

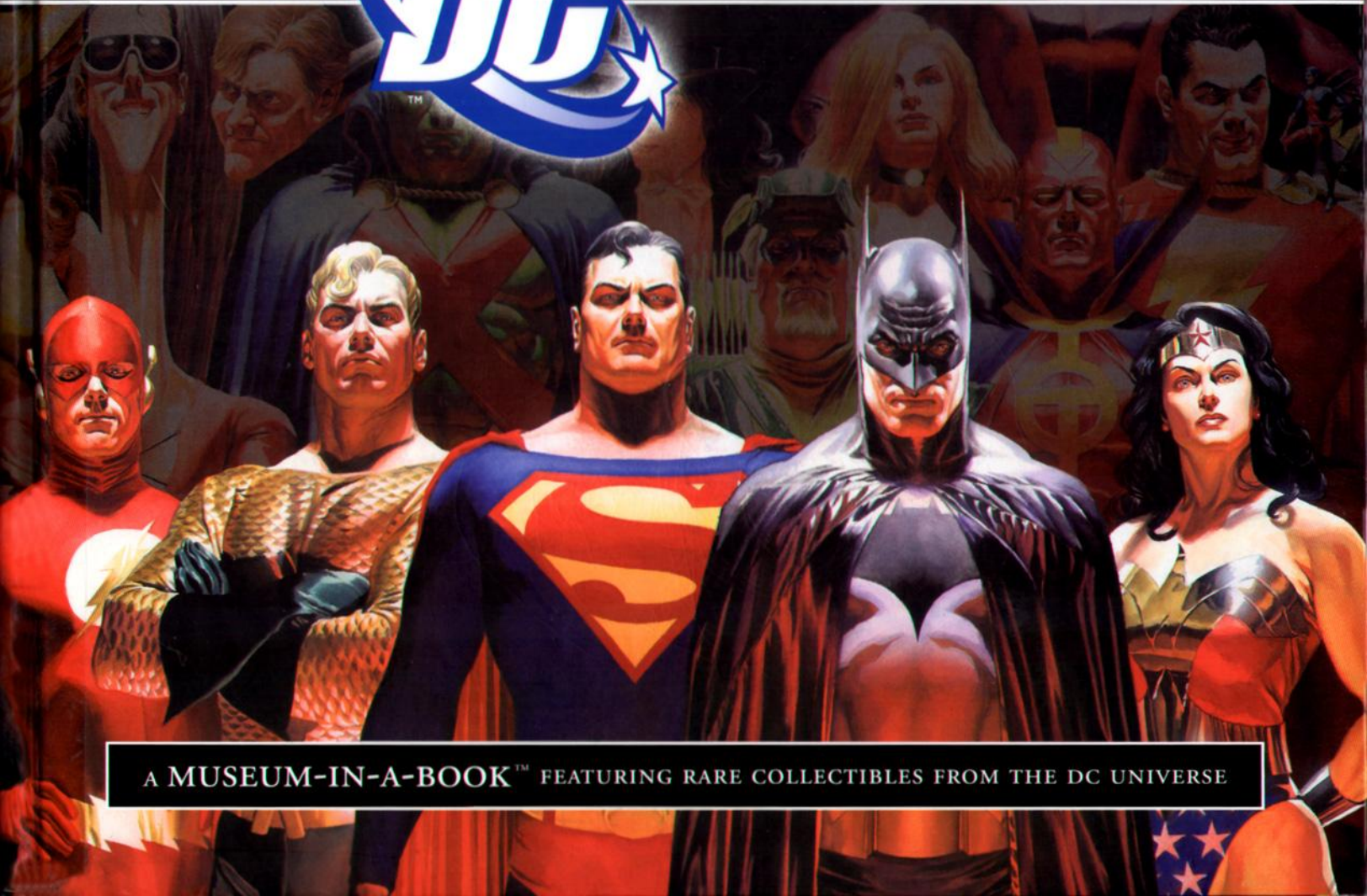
THE



VAULT

MARTIN PASKO

*foreword by* PAUL LEVITZ



A MUSEUM-IN-A-BOOK™ FEATURING RARE COLLECTIBLES FROM THE DC UNIVERSE





**BAT MAN**  
WITH  
**ROBIN**  
IN  
THE  
MOVIE

THE **DC** VAULT



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**PREVIOUS SPREAD** "Secrets of the Batcave" lithograph (1994) by Dick Sprang. **LEFT** Detail from cover of *Sensation Comics* #11 (November 1942) by Harry Peter. **FOLLOWING SPREAD, LEFT PAGE** Detail from cover of *Action Comics* #20 (January 1940) by Joe Shuster. **FOLLOWING SPREAD, RIGHT PAGE** Detail from "Adventures of Steve Curran" from *New Adventure Comics* #25 (March-April 1938) by Craig Flesler.

# THE VAULT

A MUSEUM-IN-A-BOOK™ FEATURING RARE COLLECTIBLES FROM THE DC UNIVERSE

*by* MARTIN PASKO  
*with a foreword by* PAUL LEVITZ



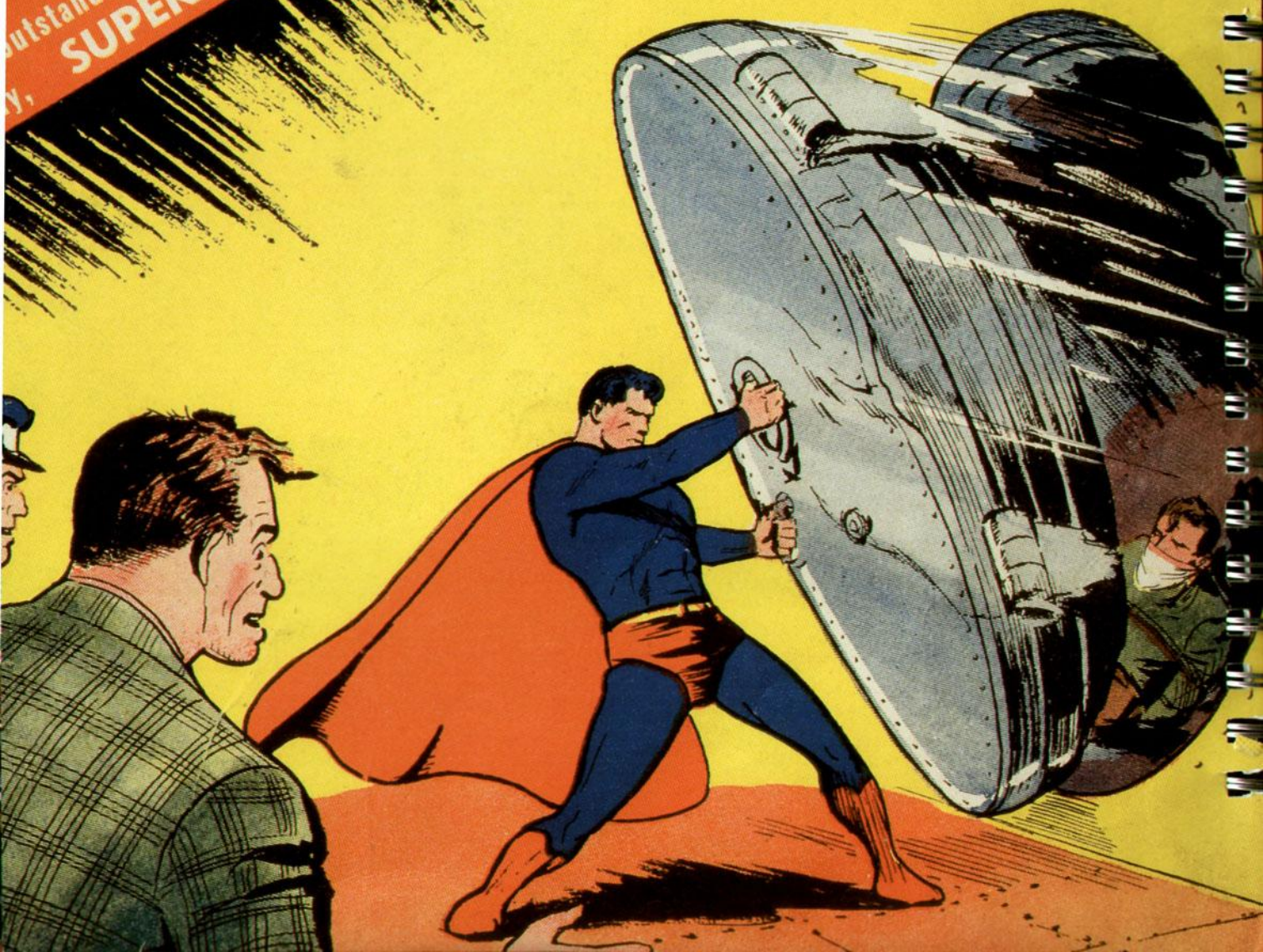
RUNNING PRESS  
PHILADELPHIA • LONDON

This Issue:  
Outstanding comic strip  
by **SUPERMAN!**

**2000 PRIZES!**



**GIGANTIC CONTEST** in this ISSUE



MYRA AND STEVE ESCAPE FROM THE ARMY TURTLES AND ARE FLEEING THROUGH THE JUNGLES WHEN THEY BECOME VICTIMS OF THE DIABOLICAL DEVACHAN WHO CUTS THE VINE PLUNGING THEM INTO THE ALLIGATOR PIT!!



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## FOREWORD

### IT'S A BIT OF A MYTH—

or maybe a metaphor—but it's also very real.

There has never been a singular "DC Vault" in which all the treasures are hidden, even though people wanted to go there, or even offered to buy the contents for millions, sight unseen.

Hidden in our secret places, there certainly are treasures. I remember going through the company's warehouse in Brooklyn, an innocuous old film-studio-turned-dump that I had walked past, unknowing, as a young fan. Unearthed in a carton was a brown-and-yellow Superman suit, worn by George Reeves for the early black-and-white TV series. There was the day I found an unpublished *Seven Soldiers* script, then already three decades old, sitting in a file. Or going through the bales of long-stored original art, when we finally began returning it to the artists, looking at the hidden beauty in the margins and on the backs of the pages.

Then there's the magic we take for granted, for the whole of the DC Comics office is in many ways the vault: the original art hanging on the walls, or the *Detective Comics* #500 cover art that rests in a closet because it was a collaboration between so many artists that the company was able to keep it, or the sketch saved from a moment of inspiration instead of being tossed aside as literally thousands of similar ones have been. When you work inside the enchantment, you don't notice it, most of the time.

But each of us have our tokens to conjure with. On my shelves, there's a Lucite-encased postcard, sent to me long ago, acknowledging a letter to DC. And hidden away in a cabinet in a closet in my office sits the ashcan of *Action Comics* #1, casting its glamour over everything that goes on in the room, even though no one knows it's there.

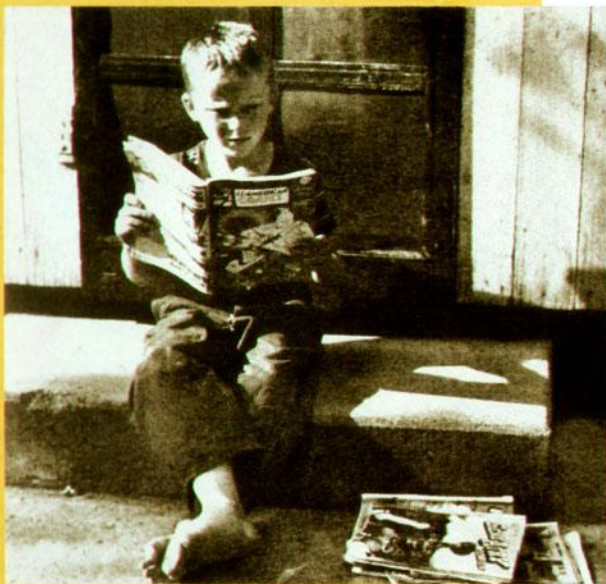
Enjoy your visit to the DC Vault, and drink deeply and freely of the magic. It's a very special place, and its most important location is in your mind.

Paul Levitz

President and Publisher of DC Comics



## INTRODUCTION



**OPPOSITE PAGE** Detail from *Batman* #1 (1940) by Bob Kane and Jerry Robinson. **ABOVE** A young reader seeks out truth, justice, and the American way.

## YOU'RE A KID IN THE '30s

*and you're hungry for heroes. And who isn't? The country's in the grip of its greatest economic depression. Bread lines. Soup kitchens. Beggars on every street corner. Who did this? Who pulled the rug out from under America?*

*And who's gonna help you get back on your feet? Who's gonna make the ones who did this pay?*

*The heroes, of course. The heroes born of necessity, out of your despair and fear. The heroes both real and make-believe whose struggle for *The Brighter Tomorrow*—itself both real and make-believe—lights the way.*

*For some, there are the heroes of the movies. The Clark Gables. The Errol Flynns. The Gene Autrys. For others, there are the heroes that come at the twist of a dial, voices in the ether: Lou Gehrig. The Lone Ranger. And "nothing to fear but fear itself."*

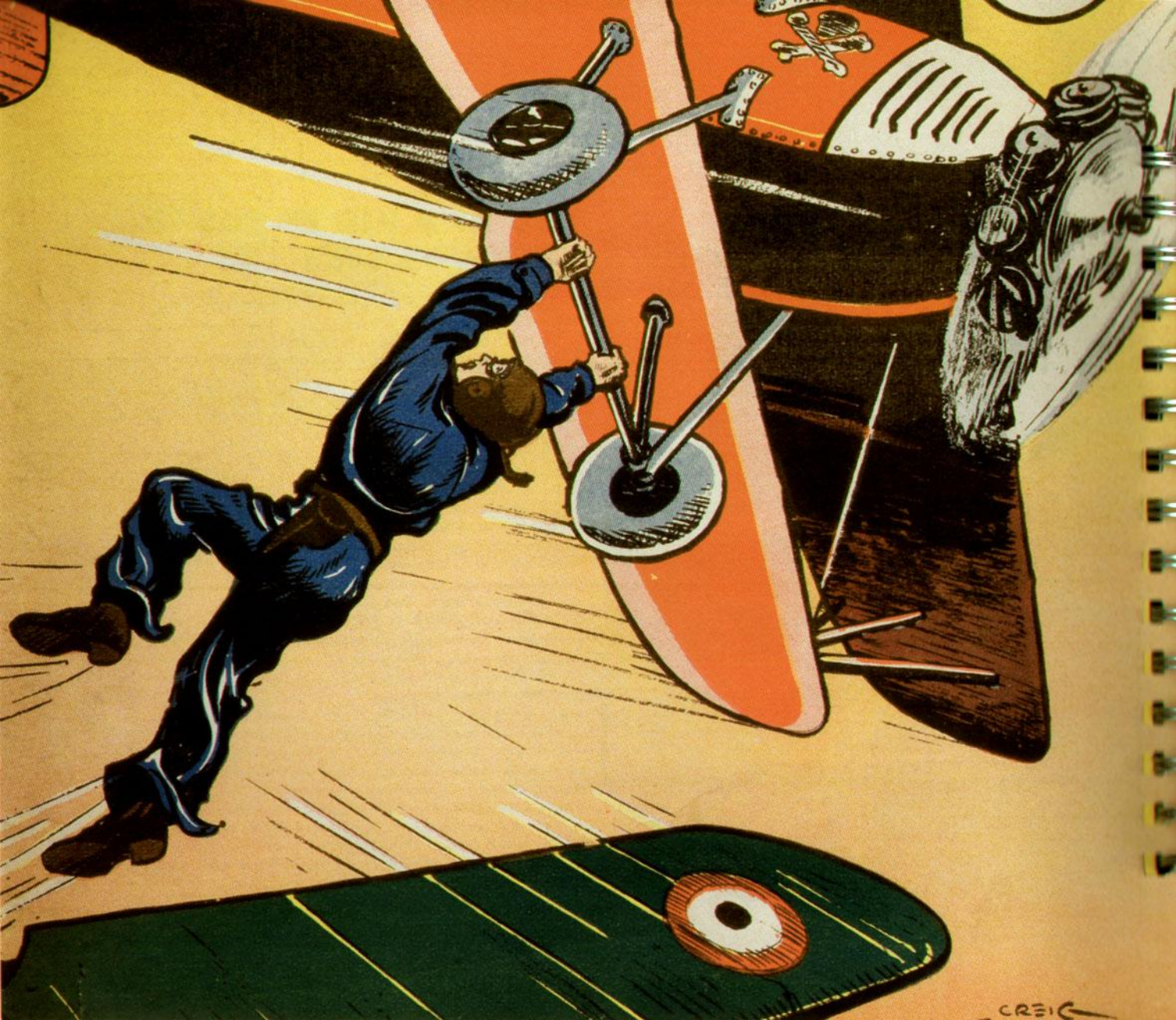
*On the newsstands you find pulp magazines—cheap adventures in prose dotted with meager illustrations, chronicling the exploits of the Shadow and Doc Savage, or the daily newspaper's comic strips that trumpet the valor of Flash Gordon, the cleverness of Dick Tracy, and the daring of Terry fighting the Pirates.*

*But by mid-decade, life's still tough all over. Help is on the way, but maybe it's not fast enough or strong enough or smart enough. Folks like you are still being left behind. You need more heroes. Better heroes. And now a whole new medium is springing up to fill the void—a hero factory called the comic book business, churning out colorful, exciting saviors by the truckload. Heroes more courageous, more fantastic, more grandiose. . .*

And not one of them would have been possible without a small, once privately owned company best known as DC Comics. Its staff and talent created not just a company, but an industry, in the process building DC into an entertainment powerhouse.

The following pages are a guided tour of how it all came to be. They're a museum in a book, a time capsule of glossy paper and vivid inks, taking you behind the scenes of more than seventy years of astonishing creativity and innovation.

You'll be present at the birth of Superman and Batman and the countless casts of characters who've succeeded and complemented them. You'll meet an amazing array of talent—names you've never heard and some you've most likely memorized, like Siegel, Shuster, Kane, Finger, Marston, Infantino, Swan, Kubert, Kirby, O'Neil, Adams, Miller, Gaiman, and Lee. You'll peer over their shoulders as they scribble notes for plots, work out character and costume designs, and make the deals that send their brainchildren from the printed page into the hearts and imaginations of five generations. And you'll see their real-world trials, tribulations, birth pains, and secrets, chronicled in sketches, memos, memorabilia and collectibles, all locked away and hidden until now, when you open . . . *The DC Vault.*





# Inventing the American COMIC BOOK



## IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE COMIC BOOK BUSINESS,

a trash receptacle was an "ashcan." And so was a dummy magazine produced solely to establish claim to a title by trademarking the dummy, because the trash was where these mockups landed after they had served their purpose. Unless, of course, someone removed one to keep it as a memento—which is exactly what happened to the first *Action Comics* ashcan in December of 1937, making it the oldest surviving artifact documenting the creation of a new periodical intended to join a line of comics with titles like *Adventure* and *Detective*.

While the *Action Comics* ashcan's cover bore no resemblance to what would ultimately see print in 1938, the inspiration for the new title was reputedly that of thirty-seven-year-old Jack Liebowitz, a quiet, publicity-shy, dour CPA who was, ironically, a dedicated socialist. While some comics historians credit others with proposing the title, Liebowitz had a different recollection in 2000: "I had an idea that I wanted to start another magazine which I had the title for—*Action Comics*."

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Cover detail from *Adventure Comics* #33 (December 1938) by Creig Flessel.  
**LEFT** Two humble cowboys and their trusty steed, plucked from the cover of *New Comics* #2 (January 1936). **ABOVE** A noisy elf bore words of greeting inside the front cover of *New Fun Comics* #2 (March 1935).

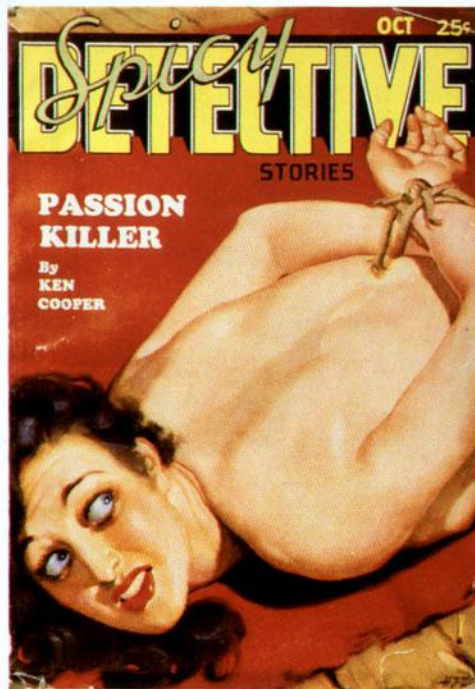


**ABOVE** Publisher Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson would pioneer the American comic book and lay the foundation of DC Comics. Photo courtesy of the Wheeler-Nicholson Family. **RIGHT** Hard-boiled crime stories and lurid covers combined to earn Harry Donenfeld's pulp magazine *Spicy Detective* a certain notoriety. This cover by H. J. Ward (who later painted a Superman portrait for the DC offices) stayed true to form.

A Ukrainian-born immigrant who put himself through New York University by working as a bookkeeper, Liebowitz in 1937 had long been a business partner of one Harry Donenfeld, a loud, dapper, fast-talking, and charismatic salesman with a fondness for improbable tales and juvenile pranks. Donenfeld claimed to have played practical jokes on both heavyweight champ Jack Dempsey and then-President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The first thirty years of Donenfeld's life are a mystery, and the story released by his press agents was a patchwork made from decades of Harry's fanciful, perhaps embellished accounts of his background. All we know for certain is that the former clothing salesman's checkered history included a variety of unrelated businesses. By 1922, Donenfeld had left his more dubious enterprises behind, with the aggressive help of Liebowitz, who impressed upon Harry his notions of what was and wasn't respectable in business. After Donenfeld took over his family's printing press in 1922, he realized that there was more money in publishing his own content than in merely printing other people's magazines.

So Donenfeld and Liebowitz formed Irwin Publishing, named after Harry's three-year-old son. With their new company, the partners became purveyors of the risqué men's pulp magazines that were popular in the heyday of *The Police Gazette*—publications with titles like *Juicy Tales* and *Spicy Detective*.



MARCH, 1935

# NEW FUN

THE BIG COMIC MAGAZINE

10  
CENTS

**JACK WOODS**



JACK HAS TURNED THE TABLES ON THE MEXICANS BUT MIGUEL IS NOT UNCONSCIOUS! HE IS ABOUT TO HURL HIS KNIFE AT BUCK'S BACK!!

MIGUEL! STOP!



DUNNO WHY YOU SAVED MY LIFE! BUT I CAN'T TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT! — HERE!



"YOU GOT PLENTY NERVE, GRINGO! HOW YOU LIKE JOB WEETH ME!!"

WENO! SHOO! I'LL UNPACK MY DUFFEL RIGHT NOW!!



I GOT A HUNCH THIS NOGALES IS DOWN SOME DIRTY WORK... SOMEBODY'S STEALIN' CATTLE FROM THE G-BAR —



AN' HE'S GOT A HEAP SIGHT TOO MANY COWS! I'M GONNA TAKE A LOOK!!



EEYEP, PONY! WE'RE GOIN' DETECTIN'



CHARGING AFTER A STEER JACK LAUNCHES HIMSELF FROM THE SADDLE —




THAT'S DON NOGALES BRAND — THE '80 GRANDE! NO MORE THAN 24 HOURS OLD, TOO!



AN' THIS IS THE G-BAR, NOGALES COULD CHANGE IT EASY! MY MUNCH WAS RIGHT!!



DEANWHILE NOGALES WO PROBE WATCH FROM THE WINDOW

THE GRINGO! HE KNOWS, SENOR!

TONIGHT, MIGUEL YOU USE YOUR NAME! THESE TIME I DO NOT STOP YOU!



EW COMIC STRIPS • AIRCRAFT • RADIO • MOVIES



**LEFT** The second issue of *New Fun Comics*, like issue #1, featured a comics story on the cover. Several collectors rate this as DC's rarest comic book. Cowboy Jack Woods and company were drawn by W. C. Brigham.

**ABOVE** *New Comics* covers, as seen on issue #11 (December 1936), featured more traditional images and a humorous tone. This "Xmas Number" was drawn by Whitney Ellsworth, cartoonist and soon chief editor under Wheeler-Nicholson.

# SHAVETAILED

By  
MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON



## AN EXCITING TALE OF THE MEXICAN BORDER

IT WAS one of the most ticklish places on the Border at that: nothing much but a low hill, and whole ranch-house at the foot of it, and our camp to the east of that, facing the river. The Rio Grande was only six miles away from us and right across it was the Mexican village where Orozco was mobilizing his forces to take the field. He had plenty of men and horses, but few guns and cartridges; and that was where our trouble started.

I found out afterward that Orozco's outfit had us under observation constantly up to the time the big smash came. There was always a patrol of three or four men hidden up above us behind the crest of the hill. They would slide in at night, relieve the old outfit and stay hidden all the next day, watching as through their field-glasses. The horses that brought in the new bunch would carry the old relief away, and it was not trick at all for two or three dismounted men to hide away among the cactus and rocks. They laid their plans pretty carefully and by watching us constantly, knew as much about the troop as we did. All they lacked, and the thing they waited for, was a favorable opportunity to jump us.

A Troop was the staff. The Troop of the Nth—Captain Ja Merzina's Troop.

Somewhere there is always something to do in the cavalry, and at this time we were going through our instruction course at pistol practice, relieving the men on outpost and river guard every day to give them their required shooting.

First-Sergeant Henderson was my top kick, and running like clock-work. Pistol practice season is a pretty busy time in the cavalry, and especially at this time as the automatons were comparatively new, and the pistol qualification course had been changed and was also new. The pistol bats were below the Mexican and those Mexican automatons from the hillside must have crossed

it with perseverance, for we plugged away at it steadily for weeks. You remember the heavy composition board silhouette targets—olive brown, all life size, each one representing a human figure either prone, kneeling, standing or mounted on horseback. And believe me, that green figure thing—the "baby," we called it—was a tough baby to hit, shooting from the back of a horse flailing by as hard as he could push.

It was like that all day—bang! bang! bang! in strings of five shots, the calling of the markers, a silence and another string of shots with the sergeant keeping the tally of each man's hits in the book.

It is dangerous business and needs constant vigilance to avoid accidents. I was on the job every minute—having plenty to do with keeping my sector patrolled, watching out for Orozco's Red Flaggers and keeping the troop up to scratch. Had I known of those Mexicans up above us on the hill watching day and night, waiting to send word the instant we relaxed our vigilance, I would have been twice as worried. But I didn't find out about them until afterwards—when it was too late.

HERE was another officer in the troop, the old Bullone, but he was more of a burden than a help. He'd only joined up a short time previously while we were still at the Fort, before the First Squadron was sent out on Border patrol. I can remember the first thing I ever heard him sound off.

"Here is one tough old poster sitting there at headquarters," he said, his voice rasping unpleasantly.

His rasping remark made every one bristle, including myself. The grivings of growling at the Old Man was not one to be taken lightly by a raw shavetail five minutes after his arrival.

Old Manners looked up coldly. "Whom do you mean, the colonel?" he asked, and his voice was as friendly as the chirp of a rattlesnake's tail.

"Yep," agreed the new-comer cheerfully. "He sure is a frosty old guy. I brought him a letter from my old man. Of course the old man isn't so much—the youngster's manner became elaborately courteous. 'You see, my old man is governor of the southwest States, waiting with an air of conscious self-importance to see the effect the announcement would have.'

He had pulled one of the worst household plays possible for a newly joined shavetail. In the first place you did not talk about families in the Nth, that old regiment being blessed or afflicted with too many names made famous by the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, the sort of names which are indelibly treasured in the memories of all true Americans, by having fire-red cigars called after them.

"So your father is governor of a whole State?" It was Gramp Jackson who spoke up, his tone full of admiration and a sort of awe. "But it must be very hard for you to come to this regiment and live this—ah—simple life after all that luxury?"

"Oh, I'll get used to it, I suppose," he explained tactfully. "We're a bunch of soldiers trying to shoot and ride. You see where I come from?" He explained tactfully, "we're brought up in the saddle and play with shooting irons from childhood." Sing, our old China butler, was bringing in coffee and liqueurs. Cigars and cigars were being lighted up. Gramp lazily rolled a cigarette and lighted it.

"And you really ride those terrible backing horses?" he asked respectfully—Gramp, who was a graduate of the Mexican Service School where they set outlaws in flat saddles.

"Oh, sure," returned the youngster easily. "That's the child's play." Gramp now asked deeply interested. Bull Manners cleared his throat and spoke up—

"Ah, you one of those quick draw artists with the six-gun?" he asked gaily.

"Never failed to get my man yet!" "Do you find the revolver better than the pistol?" asked Bull.

"The automatic, you mean? It isn't worth a damn. Give me the good old .38 revolver every time," the young fellow answered without a second's hesitation.

The Nth had just come from Jobs where attempts to stop wild-eyed Mores with the .38 had resulted unpleasantly for every one except the Mores concerned. Then we had changed to the automatic pistol and it was the Mores's turn to be disgraced! The Nth was pretty strong for the heavy automatic, and had learned to do good execution with it.

"It's too bad the regulations forbid our using the .38," commiserated Bull. "Otherwise you might be detailed to show the regiment something about quick shooting with the revolver."

"Believe me I'll be glad to show 'em anything I know," stated Ralton generally.

THE next day the Old Man, who had stood him up pretty well, assigned him to Captain Bullone's Troop II, in the first squadron. Captain Bullone had a tongue that cracked like a whip and was reputed the strictest disciplinarian in the regiment, although his men were crazy about him. But I know that he had a deep and abiding hatred for all green second lieutenants raw from civil life, especially if they were commissioned through political influence as this kid was.

The first thing Dorsey Bullen did was to get Ralton in the raw for doing a corporal in front of his drill. He didn't even know the "School of the Soldier," let alone anything about being an officer.

The next night at mess he seemed to have forgotten the grad we had



LEFT The major's prose stories, like this one from New Fun Comics #5 (August 1935), appeared regularly. A fiction writer at heart, Wheeler-Nicholson drew from his own background of far-flung military service for inspiration. ABOVE In this story from New Comics #11 (December 1936), the major and artist Munson Paddock tell a tale involving mysterious pearls and Asian stereotypes. OPPOSITE PAGE The Super Police, seen here in New Fun Comics #5 (August 1935), by writer Ken L. Fitch and artist Clem Gretter, was an Earth-based law-enforcement team set in the year 2023. Members including Rex Cosmos piloted the spaceship Hi-Lo, battling evil forces.

Unfortunately, Donenfeld made the move into publishing just three months before the stock market crash that ushered in the Great Depression. His cash flow ended in 1932 when Eastern News, a distributor half-owned by pulp publisher Paul Sampliner, went bankrupt, owing Donenfeld \$30,000. Donenfeld's response was to take a half-interest in a new distribution company. The smooth-talking Donenfeld persuaded Sampliner that Sampliner's wealthy mother could finance the company, which would be called Independent News.

Perhaps Donenfeld and Liebowitz would have been content to go on publishing pulps forever, but in 1936 they were enticed into the new field of so-called picture story-magazines, after crossing paths with a figure even more colorful than Donenfeld himself.

This was forty-six-year-old, Tennessee-born Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, an eccentric pulp fiction writer, adventurer, teller of tall tales, and gambler on long shots. "The major," as he liked to be called, referring to his Army service eleven years earlier, would later be credited—not entirely accurately—with being the inventor of the comic book as we know it today.

Wheeler-Nicholson's first attempt to go into business for himself, as a newspaper feature syndicator in 1929, had been undercapitalized. He went bankrupt the following year, returning to writing until the day in 1934 when the idea of comics beckoned again. The major's decision to try his luck once more with the new medium put him on a collision course with men who would help him realize his ambitions, but probably not in quite the way he'd envisioned.

While Wheeler-Nicholson had been pursuing his writing career, the world of comic books had changed. The comic books of the '20s, which were usually printed in black-and-white and were essentially newspaper comic strip collections, evolved into four-color, tabloid-size giveaways. Comics first became widely available as premiums from companies such as Kellogg's and Ovaltine that sponsored kids' radio shows, cementing the mindset that would persist for the next five decades that comics were exclusively children's entertainment.

If Harry Donenfeld had a hard time keeping his color presses busy apart from running the covers for his "spicy" pulps, we have no record of it today. But a competitor called Eastern Color Printing did face that challenge. Fortunately, Eastern's sales manager, Harry Wildenberg, saw "the funnies" as his company's salvation. Wildenberg's custom comics (magazines produced for corporate clients rather than for distribution at retail) established the half-tabloid size that would become the standard for early comics-format publications.

Wildenberg's colleagues included men who would later figure prominently in DC's development, such as M. C. Gaines, known to his associates as "Charlie" or, less frequently, "Max." Gaines was an Eastern salesman who claimed to have dreamed up the half-tabloid format. Another was Sol Harrison, a young man working at Strauss Photo-engraving, Eastern's color separator.

It was Gaines who put price stickers on leftover Wheetena promotional comics and sold them on New York newsstands in 1934. These new "comic books" sold out in a matter of days, and this evidence that retail comics might be viable flushed Wheeler-Nicholson out of his writing eyrie. The major decided to take another shot at running his own business with the formation of National Allied Publications.

Working out of a tiny office at 432 Fourth Avenue, once again without much capital, Wheeler-Nicholson decided he couldn't afford the license fees of fifteen dollars per page that newspaper syndicates charged for reprinting their comic strips.



Instead, he sought new material that had been rejected by the syndicates, or had been prepared as samples. Veteran cartoonists, moonlighting to make ends meet, joined beginners trying to break into the field, creating the contents of National's debut publication, *New Fun*.

From its first issue, dated February 1935, *New Fun* featured a color cover, though it was forced to start out with black-and-white interiors and gradually add color, in increments, over its run. Within the year—and without a competitor yet or any way of knowing how well the first book was selling—Wheeler-Nicholson added his second title, *New Comics*.

The major's inability to pay his staff promptly led a succession of editors to quit until he was left with the two assistants, a pair of struggling writer-cartoonists. Twenty-four-year-old Vincent Sullivan and twenty-seven-year-old Whitney Ellsworth, a former assistant on the "Dumb Dora" newspaper strip, each contributed many early features and covers to the major's comics.

**ALL ORIGINAL**

**NEW**

**APRIL 1935**

# FUN

**THE BIG COMIC MAGAZINE**

**10 CENTS**



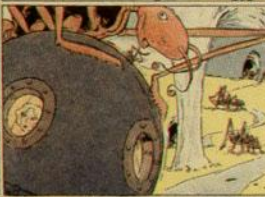
**OSWALD THE RABBIT**



**DON DRAKE ON THE PLANET SARO**

THE SONOLDA CONTAINING DON AND BETTY AND THE MIDGET MEN FALLS OFF THE CLIFF INTO THE WATER

**BUT A GIANT SENTINEL AT THE BASE OF THE CLIFF SPIES THE STRANGE OBJECT**



AT THE MERCY OF A FOUL AND PITILESS CREATURE  
CONTINUED

**ABOVE** Oswald the Rabbit, a character popularized in Disney's animated Alice Comedies series, made his first comic book appearance in *New Fun*. Artist Al Stahl pencilled the rabbit's adventures for this April 1935 issue. **RIGHT** *New Fun* Comics #3, drawn by Clem Greter, was the first DC comic to feature a woman—brave heroine Betty—on a cover.

**NOW IN COLORS • ADVENTURE • FLYING • MYSTERY  
COMIC STRIPS • STORIES • MOVIES • SCIENCE • PRIZES**

APRIL

NEW  
APRIL, 1935

# FUN

BIG COMIC  
MAGAZINE



IN THIS ISSUE:  
The Secret Service  
The Mystery of the  
The Adventure of the  
The Mystery of the  
The Adventure of the

Edited by LLOYD JACQUET

Editor	Lloyd Jacquet	Editorial Board	Walter B. Dill
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## SANDRA of the Secret Service



APRIL, 1935

Page 1



LEFT Monroe Eisenberg wrote and drew this page from New Fun Comics #3. ABOVE Evident from issue #1 of the New Comics series (top) were Vin Sullivan's talent as a cartoonist and its covers' emphasis on comedy. Issue #7, from August 1936 (bottom), was no exception.



With these editors, Wheeler-Nicholson's company barely survived, changing its name almost as frequently as did its publications. *New Fun* became *More Fun* as the company became More Fun, Inc., and with the November 1936 cover-dated edition of *New Comics*, its publisher became the Nicholson Publishing Company.

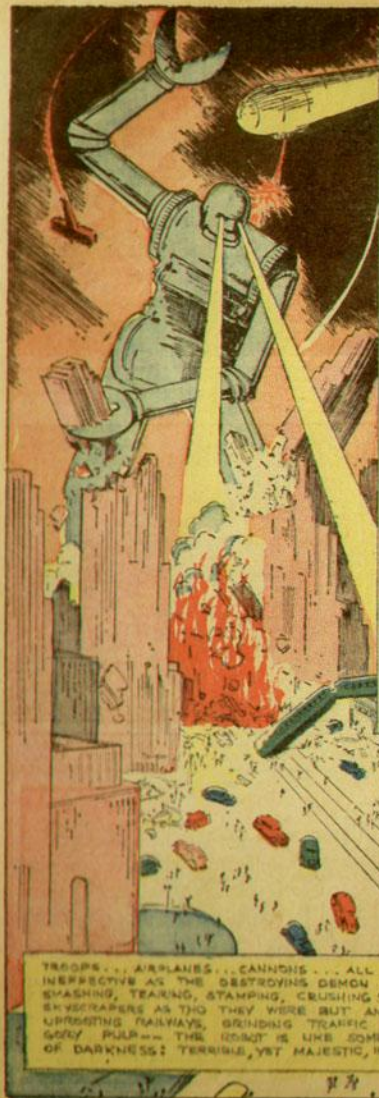
In the summer of 1936, *More Fun Comics* #12 and *New Comics* #7 were the first Wheeler-Nicholson publications since *New Fun* #4 to feature glossy paper covers—now printed by Harry Donenfeld's presses.

During this time, the pages of the major's comic books were filled with features drawn to resemble Sunday newspaper strips, with less-than-arresting titles such as "Capt. Desmo" and "Hanko the Cowhand." Most lacked originality and were pale echoes of newspaper strips and radio series of the day.

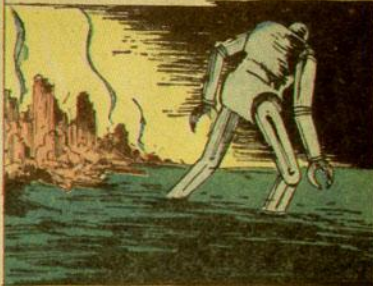
The writers and artists behind the better of these features would soon figure prominently in DC's ascendance to industry leader. Foremost among these in 1935 was Sheldon Mayer, who contributed several humor stories such as the surreal "Strange Adventures of Mr. Weed." Mayer later described Wheeler-Nicholson as "not only the first guy to publish all-new comics, but also the first to stiff an artist for his check." Mayer didn't give up on cartooning when he quit working for the major, but he was quick to accept an offer from Charlie Gaines to work for him at his latest employer, the McClure Syndicate, where Mayer would edit their newspaper strips for reprinting as comic books.

Meanwhile, the major's magazines continued to gush red ink, and it took the greater business savvy of Donenfeld and Liebowitz to rescue the assets. In 1937, Donenfeld financed a new title, *Detective Comics*, published by the newly incorporated Detective Comics, Inc., which would inspire the company's quickly popularized nickname, DC. Detective Comics, Inc. was co-owned by Liebowitz and Wheeler-Nicholson, and its flagship title was edited by Sullivan, Ellsworth, and Wheeler-Nicholson himself.

**LEFT** Young creative duo Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster developed features like "Spy" during the years before Superman took off. As seen in this page from *Detective Comics* #2 (April 1937), lead characters Bart Regan and Olga Balinoff, drawn by Shuster, bore a passing resemblance to the Man of Steel and Lois Lane.



HITTING UPON THE CORRECT METHOD OF OPERATION, STEVE TAKES OVER CONTROL OF THE NOW PASSIVE GIANT, WHEELS IT INTO THE SEA, AND DIRECTS IT BACK TO THE MECHANICAL ISLE.



FACING A TERRIBLE FATE AT THE HANDS OF THEIR OWN HORRIBLE CREATION, THE MEN ON THE ISLE SHOUT FRANTIC ORDERS --



HE'S LOOKING FOR BATTLE AND WE'LL GIVE IT TO HIM! OPEN THE HANGARS!

TROOPS... AIRPLANES... CANNONS... ALL ARE INEFFECTIVE AS THE DESTROYING DEMON RUNS WILD -- SMASHING, TEARING, STAMPING, CRUSHING! ATTACKING SHIPYARDS AS THO THEY WERE BUT ANT-HILLS, UPROOTING RAILWAYS, GRINDING TRAFFIC INTO A SOFTY PULP -- THE DEMON IS LIKE SOME FIRED GLOBE OF DARKNESS! TERRIBLE, YET MAJESTIC, IN ITS FURY!

BUT SUPERMAN'S SUPER-PHYSIQUE ENABLES HIM TO SURVIVE THE ELECTRIC BOLT!

SIMULTANEOUSLY, BOTH TOSS AWAY THEIR

SO THE

WISDOMS  
MAN -  
ING COMPOSITE  
CEPTIONS OF  
WISDOMERS AND  
COMES TO EARTH  
THE PLANET  
ON

**LEFT** Giant robots tend to populate future worlds, but in this stunning page of Siegel and Shuster's "Federal Men," which appeared in *New Comics* #10 (November 1936), the invaders hailed from a "scientific island" just off the coast of modern-day New York City. Yet somehow, hero Steve Carson maintained his cool.

In quick succession, the bland-sounding *New Fun* was renamed *New Adventure Comics*, and by April of 1937, Donenfeld and Sampliner's Independent News was handling distribution of the major's titles.

At last all the elements were in place for the success that was to come—if only the company could be rescued from the mismanagement of Wheeler-Nicholson, who owed his partners thousands of dollars in printing and distribution fees. By one account, Donenfeld sent the major on a long cruise, supposedly for a rest that would allow him to “work up new ideas.” When Wheeler-Nicholson returned, he found his office lock changed.

In his absence, Donenfeld had sued him for nonpayment and forced Detective Comics, Inc., into bankruptcy. In the court proceedings, an old friend of Donenfeld's, Judge A. I. Menin, arranged for the company to be sold to Independent News. Donenfeld settled with Wheeler-Nicholson by promising him a percentage of *More Fun Comics*' gross for ten years, and *New Adventure* #25 and *More Fun* #30 were published by “A. I. Menin as bankruptcy trustee.”

When Whit Ellsworth quit DC to try his luck in Hollywood, leaving Vin Sullivan as sole editor, the division of labor had finally been established at the new Detective Comics, Inc. Donenfeld, ever the schmoozing dealmaker, traveled widely to build up Independent's distribution network. Meanwhile, his second-in-command, Liebowitz, was the de facto publisher, managing the editorial and production sides of the business. But, as Liebowitz said shortly before his death in 2000, “we didn't bother with titles in those days.”

Late in 1937, Detective Comics, Inc. moved to 480 Lexington Avenue, and Wheeler-Nicholson's name on the masthead, like the major himself, quietly disappeared. During this time, Liebowitz claimed, he ordered two black-and-white ashcans to be produced: one for a new adventure title, *Action Comics*, and the other for what presumably would be a mix of adventure and lighter features, to be called *Action Funnies*. Donenfeld was dubious about

**RIGHT** The characters in Sheldon Mayer's “The Strange Adventures of Mr. Weed” faced a program of odd happenings. Page from *New Comics* #2 (January 1936).



"Superman" Is A  
Hit Over KZRM

Step Dinner Activities



**ABOVE** Jack Liebowitz (left) and M. C. "Charlie" Gaines (right) look on as an unidentified man in a dark suit shares a document with Harry Donenfeld.

...New York, N. Y.—Children's day at the New York World Fair, July 3, at the New York World Fair, will be distinguished by a program built around the popular Green Sheet strip here, Supermann. The feature attraction of the day will be a parade headed by Supermann himself. A contest to select a superboy and a supergirl is scheduled to attract thousands of children to the grounds.

...Thousands of children will be judged by the judges. Winners will be awarded gold trophies and play in a variety of store displays for the day. The event will be a highlight of the fair.

...SUPERMAN

...Joe Shuster, both under 30. Shuster dreamed of what they would do if they were the strongest man. Superman is the extension of the...



**ABOVE** Though it was nothing like the cover that ultimately made it to newsstands, the askan cover for issue #1 of Action Comics certainly was eye-catching. **RIGHT** An interior page from the same askan starring hero Slam Bradley, courtesy of the Siegel and Shuster team.

expansion, however, concerned that they might already be in too deep with the three existing titles. Liebowitz, who would in later years claim to have been passionate about comics' potential as wholesome and lucrative children's entertainment, prevailed nevertheless.

Yet when that *Action Comics* askan was created, neither man could have predicted the title's ultimate significance because they had no inkling of the final—and staggeringly successful—form the magazine would take.

Until recently, the path to success for these pioneers of the comic book industry was shrouded in a mist of dimming memory and self-serving mythologizing. Tellers of romantic tales, all, they preferred to make it all seem so easy. But maybe, in a sense, it was.

As easy as lifting a car over your head.



# BRAND NEW!

AND JUST WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR - -



Look for this dandy new magazine filled with original adventure features and pictures in

**Color!**

Written and drawn especially for you by your favorite artists!

You'll miss the treat of a lifetime if you fail to buy a copy!

**10c at all  
Newsstands**

**SPECIAL PRIZES AND AWARDS!**

## MORE FUN COMICS

*The National Comics Magazine*

VINCENT A. SULLIVAN  
Editor

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SHORT-  
SHORTS

by such  
favorites as:  
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SVEN ELVEN!  
BILL PATRICK!  
CREIG FLESSEL!  
Seigel & Shuster!  
Homer Fleming!  
ALGER!



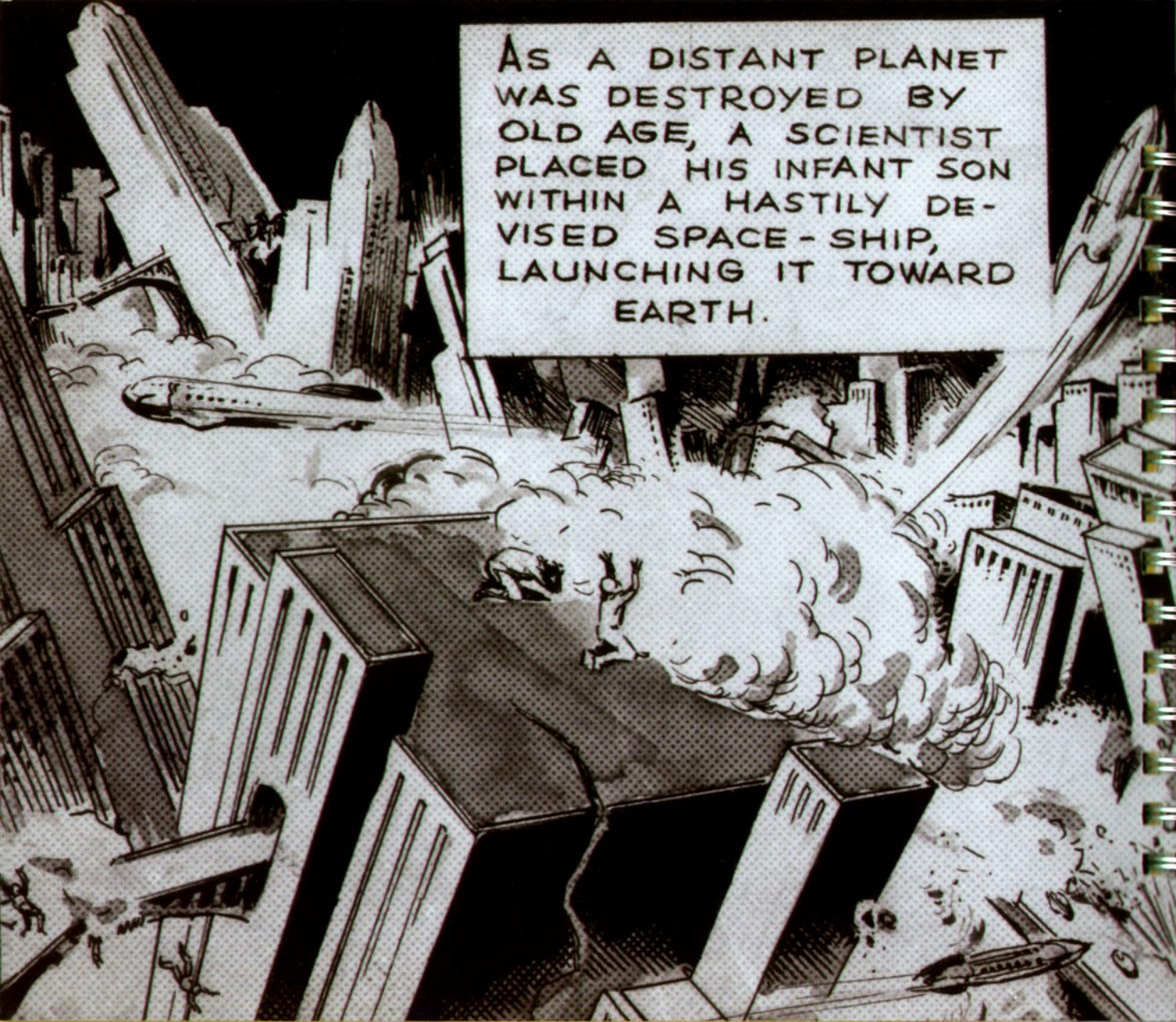
BE SURE TO GET THE GENUINE ARTICLE!

**ONLY 10c AT ALL NEWSSTANDS!**

**LEFT** Superman made his first appearance in an ad that ran inside the front cover of *More Fun Comics* #31. His indelible cover image made it clear from the outset that DC's new hero was capable of amazing feats.

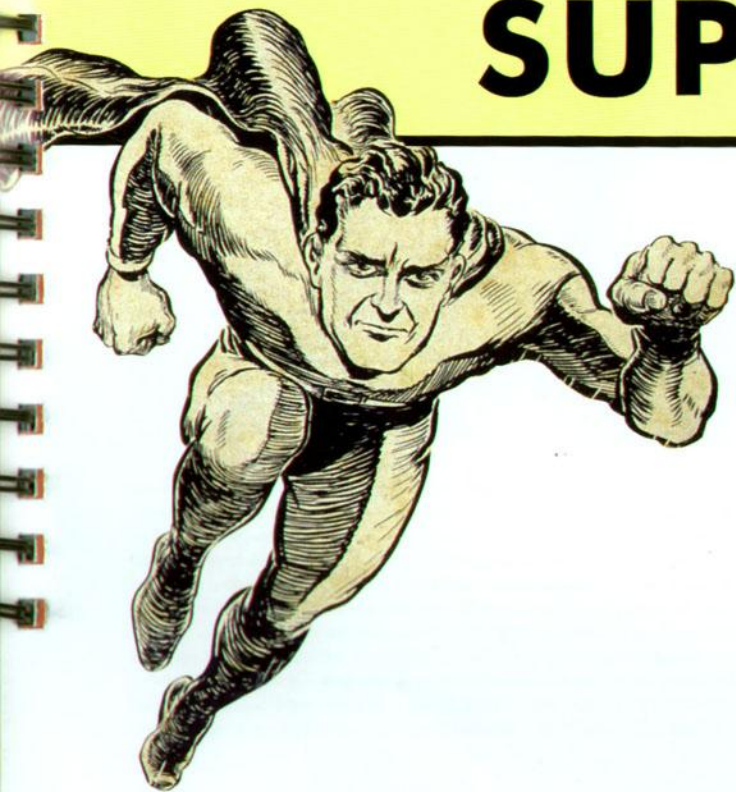
**ABOVE** *New Comics* #11 (December 1936) heralded the arrival of *Detective Comics* #1 with a full-page ad that triumphantly credited its writers and artists—even if it didn't spell Jerry Siegel's name correctly.

AS A DISTANT PLANET WAS DESTROYED BY OLD AGE, A SCIENTIST PLACED HIS INFANT SON WITHIN A HASTILY DEVISED SPACE-SHIP, LAUNCHING IT TOWARD EARTH.





# Inventing the SUPER HERO



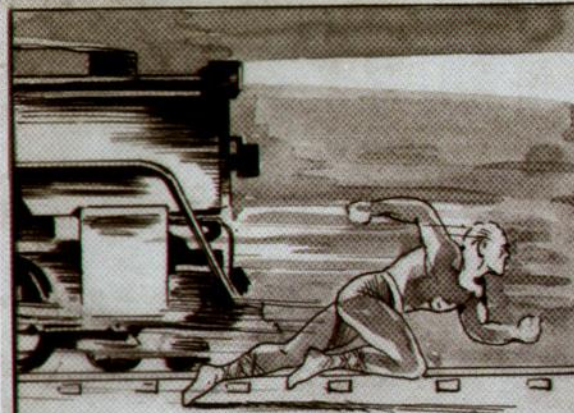
### **"SUPERMAN LITERALLY LAUNCHED THIS INDUSTRY,"**

says Paul Levitz, the current president of DC Comics. DC has been affirming that statement for as long as its institutional memory can recall. Until the Man of Steel's debut, comic books had not yet produced a major star. But when one finally came along, he almost slipped through DC's grasp.

In 1931, in the depth of the Depression, aspiring writer Jerry Siegel and his family had fallen on hard times when Siegel met even poorer budding illustrator Joe Shuster at Glenville High in Cleveland, Ohio. The boys discovered a shared interest in fantasy, in the form of the "scientifiction" pulp magazines with titles like *Amazing Stories* and *Science Wonder Stories*. The news of the day was filled with stories of cartoonists like Harold Gray, the creator of "Little Orphan Annie," and Chester Gould, the originator of "Dick Tracy," who were becoming wealthy from the success of their creations. So Siegel and Shuster's shared passion for "Buck Rogers" made the creation of a widely syndicated newspaper strip an obvious goal for the new would-be collaborators.

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Original artwork by Joe Shuster and text by Jerry Siegel depicting the destruction of Krypton. **LEFT** Superman looked a bit different when he made his British comic book debut on the cover of *Triumph* in 1939. **ABOVE** In the original art for this "Superman" newspaper strip, the Man of Steel faces one of the more insidious threats to society: skulduggery.

by JEROME SIEGEL & JOE SHUSTER

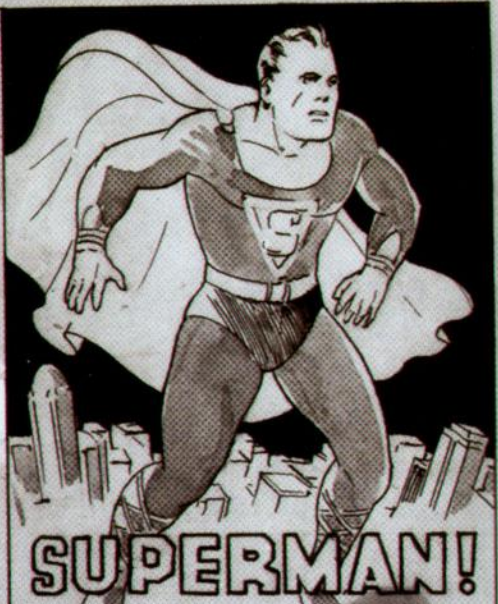


WHEN CLARK KENT, THE BABE, GREW TO MATURITY HE DISCOVERED HE COULD EASILY HURDLE A TWENTY-STORY BUILDING, LEAP 1/8 TH OF A MILE, RAISE UNBELIEVABLE WEIGHTS, RUN FASTER THAN AN EXPRESS TRAIN, AND THAT NOTHING LESS THAN A BURSTING SHELL COULD PENETRATE HIS SKIN.

NO 1

EARLY, CLARK DECIDED HE MUST TURN HIS TITANIC STRENGTH INTO CHANNELS THAT WOULD BENEFIT MANKIND.

AND SO WAS CREATED...



**SUPERMAN!**

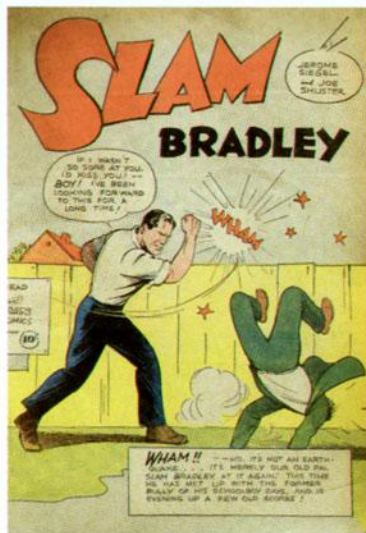
CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED, THE PHYSICAL MARVEL WHO HAD SWORN TO DEVOTE HIS EXISTENCE TO HELPING THOSE IN NEED!

The teenagers spent their weekends, nights, and as much of their days as possible—when not in school or holding down a variety of menial jobs to help feed their families—in brainstorming sessions for their projects and in science fiction fan activities. Among these was an effective form of what today we would call networking. A demon correspondent, Siegel made and maintained contacts with some of the most prominent writers in

the field, as well as other young people who would come to be called "Big Name Fans." These included a pair of teens from the Bronx who had gotten hold of a mimeograph machine to create the very first science fiction fanzine, *The Time Traveller* [sic], in 1933. Their names were Mort Weisinger and Julius Schwartz, in whose footsteps Siegel and Shuster would briefly follow with a fanzine of their own. At this point, none of these four could know that they were all headed in the same direction, and that one of the boys from the Bronx would have a significant impact on Siegel and Shuster's career.

**ABOVE** In this original artwork, Siegel and Shuster endowed Superman with certain characteristics that would make him an effective champion of society. Principal among these was speed.

Among the earliest fruits of the new Siegel-Shuster collaboration was "Reign of the Superman," a profusely illustrated prose story about a grim and somewhat brutal vigilante with super-human abilities. In 1972, in a never-used foreword to an unpublished DC reprint collection, Siegel described "Reign" as "an original comic book," which



would have been quite a novelty in 1932 when the work was created. This was just one of many times over the decades, in memoirs and interviews, that Siegel would misstate details in recounting Superman's creation. Failing memory? Most likely. Or perhaps this was his writerly love of a good yarn at work.

Siegel's varying accounts—each more dramatic than the one he gave before—suggest that his mild-mannered, bespectacled exterior, not unlike Clark Kent's, may have belied a press agent's instinct for not letting facts get in the way of a more exciting story. Siegel long maintained that what became known as “The Superman” was rejected by every publisher, major or minor, to whom it was submitted. The truth, unfortunately for entertainment value, isn't that exciting.

More accurately, the path to publication was a succession of false starts. For example, Siegel and Shuster's one prospect in 1933 was Consolidated Book Publishers of Chicago. They expressed interest in adding “The Superman” to the second issue of a black-and-white comic book called *Detective Dan*, which sold so poorly that there never was a second issue.

In that unpublished foreword, Siegel wrote that in 1934, “I conceived the idea of an even more dynamic Superman [and] this time I scripted it in newspaper strip format.” This “more dynamic” Superman had the famous Kryptonian origin we know today.

Several editors rejected the new work with patronizing advice, and Siegel and Shuster got by on low-paying greeting card work and advertising layouts for local Ohio agencies. When they finally broke into comics, they did it by selling original concepts less inspired than Superman.

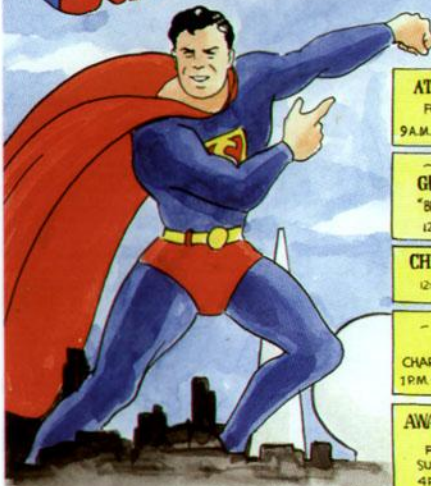
In 1935, Siegel and Shuster began their relationship with Harry Donenfeld's customer, Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, when their features “Henri Duval” and “Dr. Occult” began to appear in the major's *New Fun* comics. But it was only because the



**ABOVE LEFT** Siegel and Shuster's Slam Bradley, shown here in *Detective Comics* #5 (July 1937), usually used his fist to make a point. **ABOVE** This page from *New Book of Comics* #2 (Spring 1938), also by Siegel and Shuster (using pen names) found ghost detective Dr. Occult mid-duel.

MACY'S AND TOYLAND  
Presents  
**SUPERMAN DAY**

CHILDREN'S ADMISSION  
**10¢**



**ATHLETIC CONTESTS**  
FOR BOYS AND GIRLS  
9 A.M. - FIELD OF SPECIAL EVENTS

*- In Person -*  
**GEORGE McMANUS**  
"BRINGING UP FATHER"  
12 P.M. - FORD BUILDING

**CHILDREN'S PARADE**  
12:15 P.M. - THEME CENTER

*- In Person -*  
**FRANK BUCK**  
CHARLES ATLAS - SUPERMAN  
1 P.M. - FIELD OF SPECIAL EVENTS

**AWARDING OF PRIZES**  
AND  
FREE GIVEAWAY OF  
SUPERMAN MAGAZINE  
4 P.M. - AMERICAN JUBILEE

**WEDNESDAY JULY 3, 1940**  
**NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR**

major was then promoting his comics as "catalogues" of strips available for newspaper syndication that Siegel and Shuster even bothered showing him Superman, hoping the major could place it for them.


Unfortunately, the major's reply was that he thought the boys "would be much better off doing Superman in full page [format] in four colors for one of our publications." Siegel and Shuster decided to pass on Wheeler-Nicholson's offer, preferring to save their brainchild for newspapers.

**ABOVE** This sketch for an unproduced poster listed events scheduled for Superman Day at the 1940 World's Fair. **RIGHT** By filling out an entry form and mailing it to DC, young attendees could compete at the Fair to win the title of Super-boy and Super-girl. The Fair also featured the first actor to portray Superman.

One of their many rejection slips came from the McClure Syndicate, whose M. C. Gaines and Sheldon Mayer brought the strip prototypes to Jack Liebowitz's attention. McClure had been contacted by Vin Sullivan, who was frantic for a feature to fill out the first issue of the new *Action Comics* title. Desperate themselves at this point, and having just about given up the dream of placing Superman where they wanted him, Siegel and Shuster relented and let the major's successors buy the strip samples, selling all rights for an agreed-upon page rate. At Vin Sullivan's request, Shuster even cut and pasted them up into a comic book format.

As the circulation of *Action Comics* continued to climb, DC's management checked the numbers against the content and found that each sales bump occurred when Superman was featured on the cover. The character had become the fledgling company's first major success.

OFFICIAL ENTRY BLANK  
ATHLETIC EVENTS  
**SUPERMAN DAY**  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 3, 1940



**New York World's Fair**

Please check events in which you wish to participate.  
Fill in questionnaire and mail to SUPERMAN, Inc.  
480 Lexington Avenue, New York City.

**BOYS' EVENTS**

<b>Junior Boys Class</b> (Ages 8 to 11, inclusive)		<b>Senior Boys Class</b> (Ages 12 to 14, inclusive)	
50 yard dash	<input type="checkbox"/>	50 yard dash	<input type="checkbox"/>
50 yard obstacle race	<input type="checkbox"/>	50 yard obstacle race	<input type="checkbox"/>

PRIZES: 1st place—Gold Medal; 2nd place—Silver Medal, 3rd Place—Bronze Medal, 4th place—Bronze Medal, 5th place—Bronze Medal.

**GIRLS' EVENTS**

<b>Junior Girls Class</b> (Ages 8 to 11, inclusive)		<b>Senior Girls Class</b> (Ages 12 to 14, inclusive)	
25 yard dash	<input type="checkbox"/>	50 yard dash	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rope skipping contest	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rope skipping contest	<input type="checkbox"/>

PRIZES: 1st place—Gold Charm, 2nd place—Silver Charm, 3rd place—Bronze Charm, 4th place—Bronze Charm, 5th place—Bronze Charm.

**CONTEST TO CHOOSE AMERICA'S  
SUPER-BOY AND SUPER-GIRL**

This contest is open to boys and girls from 8 to 14 years old. The boy and girl winners of the Super-Boy and Super-Girl contest will each be awarded a silver trophy.



**THIS PAGE** Scenes from Superman Day at the World's Fair on July 3, 1940 (clockwise from top left): Roy Middleton as Superman; Joe Shuster and Bella Siegel; Harry Donenfeld on an elephant ride; Jerry Siegel and Jack Liebowitz, the two teens crowned Super-girl and Super-boy.



## FOLLOW THE ADVENTURES OF HOP HARRIGAN EVERY MONTH IN ALL AMERICAN COMICS!

HE'S HUMAN!  
HE'S YOUNG!  
HE'S COURAGEOUS!  
AND HE'S  
AMERICAN!  
DON'T MISS  
A  
SINGLE ISSUE!





### HERE IS A MESSAGE FROM HOP HARRIGAN!

If you are already a member, you can get five Army Air Corps "KEEP 'EM FLYING" stickers to paste on the windshield of your family automobile and to give to your friends to do likewise, by sending in a self-addressed, stamped envelope to HOP HARRIGAN, President, All-American Flying Club, 480 Lexington Avenue, N. Y. C., and I will mail them to you absolutely free of charge. KEEP 'EM FLYING! Of course, each new member, in joining the ALL-AMERICAN FLYING CLUB, will also receive the five baggage stickers, one from each of the big airlines in the U. S. You can join the ALL-AMERICAN FLYING CLUB by filling in the application below and mailing it to Hop Harrigan, President, All-American Flying Club, 480 Lex. Ave., N. Y. C.



**Here's What You Get  
When You Join The  
All-American  
Flying Club!**

- (1) A beautifully engraved membership card containing all the rules of the Club.
- (2) A beautiful golden winged emblem, illustrated above.
- (3) Opportunity to enter many contests for prizes and free trips.

**HOP HARRIGAN, President,  
ALL-AMERICAN FLYING CLUB  
c/o ALL-AMERICAN COMICS, 480 Lexington Ave., N. Y. C.**

Dear Hop:

Please enroll me as a Charter Member of the ALL-AMERICAN FLYING CLUB! I am enclosing 10c to cover cost of mailing, etc.

