

SPECIAL GIANT-SIZED "TABLOIDS AND TREASURIES" ISSUE

# BACKISSUE!

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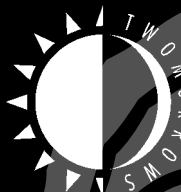
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**BACKISSUE**

Comics' Bronze Age and Beyond!



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# THE PERILS OF THE DC/MARVEL



For many 1970s comics fans, few things were as wonderful as the tabloid editions. Measuring 10" x 14" (versus a standard comic's 7" x 10"), every issue wrapped a cardboard cover around a thick collection of carefully chosen stories that popped as much because of their content as the huge size at which they were printed.

As a young engraver and color separator, DC Comics vice president Sol Harrison had worked on many of the industry's earliest comic books and recalled publisher Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson's *New Fun* (1935), whose 10" x 15" issues were at odds with the 8" x 10" comics that became the industry standard. Other publishers had dabbled in oversized comics since then, but no one had made a real go of it. Recognizing that readership was declining, Harrison believed that tabloids could be a lifesaver.

"We were looking for a new format," he explained in *The Amazing World of DC Comics* #10 (Jan. 1976), "because our magazines weren't getting proper placement among the 120 magazines on the newsstand at the time. Returning from a trip to the World Color Press plant at Sparta, Illinois, I began to play around with different sizes for comics. None of the sizes seemed to work, since they couldn't be put on a newspaper high-speed color press. But by opening the comic up, with one less fold, we could create a tabloid size comic that would stand out on the newsstand."

There were obvious attractions to the format. A thick 80-page \$1.00 package made more money for retailers than a slim 20-cent comic. The permanence of a sturdy cardboard cover invited comparisons to more respectable children's books and offered an entrance into mass-market retail chains and variety stores. (Some outlets, unaware that these were magazines whose unsold copies could be returned for credit, racked them with coloring books and gave a few early volumes a shelf life of years.)

## THEN ONE FOGGY CHRISTMAS EVE...

With publisher Carmine Infantino's blessing, Harrison assembled a trial issue starring Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. Composed entirely of reprints from DC's 1950s *Rudolph* series, the 80-page issue went on sale October 24, 1972, and evidently had a strong sell-through by the end of the Christmas season.

*Shazam!*, a hugely anticipated Captain Marvel revival, was launched the same season and Golden Age reprints from the feature were gathered for DC's second tabloid in May 1973. Under the umbrella title *Limited Collectors' Edition* (curiously beginning its numbering with C-21), the series continued in the late summer and fall with issues devoted to *Tarzan*, *House of Mystery*, and another *Rudolph*. Intent on expanding the readership, Harrison tried out a variety of genres rather than simply spotlighting fan-favorite superheroes.

Their turn came soon enough when the tabloids went bimonthly in 1974 with a pair of issues arriving every two months and filled with reprints chosen by editor E. Nelson Bridwell. *Batman* (LCE #C-25), *Shazam!* (#C-27), and *Superman* (#C-31) were followed by

# TABLOID ERA

by John Wells

**A DRAMATIC BREAK-THRU FROM--**  **THE LINE OF Super-Stars!**

LIMITED COLLECTORS' EDITION  
WITH ONE MAGIC WORD  
**SHAZAM!**  
THE ORIGINAL CAPTAIN MARVEL

**6 KING-SIZE STORIES**

- ★ HOW-TO-DRAW SHAZAM FAMILY
- ★ SUPER-SIZE PIN-UP
- ★ SPECIAL FUN PAGES
- ★ 3D DIORAMA CUT-OUT
- ★ BEHIND THE SCENE WITH C. C. BECK (SHAZAM'S ARTIST)

**IN THE GIGANTIC NEW SUPER-SIZE!**


**WARNING-- THIS IS A VERY LIMITED EDITION!**

**ON SALE-- THE FOURTH WEEK IN MAY!**

**RESERVE YOUR COPY OF THIS BLOCK-BUSTER ISSUE NOW!**

DC \$1.00

C.C. BECK 1973



## Direct to Your Door

DC's house ad for its first superhero tabloid, *Limited Collectors' Edition* #C-21 (*Shazam!*).

TM & © DC Comics.

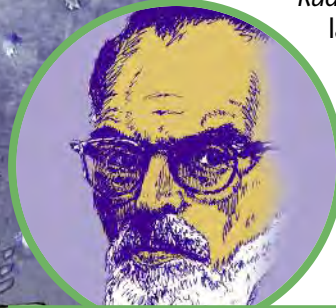
# You Know Dasher and Dancer...



# Rudolph

## The RED-NOSED REINDEER

by Mark Arnold



SHELDON MAYER

The character of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer was originally created by Robert L. May in 1939 for a series of ads for retailer Montgomery Ward. May's brother-in-law Johnny Marks turned Rudolph into a hit song that was popularized by cowboy singer Gene Autry.

A Rudolph theatrical cartoon was released in 1947 by Max Fleischer independently after he was ousted from his own Fleischer Studios in 1944. (Ironically, Sheldon Mayer worked as an opaquer for Fleischer in the early 1930s before entering the comic-book field, and funny-animal cartoonist Rube Grossman was a Fleischer animator as well, but neither worked on this cartoon.)

This version became a Christmas perennial in the early days of television until the Animagic Rankin-Bass version superseded it in 1964, which still airs to this day. Rankin-Bass recruited original songwriter Johnny Marks to write more songs to bring the project more authenticity, but the Rankin-Bass version also created a number of other characters not associated with any previous versions of the story and redesigned Rudolph to make him more cute and cuddly.

Rankin-Bass' success was so great that they came back with two other shows: a 1976 TV special called *Rudolph's Shiny New Year* and a 1979 theatrical release called *Rudolph and Frosty's Christmas in July*. Despite these latter-day shows being produced concurrently with the DC treasuries, there was no crossover or connection whatsoever, other than the Rudolph name and the facts that he had a red nose and was a reindeer that hung around with Santa Claus.

Sheldon Mayer (1917–1991) was already known for his work on *Scribbly* and *Sugar and Spike* when the DC Comics assignment came through to take on a new version of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, which had previously appeared in 12 annual standard-size and one giant-size comics from 1950 through 1963. These earlier editions were all drawn by Rube Grossman (1913–1964), who also did a comic-strip version.

Grossman and Mayer had worked on similar assignments before, most notably many DC funny-animal humor titles such as *Peter Porkchops*, *The Three Mouseketeers*, *Funny Stuff*, *Leading Screen Comics*, *Nutsy Squirrel*, *Flippity and Flop*, *Hollywood Funny Folks*, and many others. They had similar drawing styles, but many consider Mayer the better of the two and Mayer had created many of these characters including *Doodles Duck* and *J. Rufus Lion*.

