



JACK KIRBY



(right) Big John Buscema did a fine job on *How To Draw Comics The Marvel Way*, but even as a kid, I knew Jack was the one who should've been doing that book. So, here's the cover the way it should've been!

# HOW TO DRAW COMICS

## THE "KIRBY" WAY

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Front & back cover inks/colors: JACK KIRBY	
<i>Photocopies of Jack's uninked pencils from published comics are reproduced here courtesy of the Kirby Estate, which has our thanks for their continued support.</i>	

*The Jack Kirby Collector*, Vol. 10, No. 37, Winter 2003. Published quarterly by & ©2003 TwoMorrrows 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 ©2003 Jack Kirby unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter is ©2003 the respective authors. First printing. PRINTED IN CANADA.

Ever since our first few issues back in 1994-95, but even more and more recently, we've been getting mail from readers asking us questions, questions, questions about how we go about putting an issue of *TJKC* together, and how many of Jack's pencil photocopies exist (and from what issues). They want to know

what's involved in scanning the Kirby pencil art we show, and why some images look so much better than others (why some, in fact, look almost like actual pencil drawings, while others barely have discernable detail in them). Frankly, I've always felt I should stay as far out of the limelight in this magazine as possible, and just let Jack's work—and his other fans—do most of the talking; but since this is the first of two (count 'em, two!) issues that'll deal with Jack's art from a technical standpoint, I figured it was about time I clued readers in to the ins and outs of my job as editor and designer of the *Kirby Collector*. If this technical hoo-hah doesn't float your boat,

# WHERE DOES HE GET THOSE WONDERFUL PENCILS?

don't worry; there'll be plenty of never-seen Kirby art in both this issue and next, so if nothing else, sit back and feast your eyes on some amazing penciling!

One of the areas of *TJKC* that hasn't always been fun is getting ahold of Kirby art to run in this magazine. Just where do we get all our art, you ask? From a number of sources, which have changed a lot since we first began this 'zine back in 1994. For our first issue, I pretty much depleted my personal supply of interesting Kirby art, but word of mouth spread quickly, and fans all over started sending us photocopies of Kirby work from their collections—convention sketches, unused pages, that sort of thing (and for those of you out there who assume I've got some massive collection of Kirby originals, sorry to burst your bubble; I own a whopping three pages, all acquired since starting *TJKC*). Over the last two or three years, that flood of art has slowed to barely a trickle, so I think we've pretty much depleted the supply of private collectors who have art to share (or at least those who are willing to send in copies). Most of our art these days isn't from individuals, although if you're out there reading this, and have something in your collection you'd like to share, please send it! We still need every piece of Kirby art we can get, to keep this magazine going indefinitely.

Our other source of art, and probably the one that's the biggest draw for Kirby fans, is the xeroxes we show of Jack's pencils before they were inked. Longtime *TJKC* readers know that sometime around when Mike Royer started inking Jack's work at DC Comics (say, *New Gods* #5 or so, in early 1971), Jack's son Neal worked for a copier company, and got his dad a photocopy machine for their home. It's not like today's models; the technology used at that time was akin to thermal fax machines of a few years ago—flimsy gray paper, with images that were far from dark black. Like thermal faxes, these copies tended to fade over

time, particularly when exposed to sunlight (although not





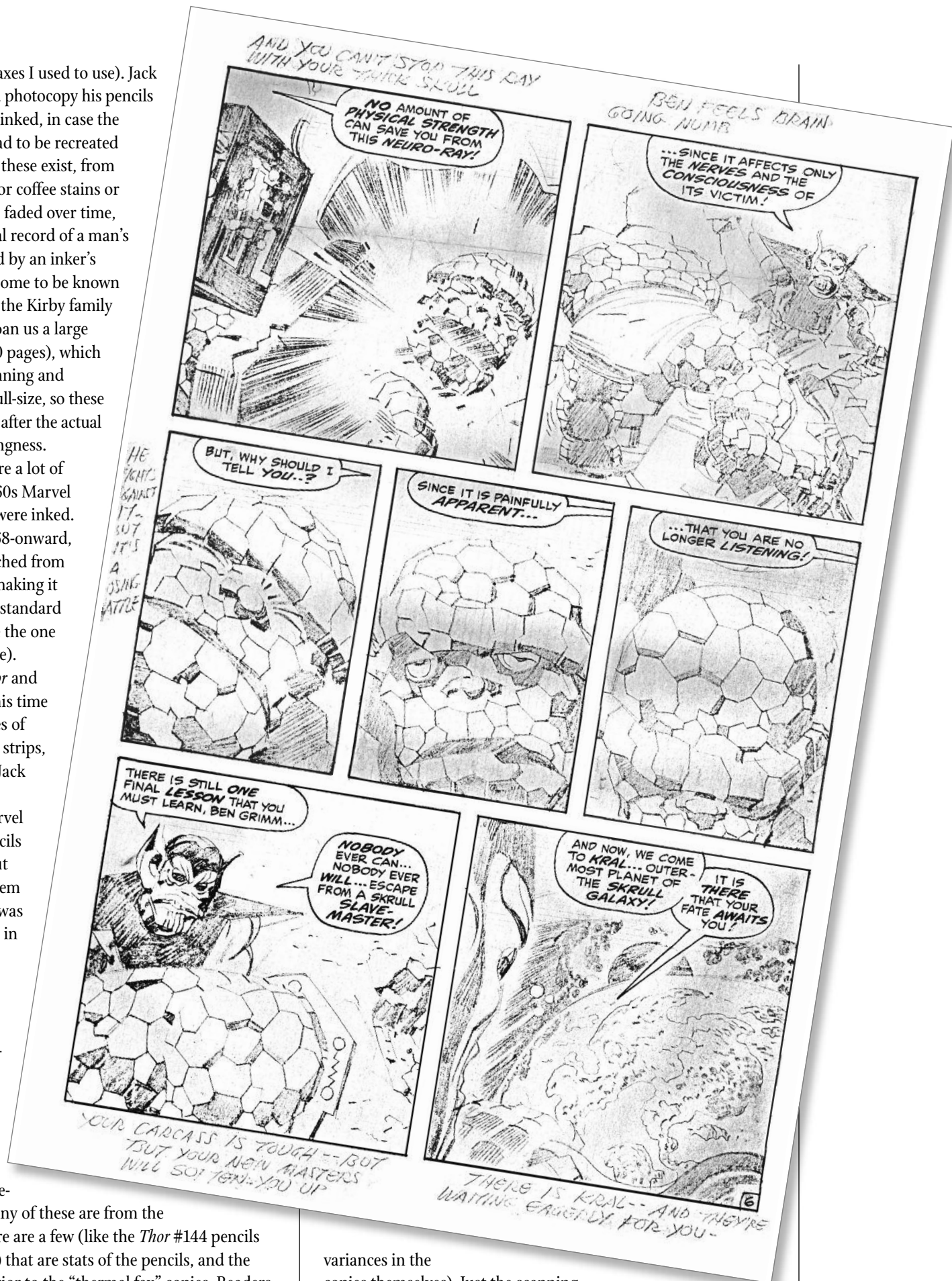
as quickly as the thermal faxes I used to use). Jack (or more likely, Roz) would photocopy his pencils before sending them to be inked, in case the pencils ever got lost and had to be recreated quickly. Years and years of these exist, from 1971-on; some with water or coffee stains or cigar burns on them, some faded over time, but still a remarkable visual record of a man's creative output, unchanged by an inker's hands. These copies have come to be known as the Kirby Archives, and the Kirby family has been kind enough to loan us a large batch of them (nearly 2000 pages), which we're in the process of scanning and archiving in digital form, full-size, so these images will be around long after the actual paper copies fade to nothingness.

Also in the Archives are a lot of "thermal fax" copies of 1960s Marvel Comics pages before they were inked. Most of these are from 1968-onward, after the time Marvel switched from "large art" to "small art," making it feasible to copy them on a standard 11" x 17" photocopier (like the one Jack would get for his home). Several whole issues of *Thor* and *Fantastic Four* exist from this time period, plus scattered pages of *Captain America* and other strips, still in pencil form. When Jack moved from New York to California in 1968, the Marvel offices would copy the pencils after they were lettered (but before inking) and send them to Jack so he'd know what was going on with the dialogue in one issue before he started penciling the next. Other, more random pages exist from the earlier "large art" period, where actual photo-stats (shot on a large stat camera) were the only feasible way to copy the art. Again, these were shot and sent to Jack so he could keep up with issue-to-issue continuity, but many of these are from the inked pages. However, there are a few (like the *Thor* #144 pencils we've shown in past issues) that are stats of the pencils, and the quality of these is far superior to the "thermal fax" copies. Readers last issue commented on why some of the *Thor* repros looked like actual pencil art; those are ones from stats as opposed to xeroxes.

