

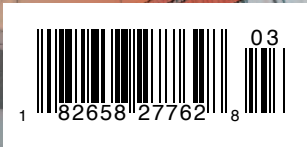
COMICS' BRONZE AGE AND BEYOND!

BACKISSUE!



April 2016
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Special **BATMAN** AND **SUPERMAN** Issue!



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BACKISSUE
Comics' Bronze Age and Beyond!



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BATMAN AND SUPERMAN ISSUE

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YOUR TWO FAVORITE HEROES IN DOZENS OF BRONZE AGE ADVENTURES TOGETHER!

THE SUPERMAN/BATMAN TEAM IN WORLD'S FINEST COMICS 1968-1982

by John Wells

The Superman/Batman team-ups in World's Finest Comics had been born of necessity. When the page count of the title was halved from 64 to 32 in 1954, the publisher could no longer run separate stories featuring its marquee stars and—at the suggestion of editor Jack Schiff—it was decreed that the magazine would henceforth feature “your two favorite heroes together in one adventure.” If Robin, the Boy Wonder minded being excluded from that declaration, he held his tongue since he still got to appear alongside Batman in nearly every story from WFC #71 onward.

Having previously illustrated the landmark 1952 Superman/Batman crossover in *Superman* #76, Curt Swan was on hand to pencil the first seven episodes of the WFC team-ups before his increasing commitments to the new *Jimmy Olsen* title and the Superman line in general took precedence. Dick Sprang (from 1955–1961) and Jim Mooney (from 1961–1964) picked up the WFC pencil after that, but Swan was never far away from *World's Finest*, quickly reinstated as cover artist and available to pinch-hit on an interior team-up when needed.

Swan's presence on the interiors didn't become a necessity until a shake-up that saw Jack Schiff succeeded by Mort Weisinger and the team-ups thrown into the deep end of the Superman pool. As the Man of Steel's editor, Weisinger had spent several years building a rich mythology for the Kryptonian hero and he brought much of it with him to *World's Finest*. Batman suddenly found himself dealing with things like a Jimmy Olsen/Robin team, a Composite Superman (inadvertently empowered by the Legion of Super-Heroes), the Bottle City of Kandor, and menaces like Brainiac and Bizarro ... all rendered in Swan's warm, accessible style and scripted by Weisinger veteran Edmond Hamilton.

THE WANING DAYS OF THE SILVER AGE

By 1968, though, Hamilton was retired and Swan was out, bumped as part of new company art director Carmine Infantino's initiative to shake up the look of the Superman and Batman books and stop the sales erosion partly blamed on Marvel Comics' growing popularity. For Infantino, no one exemplified the future of comic-book art like neo-realist Neal Adams, and the soon-to-be superstar was tapped to draw the Superman/Batman team-ups beginning with *World's Finest* #175 (on sale March 12, 1968).

Scripted by college student Cary Bates, the story featured dueling bands of villains—the newly created Batman Revenge Squad and the well-established Superman Revenge Squad—amidst an annual battle of wits between the World's Finest duo. Readers were delighted with the realistic look of the story—inked by Dick Giordano—but Adams was disappointed.

“I was not ready for it, psychologically,” he told Michael Eury in *The Krypton Companion* (2006). “First of all, it was a complicated story and had lots of stuff going on. But when you read a synopsis or read a script that has Batman, Superman, and a squad of guys dressed like them, so you go, ‘Oh, God. Every panel, I have to do like fifteen people.’ It's a daunting thing, you just don't want to do it.” Generally, Adams declared, “I wasn't doing the characters well, and I really wasn't enthusiastic about it, and I would have to say at that point, I was still in the throes of wanting to go off and become an illustrator, and I really wasn't enjoying comic books that much.”

That said, “I wasn't willing to give up certain ideas that I had while I was doing it. So within that story you will find different approaches to ideas scattered throughout the book and nothing really great, but it was fun.”

Issue #176's follow-up spotlighted rare guest-stars Supergirl (paired with Batman) and newcomer Batgirl (matched with Superman) in a plot that had two apparent aliens pit the duos against each other. The issue's cryptic cover—in which a blacked-out figure took responsibility as headshots of the combatants surrounded him—made it clear there was more to the situation, but kids had to read the story to find out what was going on. Conceding that the concept (conceived by Bates) had a great hook, Adams told Eury that he “hated” drawing it. “It was simple and essentially boring and it was sloppy, but it sold comic books.”

Adams bid farewell to the series at that point, but almost immediately regretted losing the opportunity to make more of a mark on Batman. Rather than simply follow the sunlit, short-eared model that was now the norm, the artist immediately lobbied to become the regular penciler of *The Brave and the Bold* and took the first steps toward returning the

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A New Look
Cover of the first issue of Neal Adams' brief stint on *World's Finest Comics*, #175 (May 1968).

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Caped Crusader back into the Dark Knight. But that's another story.

For *World's Finest*, it was back to Curt Swan pencils for two issues. Following a Jim Shooter tale that represented the book's third and last Joker/Luthor team-up (*WFC* #177), Cary Bates returned with a two-part Imaginary Tale in which a de-powered Superman adopted the new persona of Nova (*WFC* #178, 180). Ross Andru and Mike Esposito—who'd replaced Swan on the Superman solo series earlier in the year—moved over to *World's Finest* with issue #180, becoming the regular series artists through issue #195. The lone disruption was a Curt Swan/Jack Abel job on another Bates Imaginary Tale (*WFC* #184), this one a darker piece in which Superman became mentor to Robin after Batman's seeming death.

"By the late '60s, Mort was nearing the end of his long tenure as editor of all Superman-related titles," Cary Bates tells *BACK ISSUE*. "While I don't agree with the people who have opined he had lost interest in comics and was 'phoning it in' by that point ... expediency may have

been one reason he was willing to take on two fledgling writers like Jim Shooter and myself. Though we were teenagers at the time, both of us could offer plots and cover ideas that more often than not met his approval—and that would've meant less work for him. In those days, *World's Finest* (or any of Mort's books, for that matter) weren't exclusive to one writer; you had to be prepared to write for whichever character or book he needed a story for that month.

"Also worth noting is the fact that the Batman and Robin who appeared in Mort's *World's Finest* stories often bore little resemblance to the Batman and Robin who appeared in Julie Schwartz's Batman books, pretty much entirely ignoring the 'New Look' direction Julie and Carmine Infantino introduced into Batman several years earlier

(except for the token inclusion of the yellow circle around the bat-emblem). If anything, an argument could be made that Mort's Batman had more in common with the earlier Jack Schiff-edited Batman books. Such discrepancies were just another indication of the total autonomy that editors had over their books back then, long before there was anything resembling company-wide continuity at DC."

Bates' contributions also included the 1968 story of Superman and Batman's visit to a planet in the far future that turned out to be an evolved Bizarro World (*WFC* #181), as well as a fanciful 1969 two-parter (*WFC* #189-190)

wherein Superman's supposed death resulted in organs being transplanted in the bodies of four criminals under the direction of Lex Luthor. The death was, of course, a hoax, as was the blacked-out panel in which the organs were harvested: "This scene censored by the Comics Code Authority." When readers questioned whether the statement was for real, editorial assistant E. Nelson Bridwell assured them that it was a joke and the CCA had been in on it.

"Mort, like Julie, was a tough audience for a writer," Bates recalls. "Both of them appreciated it when you could come in with a unique idea (even if they were outlandish or way out). One example was a story I pitched in which Superman supposedly died and his organs were harvested and distributed to four people. Mort was so taken by this idea he chose to make it a two-parter. Though the story as executed doesn't hold up that well by today's standards, it fit right in with the '60s-vintage gimmick-based stories Mort was so well known for."