Merrily Mayer Harris, Sheldon's daughter and the inspiration for *Sugar of Sugar and Spike*, says, "My father was born on April Fool's Day in a poor Jewish neighborhood in Harlem."

Harris says of Grossman, "I met Rube Grossman when I was six or seven. He was a short, fat, Jewish bald

### Midnight Riders

Santa Claus takes a red-nosed ride on this original cover painting by Sheldon Mayer for *Limited Collectors' Edition #C-53*, the 1977 *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* annual.

Original art scan courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)).

TM & © DC Comics.

# THE AMAZING WORLD OF SUPERMAN TABLOIDS

by Michael Eury

OFFICIAL  
METROPOLIS  
EDITION

AMAZING  
WORLD  
OF



SUPERMAN

Was there any character more deserving a showcase in comics' biggest format than its first superhero, Superman? In addition to the reprint editions headlined by the Action Ace, Superman starred in four exceptional tabloids of interest to virtually every Fan of Steel.

## THE AMAZING WORLD OF SUPERMAN

Superman theme-park rides are common today, thanks to the Six Flags franchise, but they certainly didn't exist during the *BACK ISSUE* era. So imagine the fervor among comics readers in 1972 when plans were announced for an amusement park solely dedicated to the Man of Steel: Superman Land!

DC had floated such a concept almost 20 years earlier: The 1955 opening of Disneyland inspired the story "Superman in Superman Land," by writer Bill Finger, penciler Wayne Boring, and inker Stan Kaye, in *Action Comics* #210 (Nov. 1955). That didn't fly, and most DC readers in 1972 weren't even aware of that earlier notion of a Superman park when a small Midwestern town with the good fortune of sharing a name with one of pop culture's most famous fictional cities, Metropolis, Illinois, brokered a deal with DC Comics to market the town (population: roughly 7000) as "Superman's hometown." The Metropolis Chamber of Commerce proclaimed January 21, 1972 as "Superman Day" and invited Carmine Infantino, then-president of National Periodical Publications, Inc. (now DC Comics) to the ceremony, as Superman was officially designated a "Distinguished Son of Metropolis." An ambitious goal of building a Superman Land amusement park there was announced.

To commemorate the event, in 1973 DC published a tabloid-sized one-shot titled *The Amazing World of Superman: Metropolis Edition*. Edited by DC's production manager Sol Harrison (abetted by Superman editor Julius Schwartz and assistant editor E. Nelson Bridwell), *Amazing World* instantly became, at the time, the must-have sourcebook for all things Super! Published in black-and-white (with washtones), this 68-page treasury opened with the story that first presented the dream: the 12-page classic "Superman in Superman Land." It was followed by a "How to Draw Superman" page by artist Curt Swan and reprints of the "Guide to Characters in Superman Family Portrait" and "How the Super-Family Came to Earth" features from Silver Age Superman Annuals.

*BACK ISSUE* readers would definitely appreciate the photo-heavy article "How a Comic Magazine is Created," depicting the process, from script to printing press, of the production of a DC comic book. Depicted therein are Infantino, Schwartz, Swan, Harrison, Nick Cardy, Denny O'Neil, Murphy Anderson, Gaspar Saladino, Jack Adler, and many other DC staffers, allowing readers a rare glimpse of the people behind their favorite comics. This fascinating feature even includes photographs of the engraving plant at Chemical Colorplate in

### "Official Metropolis Edition"

This 1973 tabloid not only engendered enthusiasm for the Superman theme park that never was, it also created an "Amazing World" brand used by Superman comics, a Carmine Infantino biography, and a comics website. Superman art by Curt Swan and Murphy Anderson.

TM & © DC Comics.

Special BONUS! GIANT POSTER "MAP of KRYPTON"

# DC COMICS'

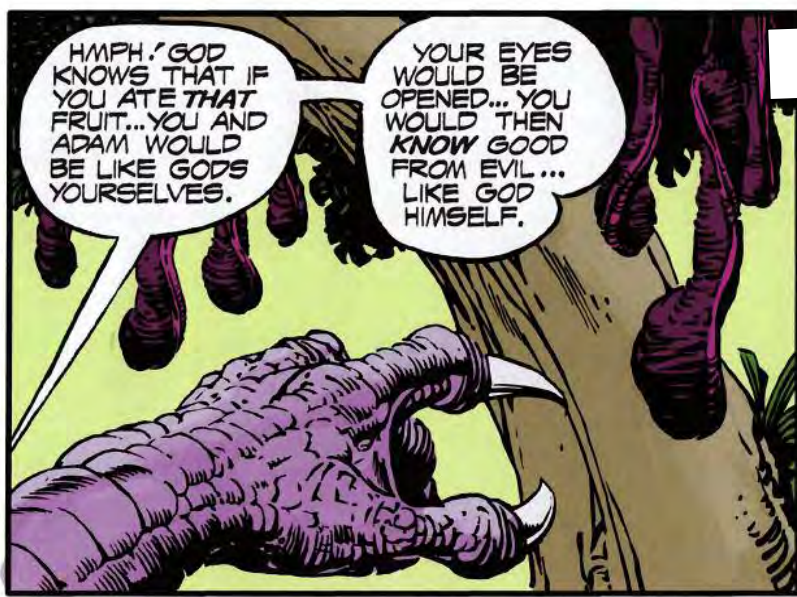
# THE BIBLE



ONE FATEFUL DAY, THE SERPENT FOUND EVE ALONE...

IT IS TOO BAD THAT GOD FORBADE YOU TO EAT THE FRUIT IN THIS GARDEN.

THAT IS NOT TRUE. WE MAY EAT ALL WE WANT.



HMPH! GOD KNOWS THAT IF YOU ATE THAT FRUIT... YOU AND ADAM WOULD BE LIKE GODS YOURSELVES.

YOUR EYES WOULD BE OPENED... YOU WOULD THEN KNOW GOOD FROM EVIL... LIKE GOD HIMSELF.



B-BUT... GOD SAID... WE WOULD SURELY DIE.

NONSENSE. YOUR LIFE WOULD JUST BEGIN.

by Eddy Zeno

## Forbidden Fruit

In the Garden of Eden, Eve is tempted by the Serpent in this sequence from DC's *The Bible*, lushly rendered by Nestor Redondo, over Joe Kubert layouts and a Sheldon Mayer script.

TM & © DC Comics.

A unique, tabloid-sized comic book appeared on magazine stands in 1975. Dated June-July of that year, its full title was *The Most Spectacular Stories Ever Told... from the Bible*. It will hereafter be referred to as *The Bible*, or as *Limited Collectors' Edition (LCE) #C-36*. Carmine Infantino, Sheldon Mayer, Joe Kubert, Nestor Redondo, and Sol Harrison were listed as contributors. On the inside back cover, editor/writer E. Nelson Bridwell was also acknowledged for his expertise as "DC's resident Biblical scholar." Planned as the first in a series of Old and New Testament illustrated tales, unfortunately, no sequels appeared.

