



Hero-A-Go-Go!

CAMPY COMIC BOOKS,
CRIMEFIGHTERS & CULTURE
OF THE SWINGING SIXTIES



SPLIT!



OH! YOU FIEND!
I...UH!-CANT HOLD. OH-

AND SO, CAPTAIN ACTION,
THE CONTEST IS OVER!
SOON YOU WILL BE
HELPLESSLY IN MY POWER!



By Michael Eury

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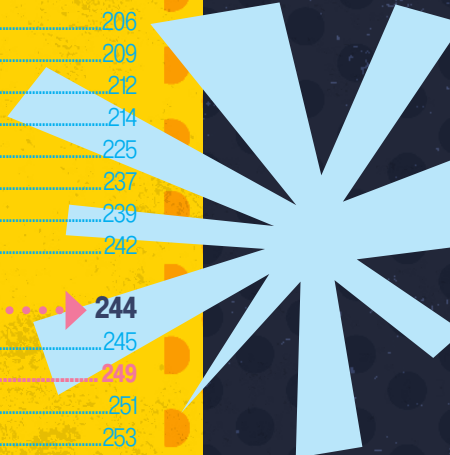
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* CAMPFIRE



Uh-oh ... Now I know how toothpaste feels! YEEOW!

HAW! I'll squeeze the elemental juice out of you, fella!

THE SUPER-HERO EXPLOSION

ECLIPSO Hero and Villain in One Man

Let's get this out of the way from the get-go: Eclipso scared the heck out of me when I was a kid. In 1966, I had just started buying comics at age eight when the "Hero and Villain in One Man!" was winding down his original three-year blip of fame. As I scoured the racks searching for Batman funnybooks, I'd avert my eyes when stumbling across those issues of *House of Secrets* starring Eclipso. As drawn by Jack Sparling, Eclipso was horrifying, with his pointy demon ears, blue half-moon face, and swollen-lipped evil snarl. But I scared easily back then. Bette Davis gave me nightmares (those were her *What Ever Happened to*



Baby Jane? years, when her makeup was gruesomely applied like Herman Munster's).

Who was Eclipso? Created by writer Bob Haney and artist Lee Elias, this high-concept character—"Hero and Villain in One Man!"—debuted in issue #61 (July–Aug. 1963) of *House of Secrets*, one of DC Comics' eerie anthologies. His premiere only garnered a headshot inset at the bottom of the comic's cover, with *HOS'* Mark Merlin considered a better draw for the spotlight. But over time Eclipso would... yes, eclipse the other stars of the book (Merlin and, later, Prince Ra-Man) to become *House of Secrets'* dominant cover feature.

Issue #61's inaugural tale, "Eclipso, the Genius Who Fought Himself," introduces solar-energy scientist Dr. Bruce Gordon, the feature's hero who would also become its villain. While studying an eclipse of the sun on an island sinisterly named Diablo, Gordon is scratched by an uncanny black diamond wielded by a loco jungle shaman named Mophir. From that moment on, Gordon becomes a modern-day Jekyll

Split personality! Gordon vs. Eclipso on the Toth-drawn *House of Secrets* #67 cover.

TM & © DC Comics.

LEFT: Original Jack Sparling art, with monsters galore, from *HOS* #80.

Courtesy of Heritage. TM & © DC Comics.

SUPERMAN AND THE GIANT CYCLOPS

A Whacked-Out Wax Exhibit

LEFT: Eclipso, Bat-villain, as seen in a frame tray puzzle, coloring book (back cover shown), and a card from a Batman card game, all from 1966.

TM & © DC Comics.



Part of growing up is the crushing discovery that sometimes, advertisements stretch the truth. Other times, they flat-out lie.

You'd think that Sixties comic books, which paraded their wholesomeness by plastering the Mom-pleasing Comics Code Authority seal of approval on their covers, would be immune to such swindles. But amid their four-color pages existed the most shameless examples of advertising's sliding scale of honesty, from the X-Ray Specs that provided no voyeuristic peek through fabric whatsoever to the Sea Monkeys that could not, in fact, be trained as pets. Those charlatans! How dare they deceive children??

The mightiest of super-heroes, Superman himself, exposed his vulnerability to false advertising in 1964 when he loaned his very name and image to one of the Sixties' greatest let-downs: the "Superman and the Giant Cyclops" attraction at the World's Fair.

The bar of anticipation was hoisted to stratospheric highs by the fair itself, an astonishing Space Age wonderland that was 1964's second biggest American invasion (after the Beatles). Engulfing 650

at the time but later hated when collectors realized the diamond made it tough to bag and board the issue without damaging the comic in front of it.) And since then Eclipso, like comic books themselves, has gotten darker and meaner.

But for those of us who lived during the Camp Age, we'll always think of Eclipso as the moon-faced menace who'd duck when you'd turn on your front porch light.



The DC Comics house ad of 1964, promising a wax museum thrill.

Superman TM & © DC Comics.

Nemesis (detail from the cover of *Adventures into the Unknown* #154) and Magicman (detail from the cover of *Forbidden Worlds* #126).
Art by Kurt Schaffenberger.

TM & © Roger Broughton.

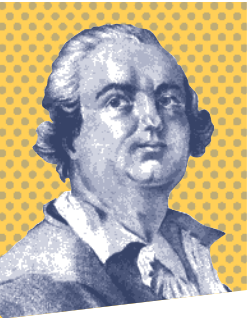
MAGICMAN AND NEMESIS

The Siegfried and Roy of the Camp Age

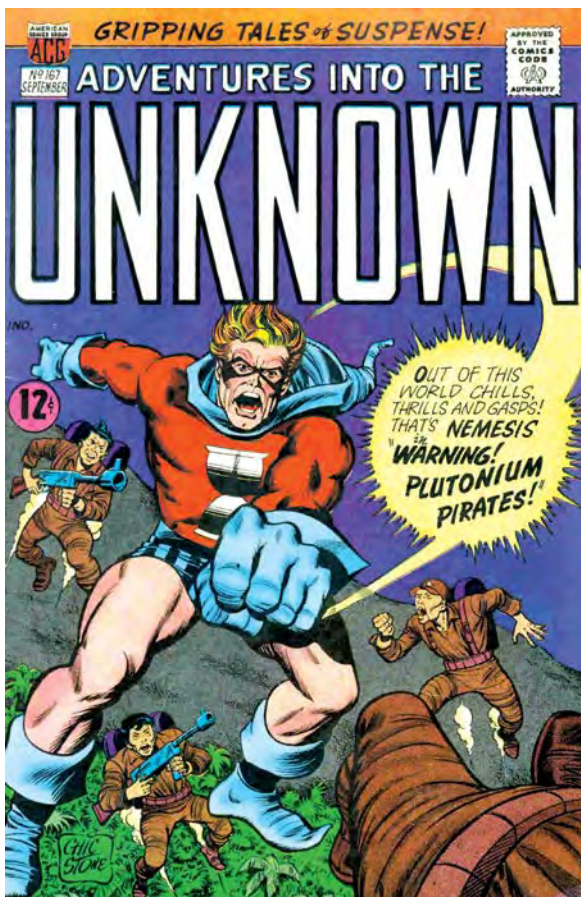


The Sixties' race to overpopulate comic-book racks with super-heroes created more wrong turns than a drunken taxi driver. Among them: the Siegfried and Roy of the Camp Age, Magicman and Nemesis.