There's even a handful of old copies made on tracing paper; I have no idea what technology they were using for that in the mid-1960s, but those are crumbling to dust quickly.

Now, what do we do to these pencils to make them reproduce optimally in the magazine? Glad you asked! Shown here is a "before and after" comparison, showing what a typical 1960s "thermal fax" copy looks like [left], and what it looks like after we scan it and clean it up with Adobe Photoshop software [above]. By beefing up the contrast so the image becomes clearer, we lose a bit of the delicate variations of Jack's pencil work, but that's the price you pay to make these faded copies viewable (and very little subtlety exists in these copies anyway). I think it's a good tradeoff.

Other tricks we use are to clean up borders by deleting stray tones outside the panels (and then in many cases going in and redrawing the panel borders), darkening up the margin notes more than the art (so they'll be more readable), and adjusting individual panels differently on the same page (to compensate for



variances in the copies themselves). Just the scanning alone is an incredibly time-consuming task (count the number of scans in this issue, then figure out how long it takes to scan one image, and you'll get a good idea what our production assistant Eric spends a lot of his time doing!). Then, the even more cumbersome task of cleaning up these scans comes in, and that doesn't include keystroking text, working on layouts, doing interviews, etc. *TJJC* is a big job, and I really appreciate everyone's patience when an issue doesn't ship on-time. Believe me, nobody here at TwoMorrrows is sitting around goofing off while you're waiting for the new issue to ship.

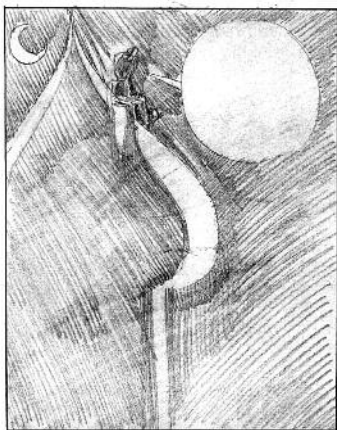
Before the Kirbys loaned us art from the Archives, we had to rely on second (and sometimes third or more) generation xeroxes made from the "thermal fax" copies. The quality of these is pretty poor, since the originals were so faded to begin with, although they worked okay for our early, photocopied issues of *TJJC*. More on where those came from—and just what exact pages exist in the Kirby Archives—next issue! ★

(this spread) Before and After versions of page 6 of *Fantastic Four* #91.

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## THE EVOLUTION OF KIRBY'S STYLE



*Jack  
Kurtzberg  
aka  
Jack  
Kirby*

Unfinished Abdul Jones strip (1937)  
(age 20) One of the few remaining  
examples of Jack's pre-comic book  
pencils, while he still went by his given  
name, Jacob Kurtzberg.



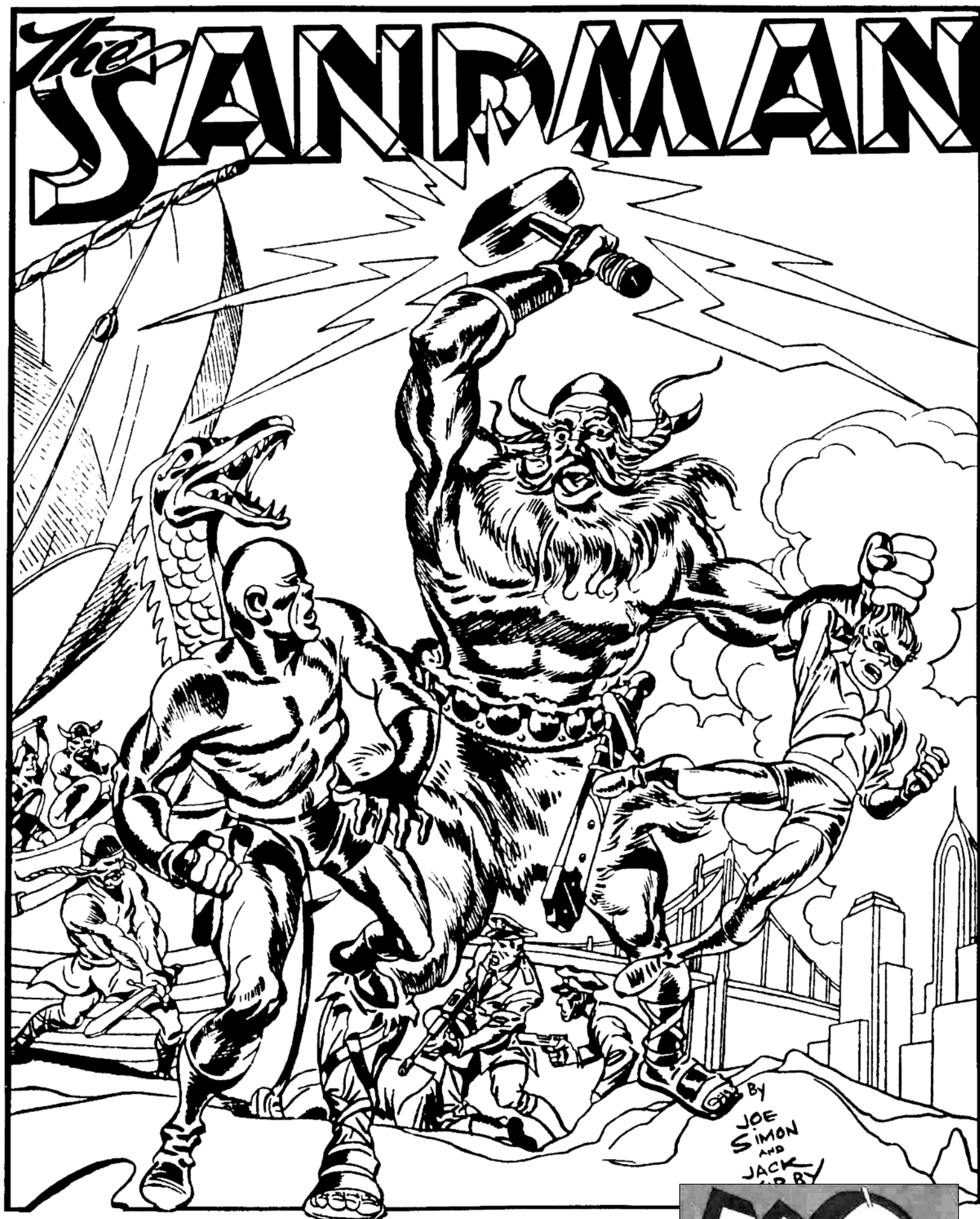
WHERE  
DID KIRBY'S  
TRADEMARK  
SQUIGGLES,  
KRACKLE, AND  
KIRBYTECH  
COME FROM?

TO KNOW,  
WE NEED TO EXAMINE  
HOW HIS STYLE  
EVOLVED, FROM HIS  
EARLIEST WORK, TO  
HIS LAST. SO FOR THIS  
ISSUE'S GALLERY,  
WE PRESENT A  
KAVALCADE OF KIRBY  
FROM THROUGHOUT  
HIS CAREER, IN AN  
ATTEMPT TO SHOW  
THE EVOLUTION OF  
HIS STYLE, STARTING  
WITH WORK FROM THE

1930s



Two gladiator studies, circa early 1930s.



*Adventure Comics #75 (June 1942)*

*(age 25) A jump to DC Comics leads to better pay, a more refined and slick style, and faster production. As war loomed, Jack stockpiled work and broke his previous speed records.*

## 1945 INTERLUDE

*KO Comics #1 (Oct. 1945)*

*This book was recently sold on eBay as having a Kirby cover. Does it? The signature "JCA" doesn't seem to lend any clues.*



# 1940's



# 1950's



(top) Unused *Strange World Of Your Dreams* cover (1952) and (bottom) *King Masters* newspaper sample (mid-1950s)

(age mid-thirties) You can begin to see the foundation for the wider, rounder bodies and faces that would populate Jack's later work. Jack was at an age when many of us start to notice a "middle-age spread" of our own. These stockier males are still lithe but with much more mass—and as always, Jack could pack more "punch" into a small panel than other artists could in a full-page pin-up.



**EARLY '60s**

Journey Into Mystery #62 (1960), and Strange Tales #84 and #86 (1961) and #96 (1962) (age 43-45) Short, throwaway monster stories keep food on the table, but the formula-style plots don't leave much room for creativity, but Marvel Age success was waiting just around the corner.



