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Pride and Prejudice

In 1960, comics were unavoidable. Outside of snobby hold-outs like the *New York Times*, every newspaper worth its salt had a healthy representation of what parents liked to call “the funnies.” A handful of recent comic strips like *Pogo*, *Peanuts*, *Dennis the Menace*, and *Marmaduke* were even showing up in paperback collections on book racks. Kids magazines might feature a comics story at any time and *Boy’s Life* had maintained a clutch of recurring features like “Scouts In Action” and Dik Browne’s Tracy Twins. Older readers might gravitate to the automotive-themed *CARtoons* or the subversive black-and-white comics magazines like *Mad* and its recent rival *Cracked*.

Will Eisner, the innovative genius who produced the weekly *Spirit* comic book section for newspapers between 1940 and 1952, now headed up the American Visuals Corporation. Built around the fact that comics were a powerful educational and commercial tool, the company counted the United States Army as its best-known client. In the pages of a monthly magazine titled *PS, The Preventive Maintenance Monthly*, Eisner was charged with conveying technical information to soldiers about the upkeep of their weaponry, vehicles, et al.

Even some members of the clergy seemed to give the form its conditional blessing. David C. Cook’s *Sunday Pix* featured a serialized adaptation of the Bible amidst other recurring features in a weekly Sunday School pamphlet while the biweekly *Treasure Chest of Fun and Fact* comic book was distributed at Catholic parochial schools. Evangelist Oral Roberts’ organization was producing a subscription-only monthly comic book of their own titled *Junior Partners*.

And certainly, the traditional four-color comic book was readily available at every newsstand, grocer, drugstore, and candy shop. Many California-based fans—among them writer/historian Mark Evanier—speak of buying their comics at liquor stores. However, as much those might have sounded like dens of iniquity, the 1960 model was actually more of a small convenience store.

The price was certainly right. The typical 32-page color comic book still retailed for 10-cents, the same price that an issue had been in the 1930s. Significantly, though, those bygone comics had generally boasted 64 pages. Two decades of inflation had necessitated that most magazines raise prices but comics had held firm, cutting back the page count to hold the line at a dime. By 1960, most comics carried around 25 pages of actual story content with the rest given over to advertising. Dell Comics was a notable exception in mostly eschewing advertising, but the price-tags on their covers had ominously read “Still 10-cents” since 1958 (following regional test-marketing of a 15-cent price-point).

As ubiquitous as comics were, there was a line of demarcation between two of the primary formats, one even made by psychiatrist Fredric Wertham in his notorious 1954 tome *Seduction of the Innocent*. For a quarter-century, color comic books had been looked upon as the ugly stepchild of newspaper comic strips—at best, a simple-minded coun-

1960 TIMELINE

A compilation of the year's notable comic book industry events alongside some of the year's most significant popular cultural and historical events.

January 22: Aboard the bathyscaphe Trieste, Swiss oceanographer Jacques Piccard and U.S. Navy lieutenant Don Walsh set a world record when they descend 10,911 meters (35,797 feet) into the Mariana Trench, the lowest point on Earth. The event is referenced later in the year in *Superman* #139.



February 29: *The Family Circus*, by Bil Keane, debuts as a daily newspaper cartoon with a distinctive circular format.



March 6: The United States' involvement in the Vietnam War begins to escalate with the announcement that another 3,500 troops will be deployed to the region.

April 1: The final episode of the *Lucy-Desi Comedy Hour* airs on CBS, bringing an end to the groundbreaking comedy that began in 1951 as *I Love Lucy*. A month earlier, star Lucille Ball had filed for divorce from Desi Arnaz.

April 22: *Dick Tracy* creator Chester Gould receives the Reuben Award for 1959's cartoonist of the year at the National Cartoonists Society 14th annual ceremony in New York City. Other winners include Wally Wood (comic book category), *Mad*, Dik Browne (newspaper strips, *Hi and Lois*), and Jimmy Hatlo (newspaper panels, *They'll Do It Every Time*).

May 11: Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, now using an alias and working as a foreman at a Mercedes-Benz facility in Buenos Aires, Argentina, is captured by agents of Israel's Mossad and Shin Bet.

May 24: Following a successful tryout in the *Showcase* comic book, DC's *Green Lantern* #1 goes on sale.



JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
	<p>February 18: The Winter Olympic Games begin in California's Squaw Valley Ski Resort, the first time the sporting event has taken place in North America since 1932. Airing on CBS, the Olympics' opening and closing ceremonies are produced by Walt Disney.</p>		<p>April 1: The final episode of the <i>Lucy-Desi Comedy Hour</i> airs on CBS, bringing an end to the groundbreaking comedy that began in 1951 as <i>I Love Lucy</i>. A month earlier, star Lucille Ball had filed for divorce from Desi Arnaz.</p>	<p>May 1: An American Lockheed U-2 spy plane is shot down by the Soviets, leading to the capture of its pilot (and CIA operative) Francis Gary Powers. A summit meeting in Paris later in May collapses in part over President Eisenhower's refusal to apologize for the incident. In August, Powers is convicted of espionage against the Soviet Union and sentenced to a prison near Moscow.</p>	<p>June 23: DC's <i>Superman Annual</i> reprint collection inaugurates a long-running string of 80-Page giants.</p>
<p>January 1: A quartet of black students stage a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's department store lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. The incident inspires further peaceful demonstrations elsewhere in the Southern United States.</p>		<p>March 6: The United States' involvement in the Vietnam War begins to escalate with the announcement that another 3,500 troops will be deployed to the region.</p>	<p>March 28: Writer Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby revive the <i>Rawhide Kid</i> comic book with #17, recreating the character's look and background. It's the first time that the collaborators will work together on an ongoing character.</p>	<p>May 11: Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, now using an alias and working as a foreman at a Mercedes-Benz facility in Buenos Aires, Argentina, is captured by agents of Israel's Mossad and Shin Bet.</p>	<p>May 24: Following a successful tryout in the <i>Showcase</i> comic book, DC's <i>Green Lantern</i> #1 goes on sale.</p>

Superman, Green Lantern, Justice League of America, Hawkman, and Aquaman TM and © DC Comics. Family Circus TM and © Bil Keane, Inc. Rawhide Kid TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

when he tried to return to National Comics (better known as DC) and found every assignment filled. "For nearly two or three months," he recalled, "I was nearly workless" (Anderson 60).

If things were tough for established creators, they were impossible for newcomers. Fresh out of college, Neal Adams arrived at DC's offices in 1959 with sample pages of a war story and their Adam Strange feature and high hopes of a place in the company. As he tells it, things didn't play out as he expected:

"I couldn't get past the front door. They sent a nice man out named Bill Perry, and it was as if my old school had given him a tape recording of what to say, 'You're wasting your time, you're a very talented young man, you should do something else, blah, blah, blah...' He wasn't even allowed to take the samples in to the editors. Then, strangely, he quietly apologized." (Schumer 20)

It's a Mad World

Only five years had passed since the content of comic books had come under scrutiny by a Senate subcommittee. The establishment of a Comics Code Authority—whose standards expressly banished most of the grisly excesses of all crime and horror comics—also nearly wiped out the entire

EC Comics line of titles aimed at a more adult audience. Serendipitously, publisher **William M. Gaines** had assented to editor Harvey Kurtzman's desire to convert their 10-cent satire/parody comic *Mad* to a 25-cent black and white magazine format in 1955, a move that instantly bought the title more respect and success (and incidentally freed it from Comics Code scrutiny). A grinning, big-eared mascot named Alfred E. Neuman (his credo: "What? Me Worry?") quickly became the public face of the magazine on its covers.

Following Kurtzman's 1956 departure, Al Feldstein became the magazine's new editor, and the next few years saw regular material by cartoonists Don Martin and Dave Berg, along with work by writers Gary Belkin, Frank Jacobs, Al Jaffee, Tom Koch, Paul Krassner, Sy Reit and artists Bob Clarke, Mort Drucker, Joe Orlando, Wally Wood, and George Woodbridge.

By 1960, *Mad* was the best-selling comic book in the United States, with its yearly average of 1,048,550 per issue even slightly surpassing Dell's four-color *Uncle Scrooge* and *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* as well as DC's *Superman* (Miller).

The magazine's anti-establishment attitude and skewering of everything from TV shows to politics had made it a household name. Fred Astaire donned an Alfred E. Neuman costume for a dance number on November 4, 1959 TV

July 11: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee's classic story of race relations in the 1930s American South, is published. It is subsequently awarded the Pulitzer Prize for 1960's best American novel.

July 11: "Alley Oop," a novelty song by the Hollywood Argyles inspired by the V.T. Hamlin comic strip about a time-traveling caveman, is the number one song on the Billboard Top 100 chart. The tune, originally performed by Dallas Frazier in 1957, is also covered by both the Dyno-Sores and Dante & the Evergreens during 1960.

August 1: The Beatles (consisting of John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Stu Sutcliffe, and Pete Best) first perform in Hamburg, Germany.



August 25: *Justice League of America* #1 arrives at newsstands and becomes the first successful superhero team comic book since *All Star Comics* dropped the Justice Society and became *All Star Western* in 1951.



September 5: At the Summer Olympic Games in Rome, Italy, the gold medal in light-heavyweight boxing is awarded to Cassius Clay of the United States.

September 25: John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon appear in the first live televised Presidential debate. Not yet cognizant of how his physical appearance would translate on film, Nixon refuses to wear make-up and seems sickly and ill-at-ease to many TV viewers, even as radio listeners believe the Vice-President has won the debate.

OCTOBER 13: For the first time, a home run determines the winner of baseball's World Series. Thanks to Bill Mazeroski, the Pittsburgh Pirates defeat the New York Yankees 10-9.

NOVEMBER 8: John F. Kennedy is elected President of the United States in a narrow victory over Richard Nixon. The 43-year-old Kennedy is the youngest man ever to be elected to the office and the second youngest (after Theodore Roosevelt) to serve there.

DECEMBER 5: In its *Boynon v. Virginia* ruling, the Supreme Court declares any segregation on public transportation in the United States to be illegal.

DECEMBER 10: Disney's live-action *Swiss Family Robinson* (starring John Mills, Dorothy McGuire, James Arthur, and Tommy Kirk) premieres and eventually becomes the second-highest-grossing film of 1960.

DECEMBER 10: In the *Brave and the Bold* #34, writer Gardner Fox and artist Joe Kubert reintroduce Hawkman, the third 1940s hero to be modernized.



JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

July 25-28: Sitting Vice-President Richard M. Nixon is nominated for President at the Republican National Convention in Chicago. Henry Cabot Lodge is tapped to run as Nixon's Vice-President.

July 13: At the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, U.S. Senator John F. Kennedy is nominated for President of the United States. In his acceptance speech, he talks of the challenges of the "new frontier" that are ahead for all Americans.



September 19: "The Twist," the Chubby Checker song that also inspired a dance craze, is the number one song on the Billboard Top 100 chart.

September 14: OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) is formed by the nations of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.

October 3: *The Andy Griffith Show* premieres on CBS, quickly making stars of its title character as Mayberry sheriff Andy Taylor, Don Knotts as bumbling deputy Barney Fife, and Ronnie Howard as Andy's son Opie.

October 2: *The Bugs Bunny Show*, a compilation of Warner Bros. theatrical short cartoons, begins on ABC as a weekly primetime series.

September 30: *The Flintstones*, a prime-time animated cartoon from Hanna-Barbera, debuts on ABC. The series overlays the personalities of the cast of Jackie Gleason's *Honeymooners* characters with those of two families living during the Stone Age.



NOVEMBER 26: Disney launches the first of its annual Christmas newspaper comic strips, short stories that conclude each December 24. The initial tale ("Peter Pan's Christmas Story") is written by Frank Reilly and drawn by Manuel Gonzales.

NOVEMBER 24: Long-standing DC back-up character Aquaman becomes a leading man for the first time in *Showcase* #30, the first of a four-issue run.



Bugs Bunny TM and © Warner Bros. Fred Flintstone TM and © Hanna-Barbera.

special and Tony Randall reenacted several of Mad cartoonist Don Martin's gags for NBC's *Four For Tonight* broadcast on February 24, 1960. Superstar comedian Sid Caesar (*Your Show of Shows*) had even written four pieces for *Mad*, culminating with "The Jackie Talented Story" in #55 (June 1960), and penned the introduction to 1960's hardback *Golden Trashery of Mad*.

Gaines was more than capable of generating press coverage on his own, as in September of 1960 when he gathered many of his staffers for an impromptu trip to Haiti—where he'd discovered that *Mad* had exactly one subscriber. Arriving at his door, Gaines and company begged him to re-subscribe (Jacobs, 250-251).

Mad had also found a valuable means of keeping the best of its earlier comics in print by reformatting them for paperback collections. "The Organization Mad" and "Like, Mad" became the eighth and ninth additions to the

series in 1960. That same year, Alfred E. Neuman costumes were available for the first time at Halloween.

While the latest pocket books were reprinting material from 1956 and 1957, the magazine was up to the minute. TV series *77 Sunset Strip* (starring teen heartthrob Edd "Kookie" Byrnes), *The Rifleman*, and *Lassie* came in for mockery in *Mad* #52, #53, and #59 respectively, as did folk music (#52), beatniks (#53, #57), monster movies (#53), violence on TV (#58), and the Summer Olympics in Rome (#56). Elizabeth Taylor's fourth marriage—this time to Eddie Fisher—earned her a personalized comic valentine in a feature in issue #53, also featuring Cuba's Fidel Castro, F.B.I. chief J. Edgar Hoover, and labor union leader Jimmy Hoffa. Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev appeared on the back cover in a Kelly Freas-painted Kodak film ad parody that showed the pictures of top secret facilities he'd snapped during his 1959 visit to the United States.

The ubiquitous advertisements being churned out for print and television were fertile territory for the *Mad* men, and ad parodies were a staple on the magazine, both on Freas' color back covers and the black and white interiors. Issue #54's "My Fair Ad-Man" (written by Nick Meglin and drawn by Mort Drucker) not only tackled the advertising geniuses of Madison Avenue but presented the story in song (all based on tunes from Broadway play "My Fair Lady"). It was the first musical parody in *Mad*'s history. Another musical sequence ("Mad Comic Opera") appeared in #56, featuring scores of comic strip characters—including Dick Tracy, Tarzan, Dagwood Bumstead, and a voluptuous adult Little Orphan Annie—realistically rendered by Wally Wood.

