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October 2017

No. 100

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1 82658 00114 8

Volume 1,
Number 100
October 2017

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BACK ISSUE
Comics' Bronze Age and Beyond!

100TH ISSUE!

Bronze Age Fanzines and Fandom

BACK ISSUE™ is published 8 times a year by TwoMorrows Publishing, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614. Michael Eury, Editor-in-Chief. John Morrow, Publisher. Editorial Office: *BACK ISSUE*, c/o Michael Eury, Editor-in-Chief, 118 Edgewood Avenue NE, Concord, NC 28025. Email: euryman@gmail.com. Eight-issue subscriptions: $73 Standard US, $116 International, $31 Digital. ***Please send subscription orders and funds to TwoMorrows, NOT to the editorial office.*** All Rights Reserved. All characters are © their respective companies. All material © their creators unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter © 2017 Michael Eury and TwoMorrows Publishing except Prince Street News, TM & © Karl Heitmueller, Jr. ISSN 1932-6904. Printed in China. FIRST PRINTING.

Fanning the Flames:

The Birth of the Comic-Book News-zines

FlashBack!

by John Wells

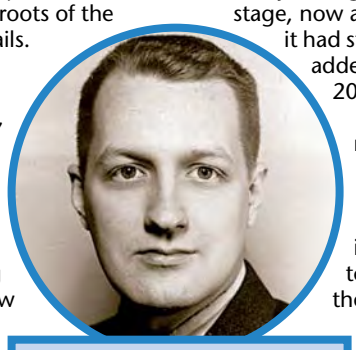
Fanzine Centennial

The Comic Reader, and its 100th issue (Aug.–Sept. 1973). Front and back cover art by Jack Kirby, whose 100th birthday we also celebrate this year. Unless otherwise noted, images accompanying this article are courtesy of John Wells.

In a world flooded with details on forthcoming comic books and where even the mainstream press routinely spoil upcoming plot developments, it's hard to imagine there was ever a time when such a thing wasn't just uncommon, but nonexistent. Like so many things in fandom, the roots of the phenomenon can be traced to the legendary Jerry Bails.

FANZINES ON THE DRAWING BOARD

An assistant professor at Detroit's Wayne State University, Bails was an enthusiastic supporter of DC editor Julius Schwartz's revivals of his childhood heroes like the Flash and Green Lantern. In February 1961, the 27-year-old approached Schwartz directly to inquire about publishing a simple Justice League of America newsletter for like-minded fans but came away from the meeting with plans for a more expansive "fanzine" with fellow fan Roy Thomas. Bails printed off copies of *Alter-Ego* #1 on a spirit-duplication machine that March, but his thoughts about a newsletter hadn't gone away. Included within *AE* #1 were two pages of news on upcoming DC superhero titles—most of them Schwartz-edited—under the title of "On the Drawing Board."



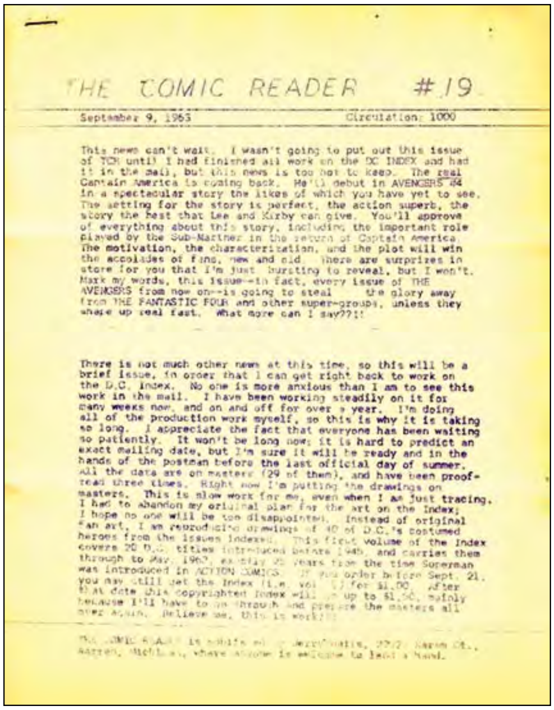
JERRY BAILS

Courtesy of John Wells, via Inter-fan.org.

The newsletter idea was too strong to contain, though, and Bails spun it off in October 1961 with *On the Drawing Board* #4 (its first three *AE* appearances included in the tally). As a point of clarification about its subject matter, *OTDB* became *The Comic Reader* effective with issue #8 (Mar. 1962) and "the official newsletter of the Academy of Comic-Book Fans & Collectors" (ACBFC) as of *TCR* #20 (Oct. 8, 1963). Truthfully, though, the publication had grown beyond the newsletter stage, now averaging nine stapled pages per issue versus the two it had started out with. Two years into its existence, issue #20 added, *TCR* had a circulation of 1,000: 800 subscribers and 200 industry professionals.

By that point, *TCR* was reporting on all industry news—albeit with an emphasis on series that were part of the Second Heroic Age—and Bails stressed that the zine would refrain from editorial comment in its capacity as ACBFC newsletter. "It is hoped," he wrote in issue #20, "that this policy will encourage pro-editors to continue to feed their latest news releases to *TCR* for the earliest possible distribution to Comicdom."

Bails' own involvement with the zine was about to cease, though. In issue #22 (Jan. 1964), he announced plans to merge *TCR* and his ad-oriented newsletter *The Comicollector* into a single entity under the editorship of famed Missouri fan Biljo White. Tragically, White was forced to back out of the deal when his mother died unexpectedly. Instead, G. B. Love took charge of the ad-zine, fusing it with his own fanzine as *The Rocket's Blast-Comicollector* (*RBCC*). With *TCR* in limbo, Love also published comics news in *RBCC* #29 and 30 as the ACBFC decided the fate of their newsletter.



THE COMIC READER #19

September 9, 1963 — Circulation: 1000

This news can't wait. I wasn't going to put out this issue of TCR until I had finished all work on the DC INDEX and had it in the mail, but this news is too hot to keep. The real Captain America is coming back. He'll debut in AVENGERS #4 in a spectacular story the likes of which you have yet to see. The setting for the story is perfect, the action superb, the story the best that Lee and Kirby can give. You'll approve of everything about this story, including the important role played by the Sub-Mariner in the return of Captain America. The motivation, the characterization, and the plot will win the accolades of fans, new and old. There are surprizes in store for you that I'm just bursting to reveal, but I won't. Mark my words, this issue--in fact, every issue of THE AVENGERS from now on--is going to steal the glory away from THE FANTASTIC FOUR and other super-groups, unless they shape up real fast. What more can I say??!!

There is not much other news at this time, so this will be a brief issue, in order that I can get right back to work on the D.C. Index. No one is more anxious than I am to see this work in the mail. I have been working steadily on it for many weeks now, and on and off for over a year. I'm doing all of the production work myself, so this is why it is taking so long. I appreciate the fact that everyone has been waiting so patiently. It won't be long now; it is hard to predict an exact mailing date, but I'm sure it will be ready and in the hands of the postman before the last official day of summer. All the data are on masters (29 of them), and have been proof-read three times. Right now I'm putting the drawings on masters. This is slow work for me, even when I am just tracing. I had to abandon my original plan for the art on the Index; I hope no one will be too disappointed. Instead of original fan art, I am reproducing drawings of 40 of D.C.'s costumed heroes from the issues indexed. This first volume of the Index covers 20 D.C. titles introduced before 1945, and carries them through to May, 1963, exactly 25 years from the time Superman was introduced in ACTION COMICS. If you order before Sept. 21, you may still get the Index (i.e. vol. 1) for $1.00. After that date this copyrighted Index will go up to $1.50, mainly because I'll have to go through and prepare the masters all over again. Believe me, this is work!!!

THE COMIC READER is edited by Jerry Bails, 2[illegible] Karen Ct., Warren, Michigan, where anyone is welcome to lend a hand.

THE COMIC READER #34

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ACADEMY OF COMIC BOOK FANS AND COLLECTORS
PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY GLEN D. JOHNSON, BOX126, CROWNPOINT, NEW MEXICO 87313

February, 1965 25¢

THE COMIC READER is published and edited monthly by Glen D. Johnson. TCR is a non-profit monthly amateur fanzine published for the enjoyment of comic fans. The price is four issues at $1.00 and five issues for $1.00 to supporting members of the Academy. Single copies are 25¢, 20¢ for Academy members. PLEASE...no more than $1.00 will be accepted in advance for TCR. Until coupons are available, you must mention you are a member of the Academy to get your reduction. When coupons are available, send these or there will be no discount. When ordering, specify the issue you want. If not, you will receive the current one.

ZINE REVIEW. Remember to send Jeremy Barry a review copy of your zine for reviewing in "The Ego Crusher". For the small cost of mailing him an issue, you will receive a free plug.

ADDRESSED ENVELOPES are no longer necessary when ordering TCR, but I do appreciate this and it does cut down on the work I must do. It is not necessary to put stamps on "nine" inch envelopes. If you wish TCR mailed in a manila envelope, you must send these and add a 5¢ stamp to each one. A WORD TO THE WISE...as soon as an issue is printed, I [illegible] as much in one night as possible. This [illegible] stapling the issue together and filling the addressed envelopes. The other issues are filled the next day, but the envelopes are mailed out a day earlier.

ADVERTISING IN TCR. Only ads accepted in advance will run in TCR. TCR is not an ad-zine, and only a small amount of space is provided for each issue. Only half page ads for fanzine are acceptable, and the cost is $1.00. Full page classified ads sell for $2.00. Write for acceptance.

PLEASE NOTE...I listed the address of Ray Bottel, editor of EPIC COMICS as 16733, and it should be 15733 Virginia Ave., Rosemount, Calif., 90723.

Danne/
Magnus #11

Early News-zines

(top left) *The Comic Reader* #19 (Sept. 9, 1963), from editor Jerry Bails. (top right) *TCR* #34 (Feb. 1965), from editor Glen D. Johnson. Art by Russ Manning. (bottom) *TCR*'s first color cover, by Howard Keltner. Scans from Gary Brown's collection.

After three issues published strictly to communicate with the Academy's executive board, New Mexico-based member Glen D. Johnson agreed to succeed Jerry Bails effective with issue #26, and *The Comic Reader* was back in business. On Johnson's watch, the zine flourished, with the news section now accompanied by columns (like the "Ego Crusher" fanzine reviews) and artwork. Fans began contributing periodic cover art with issue #29 and pro pieces by the likes of Russ Manning and Steve Ditko were also published during the Johnson era.

There was a fine line between fair use and copyright infringement, though, and Johnson naively crossed it. Fan writer-artist Bill DuBay had been doing a series of comics short stories ("Picto-Origins") that recreated the debuts of vintage superheroes and that was fine when it came to dormant characters like Blue Bolt. His piece on the Sub-Mariner in *TCR* #39 (July 1965) drew a quick cease-and-desist from Marvel Comics, though, and DC issued a preemptive demand that a forthcoming piece on Plastic Man not be published.

The news was delivered in issue #47 by Derrill Rothermich, who succeeded Johnson with *TCR* #42. There was a clear line of demarcation between the two editors as the fanzine shifted from purple Ditto printing with its inconsistent quality to sharp offset reproduction. Although the improved look was a benefit, the change was ultimately motivated by the fact that Ditto masters were only good for about 250 copies and *TCR*'s circulation exceeded that. Even in 1965 terms, the accompanying price increase from 25¢ to 30¢ seemed modest, and Rothermich admitted that "I am going to [lose] money on almost every issue, including this one." Like most of his brethren, he was in the fanzine game for love, not money.

Rothermich was inundated with fan art—more than he could possibly use—but the surplus assured a higher quality of pieces in the zine including fine covers by Alan Hutchinson and Doug Potter. *TCR* #45 (Jan. 1966) even featured the first—and, for many years, only—color cover in the title's history for Howard Keltner's drawing of the Ray. Hero histories and articles were a regular presence, too, and the Fox—a superhero creation of fan Ronn Foss—appeared in issues #45–47.

© Street Enterprises.

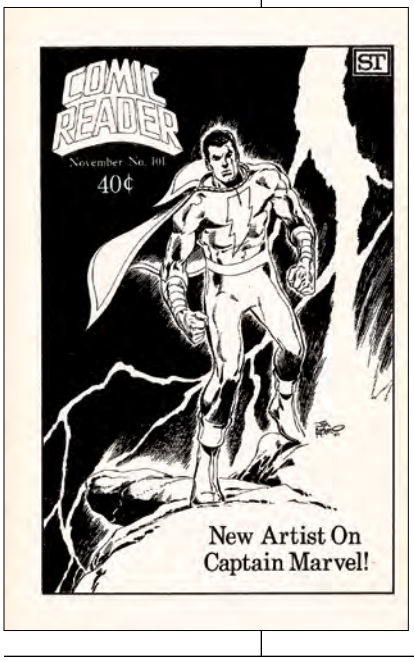
things in the Coming Comics listings in the process, but nobody ever pointed that out if I did.)" Getting the magazine on schedule was essential since Tiefenbacher—writing in *TCR* #101—envisioned it as "the *TV Guide* of a medium that is not too dissimilar from television in demographics." That meant that the coming comics listings needed to be in readers' hands before the issues went on sale *and* they needed to include all publishers, not merely DC, Marvel, and Warren. By the end of 1974, Charlton, Gold Key, Archie, and newcomer Atlas-Seaboard were each represented in *TCR*'s pages, with Harvey belatedly joining them in mid-1975. Moreover, a concise one-page Pocket Checklist was introduced in issue #108 (July 1974) that listed every title on sale that month.

The effort, Tiefenbacher emphasized in issue #101, was not merely important in the short-term. "*TCR* retains value as a historical record of what was published, and the more complete our listings, the more accurate will be the price guides, indices, and research projects of the future."

Street's *Comic Reader* was a slicker package, with a sharper typeface and a handsome official logo that was designed and rendered by Tiefenbacher. Polished covers abounded with Jim Aparo, Jim Starlin and Al Milgrom, Gil Kane, Frank Thorne, and Alex Toth, respectively, drawing just the first five Street editions.