They were the product of American Comics Group (ACG), known for its long-running supernatural anthologies *Adventures into the Unknown*, which began in 1948, and *Forbidden Worlds*, which began in 1951 and gave birth to the cult favorite Herbie. In the mid-Sixties, their editor, Richard A. Hughes, acquiesced to reader and market demands and created the super-heroes Magicman, who took over *Forbidden Worlds* with issue #125 (Jan.–Feb. 1965),



Magicman's daddy, Cagliostro.



Chic Stone's Nemesis, on the cover of *Adventures into the Unknown* #167.

TM & © Roger Broughton.

and Nemesis, the cover-featured star of *Adventures into the Unknown* beginning with issue #154 (Feb. 1965). Conceptually, both characters were a better fit for their anthologies than, say, Martian Manhunter or Dial H for Hero were for DC's *House of Mystery*. Magicman and Nemesis were rooted in the occult, both had creepy origins...

...and both had the most embarrassing costumes this side of Captain Nice. As comics historian Don Thompson wrote in his essay "OK, Axis, Here We Come" in the 1970 book *All in Color for a Dime*, Magicman and Nemesis were "a couple of limp-wristed super-heroes" who were "costumed as if for ballet." Magicman's bare arms, peek-a-boo chest, and pixie boots so undermined his masculinity that they made his turban look like a beauty shop towel wrap. And the barelegged Nemesis was emasculated by striped briefs and a hood that looked better suited for a Forties screen diva. Soft costume colors (lime for Magicman, powder blue for Nemesis) didn't help their virility, either.

They were nicely drawn, however, particularly on their covers, most of which were done by German immigrant Kurt Schaffenberger, a goat herder-turned-comic artist who dazzled Golden Age readers with his work on Fawcett Comics' Captain Marvel

THE OTHER WOMAN IN METAMORPHO'S LIFE

An Interview with Ramona Fradon

Ramona Fradon entered the comic-book industry in the Fifties, at a time when few women worked in the business, drawing the Aquaman feature in *Adventure Comics* for an unbroken run of ten years. After a hiatus she returned to co-create Metamorpho with Bob Haney, designing the Element Man's unique (and bizarre) appearance and his memorable supporting cast. In the years since, Ramona has dazzled readers as one of the few cartoonists to do justice to Jack Cole's Pliable Pretzel, *Plastic Man*, and earned a new generation of fans as the artist of DC Comics' *Super Friends* title. This extremely versatile illustrator, a 2006 Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame inductee, has also drawn comic strips (following creator Dale Messick on *Brenda Starr* for an impressive fifteen-year stint) and children's books. But to Camp Agers, Ramona Fradon is *the* Metamorpho artist.

Interview conducted in September 2015.

After a long run on Aquaman, you'd dropped out of comics for a few years before launching Metamorpho in 1964. What were you doing during that?

I spent my time raising my little girl and working intermittently on a couple of children's books. I actually revised and finished one recently and it's selling on Amazon. It's called *The Dinosaur That Got Tired of Being Extinct*.

How did George Kashdan recruit you back to DC to do Metamorpho?

George called me one day and said he had an idea for a super-

hero series and he thought my drawing would be just right for the character he had in mind. My first inclination was to say no, but when he described the goofy plotline I was intrigued and agreed to design the characters and do the first four episodes to get the series launched.

What was it about the character that you found as an incentive to return to comics?

I love to exaggerate, and Bob's characters were wonderfully exaggerated popular stereotypes that I thought I could have fun with. It's no secret that I don't enjoy drawing super-heroes, and it's because they are so straight and so serious and so lacking in identity except for their individual powers and the costumes they wear. In *Metamorpho*, there was a humorously dysfunctional set of characters that interacted in ridiculous and improbable ways.

In designing Metamorpho, did you go through variations for his appearance, or did you have a clear vision of what he should look like from the get-go?

I muddled around with capes and masks and other conventional super-hero costumes, but Metamorpho wasn't conventional and none of them suited him. I finally decided that, since his body was always changing into different forms, clothing would get in his way, so I put him in shorts with the necessary insignia and left it at that.

But he did briefly wear a costume in his third appearance (*Metamorpho* #1)...

If I remember correctly, for awhile he dressed up as a normal person

when he and Sapphire went out, and maybe he was at a costume ball in that one story. He and Sapphire really got around.

Did you also choose his body's colors?
No.

Metamorpho is not only colorful, he's textured. What elements are the four quadrants of his body supposed to represent?

Well, they are supposed to represent the four elements, earth, fire, air, and water, but I have to admit they look more like wood, metal, maybe water, and some horrible form of acne on his upper left side.

Where on Earth did you get the inspiration for Simon Stagg's hairstyle?

I guess I was thinking of a mixture of old pictures of Southern



Ramona Fradon.

An undated recreation of *B&B* #57's cover, auto-graphed by artist Ramona Fradon.

Courtesy of Heritage. TM & © DC Comics.



PALISADES PARK

Superman's Favorite Amusement Park

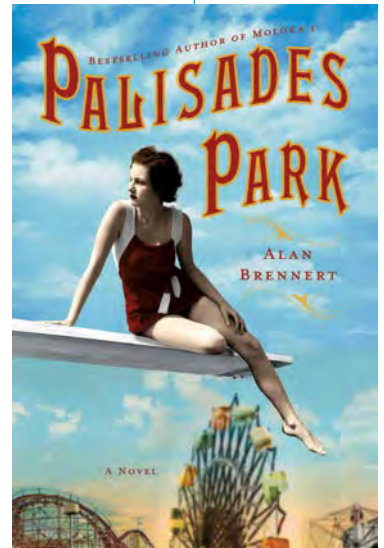
The ink was barely dry on copies of *Action Comics* #1 back in 1938 before Superman's corporate bosses discovered that the hero's "S" also stood for "\$." While you never find super-salesmanship listed among Superman's super-powers, the Metropolis Marvel has long doubled as the Madison Avenue Marvel, over the years hawking everything from bubblebath to peanut butter.

Outside of lending his name to his publishing home of National Periodical Publications ("Superman" top-lined DC Comics' cover bullet for many years), no promotional campaign involving the Man of Steel was more visible during the Sixties than Supie's Palisades Amusement Park ads appearing in DC titles. "Be my guest," invited Superman in a compelling late-Sixties ad that caught my young eye. This wonderland was located in Cliffside Park, New Jersey, "½ mile south of the George Washington Bridge," the ad explained. For those of us living in far-flung Anytown, U.S.A., we could only dream of accepting Superman's kind offer.

Alan Brennert didn't have to dream. The Emmy-winning TV writer/producer (*L.A. Law*), comic-book

scribe (a handful of the best Batman stories—ever), and bestselling novelist (his books including *Moloka'i*), grew up near the park. "When I was a kid, circa 1960, I used to get my comic books at Pitkoff's candy store on Palisades Avenue in Cliffside Park, New Jersey," Brennert shared with me in January 2016. "About a mile down the street was Palisades Amusement Park, in whose giant saltwater pool I waded as a toddler and in which my Aunt Eleanor once laid down God knows how many quarters at a concession stand in order that I might win a giant stuffed dog I immediately named Ruff, after Dennis the Menace's dog.