Alfred E. Neuman entered the 1960 U.S. Presidential campaign in issue #55, where a (real) ad offered a kit (including a button, poster, hat, et al.) for one dollar to support his candidacy. Elsewhere in the issue, a magazine

but resembled a comic book the least. Recalling the magazine to Gary Groth, Kurtzman said:

"We did *Help!* with a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of naiveté, and I had some great people working with me. Harold Hayes sent me Gloria Steinem—yes, *the* Gloria Steinem—who'd come fresh from India where she was working on some sort of deal for the government. Gloria was this incredible person, bigger than life. She would get all these movie stars to pose for *Help!*—for the covers. She'd get 'freebies' galore. The thing I learned from Warren is how to fill your pages with freebies. You know—or you should know—those inexpensive ways of filling up space. We'd fill our magazine with stock shots which we'd get for nothing from the movie publicity departments, and then we'd do tricks with them, print captions on them, print them out of context, touch them up funny. So our total budget was \$2 and we put out a magazine." (Groth 93)

Help! was more of a hybrid, a celebrity-driven vehicle that hoped to draw in an older, hipper reader who responded to the up-and-coming comedians of the day and appreciated more risqué material. With photo covers featuring comedians like Sid Caesar (#1) and Jerry Lewis (#3) and interiors featuring fumetti (photos doctored with captions or words and articles), actual comics were only part of the equation. Nonetheless, Kurtzman's favored artistic collaborators Jack Davis, Will Elder, Al Jaffee, and John Severin were well-represented in the magazine. Kurtzman also made a point to reprint samples of artistic brilliance from generations past, whether cartoons from 1920s issues of the humor magazine *Punch* or episodes of Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo In Slumberland* from the early 1900s. As time passed, the magazine would also become a vehicle for a radical new generation of cartoonists.

Dell Comics Are Good Comics

The foremost comic book publisher in the land was **Dell Comics**, whose line-up included some of the most recognizable properties in the United States: Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Tom and Jerry, Little Lulu, the Lone Ranger, Tarzan, Zorro, and many more. In 1960, they published 377 separate comics (Stevenson), more than any other company, and two of its titles—*Uncle Scrooge* and *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*—charted average circulations over one million copies per issue. Only EC's *Mad* surpassed them (Miller).

Part of Dell's success stemmed from a long fruitful partnership with Western Printing and Lithography. It was Western that actually pro-

duced the comics that bore the Dell insignia, not only hiring the writers and artists but publishing the completed issues at their Whitman printing plant in Poughkeepsie, New York. With offices in both New York City and Los Angeles, Western also arranged to license the various cartoon and theatrical characters from their respective owners, but it was Dell that decided which of them to publish and what their publication frequency would be. Dell then paid the printing costs and made arrangements for the comics to be distributed to outlets across the country.

In 1960, Dell's president was **Helen Meyer**. Although only recently promoted from vice-



A trademark of Dell's adventure comics were their often stunning painted covers by artists such as George Wilson and Mo Gollub.
Tarzan is TM and © ERB, Inc. Turok TM and © Random House, Inc.

JUST IMAGINE!

THE MIGHTIEST HEROES OF OUR TIME...

JUSTICE LEAGUE of AMERICA

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

10¢

SUPERMAN! BATMAN! FLASH! GREEN LANTERN! WONDER WOMAN! AQUAMAN! J'ONN J'ONZZ-- MANHUNTER FROM MARS!

... HAVE BANDED TOGETHER AS THE

JUSTICE LEAGUE of AMERICA

A STAR-STUDDED SPECTACULAR... "WORLD OF NO RETURN!"

THE THRILLING EXPLOITS OF THESE FAMOUS CHAMPIONS APPEAR IN THE NEW

SUPERMAN DC NATIONAL COMICS

TO STAMP OUT THE FORCES OF EVIL WHEREVER AND WHENEVER THEY APPEAR!

MAGAZINE ON SALE AUGUST 25th!

THIS IS IT!

THE EXCITING NEWS YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!

GREEN LANTERN

THE "TRIAL" APPEARANCE OF **GREEN LANTERN** in **SHOWCASE**

PROVED SUCH A TERRIFIC HIT THAT HIS ADVENTURES WILL BE CONTINUED IN A MAGAZINE EXCLUSIVELY HIS OWN!

LOOK FOR THE *First* GREAT ISSUE OF **GREEN LANTERN**

FEATURING THE STARTLING STORIES... "PLANET OF DOOMED MEN!" "MENACE OF THE GIANT PUPPET!"

ON SALE MAY 24th

SUPERMAN DC NATIONAL COMICS

Grandly headlined house ads like these fanned the flames of DC's superhero revival. Justice League of America and Green Lantern TM and © DC Comics.

New Blood

The success of Green Lantern and the Justice League of America was the strongest evidence yet for DC that costumed heroes were once again a growth industry. Still feeling their way in this new frontier, the company's editors and writers struggled with what other elements of the first superhero explosion to bring back. In 1959, a resurgence in teen sidekicks and counterparts, culminated with Kid Flash (*The Flash* #110: December 1959-January 1960) and Aquaman's new partner Aqualad (*Adventure Comics* #269: February 1960). Next, two DC editors would ask the question of whether comic relief—a staple of many successful 1940s hero strips—still had a place in 1960. The answer was a resounding no!

Etta Candy and the Holliday Girls had been college students/adventurers who were a fixture of the *Wonder Woman* series from 1942 to 1950 before new writer/editor **Robert Kanigher** dropped them from the series. In *WW* #117 (October 1960), he decided to bring them back, albeit as little more than an audience for the *Amazing Amazon's* exploits. A pair of follow-up stories in 1961 were much the same and Kanigher promptly sent them back to limbo.

higher issue number. A first issue, he believed, would be viewed as a gamble that some might not wish to take. (There was also, it seemed, not a particular amount of sentimentality over anniversaries. The 100th issues of *House of Mystery* and *Our Army At War* each passed without comment in 1960.)

The return of the Flash had come out of nowhere, his first appearances slipping by many who might have been interested in the new/old hero. On the heels of Green Lantern's debut, the house ads for *The Brave and the Bold* #28 brought something new:

anticipation. For a generation too young to remember *All Star Comics*, the concept of a comic bringing together characters who normally worked alone was mind-blowing. *Justice League of America* would prove to be influential in ways the Justice Society never was. It didn't merely create the model for scores of superhero teams in the decades to come or even, ultimately, lead to character crossovers becoming mainstream rather than a novelty. It would, quite unwittingly, be the catalyst for both an entirely new kind of comic book and the organization of comic book fans into a force to be reckoned with.

Archie Adventures

Archie Comics was the first to pick up on the fact that superheroes might be making a comeback. In 1959, they'd contracted with Joe Simon (briefly joined by his former partner Jack Kirby) to produce two new titles for them, *The Adventures of the Fly* and *The Double Life of Private Strong*. Conceptually, both concepts were derivative. The Fly—a boy transformed into an adult hero—echoed 1940s hero Captain Marvel, while Private Strong (a.k.a. the Shield) recalled Simon and Kirby's Captain America. According to Simon, DC didn't see the latter that way. From their perspective, the Shield was obviously a copy of Superman and they sent Archie a "cease and desist" letter. So *Private Strong* ended with issue #2 (Simon 200).

The Fly, however, continued well beyond Simon's four-issue commitment, albeit with less dynamic art from Bill Vigoda (#5). The artist, by then more accustomed to the Archie humor style, was succeeded by John Giunta with #6-10. Ironically, the character was immediately transformed into a superhero far more like Superman than Private Strong had ever been. Clad in yellow and green rather than red and blue, the Fly completely escaped the notice of DC's lawyers.

Between issues #4 and #5 (January and March 1960), youngster Tommy Troy became adult lawyer Thomas Troy but still possessed a magic ring that could transform him into the Fly at a moment's notice. Each issue contained three tightly-plotted stories built around a tantalizing hook (such as Thomas Troy defending a man in court while the Fly was trying to convict him) with a gradual accrual of a mythology that included a Lois Lane-type girlfriend/secretary named Donna Morse and the use of chlordane (a real-life pesticide component) as the hero's personal kryptonite. The parallels to the Superman formula were no coincidence. The un-credited stories in *The Fly* were being written by Robert Bernstein, who was simultaneously selling stories to DC's Mort Weisinger.

Bernstein was less successful in conveying the sense of wonder and importance that gave impact to the best of Weisinger's Superman stories. In the middle of *The Fly* #7, the hero shared a case with the Black Hood, a policeman turned costumed hero. From a historical point of view, the story was a milestone, one that brought back a character unseen since 1947 when Archie was still known as MLJ. In the script itself, the team-up

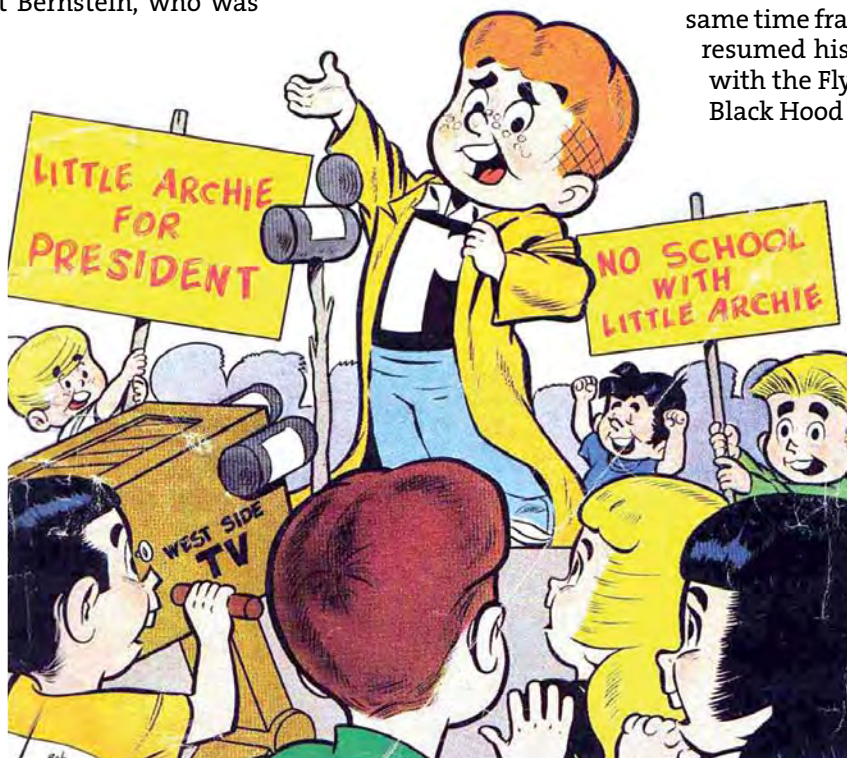


John Giunta drew the revival of the Black Hood in *Adventures of the Fly* #7. The Black Hood TM and © Archie Comic Publications, Inc. The Fly TM © Joe Simon.

was almost matter-of-fact, the Black Hood simply acknowledged as a hero from another town rather than one who was being revived. Still, Bernstein had ventured into virgin territory and had no idea how much readers would be fascinated by the thought of bringing back a character created before they were born.

If the intention was to emulate the popularity of the Superman-Batman team-ups in *World's Finest Comics*, the stories in *Fly* #8 and #9 were more on the mark, at least in terms of heroes created in the same time frame. Private Strong quietly resumed his double life to join forces with the Fly in both issues before the Black Hood returned in issue #10.

While a modest hit, *Adventures of the Fly* was ultimately just Archie's effort to keep a toehold in the superhero genre should it actually take off again. Taking stock of its other niche titles, the company decided to end the 16-year-old superhero/funny animal title *Super Duck* with #94 (December 1960) and closed the book on the Dennis the Menace-styled *Adventures of Pipsqueak* (formerly *Pat the Brat*) with #39 (July 1960).



The personal voice that Bob Bolling gave to Little Archie made the title a critical hit. Little Archie TM and © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

Archie's real focus was on what they did best: the teen humor titles that were referenced in its very company name. The core of the line remained *Archie*, *Archie's Girls*, *Betty and Veronica*, and *Archie's Pal, Jughead* while satellite titles like the surreal *Archie's Madhouse* (which began in 1959) pushed the boundaries. Bob Bolling's *Little Archie*, launched in 1956 and featuring the cast as younger kids, was arguably the most critically successful.

A new title called *Life With Archie* had been tested in 1958 and 1959 but didn't acquire a distinct point of view until it was promoted to an ongoing series with issue #3 (July 1960). Published under the "Archie Adventure Series" imprint like *The Fly*, the book placed the Archie cast in longer, more serious action stories with scripts by veteran writer Sy Reit and art by Bob White. The adventure premise sustained the title for over thirty years before it was finally cancelled.

On the flipside was *Jughead's Fantasy*, another Reit-scripted addition to the adventure line that imagined Archie's pal as a knight in shining armor or a hardboiled private eye. It made it to issue #3 (December 1960) before the plug was pulled.

There was no small amount of irony in the fact the Archie Adventure Series imprint arose at the same time that **Neal Adams** was trying to get a job in the comic book industry. Unable to get a shot at DC, the artist later to be known for his dynamic realistic style looked to Archie about the possibility of working on *Adventures of the Fly*. Approaching Joe Simon, Adams was informed by the veteran cartoonist that getting into comic books was a waste of time. But the artist persevered:

"I started to do samples for Archie and I left my Fly samples there. A couple weeks later when I came in to show my Archie samples, I noticed that the pages were still there, but the bottom panel was

cut off of one of my pages. I said, 'What happened?' They said, 'One of the artists did this transition where Tommy Troy turns into the Fly and it's not very good. You did this real nice piece so we'll use that, if it's OK.' I said, 'That's great. That's terrific.'" (Offenberger)

That panel ran in *Fly* #4 but all of Adams' subsequent work for Archie consisted of half-page filler gags that ran in *Archie's Joke Book* and *Pep Comics*. Although the artist appreciated the work, he was not being used to his full potential. Leaving Archie, he went into the commercial art field.

