

SPRING 2015

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JACK
KIRBY

JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR SIXTY-FIVE  \$10⁹⁵



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THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

ISSUE #65, SPRING 2015

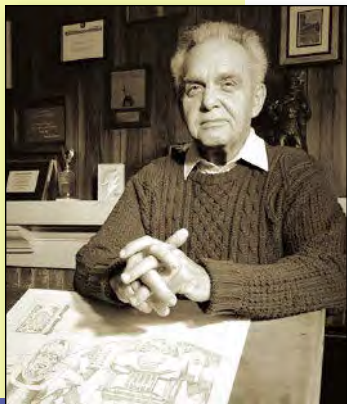


This issue's cover is Jack's unused Hulk Marvelmania poster art. It seems Stan Lee felt that too many of the Marvelmania posters were all by Jack, so he chose to have some of them redrawn by other artists who were working on those strips at the time, such as John Romita redrawing Kirby's Spidey poster. So Herb Trimpe got the nod, but unlike Romita (who completely re-drew Jack's), Herb only redrew the main figure, leaving the rest all-Jack. For more on Herb's career at Marvel, check out our new bio The Incredible Herb Trimpe, on sale in July.



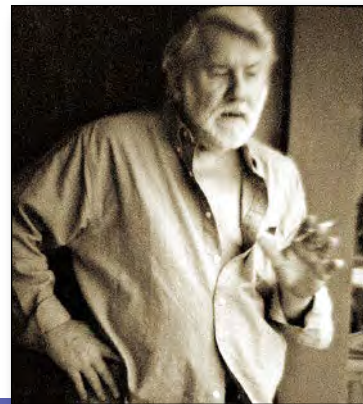
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Comic books are a true American art form that have been produced by some of the greatest creators ever to hold a pencil or paintbrush. While many can be considered geniuses for the sheer amount of brilliance they have created, two names rise above all the others due to the unparalleled influence they possess. Those two titans of the medium are none other than Jack Kirby and Alex Toth. Their work has stretched decades throughout many genres and continues to inspire creators and fans alike. But which one has the right to be called the one true “King” of comic books?

For the first time, Jack Kirby and Alex Toth will be analytically compared head-to-head as we try to discover the truth. Enjoy a comprehensive and fresh look at these two legends in a way that is reminiscent of the super-hero excitement that they are so famous for.



HEAD-TO-HEAD

JACK KIRBY VS. ALEX TOTH

The definitive examination proving who's the real King of Comics, by John “The MEGO Stretch Hulk” Cimino

(above left and right) Jack Kirby and Alex Toth in their twilight years. Toth's work was grounded in reality (right, from Detective Comics #442, Sept. 1974), while Kirby's imagination roamed the cosmos (below, from the 2001: A Space Odyssey Treasury Edition, 1976).

(next two pages) Kirby's and Toth's approaches to fight scenes were very different, but equally effective. Journey Into Mystery #112 (January 1965) vs. Adventure Comics #418 (April 1972).

TO THOSE WHO WOULD BE CROWNED KING

Genius: extraordinary intellectual power especially as manifested in creative activity.

Genius. A word we hold for those who make such an impact on the world that they inspire generations for years to come. No matter what field someone is in, the ones that excel the furthest and leave a lasting impact on others are considered a *genius* in some way. They are the ones who think outside the box and follow their own paths, carving an impression that lives on well after they are gone. This is what every creator truly strives for.

In the world of comic book creators, there are a select few who can be called a *genius*. They are the creators that defined the field on such a high level that all the creators that have come after them, look to their work for inspiration. Some of these creative *geniuses* are (in no particular order): Stan Lee, Steve Ditko, Julius Schwartz, Carl Barks, Robert Crumb, Gil Kane, Bill Finger, Will Eisner, John Buscema, Harvey Kurtzman, John Romita Sr., Wally Wood, Milton Caniff, Doug Wildey, Harold Foster, Frank Miller, Alan Moore, Barry Windsor-Smith, Frank Frazetta, Jim Steranko, Joe Kubert, Neal Adams, and possibly the two most influential comic creators of all time, Jack Kirby and Alex Toth! For when it comes to pure visceral creativity and total impact on the industry, these two titans of the field have no equal.



Jack Kirby has always been considered “The King” of comics because he took heroic storytelling to a new level. He established a lot of the theories for layout and pacing that became ubiquitous. In that regard, he was instrumental in taking comic books away from their strip roots and toward their own thing. With his unmatched creativity, imagination and dynamism, Kirby made these costumed heroes “Super”! And then he took us to places that we never thought possible, that we never thought could ever exist, and we always wanted to go back for more.

Alex Toth was dubbed “The Artists’ Artist” due to his level of simplistic art, character concepts and unparalleled style of storytelling. He was a gruff perfectionist that wouldn’t expect anything less than the best from himself and others. After he left comics and went into the animation field, his ability to design whole new concepts and storyboarding grew even more legendary, to the point that the industry was never the same.

Both of these creators at their best are unmatched by their peers. When you look at their bodies of work today, you can still see their lasting impact on comics, cartoons and creations. When you ask creators who were some of their biggest influences, chances are Jack Kirby or Alex Toth will be on their lists. How could they not be? These two creators have become *the* standard and that will never change. Here are two examples of their prestige by others.

The New York Times, in a Sunday op-ed piece written more than a decade after his death, on Jack Kirby:

"He created a new grammar of storytelling and a cinematic style of motion. Once-wooden characters cascaded from one frame to another—or even from page to page—threatening to fall right out of the book into the reader's lap. The force of punches thrown was visibly and explosively evident. Even at rest, a Kirby character pulsed with tension and energy in a way that makes movie versions of the same characters seem static by comparison."

Journalist Tom Spurgeon on Alex Toth:

"He had an almost transcendent understanding of the power of art as a visual story component, that he is one of the handful of people who could seriously enter into Greatest Comic Book Artist of All-Time discussions, and a giant of 20th Century cartoon design."

Although I loved their art as a young kid reading comics and watching cartoons, I didn't know why I always returned to their work time and time again. There was just something about it that drew me in. As I grew older and became more aware, I got educated by studying them and their work (a 20-year ordeal). I noticed that they were so admired and heralded by their peers but yet, so vastly different in art styles. Since both of their styles intrigued me, I became curious to find out which one really made more of an impact on the world of comics and popular fiction. Who was truly better at their peak? Who was more influential? Who was more creative? It kinda turned into an obsession of mine... I had to know who has the right to be called the *true* "King" of comics! In order to find out that answer, I had to compare them and stack their talents up against each other head-to-head.

