

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

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ISSUE #1, SEPT. 1994

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Characters © MCG, Artwork © Jack Kirby



*Jack Kirby telling war stories at the 1991 San Diego Con
(Photo by John Morrow)*

WELCOME TO THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR!

This is the first issue of a new publication *for and by* collectors of Jack Kirby's work. You received this issue free because you're a fan of Jack Kirby, and you may have written a tribute letter to *Comics Buyer's Guide* or on one of the many online computer services when Jack died last February.

My name is John Morrow, and I'm not some hotshot comics professional, just one of the many loyal Kirby fans throughout the world. I first got hooked on Jack's work in the early 1970s, and I've been a hardcore fan ever since. I only met him briefly on one occasion, but like all of you, his recent passing really affected me.

In corresponding with other Kirby fans I've discovered that there's a lot of his work out there that I wasn't aware of. I also discovered a great many people willing to share their knowledge to help others find, experience and appreciate Jack's talent. And it occurred to me that there's no regular outlet for Kirby fans to express their respect and appreciation for Jack's contributions to our lives. So I came up with this publication.

I worked up a rough version of this issue and sent it to Roz Kirby for her approval. She graciously gave her consent, and put me in touch with Kirby historian Greg Theakston. Greg offered some much appreciated advice and volunteered the use of his immense archive of Kirby artwork for future issues, so rest assured great things are ahead.

This publication is my effort to keep Kirby fandom alive, active, and unified. But I need your help! Out of necessity, most of this issue's submissions are by me. But it's meant to be full of articles, reviews, letters, and personal recollections of Jack's life and work submitted by YOU! And of course, plenty of great

Kirby artwork! I feel certain we fans have the ability to submit the editorial material to make a lively, entertaining, and informative publication. So use your Kirby knowledge and submit an article, art, or idea! Send your submissions to:

TwoMorrrows • 502 St. Mary's St. • Raleigh, NC 27605 • USA
919/833-8092 • Fax 919/833-8023
or E-mail via the Internet to: twomorrow@aol.com

Don't forget: this publication is for FANS! Use your imagination and let's have some fun! In the process, hopefully we'll introduce some new people to Jack's magic. Now here are the ground rules:

- If you like this free issue, tell a friend about it and subscribe! If not, pass it along to another Kirby fan - the idea is to get as many people involved as possible.

- Here's where your \$2.00 subscription cost goes with 100 subscribers:

<i>Postage (1st Class):</i>	<i>57.00</i>
<i>Xeroxing:</i>	<i>84.80</i>
<i>CBG Advertising Expenses:</i>	<i>43.48</i>
<i>Misc. Postage & Expenses:</i>	<i>15.00</i>
	<i>\$200.28 (\$2.00 per issue)</i>

To reach as many fans as possible, we're producing this thing at-cost, only charging enough for expenses. When we reach 300 subscribers, we can print for the same price as xeroxing. At around 400-500, we'll can add more pages! So tell someone about us: more subscriptions means more submissions and better quality for everyone.

- Since we're producing this thing at-cost, we can't pay for submissions. But if your submission is used, you'll receive that issue FREE! (We'll extend your paid subscription by one issue.)

The success of this publication depends on YOU! We need your comments, ideas and submissions to make this the best publication it can be. I look forward to hearing from you.

Long live the King!

John Morrow, Editor

(This issue's cover is a self-portrait Jack drew in the late 1960s, and it's the first Kirby art Mike Royer ever inked. According to Mark Evanier, Mike came to Jack's studio to talk about inking his work, so Jack handed him this drawing and told him to give it a try. While Jack took a walk for an hour or so, Mike sat there and inked this drawing as a sort of test. Talk about pressure! Jack must have liked the results, because Mike went on to do a great job inking much of Jack's 1970s work.)



THE MARVELMANIA PORTFOLIO

by Paul Doolittle

Upon Jack Kirby's departure from Marvel Comics to DC Comics in 1970, a special tribute portfolio was prepared by the staff of Marvelmania. It was offered for sale in the first two issues of *Marvelmania Magazine*. Both issues described the contents of the portfolio; 12 unpublished pencil drawings, a photo of Jack, and the text of an interview, all inside a folder. This was intended to be a one printing offer, only enough copies to fill requests, but extras were run off for sale while they lasted.

I recently received xeroxes of this rare item, although I suspect that the original they came from was incomplete. Only the folder, introduction page, and 11 pieces of art were accounted for. The folder artwork is the same as the Kirby-style machinery art from the endpapers to the *Jack Kirby's Heroes and Villains* hardcover published a few years ago. A collage and a page of Jack's unpublished Surf Hunter newspaper strip accompany 9 unpublished pencil drawings from *Thor* and *Fantastic Four*. The collage appears to have an astronaut riding a spacecraft which

looks like a bathyscaph (it's hard to describe because this picture didn't copy too well). The Surf Hunter strip can be found on page 101 in *The Art of Jack Kirby* and also in *Jack Kirby Masterworks*.

The *Thor* pages consist of a full-page Odin and Asgardian; a full-page Loki, Karnilla, and Haag; 2 full-page Galactus in space; and 2 pages of panels. Some of these are easy to figure which issues they came from, while others can be speculated. The Loki, Karnilla, and Haag page is most likely from *Thor* #167, where Haag is holding the clay image of Balder. One page of panels depicts the battle between Balder, Fandral and Hogun against the Thermal Man, probably from *Thor* #169 or #170. One of the Galactus pages is almost identical to page 17, panel 2 of *Thor* #162. The other page shows Loki speaking from the branches of a tree to a group of Asgardian warriors.