...US THEM--  
TO REACH THEM--

THEY REACH EDGE OF  
SPACE-- NO AIR-- THEY  
SUFFOCATE



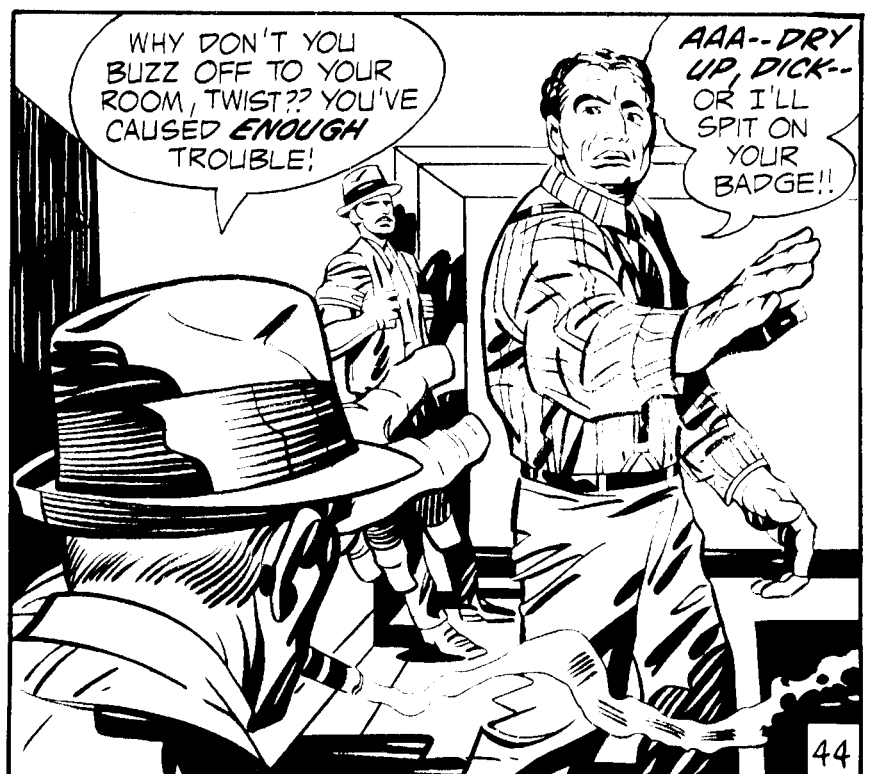
THEN THEY FREEZE--  
BEN STILL CONSCIOUS--MOVES  
FOEBLY--TO NO AUSE

THEY--BARELY--  
DIE--LAST SUMMER--  
ALL THREE

# LATE '60s

Fantastic Four #75 (June 1968)

(age 51) With his workload down to three books a month (Captain America, Fantastic Four, and Thor), Jack's pencils take on a mass and power never-before-seen in comics.



1971-75

Unpublished page from *In The Days Of The Mob* #2 (1971)

(age 54) The move to DC Comics brings inker Mike Royer on board, who does the most faithful inking Kirby's ever had. Without Sinnott's stylization or Colletta's softening, we see as close to "pure" Kirby as possible.



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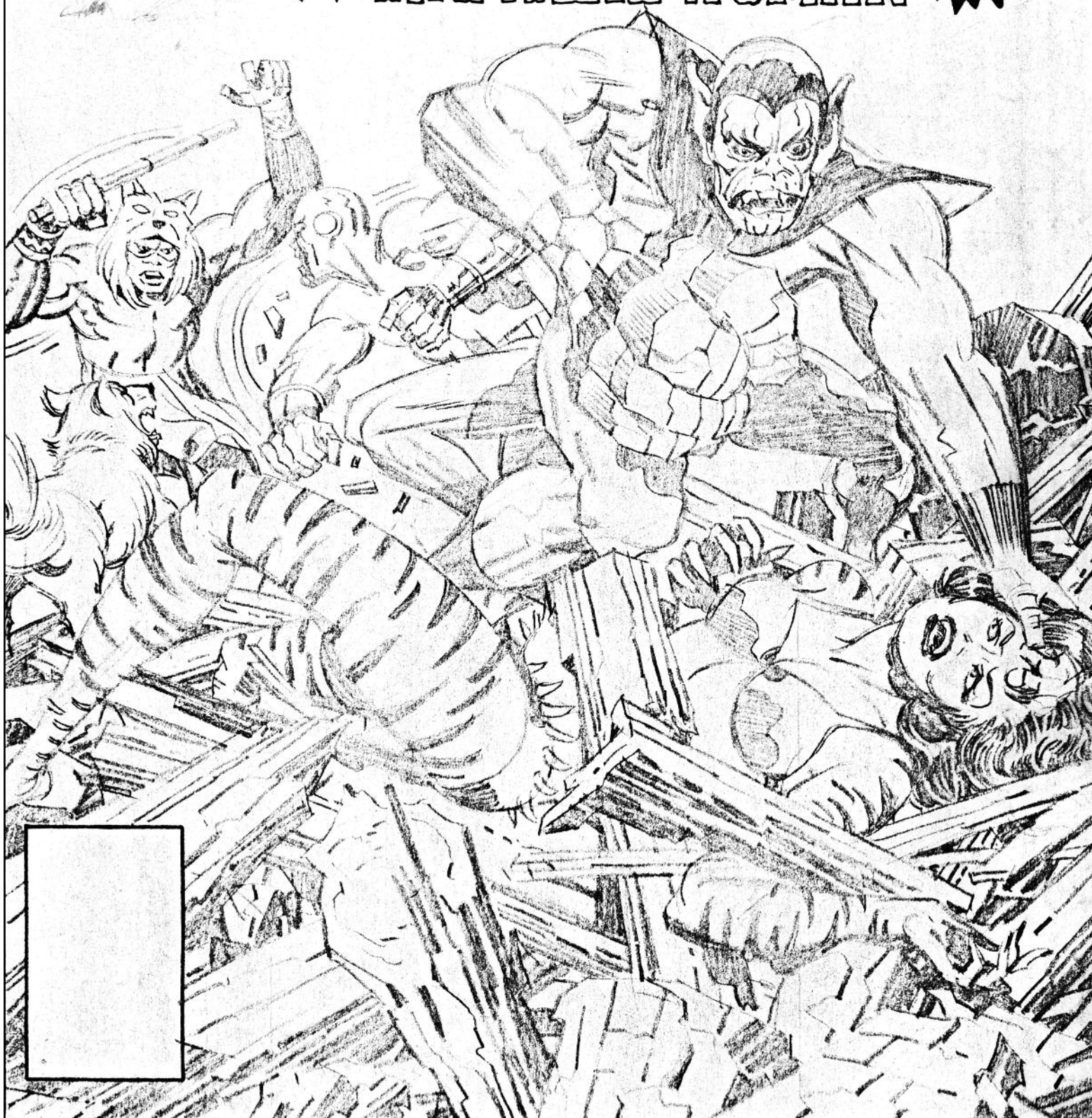
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MARVEL CHILLERS<sup>TM</sup> featuring



# TORRA

The WERE-WOMAN<sup>TM</sup>



LATE '70s

Marvel Chillers #7 cover (Oct. 1976)

(age 59) A long string of covers for Marvel shows Jack working from supplied layouts for the first time since the early Simon & Kirby days. His return to Marvel begins with a bang as he takes over Captain America, but refuses to work on his other old strips, instead concentrating on new creations.





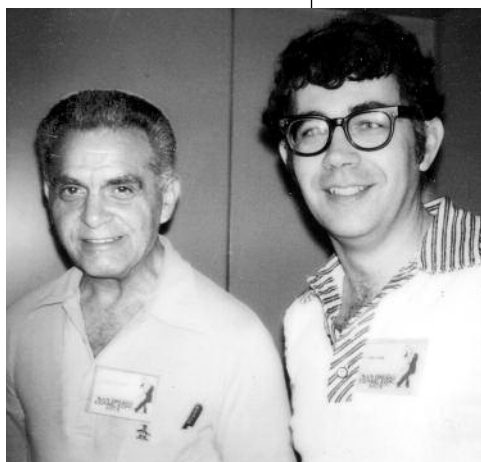
# 1980<sup>9</sup>

Unused *Destroyer Duck* page (1982)

(age 65) After several years in the animation industry doing fairly loose work on storyboards, Jack returned to comics and helped inaugurate the direct market with *Captain Victory*. While his time away from comics may have subdued his skills, there's still solid work with a nice sense of design and detail.



(below) Jack Kirby with Mike (looking very "Austin Powers" shagadelic, baby!) at the 1975 San Diego Comicon.



(far right, top) Mike, at home on the range during one of his many trail rides.

(center) Mike was kind enough to supply us with this list of the inking supplies he uses, both while he was regularly inking Jack, and now.

(far right, bottom) Who cares if Orion switched legs during *New Gods* #5? That's gorgeous art! Orion, Slig TM & ©2003 DC Comics.