Keeping the Presses Running

In terms of sheer output (if not sales), **Charlton Comics** ranked third behind Dell and DC with 280 issues of its various titles published during 1960 (Stevenson). Where the two major companies split the various publication aspects among separate cities, Charlton both printed and distributed its comics from its Derby, Connecticut base while paying its editors, writers, and artists some of the lowest wages in the industry. Indeed, the voluminous comics line existed in part simply to keep the presses running non-stop when they weren't printing magazines featuring song lyrics. **Dick Giordano**, a Charlton artist and editor from 1952 to 1967, viewed it as a missed opportunity:

"If they wanted to go head-to-head with DC Comics, quality of the artwork, quality of the stories, quality of the printing and distribution, they probably could have done it at two-thirds of the cost that DC was paying. And if they had done that, they really could have turned the comic book publishing business on its ear. But they chose to be junk dealers, they really did. I mean that in a literal sense: They thought they were producing junk, they thought of all of it as junk, they didn't think there was any



Better known for his yellow and orange costume, Captain Atom started out in blue.
Captain Atom TM and © DC Comics.



The Shape of Things To Come

In 1961, now moving an average of 1,209,918 copies per issue, *Mad* broke the previous year's virtual tie with *Uncle Scrooge* to become the best-selling comic book in the United States and never looked back (Miller). Much like baseball player Roger Maris, who broke Babe Ruth's home run record the same year, it was an achievement that would be acknowledged only grudgingly. The Babe, critics argued, had made his record in a 154 game season. Maris did it in a 162 game season. Likewise, some would say, a *real* comic book was in color and packaged in a rectangular format. *Mad*, on the other hand, was a black and white *magazine*.

No matter. William Gaines' team continued to skewer television, politics, advertising, and more, laughing all the way to the bank as they fiddled with the issue-to-issue features. Dave Berg's "The Lighter Side," a series tackling a different subject each issue, began in *Mad* #66 (October 1961) while a pantomime feature dubbed "Spy Vs. Spy" debuted in #60 (January 1961). Focusing on a pair of beak-nosed spies, one dressed in black and the other in white, the feature had a distinctive look and, as the first installment revealed, a creator who'd endured considerable peril before drawing them.

Antonio Prohías had gained equal parts fame and infamy in his native Cuba for his anti-Castro cartoons. Fleeing the country on May 1, 1960, the cartoonist eventually made his way to New York City. On July 12, 1960, he showed up at the *Mad* offices. Observing that anyone who didn't support Fidel Castro was automatically classified by the Cuban leader as a conspirator, the cartoonist had begun to play with the whole spy concept. Speaking to a *Miami Herald* reporter in 1983, by which point "Spy Vs. Spy" had been running in *Mad* for more than two decades, Prohías declared that "the sweetest revenge has been turning Fidel's accusation of me as a spy into a money-making venture" (Prohías, 14).

The world was becoming a scary place in 1961. On multiple fronts, the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union was heating up. Russia had won the race to put the first man in outer space. Communist-controlled East Germany began erecting the Berlin Wall to prevent further defections to the west. In October, the Soviets created the largest explosion in recorded history when they detonated a 58-megaton hydrogen bomb. And the ongoing war between North Vietnam's communist forces and South Vietnam was a dark cloud on the horizon.

Closer to home, a C.I.A.-sponsored attempt at removing Castro backfired in spectacular fashion. The botched Bay of Pigs invasion not only helped the Cuban leader silence insurgents but pushed the country directly into an alliance with the Soviet Union.

CHAPTER TWO



WHILE I WRITED WITH THE REST OF EASY... I COULD PICTURE WHAT HAPPENED AFTER OUR MACHINE GUN POST HAD BEEN HIT...



BUT WHAT I DIDN'T FIND OUT UNTIL LATER WAS...

WILD MAN!... WILD MAN!... WHERE ARE YOU? ... I CAN'T SEE--!



THEN... THEY'RE COMING ACROSS THE SWAMP! THEY KNOW THEY'VE KAYDED US! SO--

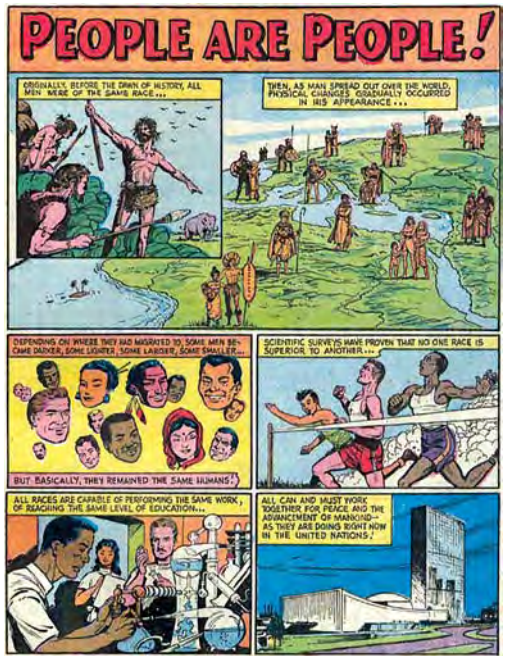
THEY'RE GOING TO WALK RIGHT OVER US-- AND THEN-- EASY! BETTER GO! WHILE YOU'VE GOT TIME!



THEY'RE TAKIN' THEIR TIME-- CROSSIN' THE SWAMP! WHAT'S THE GOOD OF EYES--IF MY HANDS DON'T WORK? IF I ONLY HAD HANDS TO WORK THAT GUN??!!



I'LL BE YOUR HANDS--IF YOU'LL BE MY EYES!



humor series' cast, even featuring him in regular stories of his own. In the context of the stories, his skin color was irrelevant. It was a vision of the world as it ought to be rather than as it was.

Curiously, a Sgt. Rock Rock war story in DC's *Our Army At War* #113 (December 1961) took the same approach. Cut off from the rest of Easy Company, soldier Jackie Johnson had been blinded while the hands of his companion Wildman were burned. Faced with oncoming German soldiers, the two men worked together, Wildman directing Jackie's gunfire until they were safe. The remarkable detail of the 13-page tale (by writer-editor Bob Kanigher and artist Joe Kubert) was this: Wildman was white and Jackie was black. It was a remarkably understated example of racial harmony (one that also ignored the fact that the Army was segregated during World War Two) but also

Our Army At War #113's understated message of racial harmony was reinforced by a public service page in the same issue. Sgt. Rock TM and © DC Comics.

service pages appearing in DC's comic books. The installment appearing in December 1961-dated issues ("People Are People") flatly dismissed prejudice, declaring that "no one race is superior to another."

The January 19 and February 2 issues of *Treasure Chest of Fun and Fact* (the bi-weekly comic book distributed to Catholic parochial schools) advocated racial harmony. The two-part "Saint For Racial Integration" (written by Sister Mary Amatora, O.S.F.) recounted the story of Benedict the Moor, a black holy man of the 16th Century whose healing power had earned him sainthood. The final caption noted, "Since 1954, the Third Order of Franciscans in the United States has been working to obtain Christlike relations among the races under the patronage of St. Benedict the Moor" and urged its young readers to promote "interracial charity."

Since the 1950s, Harvey Comics' *Little Audrey* comic book had quietly featured a black boy named Tiny among the

something that wouldn't be repeated in the series anytime soon. Jackie eventually returned as a series regular in 1965, subsequently appearing in a few more pointed pieces on racism.

The military comics from every comics publisher were still principally focused on World War Two though other conflicts showed up frequently. By contrast, the military-based newspaper strips were nestled deep in the present-day Cold War culture. *Terry and the Pirates* devoted its final 1961 continuity to a sequence involving a Russian ballerina that was likely inspired by ballet star Rudolf Nureyev's earlier defection. The recent Sino-Soviet split that saw Russia at odds with the communist government of Red China figured into a *Steve Canyon* sequence. And in *Buz Sawyer*, following an adventure in which the Naval hero fought Red Chinese agents in Hong Kong, took the action directly to South Vietnam. In the midst of a small besieged village,

Birth of a Universe

At a glance, *Fantastic Four* #1 (dated November 1961 and on sale in August) seemed to feature the latest of Marvel Comics' monster stories, what with a giant green creature rising out of the earth while a lumpy orange creature called the Thing barreled toward him from the corner. But there were more players on the cover than monsters. An "Invisible Girl" was held aloft by the green monster while a stretching man called Mister Fantastic wiggled free of ropes. And flying into the fray was the flaming Human Torch, sporting the same name as the hero who'd been one of the company's stars in the 1940s.

An opening eight-page sequence introduced each of the principals, allowing them moments to demonstrate their respective abilities in colorful fashion before a five-page flashback explained how they came to be. Hoping to send an experimental rocket into outer space, gray-templed scientist Reed Richards had already persuaded his girlfriend Susan Storm and her teenage brother Johnny to join him on the maiden voyage. Only burly Ben Grimm—whom Reed wanted to pilot the craft—was balking. Insisting that they didn't "want the Commies to beat us to it," Sue called Ben a coward and goaded him into taking the job.

As the pilot feared, the rocket was hammered with cosmic rays as they left Earth's atmosphere and the quartet narrowly survived a crash landing. In short order, the effects of the cosmic rays were clear. Sue turned invisible, Reed gained elastic powers, and Johnny turned to flame with no harm to himself. Their powers had an on/off switch but Ben's did not. Transformed into a freakish orange rock-creature, Grimm—the only person who'd questioned the mission—was dealt the harshest blow. He was permanently trapped in the form of a monster.

Making a pact to use their new abilities for the good of humanity, each of the group placed his or her hand atop the others' and cemented the formation of the Fantastic Four. In the dozen



Jack Kirby's iconic cover layout for *Fantastic Four* #1 has been recreated by dozens of artists since 1961. *Fantastic Four* is TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

pages that remained of the story, the novice team defeated the Mole Man, leader of a group of monsters from deep inside the planet (and who'd have been right at home in *Journey Into Mystery* or *Tales To Astonish*).

For the book's creative team of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, the year had been discouraging up to that point. Each had dreamed of escaping the comic book ghetto for the lucrative world of newspaper comic strips and those dreams were independently dashed in 1961. Kirby's *Sky Masters* daily strip—launched in 1958—was cancelled with the February 25 episode, ending a feature that had previously embroiled the artist in a bitter legal battle with DC Comics editor Jack Schiff. Lee's own *Willie Lumpkin* (drawn by Dan DeCarlo) concluded its own 18-month newspaper run on May 6.

In later years, Lee would often talk of the epiphany he had at this point. Lamenting his lack of success in breaking away from comic books, the writer-editor's wife suggested that he was looking at the problem from the wrong angle:





Fantastic Four TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

“Joan was commenting about the fact that after 20 years of producing comics I was still writing television material, advertising copy and newspaper features in my spare time. She wondered why I didn’t put as much effort and creativity into the comics as I seemed to be putting into my other freelance endeavors. The fact is, I had always thought of my comic-book work as a temporary job—even after all those years—and her little dissertation made me suddenly realize that it was time to start concentrating on what I was doing—to carve a real career for myself in the nowhere world of comic books.” (Lee 16)

Lee’s course of self-improvement did not take place overnight but Marvel publisher (and Lee’s cousin by marriage) **Martin Goodman** serendipitously provided him with the vehicle where it could take place. Always on the lookout for a new trend that his company could capitalize on, Goodman had paid attention when an industry insider at a golf game confided that DC’s *Justice League of America* title was proving to be a big success. The fateful golf player was sometimes recalled as DC executives Irwin Donenfeld or Jack Liebowitz but filmmaker-historian Michael Uslan later asserted (via an account from DC executive Sol Harrison) that the person in question was actually part of the Independent News distribution group.

“As the distributor of DC comics, the man certainly knew all the sales figures and was in the best position to tell this tidbit to Goodman. Now, why would Goodman be playing golf with the head of Independent News? I.N. was distributing ‘Marvel’ then, as well as DC, under a ‘take it or leave it’ arrangement that severely limited the number of comics Goodman could publish monthly. Of course, Goodman would want to be playing golf with this fellow and be in his good graces. It would absolutely be in the best interests of his business. In addition,

I understand that I.N. was well-known for its golf outings back then.” (Uslan 42-43)

Returning to his office, Goodman ordered Stan Lee to create their own version of *Justice League of America*. Lee, of course, grasped the problem that his publisher did not: the JLA was composed of characters that DC already published in individual series. But Marvel was currently publishing no superheroes and their 1954-1955 revival of 1940s stars Captain America, the Human Torch, and the Sub-Mariner had been a bust. Consequently, Lee decided to fake it: On the cover of *FF* #1, the copy screamed the names of the Thing, Mr. Fantastic, Human Torch, and Invisible Girl and declared they were “together for the first time in one mighty magazine.” If readers inferred from this that the quartet had previously appeared elsewhere, so much the better.

Working from Lee’s two-page plot, Jack Kirby broke down the story into a 25-page adventure. The origin sequence—including the vivid page where the would-be astronauts were peppered with cosmic rays—was, in some respects, a larger-than-life version of Kirby’s 1956 co-creation for DC’s *Showcase* #6: the Challengers of the Unknown. Like the FF, the soon-to-be Challs had also survived a crash (albeit of a plane) and united as a group of specialized adventurers.

The Challs were eventually followed at DC by other specialty quartets like the Suicide Squad, the Sea Devils, and Rip Hunter’s group of time-travelers. Each of them tweaked the formula for added reader identification by including a female member among the four, with the latter two teams also adding a teenage brother for kid appeal. Whether or not they were aware of these later groups, Lee and Kirby adhered to the formula with their own Susan and Johnny Storm.