It is understood that I am to receive a Membership Card and emblem and be entitled to all the privileges of the organization.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ AGE \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY & STATE \_\_\_\_\_

SEN. NO. 1

In Jerry Siegel's mind, at least, he and Shuster didn't really hit the big time until January of 1939, when their long-cherished dream came true: a "Superman" newspaper strip that was distributed, of course, by McClure. Jack Liebowitz told Siegel and Shuster he wanted to make up for the disadvantageous deal they'd made on the comic books by giving the creators a generous cut of the proceeds from the strip, but there remain to this day differing accounts of the exact percentages.

When a separate *Superman* comic book began in mid-1939, running concurrently with *Action* and the newspaper strip, the demand for new Superman material grew alarmingly. The boys were forced to hire a staff of artists to churn out the pages under Shuster's supervision, which meant their profit margin shrank. But even as they continued to receive statements from Liebowitz asserting that, according to the company's accounting, DC was still losing money on Superman, Siegel and Shuster watched their hero crop up everywhere, in toys, general merchandise, and other licensing.

In his later years, when he was more amenable to interviews, Liebowitz would claim that he was an early visionary who saw comics' potential. "I had a feel for it," he liked to say. That may be so, but Harry Donenfeld left nothing to chance. In 1939, he hired a hotshot publicist named Allen "Duke" Ducovny who had great success placing Superman articles in every news medium of the period. The articles and publicity stunts—including Superman Day at the World's Fair in New York in 1940 and a Superman balloon in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade that same year—drove increasing sales. With the Superman revenue lining his pockets and subsidizing a latter-day Roaring '20s lifestyle, Donenfeld continued to believe that a small comic book line was enough.

And so, Liebowitz claimed, being unable to persuade Donenfeld to aggressively expand, he approached feisty, combustible Charlie Gaines to go into partnership with him on a separate

**LEFT** Hop Harrigan, Jon Blummer's young hero, invites readers to join the All-American Flying Club in an ad from *Sensation Comics* #1 (January 1942). **OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT** Superman was an early proponent of official merchandising. Among the first licensed products, shown in this ad from *Superman* #8 (January-February 1941), were Superman moccasins, bubble gum, toy guns, and undershorts. **OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP RIGHT** The cover of *All-American* #1 (April 1939) featured a patriotic cost of Sheldon Mayer characters, including boy-cartoonist Scribbly. **OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT** The awkward Movie Comics, comprised of stills from popular feature films, debuted in the same month as *All-American*, but would last for only six issues.





**ABOVE, TOP** Artist Bob Kane and a friend on the town. **ABOVE** Writer Bill Finger on the links. **RIGHT** Kane's "Oscar the Gumshoe" served as a short filler in *Detective Comics* #15 (May 1938).

company. Other accounts have Gaines approaching Liebowitz, but either way the result was the All American Comics Group, or AA to its readers, with Gaines's protégé, Shelly Mayer, as editor.

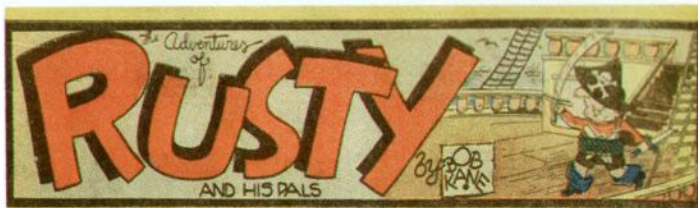
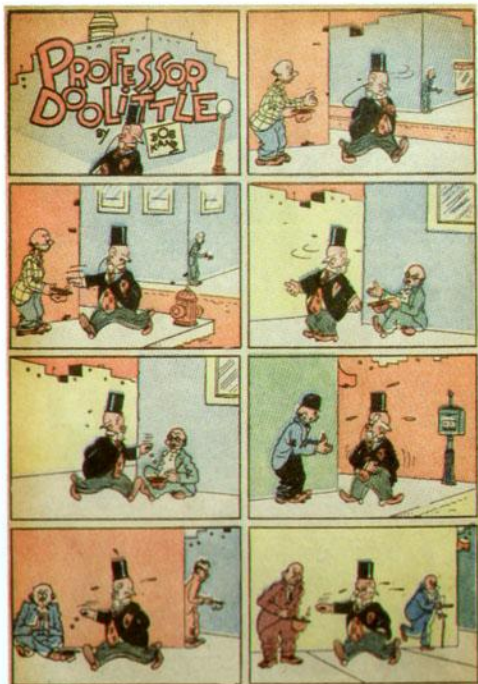
Tied by shared printers and distributors, as well as a labyrinthine managerial flow-chart, DC and AA referred to each other as "sister companies," but they began as separate entities in separate offices. Even most of the employees probably didn't understand the exact relationship between the two, especially when DC characters started showing up in AA books, as began to happen in AA's *All Star Comics*. Thus it would remain for eight years until the two companies eventually consolidated on one floor in the same building as an economic measure.



*All-American Comics* and the instantly forgettable *Movie Comics* were the first out of the AA gate. While mostly made up of McClure reprints, *All-American* #1 (April 1939) did feature Jon Blummer's original aviation adventurer, Hop Harrigan. The latter would go on to become AA's one and only media crossover hit, spawning a Mutual radio series from 1942 to 1948 and a Columbia movie serial in 1946.

Back at DC, another writer-artist team would be responsible for the company's second major star. They, too, began their relationship with DC by selling short features to Major Wheeler-Nicholson. Unlike Siegel and Shuster, however, one of them had already begun working in comics as a solo act, but he wasn't getting very far on his own.

In 1936, twenty-one-year-old Bronx native Robert Kahn, who had taken the name Bob Kane, began selling to Wheeler-Nicholson's titles such one-page fillers as "Professor Doolittle" and "Oscar the Gumshoe." From the start, Kane had perfected his distinctive signature for comic books: his name in block letters enclosed by a box, with the "o" in "Bob" prominent—just the way it was in the signature of one of Kane's idols, Milton Caniff.



**THIS PAGE** Bob Kane's familiar signature—with a big "O"—appeared on "Professor Doolittle" (left) from *New Adventure* #27 (June 1938) and on "The Adventures of Rusty and His Pals" (above) from *New Adventure Comics* #26 (May 1938).

No. 22

64  
PAGES  
OF  
Thrill-Packed  
ACTION

DECEMBER, 1938

# Detective COMICS

Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

10¢

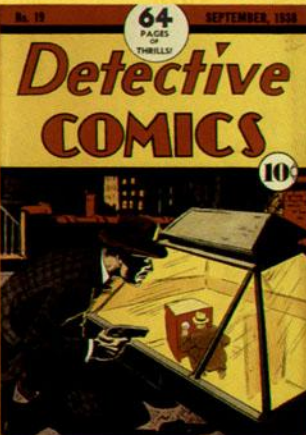


Price 10¢

DETECTIVE COMICS

PUBLISHED BY  
ACTION COMICS  
ENTERTAINMENT CO.  
410 N. 3RD ST.  
PHILADELPHIA  
PA. 19106

NO. 19 SEPTEMBER 1938  
10¢



No. 19 SEPTEMBER 1938

64  
PAGES  
OF  
THRILLS!

# Detective COMICS

10¢

**LEFT** The cover of Detective Comics #22, by Jim Chambers, afforded the Crimson Avenger only passing fame. **ABOVE** Detective Comics, Inc. stationery, and the cover of Detective Comics #19 (September 1938). **OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT** Batman's first published appearance came in this ad in Action Comics #11 (April 1939). **OPPOSITE PAGE, RIGHT** In later years, on stylishly decorated stationery, Bob Kane would show his sense of humor.

Kane was not by nature a collaborator. He dreamed of being considered an auteur, but one who employed anonymous assistants—called “ghosts”—with whom no glory need be shared, just as his heroes, cartoonists like Caniff and Al Capp, did. A graduate of DeWitt Clinton High School and the Art Students League, Kane worked briefly as an animator and assistant to childhood friend Will Eisner in the studio Eisner had formed with a cartoonist named Jerry Iger. Although Kane’s first love was humor, and he was good at constructing sight gags, he needed to create longer features, which at the time were adventure-oriented, in order to achieve the recognition he craved. But writing and conceptual thinking were not his strong points.

At a party one day in 1937, Kane met a fellow DeWitt Clinton graduate, aspiring writer Bill Finger. The moody, depressive Finger was only a few years older but had married young and, at twenty-four, he already had a son. Having been forced to sell shoes to support his family, he jumped at the chance to supply Kane’s scripts. Together they sold “Rusty and His Pals” to *New Adventure* in 1938 and “Clip Carson” to *Action* in 1939. While the distinctive Bob Kane box appeared on both strips, Finger’s credit was nowhere to be seen, nor would it be seen on his greatest collaboration with Kane. And it was on that project that Kane and Finger differed from Siegel and Shuster in another important respect: their creation was the result of an editorial request.

By now Superman was on every *Action* cover, and Vin Sullivan was eager for a cover star for *Detective* as well—meaning a super hero that fit the title’s investigative theme. The closest thing *Detective* had to a super hero was a masked, fedora-wearing crusader in a suit and cloak called the Crimson Avenger, who had appeared on the cover once, apparently to no noticeable effect.

As legend has it, Kane heard about the open *Detective* slot on a Friday, when Sullivan spoke tantalizingly of the significant revenue Siegel and Shuster would derive from the “Superman” syndicated strip. Kane promised to return the following Monday with a concept. Of the many other writers and artists who took up Sullivan’s challenge, it was only Kane and Finger who hit the mark.

While sitting in the DC bullpen in 1973 shortly before his death, Bill Finger described how Kane first approached him with sketches of a red, orange, and yellow-garbed hero with mechanical wings that Kane called Bird-Man. To Finger, this “just didn’t feel right.” Finding a bird too benign a model for an avenging hero, Finger





MACY'S WILL FEATURE "SUPERMAN" ARRANGEMENTS have recently been completed by Superman, Macy & Company nationally against RIVAL COMICS.



**LEFT** Batman's grim origin story was revealed in this page from Detective Comics #33 (November 1939), written by Bill Finger, art by Bob Kane. **ABOVE** There never was a Superwoman comic book, but this ashcan was created in 1941. Only two copies are known to exist.



suggested a bat instead. And so it went, design element by design element, with Finger repeatedly resisting Kane's initial ideas and suggesting alternatives, until they arrived at Batman with his bat-eared cowl and mask, scalloped bat-wing cape, and finned gauntlets. From Superman, the prototypical super hero, they borrowed the chest emblem conceit, and from Doc Savage they took the Utility Belt gimmick. Initially Batman had no origin story. All we knew was that, like the Shadow and several others, the masked persona was in reality an idle, rich playboy, this one named Bruce Wayne.

The stories immediately following the character's debut in *Detective Comics* #27 (May 1939) introduced refinements. Bill Finger's personal struggles often caused difficulties with deadlines, and when this problem began to affect the delivery of Batman stories, Sullivan turned to an old friend and ex-lawyer named Gardner Fox to pinch-hit for a few issues. Fox, finding clients scarce in the Depression, had tried his hand at writing comics and quickly developed a reputation as a fast, facile stylist. By 1939, Fox had become one of Ellsworth's most prolific writers, beginning with many late-'30s features such as Speed Saunders and Zatara.

Because the Batman feature was at this stage embryonic, Fox's script for *Detective* #32 (October 1939) was a bit off the mark: he had Batman fighting vampires in a Middle European castle. Batman subsequently developed as a reality-based feature, generally refraining from incorporating fantastic elements until the late 1940s. But the significance of Fox's story was not lost on Finger, Kane, or his new ghost, a seventeen-year-old with extraordinary artistic talent named Jerry Robinson, who would soon become the primary Batman penciller. They saw in Fox's treatment the way horrific elements could enhance the feature, an idea kept very much in mind when it was time to create a Rogues Gallery of quirky villains, such as the shockingly colored serial killer named the Joker and the grotesquely disfigured madman known as Two-Face.

Batman's origins were revealed in November 1939, when Finger's hastily penned origin story was grafted onto *Detective* #33's lead story. Readers learned of the murder of young Bruce Wayne's parents, and the legend was born.

Within six months, *Detective*'s sales climbed into the 80,000 range, and it became clear that DC had found the second star it needed. Meanwhile, Fox went on to create, with artist Bert Christman, the Sandman, a literally sleep-inducing hero. Introduced in a story for a one-shot omnibus title produced as a tie-in to the 1939 New York World's Fair, the Sandman settled down to a healthy run in *Adventure*. Next Fox teamed up with artist Harry Lampert to create the Flash for the All American line. Its star was a super fast-moving hero with a winged helmet like that of Mercury, the swiftest Roman god.

Meanwhile, the success of Batman encouraged a burst of creativity that produced a horde of characters, many of which still entertain readers today, in one revised form or another. Most of the key recurring cast in "Batman" was created early in the property's development, including the "Boy Wonder," Robin, who debuted in *Detective* #38 (April 1940). Adding a preteen boy to the mix not only gave Batman someone to trade exposition with, but also introduced a character that a young audience could find more relatable. *Batman* #1, which premiered in the spring of 1940, introduced the Joker and also the Cat, a female burglar who would be the prototype for Catwoman.

Elsewhere in the DC line, the Spectre, Jerry Siegel's new character, led a host of other heroes with exotic names such as Dr. Fate and Hourman. Among the super heroes conceived for All American was the ancient winged warrior, Hawkman, and

**ABOVE LEFT** Issue #1 of *Flash Comics* (January 1940) introduced the world to the "fastest man alive" with a cover by Sheldon Moldoff. Hawkman also featured prominently.



**ABOVE** Adventure Comics gets its hero: the Sandman! The gas mask-wearing version in issue #40 (July 1939), as envisioned by Creig Flessel, bore little resemblance to the Sandman that would reemerge in the late 1980s (who wouldn't need a mask to do his job). **RIGHT** All-American Comics #3 (June 1939) cover by Jon Blummer, featuring ace pilot Hop Harrigan.



THE JUSTICE SOCIETY OF America *Presents* ALL STAR COMICS NO. 7!

Read the story of how we raise \$1,000,000 for refugee children in the war-torn Democracies of Europe and Asia; and how our three Honorary Members help JOHNNY THUNDER out of a tight spot!



Also in ALL-STAR No. 7, we announce the results of your voting for the next Honorary Member like SUPERMAN, BATMAN and THE FLASH—and the NEW active member of the Justice Society of America! Don't miss it!

ALL-STAR COMICS NO. 7—NOW ON SALE EVERYWHERE!

Thanks, boys and girls, for voting me the next Honorary Member of the JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA, and a whole book of my own, like SUPERMAN, BATMAN and FLASH!



HERE IT IS!

FALL ISSUE NO. 1

A complete 64 page issue in full color, containing all new, never-before-published adventures of the GREEN LANTERN!

ANOTHER FIT COMPANION TO SUPERMAN, BATMAN and THE FLASH!



NOW ON SALE EVERYWHERE!

the most likely bizarre feature in *All-American* #16 (June 1940): Martin Nodell and Bill Finger's "Green Lantern," in which a blue-collar type named Alan Scott came upon a mystical ancient artifact once used as a train engineer's lantern. Scott, however, used it to fight crime by refashioning a fragment of it into a ring, after discovering that, by sheer thought, he could shape its magical energy into any weapon or tool he imagined. Got that?

Many of AA's new hero features were hits, with Flash and Green Lantern quickly earning their own titles. Recalling the innovation of that *World's Fair* title, which had morphed into *World's Finest*, DC thought it only natural to try the omnibus approach again with these newly created heroes, and in *All Star Comics* #1 (Summer 1940), co-published by DC and AA, two strips each were culled from *Adventure*, *More Fun*, *Flash*, and *All-American*.

NO. 14 SHINING KNIGHT!

STARMAN

DC PUBLICATION

# Adventure COMICS

MAY

10¢



By the third issue, *All Star* would introduce comics' first super-hero team, the Justice Society of America, uniting its stars in one book-length storyline in which the president of the United States personally asks the Atom, Dr. Fate, Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, Hourman, Sandman, and the Spectre to join forces against the country's enemies, reflecting the increasingly patriotic spirit of prewar America.

ABOVE LEFT Green Lantern wins his own comic and an honorary Justice Society membership in this 1941 advertisement for *All Star Comics* #7 and *Green Lantern* #1. ABOVE Cover of *Adventure Comics* #74 (May 1942). Pencils by Jack Kirby and inks by Joe Simon.

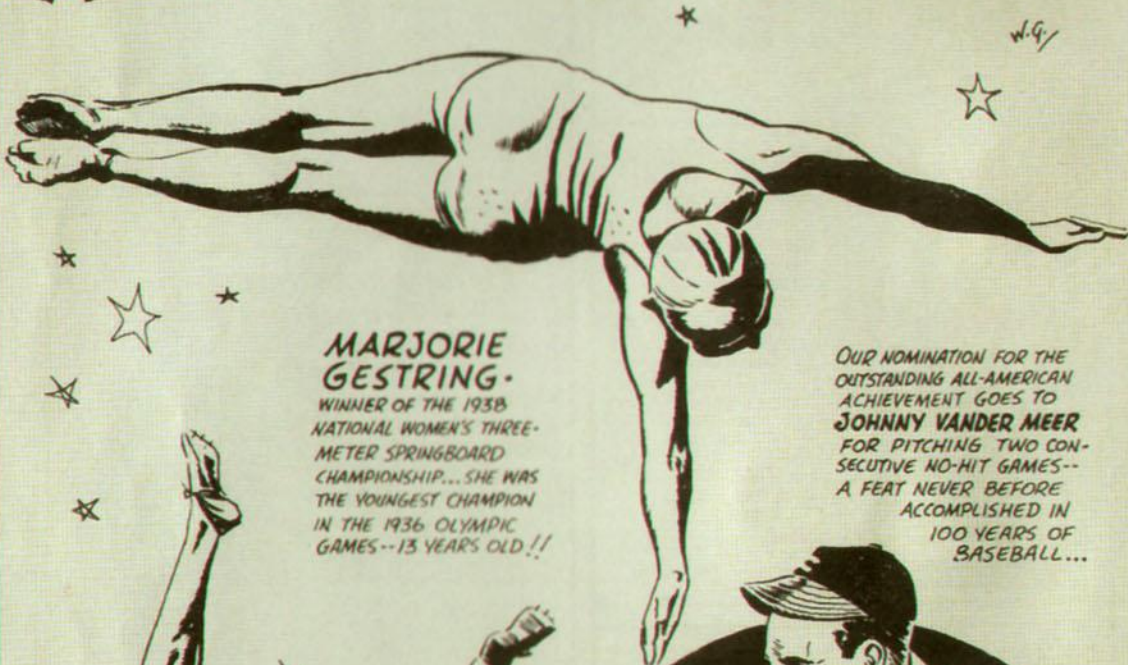


Superman Is A  
Hit Over KZRM

**DOUBLE ACTION COMICS #2  
ASHCAN (JANUARY 1940)**

—  
**Only three copies are known to exist of  
this ashcan. No copies of a Double Action  
Comics #1 ashcan have ever surfaced.**

# ALL-AMERICAN CHAMPS



**MARJORIE GESTRING**  
 WINNER OF THE 1938 NATIONAL WOMEN'S THREE-METER SPRINGBOARD CHAMPIONSHIP... SHE WAS THE YOUNGEST CHAMPION IN THE 1936 OLYMPIC GAMES--13 YEARS OLD!!

OUR NOMINATION FOR THE OUTSTANDING ALL-AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENT GOES TO **JOHNNY VANDER MEER** FOR PITCHING TWO CONSECUTIVE NO-HIT GAMES-- A FEAT NEVER BEFORE ACCOMPLISHED IN 100 YEARS OF BASEBALL...



**CORNELIUS WARMERDAM**  
 FORMER FRESNO STATE COLLEGE STAR--HAS BEEN CLIMBING HIGHER AND HIGHER--THIS SUMMER HE HOPES TO BECOME THE FIRST MAN IN HISTORY TO CLEAR 15 FEET...THE PRESENT RECORD IS 14 FEET, 11 INCHES.



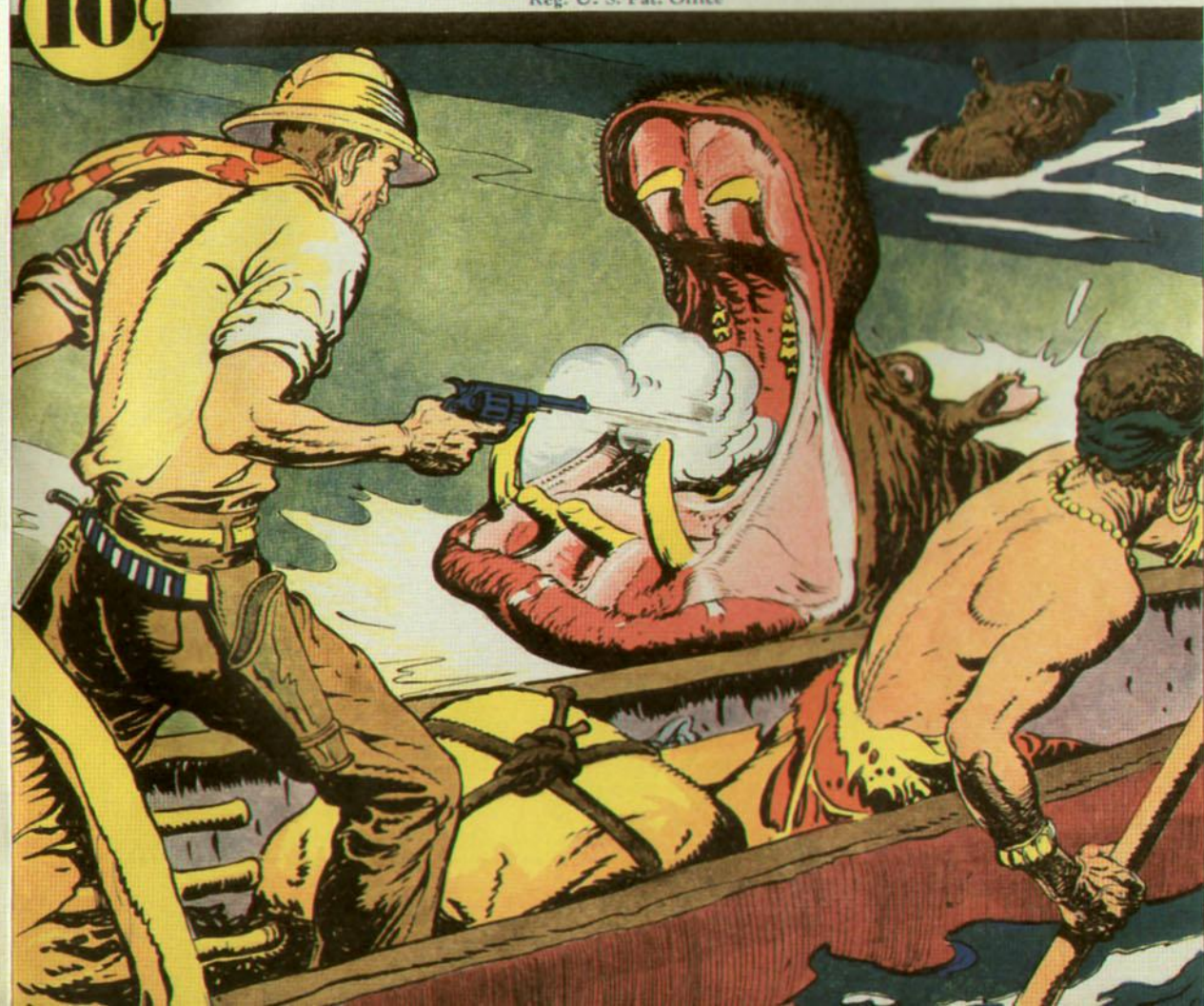
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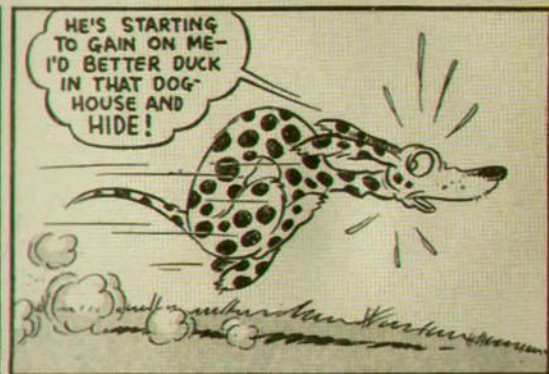
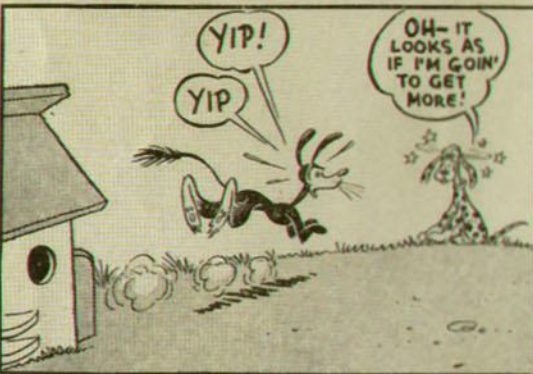
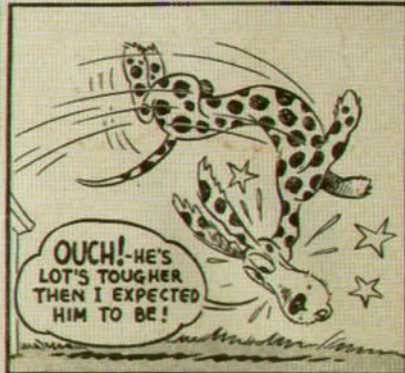
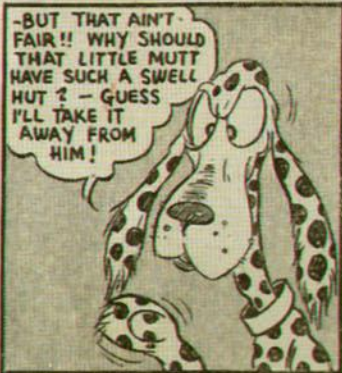
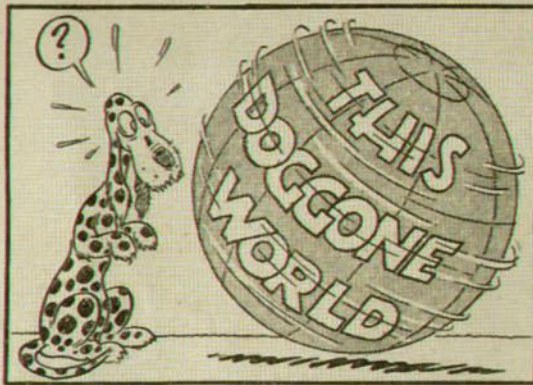
JANUARY, 1940

# DOUBLE ACTION COMICS

10¢

Reg. U. S. Pat. Office





# CRIME NEVER PAYS

**BULLETS BETRAY NO LESS THAN FINGERPRINTS**  
FORENSIC BALLISTICS - THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF MISSILES IS A GREAT AID IN CRIME DETECTION. AN INDIVIDUAL FIREARM WILL LITERALLY STAMP ITS OWN "FINGERPRINT." NO TWO GUNS ARE ALIKE AND EACH MARKS THE BULLETS IT SHOOTS. TODAY ALL SCIENTIFICALLY TRAINED DETECTIVES POSSESS THE NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS TO ACT AS EXPERTS AND CAN TELL WHAT TYPE OF WEAPON DISCHARGED A BULLET.

HELEN BLIXT - OF SALT LAKE CITY, ONE OF THE LEADING BALLISTICS EXPERTS OF THE U.S.

*The* ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE CAME INTO EXISTENCE OVER SIXTY YEARS AGO 1875, AND TODAY THERE IS A TOTAL OF NEARLY 3,000 IN THE FORCE.

**TRAVELING CRIME HEADQUARTERS**  
A POLICE HEADQUARTERS ON WHEELS - AN AUTOMOBILE TRAILER - THAT CAN SPEED DIRECTLY TO THE SCENE OF A SUSPECTED OR KNOWN CRIME WITHOUT DELAY IS USED BY THE NASSAU COUNTY POLICE DETECTIVE DIVISION, NEW YORK. IT IS OUTFITTED WITH THE NEEDS OF THE HOMICIDE SQUAD INCLUDING CHAIRS TO ACCOMMODATE SUSPECTED PERSONS OR WITNESSES DURING THE PROCESS OF QUESTIONING. THE TRAILER ALSO CONTAINS A LABORATORY EQUIPMENT INCLUDING A COMPLETE FINGERPRINTING OUTFIT.

**HOLE IN LEAF CLUE**  
WHEN A MAN WAS MYSTERIOUSLY SHOT TO DEATH, LUKE MAY, CRIMINOLOGIST OF SEATTLE, WAS CALLED ON THE CASE. THE VICTIM HAD BEEN SHOT BY SOMEONE OUTSIDE THE HOUSE AS HE SAT BY THE WINDOW IN HIS STUDY. LUKE MAY NOTICED THAT - IF THE SHOT HAD BEEN FIRED CLOSE TO THE GLASS, THE PANE WOULD HAVE BEEN BROKEN. OUTSIDE, NEAR A TREE, MAY LOOKED AROUND FOR CLUES, AND GLANCED AT A LEAF ON A LEVEL WITH THE WINDOW. THROUGH IT WAS A BULLET HOLE TRACING THE FLIGHT OF THE SLUG LED HIM TO A WINDOW IN A ROOMING HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET THE SLAYER HAD OCCUPIED THE ROOM. HIS DESCRIPTION WAS SECURED AND HE WAS ARRESTED.

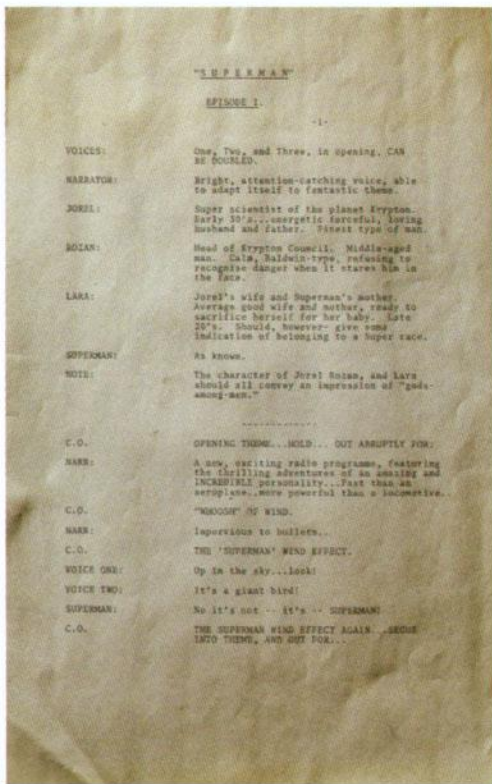
THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION STARTED THEIR FINGERPRINT COLLECTION IN 1924 AND IS THE LARGEST IN THE WORLD

NAME	RIGHT THUMB	INDEX
John Doe	C	S
OFFENSE	Thumping	16
1924	1924	R
		A
		M

ROLLED IMPRESSION

**DETEC-TEST**  
WHAT IS A WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS?  
ANSWER - A WRIT DIRECTED TO THE PERSON DETAINING ANOTHER, COMMANDING HIM TO PRODUCE THE BODY OF THE PRISONER AT A CERTAIN TIME AND PLACE.

**ROBS U.S. TREASURY DISPLAY GOLD (?)**  
THE ONE AND ONLY ROBBERY EVER STAGE IN THE U.S. TREASURY BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C. WAS COMMITTED BY AN UNKNOWN THIEF IN 1934. IF THE BARS OF METAL WHICH WERE STOLEN FROM THE DISPLAY WINDOW HAD BEEN GOLD IT WOULD HAVE BEEN VALUED AT \$30,000 - BUT THEY WERE ONLY GILDED SCRAP IRON.



Batman comics and *More Fun*, and planned to oversee the Superman titles himself. But the company's continued growth meant this arrangement wouldn't last for long.

In his new hire, Ellsworth also got a prolific, if somewhat derivative, writer. In 1941 alone, Weisinger came up with these new characters: Johnny Quick, a hero not dissimilar to the Flash; an underwater hero named Aquaman, an answer to Marvel's Sub-Mariner;

**ABOVE** The first Superman radio script, as performed by narrator Jackson Beck and supporting cast, included the immortal "Look! Up in the sky!" opening lines. Gunshot, steam engine, and wind sound effects enhanced the story. **ABOVE RIGHT** An original inked page from *Batman* #13 (October–November 1942), featuring a script by Bill Finger, pencil work by Bob Kane and Jerry Robinson, and inks by George Roussos.



a cross between a super hero and a cowboy named the Vigilante; and Green Arrow, a colorfully costumed archer with gimmick-tipped arrows, who was developed as a Batman clone replete with kid sidekick and wealthy playboy guise.

By the time Hideki Tojo became Prime Minister of Japan in late 1941, American comics seemed to be coming up red, white, and blue everywhere. In December, *All Star Comics* #8 added an extra eight pages to introduce the publisher's newest character, the first major super heroine. Her campaign to save mankind from its own warlike ways seemed to have been launched not a moment too soon: Only a few weeks later, in the actual month of *All Star* #8's cover date, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II.

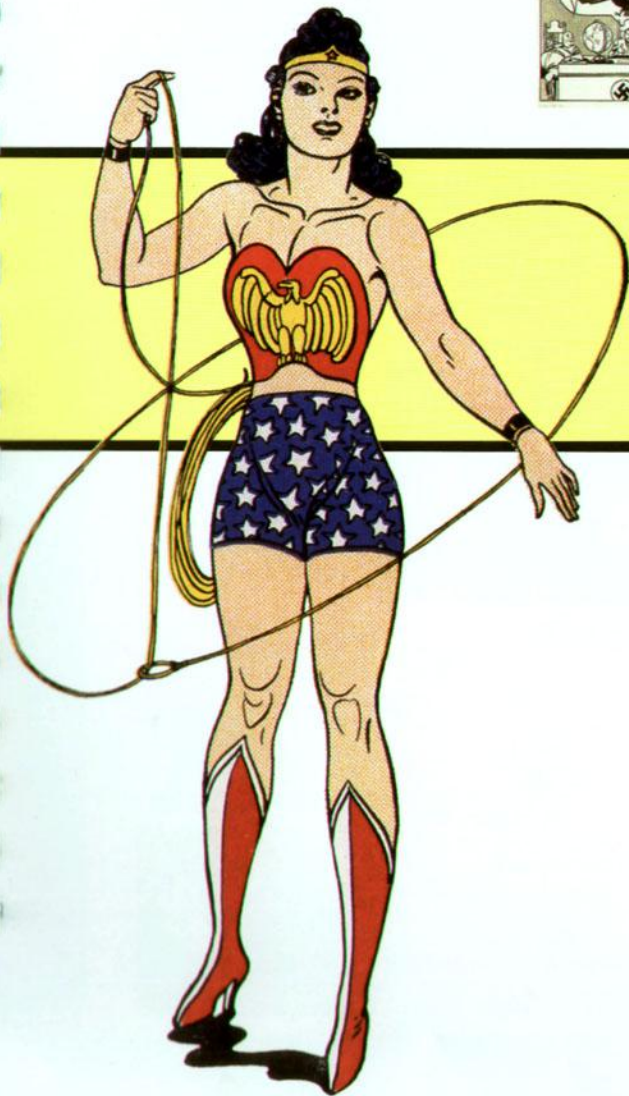




VICTORY  
GARDEN

ONIONS

## CHAPTER THREE



# DC Goes TO WAR

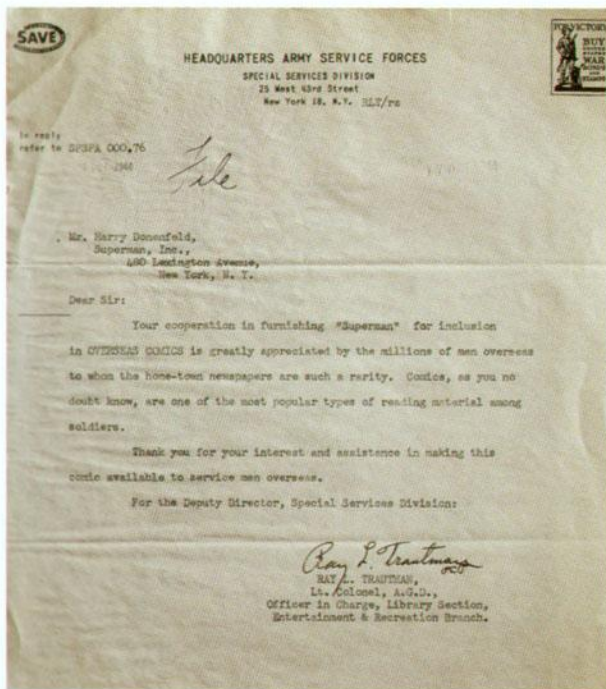
**WONDER WOMAN WASN'T A PRODUCT OF WORLD WAR II PER SE,** but she probably couldn't have succeeded as well in any other era. That became clear after half the men in the country were drafted into the military and women on the home front became more self-reliant. But the Amazing Amazon's origins were more likely the product of a different war—the one between Charlie Gaines and Jack Liebowitz for recognition as the real genius behind All American Comics.

When Wonder Woman's creator, psychologist William Moulton Marston, attacked the comic book form as unsavory in the pages of *Family Circle*, Gaines saw his chance to one-up Liebowitz. Gaines arranged a meeting with Marston, turned on the charm, and by the time they had finished dinner, the psychologist had not only agreed to end his anti-comics rants and help form a new Editorial Advisory Board for the publisher, but to develop a female super hero for All American as well.

In 1940, no one could have known that the success of Wonder Woman would be assured by an epidemic of hero worship that would seize the American home front as its

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Superman, Batman, and Robin turn to gardening for Uncle Sam in this detail from the patriotic cover of *World's Finest Comics* #11 (Fall 1943) by Jack Burnley. **LEFT** Wonder Woman detail from a 1943 March of Dimes postcard. **ABOVE** Writer Jerry Siegel and artists Joe Shuster and Jack Burnley somehow managed to fit the Man of Steel, Santa Claus, and the Axis alliance into one "Superman" newspaper strip from December 22, 1945.

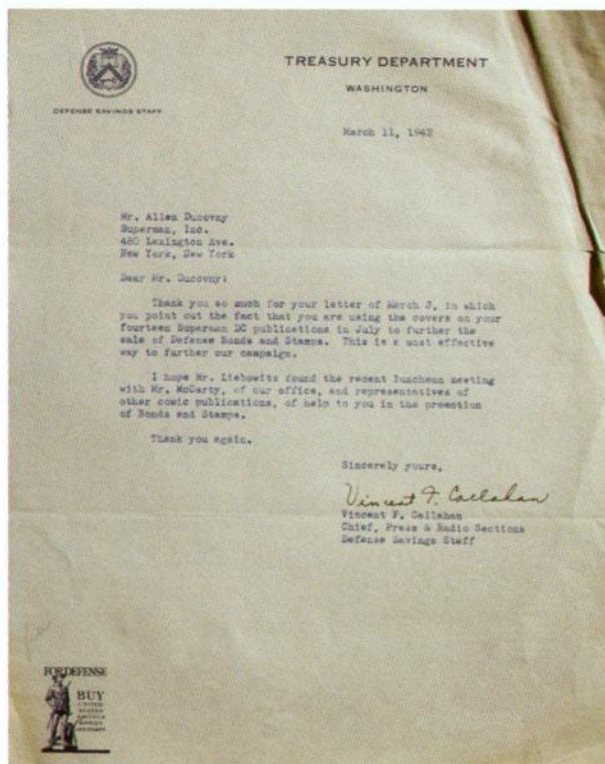




sons, fathers, and brothers went off to war. Women were left to fill the vacuum in the work force, creating the "Rosie the Riveter" era in which tough, strong women increasingly stepped into traditionally macho jobs like construction or truck driving. These women prepared the country for the idea of the WACs and WAVEs that came later. In this context, the idea of a woman marching shoulder-to-shoulder with men against the Axis forces met with less sales resistance than it might have otherwise.

As speculation about America's war involvement increased, a different kind of anxiety took hold at DC. Many of the writers, artists, and even editors were young, healthy candidates for the draft. How would DC maintain its output? After all, Whit Ellsworth already felt overstretched. He complained of his need for more editorial staff to Henry Boltinoff, a cartoonist who had begun supplying gag filler features to DC and would continue doing so for the next twenty-five years. Henry suggested his brother Murray, a former newspaperman who had sold a story to the movies, and the latter came to work as an associate editor at DC in 1942.

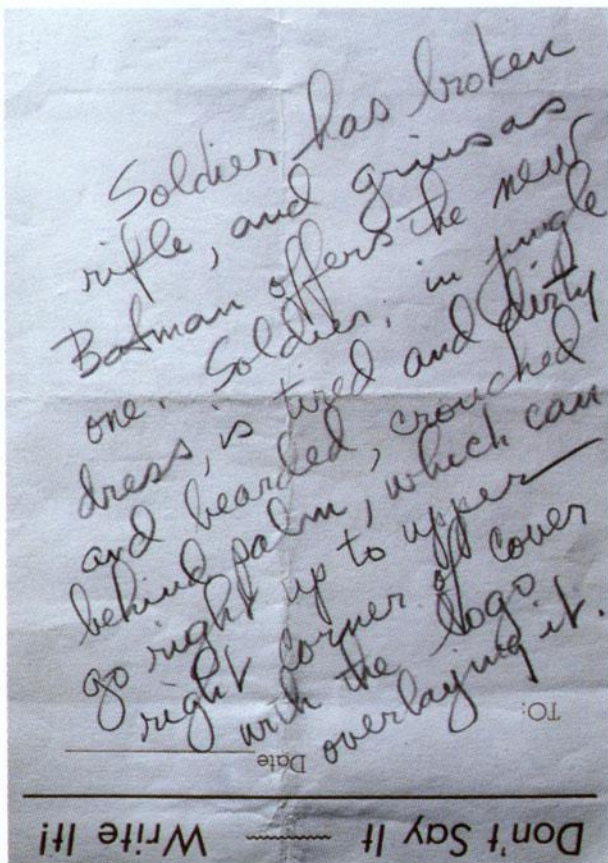
A short, soft-spoken man with sad eyes who rarely laughed, Murray Boltinoff worked at DC for more than thirty years, often editing some of its best-selling titles and reaping nothing but scorn from the other taller, louder, and more aggressive editors. As artist Nick Cardy put it, attributing the remark to penciller Gene Colan, the Boltinoff



he knew was "the best editor in the business, but nobody ever told Murray Boltinoff that." Boltinoff once said he'd spent thirty years wishing he'd had the courage to go to Hollywood, as his wife had urged him to do, when in 1941 Paramount turned his short story into a B-picture called *Buy Me That Town*. Ellsworth might well have felt a kinship with him.

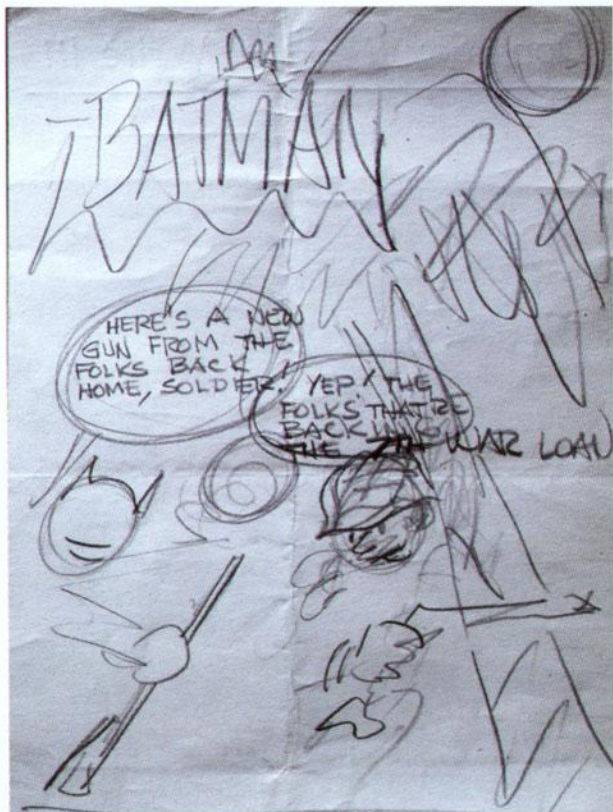
Dick Sprang was the first artist recruited by Whit Ellsworth in 1941 to ghost Batman comics—that is, working directly for DC, as opposed to the other ghosts, who were employees of Bob Kane. Sprang, who would be widely credited with refining the

**ABOVE LEFT** DC Comics did its part for the war effort, providing Superman stories for the publication Overseas Comics. **ABOVE RIGHT** DC also set aside cover space on its comics to help sell Defense Bonds and Stamps during the war.



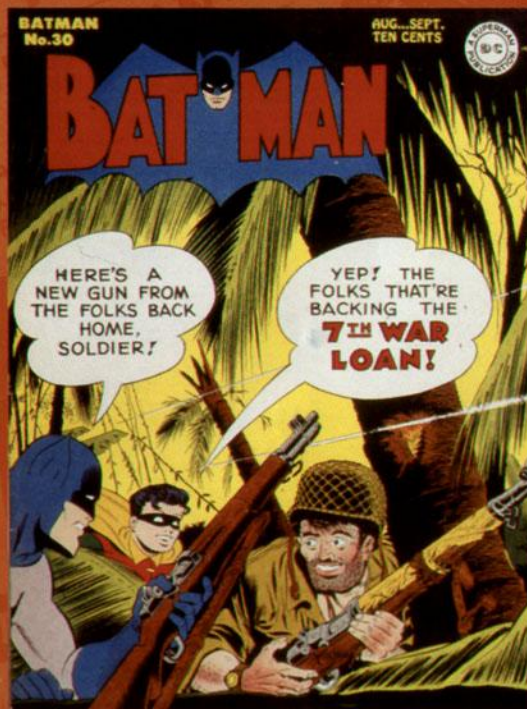
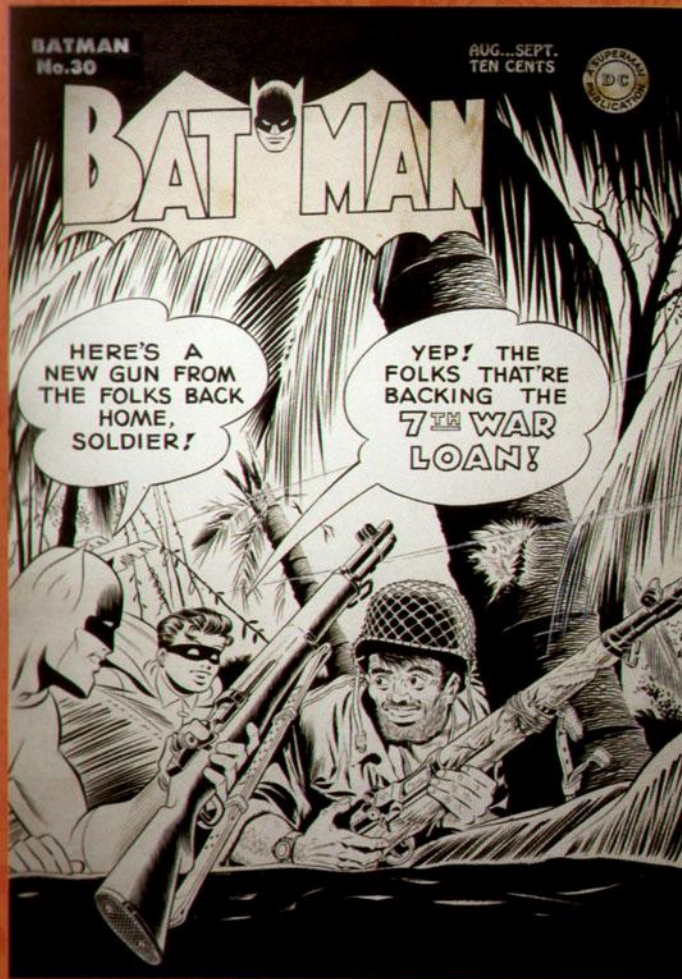
Batman stories' film noir-influenced look in the 1940s and early '50s, would later say that he had to wait two years before his work from 1941 would see print. DC was deliberately stockpiling his boards in case Kane and company were drafted.

**ABOVE LEFT** In his instructions for the cover of *Batman* #30 (August–September 1945), editor Whitney Ellsworth detailed a specific World War II scenario. **ABOVE RIGHT** The scene took shape in his sketch before going to Dick Sprang's capable hands for pencil-and-ink work [opposite page, left].



Sprang was a reliable art source because he'd been classified 4-F due to his weak eyesight, an occupational hazard among cartoonists. Joe Shuster sat out the war for the same reason; even in high school, his rheumy eyes swam behind bottle-thick lenses. His war years were spent managing the Superman art studio, staffed by a steady stream of artists working more or less in Shuster's original style: Paul Cassidy, Leo Nowak, John Sikela, Ed Dobrotka, Sam Citron, Peter Riss, Wayne Boring, and others. The turnover was constant, as most were conscripted by the military—or, like Boring, hired away by DC Comics itself.

For the staff back in New York, the pressures were offset by the fact that the war years were definitely good for the comics business, the way any medium specializing in escapism prospers in tense times. During WWII, overall circulation tripled, as servicemen added comics to their reading habits. At the height of the war, many titles were selling over a million copies a month. *Superman* topped the list, of course—at first.



**RIGHT** The final *Batman* #30 cover (August–September 1945) brought the comics' patriotic message—what Sprang once called his “contribution” to the war—into focus. **ABOVE RIGHT** Harry Donenfeld and a group of soldiers admire a Superman wartime poster.

**Supersalesman** ... the most popular character ...

**Introducing 'SUPER GI'!**  
She'll Be Seeing You In The Funnies!

**Siegel and Green Create New Kind Of GI Comic**

With this issue, Midpacfiction presents a new innovation in comic which revolutionizes the genre. For the first time in the history of the Funnies, a GI character is being created who has been prepared by his creator even before the actual comic is published.

**Model WAC** ...

**Page 2 or Tell Tale** ...

**Capote** ...

Page 10      MIDPACFIC      December 30, 1944

Super heroes wasted no time joining the war effort. Characters frequently appeared on covers promoting war stamps or war bonds, and in interior public service announcements they promoted rationing rules and reminded their readership that "Loose lips sink ships."

**ABOVE** Working without his longtime partner Joe Shuster, army corporal Jerry Siegel introduced a khaki-costumed Soldier of Steel called Super GI (real name Joe Droop) in the December 30, 1944 issue of *Midpacfiction*, an Armed Forces newspaper.

**When Pvt. Joe Droop Gets Conked On The Head, Super-GI Is Born. A Brand-New Comic Strip By Cpl. Jerry Siegel, The Creator Of Superman**

**By CPL. JERRY SIEGEL**  
Midpacfiction Staff Writer

**DEVELOP A PIERCEFUL PERSONALITY!** ...

**TO ENHANCE YOUR BUILT** ...

**STOP! YOU'RE GETTING AWAY!** ...

**A WHOLE MOUTH!** ...

**GETTA WHOLE MOUTH!** ...

**DRAP DRAP!** ...

**UP AND DRAP!** ...

**YOU'LL BE BOPPED DROOP!** ...

**THINK IT WON'T JUST BE A QUARTY LIL' FIBER - BANNING TRAGALS - YET THERE'S MORE DREEST WORK!** ...

**DRAP DRAP!** ...

**C CUT!!! S O B O B!!!** ...

**DRAP DRAP!** ...

**DRAP DRAP!** ...

December 30, 1944      MIDPACFIC      Page 10

Along with those announcements, readers of *Superman* #20 (January-February 1943) found a bit of news about editors Mort Weisinger and Murray Boltinoff, who were almost never mentioned in print. (The indicia carried only one credit, Whit Ellsworth's, and he was listed as editor, rather than by his actual title.) Weisinger and Boltinoff were now in the military, the notice said. What it didn't say was that when Weisinger was drafted in 1942, he arranged for his job to be taken by an old Standard buddy, Jack Schiff.

By that time, Weisinger's duties included assisting Ellsworth on *Superman*, the job-security franchise. Reluctant to jeopardize that position, Weisinger's idea was that Schiff would act as a benchwarmer, and after the war, Weisinger would return to his old job. This was a common policy adopted by many employers toward returning GIs, and Weisinger relied on that. For the duration, the notice said, both the *Superman* and

### WONDER WOMAN BUTTON

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This rare button, reproduced here as a sticker, was offered in *Sensation Comics* #5 (May 1942).

### BATMAN MASK (1943)

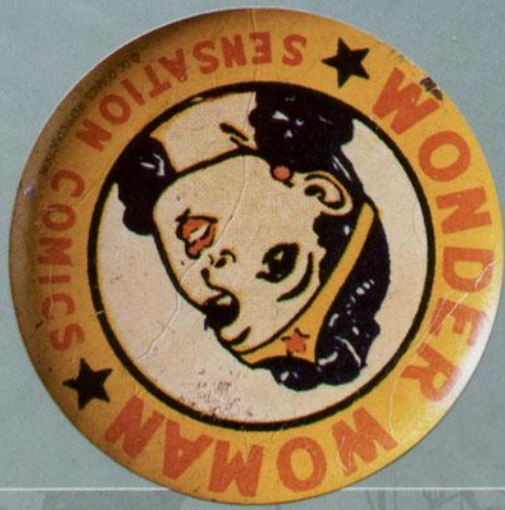
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This promotional mask was created for the *Philadelphia Record* newspaper. On the back, it announces the "Batman and Robin" daily and Sunday newspaper strips.

### JUNIOR JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA DECODER (1942-44)

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The Junior Justice Society made its debut in an ad in *All Star Comics* #14 (December 1942-January 1943). Readers could send in fifteen cents and receive a membership kit that included a welcome letter from Wonder Woman, a badge, this cardboard decoder, a four-page War Bond comic, and a membership certificate (seen on page 51).



*Introducing*  
**BATMAN AND ROBIN**

**BATMAN**

—Avenger of evil,  
—venge of sinners!  
The thrilling comic  
book sensation!



**ROBIN**

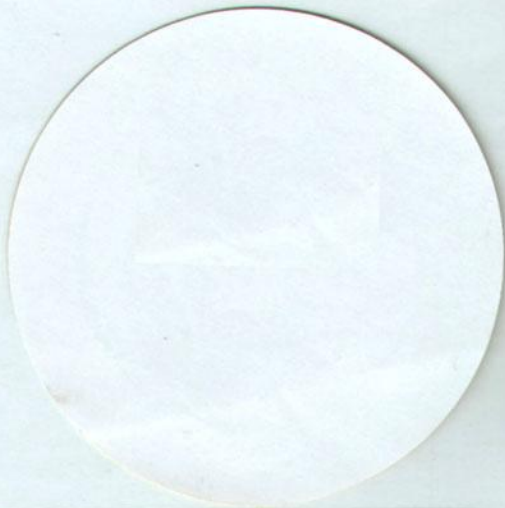
—Batman's audacious  
aide, partner in his  
astounding feats!

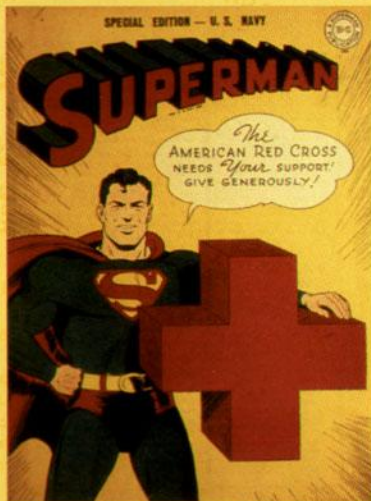


Follow Their Amazing, Prodigious Adventures!

**NOW**  
IN THE PHILADELPHIA RECORD  
DAILY &  
SUNDAY

© DC COMICS.  
REPRODUCTION





**ABOVE** Superman Special Navy Edition for the Red Cross (1945). **ABOVE RIGHT** A McClure Newspaper Syndicate brochure provided house ads for the new "Batman and Robin" strip in 1943. **RIGHT** For much of World War II, the heroes encouraged readers to purchase war stamps and bonds in support of the war effort. **OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT** Newly instated Junior Justice Society members received a certificate signed by Wonder Woman (using her non-costumed persona, Diana Prince). **OPPOSITE PAGE, RIGHT** Viewers were treated to high-stakes action—if not high production values—when Batman came to the small screen in live-action serial form.

## PROMOTION..

Supplied in Mat Form

**HERE COMES BATMAN**

YOUR PAPER

**BATMAN... ROBIN**  
are coming! LOOK FOR THEM!

YOUR PAPER

**LOOK OUT! They're Coming!**

YOUR PAPER

**CAPTURED-BATMAN and ROBIN!**

YOUR PAPER

**What is the BATPLANE?**

YOUR PAPER

**What is the BATMOBILE?**

YOUR PAPER

**Who is the PENGUIN?**

YOUR PAPER

**Who is the...?**

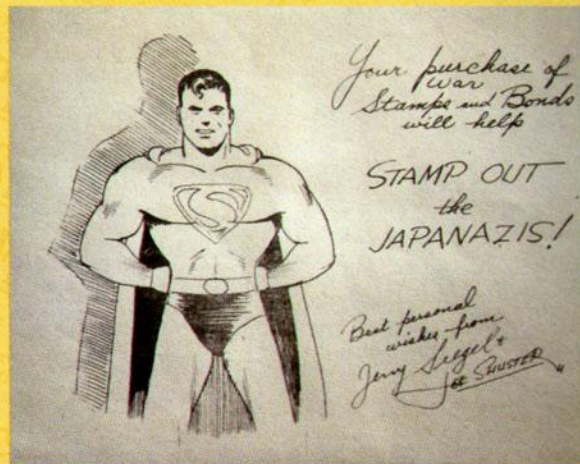
YOUR PAPER

## DON'T DELAY..

**SECURE THIS OUTSTANDING FEATURE FOR YOUR READERS!**

Now available in newspapers for the first time, **BATMAN and ROBIN** is a record of broad, immediate and enthusiastic acceptance. This strip is unique in that it has been tested and proved by actual mass acceptance in those two other mass media, magazines and movies. Conceived and developed by the producers of sensational **Superman**... released and serviced like **Superman** by the McClure Syndicate. **BATMAN and ROBIN** is destined for a top-ranking place in newspaper circles. Don't delay... secure this comic feature for YOUR readers... today!

WRITE · WIRE · PHONE  
**McCLURE NEWSPAPER SYNDICATE**  
 75 WEST STREET (6) · NEW YORK



**The JUNIOR JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA**

Headquarters: c/o All Star Comics  
480 Lexington Ave., New York, N. Y.

**This Certifies that:**

Name Andrew James Fiddler Age 11

Address Adrona, Virginia

has been duly elected a charter member of this organization upon his or her pledge to help keep our country united in the face of enemy attempts to make us think we Americans are all different, because we are rich or poor; employer or worker; native or foreign-born; Gentile or Jew; Protestant or Catholic. And makes the further pledge to defeat this Axis propaganda, seeking to get us to fight among ourselves, so we cannot successfully fight our enemies—knowing full well that we are **all AMERICANS** believing in **DEMOCRACY** and are resolved to do everything possible to help win the war!

This membership is accepted by the above Charter Member upon his or her oath to keep secret the J. J. S. A. code and to follow the announcements of the **JUNIOR JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA** in every issue of "ALL-STAR COMICS".

In Witness of which I have this day set my seal and signature as follows:

*Deana Bruce*  
(WONDER WOMAN) ... Secretary

No. \_\_\_\_\_

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

REGISTERED 1942 BY ALL-AMERICAN COMICS, INC.

Batman lines would be edited by Schiff and Bernie Breslauer, an editor who died not long after joining DC and about whom little is known today.

Almost from the moment he got near Superman, Weisinger had made the case that DC needed to exert more control over its prized possession, rather than letting the feature's creators package it from three hundred miles away, where enforcing editorial fiat could be difficult. Ironically, Weisinger the soldier had no such trouble. While stationed at bases outside New York, he kept in constant touch with Schiff, exerting the kind of remote control over Superman's destiny that Jerry Siegel wanted to maintain, but couldn't, when it was his turn to serve.

Siegel always worried that, as the demand for Superman material stretched the shop's capacity to its limits, DC would become more aggressive in securing talent services directly, and losing Wayne Boring that way intensified the concern. This was the



thought that preoccupied Siegel as he was drafted in 1943. But his fears were not entirely groundless, and this, plus a friend he made in the Army—a lawyer named Albert Zugsmith—would change Siegel's relationship with his creation forever.

The war also created problems for Superman regarding content. Clearly, with all his powers, the Man of Steel could end hostilities in a day, and the press had begun to muse about that very thing. As a pre-emptive strike, a cover story was concocted. In a 1943 story, Superman allowed that he could help out occasionally, but the war could only be won by "America's secret weapon—the courage of her common soldier."

Batman's most memorable wartime experiences took place away from comics. Bob Kane wasn't drafted, but as far as his direct involvement in the comic books was concerned, he may just as well have been. In 1943, he focused his energies on what was, for him as for Siegel and Shuster, a lifelong dream come true: In October of 1943, "Batman and Robin" debuted as a syndicated newspaper strip. Thereafter, Kane would almost never contribute to the periodicals, which were pencilled primarily by Sprang and Robinson, and later in the decade by Lew Sayre Schwartz, Jim Mooney, Sheldon Moldoff, and others. Unfortunately, the Capped Crusader, as he was then known, lacked Superman's durability, and the strip lasted in newspapers for only three years.

Batman's other achievement was to become the first DC hero to reach the live-action screen. Debuting in 1943 was *Batman*, Columbia's ridiculous fifteen-part Poverty Row serial, starring a flabby Lewis Wilson as Batman and Douglas Croft as an overeager (and overage) Robin. The villain in this back-lot ultra-cheapie was a Japanese spy stereotype called Dr. Daka.

Comics proliferated even as wartime paper restrictions were crucifying the pulps and causing the much thinner comics to cut their page counts as well. But markets for pulp writers were drying up. Julie Schwartz had remained a science fiction literary agent



whose star client was Ray Bradbury, maintaining his and former partner Weisinger's Solar Sales Service even as many of his clients—future science fiction novelists like Alfred Bester and Henry Kuttner—made the leap into comics early in the decade.

In February of 1944, with his commissions dwindling, Schwartz interviewed for a story editing position with Mayer. Schwartz had never read a comic book before, and

**ABOVE** Employed by Universal Pictures, Dr. William "Charles Moulton" Marston and his assistant Olive Byrne (in back) used his lie-detector machine to gauge the reactions of a happy moviegoer.

say his first one in the reception area at AA, waiting for Mayer. He later recalled feeling very insecure "because I didn't know a thing about super heroes." He needn't have worried. By 1944, there were already signs that the super-hero craze had peaked.

All American's star flag-waver, Wonder Woman, had spent the war years being a source of discomfort for Shelly Mayer. His dismay was caused by the controversial philosophy of Wonder Woman's indomitable creator. At the time Dr. William Marston was approached by Charlie Gaines in response to his attack on comics, the good doctor, no stranger to self-promotion, was known as a former clinical psychologist, writer of self-help articles, and consulting editor of *Family Circle*. But he was most famous for his claim that he had invented the lie detector—the image of which he sold, along with his own, to many advertisers. "Lie Detector 'Tells All,'" proclaimed a 1938 Gillette ad, "[and] Reveals Startling Facts About Razor Blades!"

Consistent with his apparent duality, that of an intellectual who couldn't bring himself to choose between scholarship and celebrity, Marston would conceive Wonder Woman using a pseudonym, Charles Moulton, yet freely admit to being her creator. He even used the association to promote himself for other kinds of writing assignments.

The doctor was as unconventional a thinker for his time as Alfred Kinsey. He had legitimate advanced degrees and would have seemed less of a curio had he not chosen to leave academia because of his minor fame and unconventional lifestyle—he lived in a communal family arrangement that clucking bluenoses called a *ménage à trois*—which made him too controversial a figure for most scholars' comfort.

What alarmed Mayer was that Marston was given to such controversial utterances as, "Wonder Woman is psychological propaganda for the new type of woman who should, I believe, rule the world." Or that Wonder Woman "satisfies the subconscious, elaborately disguised desire of males to be mastered by a woman who loves them." Marston contended that his scenes in which the girls of Paradise Island "begged for chains and enjoyed wearing them" were "the one truly great contribution of my . . . strip to the moral education of the young. The only hope for peace is to teach people who are full of pep and unbound force to enjoy being bound . . ."

Mayer would appeal to Marston to cool the rhetoric in public, but it tended nevertheless to confirm his worst fears that Wonder Woman's manacle-like, bullet-deflecting bracelets and magic lasso, whose truth-compelling powers usually inspired one or two scenes per story of someone being tied up, were exactly what they looked like.

But on May 2, 1947, just as the reactionary forces of moral outrage and reform were turning their baleful gaze to comic books, and Jack Liebowitz had reached the end of his patience with the feature's more questionable emphases, Marston died of cancer. His passing cleared the way for transforming Wonder Woman into something that would be perceived as far more wholesome.

Meanwhile, writer Joe Simon and artist Jack Kirby, who had done their part for patriotism by creating the Captain America feature for Timely (later Marvel), had gotten into a dispute with that publisher and had now moved to DC. One of their new creations, Boy Commandos—an improbable fantasy about a multinational kid gang traveling the world opposing the Nazis—began in *Detective* in June, 1942 and was so successful that the Commandos had their own book before the end of the year. This without a single mask or cape among them.

As the country relaxed into peacetime, signs of upheaval were definitely visible on the comic book horizon. Julie Schwartz, funny-animal specialist Breslauer, and the recently hired Larry Nadle, who would serve the publisher as its primary non-adventure editor

"Superman" Is A  
Hit Over KZRM

Fans Stop Dinner Activities  
During Broadcast

RE AIRCASTER

Superman is a hit over KZRM

show during the broadcast

at the KZRM radio station

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MEMO from M.C. GAINES

"Doc" Marston has long  
been an advocate of all right  
types of comic magazines  
and is now a member of the  
Editorial Advisory Board of  
all "D.C. Superman" Comics.

I believe you will enjoy  
reading the attached  
article which appeared  
some time ago in "Family  
Circle," a publication  
with a circulation of  
over 2,000,000 copies.

M.C.G.

William Moulton Marston

Introducing Extra 10 who  
WU

WORDER WOMAN

Daily Newspaper Strip

No.1

panel 1 - Sub title: Who IS wonder woman?

