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ROY THOMAS went from being a high school teacher to being Stan Lee's assistant editor and a script-writer for Marvel Comics in 1965. He served as a writer, editor, then editor in chief at Marvel until 1980. Having co-written two films, contributed to a number of books, and co-authored one with Stan Lee, Roy truly is an expert on all things Marvel.

PETER SANDERSON is a comics guru in his own right, penning books, journal articles, and criticism, teaching courses at New York University, and producing documentaries on comics. Peter joined the Marvel Comics staff as an assistant editor, later becoming Marvel's first archivist.

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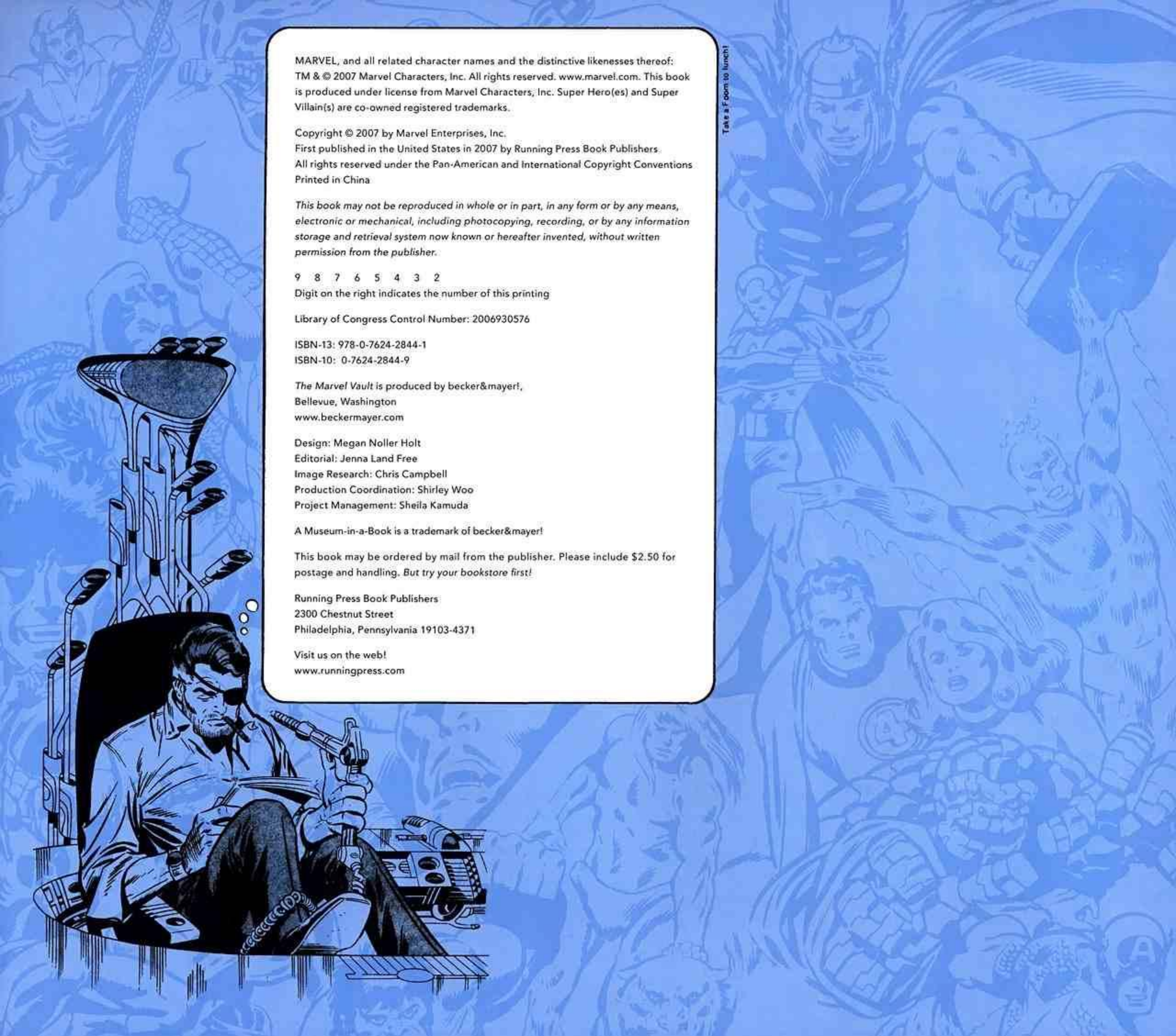

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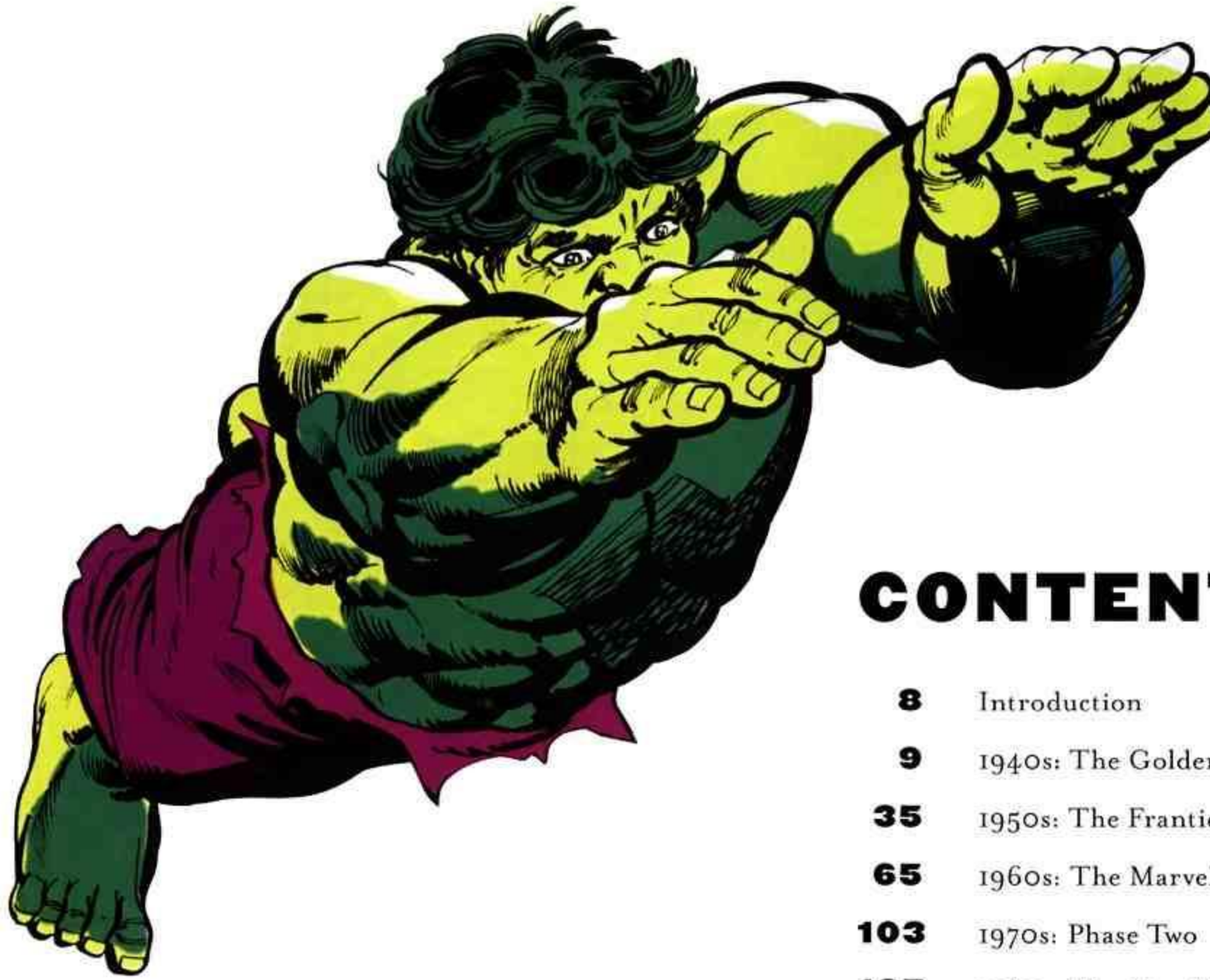

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INTRODUCTION

SUMMER, 1939.

That's when *The Wizard of Oz* premiered, when World War II began in Europe, when the New York Yankees celebrated Lou Gehrig Day. It was also when the first Marvel comic book—titled, aptly enough, *Marvel Comics* #1—hit the nation's newsstands.

As you'll find on the pages that follow, that four-color extravaganza starred the Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner, two unique super heroes who are still thrilling readers nearly seven decades later. Of course, over the years, they've changed as their readers have changed . . . as their creative teams have changed . . . as the *world* has changed.

Most notably, nowadays Torch and Subby have a lot of company.

At one time in the 1990s, Marvel editor Mark Gruenwald made up a list of all the heroes and villains that had appeared in the company's stories, partly to encourage writers and artists to use already existing characters whenever possible rather than make up new ones. "Please think long and hard," Mark admonished, "before you add to this multitude." His list went on for dozens of pages, hundreds of names. *Hundreds.*

In the long run, Marvel's characters, like its story lines, continued to proliferate, as it's in the nature of writers and artists—in their deep, dark DNA somewhere—to create new characters, not just endlessly recycle old ones.

Even so, over the decades, certain heroes and villains (also certain artists, writers, editors, colorists, and letterers) stand out from the herd. They are the ones who are remembered with fondness and even awe, twenty, forty, even seventy years after they burst full grown like Athena from the brain of some talented guy or gal with a typewriter, a pencil, an ink brush . . . or a PC.

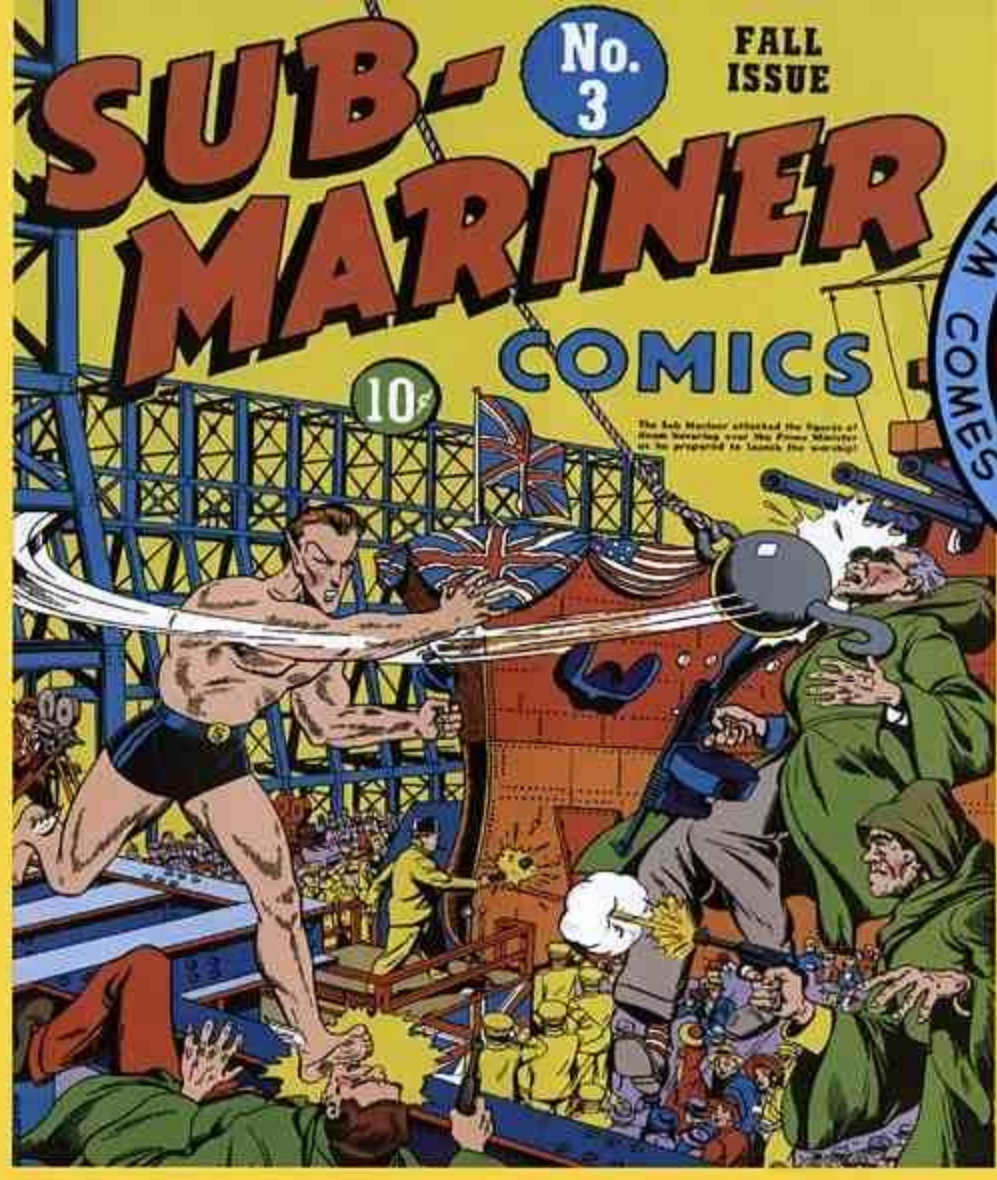
Captain America, the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, the Incredible Hulk, the X-Men, Wolverine...

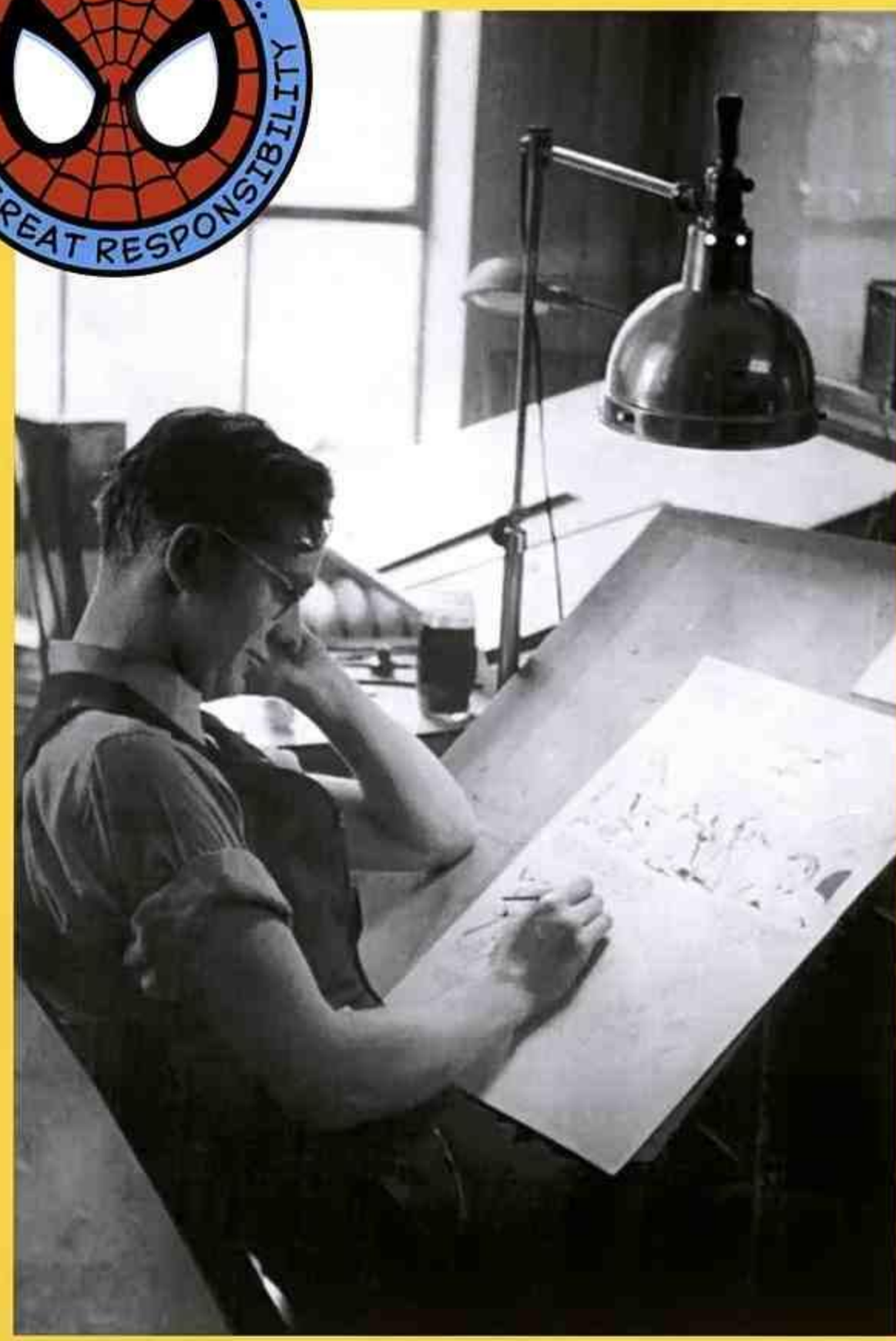
Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, John Romita, John Buscema, Joe Simon, Frank Miller...

This book is about *all* of the above and many more besides.

It's a book of memorabilia, in the broadest possible definition of that word. Memorabilia can be a published comic book, a computer printout, a type-filled sheet of paper, a scribbled sketch tossed away when a larger finished

(Left) Wolverine charges. (Opposite page) Bill Everett, circa 1940, an early artist for the company that would turn out titles like *Sub-Mariner* (issue #3 pictured), *Spider-Man*, and *X-Men*.





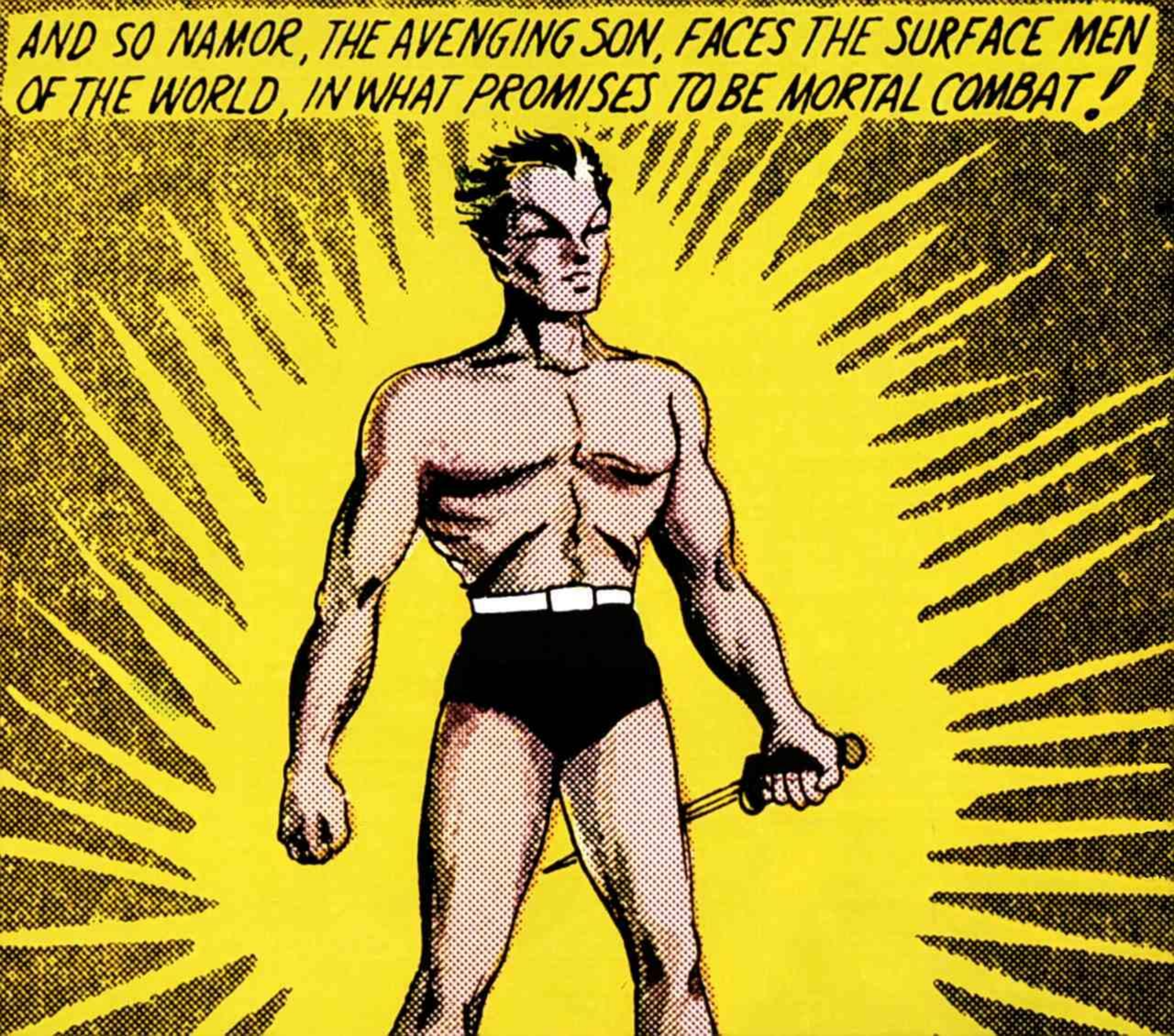
drawing is done, only to be retrieved from the wastebasket (and not always by the person who tossed it there).

Memorabilia can include a program book for a comics convention, or collectible hero stamps; an invitation to Peter Parker's wedding to Mary Jane, or a stock certificate from the time Marvel went public; a letter printed on Marvel stationery, or scrawled on the back of a photocopy; a membership certificate for the Merry Marvel Marching Society, or a holiday card featuring the Thing. It might be a black-and-white photocopy of the Human Torch fighting the Sub-Mariner in 1940, signed in the 1970s by the artists/creators of both heroes.

It can be anything that records the history of Marvel Comics (or Timely, as it was initially called), from 1939 to the present, and shows why and how things turned out the way they did, instead of some other way—which might have been better, or worse, or pretty much the same.

And it's all here, when you apply the strength of Ben Grimm or Thor or Ol' Greenskin and pry open—

—the Marvel Vault.


AND SO NAMOR, THE AVENGING SON, FACES THE SURFACE MEN OF THE WORLD, IN WHAT PROMISES TO BE MORTAL COMBAT!

THE GOLDEN AGE

1940s

THE DRAMATIC DEBUT OF SUPERMAN IN *ACTION COMICS* #1 IN THE spring of 1938 may have started the super hero revolution in comic books. But less than a year and a half later, *Marvel Comics* #1 ratcheted up that revolution to the next level—with a vengeance!

From the thirteen tabloid-sized issues of Dell Publishing Company's *The Funnies* in 1929, through the publication of the first modern "comic book" (*Funnies on Parade*) in 1933, and for a few years afterward, comic magazines were content simply to reprint newspaper comic strips like *Tarzan*, *Flash Gordon*, or *Dick Tracy*. When all the major strips had been licensed by rival comic book companies, anxious publishers purchased new comic book stories written and drawn to *look* like Sunday newspaper strips, complete with introductory panels that sported imitative title logos and captions that often began "The Story So Far."

(Opposite page) Prince Namor in golden glory, from *Marvel Comics* #1 (1939). (Left) Captain America and pal Bucky introduce themselves in *Captain America Comics* #1 (1941).

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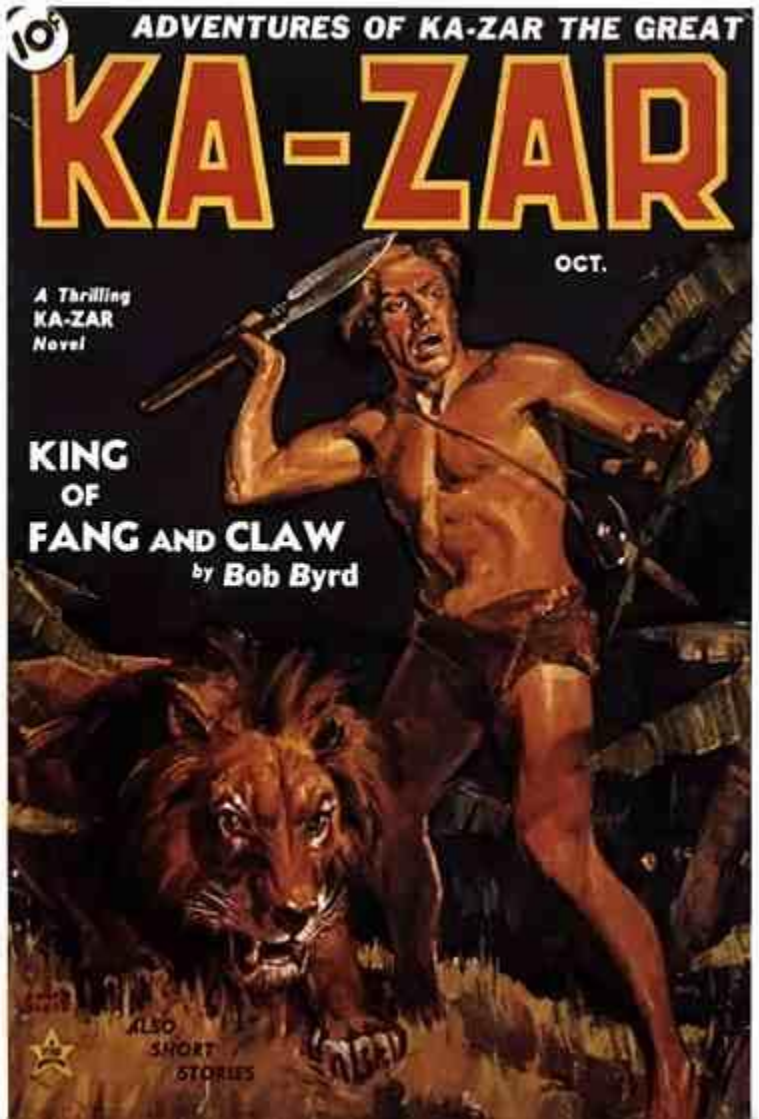
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NEOPLASTIC — FE
NEWSCAST
by
HARL VINCENT

Then along came the Man of Tomorrow. Superman started his publication life not in the daily newspaper but in a mostly in-color, ten-cent, words-and-pictures magazine clearly aimed at the younger set. No publisher could buy the rights to another hero *like* him, because in 1938 there *wasn't* any other character like Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's Superman. No other comic book or newspaper protagonist had superhuman powers. No other existing character looked or acted even *remotely* like Superman.

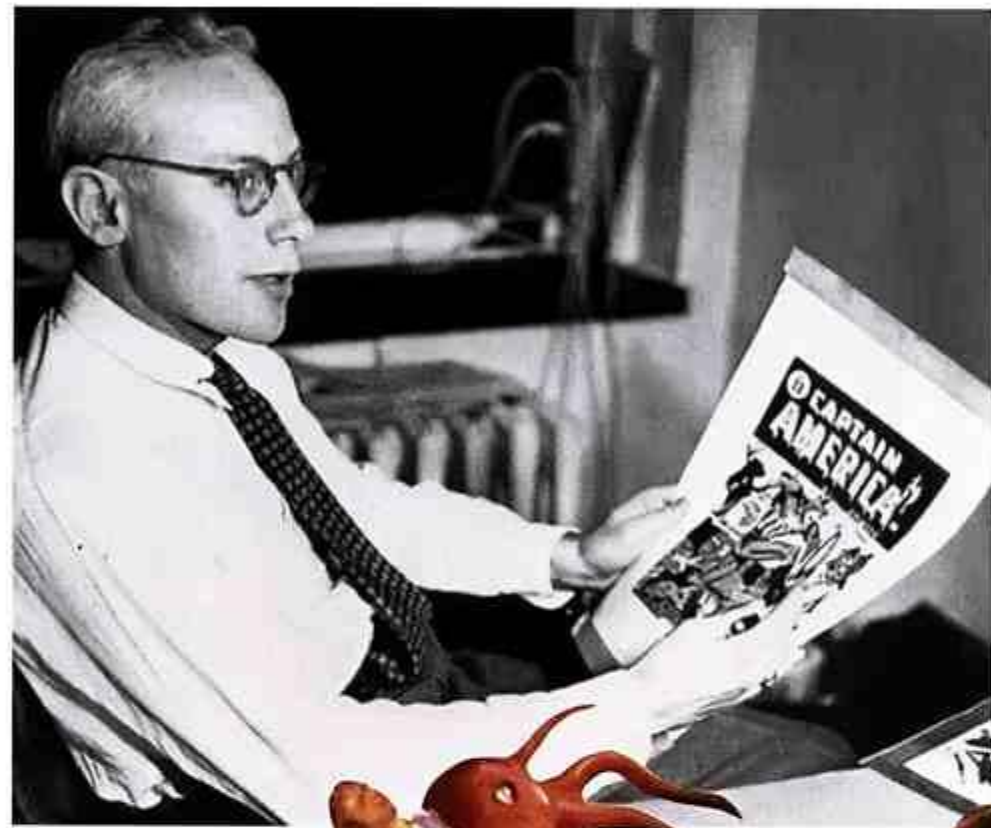
But soon they would. Several of the earliest comic book super heroes were so close to Superman in both appearance and extraordinary powers that his publisher, National/DC, sued the publishers of Wonder Man, Master Man, and the biggest cheese of all, Captain Marvel, for copyright infringement. But that wasn't the only obstacle facing these knockoffs. Why should a kid plunk down his dime for a cookie-cutter copy when the real deal was on display in *Action Comics* and, by mid-1939, in an entire comic devoted entirely to Superman himself? As cartoonist and satirist Jules Feiffer has said of this time, "It was no longer enough to be merely super; one needed a specialty."

Something *different* was called for. And necessity, like always, was the mother of invention.

A GUY NAMED GOODMAN

Martin Goodman had been publishing pulp magazines since 1932. These ten-cent periodicals, printed on rough-edged "pulp" paper, contained prose tales of cowboys or jungle lords or detectives or spacemen, with at most a few black-and-white illustrations per story. Two of Goodman's early pulp titles were *Ka-Zar* (a Tarzan-wannabe who ruled lions instead of apes) and *Marvel Science Stories*, with its lurid space-opera approach to science fiction.

By the late 1930s, though, the popularity of the pulps was fading. Enter Frank Torpey, the sales manager for Funnies, Inc., an early "comic shop" owned by one Lloyd Jacquet. Comic shops (a.k.a. studios) turned out the contents of entire issues of comic books, all scripted and drawn, for publishers who wanted to get into the game without having to hire an in-house staff of artists, writers, and editors. Torpey's job was to drum up business for Funnies, Inc. by convincing publishers to add a comic book or two to their magazine lineup. And one of the first publishers he convinced to do so was Martin Goodman.



(Opposite page) Goodman's early pulp magazine covers. The *Marvel Science Stories* issue marked the first time "Marvel" was used in a title. (This page) The dynasty's king—publisher Martin Goodman.

Once Jacquet's shop had the assignment—to produce enough pages to fill a sixty-four-page comic book, undoubtedly with orders that at least one feature should star a super hero—the job was turned over to the studio's writers and artists.

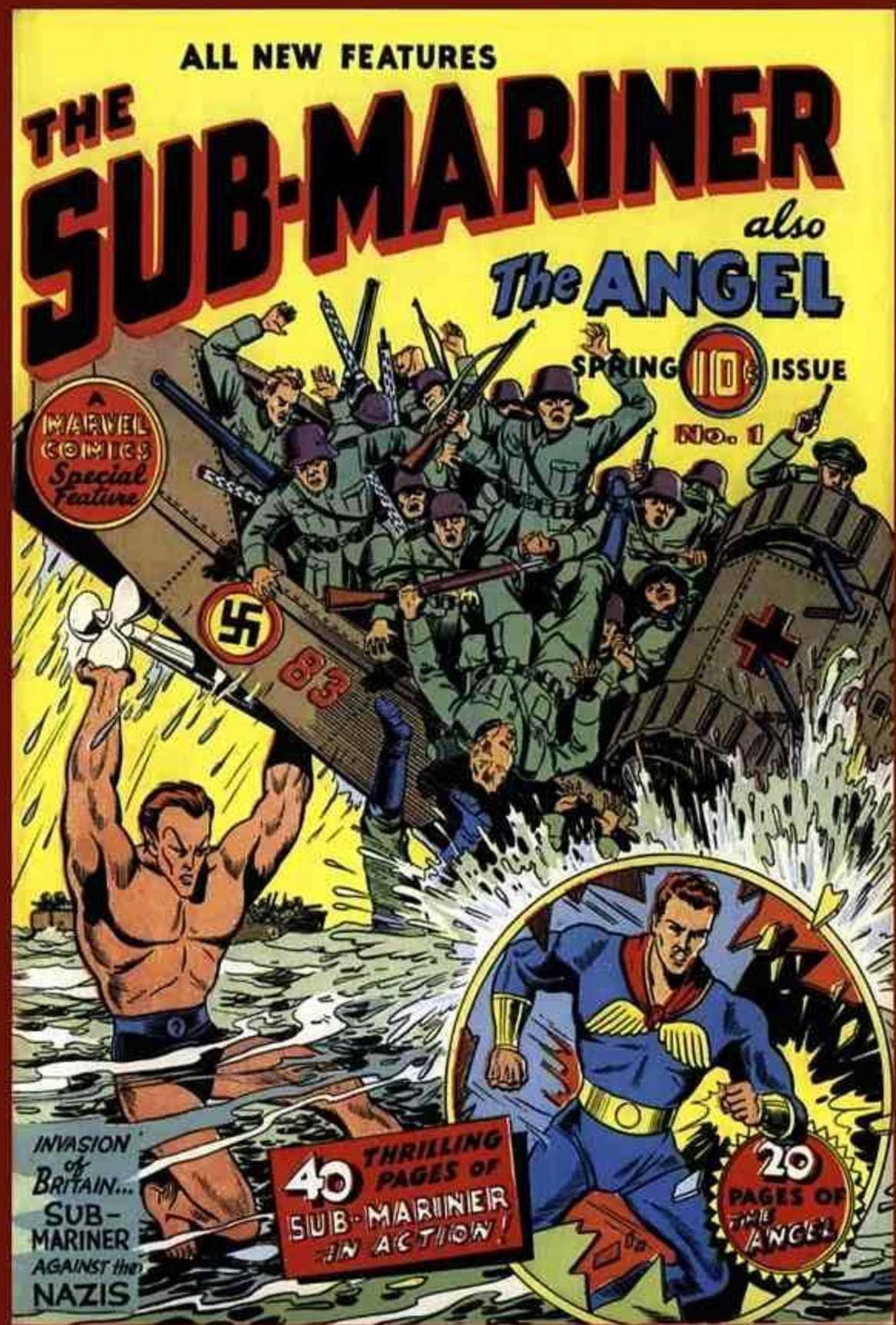
The result was *Marvel Comics* #1, which had a cover date of October 1939 and went on sale in late summer. Comic books were usually dated two or three months ahead, in hopes on the publishers' part that newsstands might leave them on sale through the month noted on the cover. It must have worked, because they've been doing it ever since. Few people paid much attention to that first issue's Masked Raider, or to the two jungle stories therein, all of which were uninspired renditions of established genres. A few readers *may* have taken note of the Angel, who had no special powers but sported a nifty blue-and-red costume as well as a Mandrake the Magician-style mustache.

But kids went *ape* over two other characters in *Marvel Comics* #1: the Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner!

FIRE VERSUS WATER

The Human Torch, the creation of artist/writer Carl Burgos, was built in a scientist's lab. He was an android but endowed with the emotions and intelligence of a human. The robot's creator, Professor Horton, had made a mistake in his calculations: Whenever his synthetic man was exposed to oxygen, he burst into flame! Horton kept him in a giant test tube while he tried to figure out how to make money with his invention. But since the Torch had a

(This page) *Marvel Comics* #1, with Carl Burgos's byline—and later an autograph—on "The Human Torch"'s opening page. (Opposite page) An early *Sub-Mariner* cover (left) and the splash page for his first battle against the Torch in *Marvel Mystery Comics* #8 (1940). The splash page was autographed by Carl Burgos and Bill Everett.


ALL NEW FEATURES
THE SUB-MARINER
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A MARVEL COMICS Special Feature
INVASION of BRITAIN... SUB-MARINER AGAINST the NAZIS
40 THRILLING PAGES OF SUB-MARINER IN ACTION!
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MARVEL COMICS Presents
THE HUMAN TORCH
VERSUS
THE SUB-MARINER
IN
THE BATTLE OF THE COMIC CENTURY!
22 PAGES OF
SIZZLING BLAZING ACTION!
START NOW ON THE NEXT PAGE

WITH THE SPEED OF AN ARROW, NAMOR'S WINGED FEET SHOOT THEM STRAIGHT FOR THE PLANE!

mind and will of his own, he soon burned his way free and went on a rampage. Inevitably, he wound up killing a criminal who tried to exploit him, thus launching his career as a super hero.

While the Torch was all machine, Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner, created by artist/writer Bill Everett, was at least *half* human, the pointy-eared offspring of an Antarctic explorer and a blonde princess from a fishlike race living beneath the South Polar ice cap. Namor's mom had brought him up to hate all surface dwellers, and indeed he killed the first two humans he met (though, to be fair, it was only because their deep-sea diving gear made him think they were robots). Since Namor had "the strength of a thousand Earth-men," his loving mother sent him north to lay waste "the land of the white people." The Sub-Mariner's career was under way—but would he turn out to be a hero or a villain?

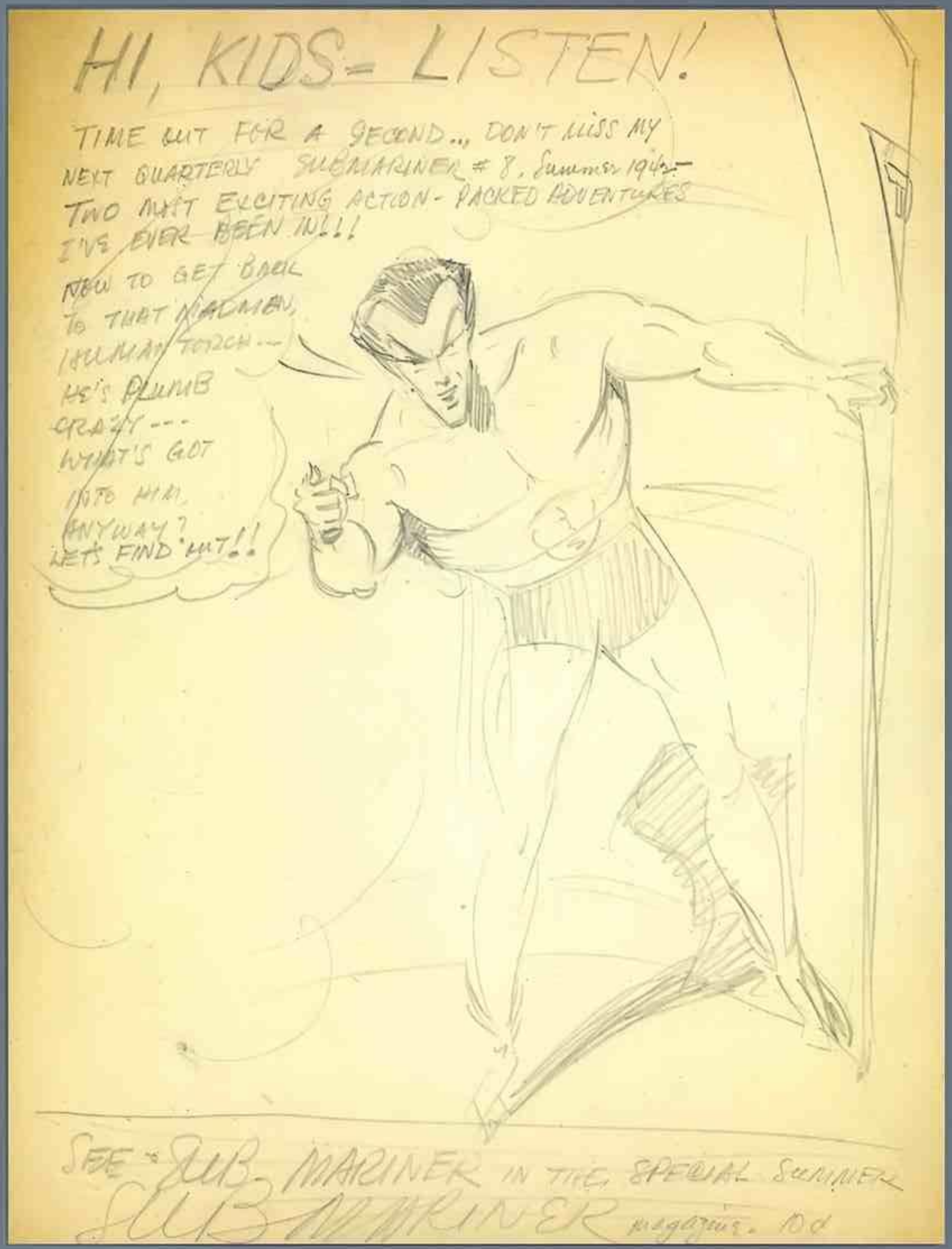
Setting fire to things by touching them! Hurling fireballs! Going to war against the whole human race! What kid couldn't relate to *that*?

Artist Bill Everett (above) and his autograph on the origin story of his brainchild—the Sub-Mariner.

HI, KIDS - LISTEN!

TIME OUT FOR A SECOND... DON'T MISS MY NEXT QUARTERLY SUBMARINER #8, Summer 1942 - TWO MOST EXCITING ACTION-PACKED ADVENTURES I'VE EVER BEEN IN!!

NOW TO GET BACK TO THAT MADMAN, HUMAN TORCH... HE'S DUMB CRAZY... WHAT'S GOT INTO HIM, ANYWAY? LET'S FIND OUT!!



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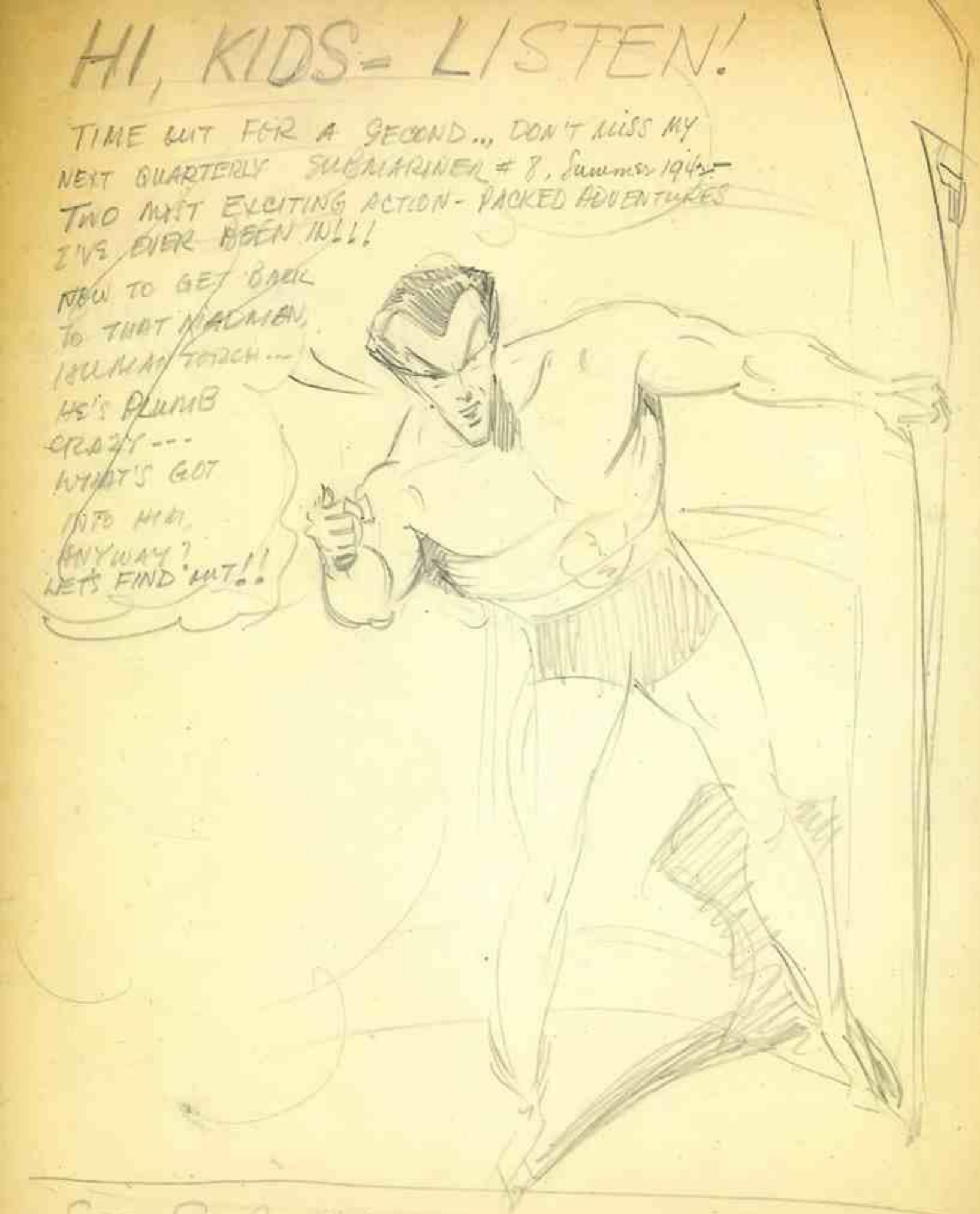
HI, KIDS— LISTEN!



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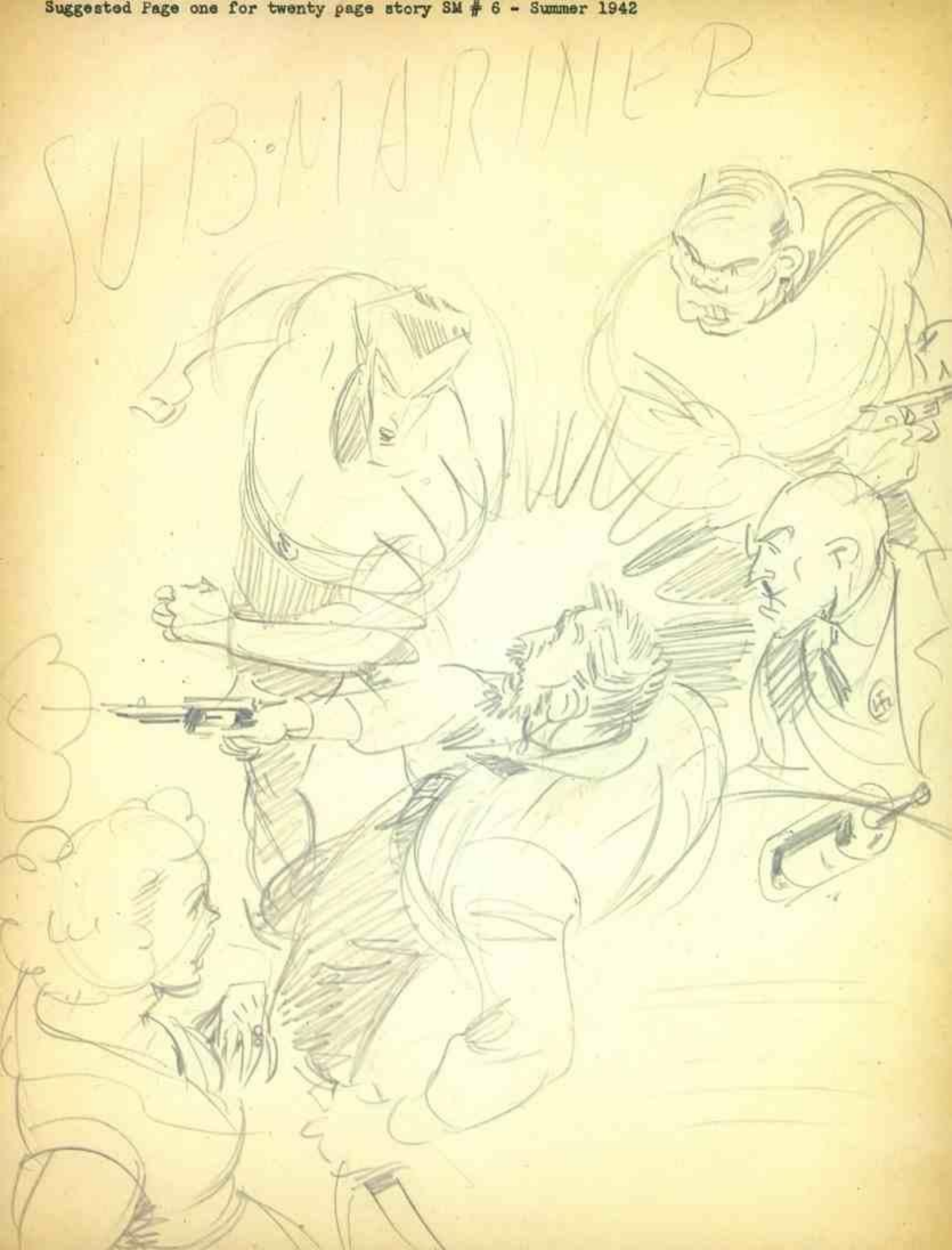

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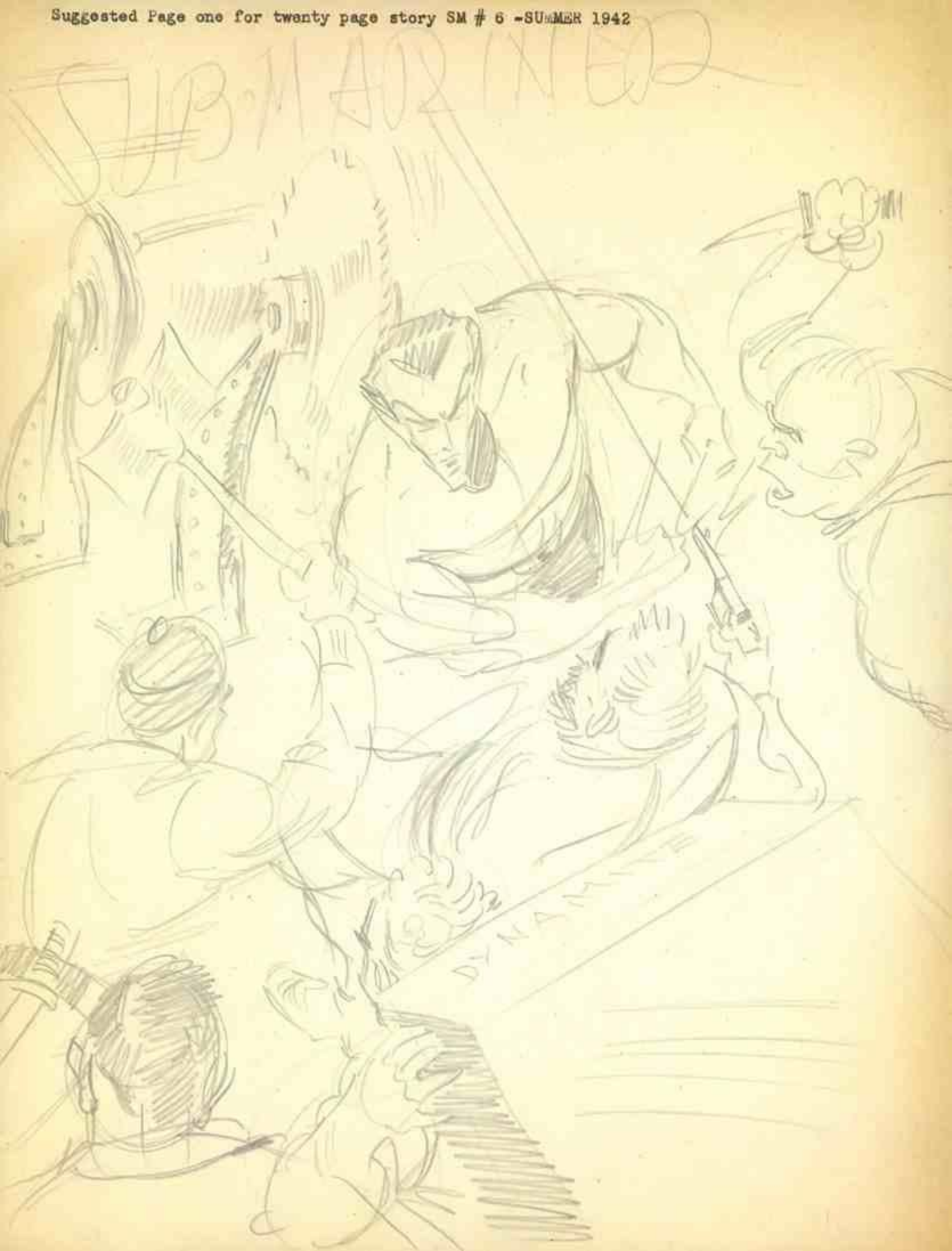
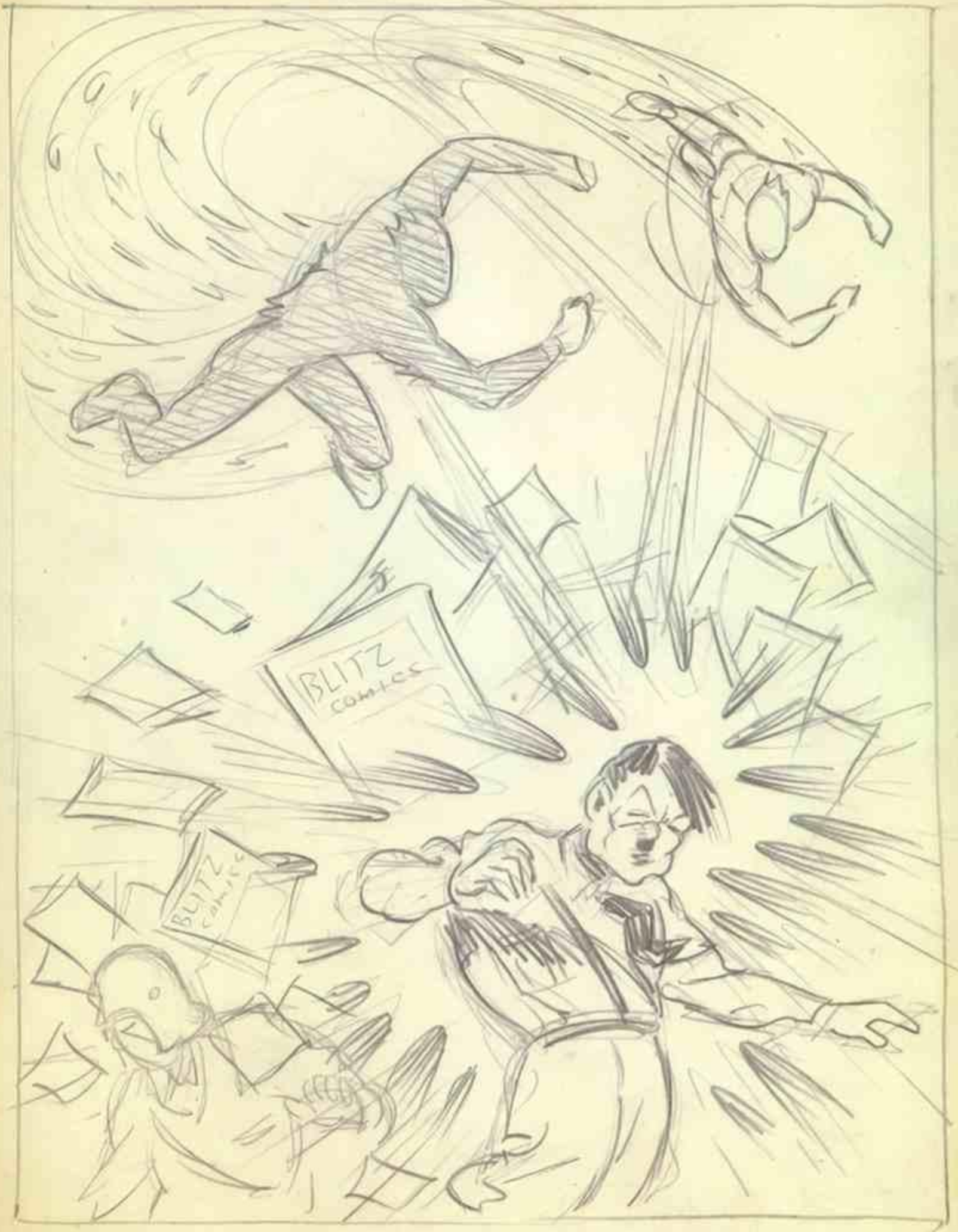
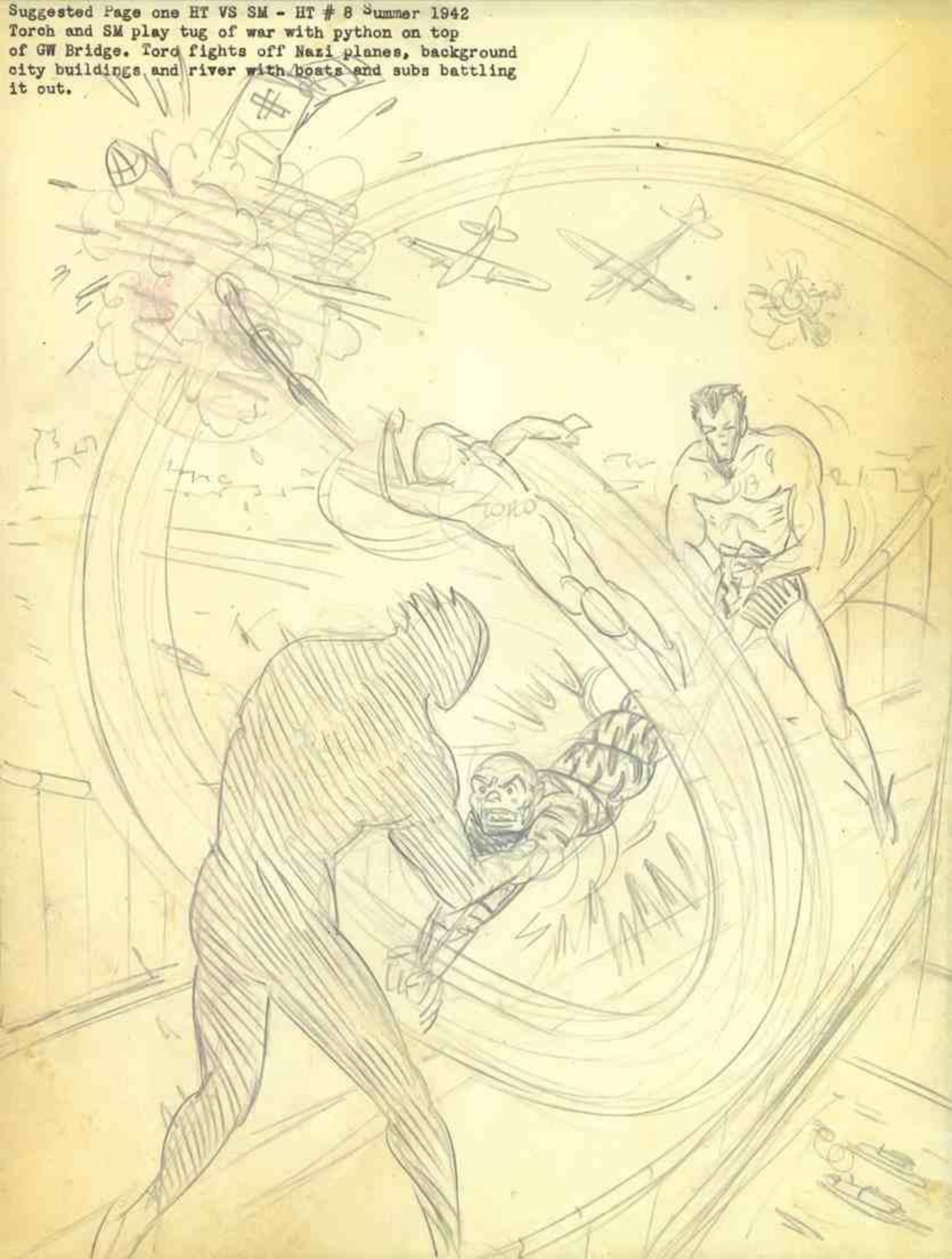



BLITZ
COMICS
BLITZ
COMICS

HUMAN TORCH
HA HA BLITZING TH' BLITZER! GIVE IT TO HIM! TORO!
BLITZ COMICS

Suggested Page one HT VS SM - HT # 8 Summer 1942
Torch and SM play tug of war with python on top of GW Bridge. Toro fights off Nazi planes, background city buildings and river with boats and subs battling it out.

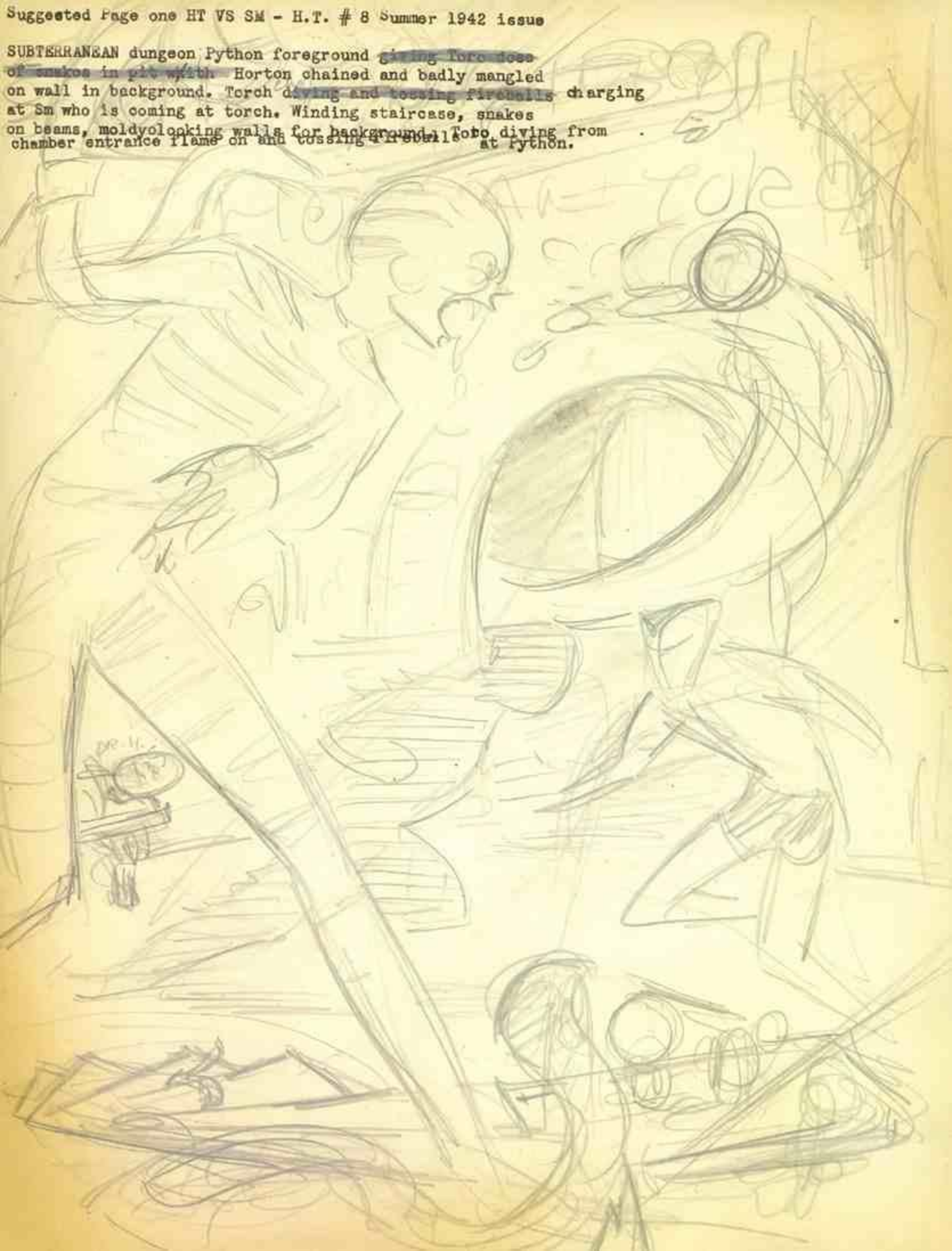


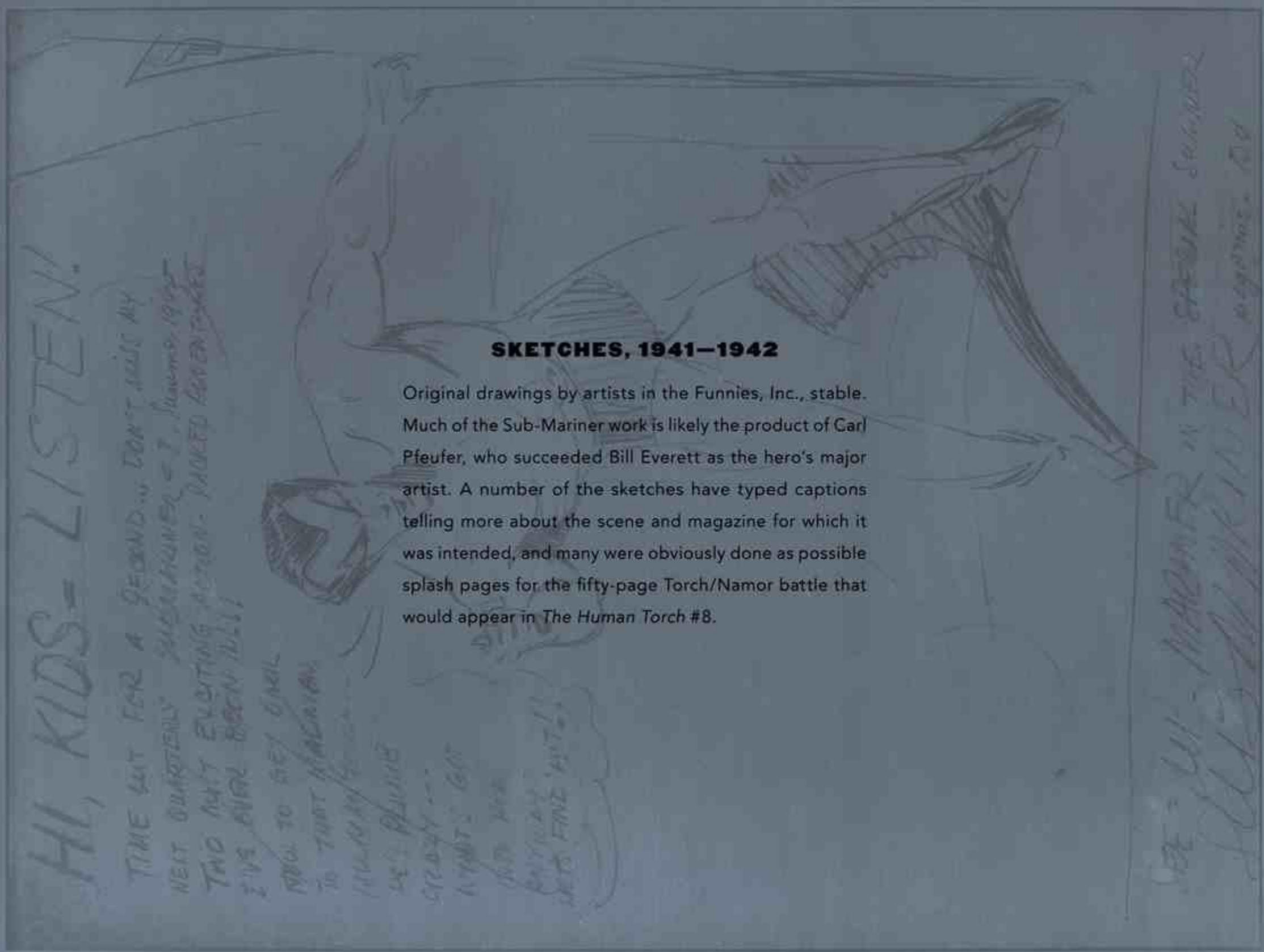
Suggested Page one for HT. VS SM HT - # 8 Summer 1942 issue

Huge Torch grabbing life size SM as Toro scurries up pier posts. City background.

Suggested Page one HT VS SM - H.T. # 8 Summer 1942 issue

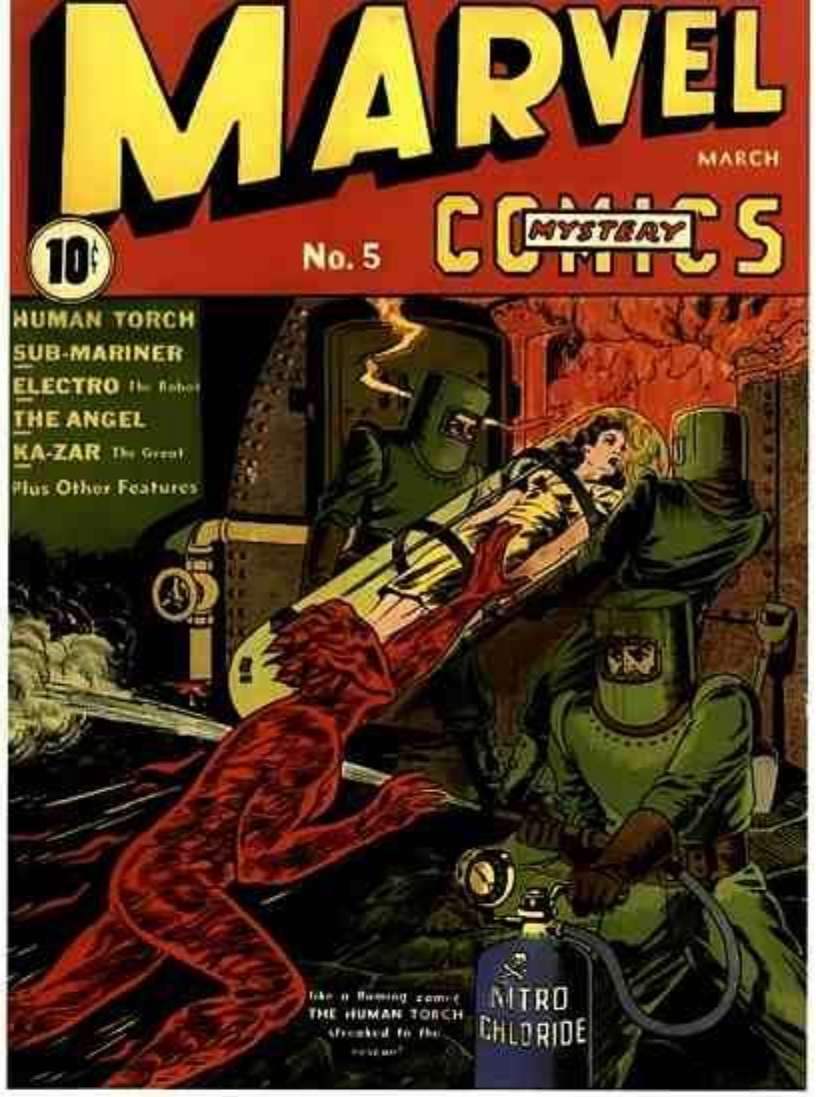
SUBTERRANEAN dungeon Python foreground ~~giving Toro dose of snakes in pit with~~ Horton chained and badly mangled on wall in background. Torch ~~diving and tossing fireballs~~ charging at Sm who is coming at torch. Winding staircase, snakes on beams, moldyolooking walls for background. Toro diving from chamber entrance flame on and tossing fireballs at Python.





SKETCHES, 1941—1942

Original drawings by artists in the Funnies, Inc., stable. Much of the Sub-Mariner work is likely the product of Carl Pfeufer, who succeeded Bill Everett as the hero's major artist. A number of the sketches have typed captions telling more about the scene and magazine for which it was intended, and many were obviously done as possible splash pages for the fifty-page Torch/Namor battle that would appear in *The Human Torch* #8.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HUMAN TORCH
SUB-MARINER
ELECTRO
THE ANGEL
KA-ZAR
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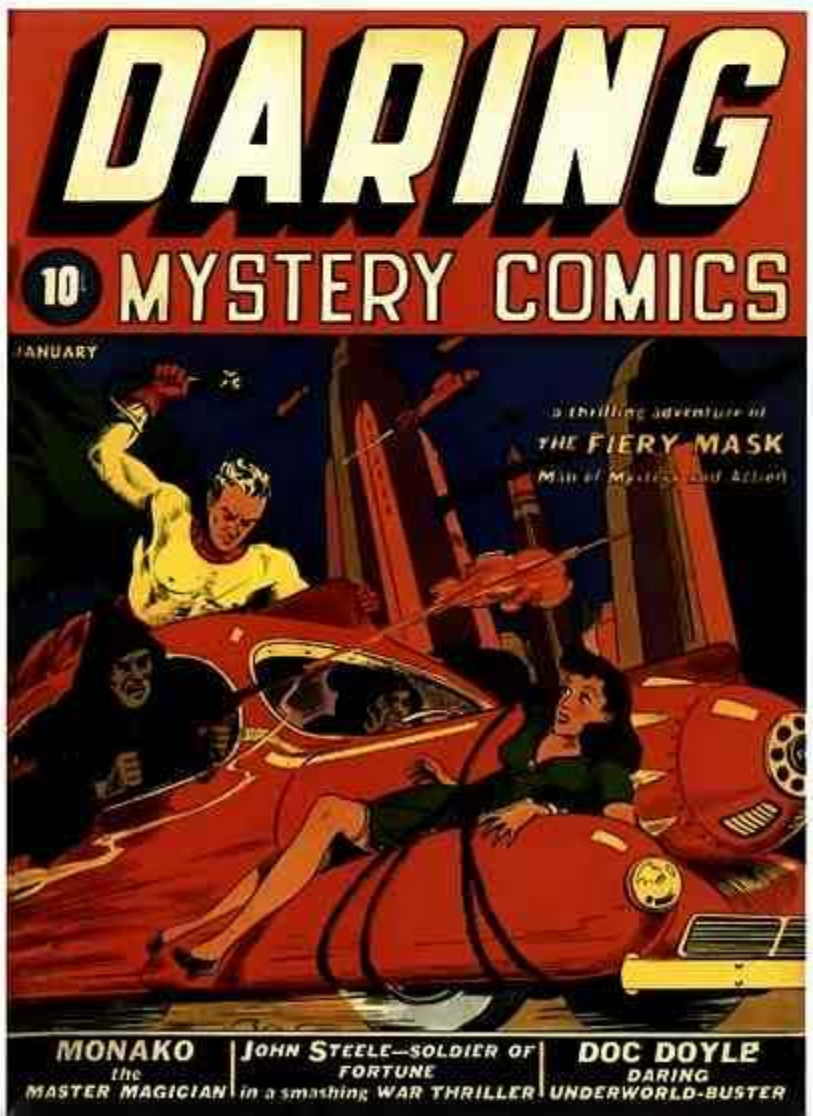
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MONAKO the MASTER MAGICIAN
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DOC DOYLE DARING UNDERWORLD-BUSTER

MARVEL COMICS Presents
A short-short picture story featuring the HUMAN TORCH
THINGS HAVE BEEN PRETTY QUIET. DO YOU THINK, CAPTAIN, THAT SUB-MARINER WILL KEEP HIS PROMISE AND NOT DISTURB THE PEACE AGAIN ?
I BELIEVE SO, TORCH. SUB-MARINER IS A MAN OF HIS WORD. I'M SURE HE WONT CAUSE ANY MORE TROUBLE.
TORCH, DON'T THINK FOR A MOMENT THAT OUR JOB IS COMPLETE. YOU UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE TO BE ON THE ALERT FOR 5TH COLUMN DISTURBANCES.
CAPTAIN, I HAVE A HUNCH THAT WE CAN DISSOLVE THESE TRAITOR ORGANIZATIONS IF WE ALL PULL TOGETHER.
YOU'RE RIGHT, TORCH. BUT WE MUST BE DOUBLY CAREFUL! YOU KNOW THESE RATS ARE PRETTY GOOD ACTORS AND COVER UP THEIR ACTIVITIES BY SMILES AND A PAT ON THE BACK WITH ONE HAND ---
---AND A GUN AND POISON IN THE OTHER!
LET'S INVESTIGATE THESE NEIGHBORHOOD CLUB ROOMS AND GET THE LEADERS' NAMES AND HISTORIES!
O.K., TORCH. YOU AND JERRY COVER THE PRECINCT TERRITORY!
WAIT! THERE'S THE RAID SIGNAL COMING FROM CAR 27. LET'S JOIN THEM IN THE RIOT CAR!
RIGHT! AND WE'D BETTER GET THERE FAST! THAT CALL IS FROM THE PRECINCT TERRITORY!
AS THE TORCH AND THE CAPTAIN REACH CAR 27 THEY ARE MET BY AN AMUSING SCENE.
GIVE ME A COPY OF MARVEL COMICS!!
YEAH!- MARVEL COMICS!
ME TOO!
CANDY
WELL I'LL BE - THAT, CAPTAIN IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHODS OF PREVENTING FUTURE 5TH COLUMNS AND UNDESIRABLE CITIZENS!
YES. THERE IS PLENTY OF GOOD, CLEAN READING, AND LOADS OF THRILLS IN EVERY ISSUE OF MARVEL COMICS! AND IT COSTS ONLY 10¢ — EVERYWHERE!!
27

And youngsters *bought Marvel Comics* #1, in more ways than one. Reportedly, the first printing had a run of 80,000 copies and quickly sold out. Goodman went back to press with a second printing (with a November cover date and a print run ten times as high). It, too, sold like hotcakes. His company, which would soon be known as Timely Comics, and eventually as Marvel Comics, was off and running.

With issue #2 (retitled *Marvel Mystery Comics*, for reasons unknown), the comic became a true monthly, with covers alternating between the Torch, the Angel, and Sub-Mariner. Almost immediately, a second title was added to the lineup: *Daring Mystery Comics*. But lightning didn't strike twice. *Daring*, each of whose first three issues featured an almost entirely different cast of heroes, was a resounding flop. A third title, *Mystic Comics*, didn't fare much better, lasting only ten issues between 1940 and 1942.

Still, with several titles coming out now, Goodman felt he needed someone in-house to ride herd over all the material coming in from Funnies, Inc., and other sources, so he hired a young writer/artist named

(Opposite page, right) A 1940 ad for "The Human Torch," which appeared in Goodman's pulps. (Both pages) Sadly, the also-ran Angel and *Daring Mystery Comics* couldn't hold a candle to the Torch's flame.

Joe Simon to be his editor. Simon, who had created a so-so hero called the Fiery Mask for *Daring Mystery* #1, brought along his new writer/artist partner, a fellow New Yorker named Jack Kirby. They'd been writing and illustrating a science-fictional super hero called Blue Bolt for a rival company, and Goodman liked what he saw.

However, neither Goodman, Simon, nor Kirby cared much for the team's first Timely comic book. *Red Raven Comics* headlined a human raised by bird-people, who could fly with artificial wings. Goodman was so displeased by Red Raven and the issue's other features that he didn't even wait for sales figures before entirely changing the mag's name and format for its second quarterly issue, dated Fall 1940. Taking his cue from the success of *Marvel Mystery*, Goodman renamed the mag after the early hero with the hot touch—*The Human Torch*.

From 1939 until he retired from comics publishing in the mid-1970s, Martin Goodman hewed to the practice of flooding the field with whatever type of comic book was currently popular. If one super hero book was good, ten should be ten times better, right? Still, with the failure of *Daring Mystery*, *Mystic*, and *Red Raven*, he must have realized that, rather than simply launch new hero after new hero to see which (if any) would survive, it made more sense to put out a magazine devoted to the Torch, who was already a proven hit. Each issue of the new *Torch* title contained two twenty-page stories of the blazing hero, plus one twenty-pager starring Sub-Mariner, just for good measure. Apparently, the publisher wasn't convinced that one hero was enough, even in

(This page) The legendary Joe Simon and the doomed *Red Raven* that was his first headliner effort for Goodman. (Opposite page) Nothing could touch the dynamic duo of Torch and Sub-Mariner . . . for the time being.

a mag named for him. Technically, even the Torch tales had two heroes now, for in the premier issue (labeled "#2"), the android gained a kid partner named Toro, who had flame powers identical to his own. (Don't ask how!)

By the spring of 1941, the Sub-Mariner, too, would acquire his own quarterly title, with the Angel as his backup feature. Martin Goodman always hedged his bets. But in the time between those two solo titles, a new super hero came along that took Timely, and the comics-reading world, by storm.

CAPTAIN AMERICA COMICS

MARCH No. 1

45 thrilling pages of CAPTAIN AMERICA SENTINEL OF OUR SHORES! PLUS OTHER GREAT FEATURES!

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TELEVISION

U.S. MUNITIONS WORKS

SMASHING THRU, CAPTAIN AMERICA CAME FACE TO FACE WITH HITLER . . .

U.S.A.

SABOTAGE PLANS FOR U.S.A.

also CAPTAIN AMERICA'S YOUNG ALLY, BUCKY

CAPTAIN AMERICA COMICS

APRIL 10¢

No. 2

45 SMASH PAGES of CAPTAIN AMERICA PLUS OTHER FEATURES

UNITED STATES

'TRAPPED in the NAZI STRONGHOLD!' Story on Page 17

URGENT! SENTINELS OF LIBERTY!

A VITAL MESSAGE from CAPTAIN AMERICA!

HELLO, KIDS! YOU'RE IN THIS WAR EVEN THOUGH YOU DON'T CARRY A GUN, RIDE A TANK, A JEEP, OR PILOT A PLANE! YOU CAN DO YOUR PART IN WINNING THIS WAR BY **JOINING THE WASTE PAPER DRIVE!** GATHER THE KIDS IN YOUR BLOCK... MAKE A HOUSE-TO-HOUSE CANVASS FOR PAPER... ANY OLD PAPER, MAGAZINES, BOXES, STORE BAGS, ENVELOPES, NEWSPAPERS, CORRUGATED PAPER! **PAPER IS A WEAPON OF WAR! A MIGHTY WEAPON!** EVERY GUN, BULLET... EVERY PIECE OF AMMUNITION USED TO SMASH THE UNHOLY JAPS AND NAZIS IS SHIPPED IN PAPER CONTAINERS! U.S. ARMY FIELD RATION "K" IS PACKED IN FOLDING CARTONS! AND MANY MANY OTHER THINGS, TOO! TO MAKE **NEW** PAPER WE MUST HAVE THE **OLD!** TO DAY PAPER IS NEEDED MORE THAN EVER! WAR CAUSES SHORTAGES... THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF PAPER... TO AN ALARMING DEGREE! SO... GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR NEAREST LOCAL SALVAGE COMMITTEE, AND ASK THEM HOW YOU AND YOUR CHUMS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE WAR EFFORT...

DO IT NOW ··· THIS MINUTE!

BUCKY SHOWS YOU HOW TO PACK THIS PRECIOUS PAPER BEFORE TURNING IT OVER TO THE SALVAGE COMMITTEE!

THANKS, KIDS!

HOW TO SAVE YOUR PAPER FOR EASY HANDLING!

NEWSPAPERS... FOLD THEM FLAT AND TIE THEM IN BUNDLES ABOUT 12 INCHES HIGH!

MAGAZINES... TIE THEM IN BUNDLES ABOUT 18 INCHES HIGH!

CARDBOARD BOXES AND CARTONS... FLATTEN THEM OUT AND TIE THEM IN BUNDLES ABOUT 12 INCHES HIGH!

WASTE BASKET PAPER, WRAPPERS, ENVELOPES, ETC. PACK DOWN IN A BOX OR BAG SO THAT IT CAN BE CARRIED!

A TRUE AMERICAN HERO

Captain America Comics #1 went on sale around the end of 1940, with a March 1941 cover date. Its cover showed the red-, white-, and blue-clad, shield-carrying hero slugging Nazi *führer* Adolf Hitler right in the schnozz. Cap was the creation of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, and he was originally a ninety-pound weakling, until he drank a potion concocted by a Professor Reinstein and turned into an athletic super soldier. He couldn't fly and he wasn't bulletproof, but if they'd had the Olympics during the World War II years, he'd have won gold medals in every sport—probably including synchronized swimming. In his origin story, Cap picked up a boy sidekick named Bucky. Otherwise, Simon told Goodman, he'd have been talking to himself all the time.

Captain America Comics quickly became Timely's best-selling title, and it stayed at the very top all through the war. Simon and Kirby stuck around long enough to churn out the first ten monthly issues before getting into a dispute with Goodman over profit sharing, packing up their pens, and hotfooting it over to industry leader National/DC. Martin Goodman didn't exactly launch a worldwide hunt for a new editor. Instead, he turned to an eighteen-year-old staffer named Stanley Lieber, who'd been writing stories under the pen name "Stan Lee." Stan was a cousin of

(Opposite page) Cap's first two covers, and his attempts to help the war effort by showing kids how to save paper. (This page) Scenes from Cap's origin story, wherein he is transformed by the potion that personal trainers the world over would kill to reproduce.

Miss AMERICA COMICS

NO. 1

10¢

Goodman's, though only by marriage. The publisher asked him to take over as editor "until I find someone permanent." (Thirty years later, Stan was still Marvel's editor. "I guess it worked out," he's been known to say.)

