

COMICS' BRONZE AGE AND BEYOND!

BACKISSUE!



April 2015

No. 79

\$8.95

Captain Atom and the Ghost TM & © DC Comics. All Rights Reserved.



FROM CHARLTON TO DC: ACTION HEROES IN THE BRONZE AGE

Blue Beetle • Captain Atom • Peacemaker • Thunderbolt • Blockbuster Weekly • Dave Gibbons Watchmen interview with Bates • Broderick • Collins • Cullins • Kupperberg • Wein & more

Volume 1,
Number 79
April 2015

**Celebrating the
Best Comics of
the '70s, '80s,
'90s, and Beyond!**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Michael Eury

PUBLISHER
John Morrow

DESIGNER
Rich Fowlks

COVER ARTIST
Allen Milgrom

COVER COLORIST
Glenn Whitmore

COVER DESIGNER
Michael Kronenberg

PROOFREADER
Rob Smentek

SPECIAL THANKS

Michael Ambrose	James Kingman
Cary Bates	Ted Kord
Bill Black	Paul Kupperberg
Pat Broderick	Kevin Maguire
Michael Browning	Robert Menzies
Mike Collins	Allen Milgrom
Comic Book Resources	Elizabeth Millsted
Corpus Christi College	Ian Millsted
Cambridge	Dennis O'Neil
Paris Cullins	Bob Rozakis
Andrew Czekalski	Tod Smith
DC Comics	Anthony Snyder
Daniel DeAngelo	Andrew Standish
Michael Dunne	Roy Thomas
Scott Dutton	Len Wein
Excelsior Comics	Greg Weisman
T. C. Ford	John Wells
Dave Gibbons	Michael Zeno
Grand Comics	
Database	Dedicated to the
Robert Greenberger	memory of
Heritage Comics	Dick Giordano
Auctions	
Dan Johnson	



CHARLTON ACTION HEROES IN THE BRONZE AGE

BACK SEAT DRIVER: The Action Heroes: They're Not Half-Bad2
A quick history of Charlton Comics and its hodgepodge-heroes

FLASHBACK: Inaction Heroes12
Charlton Spotlight editor Michael Ambrose examines the Action Heroes' pre-DC purgatory

GREATEST STORIES NEVER TOLD: Blockbuster Weekly18
Bob Greenberger goes behind the scenes of DC's aborted Action Heroes revival

FLASHBACK: Re-Meet the Beetle23
The Blue Beetle is rebooted at DC Comics

FLASHBACK: Quantum Entanglements: Captain Atom's Rebirth in the 1980s37
This atomic hero leapt from 1968 to 1986—and from Charlton to DC

FLASHBACK: Getting Down and Dirty with Peacemaker57
Paul Kupperberg and Tod Smith's blast(er) from the past

FLASHBACK: Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt63
Mike Collins relocates Pete Morisi's reluctant hero to the UK

INTERVIEW: Dave Gibbons: Drawing the Watchmen69
The artist of one of comics' most celebrated projects discusses its connections to the Action Heroes

GREATEST STORIES NEVER TOLD: Moore and Gibbons: Before Watchmen76
In a coda to his interview, Dave Gibbons reveals some projects he had hoped to do with Alan Moore

BACK TALK77
Reader reaction to our FF issue and more

If you're viewing a Digital Edition of this publication, PLEASE READ THIS:

This is copyrighted material, **NOT** intended for downloading anywhere except our website or Apps. If you downloaded it from another website or torrent, go ahead and read it, and if you decide to keep it, **DO THE RIGHT THING** and buy a legal download, or a printed copy. Otherwise, **DELETE IT FROM YOUR DEVICE** and **DO NOT SHARE IT WITH FRIENDS OR POST IT ANYWHERE**. If you enjoy our publications enough to download them, please pay for them so we can keep producing ones like this. Our digital editions should **ONLY** be downloaded within our Apps and at www.twomorrows.com



BACK ISSUE™ is published 8 times a year by TwoMorrows Publishing, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614. Michael Eury, Editor-in-Chief. John Morrow, Publisher. Editorial Office: **BACK ISSUE**, c/o Michael Eury, Editor-in-Chief, 118 Edgewood Avenue NE, Concord, NC 28025. Email: euryman@gmail.com. Six-issue subscriptions: \$60 Standard US, \$85 Canada, \$107 Surface International. *Please send subscription orders and funds to TwoMorrows, NOT to the editorial office.* Cover art by Allen Milgrom. Captain Atom and the Ghost TM & © DC Comics. All Rights Reserved. All characters are © their respective companies. All material © their creators unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter © 2015 Michael Eury and TwoMorrows Publishing. **BACK ISSUE** is a TM of TwoMorrows Publishing. ISSN 1932-6904. Printed in China. **FIRST PRINTING.**

Back cover of Americomics #3 (Aug. 1983), by Rik Levins and Bill Black. Blue Beetle TM & © DC Comics.

A Quick History of the CHARLTON ACTION HEROES

...and of Charlton Comics, Too

by Michael Eury

Long before Watchmen's Nite Owl, Dr. Manhattan, Rorschach, Silk Spectre, Ozymandius, and the Comedian, there were Blue Beetle, Captain Atom, the Question, Nightshade, Peter Cannon—Thunderbolt, and the Peacemaker.

And let's not forget Sarge Steel, Judomaster, and Son of Vulcan.

If you started reading comic books in the Bronze Age or later, you missed the original appearances of these so-called "Action Heroes." And even if you were reading comics during the Silver Age, you still might have missed their titles, due to the spotty and unpredictable distribution of their publisher's releases.

"Spotty and unpredictable" might also describe this company's product. Quality often took a back seat to volume, as its presses were primed to crank, crank, rarely slowing down. These printed comic-book pages might be poorly trimmed, with ragged edges, or their staples might be misaligned, or their artwork marred with ink blotches. Sometimes word balloons and captions were typeset to save the cost of paying a letterer (earning the credit "Lettered by A. Machine"). And in the battle for newsstand rack space, since it lacked the name recognition boasted by the majors, this company's comics sometimes remained bundled and stacked in warehouses or storerooms, only seeing the light of day after their logos were torn off to earn retailer credit.

To top it off, its founders started their company after meeting in prison!

Such was the wild, but wonderful, history of Charlton Comics, that little-comics-house-that-could, which turned out everything from *Abbott and Costello* to *Zoo Funnies* from its frantic funnybook factory in Derby, Connecticut.