### THE GENESIS OF AN IDEA

In a sense, one can trace the 1975 *Limited Collectors' Edition* back to M. C. "Max" Gaines. A youthful Sheldon "Shelly" Mayer worked for Max at McClure Syndicate, joining him in 1936. Mayer followed the boss when Gaines left McClure to partner with Harry Donenfeld and more directly with Jack Liebowitz, forming All-American Comics. The year was 1939 and Mayer became editor of the line. Max sold his interest in All-American in 1946 to Donenfeld and Liebowitz. He left his

superheroes to merge with theirs but took *Picture Stories from the Bible* with him and began Educational Comics (EC).

*Picture Stories from the Bible* began in 1942. It had primitive art, nor were the events dynamically portrayed. Perhaps it was at this time when Mayer stored the thought in the back of his mind that he would like to play the lead on such a project one day using the best available talent.

Gaines was killed in a boating accident in 1947. Mayer had stayed at All-American but gave up his editorship in 1948 to return to his first love, cartooning. He would go on to create features like *Sugar and Spike*, babies whose language was perfectly intelligible to them but babble to adults. Though the mischievous tykes became as well known as his semi-autobiographical boy cartoonist, Scribbly, Sheldon was hardly limited to humor. When cataracts began affecting his sight, he wrote horror, mystery, and superhero stories for DC Comics. By the early to mid-1970s, he was also considered a consultant to the company—not as official as, say, Bill Gaines (Max's son), whose *MAD*

"In the great Hall of the Justice League, there are assembled the world's four greatest heroes..."

In late 1975, an even greater assembly occurred at said Hall of Justice, as those three junior Super Friends—Wendy, Marvin, and Wonder Dog—were introduced to the entire Justice League of America!

HI, I'M ROBIN, AND I'LL BE YOUR TOUR GUIDE

Fans who picked up the *Super Friends* tabloid (actually *Limited Collectors' Edition* #C-41) with the rainbow-blasting cover held the very first Super Friends comic in their hands. The Hanna-Barbera-produced television series had been airing for over two years, with no tie-in comic offered by DC. The logo and art style on the cover demonstrated just how closely this comic would be related to its television counterpart. Cover artist Alex Toth was the chief character designer on the series, so the heroes looked just like their animated versions, minus a redrawn Superman face. DC's production department infamously pasted a ten-year-old Curt Swan/George Klein-drawn Superman head over Toth's Man of Steel. Toth was in good company, as DC did the same thing to no less than Jack Kirby's art during the decade!

The SF vibe continued in the interiors, with Toth handling the art chores on the contents and first pages, and series consultant E. Nelson Bridwell providing the script. Robin, the Teen Wonder was leading created-for-television characters Wendy, Marvin, and Wonder Dog to the Hall of Justice (HOJ) for a secret surprise.

When the Teen Wonder opened the doors to the HOJ (and readers turned the page), the meddling kids and their dog were astounded to find the *entire Justice League* greeting them!

Aside from the main Super Friends—Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and Aquaman—the junior trio had also met Flash and Green Arrow over the course of the television series. They (and readers) got their first glimpse of what the Atom, Hawkman, Red Tornado, Green Lantern, Elongated Man, and Black Canary would look like if Toth had designed them for television.

The Leaguers then gave the kids a tour of their trophy room. Having worked as an editorial assistant under both Mort Weisinger and Julius Schwartz, Bridwell's superpower of continuity shined through here, as old JLA members and foes were discussed, from Snapper Carr to Amazo. Marvin even tried on Green Arrow's original, pre-Neal Adams uniform, which managed to get a chuckle out of the Man of Steel. Marvin's masquerade reminded him of a JLA case, and as he reminisced, on the next page, the true nature of this book was revealed...

It was mostly a bunch of JLA reprints!

Rainbow Coalition

TV's Justice League, the Super Friends, in their first comic-book appearance in *Limited Collectors' Edition* #C-41 (Dec. 1975–Jan. 1976). Note the Swan-patched Superman face, and that cover artist Alex Toth's interior content is blurred in the text.

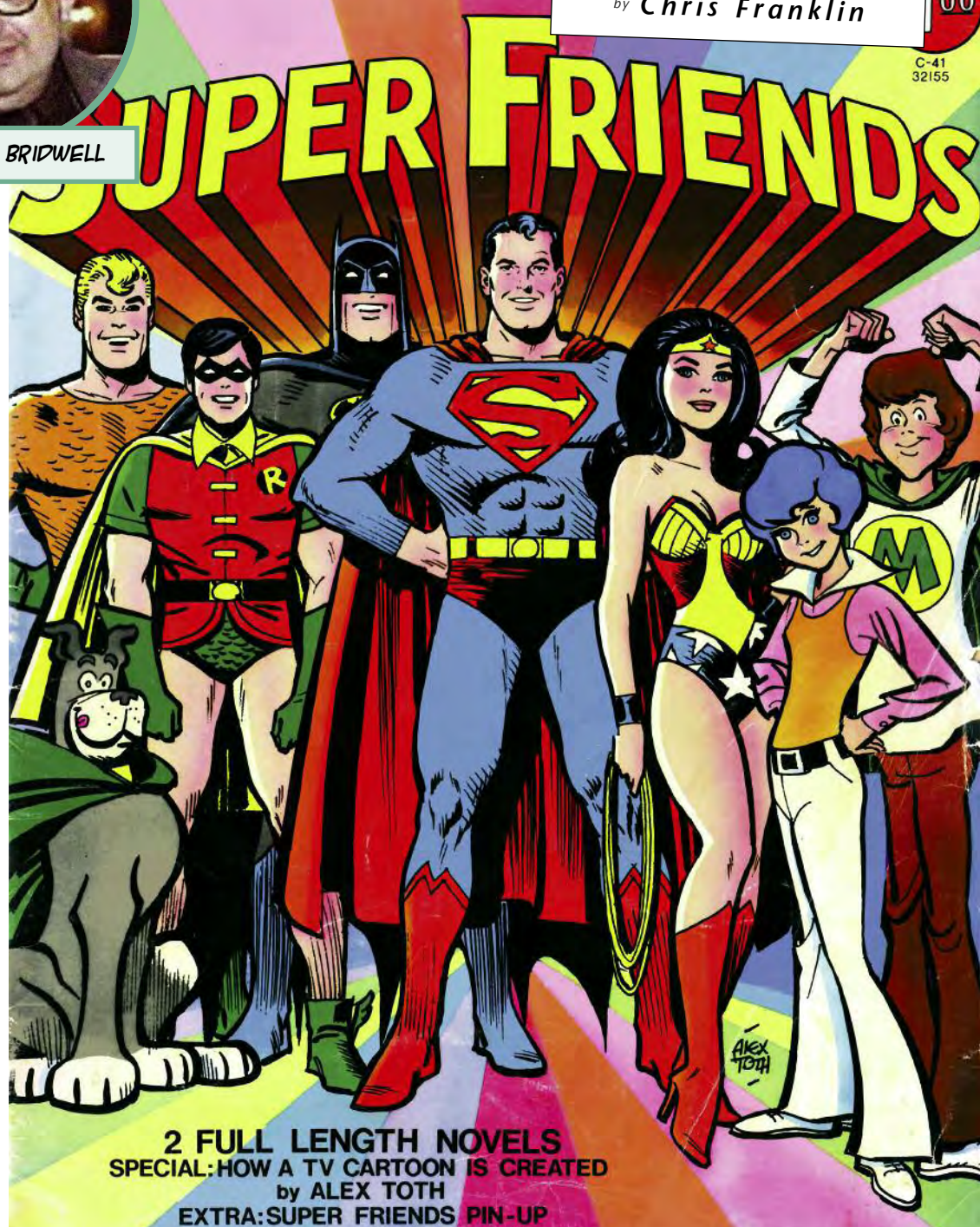
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# The Kids in the Hall (of Justice): A Whirlwind Tour with the SUPER FRIENDS