The *Fantastic Four* pages are of panels most likely intended for the Black Panther origin in *Fantastic Four* #53. Of the two

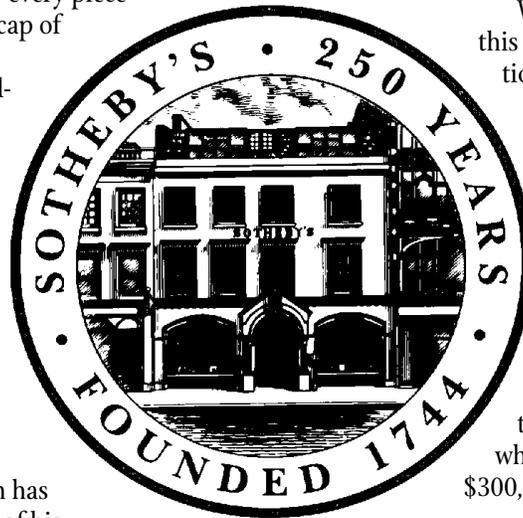
KIRBY ORIGINAL ART AT SOTHEBY'S

On June 18, 1994, Sotheby's Auction House in New York held its annual auction of comic book related items. Included were numerous items by Jack Kirby, including the following pieces of original art. Nearly every piece sold, and we felt collectors might like a recap of the results.

The prices listed here are the final selling prices. While some of these prices may seem exorbitant, bear in mind the following:

- Each price listed includes a 15% premium paid to Sotheby's.
- The seller has to pay Sotheby's a commission equal to 10-20% (minimum \$100) of the successful bid price, which will naturally be reflected in the minimum bid they'll accept.
- Unfortunately for collectors, Jack's death has (at least temporarily) driven up the cost of his work. (I saw a Mr. Miracle page in *Comics Buyer's Guide* in

June for \$250. Three weeks later I saw the same page at a comic convention for \$400, and it had already changed hands at least twice.)



While all the extra costs undoubtedly make this more expensive than buying at a convention or by mail, it's difficult to find this kind of selection anywhere else. If you missed out on this year's auction, consider ordering next year's catalog by calling Sotheby's at 800-444-3709. The catalog itself is profusely illustrated and makes an interesting collectible.

Combined sales of all these Kirby items totals \$142,309.00. This doesn't include the numerous comic books sold with Jack's art in them. The total sales for the one-day event were \$1,688,304.00 (of which Sotheby's collected between \$200,000-\$300,000 in commissions and premiums).

If you know of other interesting sales of Kirby originals, write and give us the details.



KIRBY COVER RECREATIONS:

The original art for many of the most famous Marvel Comics covers is assumed either lost or destroyed, so here's the next best thing. These are recreations of famous Marvel covers, drawn by Jack in 1993. Logos and balloons were hand-lettered by Jack to distinguish them from the originals (in case they still exist). These drawings were fully authorized by Marvel Comics, and all proceeds went to Jack's estate (minus Sotheby's commissions and a share to Dick Ayers for the inked pieces).

TITLE	ISSUE #	COMMENTS	FINAL PRICE
<i>Amazing Fantasy</i>	#15	Penciled only	\$10,925.00
<i>Tales of Suspense</i>	#39	Penciled only	\$7475.00
<i>Amazing Spider-Man</i>	#1	Penciled only	\$14,950.00
<i>Fantastic Four</i>	#1	Inked by Ayers	\$7475.00
	#5	Inked by Ayers	\$6325.00
<i>X-Men</i>	#1	Inked by Ayers	\$4887.00
<i>Journey Into Mystery</i>	#83	Inked by Ayers	\$9200.00
<i>Strange Tales</i>	#89	Inked by Ayers	\$5750.00

6



These two posters each measure 19" x 26" and were printed in black-&-white. I bought these at a convention in 1977 for 50¢ each. What a bargain! Does anybody know if these were authorized by Jack, or are they a "bootleg" product? Let us know if you have any information on these great pencil sketches.

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

ISSUE #2, NOV. 1994

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Characters © Marvel Comics, Artwork © Jack Kirby

A SANDMAN SLEEPER

by John Morrow, artwork submitted by John Cowan, Bill Alger, and Greg Theakston

In June 1978, DC Comics went through a major shake-up in their line of comics. Coming off a rapid period of expansion called the “DC Explosion,” they suddenly and dramatically cut back on their output. The shake-up came to be called the “DC Implosion.”

In the midst of this, many books that were ready to go to press got shelved. To retain copyright on these unpublished stories, DC xeroxed the original art on 8-1/2" x 11" pages, one-sided, and bound them into two volumes called *Cancelled Comics Cavalcade*. Both volumes have a blue cover and a taped spine, and only 35 copies were printed and distributed (mostly to artists whose work was included, with one copy sent to Bob Overstreet as verification of its existence).

But since Jack had already left DC for Marvel Comics by 1978, what does all this have to do with him, you ask?

Well, included in Volume Two is an unpublished Kirby *Sandman* story (inked by Mike Royer) originally scheduled for *Sandman* #7 before that book was cancelled in 1975. It was rescheduled to run in *Kamandi* #61, but *Kamandi* was a victim

of the Implosion, so the story ended up in *Cancelled Comics Cavalcade*. Presented here are six pages of that *Sandman* “sleeper.” The story has a Christmas theme, and we felt this was an appropriate submission with the holidays upon us.

Kamandi #61 contained a framing sequence (not by Kirby) that tied the *Sandman* story in with Kamandi’s continuity. Apparently Jack C. Harris (editor of Kamandi at the time) planned to send Kamandi on a series of adventures that had him encountering all of Kirby’s 1970s DC characters. The Vortex that swept Kamandi away in issue #59 would eventually have been revealed as connected to The Source (from the Fourth World series).

On a related note: although not by Kirby, *Cancelled Comics Cavalcade* contains work by other artists working on Kirby DC characters, including what would have been *Kamandi* #60 (with an OMAC story) and a Mister Miracle drawing by Michael Golden intended for the cover of *Mister Miracle* #26.

If you’d like to see more of this Sandman story, let us know and we’ll run it in a future issue.