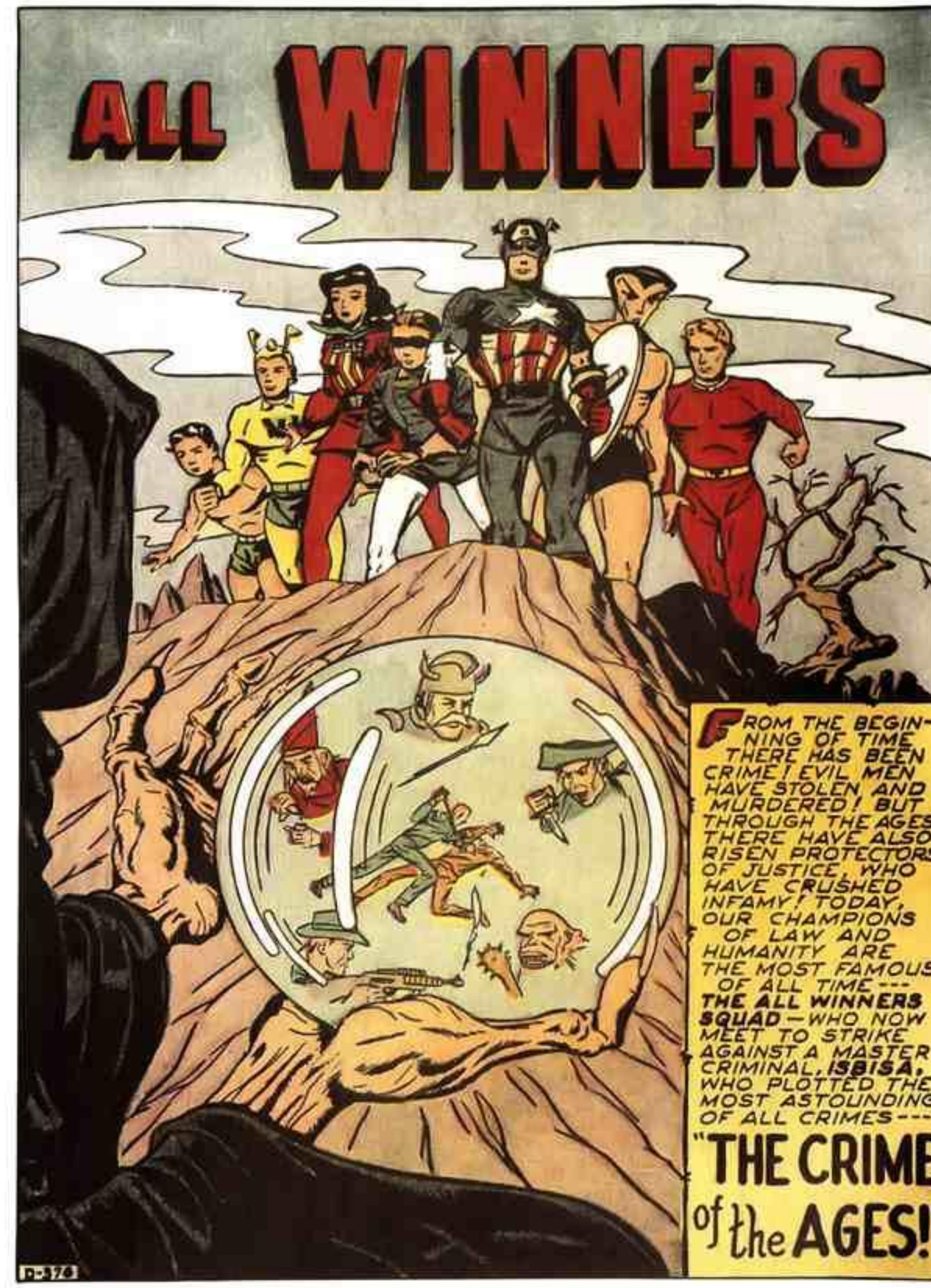
SUPER IS AS SUPER DOES

Timely developed a lineup of additional super heroes during the war years. Along with the company's "Big Three" of Cap, Torch, and Namor, a few of them stuck around for several years:

- ➡ The Destroyer, a brainchild of Stan Lee, drank a Captain America-style serum and also became a super athlete, except that he fought the Nazis inside the Third Reich itself, wearing a blue face mask and sporting a skull symbol on his chest.
- ➡ The Patriot was another red-, white-, and blue-garbed do-gooder, though he had to get along without a super potion.
- ➡ The Whizzer could outrun a car, if not a speeding bullet, having gained super speed when given a transfusion of mongoose blood. (We are not making this up.)
- ➡ The Vision was a green-skinned denizen of another dimension who would enter our world through smoke, sock a few bad guys, then return to his own world till next issue.
- ➡ Miss America could fly, even though she might not actually have won any beauty contests. In later stories, she took to wearing glasses while in costume, a switch on the usual Clark Kent shtik.

None of these heroes, however, ever approached Torch and Namor, let alone Cap, in popularity. So throughout the war—somehow managing to find sufficient paper despite government rationing—Goodman kept putting out new mags starring the same titanic trio. Captain America became the cover star of *USA Comics*—and he, Subby, and Torch were the joint headliners first of *All Winners Comics* and later also of *All Select Comics*. Even sidekicks Bucky and Toro led a gang of Axis-battling boys in *Young Allies*. After the war, in two 1946 issues of *All Winners*, the "Big Three" and the two kid sidekicks even teamed up with Miss America and the Whizzer in a super hero group called the "All Winners Squad."

By then, though, the bloom was pretty much off the super hero rose. And not just at Timely.



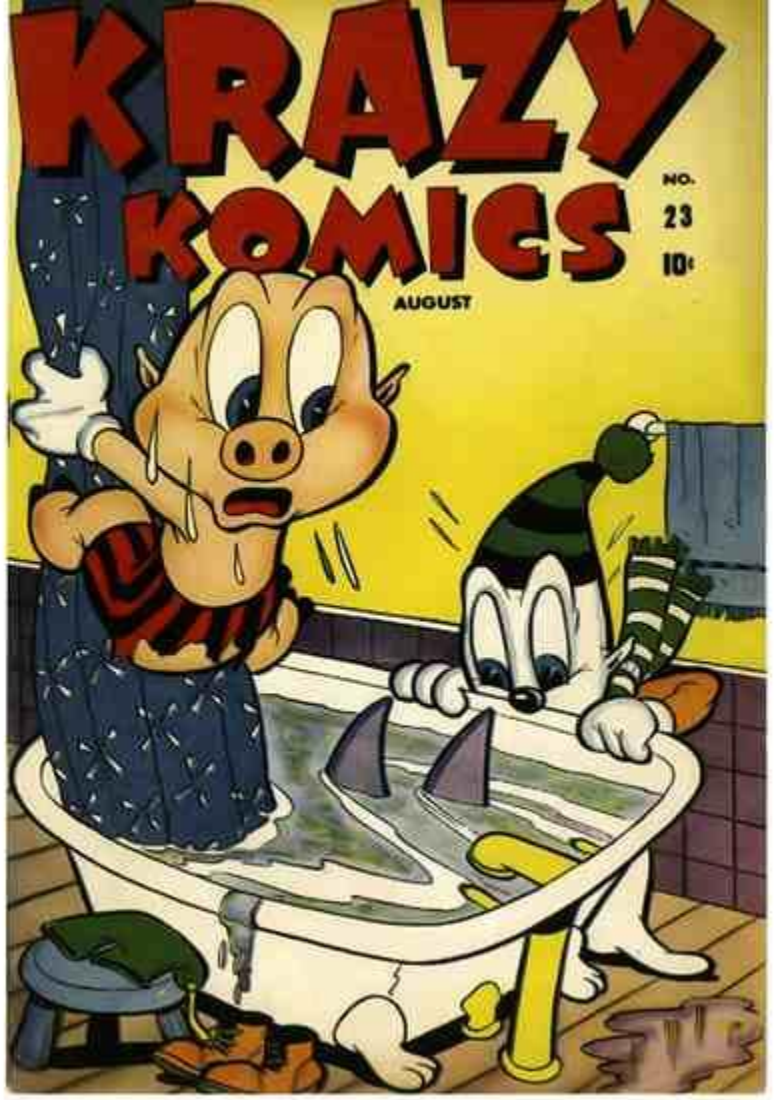
(Opposite page) Wartime diversions in the form of Miss America and the Vision. (This page) The short-lived All Winners Squad was Timely's first super hero group, a decade and a half before the Fantastic Four.

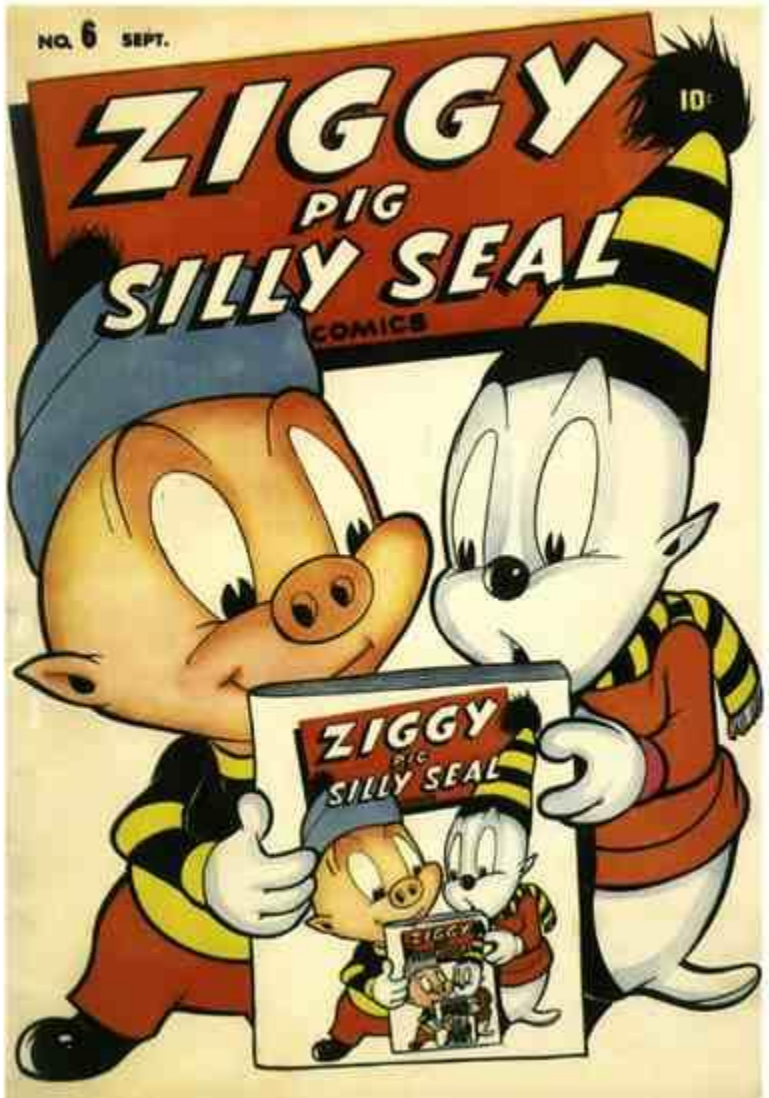
COMEDY COMICS

NO. 23

10¢

MAY





OF WAR AND FUNNY ANIMALS

How could a nation tire of super heroes?

Maybe it was because there had been so many costumed characters between 1940 and 1945 that even a nation full of hero-hungry kids became satiated. (What was left to see, after they'd read the adventures of hundreds of heroes with powers over fire and water and electricity and ice and stretching and growing and shrinking and what have you?)

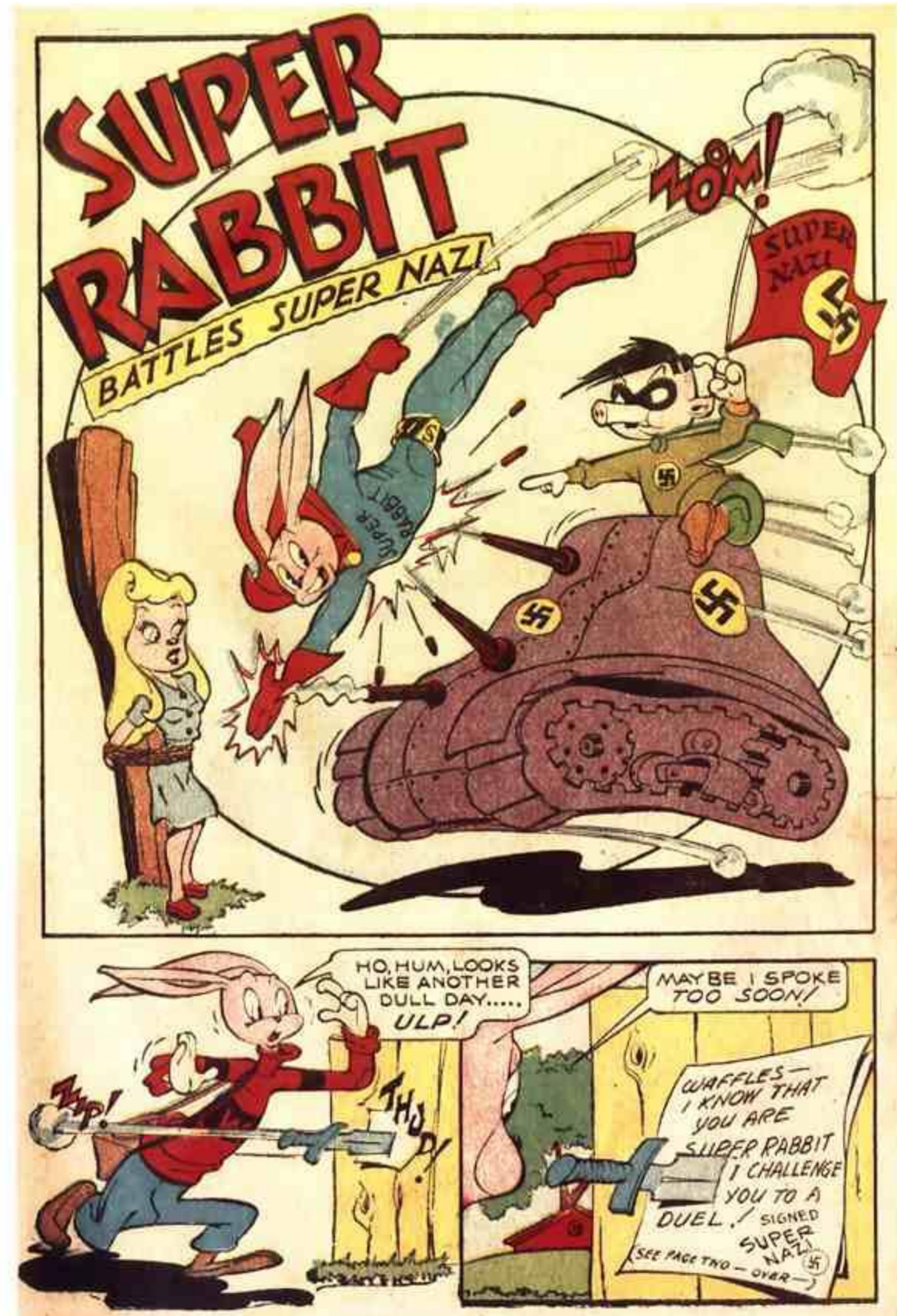
Or maybe it was because, during the war, the masked heroes could duke it out with the ultimate villains: the goose-stepping Nazis and the Japanese who had sneak-attacked Hawaii. The postwar crop of gangsters didn't seem to deserve being burned alive or drowned as much as the Axis bad boys had!

Or maybe it was simply because other types of comics had come along, and kids (and even the captive audience of servicemen) were always looking for something new.

The "funny-animal" craze was the first to challenge the primacy of the super heroes. In 1940, Dell Publishing had inaugurated *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories* with Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. When it proved a hit, Dell followed it with Warner Bros.' Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, and company in *Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies*, then added magazines starring Walter Lantz's Woody Woodpecker and MGM's Tom and Jerry.

To cash in on the popularity of movie cartoons, Timely soon bought the rights to Mighty Mouse and other Paul Terry–animated characters. *Terry-Toons Comics* #1 had an October 1942 cover date. The mag was published successfully by Timely until 1947, when another company took over the Terry-Toons license.

Perhaps it's only a coincidence that, when editor in chief Stan Lee was drafted early in 1942, his replacement was a funny-animal artist and writer



Stan Lee (pictured above during his army service) was in uniform during much of the time the silly-animal craze took center stage (examples on both pages).

Patsy Walker

named Vince Fago, who had the perfect résumé to support Timely's foray into humor comics. Still, Stan managed to script stories for Timely while also writing training films for the army. On the contents pages of many wartime comics, he was listed as "Pvt. Stan Lee, consulting editor."

Hoping to establish a few furry franchises of his own, Martin Goodman introduced *Krazy Komics* (cover-dated July 1942) to showcase original funny animals *not* based on movie cartoons. Comics researchers have determined that Timely's titles contained the very first funny-animal characters created especially for comic books, such as Ziggy Pig and Silly Seal.

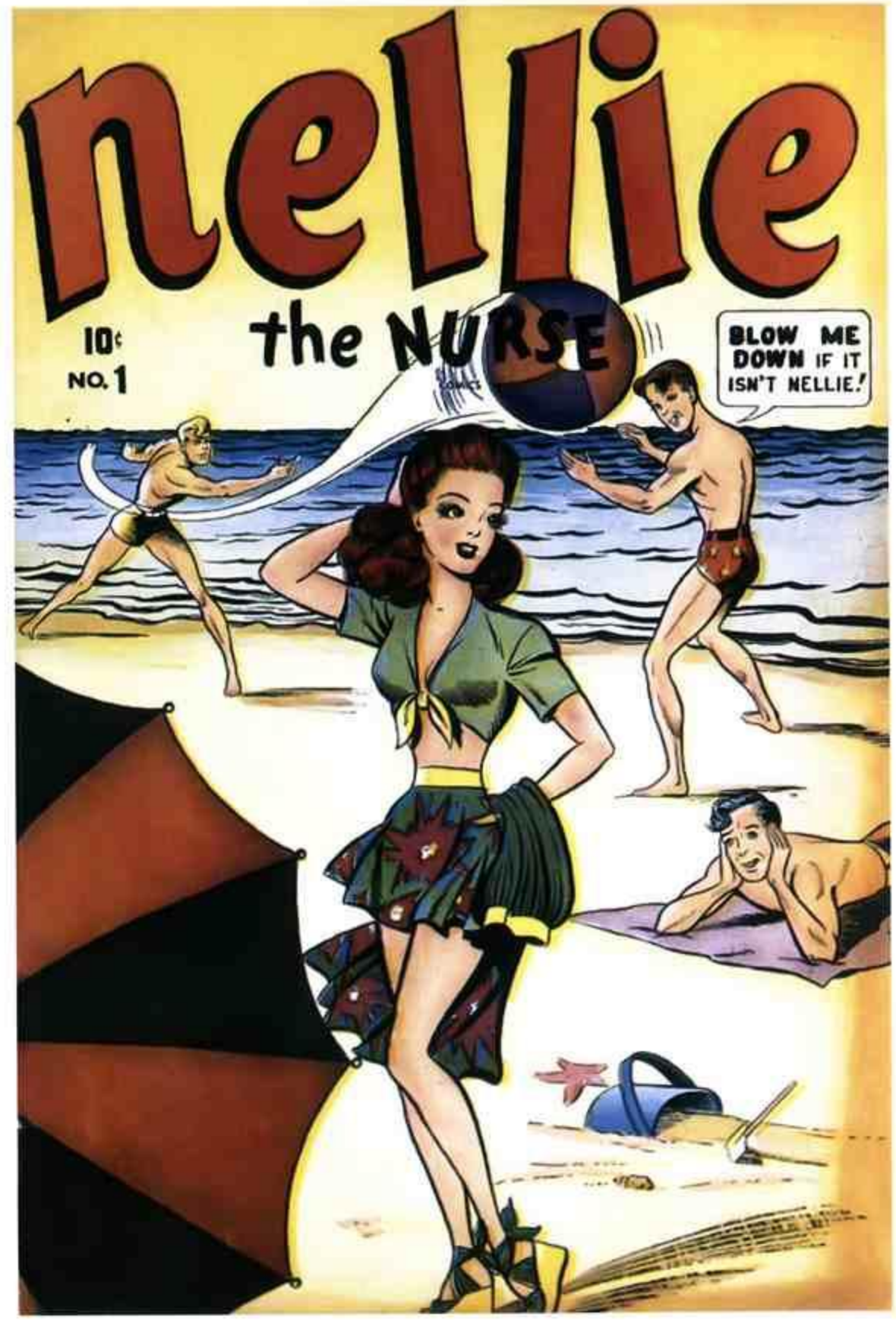
Timely also put out comics with titles designed to *sound* as if they featured movie-cartoon characters (such as *Animated Movie-Tunes*, *Silly Tunes*, and *Komic Kartoons*). In actuality, these comics starred homegrown creations like Super Rabbit and the aforementioned Ziggy Pig and Silly Seal. Although Dell's licensed funny-animal comics flourished, Timely never got much of a paw in the door with its original titles. Soon after the war, most of them were gone.

TEEN LOVE

In the midst of the funny-animal craze, another market was rising that Goodman (and the returning Stan Lee) hoped might take its place: teenagers. Timely was all over it.

The company's position at the head of the curve seemed to come about almost by sheer luck. Back in 1942, Timely had launched *Joker Comics*, a magazine that featured scatterbrained humans as an alternative to the rampant funny animals. Most likely, the inspiration for *Joker* was simply the popularity of comedy on radio and in movies—plus the disappointing sales of comics like *Daring Mystery* and *Mystic Comics*, which made Goodman cast about for non-super hero alternatives.

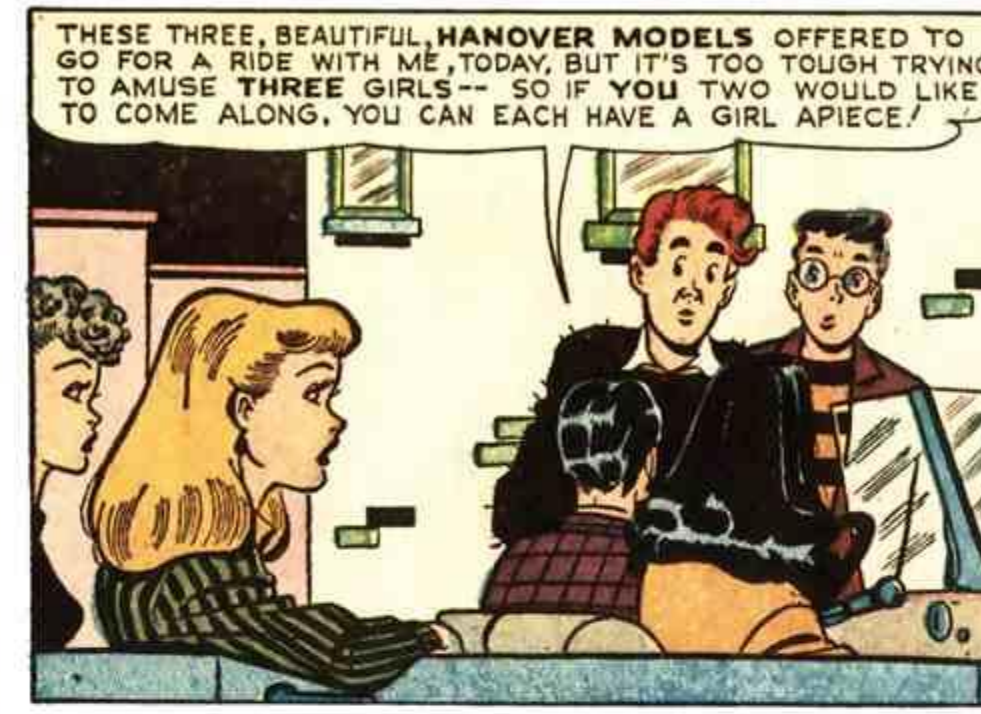
By the mid-1940s, a rival company's *Archie* and related mags had become solid hits. And despite the appeal of *Archie*'s male protagonist, Timely reentered the funny-human category not with a boy but with a teenage



girl—Patsy Walker, a high schooler whose humorous adventures revolved around teenage life. Patsy had started out as a backup feature in a comic book about the super heroine Miss America, but within two issues the bobby-soxers had taken over the magazine. Before long, young "career women" only slightly older than Patsy were starring in Timely mags with titles like *Millie the Model*, *Tessie the Typist*, and *Nellie the Nurse*. Since it's unlikely that many boys were buying these comics, it would seem Goodman and Lee had tapped into a new group that had begun to buy the *Archie* comics: young girls!

Boy fans weren't forgotten, however. During the postwar era, Timely also introduced comics about teenage males with names like *Georgie* and

Timely goes teenage with Patsy and Tessie (opposite), Millie and Nellie (above).

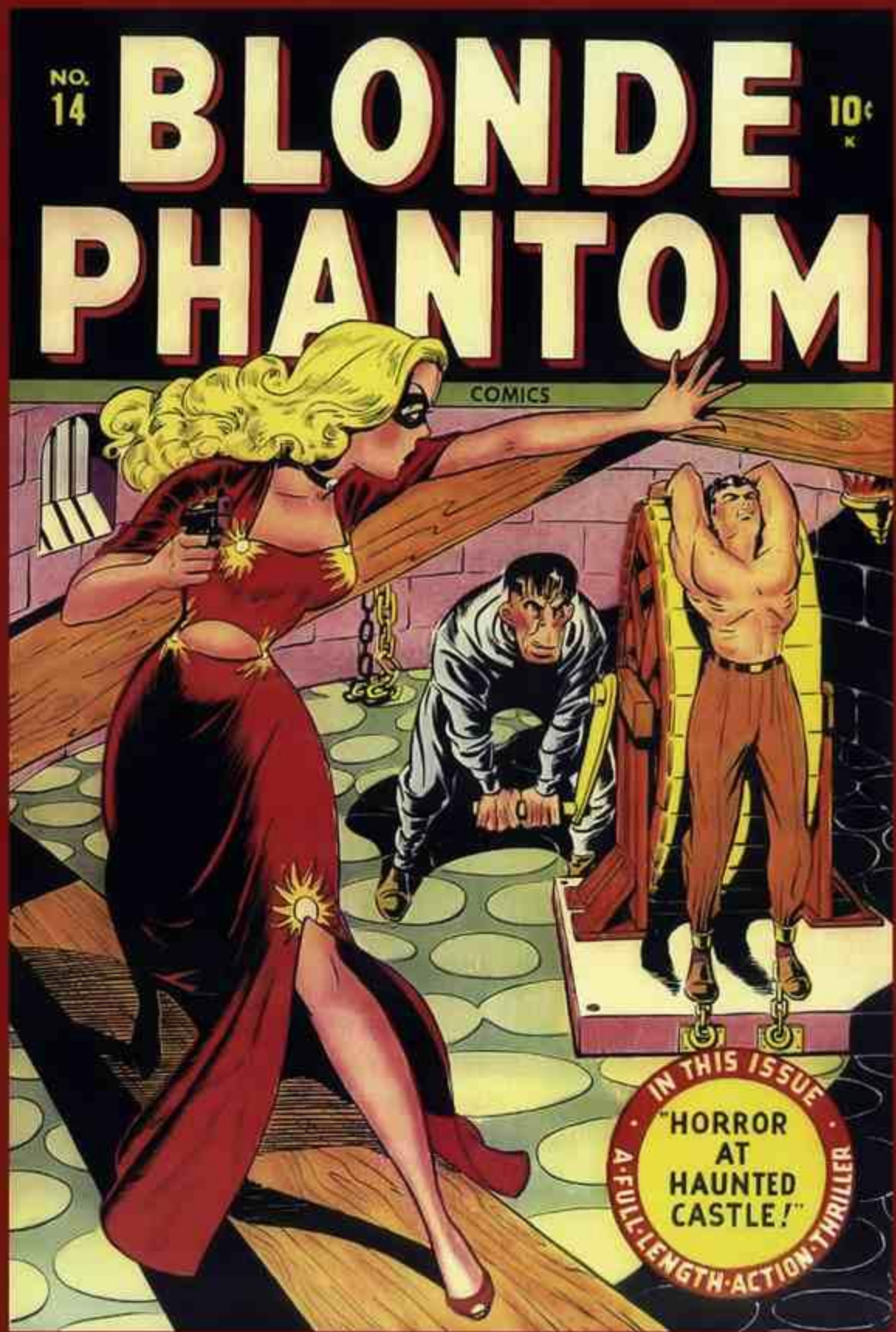


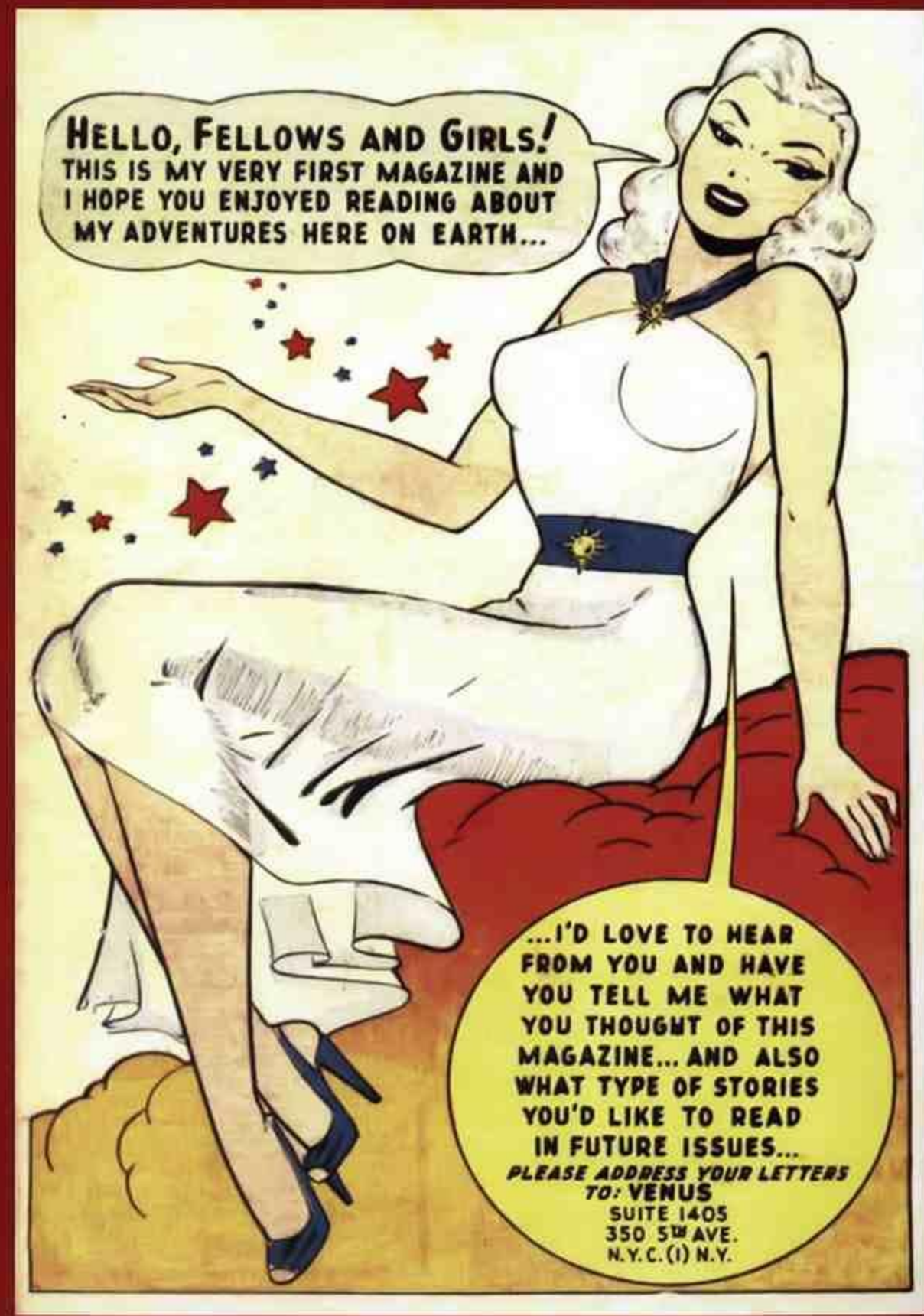
Willie. None of them ever caught on for Timely like *Patsy Walker,* but they gave it that old high-school try.

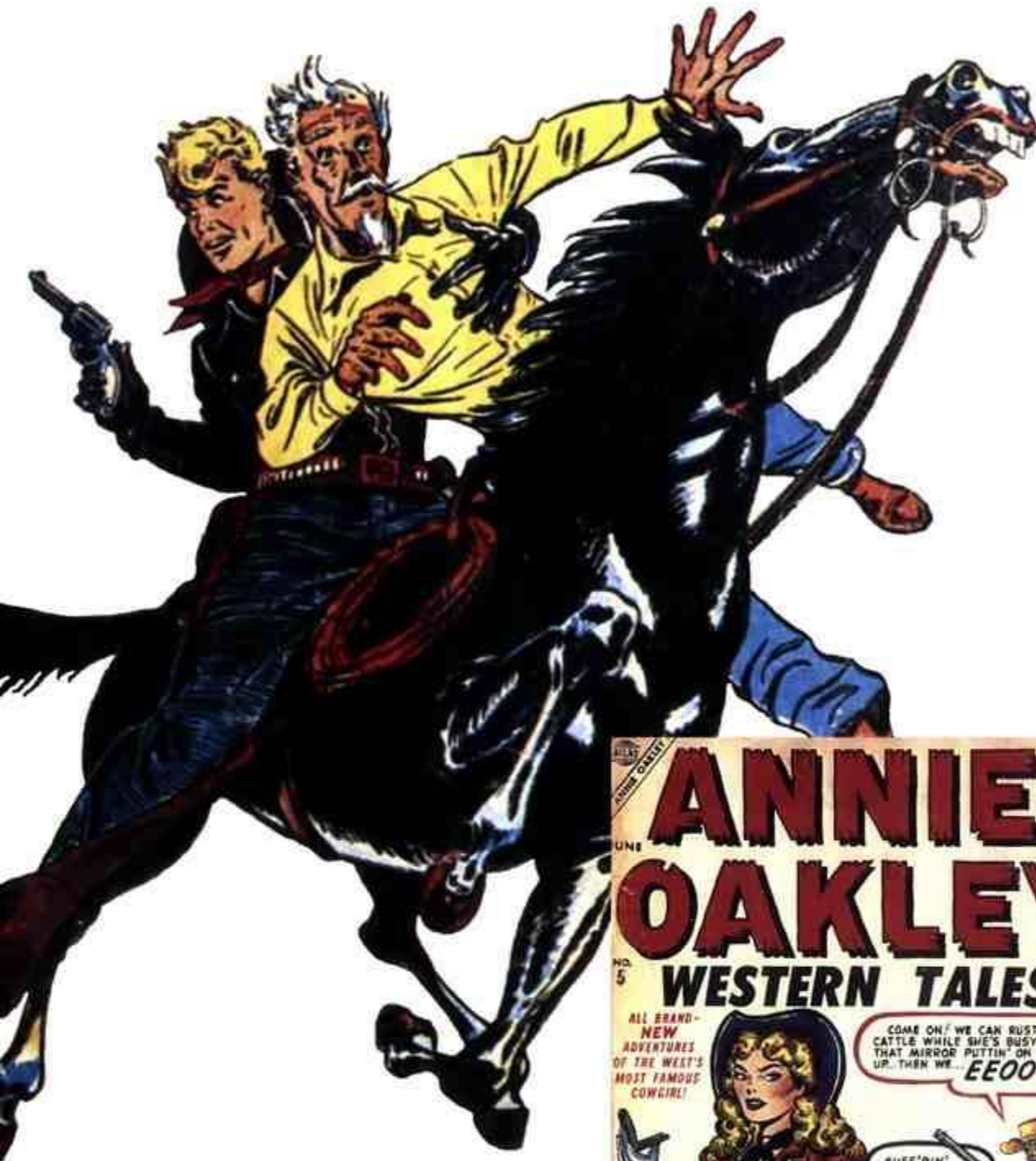
Around 1948, Stan and his writers and artists tried to broaden the interest of their female readers by creating several new super heroines. Bucky got wounded in a Captain America story and was promptly replaced by the Golden Girl; the Human Torch traded in Toro for a blonde called Sun Girl; and the Sub-Mariner started hanging around with a "sea beauty" cousin named Namora. The last two of these female felon catchers even gained their own comic books, though only for three issues each. Slightly more successful was *Blonde Phantom,* a masked lovely who fought crime in the unlikely garb of a floor-length evening gown and high heels.

Then there was *Venus,* which related the exploits of the Roman goddess of love, who came down to Earth from Olympus and promptly found herself working for a beauty magazine. Her stories began as humorous capers but soon evolved into adventures with science fiction and even super heroic overtones, as she went to the moon and battled Loki, the Norse god of fire (obviously drawn as a stand-in for Satan). Even weirder things lay in store for Venus in the early 1950s, as she was the only one of the super heroines to last that long. For in the end, while boys gravitated to super heroes, girl readers clearly preferred the high school hijinks.

Short-lived titles from Timely's foray into the adolescent and the feminine. (This page) A *Namora* #1 splash page and a panel from *Willie* #9. (Opposite page) The cover of *Blonde Phantom* #14 and a pin-up from *Venus* #1.


NO. 14
BLONDE PHANTOM
10¢
COMICS
IN THIS ISSUE
"HORROR AT HAUNTED CASTLE!"
A·FULL·LENGTH·ACTION·THRILLER


HELLO, FELLOWS AND GIRLS! THIS IS MY VERY FIRST MAGAZINE AND I HOPE YOU ENJOYED READING ABOUT MY ADVENTURES HERE ON EARTH...
...I'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU AND HAVE YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU THOUGHT OF THIS MAGAZINE... AND ALSO WHAT TYPE OF STORIES YOU'D LIKE TO READ IN FUTURE ISSUES...
PLEASE ADDRESS YOUR LETTERS TO: VENUS
SUITE 1405
350 5TH AVE.
N.Y.C. (1) N.Y.



COWBOYS, DAMES, AND ROBBERS

Timely continued to test out other comics genres as the popularity of the super heroes faded, going wherever they thought the market might take them... including the Wild West.

There was a craze for Westerns in movies and on radio, so Timely soon produced *Kid Colt Outlaw*, *Two-Gun Kid*, *Tex Morgan*, *Tex Taylor* (no relation), *Black Rider*, and *Annie Oakley*. Stan Lee even posed in costume for a photo-cover of *Black Rider*.

In the late 1940s, Simon and Kirby (yes, them again!) had initiated the first romance comic at a company called Prize, and this genre, too, became a hit with the new audience of girls. Ere long, Timely was publishing *My Romance*, *Lovers*, *Love Tales*, *Faithful*, *Young Hearts*, and numerous other titles—including even comics that combined cowgirls and kisses, such as *Love Trails*, *Rangeland Love*, *Cowboy Romances*, and *Cowgirl Romances*.

In 1942, a small company called Lev Gleason Publications had launched a comic called *Crime Does Not Pay*, which claimed to tell true stories of cops and robbers—definitely *not* in that order. Mostly, the criminals rampaged around for ten or more pages, shooting everyone in sight before they themselves got gunned down on the final page. Soon after the war, *Crime Does Not Pay* became one of the best-selling comics around. It will hardly come as a surprise that Timely responded with *Justice*, *Crime Fighters*, *Lawbreakers Always Lose*, and on, and on. And on. One wonders how Captain America would have fared against this new kind of hoodlum. (Well, at least he'd have had a shield to ward off their bullets.)

In the non-super world of numbers, however, Cap didn't fare too well at all. *Captain America*, *Human Torch*, *Sub-Mariner*, and even Timely's flagship title *Marvel Mystery Comics* were all canceled in 1949, to close out a decade that had begun with such promise for super heroes.

The fabled "Timely bullpen"—which consisted of numerous artists, writers, colorists, and letterers who had worked on staff on the fourteenth floor of the Empire State Building since 1942—didn't fare much better. Stan Lee and his sub-editors had been commissioning stories and art like they were going out of style—

Cowboy titles try to hold their own in the wake of Timely's super hero hits.

BLACK RIDER

MYSTERY MAN OF THE WESTERN RANGE!

THE LEGION OF DEATH THUNDERED ACROSS THE PLAINS AHEAD OF HIM, BUT THE *BLACK RIDER* CLUNG GRIMLY TO THEIR TRAIL, DETERMINED TO END THE SAVAGE LOOTING, PILLAGING AND TERROR OF THEIR REIGN! HE COULD HARDLY KNOW THAT THIS CHASE WOULD MARK THE BEGINNING, RATHER THAN THE END OF *"THE LEGION OF DEATH!"*

IT HAD BEGUN A SHORT TIME AGO IN THE FLAMING PYRE THAT WAS ONCE THE BORDERTOWN OF BUCKHORN...

NOT A HUNDRED YARDS BEHIND THE FLEEING HORDE, THE BLACK RIDER RISKED DEATH BETWEEN TOPPLING BUILDINGS TO PURSUE HIS QUARRY...

KID COLT OUTLAW

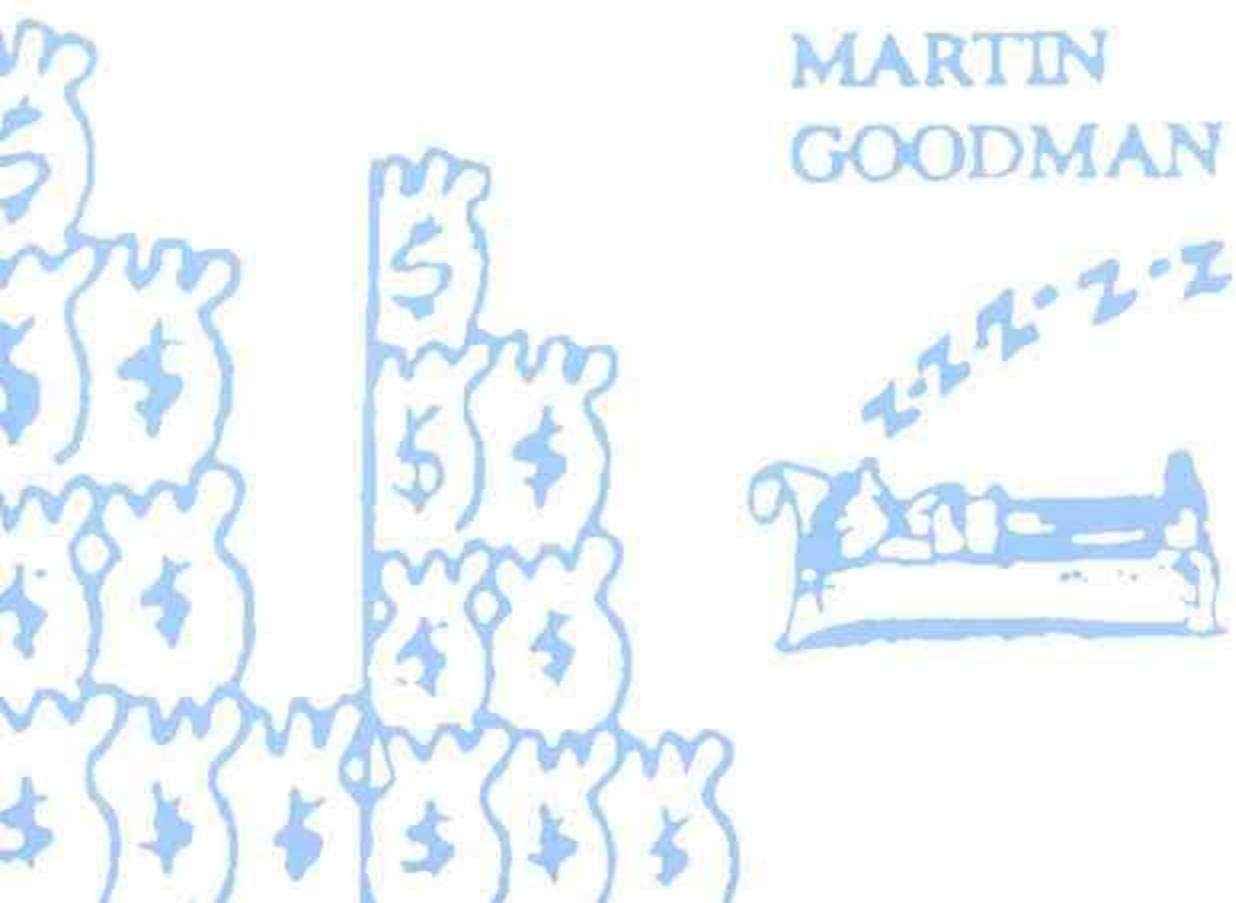
MAY
NO. 5

MARVEL COMIC

10¢

WESTERN ACTION

PRELUDE TO BAMBI
LUNCHEON
TIMELY COMICS & FUNNIES, INC.
HOTEL ASTOR AUG. 14, 1942



and it turned out they *were*. The legend, which might even be true, is that one day Martin Goodman opened a closet door and found piles of completed artwork just sitting there, all of it paid for—but not slated to be used! Since Timely had such an overflowing inventory, the publisher ordered Stan to dismiss the entire staff until the art was used up. For the next several years, the creative staffers were turned into freelancers and were given assignments only as the need for new material came along.

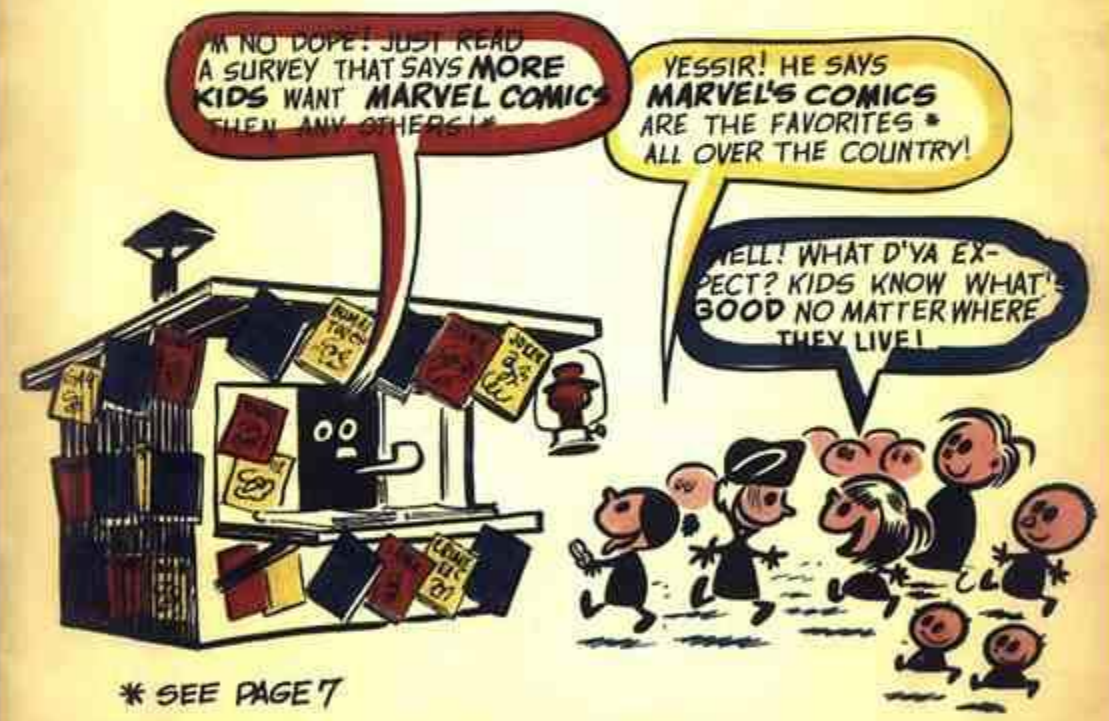
All this while, though, Timely was still selling a lot of comics—partly just by flooding the newsstands—and yet Martin Goodman's company barely had a name to call its own. The "Timely" tag never really caught on and hadn't been used much on covers after 1943. The name "Marvel" was tried out on covers in various forms from around 1947 to 1949, but then it was dropped as well. For the time being....

(Above) Photograph of the gentlemen of Timely Comics and Funnies, Inc., 1942. (Left) Publisher Goodman relaxes while money piles up outside his door, in a cartoon by 1942–1945 editor in chief Vince Fago.

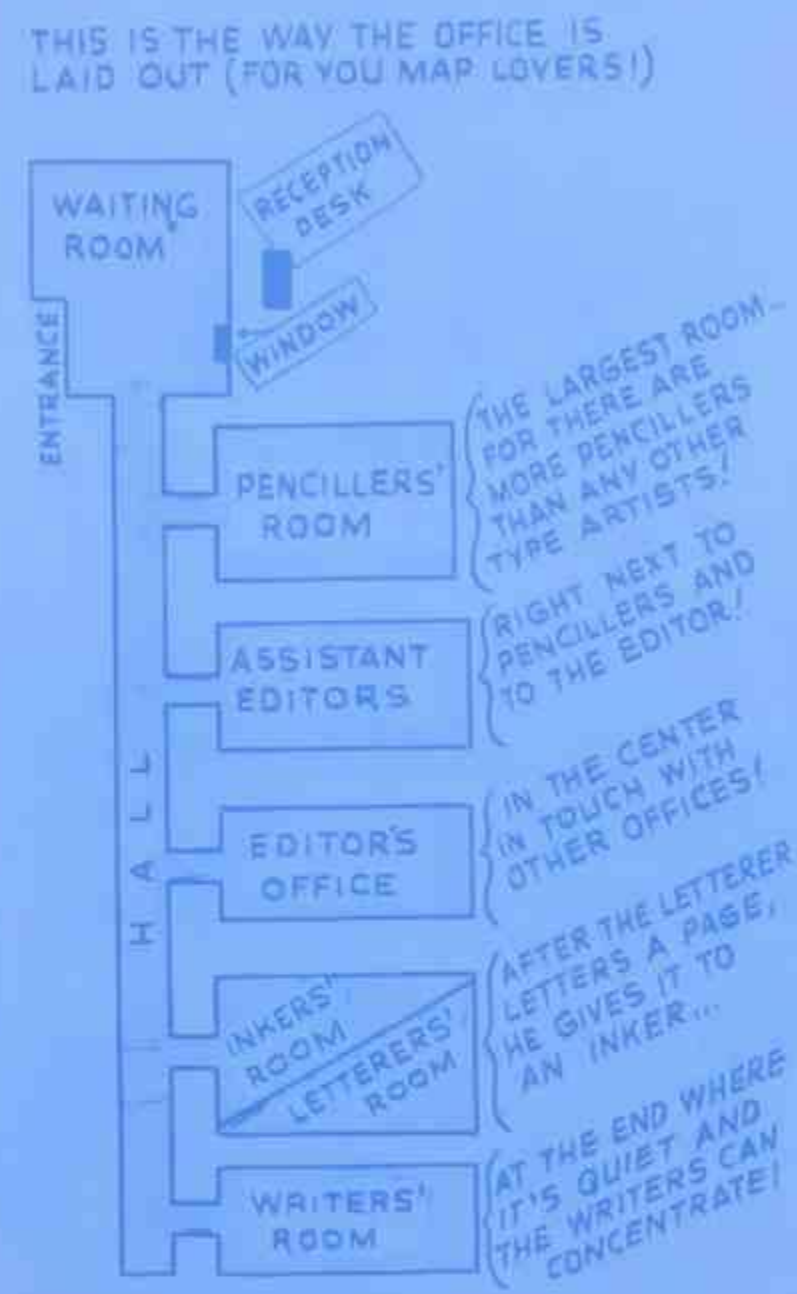
SURVEY

A COMIC MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO THE JUVENILE MARKET

PUBLISHED BY MARVEL COMIC GROUP, MARTIN GOODMAN, PUBLISHER

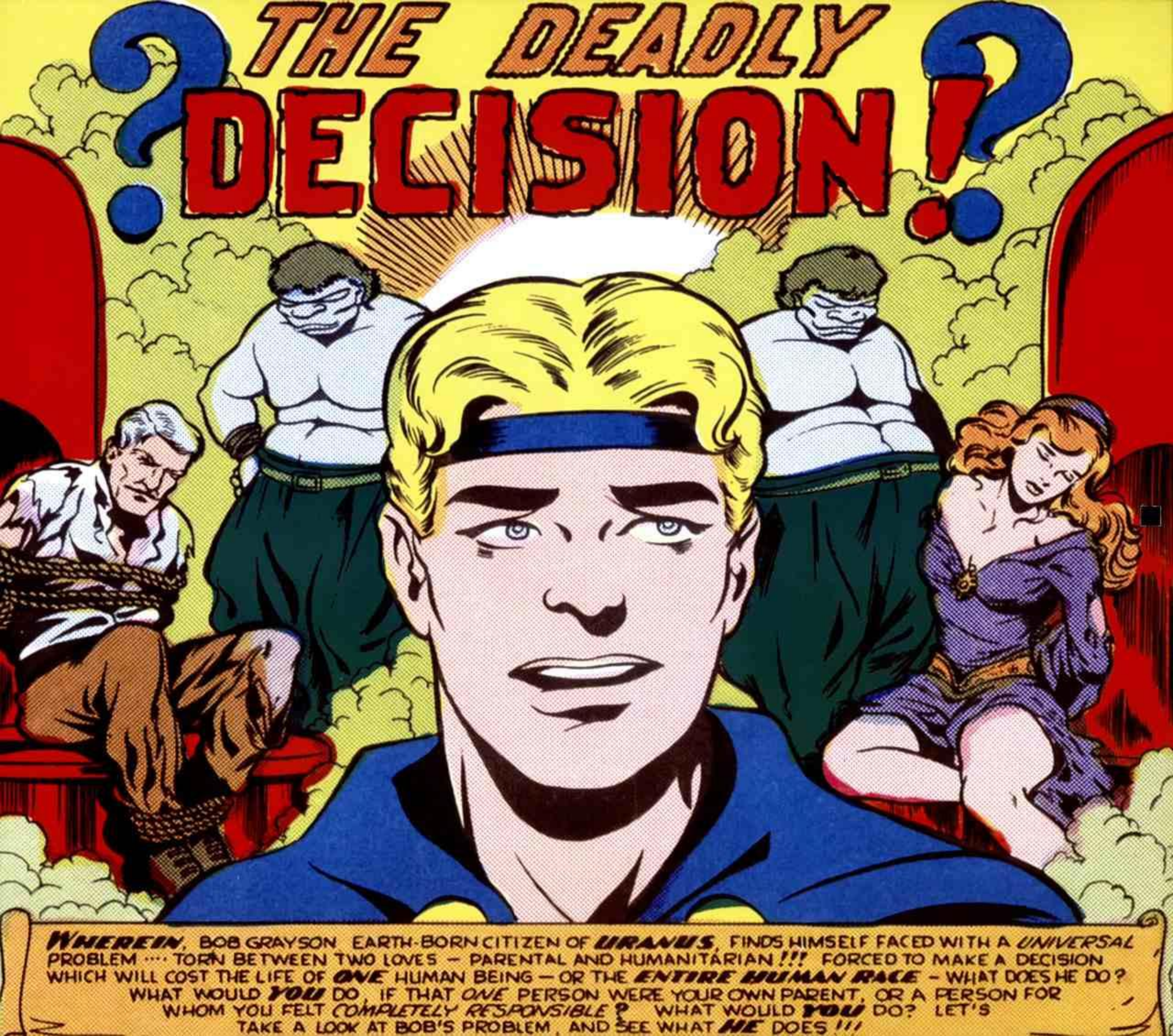


MARVEL COMIC GROUP · 350 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK 1, N. Y.



Frank Torpey waiting for his $25 Weekly check...

(Above) This Timely/Marvel publication from the late 1940s analyzed the comic book market for retailers, and sported a cover by Timely cartoonist Harvey Kurtzman, who would create *Mad* magazine in the 1950s. (Right) The illustrations show a layout of the Timely offices from a 1947 behind-the-scenes book by Stan Lee, plus a jab by Vince Fago at Goodman's habit of paying Frank Torpey $25 a week for persuading him to enter the comics world.


THE DEADLY
DECISION!?
WHEREIN, BOB GRAYSON EARTH-BORN CITIZEN OF URANUS, FINDS HIMSELF FACED WITH A UNIVERSAL PROBLEM .... TORN BETWEEN TWO LOVES — PARENTAL AND HUMANITARIAN!!! FORCED TO MAKE A DECISION WHICH WILL COST THE LIFE OF ONE HUMAN BEING — OR THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE — WHAT DOES HE DO? WHAT WOULD YOU DO, IF THAT ONE PERSON WERE YOUR OWN PARENT, OR A PERSON FOR WHOM YOU FELT COMPLETELY RESPONSIBLE? WHAT WOULD YOU DO? LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT BOB'S PROBLEM, AND SEE WHAT HE DOES!!!

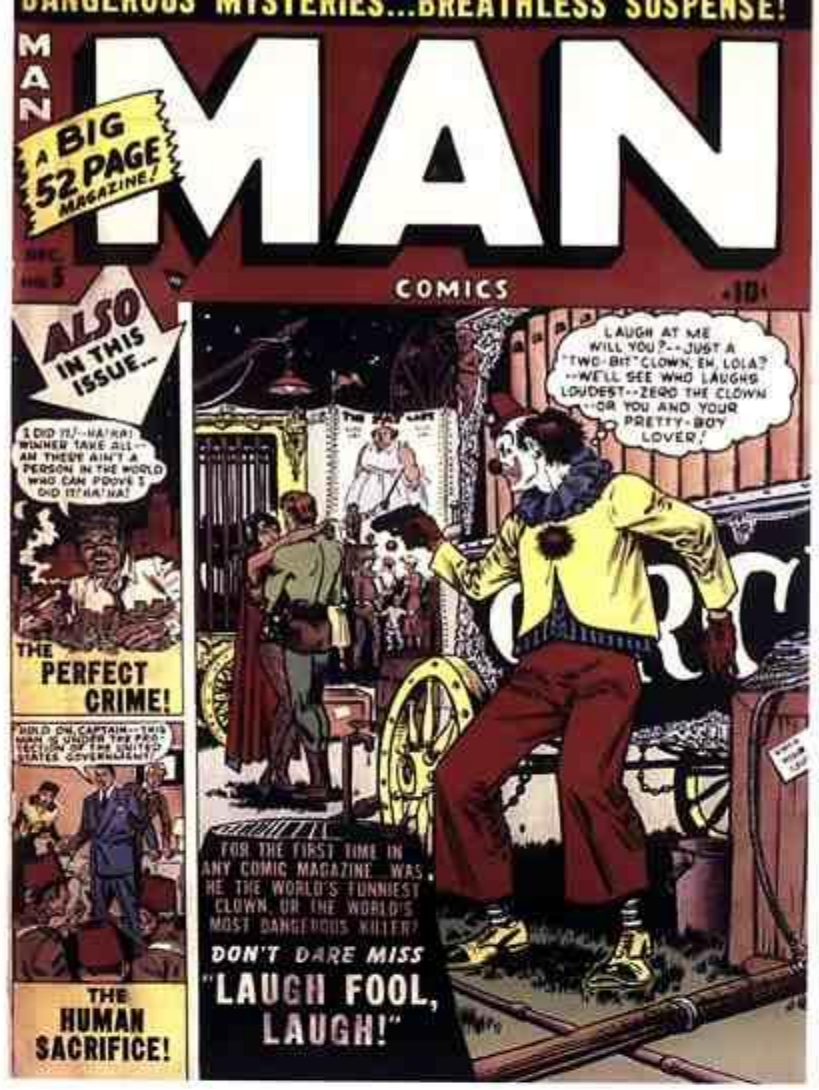
THE FRANTIC FIFTIES— PLUS A YEAR OR TWO

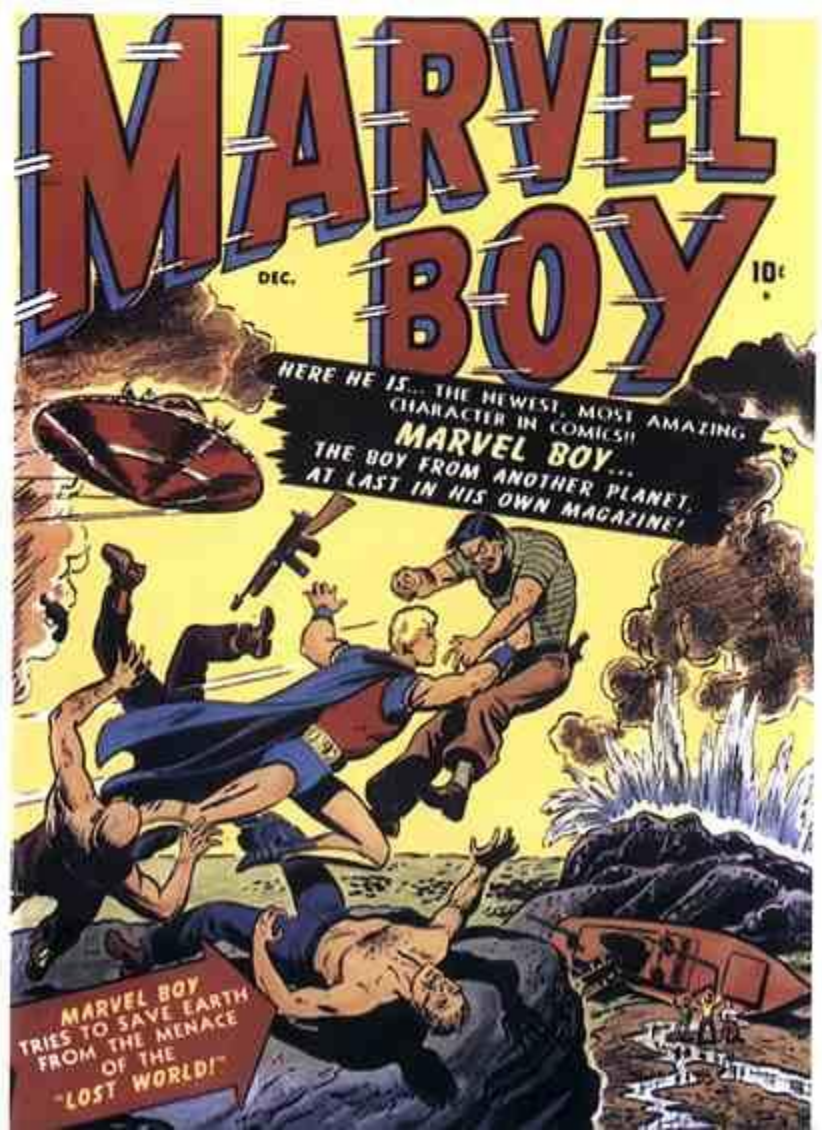
1950s

THE 1950S—PARTICULARLY THE FIRST HALF OF THE DECADE—are regarded by most super hero comics fans as a vast wasteland. During that period, Timely seemed to be churning out almost every type of comic book *except* ones featuring colorful characters in acrobat outfits. At one point, somebody counted and discovered that the company was publishing no fewer than eighty-two separate titles per month—more than twenty each week!

The comics field operated in cycles, with sales surging when some new fad came along to be milked—such as funny-animal comics in the early forties, and romance and Western comics a few years later—then plunged when readers tired of it. Of course, one factor that probably helped kill interest was the

(Opposite page) Timely returns to super heroes with a *Marvel Boy* comic. (This page) The Torch in action.





deluge of titles that flooded the nation's newsstands when something got "hot." And usually, no company did more flooding than Timely.

The 1950s began with Goodman shifting his emphasis away from comics and his few surviving pulp magazines toward what one researcher has called "major low-end genre mags." Timely began to put out movie magazines, "confessionals" (romance), so-called men's magazines (showcasing tales of hairy-chested male adventure interspersed with scantily clad, but never totally unclad, ladies), and others. Comic books, with their ten-cent price tags, offered little competition for Goodman's attention compared with his genre mags, with their higher cover price and greater potential to lure advertising revenue.

Of course, none of Goodman's new publications was a trailblazer in its field. Just as in comics, he played "follow the leader"... as well as "*out-produce* the leader." But the comic book reader didn't know any of this. Timely Comics fans (if there was such a species) knew only that there were suddenly fewer of that company's titles coming out in the early 1950s.

But it didn't take long until the pendulum swung back the other way, at least partly.

In the 1940s, comics had gradually scaled down from sixty-four to forty-eight pages. In the early fifties, various publishers dropped the page count even further, going from forty-eight pages to thirty-two. Now, with so few pages but still a ten-cent cover price, comics suddenly offered a larger profit margin. That probably led in part to Goodman's decision to add to his comics line once again.

MARVEL BOY

Unexpectedly, one of the first Timely comics of the decade introduced a brand-new super hero: *Marvel Boy*.

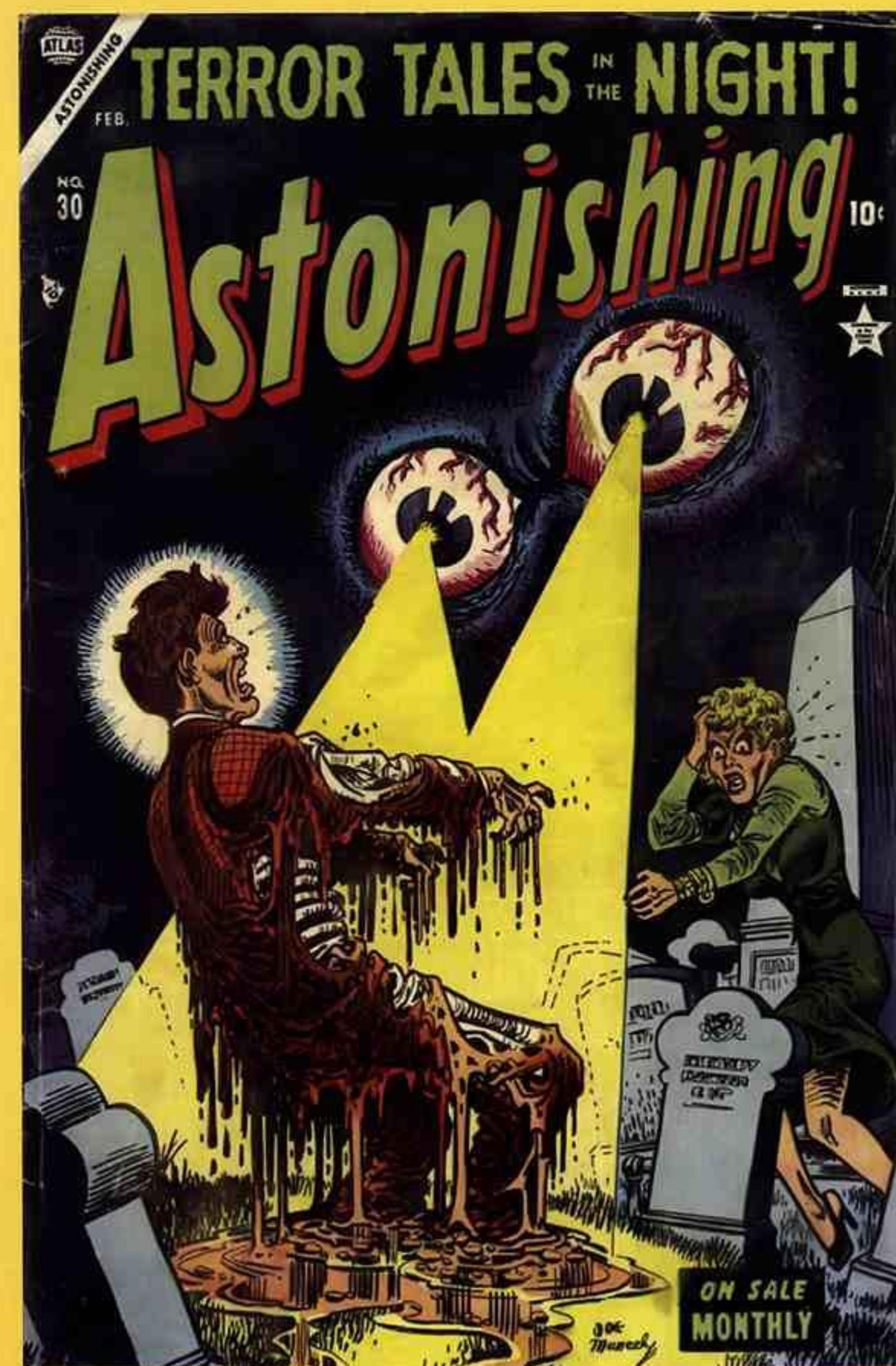
Marvel Boy's origin was virtually a reversal of Superman's more famous one. And so the story goes: During World War II, a scientist, Dr. Grayson, had turned his back on the world when his wife and daughter were on a plane shot down by the Nazis. He built a rocket and attempted to fly to the moon with his son, Bob, but his aim was lousy, and they ended up on the planet Uranus. Luckily for them, the seventh planet of the solar system just happened to have a livable atmosphere and temperature as well as a friendly and ultra-intelligent race of humanoid inhabitants, so Dr. Grayson reared his son there in peace and comfort. In 1950, though, he sent his only son

(This page) Marvel goes from *Man* to boy. (Opposite page) Though Marvel Boy started off in his own title, it was quickly changed to *Astonishing*.

to Earth "to save it from self-destruction . . . by combating all evil elements, political and criminal, who seek to destroy it!"

Bob came to our world with little in the way of super powers. He was highly intelligent, had been trained in mental telepathy, could "run faster and fight a little harder" than most mortal men, and had a jeweled wristband whose beam of light temporarily blinded his foes. He also had a great costume, with a stylized flame symbol on his chest, though his bare legs may have been a bit over the top. When on our planet, he doubled as an insurance investigator, which gave him an excuse to look into crimes—although he couldn't have been much over seventeen or eighteen, based on his origin story. While the stories were only so-so in quality, the art by Russ Heath and Bill Everett was superior.

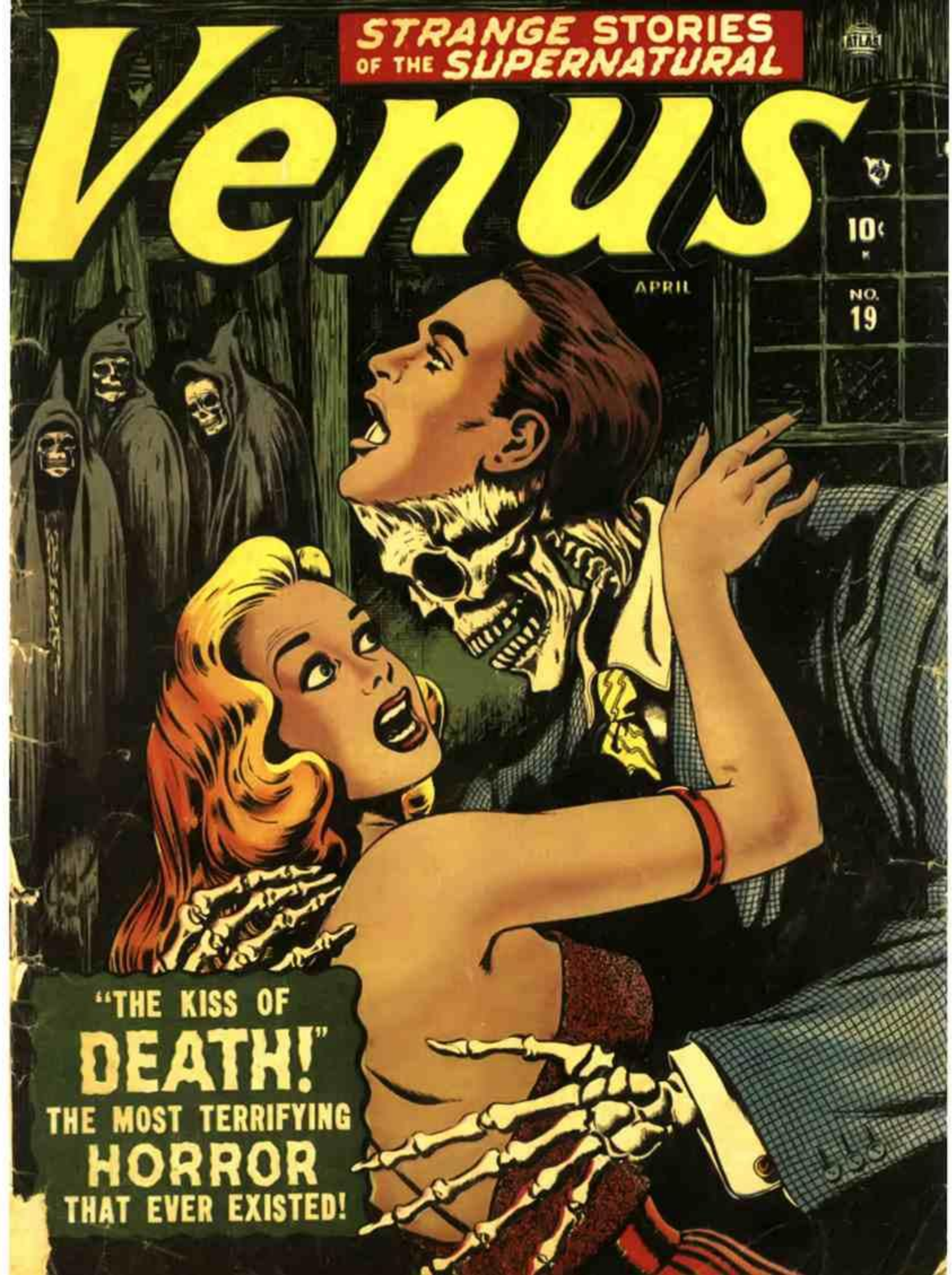
But Goodman must have quickly decided (even before sales figures were in) that he had jumped the gun in bringing out a new super hero only a year after Timely's "big three" had bitten the four-color dust. So with issue #3, the comic's name was changed to *Astonishing*, although Marvel Boy continued to star in the next four issues. While tinged with science fiction, the Marvel Boy stories increasingly veered into supernatural horror. Typical titles were "The Screaming Tomb," "The Walking Ghost," "Murder by Magic," and "Unseen Terror." After issue #6 in 1951, Marvel Boy was seen no more, and *Astonishing* unreservedly became that most reviled of things: a horror comic.



TAKE THESE HAIR-RAISING ADVENTURES INTO TERROR

THE THING IN THE CAVE!

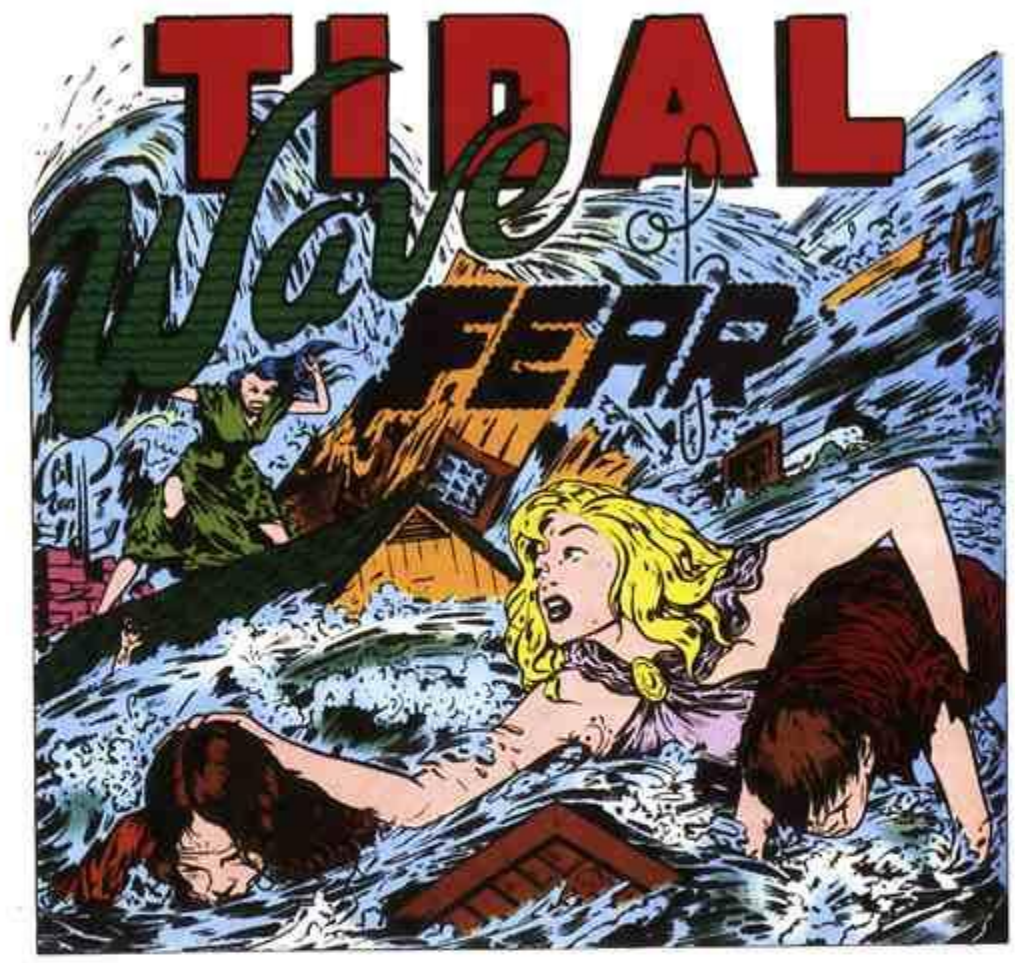
TERRIFYING MYSTERY FROM A WEIRD WORLD!

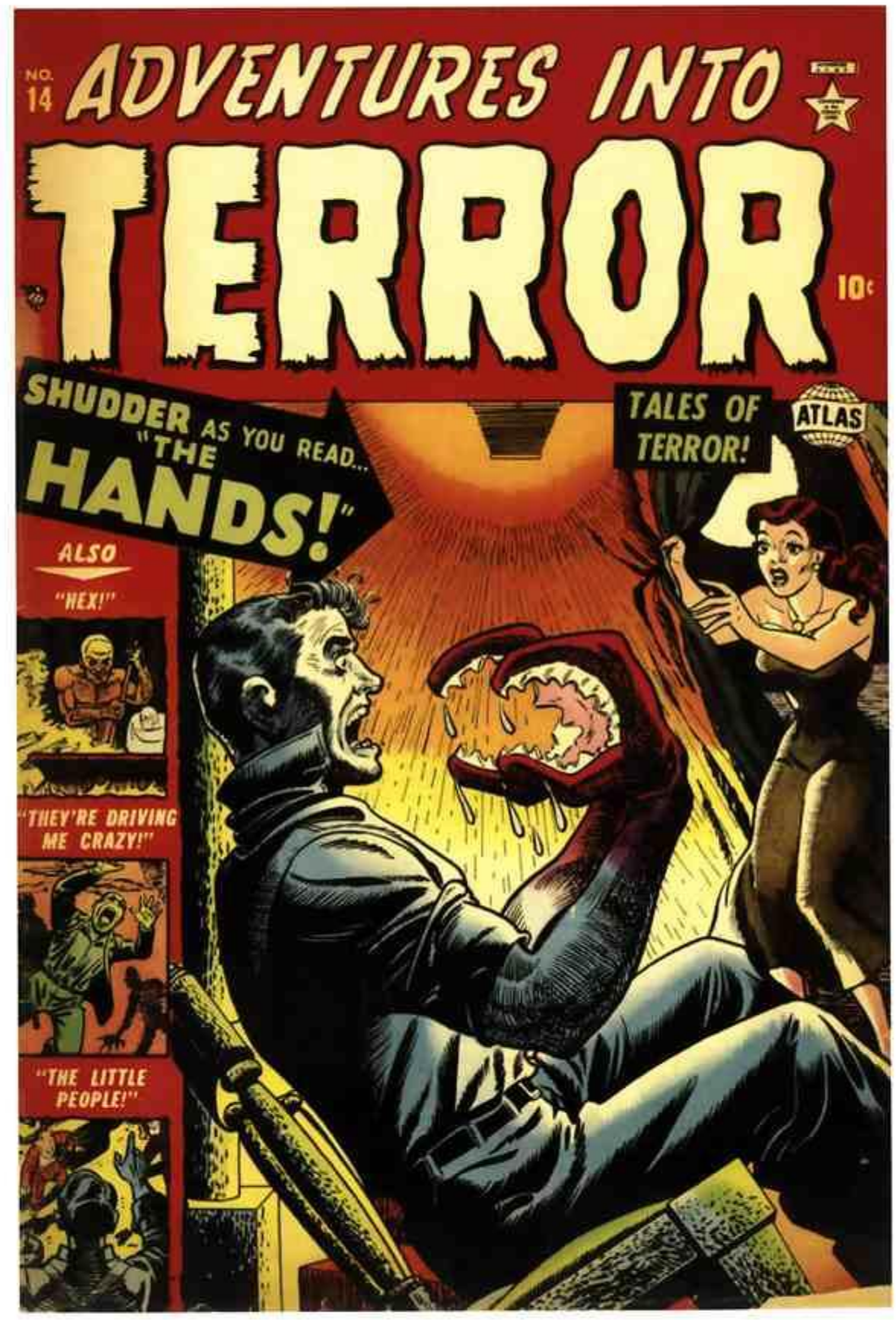


THE HORROR! THE HORROR!

The Timely comic *Venus* was also veering toward the horrific, and the gowned goddess gradually found herself the heroine of what were basically horror stories. The last *Venus* cover showed the blonde goddess embracing a man whose human-looking rubber mask has been pulled back to reveal that he's actually a walking skeleton wearing a business suit. The story's title? "The Kiss of Death," what else?

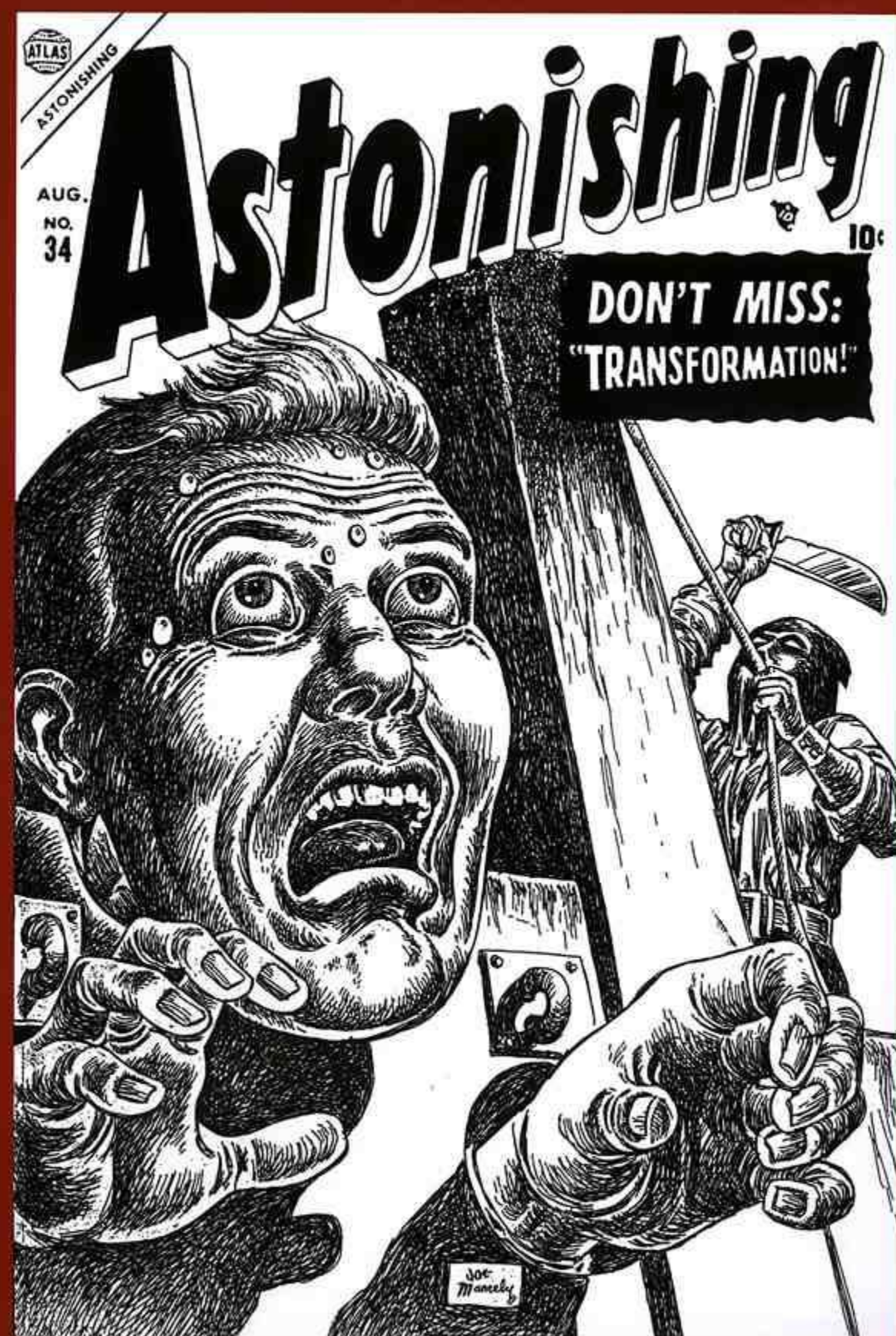
During the early 1950s, Goodman took his cue from the rising popularity of a smaller competitor, EC Comics. EC published three supernatural horror titles (*Tales from the Crypt*, *The Vault of Horror*, *The Haunt of Fear*), two "crime" comics with horrific twists (*Shock SuspenStories*, *Crime SuspenStories*), and two science-fiction titles also with horror overtones (*Weird Science*, *Weird Fantasy*). Timely added horror title after horror title between 1950 and 1953, until it was turning out a greater volume of such comics than anybody else, with titles like *Adventures Into Terror*, *Journey Into Unknown Worlds*, *Menace*, *Strange Tales*, *Uncanny Tales*, *Mystery Tales*, *Mystic*, *Spellbound*, and *Suspense*.





Titles featuring the horrific "Kiss of Death" (opposite) and other terrifying tales.

