



The complete history  
of the influential 1970s  
independent comic

# STAR BEACH

## COMPANION



by  
Richard Arndt

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# Chapter One

## THE STAR\*REACH INFLUENCE

**T**ry and name the most influential comic book of the 1970s. Surely, one might think, it would be the new *X-Men*. The title had very good, entertaining stories, with the high point being the Dark Phoenix story arc. It revitalized and transformed a second-tier title into one of the top titles in Marvel's history. Yet what effect did it really have on the comic industry as a whole? It certainly made the *X-Men* book a hot item and helped spawn a houseful of *X-Men* spin-offs. Still, in the long run, I don't think it created any long lasting trends. Rather, it continued and strengthened the superhero genre, which had been in full swing since the early 1960s. It essentially maintained the status quo.

Will Eisner's landmark *A Contract with God* demonstrated that graphic novels (or albums, as the term "graphic novel" was not in common use when the book was published) could not only be done, but be done well, and, most importantly to comic publishers, sell enough to make a decent profit. But, simply by its nature, it is not a traditional comic book.

Kirby's "Fourth World" comics? Beautifully drawn and plotted although somewhat oddly scripted, they were the first clear attempt at a maxi- or limited series, but they were never finished. At best, they're a noble, fascinating, and frustrating failure.

After that the pickings get slim. *Swamp Thing*? No. No matter how good Len Wein and Bernie Wrightson's run on the comic was, that title became much more important when Alan Moore started writing it in 1983. *Elfquest*? Might have a case there except that most of the original run appeared in the 1980s. Frank Miller's *Daredevil*? Again, a possibility, but again the most groundbreaking issues came out in the early 1980s.

Nope, for my money the most important comic book of the 1970s was the independent (or ground-level, as it was called at the time) *Star\*Reach*. Everything, everything, that comics are today can be seen in embryo fashion in that book.

First, it was an independent comic, long before anyone seriously mentioned or had even really conceived of



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# Chapter Two

## WHAT CAME BEFORE

As mentioned in Chapter One, Friedrich called *Star\*Reach* a “ground-level” comic. By that he meant that it wasn’t a mainstream comic, coming from the big companies in the (above-ground) skyscrapers on Madison Avenue, nor was it part of the underground comix movement which was flourishing at the time *Star\*Reach* launched its first issue. It was in between the two. Far more liberal and mature regarding violence, sex, story genres, and politics than the four-color superhero comics that ruled the likes of Marvel and DC, but not as counter-culture, sexually explicit, or as excessive in its approach as the likes of *Zap*, *Bizarre Sex*, *Skull*, or *Slow Death* comix.


Of course, Friedrich’s *Star\*Reach* didn’t spring up out of nowhere. There were any number of earlier magazines that pointed the way as well as numerous trends in the comics industry itself that influenced, supported, and helped create the possibility of *Star\*Reach*’s birth and success.

The first and probably most important was EC artist Wally Wood’s *witzend* magazine. Begun in 1966, Wood’s title published 13 issues between 1966 and 1985, although the bulk of them appeared between 1966 and 1971. Wood intended his comic magazine to be a showcase for writers and artists, and as such, made a point of refraining from actual editorial interference. He published the stories as is and regardless of genre, which often made it appear, especially in the earliest issues, that the magazine had no firm editorial hand at all.

*witzend* (always in lower case) originated from an idea by Dan Adkins, at the time Wood’s assistant, who intended to self-publish a comic magazine named *Outlet*. This became a Wood effort called initially *Etcetera* but changed to *witzend* shortly before the first issue appeared when Wood discovered another magazine with the *Etcetera* title.

The first issue appeared in the summer of 1966 and featured unpublished stories from the 1950s, poetry, gag strips rejected by *Mad* magazine, the first half of an interesting SF/horror story featuring a character called Animan

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by Wood himself (Animan probably couldn’t have been published in mainstream comics at that time due to the restriction of the Comic Code, which forbid the use of a werewolf and frowned about stories dealing with human genetic experiments à la Dr. Moreau), and finally a really superb science-fiction story entitled “Sinner,” written and illustrated by Archie Goodwin.

Wood acted as the publisher and editor for the first four issues, publishing significant early work by Art Spiegelman and Roger Brand as well as important and interesting work



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# witzend



(above left and previous page) Some of the original ads for the title that became *witzend*. (above right) *witzend*'s first issue.

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from Steve Ditko—the first Mr. A stories appeared in *witzend*—Gray Morrow, and Wood himself. With the fifth issue, Wood sold the title to Bill Pearson for the sum of one dollar, with the proviso that Pearson publish all the stories that Wood had already accepted for the title and continue the magazine though at least issue #8, since Wood had sold some subscriptions promising at least that many issues.

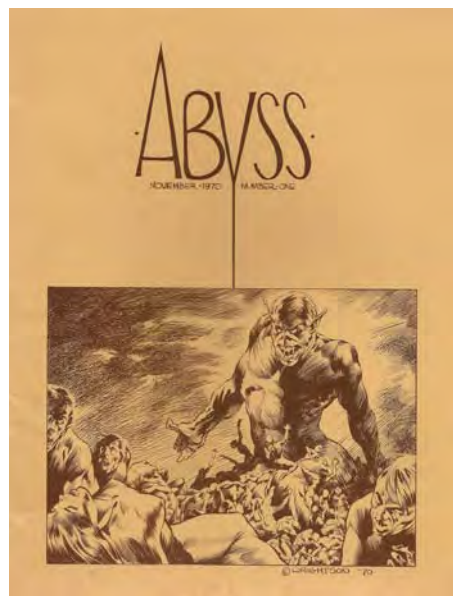
Pearson, in turn, published some of the most interesting stories of the era, including Vaughn Bodé's deeply moving (and very violent) "Colbalt 60"; the exceptional pairing of Edgar Allan Poe and Frank Frazetta on "The City by the Sea," using an old comic strip tryout by Frazetta to frame Poe's 19th century poem; and additional fine work by the likes of Jeff Jones, Bernie Wrightson, Mike Zeck, Nicola Cuti, Grass Green, Howard Chaykin, Alex Toth, Pearson himself, and many others.

Another interesting title was the 1970 effort *Abyss*, co-published by Jeff Jones, Bruce Jones (no relation), Bernie Wrightson, and Michael Kaluta along with major (uncredited) editorial help from Mary Skrenes. *Abyss* was probably a reaction

to the cancelation of the mainstream black-and-white title *Web of Horror*, for which all four men had been major contributors and which Wrightson and Bruce Jones had hoped to take over as co-editors before it went belly-up. *Abyss*' only issue featured mostly straight science-fiction stories, although Wrightson's tales were horror. All the stories were done in a style that would not have been allowed in mainstream comics due to Comic Code restrictions, and were mostly in a genre—science fiction—that the mainstream comics had deemed non-commercial years earlier. While no story stands out in particular, all of them were decently written, and the artwork was quite strong, making a very attractive magazine.

Then there were the efforts of the bar-mitzvah boys—Robert Gerstenhaber (now Gerson) and Adam Malin. The two teenagers were friends and lived across the street from each other.

Both were greatly interested in comics and heavily influenced by the fan-published comics history titles that had appeared in the 1960s, such as *Alter Ego*, which dealt with comics in general, and *Squa Tront* and *Spa Fon*, both of which focused



# Chapter Three

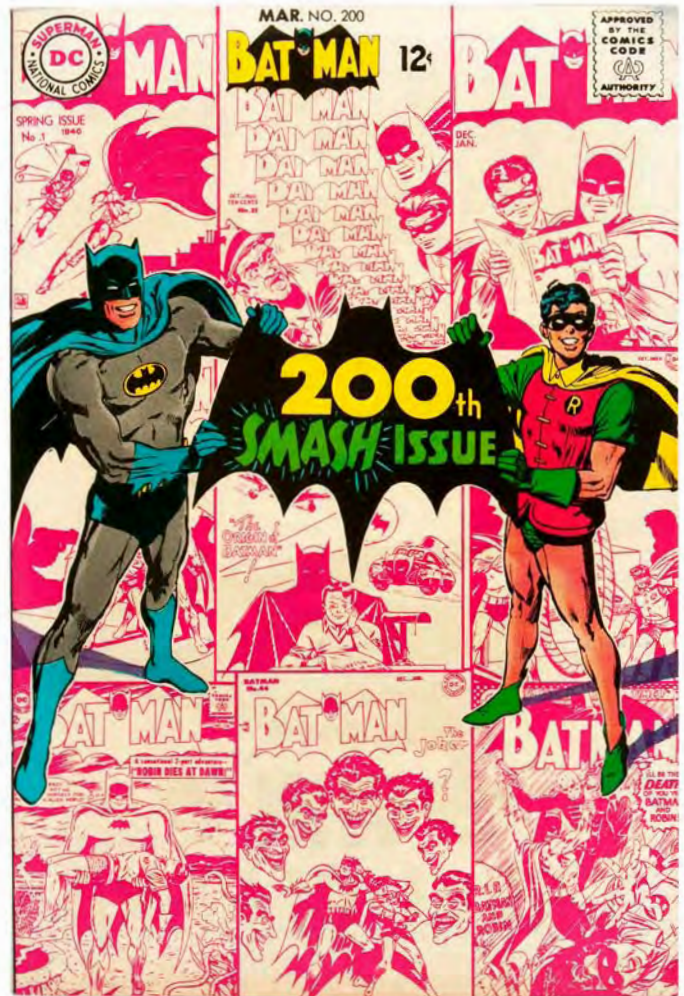
## AN INTERVIEW WITH MIKE FRIEDRICH

**RICHARD ARNDT:** *I'm speaking with Mike Friedrich, Star\*Reach's publisher and editor as well as a talent agent and a Silver Age writer for DC and Marvel. Can you tell us a little about your early days in the comics field?*

**MIKE FRIEDRICH:** Sure, I became a comic fan in high school and started writing letters to the various editors. I got a bunch of them published, mostly in DC comics. This would have been in the mid-1960s. A great many of them appeared in the comics that Julius Schwartz edited—*Flash*, *Green Lantern*, *Justice League*, *Batman*. When I turned 18, just before I graduated from high school, I was able to sell DC some comic scripts. I spent my college years working in New York writing scripts in the summer and out here in California the rest of the year while going to school. I continued writing for DC, and later Marvel, until the mid-1970s.

In 1972 I began to think about the small press. There were a lot of underground and small press comics being published here in the Bay area where I live, and that kind of inspired me to think about publishing artists' work that I knew from Marvel and DC. That eventually led in 1974 to the first issue of *Star\*Reach*. I was the publisher, editor, marketing director, swept the floor, etc., of that until 1979. In 1980 I had to fold that tent, and I went to Marvel Comics and launched their direct sales department. Out of that came setting up Diamond Comic Distributors. That's one of the things I did during that period. After a couple of years of that, I returned to California, and for 20-something years I ran a management company for artists—primarily comics but in television as well. That's the broad stroke overview.