MAKING MAGAZINES FOR A SONG

Actually, comic books weren't Charlton's primary product, at least not in the beginning. In the early 1930s, Italian immigrant brick mason John Santangelo, in an effort to impress his music-loving girlfriend, started publishing inexpensively produced magazines that printed the lyrics of popular songs. Little did he realize that he was breaking the law, and he was convicted of copyright infringement and sentenced to one year in prison. There he met a disbarred lawyer named Edward Levy, and after their release, Santangelo and Levy started

Charlton Publishing, *legally* obtaining the rights to song lyrics and publishing several successful music magazines including *Hit Parader*, as well as puzzle magazines. For their



Ready for Action

(opposite) Son of Vulcan (art by Dick Giordano), Peter Cannon—Thunderbolt (art by Pete Morisi), Judomaster (by Frank McLaughlin), and Peacemaker (by Pat Boyette). (this page) Sarge Steel (by Giordano) and the Question (by Steve Ditko).

Peter Cannon—Thunderbolt TM & © Peter A. Morisi estate. All other characters TM & © DC Comics. *Hit Parader* © Hit Parader Magazine.

Blue Beetle in the Golden and Silver Ages

(left) Fox's *Blue Beetle* #2 (May–June 1940).

Cover by Lou Fine.

(right) BB's kinda-sorta mid-1950s revival, in Charlton's *Space Adventures* #13 (Oct.–Nov. 1954).

Cover by Al Fago.

Blue Beetle TM & © DC Comics.



venture they operated on the cheap, headquartering their enterprise not in the nation's publishing capitol of New York City but instead in Derby, Connecticut, a hamlet that at one time housed a corset-manufacturing plant (its current motto is "Connecticut's Smallest City"). Expenses were further cut by Charlton's purchase of a used printing press. Charlton's plant was a seven-and-a-half-acre facility, where every aspect of the company's business was located under one roof.

Charlton tricked into the comics game in the mid-1940s, with *Zoo Funnies* and *Marvels of Science* among its first entries. It wasn't until the 1950s that Charlton's comic division picked up its pace, with editor Al Fago (and later, editor Pat Masulli) grinding out generic fare that capitalized on whatever trend would sell: Westerns, hot rods, crime, girls' romance, funny animals (with its own version of Casper the Friendly Ghost, titled *Timmy the Timid Ghost*) ... you name it, even "superheroes" (with its Mighty Mouse imitation, *Atomic Mouse*). In March 1955, company owner Santangelo concocted a new way to pinch pennies: He offered his freelance artists staff employment with some benefits, but reduced their page rates from \$20 to \$13. Many artists rejected this offer and sought work elsewhere, but a young journeyman illustrator named Dick Giordano, who was one month shy of walking down the aisle, opted in for job security. (Santangelo sliced page rates even more later that year after flood waters from Hurricane Diane destroyed inventory. As Giordano related to me in the 2003 *TwoMorrow's* biography *Dick Giordano: Changing Comics, One Day At a Time*, "At this time we didn't know John had full flood insurance—and had collected on it." Page rates soon inched back up to \$13.)



DICK GIORDANO

A MYSTERY MAN RETURNS

The mid-1950s were a miserable time for the comic-book industry: Television was robbing comics' readership by providing an enticing new form of entertainment, delivered for free right into the family living room; Dr. Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* indicted comics as the root of juvenile delinquency and sparked a witch hunt that nearly torched the entire business; and the superhero boom of the Golden Age had sputtered to a near-halt, with only the best-known

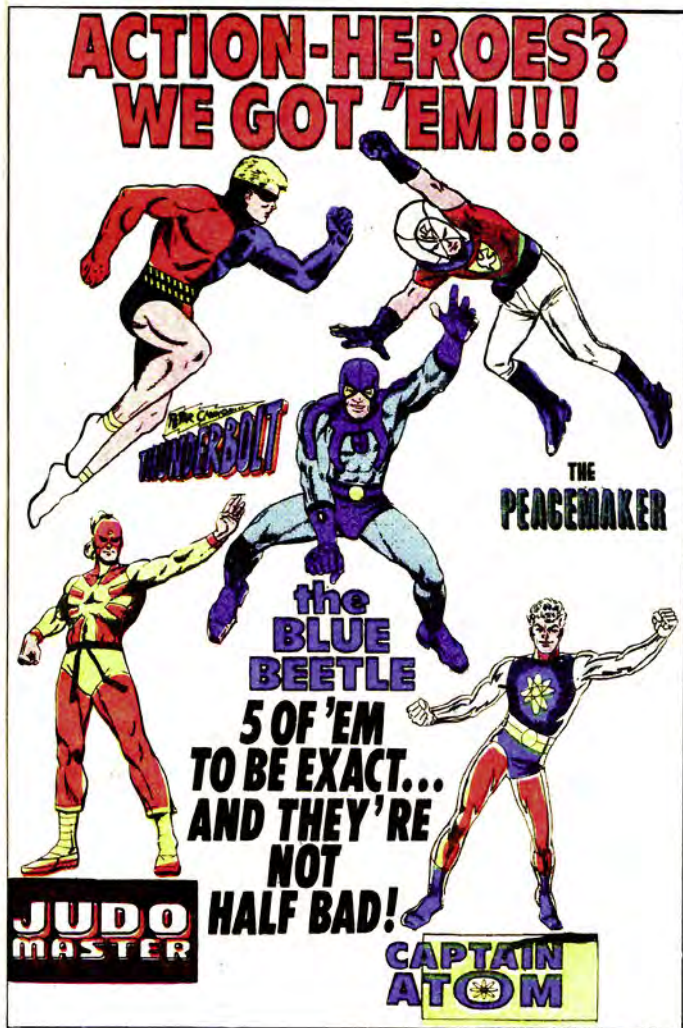
crusading commodities (mainly Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman) remaining in print.

What a weird time to release a title starring a costumed character! But that's exactly what Charlton did by publishing the adventures of Blue Beetle. The character first popped up at Charlton on the Al Fago-drawn cover of *Space Adventures* #13 (Oct.–Nov. 1954). BB returned in the next issue, quickly followed by four issues of *Blue Beetle*, beginning with issue #18, cover-dated February 1955. This was really more of a product mop-up than a genre experiment; at the time Charlton was engulfing properties from publishers that were going belly-up. Also, it was more economical for Santangelo to keep Charlton's printing presses spinning 24-7 than to turn them off and on, so this *Blue Beetle* comic-book revival was little more than product to be churned out between the printing of the latest music and crossword periodicals.

Blue Beetle was a familiar character to readers who had been around for a few years. He was one of the many colorful crimefighters rushed into print after National (DC) Comics' *Action Comics* #1 (June 1938) starring Superman proved an instant sensation. Fox Features Syndicate, not Charlton, was the original home of Blue Beetle. He was actually policeman Dan Garret, who donned a blue suit and fedora for after-hours crimebusting when first spied in *Mystery Men Comics* #1 (Aug. 1939). Soon he would appear in blue chain-mail tights and a cowl, sporting a scarab motif and superhuman strength as well as many comic books from Fox and Holyoke Publishing, plus a radio serial and short-lived comic strip. In 1950, his heyday had passed ... until Charlton picked up his publication rights and released those 1954 and 1955 issues, which reprinted Golden Age material.