Caption: Captain Steve Trevor, brilliant young officer  
in the Army Intelligence Service, crashes while flying  
over lonely seas and disappears in a smother of mist and  
foam.

(Trevor's plane nose diving into a sea covered with heavy mist, a  
fountain of water splashes up where the plane hits. Trevor's figure  
thrown clear of the plane, is falling head down, arms and legs waving  
helplessly, beside the plane into the sea.

Trevor: No hope of rescue here - this is the end!

2. Caption: On the official Army rolls at Washington Captain  
Trevor is listed "killed in pursuit of duty".

(Trevor's secretary is sitting at her desk, pen in hand and army records  
in front of her. With her other hand she is making a gesture of appeal  
to Colonel Darnell who stands at the desk. Tears are running down the  
girl's cheeks.)

Secretary: Isn't there any hope he may be saved?

Colonel: None whatever. There's no land charted within a  
thousand miles of where Steve went down!

3. Caption: But weeks later, to the utter astonishment of  
everybody, a beautiful girl appears with Captain Trevor in  
her arms!

(Wonder Woman holds Trevor on her outstretched hands, presenting him to  
an amazed hospital doctor. A nurse may also appear in panel for atmos-  
phere.)

LEFT M. C. Gaines's memo regarding Marston's infamous Family Circle article. ABOVE A page from Marston's script  
for a "Wonder Woman" newspaper strip in which Wonder Woman meets her future love interest Steve Trevor.

February 23, 1941.

Dear Mayer:

Enclosed find first script of SUPREMA, THE WONDER WOMAN, revised according to our understanding and on the date I promised - will send this special delivery Monday morning.

I hope you'll call me up about any changes in the story, names, costumes or subject-matter - as to arrangement of panels, etc., that's your business. If you want to re-write opening and final legends, that's okay too.

You know, in fiction or articles, if you hit a universal theme, symbols or experience, not merely reader identification but something more, a racial truth, you get really tremendous results. Whereas if you merely follow a fad slavishly you don't get far or travel long. In this theme I am using I fully believe that I am hitting a great movement now under way - the growth in power of women and I want you to let that theme alone - or drop the project. But I am sure, from our talk, that you see it as I do.

Bear with me while I mention the under-meaning here. Men (Greeks) were captured by predatory love-seeking females until they got sick of it and made the women captive by force. But they were afraid of them (masculine inferiority complex) and kept them heavily chained lest the women put one over as they always had before. The Goddess of Love comes along and helps women break their chains by giving them the greater force of real altruism. Whereupon men turned about face and actually helped the women get away from domestic slavery - as men are doing now. The NEW WOMEN, thus freed and strengthened by supporting themselves (on Paradise Island) developed enormous physical and mental power. But they have to use it for other people's benefit or they go back to chains, and weakness. Now all this is true and besides making just as exciting plots as false or phony themes, will inevitably hit a deep responsive chord, in time, in readers' minds - even in the medium of comics magazines! So that's why I want to keep this theme straight and just as it is.

I am sending Peter, the artist, a carbon of this script so he'll be prepared to go over it with you. Let me know when you want him and I'll send him down. Sincerely,  
S. Sheldon Mayer,  
229 Broadway St., N.Y.C.

April 16, 1942.

Dear Sheldon

Here it is and I think I got EVERYTHING in but the cat's tail. After you phoned I tore the rest of it apart and inserted the catnip incident and the promotion of Trevor to a Majority.

In this 21 episode for the W.W. Quarterly #1, we now have the Amazon history, the Aphrodite versus Hera theme, Paradise Island, the anti-moon rules, losing the birthright business, the mental radio, the Magic Lasso, the Amazon girls' sports, exposing Hala to Steve for future reference, the silent invisible plane, the Amazon-Aphrodite-athena method of creating daughters for the Amazons - a very necessary bit for later use, W.W. as a Wonder Child pulling up cherry trees, Steve a Major, Colonel Barnell as Chief of Intelligence and Diana Prince as W.W. in disguise. If there's anything else of importance in the first six episodes I can't think of it. This ought to launch our pal W.W. on both feet with new readers.

See you Monday, regards -

Mr. Sheldon Mayer,  
Editor, All-American Comics, Inc.,  
252 Lafayette Street, N.Y.C.

M/O-encl.2



ABOVE The note Marston sent to editor Sheldon Mayer accompanying the nearly completed first Wonder Woman story. ABOVE RIGHT A letter from Marston to Mayer underlining his vision for, and rationale behind, the new character. RIGHT A 1942 meeting between Marston, artist Harry Peter, Mayer, and Gaines, photographed by associate editor Alice Marble.

**FREE! AN AUTOGRAPHED PICTURE OF WONDER WOMAN TO ALL THOSE WHO HELP THE MARCH OF DIMES!**

**WONDER WOMAN'S MOTHER, QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS, FOLLOWS EVENTS IN THE MAN RULED WORLD WITH HER MAGIC SPHERE ON PARADISE ISLAND.**

WATCHING WONDER WOMAN THE QUEEN DISCOVERS A STRANGE INVENTION.

WONDER WOMAN IS SUMMONED HOME IN HER SPEEDY INVISIBLE PLANE.

DAUGHTER, EXPLAIN! WHAT IS AN IRON LUNG - SOME NEW TORTURE APPARATUS OF THE MAN-RULED WORLD?

OH NO, MOTHER? IT HELPS CHILDREN TO BREATHE - THERE ARE MANY GOOD INVENTIONS IN THE MAN'S WORLD!

YOU'VE SAVED THIS CHILD'S LIFE - HE'LL SOON BE OKAY IN THE IRON LUNG!

\*IRON LUNG\* - SOUNDS HORRIBLE!

THERE'S MY DAUGHTER CARRYING A SICK CHILD - POOR LITTLE THING!

WHY IS THIS IRON-LUNG NEEDED?

DOCTORS, PORTABLE IRON LUNGS AND SPECIALLY TRAINED NURSES ARE RUSHED WHEREVER CHILDREN ARE STRICKEN. AMERICANS CELEBRATE THEIR PRESIDENT'S BIRTHDAY BY GIVING PARTIES TO RAISE MONEY FOR THIS TREMENDOUS WORK!

A CALL FROM STEVE TREVOR ON THE MENTAL RADIO INTERRUPTS THIS CONVERSATION.

GALLING WONDER WOMAN! MY DESK IS SWAMPED WITH LETTERS ASKING FOR YOUR PIC - WHO SENDS ME TURE! DO YOUR A DIME FOR FANS THINK I'M A THE PRESIDENT'S PHOTOGRAPHER? DENT'S BIRTHDAY YOU ANSWER THEM!

MOTHER, AN IDEA! I'LL GIVE MY PICTURE TO EVERY CHILD FOR YOUR PIC - WHO SENDS ME TURE! DO YOUR A DIME FOR FANS THINK I'M A THE PRESIDENT'S PHOTOGRAPHER? DENT'S BIRTHDAY YOU ANSWER THEM!

THAT'S WONDERFUL! YOU MUST HELP!

HERE'S HOW YOU GET YOUR FREE PICTURE!

EVERY BOY AND GIRL IN AMERICA CAN GET A FREE PICTURE OF WONDER WOMAN. SEND YOUR DIME (OR DIMES) FOR THE MARCH OF DIMES, WITH THIS COUPON. YOUR MONEY WILL BE TURNED OVER TO THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S BIRTHDAY AND YOU WILL RECEIVE YOUR FREE PICTURE!

WONDER WOMAN  
© ALL AMERICAN COMICS INC.  
232 LAFAYETTE ST., NEW YORK CITY

ASAR WONDER WOMAN:  
ENCLOSED, PLEASE FIND AT LEAST ONE DIME FOR THE PRESIDENT'S BIRTHDAY BALL MARCH OF DIMES! IT'S UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS MONEY WILL BE TURNED OVER TO THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR INFANTILE PARALYSIS AND THAT I AM TO RECEIVE A FREE PICTURE OF YOU!

THE COMMITTEE FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S BIRTHDAY  
THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR INFANTILE PARALYSIS  
THE MARCH OF DIMES

Dr. G. F. Wilson, President  
1000 Broadway  
New York City

Send Mr. Nelson  
This is an acknowledgment card from the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. It is not a receipt for the money you have contributed. The money you have contributed will be used for the benefit of the children who are afflicted with this disease.

The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis is a non-profit organization. It is not affiliated with any political party or religious organization. It is not a charity. It is a foundation.

Producing this card involves other of many thousands of people and the money you have contributed will be used for the benefit of the children who are afflicted with this disease.

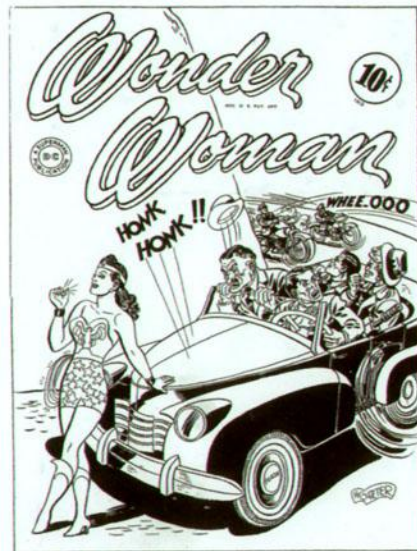
NAME \_\_\_\_\_ AGE \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY AND STATE \_\_\_\_\_

BEAUTIFULLY LITHOGRAPHED IN YOUR COLORS ON HEAVY STOCK SUITABLE FOR FRAMING (SUGGESTION: 5.00 - \$10.00 MORE EACH)

THIS PROJECT HAS THE OFFICIAL APPROVAL OF THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR INFANTILE PARALYSIS!

until his death in 1964, would prove themselves valuable to DC in the immediate postwar years, primarily for their adaptability to changing trends.

Starting in 1941, an obscure backup feature about a high school student in a title from DC competitor MLJ Comics gained such popularity that, by 1944, the super heroes were driven from the book as the teen's tales took it over. One year later, faster than the speeding bullet that once was Superman, and mimicking his trajectory, the character began a long run as a newspaper strip, complementing the one he'd begun as a radio star in 1943. And MLJ changed its name to Archie Comics.



**LEFT** This full-page March of Dimes ad from Sensation Comics #15 (March 1943) promised an autographed photo of Wonder Woman to every boy and girl who pledged support. **ABOVE** In this unpublished cover by Harry Peter, Wonder Woman breezily stops a carload of crooks.

AS THE AMAZON ARMY NEARS VALHALLA, THE VALKYRIES SWEEP DOWN SUDDENLY WITH A STEEL NET.

WE'VE CAUGHT THEM ALL--CLOSE THE NET!



BUT STEEL NETS MEAN NOTHING TO AMAZONS.

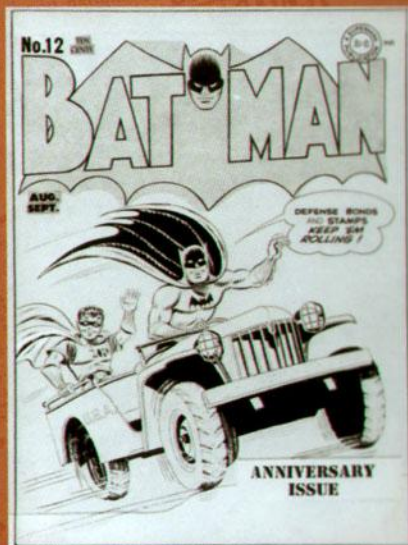
BAH! WHAT FRAIL METAL-- CUT YOURSELVES LOOSE, GIRLS!



PRINCESS GUNDRÄ, FURIOUS AT HER CAPTIVES' EASY ESCAPE, HURLS HERSELF AT THE AMAZON QUEEN.



BATTLE IS JOINED--THE POWERFUL AMAZONS IRRESISTIBLY DRIVE BACK THE VALKYRIES.



**LEFT** Original artwork by Harry Peter from Comic Cavalcade #17 (October–November 1946), a series that began as a collection of super heroes but soon became DC's big book of friendly beasts. **ABOVE** Inked cover art for Batman #12 (August–September 1942) by Jerry Robinson and George Roussos.

BOY  
COMMANDOS  
No.24

NOV... DEC.

TEN CENTS



# BOY COMMANDOS

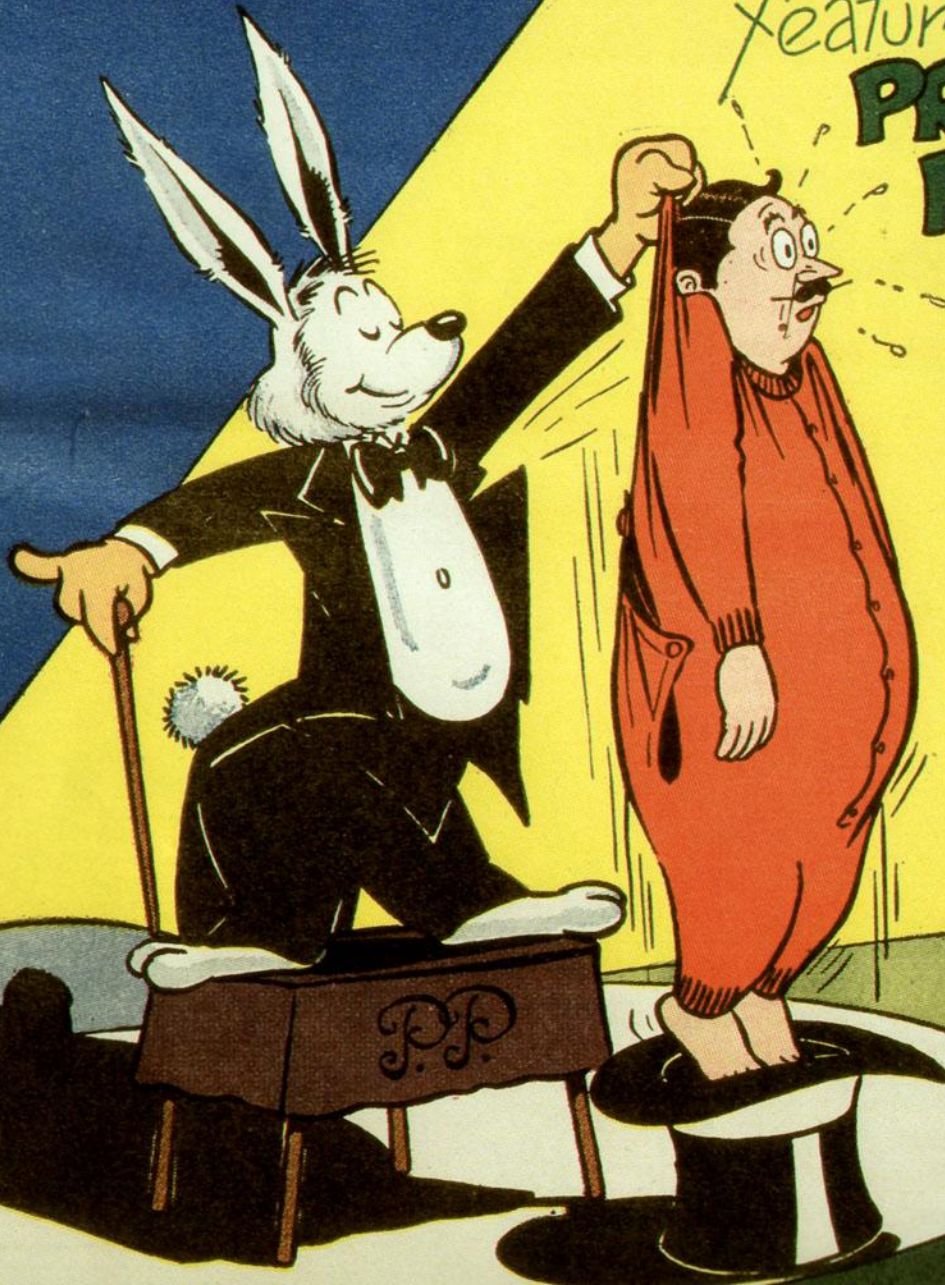
*A Sensational Thriller!  
You can't afford to miss  
"UP, UP AND AWAY!"*



**LEFT** Original cover art for Jack Kirby and Joe Simon's *Boy Commandos* #24 (November–December 1947), the popular comic starring four young belligerents battling an array of foes, and doing it with style. **ABOVE** The *Star Spangled Kid* debuted in October 1941, with a cover by Hal Sherman. Jerry Siegel envisioned him as a title-worthy hero, but the character never quite caught on.

ten  
cents

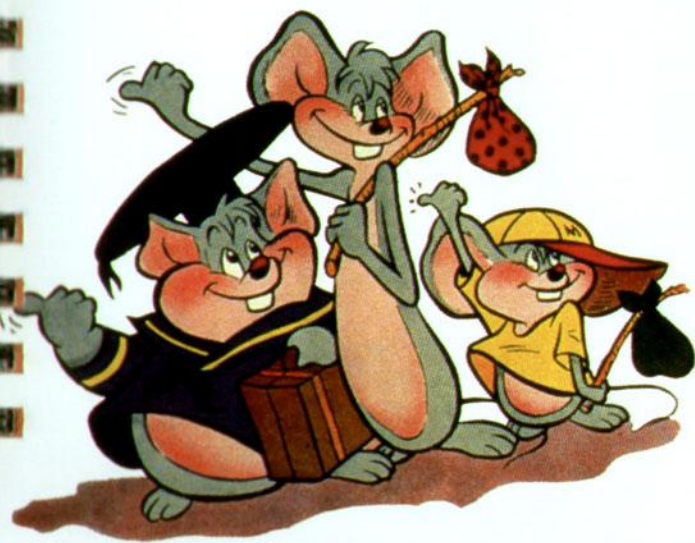
featuring  
**PRESTO  
PETE**



## CHAPTER FOUR



# Twilight of the SUPER HERO



### NO ONE REALLY KNOWS WHY THE SUPER HERO DIED.

Theories abound, but the most persuasive is that the genre was closely associated with fighting, and America had had enough of that once peace was declared.

The super hero started fading from DC's pages even before that, however, more because of the war effort itself than reader apathy. Wartime paper restrictions literally squeezed several costumed heroes into oblivion as page counts were cut repeatedly, and publication frequencies went from monthly to bimonthly or even quarterly. The Hourman feature was discontinued in 1943, for example, and Dr. Fate and the Atom were dropped the following year. By the time victory was declared in Japan in 1945, the home of some of DC's biggest flag-wavers, *Leading Comics*, had become a humor book.

Over the next seven years, all of the super-hero titles except those starring Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman would be either cancelled or reworked to showcase different genres. Obviously, the first new category to get a big push was humor, starting with what comics fans call funny animals—features like the Three Mouseketeers and McSnurtle the Turtle.

**OPPOSITE PAGE** "Presto Pete" from *Animal Antics* #1 (March–April 1946) cover by Howard Post. **LEFT** The dynamic trio of rodents from issue #1 of *Three Mouseketeers*, also by Post. **ABOVE** A rare "Wonder Woman" newspaper strip from June 15, 1944.



Unfortunately, there were no breakout hits to emerge from these, even though DC would continue publishing them well into the next decade. Meanwhile, Archie was making the case that teenagers could be bigger than talking squirrels. DC would have a modest hit with *Buzzy*, a dated-looking but popular feature that was spun off into its own title from its berth in *All Funny*, and *Leave it to Binky*, which would turn out to be the last title edited by Shelly Mayer. He would quit staff to concentrate on cartooning, beginning with Scribbly, then as the company's primary humor contributor, as both writer and artist, into the early 1970s. He is best remembered today for his work in that period, primarily as the creator of *Sugar and Spike* in 1956. But in humor, DC always had more success with titles licensed in from movies, radio, or, later, TV, than with original, homegrown properties.

**ABOVE** Little is known about this mid-1940s gathering of DC Comics executives and editors and (probably) independent news distributors. But Creig Flessel, Jerry Robinson, and Sheldon Malloff were able to identify the following participants: (1) Bill Finger (2) Julie Schwartz (3) Robert Maxwell (4) Sheldon Mayer (5) Mort Weisinger (6) Robert Kanigher (7) Jack Schiff (8) M. C. Gaines (9) Sol Harrison (10) Murray Boltinoff (11) Whitney Ellsworth (12) Harry Donenfeld (13) Jack Liebowitz (14) Paul Sampliner.

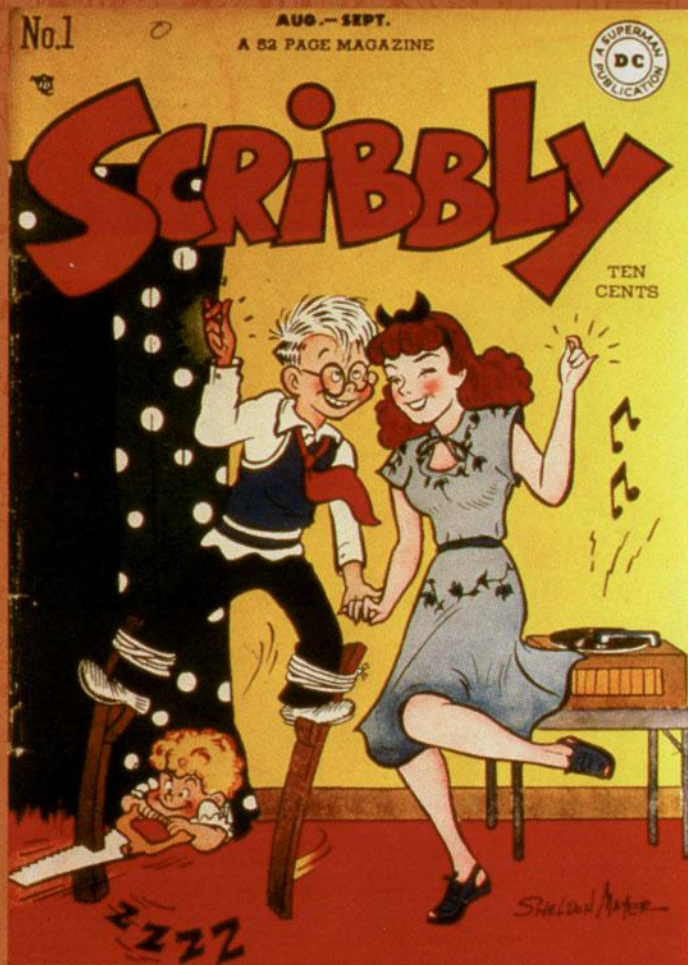
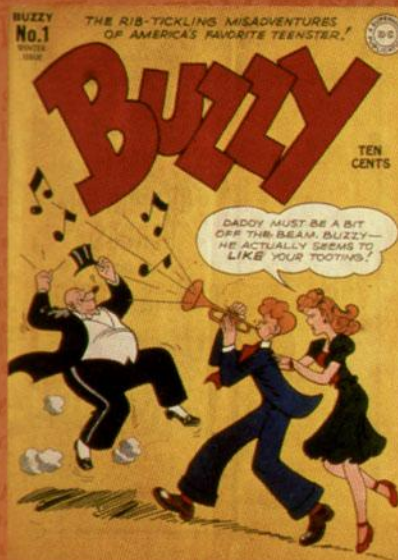
This try-and-fail mirth making, like all later experiments with genres other than super heroes, was facilitated by major organizational and staff changes. The AA books cover-dated April 1945 had introduced AA's own logo—or bullet, as the circular emblem had come to be called—similar to DC's own. But as of the November 1945 books, the last distinctions between the two lines began to dissolve.

By 1946, the AA titles had blank spaces where M. C. Gaines's name once had been. At some time prior to September 25, 1945, the Statement of Ownership date, Gaines had sold out to Detective Comics, Inc. With the November 1945 titles, the All American titles once again bore the DC bullet. And as of September 30, 1946, the official merger was complete, with the combined All American and Detective, Inc. being renamed National Comics.

Not long after, Gaines realized his dream of forming Educational Comics, and felt fulfilled by the illustrated Bible comics his company E.C. put out. But then Charlie was killed in a boating accident, and E.C. fell to his son, Bill. The younger Gaines would reinvent himself as William M. Gaines, publisher of *Entertaining Comics*, and embarrass everyone who knew of his father's loftier ambitions.

As demobilization continued through 1947, more and more draftees from the comic book industry returned to resume their pre-war lives. Many came back to a vastly different landscape, full of bewildering new readership trends and business strategies, relationships strained by time and fading memory, and disorienting shifts in office politics.

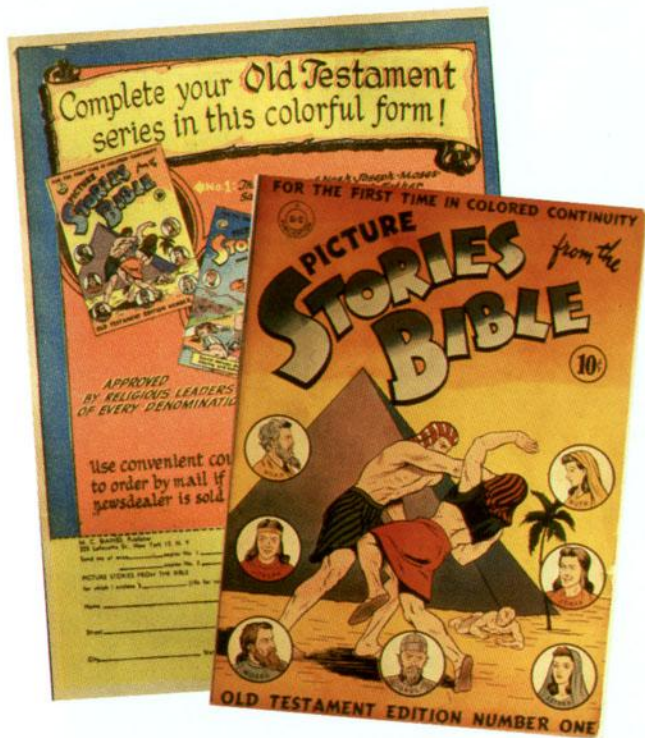
For example, when Mort Weisinger returned to DC, he found himself effectively reporting to Jack Schiff, rather than at parity with him—although the “pecking order,”



**ABOVE LEFT** Banking on the growing popularity of teenage characters, Buzzy was a modest success. Buzzy #1 (1945) made the title's fun-loving focus clear. Art by George Storm. **LEFT** According to this ad, the first issue of Sheldon Mayer's Leave it to Binky was a "sellout." **ABOVE** In Scribbly #1 (August–September 1948), Mayer recast his kid cartoonist, Scribbly, for the new teen market.



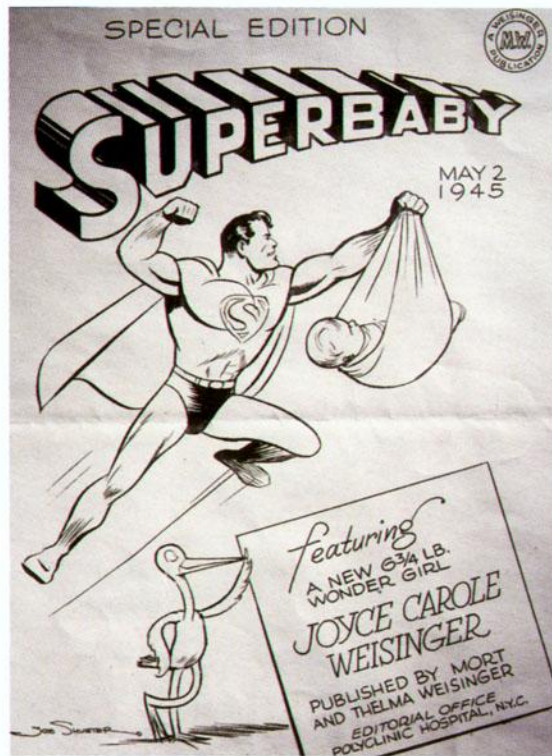
**THIS PAGE** DC's teenage-boy lineup shared something of a preoccupation with the fairer sex—as seen on Irwin Hasen's cover for *Here's Howie* #1 (January–February 1952) and Bob Oksner's cover for *Everything Happens to Harvey* #6 (July–August 1954).



as artist Nick Cardy once described it, was implicit and ambiguous, because, you may recall, the family-owned DC “didn’t bother with titles” much. Whatever the exact nature of the relationship, Schiff didn’t merely hand back Weisinger’s old job.

It was Jerry Siegel who turned out to be the most aggrieved war veteran in comics. In 1943, *Superman* #23 had contained the first Superman story Siegel could not write himself. Though he tried to keep up between maneuvers and latrine duty, most of the material had to be assigned to writers like Alvin Schwartz and Don Cameron.

Cameron, already well respected as the second-best Batman writer after Finger, became ever more valuable to DC thanks to *Superboy*. The first installment of the Man of Steel’s boyhood adventures had been written by Siegel and illustrated by the Shuster shop, but the main conceit was that the boy had used his super powers as a non-costumed prankster. This was rejected by DC because of Jack Liebowitz’s longstanding concerns about setting a good example. Cameron reworked the premise, mandating a last-minute art change to add two images of Superboy in costume. Ostensibly because of this, the story did not include the usual Siegel and Shuster byline. The series, which



began in 1945 and was buried in the back pages of *More Fun Comics* #101, became a surprise hit.

When Siegel returned from active duty and discovered this, he turned to his lawyer friend, Albert Zugsmith, for help. (Zugsmith would later find notoriety in the Hollywood of the 1950s as the producer of many forgettable B-movies and, yet, also two classics: *The Incredible Shrinking Man* and Orson Welles’s *Touch of Evil*.) Siegel filed suit

**ABOVE LEFT** Cover artwork by Don Cameron—not the Batman writer—for *Picture Stories From the Bible* #2 (Winter 1942–43), and an ad for the series, the brainchild of M. C. Gaines and his new company, Educational Comics. **ABOVE** Joe Shuster drew this birth announcement when Mort Weisinger and his wife, Thelma, welcomed their first “Superbaby.”



against Detective Comics, Inc., claiming they used his story without payment, much less credit. The suit raised the question of who had the right to claim ownership of Superman and, although the legal dispute was later settled in 1948, it separated Siegel and Shuster from further involvement with their creation.

**THIS PAGE** Artist Dick Sprang created some of the most memorable images of Batman during the 1940s and 1950s. But the DC editors must have been unhappy with Sprang's drawing of Superman, seen for the first time on this original cover artwork for *World's Finest* #19 (Fall 1945), because Sprang's Man of Steel was replaced with a new Superman drawn on an overlay by Jack Burnley (right).

By then, Weisinger and Schiff had changed the look of the Superman titles, retaining only Wayne Boring and John Sikela from the Shuster shop, and bringing in newspaper cartoonists Al Plastino and Win Mortimer. The latter would go on to become DC's primary cover artist of the postwar era.

When the *Superboy* comic made its debut in March 1949, it benefited from the popularity of the teen humor genre to become the only new successful super hero launch since the war years. Wartime paper rationing had ended in 1946, beginning a newsstand explosion as new comic titles and companies flooded the market. Now, as more monthlies and bimonthlies appeared on the schedule, more talent was needed to fill them.

Few of the new personnel who joined DC at this point would be as useful in setting its new directions as an amazingly fast, impressively versatile, wildly inventive, and deeply eccentric thirty-year-old named Robert Kanigher.



**SUPERMAN-TIM STORE BOOKLET  
(MARCH 1944)**

—  
The Superman-Tim club was sponsored  
by clothing stores from 1942 to 1950. A  
monthly sixteen-page giveaway maga-  
zine featured new articles and activities.

# RALPH'S

YOUTH'S CENTER

367 MAIN ST. CATSKILL, N. Y.

Sec. 562, P. L. & R.

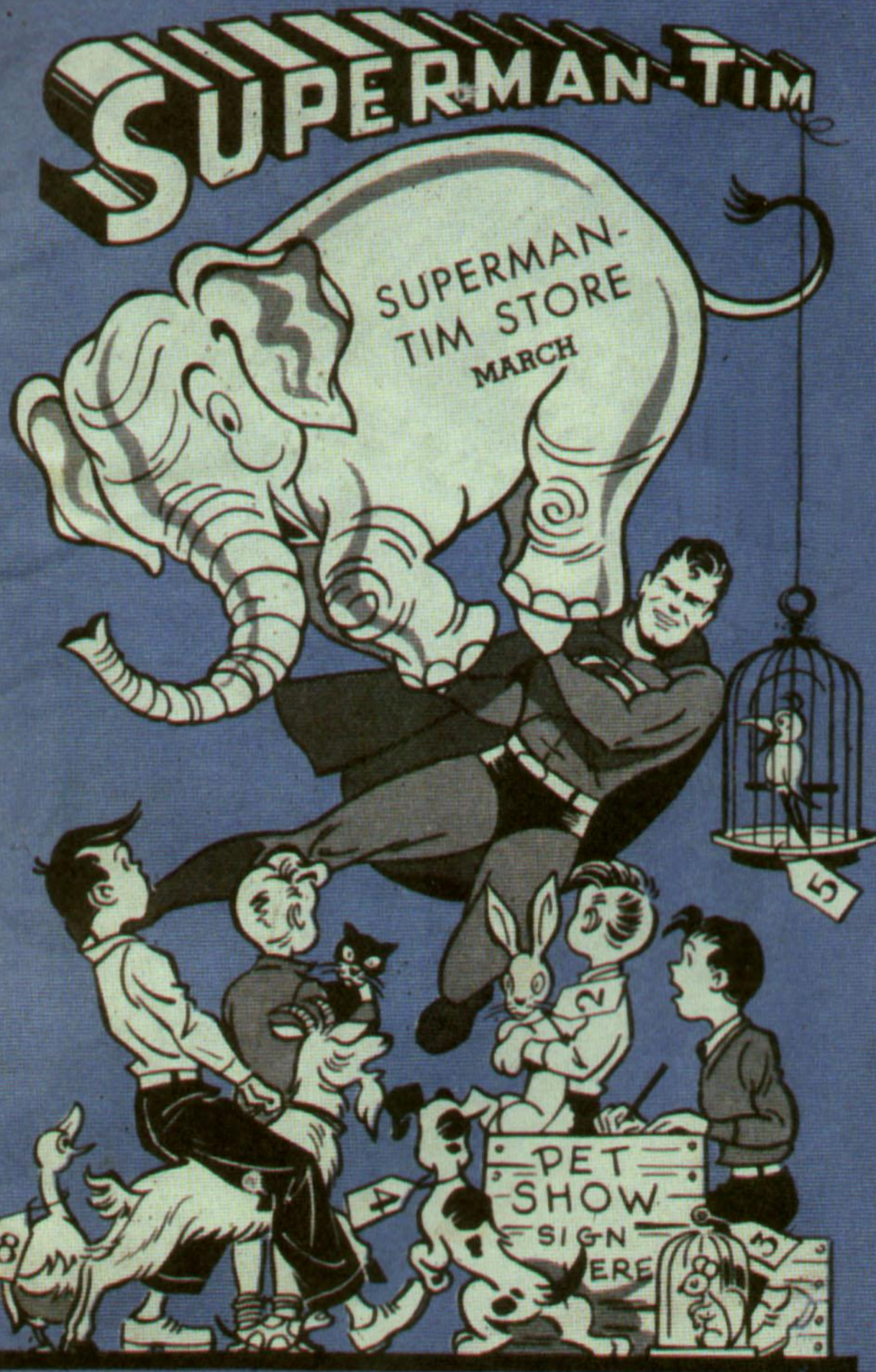
POSTMASTER—If Addressee has moved and new address is known, notify sender on Form 3547, postage for which is guaranteed.



YOU'LL BE IN HARMONY

with the weather if you wear Superman-Tim Clothes! Yep, March may be rough as a lion or gentle as a lamb. But **you** don't have to worry! Just drop around to your Superman-Tim Store. You'll find a lot of just-right clothes for **any** kind of weather!

**SUPERMAN-TIM STORE!!**



# THE PET SHOW ?

By Tim, Great Post (?)

It was the second of March, and as you may know,  
We were all signing up for our animal show.  
When from each of our pets there arose such a clatter,  
We looked in the sky to see what was the matter.

With a flash and a dash (could it be lightning, maybe?)  
No . . . Superman bringing an elephant baby!  
He said, "Here's my entry; he'll get a big prize,  
If not for his beauty, at least for his size!"

Come Dancer, come Prancer, come Dunder and . . .  
(Excuse please! I got a little mixed up!)  
But we never found out if the elephant won,  
For he shivered and shook, and then started to run.

And Superman said, as he chased round the house,  
"Believe it or not, he's afraid of that mouse!"  
"Come," Superman told him, "The best place for you  
Is back with your mother, at home in the zoo!"

"Good luck with your show, and to all a Good Day!"



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# The WINNER can be You!

## 12 SETS



### of these swell Everlast BOXING GLOVES

will go to the winners of this contest! And every winner is going to be tickled pink with such a terrific prize . . . so get busy! Each set contains two pair of boxing gloves made of the finest glove sheepskin, fully lined and stuffed with pure, dust-free, air-blown goat's hair. Full hand pocket to insure proper fit . . . leather re-inforced thumb. And listen to this! Each glove bears the official signature of Joe Louis, and a boxing lesson! You may have your choice between a set containing two pair of gloves, both sized according to your age range (1) or a Father and Son set (2). If winners do not indicate a preference, they will receive set No. 1.

Here are the rules: Make up an original drawing, poem, story or letter about someone you like to hear on the radio. Write your name, age (this is important!) and full address, and mail or bring your entry to the Boys' Department at your Superman-Tim Store before March 24th.

OTHER PRIZES — — 250 GAMES!

# WIN A SUPER COIN COLLECTION!

Here's a prize you will want to keep forever! There are 32 large, bright medallions made of gold colored bronze. Each one carries a sculptured picture of a President of the United States, and a brief biography on the other side. The collection comes in an attractive leatherette and velvet case. Just send an original drawing, poem, story or letter with Patriotism as the subject. Mail or bring your entry to the Boys' Department at your Superman-Tim Store.

NOTICE: Lots of you fellows have asked if you may send more than one entry for each contest. The answer is YES. Send as many as you like (and no box tops are necessary!)



## BOXING isn't "FIGHTING"!

One day I came home looking pretty messed-up and feeling mighty low. Dad said, "What's up, Tim? Something wrong?" "Well, it was a fight," I answered, "I didn't start it, but I just couldn't get out of it. And I don't like to get pushed around, even if Bill Jenkins is bigger than I am!" Dad didn't say any more, but the next night he came home with some boxing gloves. After my first lesson, I said, "Jeepers! When I get a little better at this, I'm going to wallop that Bill Jenkins, but good!"

"No," answered Dad, "You'll find that the ability to box keeps a fellow out of fights! In the first place, the knowledge that he can take care of himself will make him more good natured to the kind of joking that he might otherwise consider 'insults'. He's not afraid, and he knows the other fellows realize that.

Boxing is called the Art of Self Defense, but it also is a sport that strengthens the body, and teaches you self-control and good sportsmanship."

P.S. When Bill Jenkins learned that Dad was teaching me to box, he asked if he could get in on the lessons. Now we have some keen work-outs together, but never a "fight"!

## WHAT IF.....



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THIS STORY? IF YOU CAN'T READ THE SECRET CODE, ASK FOR A MEMBERSHIP CARD AT YOUR SUPERMAN - TIM STORE, AND LEARN HOW!



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## AIRLAND ADVENTURES

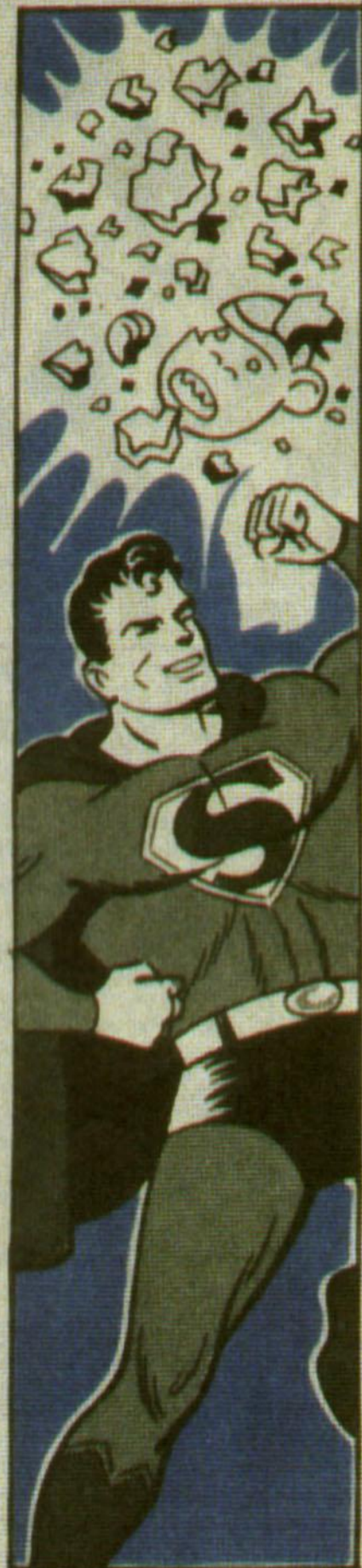
"While in his Subaerobile, Tim discovers 'Airland', high in the sky. He meets Professor Twinkum, who tells him that Airland used to be a peninsula. When the professor's new experiment, a pink powder, was accidentally spilled, the peninsula broke off and went soaring into the sky. His assistant, Smith-Jones, has disappeared with the rest of the powder, and strange things are happening!]

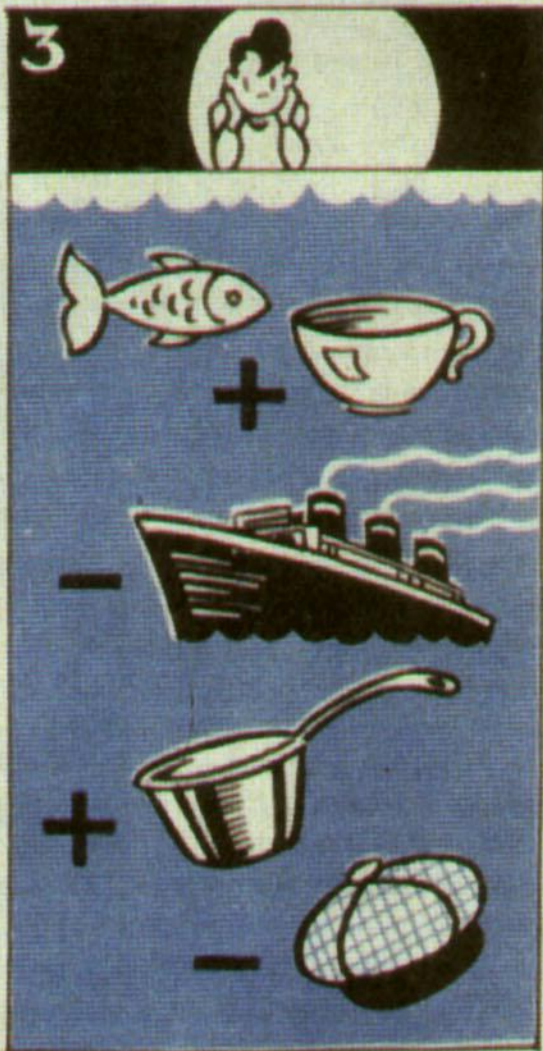
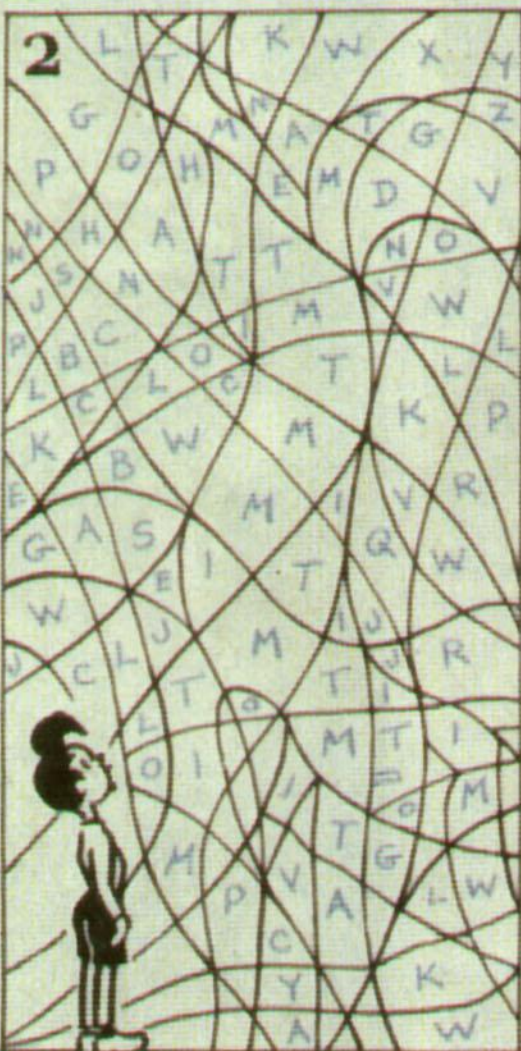
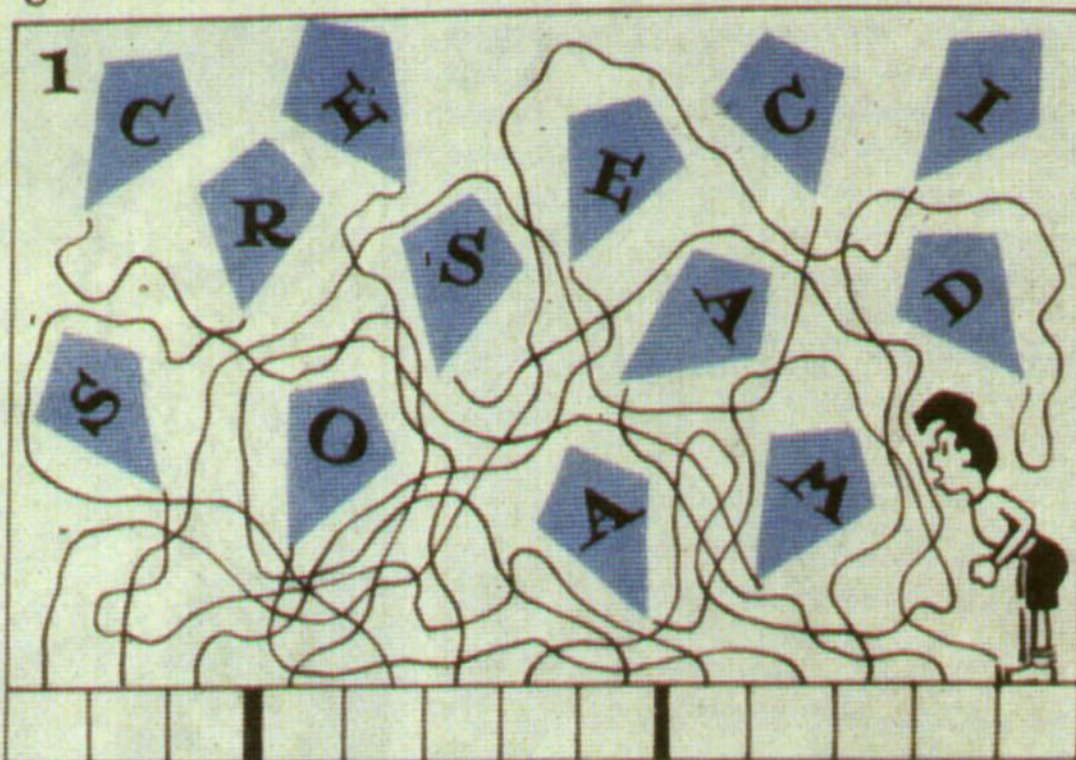
"It's been quiet around here for almost a week, Professor," said Tim. "Of course, I don't want to look for trouble, but things are getting a little dull." He picked up a statuette of three small monkeys, "Gee, I haven't seen one of these for years. I remember that they represent 'See no Evil, Hear no Evil and Speak no Evil.' Say, one of them seems to have some pink stuff on it. I wonder . . ." One of the monkeys moved, stood up and stretched, and jumped out of Tim's hand! As they watched in amazement, the tiny animal grew larger and larger until he became a full-sized ape! "My goodness," said the professor, "I've almost finished an antidote for that mysterious Pale Pink Pixillating Powder, and now's the time to try it out!" He ran from the room and returned with a smoking vial, the contents of which he poured over the ape. "Hey!" said Tim, "Something is happening! Look! You can see right through him! Jeepers . . . he's turned to glass! But he can move!" As the ape lunged toward him, Tim struck out, then held his fist and shouted, "Yeow! Did I skin my knuckles!" This seemed to startle the creature, and he dashed out the door, went loping across the field, and into the woods. In a short time, the professor pointed toward the mountains. "He's climbing up there . . . see the sun flashing on the glass." "Maybe we can catch him," sug-



gested Tim, "He's sure to come back and do some damage. Let's dig a trap . . . the kind they use for wild animals in Africa." Several hours later, Tim and Professor Twinkum stood looking down into a deep hole at the foot of the mountain where the ape was last seen. "Using that old cocoanut door-stop for bait was a keen idea," said Tim. "Perhaps, perhaps," answered the Professor, as they turned toward home, "But I fear that our trap isn't constructed very expertly. However, we shall see." The next morning both were anxious to find out if the trick had brought results. But as they stepped to the edge of the trap, there was a rumbling sound overhead. Looking up, they had a glimpse of the ape far above . . . and a huge boulder thundering down the mountainside! "Dive!" gasped Tim, and they both jumped to the bottom of the pit in a split second before the great rock crashed above them. "Well, this is just dandy," said Tim, as they huddled in the darkness, "We're sealed in as tight as a couple of sardines." Professor Twinkum said nothing, but soon after he began to cough. "Gee, I know what you don't want to tell me," whispered Tim, "The air won't last long, will it?" Luckily the professor didn't have to answer. The boulder disappeared, and a voice asked, "What kind of game is this? Hide and seek?" "Oh, my friend, Superman," said the professor, "You are certainly most welcome. Dear me, yes!" "I think I'd better put your pal up there out of commission," said Superman. He flashed toward the ape, who began to leap from rock to rock. But for only a moment. One blow of Superman's powerful fist shattered the glass into a thousand glittering pieces. "Well, that's the end of that episode," said Tim, as they walked back to the cottage, "Wonder what's next."

**Do You ? Read the April  
Airland Story!**





O BOY!  
Ask for  
YOUR  
NEW  
STAMP!!



Paste your  
**NEW STAMP**  
here or  
in your  
**SUPERMAN-TIM**  
Stamp Album!



### TUCKO'S ERRANDS ARE PUZZLES!

Tim says that when his little brother Tucko is sent on an errand, he must go by way of Australia. For instance, the other day Tucko's mother sent him on a hurry-up trip to the grocery store. But he kind of got side-tracked. 1. Tucko stopped to help some of his pals untangle their kites. He was so "tired" afterwards that all he could think of was having a couple of.....? Follow the lines from each kite to the square below and write in the letter. Then you'll find out. 2. Next Tim's little brother played with a..... that he met. Fill in the spaces that contain the letters T, I or M and you can add the missing word. 3. Then Tucko got interested in something strange floating in the pond. Add and subtract the objects shown here, and you'll find the name of something Tucko really goes for. (So do you!) By that time, the speedy errand boy had forgotten what his mom wanted at the store. We won't tell what happened when he got home... that's a "whopper" of a story. But you'll find the answers to the puzzles on page 11.

Yep, there's another of those great big colorful Superman-Tim Stamps waiting for you. Just ask for it at your

### TIM STORE SUPERMAN-

Remember that you can get a new and different stamp every month. Don't miss even one of this exciting series. The March stamp has a picture of Superman, Tim and the mysterious glass ape in the Airland Story. And in secret code, you'll find the answer to this question: What unusual "character" will appear in next month's story? Here's a riddle clue:

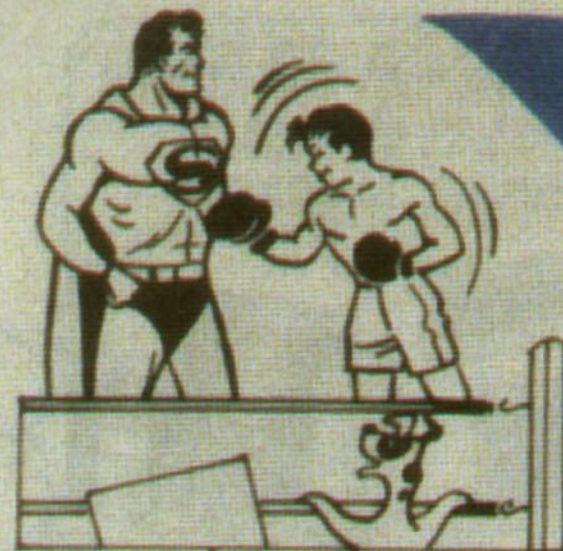
IT HAS NO CORNERS, BUT ISN'T ROUND!  
AND AT A FARM IT'S USUALLY FOUND.  
THERE IS A "SUNNY SIDE", AND YET  
THIS ONE'S AS TOUGH AS IT CAN GET!

We'll admit that it's a puzzler, but we think you'll guess the first part, anyway. Then get your stamp at your Superman-Tim Store and decode the answer.

HERE'S A  
COLOR-CUTOUT  
THAT MOVES!



TIM'S PRIVATE  
TRAINING  
CAMP



## TIP

It's just about kite time, isn't it? And sometimes that old March wind is pretty rugged. Did you ever lose a good kite because a sudden gust of wind broke the string? Here's how to avoid that. Make a chain of rubber bands and tie it into the string. Be sure that the slack in the string more than equals the full stretch of the rubber.

RUBBER  
BANDS

Superman said that since Tim is taking boxing lessons, he could practice that old one-two on him instead of buying a training bag. And of course, Tim really puts everything into it. Wham! But no matter how hard he hits, Superman laughs and says, "Hm! Was that a butterfly that just landed on my chest?" If you want to see Tim working out on Superman, here's how. First trace both patterns on heavy paper or light-weight cardboard. Then add color, and cut them out around the heavy outside lines. Put the two parts together (the Tim section in the back) with knotted wire, a staple or knotted thread. Now move the tab at the bottom back and forth and watch Tim go into action!

Don't Be A Whoo Shoo! He's The Boy Who Gets This Magazine Every Month, But Never Buys Any Of His Clothes At The Superman-Tim Store! Geel





Tim is surely kept busy sending  
out all of those  
**WINNER CHECKS**



## WINNERS

(NOVEMBER)

Tim Schaefer, Thomas Palmer, Jacob Villhauer, William Wainwright, Roy Yeager, Lloyd Kamins, Irwin Bahl, Martin Ross, James Wilde, George Kranz, Joseph Heid, Michael Reilly, Louis De Respino, Gerard Flood, Robert Morton, Charles Blaylock, Russel Hurst, Pat Reams, Jack Young, Jerry McCord, Ed Watts, Meyer Smolensky, Thomas Applewhite, Neal Rogers, Joe Behrens, J. Beeler, Freddie Williams, Donnie Grimes, Sidney McCrory, Billie Musslewhite, Rhymes Humphreys, David Yoder, Richard Dietz, Joe Wagner, Albert Cook, Richard Gresko, Ted Schvimer, Bob Gates, Pat Soria, John Montgomery, Thomas Uhl, Jim Smoot, Franklin Underwood, Richard Steinmetz, Tommy Stevens, Larry Curson, Thomas Bradford, Gerald Jones, George Mellillo, Harold Roos, Dana Pond, Paul Lucas, Jean Bouchard, Marcel Savoie, Gerald Endrizzi, Donald Pagel, John Burmeister, Ronald Ferguson, Thomas Schaus, Richard Fritz, Ralph Clemens, Jerry Meister, Ronnie Cline, Harry Biedstein, Jackie Prewitt, Burton Sacks, Dick Spencer, Anthony Misetick, Ronnie Roloff, Gary Hathaway, Antonio Rios, Stevie Bisheff, Teddy Aroney, Michael Chin, Allan Forman, Victor Moretto, Jack Crawford, Bobby Price, John Crocker, Raymond Thick, Allan Miller, John Armstrong, Paul Belanger, Rodney Cumber, Lafayette Heath, Robert Brown, Ray Gilbert, Gerald Rea, Jimmy Middleton, Larry Casey, Richard Rackleff, Gary Kaim, Bruce Gottschall, Stuart Sandrew, Daniel Solin, David Cullen, Dale Adams, Kenneth Holsten, Grover Parker, Robert Spohn, Howard

Jacobson, David Pratt, Patrick Burke, Mike Farley, Ray Yinger, Jim Reynolds, John Fisher, J. Forrest Fisher, Alexander Ghiz, Nickle Haddad, Louis Wanzer, John McCorey, Dale Crouser, David Marbin, D. Todd Garden Jimmie Carden, Laman Parker, William Gold, Robert Rhoads, Jimmy Henroid, Reas Summerton, Russell Albers, Jack Krebs, Conrad Knoten, Harvey Tash, Donald Steward, Eddie Boische, Jack Helligman, James Serati, Gene Fickel, Ronald Landmann, Martin Finkelstein, Jerry Keller, Jerome Krasner, George Schanck, John Murphy, Michael Murray, John Moellenhoff, Jimmy Feibiger, Dennis Christman, Burl Stamp, Melvin Soellner, Michael Mickes, Robert Sinak, Smith Bruner, Jack Axelrod, Bobby Henroid, David McDowell, Thomas Julius, Jerrold Kaiser, James Reeves, Bob Sabo, Thomas Kaiser, Ronald Gorman, Jack Muth, Lloyd Shaw, Gerald Wolff, Joseph Burgess, Alan Shaffer, David Schroder, David Rataichak, Richard Puricelli, Joe Starr, Herbert Inglove, Carl Walker, Stanley Mucik, Phillip Gumprecht, Vernon Casell, Scott, Bill Seals, Ronnie Perdue, H. Heim, Robert Winters, Tommy Hogan, Henry Selvitella, Edward Rand, Paul Reynolds, Leon Gluckman, John Moran, Louis Costello, Leonard Murphy, Paul Ginat, Tom Shea, Michael Klein, Richard Gilling, Dick Radway, Loran Sheffer, Roger Noyce, James Byrne, Jerry McGrath, David Sandbo, Michael Comford, Michael Gagliaro, Richard Gagliaro, Billy Halby, Billy Junio, John

## MORE WINNERS

Sterling, Bill Fox, Ernest Ford, Aubrey Capelan, Marc Covington, George Straud, Ronald Gaco, Ray West, Paul Scardina, Joseph Rakocy, Bruce Fogarty, Hollister Cantus, Robert McConnell, William Oberes, Dick Worst, Charles Harris, Carl Heffner, Larry Foote, David Gross, Norman Robert, Osterday, Bob Anderson, Fred Schnelder, Bob Salbert, Fred Newfield, Aaron Cohen, Tommy Farmer, Bobby Brown, Frank Soosentini, Billy Hegeman, John Johnson, Robert Hart, Otto Wahl, John Bock, Edward Wilson, Bob Bowyer, Gary Palmer, Don Reynolds, Warne Hoff, Henry Rosiak, Pierce Darnell, Arnold Kerven, Tommy Walters, Richard Brower, Jack Gower, Jimmy Davis, Edward Tschopp, Bobby Hurst, Jimmy Turtle, Robert Hohnstock, Lary Goldenberg, Robert Barber, Donald MacDonough, Sheldon Yampolsky, Charles Winter, Robert Mack, Raymond Jones, John O'Donnell, Michael Hughes, James Stewart, Jack Goldey, Sanford Engber, Charles Reed, Marvin Levine, Alan Malinger, Harry Siegel, Donald Luciano, Robert Kinkado, Jerry Janco, Allan Smaul, Edward Watson, Richard Mass, Jerry Berger, Joseph Stolarczyk, Raymond Ribeiro, Herbert Hanan, Thomas Hale, Roger Serota, William Smedley, Donald DiPietro, Patrick McGovern, Jerome Perr, Francis Mullen Billy Gaus, Frank Pionic, Jerry Schwartz, Erwin Schwartz, Edward Gudknecht, Jimmy Flood, Joe Kimbriugh, Lyonel Silas, Scotty Adkin, L. Stewart, Lynn Owens, Eugene Anderson, H. Lockart, Ted Johnson, Brian Johnson, Jonathan Sargent, John Philbin, Joseph LeBlanc, Billy Hoag, Yale Newman, Richard Dubs, Theodore Dubs, Robert Dubs, Glenn Zeiders, Beal Methot, Santo Grangrave, Larry Welch, Jonathan Hoskins, Horace Pomeroy, Edward Kennell, Bobby Pendergraph, Philip Jones, Jackie Manning, Edward Marois, Ronald Moeske, Ronald Romencik, Richard Wareglin, Charles Moyer, Glen Eggers, Carl Cots, Bill Schell, Paul Stringham, Galen Hodge, Jerry Kasper, John Vander Heyden, Wayne, Root, Paul Koenig, Clyde Couch, John Hoyt, Edward Kosiol, Albert Fairorth, Leonard Fairorth, Thomas Remetes, Don Watson, Ronald Ellik.

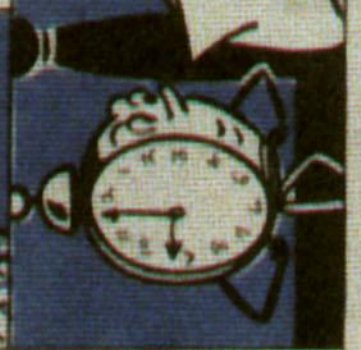


THINKING OF  
ALL THE NEW  
CLOTHES YOU  
WILL NEED  
FROM YOUR  
SUPERMAN-  
TIM STORE!

BECAUSE IT'S  
A QUARTER-  
TO-EASTER-  
TIME, AND  
SO YOU  
SHOULD  
START...



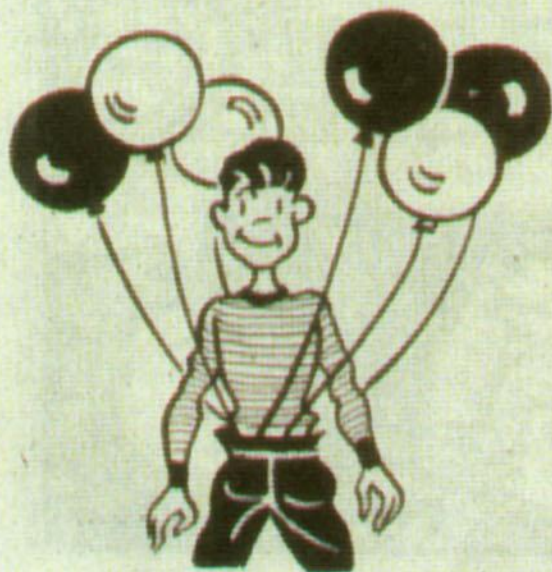
WHAT  
FOR, HUH?



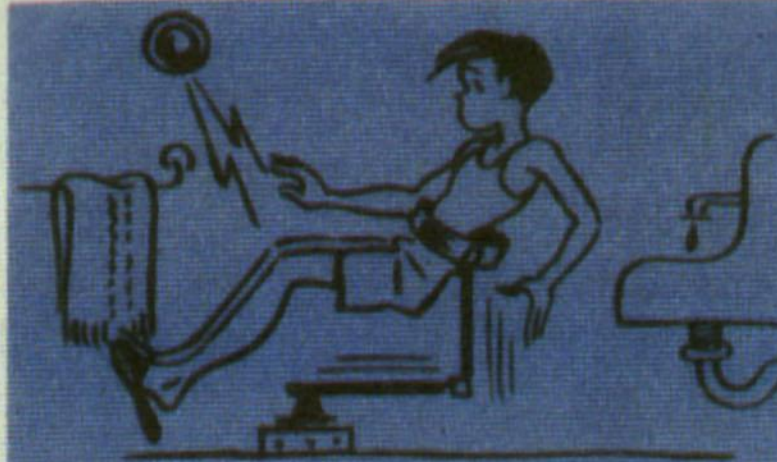
# WIN \$1

SAY KIDS! HERE'S A SWELL CHANCE TO WIN SOME EXTRA SPENDING MONEY! SEND US YOUR OWN ORIGINAL INVENTION!

Pants holder - upper for boys too thin to wear belts. By Paul Prazza.



Laurence Fetler suggests dishes that can be eaten after the meal. (Bet you Laurence gets kitchen duty sometimes!)



If hands aren't clean, electric eye starts machine which pulls victims back to the wash basin. By Billy Breuch.



The man who never gets scared at mystery programs, pulls lever and a cold hand touches his neck. By Martin Millison.

Umbrellas for chickens, so they won't get "mad as a wet hen." By James Baker.



# WIN \$1



Kanigher, who claimed Dostoyevsky, Gorky, Shakespeare, Freud, Joyce, and Sophocles as influences, had started writing as a boy. A precocious child, he had published short stories and poetry before winning the *New York Times'* Collegiate Short Story Contest in 1932, at the age of seventeen. The disappointments came early, too: he had written for local radio but didn't get much further with the networks than a handful of scripts. He had also completed several unproduced plays by the time he found a steady paycheck in comics.

Kanigher began at Fox Comics in 1940, writing *Blue Beetle* and numerous other features at the astonishing rate of one hundred pages a week, making ten times what the average comics scribe earned. He was legendary for stunts like producing overnight fill-ins by dictating scripts to artists over the phone.

When Shelly Mayer hired Kanigher as an assistant editor in 1946, not even Mayer expected that, while on staff, Kanigher would maintain his writing schedule, becoming DC's most prolific writer-editor. Though a DC staffer, he could still write-for-hire eight

**ABOVE** This Wonder Woman Valentine's Day card from the 1940s was probably an in-store promotional item.

to ten pages on a portable typewriter aboard the commuter train, morning and night. It was this frantic productivity that, some say, contributed to the nervous exhaustion that would later interrupt his career for several years.

As AA was morphing into National, Kanigher quickly took to scripting all of the line's super heroes except Superman and Batman. He rapidly earned himself the mantle of utility infielder—the guy Shelly Mayer knew could always be counted on in a pinch to write any of the old AA features, no matter how tricky they seemed. When Marston died, it was Kanigher that Mayer turned to first. Kanigher was promoted to full editor the very night he turned in his first Wonder Woman script.

Previously, AA management took it for granted that although Marston was aiming at a female audience, it was mostly boys who were reading Wonder Woman. But by 1947, Archie had taught the industry that girls really *were* reading comics, and thus began the postwar push to lure them with teen humor, then romance—tame radio-soap-opera-style storylines with provocative pictures added—a genre believed to have been invented in 1947 by Simon and Kirby for a small publisher named Prize/Crestwood.