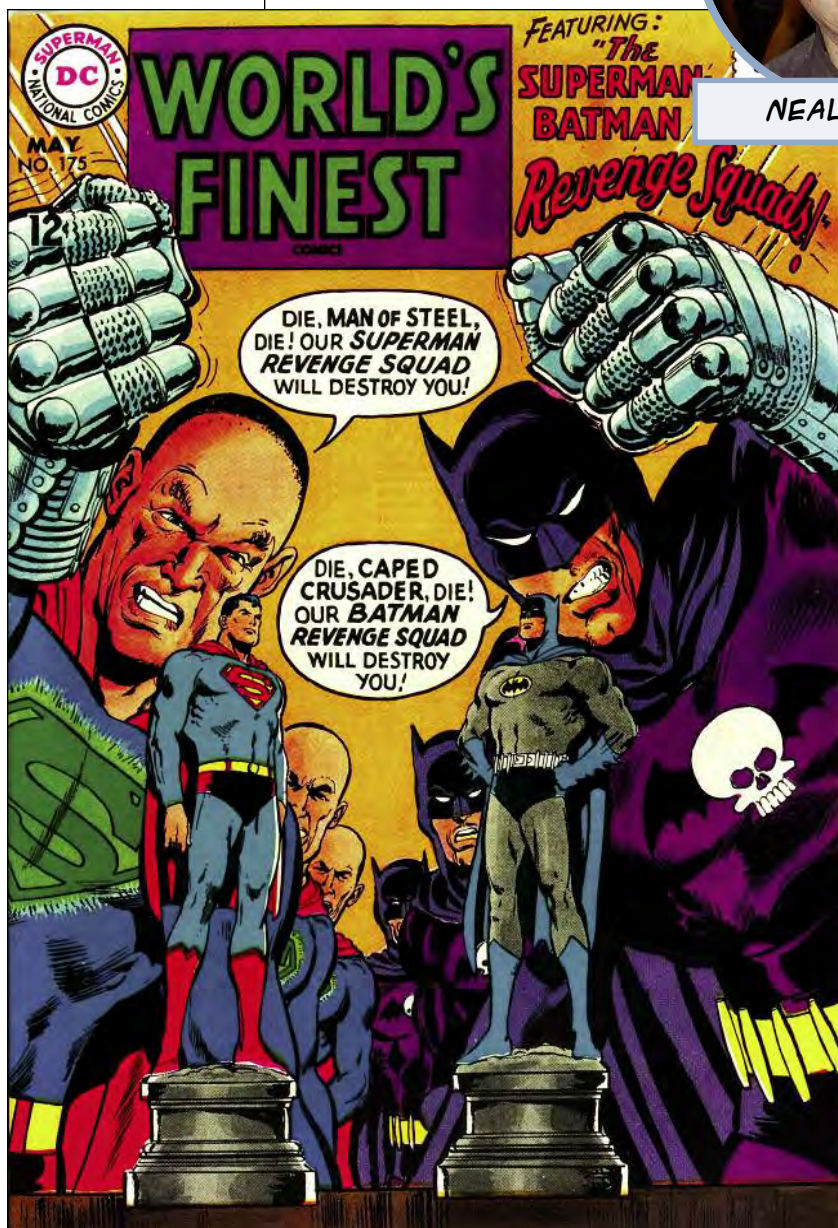
Bates also offers an anecdote about "Execution on Krypton" in issue #191: "I can distinctly remember writing the final pages of that story on July 20, 1969, the very same day the first Apollo moon walk was being broadcast on TV. I recall my cousins who I was visiting at the time were giving me grief because I wasn't paying more attention to Neil Armstrong, but I had a deadline to meet."

Primarily set in the past on Krypton, that story included a scene wherein Superman and Batman broke up a demonstration of seemingly non-violent Kryptonian student protestors. The kids, E. Nelson Bridwell declared in issue #194, wanted to destroy their robot teachers per history texts that Superman had read. "They did not just demonstrate," he concludes. "They were out to wreck the robots. And they were completely wrong."

A conspicuous amount of conflict in *World's Finest* seemed to center on the headlines themselves, typified by issue #180's cover image of Superman threatening to throw Batman to his death from scaffolding. It was a thematic device that would follow the series into 1970. Superman vs. Batman scenarios had been a recognized story hook since 1958's *WFC* #95, but they seemed to spike in the latter days of Weisinger's editorial run.



NEAL ADAMS



WFC ENTERS EARTH-B

Since the post-Weisinger era began, Superman's solo adventures had been jointly edited by Julius Schwartz (in *Superman* itself) and Murray Boltinoff (in *Action Comics*). In "a move to solidify the continuity of the Superman stories," 1972's *The Comic Reader* #86 reported, Schwartz agreed to take over *Action* and handed *World's Finest* to Boltinoff in a swap.

The effect on *World's Finest* was immediate. Boltinoff retained Dick Dillin as regular penciler but rejected everything else that had come before him. For starters, there'd be no more of the mixed bag of team-ups. Superman and Batman had made the magazine a success and they were back together for good.

Boltinoff had also overseen the revival of Bob Haney's classic 1960s freak-hero Metamorpho in 1972's *The Brave and the Bold* #101 and a subsequent feature in *Action Comics* #413-418. Rather than lose that momentum, the new editor brought Metamorpho into *World's Finest* for a guest-appearance (*WFC* #217) and briefly resumed his backup series in the next three issues.

Creatively, along with replacing Joe Giella's inks on Dillin's pencils with the slicker finishes of Murphy Anderson, Boltinoff brought in his reliable *Brave and the Bold* contributor Bob Haney as the series' regular writer. "We will try to make each issue, or series of issues, break new ground," Haney declared in *WFC* #215, "either in terms of plot, or background, or character, or all three. Yet, we will also try to keep alive, or revive, the old comics virtues of slambang action, breezy and pungent dialogue, and immediacy. Our heroes will be human, and even vulnerable, whether in body or in heart. And here and there some laughs."



MURRAY BOLTINOFF

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The promise to shake things up took place immediately in issues #215 and 216, where Haney brought the generation gap to *World's Finest* in the form of Superman and Batman's hip, young adult offspring, the Super Sons. The full story of the Clark, Jr. and Bruce, Jr. is detailed elsewhere in this issue but, suffice it to say, hardcore fans were distressed by Haney's flat statement that the tales were "not imaginary, nor fantasy, but real, the way it happened."

There was more anxiety to come once Haney wrote his first "traditional" Superman/Batman adventure. Thanks to a chemical bath in February 1973's *WFC* #217, Metamorpho wound up with the powers and deductive prowess of the *World's Finest* team on top of his own formidable elemental abilities. Dressed in a costume reflecting both heroes (not unlike the 1960s' Composite Superman), Metamorpho declared himself "Super-Freak" and showed up the book's stars but good. Neither was amused, particularly Superman, who snapped at the braggart, "Are you saying you're superior to me, freak?" The duo was so mad, in fact, that they defected to the enemy nation of Slavia with the promise of divulging state secrets. It was, of course, a sham designed to expose the dictator's hidden super-weapon, but Batman and Superman admitted that their earlier jealousy was for real.

An issue later, Haney vowed to reveal the team's first failure. The plot followed a mysterious psychic called Capricorn who blackmailed everyone from Commissioner Gordon to Gotham City's mayor to Bruce Wayne himself by threatening to expose secrets known only to themselves. The heroes' mistaken identification of one man as Capricorn inadvertently marked him for death when the real blackmailer murdered him to prove a point. The duo ultimately resorted to releasing a false report of the villain's death in the hope that it would

He's a Super-Freak

Even Metamaniacs had to shrug off this wacky Bob Haney-scripted tale in *WFC* #217 (cover-dated Apr.-May 1973), guest-starring the Element Man. (left) Its Nick Cardy cover. (right) An out-of-character Superman in a shouting match with Metamorpho. Art by Dick Dillin and Murphy Anderson.

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The strange saga of the SUPER SONS

by Mike Pigott



When I was about 12, I discovered the *Super Sons of Superman and Batman* in a black-and-white Australian reprint comic. I had been reading Superman and Batman comics for years, and I didn't remember either of them getting married. And I must have missed the issues in which they had sons! The story was entitled "The Town of Timeless Killers" (originally appearing in *World's Finest Comics* #242), and was unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately—the last in the run of Super Sons tales. Despite my trepidation to the concept of Super Sons [alternately Super-Sons], I really enjoyed the story; like many tales by Bob Haney, it was clever and well written despite completely ignoring established DC continuity.

SO, WHO WERE THE SUPER SONS?

For those who came in late, the Super Sons of Superman and Batman was an intermittent lead feature that ran in *World's Finest Comics* between January 1973 and December 1976 (cover dates). Superman, Jr. (a.k.a. Clark Kent, Jr.) and Batman, Jr. (alias Bruce Wayne, Jr.) were the teenage sons of Superman and Batman and their unrevealed wives. The series seemed to be an attempt at introducing a younger, hipper version of Superman and Batman for a youthful audience. Of course, these were not the first comics to feature Superman and Batman with children. During the 1950s and '60s, many of the Superman family of titles featured imaginary stories in which Superman was married with kids, particularly *Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane*. There was also a run of Batman tales set in a future where Bruce Wayne and his wife Kathy Kane were retired from superheroics, leaving Dick Grayson to take over as Batman II, with a ginger-haired Bruce, Jr. becoming Robin II.

The true forerunners to the Super Sons series were two previous issues of *World's Finest*, followed nearly five years later by two unrelated issues of *Action Comics*. *WF* #154 (Dec. 1965) had the lead story "The Sons of Batman and Superman" by Edmond Hamilton, Curt Swan, and Sheldon Moldoff. The first part of the tale chronicled the double marriage and separate honeymoons of Clark Kent and Lois Lane, and Bruce Wayne with Kathy Kane. The second part took place about four years later, when both couples have young boys; a playground fight between the two sons causes Lois and Kathy to fall out and lose contact. Part three is set about eight years later, when a young Kal-El, Jr. and Bruce Wayne, Jr. get back in touch and are captured by one of Batman's enemies and used as bait in a revenge trap. Fortunately, the two lads use their initiative to escape and warn their dads of the impending trap.

