

 JACK KIRBY
COLLECTOR

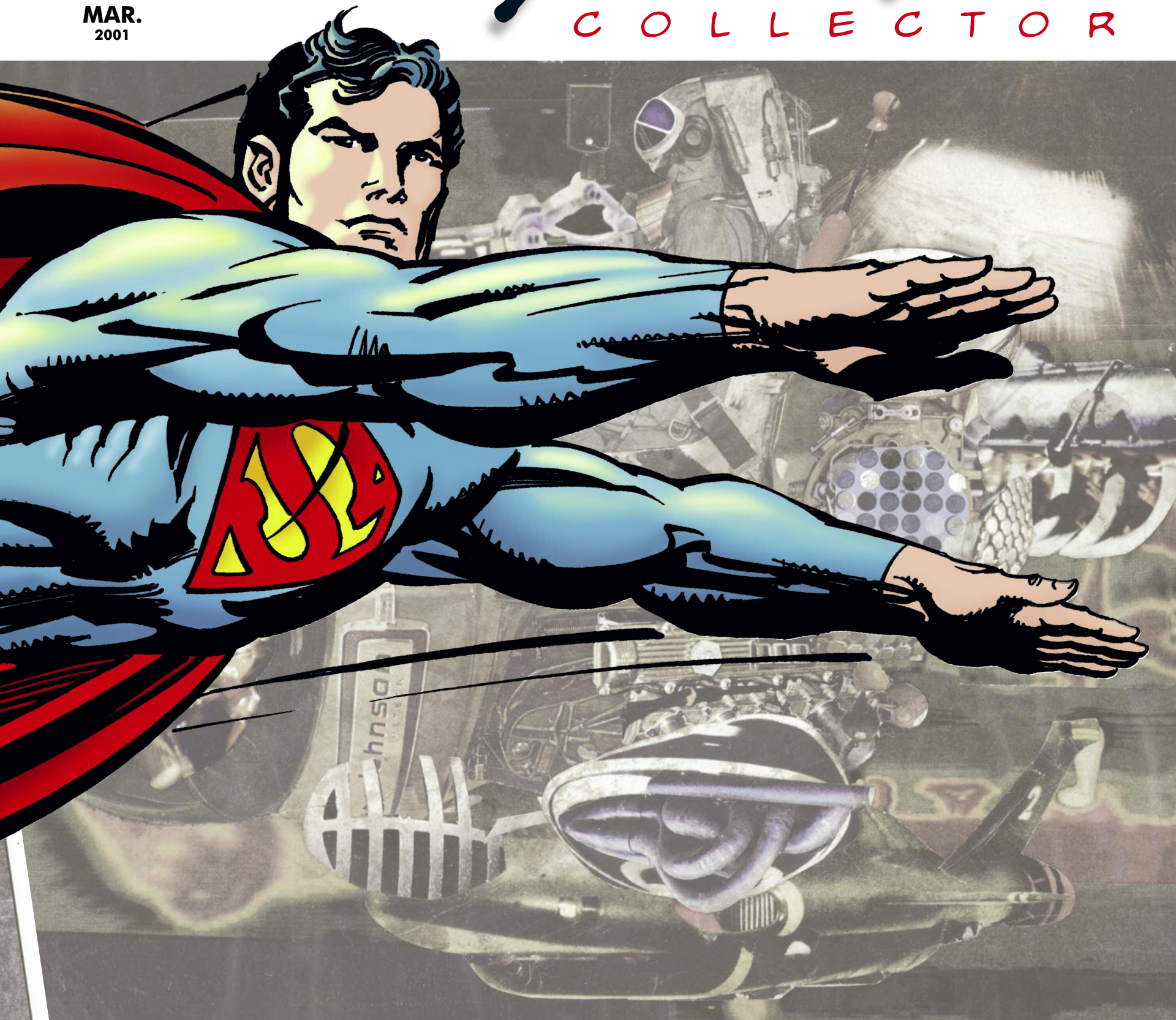


NO. 31
MAR.
2001

*IT'S THE **KIRBY** BIT! BUT LIKE
YOU'VE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE!!!*

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THE NEW JACK KIRBY~ C O L L E C T O R



LOOK *HIGH!* LOOK *LOW!* THEN BRACE YOURSELF FOR

THE BIG ONE!!

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Cover inks: NEAL ADAMS
Cover color: TOM ZIUKO

(This issue's cover was inspired by Jimmy Olsen #138: The Big Boom!)

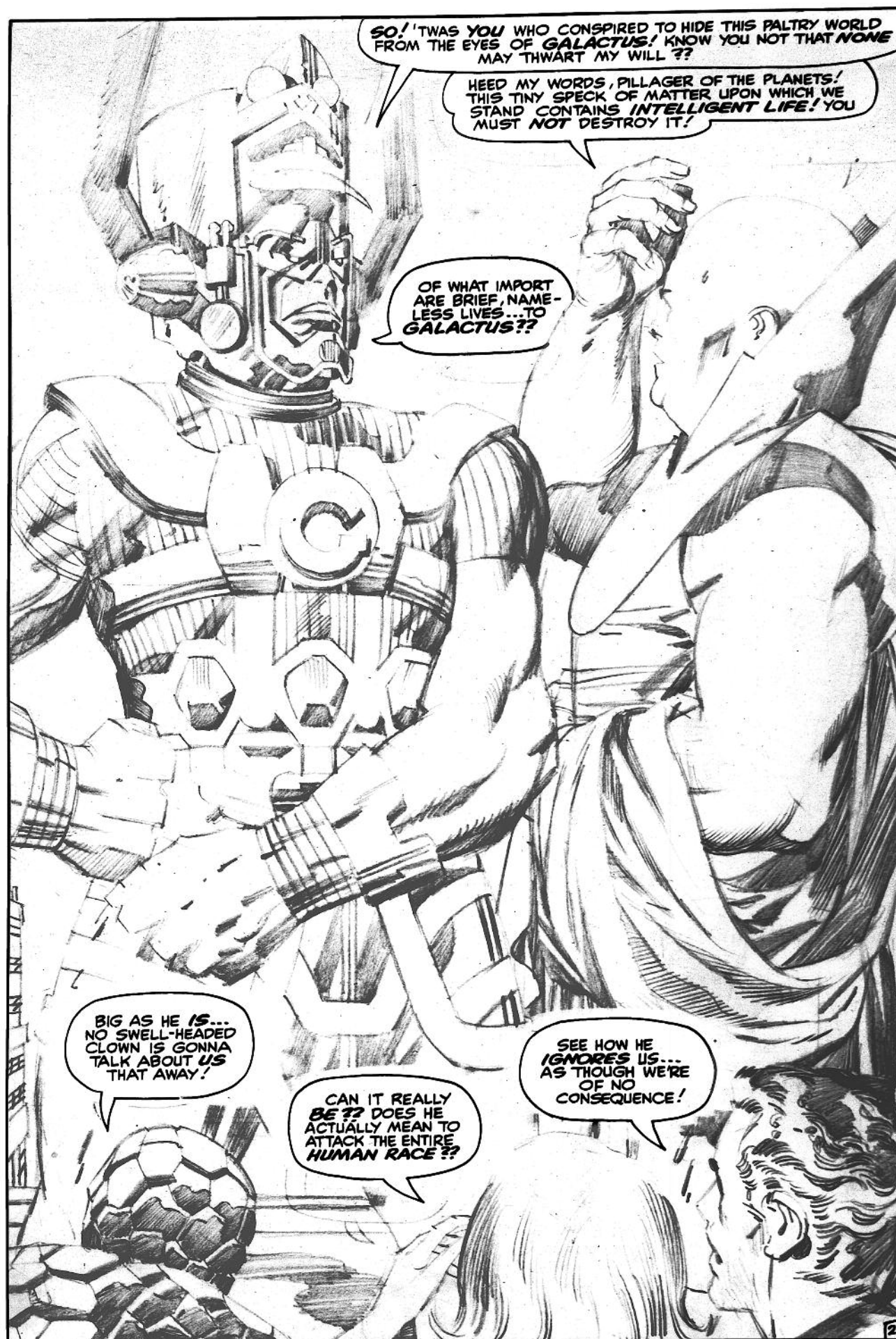
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These *Fantastic Four* #49 pencils (Apr. '66) were first presented in *TJKC* #22, but what better image to start off our first "big" issue?

The Jack Kirby Collector, Vol. 9, No. 31, March 2001. Published quarterly by & © TwoMorrows Publishing, 1812 Park Drive, Raleigh, NC 27605, USA. 919-833-8092. John Morrow, Editor. Pamela Morrow, Asst. Editor. Eric Nolen-Weathington, Production Assistant. Single issues: \$13 postpaid (\$15 Canada, \$16 elsewhere). Four-issue subscriptions: \$36.00 US, \$60.00 Canada, \$64.00 elsewhere. All characters are trademarks of their respective companies. All artwork is © Jack Kirby unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter is © the respective authors. First printing. PRINTED IN CANADA.