National eyed the new format carefully for signs of success while pursuing female readers in its own way. Eventually, in 1949, National entered the romance field with *Girls' Love Stories*, which was soon joined by several companion titles. National may not have invented the form, but its romance line quickly became the slickest and most successful in the business, lasting into the early '70s and setting the standard that others had to beat. But for *Wonder Woman's* publisher in 1947, strong female characters were what they knew. So before the company started backing away from capes and masks altogether, Kanigher created a horde of super women, both heroines and villainesses.

During the war, however, the comic book readership had also swelled to include the servicemen who were now civilians, men whose experiences had made them worldly, cynical, and less innocent about sex. The conflicting values in the postwar era's view of women, in which Rosie the Riveter was pushed aside as Johnny came marching home to take back his job, made many of the strong women introduced in the comics more sex object than role model. In their design, all seemed eager to exploit the plunging necklines to which the movies' Jane Russell had inured America. In 1947, Timely led the charge with Namora, its Sub-Mariner character in drag, and she was quickly followed by the amply bosomed Sun Girl and Blonde Phantom. A new low, by the standards of the day, was reached with the outrageous pneumatic cleavage of the Fox Features version of Phantom Lady.

All National Comics editorial decisions were informed by Jack Liebowitz's insistence on respectability, and so DC titles starred chaste heroines in features that emphasized romantic rather than racy adventure elements. For example, with issue #94 (November-December 1949) Kanigher turned *Sensation* into a romance book fronted by a Wonder Woman less concerned with her rope and manacles than with landing Steve Trevor for a husband.

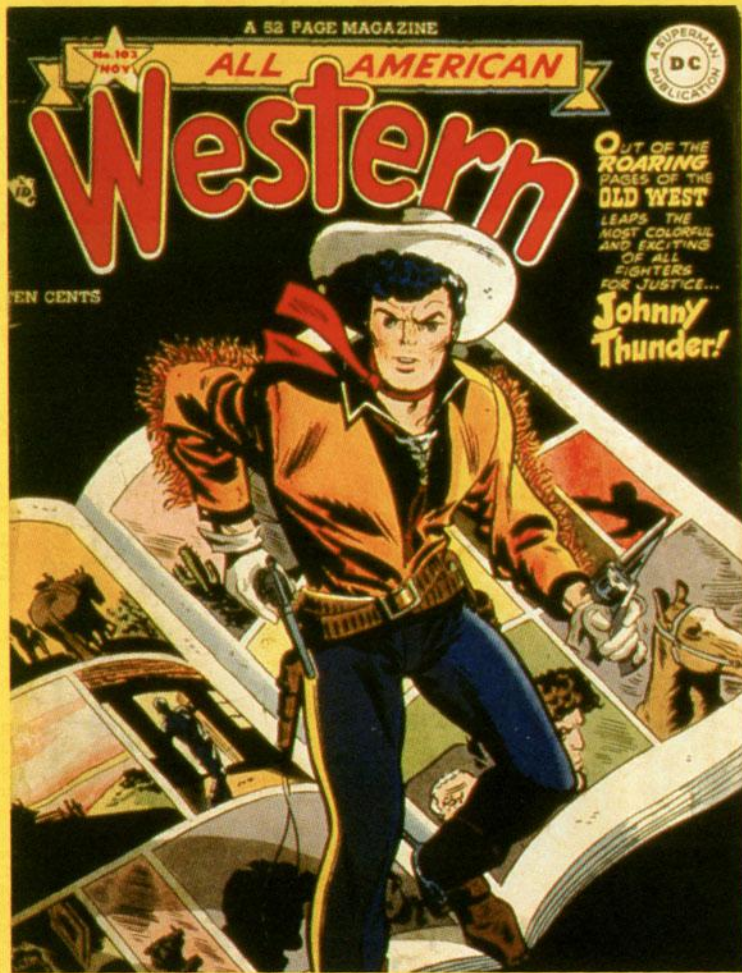
There was one other figure without whom the innovations of the late '40s would not have been possible—a young man who came to National in search of a job, any job. He got one mainly because of his last name. He kept it because of his best ideas.

"In 1948, I was already married and had a child. I graduated from college and went up to DC and I showed them that I was a college graduate," said a very warm and modest Irwin Donenfeld shortly before his death in 2002, "and they hired me because my father was the boss."

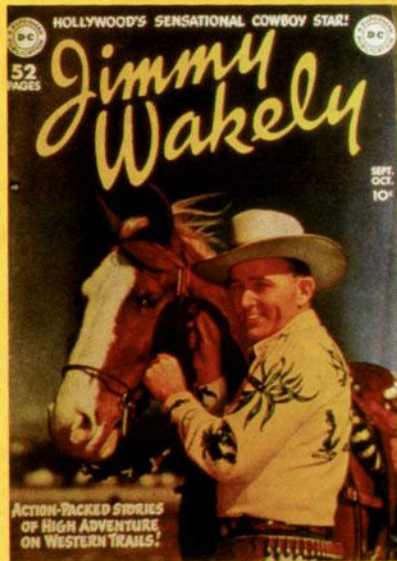
The twenty-two-year-old quickly established himself as something National had never really had, and now needed desperately: a resident trend-spotter. He began by soliciting input from retail representatives who reported the types of magazines that were selling around the country. As he told interviewer Mark Evanier in 2001, exact sales figures were generally not shared with the editorial group, but Irwin would enter the figures in scrapbooks next to a photo of the corresponding book's cover. He'd look for correlations between the field reports and the cover images, being a firm believer—as were his father and Jack Liebowitz—that because the cover was what sold the book, they didn't need to know the contents to understand its appeal, just the cover's predominant element. This may have caused National's covers to continually recycle the same themes, but only because they paid off every time.



**THIS PAGE** DC threw readers a bone with the addition of Streak the Wonder Dog (left) in Green Lantern #30 (February–March 1948). Soon there was a kennelful of other dogs, including the debut issue (above) of *The Adventures of Rex the Wonder Dog* (January–February 1952) from the same team that whelped Streak. These dogs could think, empathize, emote, and understand language—as their highly articulate thought balloons revealed. Cover art for both by Alex Toth.



**ABOVE** All-American Western #103 (November 1948), with cover art by Alex Toth and Frank Giacoia, marked All-American Comics' complete western makeover. **ABOVE RIGHT** Cowboy Jimmy Wakely graced his first cover in 1949. **RIGHT** During the same period, lively ads publicized a slew of gunslingin' new titles from DC.



It wasn't long before the effects of young Donenfeld's methods became apparent. At the height of the popularity of Lassie in movies and on radio, Kanigher originated Sreak the Wonder Dog as a companion to Alan Scott in *Green Lantern* #30 (February 1948). In only a few issues, the dog had displaced the super hero from the covers, signaling a renewed interest in content drawn from everyday life. Thus, reality-based licenses from the entertainment world filled out DC's schedule in this period, including fictionalized versions of real movie stars' lives; at one point, DC published *The Adventures of Alan Ladd*.

As the '40s drew to a close, the appetite for visual realism was fueled by the new medium of television, which would bring more vicarious experience in the form of movies and original programming—and, eventually, more reality in the form of newscasts—into more people's lives and more often than ever before. An early indication of how TV could affect pop cultural trends, and the comics medium in particular, came in 1948.

At that time, there was comparatively little original TV programming, and old movies filled out the broadcast schedule, sparking a renewed interest in movie cowboys. In 1948, Dell's *Roy Rogers* comic book was the most successful in the nation, selling over a million copies. 1948 was the same year the *Hopalong Cassidy* film series ended, and the sixty-five features produced since 1935 were released to television to create a national "Hoppy" craze.

To DC, "send in the cavalry" was the only sensible response, and the horsemen who rode to National's aid comprised *Western Comics*'s Vigilante, joined by new characters that included the Wyoming Kid, the Cowboy Marshal, and Rodeo Rick. Dozens more western properties would be created over the next two years, and soon, the few omnibus titles that were still positioned as super hero books surrendered to the Wild West. *All-American Comics* was renamed *All-American Western* in 1948, and the Justice Society came to an end when *All Star Comics* was renamed *All Star Western* with #58 (April–May 1951).

Out in the real West in 1948, Whit Ellsworth rustled up licenses for *Dale Evans Comics* and also for *Jimmy Wakely*—

**RIGHT** At least two western comics ashcans were created for titles that were never published, including *Mystery Trail* and this one for *Western Serenade* (1949).

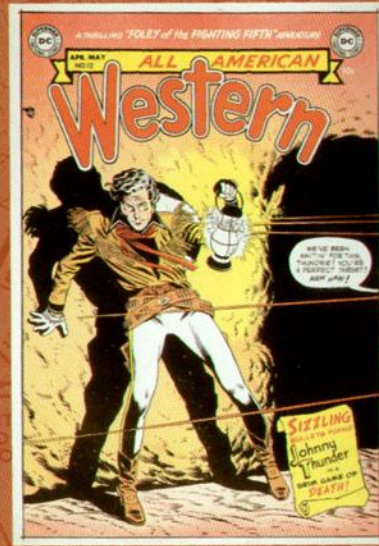
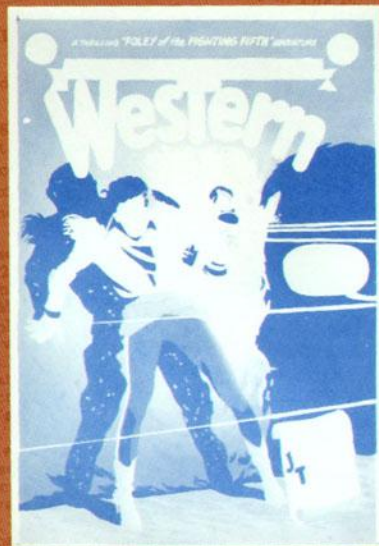
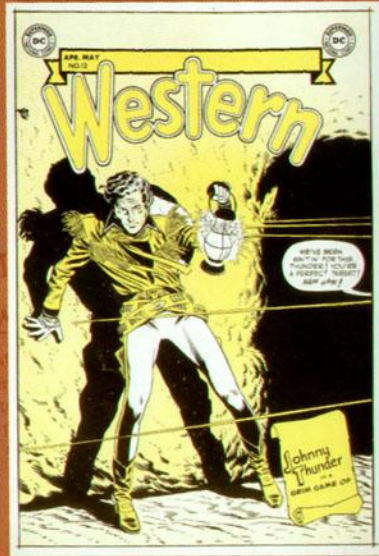
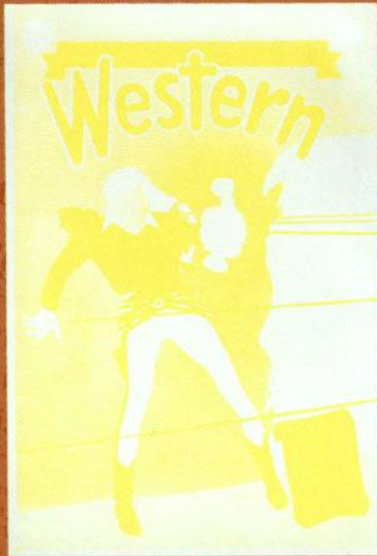
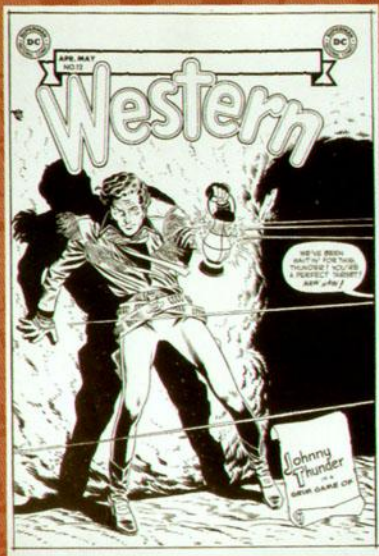
# WESTERN SERENADE

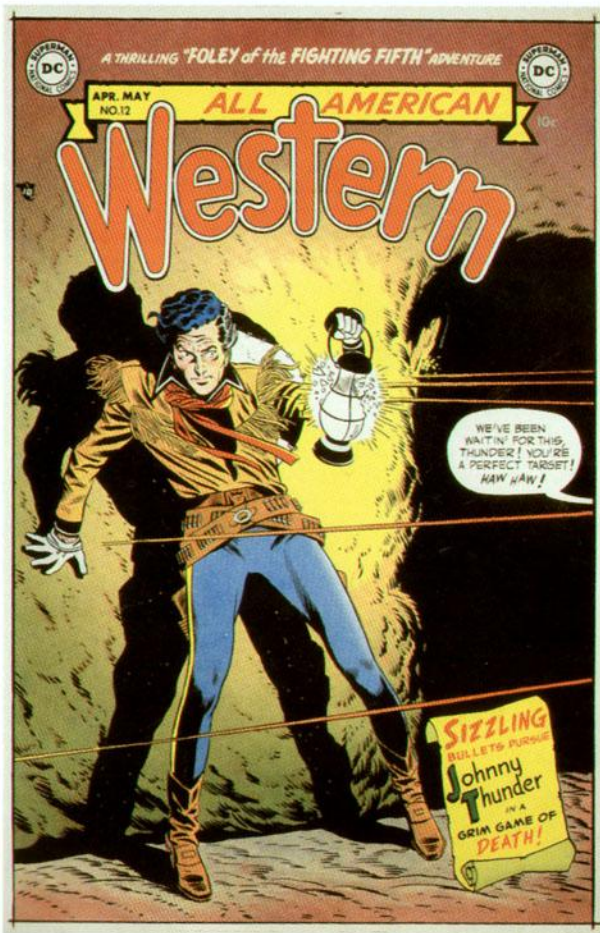
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MAY - JUNE

10¢







eliciting Julie Schwartz's immortal response when assigned to edit it: "Who the f\*\*\* is Jimmy Wakely?"

The Western comics trend was relatively short-lived, lasting, like the super-hero boom, roughly a decade. Ironically, the Hopalong Cassidy character that helped start the Western fad would end up at National, but only thanks to one of the company's most famous legal battles. Readers have seen many struggles between Superman and Captain Marvel in contemporary DC comics, never suspecting that these are a fanciful echo of a real world-shaking, if symbolic, combat.

Fawcett Publications, which achieved its biggest successes with magazines such as *Family Circle* and *Mechanix Illustrated*, first introduced Captain Marvel in *Whiz Comics* #2 in 1940, shortly after entering the comics field. The Captain's feature was a delicate blend of adventure and whimsy that teased its inspiration by giving the idealistic adult hero the innocence of his alter ego, prepubescent Billy Batson. Batson, a radio *newscaster*—yes, at the age of twelve!—spoke the magic word "Shazam!" to turn into the "Big Red Cheese," as Captain Marvel's equally fanciful enemies called him. But if this new feature seemed tonally a far cry from Superman, its star nevertheless had powers that were essentially identical to the Man of Steel's. The Captain's worst transgression, however, was that by 1942, at 1.4 million copies an issue, he was outselling Superman.

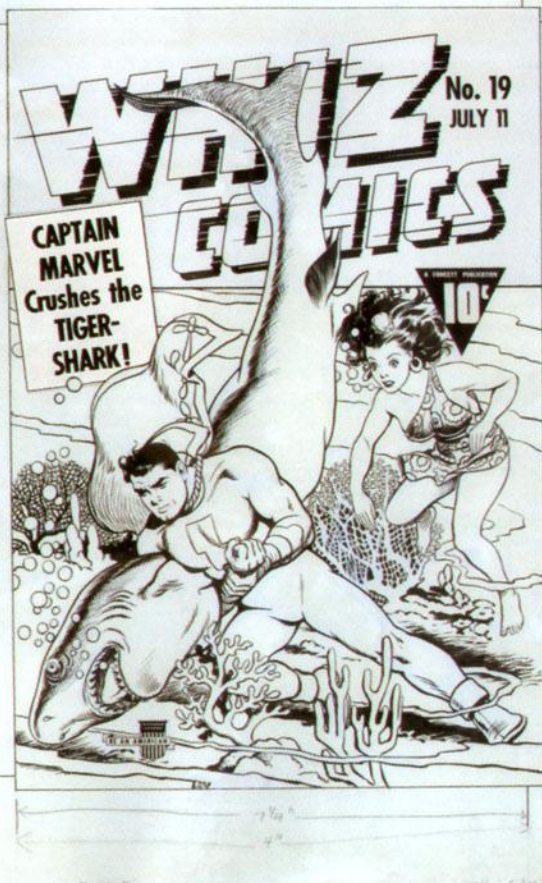
Detective Comics, Inc. sent a cease-and-desist letter, claiming that Captain Marvel infringed its Superman copyright. Fawcett was unresponsive, and in 1941, Republic Pictures, the leading producer of Saturday afternoon serials—chapter plays consisting of twelve or fifteen two-reelers shown at the rate of one per week—released *The Adventures of Captain Marvel*. National filed suit against both Fawcett and Republic, even knowing that, unlike other publishers whose Superman imitations it had shut down, Fawcett's pockets were deep enough to allow it to push back, especially when allied with a movie studio.

The case finally came to trial in 1948, and the ruling held that Captain Marvel did indeed infringe the Superman trademark. But National lost the first round on what it considered a technicality: DC was found to have undermined its own efforts to protect its claim to ownership because McClure had failed to copyright certain "Superman" newspaper strips earlier in the decade.

But in 1951 the decision was reversed on an appeal, argued by famous libel and plagiarism specialist Louis Nizer before the New York Circuit Court of Appeals, presided



**OPPOSITE PAGE** A series of color guides called progressives for *All-American Western* #125 (April-May 1952), used by the printer to check colors. **ABOVE LEFT** The final composite color guide. Art by Alex Toth and Sy Barry. **ABOVE** Employees toil in the separations room during the 1940s.



**ABOVE** Fawcett's Captain Marvel, battling an undersea adversary (and a Superman complex?) on the original cover artwork for Whiz Comics #19 (July 1941) by C. C. Beck and Pete Costanzo. **RIGHT** The "Big Red Cheese" and the rest of the Marvel family spawned a line of tiny statues during his 1940s heyday.

over by the renowned Justice Learned Hand. The result was that by early 1954, with super hero sales still in a slump, Fawcett settled damages owed National by paying it \$400,000 and agreeing to get out of the comic book business. It sold many of its titles, such as *Cowboy Love*, *Nyoka the Jungle Girl*, and *Strange Suspense Stories*, to Charlton Comics. National acquired the rights to Hopalong Cassidy and published that feature through 1959. But it would not be until 1991 that DC Comics would purchase the rights to Captain Marvel and related characters outright.

In the new decade, another genre, like romance, was begun by others but refined and perfected by DC: war comics. Within a year after DC's entry into the field, its war books were the gold standard; with the exception of Harvey Kurtzman's *Two-Fisted Tales* and other war titles from Bill Gaines's E.C. Comics, other publishers' efforts in the genre are virtually forgotten today.

National entered the field starting with *Our Army At War* (August 1952). Again, it was Bob Kanigher who led the company into the new genre. But the titles' reputation would rest on his collaboration with artist Joe Kubert, whose first war story appeared in *Our Army At War* #32 (March 1955). Kanigher originally worked on these books with many artists, including Jerry Grandenetti, Gene Colan, Russ Heath, and Irv Novick, but the Kanigher-Kubert work would prove the most memorable, particularly in the creation of the still-popular character Sgt. Rock. The team kept up a consistently prolific output as *Star Spangled Comics* became *Star-Spangled War Stories* and *All-American Western* was renamed *All-American Men of War* in 1952. *Our Fighting Forces* was begun in 1954, and DC inherited *G.I. Combat* from Quality in 1957. Ultimately, the Kanigher-Kubert collaboration would continue for over thirty years.

**HEY, KIDS, LOOK!**  
STATUETTES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC HEROES

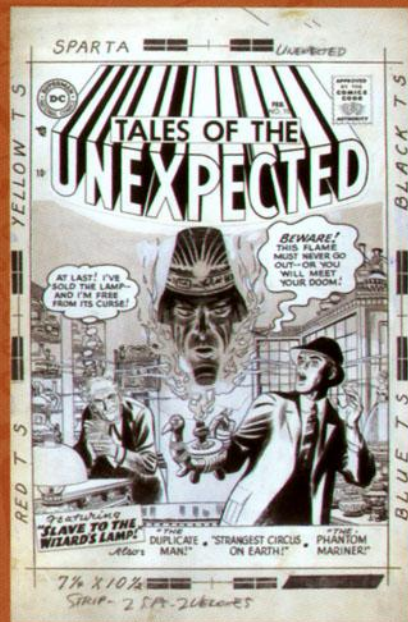
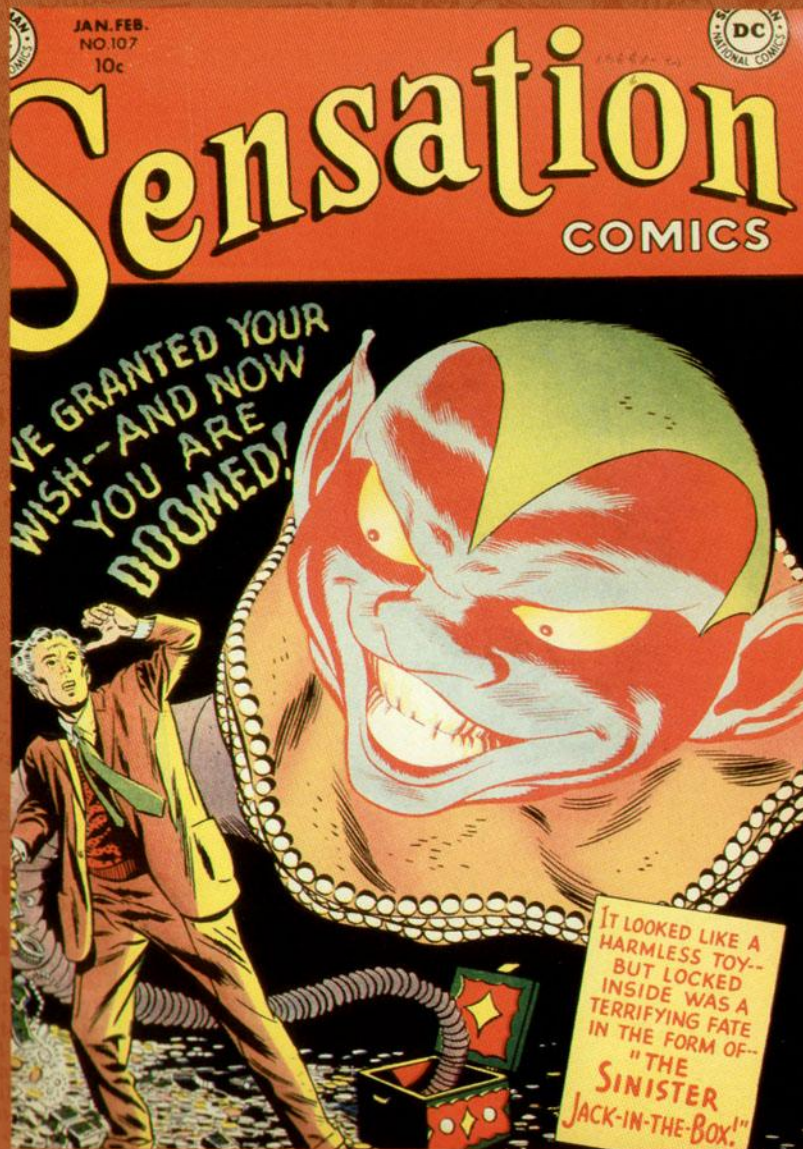
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PLASTIC MOLDERS  
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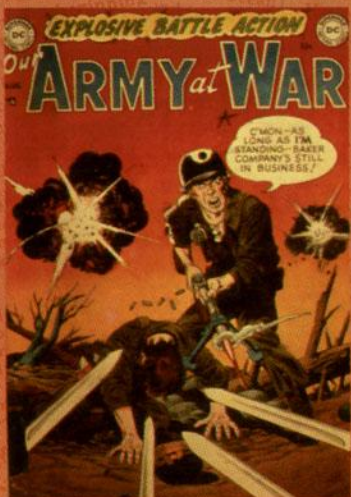
**ALL PLASTIC  
HAND  
COLORED**

**MOTHER! DAD!** You'll make your child happy when you bring him one of these popular Comic Character Statuettes.

**BUY ANOTHER, TODAY!** \$ ea

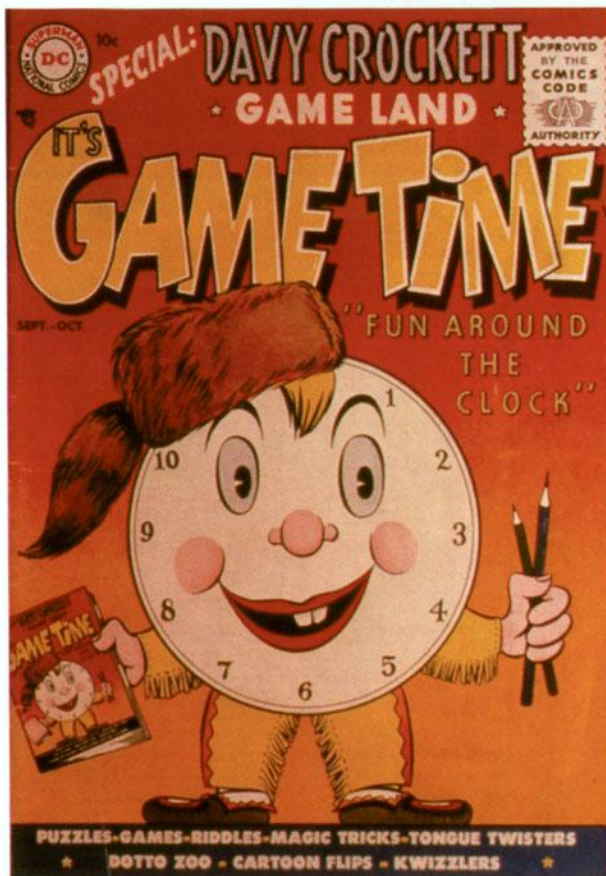
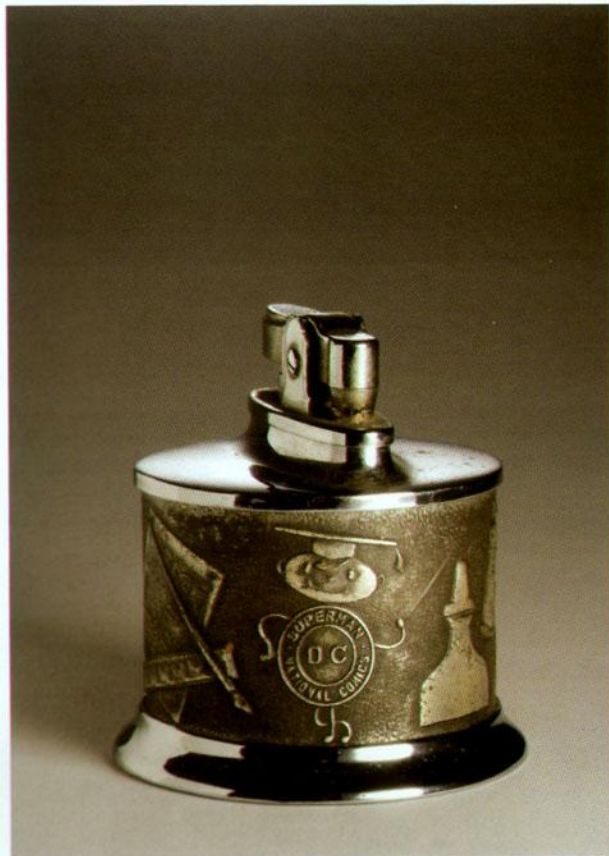


**LEFT** Sensation Comics took a turn for the weird after World War II: issue #107 (January–February 1952) featured a possessed-Jack-in-the-Box storyline. **ABOVE** Tales of the Unexpected #10 included similarly foreboding text and large sinister head. Original cover artwork by Mort Meskin.



The trend away from super heroes would continue until the mid-1950s, and it would occur in DC books that credited Whitney Ellsworth simply as "editor." Some have explained this as a perk—what Liebowitz liked to call a "token of feeling." Others have said it was because no one cared, so no one bothered to correct it. Still, when AA and DC had merged into one company and Shelly Mayer left, Whit Ellsworth had become editor-in-chief (or perhaps editorial director, in the culture that didn't bother with titles), but the indicia continued to list him simply as "Whitney Ellsworth, Editor."

That credit would remain until 1959, eight years after Ellsworth turned over the editorial direction to Irwin Donenfeld so that Ellsworth could lead the company boldly into the new medium of television—as the driving force behind the immortal *Adventures of Superman*.



**OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** *G.I. Combat* #56 (January 1958) and *Our Army at War* #54 (January 1957) covers by Joe Kubert and Joe Giella. *Our Army at War* #1 (August 1952) cover by Carmine Infantino and Joe Giella. **LEFT** This DC lighter featuring the character Johnny DC is a mystery. Some have surmised that it was a 1950s promotional item for retailers or distributors. **ABOVE** If canines like Rex and Streak were able to have human thoughts, there's no reason a clock couldn't wear a Davy Crockett coonskin cap on the cover of *It's Game Time* #1 (September–October 1955).

THE FACE AND THE VOICE

# SUPERMAN IN EXILE

SUPERMAN IN EXILE

Copyright MCMLIV by National  
Comics Publications, Inc.

starring **GEORGE REEVES**

featuring

NOEL NEILL • JACK LARSON • JOHN HAMILTON • ROBERT SHAYNE



## CHAPTER FIVE



# Forging New FRONTIERS

### IN 1941, HARRY DONENFELD WAS IN NEGOTIATIONS

to sell the Superman movie rights to Republic Pictures, but this low-budget studio was soon outbid by one of the majors, Paramount. Although Paramount didn't make serials, they *did* have a cartoon studio—the Fleischer brothers'—and it was as a cartoon that the Man of Steel made his screen debut.

Despite the *Captain Marvel* serial that Republic made instead, which put Fawcett's hero into live-action movies before Superman, DC nevertheless had the strongest presence in filmed entertainment of all the comics publishers in the '40s and '50s. While never in feature films during this period, DC heroes were the subject of seven serials: *Hop Harrigan*, two *Superman* titles, two *Batman* titles, *Congo Bill*, and *Vigilante*—all from Columbia.

All had been as cheaply produced and tacky-looking as the first *Batman* serial, usually eliminating the comics' most distinctive features as too expensive to recreate. For example, despite tests showing that, technologically, the serial could achieve the same kinds of flying effects that the later TV series did, Kirk Alyn was never shown in flight as Superman. It was evidently cheaper for him to clumsily and obviously turn into an

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Artwork from a poster for *Superman in Exile* (1954), a compilation of three episodes from *The Adventures of Superman* series. **LEFT** The big screen's first live-action Man of Steel, Kirk Alyn. **ABOVE** Detail from a *Superman Flies Again* (1954) advertisement.



**ABOVE** A rare Superman background painting by Robert Little from the 1943 Fleischer studio cartoon "Underground World."

**FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY!**

Not only is Superman the first adventure strip character to be made into an animated cartoon short feature... but Superman is the first short subject to star repeat billing with a full length feature picture at a fast run metropolitan movie house.

Superman animated cartoon starts in fall TriStar—over one million for two years to 10,000 movie houses from coast to coast, increases the topgrossing multiple audience for the Superman radio serial... provides countless opportunities for exploitation... gives the operator a definite loop with a unique movie personality.

Superman is now broadcast on eight stations... and doing a better job for every operator... Your territory may well be open... set back... further information, write, wire or phone.

ROBERT J. MAXWELL  
SUPERMAN, INC.  
NEW YORK CITY

PLAZA 5406

HOLLYWOOD NEWS  
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THE MOVIE SHOW IS BEING MADE IN 21 WEEKS!

SOB HOPE  
PAULETTE GODDARD  
NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH  
THE ANDREWS SISTERS  
JOHNNY LONG AND HIS ORCHESTRA  
EDWARDS ARNOLD  
MALLY BROWN  
HARRY ADLER  
PARAMOUNT

animated cartoon when he went up, up, and away, making the dummy-on-wires version of Captain Marvel look convincing by comparison.

For the rest of his life, Bob Kane would delight in telling the story of how, while visiting the set of a *Batman* serial, he was leaning against a nondescript gray convertible as he asked the producer where the Batmobile was. "You're leaning on it," came the reply. Yet all of them, especially the *Superman* serials, were big box office, despite the fact that serial attendance was declining with the advent of television.

**ABOVE** A promotional piece created by DC Comics heralding Superman's animation debut.  
**RIGHT** George Reeves on set with producer Whit Ellsworth and girlfriend Toni Mannix. The relationship shared by Reeves and the married Mannix continues to be a source of speculation regarding his death.

By May of 1951, Superman had left radio, and National had become disenchanted with the look of Columbia's product. Whit Ellsworth's next assignment resulted in what was arguably his greatest contribution to DC Comics. But it would have been impossible without Jack Liebowitz's strategy and philosophy.

Not even Liebowitz's most vocal critics could deny he was foresighted. He saw the new medium of television in a way no other comics publisher did. He predicted that TV would virtually end dramatic radio and cut into comic book sales, too. Thus, at the turn of the decade, it was DC alone that had the wisdom to get into TV.

As with the radio show, Liebowitz said, "I wanted to do the films myself. I didn't want to send them out to subcontractors." In fact, the relationship with Columbia had ended badly—so much so that a dispute over ownership kept the serials out of the public eye for the next forty years. So in 1951, the plan was to start with a low-budget Superman feature that would become the basis for a series. (Without realizing it, Liebowitz had stumbled onto a concept that is known today as a back-door pilot.) Liebowitz asked Bob Maxwell to produce and Ellsworth to write.

The film featured the first appearance of George Reeves as the Man of Steel. The actor went on to do all 104 episodes of the subsequent TV series that was filmed on an irregular schedule between 1953 and 1957. In 1951, however, the Superman feature had been just another quickie job to Reeves, who would not live to see how the role would confer on him a kind of immortality. His promising movie career, begun in 1939, had been stalled by World War II. By the 1950s he was reduced to working in live TV dramas in New York or making films in Hollywood for people like Sam Katzman, who was producing the Columbia serials at that time. (The troubled actor's sad career and



**EXHIBITOR'S  
CAMPAIGN  
BOOK**

**SUPERMAN  
FLIES AGAIN**

**SUPERMAN  
AND  
SCOTLAND YARD**

**SUPERMAN'S  
PERIL**

**SUPERMAN  
IN EXILE**

**SUPERMAN  
AND THE  
JUNGLE DEVIL**

**5 SUPERMAN FEATURES**

Released by 20th Century-Fox

**FIVE SUPERMAN FEATURES**

**Superman Champions Justice Over Evil In Adventure Series**

"Superman's Peril"

Team-Casting In Superman Film

**PIX-BITS**

"Superman Plus Apes"

**ADOLPH GEORGE REVEALS SCREEN'S MAN OF STEEL**

Scientific Superman

**SYNOPSIS**

Head Mail Order Newspaper For Film—As Reporter

"Superman And The Jungle Devil"

**SUPERMAN—**  
LIVING HERO OFFERS  
A SILENT HEROIC  
WALKS THE WALK  
FOUNDER OF THE MOVIE  
IT'S SUPERMAN'S  
MOST CHALLENGING  
ADVENTURE!

**SUPERMAN  
AND THE  
JUNGLE DEVIL**

GEORGE REEVES  
CASTING SUPERMAN  
CASTING SUPERMAN  
CASTING SUPERMAN  
CASTING SUPERMAN  
CASTING SUPERMAN

**CAST**

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MAK-385

mysterious death in 1959, officially ruled a suicide, would be only slightly fictionalized in the 2006 film *Hollywoodland*.)

Filmed in the summer of 1951 and released later that year, *Superman and the Mole Men*—with Phyllis Coates as Lois, the only other comics character in the movie—was a smash hit for its small distributor, Lippert Pictures, and the shooting of the series followed immediately.

The first season began airing in 1953 and was a huge success, beyond even DC's greatest expectations. But producer Maxwell had targeted an adult audience as well as children, creating a show with a more gritty, serial feel by including realistic violence and frightening menaces. When Kellogg's came aboard as sponsor for the second season later in 1953, it knew that many parents were uncomfortable with such an approach. As a result, production was reassigned to Ellsworth, who brought in Mort Weisinger as story editor and, with Coates unavailable, recast Lois with Noel Neill, who had played the role in the serials. Maxwell severed his ties to DC after fourteen years, and would go on to bring *Lassie* to TV the following year.

For the rest of its run, Ellsworth made *The Adventures of Superman* work with less violence and more comedy. Kellogg's was particularly responsive to the kind of whimsy and absurd slapstick that would later become familiar to readers of the Superman comics as they were revamped following the TV show's cancellation. This more kid-friendly approach, in combination with clever staffing and casting, ensured the show's success.

Out of necessity, the series innovated economies that would be used by other productions for decades, such as the practice of giving each character only one costume per season, then shooting an entire season's scenes in a particular set before striking it. *The Adventures of Superman* would become a television institution, running continuously in syndication, then on cable, for almost fifty years. Meanwhile producer Ellsworth was enjoying an entirely new career, the one he'd dreamed of since 1937, and was happy to have turned over all hands-on responsibility for the comics to Harry Donenfeld's son.

That transition occurred none too soon, because in 1950 Irwin Donenfeld's charts and reports were filling with undeniable disappointments: following trends such as Westerns and teen humor had netted National Comics only modest successes. Those titles never generated revenue to rival *Superman* or *Action*, and when the fads on which they were based eventually fizzled, so did the books. DC needed to be ahead of a curve, for once, instead of playing catch-up.

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Front cover and selected pages from a 1954 *Superman Exhibitor's Campaign Book*, given to movie theater owners. **RIGHT** Two of Donenfeld's meticulous charts, tracking the sales of *Girls Love* (bottom) from 1953–55, and *Superman* (top) from 1959–61.





**ABOVE** Sublimely surreal: *Strange Adventures* #110 (November 1959) cover by Gil Kane and Jack Adler. **RIGHT** *Strange Adventures* #8 (May 1951), by Win Mortimer, featured that title's first cover-gorilla. After DC discovered that these giant apes spiked sales dramatically, every DC editor wanted to get in on the act. Donenfeld finally had to place a moratorium on "gorilla covers."

The search for new genres to plug the hole left by the super heroes' fade gave Julie Schwartz the best break of his career. DC had started publishing what today we call space opera as early as the Tommy Tomorrow stories in 1947, and Wheeler-Nicholson had run some pulpy, Edgar Rice Burroughs-like science fiction (SF) in the '30s, but these were only short features, never represented on covers. The time seemed right to place a bigger bet on the genre.

Julie Schwartz knew SF, and when he and Irwin Donenfeld got wind of an indie film called *Destination Moon*—which later became the surprise hit of 1950—they took notice. Julie considered it the first *real* science fiction feature film: it was based on a Robert Heinlein novel. Whit Ellsworth was asked to secure the rights for a comic book adaptation,

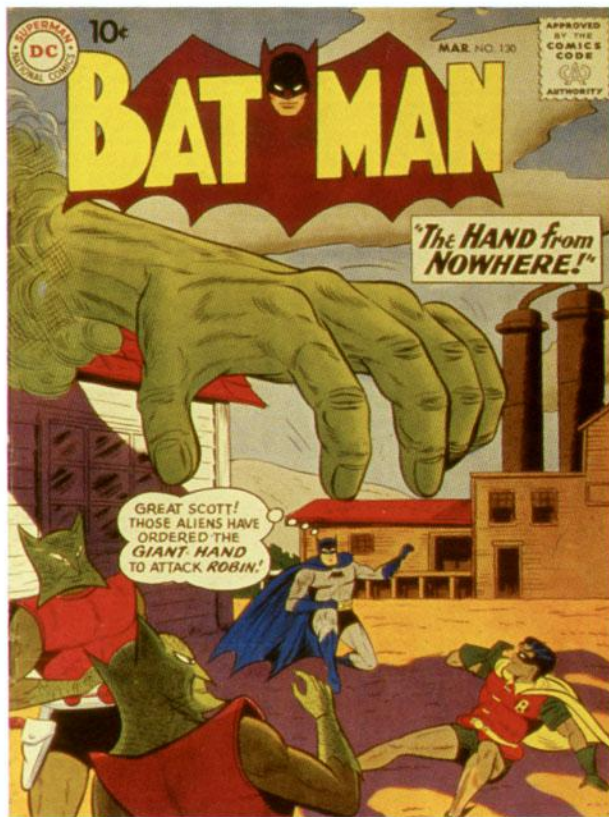




**THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT** The premiere issue of *Strange Adventures* (August–September 1950) put man on the moon. *Strange Adventures* #95 (August 1958) and #79 (April 1957) pitted him against outer space and outsized snowmen, respectively; both covers by Gil Kane and Frank Giocchia. A strange adventure in Gorilla Land in *Strange Adventures* #108 (September 1959); cover by Gil Kane.



**THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT** *Mystery in Space* #31 (April-May 1956) sliced the world in half; aliens paid a visit in *Mystery in Space* #11 (December 1952-January 1953); and here Adam Strange patrolled the planets in issue #53 (August 1959). Covers by Gil Kane and Bernard Sachs. *Mystery in Space* #36 (February-March 1957) challenged readers with a riddle from the Sphinx. Cover by Gil Kane and Jack Adler.



which was pencilled in an appropriately realistic style by Curt Swan. Around it Schwartz and Donenfeld built DC's first science fiction anthology, *Strange Adventures*, with a title that would have done the father of SF pulps, Hugo Gernsback, proud.

DC had found the perfect title in the perfect moment. Science fiction was becoming widely popular, perhaps because of the new interest in real science in the postwar era; real-world rocketry, atomic energy, radar, and a host of other new technologies had been spawned by the war effort. As the decade wore on, radio shows like *Dimension X* and *X Minus One* would adapt classic stories by the genre's masters; outer space adventures would fill movie screens; and heroes in the tradition of Buck Rogers would become a staple of kids' television: *Rocky Jones*, *Space Ranger*, *Captain Midnight*, et al.

In 1950, it certainly didn't hurt *Strange Adventures* that the scripts were first-rate. Schwartz knew the field from an insider's perspective and could spot budding talent and coax those writers into contributing scripts. In the end, Schwartz's *Strange Adventures*

was a more enduring and influential success than DC had hoped for, continuing well into the '70s (after a brief life as a supernatural title, beginning in 1968) and spawning an equally well written companion magazine in the spring of 1951, bearing the Ellsworth-suggested title *Mystery in Space*.

Over the decade, science fiction would prove so popular that the genre began to influence almost all of DC's non-humor output. New life would be breathed into occult titles *House of Mystery*, *House of Secrets*, and *Tales of the Unexpected* with the addition of aliens from other worlds and dimensions. Their editor was also *Batman's*, and Jack Schiff—himself no stranger to pulp SF—soon would have the Caped Crusader battling aliens and monsters with increasing regularity.

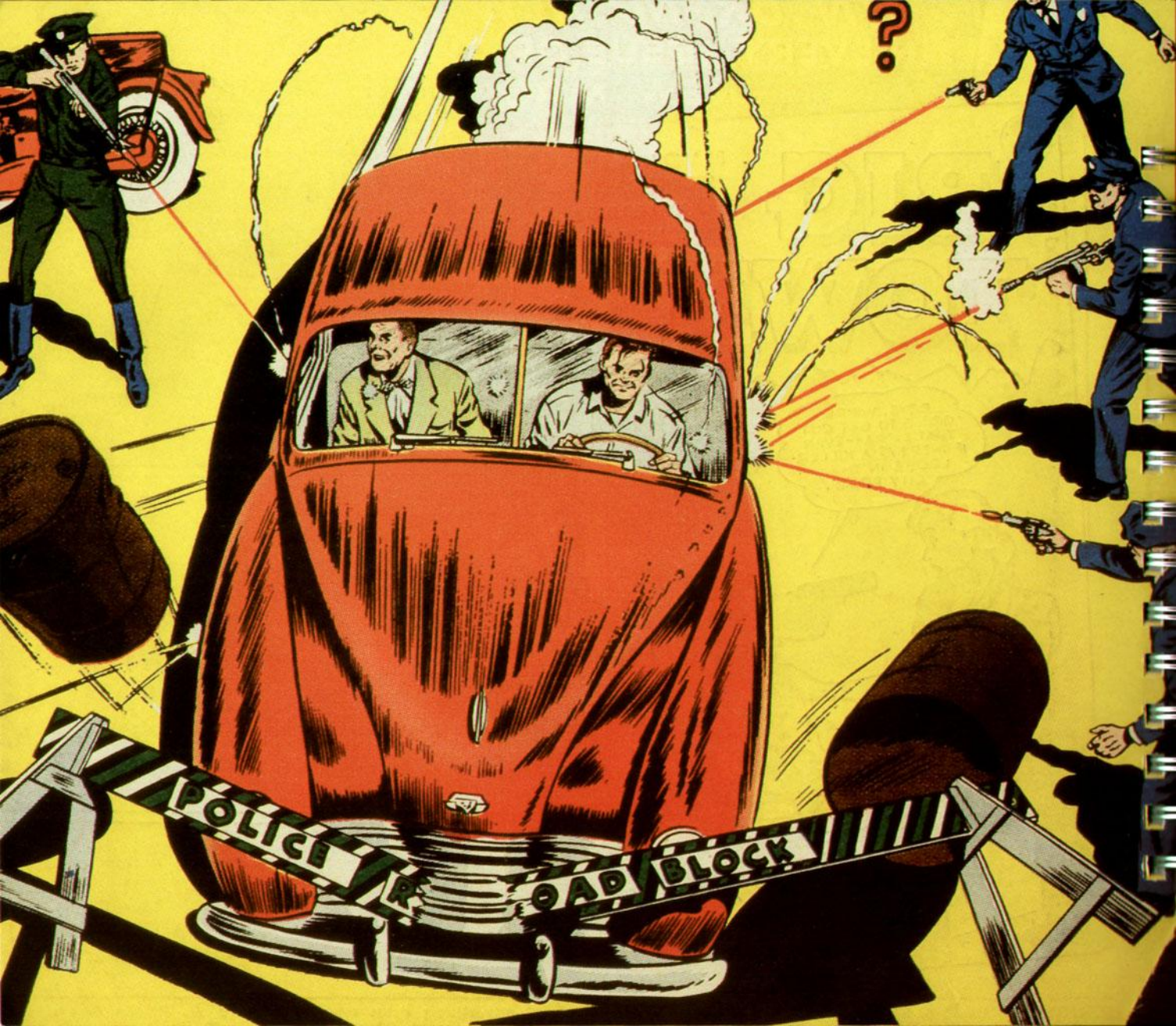
Schwartz's titles in particular would have far greater significance than anyone could have foreseen, serving as training grounds for writers like John Broome and Gardner Fox, and artists like Gil Kane, Mike Sekowsky, Carmine Infantino, Sid Greene, Bernard Sachs, and Joe Giella, in a new genre—a Space Age science fiction. That would be a key element in the rebirth of costumed heroes—a new, Space Age kind of hero—at the end of the decade.

But these new heroes would not arrive in time to stop the tidal wave that was about to hit the comic book industry and decimate it, inflicting damage from which it would not fully recover for decades.



**ABOVE LEFT** Robin may have slipped through its fingers, but Sheldon Moldoff's drawing of a giant hand showed a firm grasp of the sci-fi trend for the cover of *Batman* #130 (March 1960).

**ABOVE CENTER** The head-turning cover of *Strange Adventures* #156 (September 1963). Art by Murphy Anderson. **ABOVE RIGHT** DC's science fiction titles became launching pads for original heroes, including Captain Comet, Space Cabby, Space Ranger, Star Hawkins, and Adam Strange, the latter shown making his debut in *Showcase* #17 (November-December 1958) with a cover by Gil Kane.





# Comics IN CRISIS



## WHAT TODAY WE CALL SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

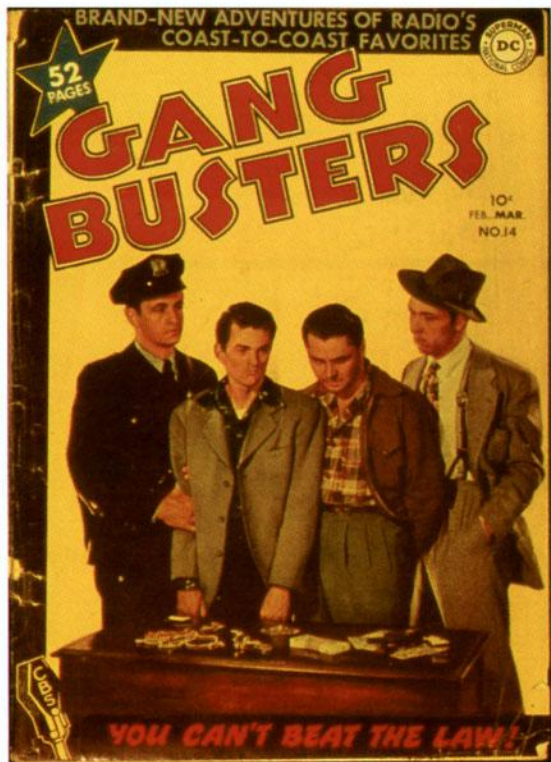
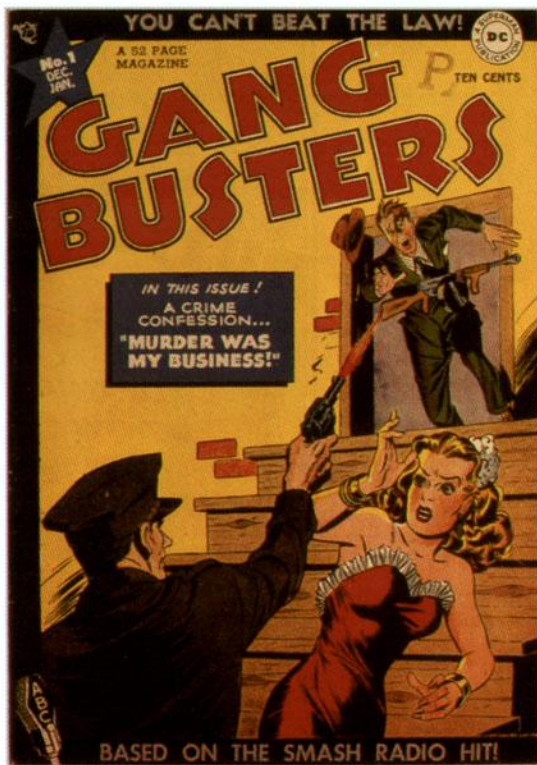
or pro-social values had been part of DC Comics' DNA from the beginning, whether out of simple business logic (they're a kid buy, but the parents mustn't object) or the product of genuine, if conflicted, emotions.

These would have included the last remaining traces of Jack Liebowitz's early socialist convictions, and his career-long campaign to insulate DC's reputation from the more colorful aspects of boss-turned-partner Harry Donenfeld's background. Or perhaps they were influenced by ex-school teacher Charlie Gaines's longing to educate and enlighten.

In any event, as early as 1941, when the Editorial Advisory Board was formed, a self-imposed code of good taste, self-restraint, and age-appropriateness had shaped National Comics' editorial thinking. Indeed, one of the Board members was Nobel laureate Pearl S. Buck, and her influence resulted in the pleas for tolerance and respect for other cultures found in DC stories of the time.

This ethos extended also to radio's *Adventures of Superman*, whose writing staff was fed eyewitness accounts of Ku Klux Klan rituals and activities by Stetson Kennedy, a civil rights activist who had infiltrated the KKK undercover. The resulting storyline

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Cover art from *Gang Busters* #20 (February–March 1951), DC's popular crime-story title, by Curt Swan and John Fischetti. **LEFT** Detail from *Gang Busters* #2 (February–March 1948), by Dan Barry. **ABOVE** Detail from a Superman public service ad.



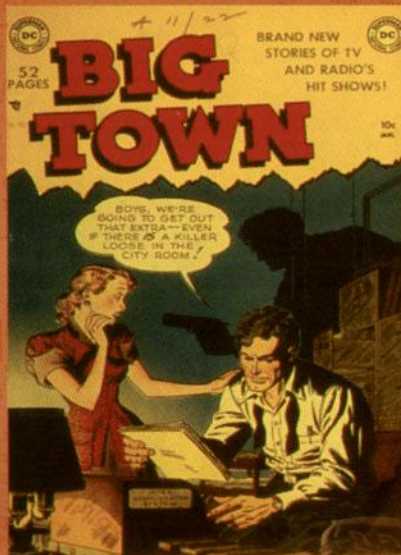
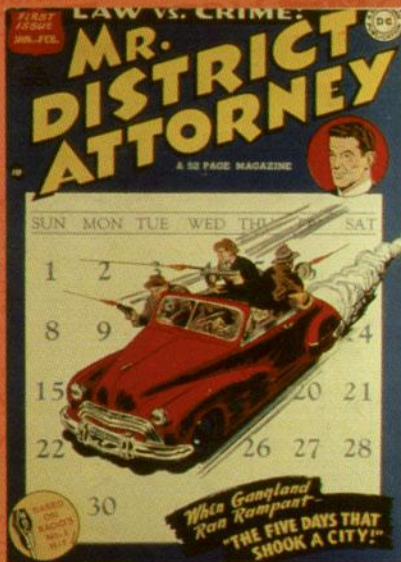
in June of that year, "The Klan of the Fiery Cross," was considered by many the first unambiguous anti-racism drama in children's broadcasting.

Meanwhile gritty, noir-ish crime comics were paying off for other, more exploitative comics publishers. Shootings, stabbings, beatings, drug addiction, alcoholism, sexual innuendoes, thinly-disguised prostitution and rape—all were fair game for the crime comics, aimed more at adult ex-GIs than, say, pre-teen readers of *Superman*.

**THIS PAGE** DC avoided the style of other publishers' gritty crime comics, such as *Gangsters 'n' Gun Molls* and *Crimes By Women*, and instead published a tie-in to the popular radio show *Gang Busters*. Issue #1 (December 1947-January 1948), shown above, was about as saucy as it would ever get. Cover by Howard Sherman. *Gang Busters* #14 (above right) featured actors in a much tamer scene and a moralistic tagline at the bottom.

For obvious reasons, then, this was the one genre DC didn't sample in its quest to find the Next Big Thing. But in 1947, the company had found a way to try out the genre on its own terms, by licensing in one of the most popular radio shows in America, *Gang Busters*. For extra insurance that it would be done in good taste, the book was assigned to public service page writer Jack Schiff. Other crime-related titles from radio quickly followed, including *Mr. District Attorney* (January 1948).

At the same time, a different cause for alarm threatened to give Jack Liebowitz ulcers: horror comics. These and the crime books were conflated by a scolding press into one big, bloody genre. Contemporary comics fans, living in the much freer-thinking climate of post-'60s America, regard these titles as unjustly persecuted, largely because they are extremely tame by today's standards and often contain beautifully rendered art contributed by some of the best artists displaced by the super-hero collapse. It's almost impossible for today's fan to imagine the strident screams of disapproval these books elicited from pulpits and principals' offices in the early 1950s.



**ABOVE LEFT AND ABOVE** Clean crime with strong, if staid, Mr. District Attorney; issues #1 (January-February 1948), by Sam Citron and Charles Paris, and #11 (September-October 1949), by Paris and Howard Purcell.

**LEFT** A third radio show adaptation from DC, *Big Town* #1 (January 1951), followed the exploits of a justice-seeking newspaperman. Cover by Carmine Infantino and Frank Giacoia.

**ARMY AIR FORCE ENLISTS AID OF COMIC MAGAZINES**

**The Problem:**  
To tell all America of the dramatic "life insurance" provided our Army Air Force fliers by the Flight Control Command.

**The Solution:**  
Publication of "The Man Who Came Back" in the 200,000 copies of *World's Finest Comics*. Permission has been granted the Army to reprint this feature in large quantities to be distributed to Army Air Force Personnel. Based on an Army textbook, this strip-continuity in full color again demonstrates the unique effectiveness of integrated words and pictures in presenting an idea simply and effectively. *Herewith are typical extracts from this feature.*

From that instant day when My first scratch on the wall of his cave the story of a wounded hero, you has found the picture-story his most potent form of expression. Latest development of this timeless technique are modern comic magazines. No better and subtler in their appeal that, addresses a class already open, comic magazines are today the most widely read publications in all America... a readership well more than 25,000,000 copies per month. Publishers in the field and leaders today are the publishers of the National Comics Group. This single unit guarantees subscribers \$3,500,000 net paid circulation per year... and delivers 2,000,000 copies a month!

**FACTS** about the readership of comic magazines:  
 • Total circulation 25,000,000 copies per month  
 • Total sales over 1,000,000,000 per year  
 • Total advertising revenue over 100,000,000 per year  
 • Total circulation in the field over 100,000,000 per year  
 • Total readership over 100,000,000 per year  
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**THE NATIONAL COMICS GROUP**  
AMERICA'S FAVORITE COMIC MAGAZINES

Represented Nationally by RICHARD A. FELDON & CO., 435 Lexington Ave., New York

What must have driven Liebowitz to distraction was the fact that these new threats to his utopia of clean, wholesome comics came from very close to home. In August of 1948, *Adventures into the Unknown*, probably the first horror comic, was published

ABOVE DC touted its own good deeds in this promotional piece about an Army Air Force story that appeared in *World's Finest Comics* #11 in 1943. ABOVE RIGHT A September 1943 note in which Gaines gently implores Marston to help All American Comics "cut down the use of chains" in his *Wonder Woman* storylines.

## ALL-AMERICAN COMICS, Inc.

435 LEXINGTON AVE. Telephone PLaza 3-0740 NEW YORK, N. Y.

LICENSEES AND PUBLISHERS OF

FLASH COMICS • ALL-AMERICAN COMICS • ALL-STAR COMICS  
 SENSATION COMICS • ALL-FLASH • WONDER WOMAN  
 GREEN LANTERN • MUTT & JEFF • COMIC CAVALCADE  
 • Also "PICTURE STORIES FROM THE BIBLE" •

Editorial Office  
 125 LAFAYETTE STREET  
 TELEPHONE: CANAL 5-7435

September 14, 1943

Dr. William Moulton Marston  
 Cherry Orchard  
 Rye, New York

Dear Doc:

Attached is a copy of a letter which came in yesterday's mail. I'd like to discuss this with you the next time you come in.

This is one of the things I've been afraid of, (without quite being able to put my finger on it) in my discussions with you regarding Miss Frank's suggestions to eliminate chains.

Miss Roubicek hastily dashed off this morning the enclosed list of methods which can be used to keep women confined or enclosed without the use of chains. Each one of these can be varied in many ways - enabling us, as I told you in our conference last week, to cut down the use of chains by at least 50 to 75% without at all interfering with the excitement of the story or the sales of the books.

Sincerely,

E. C. Gaines, President  
 ALL-AMERICAN COMICS, INC.

MCG/g  
 Encls.

by American Comics Group, a new company founded on a loan to its publisher, Ben Sangor, from his old friend, Harry Donenfeld.

To make matters worse, the most lurid and provocative horror comics of all—*Crypt of Terror* and its companion magazine, *Vault of Horror*, which were also the most notorious by dint of being the most successful—were published by the upstart E.C. Comics. This was Charlie Gaines's post-DC company, now being run by his son, Bill. This wasn't just a competitor—this was family!

So it was with some dismay that DC found itself on the defensive in a climate of paranoia about myriad evils in America's midst, as would-be reformers equated comic book content with every plague from juvenile delinquency and illiteracy to developmental disorders and sexual deviancy.



OCT.-NOV.  
NO. 79



10c

# BATMAN

Another  
ACTION-PACKED  
ADVENTURE  
WITH  
**BATMAN**  
and **ROBIN!**



**LEFT** Unused cover art by Win Mortimer for Batman #79 (October–November 1953). **ABOVE** Four ultra-violent “Woman Wonder” panels from MAD #10 (April 1954), written by Harvey Kurtzman and drawn by Will Elder, that would not have passed muster under the Comics Code Authority.



## Editor consults expert!

Supersonic planes faster than sound... a machine that remembers a thousand numbers... electron microscopes for improving food processes... supercyclotrons... chain reaction of radioactive isotopes...

With such stuff coming over the news tickers and making front page stories, even the Managing Editor, who once won an M.A. from Harvard, and is not exactly short of sophistication... finds himself out of his depth. But he found there was a science expert in the city room!

Now, whenever some scientific toughy rattles in from the news service and the M.E. wants to know what it means, he consults Shoury!

Shoury is a copy boy... high school senior, seventeen, with a good head, partial to loud ties and quiet thinking... and at home among raffles, riddles, television techniques,

atomic diagrams, jet propulsions... "Shocks," says Shoury. "The comics had 'em years ago..."

And they did! The comics magazines have conditioned young minds far beyond the range of the conventional textbooks... increased their understanding not only of science, but of people, literature, history, politics... helped give junior's L.Q. a jump on his elders'.

So today in the better families, Dad goes into a huddle with Shoury on the best electric dish washer to buy... the radio with the latest improvements... the car with the fastest acceleration and best transmission system... the merits of fluorescent lighting, air conditioning, radiant heating, deep freezers.

Shoury's favorite literature, like most young Americans',

is the comics magazines. With more than 50,000,000 monthly circulation, comics magazines are the most popular periodicals in print... and among the 14,000,000 U.S. families with children of 8-20 reach 90% of the homes, 85% of the youngsters, 40% of the adults. And 9 of 10 comics magazine readers are regular readers of the best in comics—the National Comics Group!

National Comics, identifiable by the Superman-DC symbol on the covers—have more than 8 million monthly circulation ABC, long life, high multiple readership, effective inquest, potent sales influence... cost only about a third as much as general magazine circulation... are used by an impressive list of national advertisers for sales over the counter, mail orders, box top returns, inquiries, profitable response. For full details, get in touch with...

**The National Comics Group**

RICHARD A. FELDMAN & CO., INC., National Advertising Representatives  
295 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N.Y. • Chicago • Los Angeles • San Francisco

**ABOVE** According to this 1947 DC ad, comic books could inspire a know-it-all teen to explain aerodynamics to an editor with a Harvard master's degree. **RIGHT** The covers of *House of Mystery* #1 (December 1951-January 1952), by unknown artists, and *Star Spangled Comics* #122 (November 1951), by Leonard Starr, showcased DC's "horror-lite" approach.

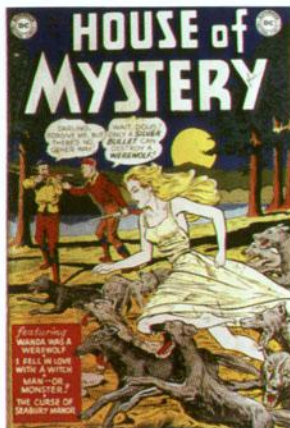
These notions first began to reach the public consciousness when the March 27, 1948 issue of *Collier's* published a report on a symposium on "The Psychopathology of Comic Books" by one Fredric Wertham, PhD. A clinical psychologist with impeccable credentials, Wertham's writing nonetheless had a tendency to make wild leaps of logic and assertions not strictly supported by clinical data.

Most worrisome to DC Comics, he went after the super heroes, suggesting that Superman was an unhealthy Nietzschean power fantasy with Aryan, racist overtones, and that Batman and Robin were the "wish dream of two homosexuals living together."

Wertham took a society already primed to see subversion of its ideals in every nook and cranny, and whipped it into a hyper-vigilant frenzy over The Comic Book Menace. His efforts resulted in developments like the New York State Joint Legislative Committee to Study the Publication of Comics, which held its first annual hearings in 1949. This, and the congressional hearings that followed, occurred while Wertham was preparing to publish his notorious book, *Seduction of the Innocent*, whose inflammatory screed and shocking images of torture and sadism reproduced from actual comics pages kicked the anti-comics hysteria up a few dozen notches.

Meanwhile, Irwin Donenfeld tried to have it both ways, publishing non-horrific stories in books that looked like horror comics. For example, when "Dr. Thirteen, Ghost Breaker" debuted in *Star Spangled* #122 (November 1951), the cover promised bloodless horror, but the stories inside presented reality-based tales in which Dr. Terry Thirteen always debunked the apparitions.

DC's painstaking restraint was considered prudent in light of the events following the May 1950 appointment of Senator Estes Kefauver to chair the Special Senate Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce. From there, Kefauver steered the committee into an investigation of juvenile delinquency and comic books. Fredric Wertham was appointed the psychiatric consultant, giving him a much bigger national platform for his dire warnings. In view of the rising tension, DC was glad not to be in the horror business at the end of 1953, having cancelled *The Phantom Stranger*.



## **PUBLIC SERVICE COMICS**

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DC Comics took pride in the single-page public service ads that ran for decades in many titles. Working with the National Social Welfare Society, DC editor Jack Schiff utilized all the characters—everyone from Superman to Peter Porkchops—to educate and inform. The pages were also reprinted and sent to schools at no cost.

## **SUPERMAN AND THE GREAT CLEVELAND FIRE (1948)**

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This four-page promotional comic was published by DC for the Hospital Fund.

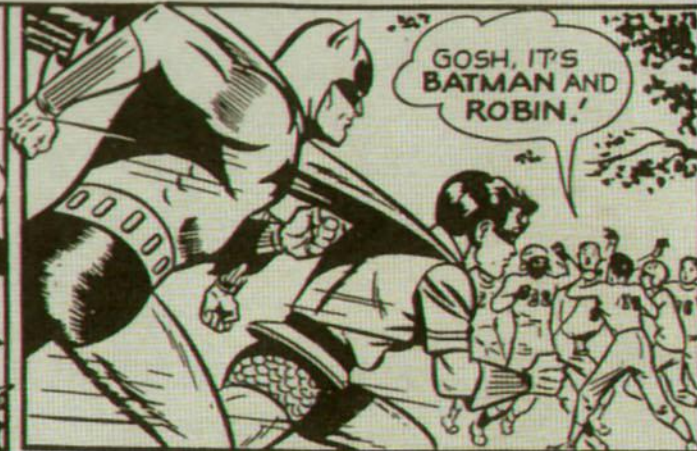
# BATMAN AND ROBIN

## stand up for SPORTSMANSHIP!

EVER ON THE ALERT FOR SIGNS OF CRIME, BATMAN AND ROBIN, FAMED FIGHTERS FOR JUSTICE, SPOT A NEW AND DANGEROUS MENACE!