by Chris Franklin



E. NELSON BRIDWELL



2 FULL LENGTH NOVELS  
SPECIAL: HOW A TV CARTOON IS CREATED  
by ALEX TOTH  
EXTRA: SUPER FRIENDS PIN-UP

# The Secrets of Z Revealed

by Jack Abramowitz



## Follow the Yellow Brick Road ... to Co-Publishing

Marvel and DC Comics present ... MGM's *Marvelous Wizard of Oz* #1 (and only), from 1975. Detail from its cover by John Romita, Sr.

TM & © MGM.

### A QUIZ FOR YOU

Here's a simple quiz for the longtime comics fan: What was the first comic jointly published by Marvel and DC? Just to be fair, we'll throw in a hint for those who need one: It was a tabloid-sized comic released in the mid-1970s. If you said 1976's *Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man* ... you're wrong! The first Marvel/DC joint venture was actually a year earlier and it featured neither DC nor Marvel superheroes. What third party's tale was so huge it took both of these comics giants to tell it? It was an adaptation of the MGM film version of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Nowadays, Oz-themed comics are commonplace. Marvel has been adapting L. Frank Baum's novels in a series of miniseries. From *Dorothy to Oz/Wonderland Chronicles* and from *The Legend of Oz to No Place Like Home*, there have been over a dozen Oz-based series since DC's 1986 *Captain Carrot* miniseries, *The Oz-Wonderland War*. When the Marvel/DC tabloid came out, however, it was untapped potential. *Classics Illustrated Junior* #535 had adapted the original book five years earlier, but the MGM film has not been adapted before or since.

An adaptation of MGM's *The Wizard of Oz* differs from adapting its source material, L. Frank Baum's book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, in more than just character likenesses. Some differences are cosmetic in nature. One obvious example is that, for the movie, Dorothy's silver shoes were changed to the more visually exciting (and now iconic) ruby slippers. An example of a major plot change is the consolidating of Glinda and the Witch of the North into a single character. Perhaps the most significant change occurs in the dénouement. The idea that "it was all a dream" is not found in Baum's original work. Far from a dream, Oz was always meant to be a real place, visited by Dorothy and many others repeatedly over the course of numerous sequels.

### WHY TWO TITANS?

The first question about the Oz adaptation is why Marvel and DC saw fit to collaborate on such a project. Roy Thomas, who scripted and edited both Oz tabloids, sheds some light on this. "I forgot a lot of details, since it's well over 35 years ago now," Thomas says, "but the basic thing is that [then-Marvel publisher] Stan [Lee] and I came up with the joint notion to adapt L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* as a new entry in Marvel's brand-new tabloid line of comics. John Buscema was chosen as artist, and he liked the idea. He did a few designs, a more realistic rendering than W.W. Denslow's art for *Wizard*. Then, from the book and my suggestions, John had broken down just the first eight pages or so, which just got Dorothy and Toto to Oz, when suddenly, Stan learned that DC was just beginning work on its own adaptation, which, I've learned since, was being done by Shelly Mayer of *Sugar and Spike* fame."

This information came to Lee's attention at an event in which "some toy company" was promoting the launch of a line of Oz figures based on the movie versions of the characters. Timing suggests that this was Mego, best known for its "World's Greatest Super-Heroes" figures. Not only did Mego release a series of Oz movie figures at this time, they also hosted a gala event at Toy Fair to promote the line.

"I never saw any pages or thumbnails of that," Thomas continues, "and for a time Stan and I believed that [DC publisher] Carmine [Infantino] was bluffing when he told Stan that work had already been begun, but apparently not. By some weird coincidence, Marvel and DC were poised to launch dueling *Wizard of Oz* adaptations, book and movie. The two men decided to join forces and make it the first inter-company collaboration. For reasons that escape me, Marvel wound up totally producing the issue—John as artist, me as writer, and Tony DeZuniga, then working for Marvel, as inker, with other Filipino artists of his studio. I've no recollection of DC seeing the job before it was printed, though you'd think they must have."



# TABLOID TEAM-UPS

## The Giant-Size DC-Marvel Crossovers

by Glenn Greenberg



It had long been a story that existed solely in the imaginations of comic-book fans: Superman and Spider-Man sharing an adventure. Of course, reality dictated that such a tale could never actually happen. After all, Superman was DC's flagship character. Spider-Man was Marvel's. Weren't the two companies bitter rivals, slugging it out at the newsstands month after month for dominance of the comic-book industry? How could they possibly put that animosity aside and cooperate on a project that would bring together their two most valuable properties?

But in 1976, it happened. DC and Marvel co-published *Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man*, a 92-page tabloid-sized epic entitled "The Battle of the Century!" Written by Gerry Conway and illustrated by Ross Andru and Dick Giordano (with uncredited art contributions by Neal Adams, John Romita, Sr., Terry Austin, Joe Rubinstein, and Bob Wiacek), it was inarguably one of the biggest events in the history of the industry. Making it a reality was actually not as difficult as one might think. [Editor's note: For the full story behind the uncredited artists' contributions to *Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man*, see BACK ISSUE #11.]

### BIRTH OF A DREAM

For one thing, DC and Marvel had already been involved in a joint publishing venture the previous year: 1975's MGM's *Marvelous Wizard of Oz*, a tabloid-sized adaptation of the classic 1939 movie, scripted by Roy Thomas and illustrated by John Buscema, Tony DeZuniga, and "the Tribe." [Editor's note: See previous article.]