(background)
Miscellaneous *Jimmy Olsen* pages.
(©DC Comics.)

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

by John Morrow, editor

Have you ever stopped to think about how many really big ideas Kirby involved with throughout his career? This issue, and our new “big” format, came about when I set out to compile a list of the most immense moments in Kirby’s illustrious career. I figure, if anyone deserves the “King”-size treatment, it’s Jack, so here’s my personal Top Ten List of Kirby’s big ideas, which I call:

THE BIG ONES!

10) Captain America

Sure, there’s a lot of talk these days about whether or not Kirby was actually involved in the creation of Cap and Bucky, or just came in after Joe Simon had presented the idea to Martin Goodman. I’ll leave that for the lawyers in Joe’s case to sort out, but either way, Kirby was pivotal in making the character come to life on the comics page, and later giving him a resurgence at Marvel. As Kirby heroes go, Cap is the biggest and longest-lasting.

9) Kid Gangs

I have a special weakness for these youngsters; surprising, since I didn’t even know there was a Kid Gang genre until I first encountered the Newsboy Legion in *Jimmy Olsen* #133 (and their 1940s reprints in later issues). *Boy Commandos* was one of the top-selling comics of all time during World War II, and Simon & Kirby went on to produce a number of less-successful groups, all subscribing to the motif of street kids ganging up, much the way they did in Jack’s neighborhood as a child. Perhaps dismissed today, the Kid Gang genre was a staple of comics for decades.

8) Romance Comics

Deemed by some as too cliché and sappy for today’s readers, these comics were the hottest sellers of the 1950s, and Jack and Joe were their pioneers. Check ’em out!

7) Mythology In Comics

Others had delved into mythological underpinnings in an issue or three, but Jack managed to base an entire series (*Thor*) pretty faithfully around the Norse legends, and keep it interesting for a decade by interweaving sci-fi and super-heroics. That’s a pretty remarkable undertaking by itself, but Jack continually produced this material while concurrently spitting out epics in *FF* and other Marvel books.

6) Double-page Spreads

Was Kirby the first to use a giant, two-page spread to evoke a single image? Some say no, but he definitely used it to better effect than anyone else, always managing to tell as much story in one giant panel as other artists would in several small ones.

5) The mid-1960s *Fantastic Four* run (#45-60)

It may be unfair to lump these issues together in a survey like this, but how else could I ever pay tribute to all the amazing stuff Jack came up with during this run on the strip? The Negative Zone, Wakanda, Vibranium, the Black Panther, Inhumans, Prester John, etc. I’d have placed this higher on the list, except for the fact that Jack came up with it over several years, and a couple of breakout ideas deserve their own special treatment, namely:

4) Galactus and 3) The Silver Surfer

Galactus is the ultimate cosmic character, long-since ripped off by nearly every mainstream comics artist who came after him. Bigger than life, no one had ever envisioned a comics character of this scope before Jack; and the Surfer is just such an *out-there* idea (think about it; a chrome-plated guy that rides through space on a surfboard!), he deserves to stand near the top of the Kirby idea heap, in my mind.

2) The Fourth World

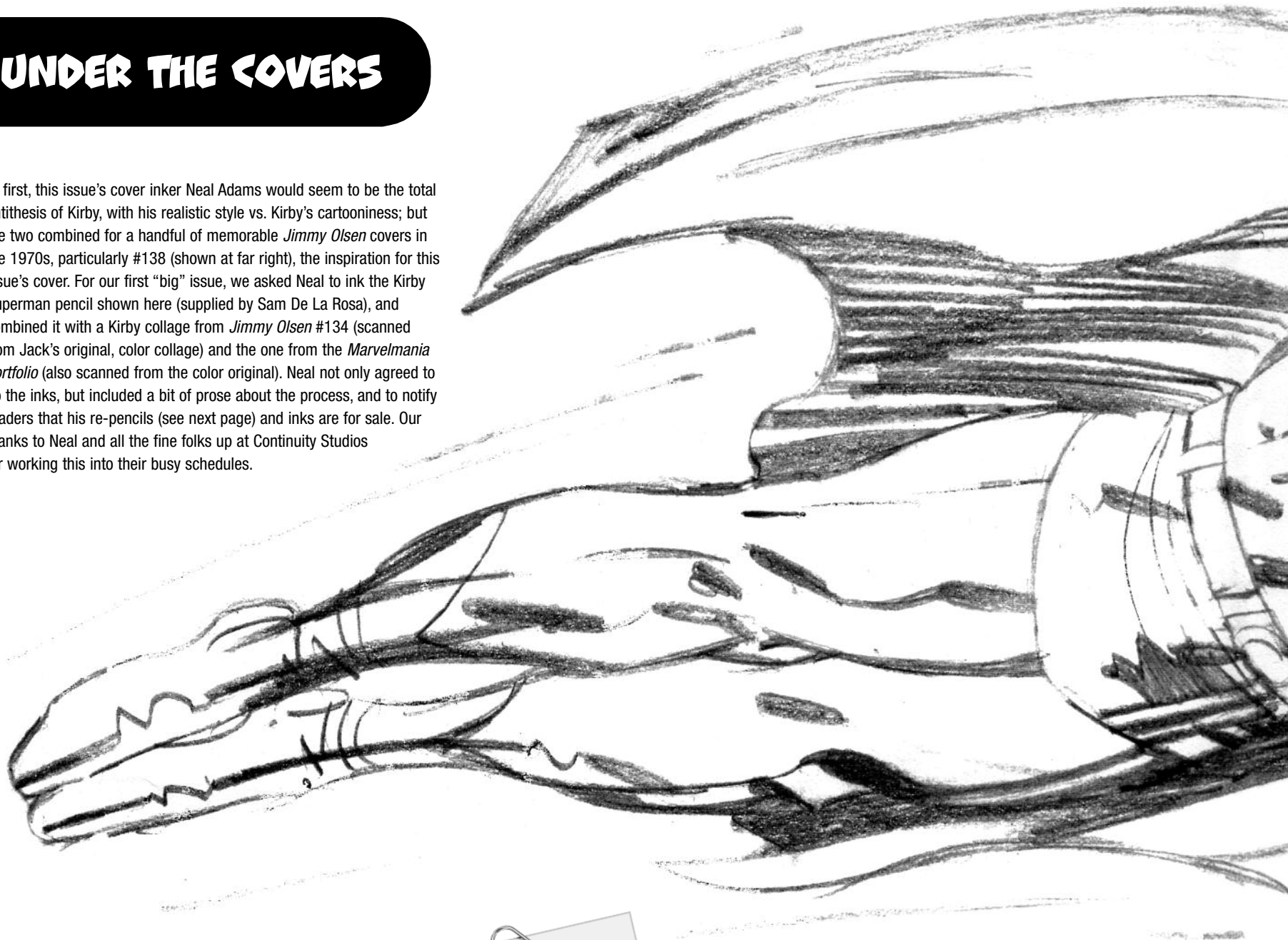
Granted, there are so many incredible concepts in the series, each could warrant its own mention in any list of Jack’s top ideas. But taken as a whole, this series stands as one of Kirby’s crowning achievements in terms of sheer scope and concept. We were introduced to Darkseid (Kirby’s ultimate villain), the Boom Tube, Mother Box, Metron (and his Mobius Chair), Granny Goodness, Mantis, Kalibak, Desaad, Lightray, Mister Miracle, Big Barda, the Female Furies, the Forever People, Highfather, the Pact, Himon, Funky Flashman, Parademons, Fastbak, Lonar; to this day, the potential of this epic remains largely untapped. Which brings me to only thing more mind-blowing than the whole Apokolips/New Genesis war; something I call:

1) The *Olsen* Effect

I have to separate this from the Fourth World proper, as each issue was just chock-full of stuff. For sheer inventiveness and creativity, *Jimmy Olsen* stands above all the rest in my mind as the single series that, in the shortest time, managed to include the most amazing array of characters, concepts, and concoctions ever in a series.

UNDER THE COVERS

At first, this issue's cover inker Neal Adams would seem to be the total antithesis of Kirby, with his realistic style vs. Kirby's cartooniness; but the two combined for a handful of memorable *Jimmy Olsen* covers in the 1970s, particularly #138 (shown at far right), the inspiration for this issue's cover. For our first "big" issue, we asked Neal to ink the Kirby Superman pencil shown here (supplied by Sam De La Rosa), and combined it with a Kirby collage from *Jimmy Olsen* #134 (scanned from Jack's original, color collage) and the one from the *Marvelmania Portfolio* (also scanned from the color original). Neal not only agreed to do the inks, but included a bit of prose about the process, and to notify readers that his re-pencils (see next page) and inks are for sale. Our thanks to Neal and all the fine folks up at Continuity Studios for working this into their busy schedules.



