



April 2020
No. 119
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ROCKET RACCOON and STAR-LORD, Before the Guardians

BACKISSUE!

**GUARDIANS OF
THE GALAXY
ISSUE!**



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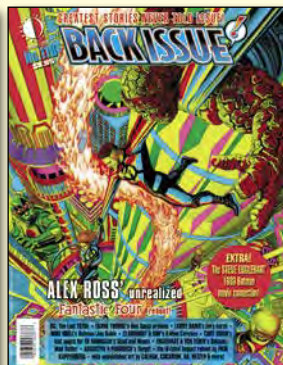
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Volume 1,
Number 119
April 2020

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BACKISSUE

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THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN: A RETROSPECTIVE ON THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

by William Colosimo

The *Guardians of the Galaxy* first debuted in issue #18 of a tryout book called *Marvel Super-Heroes*, dated January 1969. The team went without a second appearance until writer Steve Gerber decided to utilize them, and from 1974–1975 the Guardians made several guest appearances in *Marvel Two-in-One* and *The Defenders* before being launched into the lead feature in *Marvel Presents*.

Gerber continued to lead the team into their own series for a time, which got off to a rocky start.

For the purposes of this article, we focus our interviews in this section on the team's first actual solo series, which was called *Marvel Presents: Guardians of the Galaxy*. The book didn't last long, although it (alongside the team's appearances in *The Avengers* #167–177's "Korvac Saga") created quite the impression on many Marvel fans of the day.

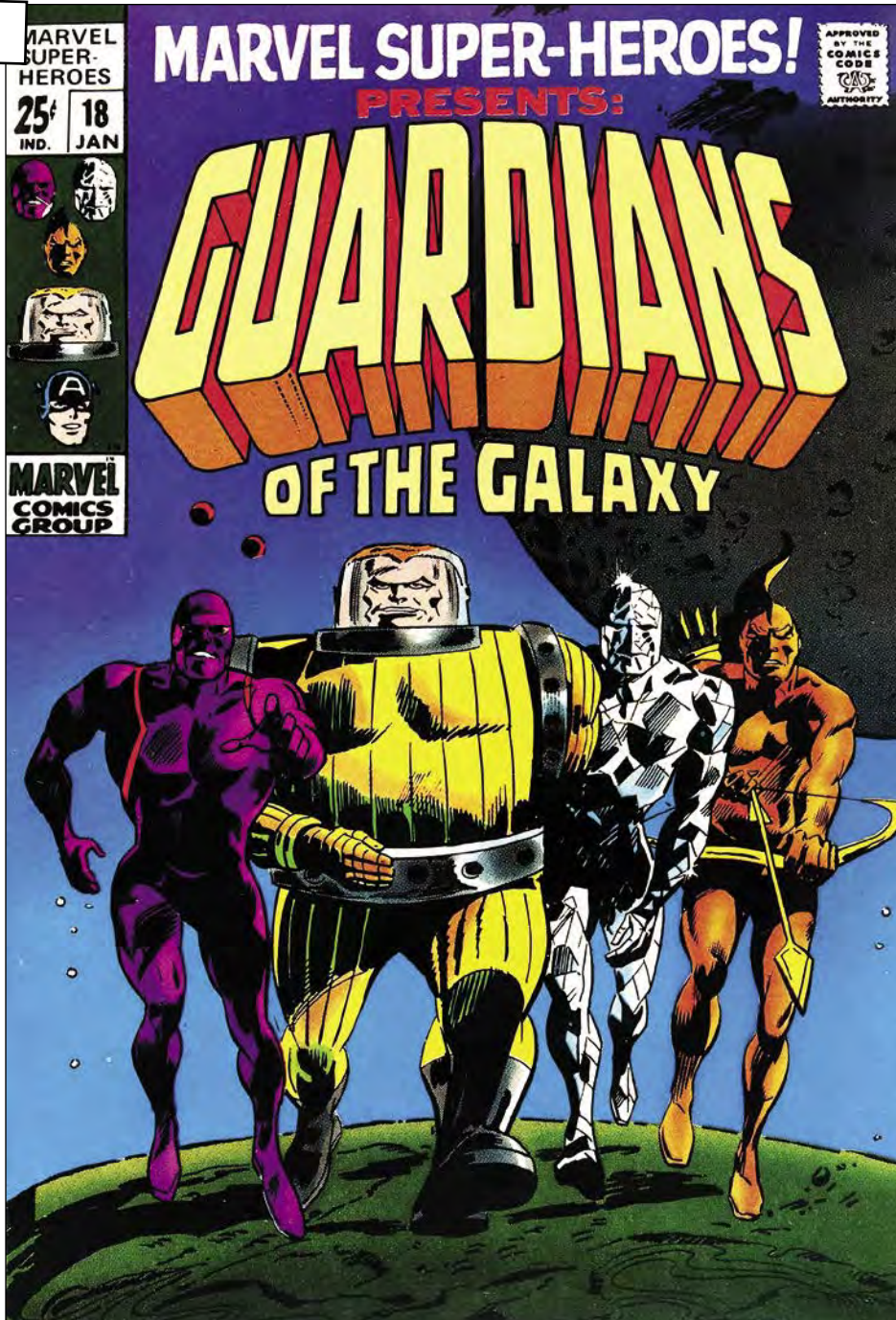
In this section, we talk with series penciler (and occasional inker) **Allen Milgrom**, along with the writer on the later portion of the series, **Roger Stern**. We also get some short comments from **Mary Skrenes** (writing partner of Steve Gerber, who helped Steve create the character of Nikki and also co-wrote one issue), along with **Bob Wiacek**, who inked the latter half of the series.

The Original Guardians

Show this cover to your average 2020 Marvel Studios moviegoer and they'll no doubt be puzzled, but here's what the GOTG—(left to right) Vance Astro, Charlie-27, Martinex, and Yondu—looked like in their inaugural appearance in *Marvel Super-Heroes* #18 (Jan. 1969). Cover by Gene Colan and Mike Esposito.

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SECTION ONE THE BRONZE AGE: MARVEL PRESENTS





AL MILGROM

© Marvel.

WILLIAM COLOSIMO: *Do you remember how you got the assignment for the Guardians of the Galaxy series?*

AL MILGROM: At the time, Marvel was still in the throes of expanding, and not having enough talent to do all the work. And once you had a few jobs under your belt—if they thought you were remotely reliable, they would tap you for new assignments. Having done *Captain Marvel*, which had a lot of outer-space science-fiction-y stuff, and cosmic stuff... I think they felt like I might be a good fit for [Guardians].

Up 'til then, I think all I had done was just take over books that [Jim] Starlin quit, you know? He did *Captain Marvel*, and when he decided to leave that, I got it. And then he was doing *Master of Kung Fu*, and when he decided to quit, I got that—briefly. This was the first one where I think they said, "Yeah, let's just skip Starlin and go straight to Milgrom on this one." I don't honestly think they offered him that book—he was probably busy doing other stuff. I'm just saying that had been the pattern until then with me.

COLOSIMO: *The Guardians guest-starred in five issues of The Defenders. During that run, it seemed like you were tapped to pencil the Guardians series. Though Starhawk first appeared in Defenders, do you remember helping design anything about his look as you were set to draw the regular series?*

MILGROM: No, I don't think so. In fact, the Guardians costumes that I was drawing—early on, at least—I believe were all Dave Cockrum designs. Dave was really into that stuff. He would design new costumes, new characters—all the time. Marvel used him for doing some of that work. Cockrum did the character designs and the costumes that they appeared in, as opposed to their earliest appearance that Gene Colan drew [*Marvel Super-Heroes* #18—ed.].

COLOSIMO: *Cockrum took Charlie out of the spacesuit and gave him a different look.*

MILGROM: Yeah, I remember he had kind of a yellow spacesuit—it was weird. Although I did like the way Gene drew him—real big and blocky. He didn't look like any of the other massive characters. He had a very distinctive look. But Colan's stuff was pretty distinctive, too.

COLOSIMO: *I was curious why Dave Cockrum did the costumes, if he never drew any Guardians books. But it sounds like he did that for a lot of Marvel properties.*

Galaxy Quest

Original GOTG scribe Steve Gerber took the space team elsewhere in the Marvel Universe, including (top) *Marvel Two-in-One* #5 (Sept. 1974) and *Giant-Size Defenders* #5 (Jan. 1975). (center left) Enter: Starhawk, in Gerber's *Defenders* #28 (Oct. 1975). (center right) *Avengers* scribe Jim Shooter utilized the GOTG starting in issue #167 (Jan. 1978). (bottom) Bashful Benji team-ups in *Marvel Two-in-One* #61 (Mar. 1980) and 69 (Nov. 1980).

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Voided Variation

(left) Never before published, Milgrom's original layouts for page 1 of *Marvel Presents* #7. Courtesy of Al Milgrom. (right) The published version, where Al drastically altered the scene's composition.