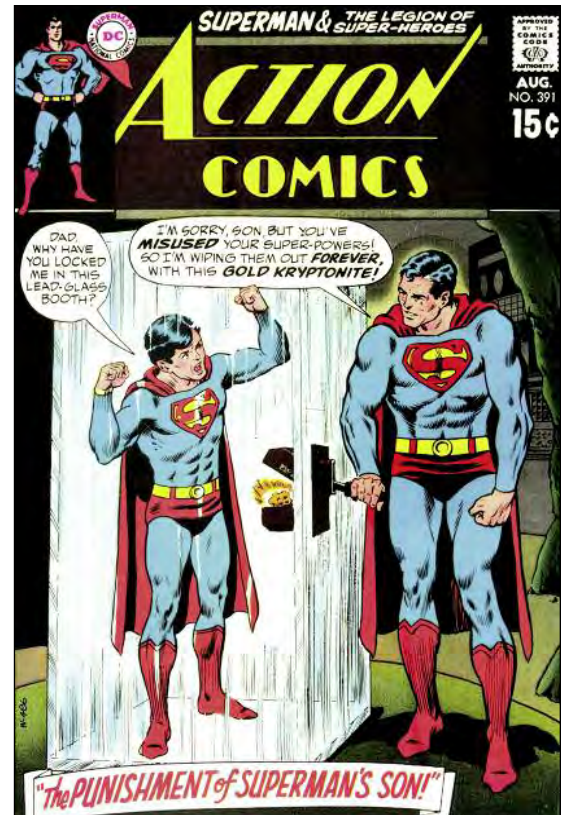
Three issues later, *WF* #157 (May 1966) featured a sequel entitled "The Abominable Brats," in which teenagers Superman, Jr. and Batman, Jr. change from responsible young men to nasty pranksters. First they start behaving like

Generation Gap

The continuity-confounding offspring of Superman and Batman, as first seen on Nick Cardy's cover for *World's Finest Comics* #215 (Dec. 1972–Jan. 1973).

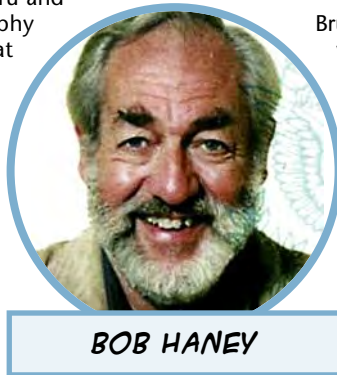
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Prototypical Super Sons (left) WFC #154 (Dec. 1965) showed us these seesawing super-juniors, while (right) a new variation of the theme started in *Action* #391 (Aug. 1970).
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delinquents, then they perform a number of cruel tricks, and finally begin sabotaging their fathers' missions. Fortunately, they are later unmasked as Mr. Mxyzptlk and Bat-Mite, and the real sons are exonerated. Unlike *WF* #154, this story is clearly set in the far future; the adult characters have all gone gray at the temples, and the streets are full of hover-cars and monorails. While the covers of both issues gave the indication that the contents were humorous, this was not really the case, although #157 had a fairly bizarre scene where both families went on a camping trip in full costume!

Two years before the Bronze Age Super Sons saga began, writer Robert Kanigher, with interior artists Ross Andru and Mike Esposito and cover artists Curt Swan and Murphy Anderson, crafted a two-part Imaginary Story that appeared in Silver Age Superman editor Mort Weisinger's final two issues of *Action Comics*. *Action* #391 (Aug. 1970) featured "The Punishment of Superman's Son!", where the Man of Steel responds to his offspring's superheroic blunders by erasing his superpowers with Gold Kryptonite. Superman's wife is unnamed in this story. "The Shame of the Super-Son!" in the following issue chronicled Superman, Jr.'s problems adjusting to life as a mortal, problems compounded on the comic's cover that depicts Superman, Jr. belly-flopping while Batman brags about Batman, Jr.'s Olympic-worthy diving! (Not only is he insensitive to Superman, Jr.'s awkwardness, Batman apparently has little concern that his son is diving in his Batman, Jr. uniform!)



BOB HANEY

THE WAY IT HAPPENED

Our Super Sons saga begins in *World's Finest Comics* #215 (Dec. 1972–Jan. 1973) with a story written by Bob Haney, penciled by *JLA* artist Dick Dillin, and inked by Henry Scarpelli, best known for teenage humor comics. The dynamic cover by Nick Cardy showed the two young heroes tearing down a poster of their Super Dads. Batman, Jr., partly changed into his Bat-suit and still wearing a pair of orange pinstripe trousers, shook his fist at the torn poster and shouted, "We're going to run our own lives—and you can't stop us, Super Dads!"

However, our first real glance at the Super Sons showed them as *dead!* The splash page showed the youthful Superman and Batman laid out in coffins in their super-suits, while the adult Batman and Superman

stood guard and a pair of weeping, veiled women cried, "Oh, Clark, my darling!" and "Bruce, my baby!"

Flash back to a few weeks ago, and Clark, Jr. is doing volunteer work at a youth crisis center that is in the midst of an attack by a biker gang. Clark defends himself and the center, but resorts to using super-strength. When Superman, Sr. arrives on the scene, he is angry about his son risking his secret identity, as well as ongoing issues about his reluctance to study and get a proper job. Young Clark, who we learn is half-human/half-Kryptonian and has half his father's powers, storms off in a huff.

Meanwhile, in a luxury penthouse in Gotham, young Bruce Wayne is at loggerheads with his parents over him wasting his college gap year socializing at nightclubs and sleeping until noon. Things are made worse when Bruce, Sr. discovers that his son has been going out at night in a duplicate Bat-suit and jeopardizing the senior Batman's ongoing operations.

Young Bruce commiserates with his friend Clark, Jr., who feels his own dad is also cramping his style. Meanwhile, the older heroes get together to discuss giving the boys a simple mission to prove themselves: shut down organized crime in Sparta City, a West Coast town controlled by the elderly, ailing Rocco Krugge. However, just to make extra certain the youngsters don't mess up, Superman (using very dubious science theories) flies through the San Andreas Fault and creates a temporary, duplicate version of Sparta. Supes, Jr. and Bats, Jr. head into town and begin tackling the gangs. Unknown to them, the "duplicate" Rocco Krugge was reinvigorated by Superman's stunt and has returned to being a ruthless underworld leader. He has Superman, Jr. knocked unconscious by a missile, then buried in the concrete foundations of a dam. He orders his son, Rocco, Jr., to execute Batman, Jr.

Krugge, Sr. feigns innocence and offers to pay for the boys' funerals. He has Superman, Jr. dug out of the dam and organizes the service, attended by a heartbroken Superman, Batman, and their veiled wives. That night, Krugge is tormented by the spirits of the two young heroes. He drives to the cemetery to make sure they are dead. Instead, he finds their coffins open and the two heroes still alive. Superman, Jr., we learn, was dug up before the two-day limit he could survive without air. Krugge, Jr., who hated his dad, only pretended to shoot Batman, Jr., who then used a drug to feign

The Last Days of *Jimmy Olsen* & *Lois Lane*



(the comic books)

by Steven Thompson



Great Caesar's Ghost!

Some of the shenanigans the *Daily Planet's* one-time cub reporter and intrepid go-getter got into toward the end of their series' runs: a high-flying Ultra-Olsen in *Jimmy Olsen* #158 (cover by Nick Cardy) and a whopping marriage inducer in *Lois Lane* #131 (cover by Bob Oksner). Both issues are cover-dated June 1973.

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In the 1950s, with the comic-book industry crashing and burning all around them in the wake of the unprecedented public backlash against crime and horror comics, National Periodical Publications (now DC) just kept chugging blissfully along with a slate that included space opera, humor, Westerns, licensed television properties, and some of the very few superheroes left—Aquaman, Green Arrow, Wonder Woman, Batman, Robin ... and, of course, Superman.

AS SEEN ON TV

While other superheroes retired en masse even at DC, the Man of Steel's popularity (and sales) was no doubt bolstered by his hit television series, *The Adventures of Superman*. The meteoric rise of television had been yet another reason why many children had lost interest in comics, thus National's attempts to cash in throughout the decade with TV tie-ins such as *Big Town*, *The Adventures of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis*, *Jackie Gleason and the Honeymooners*, and *The New Adventures of Charlie Chan*. Superman's TV series was in the middle of its syndicated run in the mid-1950s when DC editor Mort Weisinger came up with a perfectly logical suggestion.

The Jimmy Olsen and Lois Lane characters were very popular on the show. Why not his and her Superman tie-in series? In a 1975 interview with Guy H. Lillian (quoted in *Comic Book Creator* and used here by permission), Weisinger himself later remembered, "The management protested that the characters weren't strong enough and the books would never go but I had a gut feeling ... and I talked to kids." Mort was right, of course.



