

ARCHIE GOODWIN
Portrait by **KEN MEYER, JR.**
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About Our Cover

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Above: *Peter Ledger's painting was used as a back cover ad for* Marvel Super Special *#11–13 [June–Oct. '79] promoting the impending debut of Marvel's* Epic Illustrated. *Inset is (slightly altered) Rick Parker's Archie Goodwin caricature, from* Marvel Age *#15 [June '84] cover.*



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THE MAIN EVENT

Archie Goodwin: An Epic Creator
Christopher Irving regales us with the epic legend of the great writer and editor – some say the *greatest* comic book editor of *all time!* – who left a legacy of excellence wherever he worked, whether Warren, Marvel, or DC Comics. Along with an in-depth bio of the Oklahoma native and overview of his achievements up to the Epic era, some friends share their memories for the man known as the "Nicest Guy in Comics" 42

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Oops!: *While it's really no biggie, in our last (super-biggie) ish, I called* CBC *#45, "the second of our hybrid magazine-slash-books," when I certainly do know better, given* CBC *#2 [Aug. '13] was our double-size "Joe Kubert: A Tribute to the Creator and Mentor" special and #6 [Dec. '14] "Swampmen: Muck-Monsters of the Comics" a 192-page effort. Suffice to say, we'll release double-size* CBC *specials annually, the next being one devoted entirely to the Marvel Bullpen, with dozens(!) of unpublished interviews… More on our plans for that extravaganza very soon!*

Right: *The great Archie Goodwin waits in the wings before speaking at a comic book convention, circa 1995.*

Please note: *Some images in this issue were enhanced by digital software.*

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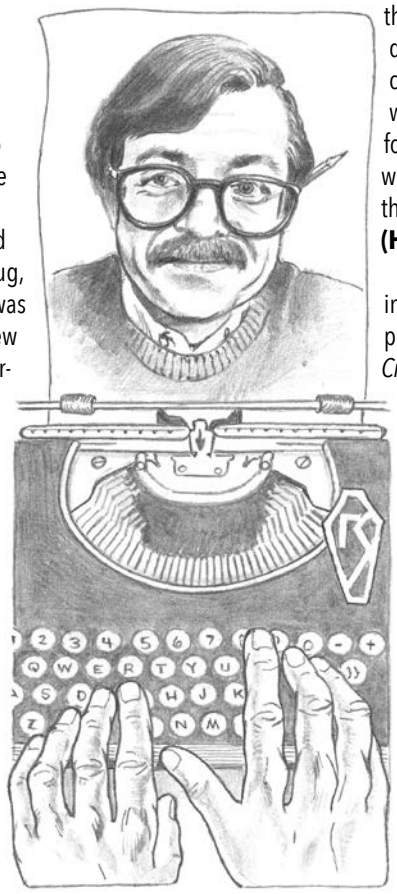
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Farewell, Friend Lent

And goodbye to the dealer of my rabid comic-book addicted youth

After 63 years in business, the hometown comic-book "supplier" of my youth, **Healy's News**, has closed and I admit it was a fact I was quite bummed to hear. Moving to Wakefield, Rhode Island, in 1971, after a year in Europe, where my 11–12-year-old self caught the comics fandom bug, whatever disappointment there was in relocating to this backwater New England town was eased considerably upon finding Healy's was a half-mile from our new digs on Prospect Avenue.

Established in 1962, this amazing shop was, at its peak, stocked with as many as 3,000 different periodicals, among them dozens of comics titles, and it was there, before the stands, my brother and I made so many discoveries. When the new books would come in every Tuesday and Thursday, we'd persuade the clerks to let us cut the wired bundles and thus get first crack at the semi-weekly releases. And it was also there where, higher up, in the grown-up magazine offerings, we found the Warren Publications, *National Lampoon,* and Marvel's black-&-white mags, like *Comix Book*.



Archie Goodwin by Ronn Sutton

Healy's was a part of Weibel Block, just off Main Street (where once stood Adams Drug with its astonishing array of paperback offerings), a row of businesses, where my mother had a used bookstore from the mid-'90s into the '00s. That fondly remembered establishment, appropriately called **Mom & Pop's Bookshop**, was impeccably curated by my now ailing mom and my stepfather, and I'd man the register occasionally and all of my boys helped their Granny as kids. When I'd win an Eisner Award, she'd insist on displaying it for a week in Mom & Pop's window, accompanied by a handwritten sign boasting her son won the equivalent of an Oscar.

I know that the one constant in life is change, and I try not to get sentimental, but I will continue to feel forlorn about the closing of Healy's, which once boasted the finest New England magazine display south of Harvard Square. To come of age within a mere 10-minute walk of the store, where my passion for this medium was nurtured… well, words prove inadequate. But let me say, thank you, **Freeman Healy** and **Sally (Healy) Minetti.** I'm eternally grateful.

Speaking of passages: every issue, in an attempt to maintain a historical perspective regarding *Comic Book Creator,* I acknowledge the demise of comic book notables in the space atop this spread, any number of whom, sadly, have been acquaintances and friends. More than one reader tells me it's through these notices where they learn about recent deaths. Still, to put the name of **John A. Lent** in that sentence comes as a shock.

Maybe I would have been less surprised had I known he was 89 years old when he passed, on May 16, 2026. And, upon reading, in *The Comics Journal* online remembrance, "For a generation of scholars and researchers engaged in comics studies, John Lent was a powerful, almost mythic figure," I had previously thought of him merely as a peer and fellow comics lover (of indeterminate age!).

That ignorance betrays my obliviousness to the academic side of things in comics-world, though during the pandemic, we did swap runs of our respective publications (guess who won out on that exchange!) and I try to find time to peruse the 26 years of the ***International Journal of Comic Art*** he traded me, which invariably leaves me overwhelmed at the incredible diversity of content. And John also aided me immeasurably with a superb essay on the history of Filipino "komiks" for *Comic Book Artist* V2 #4 [Sept. '04]. So I'm chagrined how little I knew of his life and how I never interviewed the scholar. Thus my plan is to cover my late friend in a future ish to make up for the lapse. Godspeed, John.

Slight hiccup finishing *Mind Candy*, chugging away on the *Treasure Chest* book, and *WW3* is coming soon!

– ***Ye Crusading Editor***
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Archie Goodwin portrait © 2026 Ronn Sutton.

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The Altergott Alternative

Audio recorder in hand, Ye Ed. takes a road trip with underrated alt cartoonist Rick Altergott

Conducted by JON B. COOKE

[**Interviewer intro:** *Upfront confession – pretty much ever since Frederick Henry Altergott, Jr., a.k.a. Rick Altergott, he of "Doofus" fame from the pages of Peter Bagge's* Hate, *and his cartoonist wife, Ariel Bordeaux, moved to Rhode Island around the turn of the century, I've been pals with the affable and accessible cartoonist. When I taught at RISD, I invited the couple to speak to the class. Rick participated in my* Book of Weirdo *and collaborated with writing chum Charles Schneider to do a story for my* Slow Death Zero *anthology, and we've always been mutually supportive of one another's ventures. A few years back, around Halloween, we drove together to visit Worcester, Massachusetts, comic shop That's Entertainment and I interviewed him on the way and back. Here's part one of that chat! –* **JBC**]

Comic Book Creator: *It's October 22, 2022, we're going to Worcester and I'm with Rick Altergott, one of my favorite cartoonists. Where is your last name derived from?*
Rick Altergott: It's German. I'm Irish/German.
CBC: *When were you born?*
Rick: May 16th, 1961, Taurus. Born in Delaware.
CBC: *What'd your dad do?*
Rick: He was a lawyer, but he worked at a bank before that. He had a military career in the Marine Corps and then the Naval Academy. Then he became a lawyer doing a lot of real estate work at a law firm in Wilmington. So that's what his vocation was.
CBC: *Was he a World War II veteran?*
Rick: No, he was actually peace-time, active in the '50s.



Photo by Chris Anthony Diaz. Color by Graham Wilcox. Doofus, Henry Hotchkiss TM & © Rick Altergott.

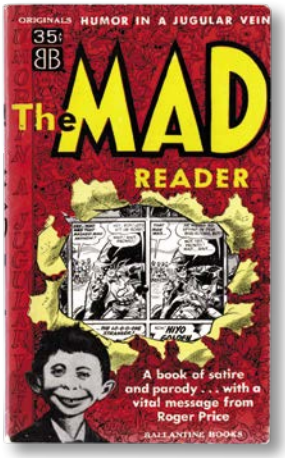
CBC: *Did you have siblings?*
Rick: Yes, I've got two sisters, one older, one younger, Pam and Allison.
CBC: *Are they creative at all?*
Rick: My little sister is creative. She's kind of omnivorous. She's actually talented in a lot of things like printmaking and pottery, and loves to take pictures. Let's say she's the more creative of the two.
CBC: *But you're the one who made a living at it.*
Rick: Well, if you could call this living, right? [*laughter*] No, I received a lot of encouragement and early success with drawing that kept me at it. I had good art instruction from good art teachers. I went to a high school that was actually a private school because my mother taught there as a kindergarten teacher. So all three of us children got to go to a very nice, prominent, private school in Wilmington.



Above: *Rick Altergott in a portrait by Chris Anthony Diaz, taken at the 2011 MOCCA Festival.* **Inset left:** *Rick freelance gig.*
Below: *Doofus and Henry Hotchkiss.*



CBC: *So your upbringing was pretty much suburban?*
Rick: It started out that way, but we moved into the city of Wilmington when I was about nine years old. In the '60s, there was a lot of unrest in Wilmington. They even had the National Guard called out because of riots and stuff.
CBC: *Racial strife?*
Rick: I think it was a lot of that. Probably more than anything else. But there were also incentives for people to move into the city and buy very cheap housing. A form of homesteading, I guess, and my dad, in real estate later on, was part of that helping to bring people back into the city instead of the opposite direction. So we bought a house not in downtown, but in a pretty nice neighborhood of



Above: *The Ballantine paperbacks reprinting Harvey Kurtzman's MAD comics made a strong impact on Rick.* **Inset right:** *There's a heavy Mort Drucker (seen in self-caricature inset below) influence Rick infused into his work in his school's humor magazine,* The Rag, *which included this* Waltons *parody.* **Below:** *Rick in a splattered smock during art class in day school.*



Wilmington, and my dad would walk downtown to work every morning… I think they bought the house for $30,000, in 1968.

When we did move into the city proper, around that time there was lots of little places – candy stores, tobacco shops – that sold comics within 10 or so blocks of where our house was. So I developed a little circuit when I was a little older. I bought a lot of comics when they were 20¢ apiece, five for a dollar, so I'd go to three or four different locations every month to find comics that appealed to me.

CBC: *What was the most important purchase you made as a kid?*

Rick: Probably, as I really got into it, *MAD* magazine, though not as early as a lot of other people my age. It was 1971 or '72 when I first saw a couple issues. And then, after that, I would purchase every one and developed a kind of radar about when the new issue would be on the stand.

CBC: *Do you remember the middle finger issue?*

Rick: Oh yeah! I bought that one for sure, for sure.

CBC: *Did your parents see you bringing* MAD *into the house?*

Rick: No, I had to hide the comics from them. Our house had a little bulkhead in the back where you could open the door and I'd walk home from the school and passed the Smoke Shop on the way… That was the name of the place, too, the Smoke Shop!… It's not there anymore, but I'd buy the new issue. I did make some other purchases. I was buying *Heavy Metal* when that started coming out… sometimes *The National Lampoon* and *Cracked*, and other comics, which I'd sneak in the house. I'd open the bulkhead door, put the comics there, and then, later on, I'd go down into the basement and pick them up as discreetly as possible.

I did have a mother who actually took the comics and ripped them up in front of me one time because my school grades were not good. In my case, that story actually happened! So that R. Crumb poster…? The one with the mom tearing up her kid's comics…? I lived that. [*laughter*]

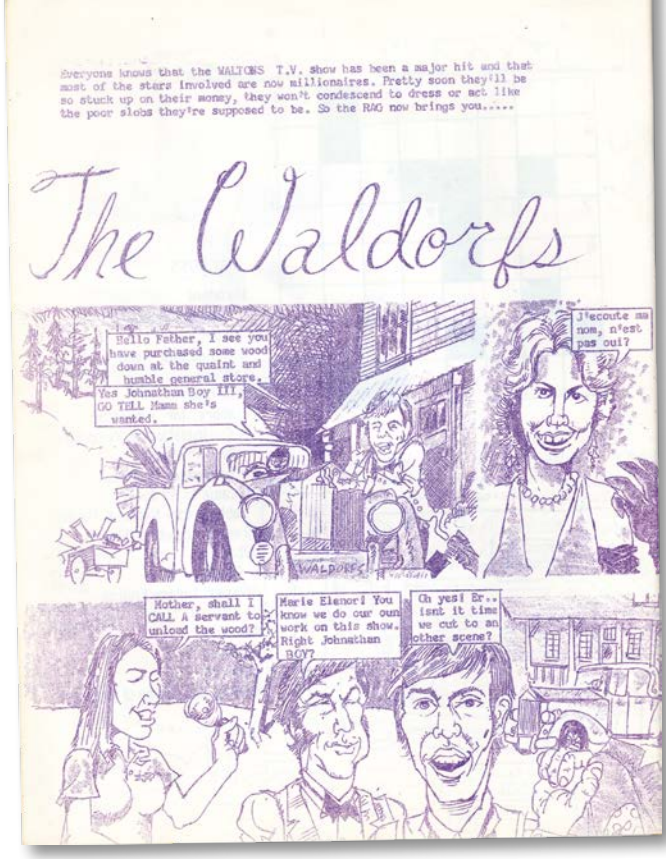
And I didn't want her seeing some of them, too! I was starting to get Heavy Metal and the racy stuff. This was later on. And those were not cheap to buy either! I didn't want my mom mutilating any more of my comics! I think she ripped up the second issue of *Crazy*, and that was, like, 40¢! Not cheap. Comics at 20¢ was a lot! You had a lot of purchasing power back then.

CBC: *Did you get an allowance when you were young?*

Rick: No, not really.

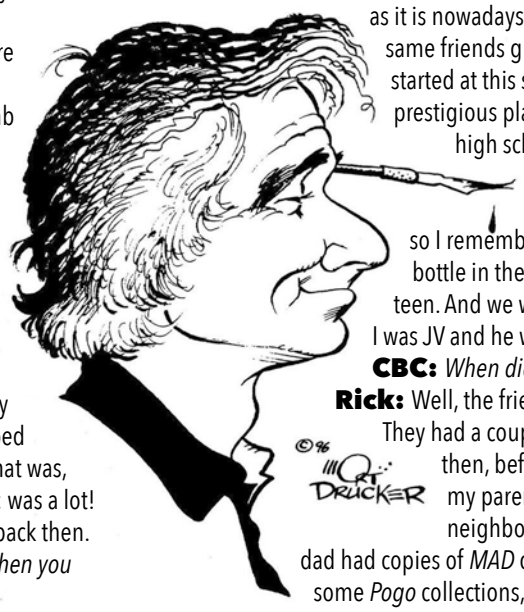
CBC: *So how did you get money to buy comics?*

Rick: I don't know! I did start working as a dishwasher when I was 16, but earlier I did some babysitting and stuff like that, though I never had a paper route or lawn cutting business. I probably did things here and there to make some money, but I didn't have a standard allowance. Not that I remember anyway.



CBC: *How was elementary school? Did you make like-minded friends?*

Rick: Yeah, I had a couple of really good friends, which was nice because I kept those same friends almost to this day. I have a lot of friends. And now I'm reaching an age where some of them are gone. It's really sad. One of my best friends died when we were both 25. And that was jarring. He had Hodgkin's disease and it wasn't as treatable as it is nowadays. But anyway, yeah, I had the same friends growing up from second grade. I started at this school called Tower Hill, a pretty prestigious place. Good education. I went to high school with Dr. Oz, though he was a grade above. His younger sister was in my class, though, so I remember one time playing spin the bottle in the basement of their house as a teen. And we were on the wrestling team, but I was JV and he was varsity.



CBC: *When did you discover comics?*

Rick: Well, the friends I was telling you about…? They had a couple of comics in their house and then, before we moved to Wilmington, my parents were best friends with neighbors across the street, and the dad had copies of *MAD* comics reprint paperbacks and some *Pogo* collections, too. My parents were way too square to have anything like that in the house. The dad was kind of a beatnik character. (He's still alive today and a really neat guy, although he must be almost 100!) And his two daughters were really into pop culture. They had copies of some of the first *MAD* issues I ever saw and they were really into stuff that was really popular in the '70s.

But you asked about comics specifically: I don't know exactly when I discovered them. I never really was into the

The MAD Reader TM & © E.C. Publications, Inc. "The Waldorfs" © Rick Altergott. Caricature © the estate of Mort Walker. Photo courtesy of Rick Altergott.

super-hero comics, was never really was exposed to them that early on, and I wasn't interested in them that much, either. And I wasn't really collecting comics for anything but reading value. But, at some point, I did start collecting and I really got into owning the issues. And, once I got into it, I remember loving Jack Kirby's artwork and seeking it out, and a lot of the other artists, too. I loved Mort Drucker. He was my favorite, because of his work in *MAD*, of course.

I was into pop culture stuff, too. I remember, later on, *Jaws* and *The Exorcist*, those were *huge*, and *Jaws* played at the same theater all summer long (which is hard to believe now, but that's how it was). It was part of the landscape that summer. The same girl from across the street, she was into *The Exorcist*… These formed my aesthetic. I still have a real fondness for those kind of big movies of the '70s and big books, things like that… [*Conversation turns to mutual appreciation for '70s pop culture* – Love Story; Jesus Christ, Superstar; Welcome Back, Kotter; *etc.* – **Ye Ed.**] Then, of course, *MAD* would do a spoof of these things and I'd seek them out. So it kind of fed on itself. The whole pop culture thing was a circular thing that was feeding on itself, drawing people like me into it. I'm sure you can relate, right? [*Jon agrees*] And that's the only way to see an R-rated movie was to see the spoof!

But anyway, when comics were 20¢ each, I was able to buy five comics for a dollar. That's pretty great! So I'd try out some other stuff. I'd try anything by Kirby. I'd be like, "Oh yeah, I want to see what this *OMAC* is about! I'll gamble 20¢." I mean, 20¢ *was* 20¢ back then, but it still wasn't a deal breaker. I could somehow scare up that kind of money…

But then, when I would get a little older, I'd take some art classes in Philadelphia and my parents wanted me to develop my art skills. So they put me on a train some Saturdays to go to the Philadelphia College of Art for art classes. I'd take a couple of those, but then I'd sneak over to a comic store in Center City, Philadelphia, called Fat Jack's Comicrypt. That's where I started seeking out back issues of *MAD* and stuff. So I remember buying those for a good price and then just developing a taste for collecting comics.

CBC: *When you saw the Ballantine* MAD *paperbacks, was that your first memorable encounter with Harvey Kurtzman?*

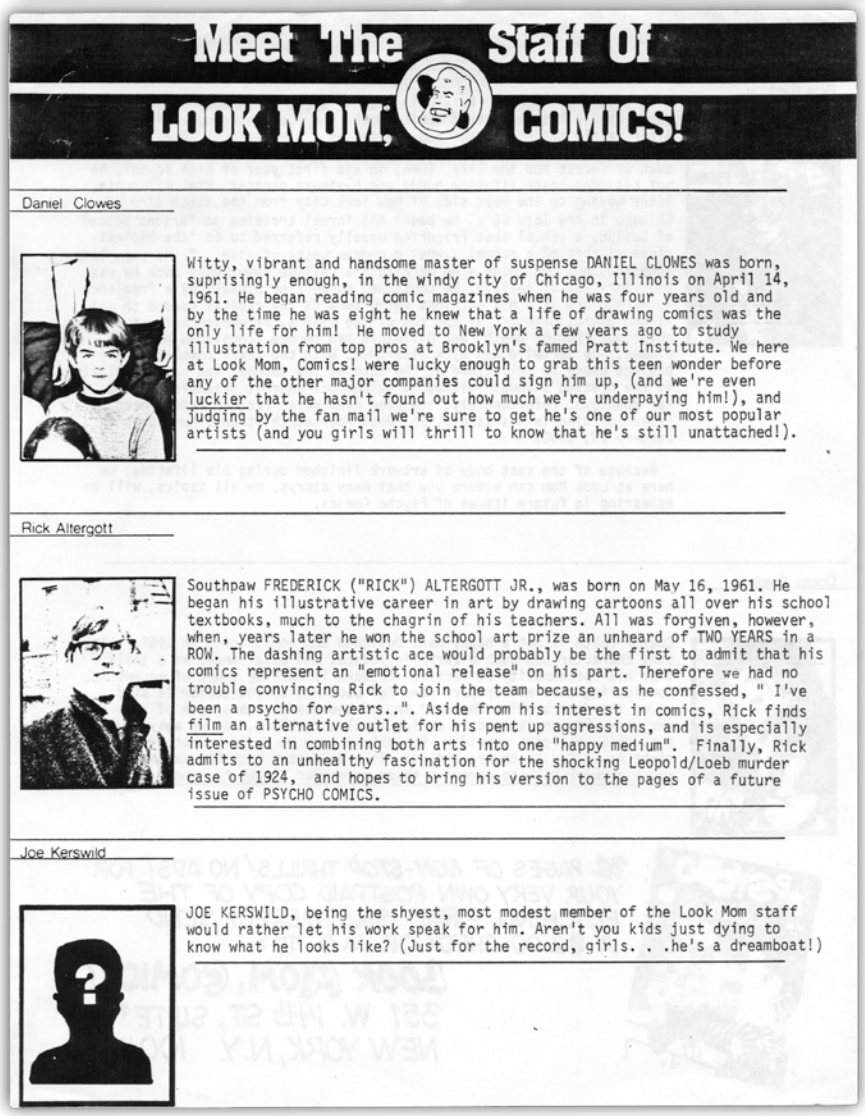
Rick: It probably was… and Wally Wood, too. And I remember being at a store with my parents and seeing a *MAD* paperback there and just wanting it so badly… They were only 50¢ and there was four of them. *The MAD Reader, MAD Strikes Back, Utterly MAD,* and *The Brothers MAD*. They all reissued those with the psychedelic covers, though I got the ones with the original covers. And that was probably the first time I saw Wally Wood's artwork, although I had probably seen it in The Mad Peck's book [*Comix: A History of Comic Books in America*, co-authored by Les Daniels] by then. "The Curse," the *Vampirella* story, was reprinted there and so was "Superduperman." But it didn't grab me the way it did until later on. I was still a Mort Drucker man back then. A lot of my interests were mostly because of pop culture cross-pollination with the movies and stuff. *MAD* was kind of a culture vulture, I'd say.

CBC: *When did you start drawing?*

Rick: I was probably drawing throughout this whole time, but not with any real purpose. I've always been able to draw what I see, so I developed that. I still have that ability, but to actually recognize and strive for a certain style and become more discriminating in what I like in drawing and didn't like, that development took time. There's a big difference between Mort Drucker, basically a naturalistic drawing style, and Jack Kirby, who is very stylized, but I liked them both.

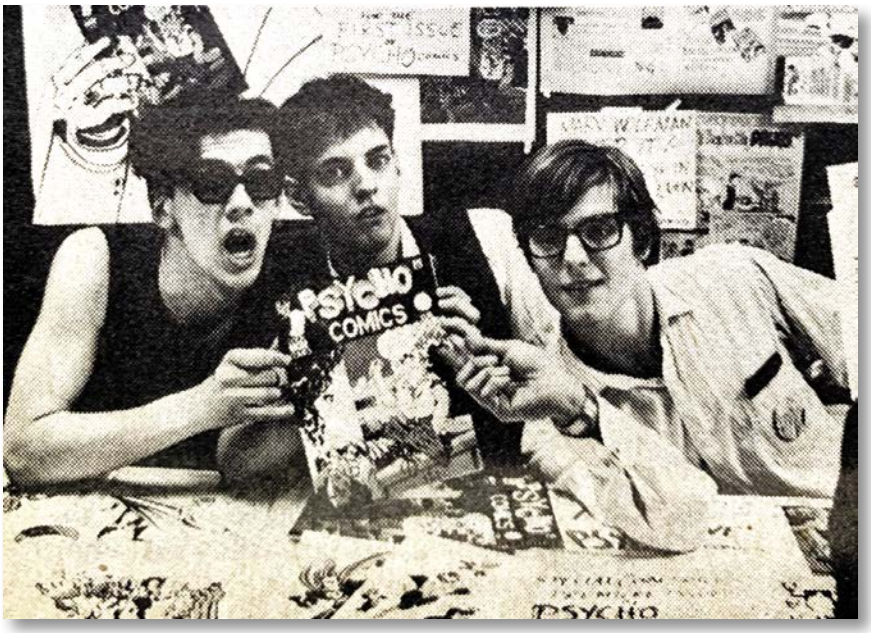






This page: *Fellow Pratt art students Rick Altergott, Daniel Clowes, Mort Todd, and Peter Friedrich teamed to produce a pair of* Psycho Comics *[1980–81] issues, published by their imprint, Look Mom, Comics!*

All items TM & ©the respective artists. Staff biographies courtesy of Rick Altergott.



Above: *Mort Todd [left], Daniel Clowes, and Rick Altergott mug at their dealer table for a candid shot taken at a New York Creation Con in early 1981, which appeared in* Amazing Heroes *#1 [July '81].*

And I liked Don Martin, too. From that I actually came up with a Don Martin style, so I was all over the place back then.

When I first started deciding what my art style was going to be like, it was only after admiring and being influenced in that kind of environment of seeing lots of different artists – mostly cartoonists – over a period of time. So it was a while before I decided to figure what my artwork looks like, and I'm *still* kind of figuring it out. Luckily now after you do it long enough, you do develop something, a default style, because I wouldn't want it all of a sudden to say, "I'm going to draw like this today." It probably wouldn't work, right? It could work, but I'm not going to do that.

CBC: *Were you known as an artist in high school?*

Rick: Yes, in high school, I was. I did a lot of drawing and, in art class, we did still lifes and I excelled at that. We did some printmaking… I did things for the yearbook. Before then, when I was in eighth grade, my friends and I did this school publication (though we were actually probably older) that was sort of an alternative comic, and we did eight issues of that. It was called *The Rag* and teachers at the school let us use the mimeograph machine and we'd run off the copies and give it to the student body. And they weren't crazy about it because it was kind of sleazy to see what we could get away with. And they knew that we were probably the kids in the school who were smoking pot.

CBC: *Were you?*

Rick: Yeah, we were. [*laughter*] Later on, in high school, up towards senior year, was when *High Times* was more important, instead of *Playboy* magazine, and there'd be a fold-out of glistening buds. And, by that time, underground comix in the mix, too. My dad bought *Playboy* all throughout. In fact, he had the first issue and I think my mom destroyed it. So she has a history of censorship, of destroying collectibles, apparently. [*laughs*] I wish he had hung on to that first issue, but he was subscribing all throughout. So I did see some of the stuff.

In *Playboy* might have been the first time I saw Crumb, when he was hired to do some stuff, along with some of the other underground guys. It was probably the greatest gig they could ever imagine back then. Getting Hefner to pay them top dollar for the super-nice print job, high-circulation work…! Crumb probably wasn't crazy about it. It was just for the money.

CBC: *So what was in* The Rag*?*

Rick: We did movie spoofs and stuff. I wrote some of them and I had another friend (who's also not with us anymore) who did some, too. We did a spoof of *The Waltons* where they're rich folks we called it "The Waldorfs." [*Jon laughs*] We did a spoof of *Star Wars* when it came out called "Star Waste." And, to get photo reference, I would buy the bubblegum cards because there was no internet or there might've been some magazines, but I probably wouldn't have had the money to buy those. Anyway, we did a *Star Trek* spoof and one on *Charlie's Angels*. I dunno if we did *The Night Stalker*, which was a favorite show for teenagers, but it started out as just a mixed bag. But my *MAD* obsession kind of pushed it into a *MAD* imitation, but done terribly by students. It was probably only like 20 pages, each issue stapled together. We printed a bunch of them and offer 'em to the student body. The school had probably about 400 students, maybe more. I don't really know.

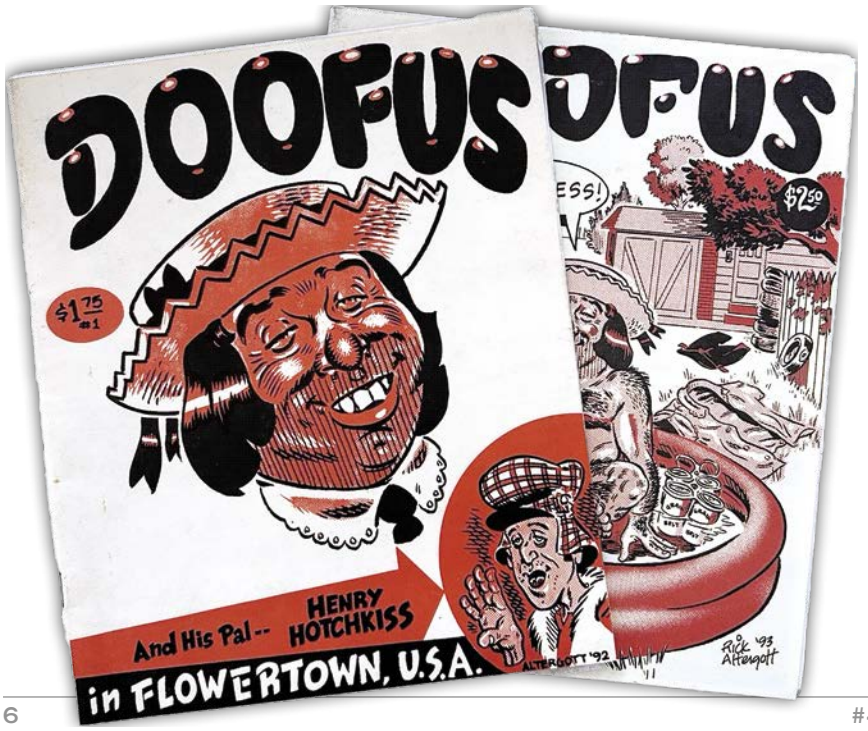
CBC: *So you'd collate and staple them?*

Rick: We put them through the mimeograph. Sometimes you could use different colors, so we have red and green and purple. And sometimes they let us do photographs, take a picture of our staff and make that the back cover with some press type on it.

CBC: *Wow! Fancy! Is that the first publication you were ever in?*

Rick: Probably, yeah. One thing I'm kind of proud of is we did this thing called "Your Page." To make the meimeograph, you'd use carbon paper that we draw on which was put on the roller and that would generate the copies. So we put a piece of the carbon paper on the public bulletin board in the school and had other students draw something. That would get covered up with weird graffiti and stuff, and then we print that as a page (because, hey, that's a page we don't have to do!). As long as it wasn't so filthy and nasty, we'd print it.

Below: *After returning to Delaware in the early '90s, Rick self-published his* Doofus *mini comic, which included the participation of his friends, Daniel Clowes and Charles Schneider. The two issues were followed up by the* Doofus *#1 and 2 published by Fantagraphics in 1994 and '97.*



Doofus TM & © Rick Altergott.

CBC: *That's like found art or something. That's pretty progressive. And how many issues did you do?*

Rick: I think there were eight of 'em. I don't remember when the last one was but, by that time, some of my friends were getting kicked out. I was a faculty kid, so they probably would've loved to have kicked me out, but somehow I was protected. But a couple of my other friends did get expelled, mostly for smoking pot…

CBC: *You were with among the privileged, right?*

Rick: Pretty much, yeah. One of my best friends was a DuPont. Unfortunately, he did die a couple years ago. He was a friend from second grade on. He lived very close to the school, so we would sneak over to his house to smoke pot. We did a lot of partying. I'm glad my son doesn't seem to be that interested, but I wish he had the friends that I had, though. That was really nice to have such a great group of friends. And there was no interruption too, because we went from first to 12th grade. It was nice, a very stable and nice environment, though I wish I could remember more about the academics because I was never a very good student… [*Conversation continues about stoner days and then rock 'n' roll music.* – **Y.E.**]

CBC: *Did you date girls? Were you sociable?*

Rick: I did a little bit, but I never really was very popular with the girls. I took a date to the prom and, the same girl, we went to see *Alien* when came out, a stupid idea. But, before that, I didn't really have very many girlfriends, though there were some girls who were friends, for sure.

CBC: *So what did you want to do?*

Rick: I was into moviemaking and comics. I had a Super 8 camera that was a gift from my grandparents one year. So me and the same group of friends would make Super 8 movies. So we have a pretty fun documentation of our times.

CBC: *Do you still have those?*

Rick: Oh, yeah, they're all on the Google drive. It's nice to have a record like that. I went to art school and had the same camera and did some filmmaking there, too. So I got a pretty good record of stuff like that. I was really into Stanley Kubrick. In fact, I saw *2001* when it first came out, in 1968, because one of my classmates was a science guy and so, for his birthday party, his parents decided that he'd take the whole class to *2001*. We were probably like seven years old or something! After the cake and ice cream, we went to see the movie. I don't think a single kid who managed to make it through the whole movie. [*laughter*] [*Discussion of the* MAD *satire in* National Lampoon. – **Y.E.**]

CBC: *Did* MAD *reach a point when you lost your interest in it?*

Rick: I lasted a lot longer than some friends of mine, and I remember Dan Clowes was just, like, he wasn't buying it anymore, and he was, "Yeah, I've outgrown it. We were only reading it for Drucker at that point… Something happens to everybody. You lose your fast ball. There were a lot of knockoffs – *Crazy, Cracked,* and *Sick* – and I definitely saw all of them because I was a junkie for this stuff. I would read *Cracked* and I'd compare the spoofs of *The Poseidon Adventure* in that and in *MAD*. And then *Sick* was a whole other category. I remember really seeing some latter day Jack Sparling, who would do the whole issue by himself and it would be set with the same typesetting machine that Charlton used…

CBC: *Did you aspire to work on them?*

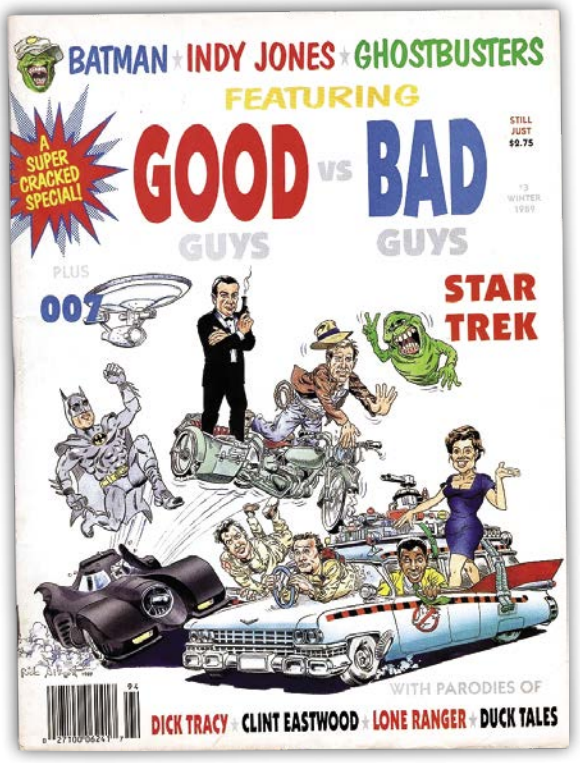
Rick: I think I definitely did at that time. I really would've loved to, especially since I was drawing my own spoofs of some of that stuff. But I didn't really understand how professional cartooning was done. Normally, now, as a professional adult cartoonist, I can usually figure out how things are done. But, with Drucker, the more you learn about him, the more mysterious his technique is…

CBC: *Did you go to conventions?*



This page: *While in New York City, Rick worked with college pal, Mort Todd, who employed the cartoonist during Todd's stint as editor of* Cracked *magazine in the later '80s, and when Mort had a stint at Marvel in the '90s. Rick covers for* Curse of the Weird *#2 [Jan. '94] and* Super Cracked *#3 [Winter '89], and* Cracked *#234 [Mar. '88] page.*





Curse of the Weird TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. *Cracked* TM & © the respective copyright holder.



Above: Doofus *single-pager by Rick, from 1993.* **Below:** *Rick had the opportunity to ink the pencils of no less than the legendary Steve Ditko for an 18-pager in* What Is… the Face? *#3 [Aug. '87]. Here's a pair of panels from that gig.*



Rick: Yes, I did. The first professional artist I ever met was Ramona Fradon. As a matter of fact, I had a friend of mine who was Wilmington's cool alternative guy, named Tom Watkins, and actually Joyce Brabner was his partner and a third partner was Craig Dawson, and they ran a little comic store in downtown Wilmington called Xanadu, where I would buy my comics… and Tom would put on a comic show and invited Ramona Fradon on as a guest… Tom actually sold me the only Jack Davis original I have… It was a pretty cool scene, but it didn't last. It would've been in the '80s… About the Xanadu comic shop: Tom Watkins has since passed away, but one year he created an event called "The World Sleaze Convention" and, since he was friends with John Waters, he screened *Pink Flamingos* in his upstairs, which was a spacious loft with chairs from an old theatre. Waters himself was the projectionist! Tom really was trying to make something happen in Wilmington back then.

CBC: *So did you seek out advice from cartoonists or read interviews in* The Comics Journal *and stuff like that? Were you interested in the professional life?*

Rick: I did. One thing I remember about the Xanadu comic store was that they'd stock every issue of *Weirdo*. I guess that establishes the timeline. So yeah, that was happening. I had been back from college, living back in Delaware, at that point. I didn't make it in New York, so I came back with my tail between my legs back to Wilmington and the hipster culture there. I was working for *Cracked* at the time, so we jumped over that. Also, Russ Cochran started reprinting the EC Comics line in his hardcover volumes.

CBC: *Where did you go to college?*

Rick: Pratt Institute, in New York City. That's where I met Dan Clowes and, through him, I met Mort Todd – Mike Dele-Femine – and Pete Friedrich; the whole comic group that was developing simultaneously.

CBC: *And they were all coming out of Pratt?*

Rick: No, a lot of 'em were at Parsons or School of Visual Arts, which had a cartooning program at that point, with Eisner and Kurtzman teaching there… But the thing is, Pratt, at the time, they didn't have any curriculum for cartooning, even though they had some pretty good alumni.

CBC: *Pratt was not a cartooning school. Why choose Pratt?*

Rick: I just wanted to be in New York. That was my main thing. I had gotten some scholarship money for attending. I dunno why I didn't go to the other New York City art schools. I wanted to go into Manhattan and seemed to be the best one. Then, because of that, I met Clowes as a teenager and we've been friends ever since. In fact, a lot of the stuff that appears in the *Art School Confidential* comic book is stuff that he and I experienced at the same time in this class. Some of some in jokes there. I think some of those experiences were kind of universal because I also met Charles Schneider at Pratt, too. I wouldn't have known him otherwise, and he's one of my oldest and best friends, the friends who are in the art world. Those two are probably my interchangeable best art buddies of all time.

CBC: *There was this New York City cartooning subculture that was going on* – Comical Funnies, Stop, Punk – *with John Holstrom and Peter Bagge, and all that. Were you cognizant of that? Were you feeling on the periphery of that?*

Rick: I was probably on the periphery, but I knew *Stop* and *Comical Funnies* from J.D. King. J.D. may have been the only one of those guys that I've met. But Pete I met maybe seeing him at a comic convention after we had published our *Psycho Comics* book. That would've been at the end of my freshman year in college. But there was a lot going on. It was a good time. I definitely knew who Pete was and knew him through his work before I actually knew him as a

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person. Same with the rest of those guys. And I knew Holmstrom from the Ramones album covers and *Comical Funnies* and I knew Bosko.

There were a lot more publications back then, too. The Village Voice was free then… there were other cartoonists and there were the alternative music weeklies throughout the country… And when we did go into Manhattan, we'd always go to Bleecker Bob's [Records] and places like that where there'd be a lot of that kind stuff going on. I remember we went to see *Eraserhead* when it came out at the Waverley, on West Forest Street. We saw more than once… There was a lot of stuff going on. That was interesting.

CBC: *Can you describe* Psycho Comics*?*

Rick: Well, we came up with our publishing company called Look Mom, Comics! – and I'm pretty sure I came up with it from a product called Look Mom, Carrots!, because I used to work in a retirement home kitchen and they had a big walk-in freezer and they'd stockpile all the stuff – so we had the name, then we had to create the comics and *Psycho Comics* was supposed to be a punk-rock kind of thing where we're kind of goofing on classical comics and they always had a negative, terrible ending. That was the whole thing: trying to bum people out and show just to be rebellious and nasty. That's the whole point.

CBC: *Were these jam comics?*

Rick: Each one did their own, though there were a couple of jams that me and Dan did one under a pseudonym, Joe Kerswild – Joker's Wild – because we were really into the instrumental bands, like The Ventures and their *Batman* album, which has a song called "Jokers Wild." There were only two issues of *Psycho Comics*, and there was a Joe Kerswild story in each one, one I penciled and Dan inked and, the other one, Dan penciled and I inked. And, believe me, his artwork is so much better than mine! One's a spoof of baseball and the other one's about a rock band…They were both pretty horrible looking, but my pencils were terrible back then, just awful! That's why we don't like to talk about those books. Nobody involved with them wants anybody to even remember they existed.

CBC: *Well, history is history now, so we all come from somewhere. Would you say that, well, who was your biggest influence with your art at that point?*

Rick: I was really into Wally Wood, Drucker… Jack Davis has always been one of my absolute favorites. I remember, at the time, Wally Wood died. Dan was the one who told me about it. I remember exactly where we were when he mentioned it to me. We were in the dormitory and walking down to a little food store there. He broke the news because Dan was really into the *Comics Buyer's Guide*, and he was obviously very determined to be a cartoonist. So he knew all the news of the day.

Dan was also much more into… he's the one who told me about *RAW* when the first issue came out, because that was a big deal, though it was pricey. And, when he heard about Wally Wood dying, that was really a bummer. Much more so later on. Like I said, I was kind of oblivious to a lot of stuff back then, but that was a big shock. That a guy would die in his 50s. Wood was my favorite, best influence of all time. I never met him or anything… Anyway…

CBC: *And for Woody to take his own life…* [sighs] *Back to your influences…*



Above: *In a photo taken at the 1990 San Diego Comic-Con, Rick gives the camera his profile.*
Below: *"Cartoon Character Badges" by Rick, depicting his "Doofus" cast members*









Rick: Well, Kurtzman was one, for sure. I did go to one of the shows Phil Seuling did put on, an event that was a watershed moment for one of those college years, an E.C. convention, and I went there and I got to meet Gaines and get his autograph. Feldstein was there, Jack Kamen was there. I remember I thought that Kamen was Jack Davis, and I embarrassed myself in front of him! I think I was so visibly disappointed that I made Kamen feel uncomfortable. And the other thing was Mort Todd and I took acid during that convention. So, on the subway home, I was tripping and it was really uncool. I was like,"God, this was bad move, a really bad idea." And I actually did a comic strip about it. ["Meeting William Gaines," *The Comics Journal Special Edition,* V4, Winter '04] It was in one of those square Fantagraphics specials.

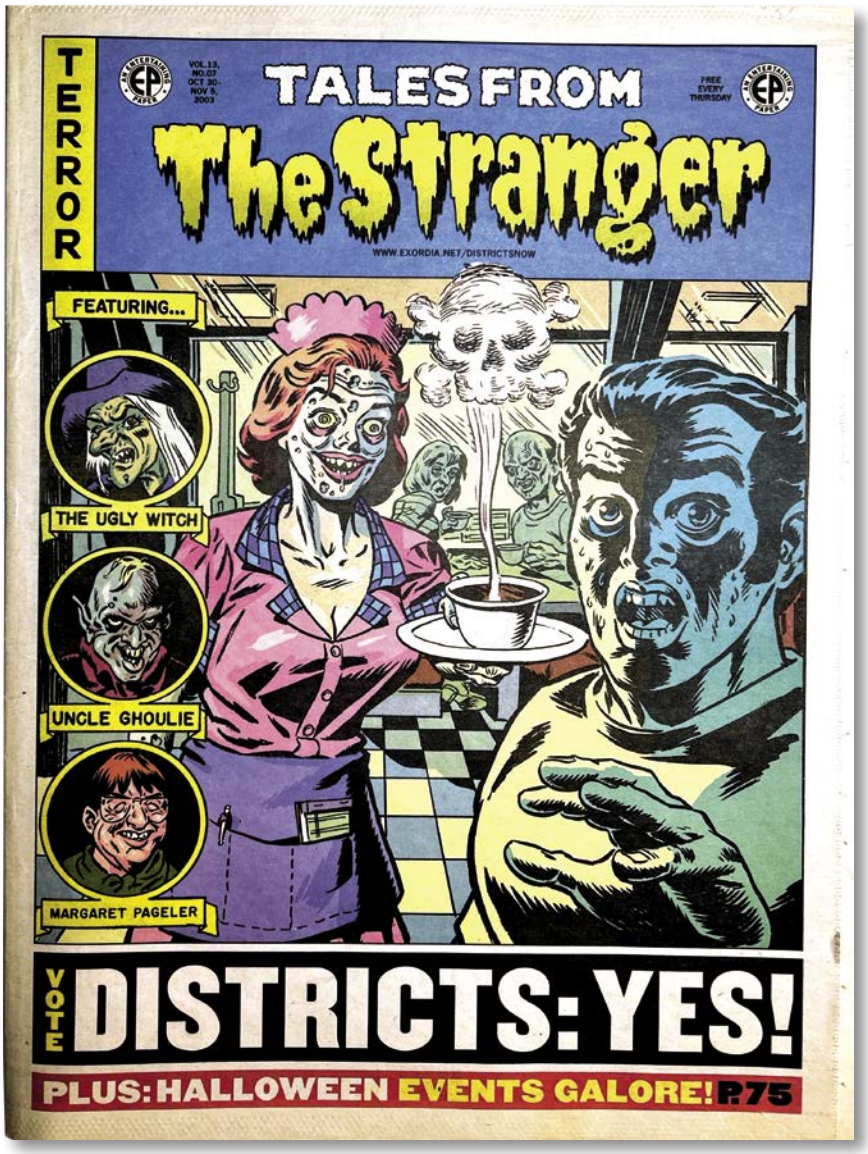
But I can say I got to meet Kurtzman, my hero. He was nice. In a setting like that, I think he was very cordial and bubbly, and so was Feldstein. I actually met Feldstein again. I met him when he was wheelchair bound when he was a special guest at one of the Boston conventions, and I had a better opportunity to talk to him and say, "Thanks for all you've done," because he really was an amazing editor of *MAD*. And I love his stuff, too. He's an amazing guy and he was really sweet, too… I didn't realize I was going to be having a chance to say those words to Al Feldstein that day.

CBC: *So what'd you want to do when you got out of college?*

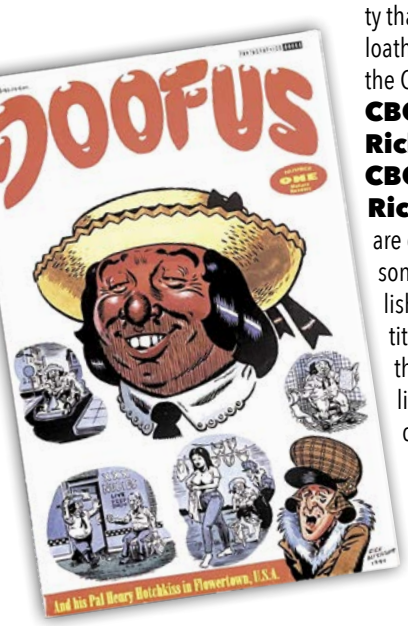
Rick: Well, I was hoping to get some kind of work in cartooning, and I did have an in at Marvel, I had a friend who got me an interview with Larry Hama for an inking gig. So I put together some inking samples, but I just wasn't good enough yet. I came back to Delaware and the job placement at Pratt was terrible. I had a degree in filmmaking, but there really wasn't much direction after you got your diploma. It was like, "Here's your diploma, you're on your own." I hope they're better now. But, at the time, I still was kind of clueless, too. I was probably one of these kids who probably wasn't ready to go right into college directly from high school. But since that's the way the structure of the whole thing is, that's what happened, right?

I wasn't really understanding what I was doing or what I was good at or how to monetize any of the skills I had. I

Photo and buttons courtesy of Rick Altergott. Doofus, associated characters TM & © Rick Altergott.



Above: *Very EC-ish cover art by Rick for* The Stranger *[V13 #7, Nov. '03], a Seattle-based giveaway that ran an Altergott comic strip for a time.* **Below:** Doofus *#1 [Dec. '94].*



really was pretty clueless. (I still kind of am in a way, especially when it comes to selling yourself and your artwork! Not good at it.) I dunno what to say. Some people are good at that stuff.

A lot to being a freelance cartoonist is creating a property that people are interested in, even though he might be loath to call it a "property," but nonetheless. Crumb had Fritz the Cat, regardless of him killing the character.

CBC: *Did you want to develop characters?*

Rick: Yes, I guess so. I had my character Doofus.

CBC: *When did that come about?*

Rick: I did my first mini [comic] around the time *Weirdo* are coming out. I guess this would be in the mid-80s or something, maybe later. And I did two of my own self-published books before Fantagraphics decided to publish the title. And then I only delivered two issues, which I don't think they were too crazy about. They probably would've liked it if I had been more productive who were the mini comic. That's where Doofus started. I don't know if I ever really had any plans for this to become a character. I mean, back then, you probably would've thought, "Oh, a newspaper character. You're going to create some kind of characters to sell to a newspaper." That was more of an option back then. But my characters would never work in that room. I mean, unless it was an alternative people, and those don't really even the most popular, those don't seem to be that viable. I don't think they are now.

So it's kind of in between two things. There was, I used to love the *Dick Tracy* reprints. You'd see stuff like that and you'd say, "Wow, this is when a newspaper strip really was something amazing!" It was like *everybody* read it. It was culture and it was something to strive for. It was something that a known quantity. So, to try to imitate that, even back then, you probably wouldn't have done a continuity strip like *Dick Tracy*. You would've done something like *Drabble* or *Dilbert* or something and you'd be doing it for the money. And for me, I wouldn't be passionate about something like that.

There's been a couple of times when I've been doing a weekly strip, and it is always a lot of fun to do. One thing I've learned is that if you look at it like, "Oh, I'm doing a weekly strip, how am I going to come up with all the ideas for this?" But, once you're actually in that, you've got a different mindset and your feelers are out and the ideas sort of come to you and you create, it just works out. At least I did. I didn't do it for that long, but I never had to buy a gag from somebody. So sometimes, I think, if you're in the game, the ideas come more readily because you're more receptive to it. I'd recommend it to anybody to try to put yourself into that situation. I don't think I'm unique. I think everybody would have that same experience.

CBC: *So was it a strip or was it a two-tier thing?*

Rick: Well, for mine, I got a couple of strips published, which was always nice because what I'm talking about later, when I did work for an alternative weekly called *The Stranger,* I filled in for Chris Ware when he was taking a break for a while, they had a hole in the paper. So I was asked to put some strips together, and that was a lot of fun. And that's what I'm talking about is the ideas just sort of come, or if you've got ideas you've written down and you've never executed them, now you've got to hammer them into shape. It's a good thing.

CBC: *How long did* The Stranger *thing last?*

Rick: I think I was in there for more than a couple months, maybe three months or so, maybe 12 strips, maybe longer.

TO BE CONCLUDED



The Stranger TM & © Noisy Creek, Inc. *Doofus*, self-caricature TM & ©Rick Altergott.

The Lady Pussycat & Me

Flash Thompson remembers his first time courtesy of Marvel's friendly and sexy secret agent

by STEVEN THOMPSON



Amazing Heroes, from Fantagraphics, was the first publication to pay me for my writing. That was in 1989. The editor was intrigued with my suggested article on Marvel's *Pussycat* and we exchanged several letters as I worked and re-worked the piece (ah, if we had only had e-mail then!). I must admit that I was actually trying to make back some of the $89 I had spent on purchasing 1968's *The Adventures of Pussycat* magazine at San Diego the previous year.

I had first discovered the obscure girlie strip back in 1970, in the back pages of my dad's hidden stash of the so-called "men's sweat" mags (which I later discovered were a sideline of Marvel's parent company). At age 11, I found the only slightly risqué strip itself not nearly as interesting as the fact that it was obviously drawn by the same guy that did "Supergirl"! What a comic book geek I was!

Ten years later, age 21 and legally allowed to do so, I was paging through a cheap, newsprint girlie mag the likes of which I had never seen before when I suddenly found, much to my amazement, a "Pussycat" strip! "They're still making this!!??" I thought to myself. Well, they weren't, of course. It was a reprint, a fact driven home by the appearance in that same magazine of Basil Wolverton's *Powerhouse Pepper* strip from the 1940s. In fact, some of the girls seemed to have been photographed in the '40s, too!

Lots of stupid jokes, ancient panel cartoons, murky black-&-white nudes and silly old comic strips. Who exactly was the intended audience for such a mixed bag of a mag? I, of course, bought it immediately.

In 1988, I purchased a copy of the b-&-w magazine that reprinted the character's early strips. With art by Wallace Wood, Bill Ward, Jim Mooney, and a gorgeous cover by Bill Everett, *Pussycat* might best be described as "Little Annie Fanny light."

When I wrote my article, I speculated that, because of the bombastic, alliterative dialogue in some of the stories, Stan the Man himself might well have been the writer. Artist Jim Mooney, in a later interview, confirmed that Stan did, in fact, write at least one, but that Lee's brother Larry Lieber wrote the rest of the ones on which the artist worked. Mark Evanier supplied the fact that Ernie Hart, otherwise not working for Marvel, also wrote some of her adventures.

When the issue of *Amazing Heroes* with my article came out, I was in heaven. At long last I was a professional writer (and I photocopied Fantagraphics' check to prove it!). The Waldenbooks where I worked even stocked *Amazing Heroes* and I looked forward to bragging about my piece (pardon the expression). Of course, that would be the issue where our national buyers decided to drop it because it hadn't been selling well.