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"ALL HANDS ON DECK"

COLOSIMO: *Issue #5 lists you and Howard Chaykin as artists, but it doesn't get more specific. You told me recently you thought the splash was all you—I assume you meant pencils and inks, but then Chaykin laid out a good chunk of the rest of the job with your finishes?*

MILGROM: Yeah, this was pretty early in my career. I started in '72, did inking pretty much exclusively through '73 or so. I was probably doing this at the same time I was doing *Captain Marvel*, which means that I was probably trying to do more work than I was really capable of, even though *Mar-Vell* and this were both bimonthlies. But I was probably still inking other people on other stuff at the same time. I mean, I really loved doing the work, I loved being in the business, and as a result my guess is I was probably loath to turn anything down. Since I was doing two bimonthly books, and I don't know what the page count was in those days, probably less than...

COLOSIMO: *The Guardians stories were somewhere around 17 or 18 pages.*

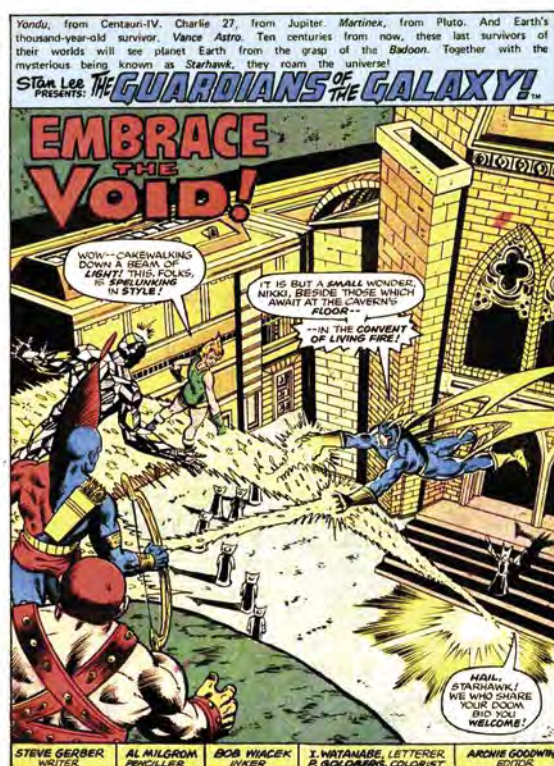
MILGROM: ...Marvel was trying to find ways to cut costs. Considering how they were at the time—they

were very popular and had already overtaken DC, I believe. But why suddenly cut the amount of story? I'm surprised the fans didn't get annoyed with that, or maybe they did. In fact, they even at one point, had that gimmick where they actually took a regular page of drawing paper, turned it sideways—and made it a two-page spread—but you only got paid for doing one page. Are you familiar with that?

COLOSIMO: *Yeah. I've seen an original art page from Marvel Two-in-One #5, the second appearance of the Guardians. And it was just like you said, it was two pages on one 11x17-inch board.*

MILGROM: Right. They did that with all the books. They were paying you for drawing one page, but they were using it as two pages. That was sort of adding insult to injury. But to make matters worse, because they were drawn on that page and then inked at that size, they actually then went and made an enlarged Photostat to blow it up to proper size of the other pages. Nowadays with computers, you can use Vector or whatever the hell they call the program... but you can do that and not lose any of the integrity of the line. But in those days, when you blew up the line, blew up the artwork—if you did an enlarged stat—the edges of it would get very rough. It would look very crude. I remember thinking at the time that the only guys who could sort of pull it off without losing a lot of quality in the look of the work were Joe Sinnott and Jack Abel, who were like two of the very slickest inkers around. But the rest of us... the stuff kind of suffered when it got enlarged like that.

So anyway, if I was doing 18 pages a month, then that should have been well within my capabilities even then. But again, I was probably inking another book or two, and taking on whatever, filling in, helping out wherever I could—if they needed an emergency two or three pages inked—which I sort of made a habit of doing my whole career. So, a lot of times with this stuff, you just went ahead and designed things, and did things, and tried to do them on the fly. It's possible Steve may have described some of the stuff he wanted—including the hair or the costumes—but I don't remember that. He may





ROGER STERN

Alexander Fuld Frazier.

WILLIAM COLOSIMO: Steve Gerber's last issue on the series was *Marvel Presents* #9, featuring the first part of *Starhawk's* origin. I know he told you that he didn't have the rest of the origin worked out for the following issue, but did he give you any other insight or advice on the series at all—general direction of the book, information on character's personalities, etc.? Once issue #10 was done, did he review it with you and provide any feedback?

ROGER STERN: No, I never heard anything from Steve about the Guardians. Of course, he was always busy with his other projects. We all were.

COLOSIMO: Gerber said his series didn't have a theme as a whole—but if it did, it would be about five exiles as much outsiders on Earth as they would be among the stars. Did you have a basic theme for the book?

STERN: The outsider theme was certainly at the core of the series. I saw the Guardians as the story of seven outcasts, each the last of their kind, looking to find their purpose in a post-revolutionary galaxy. And, of course, fighting the good fight along the way.

COLOSIMO: During the *Marvel Presents* run, series penciler Al Milgrom and yourself both lived in the same apartment complex on the same floor and would at times pass pages back and forth to work on. Due to this, was there a lot of synergy on the book—where you gave him ideas on costumes or layouts, and he gave you ideas on plot, character's personalities, or dialogue? How would the two of you go about creating the next story that was due?

STERN: The only costume request I made to Al—and it was a request, without any real suggestions—was to change Charlie-27's outfit. To me, a bare-chested spaceman didn't make much sense. I thought that the new outfit Al designed was a major improvement, but that design was all his.

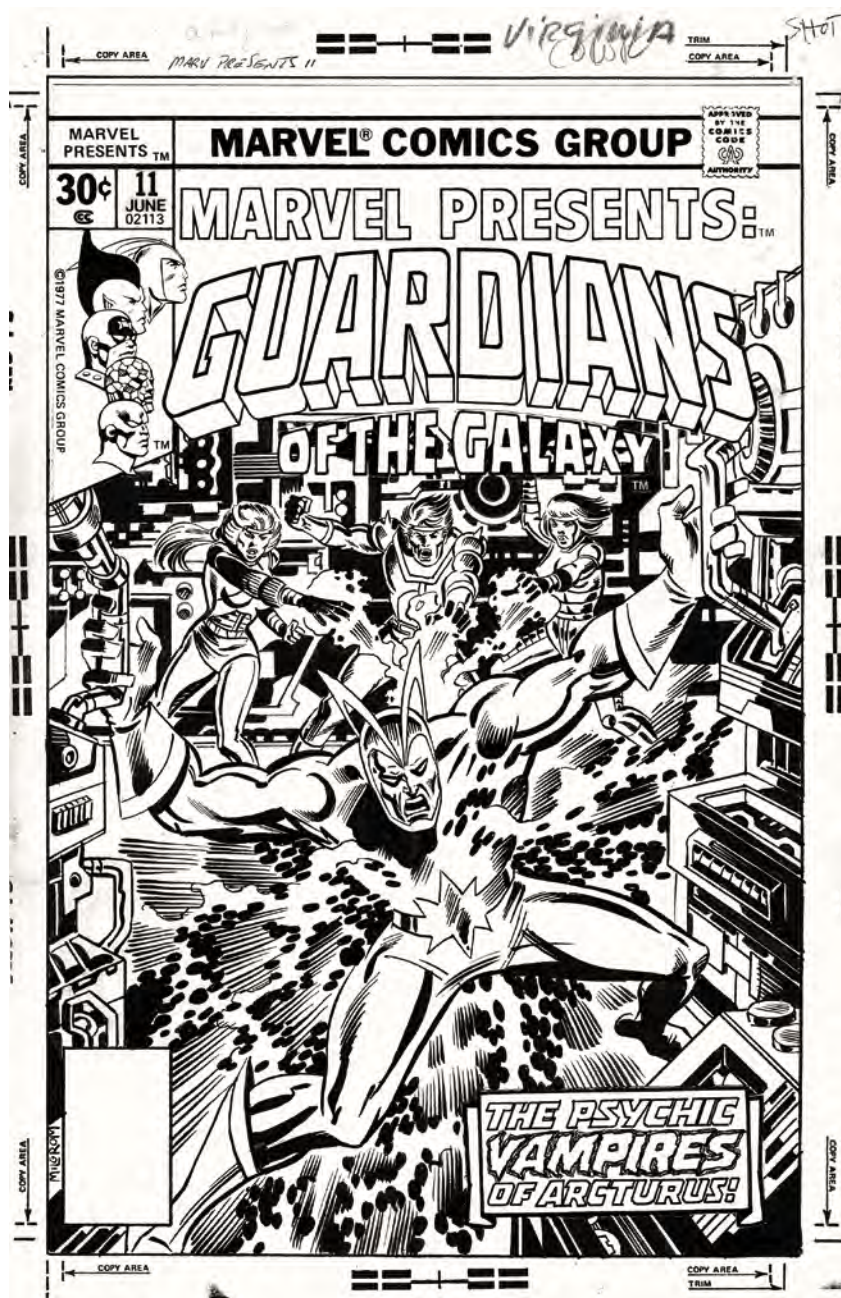
As far as collaborating on plots, we never got to do that as much of that as I would have liked. Al is a great story man, but the book was almost terminally late when I got the writing assignment, and deadlines were coming at us so fast and furiously that we never got much breathing room until the very end. A couple of times we were able to sit down over dinner at some burger joint, to talk about general directions. Then I'd have to run off and quickly type up a plot, so that Al could start drawing the issue.