I became a comic pro largely through making a connection to Julie Schwartz, writing him letters, and, eventually, he started writing back. I was growing up rapidly during this time, maturing as a comic reader—going from, “I like these comics. I don't like these other comics,” to, “I like or don't like these comics because of this reason or that reason.” Then the third step of, “You know, it would be better if you did this... or that,” and finally, “You know, I could do it better.” [laughs] That's kind of what led me to start to write.



Friedrich's debut at DC, writing *Batman*. How great is that?

Batman and all related characters ™ and © DC Comics

**RA:** *Did you find DC, in particularly Julie Schwartz, receptive to that approach?*

**MF:** Well, yes, he very much was. There were a lot of historical factors going on during this period that I was completely unaware of at the time. DC had been the king of the hill for a long time. But by the mid-1960s they were not very sure that they were going to have much of a future.





Another early Friedrich effort teamed him with Neal Adams, reintroducing Wildcat! Spectre, Wildcat™ and © DC Comics

Marvel had come along and was doing much better with much fewer titles. There was a sense within DC itself that they had become stale. They got worried that the kinds of stories they were telling weren't as current and interesting. There was this whole counter-culture [thing happening], with baby boomer kids growing up. Times were changing and the older editors at DC really felt lost. They particularly did not feel that the current people they had, who had been working for them for 15 or 20 years, were up to the challenge that Marvel presented or for the new audience that was out there. They didn't know where to go next.

Comics were traditionally never an attractive field to work in as a career. Now all of a sudden there were these comic fans who, *hey!*, wanted to become comic people. They wanted to be writers. They wanted to be artists. I was lucky enough to be in the first wave of that. I landed on the beach early [laughs] and was able to get a little bit of a foothold there at a much earlier age than people after me were able to do. It was probably the last time an 18-year-old writer was hired by DC or Marvel.

**RA:** *Jim Shooter may have had you beat in age. I think he was around 15 or 16 when he sold his first script for the "Legion of Superheroes."*



**MF:** Yeah, he was. That's my point. A couple of years later than this and a teenaged writer wouldn't have been able to get in. There was only a narrow window of time that I was fortunate to slip through, along with Gerry Conway, Cary Bates, Len Wein, and Marv Wolfman.

**RA:** *I do recall an interview in which Neal Adams mentioned that, in 1967, he was the first new artist that DC had hired in probably ten or 15 years, since about 1954.*

**MF:** Well, that was certainly true, meaning the first new artist. Jim Shooter and Cary Bates were writing for DC before Neal was drawing for them. DC had not brought in a new artist in a long, long time.

Of course, in the 1950s, the whole field had shrunk dramatically. So when there was any sort of revival, at either



DC or Marvel, who they hired first were people that they used to work with before the collapse. They would bring people back into the field.

Pretty soon, Marvel was facing the same problem as DC. By the early 1970s, Marvel had no old people to bring back anymore, so the doors began to open to new people. They needed fresh blood as well and began to draw on the fan talent as it evolved.

**RA:** *I noticed, and it seemed a rather curious thing at the time that, while Marvel had been very much the trendsetter during the 1960s, the new artists and writers seemed to have an easier time finding a home at DC than at Marvel. Marvel seemed very resistant to the idea of new blood.*

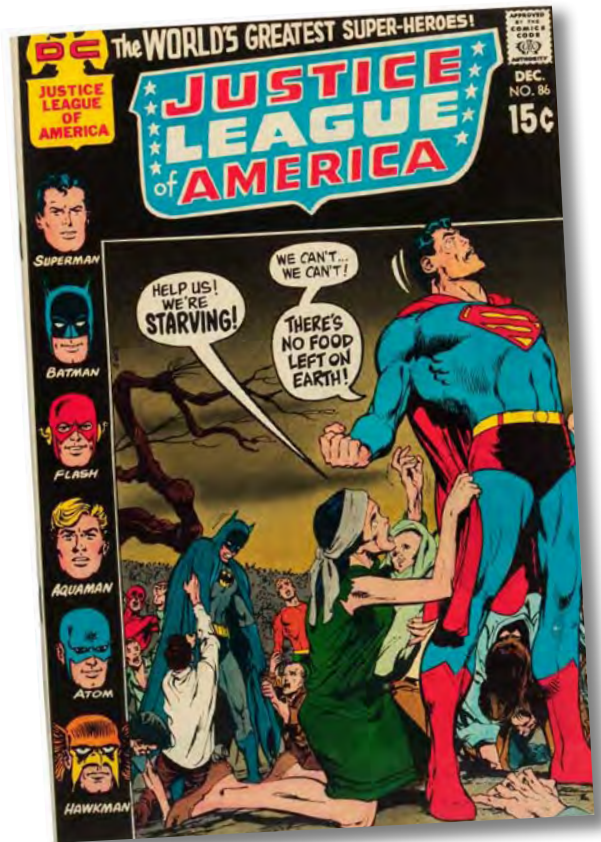
**MF:** Right. A company has a certain way of doing things, especially if they enjoy a certain amount of success. If it worked, why mess with a formula that was succeeding? Through the 1960s, Stan Lee basically brought back people that he'd worked with during the Atlas days and even earlier, back to the 1940s. Almost every artist that we think of as a Marvel artist during the 1960s and well into the 1970s had personal and professional dealings with Stan going way, way back. I wrote *Iron Man* in the early 1970s for about four years, and George Tuska drew it. George was probably [looking] towards the end of his career, but he'd started with Stan during World War II! That was just the kind of guy that Marvel hired. It literally took an entire generation of people retiring in the field before Marvel moved to get new people in.

**RA:** *Part of the need for new artists could also be due to that massive expansion of their titles from 1972–75. But at that point, they were also picking up a lot of artists from DC, like Bob Brown and Jim Mooney.*

**MF:** Yeah, well, by then DC had brought the talent in. DC was not able to control their collapse until well into the 1970s, so the pay rates for DC stayed kind of static, and Marvel, certainly by the mid-1970s, came to be the better place to work in terms of making money and having fun. It wasn't until Jeanette Kahn came in and turned things around that DC got to be more interesting again. Even then, it took five or six years to take root.

**RA:** *One thing I've noticed about your stories, for both DC and Marvel, was that they tended to be concerned with contemporary social issues more than most other writers of the time. In previous DC stories, the stories all seem to be centered in a world based on the small-town values and life of Superman's fictional hometown, Smallville. Even stories set in Gotham or Metropolis didn't appear to be particularly urban. Small fictional towns like Smallville, or Archie Comics' Riverdale, often seemed to be stuck in a time period where nothing happening in the stories seemed to reflect what was actually going on in the real world. I think yours were the first stories—at least at DC—to blatantly put characters into situations that were actually talked about in the news. Of course, a lot of those "relevant" stories today can seem to be pretty heavy handed in their approach, regardless of who was involved in the writing or art.*

**MF:** It's very embarrassing to look back at that stuff. [laughs] DC just didn't know how to deal with what Marvel was doing in the 1960s. Stan was acting like he was this hip guy. He came across



DC's social concerns crop up in the pages of *Justice League of America* with Friedrich's hip new approach.

Justice League and all related characters™ and © DC Comics





(left) Another early effort, this time with Berni Wrightson for *Web of Horror* #3.



(right) Skywald's first horror magazine, *Nightmare* #1 (Dec. 1970), with cover art by Brendan Lynch.

© respective owners

with the notion that young readers counted, that they were important to him and to Marvel. His literary voice resonated with an older reader than what DC was reaching. Stan was hitting the junior high school age, while DC was hitting grammar school kids. Kids who read DC had older brothers who were reading Marvel, and their friends down the street were reading Marvel. If you were older, you read Marvel, and, for that simple reason, DC began to look decidedly uncool. Stan acted like this was some big college sensation, which was a complete fabrication. But it made the high school kids feel like they were sophisticated.

DC had no idea how to make that approach work. Practically all those people who had produced their earliest stuff, which had been done in the 1940s, were gone. The people who created those characters and those stories weren't around, and there were a bunch of resident writers and artists, who had taken over from the original creators, who were just told to keep on doing what they'd done before. So DC brought in the new people, and like I said, I was one of the earliest ones. We were encouraged to write contemporary stories, to be hip—whatever that actually meant to us.

Well, let me tell you, in high school and college, I was not a hip person. [laughs] I was aware of what was around me, of the things that I was having to deal with in my regular life. So those were the issues that were out there. The

Vietnam War, for example, which was quite unpopular—we were all worried that we were going to get involved in it personally. The whole civil rights movement had exploded. The environmental movement was developing. Women's rights were coming to the fore. It was a very turbulent cultural time. It was hard not to reflect that in my work.

I was not very well trained as a writer. I was completely self-taught. I did not really have strong craft at that age, so I read that stuff now and I cringe because it's just so clunky. But there was a bit of life to it.

**RA:** *I should probably note that when I was helping the late Al Hewetson (the one-time editor of the Skywald line) with his Illustrated History of the Skywald Horror-Mood, he didn't have credits for the early issues of either Nightmare or Psycho because he wasn't the editor there at the time. The first two or three issues didn't have any credits at all, except in the mast-head on the title page. A lot of the writers mentioned there I don't think even existed. Anyway, he wanted to know if I could figure out who had written the two or three original stories in those early issues, and yours was fairly easy to figure out because your stories tended to center around some kind of social issue, whereas Marv Wolfman, for example, had zero social commentary in his work. I think you wrote a story called, "The Pollution Monsters" that Don Heck illustrated.*

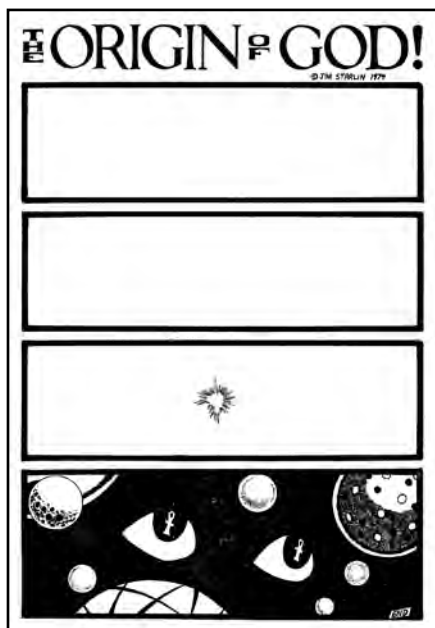
# Chapter Four

## THE STAR\*REACH CHECKLIST

### STAR\*REACH

1. cover: Howard Chaykin/back cover: Jim Starlin (Apr. 1974)