My local comic book shop had even been shorted on that issue but saved me the two copies they got. Another nearby comic shop reluctantly agreed to save me all seven copies they had, but I had to pick them up by 7 P.M. that day. I took an hour-and-a-half bus ride to get there (on two buses, through three counties, in two states!) and made it with about 15 minutes to spare! On the equally long return bus ride, it occurred to me that I had cornered the local market on that particular issue, so no one I knew locally could ever glance through a copy and discover my article! *Sheesh!* And I wanted to be a writer! I signed and distributed a few of my copies, then began submitting ideas for a follow-up now that I had an established relationship with the editor. Unfortunately, that editor was already gone, the new guy didn't know me, and wasn't interested in any of the ideas I pitched. Discouragement set in. It would be years before I followed up successfully, but *Pussycat* made me a writer.

With the rise of the Internet, the *Pussycat* cult began to grow. Fred Hembeck wrote a great piece on the old girl. Wikipedia even has an entry now. The closing line of my *AH* article said that Pussycat "…can be found these days languishing in a distant corner of the Marvel Universe, filing her nails as she commiserates with Millie the Model, wondering why she couldn't have been born a mutant like all of the popular girls."

fin



Above: *Our intrepid columnist had his first paying writing gig in* Amazing Heroes *#172 [Oct. '89], with his article, "Pussycat, Pussycat." By the way, Flash used his full name, Steven Paul Thompson, as author.* **Inset left:** *Bill Everett drew this pin-up of the swingin' spy as centerspread in* The Adventures of Pussycat *#1 [Oct. '68].* **Below:** *Cover by Wild Bill of same.*

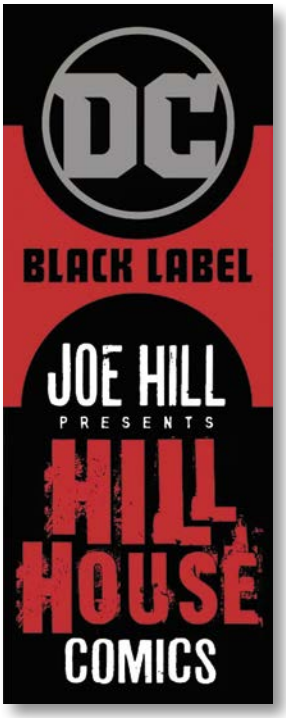


Pussycat TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. *Amazing Heroes* TM & © Fantagraphics, Inc.

Hill Comics are Good Comics

Writer Joe Hill on his titular comics line, the Gaiman controversy, and "dropping the bear"

Below: *Hill House Comics logo.*
Bottom: *Joe Hill in 2025. Photo by Colleen Sturtevant.*





Conducted by GLEN CADIGAN

[**Introduction:** *In the first two installments of our three-part interview with Eisner Award-winner and* New York Times *bestselling author Joe Hill, we discussed his influences, including the E.C. Comics he discovered through his father, Stephen King (yes,* that *Stephen King), breaking into comics via his prose work outside of comics, and what went into making his signature series, Locke & Key.*

[*Our third and final interview installment ventures into his foray over to DC Comics where he launched his own line – Hill House Comics – as well the crossover between* Locke & Key *and the* Sandman *universe. Also addressed is the Neil Gaiman controversy (with a follow-up statement submitted post-interview by Hill), the industry's future, and the future of Hill's comic book career. Conducted via Zoom on Sept. 12, 2024, thanks to Chris Ryall for facilitating the Q&A. –* **G.C.**]

Glen Gadigan: *If* Locke & Key *is done for now, that means the last issues were the crossover with* Sandman. *How did that come about?*

Joe Hill: It had been in the works for a long time. When I came back to comics as a college student, the comics I came back to were *Sandman*, because it was such a great horror comic and I had loved Alan Moore's *Swamp Thing*. Somehow I picked up that Neil was a protégé of Alan. [*Locke & Key* artist] Gabe [Rodriguez] loved *Sandman*, too. We all did. Almost every comic book writer of my generation who does somewhat mature fantasy grew up on *Sandman*, and *Sandman* taught us how to do *Locke & Key*.

The thing about *Sandman* is the guiding metaphor was dreams, and through the avenue of exploring dreams, Neil Gaiman could tell any kind of story he wanted to tell. So he could tell a horror story, he could tell a comedy, he could tell a sweet fantasy, and I realized that I could use the keys the same way. That every key had a different power, and would offer different opportunities to my characters, and that through the metaphor of the keys I could tell a scary story, I could tell a story of social concern about race in America, I could tell a funny story that dwells on ideas about children and how they play pretend. In that sense, *Sandman* was a landmark that Gabe and I were able to use to orient ourselves to the kind of stories we wanted to tell. But the other thing is, at some point I was thinking about *Sandman*, I was thinking about the great stories set in Hell, the stories where Lucifer gives away the key to Hell to Morpheus, and then Morpheus is stuck holding the key and has to figure out what to do with it. I remember joking with [IDW editor] Chris [Ryall] and Gabe, "What if that key is made out of Whispering Iron? Wouldn't that be funny?"

At some point I was approached by Mark Doyle of DC about doing some comics for him, and I floated him the idea of taking *Locke & Key* and having it cross over into the *Sandman* universe. I floated him that idea of, "What if the key to Hell was made out of Whispering Iron?" and I said, "Do you think Neil would go for that?" and he said, "There's one way to find out." And Neil thought it sounded pretty cool and signed off on it. On that basis, we were able to work out a story that was set in the past that tied into the very first couple issues of *Sandman*. I wanted to do something where we would be able to meet all the great Vertigo characters, so not just the characters from *Sandman*, but also Etrigan, the Demon… in an early draft we managed to get in Swamp Thing, but he fell out of it because it didn't quite work. But part of it was supposed to be that it was an adventure through that whole Vertigo universe, and it would be fun to play there, to open a door from the world of *Locke & Key* into *Sandman*, and it turned out pretty well.

Glen: *Usually, when there's a crossover, the crossover is pretty disposable. It either takes place on an alternate Earth or it's out of continuity. But this had relevance to* Locke & Key.

Joe: It was fun to write a story set in the past, specifically about Mary Locke, who had already turned up in a couple one-shots. It was also interesting [because], as a reader, I read a lot of historical fiction. It's true that most of what I write is horror, but a lot of what I read is historical fiction, and I've always wanted to try my hand at that because I'm sort of haunted by that phrase of Faulkner's ["The past is never dead. It's not even past."] Comic books have given me a safe space to play around with historical fiction without too much risk. So I was able to write about World War I in … *In Pale Battalions Go*… and tie the larger story into the grief and loss of so many young men on Flanders Fields. I was able to reflect upon that in the context of a larger *Locke & Key* story. And, by the same token, I did a story ["Sea Dogs"] about the American Revolution for Hill House which is about how we won the Revolutionary War by deploying werewolves against the British Navy. So I've been able to scratch my itch a little bit there.

In any event, going back to the tie-in, it was important

Hill House Comics TM DC Comics. Photo of Joe Hill at 2025 Tribeca Film Festival. Courtesy of photographer Colleen Sturtevant and Wikimedia Commons.

to be set in the past of *Locke & Key* because so much of the essential elements of the *Sandman* universe were most closely packed together in the days just after World War I. Then there's a scattering where one character is here and one character is there and, if I was gonna have Mary meet Morpheus and the Corinthian and Etrigan and all the rest of them, it was best to set it in close proximity to the events of *Sandman* #1, so that's what we did.

I have to circle back for a second because I'm wondering – and this is really a question for you: there have been some allegations around Neil. Is that something that you feel that we should discuss?

Glen: *It's the old question of, "Do you separate the art from the artist?"*

Joe: Well, that's true, and I think, in spite of some of what's come out, I still believe that *Sandman* is a landmark, and hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people have read that comic and loved it, and I don't think suddenly the work became terrible because we've learned some things that are painful to hear. I guess when talking about Neil's work, I don't want to strike a tone-deaf note by sounding like I haven't heard some of the stories that have emerged in the last few months, or that somehow I'm indifferent to them. I'm still processing. I think for people who have admired Neil's work, it's been quite a bit to take on board. Certainly for those of us who love Neil's work, it's been a heartbreaking season. It's been troubling.

[**NOTE:** *On February 13, 2025, Hill added the following:*]

Joe: In the time since we first did this interview, there have been further allegations, and the initial allegations have been fleshed out in upsetting detail. We've learned a lot more about Neil's sexual misbehavior, all of it awful, all of it heartbreaking. I looked up to Neil and I thought the world of his comics and short stories… and I know there were a lot of other comic fans and creators who felt the same way. Our sense of Neil's stories was uniquely tied up in our sense of who Neil Gaiman was as a person, and for that reason, I think the revelations have been uniquely damaging to his body of work. (It almost goes without saying that knowing what I know now, I wouldn't have crossed *Locke & Key* over to the *Sandman* universe. For whatever that's worth… maybe not much.) I'm real sorry he turned out not to be the guy we all hoped he was and even sorrier that he hurt so many people. What will we make of his fiction in 10 years? Who gives a damn? I don't. People are more important than art. Caring for people is more important than entertaining them.

Glen: *You mentioned Hill House Comics. What's the story there?*

Joe: Well, again, it was Mark Doyle. We had talked for a while about me doing some writing for DC in their horror space, and then Mark approached me one day and said, "What would you think about having your own imprint?" And, at the time, I was just engaged to get married. I'd been a divorced guy, and then I fell in love – fortunately, she fell in love with me, too – and we were going to get married, and I thought, "I don't think I want to be a novelist for a little while. I think I want to take some time off and focus on being a married guy." And we decided to try for kids, which is how I wound up with five sons, because we had twins. I had three kids when I was a kid myself, but then I got married again and thought, "Well, I'm still pretty young. I could have one more kid." We had twins, which has been a party, so I was focused on my life being more oriented in a domestic way, and I thought, "I don't really want to work on a novel right now, but maybe it would be fun to be a full-time comic book writer for a bit. I think I could do that, and maybe even be working a little bit less." I'm not sure I actually did wind up working a little bit less; I think I wound up working a little bit more.

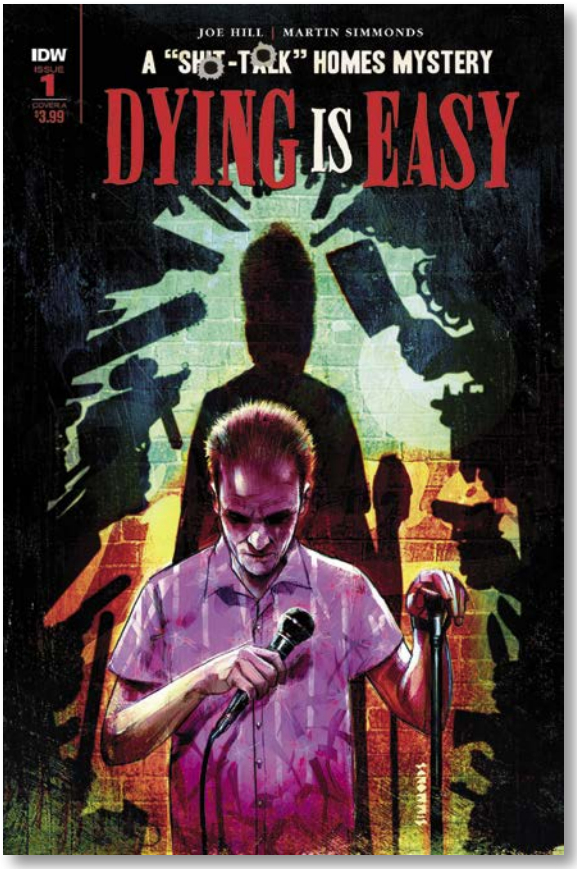
So many of my peers and the writers I admire, are guys like Matt Fraction and Gail Simone and Ed Brubaker, and these guys, they all carry multiple titles at once. They're always writing a few big names like *Captain America* and



Above: Basketful of Heads *#1 [Dec. '19] promotional image by Reiko Murakami.* **Below:** Locke & Key/The Sandman: Hell & Gone *#1 [Apr. '21], art by Gabriel Rodriguez.*



Basketful of Heads TM & © Joe Hill. *Locke & Key* TM & © Joe Hill & IDW Publishing. The Sandman TM & ©DC Comics.



Above: Dying is Easy *#1 [Dec. '19], with art by Martin Simmonds, is a standup comic murder mystery.*
Below: *Werewolves in service to the American revolution!* Sea Dogs *['21] collection cover, Dan McDaid.*



Iron Man, but also a few of their own creator-owned titles. They'll be carrying four or five titles at once, and I wanted to know if I could do that because I'd never written more than one comic at a time. I thought, "What must it be like to try to write two or three comics all at once?" Pretty difficult, actually. It's pretty difficult to do it well.

I think *Basketful of Heads* came out great. I love *Basketful of Heads.* I think it's a really fun story. I think "Sea Dogs" is really, really fun. I think *Plunge* is beautifully illustrated. In terms of the writing, I think I made a lot of the expected choices. I think that *Plunge*, in terms of the writing, feels very familiar. I wanted it to feel like John Carpenter's *The Thing*, that kind of arctic horror vibe, but I'm not sure I ever did anything that was really super-fresh. But then, sometimes my wife says she actually thinks that *Plunge* is almost like comfort food horror, that it did exactly what readers wanted. And then there are some readers who seem to think it's the best of those three, so I don't know. I might not always be the best judge of my own work. I will say that Stuart Immonen just delivered one jaw-dropping page of brilliance after another. So come for the writing, but stay for the art, for sure.

Glen: *Hill House did give you an opportunity to work with different artists.*

Joe: Yeah, and it was a trip, and it was also very different for me because, like I said, over time, Gabe and I'd become like an old married couple, where we have a perfect understanding of how the other thinks creatively. We're totally in sync, and so mixing it up and working with Leomacs [on *Basketful of Heads*], and I worked with Martin Simmonds on *Dying is Easy*, which isn't a Hill House title, but came out at the same time [was fun]. At one point, I was carrying "Sea Dogs," *Basketful of Heads, Plunge,* and *Dying is Easy,* so I was carrying four titles at once for a little while. It was a tremendous experience. I was very fortunate in all my collaborators, but we don't have that shared language, and so I had to rediscover it. I had to figure out, "What does each artist need from me?" "How do I communicate to this artist?" "What does this artist need to hear?" and "What don't I need to write?"

So working with each artist was a unique experience, and you're almost taking a different approach with each artist to play to their strengths to the best degree possible. That is actually a big part of the job as a writer of comic books. I think when you're working with an artist, you want to figure out, "What can I write that will give them a chance to shine? What can I write that will play to their strengths, and give them a chance to draw one beautiful page after another?" If an artist hates to draw horses, you probably don't want to write a story where every page is the cavalry riding over a hill, so you want to figure out, "What do they love to draw? What's going to look great on the page? What is this particular artist's milieu, and how can I exploit that? How can I tell a story that's going to play to those strengths?" So each comic was its own little experience of discovery of who that artist is and how can we best work together. It was fun. It was a lot of fun.

Glen: *Do you have a wish list of artists you'd still like to work with?*

Joe: [*Pauses*] Who have I not worked with that I would really love to work with? [*pauses*] Oh, Sean Phillips. It'd be great to work with Sean sometime. But him and Ed Brubaker are like the hand in the glove. They are a one-two punch completely committed to the *Criminal* universe, and so I think I'd have a hard time prying Sean free from Ed. But Sean has my email address, so if he ever wants to get a little strange, I'm his guy. I'm there for him.

Glen: *How actively involved were you with the other Hill House titles?*

Joe: To varying degrees. Carmen Maria Machado came in and she knew what she was doing. She had a great idea; she had a great concept. I loved those skinless men walking through the forest of *The Low Low Woods.* It was her first comic book, but she hit it like a natural. She's obviously a big comic book fan, and had an idea about how to craft the material for the page. I talked to her about the craft and stuff a little bit in the first couple of issues, but I don't remember having to say that much.

I worked with Mike Carey, M.R. Carey [on *The Dollhouse Family*]. He's an old hand. He wrote *Unwritten*, he had an endless run on *Lucifer*. That guy has forgotten more about comics than I'm ever gonna know. He didn't need a lot of advice from me.

Laura Marks was a newcomer [on *Daphne Byrne*], and Kelley Jones is an old hand, and has a strong vision. I think in the first couple issues of working with Laura, it was very much a "This is what can be done in 24 pages. This is how to arrange your material so that it flows well." Even little technical things, like you always want to have a reveal on the verso. You want to have it on the left-hand page, not the right-hand page, because if you have a big reveal on the right-hand page, the reader will look at it before getting to that part of the story, so you always want your surprise on

Dying is Easy TM & ©Joe Hill, Martin Simmonds, and IDW, LLC. *Sea Dogs* TM & © Joe Hill.

the left-hand page. I talked about, I think, for a good visual flow, it's great if you can have a full-page spread in the first three pages, and usually for the last page, or close to it. You don't always have to. They're not rules, they're suggestions, they're ideas. But generally, I think in the flow of a story readers want one big reveal early on, and one big reveal for the cliffhanger at the end.

So I was talking to Laura about some of that stuff, because she had never written a comic before; she had written for TV. She had done a bunch of work on the *Locke & Key* TV show. She had written for TV, she had written plays, but she had never written for a comic book before, and so I was able to do a little bit more for her in terms of talking about how to structure things. But she was flying by the last two issues. By then, she had the form well in hand, knew how Kelley worked, knew how he approached the material. She was writing for him in a kind of, "Okay, here's his strengths. Here's what I'm going to write to" [kind of way] and I think it worked out pretty well.



Glen: *Speaking about giving advice to someone who had never written a comic book before: did you give any advice to your dad when he wrote Skinner Sweet's origin in* American Vampire*?*

Joe: Yeah, I did. I read his script, and I said, "Dad, people don't use thought balloons anymore." He had all these characters doing thought balloons. Now when there's interior dialogue, people do it in captions, but thought balloons, that's like from Archie Comics in the 1960s. No one does thought balloons anymore. What's really funny is then Scott Snyder turned around and said to my dad, "I love thought balloons. Do it! If you want to do thought balloons, let your freak flag fly!" And, actually, Scott was right.

Have you ever heard that, when an expert plays chess, it can be sometimes harder for an expert to play an amateur than it is for them to play another expert? Because the other expert will do expected moves, whereas an amateur just does some weird sh*t, and you're like, "Why'd you do that? That doesn't make sense!" It's a little bit like that, where I've been writing comics for so long, and I was so steeped in how other writers write comics, that naturally I thought no one does thought balloons anymore. "Oh, Dad!" you know? But, actually, my dad was right. And Scott Snyder was right to say, "Do a thought balloon! That's really fun! People stopped doing thought balloons, it's time to bring 'em back!"

I don't think I've ever done thought balloons. You know what? This is maybe getting too technical, too "inside comics," but I think, if you're gonna do thought balloons, they should be visual so that, when you've got the thought balloon, instead of words in the thought balloon, you've got a picture in the thought balloon. I think that's fun. I'd do that. I never have, but I would.

Glen: *Hill House was launched not that long before the pandemic started.*

Joe: Yeah, that's true.

Glen: *You had all these comics coming out. There're no comic book stores.*

Joe: I know, right?

Glen: *So tell me about your experience with that.*

Joe: My experience with that is that, in early 2020, the pandemic was everywhere. Comic stores closed. Many of them did not reopen, and the business has still not recovered. That's my experience with it is that, right now, the business of owning comic stores, and the whole direct sales model to comic stores and to America's network of independent comic stores is very close to facing something like an extinction event. And I don't know what the future





Top: *Joe Hill teamed with DC to helm the Black Label line, Hill House Comics, which ran from 2019–22.* **Above right:** *Joe and his father, Stephen King, wrote* Road Rage: Throttle *['12], and appear on this variant cover.* **Right:** *Joe and Gabriel Rodriguez pose with their Eisner in 2009.*

All Hill House titles ™ & ©Joe Hill. *Road Rage: Throttle* ™ & © Joe Hill and Stephen King. Photo courtesy of Chris Ryall.



looks like, because I just don't think that readership [is coming back]. I think there was a small committed readership that turned up to comic stores every Wednesday and, if not every Wednesday, every month. The pandemic happened, and I don't think that readership has ever fully come back, and sadly, you see that in the sales of a lot of comic books, whether it's the independent stuff, the Image stuff, or DC and Marvel. Whatever it is, most of it's selling at depressed numbers from where they were six, seven years ago.

I think there are still people who love comics, but a lot of times they're trade-waiting. They'll pick up their graphic novel in Barnes & Noble or something. And the problem is, if people don't buy the single issues, a lot of stuff will never make it into trade. The comic book publishers just won't publish because you almost have to have the single issues to break even, so then you're not in the hole anymore when you do the trade. Certainly, the smaller comic book companies don't have the financial resources to pay for 122 pages of art without seeing any money until the book is published. They have to start making their money back with the single issues. So I think the business of comic books right now is pretty scary. The stores have my sympathies because I think a lot of them are week to week, month to month, clinging on by their fingernails to keep going.

Glen: *Do you think Hill House would be around if not for the pandemic?*

Joe: No. No, definitely not. Certainly not. Midway through the work on Hill House, *Basketful of Heads* was almost done, *Plunge* was just starting to come out, some of the other titles were midway through. I think *Dollhouse Family* was almost done, but about midway through the process, Warner Bros. decimated the editorial ranks at DC. More than decimated. One out of three members of the editorial staff was fired. People throughout the production teams were fired. They were all let go unceremoniously. The editor who had made Hill House happen, Mark Doyle, was fired. And it was quite a surprise to him. The axe came down, and he was gone. The remainders of the Vertigo team that had been working on the Hill House titles picked up the pieces, and we finished the series. But, all of a sudden, it was like there was this infrastructure that had been working on the comics that was gone. And you hardly knew who to send an email to. You hardly knew who to talk to. The wheels had come flying off.

It's my impression that DC has been handled pretty badly as a corporate asset, and that it hasn't really recovered from that first round of firing, that tremendous downsizing that they did. Maybe Warner Bros. doesn't care. Maybe it doesn't matter. Maybe the movies are what matter, and the important thing is to have big hit DC Universe movies, and then they can use that to sell T-shirts and stuff like that. But, in terms of the publishing, in terms of DC as a publishing house, once they fired Mark Doyle, it was hard to imagine there was going to be any kind of future for Hill House. I didn't know anyone. It was like the team that was building the comic was gone. So it was hard to imagine going forward.

Glen: *There's one aspect of your comic book career we haven't talked about: adaptations of your prose work which are written by other people.*

Joe: David Bohr handled *Rain*. Jason Ciaramella handled *The Cape.* Jason did *The Cape* initially as a single standalone issue with Zack Howard, and that issue was nominated for an Eisner, and led to the whole demented series. Jason and Zack picked it up and ran with it and told a whole story about Eric, my sociopath in a cape. And they did a thing – I want to say it was in the third issue; maybe it was the second – [where] Jason had an idea. Again, it was almost like Gabe saying, "Why don't we do a key to get rid of demons?" Jason had an idea that was ridiculous, and I laughed, and then I said, "You gotta do it. That's gotta be in the story."

So there are these two policemen investigating the anti-hero at the center of *The Cape,* Eric. And they think that Eric killed his girlfriend, but they're not sure they can prove it because the circumstances of her death are so mysterious. But they're staking out his house, and he's not well. He is not a well man. He's got his childhood cape, which gives him the power of flight, and to a degree, while he's flying, he has more lift, more strength than if he was just a man on the ground. The cape can do most of the lifting for him. So he flies to a nearby zoo, and he wraps a log chain around the neck of a bear, and then he takes off over the streets, and he drops the grizzly bear into the convertible with the two police officers, who are then forced to fight for their lives in a car with a hysterical, panicked bear. And it's a grizzly scene, no pun intended, but also hysterically funny. And ever since then, Jason and Chris Ryall and myself and some other people talk about dropping the bear. That, in every comic book, in every comic book series, readers want a moment where you drop the bear, where you do something they've never seen before, and until the moment they saw it, they didn't know how much they needed to see it. So you're always looking for that one absolute insane escalation of the situation.

I love *The Cape* and I thought that Zack and Jason absolutely hit it out of the park. I've been lucky in the adaptations. There have been a few other really good ones. I thought that Zoe Thorogood and David Boeher did a tremendous job with *Rain*, and created something very emotionally powerful. Restrained. Quiet. Well written. Well composed. Chris talked Zoe Thorogood into illustrating. I don't know how he did it. She's a huge star. It's really surprising, and she does her own stuff. She's a tremendous writer in her own right, and it boggles the mind that for some reason she agreed to do *Rain*. But she did and we were very lucky to have her. David is a tremendous writer who's got a lot more great comics in him, and probably some screenwriting, too. It will be exciting to follow his future projects.

You and I got into this kind of dire inside baseball stuff about DC Comics and the downsizing, and comic book stores are struggling. It's a beautiful

Doctor Strange TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

art form with tremendous possibility, and you hope that the business end of things will hang together so that people continue to expand on the art form, and that readers will continue to be able to enjoy new stories in this form. It's strange to talk about, because I just think comic books are almost fundamental to America's cultural story. Like American blues, like baseball, comic books are just one of these essential aspects of America's cultural tapestry, and it's kind of terrible to imagine what the future might look like without them. But I think we have to imagine it, because the business end of things doesn't look so great. And figuring out how it will continue as a business, that's a big problem to puzzle out.

Glen: *You started your comic book career with a "Spider-Man" story, but there's also the one page "Doctor Strange" story you did in* Marvel Comics 1000. *Outside of those two things, you haven't done any of the mainstream Marvel and DC characters. Have there been offers your way?*

Joe: Yeah. I turned down one comic that I can't believe I turned [down]. I won't say which one it was, but I turned down one that 13-year-old me never would've believed I would've said no to it. And 28-year-old me, who couldn't sell a novel and really wanted to be able to write *Ghost Rider,* wouldn't believe that I turned this thing down. But I was professionally tied up; I couldn't do it. I had a novel and a screenplay or something, and I just thought, I can't take on one more thing, no matter how much I want to do it.

But, over time, I've also come to think I've probably done my best work with my own characters. I did the "Spider-Man" story and the "Doctor Strange" story, and I don't look at either of them and think, "I killed that!" I mean, the "Doctor Strange" one-pager is a joke. It's a goofy joke on the idea that Strange's cloak has its own personality, basically a concept invented by C. Robert Cargill and Scott Derrickson, who did the *Doctor Strange* film. They're buddies of mine; they did *The Black Phone,* which was based on one of my stories. I love Scott. I love Cargill, but that thing about Doctor Strange's cape having a personality, that's not actually in the comics, that's a thing that they came up with for the movie that now has been retconned in because people love the cape. So my "Doctor Strange," it's a one-page visual gag on the idea that his cloak doesn't want to be washed, that it wouldn't want to go into an automatic washing machine. And we've already talked about the "Spider-Man" story where I think, by the time Tom Brevoort and I worked our way to a finished script, it was kind of a generic "Spider-Man" piece. So I don't know that I've actually done very good work when I've done the existing DC or Marvel characters.

Oh, no! That's not quite true. I think we did pretty good with the [*Sandman*] crossover. It was really fun to write. It was great to write Etrigan. It was great to write Lucifer. I feel, "Okay, I did a pretty good job with those characters."

Glen: *Are there any characters out there that if you were offered them, you would have to seriously consider it?*

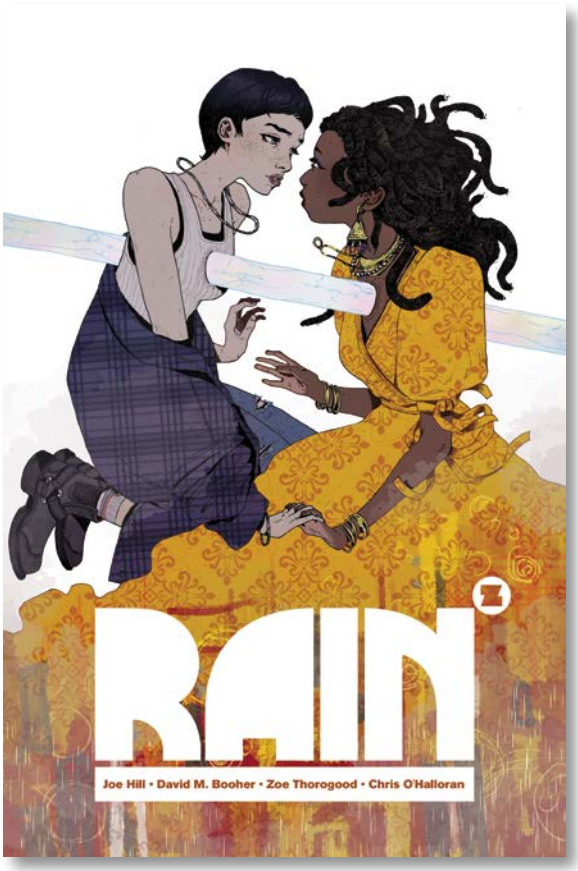
Joe: Like I said, I think at this point I'm mostly out of comic books. I got to do a bunch of stories that I wanted to do, and I really enjoyed it, and it was a blast. I think I'm going to take the next five years and try to write five novels. I'd love to be a book a year novelist. I always wanted to know what would it be like to write four or five comics at once, and so I did Hill House, and *Dying is Easy,* and that was a great experience. My dad has always been a book a year writer, and I'm kind of curious what that would be like. I'd like to be a book a year writer, and I don't think I can do that and carry comics, so I don't know that I could get offered anyone where I'd say, 'Yeah, I'm gonna [do it]."

At this point, I would only do a series character. I would only pick up one of the big mainstream characters if I was going to do more than one issue. It would have to be a six or 12-issue run; it couldn't be just one issue, because with time to stretch my legs, with time to explore the character, I might do something fresh and different. But it's clear to me that with the "Spider-Man" comic and the "Doctor Strange" [story], that I didn't really have enough literary real estate to do anything that was all that interesting or new. But I think, if I had 12 issues, I might be able to do something that feels reasonably fresh and exciting, I hope.

But is there a specific character? I don't know. [*pauses*] A few years ago, I would have leapt at the chance to write either *Superman* or *Captain America*, but no one would offer me those titles because I'm the "Scary Guy." People don't want me to write that; they want me to write *Tomb of Dracula.* Which would be fun; I love *Tomb of Dracula*. That was one of the comics I collected. But I would love the chance to write someone like Superman, who has a kind of timeless innocence about him, and a kind of timeless middle American decency. I like Captain America's inflexible moral compass, that he can work towards compromise, but one thing that is not open to compromise is his conscience. I love the idea of writing that kind of character, someone who's a sunlit figure, who stands for our noblest ideals. I feel like I could have a lot of fun with that. That would be cool. But like I say, I'm the "Scary Guy," I write horror fiction. And so generally when I am offered a character, it's someone on the darker end of the spectrum.

Glen: *I do have one last question for you: where do you keep your Eisner?*

Joe: I have a little shelf of some of the awards and action figures over there across the office, next to a couple of cute, fuzzy owls that my mom gave me. I don't like to have awards or anything where I can see them. I couldn't write with my awards on a mantle over the desk, because they'd just be a reminder of, "Well, you did good stuff once. You used to be good." It was pretty amazing. To this day, I still feel in a state of disbelief that I won the thing, and it's pretty cool, I guess.



Above: *Adapting Joe's novella, Rain, David M. Booher was scripter and Zoe Thorogood was the artist for the five-issue mini-series published by Image,* Joe Hill's Rain. *This is the cover for #1 [Jan. '22].*

Previous page: *Joe and artist Mike Allred's humorous single-pager starring the Sorcerer Supreme and his cape appeared in* Marvel Comics *#1000 [Oct. '19].* **Below:** *"The Cape" was another Hill story adapted by another writer, this time Jason Ciarmella, for comics.* The Cape *#2 [Aug. '11] variant cover by Nelson Dániel, published by IDW.*



Rain TM & ©Joe Hill & Syzygy. *The Cape:* story © Joe Hill; art © IDW, LLC.

The Martial (Color) Artist

Comics veteran Rachelle Rosenberg has a black belt in karate and also excellent color sense!





Top: Cloak or Dagger *#3 [Dec. '25] cover variant, art by Todd Nauck.* **Above:** *Deadpool: April Pool's Day #1 [Apr. '26] variant cover, art by David Baldeon.* **Inset right:** *The colorist herself (who colored all the covers seen here).* **Below:** Marc Spector: Moon Knight *#7 [Aug. '26] cover, art by Paulo Siqueira.*



by DARRICK PATRICK

[*Rachelle Rosenberg is an exclusive Marvel colorist who has worked on titles such as* Amazing Spider-Man, Moon Knight, Star Wars, Avengers, Deadpool, Black Panther, Magneto, Spider-Woman, Power Pack, Daredevil, Gwen Stacy, Fantastic Four, *etc. Outside of the comics world, the Wisconsin-based artist is a (once competitive) National Physique Committee Wellness bodybuilder.* – **D.P.**]

Darrick Patrick: *What was the journey that led you to a career in the arts?*

Rachelle Rosenberg: I have wanted to do art ever since I could remember. I was always coloring or drawing. My dream as a kid was to one day be an animator for Disney. When I started college at Laguna College of Art and Design, my initial major was animation. After my first year, I decided I did not want to work for a big animation studio where I would have to commute and live in L.A., so I switched my major to Illustration. I was heavily focused on children's book and advertising illustration, and my typical medium was oil paints. It wasn't until I started having kids that I transitioned to digitally painting my illustrations, which is what led to me coloring comic books.

Darrick: *Who are some of the people that greatly influenced you while growing up?*

Rachelle: The people who influenced me most growing up were my parents. They taught me the importance of hard work, kindness, and putting family first. Their love and guidance helped shape the person I am today.

Darrick: *Do you have any words of advice for other individuals looking to make a career with their artistic abilities?*

Rachelle: Do not ever give up. The art field is huge. There are opportunities everywhere. The best thing you can do is find your niche in art and get really good. Then just pursue it like crazy and never give up.

Darrick: *How do you spend your time on a typical workday?*

Rachelle: Typically, I wake up and go to the gym. Then it's emails, downloading my flats, and working. I usually work a "9–5-ish" workday. I try to not work weekends anymore or pull any overnighters. After work, I spend time with my family.

Darrick: *For new readers who may not be familiar with your work, what are some projects of yours that you would recommend to begin with?*

Rachelle: I have worked on some incredible titles, but my favorite and most proud is *Moon Knight*. The Jed MacKay run… all of them. They are all colored by me and it's just been the best four years of my career being a part of such an incredible team of people.

Darrick: *Who are a few of the people in the comics industry that you hold a high deal of respect for?*

Rachelle: This is a hard one. I have way more than a few to name. I've been working in comics for almost 18 years, and it really becomes kind of like family. There are so many creators, writers, and editors that I hold a high deal of respect for. People that have pushed me to be better, both professionally and personally.

Darrick: *Outside of creating artwork, what are you other interests?*

Rachelle: Many of my followers probably know, but I love bodybuilding. I did compete for a few years. I am no longer competing, but it is something I still really love and enjoy doing. I have also really gotten back into playing Skyrim on our PS5. I am honestly kind of addicted at this point. [*laughs*]

Darrick: *What is your oldest memory?*

Rachelle: One of my oldest memories is being in kindergarten, waiting for my dad to pick me up, and drawing pictures for all my friends also waiting to be picked up.

Darrick: *Tell us something about you that most people don't know.*

Rachelle: I have a first-degree black belt in Karate and used to co-own a martial arts studio with my husband.

Darrick: *If you had super-powers, what would they be?*

Rachelle: If I could have any super-power, it would be the ability to heal. I'd want to ease people's pain, help them recover, and make the world a little better.

fin



All characters TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. Photo courtesy of Rachelle Rosenberg.

Max Kudos for Mini Looks

Plus Joe Frank weighs in and we hear from one of Pat Broderick's former artistic collaborators

[*Seems like every time one of my appeals for letters o' comment is sent off to press – as happened with* CBC *#45 – a deluge of missives follows, rendering moot my request! The e-mail box has been active as of late, with too many to fit in this ish, but we'll endeavor to catch up!* – **Ye Ed.**]

Bob Pfeffer

I just wanted to drop you a note to let you know how much I am enjoying *Comic Book Creator*. I love that, while still focusing on "name" creators, you're also highlighting some more obscure and underground artists every issue. I feel I am pretty well-versed in comic book history, but every single issue you cover someone or something new to me.

As a small press/self-publisher from many years back, I particularly have been enjoying the coverage of smaller pressers from back in the day like Bruce Chrislip, Michael Dowers, and especially the three-parter on Steve Willis. There are a few more that I think might deserve a bit of coverage that I would like to recommend:

Matt Feazell has influenced me and many, many other small press creators with this DYI attitude and promotion of mini comics over the years. He has had an amazing long run as a comic creator, from starting in underground comics (*Anarchy Comics* #3) to his *Not Available Comics* (Cynicalman) to *Zot, Disney Adventures,* etc. He was recently awarded the Transformative Work award at CXC 2025.

Sam Henderson was a fellow high school comic creator when I was publishing with my pal, Randy Paske. He and Bobby Weiss put out *Captain Spaz* and it was simply the funniest thing I had ever read. Sam has gone on to a long career with other comics (*Magic Whistle*) and animation (*SpongeBob*) work and is still putting out some of the funniest comics around. Keep up the good work.

[*After my editorial last ish, it's nice to have the mail pick up. Thanks for the great suggestions, Bob! I will indeed keep up the "mini coverage"! Keep ye eyes peeled!* – **Ye Ed.**]

Joe Frank

An overabundance of eclectic material, this issue [CBC 42]. Luckily, some of it connected. Especially intriguing was "Heroes of the Seventies," introduced by *Esquire*. I'd never even heard of the project, so a welcome surprise. Better still, I was interested in four of the six artists. So, "new" work I wasn't expecting at this late date.

Sadly, it seemed limited and satirical rather than an honest tryout for something of lasting importance. True, *Esquire* wasn't publishing comics. The direct market was still years away and terms still favored the publishers. But it could have lead to self-published work, if any had faith in the process, so early on. Certainly, Ralph Reese, the onetime Wood assistant, could have worked up concepts for *witzend*. Or he, Wrightson, Smith and Jones could have instigated new players for *National Lampoon,* to which they all eventually contributed.

Alan Weiss noted the assignment "...came and went, and nothing happened..." If so, was there anything substantial offered to merit praise or continuing interest?

Liked part one of your conversation with Shary Flennikken, probably because I recall her "Trots and Bonnie" strip in *National Lampoon*. I didn't stick around long enough to see her issues as editor. So, curious to see what she has to say about that next time.

"The Justice Society and Me" was great fun. Terse, but nostalgic, relatable joy with someone at the dawn of his collecting experience.

Loved the unseen (by me) Neal Adams cover to *Deathstroke* #15. I could identify some but hardly all. I see Siegel and Shuster, Infantino, Giordano, O'Neil, Goodwin, and Schwartz. Do any of these covers come with an identification chart as did Neal's Superman Vs. Muhummad Ali? Do any of your more DC-oriented readers know more?

I nearly always enjoy Fred Hembeck. This time was twice as fun. Not only did we get nine Marvel heroes, done in his pleasing style, but a look at the short-lived Harvey heroes of the mid-'60s. Aside from Fighting American, I know very little about them.



This page: *Boy, it was great to receive a letter from Steve Willis, who thanked me for* CBC*'s look at the cartoonist over three issues, and he offered, "Please feel free to draw on me (pun intended) as a resource" for future coverage of the mini comics! I'll certainly do that, Morty Man! In his missive on this page, Bob Pfeffer fails to mention his imprint name, High School Comics, so check out an interview with him at:* https://poopsheetfoundation.com/index.php/history-articles/17-bob-pfeffer-hsc-interview? *Covers here include Matt Feazell's* Cynicalman *and "America's* only *super-hero,"* Captain Spaz by *Sam Henderson and Bob Weiss!*







Cynicalman TM & © Matt Feazell. Captain Spaz TM & © Sam Henderson and Robert Weiss.



Pat Broderick? I recognized the name, obviously, but realized I'd read so few of his comics over the years. Maybe some issues of *The Micronauts?* Still, I really enjoyed both interviews and the coverage of his career.

Two items, in particular, were quite impressive. First, when comics got slow and a struggle for him, he got into other fields. He wasn't going to put up with anything and everything. He still had his skills and could make a living elsewhere. It wasn't comics or nothing. Secondly, he returned to the field on his own terms, doing new material, of his preference, on his own schedule. So personal satisfaction in content and production schedule.

I was tremendously impressed with your rare '75 photoshoot, for better poses, featuring such ninja masters of the day, such as Walter Simonson, Jack Abel, and Ralph Reese. No shots of Abel wielding a blade, but maybe he was the one offering sagely advice to his malevolent henchmen…?

Pat also referenced something that could – and should – stand closer examination. That is, the Crusty Bunkers gathering at Continuity. When did it start and end? Were people still working in that manner after the pseudonym went away? Is there a list of participants? If so, can the remaining ones identify what they contributed and to which stories? That'd be not only informational but great fun to read.

My only suggestion, this time, is to devote more pages to the cover feature, if possible. Ideally, as the selling point, it should take up at least half the issue and be explored with both interviews and essays. Yes, even if it means forgoing 80-year-old lawyer comics.

[*Yes, for sure, a "Crusty Bunkers" feature would be a neat fit in these pages, Joe. In my interview with the writer, in* CBC *#37, Steve Englehart said the group started with his lonesome self assisting Neal Adams in the time before "Stainless Steve" became a comics scribe. And though Steve's name isn't included on the Grand Comics Database (at* comics.org*) list of artists who worked at Continuity, he is among the crew named in the Wikipedia entry. Generally, while assists abounded at Adams' comics publishing company Continuity Comics [1984–95], the designation seems to have ended by the time of the DC "Implosion," circa 1978. But we should ask our next letter writer to weigh in, himself a proud Crusty Bunker from the mid- to late '70s (and among comics' finest embellishers, to boot!).* – **Y.E.**]

Terry Austin

What a treat it was for me to "catch up" with my old studio-mate Pat Broderick via the interviews in your latest issue [*CBC* #42]! I haven't seen Pat in person since he walked out of Continuity Associates heading for Florida back in the '70s (the reference photo on page 57 and the thumbnail layouts that you printed on page 58 were rescued by me from the garbage can on that fateful day when Seaboard/Atlas editor Jeff Rovin pleaded with me to search for the only copy of the script for "The Dark Avenger," so that I could finish penciling it and they could have it lettered!). I would later happily be paired with Pat by Archie Goodwin on a black-&-white Iron Fist/Sons of the Tiger team-up [*Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* #18, Nov. '75] and by Julie Schwartz on the Firestorm/Martian Manhunter team-up in *Justice League of America* # 200 [Mar. '82], but had no contact with him until someone put us together on Future Comics' "Peacekeeper" [in *Metallix – Free Comic Book Day* #1, Apr. '03] decades later, when we shared several delightful phone conversations that acquainted me with the terrific man that Pat has become. So great to hear that he is still plying his trade with his old enthusiasm intact! Best of luck to you, ol' pard!

One slight quibble with Patrick's memory: he states that I inked backgrounds on his *Planet of Vampires* for inker Frank McLaughlin. Untrue, I'm sorry to say, but it did cause me to think about the folks that I actually inked backgrounds for back in the day: Dick Giordano (three years running) and Neal Adams at Continuity, of course; Bob Oksner and Tex Blaisdell on *Superman* and *Action Comics*, Jack Abel on an [*Amazing Adventures*] issue of Craig Russell's "Killraven," Ralph Reese on some of his *Son of Sherlock Holmes* graphic novel, and I believe that's it! I once turned down the chance to spend the night assisting Wally Wood on one of his jobs, which would have been a thrill, but I knew that the cigarette smoke and country music would have loosened my already tenuous hold on sanity!

[*Terrific to hear from you again, Terry! You were a great help back in the days of my* Comic Book Artist *magazine, especially on both the Atlas/Seaboard and Alex Toth issues. Good to be back in touch!* – **Y.E.**]

Michel Bohbot

Just finished reading the John Buscema interviews you published in *Comic Book Creator* (wonderful magazine, by the way) and I am a bit puzzled by Buscema's assertions that Alcala was messing everything up. Yes, Alcala drew in the eyelashes, but I didn't care one bit when I first saw those groundbreaking issues of *The Savage Sword of Conan* in college. In fact, I was mesmerized.

When I tried to draw like that (but badly), I was nevertheless encouraged

Above: *Your humble editor didn't realize that Terry Austin was inker of the* Peacekeeper *cover by Pat Broderick featured in* CBC *#42, as well as on interior pages, but not much saw print (including this #2 cover) as the future of Future Comics went dark not long after yours truly visited the Tampa-based imprint in 2003. Ye Ed intends to share about that visit with "Futurians" Dick Giordano, Bob Layton, and very same Mr. Broderick in a near (ahem) future issue!*

Peacekeeper TM & © Future Comics. Artwork courtesy of Terry Austin and Walter Simonson.

by my great art teacher, Bob Mumford, not to give up. In fact, he lent me a huge first edition of a Gustave Dore book. Talk about fascination and intimidation all at once. But it did the trick and I did end up an illustrator. :) But I've digressed.

I went looking online for some proof that his pencils had been massacred but was only able to find two pages of pencils (on the Heritage Auction site) I could compare. One is page 48 from *SSOC* #36 [seen at right]. And while the girl is not drop dead gorgeous in the finish, the pencils are barely there.

The other sample is inked by Tony DeZuniga in *SSOC* #40, page 5. The finish is great, but the pencils are still rudimentary at best.

No shade on Buscema's blocking and pacing of his stories but this is nowhere near the brilliance of his early Avengers-era pencils. I realized he was just blocking things out as a way to make more money, but to condemn Alcala seems on the face of it to be silly. But wounded pride can be silly and the praise Alcala was getting was perhaps too much.



That said, I would love to see if you or any readers have any examples of *SSOC* where Buscema's pencils where tight enough for him to legitimately complain about Alcala's inking.

[*Thanks, Michel. Any examples, people?* – **Y.E.**]

fin

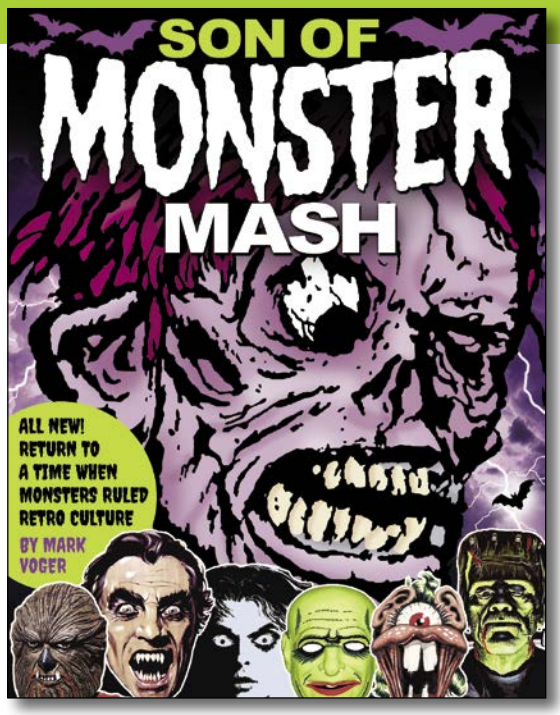
Above: *Compare John Buscema's pencil breakdowns with Alfredo Alcala's finished inks on this page from* The Savage Sword of Conan *#36 [Dec. '78].*

Conan TM & © Conan Properties International LLC. Pages courtesy of Michel Bohbot.

SON OF MONSTER MASH

by RetroFan's MARK VOGER

ALL NEW! ALL GRUE! It's the long-awaited sequel to author/designer **MARK VOGER**'s Rondo Award-winning book **MONSTER MASH: THE CREEPY, KOOKY MONSTER CRAZE IN AMERICA 1957-1972**, which redefined Monster Kid fandom with a visually immersive graphic approach. This companion book revisits the period, while examining the literary and cinematic roots of its fictional precedents (**MARY SHELLEY**'s *Frankenstein*, **BRAM STOKER**'s *Dracula*); early silent films (*Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Nosferatu*); the golden age of monster movies (with such stars as **LON CHANEY SR., BELA LUGOSI, BORIS KARLOFF** and **CHANEY JR.**); the 3-D and teenage monster movie trends; the **EDGAR ALLAN POE** adaptations and **HAMMER STUDIOS** releases of the period; the monsters of **SIXTIES TV**; the eye-popping toys, memorabilia and comics; and the aftermath of the influential Monster Craze. It features interviews with filmmakers such as **RAY HARRYHAUSEN** (*20 Million Miles to Earth*), **ROGER CORMAN** (*The Pit and the Pendulum*) and **SIDNEY PINK** (*Reptilicus*), and stars like **GLORIA STUART** (*The Invisible Man*), **RICOU BROWNING** (*Creature From the Black Lagoon*), **HARUO NAKAJIMA** (*Godzilla*), **JONATHAN HAZE** (*Little Shop of Horrors*), **HAZEL COURT** (*Curse of Frankenstein*), **KATHRYN LEIGH SCOTT** (*House of Dark Shadows*), **ROBERT QUARRY** (*Count Yorga, Vampire*) and many others. No monster fan should be without this treasure trove of terror!



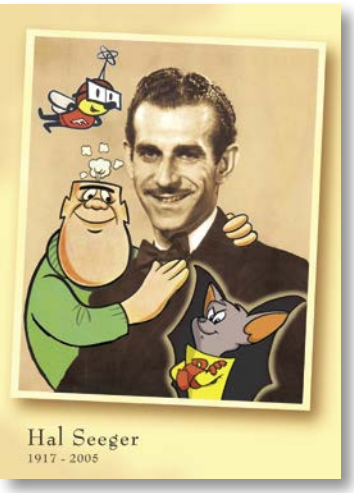
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The Comics of Hal Seeger

Getting the story of the father of The Farmer's Daughter, G.I. Jane, *and* Muggy-Doo, Boy Cat!



Above: *Undated shot of Hal Seegar being embraced by his 1960s children's cartoon creations Fearless Fly, Milton the Monster, and Batfink, all used as Hal's memorial card after he passed away in 2005.* **Below:** *Hal in the 1960s, years after his brief career as writer in the comic book field.*

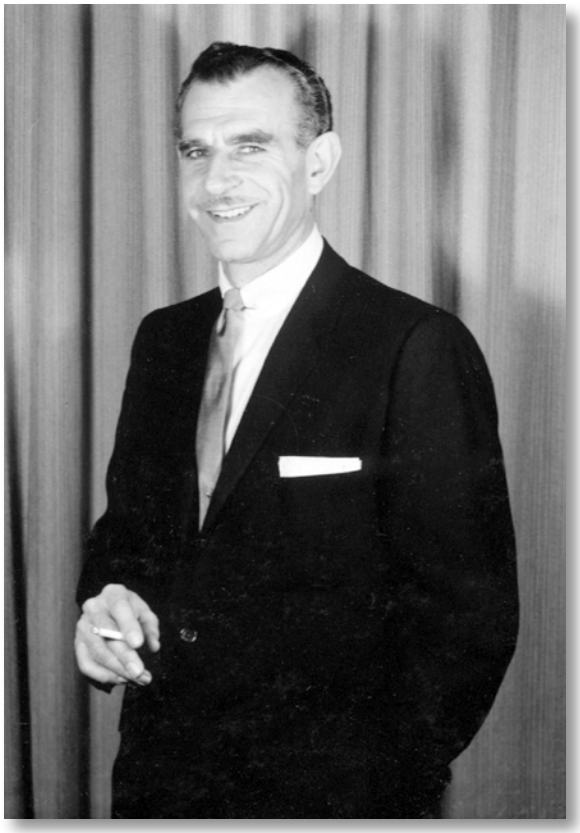
by SHAUN CLANCY with JON B. COOKE

Back in 2012, I went in search of the family of Hal Seeger [1917–2005], best known for his 1960s animation work on his creations *Bat Fink* and *Milton the Monster*, and who, less known, also worked in the comic book realm in the '40s and '50s. In my research, I learned that he created and wrote some curious series during his brief comics career, *Broadway-Hollywood Blackouts* [three issues, '54], *The Farmer's Daughter* [four issues, '54], and *G.I. Jane* [10 issues, '53–54] in addition to years scripting teenage humor comics for DC.

Hal's daughter-in-law, Holly Whitstock Seeger, was a tremendous help through her gathering of recollections by Seeger family members and her digging into the Seeger archives, piecing together the following biography:

Harold Seeger was born, on May 16, 1917, in New York City, to Russian-born Samuel and native New Yorker Jeanette. Among his brothers, Hal was second-born and, by age 16, he attended the New York Illustration Studios, located in Manhattan's Flatiron Building, where he completed his high school requirements. "Hal always liked drawing," Holly said.

Holly, who met Hal when she went to work for him in 1978 and soon thereafter married his son David, shared, "I remember him saying that one of his very first jobs was drawing the cartoon character, Popeye. He would always mention that the similarity of their names; Seeger and [Popeye creator E.C.] Segar was often pointed out when the name of Popeye came up in conversation… His younger brother, Lou, wrote to me saying, 'When Hal worked for Max Fleischer, he wrote the [scripts] for the *Popeye* cartoons.'"



She continued, "In 1934, at age 17, he was hired by Fleischer as an assistant to Bud Counihan, writer/cartoonist of the *Betty Boop* comic strip. Evidently, Bud was overwhelmed by his weekly schedule of writing and drawing six daily cartoon strips, plus the full-page Sunday [strip], so, in Hal's own words, 'Bud and Max liked my samples and I was hired to write the daily strips, plus the 12-panel Sunday page and make rough drawings as a guide for Bud. (What a coup that was for a teenager… plus I was paid $20 – a *week!* – Wow!)'"

At some point, in his late teens, Hal moved to the Florida-based studios of the Fleischer brothers, where he worked on animated features *Gulliver's Travels* and *Mr. Bugs Goes to Town*. Soon enough, he established a career as animation producer, eventually opening his own production company, in New York City, which specialized in TV commercials.

"When WWII began" Holly said, "men felt compelled to enlist to protect America. Although Hal was ineligible due to a past leg injury, he joined the U.S. Army Signal Corps, based in Long Island, along with Myron Waldman and a host of screenwriters. This brought him back to New York and, after the war, he stayed there furthering his career."