"When I started reading DC Comics, of course I saw the half-page ads in which Superman shilled for the park (even holding a not-to-scale replica of it aloft with one hand, my favorite of the ads). Having Superman 'ballying' for my neighborhood amusement park was both thrilling, and yet unsurprising, to me. After all, Palisades was a great park—why shouldn't Superman be endorsing it? It wasn't until years later, when I started to understand how advertising worked, that I began to wonder why a regional amusement park should be advertising in national publications (no pun intended). And still later I would hear from comics readers/writers like Mark Waid, who once told me



Alan Brennert's tale of diver Toni Stopka, 2013's *Palisades Park*.

© Alan Brennert.

BE MY GUEST
AT AMERICA'S
GREATEST
AMUSEMENT PARK

PALISADES
AMUSEMENT PARK N.J.

½ MILE SOUTH OF GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE

LOOK FOR THIS COUPON IN ALL
JUNE THROUGH OCTOBER ISSUES

ADMIT ONE (1) to
PALISADES
AMUSEMENT PARK, N.J.

GOOD MONDAY, WEDNESDAY
and FRIDAYS
(EXCEPT HOLIDAYS)
Until 7 P.M.

FREE
ADMISSION
CIRCUS ACTS
PARKING

WORTH **85¢**

FREE RIDE
BATMAN SLIDE

FREE RIDE
CRAZY
CRYSTALS

Superman invites DC Comics readers to visit Palisades Park.

TM & © DC Comics.

A HERO-A-GO-GO TOUR OF PALISADES AMUSEMENT PARK

An Interview with Vince Gargiulo

Vince Gargiulo grew up in Cliffside Park, New Jersey, just fifteen blocks away from Palisades Amusement Park. Today he is the Executive Director of the Palisades Amusement Park Historical



Society and webmaster for its website, *PalisadesPark.com*. The park's most renowned historian, Gargiulo has written two books and produced one documentary on the subject: *Palisades Amusement Park: A Century of Fond Memories* (Rutgers University Press, 1995), which was followed in 1998 by his PBS documentary based on the book, narrated by Ken Burns; and *Postcard History Series: Palisades Amusement Park* (Arcadia Publishing, 2005). Vince has kindly shared with *Hero-A-Go-Go* photographs of Palisades Park's comic-related attractions.

*Interview conducted in
January 2016.*

Since Superman was Palisades Park's pitchman in DC Comics throughout the Sixties, did an

actor dressed as Superman ever appear at the park?

I don't believe anyone ever appeared at Palisades as a Superman costumed character. George Reeves did, however, make a personal appearance. I do not have an exact date as to when this occurred.

Were there marketing studies conducted to show how many attendees were drawn to the park from outside of the New York metro area by the ads published in comic books?

None that I am aware of. But based on published newspaper articles throughout the lifetime of the park, I was able to calculate that 33% of the visitors to Palisades were from New York.

The Batman Slide was built in the mid-Sixties. Do you know exactly when? I'm assuming it was in response to the over-



night success of TV's Batman, which first aired in January 1966. The first mention I found of the Batman Slide in news articles was from March 1966.

What Batman-isms were featured on the Batman Slide?

At the very top of the tower was a large cutout of the comic-book Batman. Below that was a sign that read "Batman Slide," with a version of the Batman logo in the background. I do not believe they ever included Robin's image anywhere on the attraction.

Was the Batman Slide still in operation when the park closed in 1971?

Yes, the Batman Slide was in operation right up until September 12, 1971. It was sold to Adventurers Inn in Queens, New York.

There was also a Batcave amusement there around the same time. What was it?



Vince Gargiulo.

LEFT: A revised edition of Gargiulo's Palisades Amusement Park: A Century of Fond Memories, plus a DVD of its PBS special and other park-related collectibles, can be purchased at www.PalisadesPark.com.

The Batman Slide and Batcave barrel attractions.

The Corbett Collection/www.PalisadesPark.com.
Batman and Robin
TM & © DC Comics.

UNSUCCESSFUL COMEBACKS

SUPER COMICS Israel Waldman's Unauthorized Comic Book "Revivals"

The Fifties were a bad time for the comic-book business. The boom of World War II and the Forties had faded, the new innovation of television was siphoning readers, and the entire industry found itself under siege "thanks" to a fussy psychologist who blamed the comic books for juvenile delinquency. Golden Age startups like Avon, Fiction House, and Fox closed shop, leaving behind a ton of inventory.

Then came the Silver Age, where reboots (the Flash, Green Lantern) and upstarts (Martian Manhunter) trickled into print in the late Fifties. Soon, the business was booming again, opening a door for one of comics' most inglorious opportunists.

Publisher Israel Waldman gobbled up artwork from those shuttered comics houses and started publishing random issues of series reprinting material from the Golden Age of Comics. Beginning in 1958, his immodestly named I.W. Enterprises cranked out a barrage of irregularly released comic books in every imaginable genre, dusting off former stars like Sheena (Queen of the Jungle), Ka'a'nga (Jungle King),

Torchy, and Phantom Lady, and also-rans like Super-Brat, Apache, Kat Karson, and Man O'Mars. I.W. avoided cover dates, a gimmick to keep its books on display longer. Most kids who stumbled across these titles had no clue that they were reading reprints. I.W.'s production costs were minimal, with an occasional new cover being the only fresh material commissioned. And thus, Israel Waldman became the Big Lots of comic books, offering remaindered product to consumers.

As the Camp Age emerged in the mid-Sixties, Waldman renamed his funnybook line Super Comics, ramping up his super-hero output by reissuing more golden oldies. Here's where a trio of once-famous super-heroes got another moment in the spotlight once Waldman repackaged issues of their magazines from Quality Comics: Plastic Man, the Spirit, and Doll Man.

Super Comics' *Plastic Man*—tagged "The Flexible Man with the Power of Steel!"—ran for three issues, starting with #11 (1963), under an uncredited cover possibly drawn by Jack Abel and Sol Brodsky. It reprinted the contents of Quality's *Plastic Man* #13 (Mar. 1949): two Plas stories by the character's creator, Jack Cole ("Gazelle Van Gander" and "Say It Ain't So, Plas!"), plus a Woozy Winks tale. Super's next *Plas* issue was numbered #16 (1964), with a cover by Gray Morrow. It reprinted Quality's *Plastic Man* #21 (Jan. 1950), another issue with two Plas tales ("Kra Vashnu" and "Where is Amorpho?") and a Woozy short. Lastly, Super published *Plastic Man* #18