Likewise, perhaps unknowingly, the duo followed the lead of DC editor Julius Schwartz in taking the name and concept of a 1940s character and recreating him with a new history. The Human Torch had originally been an android

Heroes High and Low

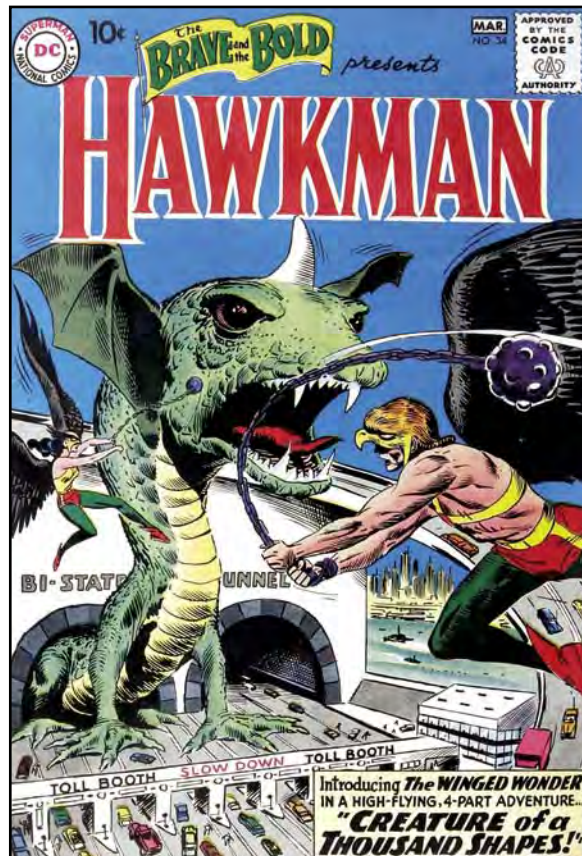
Julius Schwartz, DC's other hit-making editor, entered 1961 with the expectation that his ongoing modernizations of 1940s superheroes would continue to soar. His next subject would be **Hawkman**, a hero with wings strapped to his back who'd starred in 104 issues of *Flash Comics* from 1940 to 1948, appearing on the cover of every other issue (alternating with the Flash). Surviving as a member of the Justice Society in *All Star Comics* for a few more years, the character had been gone for a decade when Schwartz decided to revive him.

The original Hawkman had origins rooted in the distant past, established in his first story as having been the reincarnation of an Egyptian prince. With memories of his earlier life revived, antiquities collector Carter Hall had adopted weapons of the past like crossbows and quarterstaves to use in his fight against 20th Century evil as Hawkman. He was joined by Shiera Sanders, herself the reincarnation of the prince's lover and soon to become his crime fighting partner Hawkgirl.

For his revival, Schwartz dismissed the musty reincarnation aspect and, as he'd done with Green Lantern, placed the character squarely in the space age. Tapping Hawkman creator **Gardner Fox** to write the modern version, he joined him in working out the details.

The new heroes would be Katar Hol and Shayera, police officers from the distant planet Thanagar whose hawk-themed outfits (included anti-gravity belts) were law enforcement uniforms. Arriving on Earth in a spacecraft that would subsequently orbit the planet, the duo was in pursuit of a shape-changing fugitive named Byth. Through the efforts of their newfound human confidant (Police Commissioner George Emmett), the duo established cover identities as Carter and Shiera Hall, curators of the Midway City Museum (giving them access to ancient weapons they could use in tandem with their advanced scientific devices). With their mission completed, Hawkman and Hawkgirl received permission to remain on Earth and study its own criminology methods.

The couple was quietly trailblazing in one respect. In the various superhero features that Gardner Fox had written during the 1940s, he'd bypassed the secret identity game typified by the Clark Kent-Lois Lane-Superman triangle. In Fox's strips, the girlfriends knew all about their heroes' secret lives, even if they weren't full partners as Hawkgirl was. It seemed entirely natural, then, that the new Hawkman and Hawkgirl should be husband and wife when the



The New York/New Jersey Lincoln Tunnel inspired Joe Kubert's backdrop on the first Hawkman cover.
Hawkman TM and © DC Comics.

however, and he would soon find himself typecast as a "war artist" in the eyes of some readers.

The unsuspecting Schwartz prepared a three-issue tryout for Hawkman that ran in *The Brave and the Bold* #34-36 (February-March to June-July 1961) with new villains Matter Master and Shadow-Thief introduced in the latter two editions. Historically, it would be the first Schwartz series to list writer and artist credits on the first page of every story, something carried over to the Atom feature than followed later in the year. Emboldened by the burgeoning comic book fandom movement, the editor also took the unprecedented step of sending photocopies of *B&B* #34's origin story to select fans (Jerry Bails, Ronnie Graham, Ron

new series opened. They were, in an unheralded milestone, the first married superheroes in comic book history.

Visually, Katar Hol had black hair (as opposed to Carter Hall's blond hair) and his headgear once again resembled the head of a hawk, complete with beak. (In the final days of the original series, that look had been replaced with a simple cowl.) Meanwhile, Hawkgirl (formerly a brunette) was given red hair, a tribute to the editor's wife Jean.

When Schwartz revived the Flash in 1956, he'd assigned the art to Carmine Infantino, the man who'd last illustrated his solo series. He did the same with Hawkman, selecting the feature's final illustrator **Joe Kubert** for the revival. In the intervening years, Kubert had blossomed into an extraordinary artist with a lush, impressionistic style that would eventually win him acclaim among fans. Much of Kubert's work at DC since the mid-1950s had been on Robert Kanigher's various combat series,



Hawkman and Hawkgirl were comics' first married superheroes.
Hawkman TM and © DC Comics.



Much like the Fly, the Jaguar engaged in adventures that evoked the style of DC's Superman stories. The Jaguar TM and © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

millions of fireflies” and melting the villain—carefully described as “non-human”—into a puddle.

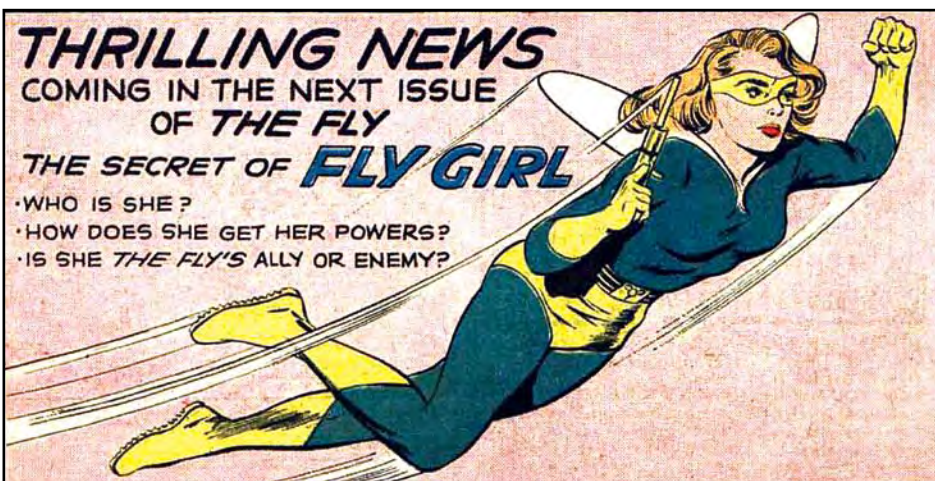
Both books cross-promoted each other with one-page teaser ads, even sharing a villain when Cat Girl (first seen in *Fly* #9) returned in *Jaguar* #4. Hoping that the character would be

exposed to the widest possible audience, the company even arranged for Jaguar short stories to appear in *Laugh Comics* #127 and *Pep Comics* #150 (both October 1961), titles that otherwise exclusively starred Archie and his satellite characters. Six-page superhero solo stories, variously star-

ring the Jaguar, Fly, or Fly-Girl, became a staple in the two humor comics from that point forward.

Archie had not yet given up on a non-superhero title for its Archie Adventure Series and turned to the still vigorous monster craze for inspiration. Arriving on newsstands more than a month before Halloween, *Tales Calculated To Drive You Bats* #1 (November 1961) was a send-up of horror icons written by George Gladir and drawn by Orlando Busino. Hosted by Igor and his pet bat Frederick, the book featured stories like that of a werewolf who had his hair removed only to be revealed as a runt who got beaten up on the beach.

The entire Archie humor line embraced monsters as fall rolled in, with staples like Frankenstein and Dracula popping up in multiple cover gags almost as often as beings from outer space. Even the Creature From the Black Lagoon made two appearances (*Jughead* #79 and *Laugh* #130). Effec-



The Archie Adventure imprint was aggressively promoted through specialty house ads. Fly-Girl TM and © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

ket that other publishers were eyeing. In fact, it was very much in the mold of the other light supernatural/suspense/science fiction titles that writer-editor **Richard Hughes** was producing and proved short-lived, ending with issue #7. In the letter column of *Midnight Mystery* #6, reader Jerry Smith remarked, "The type of stories I like are those where, by a twist of fate, people turn into monsters, such as werewolves, Draculas, and Franksteins. Do you think you might print such stories as these?"

It was the sort of question that Hughes addressed periodically in his freewheeling letter columns and his answer, as always, was an emphatic no. There was a bit of shame in that, rooted in the fact that he'd created the first ongoing horror comic book—*Adventures Into the Unknown*—in 1948 and inspired scores of far grislier imitators from other publishers. Having inadvertently set into motion the circumstances that led to comic books coming under attack in the 1950s, Hughes' responses—like this one from *Forbidden Worlds* #98 (September 1961)—were understandable:

"As editors, the thing we're most interested in is story. We admire a good and carefully-constructed plot, particularly if it's fresh and original. How was this ever possible in the days of senseless horror? The criterion of quality in a story at that time was whether it looked awful enough. Werewolves, vampires, and zombies had certain time-honored attributes which telegraphed in advance exactly what each story was going to be about. As to the harm done, the least was an offense against good taste. [...] Now we can't lean on the crutch of silly horror—we've got to come up with plots that are challenging, tense, and actionful in themselves. So—



Midnight Mystery wasn't the horror comic book that its title suggested and it lasted a scant ten months. Midnight Mystery TM and © respective copyright holder.

nuts to the 'good old days!'"

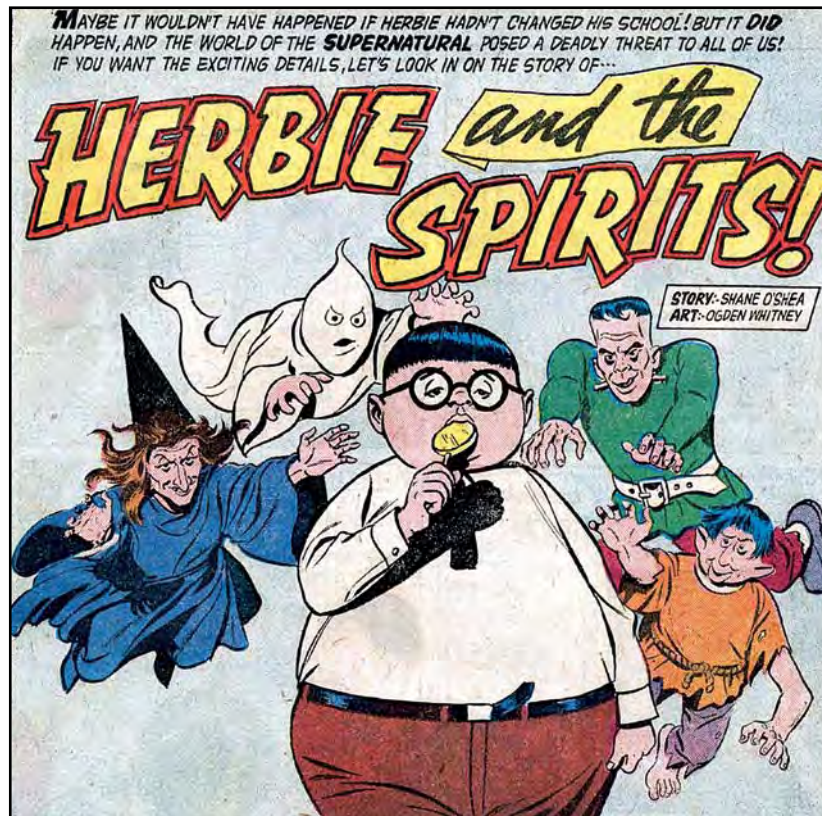
Hughes preferred lighter fare, as in the two sequels that appeared in February and March-dated issues. A year earlier, Hughes (with artist Ogden Whitney) had told the story of Eugene "Knuckles" Markham, a teen gang leader who was accidentally rocketed into outer space, fell in love on the alien world of Karonia, and turned over a new leaf when he came home (*Adventures Into the Unknown* #114). The "Delinquent In Outer Space" returned in *Adventures* #122 when he discovered that no less than Nikita Khrushchev was planning to nuke Karonia in a show of Soviet superiority. Leaping into action, Markham managed to save the planet and win his lost Karonian love in the bargain.

More significant was the story in *Forbidden Worlds* #94 (also by Hughes and Whitney), featuring the return of a "little fat nothing" named Herbie Popnecker (first seen in #73 in 1958). With a bowl-shaped haircut,

thick glasses, a round torso, and a ubiquitous lollipop in his mouth, Herbie was as unlikely a leading man as could be imagined. That was part of the joke. Through means never entirely explained but partly attributed to magical

lollipops, Herbie was the world's most infallible superhero, adept at thwarting any threat thrown in his path even as his oblivious father dismissed him as a pathetic failure. The kid was no more capable of being defeated than he was of cracking a smile.

Harvey Comics continued its show of faith in the strong-performing kids humor characters that had become the company's signature features. The summer saw the first spin-off series of three of its characters, each of them in the 64-page giant format priced at 25-cents: *Richie Rich Millions* #1, *Spooky Spooktown* #1, and *Little Dot's Uncles and Aunts* #1, the last of which followed try-outs in *Harvey Hits*. Published in the midst



When Richard Hughes (a.k.a. Shane O'Shea) did use horror icons, he did so strictly for laughs. Herbie Popnecker TM and © Roger Broughton.