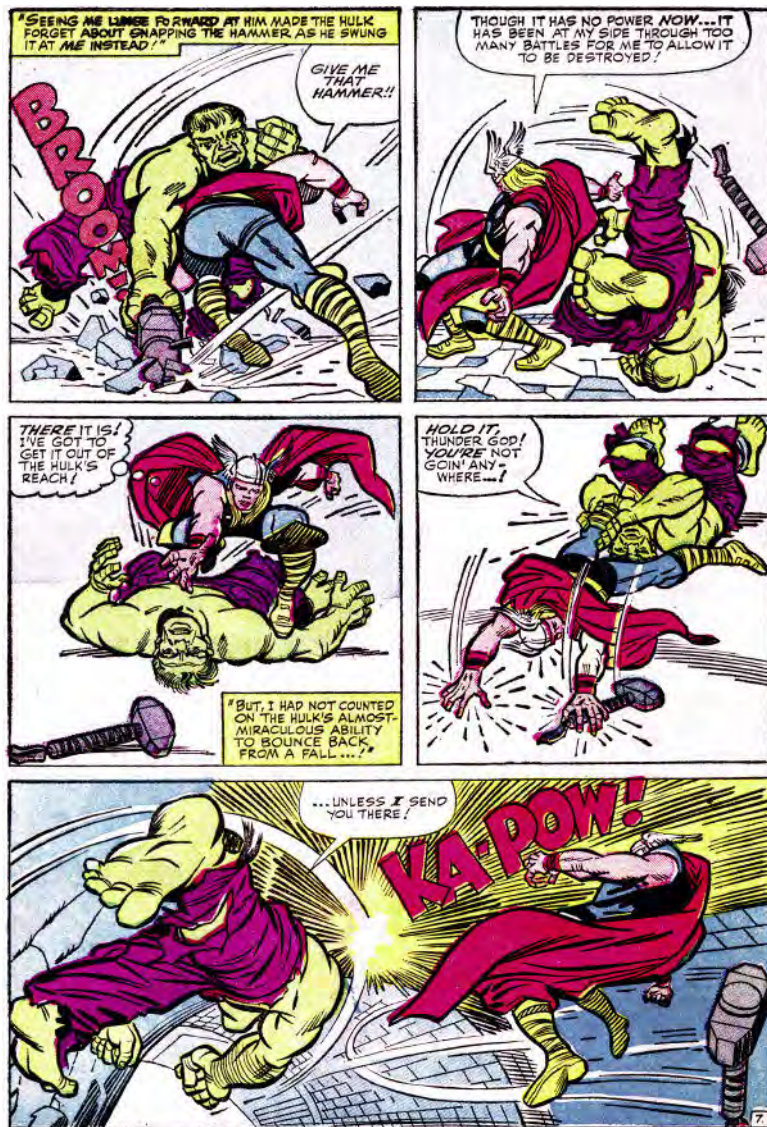
Evaluating and comparing these two genius creators can be purely subjective, especially to their fans—because let's face it, fanboys think that their creator of choice is the best at everything. Hey, I get it, but it's not really the truth (and I pride myself on the truth). If you take a step back and compare each artist based on their greatest strengths and weaknesses, an answer can be found somewhere in the middle. I know this won't be easy, but I want an answer. And just to show the readers how difficult this is, see for yourself how both artists compare to each other with similar action sequences shown in the examples on these two pages. Both are literally flawless... how do you compare perfection?

I didn't write this article to disrespect either of these great creators. Truth be told, they are *both* my heroes (along with Stan Lee)! I couldn't tell you how much their works have entertained and inspired me throughout my life. It also saddens me that I never got a chance to meet either of them, to thank them for everything they've given to me. So here is my chance. I hope you readers will enjoy it as well, because this is a monumental task that is a true labor of love.

Without further ado, let's take an analytically-charged in-depth look at Jack Kirby and Alex Toth, the two titans of comic book creators, and find out who is *really* the best of the best! KAAA-POWWW!

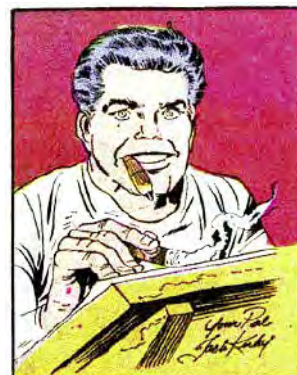
TALE OF THE TAPE

Born Jacob Kurtzberg in New York City, Jack Kirby is regarded by comics historians and fans alike as one of the major innovators



and most influential creators in the history of the comic book medium (he's been dubbed the "William Blake" of comics). He entered into the nascent comic industry in the 1930s in which he drew various comic features under different pen names, ultimately settling on "Jack Kirby." In 1940, he and writer/editor Joe Simon created the incredibly popular character Captain America for Timely Comics (Marvel Comics). During the rest of the 1940s, the highly prolific Simon and Kirby team created numerous characters for both Timely and National (now DC) Comics.

After serving in World War II (fighting under General George S. Patton and almost losing both his legs due to frostbite in the famous battle of Bastogne), Kirby returned to comics and worked in a variety of genres. He produced work for a number of publishers, including DC Comics, Harvey Comics, Hillman Periodicals and Crestwood Publications, where he and Simon created the genre of romance comics. They also launched their own short-lived comic company, Mainline Publications. Kirby ultimately went on his own and found himself at Timely's 1950s iteration, Atlas Comics, soon to become Marvel Comics. There, in the 1960s, he and



PLANET OF THE JACK-AN-APES

by Darrell McNeil

As many of you should know by now—and if not, shame on you—I’ve worked as an animator for the last 30 years. I did Scooby-Doo before Scrappy-Doo. I did *Super Friends* in the '70s—that’s how far back I go. I’ve worked with Alex Toth, Gil Kane, Mike Sekowsky, and of course the great Jack Kirby.

Jack started working in animation in California in 1978 with the *Fantastic Four*. From 1979-85, he was in high demand from studios like Hanna-Barbera and Ruby-Spears (both owned by the same company, Taft Broadcasting). Kirby worked on shows you wouldn’t believe he worked on! He did design work on *Scooby-Doo*, *The New Shmoo*, *The Thing* (with a teenaged Benjy Grimm

who presses two half-rings together and says, “Thing Ring, do your thing!”), and even preliminary designs for the *Drak Pack*.

Alex Toth’s *Space Ghost* (1966) was the show that inspired me to become an animator. Getting to work on the new show (1980) was a dream come true. Getting to work on it with Kirby was an added bonus.

I’d often run into Jack while going into H-B to pick up work. He’d always have a ready grin on his face when we met and would say things like, “I can’t believe I got paid this much money to do this work!”

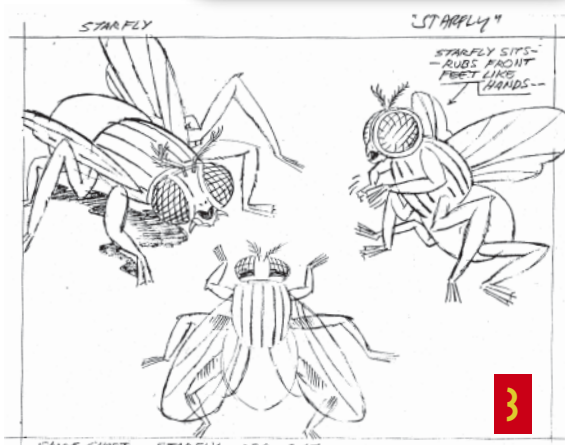
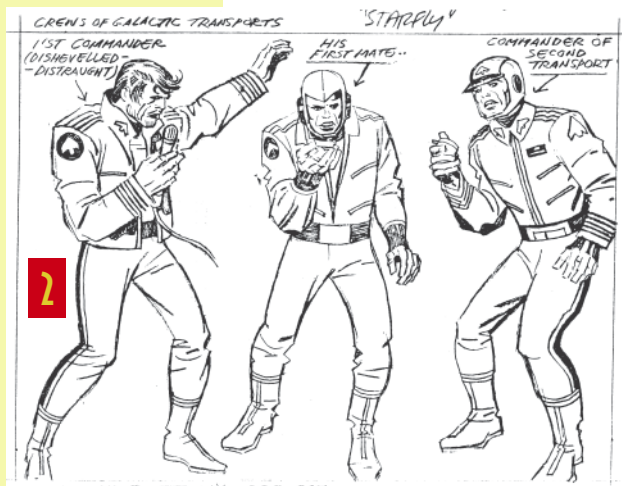
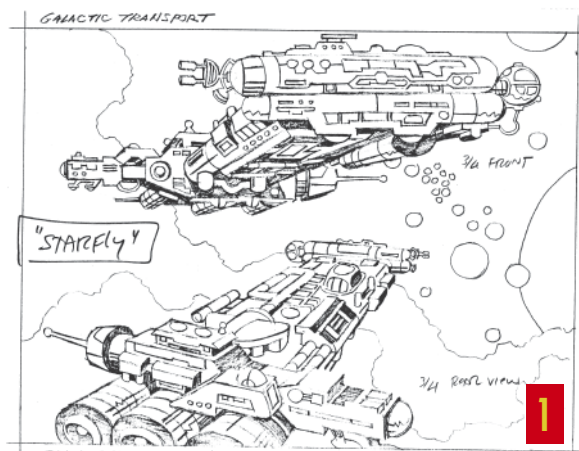
I’d get the King’s designs after they’d been approved by our bosses. Jack’s drawings had to be simplified into animation more so than, say, Alex Toth’s, who knew animation a little bit better than Kirby did (having done it longer), but Kirby’s stuff was excellent, such as these examples from the *Space-Stars* episode “The Starfly,” which first aired September 19, 1981 on NBC-TV.