MAN IN SPACE AND MEN OF ACTION

By the mid- to late 1950s, science fiction was a fad, prompted in part by the United States' "space race" with Russia. Satellites, dogs, and chimps were being rocketed into orbit, and Americans were fed the expectation that jetpacks, flying cars, and lunar hotels would one day be the norm (ahem ... we're still waiting). Charlton blasted off into this trend with titles like *Mysteries of Unexplored Worlds*, anthologies whose stories took readers to the Moon—and beyond.



schedule after the Masulli-edited issue #8 (Apr. 1966), was back—but now retitled as *Secret Agent*, riding that still-popular craze. (Around this time, Gold Key Comics published two issues of its own *Secret Agent* series, based upon the TV show of the same name, a US-renaming of the British import *Danger Man*, starring Patrick McGoochan.) Gill, Montes, and Bache were back, with a Giordano-drawn cover. The next—and final—issue would not appear until one year later. Editor Giordano returned to the drawing board to illustrate the Sarge Steel tale in *Secret Agent* #10 (Oct. 1967), which featured a Steve Skeates script. That issue's backup was Tiffany Sinn, "The C.I.A. Sweetheart," by Kaler and Aparo.

The same month Blue Beetle hopped into the back pages of *Captain Atom*, Giordano took over *Fightin' 5*, with issue #40 (Nov. 1966). While the FF were ostensibly separate from Charlton's costumed champions, a full-fledged Action Hero—the Peacemaker, a precursor to weapons-loaded anti-heroes like the Punisher—bowed as the backup in *Fightin' 5* #40. That feature's artist was Pat Boyette and its writer was the omnipresent Joe Gill.

Giordano's Action Hero universe continued to expand with 1967-covered-dated books. *Fightin' 5* was axed with #41, but it traded places with its backup as *The Peacemaker* #1 (Mar. 1967) premiered, with *Fightin' 5* short stories bringing up the rear. That same month, *Captain Atom* #85 introduced the zany villain team of Punch and Jewelee.

Steve Ditko's buggy crimefighter got his own series starting with *Blue Beetle* #1 (July 1967), making way for Nightshade to take his berth in the back of *Captain Atom*. *Blue Beetle*'s backup feature was the Question, Ditko's faceless objectivist who would achieve great acclaim two decades later. Among the house ads pushing the Action Heroes was one where editor Giordano, playfully mocking Stan Lee's hyperbolic promos at Marvel, touted his five not-quite-superhero books as being "not half bad."

Despite this exciting expansion, the Action Hero line was about to be abruptly derailed. While he was being flooded with "overwhelmingly positive" fan mail about the Action Heroes, Giordano was disheartened to discover that his titles were selling at only around 18 percent of their print run. He nosed around and discovered that approximately 75 percent of Charlton's comic books were remaining bundled in warehouses, succumbing to a crowded magazine marketplace where recognizable titles were selected for distribution over lesser-known ones. Most comic-book consumers were not even getting the chance to try an issue of *Captain Atom* or *The Peacemaker*.

"Not Half Bad"

(top) Giordano's jokey 1967 house ad. (bottom) Under Giordano, backups were often cover-blurbed, such as Blue Beetle in *Captain Atom* #85 (Mar. 1967) and the Question in *Blue Beetle* #1 (June 1967). Ditko pencils on both, with Mastroserio inks on the *Cap* cover.

Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt
TM & © Peter A. Morisi estate.
All other characters TM & © DC Comics.



FlashBack!

INACTION HEROES:

The Charlton Revivals of the 1970s and '80s

by Michael Ambrose



Charlton's Champions

Wraparound cover to the *Charlton Portfolio* (1974), by Don Newton and Bob Layton. Unless otherwise noted, all scans in this article are courtesy of Michael Ambrose.

All characters TM & © DC Comics, except: Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt TM & © Peter A. Morisi estate. E-Man TM & © Joe Staton and Nicola Cuti. Yang © 1974 Charlton Comics Group.

The year 1974 was pivotal in the history of the Charlton Action Heroes.

Or maybe it would be more accurate to call them "Inaction Heroes." By that year, those characters were but a fond, distant memory in the minds of comics fans. Until 1968, Charlton had made an honest if halting effort to enter the blossoming superhero comics field with Blue Beetle, Captain Atom, the Question, Judomaster, Sarge Steel, Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt, and Peacemaker, along with the various minor characters, some of which had only a single outing. Fan reaction was favorable, but as Michael Eury discusses in his history of the Action Hero line elsewhere in this issue, there simply weren't enough kids buying the comics, because Charlton's own distribution was so ineffective. The last appearances of any of the characters had been in *Mysterious Suspense* #1 (Oct. 1968), an all-Question one-shot by Steve Ditko, and *Blue Beetle* #5 (Nov. 1968), also by Ditko,

and featuring a Question backup story. That was it for the Action Heroes—or so it would seem.

In 1974, two Action Hero characters made a cameo appearance in *Ghost Manor* #21 (Nov. 1974). The first page of "Death in a Darkroom," by Nicola Cuti and Steve Ditko, depicts a parade scene with E-Man, Blue Beetle and the Bug, and a Captain Atom-like figure in the background. We don't know whether Cuti specified those characters in the script or if Ditko simply felt like drawing them (in any case, it may be the only known instance of Ditko depicting E-Man), but likely only a few readers at the time were aware that the Beetle and the Captain were actually Charlton characters from a previous comics generation—which, in those days, was reckoned to be every three to five years.

Far more important in 1974 was the appearance of CPL Special Double-Issue #9 and 10 from CPL/Gang Publications of Indianapolis, Indiana, a magazine better known as the *Charlton Portfolio*.



CHARLTON PORTFOLIO AND THE CHARLTON COMICS SURGE

Fans Bob Layton and Roger Stern started a fanzine they grandiloquently titled *CPL—Contemporary Pictorial Literature*—in the early 1970s after graduating from high school in Indianapolis. Fellow fan Duffy Vohland, at the time a mover and shaker in the fanzine world, was able to convince many semipro and pro comics artists to contribute to *CPL*, among them John Byrne, P. Craig Russell, Paul Gulacy, Bob Hall, and Alex Toth. *CPL* ran for a total of 12 issues and was one of the more highly regarded fanzines of the era. It was Vohland who arranged for *CPL*/Gang to hook up with Charlton.

According to an interview with Layton in *Comic Book Artist* #12 (Mar. 2001), “Duffy was really the one who got us connected with Charlton” in 1974. “Stern gave us a call from Duffy saying that I should talk to somebody up at Charlton, and how would we like to publish the unpublished material they had left over from the Dick Giordano days. And, of course, we lost our minds! Even at the possibility of it!”