(above) Mike with mentor Russ Manning in the early 1970s.

Interviewed by Jim Amash

(Editor's Note: I'd always planned to have interviews with both Mike Royer and Joe Sinnott in this issue, and I figured, who better to interview an inker than a fellow inker? After my pal Jim Amash agreed to take time out from his work for Archie Comics to get Mike and Joe on the record, I set out to compile a stack of key Kirby pages inked by each, to use as fodder for discussion. But the stack grew ever larger as I got into it, and both gents sent back additional art of their own to include. So rather than truncate what I think is the most in-depth discussion ever conducted with Jack's premier inkers, I'm holding Joe's interview till next issue, and giving Mike the full treatment in this one.)

**MIKE ROYER:** When I was a youngster, a couple of things happened. I became fascinated with the artwork and storyline of V.T. Hamlin's *Alley Oop* comic strip, which I discovered in some old newspapers at the bottom of my grandmother's trunk in the attic while looking for letters with old

stamps on them. There was a pile of old Sunday sections there. I got ahold of an Alex Raymond *Flash Gordon* reprint comic book at the local market, and immediately fell in love with Raymond's work.

I began cutting out the new *Alley Oop* strips from newspapers and taped them together. Then I built a cardboard box and got a crank handle so I could run the strips through the box like a movie screen. Around this time, I found some Big Little Books my mother had stored in the attic. All these things inspired me to do comics.

I did amateur comic books in high school. My mother had an artistic bent and encouraged me to do all this. But I didn't learn quite as much as I should have because my mother was always telling me how good I was. When you constantly hear that kind of praise from one source, you develop an attitude that you don't have that much left to learn. This isn't meant as a criticism of my mother because she said what she believed. Artists go through this sort of thing a lot when they are young, I suppose. But there comes a point when you realize you don't know very much. Another cartoonist and I did a strip for the local newspaper, which we didn't get paid for, but it was a lot of fun. I was on the high school newspaper and did cartoons there and contributed drawings to the school yearbook, too.

After high school, I decided I wanted to do comic strips, not comic books. However, in the late 1950s, it wasn't the best time to try doing adventure strips, as the newspapers had started turning away from that genre. I got married at twenty and had three children

by the time I was twenty-three, so I did all kinds of jobs. In 1964, I decided I couldn't just go on doing "jobs." I still wanted to do comic strips, but amended that goal to just wanting to do comics.

I fell into the age of Marvel Comics and was enthralled by what was happening: the way Jack Kirby drew and the way Stan Lee told the stories. Since newspapers weren't interested in the kinds of things I wanted to do, I started leaning towards doing comic books. I still have the rejection letters from

Marvel Comics (and other publishers) from the early 1960s.

I got into Edgar Rice Burroughs fandom at this time and was getting all the fanzines, eventually drawing a few things for them. I discovered that Russ Manning was a Burroughs fan and I assumed that he would be going to the World's Science Fiction Convention at Oakland in 1964. Another fan and I produced a comic book based on *The Wizard Of Venus*, which was one of the last of the

"Carson Napier of Venus" books. We took this fanzine to the convention, but Russ Manning wasn't there.

Camille Cazedessus, Jr., publisher of *ERB-dom* was there and took a copy of our comic book to him. A few months later, I prepared samples, with the encouragement of Kaz, to send to Russ Manning. I wrote a cover letter, saying that if he ever needed an assistant, that I would like to have the job. Russ wrote back, saying, "If you were here, I see no reason why you couldn't assist me." So, I packed up my family, moved to Southern California and bless his heart, Russ gave me some work.

Russ put me to work on "Aliens," which was the four page back-up story that appeared in *Magnus, Robot Fighter* #12. The pages were sixty percent tightly penciled and sixty percent inked, and my job was to finish the pencils and to match the inking that was already there. I had an advantage because I was a self-taught inker, so I was able to do what Russ wanted me to do. I started working with Russ in 1965 and worked with him until 1979. Of course, during that

period, is the ten years

of almost constant work with Jack Kirby.

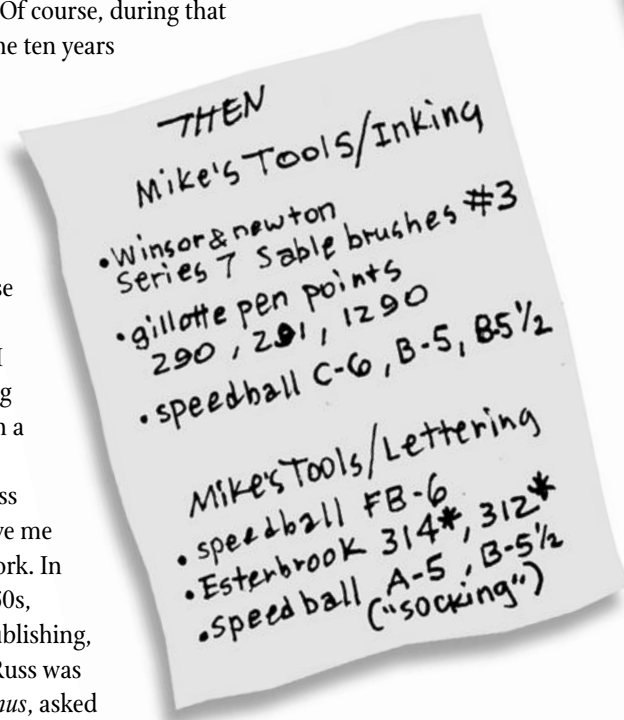
I did other work during those early days with Russ. I was working weekdays in a paint store because Russ couldn't give me full-time work. In the late 1960s, Western Publishing, for whom Russ was doing *Magnus*, asked Russ to take over the *Tarzan* comic book. He told them the only way he could do that is to have me assist him, but that it wouldn't be enough work to afford me a full-time income.

Russ informed Western that they would need to give me other work, so that I could help him and also have enough other work to live on. Western did that, so now I was into doing comic books on a full-time basis. This is how I became known in the comic book community in California.

In the mid-1960s, I also did some work for an animation company named Grantway-Lawrence. I met Mike Arens there and while I owe Russ the thanks for getting me started in the comic book business, it was Mike who taught me the most. Mike also pushed me into lettering because he knew the importance of an artist being able to handle all facets of the trade, so I'd never have to turn a job down. He said, "Lettering is just like drawing. All those letters in the alphabet are just like objects you draw. You pencil them, and you ink them." Mike really mentored me and I ended up working for him, too. Richard "Sparky" Moore worked there and he gave me this great piece of advice: "You get your first job on your ability and you get your other jobs on your *dependability*."

On a fateful day, when my wife and kids were swimming and I was walking from my studio at the rear of my garage, the telephone rang in the kitchen. I ran in, picked it up, and heard a gruff voice say, "Hello, Mike Royer. This is Jack Kirby. Alex Toth says you're a pretty good inker." That's how my association with Jack started.

**THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR:** I know the story about how you



# WEST: MIKE ROYER

went over to Jack's house and inked that great drawing of Jack sitting at his drawing board, with the Marvel Comics characters all around him. And I know you inked a few things for him when he was doing work for *Marvelmania*. Did Jack try to get you as his inker on any of the Marvel comics?

MIKE: I don't know. All I remember is that Jack said he had me in mind for something and then he left for New York. A few days later, I got a call from Maggie Thompson saying, "What's this I hear that Jack Kirby's left Marvel and gone to DC?" I told her I didn't know anything about it.

That same evening, I got a phone call from Jack and he said he'd had it in his mind that I was to letter and ink all his DC books, but they wanted to control those aspects of the books in New York. You know, it's funny, because I used to

see the rare page of Jack's pencils that were printed in fanzines, and wonder, "Why isn't anyone inking what Jack's penciled?" Maybe that thought occurred to me because I worked with Russ Manning and everything had to look like Russ' work.

When I penciled and inked *Tarzan* filler stories at Western, it had to look like Russ Manning, or at least be pretty close. When I inked Doug Wildey at Grantway-Lawrence, I wanted it to look like Doug had inked it. Mike Arens wanted me to ink his work as though he had inked it. I had to match other people's work at Grantway-Lawrence. This was the mindset that I had.

When it came to work, I guess I was a chameleon. I didn't develop a natural style of my own, though I have a bent towards the Alex Raymond/Russ Manning school of illustration.

TJKC: Tell me about the work you did for Jack at *Marvelmania*.

MIKE: I don't remember what all I did for Jack there. I do remember doing a few pin-ups and some letterheads with the Marvel characters. I remember that Jim Steranko came out here and stayed with me for a couple of weeks in 1970. Jim penciled a bunch of *Marvelmania* pin-ups that I inked. Jim let me keep the originals since I put him up for a couple of weeks, which I later sold to acquire my first 16 millimeter movie.