- Editorial [Mike Friedrich/Lee Marrs] 2/3p [text article, frontis]
- Observations [Mike Friedrich/Neal Adams] 1/3p [frontis]
- ...The Birth of Death [Jim Starlin] 8p
- Death Building [Jim Starlin/Jim Starlin and Al Milgrom] 7p
- Fish Myths [Steve Skeates] 2p
- Suburban Fish [Steve Skeates] 2p
- A Tale of Sword & Sorcery [Ed Hicks/Walt Simonson] 12p
- Cody Starbuck [Howard Chaykin] 16p
- The Origin of God! [Jim Starlin] 1p



Jim Starlin's one-pager from *Star\*Reach* #1.  
The Origin of God! © Jim Starlin

**NOTES:** \$.75 for 48 pages. Publisher and editor: Mike Friedrich. Starlin's cover was originally intended for the front cover, and when the issue was reprinted in Nov. 1975, the covers were reversed. I much prefer Starlin's cover as a front cover. After all, who doesn't like hot, naked, green alien babes? The order of the stories was also rearranged in subsequent printings. The reprintings are dated Nov. 1975, Apr. 1977, and Mar. 1978. "Observations" is in comic strip format, and the art looks like Adams whipped it out in about three minutes. Both it and the editorial were dropped after the first printing and replaced (in 1977) with a title page drawing by Becky Wilson. This first issue was originally planned as a standard 32-page comic with just the Starlin and Chaykin material appearing, but Friedrich expanded the book shortly before publication. The Hicks/Simonson story was actually done when Simonson was in college (Hicks was a college buddy of his) and intended for a college newspaper. Because of the different requirements for tabloid and comic book page sizes, Simonson added the mini-strip of the falling man at the bottom of each page, the only part of the story actually done for the *Star\*Reach* presentation. Steve Skeates, a long-time comic writer, had previously published similar "fish tales" in the fanzine *Phase* in 1971. The best story here would be Starlin's "...The Birth of Death," while Starlin, Chaykin, and Simonson share best art honors. Even Skeates' quirky art is fun to look at. An impressive first issue.

2. cover: Neal Adams/back cover: Lee Marrs (Apr. 1975)

- Creativity Unchained [Mike Friedrich/Lee Marrs] 1p [text article, frontis]



- Stephanie Starr: In the Light of Future Days... [Mike Friedrich/Dick Giordano] 20p
- Earthprobe: All a World of Dreamers [Mal Warwick/Lee Marrs] 11p
- The Return of the Fish [Steve Skeates] 2p
- I've Got the Power! [Jim Starlin/Jim Starlin and Al Milgrom] 3p
- The Visitor... [Jim Starlin/Jim Starlin and Al Milgrom] 3p
- Key Club [John Workman] 8p
- Reincarnation [Mike Vosburg] 1p

**NOTES:** \$1.25 for 48 pages. Adams' cover is quite striking. Stephanie Starr was originally intended for a DC title and was altered (with much nudity added) for its appearance here. This issue was reprinted, with



Friedrich's editorial replaced by the title page art of Becky Wilson, in Oct. 1976 and Dec. 1977. Since my copy is one of the later reprintings, I suspect but cannot confirm that the stories were rearranged, as they were in #1, for these reprintings. John Workman made his professional comics debut here and also provided the best story and art with his delightful "Key Club." Other good story work appeared from Jim Starlin, Mike Vosburg, and the Friedrich/Giordano team. If one doesn't consider Steve Skeates' fish stories to be a serial (and I don't), then the hippie SF comedy "Earthprobe" was *Star\*Reach's* first ongoing storyline.

3. cover: Frank Brunner (Oct. 1975) [wraparound cover]
- Editorial [Mike Friedrich] 1p [text article, frontis]
  - Dragonus: The Wizard's Venom [Frank Brunner] 10p
  - I Hunger and I Wait... [Mark A. Worden/Mark Cohen] 5p [poem]
  - Earthprobe: On the Shoals of Space [Mal Warwick/Mal Walwick and Lee Marrs] 12p
  - And Sleep the Long Night in Peace! [Mal Warwick/Bob Smith and John Workman] 7p

- Linda Lovecraft: High Priestess of Sexual Fantasy [Mike Vosburg] 9p
- Wooden Ships on the Water [Mike Friedrich/Steve Leialoha] 5p [from the song by David Crosby, Steven Stills, and Paul Kantner]

**NOTES:** Brunner's story is a sequel to "Dragonus," which appeared in *Phase #1* (Sept. 1971) and was reprinted in Marvel's black-and-white magazine *Monsters Unleashed* in Nov. 1973. Vosburg's "Linda Lovecraft" series is a forerunner to his recent *Lori Lovecraft* series. It was clearly inspired by the stories of H.P. Lovecraft, with a tip of the hat to the porn "actress" Linda Lovelace. "I Hunger and I Wait" is a poem in comic form, while "Wooden Ships on the Water" has a story woven around the song lyrics from the Crosby, Stills, and Nash song. Brunner's wraparound cover, featuring Dragonus, is quite striking, and his sword-and-sorcery effort featured the best story and art for this issue, but fine work also appears from Leialoha, Vosburg, Friedrich, Worden, and Cohen. On the "Earthprobe" story, Mal Warwick provided layouts with Lee Marrs providing the finished art. Reprintings of this title, with Friedrich's editorial replaced by Becky Wilson's title page art, appeared in July 1977 and June 1978.

4. cover: Howard Chaykin (Mar. 1976) [wraparound cover]

- Editorial [Mike Friedrich] 1p [text article, frontis]
- Starbuck [Howard Chaykin] 11p
- Linda Lovecraft: The White Slavers of Scrofula! [Mary Skrenes/Mike Vosburg] 10p
- Marginal Incident [Steve Leialoha] 8p
- Sherlock Duck: The Adventure of the Animated Government [Bob Smith] 5p
- Earthprobe: Hidden Worlds, Hidden Dreams [Mal Warwick and Lee Marrs/ Lee Marrs] 11p
- Klik! [John Workman] 4p

**NOTES:** My copy of this issue is a reprint, but the title page that replaces Friedrich's original editorial is a misprint of *Star\*Reach* #10's title page, so I've no information at this time on reprint dates. The "Sherlock Duck" story appears to have a missing page, as the page numbers go from 1-4 to



Frank Brunner's "Dragonus."  
Dragonus © Frank Brunner

page 6, but Mike Friedrich tells me that that was a deliberate joke. “Sherlock Duck” would also appear to be a preview of sorts to *Star\*Reach’s* upcoming *Quack!* comic. Chaykin’s “Starbuck” features a much older looking Cody Starbuck than in his first appearance in #1. “Clik!” was a last-minute replacement for another Workman illustrated story, “Comicbook Writer,” that was to have been scripted by Gerry Conway. When Conway became the new editor-in-chief of the Marvel line, he couldn’t finish his story, and Workman’s solo effort, “Clik!” was substituted. With this issue *Star\*Reach* began a fairly regular quarterly schedule. Best artwork and story here belong to Steve Leialoha’s gentle “Marginal Incident,” while other interesting art and stories appear from Chaykin, Vosburg, Workman, and Marrs. Mary Skrenes becomes the new scripter on Mike Vosburg’s “Linda Lovecraft” series. The “Earthprobe” entry was noticeably more serious in its final appearance.

5. cover: Howard Chaykin (July 1976) [wraparound cover]

- Editorial [Mike Friedrich] 1p [text article, frontis]
- Gideon Faust, Warlock at Large [Len Wein/Howard Chaykin] 12p
- The Gods of Mount Olympus in Ancient Mythology: The Beginning of All Things [Johnny Achziger/Joe Staton] 16p
- A Nice Place to Live, But... [Frank Brunner] 1p
- Mandy, The Girl with the Most Comics in America [John Workman] 1p
- Waters of Requitall [Lee Marrs] 8p
- Linda Lovecraft: Midnight in the Medina [Mary Skrenes/Mike Vosburg] 10p

**NOTES:** Chaykin delivers a great cover for the debut of the interesting Gideon Faust. Two more Gideon Faust stories appeared in *Heavy Metal* in 1979 and 1981, both in color. “The Gods of Mount Olympus” is technically reprinted from Johnny Achziger’s self-published tabloid-sized fanzine of the same title. However, it is somewhat rewritten and largely redrawn for its appearance here. Regardless of its origins, the story and art (particularly Staton’s art) are superb; the best in an already strong issue. Lee Marrs’ storytelling ability takes a noticeable upward swing here. With this



A nice one-pager from John Workman.

Mandy © John Workman

issue *Star\*Reach* really began to come into its own. Reprinted in Apr. 1977 and June 1978 with Friedrich’s original editorial replaced by Becky Wilson’s title page art.

6. cover: Jeff Jones (Oct. 1976)

- Editorial [Mike Friedrich] 1p [text article, frontis]
- Elric of Melnibone: The Prisoner of Pan Tang [Eric Kimball/Robert Gould] 20p [from the character created by Michael Moorcock]

- Childsong [Gary Petras/Gene Day and Steve Leialoha] 3p
- The Gods of Mount Olympus in Ancient Mythology: Zeus and Prometheus [Johnny Achziger/Joe Staton] 15p
- Out of Space, Out of Time [Gary Lyda] 8p

**NOTES:** Jones’ cover is a superb rendering of Elric, with Bernie Wrightson serving as the model. It is repeated sans copy on the back cover. The Kimball/Gould Elric story



# Chapter Five

## THE STARS OF STAR\*REACH

### AN INTERVIEW WITH LEE MARRS

*Lee Marrs' career began as an assistant for Golden Age artist Tex Blaisdell. She became one of the founding female members of the underground comix movement of the early 1970s and was one of the few artists who moved freely between underground and mainstream work. Besides her Star\*Reach material, she did humorous strips for both DC's Plop! and Marvel's Crazy. She also wrote stories for Wonder Woman, Batman, Zatanna, "The Viking Prince," Indiana Jones, and individual stories for DC's Weird Mystery Tales and House of Secrets.*

**RICHARD ARNDT:** Welcome! To start off, what led to your underground strip, "Pudge, Girl Blimp"?

**LEE MARRS:** When I moved out to California, I was working as a television graphic artist. The television studios were having cutbacks, and, within a month of moving out here, I was laid off along with a couple of other people who had just been hired. I was doing a variety of art jobs and ran into a couple of guys who wanted to start an alternative features service for college newspapers and community newspapers. So one of the things we did, in addition to my doing cartoons and illustrations, was that we started running cartoon strips and comic pages in the papers.

That got me aware of underground comics, which I had never heard of on the East Coast. I saw people doing their very own stories, developing their very own characters and keeping the rights to them. The idea that there was no money in these kinds of strips was not clear yet. [laughs] So I

had all kinds of different ideas and had gotten to know—through Alternative Feature Services—a number of the underground comic people, including Gilbert Sheldon, who did the *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*.