What resulted was the stunning *Charlton Portfolio*, a 48-page black-and-white magazine professionally printed on coated stock. Behind a wraparound cover by Don Newton and Bob Layton, spotlighting the 1960s Action Heroes along with some of Charlton’s 1970s characters, were pinups by Dick Giordano, Pete Morisi, Frank McLaughlin, Warren Sattler, Joe Staton, Pat Boyette, Jim Aparo, Dave Cockrum, John Byrne, and others, plus a variety of Charlton-centered articles. But the meat of the *Portfolio* was the complete, unpublished *Blue Beetle* #6

by D. C. Glanzman and Steve Ditko. “We got it pretty much with no strings attached,” said Layton. “They had no use for it! It never occurred to them to actually publish it themselves.”

One of the most important features in the *Portfolio* was the inside-back-cover commentary, “The Last Word.” Here, managing editor George Wildman detailed how he was going about making changes at Charlton Comics. This article forms a kind of “Charlton Manifesto” and is key to understanding how Wildman was trying to transform Charlton’s low-tier industry image at the time. Among other improvements outlined in the article, Wildman pointed out that the comics were no longer a “closed shop” but were now open to new talent, that he was now providing information and material to fans, and that Charlton had reentered the superhero field with the introduction of E-Man and Yang. He acknowledged that he had “a lot of catching up to do but we have created a momentum that is constantly gathering speed and shows no signs of slowing.” Wildman was in charge of some four-dozen titles and continued to expand the line during his tenure, dropping deadwood and adding new titles. During this latter heyday, 1972 to 1976, Charlton published around 250 individual comic books per year.

The *Portfolio* was a major financial loss for *CPL*/Gang, but as Layton said, there was a silver lining: “Charlton came back, very impressed with the effort.” At that time the two major comics companies were producing in-house fanzines: Marvel Comics introduced *FOOM* in spring 1973, and in summer

After 8 Years! The Action- Packed Return of CAPTAIN ATOM SHOWDOWN IN SUNURIA!



Familiar Faces

(left) Title page to “Death in a Darkroom,” by Nicola Cuti and Steve Ditko, from *Ghost Manor* #21 (Nov. 1974), showing Blue Beetle, Captain Atom, and E-Man in the background. (right) Splash page to “Showdown in Sunuria,” a previously unpublished Captain Atom story by Ditko, from *Charlton Bullseye* #1 (1975). Anyone recognize the newbie who inked and lettered the story for *Bullseye*?

Blue Beetle and Captain Atom TM & © DC Comics. E-Man TM & © Joe Staton and Nicola Cuti.

Greatest Stories NEVER TOLD

There was always something a little different about **Charlton Comics**. Charlton published scores of titles just like Timely/Atlas/Marvel, utilized some of the best artists in the field such as Steve Ditko, and today remains beloved by many despite being gone for three decades now. During the 1960s, when everyone was jumping on the Silver Age superhero bandwagon, Charlton offered up a line of Action Heroes that were fun, quirky, and different ... but never got licensed, made into cartoons, or found their way off the four-color page.

Still, as Alan Moore told Jon B. Cooke, "There were some very good little strips, and then, of course, there was that big Charlton revamp where we got the new Blue Beetle, the new Captain Atom, and so forth, which was a shot in the arm. All of these things contributed in pushing Charlton higher up my league titles of which comics to buy first. They never quite ousted Marvel or DC, but during that golden period, Charlton was up there with the best of them."

In 1983, Charlton was a dying company, and DC Comics' Paul Levitz acquired the Action Heroes for \$5000 a character as a present for executive editor Dick Giordano. Dick was delighted, of course, then pocketed them, figuring out what to do with them. As he revealed to *BI* editor Michael Eury in the 2003 biography *Dick Giordano: Changing Comics, One Day at a Time*, his first thought was reprinting their Charlton tales to reintroduce them to fans before launching new stories. DC's marketing department nixed that idea, so Dick went in different directions. It was a tricky task because even then, plans were being made to upend the DC Universe in less than two years with *Crisis on Infinite Earths*.

Yet these Action Heroes were Dick's babies, and he guarded them until he could figure out the best way to reintroduce them. By then, the direct-sales market had proven able to support direct-only titles while newsstands were showing considerable signs of weakening. As a result, experimentation in terms of page count, format, and price was growing. At some point, Dick hit upon the idea of a weekly title featuring the Charlton heroes—Blue Beetle, Captain Atom, Judomaster, the Question, and Peacemaker—treating them like extended Sunday newspaper comic strips. To tie it in with the DC line, he and Levitz concocted the idea to reprint in comic form the syndicated newspaper strip *The World's Greatest Superheroes* from its 1978 beginnings. Writer/artist Pete Morisi still owned Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt and was interested in doing more with his character, so a deal was struck allowing him to contribute.

Super Friends

Dave Gibbons' cover for the unpublished *Comics Cavalcade Weekly* (a.k.a. *Blockbuster Weekly*) cover, colored by and courtesy of Scott Dutton (catpawdynamics.com), who also added the Charlton bullet and cover graphics.

All characters TM & © DC Comics, except Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt TM & © Peter A. Morisi estate.

BLOCKBUSTER BI WEEKLY

by Robert Greenberger



RE-MEET THE

FlashBack!

BEETLE™

THE FORMER CHARLTON ACTION HERO REESTABLISHES HIS ROOTS AT DC

by Jim Kingman



"Ahh, isn't recognition grand? And here I thought I'd be forgotten after all this time." With those spoken words in panel 4 on page 18 of *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #1 (Apr. 1985), the Blue Beetle, formerly of the Charlton Comics Action Hero universe, dropped from his solar-powered flying (and aquatic) craft, "the Bug," into the DC Universe for the first time. Months later, the Beetle's first full-length solo appearance as a permanent DC character was published in *Secret Origins* #2 (May 1986), released in February. *Blue Beetle* began publication in March of 1986.

A new level of maturity in comic-book storytelling was produced throughout 1986, and it is a year now considered by many to be the beginning of the Modern Age of Comics. It's hard to argue, as during that year Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* were published, while Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen* began its year-long serialization. *Watchmen* was originally conceived to feature Blue Beetle and other Charlton superheroes acquired by DC, but that decision was nixed so that the company could use the characters for years to come within DC Universe continuity. Moore and Gibbons created new superheroes (and a heroine) based on the Charlton characters, and the rest is significant comic-book history.

