

CELEBRATING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR!



THE NEW

JACK KIRBY

COLLECTOR

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IN THE USA

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Front cover inks: ERIK LARSEN
 Back cover painting: BRUCE TIMM
 Front cover color: TOM ZIUKO

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THE NEW JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

ISSUE #33, NOV. 2001

THE FANTASTIC FOUR



**MARVEL
 COMICS
 GROUP**

(above) 1960s Kirby Marvelmania t-shirt art, recently resurrected (if we're not mistaken, with a little help by Steve Rude) for a new t-shirt release. © Marvel Characters, Inc.

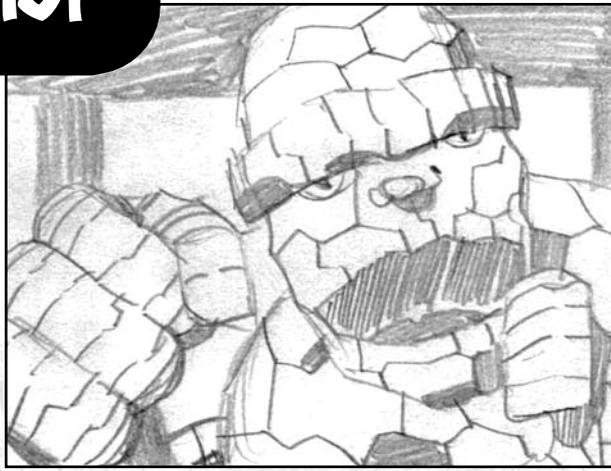
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OPENING SHOT

(background) Pages from Jack's last couple of years on the *FF*.

(inset) Details from Jack's "FF Meet Dr. Doom" animation storyboards, #34 and #37.

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I'm not overstating the book's importance to comics. Stan and Jack's *FF* was a veritable primer for would-be (and already-been) comics pros in the 1960s and '70s. Before *FF*, there were no "cosmic" concepts in comics, just tired sci-fi rehashes; no real menaces that threatened the Earth (let alone the Universe) the way Galactus did. There were no black heroes in mainstream comics before the Black Panther debuted in *FF* #52. Villains were never as wickedly clever before Dr. Doom made the scene. Few (if any) married couples went super-heroing together, or had babies, or exuded the sense of family that the *FF* did.

Basically, the *FF* broadened the thinking of everyone in comics, from fan to pro, reader to publisher, and made them believe that you could stretch the boundaries of comics from covering mundane

FANTASTIC FORTY!

by John Morrow, Editor

We ran our first *FF* theme issue back in *TJKC* #9, and this one serves as a sequel of sorts, meant to complement (not replace) that issue. *FF* #1 appeared in November 1961, and I'm proud to have assembled this issue forty years after that seminal event. Since we covered so much in issue #9, we opted to concentrate more on art than text this time out (showing 40—count 'em, 40—pages of Jack's pencils!); but throughout this issue, you'll find mini-interviews with nearly every writer and penciler who worked on the *Fantastic Four* after Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, where George Khoury asked each two questions:

- What Lee/Kirby issue of *Fantastic Four* is your favorite and why?
- How would you say the Lee/Kirby issues influenced your work on the *FF*?

Perhaps it would've been more appropriate to track down every artist who worked in comics after 1970 and ask them, "How did the Lee/Kirby *FF* influence ALL your future work?" (But hey, we still managed to miss tracking down Keith Pollard and Chris Claremont for the original questions, so I don't think poor George Khoury would've been able to find everybody anyway!)



good vs. evil slugfests, into something more intellectual, more emotional, more... fantastic!

Some may look at those books in today's light and call them simplistic, or too melodramatic; but today's light wouldn't be as bright if the *FF*, under Stan and Jack, hadn't shaped up the way it did. They took comics to another level, and the concepts, drama, and sheer power on those *FF* pages have influenced several generations of fans since they first appeared, and continue to do so. ★

(Note: Mike Gartland's new "Failure To Communicate" installment wasn't ready at presstime, but we'll have it in an upcoming issue.)





JOHN ROMITA

(Artist on *Fantastic Four* #103-106)

What Lee/Kirby issue of *Fantastic Four* is your favorite and why?

Oh God, there were so many. Whenever Jack's stuff came to the office, we used to make copies just to keep pinned up. I've still got a copy of a page he did. How can you pick your favorite from stuff they did together? I'm sure it was somewhere in the Silver Surfer-Galactus saga but it was almost everything. It's hard just to pick a favorite because every month a new favorite would come. I'm sorry that I don't have a clear favorite. I was just looking at *Captain America* stuff last week admiring stuff he did when I was ten years old. He was more than just an idol; he was like "The Original." I could never pick out a favorite.

How would you say the Lee/Kirby issues influenced your work on the FF?

(Laughs) I've told this to many people, when I did those three or four issues, I didn't even think of a panel without having about ten or fifteen of his books in front of me as a guide. I personally felt that nobody should touch the *Fantastic Four* after Kirby left. If it were me, if I were editor-in-chief, I would close the book down with a "Sorry, but who are we kidding?" I went to Stan Lee and asked him if they were going to drop the book, and he said, "You're going to do it." I said, "Are you crazy? I just told you I would drop the book." (laughs) He asked me to do it and I did it under extreme duress because I felt inadequate. I felt anybody who tried it would be inadequate. It was like trying to raise somebody else's child. I felt that it had to be an exact copy of Kirby to make it valid. If it didn't look like Kirby, it wouldn't look like *Fantastic Four*. Thank God that John Buscema didn't get burdened by that kinda stuff. John kept all of Jack's power and approach but he didn't feel burdened by doing it exactly like Jack. It's just my old-fashioned work ethic that felt that if you take over somebody's book that you had to reproduce it perfectly. All those pages, I just saw them, as Kirby would do them. I tried to emulate him.

PROGRESSING TO A TANGENT (5 YEARS ON)

by Mark Alexander

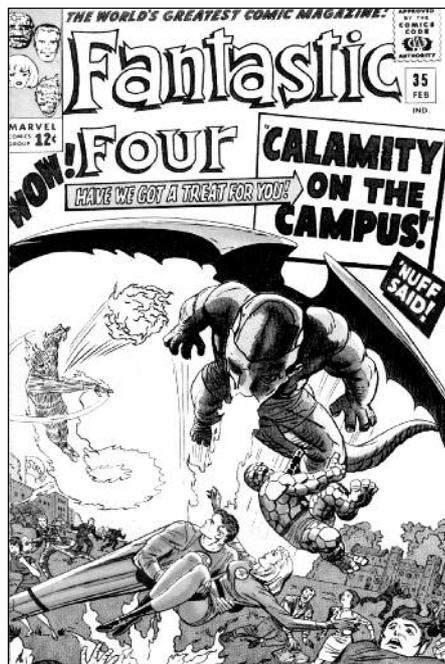
TANGENT: To change suddenly to another line of action.

Webster's New World Dictionary

Marvel Collectors' Item Classics was a 1960s reprint comic which ran early *FF* stories as its main feature. For no apparent reason, Jack was assigned to draw a new cover for issue #19 (Feb. 1969, John Verpoorten inks), which reprinted *FF* #27 (June 1964, Chic Stone inks). (Every other issue of *MCIC* featured the original Kirby cover.) Regardless of why this was done, it gives us a unique opportunity to examine Kirby's artistic progression from mid-'64 to early-'69, which marked his greatest period of growth and evolution.

Considering Jack's penchant to constantly spew forth new ideas and creations, it's surprising that he would choose to do a fairly faithful remake of the original cover. In a similar instance, when asked to redesign the cover of *FF* #35 (Feb. 1965, with Colletta inks), he took a decidedly different approach (see *Marvel's Greatest Comics* #27, June 1970, with John Verpoorten inks, above).

In any event, the first thing one notices about the new *MCIC* #19 cover is that the figures in the foreground seem looser and more supple,



particularly Sue and Namor, who by comparison look stiff and rigid on the original.

The later-day Torch and Thing both display a greater sense of urgency and rage because of their exaggerated forward thrust which is entirely absent from the '64 version.

One also notices an increased sense of motion due to the use of "zip ribbons" on Dr. Strange and Namor. (For more info about "zip ribbons" read Scott McCloud's indispensable book *Understanding Comics*.)

Finally, instead of floor tiles, newly-prominent shadows flow from the base of each figure, and these pools of black serve three purposes:

1. They "ground" the characters
2. They create the illusion of an overhead light source and
3. They spare the artist the tedious task of penciling a line-pattern on the floor (see original), which would recede into a vanishing point.

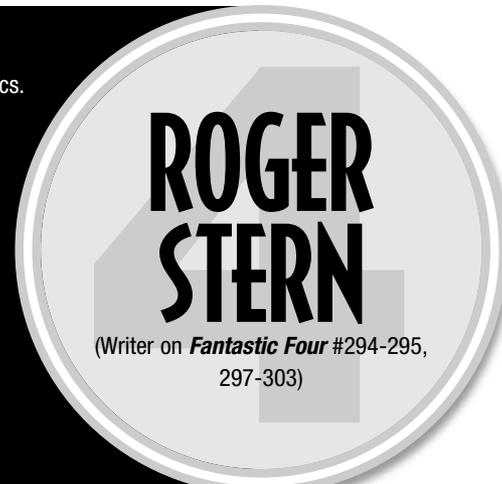
The later-day Kirby uses shadowing as a speedier, more efficient way to fill out the bottom of the page. He chooses design over draftsmanship, and considering the rather askew one-point perspective of the original floor, his instincts were correct. ★

What Lee/Kirby issue of Fantastic Four is your favorite and why?

Surely, you aren't asking me to pick just one issue! I love the entire Lee/Kirby run. Even their lesser issues are good, entertaining comics. But I'd have to say that the book really solidified when Joe Sinnott's inking was added to the mix. *Fantastic Four* #44-60—including "The Torch That Was" from *FF Annual* #4 (between issues #56 and #57)—is one of the greatest storylines in comics history. There's the introduction of the Inhumans, the Silver Surfer and Galactus, Wyatt Wingfoot... all followed by the wonderful "This Man, This Monster"... and then, the Black Panther, Klaw, Prester John, the Thing tearing into the Surfer again, the return of the original Human Torch... and finally, everything wrapping up with Doctor Doom stealing the Surfer's powers, Black Bolt freeing the Inhumans, and the *FF* getting Doom to defeat himself. During that period, it truly was "The World's Greatest Comics Magazine!"

How would you say the Lee/Kirby issues influenced your work on the FF?