"Mike did a lot of writing, typing, logo designs, occasional artwork, and listening to Milwaukee Brewer games or rock 'n' roll on the radio," Sinkovec tells *BACK ISSUE*. "I worked finances, proofreading, production, and mailing. We had three or four high school people (including siblings) who stuffed envelopes, addressed issues going out, and odds and ends. (And I also listened to the radio. And read comic books. *I had to—it was my job!* [*chuckle*]

"When we did color on *TCR*, Mike did most of the color guides (other than Jim Engel and Chuck Fiala doing the guides for their strips) while I did almost every bit of the color separations for our covers and the interior strips," Sinkovec continues. "I used Zip-a-Tone on overlays at first and wore out a lot of X-Acto knife blades. Then I figured out a way to paint overlays with gray paints for each color. Messy, but provided some nice looking results. I did a lot of pasting up of the pages."



WONDERFUL WORLD OF COLOR

Alan Light's purchase of color centerspread ads in *TCR* #138–142 (Dec. 1976–Apr. 1977) enabled Street to run color covers on those five issues and prompted them to remain full-color from that point forward. The move came with a price increase (75¢ from 60¢), but the effect on subscriptions was negligible. Circulation just kept climbing, now exceeding 5,000 copies per issue.

The same thing didn't hold true for the *Menomonee Falls Gazette* and *Guardian*. The sheer amount of current product and back issues in Street's headquarters prompted their landlord to evict them while non-payment from many comic-shop owners hurt an already struggling cash flow. Tiefenbacher, who was an employee to Sinkovec's owner, noted that "I was supposed to be making $110.00 a week, but I was being paid monthly or every time I had a car insurance payment to make."

Tiefenbacher later declared, "I'd say the fact that we put out two weeklies and a monthly for nearly three years with two people doing everything from writing, typing, paste-up, negative opaquing, and stripping, addressing, mailing, and shipping to be astounding. Just thinking about how tired I was all the time makes me glad it's over with."

The *Guardian* was canceled in 1976, while the *Gazette* limped on as a monthly into 1978 when it, too, came to an end. Conversely, *TCR* was doing better than ever with

Fan-Favorites

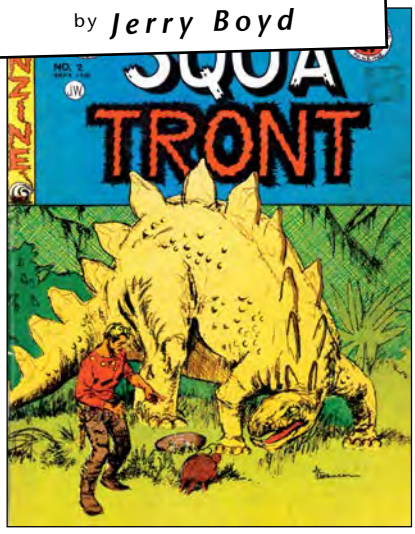
(top) Howard Chaykin and Walt Simonson provided these IronWolf and Manhunter covers for *TCR* #94 (Feb. 1973) and 99 (July 1973, the second color cover in *TCR* history). (bottom left) The new Captain Marvel artist was Bob Oksner, despite Jim Aparo's cover art on *TCR* #101 (Nov. 1973). (bottom right) Cover art by Simonson and Bernie Wrightson originally meant for *Metal Men* #45 was used for *TCR* #136 (Oct. 1976). *TCR* often used rejected pieces like this for its own covers.

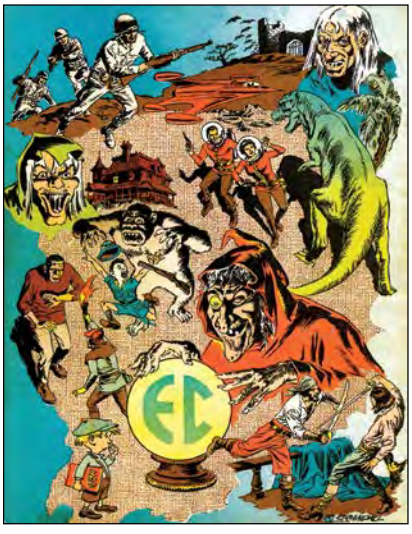
Characters TM & © DC Comics. The Comic Reader © Street Enterprises.

AND A SPACE ALIEN SHOUTED OUT, "SQUA TRONT!!"

An Overview of the Best of the EC Comics Fanzines

by Jerry Boyd





An Entertaining Fanzine

(top left) Roger Hill's cover for *Squa Tront* #1 (1967). (top right) An old Al Williamson sci-fi illo got the cover treatment for *ST* #2 (1968). (bottom left) Reed Crandall did this impressive back cover for #2. (bottom right) Al Feldstein loved his sci-fi titles and this illustration, a favorite of Bill Gaines', became the logo-less cover for *ST* #3. Images in this article are courtesy of Jerry Boyd.

FlashBack

The Entertaining Comics (EC) company "ended" in 1956 (many say), brought down sales-wise amid never fully substantiated claims that their crime and horror lineup was adding immeasurably to the increase of juvenile delinquency in America. The overall excellence of EC, however, never went away, and the work of the creators there goes on with unabated praise and respect to this day.

As time passed, most of the EC artists and writers went on to new clients and suffered the usual ups and downs of the comic-book ghettoes. Some left comics, a few moved over to the advertising markets, some went into paperback and pulp illustrating, and the remainder stuck with comics that shifted from horror into "mystery" (a muted Comics Code-approved form of horror) and tales of justice with less-violent crime sagas where the bad guys would never prevail.

MAD (the comic book that morphed into a magazine to beat the Comics Code and to keep Harvey Kurtzman happy) was the company's sole survivor, and ironically, the great Al Feldstein oversaw its success in the late 1950s and for decades afterward, after seeing his horror and crime titles put aside by the PTA groups, child psychologists, parent groups, and Congressional watchdogs of the early Ike era. Harvey Kurtzman, another one of the company's towering talents, had shown the way and Al and Bill Gaines turned *MAD* into a national treasure.

Publisher Bill Gaines had to be pleased. He'd weathered the storm, and by 1967 *MAD* was an American institution and extremely profitable. It was a cottage industry in and of itself. The old EC Comics experience, though revered and beloved by its readership, seemed light years away in the past….

EC, MEET POP ART AND MOTHER NOSTALGIA

The 1960s was largely a decade of forward-thinking people, though there were glimpses of nostalgia taking shape. Big-city movie art houses were sprouting up and they would showcase film festivals, retrospectives of the works of top directors and screen stars. A new phenomenon, commonly called "monster magazines," devoted their pages to the great filmmakers of times present and past. Pop-art galleries presented paintings linked to clichéd comic-panel ideas. Fanzines persisted. Some of them would be big on the new spate of Marvel superheroes and DC legends, with the elders of the Golden Age thrown in. One of the new zines would be edited and published by one Jerry Weist. This *Squa Tront* concentrated on the work of the greats who toiled at… EC Comics.

Mr. Weist was born in 1949, and by '67 was the perfect age to take his love for EC Comics to a new plateau. "Roger Hill and I got together, nerved ourselves up, figured out the East Coast time vs. Kansas, and called [Bill] Gaines about 7:30 in the evening," Jerry recounted for *Filmfaxplus*' Winter 2011 edition. "And Bill picked up the phone! We told him we were young fans in Kansas, and that we were collecting EC comics. He was astonished, and he talked with us for 20 minutes. That was the beginning of a long and incredible friendship."

Jerry initially wanted to do "a Burroughs fanzine," but friends moved him toward "something that isn't being done…" An alien shouted, "SQUA TRONT!" at the end of an Al Feldstein-written, Al Williamson-drawn tale in *Weird Fantasy* #17 (Jan.–Feb. 1953), and that otherworldly pronouncement provided the fanzine's title. (One of the alien's pals added, "SPA FON!," and that had its day as another fanzine title, also.) Roger Hill provided the cover art

Groovy Ghoulies (top left) This Graham Ingels Old Witch painting adorned Gaines' office wall for years and was *ST* #4's cover (with no logo). (top middle) *ST* #5's blurb-less cover, featuring Johnny Craig's Vault-Keeper. (top right) Bernard Krigstein's panel art from an old horror story was magnified into *ST* #6's cover. (bottom) Jack Davis' rendition of the Crypt-Keeper, used as *ST* #8's cover.

of the fanzine, I had full control of 'The Frazetta Collector.' Under John Benson, I was afraid that he would dictate what I wrote, plus I didn't know if he would even want the column/articles to continue under him." [***Author's note:*** Mr. Benson declined to give comments for this piece.]

But Benson was able to keep Roger Hill.

Roger notes, "Yes, John was in touch with me quite a bit on *ST* #5, because he needed my help art-wise on a few things, and we had long conversations about it. Later, he had me arrange the printing here in Wichita for that issue since it was much cheaper than East Coast prices. So I took care of that for him, and handled a lot of the packing and shipping to distributors after it was finished. John definitely had his own version of *ST* after he took it over, but I think he kept it focused and on track through all the issues he's done."

HAPPY DAYS, SCARY DAYS

The disco era began in '75, but it was still the "happy days" in the pages of *Squa Tront*. The 1950s continued to gain interest in *MAD*, which had taken to reprinting their original Kurtzman-edited/written comics as special supplements. Not surprisingly, these satirical masterpieces, drawn mostly by John Severin, Bill Elder, Wally Wood, and Jack Davis, were well received, and *MAD* gave the readers more in issues to come. *Squa Tront* did its part in keeping EC "alive."

ST #7 (1977) featured an art gallery of chilling cover roughs by Krenkel that were considered for Warren Publishing's *Creepy*. Another highlight: a rarely seen Kurtzman tale that warned of contracting VD! Benson had taken to us to his fandom roots by including a look at EC fanzines of the 1950s and these looks back became an ongoing endeavor. Some of those mimeographed efforts were naturally amateurish, but their histories were necessary, just as our writings and interviews are today.

Squa Tront #8 (1978) gave readers the Crypt-Keeper portrait by Jack Davis as a cover offering and transcripts and pictures of the EC Convention from '72. An early Feldstein teen humor story, still in pencils, rounded off the proceedings and the 1970s, for *ST*, ended.

GASP! CHOKE! COULD THIS BE THE END??!!

Benson took some time off after the eighth issue. But in 1983, he came back with his most ambitious issue yet. Benson said, "I got a more demanding job in 1981, and I really didn't have the time. I knew that issue #9 would be the last for a while. Now I'm semi-retired and I have more time."

ST #9 would be a 100-pager, and have some color pages. On the front: a fantastic cover painting by Johnny Craig with all three of the Ghoul-Lunatics was done for this issue! Despite their ever-present smirks, they seemed to cheer this masterpiece of a fan magazine—interviews with Bill Elder, Kurtzman, Feldstein, and Gaines (and a few others) waited within. Rare early work by Wally Wood and office illustrations done for special occasions were on hand. EC writers got written about and had their works listed.

After that, a reader could say everything had been done and done to perfection. Well, perfection is in the eye of the beholder. As great as *ST* had been, that was it for the 1980s. In those pre-Internet/email days, a fan could've written John and said, "Hey, any more zines coming out?"

And maybe some did. But *ST* didn't. And sadly, EC creators who could've been interviewed or supplied rare sketches and artwork have passed on. I asked Roger if he had any regrets about material not done/roads not taken. "I do have regrets, especially with Reed Crandall. I knew him for a couple of years before I went into the Navy, and yet I never thought to take a tape recorder over there and talk to him for a couple of hours about his long career in comics. And neither did Jerry, who went off to college for four years. We both should have done it.

The Semi-Secret Origins of THE OVERSTREET COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDE

by J.C. Vaughn

***When Robert M. Overstreet first produced* The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide**, *it was in many regards the logical culmination of collecting habits and skills he had honed since childhood. It was also the start of an entirely new career.*

With his calm, studious approach—frequently punctuated by moments of excited smiles at some new discovery—Overstreet first released his Guide *to fandom and the marketplace in 1970. Not only did its success warrant a second printing, it also meant he had to update the prices and produce a second edition, something he hadn't contemplated when he started.*

Still very active with the Guide *today—he continues to handle all the pricing himself—Overstreet talked with J.C. Vaughn, Gemstone Publishing's vice-president of publishing, with whom he's worked for about 22 years (Vaughn previously freelanced for Overstreet Publications prior to its acquisition by Steve Geppi's Gemstone).*

– J.C. Vaughn

Sometimes the seeds of something big are planted very early. That was the case with Bob Overstreet. Known to literally hundreds of thousands of readers as the author of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, he not only started with comics early in life, he started with them early each day.

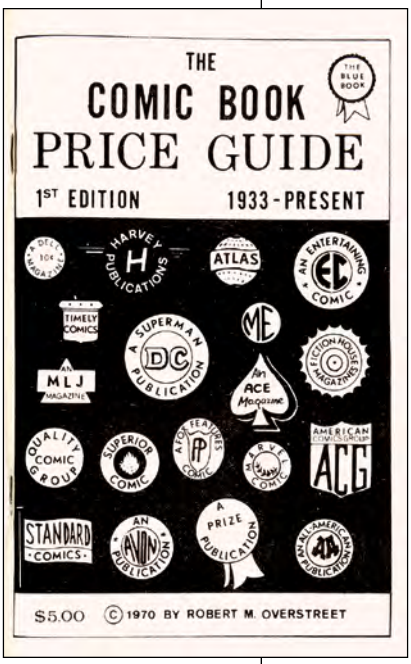
"I read comic books in the late '40s. One of my favorite comics was *Fox and the Crow*. I would have Kix cereal in the morning and I would read my *Fox and the Crow* comics eating Kix. My older brother Jerry had more comic books than I did. And we always had comic books around the house."

J.C. VAUGHN: ***You mentioned* Fox and the Crow*. Were funny animals your favorite?***

ROBERT OVERSTREET: With my brother's comics I remember Captain Marvel, Daredevil (the '40s Daredevil, that is). It was a mixed bag of superhero and funny animal, but I mainly remember reading the *Fox*

Young Bob Overstreet

(top) A '60s-era self-portrait of the man whose name would soon be synonymous with collecting comic books. Courtesy of J.C. Vaughn. (bottom) Front and back covers to Overstreet's very first *Guide*, and (middle) our interview subject holding two editions of that 1970 classic.



and the Crow comics. I really enjoyed those at that time, but my favorite superhero was the Gleason Daredevil [the Golden Age character from Lev Gleason Publications]. At 11 years old in 1949, I was Daredevil! I had hand-walked power lines across the street, could jump my own height, and pole-vaulted across ditches.