So instead of Blue Beetle being in on the ground floor of the Modern Age through *Watchmen* (the Beetle became Nite Owl), BB's own book leaned heavily on a traditional form of superhero storytelling reminiscent of Marvel since its Silver Age superhero inception and later DC during the 1970s; entertaining but no longer groundbreaking. Subsequently, the series, which lasted 24 issues and also tied into two crossover events (*Legends* and *Millennium*), has been overlooked by comic-book historians. Meanwhile, Blue Beetle's active participation and character development in 1987's relaunch of the JLA in *Justice League America* garners most, if not all, of fandom's attention. This is a shame, because *Blue Beetle*, plus *Secret Origins* #2, is a lot of fun, and deserves its due. That starts right now!



LEN WEIN

THE CREATORS

Len Wein, whose comics career is so vast and influential it would require a year's worth of *BACK ISSUE* to properly overview, wrote *Blue Beetle*, plus *Secret Origins* #2. RJM Lofficier provided plot assists on issues #14, 15, and 17-22. Gil Kane illustrated the introductory tale in *SO* #2 with a rawness reminiscent of the Golden Age but with ten times the dynamism. Paris Cullins was the main artist on *Blue Beetle*, having established himself on DC's *Blue Devil*. Cullins penciled issues #1-9, 11-14, and 17 and penciled and inked his swan song in #18. Bruce Patterson inked Cullins on issues #1-6, and was replaced by Dell Barras, who inked Cullins on issues #7-9

The Beetle is Back

Paris Cullins and Bruce Patterson's incredible, in-your-face cover for DC's *Blue Beetle* #1 (June 1986).

TM & © DC Comics.

killer Blue Beetle is tracking through Chicago's ugliest streets. An unnamed masked man is murdering the homeless in search of a vial he dropped while being pursued by BB. Ted later deduces that the man had stolen the vial from S.T.A.R. Labs. The killer believes its contents will cure him of his leukemia. He is eventually captured by BB. Wein puts the subplots aside for this tale, with only Fisher on hand, back from "vacation" and back on the beat investigating the killings.

BLUE BEETLE #17 (Oct. 1987)

"The Way the Brawl Bounces!"

Blue Beetle battles the anti-corporate Overthrow. Overthrow has targeted KORD, Inc. as his first corporation for destruction, bypassing bigger fare such as General Motors, IBM, Exxon Mobil, and AT&T. There's a reason for KORD being targeted, although it won't be revealed until a few issues down the line.

Honestly, everything feels like a main storyline in *Blue Beetle* #17: the resurrection of a disoriented and deranged Dan Garrett on Pago Island; the mysterious disappearance and torture of Jeremiah; Melody's encounters with Ted (who she's mad at) and her new assistant, Randall (who she's happy with); Garrison Slate's discovery of a concealed S.T.A.R. experiment dubbed "File 13"; Murray's arrival at SOL in England; all leading up to the original Blue Beetle's attack on Chicago in search of his usurper! Action and events are relentless in this issue, and yet what resonated with me the most was a passage in the narration noting that with the departure of Dan Garrett, Pago Island had become truly lifeless.

BLUE BEETLE #18 (Nov. 1987)

"...And Death Shall Have No Dominion!"

File 13 has been activated and escapes from S.T.A.R. Labs. This young lad now roams the streets of Chicago, while his experimenters and captors scour the city for him. For months, Dan Garrett, the original Blue Beetle, had been kept alive and imprisoned on Pago Island by the powers of the mystical scarab, but during Ted Kord and Lt. Fisher's battle with Carapax, Garrett was released, and the scarab, still in control of Garrett's mind, ordered him to journey to Chicago and slay the "imposter," Ted Kord. As the battle of the Beetles rages, File 13 stumbles upon the fight and recognizes one or both of the combatants. As Garrett nears defeat and Kord acquires the scarab, the scarab offers Kord the "precious gift" that is its power. Kord refuses, but Garrett hungers for it. File 13 exhibits a powerful mind control over Garrett, allowing him to see his once-heroic self. Garrett turns on the scarab and destroys it, once again sacrificing his life, but this time permanently. He begs Kord again to carry on as Blue Beetle in his stead, and Kord is left to mourn the loss of his friend a second time.

Jeremiah finally breaks under torture, divulging to Catalyst the information Cornelius had been seeking. Meanwhile, much to Melody's dismay, Randall exhibits behavior as flaky as Ted's.

BLUE BEETLE #19 (Dec. 1987)

"A Matter of Animus!"

In the wake of the death of the original Blue Beetle, the unnamed boy, File 13, is swiftly reclaimed by Garrison Slate and S.T.A.R. Labs. Ted vows to get to the bottom of this mysterious matter. Blue Beetle confronts Slate that evening, but there isn't much he can do now that the boy is back in S.T.A.R. Labs' custody.

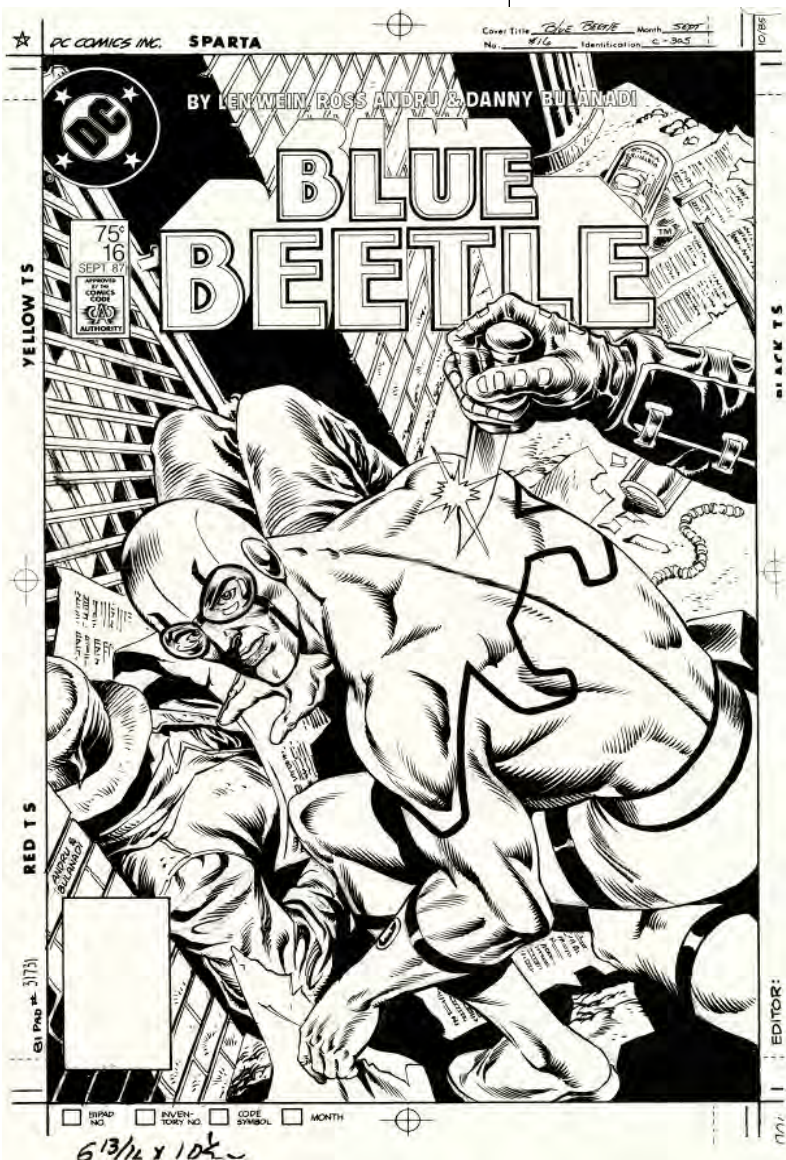
Ted does some detective work and learns more about the boy. He discovers that File 13's "mother," former S.T.A.R. employee Dr. Rose Beryl, had spliced her genes with Dan Garrett's to create the prototype of an improved human race. She was apparently killed in a lab explosion. Blue Beetle locates Animus Explorations on the west coast, where the