MORT WEISINGER

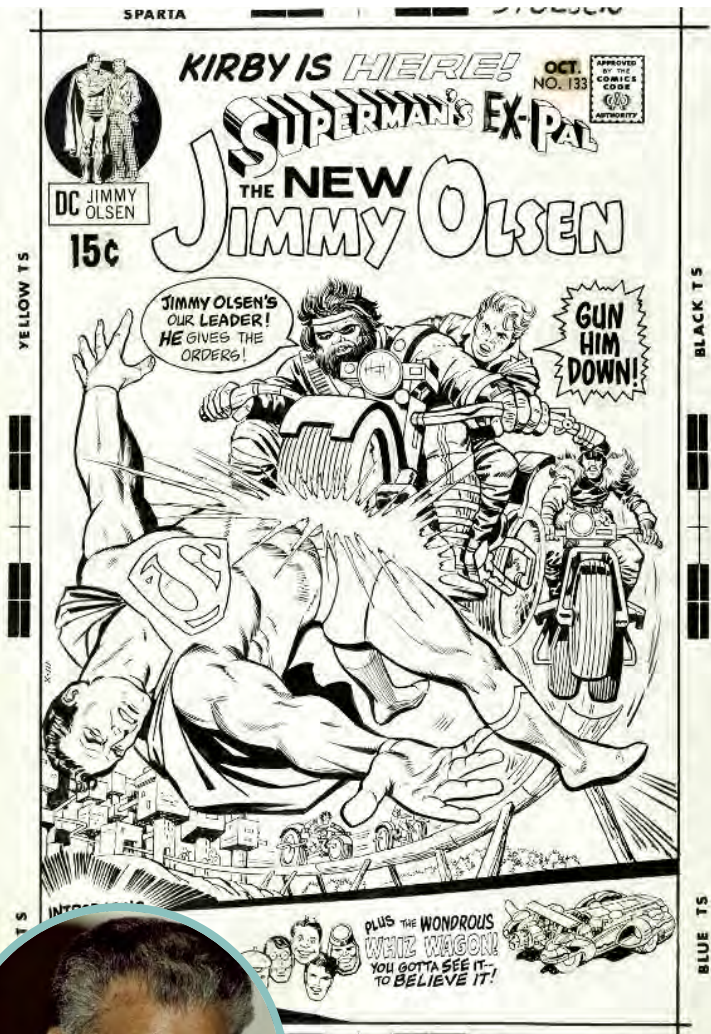
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Jimmy's came first. *Superman's Pal*, *Jimmy Olsen* debuted in late 1954 and *Superman's Girl Friend*, *Lois Lane* eventually followed in early 1958. Both titles would last well into the 1970s! For this article, cartoonist Fred Hembeck comments, "The idea of Superman's girlfriend and young pal having their own books seemed natural to me back in 1961, but as the years wore on, it became more and more obvious what a peculiar notion it really was!"

Love him or hate him, Weisinger was a hard act to follow. When "Uncle Mort" left DC in 1970, Superman kept flying right along, of course, but, by then, the long-time companion comics featuring his "pal" and his "girlfriend" found the going a little bit tougher. The ante had been upped in recent years and the comic-book fan was no longer content to settle for the status quo. For more than a decade, Jimmy's stories consisted of the egotistical, bowtied cub reporter turning into everything from a werewolf to a Giant Turtle Man, getting in trouble, and being rescued by Superman, who often tried to teach his pal a lesson. Similarly, Lois' adventures had long since become less about her being an award-winning reporter and more just romance stories of her attempts to win Superman over her perpetual rival, Lana Lang. There were variations, but it was a formula that worked, so why mess with success?

KIRBY IS COMING!

But mess with it they did when sales slumped. Eager to leave the camp days of the *Batman* TV series behind, DC swung almost too far to the opposite



JACK KIRBY



Hippy, Trippy

(left) Original cover art to Jack Kirby's first issue of *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen*, #133 (Oct. 1970). Inks by Vince Colletta, with Superman's face redrawn, per house style, by Al Plastino. (right) From *JO* #134, in *living color* as the King produced it, one of Kirby's photomontage pages featuring the Whiz Wagon's wild and woolly ride. DC published this and subsequent photomontage pages in black and white, and they've been reprinted in B&W in trade paperbacks. This page was first published in color by TwoMorrows' own *The Jack Kirby Collector* #59—a mag you should be reading if you aren't. Both images are courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com).

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about the eternal Lee/Kirby debate, but when Kirby was let loose with his own dialogue here, it was ... unusually and, at times, surreally unrealistic.

Although I'm not sure how Jimmy managed to keep his job at the *Planet* during this period, he certainly kept himself busy with the introduction of the alien demigod Darkseid, the Project, the Evil Factory, the DNaliens, the Golden Guardian, Dubbilex, the adult Newsboys, a not-so-jolly green giant version of Jimmy himself, and a bunch of Jack's patented photo collages. In fact, we're all the way up to issue #138 (June 1971) before we even see the *Daily Planet* offices again. And when we do, Perry turns out to be noticeably redrawn by Anderson, too!

Fred Hembeck is on record as probably the biggest fan of the early, goofy *Jimmy Olsen* issues. Fred tells *BACK ISSUE*, "Mort Weisinger's Superman family titles are what eased me over from a strict diet of Harvey and Dell kiddie comics back in 1961 when I was eight. Naturally, Lois' and Jimmy's titles were included in that group. But by 1967, having grown a bit older and discovered Marvel Comics in the interim, the Weisinger books seemed silly and stale, so I bailed on 'em all. Naturally, I followed Jack Kirby over to DC and started buying *Jimmy Olsen* again once he took it over. But, c'mon—all the redrawn faces by Murphy Anderson couldn't disguise the fact that, aside from the logo, this new series of adventures featuring Superman's red-headed pal had absolutely *nothing* in common with the stories I'd eagerly read just a few short years earlier. No Lucy Lane, no Professor Potter, no disguise truck, no Elastic Lad. But, as Kirby said, 'Don't ask—just buy it!' And I did! It was fun, but to me, it was a Kirby comic, not a Jimmy Olsen one. Not really."

In the meantime, Kirby also debuted his New Gods trilogy, which showed how the alien dictator, Darkseid—by that point already tied to Morgan Edge—was behind a lot of things in his somewhat-vague quest for something called the Anti-Life Equation. All of this seemingly major continuity was completely and totally ignored by every other DC editor ... for a while.

Even Olsen's title took a short break from all the techno-cosmic self-importance, with its legendarily uncalled-for Don Rickles two-parter (bisected by a reprint Giant of much older cub-reporter stories of Jimmy).

FlashBacks!

In the Silver Age of Comics, when Superman and Batman were "Your Two Favorite Heroes" co-headlining *World's Finest Comics*, their respective supporting casts would frequently cross over in that magazine. You never knew when their villains would pop up (Lex Luthor, Clayface, Brainiac), team up (Luthor and the Joker, Brainiac and Clayface), or crack us up (the Joker becoming an honorary Bizarro, or Mr. Mxyzptlk and Bat-Mite turning Superman and Batman into has-beens). Robin, the Boy Wonder and Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen would occasionally join forces (Jimmy even knew the Dynamic Duo's secret identities). And on one occasion, Commissioner Gordon and Perry White were allowed joint access to Superman's Fortress of Solitude! This shared Bat/Super-universe wasn't limited to *World's Finest*: Robin traveled into the past to meet Superboy in *Adventure Comics* (in a tale that has been frequently reprinted), Batman was seen in issues of *Action Comics* and *Jimmy Olsen*, and Catwoman and Superman's Girl Friend went at it in the pages of *Lois Lane*. While such shenanigans were generally relegated to the titles in the stable of Superman editor Mort Weisinger, Luthor (see inset) was the secret menace behind "The Hand from Nowhere!" in editor Jack Schiff's *Batman* #130 (Mar. 1960).



TM & © DC Comics.

Once the Bronze Age began in 1970, Superman editor Weisinger retired and the blended Batman/Superman universe began to splinter. In the pages of *Batman*, which had been edited by Julius Schwartz since 1964, Robin—now the *Teen Wonder*—had recently left Gotham City for Hudson University, also vacating his hanger-on role in *World's Finest*. Batman temporarily detoured from *World's Finest* to allow Superman to pair off with other heroes. Superman's pals and gals (Jimmy Olsen, Lois Lane, and Supergirl) were blended into a single title (*Superman Family*), rotating the lead spot, and with fewer solo stories being produced they rarely interfaced with members of Batman's family. The worlds of Batman and Superman slowly grew apart, and, by extension, so did their supporting casts.

Yet upon several occasions throughout the Bronze Age, members of Batman's and Superman's families managed to meet.