COLOSIMO: How much guidance and direction did editor Archie Goodwin give you with the book—were you allowed to do what you wanted with fairly limited restrictions?

STERN: I don't really recall Archie setting any restrictions. I do remember that every bit of advice he ever gave me was helpful. Plus, most of what I know about placing copy on a page, I learned from watching Archie do that. He really was the best at just about everything.

COLOSIMO: *Marvel Presents* #10 seemed to be a team effort. Chris Claremont helped you plot it, and Jim Starlin helped Al Milgrom lay it out. At the time, was pitching in like this common when the need arose?

STERN: Oh, yeah... people were always happy to pitch in with suggestions. There was a great camaraderie around the Bullpen.



COLOSIMO: *Marvel Presents* #12 was the last issue. You had stated in a previous interview that the series was cancelled based on sales of early issues. Did you ever find out if Gerber's later issues or your issues picked up steam sales-wise?

STERN: I'm afraid that I couldn't tell you what the issues sales were—only that they must have dropped below some critical threshold. Very few of us were privy to current sales figures in those days. That wouldn't really change until sales-based royalties were instituted some years later.

COLOSIMO: Based on older interviews, we know some of the general plans that were in store had the series continued: a return to Earth (although I'm unsure if that meant 20th or 31st Century), match-ups against already-established 31st-Century Marvel villains such as Korvac and Sise-Neg, issues devoted to exploring individual team members' pasts (such as Charlie in *Marvel Presents* #12), continuing a rocky relationship between Aleta and Stakar—and possibly having Aleta becoming *Starhawk* for a while. That said, I wanted to

Planet of the Vampires

Our pal Al delivers the goods on yet another explosive GOTG cover!

Marvel Presents #11 (June 1977) cover art scan courtesy of Al Milgrom.

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A STAR-LORD™ IS BORN

THE ORIGINAL PETER QUILL PROBABLY WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE HIS LATER INCARNATIONS—
IN COMICS AND ON THE BIG SCREEN

by Glenn Greenberg



First Flight

Original cover painting to Star-Lord's first appearance, from *Marvel Preview* #4 (Jan. 1976). Art by Gray Morrow.

Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com).

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Peter Quill is a jerk, with a mother named Meredith who died when he was a boy and an extraterrestrial father he didn't know about, or meet, until he was an adult. Those facts span every version of the man also known as Star-Lord.

Beyond them, however, the backstory, abilities, and very nature of the space adventurer really depend on who is writing him, and on the medium in which his stories are being told. The version introduced more than 40 years ago, the one appearing in comics published today, and the one portrayed by Chris Pratt in the Marvel Cinematic Universe movies represent very different visions—but that's actually the way it's been with Star-Lord from the beginning. In just the first few years of his existence, he underwent several relaunches and reworkings. None of them really took hold, and for most of his history, Star-Lord has been relegated to comic-book limbo—until crossing paths with another heavily reworked concept, the Guardians of the Galaxy, with both ultimately benefiting greatly.

But to reach that point, Peter Quill had to go through a long, circuitous, and sometimes tumultuous development process, guided by some of the most successful and acclaimed creators in the comic-book industry. They planted seeds that would finally flourish decades later.

A COSMIC DESTINY

Created by writer Steve Englehart with artist Steve Gan, Star-Lord first appeared in the black-and-white magazine *Marvel Preview* #4 (Jan. 1976), in a 32-page story that established his origin and set up his intended ongoing status quo. Upon Peter Quill's birth on February 4, 1962, which coincides with Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Mercury, Venus, and Earth's moon all being in alignment, his mother is accused by her husband, Jake, of having cheated on him, as the baby looks nothing like him. Over Meredith's protests, Jake takes the newborn baby out into the night, intending to kill the child—and dies of a sudden heart attack under the stars. Peter, raised by Meredith alone, develops a fascination for space and science fiction. At age 11,

he's thrilled to witness the arrival of a flying saucer and brings his mother to the landing site to show her. The aliens aboard the vessel see the human observers and open fire, killing Meredith.

Peter survives and swears to get revenge.

By 1987, Quill has joined the US space program to get to the stars and track down the aliens. In his obsession, he becomes ill-tempered and ruthless, willing to crush anyone who stands in his way. His determination serves him well—Peter ends up serving aboard Earth's Space Station Eve. There, in 1990, the crew is visited by a mysterious higher power that calls upon them to select one of their members, at the next lunar eclipse, to become the "Starlord" (sic—the hyphen would be added later on) and assume a glorious destiny in the cosmos. Quill wants to be chosen, and is crushed when his superiors choose his rival instead.

Unwilling to accept the decision, Quill moves to eliminate the competition, apparently killing several security guards who are simply trying to do their jobs. The remaining guards are ordered to shoot to kill, but as they open fire, Quill disappears, having been whisked away to the heart of the Sun by the higher power—a being who looks like a bearded old man with long white hair and dressed in a long flowing robe, who calls himself the Master of the Sun. Quill wonders aloud if this being is God, to which the Master replies, "Do I resemble him? But all men do, Peter—for it is written that God created Man in his image. Perhaps I... am not what I seem."

The Master bestows upon Quill the uniform of the Star-Lord—without explaining what a Star-Lord actually is or does—along with the ability to fly and breathe in outer space, and a unique gun that can shoot any of the four elements: fire, water, air, and earth. The godlike being then enables Quill to experience the feeling of avenging his mother's death, bringing Peter to a point where he's ready to move



STEVE ENGLEHART

steveenglehart.com.

THE STARLORD: WHO HE IS AND HOW HE CAME TO BE

by Steve Englehart

Like everything else in life, this is a story that begins and ends with the cosmos. When man first rose above the animals, he did it by developing his mind. He had freed himself from the enslavement of his instincts—but as with all his other advances, that was simultaneously a blessing and a curse. He was no longer one with nature, and so was obliged to decide what was best for his continued survival. Obviously, he needed to learn.

Thus, he looked to the heavens, where, in contrast to the chaos on Earth, he found simplicity and order. The purposeful motion of some "stars" (actually planets) against the fixed backdrop of others brought about the alternation of day and night, the progression of the seasons, harvest and rebirth—in short, the survival of his world. A study of the stars would teach him what he wished to know; he called his craft "astrology."

Astrology was a major factor in man's life from then on. The Great Pyramid and Stonehenge are remnants of his early efforts. By the sixth century BC, enough was known to cast natal horoscopes (a map of the major celestial bodies' positions at an individual's moment of birth) with great accuracy. Until the eighteenth century AD, astrology enjoyed the highest respect of learned men in Europe, Asia, and Africa. And then—the "Age of Reason" arrived. The sciences astrology had fathered reasoned it was a superstition, and shunted it aside.

Now, as must be obvious from my past work, I'm not so much interested in reason as in reality. The question I've asked most often in my young life is "Why?" and I don't particularly care where I have to go to get

some answers. So it was that I turned on to astrology (and the Tarot, and sorcery, and mythology—but those are other stories). I suppose I should make it clear that, while I'm one of the few comics scripters *not* from Missouri, I'm still pretty hardheaded about things being reality, as opposed to flights of fancy (both my sun and moon are in Taurus, if it means anything to you). In any metaphysical subject, I have to be shown—and I was. Astrology works.

Once I saw that, I committed myself wholeheartedly to it, and spent the following months learning as much as I could. Then, because I have, after all, another major occupation, I began to figure how I could incorporate my new knowledge into my comics. I was working on a plot for DR. STRANGE late in February, and chafing under the fact that sorcery and astrology are strange bedfellows, when I got a call from Marv Wolfman in New York. "Steve," quoth he, "we're going to do a new black-and-white science-fiction adventure. I want to call the lead feature STARLORD, and I'd like you to come up with the concept and character. Got any ideas about outer space?"

The sun, it should be noted, had just moved into Pisces, season of the spaced. I played with the possibilities for the rest of that month, plotted this first story in Aries, season of self, and Steve Gan and friends drew it up in Taurus, season of stabilization. Now it's early June—in Gemini, season of communications—and now the words are coming.

After all the foregoing, let me also make it clear that you, the

reader, need know or believe not a thing about astrology to enjoy STARLORD. As with the heavens, it merely forms a backdrop against which events can unfold, and even if you can't tell the sun from the moon, you'll have a good time following Peter Quill's bizarre destiny. But—if you get interested in going further on your own, then that's all right, too!

All the astronomical data herein is correct. The planets really did move (or will move) into the conjunctions as shown at the times shown. (By the way, the placement of Chris's birth in 7 BC is not a mistake. Most modern historians, using independent evidence, now figure the event for that time. Even more by the way, the specific date of the conjunction was Saturday—the Hebrew holy day of Shabbat.)