In 1948, Hal co-wrote a TV script with DC Comics editor Murray Boltinoff, "Rough Sketches," produced by then writer/director/producer of *The Adventures of Superman* radio show and later TV series, Robert Maxwell. That same year, Hal created a DC teenage humor title, an Archie knock-off called *Leave It to Binky,* which ran for a decade (and later revived between '68–'71), for a total of 81 issues.

As his career in animation was usually associated with Max Fleischer, Hal's comics career, short as it was, had an overriding connection with DC, even if surreptitiously. In January 1953, apparently on leave from film work, Hal went into partnership with Stanley M. Estrow, clever bankruptcy lawyer, co-founder of Leader News Company, and longtime associate of DC publisher Harry Donenfeld, to establish Stanhall Publications. There's little doubt that Donenfeld helped bankroll the company – as DC and Stanhall shared the same Manhattan address of 480 Lexington Avenue – with DC staffer Ira Schnapp identified by letterer/historian Todd Klein as a logo designer for at least one Stanhill title.

The outfit had a brief life, with 25 separate issues cover-dated January '53–December '54, and all seem to have been written by Hal, an eclectic batch encompassing five titles, all humorous but distinctly different from one another. In addition to those cited in the first paragraph, there was Archie-like *Oh, Brother!* [four issues, Jan.–Oct. '53] and funny animal *Muggy-Doo, Boy Cat* [four issues, July '53–Jan. '54].

A few years before his foray as comics producer, Hal had married Beverly Arnold, who helped her spouse with some of the comic book material,* including the naming of *Muggy-Doo*. Holly explained, "Beverly Seeger always told me that the name was derived from her expression, 'This is a "muggy doo" kind of day,' referring to the weather."

*Beverly, who contributed cartoon voices to some of her husband's efforts, also originated the star character's name of Hal's one comic book for Dell, *3-D-ell* #3 ['53], Flukey Luke, a funny animal/Western mashup.

Cartoon characters TM & © the estate of Hal Seegar. Photo, memorial card courtesy of Holly Whitstock Seeger.

At some point, Holly uncovered an autobiographical essay by Hal and she paraphrased, "Hal and Beverly were living in Malvern, New York, on Long Island… After the birth of their second child, Hal wanted to earn more money and came up with the idea of making his own comic books. He was reluctant to go to DC Comics with his idea because he wanted to retain ownership, as opposed to the creators of Batman and Superman."

Hal said, "So, instead of offering DC my ideas, I went to talk to a much smaller company. I developed several comic books: *Oh, Brother!,* which was a teenage character and, since I was DC's top writer of teenage comics, I felt I could not miss!" *Broadway-Hollywood Blackouts* consisted of one- to three-page vaudeville gags, often starring comely lasses. That book featured a phrase Hal's children vaguely recalled, which Holly elicited from her spouse and a sister-in-law. David Seeger said, "I remember hearing about it as 'blackouts' meant quick jokes," and Susan Seegar offered, "I think we remember Dad talking about blackouts as a form of writing rather than a publication he was involved in. He liked that type of humor. Today we call them sketch comedy."

In that mini-bio, Hal said, "There was a very well known Broadway show that had a terrific run a few years back. It was *Hellzapoppin*. [Joel 'Ole'] Olsen and [Harold 'Chic'] Johnson were the comics who created and starred in the show. Olsen lived in Malvern. I phoned him and told him I was trying to do a comic book titled *Blackouts*. ('Blackouts' were from what burlesque was made of! And [burlesque was] from where Olsen and Johnson came.) I asked 'Ole' if he had any books on blackouts. He had a library full!"

While *Blackouts* was mildly risque, *The Farmer's Daughter* and *G.I. Jane* were a tad more provocative. "I felt that a comic book that was 'suggestive,'" Hal explained, "but did not cross the line, would be worth trying." Holly stated the books were "styled after the pin-up girls popular during World War II."

Of course, Stanhall debuted just as the field was thrust into existential turmoil by the national Wertham-led anti-comics campaign, so the company was not long for the world. "Several issues were published," Holly said, "and he wrote that he made nothing more than 'a fair writing fee,' but he did retain ownership of all his characters, including 'Flukey Luke,' the 3-D comic for Dell."

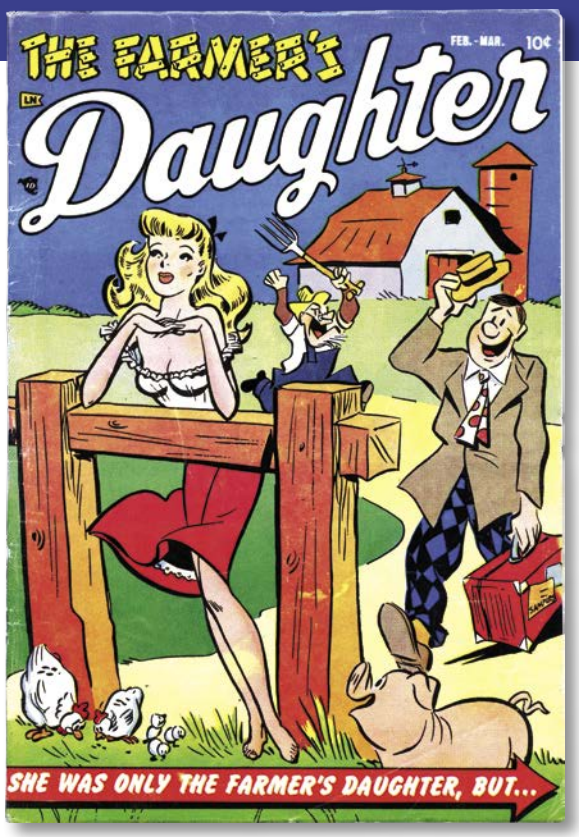
Of that three-dimensional title, Holly said, "In going through some old files, I came across black-&-white pictures from the original photo shoot for 'Flukey Luke.' According to [Hal's brother] Lou Seeger, '[Hal] was living in Malvern when he did the comic book stuff and once let me do one in which the hero or villain was a chameleon.'" Holly added, "I personally recall Hal telling me that they shot the entire thing in their garage and backyard."

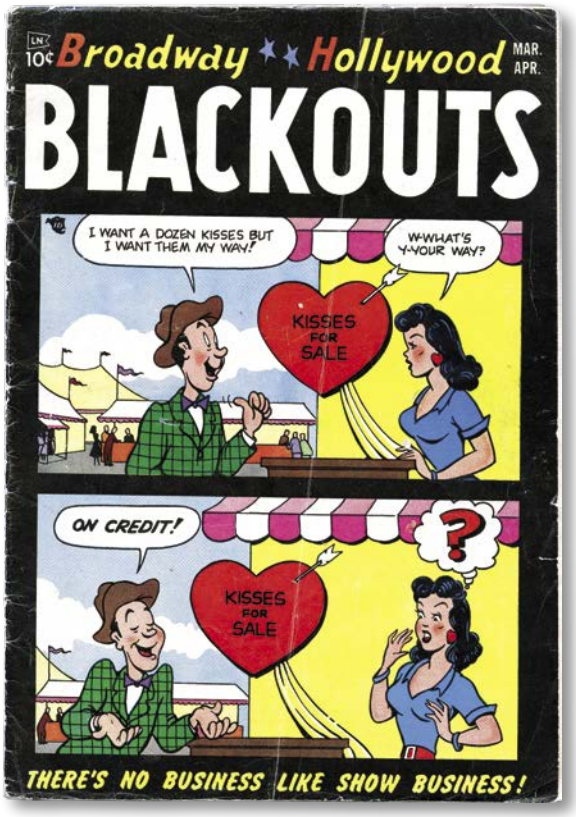
And Hal did, indeed, retain ownership of his '50s creations, resurrecting Muggy-Doo, Flukey Luke, and others for his '60s TV cartoon shows, though there were at least two conspicuous omissions. Holly said, "Many of these [characters] were later used in his *Milton the Monster* cartoon show, which appeared on ABC-TV, in the '60s. This must have been when he was partnered in Stanhall Publishing, which I also remember him mentioning. In Hal's own words, 'There were two comic book titles that could not be included, both for the same reason. They were too sexy for the early 60's. One was *The Farmer's Daughter* and the other was *G.I. Jane.* All the titles were copyrighted in my name, in 1953.'"

Holly said, "The above quote was written in the context of his objection to Disney's 1997 film, *G.I. Jane,* using that title for their production. First off, he was indignant because the term, G.I., has always been applied to the Army (Demi Moore was not a WAC; she was a SEAL) and, secondly, he was annoyed about the copyright infringement. He actually wrote a letter to [CEO] Michael Eisner of Disney but, to my knowledge, nothing ever came of it."

Of course, the focus of this article is specifically on Hal's comic book work, though he would overall make a significant impact in animation, an aspect we've woefully neglected and worth learning about. Suffice to say that Hal, who would start Today's Video, where he worked with his son, lived a fruitful life until passing away at 87.

fin





Above: *Though relatively tame,* The Farmer's Daughter, *based on the ribald traveling salesman trope. (The lead story is #1 [Mar. '54] is literally titled, "The One About the Traveling Salesman"!). Art by Irv Spector and Bill Williams.*
Inset left: *Inspired by burlesque shows and the* Hellzapopin *Broadway musical, Hal created* Broadway-Hollywood Blackouts. *Cover of #1 [Apr. '53].* **Below:** *The most successful Stanhall title was* G.I. Jane, *which lasted for all of 10 issues, all written by Hal and drawn by Bill Williams. Hal would take umbrage when Disney did a 1997 film with the same title.*



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Lee & Kaluta's Starstruck

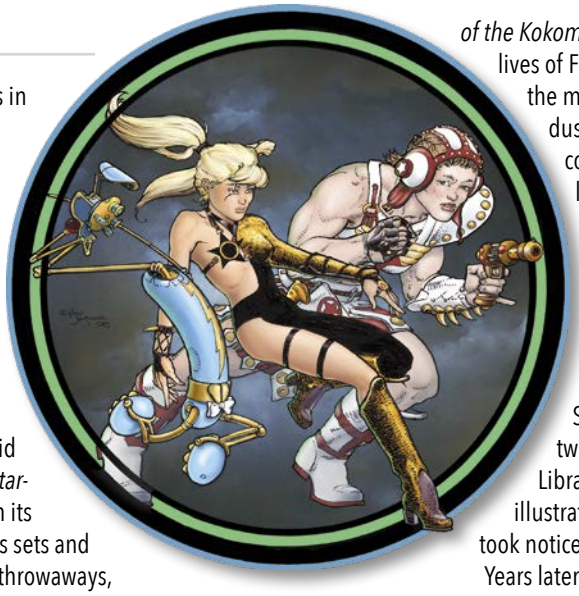
It's a play! A graphic novel! A comic book series! An RPG! But what is this Starstruck *really?*



Above: *Playbill from the first performance of Starstruck, in April, 1980.* **Inset right:** *Remastered Michael Wm. Kaluta illustration originally used as cover for the Epic graphic novel. This version was used for a T-shirt design.* **Below:** *Official title for the November 1984 release was* Marvel Graphic Novel #13 – Starstruck. *Art by MWK.*

by JON B. COOKE

"*Starstruck*," Tym Stevens writes in his brief history of the subject, "was also created during the exploding late '70s/early '80s N.Y.C. scene, whose Do-It-Yourself spirit ignited the first punk bands of CBGB, the no wave and post-punk aftermath, the dawn of hip hop, the splicing of mutant disco, and a bristling indie film movement. As part of this hybrid scene, which propelled itself, *Starstruck* the play was as D.I.Y. with its wicked and absurdist humor, its sets and costumes collaged from street throwaways, and its upending of all conventions."



As much as the Organic Theatre science fiction stage trilogy *Warp** was, in its own way, representative of the decade prior, so too was *Starstruck*, a production that would inspire a comics franchise, reflected – as Stevens rightly explains – the wild side of the era from which it emerged, the 1980s. Still, Elaine Lee, who wrote the self-described "space opera" (with help from her sister and a now ex-husband), shares that the idea for the show technically began in 1979.

A refugee to New York City from Wilson, North Carolina, Lee was acting in *The Doctors*, a TV soap opera, playing troubled nursemaid Mildred Trumble (a role that snagged her an Emmy nomination!) and, meanwhile, she established a theatrical company, Wild Hair Productions. The first play the (mostly female) ensemble performed was called *Brief Cases,* about women in therapy, and the second was *Contamination of the Kokomo Lounge,* speculating on the lives of Freeport, Texas, womenfolk if the men in town all died in an industrial accident. That comedy(!) contained, Lee said to me, "A little tiny bit of sci-fi in it, so it started to head that way."

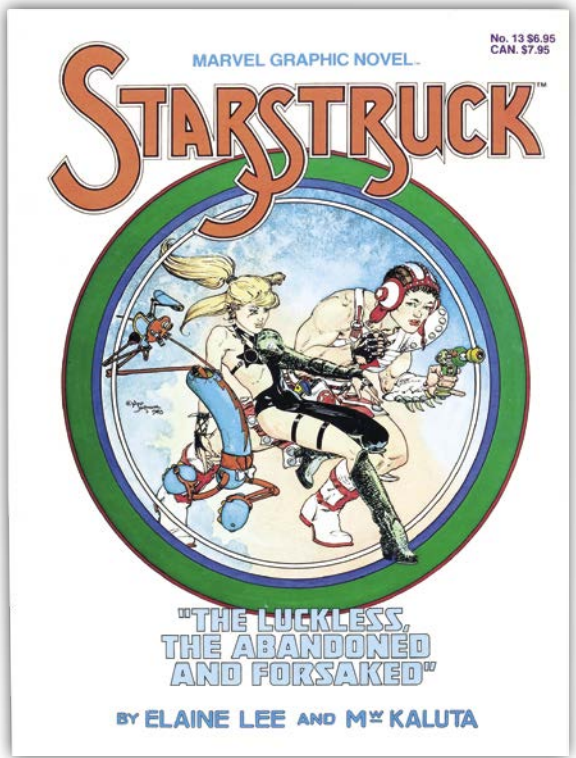
"That way," of course, was the path to their third stage show, which an unkempt Lee was researching with sister and fellow Wild Hair trouper Susan Norfleet Lee. While the two sat in the Upper West Side's Library Restaurant,* a certain illustrator seated at a nearby table took notice. It was October, 1979.

Years later, Michael William Kaluta recalled to me, "I was sitting in a neighborhood restaurant one afternoon, drinking coffee and drawing pictures over in a corner, and I saw two women with big stacks of magazines and books on their table and I recognized the covers of a couple of the books and they're all science fiction. One was on robots. I went to myself, 'You'd be a fool not to go over there and say something because you have an "in" here.'

"They were very pleasant, attractive women. Had I seen them in their regular, going-out-in-the-day makeup, I would have been very intimidated because they were both really, really beautiful. But they were wearing no makeup because they were in dress rehearsals for a play they were doing. So they were both basically fresh-washed, hair pulled back, sloppy, comfortable clothes, which made them accessible. So I wasn't intimidated."

Elaine chuckled to recall the Lee sisters' condition as the siblings pored over copies of *Starlog* when this affable stranger approached. "We were looking how to do props and things for the play," she said of the science-fiction movie magazine issues spread out on the tabletop, "so I was looking for inspiration. I can't even believe Michael came up to us because we were doing all this work and nobody had on makeup or washed their hair. I probably had on a baseball cap over my hair."

MWK offered, "I said, 'Uh, hi. You girls like science fiction?' One of them said, 'Well, we're writing a science fiction play.' I said, 'Well, that's great. I draw science fiction.' Elaine took my name and phone number and said, 'Well,



*This writer produced a thoroughly exhaustive look at that Stuart Gordon/Lenny Kleinfeld play in the pages of *Comic Book Creator* #10 [Fall '15]. Just like *Starstruck* and itself inspired by Kirby and Ditko's Marvel comics, *Warp* was another stage production that prompted its own comic series.

*The 1968 *AIA Guide to New York* quipped of the eatery, located on the corner of Broadway and W. 92nd Street, "The books are real and in abundance, but hardly worth filching. The atmosphere they create, however, is friendly… [with a] sometimes overly boisterous bar." (*The Gay Insider USA* ['72] tour guide joyfully proclaimed, "That bar is gay!") The establishment permanently closed sometime in the '80s.

Starstruck TM & ©Elaine Lee and Michael Wm. Kaluta.

maybe I'll get in touch with you to perhaps do a poster or something.' I said, 'That's cool. That'd be great.' So off I went. And, as I found out later, the conversation continued at their table. One or the other said, with an eye-roll, '*Sure!* I'll *bet* he draws! He probably drives a cab and does these little prison tattoo drawings of girls with big t*ts and space guns!

"It happened that Elaine, in researching for the play, would go over to West Side Comics and look at the posters they had there. One was from *The Studio* book, 'The Fate of Dollies Lost In Dreams,' with the bed flying up in the air and the little doll falling out of it, which had been on the back cover of *Heavy Metal*. And she went, 'Oh, I *loved* that!' And she realized, 'It's by the taxi driver!' and remembered that she'd loved my work. So she gave me a call."

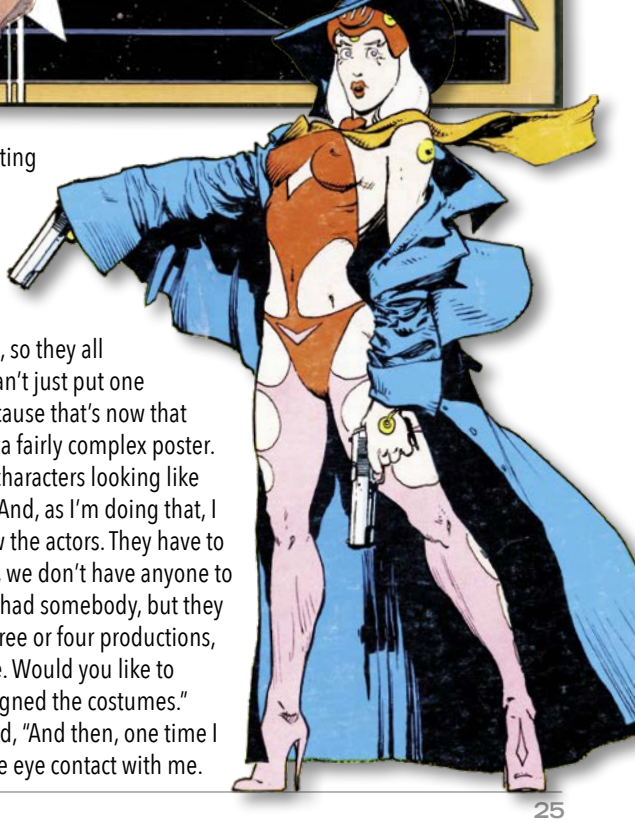
Lee, who can cited the month of her putting two and two together at West Side Comics as December, '79, said, "At the time we met him, I think that we had finished *Brief Cases,* were running the *Kokomo Lounge* play, and planning *Starstruck*. We did these plays really close together." So, after encountering MWK's "Lost Dollies" poster, "I called him and said I'd give him comps [tickets] to the [*Kokomo Lounge*] play, and then I went over to his apartment and saw all the other stuff he had done. But we hit it off right away. We have a similar sense of humor. We're both…" She hesitated and laughed, explaining "Oh boy! We both tend to think when the phone rings, it's bad! We have that in common, and we have a similar sense of humor that's kind of based on that silly dread."

MWK continued, "She invited me to see the [*Kokomo Lounge*] play. I went and it was brilliant, absolutely brilliant. Elaine and Susan were the main leads. It was a very dark comedy and it was so polished, so funny, and the place was packed, and it was a riot! After the show, the women said, 'We know your work, we love your work, could you do us a poster?' I said yes and that led onto many other things because the *Starstruck* is an ensemble play. There's no real star… everybody has their moment on stage. *Everybody*.

"They had people to do lighting and the sets and this and the other thing, but they needed a poster. So I thought about it and thought about it, and went, 'Well, the play is all about all these different people, so they all have to be on the poster.' You can't just put one or two people on the poster because that's now that the play is about, so I designed a fairly complex poster. I did representations of all the characters looking like the actual actors and actresses. And, as I'm doing that, I said, 'You know, I can't just draw the actors. They have to be in costume.' They said, 'Well, we don't have anyone to do the costumes right now. We had somebody, but they went to Las Vegas to work on three or four productions, and so they're just not available. Would you like to design the costumes?' So I designed the costumes."

With a chuckle, he continued, "And then, one time I went in, but no one would make eye contact with me.





Starstruck TM & ©Elaine Lee and Michael Wm. Kaluta.



Above: *Archie Goodwin and Elaine in* Starstruck *#1.*

Previous page: *MWK art for the play and cover illo for* The Comics Journal *#103 [Nov. '85].*

Below: *Front row: Martha Lee (choreographer), Karen Stillwell (Erotica Ann), Charles Vess (helmets, set sculpture). Middle row: Neal Ashmun (Rah El Rex), Kathy Gerber (Bronwyn). Back row: Elaine Lee (Galatia 9), Susan Lee (Brucilla, the Muscle), Michael William Kaluta (set, costume design).*

I'm thinking, 'Huh, what's going on? This is weird.' So eventually, they all sat down, they're all looking at me, and they confessed, 'Well, our set designer just got a job designing another production, so we don't have a set designer any more. Would you design our sets for us?'"

Artist Charles Vess, who shared an apartment with MWK starting in 1976, was enlisted to assist the production* – "Charlie helped immensely," MWK declared – but it was the *Shadow* artist who spent the majority of time working on the costuming and stage design. "I got to dress all the sets," MWK said, "which took a heck of a long time, but I had everybody tasked to pick up stuff out of the trash; to all the women (and there are *lots* of them), I said, 'If you wear those L'eggs egg stockings, save the L'eggs eggs for me.' 'Why?' I said, 'They're shiny and they're weird looking. They're round.' 'Oh, okay.' I said, 'Disposable razors, I want all of them!"… I had them give me all these things… Ice cube trays… I said, 'Once you stand back, and they're painted silver with a few rivets on them, so no one will know it's an ice cube tray anymore. It'll just be a real interesting shape because of the way the light hits it.' And that's what it turned out to be. We had these Hot Wheels tracks, made an entire thing for the android, her own console… I spent a lot of time down at Canal Street, where all the junk stores were at the time."

*Lee said that, while Michael designed the helmets, "Charles built them and they were incredible! He also glued very many Galactic Girl Guide faces and lots of skin to the walls of Verloona's ship."



Asked if he had been smitten with Lee, MWK exclaimed, "Oh, I was smitten with *all* of them! There were 12 women in this acting troupe, which they called Wild Hair. But I *was* really knocked out by Elaine's genius. She was writing partners with other folks, but the play I had seen by her and her sister, it was so stunning, so damn professional… And the thing that I loved and admired about *Starstruck* was that it was a comedy.

"But, while it could have been like a *MAD* magazine parody, with characters whose names were close enough to *Star Wars* characters to make fun of them, but *Starstruck* wasn't like that. It made fun of a lot of the tropes and memes of the sci-fi movies but, at the same time, it was a valid SF story of its own. It referenced a lot of other stuff. If you recognized it, you'd go, 'Oh, right, that's from *Queen of Outer Space*.' It wasn't anything necessarily directly from it, but it was a reference. The fact that *Starstruck*'s evil queen of outer space had high heels was a giveaway that she's an echo of evil space queen Zsa Zsa Gabor."

STAGESTRUCK IN HELL'S KITCHEN

Starstruck: A Space Opera debuted Off-Off-Broadway, on April 16, 1980, at the N.E.T.W.O.R.K. Theater, in Hell's Kitchen, and it lasted for a mandated limited run, closing on May 10. "Because no one was getting paid," MWK explained, "it's what was called [an Actors' Equity union] 'pilot project,' which meant 16 performances only. If you went more than that, you had to pay them scale." He added with a laugh, "Which was, at least, $250 an hour… something like that."*

He exclaimed, "There was no money! We spent everything on extra thumbtacks and hot glue, Christmas lights, and all that other kind of stuff. Nobody had any dough… I donated, like, two or three video machines, along with money. Everybody shared material and also helped build things. So it's a big team effort, it was very fun."

In *Heavy Metal*'s article that included promoting a *Starstruck* play revival in its May '83 issue, Steven Maloff wrote (quoting Lee), "By April 1980, the cast and crew were not ready to spring *Starstruck* on theatergoers, but they did. 'The set was being built right up until people starting coming in. At 7:45, the stage manager was on stage, drying Verloona's throne with a hair dryer. We really had our dress rehearsal a week after we opened.'"

Published in *Media Showcase* #5 [Mar. '81], journalist Steve Ringgenberg waxed rhapsodic when he reported on his visit to New York City's West Side for an interview with MWK: "Backstage at the Network Theater, it is half-an-hour

*Lee recalled, "Not exactly true. We had to pay the Equity actors a little bit. I thought it was unfair not to pay the others, as well. So we did. But it basically paid their travel and expenses."

Starstruck TM & © Elaine Lee & Michael Wm. Kaluta. Group photo by Dale Place.

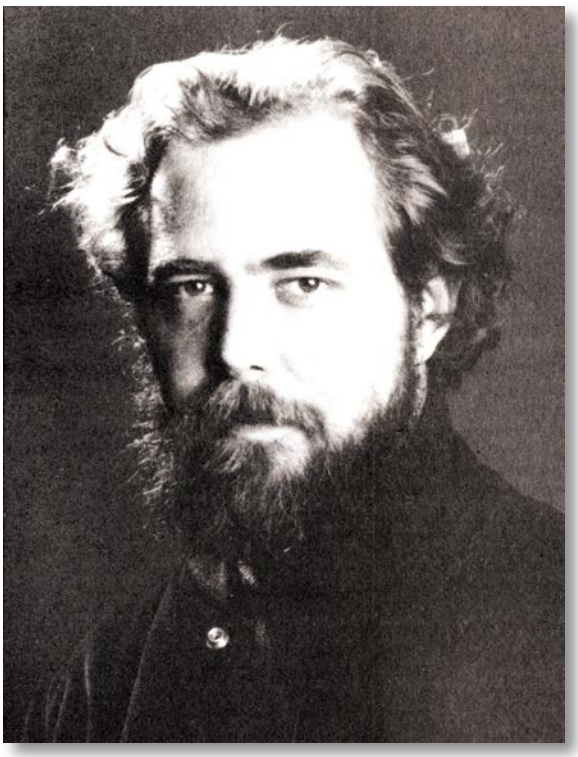
until curtain. The cast of *Starstruck* mills around in the traditional pre-show frenzy, donning flamboyant costumes, applying bizarre makeup, and readying the assortment of futuristic props and weapons used in the show. One isolated corner of the crowded dressing room is strangely calm. There *Starstruck*'s costume designer completes some last minute repairs on a damaged costume piece. The tall, fierce-looking bearded man who sits hunched over a gray foam rubber space helmet is Michael William Kaluta, comic artist, illustrator, and theatrical designer. As pandemonium reigns around him, Kaluta, refusing to be hurried, carefully affixes an elaborate crest to the side of the helmet whose shape is curiously suggestive of an art deco Christmas ornament. Taking a drag on the cigarette which dangles from the corner of his mouth, Kaluta critically eyes his handiwork. He nods his approval silently. The helmet is ready to go on.

"Later, when the show is underway and the atmosphere in the dressing room is less chaotic, Kaluta settles back on a broken down couch to smoke another cigarette and answer a fresh round of questions. His full, dark beard adds to the suggestion of brooding mysticism hovering around him. But, as we talk, I become aware of his eyes and the whole aspect of his face seems different. Kaluta has the eyes of a poet, full of wry humor, intense curiosity, and other wilder, less identifiable emotions. When he laughs, which is often, his laughter is deep and rich as it comes rumbling up from his chest."

Ringgenberg, who called *Starstruck* a "feminist science fiction comedy," asked MWK if he wanted to do more theatrical designing, leading to an answer giving an impression of a bright future for the theatrical production. Kaluta said, "Sure, and I might, too," the artist replied. "The Wild Hair people who wrote *Starstruck* included me in their negotiations because they want me to be their designer for wherever *Starstruck* goes. They're shooting for Off-Broadway, road shows, and the United Kingdom. They want me to be the designer, which means I'll either join the union or be run in the credits as, 'Conceived by Michael Wm. Kaluta' and designed by somebody who's in the union."

MWK provided a story synopsis to me: "It was about a rocketship called *The Harpy,* which had an all-woman crew. An android is the science officer, but she was originally a 'pleasure android' and she'd been reprogrammed to be a science officer because she had brains as big as a planet. But her talking in a squeaky voice and walking around sexy had not been removed. So she's a sexy little nymphet, but with Mr. Spock intelligence. Then there was Brucilla, the Muscle, a hot-headed, impetuous, strapping lass from Earth whose answer to every question is, 'We'll blast 'em out of the skies!' She was like the kid brother, and we dressed her in red and white, in the shape of a Roman Centurion-type.

"Then there's the captain, Galatia 9, and she wrote bad, bad feminist poetry and was an Amazon. She had one breast, having had the other removed because of the arrow thing, like Diana. Every once in a while, she would strike a pose and recite one of her poems to great effect, and it was very funny. And they were all on some mission – going somewhere, doing something – and they end up bumping into another spaceship, a living vessel called *The Siren,* which turns out to be made from the living flesh of millions of Galactic Girl Guides. Then there's a mermaid-like character who's an empath, and there's also the evil queen with her two henchmen, one who is a poisonous, mean guy and the other who is, as Elaine said, 'the Sun King goes to Mars.' That's Rah El Rex and they're funny and they all had their moments, they all had their different personalities, they all interacted. And then there's these two – the two ships ended up being locked together and the characters went from one to the other and tried to get the drop on the other ones. So it was basically that on stage. But everybody had a secret and the real secret was that the captain of the Harpy and the captain of the Siren were half-sisters." MWK then chuckled and said, "They hated each other!"



Above: *Michael Wm. Kaluta during his initial Starstruck days. Taken from* Media Showcase *#5 [Mar. '81]. That issue contained an account by* CBC *pal Steve Ringgenberg of his visit to the first run of the play.* **Below:** *In between the play and the comic book, Sal Quartuccio bankrolled a* Starstruck *portfolio, which consisted of six plates of character illustrations by MWK and descriptions written by Elaine Lee. This is Eeeeeeeeeluh!*

STARSTRUCK GENESIS

Lee shared about the development of that storyline: "I had recently discovered *Heavy Metal* and really loved that. Then my sister and I signed up for this writing class at the New School (which wasn't really even a college then, I don't think). Susan quit after the first class – it really wasn't a good class – and I hung on for a couple more, and I got the assignment of writing two people fighting over something, some object. So I had these two *Heavy Metal*-like women (who became Galatia and Verloona in the play) fighting over a box, and had a vague idea a crystal was in the box, and the dialogue was a sort-of comic-book banter during this fight.

"Then I was making a Christmas ornament with a star on it, sticking sequins into a Styrofoam ball. I thought, 'This is tedious.' And it *was* tedious! So I started thinking about that scene and had the star I was making, and it began to evolve.

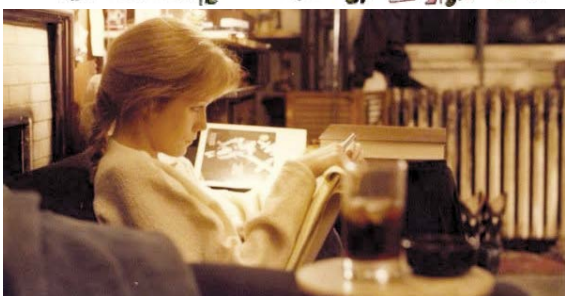
"The first versions of the play listed me, my sister, and my ex-husband as the writers. But how it really happened was I made up a bunch of characters – Galatia 9, Brucilla, etc. – and wrote descriptions on index cards,



Starstruck portfolio TM & © Elaine Lee & Michael Wm. Kaluta.







Above: *The very first appearance of* Starstruck*, the comic book series, was in the Spanish anthology,* Comix Internacional *#17 [Apr. '82]. Cover art by MWK.* **Inset right:** Starstruck *promo art by MWK and photo of Elaine Lee in the artist's apartment, where they collaborated in the first Starstruck stories.* **Below:** Comix Internacional *#23 [Oct. '82] with a repurposed portfolio plate cover by MWK.*



By 1980, MWK – who made his first impact as comic book artist in *Web of Horror* and then at DC Comics, where his rendition of *The Shadow* was wildly popular with fans – had mostly been out of the field during the few prior years. Instead, Michael had focused on illustration as one of the four renowned artists constituting The Studio, which had already disbanded by the time it was the subject of a very well-received, same-named art book. But, after having "given up" on comics, his involvement with the *Starstruck* stage production reinvigorated an interest in sequential art when the idea arose to make it a comic book.

MWK told *Comic Book Profiles* #7 [Summer '99], "Once the play had had its Off-Off Broadway run, Elaine optioned the rights to a producer. As time went on, she became impatient with the producer's non-involvement with pushing the property and looked through the contract to see what part of *Starstruck wasn't* optioned. The one thing that fell into that area was a comic book."*

Lee told Peter Sanderson, in *Amazing Heroes* [#57, Oct. '84], "The whole idea of the *Starstruck* comic series was Michael's attempt to get me out of my depression [over the option's restrictions]… and put together a plot outline out of all that. And then I think there was one monologue that [then-husband] Dale [Place] had done for acting class that he wrote himself. I wasn't thinking about, 'Oh, I'm going to write this thing alone'; I was thinking about acting. So I put some science fiction into Dale's monologue and just inserted that into the play. And then Susan [Lee Norfleet] wrote some stuff, but she had bigger fish to fry in her life, saying, 'I can't write science fiction.' So I put it together before we started rehearsals. And then, during rehearsals, I rewrote a good bit of it."

*Lee said, "We worked on the comic without letting the producer know and just waited for the option to run out. It was clear he was never going to do anything with it."

PORTFOLIO INVESTMENT

and I didn't think anything was going to happen with it during that time."

Evidence suggests the option also didn't cover art portfolios, as prozine publisher Sal Quartuccio published an exquisite six-plate print collection of *Starstruck* characters in '80. All marvelously rendered by MWK, included was a sheet of character descriptions* by Lee, who later shared in the *Marvel Graphic Novel* introduction: "Sal Quartuccio (SQ Productions) kept us alive while we worked on *Starstruck* and was responsible for its publication in Europe and eventually in *Heavy Metal*."

Quartuccio recently shared a seminal role in the *Starstruck* saga: "I knew Mike from the Studio days and the lovely portfolio he produced for me, 'Children of the Twilight,' in the late '70s. I met Elaine at Mike's place, got the basics of the play, and saw Mike's sketches, and thought I could finance the graphic novel, which I did for quite a while. In 1980, I had Mike do the *Starstruck* portfolio to promote the graphic novel and help the finances along.

"As pages were completed, I showed them to [European comics packager/editor/publisher] Josep Toutain, who I knew from the Warren days. He loved it and suggested his studio in Barcelona should color it (and, boy, they did a great job!). My money ran out, and Mike and Elaine, I believe, continued to finance it themselves."

Mail order maven and comics distributor Bud Plant erroneously described the play as being performed on the Great White Way when he listed the portfolio in his *Bud Plant Catalog* #18 [Fall '80], but he was hardly wrong about the quality of MWK's artistry: "Mike designed the highly exotic and original costuming for this play currently on Broadway. Here he has set six of the most unique characters into fantastic fantasy backgrounds. These are space pirates, mermaids, one-eyed rogues metal monsters… all Kaluta at his best!"

DAWN OF STARSTRUCK: THE COMIC BOOK

Not only did the portfolio partially support the two while they developed the storyline, it also helped to flesh out the

*One example described the character Lee played on stage: "Galatia is a grim, humorless scar-faced little tadpole: tough and wily, and expert swordswoman. Pollyanna in black leather. Charles Bronson trapped in the body of Little Bo Peep."

Comix Internacional TM & ©the respective copyright holder. Starstruck TM & © Elaine Lee & Michael Wm. Kaluta.

main characters and a decision was made for Lee and MWK to not adapt the play in comic-book form, but rather conceive of it as a prequel to the events of the stage production. "The guy who optioned the play had it for another year," Lee said, "so we couldn't do anything with it, so we decided to do a graphic novel, but not tell him because then he would renew the option. So we worked on it in secret."

In his *Comic Book Profiles* interview, MWK said, "When Elaine and I looked at the play, to see how it could be developed into a comic-book story, we had to admit the dialogue-heavy play wouldn't translate to the static form of comics – not in America, anyway. Not ready to give up, Elaine looked inside the play. There are segments where each character talks about their past, reveals how they came to be who they are. Those passages were in the play because, in every comic book Elaine had read, she'd noted the characters couldn't keep quiet about their pasts. We decided to approach the *Starstruck* story as episodes from each of the characters' past histories, slowly bringing them together, overlapping them, until the events of the play came about."

In a brief commentary in *Comix Internacional* #24 [Nov. '82], Lee shared (here translated from Spanish), "It took us several months to create the *Starstruck* universe. We would sometimes spend entire days in Mike Kaluta's apartment, leaving only to buy cigarettes, coffee, and Chinese food. We mapped out timelines, projected revolutions, invented religions for all our planets, and – calculator in hand – worked out time units for the different worlds… For a period, neither of us would talk to anyone else. We used words we had invented ourselves and were surprised when others didn't understand us. All that preparation shows in Mike's work; his drawings are the best he has ever done. I hope that effort is reflected in the script as well."

SPANISH DEBUT, AMERICAN REVIVAL

Interestingly, as a result of Quartuccio showing the initial *Starstruck* pages to Toutain, it was inside the latter's Spanish anthology where *Starstruck* made its first appearance anywhere. But that premiere was not in Lee and MWK's native land, but instead as an opening 10-pager in *Comix Internacional* #17 [Apr. '82], which boasted a gorgeous Kaluta painting of Veep 7 and Aguatunasians as cover art. The serial continued through #24 [Nov. '82] (skipping #22), with seven episodes.

The table of contents in *Comix Internacional* #23 [Oct. '82] features a quote from the then-editor of the American publication subtitled, "The Adult Illustrated Fantasy Magazine": "We don't mind that *Starstruck* has previously been published in Spain. Mike Kaluta is one of our favorite American artists, and we will definitely publish his magnificent work in *Heavy Metal*. – Julie Simmons-Lynch, editor."

She kept her word as, in the same month the first storyline concluded in Spain, *Starstruck* launched stateside as a serial in *Heavy Metal* V6 #8 [Nov. '82], ending after nine episodes, in *HM* V7 #4 [July '83]. John Workman, then the art director of the U.S. magazine, today has a vague recollection of *Starstruck*, both his attending the play and its appearance in *Heavy Metal*. "Julie always got first look-see at potential things that we might use from foreign sources… I do remember that we had a good professional relationship with Toutain. He came to the United States one time and visited us in the *HM* offices."

When, in 2011, an interviewer for *Comic Heroes* magazine asked about the series' longevity, MWK replied, "It was a great thing *Starstruck* was first presented in *Heavy Metal* magazine – it made the story available to quite a wide audience, but, although it was a great venue, they chopped the chapters up to meet its page demands, making our dense story even denser." (The European excerpts were, truth be told, also jarringly chopped up into sections.)

Before the *HM* serial concluded, France's *Spécial USA* started publishing the *Starstruck* chapters, which led to frustration for the creators when they sought, to no remedy, to rightfully receive compensation for those appearances in #1 [Mar. '83], #3 [July '83]–#7 [Apr. '84]. Lee quipped, "To this day, Michael and I call money that you're owed but that you know you'll never see, 'Money from France.'"

By the time *Starstruck* comics finally reached an American audience, the option on the stage play had run out and Lee was free to revise the script, as well as serve as the director of its revival. "We were going to do the play again in 1983 and so I did another rewrite, because things changed when we started doing the comics." In that same year, the writer told *Heavy Metal,* "Since this is the second time around for *Starstruck*, it's a lot easier and more professional, naturally. We're *not* going to finish the costumes opening night. We began reworking the play immediately. It's basically the same set, but with a lot of decorative differences – for instance, our spaceships have video monitors. But we've been working on *Starstruck* for three years, and the play itself has evolved. We've taken stuff from the strip and put it into the play. We've cut a couple of characters and condensed a few scenes."

A few years later, Broadway Play Publishing, Inc.,



Above: *Is this MWK spoofing Dave Stevens' Rocketeer pose? Your guess is as good as ours! This issue of* Marvel Age, *#26 [May. '85], contained a feature on the then-new Epic Comics series.*

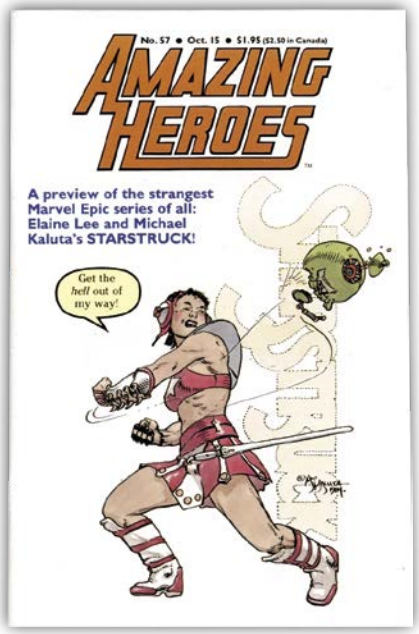
Below: *The New York* Daily News *of April 20, 1983, featured this item on the Starstruck play revival, name-checking both writer and artist and replete with photo.*

• Elaine Lee and Michael Kaluta are creators of a sci-fi comic strip called "Starstruck" in Heavy Metal magazine. The major characters in the strip are women, space adventuresses. Lee, her sister, Susan Norfleet Lee, and Dale Place have adapted the strip for the stage and it is being presented at TOMI's Park Royal Theater *(23 W. 73d St.: 795-5614)* with sets and costumes by Kaluta and music and synthesized sound effects by Dwight Dixon. Nothing serious here, just fun. Tonight's performance is at 8.



Top: heroines of "Dead Fathers Club"; bottom: some heroines of "Starstruck"

Marvel Age TM & ©Marvel Characters, Inc. Starstruck TM & © Elaine Lee & Michael Wm. Kaluta.

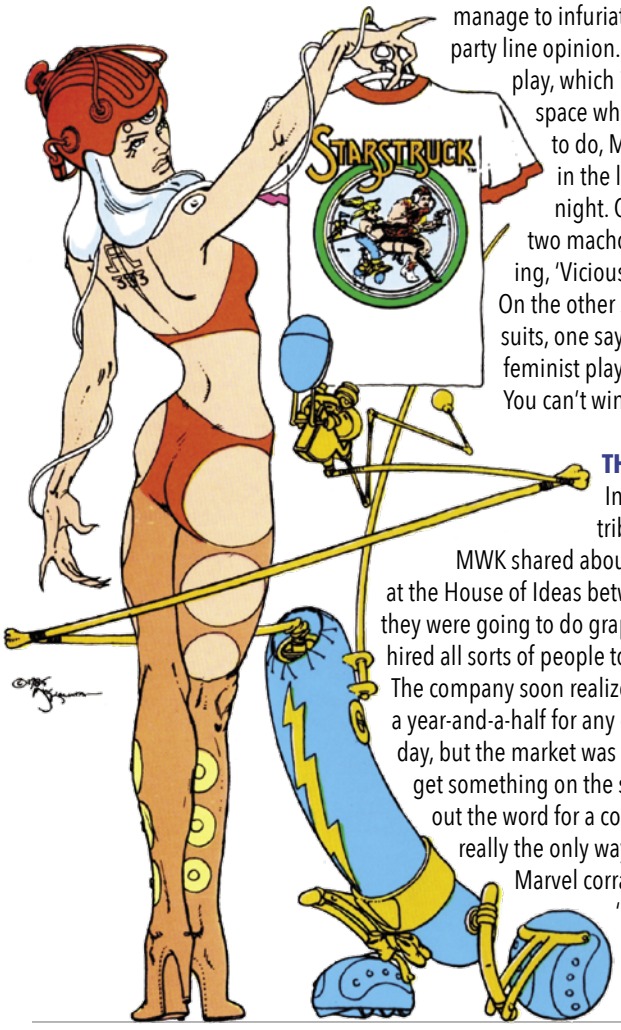


Above: *MWK drew Brucilla, the Muscle, for this* Amazing Heroes *#57 [Oct. '84] cover.*
Below: *Bob Chapman's Graphitti Designs produced* Starstruck *T-shirts sporting MWK artwork. He gifted this ad art to the T-shirt maven back in the day. Bob's got it hanging proudly on his wall!*

published the play in book form, which includes this in the biographical blurb for Dale Place: "Starstruck is his first literary attempt at anything intelligent, insane, or otherwise." The first edition of *Starstruck: A Space Opera* ['85] also has MWK's portfolio illustrations and multiple photos of both the '80 and '83 productions. (A bound edition is still available at *broadwayplaypublishing.com*.)

The *Starstruck* revival was staged Off-Broadway at the Theatre Opera Music Institute (TOMI) Park Royal Theater, in New York's Upper West Side, premiering April 16, 1983, three years to the day of its first opening. Alas, the show had 16 performances, closing May 8, an abbreviated run no doubt again due to Actors Equity restrictions. The only contemporaneous extant review found was in the May, 1983, issue of *Backstage* magazine, a critique so wickedly bilious and over the top as to make the show most definitely worth experiencing. Wrote Lee Alan Morrow, "Imagine an evening of mindless gobbledygook, screaming women, and a script which surpassed the worst imaginings of an LSD flashback… full of invented words, phrases and other such mishmash. It is completely without merit or intelligent thought." (Asked about reviews, MWK said, "I think one critic wrote that it was all a bunch of yelling. I don't know that we got any good reviews at all.")

In 1995, Lee addressed the story's ability to polarize with *Lacunae* [#4, Nov. '95]'s Chris Tower: "I usually manage to infuriate anyone who holds any party line opinion. Back during the *Starstruck* play, which is about lots of women in space who do things guys usually get to do, Michael Kaluta was standing in the lobby at intermission one night. On one side of him, these two macho guys were talking, one saying, 'Vicious bitches, must hate men!;' On the other side two women in business suits, one saying, 'Skimpy costumes for a feminist play!' You can't win."



THE EPIC YEARS

In the *Comic Book Profiles* tribute for Archie Goodwin, MWK shared about *Starstruck* finding harbor at the House of Ideas between 1984–85. "Marvel said they were going to do graphic novels," he said. "They hired all sorts of people to do these graphic novels. The company soon realized it would take a year to a year-and-a-half for any of these to see the light of day, but the market was there and they wanted to get something on the shelves quickly. So they put out the word for a completed work, and that's really the only way *Starstruck* got into the Marvel corral. Because it's really not a 'Marvel book,' is it?

"Elaine Lee and I went to [Marvel editor-in-chief] Jim Shooter and said, 'We have a graphic novel. It's full color and ready to go.' It was running as a series in *Heavy Metal* magazine, but they weren't going to publish it as a book. He wanted to see it, so we brought it in. He read it through; he wanted just a little bit of clarification on a few points, just a nuance of clarification. Then he said, 'Give it to [Epic Comics editor] Archie and let Archie tell you what it needs.'

"At this point, we'd gotten a lot of letters from people about *Starstruck*, a lot positive, but some negative saying it was too complex. So we thought this would be interesting to see what a professional editor would say about *Starstruck*. Archie read it and we had a meeting and he said, 'I'm from the old school of comic-book storytelling. If I edit this, I'm going to kill it. I'll absolutely ruin it. I think you know what you're doing with this. You're going into a new direction with your storytelling. I'm not going to touch it.'

"We ended up adding five pages of new material for the graphic novel, and it became one of Marvel's earliest graphic novels. It did well enough that Marvel hired us to do a 12-issue limited series to continue it. Archie was the chief editor of that, but Jo Duffy was our actual editor."

(To her credit, that same editor was exuberant in *Epic Illustrated* [#32, Oct. '85] about the source of the comic series. Duffy enthused, "The play…is a romp… one long, free-wheeling adventure. It's funny, fun, and exciting, with stylish dialogue and characterization, nicely paced action, and some very touching, sensitive developments thrown in toward the end.")

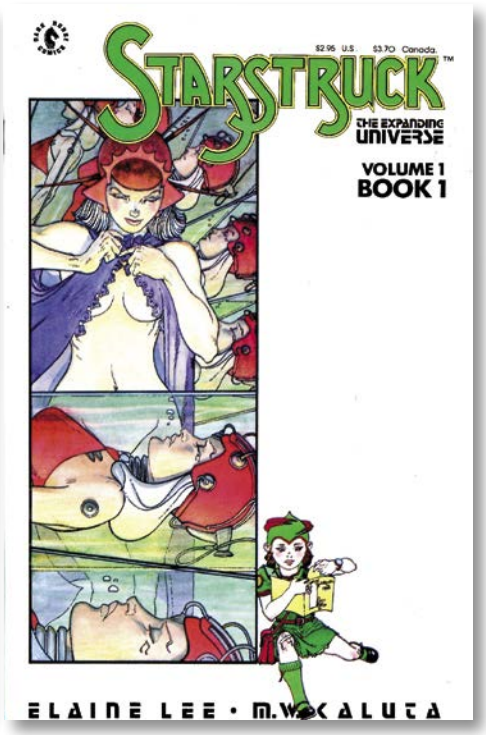
Unfortunately, though contracted for 12 issues, Marvel cut in half the *Starstruck* run as an Epic Comics release. MWK told Joe McCabe, in *Comic Book Marketplace* [#105, Aug. '03]. "When Elaine Lee and I did *Starstruck* for Marvel's Epic line, our contract wasn't renewed because we weren't selling in excess of 60,000 copies. Our editor said, 'Well, you know, it wasn't a good comic.' I said, 'What do you mean? It was a great comic. It just wasn't a "successful" comic.' She said, 'Yeah, that's what I meant.' She and I knew what she meant was, 'We didn't make enough money off it, so we had to cancel it.' But any comic book company would love making the numbers we made on *Starstruck*."

To Zack Smith, in *Back Issue* #133 [Feb. '22], MWK said of the abbreviated run: "At that time, when we found out that we only had six issues when we'd planned 12, some unnamed professionals told us, 'Well, just stop at your fifth issue and f*ck them.' And I know I said, speaking for both of us, 'No no no no, this isn't for a company. This is for our fans, and we don't dare leave the fans wondering what would happen next.'"

Lee told me, "We felt like we had to give some kind of ending, because the people that loved *Starstruck*, we wanted to honor them by having an ending and not just have it drop off the face of the earth. So the 'Trial of Brucilla' story was really truncated, and I wasn't happy with it, which is part of the reason we eventually ended up doing an expanded version of the thing. But we never got to those end books [of the planned Epic series]. But that's what it would be." The writer added, "I would really like to do the end, which includes the trial of Brucilla, 'The Muscle,' on the Rec Station, and the stuff on [planet] Alias, and all of that. So maybe it will happen. We'll see."

Amazing Heroes TM & ©Fantagraphics. Starstruck TM & © Elaine Lee & Michael Wm. Kaluta.







AND THE REVIEWS ARE IN…

Despite the abbreviation – which was particularly sudden as the team had to finish up the planned-for-12-issues storyline in the densely packed sixth issue – the half-dozen *Starstruck* published issues and its graphic novel progenitor created a legion of fans who have since remained loyal to the series.

No less than horror maestro Clive Barker became a massive fan of the series, as he told Bill Warren, in *Comic Scene* [V2 #36, Aug. '93]: "I was, and am, a huge fan of *Starstruck*, which I think was one of the most brave and elegant experiments in comic book storytelling." For *Comics Values Monthly* [#85, Sept. '93] Barker spoke of his admiration for the writer: "I loved *Starstruck* and she has this incredibly elaborate, baroque imagination. She has this imagination which extrudes itself in every direction, and what's wonderful is that behind all the extrusions, there is a system she knows. She has a pattern for it all. You may not be able to see all of the pattern… and it's very interesting."

Rob Rodi reviewed the Epic series in *The Comics Journal* #111 [Sept. '86], calling the "dazzling, shoot-'em-up vaudeville" of *Starstruck*, "one of the brightest and one of the most cursed. Who could take it seriously – a funny, theatrical all-dressed-up romp through a deadly carnival future – a merry, decadent anarchic treatment of our silliest genre: space opera – and all of it under the *Marvel* imprint? Its cancellation was a foregone conclusion. People who might have liked it don't read Marvel Comics; and Marvel Comics readers don't let outsiders like this book fool them.

"Of course, *Starstruck* was a Marvel/Epic Comic, which means that it really wasn't a Marvel comic at all. What is was (save for some token jabbing and poking by the Epic staff that we're probably better off not knowing about) is a straight look into the minds and hearts of Elaine Lee and Michael Kaluta."

In 2011, David A. Roach proclaimed his approval of the series in *1001 Comics You Must Read Before You Die*: "The 1980s was a time of experimentation in U.S. comics, but even amid that burst of creativity, there was nothing as strange as *Starstruck*… a fiendishly complex space opera set in the far future with a wide cast of bizarre, mostly female characters… Lee's writing is clever, sexy, profane, and outrageously funny, and she creates a sparkling cast of strong female characters. At the time, Kaluta was rightly famed for his beautifully fantasy themed artwork, but here he proved himself to be a leading science fiction artist, as well, creating an elegant art nouveau vision of the future. What the pair achieved in *Starstruck* is a perfectly realized universe of their own with a depth and complexity rarely seen in comics."