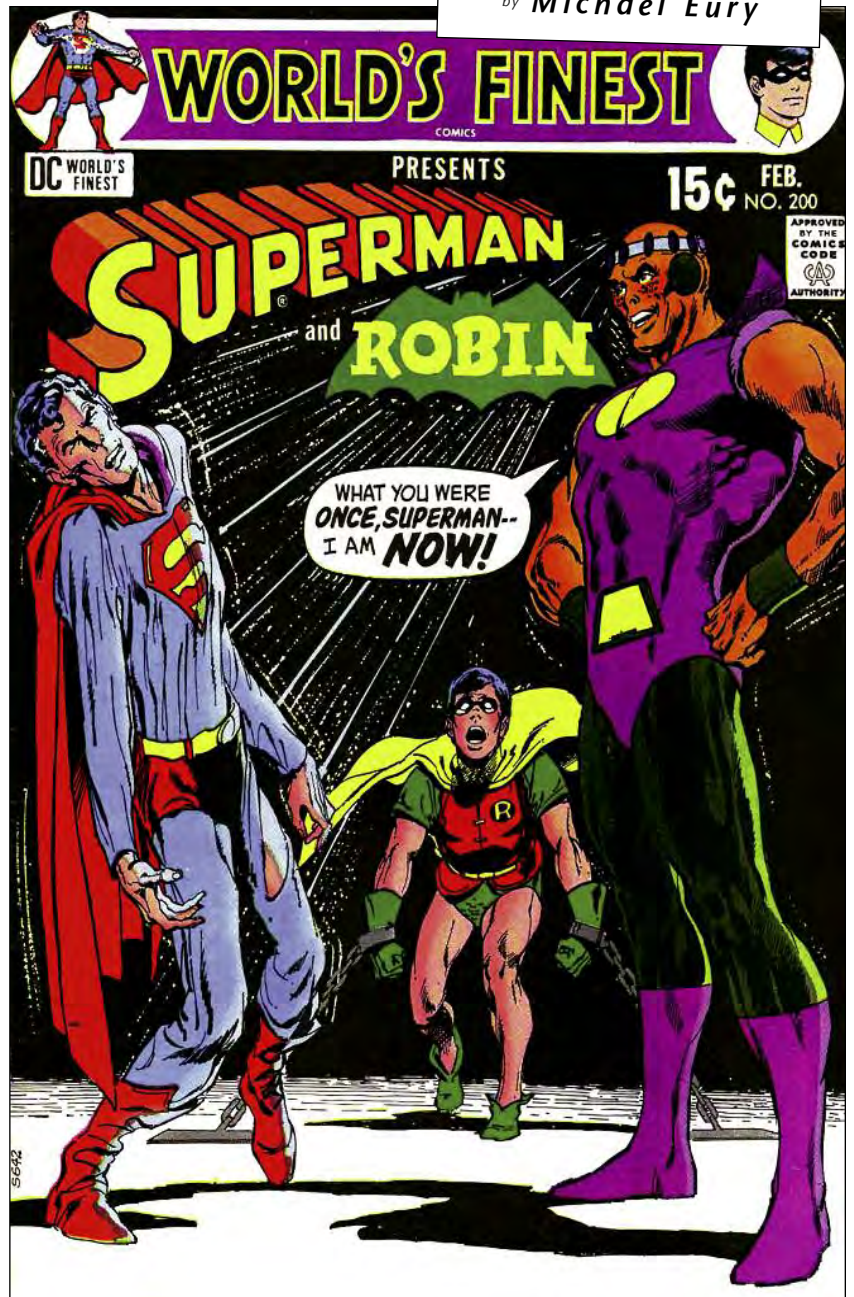
Man of Tomorrow and Teen Wonder

It was Robin, not Batman, who teamed with Superman in the anniversary issue *World's Finest Comics* #200 (Feb. 1971).

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THE BATMAN SWAP SUPERMAN

by Michael Eury



Relevance Meets Sci-Fi

WFC #200's Superman/Robin pairing, written by Mike Friedrich, shifted settings from a college campus protest to an otherworldly environment. Art by Dillin and Giella.

TM & © DC Comics.

SUPERMAN AND ROBIN

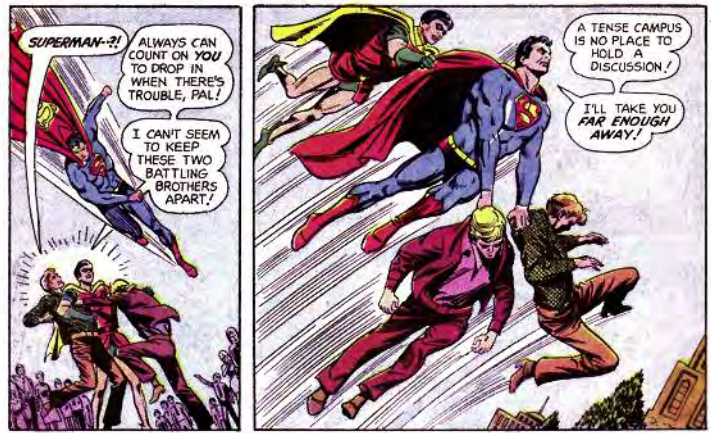
There's a relationship forged for decades in *World's Finest Comics* stories, where readers felt reassured that—Heaven forbid!—should anything ever happen to Batman, Superman would always keep an eye on young Robin as a watchful “uncle.” And so, during *World's Finest's* short-lived stint as “*Superman's Brave and Bold*,” where longtime WFC co-star Batman stepped aside to allow the Metropolis Marvel the chance to join forces with other DC heroes, regular readers weren't surprised to see Superman's erstwhile junior co-star team with the Man of Tomorrow—sans Batman—in WFC #200 (Feb. 1971). (Batman's “voice” was heard in this bicentennial issue, however, via the “200 Issues of the World's Finest Comics!” text feature, scripted by E. Nelson Bridwell, where the Caped Crusader, Superman, and Robin reminisced about the title's history.)

At the onset, “Prisoners of the Immortal World!”, written by Mike Friedrich and illustrated by WFC's then-resident art team of Dick Dillin and Joe Giella, is a “relevance” story so in vogue at DC during the early 1970s. WGBS-TV newsman Clark Kent is reporting live from Hudson University (where Dick Grayson is attending college), “the scene of many flare-ups, as students reflect the boiling temper of a war-torn nation...” Robin, the Teen Wonder is there as a peacekeeper, but by the opening page's last panel there's nothing peaceful about this tale as the campus' ROTC building is fire-bombed. Clark switches to Superman to hold off an angry exchange between National Guard troops and rioting students—a scene inspired by the infamous Kent State University massacre of May 1970—while Robin intercedes between two brothers bucking heads in a hawk-and-dove argument about America's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Friedrich shifts gears from relevance to science fiction on page 4, as Superman, Robin, and the quarreling siblings are inexplicably teleported to another world by cantaloupe-hued aliens who trap Superman and siphon his super-energy to revitalize their race, a premise advertised on the comic's dynamic Neal Adams-drawn cover. Meanwhile, Robin and the brothers are left alone to fend for themselves on a world fraught with unknown dangers, with an annoyed Robin mediating their arguments while trying to keep everyone alive. Was this abrupt shift from relevance to sci-fi the writer's idea or the suggestion of editor Julius Schwartz, who was known for his affinity for science fiction and for playing a sometimes-dominant role in the plotting of his writers' stories? “I'm afraid you've hit a dry well in the memory aquifer,” Mike Friedrich tells *BACK ISSUE*. “Even after re-reading *World's Finest* #200 I'm afraid I remember nothing about it. I suspect that the abrupt plot changes were probably my responsibility, but also it's possible that editor Julie Schwartz made a suggestion or two that I incorporated, but what they might have been I don't recall.”

The issue's co-stars are separated for most of the story, so there's little interaction between Superman and Robin, although the Teen Wonder manages to provide the Man of Steel with a much-needed helping hand. “The relationship between Superman and Robin in the story appears to be distant and professional, not really taking into account the difference in their ages,” notes writer Friedrich. “Today I'd say the obvious opportunity would have been to play them as kinda professional uncle and nephew (as distinct from Batman's role as mentor and stepfather), but since I didn't have an uncle like that, it didn't occur to me.”

Nonetheless, WFC #200 should be appreciated as a tightly plotted sci-fi thriller and as an early spotlight for Robin outside of the shadow of Batman (or the Teen Titans, for that matter).

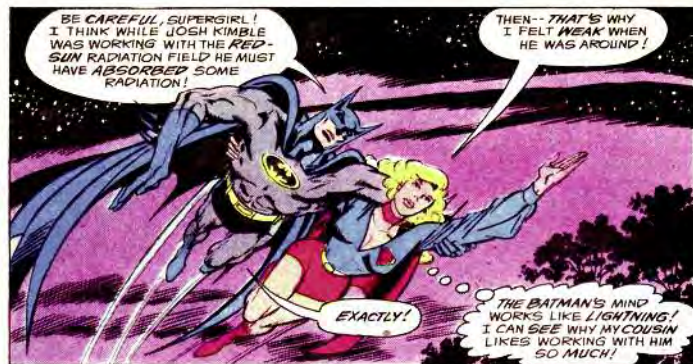


MIKE FRIEDRICH

Photo credit: Alan Light.

Superman and Robin teamed up again ten years later in *DC Comics Presents* #31 (Mar. 1981) in a circus-based story titled “The Deadliest Show on Earth!”, by scribe Gerry Conway, penciler José Luis García-López, and inker Dick Giordano. Despite its publication in the Superman team-up title, this is essentially a Robin story guest-starring Superman—not surprising given its big-top location and Dick (Robin) Grayson's backstory as a circus aerialist. The Sterling Circus has pitched its tents outside of Gotham City, and Grayson, visiting the show with a date, gets suspicious when an old acquaintance, Waldo the Clown, fails to recognize him. He later investigates as Robin and discovers a “circus of mind-slaves” manipulated by a “disembodied voice”—and finds Superman himself under the thrall of this mystery ringmaster, forced to play the role of strongman! Ultimately, by a story device I won't reveal here, the two break free of the mind control (as you'd expect) and join forces to apprehend the controller and liberate his minions. While this type of menace may seem beneath the Man of Tomorrow's powers, the story is briskly paced and beautifully rendered, and Superman and Robin smoothly perform together as a team, with neither upstaging the other.

The circus once again provides the opening stage for the next Superman/Robin encounter—this time with the Elongated Man added for a good stretch—in the form of “The Deadly Touch of the Intangibles!” by Mike W. Barr, Curt Swan, and Dave Hunt, which appeared in *DC Comics Presents* #58 (June 1983). WGBS reporter Clark Kent is covering a big-top fundraiser featuring the athletic showmanship of Robin, the Teen Wonder and the Ductile Detective, the Elongated Man. Once the performance is disrupted by a trio of phantom troublemakers, the Intangibles, Kent joins the action as Superman—and when the Intangibles shimmer away, this



underworld gathering occurs at a mobster's estate and a hearing is held, overseen by "Judge" Ra's al Ghul, with Two-Face harkening back to his days as crusading district attorney Harvey Dent by serving as the prosecutor. A sinister six sits as the jury: the Mad Hatter, the Spook, Poison Ivy, the Scarecrow, Signalman, and Mr. Freeze. And thus the four-parter gets underway, each chapter featuring a "testimony" by a supervillain who maintains they executed Batman: Catwoman (in *Batman* #291), the Riddler (#292), the Joker (#294), and...