VAUGHN: ***What was your family background? Did your dad have a furniture business?***

OVERSTREET: Dad was in the furniture business. He owned his own store. He worked in the coalmines back in the 1930s in West Virginia. That's where I was born. Then he went to work for Sterchi's, which was a big furniture chain rooted out of Knoxville, Tennessee. They transferred him to Cleveland, Tennessee, in 1944.

VAUGHN: ***And that's when you moved there?***

OVERSTREET: Yes. And then he opened his own store after he'd been there a while. Before he opened the store, though, he left Sterchi's and went to work for the newspaper. He became publisher of the Cleveland newspaper between 1948 and 1952. In '52 he opened his own furniture store. He kept that for ten years and then he sold it. He didn't do well with it. I don't know if he ever showed a profit. Then he sold it and went back to West Virginia in the early '60s.

VAUGHN: ***How old were you when you hit the ECs?***

OVERSTREET: I was 13.

VAUGHN: ***How did you discover them?***

OVERSTREET: I met Landon Chesney when I was in the eighth grade. LC was very intelligent and he collected ECs. He collected them seriously. He loved the art, and he was a great artist himself. I was always interested in art, so when I met him he introduced me to EC Comics. He was an early member of the EC Fan-Addict Club. His number was 47. And he also introduced me to the idea of collecting comic books. I never thought about collecting them before that. He was a really interesting person. He collected comics, and was interested in magic. He did a lot of artwork. He was interested in theater. He could imitate almost anybody. In high school he was in theater. He enjoyed that. I would take him to high school parties with me and he'd be the entertainment for the party because he could imitate Jimmy Stewart, or Jerry Lewis, or Peter Fontaine, or just about anybody famous. He was really good at it. He was a natural.

VAUGHN: ***Did you guys meet other collectors at that point?***

OVERSTREET: We were the two comic-book collectors in the town. We had friends that had comic books, but we were the only ones who were serious about it. We were always seeking EC comics to complete our sets, and so we discovered a few EC comics from our friends, but not many.

VAUGHN: ***Once you started getting really diligent about tracking down all the ECs, how did you start meeting other collectors?***

OVERSTREET: Back in the early '50s, I also collected coins. I always bought the *Red Book* when it came out each year. [***Editor's note:*** Not to be confused with *Redbook Magazine*, *Red Book* is a long-running price guide for coin collectors.] Back in those days, you could still go through change and find a lot of rare coins in it. It wasn't a big investment, other than time. So I went to the bank and they would give me the parking meter money, and I would go through it looking for rare coins. And then I would count the coins and roll them for the bank.

VAUGHN: ***So you traded your services for the chance to cherry-pick coins from the bank?***

OVERSTREET: Right. I found a lot of rare coins. I put together complete sets of almost all the rare 20th-Century coins. I would even find Indian Head Pennies or Barber coins going back to the 1800s. [***Editor's note:*** Barber coins were named after their designer, created

The History of THE BUYER'S GUIDE FOR COMIC FANDOM

by Alan Light

As a 15-year-old kid in 1968, I would help out my dad and uncle on weekend mornings by cleaning their neighborhood tavern in small-town Rapids City, Illinois. I would also sort empty smelly beer bottles that had been sent down a chute to the basement the night before. I worked three hours every Saturday and Sunday morning, and Dad paid me $12.00.

I used the money to buy comic books. I bought most of them at Ben Franklin five-and-dime store in East Moline, Illinois. At the time, comics cost 12¢. Once in a while, the store would have a shopping cart piled high with all sorts of comics that had the titles mysteriously sliced off—and those were just a nickel! (I didn't know then that what the store was doing was illegal, tearing off and returning the top third of a cover to get a full refund on unsold copies from the distributor and then selling the comics, which were supposed to have been destroyed.)

ALAN LIGHT

One day in September of 1968, I spent the full 12¢ for the latest issue of *Adventure Comics*, #374. Inside was an article headlined "The Wonderful World of Comics" that told about something called comics fandom and explained that "fanzines" were amateur fan magazines about comics. The article recommended a fanzine by the name of *Comic Crusader*, for 25¢. When it arrived in the mail I was hooked, and my life took a dramatic change.

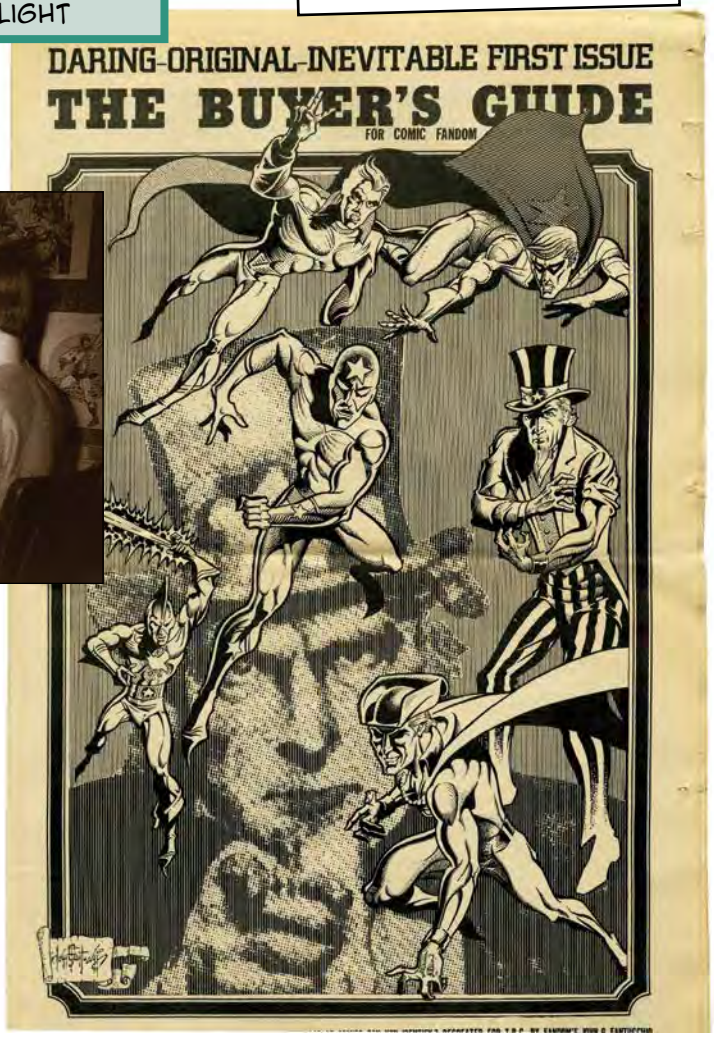
I still have that issue of *Adventure Comics* #374 and that issue of *Comic Crusader* #3, in a single musty old box of souvenirs from my 15 years in comics fandom.

Soon after learning that fanzines existed, it occurred to me, "I could do that!" I wanted to join in. My first attempts, *Comic Cavalier* and then *All Dynamic* ("All" came from my initials, Alan Lloyd Light), are laughably crude when looked at now. But they were necessary steps that led to a publication that endured a very long time, indeed—*Comics Buyer's Guide*.

After losing about $100, which was a lot of money to a kid working hard to earn $12 a week, I decided to try going for a wider audience and maybe even the chance to break even or make a profit. A profit on a fanzine was unheard of in those days and was in fact considered anti-fan. It was very much frowned on.

The idea I had at the still-a-kid age of 18 was to publish a tabloid-format newspaper for comic-book fans. It might have a little advertising, but it would be mainly news. In what would turn out later to be an interesting coincidence, the people I contacted back in 1970 to help me with my new idea were Don and Maggie Thompson.

Why the Thompsons? They were celebrities in comic-book fandom. They both went way back to the earliest days. They were "connected." They knew everyone who was important in comics. Don and Maggie had been publishing a mimeographed fanzine called *Newfangles*,



Uncle Sam Wants You…

…to identify these star-spangled stalwarts from the Golden Age on the cover of *The Buyer's Guide for Comic Fandom* #1 (Mar. 1971). Cover by fan artist John G. Fantucchio. In the inset photo, the young publisher holds the original cover art for the issue.

which contained the latest news about comics gathered straight from their comics-famous friends.

Don and Maggie had just announced their decision to stop publishing *Newfangles*. They were ceasing publication because the effort and expense of publishing had become too great.

Contacting them made perfect sense. Here I was with the idea of a fandom newspaper, but no way to collect news for it. Here they were, knowing all the latest news, but no longer wanting the drudge work and expense of maintaining a subscription list, printing issues, and mailing them out. It seemed like a good match to me at the time.

So I wrote the Thompsons a letter, something like, "I will take over all of the work if you will gather the news for me." A win-win situation, I thought. What could go wrong?

Well, the big-name fans took the time to politely write back to this guy who had written to them out of the blue to say that they couldn't help gather any news. They were exhausted and wanted a break. Oh.

Without their help—without their news-gathering ability—I couldn't proceed with my original idea, so I modified it. It would still be newspaper-sized but contain all advertisements instead.

The idea, which I called *The Buyer's Guide for Comic Fandom* (named after a local free shopper that came in the mail all the time called *The Big River Buyer's Guide*), would still be a tabloid 11" x 17" newspaper, but would now be entirely devoted to advertising—the heck with needing someone to collect news—and best of all, the advertisers would design the content themselves!

I would send the issues out for free—just like that local shopper I got in the mail all the time.

To get addresses of comic-book collectors I combed the pages of existing fanzines and comic books. In those days it was common for comics to publish letters to the editor along with the full mailing addresses of the writers. I also placed ads offering free subscriptions in the major fanzines of the day, including the biggest one of all, the *RBCC* [*Rocket's Blast-Comicollector*], an adzine published by Gordon B. Love of Miami, Florida. "G. B.," as he was known, was the most famous fan publisher at the time, and he published *RBCC* despite the added hardship of having cerebral palsy, which required him to type one letter at a time using a pencil in his fist. (He passed away January 17, 2001, at age 61).

My ad in *RBCC* offered every reader a free subscription to *The Buyer's Guide for Comic Fandom*. I remember holding my breath to see if G. B. would publish my ad, since I was an obvious competitor. The ad was critical to my success. If he had rejected it, *TBG* would likely never succeeded. But he printed it (a mistake, I vowed, I would never make myself), enabling me to obtain virtually his entire subscription list.

I called my new company DynaPubs (short for Dynamic Publications). One of the most famous fan artists of the day, John G. Fantucchio, designed the company logo and also drew the first issue's cover. At the top, he had written, of his own volition, "Daring – Original – Inevitable First Issue."

So there I was in 1971, in my living room, with my mom and dad and grandmother and sister, surrounded by a mountain of copies of the first issue of *TBG*, using a wet sponge to stick labels onto about 3,000 copies. Not in our wildest dreams would we have believed the publication would last 42 years.

TBG went from bimonthly, to monthly, to twice-monthly, to weekly in very short order.

By issue #77 (Mar. 1, 1975), the issue was 100 pages with over 7,000 subscribers. By issue #87 (July 18, 1975), the issues were so big that I decided to make the publication weekly, and even so the first issue was 72 tabloid-sized 11" x 17" pages. By issue #200 (Sept. 16, 1977), circulation topped 10,000 subscribers and a normal weekly issue was 80 pages or more. It was not uncommon for a weekly issue to have over 100 tabloid-sized pages.

DynaPubs HQ

(top left) DynaPubs' original headquarters, Alan Light's home, on the Mississippi River; it's since been demolished and replaced by condos. (bottom left) Addressing an issue of *TBG*, March 1974. (top right) The DynaPubs office, 1976. All photos in this article are courtesy of Alan Light. (bottom right) Dan Adkins provided cover art for these early issues of *TBG*, #3 and 6.

FlashBack!

THE FCA STORY: This Long-Running Fawcett Fanzine Has the Stamina of Atlas

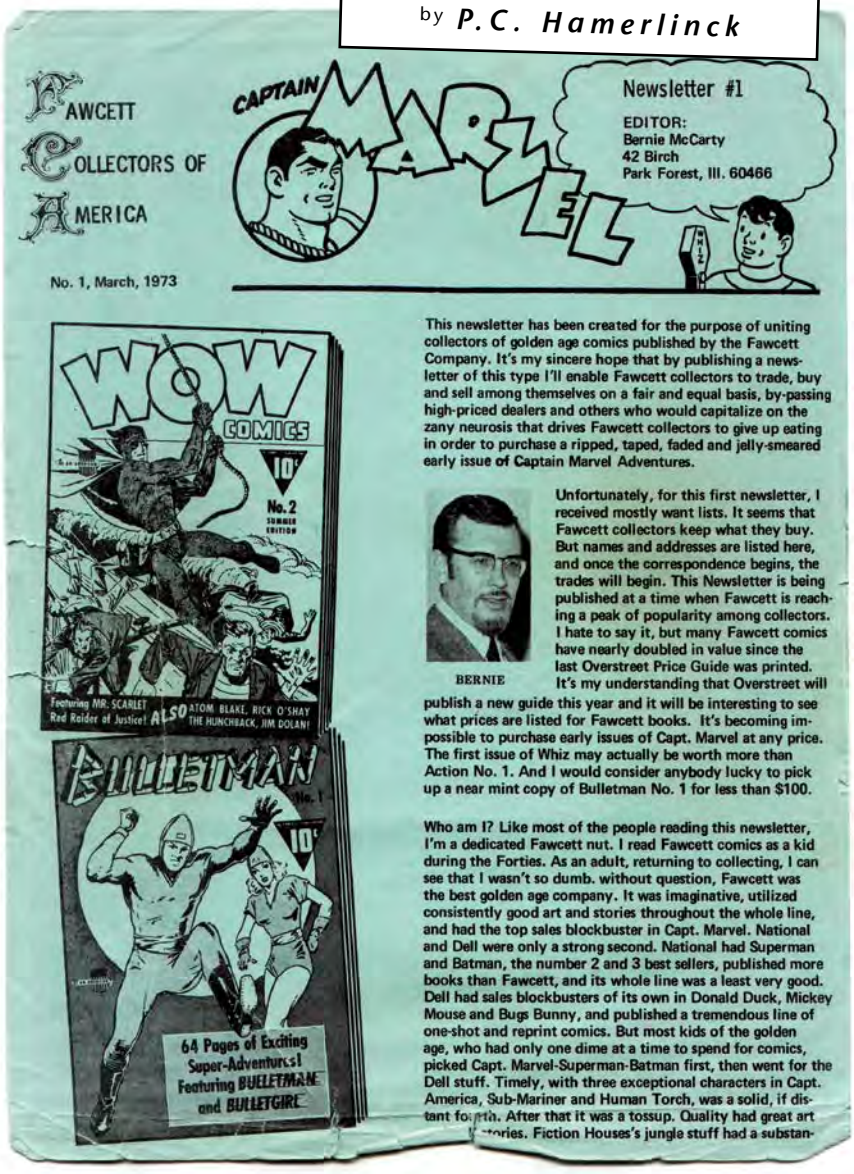
by P.C. Hamerlinck

It was a wistful, sentimental longing of a certain red-suited hero from his youth that drove Bernie McCarty, a Chicago-area newspaper sportswriter, college football enthusiast, jazz records connoisseur, and someone who appreciated sipping a good martini, to self-produce and publish a '70s fanzine about his best-remembered comic books that left such a lasting impression on him as a child.