Constantly. As far as I'm concerned, I was following John Byrne and Lee-&-Kirby. I wanted to be faithful to what John had established, but—in plotting as well as scripting—I was always asking myself, "What would Stan and Jack have done?" They created all of those wonderful characters, and I had a responsibility to be faithful to them.

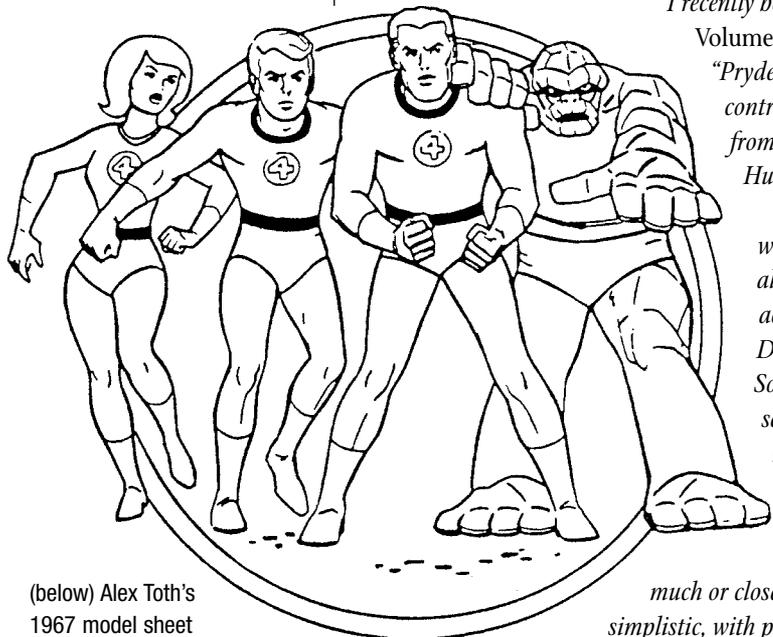


JACK F.A.Q.S



(right) A very simplistic FF rendition, from their 1960s cartoon series.

Art © Hanna-Barbera.
FF © Marvel Characters, Inc.



(below) Alex Toth's 1967 model sheet for Dr. Doom.

Art © Hanna-Barbera.

(next page) Jack's storyboards from the 1970s FF series (board #20a and Herbie detail from #36).

Characters © Marvel Characters, Inc.

A column answering Frequently Asked Questions about Kirby by Mark Evanier

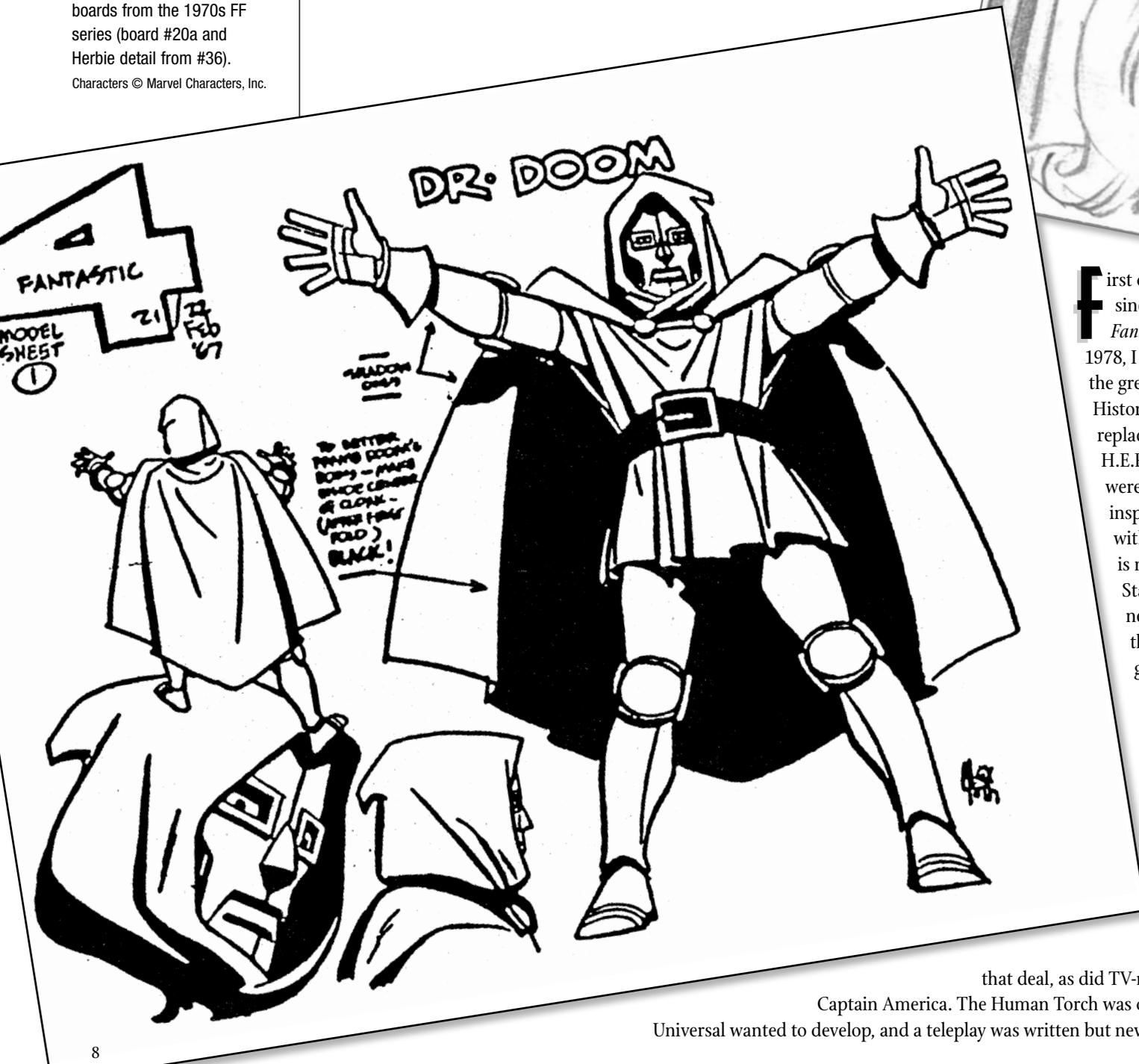
Our question this time out comes from Kirk Groeneveld of Athens, OH who writes:

I recently bought a used VHS copy of Marvel Matinee, Volume One for my daughters. We enjoyed the first feature, "Pryde of the X-Men" very much, but it made an interesting contrast with the Spider-Man and Fantastic Four episodes from circa mid-1980s. (The FF featured Herbie instead of the Human Torch.)

None of the voices in the simplistic FF cartoon show sounded right, except for Reed Richard's voice, who was credited as Mike Roads. I wondered if he was the voice of Mr. Fantastic from the 1960s series also? I noted Ted Cassidy ("Lurch" from The Addams Family) played Ben. Perhaps a column on all the actors who played voice roles in Kirby-drawn/written Marvel Super-Hero cartoons would be of interest? Did Jack have an opinion on the appropriateness of voices used for his creations? Somehow, even though Reed sounded right, he still seemed out of character; unsure, not confident, not insightful, etc. I also noted Jack Kirby received a rather prominent credit for storyboards in the end credits of the FF. How large a role did he play? Did he have to work with Stan Lee

much or closely on this project? I find the artwork crude and simplistic, with poorly rendered faces and costumes. (Example:

The Sandman's modern green costume headpiece, which Jack Kirby drew as a thick plastic block strap in FF #61-63, appears as a thin piece of cloth in the cartoon. Even Trapster's and Wizard's helmets are too small.)



First off, since you mentioned the Fantastic Four cartoon show from 1978, I probably ought to refute one of the great Urban Myths of Comic Book History, namely the claim that they replaced the Human Torch with H.E.R.B.I.E. the Robot because they were afraid that the Torch might inspire some kid somewhere to play with fire or set himself ablaze. This is not true. Although the folks in Standards and Practices at the networks have done some bizarre things, the decision on this never got as far as their offices.

What happened was that, shortly before that show was launched, Marvel made a deal that licensed a number of their characters to Universal Studios to be developed as live-action TV-movies and potential series. The Incredible Hulk TV show (the one with Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno) came out of

that deal, as did TV-movies of Dr. Strange and Captain America. The Human Torch was one of the characters that Universal wanted to develop, and a teleplay was written but never produced.

THE "OTHER" FF (OR,

by Mike Gartland

Lots of times comic book enthusiasts reflect on their favorite stories, genres, characters, etc. and often agree on one fact: Once you've read a new story, the spontaneity and excitement are lost forever. You can go back of course and re-read it, enjoy it, savor it with a nostalgic zeal, but the moment of that first time is never quite the same. So it is (or was) with those of us who grew up ingesting the classic stories of the Kirby/Lee *Fantastic Four*. If you've gone over those 102 issues and six *Annals*, then that's all there'll ever be as far as the FF are concerned; or is it? There may be another option open, another chance to capture that excitement again, albeit in a diluted form.

As all true Marvel historians know, 1961 was the year it all began; but in reality it was 1962 that was the watershed. That was the year many of us not only discovered the existence of the FF, but were introduced to great new characters like Spider-Man, Ant-Man, Thor, the Hulk, and the Human Torch. Wait! That last one can't be right! The Human Torch wasn't new; but he was! And why start up all these new guys in existing titles and then put in a character who was not only a throwback, but was already in a relatively new title already? And what about that chance to read some other Kirby/Lee FFs? Well....

True, the Human Torch was hardly a new character by 1962. The hero was originally created in 1939 by Carl Burgos. Initially, the Torch was an android that resembled a human male; due to a flaw in its creation, the

android would burst into flame whenever exposed to oxygen. This problem was surmounted by the end of the first story and the character learned to control its ability to flame. The Torch went on to become one of the "Big Three" super-heroes in the (then) Timely Comics line, the other

two heroes being the Sub-Mariner and Captain America. Editor Stan Lee and publisher Martin Goodman both developed a fondness for the character: Lee's was based on the uniqueness of the character and the ability to get an exciting story out of him; Goodman's was based on, naturally, the character's ability to sell books and turn a profit. By the end of the Forties, super-heroes were done, but Lee wouldn't forget them for very long. To that extent, by the early Fifties, Lee tried to bring the Big Three back, but the timing was off. Psychiatrist Fredric Wertham's anti-comics crusade and the Kefauver hearings on Juvenile Delinquency, plus the fact that a tabloid publication ran a story of a child immolating himself because he wanted to be like the Human Torch, pretty much put an end to the hopeful revival; but still Lee wouldn't forget, and after cancellations, layoffs and hardships, finally—with the arrival of DC's new heroes and the return of Jack Kirby—the timing would be perfect.