I brought him a lot of the work I had done and asked, "What do you suggest?" His advice was to come up with a character, or a set of characters, about whom you could do lots and lots of stories. That was the way to really get into this field. Not to do a bunch of different stories with different characters in different genres, but to develop a character and keep going with that.

I came up with a storyline featuring a central character: a teenybopper intellectual who was an outsider—very *Mad* magazine existentialist. But once I started working on it, penciling that character, she became someone else. She became the



Lee Marrs has a drink in this jam piece of self-illustrations by the creators of *Wimmen's Comix*.

© respective owners

Pudge, Girl Blimp character. I started with someone else and the character changed herself and just came alive with her own personality. I thought to myself that I had all these friends just starting out with life experiences that had not seen the light of day in print, books, short stories, anywhere. So the idea of taking all their stories and having them happen to one character seemed like a possibility for endless stories—years of stories.

I finished up one story and went to Ron Turner, the publisher at Last Gasp Eco-Funnies. He was interested in publishing the book. Well, not actually publishing the book, but he said, “Look, there’s a bunch of women getting together to put out an anthology book. Why don’t you meet with them.” Now, I already knew Trina Robbins, because we had hired her to do a Panthea series for the Alternative Feature Service. She was going to be one of the people in the book.

So I got in with the *Wimmen’s Comix* folks as a founding mommy. But it was obvious that the Pudge story didn’t really fit in with the editorial direction of *Wimmen’s Comix* #1. So then I heard from Ron that if the women’s comic anthology did well then we would see about *Pudge*. *Wimmen’s Comix* #1 actually sold very well, so I worked up the first book, the first issue of *The Further Fattening Adventures of Pudge, Girl Blimp*.

**RA:** *I guess I should note here that I actually just read the complete series a couple of weeks ago, and I thought they were quite charming and, in a rather odd way, quite down-to-earth. I enjoyed them a lot. They’re time capsules now of the 1970s but an interesting look at that time. Plus, they’re still quite funny.*

**LM:** Thanks very much. Good to hear that. It’s interesting to me that, of all the decades of comics I’ve done, *Pudge* seems to have struck the biggest chord. I’ve got miles of letters from all kinds of people. Most of the people reading comics at the time were pre-teen boys. They loved her as being like them! Everybody thinks that the party, you know, is happening in some other person’s apartment. “The action is wherever I’m not.” So teenage boys identified with her non-hip status, with her not really understanding what was going on. Fatness was only a symbol.

*Pudge* was one of the most straightforward books around. Nobody edited it. It was one of the most direct things I’ve ever done, and it really seems to have struck a chord with people. The most rewarding aspect of doing the series has been the genuine resonance it struck in so many people’s hearts.

But I had created a character whose main characteristic was naiveté. So it turned out that she really didn’t have endless numbers of stories. It would be false, I think, to have continued without her gaining some experience and wisdom. After a time, she would have just seemed stupid to just continually have that kind of attitude. I ended the strip after three issues. She actually has appeared in other forms in lots of other places

as a comic strip, as a character in a comic strip or in women’s TV newsletters, and in various fundraisers for various causes, doing some short stories with her. But the idea of continuing her as an ongoing book, in my mind, was limited. There just wasn’t enough of a storyline to sustain that.

**RA:** *Much of the underlying themes, even in stories where it wasn’t explicitly talked about, was Pudge’s continual quest to lose her virginity. And in the last issue she lost it, so it did seem a natural place to end the ongoing series.*

**LM:** Yes, exactly! There weren’t six seasons of stories there. And I’ve always hated things that carried on after their expiration date.

**RA:** *In 1975 you started doing the science-fiction hippie series, “Earthprobe,” with Mal Warwick in Star\*Reach...*



Marrs’ back cover to Star\*Reach #2—Earthprobe!

Earthprobe © Mal Warwick and Lee Marrs.

**LM:** Yeah, Mal was writing them and I was drawing them. We really didn’t work well together. I was living with him at the time. He was a good science-fiction writer. It seemed like a good idea, but he and I had such different ideas about what made a good story that the awkwardness of that series was quite clear. It came out in the quality of the work. We didn’t do any more stories together.

**RA:** *I noticed that you scripted the last episode from Mal’s plot. Usually, you can figure out that there is something going on backstage when the writer starts doing the art or the artist starts writing the book.*





**LM:** Yeah, when that happens there's something going on. Well, I had always written and drawn my own stories. I've nearly always written most of my own material, and I'd started doing that in the undergrounds. Many editors in the mainstream see me as someone who can both write and draw her own material, but mostly for humorous stuff. At a certain point... I could write adventure things, but nobody liked my drawing style for adventure stories, except for Mike Friedrich.

So I started doing science-fiction stuff for Mike. It's important to remember that no company was doing science fiction at the time in mainstream comics. I mean, they did some sci-fi stuff in a superhero style or Barry Windsor-Smith's *Conan* in a fantasy style, but not straight science fiction.

**RA:** I've noted the mainstream publishers' reluctance at the time to do straight science fiction as well. I quite liked your stories "Waters of Requitul," "Headtrips," and your serial "Stark's Quest," all of which were science-fiction stories that you did for Star\*Reach.

**LM:** Well, thank you. "Stark's Quest" was one of my favorites, really. Mike Friedrich's publishing venture folded right when he was planning to gather some of the work that had appeared in *Star\*Reach* and put it out again in a more elaborate form, like some of the other science-fiction comics magazines that were popping up. He hadn't started his agency yet, so quite a few things sort of fell between the cracks. Some of the work I did that was to have appeared in *Star\*Reach* ended up in *Heavy Metal*, and then later I sold some of my stuff to *Epic Illustrated*, to Archie Goodwin, who also liked my graphic style.

I actually re-did the first chapter of "Stark's Quest" in color, later on, but Mike didn't find a place for it.

**RA:** That's a shame because I always thought it would have made a pretty good collection.

**LM:** I thought so too. As an agent, Mike was a really straightforward creative person, in the sense of doing deals, making contracts, that kind of stuff, but he was not ever a traditionally aggressive agent. At least, not in the sense of running around trying to find where some project could go. If an opportunity appeared, he would recognize it and go for it, but he was not the type of person to pound pavements looking for an opening. Graphic novels, as such, didn't exist in book companies' universes. So it would have taken some enormous persuading.

I actually think "Stark's Quest" would make a good movie. There's certainly enough action in the plot. So... hmm... who do I know who knows Uma Thurman?

**RA:** How did you meet Friedrich?

**LM:** How I got hooked up with Mike was that I met him in New York when we were both visiting. He was just getting ready to move back to California and the Bay area. It was like, "Oh, you're from California!" At that time, he was going to start an art agency with some of the artists who had moved to California from New York. He told me that maybe when I got back to California I could maybe work for the art agency too, maybe. I'd always worked in other fields than comics. I'd worked for advertising agencies, that kind of thing. So I went in to see them, but was unimpressed with what they had in mind. I didn't think it would



(left) A Mike Friedrich/Lee Marrs team-up. (right and next page) Lee's humor work, a tale from *Quack!* #6 and *Imagine* #3.

Mariah © Mike Friedrich and Lee Marrs. Ersatz, The Fleet Foot Foogle © Lee Marrs.

fly, and it didn't. But later, he was going to set up *Star\*Reach* and he put out a call for stories. I answered the call.

**RA:** You actually did quite a lot of work for *Star\*Reach*. There were two serials and a fair number of one-off stories.

**LM:** Mike was very open to ideas. Unlike many publishers, he didn't have a strict editorial policy. I worked really fast and Mike had a pretty reasonable publishing schedule. He had an issue come out every three or four months, so it wasn't hard to put out that many pages. Most of the books I worked on that were commercial came out every month, so for those you really had to bust your hand to make deadlines. I was dependable. There was some kind of formula about comics—I don't know who said it first—that states that artists and writers get regular work if they're easy to work with, or that they're any good, or that they can make the deadlines, or any combination of the three. If you could do all three you were gold. I could usually manage two out of three.

**RA:** Do you have any particular story of your own that you personally think is really good?

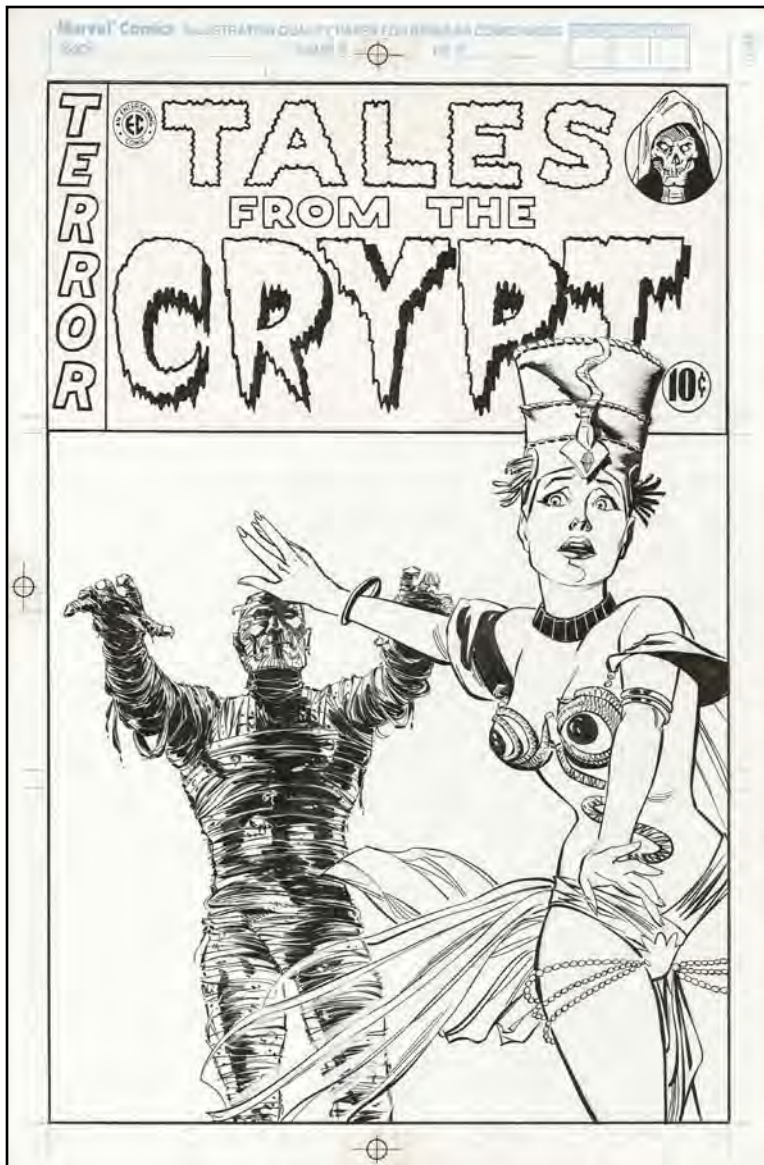
**LM:** I really liked "Stark's Quest." In looking back, I really wish that one had got around more. There were some other individual stories that I really liked a lot. I did one called "My Deadly, My Love" for *Wimmen's Comix*. For me, that hit a lot of good notes, making fun of the woman-in-jeopardy type of story along with real estate development and a sort of cruel but attractive lesbian love story all in one clump.