On the other hand, the life of Peter Quill is not necessarily in accord with the stars' position on his birth-day. I have a chart of that moment pinned to the wall in front of me, and it indicates a much happier early life than I've given Peter—but if you don't go down, you can't come up. If you or one of your friends was born at or near the same time, please don't look to his hassles as your own. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and/or institutions, etc.

And finally, once the events in this story pass 1975, the future is entirely speculative. Furthermore, it's not related to any other speculative future in the Marvel Universe.

Whew! Whatever did happen to simple shoot-'em-ups?

Okay, you say—that's how the Starlord came to be. But who/she? Read on.



The Un-Hyphenated Space Hero

From *Marvel Preview*

#4, (left) Star-Lord

creator Steve

Englehart's text page

describing the genesis of "The Starlord," and

(right) co-creator

Steve Gan's

accompanying pinup.

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on. The Master offers him the opportunity to forge a new path as the Star-Lord, and Quill accepts.

At that point, the saga was born. But it was derailed immediately thereafter, despite Steve Englehart's long-range plans for the character.

CHARACTER BUILDING

According to Englehart, the creation of Star-Lord came about after he was approached by Marv Wolfman, then the editor of Marvel's black-and-white magazine line, to come up with a character bearing that name for a new science-fiction feature. "Marv came to me with the name Star-Lord, I came up with all the rest," Englehart tells *BACK ISSUE*.

The timing was fortuitous. At that moment, Englehart was deep into researching astrology, and had come to embrace it as a useful tool. "The basic theory is that all the different parts of the solar system are moving and each one has an effect, and you can see the effects play out," he explains. "It's hard to pin down. It all boils down to whether you can accept that there are influences beyond what we can look at, and I'm pretty convinced there are."

Given the opportunity to develop a new character set in outer space, Englehart decided to incorporate astrology into the concept. "My main idea was, I wanted a guy who was the biggest a**hole in the world, just completely irredeemable, but by the end of the first issue, he'd be talking to the Master of the Sun," Englehart says. "The idea I had was that, over 12 issues [of *Marvel Preview*], Quill was going to go outward through the solar system and he would stop on each planet and have an adventure based on the astrology/mythology of the planet. For example, if he got to Venus, it would be a love story. When he got to Mars, it would be a war story. It would be like an anthology in that sense.

And each time Star-Lord went through one of these adventures, he would become more human, he would discover aspects of himself that he didn't know he had. And he would learn about love, about war, about government when he got to Jupiter, and so forth."

According to Englehart, Peter Quill would conclude his journey on Pluto. "That was back when Pluto was still a planet," he notes with a chuckle. "And the idea was, when he got past Pluto, he would finally be the Star-Lord, completely self-aware."

It's important to note that Englehart decided to set the series firmly within its own universe. "Completely standalone," he says. That worked for the storyline, given its incompatibility with the chronology, continuity, and details of the Marvel Universe. Also, in a universe where you have cosmic beings like Galactus, the Grandmaster, the Living Tribunal, and Eternity playing active roles, a figure like the Master of the Sun comes off as somewhat quaint, hardly an all-powerful being.

In keeping with his anthology approach, Englehart also accounted for the visuals for each installment. "My idea was to get a romance artist for the Venus story," he says. "Jay Scott Pike would have been my choice—probably inked by Vinnie Colletta! Then get Joe Kubert or Russ Heath for the Mars book, the war story."

Obviously, Englehart completed the first story. "I did the one where he was a complete jerk," he says. "I did everything I could to make him unlikable—that was my point. I mean, just the name Peter Quill—both of those names are synonyms for 'dick.' I wanted you to not like him, so that as he became a better person, a more fully rounded person, you would be struck with awe and amazement, watching this guy grow and change. It was writer's hubris—I can do this, I can make this work.' But we never got a chance to see whether I could or couldn't."

"In Full, Brilliant Marvel Color"

(top) Pages 5 and 6
from *Marvel Super
Special* #10 (Winter
1979), illustrated by
Gene Colan and
Tom Palmer.

(bottom) Palmer's
colors for those
pages. Art scans
courtesy of Tom
Palmer, with special
thanks to Tom
Palmer, Jr.

TM & © Marvel.





The Origin Revisited

A recap of Quill's backstory, provided in *Marvel Super Special* #10 by writer Doug Moench and artists Colan and Palmer.

(left) Page 17. Note the Duotone artboard effects. Original art scan courtesy of Tom Palmer, with special thanks to Tom Palmer, Jr. (right) The origin continued, on page 18. Scan of Gene Colan's uninked pencils courtesy of Heritage.

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WHERE NO MOENCH HAS GONE BEFORE

"What the f*** is this, is this supposed to be the Green Lantern Corps or something?" Doug Moench remembers asking when Marvel magazine editor Rick Marschall and his associate editor, Ralph Macchio, called to offer him Star-Lord. "And I recall being told, 'Nobody knows, that's up in the air. If you want to take it over, you can decide.' And I said, 'No, no, I don't want to take it over.'"

The little that Moench knew of Star-Lord came from conversations he'd had with Claremont when the two writers socialized. "Chris was describing his ideas for the character, the stories he had in mind," he explains. "And I responded, 'Oh, you like Robert Heinlein, huh?' and Claremont replied, 'Yeah, he's my favorite.' So when they asked me to do it, I said no at first because I did not like Heinlein that much. I was much more enamored with science fiction that leaned toward hard science fiction, but with more social commentary. I loved Ursula Le Guin and Harlan Ellison, Robert Silverberg—and Alfred Bester, he may have been my favorite."

Moench says that Marschall and Macchio were, for some reason, convinced that he was the right person to take over Star-Lord, and they called him again. "I think it was Ralph who said something like, 'You gotta do it, and you can do it any way you want. It doesn't have to be exactly the way Claremont did it.'"

That was enough to convince Moench to give it a shot—though he couldn't simply ignore everything that had already been published. "I had to read the previous stories, do catch-up learning," he says. "Englehart's take, the astrology angle, was the *opposite* of hard science fiction." Like Claremont, Moench chose not to include that aspect of the canon.

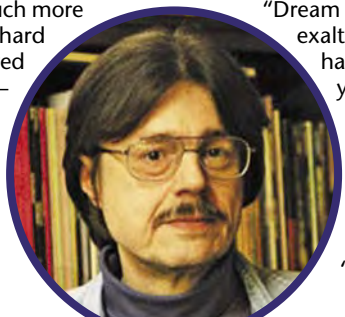
Relaunching the concept in *Marvel Super Special* #10 (Winter 1979), Moench maintained the basic status quo set up by Claremont: Star-Lord and "Ship" discovering new cosmic wonders and righting interstellar wrongs, and sharing an empathic bond—though Moench eliminated any hint of romantic feelings between them. As the story gets underway, Star-Lord and "Ship" are separated when Quill is yanked into a strange vortex. It transports him far away, to a three-million-year-old space ark running a full light-year in length and carrying a civilization of two billion people across the galaxies, having escaped

from a meteor storm that devastated their homeworld. Star-Lord is welcomed by the leader of the ark, a man named Noah, and befriended by a beautiful young woman named Aletha, who escorts him on a tour of the vessel's wide variety of cities and environments. Quill is shocked when he is told that the vortex transported him across time as well as space—that the ark, and its inhabitants, are all that's left of the planet Earth. But he soon realizes that there is far more that he needs to know about his new surroundings, which puts him on a collision course with Noah and the military force that backs him.

Along the way, Moench attempted to give at least *some* explanation of what being a "Star-Lord" actually means. Early on, as "Ship" tries to ease Quill's troubled mind into much-needed sleep, she tells him, "Dream of the Star-Lord's very special destiny.... You have been exalted, Peter, above all others on your former plane... you have been given extraordinary powers and insights... you have been granted the very stars... you are truly a lord of the stars.... The beings of a billion billion worlds... they will need your abilities and they will pray for your aid... they need you, Peter... they need you, Star-Lord."

The story was momentous in that it was the first Star-Lord tale published in color—high-end, "full-spectrum" color, the kind reserved for Marvel's more prestigious magazines, like *Epic Illustrated* and *The Hulk!* And Moench was not the only newcomer to the character. The art was provided by penciler Gene Colan and inker Tom Palmer, who had worked together extensively on classic runs of *Doctor Strange* and, of course, *The Tomb of Dracula*. Palmer did double duty here, also serving as colorist—and he pushed himself to the limit out of his great enthusiasm for the material.

"That Star-Lord book was special for Gene Colan's amazing science-fiction work," Palmer says, citing the double-page spread showing the vast exterior of the massive space ark as a particular highlight for him to work on. "I recommended to Gene an art book by illustrator Robert McCall, who painted fantastic spacescapes and vehicles. McCall's work inspired me on many of my advertising jobs—anything with a space background, planets, the way they're lit. Gene embraced the book along with his own creative talent and produced incredible images."



DOUG MOENCH

THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN: A RETROSPECTIVE ON THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

SECTION TWO THE COPPER AGE: THE 1990 *GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY* SERIES

The Guardians of the Galaxy were, for the most part, gone from Marvel Comics for nearly a decade before Jim Valentino submitted a series pitch to Marvel editors.