In 1961, when Kirby and Lee were brainstorming over the characters that would eventually become the Fantastic Four, according to Lee it was he who suggested using the Torch in the new group (some have speculated that he wanted to bring back the Big Three at this time, but this is yet to be determined as fact). The Torch came back, but either Lee or Kirby saw to it that it wasn't the original Torch. During the course of the group's development, it was determined to make the Torch a true human; and in order to give the group a sense of "family," have him be related to one of the other members. In this case

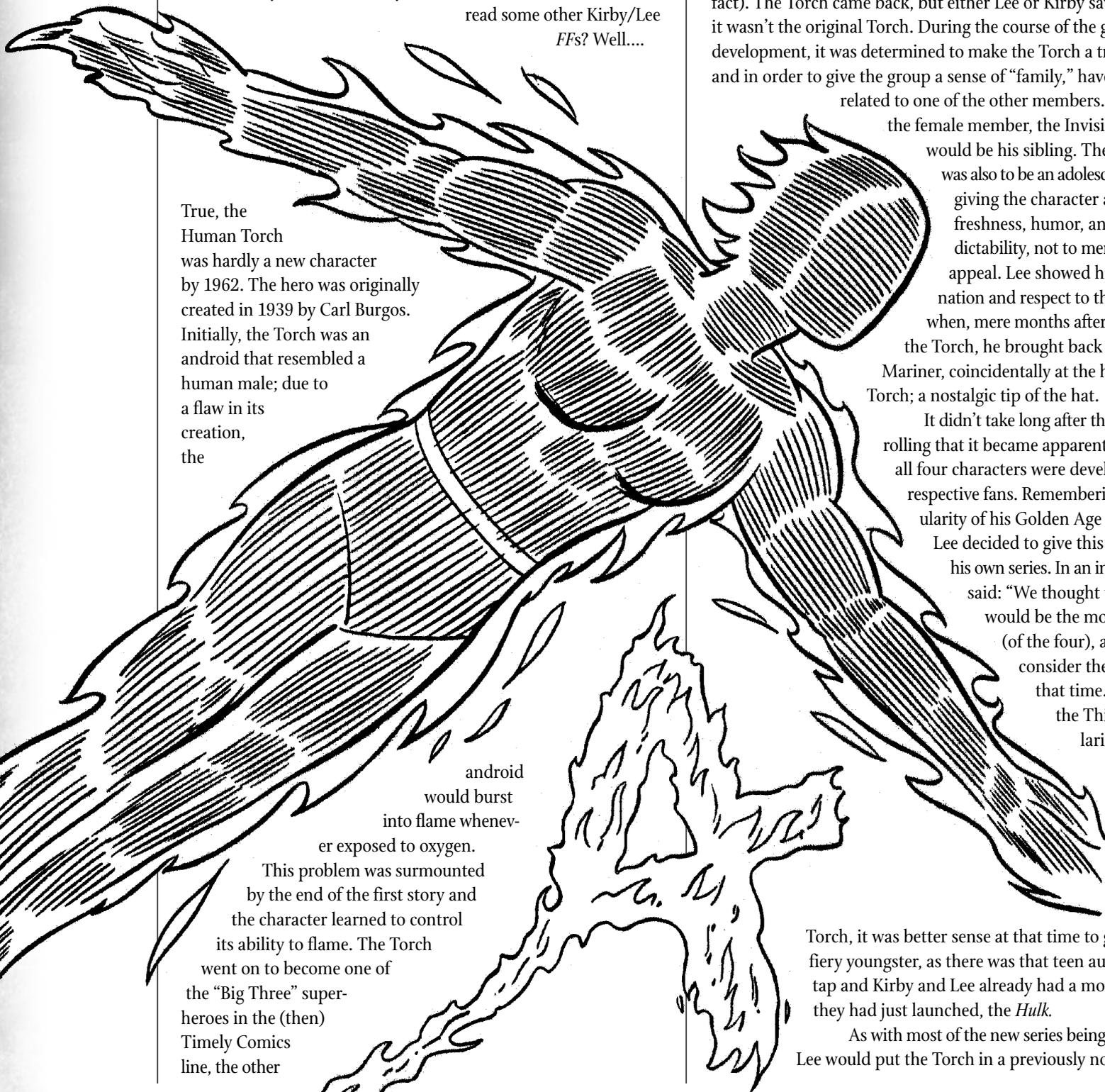
the female member, the Invisible Girl, would be his sibling. The new Torch was also to be an adolescent, thereby giving the character an air of freshness, humor, and unpredictability, not to mention "teen" appeal. Lee showed his determination and respect to the old guard when, mere months after re-creating the Torch, he brought back the Sub-Mariner, coincidentally at the hands of the Torch; a nostalgic tip of the hat.

It didn't take long after the *FF* started rolling that it became apparent to Lee that all four characters were developing their respective fans. Remembering the popularity of his Golden Age antecedent, Lee decided to give this new Torch his own series. In an interview Lee said: "We thought the Torch would be the most popular (of the four), and didn't consider the Thing at that time." Although the Thing's popularity with fans would indeed grow fast and eventually eclipse that of the

Torch, it was better sense at that time to go with the fiery youngster, as there was that teen audience to tap and Kirby and Lee already had a monster/hero they had just launched, the *Hulk*.

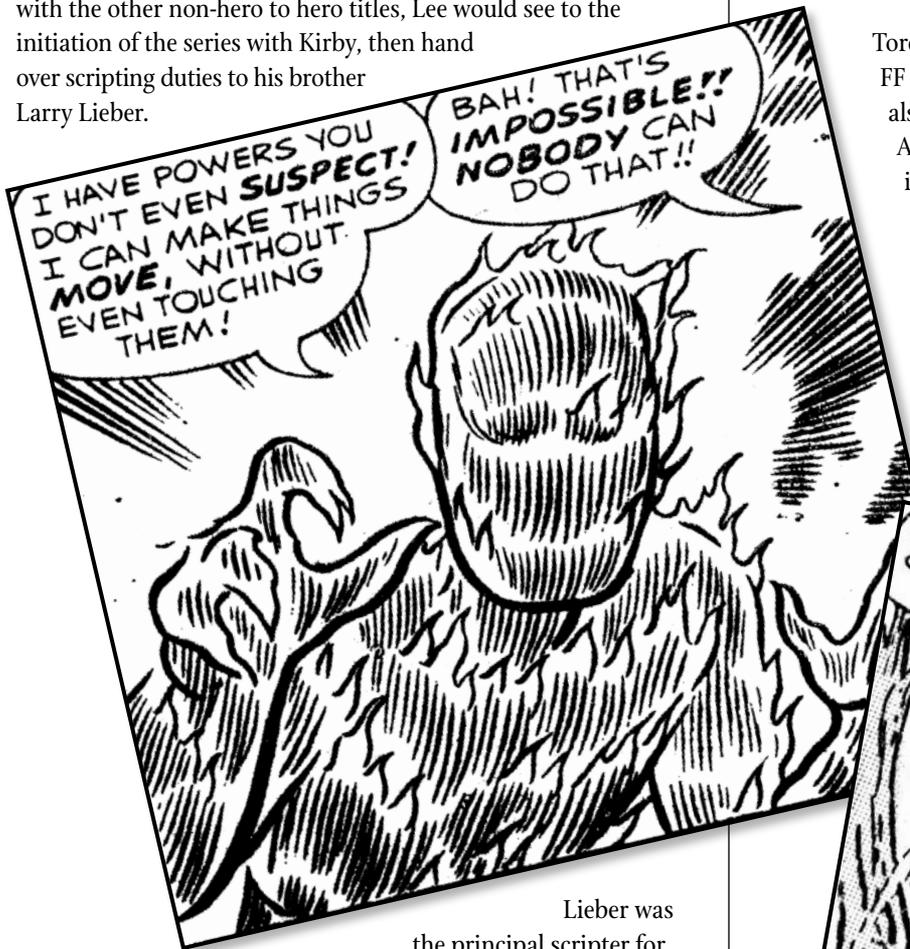
As with most of the new series being premiered, Lee would put the Torch in a previously non-hero title

(below) Detail from the Human Torch pin-up in *FF* #3 (March 1962). Sol Brodsky inks.
© Marvel Characters, Inc.



NOT-SO-STRANGE TALES)

(due to the publishing restrictions put on Marvel by its then-distributor). It was determined that the Torch series would go into the *Strange Tales* comic starting with issue #101 and, just as with the other non-hero to hero titles, Lee would see to the initiation of the series with Kirby, then hand over scripting duties to his brother Larry Lieber.



Lieber was the principal scribe for the early issues showcasing not only the Torch, but Thor, the Ant-Man, and Iron-Man as well. Based on plots allegedly given by Lee, Lieber would, in his words, give full scripts to the artists he was working with. It is noted in several instances of viewing the original art, however, that Kirby (at least) leaves visible notations of dialogue and/or captions underneath the areas of the art where the word balloons would be put; this has only been seen on originals where there is an intermediate scribe (ie. Lee's plot, someone else's script). It appears to me, having researched many Kirby Marvel originals that, as far as his involvement with the scribes went, the art tells the tale. In stories where there is a definite co-working of plot and story between scribe and artist, there are virtually no notes left by Jack. In stories where he is working with someone else's plot or script, there are additions or changes made by Kirby as he draws the story, adding his input in dialogue/captions where the balloons would go. In stories where Jack was driving the plots and others would follow up with the scripting afterward in the form of dialogue/captions, there are copious notes left by Jack in the borders. It's also documented that Kirby almost always was in on the visual design of the characters being created, whether he drew the story or not. Kirby would design the villain or hero while usually doing the cover, thus giving the resident artist a visual template; this clearly

indicates that Jack must have been aware of at least the basic plots to many stories he either didn't draw, or would later draw under another's (in this case, Lieber's) script.