**RA:** It's too bad "Stark's Quest" didn't make it into Epic Illustrated as one of their color serials.

**LM:** Yeah, but I don't think they were really interested in anything that had been published anywhere before. Unless it was a heavily redone version, such as "The Sacred and the Profane."

I've been thinking about putting out the *Pudge, Girl Blimp* series as a graphic novel. All three issues collected, plus the other appearances that she's made over the years as one of those print on demand things. *Pudge* actually was going to be a graphic novel in the early 1980s. St. Martin's Press was interested in doing it. The editor was really gung-ho, and it proceeded pretty far along the process, but then





(left) One of Mike Vosburg's faux *Tales from the Crypt* covers used in the cut scenes for the TV show.

(right) Vosburg storyboards for the film *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

Tales from the Crypt™ and ©Tales from the Crypt Holdings  
The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe ©Walden Media

the TV show *Tales from the Crypt*. He'd introduce the story, and they'd cut to a faux version of an EC cover, and those would be mine. That was my job for a number of years.

More recently I've been doing storyboards for music videos. I've storyboarded videos for Eminem, Marilyn Manson, Gwen Stefani, Dr. Dre—a bunch of people. The last big thing I worked on was [as] the lead storyboard artist on *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Prince Caspian*.

I still work in comics too. I'm doing another—she's not called Linda Lovecraft anymore, but Lori Lovecraft—but it's another *Lori Lovecraft* graphic novel that will be coming out within six months to a year.

**RA:** Cool! I've always liked that character.

**MV:** I'm surprised that you've seen them! [laughs]

**RA:** Actually, that's the part of your comics career that I'm most familiar with. I've been a fan of Lori Lovecraft since she was named Linda, back in the 1970s.

**MV:** Yeah, that was the stuff that I was doing for *Star\*Reach* at the time. That was her name back then—a play off H. P. Lovecraft and the porn actress Linda Lovelace. But I decided I had to change her name because I was always getting people coming up to me and saying, "Hey! You're the guy who does that Linda Lovelace comic!" Neither the Linda nor Lori versions were porn books, and I felt that I needed some product identification that actually applied to the comic I was drawing, so I changed her name. I also thought that the name Lori had a more mystical feel to it, like Lorelei.

**RA:** I was a huge *Star\*Reach* fan, and Linda Lovecraft was one of my favorite characters. I especially liked the way you combined the mystic storylines of a *Dr. Strange* or *Dr. Fate* type character with the erotic or cheesecake market. I think I ought to note that your material was and still is somewhat more innocent than the type of erotica that routinely appears today. The 1970s adult film market was quite a bit different than it

is today. Back then, the adult filmmakers appeared to be actually working on the concept that adult porn could also have a story. That concept has generally been pretty much abandoned, but there were some interesting attempts to revive that in recent years. Mixing adult film references and H. P. Lovecraft was new at the time. I don't think anybody had tried that before. For me, it was a pretty interesting approach to horror. Lots of [mostly] implied sex but none of the grossness that often marred the underground comix.

**MV:** Yeah, for me it was more that I really wanted to do something whimsical. I had worked in underground comix—that's where I got my first start—but you hit the nail on the head. Underground comix were either a political statement or pornography or both. At the time I really wasn't interested in doing either of those types of stories. Nowadays, I'm afraid I might be great at underground comix, because I have a lot of feelings politically.

**RA:** Everybody does these days.

**MV:** The other problem, and I found this with more recent Lori versions, is that, when you're dealing with erotic material, half the people want to put you in jail just for doing it and the other half don't want to buy it because it's too tame. It's pretty hard to find an audience there.

**RA:** It's like erotic novels. For a while in the late 1960s and early 1970s, some of them were actually half-way decently written and about a lot of different topics. Now they're all kink. There's nothing in-between or even to the left or right of that. That's fine if that's all you like, but it's like ice cream—every so often it's fun to try a different flavor.

**MV:** And the problem is, "What I like in erotic material is sensual, but what you like is perverted."

**RA:** Well... thanks. [laughs] No, I know what you're saying...

**MV:** "My own personal stuff is reasonable, but what you like is weird and dirty." You just can't win with that. People ask me, usually with Lori or Linda Lovecraft, if I like drawing pornography, and I think to myself that the only pornography that I ever drew was *G.I. Joe*.

**RA:** [laughs] Actually, I've never considered either version of Ms. Lovecraft as porn, simply kinda sexy, a bawdy romp. Nothing to really make you cringe.

**MV:** The other problem is that there's nothing, or not much anyways, in either "Linda" or *Lori* that you probably wouldn't find in any popular woman's magazine, because that's usually where I go for my swipes. The problem is that by their nature, by the fact that they are comic books, that in and of itself means that, for some people, the medium is for kids only. There's resistance to the subject matter under those limits. It's just not acceptable for some people that comics deal with any type of sexuality, under any circumstances, period. It's a cultural thing, and every culture has that thinking to some degree, even if the specific things are different in each culture. That applies whether it's Japanese or American or European culture.

**RA:** Well, to move this back to *Star\*Reach* a little more—how did you find out about *Star\*Reach* and how did you submit your work there?

**MV:** That goes back to the Detroit Comic Mafia again. When I was working in comics and going into New York, the guys I would stay with were Al Milgrom and Jim Starlin. Mike Friedrich, who was the *Star\*Reach* editor, at one time was renting a place with





# Chapter Six

## THE INDEPENDENTS DURING STAR\*REACH'S RUN

**D**uring *Star\*Reach's* 1974–79 run, a number of worthy (and some not so worthy) independent comics appeared to challenge *Star\*Reach's* dominance of independent publishing.

The most noteworthy are as follows:

### HOT STUF' (1974-78)

Published by Sal Quartuccio, this independent comic matched *Star\*Reach's* quality and format for much of its run. The first two issues were magazine-sized, but then the title changed to the same comic size as *Star\*Reach*.

However, *Hot Stuf'* was no simple imitator but maintained its own editorial identity throughout its run. There is no hint of amateur hour in this title (nor was there in *Star\*Reach*). The storytelling and art are done by professionals or those who were good enough to appear professional in their early efforts. Sterling, and often quite stunning work appeared from a lengthy list of contributors including Ken Barr, Richard Corben, Rich Buckler, Neal Adams, Bil Maher (and whatever happened to this fellow—his art was intriguing and his storytelling decent), Ernie Colón, Gray Morrow (early chapters of *Orion*—reprinted in 2012—appeared here), Robert Kline, Herb Arnold, Jan Strnad, Alex Toth, Tim Kirk, Rich Larson, Tim Boxell, and Michael Kaluta.

I should note that Rich Larson has maintained his relationship with publisher Sal Quartuccio. Quartuccio continues to publish some very well done cheesecake-style artbooks with Larson being one of the leading contributors.



Number One • \$2.50



## ORB (1974-76)

A Canadian independent title, published by James Waley and Matt Rust, *Orb* was probably the most influential Canadian fanzine to appear during this time period. Mike Friedrich was impressed enough to send in a fan letter and to contact Ken Steacy (and through him, Dean Motter) after Steacy's professional debut here.

Besides Steacy and Motter's efforts, *Orb* also featured strong work from Gene Day, Jim Craig, Bruce Bezaire, John Allison, Ronn Sutton, Mary Skrenes, Steve Skeates, and T. Casey Brennan. Although there is also a fairly large amount of amateur art and stories appearing, this title is still well worth looking for and purchasing.



## GRAVE TALES (1974)

Published by Bruce Hamilton and edited by *witzend* publisher/editor Bill Pearson, this was a one-shot title, although it was not intended to be so. Its main claim to fame was that it introduced Don Newton, who'd been doing spectacular pin-up pieces for the fanzines, and was his professional debut as an artist. Charlton was impressed enough with his work and this title to offer Pearson an editorial position and Newton regular work on their mystery titles, which in turn led to his stunning work on Chalton's *Phantom* and DC's *Batman*.

## BIG APPLE COMIX (1975)

Published and edited by Flo Steinberg, in many ways this was more of an underground comic (as you can tell by the title) than a ground-level title, but it did include strong examples of each. Steinberg was Marvel's *Girl Friday* in the 1960s and Warren's *Captain Company*'s coordinator during the 1970s.

By all accounts Steinberg is a sweet lady, so the sheer raunchiness of this title may come as a shock for a first-time reader. Be warned—there is a lot of explicit sex here. Still, it is well done raunchiness and features a time-capsule look at New York circa 1975.

Stong work appears here from Mike Ploog, Wally Wood, Archie Goodwin, Alan Weiss, Al Williamson, Neal Adams, Larry Hama, Herb Trimpe, Marie Severin, and Paul Kirchner.





# Chapter Seven

## STAR\*REACH DURING ITS RUN

To a great extent, *Star\*Reach's* influences during its run could really only be seen in hindsight. One result that could be seen directly during that time was Gene Day's move from obscure fan artist to a major mainstream artist, first as an inker on Marvel's *Master of Kung Fu*, then as the full artist on that strip as well as an inker, usually over Carmine Infantino's pencils, on *Star Wars*. By the time of his premature death in 1982, he was gearing up to take over one of the Batman titles for DC.

Howard Chaykin continued to mature and grow, both as an artist and a writer, although during this time period he was rarely the lead artist on a mainstream book. Much of his work appeared in back stories, black-and-white efforts, and on an increasing number of paperback and book assignments.

Craig Russell's solo art efforts were at *Star\*Reach* and the new independent publisher Eclipse. For the mainstream companies at this time, his contributions were largely as an inker.

Lee Marrs found success at the big two companies, not as the dramatic SF writer/artist she was at *Star\*Reach* but doing humor strips for DC's *Plop!* and Marvel's black-and-white magazine *Crazy*.

Simonson moved directly into the mainstream. Prior to his college effort appearing in *Star\*Reach* #1, he'd already done a number of stories for DC's war anthologies. Fame came just prior to his *Star\*Reach* debut when he teamed up with writer Archie Goodwin to do a backup strip in *Detective Comics* featuring an updated version of the old 1940s super-



Gene Day's cover art for *Master of Kung Fu* #104.