But our story really begins in the mid-'60s, where Illinois comic-book collector Joe Sarno began organizing meetings down in his basement of his house once a month with other Chicago-area comics fans. McCarty, still a fan of the comics he grew up reading during the Golden Age, learned of Sarno's basement bashes and, at his first meeting, made friends with two other avid collectors, Ken Pierce and Frank Craft, who also resided in Bernie's suburban hometown of Park Forest South, Illinois. Attending that first meeting was the first step towards McCarty becoming a fanzine publisher.

By the late-'60s, Sarno's basement get-togethers became so overcrowded that the gatherings were moved inside a northside Chicago bank! Eventually, these once-a-month Sunday meetings outgrew to yet another venue before Sarno and friends organized their first comic convention in 1970. At the time, in the pre-*Price Guide* era, collector trading and selling were still wide open and based on wants, not on monetary value. Two years later, McCarty, with Pierce, Craft, and newcomer Chuck Agner, organized the Old Time Comic Book Club of Illinois (complete with membership cards), which held mini-conventions in a large ballroom at the downtown Chicago YMCA Hotel. Pierce (who had just become a book publisher), and later Craft, were in charge of the conventions. (Both Craft and Sarno would eventually open up their own comic-book shops in Chicagoland.)

In early 1972, while still an active member of the Old Time Comic Book Club, Bernie met popular fanzine artist Alan "Jim" Hanley—a fan of the original Captain Marvel who had created many of his own comic books, with characters based on old Fawcett and Golden Age heroes. One Sunday afternoon, Bernie met up with Hanley at the artist's studio apartment in Chicago. There, at Hanley's drawing board, the two came up with concepts to revive the old Captain Marvel Club, which both men had been members of during their comic-book-reading childhoods. Their optimistic notions quickly faded, but it was Hanley's enthusiasm that afternoon that stuck with Bernie, and which inspired him to launch a newsletter-style fanzine entitled *Fawcett Collectors of America* (*FCA*) in March 1973—its release date unintentionally closely coinciding with DC's Captain Marvel revival in *Shazam!* just a couple of months earlier. The fanzine was just four pages of want-sell-trade lists for comic collectors to peruse. By issue #2 (June 1973) the zine



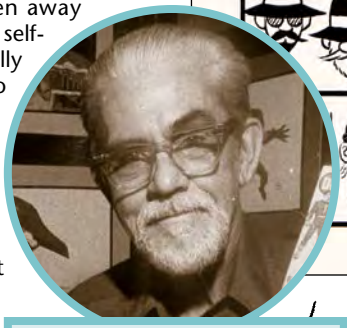
The Big Red Cheese's Big Green Zine

Fawcett Collectors of America #1 (Mar. 1973). Note editor Bernie McCarty's inset photo. All images in this article are courtesy of P.C. Hamerlinck.

had expanded to eight pages, and subsequent issues stayed that way.

McCarty originally assumed that Fawcett collectors simply wanted to buy and swap old comics, and perhaps communicate or correspond with other like-minded fans—many who were now middle-aged, respectable citizens and parents (whom Dr. Frederic Wertham and other comics critics assured us would grow up into perverts and criminals) who loved the same comics that others did when they were kids—thereby McCarty devoted the early issues to that end. The title of the fanzine itself was a step toward that unification. But *FCA* subscribers were opened up to a whole new world when fervent fans such as Matt Lage and Dan Fabrizio surfaced and began contributing articles to the zine, including informative interviews with writers, artists, and editors, and profiling various old Fawcett titles. Other fans could now learn more about those who were at the helm producing their favorite comics. Names such as C. C. Beck, Otto Binder, Kurt Schaffenberger, and others soon became, as McCarty once put it, "real human beings, not mysterious gods of my childhood." Only a couple of seminal works—including *Alter Ego*, *All In Color for a Dime*, and Steranko's *History of Comics* vol. 2—had previously shed light to those hungry to know more about Fawcett.

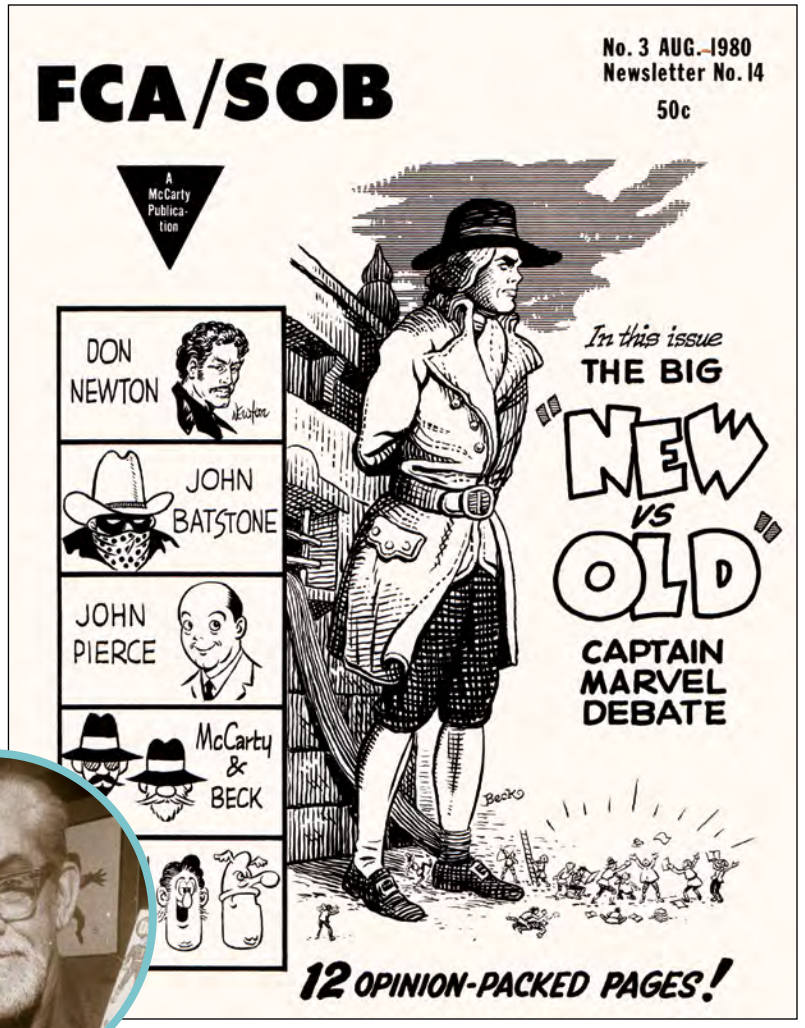
FCA was infrequently published, to put it delicately. Basically, a new issue would only be published when McCarty had accumulated enough extra cash to do so. Due to *FCA*'s first incarnation being given away essentially for free (although donations and self-addressed stamped envelopes were cheerfully accepted), the circulation quickly climbed to over 500 copies per issue. However, after issue #11, *FCA* experienced a longer than usual hiatus. The lapse continued for over a year: "In limbo," McCarty explained, "due to rising production costs."

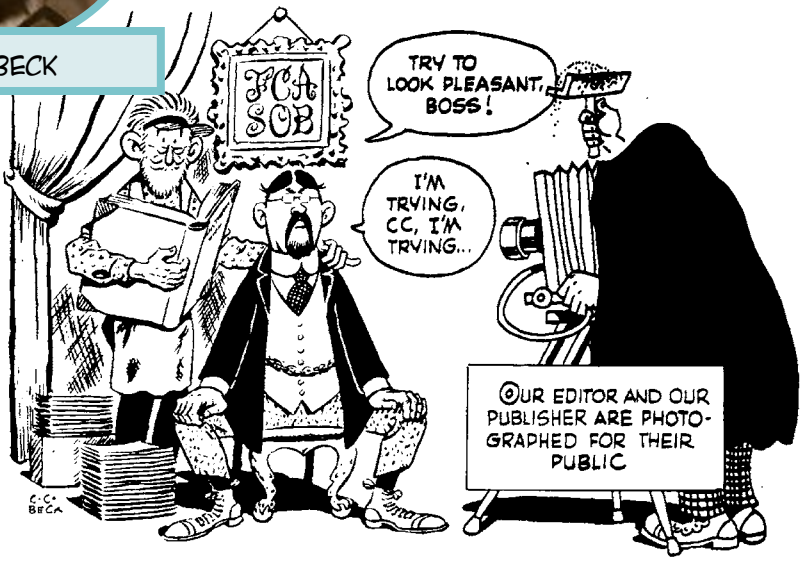


C. C. BECK

And then, lightning struck again. Captain Marvel co-creator and chief artist C. C. Beck, who had previously just been contributing letters of comments to the zine, stepped forward and decided it might be fun to get involved. Beck took over as editor, renaming the zine *FCA/SOB* (*Some Opinionated Bastards*) #1—yet still also retaining McCarty's original numbering. *FCA/SOB* went to a regular bimonthly schedule for the first time ever, and paid subscriptions of a paltry fee were solicited.

Delightful cartoons by Beck were highlighted throughout the publication, in contrast with his conservative viewpoints and often dogmatic editorializing and assertive essays on comics and art. Beck was determined to illicit strong reactions from readers, even if that meant getting them riled up a bit. While Beck had strong convictions on what constituted true comic art, and astute opinions to match them, he also realized that if he was going to take on being an editor (ironically, he always loathed editors, except for his Fawcett editors), he was bent on brewing up some mischievous fun with the role. By contrast, in person, Beck was elf-like in appearance—kind-hearted, soft-spoken, often chuckling—quite unlike his exaggerated published alter-ego persona which often painted him as a raging old, out-of-touch, unreasonable cranky curmudgeon. *FCA*'s potent new direction as "SOB" was perhaps predestined, from early reports in McCarty's *FCA* of Beck's involvement, disdain, and ensuing complications with DC Comics. Beck treatises, such as "The Destruction of Creativity," "We Were Considered a Bunch of Idiots," and "What Really Killed the Golden Age," set the stage for the publication's direction. While Beck's openness with his opinions was outrageous to many readers during his vivacious tenure as editor, *FCA/SOB*'s biggest reader reaction





Say (Big Red) Cheese!

(top) Under editor C. C. Beck, the zine became *FCA/SOB*. Beck also provided the main cover art for this issue, *FCA/SOB* #3 (Aug. 1980), also issue #14 of *FCA*. (bottom) C. C. Beck and Bernie McCarty, as cartooned by Beck in 1980.

FOOM! FRIENDS OF OL' MARVEL

An Overview and Oral History

by Stephan Friedt

In 1972–1973, Marvel Comics was in full swing in popularity, and DC was close behind. Fans were enamored with the art of Bernie Wrightson and Barry [Windsor-]Smith… the writings of Roy Thomas, Denny O'Neil, and Len Wein… and comics like *Conan the Barbarian*, *Swamp Thing*, and *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*…

Comic fandom was running full speed with fan-produced periodicals like *The Comic Reader* and *The Menomonee Falls Gazette*. *The Buyer's Guide to Comic Fandom*, a weekly advertising/article fanzine, had two years under its belt.

Some of us had been members of the M.M.M.S.—Merry Marvel Marching Society (1964–1969)—and Marvelmania International (1969–1971). We read every letters column and devoured "Stan's Soapbox" column every month…

When we saw the ads and blurbs for a new Marvel-centric fan group called *F.O.O.M.* (herewith *FOOM*)—or Friends Of Ol' Marvel—in the comics, we sent away our $3.00 for a four-issue subscription, or $4.00 for the subscription and a membership kit. I went for everything, kit and all! I wasn't disappointed.

The influence of each *FOOM* editor creates a natural grouping of the issues published, so I'll approach the history with that in mind.