Issue #101 established the parameters of the new Torch with new readers. It goes over the origin of the FF and how young Johnny Storm gained his powers. It also introduces the locale of Glenville, a sleepy, all-American, WASPish environment where everything is "Happy Days" except for insane super-villains, aliens, dimension warps, etc.—you know, the usual stuff. Johnny lives here with his sister, whom everyone knows is the Invisible Girl, but for some inexplicable reason it's given that, in this series, the Torch has a secret identity (in this town anyway). It was established early on in the pages of *FF* that the identities of the Four were known to the general public. Giving the Torch a secret identity may have been a miscommunication between

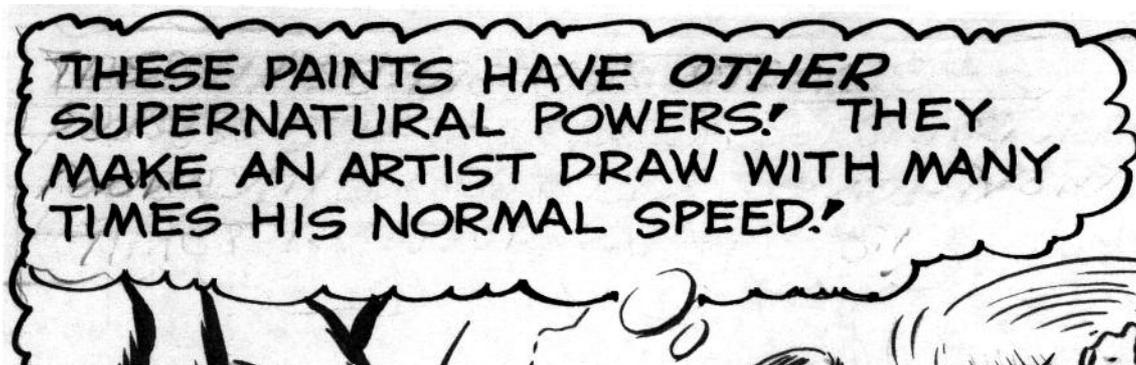
(left) The Fantastic Four—particularly Sue Storm—made appearances in the Torch's solo stories. Shown here are panels from *Strange Tales* #102 (Nov. 1962). Inks by Ayers. © Marvel Characters, Inc.



Lee and Lieber, or it may have been on purpose, as it is spotted early on, but used as an "in" joke on the Torch by his friends and classmates in the town; the secret identity fiasco is eventually dropped within six issues. The first published story (all Torch stories would be anywhere from 12-14 pages in length) involves a masked saboteur named the Destroyer (this was a pre-*Thor* Destroyer, mind you) who is caught and unmasked *à la Scooby-Doo* by story's end. Issue #102 introduces the Wizard, who would become the arch-nemesis of the series, even though he appears only four times in the entire run; and as with many Kirby creations, he never looks as good as he does in that first panel appearance on page two, an acromegalic masterpiece, God help him.

(left) Looking closely at the original art, you can see vestiges of Kirby's handwriting under the final lettering in the balloons from *Strange Tales* #108 (May 1963), begging the question: Did Jack simply copy Stan Lee's and Larry Lieber's pre-written dialogue onto the artwork (but why?), or did Jack have a hand in writing the dialogue for these stories?

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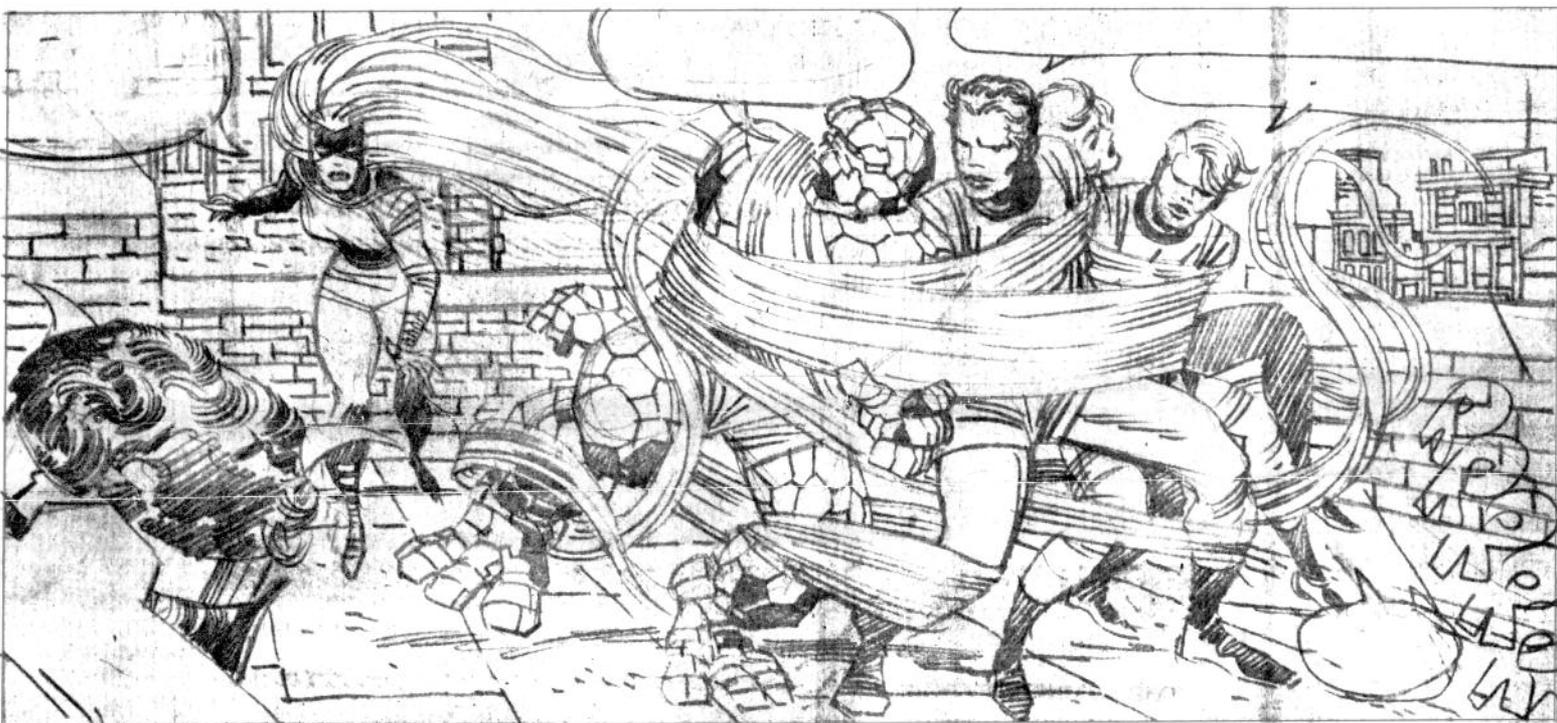


Issue #103 is interesting with respect to, not the story which is pretty much standard science-fiction fare—"Zemu of The Fifth Dimension" (it does give the Torch his first one-on-one with

GALLERY



IF HE TAKES ME-- WE MUST TAKE YOU TOO



~~SHOCK WAVES~~
SHOCK WAVES HAVE LOOSENED DEBRIS IN BLDG. BASEMENT WHERE

JACK! COMPARE THIS WITH NEXT PAGE!
THIS WITH NEXT PAGE IS OUT OF BLDG
SIL
EDITED ON 10/20/84 #4, 25

Here are pages 19 and 20 of FF #44 (Nov. 1965), in their original pencil form. Joe Sinnott took over inking with this issue. Notice Sol Brodsky's note to Jack on page 19 ("Jack! Compare This With Next Page!"), in reference to an edit Stan is requesting (see chopped-off notes at bottom of page). It appears to have something to do with why panels 3 and 4 on page 20 were reworked from these original pencils, but we're unsure why Stan requested the art change. Ideas, anyone? Characters © Marvel Characters, Inc.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE
REED THEY GOTTA GET PSYCHON--
REED SAYS HE NEEDS MORE
FACTS

ATTACK WORLD WITH A BIG FEAR G...
REED SAYS - CANIT GO-- DOCTOR
EXAMINED SUE-- SHE'S GONNA BE
A MAMMA TWIN'S SO?



TORCH AND CRYSTAL NOW
SAYS - COMBIE - -

BEN SHOO
SAYS - YOU

STAN LEE INTERVIEW

(center oval) A stat sent to Jack for reference by Marvel production manager Sol Brodsky, at Stan's request. Stan obviously knew readers would spot differences in Johnny's hot rod issue-to-issue, right down to the "F4NY" license plate number. From FF #65 (Aug. '67). © Marvel Characters, Inc.

(below) Stan's synopsis for FF #1. For a full discussion of it (including Stan's annotations), get the *Alter Ego: The Comic Book Artist Collection* trade paperback from TwoMorrows.

Conducted by Jon B. Cooke on October 11, 2001

(When I was a 15-year-old smart-ass kid, I attended a lecture given by Stan Lee held at a local college. I asked "The Man" what he thought of Jack Kirby's not-so-nice satirical jab at him in the pages of Mister Miracle casting Stan in the guise of huckster Funky Flashman. "Oh, that Jack," diplomat Stan said, quickly dismissing me, "he was always a kiddie." Now, 27 years later, this is my second chance to ask questions of the founding father of Marvel Comics. This interview was transcribed by John Morrow, and copyedited by Stan.— Jon B. Cooke)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: Was the *Fantastic Four* a fun strip to work on?
STAN LEE: Sure, I loved it.

TJKC: Do you remember when the Marvel Method started? [Editor's Note: See Sidebar.]

STAN: No, not really. I think it was even before the *Fantastic Four*. It might have been when Jack and I

were doing monster stories. I'd give him an idea for a monster

story, he would draw it, and I'd do the dialogue. Or it might

even have been before that time. Memory-wise, I'm not much of a super-hero.

TJKC: Did Kirby ever ask for a writing co-credit because of the Marvel Method, feeling he did part of the writer's job?

STAN: Kirby never asked me for co-writing credit. It was he who originally suggested the "By Stan Lee and Jack Kirby" credit, and as far as I knew he was quite contented with that.

TJKC: In 1957, there was the problem with Atlas' distributor American News collapsing. Did the Marvel Method grow out of that, because you were the single writer for what was then Atlas Comics?

STAN: Well, it did grow out of the fact that I didn't have time to write all the stories I had to write, and that was the quickest way to do it.