Bwah-Ha-Ha

(top) Blue Beetle marker sketch by Kevin Maguire. From the collection of Michael Zeno. (bottom) Ross Andru, one of the *Amazing Spider-Man* artists of the Bronze Age, took a brief turn at another Ditko-drawn do-gooder, Blue Beetle. Original cover art to *BB* #16 (Sept. 1987), inked by Danny Bulanadi. From the collection of Mike Dunne.

TM & © DC Comics.



QUANTUM ENTANGLEMENTS:

CAPTAIN ATOM™'S

REBIRTH IN THE 1980s

FlashBack!

"John Wayne is dead."

"The Duke? Not the Duke—he beat the big C!"

"Martin Luther King is dead."

"Memphis. Six, seven weeks ago. Some sniper. What is this, a disorientation test?"

"Robert Kennedy is dead."

"That's a lie!"

"Lyndon Johnson. Hubert Humphrey. Jack Benny. In the ground. *Anwar Sadat! Indira Gandhi! John Lennon! Gone. All of them, dead and gone.*"

"My wife. I want to call my wife."

"Your wife is dead too."

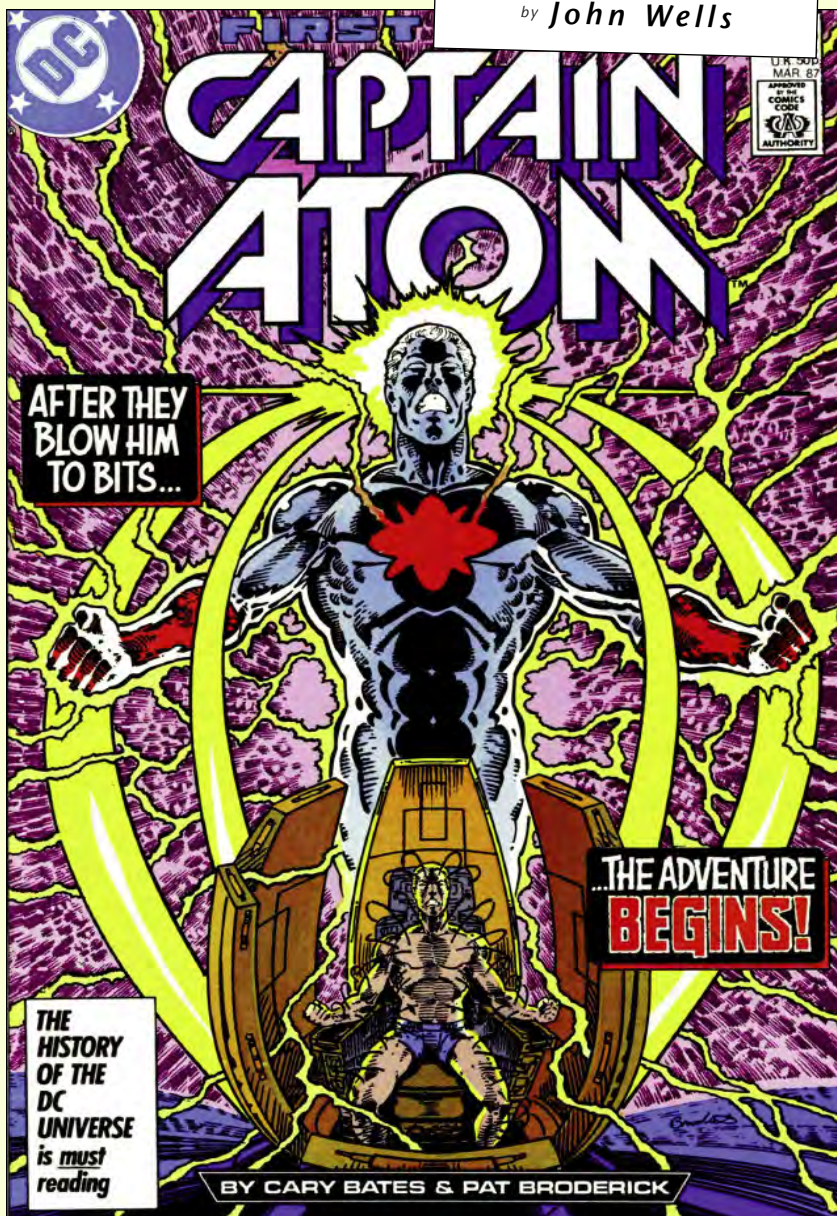
For Nathaniel C. Adam, this was no dream. One minute it had been 1968; the next 1986. And there was more to absorb. Convicted of treason nearly 20 years earlier, the disgraced Air Force captain had agreed to a radical experiment to commute his death sentence ... assuming he survived. The United States had acquired a malleable alien metal at a UFO crash site and wanted to see if it could be used to protect a human being shielded within it. Specifically, they wanted to see if the silver shield would withstand a 50-megaton thermonuclear blast. In the short term, the answer seemed to have been no. Captain Adam and the metal appeared to have been vaporized and Colonel Wade R. Eiling (rhymes with reeling)—the cold-blooded man who'd supervised the project—moved on with his life, going so far as to marry Adam's widow and becoming a stepfather to the convict's young children Randy and Peggy. Now a two-star general, Eiling was alive, well, and prepared to turn the screws when a disoriented, metallically bonded Nathaniel Adam materialized in 1986.

Adam found more sympathy with Dr. Heinrich Megala, the scientist who'd spearheaded the 1968 project. Suffering from a motor-neurological condition triggered by initial contact with the alien metal, Megala was now a virtual paraplegic kept mobile by a sophisticated wheelchair with mechanical arms.