TJKC: I take it that you inked them in the Steranko style.

MIKE: Yep.

TJKC: What was the first Kirby book you inked at DC?

MIKE: *New Gods* #5. What amazed me about it was early in the story, Orion was trapped by a giant clam. On one page, it was his right leg that was trapped in the clam's mouth and on the next page, it was his left leg. But it didn't matter because Jack's pencils were so damn powerful that they defied reality. You truly had a suspension of disbelief when reading Jack Kirby's work.

TJKC: Which is something that only a few comic artists ever really achieve. Of course, Jack Kirby's work was very different than Russ Manning's.



MIKE:

Ohhhh, yeah!

However, let me state here

for print that they were both master designers. They both learned from the same people: Hal Foster and Alex Raymond. Jack and Russ both designed beautiful pages but were polar opposites.

TJKC: Since that's the case, and since Jack's work was quite different from what you were used to working on, were you forced to look at a paneled page of Jack's as a total design element?

MIKE: Yes. It was not hard to ink Manning in a Raymond-like illustrative style, and then ink Kirby, who was expressionistic. When it came to inking, it was my job to finish the penciler's statement. I've been accused by some fans of just tracing Jack's pencils, and sometimes, I thought that's what I did. But now, when I compare Jack's penciled work to our finished pages, I realize that wasn't what I did. I brought something to those pages, but I don't know if it was me or if it was my conceit that I was trying to finish the page the way Jack would have.

TJKC: I understand, but as you know, Jack didn't always ink his work quite the same way that he penciled it.

MIKE: I wasn't exposed to that then, so it didn't mess up my illogical logic. (laughs)

TJKC: I did the gray tones on a couple of Jack's paperbacks when DC reprinted *New Gods* and *Mister Miracle*. I developed an even a greater appreciation of Jack's design work and how he put things together, than I'd had before. For instance, Jack would use three different light sources on the same figure, even when there was only one possible light source. Jack was thinking about design more than he was reality.

MIKE: Comics are not real life. It's a mistake for people to approach them as if they are. As Russ Manning used to say, "When you're drawing comics, you're drawing something that can't be done on film." Of course today, there isn't anything that can't be done on film, except for telling stories. (laughs)

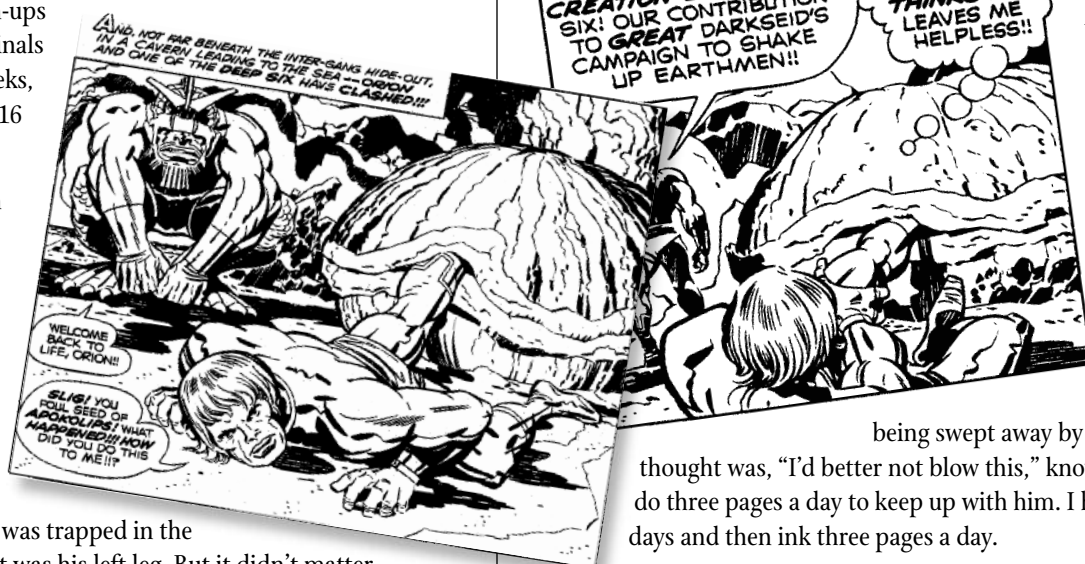
TJKC: I agree. And you can't take a naturalistic approach to Jack's work. You had to think of it as pure design.

MIKE: I think you're right. I might have been thinking that way at the time, but it was probably a subconscious thought process on my behalf. I just looked at the drawings and my first feelings were about

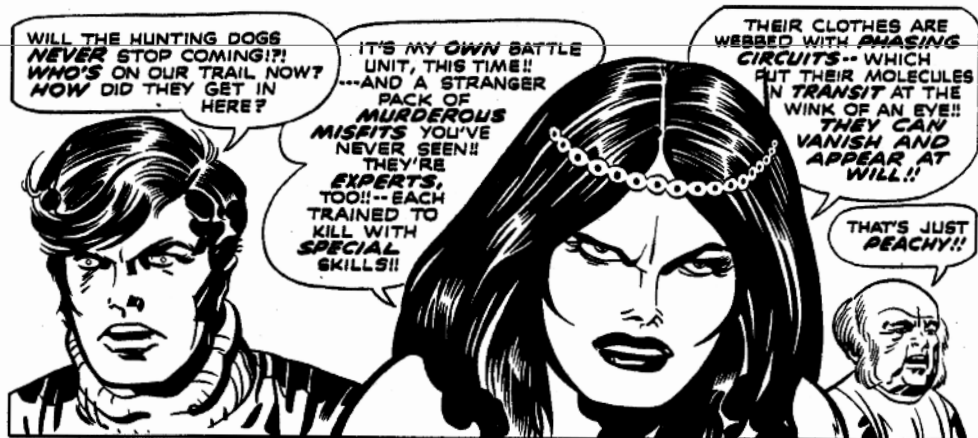
being swept away by the power. My second thought was, "I'd better not blow this," knowing full well that I had to do three pages a day to keep up with him. I had to letter a book in two days and then ink three pages a day.

TJKC: Correct me if I'm wrong, but you got a whole book at a time, right?

MIKE: Yes. I'd open the package up and breathe in the smell of the Roi-Tan cigars that Jack smoked while he drew these pages. That powerful pencil work, with the carbon smeared all over the pages and the smell of those cigars... it was intoxicating! Then, it was slightly intimidating, because I was thinking that I had all this powerful







work and I'd better not screw it up.

If you were to ask me who my favorite inker was, in most cases, I'd probably say Joe Sinnott. However, I think the best inker for what Jack Kirby wanted, was me. Now, I loved Frank Giacoia's inks and even those early *Fantastic Fours* with George Roussos' inks. But what Jack wanted at the time I went to work for him, was what I gave him. That's why I saved the best for him. I guess this sounds egotistical.

**TJKC:** No, it doesn't. You knew what had to be done and you guided your natural sensibilities in that direction.

**MIKE:** The only originals I ever had were a couple of books that Jack gave me, because he retained everything. Since I knew they had some market value, I sold them off so I could get sixteen millimeter movies, being an avid movie buff. I didn't collect my work, even though it was Kirby pencils. If they were Joe Sinnott or Giacoia or even Chic Stone pages, I'd have probably kept them.

I remember at the wake, after Jack was laid to rest, we were looking at Jack's work in his flat files in his house. I'm looking at this work that I had done, twenty or more years ago, and said, "God! I'd love to have them." I was looking at a *Black Panther* double-page spread and said how much I wished I could own it. You see, enough time had passed that it didn't seem like my work anymore.

**TJKC:** I was with you when you said that and remember how you felt. Now, when you got a story, you sat down and read it first.

**MIKE:** Yes. In the first few issues, Jack indicated in the margins what sound effects he wanted. In fact, one of the first disagreements we had... and it was never verbalized, but the evidence bears it out, was that he was not happy with how I placed the sound effects, which we called "bangs" in those days. After the first three or four issues, Jack started indicating the sound effects on the penciled pages.

My feeling, as a designer, was to put them where I felt they should be, but it wasn't exactly where he wanted them. That's why he started putting them in, and he never said a word to me. I don't think I was doing it "wrong," but they weren't quite where he wanted them to be.

**TJKC:** Do you think Jack's placement of the sound effects was influenced by Marvel letterer Artie Simek?

**MIKE:** I've never, ever thought about this, but at this moment, I'd agree with you. Thinking back, and knowing how Jack worked back then, you may be right. And now that he was in total control of the books and I was doing his lettering, he probably thought, "Why should I leave this up to Mike? I'll put them where I want them."