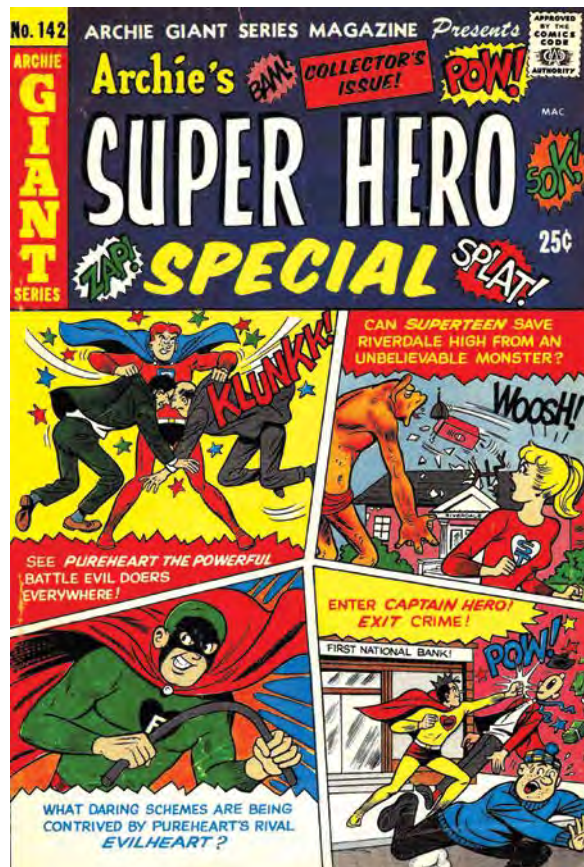
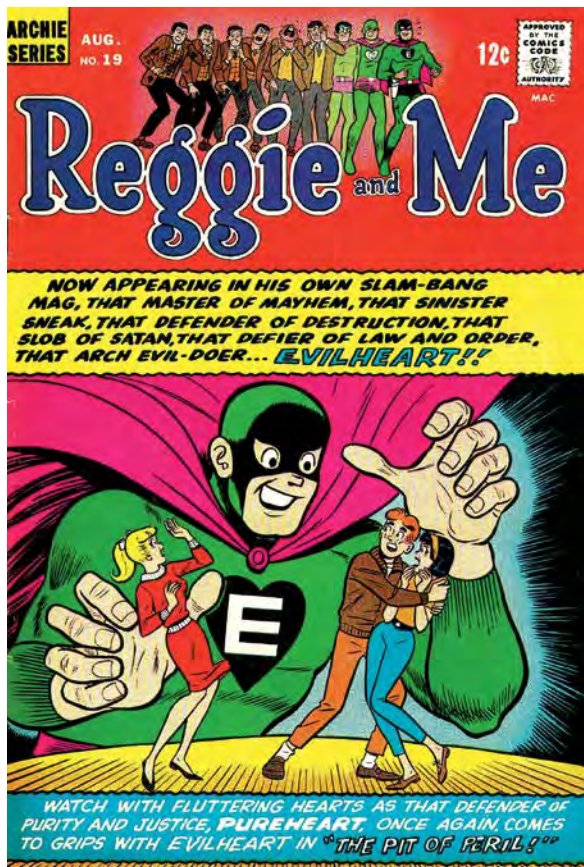
Three of Super Comics' unauthorized reprints: *Plastic Man* #11, *Spirit* #17, and *Doll Man* #17.

Plastic Man and *Doll Man* TM & © DC Comics. *The Spirit* TM & © Will Eisner Studios Inc.

Three—Pureheart, Superteen, and Captain Hero (actually Jughead Jones)—who joined forces to rescue a brainwashed Veronica from the clutches of the dastardly duo of Evilheart and Mad Doctor Doom (a villain transplanted from the pages of *Little Archie*). The super-heroes then branched out, with Evilheart appearing in *Reggie and Me*, Superteen in *Betty and Me*, and *Pureheart the Powerful* and *Captain Hero* getting their own books. (Not to be outdone, *Little Archie*—the adventures of Archie as a child—featured Little Pureheart stories, and even Little Evilheart made an appearance!) Their super-powers were of the garden variety, mostly super-strength (except for Evilheart, who was powerless), but occasionally a cockamamie super-power would emerge if it would guarantee a laugh, like Pureheart’s Intercranial TV. Superteen’s transformations were attributed to Betty’s twirling of her blonde ponytail, while Jughead would become Captain Hero after reciting this oath to his trademark headwear:

*Teeny weeny magic beanie
Pointing towards the sky,
Give me muscle, power, vigor,
Form a SUPER GUY!*

Meanwhile, the Man from R.I.V.E.R.D.A.L.E. took over *Life with Archie* with issue #51. V.E.R.O.N.I.C.A. and R.E.G.G.I.E. were reformed into P.O.P. agents, and once TV’s *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*’s spin-off *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.* debuted, Betty was billed as the Girl from R.I.V.E.R.D.A.L.E. Frank Doyle’s spy



TOP & BOTTOM: Jughead's Captain Hero costume went from yellow (LEFT) to blue during his brief super-stint.

TM & © Archie Publications, Inc.

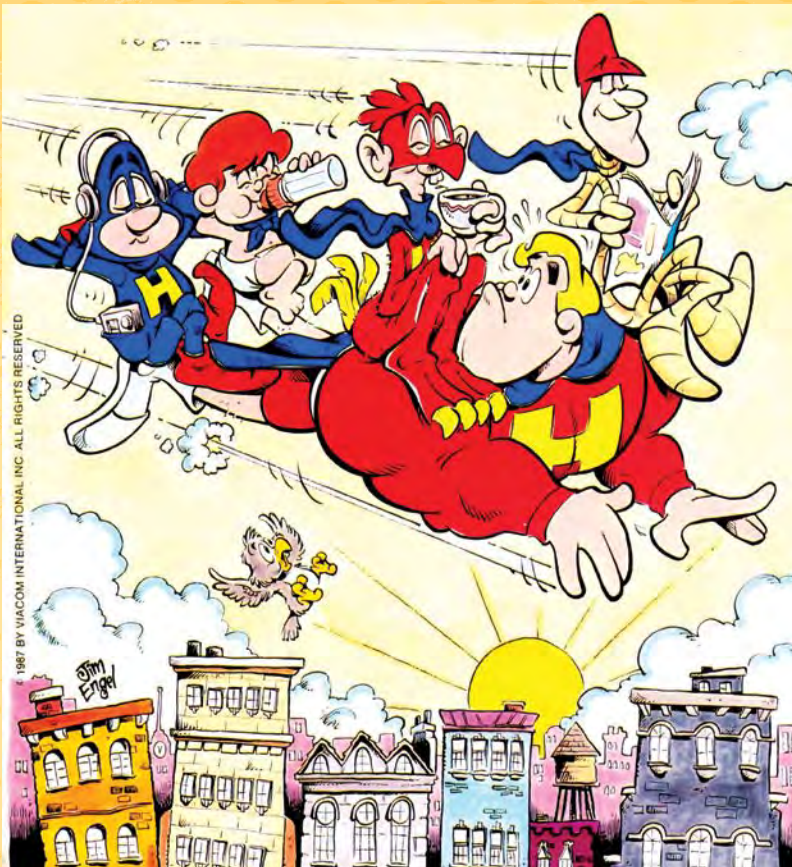
spoofs got zanier with each issue: The Batusi craze inspired the villain the Whistler, whose music forced the P.O.P. agents to dance in *LWA* #52, and *LWA* #59 spotlighted Archie’s red jalopy, souped up into the P.O.P.mobile.

Between these two hero-vs.-villain genres, there seemed to be no end of threats to the previously Norman Rockwellian suburban landscape of Riverdale. Super-villains were in high supply, some of them leaping the fence between the Pureheart and R.I.V.E.R.D.A.L.E. stories. Atom Man, Birdman, the Bowman, the Collector (who trapped go-go girls under glass), the robot Computo (no relation to the Legion of Super-Heroes villain), the Demon Dropout (a.k.a. the Mad Chemist), the Devilish Disguiser, Dr. Demon, Dr. Detest, Dr. Nose, the Drummer, the Enforcer, Fang Finkster, Flamethrower, the devil Hotfoot, the mind-controlling sexpot Looker, the Mad Clown, the Mad Music Master, the Mailman, Mr.

LEFT: Even Reggie Mantle got into the super-“hero” act!

TM & © Archie Publications, Inc.

Detail from
Spotlight
Comics' *The
Mighty Heroes*
#1 (1987). Art
by Jim Engel.
Mighty Heroes
TM & © CBS.