THE JIM STERANKO ISSUES: #1–4

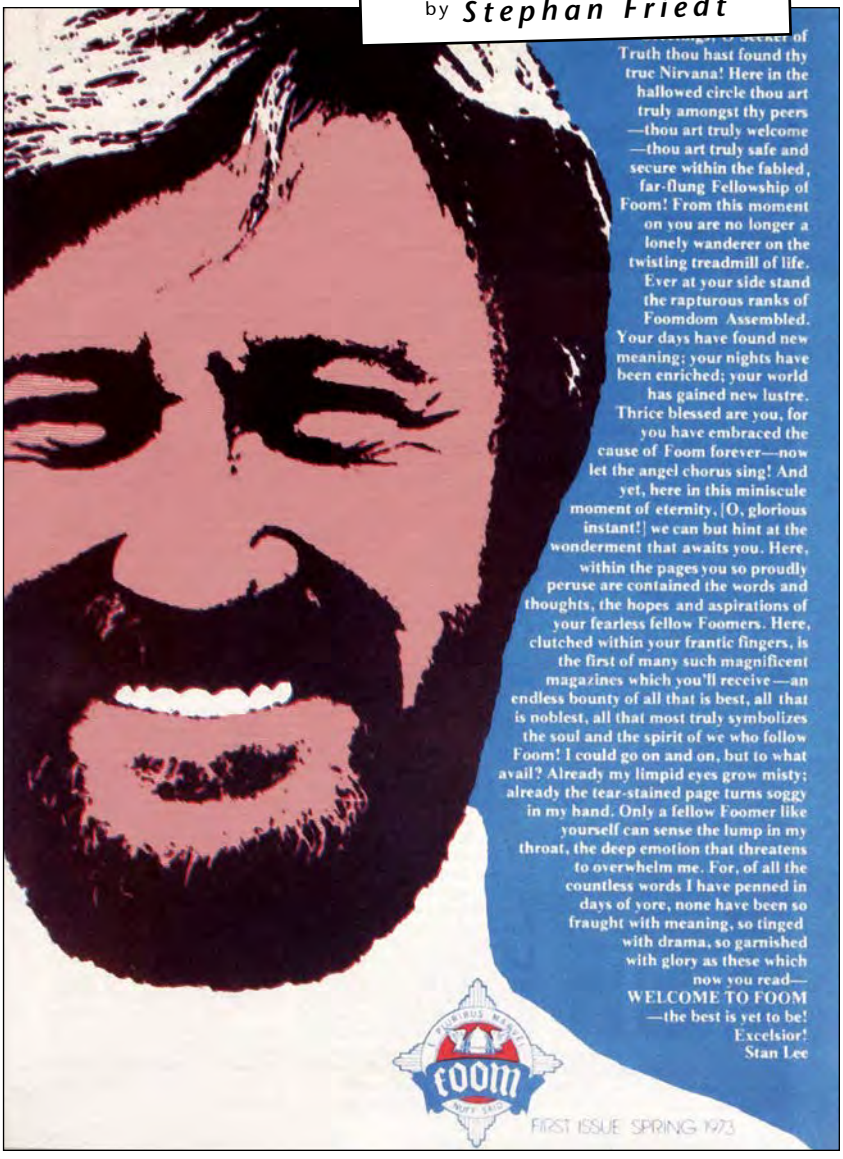
Just about anybody who has read comics from the 1960s to the current day has heard of Jim Steranko… or just "Steranko." Jim is a professional illusionist (magician), a musician, and a recognized comic-book artist starting with his work for Harvey Comics' "Harvey Thrillers" series in the 1960s and later for his work on an influential run on Marvel's *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, *Captain America*, and other series and covers. His iconic covers for the paperback series of *The Shadow* pulp-story reprints and for Leigh Brackett's *John Starr* series are well known. His role as a comics historian and accomplished publisher add to the résumé—his *History of Comics* volumes and *Mediascene* magazine are well remembered. And with *FOOM*… he started it all.

Issue #1 (Spring 1973)

When the first issue arrived, there was Smilin' Stan's face on the cover and a typical Stan's Soapbox speech that included: "Here, clutched within your frantic fingers, is the first of many such magnificent magazines which you will receive—an endless bounty of all that is best, all that is noblest, all that most truly symbolizes the soul and spirit of we who follow Foom!"

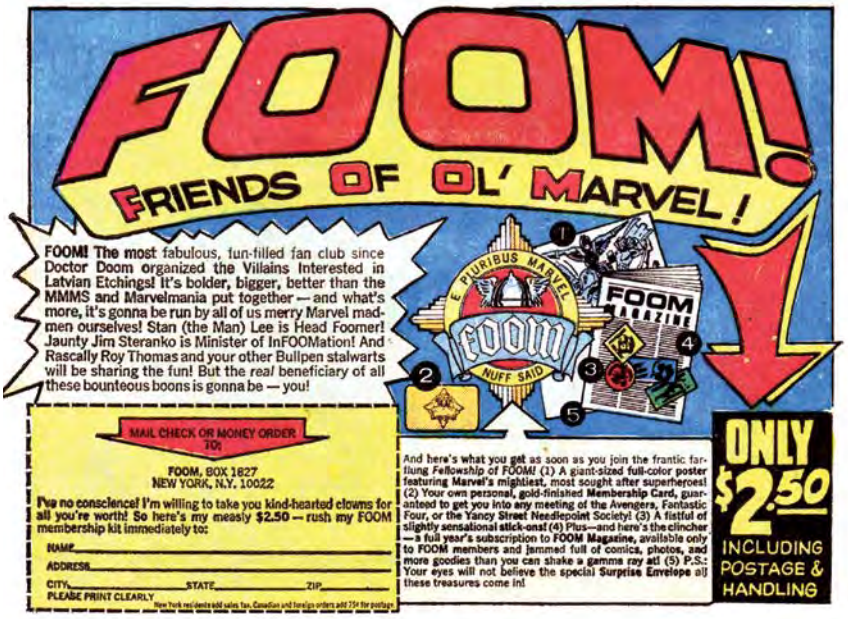
Jim Steranko wrote about the origin of the magazine with his editorial in the first issue:

"I dropped in at the Marvel [B]ullpen to rap with Stan about the current comic scene when the subject came up. Stan mentioned that he was thinking



Make Room… for FOOM!

Stan the Man hogs the cover of the Jim Steranko-edited-and-designed *FOOM* #1 (Spring 1973).



seriously about initiating a new Marvel Comics club. It had occurred to him, he revealed, at one of his college lecture engagements.

"'FOOM.' he told them, 'is the name the new organization.'

"'FOOM?' I asked!

"'Friends of Ol' Marvel,' he explained.

"…Suddenly at a lightning pace, we began exchanging ideas about the new club: it would be Marvel-based, not leased out like the previous one. Projects would be developed exclusively for the Marvel fan—colorful, exciting, and informative projects like none that had ever come before. In the heat of enthusiasm, I volunteered my services as designer, writer, and comic historian to the cause. We shook hands on it."

The first issue was devoted to the Fantastic Four. It included an article about the series by Ed Noonchester and a checklist to *FF* issues #1–132. Editor Steranko produced several new illustrations for this issue. Biographies (with photos) of Stan Lee, John Buscema, Roy Thomas, Joe Sinnott, and Gerry Conway were included, along with games, puzzles, previews of upcoming Marvel issues, and merchandise ads.

Issue #2 (Summer 1973)

The second issue highlighted the Hulk, with a spectacular Steranko cover illustration. It included a short Hulk article by Martin Greim and checklist for the six issues of the original *Hulk* series, Hulk's run in *Tales to Astonish* #60–101, and *Incredible Hulk* #102–165. *FOOM* #2 also included a forward by Stan Lee, behind-the-scenes photos of the Marvel Bullpen in action, an interview of Roy Thomas by Dwight R. Decker concerning the new phenomenon of *Conan*, fan-art contest pages including submissions by future stars Steve Rude and Trevor Von Eeden, and the usual fun, games, previews, and advertisements for Marvel merchandise. The back cover was a stunning Mike Ploog illustration of Frankenstein.

Issue #3 (Fall 1973)

Issue #3 featured Spider-Man, with a Steranko infinity cover. Contents: a Spider-Man article by Bob Cosgrove and Martin Greim, a checklist covering *Amazing Spider-Man* #1–125, *ASM Annuals* #1–9, and *Marvel Team-Up* #1–13; short bios of Spider-artists John Romita, Sr., Gil Kane, and Frank Giacoia; and fan-art pages submissions by future pros Grant Miehm and Tom Lyle. It also featured the winner of the fan-art superhero contest with Michael Barreiro's winning entry "Humus Sapiens," plus the usual games, previews, and house ads. Sal Buscema provided an Avengers back cover.

Issue #4 (Winter 1973)

The fourth issue, Steranko's last, featured Dr. Doom with a Jack Kirby front cover, a Dr. Doom article by Gabriel Coco, Ph.D., and a centerfold featuring a board game designed by Steranko featuring Dr. Doom and other Marvel villains. This issue featured several new Steranko illustrations, a Steranko bio, and a one-page text mystery story by Steranko. There was a one-page report by Bruce Cardozo about a planned, independently produced Spider-Man movie, a Marie Severin

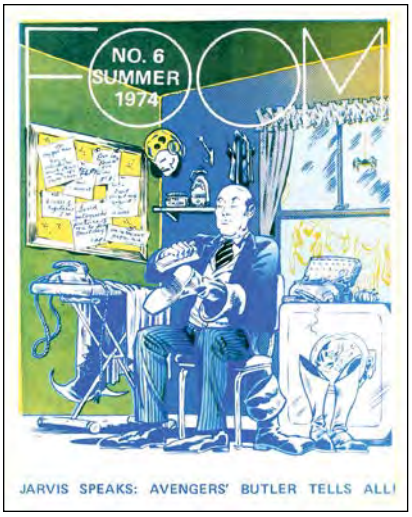
Calling All Friends Of Ol' Marvel!

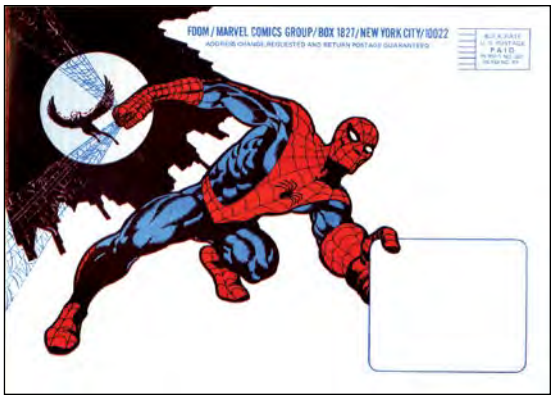
(top left) This FOOM membership ad appeared in 1973 Marvel comics. (top right) Here's what your FOOM membership packet contained, including that scrumptiously super Steranko poster. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (*www.ha.com*). (bottom) Covers to *FOOM* #2–4, edited by Jim Steranko.

The Isabella Issues

(bottom) One of the last illos by Rich Buckler (who died 5-19-17), commissioned by Jim McCaffrey and drawn in January 2017, recreating the artist's cover to (inset) *FOOM* #5. (top) Issues #6 and 7. (right) Mailing label allocation, as seen on #1's back cover.

TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.





self-portrait, a lettercol including a missive from future Marvel writer/editor Ralph Macchio, more fan art, and the usual games, previews of Marvel comics, and house ads. Jack Kirby provided the art for the back cover.

Up to this point, Steranko had been doing practically everything editorially (with the assistance of Ken Bruzenak), and it got to the point of being too much time for too little money. His comic work as an artist was worth more of his time, and his work as a paperback cover illustrator was even more lucrative. So Jim left *FOOM* and Marvel took the project in-house.

THE TONY ISABELLA ISSUES: #5–7

Tony Isabella was the next to hold the editorial reins. Tony had come up through fandom to be picked by Roy Thomas to be an assistant editor at Marvel. That quickly led to Tony's position overseeing the Marvel UK line and as an editor of the black-and-white magazine line. Tony wrote for many of Marvel's titles, from *Ghost Rider* to *Luke Cage*, and from *Hero for Hire* to *Captain America*. Tony created *Black Goliath* for Marvel and *Black Lightning* for DC, and co-created the character Misty Knight and the team *The Champions*.

I talked to Tony Isabella about the *FOOM* transition:

STEPHAN FRIEDT: ***How did you get picked for the job? Did Steranko recommend you… hence your "Thank you" in your first editorial?***

TONY ISABELLA: I was picked to be the new editor because I was the obvious choice. Besides having very recent roots in comics fandom, I was working in Sol Brodsky's department and this magazine fell into his bailiwick.

As for my thanking Jim, I confess that was a secret sarcastic dig. Jim and I were having disagreements back then, though we patched things up long ago. He had nothing to do with my getting the job.

FRIEDT: ***Tell me what was it like working with* FOOM *contributors Mark Evanier, Marie Severin, Rich Buckler, Doug Moench, and the rest of your beginning crew?***

ISABELLA: I didn't actually have a "crew" for *FOOM*. I would beg and coerce and sometimes actually pay people to do stuff for the mag. Mark Evanier was one of my oldest and therefore most forgiving friends, and I was somewhat close to Rich Buckler. Marie Severin was the darling of anyone with the sense to recognize she was more capable than 99% of the Marvel Bullpen. Doug Moench wrote a lot of stuff for me on the black-and-whites, so we had a good working relationship.

Honestly, I was doing so many things for Marvel—supervising the British weeklies, editing some of the black-and-whites, helping out with the color comics, writing some comic books, and doing special projects

Off My Chest

MY DC Comicmobile MEMORIES

by Bob Rozakis

Comicmobile photo © DC Comics.

About a month after I started working at DC Comics back in the summer of 1973, I arrived at the office one morning and was confronted by vice president/production Manager Sol Harrison. "What are you doing here?" he asked.

Startled, I replied, "I work here."

"I know that. You're supposed to be in New Jersey, picking up the Comicmobile."

Yes, the Comicmobile, that fabled vehicle of comics history that many have heard of but few have seen (and even fewer have actually purchased anything from). For those of you who are unfamiliar with it: It was Sol's idea that if kids living in the suburbs couldn't get to the old "mom and pop stores" that sold comics, we should bring the comics to them. So he leased a big blue van, had "The DC Comicmobile" painted on it, with plastered superhero stickers. Then he stocked it with leftover comics from the DC library and, at the start of the Memorial Day weekend, sent Michael Uslan (much later the executive producer of the *Batman* and *Swamp Thing* movies, among lots of other things) out on the streets of New Jersey to sell them.

When it was time for Michael to leave for Indiana for his impending wedding, Sol decided that I should take the Comicmobile to Long Island. I knew I was supposed to pick it up, but Michael and I had worked it out that I would do so the following day.

Sol, however, did not agree. Midge Bregman, his secretary, handed me money for train fare, told me what little town in the Garden State I was taking the train to, and shooed me out of the office. They did give me time to make my one phone call—to tell my parents I would not be coming home from work that night!

Michael met me with the Comicmobile and we spent the afternoon and evening riding around, ringing the bells and selling comics at local parks, beaches, and in front of other places potential customers were gathered. He had a "lovely assistant" named Robin Burke working with him and, frankly, I think she attracted more than one father of small children over to be persuaded into buying a few comic books.

"Sol was the Philo Farnsworth of comics," remembers Uslan. He was always looking for different ways to get comic books into the hands of kids. He made the first deal with Phil Seuling, which opened the door for the direct-market distribution of comics. He tried vending machines. He made the deal with 7-11 to put 60 different DC characters on plastic Slurpee cups, looking to create greater recognition of the characters." And so Michael was not that surprised when Sol first told him about the Comicmobile, "except the part where he told me I was going to drive it!"

I slept at Michael's parents' home that night. They were as surprised to have an overnight guest as I had been when I learned from Sol I was

going to be one. And the next morning, after going over what was in our "inventory" and how to keep track of the money, Michael was off to Indiana to get married and I was on the road back to Long Island.