**TJKC:** Before the Marvel Age, there really wasn't much done with sound effects.

**MIKE:** That's probably because those creators were influenced by the adventure newspaper strips. I don't recall Milton Caniff ever doing much with sound effects.

**TJKC:** He didn't. Roy Crane was really the first one to do much with them, and even then, he didn't go crazy with them. Now you have the 1960s, and Jack's work was even more dynamic than before, so they did the lettering to match up to the power of Jack's drawings.

**MIKE:** Those Marvel letterers did all kinds of wonderful things. It wasn't just the snappiness of Stan Lee's dialogue, but the shapes of the word balloons by the letterers. I wouldn't say that I always agreed with their choice of balloons, but it was an attitude in all their magazines that was so effective.

When I lettered at Western Publishing, I was sometimes influenced by what they did. I didn't do

real "burst" balloons, but did a kind of "burst" balloon that Russ and I had worked out.

I always looked at what other letterers did. In a script for a film, when there's a pause in the dialogue, there's usually a *(beat)*. That means the speaker pauses. In comic books, it's three dots. But it never looked right to me to have the three dots on the bottom of the invisible line that holds the characters.

At some point, in the '70s, I started paying attention to Ken Ernst's lettering in the *Mary Worth* newspaper strip. He would use the three dots, but put them in the center of the line. I still do that, though I don't know if anyone else does it. From a design sense, it makes more sense to me. You put dashes in the center of the line, don't you?

I always ruled pencil guidelines before I lettered to insure my lettering consistently came out the right size. I don't know if anyone's noticed this, because it's subtle, but I did something that makes for a better design and easier reading. The normal way would be to rule seven or ten lines down from the top of the panel border and then letter. I found it took a little extra time, but if there was a character talking in three different, contained balloons and a fourth balloon is coming from someone speaking off-panel, I made sure that none of those lines of dialogue are on the same plane, in any of the balloons when possible.



Look at page fourteen of *Mister Miracle* #6, third panel, for an example of this. If you measure it with a ruler, you'll see what I'm talking about. If you'll look at a page with a lot of dialogue, and squint your eyes, you'll see that it's just not a mass of uniform dialogue that goes across the page. They bounce and bump into each other. It's makes for an easier read, in my opinion.

*TJKC*: I always thought your lettering really fit Jack's work. There was something about it that made it look like Jack himself had lettered it. Your lettering style fit the design of the page in every way, from the balloon and text placement to the balloon shapes, to the very way you lettered the alphabet.



*MIKE*: I don't really know what to say here, because my lettering was different from the way that Jack "greeked" the dialogue in. If I'd had the time, I would have lettered everything I ever did in the Frank Engli style. If you'll look at the *Black Hole* strip Jack and I did, you'll notice my lettering is different from my other work with Jack. That lettering style is how Engli did it in everything that Milton Caniff did, from *Terry And The Pirates* to *Steve Canyon*. I fell in love with that lettering, not from Milton Caniff, but from Warren Tufts' work on *Casey Ruggles* and other features. That was patterned after Frank Engli's work, but it takes longer to do it that way.

When I first started doing the lettering, I found that I couldn't use the pen points that I really wanted to use. I normally used Esterbrook 314s, which were gold-plated pen points. Guys like Engli and Tufts used them, because as the pen points spread from usage, you could take a razor blade and shave the outside edges, restoring the point, which would give a beautiful thick and thin line.

But the paper that Jack used was probably the cheapest paper ever made. It just literally drove me nuts. Those points would tear

up the paper and the lines would bleed. I had to find something else that would work. Now, I'm not knocking Jack for using that paper. It was probably the best paper in the world for his penciling, but by the time he'd finished penciling a page and the heel of his hand had gone over it, it was like toilet paper. I used to take a iron and press the pages out in order to make the paper surface a little denser.

The first lettering point I found that worked on Jack's pages was the old Speedball FB-6. The sound effects were done with the B series Speedball points. The B-5s and B-5½s were good. If I'd had the time, I'd have used

things I learned from Russ Manning, like when he did the corners of balloons. He'd make those corners a little squarer than I did. There's all kinds of things I'd have done, if I'd had the time.

*TJKC*: One of the things that you did do, was on splash pages, where Jack would write a caption and then have a title for that chapter. I loved the typography you used and it was different from anybody else's. Did you just make up that style of title lettering?

*MIKE*: "Made it up," is okay when you understand that there's nothing "new." I looked at all kinds of lettering and cut out pages with styles of lettering that I liked. On the splash page of *Demon* #10 [left], you'll notice the skull in the "D" in the word Demon. There was a story that Tony DeZuniga did in DC Comics' *House of Mystery*, and he put a skull head in the letter "D." I said, "Oh, that's cool! I'm going to use it." I think the Filipino artists did their own lettering because they understood that lettering is just an extension of drawing.

I had xeroxes of title pages from Italian reprints of Raymond's *Flash Gordon* which were done in the 1960s. I couldn't understand the language, but loved the lettering. There was a particular style that I used a lot, because there wasn't always enough time to do the lettering in two days. Then, there's the style I used the most of, which I made up from two or three typefaces that I saw the Filipino artists use.

I made my own alphabet based on the lettering that they did, like the organic lettering with the drop shadows. On the *Prisoner* story, I didn't even think about it. I knew I had to use a stenciled lettering style. I knew the numbers on prison uniforms had stenciled lettering. Sometimes, these things just came to me naturally. Other times, I'd sweat bullets trying to come up with something that didn't look like the last seventeen books.

There were several things that I picked up from Larry Mayer, who was a designer and editor for Western Publishing for many years. Larry, a "jack of all trades," was more involved with coloring books, but he also did the display lettering and occasionally splash page layouts on the comics. He did something that I really liked,



(previous page, top) As Mike mentions in this interview, when lettering a panel with multiple balloons, he'd take the time to rule separate guidelines to make sure none of the balloons lined up with the other. We superimposed a horizontal guideline to this detail from *Mister Miracle* #6 (Jan. 1972).

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(above) Looks like this photo was take just as Mike finished inking the splash page from *Demon* #10 (July 1973), and had pinned it up to his drawing board to dry. Shown at left are Jack's pencils and Mike's final inks. Note how Royer changed Etrigan from speaking the dialogue to thinking it.

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# "I DON'T LIKE TO DRAW SLING

(above) Cast and crew of the 1971 Disneyland Convention in Anaheim, CA. First row, center is Carmine Infantino, flanked to his right by Kirby and Shel Dorf. Photo courtesy of Shel Dorf.

(next page) Pencils to an unfinished, unused page from *Battle For A Three Dimensional World*, the 1982 one-shot comic that presented Jack's work in true 3-D, complete with stereoscopic (green and red) glasses, and led to Johnny Carson's gaffe about Kirby on *The Tonight Show* (see *TJKC* #35 for details).

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*Part Two of an August 1969 Interview With Jack Kirby  
Conducted by Shel Dorf and Rich Rubinfeld  
Transcribed by John Morrow*

*(Last issue, we presented the first part of this never-published interview, conducted in August 1969, just months before Kirby left Marvel for DC Comics. This time out, we pick up where we left off, as Jack discusses his working techniques and philosophies.)*

**SHEL DORF:** What is your average work day like?

**JACK KIRBY:** My work day is very erratic. I'll do a page, and I'll get up and break up the day that way, and I'll come back and do another page, and begin work another hour. Sometimes I'll decide to work very late, and I will work very late. Sometimes I'll do my quota of pages in quick time, and get off early enough to catch a movie. So, it's a rare privilege, I think, to be able to do that, because there's no restriction on an artist in that respect. It's the pattern of work that I feel is a kind of a boon to me; somehow I've earned that kind of routine, and I enjoy it. Possibly I might like a 9-to-5 routine just like a lot of other people, but somehow I feel that I enjoy this more.

**SHEL:** Have you ever had a 9-to-5 routine in your life?

**JACK:** Yes, I have, several times, but somehow I've grown accustomed to this way of living. I see nothing wrong with it, I enjoy it, and I break up my day as I see fit. It's something that makes me feel I'm my own man, which of course I'm not. *(laughs)*

**RICH RUBINFELD:** What direction do you think the comics are going in today?

**JACK:** I'd love to know that. I'd love to know what's in the heads of the young fellows who see the images that we project, and

good in it, and use it for himself, but I wouldn't like to see him telling *my* story. I'd like to see him telling *his* story, and I'd like to see what emerges from *him*; that's the fun of comic art to me. It might be a technician's view, but I feel that's the fun of any creative medium: Seeing what comes up from the next guy. If the fellow has a bland personality, maybe something nondescript will come out. If he's a passionate person, maybe we'll see something really powerful. That's the fun of it for me, to watch what comes out of a human being, and project it for the reader.