...Luthor, in the penultimate chapter, issue #293. As the comic's attention-grabbing cover by Jim Aparo reveals, super-scientist Luthor managed to trap his mighty foe, Superman, inside the human (and breakable) body of Batman. In a wild explanation that only could have occurred in a Bronze Age comic, Luthor credits his body-swap to his satellite-positioned device that emitted MASER

Dark Knight and Maid of Might

Stop begging—here it is! Cover and sample panel from the fan-requested first Batman/Supergirl team-up in *The Brave and the Bold* #147 (Feb. 1979), by Cary Burkett and Jim Aparo.

TM & © DC Comics.

rays—that's "M(icrowave) A(mplification by) S(timulated) E(mission of) R(adiation)," according to an oh, so helpful footnote—that were "designed to perform an astonishing surgical transference—rays directed to the brain through the *pupils* of the *eyes*!" Luthor then describes how he beat to death the body of the Batman, inside which Superman was trapped. Of course, this turns out to be false, as do the testimonies of the other villains. I'll leave the story's twist ending as a surprise for those of you who have yet to discover it (which you can do in DC's 2009 trade paperback, *The Strange Deaths of Batman*, if you can't find a back issue of the original), but overall, this encounter between Batman and Lex Luthor is a cheat since it still features Superman—but it makes one wonder what an actual Bronze Age meeting of the minds between Batman and Luthor would've been like. (Mike W. Barr wondered that, too, as you'll read shortly...)

BATMAN AND SUPERGIRL

"At last! The team you've been begging to see!" proclaimed a burst on the cover of *The Brave and the Bold* #147 (Feb. 1979). As the comic's house ads reveal, a Superman promotional blitz was underway in conjunction with the December 1978 premiere of *Superman: The Movie*, and this Batman/Supergirl pairing basked in its glow.

"Death-Scream from the Sky!" involves the Children of Light, a group of terrorists (a recurring threat in Bronze Age *B&Bs*, for those of you who may regard this a more contemporary occurrence in the real world), who threaten destruction from above via a "laser-cannon" mounted onto a satellite. Once Batman gets involved, he tells Commissioner Gordon, "They couldn't have picked a better *time* to act ... the other members of the *Justice League* are on a mission in *space*! I'm the only one *left* to stop them!" Batman conveniently forgets Earth's non-JLAers as possible helpers, but soon runs into one of them, teaming with Supergirl—whose superpowers are mysteriously fading, off and on—and together they stop the terrorists and reveal the supervillain behind their malevolence.

While this Batman/Supergirl team-up was drawn by the amazing Jim Aparo, who handles the Maid of Might as deftly as any of the other guest-stars who ventured through the series over the years, *B&B* #147 was not written by the series' normal scribe Bob Haney, but instead by DC newcomer Cary Burkett. "I was an assistant editor at DC and I had worked on *Brave and the Bold* with Denny O'Neil when he was editor and later when Paul Levitz took over the title," Burkett tells *BACK ISSUE*. "This was just after Murray Boltinoff had relinquished the book after many years as editor. All the Batman titles were being brought together under one editor. (*JLA* and *World's Finest* were not considered specifically Batman titles, though he appeared in both of those books.)

"Bob Haney was working with new editors on the book for the first time, and there was some friction as Denny and later Paul tried to bring the Haney Batman more in line with the character as he appeared in other books," Burkett continues. "With Paul, I was given the 'first edit' of the Haney scripts, looking to find and fix any glaring continuity errors. I'd pass them on to Paul with some rewrite suggestions. Paul would often then pass the scripts back to me to implement my rewrites, and I did my best to match the Haney style. There are a lot of *Brave and Bold* scripts from that period that were heavily rewritten."

Editor Levitz was fundamental in bringing in Supergirl as a teammate—and in bringing in Burkett as the team-up's scribe. "As I recall, Paul wanted to expand the co-stars in the book, bring in some who had never appeared before," Burkett says. "Haney was cool to the idea—he preferred the characters he was familiar with, like the Metal Men, Sgt. Rock, and Wildcat.

SUPERMAN AND THE JOKER

In late 1973, readers were shocked when the Batman formed an unholy alliance with his arch-enemy, the Joker, in the so-called "Strangest Team-Up in History," in *The Brave and the Bold* #111 (Feb.-Mar. 1974). As both Batman and readers suspected, the Joker does not make a trustworthy teammate. Apparently this message didn't trickle down to Batman's World's Finest friend, as Superman and the Joker joined forces in *DC Comics Presents* #41 (Jan. 1982). "The Terrible Tinseltown Treasure-Trap Treachery!", a story by scribe Martin Pasko and artists José Luis García-López and Frank McLaughlin, used the Kryptonian Crusader's portly

pest, the Prankster, as the catalyst for its Superman/Joker union, with the Clown Prince of Crime springing the Prankster from Metropolis State Prison and then heading for Hollywood for a heist, with the *Daily Planet's* Perry White, Lois Lane, and Clark Kent also converging upon the sunny California city for a news-journalists' convention.

How did editor Schwartz tap Martin Pasko for this writing assignment? "The way Julie approached DCCP was to decide what team-up he wanted to do, and then offer it as an assignment to whichever available writer in

his stable he thought was the best fit," Pasko offers. "Since I'd kicked off DCCP by writing the first three scripts (though not published in that order), Julie had it in his mind that I was one of the guys he could trust with the team-ups, and whenever he had a pairing he associated with me, he'd call—which could sometimes be frustrating; I was assigned a Superman/Swamp Thing team-up that I had a story for that I really liked, but he assigned it to Alex Toth (don't ask why; I never understood that choice, either), but I'd've wanted to work with Alex if it had been 'Superman Meets Sugar and Spike.' Unfortunately, Alex disappeared with the script and never delivered, and that one never saw the light of day. Damn!

"Anyway, I'd written the Joker in his own title, and Julie liked the way I had handled the character as an 'anti-hero,' for lack of a better term, so he turned to me for this admittedly odd team-up."

DCCP #41 was published shortly after Pasko began working in television animation, and much of its action takes place in L.A., so I asked the writer how his living and working in Hollywood imprinted his story. "The Joker had to be a relatively benign figure to work in a 'daylight' story," Martin contends. "That's always been one of the key differences between Batman and Superman: Bats was nocturnal and Supes was a daytime character, which led guys like John Byrne and Denny O'Neil to argue for a long time that *World's Finest* never really worked. So I started casting about for some 'less dark' facet of the character—something lighter than the rictus-inducing nerve toxin or the Joker card left at the scene of a murder—as a linchpin for the story. I remembered that in the beginning of his tenure on *Batman*, Julie had done stories in which the Joker committed comedy-themed crimes (which seemed fun enough to the TV show's producers to have used that idea in the series). [Editor's note: The story was John Broome's "The Joker's Comedy Capers" in *Detective Comics* #341, July 1965, which was adapted to the *Batman* TV series as a Season One, two-part episode starring not the Joker, but the Riddler.] I then thought it



A Prankster Page

We'll always grab a chance to show off José Luis García-López original art! A signed page from DCCP #41, courtesy of Heritage. Inks by Frank McLaughlin.

TM & © DC Comics

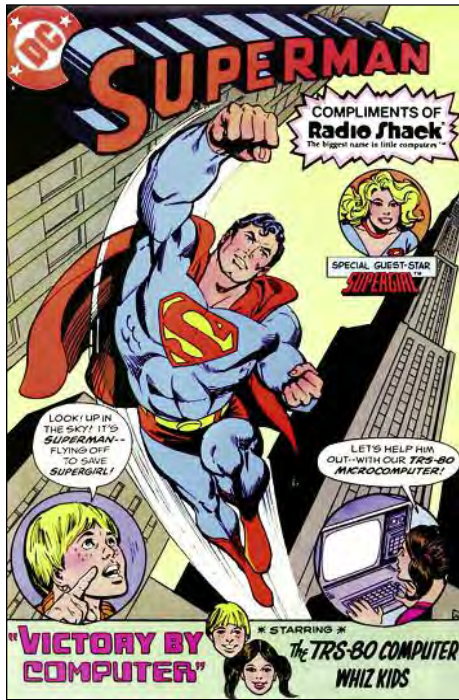
without at least pausing to consider whether Francine might give birth to a horribly genetically damaged child. On the phone, Julie just verbally shrugged and said something about acquired characteristics not being hereditary, totally missing my point about having the Langstroms question, after-the-fact, whether the serum might not have damaged *their own* chromosomes. So I decided to try to retrofit this dramatic element into the new developments in the continuity, in the form of making the Langstroms' parenthood tragic and tense with foreboding.

"In the Batman/Man-Bat story [B&B #165], I had a subplot about the child, Rebecca, showing symptoms of a mysterious illness. The DCCP story continued that ongoing concern," Pasko says. "From there, it wasn't hard to bring Superman into Man-Bat's ambit. It was simply a matter of having a Superman villain—in this case, the Atomic Skull—come to believe Langstrom had something he wanted or needed, and having the Skull go after Langstrom. So the team-up took the form of Superman needing to capture the Skull, and Man-Bat helping Superman to get the Skull off Man-Bat's back."