There was also the fact that when the idea of bringing Superman and Spider-Man together was pitched to both companies, their top creative executives were amenable. Conway notes that this would not have been the case just a few years earlier:

"Before Stan [Lee] became Marvel's publisher, you had people like Martin Goodman and his son Chip who were the ultimate business people there, and who would tend to hold a grudge. And at DC, you had [publisher] Carmine Infantino, who also tended to hold a grudge! So this was not a good mix."

The atmosphere changed a bit when the Goodmans were out of power at Marvel and Lee was in the publisher position. "Stan was a total pragmatist," Conway recalls. "If it was a matter of making his characters more popular, he had no problem with it."

But how did the idea of *Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man* come about? It's of note that the project

### Were You There?

If you were one of the tens of thousands of fans who bought this landmark one-shot when it arrived at newsstands on January 2, 1976, you probably still remember that exhilarating moment! Front cover to *Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man* by penciler Ross Andru and inker Dick Giordano (with Neal Adams "inking with a pencil" over the Superman figure and Terry Austin on background inks). Cover design by Carmine Infantino.

Superman TM & © DC Comics. Spider-Man © 2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.

The bicentennial celebrations of 1976 serve as a reaffirmation of what makes the United States of America a great country. In the wake of the controversial Vietnam War and President Nixon's resignation, Americans were looking to the glories of the past in order to shape their beliefs and goals for the future of the country and themselves. To express these ideas in comic-book form, what more worthy creator was there than Jack "the King" Kirby? And what better character than Captain America himself, Kirby's most iconic co-creation (along with writer Joe Simon), could have served as the creative lens for the King's patriotic love of America at its two-century mark in the landmark June 1976 *Marvel Treasury Special, Captain America's Bicentennial Battles*?

In the opening splash page for "Chapter One – Mister Buda," the reader immediately beholds the image of Captain America entering the eastern-tinged sanctuary of Mister Buda, a bald, diminutive man who is sitting in the lotus position within a golden, triangular-shaped structure. If one were to substitute Dr. Strange for Cap, the image would not be as incongruously striking to a reader who would sooner be expecting Captain America to be infiltrating a Hydra fortress or engaged in fistcuffs with the likes of the Red Skull or Batroc the Leaper at the beginning of his tales. Then again, this is 1976, not 1964 or 1941, and comics have moved on to embrace a worldlier, multicultural perspective in their storytelling. Buda, subsequently, serves as the catalyst for Captain America's stunning journey across the landscape of America's past, present, and future. Mark Evanier, longtime friend and biographer of Jack Kirby with *Kirby! – King of Comics* (Abrams 2008), offers his thoughts on why Kirby chose this Buddha-like character to expand Cap's perspective on America. "I'd just be guessing," Evanier admits, "because Jack operated on a lot of instinct and hunches. But I'd say he wanted a figure who would have the importance of a religious icon but didn't want to be as obvious as to make the guy God."

If indeed Kirby was ambiguous about his feeling regarding the place of religion in a *Captain America* comic, he was not so uncertain in asserting his position on the Nazis three decades after the end of World War II. Even though Captain America rejects Mister Buda's offer to help him view his role as a symbol of America with a newfound universal eye, Buda opens a hidden fold in the universe, into which the departing Cap unwittingly steps. Finding himself in a mysterious fortress, Captain America quickly infiltrates an interrogation of his long-dead partner Bucky that is being brutally conducted by a few Nazis, the Red Skull, and Adolf Hitler himself! What reader, consequently, would not feel a nostalgic rush in witnessing Cap knocking



JACK KIRBY

### A Star-Spangled Celebration

Cover to *Marvel Treasury Special* featuring *Captain America's Bicentennial Battles* (1976). Cover pencils by Jack Kirby, inks by Frank Giacoia. The Grand Comic-Book Database ([www.comics.org](http://www.comics.org)) notes that Marie Severin and John Romita, Sr. made art corrections to the background images, Mirthful Marie drawing the colonial characters on the left, and Jazzy Johnny adding the Cap figure on the right.

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# KIRBY CELEBRATING AMERICA'S 200TH BIRTHDAY:

## CAPTAIN AMERICA'S BICENTENNIAL BATTLES

by Tom Powers

MARVEL TREASURY SPECIAL™



A JACK KIRBY KING-SIZE SPECTACULAR!

FlashBack!

# KRYPTONIAN AND AMAZONIAN NOT LIVING IN PERFECT HARMONY

by Andy Mangels

## You Wouldn't Hit a Girl, Wouldja?

Detail from the *Superman vs. Wonder Woman* cover. As the signatures read, art by José Luis García-López and Dan Adkins.

TM & © DC Comics.



No young comic-book fan has ever failed to engage in flights of wild fancy about which superhero or superheroine is stronger or faster or just plain better. Marvel Comics storytellers traded on this trope almost monthly, with guest-star heroes battling the star heroes of whichever book they appeared in, before they both realized they had a common enemy. But at DC Comics, the tendency from the 1940s forward was that the heroes worked together for common goals; they would become the World's Finest or the Brave and the Bold. By the 1970s, DC's heroes were even branded in the public eye as the "Super Friends."

Readers had to feel astonished, then, when DC announced for summer 1977 release an all-new book-length treasury *All-New Collectors' Edition* called *Superman vs. Wonder Woman*. But how and why would the Man of Steel and the Amazing Amazon be at each other's throats, and who could truly win this match?

The tabloid release was the second of DC's books that pitted Superman against a popular hero, following *Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man*, also the first cross-company team-up between DC and Marvel. Released in 1976, the epic tale was scripted by Gerry Conway and illustrated by Ross Andru and others. [Editor's note: See this issue's article on this and the other DC/Marvel team-up tabloids.]

Conway had been one of Marvel's star writers from 1970–1975—when he was age 18–25—before defecting to DC in 1975, and causing a tug-of-war to ensue between the companies. "I was actually at Marvel in '76 for about six months," Conway says today. "I originally left Marvel in 1975 after

being passed over for the position of editor-in-chief. At the time I felt I'd been promised it by Stan Lee, when I'd filled in for Roy [Thomas] a few times when he was on vacation. Rightly or wrongly—probably wrongly—I felt betrayed by Stan, so I took my ball and bat and went home. Or, to be more precise, back to DC, where I'd worked at the beginning of my career."

It was then that Conway wrote *Superman vs. Spider-Man*. "When I came to DC in 1975 Carmine Infantino considered me a 'catch' because I'd been writing Marvel's top books, and Carmine was a very competitive man. The *Superman vs. Spider-Man* book was a high-profile project, and I was a natural fit for it, having scripted both *Superman* and *Spider-Man* in the past. And Carmine wanted to stick it to Stan. Like I say, he was a competitive guy."