LOOK, ROBIN, SOME REAL TROUBLE ON THAT FOOTBALL FIELD--AND IT NEEDS OUR ATTENTION!

CHECK, BATMAN!



GOSH, IT'S BATMAN AND ROBIN!

HOLD ON, WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

AW, WE DON'T WANT THIS GUY AROUND HERE. HE DON'T BELONG! HE AIN'T A REAL AMERICAN!

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, DAN!

A LOT OF US DON'T AGREE WITH YOU! HANK'S A GOOD PLAYER--AND HE BELONGS ON THE TEAM SAME AS ANYBODY ELSE!

RIGHT! IT'S THE ONE WHO THINKS OTHERWISE WHO'S NOT THE REAL AMERICAN! HE'S HARMING HIS COUNTRY WHEN HE SPEAKS AND ACTS THAT WAY!



DON'T BELIEVE THOSE CRACKPOT LIES ABOUT PEOPLE WHO WORSHIP DIFFERENTLY, OR WHOSE SKIN IS OF A DIFFERENT COLOR, OR WHOSE PARENTS COME FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY. REMEMBER OUR AMERICAN HERITAGE OF FREEDOM AND EQUALITY!

DON'T WEAKEN OUR COUNTRY! A NATION DIVIDED BY PREJUDICE IS LIKE A FOOTBALL TEAM WITHOUT TEAMWORK! SO GET TOGETHER... WORK AND PLAY IN HARMONY--AND YOU'LL HAVE A SUCCESSFUL TEAM!

THANKS, BATMAN, WE WILL!



# PETER PORKCHOPS solves

## "The Case of the CARELESS CAMPER!"



**PREVENT FOREST FIRES!**  
DON'T BUILD YOUR FIRE NEAR TREES OR TALL GRASS. BE SURE FIRE IS OUT TO THE LAST SPARK BEFORE YOU LEAVE!



**PREVENT FOREST FIRES!**  
BREAK UP YOUR MATCHES AFTER FLAME IS OUT. CRUSH OUT CIGARETTES!



**WAKE UP!**  
PREVENT FOREST FIRES! THIS MEANS YOU!



PUBLISHED AS A PUBLIC SERVICE IN COOPERATION WITH THE ADVERTISING COUNCIL AND LEADING NATIONAL SOCIAL WELFARE AND YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS, THIS PAGE APPEARS IN MORE THAN 10,000,000 MAGAZINES OF THE NATIONAL COMICS GROUP (SUPERMAN-DC PUBLICATIONS).



PUBLISHED AS A PUBLIC SERVICE IN COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL SOCIAL WELFARE ASSEMBLY, COORDINATING ORGANIZATION FOR NATIONAL HEALTH, WELFARE AND RECREATION AGENCIES OF THE U.S., THIS PAGE APPEARS IN MORE THAN 10,000,000 MAGAZINES OF THE NATIONAL COMICS GROUP (SUPERMAN-DC PUBLICATIONS).

# "IT'S FUN TO BE HEALTHY!" says Wonder Woman

ON THE ATHLETIC FIELD OF TOWNVILLE HIGH, WONDER WOMAN, THE AMAZON PRINCESS, SEEKS OUT A YOUNG FRIEND...

AND LAST WEEK YOU HAD A HEADACHE AND DIDN'T FEEL SO GOOD, AND YOU DIDN'T GO ON THE SCHOOL PICNIC. YOU'RE MISSING ALL THE FUN, DICK!



BUT I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. YES, YOU CAN, IF YOU SET YOUR MIND TO IT. AND I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU HOW!



BRIGHT AND EARLY MONDAY MORNING ...



SO YOU WON'T FORGET, DICK, THERE'S A CHART OF THE THINGS YOU MUST DO! JUST CHECK THEM OFF AS YOU DO THEM EVERY DAY!

AND IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING, DICK FAITHFULLY FOLLOWS THE AMAZON PRINCESS' INSTRUCTIONS.



AND SO, ONE DAY, ON THE SAME ATHLETIC FIELD...  
"HIYA, WONDER WOMAN! GOSH I FEEL SWELL! AND AM I HAVING FUN!"  
"YES, DICK. IT'S FUN TO BE HEALTHY! AND WITH A LITTLE PATIENCE AND COMMON SENSE, AND THE HEALTH RULES I TAUGHT YOU, ANYONE CAN BE."



# BULLY says "YOU GET WHAT YOU VOTE FOR!"

HEY, FELLERS, DON'T TELL ME THE MEETING'S ALL OVER! SURE--WE COULDN'T WAIT FOR YOU FOREVER, JOE. WE VOTED TO GO TO THE LAKE FOR OUR PICNIC.



BUT I TALKED TO MY UNCLE ABOUT COMING TO HIS FARM. HE WAS GOING TO LET US RIDE THE HORSES AND GO SWIMMING IN THE POND. HOW WERE WE TO KNOW? ARE WE MIND-READERS?



HOLD ON, WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT? AW, I CAME TOO LATE FOR THE MEETING, AND I JUST FOUND OUT THEY VOTED TO GO TO THE LAKE FOR OUR CLUB PICNIC. AND I HAD IT ALL FIXED WITH MY UNCLE TO GO TO HIS FARM.



I KNOW JUST HOW YOU FEEL, JOE! LAST YEAR THE TOWN COUNCIL, IN AN OPEN FORUM, VOTED DOWN HAVING A NEW PLAYGROUND AND SWIMMING POOL. I HAD A PLAN THAT MIGHT HAVE WORKED WITHOUT RAISING TAXES TOO MUCH, BUT I COMPLETELY FORGOT ABOUT THE DATE OF THE MEETING.



BOY, NEXT TIME, I'LL BE SURE TO BE THE FIRST ONE PRESENT!



YOU'RE LUCKY YOU CAN DO THAT. YOU CAN'T ALWAYS HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE.



PUBLISHED AS A PUBLIC SERVICE IN COOPERATION WITH LEADING NATIONAL SOCIAL WELFARE AND YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS. THIS PAGE APPEARS IN MORE THAN 10,000,000 MAGAZINES OF THE NATIONAL COMICS GROUP (SUPERMAN-DC PUBLICATIONS).

Won the American Heritage Foundation award for "the most effective page appearing in comics magazines in support of the National Register and Vote Campaign of 1952."

# What's Your B.Q.\*?

BROTHERHOOD WEEK (FEB. 15-22) IS A GOOD TIME FOR ALL OF US TO TAKE INVENTORY ON OUR ATTITUDES. HERE'S A SIMPLE WAY TO FIND YOUR BROTHERHOOD SCORE!

(\* BROTHERHOOD QUOTIENT.)

A. CHECK ONE COLUMN FOR EACH ITEM LISTED TO TEST YOUR LIKES AND DISLIKES.

	UGH! DISLIKE	UM! LIKE	SO-SO! LUKEWARM	NO THOUGHT! VACANT
Alligators				
Baptists				
Cabbage				
Catholics				
Detective Stories				
Foreigners				
Indians				
Jews				
Long-hair music				
Negroes				
Spiders				

B. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT "ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL?"



YES.....  
NO.....

C. DO YOU THINK ALL YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE THE SAME CHANCE FOR EDUCATION, SPORTS AND JOBS?



HOW DID YOU MAKE OUT IN TEST A? ALL OF US HAVE SOME THINGS WE DON'T LIKE. WHEN THEY'RE VEGETABLES OR INSECTS--NO ONE CARES. BUT WHEN THEY'RE PEOPLE--YOU HURT THEM AND CHEAT YOURSELF.

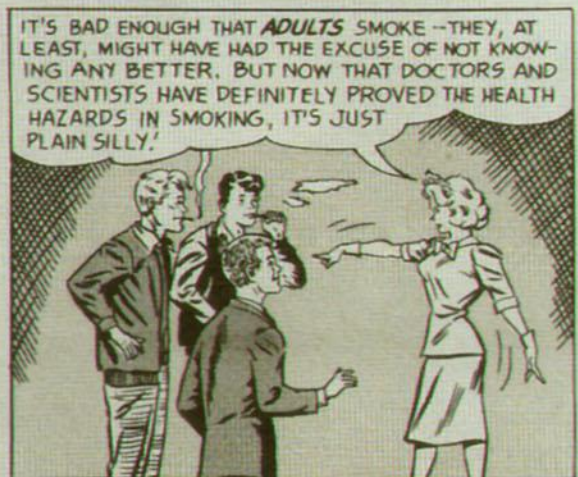
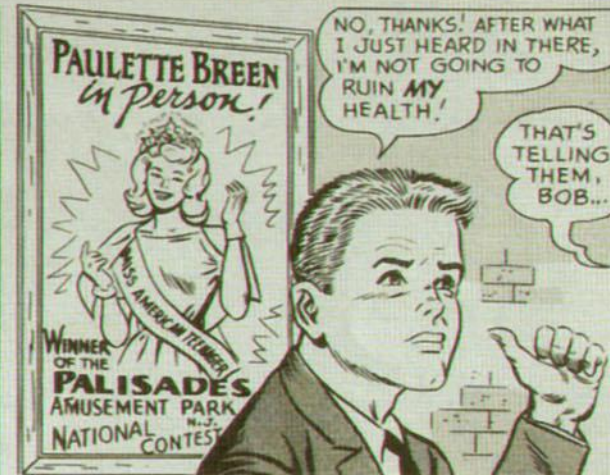
IF YOU SCORED 3 YES ANSWERS ON QUESTIONS B, C AND D--YOU'RE OKAY! IF YOU DIDN'T--YOU'D BETTER START THINKING ABOUT IT!

D. WHEN A NEW CHILD COMES TO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, DO YOU GO OUT OF YOUR WAY TO MAKE HIM FEEL AT HOME?



YES.....  
NO.....

# SMOKING is for SQUARES!



PUBLISHED AS A PUBLIC SERVICE IN COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL SOCIAL WELFARE ASSEMBLY, COORDINATING ORGANIZATION FOR NATIONAL HEALTH, WELFARE AND RECREATION AGENCIES OF THE U.S., THIS PAGE APPEARS IN MORE THAN 10,000,000 MAGAZINES OF THE NATIONAL COMICS GROUP (SUPERMAN-DC PUBLICATIONS).



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OCCURRENCES LIKE THIS MAKE ONE THING CLEAR—YOUR NEED FOR BETTER HOSPITAL PROTECTION.

"REMEMBER, ONE IN EIGHT NEEDS HOSPITAL CARE EACH YEAR."

"YOUR OWN FAMILY IS IN DANGER."

"MORE HOSPITAL BEDS ARE GREATER CLEVELAND'S GREATEST CHALLENGE."

MOST OF YOU FOLKS HAVE HOSPITALIZATION INSURANCE. NOW YOU NEED HOSPITALS TO USE IT WHEN YOU'RE HURT, OR YOUR WIFE OR BABY IS SICK.

THE GREATER CLEVELAND HOSPITAL FUND IS RAISING \$9,525,000 TO ENLARGE 14 NON-PROFIT HOSPITALS AND BUILD FOUR NEW ONES.

*Your* CONTRIBUTIONS ARE NEEDED!

A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE FROM YOUR PLANT WILL EXPLAIN IT. BY CONTRIBUTING AT LEAST AN HOUR'S PAY A MONTH FOR TWELVE MONTHS, YOU CAN MAKE YOUR HOSPITALS BIG ENOUGH FOR YEARS TO COME.

HOW DO WE DO IT, SUPERMAN?

LATER, IN THE OFFICE OF H.P. LADDS, FUND PRESIDENT...

THANKS, SUPERMAN, YOU HAVE HELPED TO AROUSE THE WORKERS OF CLEVELAND TO THE NEED FOR MORE HOSPITAL BEDS.

I'M SURE THE EMPLOYEES WILL DO THEIR FULL SHARE. THE COMPANIES HAVE SET A GOOD EXAMPLE.

A GLANCE INTO THE FUTURE...

Feb. 29, 1948  
 To all the Employees of Cleveland:  
 Congratulations on your splendid response to the Greater Cleveland Hospital Fund! Soon your great city can add 1,174 hospital beds and replace 500 in worn-out buildings. No more waiting lists, prompt admission when your family needs care. That's what the doctor ordered!  
 Superman

# SUPERMAN and the GREAT CLEVELAND FIRE

OUT OF THE NIGHT COMES A CRY OF ANGUISH, A CALL FOR HELP AS WORD SPREADS RAPIDLY—FIRE! AND A JOYOUS CELEBRATION BECOMES A SCENE OF TERROR AS HUNDREDS ARE PINNED IN A FIRE-TRAP. BUT RACING TO THE RESCUE IS SUPERMAN IN A DRAMATIC STORY OF MERCY THAT STRIKES AT THE HEART OF CLEVELAND'S FUTURE!

© 1948 THE NATIONAL COMPASS PULP, INC.

IN THE OFFICE OF THE DAILY PLANET...

KENT, THE NATION'S HOSPITALS ARE CRITICALLY OVER-CROWDED. MAKE A TOUR OF THE LEADING CITIES. FIND OUT WHAT THEY'RE DOING.

CLEVELAND HAS 4,000 ON ITS WAITING LIST FOR HOSPITAL CARE. SUPPOSE I START THERE.

SOON, IN THE OFFICE OF A CLEVELAND HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR...

YOU SAY, DOCTOR, THAT THE USE OF HOSPITALS HAS DOUBLED IN TEN YEARS?

YES, MEDICAL SCIENCE IS MAKING MARVELOUS DISCOVERIES TO GET THE FULL BENEFITS, MORE PEOPLE ARE COMING TO HOSPITALS.



SUDDENLY...  
LOOKS LIKE A FOUR-ALARM FIRE!

HMM... I'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE!

THIS MIGHT BE A JOB FOR SUPERMAN!



HUNDREDS ARE TRAPPED INSIDE THAT BUILDING! WE CAN'T REACH THEM ALL.

THIS IS A JOB FOR SUPERMAN!



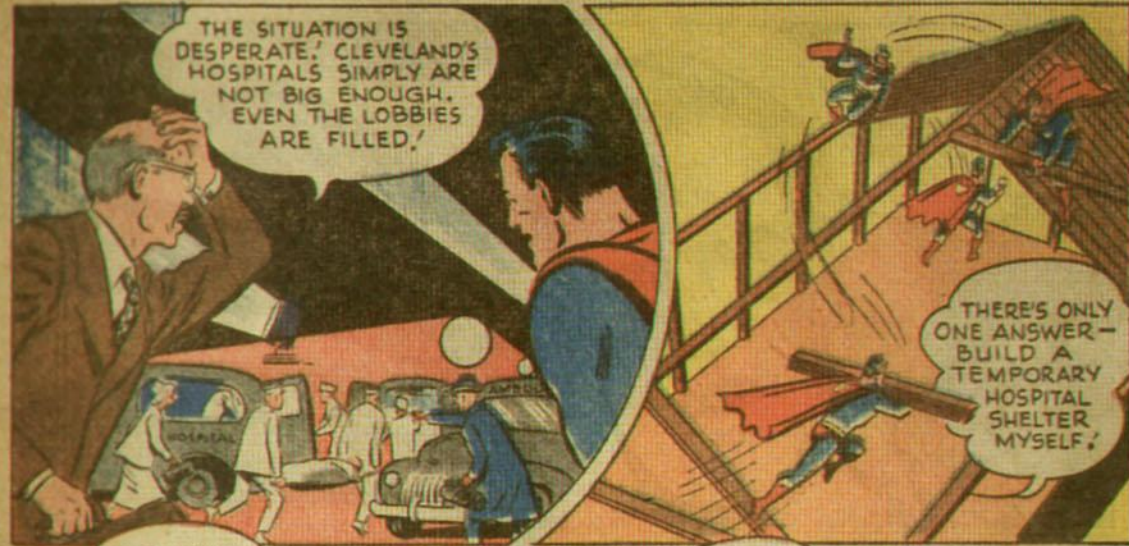
FIRST, TO HELP THE FIRE DEPARTMENT SAVE THESE PEOPLE,



I'LL BE BACK WITH MORE IN A MINUTE!



THERE'S NOT A VACANT BED IN THE HOSPITAL, BUT WE'LL SET UP COTS IN THE CORRIDORS.

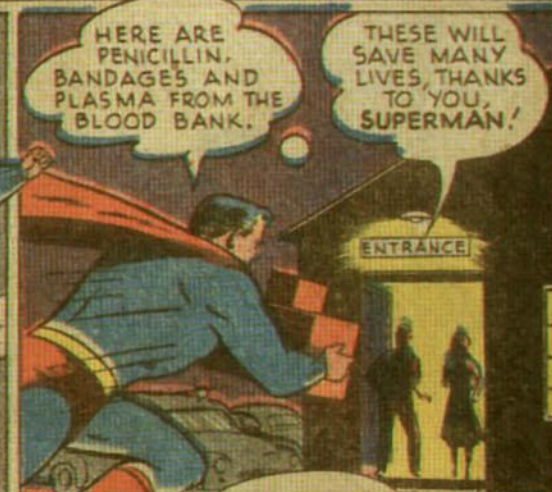


THE SITUATION IS DESPERATE! CLEVELAND'S HOSPITALS SIMPLY ARE NOT BIG ENOUGH. EVEN THE LOBBIES ARE FILLED!

THERE'S ONLY ONE ANSWER— BUILD A TEMPORARY HOSPITAL SHELTER MYSELF!



AND NOW TO GET THE SUPPLIES TO TREAT BURNS.



HERE ARE PENICILLIN, BANDAGES AND PLASMA FROM THE BLOOD BANK.

THESE WILL SAVE MANY LIVES, THANKS TO YOU, SUPERMAN!



HOURS LATER...

HURRAY FOR SUPERMAN!

YOU DID A WONDERFUL JOB, SUPERMAN!

THERE'S A BIGGER JOB WAITING FOR YOU TO DO!

PEOPLE OF CLEVELAND, THIS IS THE KIND OF DISASTER THAT MIGHT HAPPEN ANYWHERE, ANY TIME. IT MIGHT BE A FIRE, AN EXPLOSION, AN EPIDEMIC...

### General Standards Part B

1. No comic magazine shall use the word horror or terror in its title.
2. All scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes, depravity, lust, sadism, masochism shall not be permitted.
3. All lurid, unsavory, gruesome illustrations shall be eliminated.
4. Inclusion of stories dealing with evil shall be used or shall be published only where the intent is to illustrate a moral issue and in no case shall evil be presented alluringly nor as to injure the sensibilities of the reader.
5. Scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with walking dead, torture, vampires and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism and werewolfism are prohibited.

### General Standards Part C

All elements or techniques not specifically mentioned herein, but which are contrary to the spirit and intent of the Code, and are considered violations of good taste or decency, shall be prohibited.

#### Dialogue

1. Profanity, obscenity, smut, vulgarity, or words or symbols which have acquired undesirable meanings are forbidden.
2. Special precautions to avoid references to physical afflictions or deformities shall be taken.
3. Although slang and colloquialisms are acceptable, excessive use should be discouraged and wherever possible good grammar shall be employed.

#### Religion

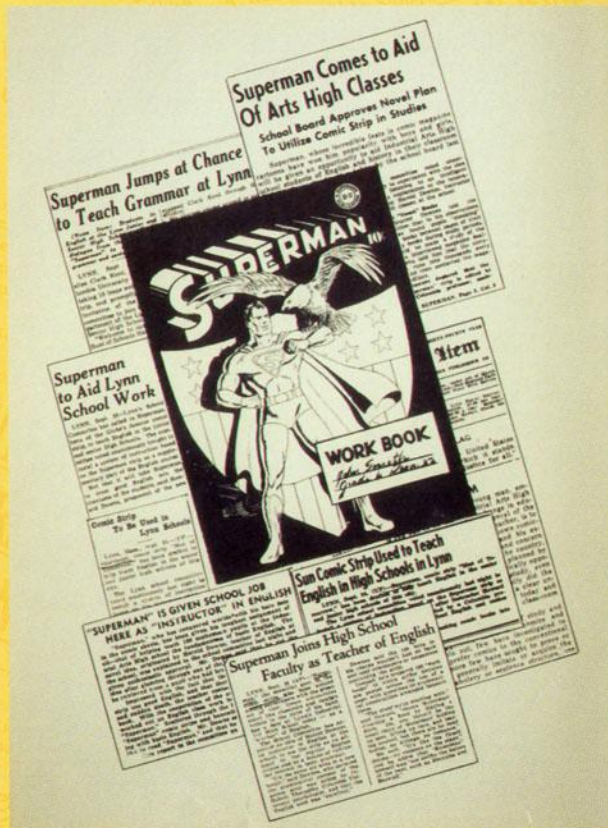
1. Ridicule or attack on any religious or racial group is never permissible.

#### Costume

1. Nudity in any form is prohibited, as is indecent or undue exposure.
2. Suggestive and salacious illustration or suggestive posture is unacceptable.
3. All characters shall be depicted in dress reasonably acceptable to society.
4. Females shall be drawn realistically without exaggeration of any physical qualities.

NOTE: It should be recognized that all prohibitions dealing with costume, dialogue or artwork apply as specifically to the cover of a comic magazine as they do to the contents.

[7]



**ABOVE** A page of standards from a *Facts About the Comics Code* booklet. **ABOVE RIGHT** The official Comics Code seal, as printed on the booklet's cover. **RIGHT** DC assembled a page of good works associated with Superman.



and *Sensation Mystery*. The inoffensive *House of Mystery*, which had become increasingly tame since its inception, survived, ultimately beating the horror rap in 1955 with stories that revealed how anything supernatural that had happened was a hoax.

In the spring of 1954, the Senate Select Committee on Juvenile Delinquency held hearings on comic books in Manhattan, and Bill Gaines was a disastrous witness. He withered under direct attacks by Wertham and let himself be maneuvered by the interrogating senators into an eminently quotable line about severed heads being “in good taste” as long as they weren’t dripping blood. The press had the proverbial field day.

*Damn that Bill!*, the publishers said as they recoiled. *We’re not in enough trouble already because he publishes the goddamn things, he has to go put us out of business on national television?* They knew they had to band together to reassure the American people that their product was safe. Self-policing, before censorship could be imposed from without, was the answer, they cried.

But self-censorship only meant that everybody else would have to follow the leads of Archie’s John Goldwater and DC’s Jack Liebowitz, who had adopted strict policies on what couldn’t be shown or discussed—even stricter than television’s. September 1954 marked the establishment of the CMA—the Comics Magazine Association of America that would administer the Comics Code Authority—with Goldwater as its president and Liebowitz as vice president. National adopted the CCA seal as of its March–April 1955 cover-dates.

With the Code effectively cutting in half the range of subjects comics could address, at least eight publishers went out of business within a year, and dozens more were sent scrambling to reinvent their lines. The cost of failure was high, and publishers became risk-averse about new launches.

In response, DC developed a testing ground for new titles. Lucky that they did, too, for just as the revenue stream from the *Superman* TV series was slowing down, DC’s new tryout book would mean a surge in publishing profits. It would also mean the triumphant return of the genre that had built DC in the first place.

youth in your game of tug-of-war

Young America will help if you get them on your team . . . when you pull your end of the rope . . . in the tug-of-war of the family purse-string . . . The 30,000,000 impressionable 8 to 20 year olds . . . a potent factor in the buying and home consumption of your products . . . know what they need and want. And they mean to get them! So aim for these young Americans . . . their pivotal position can swing the balance of power in your favor. in the marketplace game of tug-of-war.

**The National Comics Group**  
represented nationally by  
**Richard A. Feldon and Co., Inc.**  
 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.  
 Chicago · San Francisco · Los Angeles

**ABOVE LEFT** Superboy dropped in to explain the concept of charity in this religious story from 1947. **ABOVE** How to reach 30 million young Americans? According to this ad, it was as simple as advertising in DC’s comics.



## CHAPTER SEVEN



# Super-Hero RENAISSANCE

### BY 1957, THE COMIC BOOK BUSINESS HAD SHRUNK

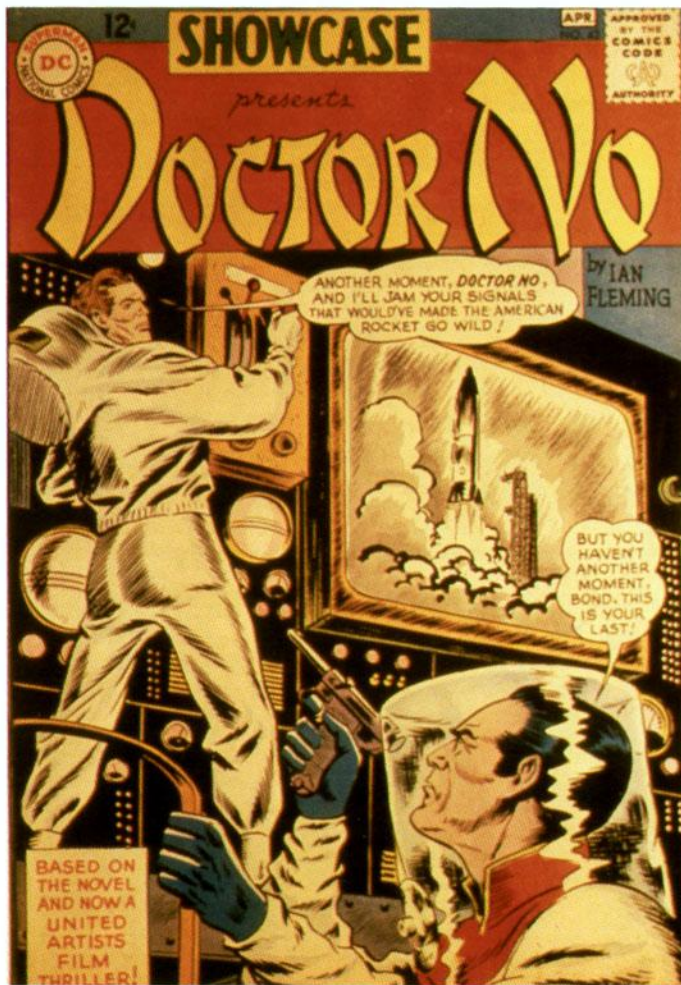
to half of what it had been in 1952. Too many publishers had built too many titles on too many things that the Comics Code had now done away with, and the softer fare they hastily substituted for it sent their sales plummeting. Artists who had flourished in the pre-Code period abandoned comics in droves. But it was a second blow that drove the stake through many a publisher's heart: the Justice Department accused American News Company, the biggest magazine distributor in the country, of restraint of trade for owning newsstands and being both a wholesaler and a retailer. Just as it had in 1938 with movie studios that owned theatres, Justice ordered American News to divest itself of its retail outlets. American chose instead to liquidate its assets and dissolve in 1957.

Half of the comics publishers who hadn't already been wiped out lost their distribution and went under. At that point, Martin Goodman, then publisher of what would become Marvel Comics, reluctantly turned to Jack Liebowitz's Independent News for

**OPPOSITE PAGE** The Justice League make their debut on this detail from *The Brave and the Bold* #28 (February–March 1960) cover art by Mike Sekowsky and Murphy Anderson.

**LEFT** Green Lantern detail from *Showcase* #22 (September–October 1959). Art by Gil Kane.

**ABOVE** Two panels from a "Batman and Robin" strip from *Arrow, The Family Comic Weekly* (1953), probably written by Walter Gibson, who created the Shadow.



**ABOVE** The Showcase #43 issue featuring Doctor No (March–April 1963) wasn't a huge hit with comics fans, but the James Bond license would prove valuable to DC's own Licensing Corporation of America. Cover by Bob Brown.

distribution. The resulting deal restricted Goodman, once the most prolific of publishers, to eight titles a month. Even though that number increased over time, for the duration of that relationship DC was able to remain the best-selling comics brand.

Again, Jack Liebowitz's notorious conservatism and foresight had saved the company. He controlled his own distribution, and because of DC's circumspect editorial policies, he needed to change little of his titles' content. Best of all, his company, like Archie, did not rely as heavily as the others on actual comic book sales.

By this time, DC was deriving most of its revenue from merchandise and television. In 1956, the licensing-out of DC characters—primarily Superman—began growing aggressively thanks to a new executive supervising it exclusively. Liebowitz's twenty-seven-year-old nephew Jay Emmett had sold his uncle on a business plan for expanding the licensing operation, and the resulting Licensing Corporation of America would handle not only National's properties but also those of other manufacturers seeking to license out their products.

Emmett was as good at spotting trends as DC's editors weren't. People laughed when he secured the rights to James Bond at a time when it was merely a series of novels for adults and just being popularized in *Playboy* (distributed by Independent News). DC's *Dr. No* comic book, marketed as a movie tie-in, didn't set the world on fire, but as the Bond movies went "boffo," Emmett built a multimillion-dollar toy, trading card, and apparel business (those James Bond trench coats!) out of something that others associated strictly with Aston Martins. Within a decade of its formation, LCA would be as highly valued a division of National as Independent News. And so, being much larger than Archie, National was the best positioned of all the publishers to withstand the greatest upheaval the business had yet seen.

In 1958, the company was publishing roughly four hundred issues a year, a number that would not be reached again until 1983, even as the variety of genres readers could enjoy was narrowing. Meanwhile, television was luring ever more preteen eyeballs away from reading matter of any kind. Irwin Donenfeld pored over his scrapbooks and reports to divine what was left that could be grown in the now-sterile soil of the comics business.

In a world of blogs, chatrooms, sophisticated market research, and a comics business with an entirely different distribution method, today's readers have difficulty understanding why DC was once so slow to spot or respond to trends. And why did it take so long to bring a new idea to market?

Production methods were more mechanical and slower in the 1950s, but the biggest delay was in getting sales data. Under the old consignment method of distribution, retailers ordered a certain number of copies from wholesalers after the print run had been set, and the books could stay on the newsstands for as long as two or three months. Then the retailers shipped the unsold magazines, with the covers removed so they couldn't be resold, back to the wholesalers. The number of unsold copies was deducted from the number of retail copies in circulation to get the total sell-through. Generally, this information was not available until *six months* after the on-sale date.

SEPTEMBER, 1956

3/21 (R) REX #29 4113

- ✓ 1. REY - PRISONER OF THE ICE BERG
- ✓ 2. REY - SECRET OF THE CASTLE TREASURE
- ✓ 3. CHIMP - SCIENTIFIC CROOK-CATCHER

(G.K. - 3/20) + 10  
 8 + P - 1  
 8 + P - 1  
 6 + P - 1

4-PAGER

- ✓ 1. MOP-UP SQUAD
- ✓ 2. COMBAT SUMMERS
- ✓ 3. G.I. DUDE
- ✓ 4. BATTLE LENSER

3/26 (R) OUR ARMY AT WAR #50 4118

(Sandy 3/16) + 5  
 4 + P - 1 ANDRU +  
 6 + P - 1 GRANDY +  
 6 + P - 1 PERCIVAL  
 6 + P - 1 HEATH

3/30 (R) WESTERN #59 4119

- ✓ 1. POWWOW SMITH - SMOKE-SIGNAL SHERIFF
- ✓ 2. NIGHTHAWK - MAN WITHOUT A MASK
- ✓ 3. RODEO RICK - SILVER DOLLAR RODEO
- ✓ 4. WYOMING KID - SECRET OF THE MISSING SPURS

(G.K. - 3/20) + 7  
 6 + P - 1  
 6 + P - 1  
 5 + P - 1  
 4 + P - 1

4/3 (R) BIG TOWN #41 - 4125 (G.K. - 3/20) (3.6 - 114) + 7 (5)

- ✓ 1. MYSTERY OF THE INVISIBLE MANSION
- ✓ 2. CONVICT AT LARGE
- ✓ 3. STEVE WILSON'S LAST DEADLINE

8 + P - 1  
 6 + P - 1  
 7 + P - 1

(R) ALL-AMERICAN MEN-OF-WAR #37 - 511

4-PAGER

- ✓ 1. THE BIG STRETCH
- ✓ 2. WEA-FOOT SOLDIER
- ✓ 4. AMMO MAN
- ✓ 3. HANGING PILEON

(Sandy 3/15) + 1  
 6 + P - 1 ANDRU  
 6 + P - 1 PERCIVAL  
 6 + P - 1 ANDRU  
 4 + P - 1 KUBERT

4/7 (R) HOPALONG CASSIDY #117 511

- ✓ 1. SCHOOL FOR SHERIFFS
- ✓ 2. BLAZE OF GLORY
- ✓ 3. CHALLENGE OF THE RIVAL OUTLAWS

(E.C. - 3/16) (5.0 - 3/23) + 1  
 8 + P - 1  
 8 + P - 1  
 6 + P - 1

4/11 (R) STRANGE ADVENTURES #72 512

- ✓ 1. SKYSCRAPER THAT CAME TO LIFE
- ✓ 2. MEN WITH LIONS - NINE LIFETIMES
- ✓ 3. PUZZLE FROM PLANET X
- ✓ 4. THE TIME-WISE THIEF

(R.M. - 3/11) + 3  
 6 + P - 1 GREENE + GILLEN  
 6 + P - 1 HAVE + GILLEN  
 6 + P - 1 GREENE + SACHS  
 4 + P - 1 GLUNTAT

4/17 (R) STAR-SPANGLED WAR #49 - 518

- ✓ 1. PAY LOAD
- ✓ 2. X MARKS THE WAR -
- ✓ 3. BATTLE BEAT
- ✓ 4. ONE MEDAL - ON LOAN

(Sandy 3/22) + 4  
 6 + P - 1 HEATH  
 6 + P - 1 PERRY  
 6 + P - 1 DUFF SWIN  
 6 + P - 1 ANDRU

3/27 (R) SHOWCASE #4 4123

- ✓ 1. MYSTERY OF THE HUMAN THUNDERBOLT
- ✓ 2. MAN WHO BROKE THE TIME BARRIER

(C.S. - 4/9) (3.6 - 4/13) + 5  
 12 + P - 1  
 10 + P - 1

4/2 (R) OUR FIGHTING FORCES #13 - 4124 (Sandy 3/12) + 4

- ✓ 1. OF EACH PARTY
- ✓ 2. HICKORY FOOT SOLDIER
- ✓ 3. COMPLIMENTS OF -
- ✓ 4. GREEN PILEON

(Sandy 3/12) + 4  
 6 + P - 1 ANDRU  
 6 + P - 1 KUBERT  
 6 + P - 1 PERRY  
 6 + P - 1 KUBERT

PERMANENT SUPER-POWER ENABLES HIM TO GIVE THE ELECTRIC BOLT!

STANEOUSLY BOTH AWAY THEIR

ODDITIES

COMPOSITE IONS OF PHERS AND ES TO EARTH



LEFT Editor Julie Schwartz tracked comic book stories and freelancers on this meticulous log from 1956. Schwartz worked at All American and DC for over four decades, compiling giant binders of log pages.

# FEATURE

REVENUE  
SHOWCASE [1]

	TITLE	WRITER	SCRIPT PAID	PENCIL		PENCIL ARTIST	INK		INK ARTIST	DISPOSITION
				OUT	IN		OUT	IN		
8	<del>OUTCAST HEROES</del>	<del>FIDELIC</del>	<del>11/4</del>	<del>1/1</del>		<del>ANDRU</del>	<del>1/1</del>	<del>ANDRU</del>	<del>SCENE 2 5-1/16</del>	
8	<del>RUNAWAY BEAR</del>	<del>FIDELIC</del>	<del>11/11</del>	<del>-</del>	<del>-</del>	<del>HEATH</del>	<del>1-1/2</del>	<del>HEATH</del>	<del>SCENE 2 5-1/16</del>	
8	<del>WIDER OF THE WOODS BOARD OF THE SKIES</del>	<del>ZIMMER</del>	<del>11/22</del>	<del>-</del>	<del>-</del>	<del>ROBERT</del>	<del>1-1/2</del>	<del>ROBERT</del>	<del>SCENE 2 5-1/16</del>	
8	<del>MARKING OF A FROGMAN</del>	<del>BRADSHAW</del>	<del>1/10/50</del>	<del>1/16</del>		<del>HEATH</del>	<del>2/4</del>	<del>HEATH</del>	<del>SCENE 2 2-8/11</del>	
6	<del>FUTURE FORTRESS</del>	"	<del>1/3</del>	<del>-</del>	<del>-</del>	<del>HEATH</del>	<del>2/21</del>	<del>HEATH</del>	<del>SCENE 2 2-7/8</del>	
7 1/2	<del>SILENT WAR</del>	"	<del>2/10</del>	<del>-</del>	<del>-</del>	<del>HEATH</del>	<del>2/23</del>	<del>HEATH</del>	<del>SCENE 3 7-1/16</del>	
FLASH	<del>FLASH - MYSTERY OF MURDER THROUGHOUT HUMAN MURDERING</del>	"	<del>SECRET 5/16</del>	<del>7-9-8</del>	<del>6/15</del>	<del>HEATH</del>	<del>SECRET 4/16</del>	<del>HEATH</del>	<del>FLASH SCENE 4 5-10/16</del>	
FLASH	<del>FLASH MAN WITH BRUCE TINE BARRIER</del>	<del>BOONE</del>	<del>3/50</del>	<del>4/4</del>	<del>4/4</del>	"	<del>4/10</del>	<del>4/4</del>	<del>FLASH SCENE 4 5-10/16</del>	
FLASH	<del>GO-RUSH MAN ON EARTH</del>	<del>BOONE</del>	<del>1/1</del>	<del>1/5</del>	<del>1/4</del>	"	<del>1/21</del>	<del>1/30</del>	<del>FLASH SCENE 5 2-1/8</del>	
FLASH	<del>SECRET OF THE EMPTY BOX</del>	<del>BOOK</del>	<del>11/29</del>	<del>11/2</del>	<del>12/3</del>	"	<del>12/6</del>	<del>12/12</del>	<del>FLASH SCENE 8 5-6/16</del>	
FLASH	<del>GIANT FLASH # 1 - 1963 MACHINE OF THE ELEMENTS</del>	<del>BOONE</del>	<del>7/15</del>	<del>4/2</del>	<del>10/4</del>	<del>INF</del>	<del>10/7</del>	<del>10/21</del>	<del>FLASH SCENE 13 3-4/16</del>	
10 1/2	<del>GIANT FLASH # 4 - OCTOBER AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 MINUTES</del>	<del>BOOK</del>	<del>10/3</del>	<del>10/7</del>	<del>10/5</del>	"	<del>10/1</del>	<del>10/28</del>	<del>FLASH SCENE 15 3-4/16</del>	
R 13	<del>GIANTS OF THE TIME WORLD BARRIERS OF THE TIME BARRIER</del>	<del>BOOK</del>	<del>11/26</del>	<del>11/7</del>	<del>12/5</del>	"	<del>-</del>	<del>12/13</del>	<del>FLASH SCENE 14 5-6/16</del>	
R 12	<del>GIANT FLASH # 9 MAN WHO CHANGED THE EARTH</del>	<del>BOONE</del>	<del>12/5</del>	<del>12/14</del>	<del>12/13</del>	"	<del>-</del>	<del>12/23</del>	<del>FLASH SCENE 14 5-6/16</del>	
17 1/2	<del>S.A. # 217 SECRET OF THE FISCAL CITY</del>	<del>SECRET ORIGINALS # 1</del>	<del>5/11/11</del>	<del>5/11</del>	<del>5/12</del>	<del>SEKOWSKY</del>	<del>5/12</del>	<del>6/12</del>	<del>ADVENTURES OF ADAM STRANGE SCENE 17 11-12/16</del>	
9 1/2	<del>S.A. # 218 PLAYERS OF THE PENDULUM</del>	<del>FOX</del>	<del>5/20</del>	<del>5/26</del>	<del>6/2</del>	<del>SEKOWSKY</del>	<del>6/9</del>	<del>6/13</del>	<del>ADVENTURES OF ADAM STRANGE SCENE 17 11-12/16</del>	
14 1/2	<del>WARRIORS FROM THE ATOM UNIVERSE</del>	<del>FOX</del>	<del>7/15</del>	<del>7/17</del>	<del>7/30</del>	<del>SEKOWSKY</del>	<del>8/12</del>	<del>8/21</del>	<del>ADVENTURES OF ADAM STRANGE SCENE 18 1-2/16</del>	
9 1/2	<del>VOZEN DEAS OF ADAM STRANGE</del>	<del>FOX</del>	<del>7/29</del>	<del>7/31</del>	<del>8/6</del>	<del>SEKOWSKY</del>	<del>8/13</del>	<del>8/19</del>	<del>ADVENTURES OF ADAM STRANGE SCENE 18 1-2/16</del>	
12 1/2	<del>HALLS OF THE SHIP HUNTER</del>	<del>FOX</del>	<del>9/22</del>	<del>7/25</del>	<del>10/3</del>	<del>SEKOWSKY</del>	<del>10/1</del>	<del>10/3</del>	<del>ADAM STRANGE SCENE 18 1-2/16</del>	
11 1/2	<del>MYSTERY OF THE METAL HEAD</del>	<del>FOX</del>	<del>10/6</del>	<del>10/8</del>	<del>10/16</del>	"	<del>10/23</del>	<del>10/31</del>	<del>ADAM STRANGE SCENE 18 1-2/16</del>	
6	<del>SOS - GREEN LAWYER</del>	<del>BRADSHAW</del>	<del>3/17/57</del>	<del>4/2</del>	<del>4/8</del>	<del>KADE</del>	<del>4/14</del>	<del>4/16</del>	<del>ADAM STRANGE SCENE 20 4-10/16</del>	
8 1/2	<del>SECRET OF THE FLAMING SCORP</del>	<del>BRADSHAW</del>	<del>3/17</del>	<del>4/2</del>	<del>4/4</del>	<del>KADE</del>	<del>4/10</del>	<del>4/22</del>	<del>ADAM STRANGE SCENE 20 4-10/16</del>	

ABOVE Schwartz's Showcase log, tracking contributor deadlines and payments, and noting each issue's "disposition."

Worse, the information was often inaccurate when it finally did show up. If, for example, a warehouse in the Midwest got snowed in and couldn't get a certain title out in time, the copies could be remaindered without ever reaching the stands, and the resulting numbers would imply that the title in question simply wasn't selling in that region.

In a 1956 publishing environment that was risk-averse by necessity, most new launches occurred at bimonthly or fewer frequencies, to minimize the number of issues a publisher had to pay for if a new title was D.O.A.

As the climate worsened, publishers became wary of new launches at all. DC's answer to this dilemma was *Showcase*, which was exactly what its name implied: a tryout magazine in which DC could throw anything at the proverbial wall to see what stuck. The first few general-adventure issues didn't catch fire, but Julie Schwartz provided the first *Showcase* titles that were hits with readers by reviving the old AA heroes he worked on in his earliest days as an editor, redeveloped in modern terms.

The first of Schwartz's series of experiments was the Flash, whose 1956 relaunch as Barry Allen, police scientist, became mythologized as the first new super hero introduced since the Justice Society had ended in 1951. This was not entirely accurate; the year before, Jack Schiff had introduced John Jones, Manhunter From Mars, as a backup feature in *Detective*.

In any event, it is Schwartz more than any other editor who is credited today with DC's single-handed revival of costumed heroes. The Flash's redevelopment would ultimately become the template for a successful Justice Society of America revival. The new team, known as the Justice League of America, made its 1960 debut in a second tryout book, *The Brave and the Bold*, and earned its own title before the year was out. Schwartz, John Broome, and Gil Kane also successfully reworked Green Lantern for *Showcase* #22 (September–October 1959).

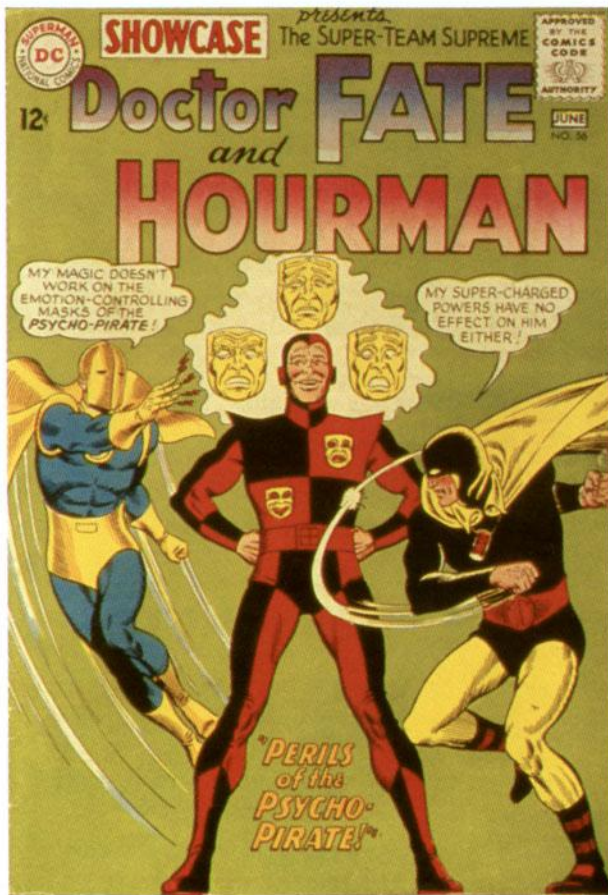
In rapid succession, old AA heroes like Hawkman and the Atom were revived—both by writer Gardner Fox—and given the SF makeover with as many new twists as possible. Hawkman and Hawkgirl, for example, were reconceived as comics' first married super-hero couple. The new Atom, for his part, wasn't just small of stature like the Golden Age original; the new one actually *shrank*—so much, in fact, that he could have adventures in subatomic worlds.

At this time, DC's editorial group had no idea it was building a mythology on which great profits would be earned over the next forty-five years. Nor could they know that Julie Schwartz's next hat trick would become one of the most distinctive aspects of the DC cosmology, formally known in the late 1980s as the eminently exploitable DC Universe.

In 1961, when Jay Garrick—the original Golden Age Flash—made an appearance in *Flash* #123, Schwartz and his talent had come up with a device that allowed them to bring back as many of National's old 1940s heroes as they wanted. "Flash of Two Worlds" posited that Jay Garrick existed on Earth Two, a parallel world similar to, but not exactly like, our own. In terms of crime-fighting fame, Garrick was the other world's counterpart to the modern-day Flash, Barry Allen. There were small differences between Earth One and Earth Two, such as city names, costume designs, and the backstories of the heroes, but otherwise they were identical.



**ABOVE** Showcase #30 (January–February 1961) starred Aquaman, the son of Tom Curry, a human lighthouse keeper, and Atlanna, a water-breathing outcast from the lost, underwater city of Atlantis. He was joined by his eager protégé Aqualad. Cover by Dick Dillin and Sheldon Moldoff.

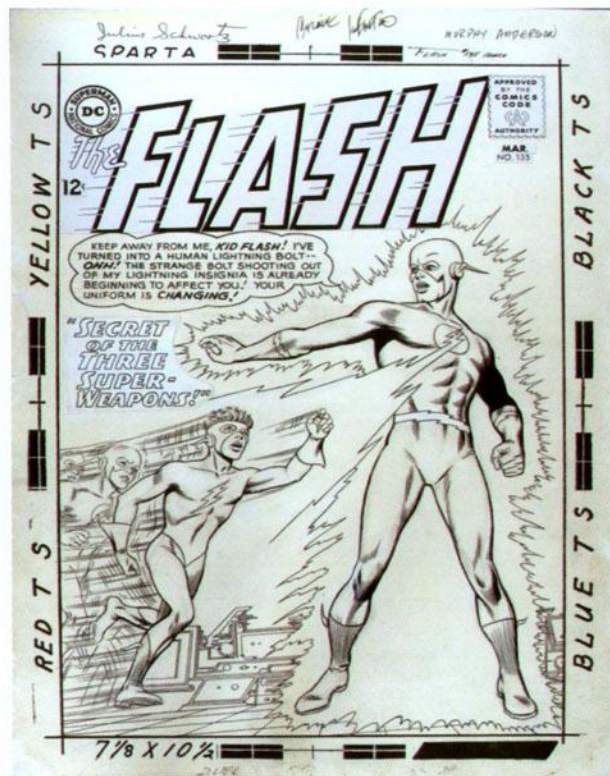


**ABOVE** Reborn Golden Age heroes Doctor Fate and Hourman faced the Psycho-Pirate in Showcase #56 (May–June 1956). Cover by Murphy Anderson. **RIGHT** In The Flash #135, Flash channeled a bolt of lightning that transformed Kid Flash's uniform into its yellow-and-red, exposed-hair version. Original cover art by Carmine Infantino (pencils) and Murphy Anderson (inks).

To save time on exposition, Barry Allen already knew who Jay Garrick was, having read Jay's adventures in comic books as a kid. In the 1940s, it was said, "a comic book writer named Gardner Fox" (himself the writer of the script) had mentally "tapped into" the other dimension in his sleep, and thought that he had "created" Jay Garrick in his dreams.

The door was now opened to reframing the members of the old Justice Society as denizens of Earth Two. And each year, like clockwork, more Earth Two heroes would be introduced to modern audiences in the long-awaited JLA-JSA team-up. This became an annual tradition that would continue for two decades, a multipart story in which both worlds' heroes joined forces against a vast menace—which tended to involve super-people from yet *another* parallel world.

Schwartz wasn't the only editor rearranging the furniture during this period. Both Mort Weisinger and Jack Schiff would vastly expand the *Superman* and *Batman* casts. Newly created characters, and the array of gimmicks and recurring situations that came with them, became a favorite nonviolent way to startle and excite the readership.



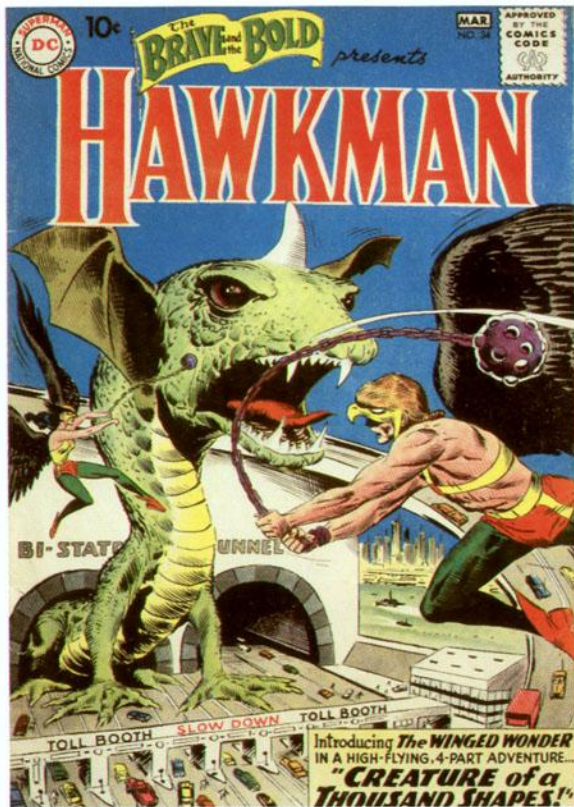
It was a case of opportunity meeting necessity and mothering invention: DC's media presence had temporarily waned and could drive comics sales no longer. John Hamilton, Perry White on *The Adventures of Superman*, had died in 1958. The following year, what had begun as an extended production hiatus became the permanent cancellation of the series upon George Reeve's death.

Throughout the '50s, National had recognized the value in keeping the *Superman* TV series more or less consistent with the comics. Ironically, though, this ultimately had an inhibiting effect on the creativity of Weisinger and his talent. None of the more imaginative aspects of the comics—such as costumed super villains or adventures on other planets—could be made to work on the minuscule TV budget. So Superman's comic book writers had been somewhat constrained: if they became too inventive, the disconnect between the TV and comic book versions of Superman would have widened noticeably and the cross-promotional value of each would have been diluted. Now, with the series gone, Weisinger was free to cut loose, and he introduced a staggering number of new ideas to the Superman comics between 1958 and 1962.



**ABOVE** Original pencil artwork for an unpublished 3-D Superman comic by Curt Swan (1950). **RIGHT** Writer Bob Kanigher conceived the colorful, oddball Metal Men almost overnight, after a slipup that left nothing scheduled for the pages of Showcase #37 (March–April 1962). His creation, with pencil work by Ross Andru and inks by Mike Esposito, starred Dr. Will Magnus and a team of variously endowed robots.





Weisinger started experimenting with deviations from the rigid three-stories-per-issue format and brainstormed on promotional stunts, such as the 1961 "Night of March 31st" contest, which challenged the readers to spot intentional goofs in an April Fool's

**ABOVE** Gardner Fox's revival of the Winged Wonder came in *The Brave and the Bold* #34 (February–March 1961), but audiences would have to wait three years for Hawkman to get his own magazine. **RIGHT** In *Adventure Comics* #300 (September 1962), the Legion of Super-Heroes took center stage, becoming a regular series with popular young characters like Invisible Kid, Chameleon Boy, Sun Boy, and Matter-Eater Lad. Art by Curt Swan and George Klein.

Day story. Meanwhile, in 1958 former Captain Marvel writer Otto Binder—doing more work for DC now that Fawcett had folded—came up with the teenage Legion of Super-Heroes, followed by Brainiac the space pirate, and Kandor, the miniaturized Kryptonian city that Superman would safeguard in another new idea, the Fortress of Solitude. By the time Binder turned Jimmy Olsen into Elastic Lad at the end of the year, it seemed as if he were Weisinger's most prolific idea man.

Then, in 1959, the still amazingly fertile imagination of Jerry Siegel was added to the mix. The '50s had not been kind to Siegel and, ignoring her husband's pride, his second wife, Joanne, bullied Jack Liebowitz into reopening old doors by threatening to publicize the fact that Siegel was in dire financial straits. Liebowitz, wishing to avoid adverse publicity, interceded with Weisinger on Siegel's behalf.



**SUPERMAN'S BUDDY  
BOOKLET (1954)**

These are printer proofs (also known as blue lines) for a booklet that was packaged with a Superman children's costume produced by Funtime Playwear.

**BATMAN AND  
ROBIN CARD (1960)**

Perhaps in an effort to bolster sagging sales of the Batman titles in the late 1950s, DC created this promotional postcard featuring the Caped Crusader.

THAT AFTERNOON, AFTER SCHOOL...



GEE -- LOOK THERE, JIMMY! IT'S THAT BULLY AGAIN! AND HE'S BEATING UP A LITTLE KID.

I'LL SHOW HIM! C'MON!

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, JIMMY?



I'LL TEACH HIM A LESSON! THIS SUPERMAN SUIT I'M WEARING WILL HELP ME!

JIMMY HAS FORGOTTEN SUPERMAN'S WARNING THAT THE SUPERMAN SUIT WOULD NOT GIVE HIM EXTRA STRENGTH.



YOU'LL TEACH ME? HAW! THAT'S A LAUGH.

SEE IF YOU LAUGH WHEN YOU FEEL THESE PUNCHES!



WHY, I'LL JUST PICK YOU UP LIKE THIS ...

OOOOOPPS!



DON'T THINK THAT SUPERMAN SUIT'LL HELP YOU, KID! I'LL SHOW YOU A REAL PUNCH!



BUT SUPERMAN, FLYING HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY, PICKS UP THE FIGHT WITH HIS SUPER-VISION! LIKE A ROCKET BOMB, HE SWOOPS DOWN...

DID YOU SAY SOMETHING ABOUT A REAL PUNCH?

U.P.! NO, I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING, SUPERMAN!

I'M FALLING! HELP!



# SUPERMAN'S BUDDY

PUT 'ER THERE, JIMMY! YOU'RE MY BUDDY!

SUDDENLY, THE ALARM CLOCK RINGS!

WHAT A DREAM! BUT, SAY, IT'S MY BIRTHDAY-- OH! A PRESENT FROM MOM AND DAD. IT'S A SUPERMAN SUIT! JUST WHAT I'VE ALWAYS WANTED!

MOMENTS LATER...

THERE! I FEEL STRONGER ALREADY! I KNOW WHAT I'LL DO! DAD'S BEEN TRYING TO GET RID OF THAT OLD STUMP IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE FOR MONTHS!



from  
**The BAT-CAVE**



BOB  
KANE

*Best Wishes,  
Batman  
and Robin*

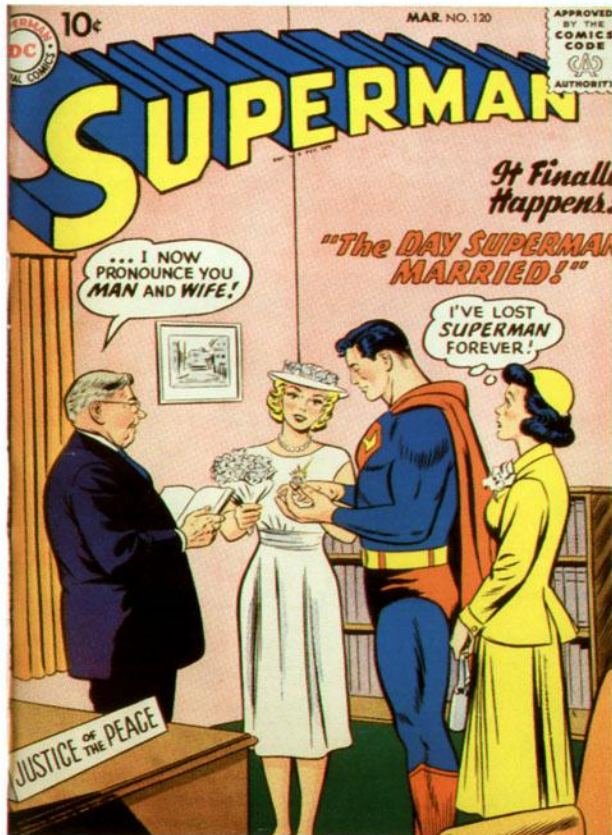
FOLLOW THE ADVENTURES  
OF BATMAN IN EVERY  
ISSUE OF THESE  
SUPERMAN D-C  
PUBLICATIONS





**ABOVE** Inker Murphy Anderson did his own pencils for the new Hawkman, a winged hero working with partner Hawkgirl to battle crime. The duo is seen here on the cover of *Hawkman* #3 (August-September 1964) **RIGHT** A scary paternal fantasy was envisioned in this imaginary tale for *Superman* #170 (July 1964). Cover by Curt Swan and George Klein.





Weisinger treated Siegel with no special deference or acknowledgment whatsoever. Nevertheless, Siegel sucked it up and gave his editor the enormously successful "Imaginary Stories," which told alternate-reality tales that couldn't be done in the regular continuity, such as what would happen if Superman and Lois married.

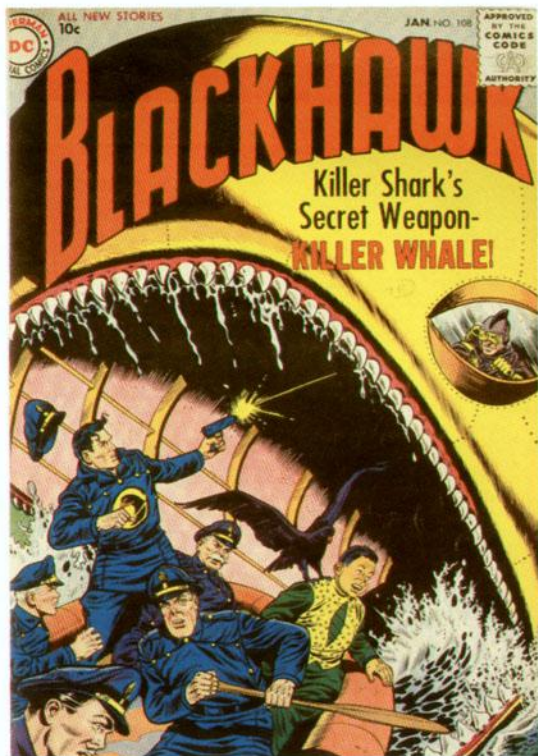
The popularity of the Imaginary Stories was both a vindication for Siegel's bruised ego and a liberation of his imagination. In his heyday, he had sometimes found his bigger ideas being shot down amid fears that they would inhibit the character's exploitability. One of those ideas was the climax of the rejected "K-metal" script submitted in 1940, in which Superman revealed his identity to Lois. Such a twist was the least of what Siegel could do now. He could even write the best-remembered Imaginary Story of them all: "The Death of Superman." Thirty years later, a new "Death of Superman" storyline would result in the most successful special event in the history of the character.

With writer Alvin Schwartz contributing Bizarro, Binder introducing Supergirl and the Bizarro world, and others adding the Phantom Zone and several super pets for Superboy and Supergirl, this period represented the greatest expansion of the Superman brand in its history. But perhaps Siegel's greatest contribution was in helping Weisinger find new story territory by exploring family connections and human relationships. In



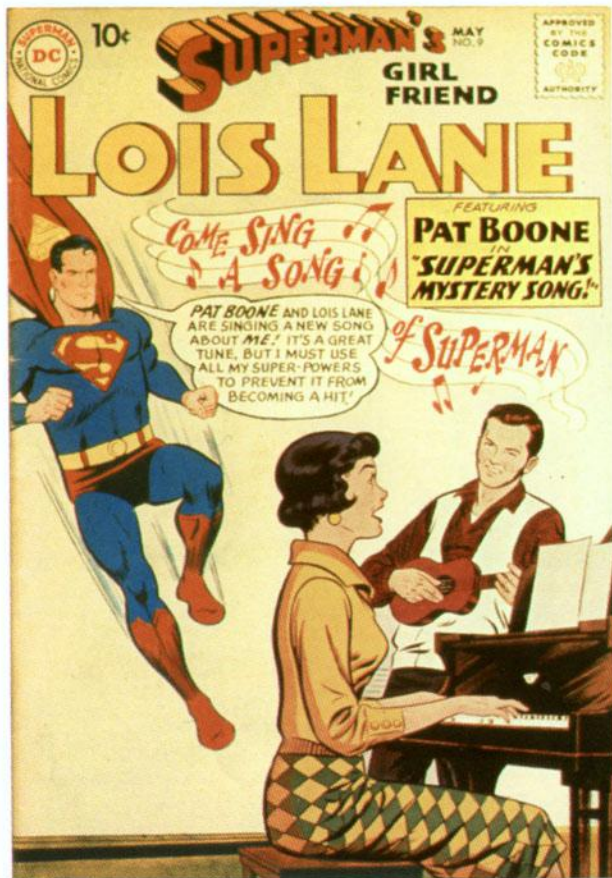
**ABOVE LEFT** A wedding staged with *Daily Planet* editor Perry White's niece, Joyce, in *Superman* #120 (March 1958) may have saddened poor Lois Lane—but all was not as it seemed. Cover art by Curt Swan and Sheldon Moldoff. **ABOVE** In *Superman* #149 (November 1961), written by Jerry Siegel with art by Swan and Moldoff, readers witnessed ("chokes!") the unthinkable.

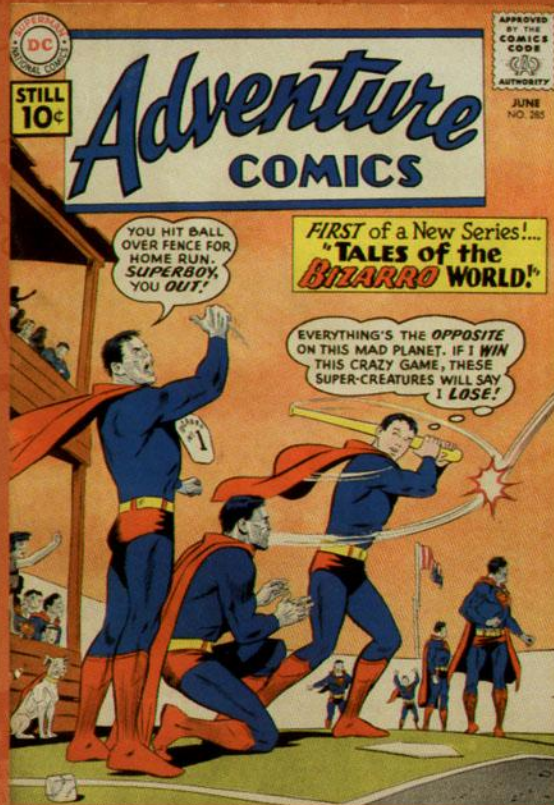
addition to watching Superman discover his roots thanks to newly recovered Kryptonian technology, we also met the citizens of Kandor; witnessed the arrival of Supergirl; met Lois Lane's sister, Lucy, who became Jimmy Olsen's girlfriend; and learned more about all the characters' private lives—even Perry White's.



**ABOVE** DC carried the Blackhawk torch after Quality Comics folded, making a home for some of its talented artists. Issue #108 (January 1957) cover by Dick Dillin and Chuck Cuidera. **RIGHT** The plot lines in *Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane* frequently involved Lois's romantic schemes, and even an occasional popular recording artist. Cover for issue #9 (May 1959) by Curt Swan and Stan Kaye. **OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT** The many faces of Superman, as drawn by Curt Swan. **OPPOSITE PAGE, RIGHT** Taking a turn for the Bizarro, *Adventure Comics* #285 (June 1961), by Curt Swan and Stan Kaye, plunked Superboy into Opposite Day.

Beyond these bursts of creativity, something else was changing the overall look of the DC titles. Fawcett and Quality had both folded by 1957, and DC found use for the talents of a handful of artists from those companies. Chuck Cuidera continued with *Blackhawk* at DC, as did Dick Dillin, who would go on from there to an extraordinary twelve-year run pencilling *Justice League*. Ex-Quality romance artist John Forte would find a home at DC beginning in 1959, inking Curt Swan for several years and lending his unique style to *Jimmy Olsen*, as well as creating the distinctive atmosphere of "Tales of the Bizarro World" in *Adventure*. His last regular assignment was the early Legion of Super-Heroes series that replaced the Bizarros, which he continued to pencil, if not always ink, until his untimely death in 1965.







**ABOVE** Batman went through an ill-advised science fiction phase in the late 1950s. *Detective Comics* #251 (January 1958) had him modeling the features of an alien. **RIGHT** In *Batman* #128 (December 1959) he and Robin helped the interplanetary police capture space pirates. Both covers by Sheldon Moldoff.



Fawcett's departure from comics freed Captain Marvel artist Kurt Schaffenberger to come to National after a brief interlude freelancing for others. He began drawing *Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane* in 1958 and became forever identified with that series.