It was the wizened physicist who understood what had happened to the silver-plated Adam. The nuclear blast "was more energy than the UFO alloy could absorb all at once," Megala theorized. "The excess energy became the 'fuel' which propelled the captain across 18 years of space-time." In short, the doctor declared (more than two years before the premiere of a certain TV show starring Scott Bakula) that Nathaniel Adam had made "the damndest quantum leap in history."

A testing program administered by Megala and his bodyguard Babylon confirmed that the time-displaced 28-year-old could now tap the awesome power of the quantum field. From Superman-style flight, strength, and invulnerability to the firing of energy blasts, Captain Adam ranked high on the power scale, but he was most grateful for a more subtle attribute. Through concentration, he could shrug off his metallic appearance

by John Wells



Blast from the Past

Nathaniel Adam's wild ride began here, in DC's *Captain Atom* #1 (Mar. 1987). Cover by Pat Broderick.

TM & © DC Comics.

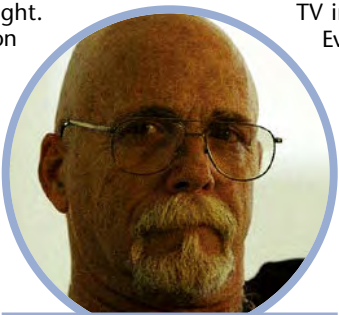
and regain his human form, only his once-brown hair remained snow white.

If Adam had any hope of resuming his old life, General Eiling soon set him straight. The clemency deal cut under the Johnson Administration was null and void, but President Reagan offered the prospect of a new pardon in exchange for a tour of duty as a United States secret agent. Off the clock, he could continue to seek out proof that he'd been framed 20 years earlier.

Still, the existence of a superhuman government agent was too politically sensitive to risk public exposure, so the government devised an elaborate diversion. With "gloves," "boots," and an atomic chest emblem laser-dyed onto his silver skin, Captain Atom emerged as the country's newest superhero ... carefully crafted by his behind-the-scenes handlers and publicists for maximum

impact. In the span of two weeks, the noble—and publicly autonomous—Captain had snagged the cover of every major news magazine and was scheduling TV interviews to divulge his "true" story.

Even the superhero community—with the notable exception of the jealous nuclear man Firestorm—was enchanted, Blue Beetle going so far as to declare Cap a "kindred spirit" as he mulled the feeling that "I already know the guy from somewhere."



PAT BRODERICK

SEEMS LIKE OLD TIMES

Most fans, of course, knew full well that the Blue Beetle did share a common lineage with Captain Atom when Steve Ditko drew both of their adventures for Charlton Comics in the 1960s.

Even after DC purchased the heroes and inserted them into 1985's *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, there was still a sense that their Charlton-documented past would be preserved in their post-Crisis adventures. That certainly seemed to be the case when Cap showed up alongside Superman and Firestorm in late 1985's *DC Comics Presents* #90. Ditto for the Blue Beetle, who had a new supporting cast in his ongoing 1986 comic book but maintained the previously established backstory. As the Question, Peacemaker, and Sarge Steel showed up fully formed in guest-appearances throughout 1986, there was an unstated assumption that their Charlton canon still counted.

In the year since Cap's team-up with Superman, though, much had changed. Galvanized by John Byrne's restart of the Man of Steel's adventures, other editors began to act on the possibilities that *Crisis'* potential clean slate offered. Hence, Greg Potter and George Pérez's *Wonder Woman*. And Cary Bates, Greg Weisman, and Pat Broderick's *Captain Atom*.

Broderick's highest-profile assignment of the 1980s had been an impressive run with writer Gerry Conway on DC's original nuclear man in *The Fury of Firestorm*, but the artist wasn't certain he wanted a second act. Deeply invested in the Charlton heroes that were dear to him, DC's Dick Giordano had reached out to him, though. "[He] called me to see if I would be interested in working on the

PERSONAL DATA

Alter Ego: Nathaniel Christopher Adam
 Occupation: Captain, U.S. Air Force
 Marital Status: Single
 Known Relatives: None
 Group Affiliation: None
 Base of Operations: Cape Canaveral, Florida
 First Appearance: *SPACE ADVENTURES* #33
 Height: 6' 1" Weight: 195 lbs.
 Eyes: Blue Hair: Brown (as Capt. Atom: White)

HISTORY

A trained, dedicated soldier who was a Physics prodigy at eight, a chemist, and a ballistics expert, Captain Nathaniel Adam was making a few last-second adjustments in an Atlas missile when he dropped his screwdriver. Unable to retrieve it in time, Adam was still inside the missile when it was launched on a test flight.

At 300 miles above the Earth, the atomic warhead in the missile exploded, disintegrating Adam utterly, yet somehow leaving his molecular skeleton intact.

Reintegrating himself through sheer force of will, Adam reappeared on the Cape Canaveral launching pad, alive but radioactive. At Adam's suggestion, Cape

scientists provided him with a protective suit made from diulustel, a special lightweight metal designed to shield radiation. Twenty-four hours after demonstrating his newfound powers, Adam was summoned to Washington, where the President himself presented him with a unique uniform made from that same diulustel, and told Adam he was to become America's new secret weapon, code-named Captain Atom.

In the months that followed, Captain Atom protected America against alien invasions and a variety of super-villains, until he was forced to extend himself to the limit to shut down a nuclear reactor gone wild. He then found that the encounter had left him powerless. Captured by the renegade scientist who had tampered with the reactor, Captain Atom was unmasked on nationwide television.

Finding his super-powers gradually returning, Captain Atom escaped his captor, then decided it was time for a new image. Since his radiation levels were becoming more and more unstable, Captain Atom allowed himself to be sprayed from head to toe with an experimental new liquid metal, a formula that was absorbed under his skin and was absolutely radiation-proof. Triggered by a power surge from his body, the metal covering would become visible, revealing Captain Atom's new costume, while completely containing Atom's excess

ive radiation. Thus clad, Captain Atom tracked down the renegade scientist and finally brought him to justice.

At this writing, Captain Atom is still active, defending his country against those who would seek to destroy it.

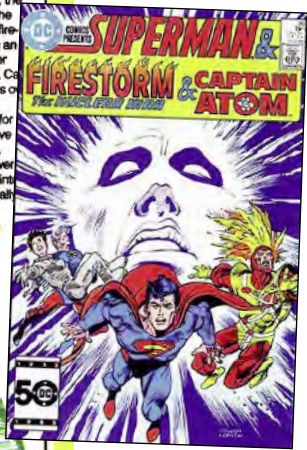
POWERS & WEAPONS

An Olympic-level athlete and highly skilled hand-to-hand combatant, Captain Atom also possesses a wide variety of atomic radiation-based super-powers, including super-strength, limited invulnerability, the ability to pass through solid objects, the power to hurl highly focused nuclear fire-balls, and the ability to fly by focusing an infinitesimal amount of his atomic power through his lower body. At his fastest, Captain Atom has been clocked at speeds of 20,000 m.p.h. As it requires a great deal of effort to maintain such speed for any long amount of time, this can leave Captain Atom temporarily exhausted.