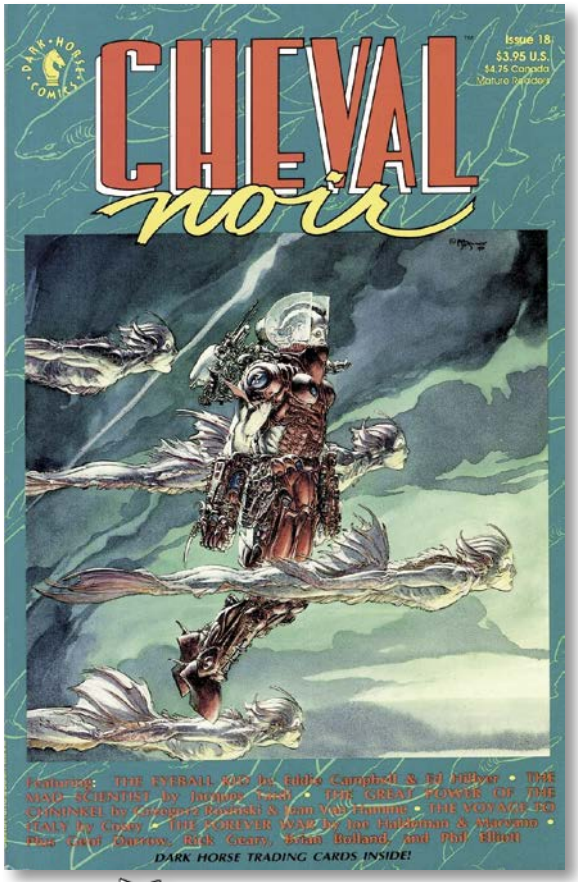
Despite the acclaim, *Starstruck* remained in limbo until 1990, when Dark Horse, then a new comic book company out of Portland, Oregon, agreed to publish a continuation of the series, *Starstruck: The Expanding Universe*.

Above: *The first issues of the three main* Starstruck *runs. From left, the Epic Comics edition [Feb. '85], the Dark Horse edition [Aug. '90], and the IDW run [Aug. '09]. All art, of course, by MWK.*

Below: *According to contributor Frédéric Manzano, this delightfully crowded piece by MWK was produced for a poster promoting the 1990 Grenoble Comics Festival, located in France.*



Starstruck TM & © Elaine Lee & Michael Wm. Kaluta.. Illustration courtesy of Frédéric Manzano.





GUIDES GONE WILD

In 1987, a *Starstruck* spin-off was included as a back-up strip in Dave Steven's *The Rocketeer Adventure Magazine*. Though only two episodes would appear in the magazine, "Galactic Girl Guides" focused on Brucilla's younger years, with childhood pals, Cookie Fabre and Puddyface Johnson, as they become Guides. (Kaluta flatmate and renowned fantasy artist Charles Vess would also contribute to the 10- and 11-pagers.)

The book-length survey *Graphic Novels* ['10] noted, "Lee and Kaluta intended this kid-friendly approach, without the trappings of the epic backstory, as an easier portal to the *Starstruck* universe for new readers. More stories were planned until a long lag in continuing Rocketeer adventures put the idea on hold, but the 'Guides' series would be returned to in the coming years."

Not long thereafter, Dark Horse editor Randy Stradley called MWK on an unrelated subject but, when the artist mentioned he thought Stradley was contacting him about reviving *Starstruck*, the editor jumped at the notion and the result was *Starstruck: The Expanding Universe.*

DARK HORSE DAYS

Originally conceived as a 12-issue series (sound familiar?), the Dark Horse run made it, alas, to four 48-page issues, all presented in black-&-white. The concept was to reprint the graphic novel and Epic series, but also intersperse the narrative with an impressive number of new pages to better flesh out the unfolding saga. "We wanted to add stuff in because, when the first stories that we did were based on the big monologues that the different characters had in the play, just vignettes, and they weren't that connected to each other," Lee told me. "And we wanted to do material that actually connected what happened between those sequences."

The fact it was in black-&-white may have been the fatal flaw that led to the series early demise. "I don't think the b-&-w series we did for Dark Horse was as successful as the color version," Lee noted in *Back Issue*. "We're asking a lot from people because it was a nonlinear story with a huge cast and the art has all this detail, and the color, when you have someone like [future series colorist] Lee Moyer doing it, tells people what to look at and what's important. You need the color – the color really helps with the storytelling. I think a lot of times with the Dark Horse version, you go, 'What am I supposed to be looking at?' Because our story was so… some of the story's in the words, some of it was in the art."

The four published issues of *Starstruck: The Expanding Universe,* released between Aug. '90–Mar. '91, were to be the first of three volumes, reprinting the aforementioned and adding 320 new (albeit monochromatic) pages of material, with release of the volumes staggered to give writer and artist time to prepare the next chapters. Criticism aside, Tym Stevens exclaimed in his *Starstruck* history about the quartet of issues released, "But what a ride! Suddenly everything was deeper, wider, richer! The single-page story that had jump-started the original novel now had an additional six-page opening, up new levels of clarity and connection. Fresh chapters revealed unseen characters. The first third of the grand plan came out in four issues with more than 100 new pages enriching the grand tale. The toll of this huge amount of work and the dispiriting lack of support in the comics world exhausted Kaluta, which led to another cancellation. While everybody gushed about Sandman and Watchmen, they'd missed the real party again."

In the early '90s, plans were to publish a five-issue *Galactic Girl Guides* mini-series, released by Kevin Eastman's Tundra imprint, drawn by Linda Medley and written by Phil Trumbo. "But when Tundra was bought by Kitchen Sink," Lee said, "the project was cancelled."

Cheval Noir TM & ©Dark Horse Comics. Starstruck, Galactic Girl Guides TM & © Elaine Lee & Michael Wm. Kaluta. Letterhead courtesy of Todd Adams.

STARSTRUCK



This page: *From top is Dark Horse Comics' anthology* Cheval Noir *#18 [June '91] cover; Galactic Girl Guides illo; and Wild Hair Productions letterhead. All art by MWK*

INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

Eighteen years after the aborted Dark Horse run, IDW announced a 13-issue revival of *Starstuck*, a wholesale reformatting and colorization of the *Expanding Universe* run, with pin-ups and bonuses galore and a gorgeous, lush presentation befitting the storyline and finally completing the epic's first third.

Lee recalled to me, "I guess it was maybe 2009, we got two calls within a two-week period. One of them was from the guys at Audio Comics who wanted to do the audio play of *Starstruck*, and the other was from Scott Dunbier, at IDW, wanting to do the first collection. And that was sort of like, 'Oh, well, this is happening again.' (Of course, in the intervening years, people found it or knew of it, and it was optioned for TV, movies, and things like that a number of times, both Starstruck and Galactic Girl Guides, [the latter] as a separate property…")

Little transpired on the licensing front, but the IDW restart was a go, though the artist faced an arduous task of adapting the dimensions of a number of pages. MWK told John Hilgart of TCJ.com, "The largest part of my work on getting the *Starstruck* pages ready for publication in the IDW volume was extending [the height of] about 80 of the pages by 2¾ inches. Given Elaine's tight storytelling, the pacing of each monologue and dialogue, I couldn't just put a thin panel in between others to lengthen the pages… I had to make selected panels taller, matching the rendering I did 30 years ago… for the first 20 pages it was a technical struggle: then I hit on a technique: time consuming, but near flawless: scan the art (had been done already, of course) select which panels/panels were to be lengthened: crop the top and bottom lines off the panels in Photoshop, print same (same size as the originals) then draw on the printed paper. Scan that page at the same [resolution] as the art, go into the now lengthened page template and replace the previous panel with the taller one. Draw new panel borders and on to the next!"

Miracle of miracles, the entirety of the planned run was completed this time, the 13-issues colored – painted, really – by Lee Moyer, who spent two years on the effort, an obvious labor of love by a lifelong MWK fan. Then, in 2013, the run was collected in a massive, slightly oversize 360-page trade paperback reprinting the series along with a plethora of additional material, including all of the "Galactic Girl Guide" episodes and a fumetti featuring a brief narrative mash-up of photos of Lee's son and pix of the original Off-Off-Broadway cast!

NEVER SAY DIE

In 2017, the team came together for their latest comics series to date, the six-issue mini-series, *Starstruck: Old Proldiers Never Die,* published by IDW. The series, which incorporates (and remasters), in part, previously published material, and focuses on professional warrior Harry Palmer, Hero of the Revolution and bartender/tavern owner.

"Harry's story was a part of the Epic Comics run that was mixed in with the Galatia 9 and Brucilla stuff, and all of that," Lee explained to me, "but when we got a chance to do another *Starstruck*, we decided to just isolate his story and put it in his own book. (And I actually have written a lot of scripts for one to follow, but I don't know if it'll ever actually be drawn. We'll see what happens.)" (The series was launched as a crowdfunding project, but Lee told Zack Smith, in *Back Issue*, "We can't do Kickstarter, that was a nightmare and we're not ever doing that again.")

MICHAEL & ELAINE

In a Reddit forum with fans from early 2022, the writer/artist team talked about collaborating with one another. MWK said, "The favorite part about working together with Elaine was her ideas sparked new directions for my art. The *Starstruck* universe developed to the point that Elaine and I could only make sense when talking to each other… I'd feel like an alien visiting Earth when trying to talk with 'jus' folks.' Total *Starstruck* immersion. The worst part was when the story demanded a complete change: sometimes an entire part of the universe had to be discarded in preference to a new Idea."

Lee said in reply, "My favorite thing about Michael's art was that he always surprised me. He would always go way beyond what I described in the scripts."

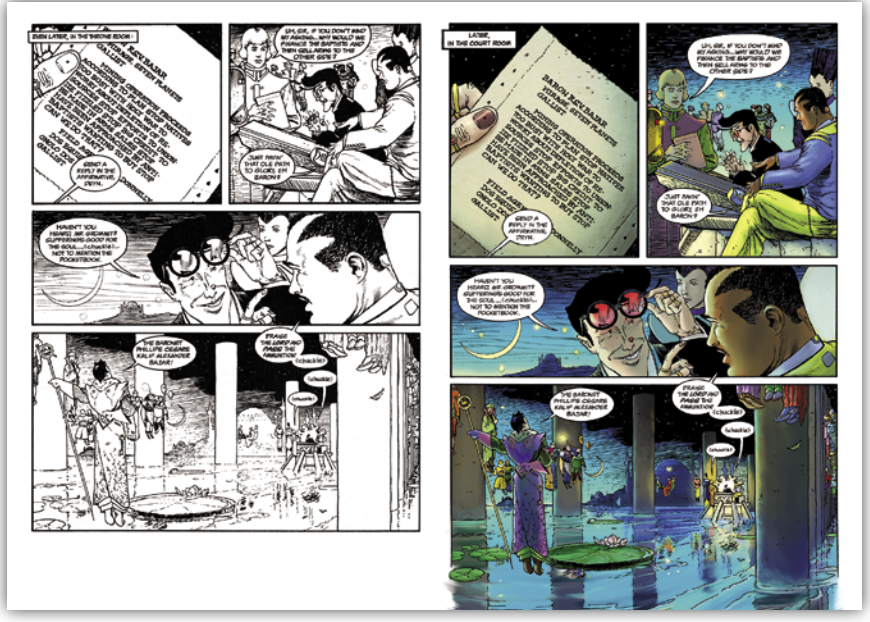
To me, Lee added, the pair became best friends in the process of working on *Starstruck*. "I've told Michael this before, that what he got as someone he was working with is the best part of me, the best part."

Another query was whether *Starstruck* had been profitable for the two over the years. "The weird thing is Michael and I are making money on it now," she said. "I don't think

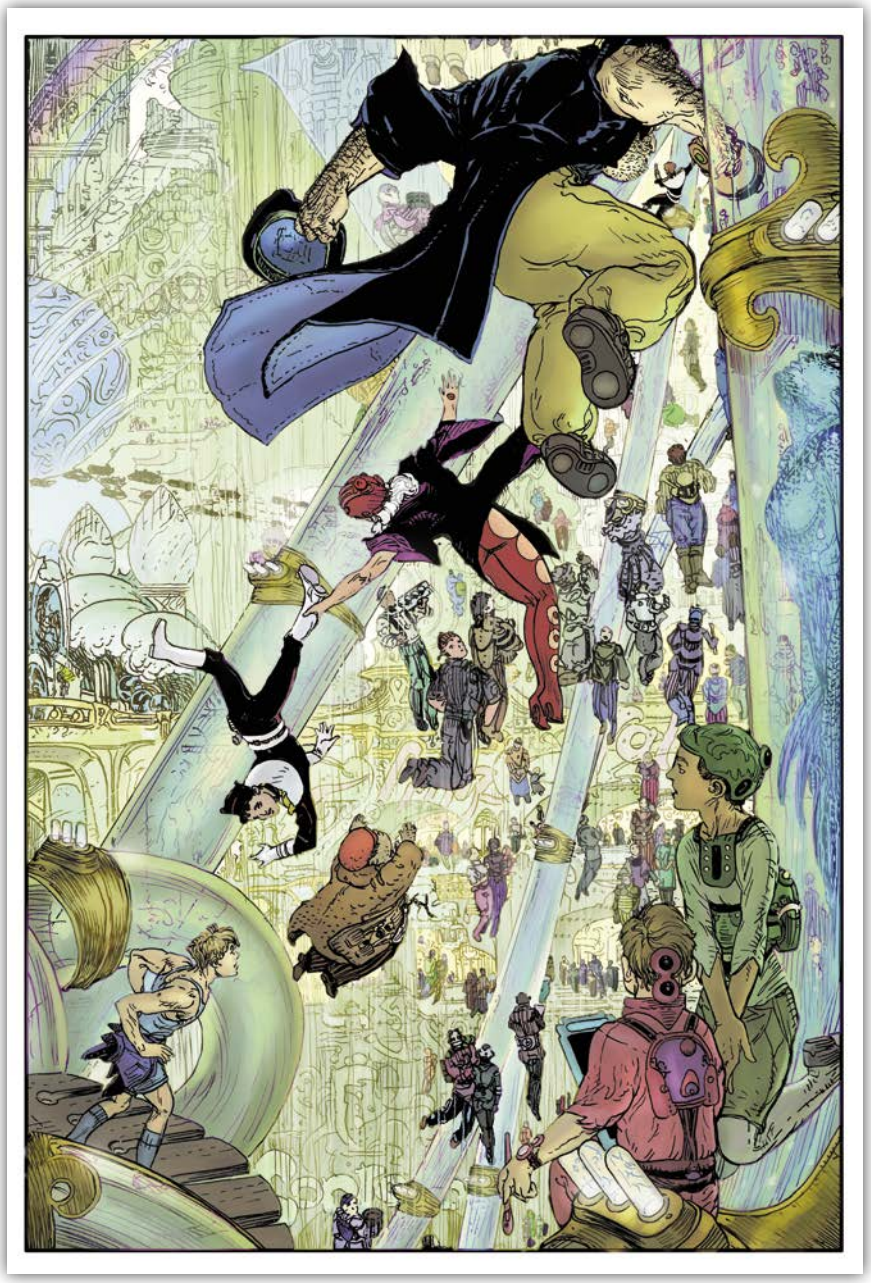


Above: *Bound and inserted into copies of* Dark Horse Presents *#48 [Feb. '91] was this Erotica Ann trading card with art by MWK.*

Below: *Elaine Lee shared this example of the remarkable reformatting accomplished by MWK and colorist Lee Moyer for the IDW* Starstruck *series, where 80 pages had to be lengthened to accommodate the renewed presentation.*



Starstruck TM & © Elaine Lee & Michael Wm. Kaluta. Trading card courtesy of Todd Adams. Comparison example courtesy of Elaine Lee.



Above: *Wonderful page by MWK and Lee Moyer from* Starstruck *labeled "See-Up-Daisy."* **Inset right:** *Screenshots from the 13th season of the web show,* Dimension 20, A Starstruck Odyssey *hosted by Elaine's son, Brennan Lee Mulligan!* **Below:** *Galactic Girl Guides!*



we ever made money off it before. A lot of people asked about my career in comics, which consisted of… I did comic writing and I did comic coloring for a long while, but I never *only* did that. You don't make money doing a cult comic…

"Well, what happened [to earn a royalty] was [Lee's son] Brennan [Lee Mulligan] did a season of the [*Dimension 20*] show called *A Starstruck Odyssey,* and then I came and did some promo stuff with him on his after-show thing, little half-hour things he did, and people started coming to the [*starstruckcomics.com*] website again and started wanting the books again… I guess it was '21. We are still making royalties every month, every quarter, making more money on it probably since all the different versions of it before."

She added with a laugh, "I remember when Michael and I were doing the first pages for what we thought was one graphic novel. We're, like, 'Oh, this is going to make this much money and we'll become famous.' And what we thought was so outlandish compared to what happened. I mean, I'm very happy with my work and money was not the first thing I thought about anyway. If it had been, I would have more of it, but it's amazing. I'm getting a little more of it now. So, yeah, I wasn't thinking about the future so much, but it just makes me happy to work on it."

LEGACY

One look at Brennan Lee Mulligan's *dropout.tv* series, *Dimension 20: A Starstruck Odyssey,** and you find ample proof that *Starstruck* resonates with many who weren't even born when the Epic Comics series debuted, with one aspect doubtless being its progressive attitude toward sexuality.

Graphic Novels stated, "*Starstruck* is consistently lauded for its mostly female cast, the depth and range of the individual characters, and the upending of gender and sexual stereotypes through the series… The underlying themes of *Starstruck* regarding gender and sexuality are consistently sex-positive, anti-sexist, tolerant of sexual preference, anti-misogyny and anti-misandry, and emphasizing person above any categories."



Lee admitted to me, "There were things in *Starstruck* that had to do with sexuality and gender, and I was certainly thinking about those things when I was writing it. For instance, there's an asexual character in *Starstruck*. She's never called that, but it's implied.

"Back then, we didn't talk about this stuff in the same way. We didn't use the same words that are used now. Nobody talked about transgender in 1980, but I knew people who called themselves transsexual. And, at the time, I was mainly worried about having lots of different women characters, because good female characters were in very short supply. We weren't worried about non-binary, because we were still trying to rid ourselves of the whole idea of binary. I was a bit concerned that the young people who came to us from *Starstruck Odyssey* wouldn't understand this. But people have been great. I haven't gotten crap from anybody. The new young fans are just lovely."

As for the future of her and MWK's science fiction epic, now in its fifth decade of revelation, Lee is tight-lipped, as plans are still in the works, though she hints that numerous *Starstruck*-related happenings – in certain venues than one might imagine – may be coming in for a landing, perhaps at warp speed, sooner than we would expect. fin

*Lee was particularly proud of her boy's accomplishment to sell out a major venue, on Jan. 24, 2025, a huge live-play of Dungeons & Dragons. "My son's show, *Dimension 20*, did a live show in New York City. They sold out Madison Square Garden in 10 minutes! Twenty thousand people came to see one of their shows. And they had two characters from the *Starstruck* universe in that show!" (*Rolling Stone* called Mulligan "arguably the greatest Dungeon Master alive.")

Starstruck, Galactic Girl Guides TM & © Elaine Lee & Michael Wm. Kaluta. *Dimension 20* TM & © Connected Ventures, LLC. Illustrations courtesy of Elaine Lee.

Fitito's Little Car That Could

Move over Herbie, the Love Bug! Here comes Mannken's feisty Fiat manned by driver Fitito!

by PABLO STADELMAN

Fitito's Journeys – Las travesías de Fitito – is an action-comedy comic series that tells the adventures of a racer named Fitito (the Argentinian nickname given to the Fiat 600) in various competitions around the world. Created by cartoonist Victor Braxator, who uses the pen-name of Mannken, this feature has a car, one possessed with a feisty personality its own, going on adventures filled with intrigue and mystery.

In the best style of James Bond 007, the vehicle is full of inventive gadgets and technological instruments, which the driver frequently makes use of during the races. Beginning in 1975, the title was published by Editorial Cielosur and its stories initially were in a large format, with color covers and black-&-white interiors, with the content being a novelty among the publications of that time.

The main characters were the Fituchini family, made up of Fitito, the young driver who gave the strip its name; his younger brother, Fitin, the official co-driver; father Don Fitucho; mother Doña Fitucha; and younger sister, Fitina. Plus there was Filomena, the dove which was in charge of sending messages between members of the racing crew. All together, they formed the Fitito Competition Team, which was known for its unity and kindness to anyone in need, even their own racing competitors.





The enormous number of gadgets and fantastical devices Fitito's car possesses is reminiscent of the Japanese anime series called *Meteoro* in Argentina and *Speed Racer* in the United States – original Japanese name: *Mach GoGo-Go* – and among the Fiat's most memorable artifacts are turbines, wings for flight, lift axles, and a periscope.

Mannken was a motorsports enthusiast and knew how to combine that passion with graphic design in his pages, work deeply influenced by Belgium's Marcinelle school, a group that included André Franquin and colleagues Jean De Mesmaeker (Jidéhem), Jean Roba, and others, many of whom contributed to the weekly comics magazine, *Spirou*.

Mannken's stylistic range spans from broad caricature to realism, a scope which earned him popularity among readers of all ages. He was also an artist who incorporated graphic trends in advertising illustration into his comics.

The sheer diversity of Mankenn's art remains extensive and impressive, encompassing several drawing styles and various themes, such as another racing strip, "Pepe Pistón," for *Billiken* magazine; as well as the science-fiction saga, "Galaxio de las estrellas," for *Afanancio* magazine (a classic comic publication in Argentina). The cartoonist also worked with any number of great writers, such as Emilio Balcarce, with whom he made "Mutante"; and with Héctor Germán Oesterheld, on "Manos Arriba." He also produced "Un verano diferente," with Carlos Trillo, and then "El hombre del carrito," with Gianni Caratelli, among other series. His great talent for drawing cars and ability to adapt to any type of story had allowed him also to find work in Europe. The Paraguayan-born cartoonist died at age 74, in 2011. fin

Above: Las travesías de Fitito *#6 features the exploits of race car driver Fitito and his Fiat 600, along with the entire Fitucha family, as they compete in automotive competitions around the globe.*
Inset left: *Dynamic full page by Mannken showing the Fiat's super-normal abilities when encountering nefarious forces.*
Below: *Undated photograph of Victor Braxator, the cartoonist known as Mannken.*



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The Look of *Lampoon*

Mark Simonson on the design and art direction of the great American humor magazine

Editor's Note: *This essay was originally written for* Comic Book Artist *V1 #24 [Apr. '03], the* National Lampoon *issue, but was unfortunately bumped. Thanks to Mark for permission to print. Visit his* National Lampoon *site at www.marksverylarge.com.*

by MARK SIMONSON

My first exposure to *National Lampoon* was in the magazine rack at Kmart: *The Best of National Lampoon* #1, the one with Rick Meyerowitz's Mona Gorilla on the cover. I could tell it was some kind of humor magazine, but it was in the same part of the rack as *Playboy*. Adult stuff. At the age of 15, I didn't feel comfortable flipping through adult magazines in Kmart. But it caught my attention. A year later I was a subscriber.



Son-O-God, National Lampoon TM & ©NL Operations, LLC.

I had been an avid *MAD* reader since the age of 10. My parents gave me a copy of *The Ninth Annual Worst from MAD* (with the bonus 33 1/3 recording of "It's A Gas") for babysitting my younger siblings for the first time.

In those pre-teen years, *MAD* was my window into the world of adults. I couldn't go see the X-rated *A Clockwork Orange*, but I could read the parody in *MAD*. Although *MAD* tackled adult topics, they were careful to keep it PG, no doubt aware that a large portion of their readers was in the pre-teen set.

MAD was also my introduction to subversive humor. They poked fun at the foibles and flaws of modern society, but did so in a very self-conscious, self-deprecating way, as if to say, "look how stupid people are, but we're just a bunch of idiots – what do we know?" which had a buffering effect.

MAD had a distinct format that went back to its beginnings as a comic book. Everything was framed as a "*MAD* Look at…," or "*MAD* Goes to…," or "Scenes We'd Like to See," or whatever. There was usually an introduction to anything more than a page long, to make sure the reader knew what the joke was going to be about. There were little idiosyncrasies, such as the unnaturally frequent use of the word "mainly" or the seeming editorial requirement of using an exclamation point at the end of every sentence.

There was something purposely silly about the *MAD* approach to humor. It wasn't enough to simply do a parody of a movie or a TV show or a magazine. Everything had to look funny, with every corner filled with gags – not necessarily related to the larger article. Use black-&-white cartoons instead of color photos for a magazine parody? It didn't matter, as long as it was funny. And it was funny. But you would never mistake a *MAD* parody for the real thing.

National Lampoon was very different. Where *MAD*'s heritage was derived from comic books, *National Lampoon* was the child of glossy magazines and college humor, by way of the *Harvard Lampoon*. The self-deprecating attitude of *MAD* (which always referred to itself as worthless trash) was replaced with mock-grandeur (for example, the elaborate architectural plans for the 1000-story National Lampoon Building). It was sophisticated in a way that made you feel smart and hip. No topic was out-of-bounds and there was a shocking, adult frankness that made *MAD* look like kid's stuff.

In *National Lampoon*, a hard line was drawn between parodies and everything else. Parodies were made as faithful as possible to the object of the parody, down to the paper stock and even the format in some cases (they did a pull-out full-size newspaper page printed on newsprint, for example). Every little detail was painstakingly captured, and, if possible, enlisted in aid of the larger point of the parody.

If not, it was left as is to ensure that the effect was complete. All of this realism and mimicry made their parodies even more subversive. It was like peering into twisted but hilarious alternate reality.

The non-parody articles were presented in a straightforward way not unlike a general interest magazine with clean layouts that let the author or artist take center stage. By framing these other articles in such a simple, consistent way, you could always tell what was a parody and what was not. There were no introductions, no explanations. When it was a parody, the magazine transformed itself into something else. When it wasn't a parody, it just looked like *National Lampoon*.

This approach was so skillfully handled that they could even run parodies of *MAD* magazine or *National Lampoon* itself.

The talents behind this were art director Michael Gross and design director David Kaestle who were at the magazine for most the early '70s. It seemed there was no visual style they couldn't ape.

This distinction between parodies and non-parodies was true with its use of comics as well.

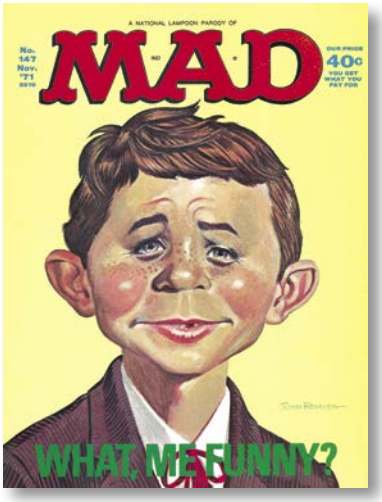
In *National Lampoon*, a parody of a comic book would look exactly like the real thing – until you started reading it. Every last detail – including the b-&-w ad on the inside front cover of the comic – would be meticulously recreated. Not only were they able to get artists to imitate these styles, they often used top comic book artists such as Neal Adams, Bernie Wrightson, Walter Simonson [*No relation to Mark.* – **Ye Ed.**], Joe Orlando, Frank Frazetta, Frank Springer, etc.

A good example of the difference in approach to comics between *MAD* and *National Lampoon* is the way each handled a parody of Tarzan. Tarzan was often parodied at *MAD*. A typical example would be a "Scenes We'd Like to See" piece where Tarzan gives his Tarzan yell, swings from tree to tree, and finally arrives at a tree-top outhouse where the yell becomes a sigh of relief. The style is cartoony and broad and is simply a gag based on Tarzan's well-known characteristics.

National Lampoon took a subtler approach. In Michael O'Donoghue's *Tarzan of the Cows*, drawn by Springer, it looks exactly like a vintage Tarzan comic book, except the premise has been changed. Instead of his parents' plane crashing in the jungles of Africa, it crashes on a farm in Wisconsin. And instead of being raised by apes, the infant boy is raised by cows. Other than that, it looks and reads just like a real, vintage *Tarzan* comic, except it's achingly funny.

The *MAD* piece was a simple gag about a well-known and popular character. The *National Lampoon* piece was about the whole idea of Tarzan.

The comic book form was frequently used as a satirical tool in the *Lampoon*. An appropriate genre would be chosen and re-cast as needed. So you get super-hero comics like *Deadman** (a crime-fighting corpse), *Verman* (becomes a louse or other pest when touching his lips to garbage), *Son-O-God* (Christ as a super-hero), *Utopia Four* (intellectuals out to save the world); romance comics, like *White House Romance, Boys' Romance Comics,* Doug Kenney's *First Lay* and *First High Comics*; war comics, like *Defeat Comics,* horror comics, like *Dragula* and *Tales of the South*; "classics" comics featuring Siddhartha, and science fiction comics like *Weerd Tayls* (written by cockroaches in the distant future). Practically every genre was used at one time or another, even underground comics. Eventually, *National Lampoon* devoted an entire special issue (*National Lampoon/The Very Large Book of Comical Funnies,* 1975) parodying dozens of comic genres covering the entire history of the form, from *Krazy Kat* to *ZAP*.

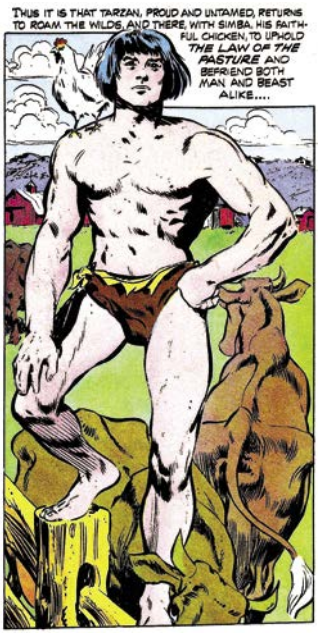


Like the non-parody articles, *Lampoon*'s non-parody comics were handled more straightforwardly. Early in his tenure as art director, Gross created the "Funny Pages" section, filled with comics that ran anywhere from a quarter to a full page. The "Funny Pages" became one of the most popular and enduring parts of the magazine with such regulars as *Nuts* by Gahan Wilson, *Dirty Duck* by Bobby London, *Trots and Bonnie* by Shary Flenniken, *Chicken Gutz* by Randall Enos, *Cheech Wizard* by Vaughn Bodé, *Politenessman* by Ron Barrett, *Idyl* by Jeff Jones, *The Appletons* and *Timberland Tales* by B.K. Taylor, *Mule's Diner* by Stan Mack, *One Year Affair* by Byron Preiss and Ralph Reese, *Shab* by B. Kliban, several long running series by Charles Rodrigues, including *The Aesop Twins*, and an endless series of "meta" comics by Ed Subitsky. Later on, the "Funny Pages" section was home to *Zippy the Pinhead* by Bill Griffith and strips by Dan Clowes, Mark Marek, Drew Friedman (who also edited the cartoon section for a time), and Rick Geary.

Ultimately, *National Lampoon* had a bigger influence on me than *MAD*. I'm not sure if it was because of the magazine itself or because it appeared when I was coming of age. Reading it gave me a healthy ability to not take anything completely seriously. It also gave me an eye for visual design that has helped me professionally as a commercial artist.

When I read *MAD*, I wanted to be a cartoonist. But when I read *National Lampoon*, I decided to become a magazine art director instead.

fin



Above: *Frank Springer renders "Tarzan of the Cows," in* National Lampoon *#13 [Apr. '71], written by Michael O'Donoghue.* **Previous page:** *Neal Adams art graces this page from* Son-O-God Comics *in #22 [Jan. '72].* **Inset left:** *Maybe the most devastating* NatLamp *parody appeared in #19 [Oct. '71], taking on* MAD *magazine. Faux cover art by John Romita.* **Below:** *This "pie" illustration (get it?) by Bernie Wrightson was in* The National Lampoon Encyclopedia of Humor *['73].*



Tarzan TM & © Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. *MAD* TM & © E.C. Publications, Inc. *National Lampoon* TM & ©NL Operations, LLC.

*Weirdly enough, Neal Adams, the artist whose sensational rendition of DC's "Deadman," in *Strange Adventures,* made a huge impact in late '60s comics, was also the man who drew the unrelated *NatLamp* "Deceased Comics" version with his Continuity partner, Dick Giordano.

comic book CREATOR

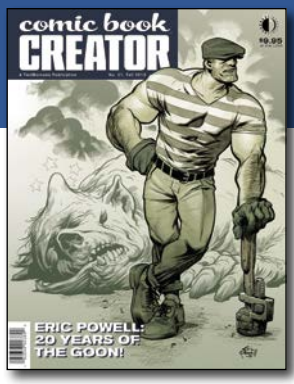


COMIC BOOK CREATOR #16

A look at 75 years of Archie Comics' characters and titles, from Archie and his pals 'n gals to the mighty MLJ heroes of yesteryear and today's "Dark Circle"! Also: Career-spanning interviews with The Fox's **DEAN HASPIEL** and Kevin Keller's cartoonist **DAN PARENT,** who both jam on our exclusive cover depicting a face-off between humor and heroes. Plus our usual features, including the hilarious **FRED HEMBECK!**

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #21

ERIC POWELL celebrates 20 years of **THE GOON!** with a career-spanning interview and a gallery of rare artwork. Plus **CBC** editor and author **JON B. COOKE** on his new retrospective **THE BOOK OF WEIRDO**, a new interview with **R. CRUMB** about his work on that legendary humor comics anthology, **JOHN ROMITA SR.** on his admiration for the work of **MILTON CANIFF**, and more!

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #22

P. CRAIG RUSSELL career-spanning interview (complete with photos and art gallery), an almost completely unknown work by **FRANK QUITELY** (artist on All-Star Superman and The Authority), **DERF BACKDERF's** forthcoming graphic novel commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Kent State shootings, **CAROL TYLER** shares her prolific career, **JOE SINNOTT** discusses his Treasure Chest work, **CRAIG YOE**, and more!

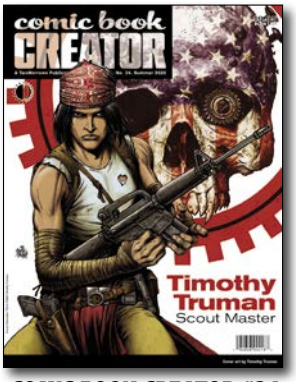
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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #23

WENDY PINI discusses her days as Red Sonja cosplayer, & 40+ years of **ELFQUEST!** Plus **RICHARD PINI** on their 48-year marriage and creative partnership! Plus: We have the final installment of our **CRAIG YOE** interview! **GIL KANE**'s business partner **LARRY KOSTER** talks about their adventures together! **PABLO MARCOS** on his Marvel horror work, **HEMBECK**, and more! Cover by **WENDY PINI.**

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #24

TIMOTHY TRUMAN discusses his start at the Kubert School, Grimjack with writer **JOHN OSTRANDER**, and current collaborations with son Benjamin. **SCOTT SHAW!** talks about early San Diego Comic-Cons and friendship with **JACK KIRBY**, Captain Carrot, and Flintstones work! Also **PATRICK McDONNELL's** favorite **MUTTS** comic book pastiches, letterer **JANICE CHIANG** profiled, **HEMBECK**, and more! **TIM TRUMAN** cover.

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #25

BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH discusses his new graphic novel **MONSTERS**, its origin as a 1980s Hulk story, and its evolution into his 300-page magnum opus (includes a gallery of outtakes). Plus part two of our **SCOTT SHAW!** interview about Hanna-Barbera licensing material and work with **ROY THOMAS** on Captain Carrot, **KEN MEYER, JR.** looks at the great fanzines of 40 years ago, **HEMBECK**, and more!

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #26

Career-spanning interview with **TERRY DODSON**, and Terry's wife (and go-to inker) **RACHEL DODSON!** Plus 1970s/'80s portfolio producer **SAL QUARTUCCIO** talks about his achievements with Phase and Hot Stuf', **R. CRUMB** and **DENIS KITCHEN** discuss the history of underground comix character Pro Junior, **WILL EISNER**'s Valentines to his wife, **HEMBECK**, and more!

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #27

Extensive **PAUL GULACY** retrospective by **GREG BIGA** that includes Paul himself, **VAL MAYERIK, P. CRAIG RUSSELL, TIM TRUMAN, ROY THOMAS**, and others. Plus a **JOE SINNOTT MEMORIAL**; **BUD PLANT** discusses his career as underground comix retailer, distributor, fledgling publisher of **JACK KATZ**'s **FIRST KINGDOM**, and mail-order bookseller; our regular columnists, and the latest from **HEMBECK**!

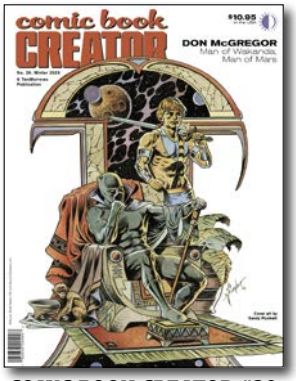
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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #28

STEVE BISSETTE career-spanning interview, from his Joe Kubert School days, Swamp Thing stint, publisher of Taboo and Tyrant, creator rights crusader, and more. Also, Part One of our **MIKE GOLD** interview on his Chicago youth, start in underground comix, and arrival at DC Comics, right in time for the implosion! Plus **BUD PLANT** on his publishing days, comic shop owner, and start in mail order—and all the usual fun stuff!

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #29

DON McGREGOR retrospective, from early '70s Warren Publications scripter to his breakout work at Marvel Comics on **BLACK PANTHER, KILLRAVEN, SABRE, DETECTIVES INC., RAGAMUFFINS**, and others. Plus **ROBERT MENZIES** looks at **HERB TRIMPE**'s mid-'70s UK visit to work on Marvel's British comics weeklies, **MIKE GOLD** Part Two, plus Don McG. with **RICH BUCKLER**! **SANDY PLUNKETT** cover!

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #30

Canadian comic book artist, illustrator, and graphic novelist **MICHAEL CHO** in a career-spanning interview and art gallery, a 1974 look at **JACK ADLER** and the DC Comics production department's process of reprinting Golden Age material, Pyramid publisher **NORMAN GOLDFIND** (of Weird Heroes and A Contract with God graphic novel by **WILL EISNER**), plus CBC's usual columns and features, including **HEMBECK!**

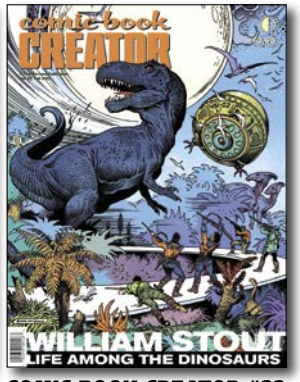
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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #31

Career-spanning interview with Bane's co-creator **GRAHAM NOLAN!** Plus, **STAN LEE's** Carnegie Hall debacle of 1972, the Golden Age Quality Comics' work of **FRANK BORTH** (Phantom Lady, Spider Widow), and **GREG BIGA** talks with ex-DC Comics co-publisher **DAN DIDIO** on his current career as writer/creator on the **FRANK MILLER PRESENTS** comics line, as well as that new comics line's publisher!

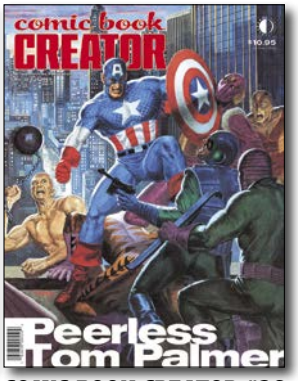
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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #32

WILLIAM STOUT is interviewed about his illustration and comics work, as well as his association with **DINOSAURS** publisher **BYRON PREISS**, the visionary packager/publisher who is also celebrated in this double-header issue. Included is the only comprehensive interview ever conducted with **PREISS**, plus a huge biographical essay. Also **MIKE DEODATO** on his early years and **FRANK BORTH** on Treasure Chest!

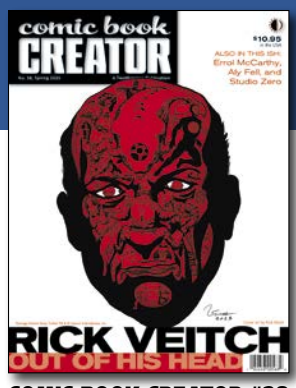
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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #36

TOM PALMER retrospective, career-spanning interview, and tributes compiled by **GREG BIGA**. **LEE MARRS** chats about assisting on Little Orphan Annie, work for DC's Plop! and underground Pudge, Girl Blimp! The start of a multi-part look at the life and career of **DAN DIDIO**, part two of our **ARNOLD DRAKE** interview, public service comics produced by students at the **CENTER FOR CARTOON STUDIES**, & more!

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #38

RICK VEITCH discusses his career from undergrounds and the Kubert School; the '80s with 1941, Epic Illustrated and Heavy Metal; to Swamp Thing, The One, Brat Pack, and Maximortal! Plus **TOM VEITCH**'s history of '70s underground horror comix, part one of a look at cartoonist **ERROL McCARTHY**, the story behind Studio Zero—the '70s collective of artists **STARLIN, BRUNNER, WEISS**, and others, and more!

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #39

THOMAS YEATES career-spanning interview about the Kubert School, Swamp Thing, Eclipse Comics, and adventure strips Zorro, Tarzan, and Prince Valiant! **GREG POTTER** discusses his '70s Warren horror comics and '80s reboot of Wonder Woman with **GEORGE PÉREZ, WARREN KREMER** is celebrated by **MARK ARNOLD**, plus part one of a look at the work of **STEVE WILLIS**, part two of **ERROL McCARTHY**, and more!

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #41

LEN WEIN's life as writer/editor from creating Swamp Thing and Wolverine, to **MOORE** and **GIBBONS**' Watchmen, and more! Plus the sad demise of **WILL EISNER**'s *P*S Army Preventive Maintenance* magazine, interview with romance and pin-up artist **JAY SCOTT PIKE**, more of **STEVE WILLIS**, and **SHAUN CLANCY** reveals the saga of **ADRIAN LOPEZ**'s *Harpoon/Apple Pie* humor mags! **FRANK CHO** cover!

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #42

PAT BRODERICK discusses his career, from the Crusty Bunkers to unforgettable work on Firestorm, Micronauts, Captain Marvel, and more! Plus the 1940s KKK-crushing district attorney **FIGHTING LAWYER**, profile of **PAUL BUHLE**, **SHARY FLENNIKEN** interview, ginchy super-heroes created in 1972 by **WRIGHTSON, REESE, WINDSOR-SMITH**, and others for *Esquire* magazine, and more!

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #43

Informative conversation with "Big" **JOHN BUSCEMA** and a biographical essay about the Marvel legend by **JON B. COOKE**, including an awesome art gallery. Plus we share about the life and tragic fate of **BILL MANTLO** (co-creator of Rocket Raccoon and Cloak and Dagger), inside comics printer Eastern Color Printing by **SHAUN CLANCY**, more with **SHARY FLENNIKEN**, chat with **RIC ESTRADA**, and more!

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #44

CARMINE INFANTINO radio interview by **KEN GALE** and **ED MENJE**, **JON B. COOKE** on Carmine's stint as DC editorial director/publisher, **ROBERT KANIGHER**'s 1989 conversation with **STEVE WHITAKER** and **TIM BATEMAN**, Part One of **TED JALBERT**'s interview with **JACK KATZ, DAVE COCKRUM**'s Aurora model kit pamphlets, **GLEN CADIGAN**'s interview with horror comics writer **JOE HILL**, and more!

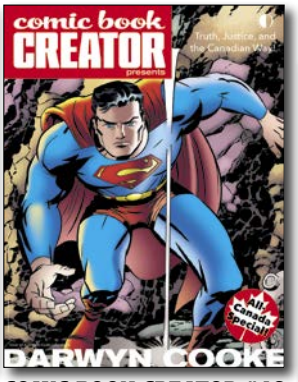
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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #45

GENE COLAN showcase with **TOM FIELD**, Gene's 75th birthday celebration from Comic-Con 2001, **MARK WHEATLEY** spotlights former boss **MYRON FASS**' *Heavy Metal* rip-off **GASM, JON B. COOKE**'s visit to defunct comics publisher **CROSSGEN**, **CAROL LAY** interview, more with **JOE HILL, SHAUN CLANCY**'s look at **HILLMAN PERIODICALS** (publisher of *Crime Does Not Pay* and *Airboy*), **HEMBECK,** and more!

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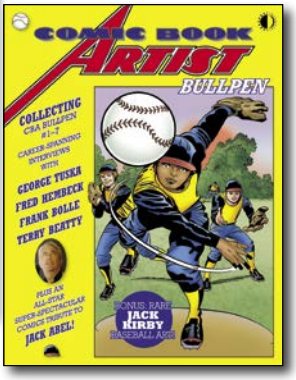


COMIC BOOK CREATOR #46

DOUBLE-SIZED ISSUE spotlighting **DARWYN COOKE!** "Truth, Justice, and the Canadian Way" features two interviews with **DARWYN**, plus other Canadian comics greats: **RICHARD COMELY'S** history of Captain Canuck; Neil the Horse's **ARN SABA**; profile of **DAVID BOSWELL** of Reid Fleming fame; plus Orb magazine founder **JAMES WALEY, DEAN MOTTER**, Vortex Comics publisher **BILL MARKS**, and more!

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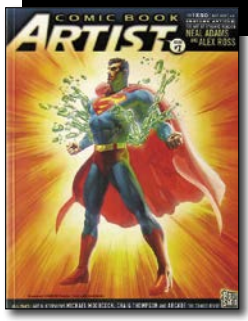
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CBA Vol. 2 #1

NEAL ADAMS/ALEX ROSS cover and interviews with both, history of "Arcade, The Comics Revue" with underground legends **CRUMB, SPIEGELMAN,** and **GRIFFITH, MICHAEL MOORCOCK** on comic book adaptations of his work, **CRAIG THOMPSON** sketchbook, and more!

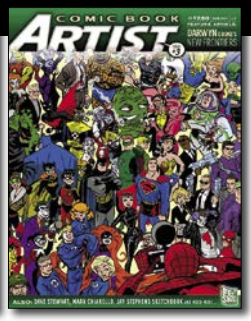
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CBA Vol. 2 #2

Exhaustive **FRANK CHO** interview and sketchbook gallery, **ALEX ROSS** sketchbook section of never-before-seen pencils, **MIKE FRIEDRICH** on the history of Star*Reach, plus animator **J.J. SEDELMAIER** on his Ambiguously Gay Duo and The X-Presidents cartoons for Saturday Night Live.

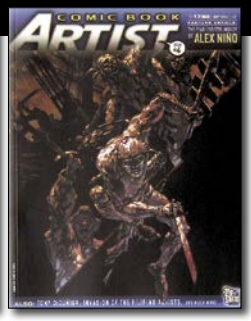
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CBA Vol. 2 #3

Interview with **DARWYN COOKE** and a gallery of rarely-seen and unpublished artwork, a chat with DC Comics art director **MARK CHIARELLO**, an exploration of The Adventures of Little Archie with creator **BOB BOLLING** and artist **DEXTER TAYLOR**, new **JAY STEPHENS** sketchbook section, and more!

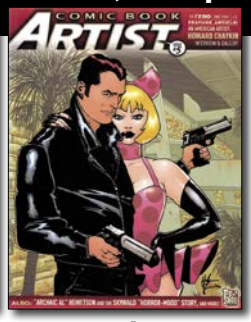
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CBA Vol. 2 #4

ALEX NIÑO's first ever full-length interview and huge gallery of his artwork, **SHAUN CLANCY** interviews **TONY DeZUÑIGA** on Jonah Hex, plus the most comprehensive look ever at the great Filipino comic book artists (**NESTOR REDONDO, ALFREDO ALCALA**, and others), a **STEVE RUDE** sketchbook, and more!

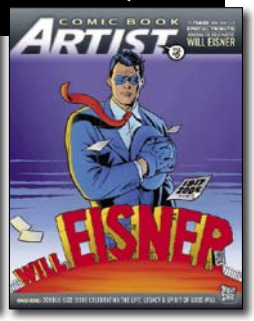
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CBA Vol. 2 #5

HOWARD CHAYKIN interview and gallery of unpublished artwork, a look at the '70s black-&-white mags published by Skywald, tribute to Psycho and Nightmare writer/editor **ALAN HEWETSON, LEAH MOORE** & **JOHN REPPION** on Wild Girl, a **SONNY LIEW** sketchbook section, and more!

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CBA Vol. 2 #6

Double-sized tribute to **WILL EISNER!** Over 200 comics luminaries celebrate his career and impact: **SPIEGELMAN, FEIFFER** & **McCLOUD** on their friendships with Eisner, testimonials by **ALAN MOORE, NEIL GAIMAN, STAN LEE, RICHARD CORBEN, JOE KUBERT, DAVID MAZZUCCHELLI, JOE SIMON,** and others!

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Archie and the Terrifying Trio

Celebrating the inept Batman villains three who were all based upon DC Comics editors

by RICHARD J. ARNDT

Being this is an Archie Goodwin issue of *CBC*, I'd like to celebrate the best editor that comics has ever had with the rest of this issue, while noting that Archie was also one-third of the best comic-crime gang, played strictly for laughs, and based on real DC Batman editors, namely the Terrifying Trio.

The trio first appeared in *Batman Adventures* #10 [July '93)], written by Kelley Puckett and illustrated by Mike Parobeck and Rick Burchett. The three editors (a.k.a. crooks) were Mastermind, (based on Mike Carlin), who makes the greatest crime plans since Eve stole an apple, but is a bullying, utter dolt; the Perfesser (based on Denny O'Neil), who is so brilliant and thinks so far ahead of the present that he is constantly losing track of where he's actually at, and Mr. Nice (based on Archie) who is the toughest brawler of all time, but is too nice to really do them in. In their first appearance the trio thoroughly overwhelm a Batman/Riddler story.

It should be noted that the Riddler's gang is actually four different stooges – poor Riddler can't even get his henchmen right. The Riddler story and the Trio's story also have almost nothing to do with each other, except that Batman puts both teams in prison.

After that initial appearance in #10, the Trio appears every 10th issue in more Stooge-style stories. In #20 [May '94], the three mad editors break out of prison in an effort to break into Fort Briggs, where the U.S. nuclear arsenal is kept, to allow Mastermind the ability to become a one-man nuclear power. As Batman goes on the chase, he is startled to notice that the dopey Mastermind's master plan seems actually to be working. Mr. Nice is assigned the primo role of taking out all the military guards at the fort and he does indeed breeze through them, only to be stymied by the last guard, stationed at the vault door – the cutest German Shepherd puppy you've ever seen. Their plan foiled, the trio is back in the slammer at the end of the issue.

In #30 [Mar. '95], a pearl thief is tracking down pieces of a map that will lead him to the largest pearl in existence and apparently only the Trio can help him discover the missing pieces. As he interviews each editor, the thief is bombarded by unnecessary origin stories for each of the Trio. None of these stories have anything whatsoever to do with the missing map pieces, but are quite funny diversions. Batman makes only a one-panel cameo in his own book, on the last page.

Then the appearances in every tenth issue stop, largely because *Batman Adventures* only makes it to #36. The Trio vanishes for four years.

Then Archie Goodwin passed away, on March 1, 1998. Penciler Mike Parobeck had also died, on July 2, 1996. May I intrude here to say I consider writer Kelley Puckett to be one of the best writers that DC has ever had, as well as a clear literary follower of Goodwin in that, both Goodwin and Puckett's only discernible writing style were their equal ability to write a good, concise, and clear story, no matter what the character or book or genre that either was writing a story in was, laced with inner meaning within the story that always seemed deeper and more meaningful than the average super-hero tale.

Anyway, Puckett, Rick Burchett,and Terry Beatty took it upon themselves to provide a warm, tender eulogy to Goodwin and show how much Archie was loved by the writers, artists, editors that he worked with and the readers he entertained.

This fourth, and final, appearance of the Trio was in *Batman: Gotham Adventures* #13 [June '99], hiding behind a Burchett cover based on Harvey Kurtzman's cover for *MAD* #1 [Nov. '52]. The splash page sets the reader up a bit for the story to come, as the title is "The End" and Batman's first words are, "Nobody's going to die tonight." Wronger words have ne'er been spoke.

Batman's quest is to retrieve three vials of plague toxin. There's an abrupt shift as we learn that the Batman story is being narrated as a bedtime story by Perfesser Denny O'Neil to his quite charming, but undeniably wicked, little granddaughter. She correctly decides that the plague vials are actually evil magic potions and the Perfesser, much to his surprise, finds himself agreeing with her.

When he returns to the story, he notes that it is the last one in that particular book of tales. Back within the story an Asian boy arrives at the Trio's lair, bringing cards that tell Mr. Nice that the leper children of Bhang believe that a nice man will come and lead his people in the hour of their greatest need, and that need is needed now.

Mastermind is infuriated when Nice agrees to let the boy lead him to Bhang. He threatens to break the three stolen plague vials unless Mr. Nice agrees to stay with the group. Mr. Nice stands up, gives Mastermind a big hug, and says he has to go. Then he follows the Asian boy down a long corridor and is gone.

Mastermind is devastated. The Perfesser quietly tells him, "Everything ends, Mastermind. Even stories."

Perfesser falls asleep and his granddaughter picks up his bedtime book and the last page promises only, "The Beginning." At the bottom of the page are the words "Dedicated to the recently passed away Archie Goodwin."

Rarely are stories that are funny as hell laced with true tenderness, sadness, and joy for a fellow creator. If Archie had the chance to read this story, I think he would have liked it.

For all I know, maybe he did.