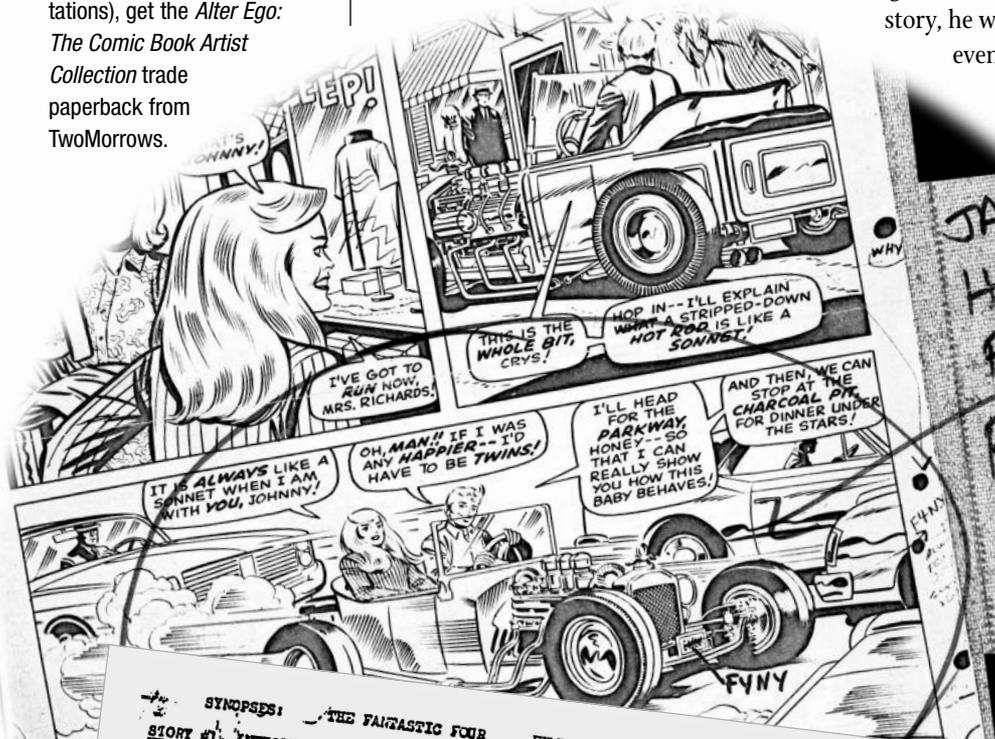
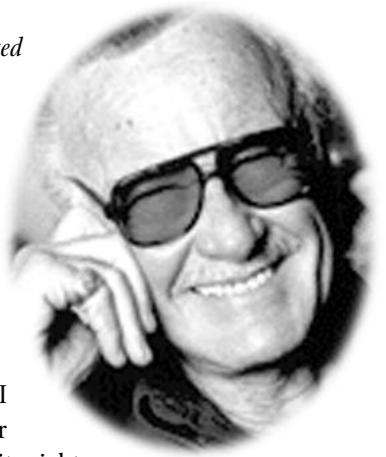
TJKC: What was your relationship with Martin Goodman like?

STAN: In the beginning I had a good relationship with him. Toward the end it soured a bit.

TJKC: Do you remember the first time you met Joe Simon and Jack Kirby?

STAN: Yeah, when I first came to work at the company Joe was the editor, the guy who hired me. Jack was the artist, and I was their assistant.

TJKC: Do you recall how Jack got into Atlas later?



SYNOPSIS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR JULY '61 SCHEDULE (F1)
 STORY #1. INTRODUCTION. "MEET THE FANTASTIC FOUR"
 This story is told in 2 chapters. Chapter one is 6 pages long. Chapter 2 is 5 pages.
 There are four main characters: 1) REED RICHARDS. (Mr. Fantastic) He is young, handsome scientist. Leader of the four. Invents a space ship to go to Mars. Hopes to be first man to reach Mars.
 2) SUSAN STORM. (Invisible Girl) She is Reed's girl friend. She's an actress. Beautiful, glamorous.
 3) BEN GRIMM. (The Thing) Ben is very husky, brutish guy. He's a pilot. He falls for Susan also.
 4) JOHNNY STORM. (Human Torch) He is Susan's kid brother. A teen-ager. 17 years old. High school star athlete.
 Story might open up with a meeting of Fantastic Four. A meeting starts, caption tells reader that we will go back a few weeks to see how it all began....
 Reed Richards tells Susan and her brother Johnny that his space ship is finally completed. He hopes to be first man to Mars. But he needs a pilot. They hire Ben Grimm. Ben is huge, surly unpleasant guy who doesn't want any part of project until he sees Susan. He falls for Susan, and she manages to coax him into piloting ship. Ben is crack-jack pilot, ex-war hero, best pilot available.
 As the four are about to begin flight, they are warned against it by authorities. Told that no one yet knows what effect comic rays will have on human bodies so far out in space. But they decide to go anyway. They fear that if they don't go, Reds may beat us to it.
 (NOTE: At the rate the Communists are progressing in space, maybe we better make this a flight to the STARS, instead of just to Mars, because by the time this mag goes on sale, the Russians may have already MADE a flight to Mars!)

So, without clearance from the authorities, in the dead of night, they take off for the nearest star— very dramatically.
 In space, on the way to the stars, POOO! They are bombarded by comic rays which penetrate the ship and which affect all four of the occupants. They can't continue the trip— have to turn back— are lucky to land alive. But they are all different now— they sense it— although they don't yet quite know HOW they've changed.
 Suddenly, they can't see Susan! But they know she's there! They can HEAR her. They realize she has become invisible. She can not become visible again. Later, she will buy a mask with a face like the one she had and she will have to wear that mask ~~in order to be seen~~ in order to be seen. Her clothes can be seen, so it is only her flesh that is invisible. When she takes her clothes off, she's completely invisible. (I hope this won't seem to over in art work. Better talk to me about it, ~~Stan~~ Jack— maybe we'll change this gimmick somewhat).
 As for Johnny, Susan's brother, whenever he gets excited, he bursts into flame. Becomes a Human Torch, and can fly, as his body gets lighter than air. BUT doesn't last for more than 5 minutes. At end of five minutes, his flame goes out and he becomes normal again, until he gets excited again. But can't flame on for at least 5 minutes after he's gotten back to normal. Comics Association told us he may never burn anyone with flame, he may only burn ropes, doors, etc.— never people. And, he cannot toss fireballs as the old Human Torch could. His biggest asset is that he can fly.

more—

They think Reed Richards, the pilot, is unaffected by comic rays, as he seems normal— UNTIL he tries to reach for something. Then they realize his arm has STRETCHED toward the thing he reached for. After awhile they realize Reed's body has become like RUBBER. He can get skinny, elongated, anything that you can do with rubber. He can squeeze thru key-holes, etc. Of course, the more stretched-out he gets, the weaker he gets— (He can even alter the appearance of his face to make himself look like someone else) BUT it is quite painful to do all this, so he can only maintain the strange shapes for a very short period of time until the pain gets to be unbearable.
 Finally, Ben Grimm steps out of the shadows. He is unaffected by comic rays, as he seems normal— UNTIL he tries to reach for something. Then they realize his arm has STRETCHED toward the thing he reached for. After awhile they realize Reed's body has become like RUBBER. He can get skinny, elongated, anything that you can do with rubber. He can squeeze thru key-holes, etc. Of course, the more stretched-out he gets, the weaker he gets— (He can even alter the appearance of his face to make himself look like someone else) BUT it is quite painful to do all this, so he can only maintain the strange shapes for a very short period of time until the pain gets to be unbearable.
 So much for who they are and how they got that way. Now, here's a gimmick I think we might play up to advantage! Let's make The Thing the heavy— in other words, he's not really a good guy. He's part of the ~~team~~ Fantastic Four because they all got that way together and they decide to remain a team, and also because he has a crush on Susan— but actually, he is jealous of Mr. Fantastic and dislikes Human Torch because Torch always sides with Fantastic. ~~Let's~~ Let's treat him so that reader is always afraid he will sabotage the Fantastic Four's efforts at whatever they are doing— he isn't interested in helping mankind the way the other three are— he is more interested in winning Susan away from Mr. Fantastic. (We might indicate that he feels he may return to his normal self at any time, because none of them know how long their strange powers will last— or whether the effect of the comic rays will one day wear off them).
 Anyway, the four of them decide to form a ~~unit~~ unit— they think it is ~~an~~ an act of Fate which made them as they are and they think they owe it to fate to use their powers to help mankind. So they adopt their new names: HUMAN TORCH, MR. FANTASTIC, INVISIBLE GIRL, and THE THING, and vow to spend their lives fighting all sorts of evil menaces which the normal forces of the world cannot cope with. And, to keep it all from getting too goody-goody, there is always friction between Mr. Fantastic and The Thing, with Human Torch siding with Mr. F. Also, the other three are always afraid of The Thing getting out of their control some day and harming mankind with his amazing strength. Occasionally also, you might have The Thing wanting to do something for personal profit— and the other 3 try to stop him. In other words, the Thing doesn't have the ethics that the other three have, and consequently he will probably be the most interesting one to the reader, because he'll always be unpredictable.
 So much for the introduction— the preceding should have covered exactly 11 pages, consisting of 2 chapters. (Chapter one: 6 pages. Chapter 2: 5 pages)
 The next two chapters, in which the Fantastic Four undertakes their first case, will also be 2 chapters for a ~~total~~ total of 10 pages— ~~3, 5, 5~~ (3, 5, 5)

STAN: Not really. He was a free-lancer. Either I called him or he called me, but whoever called who, I said, "Hey, I've got some work for you," and he said, "Okay," and he came and did it.

TJKC: You guys had a good working relationship while you were working together, right?

STAN: I think we had the best relationship in the world.

TJKC: For a period of time, you wrote almost all the stories that were coming out; your brother Larry Lieber wrote some of them. As the company grew, you got Roy Thomas and a bunch of other people in, but you still remained on the books Jack was drawing.

STAN: Well, I tried to stay with the most important stuff for as long as I could. I'd give Jack most of those strips because he was the best.

TJKC: How did you work with Jack? Did you say something very simple, and he'd build off of that?

STAN: In the beginning, I'd give him written-out plots, like the outline for the first *Fantastic Four*. After a while, I would just tell him what I thought the story ought to be. Then after a while, I would just give him a few words. He could practically do the whole thing by himself, y'know? Very often I didn't even know what the hell he was going to give me. I'd get some pages of artwork, and I wrote the copy and turned it into whatever story I wanted it to be.

TJKC: In the mid-1960s, right when you guys were hitting your stride, there was a cosmic era, where Galactus came in. It was really a classic time for the *Fantastic Four*. You've said, for instance, that you didn't even know who the Silver Surfer was when he appeared on the pages for FF #48.

STAN: Jack had thrown him in. I told him I wanted a character called Galactus and I described Galactus to him. When he sent me the artwork, there was this oddball on a flying surfboard, and I said, "Who the hell's this?" He said, "I figured anybody as powerful as Galactus ought to have a herald who would go ahead of him and find planets." I said, "That's a great idea!" so I gave him the name "The Silver Surfer." I liked the way Jack drew him very much; there was a certain nobility to his demeanor, so I tried to write him as though he was a somewhat spiritual guy. To Jack, he was just a herald, that's all; just a sort of flunky for Galactus. But I thought he looked like much more than

that, so I began to feature him and write him like he was somebody special.