A CALL GOES OUT FOR... THE MIGHTY BAKSHI! An Interview with Ralph Bakshi

In the Seventies, Ralph Bakshi directed the revolutionary animated films *Fritz the Cat*, *Heavy Traffic*, *Wizards*, and *The Lord of the Rings* (the 1978 version). But then again, he was always one to test boundaries.

Born in Palestine, as an infant Bakshi was moved by his family to the U.S. to flee the threat of war. He grew up in the rough-and-tumble Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York, where he learned to think on his feet. After graduating from an arts-vocational high school in 1956, Bakshi, a comic-book fan, began his animation career as a cel polisher at Terrytoons. He rapidly learned his craft and rose up the ranks until the fateful day in 1966 that he made an impromptu pitch to CBS' Fred Silverman for *The Mighty Heroes*.

That led to his becoming that series' director and the Creative Director for Terrytoons, and a whirlwind few years of Camp Age animation projects. In 1967, Bakshi replaced fabled animator Shamus Culhane as the head of Paramount Cartoon Studios' (Famous Studios) New York-based animation house, with an aggressive mandate to develop cartoons for television. That short-lived venture was followed by Ralph's often-tumultuous professional relationship with Steve Krantz, during which time Bakshi took over the TV toons *Rocket Robin Hood* and *Spider-Man*. This led to *Fritz the Cat*, which Krantz produced. In the decades following, Bakshi directed several other animated films including *American Pop*, *Fire and Ice*, and *Cool World*, and was responsible for the delight-

fully subversive 1987 Saturday morning cartoon *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse*.

In this interview, Bakshi takes us behind the scenes of the creation of *The Mighty Heroes*, his projects at Paramount, and his early days of working with Steve Krantz.

Interview conducted in January 2016 and transcribed by Steven Thompson.

Let's start with how you got started at Terrytoons. How old were you then?

That's a good question. I was eighteen and I'd just graduated high school at the School of Visual Arts. I think it's now called the School of Visual Arts but in those days it was the Vocational Professional Arts School, where professionals from the industry taught the various classes. So I graduated and, because I won an award in cartooning, Terrytoons offered me a job at graduation. There was no thought of going to college. In those days, if you had options, you'd rather work. So I accepted the job. Little did I know I'd be at a desk polishing cels, [laughs] for the camera. I might have thought twice about it, but there I was, suddenly self-determined. My mother could not get me to clean a glass, and then I end up polishing stuff all day.

[laughs] Some of the early shows you were working on was stuff I cut my teeth on as a kid watching



RIGHT: Bashi's high school portrait.
Courtesy of
RalphBakshi.com.

SUPER PRESIDENTS

JFK and LBJ in Comic Books

The original SuperLBJ versus his greatest enemies! Detail from the cover of the comic insert *A.P.E. Comics*, from 1965's *Biggest Greatest Cracked* #1. Art by John Severin.

Scan courtesy of John Wells. © 1965 Cracked Magazine.



Before Nixon and Watergate, people looked up to the U.S. President. It's true! Every kid believed that he (not she—back then, only First Ladies, secretaries, and mistresses were allowed in the White House) could grow up to be our commander-in-chief. They also believed they could grow up to be an astronaut or a cowboy.

So we shouldn't be surprised that the Swinging Sixties gave us an astronaut president and a cowboy president—the handsome Man from Camelot who promised us the moon and the feisty Man from Texas who ran Jim Crow out of town on a rail.

JFK'S NEW FRONTIER OF COMIC BOOKS

The Camp Era was in its embryonic stages during the presidential election of 1960 when Republican Richard M. Nixon, a familiar face who'd been eyeing the Oval Office from down the hall as vice president to Dwight D. Eisenhower, campaigned against Democrat John F. Kennedy, a fresh face who'd impressed folks with both his promise of a New Frontier and his gorgeous wife who wore the best pillbox hats this

side of Kurt Schaffenberger's Lois Lane. Old versus Young. Status Quo versus Here We Go. And if you believe the political analysts, the Gray Suit versus the Dark Suit, as Nixon's drab, five o'clock-shadowed appearance in a televised debate (in black and white) made many viewers tune him out in favor of the stark, striking, vibrant Kennedy. Still, *MAD* Magazine

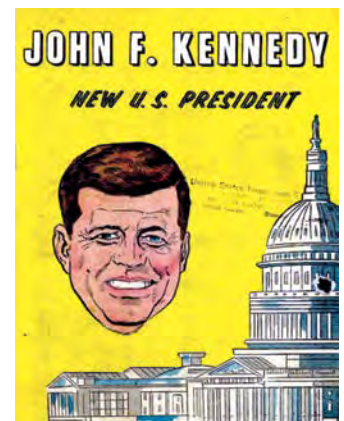
hedged its bets with its sixtieth issue by releasing a flip cover, one side duplicitously congratulating Nixon, the other, JFK! (*MAD*, and Americans of voting age, ignored the candidacy of Huckleberry Hound, who ran on the Hanna-Barbera ticket, at least according to the *Huckleberry Hound for President* issue of Dell Comics' *Four Color* series, #1141. However, those same voters disregarded *MAD* #56's "New Man" campaign for Alfred E. Neuman for President, highlighted by a Kelly Freas cover crammed with likenesses of political figures.)

While celebrities and comic books were frequent bedfellows, U.S. presidents were infrequently seen. Presidents in comic-book stories were traditionally generic statesmen (except for flashbacks to historically significant past presidents like Washington and Lincoln, who tended to pop up frequently), or their faces were purposely obstruct-

ed or in shadows (done so to preserve "the dignity of the office"). Then came the first rock-star president of the TV age. John Fitzgerald Kennedy had barely lowered his swearing-in hand after his January 20, 1961 inauguration before he became one of the most in-demand real-world guest-stars of comic books of the early Sixties.

The new U.S. president made a quickie comic-book appearance in a one-shot aptly titled *John F. Kennedy, New U.S. President*. Published on newsprint with a newsprint cover, this issue flew under the radar of, well, everyone reading comic books, since it was produced by the U.S. Information Agency as a giveaway to international dignitaries to introduce them to our new commander-in-chief.

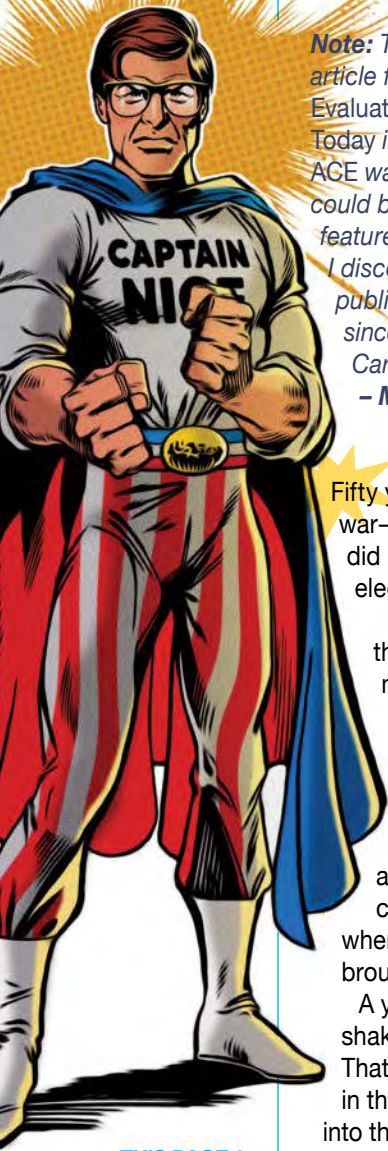
Charlton Comics, the little Derby, Connecticut, comics house that rapidly and rabidly exploited any new trend, was the first to rush a JFK comic-book publication onto the



