch-enemy of the Miracle Family, also pointing out that Avril Lear was sexually assaulted by him.

Gargunza, joined by a bevy of Andy Warhol clones, reveals his gift to the partygoers, a flock of Winter clones. The Winter clones fly above the crowd, with the true Winter in their midst, and Gargunza reveals a hidden device that sends Miracledog into a rage, causing him to attack the clones. Amidst the confusion, Gargunza utters the secret word "Lolita," turning Miraclewoman back into Avril, and bringing to light memories of the horrors she suffered at his hands. Gargunza chokes Avril, but is rescued by Liz. Liz says her goodbye to Winter, who warps her back home to San Francisco.

Miracleman, absent from the party, is told by the fortune-tellers to reach out to North America for answers to his questions about his world-changing initiatives. The fortune-tellers also suggest a companion, Jason Oakey, a child that Miracleman met early in his adventures. Miracleman returns to Olympus with Winter and reminisces about Liz Moran, part of a life and a love now lost, and a desire to visit America.

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