SOMEWHERE, BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH, THERE IS A PLACE WHERE DREAMS ARE BORN AND MONITORED. THIS IS THE DOMAIN OF A LEGENDARY FIGURE, ETERNAL AND IMMORTAL, WHO SHARES WITH MAN AND BEAST ALL THE SECRETS OF THE AGES.

THE SANDMAN IN THE SEAL MEN'S WAR ON SANTA CLAUS



INDICIA



CONVERSATIONS WITH JACK KIRBY

by Harry W. Miller

(This article was originally published in *Alpha Omega* #26, May 1989, well before Jack's passing, and should be viewed in that light.)

There is no questioning the important place Jack Kirby has in the history of comics, both in terms of his visual and conceptual innovations. But even more impressive to me is the character of the person behind those historic contributions. I was able to appreciate this very clearly after having the opportunity to talk with Mr. Kirby on the phone several times. My hope is that someday I'll have the chance to meet him face-to-face.

The following is my paraphrasing of some of the thoughts he shared with me during our phone conversations, the last of which were on January 18th and March 16th this year. Much of it concerns the formative influences which went into the development of his unique and hard-hitting brand of telling stories with words and pictures. He has reviewed and given me permission to use this material.

Jack Kirby was born Jacob Kurtzberg in 1917 of Austrian Jewish parents who came to America from Europe. He had one younger brother Dave who he used to refer to as a "big guy". That's easy to understand, considering Jack is 5' 7".

Jack was the first member of his family to be a native-born American. This fact, together with his character-shaping experiences in the U.S. Army in World War II France, imbued him with the staunch patriotism so forcefully expressed in his stories and in characters such as Captain America and his hero with a sense of humor, The Fighting American. Indeed, all of his work was strongly influenced by or directly based upon his true-life adventures.

During his youth, growing up in New York City, he experienced the kind of prohibition and depression era world he pictured in works such as *In The Days of the Mob* and numerous other crime comics. His neighborhood was an ethnic melting pot, so he learned to understand all types of people. He seems to have found there are basically two types, good and bad, individuals, that is. Later, he would at times choose to use ethnic minorities such as blacks in stories based upon experiences in which the original character was white. Because, he says, "there were no blacks in comics at that time."

In *Fantastic Four* #52 he created what is deemed the first black super-hero, the Black Panther. That character went on to star in *Jungle Action* and then appeared in his own title.

Kirby's early surroundings helped stimulate his interest in story-telling. Being from a hard-working emigrant family, short on income, one of the chief forms of entertainment was telling stories to one another after the evening meal. So, young Jack was trained at his craft early-on. He told me he could just as well have become a journalist, so strong was his interest in the story-telling aspect of his art.

His home was on the lower east side, a short trolley ride from where most of the publishers were then located. As luck would have it, he came under the influence of the comic strip artists rather than the journalists. He would often visit with, run errands for, and most of all, learn from such accomplished

artists as Walter Berndt, creator of the *Smitty* strip. This was essentially the place Jack Kirby served his "apprenticeship."

During the thirties, his eyes and mind were being fed by the visual glories of the cinema and newspaper comic strips. Jack was increasingly impressed by the magnificent, large-sized strips he read in the Hearst paper, *The New York Journal*. One cartoonist whose great line-work he found to be particularly outstanding was Billy DeBeck in his *Barney Google* strip around 1935.

Frequent trips to the cinema reinforced Jack's appreciation for the visual, sequential type of story-telling. I can tell you, he is still a die-hard movie buff of the first order.

Although he greatly prefers movies with well thought-out plots to those which lean needlessly on special effects, the three dimensional aspect of cinematography has always had a strong fascination for him. The Kirby style, noted for its use of strong perspective and foreshortening, makes this clear. However, Jack mentioned the actual 3-D work he did with Ray Zone in *Battle for a Three-Dimensional World* as, perhaps, the best example of this interest.

Like many young boys of the thirties, he sold newspapers to make spending money. The experiences he had as a newsboy planted the seed of what would later become his Newsboy Legion which appeared in *Star-Spangled Comics* and still later in *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen*. The Legion was, perhaps, the first such teen group to lend a hand to their favorite super-hero.

During World War II Jack mentally stored away enough exciting experiences to supply him with a near inexhaustible source of story ideas. Kirby served as an advanced scout for

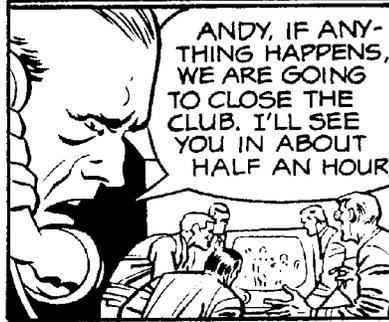


Harry did finally get to meet Jack face-to-face at the 1990 Atlanta Fantasy Fair. Shown here is a photo taken at that meeting in August 1990.

12:20 P.M., NOV. 22, 1963 -- JACK RUBY LEARNS OF THE ASSASSINATION IN THE NEWS ROOM OF THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS, WHERE HE HAS GONE TO PLACE AN AD FOR HIS CLUB AND COMPLAIN ABOUT AN ANTI-KENNEDY AD.



STUNNED, RUBY GETS ON THE PHONE AND CALLS ANDY ARMSTRONG, BARTENDER AT HIS CLUB, THE CAROUSEL.



ANDY, IF ANYTHING HAPPENS, WE ARE GOING TO CLOSE THE CLUB. I'LL SEE YOU IN ABOUT HALF AN HOUR.

THEN HE CALLS EVA GRANT, HIS SISTER, BUT SHE IS HYSTERICAL.



JOHN, I AM NOT OPENING TONIGHT. I WILL HAVE TO LEAVE DALLAS..