MENACE
MAR.
ATLAS
10¢
A TALE OF MADDENING MENACE...
"ONE HEAD TOO MANY!"
ON SALE MONTHLY
MORE TALES OF MADDENING MENACE!
"THEY WAIT IN THEIR DUNGEON!"
"THE MAN WHO COULDN'T MOVE!"
"POOR MR. WATKINS!"


ATLAS
ASTONISHING
Astonishing
AUG.
NO. 34
10¢
DON'T MISS:
"TRANSFORMATION!"
Joe Maneely

These mags featured a virtual horde of vampires, werewolves, ghosts, ghouls, and other things going bump in the comic book night. Skulls and skeletons were a common motif on Timely covers, usually drawn by a handful of artists, such as Bill Everett, Joe Maneely, Russ Heath, and Carl Burgos, who specialized in ultra-detailed and gruesome illustrations.

Besides the large main illustration, covers usually also sported three smaller drawings related to the other tales inside. Martin Goodman wasn't taking any chances that a potential reader wouldn't cotton to the theme spotlighted in the main cover "illo," and he hoped all those smaller pictures would make kids figure they were getting a real bargain—four or more stories in each and every issue! For instance, *Menace* #1 showcased "One Head Too Many!" but also contained three other tales heralded on the cover: "They Wait in Their Dungeon!" "The Man Who Couldn't Move!" and "Poor Mr. Watkins!"

"THE WHITE BONES!"

"FENTON'S FACE!"

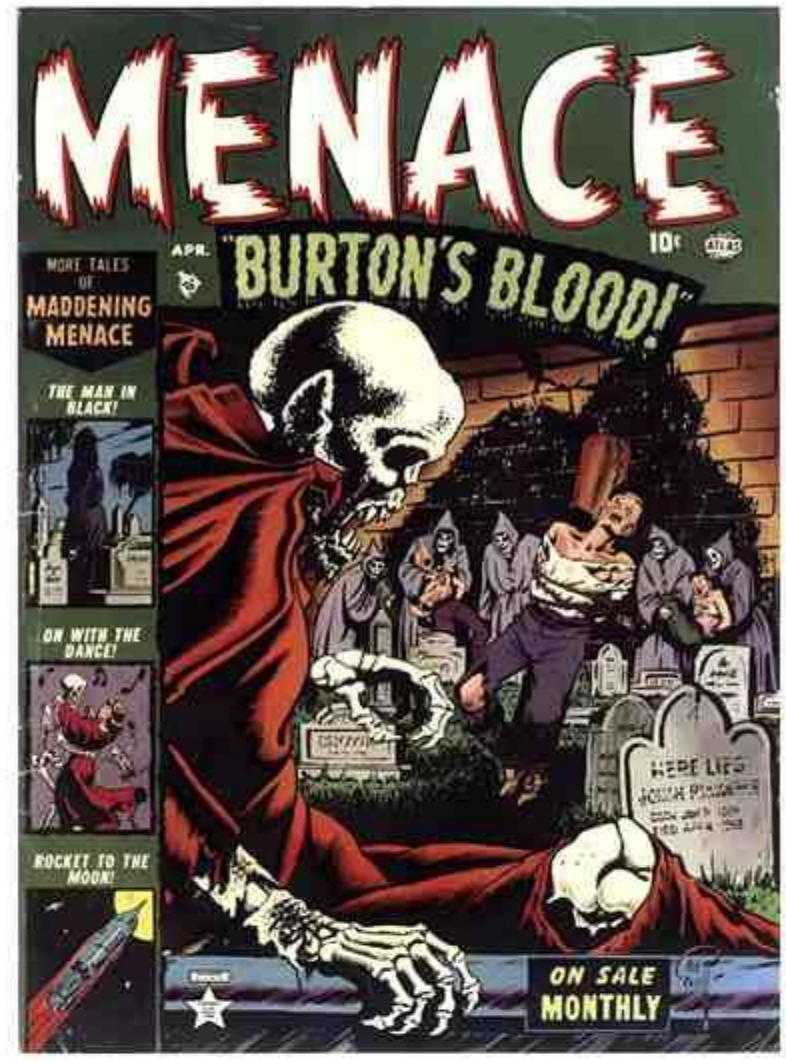
"THE WORLD IS OURS!"

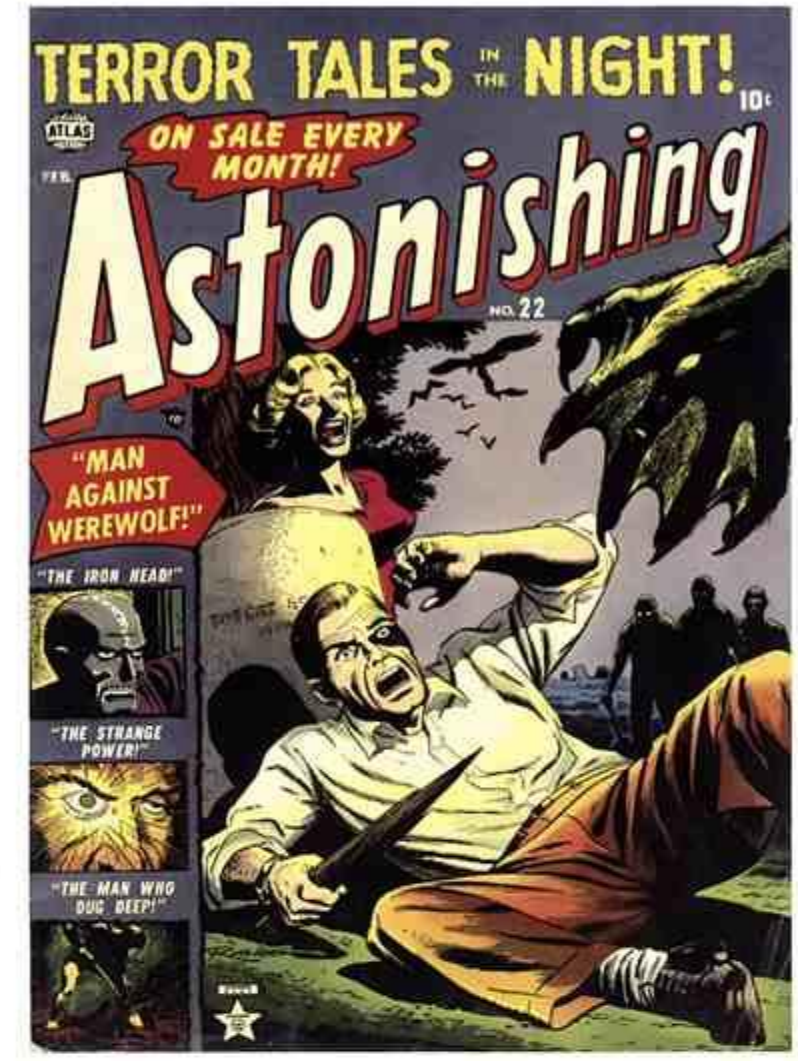
(Both pages) Vivid horror art by Russ Heath, Joe Maneely, and Bill Everett. (Opposite right) The *Astonishing* cover is reproduced from the original black-and-white art.

Not all "horror" stories, whether at EC or Timely or elsewhere, were of the supernatural variety. Some were merely short morality tales with grisly surprise endings. In one of the post-Marvel Boy issues of *Astonishing*, for instance, a rich middle-aged victim of "a rare somnolent sickness which makes sufferers appear lifeless" is so terrified of being buried alive that he has a supply of oxygen and a phone installed in his pre-built coffin. When he appears dead and is buried (apparently without benefit of embalming!), his greedy wife rips out the phone at her end. But, because the mistrustful husband had secretly put in a second phone line, other people dig him up before he runs out of air. When his wife is told by friends that he phoned one of them, she has his coffin exhumed by paid hirelings so she can make sure he's dead. Left alone, she's so startled to find his coffin empty that she promptly topples into it—and the lid slams shut! With only minutes of oxygen left, she tries phoning for help...but the sole line left in the coffin calls only the phone she tore out! This may have been a horror story of sorts, but it was also one in which justice was meted out, if only by accident.

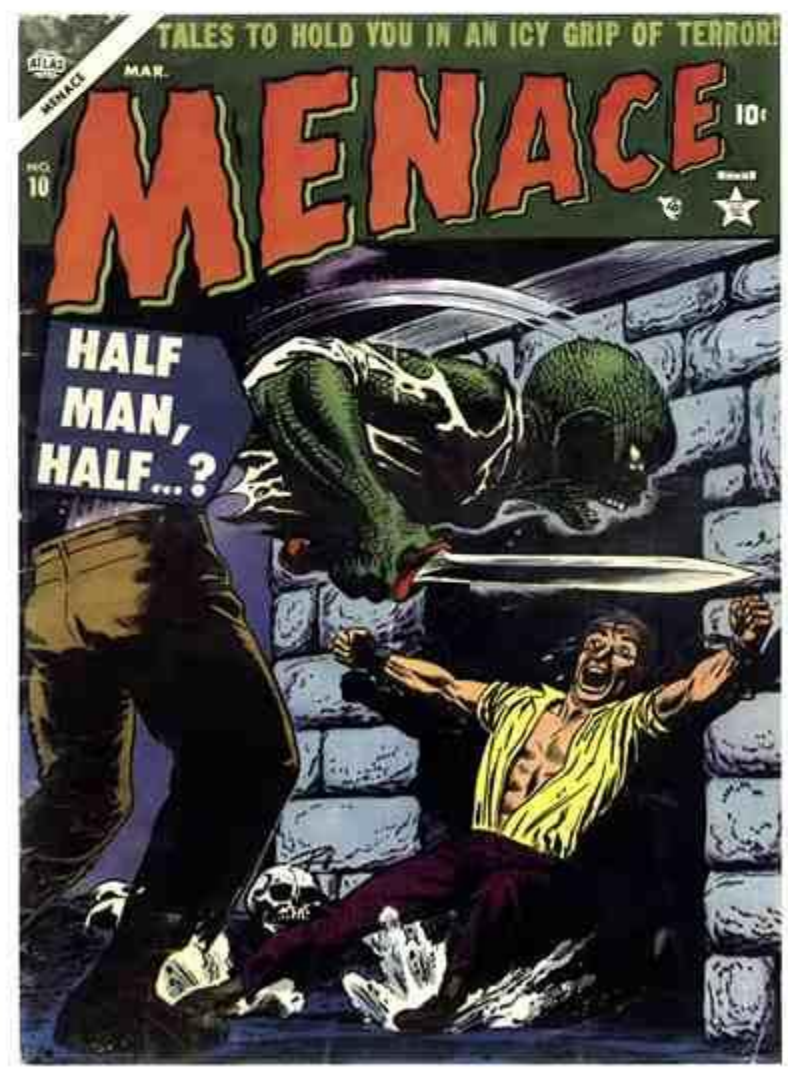
(This page) *Adventures Into Terror* feature story. (Opposite page) A sampling of covers from Timely's horror line.

MYSTIC... THE MOST EERIE STORIES EVER TOLD!
MYSTIC
JAN. NO. 6
10¢
I KILLED HER... BURIED HER...BUT...
"SHE WOULDN'T STAY DEAD!"
DO YOU DARE LOOK INTO THE EYE OF DOOM!
THE OLD LADY'S SON! WHAT WAS HE... MAN, BEAST OR...???
WHAT IS... NOTHING!
AND OTHER MYSTIFYING TALES!


MENACE
APR.
10¢
"BURTON'S BLOOD!"
MORE TALES OF MADDENING MENACE
THE MAN IN BLACK!
ON WITH THE DANCE!
ROCKET TO THE MOON!
ON SALE MONTHLY


TERROR TALES IN THE NIGHT!
10¢
ON SALE EVERY MONTH!
FEB.
Astonishing
NO. 22
"MAN AGAINST WEREWOLF!"
"THE IRON HEAD!"
"THE STRANGE POWER!"
"THE MAN WHO DUG DEEP!"

MYSTIC... THE MOST EERIE STORIES EVER TOLD!
MYSTIC
MAY
NO. 8
10¢
DON'T MISS THESE MYSTIC TALES!
WE MEET AT MIDNIGHT!
"A MONSTER AMONG US!"
HOUSE FOR SALE!
"SORRY, MISTER HOPKINS!"


TALES TO HOLD YOU IN AN ICY GRIP OF TERROR!
MAR.
MENACE
NO. 10
10¢
HALF MAN, HALF...?

ASTONISHING STORIES OF THE SUPERNATURAL
Astonishing
DEC. NO. 7
10¢
YOUR STARTLED SENSES WILL NEVER FORGET...
"NIGHTMARE!"
I'M DREAMING! IT MUST BE ANOTHER NIGHTMARE! BUT YET... I KNOW I'M AWAKE... AND I CAN FEEL ITS CLAMMY HAND ON MY SHOULDER!
THEY DWELL IN DARKNESS!
OUT OF MY MIND!
PAID IN FULL!

WAR ADVENTURES
JAN.
ATLAS
10¢
K
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A G.I. GETS...
BATTLE FATIGUE!
BECKER! SNAP OUT OF IT! IT'S OVER! YOU'RE OKAY! BECKER... SAY SOMETHING!
"COLD STEEL!"
"THE WEAPON!"

THE HUMAN TORCH
"IN KOREA!"
TWO AGAINST AN ARMY... THAT WAS THE HUMAN TORCH AND ME, HIS PAL TORO, WHEN THE COMMIES SNATCHED A GENERAL AND HIS BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER... AND A SECRET WORTH EVERY DOGGIE'S LIFE...
IN THE NAME OF BUDDHA! IT IS THE HUMAN TORCH! STOP HIM! HE'S AFTER THE AMERICAN GENERAL... AND THE SECRET!
HE WILL NOT BE HUMAN... NOR A TORCH FOR LONG!

THE KOREAN WAR ERA

In 1951, Goodman left his distributor, Kable News, and formed his own distribution arm: Atlas News Co., Inc. Soon his comics sported a tiny world globe with the word "Atlas" written across it . . . and so things would stand for the next five years. While many readers came to think of this line of comics as "Atlas," to the artists, writers, and editors who worked there it was never called anything else but "Timely."

And the comics kept on coming. Soon after the North Koreans poured south across the forty-ninth parallel on the other side of the world and the

(Opposite page) Timely tackles the realistic side of war with titles like *War Adventures*, but still finds room for super heroes like the Human Torch on the battlefield. (This page) Goodman's new "Atlas" logo and combat covers.

United States found itself in a warmed-up version of the cold war, Timely initiated several Korean War comics. Its first was the generically titled *War Comics*, followed by the likes of *Battle*, *Battlefront*, *Battleground*, *Combat*, and *War Action*. These weren't always tales of war heroism; many dealt with what one writer has called the "pain, misery, and fear of ordinary soldiers." Once again, rival EC Comics had led the way in this genre, with its *Two-Fisted Tales* (a hastily revamped adventure comic) and *Frontline Combat*. However, some of Timely's war offerings rivaled EC's in the power of both art and story. Neither EC nor Timely took a position against the war, but neither did they glamorize it, as most earlier war comics had done. In their view, war was a dirty business, but somebody had to do it.

As fighting continued to rage on the Korean peninsula, Timely also experimented with "series" war comics, starring continuing heroes: *Combat Kelly*, *Combat Casey*, *Battle Brady*, and several others. The series comics were often at the other end of the spectrum from the more "realistic" war comics. Both kinds co-existed for a time, although a wartime congressional committee declared the latter type to be unpatriotic, and Stan Lee has said that at one time Timely's comics were not permitted to be sold in PXs on the nation's military bases. For whatever reason, the antiheroic stories were gradually discontinued, and after the 1953 truce, only the *Combat Kelly*-type of Korean War comic managed to continue publication.

(This page) Super soldier Combat Kelly in action. (Opposite) Artist Joe Maneely penned his and his colleagues' names on the shirts of characters in his *Navy Combat* cover, near right.

NAVY COMBAT

NAVY COMBAT

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

19 AUGUST

DEDICATED TO THE VALIANT SHIPS AND COURAGEOUS MEN OF THE *UNITED STATES NAVY!*

10¢

"MISSION.... SUBMARINE!"

AND OTHER *SMASHING NAVY TALES!*

COMBAT

COMBAT

ATLAS

THE MARINES ATTACK WITH "BARE BAYONETS!"

10¢

JUNE

ON SALE EVERY MONTH!

COMBAT

COMBAT

10¢

ATLAS

SEPT.

BAYONETS STRIKE BACK BECAUSE OF *"THE MISTAKE OF GENERAL MING!"*

ON SALE *EVERY MONTH*

ATLAS
YOUNG MEN
THE HUMAN TORCH RETURNS
DEC.
YOUNG MEN
10¢
NO. 21
ALL NEW STORIES!
LOOK! HE'S BACK FROM THE DEAD! IT'S THE HUMAN TORCH!
SUBMARINER AND CAPTAIN AMERICA ALSO IN THIS ISSUE
SUBMARINER
CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BUCKY

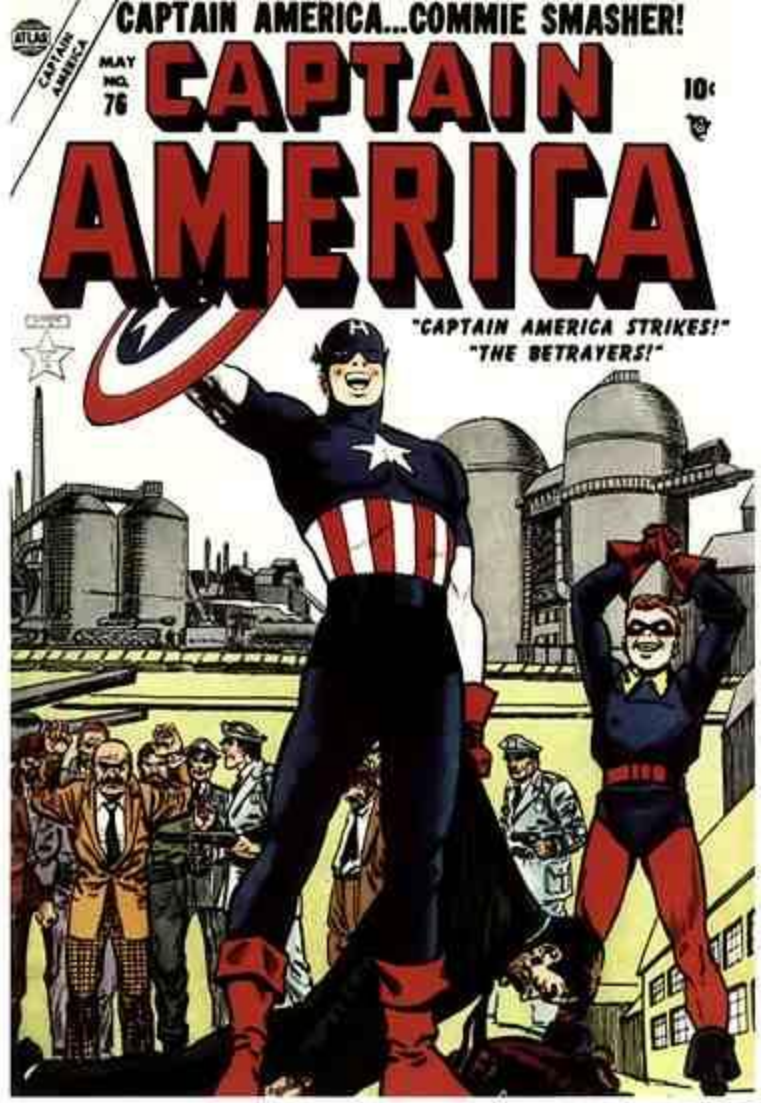
ATLAS
THE HUMAN TORCH
HUMAN TORCH...MAN OF FLAME!
HUMAN TORCH
APR.
NO. 36
10¢

A SUPER RESURRECTION

Sometimes wars need super heroes. So Goodman and Lee brought back their "Big Three" WWII-era mainstays. Since the title *Young Men* had risen from the ashes of a comic titled *Cowboy Romances* in 1950, it had shifted genres several times—from a comic book equivalent of the "men's adventure" magazines, to a war comic (*Young Men on the Battlefield!*), to three issues featuring hot-rod drivers and their fabulous flivvers. Then, suddenly, the cover of the December 1953 issue of *Young Men* depicted the Human Torch flying above a city street, hurling his fireballs, and melting a building wall as a man in the street below gasped, "Look! He's back from the dead! It's the *Human Torch!*"

Not only was the Torch back (with Toro), but so were the Sub-Mariner and Captain America (with Bucky in tow). This time, their enemies were not just criminals, and certainly not the Axis, but the international Communist conspiracy. It was revealed that the Torch had been buried in the southwestern desert in 1949 by gangsters who put out his flame with Commie-produced "Solution X-R." Toro, meanwhile, had been brainwashed into fighting for the Reds. The Sub-Mariner had retired to his subantarctic realm but valiantly

(Opposite page and above) The Human Torch and Captain America fought the Communist conspiracy in *Young Men*, before once more earning their own solo titles. (Top right) A drawing of Cap and Bucky in action, first published in 2003—exactly fifty years after it was drawn by John Romita for *Young Men* #24.



returned when he thought the Soviets were sinking Free World shipping. (Not that Namor cared about politics; he was just doing a favor for his World War II girlfriend Betty Dean.)

Even the ultimate Nazi villain, the Red Skull, had formed an alliance with the Communists, which brought Captain America out of retirement; turned out he'd been teaching high school for the past few years. (Civics, no doubt.)

The reason for the revival of Cap, Torch, and Subby after four years was clear for all to see. For the past year or so, the hottest thing on kiddie television had been the new *Adventures of Superman* show starring George Reeves as the Man of Steel. Goodman figured that youngsters might be ready for a super hero resurgence. *Young Men* #24 sold well, and within a few months it had gone from bimonthly to monthly; a second title (*Men's Adventures*) was converted from a war comic to star the "Big Three"; and each of the three adult heroes' solo titles was resuscitated.

But this Indian summer for super heroes didn't last. Within the year, all the resurrected mags were canceled again—except *Sub-Mariner*.

So why did a comic starring an amphibian with pointy ears, a triangular head, and swim trunks outlast the fiery Human Torch and the colorful Captain America by a full year's worth of issues? Most likely because there was a TV deal in the works at the time for a live-action *Sub-Mariner* series starring movie actor Richard Egan. At some point, however, negotiations between Goodman and the television producers fell apart...and Prince Namor, too, went into retirement for a second time. Understandably, fans and insiders alike believed that this time it was probably for good.

(This page) Covers of resurrected titles for Cap and Namor, plus the Torch splash from *Young Men* #25. (Opposite page) An interior page from *Human Torch* #36 (original illustration in black and white by Dick Ayers, next to the published version, where Carl Burgos's Torch figures had been pasted over Ayers's).

2 NEXT PAGE

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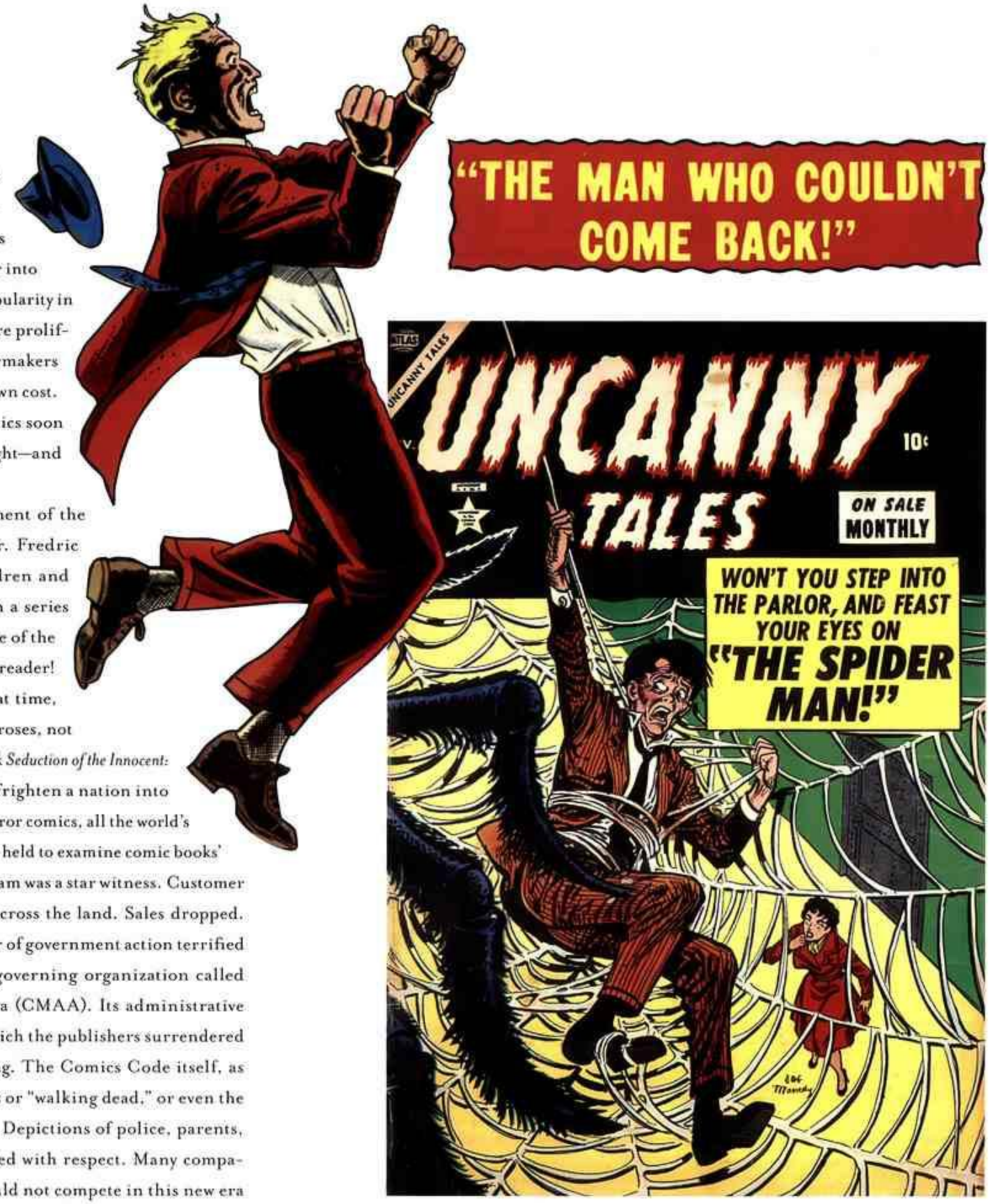
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

PARENTAL OUTCRY

Although comic books had always come with social critics, beginning in the late 1940s the rising popularity of so-called crime comics had helped turn what had been a muted whisper into a cry of protest. Crime comics generally lost popularity in the early fifties, but by then horror comics were proliferating like weeds. They were obviously moneymakers for the entire industry, but not without their own cost. In fact, between them, horror and crime comics soon thrust comic books into the national spotlight—and not in a favorable way!

One of the most outspoken and prominent of the genre's critics was a psychiatrist named Dr. Fredric Wertham, who worked with disturbed children and juvenile delinquents at a New York clinic. In a series of articles, he pointed out that nearly every one of the troubled youths he treated was a comic book reader! (Of course, so were *most* American kids at that time, but Wertham's chief appeal was to parents' neuroses, not their sense of logic.) In 1954, Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent: The Influence of Comic Books on Today's Youth* helped frighten a nation into believing that, if we just outlawed crime and horror comics, all the world's problems would be solved. Senate hearings were held to examine comic books' effect on juvenile delinquency, and Dr. Wertham was a star witness. Customer boycotts and comic book burnings erupted across the land. Sales dropped.

A combination of public pressure and fear of government action terrified the comics publishers into creating a self-governing organization called the Comic Magazine Association of America (CMAA). Its administrative branch was the Comics Code Authority, to which the publishers surrendered censorship of their product prior to printing. The Comics Code itself, as written, did not allow werewolves or vampires or "walking dead," or even the use of the words *horror* or *terror* on the covers. Depictions of police, parents, and other authority figures had to be handled with respect. Many companies went out of business, convinced they could not compete in this new era



Dr. Fredric Wertham (opposite page, top left) and examples of the horror comics he vehemently denounced to lead the way for the Comics Code Authority approval seal (opposite, bottom left).

SAL -
VINCE - STANG

HEIGH-HO
DADDY-O!

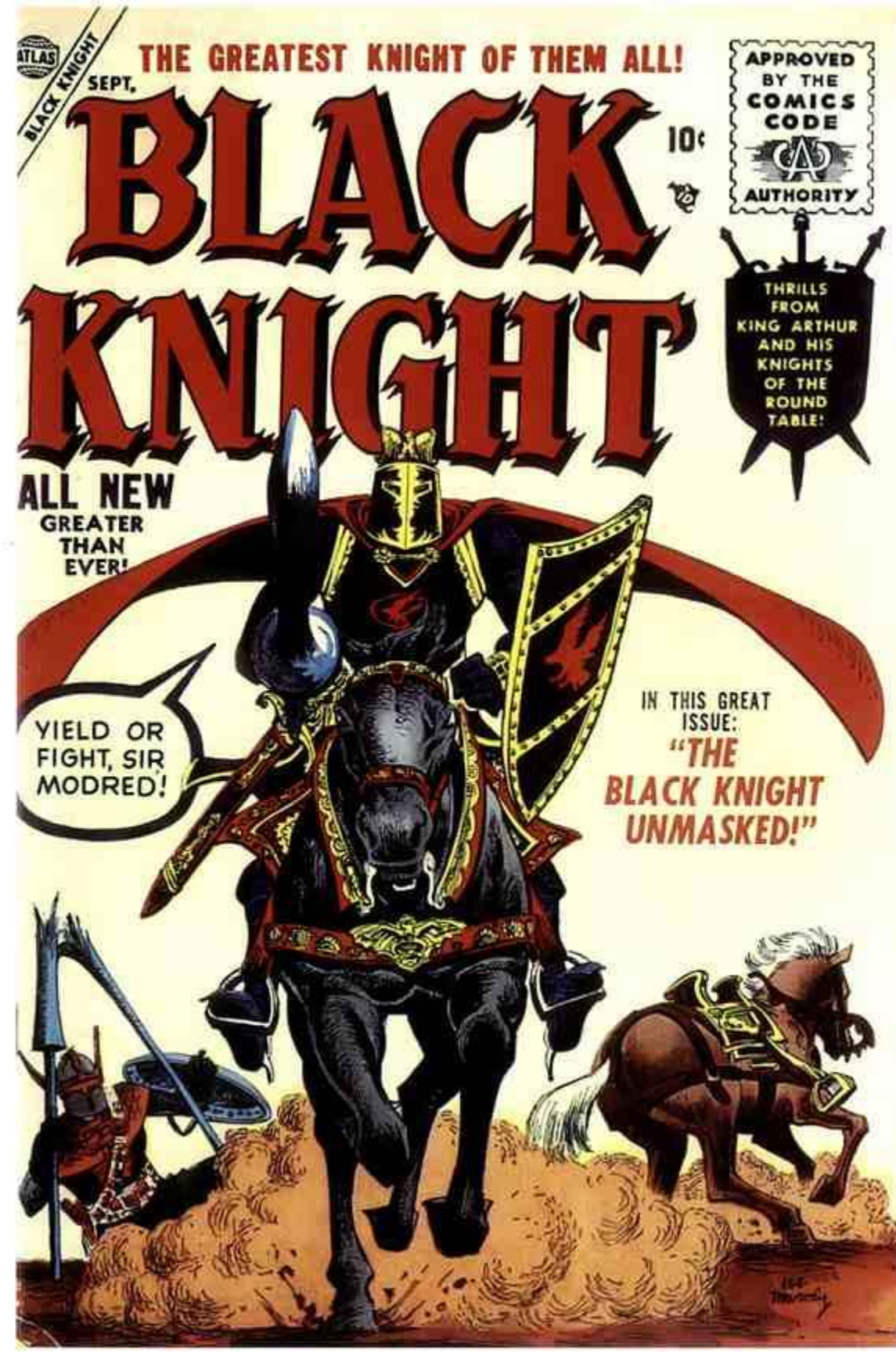
CONGRATULATIONS

TO BETTY JEAN and DADDY JOE

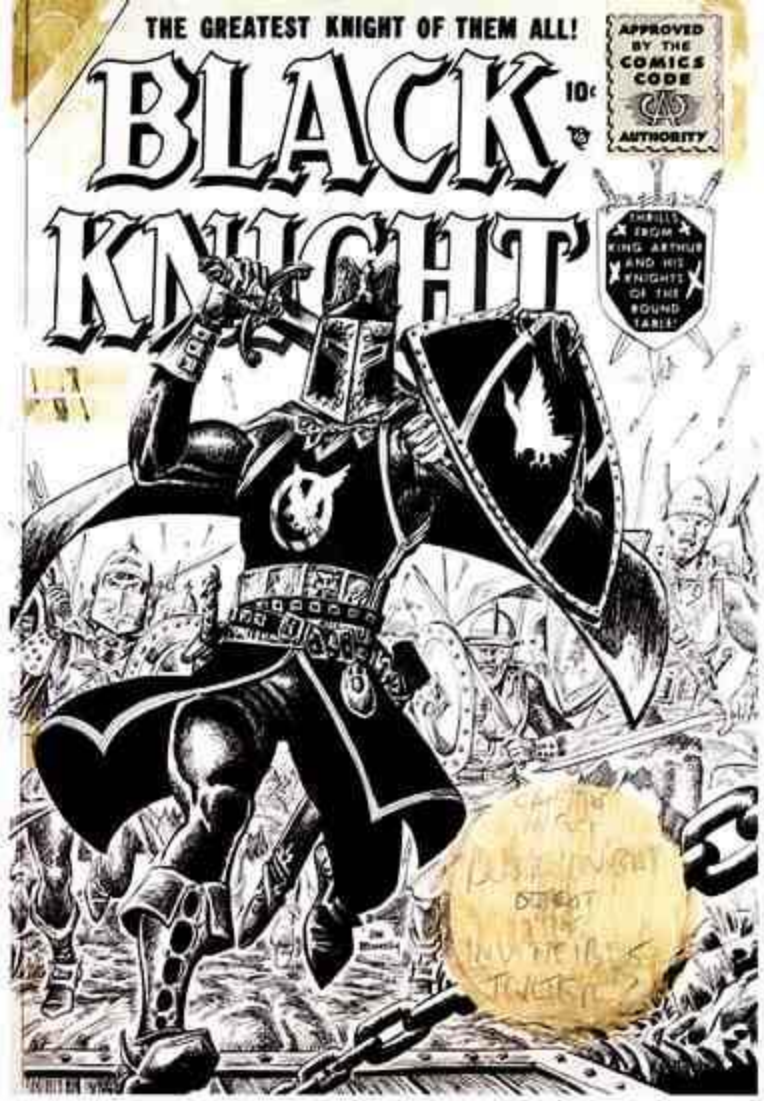
in which stories and art had to be suitable for the very youngest and most innocent of children.

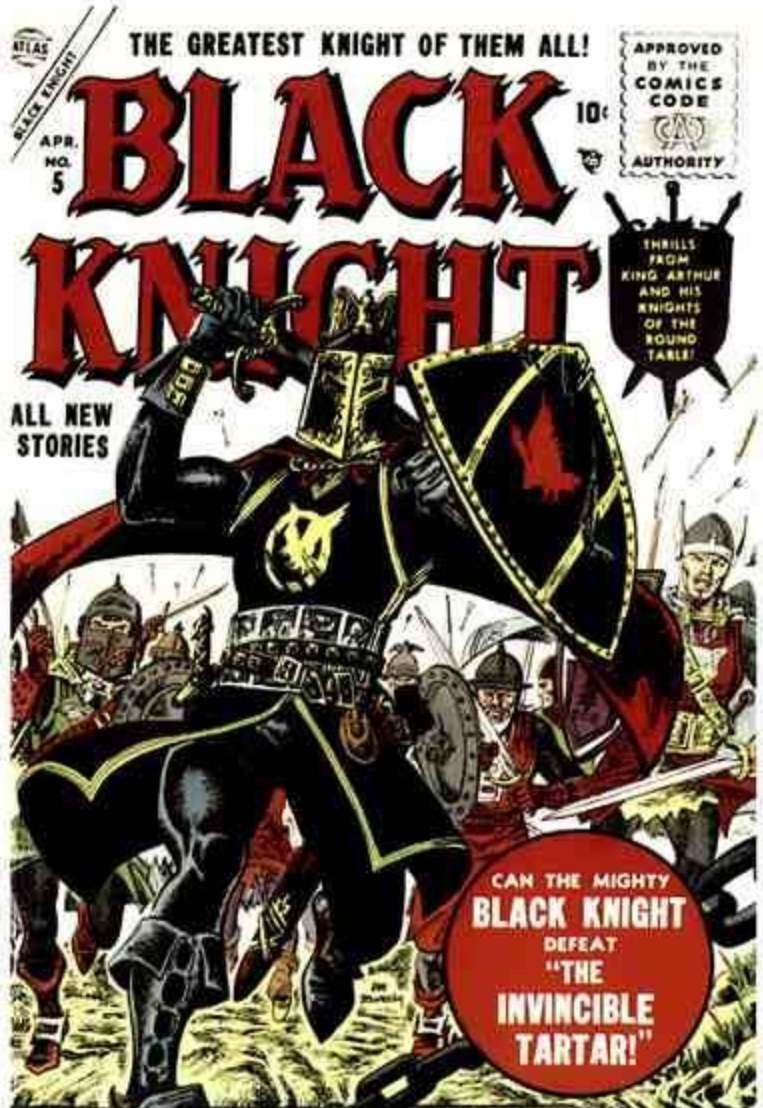
Timely weathered the storm better than many other companies, largely because Goodman controlled his own distribution at Atlas. Even so, writers and artists had to take pay cuts, and various titles were canceled. Many of Timely's less offensive horror titles survived by switching to a blander type of story. Instead of "horror comics," they became "mystery" comics. Ghosts were still permissible, if they weren't visually horrific. Little morality tales were acceptable, as long as they didn't involve vampires or loose women. While *Menace*, *Adventures Into Weird Worlds*, *Adventures Into Terror*, and other titles were put out to pasture, others managed to continue: *Strange Tales*, *Journey Into Mystery*, *Uncanny Tales*, *Mystery Tales*, and *Mystic*.

In 1955, repositioning themselves under the new CMAA code, Timely even tried a slightly different type of super hero. EC Comics, having also been forced to drop its horror line, introduced several new titles, including *Valor*, which featured tales of ancient Rome and Egypt, the Crusades, and knights in



(This page) Joe Maneely (above) stuck with Marvel during the move from horror toward titles like *Black Knight*. (Opposite page) Timely's congratulatory card for the birth of Maneely's daughter Nancy, signed by Marvel legends including Stan Lee, Carl Burgos, and Marie and John Severin, 1956.





armor. Thinking EC might be onto *another* hot new trend, as it had been with crime and horror, several other companies launched their own titles in that old-world vein.

Timely's entry into the swashbuckling arena was *Black Knight*, originally scripted by Stan Lee and drawn beautifully and powerfully by Joe Maneely. It was set during the legend-laden days of the Round Table and starred a hero with a double identity. Whenever King Arthur was about to fall prey to one of the schemes of his evil nephew Modred, or be captured by Vikings, the foppish Sir Percy of Scandia disappeared behind a convenient wall and emerged as the Black Knight, wielding his invincible Black Blade (given to him by Merlin the Magician) and dealing doom to his liege lord's foes. Many aficionados of 1950s comics consider *Black Knight* the best work of the talented Maneely, while Lee got practice writing Shakespearean cadences, which would serve him in good stead in the following decade.

But, alas, it turned out the world was not waiting for comics about knights in shining armor. *Black Knight* lasted just five issues. (So did EC's *Valor*.)

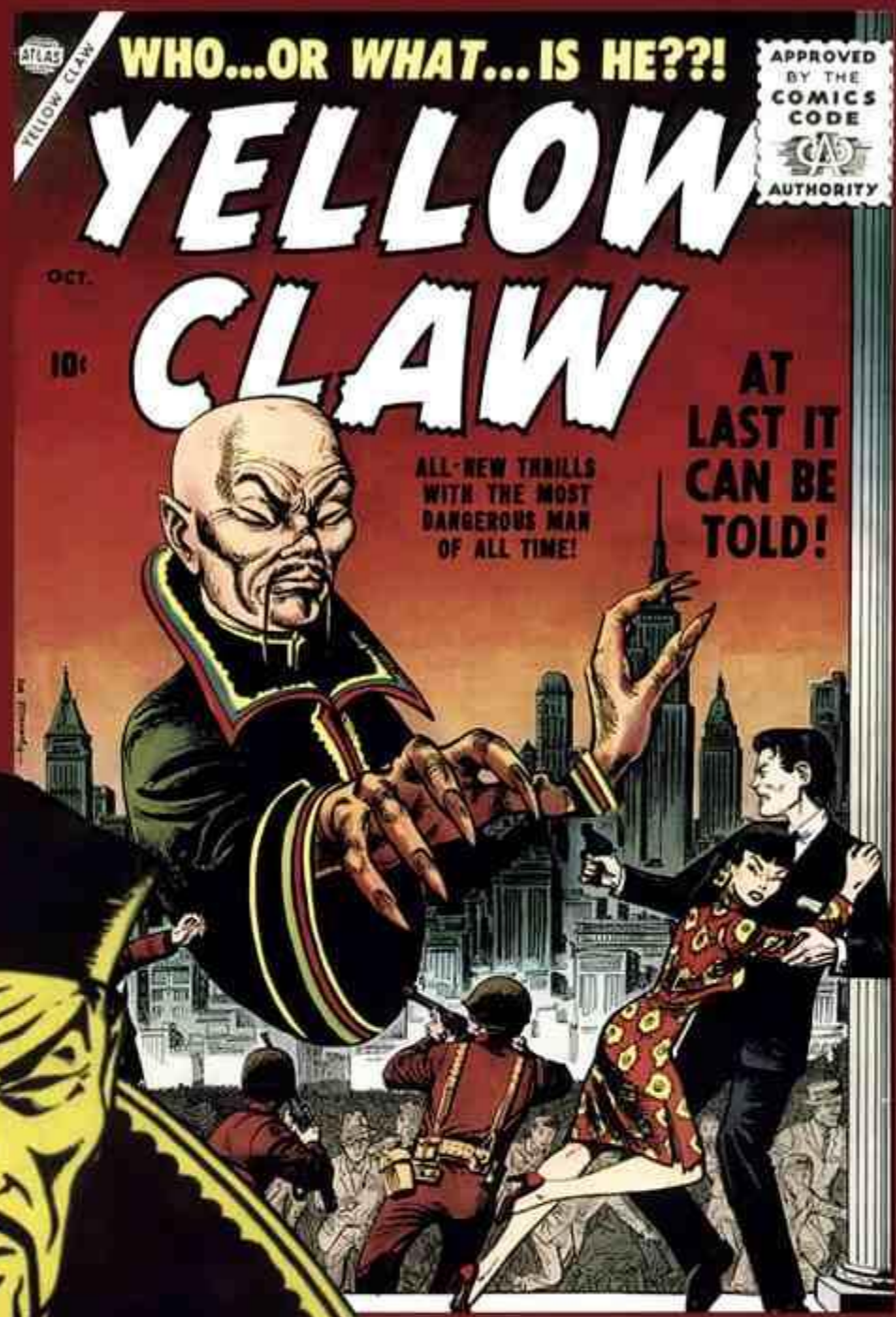
By 1956–1957, however, Goodman's company had begun to regroup. New artists like Steve Ditko joined the bullpen. Jack Kirby, the co-creator of Captain America, had a falling-out with an editor at National/DC and returned to Timely for the first time since 1941. Kirby took over the art for the second issue of *Yellow Claw*—featuring a clone of the old Sax Rohmer pulp villain Fu Manchu—and the stories got more fantastic overnight. A 1,000-foot giant snatched helicopters out of the sky, men shrank to a few inches in height, and saboteurs turned themselves into living black shadows. Still, who wanted to read a story whose main character was a villain? *Yellow Claw* was canceled after four issues.

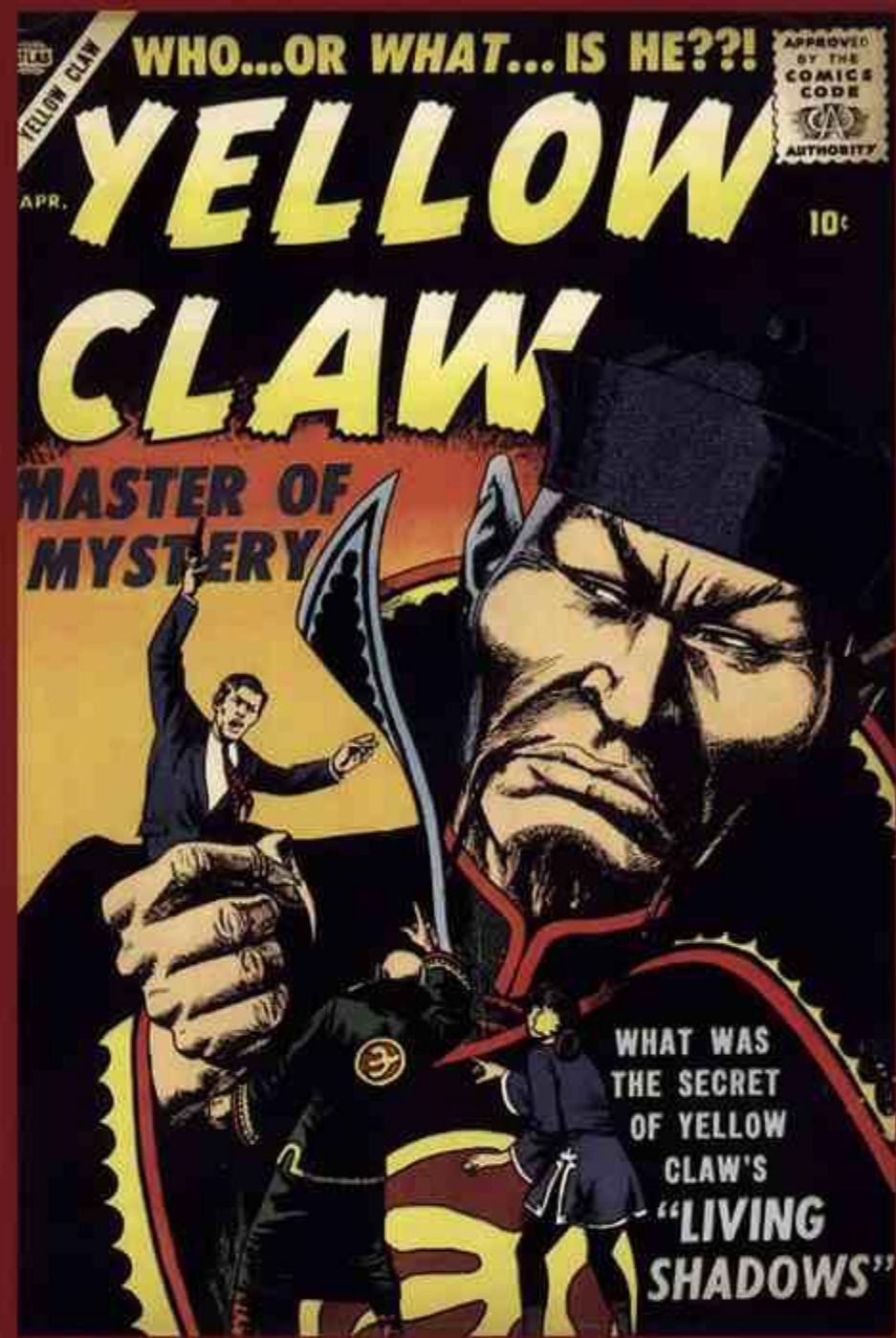
Then, a new disaster struck and very nearly brought about what Wertham and his ilk hadn't: the end of Timely Comics.

DARK DAYS

In 1957, Martin Goodman decided to discontinue his Atlas company and have his comics distributed instead by the once-powerful American News Company. Unfortunately, ANC itself collapsed only a few months later, leaving Timely with no way to get its comics onto newsstands. A later generation of comics historians has termed this occurrence "the Timely Implosion."

(This page) Maneely's original art for the cover of *Black Knight* #5, above its powerful printed cover. (Opposite page) Covers from two issues of the short-lived *Yellow Claw*.





MASTER OF MYSTERY

In order for his publishing empire to survive, Goodman had to make a disadvantageous deal with rival National/DC, which owned a thriving distribution company called Independent News. IND agreed to carry only eight Goodman comics titles a month. Timely shrank to a handful of teenage, love, Western, and war comics. Because he cannily converted his comics line to sixteen bimonthly titles, however, Goodman's output kept a slightly greater presence on the nation's newsstands than if he had published eight monthlies. Even so, editor Stan Lee became virtually the only person still holding down a staff job. He worked out of a tiny office and, for a time, slapped together issues from an inventory of art that had been completed before ANC collapsed. He told one freelance artist at the time that his uncle (Goodman) wouldn't even talk to him when they ran into each other in the hallway.

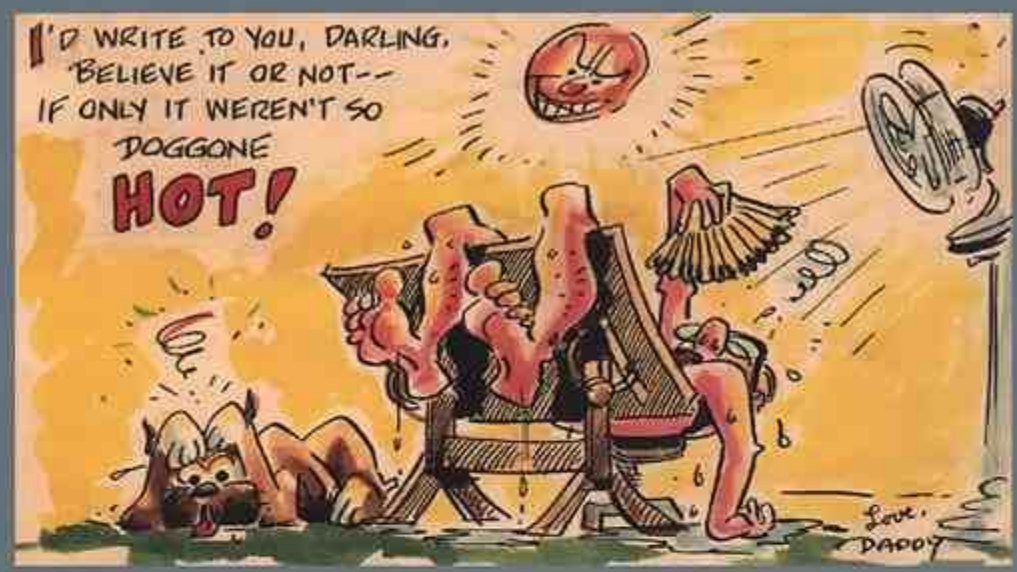
Yet, by the end of 1957 and early 1958, despite a deep recession in the national economy, things began to look up for Timely—just a little. Stan was able to commission new stories as the backlog was eaten up. *Journey into Mystery* was revived. The company even launched a few new titles: *Strange Worlds, Tales to Astonish,* and *Tales of Suspense.* If one title was canceled, another would be tried in its place. A year or so later, Goodman managed to convince IND to up his quota of titles from eight to ten. All bimonthlies, of course.

(Left) *Strange Worlds,* one of the new comics to emerge as Timely bounced back. (Above) Maneely (left) with Stan Lee, working on a newspaper comic strip.

HI, WENDY! I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU WANT THIS, BUT HERE IT IS!
Bill Watterson
LOVE, DADDY

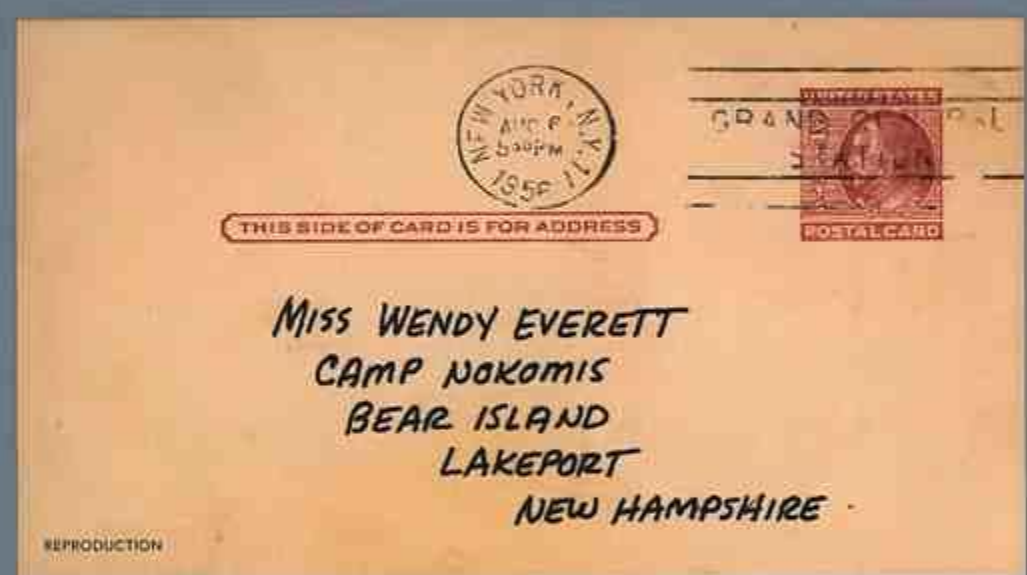
HI, WENDY! GOSH, IT'S RAINING SO HARD HERE, I CAN'T SEE FAR ENOUGH TO DRAW ANYTHING!
NOW, WHERE THE HECK IS THAT GOSH-DURN DRAWING-BOARD???
LOVE, DADDY

I'D WRITE TO YOU, DARLING, BELIEVE IT OR NOT-- IF ONLY IT WEREN'T SO DOGGONE HOT!
LOVE, DADDY

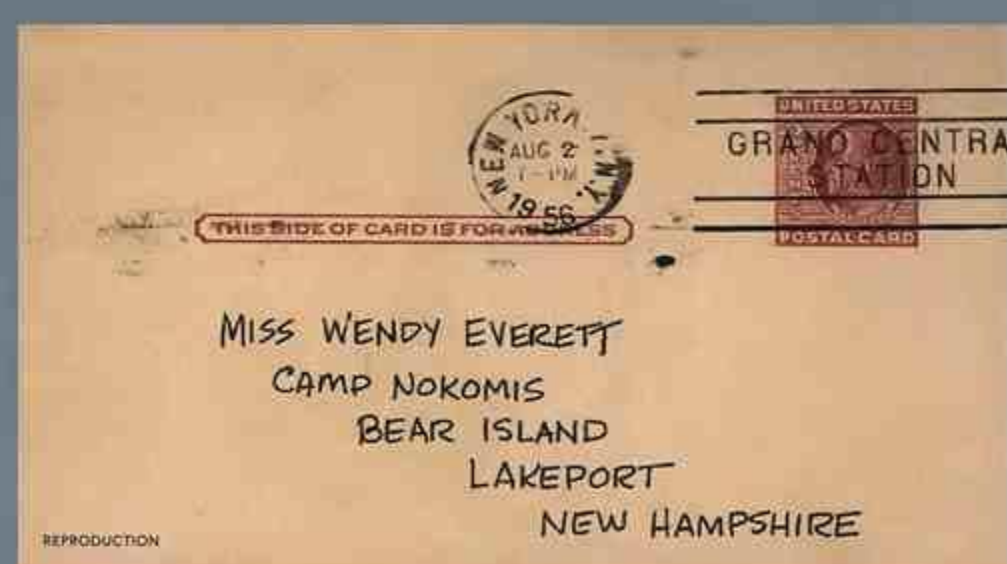

I'D WRITE TO YOU, DARLING,
BELIEVE IT OR NOT--
IF ONLY IT WEREN'T SO
DOGGONE
HOT!
LOVE,
DADDY

NEW YORK 17, N.Y.
JUL 3
1956
GRAND CENTRAL
STATION
THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS
Miss Wendy Everett
Camp Nokomis, Bear Island
Lakeport,
New Hampshire
REPRODUCTION

HI, WENDY! GOSH, IT'S
RAINING SO HARD HERE,
I CAN'T SEE FAR ENOUGH
TO DRAW ANYTHING!
NOW, WHERE THE HECK IS THAT
GOSH-DURN DROWNING-BOARD???
LOVE,
DADDY


NEW YORK, N.Y.
AUG 6
1956
GRAND CENTRAL
STATION
THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS
POSTAL CARD
MISS WENDY EVERETT
CAMP NOKOMIS
BEAR ISLAND
LAKEPORT
NEW HAMPSHIRE
REPRODUCTION

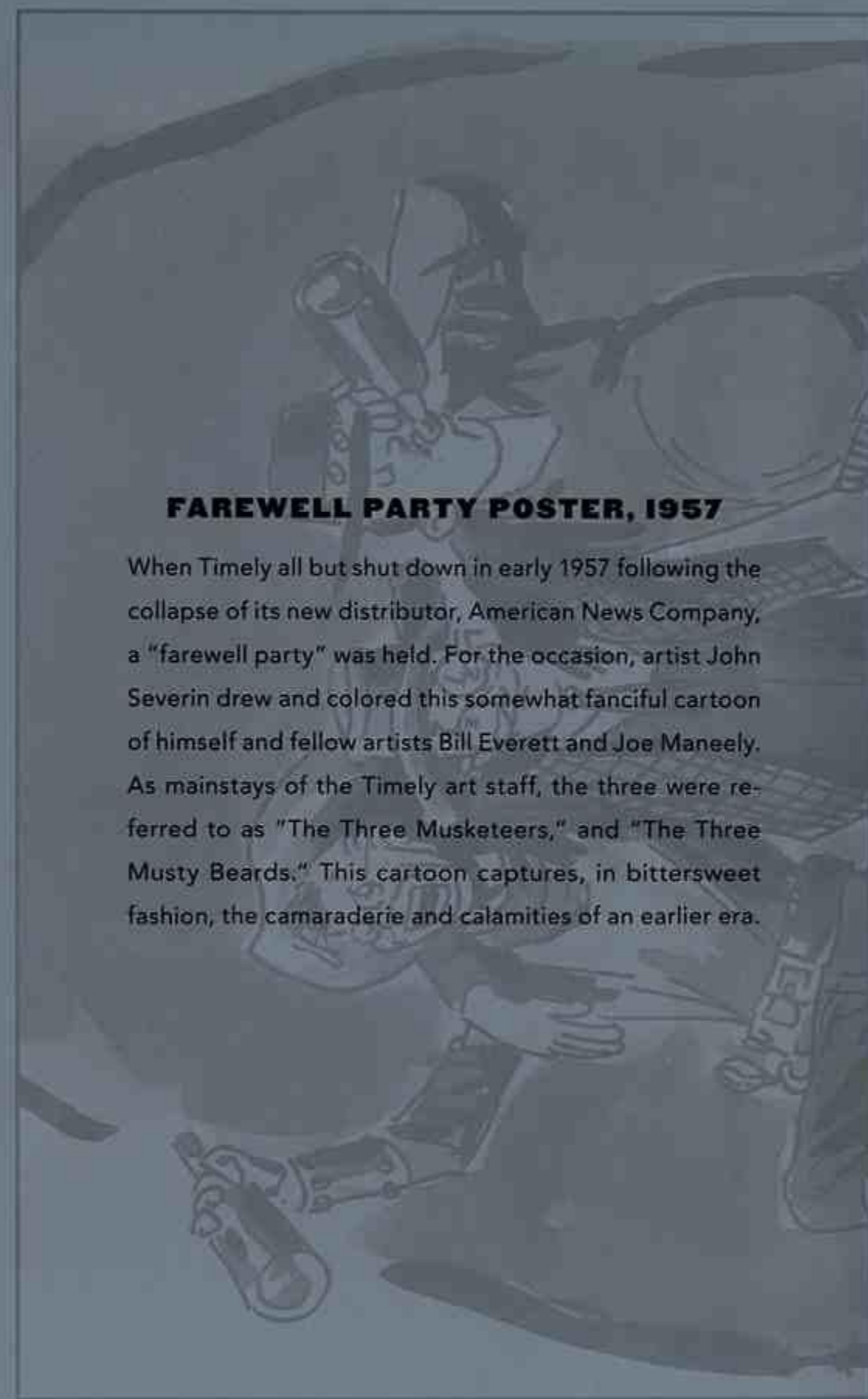
HI, WENDY! I DON'T KNOW
WHY YOU WANT THIS,
BUT HERE IT
IS!
Bill Cosby
Love,
Daddy


NEW YORK, N.Y.
AUG 2
1956
GRAND CENTRAL
STATION
THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS
POSTAL CARD
MISS WENDY EVERETT
CAMP NOKOMIS
BEAR ISLAND
LAKEPORT
NEW HAMPSHIRE
REPRODUCTION

"THE FAREWELL PARTY!"

BILL EVERETT'S POSTCARDS TO HIS DAUGHTER, 1956

When Bill Everett's daughter Wendy went off to summer camp, the Timely artist would send her a postcard every week and would draw—and color—a cartoon on the back depicting what had happened at home that week. According to Wendy, "No one in camp ever got anything like that, and, of course, because they were postcards, everyone else at camp got to read [them] before I did."



FAREWELL PARTY POSTER, 1957

When Timely all but shut down in early 1957 following the collapse of its new distributor, American News Company, a "farewell party" was held. For the occasion, artist John Severin drew and colored this somewhat fanciful cartoon of himself and fellow artists Bill Everett and Joe Maneely. As mainstays of the Timely art staff, the three were referred to as "The Three Musketeers," and "The Three Musty Beards." This cartoon captures, in bittersweet fashion, the camaraderie and calamities of an earlier era.

MAGAZINE MANAGEMENT COMPANY

655 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK 21, N. Y. • TEmpleton 8-7900

8/25/59

Dick:

You did a swell job inking Kirby's MONSTRO story.

So, here's the cover of that mag for you to ink, also. It's due this Friday 8/28 if possible-- if not, Monday will be okay.

I've enclosed another 6-page strip as well for you to ink. It has a long deadline-- I won't need it till Septemeber 10th. Of course, if you send it to me sooner, that's fine-- but you needn't rush.

I'll try to send you as much inking as I can--- don't expect TOO much because we don't HAVE that much-- these twelve pages in a row is an unusual situation... however, whatever DOES come along I'll give you first crack at.

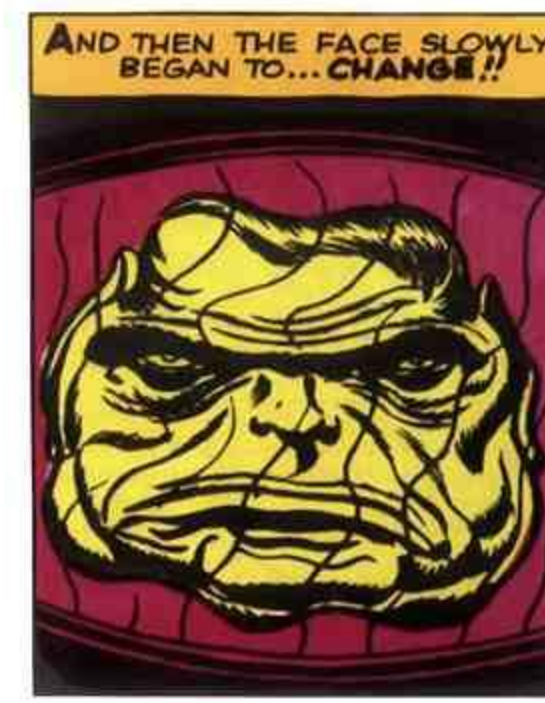
All best-

THE MONSTER MAGS

Around the time that the situation was improving for Timely, a new type of story had begun to predominate in the "mystery" titles. Instead of vaguely spooky subjects, now nearly every issue spotlighted some gigantic creature that was menacing the world. This theme can be traced ultimately to the 1952 revival of *King Kong* (originally released in 1933), which led to a spate of giant-monster movies that became virtually synonymous with the 1950s, including *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, *It Came from beneath the Sea*, *Tarantula*, and *The Deadly Mantis*. This trend climaxed in 1956 with the blockbuster success in the United States of the Japanese movie *Godzilla*, in which a gargantuan reptile with fiery breath leveled much of Tokyo.

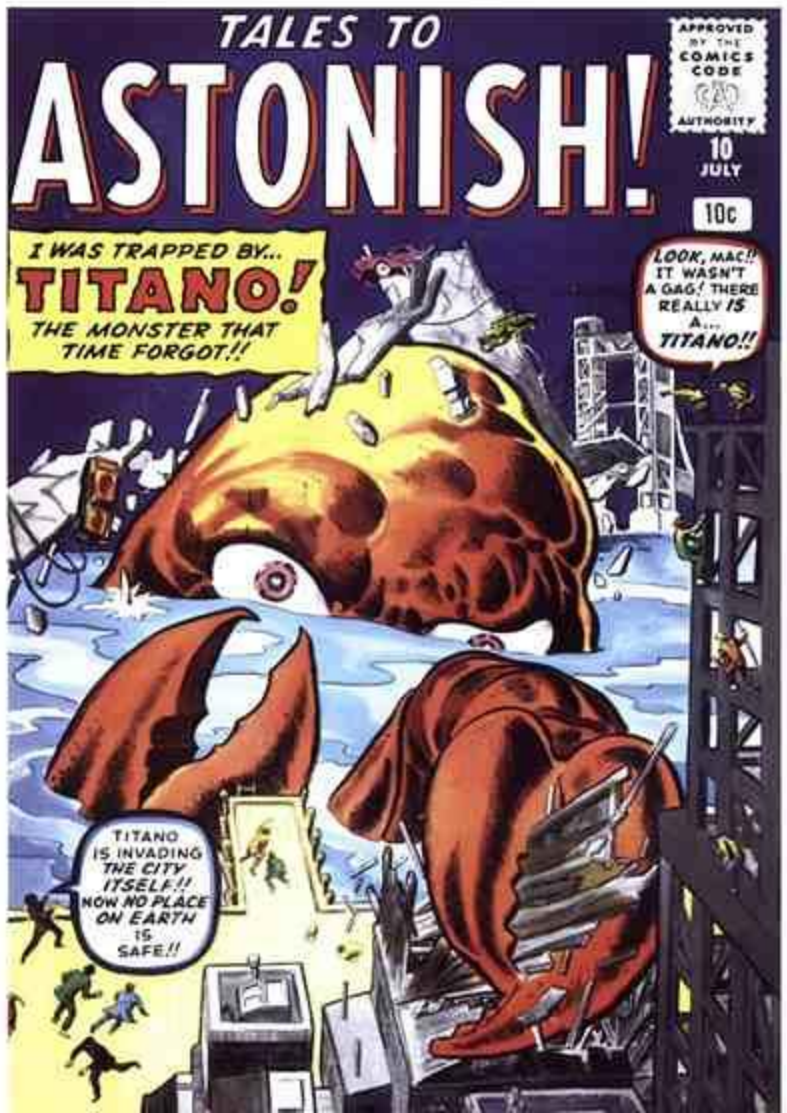
Goodman's little stump of a company took to this genre with a vengeance between the late 1950s and the early sixties, with Jack Kirby drawing most of the lead tales from scripts by Stan Lee. Month after month, some enormous "thing" arrived from outer space, from beneath the Earth or another dimension, or from a scientist's lab to threaten civilization. The humans usually defeated it by some clever ploy—such as designing an even bigger (but non-functioning) monster to scare it off, or luring it into a bottomless quicksand bog.

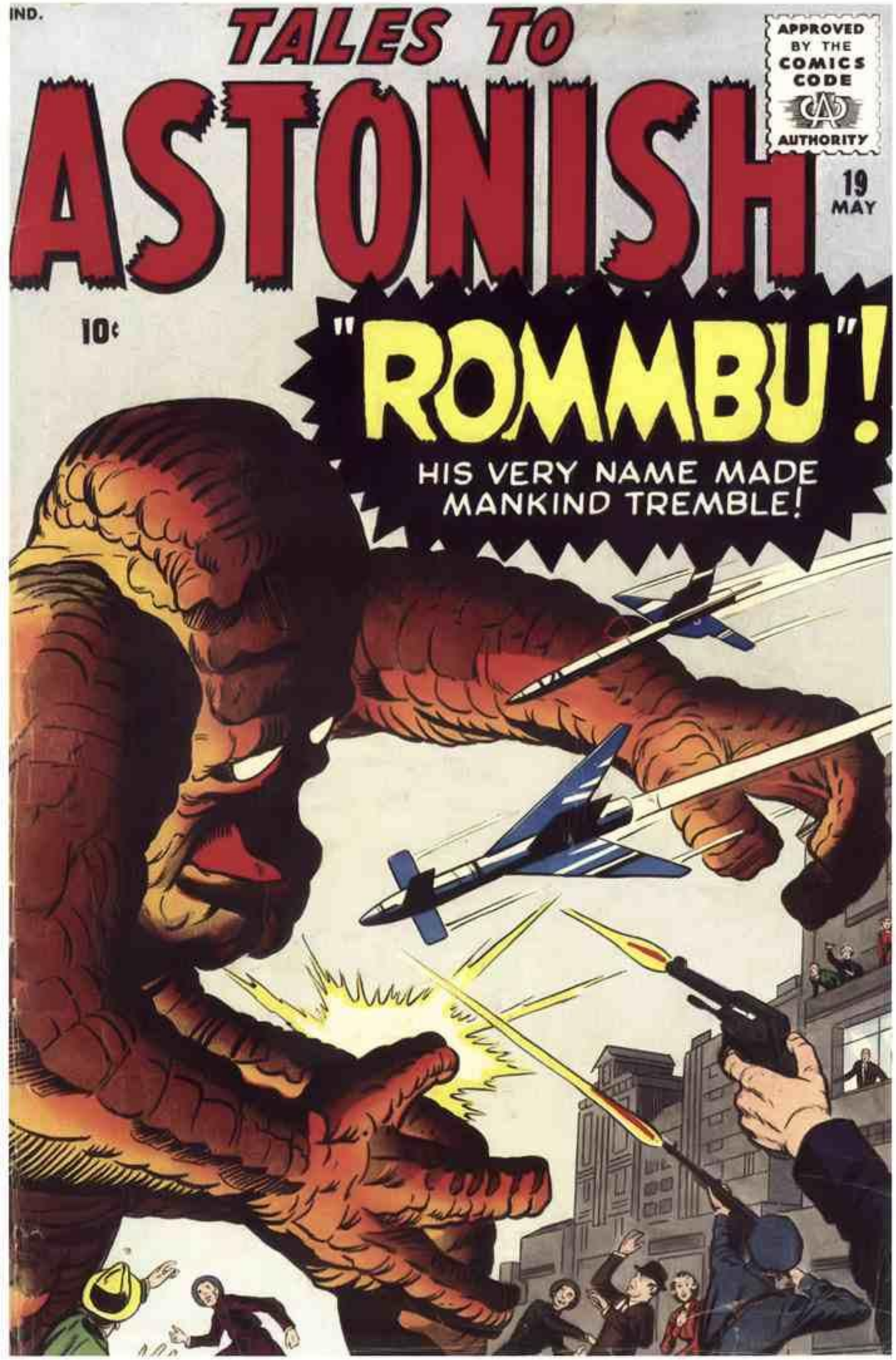
As often as not, the major virtue of these stories was Kirby's powerful and inventive artwork. But Stan Lee's names, too, had a certain kookie charm: Mummex, King of the Mummies; Droom, the Living Lizard; Titano, the Monster that Time Forgot; Monstrom, the Dweller in the Black Swamp; and Rommbu ("His Very Name Made Mankind Tremble!"). And that's just from a 1960–1961



(Opposite page) A letter from Stan Lee to Dick Ayers, who inked Jack Kirby's illustrations of the monsters Monstro and Spoor. (This page) The inked version of Spoor and his friend Rorgg.

TALES TO
ASTONISH!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
9
MAY
10¢
GET OFF THE STREETS! GET OUT OF TOWN! HERE COMES...
DROOM! THE LIVING LIZARD!
EVEN THE MISSILES CAN'T STOP DROOM!! NO ONE IS SAFE! THERE'S NO PLACE TO HIDE!
HELP! SAVE US! HE'S ALIVE! HE'S COMING! IT'S DROOM!!


TALES TO
ASTONISH!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
10
JULY
10¢
I WAS TRAPPED BY...
TITANO!
THE MONSTER THAT TIME FORGOT!!
LOOK, MAC!! IT WASN'T A GAG! THERE REALLY IS A... TITANO!!
TITANO IS INVADING THE CITY ITSELF!! NOW NO PLACE ON EARTH IS SAFE!!


IND.
TALES TO
ASTONISH
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
19
MAY
10¢
"ROMMBU"!
HIS VERY NAME MADE MANKIND TREMBLE!

run of issues of a single title, *Tales to Astonish!* Three others, *Journey Into Mystery*, *Strange Tales*, and *Tales of Suspense* served up more of the same. When Stan got too busy to write them all, he simply turned a skeletal plot over to his younger brother, artist Larry Lieber, to script.

Sales on these and Goodman's other surviving titles were never spectacular, and reports differ on whether they had leveled off, or were actually declining, by 1961.

Nineteen sixty-one. That's when the world of comic books changed forever.

(Both pages) Mummies, Martians, and monsters: Astonishing!

MUMMEX BEWARE!
KING OF THE MUMMIES, LIVES AGAIN!!

4
4
4

THE MARVEL AGE OF COMICS BEGINS!

1960s

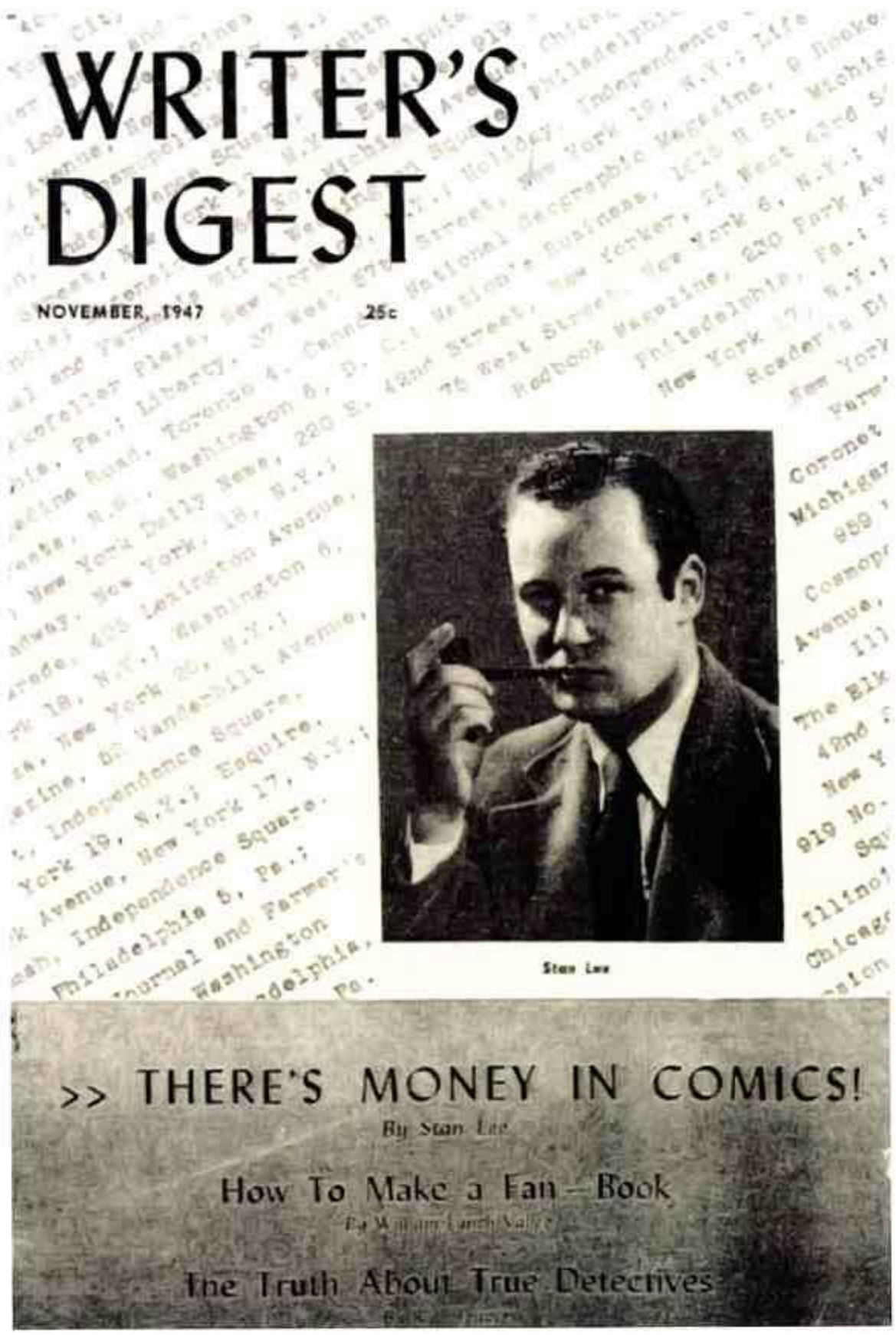
BY 1961, STAN LEE HAD HAD ENOUGH. FOR TWO DECADES, HE'D been writing and editing hundreds of comic books according to Martin Goodman's formula, which could be broken down roughly as follows:

(1) Never be *first* to put out a comic book in a particular genre—but if and when you go in, saturate the market with numerous titles that imitate whatever's selling.

(2) Keep all plots and dialogue simple enough for a child to read (and not necessarily an especially *bright* child).

(3) The cover is everything. If it catches a kid's eye and causes him to pluck the mag off the newsstand, what's inside hardly matters.

(Opposite page) The Fantastic Four pose for a pin-up drawn by Jack Kirby and inked by Dick Ayers. (This page) A gray Hulk, as shown in *The Incredible Hulk* #1, flexes some muscle.



This approach wasn't *entirely* wrong, of course. Magazine covers *are* important selling points. And, while young adults in the armed services formed a significant portion of comics readers during the medium's first few decades, preteen children were clearly its largest audience.

But Stan had grown weary of the whole process. At best, the company's comics—indeed, the entire field—seemed to be merely treading water. And Stan Lee didn't want to stay shackled to a dying industry.

Over the years, he had dabbled in other areas of writing. He'd scripted several different comic strips for newspapers, aimed at adults as well as kids. In 1947, his photo had even graced the cover of *Writer's Digest* magazine. Stan had a theory: "If you can write, you can write." That is, if you can write one kind of story or for one medium, you can probably adjust your style so you can write other kinds of stories for other mediums.

So, one day in 1961, he told his wife, Joan, that he wanted to give Goodman his notice and try his hand at something new, at some*place* new. Before he could resign, however, Goodman informed Stan that he wanted to launch a new comic book—about a *team of super heroes*, a concept that seemed to run contrary to what Timely had published of late. Goodman told Stan he had been playing golf with some bigwig associated with DC Comics, and the exec had mentioned strong sales figures on a new DC title, *Justice League of America*. That comic starred a team composed of icons Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and Aquaman, and newer heroes Manhunter from Mars, Flash, and Green Lantern.

Well, Goodman figured, if super heroes were selling again for DC, maybe they'd sell for him, too. So he wanted Stan to create a super hero team.

Stan never got around to resigning from what remained of Timely—that day, or any other day. He's written since of how he was in a quandary about what to do, when Joan gave him the solution. For years, Stan had been saying he wanted to write a different kind of comic—one with more realistic stories and greater characterization, and not just aimed at youngsters. This was his chance, Joan said. He could do that with this new super team book. If Goodman didn't like it, what was he going to do? *Fire* him? Stan had been wanting to quit anyway!

So Stan typed out a two-page synopsis for the eleven-page origin story of this new team. The reason for the short summary (versus a longer script) was that, over the years, Stan had had to devise efficient ways to keep up with

(Left) A 1947 *Writer's Digest*, featuring none other than Stan Lee. By the time he created the Fantastic Four in 1961, Stan had been writing comics for two decades.

SYNOPSES: THE FANTASTIC FOUR JULY '61 SCHEDULE (#1)

STORY #1. INTRODUCTION. "MEET THE FANTASTIC FOUR"

This story is told in 2 chapters. Chapter one is 6 pages long. Chapter 2 is 5 pages.

There are four main characters: 1) REED RICHARDS. (Mr. Fantastic) He is young, handsome scientist. Leader of the four. Invents a space ship to go to Mars. Hopes to be first man to reach Mars.

2) SUSAN STORM. (Invisible Girl) She is Reed's girl friend. She's an actress. Beautiful, glamorous.

3) BEN GRIMM. (The Thing) Ben is very husky, brutish guy. He's a pilot. He falls for Susan also.

4) JOHNNY STORM. (Human Torch) He is Susan's kid brother. A teen-ager. 17 years old. High school star athlete.

Story might open up with a meeting of Fantastic Four. As meeting starts, caption tells reader that we will go back a few weeks to see how it all began....

Reed Richards tells Susan and her brother Johnny that his space ship is finally completed. He hopes to be first man to Mars. But he needs a pilot. They hire Ben Grimm. Ben is huge, surly unpleasant guy who doesn't want any part of project until he sees Susan. He falls for Susan, and she manages to coax him into piloting ship. Ben is crackerjack pilot, ex-war hero, best pilot available.

As the four are about to begin flight, they are warned against it by authorities. Told that no one yet knows what effect cosmic rays will have on human bodies so far out in space. But they decide to go anyway. They fear that if they don't go, Reds may beat us to it.

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As the four are about to begin flight, they are warned against it by authorities. Told that no one yet knows what effect cosmic rays will have on human bodies so far out in space. But they decide to go anyway. They fear that if they don't go, Reds may beat us to it.

(NOTE: At the rate the Communists are progressing in space, maybe we better make this a flight to the STARS, instead of just to Mars, because by the time this mag goes on sale, the Russians may have already MADE a flight to Mars!)

So, without clearance from the authorities, in the dead of night, they take off for the nearest star-- very dramatically.

In space, on the way to the stars, POOOF! They are bombarded by cosmic rays which penetrate the ship and which affect all four of the occupants. They can't continue the trip-- have to turn back-- are lucky to land alive. But they are all different now- they sense it- although they don't yet quite know HOW they've changed.

Suddenly, they can't see Susan! But they know she's there: They can HEAR her. They realize she has become invisible. She can not become visible again. Later, she will buy a mask with a face like the one she had and she will have to wear that mask ~~[illegible]~~ in order to be seen. Her clothes of course can be seen, so it is only her flesh that is invisible. When she takes her clothes off, she's completely invisible. (I hope this won't seem to scary in art work. Better talk to me about it, ~~[illegible]~~ Jack-- maybe we'll change this gimmick somewhat).

As for Johnny, Susan's brother, whenever he gets excited, he bursts into flame. Becomes a Human Torch, and can fly, as his body gets lighter than air. BUT doesn't last for more than 5 minutes. At end of five minutes, his flame goes out and he becomes normal again, until he gets excited again. But can't flame on for at least 5 minutes after he's gotten back to normal. Comics Association told us he may never burn anyone with flame, he may only burn ropes, doors, etc.--never people. And, he cannot toss fireballs as the old Human Torch could. His biggest asset is that he can fly.

more--

They think Reed Richards, the pilot, is unaffected by cosmic rays, as he seems normal-- UNTIL he tries to reach for something. Then they realize his arm has STRETCHED toward the thing he reached for. After awhile they realize Reed's body has become like RUBBER. He can get skinny, elongated, anything that you can do with rubber. He can squeeze thru keyholes, etc. Of course, the more stretched-out he gets, the weaker he gets-- but the point remains that he can twist and stretch his body into almost any shape. (He can even alter the appearance of his face to make himself look like someone else) BUT it is quite painful to do all this, so he can only maintain the strange shapes for a very short period of time until the pain gets to be unbearable.

Finally, Ben Grimm steps out of the shadows. They all gasp-- his body has changed in the most grotesque way of all. He's sort of shapeless-- he's become a THING. And, he's grown more fantastically powerful than any other living thing. He is stronger than an elephant. BUT, he is so heavy that he moves very slowly-- he's very ponderous, and those slow, ponderous movements should make him look very dramatic. He cannot alter his appearance as the others can, so he must wear a coat with turned-up collar, sunglasses, slouch hat, and glove when he goes out in public. But when he takes 'em off, he is a THING!