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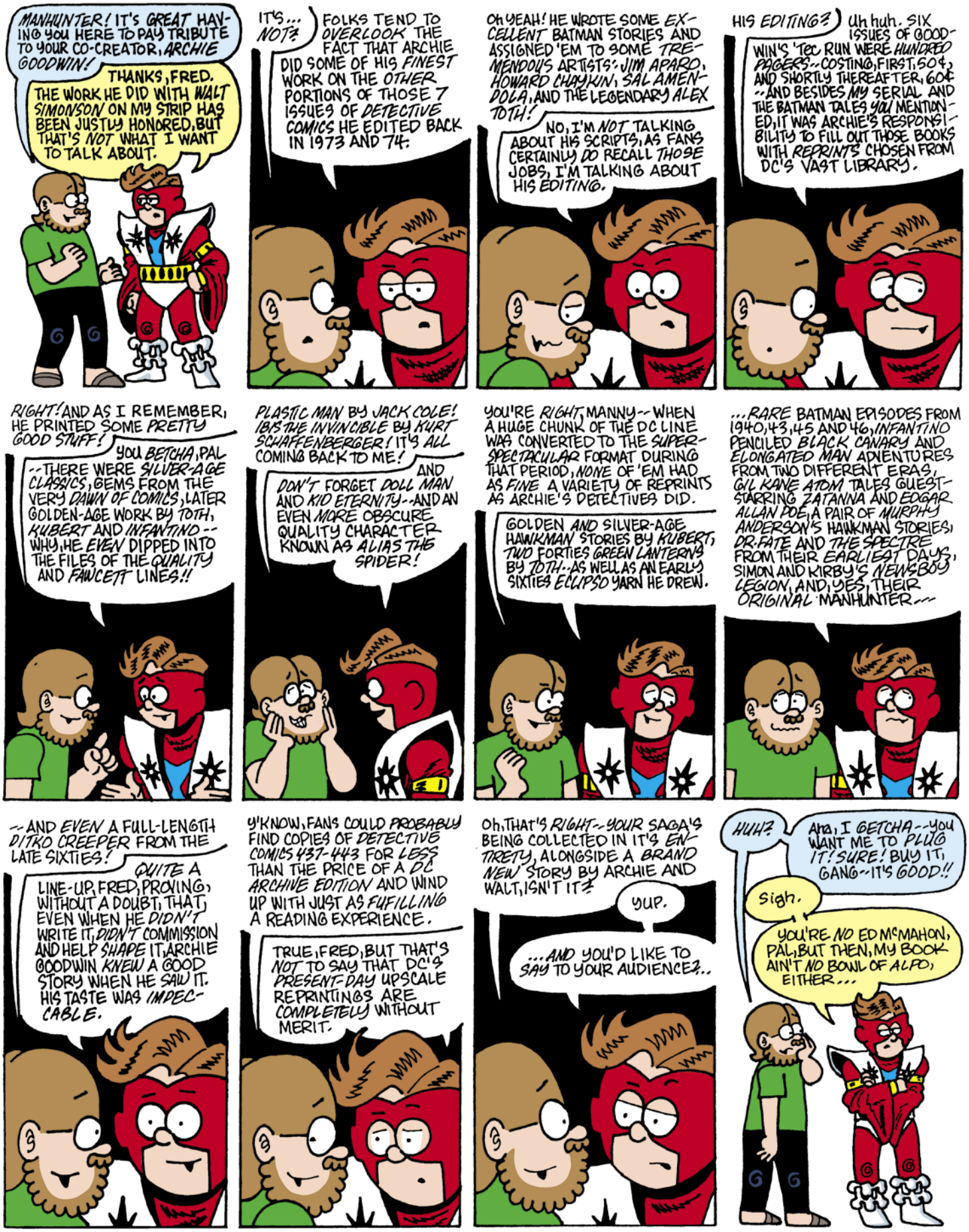




Above: Batman: Gotham Adventures *#13 cover and panel from* Batman Adventures *#20.*

Batman: Gotham Adventures, *Batman Adventures* TM & © DC Comics.

Fred Hembeck's Dateline: @%#!!



Manhunter TM & © DC Comics. Dateline Hembeck TM & © Fred Hembeck. (This strip originally appeared in black-&-white in *Comic Book Profiles: A Tribute to Archie Goodwin* [June '99]) **COLORS BY: GLENN WHITMORE**

Archie Goodwin

For many, the creative drive, kindness, and accomplishments of this gentle man with a trademark bushy mustache has elevated Archie Goodwin to legendary, even heroic status. Learning the ropes in the 1960s, alongside his comics heroes at upstart Warren Publishing and revolutionizing comics storytelling with DC's "Manhunter" and *Heavy Metal*'s adaptation of *Alien* in the '70s led Archie to set the standard for creator-owned comics as editor of the innovative Epic line at Marvel in the '80s. His intimate understanding of every aspect of the creative process, along with deep friendships with creators, established Archie as the Tiffany of editors, that made working for DC Comics under his thoughtful direction attractive to independent creators of the '90s, a decade from which he, sadly, did not emerge.

First *Epic Illustrated* and then Epic Comics set a standard for a major publisher to support creator-owned comics, reflecting a regard for the form also seen in *Heavy Metal* magazine. The difference is Epic had a not-so secret weapon in Archie Goodwin as editor of the line.

In the 28 years since his death, which occurred on March 1, 1998, I've still never heard a bad thing said about Archie Goodwin. Ever. Not on the record. Not off the record. When I talked with Howard Chaykin about Archie, the writer/artist stated in his usual direct manner: "No, you will never hear anyone say a bad thing about Archie."

"Archie was a very kind man," scribe Christopher Priest said. "In this business, you make a lot of enemies and can't help it. There are people I run into today who go 'You were a real asshole,' and I don't know who these people are or remember what I did to them. These people are still, as we speak, holding a grudge. I've never met anyone – not a freelancer or a staffer – who ever held a grudge against Archie or had anything negative to say about Archie. If you think about it, it's remarkable… Archie had a way of comporting himself. I can't explain it. I'm way too neurotic; I flail and make enemies. Shooter made enemies. Anyone in this business does, because that's how the business works.

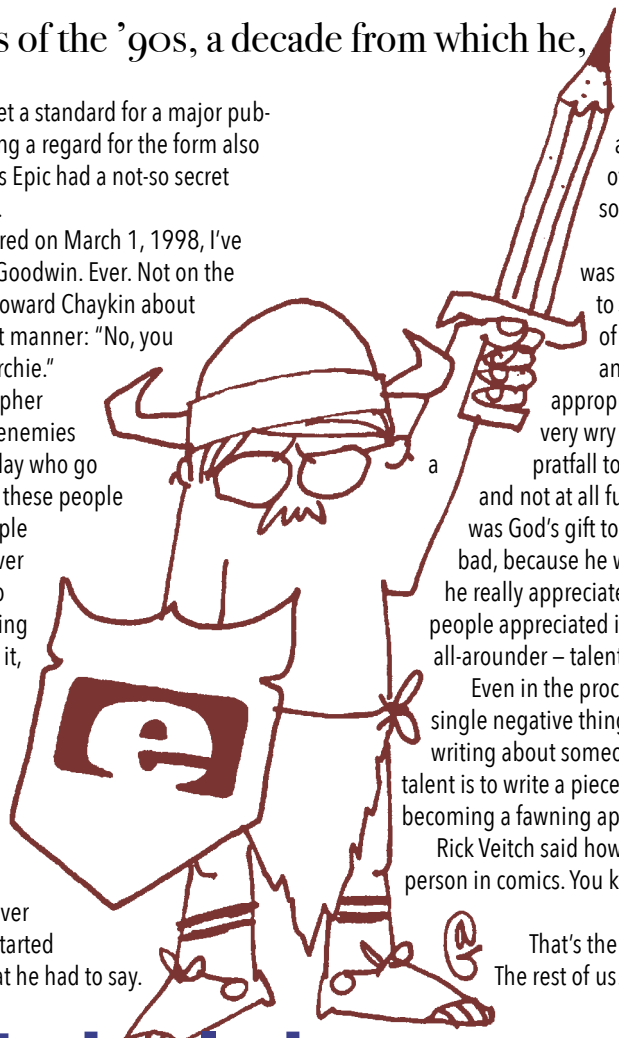
"Archie was universally admired and respected, and we took him seriously. When he talked in that soft tone of his, we never talked over him, we didn't shout him down, and when he started talking, we shut the hell up and listened to what he had to say. He was a remarkable individual and had a remarkable story. It's one of those things that we could all learn something about."

"Very smart, in a laid back kind of way," was how Louise Simonson described Archie to Jon B. Cooke. "A quirky combination of quiet and wildly funny. He could be any number of things depending on the appropriateness of the circumstances. He had a very wry sense of humor, and wasn't above taking a pratfall to get a laugh. He was self-deprecating and not at all full of himself, not at all thinking that he was God's gift to anything, which I think was sort of too bad, because he was such a talented man. I don't know if he really appreciated his own talent as completely as other people appreciated it… Archie was a real Renaissance guy, an all-arounder – talented as an artist, a writer, an editor."

Even in the process of writing this extensive essay, not a single negative thing about Archie came up. The challenge in writing about someone so noted for kindness and incredible talent is to write a piece that doesn't overwhelmingly delve into becoming a fawning appreciation.

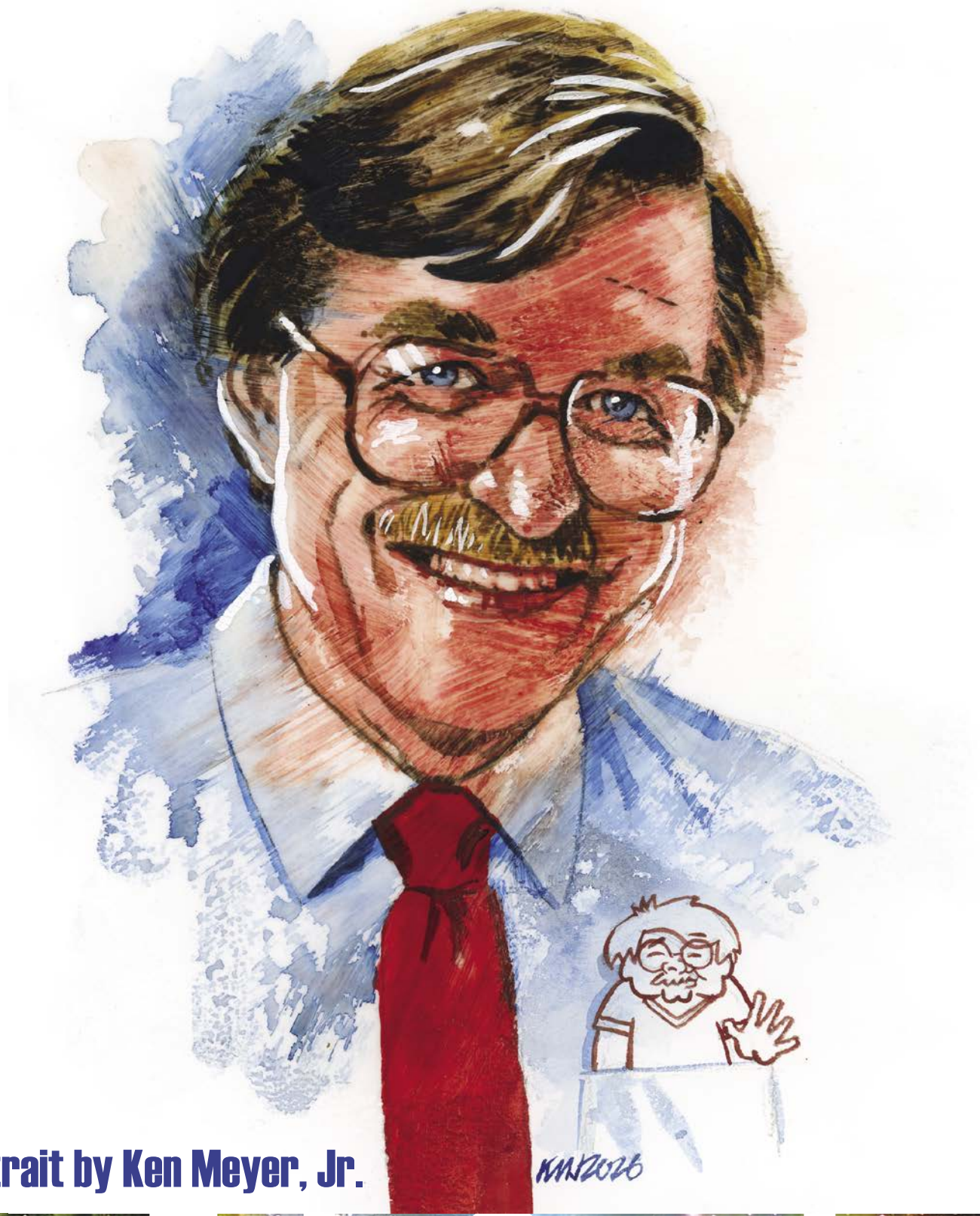
Rick Veitch said how Archie was "the most perfectly named person in comics. You know: Archie Goodwin."

That's the legacy Archie Goodwin left behind. The rest of us…? Well, we should be so lucky.



Self-caricature by Archie Goodwin. © Marvel Characters, Inc.

by Christopher Irving (with an assist by Jon B. Cooke)



Archie Goodwin portrait by & © Ken Meyer, Jr.

Portrait by Ken Meyer, Jr.

An Epic Creator



Above: *Baby Archie Lee Goodwin with parents Marvin and Flora (Shoemaker).* **Below:** *The Will Rogers Middle and High School was posthumously built in Tulsa, Oklahoma, after the nationally beloved humorist tragically died in a 1935 plane crash. Archie was a graduate of the class of 1955. Archie credits his art teacher Hortense Bateholts as a supporter.*



OKIE DAYS

Archie Lee Goodwin was born, in Kansas City, Missouri, on September 8, 1937, as the nation was entering the tail end of the Great Depression and *Action Comics* #1 was still half-a-year away from hitting the newsstand. By the time he reached junior high age, around 1952, the Goodwins moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, when his father became a partner in a trucking company. Attending high school, Archie was struck by the racial segregation prevalent there as opposed to his earlier childhood in Kansas and Missouri.

Named for the iconic American humorist, Will Rogers High School has a stunning art deco facade and was built in 1939 through the Works Progress Administration to further accommodate the bustling city's growth. When the school banned the forming of any secret clubs, Archie and his friends, Paul Davis, Don Lindmark, and Russell Myers formed the clandestine Cartoonists Club, which was mostly an excuse to hang out at the local Owl Drugstore and flip through the latest comics on sale. They were also encouraged by beloved art teacher Hortense Bateholts, who gave them space and encouragement to explore art in her classroom.

At that point, super-heroes were mostly dead, with other genres taking over the rack space – particularly crime and horror. EC Comics' infamous and lauded line of horror books – *Tales from the Crypt, Vault of Horror,* and *Haunt of Fear* – were in full swing through Archie's high school years, as were the Carl Barks *Donald Duck* and *Uncle Scrooge* comics of Dell's Walt Disney line. Archie claimed to have discovered both EC and a desire to cartoon in the ninth grade, as he and his friends created their own comics and characters, and he would never deviate from pursuing that impulse. The "Artist Profiles" in the ECs made him realize that, yes, human beings make comics and, then and there, his career path was solidified:

"'When I was 13 or 14, I got it in my head then that, 'Why couldn't I work in comics?'" Archie told Steve Ringgenberg. A "ham" during drama and theater classes, Archie was also an aspiring cartoonist who thrived through the support of his friends and high school art teacher. His dream was to make it east to New York City and study at the School of Visual Arts, where his pal Paul Davis had been accepted, but his father had other plans, demanding he attend Oklahoma University upon graduating high school in 1955.

Balking at the school's philosophy towards abstract expressionism, Archie's protest took a quieter form than most, flunking out by late November; he would declare in 1956 that, "They couldn't flunk me; I quit!" After Archie passed away, Davis told *Tulsa World,* "He didn't even finish his first semester there. We met up when we were visiting home during Christmas break, and when it was over, he took the bus back to New York with me."

Archie's wife, Anne T. Murphy, recalled to Cooke, "He talked about the fact that he never had wanted to do anything else – and he had to battle his father to do it, just like a lot of people in comics. As far as his father was concerned, you couldn't make a living doing it. He had also had to battle his father to go to art school and was made to put in several months at the University of Oklahoma first. He came home at Thanksgiving and simply told his father he was never going back, he was going to New York. His mother was supportive, but his father never stopped arguing the issue. Archie had also taken care to make sure he wasn't really passing his classes.

"He was determined to do what he wanted and his father was determined that he wasn't going to – but, truthfully, Archie was right, because what would he do in Oklahoma? His father had no real idea what he should do; his father just knew what he didn't want Archie to do. His father was a truck driver and then a gas station owner, and finally had a tire retreading place. Archie worked in the gas station for a half-year when they couldn't pay to send him back to the School of Visual Arts. I think his father wanted him to stay in Oklahoma and be like a normal person, only he wasn't sure what he meant by 'normal.'"

HOOHAH!

In the meantime, Davis, who remained a lifelong pal and would himself establish a career as renowned illustrator and graphic designer, attended SVA with newly enrolled Archie, who was now working in the city to support himself and pay for his studies in the next semester.

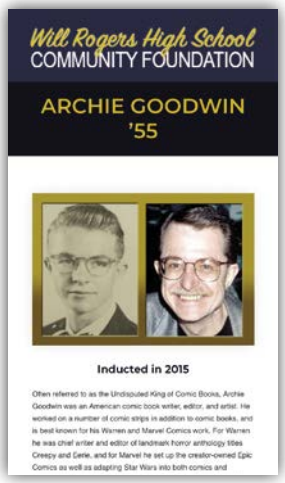
Archie was in New York during a period when the comic book industry was floundering, having recently suffered the slings and arrows of Dr. Fredric Wertham's anti-comics campaign and the KeFauver Senate Subcommittee hearings that accused comics of contributing to juvenile delinquency. When EC publisher William M. Gaines testified before the senators on April 21–22, 1954, his good intentions crashed and burned before a national audience on live television. That meltdown contributed to the creation of the Comics Code Authority, a self-censoring body that reviewed comics and whose ultimate goals included, more or less, a drive to force EC out of business by banning horror and crime

Family portrait courtesy of Seth Goodwin.





Above: *Right to left, the president, Archie Goodwin, and V.P., Paul Davis, of the Will Rogers High School "Artists, Incorporated" club, its purpose, according to the 1955* Lariat *yearbook, "to encourage creative art."* **Inset left:** *Archie Lee Goodwin's senior portrait.* **Below:** *In 2015, Goodwin was inducted in his high school's Hall of Fame, which referred to him as "the undisputed King of Comic Books"! Bottom: That's Archie sitting at the desk of EC publisher Bill Gaines Not the scratched-in smoking related gags. Photo snapped by Goodwin's NYC pal, Larry Ivie.*



genres. The industry had, as Archie told Ringgenberg, "pretty well been beaten to its knees, maybe even to its waist."

Archie remained a dedicated EC fan, even carrying his EC Fan Addict membership card in his wallet well in the 1970s, so it's no surprise he began writing and sending cartoons to *Hoohah!,* an EC fanzine edited by Ron Parker. Described by Bill Schelly, *Hoohah!* was "the last EC fanzine begun while the publisher was in the comic book business," a mimeographed, stapled effort with a reported circulation of 44.

Shortly after his arrival in the Big Apple, Archie connected with comics fan extraordinaire and fellow SVA student Larry Ivie (likely through Paul), and the trio embarked on a sacred journey to their shared Mecca – the offices of EC Comics, in midtown Manhattan, on the seventh floor at 225 Lafayette Street. At that time, EC would have still been well into the Harvey Kurtzman era of satirical magazine *MAD*, while the ill-fated "New Direction" titles, like *M.D.* and *Piracy,* and "Picto-Fiction" like *Crime Illustrated* were coming off – or about to go on – the presses.

The lads let themselves into the EC offices to find it devoid of staff as: "It was apparent that a round of mags had just been sent out and everyone was taking a breather before going through the cycle again. Hung about the office were original pen and inks, paintings, and drawings by various EC artists."

Archie even snuck into Bill Gaines's office and sat at the big man's desk, posing for a photo taken by Larry, before they were run out by a secretary. (A print of the snapshot, which prominently displayed the publisher's desk sign of "No Smoking," had scratched-in cartoon add-ons, including an ashtray overflowing with butts, smoke wafting in the air, and cigarette dangling from Archie's mouth.) Non-smoker Archie wrote how they were "politely ushered out with the cries of breaking-and-entering ringing in our ears."

Archie described himself in the pages of *Hoohah!* as having "such an exaggerated sense of politeness that you will decide he is either poking fun at you, or is an unforgivable nitwit and boor. You will probably be right," and a short 5' 6" with "an uncombed, unshorn mop of straight hair that perhaps, if washed, might be blond."

His encounter with the empty EC offices was a prologue to meeting one of his EC heroes, through Ivie, who brought Al Williamson around to meet his friends in September of that year.

Archie truly had no idea who he was meeting, admitting to Ringgenberg: "So, a little bit later, [Larry] drops up with this guy and he says 'Hello, Artie, this is Al.' I figure this guy's a comics fan, 'Let's kid around with him a little.' I said, [*sarcastically*] 'Oh, Williamson?' And he said 'Yes.' And I went, 'oublublub.'" The affable Archie hit it off with affable Al, and, from then on, the two regularly went to the movies together.

"He wasn't shy, but a little aloof, though not in a bad way," Williamson recalled, "He was a gentleman and it took a little while – we saw each other and always had a good time – but, little by little, we really got to know each other and we became very, very good friends."

To Archie, his visit to EC and burgeoning friendship with Williamson must have provided a glimpse of his achieving a goal to work professionally in comics. He was singularly driven towards a career in the field, according to *Squa Tront* editor John Benson, who said Archie was "a fan who always thought he was going to become a professional."

REDBOOK AND *MARY PERKINS*

But the dream didn't materialize immediately after leaving SVA, in 1958, as Archie could no longer afford the tuition. Still, the school did lead him to his first job, in the art department of *Redbook*, the popular women's magazine published by Hearst Publishing. It was there that Archie was stuck, in his role as a junior art director, with the task of turning down an artist anxious to have his drawings of shoes published in the magazine – no less than Andy Warhol.

Anne told Cooke, "Archie went out to look at the portfolio as a courtesy and to tell Andy they couldn't use him because they had no shoe pieces coming up. Archie, fresh out of art



High school portrait courtesy of Seth Goodwin. Goodwin in Gaines office photo by Larry Ivie and courtesy of Sandy Plunkett.





















Above: *All of these great '50s photos were in Larry Ivie's archives, except the Archie-in-uniform pic, owned by Al Williamson. Below that is Paul Davis and Archie posing at their "studio" door. A.G. fan club card by A.G.* **Left:** Hoohah! *covers by Archie, including the front and back of the "best of" collection.*

Photos courtesy of Sandy Plunkett and Cori Williamson.

school, had been exposed to 'You don't trace!' in his classes so he actually gave Andy a little lecture on doing his own drawings instead of just tracing on silver foil, which he viewed as swipe."

Archie had been working at the *Redbook* offices, at 230 Park Avenue, until he was drafted into the U.S. Army for a two-year hitch, starting in 1960 – "defending Petersburg, Virginia," he once quipped – where he was assigned to be a personnel clerk at Fort Lee. Even though his military stint was in peacetime, it helped him develop an appreciation of those who had served in war."

But, before being drafted, Archie got his first gig in the world of syndicated newspaper comic strips, as he relayed to Ringgenberg. "While I was working at *Redbook*, I was still friendly with Al [Williamson] and he began working with John Prentice on *Rip Kirby.* John shared a studio with Leonard Starr. Leonard happened to mention one day that he would like to get someone to help him with the writing on the [*On Stage*] strip. And Al said, 'Hey, I have a friend who writes.' And Al showed him some of the stuff I had written. And Leonard said, 'This will do.' And so I started working for him on *On Stage*… That lasted, oh, I guess I worked with him for a couple of years until I was drafted for the Army."

IN THE ARMY NOW

Archie told J. Michael Catron, "I went through basic training, which meant you were being trained by guys who were usually combat veterans of Korea. It probably helped to whatever extent they could give you a little insight into combat and what they would expect of you in fighting. I'm sure it was nothing to compare with actually being in combat."

Two things happened upon his return to civilian life: his first professional comic book story was finally published, and Archie met his future wife on the job. The lesser of those two events was a five-pager in the back of *Alarming Adventures* #1 [Oct. '62], edited by comics pioneer Joe Simon and published by Harvey Comics. "Hermit!" was one helluva a way to crack into comics, with pencils by Reed Crandall and inks by Al Williamson. The story languished in the publisher's inventory for three years before publication, as Williamson recalled sending him to Harvey in 1959.

"Al had seen some of the stuff I had done for [SVA] class and thought I could write," Archie told Ringgenberg. "And it's been one of the few flaws in Al's career for quite a while. He keeps thinking I can write."

Archie later credits Al's support with keeping him from becoming "a struggling mediocre comic book artist now instead of a rich and successful mediocre comic book writer," and how "Hermit" made it easy to "look immensely better as a writer when you have really great artists doing your work."

Archie's life was to change in even bigger and unexpected ways upon return to civilian life and working at the women's fashion magazine, when he encountered a new fiction editor. "I met him after he came back to *Redbook*," Anne said. "I was in editing – in the fiction department and later in copy-editing and production – and he was in the art department. So that's where we met, although I was very iffy about getting involved with someone at work."

Younger than Archie by a few years, the couple kept their romance secret at work, going out on "secretive little dates" while Anne attended evening classes for her master's degree, at New York University. Archie pursued writing with renewed vigor, even taking a class in creative writing at the New School. His submitted a prose story to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,* which was accepted, though editors had to first be assured that "Archie Goodwin" – the same name of fictional detective Nero Wolfe's sidekick so often featured in its pages – wasn't some lame, all-too-clever attempt at a pseudonym. After Archie convinced them otherwise, his first published prose work finally appeared in the July 1964 [v44, #248] issue. With that and the *Alarming Tales* appearance, Archie had finally established a career as professional writer in both comics and prose, however tenuous.

Of the two, comics would win out.

THE MONSTER MAGAZINE MOGUL

Of those days, Archie recalled, "Comics were just starting to creep out of about a 10-year dark ages, the Wertham era of the '50s. A lot of comics went down the tubes and they never really got back any kind of commercial inroads to sales until the super-hero stuff began to take off, which was just about that time."



Above: *The man, the legend, James Taubman Warren. in a photo from the early '60s. Jim, of course, was publisher of* Famous Monsters of Filmland, Creepy, Eerie, and Vampirella *(and more!).*

Below: *School of Visual Arts class assignment produced by Archie during his time at the fabled art school.*



Goodwin school project courtesy of Sandy Plunkett.



Above: *Archie's first comic book story appeared in Harvey's* Alarming Adventures *#1 [Oct. '62], with art by Reed Crandall and Al Williamson.* **Inset right:** *Archie's first published fiction appeared in* Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine *#248 [July '64].* **Below:** Creepy *#1 [Nov. '64]. Cover art by Jack Davis.*



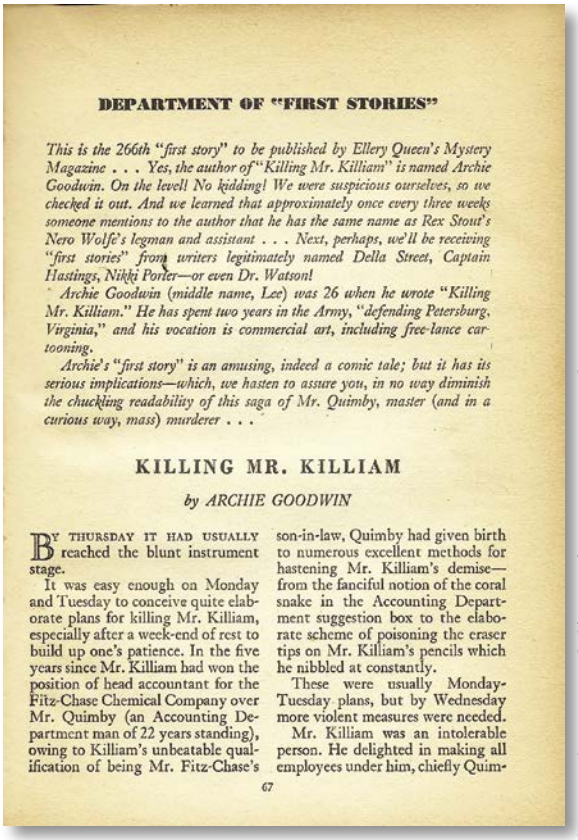
Marvel Comics, a scrappy publisher that'd seen better days as Timely in the 1940s, was starting to make waves with their new super-hero line, starting with *Fantastic Four* in 1961 and followed 18 months later with *The Amazing Spider-Man*. The Marvel heroes, unlike their status quo counterparts at DC, were full of conflict both in and out of costume, and the artwork by the likes of Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby was edgier and different than the sedate DC house style. The Marvel comics had an unprecedented grit and relevance that would eventually bring the super-hero to older audiences and revitalize both the genre and medium.

Amidst all this change, however, was an upstart publisher named James Warren. The young entrepreneur had suffered the wrath of his native Philadelphia, which objected to his *Playboy* knock-off, *After Hours,* though he hit pay dirt, in 1958, with the launch of a movie magazine, *Famous Monsters of Filmland,* edited by Forrest J Ackerman. Warren moved to New York City, where he expanded his magazine line to include *Help!*, packaged by legendary cartoonist and *MAD* founder Harvey Kurtzman, and he also started a (hugely successful) novelty mail-order company he could promote in the back pages of *Famous Monsters*. The idiosyncratic Warren operated out of his townhouse, would sometimes come down fresh from a shower to check in with Archie.

Warren met illustrator Russ Jones in 1964, who pitched a horror comics magazine in the vein of the dearly departed ECs. Much as shifting *MAD* from comic book to magazine format helped EC avoid the oppressive Comics Code, creating a horror magazine could do the same. *Creepy* came out later that year with a cover by former EC stalwart Jack Davis, and interior art by other EC veterans Al Williamson and Joe Orlando,* as well as Roy Krenkel, Gene Colan, Al McWilliams, and Gray Morrow. Warren sprung for a $35 page rate, a stretch for him as a small publisher.

In *Creepy* #1, along with two other tales of terror, Archie contributed the script for a six-pager, "Vampires Fly at Dusk," with art by Reed Crandall. It's less EC and more a Hammer horror film on paper and, where an EC story often ended in a one-panel punchline, designed to convey either terror or humor or both, this tale's tragic, shock twist ending is imbued with a meaningful pathos not often found in horror comics. (Another of his classics for the debut ish is discussed anon.)

In his interview with Ringgenberg, Archie described Russ Jones as: "Pretty good at hustling his way into situations and then getting together people to help him out." That ability,



DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 266th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . Yes, the author of "Killing Mr. Killiam" is named Archie Goodwin. On the level! No kidding! We were suspicious ourselves, so we checked it out. And we learned that approximately once every three weeks someone mentions to the author that he has the same name as Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe's legman and assistant . . . Next, perhaps, we'll be receiving "first stories" from writers legitimately named Della Street, Captain Hastings, Nikki Porter—or even Dr. Watson!

Archie Goodwin (middle name, Lee) was 26 when he wrote "Killing Mr. Killiam." He has spent two years in the Army, "defending Petersburg, Virginia," and his vocation is commercial art, including free-lance cartooning.

Archie's "first story" is an amusing, indeed a comic tale; but it has its serious implications—which, we hasten to assure you, in no way diminish the chuckling readability of this saga of Mr. Quimby, master (and in a curious way, mass) murderer . . .

KILLING MR. KILLIAM

by ARCHIE GOODWIN

BY THURSDAY IT HAD USUALLY reached the blunt instrument stage.

It was easy enough on Monday and Tuesday to conceive quite elaborate plans for killing Mr. Killiam, especially after a week-end of rest to build up one's patience. In the five years since Mr. Killiam had won the position of head accountant for the Fitz-Chase Chemical Company over Mr. Quimby (an Accounting Department man of 22 years standing), owing to Killiam's unbeatable qualification of being Mr. Fitz-Chase's son-in-law, Quimby had given birth to numerous excellent methods for hastening Mr. Killiam's demise—from the fanciful notion of the coral snake in the Accounting Department suggestion box to the elaborate scheme of poisoning the eraser tips on Mr. Killiam's pencils which he nibbled at constantly.

These were usually Monday-Tuesday plans, but by Wednesday more violent measures were needed.

Mr. Killiam was an intolerable person. He delighted in making all employees under him, chiefly Quim-

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however, didn't get him farther than editing three issues of the new magazine. By Spring '65, Jones and Warren had a falling out and *Creepy* was suddenly in need of a new editor.

(Russ Jones admired Archie and his talent as storyteller, sharing with Cooke, "All he had to do was bring in that first script and [one knew] he had a feel for it. He was just a natural. I mean, there was something about Archie. I guess it was that Midwestern honesty or something. He was just a very exceptional human being.")

"When I needed a replacement editor – Archie seemed like a natural," Warren told *Comic Book Profiles*. "I liked him, all the artists and writers liked him – I don't think there was anybody who didn't like Archie Goodwin – he could write, he knew graphics, he could edit."

*Orlando served as uncredited story editor for the first issue, though by *Creepy* #2, he left Warren after scoring an in-house gig as freelance artist at DC Comics, where he would, in a few years, launch and edit the publisher's highly successful "mystery" line filled with Code-approved stories, a family of titles that also made use of the occasional EC veteran. Before Jones departed, Archie became story editor for #2–3.

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THE MAKING OF A LEGEND

It took Warren's guarantee of a year's salary, regardless of the line's success or failure, to convince Archie to quit *Redbook* and make the plunge. And so he came in as full editor on the fourth issue of *Creepy* and guided the magazine to live up to its potential as heir to the EC line. In the few interviews he gave over his career, Archie rarely lobbed criticism at others, but Jones was an exception.

"Warren probably wouldn't have done *Creepy* – and probably not *Blazing Combat* – if Russ hadn't suggested it," Archie admitted to Catron. "At the same time, I feel like, well, he deserves the credit, but he's also gotta take the rap for almost screwing it all up, too."

With Archie at the helm, *Creepy* continued to elicit exceptional work out of the exceptional talent, with most stories written by the new editor himself. That was by design rather than accident: his salary was predicated upon writing 80–90% of the material for *Creepy*, many of which were written by Archie when Anne was off taking night classes at Columbia University, studying for her master's degree.

"I was a logical person to step in and do it," reflected Archie to Dwight Jon Zimmerman. "I had worked at *Redbook* magazine, so I had editorial experience as well as writing experience. Since I was writing most of the material, I was able to tailor scripts to the particular needs and desires of the people contributing. That worked in my favor, too. So, when Warren and I struck our deal, we based my getting a weekly salary on editorial contributions plus my writing."

Archie had already experienced deadlines and managing talent through being on staff at the women's magazine and, either through that experience or just as a facet of his own personality, he developed a personal writing and editorial style that cemented him as a remarkable exception in the industry – even that early on in his career.

You wouldn't be wrong to characterize Archie – who wrote full-script at Warren – as the "anti-Stan Lee": rather than putting himself out in the forefront of every book as the voice of the brand, Archie kept both his writing and his ego subdued and out of the spotlight (in the process, letting the artist shine), as he explained to Zimmerman.

"My feeling, at that time, was that writing in comics should be a little like good background music in movies. It makes a contribution that works toward the success of the overall piece, but you shouldn't specifically notice it. If suddenly the reader is aware and says, 'Hey, this is great writing!' Then you're maybe calling more attention to it than you should. What the reader should be thinking is, 'Wow, this is a great story,' and not be conscious of the writing for the writing's sake.

"As far as writing style goes, I didn't particularly change my writing from story to story. What I would try to do is vary the subject matter to the particular artist and ask him what kind of story he'd like to do – a historical period, a type of story, a setting he'd like to work in – anything like that would give me a springboard toward narrowing my own thinking and coming up with something to please us both."

It's no secret that Archie Goodwin benefited from the experience of the EC crowd of artists who were then in their prime, with many available to work for Warren as the industry slowly returned to life from its post-Wertham coma.

Archie's stories followed the typical EC formula with the twist at the end: a witch hunter in the swamps stands revealed as a warlock seeking out new turf! A newly-made vampire seeks out his fiancée to feed on, only to learn *she* was the vampire who made him in the first place! A village burgmeister hunting a vampire is actually a werewolf terrorizing the villagers instead! Maybe cliché, but always wry.

BALDO SMUDGE AND OTHER YARNS

Maybe the most meta story in the 20 years of Warren horror comics is "The Success Story," a comeuppance tale written by Archie about a comic strip hack appearing in *Creepy* #1, one vividly drawn by Al Williamson. Featuring caricatures of the artist himself (as the villain), Archie, and Angelo Torres, the six-pager was actually a behind-the-scenes skewering of a real-life cartoonist (today remembered, if at all, for awful *Partridge Family* comics) who relied completely on assistants, but hogged all the credit. The conceit of the effort for observant insiders was, in actuality, those caricatured all worked for the real-life "Baldo Smudge," and were able to vicariously kill the offensive jerk in Archie's vignette.

In that denouement, the reanimated corpses of Smudge's "ghost artists" burst in and wreck his studio, leaving behind an illustration of the living dead about to kill the glory hog – inked in blood. The macabre finale was a clever commentary on the culture (and talent) often behind the celebrity comic strip artist, but told with the black humor of the very best EC stories.

The versatility of Archie's talent was breathtaking, as the writer/editor seamlessly wrote in a multitude of genres and also could effectively adapt the work of other writers. In his Warren years, he wrote his versions of classic stories by Edgar Allan Poe, though later expressed some regret over the liberties he took early on. He told Zimmerman:

"So, for the first year that I did these things, I felt

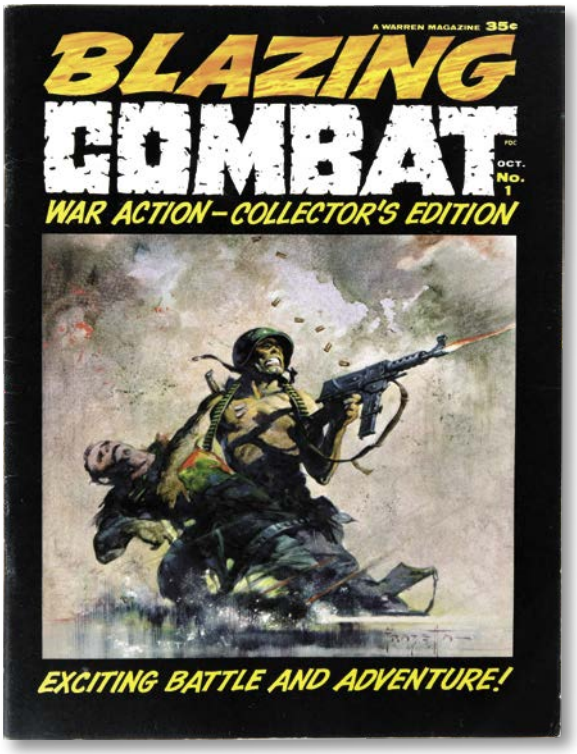




Above: *Archie in the* Redbook *masthead in its August, 1964, issue.* **Inset left:** *Splash page to Archie and Williamson's story in* Creepy *#1.* **Below:** Eerie *#2 [Mar. '66] cover. Art by Frank Frazetta.*



Redbook TM & © Hearst Communications, Inc. "Success Story," *Eerie* TM & ©New Comic Company, LLC.



Above: Blazing Combat *carried the torch for Harvey Kurtzman's war comics, featuring stories often tinged with ambivalence like its EC Comics predecessor. This cover for #1 [Oct. '65] is by Frank Frazetta.* **Inset right:** *The lead story in the first issue, "Viet Cong," was evidence that publisher Jim Warren and editor Archie Goodwin had no plans to shy away from the Vietnam War as subject for stories. Joe Orlando provided the art.* **Below:** *It was this* Blazing Combat *#2 [Jan. '66] panel by Orlando, which was interpreted as depicting a U.S. serviceman's bullet killing a Vietnamese civilian, might have prompting PXs to ban the mag.*



obligated to give them either new endings or new beginnings – flesh them out in some way so readers who were totally familiar with the stories were still getting a little something more than this completely familiar material. Later on, I began to realize that maybe Edgar Allan Poe and the others knew what they were doing when they created their stories and perhaps they could get along well enough without my help. So I laid off doing that.

"But, even when I'd add stuff, I'd generally try not to muck up the original story. If I could, either through a prologue or an epilogue, I'd add a new twist on what had already been done. I don't think on any of them I actually went in and changed what the original author had done. I just added at the beginning or at the end, until I came to my senses."

WORKING WITH THE MASTERS

Archie proved himself to be a valuable collaborator with both Alex Toth and Spider-Man co-creator Steve Ditko, both infamous as particular with their work. In Toth's case, he set such a high bar for scripts to work on, while Ditko was outspoken in his political philosophy. Archie's apparent good nature, coupled with his impeccable skill as a writer/editor, must have broken through the defenses of both men as Archie and the artists respectively created exceptional tales.

Neal Adams, who was turned away as a teenager from DC Comics in 1959, was more than welcome at Warren a few years later, where he made his debut in the mainstream comics realm, after a start in comics for advertising, in *Creepy* #14 [Apr. '67]. "So I go over to Warren and meet Archie Goodwin," Neal told Arlen Schumer. "Probably, outside of Dick Giordano, Archie is the nicest guy in comics. So kind. So courteous. You could see behind his eyes that he was making his own EC comics and he was Harvey Kurtzman. He was writing most of the stories and he would do layouts. I got Archie Goodwin layouts! He'd say, 'Don't worry… you don't have to follow them… they're just to help tell the story.'

"So Archie was just as kind as could be and a complete opposite from DC, which had turned me away. Well, Christ, who wouldn't want to work for Archie Goodwin? I'd never [yet] met Jim Warren. I didn't know what kind of person Jim was. All I knew about Warren was Archie Goodwin. You couldn't have a better front-man."

In truth, Archie was far more than a front-man for Warren: the multi-talented Okie was invaluable to the small publishing company. "During the early days," Warren told Cooke, "I applied for a company loan at a neighborhood bank. I represented to the loan officer that we had an office with a production man, an editor, a writer, a letterer, and an artist. I filled out the papers and the banker said, it looks good. I'll let you know next week.'

"A few days later, the banker showed up unannounced at the office – the doorbell rings, I answer it, and it's the banker. He says, 'I was just in the neighborhood.' But he wasn't 'just in the neighborhood' – he had come to look around. He said, 'Mr. Warren, you told me your company had five employees. Where are they?' I said, 'There they are!' And I pointed to Archie and said, 'He does all of these things. He's an editor, writer, artist, letterer, and production man!' Meanwhile, Archie is sitting there, wondering why I'm pointing at him. I said to the banker: 'Go over and ask him. He'll prove it to you.' We got the loan. Archie was a five-way threat."

BLAZING COMBAT

The Philly-born publisher, anxious to tap into other genres beyond horror, decided to release an "anti-war" book in 1965 just as the conflict in Vietnam was ramping up into an all-out war that would scar an entire generation of youth. President Lyndon B. Johnson pushed the Gulf of Tonkin



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Resolution through Congress the year before, authorizing the administration to "repel" any attack against U.S. forces.

Archie was a long-time fan of Harvey Kurtzman's cerebral, visceral, and well-researched EC war comics, particularly *Frontline Combat.* Published from 1951–54, *Frontline* emphasized the folly of war at a time when the U.S. was engaged in the Korean "police action" and hot on the heels of the end of World War II. There was less heroism in Kurtzman's war comics than humanism, as the writer/artist/editor focused on (for instance) the Japanese civilians whose lives were destroyed by Allied bombing as much as he did the G.I. forced to suffer the brutality of the Pacific campaign.

With *Blazing Combat,* Archie realized going in that he would walk in Kurtzman's footsteps, admitting, "Anytime I tried to sit down and tried to think up a plot for a war story, it would seem that Kurtzman had covered the ground one way or another." But he did more than just look to back issues of *Frontline Combat;* Archie also tapped into anti-war films, like Stanley Kubrick's *Paths of Glory,* and reading war fiction, including Norman Mailer's 1948 novel, *The Naked and the Dead,* and 1951's *From Here to Eternity,* by James Jones. Archie professed that he wasn't out to specifically write an anti-war anthology, but rather a series written by someone who found war senseless. As he told Catron: "The whole idea of war seemed to me – basically, it's a crazy way to settle things and you could be very sympathetic to the people who were stuck with having to fight them."

Archie was working on the new war title while overseeing *Creepy* and its newly arrived companion mag, *Eerie*, which debuted a month before *Blazing Combat* #1 [Oct. '65]. He said, "I was incredibly enthusiastic because – as an EC fan, while I loved all the EC books – the war stuff was always my favorite. So I kind of leaped up and down at the chance to do the material. I think even as we were working on the second and third issues of *Creepy*, I probably began writing a script for *Blazing Combat* #1." Alas, despite covers graced with Frank Frazetta paintings and among the finest interior artwork ever rendered by comic book artists, the series lasted only four issues. For the arguably second coming of Kurtzman war comics, it was short-lived.

What distinguished the innovative title compared to the many four-color war comics of the day was the fact *Blazing Combat* included contemporaneous stories using the Vietnam War as backdrop, something DC, Marvel, and Dell tended to avoid. The very first story of the first issue has about a U.S. Army advisor going on a mission with South Vietnamese troops to learn the rules of engagement are unlike anything he'd seen before. Drawn by Orlando, "Viet-Cong," doesn't take any overt political stance on the ever-expanding conflict, but doesn't shy away from the brutality of warfare. At the time, it was a rare mainstream glimpse into an enigmatic conflict:

"My memory [of Vietnam] is that not that much was really known about it," Archie recalled to Catron. "Obviously, it was heating up, but my impression is that, when we started the magazine, there was still some attempt to portray our role as more of an advisory one."

While Archie was ultimately against the war – he would refer to himself as "a knee-jerk liberal" – the inclusion of Vietnam in the pages of *Blazing Combat* was more out of a desire to be comprehensive than any political consideration. "Basically, we were doing a new war book," he shared. "It seemed reasonable to me that Vietnam seemed to be the place where the closest thing to a war was going on. So it seemed natural that you'd want to cover the most current wars as well as wars of the past."

The demise of *Blazing Combat* was much due to the fact that Army PXs refused to display the title. "Actually, the thing that upset the Army was that it looked like, on the last page, that the South Vietnamese troops, our guys, shot the old man," Archie said to Catron, referring to "Landscape," in the second issue. "And, I think, the way I originally did the

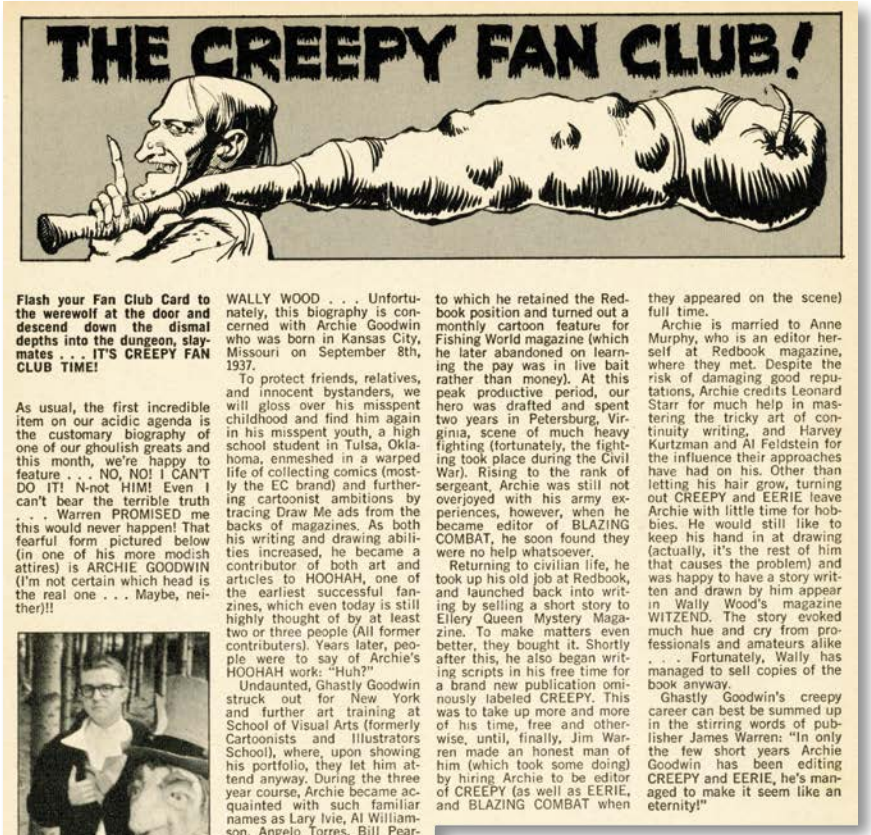






Above: *Archie and Al Williamson posing for a reference pic in the early '60s.* **Below:** *Wedding pic of Anne T. Murphy and Archie, taken in the mid-'60s.* **Bottom:** *Unsure of reasoning behind this "Alice in Wonderland" themed tea party, but that is Archie in the foreground.*

Archie and Al photo courtesy of Victor Williamson. Other photos courtesy of Seth Goodwin.



THE CREEPY FAN CLUB!

Flash your Fan Club Card to the werewolf at the door and descend down the dismal depths into the dungeon, slaymates . . . IT'S CREEPY FAN CLUB TIME!

As usual, the first incredible item on our acidic agenda is the customary biography of one of our ghoulish greats and this month, we're happy to feature . . . NO, NO! I CAN'T DO IT! N-not HIM! Even I can't bear the terrible truth . . . Warren PROMISED me this would never happen! That fearful form pictured below (in one of his more modish attires) is ARCHIE GOODWIN (I'm not certain which head is the real one . . . Maybe, neither)!!

In Menahga, Minnesota on June 17, 1927 was born a boy who was destined to become one of the biggest names in the comics field today, admired for both his art and writing abilities. That boy was WALLY WOOD . . . Unfortunately, this biography is concerned with Archie Goodwin who was born in Kansas City, Missouri on September 8th, 1937.

To protect friends, relatives, and innocent bystanders, we will gloss over his misspent childhood and find him again in his misspent youth, a high school student in Tulsa, Oklahoma, enmeshed in a warped life of collecting comics (mostly the EC brand) and furthering cartoonist ambitions by tracing Draw Me ads from the backs of magazines. As both his writing and drawing abilities increased, he became a contributor of both art and articles to HOOHAH, one of the earliest successful fanzines, which even today is still highly thought of by at least two or three people (All former contributers). Years later, people were to say of Archie's HOOHAH work: "Huh?"

Undaunted, Ghastly Goodwin struck out for New York and further art training at School of Visual Arts (formerly Cartoonists and Illustrators School), where, upon showing his portfolio, they let him attend anyway. During the three year course, Archie became acquainted with such familiar names as Lary Ivie, Al Williamson, Angelo Torres, Bill Pearson, Gray Morrow and Leroy Gangursky (Leroy Gangursky?). It was also while in art school that he sold his first comic script which appeared in Harvey comics' "Alarming Tales", a sci-fi story illustrated by Crandall and Williamson. But for the most part, the comics industry was dead at this time, and Archie drifted into layout and design work, winding up in the art department of Redbook magazine where he picked up some of the design skills you see applied on our eye-catching covers (He also picked up some art supplies which they made him put back).

Thanks to Al Williamson's recommendation, Archie got the opportunity to work with strip cartoonist-writer Leonard Starr, assisting with the writing of "On Stage". In addition to which he retained the Redbook position and turned out a monthly cartoon feature for Fishing World magazine (which he later abandoned on learning the pay was in live bait rather than money). At this peak productive period, our hero was drafted and spent two years in Petersburg, Virginia, scene of much heavy fighting (fortunately, the fighting took place during the Civil War). Rising to the rank of sergeant, Archie was still not overjoyed with his army experiences, however, when he became editor of BLAZING COMBAT, he soon found they were no help whatsoever.

Returning to civilian life, he took up his old job at Redbook, and launched back into writing by selling a short story to Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine. To make matters even better, they bought it. Shortly after this, he also began writing scripts in his free time for a brand new publication ominously labeled CREEPY. This was to take up more and more of his time, free and otherwise, until, finally, Jim Warren made an honest man of him (which took some doing) by hiring Archie to be editor of CREEPY (as well as EERIE, and BLAZING COMBAT when they appeared on the scene) full time.

Archie is married to Anne Murphy, who is an editor herself at Redbook magazine, where they met. Despite the risk of damaging good reputations, Archie credits Leonard Starr for much help in mastering the tricky art of continuity writing, and Harvey Kurtzman and Al Feldstein for the influence their approaches have had on his. Other than letting his hair grow, turning out CREEPY and EERIE leave Archie with little time for hobbies. He would still like to keep his hand in at drawing (actually, it's the rest of him that causes the problem) and was happy to have a story written and drawn by him appear in Wally Wood's magazine WITZEND. The story evoked much hue and cry from professionals and amateurs alike . . . Fortunately, Wally has managed to sell copies of the book anyway.

Ghastly Goodwin's creepy career can best be summed up in the stirring words of publisher James Warren: "In only the few short years Archie Goodwin has been editing CREEPY and EERIE, he's managed to make it seem like an eternity!"

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Above: *Note photo of Archie taken at same tea party seen on previous page seen here on the bio page in Creepy #14 [Apr. '67].* **Inset right:** *Splash of Archie's first Marvel story, in* Tales of Suspense *#99 [Mar. '68].*

Below: *Gene Colan and Frank Giacoia's cover of that same issue.*



story was to have him shot from the rice paddies… Whoever looked at it who was judging books for the PXs thought that it was the 'good guys' who had shot him. And was offended. I don't know if that's actually true, but at least that's what Warren said caused the books to be knocked out of PXs."

Despite it being cancelled with the fourth issue, *Blazing Combat* cemented the notion that Archie was a creative force to be reckoned with. Warren recalled to Cooke, "[The cancellation] broke Archie's heart, but not because we published a magazine that didn't make it (that happens every day), but because of the reason it didn't make it. They didn't like the message, so they killed the messenger. It was censorship of the worst kind. I hated it, but I had to swallow it. In *Blazing Combat,* I believe Archie did his finest work – everyone did."

However humble, Archie was in agreement with his old boss. "Certainly *Blazing Combat* was, I think, if not a – it probably wasn't a publishing success, but it was definitely, at least among my comic book peers, an artistic success."

WARREN EXODUS

Things took at turn at Warren around 1967, as the publisher struggled financially, leaving Archie in a bind. With the page rate being reduced, was he to side with the creators or with Jim Warren? Archie made the only decision he could:

"Archie always identified with creators even while representing management," Anne told Cooke. "Warren wasn't paying on time; the artists, who trusted Archie, were asking for assurance Archie couldn't really offer; and Archie felt caught in the middle because he wasn't getting any solid explanations to pass along to the artists. Archie was uncomfortable stringing them along; Russ Jones would have been the man for that. Of course, Warren survived for quite a while after that and I have no idea what the financial problems were." By mid-1967, Archie resigned from Warren.