PLATE 1: The ship you’re seeing was used by the space pilots in Plate 2. Model supervisor Bob Singer wrote “This will be simplified” at the top of Kirby’s design. The Galactic Transport, a beautiful design by Kirby, flew across space with their crew and into trouble to be rescued later. There would be two ships from the same design, actually, because the second plate shows the commander of the second vessel.

PLATE 2: Singer also wrote “for Ruffing only,” at the top. I had a week after the producers approved the King’s designs to lay out the story, using them and the storyboards which



(above) Non-Kirby model sheet for the 1980 *Space Ghost* series in *Space-Stars*.



HOW2?

Editor's note: I originally had a different article on this page of my layout file, with the Thor Marvelmania poster in the spot below, since it was about Thor. I later decided to omit that article from this issue, and deleted all the text on this page, leaving only the Thor poster art. Without thinking, I pasted this new article's text here, only to discover the Thor poster was perfect for it, in the exact spot I already had it. Just one of the weird coincidences that have regularly happened over the years, working on TJKC.

When representing the heroic human form, most comic artists draw anatomy, even when, in life, little would be shown clearly. Indeed, many draw heroes with musculature so well defined it's as if they had no skin, let alone clothing. But Kirby doesn't do that. Occasionally, some musculature is hinted at, but usually, he uses his unique slashes and squiggles instead. Why does he do them? What are they? And why do they work so well?

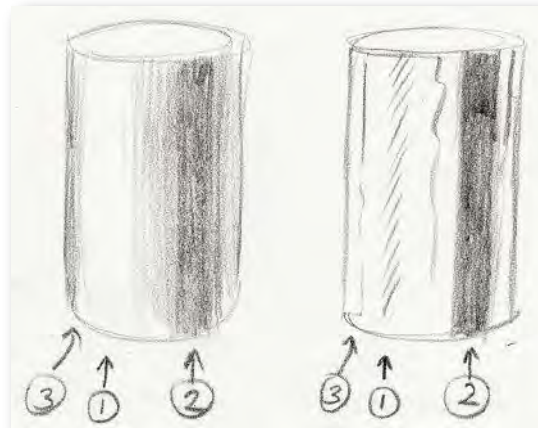
It occurred to me recently there is a simple answer—or at least a simple beginning point for an answer. Allowing for the artistic and creative genius of Kirby, which meant he constantly strayed far and wide from being 'correct' (making any analysis of a 'system' difficult), here I think is what Kirby did.

Rather than drawing heroic anatomy, Kirby was more interested in creating the illusion of solidity by emphasizing highlights and shadow terminator lines!

Here's a preliminary attempt to explain why I think this.

It suddenly occurred to me one day that the marks Kirby used on legs and arms are approximately the same as used when drawing cylinders.

The common way of drawing a cylindrical shape in comics is like this:



On the left is a tonal drawing of a cylinder. On the right is how those tones are often done so they can be inked for comics.

(1) is the feathering for the highlight. Whoever discovered that a feathered black line works well to represent a highlight I can't say, but Kirby used it, as did Wally Wood, John Romita, etc.

(2) is the heaviest shaded part. Where this shadow stops and meets a lighter area is called a 'terminator line'.

(3) is another 'terminator'—a line that represents where the softer left side shadow stops. On the right drawing, there are two more of these lines shown. Many artists never put any of the (3) lines in. Kirby often did. Romita and Wood did too.

Since, on a cylinder, there are many shades of grey, there are any number of 'fuzzy edges' where it is unclear where a dark area stops and becomes a lighter one. So it is all very subjective and entirely at the artists' discretion where (or if) he may put a terminator. So sometimes there might be one terminator and one highlight drawn—other times there might be two 'terminators'.

Occasionally, there is even more than one (1) highlight line as well. Whatever worked.

Now notice that this is basically the same arrangement that Kirby uses on his figures—especially on legs and arms, which are essentially cylindrical. It's all haphazard and changes every time, but very often, there is a heavy line on the shadow side, one or more lighter lines elsewhere, and often a feathered highlight line. But because arms and legs are cylindrical but with all sorts of bumps and uneven areas, the shine/terminator lines he draws are often also bumpy and uneven (which is why they can sometimes look like an attempt at anatomy). The marks are heavily stylized, and no attempt is made to be 'correct', often with multiple lines for added



KIRBY'S

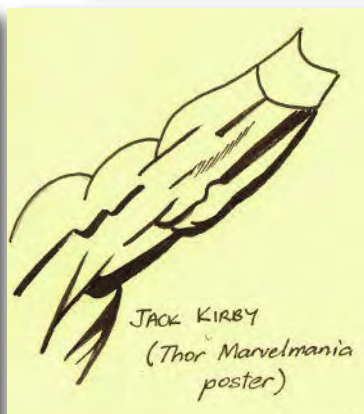
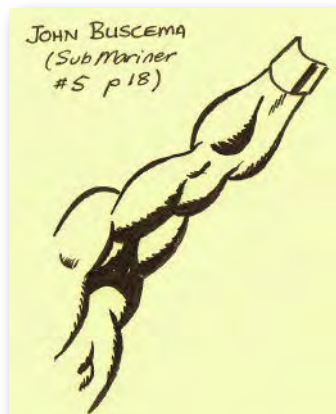
stress. But rather than draw a muscle that is anatomically correct, Kirby's drawing where light and shade may appear most powerfully on the form.

(I'm not saying Kirby is slavishly reproducing any of this—just that this may be a basis for what he's doing. As with his figure proportions, he's exaggerating and beefing things up at every turn.)

Here's an example.

Below left is an outstretched arm drawn by John Buscema for *Sub-Mariner* #5, page 18. As always, Buscema was brilliant at stylized anatomy. Next to it are diagrams of the upper terminator lines (shown in blue) and where highlights would approximately be (shown in red) on that arm. Below that is virtually the same arm position that Kirby drew for the Thor poster done for Marvelmania (previous page), and used most recently on the cover of *Collected Jack Kirby Collector*, Volume 3.

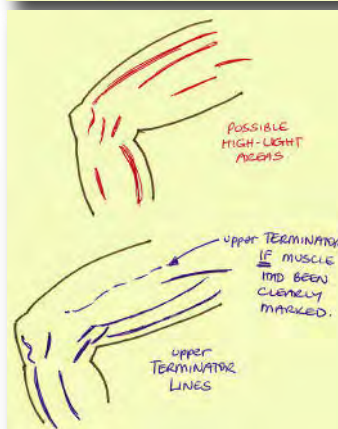
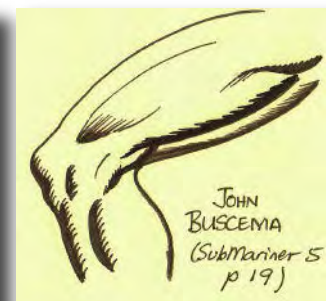
Notice how the lines on Kirby's arm are somewhere near a combination of the terminators and highlights we find on the more 'anatomically correct' arm by Buscema.