© U.S. Information Agency

THE NICE-TERRIFIC WAR

Guest Essay By
Will Murray



Note: This essay was originally conceived as an article for Jon B. Cooke's magazine *ACE: All Comics Evaluated*, for which its opening artwork by USA Today illustrator Keith Carter was commissioned. *ACE* was cancelled before "The Nice-Terrific War" could be published. Jon then planned to include this feature in his *Comic Book Artist* magazine. Once I discovered its existence, I inquired to Jon about publishing it here in *Hero-A-Go-Go* instead. My sincere thanks to Jon Cooke, Will Murray, and Keith Carter for agreeing to its publication in my book.
— Michael Eury

Fifty years ago, two obscure superheroes went to war—with one another. These colorful characters did not slug it out in the real world, but on an electronic battlefield still in its youth.

History has chosen not to formally record this tragi-comic epic, but some skirmishes did make the newspapers. One reporter dubbed it "The Nice-Terrific War." Out of these accounts it is possible to recount the sorry tale of the year when *Mr. Terrific* and *Captain Nice* battled one another to mutual extinction.

It began on network television, in January of 1967—the traditional start of the so-called "Second Season." That was the month when the Big Three dumped their Fall losers and brought in fresh troops for ratings reinforcements.

A year before, ABC's *Batman* had debuted, shaking up the mid-season ratings sweepstakes. That network followed up with *The Green Hornet* in the Fall. Naturally, NBC and CBS wanted to get into the act.

Buck Henry of *Get Smart* fame was tasked with concocting the NBC entry, *Captain Nice*. Over at CBS, they were allied with Universal Studios to produce *Mr. Terrific*. Jack Arnold, the director behind *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* and *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, was the mind behind the alternate alter ego.

Mr. Terrific was hardly original. A minor DC super-hero by that very name operated back in the Golden Age of Comics. As for the concept, it appeared to have been borrowed from the popular Saturday morning cartoon show, *Underdog*, starring Wally Cox.

The differences between the two superschnooks were superficial. *Mr. Terrific* starred

Stephen Strimpell as humble gas-station attendant Stanley Beamish who is the only mortal who can swallow a "power pill" and become energized. Recruited for a secret government agency, he dons a silver lamé suit and matching aviator goggles to battle America's enemies as Mr. Terrific.

Police chemist Carter Nash, played by William Daniels, invented the potion that transformed him into Captain Nice. His hyper-colorful homemade costume was the gaudiest thing this side of the Golden Age Green Lantern. He, too, wore goggles when flying.

At first, the development of both shows seemed to be innocent examples of synchronicity.

Stephen Strimpell had been a New York actor when he decided to take a two-month break in Los Angeles to get away from the oppressive humidity. "I told my agent, 'No calls. Just let me rest.' But I was barely off the plane, still in my traveling suit, when a CBS casting director tracked me to my hotel room and asked if I was interested in doing a TV series. He had seen me off-Broadway in *The Exhaustion of Our Son's Love*, where I had gotten some impressive notices, and he was delighted I was right on the scene. Before the week was out I was signed to star in *Mr. Terrific*." Strimpell had played a rough-edged garage mechanic in the play. He was also cast in a new Dick van Dyke movie, *A Garden of Cucumbers*. When the pilot sold, it created a problem. "I found I'd have to report for work on both projects the same day. Obviously, I couldn't be at both the Goldwyn and Universal Studios simultaneously. For awhile it looked like there would have to be a court fight for priority. But finally they settled it amicably by telescoping my 5 and a half weeks of work in the van Dyke picture into 1 and a half days."

While Buck Henry was developing *Captain Nice*, he remembered an actor who would be perfect for that part. Trouble was, he couldn't remember the man's name or where he had seen him! Walking past a theater showing *A Thousand Clowns*, Henry spotted the actor's face on a display still. Fate—or something approximately like it—rudely yanked William Daniels off Broadway.

At the time, Daniels observed that Henry patterned Carter Nash after Daniel's stuffy social worker character in *A Thousand Clowns*.

Both shows premiered Monday night, January 9, 1967. CBS's *Mr. Terrific* debuted at 8:00 with the episode entitled "Matchless." NBC decided to air *Captain Nice* a half hour later, at 8:30, in "The Man Who Flies Like a Pigeon." Bad blood immediately resulted.

"That back-to-back scheduling is something," remarked Daniels. "In the hierarchy of the networks it may make sense, but it's beyond me. But I can't concern myself with that. I just work all the time." Whether archly or smugly, he added, "I'll be honest and say I feel better about it after I saw the premieres of the two shows." Boom.

Critics were not kind. One lumped both shows together and called them "disheartening." Strimpell

THIS PAGE & OPPOSITE: TV heroes Captain Nice and Mr. Terrific put up their dukes in this illustration by Keith Carter.

Captain Nice © NBC.
Mr. Terrific © Universal Television.
Art © Keith Carter.

WILL ROBINSON, TV'S OTHER BOY WONDER

An Interview with Bill Mummy

The Sixties offered no shortage of boy and teen heroes to look up to, from the globetrotting Jonny Quest, to the high-flying Superboy, to Robin and Jimmy Olsen, the best buds of Batman and Superman. But really, was

space family blasted off in the *Jupiter 2* he had already logged years of screen time as an actor. In the half-century-plus since *Lost in Space*'s September 5, 1965 debut, Mummy has scored successes in virtually every imaginable spectrum of the entertainment business—in addition to his galaxy of work in front of the camera, he's an accomplished musician, songwriter, voice actor, narrator, author, producer—even a comic-book scribe (including his co-creations *The Comet Man*, *Dreamwalker*, and *Trypto the Acid Dog*). Whether you know him as *The Twilight Zone*'s Anthony Fremont, the kid in the Dick Tracy Water-Power Jet Gun commercial, young Darrin Stevens, *Babylon 5*'s Lennier, or the narrator of A&E's *Biography*, for those who grew up during the Camp Age, Bill Mummy will forever be TV's other Boy Wonder, Will Robinson.

Interview conducted in February and March 2016.

Before I ask questions of Bill Mummy, the adult creative artist, can we channel Billy Mummy, the child actor, for a moment? Tell me how you, as a kid, felt the day you first saw the elaborate *Jupiter 2* set for *Lost in Space*.

I hate to disappoint people when they expect me to have reacted like I was really feeling like I was seeing a legit spaceship, or a real robot, etc., when I was a kid. But the truth is, I'd been on sets and locations and around lots of props and in all kinds of wardrobe for half my life by the time we started *Lost in Space*. I was a seasoned pro by then. The *LIS* sets were truly impressive... but remember, they were spread out over two separate sound-stages on the 20th Century Fox

lot. The upper deck was on one stage, the lower on another... we had swing sets that connected and disconnected... no ceilings... big lights, cameras, and cranes and cables and crew always everywhere. I LOVED the look of the show. But I never got caught up in the feeling that it was anything other than just cool sets and props and acting.

Although you had been acting for several years and were quite experienced, *Lost in Space* was your first hit...