To render unto the King... a cover.
To ink or not to ink. To change and in the
changing... perchance to destroy.
Whether 'tis nobler... in my mind to alter and
suffer the slings and arrows of outraged Kirby
fans or to face a sea of adversity from my own
loyals and render line for line.
Yet I can, as I have in the past, leave it for
others to render line for line... that was never
my way. Even so it must be that we all pay trib-
ute to the King... Kirby and my tribute must be
homage.

Therefore the thing must be an amalgam of each...
A new thing, yet glorious... not the worst, but
the best of both.

So as to the method of thing. I must perforce make
a reproduction of it with a graphite shaft employ-
ing a box of light. An image is thereby produced
which affixes the thing in graphite and papyri.

Now I must reproduce the thing again in a puree of
India's ebon liquid, impervious to water... but
not... I say nay, not on that selfsame surface...
but another, as pure... so that I may study as I
progress on my path... of fealty, and creation.

And so... two illustrati have I made of an origi-
nal. One in graphite, one in ink of India... Each
a thing... each... available for sale... We will
entertain offers. It is the least we can do.

Salutations One and All,

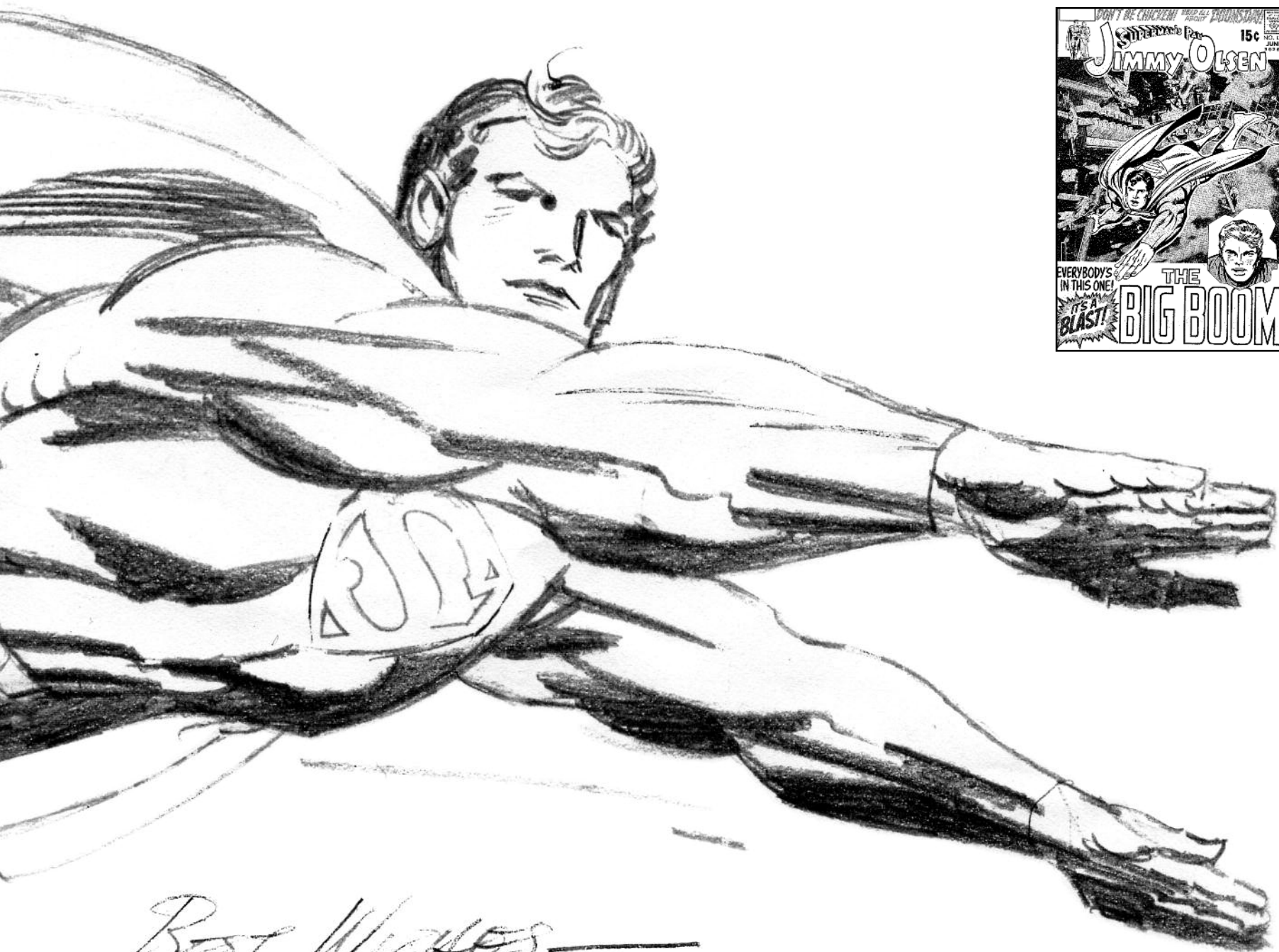
Neal Adams
Neal Adams (Scribe)
www.nealadams.com

To Sam

It's December 1975, and my friend Dave came over all excited and told me he read about an upcoming comic convention in Miami, where we live, that would have Neal Adams for a guest. (Adams was our favorite artist. Wasn't he everyone's favorite artist back then?)

"Great," I said, "let's plan to go to it. When is it?" "It starts tomorrow," he tells me. Somehow we decided to call Adams at the hotel—to say what, I had no idea. We're young and stupid, we didn't need any ideas. So I called the hotel the convention was at, and in the deepest voice I could speak, I asked if Mr. Adams had checked in yet. "Yes, he has," I was told. "Can I have his room number, please?" I asked. "I'm sorry, sir" (possibly the first time I'd ever been called sir), "we can't give out that information." "Well," I lied, "I have a very important message to deliver to him." "I'll connect you to his room," replied the hotel clerk—but there's no answer to his phone, and I dejectedly hung up.

Then Dave said, "Why don't we go to the hotel and find him?" "You're crazy," I constructively responded. But somehow, we ended up deciding that if we're slick enough, we'll figure a way to find him—for what, we didn't quite know yet. And then I suggested, "Let's get him a cake."



Best Wishes —
JACK KIRBY —

My friend and I got a cake made that said “To the World’s Greatest Artist” on it at a bakery near my house, and headed to the hotel. We went to the front desk and I confidently announced, “I’ve got the cake for Neal Adams here, which room should I deliver it to?” Well, unknown to me, Mr. Adams had evidently just stopped by the desk for his messages and the clerk heard him mention he was on his way to eat in the hotel restaurant. So the desk clerk assumed that he knew about the cake coming, and directed us to the restaurant! Trying to keep our cool, Dave and I nonchalantly walked to where the clerk pointed, and tried not to give anything away.

Figuring if it worked once, it would work again, we walked up to the woman at the door of the restaurant, and told her we had the cake for Mr. Adams, and asked where he was seated. Before she could say, “Who? Go away, little boys” (which is probably what she would’ve said, if we had given her the chance), Dave said, “I see him,” and started to walk inside. Of course he hadn’t—not yet—but his quick thinking got us inside before anyone could stop us.

Then, we saw him, and we were speechless—

MY EXCELLENT JACK KIRBY STORY

by Bill Field

literally. Neither Dave nor I could do or say anything. I mean, it’s Neal Adams! *The* Neal Adams! Our hero, Neal Adams! But wait... he’s not alone. He’s sitting with James Doohan and Jack Kirby! Oh, and several wives were also present. Jack Kirby, God bless him, finally said, “Yes, boys, can we help you?” just as friendly as can be, while Adams and Doohan were doing their best to pretend we’re not there. I managed to stammer out, “We’ve brought a cake for Mr. Adams,” as I held it up for them to read. Don’t forget

now, it addressed Adams as the best artist, and again, God bless him, Jack grabbed the ball, and said, “How nice. Tell you what, kids. Let us eat our dinner in peace, and we’ll eat that cake together for dessert. Can you wait outside for us?”

Can we? Does a bear... well, you know the rest. So Dave and I found a place to sit right outside the restaurant entrance (since we didn’t want to miss them coming out), and simultaneously sat down and floated in the air. For the next 45 minutes, the

KURT BUSIEK: GETTING TO

((below) A Keith Giffen page of Kirby's Ninth Men, from the unpublished second issue of Topps Comics' *Victory* mini-series.