Let's try another example.

Below is a powerful leg drawn for the cover of *Fantastic Four* #65 (right). Next to it is another Buscema drawing, of a leg in the same position (from *Sub-Mariner* #5, page 19, shown below). Next to that are diagrams of the terminators and highlights on Buscema's more 'anatomically correct' leg.

Notice, again, how those terminators and highlights are roughly combined to give what Kirby drew; some ignored, others extended. Many superhero artists would have drawn a calf muscle on the lower leg for Ronan, as Buscema has done for Namor, even though such anatomy would never be visible on an armored figure. Kirby didn't draw that. Instead, he put a powerful curved line there to show the form of the lower leg instead. It not only represents shine, but gives the leg a solid appearance, which is why these sort of lines appear even when there would be little 'shine' *per se*.



I believe this 'system' Kirby used is part of the reason why his figures, though often appearing anatomically insane, have a power and solidity that others often don't have. He's creating a solid form, not just representing muscles. And it is why it is often impossible to

SLASHES & SQUIGGLES

An attempt to understand 'em, by Shane Foley

JIMMY OLSEN VS KAMANDI

Commentary by
Shane Foley

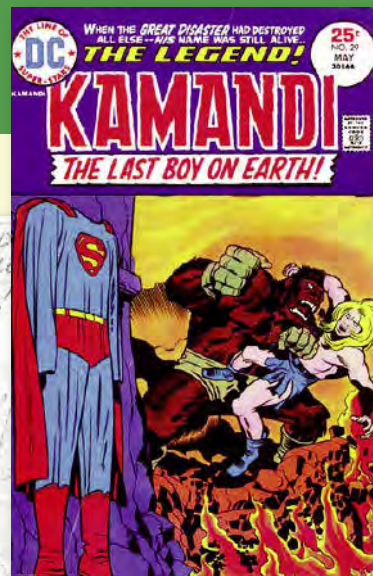
Some people can see similarities and conspiracies anywhere. Very rarely are they right. Now TJKC's esteemed editor has a new one himself. It goes like this: Are there just too many similarities between Kamandi and Kirby's run on Jimmy Olsen to be a coincidence? Say what?

Yes, you read it right. Did these two strips have far more in common than previously thought? I can't say it's ever occurred to me before. But what a revolution in Kirbydom there would be if this is found to be true! His evidence is common subject material in both strips. Following are examples of his best evidence. My task is to see if our ageing editor's newfound theory is right, or whether he's overdosed on too much Kirby yet again. So without further ado, let's see what he has to offer.

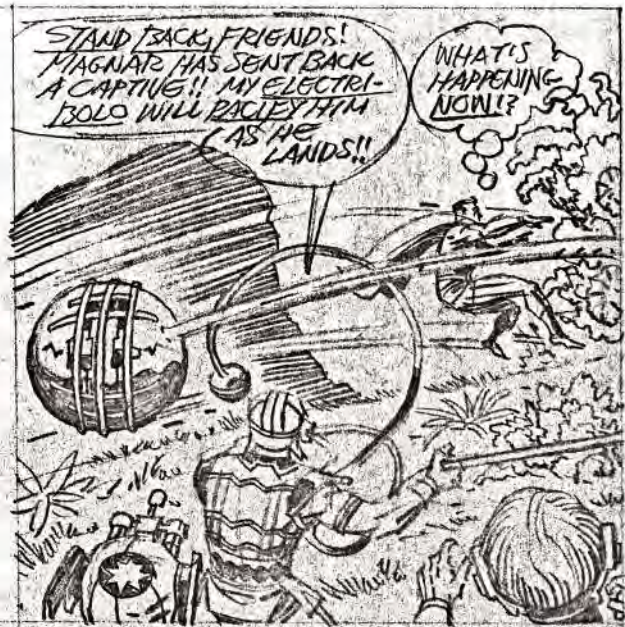
(pages 18–19) Exhibits 1a and 1b: Kamandi #29 cover and Jimmy Olsen #147, page 9.

Hmmmm—Supes certainly featured prominently in Olsen—such as in this page from the sequence where he has a brief foray into New Genesis. (Hard to believe DC were unhappy with Supes' face as drawn here by Kirby, isn't it? Looks close to spot-on to me.) But Supes in Kamandi? He nearly, but not quite, appeared but once! (Note that on the published cover, all the background above Kamandi and the ape has been omitted!)

Sorry, John, you haven't been very convincing yet.



BOTH HAD:
SUPERMAN!





2014 JACK KIRBY TRIBUTE PANEL

Held at 10:00am on Sunday, July 27, 2014 at Comic-Con International: San Diego. Moderated by Mark Evanier, and featuring Len Wein, Scott Shaw!, Charles Kochman, and Paul S. Levine. Transcribed by Jon Knutson, edited by John Morrow and copyedited Mark Evanier. Photos by Chris Ng.



In lieu of Mark's regular column this issue, we proudly present his 2014 Kirby Tribute Panel, featuring (below, l to r) Mark, Len Wein, Scott Shaw!, Paul Levine, and Charlie Kochman.

(above) Kirby is interviewed by an unknown journalist at a mid-1970s San Diego Comic-Con. Photo by Shel Dorf.

MARK EVANIER: I'm Mark Evanier. This is the panel I look forward to the most at this convention every year, because this is the closest I can come these days to spending time with a man named Jack Kirby. It's been 20 years since we lost Jack, and as I've said before many times, there

isn't a day I don't

think of him, quote him, get asked about him, find myself figuring out something that years ago, I didn't understand, and now I go, "Oh, that's what he meant." We're going to talk about Jack for a while today. We will not be discussing current legal matters. We're going to talk about Jack and his work. I've asked to join me here a couple of people who knew Jack, and helped him out over the years. This is my friend, Mr. Scott Shaw, ladies and gentlemen. (applause) On the far end is the publisher... not the publisher, what's your title there?

CHARLIE KOCHMAN: Editorial director.

MARK: Editorial director of Harry N. Abrams Books, the company that published the Jack Kirby book I did a couple of years ago. This is Mr. Charles Kochman. (applause) The gentlemen between them is, full

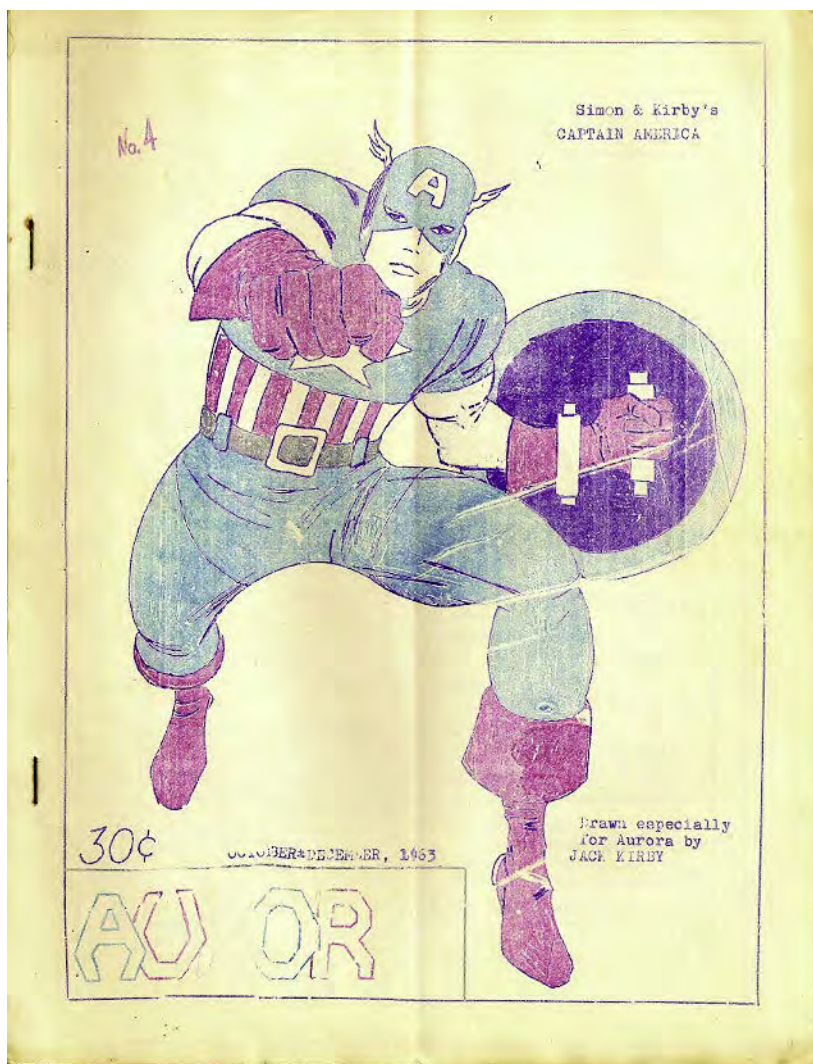
disclosure, my attorney, and he's the attorney for Lisa Kirby, and what's the official title of this? It's the Rosalind Kirby...