It's a Bird! It's a Plane! No, it's... Radio Shack!



by Dewey Cassell



If you are old enough to remember a time before cell phones and DVDs and I were to mention Radio Shack, the image that comes to mind is likely the pegboard racks of capacitors, resistors, and phonograph needles that dominated every store. Or maybe it was the Free Battery of the Month Club. Or the remote-control toys. But odds are, it was not comic books. And yet for two decades, Radio Shack was a major distributor of comic books, including an educational partnership with the Man of Steel.

Radio Shack was started in Boston in 1921 as a supplier for ham-radio operators. The company was acquired in 1963 by the Tandy Corporation, which refined and focused the product line in electronics and implemented the approach of opening smaller stores in more locations. Headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, Radio Shack had over 4,000 stores prior to declaring bankruptcy in early 2015.

One of the things for which Radio Shack was famous was its catalogs, which began production in 1939. The catalogs served as a great marketing tool, with customers perusing the pages at home and then returning to the store with a want list in hand. The experience gained in producing the catalogs also served them well when they decided to produce another kind of publication.

One of the things the Tandy Corporation brought to its acquisition of Radio Shack was a sense of corporate responsibility to support education. It was manifested in the product line, which included project kits to teach kids how to make things like a crystal radio, motorized helicopter, or solar-science experiment. It was also demonstrated in comic books. In 1971, Radio Shack began publishing a comic book called *The Science Fair Story of Electronics*, produced under the Science Fair brand as a giveaway. The first issue was 24 pages in length, full color, and printed on heavy newsprint. The story is told in the context of a party, where a boy has received a radio kit for his birthday and

his father and a family friend are explaining the history of electronics. The final page includes a coupon for \$1.00 off a Radio Shack Science Fair kit and the back cover encourages teachers to send for additional free copies. The comic book is well illustrated, in a style resembling that of *Classics Illustrated*. In the years that followed, *The Science Fair Story of Electronics* was updated and reprinted numerous times, with the setting of the story changing to a school classroom and the quality of the artwork generally declining. It is uncertain who wrote and drew the early stories, but the indicia in later editions say, "Narrative by William W. Palmer, illustrations by J&R Weathers, Designers."

[It is worth noting that this was not an entirely original idea. Westinghouse published an illustrated *Story of Electronics* in 1945 and distributed it free to schools.]

In 1977, Radio Shack entered the budding personal computer market with the TRS-80. The TRS-80 was one of the earliest personal computers available to the mass market and became successful thanks to a proliferation of software available. Until 1982, the TRS-80 was the most popular personal computer, outselling Apple and Commodore.

It was a competitive business, as noted in the March 12, 1984, issue of *Time* magazine. The article, titled "Computers: Slugging It Out in the Schoolyard," noted that "Tandy, one of Apple's chief competitors, supported federal legislation tailored to promote its Radio Shack line of computers. Tandy gave books, slides, even special Superman computer comics to schools and made available free instruction to each of America's 2.4 million schoolteachers. 'It's good business for us,' says Bill Gattis, director of Tandy's education division."

Radio Shack's advertising strategy included the comic books, but *The Science Fair Story of Electronics* didn't do much to promote the TRS-80, so Tandy Corporation turned to DC Comics and their flagship character for a more high-

Whiz Kids Comics

The trio of Superman/Radio Shack giveaway comics—each featuring the then-cutting-edge TSR-80 Computer Whiz Kids.

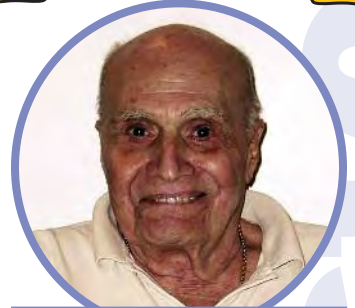
Superman and related characters
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Radio Shack® TM & © Tandy Corp.

ARTIST ROLL CALL



PAT BRODERICK

ARTIST ROLL CALL



CARMINE INFANTINO

Luigi Novi / Wikimedia Commons.

A League Divided:



JUSTICE LEAGUE of AMERICA™



#200

by John Trumbull



JIM APARO



BRIAN BOLLAND

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DICK GIORDANO



JOE KUBERT

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GIL KANE

Alan Light / Wikimedia Commons.



GEORGE PÉREZ

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Divided We Fall
George Pérez's
astounding, amazing,
awesome (feel free to
add more superlatives)
wraparound cover
to *Justice League
of America* #200
(Mar. 1982).

TM & © DC Comics.



"Just Imagine! The mightiest heroes of our time—Superman, Batman, Flash, Green Lantern, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, and J'onn J'onzz, the Manhunter from Mars—have banded together as the Justice League of America to stamp out the forces of evil wherever and whenever they appear!"

The Justice League of America debuted in *The Brave and the Bold* #28 (Feb.–Mar. 1960). A new version of the Golden Age's Justice Society of America, the Justice League brought together DC Comics' greatest superheroes into one unstoppable team. After a three-issue tryout in *B&B*, the League graduated to its own book before the end of 1960. The early *JLA* stories of writer Gardner Fox, penciler Mike Sekowsky, and editor Julius Schwartz followed the same formula as the *JSA*: a menace would arise to challenge the team; the League would split up to combat various aspects of the menace, coming together for the villain's final defeat.

The team's origin was revealed in *Justice League of America* #9 (Feb. 1962), where seven claimants to the throne of the planet Appellax choose Earth as their battlefield, rocketing to Earth in kryptonite meteors. The Martian Manhunter, Aquaman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, and the Flash each vanquish an alien in individual battles across the globe. The five unite to defeat the sixth alien on the Carolina coast, while Superman and Batman beat the seventh in Greenland. Working together inspires the seven heroes to form a permanent team, the Justice League of America. Together, they bury the Appellaxian meteors at the original landing sites.

FROM 48 TO 72

In 1981, the *JLA* creative team of writer Gerry Conway, penciler George Pérez, and editor Len Wein wanted to make the *JLA*'s 22nd anniversary issue as special as possible. As Conway explained in his text piece *The First Two Hundred* in *JLA* #200 (Mar. 1982): "Our original notion was to produce a 48-page comic book story, a little larger than most, but by no means as unusual as what you now

hold in your hands. Through one of those happy publishing decisions that make a writer's life so full, that original 48-page book was expanded to 72 pages. At first, Len Wein suggested that two stories be done for the book; one complete story by George Pérez, and a second story featuring five or six chapters drawn by five or six different artists.

"It was Roy Thomas, of *All-Star Squadron* fame, who suggested that the two stories be combined into one single story 72 pages long. George Pérez and I had already agreed on what kind of story we wanted to do for *JLA* #200 (a tribute to the earliest Fox-Sekowsky tales, with members fighting each other, old against new); the logical next step was simply to integrate the idea of individual chapters into the already-determined framework. And that's when the fun began."

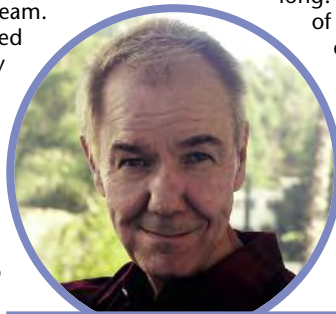
Expanding the story to 72 pages, Gerry Conway tells *BACK ISSUE*, "made it much more complex, but it actually worked very well with the original structure. It just gave us the opportunity to develop each sequence a little more fully and make the wraparound a larger story, a little more elaborate. In one sense it made less work, because I didn't have to come up with two stories, but it made more work in that I had to develop the story more

fully to encompass 72 pages."

For his part, Roy Thomas tells *BI*, "The only thing I recall is suggesting that [Gerry] get different artists to draw the interim chapters, like in the old *All-Star Comics*. But, hey, anything else he credits me with, I'll take it. After all, he helped me plenty of times, too."

Scripting a triple-sized book didn't adversely affect Conway's workload. "We actually planned it out over a period of time, so it didn't all hit in one month," he recalls. "We knew this was going to be taking place, and I think the biggest impact was on George, because he was doing a regular monthly book and to do this on top of that did take him more work."

George Pérez was happy to take on the challenge. The artist was nearing the end of his run on the *Justice League*, but as he



GERRY CONWAY



Battle Six
Green Arrow and
Black Canary vs.
Batman. Art by
Brian Bolland.

TM & © DC Comics.

lot of sense." Gerry Conway theorizes, "I think he was just too busy with his commercial work to be available for that. But he would have been ideal, obviously. I don't know specifically that there was a discussion, but I think we all knew that would not be a practical choice."

While the meticulous Bolland was the very last artist added into the mix, Conway was not concerned about his speed. "Whether he was slow or not, he was also very reliable, so if he took it on, you knew that you would get it. And we planned this out. This took place over a period of several months, so I'm pretty sure that he was given sufficient time to do the work."

CH. 7: HAWKMAN VS. SUPERMAN

Joe Kubert illustrates the last guest chapter as Hawkman journeys to Greenland, the burial site of the seventh and final meteor. The Winged Wonder defeats two Superman robots with his trademark medieval

weaponry, but the real Man of Steel, arriving in a plasta-lead alloy to protect him from kryptonite, knocks Hawkman into orbit and leaves with his prize. As the unconscious Thanagarian drifts in the upper edges of Earth's atmosphere, he is enveloped in a strange light, and vanishes.