1962

CHAPTER THREE

Gains and Losses

Color comic book publishers went into 1962 braced for falling sales. The price hike from 10¢ to 12¢ (with Dell issues still at 15¢) was a virtual guarantee that kids were going to be buying fewer comics. Before the year was over, industry leader Dell fractured, splitting into two less dominant publishers. One researcher speculated that DC Comics' cumulative 1962 sales may have been \$678,237 less than those in 1961 (Tolworthy). Gilberton, known for its literary comics, ceased publishing new material effective with *Classics Illustrated Junior* #576 ("The Princess Who Saw Everything") and *Classics Illustrated* #167 ("Faust").

A 1962 *New York Times* article by Peter Bart tossed out discouraging statistics, noting that the industry was selling an estimated 350,000,000 comic books versus 800,000,000 a decade earlier. "The comics industry, once a major advertising medium for reaching the teen-age and younger market, today has lost much of its revenue to rival media," Bart continued. "Even National Periodical, Superman's publisher, presently derives only about \$176,000 a year from advertising compared with nearly \$1,000,000 a decade or so ago" ("Superman Faces New Hurdles" 166).

The magazine industry in general was struggling, with the Curtis Publishing Company—whose periodicals included *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Ladies' Home Journal*—reporting losses in excess of \$15,000,000 for the first nine months of 1962. The news that Congress had passed a bill increasing postage costs (to begin January 7, 1963) was also greeted with concern. "The bill was milder than one originally considered," Peter Bart wrote, "but it would still increase distribution costs by many millions of dollars" ("Publishing" 426).

For other comic book publishers, there's little doubt that tales of woe were also being told in the offices of Charlton, Harvey, Archie, ACG, Prize, and Hallden. In every office, that is, but Martin Goodman's. The publisher of "MC," the company restricted to publishing a handful of titles and tentatively grasping for a new corporate identity, came out of 1962 smiling. His sales were up.

The World's Greatest Comic Magazine

Much of the credit could be laid at the feet of writer-editor **Stan Lee** and penciler **Jack Kirby**, the dream team that had created *Fantastic Four* in 1961. Although inspired by DC's *Justice League of America*, the FF had departed from convention in then-radical ways with its characters clad in street clothes and not bothering with secret identities. Readers immediately began to write in to insist that the *Fantastic Four* be changed into something more familiar.

Effective with *Fantastic Four* #3 (featuring the comic book's first letter column), Lee and Kirby assented. The FF received matching blue costumes (with the monstrous Thing's outfit soon scaled back to shorts), an official headquarters atop a skyscraper (identified as the Baxter Building in issue #6), and an aerial Fantasticar (soon nicknamed "the flying bathtub"). Rejecting a previously-commissioned cover that spotlighted the issue's monster menace, Lee had Kirby draw a new cover that loudly touted the changes. On the same issue, a less-than-humble tagline—"The Greatest Comic Magazine in the World"—was added, revised to "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine" on the cover of issue #4 and every issue thereafter. Lee's desire to please readers was not always the wisest narrative step but, at this early juncture, it helped forge the personal bond between the writer and his readers.

In 1990, historian Greg Theakston published rare original art and artifacts related to *FF* #3 that revealed that the team originally sported an overlapping "FF" on their shirts. Doodling alternate logos, Lee devised a three-dimensional "4" that became the team's official symbol. The team's costumes had initially included masks, a detail that was revised before the story was published. Since the quartet's identities were already public knowledge, the masks were unnecessary and, as Theakston noted, impractical:

"It must have occurred to Stan that the Torch didn't need a mask, and that Ben couldn't hide under any mask, and the Invisible Girl needed a mask least of all. That left Reed, and if the other three didn't need masks, neither did he. Stan plays with the idea when he has the Thing tear off his new outfit halfway through the third issue. After all, he was far more interesting to look at than any uniform." (Theakston 32)

The color scheme of the FF's outfits was chosen by Stan Goldberg. "I decided that I couldn't really put two or three colors on those costumes. It had to be one color. Since the Thing was orange and the Human Torch burst into flames, we had enough color there and didn't have to worry about the dull, blue color of the costumes" (Amash 21).

Adding superhero trappings was really only a modest concession. The suggestion of reader Bill Sarill (in *FF* #3's letter column) that "the Thing ought to revert to human form



If the *Fantastic Four* wanted to star in the *World's Greatest Comic Magazine*, they needed to dress accordingly. *Fantastic Four* TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

as will as his teammates do" was something else. Lee and Kirby not only rejected the idea but played up the situation's tragedy by including scenes like those in *FF* #2 and #4 where Ben Grimm regressed to his human persona and had only moments to tearfully rejoice before involuntarily becoming the Thing again. Elements like these and the friction between the four heroes were soon prompting responses like this one from Len Blake in *FF* #4:



Scenes like this one from *Fantastic Four* #2 accentuated the inherent heartbreak at the core of the Thing. *Fantastic Four* TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

ville were just pretending they didn't know Johnny's secret as a show of respect.

Although the feature introduced characters who'd later be folded into *Fantastic Four* itself like the villainous Wizard (*Strange Tales* #102) and Paste-Pot Pete (#104), the Human Torch series was clearly of secondary concern. Stan Lee only plotted the series while his brother Larry Lieber scripted it. And after penciling the first five stories, Jack Kirby handed the series off to his inker Dick Ayers, now assigned full art chores. (Ayers had also become Kirby's regular inker on *Fantastic Four* with issue #6.)

Since the Human Torch had been a headliner in the 1940s, there was an assumption that he would be again in the 1960s. Lee had not yet quite grasped the fact that it was the Thing—not the Torch—who was the breakout star of *Fantastic Four*. Building on the character's inherent tragedy, he and Kirby gave Ben Grimm a blind girl friend named Alicia (daughter of the evil Puppet Master) in *FF* #8. Unbothered by his rocky exterior, she saw the true man inside the Thing. The insecure Ben constantly feared that if Alicia

could see him, she'd drop him in a heartbeat. Balancing the melodrama, a reflexive sense of humor was also endowed on the Thing, extending to his brotherly brawls with the Torch and the taunts he received from the unseen Yancy Street Gang.

Doctor Banner and Mister Hulk

Fantastic Four was only part of a very fertile year for Lee and Kirby. Buoyed by early reader reaction to their new title, the duo conceived another series which spun off the monsters that had been driving sales. Effective with its 86th issue (March, 1962), *Teen-Age Romance* was dropped from the schedule and replaced with *the Incredible Hulk* #1 (May, 1962).

Just as the FF had first plunged into space to beat "the Com-mies" to the moon, the principals in *Hulk* #1 hoped to create a g-bomb ("g" as in gamma radiation) that would give the United States an edge in the arms race. The bomb's creator was mild-mannered bespectacled Bruce Banner, whose insistence on caution in testing quickly earned him the enmity of the blustering General "Thunderbolt" Ross. Coming in between the two of them was the requisite love interest Betty Ross, who was obviously sweet on the quiet scientist even if her father hadn't yet caught on.



The Hulk was shadowed by the guilt-ridden Rick Jones who'd unwittingly initiated his transformation.
The Hulk TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

When a teenager named Rick Jones drove onto the desert test site on a dare, a hysterical Banner rushed out to shove him into a protective trench. Unfortunately, Banner's scheming assistant Igor opted not to delay the countdown and his boss—though miles away from ground zero—was bathed in radiation when the gamma bomb detonated. The two men were held in isolation, thus leaving Rick Jones to be the lone witness when the moon rose and Doctor Banner changed into a monstrous creature whom soldiers soon dubbed **the Hulk**.

Wracked with guilt, the teenager resolved to stay by the side of both Banner and the Hulk, making excuses when need be to ensure that no one learn their secret. Super-strong and prone to angry outbursts, the Hulk had no idea that he was Banner and regarded his alter ego as a weakling. It fell to Rick to guide the so-called monster as they came into contact with a succession of strange threats, molding the Hulk into something of a superhero while Thunderbolt Ross and the Army saw only a rampaging creature who left trails of destruction everywhere he went.

With his squared skull and grim expression on the cover and splash page, Kirby's Hulk was unmistakably derived from Boris Karloff's portrayal of the Frankenstein monster in the 1931 Universal Pictures movie. The Aurora Plastics Corporation, tapping into the present-day monster craze, had released a model kit based on Karloff's Frankenstein in 1961. The reception undoubtedly exceeded their expectations with demand reportedly compelling



Bitten by a radioactive spider, young Peter Parker accidentally discovered that he could stick to and climb walls. Spider-Man TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

Days passed and the incident was forgotten. Returning home one night, Peter was greeted at the curb by a policeman with the horrifying news that his Uncle Ben had surprised a burglar in their home and was fatally shot. In a state of shock, the teenager pulled on his costume, tracked the assailant to a warehouse, and pummeled him into unconsciousness. And only then realized that he was holding the same man that he'd allowed to escape at the TV studio a week earlier.

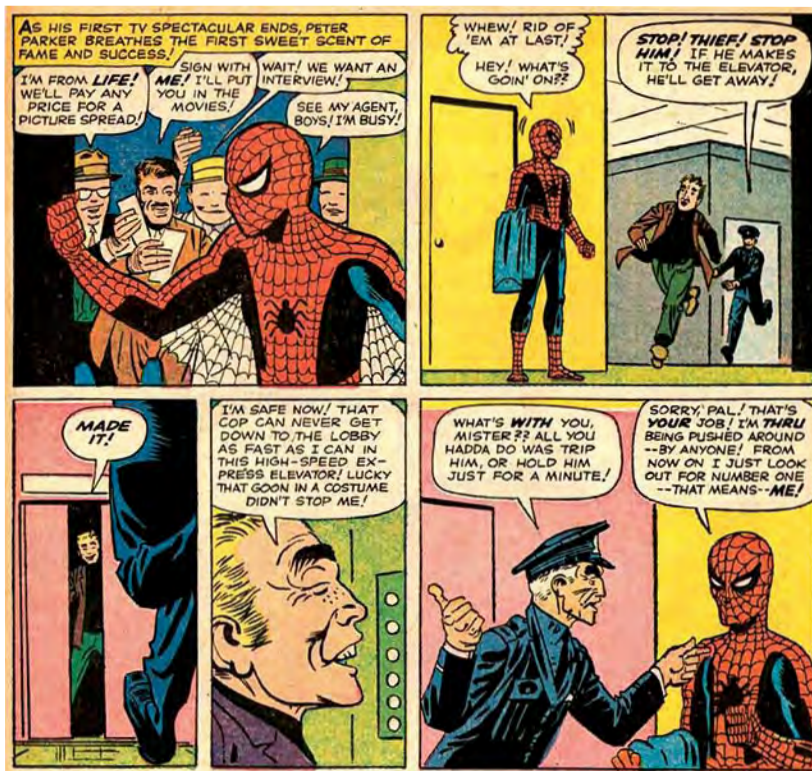
Leaving the killer webbed up for the police, Spider-Man staggered away in a daze, overwhelmed that his uncle had died because of his earlier apathy. "And a lean, silent figure fades into the gathering darkness," the final caption read, "aware at last that in this world, with great power there must also come—great responsibility."

Written by Stan Lee and illustrated by Steve Ditko, the 11-page story packed a punch and struck a chord with teenagers across the country. Years of honing their skills on short morality plays had culminated in one of the great moments in comic book history. The path leading up to its publication, Lee wrote, had been a complicated one:

"For quite a while I'd been toying with the idea of doing a strip that would violate all the conventions—break all the rules. A strip that would actually feature a teenager as the star, instead of making him an (ugh!) adult hero's sidekick. A strip in which the main character would lose out as often

as he'd win—in fact, more often. A strip in which nothing would progress according to formula—the situations, the cast of characters, and their relationship to each other would all be unusual and unexpected." (Lee 133)

Casting about for a name, the writer recalled a favorite pulp magazine hero of the 1930s—the Spider, Master of Men. Deciding to call his own hero Spider-Man, Lee immediately went to his favored superhero collaborator Jack Kirby and explained his idea:



Spider-Man's failure to take action against a fleeing thief changed the course of his life. Spider-Man TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

"I told Jack that I wanted to try something different. I didn't want [Spider-Man] to be overly heroic-looking. I wanted him to be just an ordinary guy who happens to have a super power. He was to be not too handsome, not too glamorous, not too graceful, not too muscular—in other words, sort of the way I might be if I had a super power." (Lee 135)

In 1953, another Spiderman had been conceived by Joe Simon and his brother-in-law Jack Oleck as a possible series for Harvey Comics. As developed with

artist C.C. Beck, the feature was renamed Silver Scarab and dealt with a boy named Tommy Troy who could be magically transformed into an adult hero. Harvey passed on the proposal as too derivative of Fawcett's Captain Marvel but Simon wasn't one to let a good idea die. In 1959, he decided to pitch the series to Archie Comics but changed its hero to the Fly. Reuniting with former partner Jack Kirby, Simon showed him the earlier Spiderman/Silver Scarab and asked

Heavy Metal

Curiously, Marvel's burst of new creations coincided with the first year in recent memory in which DC did not—with one notable exception—generate a clutch of their own prospective stars. Star-making editors **Julius Schwartz** and **Mort Weisinger** built on pre-established situations and characters within their own groups of titles, pushing them to greater heights. On the whole, though, there was a sense that DC might have run dry on new concepts. Tryout title *The Brave and the Bold* actually returned to older characters Cave Carson (*B&B* #40-41) and Hawkman (*B&B* #42-44) whose previous test runs had been encouraging...but not quite enough to earn them ongoing titles.