PAUL S. LEVINE: The Rosalind Kirby Family Trust.

MARK: This is Mr. Paul Levine. (applause) We will be joined by Len Wein, who is—I've never heard of this happening before—late! (laughter) One of the things I like about this panel is that we have here a lot of Jack Kirby fans. They're a smarter, cleverer batch of people, and I'm pleased that a lot of you keep carrying the torch for Jack. Seated somewhere down here is John Morrow of *The Jack Kirby Collector*. (applause) There's Rand Hoppe, who's running the Jack Kirby Museum. (applause) There's Tom Kraft, who's also running the website *What If Kirby.com* and works on the Kirby Museum with Rand.

A few years ago on this panel, I said, "Everything Jack ever did that can be reprinted will be reprinted." The other day, somebody calculated that the first ten issues of *The Fantastic Four* have now been reprinted 85 times in this country. I don't know if that counts digital, which would probably be another ten times right there. Jack's work had a lasting quality, and on two levels—first there was just those wonderful pages he worked on himself, and then how his work inspired other people to do new series based on his characters and his concepts. They keep coming up, they keep coming out, and I don't know any other creator in comics who had that kind of track record and influence. I sometimes run into people who say, "Oh, I like the way John Buscema drew the Silver Surfer more than Jack Kirby," or, "I like somebody else's X-Men more than Jack's X-Men." Okay, fine. I don't even have any interest in those arguments. The thing that people sometimes don't get is that John Buscema, as brilliant and talented as he was, did not have the same job description that Jack assumed for himself. Jack's job description was not filling pages with beautiful drawings. Jack's self-appointed job description was always, "I've got to take comics to the next level. I've got to invent something brand new to build an empire on." And he did it over and over again throughout his career, not always successfully... sometimes he





Jack's cover for the fanzine Aurora #4, edited by a young Len Wein. The October 1963 cover date means that Kirby drew this about the time Captain America got a try-out in Strange Tales #114 (which would've come out around September 1963), and before he officially returned in Avengers #4 in 1964.

was sabotaged, sometimes he was ahead of himself, sometimes he had some projects that maybe weren't as good as others, but he did it more often than anyone else in comics, in terms of revolutionizing and spotting something brand-new in comics. It always seemed to come from Jack. And it's not a coincidence, I think, that comics took an enormous downturn in sales right after Jack died. It was like he left and took the business with him for a while.

I want to talk a little bit about upcoming Kirby projects. I'm going to start with Charles. Charlie, tell us about this book that's coming out.

CHARLIE: This is a dummy for the book, it's 384 pages, and it's called *The Art of the Simon & Kirby Studio*, and thanks to Mark Evanier, this book will be coming out in October 2014. The genesis of this was, when Mark had done his Kirby: *King of Comics* book, we had a bunch of *Fighting American* pages that were shot off the original art. And when I went to drop the book off at Joe Simon's house—coincidentally, he lived on the same block I lived on in Manhattan—he was looking through this book, and saw this *Fighting American* page and suggested we do a book of all original art. He wanted to do a book that was a reading book, complete stories, unpublished stories, covers, alternate covers, that would be in this format. This was before I even got the company started doing books of original art, and what's wonderful about this, again, it's a reading book, and a chance to show Joe and Jack as artists, and the people who were in the studio. So, we put this together. Joe had thousands of pages of original art,

but thanks to Rand Hoppe and the Kirby Museum, and Tom Kraft and everybody who generously supplemented pages and stories, this is the book, it's coming out in October, it's got commentary, Introduction by Mark, and notes, and Jim Simon wrote a beautiful Afterword, sort of talking about his dad, and talking about Joe and Jack.

MARK: And this is not just art by Simon & Kirby, we also cover people like Bill Draut, and Joe Albistur, and Doug Wildey, there's a couple of Doug Wildey stories in there, and Leonard Starr, Al Williamson, Mort Meskin are represented. We have this story that was in Joe Simon's archives. It was a Mort Meskin story called... it's a horror story, it's kind of a grisly horror story.

CHARLIE: "Credit and Loss."

MARK: "Credit and Loss," and we have this story, and it's a beautiful story, it's the best example we have of Meskin's work. But I said to Charlie, "This isn't really a Simon & Kirby story. This was done for one of Harvey's horror comics that Joe and Jack had nothing to do with." And Charlie said, "It was in Joe's house, Joe had the original art. Doesn't that mean he had something to do with it?" So, I now had this moral dilemma: do I put this in as the best example we have of Mort Meskin work, or do I keep the book true to Simon & Kirby, because it's not a Simon & Kirby story? I swear to you, this is true. I'm sitting there thinking about it, and the phone rings. It's Sid Jacobson, who was the editor of Harvey at the time. He called me up and said, "Can you arrange for me to have a room for a panel? I've got this new project I'm doing," and I said, "I'll arrange it if you can answer a question for me, Sid. Do you remember this story by Mort Meskin? Why would that artwork have been in Joe Simon's collection?" He said, "Give me the issue number, I'll look it up, and call you back." He calls me up ten minutes later, and says, "Oh, we bought that story from Simon & Kirby." (laughter) And that's all he knew. He was sure it came from Joe and Jack. Possibly it's a story that they bought for *Black Magic*, and maybe they thought it was a little too grisly for *Black Magic*, so they shunted it off on Harvey—Harvey was down the hall from

where they were working at that point. One of the reasons Sid knew he didn't commission that story was, he never met Mort Meskin in his life. So he knew it had to come from Joe for that reason alone. That story is in there, I don't think in the notes I even explained that.

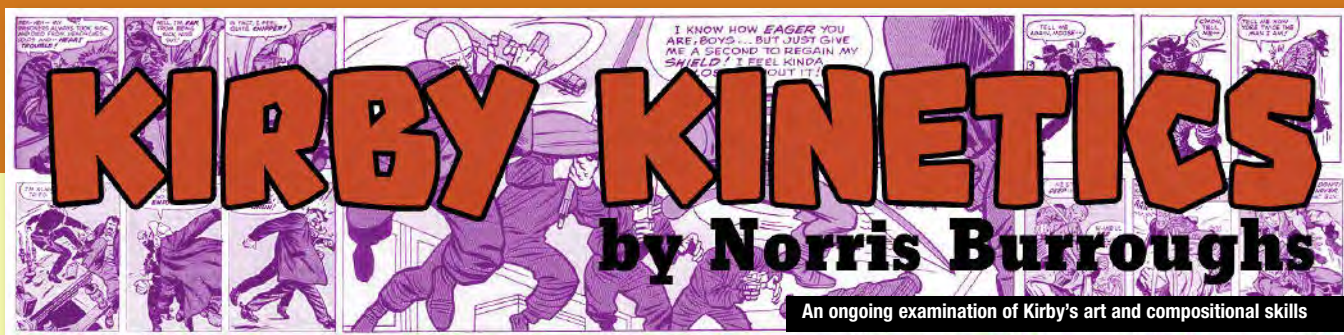
CHARLIE: In your blog, you gave that story.