One of the most visible changes at DC was to be seen in the Batman books, where whimsy and silliness were increasingly favored over action and suspense. Unfortunately, some of the changes would prove disastrous for the property. Apparently the miscalculation was that kids who were being taught in school to "duck and cover" in the event of a nuclear attack would have no problem accepting that Batman and Robin worked in broad daylight (after all, what responsible adult keeps a fourteen-year-old up past midnight?). Or that at least once an issue, a spacecraft would appear in that daylight, and a problem would be caused by aliens from one of many different planets, all of whom had heads shaped like inverted bowling pins



**ABOVE** As the decade rolled over, strange encounters and interesting transformations were in store for the Caped Crusader, as seen in *Batman* #162 (March 1964). **RIGHT** *Detective Comics* #284 (October 1960) cover by Sheldon Moldoff.

and the same starfish-like claw-hands. Readers were also expected not to find it strange that the Dynamic Duo spent more time with Batwoman, Bat-Girl, and even Ace the Bat-Hound than most spouses do with each other, yet none of them knew the other's real name (at least not for many, many issues). But would they really swallow a magically powered imp from another dimension, inspired by Superman's Mr. Mxyzptlk, in the form of Bar-Mite?

The deafening sound of kids *not* reading *Batman* forced an alarmed Irwin Donenfeld to make an editorial change that would sweep away this newly expanded cast, establishing in its place a slightly more sophisticated and reality-based approach. Ironically, its success would spawn something that, in the eyes of a serious-minded *Batman* fan, would make *Bat-Mite* look like Philip Marlowe.



# バットマン

朝日ソノラマ

ドラマ などの  
銀行ギャング団

もあつて  
ロビン

ロビン

少年キング

少年画報

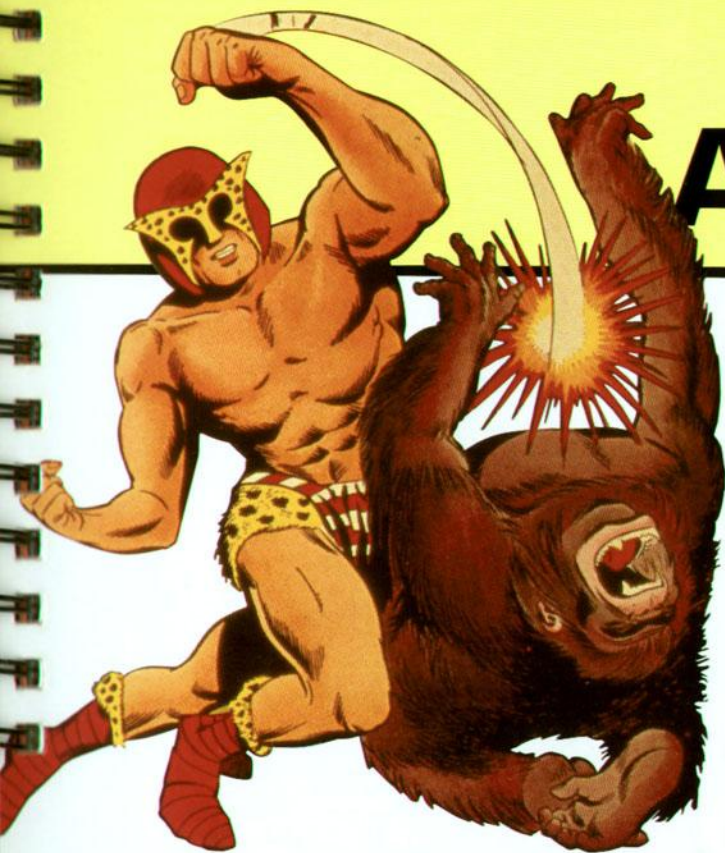


TVシリーズ・配給  
トランスグローバル

世界中で大ヒット  
バットマン  
テーマ

少年画報

## CHAPTER EIGHT



# DC- A-GO-GO

**IF SUPERMAN BUILT THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY,** Batman saved it—for a while, at least. Ultimately, the renewed interest in super heroes sparked by the smash hit *Batman* TV show, which premiered on ABC in January of 1966, would be only a golden remission from the disease that was slowly debilitating DC, if not the entire business.

The disease was actually a syndrome—a constellation of symptoms. One was the seeming impossibility of forging a vision for the future of comics publishing. At National, management had remained spooked by the mid-1950s backlash against extreme content. At the same time, it was doing well with merchandise licensing, which National had come to view as the lifeblood of the company. Comics had become a means to an end rather than the end itself—not unlike the way Wheeler-Nicholson positioned his early comics as merely a vehicle for selling newspaper strips into syndication.

Another symptom was that the industry was slow to recognize the existence of comics fandom, which had been growing as a discrete hobby since around 1961. The

**OPPOSITE PAGE** TV stars Adam West and Burt Ward were somewhat recognizable on the cover of this 1966 Japanese *Batman* record. **LEFT** Detail of Bwana Beast from Showcase #66 (January–February 1967) by Mike Sekowsky and Joe Giella. **ABOVE** Racial stereotypes abound in this “Batman and Robin the Boy Wonder” newspaper strip from 1966. Art by Joe Giella.



**ABOVE** Joe Simon's "Brother Power the Geek," featuring a sort of Frankenstein in hippie's clothing, debuted in September-October 1968, but the eccentric character would survive for only two issues before DC pulled the plug. **RIGHT** A late 1950s or early 1960s fan-postcard response from Sugar and Spike, Sheldon Mayer's wonder-baby protagonists.

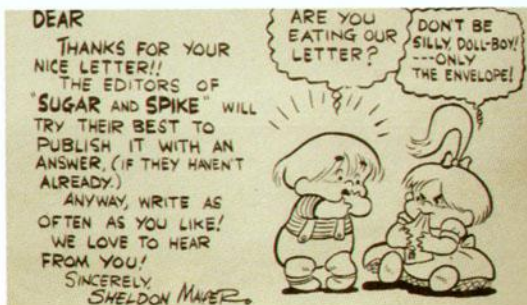
DC editors still perceived fans' close attention to the minutiae of mythology and insistence on consistent continuity as irrelevant, if not antithetical, to commerciality. National couldn't see the wisdom in Stan Lee's approach at Marvel: get 'em hooked by structuring the material so that the readers are afraid to miss an issue, lest they lose track of what's going on.

The DC editors could not predict that Marvel would soon eclipse DC in sales; as 1966 began, Marvel's growth was still limited by its deal with Independent News. There was no known reason why DC's old guard should not continue to insist that every issue of every title be completely accessible to someone picking up a comic book for the very first time. DC's bet remained placed on the average child whose schoolwork-minded parents forbade him to read comics more than occasionally; the serviceman; the uneducated; and the immigrant learning English from captions and thought balloons that redundantly described the picture.

Because there was no perception of the fan subculture as a market to be targeted, there was also no incentive to envision a new business model that would replace the traditional practices that seemed increasingly outmoded. Finding an alternative to the consignment system would have to wait for later circumstances and different management.

But perhaps the most alarming symptom was the growing disconnect between the aging editorial staff and talent pool who created the comics, and their young, ever more jaded readership. The civil rights struggle at home and the war in Vietnam escalated, sowing the seeds for the counterculture to come. Young people were increasingly rejecting the values that DC Comics, as shaped by Jack Liebowitz's social conservatism, still resolutely embraced. Arguably, this stodginess was institutionalized, and DC had been hard put to find the right note to strike with teens and preteens since the bobby-sox era. Indeed, for creators of a soundless medium, youth culture's increasing appetite for its own pop music must have posed a challenge in itself.

In the late '50s, when rock 'n' roll was new and very hot, DC seemed to run away from it. In the sexless post-Code era, no one dared try licensing pelvic-thrusting Elvis for his own comic, but in 1959, DC embraced the opposite extreme and signed up clean-cut Pat Boone, whose title—a curious hybrid of fan magazine and comic book—lasted only five issues.



# Rock'n Roll

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COMICS

DEC.-JAN.



**ABOVE** The ashcan produced for Rock 'n Roll Comics (1956), reused cover art from a crime comic. **RIGHT** Squeaky-clean musician Pat Boone got his first issue in September-October 1959, sharing a cover with other popular young celebrities. DC crafted Tiger Beat-style features starring the dreamboat, but Pat Boone ran for only five issues.

EXCLUSIVE! *Pat tells his story*

10c

# PAT BOONE

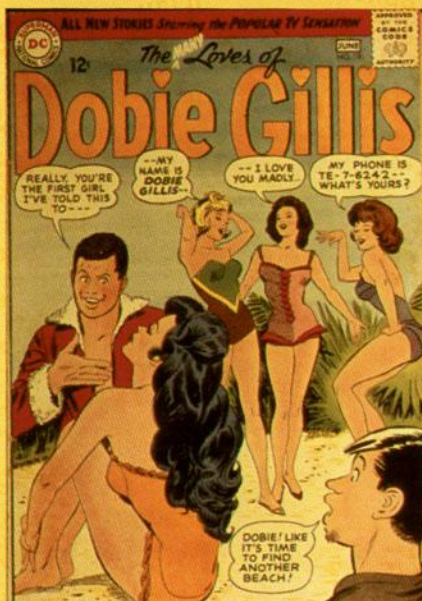
OCT.

JIMMIE RODGERS

4 LITTLE CHICKS

EYDIE GORME

A TEEN-AGER'S DILEMMA . . . CARTOONS . . . RECORD ROUND-UP . . . PAT'S PIN-UPS . . . FAN CLUBS, U.S.A. . . . PLUS MANY OTHER EXCLUSIVE FEATURES



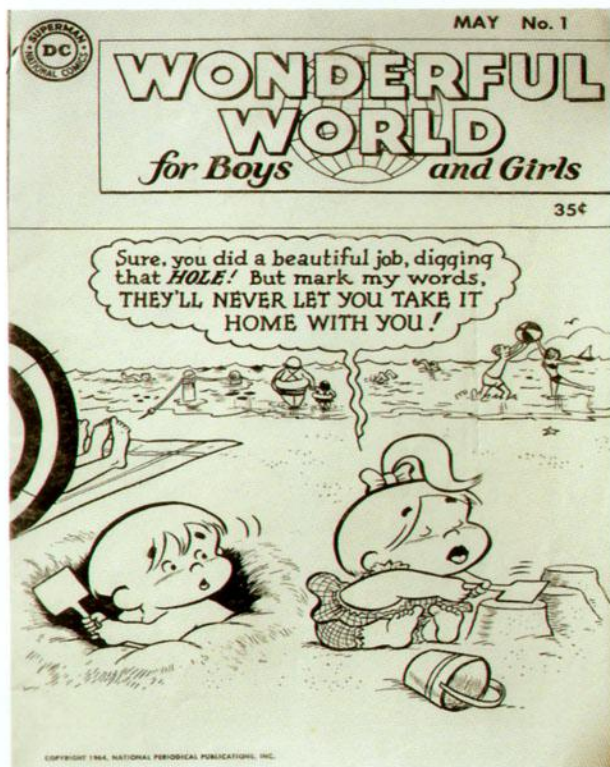
**THIS PAGE** *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis* banked on the popularity of the hit TV series. Covers for issues #19 (above) and #1 (right) featured artwork by Bob Oksner.



DC's early '60s efforts to target adolescents tended to rely on licensing in TV shows such as *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*. Lead times being what they were, the hit shows would already be well into their runs by the time the books debuted, and titles that were still selling well kept having to be cancelled because the shows went off the air as their young casts outgrew their roles.

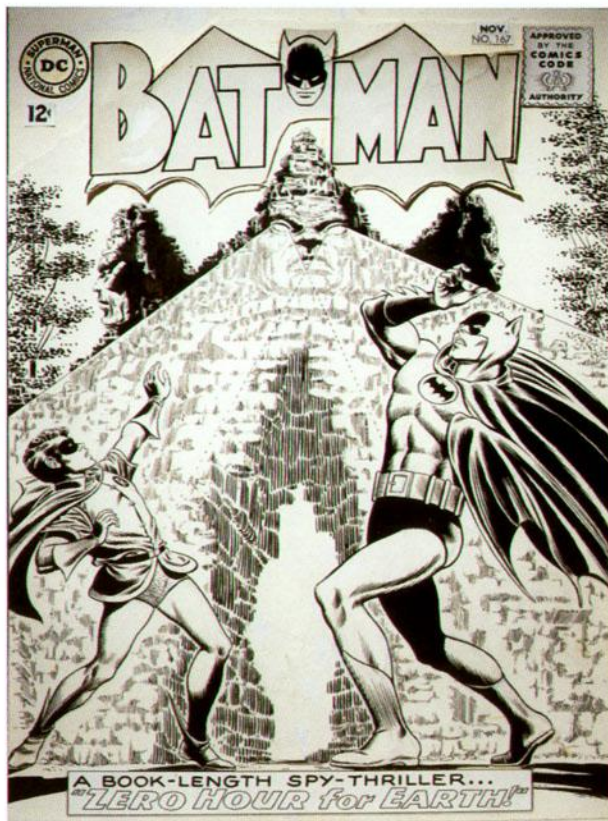
To his credit, Irwin Donenfeld, perhaps the youngest force in editorial, sensed the need to re-examine DC's approach to youth marketing. In 1958 he had been promoted from editorial director to executive vice president, and by 1964 he'd been shuffling staff assignments for over a decade, but never with so great a sense of urgency. Too many years of silly science fiction had eroded sales of the Batman comics to the point of cancellation, and Donenfeld apparently began losing confidence in Jack Schiff. He re-signed *World's Finest* to Mort Weisinger, who proceeded to make that title look more like a Superman comic with Batman guest-starring a lot.

Donenfeld gave the other two Batman titles to Julie Schwartz, who proceeded to put his stamp on the property. Most of his changes were for the better, with the



possible exception of modifying the costume by grounding the bat silhouette chest emblem against a yellow oval, an innovation that would remain until the emblem reverted to a simple black bat in 2002. DC touted the 1964 revisions as Batman's

**LEFT** Ashcan for the never-published *Wonderful World for Boys and Girls* (May 1964), utilizing Sheldon Mayer's Sugar and Spike as a cover placeholder. **ABOVE** The printer proof for a Batman and Robin calendar pinup from *Batman Annual* #2 (1961).

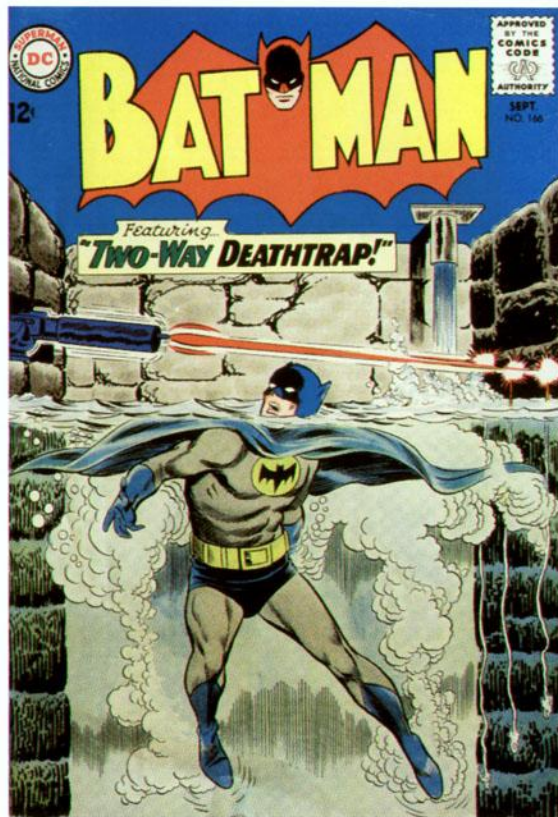


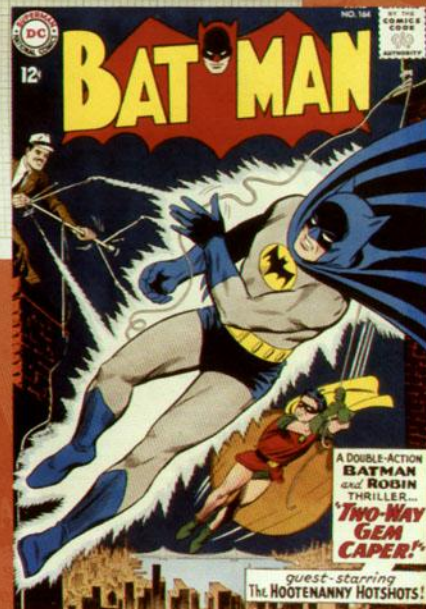
"new look," which was really more the product of Julie's longtime collaborators like Carmine Infantino drawing Batman alongside Sheldon Moldoff, who was Bob Kane's pencil ghost at the time. Moldoff would now be inked by a Schwartz favorite, Joe Giella.

**ABOVE** Original cover art for *Batman* #167 (November 1964), by Carmine Infantino, with inks by Murphy Anderson. **RIGHT** *Batman* #166 (September 1964), by Infantino and Joe Giella, marked the premiere of Batman's new look. **OPPOSITE PAGE, COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP** Irwin Donenfeld's chart tracking sales of *Batman* from 1964–66; "Batman and Robin the Boy Wonder" newspaper strip from 1966; *Batman* #164 (June 1964) cover by Sheldon Moldoff and Joe Giella.

A new tone was created by subtle shifts in story values as well. Initially, Schwartz was unfamiliar with the Batman character, but he had edited many plainclothes detective stories and thought there should at least be *some* deduction happening if a book were called, say, *Detective*. Writers John Broome, Gardner Fox, and Ed Herron were forced to tackle the feature's self-made clichés—including the Utility Belt, Batcave, and Batmobile—and, perhaps inadvertently, their writing took on an odd, vaguely self-parodic tone. It was those comics that attracted the attention of television producer William Dozier, who was looking for a trendy comedy to fill a commitment with ABC.

For the previous two years, the country had been in the grip of an explosion of new design ideas in the graphic arts and fashion, which seemed to complement the new, British-influenced rock that came courtesy of the Beatles and their countrymen. The early-'60s pop art of painters like Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol, and







sculptors like Alexander Calder and Claes Oldenburg, had given way to Op Art—abstract painting and sculpture relying on patterns of geometric shapes and trompe l’oeil to create vaguely hallucinatory optical illusions. The “Mod look” of Carnaby Street,

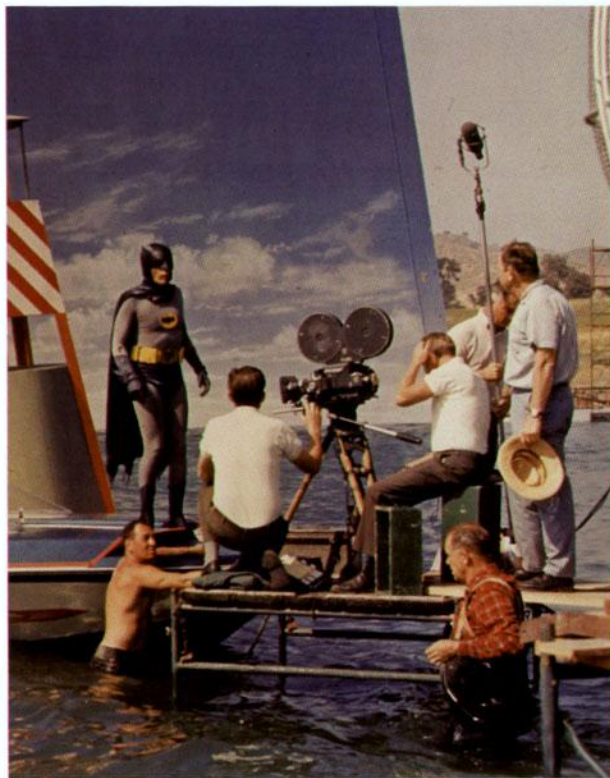
**ABOVE** Joe Orlando’s *Swing with Scooter* #1 (June–July 1966) cranked the Mod level to its absolute grooviest. **RIGHT** Bat-star Adam West takes direction on the set of the 1966 *Batman* feature film.

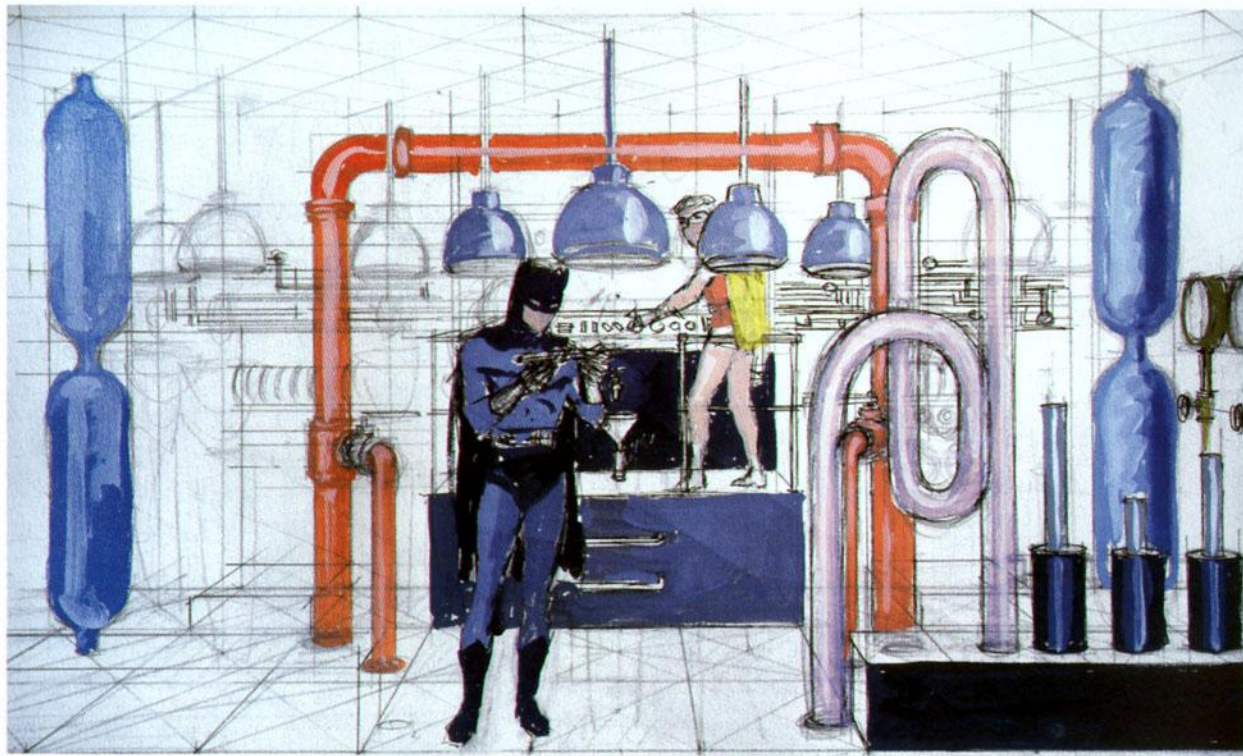
miniskirts, and a national craze for “go-go boots” took over, while “a-go-go” became a catch phrase for anything supposed to be hip and appealing to kids.

Dozier’s *Batman* TV show synthesized all these cultural elements into a visual approach that simultaneously satirized specific Batman conceits (e.g., everything in the Batcave was literally labeled with a name that had a “bat” prefix, a gimmick the comics at times overused), as well as comic book conventions in general (hand-lettered sound effects like “Pow!” and “Bam!” were superimposed onscreen in fight scenes).

The result was a comedy that delighted both mass audiences and the hipper critics while confusing children (“What’s so funny, Daddy?!”) and enraging longtime Batman fans. Bob Kane may have winced a bit now and then, but never on the way to the bank.

The show’s huge success provided a much-needed cash infusion for National, with the added bonus of allowing the company to leverage *Batman* to increase other titles’ sales. By *Justice League* #46, he had become the book’s regular cover star. Batman





team-ups became the regular format of *The Brave and the Bold* with #67. And by the end of 1966, the character was being billed over Superman in *World's Finest*, despite the stories' emphasis on Superman elements. But the most lasting impression of the show is that it inspired what fans today consider one of the industry's most loathsome fads: "Camp."

The burgeoning pop cultural revolution did not escape the notice of Susan Sontag, the so-called "Dark Lady of American intellectual life" whose famous 1964 essay in *Partisan Review* defined the term Camp. She tried to explain it as a sensibility, a celebration of exaggeration and artifice, and her thesis was garbled and fallaciously translated by the popular press as "something that's so bad it's good" or, at least, fun.

In the '70s, what Camp meant would become clearer in the appeal of flamboyant drag queens and Roger Ebert's "guilty pleasures," such as Russ Meyer movies. But in 1966, it was TV's *Batman* that epitomized Camp, its cool awfulness achieved by displacing formal elements from comics, where they worked (the sound effects, the garish costumes), to a different medium in which they didn't—or at least,

became comical in their incongruity rather than enhancing an atmosphere of adventure and mystery.

Within six months of the *Batman* TV show's success, Camp was becoming synonymous with the comics medium itself, and the concept became linked in fans' minds forevermore with one of Irwin Donenfeld's less inspired notions. In the wake of DC's and Marvel's super-hero successes of the early '60s, other publishers began reentering the field. The crowded newsstands were making it harder to find DC product, and realizing that usually only the top fourth of the cover was visible, Irwin Donenfeld wanted a graphic element there that would make DC's titles visible at a glance.

ABOVE An elaborate set design sketch for the *Batman* TV show.



Before knowing what TV's *Batman* would trigger but understanding its approach, Donenfeld bought the production department's pitch of a design inspired by Op Art, and "go-go checks" were born: a black-and-white checkerboard in a banner across the top of the cover. Ultimately, this idea seemed to serve no purpose other than to take up valuable cover space, because it would be gone by the end of 1967, just as the *Batman* fad was winding down.

The Camp sensibility also infused many other super-hero-related TV and movie projects and even a Broadway musical, *It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's Superman*, which enjoyed a brief run in 1966. The only place one didn't find Camp—at least, not the intentional variety—was in Filmmation's *New Adventures of Superman*, a very limited-animation cartoon show that debuted on CBS in September of 1966. It was the first series produced by Filmmation Associates, founded by animation directors Lou Scheimer and Hal Sutherland, and a radio DJ named Norm Prescott.

Such was the power of a super-hero brand at this time that later, in the 1980s, the staff of Filmmation, which had been doing commercials exclusively since 1963, would spin the company's origin to portray it as the animation studio that Superman built. Scheimer and Prescott had allegedly secured the Superman rights by giving Duke Ducovny a tour of a studio that was seemingly much larger and busier than the actual operation. The "studio" was actually a vacant commercial space hastily acquired for one day and

**ABOVE LEFT** Camp looms large on *Justice League of America* #46 (August 1966). Cover by Mike Sekowsky and Joe Giella. **ABOVE CENTER** *Batman* #183 (August 1966) allowed for a little shameless self-promotion. Cover by Carmine Infantino and Joe Giella. **ABOVE RIGHT** A super-giant dose of humor was built into Mike Sekowsky and Mike Esposito's art for *The Inferior Five* #2 (May-June 1967), a comic about a parody super-hero team that fell slightly short of fantastic.

staffed with Scheimer and Prescott family members seated at rented animation tables. Then, armed with the might of Superman, Scheimer and Prescott sold CBS on a leap of faith. Not only did CBS actually order a show from this tyro company headed by unknowns, it put *The New Adventures of Superman* on its schedule immediately.

Meanwhile, DC tried to emulate Marvel's so-called hipness in elements such as text pages and in-house ads, but was unable to find the equivalent of Stan Lee's casual, insider tone ("Hey, true believer!"). Marvel took a consistent, across-the-line approach to graphics and storytelling; set its stories on the streets and campuses where its readers lived; and spoke in one voice (Lee's) that took a tone of ingratiating intimacy. By contrast, DC's books were a diverse lot, with each title reflecting its idiosyncratic editor's



**TOP LEFT** A Batman board game produced by Hasenfeld Bros. in 1965. **TOP RIGHT** No media was off limits: the Bat-craze extended all the way into Batman and Robin hand-puppets. **BOTTOM** Artwork from the inside of a 1966 Japanese Batman album.

sensibility. The only uniform element was the stiff aloofness of the editorial "we" and "Dear Editor" instead of "Hey, Stan." Seeing this, Irwin Donenfeld may have entertained a need to freshen the talent pool with younger, more contemporary sensibilities. But before he could act aggressively, natural attrition started to address the issue by itself.

For one thing, by 1965, Jack Liebowitz's philosophies had ceased to influence Donenfeld's sense of direction. Liebowitz, along with Paul Sampliner, now sat on the board of National Comics, which had been renamed National Periodical Publications, Inc. (Ah, finally to be rid of that "comics" stigma!) Liebowitz's new duties in that rarified air—which included taking the company public back in 1961—left him increasingly uninterested in day-to-day publishing operations. Also in 1965, Harry Donenfeld died after four years of semi-consciousness, the effect of a massive brain injury. Irwin Donenfeld now felt freer than ever to try anything new, usually campy, to stem the reader defection to Marvel.

By mid-1966, veteran Superman writer Edmond Hamilton had retired, and Jerry Siegel had quit National, finding work at Archie and Gold Key while renewing his legal assault on the proprietors of Superman. Bill Finger's last regular series assignment would appear the following year, as a shrinking comics workload and the promise of a screenwriting career—that didn't pan out—lured him away.

Meanwhile, DC was having good luck with two young fans turned writers—the first of whom was very young indeed. Despite his near-six-foot stature, he was in no position to stand up to Mort Weisinger, being only thirteen years old. His name was Jim Shooter, and he broke into comics with a Legion of Super-Heroes story in *Adventure* #346 (July 1966) in which he created four new Legionnaires. Shooter did more than even creator Otto Binder and original series writer Hamilton to build the teenage super-hero club into a perennial franchise for the company. (Shooter's reputation in the industry would eventually help him become the editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics. And in an interesting parallel, there was another writer who, in 1976, was almost as young as Shooter had been ten years earlier when he, too, started developing the Legion feature into a best seller once more. This writer was Paul Levitz, and he would eventually end up *running* DC.)

Seventeen-year-old Ohioan Cary Bates, who had been selling cover concepts and plot ideas to Mort Weisinger since the age of fourteen, sold his first full script to *World's Finest* in 1967. His and Shooter's influence, as well as a cursory glance at Marvel's titles, slowly created a DC culture that valued action and visual spectacle over plot in an attempt to be more competitive.

The old era was undeniably coming to a close. But despite many creative bright spots over the next few years, life at National Periodicals would grow as turbulent as it was in the inner city and in academia. A massive corporate reorganization would get under way, even as DC Comics was being trampled by a merry Marvel marching society.



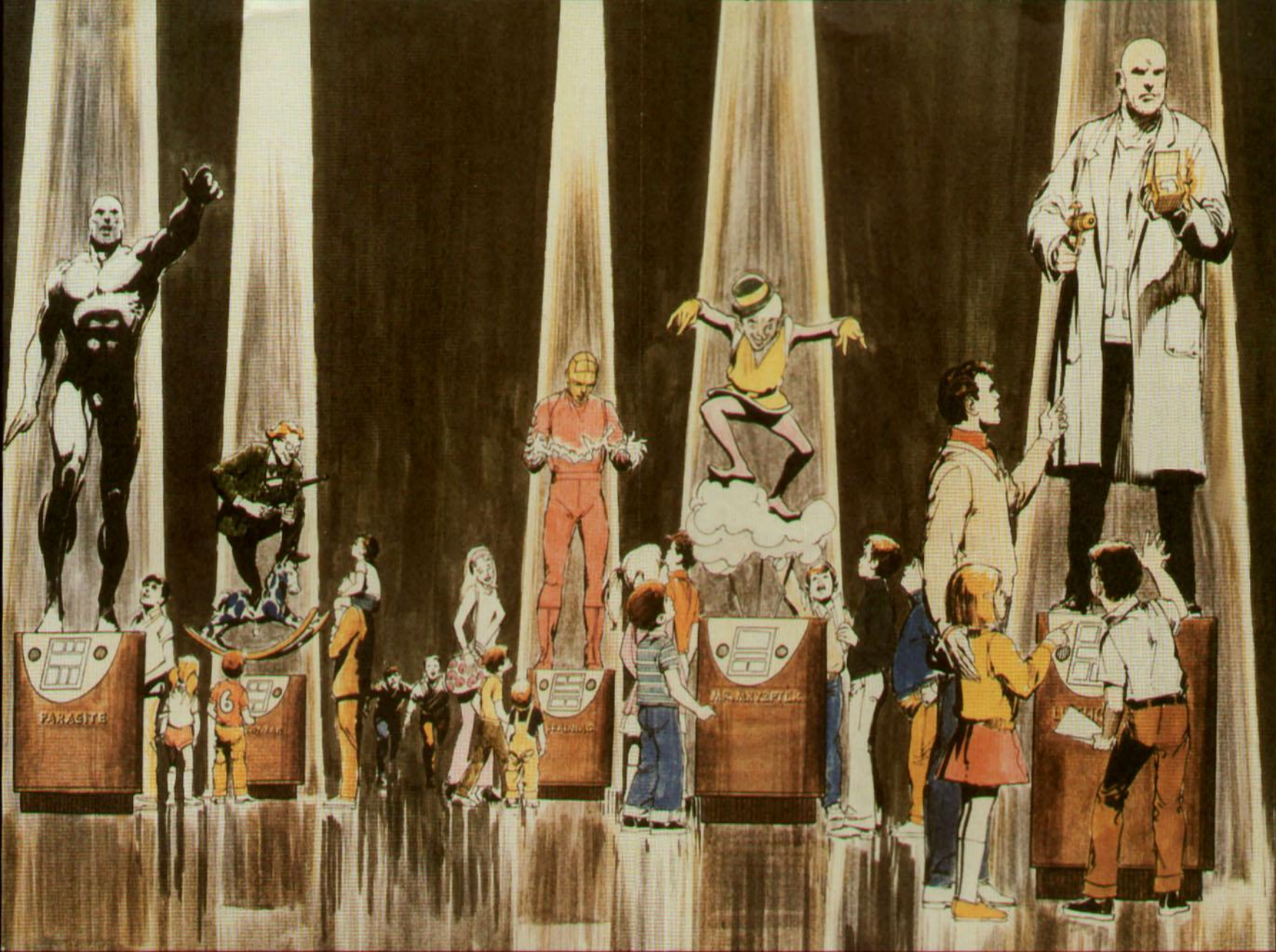
ABOVE Giant manhawks with human heads posed a major problem for Hawkman in *The Brave and the Bold* #43 (August–September 1962). Art by Joe Kubert.

**THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #43  
(AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1962)**

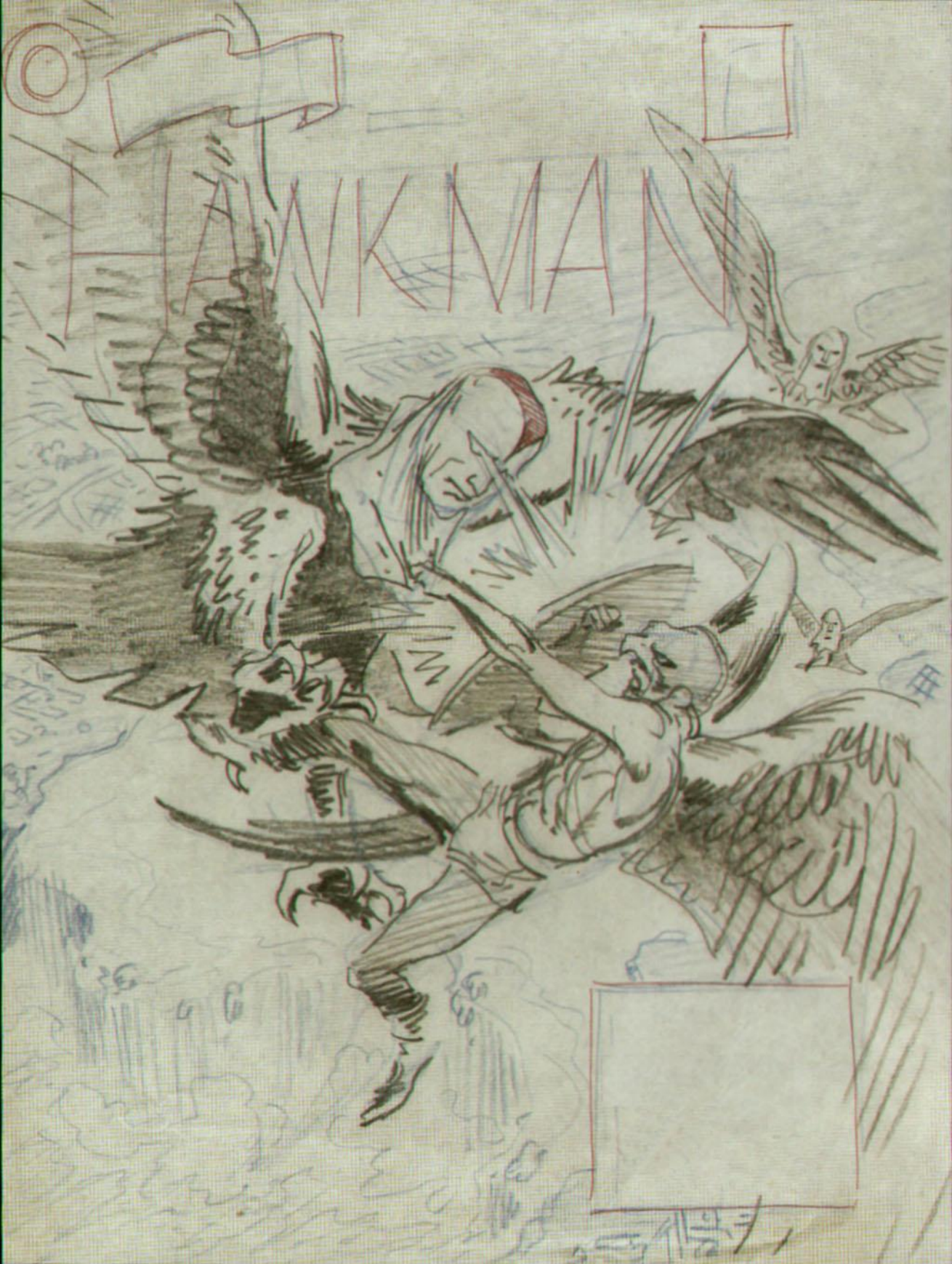
Cover Pencils by Joe Kubert.

**SUPERMAN LAND PLANS  
(TWO-SIDED)**

Neal Adams created these elegant drawings of planned attractions for a Superman Land amusement park, including Smallville, a rocket trip to Krypton, and a tour of the Fortress of Solitude. The planned site: a town in southern Illinois called, what else, Metropolis. The project was never green lighted.







I BEEN READIN' ABOUT YOU...  
HOW YOU WORK FOR THE **BLUE**  
**SKINS**...AND HOW ON A PLANET  
SOMEPLACE YOU HELPED OUT  
THE **ORANGE** SKINS...

...AND YOU DONE CONSIDER-  
ABLE FOR THE **PURPLE** SKINS!  
ONLY THERE'S SKINS YOU  
NEVER BOTHERED WITH--!

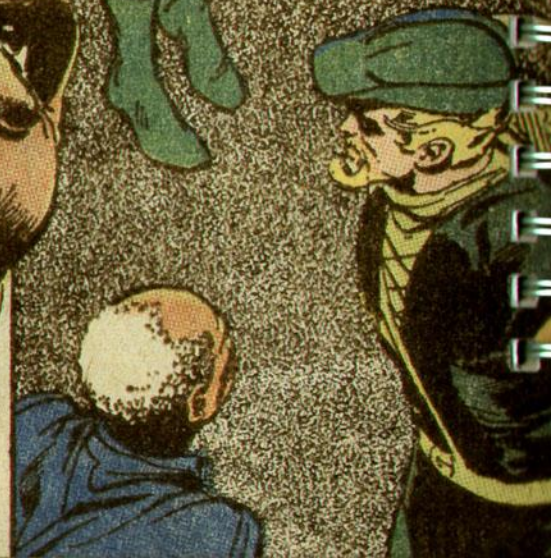


...THE **BLACK**  
**SKINS**! I WANT  
TO KNOW...  
HOW COME?!

ANSWER ME  
THAT, MR. GREEN  
LANTERN!



I...  
CAN'T...



## CHAPTER NINE

IT'S IMPORTANT  
THAT I LIVE THE NEXT  
24 HOURS AS A  
BLACK WOMAN!



# DC Meets the COUNTERCULTURE

### A NEW BATGIRL, DEBUTING ON THE JANUARY 1967 COVER

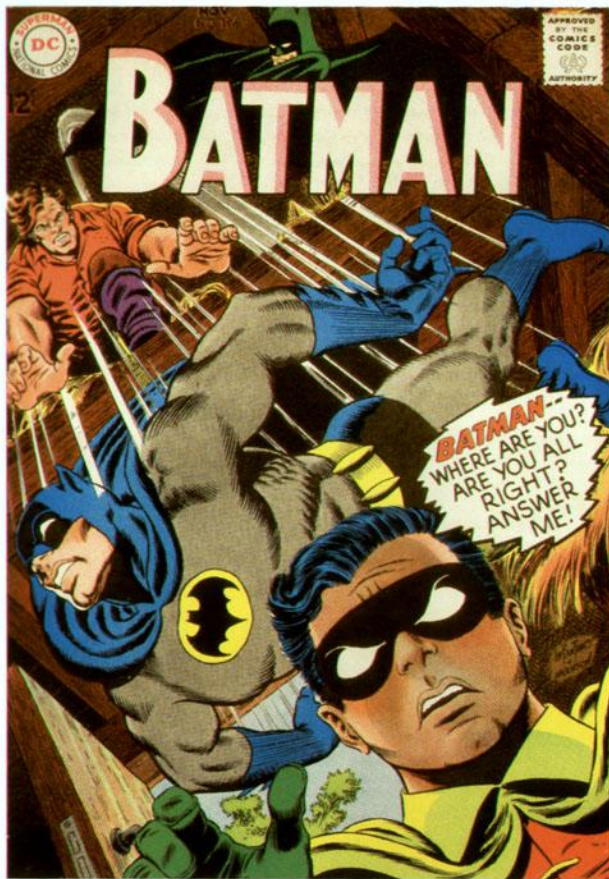
of *Detective Comics*, helped William Dozier add a new character to the *Batman* TV show and secure a pick-up from ABC for a third season. That cover, like the Batgirl character itself, was designed by Carmine Infantino.

In Irwin Donenfeld's cover-centric worldview, this merely confirmed the judgment that Infantino had contributed more to DC's success in exploiting the TV tie-in than any other artist. Moreover, Infantino's covers, with their extraordinary design sense, often appeared on other successful titles such as *The Flash* and *Strange Adventures*, so Donenfeld was eager to see if the illustrator could spread the magic to the entire line. In 1967, Infantino accepted Donenfeld's offer to become DC's art director.

Infantino sharply cut back his pencilling work to take the job, which involved laying out all the covers and bringing in new art talent. He also made a point of insisting that DC

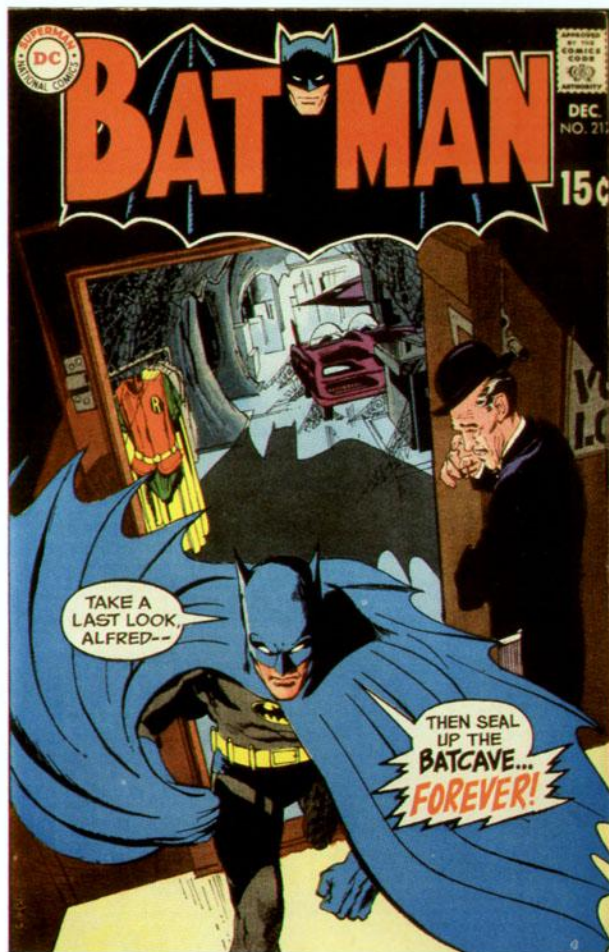
**OPPOSITE PAGE** Racial prejudice is confronted in three famous panels from *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #76 (April 1970), written by Denny O'Neil and drawn by Neal Adams and Dick Giordano. **LEFT** Lois makes a startling transformation on this detail from the cover of *Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane* #106 (November 1970), by Curt Swan and Murphy Anderson. **ABOVE** Batman and Green Arrow confront a wounded radical in this 1970 newspaper strip written by E. Nelson Bridwell and drawn by Al Plastino.





artists update their files of visual reference to better reflect recent developments in fashion, hairstyles, and automotive and interior design. Donenfeld and Infantino reportedly worked well together, and Infantino's judgment seems to have dovetailed with Donenfeld's: In 1967, Jack Schiff chose to retire after his workload was repeatedly reduced.

It remained Donenfeld's responsibility to hold Marvel at bay, however, and that was getting more difficult as the rival company's profile rose in the media. Stan Lee was as indefatigable a promoter of Spider-Man and company as Duke Duconvy had been for Superman three decades earlier. Throughout the 1960s, Lee and his heroes, which he was quick to position as rebellious and mistrusting of authority, seemed to appear in every trendy magazine read by intellectuals and college students, nationally publicizing



**OPPOSITE PAGE** Stylish figure sketches by Carmine Infantino. **ABOVE LEFT** *Batman* #196 (November 1967) modeled Infantino's compelling design sensibility. Inks by Murphy Anderson. **ABOVE** In *Batman* #217 (December 1969), written by Frank Robbins, two major moves took place: Dick Grayson left for college, and Bruce Wayne and Alfred departed Wayne Manor for the Wayne Foundation building in midtown Gotham. Cover by Neal Adams.



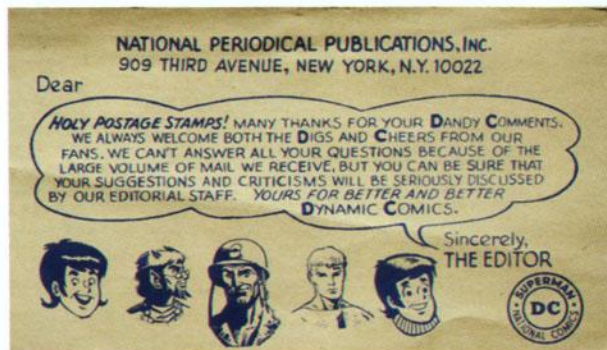
what comics readers already believed, that a cachet of hipness belonged to Marvel Comics. By the mid-'60s, Marvels were being read by young adults as well as preteens and teens, and their greater sales to these non-traditional demographics increased Marvel's reader base dramatically.

**ABOVE** Editorial assistant Bob Rozakis tried to sell reader Bob Hughes on DC's cover price increase on this 1973 postcard. **RIGHT** Front and back of a thank-you postcard sent to a young Paul Levitz in 1970—the same card DC's president still has, encased in Lucite.

By the time Marvel signed a deal for their first network (as opposed to an ultra-cheap, syndicated) cartoon with ABC in 1967, a vague sense of panic was starting to set in at DC. *How could they be doing so well with so few titles?* DC's worst nightmare was about to come true.

Marvel's own official company history puts it this way: "By 1968, Marvel was selling fifty million comic books a year. With this strong performance, the company was able to revise its distribution arrangement with [National] . . . to put out as many different titles as demand warranted." Marvel wasted no time in spinning off features from its two-hero titles into solo books, increasing their line significantly.

The search for staff and talent who might better understand Marvel's appeal led the DC editors to their own letter columns, those pages of reader comments that had started replacing the two-page text fillers in 1958. These "lettercols" generated two of the more significant new hires of the mid-'60s, beginning a trend that would continue into the next decade. Certain correspondents' writing skills would catch editors' eyes, and the editors would run letters from the same people repeatedly. The editor came to know on whom he could "rely" for something worth a few column inches. Later, the





**LEFT** Original artwork for a page from the famous story "The Joker's Five-Way Revenge!" in *Batman* #251 (1973). Script by Denny O'Neil, pencils and inks by Neal Adams.

Dear Paul; Thank for the good words about ROSE AND THORN and the editor appreciates your ROSES



Dear DC Reader:

Thank you for your recent letter. We know you will understand that, due to the huge quantity of mail received, it is impossible to answer each letter personally. However, we are passing your comments on to the editor, who may wish to publish extracts in one of our "SUPERMAN family" of magazines — SUPERMAN, SUPERBOY, ACTION COMICS, ADVENTURE COMICS, LOIS LANE, JIMMY OLSEN or WORLD'S FINEST.

We appreciate your interest in writing us and are grateful for your loyal support of the DC magazines.

Sincerely yours,  
THE PUBLISHERS,

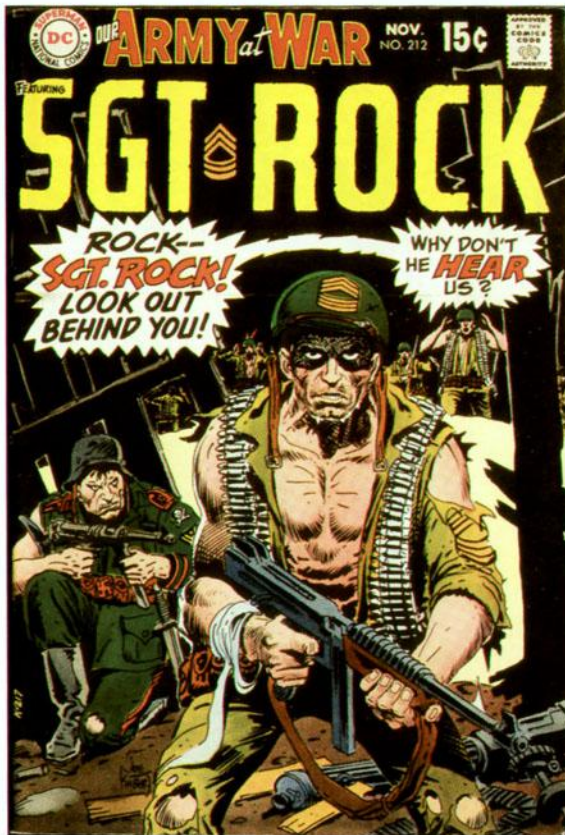
same familiar writers' names on over-the-transom script or art submissions would make them stand out from the rest of the slush pile, and the envelopes from the "known quantities" were opened first.

Many writers and editors would break into the business this way, and in 1965, one of the first was Weisinger's new assistant, E. Nelson Bridwell, a well-educated Oklahoman with a near-encyclopedic memory. Another of Weisinger's assistants in this period was a prolific contributor to Julie Schwartz's columns named Roy Thomas, who lasted only a few weeks before quitting to go to Marvel as Stan Lee's right hand. Unlike Thomas, Bridwell found a way to forge an effective working relationship with the difficult Weisinger that lasted until the older man's retirement. Like Thomas, Bridwell was among the first people to call themselves "fans" and impress on their bosses the importance to building reader loyalty of consistent continuity and a "shared universe." He was the first DC staffer to write and, later, commission stories built on explaining away seeming inconsistencies in past stories whose writers had not been mindful of previously established lore.

The new kind of thinking that men like Bridwell pioneered would eventually become standard operating procedure, but only after many organizational changes in the company and an influx of fresh faces. Most personnel coming to DC at this point didn't realize they were joining a company that was about to change dramatically. As the story goes, Liebowitz said to Weisinger, who had been made a vice president as part of an escalating effort to dissuade the editor from early retirement, "You can leave now. I'm leaving myself." On February 23, 1968, it was announced that National Periodical Publications was merging with Kinney Services (known to most New Yorkers for their chain of parking garages) to become Kinney National Services.

The creation of Kinney National Services was just one step in the now well-documented empire building of Steven J. Ross, who ultimately assembled Time Warner, the largest communications conglomerate on Earth. In 1960, Ross helped merge his father-

**ABOVE** A complimentary note from Paul Levitz on the DC feature *Rose and Thorn* earned him this response from the DC editors in 1970. **ABOVE RIGHT** The finished cover for *Our Army at War* #212 (November 1969).



in-law's chain of funeral homes with a car rental and parking lot chain to become Kinney Services. By 1967, Kinney under Ross's leadership had grown through acquisitions into a huge, diverse conglomerate. At the height of the TV *Batman* windfall, Ross grew attracted to Independent News and LCA, and Kinney began to woo National. Kinney was not that interested in the comics, but Liebowitz was too smart to allow the company to be broken up.

Irwin Donenfeld wanted to stay on, and there was apparently a period of ostensible deliberation by Kinney executives. It turned out that a search for a successor had taken place instead, but the new owners were unable to find a suitable candidate. As it happened, Infantino remained art director for just slightly more than eighteen months before being elevated to editorial director, replacing Irwin Donenfeld for reasons having little to do with anything either man had done.

# "Superman" Is A Hit Over KZRM

## Fans Stop Dinner Activity During Broadcast

By AIRCASTER

Superman was a one-man show! During last Friday's Estrella del Norte's Cyma TV program from 5:30-5:45 p.m., KZRM Radio Manila, which fell swoop, he cleared the of twenty tons of rocks andbris so that the Western E United could reach Denver

## 'Comic Strip' Takes Nazi Wrath

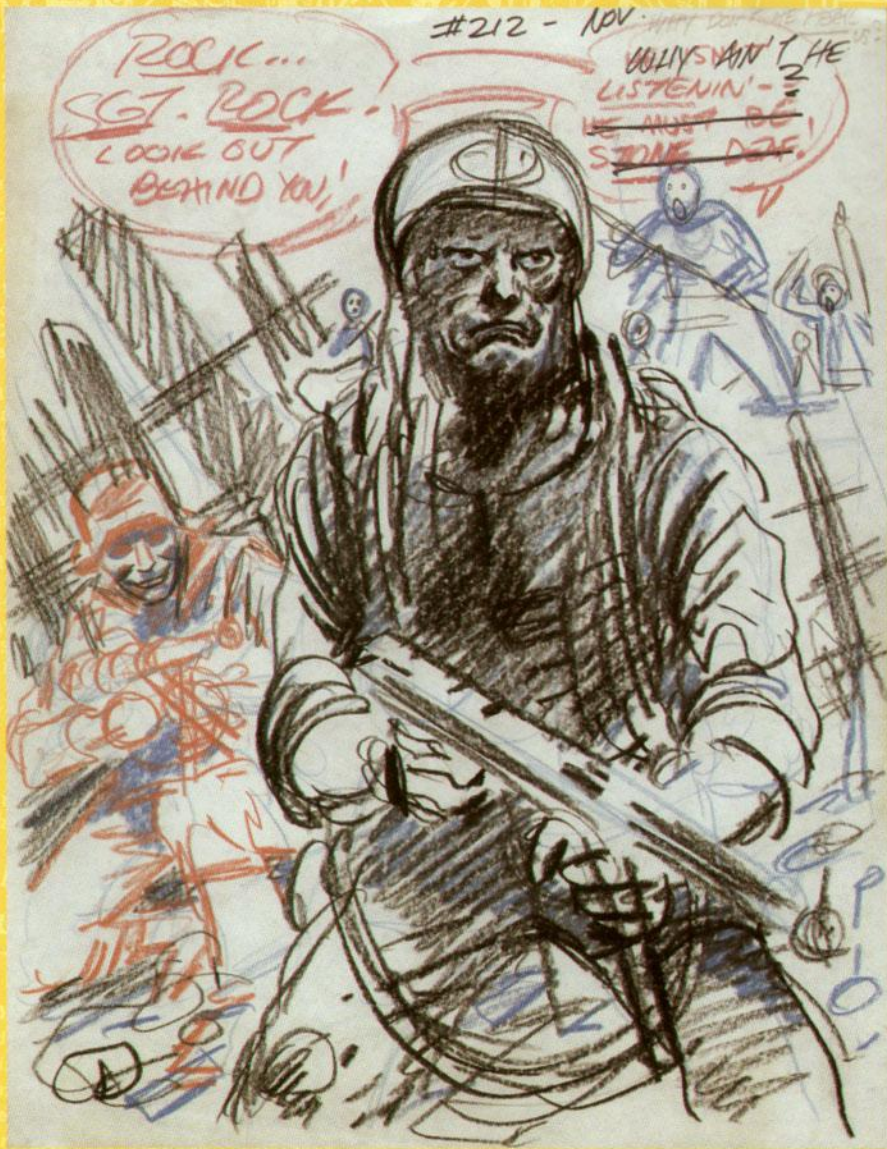
### Author Must Be 'Hate and Crime'

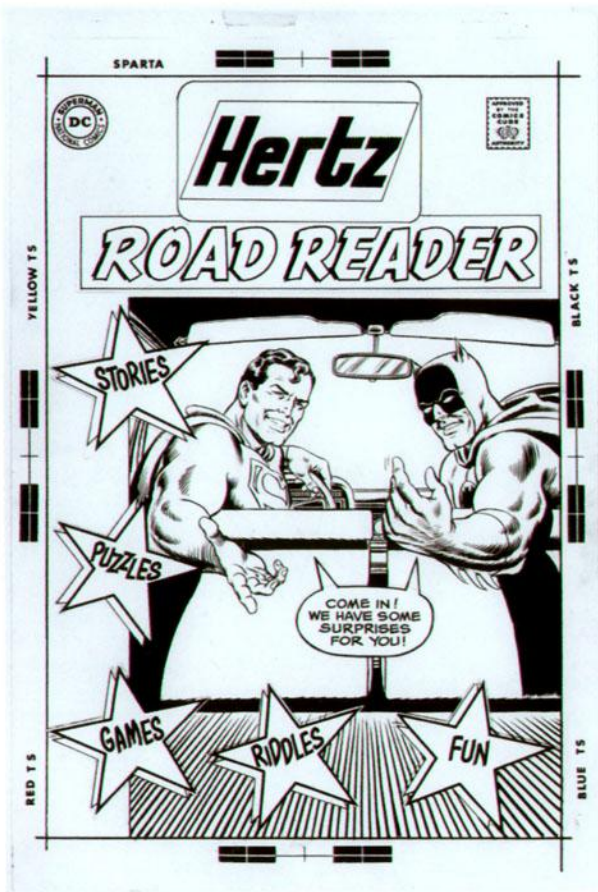
...arch-enemy and extraordinary, frustrated, and his face was Superman's cloak. Of to get the enemy asking for Clark Ke organ of the and wisdom of n... today the Amer... of this newest ser... "Superman," report that dinner acti... and Joe expended during the... devoted a full-out, and members of... of such facts or who want to talk during... single-handed let host presentation... ny's Westwall, used from the radio... "Superman's" after the conclusion s... gram... D... spec... the to... the

## Superman Day At Fair July 3

Athletic events for boys and girls between 8 and 15 and 7 New...

**RIGHT** Cover sketch for Our Army at War #212, by Joe Kubert, showing revisions made to Sgt. Rock's dialog.





**ABOVE** This cover was created for a never-published Hertz Road Reader comic (1970). Art by Carmine Infantino and Murphy Anderson.

Carmine Infantino told an interviewer in 1999, “[A]ll of a sudden I became the editorial director. ‘That’s it!’ Jack said, ‘You have to run it now.’” As Infantino remembered it, during the transition, “We were all a part of one company but the [other divisions] weren’t a part of [DC]. Liebowitz was the president of the whole thing. [Harold] Chamberlin ran Independent News. Jay Emmett ran the Licensing Corporation of America. We each ran our divisions independently. Liebowitz would make the final decisions.”

By the spring of the following year, Donenfeld had been forced out, and a Kinney executive named Paul Wendell became president. But he was rarely seen in the halls of the company’s new quarters at 909 Third Avenue. From the talent’s perspective, it was Infantino’s show.

It was these offices that were remembered fondly for their atmosphere of electric creativity by the new, youngish staffers Infantino brought in as editors—most of them artists he admired. They were men like longtime colleague Joe Kubert, who replaced Bob Kanigher as editor of the war books while Kanigher was on medical leave. Joe Orlando, who was eager to rid himself of *MAD* because his ex-wife still worked there, was invigorated by the challenge of editing.

Today, most DC fans with an interest in its history assume that ex-Charlton Comics editor and inker extraordinaire Dick Giordano was another of Infantino’s hires. But it was Irwin Donenfeld who had brought Giordano in to replace George Kashdan, and unknowingly bequeathed to Carmine one of the best Batman artists of all.

In 1969, Infantino oversaw Julie Schwartz’s remaking of Batman yet again in order to save it, this time from the thudding indifference that greeted it after the Bat-fad wore out its welcome. The reboot amounted to a systematic dismantling of the strongest associations with the TV show.

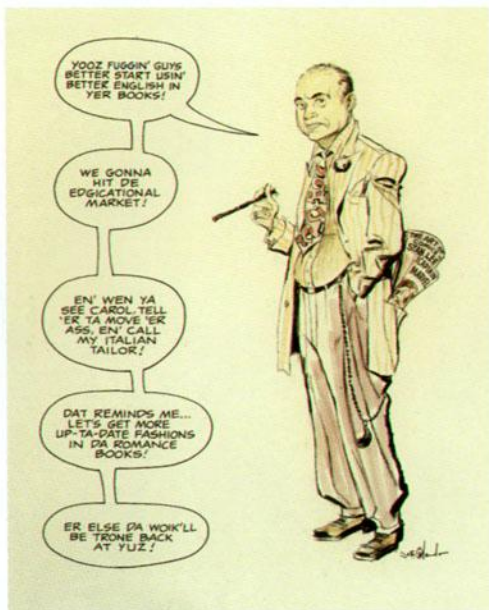
During the change in National’s ownership, Bob Kane had chosen to stop packaging ghosted pencils and get out of the art-sourcing business for good. After creating a second animation series (1966’s *Cool McCool* on NBC succeeded 1959’s syndicated *Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse*), Kane had settled permanently in Los Angeles, where he sold paintings and enjoyed his increasing fame as Batman’s creator until his death in 1998.

Meanwhile, new creative personnel proceeded to rescue Batman by returning him to his roots. It was mostly Neal Adams’s artwork on the feature, usually with scripts by Dennis O’Neil (arguably comics’ best writer in this period, who had been brought to DC by Dick Giordano) and inking by Giordano himself, that turned Batman into a whole ‘nother animal. If not for this work, and the standard it set for the other Batman contributors, the second wave of Batmania would never have arrived in 1989. Hollywood had left the Caped Crusader with so bad a reputation that he had to reinvent himself as the Dark Knight.

As a creative director, Infantino also nurtured critical, if not commercial, successes by taking a hands-off approach. When *Green Lantern* was poised on the brink of cancellation, Infantino told Schwartz to do whatever he wanted. The result was the award-winning series of topical stories known as *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*, from the team of O’Neil and Adams. It was a kind of Spandex *Easy Rider*, with Lantern and Arrow crossing the country and bringing down slumlords; helping Indians protest forest clear-cutting; defending an Abbie Hoffman manqué; and starring in many cautionary tales, some less subtle than others. Most memorable was Green Arrow coping with the heroin addiction of his ward, Speedy, and defying the Comics Code to do it.



**THIS PAGE** Rough cover layout (left) and final cover (above) for *Phantom Stranger* #37 (June–July 1975). The title revived a Phantom Stranger character who had first appeared in his own series in 1952, which lasted for six issues; he would also aid the Justice League and star in a 1987 miniseries, among other roles. Cover design by Carmine Infantino with shading and embellishments by Joe Orlando. Final cover art by Jim Aparo.



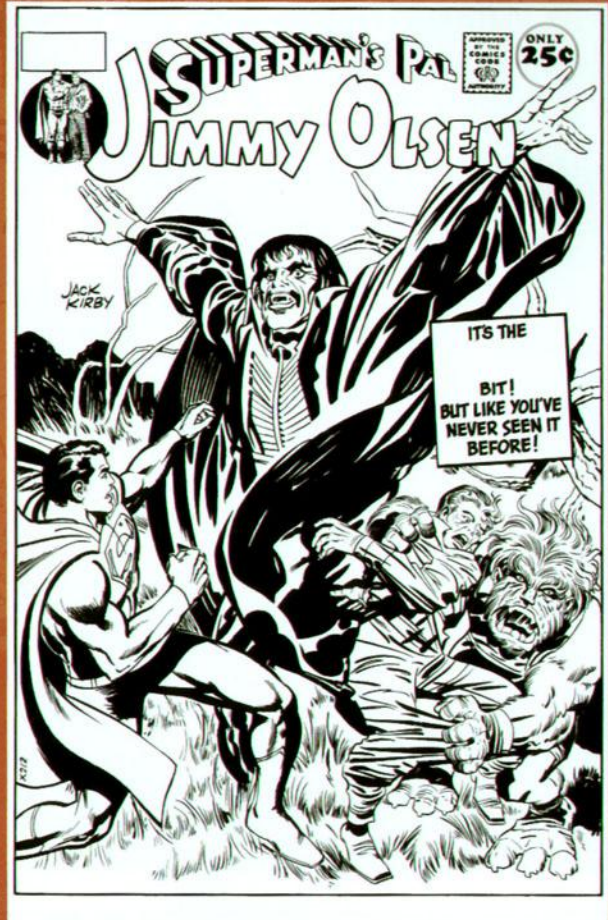
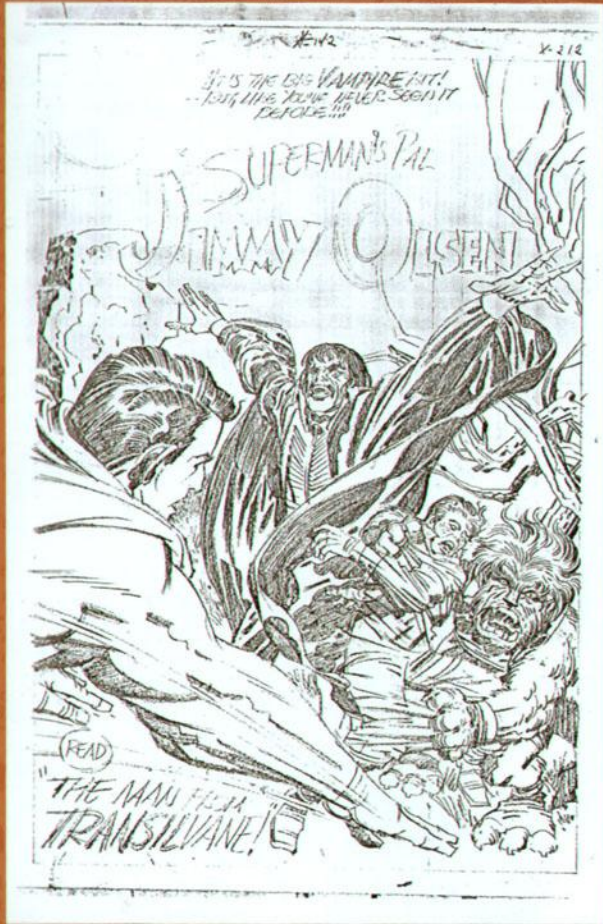
But Infantino was an artist, not a businessman, proudest of always trying new things. Most of the projects he championed were indeed innovative, or at least brought fresh styles and approaches to DC, but none was “box office.” The super-hero backlash, once Batmania had worn off, was a brush that tarred all comics, regardless of genre. And with Donenfeld gone, the trend-identifying mechanism broke down. To stem the tide of red ink, Infantino depended more and more on recycling the DC library, then tried to have it both ways. By using reprints to test new concepts—sometimes with retouched art—he thought he could lower risk. In only a few cases did it work, however. For example, *Phantom Stranger* reprints revived the character as readers’ tastes turned to horror in the early ’70s.