(Kurt Busiek needs little introduction to readers of today's comics. He made his first major splash on the scene as writer of Marvels, taking a more realistic view of many of the Lee/Kirby characters and events of the 1960s. He's gone on to handle a slew of other Kirby-related characters, including work on the Topps "Secret City Saga" characters in the 1990s, of which we were privileged to examine some of his preliminary materials for the series. Kurt is continually winning industry awards for, among other things, work on his creator-owned series Astro City. This interview was conducted by e-mail, with questions devised by Eric Nolen-Weathington and John Morrow. Our thanks to Kurt for taking time out of his busy schedule!)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: When did you first become aware of Jack Kirby's work? Did his work stand out for you at the time?

KURT BUSIEK: I probably read Kirby stuff early on, back when I was reading comics occasionally, running across them at friends' houses and such. The first time I became aware of his work, though, I wasn't even aware of his name yet. I'd recently started reading comics regularly, and had issues of both

Fantastic Four and *Marvel's Greatest Comics*. I didn't realize that *Marvel's Greatest Comics* was a reprint magazine. In my confused youthful mind, I was trying to figure out how the people at Marvel knew to put the really great FF stories into *Marvel's Greatest Comics*, and the just-okay ones into *Fantastic Four*. What did they do, I wondered, if the story being done for *Fantastic Four* came in and was one of their greatest? Did they switch it into the other book?

So even then, I knew the Kirby stories were better. I just didn't know why.

TJKC: Were you influenced by his writing style at all, as far as plotting and dialoguing go?

KURT: As far as dialoguing, not so much—though I get a kick out of Kirby dialogue. As far as plotting goes, though, I'm probably enormously influenced, even if it's just subconsciously. When I'm having trouble pacing out a story visually, one of my tricks is to ask myself, "Okay, if this was a Kirby story, how would it play out on the page?" That usually solves whatever problem I'm having.

TJKC: In my opinion, your greatest talent lies in characterization—getting to the heart of what makes your characters tick. How do you feel about Kirby's characterization? Do you consider it a strong suit or a weak one in his work?

KURT: I think Kirby's characterization is the bedrock his work rests on, and one of the strongest aspects of his work. His characters are bursting with personality, projecting whatever essential emotion or attitude is right for their personality and that story moment through their body language, their facial expressions, their visual design, and more.

The one piece of advice Kirby ever gave me was that a comics creator could do anything, no matter how strange, cosmic or bizarre, and if the characters just reacted to it like they should, like real people, then the audience would believe in it. I think that's how he worked in everything, never forgetting who the characters were, and what their essential human (or at least emotional, in the case of the non-humans) center was.

TJKC: How did you break into comics?

KURT: I had been writing fan letters for years, and writing for the fan press—plus, Scott McCloud and I had been doing comics for ourselves, practicing and learning by working with each other, since high school. I interviewed Dick Giordano, then the



THE BOTTOM OF TOPPS COMICS

editor-in-chief at DC, for a college term paper on publishing, and after the interview was completed I told him I was hoping to become a comics writer when I graduated school.

He invited me to submit some script samples, so I did. I wrote four sample scripts—a *Flash*, a *Supergirl*, a “Superman: The In-Between Years” backup and a *Brave and the Bold* teaming Batman and Green Lantern—and sent them in. Dick parceled them out to the editors of those books, and as a result I got a tryout on a *Superboy* script (that didn’t go anywhere) from Julie Schwartz, and an invitation to pitch “Tales of the Green Lantern Corps” backup ideas to Ernie Colón. Ernie liked a couple of the GLC pitches, so he hired me to write one of them, and that was my first big-time sale, in *Green Lantern* #162.

While I was working on another GLC script for Ernie, I noticed that over at Marvel, they’d kept announcing that Bob Layton was going to be the new writer of *Power Man & Iron Fist*, but month after month, the book featured fill-in scripts written by Denny O’Neil, the book’s editor. So I figured Denny might be open to some deadline help, and sent him a story submission for a one-issue *Power Man & Iron Fist* story along with a note saying that I was already writing professionally for DC. Denny bought it, so I pitched another, and as things worked out, Bob Layton never took over the book, and I wrote it for about a year.

TJKC: *Marvels* was what really put your name on the map. The story was told with a man-on-the-street realism that hadn’t really been used at Marvel before. What was your thinking when taking grandiose, larger-than-life stories, particularly Kirby and Lee’s introduction of Galactus, and showing them through the eyes of mere mortals? Did Alex Ross’ work make it easier to convey? Would you have been able to tell the same story with Kirby art?

KURT: Showing the Marvel Universe through the eyes of the man on the street was, more or less, a way to do two things: First, it gave us a narrative hook that would tie together all the things Alex wanted to paint, from the original Human Torch to Gwen Stacy, and second, it was a perspective that took advantage of Alex’s breathtakingly photorealistic art. I’d written a couple of stories prior to that from “normal human” viewpoints and liked it, but I think taking advantage of how “real” Alex made the *Marvels* look was a big reason we chose it—and sure, the same approach could have been taken with Kirby’s art, though I don’t think it would have worked out the same, just as a straight retelling of the Galactus Trilogy by Alex wouldn’t



work out the same as the original. Both would probably be good, and have their own strength and power—but it wouldn’t be the same.

TJKC: You use a similar stylistic approach in *Astro City*. I’m thinking specifically of your “First Family” storyline where Astra runs away from “home, sweet fortress” so she can be a “normal” kid. Do you think Kirby and Lee could have pulled off this type of story in the *FF*? They did have the Thing return to normal a few times, but it

(above) This page was used as page 2 of *Captain Victory* #3 (Mar. 1982), but was actually part of the original Kirby story that was drawn in the mid-1970s.

GIANT-MAN.

“Giant-Man always sounded rather corny to me.”

No, that’s not my opinion, but that of the character himself, or rather the opinion of the man putting the words into his mouth at that time; namely Stan Lee (see *Avengers* #28). Even though it was probably just another line of dialogue, Lee does tend to bear out the apparent history of ambivalence towards the character by many Marvel fans. The history of Giant-Man is pretty much the history of any media-created character, be it comic strip, television, book, movie, etc.; when sales (or ratings) slip, tinker with the formula and hope it catches on or finds a new audience. Unfortunately, Giant-Man never really did; never in Marvel’s (then-new) history has so much been done to keep a character going. By decade’s end the Henry Pym character would be able to rival Sybil in alter-egos.

As mentioned in an earlier article covering Ant-Man (*TJKC* #18), Giant-Man came out of expediency. The Ant-Man character had begun to stagnate soon after Kirby left it (Jack drew issues #35-40; his influence on the plots is unknown at this time, but appears to be negligible), and Lee was looking for a new approach to freshen it up. Jack came back in *Astonish* #44 and developed The Wasp, which was a step in the right direction; it was hoped that a team might boost sales. When this didn’t happen (to the satisfaction of Martin Goodman, anyway),

Lee brought Jack back in for more changes and this is where the character deviated from his original concept. It must be noted that Lee and Lieber (who handled the plots and scripts) never utilized the full potential of the small hero vs. the giant villain as Gardner Fox so brilliantly did with The Atom. The Lee/Lieber stories were among the most lackluster efforts done for a hero at that time; Ernie Hart (under the pseudonym H.E. Huntley) came on as scripter in issue #44 and the stories improved to some extent. Don Heck was drawing and inking the Ant-Man strip whenever Kirby wasn’t



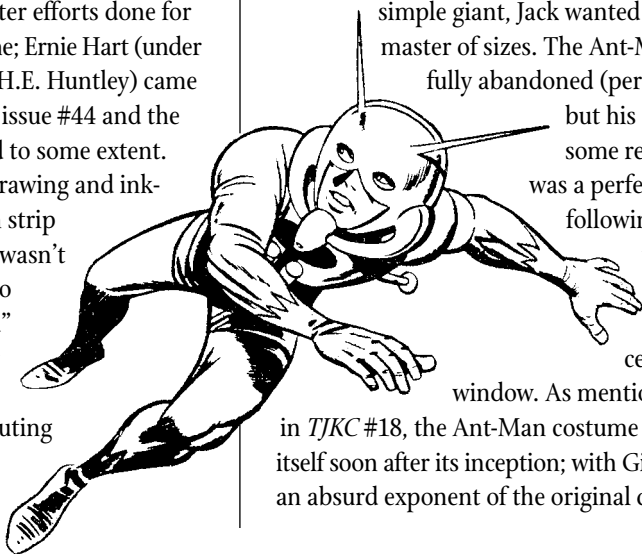
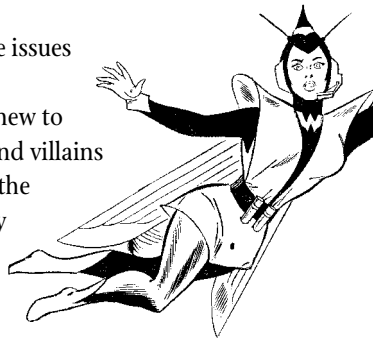
Ernie Hart dialogue (!), Kirby pencils, and Heck inks for the Wasp’s intro in *Astonish* #44.

called in, and his work fluctuated from issue to issue. Heck was still learning “Marvel method” plus drawing other strips as well, and in many instances his work on Ant-Man seems rushed and unfinished. These may have been contributing factors to the drop in sales; is it more than coincidence that sales began to drop on

Ant-Man after his first six issues (the issues Jack worked on)?