1:15 P.M., RUBY WENT, POSSIBLY, TO PARKLAND MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, WHERE NEWSMAN SETH KANTOR CLAIMS TO HAVE SEEN HIM.



SHOULD I CLOSE MY PLACE FOR THE NEXT THREE NIGHTS, DO YOU THINK? YES... I THINK THAT IS A GOOD IDEA..

1:45 P.M., HE ARRIVES AT THE CAROUSEL CLUB.

CALL EVERYONE AND TELL THEM WE'RE NOT OPENING!



1:51 P.M., RUBY CALLS RESTAURANT OWNER, RALPH, PAUL AND OTHERS...

ISN'T THIS A TERRIBLE THING? RALPH, I CAN'T OPEN. YOU SHOULD CLOSE YOUR PLACE TOO!



A DALLAS POLICEMAN NAMED TIPPIT HAS JUST BEEN SHOT AND KILLED!



I KNOW HIM! I KNOW HIM!

LATER, AT A DELICATESSEN WHERE RUBY GOES TO BUY \$ 22.00 WORTH OF COLD CUTS...



JOE WHAT IS THIS GOING TO DO TO OUR BUSINESS? WE'RE GOING TO LOSE ALL OF THE CONVENTIONS!

YOU DON'T KNOW THIS, BUT I STARTED ALL OF MY PROGRAMS WITH A PATRIOTIC NUMBER.

DO THEY HAVE THE SON-OF-A-BITCH THAT DID IT? THEY SHOULD SHOOT HIM RIGHT AWAY!

RUBY ARRIVES AT HIS SISTER'S APARTMENT.



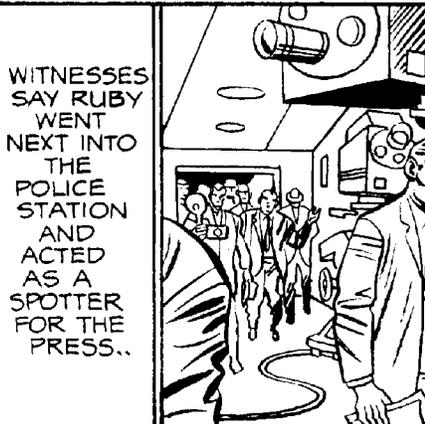
EVA, WHAT SHALL WE DO?

JACK, LET'S CLOSE FOR THREE DAYS. WE DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ANYWAY, BUT WE OWE IT TO...

RUBY, THEN, PLACES A CALL TO THE NEWSPAPER TO CHANGE HIS AD.



DO ME A FAVOR, LISTEN, USE MY SPACE AND SAY, "CLOSED FRIDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY." AND DON'T TELL THE WEINSTEINS. I DON'T CARE WHAT THE OTHER CLUBS ARE DOING. I WANT TO SCOOP THEM.



WITNESSES SAY RUBY WENT NEXT INTO THE POLICE STATION AND ACTED AS A SPOTTER FOR THE PRESS..



WAS THAT SHERIFF DECKER?

NO THAT WAS CAPTAIN WILL FRITZ. YOU SPELL IT. W-I-L-L-F-R-I-T-Z-

Here is page one of a three-page story Jack did for *Esquire Magazine* (May 1967), detailing the events leading up to Jack Ruby shooting Lee Harvey Oswald. Jack's art was also featured in the Sept. 1966 issue, in an article about the comics craze on college campuses. Artwork submitted by Greg Theakston.

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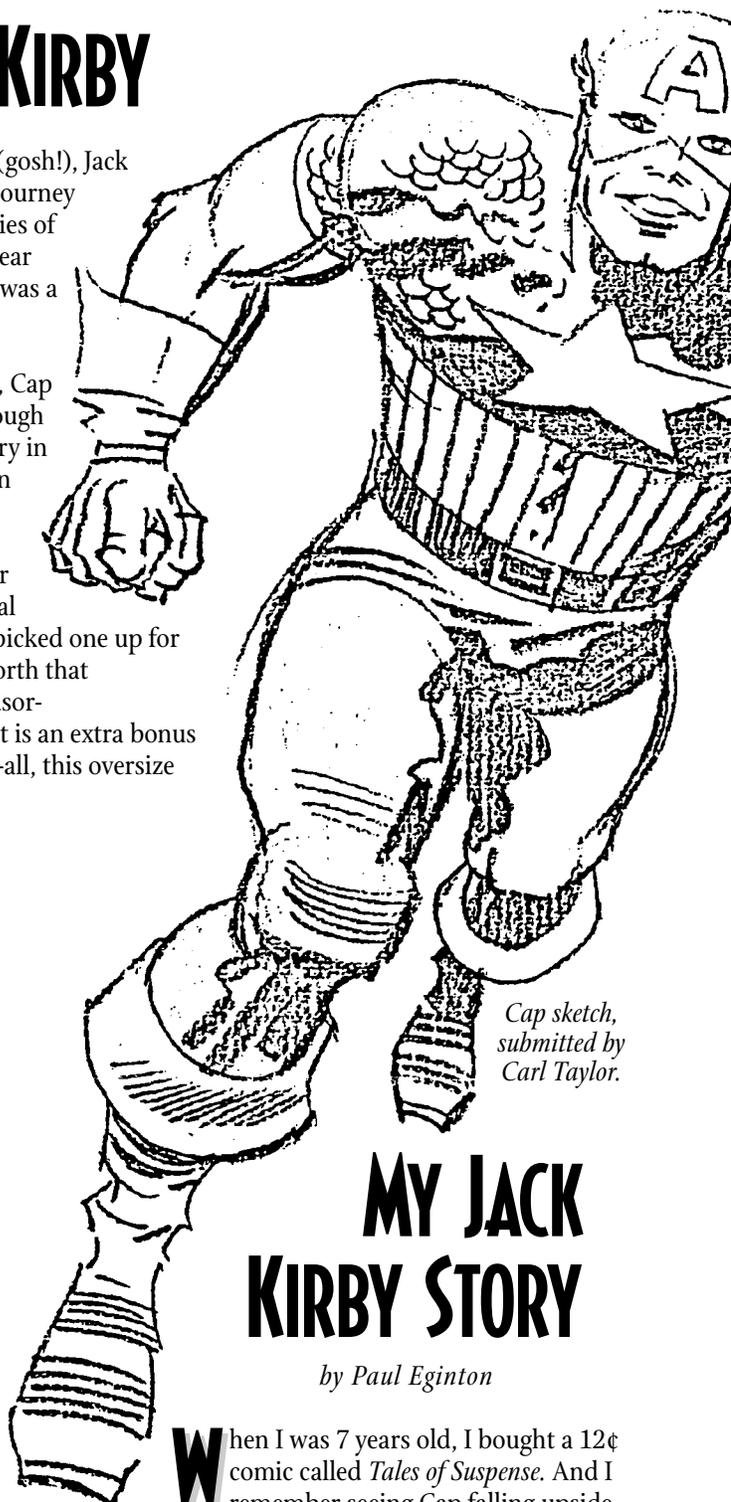