That book was quite a success, and Conway found himself courted by the company that he felt had spurned him. "In early 1976, I was offered the editor-in-chief role at Marvel, and because it was what I thought I wanted at that point in my life, I left DC and grabbed it. Turned out it wasn't what I wanted after all. Along with the obvious fun of getting to participate in the management of Marvel Comics at a high level, I found myself at the center of an office-politics nightmare. I alienated people whom I considered to be friends, and was alienated by people I considered to be friends. After five or six weeks I couldn't stand it anymore, and decided to return to DC. Stan asked me to remain at Marvel and offered me a contract, and we negotiated over it for a few months, but ultimately I felt I'd be happier at DC."

# SUPERBOY

## AND THE

# LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES

by Jim Ford

**Mr. and Mrs. Ranzz**

A double-page spread from *All-New Collectors' Edition #C-55* (1978), featuring the wedding of founding Legionnaires Lightning Lad and Saturn Girl. Note the none-too-subtle cameos of Legion writer Paul Levitz and penciler Mike Grell in the lower left and right corners, respectively. Words by Levitz, pencils by Grell, and inks by Vince Colletta.

TM &amp; © DC Comics.

**The Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes tabloid has everything!**

It is a gigantic comic with an electrifying wraparound cover and interior artwork by fan-favorite Mike Grell! It has several pages highlighting "The Origins and Powers of the Legionnaires," reminiscent of the best bonus features of the Silver Age! It has a poster-sized double-page pinup of all the Legionnaires, past and present! Paul Levitz wrote the story that finally revealed the secret of the Time Trapper at the End of Time, and best yet, he fulfilled a divination from the very beginnings of the Legion as Saturn Girl and Lightning Lad got married!

Officially entitled *All-New Collectors' Edition #C-55* and published in 1978, this was the first and only *Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes* tabloid to present original material. "You have to remember," Levitz said in an interview with Glen Cadigan in *The Legion Companion* (2003, TwoMorrows Publishing), "once you get to '76 or so, part of my job was at least to be in the room in all of those discussions, and over time it evolved into more and more of my responsibility, so whether it was the double-sized format or going monthly or getting a tabloid, the Legion had a pretty good advocate in the room. The book was doing fairly well at that time, so it wasn't unreasonable to argue for it, but it also had somebody there really with definite interest in promoting it."

**THE WEDDING OF SATURN GIRL AND LIGHTNING LAD**

Saturn Girl and Lightning Lad, along with Cosmic Boy, were the only Legionnaires seen in many of the Legion of Super-Heroes' earliest appearances beginning with *Adventure Comics* #247 (Apr. 1958). They were later acknowledged as the team's founders many years later in *Superboy* #147 (May-June 1968). Although Lightning Man was shown to be married to Saturn Woman in early Legion stories where they appeared with Superman as adults, the relationship between their teenaged counterparts was nothing more than that of devoted comrades. Saturn Girl, as team leader, learned that one Legionnaire was destined to die in *Adventure Comics* #304 (Jan. 1963). Despite her every effort to ensure that she was that Legionnaire, Lightning Lad was killed. It was from a deep sense of guilt at her failure, and not any evident emotional attachment to Lightning Lad, that she again plotted to sacrifice herself so that Lightning Lad might be revived from a death-like coma in *Adventure Comics* #312 (Sept. 1963). Proty, Chameleon Boy's telepathic and shape-changing pet, died in her place.

Nothing more was intimated about their deepening relationship until, in *Adventure* #337 (Oct. 1965), Saturn Girl and Lightning Lad were married. Although the ceremony was actually a hoax perpetrated to draw enemy spies out into the open, the event nonetheless

# SUPERMAN<sup>®</sup>

VS.

# MUHAMMAD ALI<sup>®</sup>

by Brett Weiss



*"Floats Like a Butterfly" Meets "Bends Steel in His Bare Hands"*

The iconic handshake that wrapped up one of comics' greatest epics, *Superman vs. Muhammad Ali* (published in 1978 as *All-New Collectors' Edition #C-56*). Art by Neal Adams and Dick Giordano.

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*The tabloid-sized Superman vs. Muhammad Ali is much more than a big, bold, brash, beautifully illustrated comic book. At least it is to me.*

Before I break down the storyline and pepper you with fresh quotes from the great Neal Adams, who penciled and co-plotted this bulky bad boy, let's hop aboard the Tardis and travel back in time to 1978, to a small suburb of Fort Worth, Texas, where *Superman vs. Muhammad Ali* graced me—free of charge—with its four-color goodness.

As a kid I loved comic books more than just about anything in the whole wide world. During the long, hot Texas summers, when I wasn't riding my bicycle, building models, digging in the dirt, or playing basketball, I was usually planted on my bed, the couch, the front porch, or anywhere else I could find some solitude, thrilling to the exploits of such stalwart arbiters of justice as Superman, Batman, Spider-Man, the Flash, and Green Lantern.

Money was pretty tight in those days—my buck-a-week allowance was enough to purchase three new issues, give or take a few cents. To supplement my collection, I would trade with my best friend, who lived next door. Better yet, my mom would take me to a couple of used bookstores in the area, where comics were typically half of cover price. Still better was the local thrift store that sometimes had comics for just ten cents each—score!

When *Superman vs. Muhammad Ali* hit the stands, I was mesmerized by its now-classic cover, its massive size (I was unfamiliar at the time with any previous tabloid releases), and its pitting of two of the world's most well-known figures against one another. I wasn't much of a boxing

fan, but everyone knew Muhammad Ali was a great fighter, and I was intrigued by the premise.

However, as with the AMT KISS van model kit that came out the previous year, *Superman vs. Muhammad Ali* was something I desperately wanted, but couldn't afford. The \$2.50 cover price was a deal-breaker as I just couldn't bear spending two-and-a-half weeks' worth of allowance on a single comic book, regardless of its size or its overall awesomeness.

Enter my older cousin Randy, who, at the age of 16, owned thousands of comic books, mostly Marvels, DCs, and Warren magazines (his mom paid for subscriptions to several titles per month). When my family would visit his family, the big kids would run off to who knew where, and the adults would sit in the kitchen talking, leaving me with hours and hours of reading time in what I considered to be the greatest library in the history of humankind. I was like Henry Bemis in the classic *Twilight Zone* episode "Time Enough At Last" (1959), but without the tragic ending.