The “Giant” theme was hardly new to comics; there were giant monsters and villains aplenty fighting super-heroes since the Golden Age. There was even an early attempt at a giant hero (*Green Giant Comics*, 1940), and DC’s Spectre was growing and shrinking all the time; but this was the first attempt at giving a giant hero his own feature on a regular basis. Unfortunately by the Sixties, Jack failed to see that creating a hero whose power was that he was huge was almost taking a step backwards in comparison to the highly imaginative and unique heroes he was creating for Marvel at the same time. The Ant-Man was that type of intriguing character, but due to less-than-average scripting and art whenever he wasn’t on the strip, Jack kept being called back in to do a quick fix. Lee—to his credit—never stopped trying to make the character saleable; this is a clear example of how quickly a strip could founder when the Kirby/Lee team wasn’t directly involved.

So it’s simple: Ya put a “Gi” in front of Ant-Man and *viola*: Giant-Man was born. As simple as it seemed, Jack was still trying his best to make the character interesting. Rather than a simple giant, Jack wanted Pym to become known as a master of sizes. The Ant-Man character was not to be fully abandoned (perhaps because of The Wasp), but his costume had to go through some revision. The Ant-Man costume was a perfect example by Kirby of form following function; but when he had to develop the Giant-Man angle, yet retain Ant-Man aspects, that costume conception went flying out the window. As mentioned in the Ant-Man article in *TJKC* #18, the Ant-Man costume became a diluted version of itself soon after its inception; with Giant-Man the costume became an absurd exponent of the original design. The wonderfully



BIG FISH IN A BIGGER POND

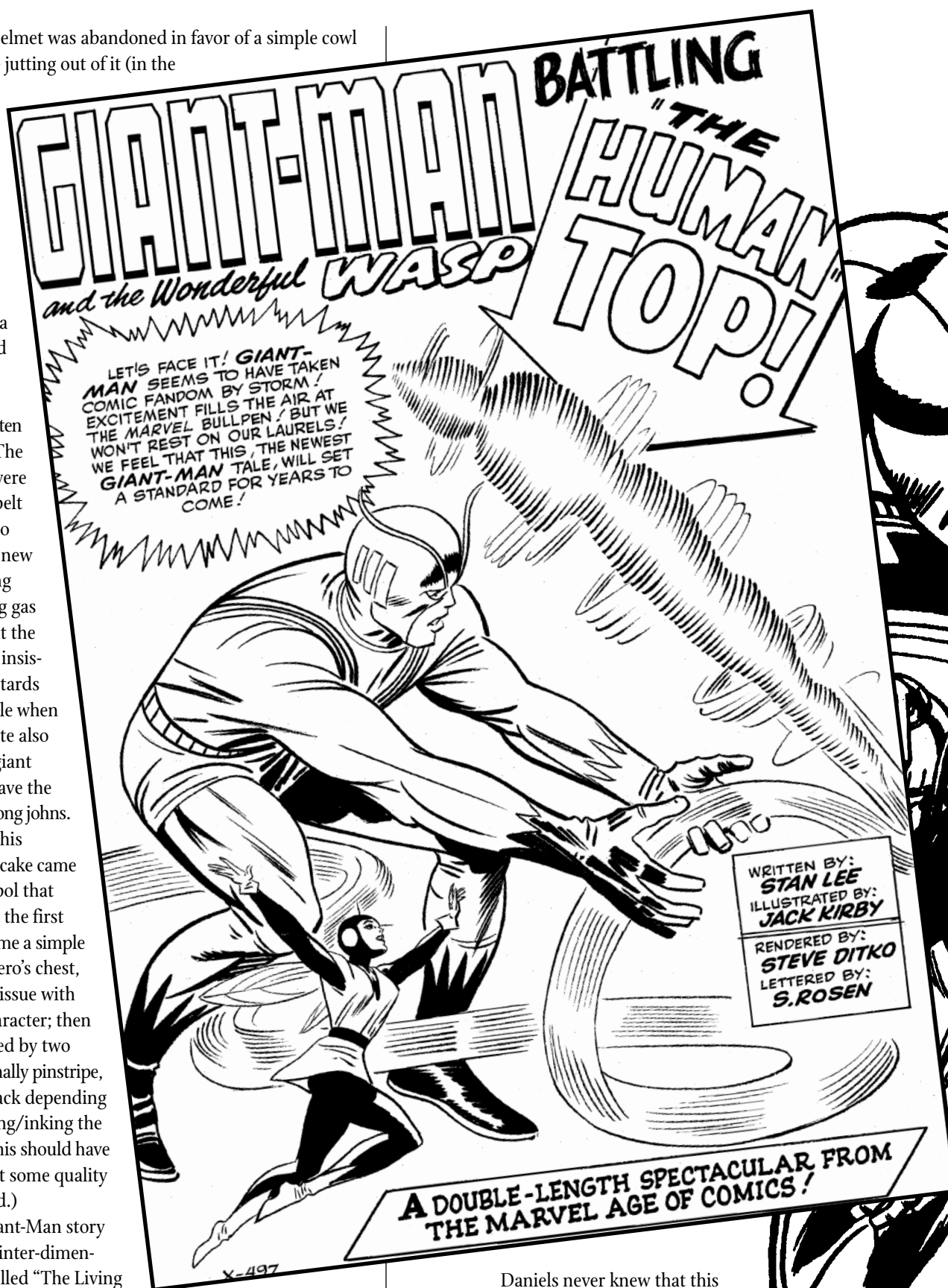
unique Ant-Man helmet was abandoned in favor of a simple cowl with two antennae jutting out of it (in the initial story,

Jack had the cybernetic ant-communication equipment inside the cowl with xylophone-like bars on both outer sides, giving Giant-Man's head a somewhat rounded insect-like appearance; but as usual this was soon forgotten and abandoned). The boots and gloves were retained, and the belt

was altered to contain the new size-changing capsules (inhaling gas was out, perhaps at the Surgeon General's insistence). The red leotards that were acceptable when the hero was minute also stayed, but in his giant incarnation they gave the appearance of red long johns.

The icing on this ludicrous costume cake came when the ant symbol that originally adorned the first costume then became a simple black dot on the hero's chest, continued for one issue with the Giant-Man character; then it was to be replaced by two suspenders—originally pinstripe, later turning to black depending on who was drawing/inking the strip; how chic! (This should have been a red flag that some quality control was needed.)

The initial Giant-Man story had him battle an inter-dimensional character called "The Living Eraser." Les Daniels, in his book *Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades* points out that this was one of those nutty, unique Lee creations, to which Lee added: "I got a big kick out of it when I dreamed up that idea." Apparently Mr.



Daniels never knew that this character was a derivative of a Kirby story called "Today I am A...?", where a boy erases himself, originally done with Joe Simon for *Black Cat Mystic* #59 in 1957, or

(previous page, far left) Giant-Man from the splash page of *Avengers* #5 (May 1964), inked by Paul Reinman.

(previous page, lower left) Inset of Ant-Man from *Tales to Astonish* #40 (Feb. 1963), inked by Sol Brodsky.

(previous page, above) Shot of the Wasp from her first appearance in *Astonish* #44 (June 1963). Don Heck inks.

(this page, above) Kirby splash page from *Tales to Astonish* #50 (Dec. 1963), inked by Steve Ditko.

(far right) Giant-Man becomes Goliath, from the cover of *Avengers* #30 (July 1966). Inked by Frank Giacoia.

Giant-Man's nemesis, the Living Eraser (right), had a Kirby precursor in *Black Cat Mystic* #59 (Sept. 1957, far right, © Harvey Publications).

(below) Another page from *Astonish* #50 (Dec. 1963).

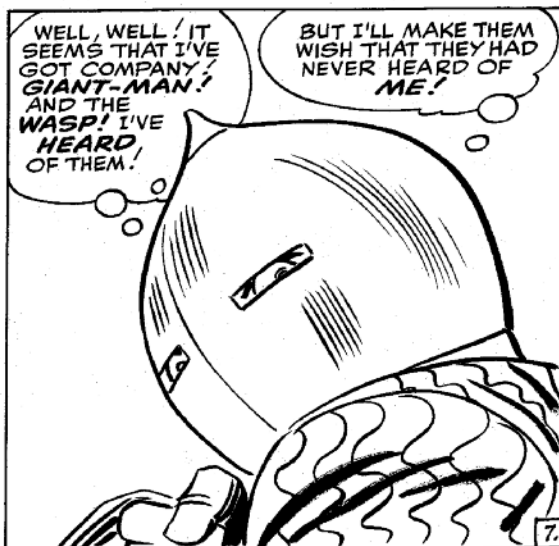
(lower center) How's this for forced perspective? Detail from *Avengers* #14 (Mar. 1965); layouts by Kirby, finishes by Heck and Stone.

he might not have been too eager to highlight the Living Eraser; as for Lee's "idea," keep "dreaming," Stan. (Hey, it was a book done on Marvel by Marvel, what do you expect?) In any event, instead of his usual one-issue fix-up jobs, Jack stayed on for two more issues, helping Lee to establish a new arch-villain for the new character. Digging into past history (*Red Raven Comics* to be exact), Kirby & Lee come up with a villainous incarnation of the Human Top.