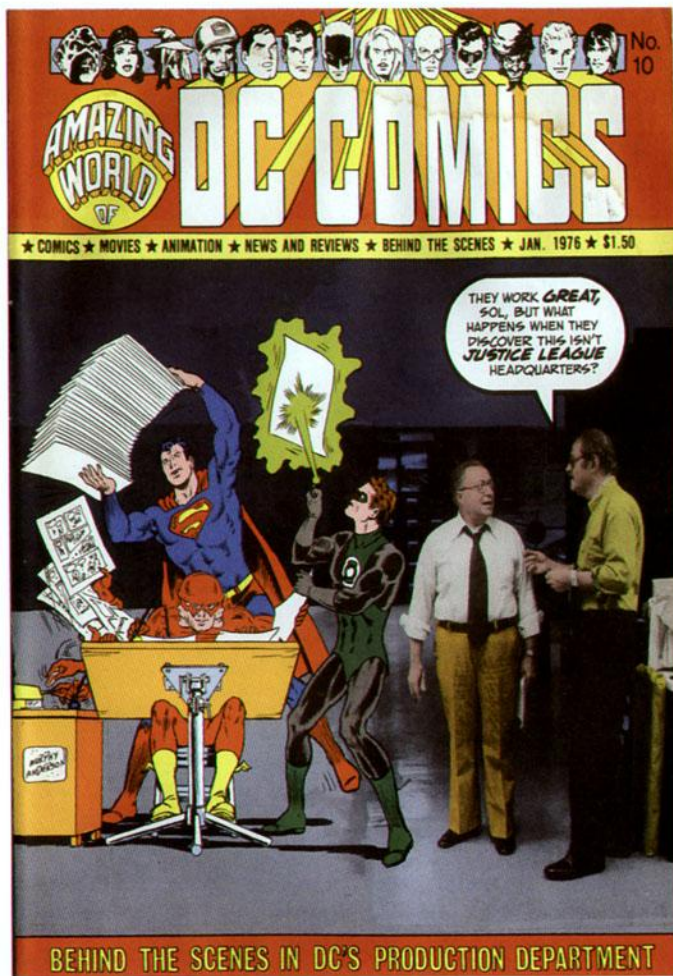
Plagued with too few hits and little media activity, Infantino was pushed by a series of supervisors to make the numbers work. Over the next eight years, he raised cover prices repeatedly and cut costs by replacing new story pages with reprints or cutting them altogether.

**ABOVE** Carmine Infantino, as sketched by Joe Orlando, ca. 1970s. **RIGHT** Jack Kirby’s New Gods concept drawings, 1970. Courtesy of the Jack Kirby estate. **OPPOSITE PAGE** Cover pencils and final inked cover for *Superman’s Pal, Jimmy Olsen* #142 (October 1971). Pencils by Jack Kirby, inks by Mike Royer, Superman figure by Neal Adams. Pencils courtesy of John Morrow of TwoMorrows Publishing.



Superman Is A  
Hit Over KZRM





### BEHIND THE SCENES IN DC'S PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT

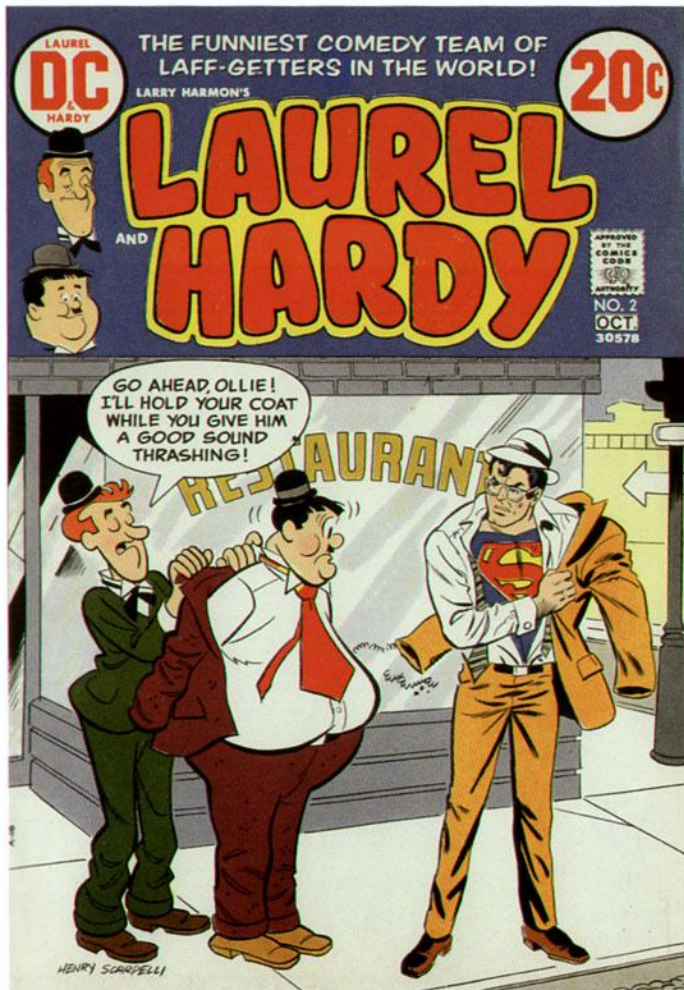
**ABOVE** DC's Sol Harrison and Jack Adler cracked wise on the cover of *Amazing World of DC Comics* #10 (1976) alongside artwork by Murphy Anderson. **RIGHT** Editor Julie Schwartz and writer Denny O'Neil in the DC offices in 1972.

But Infantino and his new editor, Joe Orlando, were ready when the country went through one of its periodic fascinations with horror. Orlando had started at Bill Gaines's E.C. Comics, assisting the legendary artist Wallace Wood, and he had contributed to the Warren black-and-white horror magazines *Creepy* and *Ferie* in the early '60s. All of these had "horror hosts" in outlandish outfits befitting a ghoulish undertaking who would offer "intros" and "outros" in framing sequences. When Orlando was brought in to take over *House of Mystery*, the horror host Cain was born. In short order, the Mad Mod Witch and then Judge Gallows were created to host Murray Boltinoff's *Unexpected*; three witches were invented for Dick Giordano's *The Witching Hour*; and Cain's brother Abel was introduced to host *House of Secrets*. The company had itself a new and very successful franchise.

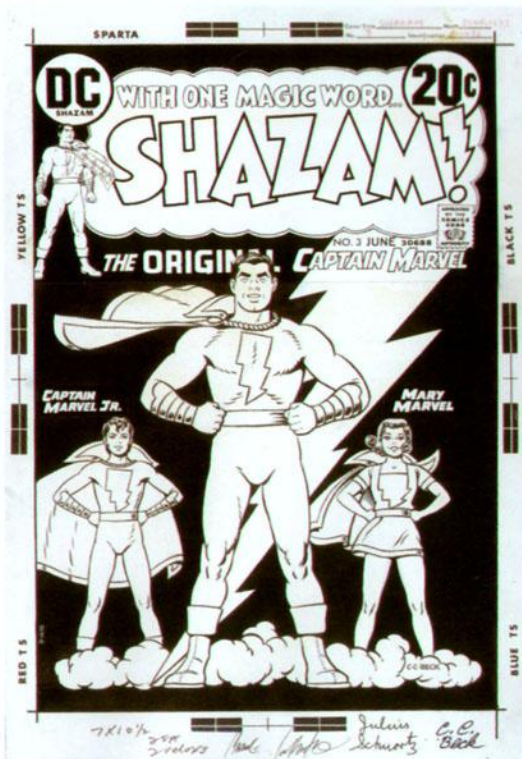
By mid-1970, the first post-Weisinger Superman books were hitting the stands, starting with Jack Kirby's *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen* #133 (October 1970), which presented pacing, tone, and plotting as radically different from Weisinger's books as humanly possible. In quick succession, readers saw that Julie Schwartz had taken over *Superman*; Murray Boltinoff had been assigned *Action*; and Nelson Bridwell would edit *Lois Lane*. *World's Finest*, under Schwartz, became a Superman team-up with rotating co-stars à la *The Brave and the Bold*, rather than a team-up with Batman every month.

Schwartz and writer Denny O'Neil attempted to update the Superman mythology and rid the feature of its more limiting conceits: Clark Kent became a TV reporter as the *Daily Planet* was absorbed into Galaxy Communications, Superman lost some of his power, and all kryptonite on Earth was eliminated. But most of the changes were ignored by the other Superman editors and eventually had to be abandoned to avoid confusing new readers of the entire line.



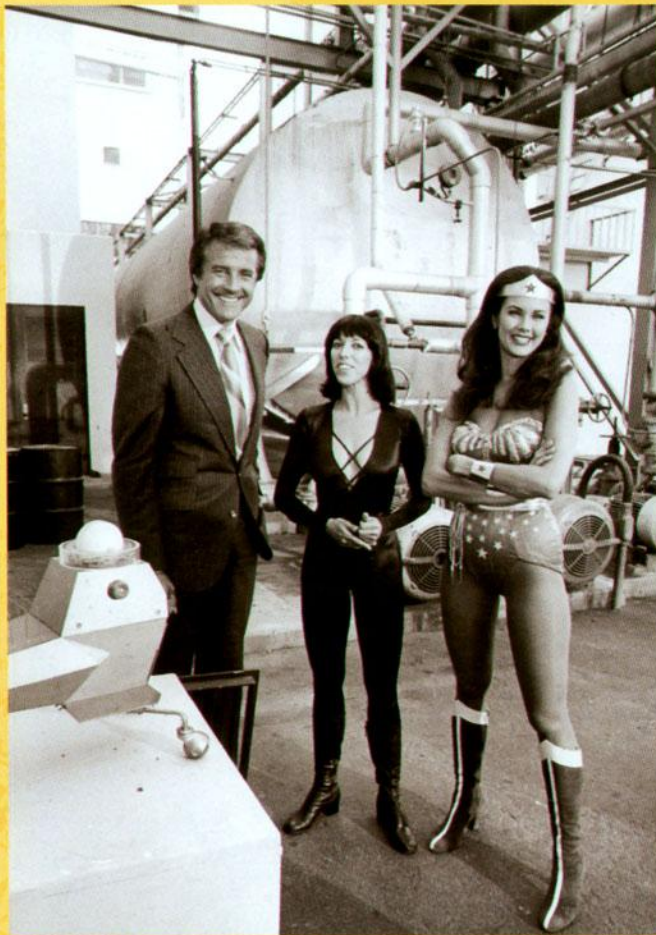


**ABOVE** Unpublished 1972 Laurel and Hardy cover by Henry Scarpelli with Superman figure redrawn by Joe Orlando. **ABOVE RIGHT** Original cover artwork by C. C. Beck for *Shazam!* #3 (June 1973), featuring the newly acquired Captain Marvel character.



In August 1973, when Infantino was about to be elevated to president and publisher, DC moved into the new Warner Communications building at 75 Rockefeller Plaza. A year earlier, Kinney had acquired the ailing Warner Bros.-Seven Arts movie studio, turning Kinney National into Warner Communications. The building blocks of Steve Ross's media empire were in place. In the transition, Sol Harrison, the production manager who had joined the company from Strauss Photoengraving to color-separate the AA heroes, was named vice president of DC.

Over the previous year, Infantino had been trying to do something with Captain Marvel, the character Superman had put out of business, even securing the services of original artist C. C. Beck to draw the feature. But there was an inevitable, protracted wrangle about what to call the new book because Marvel Comics had trademarked their own Captain Marvel by then. A settlement allowed the character to keep his name as long as the book was titled *Shazam!*, after Billy Batson's magic word.



**LEFT** Cathy Lee Crosby starred as Wonder Woman in a 1974 TV-movie, a year before the ABC program was reteoled and recast with Lynda Carter. **ABOVE** Lyle Waggoner, Lorene Yarnell (of the mime duo Shields and Yarnell), and Carter during the filming of "Formicia," an episode of the Wonder Woman series in which the villain, played by Yarnell, gains control over a horde of ants and has them terrorize industrial companies.

STATUE Concept B.  
SEASON 2 COSTUME



Hair Styles...



NICE 3/4 FACE S

**LEFT** The many moods of Lynda Carter-as-Wonder Woman (photos ca. 1976) used as reference for a DC Direct statue in 2006. **FOLLOWING PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT** Layout sketch and final cover for *Swamp Thing* #13 (November-December 1974). Cover design by Carmine Infantino with shading and embellishments by Joe Orlando. Final cover art by Nestor Redondo.



The new launch had greater success than most in 1973, and, with the debut of a live-action *Shazam!* series on CBS's Saturday morning schedule in 1974, Captain Marvel's show would become one of two live-action TV programs sold on Infantino and Sol Harrison's watch. *Shazam!*, which ran for two seasons, and *The New Adventures of Wonder Woman*, which began as a series of made-for-TV movies on ABC in 1975, may have been Infantino's luckiest breaks in the '70s.

On the other hand, the protracted gestation period of *Superman: The Movie* may have been his unluckiest. By the end of 1975, the big news was that Neal Adams had become an advocate for Jerry Siegel, who had decided to go public with his dismay over the forthcoming multimillion-dollar film. Early in December, Adams appeared on a New York-based NBC talk show to plead Siegel's case for better compensation for Superman.

Whatever fallout there was took only a month to suggest itself, although no one alive today other than Infantino knows exactly what happened on that day in January of 1976. And if Infantino does, he's not talking. All Joe Orlando remembered in a 1999 interview was that Infantino left a meeting to go upstairs, then came back and said he'd been fired.

He quietly left the building, and—even though he resumed drawing *The Flash* for a few years in the 1980s—he never set foot in the DC offices again. Sol Harrison took over as president, but as for who was going to run the editorial group, no one knew. For a few weeks, it looked like the status quo might remain in effect . . .

Prior to this time, comics professionals weren't really the crowd of balding, cigar-chomping men conjured up in their favorite anecdotes, but nothing in the editors' or executives' experience could have prepared them for this much of a departure from the stereotype: the new leader of the editorial group was a twenty-eight-year-old Ivy League graduate with an art history degree, a successful entrepreneur-turned-executive who had created a hit magazine for children called *Kids*, "the first magazine for kids by kids," and then repeated the trick—twice—first with *Dynamite!* and then again for Scholastic with *Smash*.

Oh.

And who was, by the way, a woman.



**"FREQUENTLY ASKED  
QUESTIONS" LETTER  
(EARLY 1970s)**

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Everything (or at least almost everything) the average reader would want to know about DC Comics and its characters was summarized on this two-page letter sent to a young fan named Paul Levitz.

**SHAZAM CELLOPHANE BUTTON**

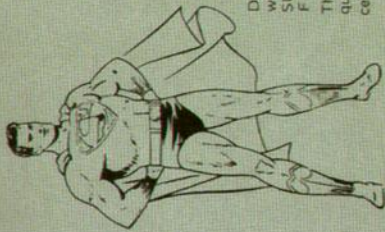
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The launch of DC's new *Shazam!* comic in 1972 was heralded with this four-inch ceramic button, reproduced here as a sticker.

**RAGMAN #1  
ORIGINAL ARTWORK BY JOE KUBERT  
(AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1976)**

---

Rory Regan was a fascinating character, scripted by Robert Kanigher and illustrated by Kubert, who worked in a Gotham City pawn shop called Rags 'n' Tatters. After criminals killed his father, he discovered a box of multicolored rags that magically jumped onto his skin and transformed him into the Ragman.



*National Periodical*  
PUBLICATIONS INC.

575 LEXINGTON AVENUE  
NEW YORK 22, NEW YORK  
P. O. BOX 9, 5700



Dear DC Reader: Thank you for your recent letter. We are passing your comments on to the editor, who may wish to publish extracts in one of our "SUPERMAN family" of magazines — SUPERMAN, SUPERBOY, ACTION COMICS, ADVENTURE COMICS, LOIS LANE, JIMMY OLSEN or WORLDS FINEST.

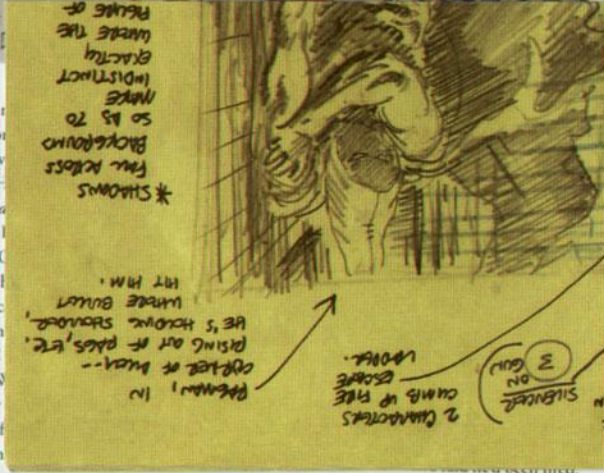
The following material may be of interest to you. It covers the subjects on which readers most frequently desire information. We know you will understand that, due to the huge quantity of mail received, it is impossible to answer each letter personally.

It is easy to start a fan club for Superman, Superboy, Jimmy Olsen, or any of our other heroes, simply find at least four fans and a place to meet. Of course, all should be members of the Superman of America; and they should keep up with the Superman family of magazines.

To join the Superman of America, send your name, street address, city, state and zip code, together with 10¢ to cover cost of



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mailings to SUPERMAN, GREEN LANTERN, LOW LIVES, 375 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.  
Certificate, Button and Superman Code.  
Because of lack of storage facilities, we do not stock back issues of our magazines, so we cannot fill any orders for issues you may have missed. Sorry.

Superman costumes may be ordered from the manufacturer, Ben Cooper, Inc., 254 36th St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11232.  
The best way to get a letter printed in our letter departments is to make it brief (we prefer postal cards) interesting, original and constructive. And remember, we get so many letters pointing out any given error that the chances of any one of these being printed are consequently small. Also, don't say, "I dare you to print this," if we took all such dares, we would have to devote half our mags to these letters.

We sometimes have continued stories in order to give you better tales with more action in them — though we rarely run a story over two parts. To assure your not missing the second part of a continued adventure, ask your newsdealer to reserve a copy for you.

The letters DC originally stood for DETECTIVE COMICS, which was the first comic magazine to print all new stories. Previously, comic mags had dealt chiefly in reprints of newspaper strips.

There are five kinds of Kryptonite: Green Kryptonite can kill Superman by poisoning his blood. Red Kryptonite has weird unpredictable effects on Superman. (However, no effect is ever repeated and no piece of Red K can affect him the same way twice.) Gold Kryptonite can destroy Superman's power permanently. Blue Kryptonite does not affect Superman, it affects only the Bizarro-Superman, those weird, imperfect duplicates of the Man of Steel. White Kryptonite has no effect on Superman, either. However, it can destroy any form of plant life.

Here is a complete listing of the current membership of the Legion of Super-Heroes: Brainiac 5... Chameleon Boy... Colossal Boy... Cosmic Boy... Duo Damsel... Element Lad... Invisible Kid... Karate Kid... Light Lass... Lightning Lad... Matter-Eater Lad... Mon-El... Phantom Girl... Princess Projectra... Saturn Girl... Shrinking Violet... Sun Boy... Superboy... Supergirl... Ultra Boy... Bouncing Boy... Dream Girl... Star Boy... Chemical King... Shadow Lass... Timber Wolf.

The Legion of Substitute Heroes: Chlorophyll Kid... Color Kid... Fire Lad... Night Girl... Polar Boy... Stone Boy. Superman gets his powers from the ultra-solar rays of Earth's yellow sun, which is hotter than the red sun of his home planet, Krypton. He also retains his mighty abilities under orange and blue-white suns; but under red and green suns he is just an ordinary man. An Earthman would not gain super-powers under a red sun.



# National Periodical PUBLICATIONS INC.



575 LEXINGTON AVENUE  
NEW YORK 22 NEW YORK  
PLAZA 9-5700



Dear DC Reader: Thank you for your recent letter. We are passing your comments on to the editor, who may wish to publish extracts in one of our "SUPERMAN family" of magazines — SUPERMAN, SUPERBOY, ACTION COMICS, ADVENTURE COMICS, LOIS LANE, JIMMY OLSEN or WORLDS FINEST.

The following material may be of interest to you. It covers the subjects on which readers most frequently desire information. We know you will understand that, due to the huge quantity of mail received, it is impossible to answer each letter personally.

It is easy to start a fan club for Superman, Superboy, Jimmy Olsen, or any of our other heroes. Simply find at least four fans and a place to meet. Of course, all should be members of the Supermen of America; and they should keep up with the Superman family of magazines.

To join the Supermen of America, send your name, street address, city, state and zip code, together with 10¢ to cover cost of mailing, to SUPERMAN, c/o ACTION COMICS, 575 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022. You will receive a Membership Certificate, Button and Superman Code.

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Superman's hair, beard and nails do not grow under Earth's yellow sun. However, while he was growing up, his hair and nails grew to conform with the growth of the rest of his body.

In the matter of our characters' ages, we use a good deal of "poetic license." This is a common practice in comics and has kept Little Orphan Annie a "little girl" since 1924. At present, we consider Superman to be about 32. Lois Lane and Lana Lang are a year or two younger. Supergirl was 15 when she came to Earth and is now about 19. Jimmy Olsen is 23. Lucy Lane is 21. Perry White is about 55.

Superboy was 2 years old when he arrived on Earth, and his foster parents, the Kents, were in their 30's. Most of our Superboy stories occur when the Boy of Steel is between 14 and 17; they don't always happen in the exact order in which they are published. At this time, Jonathan Kent is about 50, while Martha Kent is a year or two younger. But they appear younger since a serum from another dimension restored their youth.

We cannot supply a list of all the TV channels on which "The Adventures of Superman" currently appear. From time to time, we publish up-to-date listings in our magazines. Aside from these, consult your local newspapers or TV magazine. Also, watch our animated series, featuring Superman and Batman, Saturdays, on the CBS network.

It is against our editorial policy to publish the full address of readers in our letter columns; therefore, we cannot use these pages to put you in touch with pen-pals. However, if you would like to make new pen-pals, you may contact either of the following organizations: People to People, Inc. Student Letter Exchange

2401 Grand Ave. Kansas City, Mo. 64141

Waseca, Minn. Attention: R.C. Mishek

If you are wondering how much an old issue of one of our magazines is worth, here are the facts. It is true that collectors will pay high prices for certain issues of comic magazines — chiefly those from the early 1940's — but only if they are in perfect condition. If you have any you think might be valuable, get in touch with a dealer. Sorry, but we cannot supply the addresses of dealers of collectors.

Quite frequently we receive letters from readers who describe themselves as super-heroes desiring to join the Legion of Super-Heroes. There are far too many of these for us to use them all, but we will print the best in The Legion Outpost department in ADVENTURE COMICS. If the powers are particularly imaginative and unique, we may use the hero in one of our Legion stories and give proper credit to the reader who submitted the idea.

over...

If you have any ideas for new model kits, like the Superman and Superboy ones, do not send them to us. Instead, contact the Aurora Plastics Corp., 44 Cherry Valley Road, West Hempstead, Long Island, N.Y.

The current members of the Legion of Super-Pets are: Beppo, the Super-Monkey; Comet, the Superhorse; Krypto, the Superdog; Protty II, Chameleon Boy's protean pet; and Streaky, the Supercat.

If you wish background information on Superman for a school term paper or a similar project, we regret that our supply of this material has been exhausted. We suggest you consult Jules Feiffer's book, "The Great Comic Book Heroes", published by Dial Press. You can also look up the article on "Comics" in Volume 7 of the ENCYCLOPEDIA AMERICANA, and the article "Up, Up and Away" by John Kobler, which appeared in the June 21, 1941 issue of THE SATURDAY EVENING POST (on file at most libraries.)

If you have sent us a story, or an idea, or a cover sketch, or some artwork, please understand that we receive a tremendous amount of such material from our readers every week. Of course, we cannot give individual criticisms of all prose submitted. However, we are constantly looking for new talent and will pass promising work by amateurs along to our editor. If he feels the material has exceptional merit, he will get in touch with you. If we think your art samples are good, you will hear from our art director. Meanwhile, if you like to draw, keep working at it and plan to study at a good art school. Several of the amateur writers and artists we have encouraged eventually made good at DC as professionals.

Whether Supergirl will get her own magazine has not yet been decided. We tried her out by teaming her with Wonder Woman in an issue of THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD, as well as giving her an 80 PAGE GIANT of her own. We may give her a SHOWCASE tryout in the future. If that proves a hit, we'll think seriously about giving her her own book.

If you're interested in "famous firsts" in the Superman line, here are the outstanding ones: Superman debuted in ACTION COMICS No. 1, dated June, 1938. SUPERMAN No. 1 bore the date Summer, 1939. ADVENTURE began as NEW COMICS, with the December, 1935 issue. No. 12 was titled NEW ADVENTURE COMICS, and it became ADVENTURE COMICS with No. 32. Superboy first appeared in MORE FUN COMICS No. 101 (January-February, 1945) and ran for seven issues. He began his run in ADVENTURE COMICS with No. 103, (April, 1946.) The first issue of SUPERBOY was dated March-April, 1949. Other first issues: JIMMY OLSEN — September-October, 1954; LOIS LANE — March-April, 1958 (after a tryout in SHOWCASE Nos. 9 and 10, in 1957); WORLD'S FINEST — Spring, 1941. Supergirl made her debut in ACTION No. 252 (May, 1959.) The Legion of Super-Heroes was introduced in ADVENTURE No. 247 (April, 1958) and started its own feature in ADVENTURE No. 300 (September, 1962.)

Finally, we appreciate your interest in our magazines and we hope you will continue to read and enjoy them.

*The Publishers*

NATIONAL PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS, INC.

~~375 LEXINGTON AVE., NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022~~

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THIRD CLASS

2

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POINTING TO PILE OF GARBAGE / CANS IN CORNER OF ALLEY.

SILENCE ON GUN

2 CHARACTERS CLIMB UP FIRE ESCAPE LOOPER.

PAGMAN, IN CORNER OF ALLEY -- RISING OUT OF RAGS, ETC. HE'S HOLDING SHOULDER, WHERE BULLET HIT HIM.

2 MEN RUNNING INTO ALLEY -- ONE, TALL & THIN -- OTHER SHORTER & STOCKY, ONE WEARS CAP -- OTHER, A HAT

PAG DOLL ON GROUND IN F.G.

\* CROOKS

"DIGNITY OF THE TA... (ILLEGIBLE)"

TIN CANS & GARBAGE.

REFUSE, BROKEN BOTTLES, ETC.

\* SHOWS FUR ACROSS BACKGROUND SO AS TO MAKE INDISTINCT EXACTLY WHERE THE FIGURE OF PAGMAN BEGINS AND BACKGROUND ENDS.





# PROMOTIONAL COMICS



**SUPERMAN and Wonder Woman** for the **USO**

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND WOMEN ACROSS THE WORLD HATE THE LONGNESS OF BEING IN A STRANGE PLACE.

—A FOREIGN COUNTRY, THE LANGUAGE, AND THEY KNOW NO ONE.

BUT THEY'RE NOT ALONE—THE USO IS WORLDWIDE.

THE USO HELPS WITH PERSONAL, GENERAL SERVICES AND OFFERS FAMILY ASSISTANCE.

THE USO HELPS WITH EVERYTHING THEIR SERVED COUNTRY AND THEIR OWN VOICES ARE PRICE OF "EACH ONE."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO JOIN THE USO, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL USO CHAPTER OR VISIT US ONLINE AT [www.uso.org](http://www.uso.org)

**USO**

## CHAPTER TEN



DC

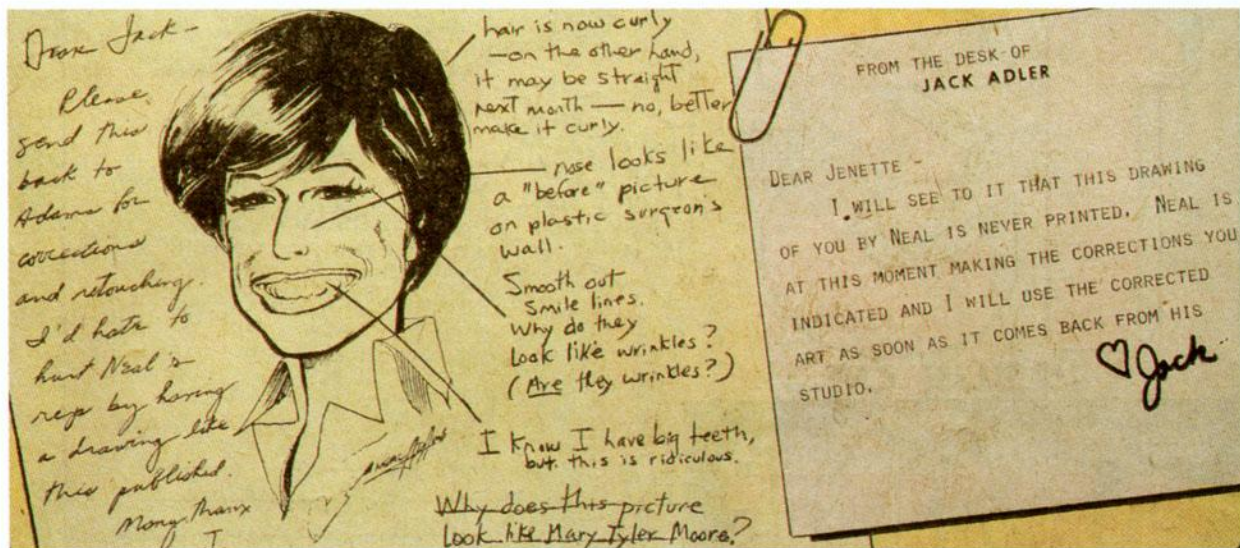
# REBORN

### BY 1976, WARNER COMMUNICATIONS HAD WRITTEN

the managerial flow chart so that reporting to Warner Publishing was the new management team headed by Sol Harrison and the Radcliffe-educated daughter of a prominent New York rabbi, Jenette Kahn. Regarded by her journalistic peers as a born publisher, Kahn joined National in that capacity with a set of knockout credentials and a savvy sense of self-promotion learned from studying Stan Lee. It couldn't be kept secret that her deal with Warner ignored the model of Infantino's succession of Donenfeld. Sol Harrison would retain only the title of president. It was clear who won what negotiation.

Harrison was Old DC, mythologized in not necessarily complimentary terms as having driven the staples through the first issue of *Action Comics*. He was, in fact, just a guy who helped Charlie Gaines figure out how to produce the modern comics format, but what's two or three years, give or take, after all those color separations? In any event, Harrison was trusted by Kinney to be the stable corrective to any of Infantino's creative excesses. And, by virtue of the business culture Harrison typified and could perpetuate,

**OPPOSITE PAGE** A 1979 promotional brochure for custom comics included Superman and Wonder Woman playing pitchman and pitchwoman. **LEFT** Christopher Reeve as Clark Kent in *Superman III* (1983). **ABOVE** "The World's Greatest Superheroes" newspaper strip (1978), written by Martin Pasko, pencils by George Tusko, inks by Vince Coletta.



he could allow Jack Liebowitz to relax and focus on his service to the corporation. That was fine for the transition.

Kahn was a pivotal figure in National's destiny, ushering in a series of changes from 1976 to 2004 that would revolutionize the company. And—because rival Marvel Comics was forced to make similar changes to remain competitive—she and her team revolutionized the entire industry as well.

A culture clash was inevitable. "Unfortunately, I think the company tended to divide into two camps," Kahn wistfully told writer Les Daniels in 1995. Her admirers and detractors alike, however, acknowledge her remarkable near-thirty-year accomplishment. If some speak as though Kahn had walked into the building surrounded by a halo, that may be hyperbole, but it's a sincere emotion. Certainly you would get no argument from the many people whose working lives were improved by what Kahn was able to accomplish with the new core group she assembled.

She couldn't even call it a management team, since one of them was only a nineteen-year-old assistant editor who would spend the rest of his career in awe of the "tremendous opportunity" he'd been given. The group was made up of Kahn, artist-editor Joe

Orlando, and his assistant, Paul Levitz. Later they would be joined by Dick Giordano.

Orson Welles often said that the extraordinary technical advances that his vision for *Citizen Kane* forced the movie business to make were forged out of ignorance; he simply asked for things he didn't know were supposed to be impossible. Similarly, Kahn could only have brought about the progress she did because she was an outsider like Welles—an outsider whose vision demanded the best work from those who were excited by "the pledges I'd made to myself," as Kahn later called her goals.

And unlike an insider, Kahn had never read Jack Liebowitz's playbook. She didn't know you were supposed to tell people that the name of your company had been changed to National Periodicals because people like Estes Kefauver thought comics were four-color Communists. She thought DC should be proud of what it was, and changed the company's name to what people had actually been calling it since 1937: DC Comics. She then hired celebrated graphic designer Milton Glaser to redesign the logo.

The team's key creative player was Joe Orlando, a short, rotund native of Bari, Italy with impressive cartoonist credentials who would be named the managing editor to whom all editors reported. But the man with the crinkling eyes and easy chortle was really the de facto editorial director. As such, he would be doing one of Infantino's old jobs and Kahn the other. Instead of just working with the company's comptroller, however, Kahn would have help on the business side from Levitz, who would soon become editorial coordinator, responsible for assigning work to the talent and getting them paid, as well as setting and maintaining schedules.

One of the things the new team turned their attention to immediately was Kahn's goal of making things better for the talent. Warner Communications was happy to endorse the sentiment, having taken a beating in the press over Jerry Siegel's complaints.

**ABOVE** Artist Neal Adams's caricature of Jenette Kahn ran, with her suggested "revisions" and a mock-memo from DC's production manager Jack Adler, in *Superman* #309 (March 1977).



# COMING ATTRACTIONS

DECEMBER, 1976

NUMBER 1

## DC INTRODUCES NEW FORMAT-- THE GOLDEN AGE IS BACK!

This year, DC is going to drive the traditionally high Christmas sales even higher with the release of the first in our series of 80 page dollar comics with all-new material. With 66 pages of editorial material, the reader is going to get more for his money - the "new" anthology format (actually a return to the traditional golden-age system of running new stories featuring a number of different characters) will, of course, attract fan attention and promote sales among people who might not ordinarily pick up the 30 cent or 50 cent version of the same title.

The format premieres with two of our most popular titles, THE SUPERMAN FAMILY and THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY, both of which will hit the streets on or about December 14th. These two titles will alternate each month with WORLD'S FINEST COMICS and G.I. COMBAT.

SUPERMAN FAMILY will feature all-new stories of Jimmy Olsen, Lois Lane and Supergirl, as well as a bunch of new back-up features. THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY will feature a variety of new mystery tales, including one drawn by Wally Wood in our first \$1.00 issue, and, if all goes well, Berni Wrightson covers. The Dollar Comics will feature a slightly different cover design than that employed by our regular titles, an extremely distinctive layout created by Milton Glaser, who has won a bushel of awards for his work on NEW YORK Magazine, NEW WEST, and his Bob Dylan poster (black profile with colors streaming out of his hair).



### JONAH HEX FIRST ISSUE -- BUT WHO IS THE SAVAGE?

After several years as the cover feature in WEIRD WESTERN TALES, JONAH HEX is finally getting his own comic book! Mike Fleisher will continue to script his adventures, and Jose Luis Garcia Lopez has drawn the first issue. BUT this creates an opening in WEIRD WESTERN TALES, which, contrary to rumor, has not been cancelled.

Mike Fleisher, who has now become the scripter of our entire line of western

**LEFT** The first direct-marketing piece issued by DC was this "Coming Attractions" mailer from December 1976.



They had signed off on a settlement with Siegel and Shuster that gave the duo pensions and health benefits for life, as well as reinstating their creator credits in the books for the first time in thirty years, beginning with *Superman* #301 (July 1976).

By the end of 1976, DC had established a medical insurance program for its freelancers and begun paying reprint fees to the old stories' original artists. But the envelope could be pushed only so far. When the Copyright Law of 1976 was passed, declaring authors the copyright holders except in cases of "work for hire," corporations in several

**ABOVE** A rare copy of *Cancelled Comic Cavalcade* (1978). DC produced only thirty-five copies of this two-volume ascan edition during the so-called "DC Explosion" to protect the company's copyrights. These are probably the rarest items from the 1970s. **RIGHT** A 1976 Superman public service ad warned kids of the perils of crashing a party. Art by Curt Swan and Vince Colletta.

media were forced to define their relationship with talent on that basis. DC had to get that understanding in writing by instituting payment vouchers that doubled as contracts, which explicitly and bindingly signed away all rights. Such documents at all the comics publishers prompted some artists to leave the industry altogether, among them Jack Kirby.

Two years later, Jim Shooter became editor-in-chief at Marvel Comics. Perhaps ideas ingrained in Shooter after years of reflexively accommodating controlling editorial personalities like Weisinger's had blinded Shooter to changes in vogues of managerial style, but his very hands-on approach alienated a lot of Marvel's fan-favorite talent. By contrast, their inspirations would find greater freedom of expression at DC.

JUSTICE FOR ALL INCLUDES CHILDREN 5





Over the next decade, some of the brightest talent in the industry would leave Marvel to come back to DC, including writer-editors Denny O’Neil, Len Wein, and Marv Wolfman. O’Neil, who reinvented Batman and Superman under Julius Schwartz, had been editing *Daredevil* at Marvel, mentoring future superstar Frank Miller.

Ross Andru, Roy Thomas, Gene Colan, Doug Moench, George Pérez, John Byrne, and, of course, Miller himself would be among the many who would see DC as a haven for their visions. DC remained a welcome alternative to Marvel even after the latter raised its page rates dramatically, to a level DC could not match. But back in 1976, Kahn and company had not yet learned just how *much* treating the talent well would become a competitive advantage.

It would soon be clear that Kahn was not typical of publishers in the ’70s—businessmen who confined themselves to P&L statements and left the content to others. She and her team focused tirelessly on freshening the stories and creating new formats. Orlando welcomed the challenge of meeting the grander creative goals, but Levitz, who was learning the business side of comics by day and at night attending NYU as an undergraduate majoring in business, was often forced to break the news that progress in implementing some of their ideas could be slow because of some practical challenges.

The way Levitz, being so young, handled himself in these situations—respectful but with frankness, factuality, and figures—deeply impressed Kahn and helped explain Levitz’s meteoric rise within the company. Sometimes the disagreements were about economic realities, such as Kahn’s desire to do away with reprints. Sometimes they were

philosophical differences born of Levitz’s conviction that the majority of the audience comprised comics fans rather than casual readers.

For example, by 1983 Marvel’s need to match DC’s talent-friendly innovations escalated into a large-scale game of one-upmanship to see who could offer the most attractive incentives—a game Marvel had been dragged into by DC. But Marvel, still owned by a smaller, more flexible corporation, could beat DC to some objectives, such as publishing “creator-owned comics” that offered the talent more favorable copyright terms and financial participations.

In another case, Kahn hated anthology titles such as *Detective*, *Adventure*, and the rest, and wanted to do away with them, but Levitz protested that they were synonymous in the fans’ minds with the company’s identity itself, and to cancel them would tarnish its image. Kahn relented. The compromise was that the umbrella titles would be kept for new larger, omnibus-type books, called Dollar Comics to leverage the DC brand, which would also serve the goal of format experimentation. Kahn would eventually have her way, however, and by 1983, all the umbrella titles but *Action* and *Detective*, the “D” in DC, would be gone.

**ABOVE** Elaborate in-house memo-pads included the new DC logo on the front and various characters on the back. When held up to the light, the two sides formed a scene as the characters interacted with the logo.



CONVENTION CHAIRMAN PHIL SEULING  
BOX 177 CONEY ISLAND STATION  
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11224

Here it comes! Approaching like a rocketship from Krypton, there's a super-celebration gathering speed and momentum until it explodes in New York City in February, 1976! It will be a party and entertainment to be talked about from Philadelphia to the Phantom Zone, from Minneapolis to Metropolis, and from Kansas to Kandor! It will be the Birthday Convention to honor the Man of Steel—Superman himself!

Inside the fun-filled framework of a comic book convention, a series of events, displays, personal appearances and film showings will mark the birthday of the world-renowned character who began the entire super-hero idea with his thrilling arrival on Earth via a spaceship from a doomed planet!

And to help celebrate the years of action and adventure Superman has provided, you are invited! Come to see the party! Come to meet SUPERMAN (and his guests Batman and Robin)! Come to see the TV shows, the movie serials and the beautiful cartoons which featured Krypton's favorite son! Come to see the comic book world: a million dollars worth of original artwork, guest artists, writers and



FEB. 27, 28, 29, 1976

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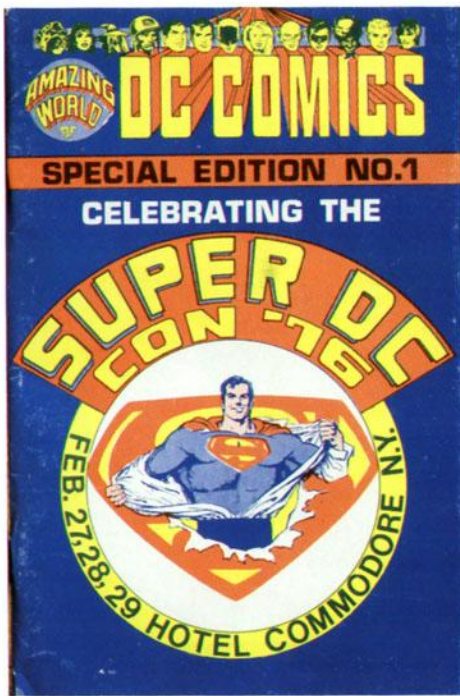
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AND AN EXTRA SPECIAL FILM PROGRAM EVERY DAY!



editors; and the famous *How A Comic Book Is Created* exhibit!

In the best traditions of comic book conventions, you will want to take part in the special talks and panel discussions (always with audience participation). You will want to see, and perhaps enter the colorful costume parades (two of them)! You won't want to miss the value-filled dealer's room. You'll keep and treasure the special convention edition of *The Amazing World of DC Comics*.

You will be part of Superman's Birthday festival! Make your plans now to be in New York City on the leap year weekend—February 27, 28 and 29, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, in the big bicentennial year of 1976!



Kane, who acknowledged the late Bill Finger's contributions to Batman to thunderous applause. Aside from outdrawing the other comics trade shows that year, the convention afforded plenty of warm and fuzzy "kiss-and-make-up" photo-ops for the networks and local stations, such as those demonstrating that peace had been made between DC and Superman's creators.

Back at the office, Kahn and Levitz worked on their plans to expand the line because they knew DC couldn't achieve the majority of market share without having a lot more product. Infantino had tried to achieve that with reprints but had drowned in red ink. In 1978, the books with September or September–October cover-dates began what was promoted as "The DC Explosion": all titles increased to forty-four pages at fifty cents. But only one month later, fourteen titles and one "Special Edition" oversize book were pulled from the schedule at the last minute, when the latest sales figures counseled against overextending. Fans dubbed the abrupt reversal "The DC Implosion," making the staff's photocopies of the ashcans for the never-published issues a collector's item still eagerly pursued today.

Kahn and company nevertheless could show profit where Infantino couldn't: this was a good period for DC's superstars in media other than comics. Although Hanna-Barbera's long-running ABC series *Super Friends* had debuted on Infantino's watch in

The importance of hardcore fans to DC's readership was tested when National held its first convention. It ran for three days in New York City's Americana Hotel and was a great success. To Kahn, never shy about being the public face of DC, the convention represented an opportunity to make a massive gesture of public goodwill. An effort was made to bring in people long associated with DC who had never been seen at a convention. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster appeared as guests of honor, along with Bob

**ABOVE** An advertisement for Super DC Con '76 from *Amazing World of DC Comics* #10 (1976). **ABOVE RIGHT** The cover of the sixty-four-page booklet that was distributed at the convention, originally scheduled to be held at the Hotel Commodore but moved at the last minute to the Americana.

# WELCOME



Consider yourself conventioned. Or if you're not, you should be. We always worry about people who read the Convention Welcome Speech before they sample a bit of the day's delights. In fact, to be properly appreciated, these pages should be leisurely perused—the first leisurely minutes after you spend a day frantically trying to get in all the convention activities possible. And we haven't made that easy.

Let's be optimistic. We're going to presume that by now you've realized that you have to experience the convention before the convention book, and that it's the end of the day. Or maybe exhausted would be a better word than optimistic?

Frankly, we've tried very hard to exhaust you. Only the rough draft of the convention schedule is finished as of this writing, but we think it's the most impressive list of events yet devised for a comics convention. There's a taste of every dimension that comics has touched—and the first hint of a few that are waiting in the wings.

To begin with, there are the very special guests of the convention: three of the men without whom there couldn't have been a comics industry or a comics convention. We can't begin to give enough

credit to Jerry Seigel, Joe Shuster and Sheldon Mayer . . . or say how glad we are to have these fine gentlemen in our midst. They've seen comics grow as few others have been able to, and we're pleased that they can share their reminiscences with us.

Of course, our second team is pretty special too. At any other convention, they'd fill the guest list two or three times over. Here, we can't even begin to list them . . . not for fear that they won't show up, but for fear that we might leave out one of our talented editors, writers, artists, letterers, colorists or production people. Every one of them is a talent in their own right, and they're all going to do their bit to make this convention more interesting for you.

But bringing the people to you isn't enough. We've also done our best to design the unique events that will make them as interesting as possible. The program should bring out our guests' talents, backgrounds, and leave us amused and informed.

Beyond that, we've designed a series of exhibits and films to show you all the aspects and media that comics are a part of. An art gallery

with more comic art than ever before assembled into a single exhibit . . . a living demonstration of the creation of comics as it takes place throughout the industry . . . the greatest collection of memorabilia that's ever been put together, conveniently arranged so that you can view it while listening to radio shows starring the characters from the four-color pages . . . a loop running throughout the day of the cartoon and television appearances of our heroes . . . a look at our foreign editions . . . and much, much more.

Even all this description really can't sum up the convention. Words just aren't enough, especially our words. We're too close to this convention, too proud of what we're trying to accomplish, of the work we're trying to showcase. It's up to you, to your words. Just as this is your convention, not ours. A convention of the fans of our comic characters and magazines, where we serve as hosts, entertainment committee, and tour guides through a magical world. It's up to you to enjoy it . . . and we all hope you do.


Have a Super Convention,  
with the best wishes of  
The DC Staff



ABOVE The welcome letter printed on pages four and five of the convention booklet.

THE MOST **SPECTACULAR**  
**SUPER-HERO BATTLE**  
OF ALL TIME!

**SUPERMAN VS MUHAMMAD ALI**



**COMING THIS SUMMER!**

**AN ALL-NEW  
72 PAGE KNOCKOUT**  
by **DENNY O'NEIL,  
NEAL ADAMS  
and DICK GIORDANO!**

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DC Comics P.O. Box 116  
Radio City Station, N.Y. 10019  
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---------------------------------	---

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**LEFT** Over the years Superman has interacted with many real-life celebrities, but his battle with Muhammad Ali in a tabloid-sized 1978 comic book was one of his most popular. Art by Neal Adams and Dick Giordano. **ABOVE** Jenette Kahn's efforts to target female readers included Amethyst Princess of Gemworld #1 (May 1983). Cover art by Ernie Colon.



**ABOVE** Original cover art for *Ronin #5*, by Frank Miller, whose title character was a samurai set in a feudalistic near-future version of New York City. The series was significant as DC's first book to carry a copyright in the name of its creator.



**ABOVE** This rare Super AA educational workbook was a collaboration between DC Comics and IBM in 1978. In addition to new stories featuring Wonder Girl and Superbaby, the issue introduced new characters like That Cat and Ted and Teri Trapper.

1973, it was not until later in the decade, after the series resumed in 1977 and began an unprecedented, unbroken ten-year run, that its value to DC's bottom line became clear. Thanks to the 1988 *Superman* cartoon and DC's early-'90s live-action *Swamp Thing* show, as well as the formation of Warner Bros. Animation and the advent of *Batman: The Animated Series* and its later spin-offs, DC's presence in animated entertainment has continued uninterrupted to the present day.

More importantly, a December 1978 release date had been set for *Superman: The Movie*, the first major, big-budget theatrical motion picture to star a DC character. (The 1966 *Batman* feature film, modestly budgeted and created by the TV show's production company, doesn't fit the profile.) *Superman: The Movie* had been in the works since at least 1974 and, as Jerry Siegel could attest, there had been a great deal of advance publicity. On December 15, the film, starring newcomer Christopher Reeve, opened to great box office success and would spawn three sequels, ending with *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* in 1987.

By 1981, significant reorganization was taking place at DC. When Sol Harrison retired to Florida that year, Kahn became president; Orlando became vice president-editorial director; and in 1982 Levitz became vice president-operations. (In the midst of this reorganization, a major brand from the old days disappeared: the name of Independent News was changed to Warner Publisher Services.) Kahn had already taken an important step in furthering the company's success by bringing back someone she'd wanted to hire almost since she had arrived: Dick Giordano, who had left DC in 1971, came onboard as the new *Batman* editor in 1980. Giordano would be promoted to managing editor, assuming most of Orlando's hands-on editorial duties in 1982, then to vice president-executive editor the following year. This was the team that escalated the plan to lure talent with better working conditions, and in 1981 DC announced a royalty program for artists and writers.

At the same time, it became clear that comics' readership comprised fans of super heroes almost exclusively, and to be where the readers were—the comic book specialty shops—a publisher had to have super heroes. Predictably, the variety of genres once published by DC began to disappear. Humor, war, romance, mystery—all were gone by the mid-'80s. Publishers like Harvey and Gold Key, who traditionally did not publish super-hero comics, found the comics shops unresponsive to their product and scrambled for alternatives to newsstand distribution.

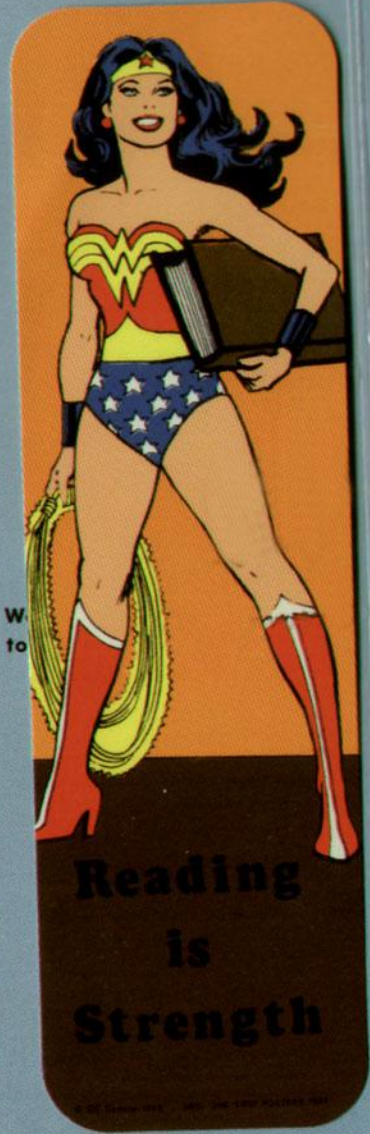
The comic book specialty shops represented a smaller potential readership than one gained by a high percentage of newsstand sell-through, but in selling directly to the shops almost exclusively, the publishers hoped to maximize profit by eliminating waste. Under the old consignment system, three comics were printed for every one sold. But by soliciting orders for *non-returnable* comics in advance, the direct-sale system allowed publishers to set print runs based on what had been *pre-sold*. Achieving one-hundred percent non-returnable sales and zero percent waste became a goal the industry would continue to work toward, an effort that is ongoing today.

**WONDER WOMAN  
BOOKMARK (1987)**

Wonder Woman did her part  
to promote literacy with this  
laminated bookmark.

**DC MOVING NOTICE (1980)**

This fold-out notice was created to  
announce the company's new address  
at 666 Fifth Avenue in New York City.



W  
to

**Reading  
is  
Strength**

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WHY AM I ALWAYS  
THE LAST ONE TO  
KNOW THESE THINGS?



DC Comics Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10103



Art: James Lim, Colors: Lyleover/Changyi, Neal Thomas © DC Comics Inc. 1992

SAY! HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS?



NEWS? WHAT NEWS?



THE BIG NEWS ABOUT DC COMICS!



I HOPE IT'S NOTHING SERIOUS!



SERIOUS? IT SURE IS!



DC IS MOVING!



THAT'S RIGHT! AS OF DECEMBER 3...



OUR NEW ADDRESS IS 666 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10103!



IT'S JUST ACROSS THE STREET FROM OUR OLD OFFICES!



OUR NEW GENERAL PHONE NUMBER IS (212) 484-2800

SEE YOU THERE!



WHY AM I ALWAYS THE LAST ONE TO KNOW THESE THINGS?





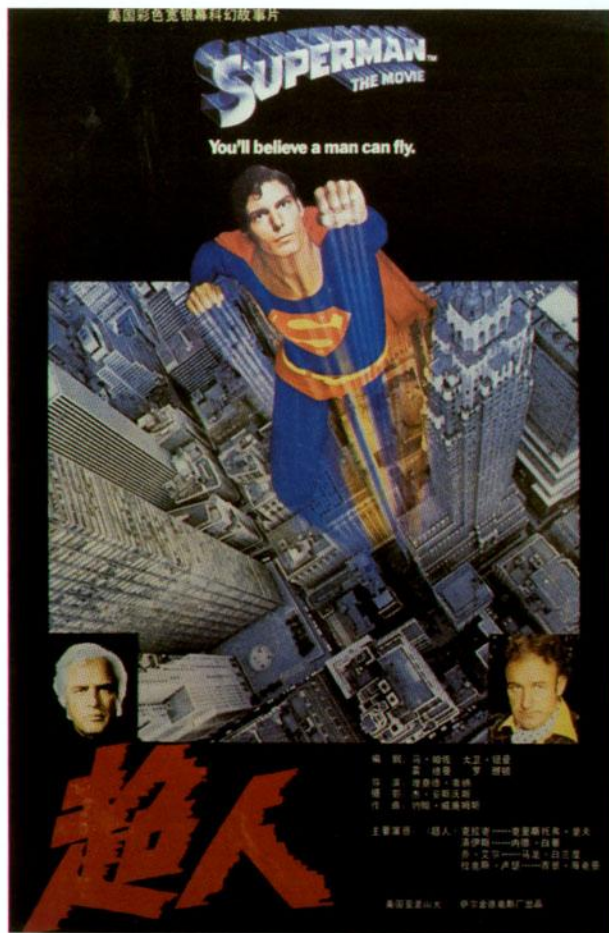
**ABOVE** In this never-published photographic contact sheet from 1976, Jenette Kahn, Christopher Reeve, and Sol Harrison are shown choosing two contestants who won small roles in *Superman: The Movie*. The two young men played football players with a teenage Clark Kent at Smallville High.

Clearly, the commercial future of super hero comics was in the comic book stores, collectively known as the direct market. At the same time, the tone and subject matter of the books themselves were venturing into terra incognita. When, in 1980, Marvel famously killed off a major character in its long-popular *X-Men* title to breakthrough sales, this new kind of realism—the abandonment of comforting genre conventions such as the certainty that the hero would never die—attracted new fans of super hero stories. The upshot was that comics were no longer always age-appropriate for pre-teens. Along with the ultra-violence introduced by Frank Miller's *Daredevil* in 1979, a

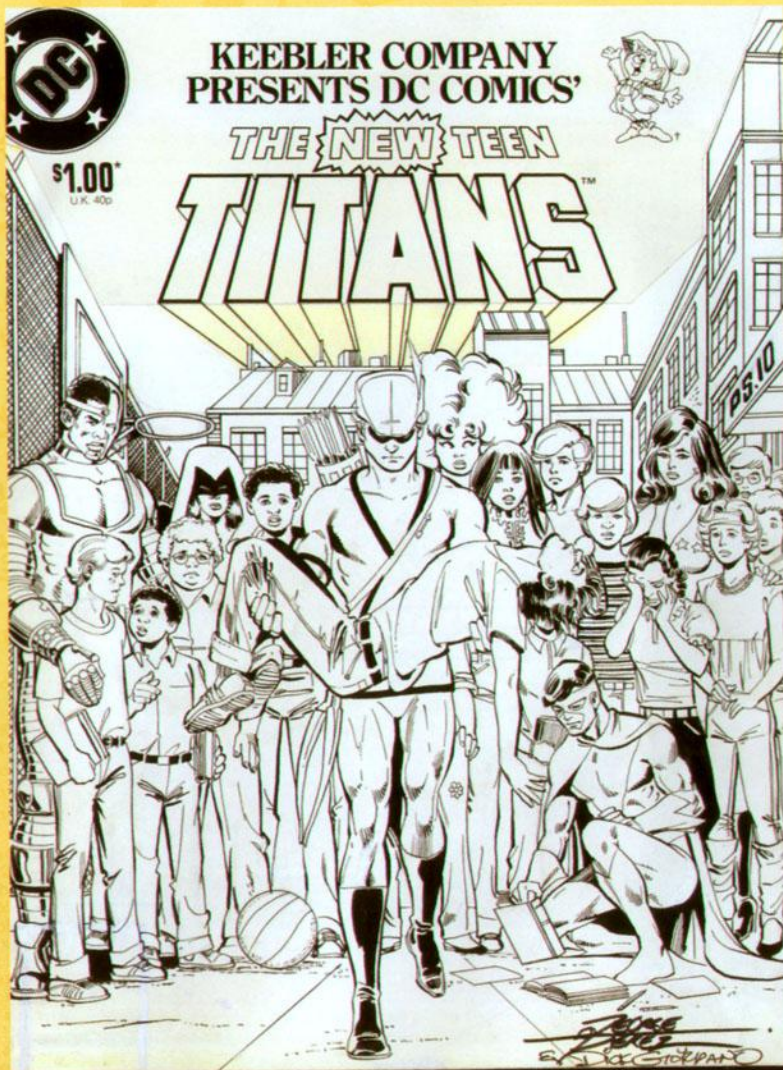
naturalistic rendering style was in vogue, as epitomized by the well-drafted and accessible work of John Byrne. Consequently, humor and cartoony content was thought of as kids' stuff.

This view of the industry and its future largely dominated the field after 1982, when DC settled into its new offices at 666 Fifth Avenue, a steel-studded midtown landmark. It was Jenette Kahn's first opportunity to influence the environment with her sense of style, from the electric yellow-and-white checked wallpaper to the life-sized sculptures of Clark Kent that sat beside the staff in conference rooms.

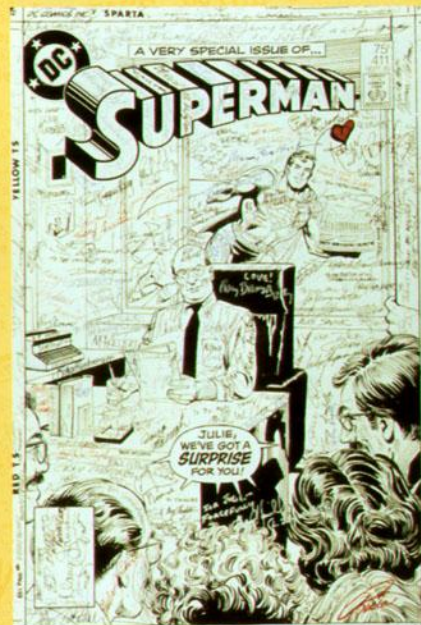
The festive décor made up for what would become claustrophobic dimensions: the company grew so fast that some personnel would literally have to work in spaces intended to be closets. In 1985, the newly muscular company felt like the growing product of some cosmic "big bang," as indeed it was. The big bang that would produce an exciting *new DC Universe*.



**LEFT** Movie poster heralding the debut of *Superman: The Movie* in Beijing. The film was shown for just one day before political criticism in the Chinese press resulted in its being yanked. The *Beijing Evening News* called the lead character "a narcotic the capitalist class gives itself to cast off its serious crises." **ABOVE** A tender moment between Superman and Lois Lane from *Superman II*, unseen for eighteen years until its DVD release in 2006.



**ALL proceeds from this issue will be donated to fight drug abuse.**



**LEFT** The New Teen Titans Drug Awareness Special #1 (1983) was the product of a collaboration between DC and the Keebler Company. All proceeds from sales of the comic were donated to the Youth Rescue Fund and the National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth. The intro included a letter from First Lady Nancy Reagan. Cover art by George Pérez and Dick Giardano. **ABOVE** Original cover art for Superman #411 (September 1985), signed for Julie Schwartz by DC staffers.



**THIS PAGE** Cover sketch (left) and final cover (above) of *Swamp Thing* #43 (December 1985) by Steve Bissette. The character made his debut in 1971, and thanks to writers and artists as diverse as Len Wein, Berni Wrightson, Alan Moore, Joe Orlando, Martin Pasko, John Totleben and Bissette, the lumpy, purposeful plant that was Swamp Thing worked his way vegetatively into the hearts of readers, moviegoers, and TV viewers.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

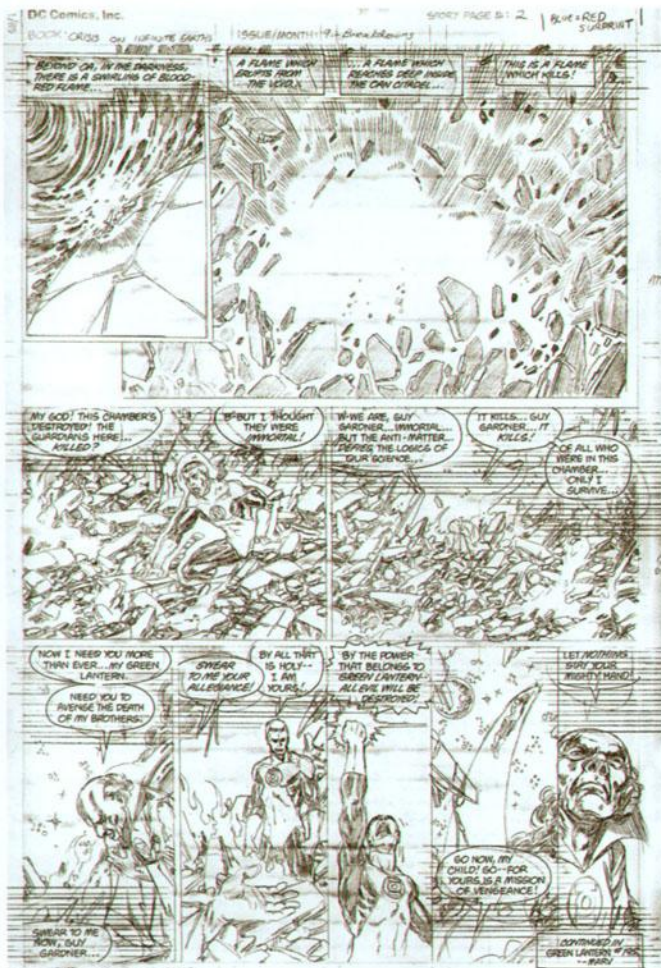


# Creating the SUPERSTAR

**BY THE EARLY 1970S, THE ANNUAL JLA-JSA TEAM-UPS** began bringing in other hero groups from properties DC had acquired from defunct publishers. The writers of these team-ups explained why DC's heroes had never met those heroes by assigning each newly revived group its own, separate world; for example, the Quality heroes were said to come from "Earth X." Clearly, the multiple Earth concept was getting out of hand. Jenette Kahn had found it confusing and had wanted to do away with it since she'd arrived at the company. Finally, the time was right.

In 1984, Kahn and Dick Giordano agreed to commission a special year-long miniseries designed to tie up all the loose ends of the DC continuity and simplify what had come to be called the "Multiverse." Marv Wolfman and George Pérez's *Crisis On Infinite Earths* told of a huge cosmic event that merged the various Earths into a single planet. The project necessitated the coordination of an unprecedented and enormous outpouring of creativity. *Crisis* created the need to rework virtually every feature's continuity so that it fit into the new universe.

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Wraparound cover detail from *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #1 (April 1985) by George Pérez. **LEFT** Rorschach, the crime-fighter in the inkblot mask, created by writer Alan Moore and artist Dave Gibbons in 1986 for the *Watchmen* series. **ABOVE** TV promo ad for 1988's *Superboy: The Series*.



**ABOVE** Pencils from *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #9 (December 1985). **RIGHT** Readers voted to kill Robin in *Batman* #428 (1988), so this previously unpublished page of a hospitalized but living Boy Wonder was never seen. Script by Jim Starlin, pencils by Jim Aparo, inks by Mike DeCarlo.

*Crisis* also introduced a marketing technique DC would return to many times over the next two decades: It was the first stunt narrative that crossed over into most books in the line, encouraging readers to sample the other titles. This triggered an unanticipated resentment among fans who felt DC was “forcing” them to buy comics they wouldn’t have bothered with otherwise. Other readers felt they needed help in figuring out what order in which to read the material; to that end, a small independent publisher, Eclipse Comics, released *The Official Crisis Index* in two volumes.

Some continuity-loving fans had trouble letting go of what they remembered and kept demanding explanations for certain changes. And some of the talent themselves had trouble letting go of old concepts, some of which they had personally created. The stories that resulted from those impulses and the demand for elaborations and revelations tended to complicate what was supposed to be a simpler, more reader-accessible mythology. By the early 21st century, the continuities would have to be tweaked yet again in more company-wide, DC Universe-shuffling stunts with titles like *Infinite Crisis* and *Final Crisis*.