Shang-Chi, Master of Kung Fu™ and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

# Chapter Eight

## THE COLLAPSE

**S**tar\*Reach collapsed primarily due to a lack of funding. It was, as a publishing entity, largely a one-man operation, and, after the financial debacle with the initial color books and inserts, Friedrich didn't have enough money to continue publishing.

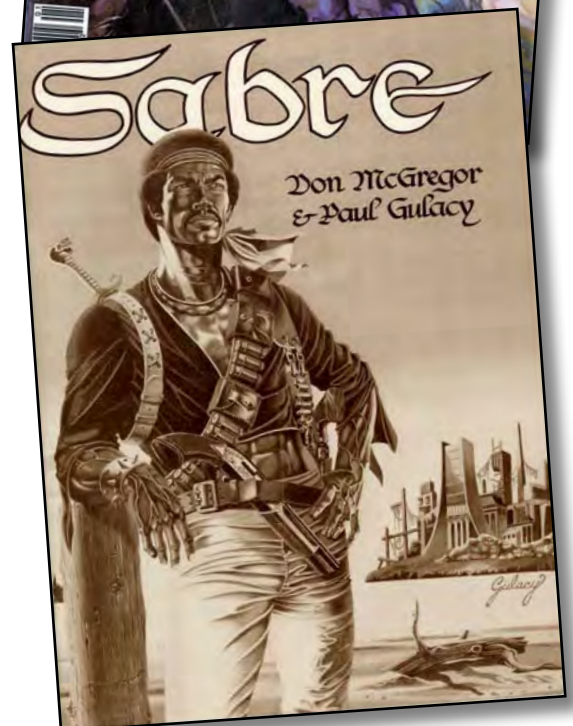
Even though he had a contract to do a Batman novella, he didn't have DC monies to fund it, and restrictions placed on him from both the creators and DC aborted the project before it was fairly started.

He was also, to some extent, a victim of his own success. The innovations and improved storytelling abilities that many of his earliest (and strongest) contributors displayed led to major offers from the mainstream comics companies. Time spent working for those companies meant less time available for *Star\*Reach*. Friedrich couldn't afford to keep his best artists and didn't have the money or, probably, the time to seek out the newer, more hungry artists.

In addition, his own success, combined with the advent of *Heavy Metal*, prompted the various mainstream companies to do something that would have been unthinkable in previous decades, namely to offer the comics creators not only a freer market in terms of what they wanted to produce, but one in which they could own, or at least co-own, their own material.

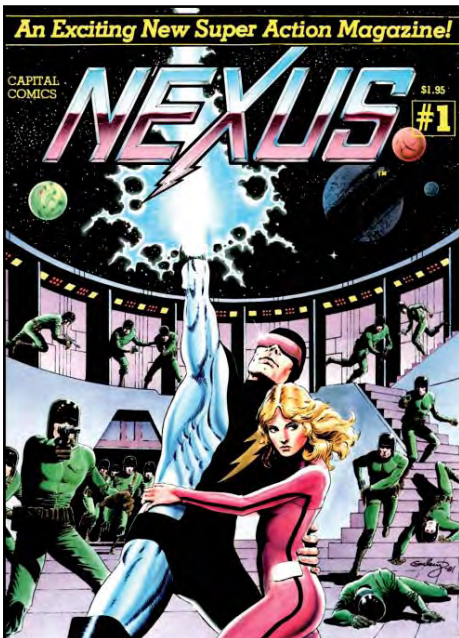
The Archie Goodwin-edited magazine *Epic Illustrated* published stories in both color and black-and-white and displayed much of the same editorial viewpoints that *Star\*Reach* had accomplished so much with. It was an anthology title that was relatively liberal in what it restricted and what it did not, emphasized the use of non-superhero stories, was innovative and classy in its production and look, and attracted many of the best artists and writers in the business at the time, including a large number of *Star\*Reach* vets.

There was also competition coming from new publishers who saw and liked what *Star\*Reach* had been doing and were moving to put their own spin on it. Eclipse, headed by Dean Mullaney, launched their first publication, *Sabre*—a black-and-white graphic novella by Don McGregor and Paul Gulacy—in 1978 and followed it with a second black-and-white book, this time a collection from *Star\*Reach* contributor P. Craig Russell, then a third book, *Detectives, Inc.*, this time in color by McGregor and Marshall Rogers. The latter book was one of the most innovative of the early 1980s in terms of storyline and production values.



Epic Illustrated © Marvel Characters, Inc.  
Sabre™ and © Don McGregor and Paul Gulacy.





(clockwise from top left) The Paul Gulacy cover art for *Eclipse Magazine* #1 doubled as a Creepy cover in Spain; Marshall Rogers “I Am Coyote” artwork from *Eclipse Magazine* #6; Mike Baron and Steve Rude’s first issue of *Nexus*.

Coyote™ and © Steve Englehart and Marshall Rogers. Nexus™ and © Mike Baron and Steve Rude.

By 1981 Mullaney launched *Eclipse Magazine*, an excellent anthology title that displayed all the strengths of *Star\*Reach* while succeeding in something that Friedrich had attempted to do but hadn’t really accomplished—launching successful spin-off titles from the anthology tales. *Coyote* (which debuted in *Eclipse* but became a series for Marvel and Goodwin’s Epic line), *Ms. Tree* (debuted at *Eclipse*, moved to First and finally to DC for a lengthy run), *The Masked Man*, and *Ragamuffins* all had varying degrees of success as separate titles. Recently, *Ms. Tree* has also had a prose novel version of her adventures published by Hard Case Crime Books.

While *Eclipse* was strictly a publishing company, both Capital City and Pacific Comics were comic distributors.

Both launched their own comic books in 1981—Capital City with the black-and-white superhero title *Nexus*, by Mike Baron and Steve Rude, and Pacific with full color titles from the likes of Jack Kirby and Mike Grell. Pacific was also the first publisher of Dave Stevens’ *The Rocketeer* and would have been, if they’d managed to survive, the first U.S. publisher of the hugely influential *Miracleman* (originally “Marvelman”) title by Alan Moore. As it was, *Eclipse* ended up publishing that title and numerous other titles originally intended for Pacific.

A flood of independent publishers followed—the more important being Aardvark-Vanaheim (publisher of *Cerebus*) and its spin-off Renegade Press, First, Comico,



# The Comics

## STORIES FROM STAR\*REACH

What follows is a small sampling of the more interesting short stories that appeared in *Star\*Reach* and its sister magazines. The selections should give you a good idea of both the quality and variety of stories in those publications.

First up is Ed Hick's and Walt Simonson's spoof of the sword-and-sorcery genre titled appropriately enough, "A Tale of Sword and Sorcery," which originally appeared in *Star\*Reach* #1.

Next is *Star\*Reach* #4's "Marginal Incident" by Steve Leialoha. Leialoha applied a nice shading approach to the artwork that wasn't typically done in comics at the time.

The first of two three-page short stories from Michael T. Gilbert is "Vignette: A Soft and Gentle Rain," which first appeared in *Imagine* #3.

Next is Howard Chaykin's "Starbuck," from *Star\*Reach* #4. This was the second installment in the saga of the sci-fi swashbuckler, and marked a change in art style from the first.

Gilbert's "Encounter at the Crazy Cat Saloon" from *Imagine* #2 is the second of his short stories featured here, and was inspired by Jack Davis' 1955 cover for *Incredible Science Fiction* #32.

"I'm God!" written by Dave Sim with art by Fabio Gasbarri was originally printed in black-and-white in *Star\*Reach* #7. It was later reprinted in *Star\*Reach's* *Greatest Hits* with color by Gasbarri and again in color in *Star\*Reach Classics* #5. Gasbarri, by the way, would go on to become a painter of fine art.

And, finally, comes P. Craig Russell's beautiful "Siegfried and the Dragon," one of his earliest efforts in adapting opera to comics. Even though only one page of this story saw print in an actual *Star\*Reach* publication, we have included it here because when it did see print several months later in *Epic Illustrated* #2, it was not presented as was intended by the artist. At long last, the tale is printed in its complete and proper form. Enjoy!



A panel from Eric Kimball's and Robert Gould's one-page "Ravens" from *Imagine* #5, and the opening title page of "The Garbage Men" by Gene Day and Fabio Gasbarri from *Imagine* #1.

Ravens © Eric Kimball and Robert Gould.  
The Garbage Men © Gene Day and Fabio Gasbarri.



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# A TALE OF SWORD & SORCERY

WRITING: ED HICKS  
DRAWING: WALT SIMONSON



These first three pages  
are covered with images,

ACTUALLY, IT SHOULD HAVE SAID "OUT OF TWO  
ARAMPANTLY  
'THE SHAPES',  
APPROACH  
DIRECTIONS  
WAY WHICH IS

MORDANT CHAOSSES EVOLVE  
FOR THE TWO CREATURES  
EACH OTHER FROM OPPOSITE  
ALONG A MYSTIC COSMIC PATH-  
AMBIGUOUS OF SORTS + IN SORE  
NEED OR REPAIR  
DUE TO THE WEAR  
AND TEAR OF  
YON + YOKE  
ETC!



NOW, FOR A  
TERSE DES-  
CRPTION  
OF PLAYER  
TWO IN OUR  
UNIVERSE  
SPANNING  
SAGA~ HE  
IS A BEAT  
TO SHIT  
CRONE TYPE,  
TATTERS  
LONG AND  
BROKEN  
FINGERS,  
TEETH, HAIR  
AND SO FORTH







THE TIME WAS SUCH THAT THEY WERE LIVING IN A WORLD OF THE PAST AS WELL AS THE FUTURE THEY DID NOT KNOW IT BUT TIME WAS FLOWING BACK ON ITSELF, CARRYING THEM ALONG ITS WELL TRAVELLED ROADS. BUT THIS TIME IT WOULD BE DIFFERENT--- PUB LIFE WAS EVER THE SAME--- "AH! WHAT'S A LOVELY WOMAN DOING DINING ALONE? ALLOW ME! WE COULD USE SOME INTELLIGENT CONVERSATION AROUND HERE..." "AS YOU WISH..."

# Marginal Incident

-the prelude-



THE LONG SUMMER WAS DRAWING TO A CLOSE, FOR SEVERAL YEARS THE HARVESTS HAD BEEN MEAGER AND THIS YEAR WAS PROVING TO BE NO EXCEPTION--- THEY CONTINUED TO BEAR OFFERINGS TO THE OLD ONES EVEN THOUGH THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE IN THOSE GODS, BUT JUST IN CASE---

TRAVELLING WAS DANGEROUS, SO FEW DARED IT! OPINION'S VARIED BUT IT WAS THE COMMON CONSENSUS THAT THE OUT-CASTS -- THE MUTIES -- WERE RESPONSIBLE!