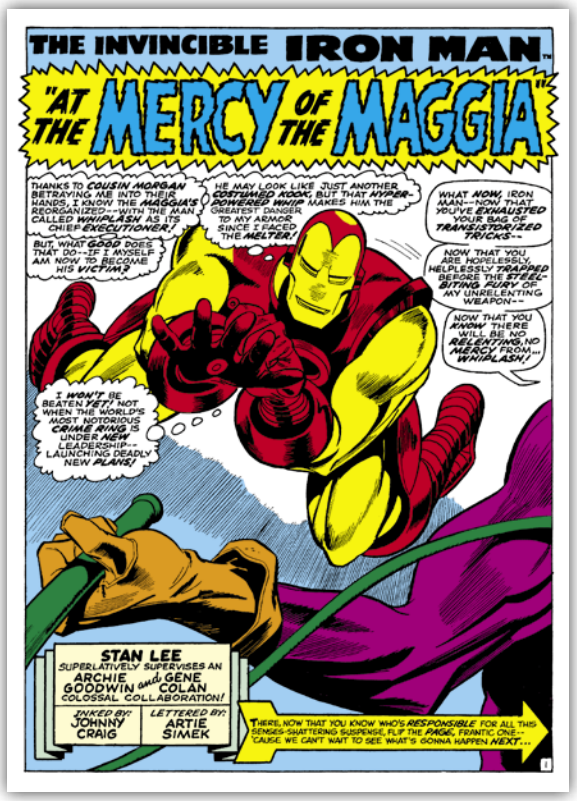
Former DC publisher Paul Levitz observed, "Archie found a path there to bring in a lot of not only guys who used to work for EC, but people whose work looked like it fit with that pseudo-EC quality level that was being done there. And you see the moment Archie leaves, the quality on *Creepy* and *Eerie* diminishes radically."

A lesson Archie carried through from his Warren days was to trust the talent and not get in their way – the quintessential virtue of the Goodwin approach to editing – something modeled by Warren himself in trusting his editor.

"One thing he had liked at Warren was the autonomy," Anne reflected. "I have the impression one of the things Warren did very right was not to intrude too much into the editor's decisions. Certainly things were checked with Warren, but he didn't hang over Archie's shoulder. Jim left Archie to do what he did best and trusted him. So, on the one hand, Jim thought he had everyone's number, and was very often wrong but, on the other hand, one of his very good qualities was not intruding: If you get someone who does what he does well, then just let him do it, and intrude only if you have to. Archie left the first time when he felt caught in the middle between Jim's financial problems and being comfortable with what he told the creators."

MARVEL FIRST-TIMER

And so Archie left Warren, a publisher whose line he spearheaded and ushered to greatness as writer and editor, and he ventured into the freelance world, writing the *Secret*



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Agent X-9 daily newspaper comic strip that Al Williamson was drawing (which would be renamed *Secret Agent Corrigan,* in 1967, by the Syndicate despite the team's protest) and ghost scripting both Gil Kane's *His Name is… Savage* black-&-white magazine in '68 and, not long thereafter, the same artist's ambitious proto-graphic novel for Bantam paperbacks, *Blackmark*. (Left unmentioned is Archie was ghost writer on comic strip *Captain Kate* between 1967–69, and the fact he wrote and drew a full-page, wordless strip for *Fishing World* magazine between 1959–64.)

Around this time, the fan of genres other than super-heroes began to change his tune towards the long-underwear set. "I particularly looked down on super-hero comics as being 'kids' comics,'" Archie admitted to Zimmerman. "Even when I was doing the Warren material, I maintained this sort of 'holier-than-thou' attitude that I was working on the more adult vein and that people who were interested in super-heroes were certainly more immature than me."

Archie told Les Daniels, "My idea of the worst thing about comics was probably super-heroes. But a number of artists I worked with at Warren also were working for Marvel and kept talking about how exciting a lot of stuff they were doing was. So, as sort of mental professional courtesy on my part, I decided to pick up some of the Marvel books and look at them." With that, by reading titles like *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Fantastic Four,* he learned what the buzz was all about.

"After reading one or two," he told Daniels, "I found it was sort of like eating peanuts. I really began getting hooked. While I was at Warren, I started to buy a lot of the Marvel things and was pretty much reading them and enjoying them, so that when I finally winded up at Marvel, I was already familiar with what they were doing with most of the characters and things like that."

The new crop of comics creators, many arriving from comics fandom, were flocking to New York City to gain a foothold in the business, looking for a chance to work in comics, but also rebuilding the industry into their own image. Archie, like Neal Adams and Jim Steranko, had arrived a tad earlier than this slightly younger batch that included writers Roy Thomas and Dennis O'Neil, and it was at a regular creator get-togethers* he connected with Thomas, who was on his way to become the right-hand man of Marvel head honcho Stan Lee. The House of Ideas was looking for writers, and Archie heeded Thomas's advice and had a meeting with Lee. Archie had told Les Daniels, "Roy had said if I ever got tired of working for Warren to drop by Marvel." Archie took the "writing test" – dialoguing four pages of penciled art – and brought them to Stan, who was scripting the latest "Iron Man" story, in *Tales of Suspense*.

"He liked what he saw and said, 'Okay, you're writing "Iron Man" now.' I assume if he'd been working on *Sgt. Fury,* I'd have been writing *Sgt. Fury.* Thank God he wasn't writing *Millie the Model* when I walked in… But, by the time I got there, they were anxious enough to get new writers that they immediately gave me 'Iron Man,' which was then 11 pages in *Tales of Suspense*. I told them I could use about 20 pages of writing a month, so they also gave me 'Sub-Mariner' [in *Tales to Astonish*] to write."



Above: *Archie and Anne at the 1971 Academy of Comic Book Arts (ACBA) dinner banquet. Note John Buscema in background.* **Below:** *Either as penciler, inker, or both (as on this* Iron Man *#14 [June '69] cover), Johnny Craig work on the title during Archie's scripting stint.*

Archie's run on Shellhead began with the lead story from *Tales of Suspense* #99 [Mar. '68] before launching the character into a new *Iron Man* series with #1 [May '68] (after the *Iron Man & Sub-Mariner* one-shot [Apr. '68]), which continued the *Tales of Suspense* storyline. Serendipitously, Archie was teamed with former EC stalwart artist Johnny Craig for much of their joint run on the title (sometimes Craig rendering pencils and inks, sometimes just inks).



"At the time I was writing *Iron Man*," Archie admitted to Ringgenberg, "it seemed to me that Stan and Roy could write them so much better. Roy especially was really very innovative at taking what Stan had done and going one step further, like when he did the Kree-Skrull War, and when he was working with Neal… But I never felt comfortable with super-heroes."

During this early stint at Marvel, Archie was a pinch hitter for the outfit, scripting fill-ins, one offs, and short runs for such disparate fare as *Captain Savage and His Leatherneck Raiders*; *Captain Marvel*; *The Incredible*

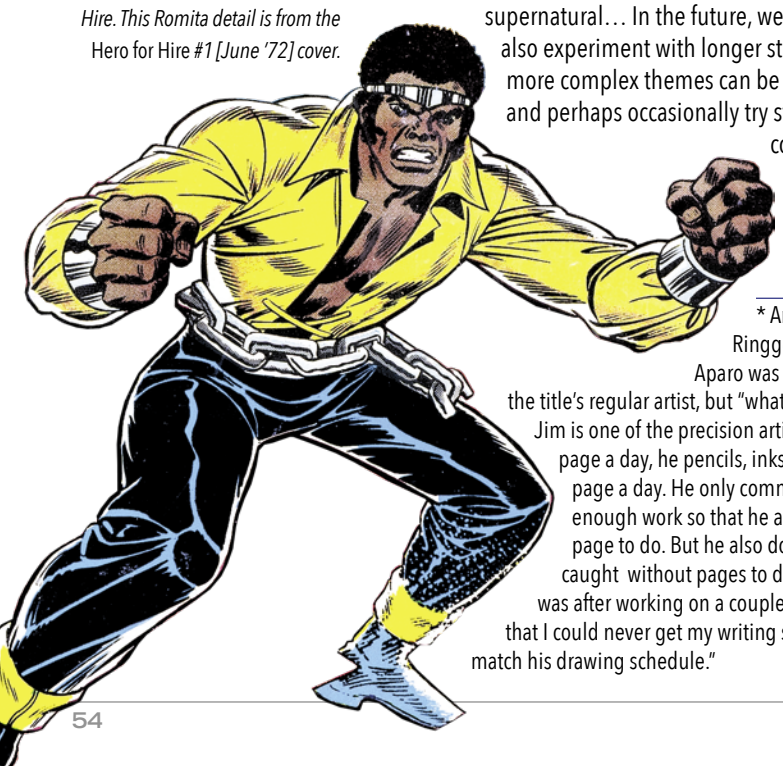
*The informal meetings, initiated by EC Comics fan John Benson, became known as "First Fridays," monthly after-work parties later hosted by Roy Thomas, then Jeff and Louise Jones, and then Archie and Anne, respectively, helping to unite the N.Y.C. comics community of that era.

Photo courtesy of Seth Goodwin. *Iron Man* TM & ©Marvel Characters, Inc.



Above: *Splash page for Archie's* Vampirella *story in #9 [Jan. '71], where he devised a new origin story for the bloodsucking character.*

Below: *Along with Georg Tuska, Roy Thomas, and John Romita, Sr., Archie created Luke Cage, Hero for Hire. This Romita detail is from the* Hero for Hire *#1 [June '72] cover.*



Hulk; *Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD*;* *Sgt. Fury*; *Chamber of Darkness*; and even *The Rawhide Kid*. Yet, despite the steady (if uninspiring) assignments, that first Marvel foray didn't endure as, by 1970, Jim Warren enticed Archie back to write the lead character of his new title, *Vampirella*, and serve as an associate editor for that mag and *Creepy* (though not credited as such in *Eerie*).

WARREN REDUX I/ MARVEL REDUX I

Archie's first return to Warren lasted a mere eight months, though, in that time, he nurtured the talents of writers Don McGregor and Doug Moench (to name but two), scripted the definitive origin of Vampirella, and produced a nine-page memo at the publisher's request, a document foretelling the publisher's mid-'70s renaissance.

"If the books should be about anything," he wrote, advocating for a broader approach than replicating EC, "it's probably the old *Weird Tales* [pulp anthology]. EC could have four stories of more or less the same type, but with seven per issue, we should have more diversity. *Weird Tales* would have horror by [H.P.] Lovecraft, sword & sorcery by [Robert E.] Howard, and occasional science-fiction by [Frank Belknap] Long. *Creepy, Eerie,* and *Vampirella* should have pretty much the same combination… The bulk of our stories will still be of the twist-ending variety, but I think we should start trying others which don't necessarily depend on a trick ending, but do evoke a definite mood of horror and the supernatural… In the future, we'll probably also experiment with longer stories, so that more complex themes can be developed, and perhaps occasionally try stories using continuing characters."

Marvel welcomed back Archie in 1971, first as scripter for *Fantastic Four* and on a short-but-gloriously-sweet run of *The Incredible Hulk* (which included the memorable return of Ant-Man), as well as a couple of issues of *Tomb of Dracula*. Most importantly, during this brief spell, Archie co-created Luke Cage, the African-American star of *Hero for Hire*, which he wrote for the initial four issues.

DC FIRST-TIMER

In 1972, Archie left his freelance gig at Marvel for a staff position at the "Distinguished Competition" across town, DC Comics, where publisher Carmine Infantino had been taking note of the man's fruitful career and likely recognized Archie's considerable editorial abilities were being underutilized (all probably at the suggestion of onetime Warren story editor and close Infantino confidant Joe Orlando, now shepherding DC's "mystery" line). The offer was for Archie to take over editing a handful of war titles and the publisher's namesake title, the one that gave the company its initials.

Archie told Cooke, "I think I maybe suffered from a short attention span a little bit, so I could do something for a year or two, but then I began feeling the itch to move on. I always find new offers tempting. It's great if you're doing something that you really, really like, but it's also great to somehow have something shiny and new waved in front of your face, too.

"While I had been doing freelance writing for Marvel, I got the offer from [Infantino] to take over three of their war books that Joe Kubert had been editing. Since [Kubert] was taking on *Tarzan* and a couple of other [Edgar Rice Burroughs-related] projects, he didn't want to continue working full-time on those. I had been away from editing – and away from war comics – since I did *Blazing Combat* at Warren, so it was a tempting new opportunity."

The new DC editor took over writing chores on the two continuing features in *G.I. Combat* ("The Haunted Tank") and *Star Spangled War Stories* ("The Unknown Soldier"), though upon becoming too busy with another title foisted upon him, Archie chose Frank Robbins as writer of the latter. The lead feature in his other war book, *Our Fighting Forces,* "The Losers," was written by Robert Kanigher. And, while the tales he wrote for his books were entertaining efforts, Archie's war titles truly excelled due to his selection of back-up features, where, in just the few pages allotted, both old masters and young Turks were given an opportunity to shine.

There was the masterful "Burma Sky," drawn to perfection by Alex Toth; the ground-breaking "Toro" by Sam Glanzman, and multitudinous items by a murderer's row of artists supreme: Tom Sutton, Gil Kane, Frank Thorne, Howard Chaykin, Gray Morrow, George Evans, Ken Barr, Sid Check, Vincent Alcazar, and Ric Estrada. Plus, of particular note were the two connected science fiction stories* by writer Gerry Boudreau and a recent Rhode Island School of Design grad who would figure prominently in Archie's next assignment at DC – as well as in the man's life thereafter!

"After doing the war books for about half a year," Archie

* Archie told Ringgenberg that Aparo was supposed to be the title's regular artist, but "what I found was that Jim is one of the precision artists. He does a page a day, he pencils, inks, and letters a page a day. He only commits himself to enough work so that he always has that page to do. But he also doesn't like to be caught without pages to do. What I found was after working on a couple of stories was that I could never get my writing schedule to match his drawing schedule."

* "U.F.M." in *Star Spangled War Stories* #170 [June '73] was drawn by newcomer Walter Simonson, a futuristic war story so impressive, Boudreau and Simonson were green-lighted for a sequel, "Return" [*SSWS* #180, June '74].

Vampirella TM & ©DFI. *Luke Cage, Hero for Hire* TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.



told Cooke, "Carmine Infantino, the editorial director, said that [DC editor] Julie Schwartz was going to do *Strange Sports Stories* again and wanted to give up one of his books, and it was *Detective* [*Comics*]. Of all the DC characters, Batman was probably the one that I liked best, so I jumped at the chance to do something with Batman."

GOTTERDAMMERUNG

The title had also been in a sales slump, recently reduced to bi-monthly frequency, but Archie was undeterred. "These are not bad circumstances in which to inherit a title, contrary to how it may sound," Archie revealed in his introduction for the collection, *Manhunter: The Complete Saga* ['79]. "One is encouraged to tinker, to tamper, and to try new things rather than preserving the status quo; if anything improves, you're a hero; if nothing works out, well… the book wasn't selling that well anyway. To demolish any possible suspense: I didn't become a hero. There was no turnaround in *Detective*'s sales. But there was, as they say in show business, some artistic success. 'Manhunter' was responsible for most of it."

Archie noted his love of the 1940s Joe Simon and Jack Kirby crimefighter Manhunter, in *Adventure Comics*, along with influences from martial arts movies and manga (in part, no doubt, from Archie's catching samurai films with other creators on movie nights).

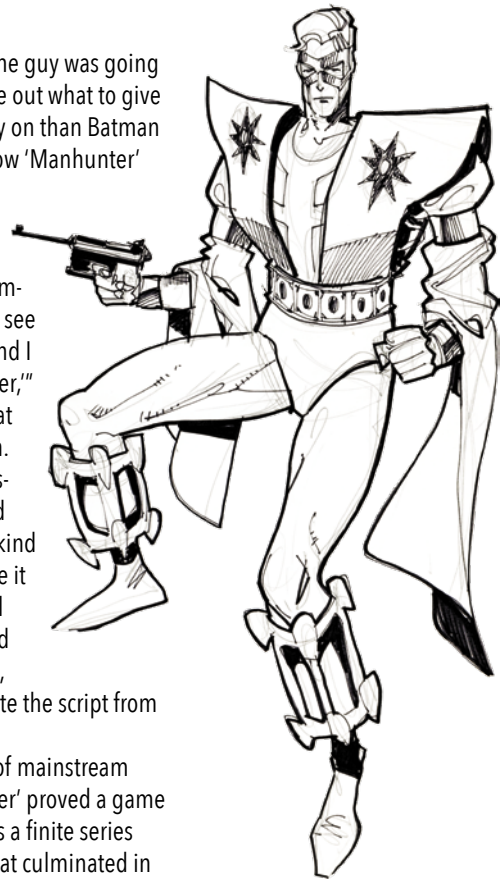
Simonson was asked by his newly acquired pal to help conceive a series. "[Archie] wanted to run a new feature (or featurette) in the back of *Detective Comics* that was not antithetical to Batman, because he was still a good guy, but the opposite," the artist explained. "Where Batman was dark, and the city, urban settings, were nighttime, and there was empty-handed combat. This was going to be a world stage, this was going to be a brighter costume. The guy was going to be armed with whatever we could figure out what to give him, and have a much bigger stage to play on than Batman would normally have been in. So, that's how 'Manhunter' came about. I designed the costume.

Archie sat closely with the young artist on the first installments, and the joint effort organically morphed into becoming even more of a collaboration. "I would see Archie and would hang out in the office, and I began kibitzing on the plots for 'Manhunter,'" Simonson recalled. "I couldn't tell you what issue, somewhere in the middle of the run. I did not have a lot to do with it, but we discussed the plots, we worked them out, and probably he worked them out and let me kind of kibitz. Then he would type it up and give it to me, and then we began working Marvel style, which means he gave me the plot, I'd go home, I'd break it down, do the pencils, and give him the pages, and he would write the script from the pages I gave him."

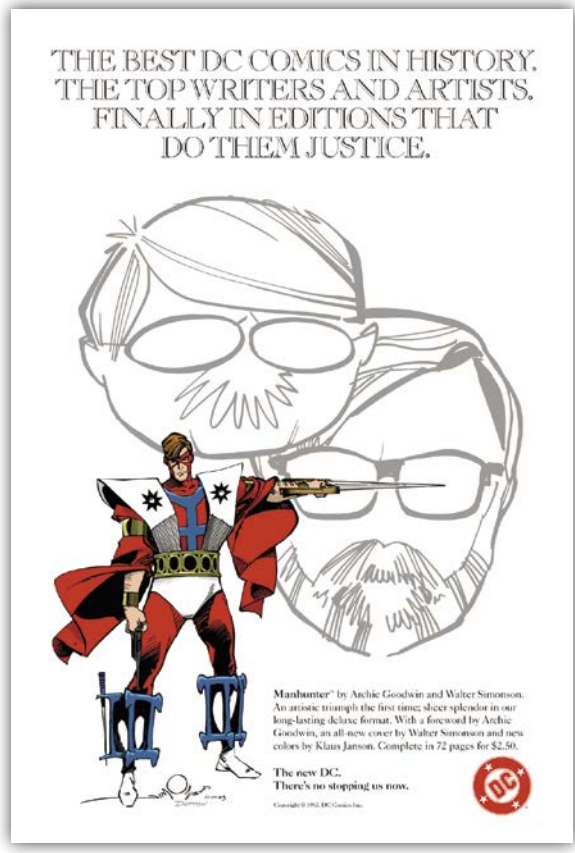
Besides the seamless teaming of two of mainstream comics most innovative talents, 'Manhunter' proved a game changer in the comics industry. First, it was a finite series which – spoiler alert! – boasted a finale that culminated in the death of the feature's lead character. Gerard Jones and Will Jacobs related in *The Comic Book Heroes* that it was also a harbinger of the next stage of evolution for American comics poised to arrive in the next decade.

"The end of the series was sad to see," they wrote, "but it was wholly satisfying. This was no ongoing series, recycling its own stories or running out of steam when its creators left or got bored. It was a self-contained serial, with a big finish guest-starring Batman and it pointed the way to a new structure for comic book storytelling. It was the genre version of the 'graphic novel'… that devoutly-to-be-wished consummation of the comic book form."

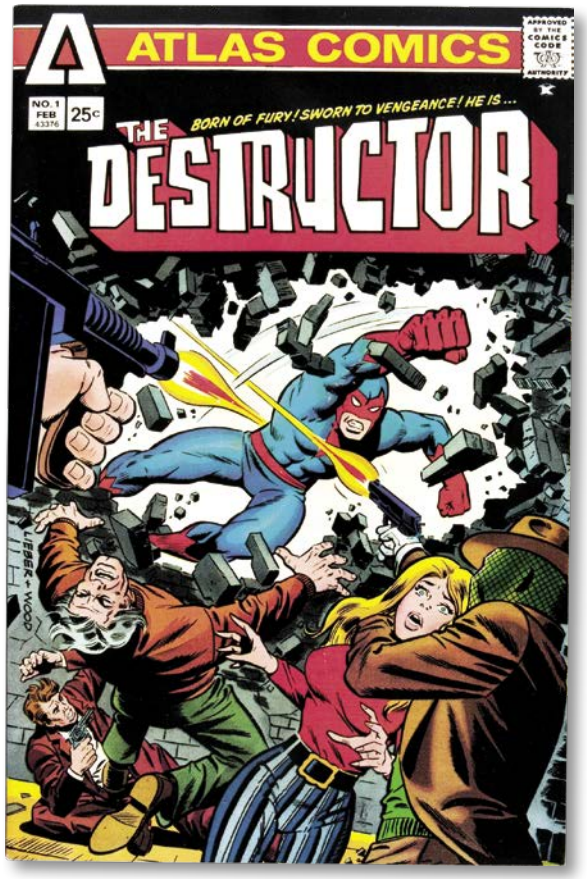
(Also important to mention is the brilliant work Archie was putting into the front section of *Detective Comics* featuring the Caped Crusader, with stand-alone stories written (mostly) by the editor and respectively drawn by an amazing array of artists: the aforementioned Toth, Sal Amendola, Howard Chaykin, and inimitable Jim Aparo, all behind great covers by Neal Adams, Michael W. Kaluta, and Aparo. This non-continuity approach would serve



Above: *Inked sketch of Manhunter by Walter Simonson, from 2004.*
Inset left: *Splash page from back-up in* Star Spangled War Stories *#180 [June '74], art by Simonson.*
Below: *House ad promoting writer and artist, from 1983.*



All TM & © DC Comics.



Above: *Archie got to again work with his friend, artist Steve Ditko, during the brief run of Atlas/Seaboard's Spider-Man knock-off, The Destructor… well, the first three issues, anyway! Above is the cover to #1 [Feb. '75], penciled by Larry Lieber and inked by the legendary Wally Wood (who also inked Ditko on the interiors of #1 and 2).*

Below: *Walter Simonson rendered this tribute piece for the cover of* Comic Book Profiles Presents Archie Goodwin *['99].*



as template for the *Legends of the Dark Knight* series he would edit a few years after his 1989 return to DC.)

In the final analysis, Simonson's teaming with Archie was nothing less than seismic. "It was one of the most formative experiences I had in comics was working with Archie," he said. "I've worked with some great writers, including my own wife [Louise Jones Simonson], who was also an editor – a great editor, one of the greatest editors, I think (no bias here) – but I don't know that I have worked with anybody where we were more in sync, and I don't know why. That's just the way it happens. You just never know."

"Archie just took comics seriously, and his writing was not whimsical," Christopher Priest noted. "It wasn't like a lot of comics today are too self-aware and the comics have this heightened sense of reality where nothing pops because everything is absurd. Everything's larger than life."

Asked why he left DC on that first go-around, Archie told Cooke he had received a tempting job offer from another publisher. "At the same time, I also felt that DC was falling behind in terms of giving back original artwork to the creators. Marvel began doing it, Warren began doing it, most other companies started doing it and we could not get DC to return people's original artwork – they insisted on keeping it. So it began making it harder to work with a lot of the better artists and again, being a thing I felt uncomfortable about – if I was getting an offer from someplace else where they would give back the original artwork which I felt should go back to the artist then I certainly felt more comfortable about going in that situation."

WARREN NO MORE

Before "Manhunter" reached its epic climax in Archie Goodwin's final issue of *Detective Comics*, the writer/editor pondered that overture, an invitation to return yet again to serve in the Warren empire, as the publisher had implemented Archie's memo suggestions and, as a result, emerged out of the financial doldrums. For example, in contrast to *Creepy*, companion mag *Eerie* showcased continuing characters – e.g., The Spook, Dax the Warrior, Hunter, etc. – often with finite story arcs, all tailor-made for potential collections. But as he was dropped into an environment which already had a capable editor, Bill Dubay, tensions immediately arose.

Dubay told Cooke, "At one point, Archie came in to edit *Creepy* and *Vampirella*. We were expanding and Jim saw the intense workload I'd taken on, so he hired Archie back to head up the two magazines. I guess he and Archie didn't communicate clearly because, after two weeks, Archie stormed into Jim's office complaining about having to answer to me as his senior editor. He was probably right about that. I mean, this was the editor who launched these magazines, and certainly someone I admired – put in the position of having to answer to me. It made us both uncomfortable."

Asked for details about Archie coming back, Warren told Cooke, "If an Archie Goodwin says he would like to come back, you don't ask why. He was probably restless and, when I bumped into him, I saw he wasn't happy doing what he was doing. So I grabbed Archie back with us; but I did it in the wrong way – and it turned sour. Nineteen seventy-four was a very heady year for me… What I should have done was to make Archie 'editor emeritus,' given him an executive suite somewhere, and let him develop a new magazine…or bring back *Blazing Combat*."

Warren continued, "Here's Archie, who was the father and creator of everything good in Warren comics, sitting in a minor position; and here's Bill DuBay, sitting in a position he earned, over Archie – and it's like putting two brothers together when the room is not big enough. One of them had to go, because I'm sure both of them looked at each other and each saw danger and a threat to his own security – and I had created this awful situation, which was horribly unfair to both of these outstanding men. What was I thinking at the time?"

Anne explained to Cooke, "The second time Archie left [Warren was] over a misunderstanding about autonomy and who was in charge of what. In that case, Jim probably thought he knew Archie and his response to the situation and, in fact, didn't."

Then, asked if, overall, Archie held fond memories of his Warren days, she shared, "Yes, although he wasn't thrilled with the six-week episode in the '70s as editor of *Creepy* and *Vampirella* that worked out badly or with feeling caught in the middle earlier on. He was very proud of much of the Warren work. When he was doing it and all went smoothly, he was happy – even with occasional minor hassles – just being able to set the whole tone and feel it was very much his creation editorially. In that respect, yes, he did."

ARCHIE & WALT

As if to balm the injured pride he endured at Warren – something he would rarely talk about to interviewers – Archie was the recipient of two consecutive "Best Writer (Dramatic Division)" Shazam Awards, bestowed by the Academy of Comic Book Arts in 1973 and '74, and he and Simonson shared three "Best Story" awards for "Manhunter" in those same two years. (For his sake, the artist shared an "Outstanding New Talent" prize at the '73 ceremony.)

The Destructor TM & © the respective copyright holder. Illustration ©Walter Simonson.

Recently, the once starving artist reminisced about how generous the Goodwins were to him. "I couldn't cook then. I can't cook now, and so I ate a lot of Hamburger Helper, and goodness knows what else. I'm sure I had a really unbalanced diet. And, after we began working together, we became good friends, and he was inviting me back to his apartment. He and his wife Anne had an apartment on Broadway and 56th Street, on, like, the fifth floor, on the corner. An apartment you would kill for now. And it was nice. So he lived there with Anne and their two kids,* and he had me over for dinner, maybe about once a week. It's probably the only time I got fed real food, and Anne was very kind."

Simonson continued, "I said that, outside my parents, I owed more to Archie and Anne than I owed to anybody. And, in Archie and Anne's case, that's because Archie gave me my start in comics, really, by feeding me these little stories, and then gave me 'Manhunter'… Then, when 'Manhunter' was over, all the elders knew who I was. We won a bunch of awards… I never had to look for work again. That really established me. I was offered work from then on and it just made an enormous difference in my professional career. I owe that to Archie."

Through the Goodwins, Simonson also met future wife Louise Jones, who would become [*in at least Ye Ed.'s opinion!*] the second greatest editor in the history of Warren Publications, where she corralled perhaps the finest roster of American comic book artists working in '70s comics – Neal Adams, Toth, Richard Corben, Russ Heath, Bernie Wrightson, John Severin, and so many more – to produce excellent art.

In a few short years, Simonson and Archie would work together a few more times, creating the comic book adaptation of the films *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* [June '78] (for Marvel) and *Alien* (for the publishers of *Heavy Metal* magazine). *Alien: The Illustrated Story* ['79] is regarded as among the best film adaptations in comics, as the pair manage to convey the claustrophobia, horror, and quiet tension of the Ridley Scott "Gothic sci-fi" film. Thus, after only three full collaborations together, the pair cemented themselves as an iconic creative duo.**

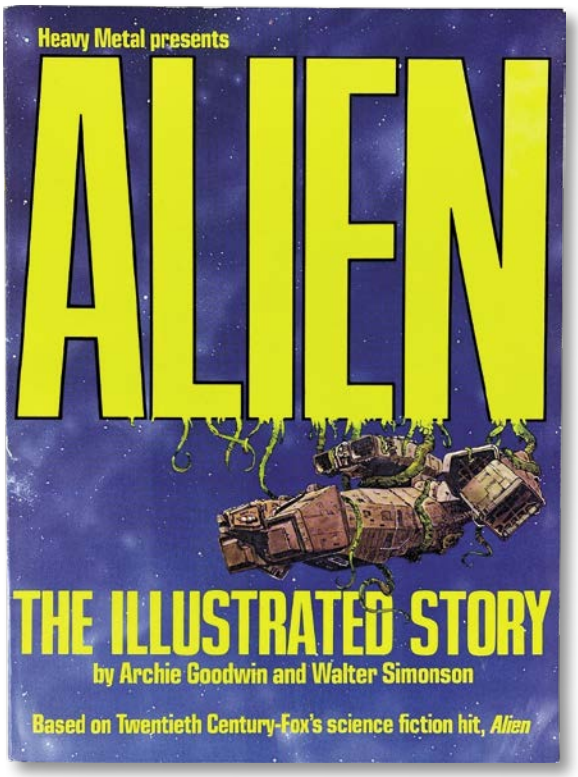
ATLAS/SEABOARD

Archie's next port of call, this time as freelancer, was to berth at the short-lived Atlas/Seaboard, in late 1974, where he teamed again with Simonson, this time for an 11-page samurai tale, as well as script *The Destructor* #1–3 drawn by Steve Ditko and wrote the exploits of "Sgt. Stryker's Death Squad," in *Savage Combat Tales*. What the writer may not have been aware of was, in a fit of anger, no less than Stan Lee instructed his second-in-command to target Archie specifically with a directive to stop recruiting for the competition – which had not only swiped the look-&-feel of the Marvel brand, but raided its freelance pool, as well.

Roy Thomas, then Marvel's editor-in-chief, told Cooke, "When Archie Goodwin was working at Atlas, it was 'Archie who?' at Marvel back then. I was authorized [by Lee] to tell [Archie] that, if he tried stealing any more of our people (which was making a strong statement, but that's using the vernacular of the time), Archie wasn't going to work for Marvel again later on. He was the only person who was singled out. It was a moment of pique in Stan's case, and it was kind of ignored. I don't think I ever told it to Archie and, if I did, not very seriously, because I knew it would die down. I guess Archie got identified with calling a couple of people later on, and, for some reason, that became more personal with Stan, because Archie had worked there at Marvel, than it was with, say, [Atlas/Seaboard editors] Larry [Lieber] or Jeff Rovin."

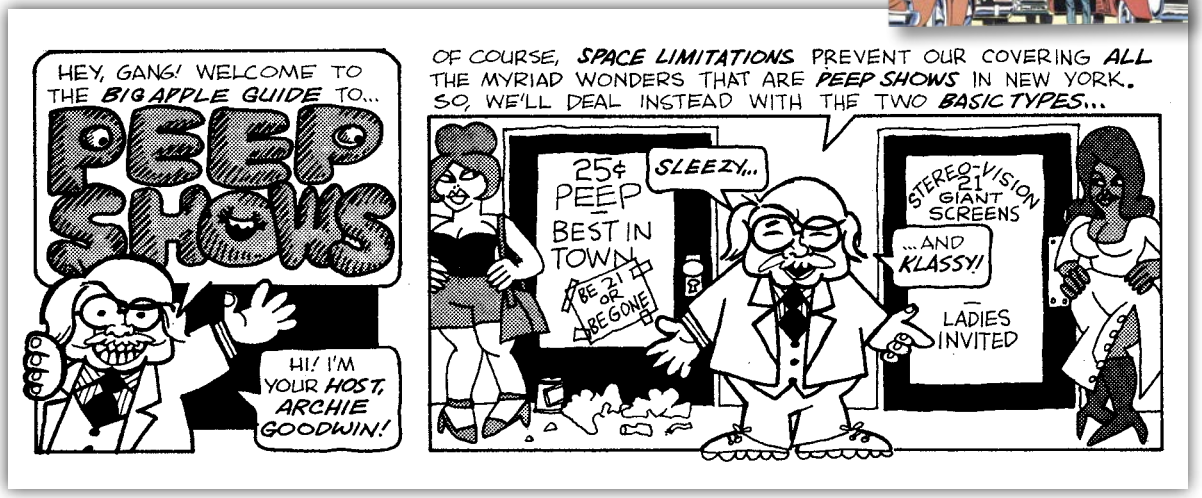
Archie told Daniels, "[Atlas/Seaboard] was a bad [idea]. Back then, it was before the direct sales market, I think it was a bad time to try to get books on the newsstand. And, literally, within a six-month period…[Atlas/Seaboard] just started, it seems like, a jillion titles and I think there just wasn't the distribution system to really get the stuff out."

(Whether the then-available Archie was considered for the editor's job at Atlas/Seaboard, Rovin speculated to



Above: *Archie and Simonson's* Alien *adaptation spent six weeks on the New York Times Bestseller list in 1979.* **Below:** *Archie contributed the two-page "Peep Shows" strip for Flo Steinberg's* Big Apple Comix *[Sept. '75] one-shot.*

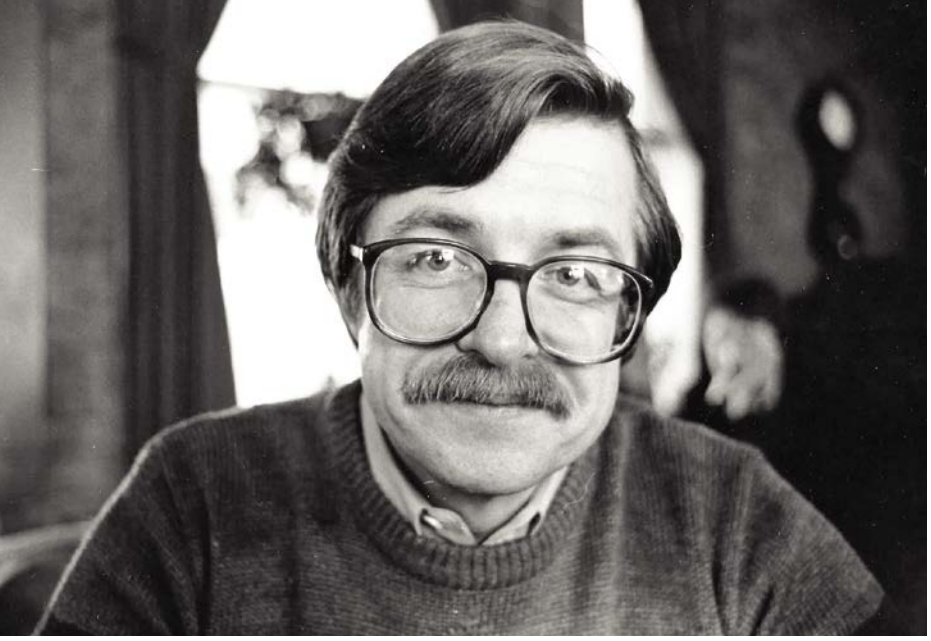




* Daughter Jennifer was born in the late 1960s and son Seth in the early '70s, according to Al Williamson's wife, Cori.

** The Goodwin/Simonson graphic novel also made history as the first comic book to make the *New York Times* bestseller list. Recalling the book stayed on the list for "about six weeks," the artist recently revealed that, alas, the twosome did not share in any riches generated. "Archie and I were paid a flat fee per page," Simonson confided, "so there were no royalties."

Alien TM & © Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. *Big Apple Comix* TM & © the estate of Flo Steinberg. "Peep Shows" © the estate of Archie Goodwin.



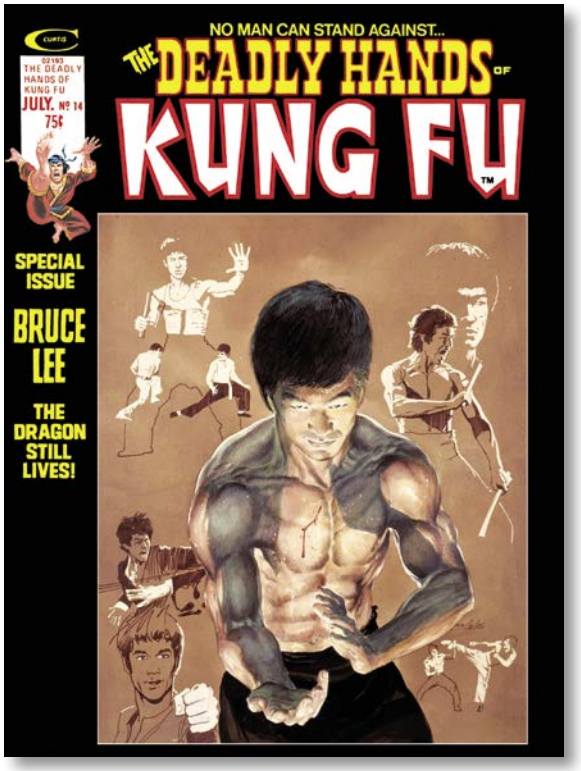
Above: *Archie is an undated pic.*

Cooke, "A lot of these guys wanted a lot more money than I was getting, and I think that was the problem they'd had with Roy Thomas: he wanted a larger salary than I got, and a contract that was a number of years – I didn't have a contract – and so…" Rovin did reveal that a comic book adaptation of the Charlton Heston science fiction movie, *The Omega Man*, was in the works before the company collapsed, to be written by Archie, and drawn by Pat Broderick and Dan Adkins.)

THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM?

Despite Stan the Man's fury, Archie next found employment at the House of Ideas, in 1975, where he came in first as editor of the black-&-white magazine line and then wound up getting more than he bargained for as editor-in-chief. It so happened, Archie had arrived at a remarkably tumultuous period for the company, by then the industry leader. Among his b-&-w mag assignments was *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu,* where, in #12 [May '75], his editorial referred to his previous Marvel tenure and *Iron Man* work, in particular. "After close to 30 issues of transistors and integrated circuits, the chance to deal with something simple and direct as a monkey blow or dragon stamp is pretty damn appealing."

Above: *For his third stay at the House of Ideas, Archie started as editor of the Marvel line of black-&-white magazines, among them,* Deadly Hands of Kung Fu. *This cover for #14 [July '75] was illustrated by Neal Adams, which sported a nifty portrait of fabled martial arts master, Bruce Lee.*



Archie found that he was a "consulting editor" on a certain number of b-&-w titles, but evidently completely in charge of *DHKF, Planet of the Apes, Marvel Preview, Vampire Tales, Savage Tales,* and *Doc Savage.* Some of those titles listed were cancelled with his first respective issue, an indication the b-&-w line wasn't exactly thriving.

Whatever Archie's workload, Marvel, higher ups eyed the returning writer/editor for advancement, as Sean Howe, in his *Marvel Comics: The Untold Story,* related in opening the chapter, "The Next Generation": "Amid a flat market and an exodus of talent, Archie Goodwin, editor of Marvel's black-&-white magazines, was drafted to be the fourth editor-in-chief since Roy Thomas had left 20 months before. Thirty-eight years old, Goodwin was experienced, respected, and beloved by nearly everyone in the industry. Unfortunately, he didn't really want the job. He'd been perfectly happy working on the magazines and only accepted it, he said later, because he was afraid to turn down a promotion.

"'Archie was never great in an executive position,' recalled one of his assistants. 'He loved to write more than anything and he loved to edit books, but he did not like doing the business part. Everybody who got that job thought that meant they could do the comics they wanted. They didn't understand. It also involved advertising space, printing bills, and keeping the businessmen who own the company happy. You had to answer questions about personnel."

THE E-I-C REIGN

Recently, longtime Marvel editor Ralph Macchio recalled, "Marvel, at that time, had a revolving door of editors-in-chief. It started with Roy, and then Roy stayed in for a few years, and then it turned over to Len [Wein], Len left after a certain period, he went, to DC to do *Batman*. Marv Wolfman came in, Marv stayed for a while, and then it went to Gerry [Conway].

"The reason for all this was because you mainly took the jobs up at Marvel – and it wasn't just editor-in-chief, but editor jobs – in most instances, because you wanted to get enough books so you could leave staff and become a full-time writer. So Marv eventually got enough [assignments], and then he left, and Gerry came and lasted a very brief period of time. I was actually hanging out at Marvel during that time period, and then Archie got into the spot."

Archie lamented to Ringgenberg, "I don't think I was psychologically or temperamentally suited to be editor-in-chief at Marvel, at least not Marvel as it existed then. I think Marvel at that time had gotten just big enough that you couldn't comfortably handle it with one editor. Marvel had expanded enough and there was a big enough workload, that having one editor responsible for everything was no longer a viable system."

Of that period, Anne explained, "He got to creatively steer the stories and I think he liked that. The part he disliked most was that as comics got bigger and more corporate there were all these meeting and business concerns – he always said he didn't like the administrative things. Archie always said, 'I got into comics so I didn't have to do this kind of stuff.'"

Anne later told Blake Bell, in *I Have to Live with This Guy* [2002], "Archie *would* rant to me, and I remember him coming home very angry one day. He didn't really like the business side of it, and he would say, 'I didn't go into comics for this.' During the time he was editor-in-chief for a year-and-a-half, Marvel had this meeting and all the business guys sat around saying 'We have to come up with ways to

Deadly Hands of Kung Fu TM & ©Marvel Characters, Inc. Bruce Lee likeness TM & © Bruce Lee Enterprises, Inc.

stop DC from stealing our brilliant artists.'

"Archie threw out all these ideas, like giving them back their artwork, giving them royalties, and the like. He comes back from the meeting and says to me they spent three hours on this meeting, and then one of these suits says, 'Why are we talking about giving benefits and royalties to these people? These aren't employees on the books. They're people we hire for piecework. They have no loyalty to us.' The whole idea of the meeting was how to try to hang onto them. He came home really mad. He couldn't show his full anger in front of them, but he was not the kind of 'mad' where he'd come home, kick the door or get mad at me."

By then a close friend, Simonson observed, "I think it took him away from actually writing and from editing individual stuff, and it was a much more managerial type job. I think he did not really enjoy it. We didn't talk about it privately with him grousing about it. He kept all that stuff inside, or maybe he confided to Anne, or maybe somebody else in the office, but not to me."

Macchio also pointed out another frustration. "Archie was effectively only the editor-in-chief of about half the line, and many of the top books, like (I believe) *Fantastic Four*, were not under the control of the editor-in-chief. So, Archie, I think, was a little unhappy about that because he was a fantastic editor and a fantastic editor-in-chief, but he didn't have full control over everything."

Editor/writer/artist Larry Hama was one of that younger generation who approached Archie for counsel in the late '70s: "I went to ask Archie his best advice he can give me for being an editor. Archie said 'Never lie to the freelancers,' so I took that seriously, and ten years later, I had all these people hating my guts because I would tell them exactly what I thought. So I went to Archie and I said 'Geez, that advice you gave me ten years ago about never lying to the freelancers resulted in me being thoroughly hated by a lot of people.'" Hama then added with a laugh, "And Archie said 'I told you don't lie to them. I never told you to tell them the truth! Big difference.'

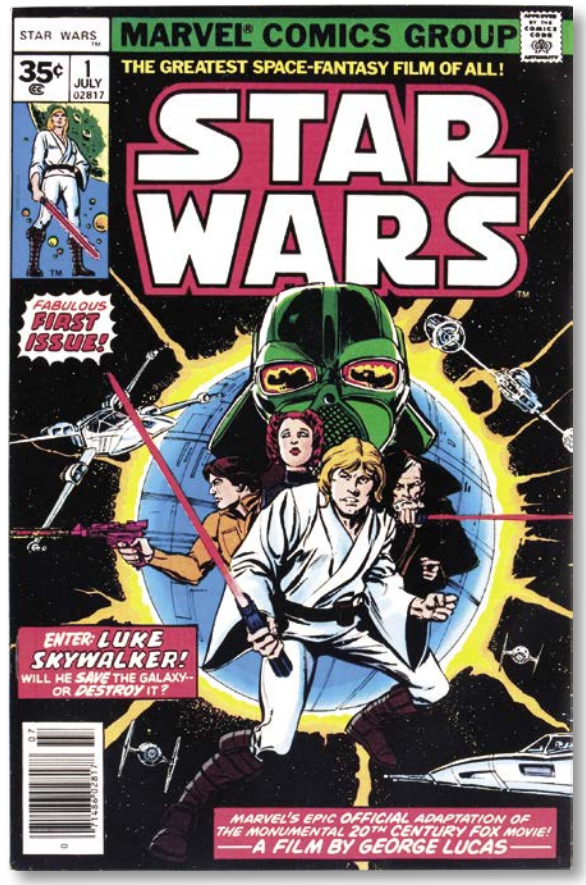
"He was very succinct and very diplomatic in his criticism, much more so than I ever was. I had learned everything how to deal with people from Neal Adams. That's how I learned how to critique stuff, you know, because I sat next to him for like three years. Archie just had this really quiet, dry wit, and he was just very likable. I can't think of anybody that didn't like Archie."

Anyway, from the start of his stint, those were tough years for the comics industry, Archie told Daniels. "Newsstand sales were not good. Within a month or so after I started as editor-in-chief, James Galton was brought in by [corporate owner] Cadence to run the company. And I think the previous administration's idea of the way you do comics was, if you needed more money, you added more comics.

"And everybody had finally come to realize that it wasn't working. Galton came in, the first thing he did was cut back somewhat on staff and on the number of titles we were doing, to try to give a certain amount of stability to the whole thing. And I think it was, the whole time I was editor-in-chief, it was kind of touch and go with finding a way to kind of keep the books going and keep enough people working, and things like that."

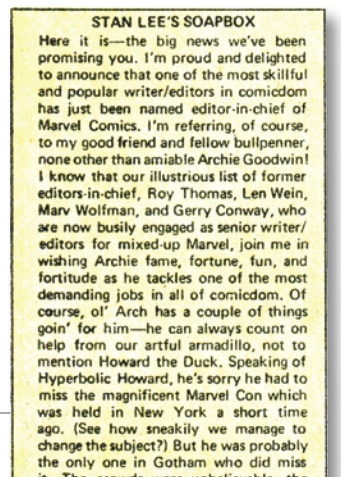
EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

Nelson "Nel" Yomtov worked in production at the time and got the chance to work closely with Archie. One day, he encountered Archie on the tail end of dealing with executives. "My immediate impression is that he wasn't really enamored with the job. I remember one particular incident, if I may: I was in the bullpen and he came in. He was editor-in-chief by that time and he looked kind of harried. He had a paste-up board and some papers and stuff. He says, 'The guy's upstairs wanted this presentation board made. They wanted type on it and some art.' You could see it was not something that he really wanted to deal with, and I said, 'Just leave it with me and I'll take care of it here in the bullpen.' And he just came out and said, quite frankly, to me, 'All I want to do is edit books. I don't want to deal with this crap.'



Above: *During his tenure as Marvel editor-in-chief, Archie began his association with the blockbuster hit movie,* Star Wars, *which spawned not just comics books – #1 [July '77], with cover art by Howard Chaykin and Tom Palmer seen here – but also (along with many, many other items) Sunday and daily newspaper strips, which the man scripted for a time, often with close friend, artist Al Williamson.*

Below: *In Oct. '76 cover-dated comics, Marvel publisher Stan Lee announced Archie Goodwin was anointed editor-in-chief of the entire comics line, a position the writer did not covet, but accepted to avoid any consequences that might arise by declining the gig.*

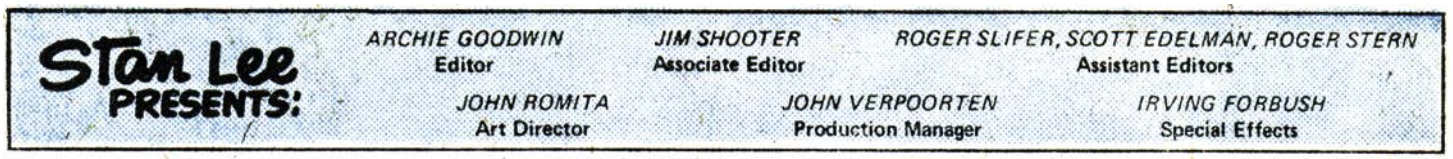

STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX

Here it is—the big news we've been promising you. I'm proud and delighted to announce that one of the most skillful and popular writer/editors in comicdom has just been named editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics. I'm referring, of course, to my good friend and fellow bullpenner, none other than amiable Archie Goodwin! I know that our illustrious list of former editors-in-chief, Roy Thomas, Len Wein, Marv Wolfman, and Gerry Conway, who are now busily engaged as senior writer/editors for mixed-up Marvel, join me in wishing Archie fame, fortune, fun, and fortitude as he tackles one of the most demanding jobs in all of comicdom. Of course, ol' Arch has a couple of things goin' for him—he can always count on help from our artful armadillo, not to mention Howard the Duck. Speaking of Hyperbolic Howard, he's sorry he had to miss the magnificent Marvel Con which was held in New York a short time ago. (See how sneakily we manage to change the subject?) But he was probably the only one in Gotham who did miss

"Jim," of course, was Jim Shooter, who had entered professional comics in 1966, at the tender age of 14, writing super-hero stories for DC Comics. The scribe had a three-week stint as Marvel editor in '69 and freelanced for DC in the early '70s, until Marv Wolfman, then Marvel's sixth editor-in-chief, hired him as associate editor, official start-date: January 2, 1976.

In a "Secret Origin of Jim Shooter, Editor-in-Chief" blogpost he wrote in 2011, former E-I-C Goodwin assistant Shooter gave a behind-the-scenes look at Archie's departure: "Sometime in or around November, 1977, Stan took me to lunch, ostensibly to talk about [Shooter's work]… Stan had apparently discussed the state of the comics with new president Jim Galton…They felt a change was necessary. Not

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Above: *The Marvel Comics masthead featuring Archie Goodwin as the (second) man in charge, which appeared in the line's titles cover-dated November 1976. Archie would last just 18 months in the position, quitting to write again and become a freelance editor in charge of a handful of titles, including* Star Wars. **Below:** *Panel from a 1975 strip written and drawn by Archie on how he conceives of stories. (Clue: the good ones take both hands!)*



Below: *On occasion, Archie would pitch in to help his syndicated newspaper strip comrades, making use of his writing skills. Succeeding* Star Hawks *co-creator Ron Goulart, for a few months, Archie scripted the feature for artist Gil Kane.*



getting rid of Archie, which would be insane, but letting me take on more of the administrative part of the editorial process.

"I thought that was a bad idea. I thought Archie would never go for anything like that. Stan said they planned to offer Archie more money and a promotion to V.P. Put him in charge of 'special projects.' Whatever that was. Having 'Special Projects' in your title always sounds like 'kicked to the curb' to me.

"Anyway, Stan and Galton made Archie some kind of offer in late November or early December. Archie turned them down. It had the stink of being 'kicked upstairs' to it. He preferred leaving and, like every other E-I-C before him, becoming a writer-editor. After some negotiations, I agreed to become the new editor-in-chief… I would take over on the first working day of January, 1978." Thus, Shooter became Marvel's editor-in-chief #9, the sixth since 1972.

OUT OF OFFICE, BUT NOT GONE

In his Marvel history, Sean Howe presented an angrier portrait of Archie: "When Archie Goodwin got wind of Lee's plans to replace him with Shooter, he was pissed. Lee took Shooter out to lunch at a Chinese restaurant and broke the news that Goodwin had resigned. 'His read was that I had stabbed him in the back,' Shooter said. 'Even though he was going to get a raise and title, he just basically told me to go to hell.' Goodwin began working out a writer-editor contract for three books a month."

Macchio explained, "The pressure was getting very intense, again, he didn't have full control, and I think [Archie] was a little upset and unhappy with that. So, when Jim Shooter came in, with Stan's blessing, he wound up taking back all of the books [from the writer/editors]; whereas Archie, I think, was worried about the guys that would suddenly be told, 'Hey, all the stuff that you are full editors on now are all coming back through the office.'

"Jim really didn't care: He felt, everything needed to come back through the office and helped set up the system that kind of imitated DC where he hired a bunch of editors– – Larry Hama, Louise Simonson [recently hired away from Warren], Al Milgrom, people like that – and everything now was going to come through the office. And, again, people did leave: Roy left, and, I think, Marv left because they felt, 'No, this shouldn't be the way it was,' but Jim felt that's the way it should be. But Archie had a different viewpoint, but the pressure was beginning to bother him, and I think he really just had enough of it."

Christopher Priest, then a young fan named James Owlsley, arrived at Marvel seeking work. "I came there to the job interview, fully expecting to meet Archie Goodwin, because that's who I was reading in the Bullpen Bulletins. And this huge white man comes walking out the door, and I had seen pictures of Archie. He was a little short guy. So I didn't know what was going on. I was like, 'Oh, this is some bait and switch going on here.'"

Comics writer D.G. Chichester noted, "The common joke we always would make behind both their backs, was that Jim stole Archie's job, and then spent the rest of his time trying to make up for it."

About the contrast between managerial styles, Macchio said, "Jim was kind in-your-face kind and a little abrasive and all that, in telling you the right things, but in a way that, at first, with some people could rub them the wrong way; whereas Archie was just almost effortless with the kind of thing that he would say, to make you a better editor. This is something Jim himself recognized, that he didn't have that kind of easygoing way. That just was not him. I remember being in a meeting with Archie and Stan and Jim. At one point, Jim brought up that they were having problems with [writer] Bill Mantlo.