Although the name is the same as his Golden Age counterpart, in keeping with his new direction, Jack made this character a mutant with the power of super-speed (the Human Top premiered around the time of *X-Men* #3 and pre-dated the Quicksilver character by at least two months). The Top story ran



ASTONISH 50 - P. 9



for two issues (*Astonish* #50-51), making this one of the earliest two-part stories. *FF* #25-26 was still months away; it should be

noted however, that Jack was already experimenting with interwoven plots leading to continued stories in issues of *X-Men* and *Avengers*. This story may also have been the last work by the artistic teaming of Kirby with Steve Ditko; Ditko inked the story in issue #50, rather hurriedly, it appears, as there are hardly any Ditko inclinations in the looks of the characters, as can be seen in their earlier works together. Also, almost all of the Wasp faces in the story were retouched by Don Heck; on the last page (of originals) Lee leaves a note for Roussos to "add blacks" which apparently doesn't get done to completion; all indicating the frenetic pace in which these people were working and how many unseen hands may go into any given story. *Astonish* #51 was to be Jack's last input on the Pym character in his own series; Stan had the second part of the Human Top story inked by Dick Ayers, probably to have him indoctrinated on the Giant-Man character since Dick picked up the art chores starting with the next issue.

Kirby actually spent more time on the Giant-Man character in the pages of *The Avengers* than in *Astonish*. Jack drew him in issues #2-8, and helped plot and lay out a Giant-Man/Wasp-centered story for *Avengers* #14, but it soon became obvious that, although Jack handled the character in a variety of intriguing perspectives, Giant-Man was little more than a secondary character. Like a human in a group of giants, Giant-Man never matched up to the originality of characters like Thor, Iron Man, Captain America, or the Hulk (who also had a difficult time finding his audience). In *The Avengers*, Pym was relegated into a Reed Richards-type mold as a respected scientific brain, but unlike Richards was not a commanding personality like a Thor or Cap. Jack did what he could with the character, but was hip-deep in other characters on a regular basis; Giant-Man's fate was to be left in other hands.

As mentioned previously, in *Astonish* Dick Ayers began doing a very nice artistic run on the Giant-Man strip. Although Dick did his usual good job, the scripts were once again less than stellar. Lee had stayed on this time as scripter and after a good start with the introduction of the Black Knight in



A new column answering Frequently Asked Questions about Kirby
by Mark Evanier

(below) A representative page from *Fantastic Four* #1 (Nov. 1961). Who is the mystery inker?

Jack Kirby was the most amazing creative talent I have ever known and, easily, the most fascinating individual. As many of you know, I am currently assembling a biography of the man.

It started shortly after he passed away and his widow asked me to undertake such a book... but it really started about two minutes after I first met Jack in 1969. He kept feeding me information and telling me stories he wanted to have preserved and disseminated for posterity. Jack was an extremely honest man and it mattered to him to have his life and achievements honestly accounted.

The book is progressing nicely and, no, I have no idea when

you'll be able to read it, though I'm sure it's at least another year or two off. I keep happening on new information—things that I feel need to be included. So it'll be done when it's done—

—and it'll be huge. Matter of fact, it's getting so long that I'm seriously thinking of having it published in two editions: A limited-printing "full" version including all the trivia and trifling data, and a shorter, "mainstream" version. The latter would be for those folks who need or want to hear The Story of Kirby without rummaging past eight pages on Marvel distribution arrangements and how they impacted what Jack drew for the company.

Anyway, I ask your patience. I am not out to make money on this venture... only to see it done right. And doing it right takes time.

To satiate the thirst for Kirby info in the interim, we inaugurate this column in the *Morrows'* splendid publication. In it, I'll try to tackle some of the questions I'm most often asked about Jack and his work. Queries are cordially welcomed.

It has long been a Big Mystery of comic book history as to who inked *Fantastic Four* #1. Over the years, various sources have named—wrongly, I'm pretty certain—Bill Everett, Dick Ayers, Art Simek, Marvin Stein, Sol Brodsky, and Jack himself. The Simek identification was especially errant and its source, I'm afraid, was Jack himself.

Someone at Marvel, compiling a book where that information was needed, phoned up both Stan Lee and Jack in the hope of settling matters. Stan did not remember. Jack, for some reason, said it was Art Simek.

He was almost certainly wrong. Artie Simek was one of the best letterers in the business and he lettered #1, but there is no verified record of him ever doing anything in comics besides lettering. (His daughter reportedly recalls him inking something at some time, but I'm assuming it was a humor page filler or something on that order.) And whoever inked *FF* #1 also inked #2—which was not lettered by Simek—as well as a few concurrent non-series stories in Marvel's anthology comics, and then stopped working altogether for Stan.

It is doubtful that, even back in 1961, Jack knew who inked the first *Fantastic Four*, as he paid very little attention to that kind of thing. Matter of fact, one of the areas of occasional—but respectful—argument I had with Jack when I first met and worked with him was over his general indifference as to who inked his penciling.

One time—this is early 1970—I mentioned to him that I thought Bill Everett had done a magnificent job inking *Thor*. Jack looked at me like I was nuts. Bill Everett inking *Thor*? He was sure I was mistaken.

In one corner of his studio, he had a pile of old

THE MOLEMAN'S SECRET!

BEFORE WE WITNESS THE BREATH-TAKING CONCLUSION OF OUR AMAZING TALE, LET US GATHER TOGETHER ALL THE LOOSE ENDS! LET US RETURN TO THE TWO MEMBERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR WHO DID NOT FALL BELOW DURING THE CAVE-IN...

REED... AND JOHNNY... GOT TO FIND THEM!!

WAIT! THAT NOISE-- BEHIND ME!! WHAT--??



BUT OTHER EARS ALSO HEAR THE MENACING SOUNDS... AND OTHER EYES BEHOLD THE FRIGHTENING SIGHT...



THE EYES OF... THE THING!!



DUCK, SUE! OUT OF THE WAY!

LET ME HANDLE 'IM!



GALLERY

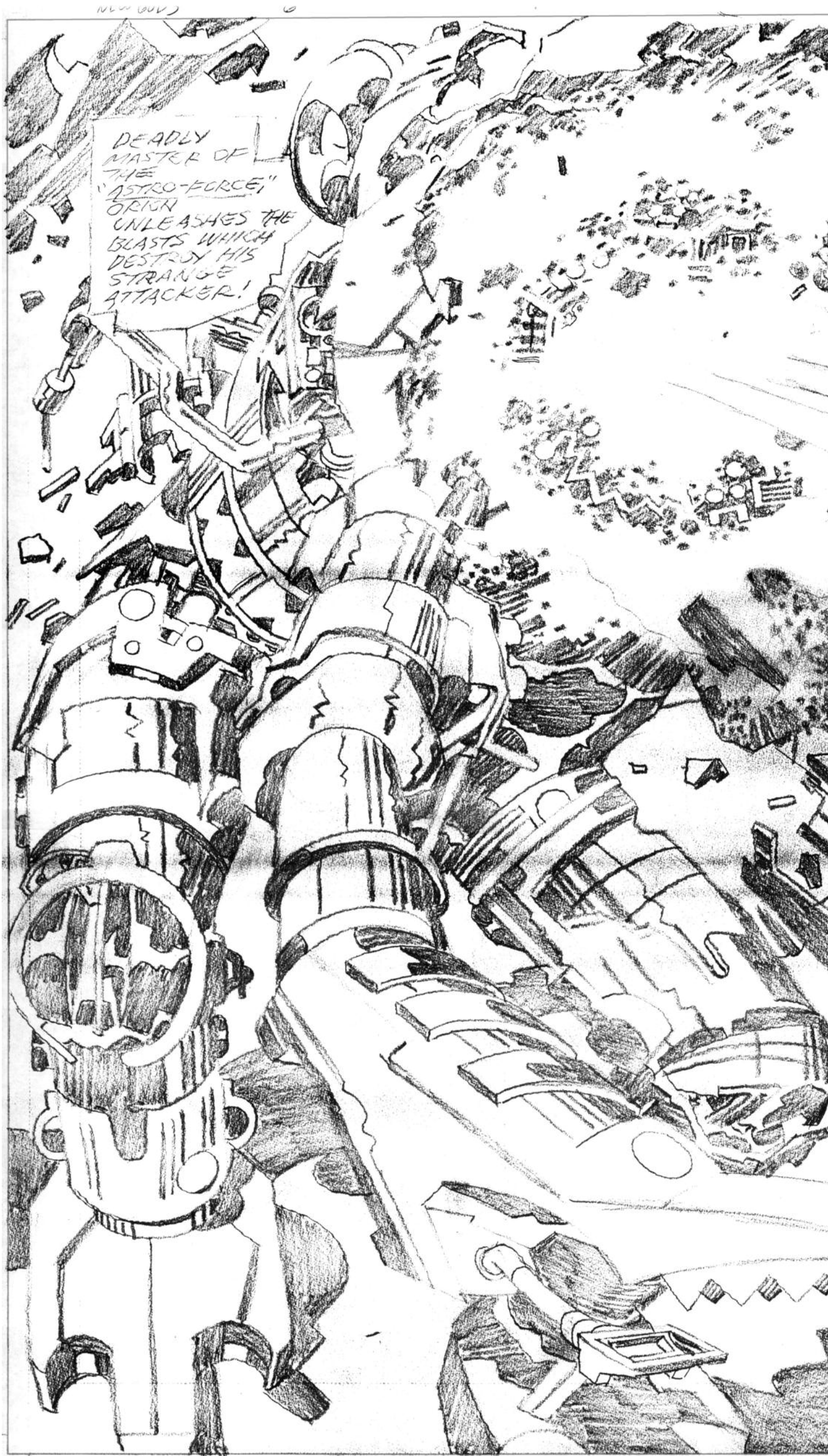
On the next eight pages is a look at just a few of Kirby's double-page splashes, from different eras of his career. Shown on the following pages are:

Double-page spread (in pencil) from the new story in the 1984 *New Gods* reprint #6.

Two-pager from *Captain Victory* #3 (March 1982), still in pencil.

Black Panther #1 (Jan. 1977) spread, inked by Mike Royer. The original art for this piece is labeled *Jungle Action* #25, so Marvel must've originally planned to have Jack take over the Panther's old series, rather than start a new one.

The memorable spread from *Kamandi* #1 (Oct. 1972), also inked by Royer.





(below) Carlos Pacheco and Ladronn's splash page to *Inhumans* #2.

(center) The Moebius influence shows through in this warrior by Ladronn. (© Ladronn.)



Interview conducted by George Khoury • Edited by Ladronn & George Khoury

(A native of Mexico, José Ladronn has made a noticeable impact on the comics industry in very little time. As penciler, together with writer Joe Casey and inker Juan Vlasco, he took Marvel Comics' Cable series through a renaissance to the excitement and epic storytelling of the Lee and Kirby era. Ladronn's linework and sense of design made an astounding connection with comics readers everywhere, from its early Kirby homage through an evolution that hearkens toward a synthesis of Kirby and Moebius. Yet it wasn't till last year that we were able to see what he could really do as an artist. With his work in *The Inhumans* and the Thor 2000 Annual, Ladronn was able to show his work as painter, a painting style that is beautiful, bold, and immaculate. It's hard to believe that the best of Ladronn's art is still to come.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: Where are you from, and what type of art training did you have?

LADRONN: I am from Mexico and I was born in Minatitlan, Veracruz. I never studied drawing—I studied graphic design—but all my life I've been drawing. I've always had that in me.

TJKC: What were your first comics and influences?



LADRONN: When I was younger, before even learning to read, I had liked comics. The first books that I had were from DC Comics; I had *Kamandi* issues, *Mister Miracle*, *The Demon*! I also had some *Fantastic Four* books; almost all of them were Kirby books, published in Mexico and [printed] in Spanish.

TJKC: Can you explain the attraction to *Kamandi* and those other books?

LADRONN: I liked reading those books because when I was a child I didn't have a lot of friends, just my classmates. I would spend entire days in house, normally alone, but I was always doing something. I liked those books because the stories were very impressionable on me. That's why I liked them a lot.

TJKC: Would you consider Jack Kirby to be your most important influence?

LADRONN: Yes. Kirby was an important influence, especially in books like *Kamandi* and *Mister Miracle*.

TJKC: When did you start to lean towards a professional career in the comics industry?

LADRONN: I always thought that one day I was going to create comics. When I was younger, I studied and sometimes during my leisure time I would make comics. But when I was older, I was fortunate to have gotten the break to be able to work professionally in comics.

TJKC: Can you explain the Kirby influence in your artistic style?

LADRONN: I think that Kirby has been an important influence for myself as an artist in the super-hero genre because his style is the strongest. His drawings show strength and were always so dynamic.

TJKC: Does it ever bother you when people compare your artwork to Kirby's work?

LADRONN: No, it doesn't bother me. When I've drawn something in the past, and I've drawn it close to Kirby's style, that for me is a lot of fun and an honor to be able to do something like that. Especially today, there are so many out there who have forgotten his style, and I honestly believe that you can't forget the lessons of the past. Today's comics would be nothing without those influences that existed in the past.

TJKC: Are there any others you would consider an influence?

SPIRIT

LADRONN: The majority of the comics that I've read—not the ones when I was a kid, but the comics that I read when I was a little older—were the European comics. The majority of my artistic influences are European; they are Spanish, French, and Belgian. I am a great admirer of Moebius and other European artists. Those are my other influences.

TJKC: Is there a comics market in Mexico?

LADRONN: The market in Mexico is extremely tough. In Mexico, I worked in something completely different. In Mexico I worked as a designer at a television company; that was my job. I did storyboards and three-dimensional promotions for a television company. Generally, most Mexican comics are translated comics from the United States. There are comics produced in Mexico, but the majority of them, especially the super-hero books, are American.



TJKC: How did you break into the American market?

LADRONN: I was invited. A friend gave me the idea to come to San Diego, to Comicon, and I came one year to see what types of things were done in a convention. So I prepared a portfolio and returned the next year; that's how I got work at Marvel.

TJKC: So *Cable* was your first book?

LADRONN: My first work was in Marvel's *Shadows and Lights*. It was a Blade story, twelve pages in black-&-white. I only did the pencils and someone else did the inks.

TJKC: How did you get the *Cable* series?

LADRONN: After *Shadows and Lights*, the editor, James Felder, told me he was interested in doing an additional project with me and so I did *Spiderboy* in the second year of the Amalgam books. After that I was offered *Cable Minus 1* which in turned got me the *Cable* series on a regular basis.

TJKC: Was it challenging working on a monthly basis?

LADRONN: Yes, it was difficult. I don't like the idea of working month-to-month. It's very tolling on an artist. You can't always

BUT THIS TIME MOLEY IS BLIND -- THE YEARS OF LIFE UNDERGROUND HAVE TAKEN TOLL OF HIS VISION---



GET HIM TORCH--HE'S HURT REED REAL BAD

THIS TIME TORCH IS TORMENTOR--HE'LL MAKE MOLEY SORRY HE'S ALIVE

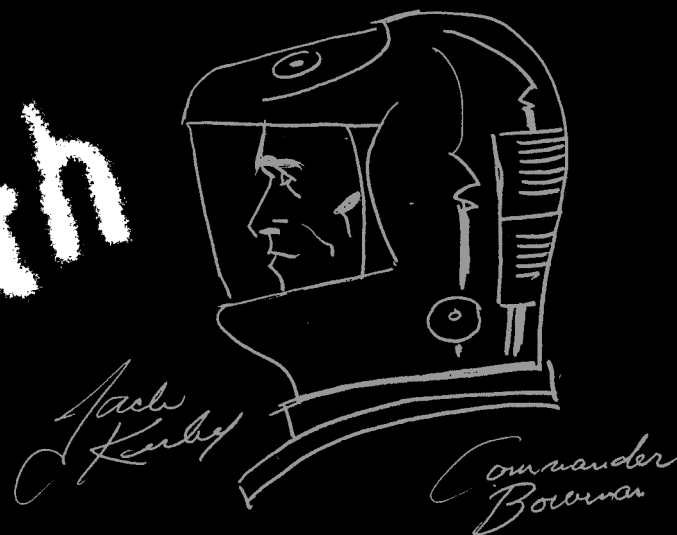
do your best and you always have all this pressure on you. There are moments that the work doesn't come out quite as intended.

TJKC: Did your editor pick up on the Kirby influence immediately?

LADRONN: Yes, right from the beginning that Kirby was my influence. I've always combined the European works with the American works. I tried to combine many details as is done in Europe with the type of work that Kirby did, which was a style that was even too powerful for super-heroes—but for this market in

(above) Flame on! Kirby's pencils from *Fantastic Four* #89, page 16 (Aug. 1969).