HISTORIC KIRBY

Almost 20 years ago (gosh!), Jack Kirby took us on a journey through two centuries of American history. The year was 1976, and the book was a Marvel Treasury Special called *Captain America's Bicentennial Battles*. In it, Cap is sent back-&-forth through time to experience history in the making (including an encounter with a young Jack Kirby!).

If you don't have your old copy, check your local comic store like I did. I picked one up for cover price! It's easily worth that much to see Barry Windsor-

Smith ink Jack's pencils. The Bullseye-esque pin-up of Cap in the Wild West is an extra bonus no Kirby fan should miss. And it's great to see Jack's art at large size. All-in-all, this oversize volume is well worth another look, and a real bargain.



Cap sketch, submitted by Carl Taylor.

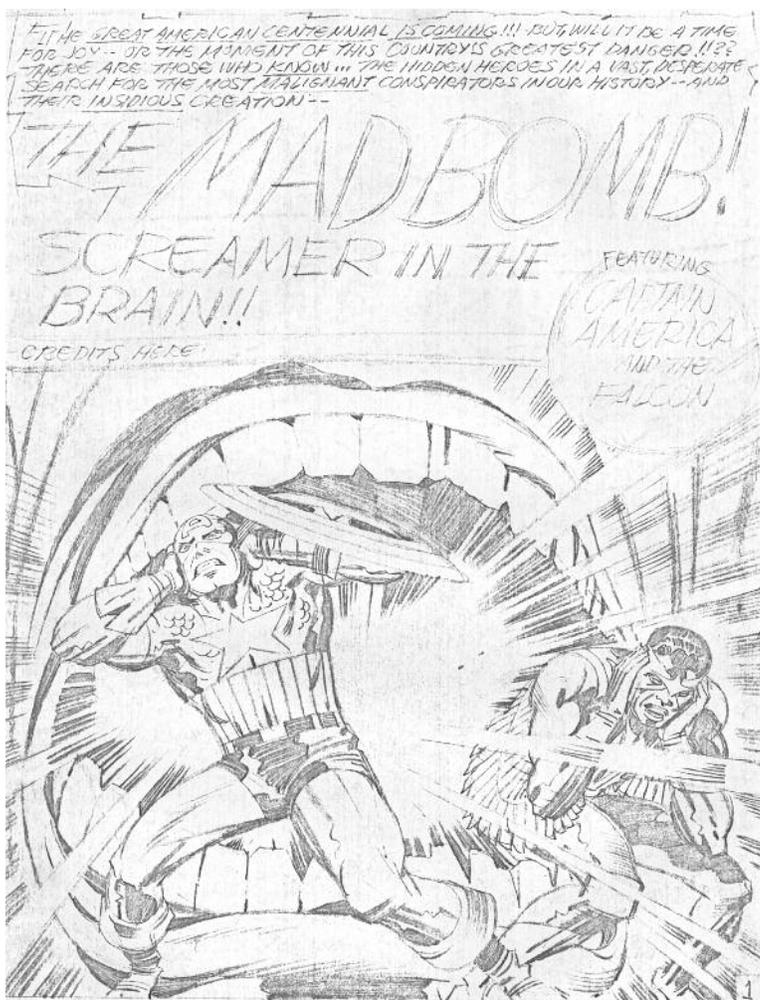
MY JACK KIRBY STORY

by Paul Eginton

When I was 7 years old, I bought a 12¢ comic called *Tales of Suspense*. And I remember seeing Cap falling upside down with his red, white, and blue shield for protection. From then on I was hooked.

I would skip the Iron Man story and go right for the Captain America story, and I would admire the drawing of some guy called "The King." As time went by and I grew older I realized what a talent this man was, and what a great body of work he left us.

It's funny when I visit comic shops now. I often see young collectors buying whatever new artist is hot this week, and I laugh and say that the real good stuff is in the bargain bins under *Marvel's Greatest Comics* (the old F.F. reprints) and *Marvel Double Feature* (the Cap reprints), drawn by the best artist of all, Jack Kirby.



Jack's original pencils from page 1 of *Captain America* #193, heralding his 1970s return to the character he co-created. Submitted by David Hamilton.

MARVELMANIA PORTFOLIO SHOWCASE

Submitted by Paul Doolittle

Here are a few more plates from the rare 1970 Marvelmania Portfolio, which was discussed in detail in issue #1. We'll be running the final installment of plates next issue.



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THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

ISSUE #4, MAR. 1995



ABOUT FACES...

by John Morrow, with help by David Hamilton & Greg Theakston

Something strange kept happening throughout Jack's 1960s-70s work; comic book companies were changing the faces on his artwork! By comparing xeroxes of Jack's uninked pencils to the printed comics, it becomes obvious how widespread this phenomenon was.