MARK: Oh, I did. That story is in there, I'm very pleased that we've got it. It's a neat book, and it was put together lovingly by Charlie and his staff, and I thank all the people that contributed artwork to that.

Does anyone else in the room have a Jack Kirby project? Barry? This is Barry Ira Geller, by the way, this is the person responsible for the *Lord of Light*.

BARRY: It's been a full year since the announcement,





THE EVOLUTION OF KIRBY'S COSMIC JOURNEY

(below) *Mercury* from *Red Raven* #1 (August 1940), and the *Green Sorceress* from *Blue Bolt* (1940).



If one studies the career of Jack Kirby, writer, artist and creator, one begins to see a powerful preoccupation with mythology and by extension, the source of life energy in the universe. Often, that preoccupation spilled from the mythological realm into the area of science-fiction, and Kirby would meld the two until one wasn't entirely certain where science ended and magic began or vice versa. In making a connection between mythological godlike powers and the little understood forces of the universe harnessed by technologically advanced beings, I am essentially elaborating on the

quote by science-fiction author Arthur C. Clarke that follows, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

Certainly at some point, Kirby's artistic direction became a journey of unfolding cosmic realization and the exploration of inner and outer landscapes. Kirby's preoccupation with

immeasurable power seemed to suggest that his psyche was tapping into spiritual or psychological archetypes that powerfully affected his worldview. One often encounters the notion that an exceptional artist is touched by genius. People of a different metaphysical perspective might even suggest that such an artist is divinely inspired. Looking at the work of Jack Kirby, I am inclined to agree with both positions. Kirby's work possessed an energy that is so prodigious that it suggests forces beyond ordinary human comprehension. Kirby seemed to be directly accessing what he would later refer to as "The Source."

To describe what I'm getting at, it is helpful to speak of an outdated 19th Century philosophy known as

"Vitalism", which in Webster's dictionary is defined as "a doctrine that the functions of a living organism are due to a vital principle distinct from biochemical reactions." Interestingly, 19th Century chemist and philosopher Carl Reichenbach later developed the theory of the *Odic* force, which could be described as a field of living electro-magnetic energy that permeates all things. Kirby, a chronicler of Thor's Norse mythology and no stranger to all things *Odic*, appears to have a direct conduit to such an energy source, which is apparent in the extraordinary vitality of his artwork.

It is easy to dismiss a quaint concept such as Vitalism, particularly if one has a scientific reductionist perspective. However, Ernst Mayr, one of the 20th Century's leading evolutionary biologists, stated, "It would be ahistorical to ridicule Vitalists. When one reads the writings of one of the leading Vitalists like Driesch, one is forced to agree with him that many of the basic problems of biology simply cannot be solved by a philosophy as that of Descartes, in which the organism is simply considered a machine."

Vitalism, or something resembling it, would continue to evolve as an idea. In the 1930s, influential psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich developed the idea of a universal life force that he called Orgone.

At the start of his career, Kirby seemed to merely use the Cosmic angle as just another gimmick, but by the mid-to-late 1960s, as the world moved further into the realm of cosmic consciousness, Kirby's imagination drove him to explore areas of that vista that were as advanced as any artist in the vanguard of the cultural movement. By the mid 1960s, cutting edge artists, musicians and writers were inspired to depict the inner reaches of outer space and vice versa. This preoccupation was especially embraced by a growing youth counterculture. Experiments with mind-expanding drugs by such musicians as The Beatles, The Byrds and The Grateful Dead as well as various avant-garde writers and artists were common. Those who eschewed drugs preferred to utilize meditation to attain higher levels of consciousness.



KIRBY ON WBAI RADIO, 1987

(below) 1940s photo of Jack and Roz Kirby.



(right) Wilton of the West detail by Kirby, some of his earliest comics work.

(bottom) This 1938 model sheet for Betty Boop gives you an idea of what Jack would've had to follow as an "in-between" on the cartoon series.

(next page) A 1980s private commission for a fan. If Jack loved nature, it didn't get more natural than this!



O Jack Kirby was interviewed on New York's WBAI Radio's "Earth Watch" program on August 28, 1987—Jack's 70th birthday. Near the end, Stan Lee calls in to wish Jack a happy birthday, and an interesting conversation about their working relationship ensues. This interview is taken from an audio recording donated to the Jack Kirby Museum by J.J. Barney, and transcribed by Barry Pearl. It was edited by John Morrow. You can hear the full audio at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1yJZKDwIRE&list=UU7A3MBhur6JWinw2i7kLOeg#t=46>

ROBERT KNIGHT: This is *Earth Watch*, and we now join Jack Kirby, speaking with us live. Good morning, Jack.

KIRBY: How are you?

KNIGHT: Just fine. The first thing I have to say is, happy birthday and thank you.

KIRBY: I understand Warren Reese is in the studio and I'd like you to say hello to him and—

KNIGHT: Well, let him say hello to you.

WARREN REESE: Jack, happy birthday. We all love you.

KIRBY: Warren, it's a pleasure talking to you and I want to thank you for the picture and it was just beautiful.

REESE: I couldn't miss, Jack, because I say in all sincerity, and I did try to do it in the period style, I learned how to draw that way looking at things that you did. And as I've said before, although people take formal lessons in art, I don't think that the youngsters can catch on quickly looking at classical paintings and classical illustration. But you have that magnificent fusion between cartooning and straight illustration that made it comprehensible so that even a guy like me could at least begin to catch on. I know I waited years and years just to be able to maybe spend an hour with you sometime and so I gotta tell you, I am thrilled to be able to share this moment with you like this.

KNIGHT: We're also assisted in this program by Max Schmeid and Creative Unity and a lot of other people who love the work that you have done over the years, Jack. When you went to what became Marvel Comics, you were something of a pioneer in the way that comics came to be produced in terms of the artist having a controlling influence in the direction of the

book; is that right?

KIRBY: The artist always had... the artist's influence is the visual part of the book and the visual part of the book is what attracts the attention. And in order to make sales, the visual part of the book is what attracts the eye. You can see it from a newsstand, you could see it from the store window. Whatever you see is what attracts you. And the job of the comic book artist is essentially sales, and therefore I felt that was my job and I did it as spectacularly as I could.

KNIGHT: Okay. Now, part of that work at Marvel included a most astonishing, to coin a phrase, collaboration with Stan Lee. How did you two guys start working together?



KIRBY: Stan Lee was the editor of Marvel and I had worked at Marvel much earlier, and in fact when I first went to work for Marvel, it was in partnership with Joe Simon, who was a fine artist and a fine storyteller and a wonderful guy. And we got along great and we sold Captain America to Marvel, the idea of Captain America, and Captain America began what you might call the comic revolution.

REESE: Talk a little bit about your early days in the business, and in fact take it from your early life as a tough member of the Newsboy Legion on the Lower East Side here in New York.

KIRBY: Well, I thank you for asking. The Lower East Side was a... well, it was a "people place."

REESE: You lived on Suffolk Street, didn't you, Jack?

KIRBY: Yes, I lived on Suffolk Street.

REESE: Do you remember which number? We want to put a bronze plaque out front.

KIRBY: I believe it was 131 Suffolk Street.