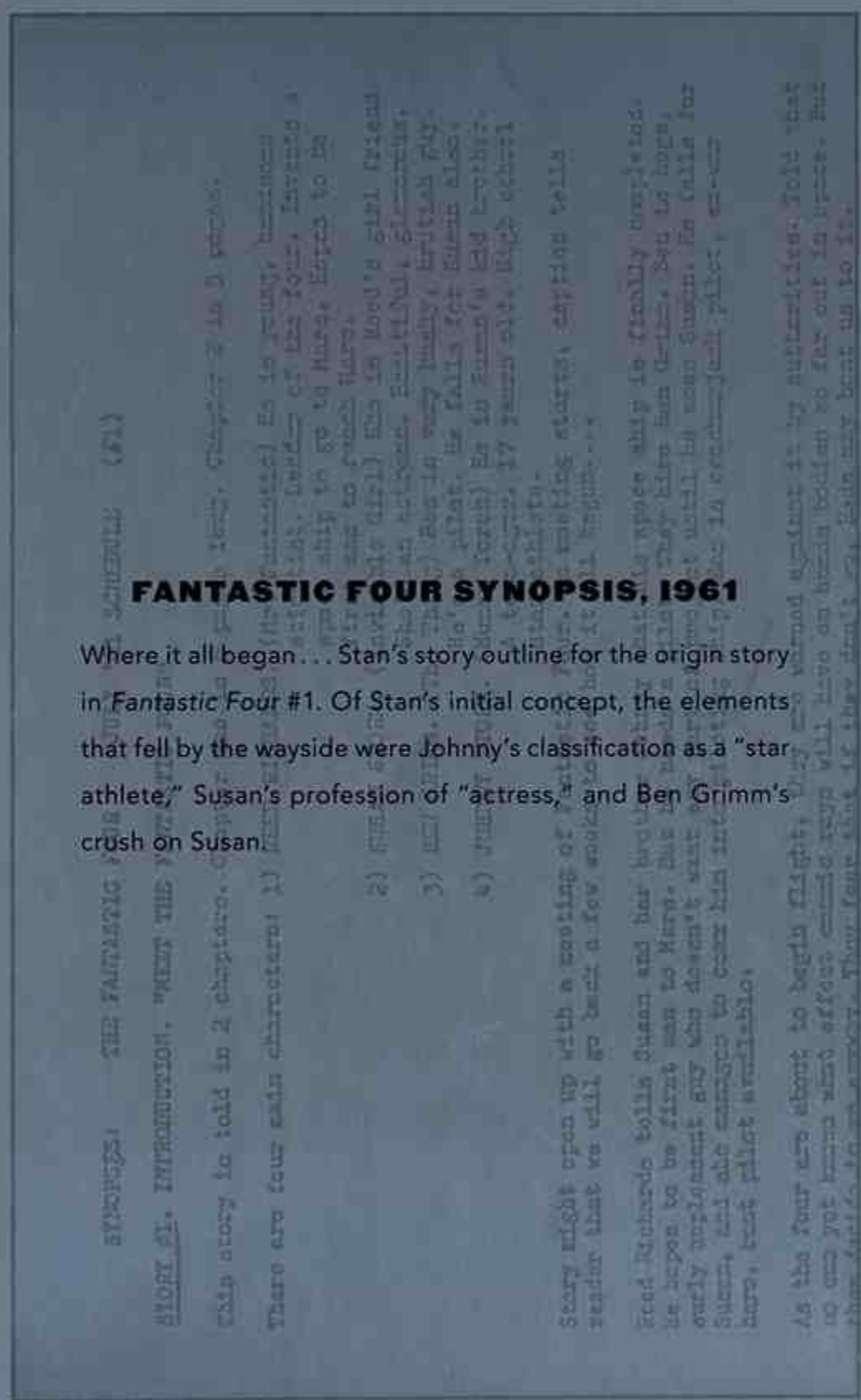
So much for who they are and how they got that way. Now, here's a gimmick I think we might play up to advantage: Let's make The Thing the heavy- in other words, he's not really a good guy. He's part of the Fantastic Four because they all got that way together and they decide to remain a team, and also because he has a crush on Susan-- but actually, he is jealous of Mr. Fantastic and dislikes Human Torch because Torch always sides with Fantastic. Let's treat him so that reader is always afraid he will sabotage the Fantastic Four's efforts at whatever they are doing-- he isn't interested in helping mankind the way the other three are-- he is more interested in winning Susan away from Mr. Fantastic. (We might indicate that he feels he may return to his normal self at any time, because none of them know how long their strange powers will last- or whether or the effect of the cosmic rays will one day wear off them).

Anyway, the four of them decide to form a unit-- they think it is an act of Fate which made them as they are and they think they owe it to fate to use their powers to help mankind. So they adopt their new names: HUMAN TORCH, MR. FANTASTIC, INVISIBLE GIRL, and THE THING, and vow to spend their lives fighting all sorts of evil menaces which the normal forces of the world cannot cope with. And, to keep it all from getting too goody-goody, there is always friction between Mr. Fantastic and The Thing, with Human Torch siding with Mr. F. Also, the other three are always afraid of The Thing getting out of their control some day and harming mankind with his amazing strength. Occasionally also, you might have the Thing wanting to do something for personal profit- and the other 3 try to stop him. In other words, the Thing doesn't have the ethics that the other three have, and consequently he will probably be the most interesting one to the reader, because he'll always be unpredictable.

So much for the introduction-- the preceding should have covered exactly 11 pages, consisting of 2 chapters. (Chapter one: 6 pages. Chapter 2: 5 pages)

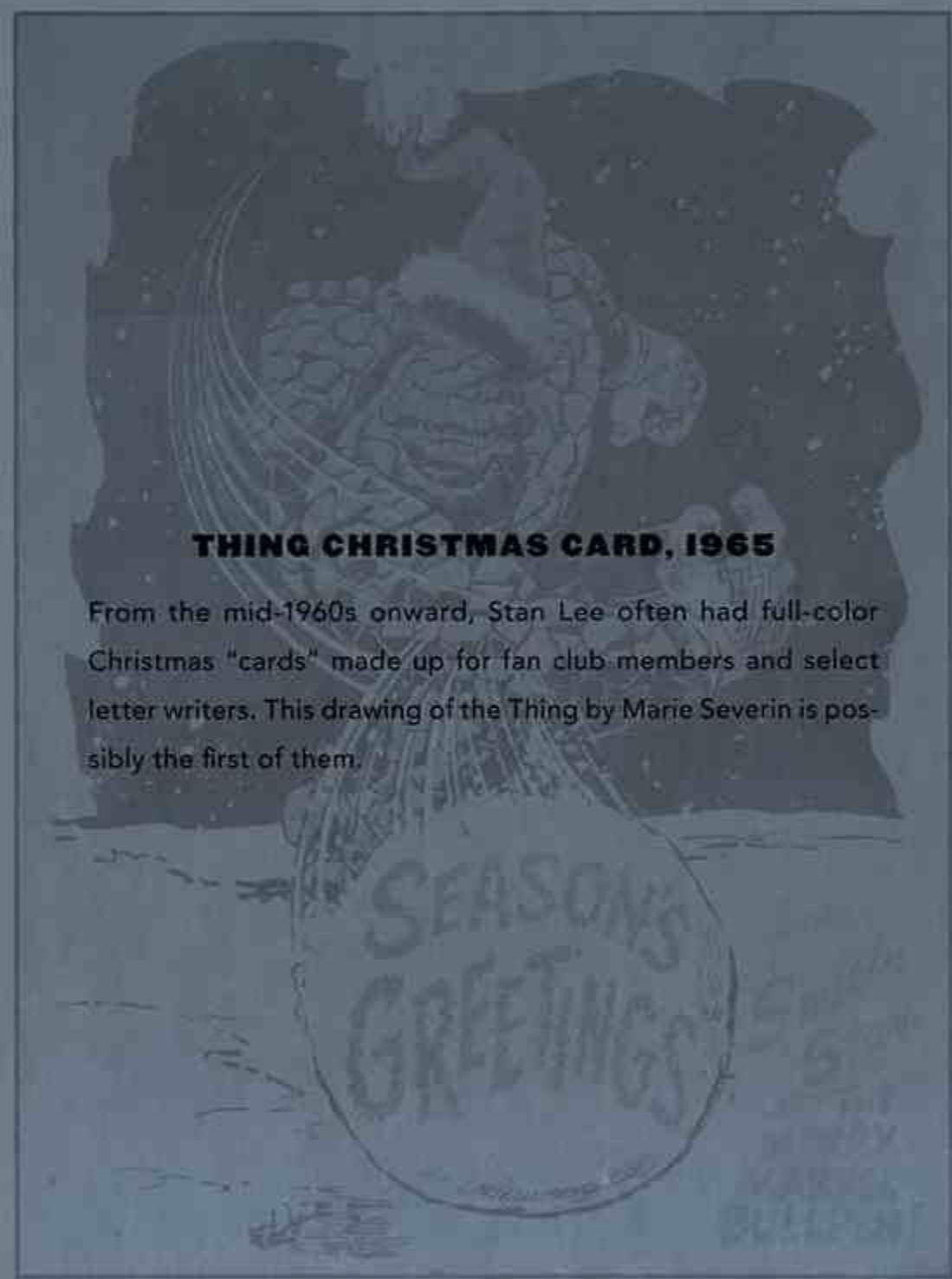
The next two chapters, in which the Fantastic Four undertakes their first case, will ~~also~~ be 3 chapters for a total of 13 pages-- ~~5 pages to each chapter~~ (3,5,5.)

REPRODUCTION



FANTASTIC FOUR SYNOPSIS, 1961

Where it all began . . . Stan's story outline for the origin story in *Fantastic Four* #1. Of Stan's initial concept, the elements that fell by the wayside were Johnny's classification as a "star athlete," Susan's profession of "actress," and Ben Grimm's crush on Susan.



THING CHRISTMAS CARD, 1965

From the mid-1960s onward, Stan Lee often had full-color Christmas "cards" made up for fan club members and select letter writers. This drawing of the Thing by Marie Severin is possibly the first of them.

demand. He had been writing so many stories that, even with his brother Larry finishing some of them from his plots, it was hard for him to keep pace with even the handful of artists still working for the company. Sometimes two or three freelance artists might need a new script at the same time, so he might give the artist only a brief summary of the story, a single typed page or so. After reading that plot, the artist would draw the story in the requisite number of pages.

When he received the penciled pages from the artist, Stan would write the dialogue and captions, drawing the balloons and boxes right on the original art, then pass them on to be lettered. After the letterer had finished *his* work in ink, the pages were then sent to the inker, who was usually a different artist from the penciler. Eventually, this way of doing a comic book story (plot, then pencils, then script, then lettering, then inks) would informally be called "the Marvel method," and for decades virtually all stories at Marvel, and increasingly many at other companies, would be done by that system. In the early 1960s, though, it was just a way for Stan Lee to keep his artists busy, so that they didn't lose money twiddling their talented thumbs while he was writing a script for a different artist!

And so it went with the mag created for the new super hero team: the *Fantastic Four.*

THE BIRTH OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR

Though only one of the quartet (Dr. Reed Richards) was a scientist, Stan's new super hero group was determined to fly a spaceship to Mars, putting the United States out in front in the space race that had begun when the U.S.S.R. launched the first space satellite in 1957. Stan was clearly making up some of the story as he typed. The proof? Two paragraphs after he wrote that the heroes

(Both pages) A super hero team is born, as shown in clips from *Fantastic Four* #1.

were bound for Mars, he inserted a note to artist Jack Kirby saying that, on second thought, the "Communists" were making such progress in space that by the time this first issue went on sale, they might already have sent a ship to the red planet, so "maybe we better make this a flight to the STARS."

The rocket fell back to earth, but not before cosmic rays in our planet's outer atmosphere had given each group member a different special power. Reed could now stretch into any length or shape, much like the 1940s–1950s hero Plastic Man, created by Jack Cole for Quality Comics Group. His girlfriend, Susan Storm, had turned invisible. Her teenage brother, Johnny, became a Human Torch—a new version of the hero who had appeared on the cover of the very first comic book Goodman had ever published, more than two decades before.

But from the very beginning, it was clear that pilot Ben Grimm would be the real star of the show. The rays had turned him into a nearly "shapeless" monster—"a THING"—and a "fantastically powerful" one. On the initial two pages of his synopsis, Stan had already decided the Thing would be "the heavy"—"not really a good guy." The others would "always [be] afraid of The Thing getting out of their control some day and harming mankind with his amazing strength." This, plus Ben's desire to make a profit from his power, meant he would "probably be the most interesting one to the reader, because he'll always be unpredictable."

Thus, from the moment the origin of the Fantastic Four was first set down on paper, they were something new under the comic book sun: super heroes far more fallible, more realistic, more *human* than readers had experienced in the medium's first two or three decades. This was a revolution in the making, but nobody knew it yet—not even Stan, who was just trying to enjoy himself by writing comics differently than he'd been doing for the preceding twenty years.

Having typed out the plot for roughly half an issue, Stan turned it over to Kirby. Between the two talented men, a good idea was transformed into a great comic book that became one of the most influential single issues in the history of the field.

Kirby took Stan's idea and ran with it. He dropped the idea of telling the story in chronological sequence. Whether on his own or after a talk with Stan, he began the tale with a several-page sequence in which three of the Fantastic Four answered a signal from their leader. Sue was at a tea party and responded to the call by turning invisible and causing a certain amount of chaos. The Thing hurled off the hat and coat that disguised his grotesque bulk and smashed his way out of a clothing store. Johnny was working on a car when, seeing the signal in the sky, he burst into flame, melting the vehicle. Luckily, Reed Richards (Mr. Fantastic) saved Johnny from a USAF heat-seeking missile by deflecting the projectile so that it "explode[d] harmlessly over the sea."

Only after the four had assembled did Kirby finally get around to drawing their origin. By now, he was on the eighth page of what was supposed to be an eleven-page story. So he squeezed all the events that had led up to the flight into space into less than a page—and the story still ended up running thirteen pages instead of eleven. There was no room to show several things the synopsis called for: Susan in her day job as an actress, Johnny as an athlete, Ben as a pilot hired by Reed for the Mars/stars mission—who also had a crush on Susan.

Sure, Stan could have shoehorned all that information into word balloons, but why bother? Seeing Jack's powerful pencils and sensational storytelling inspired him to streamline events in the story when he wrote the dialogue. And so the first flowering of what Stan would later christen "The Marvel Age of Comics" came about as a joint effort by one of the great collaborative teams in comic book history.

(This page) Cover for the first issue of *Fantastic Four*. (Opposite page) Samples from the interior, and Stan Lee's original sketches of the team's emblem.

The Fantastic Four #1 went on sale in late summer with a November 1961 cover date. Wisely, Lee and Goodman wanted to make certain that, while reaching out both to older readers and to young super hero fans, they also appealed to a third group who only weeks earlier might have bought *Strange Tales* #89 (which starred Fin Fang Foom, a giant reptilian monster). And so the premier issue's second half was devoted to a comic about the Fantastic Four's confrontation with the Mole Man, a subterranean villain. In that story—and, most tellingly, on the cover—the foursome battled a huge monster breaking through a Manhattan street from beneath. Hence, *Fantastic Four* #1 was a triple threat, striving to be all things to all readers.

And it worked.

DEAR EDITOR

Over the next few bimonthly issues, Stan pored over the letters that, to his surprise, came cascading into his office, often clearly from readers who weren't part of the younger "bubblegum brigade." By the third issue, he could begin to incorporate a few of their requests into the mag. In *Fantastic Four* #3, the group finally donned super hero costumes (uniforms, really), even though Stan had hoped to avoid them. They also gained a colorful mode of transportation, a "Fantasti-Car"—even if it did look like a flying bathtub. Above the cover logo floated the immodest phrase: "The Greatest Comics Magazine in the World!!" That issue even sported a "letters page."

Stan had always enjoyed letters columns when he was growing up. They had made him (and others) feel as if their feedback really mattered to the magazines, and he wanted to give that same aura to *Fantastic Four*. In #3, he printed excerpts of letters—starting with one from teenager Alan Weiss, who a decade later would be drawing stories for Marvel. Stan would answer the writers' questions with serious or humorous answers, as the occasion demanded. When one reader complained about the cover of

(This page) Artist Joe Sinnott (above) hard at work, 1961. He would ink *Fantastic Four* #5, and later become the comic's most important inker ever. (Opposite page, left) The letters page from the third issue of *Fantastic Four*, with Stan's characteristically witty responses to fans' comments. (Opposite page, right) Covers that never made it to press.

FANTASTIC FAN PAGE 4

DEAR EDITOR:

I think the Fantastic Four will become a great success. The Thing and the Torch are very new and different. I would also like to know what the name of your artist is.

Alan Weiss
Pardee Place
Las Vegas, Nevada

It'll *become* a success?? What do you think it is NOW? Chicken liver?? Considering that our artist signs the name JACK KIRBY on everything he can get his greedy little fingers on, I think we can safely claim that that's his name!

4.

DEAR EDITOR:

The best thing about the comic is the character conflicts. It's nice to see a group of super-heroes who aren't unnaturally buddy-buddy. The cover of #1 was pretty poor, it didn't stand out. I wish the name of Mr. Fantastic were different. It sounds too much like Mr. Clean.

Rick Wood
Ames St.
Cambridge, Mass.

Rick, no two fans ever seem to agree on what cover is best. Same thing applies to characters' names. So, let's hear from you other readers. What type of covers do YOU prefer, and how do you feel about the name Mr. Fantastic? (We'll bet at least ONE joker writes that he'd prefer Mr. Clean!)

4.

DEAR EDITOR:

You've got a heckuva nerve making a doll like Susan Storm invisible!

Unsigned
Dallas
Texas

Listen, Unsigned, with wolves like YOU around, she's a lot better off that way!

4.

DEAR EDITOR:

Before I started to write this letter, I read The Fantastic Four over 50 times! So then I decided to tell you what I thought of it. It is GREAT, WONDERFUL, FANTASTIC, BREATH-TAKING and STUPENDOUS, to say the least!

My biggest request is for more of the Human Torch in action.

George Paul
Park Ave.
Hoboken, N.J.

No WONDER you thought the mag was great, George, after reading it fifty times, brother, you've been BRAINWASHED! As for seeing more of the Torch, you've got a treat coming in the next issue!

4.

DEAR EDITOR:

Just finshed reading Fantastic Four and must admit to being disappointed. I expect better things from the team of Lee-Kirby. Jack is capable of better art work, and the Thing ought to revert to human form at will as his teammates do. The story also suffers from "Creeping Monsterism" to paraphrase Jean Shepard, that has dominated most, if not all, of your comics for some time.

Bill Sarill
Colorado Street
Boston, Mass.

See how fair we are? We print the knocks as well as the boosts! (The next time anyone around this office opens another one of Bill's letters, he's thru!!) As for the Thing reverting to human form, it's not that easy, pal. If you don't believe us, take a dose of cosmic rays yourself and see what happens!

4.

DEAR EDITOR:

Are you the same one who also puts out STRANGE TALES, TALES TO ASTONISH, JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY, TALES OF SUSPENSE, AMAZING ADULT FANTASY, and a lot of Westerns like KID COLT, OUTLAW, and teen-age titles like PATSY WAKER? If so, how do you do it?

S. Brodsky
Brooklyn
New York

With great difficulty!

P.S.—We've just noticed something . . . unlike many other collections of letters in different mags, our fans all seem to write well, and intelligently. We assume this denotes that our readers are a cut above average, and that's the way we like 'em!

Address your letters to:

THE EDITOR
FANTASTIC FOUR
THIRD FLOOR
655 MADISON AVENUE
NEW YORK 21, N. Y.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

We receive so much mail that it is utterly impossible to engage in correspondence with any readers. As many letters as possible will be answered on this page each issue. Please do not ask us to write to you personally.

I AM THE MIGHTIEST LIVING MORTAL ON EARTH!!

AND NOW, MANKIND SHALL **FEEL** THAT MIGHT... AS IT IS TURNED **AGAINST** YOU ALL!

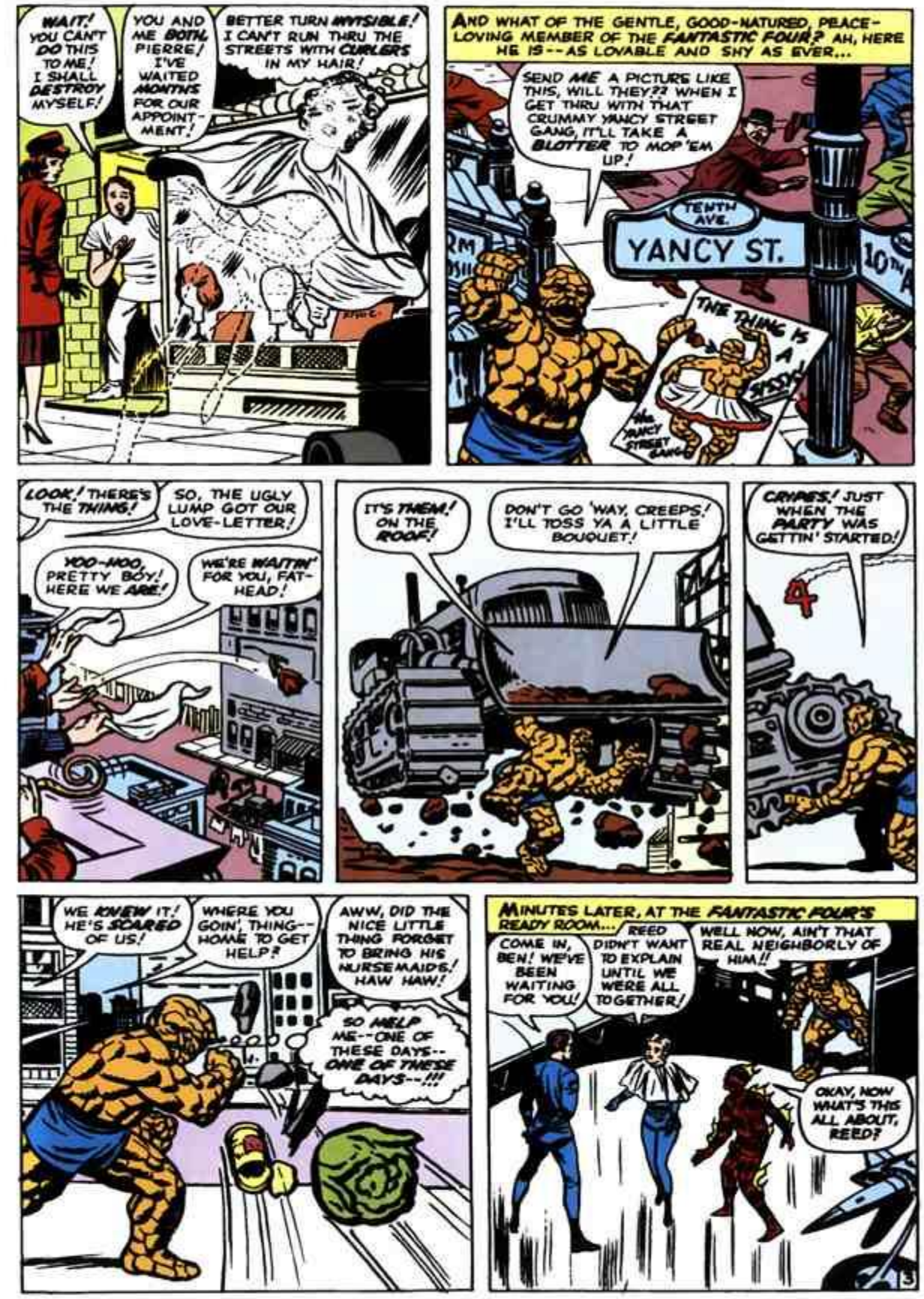
the first issue, Stan asked others to write in about what kind of covers they liked. When printing a critical letter from a fan named Bill, Stan quipped: "See how fair we are? We print the knocks as well as the boosts! (The next time anyone around this office opens another one of Bill's letters, he's thru!!)"

Stan wasn't above loading the dice a little, though: the page's final, complimentary note was from "S. Brodsky" of Brooklyn. Sol Brodsky was actually that issue's inker and would soon become Stan's production manager as the comics line grew.

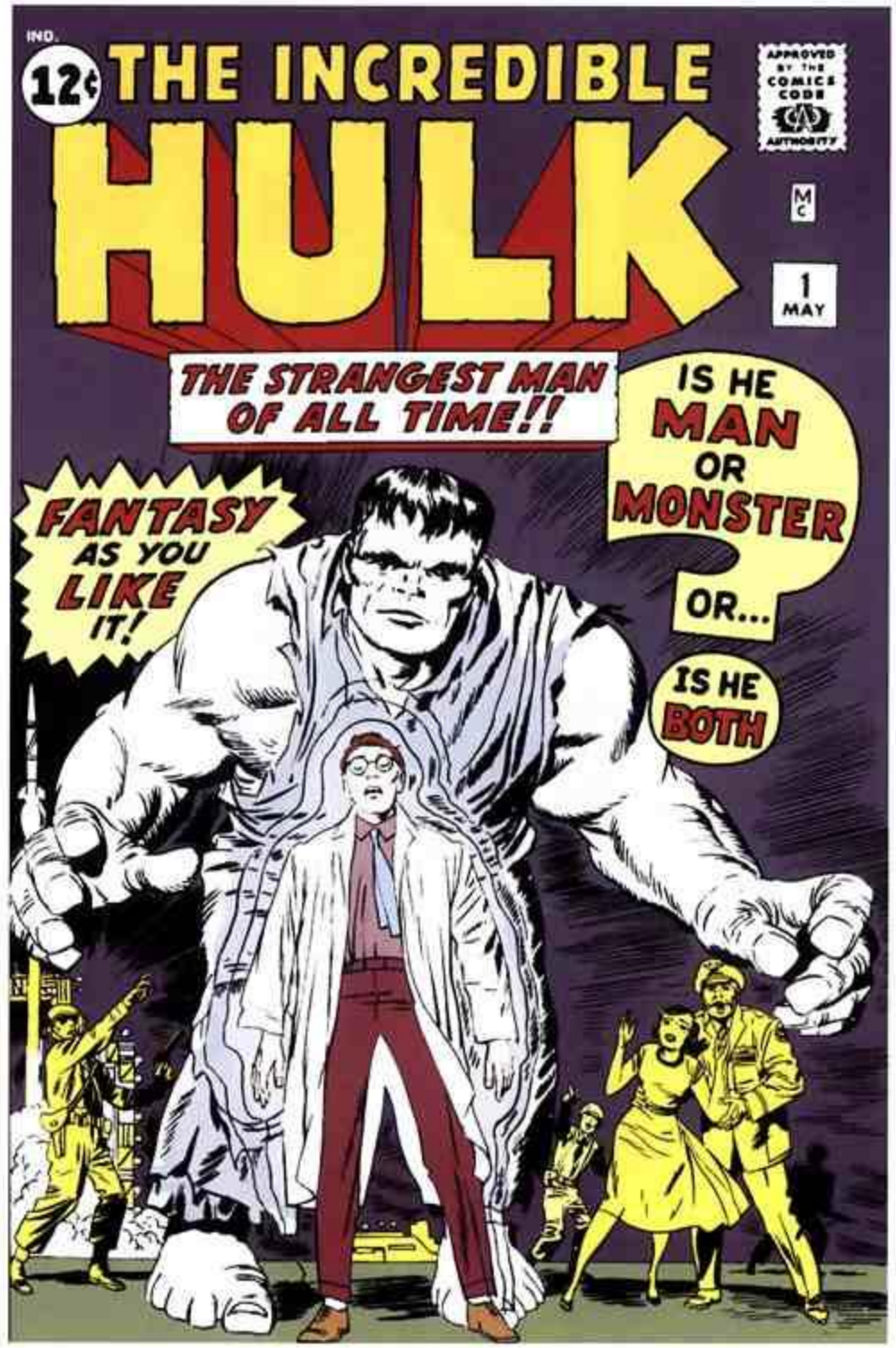
And grow it did!

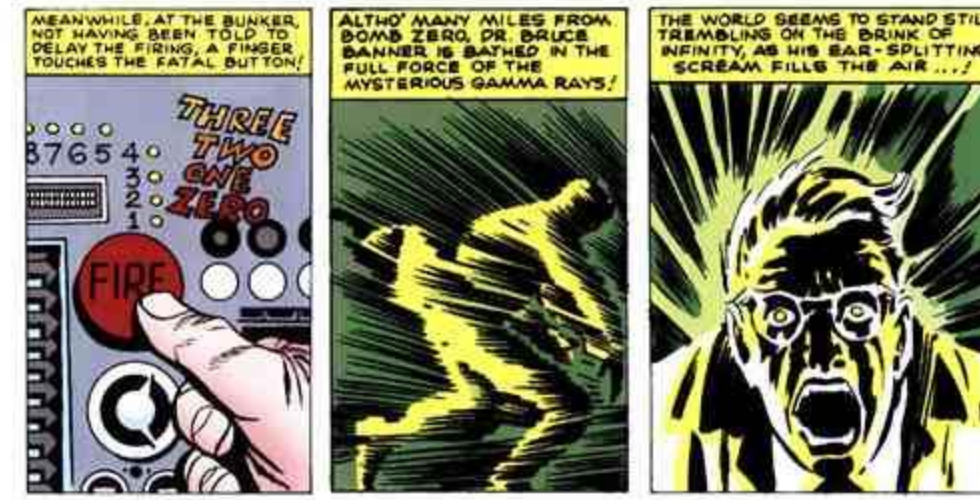
The fourth issue (May 1962) brought back the Sub-Mariner, a.k.a. Prince Namor, from the Timely comics of the forties and fifties—this time, not a new version of an old hero but the original article. Being half human, half amphibian, he didn't age at the rate normal people did, so he was still in his prime and more than ever an enemy of the human race, albeit with heroic overtones.

Equally intriguing in that issue were little taglines at the bottom of several of the story pages: "The Hulk is coming!" "What is the Hulk?" "You've never seen anyone like the Hulk!" "Who is the Hulk?"



(Opposite page) The Sub-Mariner returns with a splash. (This page) The Thing gets mad with metal. The sketch above by Jack Kirby was drawn as part of the page printed at right, but it was never used.



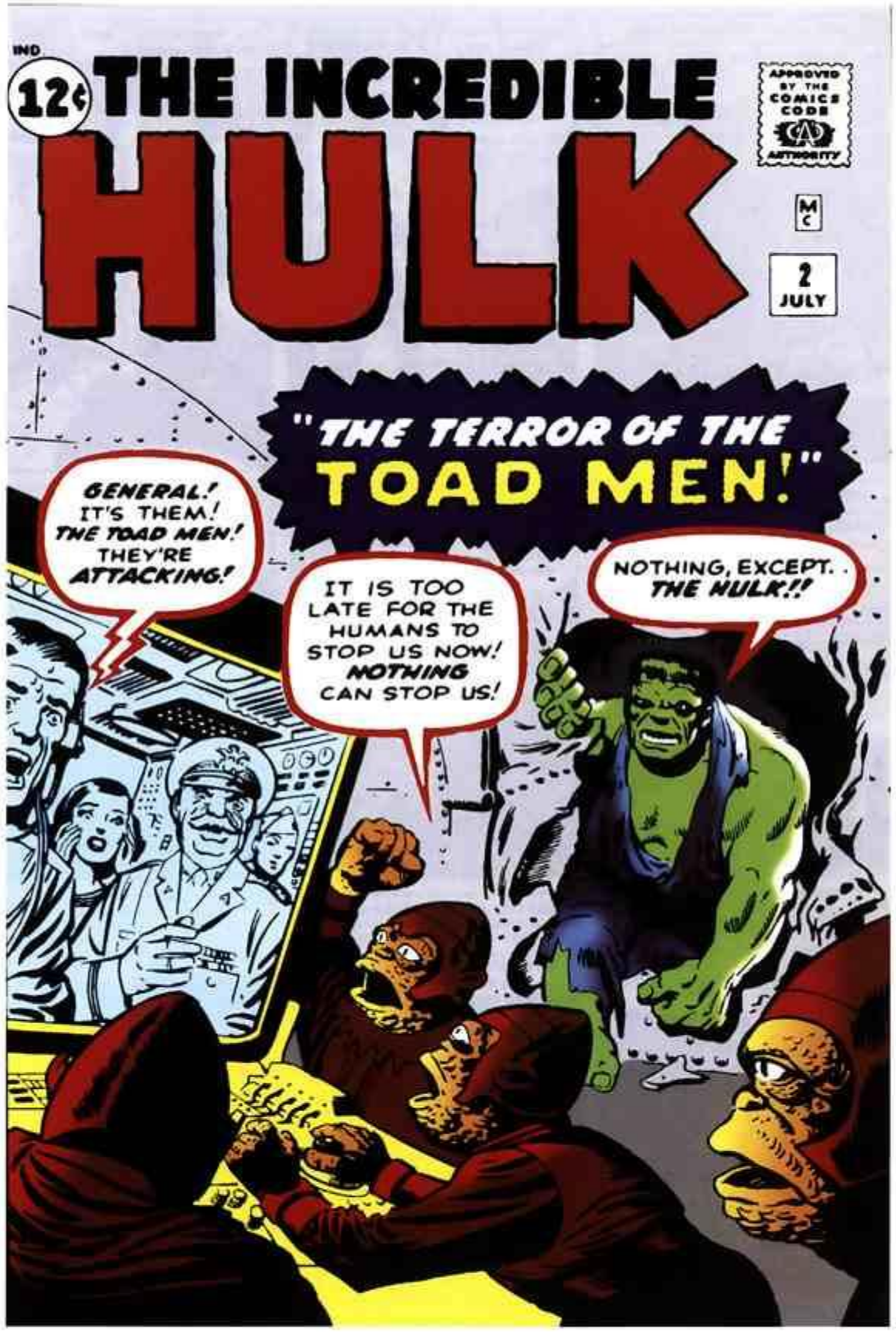


OL' GREENSKIN

The Incredible Hulk #1 had the same May 1962 cover date as *Fantastic Four* #4. When its protagonist, Dr. Bruce Banner, was turned by a gamma bomb explosion into a gray-skinned, rough-talking monstrosity called the Hulk, he wasn't really that different from the orange-skinned, rough-talking Thing from *Fantastic Four*. Stan Lee's script and Jack Kirby's pencil art were first-rate, and the concept was a good one—*Hulk* just didn't blaze any new trails . . . yet.

Things picked up a bit with the second bimonthly issue, when it was decided the Hulk should be green instead of gray. But Lee and Kirby were still feeling their way around with the character. Over the next few issues, the Hulk was endowed with various additional powers in an attempt to hit on just the right combination, but by issue #6 *The Incredible Hulk* was canceled. Sales figures were surely the main reason for Goodman's decision, but Stan felt that another factor was the Comics Code. The industry's censoring body thought Ol' Greenskin looked more frightening to young readers than most comic book characters and thus asked for more changes in each *Hulk* issue than in *Fantastic Four* or any of the company's other comics. This caused delays and extra expenses and may well have contributed to the dropping of the title.

(Opposite page and above) Bruce Banner adjusts to his new life as the Incredible Hulk, in the first two issues of his series.


IND
12¢
THE INCREDIBLE
HULK
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MC
2
JULY
"THE TERROR OF THE TOAD MEN!"
GENERAL! IT'S THEM! THE TOAD MEN! THEY'RE ATTACKING!
IT IS TOO LATE FOR THE HUMANS TO STOP US NOW! NOTHING CAN STOP US!
NOTHING, EXCEPT. THE HULK!!

THE HULK! MIGHTIER THAN A BATTERING RAM!

THE HULK! MORE DANGEROUS THAN A RUNAWAY TORNADO!

THE HULK! AS UNCONTROLLABLE AS THE VERY FORCES OF NATURE HERSELF! FOE OF EVERY HUMAN BEING ON EARTH!

ONLY ONE OTHER LIVING PERSON KNEW THE SECRET OF THE HULK'S TRUE IDENTITY--AND THAT PERSON WAS RICK JONES, WHO REFUSED TO DESERT HIM, NO MATTER WHAT HE HAD TURNED INTO!
WAIT! WAIT FOR ME! I'M GOING WITH YOU! YOU--YOU NEED ME!

ONLY RICK JONES KNEW THAT WITH THE COMING OF DAWN, THE HULK AGAIN BECAME DR. BRUCE BANNER--THE MAN WHO SAVED HIS LIFE!
YOU MUST LEAVE ME, RICK! I CAN'T CONTROL MYSELF WHEN I BECOME THE HULK! EVEN YOU WON'T BE SAFE!

BUT RICK JONES DID NOT LEAVE HIS FRIEND! INSTEAD, HE HELPED BRUCE BANNER BUILD THE MASSIVE PRISON UNDER THE SEA--THE PRISON WHICH WAS CREATED TO HOUSE THE HULK, AND FROM WHICH EVEN HE COULD NOT ESCAPE!
I'LL OPEN THE DOOR WHEN IT'S DAYLIGHT AGAIN, BUT TILL THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO STAY IN THERE--FOR YOUR OWN GOOD!

AND NONE BUT RICK JONES KNOWS WHERE THE MIGHTY HULK IS IMPRISONED--AND NONE BUT RICK CAN SET HIM FREE!

ALL THIS FLASHES THRU THE WEARY TEEN-AGER'S MEMORY AS HE SITS AGAINST THE DUNGEON DOOR, FRANTICALLY PRAYING THAT HE WILL STAY AWAKE...

FOR, IF HE SHOULD FALL ASLEEP--AS HE IS STARTING TO DO NOW, HIS CONTROL OVER THE CREATURE BEHIND THE WALL WILL END! AND, WITH THE HULK BEING MORE POWERFUL THAN EVER NOW, WHO KNOWS IF THE MASSIVE CONCRETE DOOR WILL HOLD??
BAM! BAM! BAM!
14

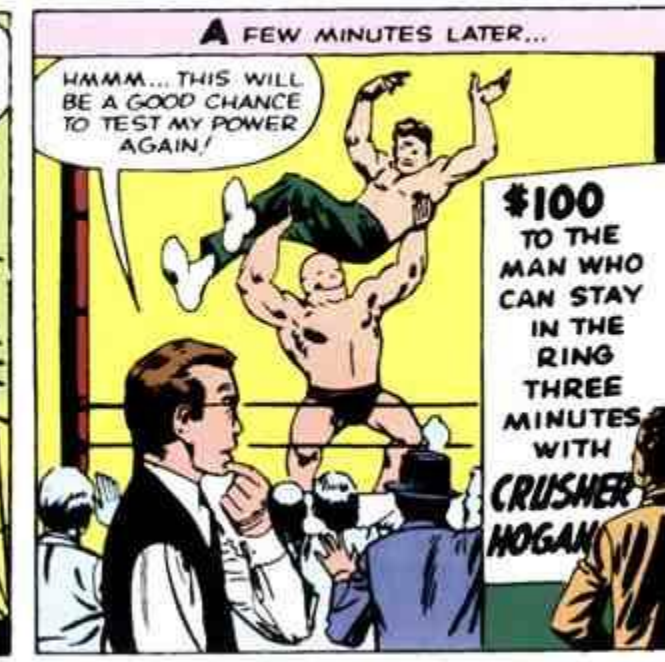
THE FANTASTIC FOUR, IN...
"PRISONERS OF DOCTOR DOOM!"

"PEOPLE DON'T LIKE SPIDERS!"

In the meantime, though, Stan Lee and his two most valued artists, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, weren't exactly letting the grass grow under their feet. In the fifth issue of *Fantastic Four* (July 1962), Lee and Kirby introduced the title's greatest villain, Doctor Doom. And, over a period of just two or three weeks in early summer, three entirely new series debuted from Stan and his creative crew.

"Spider-Man" first appeared in *Amazing Fantasy* #15, cover-dated August 1962—the final issue of a comic formerly titled *Amazing Adult Fantasy*. (No dirty minds here: The "Adult" referred to the fact that the stories were a little more complex than usual!) This super hero was actually Peter Parker, a bookish, bespectacled high school "wallflower" who got bitten by a radioactive spider and gained the proportionate strength and wall-crawling abilities of an arachnid. Somehow, this young science student devised a contraption that allowed him to shoot out powerful, sticky lines of webbing. Kirby was slated to be the artist, but after he had drawn a few pages, Stan decided a different

Two genre-changing characters: the Fantastic Four's super villain, Doctor Doom (opposite page), and the unforgettable debut of Spider-Man (above and right).



approach was needed, and he handed the assignment to Steve Ditko, whose quirky style proved to be just the ticket. Even so, Kirby was drafted to pencil that issue's cover, which Ditko inked.

Martin Goodman didn't care much for this new character, and told Stan, "People don't like spiders!" Goodman's reluctance may be the reason the original story was put in the last issue of a dying magazine. From the beginning, "Spider-Man" was handled a bit differently from even *Fantastic Four* and *Hulk*. While the story itself was deadly serious (although the radioactive spider bite seems almost a parody of a super hero origin), some of Stan's captions and dialogue had a decidedly tongue-in-cheek approach. Yet this was really just a variant of the more realistic approach Stan was now taking to super heroes. Real life is often humorous, heroic, ironic, tragic, and even pathetic by turns, and the first Spider-Man tale contained all those elements. By the time the reader had finished perusing a mere eleven pages, he (or she) had followed Peter as he tried to find a way to make a buck from his new powers, had seen the youth's selfishness contribute to the death of his beloved uncle, and had witnessed Peter's dawning realization that "with great power there must also come great responsibility."

The story was a four-color roller-coaster ride that *already* contained all the elements that within a few years would make Spider-Man the most popular of the company's heroes.

(This page) Peter Parker works his powers to their most economical advantage in his debut. (Opposite page, left) Aunt May begins a lifetime of weakness. (Opposite page, right) Alternate, unused sketch by Marie Severin for the cover of a late-1960s *Spider-Man* issue.

FINALLY, AS PETER PREPARES FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL....
I'LL BE UP EARLY TO MAKE BREAK-FAST FOR YOU TOMORROW, DEAR!...
YOU NEEDN'T BOTHER, AUNT MAY! I CAN FIX IT! YOU NEED YOUR REST!

NONSENSE, PETER! I WANT TO... OHHH...!
AUNT MAY! WHAT'S WRONG?!

SHE.. SHE'S FAINTED!
I'VE GOT TO SEND FOR THE DOCTOR ...RIGHT AWAY!

A HALF HOUR LATER ...
YOU MAY COME IN NOW, SON!
HOW IS SHE, DOC?
SHE'S VERY WEAK, MY BOY!

I'M NOT QUITE SURE WHAT'S WRONG, BUT, AT HER AGE, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE ANY CHANCES! I'LL SEND FOR THE AMBULANCE!
AMBULANCE? YOU MEAN...?

YES, PETER! SHE'LL HAVE TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL FOR SPECIAL TESTS!
IT.. IT HAPPENED SO SUDDENLY!
HELLO, THIS IS DR. BROMWELL! CONNECT ME WITH ADMITTING, PLEASE!

THEN, AFTER A SWIFT AMBULANCE RIDE ...
SHE'S A BIT STRONGER NOW! THE MEDICATION SEEMS TO HAVE HELPED!
PETER...
I'M RIGHT HERE, AUNT MAY!
EASY, SON.. DON'T TIRE HER!

YOU MUST TRY TO GET SOME REST NOW, MRS. PARKER!
I WILL.. BUT, POOR PETER... FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL TOMORROW... SHOULD BE ASLEEP... NOT WAITING UP... HERE!
DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT ME, AUNT MAY! JUST YOU REST AND GET YOUR STRENGTH BACK, HEAR? I'LL BE JUST FINE!

SPIDERMAN

KIRBY THE PRODIGIOUS

Introduced around the same time as Spider-Man was "Thor the Mighty," the new star of *Journey Into Mystery* as of #83 (also August 1962). If there was a touch of almost antiheroism to Spider-Man, the Kirby-penciled Thor was the epitome of the kind of godlike super hero familiar to readers of DC's Man of Steel. In fact, he *was* a deity—the Norse god of thunder, who traded places with lame mortal physician Donald Blake to battle evil, the latter's cane turning into Thor's invincible hammer. Unlike Spider-Man, Thor starred in a comic that *wasn't* being canceled.

The introduction of the Norse hero whom Stan would affectionately call "Goldilocks." A *Thor* cover penciled by Jack Kirby (above) was ultimately rejected for the image opposite. (Opposite page, far right) Stan and Jack's collaboration—penciled and inked panels from the Norse god's series.

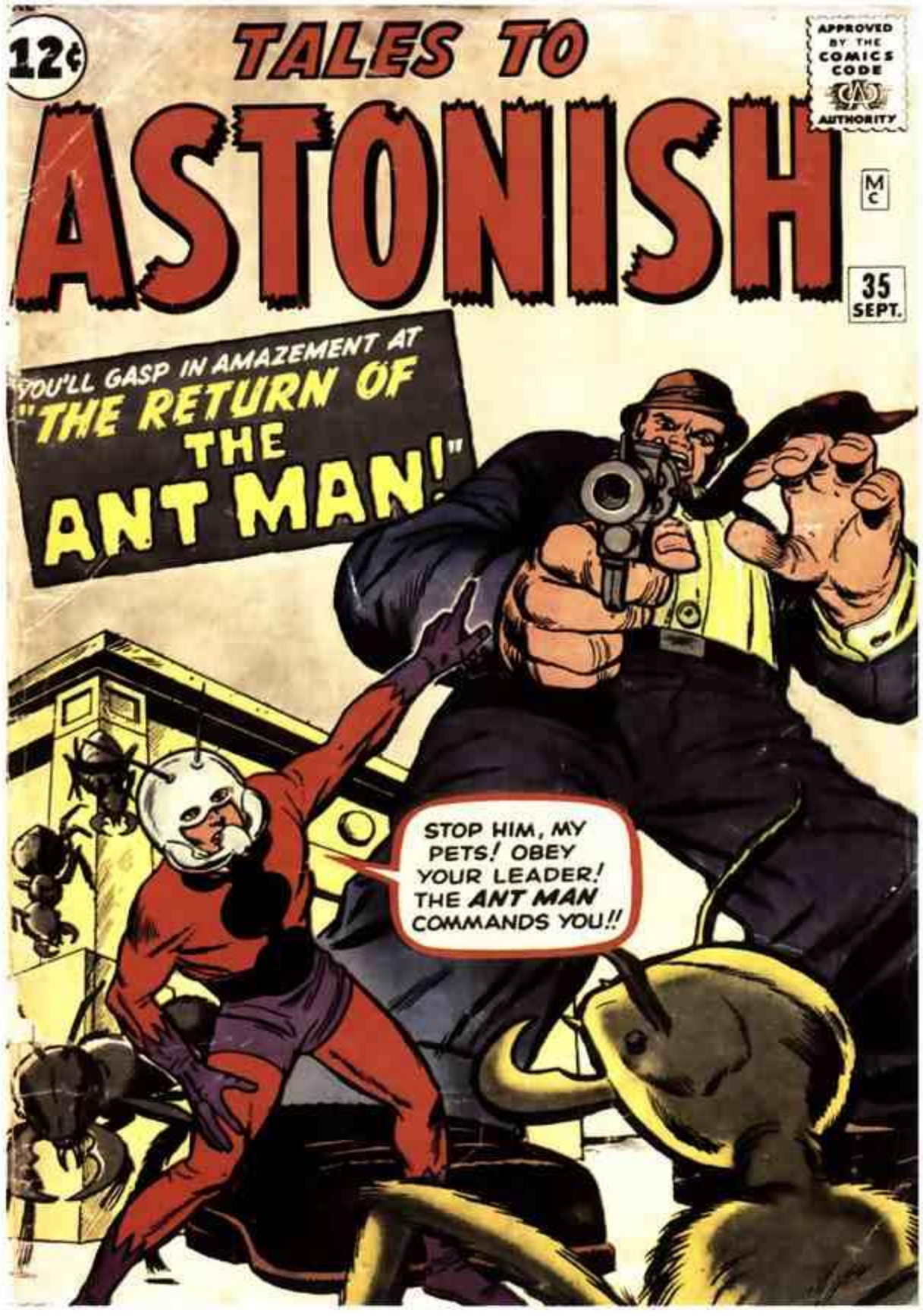
THOR
15¢ IND. 167 AUG

THE MIGHTY THOR

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

MARVEL COMICS GROUP

THIS WORLD RENOUNCED



A week or two after Thor's debut, *Tales to Astonish* #35 (September 1962) heralded "The Return of the Ant-Man," also drawn by Kirby. Ant-Man had debuted (minus costume and even the name) in a story published just a few months earlier, titled "The Man in the Anthill." It had been meant merely as a giant-monster story in reverse, but when sales for that issue came in strong, Goodman and Lee made an ongoing hero out of scientist Henry Pym and turned him into Ant-Man, who could shrink to the size of an insect. Ant-Man would never reach the level of success of the other new heroes (even the Hulk), but he endured for over a year before morphing (in issue #49) into Giant-Man, who instead of shrinking *grew* to a height of ten or twenty feet.

(This page) Cover for the first issue to feature Ant-Man (left), and his promotion to Giant-Man (above). (Opposite page) Spider-Man gets his own title and his own pin-up, to boot!

Jack Kirby's output during this period was truly prodigious, in terms of both quantity and quality, especially considering how quickly he had to turn out pages. Goodman's rates were considerably lower than those at DC Comics, where the artist had formerly worked; he had to draw twice as fast to make the same amount of money. The resulting pencils might sometimes have been a bit crude and unpolished, yet he conveyed such power and told the stories so well and so inventively that his art was as important as Stan Lee's altered style of writing in making this new breed of comic book worthy of its increasing attention.

THE MARVEL AGE

In 1963, Martin Goodman's little company finally (re)acquired a name. Henceforth, it would be called the Marvel Comics Group—a phrase emblazoned in the upper left-hand corner of each issue. In the years to come, that would prove to be a far happier choice of names than either Timely or Atlas. The word *Marvel* meshed well (and often alliteratively) with an infinite number of words and led Stan to coin some memorable phrases: "Mighty Marvel," "Make Mine Marvel," and "the Marvel Age of Comics."

During 1963–1965, Stan Lee and Marvel Comics launched even more heroes as sales inched upward. Some of these were very much in the mold of *Fantastic Four*, while others branched out in still new directions. What's more, most of these new characters would *endure*. What Stan Lee had hit on, with the aid of Jack Kirby in particular, was not a *fad*—it was a *whole new way of doing heroic comics*!

While the original 1940s run of the Human Torch, Sub-Mariner, et al., had lasted ten years at most, and their 1950s revival had lasted only a year, most of the Marvel super heroes introduced after 1961 are still starring in their own series, more than four decades later.

Spider-Man came back strong at the start of 1963 in his own title: *The Amazing Spider-Man*. Stan's faith in his and Ditko's offbeat co-creation had paid off. "Spidey," as Stan nicknamed him, gradually but steadily increased in popularity, until eventually he would become the company's most popular hero and even achieve parity in terms of name recognition with DC icons Superman and Batman!

For *Strange Tales*, the Lee-Ditko team also developed Dr. Strange, a sorcerer who guarded our world from such other-dimensional nasties as Nightmare and the dreaded Dormammu. There had been wizards before in both comic strips

MEN CALL HIM DR. STRANGE!

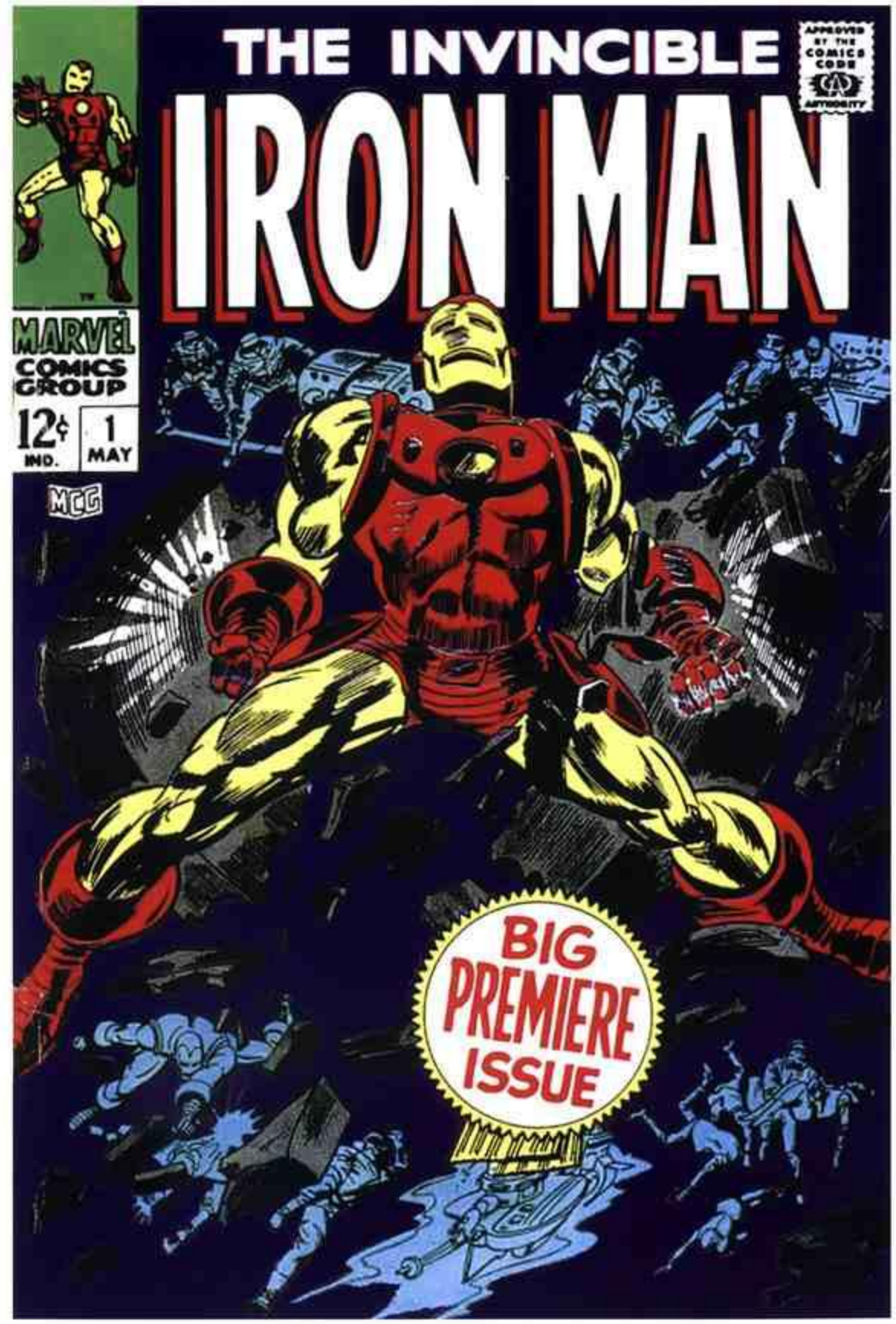
NEVER HAVE YOU KNOWN HIS LIKE!

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE AND PRIVILEGE FOR THE EDITORS OF STRANGE TALES TO PRESENT, QUIETLY AND WITHOUT FANFARE, THE FIRST OF A NEW SERIES, BASED UPON A DIFFERENT KIND OF SUPER HERO--

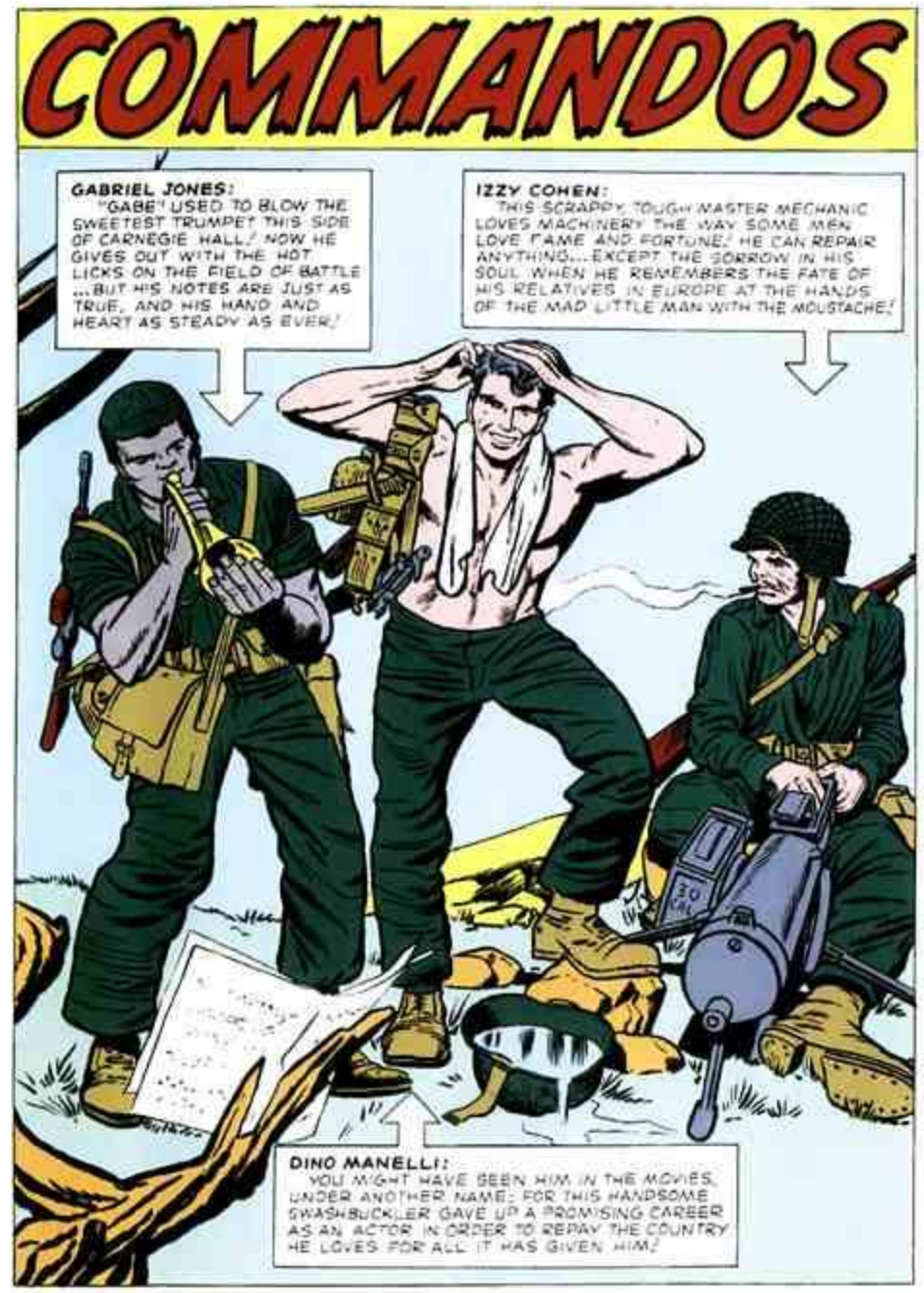
DR. STRANGE MASTER OF BLACK MAGIC!

and comic books (Mandrake the Magician and DC Comics's Dr. Fate come to mind), but no comic artist had ever captured the eerie feel of alien dimensions the way Steve Ditko did. Dr. Strange began life as a five-page throwaway feature in the back of the magazine and was soon traversing Daliesque realms that would have done Drs. Freud and Jung proud.

Another of the enduring heroes was Iron Man (first seen in *Tales of Suspense* #39), actually Tony Stark, playboy, industrialist, and inventor extraordinaire. When shrapnel from a North Vietnamese land mine became imbedded near his heart, the only thing keeping him alive was a protective metal chest plate. He soon wound up a fully armored Iron Man, fighting crime with fantastic technological gadgets yet always only a heartbeat away from death. No super hero had ever seemed quite so vulnerable before: Even while he was stopping runaway trains or shooting out powerful "repulsor rays," every moment might be his last.



Dr. Strange (opposite page and above) and Iron Man (right), two more enduring heroes to come out of Marvel's heyday.



Early in 1963, there even arrived a new comic set in World War II, drawn by battle veteran Kirby and written by one-time Sgt. Stan Lee: *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos.* It told tales of combat in a style similar to *Fantastic Four*'s, combining humor, pathos, and heroics. Stan soon referred to it as "the war comic for people who hate war comics." It was also one of the earliest comics to feature an African-American—Gabriel Jones—as one of its major characters, playing his jazz trumpet when charging into battle, but otherwise almost completely devoid of anything that could be called a stereotype.

Also in 1963, *The Avengers* brought together five of Marvel's mightiest: Thor, Iron Man, Ant-Man/Giant-Man, the Wasp (Ant-Man's flying pint-sized lady friend), and the Hulk. After a few issues, when Ol' Greenskin (Stan's favored nickname for the Hulk) stomped off into a new solo series in *Tales to Astonish*, his place was taken by none other than the original Captain America. That star-spangled stalwart, it was revealed, had been entombed in ice since 1945 and was as young and fit as ever.

(This page) Sgt. Fury's Howlers, featuring the first African-American to play a prominent role in comics. These panels are from a later reprint; in *Sgt. Fury* #1, the color engraver accidentally colored Gabriel Jones the same hue as the other Howlers! (Opposite page) The super hero–packed Avengers.

"THE COMING OF THE AVENGERS!"

NO WONDER THEY CALL HER...

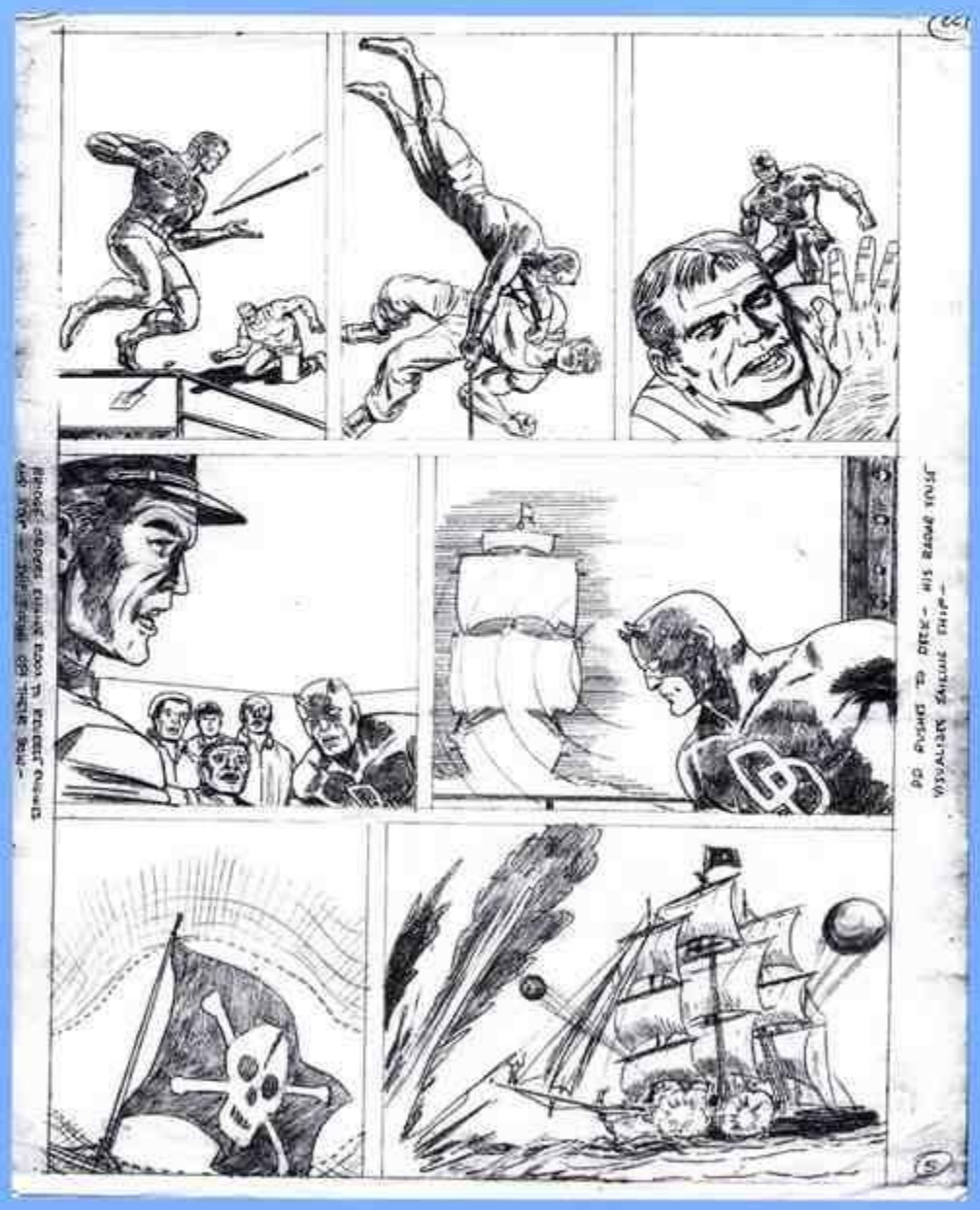
Marvel Girl

Introduced the very same month as *The Avengers* was *The X-Men*, a quintet of teenage mutants, each with a different (extra) super power. They were assembled by the mysterious Professor X to battle evil mutants who were trying to take the world away from the human race. The original members consisted of Cyclops, the Angel, Marvel Girl, Iceman, and the Beast. The mag is noteworthy for a host of reasons, most significantly that it showed the dangers of stereotyping and of relegating a class of people that might be "different" to the sidelines.

Daredevil (debuting in his own series in 1964) had been blinded in a freak accident—again involving radiation. He found that his other senses—hearing, touch, etc.—had been fantastically heightened, and he became an acrobatic crime buster. Although there had been one or two heroes in pulp magazines and comics who couldn't see in the daytime but regained their vision at night, there had never before been an actual blind super hero. For making "D.D." a wisecracking super hero whose other heightened senses made him more than a match for criminals, Marvel received plaudits from sight-deprived Americans.

(This page) *X-Men* pin-ups. (Opposite page, left) Dick Ayers's "audition" to be the *Daredevil* artist once Wally Wood departed, with his notes in the margin. (Opposite page, right) John Romita's audition sketch of D.D. (which he later signed) that got him the job. Dick kept busy on *Sgt. Fury*.

EXACTLY FIVE SECONDS LATER...
MAN FACING ME... GUN MUZZLE AIMED THIS WAY... FUNNEL DIRECTLY BEHIND HIM...!
STOP WHERE YA ARE, MISTER... BEFORE I VENTILATE THAT NUTTY RED UNION SUIT!
THAT WAS A REAL IMPRESSIVE SPEECH, CAPTAIN BLIGH... BUT WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR AN ENCORE?!
THWAK!
CLANG!

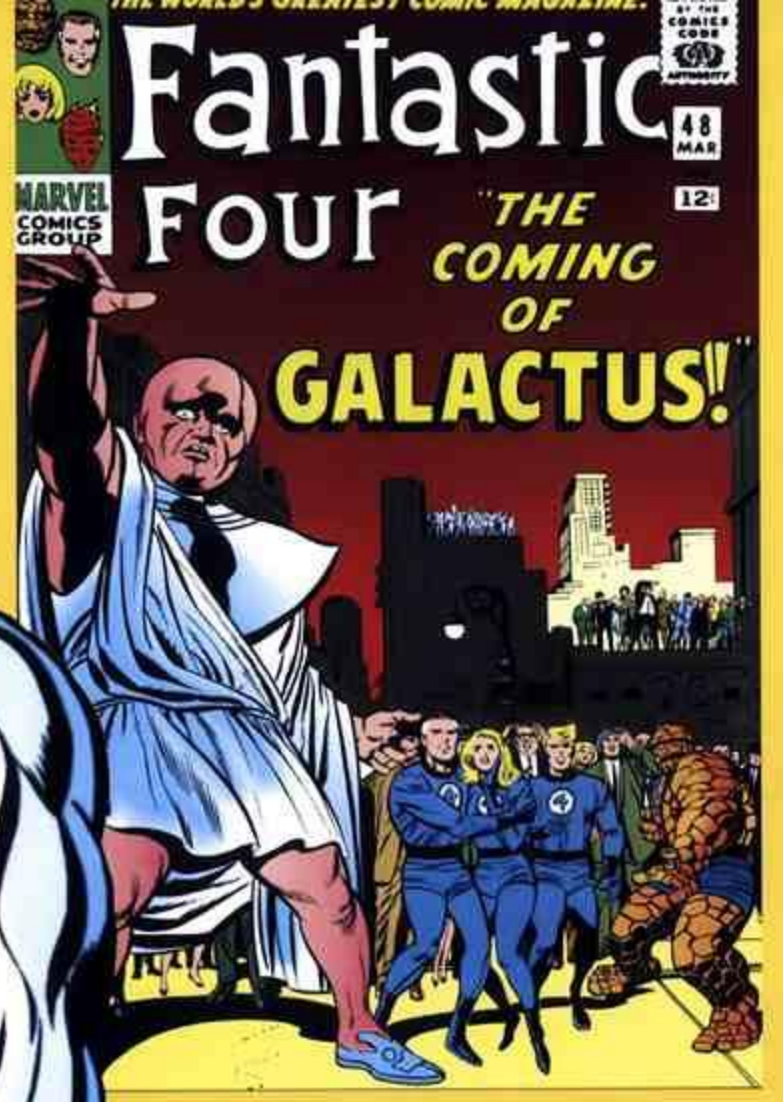


FIRST ATTEMPT AT DAREDEVIL ('65) 'AUDITION' FOR STAN LEE
JOHN ROMITA

WOK!
BOP!
REINFORCEMENTS COMING AT ME! GOOD THING I CAN'T SEE THEM... I MIGHT REALIZE I BIT OFF MORE THAN I CAN CHEW!
AVAST!! THERE'S THE ONLY ONE WE HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT!
THAT'S THE PLUNDERER! HE'S BIG... POWERFUL... CONFIDENT! HE WON'T BE EASY!
7

THE STARTLING SAGA OF...

"THE SILVER SURFER!"



ON AND ON HE SOARS, DODGING METEORS--SKIRTING AROUND ASTEROIDS--ROCKETING FROM PLANET TO PLANET--WITH ENTIRE *GALAXIES* AS HIS PORTS OF CALL--WITH THE KNOWN *UNIVERSE* ITSELF AS HIS HIGHWAY--!

When in 1965 Marvel wanted to respond to the spy craze sweeping the nation with the James Bond movies and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* television show, Nick (formerly Sgt.) Fury got a starring role in *Strange Tales*, due in large part to his new job. The old WWII Sarge had become head of a top-secret organization called "S.H.I.E.L.D." (Supreme Headquarters International Espionage Law-enforcement Division.)

During this period of prolific creativity, it seemed as if every month or so Marvel forged a new milestone, creating some character or plot twist that kept readers excited and forever wondering "What'll happen next?" Some of these new characters were unforgettable—like Hercules in *Thor*, or the Inhumans and Black Panther in *Fantastic Four*.

Then came the issues of all issues, the instant legend, the trilogy of *Fantastic Fours* (#48–#50) that excited readers immediately christened "the Galactus Trilogy," a designation still widely recognized four decades later. This trio of issues introduced the alien demigod Galactus, who descended to

(Both pages) The trilogy that became a classic, and the herald who became a legend.

Earth to strip it of all its energy and leave it a lifeless husk! The Trilogy also introduced another beloved character: Galactus's shimmering sentry, the sky-riding Silver Surfer.

Up to this point, the Fantastic Four had fought criminals, super villains, and even the occasional alien race. But Galactus and the Silver Surfer were creations that went beyond anything ever seen before in comics—or in films and other visual media, for that matter. Galactus was a stand-in for a malevolent deity who had no use for lesser sentient beings except to deprive them of their vital, life-giving energies, while the Surfer reverberated from the start with the hint of his being a Christ figure, a parallel that was rare in U.S. popular culture in 1965. In days and issues to come, the Silver Surfer would become one of Marvel's most iconic heroes.

(Both pages) The Surfer's origin story, in which artist John Buscema puts him in one iconic pose after another.

BUT, NEITHER *MISSILES* NOR MEANINGLESS *MOUTHINGS* OF PETTY PEDAGOGUES CAN HALT THE PROGRESS OF THE *SILVER SURFER*, NOR STIFLE THE *LONGING* IN HIS TORTURED *SOUL*...

IN ALL THE *GALAXIES*... IN ALL THE ENDLESS REACHES OF *SPACE*...

I HAVE FOUND *NO PLANET* MORE BLESSED THAN *THIS*...

NO WORLD MORE LAVISHLY ENDOWED WITH NATURAL *BEAUTY* ... WITH GENTLE *CLIMATE*... WITH EVERY INGREDIENT TO CREATE A VIRTUAL LIVING *PARADISE!*

IF A *HERALD* YOU DESIRE... THEN A *HERALD* SHALL I *BE!*

LET *ME* PROBE THE HEAVENS... SCAN THE STARWAYS... ROAM THE ENDLESS *COSMOS* FOR YOU!

ALL *THIS* WILL I DO...

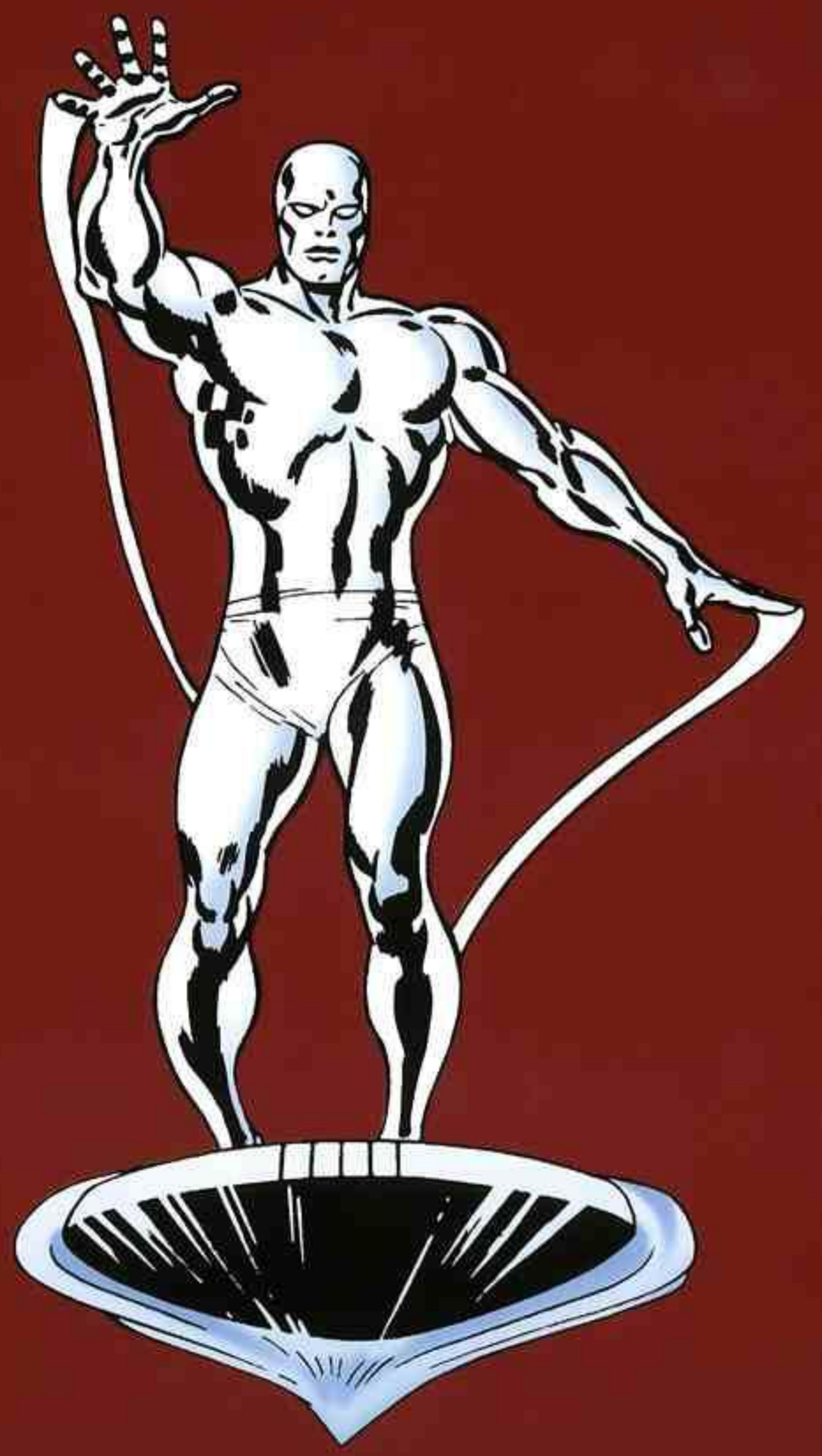
IF YOU WILL BUT *SPARE* MY PEOPLE... SPARE *ZENN-LA!*

MY FATE IS OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE...

IF IT CAN SAVE THE *WORLD* THAT GAVE ME *BIRTH!*

MIGHTY *GALACTUS* ... DO BUT *SPARE* ZENN-LA...

AND I AM EVER *YOURS*... TO *COMMAND!*



MEET THE GANG IN THE MERRY MARVEL BULLPEN!

(Our fearless answer to those who claim we're Martians!)

First, let's polish off the big brass . . .

Merry MARTY GOODMAN
Publisher
Guardian Angel

Smilin' STAN LEE
Writer/Editor
Bullpen Boss

Joyful JOHNNY HAYES
Business Manager
Kibitzer de Luxe

And now, our own madcap pencil pushers and ink splatterers:
(In alphabetical order—to prevent a possible riot!)

Darlin' DICK AYERS

Sparkling SOLLY BRODSKY

Valiant VINCE COLLETTA

Spunky STAN G.

Affable AL HARTLEY

Debonaire DON HECK

Joyful JACK KELLER

Jolly ol' JACK KIRBY

Laughin' LARRY LIEBER

Jovial JOE ORLANDO

Peerless PAUL REINMAN

Sprightly SAM ROSEN

Adorable ARTIE SIMEK

Cheerful CHIC STONE

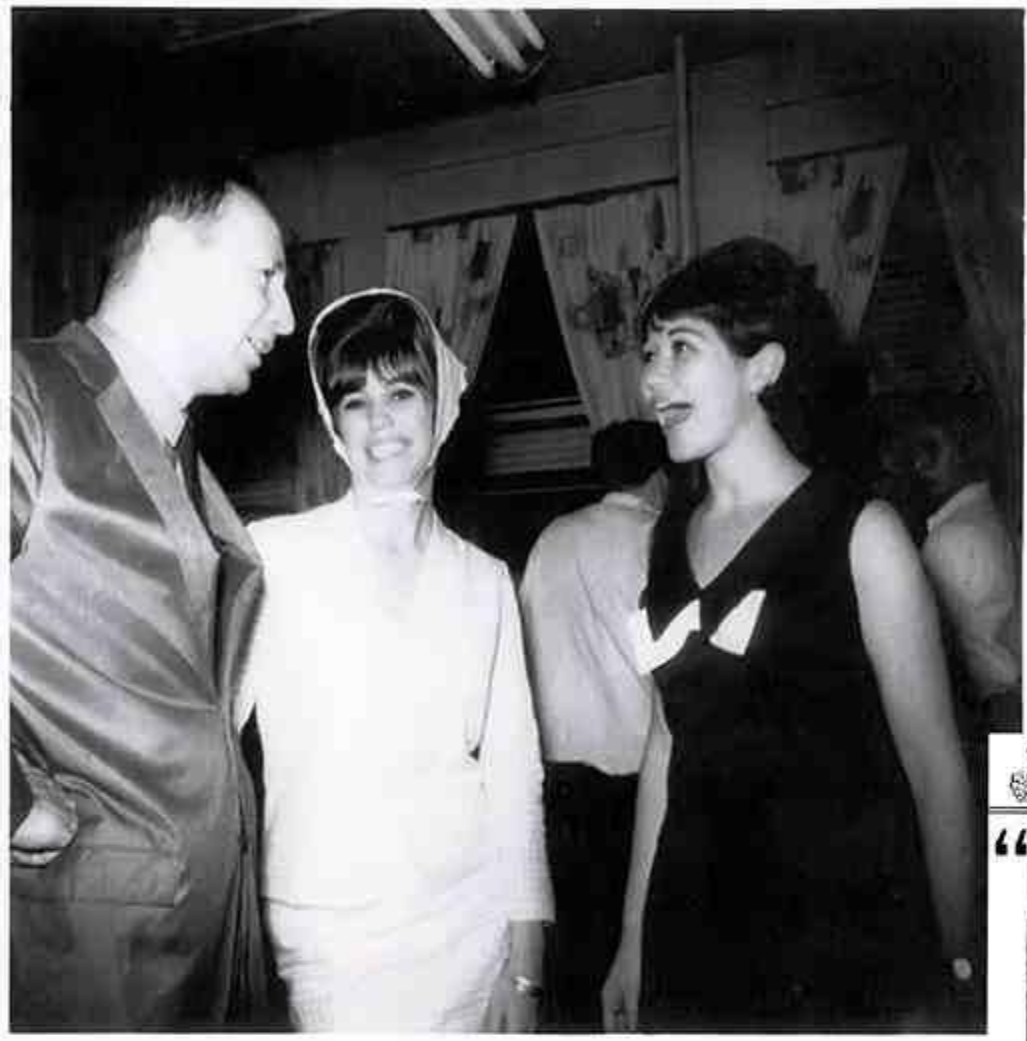
A few of our bullpen buddies were out of town when these pix were taken—so we'll try to print their pans later on. (A sneaky way to coax you to read all our future issues!)

And now, we present our ever-lovin' glamor department . . .

Fabulous FLO STEINBERG
Corresponding Secy.
Gal Friday

Nifty NANCY MURPHY
Subscriptions
Overseas Mailings

Dazzling DEBBY ACKERMAN
Campus Rep.
Student Surveys



THE MERRY MARVEL MESSENGER

"FACE FRONT, MARVELITES"

Season's Greetings

INTRODUCING: OUR NEWEST BULLPEN BOMBSHELL!

Hang loose, frantic ones – and feast your eyes on the latest labor of love from your blushin' Bullpen!

We've been promising all of you a regularly-published newsletter for a long time now – and, like the man said, here it is!

After many long hours of sleepless brain-searching, we decided that the best way to print news is in – wouldja believe a newspaper? So, we've created the Merry Marvel Messenger for MMMS members only – to keep you clued-in on all the latest happenings in and around the Marvel Madhouse!

And, that's not all. We're gonna give all you madcap marchers a chance to tell us – and all the rest of Marveldom – what's cooking with your local chapters! You send us the news, and we'll do our best to print it – right on the pages of this, your exclusive club bulletin! But, we'll tell you how to go about sending in your nutty news elsewhere in this frantic first ish!

Now, in addition to telling you what's cooking in the Bullpen, we're also gonna toss in some crazy contests, frenzied features about all the Marvel Maniacs and a gob of other goodies too numerous to mention right now! And, if any of you have ideas of things you'd like to see in the Marvel Messenger – don't hesitate, let us hear about it! Get it? Got it!

So, before you get so excited about jotting down all of your scintillatin' suggestions that you forget to read the rest of the paper, we're gonna cool it – and just tell ya to feast your eyes and enjoy! After all, we did all's this just for you, tiger! ★ ★ ★

BLASTS AND BRAVOS ON TV SUPER-HEROES

Response to our bombastic boob-tube venture have been so overwhelming the past few weeks that the Post Office is threatening to make Irv Forbush help them deliver all of your letters!

But, at least we know that somebody out there must be tuning us in – 'cause Smilin Stan hasn't been able to dig his way through last week's mail! And, by now, the letters are piled up so high in front of his door that it looks like he may be confined to his office for eternity!

Just before we went to press, though, he did send up a smoke signal to let us know that a majority of you frantic fanatics think the show is a gas. Of course, on the other hand – a lot of you have spotted a few fumblin' flaws in the show, and you should see how many we found, ourselves!

Just like many of you, your brain-bustin' Bullpen realizes that the animation isn't up to Walt Disney, yet – and one or two of your respective hosts may be playing up a bit much to the bubble-gum brigade – but just wait till next season! All in all, we think old Wing-Head, Fish-Face, Green Skin, Goldilocks, and Shell-Head come off pretty well in videoville!

And we're mighty glad that enough of you agree with us to make Marvel Super-Heroes a top-rated show in its time-slot in most areas of the country! ★ ★ ★

WE NEED HELP, O, TRUE BELIEVER

Clutch your MMMS membership button to your bosom – keep calm, and, above all, don't fool with your cool! 'Cause this is your chance to become an important part of our glitzy little group!

Starting right now, pussycat, the MMMS needs you! No, not as a member! If you're reading this, we've already got you hangtied! What we need from you is news! We want you to write and tell us what's going on among the rank and file of your own cavortin' chapters!

Get the picture? Good! Now, all you have to do is send your reports to Marvel Comics Group, News Dept., 625 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10022! We'll print the best of your batty bulletins in each future issue along with the name, address and MMMS number of the reporters who submitted them.

Ready? Then rush to your typewriters and get with it! After all, we can't print the news until you've made it!

And, in case your chapter hasn't made any news lately (and we shudder at the thought), we might suggest a few worthwhile projects! You might take a green-skinned monster to the cafeteria for lunch – or you might arrange for one of your classmates to be bitten by a radio-active spider! But, if neither of those ideas grab you, why not march on city hall in your Thing and Hulk sweat shirts. (Marvel T-shirts should be permissible dress for those few Marvelites who are still dwelling in the last century and haven't ordered their sweat shirts yet!) ★ ★ ★

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MERRY MARVEL MARCHING SOCIETY

Along the way, between stories and art that grabbed readers by the lapels and said, "Pay attention!" Stan and Marvel introduced other hooks:

First there were the "Bullpen Bulletins," a special page set aside in each and every Marvel comic, in which Stan put flesh on the bones of Marvel artists and writers by printing news of their activities—like when artist Gene Colan bought a motorcycle, or when world-famed movie director Federico Fellini unexpectedly dropped by the Marvel offices.

Stan gave everybody nicknames, both in the "Bullpen Bulletins" and in the credits on the stories' splash pages. He was "Smilin' Stan" or "Stan the Man"; Jack Kirby was "Jolly Jack" and later "King Kirby" (a name that stuck!); returning artists John Romita and Bill Everett became "Jazzy Johnny" and "Wild Bill"; and apprentice writer Roy Thomas was "Rascally Roy" or "Roy the Boy." Even Stan's corresponding secretary was known then (and still is, to many longtime comics fans) as "Fabulous Flo" Steinberg.

(Opposite page) Sheet of "bullpen" photos as printed in *Marvel Tales Annual* #1 in 1964. (Above) Marvel corresponding secretary "Fabulous Flo" Steinberg (right) chats it up with attendees of a mid-1960s comic convention. (Right) Important information passed on to fans in the *Merry Marvel Messenger* newsletter.

In 1964, after months of hints in letters pages, the Merry Marvel Marching Society (MMMS) was launched, a fan club so outlandish and gung-ho that it made even the older readers want to join...maybe *especially* the older readers. For a while, the names of a few dozen members were printed in every single Marvel comic, so a reader had to buy them *all* if he didn't want to miss spotting his own name.