Robert Kanigher had just concluded a reprise of his own *Suicide Squad* in *B&B* #37-39 when DC's Executive Vice President approached the writer-editor about a new series for the company's other tryout title. In a 1982 interview, Kanigher recounted what would become an industry legend:

"Late Friday, Irwin Donenfeld said that it wasn't my turn to do *Showcase*, but did I have an idea for one. I said: Metal Men. Robots with human characteristics, but still retaining their metallic properties. Irwin said: Do it. I regret that I'm not versed in science. I gave myself a crash course in Chemistry from a battered book that Julie Schwartz had on his desk. [*Van Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia*.] The next morning I drove my daughter Jan to Julliard's School of Music, where she was taking an advance course in ballet for children. It was winter. I parked on a deserted street facing the Hudson River and warmed myself by writing in a spiral notebook with ruled pages. When Jan was finished I drove home with her. I continued writing. I finished the 25 pages the next day and my wife Bern stoically typed the script. On Monday I called Ross Andru in to do the breakdowns." (Snyder 77)

Rather than have Andru fully pencil the pages, Kanigher had him sketch out rough layouts for each page on typing paper and noted any revisions as the artist turned them in. By the end of that Monday, the layouts for the entire story had been



approved and Andru went home to begin penciling them. "I saved the length of time it would have taken Ross to do an entire book of pencils, come back, show them to me, have me edit them, send them to the letterer, and back to Mike [Esposito] to do the inking, and back to me," Kanigher explained. The entire process took ten days (Snyder 78).

As related in *Showcase* #37 (March-April 1962), the *Metal Men* began with Will "Doc" Magnus, "the man who makes science-fiction ideas practical." It was Magnus who the U.S. government came to when they were seeking a means of defeating a giant radioactive flying manta that was terrorizing the east coast. The scientist had already created a life-sized robot woman made of platinum (dubbed "Tina") who was animated with human characteristics

by a microscopic device later referred to as a responsometer. With the government's encouragement and funded by the millions of dollars his patents had earned him, Doc created five male siblings for Tina: Gold, Iron, Lead, Mercury, and Tin.

Each of them had distinct personalities. Kanigher knew that he wanted a female in the group and portrayed Tina as hopelessly infatuated with her creator, much to Doc's exasperation. Kanigher later discussed the process of creating the other Metal Men:

"Gold was the most difficult. From the viewpoint of the character, he's a noble metal. How can you handle nobility without making him Mister Clean? Lead was easy. I made him like William Bendix, the actor, except not as intelligent as Bendix. [...]

Iron was the strong man of metals. Mercury the most ill-tempered. Tin, the lowliest, who knew it, hence his inferiority complex and stammer." (Snyder 77)



A detail of this Metal Men image appeared in the September 23, 1962 New York Times alongside a drawing of standard-bearer Superman. Metal Men TM and © DC Comics.

The Metal Men were extraordinarily pliable, capable of stretching and reshaping themselves if not melding with each other to blend their strength. As drawn by Andru and Esposito, the sextet had a cartoony, expressive look that fit perfectly with Kanigher's characterization. The team had a charm and unique perspective that set it apart from every other comic book on the market. There was even an element of tragic heroism in the



Gold Key quickly abandoned a series of comics that used photos and word balloons to adapt movies and TV shows.

Three Stooges TM and © Norman Maurer Productions, Inc.

change, Western also asked its artists to begin drawing their original artwork at twice the size of a printed page rather than 2 ½ times larger as they'd done to that point. In a 1962 letter to Malcolm Willits, Barks groused about the reduced drawing size:

"It is a painful one for us artists, as the old size of 2 ½ times up gave us room to operate with big pens or brushes when advantageous. Now the size is 2 times up. This wouldn't be a calamity, except that some bright boy in the East thought the pages would look 'different' if the dialogue balloons were inset a minimum of ¼ inch from the top or sides of the panels. Naturally, this compresses the drawing area." (Blum 5)

The ¼-inch "frame" that Barks described was added to the Gold Key stories with an eye toward future reprinting in different formats. If the artwork needed to be cut down to fit, the irrelevant borders could be removed. Whitman Publishing, another division of Western, explored one such experimental book series in that regard during 1962. Eight 136-page hardbacks about the size of Big Little Books were devoted to various licensed cartoon characters, with the Bugs Bunny and Donald Duck editions reprinting stories from 1957-1958 Dell comics. The remaining six editions



The irradiated Doctor Solar became Gold Key's first superhero, illustrated by Bob Fujitani with cover paintings by Richard Powers. Doctor Solar TM and © Random House, Inc.

experimented with in its 1961 *Golden Picture Story Book* series. Seeking to bring the comics in line with its storybooks and coloring books, they asked that the borders be removed from every story panel and the traditionally rounded word balloons be replaced with rectangular ones. Carl Barks drew exactly one tale in the new format (*Uncle Scrooge* #40) but disliked it so intently that he was allowed to return to the old style even as the rest of line moved on.

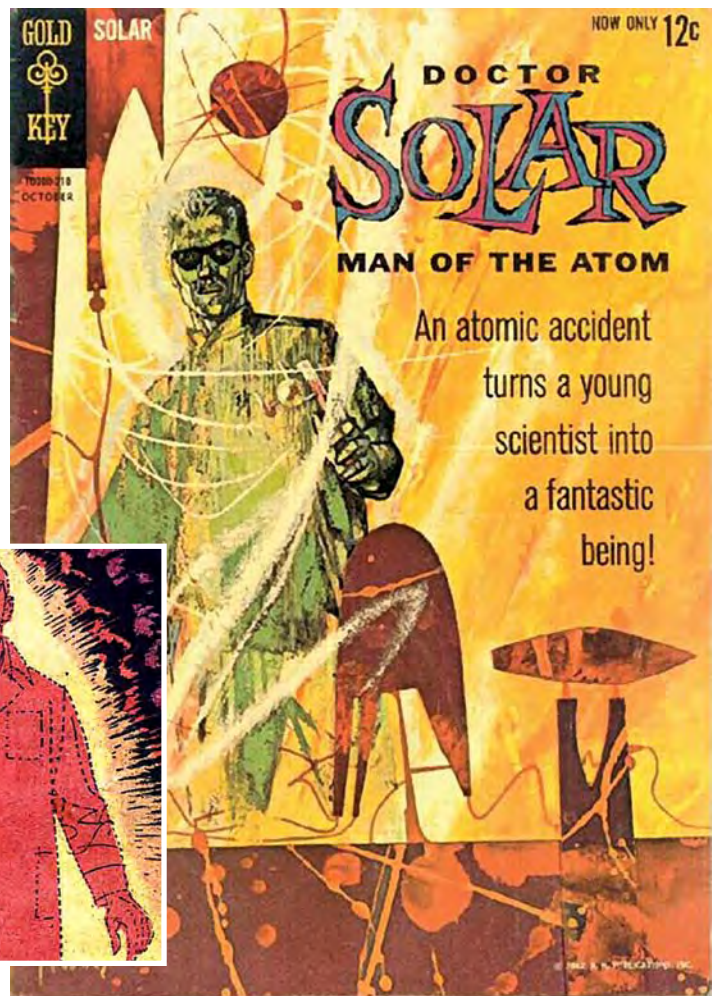
Coinciding with this

featured a variety of Hanna-Barbera characters in brief two-to-four page episodes that were originally produced by U.S. artists for weekly British tabloid series. Sold in non-traditional comics outlets, the books failed to generate much interest and no further volumes were produced (Ward 54).

One of Gold Key's innovations never made it past 1962. Matt Murphy envisioned using fumetti—film stills with word balloons—in thick 25-cent comic books based on TV shows and movies. Dated November 1962, *Ben Casey Film Story* #1 and *The Three Stooges In Orbit* #1 (based on the current film) marked the beginning and end of the format. *Gunsnake Film Story* was advertised as part of the initial Gold Key issues but never published.

Murphy had greater success with *Doctor Solar, Man of the Atom* #1 (October 1962), Gold Key's first entrance into the superhero movement. "I created it out of whole cloth," he declared in *The Comics!* (Vol. 16) #5 (May 2005), "and verbally described it to [scripter] Paul S. Newman." The script was illustrated by Bob Fujitani, who remained on the series through issue #5.

Superficially, the character's origin shared elements not only with Charlton's Captain Atom but also Marvel's Hulk. Like Bruce Banner, Doctor Solar had been transformed into a powerful green figure by a nuclear accident engineered by a spy. Where the Hulk was a rampaging brute whose power was essentially his strength, Doctor Solar could transform himself into pure energy and fly, among other attributes, while in complete control of his great intellect.



after singer Della Reese), the young heroine was also assisted by her familiar, a cat named Salem. "At the time, I believed I was naming Sabrina after a woman I recalled from my teen days as having a name with a New England ring to it. Only many years later did I recall that her name was Sabra" (Gladir 38).

Editor Richard Goldwater assigned Dan DeCarlo to pencil the five-page episode that appeared in *Archie's Madhouse* #22 (October 1962). In a nod to the play and film "Bell, Book and Candle," the pilot asserted that witches could not cry and would lose their powers should they fall in love. Once Sabrina became a recurring character, such rules were forgotten.

Despite the affection that Gladir had for Sabrina, she was anything but a breakout star. The teen-age witch didn't return until *Madhouse* #28 (September 1963) and appeared in only an issue or two a year through 1969, when television exposure magically elevated the character to stardom.

In the meantime, *Tales Calculated To Drive You Bats* was cancelled with #7 (November 1962), its final issue replacing the humorous monster-themed vignettes with mild horror and science fiction tales drawn in the Archie style. Hilda the Witch survived the cancellation, however, having moved to *Archie's Madhouse* with #19 (June 1962) and ultimately being folded into the Sabrina continuity with #37 (December 1964) as the younger witch's aunt.

Bats' cancellation reduced the Archie Adventure Series line by one but *Life With Archie* and Robert Bernstein and John Rosenberger's two superhero titles forged onward in mostly episodic routine. Bernstein's DC Comics colleague (and Batman co-creator) Bill Finger briefly did some moonlighting at Archie in 1962, writing a pair of Fly adventures in *Laugh* #132 and *Pep* #154 along with a Fly/Black Hood team-up in *Laugh* #134.

Adventures of the Jaguar was enlivened with the addition of recurring nemesis Cat Girl, whose priorities shifted over the course of the year from enslaving mankind (issue #4) to winning the Jaguar's heart (issue #6). Attempting to build a group of female romantic rivals like those in DC's Su-

perman titles, Bernstein even penned an episode in which Cat-Girl, the undersea temptress Kree-Nal, and Ralph Hardy's secretary Jill Ross put their differences aside when the Jaguar disappeared (issue #7).

Adventures of the Fly #21 (September 1962) revisited the concept of a large-scale team of super-criminals, unseen in a superhero series since the 1940s' Injustice Society (*All Star Comics* #37, #41) and Villainy, Inc. (*Wonder Woman* #28). Composed of eight separate villains (seven of whom had appeared in previous issues), the Anti-Fly League targeted the Fly and Fly-Girl for three consecutive issues.

Fly #23's "Ice Giant From Pluto" was very much in the mold of a typical Mort Weisinger-edited Superman story of the era, one that employed both a puzzling mystery and charming sentiment. Discovering that the Fly had been replaced by an imposter, Fly-Girl ultimately discovered that he was really the Jaguar. He'd been covering for the genuine hero until the Fly could return with a magical pendant intended for Fly-Girl on her first anniversary as a super-heroine.



Fans longed to see the Archie heroes united as a team but had to settle for the Fly's enemies gathering against him. The Fly TM and © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

Letter columns were introduced in the July 1962-dated *Fly* #20 and *Jaguar* #7. By issue #8 of the latter, fan Paul Seydor had suggested uniting all the Archie heroes (Black Hood, Fly, Fly-Girl, Jaguar, the Shield) as the Anti-Crime Squad and even enclosed a cover





Triumph and Tragedy

Very few parents hope their children grow up to become professional cartoonists. The parents of Mexican artist **Sergio Aragonés** were no exception. Despite demonstrating a passion and skill for drawing from an early age, Aragonés knew his mother and father regarded his craft as merely a hobby on the way to a real job. “When I left for the United States at 24,” he recalled, “unable to speak English and with no money, to pursue a career in cartooning, they were devastated” (Meglin 11).

In New York City, Aragonés had minor successes but was unable to get that big break. A fan of *Mad* since he saw his first copy in 1955, the young man resisted approaching them. “It was a satire magazine that poked fun at American life,” he explained, “and [included] not one pantomime gag” which he specialized in (Meglin 10). Inevitably, though, he gave *Mad* a try.

Aragonés’ instincts were correct. The magazine’s editors didn’t think his sight gags were right for them. Associate editor Jerry DeFuccio saw something in the cartoonist, though, and recalled how they had been able to integrate Antonio Prohias into *Mad*. So editor Nick Meglin took another look. “I came across a series of astronaut gags,” he remembered. “Each one delivered a laugh visually, without relying on a caption or dialogue balloon. I quickly roughed out a spread of the strongest panels and brought them to the Art Department.” After further tightening of the layout by *Mad*’s art director John Putnam, the two-page spread was approved by editor Al Feldstein, and Sergio Aragonés was on the magazine’s payroll (Meglin 9).