REESE: And your brother Dave once told me, Jack, that your mother used to draw also. Perhaps you could clarify



parallel structure is called the Cosmic Cube.

KIRBY: Well, it flatters me for you to make the connection, but however, I'm sure it's a technical term today whereas yesterday, where storytelling is concerned, it was a wonderful keystone for many, many good stories. So I used the Cosmic Cube as I would use any other gimmick on which to base five or six stories or maybe more. The Cosmic Cube to me was certainly a part of the mystery which we're still trying to solve. What is there out in space, and then the many other questions that come with it. Are we the only form of life? If there is life out there, what kind of life will we find? And the Cosmic Cube is that little clue maybe left behind in the human mind. Somewhere in the human mind, that question is important. I was doing that sort of thing so it

became important to me and therefore I created the Cosmic Cube probably—it was material from the same fountainhead from which I was asking questions.

KNIGHT: Speaking of cosmic parallel pipeheads, this is *Earth Watch* on WBAI in New York. My name is Robert Knight, here with Warren Reese celebrating the 70th birthday of Jack Kirby, live on the air. Also with us in the studio is the Dean of the Golden Age of radio here, Max Schmeid.

MAX SCHMEID: Hi, Jack. I've been sitting in on this conversation and one or two questions have occurred to me. We're discussing now the war years of the '40s, and you've been saying

that you write very often to explore your own feelings and thoughts about things. But what market did you feel you were writing for? Today the general thought is that comic books are for children. Was that the thought at the time? Did you feel you were writing for a children's audience?

KIRBY: Oh, that was not true at all. I was writing for everybody. I was exploring everybody. I wanted to know about everybody. And I'm still doing that today. As I said before, people were always important to me. I wanted to know more about them. And in creating those stories, I was exploring people and I was exploring the questions that people ask. I was exploring my own self in reality. And I'm still doing that today.

REESE: We've got some follow-ups on that in a minute specifically about your years doing the science-fiction stories about the aliens. But I just had a couple more quickies about your work on Cap. When you did the covers of *Captain America* #7 and *Young Allies* #1, I have line art from house ads that shows that they were redone. The changes that were made on the cover of *Young Allies* made sense (right).

The Allies characters were made larger and Joe Stalin was omitted from the cover, presumably because the non-aggression pact with Hitler fell through and he became one of the Allies. But on the cover of *Captain America* #7 (above), which prominently featured the Red Skull on the inside,



(above) Covers sometimes changed between their appearances in house ads, and when they were actually published.

- as narrated to -
STAN LEE

THE smoke world is thousands of light years from the earth, and is many times larger than any of your planets. Instead of air to breathe, the inhabitants of my land breathe smoke, for there is no air. That's why my eyes are different than yours. If I had eyes like yours, the smoke would get into them and blind me—but my eyes are protected by a white film which I can see thru and which keeps the smoke out.

YEARS ago in the World of Smoke, I was a policeman. Of course, we don't have policemen of the kind you have on earth, but that's the only way I can describe myself so that you'll understand. Actually, I was called a "keeper of the law." It was my duty to see that everybody was happy, and that the strong didn't take advantage of the weak.

The VISION . . . that amazing nemesis of crime . . . comes out from behind his smoke-screen to peer at ordinary mortals, and catch those who stray from the straight path. Once a month, he comes down to Earth on a mission of peace and justice that never fails to awe, amaze.

STAN LEE: Hi, how you doing? I just, I want to wish Jack a happy birthday. This is a helluva coincidence. I'm in New York and I was tuning in the radio and there I hear him, talking about Marvel and I figured well, I might as well call and not let this occasion go by without saying many happy returns, Jack.

LEE: I'm doing my best, and the same to you. You know, you were talking earlier about your drawing and people sometimes criticized your figures and so forth. I always felt that the most important thing about your drawings—I remember when I was a kid and I first saw Captain America, it wasn't the correctness of the anatomy, but it was the emotion that you put in. To me, nobody could convey emotion and drama the way you could. I didn't care if the drawing was all out of whack because that wasn't important. You got your point across and nobody could ever draw a hero like you could. And I just want to say without getting too saccharin, that one of the marks I think of a really true great artist is he has his own style. And you certainly had and still have your own style and it's a style that nobody has even been able to come close to. And I think that's something you can be very

REESE: Oh, my God, that means that the two of you who indelibly



(above) Creepy two-page spread by Kirby, for Captain America #8 (Nov. 1941).

changed the history of comics when you were both in that field, have a shot at changing the course of animation perhaps.

KIRBY: Well, I feel that productive people are always doing something productive, and speaking for myself I've never stopped.

REESE: Well, let me now desaccharinize the conversation and let's get down to both of your assessments of the state of comics today. I mean, enough can never be said about what you have done in the history of comics, but I'd like for some specific comments, naming of names in regard to the changes that have taken place in comics such as the new approach to Batman, for instance. The, the current Spider-Man series. The introduction of ambiguity, conflict and contradiction in issues and ethics today. Do you have any views on that?

LEE: Who do you want first?

REESE: You, since you spoke first.

LEE: Okay. Well, actually, I think that we had plenty of conflict and when we were starting our early strips, certainly there was conflict in the *Fantastic Four* and *Spider-Man* and all of them. And I think Marvel sort of pioneered playing up the characterization more and playing up the personal problems of the heroes, making the heroes more believable because they were more realistic and more human.

However, today what has happened—and it's a natural evolution—today they've gone many steps beyond what we started doing in those days. I think the stories primarily are much more complex, they're more adult, they tackle subjects that we couldn't dream of tackling in the early days. When Marvel started, our stories were very much like the motion pictures of those days. Today the comics, especially Marvel comics, are very much like the motion pictures of today. Well, the

motion pictures of today are so much different than they were then, and the same evolution has really taken place in comic books.

KIRBY: Well, I think Stanley is correct on that and of course, the standards have changed, and the standards have changed in all the fields. And I'll agree with what Stanley says of all the facets of entertainment because he understands it as well as I do. Whatever is evolving, I couldn't put my finger on it but it's certainly different from the black-and-white type of thing that we did in what you refer to as the Golden Age.

REESE: Are there things that you look at with interest these days?

LEE: Oh, sure. Now there's a DC series called the *Watchmen* which I think was absolutely superb. There's the work that John Byrne has been doing, the work that Frank Miller has been doing. There are so many new artists coming up that are very sophisticated and they're very dramatic and they're very cinematic. A lot of them write and draw, they have their own styles. And my big regret really is I don't have time to read the books the way I used to.

KIRBY: Yeah, but the younger people have absorbed a lot more than we did, Stan. I think that's what it's all about today. Their understanding of life and they're a lot more understanding of themselves and what they produce is on a very realistic scale. And I don't

think there is anything visually around us that the younger people haven't noticed. That's why I respect the younger people.

LEE: You know, it's much more a visual era that we live in now than it was when we were starting because with television today—I don't know if anybody has brought this up, but comics are like the last bastion, the last defense against creeping illiteracy. If not for comics, I don't know how many young people there would be who just



(above) Jack's Spider-Man page from the Valentine's sketchbook he drew for wife Roz in the late 1970s.

by John Morrow

(below) C.C. Beck's
Silver Spider.(below) John Romita's
work on the short-lived
Captain America revival of
the 1950s.

Concluding our look at key moments in Jack's life and career from *TJKC* #60 (which covered Marvel in the 1960s), #62 (which covered 1970-1975), #63 (covering Kirby's 1975-1994 era), and #64 (covering 1917-1949), we present this final timeline of key moments that affected Kirby's life in the 1950s. Of invaluable help were Richard Kolkman's work on the *Jack Kirby Checklist*, Ray Wyman, Tom Kraft, Glen Gold, and Rand Hoppe, as well as Mark Evanier's book *KIRBY: King of Comics*.