THE CONVERSATIONS WERE ALWAYS THE SAME--- IT WAS THE CURSE OF THE PAST--- THE MUTIES WERE TO BLAME !!

"MUTOS... YOU NEVER KNOW!" OF COURSE MUTIE BEHAVIOR WAS UNDERSTANDABLE-- THEY WERE NOT CAPABLE OF MUCH AND ANYONE FOOL ENOUGH TO TRAVEL THROUGH THE AREAS OF SICKNESS DESERVED WHAT THEY GOT!-- THE EVER ACCUSING FINGER POINTS---



... AND FINDS A VICTIM!  
"COME OUT INTO THE LIGHT  
AND LET'S SEE...WHAT..."



IT WAS A COMMON PASTIME HURLING THESE  
INSULTS, BUT THE LAST THING ANYONE  
EXPECTED WAS TO HAVE IT BE TRUE!  
"NO! I ONLY WISH TO..." BUT THE  
WORDS ARE LOST ON A CROWD THAT  
WILL NOT HEAR ANYTHING BUT ITS  
OWN FEAR!



THE REACTION COMES WITHOUT  
THOUGHT! FISTS AND BOOTS  
SWIFTLY FIND THEIR MARK---



HE'S THROWN TO THE  
GROUND AND LIES  
THERE MOTIONLESS...

"MY GOD!  
WHAT HAVE  
YOU DONE?!"



TIME IS SUSPENDED AND  
THEN THE MOMENT IS  
OVER...

"HE'S DEAD!"

THIS WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO  
HAPPEN! REALLY! THESE WERE  
GOOD FOLK! THEY DID NOT KILL!



RAIN COULD BE HEARD  
AND THE GLARE OF  
LIGHTNING FILLED  
THE SMALL ROOM...



LEAVING ONLY THE ASTONISHED  
AND THE SOUND OF THUNDER!

IT WAS SOME TIME  
BEFORE ANYONE SPOKE  
THE ANGER WAS GONE  
NOW LEAVING ONLY  
BEWILDERMENT!  
THE TAVERN EMPTIED  
QUICKLY AND BEFORE  
LONG EVEN THE  
RAIN WAS GONE...

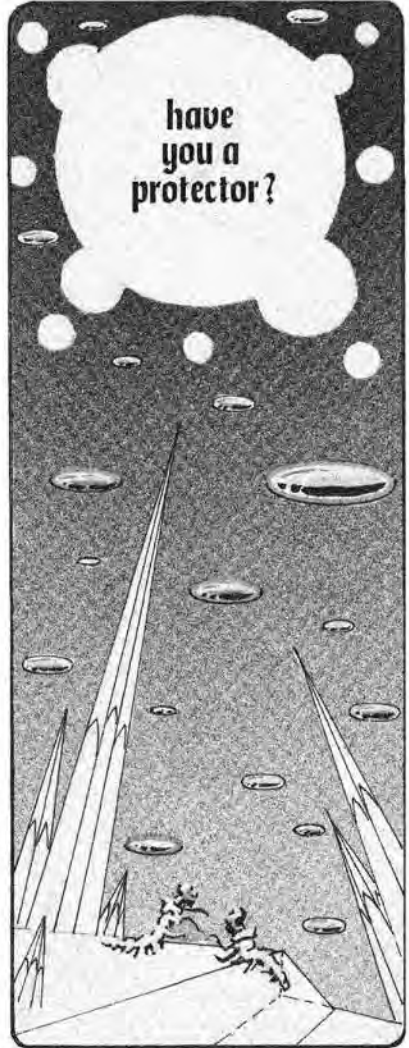


# WINGETTE

## A Soft And Gentle Rain.

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# STARBUCK

THE "*SURPRISING FIND*" WAS AN ANONYMOUS LITTLE BOX OF CIRCUITRY-- THAT HELD THE KEY TO THE HUMAN FUTURE.

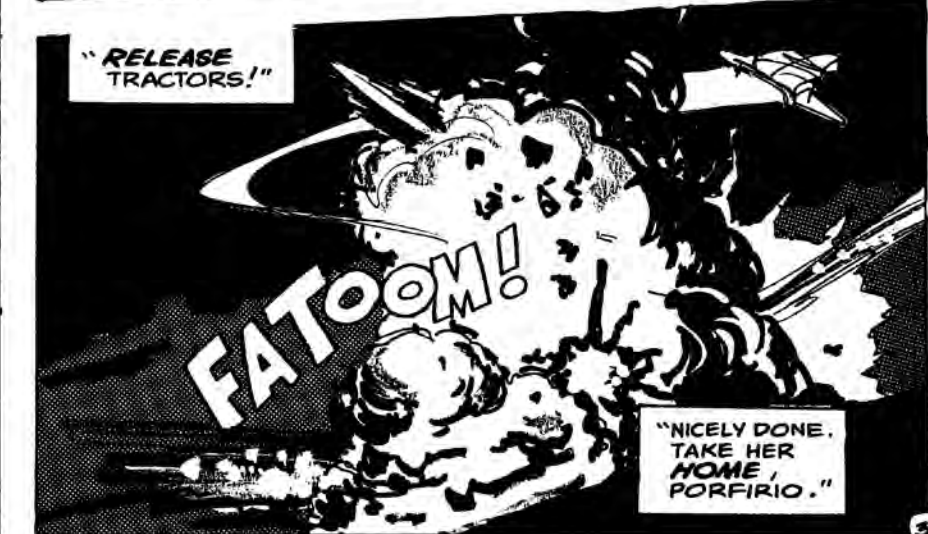


THE BASIC DESIGN FOR A *HYPER SPACE DRIVE* -- A DEVICE TO WARP THE TISSUE OF SPACE... TO OPEN THE STARS... THIS WAS THE *PRIZE*.

GOT IT, CODY!

LETTERING : ALAN KUPPERBERG

© 1976 HOWARD V. CHAYKIN 2



"NICELY DONE. TAKE HER HOME, PORFIRIO."

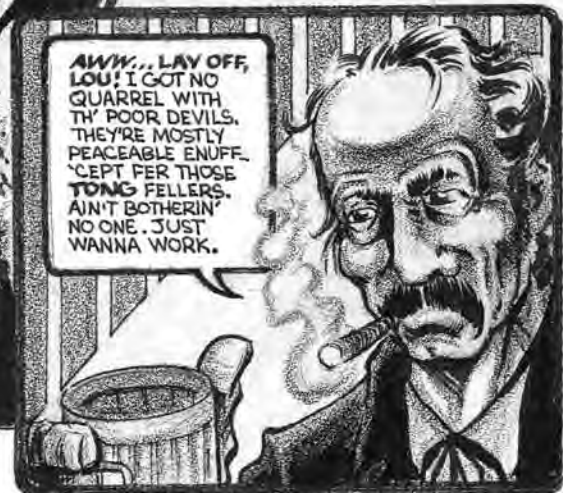


# ENCOUNTER

at the

## CRAZY CAT SALOON

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Arizona:  
1878



# PROLOGUE!

"IT APPEARED PRACTICALLY OUT OF NOWHERE ON THE FORWARD SCREEN... TOO SUDDEN FOR ME TO SWERVE OR STOP..."



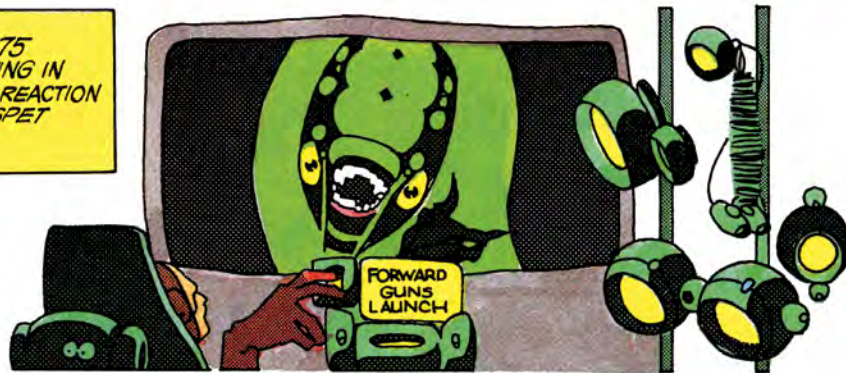
"IT WAS UGLY AS SIN AND AS FAR AS I COULD SEE, DEAD, OR A REASONABLE FACSIMILE THEREOF..."



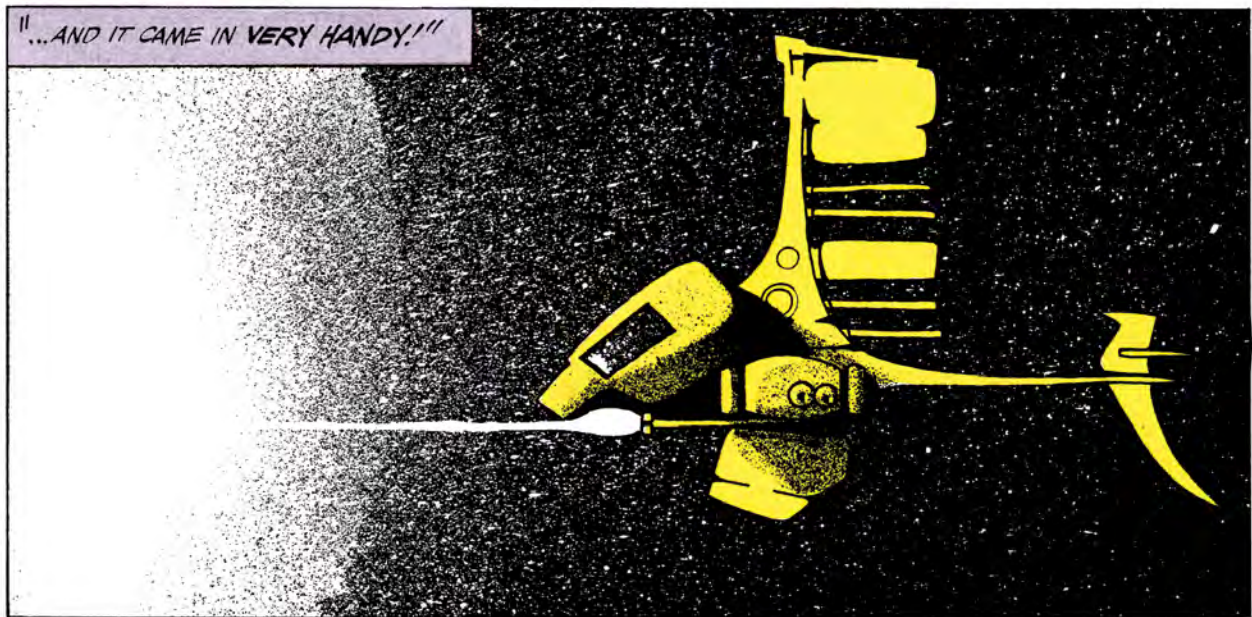
"...WHEN THE MOUTH OPENED IN FRONT OF ME, IT WAS AS IF THE LIGHTS HAD GONE OUT IN CARLSBAD CAVERNS..."