Gratiti on the Monolith



KIRBY VS. KUBRICK

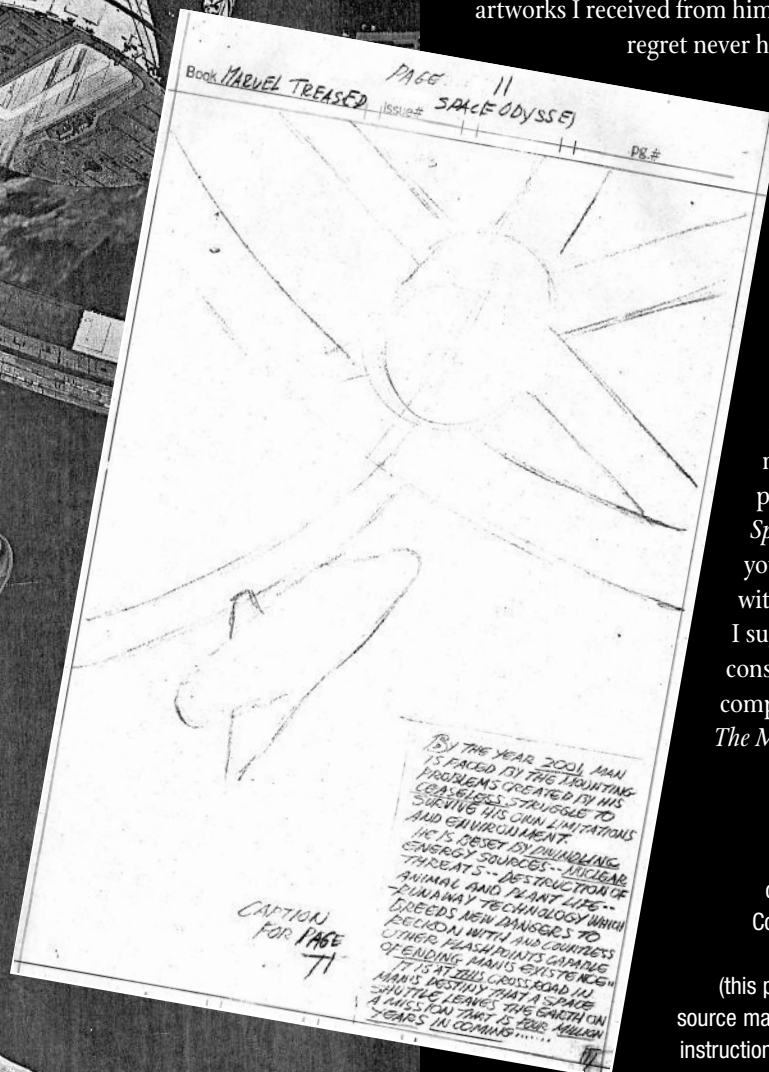
A commentary on Jack Kirby's adaptation of 2001: A Space Odyssey, by John P. Alexander

I am almost as big a fan of Stanley Kubrick as I am of Jack Kirby. As a kid I spent many long hours drawing Kirby-derived comic books for fun. *The Fantastic Four* may be my all-time favorite comic, but *2001: A Space Odyssey* is my all-time favorite film. I also filled canvases inspired by the promotional art from *2001* that had been painted by aerospace artist Robert McCall. Both of these artists, who were preeminent in their respective fields, had a profound influence on my aesthetic sense. I made McCall's acquaintance while preparing a science fiction film festival in college in 1976, and cherish several original artworks I received from him. I will forever regret never having met Jack

Kirby. It is therefore ironic that I must play devil's advocate when it comes to the subject of Jack's comic book adaptation of Stanley Kubrick's milestone motion picture *2001: A Space Odyssey*. If you have a problem with anything here, I suggest that you consult Jerome Agel's comprehensive book *The Making of 2001*.

(top) Quick Kirby convention sketch of Commander Bowman.

(this page) Jack's collage, source material, and assembly instructions for page 13 of the 2001 Marvel Treasury Edition.



2000 KIRBY TRIBUTE PANEL

*Conducted at the 2000 Comicon International: San Diego
Featuring (clockwise from left, below) moderator Mark Evanier, Gene
Colan, Roy Thomas, Tracy Kirby, Jeremy Kirby, and Marie Severin,
and transcribed by Eric Nolen-Weathington*

MARK EVANIER: One of the panels I couldn't possibly let anyone else do—I would've mud-wrestled anyone else who tried—is the Annual, except for last year, Jack Kirby Tribute Panel. The reason we didn't have one last year was that it got lost in the schedule. It was being scheduled at one point and at the last minute there was just no room to do it justice, so we passed on it. Everybody came up to me and said,

"Where's the Jack Kirby Tribute Panel? There must be room." They were angry; and I said, "Okay, we will never miss the Jack Kirby Tribute Panel again." As long as this convention is here we will do this every year. *[applause]*

I would like to introduce to you—well, this panel is going to go in two chapters. We're going to start by talking about the current legacy of Jack and the family; some projects they're working on that involve Jack's characters. Jack wanted very much to have his work be profitable for his family. Those of you who know Jack know he was very concerned with leaving first Roz and then his kids and his grandkids something on which to build; work that made them profit, both financially and personally, and use it to advance their careers and advance their creativity—and it has been very much a pleasure to see Jeremy and Tracy, grandchildren of Jack's, run with some of this stuff and flourish in their own careers. I'd like to introduce you to Tracy Kirby and Jeremy Kirby.

[applause]

I'll introduce the other three people in a moment, but let's ask Tracy and Jeremy, in either order, a little bit about what they're up to. I know a lot of things are happening that can't be discussed. Which one of you wishes to go first? Jeremy?

JEREMY KIRBY: *[I'm]* currently working on comic books—*Captain Victory and the*

(below) Detail from the splash page of *Thor* #173 (Feb. 1970), inked by Bill Everett.



Galactic Rangers. We did that using some of the original artwork as well as artwork that none of you have ever seen before—I can guarantee that because it was bound in a box for about 20 years. So that'll be pretty exciting, when you take a look at that. We're working on the *Captain Victory* mini-series as well as the website [www.kingkirby.com] and getting that set up and professional within the next few months, hopefully. There's really a lot of projects

going on right now. Tracy is doing a lot of the movie-type entertainment things—television. I've just been concentrating on comic books. If you want to talk some about the movies...?

TRACY KIRBY: My brother is a fast talker. [laughter] This has just been an ongoing process, I think, for both of us. And we're kind of looking at different characters and projects that we've taken personally to heart over the last couple of years. For myself, I went to Mike Richardson at Dark Horse Comics, who has been a long-time, close friend of the family for many, many years, and we want to do projects together. He wants to take some of Jack's work and really do something wonderful with it. So, one of the first projects—one of my main priorities that I have been working on with Dark Horse—is an obscure project called *Satan's Six* that Jack did in '93; a very small comic book series that came out from Topps Comics. Basically, we just took Jack's original concept ideas and characters

and [Mike Richardson] helped us set it up. We just got two writers attached to the project who are finishing up Ridley Scott's next movie. That's a project that I'm really looking forward to. I'm keeping my fingers crossed, because I've learned over the last couple of years that I've been in Hollywood that things change very, very quickly. You really get your hopes up high, then you take the fall and you have to get back up and try again.

I'm also trying to develop *Challengers of the Unknown* as well. So those are the two projects that I'm focusing on. I love 'em, especially *Challengers*. I love the stories. I know Jeremy has always taken *Captain Victory* to heart. The good thing [is] that our grandfather left us not just the mainstream characters. I wish all the Marvel characters well. I mean, I'm so happy that *X-Men* took off; they did a wonderful job. I won't say anything about the credit

issue at the moment, but Jeremy and I do have a wonderful opportunity to use obscure characters and show our own creativity as well. My most important concern is getting [Jack's] name out there and keeping it alive. It's been hard. It's kind of hard when you see his characters all over the place and no one really knows who he is. I'd just love to one day see a project that's solely Jack Kirby. I wish my brother well with his projects. He's the



computer guru, so he's in charge of all the websites. We have a lot of opportunities. It's been a wild ride. Everyone that we have met over the past couple of years trying to get things going has just been wonderful. We can only go up from here.

MARK: By the way, DC Comics is about an inch-and-a-half from producing either another volume of the Fourth World reprints or a *Challengers of the Unknown* volume. It would not hurt anything if you went by the DC booth, grabbed Paul Levitz by the lapels, and said, "Put out one of these things quickly." They really seem to respond to what demand they get at the conventions. They are poised to do these things. A very slight nudge and you'll see the rest of the Fourth World material collected in a volume, you'll see *Challengers*. And they are poised to try to do *Jimmy Olsen* maybe next year. They're doing a *Supergirl Archive* now. So we've moved

(above) Cover pencils to the 1975 *Marvel Treasury Edition* #7, featuring the Avengers.



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