TJKC: Correct me if I'm wrong; he became your favorite character at the company, right?

STAN: What do you mean?

TJKC: You seemed to have a special place in your heart for the Silver Surfer.

STAN: Oh, I misunderstood you! I thought you said "I" became my favorite character. (laughter) Well, I had a special place in my



(above) Kirby pencils from FF #75 (June 1968), page 2.

Characters © Marvel Characters, Inc.

THE FINAL



(this page) Cover details (inked by John Verpoorten) of the Inhumans' final Kirby *FF* appearance in issue #99 (June 1970). Solo stories in *Amazing Adventures* would begin two months later, so like the Surfer before them, a story in the *FF* was used to get the ball rolling.

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(below) Kirby in 1967. Photo by Mark Hanerfeld.



Comic book historians have written about it. The most dedicated Kirby buffs have wrestled with it. It's the one irony that permeates all Kirby scholarship: How, with all the imagination, skill, and experience at his fingertips, Kirby's self-edited creations like the Fourth World books never achieved the popularity or the commercial success of Jack's Silver Age Marvel work.

Explanations run from Kirby's inconsistencies at writing dialogue to fluctuations in the comic book marketplace to ill-treatment on the part of inexperienced editors. Gene Popa's excellent article "Stan Lee Presents: The Fourth World" (*TJKC* #26) subtitled "What would a Marvel Comics *New Gods* have been like?" raised the issue, but gave only passing mention to what I believe is a key to the question.

I'd like to bring to light what I consider a comic book archaeological find, the closest existing answer to the question of what a Marvel-published, Kirby-created Fourth World series would be like. The evidence lies in an obscure title Marvel published at the twilight of the Silver Age—a few overlooked episodes of a super-hero strip that didn't even take up an entire book, but makes for a fascinating moment in the history of comics and particularly in the career of Jack Kirby: That rarest of rare animals, a series that Kirby wrote as well as drew—under the editorship of Stan Lee. Its title was "The Inhumans," in a book called *Amazing Adventures*.

THE TIME AND PLACE

It was 1970, nearly a decade after the debut of the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man. The Marvel style, canon, and universe were all well formed, commercially proven, and easy to crank out. They were also eminently applicable to characters from other media, like Conan the Barbarian, and to genres outside the super-hero vein, like the horror anthologies *Tower of Shadows* and *Chamber of Darkness*, and the romance books *My Love* and *Our Love Story*, that also premiered that year. Trying out different ideas in hopes of a new hit seemed to be the order of the day.

Two new titles, *Amazing Adventures* and *Astonishing Tales*, revived the "split" format that had been used several years earlier in *Tales to Astonish*, *Tales of Suspense*, and *Strange Tales*, spotlighting some secondary Marvel characters, presumably to see if they could garner the popularity to support their own books. *Astonishing Tales* starred the perennial Tarzan knock-off Ka-zar and Dr. Doom. *Amazing Adventures* featured the Black Widow and the Inhumans.

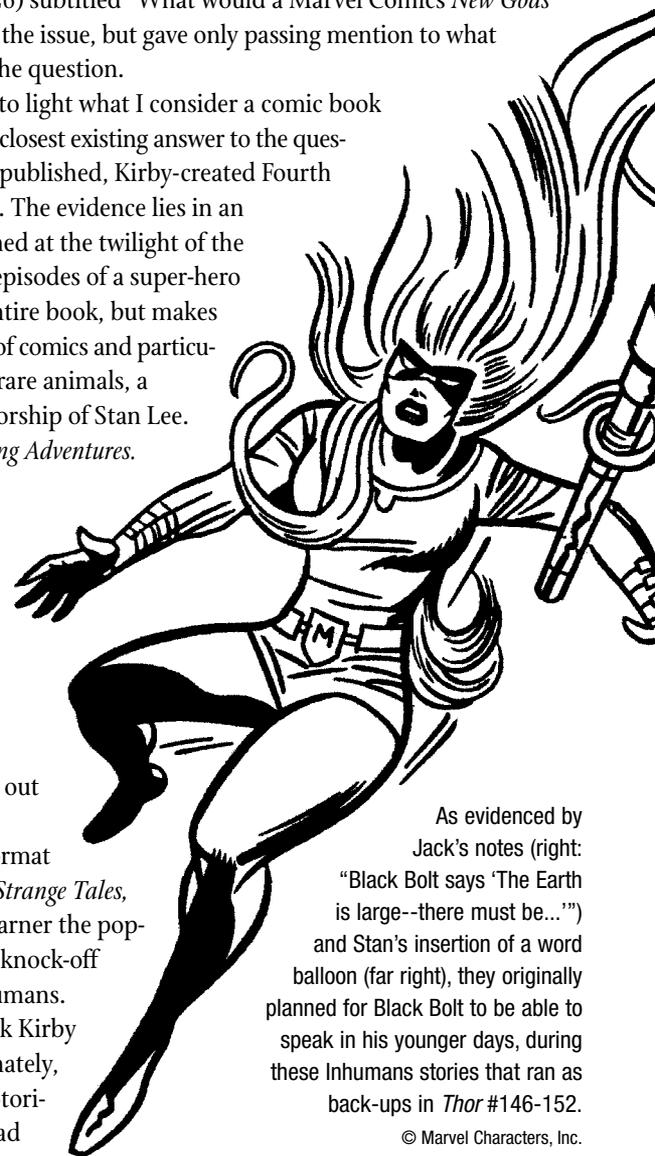
It is on the splash page of the first Inhumans story that we first encounter Jack Kirby being credited as a writer, as well as artist, of a Marvel super-hero series. Unfortunately, we'll probably never know how this arrangement came about, since Stan Lee is notorious for his bad memory and Kirby is dead. Did Stan, delighted at how well Jack had been plotting the *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* for so many years, ask Jack if he wanted to script a series? Did Kirby petition Stan to let him try his hand at writing? Was Jack so frustrated by his lot at Marvel that he insisted on writing any new books Stan gave him to draw?

Whatever the circumstances, we can safely assume that Jack wanted to write. The prospect probably appealed to Stan as well—if Jack could write as dependably as he drew, there would be one less editorial assignment to worry about. A strip in *Amazing Adventures* or *Astonishing Tales* would provide the perfect place to give Jack Kirby a shot at it.

WHY THE INHUMANS?

Why the Inhumans? Why not Ka-Zar, which Kirby was penciling in *Astonishing Tales*? Or Dr. Doom, whom Jack had drawn in the *Fantastic Four* since God was a boy? Probably because the Inhumans were largely Jack's creation, like that other intriguing *Fantastic Four* supporting character from 1966, the Silver Surfer. Although the Inhumans had been introduced into the pages of the *Fantastic Four* individually over the course of a year or two, the emergence of these strange beings as a group—members of a common genetic offshoot of humanity—happened at a time when Jack was doing more and more of the plotting on the *Fantastic Four*—unlike Doom, who premiered in *FF* #5. Also, the idea of a race of genetically offbeat people is a theme Jack returns to several times in his career, most notably in *The Eternals*.

In 1968, the "Tales of Asgard" feature that had occupied the last 5 pages of every issue of *Thor* was dropped in favor of an Inhumans

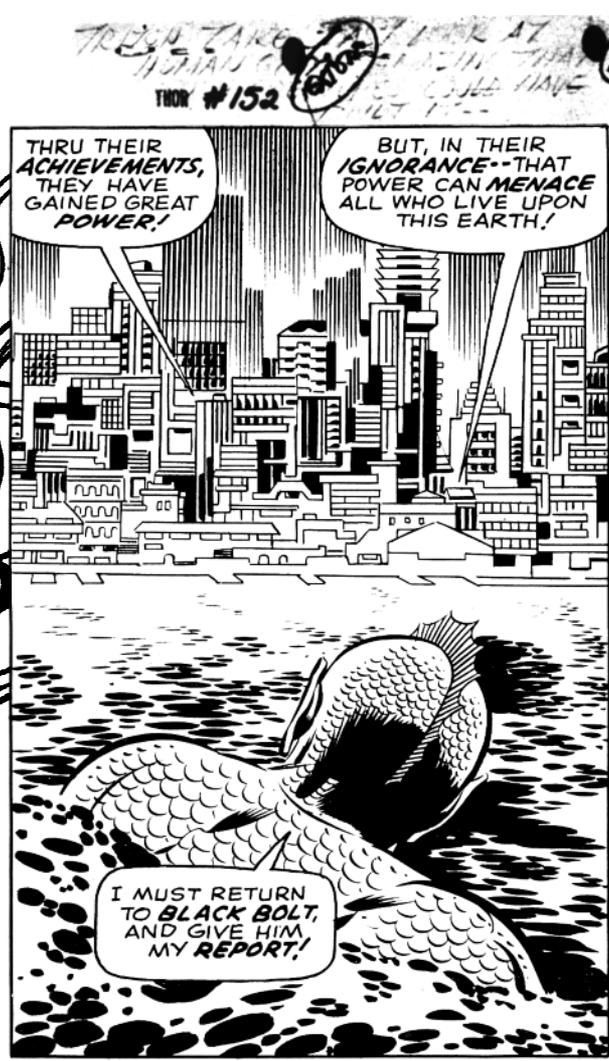


As evidenced by Jack's notes (right: "Black Bolt says 'The Earth is large--there must be...'"') and Stan's insertion of a word balloon (far right), they originally planned for Black Bolt to be able to speak in his younger days, during these Inhumans stories that ran as back-ups in *Thor* #146-152.

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FAMILY REUNION

by Mark Lerer



ten-page Inhumans stories, titled simply "The Inhumans" premiered in *Amazing Adventures* #1, cover date August 1970.

A SOUND EDITORIAL PRESENCE

The first, most obvious thing one notices upon reading the ten-page Inhumans stories in *Amazing Adventures* #1-4 is that the disfluencies that mar Kirby as a scripter in his later, self-edited books are practically nowhere to be found. One would never know from reading these stories that Jack Kirby was as flawed a scripter as his later books would reveal him to be. There are far fewer instances of emphasis on the wrong words. Dialogue is understandable on the first reading. The conversations between characters clarify for the reader whatever may not be evident in the pictures alone, without sounding forced or contrived. The awkwardness is absent. Occasionally there is a triple exclamation point, but they're rare. Compared with Jack's DC books, or his post-1976 Marvel work, these stories are much more readable.

The immediate conclusion? Obviously, Kirby was being edited here, and being edited carefully. Jack's scripts read better when edited by Stan Lee than when edited by Jack himself.