**RICH:** Sort of originality from inspiration, in other words?

**JACK:** Not originality exactly, but...

**RICH:** An original thought coming from an inspiration from something else?

**JACK:** No, nobody has an original thought; there's nothing original. You take what comes before you, and you turn it out for yourself, in your own way. It's the only thing you can do. There's nothing in this world that I haven't seen before, and I'm not familiar with. I can be given any kind of a familiar form, and just turn it around my own way. I won't draw a car like anybody else. I won't draw a shoe like anybody else. I won't draw a hand like anybody else. I've been bawled-out for drawing choppy fingers without fingernails, but that's the way I see fingers. It may be rebellious in a way, and gotten me into trouble, but I can't help it. That's how I see fingers.

**SHEL:** It seems to me there's so much energy being generated, someday they may put your brain in a glass in some museum and study it for a couple of hundred years.

**JACK:** Well, I hope it's at an Ivy League school. *(laughs)*

**SHEL:** It seems to me there's an industrial designer in there, there's a poet, a storyteller, an adventurer, a graphic designer. There's just too much for you to be satisfied with any one of these specialized fields, and you seem to have found the perfect medium for expressing all these directions.

**JACK:** Well, I feel that this is not the end of it. I feel that I'd love a little more time to take it down to where it ought to go. I don't know where it should go, but I feel that the medium leads the artist. I sometimes draw a line and try to find out where the line goes. I don't feel that you control the line; I feel that the line controls you. And you should follow the line, and probably come up with a very interesting form. I don't believe in the conventional in art. I don't feel that art should be so abstract that nobody can get your meaning. I feel like you shouldn't allow yourself to become trapped in one style, or one form of art, or live in any static way. I feel that anything static is dead. I don't go for anything that's dead. That's why my figures have a lot of motion. I feel that motion is life, and I feel that anything that moves is alive, and that's where you ought to go.

**SHEL:** Why don't we see any clay around here? It seems to me the next direction for you is sculpture.

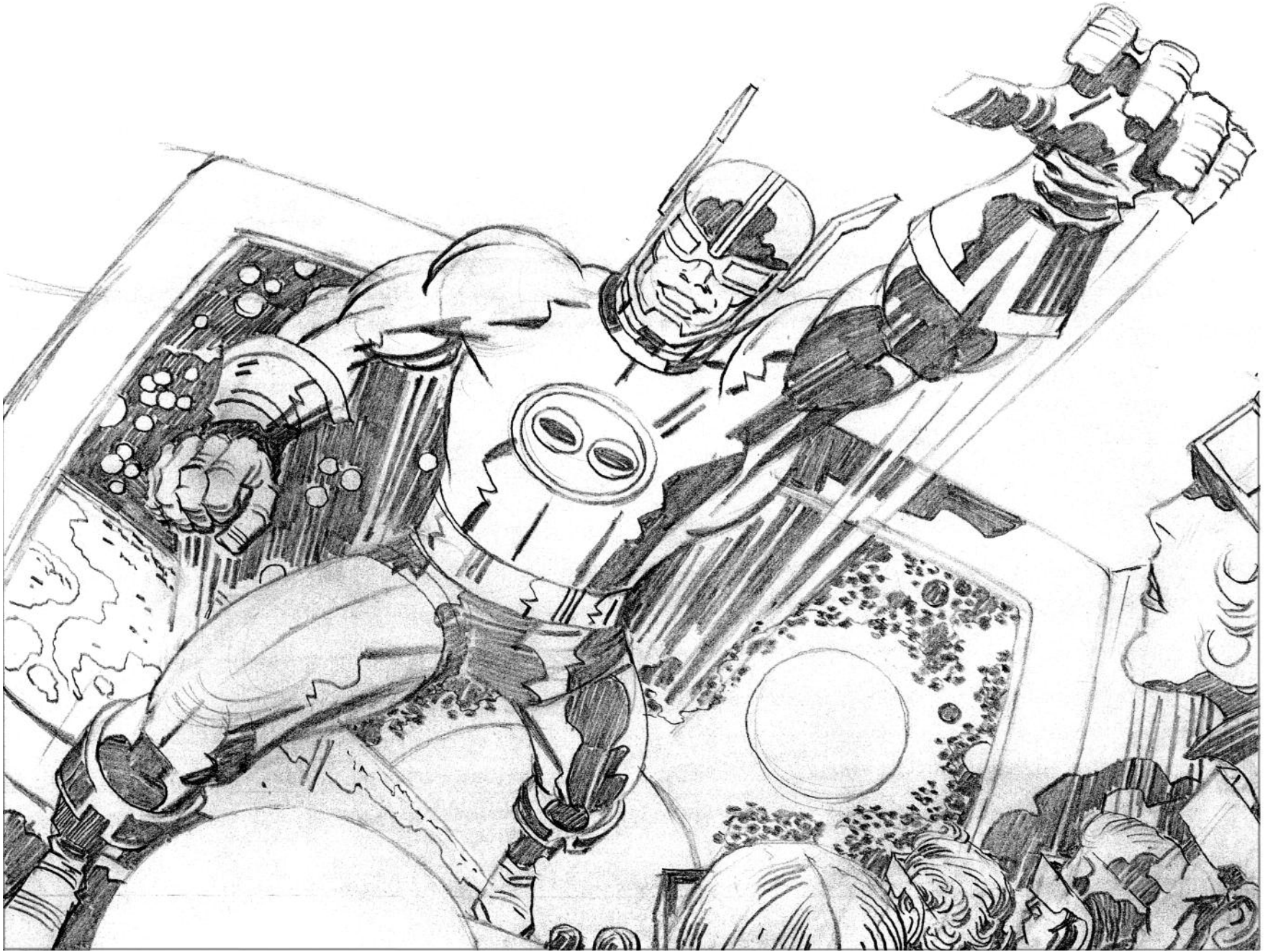
**JACK:** Why don't you see any harpsichords around here? Because that's just not my thing, and I don't know why it is. I don't have any

aversion to clay. I feel that clay has been done; I feel that oil paintings have been done. I feel that watercolor has been done. I don't want to do them. I don't know why, I just don't want to do them, for the reason I don't give Thor a red beard. I don't feel he



won't accept them. I hope they won't accept anything I draw. I hope whoever is coming up with comic art won't accept anything anybody draws. Give us his own version of what he sees. I'd like to see him take the technical part of my work, if he finds anything

# SHOTS; I LIKE TO DRAW CANNONS."



ought to have a red beard. I like to do my own version of Thor.

*SHEL:* Maybe next week you'll suddenly decide to pick up a lump of clay, and make a figure of the Thing or something, and this'll take you in a whole different direction.

*JACK:* I wouldn't say no. I don't think there's a set rule for anything. I'm not saying that rules are bad, but I'm saying that rules shouldn't be unshakable.

*SHEL:* I'm looking at this just from a collector's standpoint. All the great artists of our times have dabbled in sculpture; Michelangelo, DaVinci and so on. They had some kind of an impulse. Paper was just a canvas, a flat surface; they reached a point where they had to do something in three dimensions. The Jack Kirby pages are 3-D without the crutch, perhaps, of actually doing the object in 3-D. You've taken the flat paper as far, I think, as you can go without actually building up on the surface.

*JACK:* That's because I don't see it as flat paper. Like I said, I feel that I'm fighting a camera all the time. I feel that the camera has so much more scope than I have. I'd like to try to get that kind of scope into my drawing. I feel that drawings should be expansive, they should be powerful. I can't see anything going "ping"; I like to see things go "BAM!" I don't like to draw slingshots; I like to draw cannons. It's that way with me, and I think everything we do should have impact of some kind. I think that we should be passionate human beings. Really live life in a way that gives us some impact, not to let it flow over us. Of course, I'm living a placid type of life, although I've done all the things that make men passionate; that's under the bridge with me, and I don't miss them in any way that would frustrate me. *(laughs)*

*SHEL:* I think you've put your finger on the "Jack Kirby Appeal." Unfortunately we're not all built that same way. We have these passions within us, but somehow

society has put frames on it, and inhibited these emotions to such an extent that we need this escapism. Kids that go to school and study the books have to keep quiet during class, and they head for the corner drug store. They pick up a Jack Kirby magazine, and these emotions, these passions, come out in them through the medium of the comic.

*JACK:* Well, I agree with you, because who knows what other channels there might've been for these passions, if that's what they are? Around the neighborhood I came from, you were either a gangster or a lawyer. It was that kind of a neighborhood, where there was no in-between; just black-&-white, no grays. A man was either for you or against you; he either didn't like you or he liked you. And you did the things you wanted, or you were told not to do them. So it's that kind of atmosphere in which I was brought up, and it's simplistic, I suppose. Maybe that's what comes out in the drawing.