Using Steve Gerber's work with the Guardians as a foundation, Valentino added significantly to the Guardians mythos over a two-and-a-half-year stint on the series. The *Guardians of the Galaxy* book was a hit with fans, showcasing a positive sales slope throughout Jim's run. Due to the formation of Image Comics, for which he was a co-founder, Valentino was unable to finish his larger Guardians story—although we will cover what was to be, and how the overarching story would have resolved.

In this section we talk with a variety of people to give a comprehensive, behind-the-scenes view of the series. This includes series writer/penciler **Jim Valentino**, in his definitive interview on the topic. Also interviewed are Marvel's editor-in-chief at the time, **Tom DeFalco**; Valentino's studio mate (and inker on several of his Guardians works) **Rob Liefeld**; series colorist **Evelyn Stein**; Jim's assistant (and eventual Image Comics publisher) **Eric Stephenson**; writer of *New Warriors* (featuring a young Vance Astro of Guardians fame), **Fabian Nicieza**; and even Jim's wife, **Diane Valentino**, along with his son, **Aaron Valentino** (who happened to create Taserface, and also was the model for the Protege character).

If you enjoyed the original Guardians, check out **BACK ISSUE #65** for additional coverage of the team, as both Guardians-themed issues combined make good bookends on the group.

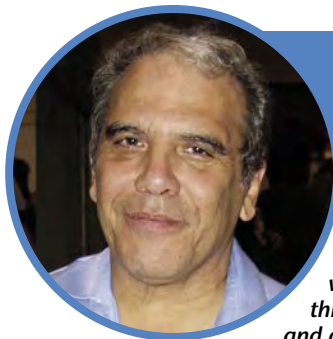
Where It All Began

In late April of 1989, Jim Valentino penciled a Guardians team shot to include with his series pitch. At a later date, Chris Ivy inked a copy of the pencils, which was then used to promote the series in several places. This 2015 image is a recreation of the inked version. Pencils, inks, and colors done by original inker Chris Ivy. From the William Colosimo collection.

Guardians of the Galaxy TM & © Marvel.

by **William Colosimo**





JIM VALENTINO

© Luigi Novi / Wikimedia Commons.

WILLIAM COLOSIMO: *I know Jack Kirby was a huge influence on you. What do you think you specifically took from studying him and applied to your work on the Guardians of the Galaxy title?*

JIM VALENTINO: That's impossible for me to quantify. His influence on me was deep and profound, but mostly in terms of storytelling. **COLOSIMO:** *It's clear you were highly influenced by comics themselves. But what about science-fiction movies or TV shows? How much did these spark the imagination, especially with the Guardians?*

VALENTINO: Probably not as much as one would think. The conceit of the series was an exploration of the Marvel Universe 1,000 years in the future, so, by its very nature, it had to be more comic-centric. I did pick the Guardians stars' function as communicators and transporters from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and I did listen to a lot of soundtracks while drawing, but most of the influence was from comics. That said, I am a huge science-fiction fan.

Harlan Ellison and Ted Sturgeon were friends, and Heinlein, Matheson, Asimov, so many others were favorites.

COLOSIMO: *Can you describe the studio you had with Rob Liefeld? What was the atmosphere like? This (and your studio at home) was where at least the early issues of Guardians were created.*

VALENTINO: Rob and I shared several studios over the course of several years, and when we weren't sharing a studio we'd hang out with one-another. So I'm sure the Guardians, *What If?*, *Hawk and Dove*, *The New Mutants*, etc. were conceived and created in close proximity to one another.

COLOSIMO: *You seemed to get regular work on What If? vol. 2 prior to and during the Guardians series. How did that come about? Was there any specific attraction to that title other than somewhat steady work or that you had already known editor Craig Anderson from your time working with the San Diego Comic-Con?*

VALENTINO: *What If?* was an anthology title with no set creative team, so it was a title that was open to pitches. I was a huge fan of DC's Imaginary tales and later, the [original] *What If?* series, so the title was right up my alley. In fact, I always considered the Guardians to be a sort of ongoing *What If?* since their future was not necessarily the future of the regular Marvel Universe. That gave me a lot of leeway to move in most any direction I wanted to move in.

As for Craig and I, yes, we were friends in San Diego when we both lived there in the mid- to late '70s.

COLOSIMO: *So, the What If? issues that you wrote were all original story ideas that you pitched, not specific assignments from the editor?*

VALENTINO: I think the first one (#3) may have been assigned. "What If Wolverine Was an Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.?" (#7) was Rob's idea. Issue #25, the "Atlantis Attacks" one, was assigned, and #11, "What If the Fantastic Four All Had the Same Power?," was from a reader's suggestion. I'm pretty sure I pitched every other one I wrote.

COLOSIMO: *Had you read the first Guardians series in Marvel Presents as it hit the stands? I think it's a safe bet—as an Avengers fan—that you knew of them from the "Korvac Saga." I know you knew of the team by 1984 at the latest, as you wrote an article on superhero groups for Amazing Heroes #53 and included a write-up on the Guardians.*

VALENTINO: I believe that I first saw them in *Marvel Two-in-One* #5, then later in *The Defenders*, as I was a fan of Steve Gerber's work and he wrote both of those series. Then I'm sure I followed them onto *Marvel Presents* and *The Avengers*.



A Preview of Things to Come

Original art to the cover to *Marvel Age* #88 (May 1990).

Jim Valentino pencils with Terry Austin inks. This issue of *Marvel's* promo-zine came out the month prior to *GOTG* #1 and was used to promote that new series. (inset) The published version.

TM & © Marvel.

PITCHING THE SERIES

COLOSIMO: *In Comics Scene vol. 2 #13, you mentioned that it took about six months to come up with an angle for a Guardians series. We can see that they were on your mind, as you penciled a story (written by Steve Englehart) in Silver Surfer Annual #2, which contains a splash showcasing various alien races; the narration seemed fairly open to interpretation for the penciler. That splash featured a Badoon and a Centaurian, among others. This issue likely hit the stands in the weeks right before the 1989 WonderCon event. Do you have any memories pertaining to the Guardians in that period of time?*

VALENTINO: Really? I said that? Hmm... well, maybe that's true. Honestly, I just don't remember anymore. What I do recall is that Rob and I were going up to WonderCon in Oakland mostly because Tom DeFalco and Mark Gruenwald were going to be there. I had several pitches for them including a new take on *The Defenders* (now lost to time and fading memory), and a Marvel version of the Teen Titans that I was going to write and Rob was going to draw that we called the

Back After a Decade of Silence!

The original art to the cover of *Guardians of the Galaxy* #1 (June 1990), minus cover dress. Jim Valentino pencils, Tom Christopher inks. Prior to this issue, the team's last real appearance was in *Marvel Two-in-One* #69 (Nov. 1980).

TM & © Marvel.

Young Avengers. As I recall, when we pitched it Tom told us about the New Warriors, which he had just created for an issue of *Thor* that had yet to be released. At any rate, I wanted one more pitch, so I thumbed through the *Marvel Universe Handbook* and came across the Guardians' entry. I called up Rob, asked him what he thought about them—he said they looked cool, but they didn't have a story. Two nights later on a midnight trip to the bathroom, it hit me—the shield, the exploration of the 31st Century, all of it. I remember I barely had time to type it up on my old Royal and draw the cover piece before we jumped on a plane to Oakland.

COLOSIMO: You came to the con armed with several Marvel pitches—a globetrotting Defenders, Young Avengers, and one called Pym People. You also had the Guardians of the Galaxy pitch, which came with a team image—the first time you penciled them—with inks by Chris Ivy. How did Chris get that task? Did Chris frequent one of your studios at the time?

VALENTINO: Honestly, I don't recall. I doubt that there would have been enough time for him to ink it prior to my going to the convention, so he probably did so

afterward. I remember liking the job he did over me on the aforementioned *What If?* #11, and I remember requesting either him or Sam de la Rosa to get the *Guardians* job, but other than that everything gets kind of fuzzy.

COLOSIMO: What attracts you to group books? All of your known WonderCon 1989 pitches happened to be team books. Was that a conscious decision?

VALENTINO: Yes, I've always liked groups. I like playing the different personalities off of one another. It's easier to reveal someone's nature through their personal interactions. I liked the fact that no team is dependent on any one character, unlike a solo book. So you could have real or implied danger, especially in a group like the Guardians where no one had a solo series. But I've always been a fan of team books. When I was a kid my favorite books were *Justice League* and *The Avengers*.

COLOSIMO: Did Mark and Tom have time during WonderCon to discuss and review the pitches, or did you hear from them later on? Do you remember the gist of the interaction there, at the con?

VALENTINO: Both Tom and Mark were extremely generous with their time and Tom did, indeed, go over all of the pitches with me. He didn't like the Defenders pitch—he felt it should be US-based—and he wasn't fond of the Pym People, which was a group based on all of Pym's various identities such as the female

Hitting the Newsstands

The first issue of a run that basically showed a consistent sales increase through Jim Valentino's tenure on the series. The June 1990 cover-dated issue likely hit the newsstands on April 20th, 1990.