The "face lift" that immediately springs to most Kirby fan's minds is *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen*, where DC had Al Plastino and Murphy Anderson redraw all the Olsen and Superman faces. (DC will restore the original Kirby faces for their upcoming Olsen reprint book if it ever sees print - see details on page 2 of this issue.) Shown on the next page are examples from issue #139, page 7. The Superman faces in *Forever People* #1 were done the same way. And a few years later, DC again changed Jack's faces in *Kobra* #1.

But DC wasn't the only culprit. Examine the panel from Marvel's *Captain America* #101 (page 11). Was this a conscious decision by Editor Stan Lee, or just heavy-handed inking by Syd Shores? I'm not certain, but it's interesting to see how much Cap's face changed while the villain behind him remained basically unaltered. Also shown are examples from *Captain America* #102 (page 7 and 8). The Sharon Carter faces were redrawn on Jack's pencil art by John Romita Sr. (with Syd Shores inking, they don't look much like Romita or Kirby.) And there are numerous other examples from *Captain America* where Sharon Carter's hair style completely changes for no apparent reason.

Jack fared no better during his mid-70s outing at Marvel. His one and only work on Conan from *Giant Size Conan* #5 has a redrawn face. And check out the facial changes on the cover of *Thor* #255 and 258, and *Ka-Zar* #12 (they even changed Zabu!). Just a few of the many other covers to check out are *Marvel Two-In-One* #25, *Invaders* #3 and #5, and *Defenders* #45.

Why all the changes? Well, for better or worse, DC was trying to keep their "house look" consistent among all their Superman books. And *Kobra* #1 has a text page that explains why they had Pablos Marcos redraw the faces.

And what was going on at Marvel? Considering Jack created Marvel's house look, why all the changes? Sharon Carter was not a company icon, so she could've remained unaltered. Stan Lee has widely praised Romita for the beautiful women he drew, so I imagine this was Stan's decision.

While Captain America is widely recognized, Jack drew him numerous other times without any alterations. Heck, he co-created the character! Why change him? We've all heard stories about people at Marvel who "had it in" for Jack during the mid-70s, which might explain those later covers. Was a similar thing going on in the late 60s, or is Syd Shores' inking strictly to blame?

If these artwork changes seem insignificant to you, put yourself in Jack's shoes. This was just one of many indignities he put up with during his career. These annoying art changes may have been the final straw that caused Jack to leave Marvel for DC in 1970, and to abandon mainstream comics altogether in the late 70s. Inevitably, we all lost out. Who knows what wonders of Jack's imagination we were robbed of seeing, all because comic companies couldn't treat one of their greatest talents with a little more respect.



Pencils vs. inks on *Captain America* #101, page 11 (above).



Why did Romita re-pencil Sharon's face on *CA* #102, pg. 7 (above) and pg. 8 (below)?



Notice the dramatic changes to the cover of *Ka-Zar* #12.

Characters © Marvel Comics, Artwork © Jack Kirby

Characters © Marvel Comics, Artwork © Jack Kirby

Characters © Marvel Comics, Artwork © Jack Kirby

A BRUSH WITH MIKE ROYER - PART 1

Interviewed by John Morrow

(Mike Royer is the current leader in our poll of favorite Kirby inkers, and no wonder! He inked the bulk of Jack's output from 1970-1980, a peak Kirby period. At age 53, Mike is temporarily living in an apartment in Moorpark, CA while his house in Simi Valley is being repaired from last year's massive earthquake damage. After fourteen years as a staff artist for the Disney Studios, Mike is now a Disney freelance Product Designer/Character Artist, with most of his work being on Winnie The Pooh. I spoke with Mike on February 6, 1995 - the one year anniversary of Jack's death.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: How well did you get to know the Kirbys?

MIKE ROYER: The relationship I always had with Jack and Roz was that, when I was working with Jack it felt like extended family. And when I wasn't working with Jack, things were in a state of limbo. Then when we did something together again, it was as if the period in-between had never existed.

I spoke with Roz the other day and told her this interview was coming up, and I said I'd try to behave myself and not insult anyone. (laughter) I think the world of Roz. I think she was the strength and the reality ground in Jack Kirby's life. I sometimes joke to my wife when we drive places, because I'm constantly thinking about the work I'm doing for Disney... I'm always creating ideas... and I sometimes miss where I'm supposed to turn off the freeway, etc. She's constantly reminding me of my speed, and I turn and look at her and say, "I'm gonna have to make you my Roz Kirby." Because as long as I've known the Kirbys, Roz always did the driving. Now I understand why. I'm not trying to say what I do with Winnie the Pooh is the same as Jack's *Captain America* and *Forever People*, etc., but the creative process does go on all the time. Roz took care of the things that insured they got from point A to point B safely, while Jack's mind was completely involved with creating.

I remember meeting with them at a restaurant in Burbank for lunch, and Jack asked me if I wanted to ink *Silver Star*. We sat there and Jack was explaining the story of *Silver Star* and I'm thinking, "How the hell is he gonna get all this information into one comic?" I subsequently found out that he had told me about all six issues - he had it totally worked out! Talk about the genius of Kirby... he had it all worked out before he'd drawn even one page of the first book.

TJKC: Did you grow up reading Jack's stuff?

MR: Yeah, but I really wasn't aware it was Jack Kirby. I have fond memories as a kid enjoying books like *Boys' Ranch*, *Stuntman*, *Boy Commandos*. Once I decided I wanted to draw, I set my sights on newspaper adventure comic strips. But sometime around 1964 I was exposed to comic books again and got a real kick out of the chutzpah of Marvel Comics. I was familiar with Kirby, but I had never made the connection that this was the Kirby from my youth until I started getting involved with comic fanzines, and the light bulb went off and I realized this was the guy whose stuff I'd

loved as a kid. The real "adventure" now seemed to be in comic books, and I wanted to be part of it.