One day during the summer of '78, while Randy's family was visiting my house, he walked in the front door, *Superman vs. Muhammad Ali* in hand. After the obligatory hugs and "hellos" and such, Randy asked me if I wanted to borrow the sacred tome. My eyes must have bugged out of my head because Randy, the kind soul that he was (and still is), asked if I'd like to keep it. Needless to say, I took him up on his offer, plopped down on the nearest chair, and devoured the issue like a man in the desert chugging a cold glass of Gatorade. Brain freeze had never felt so good.

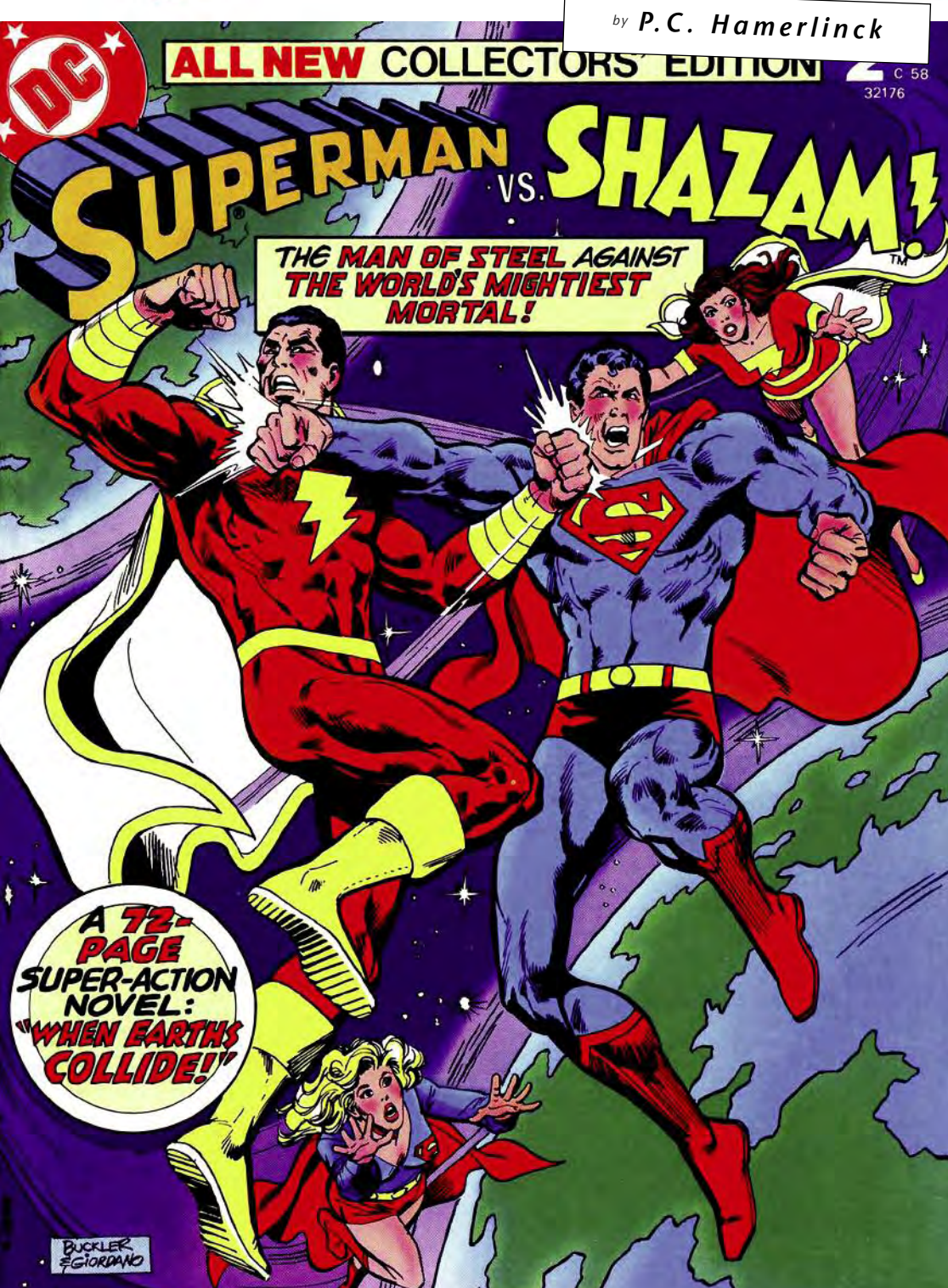
# WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

FlashBack!

THE COLOSSAL-SIZED CONFRONTATION BETWEEN

## SUPERMAN AND Captain Marvel

by P. C. Hamerlinck



"The Battle Nearly Four Decades in the Making!" declared a 1978 DC Comics advertisement for the tabloid-sized, maladroitly titled comic-book epic, "Superman vs. Shazam!"—more formally known as *All-New Collectors' Edition* #C-58—which marked the first genuine full-length fracas between Superman and Captain Marvel that restless readers had patiently anticipated since DC acquired the publishing rights to Captain Marvel, due to the heroes' harried history together.

The conflict first began during ostensibly simpler times when the two found themselves at odds in a courtroom—where one hero's probably only true crime was outselling the other one. After the lengthy litigation concluded, roundabout rematches would tease readers over the ensuing years, with "Superduperman" and "Captain Marbles" trading jabs in *MAD* #4 ... a decked, dazed and confused Marvel's succinct and subtle slot in *Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane* #42 ... a faux Big Red Cheese's scuffle with the Big Red "S" in *Justice League of America* #103 ... a thunderous CM-doppelganger meeting the Man of Steel in *Superman* #276 ... an Earth-One/Earth-S showdown in *Justice League of America* #137 ... Superman scoundrel Lex Luthor involuntarily transporting himself to Captain Marvel's universe in *Shazam!* #15 ... and the World's Mightiest Mortal's m le with a Sivana-designed Superman robot in *Shazam!* #30. But by 1978, writer Gerry Conway, artist Rich Buckler, and inker Dick Giordano finally made the two superheroes' worlds collide in a big way over the course of 72 over-sized, potent pages.

After being treated to a comparison chart of our two heroes, we're introduced to an eyeball earring-wearing Martian named Karmang the Evil. Formerly an ancient scientist known as Karmang the Good, he devises a way to resurrect his dead race by colliding the parallel worlds

### Heroes Behaving Badly

Rich Buckler and Dick Giordano's cover to *All-New Collectors' Edition* #C-58, *Superman vs. Shazam!* Note that the cover features the story's co-stars, Supergirl and Mary Marvel. Cover art by Rich Buckler and Dick Giordano.

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# PAUL & ALEX DINI ROSS



## DISCUSS A TREASURED FORMAT

by Zack Smith



The tabloid-sized treasury format was a beloved staple of 1970s comics, offering both reprints of classic stories and the occasional new epic tale in an oversized package. But times change and printing costs go up, and by the mid-1980s, the format was virtually dead.