TM & © Marvel.



VALENTINO: The story of his leaving started when he first met Photon in issue #5. When next we were to see her, during the Protege War, Photon would be carrying Yondu's pup in her pouch (theirs was a race of Marsupials). The clue was in issue #16 where they said that they had come to an... understanding. Had to be subtle about these things in those days.

COLOSIMO: *What can you tell me about the 1992 Guardians poster that Rob Liefeld inked?*

VALENTINO: Marvel was doing a lot of posters at the time and they asked me to do one. I asked if Rob could ink it. I don't recall who colored it. As I recall they held it back for quite a while, only releasing it after Image was announced.

A NEW IMAGE

COLOSIMO: *Rob brought the idea of Image Comics up to you in, I believe, the summer of 1991, and Image was announced to the public in January 1992. You were still at Marvel until a few months later. Originally you planned to do another team book at Image—The Pact—but decided against that and went with the unused Archie Comics' Fox pitch as ShadowHawk. You had eventually asked Marvel editorial if you could continue writing the Guardians, but relinquish penciling duties as you realized juggling both companies would be difficult.*

How much work with Image were you doing up through the spring of 1992, when you left Marvel? Was it mostly working on the concepts of both your new book and what Image was as a company?

VALENTINO: It was insane. There was so much going on, it was ridiculous. We had gone from employees to businessmen, from part of a large company to creating a new company from scratch while trying to keep up with deadlines and all of the demands on our time. We were being interviewed on television, in magazines, everyone wanted a meeting—there were people coming at us from all sides and we had to do our books or the whole thing would go to hell before it even started. Conventions were offering us serious money to appear at their shows. It was just insane. It was like going from one full-time job to juggling four or five of them. And that's not to mention finishing our obligations to Marvel.

COLOSIMO: *How did Eric Stephenson come about to ghost-write a story in GOTG*

Annual #2? What kind of direction did you give him? Did you do any significant rewriting to it while editing it before sending it in?

VALENTINO: He was trying to break into the industry at the time, so he interviewed me on spec for a pitch to *Wizard* magazine. We had to redo the interview several times and I got to know him a bit, I liked him. So, I asked if he wanted to ghost this story. I'm not sure how much direction I gave him, but I must have given him some. Then when he brought it back to me I edited it in front of him, showed him where he was going wrong, and explained why. He told me years later that it was very instructive for him, which was very nice of him to say.

COLOSIMO: *Your last addition to the team's line up was Rita DeMara—Yellowjacket. She was a newer character, a villain that began siding with the Marvel heroes. You introduced her into the book with your script for #28, but didn't have time to do anything with her character other than lay some foundation.*

How did you see her personality? Was one of her main functions to add a pair of 20th Century eyes to the team's (mostly) 31st Century adventures?

VALENTINO: Yes, adding Rita was my idea. I liked the character, and as a person from the 20th Century my feeling was that she could add that sense of wonder that none of the other Guardians were capable of. For her the 31st Century would be a place of wonder—she would become our fish out of water. Another thing I'd planned was that the team would pick up Killraven on their return to the 31st Century, and he and Rita would become involved in a romance.

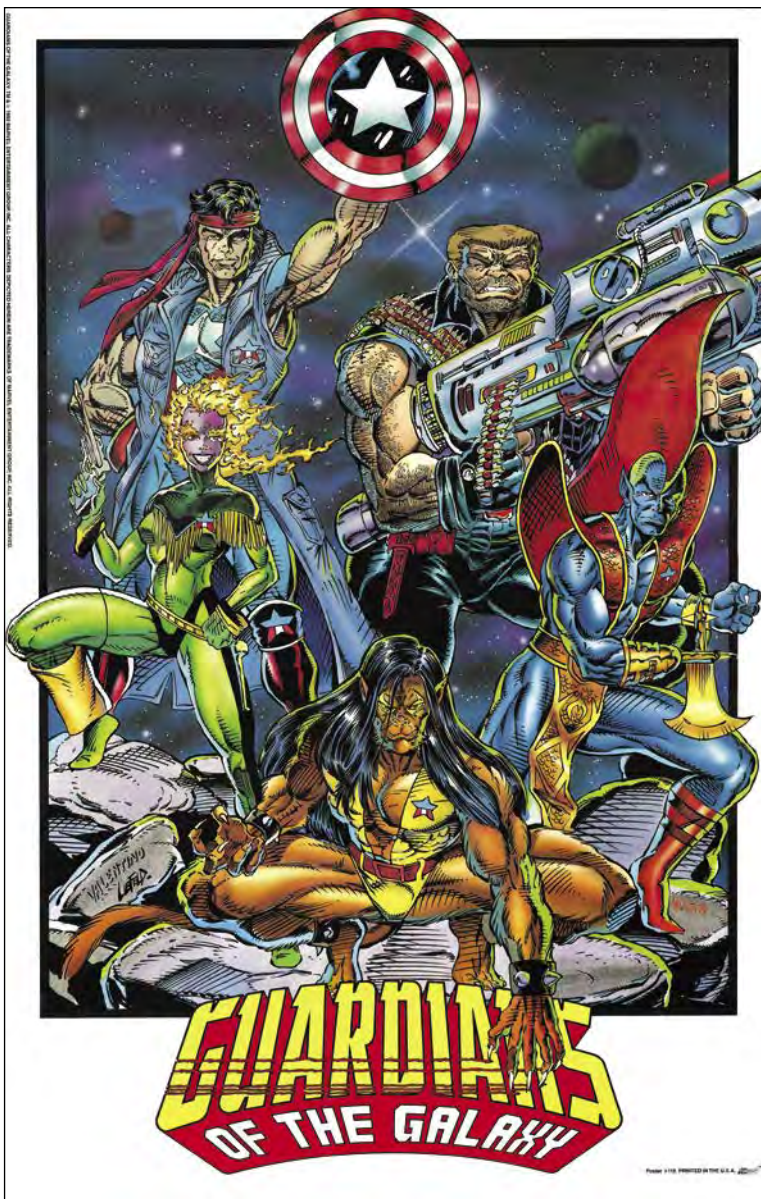
COLOSIMO: *How did you feel Killraven would have meshed with the group? Was the thought to add him one that was toyed with when you originally planned telling the "War of the Worlds" story?*

VALENTINO: When I left the title, the Guardians were in the 20th Century. The way I had it figured was that they would have made a stop in Killraven's time (I don't know how anymore) and pick him up there. He would have been in his 50s, his war over, his friends gone—so he went with them into the future.

I remember pitching to Tom DeFalco at a dinner somewhere my version of the "War of the Worlds" as a two-issue prestige-format book. I told him that my idea was kind of the reverse of the original H. G. Wells story in that the Martians would be carrying a virus that

would infect and kill all super-people. This would explain why there were no super-beings during Killraven's time. He gave me a green light on the spot. Unfortunately, I never got the chance to do it.

COLOSIMO: *Marvel eventually decided to part ways with you, your last full issue for all intents and purposes being Guardians of the Galaxy #27. How much of a disappointment was it to you that you couldn't finish the larger story that you had planned to tell through the book?*



Jim and Rob Together Again

Former studio mates Jim Valentino (on pencils) and Rob Liefeld (on inks) team up once again for *Marvel Press Poster* #118, from 1992. Scan courtesy of William Colosimo.

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VALENTINO: I was very disappointed. Rob and I were the only two Image founders who wanted to finish our Marvel stories after the formation of Image. In my case, I'd been setting up signposts all along pretty much from the start of the series. I asked if I could just write, maybe do covers, as I was neck-deep in Image both creatively and business-wise at the time. But they thought it best to make a clean break. I was very disappointed.

I genuinely loved the *Guardians*—it wasn't just an assignment for me.

COLOSIMO: You've stated that the book had a positive sales slope through your run—I'd assume after your first issue, there was a bit of a drop-off in orders for a couple issues until the book started reaching the readers hands, then it increased in numbers up through your last full issue, #27. Any general idea on what the numbers were at the end of your run? Around 200,000 in monthly sales?

VALENTINO: Yeah, somewhere in that vicinity, but let us not forget that Rob, Todd, and Jim were selling in the millions at the same time. Funny, it was a solid mid-range book at the time, but publishers would give their eyeteeth for sales in the 100,000 range today.

COLOSIMO: In the late 1980s, you were co-creator on a series idea called *The Protectors*. This series didn't get off the ground, and when you started *Guardians* you took some of your ideas from *The Protectors* and merged them into the GOTG. You left GOTG before you could finish your larger story, so you attempted to finish it somewhat in 1994 with Keith Giffen in a project at Image called *The Galactic Legion*. That series was too impractical to get off the ground.

Missing the GOTG and wanting to revisit a team of space adventurers, you decided to go back to *The Protectors*, rename it *The Alliance*, and publish that in 1995—possibly using a couple characters that were created for *Galactic Legion* (characters that were likely riffs of GOTG characters, so things in *Galactic Legion* could ring true to GOTG). You ended up cancelling *The Alliance* after three issues as you felt it wasn't progressing as you had envisioned. Does any of that back-story need to be corrected or added to?