"I remember Archie – one of the few times I saw him really get mad – threw down the pencil and he pointed to Jim and he said, 'We haven't had any trouble with those guys until you started to get on them.' I remember standing back and off because when Archie exploded – and it was very seldom he exploded. He pointed at Jim and just said, 'Listen, with these guys, get off their backs,' and all that. Jim had his own view that Doug Moench wasn't toeing the line and Bill Mantlo wasn't toeing the line, the way he saw it, and he was editing the scripts and all that. So you could see some friction there. But, again, there was also a lot of respect between them all and Stan being the great conciliator, he calmed everybody down, and we got back to business."*

* To Bell, Anne offered an insightful, if blunt, comparison: "People hated Jim Shooter, but in some ways he combined running it as a business with a real caring about comics. His problem was he was a control freak. I think of Shooter as Richard Nixon. He could have left well enough alone, but couldn't resist tinkering and wreaking vengeance just for the sake of control. Archie didn't micro-manage artists, and that's what they loved about him. He could write to an artist's strengths, but didn't hover over them."

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INTO A FARAWAY GALAXY FROM LONG AGO

Before ending his run as editor-in-chief, Goodwin listened to Roy Thomas's emphatic urging for Marvel to secure the license for an upcoming science-fiction film. The resulting comic book was *Star Wars,* and it proved a sales juggernaut. Thomas served as the writer for the first 10 issues (including the adaptation of the film), with Archie taking over scripting with #11, when he joined his former DC boss – now back at the drawing table – Carmine Infantino. Archie stayed on as writer (skipping the occasional issue) until #50 [Aug. '81].

"The *Star Wars* thing was an incredible phenomenon," Archie told Daniels. "I had never, in the time I'd been in comics, ever seen a comic book go back for a second printing. The first six issues had a second and third printing. It was the first time, I guess, since the heyday of comics in the '40s that something sold over a million copies."

He added, "And I think *Star Wars* was even beyond just the phenomenon of [it] spinning off a successful comic book. I think the film helped create an interest in fantasy and in comics… It reawakened some of the fun of comic books and it was very good for comic books, in general."

Aside from the Marvel title, Archie's association with George Lucas's blockbuster film began in 1978, when he and Al Williamson produced a dozen sample newspaper strips, which impressed Lucasfilm. "I was contacted to [draw the strip] when the movie came out," Williamson recalled. "I had heard that, 'Lucas loves your work,' and I thought it was baloney, frankly. I finally got a call from somebody at Lucasfilm, saying that they wanted me to do the strip and, 'Would I consider it?' I figured 'Why not? It sounds like a good idea.'

"I got a hold of my friend, Archie Goodwin, who was a wonderful artist and terrific writer, and he adapted two weeks of the first movie. I sent it in, and didn't hear from them, and I needed the money," Al laughed.

It's possible Archie and Williamson were unavailable when the go-ahead was given for the strip, as cartoonist Russ Manning was first to produce the daily and Sunday episodes (at times with the notable assist of Dave Stevens), starting in Mar. '79 and only ending in mid-'80 due to his declining health. Archie, using a pseudonym – "Russ Helm," doubtless a play on Manning's name – perhaps to cloak the freelance work from the Marvel office, took over writing chores from Manning in '79. Archie remained as scribe and then continued when his old buddy came aboard in '81.

(*Secret Agent Corrigan*, the newspaper strip the Williamson and Archie collaborated on since 1967, had been turned over to the capable hands of onetime EC Comics mainstay George Evans, in 1980, evidently leading to the opening up of Williamson's schedule to let him be with the Force.)

The artist discussed with Cooke what made Archie such a great collaborator: "First of all, he's an artist. When he wrote a story, he knew the pictures and could see them in his mind. Consequently, when he wrote a story, he made it very simple for the artist. It was right there. A lot of writers will write a script that can't be drawn. My God, they'll ask you to draw a million things in a panel that you can't do. That's not all of them, of course, but I have had scripts that I had to send back. You have to keep it simple and you can't throw everything in one panel; you have to tell the story."

Set between the first two films, the *Star Wars* daily strip brought Luke Skywalker and company up to the events of *The Empire Strikes Back,* as Archie and Williamson have them fighting the Emperor and company, and also revealed how the sequel's scenario developed. In his dialogue, Archie nailed the character's voices, writing scripts for the upcoming week in three- to five-hour sessions over the weekend (as not to interfere with any day job), and also providing Williamson with thumbnails. The pair also adapted *Empire* and 1983's *Return of the Jedi*. The adaptation process was arduous, but paid off in the final result.



Above: *Al Williamson* Star Wars *tryout strips.* **Below:** *Williamson's cover art,* Star Wars *#39 [Sept. '80].*



"I go out to the movie studio, pick out the reference stuff," Archie told Ringgenberg. "We've been getting anywhere from 1,000–1,200 movie stills. I'll go through the script a couple of times, trying to figure out how much space I've got to work with, making notes on where I think breaks will fall in the script. And how much script I think will fit into how many pages of comics… Then I go through and try to

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Above: *Photo of a Marvel panel at the1982 San Diego Comic-Con. From left is Jim Shooter, Steve Englehart, Archie, Mary Jo Duffy, and Carol Kalish. Pic by Alan Light.*

Below: *The epic start of* Epic Illustrated *sported a cover painting by no less than Frank Frazetta.*

put the stills in chronological order, breaking them down, section by section. Then I start writing the script, which, if I'm working with Al, I'll do thumbnails, a little page like this and break it down into panels and do very rough little drawings. And I actually write in the dialogue then too, with little balloons… So, essentially, what I wind up with is looking at the stills, and doing panels, and pull out several stills that I think might fit a particular panel or something. I try, with Al, to do pages that are five panels or less."

Williamson gushed about their process. "Working with Archie is just wonderful. We tried our best, I worked hard, and it was fun to do. It was nice to be working with something that everybody knew. Archie wrote such a good story, and really got the feeling of the movies. I never had any trouble with Archie's scripts… and we did a lot of work together in comics. It was always great working with Arch… He was just the greatest guy, with a great sense of humor, and very talented. He was just the best."

Recent Kubert School grad Rick Veitch came on as a letterer on the strip and the *Empire Strikes Back* adaptation, where he found the work formative. He explained, "I was lettering Archie's scripts, and Al was on the phone to Archie all the time. You know, they're goombahs going back forever, so it was really learning how to write comics just by lettering Archie's stuff. He's got a lot of neat little tricks, and the way he is able to boil down complex ideas into very simple, punchy sentences. I really liked that kind of writing, and I tried to assimilate it into the stuff I was writing.

"They were both big *Star Wars* fans, but they were always griping, because they couldn't get what they needed out of Lucasfilm, because Al, especially, is a reference artist, and so he wanted photographs of, like, everything. And, especially with the second movie, there was stuff that [the studio] wouldn't give them. When I was lettering, all he had for the [AT-AT] walkers were these two little Polaroids of the model. We didn't have the [Ralph] McQuarrie paintings. None of it. They were because they wanted to keep it under wraps and also Yoda. He had nothing to go on from for Yoda, so if you look at the first printings of those *Star Wars* comics, Yoda is from an imaginary description that Archie had to come up with."

Through his deal with Shooter, Archie retained his job at Marvel as freelance editor, but was also able to keep writing the *Star Wars* comic strip as a side gig. His editorial responsibilities soon shifted to something more in line with the innovative editor's ability to work with independent creators.

During this period, yet another science fiction comic strip Archie scribed was when he replaced strip co-creator Ron Goulart on *Starhawks*, giving him another chance to work with artist chum Gil Kane. Arriving on the feature in April '79, he remained as writer until moving on in '80.



EPIC IN THE MAKING

According to Jim Shooter, the origin of *Epic Illustrated,* the *Heavy Metal/Métal Hurlant* wannabe that lasted for 34 issues between Spring '80–Feb. '86*,* was "a project initiated during Archie's time [as Marvel editor-in-chief], a color magazine intended to feature creator-owned material with the working title, *Odyssey*."

"Well, I remember, while I was editor-in-chief," Archie told Daniels, "the guys who put out *Métal Hurlant* in France came over to see Stan and to try to talk him into doing an American edition of it. And Stan very much liked the idea, but he said it would cost too much, the way things are set up now to talk management into backing it. And of course, they eventually went to *National Lampoon* and *Heavy Metal* grew out of that. But this was something Stan said he always wanted to do, the idea of the expensive [slick] comic book.

"And certainly, as *Heavy Metal* got successful and the direct sales market opened up, it made Marvel rethink the

Photo courtesy of Alan Light. *Epic Illustrated* TM & ©Marvel Characters, Inc. Art © the estate of Frank Frazetta.

idea of doing something like that. Once you had the direct sales market, you at least had some place where, if nothing else, you could guarantee yourself a certain number of sales, enough to give you a base to gamble with. I would say that it was certainly one of the things very favorable to Jim [Shooter]'s success. The direct market really got started then. When I was editor-in-chief, the circulation people were sort of interested in it but, at the same time, were sort of fending [off] a bit with [direct market distributor] Phil Seuling. I guess they probably wanted to control the whole thing. And Phil, that would be the last thing he would have wanted."

Ralph Macchio, who joined Marvel as an assistant editor in '77, gave an insider's view of the *Epic* beginnings. "Stan Lee wanted to expand our publishing, and he wanted to go in different directions with different things; that's why they tried that *Spider-Man* black-&-white magazine, at one point. Well, he wanted to compete with *Métal Hurlant* or *Heavy Metal*. So he came in one day and he sat down with [special projects editor] Rick Marschall (because, at that point, I was working with Rick), and Jim was editor-in-chief, and they talked about coming up with a magazine that would feature all of the top guys that weren't doing regular comics. Rick Marschall, who had connections outside of mainstream comics with other people, said, 'This could be a fantastic magazine.' He managed to get Frank Frazetta to do the cover for the first issue, which was almost unheard of to get Frazetta to do that."

In 2018, Marschall told the Comics, Beer & Sci-Fi podcast, "I was hired by Stan at Marvel and first worked on the magazine line. So we did movie adaptations, including *The Hulk*, which was a TV hit then, and stuff like that. And I had worked previously in the newspaper strip business and had a lot of contact with European cartoonists and magazines.

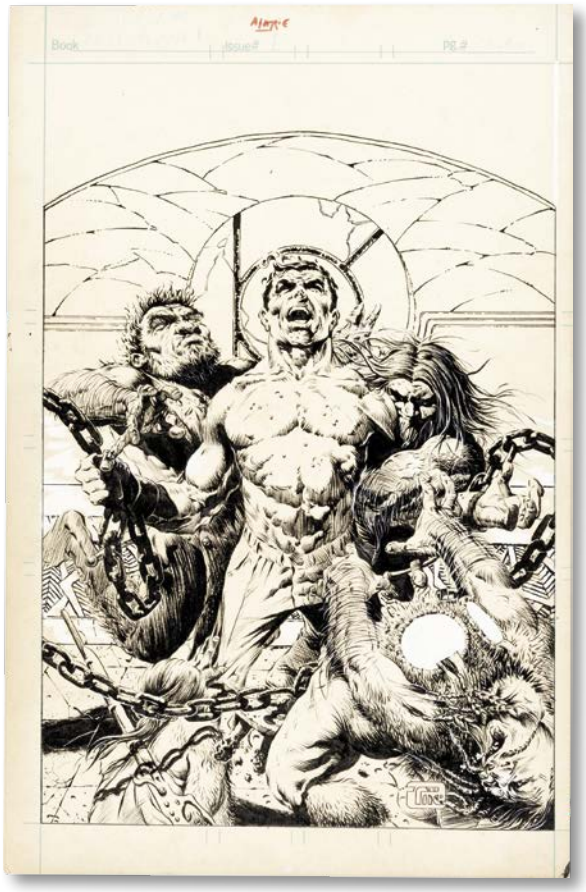
"Stan wanted to do a Marvel version of *Heavy Metal,* so that was the vision for the magazine. He gave [the assignment] to me and I scouted some artists from Europe and also in the U.S., and was able to [develop a] creators' rights contract, [determining] ownership of the property. So there were a lot of breakthroughs, including the printing methods, the color work, and all like that. So that's how *Epic* started."

But, even before the first issue was sent off to press, he continued, "I had conflicts with Shooter… and he said something to me one day that actually made it impossible for me to work another day. He said, 'You're fired.' Anyway, so I did a few issues of *Epic* and then a lot of stuff that kept appearing when Archie Goodwin became editor that I commissioned or edited [and] kept appearing. So [*Epic Illustrated*] was kind of my baby and I was very proud of the way it went."

About the name change from *Odyssey*: Marschall, a comic strip historian and past newspaper feature editor, had learned that as many as seven other magazines utilized the *Odyssey* name prompting him instead to rename the forthcoming high-end comics mag, *Epic Illustrated.*

Curiously, Shooter, who had used wiles and (his words) an "epic deception" to entice Archie to take the reins of *Epic Illustrated,* hadn't known it was Marschall who scored the Frazetta cover for #1: "I don't think anyone but Archie could have done what he did with *Epic*," he shared in a blogpost. "No way I could have. The Frazetta cover, for instance. I probably could never have gotten past Frazetta's wife and gatekeeper, Ellie. Archie was well known to the stars and legends. If stars and legends who weren't actively working for Marvel had heard of me at all, to them I was a former DC writer who was Marvel's new, whip-cracking, Blue-Meanie E-I-C. Everybody loved Archie. I ranked between Mussolini and Torquemada on the popularity scale. He did a magnificent job, and I'm proud to have filled in some of the potholes in front of him on the way."

Of course, Archie, ever a champion of creator's rights, was an absolutely inspired choice to guide a magazine with contents containing mostly creator-owned material. Archie's cache was in his relationship with creators – as well as the reputation achieved through his time at Warren as an editor, and his groundbreaking work on 'Manhunter' – established him as a creative force in the industry. His approach as *Epic Illustrated* editor – which started in Oct. '79 – was diplomatic and generous, granting creators final say given the creator-owned nature of the work.



Above: *Early serials in Epic Illustrated included Roy Thomas and Tim Conrad's adaptation of Robert E. Howard's Almuric, which ran for four issues in #2–5. This is purported to be an unused cover illustration for* Epic*, though a margin note indicates it was to be a cover for something called* Warrior of the Lost Planet *#1.* **Below:** *Panel from P. Craig Russell's bravura adaptation, with Roy Thomas writing, of Michael Moorcock's* Dreaming City. *From* Epic Illustrated *#3 [Fall '80].*

Artist Mark Wheatley captured a glimpse of Archie compiling the first issue, when the young artist stopped by with his portfolio looking for work, as he related in his remembrance for *Comic Book Profiles.* "When Marvel announced the impending release of their adult comic book, *Epic Illustrated,* I made an appointment to see the editor and headed in to show my portfolio. When I made my appointment, *Epic*'s editor was Rick Marschall. On the day I found myself in the Marvel offices, I was greeted by Archie Goodwin. He explained that Marschall had moved on and he was taking over. He was still attempting to put his office into order.

"I remember him hovering around the room, going from one stack of paper to another pile of comic art, inspecting the pages and sighing in a hopeless way that told me he didn't want to be dealing with these leftovers from a previous editor. He moved a pile into a drawer and brushed his hands as if to be rid of the things and said, 'You only get one chance to start a



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magazine. The first issues are the ones you put together before a single reader ever sees them, before the magazine takes on an identity. Right now, I should be able to pick and choose any content I want, but I'm saddled with all this work that was already bought and paid for by the previous editor.'

"Archie sat in the corner of his desk. He looked out his open door and then at me in a conspiratorial manner and said, 'There's some good stuff in there, but I'm going to put off publishing most of it for as long as I can. If I put that in my first issues, then that's the only kind of material I'd ever see. No artist or writer should ever show me samples that didn't look exactly like the contents of my first issue. So the first issue is going to be made up of what I want in it."

Wheatley added, "Honestly, I might not have submitted to *Epic* if I had known Archie Goodwin was the editor. I'm chicken that way. I don't enjoy acting the fool and I always fumble and mumble when confronted with my heroes. But, here I was, sitting in Archie Goodwin's office. Not only that, but the man was in the process of confiding in me his battle plans for forging *Epic Illustrated* in his own image. And as he talked, he was growing more excited. 'This is my favorite time in the process of creating a new publication. I like so many different styles and approaches to making comics, and I want to include all of them in *Epic*. But once we publish the first issue, it'll all be locked in from then on.'"



THE EPOCH OF EPIC

While it was certainly inspired by the successful slick comics magazine being compiled monthly just three blocks north of the Marvel offices, on Madison Avenue, *Epic Illustrated* did, under Archie's direction (for better or worse), establish its own identity unique from *Heavy Metal*. It had moments of brilliance, to be sure, boasting a killer line-up of creators, all beautifully packaged behind striking covers. (Still, the shoe-horning of the Silver Surfer and Galactus in #1 and the latter character in #26–34 from the super-hero books hindered its distinction from the comic book line a tad.)

The first issue of *Epic Illustrated,* hit the stands on Jan. 22, 1980, and it credited Stan Lee as editor, complete with opening editorial by "The Man," and Archie was in the masthead as "editorial director," with him contributing a small paragraph introducing comments on the first issue by Neal Adams, Ray Bradbury, and even producer George Pal. (Lee would be listed as the top editor within every issue of *Epic,* always above the name of the actual editor.)

Though Stan Lee was hands off, Archie told Daniels, the boss was still interested. "Stan was not too directly involved except he liked the idea. It was something he was pretty interested in. And I think, prior to my coming aboard, he was maybe a little more directly involved. I think both Stan and Jim were looking after a lot of other things that the place was doing. At the same time I came on, they both seemed kind of content to let me put the thing together. Stan would occasionally usually come in to look at what I was doing. And occasionally he would make suggestions: 'Why don't you try this style?' Or, 'Why don't you try something like this?' But I was left pretty much alone.

In that first issue's "Endgame" column, Archie touched upon what Wheatley had observed: "What editors want, particularly in a first issue, is perfection," he wrote. "Naturally, we never quite achieve it. Hopefully, we'll come a little bit closer with each succeeding *Epic*. The hardest part of questing for this particular Holy Grail was disappointing the artists and writers who had counted on being part of the first issue, but then found their jobs taken out in the name of format, pacing, and editorial paranoia."

Carol Kalish and Richard Howell, interviewers for *Comics Feature* magazine, captured Archie's overview just as the first issue went to press, as he discussed early features for the mag. "We have 'Metamorphosis Odyssey,' a serial by Jim Starlin, which was conceived to be done in eight page, monthly chapters," he revealed. "Since the decision was made to make the book a quarterly instead of a monthly, what I did for the first issue was to run the first three chapters. Originally, I was considering just running two, but when I read through the third chapter, I liked the point at which it ended. So I'm running the first three.

"We'll also be having an adaptation of [Robert E. Howard's] Almuric by Roy Thomas and Tim Conrad, and that's going to have to run in large chunks. It makes it a little hard for me juggling beforehand, but I think it's worth it to have extra-long material in there, too. Until the magazine is published monthly, however, I won't be having as much continuing material. I'll try to limit that and probably won't run a lot of long pieces, but I will definitely run some."



Then, asked if he was happy about the quarterly schedule, Goodwin said, "Not wildly. Although it would probably kill me, I'd rather have a monthly schedule. In theory, the quarterly schedule gives you more time to put the material together, but there's never enough time, as far as I'm concerned, to do it exactly the way you want to do it. If I had a year to do a magazine, I'm sure I would still be rushing some stuff off at the last minute and wishing that there was something else I could have had or some little thing I could have done or something I could have read over, one more time. A magazine should be an organic, growing kind of thing, and I think a monthly, or at least a more frequently scheduled magazine, gives it a better chance of being that.

"My approach would be a lot looser if it were a monthly magazine but, when it's

Epic Illustrated TM & ©Marvel Characters, Inc. Neal Adams cover art © the estate of the artist. Barry Windsor-Smith cover art © Barry Windsor-Smith.

a quarterly, I find myself much more uptight about what's in each issue. With a quarterly, you only have four shots each year. And, God help you, if one out of the four falls off in some way, then you're really hurting. With a monthly magazine, if you have mostly good issues, then if you fall off on an issue, that's okay. That's one of the nice things about a monthly magazine."

Whose decision was it to make it a quarterly? Kalish and Howell inquired. He replied, "I don't know specifically. I assume it was probably higher up in the management level. And they felt that if they were going to spend this much money on a magazine and, compared to any other Marvel comic coming out, it is a big budget – I think they wanted to see what kind of results they would get with that big a commitment before just plunging in. With a monthly magazine, you have to do about six issues before you're really even sure how the first one did. And that's a tremendous investment. By making it quarterly, it gives them a chance to see how the magazine is doing with a four-issue investment. In terms of the company's money, I understand why they made that decision.

"The balance in a monthly magazine wouldn't be as grave as with a quarterly. In the first issue, frankly, there was one piece I didn't have: that was a good, really solid science fiction, dueling spaceships kind of piece. I have some material that can kind of pass as that kind of science fiction, but I would have really liked one solid science fiction piece for the first issue. It just hadn't been done or hadn't been commissioned beforehand. And there was no time for me to suddenly to commission one. But if it were a monthly magazine, there would have been some issues which wouldn't be balanced, but it wouldn't matter as much because with a monthly book, you could do a theme issue or something like that. There's a lot of things you can do with a monthly schedule…

"But, generally, I think a lot of what the magazine will be will depend very much on the individual contributors and what they come up with. You can exercise your own judgment in saying, 'Yes, I want this. No, I don't want that.' But, to a great extent, the success or failure of a magazine like this really depends on the kind of submissions I'll be getting. A lot of the magazine's personality will come from what the individual person does.'

The magazine also included text features, such as a revealing account of Archie visiting Barry Windsor-Smith's upstate studio; Maurice Horn's essay on European comics; and a Basil Wolverton article by Ron Goulart, as well as continuing features, one being a review column by Dennis O'Neil, "Mediaview" (commencing in the first bi-monthly issue, #5), who shared about the *Epic* editor in the following from *Comic Book Profiles*:

"It helped that he had a versatile and encyclopedic knowledge of the field, so when he told you something, he told it with authority. But he never imposed himself on the job. His goal was always to get the best out of you. He never had any agenda of his own. I don't know quite how he always managed to do that. I wish I had that same knack because he was so enormously likable. You wanted to please him, you wanted to do your best. You didn't want to disappoint Archie Goodwin.

"When I wrote a movie column for him in *Epic*, he and I disagreed about what the movie column should be for the five years that I did it. But he never, for one second, tried to force his view upon me.

"In my case, after you've done 500 or 600 scripts, you really don't need help with the basics anymore. You need a sounding board. Somebody who can understand what you're going for, can listen to your difficulties and react to them. Archie was very good at that. Another of his strengths, another thing that I envy was his ability to match talent, the right penciler with the right writer and with the right inker. He cared about every project. I never had a sense that any issue that he edited was just another job for him. He really put as much as he had in him into every editing job he did."



Above: *Portrait of Mary Jo Duffy, published in* Epic Illustrated *#5 [Apr. '81], the first issue of year two for the magazine, when she joined Archie to serve as associate editor as the magazine goes bi-monthly.*

ALONG CAME JO

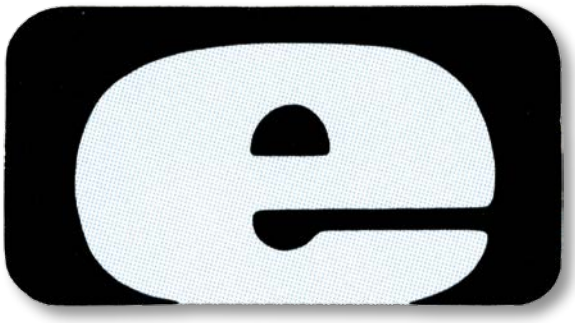
Fortuitously, one-time letter hack Mary Jo Duffy had been toiling away as a legal proofreader in a law office when she had a job interview at Marvel for a proofreader position. Though she lost out on the job to Scott Edelman, already a Marvel freelancer, she made a positive enough impression that, four months later, then editor-in-chief Archie called and offered her the gig as (her words) an "office drone."

In an interview for *Pulp, the Manga Magazine,* Duffy shared about initially meeting the man she would call "future mentor and one of my greatest friends": "I was so intimidated when I saw Archie Goodwin on my first job interview. I was all, 'Oh my God, my knees are knocking together! He did 'Manhunter'! I was more scared of [Archie and Walter Simonson] than I am of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby – also my

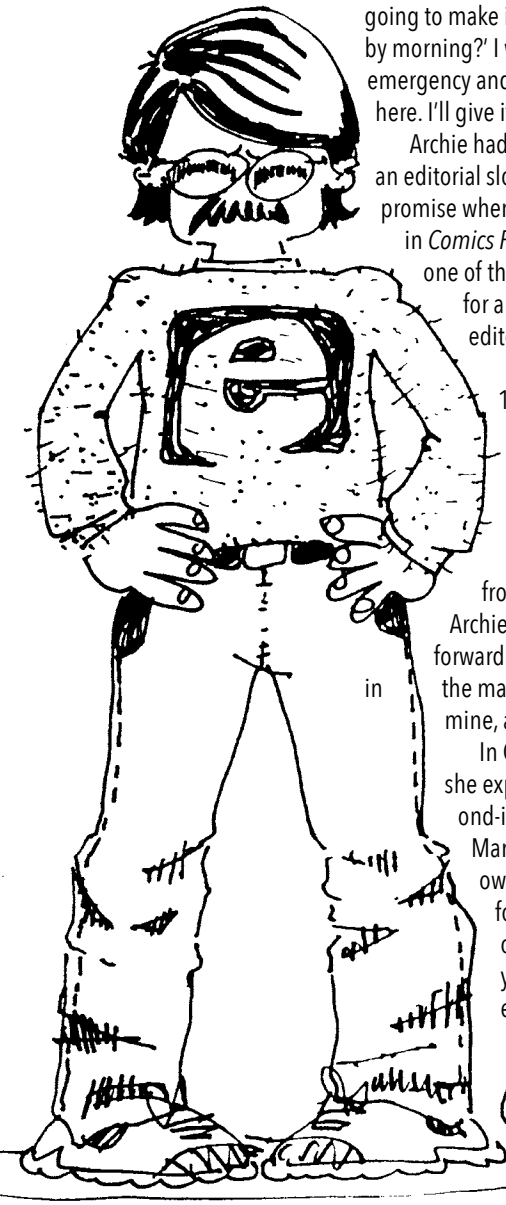


Below: *During those* Epic Illustrated *years, Archie kept his freelance* Star Wars *gig going, which included his adaptations of the film sequels,* The Empire Strikes Back *and* Return of the Jedi, *which he executed with artists Al Williamson (pencils), here at center, and Carlos Garzon (inks), at left in this pic) taken in Archie's Epic office.*

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This spread: *The Epic Comics icon is above. Next page is, at top, Rick Parker's homage to the great writer/editor drawn for the cover of* Marvel Age *#15 [June '84], the promotional, comic-size mag. This issue featured an interview with Archie and, as you'll note, we used Parker's caricature of Archie on the cover of this issue. Below that is Archie's self-caricature for* Marvel Age *#24 [Mar. '85]. Below is another self-caricature this drawn on a memo for Mark Chiarello.*



heroes, but they weren't as scary to me as the creators of Manhunter."

Interestingly, when she first came on board the House of Ideas, Duffy assumed the job of returning artwork to the creators, an experience she treasured. She told Charlie Carden of the Secret Friends Unite podcast, "This turned out to be the job of all jobs because A) I got to handle and look at and savor and appreciate every page of artwork Marvel published, and B) I had all this stuff that belonged to Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, John Buscema, John Romita, Sal Buscema, John Romita Jr., Marie Severin… you name them. I had their stuff.

"And they learned I would get it back to them as quickly as I could. And I'd go, 'Oh gee, I love *Devil Dinosaur.* Mr. Kirby, your work is terrific! Oh, I'm so thrilled and honored to meet you!' And, as a result, any artist who worked for Marvel, I was on good terms with. I got to know them all. I got to meet them all. And inevitably the day came when they're like, 'Oh my gosh, if we don't have a script, the book's not going to make it to press on time. Can anybody write a script by morning?' I was like: ding! ding! ding! They'd have an emergency and I'd raise my hand and go, 'Well, I'm right here. I'll give it a try.' And that was basically how I got in."

Archie had promised Duffy that she'd get a shot when an editorial slot opened and, as editor-in-chief, he kept his promise when someone quit. She told Kalish and Howell in *Comics Feature*, "All I know is that the next time one of the assistant editors quit, I bit my fingernails for about 10 days and then got the assistant editorship."

Duffy joined the Marvel staff on May 7, 1977 (yes, she remembered the precise date!) then became an editor, and then associate editor of *Epic Illustrated* when Archie welcomed her into the two-person office (her being the second person) by *Epic* #5 [Apr. '81] to help as the mag went from a quarterly to bi-monthly. At the time, Archie beamed, "We're happy to have her and look forward to seeing her special point of view reflected in the magazine, along with Stan's, Jim Shooter's, mine, and that of our many contributors."

In Comic Book Central's interview with Duffy, she explained how she became Archie's second-in-command. "*Epic* was the first time that Marvel published something where the creators owned it and the company merely published it for them, and Archie was in charge of *Epic* – oh, and talk about being overbooked! – so, you know, tra-la-la-la-la, 'You get one other editor to help you because we haven't figured out a way to clone you yet,' and that was me." Duffy, who had her own "Bookview" column in *Epic*, would eventually be named managing editor of the anthology mag.

(Jim Starlin would hold Duffy and Archie in high esteem during his time with *Epic Illustrated* and Epic Comics. "She and Archie and I just get along famously," he told David Anthony Kraft (who also lauded her editing skills) in *Comics Interview*. "I don't think I work better with anybody than those two… Archie Goodwin and Jo are really on the top of my list at this point.")

Comparing *Epic* to the color line, Duffy told *Comics Feature*, "Well, on *Epic*, it's a little different because… it's not work for hire. Like on the four-color books, Marvel owns the work that people do. They're doing work *for* Marvel. On *Epic*, we have the right to buy or not buy what people do for us, but it's *their* work. We're just buying the right to print it and, as a result, the editorial control can boil down to a yes or a no. If people want to come to me for editorial input or they want to come to Archie, they're sure to get it, and Archie, in particular, is very good about sitting down with people and going over proposed storylines with them before the fact. But you don't get the same kind of license to kibitz that you would if you were actually buying the work instead of just printing it.

She added that, in comparison to the color books, "With *Epic*, I'm forced to be more objective and to do less meddling. And as a result, what we get is purer. It's more from the creator. And all I'm really doing on *Epic* is doing the proofreading, expediting things for them, seeing that pages are done to the correct dimensions, giving the creators technical advice in terms of how to get a better package for when it's printed… But that leaves Jo [the] writer fresh for when she goes home in the evening to sit down at her own typewriter and get work done or to curl up with a good novel and not feel her brains all burned out."

APPLES AND ORANGES

Of course, the 500-pound elephant in the room was how did *Epic Illustrated* differ from the magazine it was emulating, *Heavy Metal*? Archie touched upon it in a reply to a letter of comment in *Epic* #2: "Inevitably, comparisons between *Epic* and *Heavy Metal* pop up in almost every letter we received on issue one. My personal viewpoint is that one magazine shouldn't necessarily have to 'do in' the other. I know and like the people who work on *Heavy Metal* and respect what they've accomplished. Since Stan and I have our own distinct editorial tastes and points of view, I don't believe the two magazines will ever be so similar that one will cancel the other out. If anything, we each may bring some new readers to the other. After all, if Superman and Spider-Man can co-exist, who are the rest of us not to? Of course, being somewhat competitive souls, if *you* want to feel that *Epic* is better, we're not about to talk you out of it."

Archie dug a bit deeper when asked in *Marvel Age* #15 [June '84] about the differences. "We feature a larger selection of talent from the United States, especially a lot of wonderful creators who've never been published before. We express a different point of view towards our subject. You'll find the art in *Epic* to be more in service of a story, an idea, or a theme. We place the greater emphasis on having the picture say something, and that's what makes *Epic* very much a Marvel magazine."

Marvel Age interviewer Mark Lerer then asked what

Epic logo TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. Self-caricature © the estate of Archie Goodwin. Courtesy of Mark Chiarello.

Archie looked for in a contributor's work: "An editor of an anthology magazine like *Epic Illustrated* appreciates a totality of vision in a creative piece. Let me explain: if I were an editor of, say, *Spider-Man* or one of the regular line of Marvel Comics, the first things I'd look for might be a good grasp of the characters and a solid plot. But *Epic Illustrated* features more traditional type of story and also more 'abstract' kinds of work, pieces that aren't in the form of traditional stories. In an issue of *Epic*, you might find a visual poem, a vignette, a character's sketch, or a more experimental and unorthodox use of the comics medium. You can't always judge such pieces by the traditional criteria. So I really look for what I call a 'totality of vision,' a clear point of view, imaginatively expressed. I look to see if the creator is realizing something unique in an interesting way."

Asked to expand on that, Archie unexpectedly invoked a notorious "Tinseltown tyrant," a person who was pretty much the writer/editor's opposite in so many, many ways: "In general, I use the Harry Cohn system. Harry Cohn was the head producer for Columbia Pictures during the era of the Frank Capra movies. He had the 'seat of the pants' system. He'd look at a new picture or see a budding new talent perform and, if he squirmed in his seat, it was out! If he didn't squirm, chances were that he liked what he saw! You just rely on your intuitive, gut feeling."

Kalish and Howell were informed by Archie how *Epic* differed from the regular comics line: "I think that's another thing that will make *Epic* different from the other Marvel magazines. In Marvel Comics, one of the things you stress is straightforward, clear storytelling, which I think is right for those particular comics. Where we have a 96-page magazine like *Epic*, what I hope to do is get a mix so that it will have some stories that are straightforward, straight on type of storytelling. Others may be wilder in terms of layout and page design. We're looking for a real mix and hopefully each issue I'll be able to get that mix and each issue will have something different, something that will catch people by surprise."

ILLUSTRIOUS RUN

Epic Illustrated had a distinguished six-year run, which ran its course after nearly three dozen issues, each one edited by Archie; most with Jo Duffy. Importantly there was the 14-chaptered *Dreadstar* prequel, "Metamorphosis Odyssey," featured in #1–9; P. Craig Russell's numerous appearances, including tales of Elric of Melniboné; Arthur Suydam's five "Cholly and Flytrap" installments; Thomas and Conrad's four-part "Almuric" adaptation; "Children of the Stars" and much more by Charles Vess; Carl Potts and Dennis O'Neil's six-part "Last of the Dragons"; and so very much more, all behind extraordinary covers by Richard Corben, Neal Adams, Jim Steranko, and the entirety of The Studio, respectively; plus many others – a run Archie and Duffy could be proud of.

Maybe the most prolific *Epic* contributor was Rick Veitch (incidentally the colorist on #1's Silver Surfer story), including eight chapters of "Abraxas and the Earthman." Veitch had sold an eight-page story to Marschall and he was both pleased and surprised to wind up delivering it to Archie.

"Archie and I got along really, really well," he said. "I really love that guy. And everybody did. He was kind of like an antidote to the other guys at Marvel, who were all like young studs and sharp elbows and swinging dicks and stuff, and Archie had this lovable personality that was honorable and was respectful, and with a wicked sense of humor.



He continued, "In those days, you would go up to the offices and pitch a story in person, which could be like terrifying when you're a young person trying to break in and you don't know if what you got is good or not. But he had this great kind of bedside manner where he'd listen to your story, or if you brought it in written, he would stop, and he would read the whole thing right there. If it wasn't something he wanted, he would let you down really easy and he would be really nice about it and wouldn't yell at you. But if it was something he dug, he would lean forward in his chair, and you knew

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BULLPEN BULLETINS

STAN LEE'S OLD JOB...

...for better or worse is in my hands. Yes, I'm the Editor-in-Chief of the entire Marvel Comics line, and I love it! Tomorrow the world!

BUT FIRST, THIS IMPORTANT MESSAGE!

Last month I mentioned (barely) something called EPIC COMICS! I promised to tell you more about them this month. And so...

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE *EPIC COMICS GROUP!*

A lot of our ideas start with a "What if...?" A while back, Archie Goodwin, who's the Editorial Director of *EPIC Illustrated Magazine*, was sitting in a corner of the Bullpen sulking because his Associate Editor, Mary Jo Duffy, is so brilliant and efficient that he's always winding up with too much spare time. As I was walking by, I noticed Al Milgrom pull up a chair beside Archie to console him. Al, as if you didn't know it, is the genius editor of *Marvel Fanfare*, a few other terrific series, and the outrageously successful Marvel Graphic Novel, *The Death of Captain Marvel* (it was only the best-selling trade paperback in the country early this year!). Not being one to miss out on a chance to loom over people, I, too, joined Arch in his corner.

My keen mind instantly deduced the cause of the problem. "Arch," I said in a wise, fatherly tone, "what you need is more work!" Staring into the sludge in the bottom of his coffee cup, Arch slowly, quietly muttered, "What if.. what if we got together some of the best comics creators available..."

"Arch, um... that's our *job*, man! That's what we *always* do!" said Al, looking concerned that Goodwin had finally flipped.

"Let him finish, Al!" said I. "He may be onto something, I hope..."

Still staring into his cup, Archie continued. "We'll get the *best*! The very best! We'll pay them a *lot* of money so they can take their time..." He looked up, wild-eyed, his voice growing louder. He uttered each word as though it were meant to be carved onto stone tablets. "...AND THEN WE'LL LET THEM DO WHATEVER THEY WANT!" He was shouting.

"Shhh!" I said. "You'll wake Hobson!" Mike Hobson, of course, is our Vice-President of Publishing. He doesn't really take afternoon naps in his office, but I started that rumor hoping to keep the noise level down in the Bullpen.

"Don't you *see*?" Goodwin hissed. "We'll *encourage* them to go nuts! All new characters! All new universes! New concepts! *A whole new line of comics!*"

"How's that different from *EPIC Illustrated*... or our Graphic Novels, Arch?" I asked softly, trying not to upset him further. Clearly, he was already raving.

"I'm talking about *comics*! Not short stories! Not limited runs! Not novels or one-shots! I'm talking *comics*!"

"You mean... you're talking about new, ongoing titles, like *The Amazing Spider-Man*?"

"Yes! New series! But *not* like Spider-Man! Different! Weird, even! But just as great!" Arch was shouting at me again. Meanwhile a light seemed to go on in Al's eyes.

"Yeah... *Yeah!*" said Milgrom. "I can see it now! We'll print on good, white paper... in full color!"

"We'll offer great deals to creators!" I added, catching on. "Incentives to make 'em pull out the stops and create! Special contracts, like the Graphic Novels and *EPIC Illustrated* use—that'll bring the superstar talent running!"

"Wait! What'll we *call* this new line?" Al bellowed. The entire Bullpen answered him.

"*THE EPIC COMICS GROUP!*" They were on their feet, cheering.

"Your problem is solved, Arch," I said, smugly. But he was sitting again, hunched over, staring at the sludge. "Hey, what's wrong?" I asked.

"This is a *big* project," he muttered without looking up, "I don't know if I have time to fit it in. I may need another assistant..."

THUS, IT BEGAN!

Something like that, anyway. I'm pleased to announce that the first issue of our first *EPIC COMICS GROUP* series will go on sale in October. It's called *Dreadstar!* It's by Jim Starlin, and it's everything that such a historic premiere issue ought to be. It'll be on sale through stores serviced by our Direct Distributors only. It'll be priced at $1.50 and a steal at that price. I confidently predict that its value as a collector's item will quickly soar.

If you don't live near a collector's store or another outlet serviced by a Direct Distributor, I'd suggest that you avail yourself of the special subscription offer below. That way you can be sure to get *every* issue!

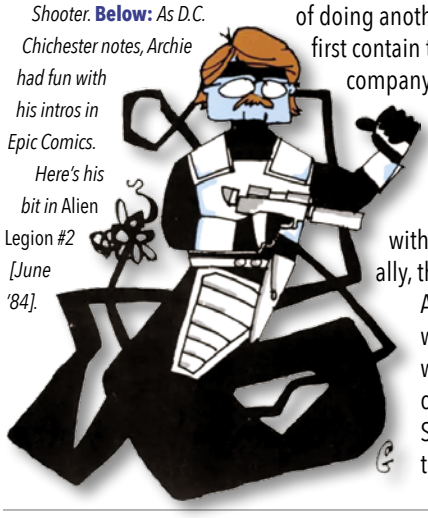
STAN LEE'S NEW JOB...

...the one glommed onto a couple of years back, as V.P. of Creative Affairs, which entails being creative boss, big deal producer and high-cosmic muckamuck for Marvel's film studio, *Marvel Productions*, is keeping him *very* busy. Why so, you say? Well, I've managed to talk Stan *himself* into explaining what's up in Hollywood in a special Stan's Soapbox appearing on this page next month! That's quite a feat, considering how busy he is with the *four* new shows and... oops! Almost stole his Hollywood Mogul-ship's lines! I'd better cool it...

...Till Next Month!

Stan

Above: *The November 1982 issues of the Marvel Comics line included this irreverent account of how the Epic Comics imprint came to be (or, more rightly, how Archie scored the editor's position) as seen by Jim Shooter.* **Below:** *As D.C. Chichester notes, Archie had fun with his intros in Epic Comics. Here's his bit in* Alien Legion *#2 [June '84].*



you got it right there, because he was seeing something in it. Not only did he like it, but he knew how to fix it and make it better." Plus, Veitch added, "He had this really uncanny ability to zero in a single panel or a single word balloon and really pull out what you were trying to get and make it really work as a short story.

"A lot of [creators] refused to work with Marvel over the Jack Kirby artwork deal," Veitch referred to Marvel's refusal to return all of Kirby's original art. "[But] they would work for Archie at Epic. The story I did with Alan Moore for *Epic*: Alan was completely ripped at Marvel over a whole bunch of stuff, but partially because of the original art thing with Jack, but he said, 'No, it's Archie.' So that's how that's how cool Archie was."

THE EPIC COMICS LINE

Things were changing by 1982: the direct market was in full swing and nascent publishers were given a new means of distributing their offerings, and to fill those pages, they attracted writers and artists eager to retain rights to their work. The new outfits were also willing to let the creators go beyond the super-hero genre. Where the 1970s saw creator ownership as a dream for many, this new decade brought the promise of it as a reality, and Epic Comics, born of *Epic Illustrated*, was Marvel's answer to this brave new world.

Les Daniels asked Archie what led to the Epic Comics line that year. "What we found was some of the people – and most specifically Jim Starlin – Jim was very keen on doing more with some of the characters he had done for *Epic Illustrated*. And, I think, at the same time, Walt Simonson had something he was interested in doing, and Frank Miller had a project he was interested in doing. And they all wanted to keep creative ownership. And I think they had some discussion with Jim [Shooter] about the possibility of doing another magazine like *Epic Illustrated* that would first contain the three projects they all wanted to do. The company, I guess, went through a sort of undecided period about it, about if they wanted to get that heavily involved with this so that I think Frank eventually went to DC [with *Ronin*]…

"Walt just kept playing around with that, with what he wanted to do, and I think, eventually, that became *Starslammers*, the graphic novel. And Starlin had Dreadstar that he very much wanted to do and was willing to keep working with [Shooter]. And Mike Hobson had just come aboard as publisher. And so Starlin and Shooter – and Hobson, actually – I think the three of them sort of working together came up with a creator's contract. And out of that came *Dreadstar*, which was the first Epic Comic.

"One day I was sitting working on *Epic Illustrated* and Jim Shooter came in and said, 'What do you think about the idea of Epic Comics?' And I said, 'Oh, boy.' Because I could see immediately a lot of work. Well, Jim interpreted that as a no. I don't want to be involved with anything. And so he then went to Al Milgrom about the idea of doing *Dreadstar* as the first Epic Comic.

"And as I saw him getting started on this, I went to Jim and said, 'Hey, look, I'm doing *Epic Illustrated*. I would like to continue with the Epic Comics. I know it'll be a lot of work, but don't interpret that as meaning I don't want to do it.' So Jim then went to Al Milgrom and said, 'Look, Archie's decided he does want to do this. Do you mind stepping aside?' And Al very graciously did step aside. So once Starlin decided to do *Dreadstar*, then Steve Englehart and Steve Gerber bought over *Coyote* and *Void Indigo*. And then, once word got out, a lot of people started bringing us things and it became a matter of picking and choosing."

With some 40 titles and over 250 separate issues carrying the Epic Comics imprint, it's impossible to give adequate space to the entire line, but some demand to be mentioned. First and foremost, there's the matter of Archie's faves:

Daniels asked the Epic editor what his favorite titles were from the line. "Well, it's a little like being asked to choose your favorite child. My answer is that it always depends on which child and how it behaves on a given day. But, I guess, *Moonshadow* [12 issues, Mar. '85–Feb. '87], I think, is artistically one of the best things that came out of Epic. To me, it sort of seemed like a smaller independent probably couldn't have afforded to do *Moonshadow* because of the expense. The full camera separations and all of that. I thought it was wonderful that Marvel was willing to take a gamble on this. And I thought [writer J.M.] DeMatteis and [artist] J.J. [Muth] did a wonderful job. And in many ways, I sort of feel like that was one of the things about Epic, was they found kind of a successful way to do painted comics. (I don't think all comics have to be painted and I don't think comics have to be painted to be an artistic success, but I think it's always wonderful if you can expand the range of the medium you're working in.)"

Asked what made *Moonshadow* successful, Archie replied, "I think to make them work both as comics and as paintings. The stuff we experimented with in *Epic illustrated,* sometimes they were failed experiments. Sometimes you could do a painted comic and it doesn't add anything. If anything, it can kill the storytelling. I think given the right subject matter and the right artistic talent, it's another way."

Archie then pointed out *Elektra: Assassin* [eight issues, Aug. '86–Mar. '87] was both an achievement sales-wise and creatively for Epic. "Certainly, *Elektra*: Assassin is probably – prior to the *Havok & Wolverine* series – one of our biggest financial successes. I think it freed up both [writer] Frank [Miller] and [artist] Bill [Sienkiewicz] to do things that, working separately, they had never done. Again, I think it made the case for a valid way of working.

"And I really like the *Stray Toasters* [four issues, '88]… a good middle range success. It sold reasonably well, particularly considering it was packaged as a more expensive

Bullpen Bulletins © Marvel Characters, Inc. *Alien Legion* TM & © Carl Potts.

book… Again, that was one of the nice things about Epic: there would be ways to make the packaging work for the subject matter. If you package the book right so that it's a little more expensive and a package to look worth the expense, you then don't have to sell *X-Men* numbers in order to have a successful book. And I think that's one of the great things about Epic and about a lot of the independent comics, too. Finding ways to do material that isn't necessarily totally mainstream. I have nothing against mainstream material. I just don't think it should be the *only* material."

So was Wolverine & Havok – Meltdown [*four issues, Nov. '88–Feb. '89*] *the most financially successful Epic title?* Daniels asked. "Oh yeah, no question." Daniels then opined, "Sad that a fancier version of mainstream comics sold best, in a way." The editor replied, "Yeah, well, absolutely, sure. There's much bigger audience for *X-Men* characters than one might be for *Moonshadow*. But the nice thing is you do a book like *Havok & Wolverine* and the next time Kent Williams or Muth do a project, they bring some of the people who had never seen their work until they did *Havok & Wolverine* – they bring them to the next project."

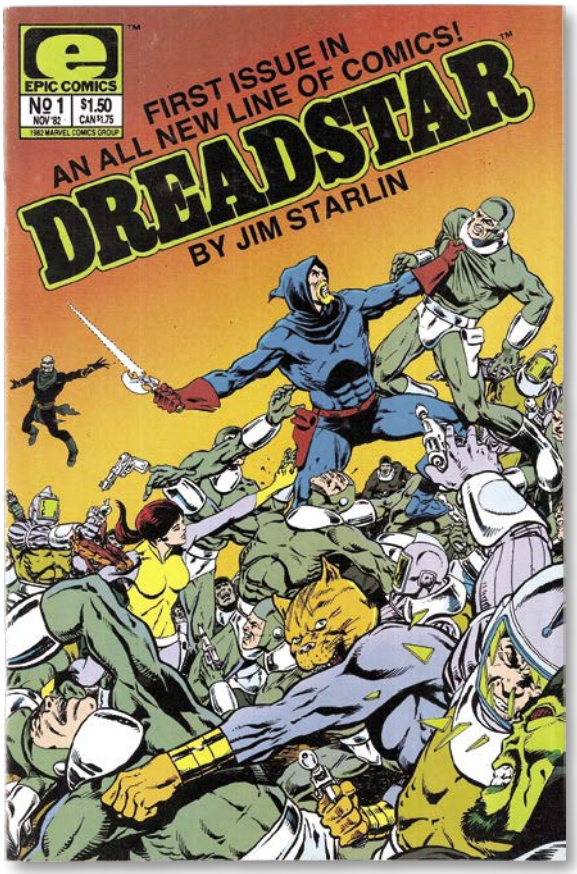
LOOK WHO WANDERED IN…

Among the finest Epic titles was the consistently excellent *Groo the Wanderer* by *MAD*'s "Marginal" cartoonist, Sergio Aragonés, and Mark Evanier, which lasted for an eye-popping 120 issues at the House of Ideas. Curiously, while commonly believed it was Archie who enticed the artist and writer to go Epic after Pacific Comics' demise, it was actually the aforementioned *Comics Feature* interviewer (and, by '83, recent Marvel hire) Carol Kalish who, at Evanier's suggestion, helped bring the *Wanderer* over to Marvel. Evanier has written, "I don't want to suggest that Archie Goodwin had nothing to do with it. Archie was a guy we and everyone trusted and he had a lot to do with making us feel welcome, as did Jim Shooter, who was then editor-in-chief (I think that was his title) back then. But Carol deserves the most credit for engineering that peaceful transfer of power."

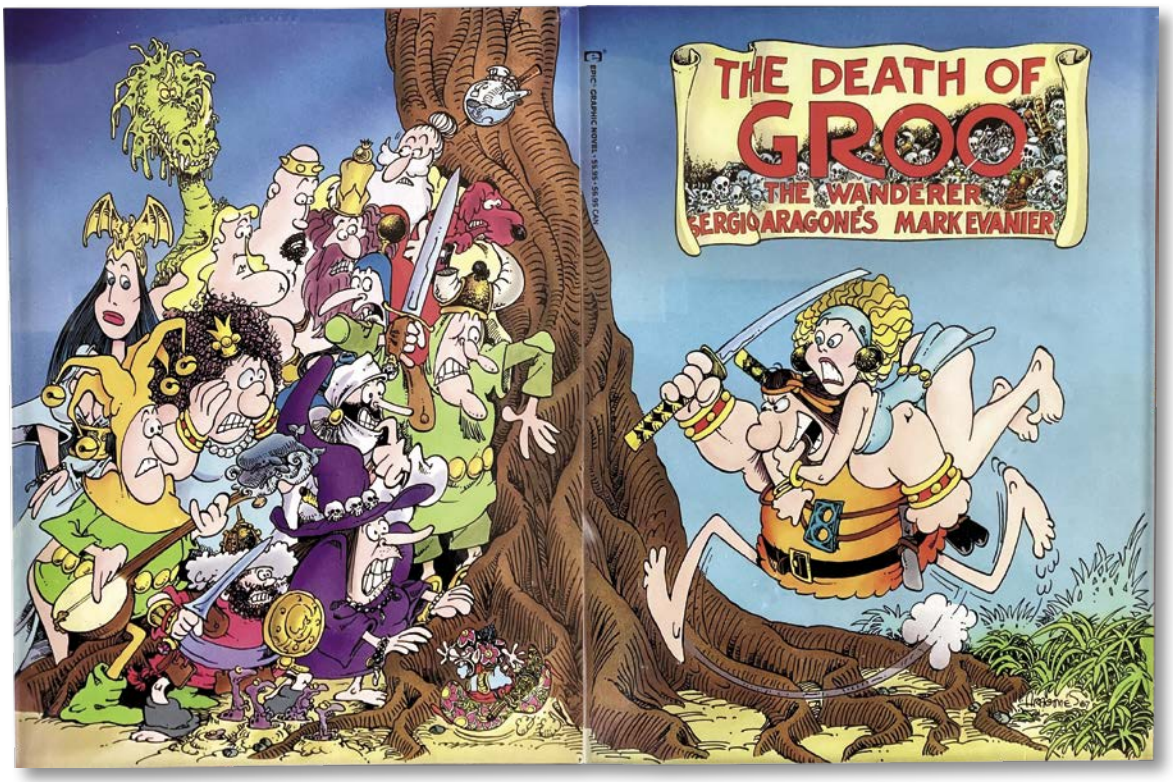
With a laugh, Archie gushed to Daniels: "It's incredible! What a concept ! It's amazing they've been able to keep [*Groo*] funny." Evanier shared, "Archie once told me he never read an issue of *Groo* until it was on its way to the printer or perhaps already printed. When you serve your stint as editor of *Groo*… just do what Archie did."

Regarding his Epic Comics series, *Six from Sirius* [eight issues, 1984–86], artist Paul Gulacy told Greg Biga, "I recall getting contacted by Archie Goodwin wondering if I would be interested in coming up with something for their new Epic line of comics with writer Doug Moench. The way we came up with *Six from Sirius* was standard procedure: either he contacts me or I give him a call and it goes like this, 'What do you wanna do?' 'I don't know, what do you wanna do?' Out I throw something at him. He fires back something awesome. And, before you know it, we're dialed in, and off to the races. Same thing with *Master of Kung Fu*. That's how we did it. *Six from Sirius* was no exception. Plus, we owned everything. This was a new plateau. Owning characters under the Marvel banner was a twist, for sure."

Referring to the first mini-series, writer Doug Moench said, "So, when [Gulacy] got the *Six from Sirius* offer from Archie… there was no deadline, 'take as long as you need to do it.' It was a finite thing. I think it was only four issues. It had a beginning, middle, and end. When you got to the end, that was it. It was a job that could be completed without worrying about having to meet a deadline. He could take as long as you want to do it."