Conway admits that the mismatch of a Hawkman/Superman fight was largely unavoidable. "Those are because you're sort of left over at that point. Atom and Green Lantern you have to do because of the artist [Gil Kane]. It's a mismatch, but it's also thematically tied to the artist. The same way with Carmine, and with Flash and Elongated Man. It wouldn't have really made any sense from a practical point of view. If this had been one artist doing this book, the matchups may have been different. Firestorm versus Superman, for example, would've made much more sense. Hawkman versus Green Lantern would've made more sense. But you're dealing with the iconic artists, so it creates a different dynamic."

We soon discover that Hawkman was caught in a Zeta Beam and transported to Rann, the adopted planet of Adam Strange. Strange contacts his allies in the JLA and drains the Zeta Beam radiation from Hawkman's body. When the Thanagarian rematerializes outside the JLA Satellite, the Elongated Man stretches beyond his limits to bring him to safety. Green Arrow is the first to reach Hawkman's side, their longtime feud a thing of the past.

Back at the Secret Sanctuary, the original JLAers shake off their mind control as the kryptonite meteors hatch like eggs, returning the seven Appellaxians to life. It is revealed that the aliens planted soul-clones into each of their meteors, complete with timed hypnotic suggestions, compelling the JLAers to gather them together years later. Quickly defeating the heroes, the resurrected Appellaxians decide to finally settle their claim to their homeworld's throne by group combat.

The new JLAers arrive soon after. With the original Leaguers back in their right minds, the entire team goes after the aliens. In a gorgeous panoramic shot of the reunited JLA charging forward, the captions state, "They have no *battle cry*—nor do they *need* one! They are fifteen of the greatest heroes this weary world has ever *seen*—and their strength resides not in simple *slogans*, but in their very identity: *for they are the Justice League!*"

Thirty-five years later, Gerry Conway confirms that this narration was "a little wink to the 'Avengers Assemble!' " battle cry of Earth's Mightiest Heroes. "But it's all in good fun, too. We're not seriously saying, 'We're better than you guys.' We're just saying we don't need to shout any, 'It's clobbering time!' or 'Avengers Assemble!' " When asked if he was ever tempted to give the JLA an official battle cry, Conway wonders, "What could it be? 'Leaguers Unite'? Whatever you say, it sounds a little silly."

CH. 8: BATMAN, BLACK CANARY, GREEN ARROW, HAWKMAN, SUPERMAN, WONDER WOMAN, ZATANNA

In the forests of Vermont, a JLA team tracks down the first three of the Appellaxians: the Wood-King, the Crystal Creature, and the Mercury Monster. Operating as a full team once more, the JLAers quickly defeat their foes. Superman shatters the Wood-King into splinters; Zatanna boils the Mercury Monster into nothingness while Batman shatters the Crystal Creature with a well-placed batarang.

INTERVIEW WITH BATMAN AND PSYCHOLOGY AUTHOR TRAVIS LANGLEY

by Jason Strangis



*Dr. Travis Langley is the author of the highly acclaimed book *Batman and Psychology: A Dark and Stormy Knight*. A professor of psychology at Henderson State University in Arkansas, Langley has delved into the psyche of the Dark Knight and speaks regularly at comic-book conventions across the country. He also has very strong views about another iconic hero—Superman—as readers are soon to find out. This interview was conducted via email in March of 2015.*

– Jason Strangis

JASON STRANGIS: *You said in your book that Adam West once asked if you thought Batman was crazy. So, is Batman crazy?*

TRAVIS LANGLEY: Man, I spent a whole book answering that question. For one thing, “crazy” is not a technical term, obviously. To the point, though: He knows what he’s doing and he knows there’s something crazy about it. He’s choosing to do this crazy thing to shake things up in his environment. He carries this emotional burden but does not let it cripple him, not at the things that matter most to him in life. For his priorities, no one functions better. Who’s going to fall apart first in a crisis, him or any of us? Not him.

Batman has some post-traumatic stress symptoms, to be sure, but not the whole range of them, and he channels his own symptoms into a constructive purpose. He shows what we call post-traumatic growth by making meaning out of his great tragedy and using that to find a purpose in life. Candace Lightner and John Walsh each suffered great tragedies in their own lives, and out of those tragedies they found purpose. She founded Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) to get drunk drivers of the road, and he went on to advocate for missing children and help catch criminals, even hosting the program *America’s Most Wanted* as part of his mission to do so. Most people don’t do these things. Missions like the ones they have carry a great cost. They’re not wearing masks, of course, but there have been times in history and locations in the world where the only way to stand up to a corrupt regime was to do so anonymously.

Is Batman crazy? The answer I gave Adam when he asked me that is still my answer today: Not for the world in which he lives... He lives in one crazy world.

STRANGIS: *There are those comic-book fans who believe that Batman—and not Bruce Wayne—is the true identity? How do you feel about the subject?*

LANGLEY: To me, it’s a false dichotomy. Batman is Bruce Wayne. Yes, he puts on this bored playboy act that isn’t who he is at heart, but he also puts on the extra-scary Batman act, the symbol who has to be more than a man and can’t show that he hurts. Clearly Batman’s mission is what’s closest to his heart. Both those acts serve that same mission. He always knows who he is: He’s Batman. But he does hurt, he is human, and it was not a bat’s parents who died in that alley that night.

STRANGIS: *Batman is obviously a character that you find intriguing. Did you read comic books as a kid, and was Batman always your favorite?*

LANGLEY: I always loved comic books. My mom read them to me when I was tiny. Art by Neal Adams motivated

Meet the Author

Dr. Travis Langley (left) and a fan. The fellow at right called Dr. Langley’s book a page turner, but wishes that the pages were more flipper-friendly.

Photo courtesy of Travis Langley. Penguin TM & © DC Comics.



me to learn to read them for myself because I wanted to understand better why the comic-book stories looked so much more eerie than the Adam West TV show and cartoons had led me to expect. During early adolescence, there were a few years when Spider-Man was the one whose stories excited me the most. But otherwise, Batman has always been my favorite.

STRANGIS: *Why do you think Batman has become one of the most famous and popular fictional characters and has lasted more than 75 years?*

LANGLEY: He's the superhero without superpowers. Where Superman is bright and impossible, powered by the sun, Batman is dark and possible-feeling, strengthened by the night. And his origin taps into the most primal human fears. We learn we will never get superpowers, we learn that our parents can and will die, and we learn bad things really happen in our world. When we find ourselves in the dark and see no light in sight, we want someone, something, in the dark to stand up and do right.

Batman works on so many levels in ways that reach across generations and time. He can be dark, he can be bright. He can be grim, he can be fun. We always need heroes.

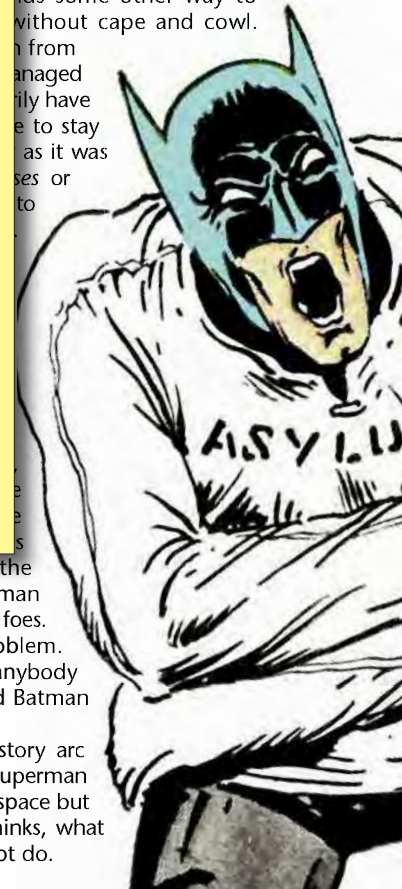
STRANGIS: *The 1960s TV series starring Adam West, while campy, seemed to catapult the Caped Crusader to new heights of popularity. What did you think of the 1960s show?*

LANGLEY: When I was a kid I had no idea it was a joke. It thrilled me. Even when I was a little kid I thought Robin's "Holy" this and "Holy" that seemed kind of stupid, but I didn't see the joke. The show worked as intended—superhero adventure for the kids and campy comedy for the adults. I can still watch most episodes through a lens of nostalgia, so I'm still not seeing it the way adults of the time saw it.

STRANGIS: *In 1986, Frank Miller came out with his seminal and groundbreaking*

Returns. Do you think Miller hasize that Bruce Wayne's life is a bit of real meaning unless he has a cowl and fights crime?

certainly wrote him that way. I really give up being Batman and some other way to go without cape and cowl.



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BACK ISSUE #87

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he

it looks like the hero might lose, and then the hero figures out a way to win anyhow. Superman usually did not win by simply overpowering his foes. He won by figuring out a solution to a problem. Batman figures out solutions better than anybody else. Superman has a lot of weaknesses, and Batman knows them all.

There's a wonderful line in the Hush story arc when Batman reflects on the fact that Superman has the power to destroy him from outer space but won't do it. He knows how Superman thinks, what motivates him, and what he will and will not do.

"Is Batman crazy?"

(this page) Well, America went mad for him in 1966! Detail from the cover of the March 11, 1966 edition of *Life*, with Adam West. (center) Detail from Joe Kubert's cover for *Batman* #327 (Sept. 1980). (opposite) Frank Miller original art for his *Absolute Dark Knight* edition, courtesy of Heritage.

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