Those of you who are unfamiliar with the roads of the New York metropolitan area probably don't know that commercial vehicles are not allowed on the parkways, only on expressways and turnpikes. Much of the direct route between Michael's home and mine involved the Garden State Parkway and the Belt Parkway. The Comicmobile, decked out with all its superhero decals and such, was most assuredly a commercial vehicle. So, in those days long before anyone had ever dreamed of a GPS, armed with only a Mobil gas station map of New Jersey, I had to abandon the route I knew for other highways and byways.

While driving across Manhattan, I spotted a college friend standing on a street corner, and he was quite startled to see me. Our paths have never crossed again and, to this day, I'm convinced he thought my job in the comic-book industry was delivering them to stores. And when I finally arrived home and parked the garish-looking van in front of the house, my father's first comment was, "I sent you to college for four years so you could drive a comic-book truck?"

I did become more familiar with the route from Long Island to New Jersey during my tenure. Once a week, I had to drive to a distribution warehouse in the Garden State to pick up bundles of new books. On the way through Manhattan, I would stop at the DC office and get additional titles from the DC library. One of those visits resulted in Joe Orlando trying to have me arrested. I was in the library filling a box with books when Joe walked in. He did not know who I was and immediately went to Sol and said, "Some kid is stealing books from the library. We better call security!" Sol followed him back, saw it was me, and said, "That's not a kid—that's Rozakis."

The hardest part about driving the Comicmobile on Long Island had to be getting a vendor's license for each of the townships I would be working in. Each town—Hempstead, North Hempstead, Oyster Bay, and Huntington—had its own set of requirements and its own set of rules. They did have one basic rule in common, one that we had not anticipated.

Once licensed, Michael had had it fairly easy in his area of New Jersey (Ocean Township, Belmar, and Bradley Beach, to be specific); he was able to drive to a local park or beach and set up shop in the parking lot. The powers-that-be on Long Island were nowhere near as liberal. I was prohibited from bringing the Comicmobile anywhere near beaches, parks, schools, and pretty much any other place kids might be. Instead, I was reduced to driving up and down individual streets, holding a set of bells out the window and ringing them vigorously. (Since DC had only leased the van, there was no way Sol was going to have the bells mounted on it.) To be honest, there were some days when it seemed like I was the only person alive while driving up and down streets devoid of any kids.

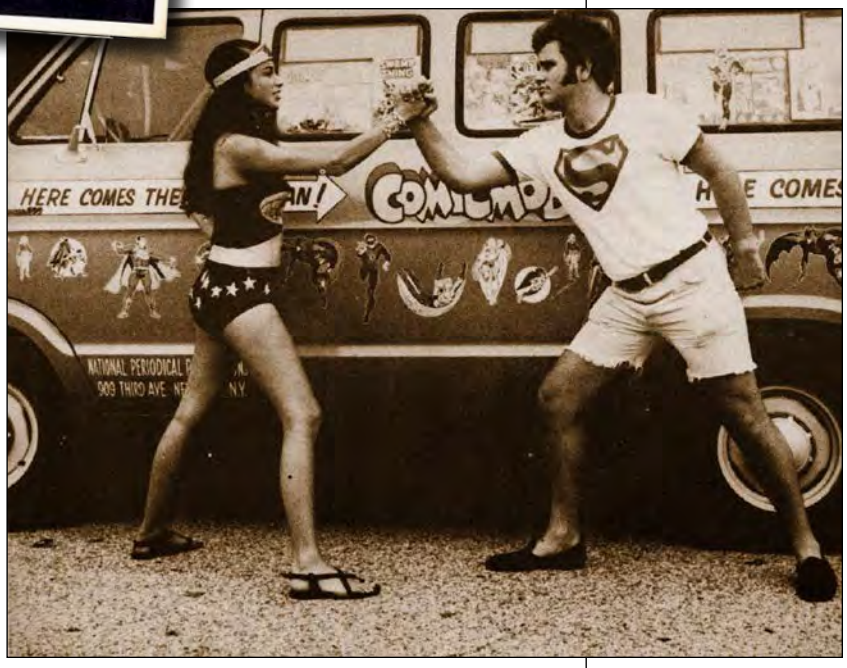
Sometimes, even when there were kids outside, they weren't potential customers. As those of you who have lived in areas that were served by an ice cream man might guess, I was often mistaken for someone selling Popsicles and Klondike Bars. There was, in fact, one little boy who would demand a Creamsicle every Thursday when I showed up. And all he ever had to pay for it was a nickel. I don't recall what an ice cream bar cost in those days, but it was certainly more than 5¢.

There was only one occasion when I was able to bring the Comicmobile to a gathering of kids. My future wife Laurie was one of the day-camp counselors at a nearby elementary school. I wore a Superman T-shirt and she dressed in a Wonder Woman costume that had been made and borrowed from DC colorist Liz Berube, and we performed a brief skit as the two heroes. We were not, however, allowed to sell anything, so I gave away flyers and free comics and told the kids to watch for me on their home streets. (The photo recording the event, taken by Laurie's father, continues to haunt us 40-plus years later.)

Over the six weeks that I drove the Comicmobile, I did eventually develop something of a regular clientele. A few of the customers would request specific issues that I could often find among the left-overs in the DC library. For them, having the Comicmobile come by was the answer to a fanboy's dreams. One of them in my hometown of Elmont, New York, was Bob Buethe,

Super Friends

Laurie and Bob Rozakis join forces as Wonder Woman and Superman in this oft-seen but beloved Comicmobile shot. Photo by Bob's father-in-law, W. J. Neu, who wasn't credited with this image's original publication in *Amazing World of DC Comics*.



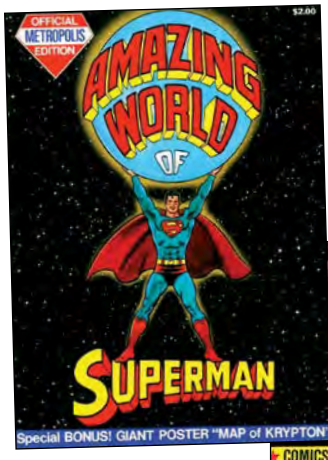
AMAZING WORLD OF DC COMICS™

An Issue-by-Issue Look at DC's Bronze Age "Prozine"

by Michael Eury

As a teenaged, diehard DC Comics fan in 1974, I was frenzied by the DC house ads selling the publisher's self-produced "prozine," **The Amazing World of DC Comics (AWODCC).** I willingly mutilated a comic book (>gasp!<) by clipping an order form, sending it and a check for $1.50 to a post-office box at faraway Radio City Station in the fabled city of New York. Once the magazine arrived, it was devoured, cover to cover… and why wouldn't it be? Here, between crisp cardboard-stock covers, was a window into my favorite comics company, a tasty blend of DC news, comic-book and comic-media history, rare art and stories, and behind-the-scenes data. Truly, this was an "amazing world," one I continued to visit throughout the next few years through a total of 17 issues (18, counting the *AWODCC Special Edition*), each of which became dog-eared after multiple readings.

Before we revisit DC's ultimate fanzine, let's detour back one year to its precursor, *The Amazing World of Superman, Metropolis Edition* (inset), a 64-page one-shot tabloid published in 1973 to inaugurate a Superman-themed amusement park in Metropolis, Illinois. (The park never made it past the drawing board, but Metropolis has remained the "home of Superman" and is the site of an annual Superman Celebration featuring a gathering of comic creators, media stars, and fans of the Big Red S.) While its format was different from the magazine-sized *AWODCC* that would follow the next year, *The Amazing World of Superman* was a prototype for the prozine through its use of its logo—the words "Amazing World of" within a globe (a logo also used decades later for the autobiography *The Amazing World of Carmine Infantino*)—and its inclusion of a lavishly illustrated article "How a Comic Magazine is Created," the type of feature which would soon become a staple of *AWODCC*.

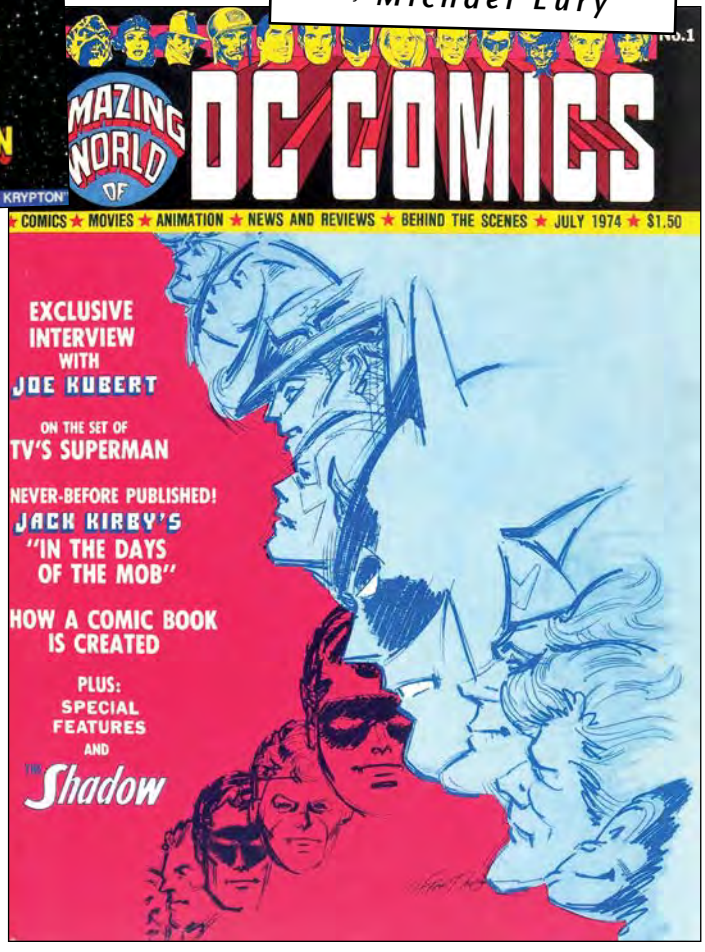


THE JUNIOR WOODCHUCKS

Young fans like me who feverishly pored over their copy of *The Amazing World of DC Comics* #1 (July–Aug. 1974) discovered that this 48-page black-and-white publication was produced by… young fans like (and not much older than) me. These were the "Junior Woodchucks," comic fans who were turning pro—right before our very eyes, through the production of this publication (and other DC work). Overseeing the process was the senior advisor of the Woodchucks, DC vice president/production manager Sol Harrison, the man behind such "Solly's Follies" as the DC Comicmobile and a Junior Bullpen Program.

AWODCC all started one day when Sol rounded up those young staffers for a meeting. "I remember that Sol told me to gather up my compatriots for a discussion about a new project," former Woodchuck Bob Rozakis recalls. "I went and found Paul Levitz, Carl Gafford, Steve Mitchell, Guy Lillian, and Allan Asherman and said, 'Sol wants to have a meeting of the Junior Woodchucks.' And that's how the name was born."

But as former Woodchuck Allan Asherman tells *BI*, Harrison had a DC fanzine in mind before rallying together the troops for that meeting. "My earliest memory of the magazine was before we were told anything about it," Asherman says. "Sol knew that my B.A. was in journalism, that I had been Long Island University's delegate to the CBS Workshop program in the late 1960s, and had therefore worked in the CBS TV newsroom. Sol called me into his office one day to discuss the possibility of a magazine written and edited by the DC junior staffers, so that those of us with writing experience could encourage and work with those who hadn't. My next memory of the magazine was being at our first staff meeting, but I do not recall any details at all about that meeting, except that it took place and I was there."



DC Behind the Scenes

The Amazing World of DC Comics #1 (July–Aug. 1974), with cover art by DC's head honcho Carmine Infantino.

MEET THE WOODCHUCKS

CARL GAFFORD: Carl took on the job of Managing Editor of this magazine when he discovered that he was not working on anything between midnight and three a.m. A 21-year-old college dropout, Carl was the Glen Howard of fan publishing before coming to DC in 1973. He was recently promoted to replace Gerda Gattel as the company's head proofreader and takes great delight in finding mistakes that everybody else misses. He claims he can proofread with his eyes closed, and he sometimes does . . . after working straight through a weekend on his other comics-related projects!

ALLAN ASHERMAN: After graduating from Long Island University (Brooklyn) with a B.A. in Journalism, Allan taught emotionally and physically handicapped children, then worked for M.G.M. before coming to DC. A professional writer, Allan has had published numerous articles on motion pictures. His staff duties include working as Editorial Assistant to Joe Kubert and Assistant Editor to Joe Simon and Nelson Bridwell. His collection of movies-television-comic book-science fiction-fantasy paraphernalia is almost as astounding as his ability to imitate the voices of the entire crew of the starship Enterprise!

STEVE MITCHELL: The playboy of the DC Comics World. Steve decided not to give us any biographical data for this article. We'd guess that he doesn't want everybody to know that he is younger than all the Woodchucks but Paul Levitz or that he has worked for DC on staff and freelance for the past four years. We'd also guess that he doesn't want you to know that he has written some stories for DC's war books, that he sees almost every movie that comes out, and that he is the biggest fan of Kojak in the country. But since he doesn't want you to know any of this, we'll move on to our next woodchuck.

BOB ROZAKIS: Elmont, N.Y.'s answer to Guy Lillian broke into comics by writing millions of letters to the editors, some 135 of which eventually got printed. His first pro work was a series of puzzle pages for DC's 100-page books (This rather surprised most of Bob's friends since he graduated from Hofstra University with a B.B.A in Accounting!) Currently, Bob works as an assistant to Julie Schwartz, and in his spare time is a parking lot attendent for a Long Island department store. The only married woodchuck, Bob spends the rest of his time (about two hours a week) with his wife Laurie trying to figure out how to fit his comic books into their apartment!

PAUL LEVITZ: At 17½, Paul is the youngest in the National Bullpen. His double life consists of attending New York University as a full-time student two days a week and acting as Assistant Editor to Joe Orlando and Murray Boltinoff the rest of the time. As editor/publisher of "The Comic Reader," Paul won two Comic Art Fan Awards for best fan magazine. Paul's hobbies include sleeping, reading, aging, and figuring out how he can do four weeks of work in the space of three days!

GUY H. LILLIAN III: Julie Schwartz's "favorite Guy" claims to have been the world's greatest letterhack before coming to work at DC in January of this year. Though a recent tally shows Guy second in number of letters published, he refers to himself as "the thinking man's Bob Rozakis" and to prove it, he pulls out his diplomas from Berkeley (B.A.) and the University of North Carolina (M.F.A.) Guy's most noteworthy achievement was seeing Richard Nixon in his underwear in 1962.