The plot of the first Inhumans story in *Amazing Adventures* #1 and #2 is very simple, and like a lot of series openers, involves some popular established characters as guest-stars. Evidence is discovered that the Fantastic Four are attacking the Inhumans. In the very last panel of part one, Black Bolt makes the fateful decision to battle the FF ("War!"). We learn that Maximus is behind the deception, and

series, spotlighting their origins. Again, we have no verifiable idea whose initiative this was; we can see, though, because Stan Lee was writing the dialogue and Jack was drawing, that this Inhumans series reads very much like the *Fantastic Four* and *Thor*—we have Jack's tremendous action scenes and cityscapes, and Stan's noble heroes declaim their intentions with typical Lee-esque drama.

I believe Jack probably thought of the Inhumans, like the Surfer, as "his," and may have actively encouraged Stan to let him write, as well as plot and draw, the Inhumans in a strip of their own. In any case, it came to pass. The first of four

KRACKLIN' KIRBY

(top) Compare the Surfer's sense of power in these two covers, from *FF* #50 (May 1966) and #72 (Mar. 1968).
© Marvel Characters, Inc.



Tracing the advent of Kirby Krackle, by Shane Foley

I've often marvelled at the differences between the Silver Surfer figures on the covers of *FF* #50 and #72. Both are virtually pinups—both are of the same character and both are by King Kirby. But the first is a lithe, sinuous figure who is strong yet fluid. The second is shiny granite. Somewhere between May 1966 and March 1968—the cover dates of these two issues—Kirby's way of drawing the human figure had changed. But something else had changed too. One of Kirby's greatest and most lasting creations/discoveries had appeared—the spectacular and affectionately called "Kirby Krackle."

That cover of *FF* #72 is alive with it. Galaxies are formed out of it. Energy seething and rising is formed out of it. Little black dots in wonderfully evocative patterns make the cover feel electric! A quick look through the issue shows over half the pages have at least one panel on them using Kirby Krackle to

represent anything from space to naked power to smoke to explosions to the energy surrounding teleportation. Kirby obviously loved it and thought it expressed these elements of his story well. I think we all agree there.

Go back three years to *FF* #37. A space adventure with a cross-galactic voyage, the first Marvel age warping through Sub-Space, lots of action and explosions and battles. And something else, noticeable by its absence—not a single use of Kirby Krackle anywhere.

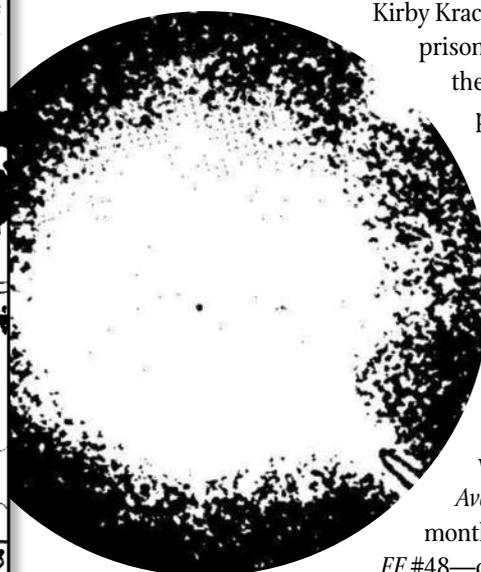
So it seems somewhere, in the three years between *FF*s #37 and #72, Kirby created/discovered the power of simply arranging black spots to achieve an illusion of power even greater than he or anyone else had achieved before. So where did it all begin? Looking at the *FF* issues subsequent to #37, the first time I see something that begins to look vaguely like Kirby Krackle is during Ben Grimm's battle with Dr. Doom in *FF* #40. But it isn't really the Krackle at all. Common place in comic explosions were the heavy 'flash' lines indicating the lines of force and the heavier, 'smokey' ends on them. Kirby being Kirby drew them heavier than most others and made the explosions look stronger. There are numerous examples here. Also on page 19 panel 3 we see a semi-silhouetted Thing as he struggles against Doom's power.



(center) The first tentative steps toward Kirby Krackle, not quite fully evolved, from (l to r) *FF* #40 (July 1965, pg. 19) and #46 (Jan. 1966, pg. 16). © Marvel Characters, Inc.

(bottom) From the *Reader's Digest Book of Strange Stories/Amazing Facts*, 1975 (page 37), this center image is of Quasar 3C273, the first quasar, discovered in 1963 by Maarten Schmidt. Odds are good Kirby was aware of its existence in the mid-1960s; is it the genesis for Kirby Krackle, which appeared fully formed for the first time in this panel from the Surfer's first appearance in *FF* #48 (March 1966)? © Marvel Characters, Inc.

(next page) Pencils from *FF* #75 (June 1968), page 3, showing full-blown Kirby Krackle. Characters © Marvel Characters, Inc.



fight, on page 16 of *FF* #46, that we do get the first real hint that I can see that Kirby Krackle isn't far away. There, in the first panel is Triton in his watery prison. His body is partially obscured in the fluid. How? Not with the usual cross hatching, but with black dots. It's not much, but perhaps something was sparking the King's mind.

March 1966—*FF* #48: Page 7 and 8 have the first ever shots of the then-new Silver Surfer. And there, in the space scenes, the smoldering Universe is partially drawn in black dots. Then on page 13, there it is again. Panel 4 shows an explosive Universe behind the Surfer. And in panel 5 (shown at left), we see him 'surfing' the Krackling shock waves of the explosion—the first real use of Kirby Krackle, and in such a landmark issue as the first Surfer/Galactus issue.

Amazing—Kirby was inspired! The concurrent issue of *Thor* was #125. (Note: As any true '60s Marvel fan knew, *Thor*, the *Avengers* and a few others were 'out of sync' with their cover months. Though *Thor* #125 was cover dated February, it was opposite *FF* #48—dated March—in the checklist. This discrepancy wasn't rectified

AN ODE TO JOE SINNOTT

Compiled by George Khoury

(Editor's Note: Inker Joe Sinnott was a huge part of the success of the Lee/Kirby run of *Fantastic Four*. After inking FF #5 and a page of FF #6, he had to hand the book off to Dick Ayers, but returned with #44, and with very few exceptions, inked most of the next several hundred issues—staying on well past when Jack and Stan both left the series. So as a tribute to Joltin' Joe, we had George Khoury ask a few of the top inkers in the industry for their opinions of Joe and his *Fantastic Four* work.)



(above) Joe Sinnott in 1997. Photo by John Morrow.

(right) Sinnott-inked Surfer detail from FF #72 (March 1968).

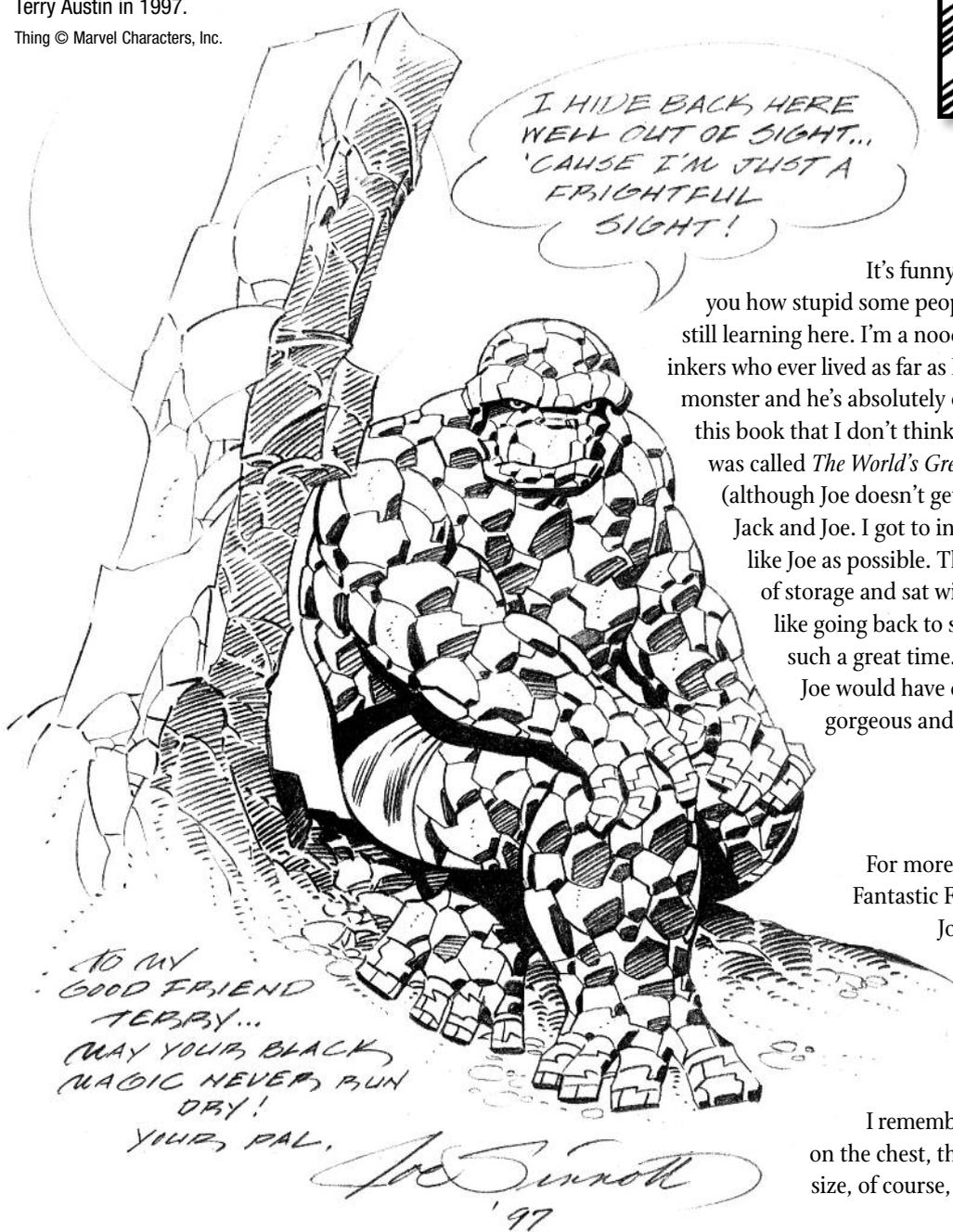
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(below) Joe drew this pencil piece for inker Terry Austin in 1997.

Thing © Marvel Characters, Inc.