This isn't a complete list of every important date in Kirby's 1950s career history, but should hit most of the main ones. Please send us additions and corrections, and at some point, we'll compile one single, fully-corrected time.

My rule of thumb: Cover dates were generally two-three months later than the date the book appeared on the stands, and six months ahead of when Kirby was working on the stories, so I've assembled the timeline according to those adjusted dates—not the

cover dates—to set it as close as possible to real-time.

LATE 1940s - EARLY 1950s

- 1948: Psychologist Dr. Fredric Wertham publishes two articles (in *Collier's* and the *American Journal of Psychotherapy*) that start a public outcry against comics, most notably EC Comics.

- 1949: Kirby family moves to a house in Mineola, Long Island, New York, which would be the family's home for the next 20 years. Jack worked from his basement studio nicknamed "The Dungeon."

- December 1949: *Captain America Comics* #75 is published, the final issue of its original run, although #74 was the last to feature the Simon & Kirby character.

1950

- August: *Boys' Ranch* #1 is published by Harvey Comics. It would run through #6 in 1951.

1951

- September: Martin Goodman begins using the Atlas News Company logo on his (formerly) Timely comics.

1952

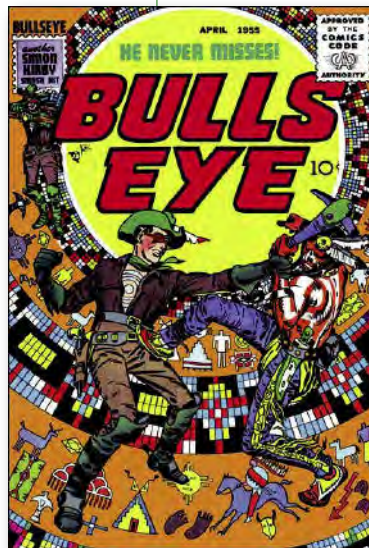
- June: *Strange World of Your Dreams* #1 is published.
- November: Daughter Barbara Kirby is born.

1953

- 1953: C. C. Beck, wanting to get back into comics, asks Joe Simon for work, and the unused *Silver Spider* (left) is the result. This would later be the springboard for *The Fly*, and presumably for Jack's original Spider-Man attempt.
- Late 1953: Simon and Kirby open Mainline Comics, subletting office space from Harvey Publications. They produce four titles: *Bullseye*, *Foxhole*, *In Love*, and *Police Trap*.
- October: Atlas Comics' *Young Men* #24 is published, briefly reviving Captain America. This infuriated Simon and Kirby, due to their past dispute with Martin Goodman over profits on the character, so the duo set out to create their own new patriotic hero, Fighting American.
- October: *Captain 3-D* #1 is published by Harvey Comics.

1954

- 1954: Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent* is published, blaming comics for the rise in Juvenile Delinquency in America.
- February: *Fighting American* #1 debuts. It would change course from straight-laced superheroics to satire with issue #2 in April.
- March: *Bullseye* #1 is published by Mainline, with Kirby layouts.
- April 21, 22, and June 4: A United States Senate Subcommittee holds hearings on Juvenile Delinquency, and the effects of comics books on children. Copies of Mainline's *Bullseye* and *Foxhole* are used as exhibits in the televised hearings against comics.
- May: Captain America's short-lived revival ends with issue #78 of his resurrected title.
- September: The Comics Code is established. EC Comics ends its horror and suspense titles, and the final issue of *Black Magic* is published by Crestwood.
- September: Simon and Kirby audit Crestwood's books, and discover approximately \$130,000 in unpaid royalties on S&K work. They are forced to settle for a reported \$10,000 rather than have Crestwood go out of business, leaving them nothing.
- December: *Win A Prize* #1 is published by Charlton Comics. The fact that S&K didn't self-publish is a clear sign that Mainline was near its end by this point, and they sell the rest of their unpublished material to Charlton. Kirby



KIRBY... KING OF BEASTS!

by Marc Nadel

(right) Marc Nadel's interpretation of Kirby, King of Beasts!

(below) Groot may be all the rage lately, but he wasn't much to look at when he first appeared in *Tales to Astonish* #13 (Nov. 1960).



and edgy monsters, carnivores, reptiles, and even his insects, managed to remain

cuddly! In

other words, in another era, Kirby's animals had exactly the qualities needed to become beloved children's book characters.

It was natural, I suppose, that Jack's creatures emerged from his mind and hand with purposeful anatomical exaggerations in the service of narrative and visual excitement, as did his superhumans. They were imbued with that essential aspect of Kirby's art: unadulterated, unfettered power, which, as it happens, is at the heart of nature's wild and brutal world. Ask Darwin. The mighty survive. Strength and size do matter. And Jack Kirby's original animal designs, with their resultant unique looks, were built to last.

Let's break it down chronologically. Kirby always drew beasts, whether imagined monsters or real world mammals. His creatures roamed throughout his early Golden Age stints with Joe Simon at Timely (e.g. Tuk the Cave Boy's woolly mammoth and other mega-mammals) and at DC (e.g. Sandman's reptilian steed from *Adventure* #94). His most omnipresent animal characters were the horses that charged at the reader in S&K Western series such as *Boys' Ranch* and *Bullseye*. There were also many examples of alien life forms in his DC science-fiction stories, and in *The Challengers of the Unknown*.

But Kirby's most charismatic critters were really born (or hatched, spawned, or built in a lab) in his giant monster stories with Stan Lee for Atlas. The alien dragon Fin Fang Foom was, for decades, the most famous example of this genre, appearing in later stories as an adversary of heroes such as Iron Man and The Hulk. He has recently been supplanted (emphasis on "plant") by the latter-day cinematic stardom of Groot. While they looked nothing like each other, they were both unmistakably Kirby creations. But why? What separates them from their Steve Ditko- or Don Heck-drawn brethren?

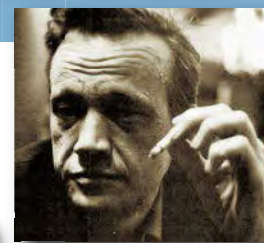
Both Fin Fang Foom and the original Groot benefited from Jack's penchant for anthropomorphizing their torsos to make them relatable, and then allowing his imagination to run wild with the rest of their physiques. Triple F was the lucky recipient of one of Jack's most unforgettable designs: A giraffe neck, alligator skin, and a magnificent mug that was pure Kirby—a gangster's eyes, a prizefighter's nose, and a vacuum cleaner mouth, all somehow retrofitted onto a dragon's face, with its required fins and fangs. As for his foom, it was nowhere to be seen, although I suspect that it was

THE MYSTERIES OF THE DEEP

by John Morrow

(below) Jack had Wally Wood ink the first two weeks' strips, so syndicates could see a finished product.

Few teams in the history of comics have produced work as beautiful as Jack Kirby and Wallace Wood. On the surface, they would seem to be a mis-match: Kirby with his bold, blocky anatomy and in-your-face action, and Wood (right), with his delicate linework and detailed and dramatic lighting effects. But put them together, and you have what might be considered exactly half of each artist—they play off each other's strengths perfectly.



Most fans think of their *Sky Masters* work together, but few know about *Surf Hunter*, Kirby's never-sold proposal for a newspaper comic strip, playing off the success of 1958's *Sea Hunt* TV series, starring Lloyd Bridges. In the 1958-59 era Jack put this presentation together, comics were dying, following the start of the Comics Code, and the Senate Subcommittee hearings that painted all comics in a bad light. Kirby was looking for a way out, and a syndicated newspaper strip was the

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big Jack Kirby fan, but had never heard of *Surf Hunter* and wanted to know more about it. He eventually gave me some freelance work, so thanks for that, Jack!