Stan even hauled artists and staffers into a studio to make a 33⅓-rpm record in which they hammed it up mercilessly. Artist Wally Wood stole the show by taking on the persona of a man who blabbers on and on about how he clams up whenever someone thrusts a microphone at him. This record was sent to all early members of the MMMS. On its flip side was the fan club's jaunty, bouncy anthem: "You belong, you belong, you belong, you belong/To the Merry Marvel Marching Society!"

T-shirts, sweatshirts, posters—you name it, Marvel tried it. But always with a humorous, self-deprecating approach, which seemed to say: It's all right for a young adult to buy and even wear a T-shirt with the Incredible Hulk on it—as long as he/she knows that doing so is a silly thing to do! It's a joke on us—but we're all in on it, so it's okay!

MIGHTY MARVEL ROLLS ON

Marvel was a happy (and growing!) family once again. Much as EC had a decade or so earlier, Marvel attracted superior talent during this heyday. The company pulled in artists who still worked for rival DC (many of whom assumed a pseudonym, so DC wouldn't know they were moonlighting), enticed back talent that had left the industry during the bad days of the 1950s, and recruited new young writers and editors.

Naturally, along the way there were also losses and resignations, but Mighty Marvel rolled on. When Spidey artist Steve Ditko left to work for a smaller publishing company (and ere long for DC), *The Amazing Spider-Man* was already solidly ensconced as the second-best-selling title (behind *Fantastic Four*, of course). Within a year, under replacement artist John Romita, it passed up the flagship title to become the company's top-selling book. Stan, John, and the rest of the "bullpen," though, just sighed and wished Ditko had stayed, because then *both* fabulous artists would've been producing Marvel titles.

The readers sometimes accused Marvel of playing musical chairs with

(Left) As Marvel began to market itself more and more, T-shirts were a hot item.

WELCOME TO THE ANCIENT AND HONORABLE ORDER OF

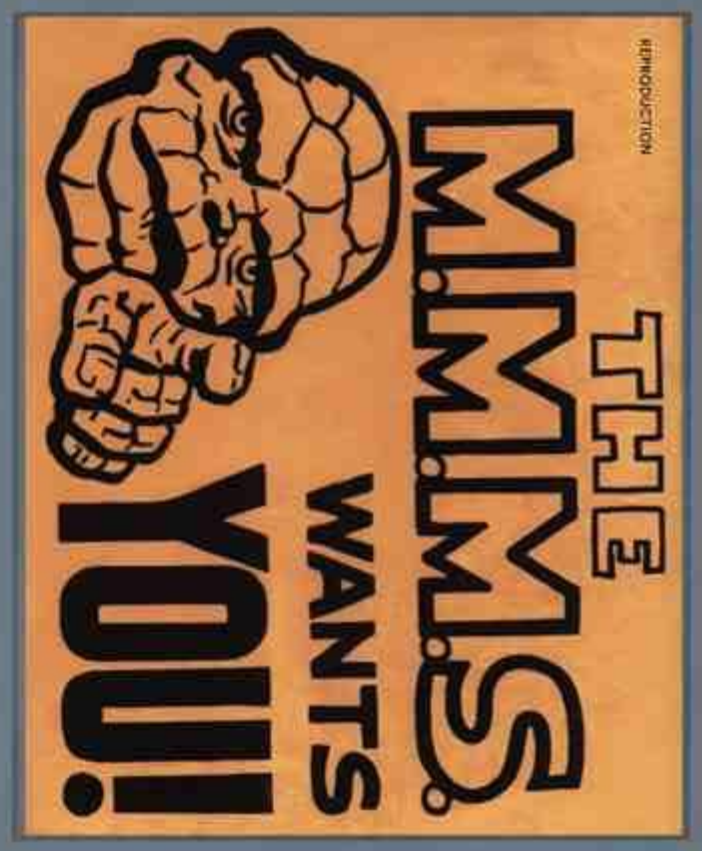
The Merry Marvel Marching Society

Congratulations, favored one!

...For having the wisdom and wit to become a Merry Marvel Marcher!

Your name has been ceremoniously entered in our log book, and your dollar has been avariciously deposited in our treasury!

Eazy, this day forth, you will stand a little straighter, speak a little wiser, and



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The Merry Marvel Marching Society

Congratulations, favored one!

...For having the wisdom and wit to become a Merry Marvel Marcher!

Your name has been ceremoniously entered in our log book, and your dollar has been avariciously deposited in our treasury!

From this day forth, you will stand a little straighter, speak a little wiser, and walk a little prouder. You've made the scene! You're in! You've joined the winning team!

But, with such triumph comes responsibility. You must use your valued membership privileges judiciously. You must be true to the Marvel Code of Ethics: Be not arrogant towards those who have shunned our ranks, for they know not what they're missing. Be not hostile towards unbelievers who march with others, for they're more to be pitied than scorned. Be not intolerant of Marvel-defamers, for they too shall someday see the light. And, above all, be not forgetful that you have become our bullpen buddy. Henceforth, you shall never march alone!

Thus, we welcome you to the fold with this sagacious admonition—FACE FRONT! You're one of us now!

'Nuff said!

The Bullpen Gang

be it known

KENNETH QUATTRO
authorized signature

Is a charter member in good standing of

The Merry Marvel Marching Society

And is thereby entitled to the adulation and admiration of all lesser mortals!

these privileges are non-transferable

Benj J. Grimm
GRAND MARSHAL, *(pro tem)*

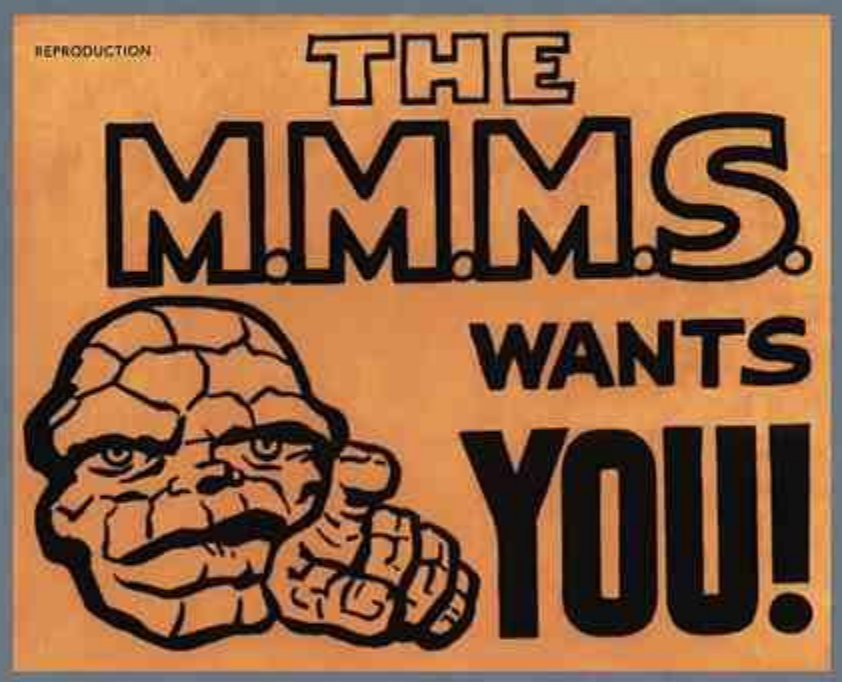
THE MERRY MARVEL PLEDGE

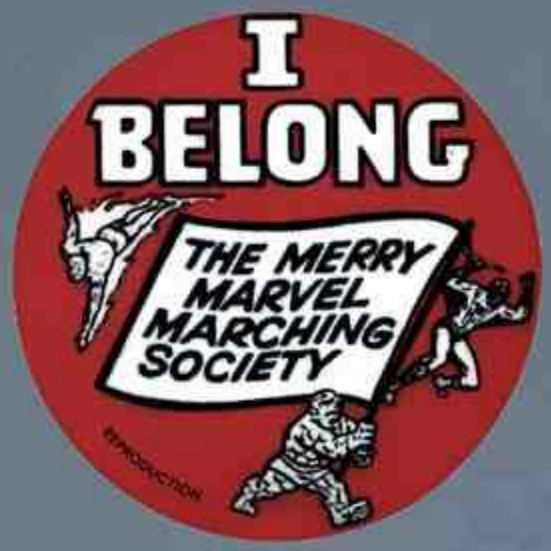
I pledge allegiance to the mags of the Marvel Group, and to the madmen who put them on the stands. One bull-pen, understaffed, indecipherable, with liberty and boo-boos for all.

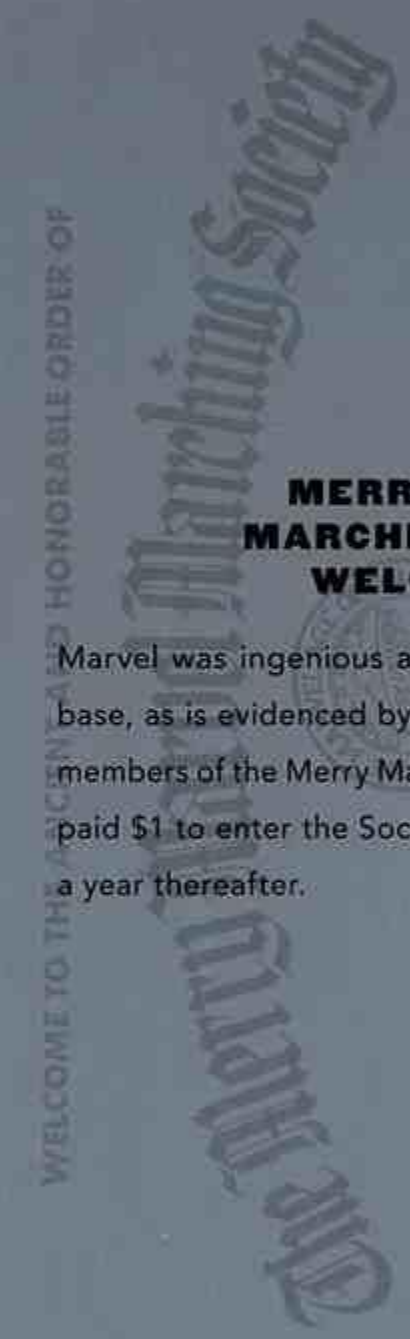
No 4345 A

REPRODUCTION

REPRODUCTION

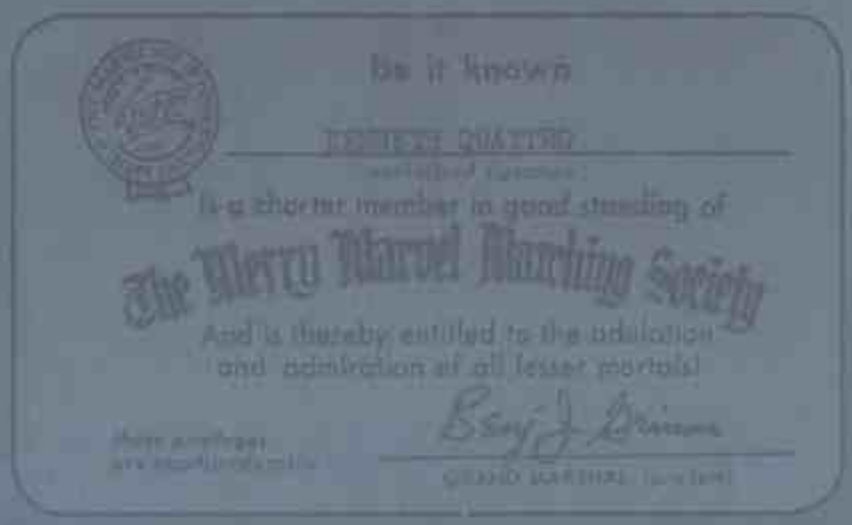






MERRY MARVEL MARCHING SOCIETY WELCOME KIT

Marvel was ingenious at inspiring and unifying its fan base, as is evidenced by this "welcome kit" sent to new members of the Merry Marvel Marching Society. Members paid $1 to enter the Society and then seventy-five cents a year thereafter.



T-SHIRTS

YOUTH SIZES	6-8	10-12	14-16	
ADULT SIZES	36-38	40-42	44-46	48 UP

CHARACTERS	SIZE	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
FANTASTIC FOUR			@ $1.50 EA.	
SPIDER-MAN			"	
THE AVENGERS			"	
X-MEN			"	
DAREDEVIL			"	
THOR			"	
SGT. FURY & THE HOWLERS			"	
IRON MAN			"	
THE HULK			"	
DR. STRANGE			"	
WESTERN			"	
COMPLETE SET OF ABOVE 11			$15.00	

PLEASE ADD 15¢ PER ITEM FOR POSTAGE AND HANDLING.

MAKE OUT CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
T-SHIRTS
625 MADISON AVE.
NEW YORK CITY, N.Y. 10022

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

its artists, switching them willy-nilly from one title to another as if not caring which artist drew which title; in truth, the changes were usually unavoidable, and made simply to stave off a deadline disaster.

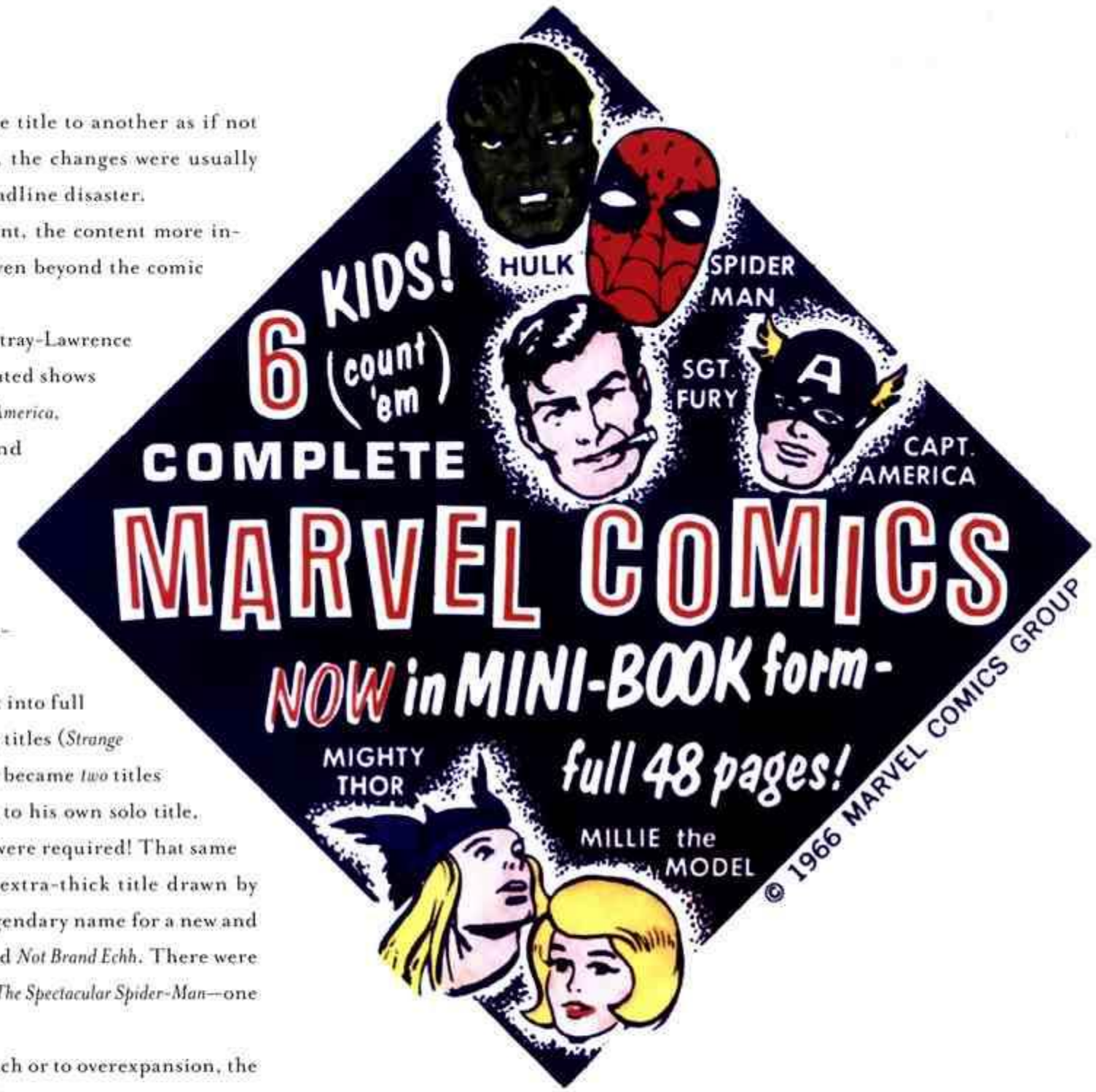
The deadlines were more and more frequent, the content more in-demand, and Marvel's reach began to spread even beyond the comic book page.

In 1966, television production company Grantray-Lawrence produced a series of five half-hour semi-animated shows under the banner title *Marvel Superheroes*. *Captain America*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Iron Man*, *The Mighty Thor*, and *Sub-Mariner* all made their television debuts, one for every day, Monday through Friday. In 1967, *Spider-Man* and *Fantastic Four* took over Saturday morning slots on ABC-TV, the latter produced by powerhouse Hanna-Barbera Productions.

By 1968, Marvel's large-scale expansion went into full swing, as each of the three remaining anthology titles (*Strange Tales*, *Tales of Suspense*, and *Tales to Astonish*) abruptly became *two* titles each, with each of their six series stars jumping to his own solo title, with the result that twice as much script and art were required! That same year, Stan launched both the *Silver Surfer* as an extra-thick title drawn by John Buscema, and *Captain Marvel* (an old and legendary name for a new and unrelated hero) to run with a humor series called *Not Brand Echh*. There were even two issues of a magazine-sized comic called *The Spectacular Spider-Man*—one in black and white, the second in color.

Whether it was due to this scattershot approach or to overexpansion, the year 1968 proved to be a tough one for comics. The entire industry experienced a dip in sales. A large contributing factor, most likely, was the rise in price of an issue from twelve cents (the price since 1962) to fifteen cents—a 25 percent jump. *Not Brand Echh*, *Dr. Strange*, and the *Silver Surfer* were canceled. *The X-Men* was soon another casualty, despite a run of acclaimed tales by artist Neal Adams and scripter Roy Thomas.

But as far as Stan Lee was concerned, Mighty Marvel was still on the move—and no little thing like a slump was going to stop it!

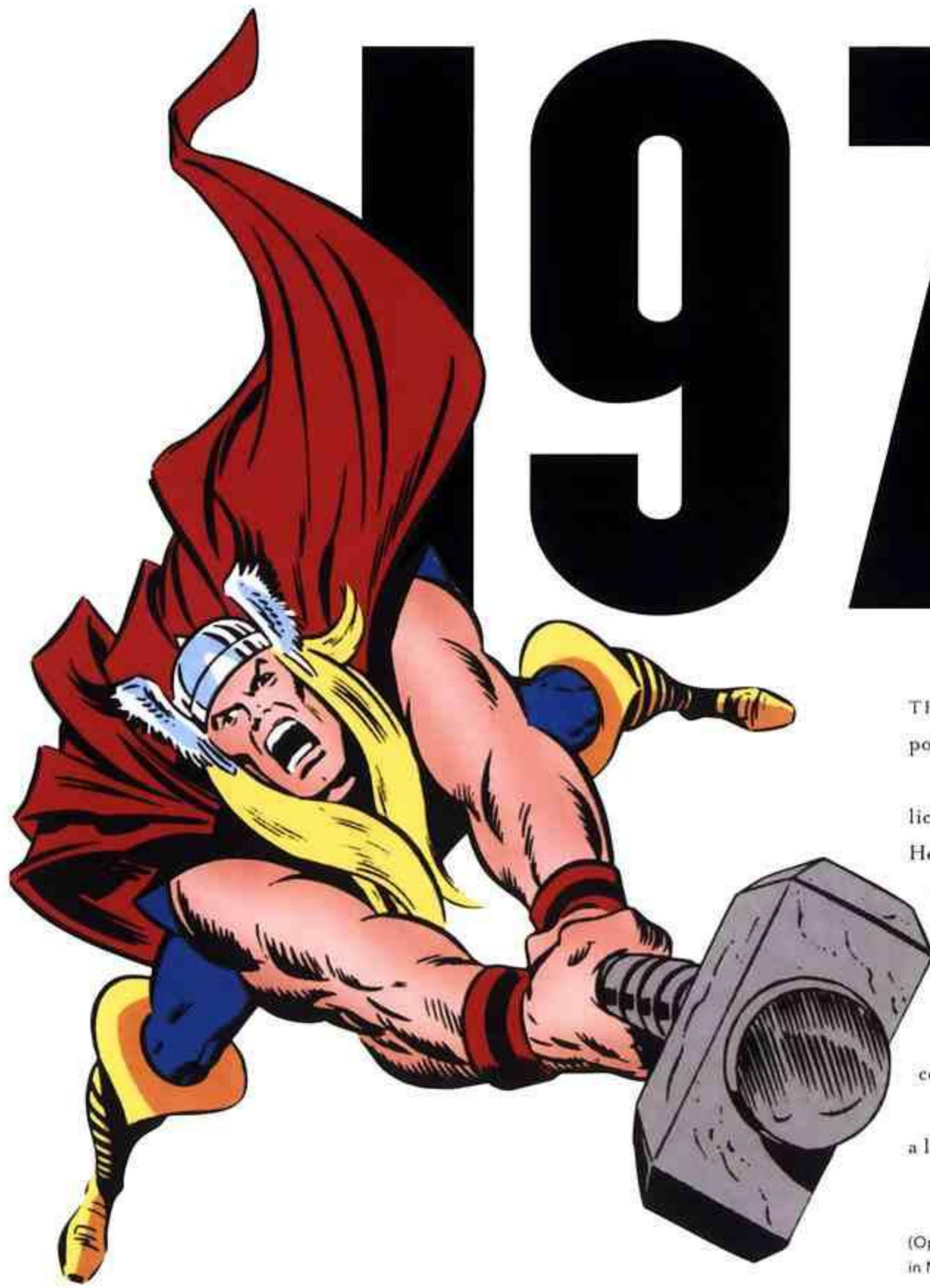


(Opposite page) The wardrobe every Merry Marcher had to have. (This page) Mini-books allowed fans to fit all their faves in one pocket!

HERO
FOR
HIRE
NO! IT CAN'T HAPPEN!
MERRY CHRISTMAS, WORLD--

PHASE TWO

1970s

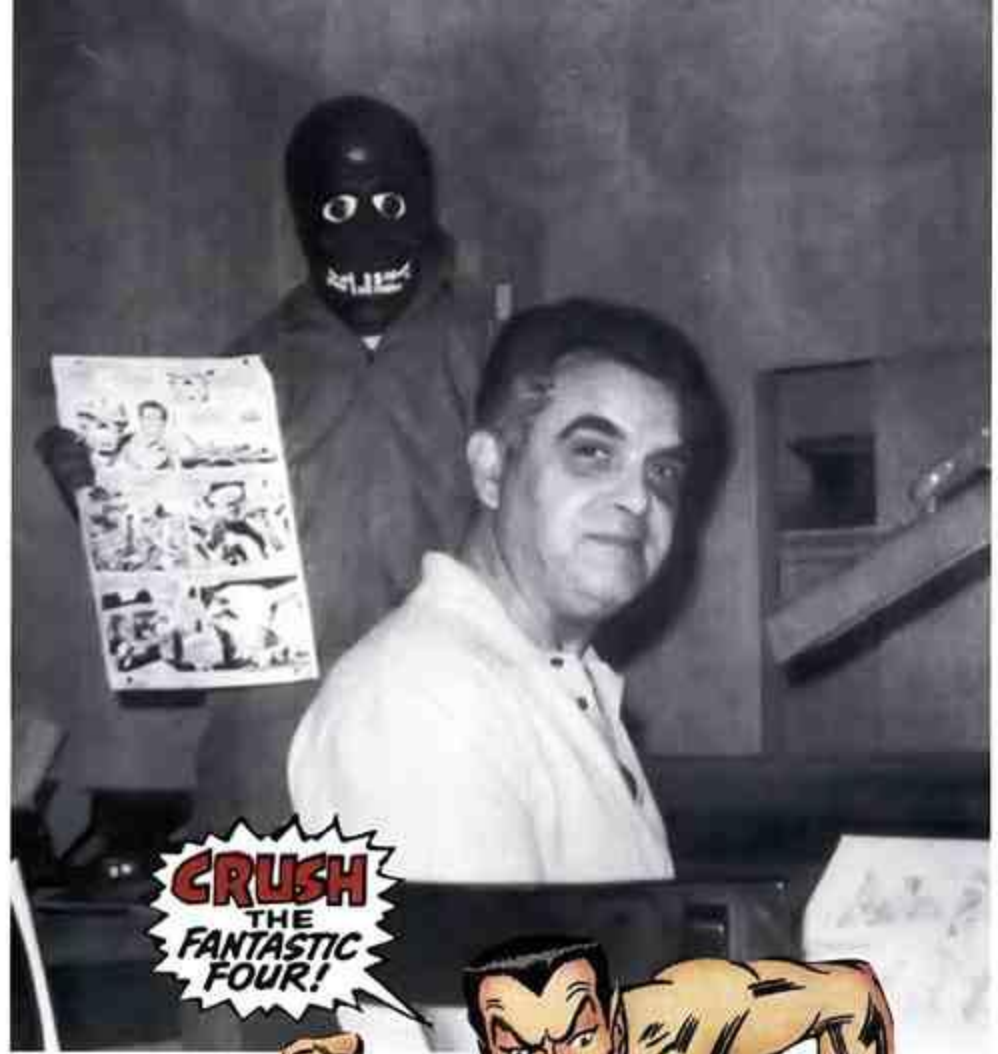


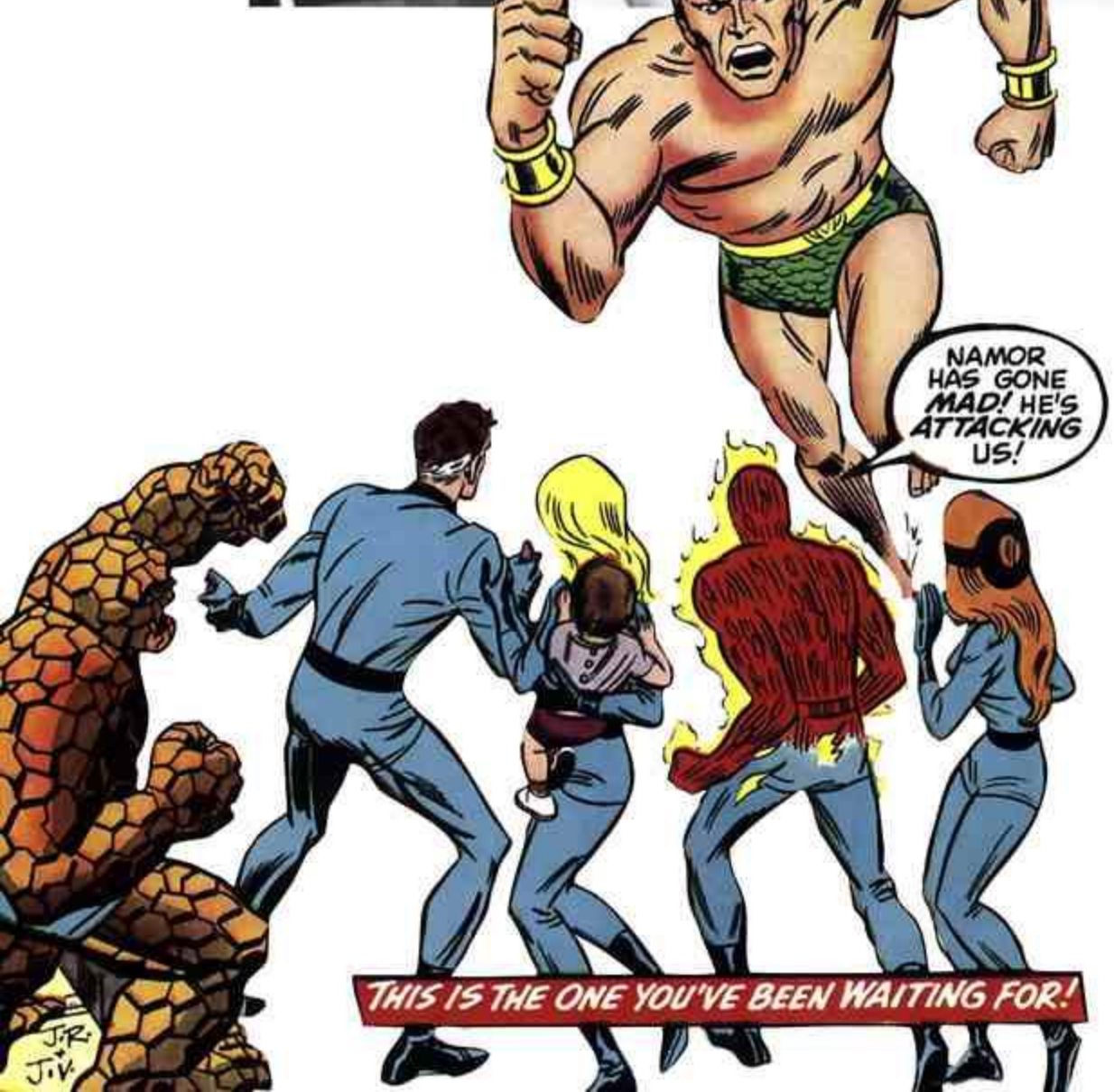
THE 1970S BEGAN BADLY FOR MARVEL: JACK KIRBY, THE ARTISTIC powerhouse, left the company for DC.

It seems clear that Kirby had, for several years, resented the greater publicity that editor/writer Stan Lee received as Marvel's major creative force. He felt that, as the artist and co-plotter—often the major plotter—of many of their stories, he had been slighted. Stan had long since changed their joint byline from "writer" and "artist" to variations on "a Stan Lee-Jack Kirby production," but in the long run, it wasn't enough. By the time Jack phoned Stan to tell him he was leaving Marvel, he had already signed a contract with DC Comics and had agreed to write and draw several new comics for them.

There were feelings of gloom, if not quite of doom, around the office for a little while. Even though by 1970 Kirby was drawing only two full monthly

(Opposite page) Luke Cage became the first African-American super hero, a key development in Marvel's "Phase Two." (This page) Hell hath no fury like an angry thunder god!





Marvel titles—*Fantastic Four* and *Thor*—they were important ones. Rising star Neal Adams volunteered to draw the thunder god's exploits for at least a few issues; Stan took him up on it, since linking Adams's name with Thor's would inevitably intrigue the young artist's fans.

Fantastic Four, however, was another matter. Not only was it the "flagship" title of the self-styled Marvel Age of Comics, but it was the only comic at the company that had never, ever been penciled by any other artist! Stunned at the news of Kirby's departure, John Romita asked who was going to draw *Fantastic Four* now.

"*You* are," Stan replied.

And so, improbably, perhaps even illogically, the artist who had helped make *The Amazing Spider-Man* Marvel's top seller was taken off that comic to draw Marvel's *second*-best seller. Romita didn't want to make the switch, but he gave *Fantastic Four* his best shot, starting with drawing the cover of #102, Kirby's final issue. With #103, Romita began penciling the stories from Stan's plots.

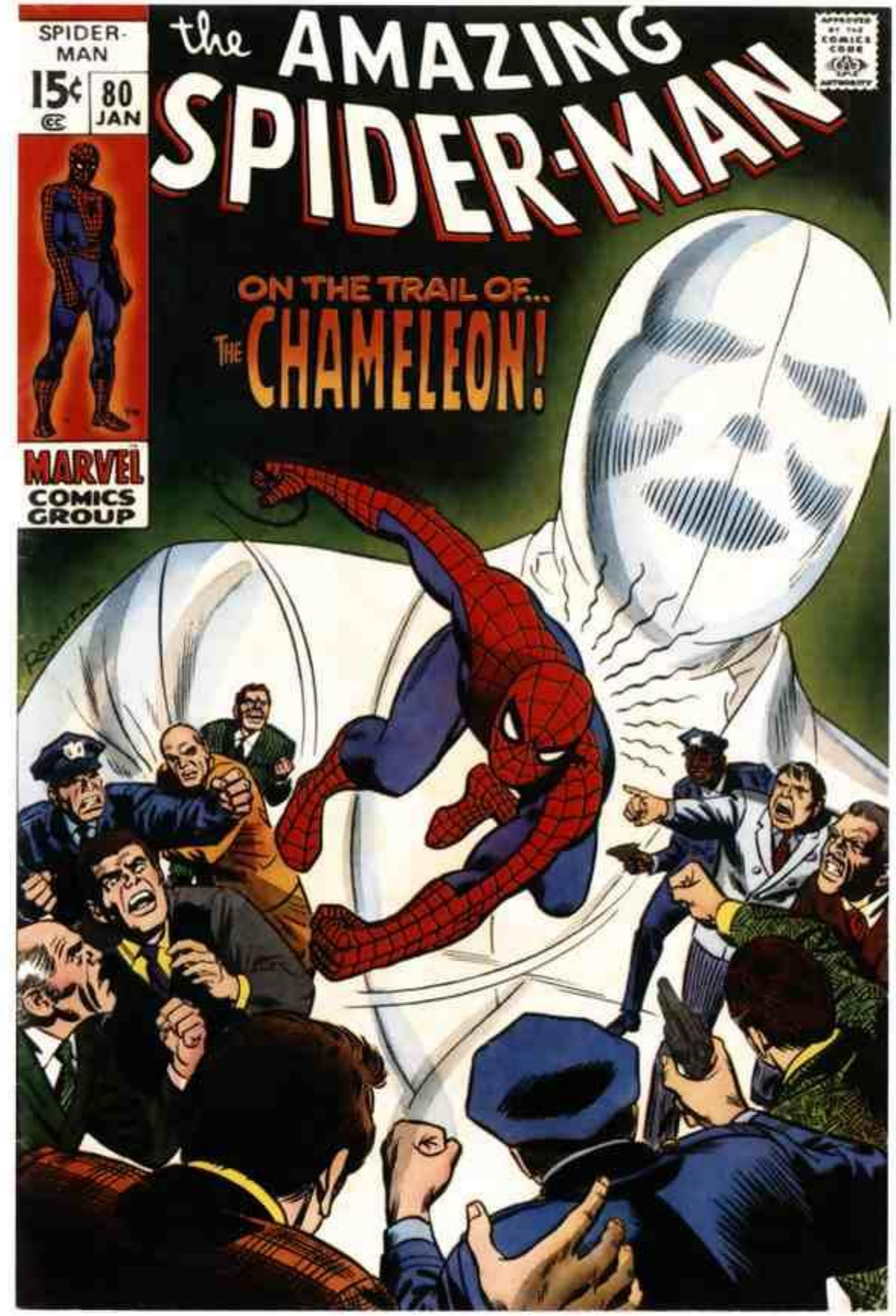
And sales went up.

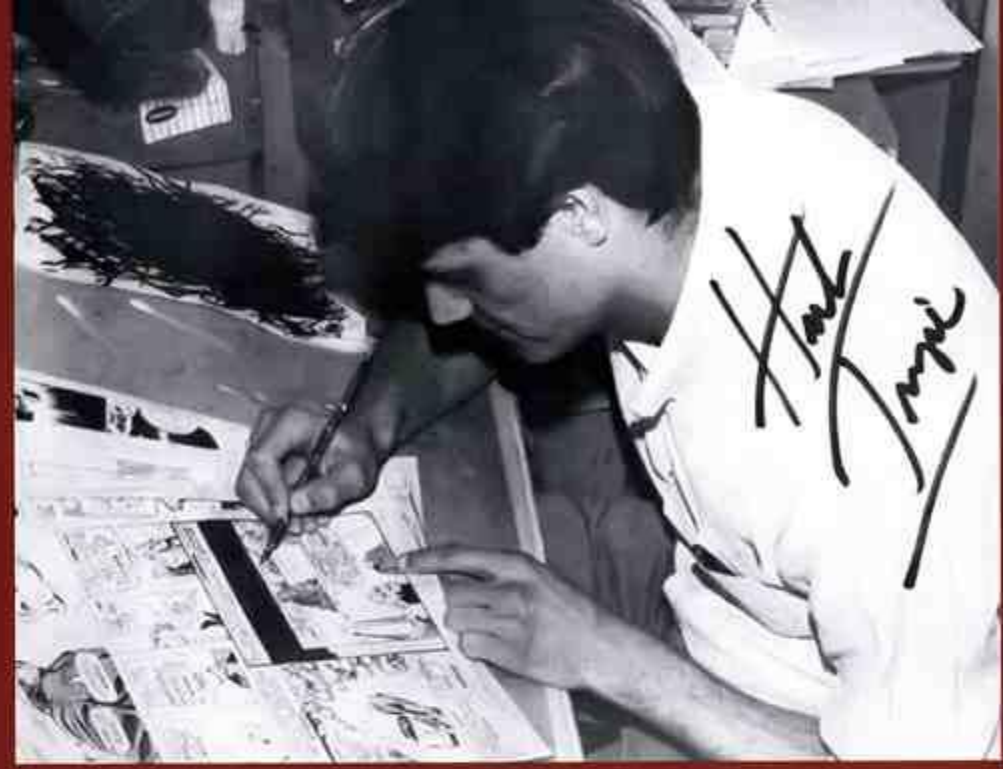
No one, least of all John Romita, would claim that means he was a better *Fantastic Four* artist than Jack Kirby. The way "Jazzy Johnny" saw it, people

(This page) Marvel greats Jack Kirby (top left), John Romita, and, of course, the Fantastic Four (drawn by Romita). (Opposite page) John Romita's color guide for the cover of *The Amazing Spider-Man* #80.

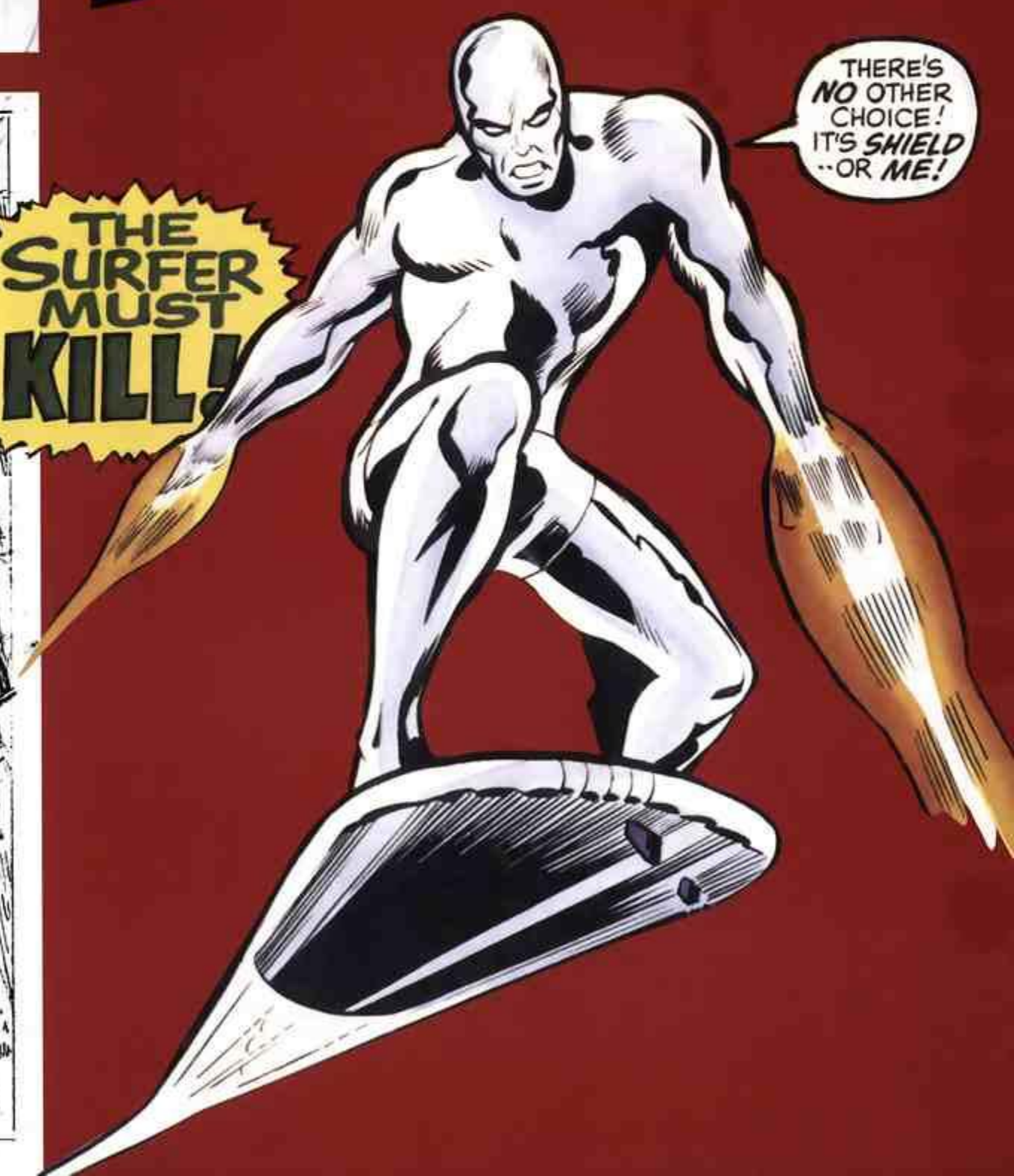
picked up his issues just to see what was going to happen now that Kirby was gone. Probably true, but what was also true was that ever since Romita had taken over first *Daredevil*, then *Spider-Man*, each had soared in sales. It was evident that John Romita had the golden touch.

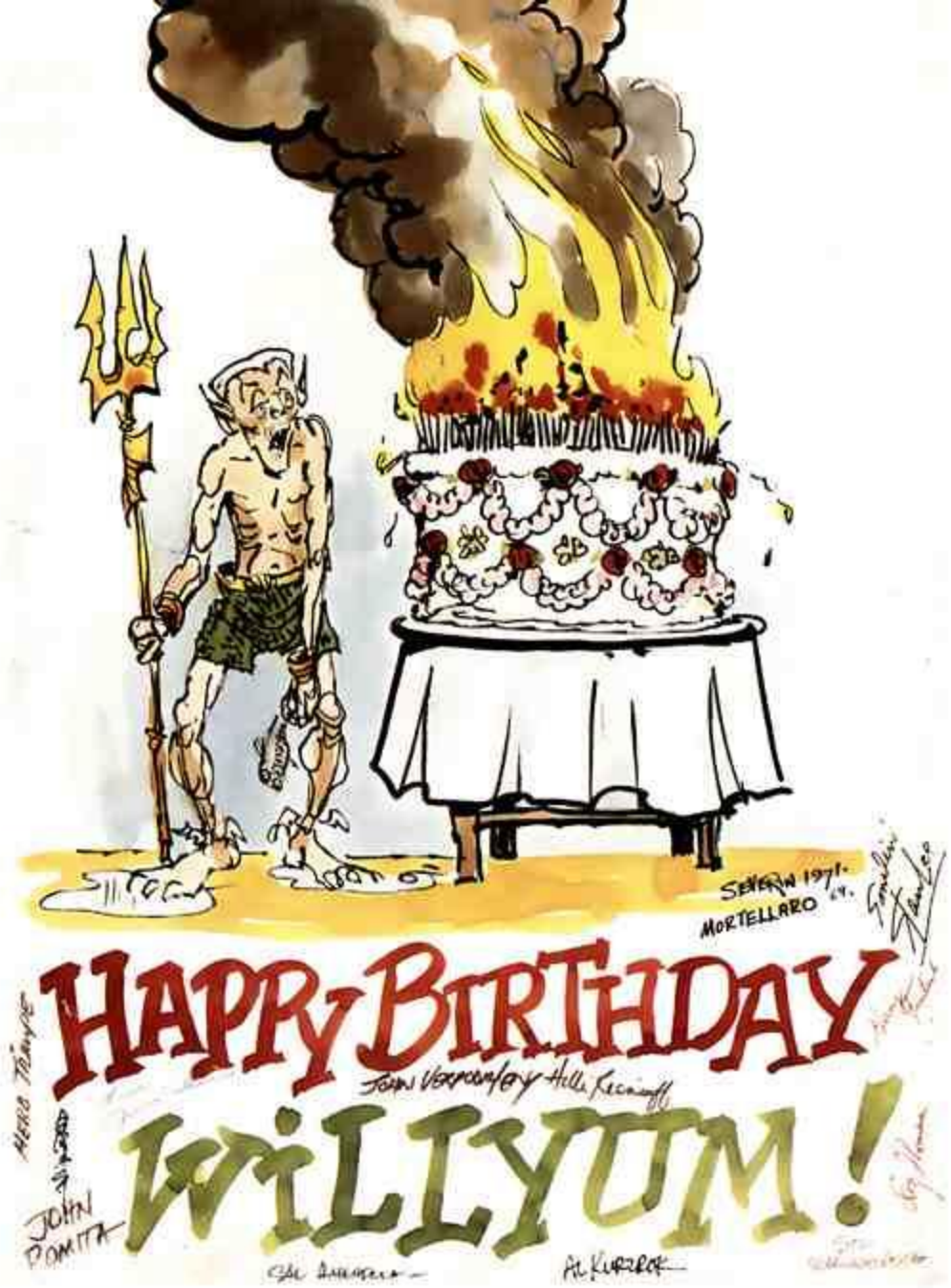
After a few issues, he breathed a sigh of relief when Stan allowed him to return to *Spider-Man*, and John Buscema—a spectactular draftsman who had briefly worked for Timely in the late forties and had recently returned from the world of advertising art—inherited both *Fantastic Four* and *Thor*. But Romita, working hand-in-glove with Lee, had done his job. Marvel had weathered the storm. The company would survive—and so would two of its top titles.

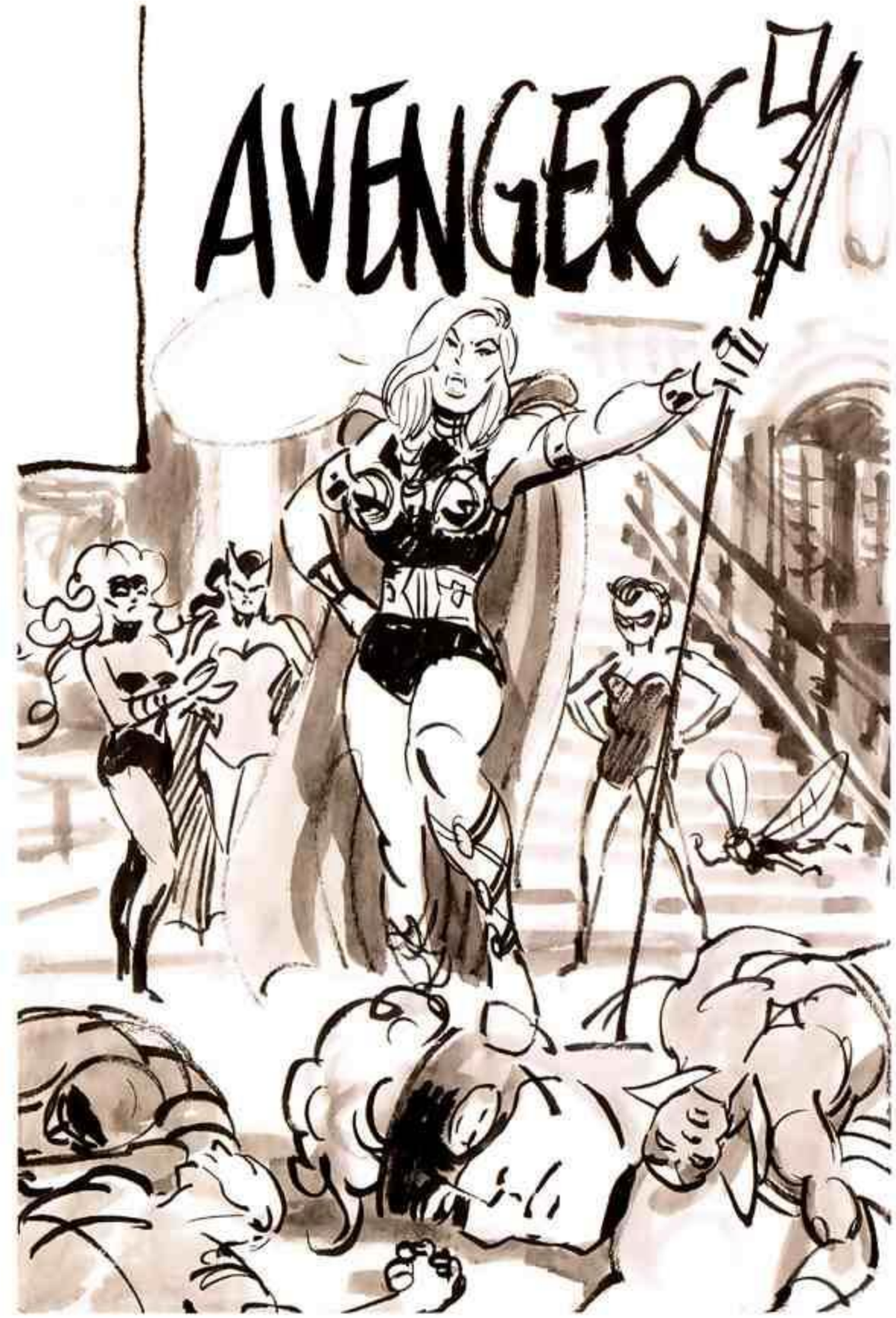




THE SILVER SURFER







A GOOD YEAR FOR COMICS

In 1970, an outside company under the name Marvelmania took over the merchandising side of things, and the MMMS fan club was folded into a new group with the former name. Marvelmania even launched a new self-titled magazine, in which young editors Mark Evanier and Steve Sherman gave members of the new fan group a look at behind-the-scenes doings. For the first time, readers were able to see how an artist's penciled work appeared before it was inked, or the finished product before it was colored, or what a script looked like.

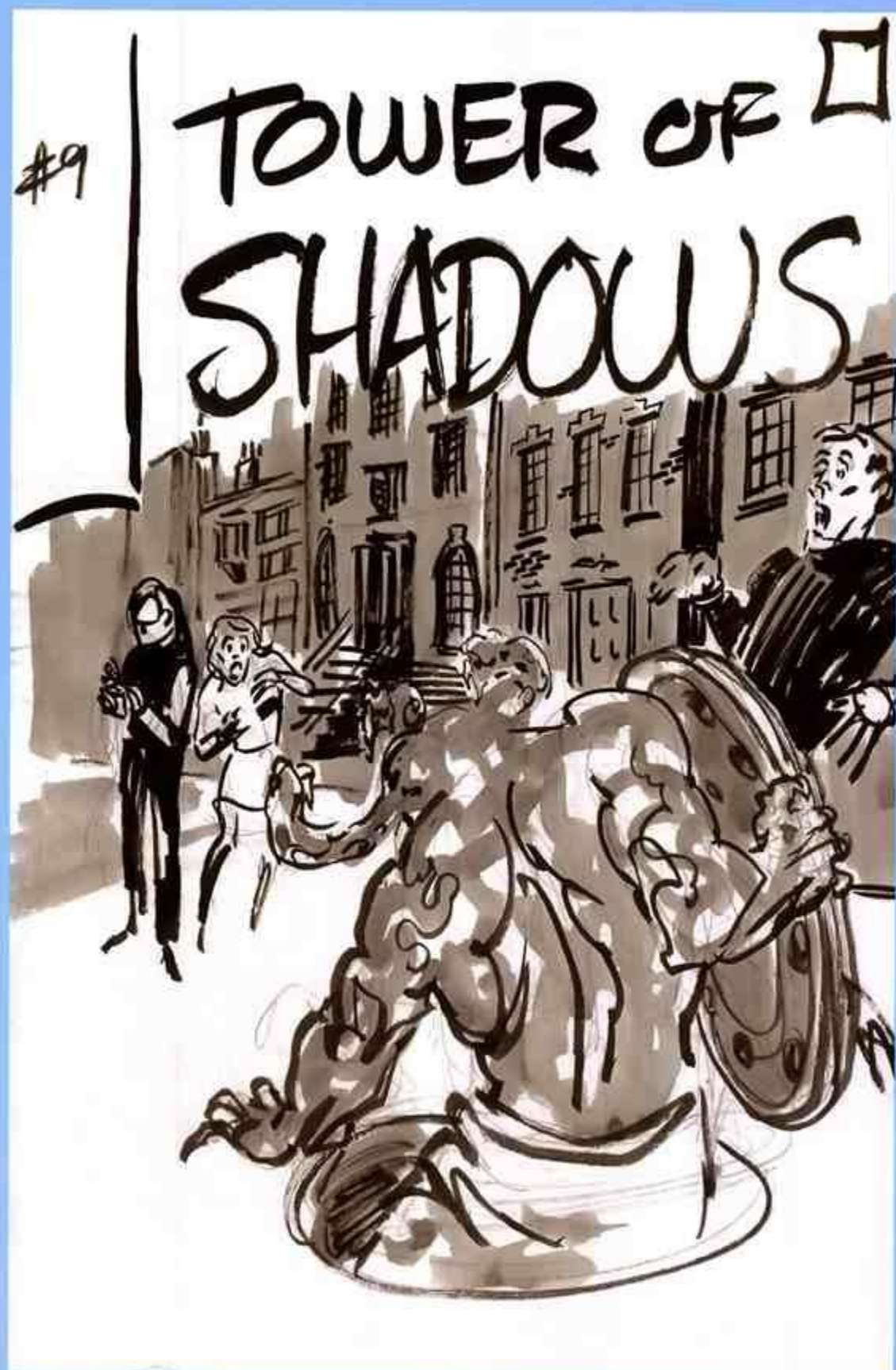
Nineteen-seventy would be a good year for the comics themselves, too. In that year a new genre, usually termed "sword-and-sorcery," became a hit for what Stan Lee had begun to call "the House of Ideas." He and associate

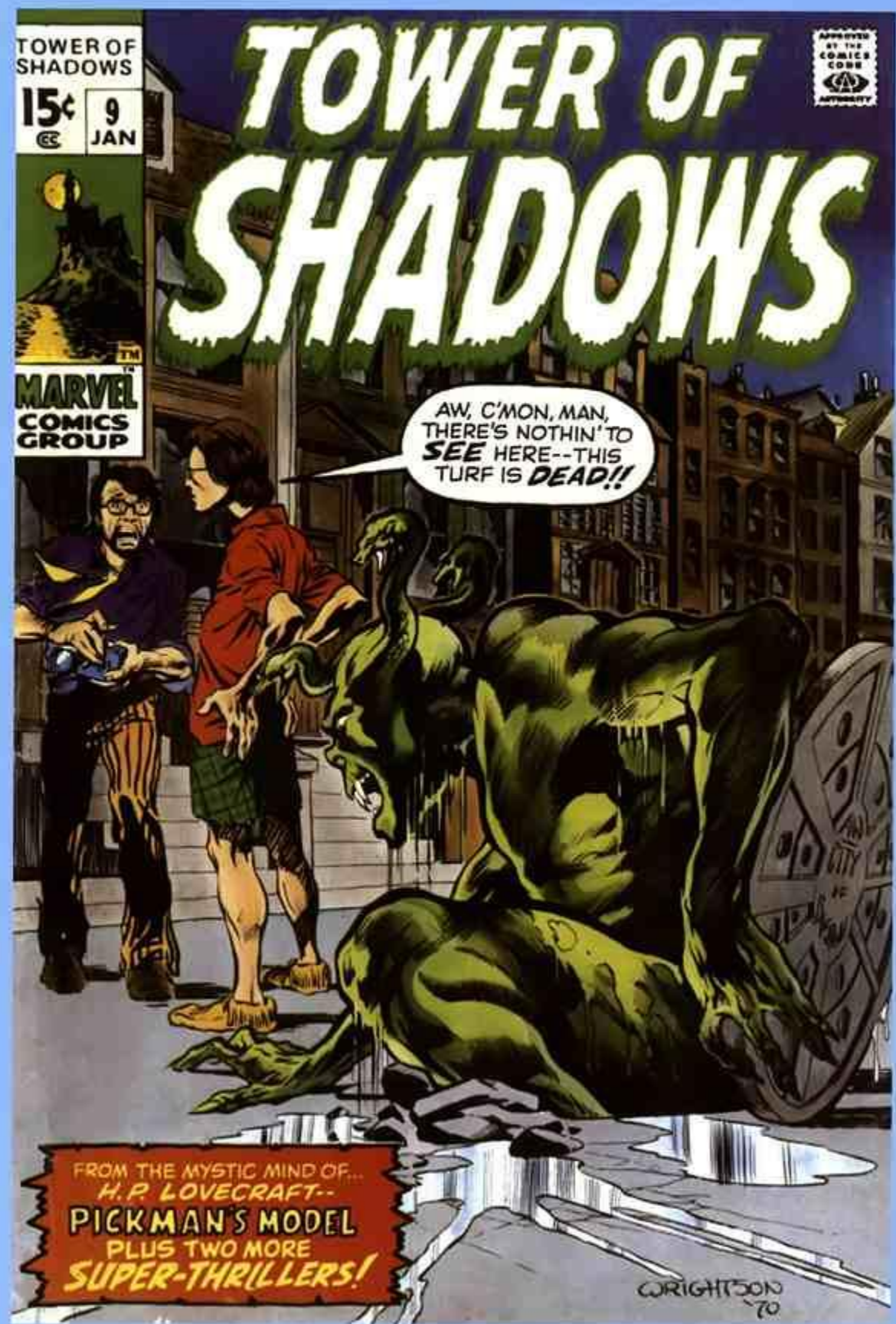
(Opposite page) Artist Herb Trimpe hard at work, above his pencils of a Silver Surfer that had become more menacing. (Above) Bullpenners were always happy to contribute their art to an office celebration, such as Bill Everett's birthday, 1970. (Right) Marie Severin's layout sketch for *Avengers* #83. Although Marvel had employed a few female artists in the 1940s and 1950s, Marie was the first woman there to make a name for herself drawing super heroes.

editor Roy Thomas noticed that readers, through their letters to the editor, were pressing them to acquire the rights to some popular non-comics properties—including Robert E. Howard's Conan the Cimmerian.

Conan, warrior hero of a mythical era before recorded history, had been created for the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* in the 1930s. In the mid-1960s, his exploits had been reprinted in paperback books, behind powerful covers by ex-comics man Frank Frazetta, and had become a mild sensation. Marvel got the rights to the unruly hero, and set British newcomer Barry Smith to work drawing a comic it called *Conan the Barbarian*, with scripts by Thomas. After a slow start, by mid-decade the title had become one of the company's best sellers, as drawn by John Buscema. The Cimmerian even became the star of a black-and-white $1 comic magazine, *The Savage Sword of Conan*, which was one of Marvel's biggest moneymakers for the rest of the decade and through the early 1980s, when two Conan films starring Arnold Schwarzenegger were released.

(Left) Marie Severin's sketch for the cover of *Sub-Mariner* #31, overlapped by the final inked version. (Above) Stan Lee circa 1970. (Opposite page) Marie Severin's layout sketch for the *Tower of Shadows* cover, to the left of the final cover by artist Bernie Wrightson.


#9
TOWER OF
SHADOWS


TOWER OF SHADOWS
15¢
9
JAN
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
TOWER OF SHADOWS
AW, C'MON, MAN, THERE'S NOTHIN' TO SEE HERE--THIS TURF IS DEAD!!
FROM THE MYSTIC MIND OF... H.P. LOVECRAFT--
PICKMAN'S MODEL
PLUS TWO MORE
SUPER-THRILLERS!
WRIGHTSON '70

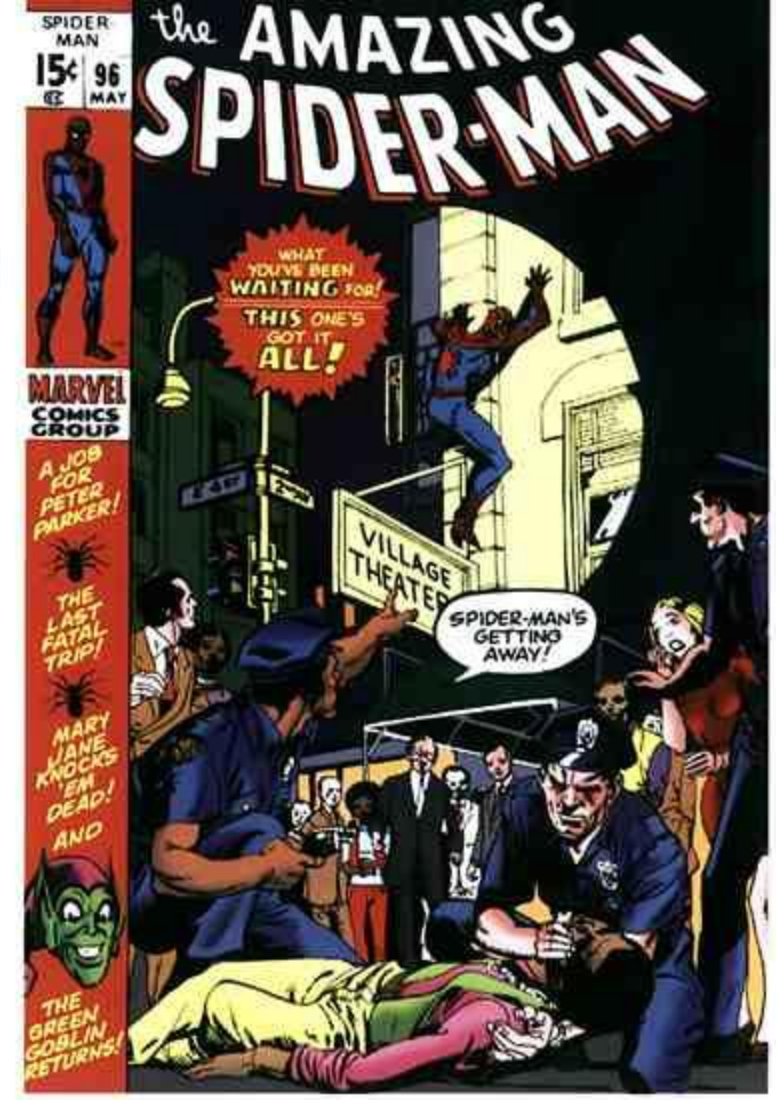
THE CHANGING TIMES

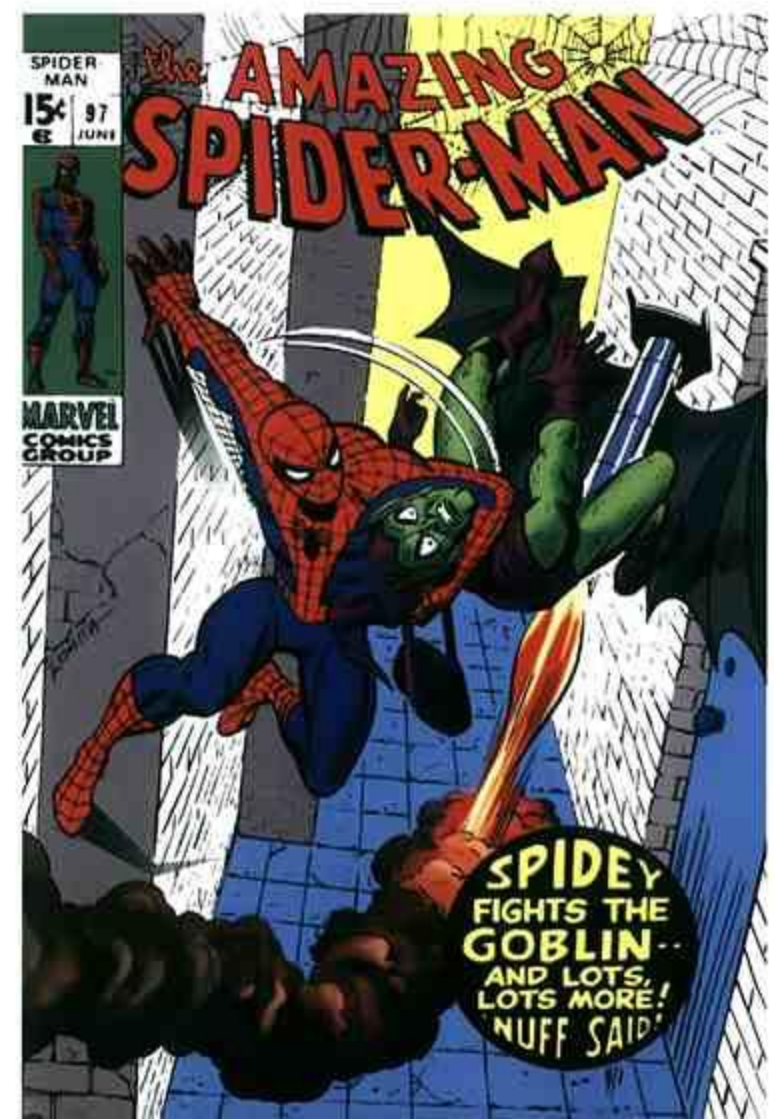
In 1971, Stan Lee was asked by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to consider doing a comic book "warning kids about the dangers of drug addiction." The result was *The Amazing Spider-Man* #96–#98, in which Peter Parker discovers that his roommate Harry Osborn is addicted to dangerous pills. When the Comics Code Authority balked at approving the story line—since the Code as written prohibited any mention of drugs—Stan and publisher Goodman decided to release it without the Code's seal of approval. This was a risky venture, but the issues received such favorable press all over the country that the situation sparked a long-needed revamping of the Code itself, to bring it in line with ways the world had changed since the mid-1950s.

The revisions in the Comics Code included allowing the use of such long-forbidden concepts as vampires and werewolves. But Stan had no intention of simply churning out new versions of the anthology horror comics of the early 1950s. Marvel's strength was obviously in its colorful characters, so

(Both pages) Drugs torment Harry Osborn's mind, as Spider-Man rushes to the rescue, and other scenes from *The Amazing Spider-Man* #96–#98.

LOSING YOUR GRIP, SPIDER-MAN?
HARRY!


SPIDER MAN
15¢
96
MAY
the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR! THIS ONE'S GOT IT ALL!
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
A JOB FOR PETER PARKER!
THE LAST FATAL TRIP!
MARY JANE KNOCKS 'EM DEAD!
AND
THE GREEN GOBLIN RETURNS!
VILLAGE THEATER
SPIDER-MAN'S GETTING AWAY!

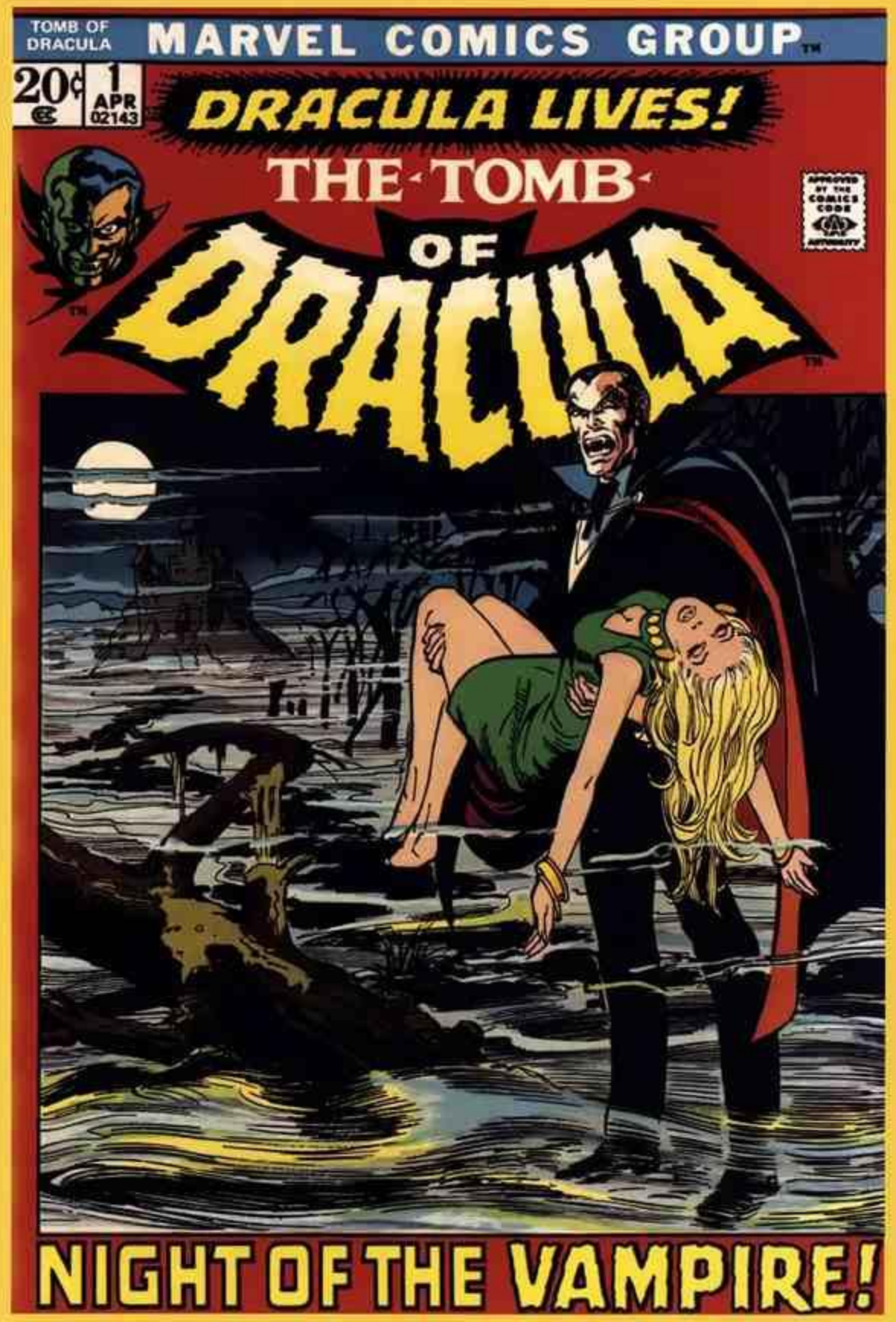

SPIDER MAN
15¢
97
JUNE
the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
SPIDEY FIGHTS THE GOBLIN-- AND LOTS, LOTS MORE! 'NUFF SAID!

1972 ushered in the age of "the monster as hero" even more than the origins of the Thing and the Hulk had.

Marvel's first real toe in the water under the revised Comics Code was the debut of quasi-villainous Morbius the Living Vampire in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #101. But Stan soon launched a monthly title, *The Tomb of Dracula*, which starred the most famous and evil vampire of them all. It became a hit! Drac was followed over the next year or so by *Man-Thing*, *Werewolf by Night*, *The Monster of Frankenstein*, *The Living Mummy*, a *Morbius* comic, *Man-Wolf*, *The Golem*, *It! The Living Colossus*, *Ghost Rider*—starring a leather-clad supernatural motorcyclist with a blazing white skull—and *Son of Satan*, whose quasi-oedipal hero was exactly what the name implies.

As all this change was going on, Marvel's comics—and DC's—abruptly jumped from thirty-two interior pages to forty-eight, and their price from fifteen to twenty-five cents. However, after just a month or two at the new size and price, Martin Goodman abruptly dropped Marvel's titles back to thirty-two pages, only now tagged at twenty cents, at the same time offering a higher percentage of the sales price to distributors. DC continued with the larger twenty-five cent magazines. Over the next year, as readers could buy five Marvel comics for the price of four DC titles, Marvel finally passed its major competitor in overall sales. It was the end of an era—and the beginning of a new one.

The Comics Code was amended, and the monsters came out to play! Covers and sketches from Marvel's return to the horrible, including new hero Ghost Rider (left), Morbius (above), and Mighty Marvel's first vampire cover (opposite).


TOMB OF DRACULA
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
20¢
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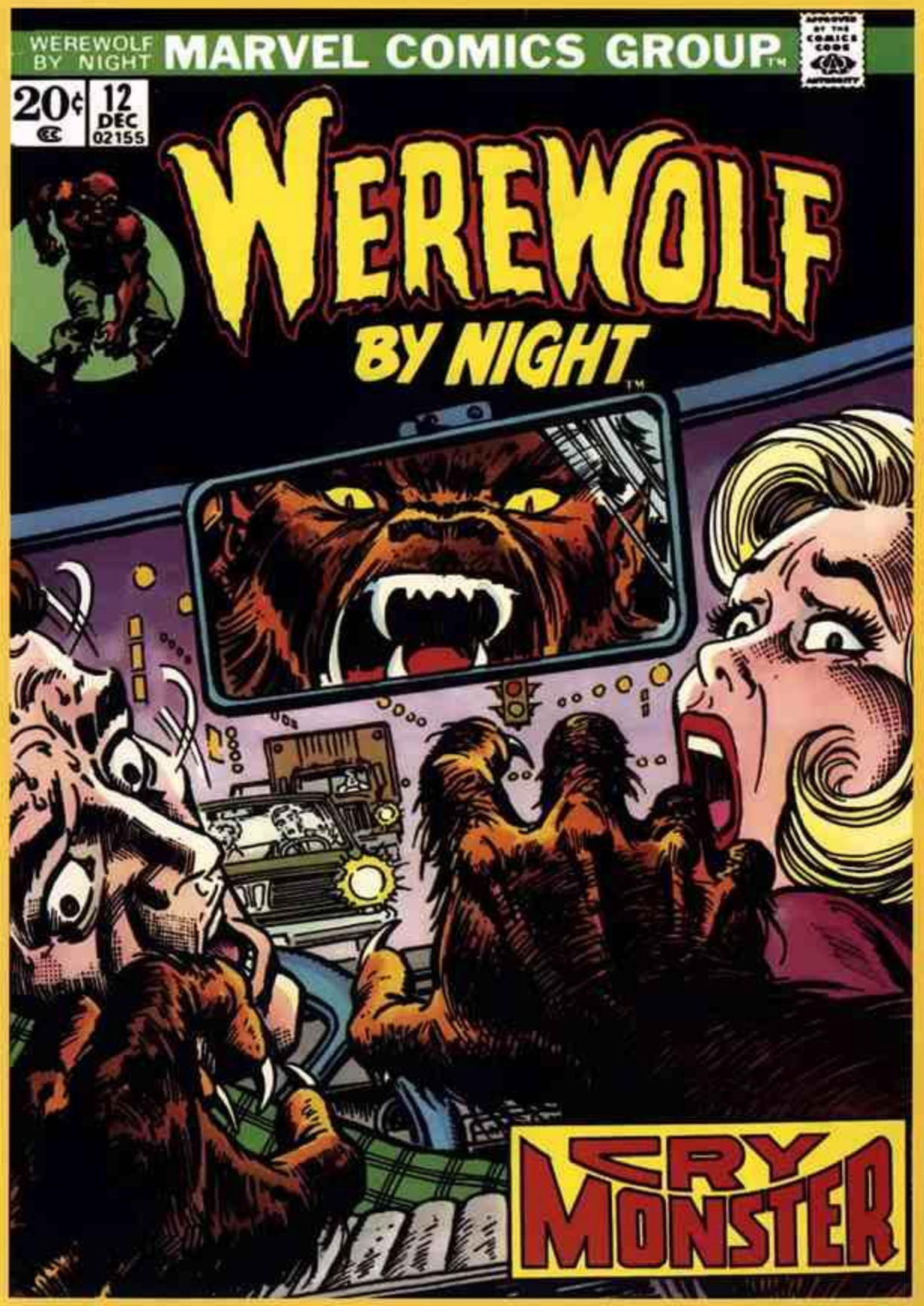
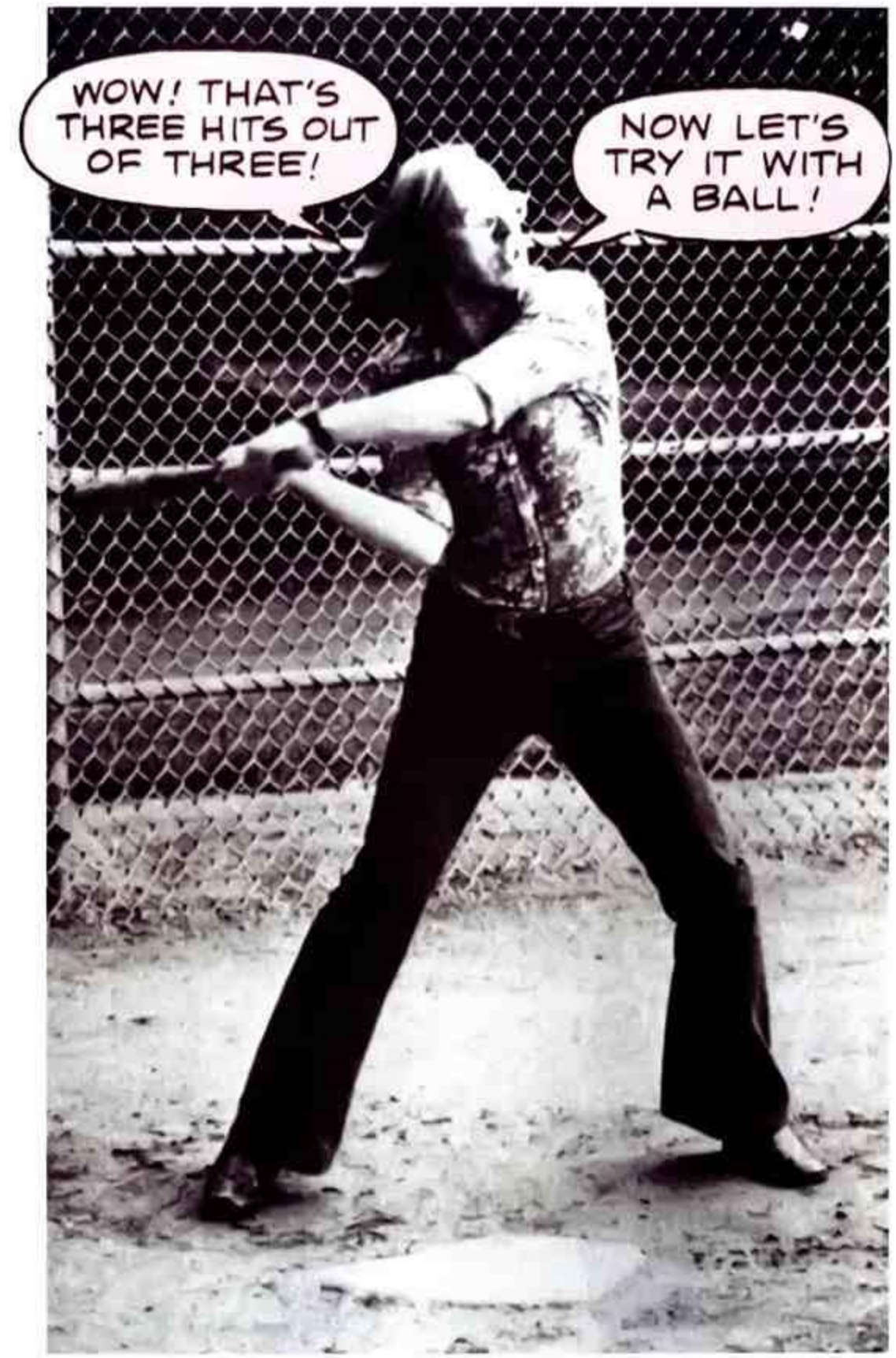
02143
DRACULA LIVES!
THE TOMB OF DRACULA
NIGHT OF THE VAMPIRE!


WEREWOLF BY NIGHT
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
20¢
12
DEC
02155
WEREWOLF BY NIGHT
CRY MONSTER

Greetings, O Seeker of Truth thou hast found thy true Nirvana! Here in the hallowed circle thou art truly amongst thy peers —thou art truly welcome —thou art truly safe and secure within the fabled, far-flung Fellowship of Foom! From this moment on you are no longer a lonely wanderer on the twisting treadmill of life. Ever at your side stand the rapturous ranks of Foomdom Assembled. Your days have found new meaning; your nights have been enriched; your world has gained new lustre. Thrice blessed are you, for you have embraced the cause of Foom forever—now let the angel chorus sing! And yet, here in this miniscule moment of eternity, [O, glorious instant!] we can but hint at the wonderment that awaits you. Here, within the pages you so proudly peruse are contained the words and thoughts, the hopes and aspirations of your fearless fellow Foomers. Here, clutched within your frantic fingers, is the first of many such magnificent magazines which you'll receive—an endless bounty of all that is best, all that is noblest, all that most truly symbolizes the soul and the spirit of we who follow Foom! I could go on and on, but to what avail? Already my limpid eyes grow misty; already the tear-stained page turns soggy in my hand. Only a fellow Foomer like yourself can sense the lump in my throat, the deep emotion that threatens to overwhelm me. For, of all the countless words I have penned in days of yore, none have been so fraught with meaning, so tinged with drama, so garnished with glory as these which now you read—

WELCOME TO FOOM
—the best is yet to be!
Excelsior!
Stan Lee

FIRST ISSUE · SPRING 1973



HOW DO YOU GET TO CARNEGIE HALL?

Answer: You go to work for Marvel Comics.

January 5, 1972 saw a sold-out performance of *Marvel-ous Evening with Stan Lee*, produced by Marvelmania. The onstage events weren't as well coordinated as they might have been, but there were still a few offbeat highlights: Stan talked to the audience about Marvel while John Romita and John Buscema drew furiously, their art projected on a giant screen; New Journalist (and future best-selling novelist) Tom Wolfe, resplendent in his trademark white suit, read an essay about Captain America; a rock band composed of Roy Thomas, Barry Smith, and Herb Trimpe performed "Be-Bop-a-Lu-La" with Marvel-related lyrics, while three young lovelies danced about, garbed as Invisible Girl, Medusa, and the Wasp; and the audience was told (as per the classic play *Peter Pan*) that they needed to make their voices heard if they wanted Stan rescued from the clutches of Doctor Doom, who had reportedly carried him off. Despite the show's organizational flaws, the standing-room-only crowd showed that Marvel was not your ordinary company—its name and creative personnel, especially Stan Lee, had become as much of a draw as its characters!

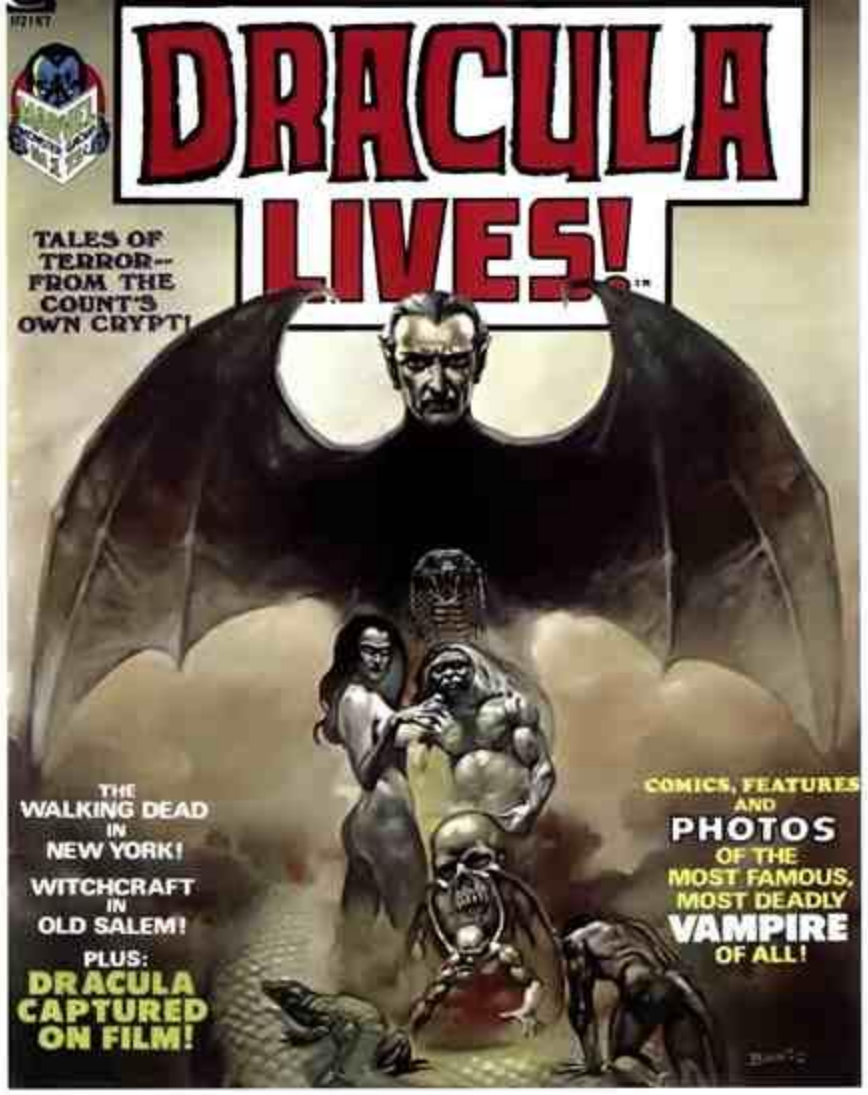
Later that year, Stan became both president and publisher of Marvel. He succeeded Martin Goodman and his son Charles ("Chip"). Stan turned over his editor-in-chief job to Roy Thomas, and John Romita soon officially became art director. In his new job, Lee spent considerable time publicizing the company, but it wasn't long before he relinquished his role as president (a purely business position), retaining that of publisher, deciding which comics Marvel should put out.