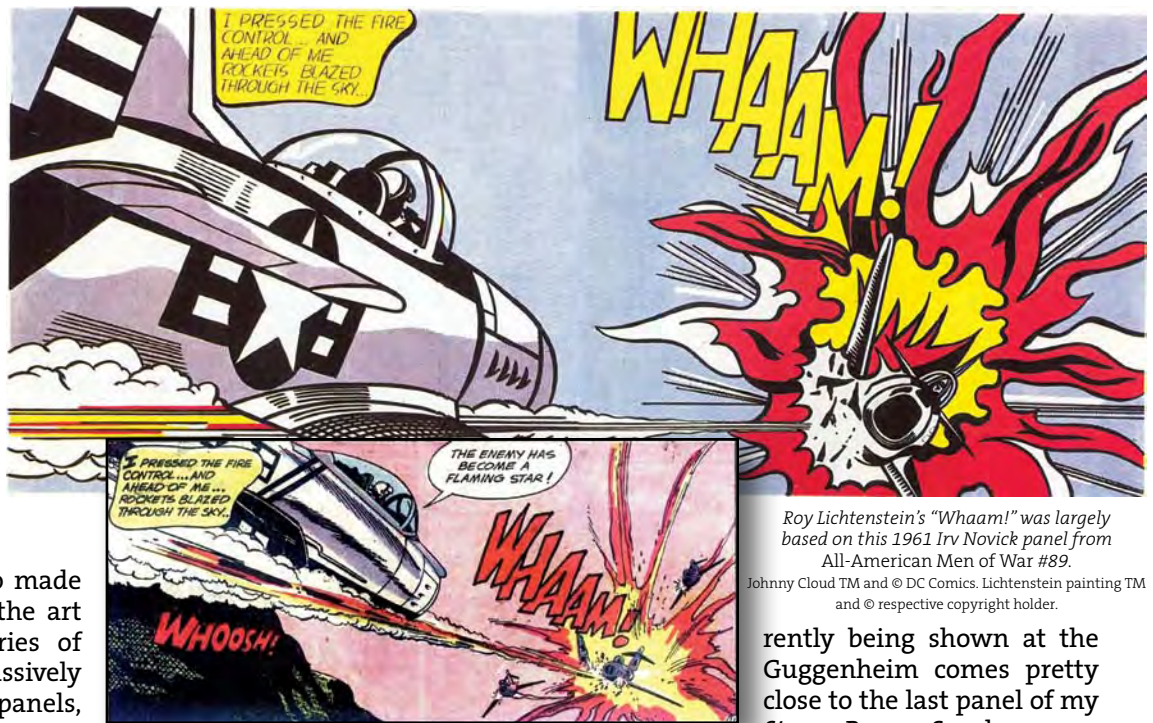
“A Mad Look at the U.S. Space Effort” (*Mad* #76: January 1963) began a half-century relationship between Aragonés and the magazine. Tiny sight gags by the cartoonist also peppered the edges of many pages in the issue, thus introducing cartoons eventually dubbed “Marginals” that would become a *Mad* staple. “After my appearance in *Mad*,” the cartoonist recalled, “my father mentioned it to his colleagues at the movie studio. Their reaction must have been positive because he called me afterwards and I could hear the pride and tears in his voice” (Meglin 11).

It was not easy being a comic book writer or artist in the early 1960s. The pay was low. The product they produced was looked on by most adults as juvenile at best and sub-literate pornography at worst. Despite it all, most of them brought a sense of professionalism to their jobs and the best imbued their work with a personal touch that they could take pride in. But if anyone had forgotten what the general public thought of comic books, Roy Lichtenstein was there in 1963 to remind them.

He was part of the Pop Art movement that began in the late 1950s characterized by incorporating common objects and cultural images into paintings, sculptures, et al. Perhaps the best known example of Pop Art may have been Andy Warhol's 1962 painting *Campbell's Soup Cans*, which was simply a portrait of each of the 32 varieties of soup offered by the company at the time.

It was Lichtenstein who made a name for himself in the art community with a series of paintings that were massively enlarged comic book panels, complete with word balloons, sound effects, and oversized orbs of color that simulated the tiny Ben-Day dots used on the comics page. To artists like William Overgard, the images were also familiar. Noting the painter's remarks in the May 3, 1963 issue of *Time* that he used real comics panels as his inspiration, Overgard felt obliged to send a letter to the magazine that appeared in its May 17 issue:

"As a cartoonist I was interested in Roy Lichtenstein's comments on comic strips in your article on Pop Art. Though he may not, as he says, copy them exactly, Lichtenstein in his painting cur-



Roy Lichtenstein's "Whaam!" was largely based on this 1961 Irv Novick panel from *All-American Men of War #89*. Johnny Cloud TM and © DC Comics. Lichtenstein painting TM and © respective copyright holder.

rently being shown at the Guggenheim comes pretty close to the last panel of my *Steve Roper* Sunday page of August 6, 1961. Very

flattering...I think?"

Overgard was far from the only artist whose work had been transferred to canvas without credit. Among Lichtenstein's 1963 works were "Drowning Girl" (based in part on the Tony Abruzzo splash page from 1962's *Secret Hearts* #83), "Whaam!" (recreating panels by Irv Novick and Russ Heath from *All-American Men of War* #89), and "Image Duplicator" (inspired by Jack Kirby art in *X-Men* #1).

To the artists affected, the paintings were insulting on many levels. The recreations were crude and primitive, suggesting that the original better-drawn artwork was the same. In the eyes of many in the art community, the paintings were meaningful and ironic, a statement on the comparatively irrelevant comic books. And the paintings were selling for increasingly large sums of money.

"[London's] Tate Gallery bought Lichtenstein's "Whaam!" for £7,000," cartoonist Lee Elias raged in a December 1970 interview. "If it wasn't so stiff, I'd recommend that they roll it up and sell it as toilet paper" (Penman 12). John Romita, one of the DC romance artists whose work had been appropriated, recalled the furor:

"A lot of the guys—Bernie Sachs and a few others—wanted to get together and file a class action suit against Lichtenstein and some of the other artists. I was not too interested. I said first of all, I don't want to contribute money to lawyers. I didn't want to get involved in it. I even foolishly told them that I was somehow flattered by the fact that they would consider these panels so good that they felt it was worthy

of a painting. And, of course, they thought I was crazy. 'Flattered?! They're ripping you off!' I never felt ripped off. I felt like it was a different art form. I



Lichtenstein also used a Russ Heath image from *All-American Men of War #89* as the basis for a painting.

All-American Men of War TM and © DC Comics. Lichtenstein painting TM and © respective copyright holder.

of a damsel in distress. That would change when she returned as a series regular with issue #13. To a general audience that still held the average girl and a growing number of teenage boys, a pretty heroine in a green jumpsuit was far more appealing than a magical imp named Quisp (who was quietly dropped from *Aquaman* in the same issue that Mera debuted).

Editor **Jack Schiff** still had faith in comical helpmates, whether Bat-Mite or (in the *Manhunter From Mars* series) Zook, but he also appreciated the appeal of costumed heroines. In the space of seven years, Batwoman had become a fixture of the *Batman* series and even her protégée Bat-Girl seemed to be sticking around as a periodic foil for Robin. *Batman* #153's "Prisoners of Three Worlds" (by **Bill Finger** and **Sheldon Moldoff**) developed the relationships of the heroic quartet to a greater degree than ever before.



Filled with extraterrestrials and science fiction elements, the plot was exactly the sort of thing that many fans later contended was the antithesis of a Batman story. But it was more than that. At 25 pages, the "3-part novel" was the longest single adventure in Batman's 24-year history and allowed an unusual degree of character development,

An unprecedented full-length story tapped the romantic tension between Batman and Batwoman as well as their junior partners.
 Batman, Batwoman TM and © DC Comics.



In short, the heroes were attacked by an alien thief who tried to teleport them to his home dimension. A mishap resulted in only Robin and Bat-Girl being shunted away while Batman and Batwoman's life forces were torn from their bodies and sent elsewhere. From there, the plot split into three directions and played with the same emotional scenarios that Mort Weisinger was having success with. Fighting back feelings of despair and hopelessness, each pair of heroes opened up to each other. On Earth, too weak to even stand, Batman confessed to Batwoman that he loved her before they used their last reserves of strength to restore their life forces and partners.

The impact of the story was blunted a bit by the final panels' restoration of the platonic status quo—Batman claimed his confession was only meant to make Batwoman's "last moments happy ones"—but readers at least got to see Robin and Bat-Girl walk off hand-in-hand. Still, the story was an important concession on Schiff's part that comic book storytelling was changing.

In issue #153's letter column, reader Robert O'Neill advocated fewer issues with the traditional three short stories in favor of two longer ones or a full-length adventure. Elsewhere on the page, Jerry Johnson complimented the improvement of *Detective Comics'* *Manhunter From Mars* feature since its own page count had increased. Bowing to popular demand, Schiff switched to two stories per issue with *Batman* #155 and *World's Finest Comics* #134 (forcing the *Aquaman* and *Green Arrow* features to appear in alternating issues in the latter title).

Schiff never precisely edited another full-length Batman story but he came close in issue #157 (June 1963), also by Finger and Moldoff. The opening eight-page tale recounted Robin's encounter with a tiny villain named Ant-Man—and if Marvel Comics noticed that the name of their year-old hero was being used, there's no record of it—while expressly stating that Batman was away on a secret mission.

That mission—its after-effects, really—were the subject of the two-part "Robin Dies At Dawn" that filled out the remainder of the issue. The Caped Crusader had participated in a days-long



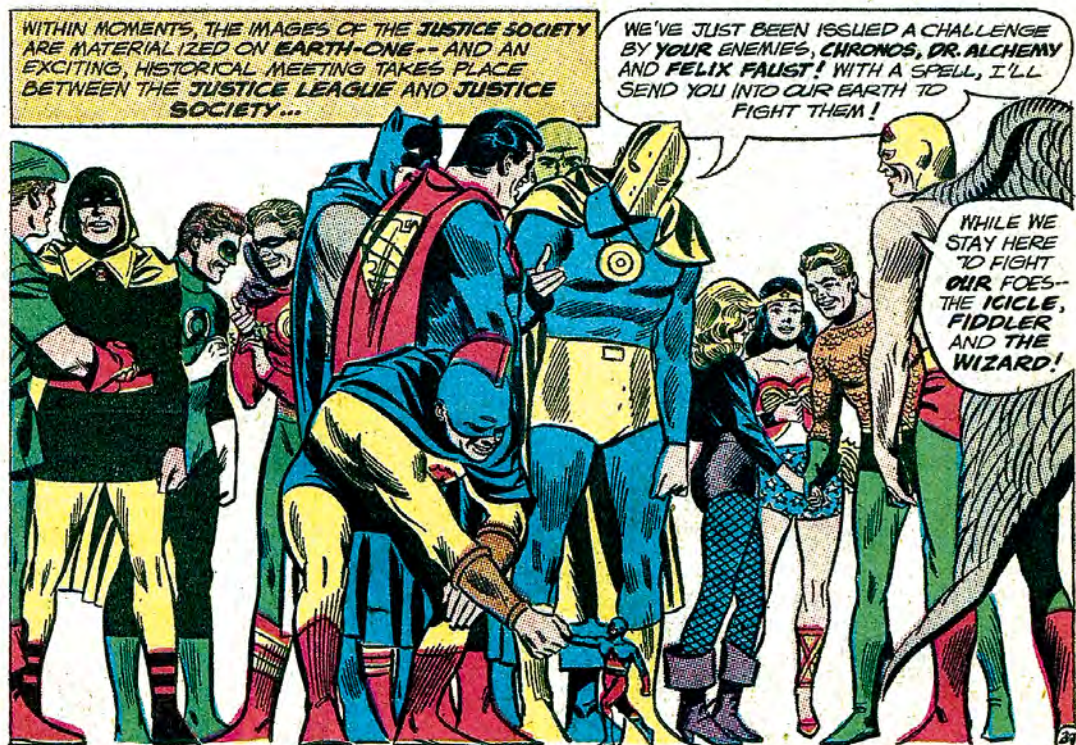
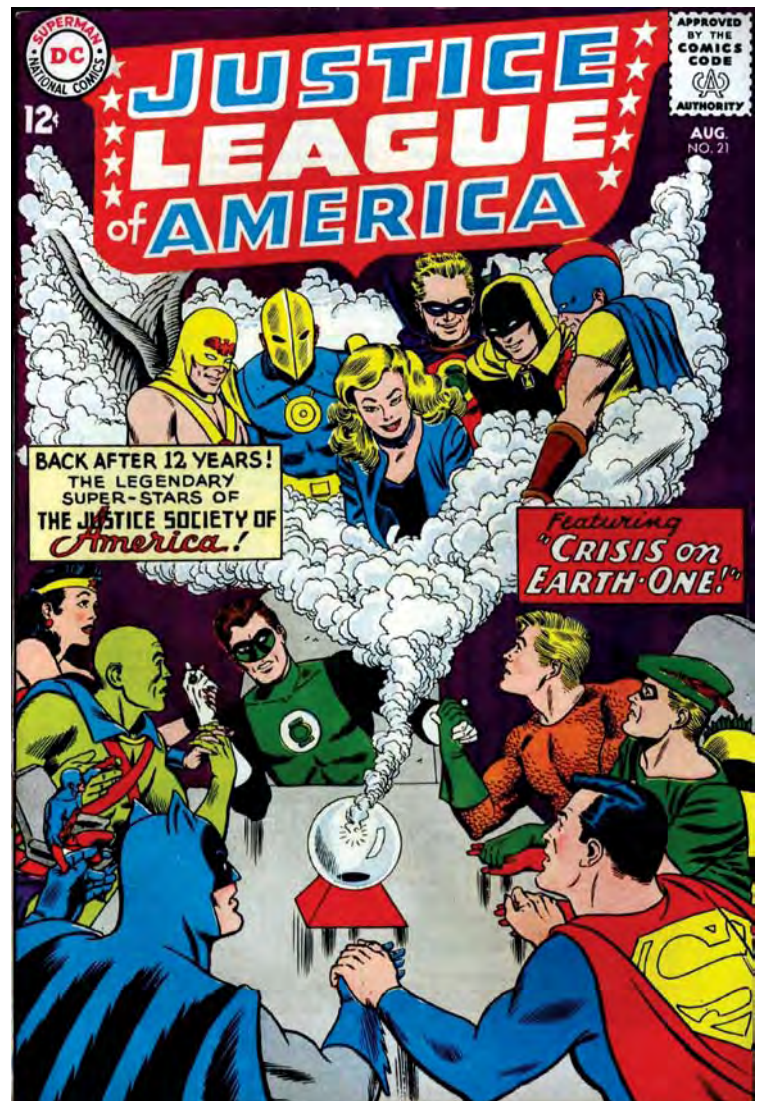
The red-haired Mera, beautifully rendered by artist Nick Cardy, quickly won the heart of Aquaman.
 Aquaman TM and © DC Comics.

his mentor's costume and Schwartz declared that it was time for a change. Consequently, Infantino designed an elegant variation that maintained the old costume's red leggings but otherwise shifted to a yellow color scheme and a lopped-off hood that exposed the boy's hair. The distinctive hood had, in fact, been part of one of the artist's original Flash concept drawings in 1956 but he rejected it because he disliked the idea of the hero's hair blowing in the wind. Seeking a more distinctive, youthful look for Kid Flash, Infantino concluded that "this approach is perfect now" (Murray, "The Legendary Carmine Infantino" 44).