SOL HARRISON: A veteran of the comic book industry from the day they invented comics, DC's Vice-President-Production Manager has been the guiding light behind **THE AMAZING WORLD OF DC COMICS.** Sol's work has been influential at DC for many years. He has designed numerous title logos for the magazines, colored countless covers and has worked on such wide-ranging special projects as the Junior Bullpen Program and the DC Comicmobile. This magazine, the latest of "Solly's Follies," is just another example of why he is where he is today.

E. NELSON BRIDWELL: When the rest of us were still in grade school, Nelson Bridwell became the first comics "fan" to break into the industry. Our guest-writer for this issue edits all of DC's $1 Collectors' Editions and is assistant editor to Julie Schwartz. Since he is a master of trivia—not only in comics, but in most of literature as well—it is hardly surprising that the usual answer to a tough question among the woodchucks is "Nelson would know!"

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The Young Turks and The Senior Woodchuck

(left) DC's fans-turned-pro new staffers—the Junior Woodchucks—and their bios, from *Amazing World* #1. (top right) Woodchuck advisor Sol Harrison, photographed in 1977 by Jack Adler. Courtesy of Bob Rozakis. (bottom right) Page 1 of "Murder, Inc.!," produced by Jack Kirby for the unpublished black-and-white magazine *In the Days of the Mob* #2 but presented in *AWODCC* #1.

Woodchuck Carl Gafford volunteered to serve as *AWODCC* #1's managing editor, with contributing editors (and fellow Woodchucks) Asherman, Levitz, Lillian, Mitchell, and Rozakis pitching in.

Gafford reveals to *BACK ISSUE* that Harrison originally had a different title in mind for this DC prozine. "Sol wanted to call it *Fanzine*, and not use the DC initials in the name at all," he says. "We said DC's initials were a major selling point." Bob Rozakis adds, "I don't recall who came up with the [*AWODCC*] name, but I think we came to a consensus after a discussion of possible ones."

Readers accustomed to a slick Murphy Anderson or Joe Giella inking line over the pencils of Carmine Infantino may have been taken aback by *AWODCC* #1's cover, a sketchy but magnificent rendering by Infantino—then DC's publisher—of DC characters he had illustrated over the years. Above the logo appeared headshots of DC's most popular characters, although over time the characters shown would rotate. The issue's contents featured Guy H. Lillian III's interview with Joe Kubert, a seven-page "Direct Currents" column announcing forthcoming comics and listing contents for two months' worth of titles, Carl Gafford's article about the recently aired pre-Lynda Carter *Wonder Woman* TV movie starring Cathy Lee Crosby, Allan Asherman's history of television's *The Adventures of Superman* starring George Reeves, a "Meet the Woodchucks" page with photos and bios, a centerspread unveiling Michael Kaluta's unused cover for DC's *The Shadow* #5 (which we repurposed as the cover of *BACK ISSUE* #89), Asherman's "Remembering" two-pager which presented a look back at Sol Harrison's roots, a memorial to the recently deceased Bill Finger (the first time many readers had heard of this talented but tragic Batman co-creator), a page of DC office gag cartoons by Sergio Aragonés, Bob Rozakis' two-page lettercol of kids' funny letters to DC characters, E. Nelson's Bridwell's one-page "Yesteryear" time capsule, a ten-page crime comic story by Jack Kirby intended for the unpublished *In the Days of the Mob* #2, Paul Levitz's inaugural installment of the "How a Comic is Created" instructional series, Steve Mitchell's episode guide for the Fleischer Studios' *Superman* animated shorts of the '40s, a DC word-search puzzle by Rozakis, and a couple of pinups. For the Bronze Age baby coming of age, *AWODCC* #1 presented more DC lore than one could ever dream of finding elsewhere.

Could these Woodchucks keep the momentum going? A next-issue blurb promised an interview with Julius Schwartz, "the dean of comic book editors." Looked like another winner was in store!

AS THE WORLD TURNS

AWODCC #2 (Sept.–Oct. 1974) followed, with a cheery Kurt Schaffenberger cover spotlighting young DC scribes Cary Bates and Elliot S! Maggin, who were interviewed together inside (no, *BACK ISSUE* didn't create the "Pro2Pro" concept) by Guy Lillian. What? No Julie Schwartz interview? (We'll learn the reason in a moment…)

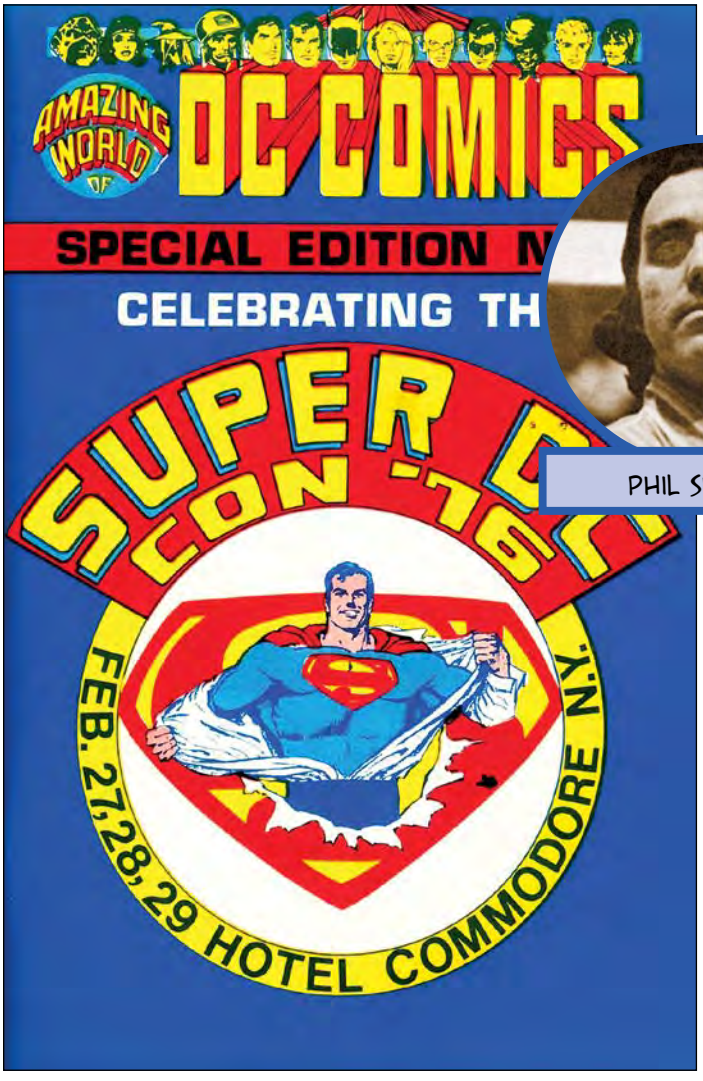
Schaffenberger's caricatures of Bates and Maggin were dead-on, even capturing their personalities in their reactions to the league of DC heroes gathered around them. These characters were reviewing script pages, and for fun, Kurt threw himself in, peeking around one of Superman's broad shoulders. Stars from Cary's and Elliot's DC features were present—Superman, Lois Lane, Flash, Green Lantern, Green Arrow, members of the Shazam! family, and the Legion's Karate Kid—but one unidentifiable character, whose body and most of his face is obstructed by Superman, always gave me pause. If he were taller, it might be Jim Shooter sneaking in for a cameo, but my theory, from the character's hairstyle, is that it's Mon-El of the Legion of Super-Heroes. "It's Mon-El," confirms Bob Rozakis.

Rozakis was now co-editor of *AWODCC*, which wasn't in the original plan for the magazine. "I didn't give up the full editorial title; it was taken from me," admits Carl Gafford. "There was a lot of concern that the zine might not make it past a first issue. When they gave us the green light, they assigned someone to manage the editorial portion and gave me just the production. Besides doing all the paste-ups, I did the color separations for the front and back covers."

Issue #2's "Amazing World of Editorials," by Rozakis, revealed the aforementioned story of the magazine's genesis and announced the

SUPER DC CON '76 WE WERE THERE

by *Michael Eury*



PHIL SEULING

Let me state right up front that I was not lucky enough to be included in the "We" in this article's title. I was a freshman at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, when DC Comics hosted its own comic-con from February 27–29 of the Bicentennial year—New York City was too far away for this pimple-faced dorm-dweller. The notion of my favorite publisher hosting its own fan gathering was almost mind-blowing enough to tempt me to skip class for a couple of days for a road trip north… too bad as a frosh I wasn't allowed to have a car on campus, else I might have made the trek in my '70 Ford Maverick.

But as an avid, life-long DC reader and a proud owner of the convention booklet, *The Amazing World of DC Comics Special Edition* #1 Celebrating the Super DC Con '76, I've wondered in the 40-plus years since what it was like to have attended that momentous event. Barring the intervention of a wielder of a time machine (where's Rip Hunter when you need him?), the closest I'll ever get to Super DC Con '76 is to live vicariously through the experiences of some of those who were there. I expect that most of you are like me and were not there—sheesh, some of you weren't even *born* yet—so join me as we look back at Super DC Con '76.

Before we hear from the people who were there, it's important to frame our perspective in the pop culture of the '70s. Today, fans have one-day comic-cons to choose from almost every weekend of the year, in major metropolitan areas and smaller suburban regions. Mega-shows like San Diego Comic-Con International and New York Comic-Con earn worldwide entertainment headlines.

But in the Bicentennial year of 1976, when the USA was gearing up for its sizzling fireworks shows that Fourth of July, comic-cons were still uncommon for most fans. A dozen years had passed since the first comic-book convention, the New York Comicon of 1964, an affair organized by young fan Bernie Bubnis, abetted by fellow fans Ron Fradkin, Art Tripp, and Ethan Roberts. By '76, a few comic-cons had trickled into existence, relatively new events consigned to a handful of major cities, discounting the flea market-like book- and comic-swaps you might find around college campuses. Convention pioneer Phil Seuling, a teacher from Brooklyn who provided refreshments at Bubnis' inaugural New York Comicon, had grown the concept into his Comic Art Conventions, explosions of fandemonium occurring in Manhattan each Independence Day weekend, dating back to 1968. Seuling had started to branch out with brand-centric shows, including a Famous Monsters (of Filmland) Convention in 1974, and Marvel Comics even launched its own short-lived annual convention in 1975 (which we'll cover in a future issue). This growing mania made the time right for a DC convention, and so Phil Seuling joined forces with DC Comics president Sol Harrison to organize a DC con. 1976 was a leap year, and back in the Bronze Age, February 29th was also Superman's birthday (according to DC lore-keeper E. Nelson Bridwell). And so, Super DC Con '76 doubled as the Man of Steel's birthday party—complete with a Super Birthday Cake (as well as a bountiful supply of Twinkies, courtesy of one of DC's major advertisers of the day).

Anyone who's ever organized a convention will tell you it's a tough job, and members of DC's staff (mostly its "Junior Woodchucks" newbies) moonlighted by coordinating most of the event's duties: Paul Levitz co-managed the con with Phil Seuling's then-girlfriend and Gal Friday, Jonni Levas, and Jenette Kahn, fresh on the job as DC's new publisher, managed publicity, with additional DC personnel handling other responsibilities (this was long before comics publishers had marketing teams dedicated to conventions). Levitz and his fellow Woodchucks produced the con booklet, the aforementioned *AWODCC Special Edition* #1, whose contents were explored in the previous article. One can only imagine how the burden of orchestrating a convention amplified the routine chaos found in DC's helter-skelter editorial and production environments, but no one could have anticipated the biggest event disruptor since the FF's rogues' gallery crashed Reed and Sue's wedding…

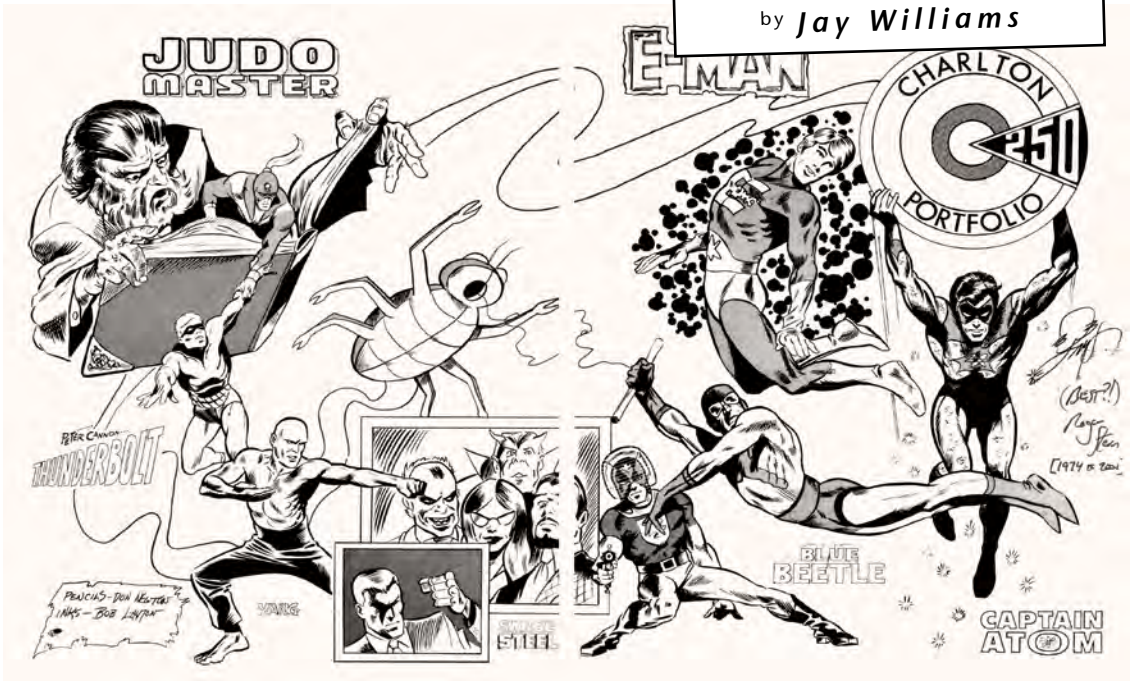
The Convention Booklet

This *Special Edition* of *Amazing World of DC Comics* (*AWODCC*) doubled as Super DC Con '76's program guide. There's an error on this cover… can you spot it? Keeping reading for details!