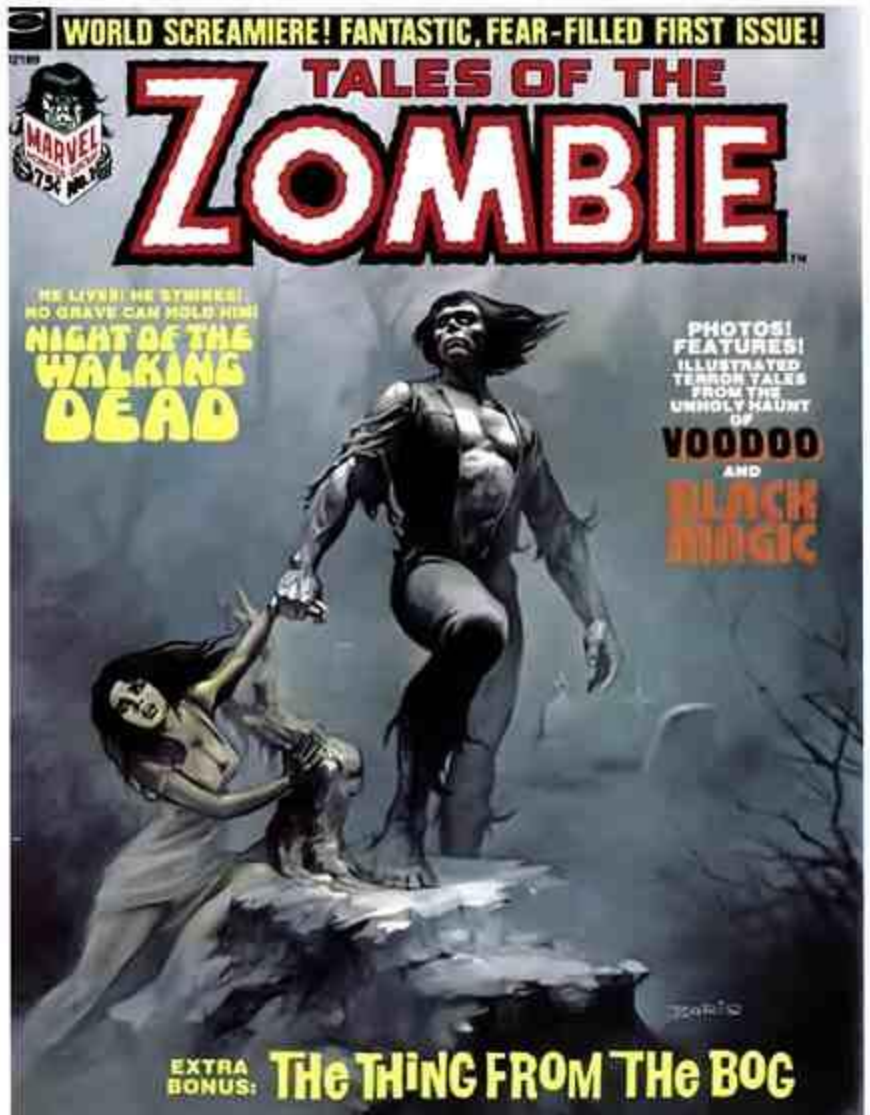
For the next two years, Lee and Thomas worked to diversify Marvel's output—and when Thomas resigned as editor in chief in 1974 to return to writing, his position passed successively to writers Len Wein, Marv Wolfman, Gerry Conway, and Archie Goodwin, before passing at the end of 1977 to yet another scripter, Jim Shooter.

The monster-hero color comics were only one part of what Stan christened "Phase Two" of the Marvel Age of Comics. Besides adding a few new mainline super heroes, Marvel branched out into a number of new areas. These included:

➡ *Hero for Hire*, the first comic starring an African-American super hero (since Gabe Jones of *Sgt. Fury* had no super powers, and only a supporting role).

(Opposite page) The Stan Lee–starring cover of *F.O.O.M.* #1 (Friends of Ol' Marvel), and, from a later issue, a photo of then-editor in chief Roy Thomas at a 1974 softball game in Central Park (word balloon by Stan). (This page) Marvel continues to break new ground, releasing the first comics cover to star an African-American hero—Luke Cage.





➡ *Howard the Duck*, the talking fowl from another cosmos.

➡ Quasi-horror titles such as *Chamber of Chills* and a science-fiction comic *Worlds Unknown*, all containing original stories and adaptations of masterworks by H. P. Lovecraft and others, but with no continuing characters.

➡ A trio of unfortunately short-lived series (*Claws of the Cat*, *Shanna the She-Devil*, and *Night Nurse*) aimed at, as well as scripted and often drawn by, women.

➡ *Red Wolf*, an American Indian masked hero.

➡ *Warlock*, a super hero, who was soon turned by writer/artist Jim Starlin into perhaps the darkest and most cosmic super hero saga to date.

➡ *Master of Kung Fu* and *Iron Fist*, a pair of kung fu super heroes.

➡ *Wolverine* and *The Punisher*, both of whom started out as villains but were clearly destined for other things.

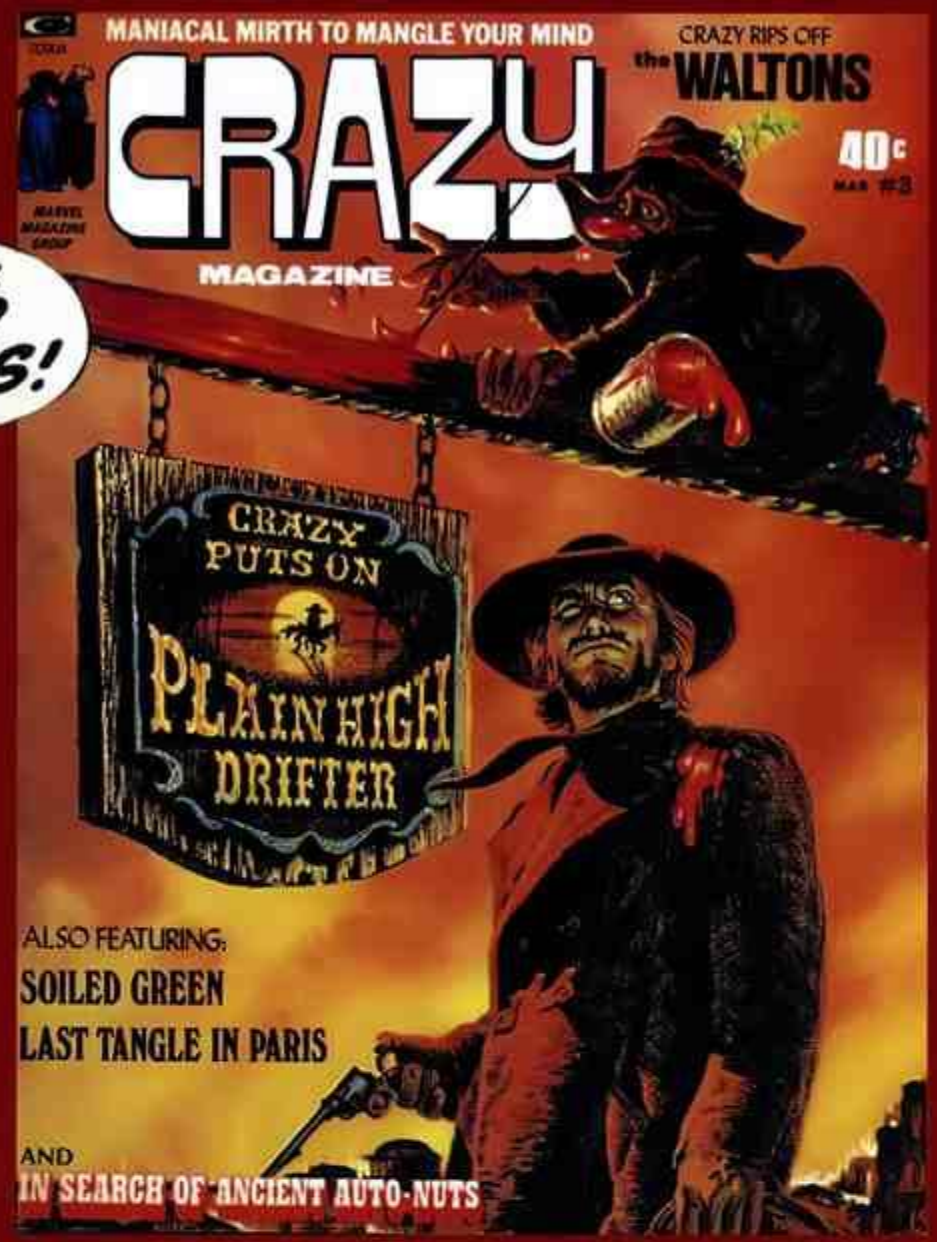
➡ *Comix Book*, a short-lived but valiant attempt to merge Marvel and the underground "comix" of the era—although the youth counterculture's own versions of comic books, being laced with liberal doses of sex, bawdy language, and drug references, were an ill fit for Marvel, and an attempt to do *Comix Book* without those three qualities led to its early demise.

➡ Several black-and-white comics published without the Comics Code seal, including *Dracula Lives!* and several other horror titles. The only one of these titles that survived more than a year or two, however, was *The Savage Sword of Conan*, a second mag about the swashbuckling Cimmerian.

Clearly, Marvel was not content to rest on its laurels by publishing virtually nothing but super heroes. *Conan the Barbarian* and *The Tomb of Dracula* had proven there were characters in other genres that could gain an enthusiastic following, and "the House of Ideas" was happy to create stories for those fans to enjoy.

(This page) Covers from comics that were beyond the Code's reach. (Opposite page) Art for *Master of Kung Fu* #48, by Paul Gulacy, pictured beneath an illustration from the cover of *Red Wolf* #7. *Crazy*, Marvel's humor mag, entertained with a satirical style (far right).

HOLD ON, GIRL! THOSE KILLERS WANT THAT MICROFILM OF YOURS...
--OVER OUR DEAD BODIES!


MANIACAL MIRTH TO MANGLE YOUR MIND
CRAZY RIPS OFF the WALTONS
CRAZY
MAGAZINE
40¢
CRAZY PUTS ON
PLAIN HIGH DRIFTER
ALSO FEATURING:
SOILED GREEN
LAST TANGLE IN PARIS
AND
IN SEARCH OF ANCIENT AUTO-NUTS

CHUMP
FWOK
"I DON'T BELIEVE IT! IT'S A BLUR! HE'S SWINGIN' AN' SWOOPIN' THOSE BLOODY STICKS FASTER'N MY EYES CAN FOLLOW!
"THEY'RE DROPPIN' LIKE POISONED FLIES--SEVEN--EIGHT--NINE OF 'EM!!

I'VE GOT TO CATCH HER--
--STOP HER FALL BEFORE SHE HITS THE WATER!

I'VE GOT TO!
I'VE GOT TO!

DID IT!
SWIK!
SNAP!

SPIDER-POWERS, I LOVE YOU!
NOT ONLY AM I THE MOST DASHING HERO ON TWO LEGS--

HEY, KID--WHAT'S WRONG? DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?
I SAVED YOU--
--YOU CAN'T BE--

THE END OF THE SILVER AGE

The late 1930s and the 1940s are considered by comics historians to be the "Golden Age of Comic Books," and the great super hero revival of the late 1950s and 1960s is the "Silver Age." Some feel the Silver Age lasted into the early 1970s, but it soon ended, begging the questions: When, exactly, did it expire? And why?

Was it when Jack Kirby quit in 1970? Or when Stan Lee stopped writing regular monthly comics with *The Amazing Spider-Man* #110 in 1972? The transition point may well be *The Amazing Spider-Man* #121 in 1973, written by Marvel newcomer Gerry Conway and illustrated by veteran artist Gil Kane.

Because that was when Gwen Stacy died.

(Both pages) Art from the two issues that featured the demise of Spider-Man's first love and the seeming demise of her killer.

Marvel had been looking for a way to shake up Spider-Man's status quo, and John Romita suggested killing off his love interest, Gwen Stacy. Readers were shocked when Spider-Man failed to save his beloved from death at the Green Goblin's hands. How could this happen? Characters didn't *really* die in comic books. And yet . . . Gwen did and *stayed* dead. What this infamous issue showed was that a new generation of writers and artists was following Stan Lee's example by pushing the limits of the super hero genre still further.

And ironically, one of the "new" Marvel writers of the mid-1970s was actually one of the Marvel Age of Comics's founding fathers: Jack Kirby had returned!

(Left) Gil Kane's pencils for a panel depicting Gwen Stacy's funeral, above John Romita's inked version, complete with considerable re-penciling. (Above) In the bullpen: Stan Lee, Marie Severin, John Romita, and Spider-Man (Roy Thomas). (Opposite page) Sketches for what became the cover of *Giant-Size Avengers* #1.

GIANT-SIZE AVENGERS

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

1 AUG 02922

50¢

68 BIG PAGES

GIANT-SIZE AVENGERS

THOR! CAPTAIN AMERICA! IRON MAN! SCARLET WITCH! THE VISION! MANTIS!

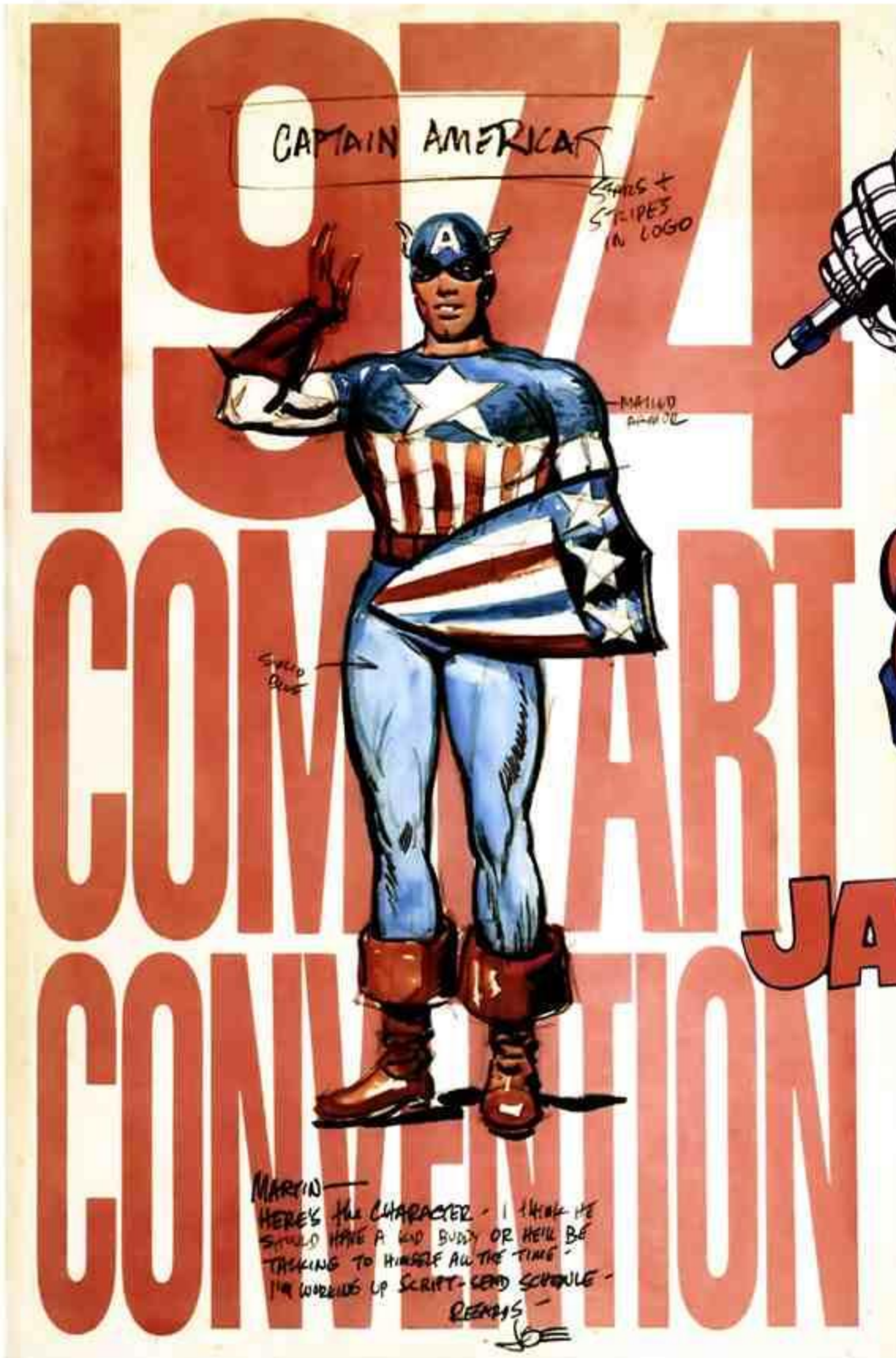
ALL THESE SUPERHEROES.. PLUS THE STARTLING REAPPEARANCE OF THE FABLED-- ALL-WINNERS SQUAD!

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!

THIS HOUR WE WIN OUR MOST GLORIOUS TRIUMPH-- OR ELSE, THIS HOUR WE DIE!

BONUS: CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE ORIGINAL HUMAN TORCH --IN ONE OF THE MOST MIND-BOGGLING TEAM-UPS EVER!

IN THIS ISSUE: A FEATURE-LENGTH ALL-NEW CLASH OF TITANS! NUKLO-- THE MONSTER THAT TIME FORGOT!



Although many series he had created during his early-1970s stint with DC, such as *The New Gods*, are now regarded as classics, DC management did not consider them commercial successes. So Kirby came back to Marvel, but this time as both writer and editor of the books he drew.

He took over *Captain America*'s monthly series, arriving in time to celebrate the nation's 200th anniversary in 1976 with the special one-shot *Captain America's Bicentennial Battles*. But Kirby devoted most of his energy to creating new series, the most notable of which was *The Eternals*, the epic saga of a race of immortals that had been worshipped as gods by ancient civilizations.

(Left) Joe Simon's 1941 character concept drawing of Captain America, published for the first time in 1974 on the cover of a comics convention program. (Above) A calendar cover from 1975, behind a caricature of Jack Kirby from *F.O.O.M.* #11, heralding his return to Marvel.

Welcome to the First...
MIGHTY MARVEL COMIC CONVENTION
march 22,23, 24!
HOTEL COMMODORE

GET DOWN AMERICA!
VOTE HOWARD THE DUCK IN '76

Welcome to the First...

A GREETING FROM STAN LEE!

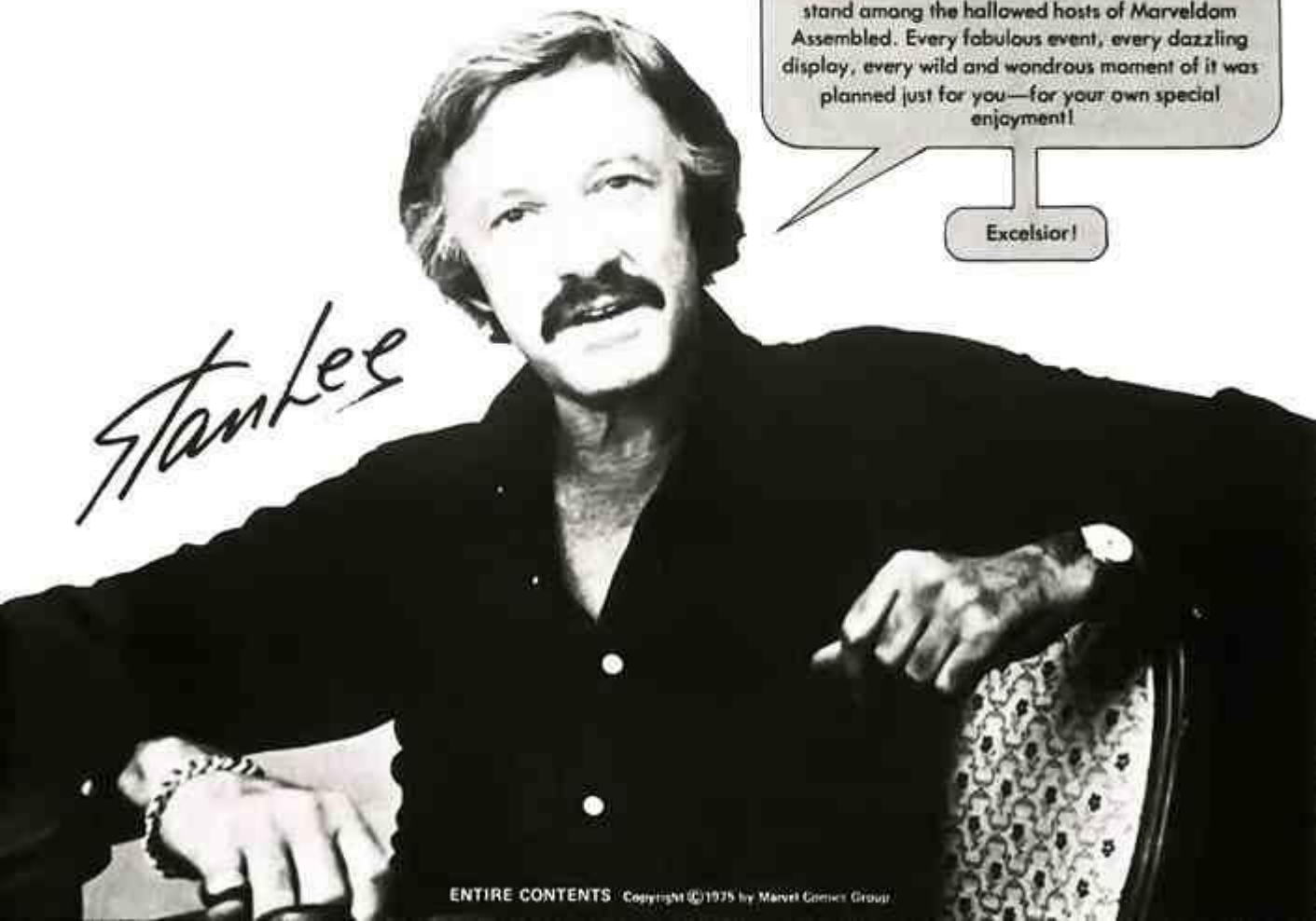
You wanted it! You asked for it! You *demanded* it! And now, here it is—the greatest occasion in the history of comicdom! The mighty *Marvel Con!*

Stay as long as you like. See as much as you can. Gather mirth and memories that will linger for years. And, most important of all, never ever let yourself forget—you're the guest of honor! We're nothing without you!

Mingle with hundreds of other merry Marvelites. Greet old friends and meet many new. See your favorite Marvel artists, writers, editors, and all the other brilliant Bullpen biggies who've entertained and enthralled you through the years. Take all the snapshots you want. Visit the many dealers who've come from near and far to help you buy, sell, or swap comics for your collection. See the zillions of books, novelties, posters, and assorted souvenirs which are all around you. Seize this golden opportunity to collect the autographs you've always wanted, and to shake the friendly hands of the terrifically talented creative crew that have made this truly The Marvel Age of Comics!

Feel welcome, warm, and wanted, True Believer, as you stand among the hallowed hosts of Marveldom Assembled. Every fabulous event, every dazzling display, every wild and wondrous moment of it was planned just for you—for your own special enjoyment!

Excelsior!



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IN THE MARVEL MANNER

Marvel Comics are written in a manner different from those of any other company, in that they are written plot first, and then the script. For those unfamiliar with this method, we present the following: a plot for TOMB OF DRACULA #32, illustrated with key sequences from the story. The book was written by Marv Wolfman, and illustrated by Gene Colan and Tom Palmer.

Page 8

1: Full page splash. Quincy Harker is sitting in his wheelchair. His dog, Saint, is by his side. They are in the Livingroom of the Harker Estate and are staring at the door as if waiting for something to happen. A phone is on a table by him, a comfortable looking chair across from him. There is tension in Quincy's face—for he feels he may die tonight if all does not go well.

2: He turns to Saint and says this may be his final night—he knows Dracula is coming to confront him, to see Quincy about the folder (which is by the telephone) of papers on the table by his side. He looks up at the fireplace and the urn which contains his daughter's ashes. He looks sad as he remembers that Dracula killed her . . . that Dracula slew his wife. From the vantage point of the dog we see that Quincy is a bit tired . . . showing his age. Quincy is saying that Quincy is old, crippled—Dracula, even after five hundred years, has his youth, has power, etc. Yes, this may be the end of his long struggle. Suddenly the phone rings, which startles Quincy. His device picks up the phone as it did several issues' back (the rod holding it in the center and the microphone nearby) and Dracula is on the other end (we don't see Drac—we only hear his voice) saying that he is coming to see Quincy—they have much to talk about.

3: Quincy says he is ready, and the phone is lowered as Quincy turns to Saint and says this is it. Cut now to the double-sided page as we did last issue—Taj's story going down the left hand side and Frank's down the right. This will continue for several pages, so follow this, please. Taj: Taj stands firmly before the door to his home, while the townspeople mass outside holding stakes, crucifixes, etc. The front man says to Taj that Taj knows what must be done. Frank: Frank is walking towards the cave in Brazil—the zombies are walking there, blank-eyed. He's walking up to one of them.

4: Taj: The men surge forward, and Taj, even though he battles them, is forced away. The men break in and run past Taj's wife who is in her wheelchair. She looks frightened, but one man, trying to be nice to her, says there can be no other way—the outcome had been decided so long ago. Frank: Frank, happy-go-lucky, pats one of the zombies on the back saying he's the new foreman. The zombie turns around and Frank sees the zombie for the first time—he is shocked. He turns and he sees about half-a-dozen zombies walking towards him.

5: They enter the room in Taj's story in the first panel and we see the kid, still lying on his bed, strapped down, crucifixes on the wall, blood being pumped into him. Now, Gene, this may be complicated—for panel two and three down this left-hand panel I want EXACTLY the same picture drawn, which means you may as well draw it only once and we'll stat it here, so make these two panels exactly the same size. What I want is a shot from behind the bed—so we only see the top of the kids head. On the left hand side of the panel is the silhouette (partially lighted) of the man who spoke to Taj before grasping the stake in his hands. The stake is poised over the boy's heart. The hands are across the top of the page. In the center is Taj running into the room, face anguished, hands out as if to stop the man from killing his son. The fourth panel is totally black. The reason I want two of the same panel is that on the

first we will put white zipatone over Taj—making the focus of the picture of man, his stake, and the kid. In the second frame, we'll put the white zip over them, leaving Taj clear—sort of like those shots in the movies where the focus changes in one scene to highlight specific subjects. Frank: The zombies come closer in panel 1. In panel 2 switch to his friend, Danny, on the phone—Danny is saying all is going well—the zombies will get Frank. In panel 3 down, Danny just like panel four of the Taj sequence.

6: Layouts back to normal. Drac is hanging up his phone (he is in a phone booth) saying all is going as planned. His agents drove the people in Taj's village angry, so they came to kill Taj's son. Drac flies off as a bat heading towards Harker Estates and he continues his thoughts—so Taj was forced to leave England. His people brought Frank Drake to South America—separating both of them from Quincy—making it so much easier to wipe out his foes. As for Rachel, well, everything has been taken care of with her . . . so Quincy, the weakest of them all is alone. Last of these panels should show Drac swooping down onto the Estate grounds. Cut to inside. Harker is staring at the open door which Dracula fills—his cape flapping in the wind outside. The moon covering him from behind so Drac appears to be solid black. He merely asks to come in. Harker says Drac doesn't need the formalities . . . he has been inside the mansion many times before. Inside now, Drac looks at Harker who is holding a growling Saint back by a collar that is half exposed (the collar has studs on it but I don't want anyone to see them yet as they will play an important role in a few pages—they're shaped like a cross). Drac is saying here that Harker looks well considering he is still recovering from his last battle with Lilith back in Chillers #1.

7: Drac, smiling, reaches to pet Saint, but the dog growls, snaps—very well trained, Drac says. Quincy asks Drac to take a seat, pointing to the chair in the splash page. Drac, smiling, says no thanks—once before he narrowly escaped death when he sat in one of Quincy's rigged chairs. He asks Quincy to show him what this one would have done. Quincy presses a button on his wheelchair and the arm of the chairs opens—coming from it is a metallic clamp that attaches itself to the other arm. Directly in the center of this is a wooden stake pointing in. In otherwords, if Drac had sat down this would have trapped him and instantly staked him in the heart because of the speed and force the clamp spun around with. Drac says very good—he has always found Quincy's devices clever—why, he remembers one back in 1919 which . . . ah, never mind. He is here on business.

8: Drac, standing by the fireplace and the urn (he can finger the urn while speaking and Quincy could tell him to get his hands off of it) says that he learned last issue

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that Quincy had some papers which indicated Drac was not only alive after his battle with Doctor Sun (issue #20 & 21) but was losing his powers. Drac demands to know how he is losing them, because he noticed some of them slipping as well. Quincy says he knows, but he is not telling. Because if Dracula's powers are being drained, Quincy wants to kill him now. At that, Saint, who has been sitting staring menacingly at Drac, leaps. The vampire grabs the dog in mid-air by the neck as if to strangle him, but his hand begins smoking.

9: The reason is that in touching the dog's neck, he touched the crucifixes on the collar, which we now see. Drac slams Saint away and turns to see Quincy is gone. Drac says he will find Harker—and he points to one of several doors and says Harker is behind that one—he can hear Harker breathing rapidly—due to his bat-like radar hearing. He breaks into the next room which is a pool-room. Quincy is at the far end holding a cue stick, which he fires—shooting a wooden spear which hits Drac in the shoulder.

10: Drac angrily pulls it out and says there is no way for Quincy to escape—the house is only so big. Quincy pushes a button on his chair and suddenly the pool table rights itself up, standing on end—two sides slip out which makes the pool table form a giant cross standing in the middle of the room. Not only that, but the walls suddenly pull down revealing mirrors everywhere—so that everywhere Drac looks he sees the giant cross. He screams in horror at the thousands of crosses.

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11: Holding his cape over his eyes, Drac tries to move closer when out of Quincy's chair comes a half dozen wooden darts which hit Drac everywhere. Drac roars in pain as he stumbles painfully onwards toward Quincy, pulling the darts out as he does. Quincy's chair, which is self-propelled, flashes by Drac as the vampire stumbles headlong into a mirror, crashing into it, breaking it as he does. Drac pulls the last dart out of his arm and as he collapses, turns into mist.

12: The mist flows through the room and out the door where a reformed Drac falls weakly to the ground. He finds himself in a hallway with a door at the end. He knows Quincy went through it. As he lifts himself up the door behind him slams shut and a grating along the top of the hallway opens—sending cloves of garlic falling down on Drac. As they begin to fall, however, he changes back into mist and flows onward towards the other door.

13: Inside the other room which looks like a den, complete with Bar, Quincy moves in his wheelchair towards the bar area. As he does, the mist forms up on the ceiling. Quincy reaches the bar and there is a small control panel by the side. Suddenly Drac, as a human, falls atop Quincy, pulling Quincy out of his chair and tosses him to the ground. Quincy's glasses fall off, and we see his eyes are glowing red—he's been bitten so many times he was affected. This is the first time we have ever seen Quincy without his glasses, so make it a strong impact shot—something special.

14: Quincy tries bracing himself when Drac starts to walk towards him, calmly saying Quincy will die now. Quincy pulls himself up to the bar . . . up to the control panel and as Drac reaches him, pulls the stud on the control panel down. Drac realizes at the last moment this shouldn't happen and grabs Quincy's hand, wrenches it free from the panel and crushes the rod in his own hand. He then turns towards Quincy who is once again on the ground, when suddenly the lights go out.

15: We see Quincy's eyes glowing and Drac says he, too, can see in the dark, so this ploy is useless. Drac moves closer—cut once or twice to Harker—there is fear showing in his face—when suddenly once more, Drac receives a shock—from the center of each wall a wooden arrow shoots out—hitting Drac on all four sides, and one right through his heart.

16: Drac rears in pain—his face contorts—Quincy, trying to pick himself up says the device was a timer . . . even though Drac crushed it, it had already set the proper mechanisms in motion. First the lights were set to shut off, then the new radar unit he created two months back homed in on Drac's heart, and when all four arrows were synchronized, they went off. Drac, still in pain, slams Quincy into his wheel chair and over it—he curses Harker as he holds the arrow which is inside his chest.

17: Harker grabs the side of the rocker and uses all his strength to pick himself up . . . it is slow and Drac, still writhing in pain, finally collapses just as Harker reaches the chair—his face bleeding, sweating, etc. Harker sees Drac on the floor, holding the arrow in his chest and begins shouting saying Drac is finally getting what he deserves—he killed his daughter, his wife, all his relatives. He hopes Drac is suffering—this is a frenzied shot of Quincy, totally blowing the cool he has tried to keep all these years.

18: Drac, on the floor, his face already decaying, bone showing through, says Harker has not won—call Rachel Van Helsing and see. Harker says this is a trick. Drac replies that even if it is, Drac is at his weakest—he can't do anything. What is there to lose. Unsure, Harker picks up the phone by the bar and calls. Switch to Rachel's apartment. Rachel is being held tightly by a female vamp in a very sexy costume. Another holds the phone to her. Rachel's clothing is half torn off her—her face is bruised, battered and bleeding. The place is a mess. Rachel screams out to Quincy that she is being held by vampires who will kill her unless Drac is freed, but, she shouts, let Drac die—she would gladly give her life for his. Last panel back at Harkers. Quincy is still holding the phone—shocked. Drac is saying Harker has the choice now—either Rachel or Dracula . . . and if Rachel dies—Harker will always know he caused it. Wow, what a decision to make. Continued next issue.

If you follow TV GUIDE with any sort of regularity, you may have noticed a series of features on old movie dialogues. This series, engineered by old film-fan Harry Purvis, never fails to intrigue us. You can then imagine how intrigued we were when Canadian Marvelmaniac NORM LABELLE graced our Post Office Box with his version of this feature, based on dialogue from old Marvel comics which are, you will admit, as interesting as anything you can find in an old movie. To take the test, merely read the line of dialogue given, keeping in mind the context it is presented in, and choose from the four responses which follow, which response you think was given in the actual comic. Once you have finished, check your answers and rating at the end, and remember . . . No peeking at your comics!

1. CRAIG TALBOT to Captain America in "The Hunchback of Hollywood and the Movie Murders" (1941):
"I'll cut you to ribbons for that kick!"

TO WHICH CAP REPLIED:
a) "That's all right, as long as you don't hurt me!"
b) "You and what other army, Talbot?"
c) "Wait'll I get a sword . . . then we'll both play!"
d) "Then make it fast, willya? I don't wanna miss Mannix!"

2. PROFESSOR HORTON to the original Human Torch in "The Human Torch" (1939):
"We heard an explosion out here! What was it?"

TO WHICH THE TORCH REPLIED:
a) "A rat dealt out justice to himself, Horton!"
b) "I was just popping some popcorn, darn it! Can't a guy have any fun around here?"
c) "Maybe I'll tell you Horton . . . someday!"
d) "Never mind, Pop—It's too late now!"

3. CAPTAIN AMERICA to Miss America in "The Crime of Ages" (1946):
"Well, what do we do about the challenge?"

TO WHICH MISS AMERICA REPLIED:
a) "*What* challenge?"
b) "We'll take it, of course! Hmph! He can't bluff us!"
c) "I don't know. We'd better talk to the others about it, first!"
d) "Shuddup and pass me the salt!"

4. A RED AGENT to Prince Namor in "Sub-Mariner" (1954):
"Not so fast, American swine! You'll get these blueprints over my dead body!"

TO WHICH NAMOR REPLIED:
a) "Who's talking about blueprints? All I want is my bottle of shampoo!"
b) "Any way you want it, pal—But I'm taking 'em now!"
c) "That suits me just fine, commie!"
d) "How dare you speak thus to a prince?"

5. A MAN to his wife in "Introducing Toro the Flaming Torch Kid" (1940):
". . . In his hand! He's holding a piece of molten steel!"

TO WHICH HIS WIFE REPLIED:
a) ". . . And his hand isn't burned. What can it mean, Tom?"
b) "I—I don't believe it! It's some kind of trick!"
c) "He's a monster! He must be destroyed!"
d) "I didn't exactly think he was holding a wet noodle, stupid!"

6. THE VULTURE to Spider-Man in "The Return of the Vulture" (1963):
"Hah! You blundered right into my trap . . . as I knew you would!"

TO WHICH SPIDEY REPLIED:
a) "Well, mercy me!"
b) "I'm not done in yet, madman! As you'll soon see!"
c) "Well, ya can't win 'em all!"
d) "I *knew* I had done something wrong!"

7. A COMMUNIST SPY to his comrade in "The Patriot" (1943):
"Der Yankee dog vill make fine food for der fishes . . . eh, Grosse?"

TO WHICH HIS COMRADE REPLIED:
a) "Gee willickins, you sure talk funny!"
b) "Ya—A fitting end for such a pig!"
c) "Ya—America's loss is der shark's gain!"
d) "You bet your sweet bippy!"

8. THE THING to Mr. Fantastic in "Prisoners of Kurrgo, Master of Planet X" (1962):
"Well, big brain! You got us *into* this! What do we do now?"

TO WHICH REED REPLIED:
a) "I dunno, Ben. What do you want to do?"
b) "I don't know. We need a plan!"
c) "I don't know. Let's ask Irv Forbush!"
d) "I don't know, Thing, but this is no time for squabbling. We've all got to think!"

9. RICK JONES to the Hulk in "The Gladiator From Outer Space" (1962):
"Hulk, you did it! YOU DID IT! They've gone!"

TO WHICH THE HULK REPLIED:
a) "What did ya expect, half-pint? I wasn't playin' for fun!"
b) "HAH! Nobody can beat Hulk!"
c) ". . . And high time, too! They had baaad breath!"
d) "Groovy!"

10. PRINCE NAMOR to the original Human Torch in "The Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner Meet" (1940):
"It's melting! BAH! I'll fix you, hot stuff!"

TO WHICH THE TORCH REPLIED:
a) "If you do, I'll scream!"
b) "Maybe!"
c) "Aww, your grandmother has a busted surfboard!"
d) "I wouldn't bet on it, water rat!"

ANSWERS
1—c, 2—a, 3—b, 4—b, 5—a, 6—a, 7—c, 8—d, 9—a, 10—b.

RATING
10 CORRECT
CONGRATULATIONS! You are a perfect Marvelite and you know your Marvel mags by heart. Consider yourself no-prized.

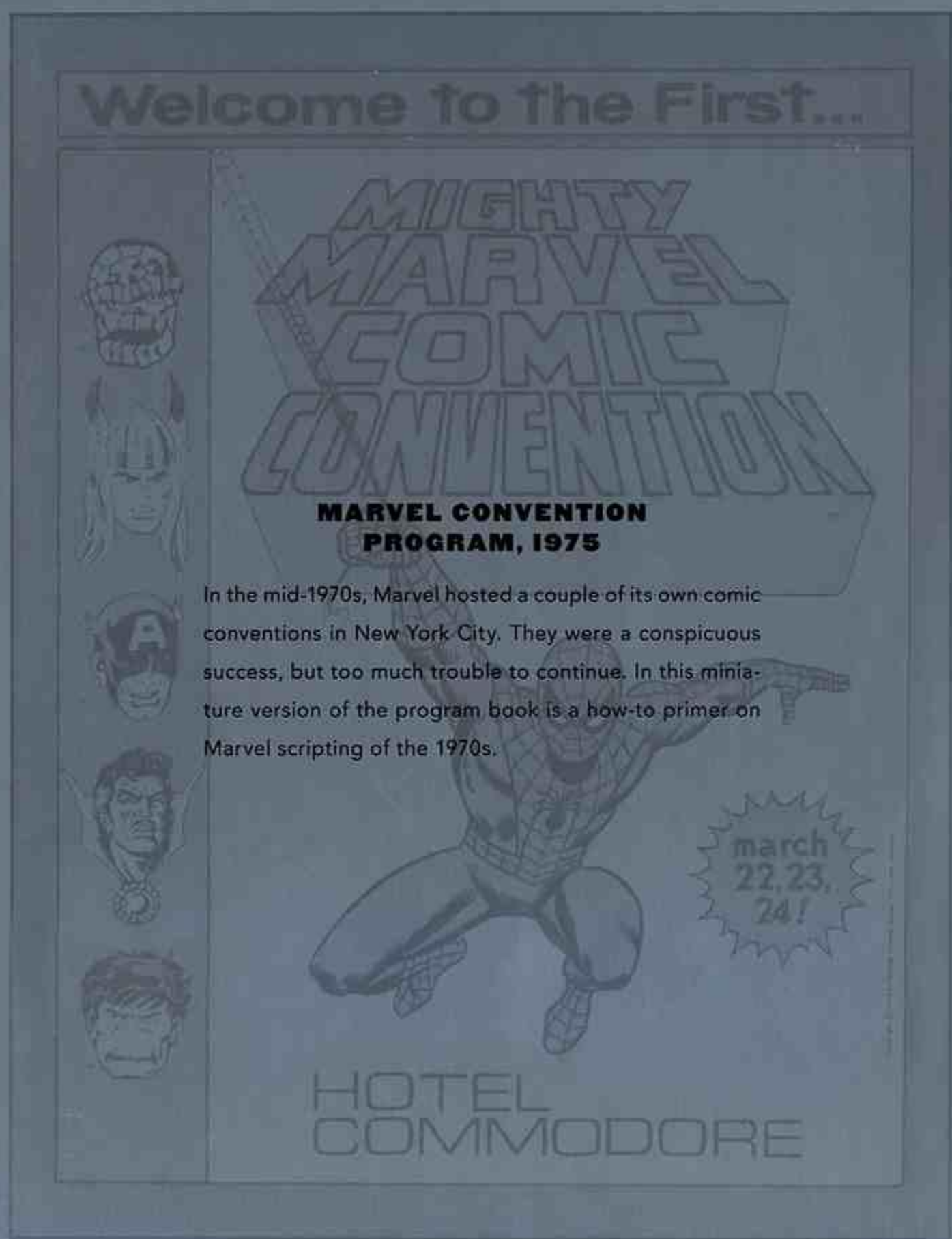
7, 8, or 9 CORRECT
NOT BAD AT ALL! You're a great Marvelite, but next time, try to have the maximum!

5 or 6 CORRECT
POOR! Snap out of it, man! You know you can do better. Your punishment: Go tell Dr. Doom he's an ugly creep

LESS THAN 4 CORRECT
HOOOO-BOY! Where ye you been, pal? Forbush's Rest Home for Tired Marvelites? Next time you get a score like that, you get instantly zapped by Herb Trimpe electric tooth-brush. Clear? Your punishment: Go sit in a corner and read the new room seven times, or Go Indian wrassle with Dum Dum's mother-in-law! (If I were you, however, I'd take the first choice!)

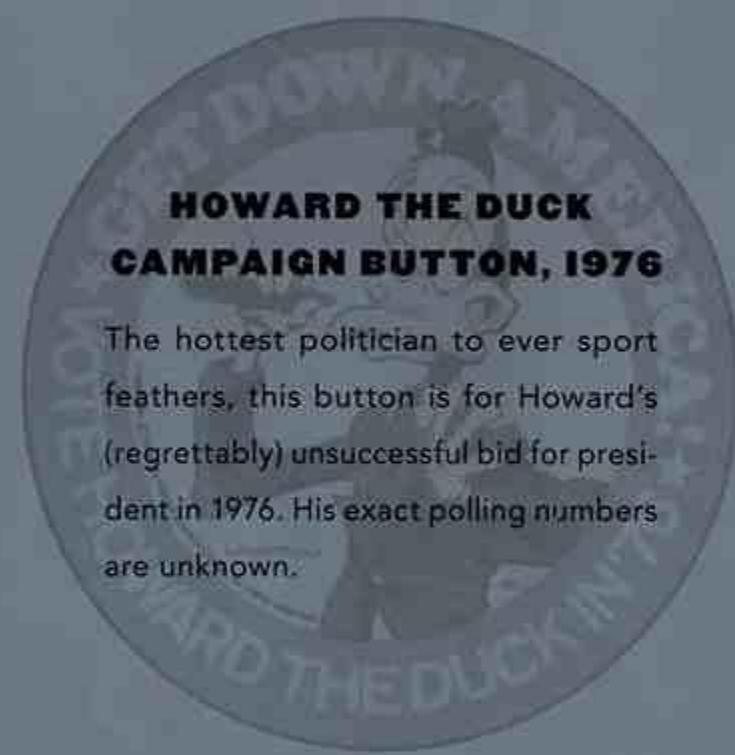
AUTOGRAPHS

REPRODUCTION



MARVEL CONVENTION PROGRAM, 1975

In the mid-1970s, Marvel hosted a couple of its own comic conventions in New York City. They were a conspicuous success, but too much trouble to continue. In this miniature version of the program book is a how-to primer on Marvel scripting of the 1970s.



HOWARD THE DUCK CAMPAIGN BUTTON, 1976

The hottest politician to ever sport feathers, this button is for Howard's (regrettably) unsuccessful bid for president in 1976. His exact polling numbers are unknown.

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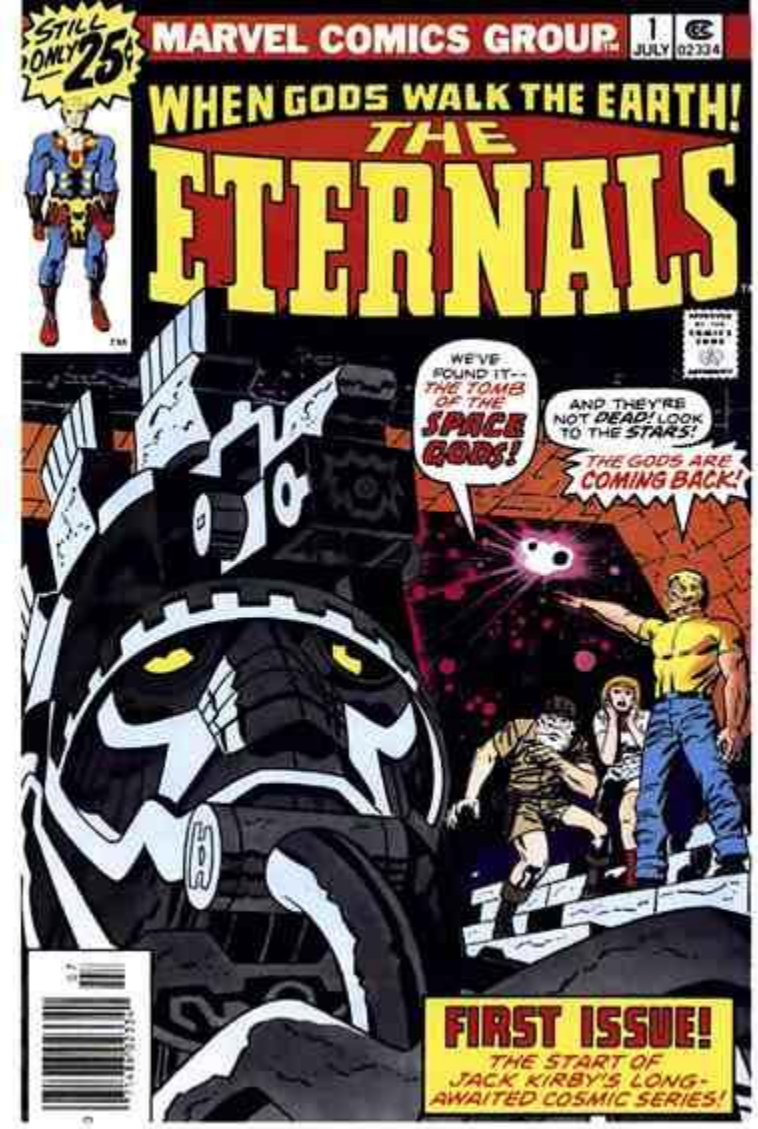
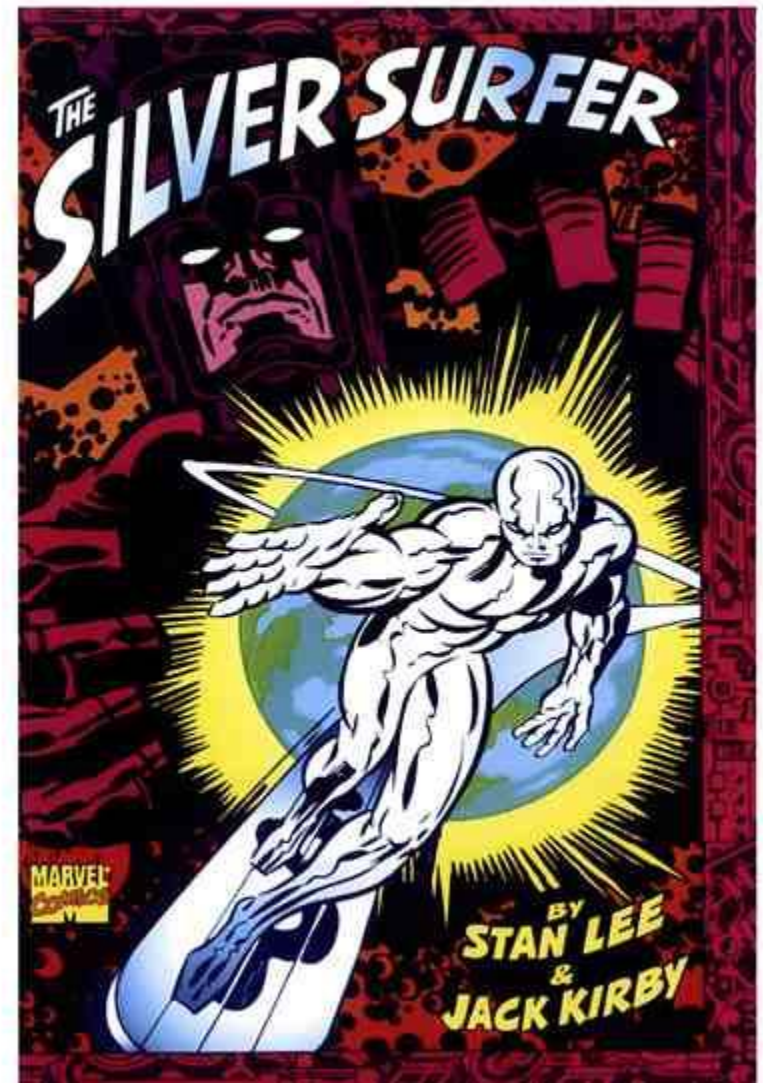




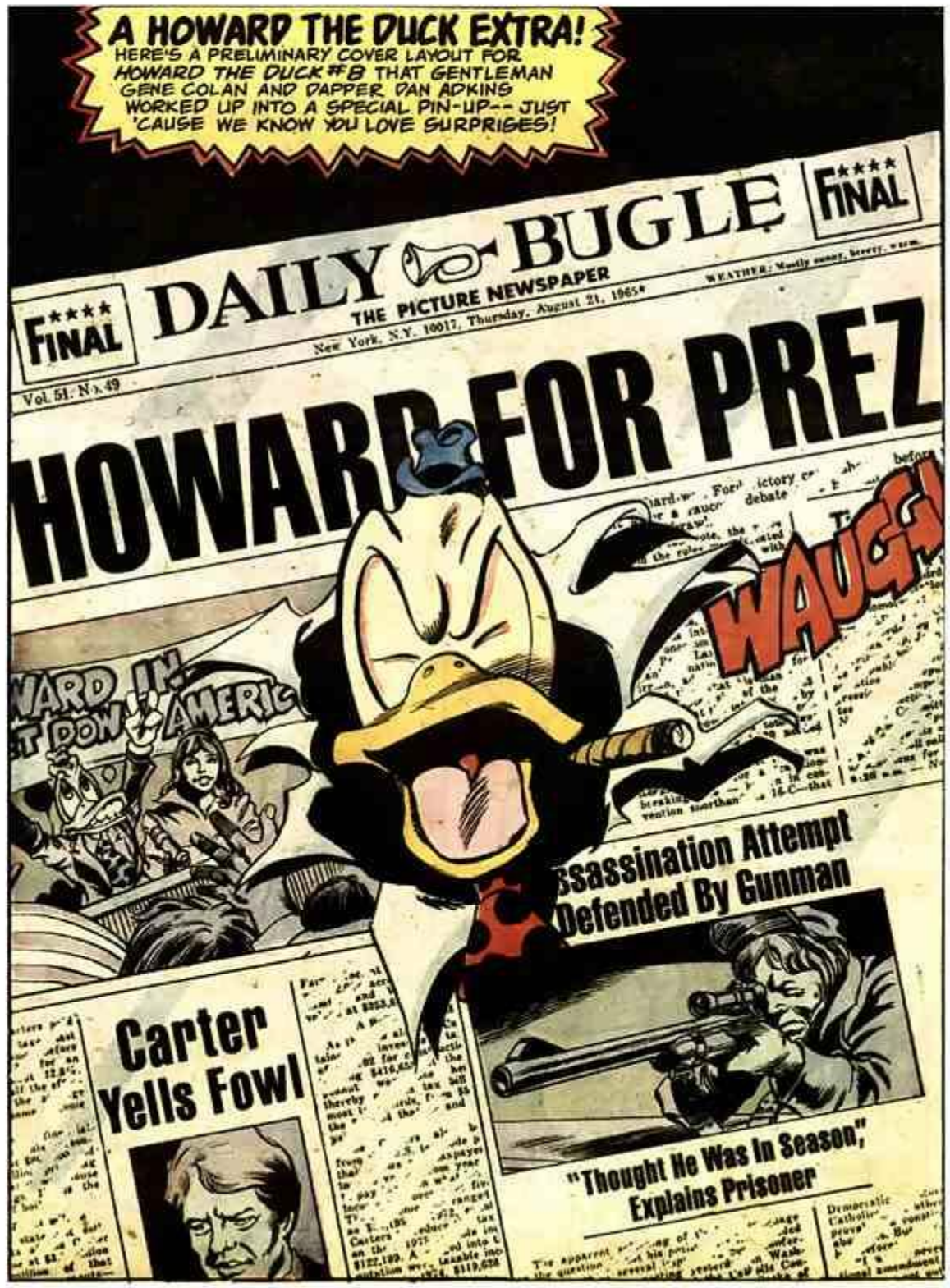
Kirby was also chosen to write and draw a comics adaptation of Stanley Kubrick's landmark 1968 science-fiction film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, as well as an ongoing series based on concepts from the movie. When Marvel lost the adaptation rights, Kirby morphed the series into *Machine Man*, the story of a robot striving to achieve humanity.

Jack Kirby even reunited with Stan Lee for a 100-page *Silver Surfer* story that Simon & Schuster published as a paperback book in 1978. Like Will Eisner's *A Contract with God*, which debuted the same year, this was an early American "graphic novel."

Unfortunately, though it had been only a decade since the "Galactus Trilogy," Kirby appeared to have fallen from favor among comics fans. His new Marvel series were soon canceled, and he left comics in 1977 for animation.

Within another decade the pendulum would swing back, and Jack Kirby would become an iconic figure, perhaps the most respected and loved creator in the history of American comic books. Nonetheless, after Kirby departed Marvel a second time in the late 1970s, he never returned.

(Opposite page) Jack Kirby's covers for *Captain America's Bicentennial Battles*, *The Eternals* #1, and the *Silver Surfer* graphic novel he created with Stan Lee. (This page, from top left) A quartet of Eternals: Zuras (in for Zeus), Makkari (in for Mercury), Thena (in for Athena), and Major Domo.



WADDLING ON

The bicentennial year of 1976 was also marked by the presidential campaign of Howard the Duck. The debut of Steve Gerber's fowl-tempered talking duck was one of the first tremendous successes in the new "direct sales" market of comic book shops. In the course of his run (waddle?) for office, Howard even released his own campaign buttons ("Get Down, America!"—because you get "down" from a duck, get it?) before his political ambitions were derailed by a pre-Clintonian sex scandal.

Marvel continued its expansion into areas beyond comic books. In 1977, *The Amazing Spider-Man* came to newspapers as a daily comic strip, written by Stan Lee and drawn by John Romita. It was soon followed by *The Incredible Hulk*, *Conan the Barbarian*, and *Howard the Duck* strips, none of which lasted long. But today Stan Lee continues to script the *Spider-Man* strip, the most successful adventure newspaper strip to be launched in the last four decades.

Marvel also had a major success in television with *The Incredible Hulk*, starting with a TV movie in 1977, which led to a weekly series the next year. This live-action version starred Bill Bixby as "David" Banner (changed from the comics's "Bruce"), and bodybuilder Lou Ferrigno as his monstrous other self. Considerably less successful were a live-action *Spider-Man* series and TV movies based on *Doctor Strange* and *Captain America*. There was also a new *Fantastic Four* animated series, produced by DePatie-Freleng Enterprises, which infamously substituted a robot named Herbie for the Human Torch.

Not just a licensor to other media, Marvel was also a licensee. Marvel began publishing an adaptation of the George Lucas film *Star Wars* two or three months before the movie premiered. During the 1970s, Marvel also created comic books around such toys as the Micronauts and Rom, TV series like *Star Trek* and *Battlestar Galactica*, and classic characters like *Tarzan* and *Godzilla*. There was even a Marvel/DC collaboration on an adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz*, utilizing the likenesses of the actors from the classic 1939 MGM musical.

Marvel's most celebrated contribution to a licensed property came when, in an issue of *Conan the Barbarian*, Roy Thomas and artist Barry Smith adapted a character from a story by Conan's creator into the swordswoman Red Sonja. She soon became a star in her own right, and a favorite at costume contests at the growing number of comic book conventions, impersonated by female fans wearing her famous "iron bikini." In the early 1980s, she, like Conan, would headline a movie.

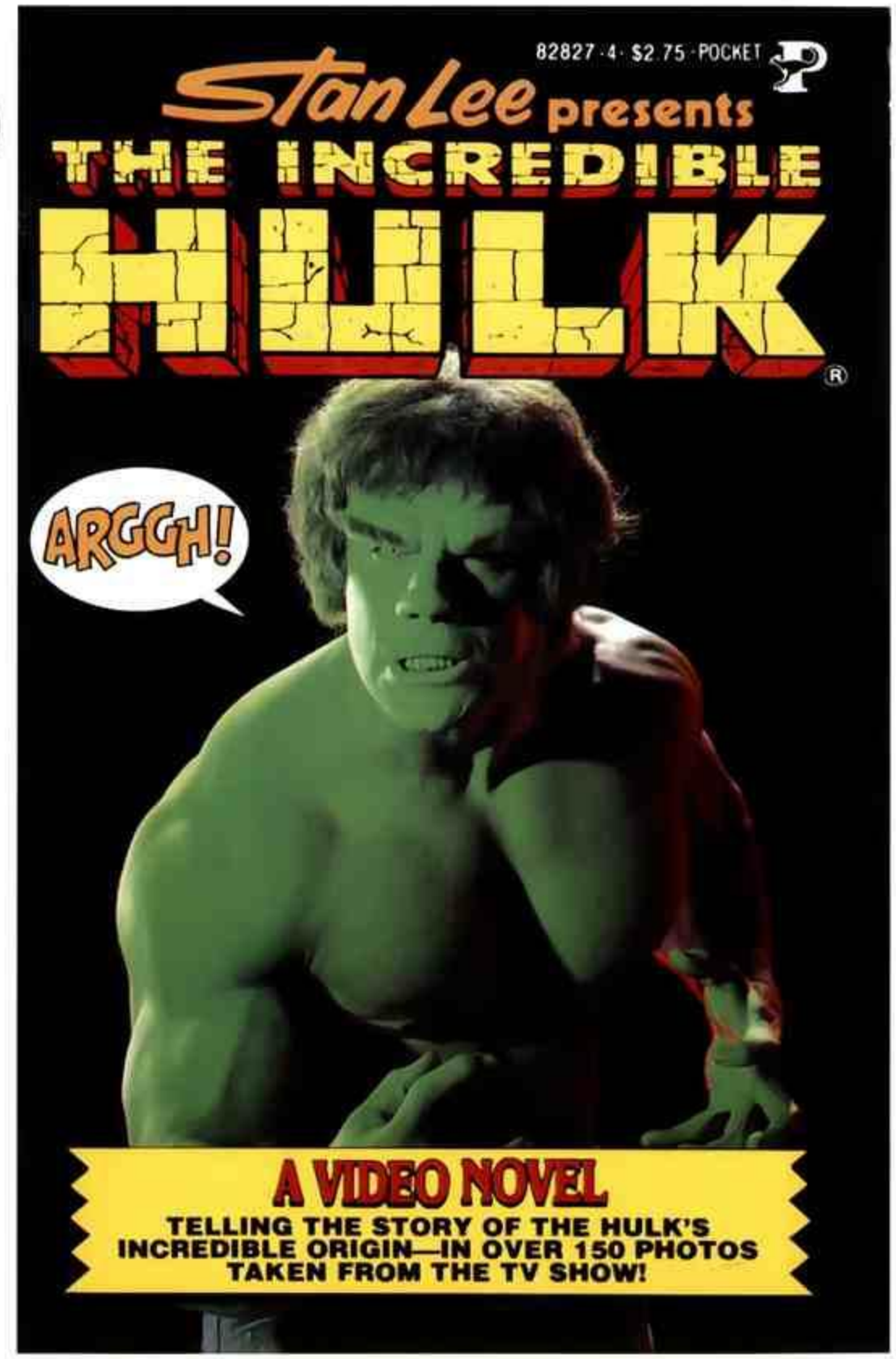
(Left) Part of the campaign trail for Howard the Duck. (Opposite page) Images from Marvel's "video novel," based on the Hulk's TV series.

Listen, doctor, you *know* something about that creature, and it's your responsibility to report it!

Believe me— I've never *seen* this "creature" you're talking about.

Forgive me, doctor— but I think you're a liar.

Don't make me get *angry*, Mr. McGee! You wouldn't *like* me when I'm angry . . . !



Bullpen Unleashed!

Just so you'll know who we're talking about when we talk about we present the following foto file—

Dapper DAN ADKINS

Jumbo JOHN VERPOORTEN

Darling DICK AYERS

DAVE "X-Man" COCKRUM

Cheerful CHRIS CLAREMONT

Dauntless DON McGREGOR

Impish IRENE VARTANOFF

Lilting LEN WEIN

Nifty NEAL ADAMS

Glitzy GLYNIS WEIN

Rascally ROY THOMAS

Mirthful MARIE SEVERIN

JOHN "Ring-a-ding" ROMITA

Artful ARCHIE GOODWIN

Marvel was also not above pairing with its rival in the name of creative publishing. Using an oversized "tabloid" format they'd been experimenting with, Marvel and DC published *Superman vs. The Amazing Spider-Man* in 1976. Although the earlier *Wizard of Oz* had been jointly published by the two companies, this was the very first "crossover" between those two perennial rivals wherein Marvel and DC characters took the spotlight. While it was primarily a commercial concept dreamed up by agent David Obst (who had recently sold Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's Watergate book, *All the President's Men*), on a different plane it represented a formal recognition by longtime industry leader DC that, at last, Marvel and its heroes had achieved parity with those published by the older company, although Marvel had surpassed DC in sales three or four years earlier. When the two red-and-blue icons faced off on the cover, beneath equal-sized logos, Spider-Man fans could feel that, at last, their favorite was the equal of the Man of Steel, who, during this period, was generally listed with Tarzan and Sherlock Holmes as one of the three best-known fictitious characters in the English language. Neither Spidey nor Superman came out the superior hero; they joined forces to battle evil instead. The novel-length story was scripted by Gerry Conway, penciled by Ross Andru, and inked by Dick Giordano.

X-TRAORDINARY!

In retrospect, the most significant event at Marvel in the 1970s was the relaunch of *The X-Men*. The mutants' title had never been considered one of the company's top-tier titles. After new stories had stopped appearing with issue #66 in 1970, *X-Men* had devolved into a reprint book wherein new covers would be created, but the stories had all been seen before. Then the president of Marvel Comics proposed to publisher Stan Lee and editor Roy Thomas that there should be a team of super heroes from countries other than America. The latter seized on the idea as the basis for reviving and revamping the X-Men as an international team. After various delays, writer Len Wein and artist Dave Cockrum introduced the "new" X-Men in *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 in 1975. One of the new members was the Canadian mutant Wolverine, whom Wein had co-created for *The Incredible Hulk* the year before. Short but fierce, like his animal namesake, Wolverine used as weapons his claws of unbreakable "adamantium," the strongest substance known, which emerged from the

(Opposite) Bullpen photographs featuring *X-Men* writer Len Wein. (This page) The splash page of Wein and Cockrum's *Giant-Size X-Men* #1.

backs of his hands. Inspired by drawings in the artist's sketchbook, Wein and Cockrum co-created other new X-Men, including Colossus, from the U.S.S.R.; Nightcrawler, from Germany; and Storm, from Africa. The "new" X-Men then moved into a bimonthly series, picking up the numbering of the original *X-Men* comics with issue #94.

After only one issue, the busy Wein turned the scripting reins over to newcomer Chris Claremont, who had started at Marvel as a "gofer" in 1969. Influenced by such science-fiction writers as Robert Heinlein, Claremont rapidly developed a distinctive authorial voice. Together, he and Cockrum took the X-Men characters, both old and new, in surprising new directions. Most notably, they transformed founding member Marvel Girl into Phoenix, wielder of immense cosmic powers.

In late 1977, Cockrum was succeeded as *X-Men* artist by John Byrne. As with the Lee-Kirby partnership, Claremont and Byrne each had a strong creative vision. Despite an ongoing tension in their collaboration, the result was a dazzling series of issues that defined the cutting edge of the super hero genre at

(This page) Exit: Marvel Girl. Enter: Phoenix. (Opposite page) The original art for the cover of *The Uncanny X-Men* #114. Artist John Byrne and inker Terry Austin scribbled their names at the top.

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that time. Canadian-born Byrne took particular interest in his countryman Wolverine, who now began evolving into the "new" X-Men's breakout star.

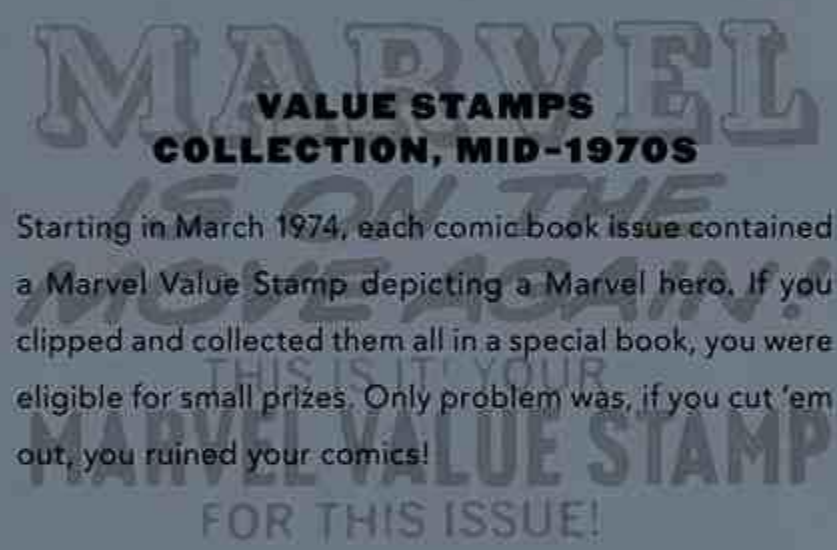
Claremont, Cockrum, and Byrne were effectively creating an *X-Men* "universe" of new characters within the greater Marvel Universe. As one example of this brave new world, Byrne introduced his own creations, the Canadian super hero team Alpha Flight, in two issues of the comic now called *The Uncanny X-Men*.

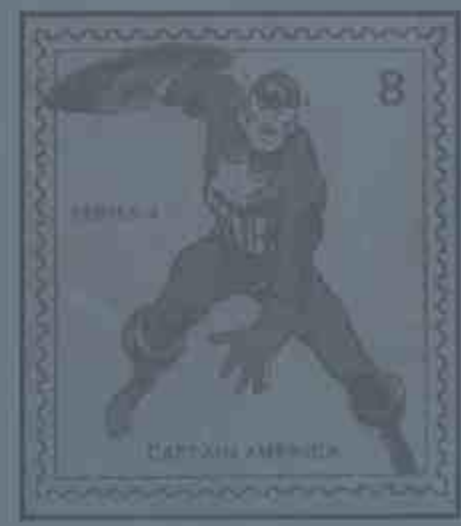
Meanwhile, discerning Marvel readers were noticing another sign of the future of comics. There was a new artist on *Daredevil*, whose work was influenced as much by the crime comics of the 1950s as by Kirby's super hero comics of the 1960s. His name was Frank Miller.

(Above) The Comics Code forced Marvel to delete the blood near the artist's signature on the cover of *The Invaders Annual* #1. (Left) Many old-time Marvel artists had departed by this point, but 1940s *Captain America* artist (and 1960s inker) Syd Shores drew Cap for a comic convention program book.

VALUE STAMPS COLLECTION, MID-1970S

Starting in March 1974, each comic book issue contained a Marvel Value Stamp depicting a Marvel hero. If you clipped and collected them all in a special book, you were eligible for small prizes. Only problem was, if you cut 'em out, you ruined your comics!





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SAVE US FROM THE KNIGHTS OF HELLFIRE!
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$0.25
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THE NEW MASTERS

1980s

IT WAS IN THE 1980S THAT THE BABY BOOMER GENERATION, WHICH had grown up reading Stan Lee's now-classic stories of the 1960s, truly took creative control of the comics industry.

The decade began with a milestone for one of the flagship titles of the Marvel Age of Comics: On its January cover date, *The Amazing Spider-Man* reached its 200th issue.

But although Spidey remained Marvel's most popular individual character, *The Uncanny X-Men* (as *The X-Men* had now been retitled) became the company's best-selling series.

With *The Uncanny X-Men*'s own January 1980 issue, the team of Chris Claremont and John Byrne began the ten issues that comprise the famed "Dark Phoenix Saga." The first issue in the saga introduced the sinister Hellfire Club, based on an actual eighteenth-century secret organization, as well as Kitty Pryde, a

(Opposite page) Little did John Byrne know when creating the first of the "Dark Phoenix Saga" covers, the tale would become legendary for Marvel. (This page) Spider-Man, on the other hand, was already epic, featured strong as ever on the cover of his 200th issue!

thirteen-year-old girl who was just discovering her mutant ability to walk through walls.

The mutant villain Mastermind finally succeeded in mesmerizing X-Men's Phoenix (Jean Grey) into serving the Hellfire Club as its Black Queen. The dark side of her personality awakened, and Phoenix transformed into the insane Dark Phoenix, a threat to the entire universe. If Jean was like Dr. Jekyll, then Dark Phoenix was a cosmic version of Mr. Hyde, wielding limitless power. It was up to the X-Men to stop her, and in a climactic mental battle, Charles Xavier caused Dark Phoenix to revert to her true personality. But in the meantime, she had destroyed an entire solar system of sentient beings.

Editor in chief Jim Shooter insisted that insanity was no excuse for the deaths that Jean had caused as Dark Phoenix, and that she must pay for her crimes. So Claremont and Byrne molded their tale into a tragedy, in which Jean committed suicide before the horrified eyes of her lover Cyclops, to prevent herself from turning back into Dark Phoenix.

The Dark Phoenix Saga is to Claremont and Byrne what the Galactus Trilogy is to Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. It is a landmark in Marvel history, showcasing its creators' work at the height of their abilities. Current *X-Men* comics stories still refer back to this tale, and it even influenced the story of the third *X-Men* movie, *X-Men: The Last Stand*.

Amazingly, Claremont and Byrne soon followed this story line with another classic that is perhaps equally influential: the two-part "Days of Future Past" in issues #141 and #142. In this saga, the X-Men battled to prevent a political assassination fated to bring about a dystopian future, where mutants would be confined to concentration camps or slaughtered outright. The X-Men won in the present, but the readers could not forget Byrne and Claremont's horrific vision of this oppressively racist

(This page) Phoenix's transformation was so powerful, it was near impossible to see the heroic, loving Jean Grey she once was. (Opposite page) In the "Days of Future Past" series, Byrne's illustrations featured mutant concentration camps (near right). Later, a punked-out Storm appears on an *Uncanny X-Men* cover (far right).

future. Marvel writers would repeatedly revisit the "Days of Future Past" or create similarly dark alternate realities, like the later "Age of Apocalypse."

With the completion of the very next issue (#143), the partnership of Chris Claremont and John Byrne came to an end. The tensions in their collaboration finally led to Claremont leaving *The Uncanny X-Men* to try his hand at writing his own stories.

The Uncanny X-Men remained something of a cult book, with a small but devoted following, but as the 1980s continued, sales went up and up. By mid-decade, it was consistently the top-selling comic book not simply at Marvel but in the entire American comics industry.

Claremont had always demonstrated a knack in *The Uncanny X-Men* for shaking up the status quo, adapting the series to fit changing reader tastes, as when he and artist Paul Smith gave Storm a Mohawk haircut and a "punk" leather outfit. Claremont also introduced new characters into the series, most notably Rogue, a feisty Southerner and former super villainess.

As for Byrne, he became a star in his own right as the writer/artist of a highly successful run on *Fantastic Four* from 1981 until 1986. Starting in 1983, he likewise wrote and drew the *Alpha Flight* series, based on the Canadian super hero team he had created, followed by a brief run on *The Incredible Hulk*, during which Bruce Banner finally wed the long-suffering Betty Ross. (Betty should have been careful what she wished for: Marrying the Hulk was like painting a target on her back. A villain killed her off in the 1990s, but since this is comics, she was hale and hearty again by the following decade!) Byrne also collaborated with his friend, writer Roger Stern, on a memorable run of

(Left) John Byrne's twentieth anniversary edition of *Fantastic Four*. (Above) Eye-popping *Alpha Flight* designs. (Opposite page) Byrne solidifies his place in the Marvel ranks with *Alpha Flight* and a long-awaited moment for the Hulk.

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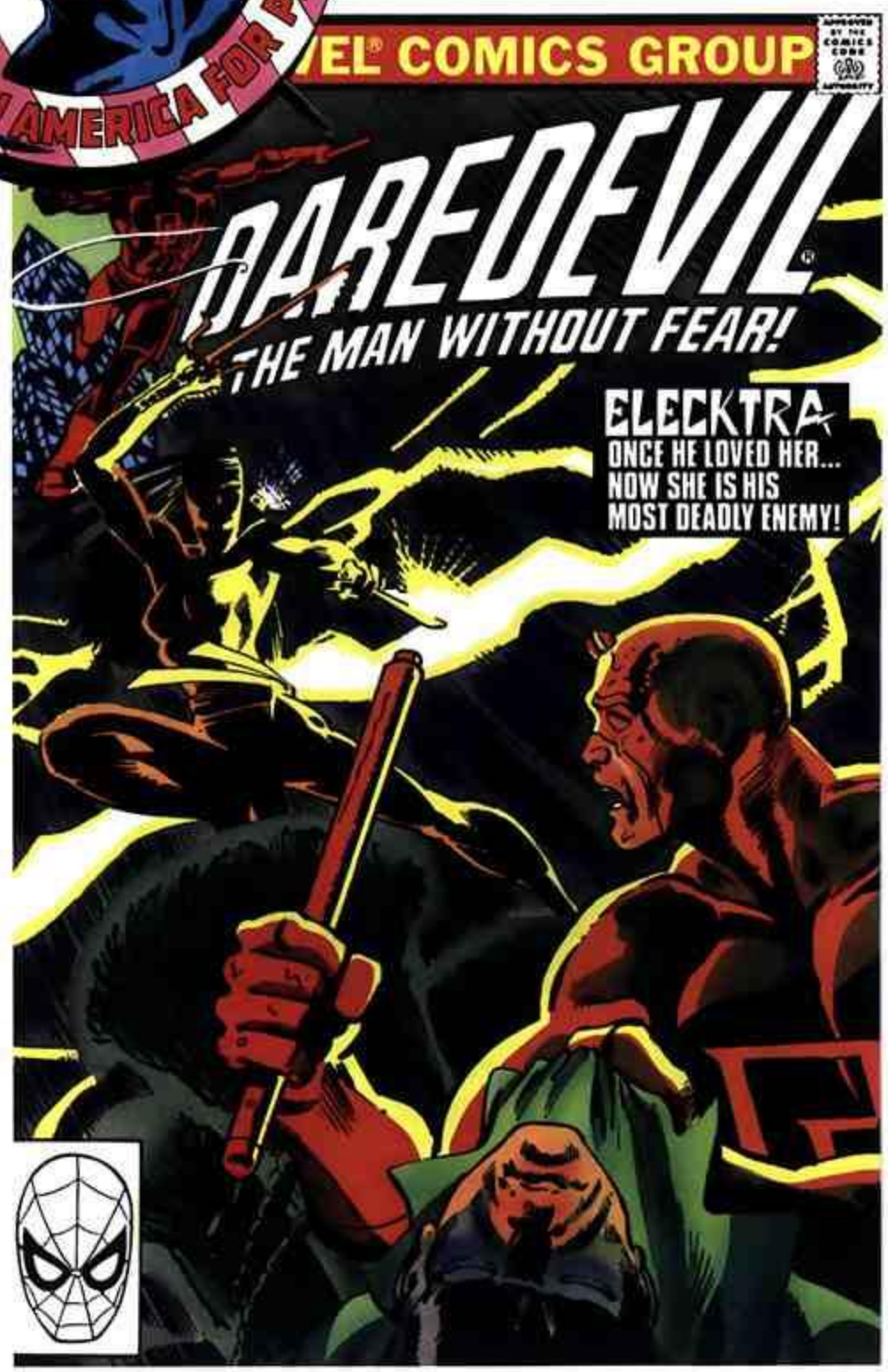


Captain America during which Cap considered running for president in 1980 and finally decided against it, realizing that the American democratic ideals he served transcended everyday partisan politics.

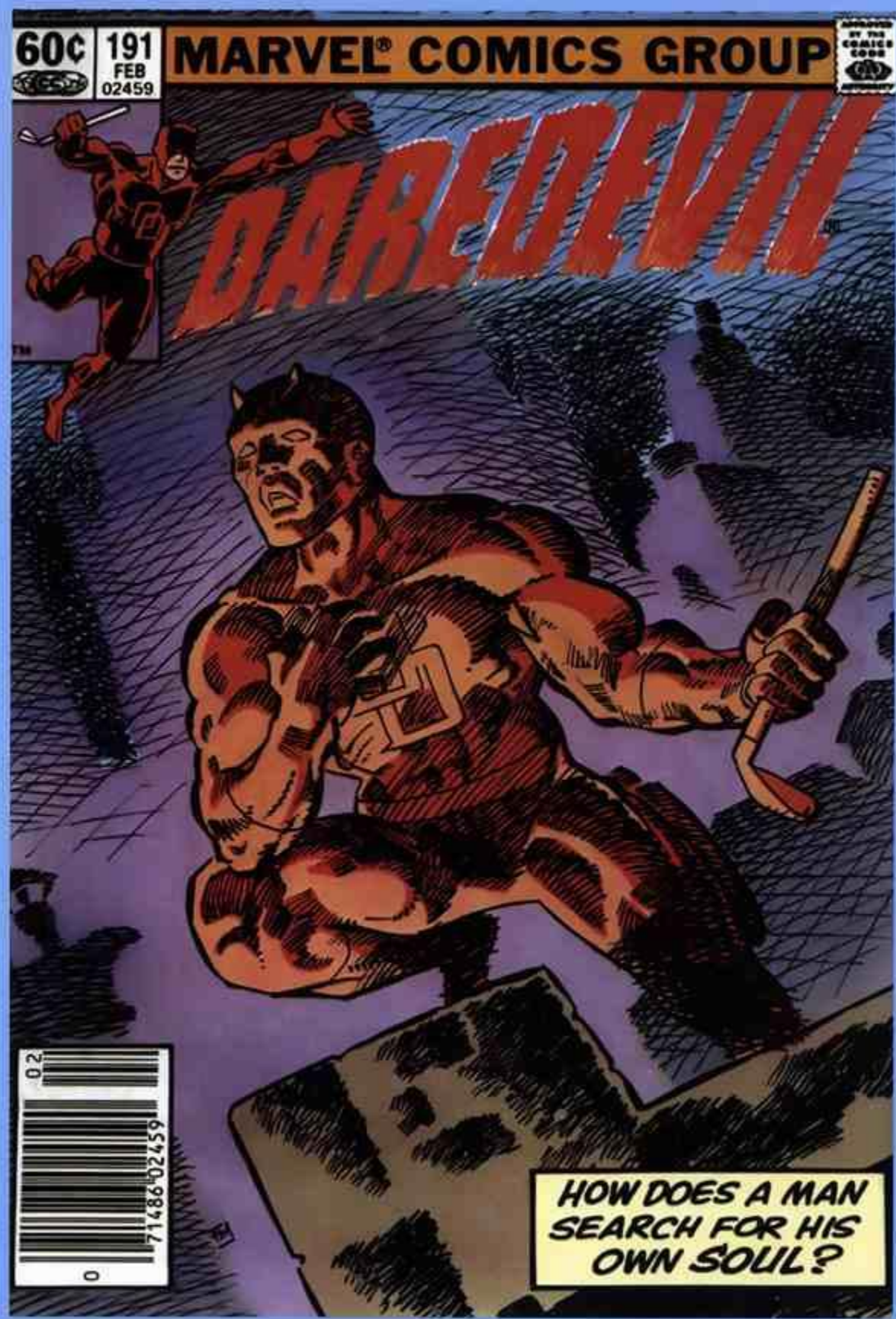
MILLER'S MASTERWORKS

Rivaling Byrne's popularity among 1980s comics fans was newcomer Frank Miller. Today Miller is known beyond the world of comics as the co-director of the film *Sin City*, the hit movie based on his graphic novels. But he got his start at Marvel in 1979 as the artist on *Daredevil*. Like Byrne, his talents also extended to writing, and he felt frustrated at illustrating someone else's stories. Finally, with *Daredevil* #168, he got his chance with the pen and took the comics audience by storm.

Miller greatly admired the work of Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, but their style of super hero comics was not his prime interest. Miller was and remains fascinated with hard-boiled crime thrillers and with the film noir of the 1940s and 1950s. Long before the current American fascination with *manga*, Miller studied Japanese comics and culture, including the lore of ninjas and samurais. He drew upon all of these influences in writing and illustrating *Daredevil*. Marvel readers had never seen anything quite like it before.

The first *Daredevil* issue Miller wrote (#168) introduced his creation, Elektra, who was part ninja assassin and part femme fatale out of film noir. A young Matt Murdock had known and loved her when they were both students at Columbia University, before he became the costumed crime fighter Daredevil. But now they stood on opposite sides of the law.