TJKC: From that, how did you get started in comics?

MR: I moved to California in 1965. Six months before that I sent some sample comic book pages to Russ Manning, whose work on the *Magnus* comics I really, really liked. He wrote back and said, "If I ever needed an assistant, you would work." So I packed my bags and moved to California and metaphorically moved into his backyard and said, "Well, I'm here!" (laughter) Out of the kindness of his heart, he gave me work.

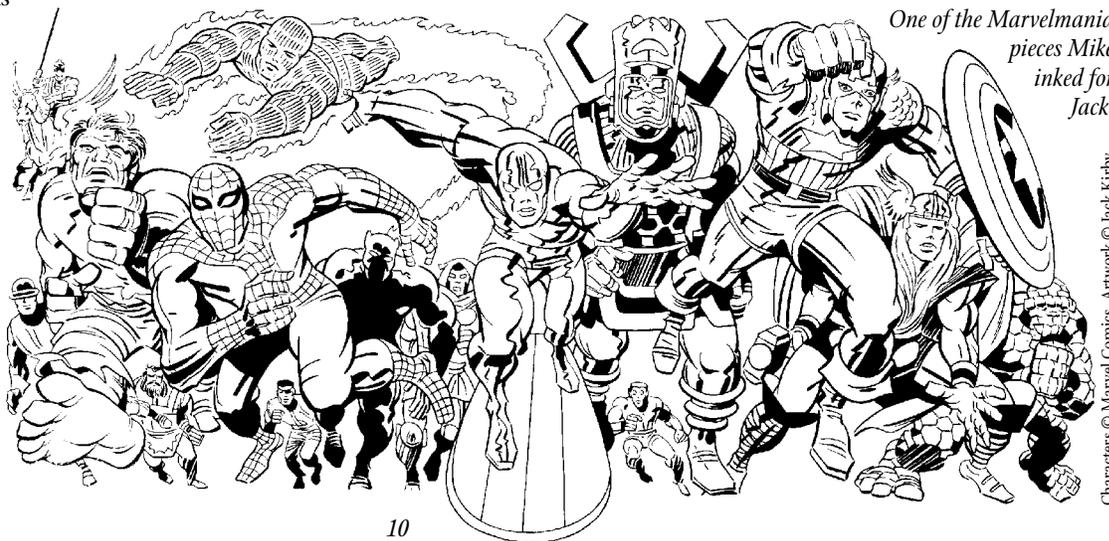
TJKC: How'd you start inking Jack's work?

MR: One night in the late 1960s, about 8:00 in the evening, the phone's ringing in the kitchen. I pick it up, and the voice says (in Kirby accent), "Hello, Mike Royer? This is Jack Kirby. Alex Toth says you're a good inker." (laughter) And Jack says there's a bunch of stuff he's doing for Marvelmania, and he wanted to know if I'd be interested in inking it. So it was Alex Toth that mentioned me to Jack Kirby.

I had seen reproductions of his pencils in fanzines and I thought, "Why doesn't anyone ever ink Jack's pencils? Why are they interpreting and changing them?" So I drove to Jack's and he showed me what he'd like me to ink, and I said, "Well, do you want me to bring this to you tomorrow?" And he says, "Why don't you sit here and do it now?" So I sat there at Jack Kirby's drawing board and I inked this page of him sitting at his drawing board with all his Marvel characters flying off the board, which became the artwork that accompanied his biography in the Marvelmania membership kits.



Characters © Marvel Comics, Artwork © Jack Kirby



One of the Marvelmania pieces Mike inked for Jack.

Characters © Marvel Comics, Artwork © Jack Kirby



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IN THIS ISSUE:

JACK GOES TO COLLEGE!

TRANSCRIPTS FROM KIRBY'S 1972 SPEECH AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

UNPUBLISHED FANTASTIC FOUR PENCILS!

ESSENTIAL KIRBY COLLECTIBLES

DO YOU HAVE THEM ALL?

JACK MEETS THE BEATLES!

WELL, SORT OF...

HOW KIRBY USED REAL PEOPLE IN HIS COMICS

A LOOK AT JACK'S ART FOR MARVELMANIA

FAN MEMORIES

AND MUCH MORE!!



KIRBY AT COLLEGE

© 1972, 1995 Harold May, 5050 Poplar, Suite 2414, Memphis, TN 38157.

April 28, 1972 was the day I met Jack Kirby. I had cut classes to help set up a hospitality tent on the athletic field between the freshman dorms and the law school. The event was a comic art symposium sponsored by the Vanderbilt University speakers program.

I hadn't believed they could pull it off. The whole weekend was put together in less than six weeks. Stan Lee and Jack Kirby both would attend. So would Dave Berg, Garry Trudeau, Gahan Wilson, and five or six other notable artists and writers. I didn't want to miss a minute of it. But I wasn't prepared for what was to happen next.

A phone call came in from our program chairman. Jack Kirby's plane was due at the Nashville airport in 10 minutes, and there was no one to meet him. "Does anybody have a car? Anyone willing to go?"

I seized the moment. "Yes!" I shouted, and began racing across campus to my car. Another student came with me. We leapt into my '69 Mustang and *vrooomed* down West End Avenue toward the expressway, and onward to the airport.

Fifteen minutes later. Nashville airport. A short, wizened figure, looking lost in the nearly empty corridor. I recognized The Man from recent photographs I had seen. We introduced ourselves, and I became Jack Kirby's unofficial host for the remainder of the weekend.

After checking Jack into his hotel (and after he had dinner on his own), I picked him up later to attend the evening's events. Jack wasn't scheduled to speak until Saturday morning, but wanted to hear the other speeches that would precede his.