Well, I'd been in a ton of "hits" before *LIS*. Three *Twilight Zones*, three *Hitchcocks* [*Alfred Hitchcock Presents*], two *Loretta Young Shows*, the hit Westerns of the day, several major studio feature films, Disney films, etc. We were all proud of the success *Lost in Space* achieved and we all paid attention to the ratings every week, but I don't think we ever felt like we were a big hit at the time. Successful, yes. But, we certainly were no *Bonanza*.

Let me rephrase that—*Lost in Space* was the first show you started on from day one, and there was a lot of *LIS* merchandising, with your likeness on trading cards and toys and such. How did you, as a kid, process that fame?

The merchandise was very cool, and I used to go up to Irwin Allen's office often and he'd allow me to take "one" of the current *LIS* merchandise stuff he had laying around. I dug it, but it never felt like much of a big deal to me at the time. I enjoyed being part of the Aurora Model kit... None of my real friends ever treated me special or acted like they were impressed by what I was doing when I wasn't tossing a Frisbee around with them. Basically, I left my work at work and then became a normal kid. I didn't think about processing fame.

Is it true that you were the first choice to play Eddie Munster?
Yes.



Bill Mummy as Will Robinson, by and courtesy of artist Mike Hoffman. *Lost in Space*™ & © Legend Pictures, LLC.

there a kid hero more happening than Will Robinson? Sure, he may have been lost in space, but Will played guitar, had a groovy wardrobe and two hot sisters, feared no giant Cyclops, and palled around with not one but two side-kicks (a robot and a crabby but lovable man-child). Plus, Will was the smartest guy in the room.

While Bill (then Billy) Mummy may have been just a hair older than many of the children watching him each week on *Lost in Space*, by the time he and his

(shared with Secret Squirrel), a push puppet and Tricky Trapeze from Kohner, a Transogram board game, and a Halloween costume, among other items.



Birdman title cel.

Courtesy of Heritage.
TM & © Hanna-Barbera Productions.

BIRDMAN

First Appearance: *Birdman and the Galaxy Trio*, NBC, 9/9/67

Number of episodes: 40

Secret Identity: Ray Randall

Super-powers: flight, energy blasts, formation of energy shield

Catchphrase: "Bir-r-r-r-r-dman!"

Rogues' Gallery: F.E.A.R., Number One, Dr. Millennium, Vulturo, Morto, X the Eliminator, Nitron the Human Bomb

Synopsis: While Hawkman was fluttering about on Saturday mornings in CBS' *The Superman/Aquaman Hour of Adventure*, Hanna-Barbera introduced its own Winged Wonder, designed by Alex Toth and voiced by Keith Andes.

Birdman, the super-hero incarnation of the Egyptian sun god Ra, is solar-powered, his energy waning during prolonged exposures to darkness. He is dispatched on missions for Inter-Nation Security by Falcon-7, his bossman who sports an eyepatch. Headquartered in the Bird Lair, deep inside an inactive volcano, Birdman is accompanied into action by his golden-eagle companion Avenger and occasionally, a kid sidekick named Birdboy.

This super-hero was actually Hanna-Barbera's second Birdman. One of the super-criminals to fight Frankenstein, Jr. was the Birdman, a dumpy, costumed crook who commanded robotic birds.

Merchandising of Birdman was limited, although the hero did appear as a 1967 Ben Cooper Halloween costume and in Gold Key Comics' *Hanna-Barbera Super TV Heroes* (according to the Grand Comics Database, the Birdman/Galaxy Trio team-up in issue #2 of *H-B Super TV Heroes* was scripted by Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel). The character

was reimagined as *Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law* on the Cartoon Network's *Adult Swim*.

DINO BOY

First Appearance: *Space Ghost*, CBS, 9/10/66

Number of episodes: 18

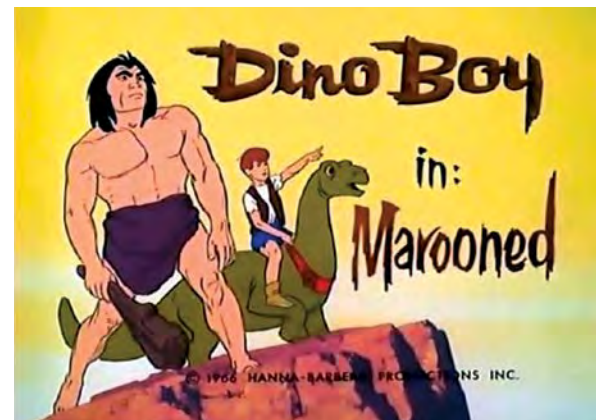
Secret Identity: Todd (last name unknown)

Super-powers: none

Rogues' Gallery: Vampire Men, Rock Pygmies, Treemen, Ant Warriors, Worm Men, Bird Riders, Sun People

Synopsis: Officially titled *Dino Boy in the Lost Valley*, this series was reminiscent of the works of master of adventure Edgar Rice Burroughs, albeit with contemporary overtones. Designed by Alex Toth, *Dino Boy's* primitive landscape provided a dramatic departure from its host series, *Space Ghost* (*Space Ghost* starred in two episodes per half hour as opposed to *Dino Boy's* one).

Dino Boy is Todd, whose life is spared once he parachutes from a doomed aircraft. Lost in a dangerous world he never made (an uncharted South American village which has inexplicably remained mired in the Stone Age), he is rescued and befriended by a hulking caveman named Ugh, and embarks upon a series of Lost Valley adventures riding atop Ugh's brontosaurus, Bronty. The young voice actor playing *Dino Boy* was Johnny Carson, who soon became known as John David Carson to avoid confusion with the famous *Tonight Show* host.



TM & © Hanna-Barbera Productions.

FRANKENSTEIN, JR.

First Appearance: *Frankenstein, Jr. and the Impossibles*, CBS, 9/10/66

Number of episodes: 18

Secret Identity: n/a

Super-powers: flight via astro boots, super-strength, various powers from mechanical body parts (battering ram from head, power beams from fingers, electrical energy from fists, elongating arms, etc.)

age of the Arabian Nights, where they are frequently imperiled by wicked wizards, terrifying beasts, and disgusting bandits. The teens fly from adventure to adventure on Kaboobie, the winged camel given to them by Shazzan.

Shazzan's thunderous voice was provided by Barney Phillips, a TV and film actor known for roles in *Dragnet*, *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*, *Twelve O'Clock High*, and one of the most popular *Twilight Zone* episodes, "Will the Real Martian Please Stand Up?" Jerry Dexter, who was also voicing Aqualad at the time for Filmation's *Aquaman* series, played Chuck, while animation great Janet Waldo voiced Nancy and Don Messick voiced Kaboobie.

In Ted Sennett's *The Art of Hanna-Barbera*, CBS' Fred Silverman, fundamental in the development of *Shazzan*, lauded the look of the show (the handiwork of Alex Toth) but cited its star's omnipotence as its biggest weakness. Nonetheless, Shazzan was licensed for several products including a jigsaw puzzle, a Big Little Book, a coloring book, and comic-book appearances in Gold Key's *Hanna-Barbera Super TV Heroes*.

Hanna-Barbera twice repurposed Chuck and Nancy's ring-transformation gimmick: with Wonder Twins Zan and Jayna touching fists in *Super Friends*, incanting "Wonder Twins powers, activate," and with young Benjy Grimm merging two ring halves in *Fred and Barney Meet the Thing*, speaking the phrase "Thing ring, do your thing!" to become the Thing of Fantastic Four fame, of sorts.