VALENTINO: No, that's pretty much how I remember it. Brian Murray collaborated with me on *The Protectors* and, as noted, Keith on *The Galactic Legion*. In both cases I tried to use the characters and concepts I could identify as solely my own out of respect for my two friends.

COLOSIMO: Rob Liefeld went back to Marvel in 1996 to do *The Avengers* (with you scripting that first issue). Did you have any thoughts at that time to present a revamped GOTG pitch to the company?

VALENTINO: No. It was very clear that they wanted the [Image] Big Three only (but they couldn't get Todd) to revitalize their marquee properties.

BACK TO BASICS

COLOSIMO: What inspired you in 2004 to come up with the pitch for a revised *Guardians* series, featuring the original team?

VALENTINO: It seemed like a good idea at the time.

COLOSIMO: If the pitch would have been accepted, did you have plans to pencil it along with the scripting duties? Were you looking to take this on as a monthly title?

VALENTINO: I would have written it, most likely with layouts, in the hope that, unlike the *Avengers* project, whoever they chose to pencil the book would follow the layouts.



Untapped Potential

(top) Yellowjacket was Jim's last addition to the team roster right before his departure from the series, so he didn't get the chance to draw her for the book. Jim Valentino pencils, Chance Wolf inks, and Evelyn Stein colors. From the William Colosimo collection.

(bottom) A couple of years after leaving GOTG, Jim reread the series and realized he missed the team. After a failed attempt initiating a pseudo-GOTG book with Keith Giffen called "*The Galactic Legion*," Jim put out *The Alliance* in 1995, a series he cancelled as he felt it wasn't turning out as he had hoped. Shown is the cover art to *The Alliance* #1 (cover "B"; every issue had two covers). Jim Valentino pencils, Dan Davis inks. From the William Colosimo collection.

Yellowjacket TM & © Marvel. *The Alliance* TM & © Jim Valentino.

ROCKET RACCOON

BILL MANTLO'S LEGACY

by Jarrod Buttery



BILL MANTLO

© Marvel.

Forgive the personal start, but, as a kid, I discovered Rocket Raccoon when he guest-starred in *Incredible Hulk* #271 (May 1982). The ongoing storyline had catapulted the Hulk into space, and in issue #271—which was his 20th anniversary celebration—the Hulk found himself on a planet of anthropomorphic animals. I remember excitedly telling my friend, Simon Rebeiro, about the hilarious issue: “The Hulk ends up on a planet of talking animals, where the main character is called Rocket Raccoon!” To which Simon replied, “What, like the Beatles song?”

I liked the Beatles, but I didn’t know they had a song called “Rocky Raccoon” (primarily written by Paul McCartney), on *The White Album* (1968). It’s a folk song, set in the Old West, about a young man—Rocky Raccoon—whose girl runs off with another guy. The lyrics open: “Now somewhere in the Black Mountain Hills of Dakota, there lived a young boy named Rocky Raccoon...”

Rocket decides to track down the pair and checks into a room, in the local saloon, “only to find Gideon’s Bible.” The subsequent showdown does not fare well for Rocky.

Incredible Hulk #271, written by Bill Mantlo with art by Sal Buscema, opens with: “Now Somewhere in the Black Holes of Sirius Major There Lived a Young Boy Named Rocket Raccoon!” Rocket, and his best friend Wal-Russ (a walrus), enlist the Hulk’s help to stop the theft of an ancient book called (spoiler alert) Gideon’s Bible. Understandably, Buscema admits he doesn’t remember all of the hundreds of comics he’s drawn, but volunteers, “I do remember thinking that this was really quirky, or something like that. I should realize that, with comics, anything goes! Wish I could elaborate, but it was 37 years ago!”

BILL MANTLO

Anyone who’s read Marvel comics from the mid-’70s to the mid-’80s would be familiar with Bill Mantlo. He wrote approximately 700 comics for Marvel (and three for DC). Towards the late 1980s, his assignments began to dry up. Bill went to law school (got his degree in two years) and became a criminal defense attorney for the New York Legal Aid Society. He also took up (and excelled at) rollerblading.

On July 17, 1992, Bill was rollerblading home when he was struck by a driver just four blocks from his home. Bill careened over the hood of the car, his head hit the car windshield, and he was thrown onto the street. The driver fled the scene. Bill suffered massive brain injuries and has been in hospitals and care facilities ever since. These details were explained in the benefit book *Mantlo: A Life in Comics* (Sleeping Giant Comics, 2007) by David Yurkovich and Bill’s brother, Mike.

That’s No Mere “Puny Talking Animal,” Big Guy!

Rocket Raccoon’s breakout appearance, in *Incredible Hulk* #271 (May 1982).

Cover by Al Milgrom. Unless otherwise noted, scans accompanying this article are courtesy of Jarrod Buttery.

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The Mantlo Brothers

Mike and Bill Mantlo today.

BillMantlo.com.

Mike Mantlo maintains the Bill Mantlo Support Fund (www.billmantlo.com) and is happy to talk to *BACK ISSUE* about his brother: "Bill and I were both Beatles fans, and still are to this day. With Bill being the older brother, it kinda worked this way: Bill would cobble together his weekly allowance money (I seem to remember it being about 50 cents a week), and whenever a new Beatles album came out (usually about two records per year during those heady years) he would plunk down his \$3.00 or so and rush home to wear out the grooves. This is where I came in... Bill would let me sit and listen to each record with him and sort of 'indoctrinate' me in the ways of Beatlemania. This eventually graduated to all things rock 'n' roll, and I received a very thorough education in '60s R-n-R history under his tutelage. It was a magical time!

"When he came up with the idea for Rocket Raccoon it was a bit surprising, as Bill was a much bigger fan of John Lennon than he was of Paul McCartney, but the Western cinematic theme of that song really stirred Bill's creative juices, and building the characters from McCartney's seeds was, for Bill, relatively simple."

THE SWORD IN THE STAR

Bill Mantlo started the science-fiction serial "The Sword in the Star" in Marvel's black-and-white magazine *Marvel Preview* #4 (Jan. 1976). (Coincidentally, this magazine also featured the first appearance of Star-Lord, as discussed elsewhere in this issue.) Mantlo's lead character is Prince Wayfinder, of the planet Ithacon, who is searching for a mythical sword of power that may help him find a new home for his people.

The series' only other chapter appeared in *Marvel Preview* #7 (June 1976). Gorgeously illustrated by Keith Giffen, Wayfinder meets a walkin', talkin', pistol-packin' raccoon called Rocky (who speaks with a distinctly British accent!). Giffen was interviewed by Vaneta Rogers for *Newsarama* in 2014: "Rocket Raccoon was created on my very first-ever professional comic-book job. Bill really helped me get a foothold in there. He was a huge supporter of my stuff, and he was one of the only supporters of my stuff when I broke in. Remember the old Beatles song 'Rocky Raccoon'? I think that was part of the inspiration. I think we were trying to do our version of Howard the Duck. You know, wink, wink, nudge, nudge.

"He was a throwaway gag. I wish I could say I had a lot more to do with his development, but honestly, I'm credited with creating the character when all I did was draw a raccoon!"

Mantlo was interviewed by Mark Waid in *Amazing Heroes* #60 (Dec. 1984): "Rocket was a secondary character in 'The Sword in the Star,' which itself was a feature that never went anywhere because all the vehicles for it died. Rocket did a walk-on part in the series. Keith had him marching out of the swamp, dressed in battle armor, and smoking a pipe—which I didn't realize until later was an almost exact rerun of the way Howard the Duck first appeared.

Rocky and His Friends

From "The Sword in the Star!" in *Marvel Preview* #7 (Summer 1976). Written by Bill Mantlo and drawn by Keith Giffen.

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The Tree's with Me!

(top) Rocket and Groot star on this variant cover for *Annihilators* #3 (June 2011) by Jelena Kevic-Djurdjevic. (bottom) Artist Timothy Green II's re-imagining of page 5 of 1985's *Rocket Raccoon* #1, in *Annihilators* #4 (Aug. 2011). Story by Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning.

TM & © Marvel.

working in comics in my early 20s and by that time, I had been doing it for a few years and deluded myself that I was a professional. Mike was already drawing some really great stuff by that time and I was a pretty big fan.

"Mike would occasionally help me out by filling in blacks, and erasing pages on deadline gigs, and I thought he could—at the very least—get some inking work, so I tossed his name around to the editors I was close with at Marvel. He finally got a few inking gigs and honestly, Marvel was obviously underusing him since his pencils and designs were so nice. I'm not sure how

Mike got the *Rocket Raccoon* gig, but I think he just asked me if I wanted to ink it, and since I loved Mike's work, and especially the very cool Killer Clowns and such that Mike was so excited by, and since we lived in the same area, well, what else could I do?

"All the stuff in that miniseries was pretty cool to ink. I love horror stuff as much as Mike does, so it was a real dream to be involved. I knew he loved drawing snakes and lizards and giant apes and such, and the more monster-oriented animals. Mike's clowns were perfect Nightmare Clowns and I really dug doing all the different textures and fur and the weird robots and stuff. Everything was a blast. I've heard people say that I really added a lot to Mike's drawings—that's nonsense. I think I did a pretty good job, but I was darn faithful to the pencils. That was the way Mike was drawing at the time. All that crazy fur was in the pencils!"