*SHEL:* I can't think of anything else, except, "Who is this guy, Stan Lee?"

*JACK:* Stan Lee is my editor. *(laughs)*

*SHEL:* How did you first meet Stan Lee?

*JACK:* Stan Lee, I guess, came to Marvel when I was doing *Captain America* in the 1940s. He was a young fellow, and we were just nodding acquaintances. He was very nice, certainly, and we were nice to each other; we got along. That was about it; there was no evidence that we'd ever get together in any way as editor and artist. It just happened that way, that's all; I came back to Marvel and Stan Lee was editor. I went to work for Stan Lee, and whatever Stan Lee's policies are, they're my policies. Whatever kind of a job Stan Lee wants done, I will do that job. I feel that's the artist's job; to cooperate with the policy of the publishing house. I've always done that.



## THE EYES HAVE IT

by Shane Foley

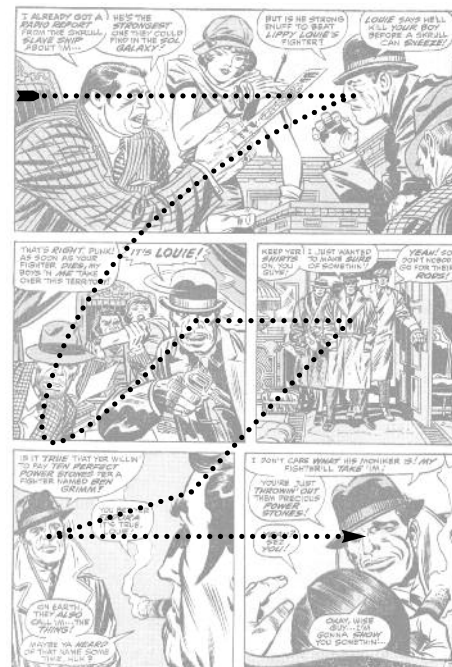
(below) Kirby's pencils to page 2 of *Fantastic Four* #91 (October 1969), and (right) the published page, diagrammed to show how Jack would flow panels according to the eyes.

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Ian Cairn's "The Kirby Flow" (*TJKC* # 19) was a very good piece on Kirby's storytelling. Here are some further characteristics of his techniques that are important to the success of his work. These involve the way the reader's eye is moved within a panel (which could largely be read in conjunction with what Ian said) and also the way the reader is guided when he wants to get out of the panel and go to the next (which, at this point, makes Ian's laying out the panels in a line inappropriate). (Now I'm sure I've read the basis of this before, but can't remember where or who wrote it.)

Here's how I see it:

Kirby pages are designed for those who know how to read; that is, the reader expects to start top left, read to the right then drop down to the far left of the next line and so on. Sounds simple, but Kirby uses this to move the eye where he wants so that the key story-telling points are found quickly and not missed.



## WITHIN PANELS

Kirby usually uses either a circular motion between main points of interest (usually heads) or a line between them (usually at heads' or the eye level), and uses other 'buffers' to stop the eye from wandering away. Using this method, Kirby gets readers to see the main points of the story first, while backgrounds and other decorative material are only subconsciously absorbed unless deliberately looked at. A quick reader will never, in a Kirby story, overlook the main elements of the story and see only the backdrop.

## MOVING TO THE NEXT PANEL

Here is where I think Kirby is master, where many other artists fail—and it's so simple. Kirby knew that his readers know how to read; that is, read left to right, then drop down and read left to right, etc. So he facilitates that to make sure the eye of the reader lands exactly where he thinks it should—i.e. not in the decoration of the panel, but at the main storytelling point (usually a character/head). He does this by making 'pointer arrows' out of body angles, arms, shadows, action/stress lines, etc.—anything at all. He's already using all those things to lead the eye around the panel in its circular (etc.) motion as stated above, but when the reader is ready to exit the panel and knows to go either 'right' or 'down left,' Kirby provides the easiest route for the eye. He then places the subject of the next panel directly in line with this route, thus, subconsciously to the reader, leading to the next point of importance. Therefore the storytelling continues uninterrupted.

So simple, yet so often not done.

Here are a few arbitrary examples:

*Fantastic Four* #91 page 2 [left]: The eye enters top left, meets Barker's head and travels right. It scans circularly between him, the thug on the right and the woman, and perhaps, the picture. (The far right thug is hardly noticed, he's a buffer, keeping the eye in the panel, but adding subconsciously to the atmosphere.) When the reader is ready to leave the panel, he knows to go 'down left,' so Kirby aids that by having Barker's arm going 'down left.' When the eye follows that, it strikes the key point of panel 2: Barker's head again and/or the front thug. The eye scans around the circular arrangement (aided by the curtains) and settles on the invisible line between Barker's eyes and the right thug's eyes.



IS IT TRUE THAT YOU'RE PAYING POWER STONES-- FOR YOUR SLAVE?

YEAH-- SKRULLS REALLY WANT 'EM.

YOUR SLAVE MUST BE PRETTY TIGHT-- TO BE WORTH SUCH RARE STUFF

(next page) Look how good Johnny and Crystal look together, side by side, ready to kick some butt! The re-drawn panel seems off-balance by comparison.

(right) "Unfinished and too cartoony" was Stan's assessment of Dr. Doom's chest buttons in this original art panel from FF #85. In the next issue Kirby had responded accordingly by adding more detail.

(below) Sue and Medusa get the axe, being omitted in the published version of this page from FF #44.

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An examination of three panels which suggest that Stan Lee's "corrections" on Kirby's art may not have always been correct  
by Mark Alexander

"Every picture tells a story," besides being a great old Rod Stewart album, also could've been Jack Kirby's motto insofar as his approach to the "illustrative narrative" (i.e., the comic book) was concerned. As magnificent as Kirby's drawings were to look at, Jack himself considered them to be of secondary importance in the total scheme of things. Kirby's main priority was to get the story told. The artwork had to function in that regard, otherwise, in Kirby's view, it failed. This is why you'll seldom find "poster friendly," drawings in Kirby's books, unlike in today's "image-conscious" comics, whose main function seems to be to show off the artists' pyrotechnics, while the storyline (if there is one) is relegated to secondary status. (Note: Kirby saved his poster-quality drawings for his covers, where they belonged: See Sgt. Fury #13, FF # 50, TOS # 59 and TTA #60 to name a few.)

At this point, I'd like to state that I'm an avid fan of Stan Lee. I view the comics that Lee produced with Kirby and Ditko as the most potent and revolutionary ever created. However, with that said, it's clear that Lee's tenure as Marvel's art director was due to default as much as anything. When Kirby returned to Martin Goodman's comics company in the late 1950s, the operation was hanging by a thread. Goodman was ready to pull the plug, and the idea that he would pay a real artist to act as Stan's art director was laughable. Commendably, Lee rose to the task, and for some-

one who didn't draw, he knew an awful lot about the medium. In fact, several of Lee's changes to Kirby's art (as seen in his margin notes) were surprisingly accurate and insightful. Many of them went beyond a mere "proofreading," for continuity's sake (i.e., "six buttons on Thor's chest—should be four"). For example, when Stan noted that Dr. Doom's chest emblems in FF #85 "lacked detail," making them look "too cartoony," he was right, just as he was right when he rejected Jack's original FF #94 cover, for being "too cluttered and hard to read" (my conjecture).

In view of this, I was shocked when TJKC #33 ran two of Jack's original penciled pages from FF #44 (Nov. 1965—what a find!). Here we see two glaringly obvious changes to Kirby's art wherein Lee's judgement (in my opinion) needs to be taken to task. On page 20 (panel three) we see that Kirby originally drew



GARSON GRABS MEDUSA-YELLS IN TRIUMPH--

WHAMMO

PART OF BLDG. HOLDING FF COLLAPSE--CARRYING THEM DOWN IN THE

NOTE: OUR LETTERS SECTION APPEARS AFTER NEXT PAGE



# PARTING SHOT

This issue's Gallery section didn't include anything from Jack's days in animation, so here's a Kirby original (inked by Alfredo Alcalá) that was done in the 1980s for Ruby-Spears Productions, and sent in by animator Bruce Zick. Bruce writes: "While it certainly is not one of his great pieces, the thing that strikes me about this piece, as in so many of his compositions, is that a very powerful, clear, simple concept of high entertainment is being created. A giant snake serpent strangling a city building! I've never seen it anywhere before, it's a great idea, and it was no doubt a quick and effortless sketch for Jack, yet it typifies what a consummate storyteller and conceptual genius he was."

*Do NOT Color Sky*

This piece was part of a Thor presentation, and the blank space below was intended to have an image of Thor penciled in.

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## KIRBY COLLECTOR #37

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