SPACE GHOST

First Appearance: *Space Ghost*, CBS, 9/10/66

Number of episodes: 42

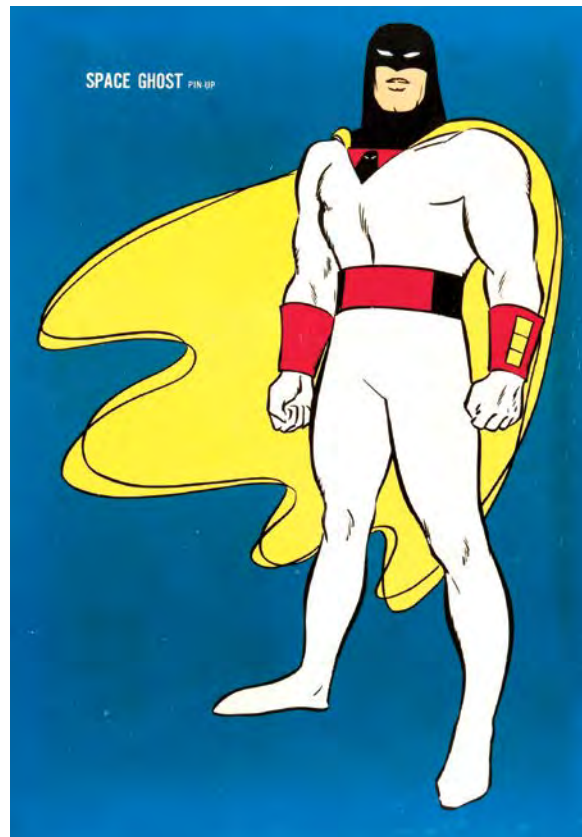
Secret Identity: unknown (at least originally)

Super-powers: invisibility and flight from Inviso-Power button on belt; Power Bands that fire numerous types of blasts, including but not limited to the Force Ray, Destructo Ray, Vibro Ray, Stun Ray, Pile Driver Ray, Heat Ray, and Freeze Ray; traverses galaxy in his *Phantom Cruiser* spacecraft, operating from his base on the Ghost Planet

Catchphrase: "Spa-a-a-a-a-ce Ghost!"

Rogues' Gallery: the Heat Thing, Zorak, Brak, Moltar, Metallus, Spider Woman (Black Widow), Creature King, Lokar, Lurker and One-Eye, Sandman, the Schemer

Synopsis: Some might call *Space Ghost* "Batman in space" (those two heroes finally met in a 2011 episode of the Cartoon Network's *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*, by the way). Created during CBS-TV exec Fred Silverman's push for new, realistic superhero programming, Space Ghost, like Batman, has since been reimagined for subsequent generations, but it's his original two-year run on Saturday morning that continues to haunt fans to this day.



Space Ghost was the perfect example of an animated series firing on all cylinders. Let's start with Alex Toth's character designs. Space Ghost's sleek costume is a curious balance of intimidating and comforting imagery, from an ebon cowl that resembles an executioner's hood to an ethereal white

Gold Key Comics' *Space Ghost* #1 (Mar. 1967). Front cover by Dan Spigle, back cover by Alex Toth.

TM & © Hanna-Barbera Productions.

THE RAIN, THE PARK, AND COMIC BOOKS

The Cowsills in Comics

“Play ‘The Happy Song,’ Mick!” my toddler brother John would plead to me back in '68. He was too young to load the 45 onto my portable record player but wise enough to know which of those black vinyl platters would bring a smile to his cherubic face. The song that made John, and me, so happy was “The

Rain, the hit by the land, the late Sixties tune about a flower happy, Flower of the best day, one. When I adored and Barbara mother. Their ha but then that set of the S happy. I and His offered whose s Fly” could out of helping nurture my positivity during my childhood.

In recent years, I’ve discovered that the happiness engendered by the Cowsills’ music didn’t

always exist in their own lives, as revealed in *Family Band: The Cowsills Story*, a 2013 documentary by Louise Palanker. The Cowsills may have seemed all smiles when leading us down “The Path of Love” or to “Indian Lake,” or while flashing their pearly whites in ads for the American Dairy Association, but behind the scenes, their manager father, Bud Cowsill, was an inflexible taskmaster—pop music’s counterpart to the ironfisted Superman editor of the Sixties, Mort Weisinger—who badgered his children, eventually ripping apart the

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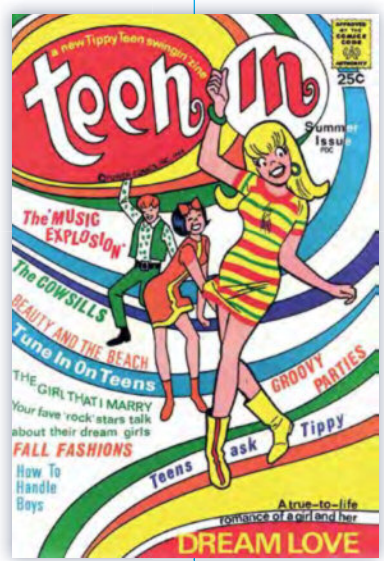
HERO-A-GO-GO

Welcome to the **CAMP AGE**, when spies liked their wars and their women warm, good guys beat bad guys with a pun and a punch, and Batman shook a mean cape. **HERO-A-GO-GO** celebrates the Camp craze of the Swinging Sixties, when just about everyone—the teens of Riverdale, an ant and a squirrel, even the President of the United States—was a super-hero or a secret agent. **BACK ISSUE** magazine and former DC Comics editor **MICHAEL EURY** takes you through that coolest cultural phenomenon with this collection of nostalgic essays and histories of classic 1960s characters like **CAPTAIN ACTION**, **HERBIE THE FAT FURY**, **CAPTAIN NICE**, **ATOM ANT**, **SCOOTER**, **ACG’S NEMESIS**, Dell’s **SUPER-FRANKENSTEIN AND DRACULA**, the “**SPLIT!**” **CAPTAIN MARVEL**, and others! Featuring interviews with **BILL MUMMY** (Lost in Space), **BOB HOLIDAY** (It’s a Bird ... It’s a Plane ... It’s Superman), **RALPH BAKSHI** (The Mighty Heroes, Spider-Man), **DEAN TORRENCE** (Jan and Dean Meet Batman), **RAMONA FRADON** (Metamorpho), **DICK DeBARTOLO** (Captain Klutz), **TONY TALLARICO** (The Great Society Comic Book), **VINCE GARGIULO** (Palisades Park historian), **JOE SINNOTT** (The Beatles comic book), **JOSE DELBO** (The Monkees comic book), and many more!



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The Cowsills make the scene in Tower Comics’ *Teen-In*, from 1968.
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me of that warbling, with the priority was ing ision

comics racks of July was Bat-roping away is of TV as visionary Batman tale, a shadowy greeper, saw print in *The mysterious, standoffish shimmered into the pages omics introduced a non-), Bat Lash. The crazy, ing a disappearing act— to bring us a one-way*

vey Comics released the *Comics presents The* t. 1968). Released under

its “Harvey Teen” imprint and marketed toward a slightly older crowd than most of Harvey’s kiddie fare, *Harvey Pop Comics* #1 capitalized on the budding



Detail from “Making It Happen,” from *Harvey Pop Comics* presents *The Cowsills* #1. Art by Ernie Colón.
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