Gordon only inked issues #1, 2, and 4, and explains: "I was on issue #2 of *RR* when John Byrne had asked his editor, Mike Carlin, to ask me if I wanted to be the regular inker on Byrne's *Fantastic Four*, and I wasn't about to turn that down. I conveyed that to Carl, who was very angry with me that I would even consider it. Carl pulled issue #3 from me and gave it to Allen Milgrom. And to my recollection, I got #4 in before Allen finished with #3."

DON'T BLINK

After his miniseries, Rocket received a full-page entry in *The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe Deluxe Edition* #11 (Oct. 1986), confirming that, after he left Halfworld, Rocket met Prince Wayfinder; and that "The outcome of that conflict is unknown."

The Impossible Man imitated Rocket in *Silver Surfer* #33 (Jan. 1990), but Rocket's next actual appearance was a cameo in *Quasar* #15 (Oct. 1990). The Cosmic Avenger accidentally disrupts the laboratory planet of the Stranger, freeing many of the Stranger's specimens—including Rocket, the insinuation being that, after leaving Halfworld, Rocket was captured for study by the Stranger. Rocket next received an updated entry in *The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe Master Edition* #9 (Aug. 1991).

The following year, Rocket—transformed into solid stone—appeared in the final panel of *Sensational She-Hulk* #44 (Oct. 1992). The next issue included a non-speaking flashback depicting how Rocket was petrified (literally) by a D'Bari weapon. At least Rocket got one line in issue #46 where, after the petrification is reversed, he explains he was attacked when he stopped to refuel. There appears to be a Rocket cameo, on a video screen, in the background, on the final page of *The Incomplete Death's Head* #11 (Nov. 1993). Jokingly, there's a raccoon-like pelt on the wall of Lord Armageddon's throne room in *Incredible Hulk* #415 (Mar. 1994).

Next, Rocket appeared in one panel in She-Hulk's law offices, in *She-Hulk* #1 (Dec. 2005). He's seen on another video screen in *Exiles* #73 (Feb. 2006) and received an updated index entry in *Marvel Legacy: The 1980s Handbook* (Nov. 2006). That's six comics, four index entries, and 11 cameos in 30 years. And then everything changed.

ANNIHILATION

In the *Annihilation* limited series (Oct. 2006–Mar. 2007), the Marvel Universe is invaded by the forces of Annihilus, ruler of the Negative Zone. Annihilus is barely repelled and, in his wake, the alien Phalanx sweep in and conquer the Kree Empire in the *Annihilation: Conquest* miniseries (Jan.–June 2008). In the precursory *Annihilation: Conquest—Starlord* [instead of standard "Star-Lord" spelling] miniseries (Sept.–Dec. 2007), written by Giffen, with art by Timothy Green II, Kree rebels "encourage" some of their "detainees" to join a Dirty Dozen-like strike team



THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN: A RETROSPECTIVE ON THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

While somewhat outside the scope of the main article and **BACK ISSUE**'s editorial purview, an issue dedicated to the Guardians of the Galaxy wouldn't quite be complete without acknowledging the new version of the team, due to their standing in popular culture from a very successful movie franchise.

Going backwards in time (possibly counterintuitive, considering we're talking about the future): The smash hit movie from 2014 was heavily inspired by the 2008 Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning *Guardians of the Galaxy* comic series, which gathered quite a rabid following. The creators of that 2008 series had a deep respect for the original Guardians team, as did **Andy Schmidt**—the Marvel editor who was the brainchild of the group that was eventually handed off to Abnett and Lanning. So not only the Guardians' name, but the work with the characters, inspired what was to come.

In this section we talk with Schmidt, the Marvel editor who pushed for the cosmic title resurgence that led into a new Guardians team, along with **Keith Giffen**, the main writer who helmed the various books that introduced and brought the new version of the team together.



**ANDY
SCHMIDT**

© Marvel.

WILLIAM COLOSIMO:
In late 2004, Jim Valentino had sent a pitch to Marvel featuring a revamped version of the original Guardians, which went unread. It seems everything somewhat began for the new Guardians team with the 12-issue Thanos series from 2004.

A Blast from the Past!

Jim Valentino returned briefly in 2008 to pencil a variant cover for *GOTG* vol. 2 #7, an homage to his *GOTG* #1 from 1990.

Chance Wolf inks. Original cover art courtesy of William Colosimo.

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SECTION THREE THE MODERN AGE: A REVISED CAST

by **William Colosimo**



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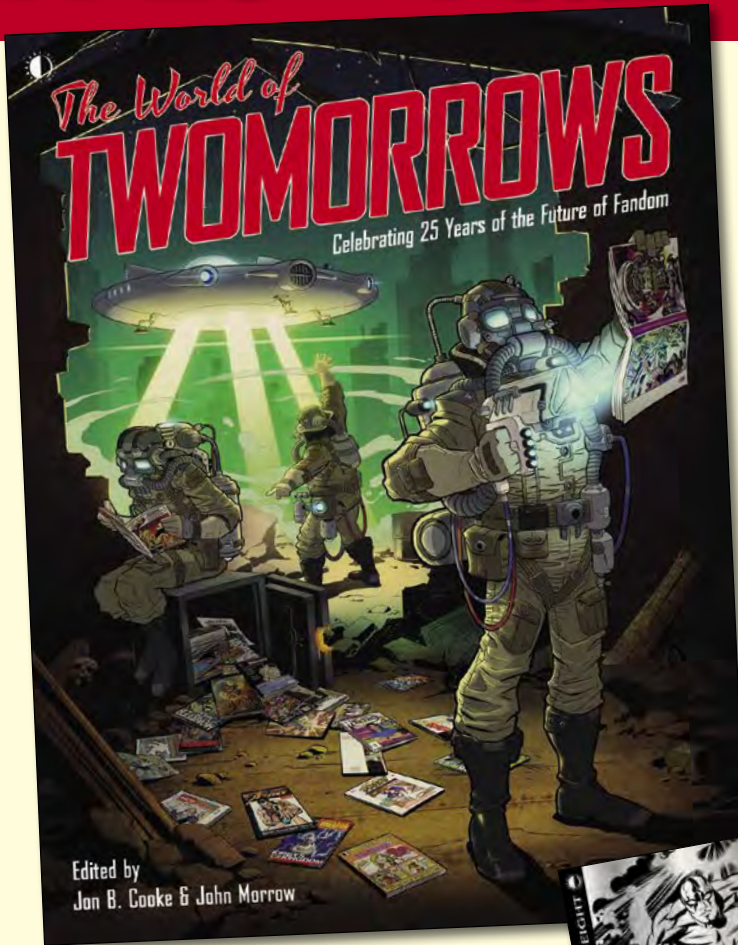
BACK ISSUE #119

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY ISSUE! A galaxy of comics stars discuss Marvel's white-hot space team in the Guardians Interviews, including **TOM DEFALCO**, **KEITH GIFFEN**, **ROB LIEFELD**, **AL MILGROM**, **MARY SKRENES**, **ROGER STERN**, **JIM VALENTINO**, and more. Plus: Star-Lord and Rocket Raccoon before the Guardians, with **CHRIS CLAREMONT** and **MIKE MIGNOLA**. Cover by **JIM VALENTINO** with inks by **CHRIS IVY**.

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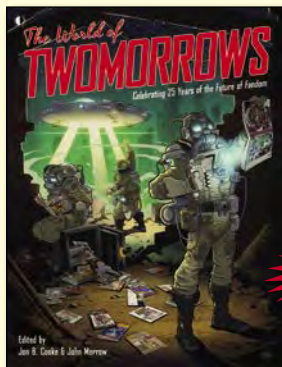
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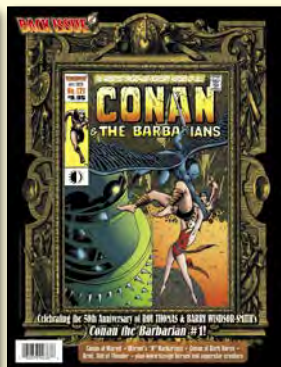
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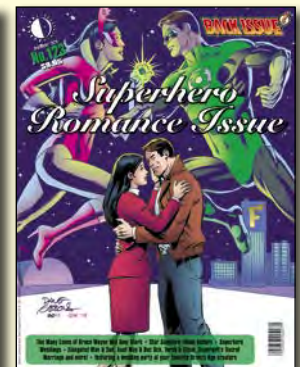
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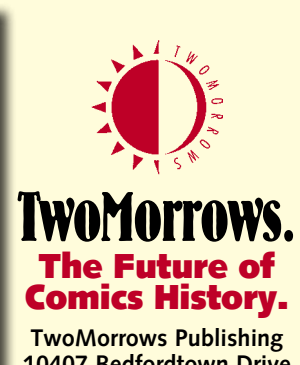
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