Above: *The very first Epic Comics release was Jim Starlin's* Dreadstar, *itself a spin-off of his "Metamorphosis: Odyssey" serial in* Epic Illustrated.
Below: *Wraparound cover art for* The Death of Groo *['87] by Sergio Aragonés and Mark Evanier.*

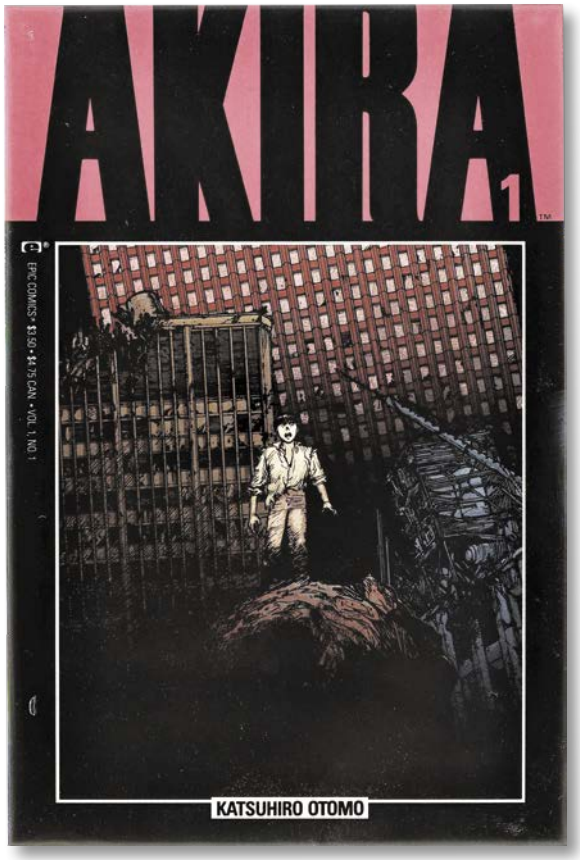


Dreadstar TM & © Jim Starlin. *The Death of Groo* TM & © Sergio Aragonés.



Above: *Writer Doug Moench and artist Paul Gulacy produced two mini-series featuring Six from Sirius. This poster promoted the second arc.*

Below: *The most ambitious – and likely most important – Epic Comics series was the 38-volume English translation of* Akira *by Katsuhiro Otomo produced between '88–'95.*



ARCHIEGRAMS

Writer Peter David gave as good a physical description of the man as any in his *Comics Buyer's Guide* remembrance: "For those of you who never met him (which I assume to be most of you), he was of moderate height, with sandy brown hair, glasses and an ever-present moustache. He had an amazing, ubiquitous self-portrait caricature that he rendered for a variety of purposes, and what was most impressive about it was how, with a few simple lines, he was able to capture himself. Simple, clean lines that portrayed a whimsical attitude. That was Archie.

"The thing that was the most memorable about him, and which you never forgot if you heard it, was his voice. Very soft-spoken, with an air of perpetual amusement about him, a voice that sounded faintly twangy and just a bit reedy, and he always paused a moment just before speaking as if making sure that he was going to choose just the right words.

"He was part of what is easily a dying breed in this industry: a gentleman. He seemed to genuinely enjoy what he was doing at all times, even when he was overworked. At those times when his workload or deadlines made him impatient, he was even impatient in a polite manner, as if he regretted that he had to give you short shrift over something even as he was doing it. He reminded you of your favorite high school English teacher."

Archie told Ringgenberg, "The thing I really like about Epic is that it isn't really one thing. It's constant variety. We may run one continuity thing for a long time, but we can also fill out the issue with a number of other things, and although it's got to be either fantasy or science fiction, that is such a broad loop that I don't really feel like it's doing the same material over and over again."

A memorable Epic Comics feature was the "Archiegrams," editorials with a humorous self-caricature, the editor's cartoonish avatar. "When we started doing the Epic Comics, it seemed like sort of a natural way of identifying the Epic Comics by the Archie Goodwin editorials," Archie revealed to Zimmerman. "Mostly, my concerns are the lofty picking and choosing of the projects. But to maintain an editorial identity for Epic and to give me a little work to do I keep on doing the Archie Goodwin editorial drawings. That way I don't feel totally worthless after I've picked a project."

"Archie was the mascot of Epic, right?" Chichester said, crediting the Archiegrams as the line's inadvertent branding. "You know, that's the reason anybody wanted to work with Epic, was to work with Archie Goodwin, not to work with me, Margaret Clark, or even Jo Duffy (to some extent). He was the magnet and he was the draw.

"It was just Archie being the Epic character that people could associate with, and then he could comment on the books, and be that voice of it. Sometimes those art tutorials were self-effacing, about 'Look, I'm late on my deadlines again,' or 'Where do I get my ideas from?' But, sometimes, they were just really fun introductions to the book. Rather than having to dive deep into what *Alien Legion* was, you had Archie as Sarigar, with a little snake tail or something like that, easing you into that world in a fun way that maybe broadened your sense of what comics were. There was that sense of 'a comic has to be this.'"

Archie is dressed in a suit of armor and a snake costume in this *Alien Legion* #2 plug for Epic's other title, *Dreadstar*. The joke: "In the interest of showing what tolerant good sports we Marvel editors can be, I usually appear in some silly, story-related costume to provide a cheap laugh. Fortunately, Carl Potts and Laurie Sutton (see the masthead) have assured me that Alien Legion will take a much more dignified editorial approach. Unfortunately, they didn't tell me that until after the zipper stuck on this @#*!!*# leotard!"

There was an honesty about the Archiegrams that were balanced with his own self-deprecation: he was a cartoon avatar who would never talk down to the audience. For the third issue of Cary Bates and Keith Giffen's *Video Jack*, Archie (looking grown up in a purple turtleneck sweater) introduces himself while untangling himself from absurdly long shoe laces: "Hello, boys and girls. Welcome to Uncle Archie's Place. Today my place looks like an Epic comic editorial, doesn't it? Can you say editorial, boys and girls? Well, it looks that way because we're about to visit an Epic comic called *Video Jack*. It's all about a young man who can move in alternate realities based on television shows. Can you say alternate reality? You know, some boys and girls have noticed we're late. That's because *Video Jack*'s creators, Mr. Cary Bates and Mr. Keith Giffen had some deadline problems. Can you say deadline, boys and girls? Due to circumstances beyond their control, Cary and Keith claimed, they needed more time to finish this issue for our visit. Uncle Archie finally told them: 'You've had enough time, Mr. Comic Creators. As soon as I finish being a proper role model by showing the boys and girls how I tie my shoes… We're going in.'"

Archie achieves much in this one paragraph: He establishes satire in line with the book itself by parodying *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*; he describes the premise of the book for new readers; the creators are introduced, along-

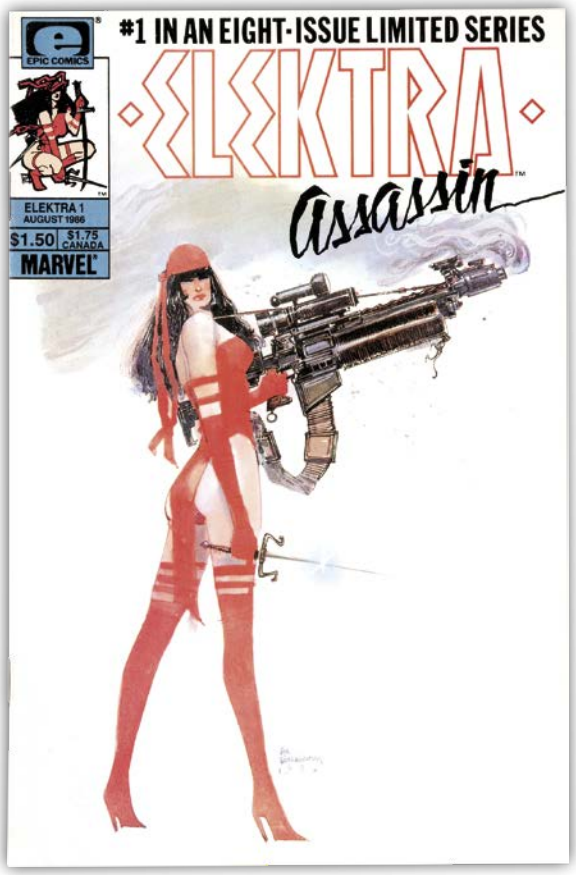
Six from Sirius 2 TM & ©Doug Moench & Paul Gulacy. *Akira* TM & © Kodansha Ltd.

side a good-natured ribbing for the delay; and he cements himself as the "boss" in a way that hilariously contradicts his position as a Mr. Rogers type.

OFFICE ENCOUNTERS

Even though Epic Comics was its own separate part of Marvel editorial, it didn't stop Archie from engaging with the rest of the bullpen, either through counsel or humor. In the case of Christopher Priest, even a young intern felt seen by the senior editor.

"Marvel was in those days, a very small office, which means you pass the same people 10, maybe 15, times a day, so Archie had, like, some clever line for all 10 or 15 times that I would pass him in the hallway," Priest recalled. "It was always a fresh Archie Goodwin quip. So I was really impressed by that. I was 17, you know…"



Annie Nocenti, who began as Shooter's assistant in 1982 and soon rose the editorial ranks, revealed, "Marvel back then was like you were in an incubator, and nobody officially taught you anything. You were just expected to keep your eyes open and learn, so you had the resources all right there in the bullpen for everything.

"Archie was the guy that, if you had a problem with plot mechanics, you'd go to Archie's office and talk to him for a while, and he's incredibly generous and witty. If you had a story that was a caper, and suddenly you realize that you'd painted yourself into a corner, or your writer had, (because I was an editor-writer), and you couldn't think of a clever way that wasn't stupid and obvious to get out of the corner, like, punching through a wall. And Archie was the master of plot mechanics."

Archie even dispensed his knowledge to Marvel employees who were not full-fledged editorial. He took assistant Greg Wright under his wing and exposed him to the inner workings of a great comic book story. "I got to go to plot conferences and everything, so my opinion was always listened to, whether that he'd ever utilized it or not, it's a whole other thing," Wright said. "He was very generous in allowing me in on the process when I wasn't anybody, you know? I couldn't tell the difference between letterers or inkers or anything, and he spent the time, when he had the time, showing me and teaching me and explaining what worked here and what didn't work there. He was incredibly generous creatively. If you wanted to spitball story ideas, he was very generous: he'd just give you ideas, let you know what it was without any quid pro quo."

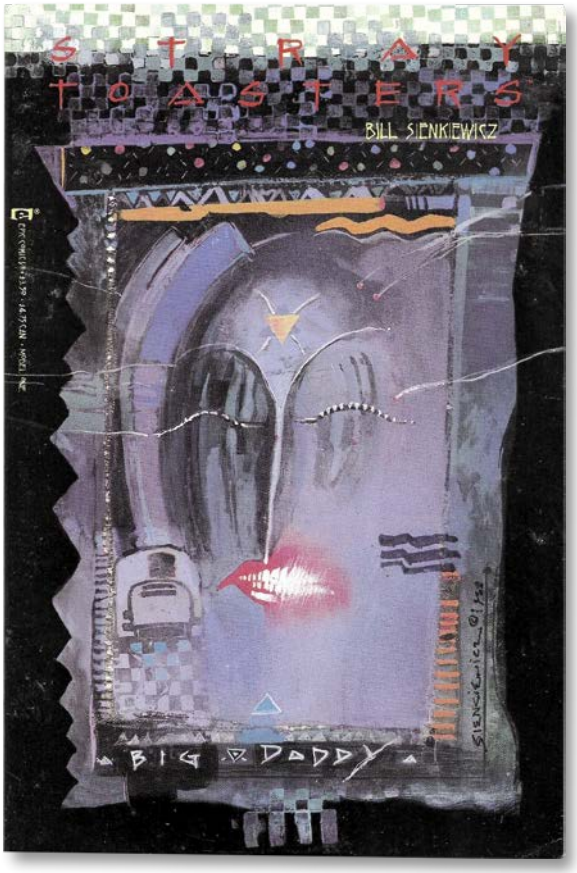


Above: *Pressed by interviewer Les Daniels to name his favorite Epic Comics series, Archie chose* Moonshadow *by J.M. DeMatteis and Jon J. Muth, a 12-issue run published in '85–'87.* **Inset left:** *Another visually spectacular Epic series was* Elektra: Assassin *[eight issues, '86–'87] by Frank Miller and Bill Sienkiewicz.* **Below:** *Sienkiewicz was both writer and artist on his wild four-issue Epic series,* Stray Toasters *['88], ostensibly a murder mystery, but also a chance for the artist to indulge in his outlandish approaches to comic art.*

Mark Chiarello, fated to become DC editor/art director, was just out of Pratt Institute when his friends urged him to look for work at Marvel. He told Cooke, "Kent [Williams] and George [Pratt] starting doing a lot of comic book work. Of all the people I went to college with, I was the big comic book fan. Kent and George would say, 'Man, you should try to get a job at Marvel in editorial.' Kent had become friends with Archie and Jo Duffy at Epic because he was doing work for them, so he introduced me. There was an opening, I interviewed with Carl Potts as his assistant. Carl decided not to hire me, but Archie was walking down the hall and said, 'I'll hire ya! I need somebody.' So I ended up becoming Archie's assistant."

Chiarello mused, "You know, after someone dies, you hear these wonderful tales about how much of a genius this guy was or how phenomenally funny so-and-so was. Archie is the only guy who that's all true about. He was the most honest, perceptive and remarkable person I've ever met. He was also the funniest freakin' guy in the galaxy. Everything good you hear or read about Archie Goodwin is true."

He added, "He was the weirdest mixture of a super-intelligent guy who was a complete nerd, who also happened to have this great sense of humor, was one of the great writers – one of the



Moonshadow TM & © J.M. DeMatteis & Jon J. Muth. *Elektra: Assassin* TM & ©Marvel Characters, Inc. *Stray Toasters* TM & ©Bill Sienkiewicz.



This page: *Unfortunately, due to space limitations, we weren't able to give focus to two aspects to Archie's Epic era Marvel work, the eight-title New Universe (poster above, John Romita, Jr., and "Shadowline Saga," "mature super-heroes" created by Archie (poster below, Bill Sienkiewicz).*

top three – in comics history. Archie was also the best editor ever in comics, bar none. The underlying thing was, he loved comic books. The man really, really loved comic books."

No slouch himself when it comes to great editors in the field, Chiarello shared a lesson he learned from his mentor. "Everything I know about editing came directly from Archie. I saw the way he treated freelancers and, more importantly, for someone like me who just wants to be liked, I saw how much his freelancers loved him. I saw his relationship with Al Williamson, Walt Simonson, and all these guys, and the advice Archie gave to me was, 'Editing's easy. Hire the best people you can possibly get and just let them do what they do.' Don't tell Mike Kaluta how to draw a hand, don't tell Wally Wood how to spot blacks, because you're just getting in their way. Let them do what they do best. That lesson has really served me quite well."

HAH-HAH FUNNY?

Chiarello told this writer, "Archie was the funniest guy I've ever met. He was so witty, it was amazing. He had such a high IQ, he was such a smart guy, and his presentation always reminded me (and I'm sure people have said this) of Bob Newhart: that dry, stuttering, self-effacing [delivery]. Archie was so funny."

Perhaps his humor was used as a way to not only defuse situations, but it seems like that part of Archie served to make him less intimidating as a veteran creator – almost as if, while he took the work and craft seriously, he never took things too seriously.

"He would do these scary pratfalls," Wright remembered. "He'd be walking down the hall, and then he'd pretend that you tripped him or something, and he would fall like he was gonna be killed, but he was fine. I don't know how he did them, and he always scared the hell out of everybody. Nobody could figure it out how he did it, and he was always very funny. If he was coming at you with a joke, you had to be real careful, because he could get you if he wanted to. He was never mean [about it], but he was a funny guy."

To Larry Hama, it was a sophisticated humor that went over others' heads – and that might have sometimes been the point. "When you say he was hilarious, he wasn't: we're not talking about side-splitting, rolling on the floor. We're talking about a murderous dry wit. Sometimes his victims wouldn't even realize they had been barbed until an hour later and they'd go 'What did he say?' Or they would never even realize it. I've seen dozens of people literally put in their place and had no idea they were put in their place. He could do that."

Veitch offered, "Part of it was self-deprecating, but also another part of it was just, like, so right on in terms of how he could skewer you or somebody with a word or two. He would just leave you gasping sometimes with his humor," Rick Veitch noted. Beyond using humor as a bonding strategy, Archie also used it as a form of protest, as the Marvel staffers saw in response to corporate overreach.

Mike Carlin, who had worked at Marvel before jumping to DC, recalled, "There was one point at Marvel where they sent around a memo, because they were mad that people were coming in around 10 or 11 o'clock every day… Anyway, they sent around this memo and they said, 'Everyone has to be here at 9 o'clock, no matter what.'

"The next day, everybody came in early, and Archie came in [wearing] a nightgown with a nightcap and it was the funniest thing I ever saw. It was a protest, because it's, like, we aren't kids (even though we are kids). It's just, like, 'We're getting the stuff done. This is the creative community you're bought into. You call it a bullpen, so we're gonna act like bulls, if you don't mind.'"



New Universe, Shadowline, Epic Comics TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

EPIC ENDING

Epic Illustrated folded in late 1985 (with a February 1986 cover date). The final issue featured the ninth part of John Byrne and Terry Austin's "The Last Galactus Story," alongside stories by Sienkiewicz, Starlin, Bernie Wrightson, Alan Moore and Veitch, and a short story by both Archie and his friend and regular collaborator Al Williamson. Archie's final editorial, printed in sans serif against magenta, is both somber and straight to the point: lowering sales would mean the magazine's survival would result in alternatives like "decreasing frequency of publication, cutting the page count or paper quality, raising the price, etc. – would only lessen a product of which we're quite proud. We prefer to bring *Epic* to a close while it's still the same magazine that we know and love."

Archie made sure to thank Lee, Shooter, Hobson, and then managing editor Jo Duffy who, in general, made "the gentleman whose name appears at the end of this column look far better than he would if left to his own devices."

An ad appeared in a striking red text box announcing an Epic Special concluding the "Last Galactus Story" would arrive. It never did, and the story remains unfinished. *Epic Illustrated* paved the way for Marvel to produce an entire line of creator-owned comics, but also pushed the boundaries of production – embracing high-quality paper and giving a regular home to fully painted comic stories. The change in a distribution model, with the newsstand shrinking and direct market growing, may have contributed to its downfall.

"Well, [*Epic Illustrated*] kind of hit at the wrong time, I think, because newsstand distribution was going out," Veitch reflected. "And it was designed as an expensive newsstand, full-color magazine, sort of based on the success *Heavy Metal* had in finding that adult audience – which, up to then, hadn't really [comprehended] in the mainstream industry. They really thought that they were selling to 12-year-olds, maybe 15-year-olds. So it was hard to get mature ideas in there. You had to fight, fight, fight to get the slightest little mature thought in there, because everyone assumed that you were writing for a 12-year-old.

"*Heavy Metal* changed that equation, and Marvel, to their credit, went, 'Okay, there's people out there who want to read more adult-themed comics that are not quite underground. We're not going to be like R. Crumb and S. Clay Wilson, but stuff that an adult would really like to read." And so I fell into that. But [*Epic*] kind of ran out of gas in terms of distribution toward the end. The direct sales market was ramping up, and it was a whole new way of selling and creating comics, and I think that's why they switched over to the Epic Comics line."

Dreadstar ended its Epic run with the 26th issue, on stands in June, 1986 and found a new home with First Comics, in Chicago. Starlin minced no words, telling *Amazing Heroes* the issue stemmed from Marvel not paying him on time, and that he suspected Marvel corporate was cooling on the concept of creator-owned. Starlin was emphatic about his support for editorial, though:

"I got along famously with Jo Duffy and Archie [Goodwin]. I had no complaints there, In fact, Archie is really the only person up there who went out on a limb at all trying to correct the situation with my checks. He was a doll about the whole thing, he and Jo both. But they had no control over bookkeeping, so nothing could be done about it."

Despite the loss of Dreadstar and Epic Illustrated, Epic Comics continued to obtain name creators and titles, publishing Wendy and Richard Pini's *Elfquest*, a collection of work by French genius Moebius, and getting Frank Miller to return to his *Daredevil* star creation with *Elektra: Assassin,* with art by Bill Seinkiewicz. The latter would later follow up with his 1988 multimedia masterpiece, *Stray Toasters*.

"It was excellent to watch him work with people like Frank Miller and watching Frank Miller come in begging for feedback on *Elektra: Assassin*," Wright said. "He didn't need to get any feedback on that. When Archie would talk, it's like, 'When E.F. Hutton talks [people listen].' If Archie was talking about something, people were really listening. It didn't matter who it was."

DEPARTURES

Jim Shooter was fired from Marvel on April 15, 1987. Reasons vary, but the company vice president was out, and the status of Epic Comics as an island unto itself was destined to transform. "After Jim Shooter was fired, they did a lot of changing at Marvel," Wright said. "Jim Shooter was actually an executive, so he had a lot of power, and they didn't want that to happen, so they didn't give Tom DeFalco the power that Jim Shooter had, and they kind of took away Archie's power of deciding when projects would become projects that would be published."

Shooter had evidently let Archie focus on Epic, away from the politics that had plagued Archie's tenure as editor-in-chief. But that all went away with Shooter's departure, replaced by a company restructuring that would splinter Epic's autonomy. "Jim was sort of sheltering Archie from what was going on and putting a shield over him so the guys upstairs couldn't really come after him," Macchio elaborated. "But, if I recall correctly, was when [new Marvel editor-in-chief] Tom DeFalco came in, that Archie was not

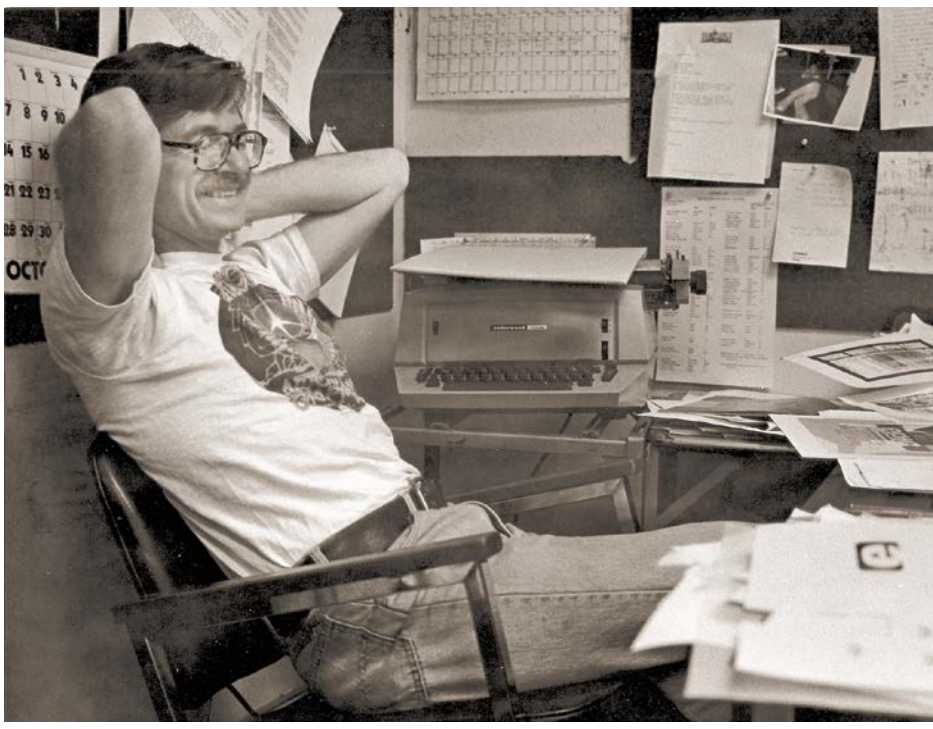


Above: *This button, featuring a self-caricature of the man, was distributed to folks attending the Archie Goodwin Memorial, hosted by DC Comics after his untimely demise.*

SOURCES

Unattributed quotes are derived, with a few exceptions, from interviews conducted by Christopher Irving and the publications where we derive quotes include *Epic Illustrated, The Comics Journal, Comics Interview, Comics Buyer's Guide, Comics Feature, Fantasy Advertiser, Comic Book Profiles, Marvel Age, The Warren Companion, The Comic Book Heroes,* Fantagraphics' *Blazing Combat* collection, *Manhunter Deluxe Edition,* numerous issues of *Back Issue, Comic Book Artist,* and *Comic Book Creator*, and various newspapers, among others. – **C.I. & Ye Ed.**

Below: *Archie kicking back in his Epic Comics office, date unknown.*

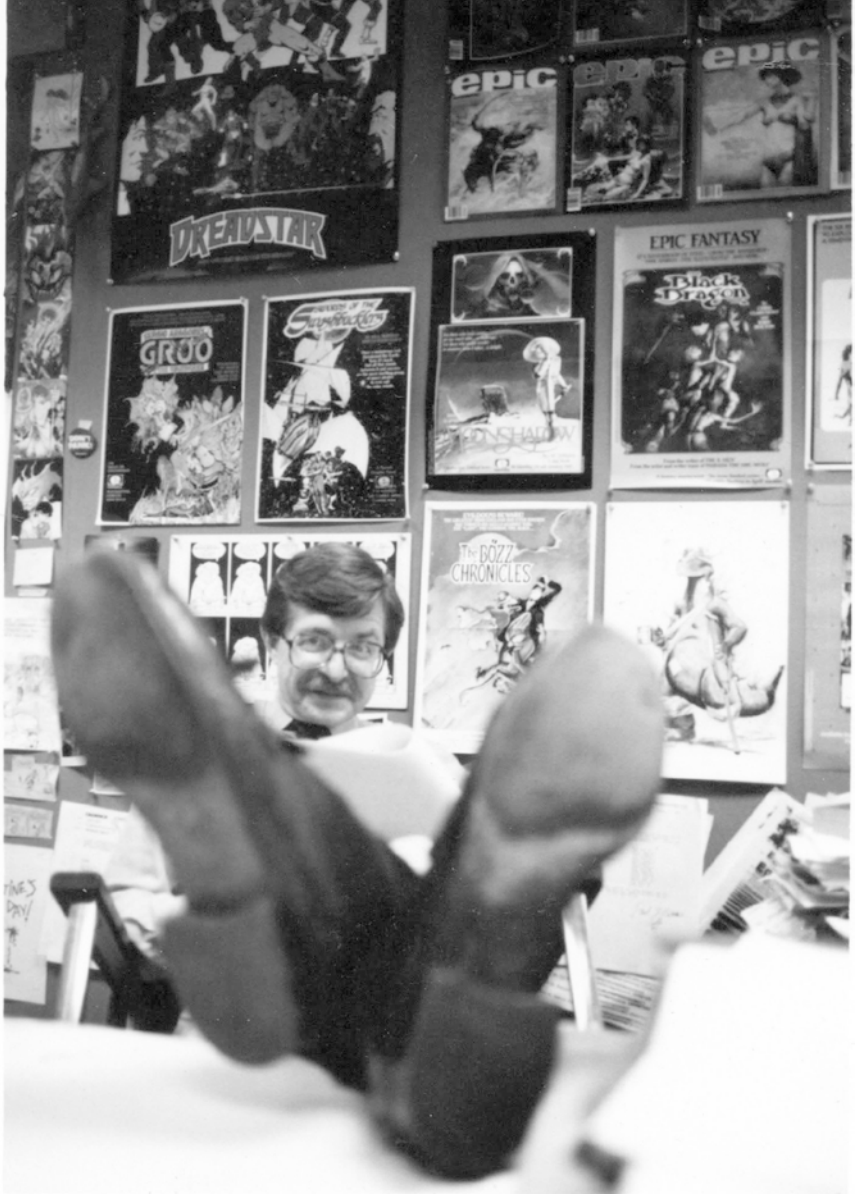


Button art © the estate of Archie Goodwin.

as sheltered anymore, and Tom was giving Archie the word on things [and] he was going to have to toe the line a little bit more. And I think that's when Archie said, 'You know, I think I'm going to get while the getting is good.'"

Overall, Archie Goodwin remained at Marvel, on staff and off, for about 15 years, his longest stretch at any publisher, but in mid-April 1989, with the company newly purchased by Ron Perelman's Andrews Group, he tended his resignation as Epic Comics editor-in-chief, almost two years to the day after Shooter's departure. Chichester said, "Once Archie left, you felt the vacuum, and the lack of his presence," "I was there a little bit after he left, and then that sense of him not being there, and everything just feeling like it was kind of ordinary. It ultimately got to the point where I decided to go freelance."

Chichester, Margaret Clark, and Steve Buccellato arranged a "dim sum blow-out," at a local restaurant, capping Archie's tenure with a send-off by his Marvel people.



Not long after he left Marvel, Les Daniels politely asked him why he quit. "The company, I think, was pretty unhappy with our lateness records at Epic and nervous about – they had just been taken over by yet another new owner and nervous about the idea that we would continue to project having a certain number of titles out at a certain time and base budgets on that. And then, if you fail to deliver on that, it troubles the corporation. And I think each time you're taken over by a new corporation, the crunch to perform even better is really upon you. So I think they had the feeling that, to one extent or another, Epic was kind of a loose cannon and the idea was to reorganize it so that we'd be a little more integrated into the Marvel system and consequently a little bit more under Marvel's production control.

"So it could continue doing, more or less, the same things, but be able to produce on a better basis. My feeling was, initially, when we talked about what we would do and how it would work that, I thought, 'Well, this is something I can live with.' As we got a little further into it, I felt like it became much harder to get the quality and commitment to quality we got from that I thought was necessary…

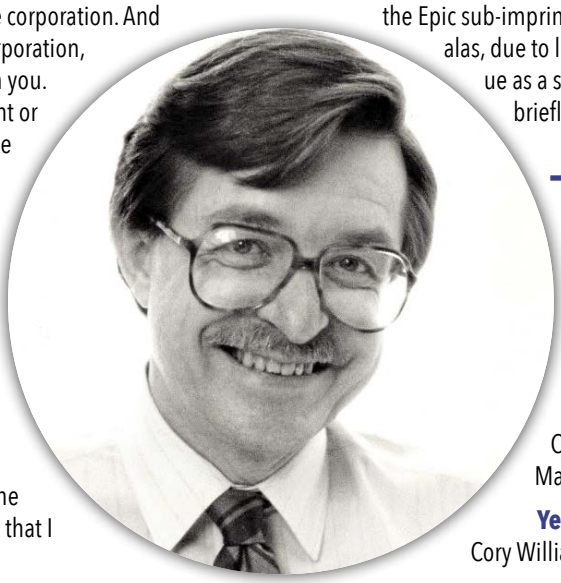
"And, as we got further into the situation, I wasn't as comfortable with about them along those terms. At the same time, I was getting calls from DC. 'Well, if you're unhappy, why don't you come over here?' And I figured I'm going to have to stay at Marvel and fight battles that I feel like I've [already] fought. So it seemed easier just to go, if I'm gonna go to do a new situation anyway, to do a totally new situation…

"Well, there seems to still be a lot of people in business who feel like [fighting], but it's never particularly been my style. Again, Marvel was doing whatever decisions it did without [me]. It's business and it's not personal."

Archie added, "I got into comics because the last thing I ever wanted to be was a salesman or an administrator and yet, as the business has grown, I found that more and more, I get thrust into situations where I do end up doing those things. Possibly not doing them well, but…"

Archie Goodwin only took 11 days off between leaving Marvel and returning to DC Comics, where he was to compose another magnificent chapter – albeit, sadly, the man's last – in his remarkably creative comic-book life. Any retrospective of his years between 1989–98 will have to wait for another issue – a feature to also include a recounting of Archie's work, during his tenure at the House of Ideas, on the Marvel sub-imprint, New Universe, and the Epic sub-imprint, Shadowline, both neglected here (omitted, alas, due to lack of space). Epic Comics would continue as a sub-imprint until the mid-'90s (though briefly revived in 2003).

fin



Thanks to these people for help regarding this essay: Mike Carlin, Howard Chaykin, Larry Hama, Dan Jurgens, Chuck Kim, Paul Kirchner, Jeph Loeb, Christopher Priest, Jim Spivey, Rick Veitch, and Greg Wright

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Ye Ed extends thanks to: Victor Williamson, Cory Williamson, and Sandy Plunkett

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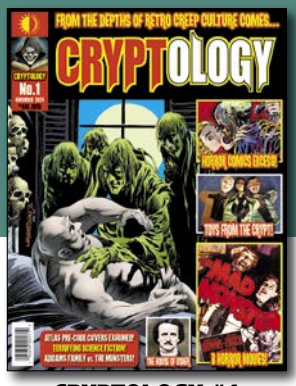


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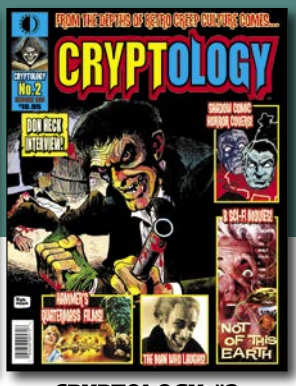
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CRYPTOLOGY #7

VAMPIRES! The career of **BELA LUGOSI**, Universal's classic *Dracula's Daughter*, view *Blood of Dracula's Castle*, **MARV WOLFMAN** discusses his *Tomb of Dracula* comic (with art from **GENE COLAN, TOM PALMER** and **GIL KANE**), plus the roots of comic book vampires, Underworld's **KATE BECKINSALE**, vampire toys, Hammer's legion of the undead, and *The Return of Dracula* and *Grave of the Vampire*!

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CRYPTOLOGY #8

See what **BELA LUGOSI, BORIS KARLOFF**, and their ilk were up to when they weren't in our favorite horror movies! Plus, Ghastly **GRAHAM INGELS'** gruesome artwork, meet **ROBERT BLOCH**'s real-life inspiration for *Psycho*'s Norman Bates, *Psycho II* scriptwriter and *Fright Night* director **TOM HOLLAND** drops by, Killer-B's gathers teenage monsters, and read the first part of our history of pre-Code horror comics!

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CRYPTOLOGY #9

KATHRYN LEIGH SCOTT recalls her time in Dark Shadows, the Cryptologist unearths old Dark Shadows comics and trading cards, our history of pre-Code horror comics continues, we uncover long forgotten Fawcett horror comics, rediscover those ghoulish 1970s Blaxploitation movies, and come face-to-face with *Curse of the Demon* and the chilling *Night of the Eagle*, plus classic B-movies and Hammer's scary offspring!

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CRYPTOLOGY #10

NEAL ADAMS' horror comics, Batman's encounters with the macabre, surprising horror movie actors (including **HUMPHREY BOGART**), *Spiderbaby*'s **BEVERLY WASHBURN** discusses her time in horror, and how spiders terrorized cinema screens, comic books & the pulps. Plus, more lurid paperback covers, your regular dose of B-movie horror masterpieces, and another selection from the Hammer archive!

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CRYPTOLOGY #11

Beware the Creature from the Black Lagoon and his three films, with actress **MILICENT PATRICK**, comics, models, memorabilia, and the prehistoric history that spawned the Creature. Plus, the TV horror hosts who introduced classic spine-tingling films, The Golem from silent cinema to comic books, **BILL STOUT**'s designs for *Return of the Living Dead*, pre-Code comics history, Hammer horror movies, and more!

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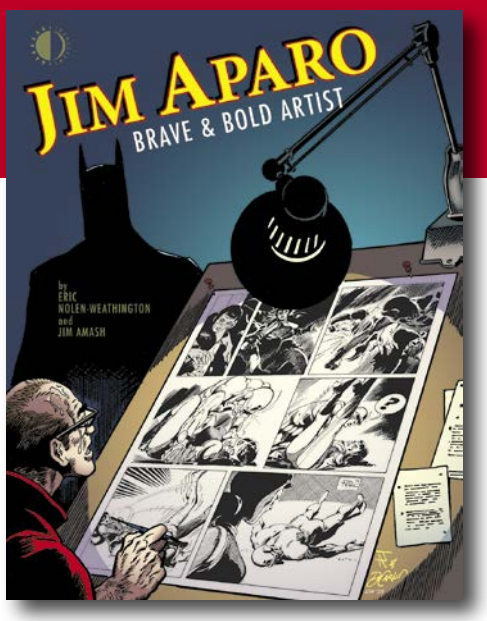
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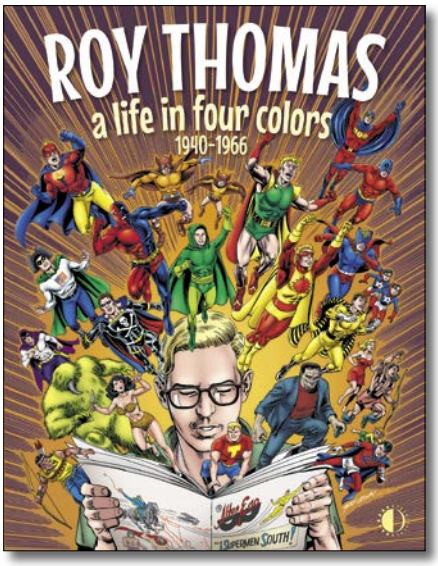


JIM APARO: BRAVE & BOLD ARTIST

by ERIC NOLEN-WEATHINGTON and JIM AMASH

For a generation of comic-book readers, **JIM APARO** is considered the greatest Batman artist of them all. Aparo—with his strong, dynamic style, well-grounded in realism—together with Batman made a team worthy of the title, *The Brave and the Bold*. But before that team-up book, he made a name for himself on such series as *Aquaman*, the controversial "Spectre," and the mysterious Phantom Stranger, and is considered by many to be the definitive artist for each. Now, the team of **JIM AMASH** and **ERIC NOLEN-WEATHINGTON** (editors of **MATT BAKER: THE ART OF GLAMOUR; CARMINE INFANTINO: PENCILER, PUBLISHER, PROVOCATEUR**; and **SAL BUSCEMA: COMICS' FAST AND FURIOUS ARTIST**) turn the Bat Signal on the life and work of one of comics' finest! From his time in the world of advertising art, at **CHARLTON COMICS** on Nightshade and The Phantom, through the heyday of the '70s, and beyond the death of Robin, Aparo's career is finally given the attention it so richly deserves. The book is lavishly illustrated with Aparo's work, including many rare and previously-unpublished pieces. Includes an introduction by award-winning artist **ALAN DAVIS,** and a new Aparo cover inked by **MIKE DeCARLO!**

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ROY THOMAS: A LIFE IN FOUR COLORS (1940–1966)

The man **STAN LEE** dubbed "Rascally Roy" and "Roy the Boy" tells the full, uncensored story of his emergence as one of the brightest stars in the Marvel Comics firmament! It's all here, starting with his Midwestern beginnings devouring the late, great Golden Age of Comics, to the glorious flowering of comics fandom during the first half of the 1960s (including the 1961 founding of **ALTER EGO** and all that that first super-hero fanzine spawned). Roy details his brief and turbulent time as editorial assistant of DC's "Superman" titles under **MORT WEISINGER**, and the pivotal first year-plus of his career at Marvel, working with **STAN LEE, JACK KIRBY, STEVE DITKO, JOHN ROMITA, BILL EVERETT**, and some of the brightest stars of the Marvel Age of Comics! Plus: you'll have a ringside seat at some of the earliest comics conventions, and at the fateful 1965 *New York Herald Tribune* interview that caused a seismic rift between **LEE** and **KIRBY**. This **FULL-COLOR HARDCOVER** is illustrated with rare and unseen art and behind-the-scenes photos from the dawn of the Silver Age of comics, so don't delay! Buy it today—read it tomorrow—'cause Roy's already hard at work on the follow-up volume that covers the rest of his Marvel tenure, from 1967 to 1980! With a spectacular cover by **JERRY ORDWAY!**

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THE CRISIS COMPANION

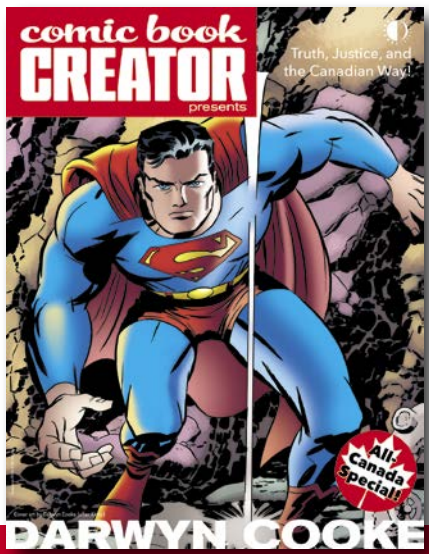
by KEVIN MILLER



FROM FLASH OF TWO WORLDS TO INFINITE EARTHS AND BEYOND

Filmmaker and lifelong comic book fan **KEVIN MILLER** unpacks the tangled web of continuity, creators, and corporate pressures that gave rise to 1985's multiverse-shattering epic **CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS**. This personal love letter to the series is a deep dive into its history, from the classic 1961 Gardner Fox "Flash of Two Worlds" story that introduced the concept of multiple Earths, through the annual Justice League/Justice Society team-ups that led to the complicated DC continuity that *Crisis* aimed to fix. It features new interviews with **MARV WOLFMAN, PAUL LEVITZ, JERRY ORDWAY, BOB GREENBERGER, MIKE DeCARLO, PETER SANDERSON, ROY THOMAS, CARY BATES, DAN JURGENS, MIKE GOLD**, and others who helped shape the series and the DC Universe itself. Explore how *Crisis* transformed our perception of comics continuity, redefined superhero storytelling, and introduced the multiverse concept to mainstream culture. Includes a **FULL-COLOR GALLERY**, and detailed, issue-by-issue commentary on one of the most influential comic book series ever published!

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COMIC BOOK CREATOR #46

by JON B. COOKE

We commemorate the 10th anniversary of the passing of **DARWYN COOKE**, in a special **DOUBLE-SIZE ISSUE**, which features two comprehensive interviews with the brilliant artist—one from 2004 conducted by **JON B. COOKE** and another from 2010 by **TUCKER STONE.** We also feature numerous testimonials and tributes from many of Dar's friends and fans. Behind Darwyn's cover of Canuck **JOE SHUSTER**'s co-creation Superman, our theme for the issue is "Truth, Justice, and the Canadian Way," as we look at fascinating subjects exclusively from the Great White North. These include, courtesy of **RICHARD COMELY**, a definitive look at the history of Captain Canuck; the life journey of **ARN SABA**, creator of *Neil the Horse* and today known as **KATHERINE COLLINS**; and feature a profile of **DAVID BOSWELL** of *Reid Fleming* fame. Plus, we gaze deeply into *Orb* magazine with founder **JAMES WALEY**, behold *Andromeda* with editor **DEAN MOTTER**, and be vexed by Vortex Comics with publisher **BILL MARKS**; and **JANET HETHERINGTON** shares her look at the Joe Shuster Awards and the Canadian Comic Book Hall Of Fame!

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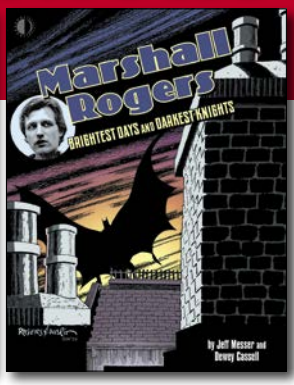
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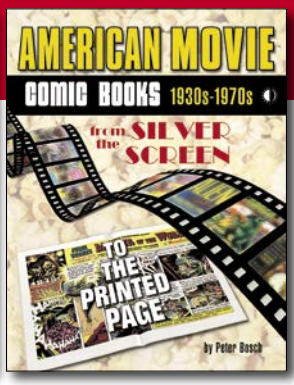
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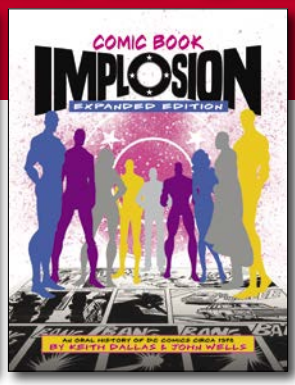
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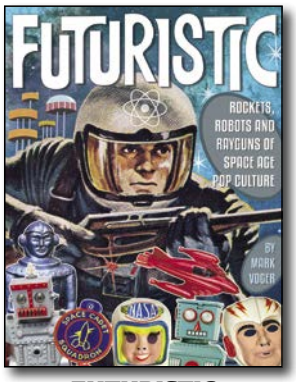
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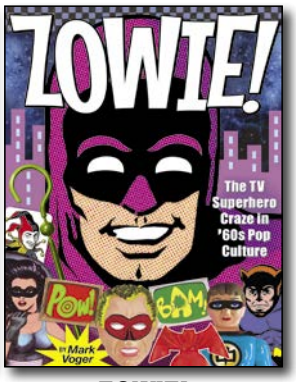
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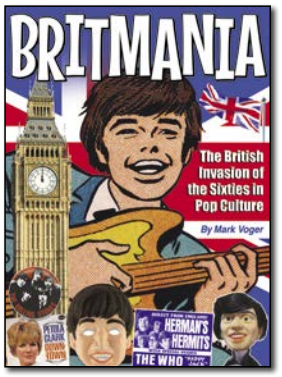
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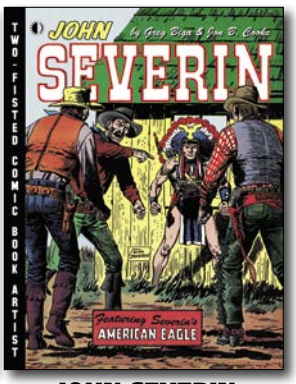
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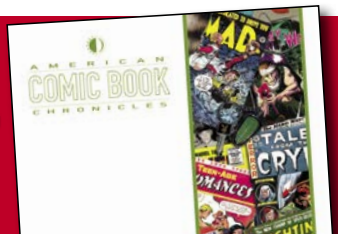


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Baltimore Comic Con 2025: Portrait Gallery

In addition to photographing creators at panels and table signings, our convention photographer often asks writers and artists to briefly pose for portrait pic. Here are a few of those creators from the 2025 Baltimore Comic Con.



Zoe Thorogood







Mark Waid



Brian K. Vaughan







Alan Davis



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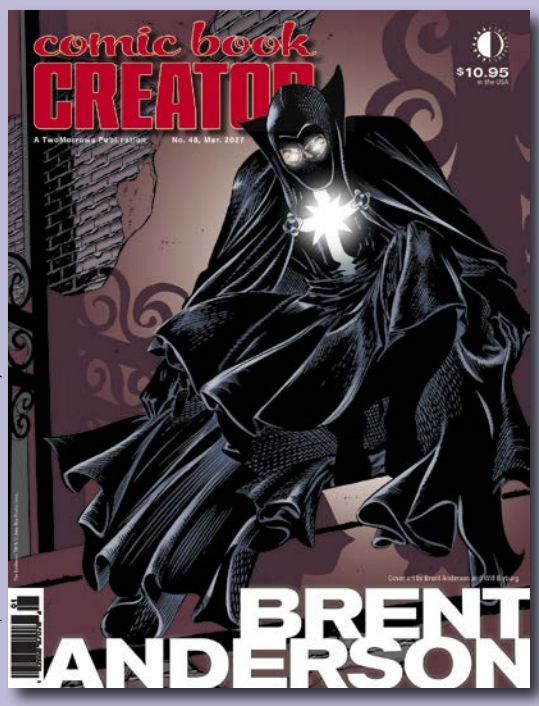
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Brent Anderson: Life in Astro City



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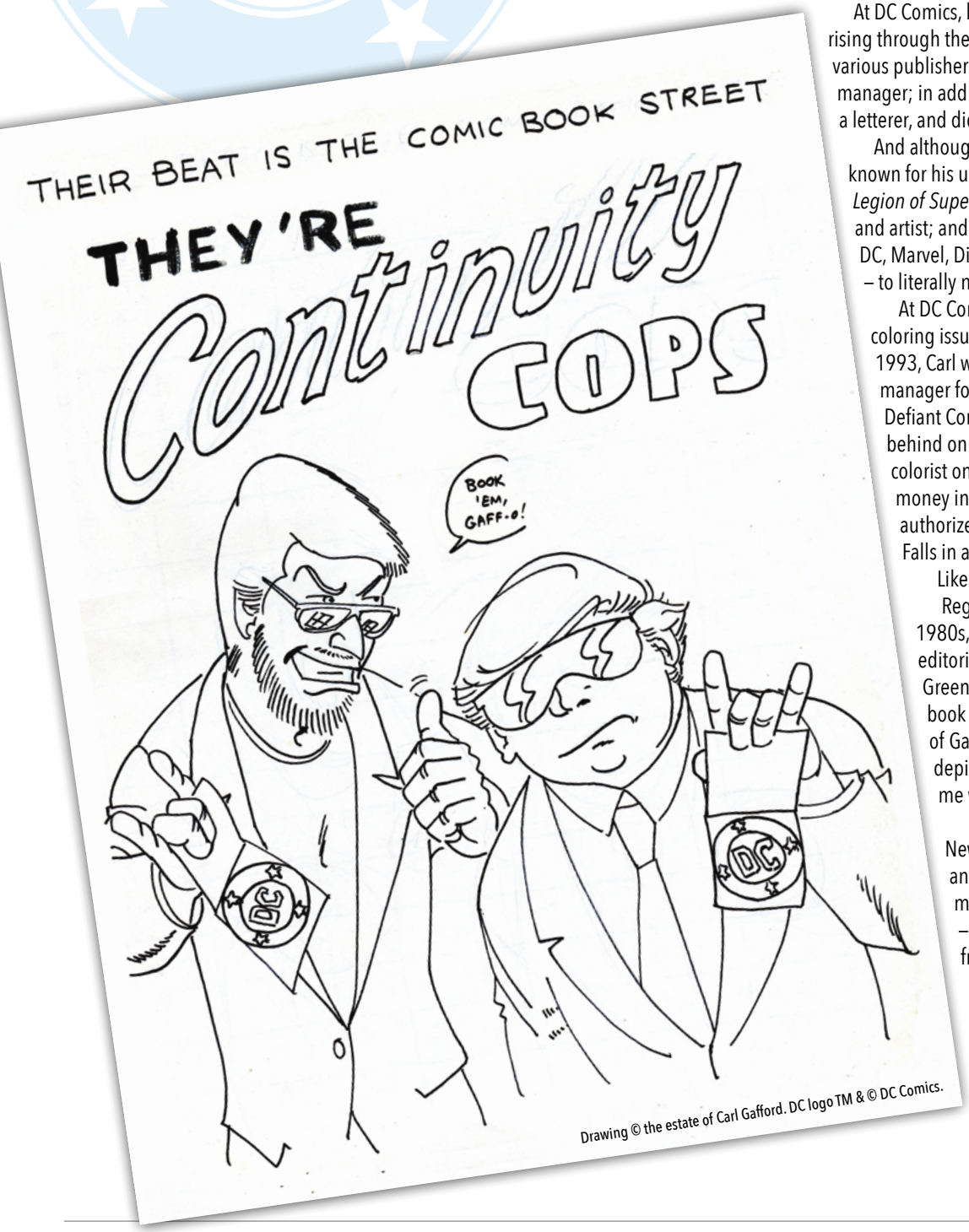
CBC #48 headlines the superb artistry of **BRENT ANDERSON** in a far-ranging interview, where his fanzine and early alt-comics are discussed, as well as start as a pro in the ill-fated *Xanadu* movie adaptation, early success with *Ka-Zar the Savage, X-Men God Loves, Man Kills* graphic novel work, stints on *Somerset Holmes* and *Strikeforce: Morituri,* and even greater notice as collaborator – along with Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross – on the legendary *Astro City* series, as well as his current projects. We also talk with Warren magazine horror comics writer **BRUCE BEZAIRE**, scripter of the terrifying "Night of the Jackass" series. CBC also continues its conversation with **RICK ALTERGOTT** about life as an alt cartoonist and his latest *Doofus* adventures. While we're at it, **ARIEL BORDEAUX** shares about her forthcoming omnibus of comics and **SHAUN CLANCY** digs into the history of the **AMERICAN COMICS GROUP** and its cloaked connection to DC. And we also grok the retro approach of **BLUE MOON COMICS** with publisher **LLOYD SMITH** (a.k.a. The Groovy Agent), as well take a loving look at the Filipino "Tagalog Komiks" of **NESTOR REDONDO** and **ALFREDO ALCALA**. And, par for the course, **HEMBECK** tees off with another whole-in-one Dateline episode!

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from the archives of Tom Ziuko

Archie Goodwin, our featured creator this issue, was well known for his love of self-caricature. It's in this spirit that I present the work of my friend and fellow colorist, the late, great Carl Gafford.

Gaff, as he was known to friends, was the literal definition of unsung behind-the-scenes comic book fan turned pro. In 1968, he was part of the first wave of self-printed fanzines and mini comics. Although now predominantly recognized as a top colorist, Gaff was involved in every aspect of comic book publishing and production at one point or another during his long career.



Drawing © the estate of Carl Gafford. DC logo TM & © DC Comics.

At DC Comics, he started as a proofreader, rising through the production departments of various publishers over the years to become production manager; in addition to his work as a colorist, he was also a letterer, and did hand separations of color guides.

And although predominantly rightfully known for his unbroken seven-year run coloring *The Legion of Super-Heroes,* he was also an editor, writer and artist; and worked for every publisher imaginable – DC, Marvel, Disney, Hanna-Barbera, Topps, Dark Horse – to literally name but a few.

At DC Comics in the 1980s, Carl and I traded off coloring issues of *Crisis on Infinite Earths* and, in 1993, Carl was hired by Jim Shooter as production manager for his new publishing endeavor, Defiant Comics. The small crew at Defiant was behind on a deadline, and they needed another colorist on deck, pronto! This was during the mad money indie publishing frenzy era, and Carl was authorized to fly me to New York City from Niagara Falls in a private jet.

Like *WOW*, Daddio!

Regarding this artwork – at one point, in the 1980s, Carl worked on staff at DC Comics in the editorial department at the same time as Bob Greenberger, notable editor, writer, and comic book historian. Presented here is an example of Gaff's talent and sense of humor – his depiction of his and Bob's job at DC. He gifted me with this original, and I cherish it.

In the late '90s, Gaff decided to leave New York City and the world of comic books and freelancing behind, and then facilitated me taking over his apartment in Manhattan – on 42nd Street, right across the street from the United Nations.

In addition to everything that Carl professionally taught and shared with me as a colorist, I'll always be grateful for this personal favor, which allowed me to live dead center in the heart of New York City for five years.

Thanks again, Gaff. Miss you.

– TZ