Arguably the most historic double-Flash story of the year, though, reunited the present-day Barry Allen with his 1940s counterpart Jay Garrick for the third time in *The Flash* #137's "Vengeance of the Immortal Villain." The title character was Vandal Savage, a millennia-old immortal who'd fought the first Green Lantern in 1943 and the Justice Society of America in 1947. Ever since Gardner Fox and Infantino had revived Jay in 1961, Julius Schwartz had built up a mystique about the other heroes of the 1940s and it finally paid off here. Seeking revenge for his last defeat, Savage captured several members of the Justice Society. Freed by the two Flashes, the JSA decided that it might be a good idea to come out of retirement.

Fans were euphoric, all the more so because Schwartz, Fox, and Mike Sekowsky followed the story two months later with a landmark two-part adventure that began in *Justice League of America* #21 (August 1963). Magically bridging the divide between the parallel Earths of the JLA and JSA, villains from each world joined forces to go on a rampage and ultimately used magic to lock down the Leaguers in their own headquarters. Using a magical crystal ball once given to the team by Merlin, the League was able to contact the Society for help. Shaking hands and making introductions in a historic half-page panel, the teams resolved to switch worlds for the duration and take on their respective foes. The saga climaxed in issue #22 with a double-page spread of the heroes defeating the villains.

With a cast of sixteen heroes and six villains coupled with a complex plot, Schwartz felt obligated in *JLA* #22 to recap the first chapter for readers who had missed the previous issue. The entirety of page one, then, was a block of text framed by head shots of the entire cast. "In the old days the pulp magazines like *Argosy* would run two or three serials in the same issue, and they'd always lead off with a page or more



The Justice League and Justice Society's milestone first meeting was a huge hit with fans. Justice League of America TM and © DC Comics.



Don't Get Comfortable

“Sweetness and light—who the hell wants it?” cartoonist **Harold Gray** snarled in the September 4, 1964 issue of *Time*. “What’s news in the newspaper? Murder, rape, and arson. That’s what stories are made of” (Smith 73).

On the *Little Orphan Annie* newspaper strip’s 40th birthday, its 70-year-old creator wished to make it very clear that he hadn’t mellowed with age. Those familiar only with the later stage and film version of *Annie* could scarcely imagine that its comic strip predecessor had built its reputation on suspenseful high drama that was, at times, shockingly violent and politicized. As far as Gray was concerned, it wouldn’t be straying from that path.

But there were no constants, even in comics. Forty years after creating the first modern adventure comic strip (*Wash Tubbs*) and 20 years after launching *Buz Sawyer*, **Roy Crane** (with writer Edwin Granberry and art assistant Hank Schlensker) decided the *Sawyer* strip needed a shake-up. In a bleak sequence running the same time as Harold Gray’s remarks, Sawyer lost his wife Christy in a typhoon and then, desperate for a distraction, left the Navy to join the CIA after depositing their 11-year-old son with his parents. For a strip that had always leavened grim events with lighter family moments, it was a startling shift in the balance and a reminder to jaded readers that they couldn’t even count on that anymore.

In good ways and bad, the post-Kennedy United States was changing. Things that were once taken for granted were no longer set in stone. Mid-1964’s Civil Rights Act effectively outlawed much of the racial discrimination and segregation inflicted on minorities but breaking through generations of entrenched racism would be an uphill battle.

Early in the year, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby’s *Sgt. Fury* #6 (March 1964) had tackled the subject head on. Ostensibly about the Howling Commandos’ mission to take on Erwin Rommel’s Panzer Division in North Africa, the story was truly concerned with bigotry. Joining the squad as a temporary replacement for the injured Dino Manelli, blond George Stonewell (named after American Nazi Party founder George Lincoln Rockwell) barely concealed his distaste for the Commandos’ Italian and Jewish members. He was delighted to learn that one man in the unit had “a real American name like Jones” but recoiled when he learned that Gabe was black. “I’m not sleepin’ in *these* barracks!” Stonewell shrieked.

A disgusted Nick Fury read him the riot act. Conceding that “there’s no time to trade ya in for a real human being,” Fury

CHAPTER FIVE



Aside from Dell's authorized Beatles one-shot, the Fab Four's 1964 comic book appearances were mostly played for laughs.

The Beatles TM and © Apple Corps Ltd. Herbie Popnecker TM and © Roger Broughton. Betty and Veronica TM and © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

a “mop top”—started another trend. Betty and Veronica were gushing about the new hairdo for boys as early as the cover of *Laugh* #160 (July 1964) and dreaming of the Fab Four themselves on the front of issue #166. By fall, Charlton was spotlighting the Beatles on the covers of *My Little Margie* #54 and *Teen Confessions* #31.

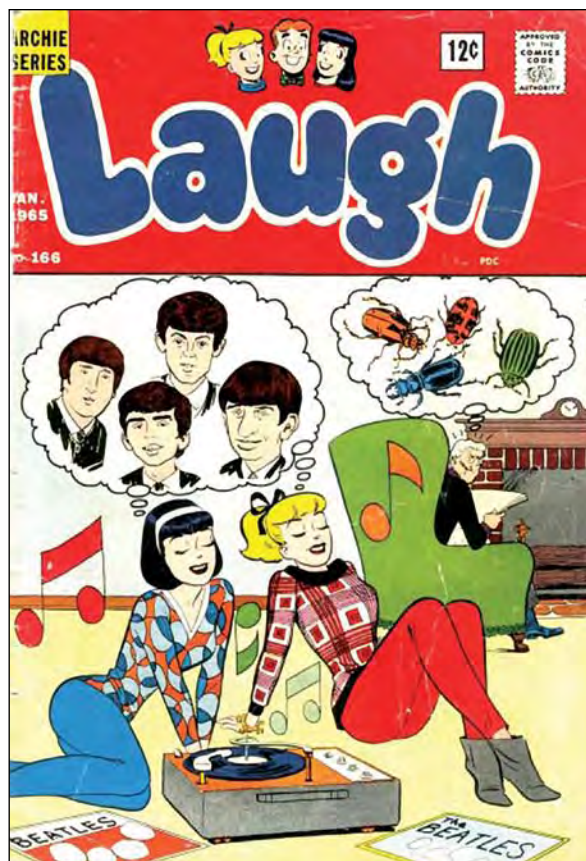
The trendy Beatles wigs that sprang up shortly thereafter became the focus of a short tale in July's *Betty and Veronica* #105 even as Superman's pal was hawking them to natives of the distant past—while crooning rock songs—as “the Red-Headed Beetle of 1,000 B.C.” in DC's *Jimmy Olsen* #79. Over in ACG's *Herbie* #5, its comical star simply donned a literal mop-head to become a rock star in “Herbie, Boy ‘Beetle.’” *Mad* #90's back cover used a Frank Frazetta-illustrated caricature of the Beatles' Ringo Starr as the centerpiece of a Breck (as “Bleech”) Shampoo ad parody while one of cartoonist Al Jaffee's first *Mad* Fold-Ins (issue #88) suggested “The Only Hope For Curing ‘Beetle-Mania’”

would be the “premature loss of the Beatles' hair.”

The Beatles' hugely-anticipated first U.S. appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* (February 9, 1964) was the subject of an early parody in *Laugh* #162. It recounted Archie's hilarious efforts to fix the reception on Veronica's television just minutes before the debut of the Termites Five on *Sullivan*.

In July, Dell published the official Beatles comic book, a one-shot that sandwiched their 64-page “life story” (illustrated by Joe Sinnott) amidst several full-page photos. Giant comics still retailed for a quarter but Dell charged 35-cents for this one, well aware that fans would snatch it up.

In April, the massive New York World's Fair opened on nearly one square mile of land in Queens, New York. Although dominated by U.S. interests, the exposition's goal was to celebrate “Man's Achievement on a Shrinking Globe in an Expanding Universe” and demonstrate the way that technology would improve the lives of everyone. Towering over the festivities was the Unisphere, a 12-story





Missouri fan Biljo White was so taken with the revamp that he created the *Batmania* fanzine in support.
 Batman TM and © DC Comics.

Archie when they ran their own folk music story in *Betty and Veronica* #101 (May 1964).

Under orders from Schwartz, Infantino had drawn a yellow oval around the bat on the hero's chest, establishing a clear line of demarcation between the end of the Old Look Batman and the beginning of the New. (A bat within a circle could also be trademarked where a bat alone could not.) Most of the editorial changes were held back three weeks until *Batman* #164 (June 1964). Schwartz had banished weird science from the series but, as DC's foremost science fiction editor, believed that the introduction of more rudimentary technology was long overdue. Thus, an elevator replaced Wayne Manor's stairway entrance to the Batcave, a hotline was established as a supplement to the Bat-Signal that lit up the night sky, and a concealed automatic door was unveiled as an entrance/exit for the upgraded Batmobile.

Batwoman, Bat-Girl, Bat-Mite, and Bat-Hound vanished without explanation from Gotham City, but another member of the cast got an unexpected send-off in *Detective* #328 courtesy of writer Bill Finger and artists Moldoff and Giella. Joining Bat-

man and Robin in their battle with the Tri-State Gang, their butler Alfred knocked the Dynamic Duo out of the path of a falling boulder in the climax and was crushed. In the aftermath, Bruce Wayne established the charitable Alfred Foundation in his honor even as a new face showed up at Wayne Manor. Learning of the tragedy, Dick Grayson's Aunt Harriet insisted on taking over the household duties, oblivious to the secret identities of her nephew and his guardian.

Psychiatrist Fredric Wertham had infamously characterized Batman and Robin as latent homosexuals in his 1950s screed *Seduction of the Innocent* and the presence of Alfred did not dispel his delusion. Aunt Harriet—named after a line in Hoagy Carmichael's 1929 song "Rockin' Chair"—was Schwartz's means of breaking up Wayne Manor's all-male household (Schwartz 119-120). With Kathy (Batwoman) Kane banished from the series, a prospective new girlfriend for Bruce Wayne was also lined up in the form of policewoman Patricia Powell, but she was dropped after two issues (*Batman* #165-166).

More effective recurring characters were the Mystery Analysts of Gotham City—a diverse group of local detectives first seen in *Batman* #164—and the Outsider, an unseen villain who knew intimate details about Batman and Robin and could strike from anywhere (*Detective* #334).

Prominent fan writer-artist (and Missouri fireman) **Biljo White** was among those taken with the revamp. Possessed of a near complete *Batman* collection, he enthusiastically



The death of Bruce Wayne's butler Alfred prompted the arrival of Dick Grayson's Aunt Harriet to replace him.
 Batman TM and © DC Comics.

Creep(y) Show

It was Gaines' famed 1950s EC horror comics—the same ones that fueled the creation of the Comics Code—which served as the inspiration for a new black-and-white comic book in late 1964. Approached by a budding young cartoonist and former Marine named **Russ Jones**, Gaines appreciated his enthusiasm for reviving the chillers in a black-and-white, non-Code magazine like *Mad* but wasn't interested in doing so himself. Instead, Jones turned his attention to **Warren Publishing** (Jones).

Since the late 1950s, publisher James Warren had published a small group of magazines like *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and *Spacemen* devoted to the science fiction and horror movies of the past and present. His line also included Harvey Kurtzman's *Help!*, the critically-beloved humor magazine. Its eclectic comics content had ranged from Gilbert Shelton's Superman takeoff Wonder Warthog (reprinted from 1962 and 1963 issues of the *Texas Ranger* college magazine) to excerpts from decades-old *Mutt and Jeff* newspaper strips. It also attracted its share of headaches, notably the 1962 lawsuit from Archie over Kurtzman and Bill Elder's Goodman Beaver story. Following the February 1964 edition (including Joel Siegel and Hank Hinton's inflammatory "My First Golden Book of God"), *Help!* went on an eight month hiatus and Warren began entertaining possibilities for a new magazine.

Prominent fan writer-artist Larry Ivie had previously pitched the idea to Warren but he, like Jones in 1964, was turned down (Goodwin 9). The former Marine was nothing if not persistent and—backed up by recent acquaintances and former EC artists Wally Wood and Joe Orlando—eventually managed to sell the publisher on a six-page "Monster Comics" feature in the new *Monster World* magazine. Jim Warren finally agreed to a full comic magazine and "Project D" was underway. Inspired by a word balloon in an EC story featuring the Old Witch narrator, Jones suggested **Creepy** as the series' official title and his publisher loved it (Jones).

"My deal with Jim Warren was five hundred dollars an issue," Jones remembered. "I was editor, and packager. The headaches had already started, when some of the proposed talent began to complain about Jim's page rate. He wanted to spend thirty dollars a page for art...not a cent more. I began to wonder if he really wanted to do the mag, since obviously, he didn't want to pay what both Dell and the newly formed Gold Key Comics were paying—thirty five per page. Finally, I simply told Jim to deduct five dollars a page from my editor's fee, and give it to the artists. If I'd done the same with the scripts, I would have done everything for free" (Jones).

Larry Ivie was soon part of the mix as a writer and, through him, artist **Al Williamson** joined the fold. Highly regarded



Jack Davis' lighthearted cover eased readers into Warren's new horror comic book in late 1964. Creepy TM and © New Comic Company.

for his elegant illustrative style, the 33-year-old Williamson was as passionate a fan of the artists who'd preceded him as he was of some of the highly-polished contemporaries who shared his sensibilities. With his help, idols like Reed Crandall, George Evans, Frank Frazetta, Roy G. Krenkel, and Joe Orlando were recruited to work on the new horror comic book, as were friends Gray Morrow and Angelo Torres. In the absence of color, several of the artists added further dimension to their work through a wash effect that only added to *Creepy's* lush look.

As important as each of the artists was to the project, it was *Creepy's* other primary writer who may have been most significant in making it gel. Originally envisioning himself as more of an illustrator, 27-year-old **Archie Goodwin** had built an impressive résumé by 1964 that included a stint on Leonard Starr's *On Stage* comic strip and an editorial post at *Redbook* magazine. His abilities as a writer were considerable, but it was Goodwin's even-tempered editorial and management skills that consistently helped him cultivate stellar creators throughout his career. His influence was great enough that he was named story editor with Russ