(This page) Another presidential candidate from Marvel (top), whom supporters assumed was a shoo-in (already being America's Captain). The cover of Frank Miller's first issue as *Daredevil* writer (#168), introducing Elektra, and Miller's drawing of Daredevil mourning her death (#182). (Opposite page) Miller ended his original run on *Daredevil* only a few issues later (#191)... but returned to write the *Daredevil: Born Again* saga in 1986.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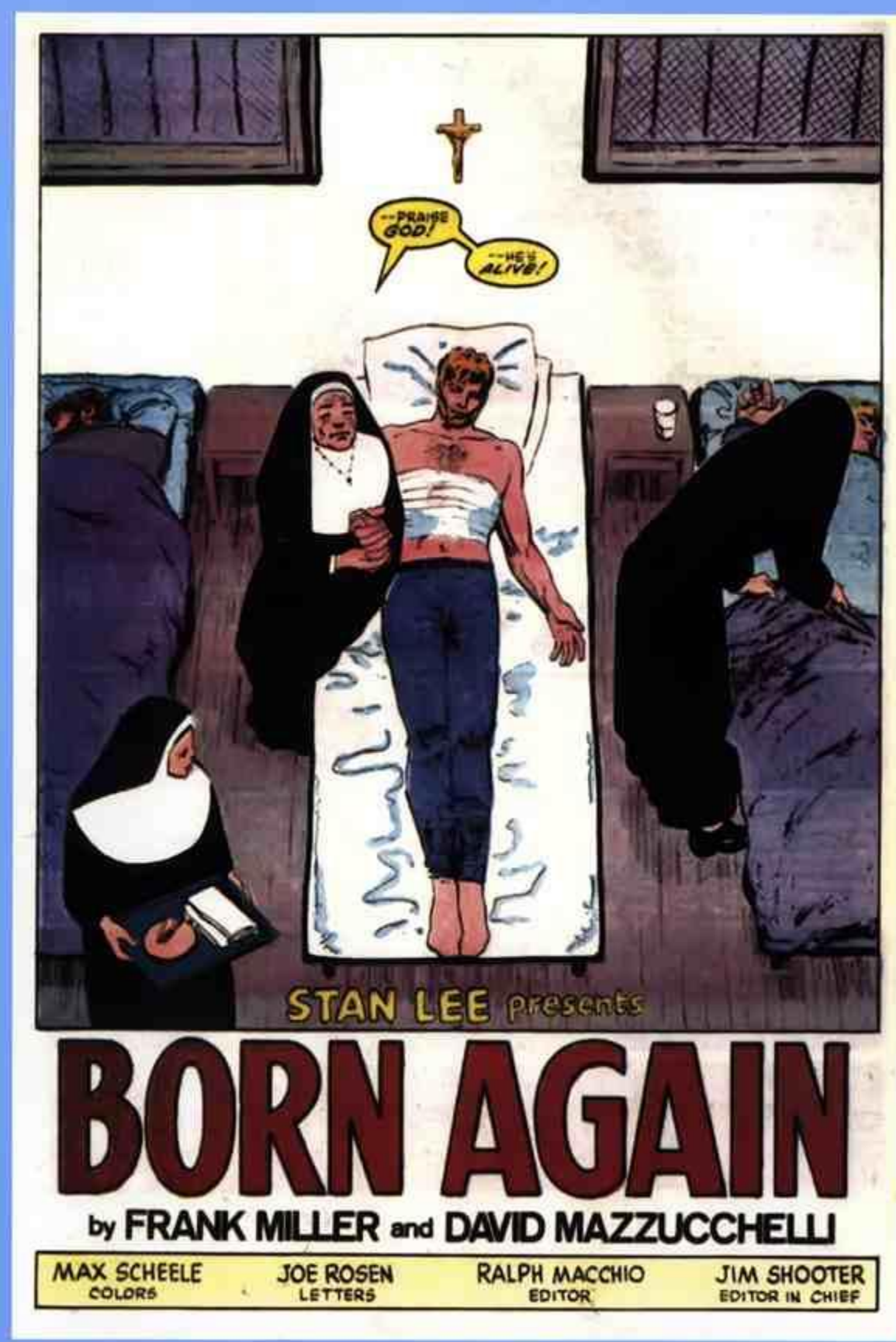
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--HE'S ALIVE!
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by FRANK MILLER and DAVID MAZZUCCHELLI
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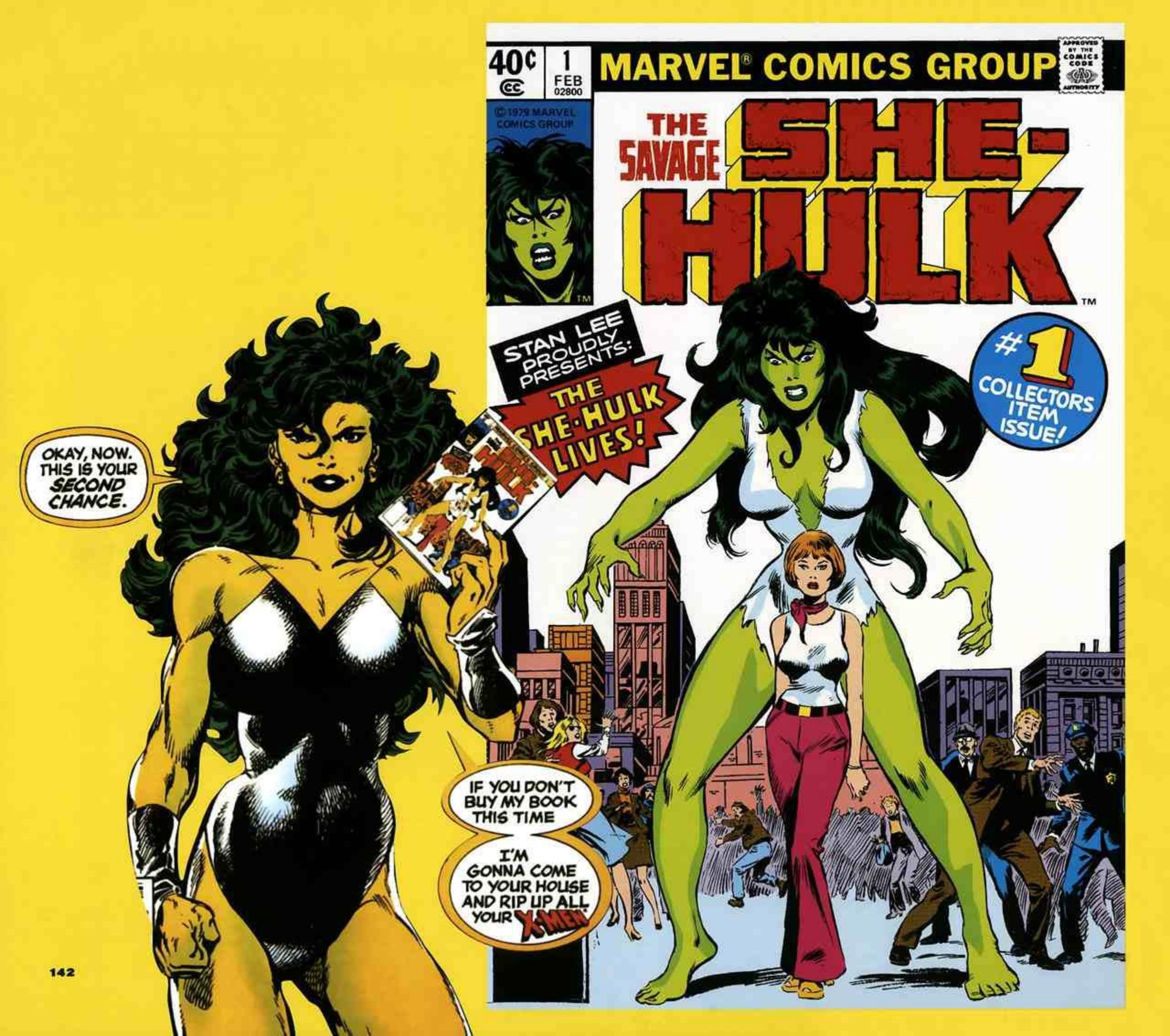
JOE ROSEN LETTERS
RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER EDITOR IN CHIEF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OKAY, NOW. THIS IS YOUR SECOND CHANCE.
IF YOU DON'T BUY MY BOOK THIS TIME
I'M GONNA COME TO YOUR HOUSE AND RIP UP ALL YOUR X-MEN

Miller's depiction of Daredevil and Elektra's tortured passions for each other demonstrated how super hero comics were becoming darker, more complex, and more adult. Their relationship was far removed from the idealized love of Peter Parker and Gwen Stacy only a decade before. Whereas Stan Lee had started the tradition of examining character flaws in his super heroes, now Miller took the process further than any of his predecessors at Marvel. Miller's Daredevil was capable of moral compromise to achieve his ends, and his love for Elektra led him to the brink of his own sanity once she had met a tragic death.

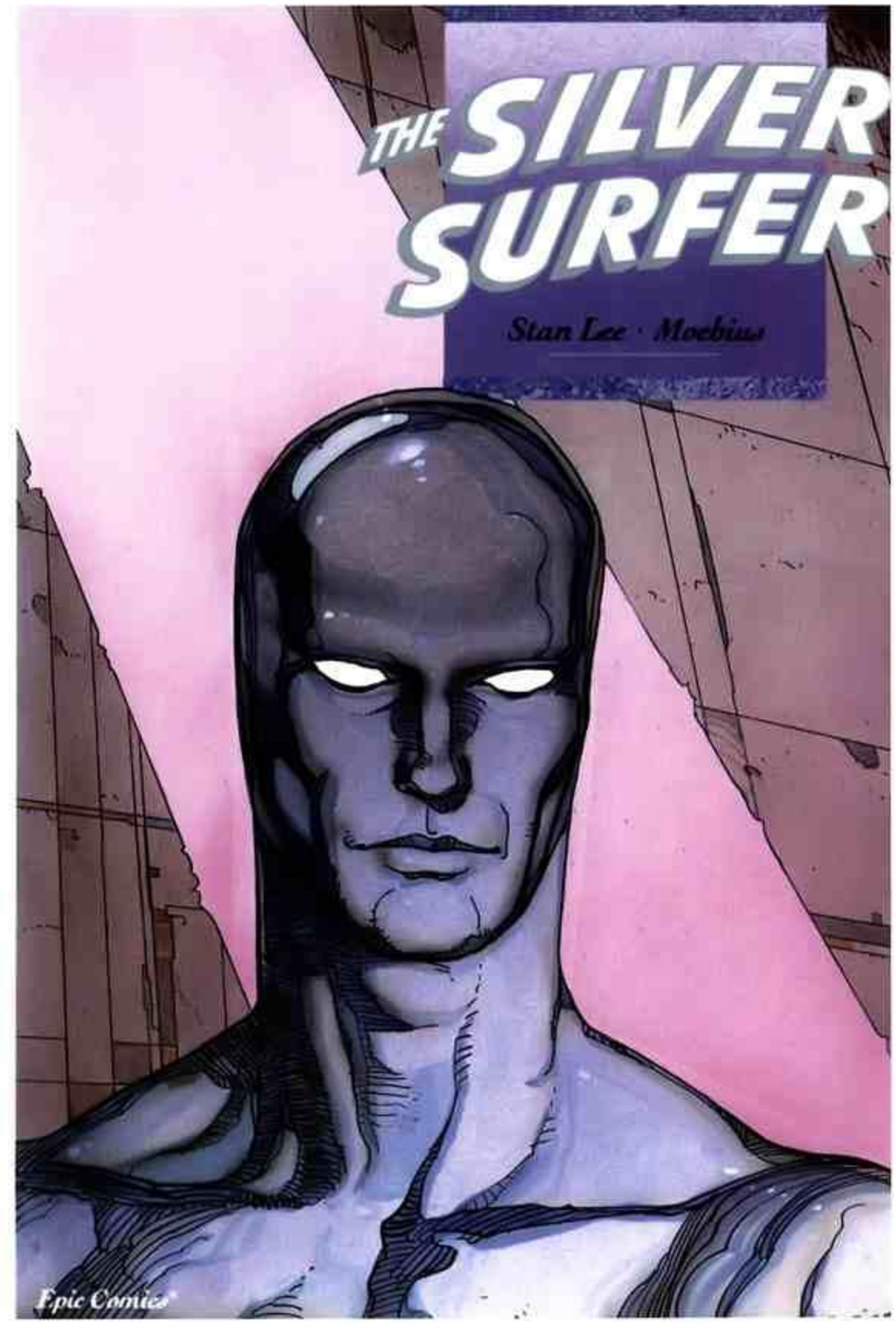
Miller's revolutionary run on *Daredevil* came to an end in early 1983, but he did return in 1986 to collaborate with artist David Mazzucchelli on a harrowing *Daredevil: Born Again* story line.

STAN—STILL "THE MAN"

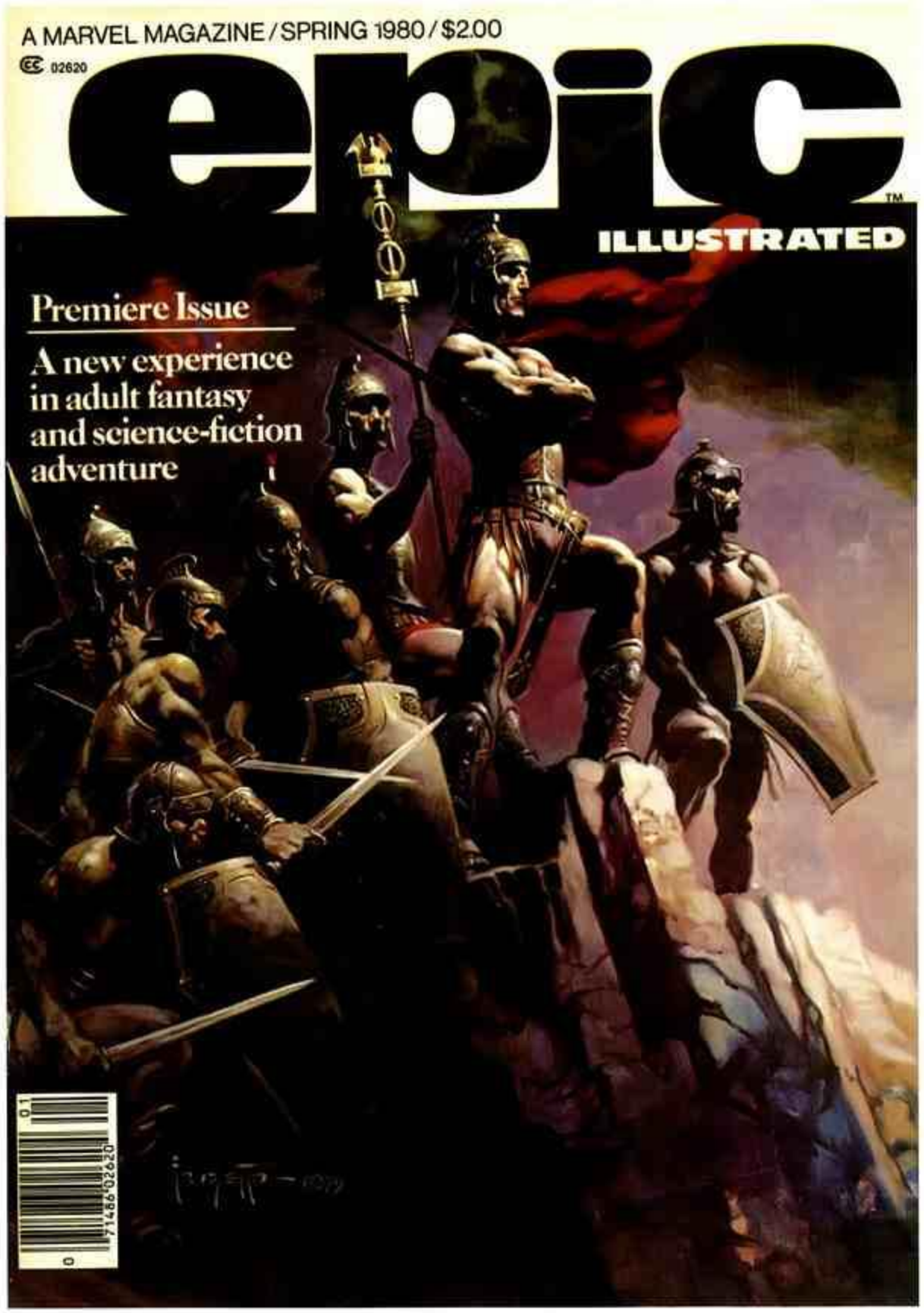
And where was the gent who had started the Marvel revolution, Stan "the Man" Lee? By the 1980s, he was based in Hollywood, working as vice president of creative affairs for Marvel's own animation studio. Marvel Productions Ltd. soon produced the animated *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends* (1981) and the new animated *The Incredible Hulk* (1982). Moreover, Marvel Productions created animated series starring characters from other companies, including Hasbro's G. I. Joe.

Stan Lee had not left comic books behind altogether, though. Since Marvel wanted to preempt anyone else's creation of a female version of the Hulk, he and artist John Buscema created their own, debuting in 1980 in *The Savage She-Hulk*. Originally, the She-Hulk was much like her male counterpart: mousy lawyer Jennifer Walters turned into a bad-tempered, green-skinned monster. But Roger Stern, who became the series' writer, brilliantly reconceived the She-Hulk not as Jennifer's inner beast but as the uninhibited, liberated woman she wanted to be. In 1989, the new Jennifer starred in *The Sensational She-Hulk*, a delightfully meta-fictional comedy-adventure series in which Jen knew she was in a comic book and even talked back to writer/artist John Byrne!

Stan Lee's most impressive comic book work of the decade was his collaboration with the great French comics artist Moebius on *Silver Surfer: Parable* in 1988. Here were iconic comics creators from two different countries joining forces to create an ambitious science-fiction saga aimed directly at a new, older, and more sophisticated audience. The revolution that Stan Lee had started in comics in the early 1960s was succeeding beyond what even he could have imagined.



(This page) Moebius and Stan Lee's collaboration. (Opposite page) Stan Lee and John Buscema teamed up once more to create *The Savage She-Hulk* (right), whose title character became sexier and funnier in John Byrne's later *Spectacular She-Hulk* series (left).



A MATURING MEDIUM

Stan and Moebius's cross-cultural team-up was only one of the signs of how the American comics industry was changing in the 1980s. Traditionally, comic books had been sold on newsstands and in "mom-and-pop" stores, but these outlets were fast disappearing. Instead, in the 1980s a network of comic book specialty stores began rapidly rising throughout the country, catering principally to older comics *collectors* rather than to children. Marvel was increasingly aiming product at this growing adult market.

In an effort to appeal to their new readers, in 1980 Marvel released the first issue of *Epic Illustrated*, a full-color magazine featuring fantasy and science-fiction comics. This was soon followed by an entire line of Epic Comics, most of them owned by the writers and artists who created them, and edited by the highly respected Archie Goodwin. The year 1982 ushered in the first of a long line of graphic novels, Jim Starlin's *The Death of Captain Marvel*.

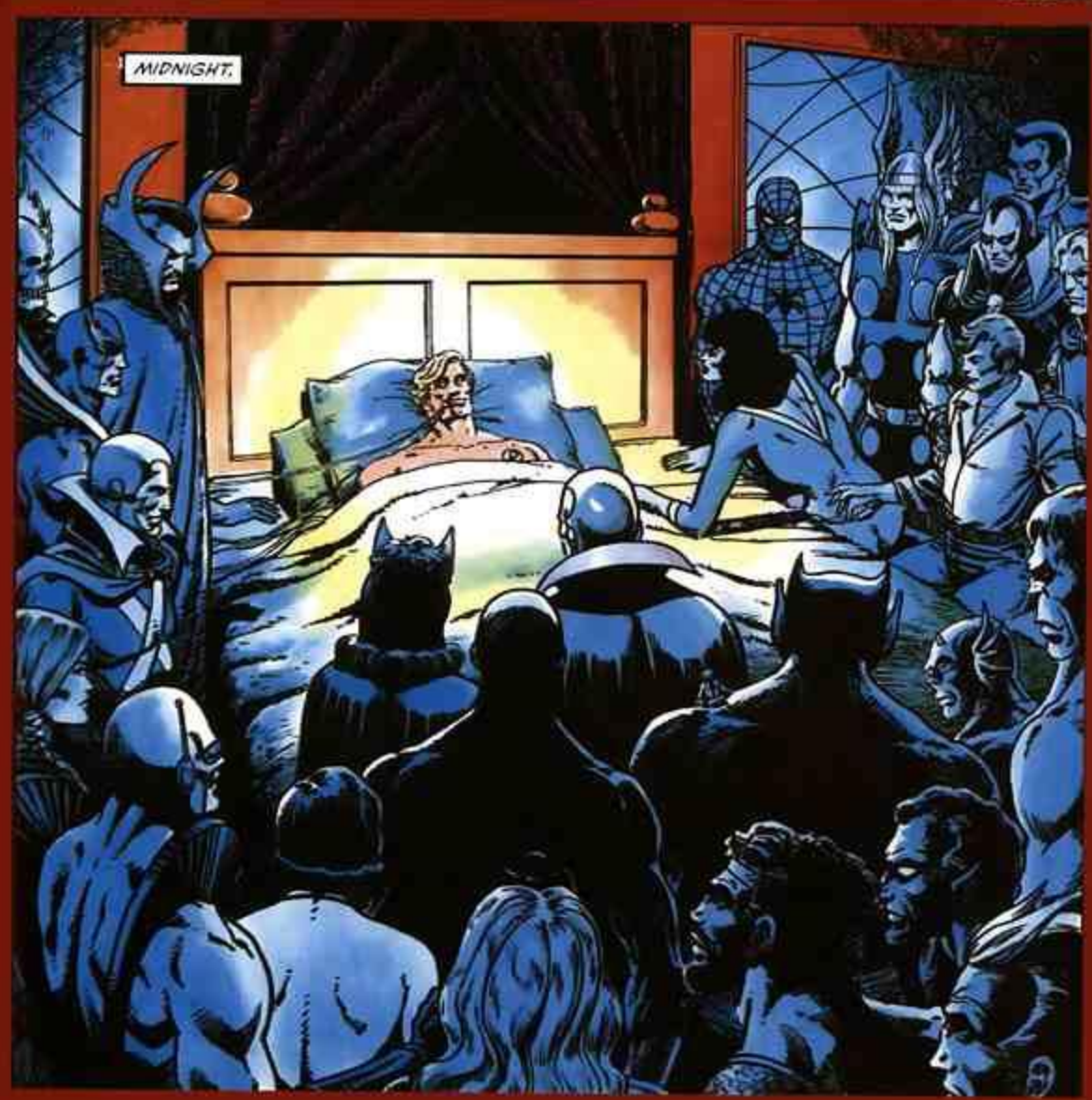
As these sophisticated comics reached out to a more discerning, adult audience, Marvel was treating their creators with more respect as well. Since the dawn of the American comics business, most professionals worked only for their page rate, a difficult arrangement that caused many leading writers and artists to leave the business for better-paying work. But in 1982, Marvel instituted an incentive, or royalty, program for its writers, pencilers, and inkers. Now that Marvel, and most other comics companies, were paying royalties, it was actually possible to prosper in the comics industry!

A NEW UNIVERSE?

One of the Marvel executives responsible for starting the incentive program was editor in chief Jim Shooter, who had exerted strong influence over the direction of many of the company's comics for a decade, beginning at the end of 1977. In 1984, he wrote the twelve-part series called *Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars*, pitting Marvel's leading super heroes against a virtual army of super villains. Changes were made in the course of this saga that would affect the characters in their own series. Most prominently, Spider-Man received a new black costume, supposedly permanently. (It wasn't, of course. But the costume turned out to be a living alien, and in 1988 it melded with disgruntled reporter Eddie Brock to become Spider-Man's new enemy, Venom. As they say, clothes make the man.) An enormous commercial success, *Secret Wars* not

(This page) *Epic Illustrated* cover by Frank Frazetta. (Opposite page) Emotional panels lead up to *The Death of Captain Marvel*.

I'VE STUDIED A MOUNTAIN OF MEDICAL VOLUMES, SEARCHING FOR A CURE FOR MY PARTICULAR PROBLEM ... AND FAILED.
I'VE NOT ASKED FOR YOUR HELP BEFORE BECAUSE I'VE I'VE BEEN UNABLE TO VOICE MY FEAR.
I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT... IT'S A TERRIBLE DISEASE.
WE, ON TITAN, CALL IT THE INNER DECAY.
YOU KREE HAVE NAMED IT THE BLACKEND.
EARTHMEN CALL IT CANCER.


MIDNIGHT.

SO YOU REFUSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE DEATH'S KIND MERCY -- BUT EVEN YOU MUST ACCEPT ITS INEVITABILITY!
WHY SHOULD I?

NO!
I REFUSE TO ACCEPT THAT!
AS LONG AS THERE IS LIFE THERE IS HOPE!

SO IT ENDS...

only spawned its own sequel, *Secret Wars II*, in 1985, but changed the comics industry. Ever since then, similar blockbuster "crossover" series, purporting to change major characters permanently, have been major moneymakers for both Marvel and DC.

Considerably less successful was Shooter's ambitious attempt to create a new line of super hero comics, the New Universe, in 1986. Describing it as "the world outside your window," the editor in chief intended for his New Universe to be more realistic than the familiar Marvel Universe. There would be no hidden races, no alien empires, and the super heroes would not even wear costumes. Perhaps leaving out so many fantasy elements helped spell the New Universe's early demise.

Over time Shooter's hands-on style caused several important writers and artists to leave Marvel. After a decade and a half, Shooter was replaced as editor in chief by line editor Tom DeFalco, who presided less stormily over Marvel editorial into the next decade.

Another new line of comics proved to have greater longevity than the New Universe: Marvel's "Star Comics," aimed at young children. Overseen by Sid Jacobson, a former editor at Harvey Comics, the Star line included new, Marvel-owned series like *Top Dog*, as well as comics based on licensed properties, such as Jim Henson's *Muppet Babies* and *Fraggle Rock*. (Marvel Productions also created animated versions of these two Henson series.) Star Comics endured until the mid-1990s, when it became a casualty of the comics industry's falling sales.

(This page) Spider-Man dons a strangely responsive new outfit in issue #8 of *Secret Wars*. (Opposite page) Stan Lee gets affection from the next generation, in this case editors Mark Gruenwald and Tom DeFalco. As Stan's note shows, he was never one to take a smooch lightly!

FROM STAN LEE

11/11/92

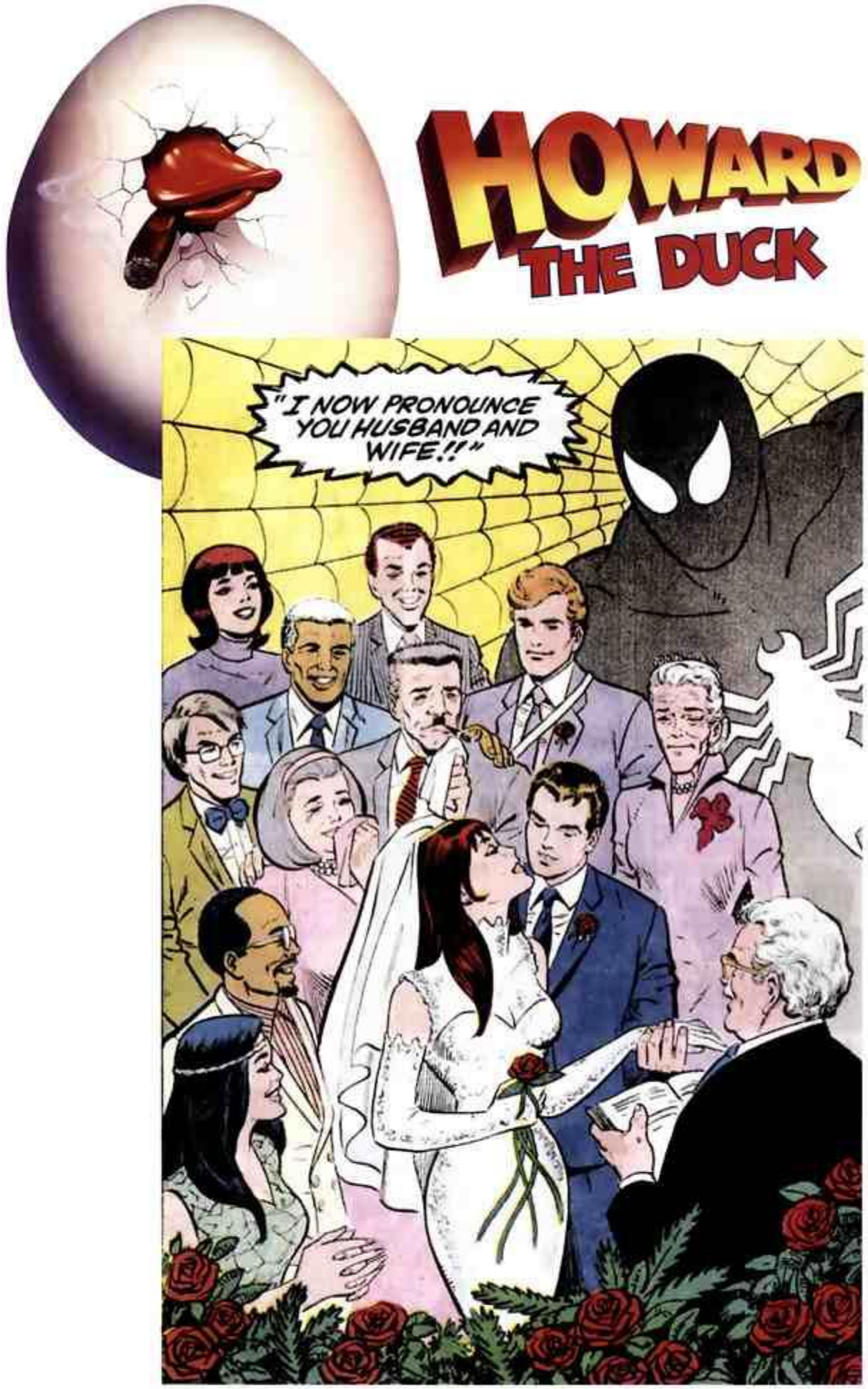
Tom —

You know, of course, that this means we're engaged!

Excelsior!

Stan

MARVEL FILMS



NEWSFLASH: SPIDER-MAN MARRIES!

Apart from animation, Marvel had little success in movies or television during the 1980s. There was an undistinguished *Punisher* movie in 1989. Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno returned in three *Incredible Hulk* TV movies; one featured Daredevil, and another guest-starred Thor. And Lucasfilm's *Howard the Duck* (1986) became one of the legendary disasters of cinematic history.

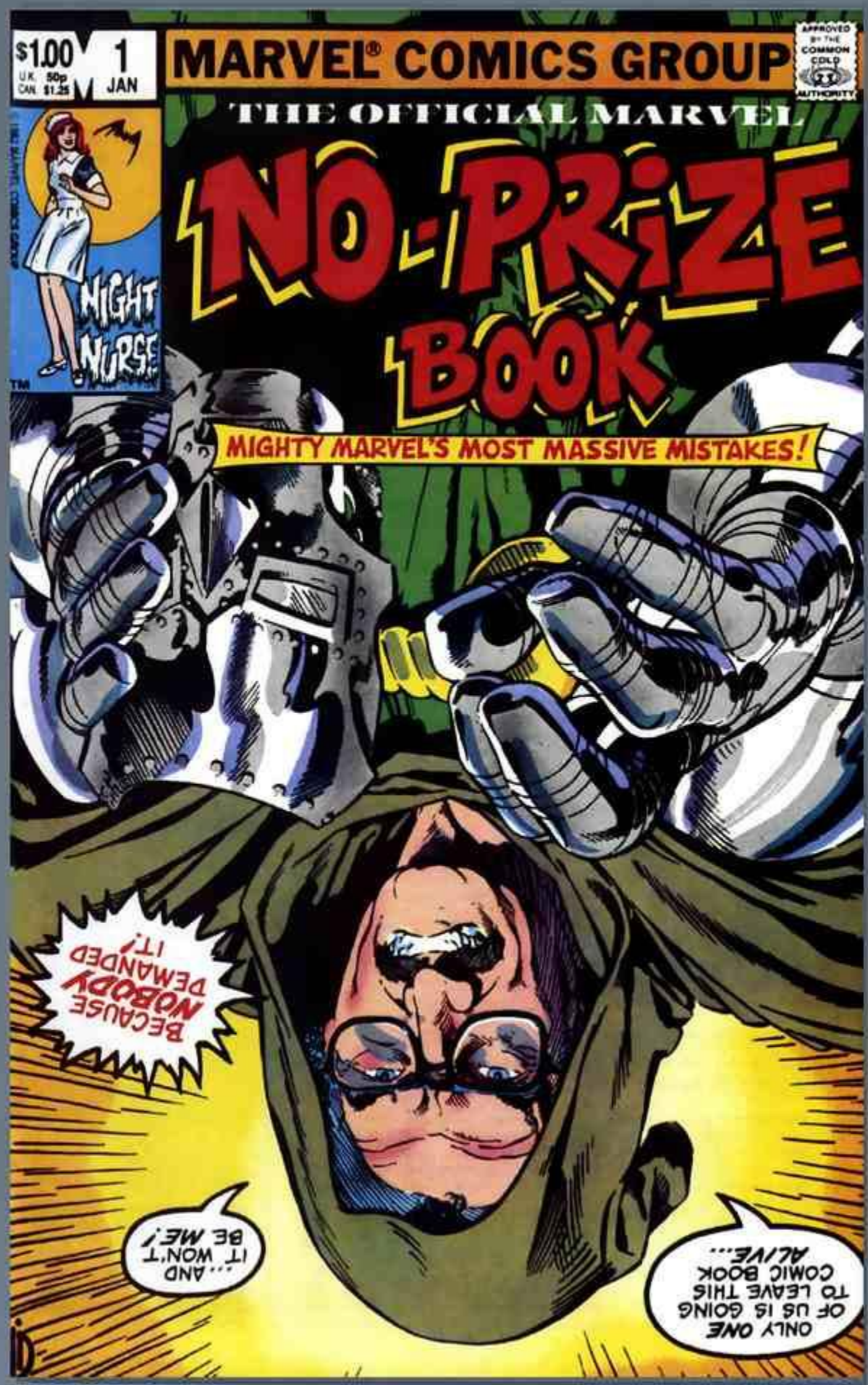
Marvel's most successful media event of the eighties was the wedding of Peter Parker and Mary Jane Watson, which was carried out simultaneously both in the comic books and the newspaper comic strips (in two almost entirely different story lines!). Fashion designer Willi Smith was commissioned to create MJ's wedding gown. To help hype the grand occasion, there was a "live-action" version of the wedding held in the not particularly intimate setting of New York City's Shea Stadium on June 5, 1987, with Stan Lee in attendance. Later that same year, a gargantuan Spider-Man balloon made its debut in the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

All things considered, 1987 was a good year for your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man.

. . . AND THE REST OF THE MARVEL SCENE?

Many Marvel comics of the decade were bursting with creativity, thanks to the talented writers and artists who introduced new twists to long-familiar genres like super heroes and war. Among the very best of the 1980s were the following:

(Top left) Unfortunately, Howard the Duck misses his mark as a movie star. (Left) Spider-Man's wedding, the event of the year in 1987. (Above) America's favorite webhead was also huge—really huge—as a balloon at Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.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...AND IT WON'T BE ME!
BECAUSE NOBODY DEMANDED IT!

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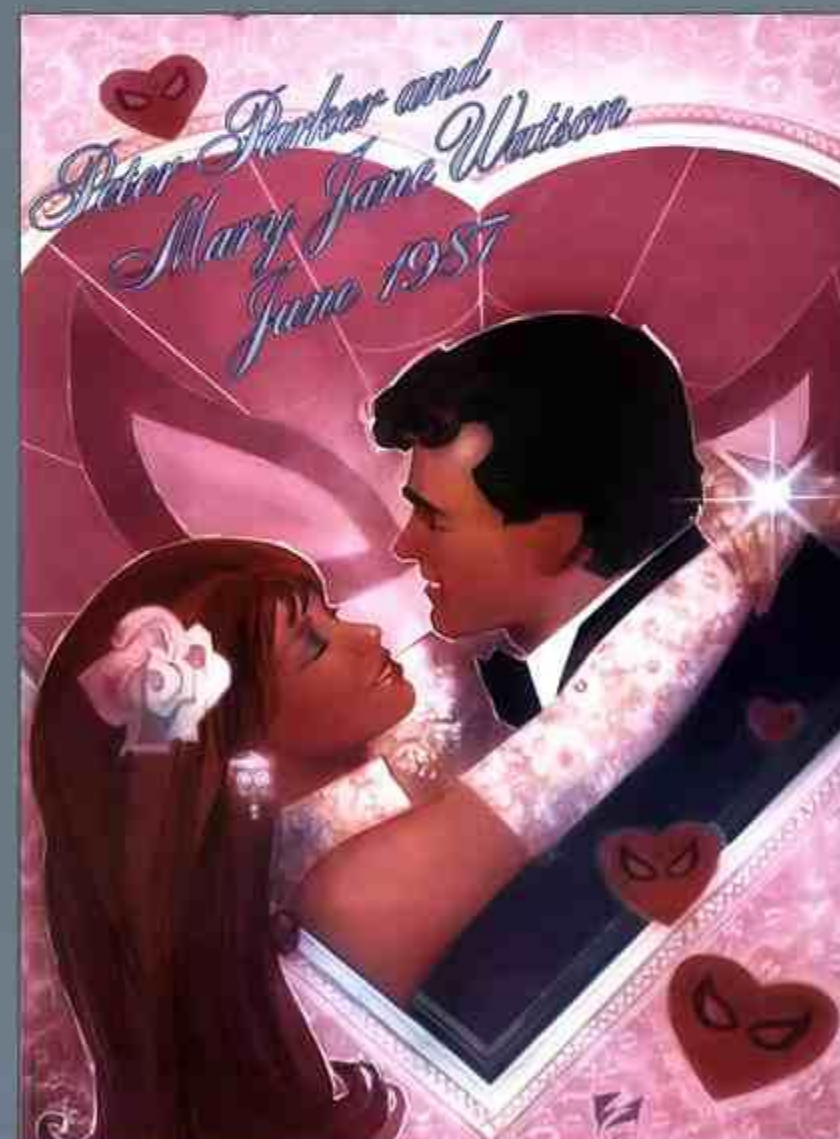
Peter Parker and
Mary Jane Watson
June 1987

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Join Peter Parker
and Mary Jane Watson
as they tie the knot
in

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Also, take a
special look back
at their relationship
in

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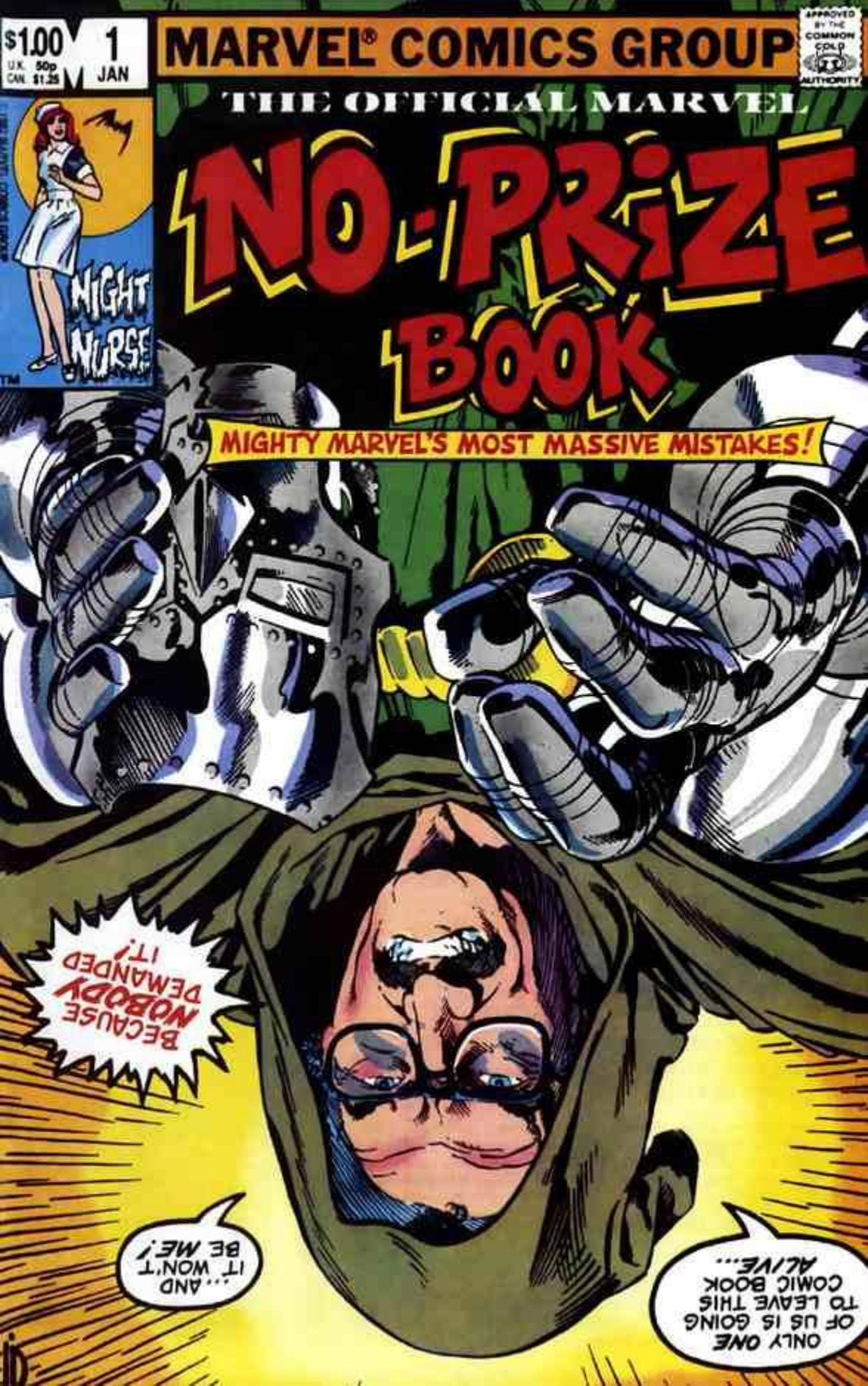
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BECAUSE NOBODY DEMANDED IT!
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ONLY ONE OF US IS GOING TO LEAVE THIS COMIC BOOK ALIVE...

4610 Van Nuys Boulevard, Sherman Oaks, California 91403

Dear Readers,

It has come to my attention that the editors at Marvel plan to assemble a so-called NO-PRIZE BOOK that I (in caricature form) am supposed to be "hosting." DON'T BE FOOLED!!! I had nothing to do with this fiasco! That's not me talking! They paid some unscrupulous freelancer to pretend he's me and sign my name! I mean, how could any one human spew out that constant flow of ersatz alliteration ("prodigious purple prose" indeed!), or smile like his lips have been cemented in that position?!? C'mon, now! That's not me! I'm still out here in sunny California, forging ahead with Marvel Productions and expanding Marvel's horizons to new, unconquered areas. Somebody in New York is trying to pull a fast one, and you can bet I'm gonna yell at that Shooter person, and fire everyone I have to to get to the bottom of all this. Heck, I'm gonna make some phone calls!

Yep. And I'm gonna start right after I get back from the bank.

Excelsior!

Stan Lee

Stan Lee

THESE PEOPLE, WHO ALL LOVE THEIR JOBS, WERE TOTALLY AGAINST THIS DUMB IDEA*, SO PLEASE DON'T BLAME:

JIM OWSLEY –writer, layout & design, art direction, making it happen, glory-grabbing/ **ROGER STERN, STEVEN GRANT** –researchers/ **BOB CAMP** –pencils/ **VINCE COLLETTA** – inks/ **PAUL BECTON** –foreign licensing (sacred keeper of the reprint file)/ **ELIOT R. BROWN** –typography/ **JOHN MORELLI** –lettering/ **RON ZALME** –cover logo & production/ **JOE ALBELO** –mechanical production, nit-picking/ **BETH FIRMIN** –colorist/ **MIKE GOLDEN** –cover artist/ **LARRY HAMA** –editor/ **AND LEST WE FORGET...**

JIM SHOOTER
CONCEPT – EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

*But Jim Shooter backed a truck up to the office filled with so much money... well... what would you do?!?

THE MARVEL NO-PRIZE BOOK™ VOL. 1, NO. 1. Published by Marvel Comics Group, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016. James E. Galton, President; Stan Lee, Publisher; Mike Hobson, Vice-President, Publishing; Mel Schiffman, Vice-President, Production. Price: $1.00 per copy in the U.S. and $1.25 in Canada. Printed in the U.S.A. The names, characters, and organizations used in THE MARVEL NO-PRIZE BOOK are fictitious. Any similarity between them and any existing person or organization is purely coincidental. Honest. You bet. CONAN THE BARBARIAN and the distinctive likeness thereof are trademarks of Conan Properties, Inc. and are used with permission. Copyright © 1982 by Marvel Comics Group, a division of **Cadence Industries Corporation.** All rights reserved. All elfs, too. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold (it would seem that we should make up our minds, shouldn't we?) or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. This periodical also may not be sold as part of a chef's salad, as a secret coded guidebook for use in the liquidation of any Third World dictatorship, nor as a miracle cure for Cancer. The magazine should likewise not be sold south of the border out of the back of a '67 Chevy wagon between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. by anyone named "Lefty." **Address all business inquiries to Ed Shukin, Vice-President of Circulation.**

Stan Lee RESENTS: MARVEL NO-PRIZE BOOK!™

LEST WE SHOULD GOOF...!

Hi there, True Believers! **Smilin' Stan (The Man) Lee** here, merely gazing with teary-eyed reverence at untold volumes of **awesome epics** from the annals of **Mighty Marvel!**

In keeping with our prolific policy of bringing you, the reader, the very best entertainment money can possibly buy, our boisterous bullpenners came up with the stultifying suggestion that we produce a magazine crammed with some of Marvel's **most massive mistakes!**

Of course, O Keeper of the Flame, Your Man Stan dismissed the idea outright! After all, there couldn't **possibly** be enough egregious gaffs to fill an entire book! This is the **House of Ideas**, you know! We don't **make** mistakes here!

That's when **Jim (Trouble) Shooter** ducked his head into this very office and presented me with several No-Prize winners that I, myself, was responsible for. I know it sounds unbelievable, people, but yes, it's true. Even I, Superb Stan, am not perfect!

Jim also reminded me that it was I who coined the efficacious phrase "**No-Prize**" – an award granted those faithful followers who actually caught our abashed bull-penners in an out-and-out exaggeration.

It was late one star-filled evening long ago, before I achieved my present level of near-omnipotence...

Well, gang, I figured What the heck? Why not?! At the very least, this epigramatic episode could be kinda fun! Why, I remember my very first... uh, misconception...

I've always had trouble with the X-Men, it seems. Gang, you just don't know how many letters I got about "...**violence is the first refuge of the incompetent!**" Of course, by the time **X-MEN #10** was lettered it read...

The Angel (Warren Worthington III) was called **"Scott" all through X-MEN #36.** I probably confused him with Scott (Cyclops) Summers... although I can't say how...

The feminist movement got its start in the pages of **X-MEN #28**, where Marvel Girl levitates a screwdriver to the Beast, calls it a pair of **pliers**, and the Beast replies, **"You're a credit to your gender..."** Hoo-boy.

Black Bolt, King of the Inhumans, destroys a huge wall, freeing his people... and thirteen issues later, **Reed Richards** takes all the credit... backed up by a footnote! See **FANTASTIC FOUR #59 &#82** for the red-faced details.

Obviously **Captain Baracuda** has no trouble looking through his periscope with the eye that has a patch over it in **HULK #219.** Wish my vision were as good.

Somebody buy this guy a dictionary! He's got **"Pharaoh"** misspelled in big letters... right on the cover of **TALES OF SUSPENSE #44!**

And, for an encore, he repeats the error... in **larger letters!** Right on the first page!

I'm sure Roy Thomas meant to say "**traitress**" in **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #25.** Well, pretty sure anyway.

And does anybody remember "**MARVEL TWO-*ON*-ONE...**"? Well, in case you don't, here it is again. Just for laughs.

D.D.'s coin toss: **Daredevil** flips a "coin"... the Grandmaster calls **"tails"**... it's tails... but D.D says that it's **heads**, and the Grandmaster **buys** it! Who's the **blind man** here?!? **(G.S. DEFENDERS #3)**

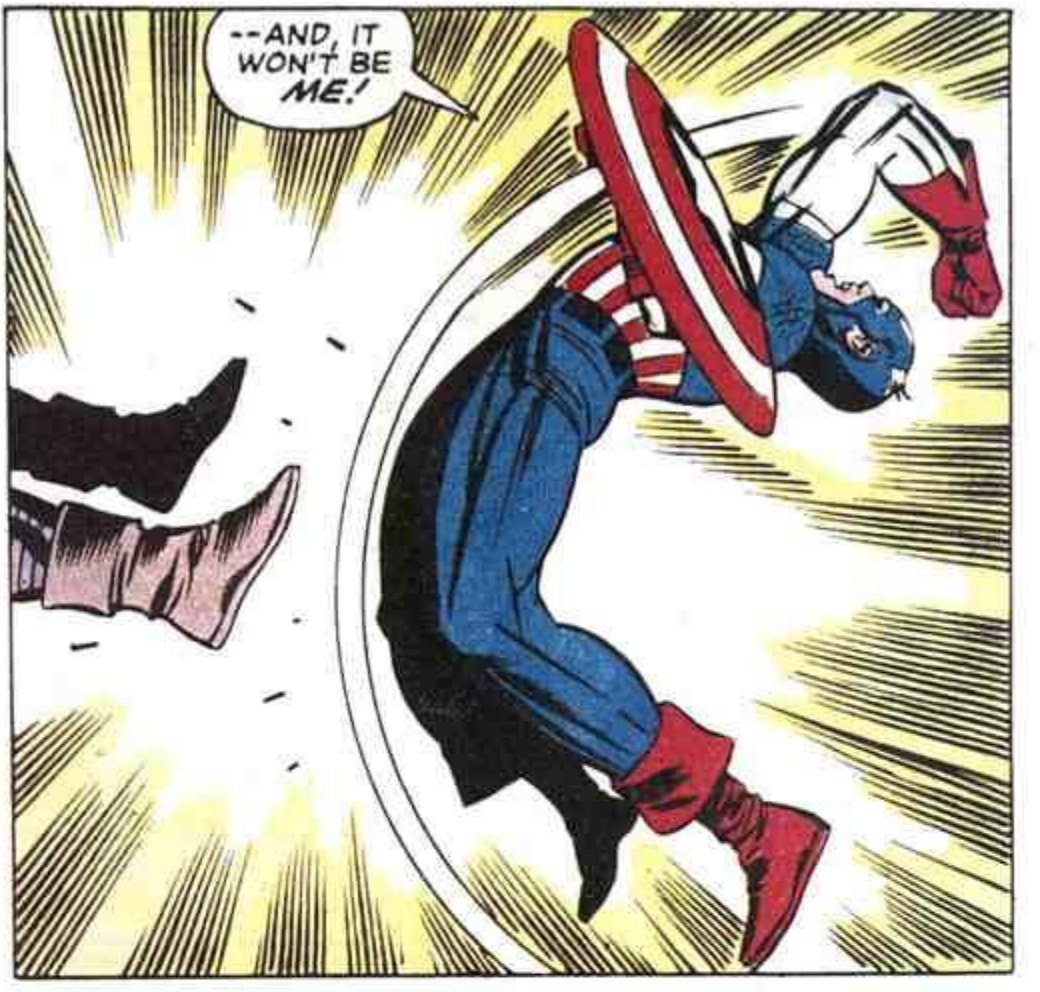
And there you **have** it, culture fans! Proof beyond any shadow of doubt that **Madcap Marvel** not only boisterously boasts of our bombastic biographs, we also meekly manifest our moronic misfortunes!

Of course, we never actually purposely perpetuate phantasmic faux pas; however when we do infrequently fall from our **unfallacious forte**, we let it all hang out.

To which end, we leave you with this, perhaps the most classic No-Prize of all, from **TALES OF SUSPENSE #92**...

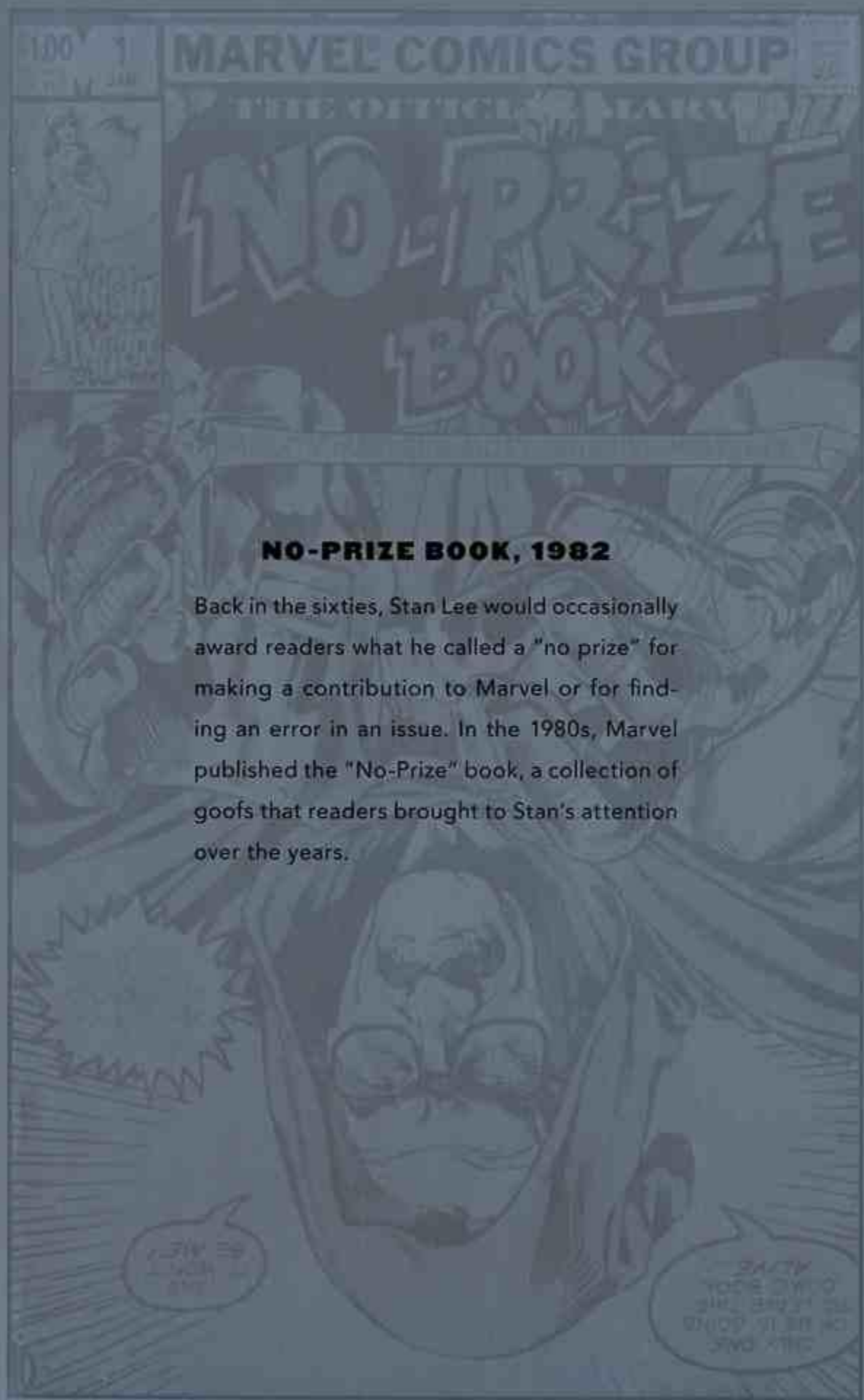
OKAY, MISTER-- I'M *READY* FOR YOU! SO LET'S *WRAP* IT UP!

ONLY *ONE* OF US IS GONNA WALK *OUT* OF HERE-- UNDER HIS OWN STEAM--


--AND, IT WON'T BE ME!

Nuff said...?
Hulk not like script.
Excelsior!

REPRODUCTION

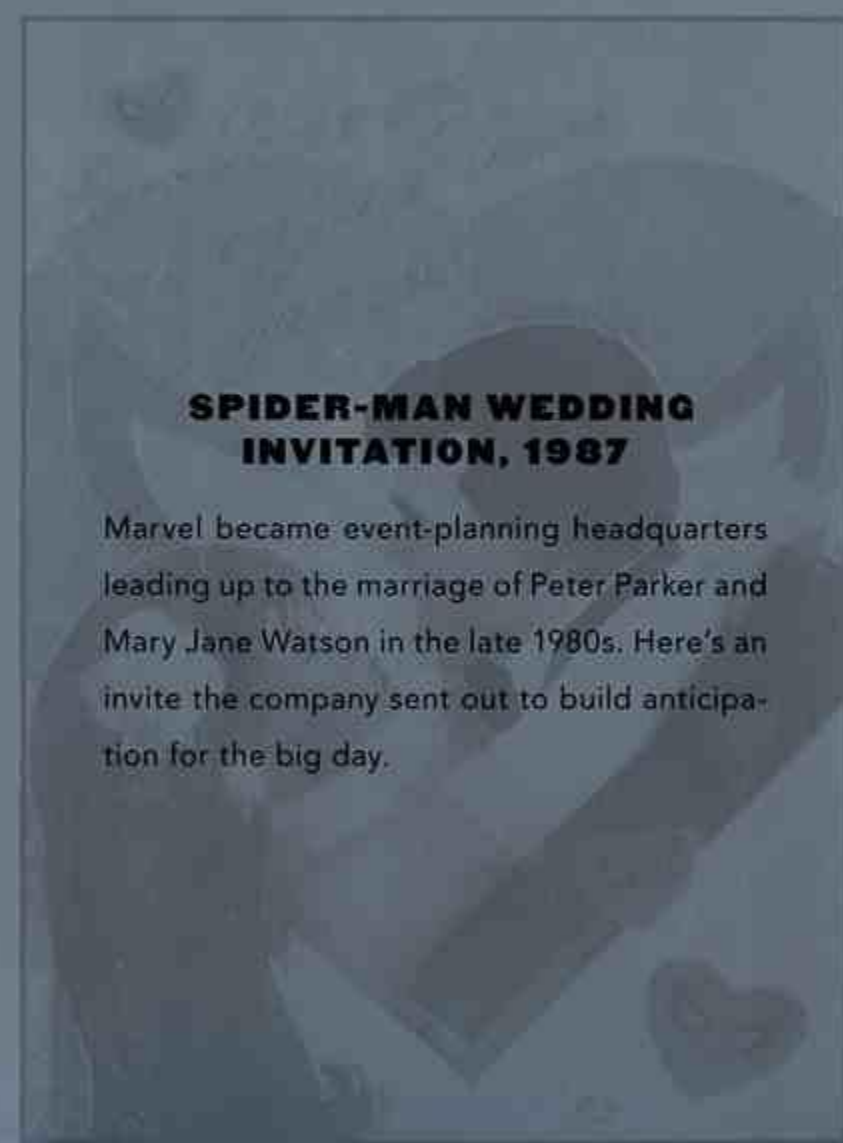


NO-PRIZE BOOK, 1982

Back in the sixties, Stan Lee would occasionally award readers what he called a "no prize" for making a contribution to Marvel or for finding an error in an issue. In the 1980s, Marvel published the "No-Prize" book, a collection of goofs that readers brought to Stan's attention over the years.

MARVEL VISITOR PASS, 1982

All visitors to the Marvel offices needed an official visitor pass like this one in order to wander the hallowed hallways and visit editors and staff.



SPIDER-MAN WEDDING INVITATION, 1987

Marvel became event-planning headquarters leading up to the marriage of Peter Parker and Mary Jane Watson in the late 1980s. Here's an invite the company sent out to build anticipation for the big day.

POWER
PACK

Marc Spector:
Moon Knight
1.50 US
$2.00 CAN
3
AUG
UK 50p
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
WELCOME TO FREEDOMTOWN
SHOWDOWN IN AFRICA

IT IS A SPACESHIP! IT'S FRIDAY! I KNEW IT! THEY'VE FIXED HER AND SHE'S COME BACK TO US!!
WHOA, KATIE--IT'S A KYMELLIAN SHIP ALL RIGHT. BUT IT'S TOO SMALL TO BE FRIDAY--AT LEAST THE FRIDAY WE KNOW.
SORRY I HAD TO WAKE YOU, FRANKLIN, BUT--
S'OKAY, ALEX. I KNOW...
FRANK'S PSYCHIC, REMEMBER?--HE'S PROBABLY BEEN WATCHING US FROM HIS DREAMS!
...WOW--THIS IS SO DEJA VU!
YEAH! AN' IT'S JUST THE WAY WE FOUND FRIDAY, TOO!

➡ Walter Simonson's classic work writing and drawing *Thor*, in stories that ran the gamut from epic warfare to witty fables;

➡ *Power Pack*, a charming and successful series about children who were granted super powers by a friendly alien;

➡ A limited series of *Squadron Supreme*, which inquired into the ethics of super heroes taking the law into their own hands, even for the best of motives;

➡ *Moon Knight*, one of the first comics produced solely for the direct sales market;

➡ *The Nam*, a monthly series that provided a far more realistic vision of warfare than *Sgt. Fury* ever did, thanks to its writer Doug Murray, who was himself a Vietnam War vet;

➡ And the ever-surprising *The Incredible Hulk*. (The comic's longtime writer Peter David at one point even put the Hulk into a hat and business suit and got him a job as a mob enforcer based in Las Vegas!)

A TRUE UNIVERSE

To publicize Marvel's many projects, in 1983 direct sales manager Carol Kalish created *Marvel Age*, a news-and-interviews-style magazine in comics format that echoed self-promotional tactics of *F.O.O.M.* (Friends of Ol' Marvel, which had taken over from *Marvelmania*) and Stan Lee's "Bullpen Bulletins" pages.

Clearly, Marvel's mythology had grown so extensive by 1983 that editor/writer Mark Gruenwald created a multi-issue encyclopedia of Marvel characters, *The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe*. He would devise several different versions of the handbook, including a series of paperback books and even a loose-leaf binder. Although the phrase "Marvel Universe" had been around since the 1960s—coined by readers in their letters to Stan Lee—the *Handbook* made it a permanent fixture in Marvel lore. And indeed, a Marvel Universe is precisely what the fictional world that Stan and Jack Kirby had depicted in *Fantastic Four* #1 had become.

As the decade drew to a close, comics sales continued to swell, and Marvel changed ownership yet again. In 1988, New World sold Marvel to the Andrews Group, part of the vast empire of corporate mogul Ronald Perelman. No one at the time suspected how ominous a development the sale would prove to be.

(Both pages) Heroes from the eighties: Art from *Power Pack*, *Moon Knight*, and *The Nam*.

LITTERED WITH TOWERING CONCRETE GIANTS THAT SEEM TO SWALLOW UP THE SKY.

THEY ARE SILENT--

--FROZEN--

--MAN-MADE GUARDIANS.

PEOPLE SCURRY ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS.

--THE CONGESTION--

--THE PRESSURE--

RISE AND FALL

1990s

THE STORY OF MARVEL COMICS IN THE 1990S, AND OF THE American comic book business as a whole, is a tale of boom and bust. From dazzling heights of prosperity, *fin de siècle* Marvel fell into bankruptcy and massive debt before rebuilding success in the following decade.

The great boom in comic book sales began in 1989, which was not coincidentally the year that Revlon owner Ronald Perelman bought the Marvel Entertainment Group. The business world had become aware that there were now big profits to be made in the comics business, not just through publishing but also through licensing and merchandising.

In 1991, Perelman turned Marvel Entertainment into a publicly owned company on the New York Stock Exchange. While retaining 60 percent of the stock for himself, Perelman made forty million dollars in this first IPO sale of Marvel stock to the general public.

(Opposite page) Spider-Man gets his own title—for the fourth time!—and starts powerfully with Todd McFarlane's illustrated splash page from *Spider-Man* #1. (This page) Meanwhile, the Punisher reigns from the cover of his *War Journal* #50.

--RISE ABOVE IT ALL!
HIS NAME--
SPIDER-MAN!
HIS POWERS--
EXTRAORDINARY!
HIS WEBLINE--
ADVANTAGEOUS!
BELOW, THE PEOPLE CONTINUE TO SCURRY.
STAN LEE
PRESENTS:
TORMENT
PART 1
ARTIST-WRITER
TODD McFARLANE
LETTERS
RICK PARKER
COLORS
BOB SHAREN
EDITOR
JIM SALICRUP
EDITOR CHIEF
TOM DeFALCO

MARVEL'S NEW LOOK

One of the factors pushing sales upward at Marvel was the arrival of a new wave of artists, whose work fired the imagination of the latest generation of readers.

Perhaps the most popular of these new stars was Todd McFarlane, whose *Amazing Spider-Man* art reinterpreted much of the spirit of co-creator Steve Ditko's work on the character, thereby readying the famous web-head for a new decade. Over the years, under successive artists, the quirkiness of the poses and movements that Ditko gave Spider-Man had worn away. McFarlane turned Spider-Man back into a synthesis of man and spider, crouching and moving in a distinctively buglike fashion.

Like such leading artistic lights as Kirby, Starlin, Byrne, and Miller before him, McFarlane hungered to write his own stories. The increasing demand for new Marvel series gave him his opportunity.

As Marvel's audience had grown over the decades, it made commercial sense to "clone" one of its biggest hits, *The Amazing Spider-Man*. First had come *The Spectacular Spider-Man*, and then *Web of Spider-Man*. In 1990, Marvel launched a *fourth* monthly series for the wall-crawling hero, titled just plain *Spider-Man*, written and illustrated by McFarlane.

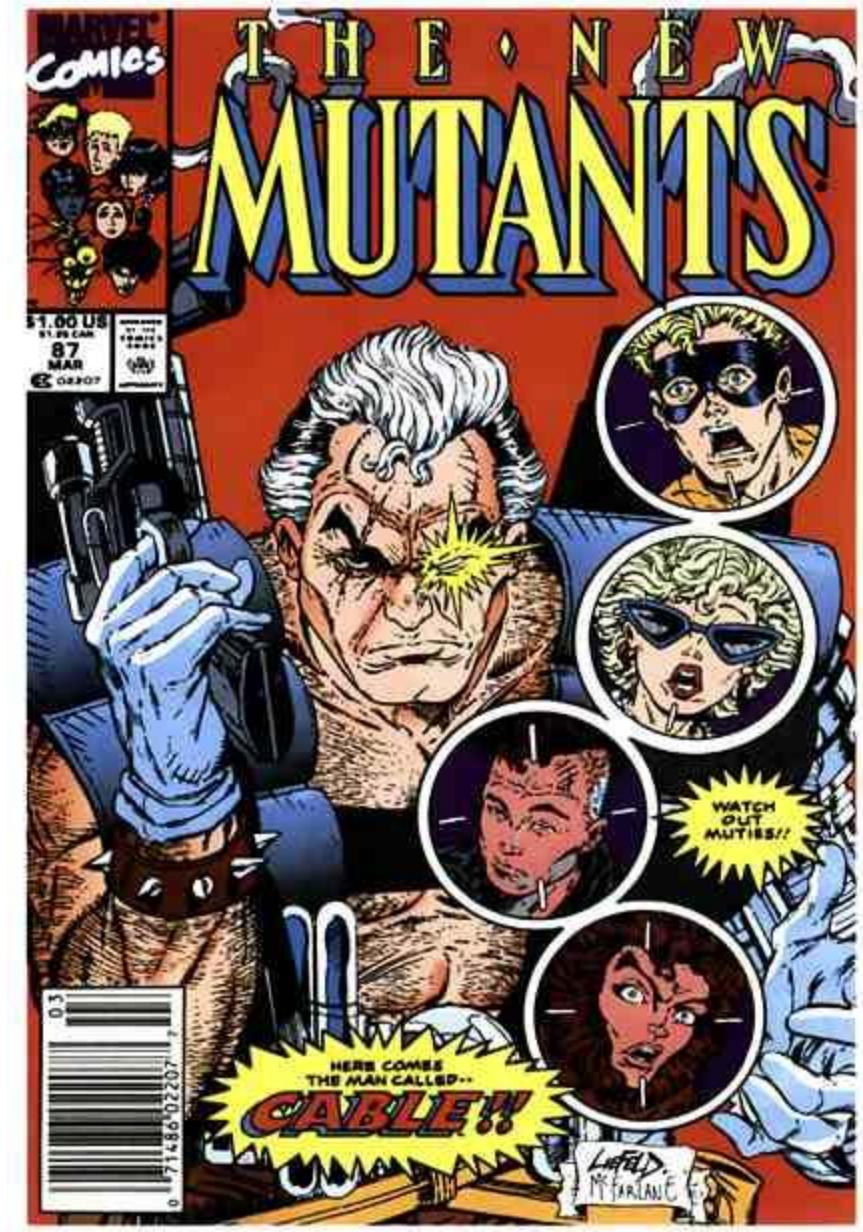
Now Marvel was publishing a Spider-Man comic every week of the year, and clearly their success was due to Peter Parker's innate appeal. But perhaps more significantly, the new *Spider-Man* series became a showcase not just for one of Marvel's biggest fictional stars but also for a star artist.

Another swiftly rising newcomer was Rob Liefeld, who drew *The New Mutants*. Perhaps more than any other star cartoonist of the 1990s, Liefeld broke the traditional rules of drawing comics. He exaggerated the physical proportions of both his heroes and heroines far beyond realistic standards, and defied the methods of clear visual storytelling that former editor in chief Jim Shooter had so strictly enforced. For *The New Mutants*, Liefeld co-created a Schwarzenegger-like warrior from the future, who was inexplicably named Cable; he would eventually turn out to be the adult son of the X-Men's Cyclops.

Liefeld, too, won his showcase; although *The New Mutants* was canceled with issue #100, the team, now headed by Cable, was reborn in *X-Force* #1, drawn by Liefeld and scripted by Fabian Nicieza, in 1991.

The third man in this superstar triumvirate was artist Jim Lee (no relation to Stan), who began working with veteran writer Chris Claremont

(Opposite page) McFarlane's Spider-Man—with the goog-goog-googly eyes! (This page) Cable comes to life on the cover of *The New Mutants* #87, while his foes face their deaths in interior panels by Rob Liefeld.



MARVEL COMICS
$1.50 US
$1.90 CAN
1
AUG
01766
X-FORCE
SPECIAL EDITION
OF THE 1ST APPEARANCE
OF MARVEL'S
HOTTEST
MUTANT TEAM!

on *The Uncanny X-Men* in 1989. Lee's massive, heroic figures imparted an epic feel to the mutant team's adventures. Taking advantage of their great popularity, Marvel launched a companion series, called just plain *X-Men*, drawn by Lee, in 1991, shortly following *X-Force* #1.

SPECULATOR MANIA

In these prosperous times, an issue of a top-selling comic would sell hundreds of thousands of copies. *Spider-Man* #1, *X-Force* #1, and *X-Men* #1 each sold in the seven-figure range; indeed, *X-Men* #1 is the best-selling American comic book of all time.

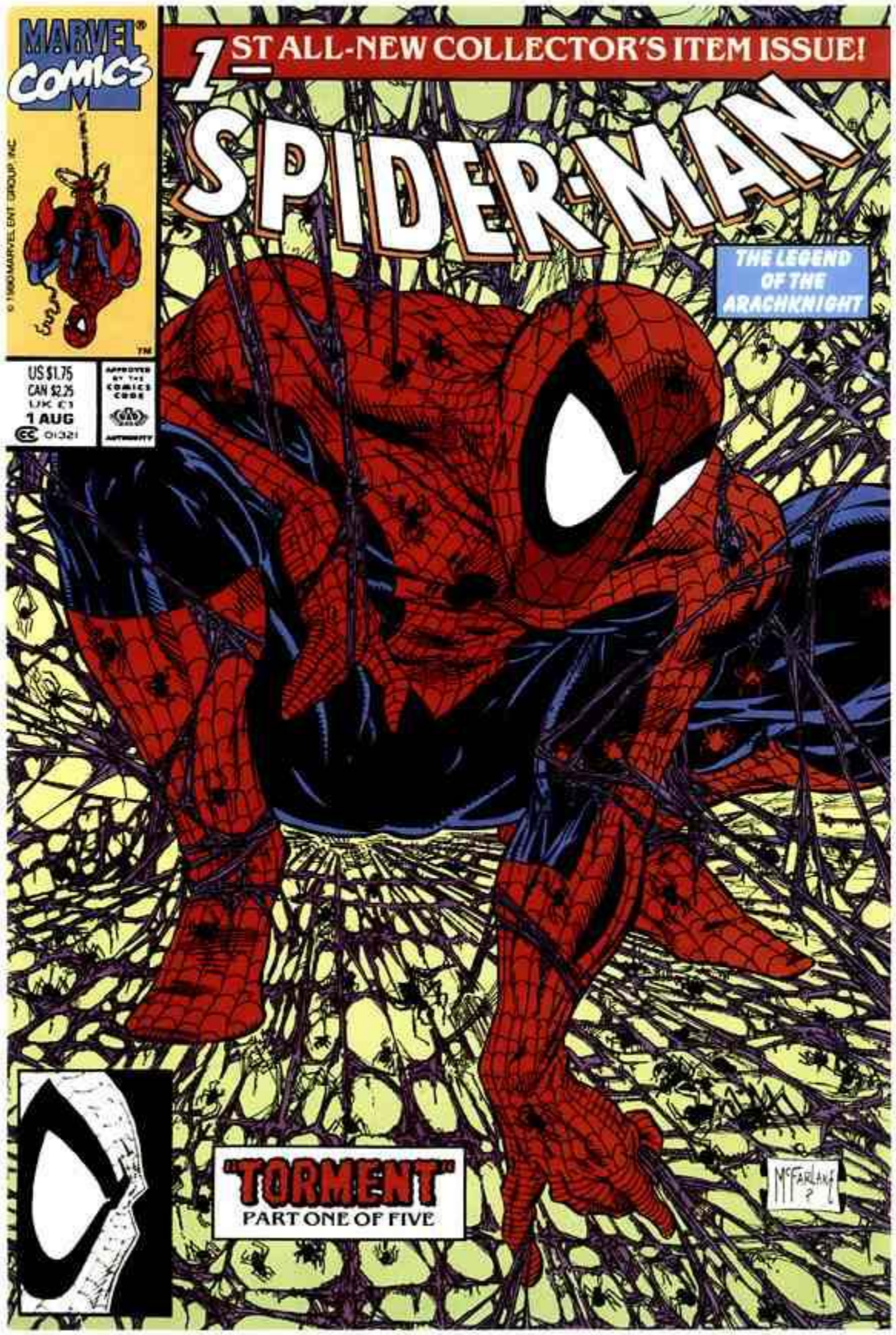
But selling a million copies did not mean that a book had a million readers. The industry had entered the now infamous period of the Great Comics Speculator Bubble. For years, newspapers had run stories expressing astonishment at how copies of vintage comic books had been sold for thousands of dollars. As a result, in the early 1990s many comics fans were fixated on the potential resale value of their comics. A fan might buy one copy to read, and one—or several more—to stuff into a transparent Mylar bag to resell later on. Moreover, speculators were coming in from outside comics fandom, convinced that by buying up issues of "hot" comics, they would eventually make a financial killing.

X-Force was really no more than a continuation of Liefeld's *New Mutants* under a different name. But "first" issues, even those starring long-established characters, were considered collectors' items and sold enormously.

It wasn't enough for many fans and speculators to buy just one or two copies apiece of *X-Force* #1. Marvel sold copies of *X-Force* #1 that were already inside protective plastic "polybags," each containing one of five different X-Force trading cards, so that the truly passionate collector would feel obligated to buy at least *five* copies of the same issue. And then there was a second printing of *X-Force* #1, without the bags or the cards, but with a cover printed in metallic ink.

Only a few months later, *X-Men* #1 managed to top this. There were four different versions of the first issue, "A" through "D," each with a different cover drawn by Jim Lee. For over twice the price, you could buy issue number 1E, which had a "double gatefold" cover consisting of all four of the covers from issues 1A through 1D.

(Opposite page) Jim Lee's pin-up art for *Wolverine* (far left), and the *X-Force* #1 cover by Rob Liefeld. (This page) Jim Lee's X-tremely spectacular double gatefold cover of *X-Men* #1, the best-selling comic book of all time!



Now that, you might think, is as many different variants of the same book as the market would tolerate. But you would be wrong. The first issue of McFarlane's *Spider-Man* came in the following versions:

- The unbagged direct sales "Silver" first edition
- The bagged direct sales "Silver" first edition
- The unbagged regular first edition
- The bagged regular first edition
- The bagged newsstand first edition
- The "Gold" second edition with a picture of Spider-Man in the UPC box
- The "Gold" second edition without Spidey in the box
- And finally, the super-special "Platinum" edition

Eight versions of what was really the exact same funnybook!

And *still* this did not exhaust the marketing bag of tricks. Other special issues of popular comics had wraparound covers, die-cut covers, and even covers with hologram images of the characters. Some comics came with entire sheets of trading cards inside.

Marvel was certainly not the only comics company that resorted to such methods of creating "collectible" comics. With such an enormous demand, it is no wonder that Marvel, DC, and later Image gave the customers what they wanted.

But *how long* would they want it?

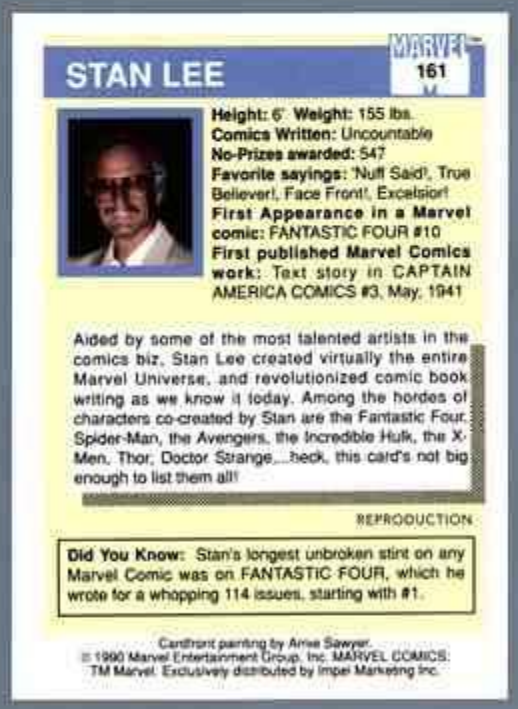
Anyone with a grasp of basic math should have realized the fallacy underlying the speculator bubble. Golden Age and early Silver Age comics are worth so much money because of their scarcity; according to comics legend, most kids' moms threw out their comics collections sooner or later. But now, with hundreds of thousands of copies of an individual issue being sold—and stored away for the future sale, rather than tossed out—how could any of these "collector's item" comics of the 1990s ever be worth much?

Why should people take the trouble to hunt down all these variant versions of all these different comics once they realized there was no big payoff waiting for them?

The comics boom was actually a ticking time bomb that would inevitably go off.

One of the many, many, er, *many Spider-Man* collector's edition covers for issue #1 by Todd McFarlane.

This ... trib-
uted ... after
Ron ... and
plac ... and
mer ...



STAN LEE — MARVEL™ 161 M

Height: 6' **Weight:** 155 lbs.
Comics Written: Uncountable
No-Prizes awarded: 547
Favorite sayings: 'Nuff Said!, True Believer!, Face Front!, Excelsior!
First Appearance in a Marvel comic: FANTASTIC FOUR #10
First published Marvel Comics work: Text story in CAPTAIN AMERICA COMICS #3, May, 1941

Aided by some of the most talented artists in the comics biz, Stan Lee created virtually the entire Marvel Universe, and revolutionized comic book writing as we know it today. Among the hordes of characters co-created by Stan are the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, the Avengers, the Incredible Hulk, the X-Men, Thor, Doctor Strange,...heck, this card's not big enough to list them all!

REPRODUCTION

Did You Know: Stan's longest unbroken stint on any Marvel Comic was on FANTASTIC FOUR, which he wrote for a whopping 114 issues, starting with #1.

Cardfront painting by Arnie Sawyer.
© 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. MARVEL COMICS: TM Marvel. Exclusively distributed by Impel Marketing Inc.

GHOST RIDER™ — MARVEL™ 82 M

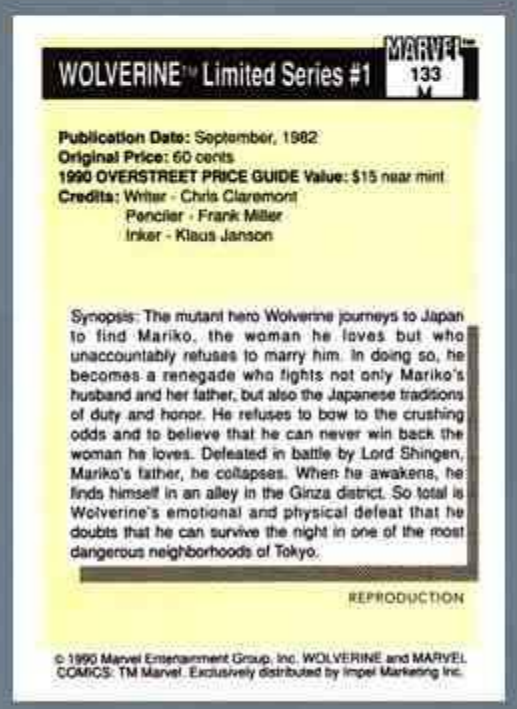
Real Name: Danny Ketch
Height: 6'2" **Weight:** Unknown
Battles Fought: 6
Wins: 4 **Losses:** 2 **Ties:** 0
Win Percentage: 67%
Arch-enemies: Deathwatch, Blackout
First Appearance: GHOST RIDER, Vol. 2, #1, March, 1990

After finding a mysterious motorcycle in a cemetery, teenager Danny Ketch gained the power to transform himself into Ghost Rider -- a flaming skeletal being of great strength and even greater purpose. In his fiery new identity he is the living spirit of vengeance. His sole reason for being is to punish those who would harm the innocent. He's easily the hottest new hero of 1990!

REPRODUCTION

Did You Know: Danny Ketch becomes Ghost Rider by touching his mystical motorcycle.

© 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. GHOST RIDER and MARVEL COMICS: TM Marvel.
Exclusively distributed by Impel Marketing Inc.



WOLVERINE™ Limited Series #1 — MARVEL™ 133 M

Publication Date: September, 1982
Original Price: 60 cents
1990 OVERSTREET PRICE GUIDE Value: $15 near mint
Credits: Writer - Chris Claremont
Penciler - Frank Miller
Inker - Klaus Janson

Synopsis: The mutant hero Wolverine journeys to Japan to find Mariko, the woman he loves but who unaccountably refuses to marry him. In doing so, he becomes a renegade who fights not only Mariko's husband and her father, but also the Japanese traditions of duty and honor. He refuses to bow to the crushing odds and to believe that he can never win back the woman he loves. Defeated in battle by Lord Shingen, Mariko's father, he collapses. When he awakens, he finds himself in an alley in the Ginza district. So total is Wolverine's emotional and physical defeat that he doubts that he can survive the night in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods of Tokyo.

REPRODUCTION

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NUMBER

ME 20397

4024

SHARES

********20***

INCORPORATED UNDER THE LAWS
OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE

CUSIP 573913 10 0

ME0020397

MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC.

THIS CERTIFIES THAT

ROY THOMAS &
DANN M THOMAS
JT TEN
RTE 3 BOX 468
ST MATTHEWS SC 29135-9326

0000019635

********20*********
**********20******
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**********20***
**********20**

SEE REVERSE FOR CERTAIN DEFINITIONS

IS THE OWNER OF

TWENTY

FULLY PAID AND NON-ASSESSABLE SHARES OF THE COMMON STOCK OF

Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. transferable on the books of the Corporation by the holder hereof in person or by duly authorized attorney, upon surrender of this certificate properly endorsed. This certificate and the shares represented hereby are issued and shall be held subject to all of the provisions of the Certificate of Incorporation and all amendments thereto, to all of which the holder by acceptance hereof assents.

CERTIFICATE OF STOCK

This certificate is not valid until countersigned and registered by the Transfer Agent and Registrar.
Witness the facsimile seal of the Corporation and the facsimile signatures of its duly authorized officers.

Dated NOVEMBER 01, 1993
40240000 ****
STOCK SPLIT

COUNTERSIGNED AND REGISTERED
AMERICAN STOCK TRANSFER & TRUST COMPANY
(NEW YORK, N.Y.)
TRANSFER AGENT
AND REGISTRAR
BY
AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE

Rose L. Losey
SECRETARY

MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC.
CORPORATE SEAL
1986
DELAWARE

Jerry Stewart
PRESIDENT

© AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY

The Corporation will furnish without charge to each stockholder who so requests the powers, designations, preferences and relative participating, optional, or other special rights of each class of stock or series thereof and the qualifications, limitations or restrictions of such preferences and/or rights.

The following abbreviations, when used in the inscription on the face of this certificate, shall be construed as though they were written out in full according to applicable laws or regulations:

TEN COM —as tenants in common
TEN ENT —as tenants by the entireties
JT TEN —as joint tenants with right of survivorship and not as tenants in common

UNIF GIFT MIN ACT—.....Custodian.....
(Cust) (Minor)
under Uniform Gifts to Minors Act.....
(State)

Additional abbreviations may also be used though not in the above list.

For Value Received,_____ hereby sell, assign and transfer unto

PLEASE INSERT SOCIAL SECURITY OR OTHER IDENTIFYING NUMBER OF ASSIGNEE

_____

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPEWRITE NAME AND ADDRESS OF ASSIGNEE)

_____

_____

_____ Shares

of the capital stock represented by the within Certificate, and do hereby irrevocably constitute and appoint

_____ Attorney

to transfer the said stock on the books of the within named Corporation with full power of substitution in the premises.

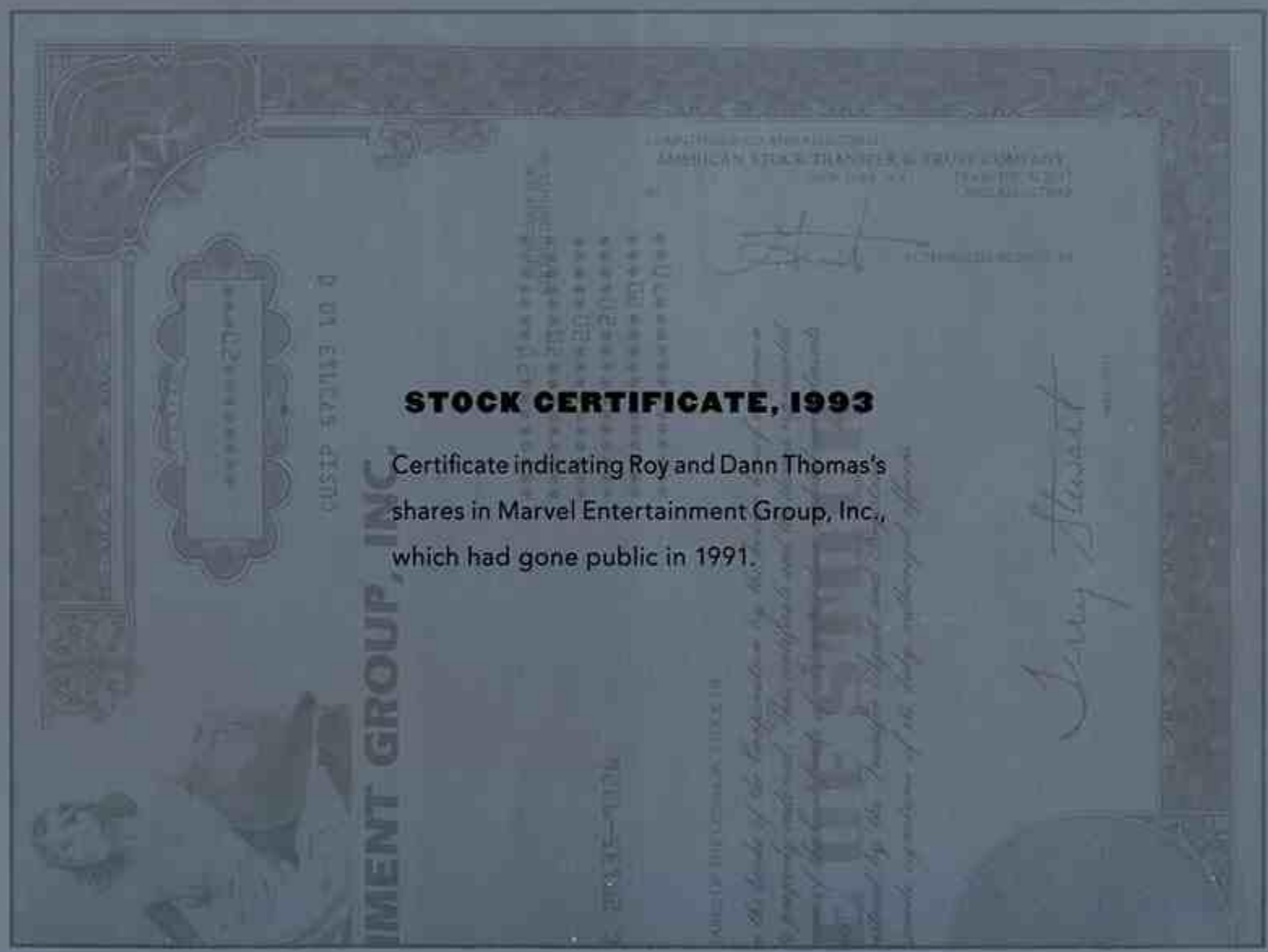
Dated_____

NOTICE: THE SIGNATURE TO THIS ASSIGNMENT MUST CORRESPOND WITH THE NAME AS WRITTEN UPON THE FACE OF THE CERTIFICATE IN EVERY PARTICULAR WITHOUT ALTERATION OR ENLARGEMENT OR ANY CHANGE WHATEVER.