TOM PALMER

He was the greatest. Very easy answer; he is the Dean of our business. Joe contributed to one of the *X-Men Hidden Years* books that I was working on with John Byrne. I think it was issue #8, and the *Fantastic Four* appeared. John had an idea of getting Joe and seeing if he was willing to ink those figures, and I did everything else. I did a little bit and I sent it off to Joe, and I was just amazed. It was like nothing had changed. It was like Joe was back in the 1960s; he was just as able and as good as he was then, if not better. I was just really, really impressed. He is the Dean.



AL GORDON

It's funny, but I have been compared stylistically to Joe for years—which shows you how stupid some people are, *[laughs]* because Joe is a monster and I'm just a noodle who's still learning here. I'm a noodle who's been in comics for twenty years. Joe is one of the finest inkers who ever lived as far as I'm concerned. I've learned more from just looking at his stuff. Joe is a monster and he's absolutely one of my favorite inkers. I had the wonderful opportunity to work on this book that I don't think turned out all that well, but it really had its heart in the right place; it was called *The World's Greatest Comics Magazine*. It was basically a tribute to Stan, Jack and Joe (although Joe doesn't get any tribute copy on the cover). So a bunch of us were all trying to do Jack and Joe. I got to ink Keith Giffen's pencils and I did my darndest to try to look as much like Joe as possible. The thing that was really exciting to me was that I got all of my *FFs* out of storage and sat with them next to my drawing table for about six months. Man, it was like going back to school! It was the best inking lesson I could have ever hoped for; I had such a great time. I would look at what Keith Giffen had penciled and I wondered what Joe would have done. And of course you end up getting lost in his stuff because it's so gorgeous and you're like, "What was I looking for again?" Beautiful stuff.

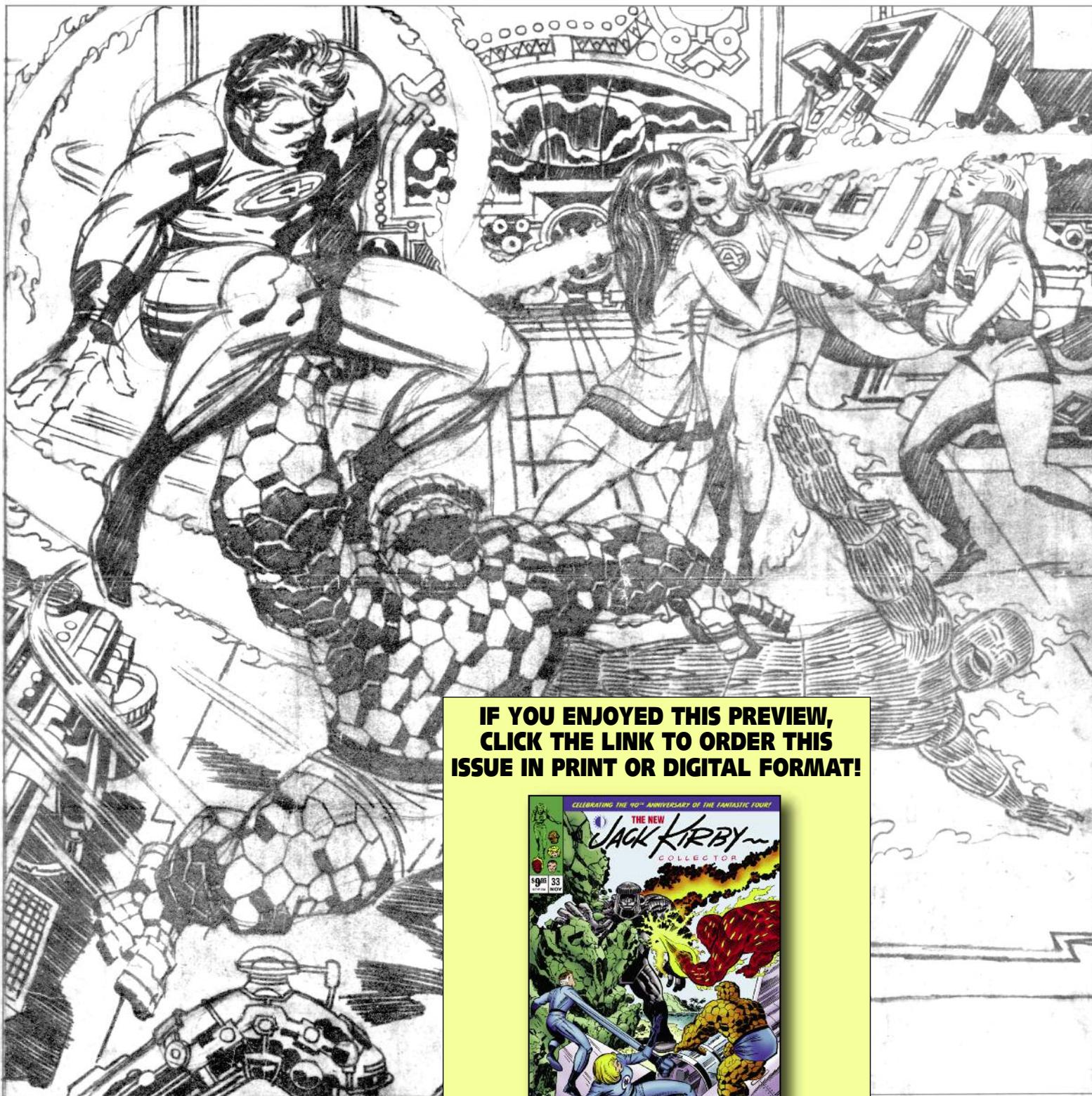
TERRY AUSTIN

For more years than I can remember, Joe's style was synonymous with the *Fantastic Four*. As long as you could open the cover of an *FF* book and witness Joe's careful delineation of our favorite family/quartet, all seemed right with their world, and consequently, ours. His lush brushwork, with its textural impeccability, was a dependable comfort, month after month; we relaxed, knowing our four friends (no matter the penciler) were in good hands. His genuine affection for these characters never failed to shine through.

I remember when Franklin Richards received his unofficial *FF* shirt, with the "4½" on the chest, thinking that that shirt rightly belonged to Joe—only in a much larger size, of course, one befitting one of the giants of our industry. ★

PARTING SHOT

(Editor's Note: This page of Kirby pencils from *FF Annual #5*—showing the quartet's reaction to learning that Reed and Sue were expecting a baby—is reproduced here in honor of the arrival of my daughter Lily. The happiness Jack exuded in these characters can't begin to compare to the joy I felt the day she arrived, and what I continue to feel every day of my life I get to share with her. She's just... FANTASTIC!)



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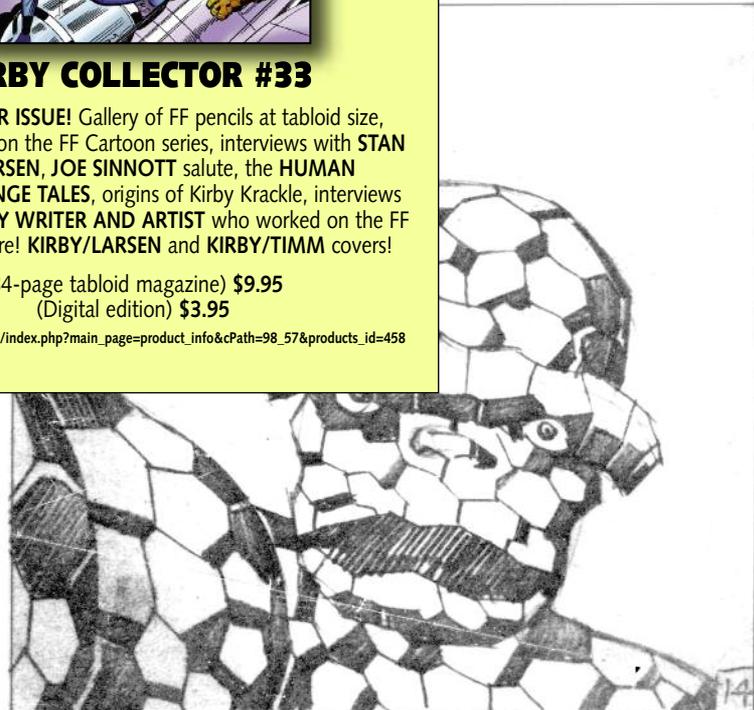
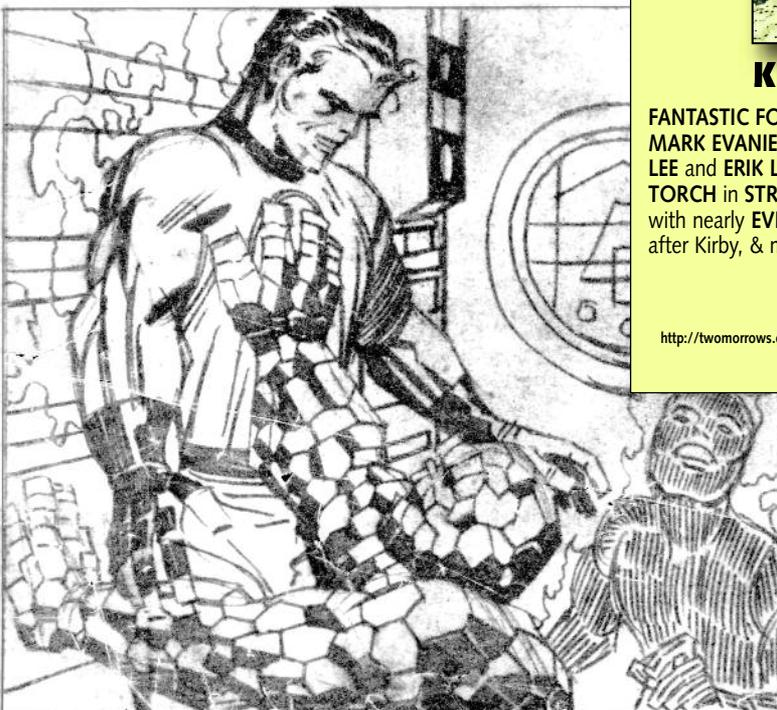


KIRBY COLLECTOR #33

FANTASTIC FOUR ISSUE! Gallery of FF pencils at tabloid size, **MARK EVANIER** on the FF Cartoon series, interviews with **STAN LEE** and **ERIK LARSEN**, **JOE SINNOTT** salute, the **HUMAN TORCH** in **STRANGE TALES**, origins of Kirby Krackle, interviews with nearly **EVERY WRITER AND ARTIST** who worked on the FF after Kirby, & more! **KIRBY/LARSEN** and **KIRBY/TIMM** covers!

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NAME BABE

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KID BE BORN IN SAME WORLD