Garry Trudeau was just beginning his keynote speech when we entered the auditorium. Seats had been held for us in the center of the room. As we entered, a hush fell on the crowd. The speeches stopped. Every head in the room turned and watched as we walked down the aisle and took our seats. The King was seated... now the program could really begin.

It was a ball being with Jack that weekend. He was so casual and relaxed with his fans. Rather than go with the other artists to a night club, he preferred to go on a night-walking tour of the campus with a group of students, ending up at a coffee shop where we shot the bull about comics until 2 a.m. Jack was scheduled to speak at 8:30 the next morning.

What follows is the text of the speech that Jack made that morning at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. In addition, I'm including some comments that Jack made during a panel discussion, the only contribution he made in that particular session.

The program chairman introduced Jack as a man who needed no introduction, other than by a list of the characters he had created. He named a dozen or so of those characters, and Jack got up to speak.

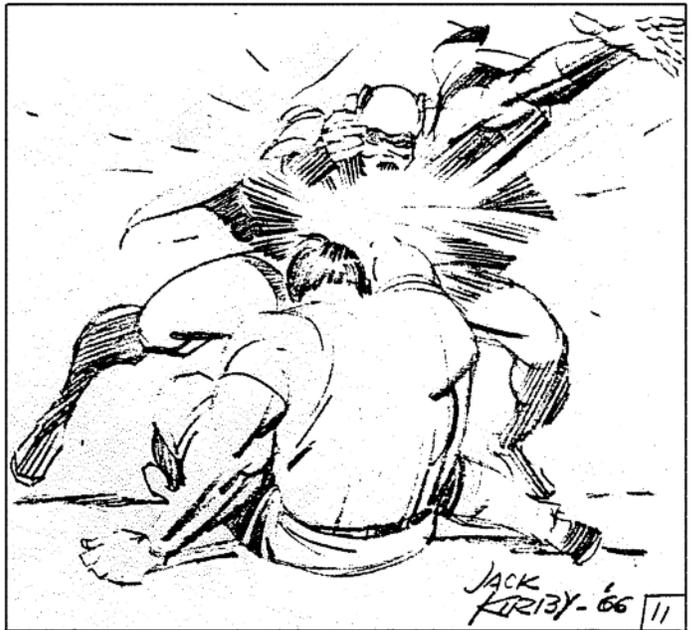
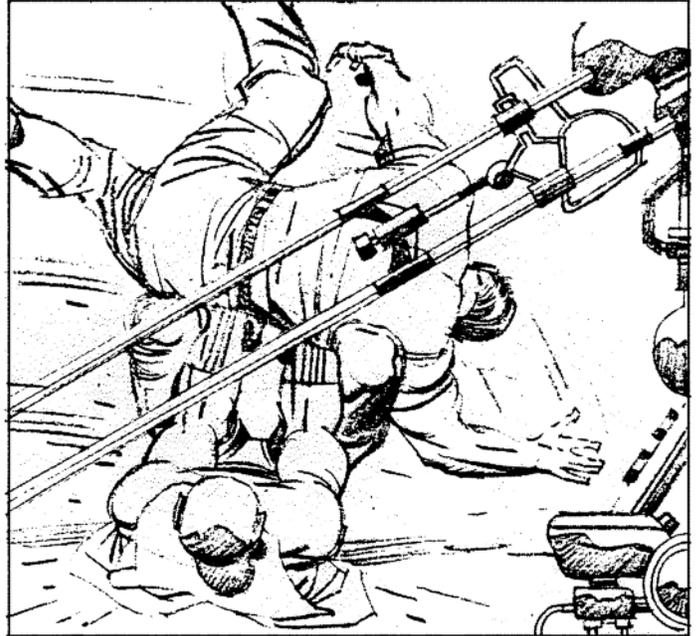
THE TRANSCRIPT OF JACK'S SPEECH

April 29, 1972, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee

The way he rattled off all those characters – why, I feel like the father of a hundred acrobats. And possibly I am, because that's been my stock in trade, really – creating people with wonderful reflexes. Perhaps in doing these comics I'm doing an analysis of myself – of things I'd like to be and things I'd like to do. You know, while I've been here, we've discussed the situation in which I – well, after doing so much of the action in Captain America, I was looking forward to being attacked by eight or nine guys and fight 'em and see how things worked out. I thought I could really do it! But that's an ego trip, and I know I'd get my lumps. But somehow you get into that sort of thing and you begin to enjoy the action. And you begin to surprise yourself.

But it's a language tool. I think comics is a form of speech, and each individual that uses it speaks in his own way. And everybody who uses it is performing in some way, whether he's an editor, a writer, an artist – he's really a performer. He makes his own individualistic stamp on the plot he's working on; whatever magazine you're reading has got the stamp of everybody who has worked on it. It's the product of everybody through whose hands it's passed.

So comics to me is a language, and I feel that some day, if we have to speak to people from another planet, I think we're going to talk to them in comics. I think they'll understand us. I can talk to – well certainly I'm not a linguist and I'm not fluent or versed in any other language except – in fact, I'm not quite sure about English. But I can communicate well in comics; I can talk to people in comics, and from what they see in the comics they know what's wrong with me. If I feel great they can see that in comics, or if I feel very passionate they'll get a slam-bang fight like they never saw before.



(Jack brought with him that day an unpublished Fantastic Four page from the 1st Black Panther story. Harold May comments, "I could have studied that page for hours... but actually only got a glimpse of it. Jack was very protective of the page, and wouldn't let me touch it!" Here are two panels, showing a beautiful example of Jack's "choreographed, violent ballets.")

JACK'S FUNNY FARM

Other than Lockjaw the Alligator and Earl the Rich Rabbit from the late 1940s, Jack didn't do much with funny animals. It's really a shame, based on these two examples of Jack's offbeat sense of humor.



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(left) A sketch Jack did for Scott Shaw! in 1970.
(above) A Kirby spoof of Star Wars.