REPRODUCTION

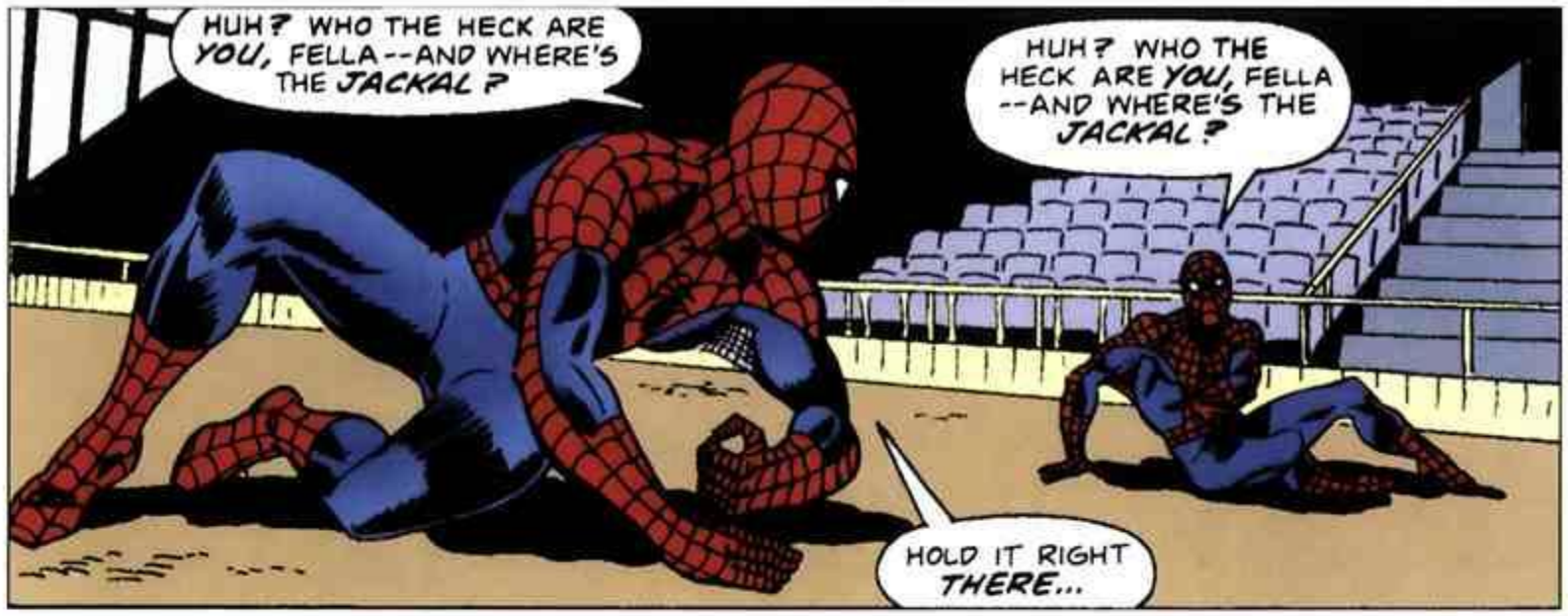
TRADING CARDS, 1990

This set of Marvel trading cards was distributed by Impel Marketing in 1990, a year after Ron Perelman took ownership of Marvel and placed a stronger emphasis on licensing and merchandising as means to big profits.



STOCK CERTIFICATE, 1993

Certificate indicating Roy and Dann Thomas's shares in Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc., which had gone public in 1991.



MARVEL BLOCKBUSTERS

One of the first signs of approaching trouble was the defection of Jim Lee, Rob Liefeld, and Todd McFarlane, as well as four other popular Marvel artists. Unable to secure the deal they wanted at Marvel or DC, they left in 1992 to found their own comics company, Image.

But there were other ways of pumping up comics sales. Marvel continued to produce major crossover events with stories that ran through a whole "family" of series, like the X-Men-related books, or even including all the major heroes, in the tradition set by *Secret Wars*.

In the most unusual crossover story line, history was altered so that the evil mutant named Apocalypse ruled North America. For four months in 1995, each of Marvel's X-Men-related series was replaced by a limited series chronicling "The Age of Apocalypse." Hence, for four months *X-Men* was replaced by *The Amazing X-Men*, which, of course, had its own collectible first issue!

Then there was the famous "Clone Saga," which ran in the Spider-Man titles from 1994 into 1996. There was a feeling at Marvel that Spider-Man, who was now married to a beautiful model, Mary Jane, had strayed too far from the luckless loner whom Stan Lee and Steve Ditko had created.

Back in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #149 (1975), Spider-Man had battled a clone of himself, which was seemingly killed. The 1990s Spider-Man team saw this as an opportunity. What if the clone had not only survived but actually become the Spider-Man featured in the books since 1975? According to the "Clone Saga," the real Spider-Man had been living under the name Ben Reilly, and now he returned and reclaimed his costumed identity.

Since the 1980s, DC Comics had been "rebooting" its major characters, starting series over by dumping all their past continuity. Perhaps the Spider-Man creative team felt that Marvel readers would therefore accept the idea of disposing of the last two decades of Spider-Man history.

But one of Marvel's strengths has always been its strong, unbroken continuity. Readers refused to accept that the last twenty years of Spider-Man stories hadn't happened to the "real" Spider-Man. Reading the clear handwriting on the wall, Marvel quickly established

(This page) A panel from the original 1975 clone story (top), and one from the ill-conceived revival of the saga in the mid-nineties. (Opposite page) Ron Frenz's original models for Spider-Girl and her alter ego, May "Mayday" Parker, with handwritten notes to writer/editor Tom DeFalco.

that *Ben Reilly* was actually the clone and killed him off in late 1996.

A much more successful experiment with the Spider-Man mythos was Spider-Girl, created by Tom DeFalco and Ron Frenz. Debuting in a *What If?* story, Spider-Girl was set in an alternate future in which Peter and Mary Jane had a teenage daughter, May "Mayday" Parker, who followed in her father's super-heroic footsteps. *Spider-Girl* was successfully aimed at super hero comics' traditional readership: young kids. This put it in sharp contrast to the darker titles of this decade designed for older readers.

THE GRIM AND THE GRITTY

It was not only *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *The Uncanny X-Men* that gave rise to an entire "family" of related titles. There were even three monthly series for the Punisher—*The Punisher*, *Punisher War Journal*, and *Punisher War Zone*, as well as numerous miniseries and one-shots, even including the most unlikely of inter-company crossovers, *The Punisher Meets Archie*.

The Punisher was not the traditional kind of Marvel hero from the 1960s and 1970s. He was a vigilante, working outside the law, who acted as judge, jury, and executioner. Spider-Man would never kill, but the Punisher gunned down criminals on every mission. He took the phrase "war on crime" literally.

The early 1990s may have been the high point of the "grim and gritty" trend in comics. Times had changed. In the 1980s, Frank Miller had depicted the Punisher as a criminal vigilante, and Chris Claremont and John Byrne had portrayed Wolverine as a mentally unstable killer. Now the Punisher was the hero of his own "family" of books, and Wolverine had become one of Marvel's leading stars. The Ghost Rider, a demonic avenger with a flaming skull for a head, also saw a resurgence of popularity, starring in two monthly series.

In 1991, Rob Liefeld and Fabian Nicieza co-created Deadpool, an apparently amoral assassin for hire who cracked wise like a mentally unstable version of Spider-Man. By 1993, Deadpool was the antihero of his own limited series, and he received an ongoing monthly series four years later.

An even less likely Marvel star was Venom, who had debuted as a villain in 1988. A symbiotic combination of reporter Eddie Brock and Spider-Man's alien "costume," Venom not only wanted to murder Spider-Man but fantasized about eating him. By 1993, Venom, too, was regularly starring in a limited series of his own.

MAKE MINE MARVELS

Marvel's most stunning experiment of the 1990s is already considered a classic: the 1994 *Marvels* limited series scripted by Kurt Busiek and illustrated by Alex Ross.

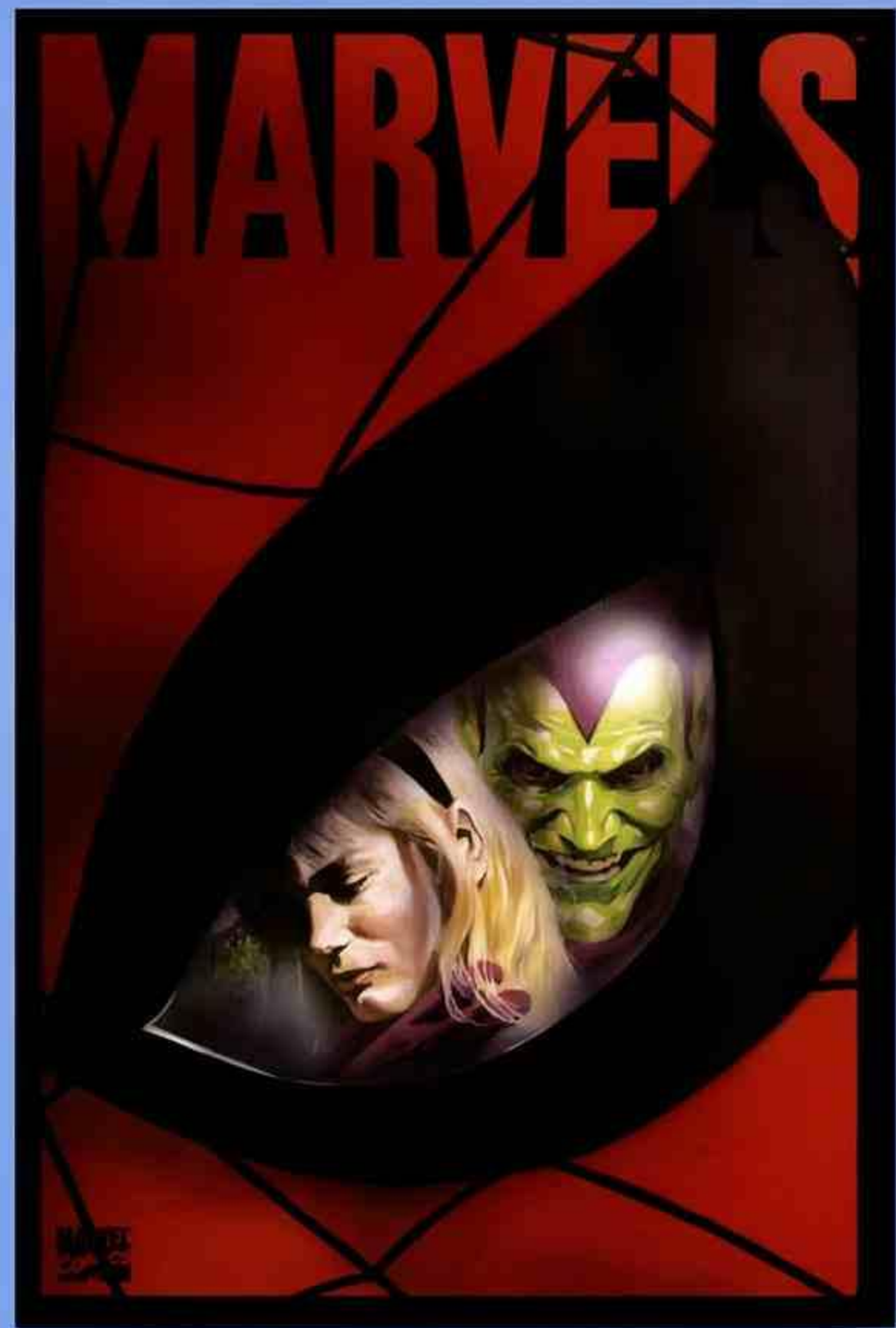
Busiek had started out in Marvel's direct sales department and had written an underappreciated run of stories for *Power Man & Iron Fist* in the 1980s, but it was with *Marvels* that he finally achieved stardom.

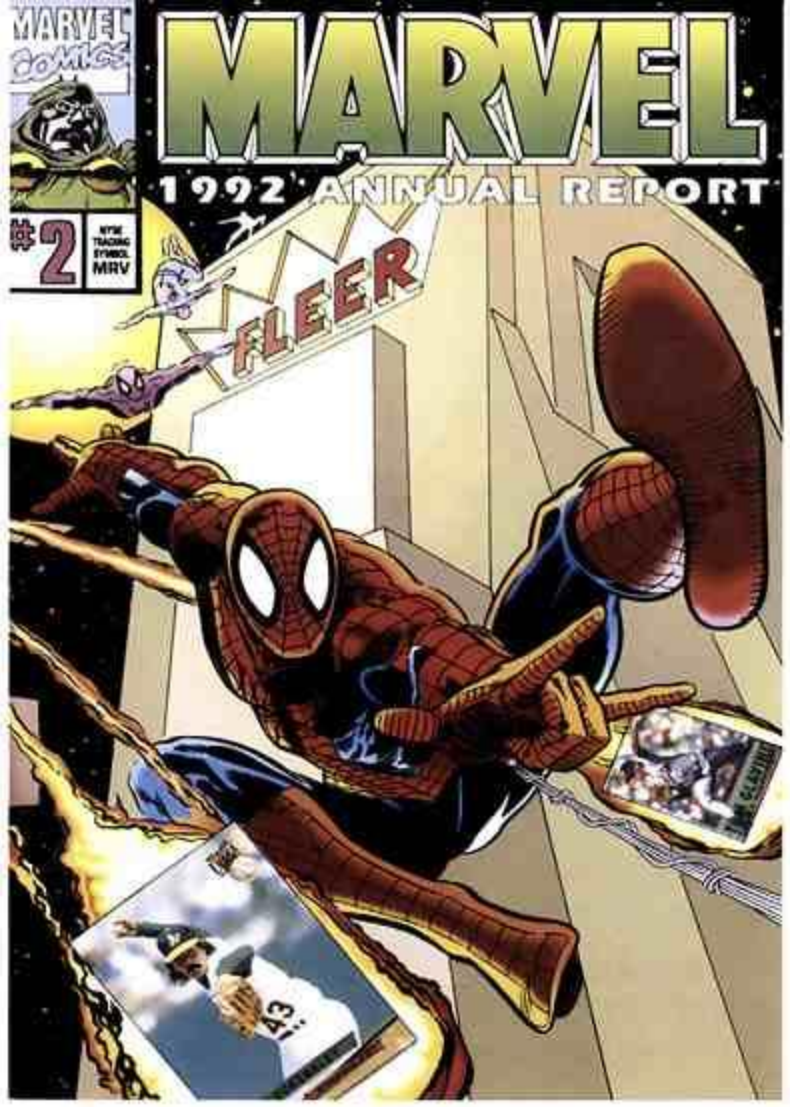
As for Ross, he was influenced not only by the super hero comics of the Silver Age but also by the great tradition of American illustration, especially as exemplified by his hero, Norman Rockwell. Ross's painted artwork for *Marvels* was like nothing ever seen before in comics: a photorealistic depiction of super heroes (Ross famously works from photographic reference of models) that simultaneously makes them look larger than life.

In contrast to the trend for books about morally ambiguous super characters, Busiek and Ross spearheaded a "reconstructionalist" movement that sought to revive a more genuinely heroic spirit in the super hero genre. The central character of *Marvels* is photojournalist Phil Sheldon, who through his eyes and camera lens witnesses much of Marvel history, from the debut of the original Human Torch, through the Galactus Trilogy, up to the death of Gwen Stacy. For once, the central character of a series was not a costumed super hero, but merely a normal human being doing his job—which happened to include taking pictures over the years of some of the great events of Marvel's comic book history. He was there when the Sub-Mariner first assaulted New York City in 1939; he was an eyewitness to the Battle of the Baxter Building; and he watched the death of Spider-Man's beloved Gwen Stacy. Through the eyes of this everyman figure, the heroes of the Golden and Silver ages once again become inspirational "marvels."

(This page) Any questions as to why they named him *Venom*? (Opposite page) Photojournalist Phil Sheldon marvels at the Sub-Mariner's fantastic urban invasion in a lifelike scene from Alex Ross's *Marvels*, while Green Goblin gets Gwen Stacy in his sights on the cover of *Marvels* #4.

...oh.
THE SUB-MARINER HAD INVADED THE CITY -- TO RECLAIM AN ATLANTEAN CITIZEN TAKEN PRISONER BY THE U.N., AS IT TURNED OUT.
IT WAS RELATIVELY PEACEFUL AND DIDN'T LAST LONG. NO DEATHS. SOME PROPERTY DAMAGE, FOR WHICH NAMOR MADE FULL RESTITUTION.
OF COURSE, WE DIDN'T KNOW THAT AT THE TIME.
THEY DON'T SEEM TO BE HURTING ANYONE...
IT'S --


MARVELS



THE BUBBLE BURSTS

Ron Perelman borrowed hundreds of millions of dollars from banks to finance an enormous expansion of Marvel from 1992 into 1995. Besides purchasing a small rival company called Malibu Comics, Marvel bought two trading card companies and even its own comics distribution company, Heroes World. Perelman also obtained part ownership of ToyBiz, in exchange for granting the company the permanent right to make Marvel-based toys. Perelman then started selling Marvel "junk bonds" to raise additional capital.

But in 1995, this proverbial house of trading cards began to collapse. The immense debts that Marvel had run up were proving to be overwhelming. A baseball strike ruined the market for baseball trading cards. Worse, the comic book speculator bubble finally burst, and sales plummeted.

But now another player entered the scene: corporate raider Carl Icahn, who bought up Marvel's junk bonds. In December 1996, Marvel filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, and Icahn began battling Perelman for control of the company. Icahn succeeded in ousting Perelman and becoming Marvel chairman in June 1997, but not for long.

Since ToyBiz manufactured Marvel toys, it had an interest in the company's fate. Its heads, Isaac Perlmutter and Avi Arad, won a judge's approval for their own plan to reorganize Marvel. Thus, in October 1997, ToyBiz took over the company, turning it into Marvel Enterprises, and stability was restored.

In the meantime, not only Marvel but the entire comics industry had suffered severe reversals. As a result of the crash in comics sales, within three years virtually half of all the comics specialty shops in the country had gone out of business.

As Marvel's troubles worsened, there were repeated, colossal downsizings of the editorial and production staffs. In 1996, four of Marvel's most important series—*The Avengers*, *Captain America*, *Fantastic Four*, and *Iron Man*—were outsourced to Image co-founders Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld, who proceeded to "reboot" the characters, rendering their past continuity null and void. Thankfully, a year later these core characters rejoined traditional Marvel continuity in the *Heroes Reborn: The Return* limited series.

Marvel brought in new blood by hiring writer/artists Jimmy Palmiotti and Joe Quesada, partners in a small independent company called Event Comics, to package comics series featuring various Marvel characters. Unlike Lee and

(This page) Cover and interior page from the 1992 Annual Report on Marvel Stock. Rest easy that the NYSE is well protected. (Opposite page) Marvel regains control of its favorites with the *Heroes Reborn* series.

MARVEL COMICS
DEC
#1
HEROES REBORN
THE RETURN PART 1 OF 4
DAVID
LABRUCA
THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS...
AS WORLDS COLLIDE!
DIRECT EDITION
00111
$2.50 US $3.50 CAN

MARVEL COMICS
CAPTAIN AMERICA
NOV '96 1
CAPTAIN AMERICA
by Rob Liefeld & Jeph Loeb
1ST SPECTACULAR ISSUE!
DIRECT EDITION
00111
$2.95 US $4.15 CAN

MARVEL
D D
KNIGHTS
NOV
#1
HERE COMES...
DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!
WWW.MARVEL.COM
SMITH
QUESADA
PALMIOTTI
$2.50 US $3.40 CAN
02459

Liefeld, Quesada and Palmiotti worked in the Marvel offices, albeit on their own floor. Their new line, called "Marvel Knights," quickly met with success. For example, in 1998 they produced a new *Daredevil* series by Kevin Smith, the writer/director of the movie *Clerks* and other independent films. The success of Marvel Knights would lead to a much more important role for Quesada in Marvel's imminent future.

GOING UNIVERSAL

Beyond the world of comics, Marvel ventured into some unusual spheres in the 1990s.

The decade saw a fad for theme restaurants like the Hard Rock Café and Planet Hollywood. In 1998, Marvel launched its own restaurant, Marvel Mania Hollywood, on CityWalk alongside the Universal Studios theme park in the greater Los Angeles area. Inside there were pictures of Marvel heroes everywhere, sound effects inscribed in large letters on the ceiling, and chair-backs shaped like word balloons. The menu featured such delicacies as "Doc Ock's Wok," "Hulk Smashed Potatoes," "Mutant Chicken Wings," "Stanwiches," and "Fin Fang Fettucine."

Perhaps doing a Marvel restaurant before there were successful Marvel movies was putting the proverbial cart before the horse. The theme-restaurant fad was already fading fast, and though Marvel had hoped to create a chain of restaurants, Marvel Mania Hollywood closed in only two years.

(Opposite page) Artist Joe Quesada brings new blood to the nineties with steamy *Daredevil* graphics for the Marvel Knights series, including the cover of issue #1. (This page) Panels by writer Kevin Smith (top), and a Quesada panel from issue #9.

Marvel had considerably more success when Universal opened its Islands of Adventure theme park in Orlando, Florida, in 1999. One of the islands was Marvel Super Hero Island, a mini-amusement park celebrating Marvel's characters. Among its rides is the "Incredible Hulk Coaster," which was selected as the nation's best roller coaster in a 1999 Discovery Channel poll. This coaster's train can accelerate from zero to forty miles per hour within two seconds.

Through Doctor Doom's "Fearfall," the Doctor (who makes personal appearances outside the ride) induces terror in hapless Universal Resort visitors by shooting them 150 feet upward and then letting them drop.

The *pièce de résistance* is "The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man," an elaborate flight-simulator ride that is still considered to represent the cutting edge of theme-park attractions. This ride propels visitors into the midst of a battle between Spider-Man and many of his foes from the comics, high above the streets of Manhattan.

Marvel Super Hero Island is still going strong today, and its Spider-Man ride was recreated for the Universal Studios Japan theme park in 2004. Amusement park fans worldwide: buckle up.

Between theme parks and restaurants, the Marvel Universe was clearly growing to be an experience for all the senses. (Above) Stan Lee poses with his Marvel friends.

MARVEL COMICS
1st ISSUE
MARVEL MANIA™
HOLLYWOOD

MARVEL COMICS
1st ISSUE
MARVEL MANIA™
HOLLYWOOD

BLAZING BEVERAGES

THE AMAZING FANTASY

IN A TAKE-HOME GLASS!

From our secret laboratory comes a graduated cylinder filled with a special concoction of Cuervo gold tequila, triple sec, and a mixture of fruit juices frozen between layers of kiwi, mango peach, and very berry. Create your own taste mutation with the pipette of blue Curacao. $12.95

CURIOUS CONCOCTIONS

JUNGLE ACTION - A colossal colada, with pieces of real pineapple and coconut, layered with an exotic mixture of tropical fruits. Complete with your own injection of Midori liqueur. $5.95

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY - Our house specialty frozen Margarita, made with Cuervo gold and triple sec, mounded over a medley of frozen fruit. $4.95

MARVEL TRIPLE ACTION - Experiment with this one. A blend of flavored rums, pineapple and orange juices, served on the rocks in a beaker. Use the contents of three pipettes to make your experiment a success. $4.95

DEAD OF NIGHT - A frozen concoction of vodka, Bailey's, Kahlua, with a chocolate rim. $5.95

LOVE TALES - A marriage of Absolut vodka and amaretto blended into a frozen mixture of berries and vanilla frozen yogurt and then topped with whipped cream. It tastes like frozen strawberry shortcake. $5.95

ICE SLIDES

Exciting natural fruit beverages filled with character but no alcohol.

GREEN GOBLIN - A tropical mix of frozen kiwi, pineapple and coconut. $3.95

CYCLOPS OPTIC BLAST - An amalgam of raspberries, blackberries, and strawberries, blended to the correct infrared spectrum. $3.95

THING - A tropical blend of mango, peach, pineapple and coconut. $3.95

THE FANTASTIC FOUR - An icy mix of four of our most popular fruit flavors. $3.95

HULK - A mango/peach smoothie made with real fruit and frozen vanilla yogurt. $4.95

SCIENTIST - A tangy citrus mixture, designed for the mad scientist - add your own cranberry catalyst. $3.95

WEB SHOOTERS

IN A TAKE-HOME GLASS!

Served in a small souvenir beaker. $5.95

SABRINA SLABRINA - Absolut citron, Midori, Malibu peach liqueur
CLOCKWORK TIME - Stoli Orange, triple sec, orange juice
ADAMANTIUM SHOT - Absolut Citron, triple sec, cranberry juice
NUCLEAR WASTE - Absolut vodka, blue Curacao, and lime juice
DIMENSION DISPORTER - Chambord, vodka, pineapple juice

MONSTROUS MARTINIS

NEGATIVE ZONE - Absolut, white creme de cocoa and cream with a chocolate rim. $5.95
ASGARD - Absolut vodka, Cointreau, lime and cranberry juice. $5.95
SAVAGE LAND - Crown Royale, Amaretto and cranberry juice. $5.95
DIMENSION - A frozen martini with Absolut Citron, Campari, and Mango ice. $5.95

BEERS

BOTTLE

Budweiser	$3.50
Bud Light	$3.50
Coors Light	$3.50
Corona	$3.95
Amstel Light	$3.95
Samuel Adams	$4.25
Sierra Nevada Pale Ale	$4.25
O'Doul's (non-alcoholic)	$3.50

DRAFT

	14 oz. Tall Glass	21 oz. Souvenir Graduated Cylinder (IN A TAKE-HOME GLASS!)
Budweiser	$3.25	$10.95
Miller Lite	$3.25	$10.95
Killian's Red	$3.75	$10.95
Pete's Wicked (Seasonal)	$3.95	$10.95

WINE

RED

Ravenswood "Vintners Blend" Zinfandel	$5.50/glass $21.00/bottle
Felzer Eagle Peak Merlot	$5.95/glass $23.00/bottle
B.V. Rutherford Estate Cabernet Sauvingnon	$6.95/glass $26.00/bottle

WHITE

Mondavi "Wood bridge" Sauvingnon Blanc	$4.50/glass $17.00/bottle
DeLoach "Russian River" Chardonnay	$5.95/glass $23.00/bottle
Kendall-Jackson Vintners Reserve Chardonnay	$6.95/glass $26.00/bottle

BLUSH

Sutter Home White Zinfandel	$3.95/glass $15.00/bottle

CHAMPAGNE • SPARKLING WINES

Domaine Chandon	187 ml $9.50 750 ml $34.00
Moet & Chandon -Dom Perignon	$140.00

SOFT DRINKS

Natural Artesian Bottled Water (1/2 liter)	$2.50
Sparkling Mineral Water (1/4 liter)	$2.25
Pepsi Cola soft drinks - Pepsi, Diet Pepsi, Mountain Dew, Lemon-Lime Slice, Orange Slice, Pink Lemonade, Root Beer and Iced Tea.	$1.95

THE DAILY GRIND

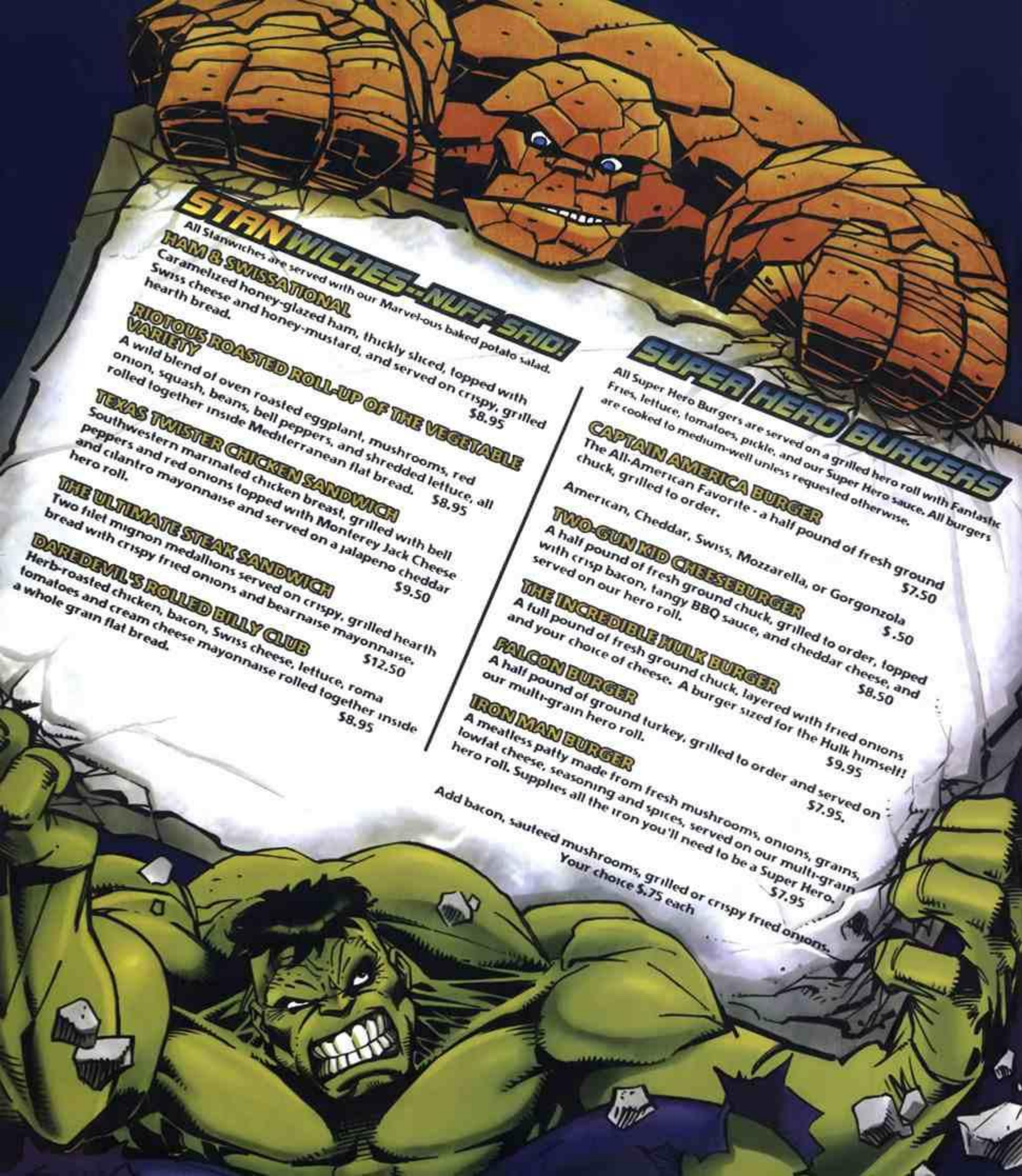
Coffee - Regular & Decaf	$1.95
Espresso	$2.25
Cappuccino & Latte	$3.50
Mocha	$3.95

SUPERSONIC SHAKES

Vanilla bean, dark chocolate, white chocolate raspberry, or Butterfinger® crunch $3.50

The Mere Mortal Spice Thermometer
Supernova!
Potent
Just a spark of heat
ASTONISHING APPETIZERS
MUTANT CHICKEN WINGS
Mutated by the mad scientists in our kitchen to be easier to eat, these jumbo lollipop-shaped chicken wings are prepared with a classic spicy Buffalo Sauce.
$6.50
HOWARD THE DUCK'S CHICKEN FINGERS
Tender chicken strips wrapped in a crispy coconut batter and served with a tropical fruit dipping sauce.
"They're good, but I'm glad they're not duck!"-HOWARD
$6.25
BOMBASTIC BRUSCHETTA
Grilled Italian bread slices smothered with fresh roma tomatoes, extra virgin olive oil, basil, fresh mozzarella, and Parmesan cheese.
$5.95
DASTARDLY DIP
A cunning blend of fresh spinach, chopped artichokes, walnuts, mushrooms, bacon with Parmesan, feta, and cream cheese. Served with our Super Hero cracker bread.
$6.95
SHANG-CHI CHINESE TACOS
Crispy wonton tacos filled with a spectacular mixture of stir-fried chicken and fresh Asian vegetables, served with sweet chili sauce.
$6.95
RAINBOW BRIDGE NACHOS
Dive into a mountain of rainbow-colored corn tortilla chips layered with melted Jack and cheddar cheeses, topped with black beans, jalapeno peppers and pico de gallo, and served with roasted tomato salsa.
$6.95
GAMBIT'S SUGAR CANE SHRIMP
A half dozen sweet and spicy shrimp served on sugar cane skewers with a Louisiana BBQ sauce.
$9.95
SUNFIRE SPRING ROLLS
Long, crispy spring rolls filled with spicy coconut chicken and stir-fried vegetables. Served with Thai peanut sauce.
$6.50

GALACTIC GREENS
SCINTILLATING SHRIMP SALAD
Jumbo, wok-sizzled shrimp, glassy noodles, colorful Asian vegetables, and salad greens, all tossed in a soy-ginger dressing. $11.95
SENSATIONAL SALAD PIZZA
Our seasoned thick pizza crust filled with savory salad greens, pesto-roasted new potatoes, pepperoni, olives, feta and Parmesan cheese, artichokes, fresh tomato and basil with balsamic vinaigrette dressing. $8.95
TYRANNUS' CAESAR
Crisp romaine lettuce tossed with Parmesan cheese, crunchy croutons and our Marvelous Caesar dressing. "Eat two, Brute!" $7.95
Add Parmesan-wrapped chicken tenders $1.95
SENSATIONAL SOUPS
POWER-PACKED POTATO
Creamy baked potato soup topped with your choice of bacon, sour cream, chives and cheddar cheese - bubbling over with flavor. $3.50
AUNT MAY'S CHICKEN VEGETABLE
Roasted chicken, carrots, peppers, onions, mushrooms and squash. $3.50
PULSE-POUNDIN' PIZZAS
Our thick Parmesan-herb crust, just loaded with toppings.
INCREDIBLE ITALIAN
Sweet Italian sausage, sauteed bell peppers, red onions, mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses and roasted tomato sauce. $9.95
FABULOUS FLORENTINE
Pesto-roasted chicken, fresh sauteed spinach, roasted artichokes, diced roma tomatoes and mozzarella cheese in a Parmesan-basil cream sauce. $10.95
X-TREME VEGETABLE
Fresh roasted bell peppers, eggplant, zucchini, red onions, artichokes and garlic with mozzarella cheese and diced roma tomato sauce. $10.50
SOUTHWEST SENSATION
Grilled chicken, roasted tomato salsa, green chili peppers with sauteed bell peppers and red onions, topped with a Monterrey Jack cheese and pico de gallo. $10.95
POWERFUL PASTAS
LINGUINE TEAM-UP, FEATURING MIGHTY MEAT SAUCE
A rich Italian meat sauce made with sausage, roma tomatoes, onions, garlic and a touch of cream, tossed with linguine pasta. $9.95
TOWERING LASAGNA
Lasagna taken to new heights! Classic lasagna filling rolled into fresh pasta sheets, then lightly breaded and fried. Served with a tangy marinara and a fresh roasted vegetable medley. $10.95
FANTASTIC FOUR CHEESE PASTA
A nuclear melt down of penne pasta, mushrooms, shallots, ricotta, Parmesan, mozzarella and gorgonzola cheeses baked to a golden brown. $9.95
CALYPSO LINGUINE
Grilled chicken tenders tossed with mushrooms, mango, and papaya in a spicy mango cream sauce with linguine pasta and garnished with fried plantains. $11.50
SIDEKICKS
CRISPY ONION STRAWS
Ribbons of onion, dusted in seasoned flour and fried to a golden brown. Served with spicy BBQ sauce. $2.95
FANTASTIC FRIES
Thin, lightly-seasoned Idaho potato fries. $1.95
FRESH ROSEMARY VEGETABLE MEDLEY $1.95
ROASTED CORN ON THE COB $1.95
HULK SMASHED POTATOES $1.95
BAKED POTATO SALAD $1.95
MARVEL MANIA HOUSE SALAD $3.95



STANWICHES...NUFF SAID!

All Stanwiches are served with our Marvel-ous baked potato salad.

HAM & SWISSATIONAL
Caramelized honey-glazed ham, thickly sliced, topped with Swiss cheese and honey-mustard, and served on crispy, grilled hearth bread. $8.95

RIOTOUS ROASTED ROLL-UP OF THE VEGETABLE VARIETY
A wild blend of oven roasted eggplant, mushrooms, red onion, squash, beans, bell peppers, and shredded lettuce, all rolled together inside Mediterranean flat bread. $8.95

TEXAS TWISTER CHICKEN SANDWICH
Southwestern marinated chicken breast, grilled with bell peppers and red onions topped with Monterey Jack Cheese and cilantro mayonnaise and served on a jalapeno cheddar hero roll. $9.50

THE ULTIMATE STEAK SANDWICH
Two filet mignon medallions served on crispy, grilled hearth bread with crispy fried onions and bearnaise mayonnaise. $12.50

DAREDEVIL'S ROLLED BILLY CLUB
Herb-roasted chicken, bacon, Swiss cheese, lettuce, roma tomatoes and cream cheese mayonnaise rolled together inside a whole grain flat bread. $8.95

SUPER HERO BURGERS

All Super Hero Burgers are served on a grilled hero roll with Fantastic Fries, lettuce, tomatoes, pickle, and our Super Hero sauce. All burgers are cooked to medium-well unless requested otherwise.

CAPTAIN AMERICA BURGER
The All-American Favorite - a half pound of fresh ground chuck, grilled to order.
American, Cheddar, Swiss, Mozzarella, or Gorgonzola $7.50

TWO-GUN KID CHEESEBURGER
A half pound of fresh ground chuck, grilled to order, topped with crisp bacon, tangy BBQ sauce, and cheddar cheese, and served on our hero roll. $.50

THE INCREDIBLE HULK BURGER
A full pound of fresh ground chuck, layered with fried onions and your choice of cheese. A burger sized for the Hulk himself! $8.50

FALCON BURGER
A half pound of ground turkey, grilled to order and served on our multi-grain hero roll. $9.95

IRON MAN BURGER
A meatless patty made from fresh mushrooms, onions, grains, lowfat cheese, seasoning and spices, served on our multi-grain hero roll. Supplies all the iron you'll need to be a Super Hero. $7.95

Add bacon, sauteed mushrooms, grilled or crispy fried onions. Your choice $.75 each

LIGHTNING SKEWERS

SIZZLING PORK BBQ
Two skewers of pork tenderloin, bell peppers, and red onion, grilled with a sweet tangy BBQ sauce and served with Fantastic French Fries and roasted corn on the cob. $11.50

STORM'S HURRICANE SHRIMP
Jumbo shrimp, red onion, bell peppers, and tropical fruits, basted with a West Indies sauce, and grilled. Served over herb basmati rice. $13.95

SEARING SATAY
Grilled marinated chicken served over basmati rice with stir-fried Asian Vegetables and a hot Thai peanut sauce. $11.95

GAMMA-GRILLED VEGETABLES
Flame-grilled medley of red and green bell peppers, red onion, potato, artichoke, zucchini, eggplant and yellow squash all marinated in a rosemary pesto sauce and served with basmati rice. $9.95

EVER-LOVIN' ENTREES

MARY JANE'S ROASTED HERB CHICKEN
Half an herb seasoned chicken, slow-roasted and served semi-boneless with redskin mashed potatoes and rosemary vegetables. $11.25

GHOST RIDER'S RIBS
Slow-roasted pork ribs grilled with hot BBQ sauce, served with Fantastic Fries and roasted corn on the cob. $15.95

DOC OCK'S WOK
Your choice of beef, shrimp or chicken quickly stir-fried with snow peas, mushrooms, red peppers, carrots and broccoli and then tossed in a sizzling stir-fry sauce over Asian noodles.

Chicken	-	$10.95
Beef	-	$11.95
Shrimp	-	$13.50

SUB-MARINER'S SUGGESTIONS
Your server will describe today's fresh selection and the market price.

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DIABOLICAL DESSERTS!

KILLER KAKE
A monstrous six layer dark chocolate cake finished off with vanilla ice cream and white chocolate shavings.
$5.95

FORBIDDEN FRUIT FAJITAS
Fresh fruit sizzling in a vanilla-rum sauce served with chocolate tortillas, vanilla ice cream and lots of yummy condiments.
$6.95

CHOCOLATE VOLCANO
A double chocolate fudge brownie volcano, erupting with white chocolate ice cream and hot fudge, flowing onto a field of raspberry sauce.
$6.50

SINISTER STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE
Fresh sweet strawberries and whipped cream served on our signature grilled shortcake.
$5.50

BALLISTIC BUTTERFINGER® BREAD PUDDING
Our explosive bread pudding laced with bits of Butterfinger® candy and topped with hot caramel sauce, chocolate sauce and our own Butterfinger® crunch ice cream.
$5.95

BLIZZARD'S SPECIAL ICE CREAM
A choice of vanilla bean, dark chocolate, white chocolate raspberry, Butterfinger® crunch
$3.50
Try a taster of all four.
$4.50

MARVEL RESTAURANT MENU, 1998

The menu of Marvel Mania Hollywood. Pass the Pulse-Poundin' Pizza, please.

HEAD'S UP!
BIG TIME SUPER HERO COMIN' THROUGH!
DEFINITELY NEED TO COME UP WITH A SYSTEM.

MARVEL IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

2000s

WITH THE START OF THE NEW DECADE, MARVEL COMICS BEGAN a new period of creativity and prosperity under new leadership.

In January 2000, Bill Jemas was appointed President of Consumer Products, Publishing, and New Media for Marvel Comics. Jemas selected Marvel Knights' Joe Quesada as the new editor in chief, and the duo's most important joint innovation was the creation of Marvel's "Ultimate" line of comics.

A newcomer to Marvel, Jemas felt that the decades of accumulated past continuity discouraged potential new, younger readers. He felt that it was necessary to start the stories of Marvel's core heroes from scratch. However, as the "Clone Saga" and *Heroes Reborn* had demonstrated in the 1990s, Marvel's loyal audience did not want to see past stories that they had read and valued cast aside for a "reboot."

(Opposite page) The contemporary recasting of Peter Parker's character in *Ultimate Spider-Man* #1 was a giant success, and paved the way for an entire line of "Ultimate" comics such as *Ultimate X-Men*. (This page) U-Go-Girl, from *X-Statix*.

Therefore, Jemas and Quesada created the Ultimate line as an alternative to traditional Marvel continuity. Series such as *The Amazing Spider-Man* would continue to chronicle the saga of Peter Parker, as it had been told ever since 1962. But *Ultimate Spider-Man*, which debuted in late 2000, started the story over from the beginning, with bespectacled high school student Peter Parker being bitten by the fateful spider.

Moreover, this new version was set in the present day. Whereas the traditional versions of Peter's Uncle Ben and Aunt May were a Depression-era couple, the hipper Ultimate versions looked as if they had met in the 1960s. Instead of being a freelance photographer for the *Daily Bugle*, Peter worked on the newspaper's Web site. The spider that endowed Peter with super powers had undergone genetic engineering. Jemas himself came up with a number of these notions for updating the series for the twenty-first century.

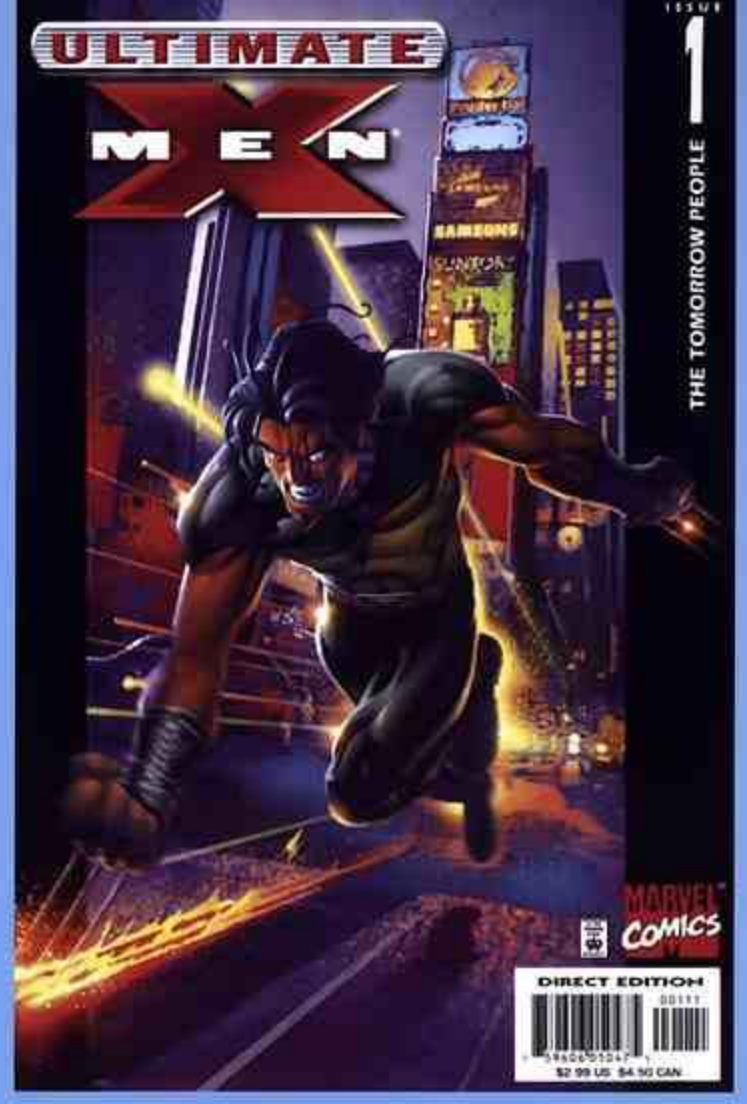
Although *Ultimate Spider-Man* was inspired by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko's 1960s stories, Jemas and Brian Michael Bendis, who initially co-plotted *Ultimate Spider-Man*, were not doing strictly faithful adaptations of the originals. Rather, they felt free to make changes wherever they pleased for their new alternative continuity. For example, Peter and Mary Jane were now high school classmates and friends, whereas in Stan Lee's original stories they had not met until their college years.

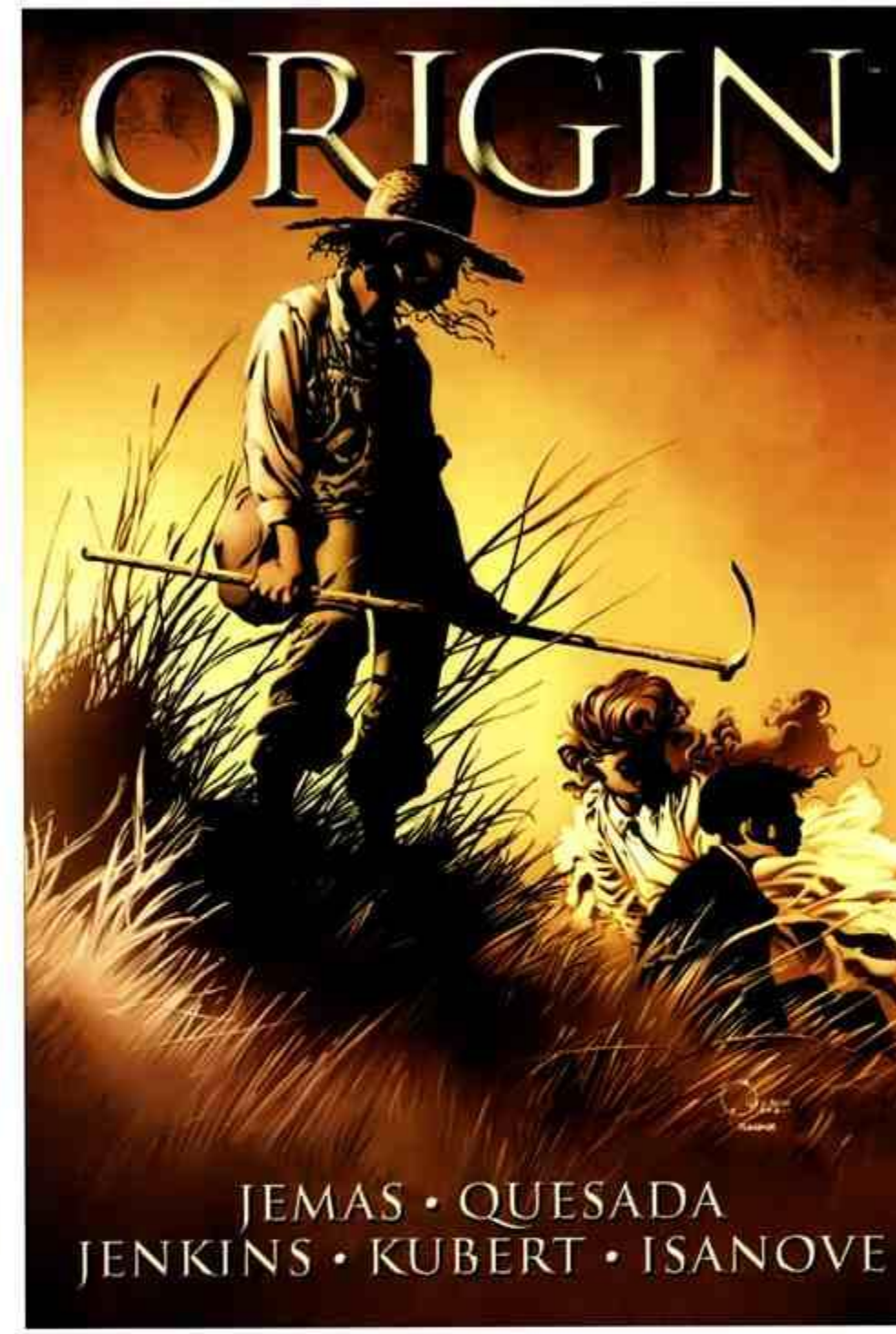
Ultimate Spider-Man was a great sales success and became the start of an entire Ultimate Marvel line of comics, such as *Ultimate X-Men*, *Ultimate Fantastic Four*, and miniseries including *Ultimate Daredevil and Elektra*, and *Ultimate Iron Man*.

As the Ultimate imprint has evolved, its direction has changed considerably. Rather than focusing the design for kids, most Ultimate books aim at older readers by presenting a harder-edged, darker version of Marvel characters. For example, *The Ultimates*, which also debuted in 2001, presents an alternate version of the Avengers. The Ultimates' Thor is a conspiracy theorist whose belief that he is a Norse god may only be a delusion, and its Hulk sometimes devours his enemies.

(This page) Peter/Spidey each get a new look in these character sketches for *Ultimate Spider-Man* by artist Mark Bagley. (Opposite page) Updated versions of *Ultimate Captain America*, *Ultimate X-Men*, and *Ultimate Daredevil and Elektra* followed on the heels of *Ultimate Spider-Man*'s success.

You think this letter on my head stands for *France?*





TO THE MAX

In 1971, Stan Lee had defied the Comics Code to publish an antidrug story line in *The Amazing Spider-Man*. Thirty years later, in 2001, Bill Jemas put an end to Marvel's cooperation with the Comics Code Authority altogether. Instead, Marvel instituted its own rating system and established its MAX imprint, which featured series for "mature" audiences.

Among the MAX series was writer Brian Michael Bendis's *Alias* (2002–2004), which centered on Jessica Jones, a former super heroine turned private detective. One MAX series that garnered particular publicity was *Rawhide*

(Left) *Alias* (issue #11 pictured) was one of Marvel's edgy MAX-rated titles in the early 2000s.
(Above) Wolverine finally got an *Origin*.

'DAWG'
• HAIR THAT LOOKS LIKE IT WAS CUT WITH GARDENING SHEARS.
• FRECKLES
• SCRAPPY-LOOKING
• DRESS IN OVERALLS?
• ROPE BELT
• NO SHOES?
C.H.

'DAWG'

- HAIR THAT LOOKS LIKE IT WAS CUT WITH GARDENING SHEARS.
- FRECKLES
- SCRAPPY-LOOKING
- DRESS IN OVERALLS?
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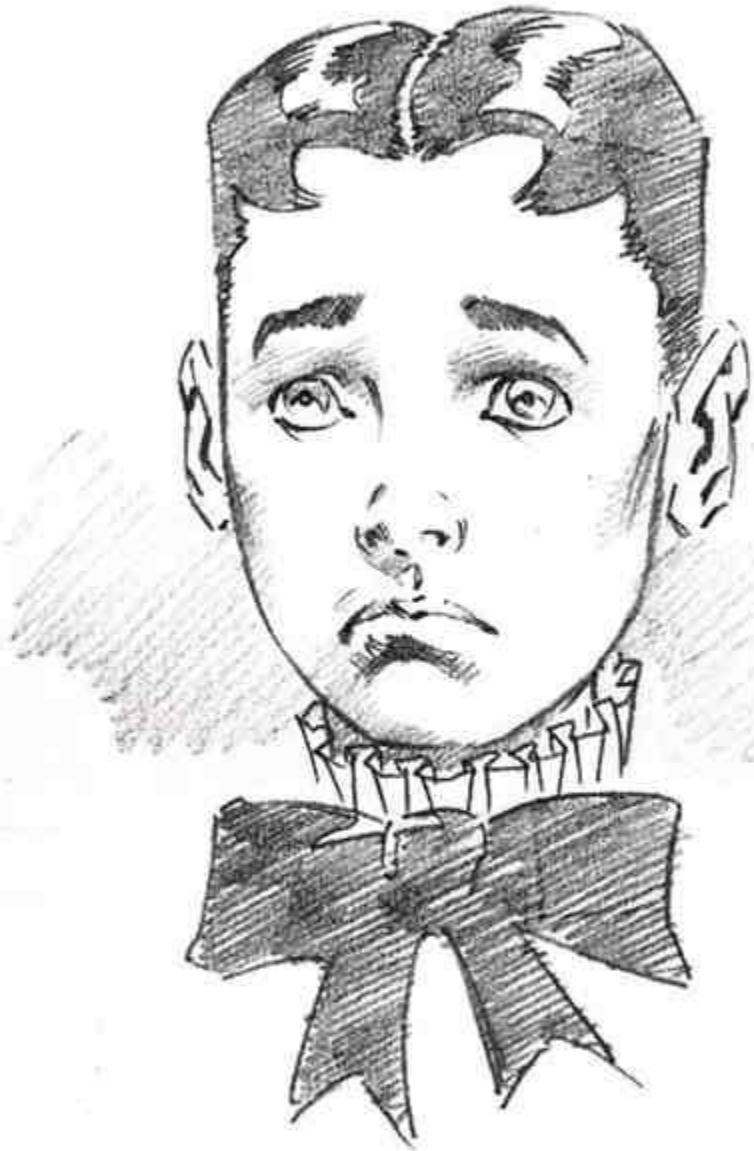
ROSE

- HAIR STYLE AND CLOTHING CAN CHANGE THROUGH OUT STORY
- RED HAIR

'JAMES'

- THIN
- CHANGE OUTFITS THAT FITS SCENE



'THOMAS LOGAN'
SIDE BURNS TOO PERFECT
THESE SIDE-BURNS!
• WOLVIE-ESQUE APPEARANCE
• SCRUFFY, SCRAPPY
• A LOT OF MILEAGE ON HIM.

PENCIL SKETCHES, 2001

Artist Andy Kubert's penciled sketches of Thomas Logan, James, Dawg, and Rose for *Origin*.

Kid: Slap Leather (2003), which reinterpreted Marvel's classic Western hero as gay, two years before the popularity of the film *Brokeback Mountain*.

More than any previous Marvel publisher, Bill Jemas took a hands-on approach to the comics. Though he lacked previous experience as an editor or creative writer, he had strong input into the plots of high-profile projects such as *Ultimate Spider-Man* and *Wolverine: Origin* (2001–2002), which resolved the long-standing mystery of the Canadian mutant's beginnings. During his several-year stint as Marvel's publisher, Jemas even dabbled in writing his own series, such as *Marville* (2002–2003).

But Jemas's reign proved to be controversial, and before long Marvel veteran Dan Buckley succeeded him as publisher, with Quesada remaining as editor in chief.

NEW TALENTS TAKE THE STAGE

Between the downsizings of the 1990s and further employee shake-ups during the Jemas years, Marvel's editorial and production staffs had changed almost completely within less than a decade. There was likewise a massive turnover in the writers and artists working on the books.

The Quesada administration brought a considerable array of new talent to Marvel, from a wide and surprising range of sources. One of these sources was the burgeoning world of independent comics, where writer Brian Michael Bendis had made his name. Soon Bendis seemed to be everywhere at Marvel. Among his credits are *Ultimate Spider-Man*, *Alias*, *Daredevil*, *Ultimate Fantastic Four*, and the relaunch of *The Avengers*, called (what else?) *The New Avengers*. Bendis even became writer/producer on a short-lived computer-animated *Spider-Man* series for MTV.

Michael Allred, the creator of the indie super hero comic *Madman*, drew the new *X-Force*, relaunched in 2002 as *X-Statix*. This was a super hero team with a very contemporary feel: These mutants went into crime fighting to get famous and get rich. (They also all ended up dead by the series' end, proving that money isn't everything.)

British creators now flooded into American Marvel comics. The most noted was Neil Gaiman, the award-winning writer of DC's *Sandman*(1989–1996). Gaiman's *1602* comics (2003–2004) transplanted many of Stan Lee's classic heroes and villains of the 1960s back to the time of Queen Elizabeth I.

(This page) Scenes from Wolverine's origin story. (Opposite page) Marvel's look in the beginning of the twenty-first century included a computer-animated MTV *Spider-Man* TV series, and *X-Statix* (an X-Force renovation) with art by Michael Allred.

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PART 6

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IN WHICH WE ARE INTRODUCED TO CERTAIN OF OUR PLAYERS

1602

PART ONE

In 2006, Gaiman revived Jack Kirby's *The Eternals* in a new limited series drawn by John Romita, Jr., son of the artist who followed Steve Ditko on *The Amazing Spider-Man*. John Jr. continues to be one of Marvel's leading illustrators.

Surprisingly, many of Marvel's new writers came from *outside* comics. For decades, writers from other media had looked down on comics as a low form of children's entertainment. But now a new generation had grown up reading Marvel comics, and as adults that generation took the genre a lot more seriously.

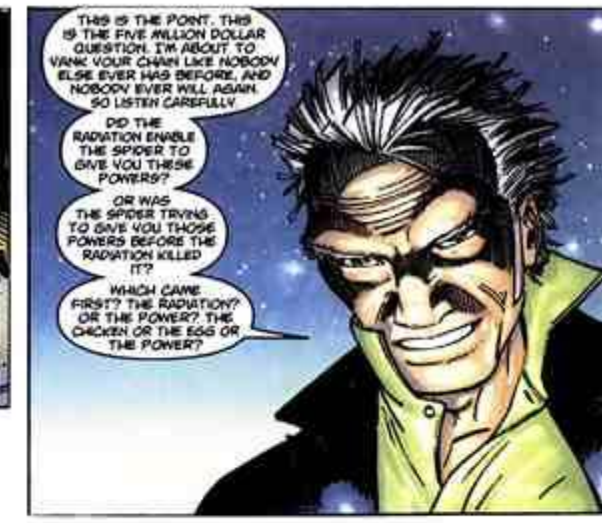
That's why literary novelist Jonathan Lethem (author of *The Fortress of Solitude*) signed with Marvel to revive the obscure 1970s comics series *Omega the Unknown* (2007). Even best-selling horror novelist Stephen King agreed to oversee a Marvel comics spin-off of his series of novels, *The Dark Tower*, which debuted in early 2007.

For decades various Marvel writers and artists had tried their luck (mostly unsuccessfully) at breaking into movies and television, where there was more money and prestige than in comics. But at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the world has turned upside down: Hollywood writers are trying to break into comics!

Indie filmmaker Kevin Smith had led the way by writing *Daredevil* for Marvel Knights. A lifelong comics fan, Smith had even featured Stan Lee—playing himself and offering sage advice to the lead character—in his second movie *Mallrats* (1995). In the 2000s, Smith turned his talents to a miniseries pairing Spider-Man with his former romantic interest, the Black Cat.

Writer/producer Joss Whedon credits *The Uncanny X-Men*, and its teenage mutant Kitty Pryde in particular, as influences on his classic television series *Buffy*

(Opposite page) Neil Gaiman pictured near his comic that spun Marvel's classic heroes all the way back to the seventeenth century. (Above) Gaiman's revisionist approach to *The Eternals* was unveiled in 2006 with the final cover pictured to the left of its alternate. (Right) Spidey's Black Cat on the cover of *The Evil That Men Do* #3, part of the duo's miniseries.



the Vampire Slayer. Starting in 2004, Whedon began writing his own new comics series for Marvel: *The Astonishing X-Men*.

J. Michael Straczynski, the creator of the 1990s science-fiction TV series *Babylon 5*, is now one of Marvel's leading writers. His daring changes and additions to the mythos of *The Amazing Spider-Man* have stirred debate among its readers. He also created a revisionist re-imagining of the Squadron Supreme in the MAX series *Supreme Power*, which premiered in 2003.

MARVEL AND THE REAL WORLD

In initiating the Marvel revolution of the 1960s, Stan Lee asked what super heroes would be like if they existed in the real world. In the early twenty-first century, Marvel continues to pursue this topic.

The September 11, 2001, attacks were commemorated in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #36 (2001), written by J. Michael Straczynski and drawn by John Romita, Jr. This somber story finds Spider-Man and numerous other Marvel heroes in the ruins of the World Trade Center, helping to clear away the rubble, and realizing that not even they can save everyone.

A wide range of leading comics writers and artists contributed to Marvel's 9/11 memorial book *Heroes* (2001), which consisted primarily of a series of full-page drawings saluting the heroism of fallen firemen and police and mourning the dead. In one example, a gigantic figure of Captain America, symbol of American patriotism, stands grieving over the smoking landscape of Ground Zero.

A few years later, Marvel explored the issue of how much freedom should be sacrificed to the need for national security in its crossover story line, *Civil War* (2006). After part of a town is demolished in a battle between super heroes and super villains, the federal government passes a Superhuman Registration Act. Some super heroes, led by Iron Man, support the Act; others, led by Captain America, oppose it. Meanwhile, the government establishes its own prison camp for super beings who defy the law.

(This page) Joe Straczynski's recasting of Spider-Man's story (top). In commemoration of the 9/11 attacks, Spider-Man appeared at Ground Zero. (Opposite page) America's volatile political climate since the attacks is portrayed in a sketch and a promo poster for *Civil War*.

MCNIVEN

MARVEL IN THE MOVIES

Marvel's merchandising efforts continue, with an enormous and diverse array of toys and action figures. Marvel also actively produces video games, and even started its own amusement park in Niagara Falls, Ontario. But Marvel's most spectacular triumph in the early twenty-first century has transpired on the big screen. For decades Hollywood had little interest in making movies based on comics, and the movie deals Marvel management had made in the past had not been well-conceived. The film rights to *Spider-Man* had become particularly entangled, as if in one of the character's own webs, with several different studios claiming to own them.

Once Perlmutter and Arad took charge, they were committed to putting their characters on the screen. They slowly but surely untangled the legal webs and created Marvel Studios to co-produce Marvel-based movies.

The result has been an astonishing parade of movies and television shows, starting with the highly successful *X-Men* movie released by 20th Century-Fox in 2000. Directed by Bryan Singer, the film starred Patrick Stewart (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*) as Professor Xavier, Oscar-nominee Ian McKellen (*Lord of the Rings*) as Magneto, Hugh Jackman as Wolverine, and Oscar-winner Halle Berry (*Monster's Ball*) as Storm.

This was followed in 2001 by *Mutant X*, Marvel's syndicated television series featuring brand-new mutant heroes who had not previously appeared in the comics. *Mutant X* ran for three seasons, ending in 2004. In

the late 1990s, Marvel had scored a hit with its *Blade* movie, directed by Stephen Norrington and starring Wesley Snipes as the vampire hunter from *Tomb of Dracula* (which had run from 1972–1979). New Line's *Blade* 2 followed in 2002, directed by Guillermo del Toro and again starring Wesley Snipes in the title role.

Then came the film that eclipsed all previous efforts to put Marvel heroes on screen: the original *Spider-Man* movie, released by Sony Pictures in 2002. Its director, Sam Raimi, clearly both loved and understood Stan Lee and Steve Ditko's original Spider-Man stories and was dedicated to translating the series faithfully and imaginatively to the screen. Like *X-Men*, *Spider-Man* had a stellar cast, including Tobey Maguire as Peter Parker, Kirsten Dunst as Mary Jane Watson, and Willem Dafoe as the Green Goblin. One of the year's top moneymakers, the *Spider-Man* movie also won over film critics who had previously been wary of the super hero genre.

Three Marvel movies appeared in the following year, 2003. First came *Daredevil*, starring Ben Affleck in the title role and his future wife, Jennifer Garner, as Elektra. Next came Bryan Singer's *X2: X-Men United*, which was the unusual kind of sequel that many consider to be superior to the original. This suspenseful action movie added Alan Cumming as Nightcrawler to its growing cast. It was followed that summer by *Hulk*, an unusual cinematic treatment of the character directed by the award-winning filmmaker Ang Lee. Starring Eric Bana as Bruce Banner and Oscar-winner Jennifer Connelly (*A Beautiful Mind*) as Betty Ross, the film was more of a psychological drama than an action thriller. Lou Ferrigno even made a cameo appearance as a security guard.

The year 2004 also brought three new Marvel films. There was a new *Punisher* movie from Lions Gate, directed by Jonathan Hensleigh, starring Thomas Jane in the title role. The *Blade* trilogy was completed with *Blade: Trinity*, directed by David S. Goyer, who had written all three. (It also became a television series in the summer of 2006.) By far the best and most successful of the 2004 offerings was Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* 2, another blockbuster hit. Like *X2*, the sequel was arguably better than its predecessor. This film not only matched Spider-Man up against his arch foe, Doctor Octopus, played by Alfred Molina, but also drew upon Stan Lee and John Romita, Sr.'s celebrated story "Spider-Man No More" from *The Amazing Spider-Man* #50 (1967).

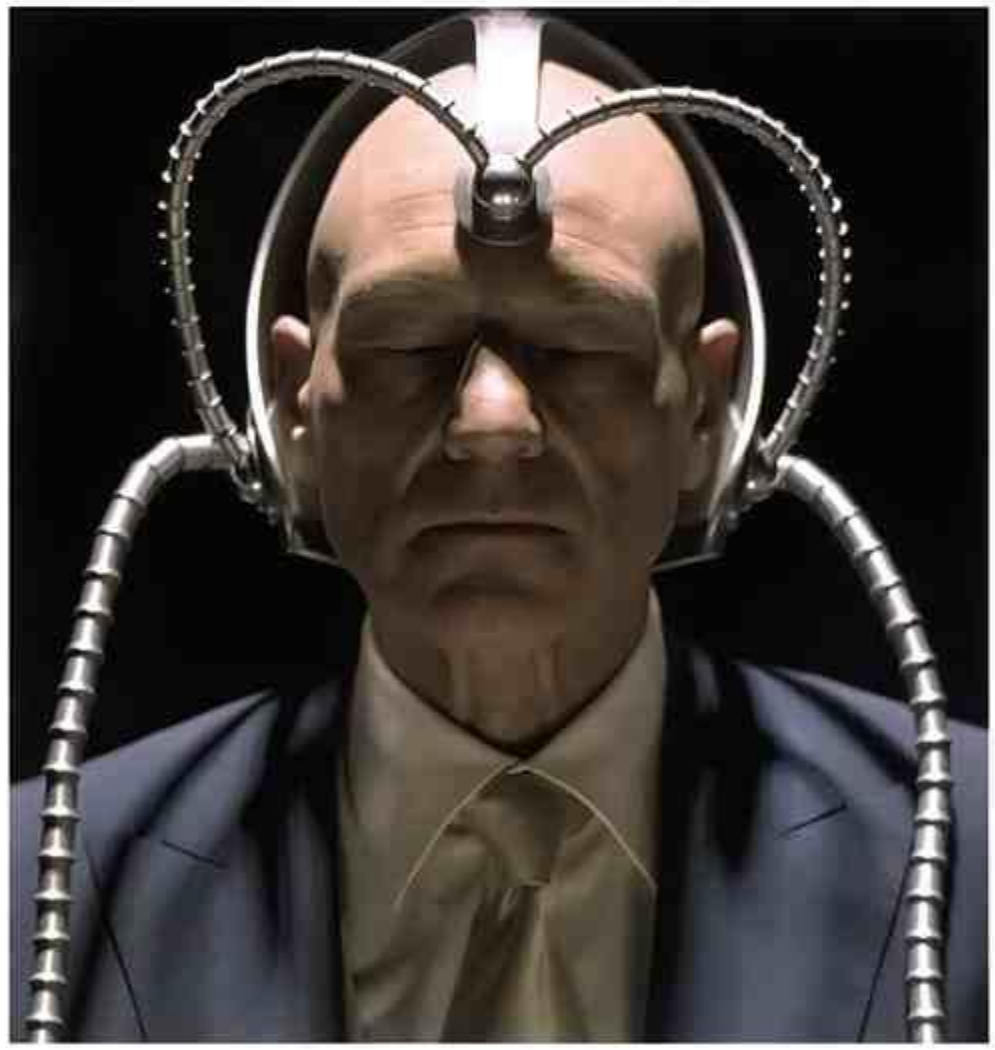
(Opposite page) *X-Men* movie poster and a shot of the Green Goblin from the first *Spider-Man* film. (This page) Poster for *Punisher* film.

Raimi even filmed a shot that recreated that issue's most famous scene—a distraught Peter Parker renouncing his secret identity and walking away from his costume, abandoned in a trash can.

Early in 2005 came Fox's *Elektra*, once again starring Jennifer Garner as Frank Miller's creation and directed by Rob Bowman.

Fantastic Four was released over that summer by Fox. Directed by Tim Story, its stars included Jessica Alba as the Invisible Woman and Michael Chiklis as the Thing. Whereas the Hulk movie used computer-generated images for its title character, that was Chiklis himself, in highly persuasive makeup and costuming, as the monstrous Thing!

The X-Men movie series became a trilogy in 2006 with *X-Men: The Last Stand*, directed by Brett Ratner and adding a heavily made-up Kelsey Grammer as the furry Beast. The film incorporated elements both of Joss Whedon's *Astonishing*



(Opposite page) A still from *The Fantastic Four* (2005). (This page) Patrick Stewart in *X-Men 2: X-Men United*, and the Fantastic Four on their movie poster.

X-Men (the "cure" for mutation) and Chris Claremont and John Byrne's classic "Dark Phoenix Saga" (with Jean Grey's return from her apparent demise in the previous film).

The X-Men may have met their "last stand" in theaters, but it was far from the end for Marvel in the movies. The year 2007 promises a *Ghost Rider* movie, starring Nicolas Cage in the title role; *Fantastic Four* 2; and Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* 3. Many, many more Marvel films are in development, including a *Wolverine* movie starring Hugh Jackman.

Through the successes of these many movies, Marvel's heroes have reached a greater audience worldwide than they had ever known before. Alert fans can find appearances by Marvel's Chairman Emeritus Stan Lee in many of these films: He chats with fellow security guard Lou Ferrigno in *Hulk* and plays his own comedy character, mailman Willie Lumpkin, in *Fantastic Four*. He seems delighted to make these Hitchcock-style cameos in the movies based on the characters he co-created, as well he should.

Marvel has come a very long way from the days back in 1961 when Stan Lee decided against quitting comics and instead typed out that plot for *Fantastic Four* #1.

All things considered, he made the right choice.

(Left) The Human Torch? No—Ghost Rider, on a promotional poster for the 2007 film. (Above) Wolverine's dramatic entrance. (Opposite page) Stan Lee, still "the man" of Marvel.

WHO
IN A BOX
MUNCH.
Crunch
Munch
SPIDER-MAN
CLASSICS

CAPTAIN AMERICA

"BREAK-OUT IN CELL BLOCK 10!"

REMEMBER ISH #60 WHEN CAP THOUGHT HE WAS GIVING A PHYSICAL FITNESS DEMONSTRATION AND DIDN'T SUSPECT HE WAS REALLY FIGHTING A BUNCH OF ASSASSINS?

WELL, SOME GUYS ALWAYS LEARN THE HARD WAY! HERE HE IS AGAIN, DEMONSTRATING HIS PROWESS TO AN OFFICIAL OF THE STATE PENITENTIARY ...OR, SO HE THINKS!

I WONDER WHY THEY ASKED ME TO DEMONSTRATE HOW I WOULD DEFEND MYSELF IF THE PRISONERS ESCAPED AND ATTACKED ME? OH, WELL, THEY MUST HAVE THEIR REASONS!

FEATURING: CAP'S OWN BRAND OF GALVANIZED ACTION! --NUFF SAID!

POW! SCRIPT: STAN LEE | WHAM! ART: JACK KIRBY
ZOWIE! INKING: CHIC STONE | ULP! LETTERING: ART SIMEK

AFTERWORD

WHAT DOES MARVEL HAVE IN STORE FOR THE REST OF THE TWENTY-first century? When the company reaches its 100th anniversary, what will the authors of *Marvel Vault 2039* have to say about the fate of Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, and the rest of the Marvel Universe?

The only certainty at Marvel is that the future is impossible to predict. After all, at two points in the 1950s, Stan Lee was the only person left on the entire staff. For much of that decade the super hero genre seemed nearly dead.

Back then, could Stan have seriously foreseen that in the 1960s he would co-create a whole series of super heroes who would rival Superman himself in popularity?

Could he have imagined that Marvel would become such a multimedia giant, with hundreds of employees?

Or that his characters would star in some of the highest-grossing movies of all time?

A half century ago, could anyone have even conceived of the new media into which the Marvel heroes would move: video games, DVDs, and Internet Web sites?

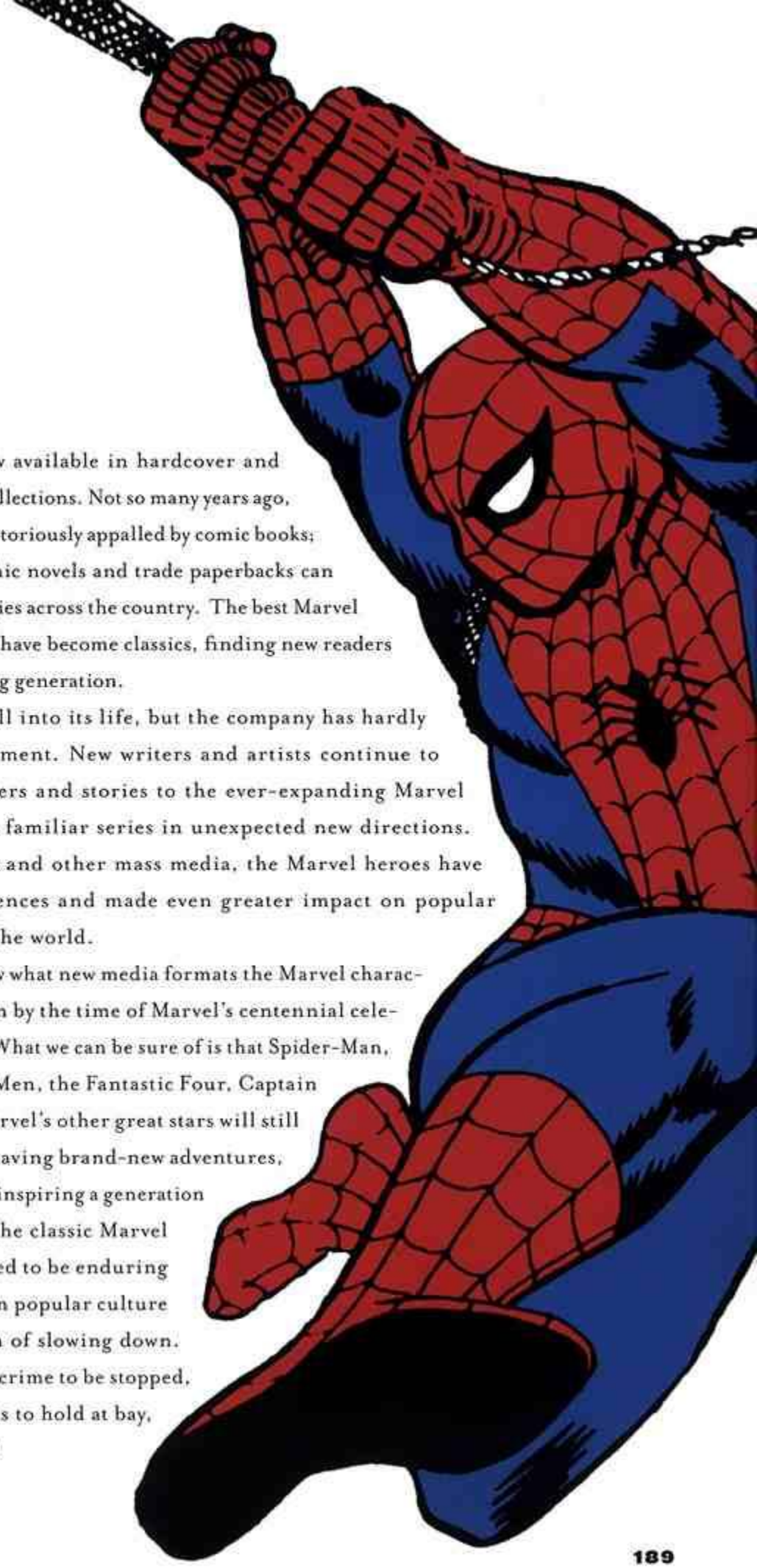
Moreover, Stan Lee has confessed that, back in the mid-twentieth century, at times even he was embarrassed to tell people that he wrote comic books for a living.

But it was Stan and his collaborators—particularly Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko—who revolutionized American comic books in the 1960s. They demonstrated that comic books could address serious themes, delve deeply into characterization, and serve as a medium of artistic self-expression. They reached out to an older, more discerning audience. They showed the way to the generations of comics creators who followed, who kept pushing the artistic envelope.

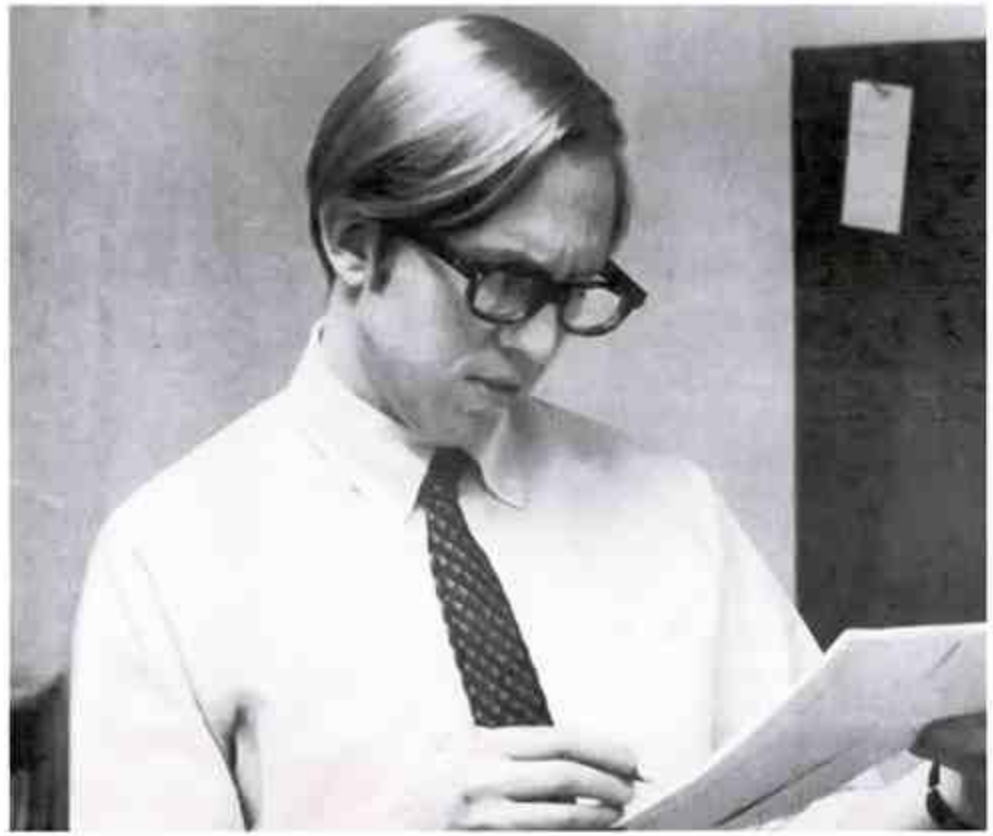
It is in large part due to this Marvel revolution that comics and graphic novels are increasingly regarded as a serious artistic medium in our new century. Most of Stan Lee's Silver Age comics, and those of many other Marvel creators, are now available in hardcover and paperback book collections. Not so many years ago, librarians were notoriously appalled by comic books; now Marvel graphic novels and trade paperbacks can be found in libraries across the country. The best Marvel stories of the past have become classics, finding new readers in each succeeding generation.

Marvel is well into its life, but the company has hardly gone into retirement. New writers and artists continue to add new characters and stories to the ever-expanding Marvel mythos and take familiar series in unexpected new directions. Through movies and other mass media, the Marvel heroes have found new audiences and made even greater impact on popular culture around the world.

We can't know what new media formats the Marvel characters will appear in by the time of Marvel's centennial celebration in 2039. What we can be sure of is that Spider-Man, the Hulk, the X-Men, the Fantastic Four, Captain America, and Marvel's other great stars will still be around, still having brand-new adventures, entertaining and inspiring a generation yet to be born. The classic Marvel heroes have proved to be enduring icons of American popular culture and show no sign of slowing down. As long as there's crime to be stopped, and super villains to hold at bay, why should they?



(Opposite page) Splash page from *Tales of Suspense* #62 (1965), and Storm of the X-Men (circa 1975). (Right) Spidey swings off.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

IN 1965, **ROY THOMAS** WENT FROM BEING A HIGH SCHOOL English teacher to being Stan Lee's assistant editor and a scriptwriter for Marvel Comics. His driving passion was to work with Stan on the development of the Marvel Universe. And so he did, following in Stan's footsteps as the writer of such titles as *The X-Men*, *The Avengers*, and *Fantastic Four*. In 1970, Roy obtained for Marvel the rights to an old pulp-magazine hero, and the result was the best-selling *Conan the Barbarian*, which he scripted for its first decade. He served under Lee as Marvel's editor in chief from 1972 to 1974, as a Marvel writer and editor from 1965 to 1980, and has written for Marvel again since the late 1980s. Roy has co-written two films, including *Conan the Destroyer* starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, plus a bit of animated and live-action TV, and currently edits *Alter Ego*, a monthly magazine about the history and creators of super hero comics. Roy has also contributed to a number of books for the Marvel and DC publishing programs, including *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age Marvel Comics*; *Marvel Visionaries: Gil Kane*; *Marvel Visionaries: Stan Lee*; *All Star Comics Archives*; and *Stan Lee's Amazing Marvel Universe*.

PETER SANDERSON IS A COMICS CRITIC AND HISTORIAN, and is the author of *Marvel Universe*, *The Ultimate Guide to the X-Men*, and *Classic Marvel Super Heroes*. Peter earned a B.A., M.A., and M.Phil. in English literature from Columbia University. Joining the staff of Marvel Comics as an assistant editor, he later became the company's first archivist. In the fall of 2004, Peter began teaching his course "Comics as Literature" at New York University. He currently writes "Comics in Context," a weekly online column on comics, cartoon art, and related subjects at the IGN Comics Web site, and reviews graphic novels for *Publishers Weekly*. He was an executive producer and co-writer for *Sex, Lies and Super Heroes*, a documentary on comics. He is a consultant for the Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art in New York City. Peter was one of the principal writers for the first four versions of *The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe*, as well as DC Comics' character encyclopedia, *Who's Who*. For more than a quarter century, Peter has also written for numerous publications about the comics medium, including *The Comics Journal*, *Comic Buyer's Guide*, and *Back Issue*. He lives in New York City.

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THE MARVEL VAULT

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ROY THOMAS went from being a high school teacher to being Stan Lee's assistant editor and a scriptwriter for Marvel Comics in 1965. He served as a writer, editor, then editor in chief at Marvel until 1980. Having co-written two films, contributed to a number of books, and co-authored one with Stan Lee, Roy truly is an expert on all things Marvel.

PETER SANDERSON is a comics guru in his own right, penning books, journal articles, and criticism, teaching courses at New York University, and producing documentaries on comics. Peter joined the Marvel Comics staff as an assistant editor, later becoming Marvel's first archivist.

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