While the original *Crisis* may not have streamlined DC’s continuity as intended, it did provide the perfect opportunity to free characters from cumbersome backstories and reimagine them for more contemporary tastes, such as replacing staid Barry Allen with his party animal nephew, Wally West, in the role of the Flash, or reinventing *Justice League* with a different membership and deliberately tongue-in-cheek scripting. Based on the kind of material topping the sales charts in 1985, however, a violent, amoral vigilante who shoots first and asks questions later was definitely the costumed character of choice for the new generation, and many—though hardly all—of DC “ret-connings” (fan-speak for retroactive changes in continuity) were cast in the new mold. This uniquely late-1980s approach would eventually be dubbed “grim and gritty.”

The king of grim and gritty, of course, was Frank Miller’s groundbreaking graphic novel, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, which posited an aging, bitter, perhaps morally bankrupt Batman in a dystopian alternate reality. Most previous graphic novels had appeared in an 11” x 15” format, but *Dark*



#### DC CRISIS ITEMS (1984-85)

---

DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths* storyline was a huge event, and it also generated a huge amount of paperwork. Among the stacks of memos and letters from DC writers and editors were these notes: a request (a "biggie!") to kill Supergirl, and a list of *Crisis* characters and dimensions.

#### ADDITIONAL DC CRISIS ITEMS (1984-85)

---

Enclosed are two memos sent during the resolution of the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* storyline: one, an update on the pivotal villain of the series, the Monitor; the other, a pondering on where to place a post-*Crisis* Jonah Hex.

#### HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE POSTER (1987)

---

This poster was created for Graphitti Designs' *History of the DC Universe* hardcover edition (also printed inside the book as a tri-fold page) featuring over fifty artists' work and signatures.

Readers could send in a postcard to request one of a limited run of 10,000 copies of the poster.



- Black Adam ?
- Black Pirate (1860s)
- Captain Fear (1830?)
- Cinnammon (1870-1900)
- The Demon ( )
- Dinosaur Island (1840?)
- EL DIABLO (1840?)
- EL PAPA BAYO - JONAH HEX (1870)
- BLOOD BUSTER - GEMMY ACE (1915)
- A-Guys (Down)
- Fischel (1820)
- General Immortus ( )
- Brother Blood - 700 yrs ( )
- Golden Gladiator ( )
- Gorilla City ? ( )
- Tomhawk - Miss Liberty (1776)
- Hawk (1820)
- Internal A - Redman - Internal A
- E... Vampire (400 yrs)
- Iron Wolf ( ) CHECK
- Johney Jaine Thunder - Madame 44 (18)
- Krona - other world ( )
- Manhunters ( )
- Monk (vampire) (ignore) ( )
- Nathaniel Dusk (1939)
- Nighthawk ( )
- Proctor Smith the hit ( )
- Prince Ra-Man / Benworld / Arion (Mishku)
- Ras Al Ghul (1800)
- Sonsai (1865)
- Scalphunter - Bat Lash ( )
- Silver Knight ( )
- Shiny Knight - Demon ( )
- Sun (Chad Co) ( )
- Tygo Twins (18)
- Viking Prince ( )
- Viking Cannards ( )
- Blue Beetle's Scarab ( )
- Blackstar Thorn ( )



Phantom Stranger  
Tela 15/6

ROME [Egyptians  
Greeks  
(Amazons)]

Arcthyt #8

Spock's face huge  
no details, space  
Enterprise moving out  
of the head

Kirk, Spawls, McCoy  
Kroge, Davids, Deakris

JENETTE —  
BIGGIE!

CAN WE KILL SUPERGIRL  
IN CRISIS. I MUST  
KNOW SOON.

YES

NO

ONLY IF WE HAVE A  
NEW SUPERGIRL SOON

NONE OF THE ABOVE

LOVE,  
Dick



## Dimensions

GenWorld

Apokolips / New Genesis

Capt. Carrot

Gods - Pantheons

Thunderbolts

Qward

Crystalline (Starman)

Meta (Shade)



To: All Editors

From: Len, Marv and Bob

Date: April 18, 1984

Re: The Monitor

Copies:

## Memorandum

Plans are proceeding on the DC Crisis project and we are now confident enough in our plans to share them with you.

The Monitor is the catalyst for the maxiseries, as we told you long ago. However, we have made him a more important figure than originally planned so his appearances in all of our titles are deceiving.

The DC multiverse has the various earths and dimensions including the anti-matter dimension where the Weaponers of Qward hail from. Just as our multiverse has a positive Monitor, so there exists an anti-Monitor. It is the anti-Monitor who has taken the naturally expanding multiverse and accelerating the process, taxing the finite life force in the positive multiverse. The Monitor is aware of this and needs champions to go throughout time and space, to specific crux points, and prepare to bring the positive multiverse into alignment, once more creating a universe.

Our heroes and villains will be dispatched throughout the various earths and times to find these crux points while the Monitor prepares for a final confrontation with his anti-matter counterpart. This will occur about halfway through the maxiseries and the Monitor will lose--and die. Our characters will then have to stop the anti-Monitor and bring the multiverse together before their very existences are rendered null. Some will live, some die--others will change costumes or powers while others will be introduced into the DC Universe. We end with one universe, one Earth and one common groundwork to launch our second 50 years.

Therefore, after you use the Monitor twice, please do not use him again. He'll be gone by next summer. Lyla, his "dumb bunny" associate is actually a super-powered herald who will collect and transport our characters from place to place. She, we expect, will survive and be available for use after the maxiseries comes to an end.

Thanks for your understanding and help in uniting our books.





To: Paul Levitz  
From: Bob Greenberger  
Date: May 30, 1985  
Re: Hex and the Crisis  
Copies: Marv Wolfman, Dick Giordano

## Memorandum

An interesting problem has cropped up concerning the placement of Hex in DC's future history post-Crisis. Mike Fleisher has theorized that the new Hex takes place some 80-100 years from today. However, the revised future timeline we have established has such technological marvels as Tommy Tomorrow and Space Ranger 100 years from today.

To make this all work, Marv and Dick have agreed that placing Hex further in the future might benefit all concerned. To that end, we were all wondering if there's a particular time period mentioned in the Legion that refers to any atomic warfare. If so, we might be able to place Hex there. If not, Marv feels he would be best placed somewhere after the 25th Century (Space Museum era) and before the 29th Century (Superwoman).

The Legion has mentioned from time to time that their historical records are incomplete so the time period Marv has identified would be ideal for some atomic catastrophe allowing Hex to happen.

Your help in this matter is greatly appreciated.

*There's one reference to the late 28<sup>th</sup> century as the time of World War 6 -- a war of super-weapons and computers, at least partially fought by robot warriors. Without knowing a lot about "Hex" I can't suggest anything precisely, but maybe the fall of civilization right after the Space Museum would be more appropriate; allowing for a recovery in time for WW6.*

*Paul*





Joe Kubert  
 Jim Mooney  
 BELOZ  
 MY SPIEGEL  
 PAUL NORRIS  
 FRANK THORPE  
 MARY WILKINSON  
 MART NEDELL  
 Ramona Franke  
 ANDY KUBERT  
 P. CRAIG RUSSELL  
 M. WAGNER  
 G. KANE  
 Schaffenberger  
 Joe Staton  
 Dave Stevens  
 ERNIE COLON  
 JOE KANE  
 CURT SWAN  
 MARVIN HASKIN  
 JESSIE PEREZ  
 Jack Kirby  
 MIKE RYER  
 Orlando  
 XAIME  
 STEVE RUDE  
 Frank McLaughlin  
 DICK GIORDANO  
 DAVE GIBBONS  
 STERANKO  
 GENE COVAT  
 WORTHY ANDERSON

*Knight Returns* was initially a four-issue series in a standard comic book page size, on high quality, coated paper and square-bound with card stock. This format was called prestige and became the standard for virtually all high-end comics to follow. It was also the first DC miniseries to go through multiple printings, then be collected into a trade paperback and sold in conventional bookstores. But this was an alternate Batman. It would take Bat-expert Denny O'Neil, who returned to DC to become a supervising editor on the Batman books in 1986, to spearhead the development of the darkest knight of all.

The retconning of Superman fell to perhaps the hottest refugee from Marvel, whose signing was a major coup for DC. John Byrne had reaped fame as the artist, with Terry Austin, of *The Uncanny X-Men*, on which he had a hugely successful, though fractious, collaboration with writer Chris Claremont. Byrne, however, was a bit old-school—one of those talents who believed comics should be fun and heroes should act like heroes. At Marvel, he bristled at being pressured to draw storylines he found too dark, and happily came to DC for the opportunity to write as well as pencil.

*Superman* #423 and *Action* #583 would be Julie Schwartz's last super-hero books. (He would go on to edit a handful of graphic novels by noted SF writers, then retire from editing altogether to become DC's "goodwill ambassador and resident living legend," maintaining an office at DC until his death in 2004.) The stories in these two comics represented the end of "Earth One," and then both titles were suspended before the debut of the October 1986 cover-dated *Man Of Steel* miniseries written and pencilled by Byrne. In addition to revamping the look of Krypton—and establishing that Superman's cape can indeed tatter—Byrne presented a Superman who was, in effect, younger.

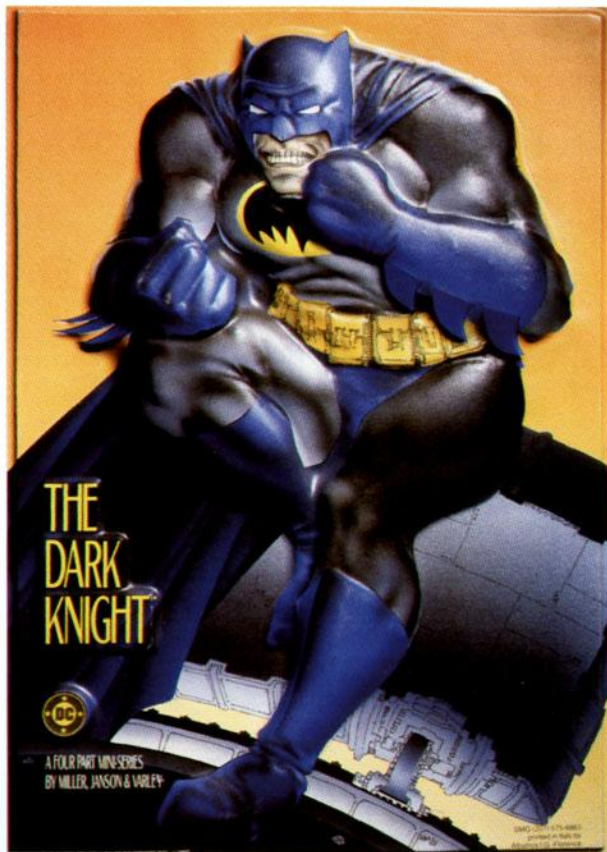
In Byrne's collaboration, first with editor Andy Helfer, then with his old friend, former Marvel editor Mike Carlin, Superman became more of an older brother to the reader than a father figure. This was accomplished subtly, by establishing that this version of the character had never been Superboy and still felt the occasional need to turn to his still-living parents for advice.

**RIGHT** Cover pencils for Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986) featured a psychologically tormented, complex version of the character, set twenty years in the future in a Gotham overrun by criminals.



Byrne worked against the “grim and gritty” grain, making Superman a brighter, more upbeat character. With no memory of Krypton, Superman was no longer a mournful displaced person who felt twice orphaned and abandoned. Byrne effectively erased the Man of Steel who was the embodiment of pain and loss that Jerry Siegel had crafted for Weisinger in the early 1960s.

The successes in the direct market of *Crisis* and the retons of not only Superman and Batman, but also Wonder Woman, courtesy of George Pérez—not to mention Wolfman and Pérez’s breakout hit, *The New Teen Titans*—made it possible for the first time to attribute specific sales gains to specific talent. Moreover, as Byrne’s continuing popularity at DC confirmed, the direct market was creating real superstars. Unlike fan-favorites of years past, these stars had real clout by virtue of being able to deliver a



quantifiable fan base that would follow them from company to company. Kahn and Levitz had succeeded in turning the freelancer from an employee into an economic partner. “Grow with us,” they said, and where the work was commercial, everyone prospered.

But DC sometimes had to navigate treacherous waters to maintain its image as talent-friendly and retain the goodwill of the non-comics reading public, while fulfilling

**LEFT** DC created a unique 3-D retailer display for *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*. **ABOVE** A page of original artwork from the famous series. Written and pencilled by Frank Miller, inks by Klaus Johnson.



**THIS PAGE** Batman: Year One (1987), a dramatic four-issue story about Batman's first year as a vigilante, originally appeared in issues #404 to #407 of the Batman comic, an early example of the now-prevalent limited-series-within-a-series model. Shown here are an original pencilled page (above) by David Mazzucchelli, and a page from Frank Miller's script (above right).

3

BATMAN/p12



[1.]  
 FULL FIGURES AS: IN FOREGROUND, BATMAN LEAPS BEHIND COLUMNS, IN THE DIRECTION OF THE CAT, WHO RUNS, BULLETS STRIKING BEHIND HIM. THE SWAT TEAM IS IN THE BACKGROUND FIRING, HITTING COLUMNS. ONE SWAT IS TRYING TO SHOOT THE CAT.

SE: BRAKABRAKABRAKABRAKA  
 2 BALLOONS[NO TAILS, NEAR SWAT]; -- THERE --  
 -- can't see him -- where --  
 -- roars so FAST --  
 -- dark --  
 -- could be ANYWHERE --  
 SE[NEAR CAT]: reeowwwrrrr  
 4 SWAT SHOOTING AT CAT: Wha --  
 SE[2]: -- DAMN that cat --

[2.]  
 FULL FIGURE OF BATMAN, ROLLING ACROSS THE FLOOR, HOLDING THE CAT IN BOTH HANDS. HE'S ROLLING TOWARD A SHATTERED WINDOW. BULLET HOLES MARK HIS PATH, RIPPING PLASTER FROM THE WALL.

SE: BRAKABRAKABRAKABRAKA  
 7 BALLOONS[NO TAILS]; -- THERE --  
 -- so FAST --  
 SE[NEAR CAT]: WREOWWWWWW

[3.]  
 MEDIUM ON ACTION AS BATMAN FLINGS THE CAT BACKWARD, OVER HIS HEAD. ONE HITZ BATMAN BELOW THE ELBOW. BULLETS STRIKE THE WALL, AT WINDOW LEVEL.

SE: BRAKABRAKABRAKA  
 10 SE[NEAR CAT]: WREEEEEE  
 11 SE[NEAR BATMAN]: NOG

[4.]  
 THE CAT RUNS ACROSS A STRETCH OF PAVEMENT OUTSIDE THE BUILDING.

VO[FROM DIRECTION OF BUILDING]: -- TAGGED him --  
 -- close in --  
 VO[FROM OPPOSITE DIRECTION]: COMMISSIONER --  
 for God's SAKE -- come in --

[5.]  
 MEDIUM ON ACTION AS THE CAT ~~REX~~ LEAPS TO THE TOP OF A SQUAD CAR, PAST GORDON AND MERKEL. ~~SEVERAL~~ WHO ARE OUTSIDE THE CAR. GORDON SCREAMS INTO THE CAR MICROPHONE. MERKEL ~~KRIKE~~ ~~YERKS~~ BACKWARD AGAINST THE CAR, CLUTCHING HIS SHOULDER. HIS HAT TOPPLING FROM HIS HEAD. A BULLET HOLE APPEARS IN THE CAR WINDOW.

GORDON: -- those IDIOTS are firing ~~X~~ out the WINDOWS -- for God's --  
 SE[2]: -- MERKEL! --  
 SE[NEAR MERKEL]: NOGAAH

[6.]  
 MEDIUM ON ACTION AS THE CAT LEAPS INTO SELINA'S OUTSTRETCHED ~~WAXHE~~ HANDS. SELINA LOOKS FIERCE. SHE'S THE ONLY ONE STANDING. HOLLY ~~X~~ DUCKS, TERRIFIED.

NO COPY





LUTHOR  
Snope. Not According to our contract.

UP ANGLE ON NEW STATUE

It's a frighteningly realistic statue of Lung-Wang, the winged, five clawed dragon which fills the cavern, floor to ceiling.

LUTHOR (CONT)  
I own the Great Wall... and everything under it! This treasure and even your Dragon King.



As Lex approaches, he admires one of the teeth. It is huge, larger than any others, and is ornately jeweled, glowing as if with a life of its own.

LUTHOR  
This tooth alone is worth millions.



LUTHOR (CONT):

I think I'll have it mounted.



ON MUKUA Alarmed.

MUKUA (CONT)  
NO! That one tooth holds Emperor Ch'ia's magic.

its responsibilities to its owners. For example, in February of 1987, DC announced it would create a set of ratings and content guidelines. The immediate result would be "For Mature Readers" labels on such titles as *Swamp Thing*, *Vigilante*, and *Watchmen*, among others. A group of twenty-four major comics professionals immediately signed a petition opposing the plan, calling it censorship, and threatened to withhold their services. In the end, their petition had little significant impact, the labels remained, and DC was perceived to have responsibly introduced adult content to a medium previously viewed as exclusively children's entertainment. Ultimately, most of the talent that threatened to boycott DC returned within months, as a more talent-friendly climate had not yet been reestablished at Marvel.

ABOVE Storyboards from an episode of the late-1980s *Superman* cartoon produced by Ruby-Spears Enterprises. The half-hour show ran on CBS on Saturday mornings, and included one eighteen-minute *Superman* adventure and one four-minute segment called "Superman Family Album," a peek at his life with Ma and Pa Kent. The artist is comics great Gil Kane, who also designed the models for the show.

# WATCHMEN

A 12 ISSUE DELUXE SERIES BY ALAN MOORE AND DAVE GIBBONS



"You know what I wish? I wish all the scum of the Earth had one throat and I had my hands about it." ROCKSWOLD (1975)

**THIS SPREAD** Three rough layouts created by artist Dave Gibbons for use as Watchmen promotional ads.

# WATCHMEN



A 12 ISSUE DELUXE SERIES  
BY ALAN MOORE AND DAVE GIBBONS

WATCHMEN

"Whatever happened to the American dream?  
You're looking at it." THE COMEDIAN (1977)



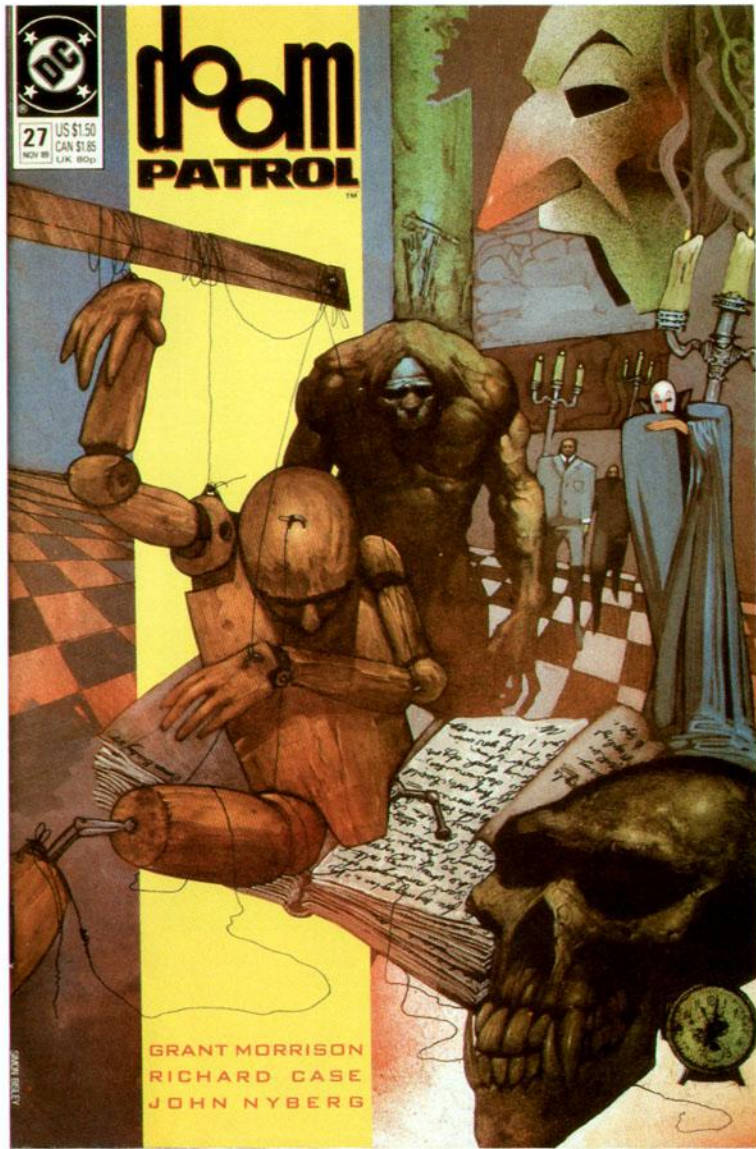
A 12 ISSUE DELUXE SERIES  
BY ALAN MOORE AND DAVE GIBBONS



**RIGHT** Point prototypes for an unreleased series of Watchmen action figures, including two replacement heads for the Comedian. Based on designs by Dave Gibbons and sculpted by Tim Bruckner in 2004.



**ABOVE** One of the challenges when Legion of Super-Heroes relaunched with issue #1 (August 1984) was just keeping track of the characters. According to writer Paul Levitz, "You'd literally have to write the book with a scorecard and notes." Cover by Keith Giffen and Larry Mahlstedt. **RIGHT** Scottish writer Grant Morrison shook up the Doom Patrol super-hero team during his forty-five-issue run, bringing elements of Dada and surrealism into the series. Cover of Doom Patrol #27 (November 1989) by Simon Bisley.





As the decade wound down, DC had achieved Kahn's goal of making the publishing operation profitable in itself, rather than DC being dependent on licensing for the lion's share of revenue. The '80s continued to be good for licensing, however, thanks to DC's continued media presence. There had been three more *Superman* films, in 1980, 1983, and 1987 (and the Tri-Star dud *Supergirl* in 1984); a syndicated *Superboy* TV series, produced by Viacom, that lasted for one hundred episodes; and another *Superman* Saturday morning cartoon show on CBS in 1988.

In that same year, DC celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of Superman with special gatherings in New York City and at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. The party continued on television, in a "Superman's 50th birthday" special aired on CBS.

In 1989, the Comics Code was revised for the first time since 1971. The ban on crime and horror titles was removed, as was the prohibition against depicting zombies. The revision mattered little to DC, however, for as the decade turned, the company was in the process of developing a line of horror and dark fantasy comics that would be published without the Code seal altogether. It would prove to be one of the biggest innovations in DC's history.

First, though, the chairman of Warner Communications surprised DC with a little innovation of his own.

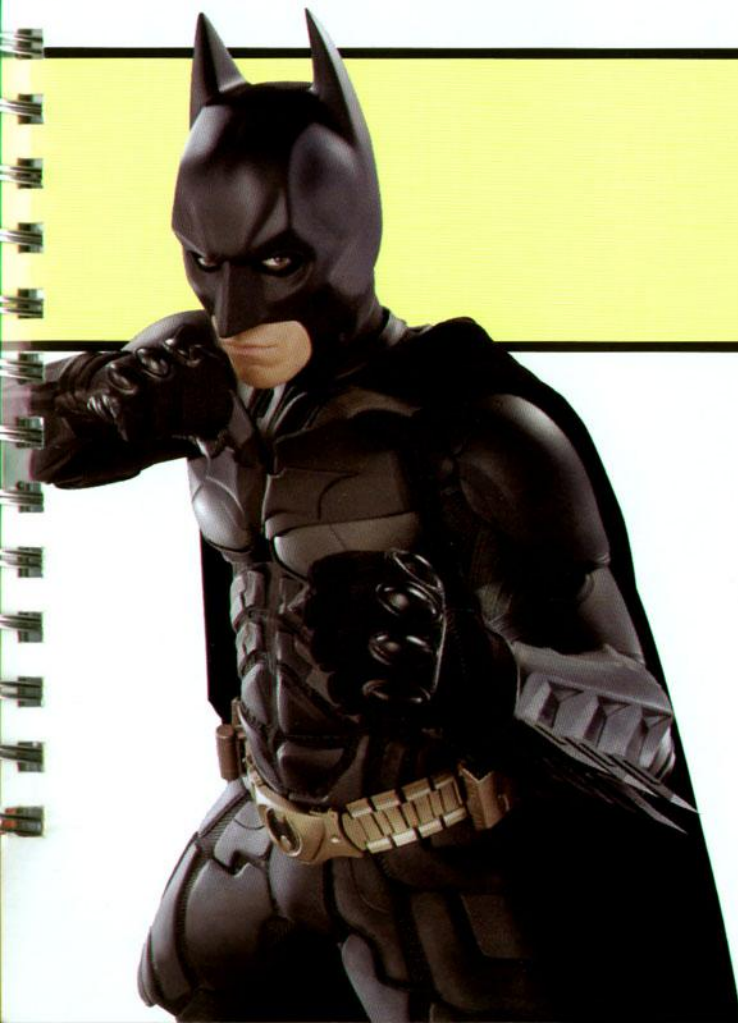


ABOVE LEFT DC celebrated its fiftieth birthday by reorganizing its universe. Advertisers were encouraged to join the celebration. ABOVE A 1986 color guide for the most popular DC characters.





## *The Jewel in the* **CROWN**



**IT'S IN ALL PRINT MEDIA; IT'S EVERYWHERE ONLINE;**

it's on every kind of screen you look at; it's coming home in toys, electronics, video games, and apparel, now and forever. It's in the ether, and in the very air you breathe.

It's like the communications giant that owns it.

It's today's DC Comics and its amazing library.

When Time Warner was created in 1989 by the merger of Time, Inc. and Steve Ross's Warner Communications, the resulting reorganization moved DC out of the Warner Publishing group, which became a division of Time, Inc., and made the comics publisher a division of the Warner Bros. movie studio. This was a foresight Jack Liebowitz might have admired, and since he was still on the Warner Communications board, he very well may have.

Steve Ross's biggest deal would inevitably change the lives of everyone associated with DC. Over the next eighteen years, the company would go from being a gnat buzzing in WB's ear to a respected collaborator with the studio on a vast array of products.

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Original pastel painting for a never-used Batman movie poster (1988). **LEFT** Christian Bale as Batman in 2008's *Dark Knight*. **ABOVE** Two generations of the Man of Steel: Artist Alex Ross's portrait of actors Tom Welling and Christopher Reeve was a bonus item in the *Smallville* Season 3 DVD box set.



For everyone, the merger would make the way forward an exciting, sometimes intimidating, roller coaster ride.

DC would now grow and thrive, it was said, because it would be rewarded for providing the studio with revenue from steadily increasing comics sales and related new products, as well as ancillary revenue from licensing deals. The new configuration would also give DC opportunities for hundreds of new product applications and partnerships with other Time Warner companies and divisions. But the studio's greatest expectation was that an endless supply of subjects for film and TV projects—as well as for new ventures such as stage plays, Six Flags amusement park stunt shows, online entertainment, and more—would pour out of the DC library. Synergy, they called it.

There was only one disappointment. The new relationships couldn't possibly be forged per this grand vision right away. DC would need at least another five years for the goal to be reachable. It would take more growth by Time Warner; a new generation of comics readers; several massive technological leaps; and a jolting shift in the public's taste, thanks to Generations X and Y, to fulfill the dream.

Under ordinary conditions, DC's first order of business would have been to get its light out from under the bushel, to raise its visibility among the horde of new companies and newly reconfigured siblings calling out for attention from what Paul Levitz called "Mother Warner." As it was, the conditions were extraordinary. The merger was

**ABOVE** Cartoonist Chris Ware created this certificate for a limited edition of Chip Kidd's *Batman Collected* (1996). **ABOVE RIGHT** A preliminary cover sketch for *The Batman Adventures: Mad Love* comic book (1994) by Bruce Timm. **RIGHT** An early *Superman: The Animated Series* model sheet featuring an African American version of Perry White (1995). **OPPOSITE PAGE** Gotham cityscape for *Batman: The Animated Series* (1992) designed by Gary Montalbano and painted by Russell Chong.



Warner Bros.  
Animation © 1995

Final  
11/20/95



**SUPERMAN**

407-000

9

**MAIN MODELS**



**PERRY WHITE**

**DAY COLORS**

PERRY WHITE  
CONFIDENTIAL  
For Reference Only  
M.S.  
TM & © 1995 DC COMICS





**LEFT** Partially inked splash page from the "Imperfect Hosts" story in *The Sandman* #2 (February 1989) by Sam Kieth and Mike Dringenberg. **ABOVE** Jon J Muth's full painting of a trading card featuring Desire from *The Sandman* series (1994). The art was considered too revealing and was cropped to show only Desire's head on the final card.

perfectly timed. Making its presence felt was exactly what DC was about to do, on a scale DC itself couldn't anticipate. By the end of 1989, Time Warner was reaping the benefits of the feature film *Batman*, the new company's first huge cash cow—what the licensing world would come to call the post-Time Warner WB's first major brand.

Earlier in 1989, the biggest excitement at 666 Fifth Avenue had been caused by a new title from editor Karen Berger: *The Sandman*. It was one of many such "mature readers" books DC had been publishing for the previous two years without the Code seal. This new, non-super-hero high fantasy series took its title (and nothing else) from the original, more reality-based 1940s super-hero feature, and it was instantly admired for the sheer beauty of the writing by Neil Gaiman, who would soon broaden the range of his achievements to include best-selling prose fiction.

But when the *Batman* movie came out on June 23, all the buzz was about the Dark Knight, who had finally received the gold-plated Hollywood treatment Superman had. The film was the work of a hot director, Tim Burton, who pitted Michael Keaton's Batman against the Joker, played by one of the highest-paid leading men in Hollywood, Jack Nicholson. In terms of success, it was indeed déjà vu all over again, except the tone and look of the newest Batman was more deadpan and sophisticated than that of the 1966 TV show, as it would be in the equally stellar sequel, *Batman Returns* (1991). Over the next decade, two more films would be made, lighter in tone but just as heavy with star power.

DEAR NEAL,

HERE'S A GOOD NUMBER OF SAMPLES FOR YOU TO KEEP A FILE ON ME. THERE ARE A FEW PIECES I DID A WHILE BACK OF DC CHARACTERS IN PREPARATION FOR JUST SUCH A TIME AS THIS. MOST OF THE STUFF THOUGH WAS MADE FOR A PROPOSAL I MADE TO MARVEL COMICS FOR A SERIES CALLED "MARVELS", FEATURING SOME OF THEIR CLASSIC SUPERHEROES IN A PAINTED FORMAT. THIS IS TO BE MADE FOR RELEASE SOMETIME IN LATE '93. PLEASE IGNORE THE NARRATIVE ON THESE PAGES, THEY WERE ONLY USED TO SELL THE IDEA AND POSSIBLY NONE OF THIS ARTWORK WILL BE USED IN THE FINAL PRODUCT. BOTH THAT SERIES AND THE OTHER ONE I'M DOING FOR ECLIPSE CALLED "LOVECRAFT & HOWARD", SEEM TO HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF ACTION IN THE SCRIPTS SO I HOPE WHEN THE WORK'S DONE THAT IT WILL SHOW MY PAINTED APPROACH CAN BE APPLIED TO ANY NUMBER OF SUBJECTS. PLEASE CONTACT ME WITH ANY IDEAS OF WHAT I MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO FOR DC, AND HOPEFULLY IF YOU ARE GOING TO THE SAN DIEGO CON THIS SUMMER, I'LL SEE YOU THERE.

THANK YOU,

Alex Ross



Meanwhile, DC's licensing department was managing quality control on an array of Batman toys and products for adults as well as children so vast it dwarfed the 1966 collection. The company's line of trade paperbacks (collections of old stories) and its licensed

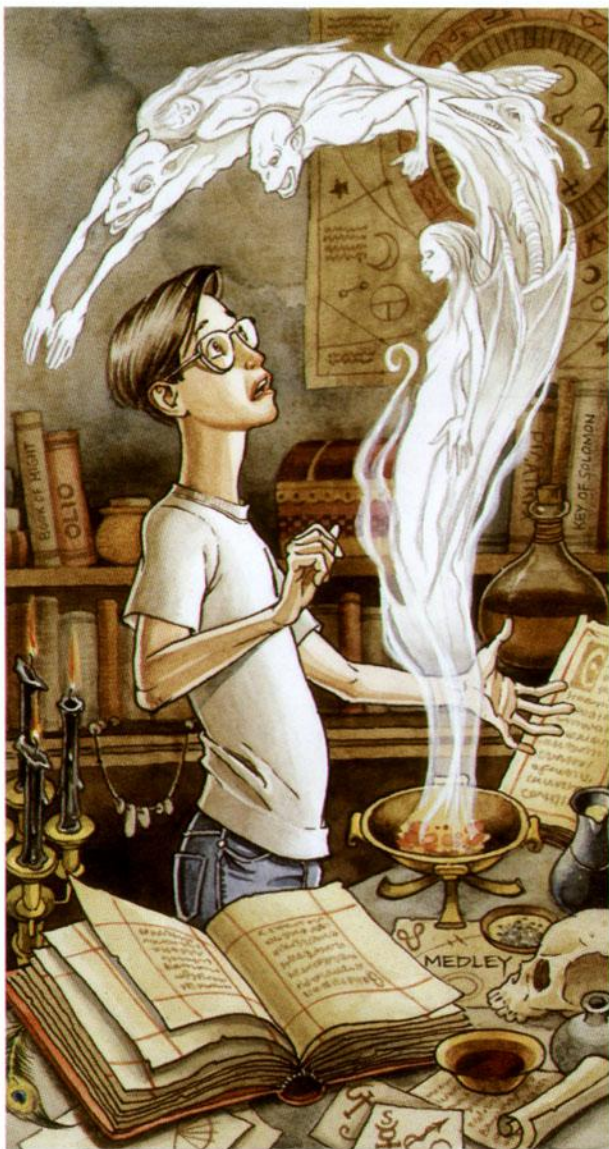
**LEFT** A pitch letter sent by aspiring DC artist Alex Ross to design director Neal Pozner in 1993. **ABOVE** Ross's tryout drawings of Elongated Man and his wife, Sue Dibny; Captain Marvel; and Ace the Bat-hound.



publications were also enjoying record success, reintroducing readers to classic Batman tales and providing kids with all manner of Batman activity and coloring books.

By 1990, books—"real books," as comics people used to call them—were nothing new to DC. The company had gotten into that business, along with much experimentation with new physical formats, largely thanks to Karen Berger. Berger had started out in 1979 as Paul Levitz's assistant editor, then replaced him as editorial coordinator in 1981, rising through the ranks to become an editor specializing in horror and fantasy. After becoming DC editorial's British liaison and taking over the editing of *Swamp Thing* from Len Wein in 1985, she championed the use of writer Alan Moore's countrymen. Thus began what would later be tagged "comics' UK invasion," as the DC books showcased the glittering writing talents of Neil Gaiman, Grant Morrison, Alan Grant, Peter Milligan, and Jaime Delano.

**ABOVE** The Sandman of the 1940s and the Sandman of the 1980s meet in artist Teddy Kristiansen's haunting painting. **RIGHT** *The Books of Magic* was a four-issue series written by Neil Gaiman in 1990. It starred Tim Hunter, a young bespectacled wizard-in-training (no connection to a later, rather more famous, young wizard). This trading card was drawn by children's book illustrator Linda Medley in 1994.





They were merely joining their artist colleagues, including Brian Bolland and Dave Gibbons, whose work had already been appearing in DC books for a few years. Collectively, the Brits began taking old DC adventure titles such as *Animal Man*; *Shade, The Changing Man*; and *Doom Patrol* and standing them head-down in some very murky and quirky waters. Among the characters introduced in the deeply strange *Doom Patrol*, for example, were people with clocks for heads and a sentient, living street named Danny.

The collections of early miniseries successes—*Saga of the Swamp Thing*, *Watchmen*, *Dark Knight Returns*, *Crisis*, and the other retconning storylines—had established DC's backlist. Now that list found its perennials in the "mature readers" titles developed in the late '80s and early '90s by Berger. Those had included 1988's *Black Orchid* by Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean, as well as Jaime Delano and John Ridgway's *Hellblazer*, whose protagonist, a character spun off from *Swamp Thing*, became the basis for the film *Constantine* in 2005.

Berger claimed she didn't necessarily start out to create books that were dedicated to more sophisticated storytelling intended for adults. It simply worked out that way because she came from a non-comics background and wanted to publish the kind of series she herself enjoyed reading. In recognition of the distinctive new dark fantasy genre she helped create, Berger was appointed group editor of an entirely new imprint, Vertigo, in 1993.

The group editor system was evolved shortly before the company moved to its expanded, two-floor quarters at 1325 Avenue of the Americas in 1991. Dick Giordano, who had by this time become vice president-editorial, was tiring of life as an executive and yearned for a more leisurely pace as an artist at a drawing board. As part of a gradual transition, increasing responsibility for the comics began to be shifted to heads of the thematic groups of books. Mike Carlin became Superman group editor, and Denny O'Neil headed the Batman group.

Under this new system, and in response to the mandate that each group had to generate new material to retain market share, the practice of pre-planning comic book "story arcs" evolved. These were multi-issue narratives crafted to be easily repackaged as trade paperback one-shots or series, such as the *Green Lantern* issues collected under the title *Green Lantern: Mosaic*, or *Wonder Woman: God and Mortals*, collecting the first seven-issue arc of George Pérez's *Amazing Amazon* retcon. As the '90s continued, such pre-planned arcs proliferated, usually promoted as special events in a crowded market in which comics sales accelerated dramatically in the wake of *Batman* and a speculator boom.

New business models would create a new paradigm for success at DC. A hit was now less a matter of how well the original periodicals sold than of how long the subsequent collections stayed in print. The goal was for the material to live on always, becoming a kind of annuity—a perennial revenue stream.

DC's desire to distinguish itself in a dizzying sea of super-hero product drove the need to generate material for more collections and inspired—to borrow a term from the TV business—"stunt programming." The across-the-line tie-in stunt of *Crisis*, in which nearly every title in the DC Universe (usually abbreviated as DCU) fleshed out the overall storyline for the duration of the event, would be repeated every summer for a decade. Only the theme of the stunt varied from year to year. These events, with titles like *Millennium* and *Armageddon*, often resulted in new morphings of DCU continuity.

The stunt mentality also bred sensationalistic multi-issue arcs within the Batman and Superman groups. In addition to new Batman titles such as *Legends of the Dark Knight* and *Batman: Shadow of the Bat*, the second *Batmania* inspired a number of mythological changes. In the late '80s, Marv Wolfman created a third Robin, Tim Drake, to replace Jason Todd, who had succeeded the adult Dick Grayson when the latter adopted the persona of Nightwing. And in 1992, Denny O'Neil created the avenging angel character Azrael.

Azrael would figure prominently in the "Knightfall" stunt of 1993–94, in which Bruce Wayne's back was broken and he was temporarily replaced in his crime-fighting role by Azrael. DC's promotion of this, as filtered through the mainstream press, created the impression that Batman had been retired by DC, and it sparked a speculator frenzy. It was a similarly misinterpreted stunt out of the Superman group in 1992–93 that had caused one of the wildest roller coaster rides for DC yet.

In *Action* #662 (February 1991), Lois finally learned that Clark Kent was Superman, during a long storyline in which Lois and Clark became lovers. The Superman team was

**ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT** The front and back of a 1991 card announcing DC's move to its new offices on Sixth Avenue.



moving toward a story twist in which Superman and Lois would finally get married. But Warner Bros. had other plans.

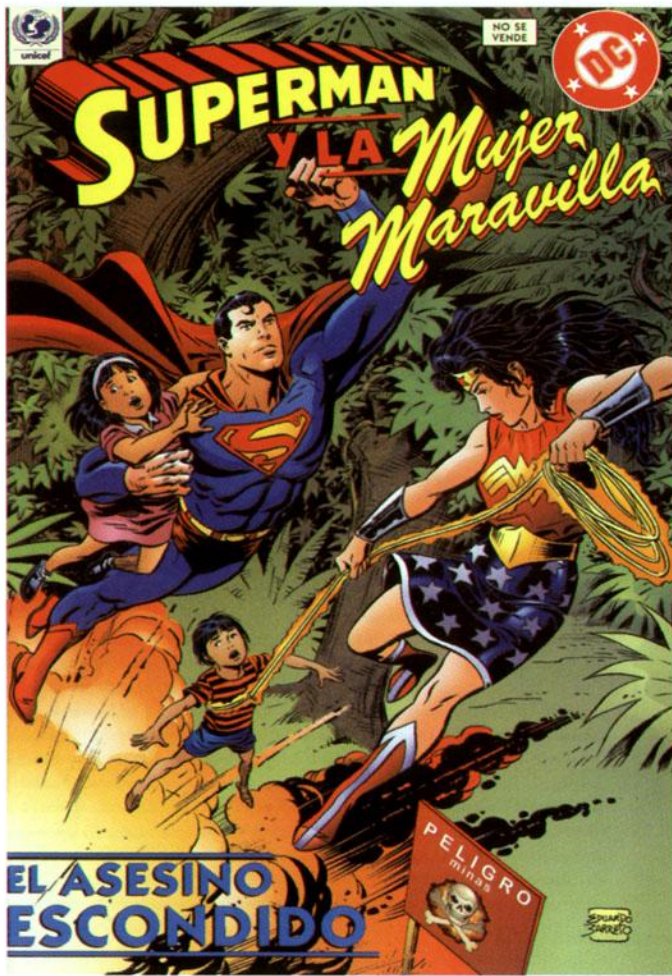
Ever since Jenette Kahn became publisher, she had been working hard, like Whit Ellsworth and Duke Ducovny before her, as DC's mass-media liaison with Hollywood. Kahn would pitch new ideas, but for every project that got a film order, there seemed to be a dozen presentations that couldn't even score development deals.

Kahn hit pay dirt with one idea she pitched, however: a new TV show called *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* that captured female viewers by focusing less on Spandex and more on the bantering relationship between Clark and Lois. The show owed much of its charm to the "will they or won't they?" sexual tension developed between the two leads. In DC's comic books, the wedding of Superman and Lois was originally scheduled to occur long before it would happen on television. So, to avoid stealing thunder from the show, DC was ordered to keep Lois and Clark single



**ABOVE** Paul Levitz and Jenette Kahn convene in her toy-filled office at 1325 Sixth Avenue in 1994. **RIGHT** Actors Michael Landes, Teri Hatcher, and Dean Cain—Jimmy Olsen, Lois Lane, and Clark Kent, respectively—on the set of *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* in 1993.



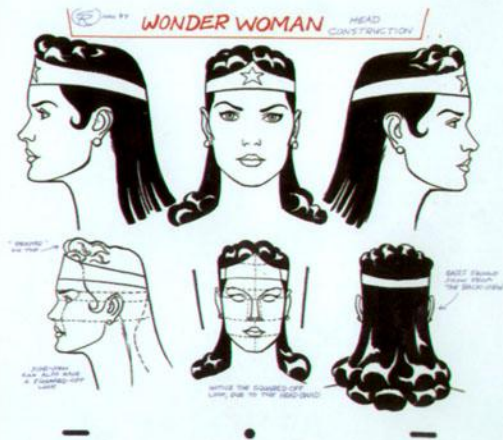


**ABOVE** Superman and Wonder Woman call attention to the dangers of land mines in this comic created for Central America in 1998. Pencils and inks by Eduardo Barreto. **RIGHT** Wonder Woman turnaround drawings by artist Steve Rude were the basis for a 1994 doll by Robert Tonner's award-winning design company.

all of them published under the Image imprint, but they were autonomous from any central editorial control. Image, whose books would be distinguished by their repositioning of the female center of gravity, offered "babelicious" comics that ultimately proved to be a fad, wearing out its welcome in less than three years. But during that time, the Image books all tended to outsell DC and Marvel dramatically. However, one of the studios—WildStorm, run by Jim Lee—showed a preference for material such as *WildC.A.T.S.*, which could be made kid-friendly enough to put a cartoon show on CBS in 1994. Of WildStorm, DC took particular notice, especially later, when artist Jim Lee tired of the administrative duties that left him no time to draw or create new characters.

The speculator boom that drove Image's sales past Marvel's also created a boom for the entire industry. To compete, DC felt forced to get into what Levitz called "the Franklin Mint business"—the manufacture of presumptive collectibles. The new gimmicks included glow-in-the-dark, lenticular hologram-enhanced, or foil-embossed covers, and even selling the comics hermetically sealed in plastic bags. Such a product "forced" any collector who *did* want to read the book to buy at least two copies: one whose bag had to be ripped open in order to read the book (thus destroying its "mint condition" collectability, because the bag had been opened), and another copy to be kept as an investment, presumably preserved forever in plastic. In less than two decades, the comics business had gone from knowing that not all readers were collectors, to serving a market in which not all collectors were readers. For writers interested in connecting with their audience, the idea that they were writing collectibles that existed for the express purpose of *not* being read made working in comics Orwellian. Some stayed for the money; others went off in search of readers or viewers.

*Lois & Clark* became a hit on ABC that would run for four seasons, and in the comics the Kryptonian's death was undone less than a year later.



**WONDER WOMAN #63  
(JUNE 1992)**

Original cover pencils and  
cover inks by Brian Bolland.

**DC COMICS HOLIDAY CARD  
(1996)**

Alex Ross painted this Christmas  
scene of Superman and Lois Lane  
flying over Metropolis.



# Wonder Woman

1811



TRIAN  
STOLAND

UPC PRICE

EDITOR: THORSLAND  
ARTIST: BRIAN BOLLAND  
INKER: B.B.

DC COVER STOCK  
COVER TITLE WONDER WOMAN MONTH JUNE  
NO. 63 IDENTIFICATION

6-8  
5-9

LOGO AREA

YELLOW TS

RED TS

BL-PAD:

BOLLAND



LOGO AREA

BLACK TS

BLUE TS

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ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX ROSS

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Share the Joy

With all best wishes  
for a happy holiday season

Your friends at DC





adolescent to thirtysomething males by blending super-hero tropes with post-Kurt Cobain disaffection and the appetite for lifestyles built around new technologies. WildStorm was what Paul Levitz called “a new flavor” when DC acquired the company in late 1998, along with Jim Lee’s services as its editorial director. Ultimately, WildStorm and its imprints, Cliffhanger, *Homage*, and *America’s Best Comics*, would keep DC fresh.

In 1993, revenue from media licenses and new business initiatives was the largest factor in DC’s ability to weather the interruption in growth. And the Batman franchise remained financially healthy in the latter half of the decade, too, thanks to—or despite—the film *Batman & Robin* in 1997. The law of diminishing returns set in rather quickly with this one, and Warner Bros. later admitted, with a trace of embarrassment, that the Schwarzenegger/Mr. Freeze opus (“Vat killed da dynosarz, Betmen? Da eyes age.”) would probably be the last Batman film for a while. The character would not become a movie star again until Christopher Nolan’s more naturalistic *Batman Begins* would breathe new life into the franchise in 2005.

**ABOVE** Shop Talk was published from 1989–95, designed as “the newsletter from the DC editorial offices to our freelance community.” This issue (September 1994) announced the launch of DC Online on AOL. **RIGHT** Detail from the cover of a never-produced style guide featuring the Milestone Comics characters (1993).

The real Man of Steel had returned in *Superman* #81 (September 1993), thanks to a robotic weapon from ancient Krypton known as the Eradicator, which stole his body and resuscitated it with a “Kryptonian birthing matrix.”

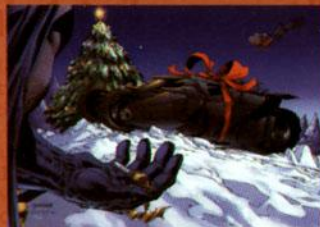
This issue, like many other important titles released in this period by other publishers, was massively over-ordered by retailers, who mistakenly believed speculators would buy it up, too. That was the beginning of the end for the boom time. Hundreds of comics stores went out of business in a disastrous month in 1994 referred to as Black September.

But it appeared that the content of WildStorm’s books was actually being read. WildStorm connected with mid-

For most of the ‘90s, DC relied on new experiments and new imprints to feed its backlog and invigorate its publishing program. In 1989, an editor named Mark Nevelow was brought in by Jenette Kahn to develop a line of titles for adult non-comic readers. Most weren’t even in comic format per se, but were smaller-size books featuring prose with many illustrations. This was Piranha Press, which eventually evolved into Paradox Press. As Andy Helfer, who took over the line from Nevelow, explained, titles like *Beautiful Stories For Ugly Children*, *The Road to Perdition*, *A History of Violence*, and the Big Book series (anthologies of one- and two-page features with titles such as *The Big Book of Urban Legends*) were “for people who dressed in black and had tattoos.” This line of material was moderately successful and further enhanced DC’s stature as a source for film properties.

On the super-hero side, another new imprint provided more grist for the media mill. In 1991, when comics were being read mostly by white suburban kids, an effort was made to appeal to minority readers with the creation of the Dakota Universe, named after the fictitious city in which the stories were set. Dakota was created when entrepreneur Derek Dingle, writer Dwayne McDuffie, and artist Denys Cowan united to form





DC holiday cards through the years: **LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM**  
Wonder Woman (1990) by Kyle Baker. Swamp Thing (1992) by Charles Vess. Superman in flight (1993) by Eric Kachelhofer. Wonder Woman with animals (1995) by Bruce Timm and Ty Templeton. Superman and family (1998) by Jim Lee, Tod Williams, and Tod Ehrlich. Superman and Father Time (1999) by Wayne Boring and Stan Kaye. Superman and heroes atop the Statue of Liberty (2001) by Terry and Rachel Dodson. Super Juniors (2002) by Kaare Andrews. Shazam (2003) by Jeff Smith. The Batmobile (2004) by Jim Lee, Scott Williams, and Alex Sinclair. Clark and Lois (2005) by Cameron Stewart. Snow fight (2006) by Travis and Jordan Kotzebue.



Milestone Media, whose comics were independently produced but whose finished books were printed and distributed by DC. With titles like *Hardware*, *Blood Syndicate*, *Icon*, *Static*, *Shadow Cabinet*, *Kobalt*, and *Xombi*, the Milestone comics pitted various super heroes and fantastically powered leads against inner city drug dealers and other forms of urban crime and social ills.

**ABOVE** When Paul Levitz became president of DC in 2002, he received this one-of-a-kind Bat-Signal gift from WildStorm's Jim Lee, Scott Dunbier, and John Nee.

By the time DC and *MAD Magazine*, which DC by then oversaw, moved to five floors at 1700 Broadway in 1995, where the company remained into the next century, DC was finding new successes in places it hadn't anticipated only a few years earlier. In 1997, the diversity of product being carried in the comic book shops inspired the creation of DC Direct, which oversees the manufacture and marketing of an ever-expanding line of toys, action figures, replicas of comic book weapons and vehicles, and other collectibles.

On February 8, 2002, Jenette Kahn announced that she would be leaving DC, having "accomplished everything [she] had set out to do" there twenty-six years earlier. As she segued into a movie producing deal with Warner Bros., Paul Levitz was named president and publisher. One year later, Mike Carlin would step down from his supervision of the DCU editorial group, Taking over the DC Nation, as it came to be called, was Dan DiDio. And finally, the newly created creative affairs department assumed responsibility for the Hollywood liaison, accomplishing the long-nurtured dream of putting a brand new DC logo—internally referred to as the "DC Spin"—on movie screens, appearing before the main titles on films like *Batman Begins*, *Superman Returns* (2006), and *The Dark Knight* (2008). Today, DC is an official mass-media presence, with active involvement in feature film development, such as *Watchmen* from director Zack Snyder and *The Justice League* from director George Miller (both planned for release in 2009).

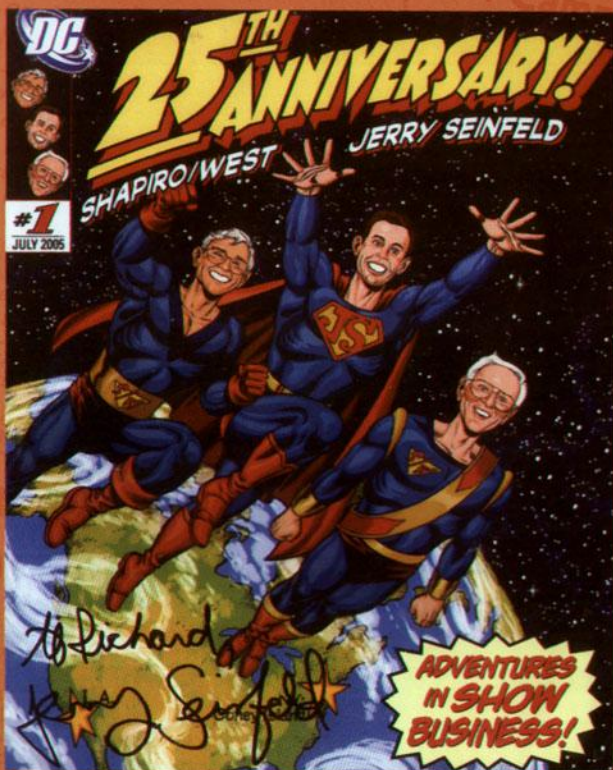
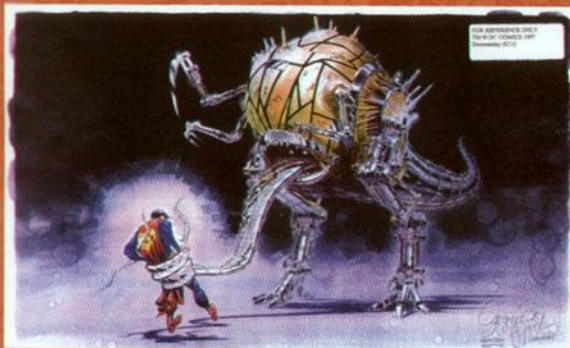
Another example of the new working relationship between DC and Warner Bros. is the series of direct-to-DVD animated features based on landmark comic book mini-series such as *Superman: Doomsday*, *Justice League: The New Frontier*, and *Teen Titans: The Judas Contract*, on which DC acts as a collaborative partner with Warner Animation rather than a mere licensor, utilizing DC talent and working closely with the best supervising directors available, such as Bruce Timm.

The development and launch of new formats and imprints continues today. In 2004 DC launched the successful CMX imprint, which imports Japanese creator-owned *manga* translated into English, and in 2007 DC continued to expand with its investment in the Japanese print and online publisher Flex Comix. Another 2007 initiative was Zuda.comics.com, a new digital imprint that posts web comics.

In a 2007 interview, publisher Paul Levitz summed up the state of the company today with characteristic understatement, speaking in terms of the comics business as a whole and only tacitly acknowledging DC's leadership role in creating the business as we know it: "It just feels like it's a wonderful time in comics right now," he said. "The range of creative material seems to be expanding everywhere you look. The reactions to it are getting both warmer and wider. More places are talking about the medium seriously, covering it seriously . . . really joining in [an] effort . . . that seems to be creating a fairly steady stream of new converts to what we do."

It is only possible to so broadly summarize this final compartment of *The DC Vault* precisely because of the passionate interest of DC's fans, longtime readers and "new converts" alike. It's a testament to the enduring appeal of characters that are now called icons that from the beginning of the digital age onward, everything about the company is a matter of record, online if not in print—either in books like this one or in the articles and discussions on the Internet tracing virtually every move the company, its talent, and its characters make.

Thus will DC's history, like its library and its ability to entertain, live on, fulfilling the dreams of the men and women who built it into the entertainment powerhouse it is today.



**TOP LEFT TO RIGHT** The unproduced *Superman Lives* feature film went through many incarnations. This 1997 concept art shows Superman battling the Doomsday monster and a Brainiac skull. **ABOVE** Animation artists in Korea created these drawings of Roxy for an unreleased Gen13 cartoon in 1997. **LEFT** To celebrate his twenty-fifth anniversary with managers George Shapiro and Howard West, Superman-fan Jerry Seinfeld requested this customized card.



## AFTERWORD

### TODAY, TIME WARNER'S DREAM

is the same as DC's.

It's the dream that DC's characters should all live on.

Thanks to comic books, collected editions, the web site, the DVDs, and all that makes modern communications technology what it is, the DC characters—real and imagined—will always be there. Everywhere you can look.

Wherever there's a story to tell, they'll be there.

But the future is not in *The DC Vault*; it's in every second ticking now, and every second yet to tick. So, too, is it in the lives of Superman and Batman and all the countless casts of characters who have succeeded and complemented them. And so, too, is it in the lives of all the men and women who built the powerhouse called DC Comics and are building it still.

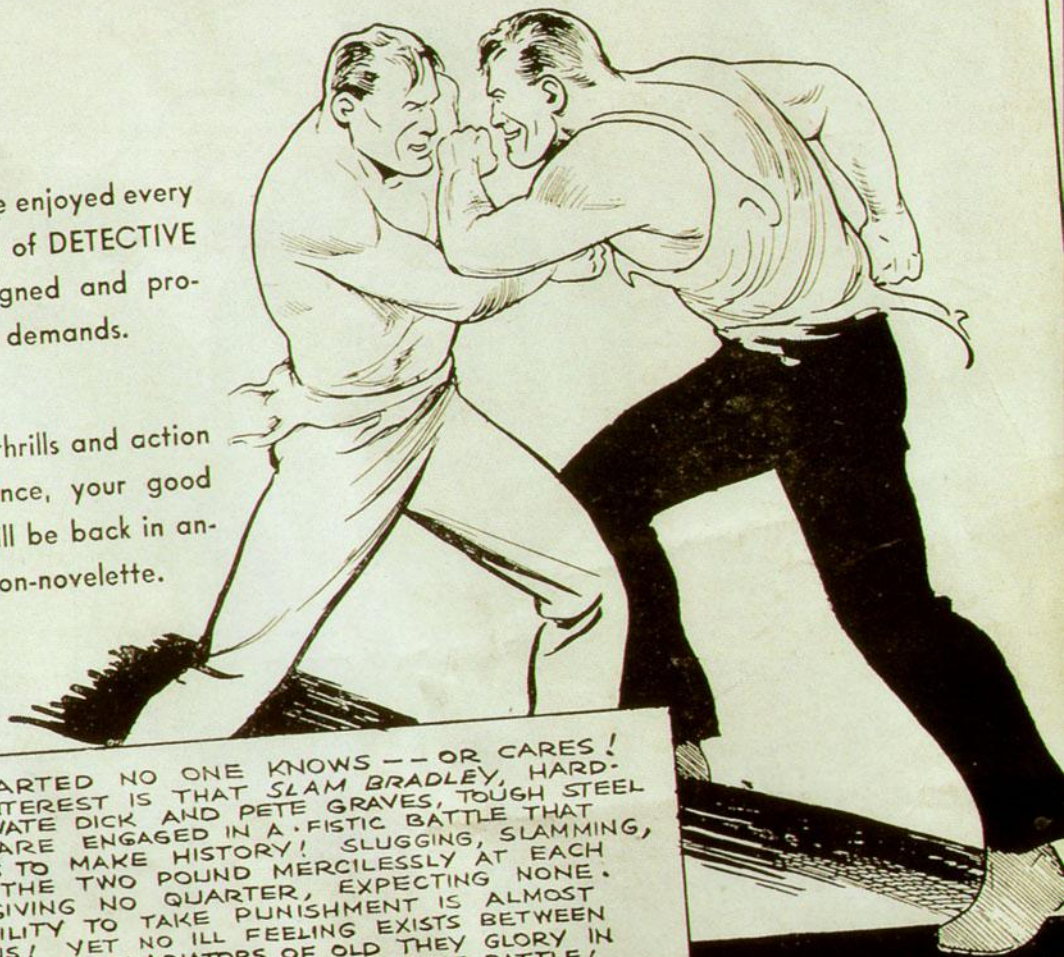
In their work, they will always be there: in all print media, everywhere online, on every kind of screen you look at, and coming home in toys, electronics, video games, and apparel, now and forever. In the ether, and in the very air you breathe.

**THIS PAGE** The evolution of the DC logo from 1940–2005. **OPPOSITE PAGE** A coming attractions ad from the first issue of *Detective Comics* (March 1937), the longest-running title in comic book history and the source of the initials “DC.”

# A BIG SECOND HELPING!

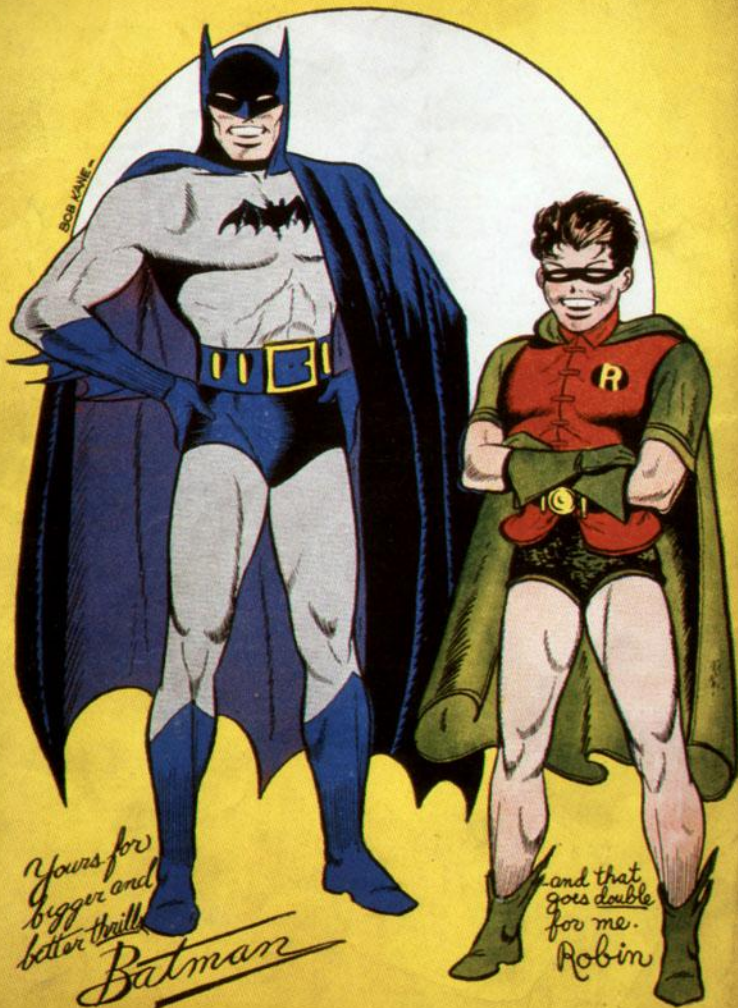
**W**E FEEL sure that you've enjoyed every page of this first issue of DETECTIVE COMICS, for it was designed and produced according to YOUR demands.

**T**HERE'LL be lots more thrills and action next month. For instance, your good friend SLAM BRADLEY will be back in another fast and furious action-novelette.



HOW IT STARTED NO ONE KNOWS -- OR CARES! OF SOLE INTEREST IS THAT SLAM BRADLEY, HARD-BOILED PRIVATE DICK AND PETE GRAVES, TOUGH STEEL WORKER, ARE ENGAGED IN A FISTIC BATTLE THAT THREATENS TO MAKE HISTORY! SLUGGING, SLAMMING, SOCKING, THE TWO POUND MERCILESSLY AT EACH OTHER, GIVING NO QUARTER, EXPECTING NONE. THEIR ABILITY TO TAKE PUNISHMENT IS ALMOST MIRACULOUS! YET NO ILL FEELING EXISTS BETWEEN THE TWO. LIKE GLADIATORS OF OLD THEY GLORY IN THE COMBAT FOR SHEER LOVE OF BATTLE!

# ASK FOR IT BY NAME!



*Yours for  
bigger and  
better thrill*

*Batman*

*and that  
goes double  
for me.*

*Robin*

CUT OUT AND FRAME

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### MARTIN PASKO

is a veteran writer and editor for a wide array of media, including comics, interactive content, and nonfiction. He has also worked extensively in television, including stints on such diverse shows as *Roseanne* and the cult favorites *The Twilight Zone* and *Max Headroom*, among many others. In animation, Pasko helped translate many comic book properties to the small screen, including *The Tick*, *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs*, and *Batman: The Animated Series*, for which he won a 1993 Daytime Emmy Award. He is also one of the writers of the animated feature film *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*.

In comics, Pasko's work is most closely associated with DC, with whom he's had an ongoing relationship since he was seventeen years old. Most recently he served as special projects editor and liaison with Warner Bros., helping facilitate the studio's development of DC properties for the screen. He is best known for having written Superman in most media, including syndicated newspaper strips, TV animation, and interactive content as well as comics, and for the revamp of Dr. Fate that served as the basis for the character's current, more popular incarnation.

Pasko lives in New Jersey with his wife, Judith, a realtor, and their daughter, Laura.

### PAUL LEVITZ

entered the comics industry in 1971 as the editor/publisher of *The Comic Reader*, the first mass-circulation fanzine devoted to comic news. He continued to publish *TCR* for three years, winning two consecutive annual Comic Art Fan Awards for Best Fanzine. His other fan activities include editing the program book for several of Phil Sculing's legendary New York Comic Art Conventions.

Levitz is primarily known for his work for DC Comics, a company he's been associated with for over thirty years. Beginning as a freelance writer of text features, he went on to write most of the classic DC characters, including Batman, Wonder Woman and Superman. His most popular writing was his thirteen years on the Legion of Super-Heroes, including an eight-year uninterrupted run, one of the longest in super-hero comics history, and on Justice Society of America.

Levitz joined the editorial staff of DC in 1973 as an assistant editor, and became editor of the Batman titles before shifting from the editorial to business side in 1980. Since then, he has been the manager of business affairs, vice-president operations, executive vice president, and, since 2002, the president and publisher.

He lives with his wife and three children in the hills of Westchester County, New York.

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What an absolutely marvelous book! It gives the lucky reader a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to relive the most exciting eras in comicdom.

— Stan Lee

# THE DC VAULT

**IN 1935**, popular culture was forever transformed when DC Comics published the first book of "all new, all original" comic material. To the delight of millions of readers everywhere, the modern comic book was born, and from its pages came leaping an exhilarating cast of characters.

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**MARTIN PASKO** is a veteran writer and editor for an array of media including comics, nonfiction, and live and animated television. His work in comics has been most closely associated with DC, and he has helped translate many comic book properties to the small screen, including *Batman: The Animated Series*, for which he won a 1993 Daytime Emmy Award.

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