"I HAD HAD A 75 HODGSON RATING IN ACCURACY AND REACTION TIME AT THE ASPET ACADEMY..."

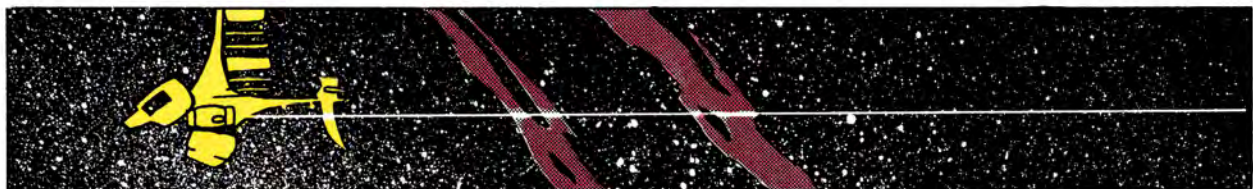


"...AND IT CAME IN VERY HANDY!"



"I HAD BEEN PILOTING ONE OF THE MOTHERLOAD PIONEER SHIPS FOR INTERCONTINENTAL FOR FIVE YEARS, SO IT HAD COME AS NO SURPRISE WHEN THE WORD CAME DOWN THAT

I WAS OFF TO INVESTIGATE PLANETARY BODIES IN THE FARTHEST REACHES OF THE KNOWN UNIVERSE FOR POSSIBLE SIGNS OF LIFE..."





"I KNOW I SHOULD HAVE SAID SOMETHING LIKE 'GREETINGS FROM THE PLANET EARTH,' BUT

HE LOOKED SO PATHETIC JUST STANDING THERE THAT THE FIRST THING THAT CAME OUT WAS..."



WHO'M I?  
WHO'M I?  
WHY YOU  
IGNORANT  
DAMN MORTAL  
...

# IM GOD!



STORY  
DAVE SIM  
ART  
FABIO GASBARRI  
LETTERING  
BILL PAYNE

"WELL, NOW...THE LAST PLACE I EXPECTED TO MEET MY MAKER WAS ON A 1:26 R INTERSPACE

MUDBALL, BUT AFTER I STOPPED LAUGHING, I FIGURED I OUGHT TO GET TO KNOW HIM BETTER..."

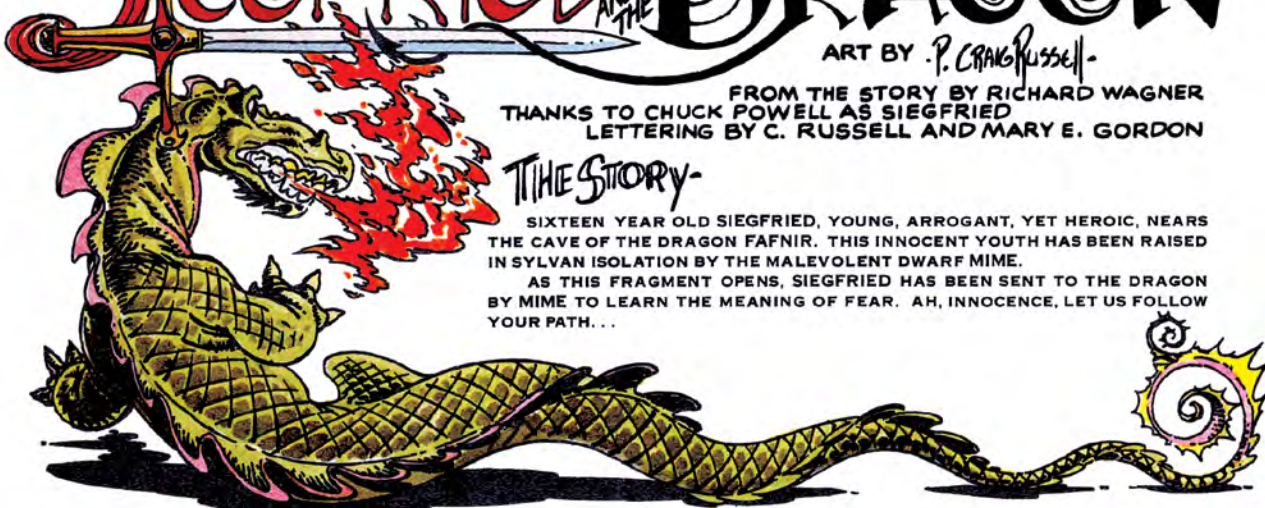




# SIEGFRIED AND THE DRAGON

ART BY P. CRAIG RUSSELL

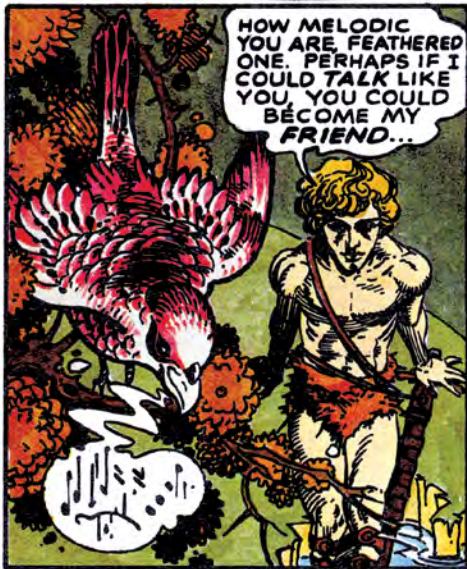
FROM THE STORY BY RICHARD WAGNER  
 THANKS TO CHUCK POWELL AS SIEGFRIED  
 LETTERING BY C. RUSSELL AND MARY E. GORDON



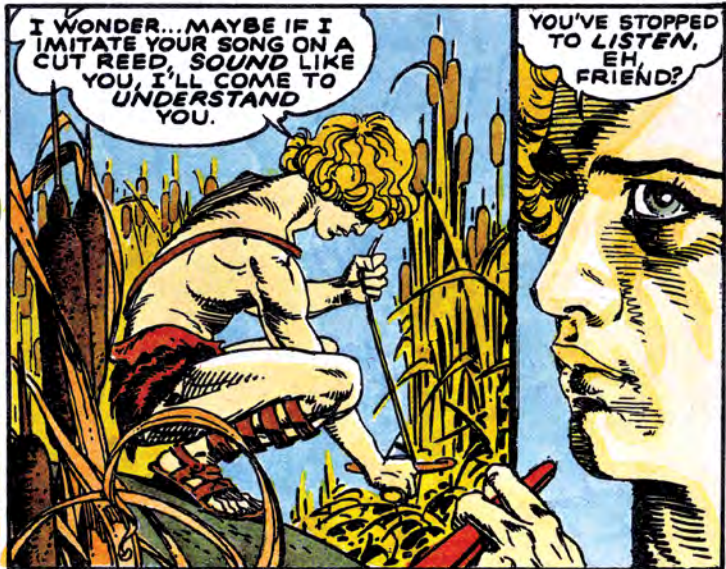
## THE STORY-

SIXTEEN YEAR OLD SIEGFRIED, YOUNG, ARROGANT, YET HEROIC, NEARS THE CAVE OF THE DRAGON FAFNIR. THIS INNOCENT YOUTH HAS BEEN RAISED IN SYLVAN ISOLATION BY THE MALEVOLENT DWARF MIME.

AS THIS FRAGMENT OPENS, SIEGFRIED HAS BEEN SENT TO THE DRAGON BY MIME TO LEARN THE MEANING OF FEAR. AH, INNOCENCE, LET US FOLLOW YOUR PATH...

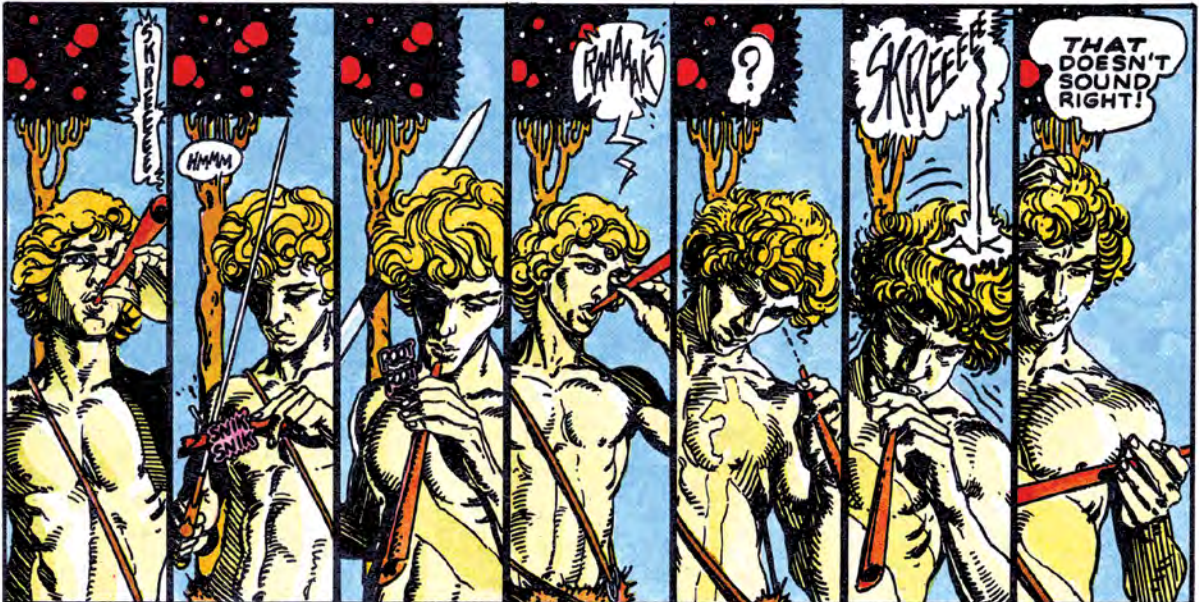


HOW MELODIC YOU ARE, FEATHERED ONE. PERHAPS IF I COULD TALK LIKE YOU, YOU COULD BECOME MY FRIEND...



I WONDER... MAYBE IF I IMITATE YOUR SONG ON A CUT REED, SOUND LIKE YOU, I'LL COME TO UNDERSTAND YOU.

YOU'VE STOPPED TO LISTEN, EH, FRIEND?



SKREEEES

HHMM

FWAAK

?

SKREEEES

THAT DOESN'T SOUND RIGHT!