FlashBack!

The Gang Behind The Charlton Portfolio and The Charlton Bullseye

by Jay Williams

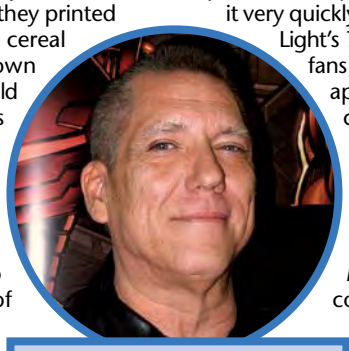


Double Your Pleasure

The Don Newton/Bob Layton wrap-around cover for *The Charlton Portfolio/CPL* #9/10 (1974), signed by CPL Gang members Layton and Roger Stern. From the collection of Jay Williams.

You have learned elsewhere in this issue about the rise of prozines in the 1970s. Now you will learn the story behind how Charlton Comics decided that it needed its own prozine, a publication that would be called *The Charlton Bullseye*.

For those who are not familiar with Charlton, they were a single-source supplier of cheap comic books operating out of Derby, Connecticut. They paid artists and writers less than DC and Marvel, they printed their comics on worn-out old presses used to print cereal boxes and sheet music, they had their own their own tractor-trailer trucks, and did their own distribution. You would know that you were holding a Charlton comic by its poor print quality. That's why Bob Layton refers to the company as "the three-legged dog of comics."



BOB LAYTON

© Luigi Novi / Wikimedia Commons.

CONTEMPORARY PICTORIAL LITERATURE #1–4: AN ADZINE

To understand how *The Charlton Bullseye* came into being, we need to go back to 1973. In the city of Indianapolis was a young comic-book collector by the name of Robert. When he was four years old, he wanted to know more about the comic books he looked at. In Robert's words, "My curiosity was so piqued" that he asked his sister to teach him to read so that he could read the word balloons himself. He learned to read so early that Robert ended up skipping a grade in school, graduating high school at age 17. Knowing that he was not college material, Robert decided to self-educate himself in the art of writing so he could attempt to become a comic-book writer. At the same time he was into collecting comics, but distribution was so bad that the only way he knew to be guaranteed to be able to get the comics he collected was to approach Koch magazine and comic distributors and buy directly from them. Robert thought he had to buy ten copies of each, so he did. Robert only needed one of each comic for his collection, so he had to find some way to sell those extra comics and decided to publish what was known as an "adzine," which was nothing more than a list of his comics for sale. But he had to have a unique name for that list. According to Robert, "I was trying to come up with a name that represented what comics were about." After much thought, he came up with *Contemporary Pictorial Literature*. Because that was such a mouthful, it very quickly became known as *CPL*. Robert purchased an ad in Alan Light's *The Buyer's Guide to Comics Fandom*, known to most comic fans as *TBG*. So *CPL* was in business, being run out of Robert's apartment. He even published his return address on the cover: Robert Layton, 41010 Mallway Drive, Apartment A, Indianapolis, Indiana. Yes, "Robert" is the man you know today as the famous Iron Man artist, Bob Layton.

CPL #1–2 were pure adzines, mimeographed sheets with amateurish drawings of comic characters by young Bob Layton on the front covers. Layton tells *BACK ISSUE*, "I am sure someone will come up with a copy of those covers and embarrass the crap out of me once they read this article." The first issue has a drawing of Luke Cage, and to the best of Bob's recollections, maybe Doc Savage was on *CPL* #2. On the back cover of *CPL* #3 (1973) was the cover of *CPL* #1 (1973) with a drawing of Luke Cage. (I was unable to verify what was on the cover of *CPL* #2, as that is not one of the issues I have in my collection.)

With the exception of *CPL* #9/10, the format of *CPL* #3–12 was 8.5" x 5.5", stapled in the middle. Heavier paper and later, cardstock, was used for the covers. All issues had black-and-white interiors and all the covers were black and white except for the cover of #12, which was in color.

With *CPL* #3, some articles began to appear. This issue was published in or around May 1973 since the cover had a Bob Layton drawing of Killraven of "War of the Worlds" fame, who first appeared in Marvel's

Amazing Adventures #18 (cover-dated May 1973 but going on sale in late February of that year), and also contained a review of that issue along with the top ten sellers for April 1973 in the Indianapolis area. Other features: the first installment of "The Indy Bomber" with reviews of comics and more, and a letters column which contained a letter from Stewart Lehman, who wrote, "I saw your ad in the *Buyer's Guide* #33. I do not have very many fanzines because I am new to the comic world. Your ad sounded great and I hope the fanzine is as good!" Layton's response: "I would like to make it clear to everyone that *C.P.L.* is **NOT** (my emphasis) a true fanzine. Our primary interest is to sell comics. We allow the items of interest to appear in order to make buying a comic catalog a worthy investment. We are **NOT** (again my emphasis) a fan magazine." Good thing Bob isn't a prophet, because soon that statement would not be true.

Issue #3's centerfold contained another illustration with six comic characters including Iron Man, which was probably Bob's first published drawing of the Armored Avenger. *CPL* #3 and 4 were 20 pages each. *CPL* #3 contained nine pages of comics for sale. In *CPL* #4, the page count of comics for sale dropped to six pages.

CONTEMPORARY PICTORIAL LITERATURE #5–8: THE GANG ARRIVES

Then *CPL* #5 arrived, and the content changed drastically due to Bob meeting Roger Stern. Sterno, as Bob calls him, worked at a local Indianapolis radio station and was a regular purchaser of *TBG*. Stern thought he was the only comic-book fan in Indianapolis. When he saw Bob's phone number in the *TBG* ads, he called Bob and said, "We have to get together." Roger knew other collectors from other states like Duffy Vohland and Roger Slifer. Stern then said, "I know this fan artist from Canada by the name of John Byrne."

It was Stern's idea to create a fanzine. "I thought it was a good idea, as I was looking for somewhere to publish my art," Layton says. "Back then there was no venue to publish comic art except in a fanzine. Duffy had contacts at Marvel and put the word out that we were converting *CPL* from an adzine to a fanzine."

So Layton, Stern, Vohland, and Slifer put together *CPL* #5, and the CPL Gang was born. While the zine retained *CPL*'s 20-page format, the ads were reduced to four pages, printed on pink paper and stuffed into the center. Issue #5's cover by Neal Adams and Duffy Vohland was a quantum improvement over the covers of *CPL* #1–4. Page 2 contained a Blue Beetle drawing that was to be plate #1 of a Charlton poster portfolio by Byrne and Vohland.

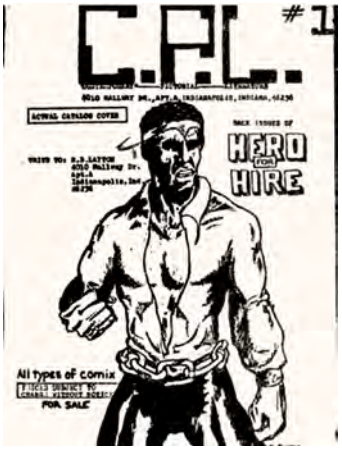
The editorial on page 4 announced: "Big changes are on their way, if you could not tell already. *CPL* #5 showcases the work of Canadian artist, John L. Byrne. The centerfold was done by Berni[e] Wrightson." Scattered throughout the issue (and future issues) were little drawings Byrne cut out of his sketchbook and sent to be pasted in. The CPL Gang sent 25 copies to Marvel and 25 copies to DC to any editor they had contact with, and apparently a few copies to Charlton.

CPL #6 added art from Dan Atkins, Joe Sinnott, Don Newton, and Mike Royer. Page 19 contained Captain Atom art by Byrne and Vohland. But the main thing of note, on pages 4 and 21, was the first two appearances of a robot drawn by John Byrne. Stern and Layton decided to make the robot the CPL Gang's mascot and have him be the one who replied to fan letters. They decided the robot needed a name—Why not one more Roger?—so they named him Rog 2000 (sometimes Rog-2000 or ROG 2000). Bob then lettered "Rog 2000" across the front of the robot on page 4, and the rest is history.

There has long been a debate as to how Rog 2000's name is pronounced. Is it Rog like in "bog" or Rog like in Roger? Bob Layton says since the robot was Roger #3, it was always been pronounced as "raj" in Roger.

By now the CPL Gang was bringing in contributions from creative people such as Tony Isabella, Don Maitz, Michael Uslan, and Steven Grant. A turning point in the lives of the CPL Gang came in early 1974 when convention pioneer Phil Seuling of Sea Gate Distributors contacted Bob Layton about making *CPL* a more professional publication. Phil, along with Bud Plant on the West Coast, was the connection between fan artists and professional artists. Phil and Bud agreed to pay for the *CPL* print runs and split the runs between them to then sell to comic shops. This allowed *CPL* #7 and 8 to have a slicker look. Notable in *CPL* #7 were three full-page John Byrne illustrations: a drawing of the Question, a Spider-Man drawing with the shadow of Batman falling over him, and a Nightshade drawing. The first and last were inked by Duffy Vohland.

In 1971, George Wildman took over as the editor at Charlton Comics. His associate was Nicola "Nick" Cuti. In September 1973, Charlton changed its logo from a white capital "C" with Charlton Comics written across it to what became known as the "bullseye" logo, which was red, white, blue, and black with the words "Charlton Comics Group" written across the bullseye.



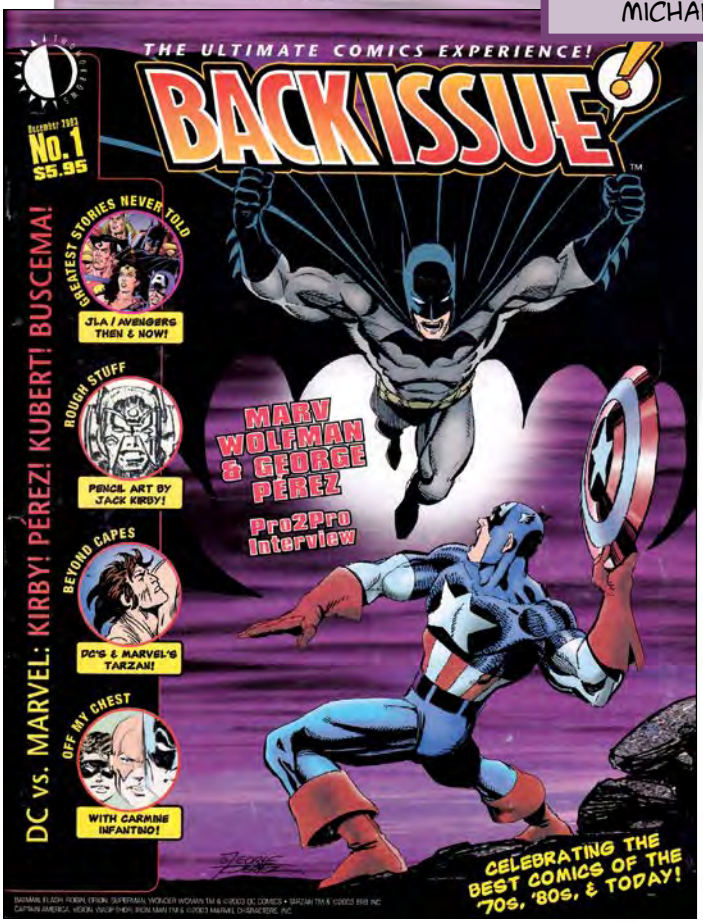
Raw Talent

(top and center) Examples of Bob Layton's early artwork. (bottom) Covers by Neal Adams and John Byrne, both with Duffy Vohland inks.

AN INTERVIEW WITH BACK ISSUE EDITOR MICHAEL EURY

conducted by
Robert Greenberger
transcribed by **Sean Dulaney**

MICHAEL EURY



I can't recall the exact moment Michael Eury entered my life, *but I am a better man for it. When we lured Michael from Comico the Comic Company to DC Comics in 1989, he was a sea of calm in a manic ocean called Editorial. He brought knowledge and enthusiasm to his assignments and was a welcome voice of reason when things got stressful. He has, since then, gone on the do many wonderful things but none more important, perhaps, than editing* BACK ISSUE*, which has furthered our understanding of comics history for 100 issues, with many more to come.*

I had, at one point, pitched the idea of interviewing him for his own magazine, and when he was done blushing demurred until plans for the centennial started to take shape. We had a very lengthy phone call in the late fall of 2016 and in early 2017 we edited, tightened, and refined the conversation so it was less mutual gushing and focused more on the magazine and its legacy.

– Robert Greenberger

BOB GREENBERGER: ***We're going to talk about your life, your writing, and the magazine. And we're going to start with the magazine, because we're celebrating the centennial issue.***

MICHAEL EURY: Hard to believe, isn't it?

GREENBERGER: ***Yeah. So, I was reading the introduction from John Morrow in #1 and he talks about how he saw a void in publishing when* Comic Book Artist *left TwoMorrows, and when he conceived of the project to fill that gap, he said you were the perfect guy to edit this. Why do you think he picked you?***

EURY: Well, we had developed a good working relationship from the first two books that I did for John, the Captain Action history followed by the Dick Giordano biography. John and I just got along well… and I met deadlines [*laughter*], and delivered when and what I promised. These are obviously important things, but they are things that sometimes folks can't deliver, so between that and my passion for comics of the Bronze Age, I guess I was his go-to guy.

GREENBERG ***magazine, w***

EURY: John s to me with "Greatest Stories Never Told", "Off My Chest," "Rough Stuff, comics]. I wanted to create so the get-go, to help keep me int and to help there be some stru content each issue, because I fel in the long run—and maybe e So the thematic structure came brainstorming what could be that has been a success, bec I've already planned up to we know exactly what I'm going t

GREENBERGER: ***Which, by the us that you are that planned a***

EURY: [*laughs*] The thing is, I d really want them to be out. I do on something that won't see long-term, sometimes fluid, g to try to do a few things that pertinent to readers of the Bro #109—which will come out in *Movie* 40th Anniversary issue.

GREENBERGER: ***Gosh, that m Warner puts* Superman *back to remind us we can "Believe a Man Can Fly."***

EURY: I'd love to see it on the big screen again.

You've Come a Long Way, Baby!

BACK ISSUE #1, released in November 2003.

Main cover art by George Pérez.