But nostalgia is powerful, and so are proven creators. And in the late 1990s, two of the most acclaimed names to come up that decade teamed up to revive that classic format with some of DC's most classic characters.

Writer Paul Dini, who'd become an Emmy-winning fan-favorite for his work on *Batman: The Animated Series* and other DC animated series and tie-in books, teamed with Alex Ross, whose photorealistic painted artwork on such series as *Marvels* and *Kingdom Come* had made him one of the most in-demand artists in comics.

From 1998 to 2003, they produced a series of fully painted, oversized books featuring DC's biggest heroes: *Superman: Peace on Earth*, *Batman: War on Crime*, *Shazam!: Power of Hope*, *Wonder Woman: Spirit of Truth*, and the *JLA* books *Secret Origins* and *Liberty and Justice*. The books featured more character-based, contemplative looks at DC's icons,

and have since been collected in the (alas, slightly-reduced-in-size) volume *The World's Greatest Super-Heroes*.

We got Dini and Ross on the phone to discuss their collaboration, what made these works special, and of course, their love for the treasury format.

— Zack Smith

**ZACK SMITH:** I was curious about how familiar you were about the treasury format, and what it meant to you, and if there were any editions that were particularly meaningful to you growing up.

**PAUL DINI:** Well, I remember as a kid, if a story was in a treasury edition, that meant you had to sit up and take notice, because this was a story you couldn't get in any other format. There was the *Spider-Man/Superman* book—there was something about the biggest character at Marvel, meeting the biggest hero at DC, and that format reflected how big it was. I had to have it.

**ALEX ROSS:** I remember when I was a teenager and had missed out on buying the various treasury editions that came out when I was younger—and I found out

### World Watch

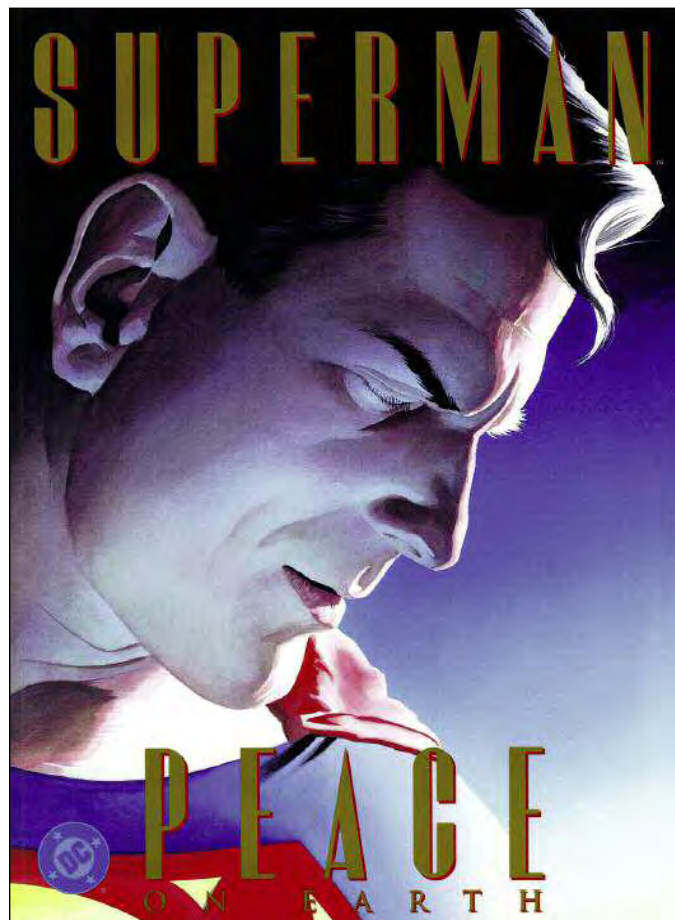
Four Justice Leaguers (five, counting the uninvited Batman, seen in the last panel) inside the Pentagon. From *JLA: Liberty and Justice* (2003), Alex Ross' art, sans Paul Dini's script. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)).

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most were extremely affordable, because they were reprints and seen as having no back-issue potential.

**DINI:** Neal Adams was my favorite artist, and I'd try to get regular-sized back issues he'd drawn, and I'd go to a comic shop and they were like, eight, nine dollars. And I bought *Superman vs. Muhammad Ali*, thinking, "This is great, and it'll be worth like a hundred dollars someday." [laughs]

**SMITH:** *That's actually going for a few hundred these days.*



## Superman: Peace on Earth

(top) Cover to *Peace on Earth* (Jan. 1999).

(bottom) Alex Ross' pencil art featuring the Man of Steel speaking to the US Congress about world hunger.

Courtesy of the artist.

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**DINI:** [stunned] Really?

**ROSS:** I've got two or three copies of that in decent shape! I should cash in!

I think the format was great in particular for Adams and Jack Kirby—for appreciating what their artwork was to this medium. Comics pack you into a tight format—I know I was always screaming for whatever larger formats were available, and why I hoped to revive this one.

**DINI:** I remember I was disappointed Adams didn't draw *Superman/Spider-Man*—they had Ross Andru, who was great, but he was the regular *Spider-Man* artist. I wanted to see Adams take on *Spider-Man*.

**ROSS:** Actually, he did do a little of it. He was in the studio at the time and did some touch-ups. I believe *BACK ISSUE* revealed this! [Editor's note: Alex is right! See BI #11.]

**SMITH:** *When I first discovered treasury editions, what I loved were reprints, like the Galactus Saga in Fantastic Four, or the Mordru story with the Legion of Super-Heroes, and how it made these stories seem even more big and epic. Did you ever discover any classic stories through these editions?*

**ROSS:** Well, those were some of the first reprints, aside from a few things like 100-page Super-Spectaculars and stuff like that. So the way I got knowledge of many characters—of their powers, their personalities, their histories—were from books like the ones they did with the origins of supervillains.

**DINI:** It became more of a special occasion to see them—at the time, I remember what I really loved was the Howard the Duck/Defenders crossover. Gerber was firing on all cylinders, and that was a fun book. That was sort of when they were moving away from those big, world-ending stories, though—like if they'd done something like Howard vs. Donald Duck, that would have been huge. [laughs] I understand the need to maximize the characters' appeal by doing something in a magazine format, moving them off the spinner rack, but I miss how these formats would have that special punch.

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**BACK ISSUE #61**  
"Tabloids and Treasures," spotlighting every all-new tabloid from the 1970s. Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man, The Bible, Captain America's Bicentennial Battles, The Wizard of Oz, even the PAUL DINI/ALEX ROSS World's Greatest Super-Heroes editions! Commentary and art by ADAMS, GARCIA-LOPEZ, GRELL, KIRBY, KUBERT, MAYER, ROMITA SR., TOT, and more. Wraparound cover by ALEX ROSS!

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