It should also be noted that the power surge that transforms Captain Adam into Captain Atom also changes his normal brown hair into silver-white.

Art by Denys Cowan & Rick Magyar

CAPTAIN ATOM



Cap, Take One

The "old" Captain Atom was shoehorned into the DC Universe before his titular series redefined him. Cap got a page in *Who's Who* #4 (June 1985, art by Denys Cowan and Rick Magyar). (inset) Squint and you can find Cap on the cover of *DC Comics Presents* #90 (Feb. 1986, cover by Cowan and Bob Smith).

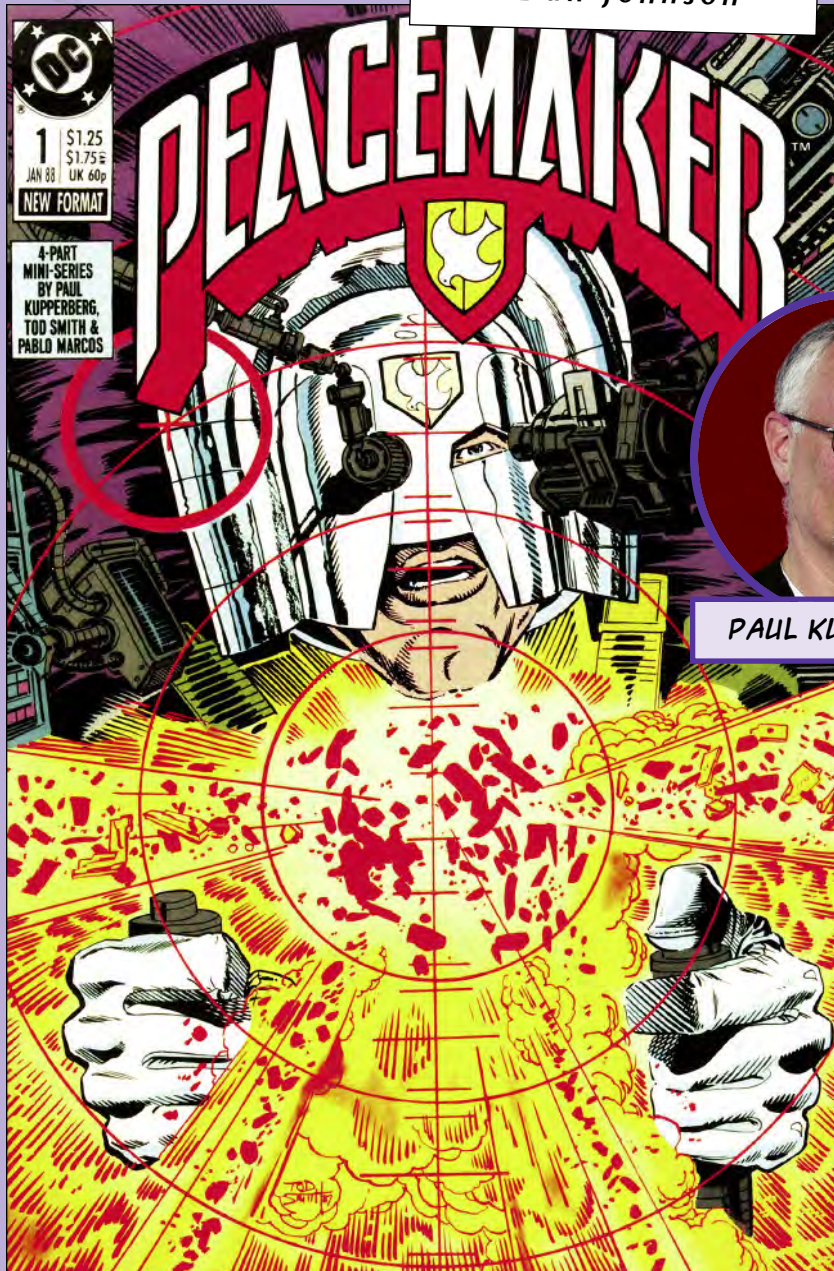
TM & © DC Comics.

GETTING DOWN AND DIRTY WITH

FlashBack!

PEACEMAKER™

by Dan Johnson



In the mid-1980s, after DC Comics' Crisis on Infinite Earths maxiseries wrapped up, the company set about integrating the recently acquired Charlton Action Heroes into its new, streamlined universe. Some characters, like Blue Beetle and Captain Atom, quickly became fan favorites thanks to their own series and inclusion in the Justice League. Meanwhile, the Question, who seemed made for the dark-and-gritty realism that was injected into comics during the latter half of this decade, also gained a loyal following.

One of the lesser-known Charlton Heroes that DC worked into the ranks was Peacemaker, a character that would also embrace the violence that comics were trading in heavily towards the end of the 1980s. The character, created by writer Joe Gill and artist Pay Boyette, was never as big a hit as his Charlton cohorts, but Peacemaker did have his moments at DC, most notably as the star of his own miniseries that was written by Paul Kupperberg and penciled by Tod Smith. In this four-issue miniseries (cover-dated Jan.–Apr. 1988), Peacemaker is a troubled man who is trying to come to grips with the sins of his father, a Nazi war criminal that “talks” to him through the helmet that he wears, while he maintains a fragile grip on reality. All the while, he is also trying to stop a plot to throw the world into utter chaos by an old foe of the Dark Knight.

UNDER THE HELMET

A few years before the miniseries was published, Peacemaker was slated to appear in another comic-book project, a weekly anthology that would showcase him and the other Charlton Action Heroes, *Blockbuster*, a.k.a. *Comics Cavalcade Weekly* (see Robert Greenberger's “Greatest Stories Never Told” article elsewhere in this issue). Had that book been published, Keith Giffen and Robert Loren Fleming would have handled Peacemaker's adventures. Even though this version of the character never saw the light of day, Giffen and Fleming's take on



PAUL KUPPERBERG

Peacemaker was well received by all involved and, in the end, several elements from it were incorporated into the 1988 *Peacemaker* miniseries which eventually saw print. “It was Keith Giffen and Robert Loren Fleming who conceived of the Peacemaker helmet talking to our hero,” says Greenberger, who was originally slated to be the editor for the weekly comic book. “They produced about a dozen two-page strips for the aborted weekly project. Everyone fell in love with the notion and despite those stories never seeing print, it became the character's concept going forward.” Paul Kupperberg concurs: “It's always easy to spot a Giffen idea ... Ambush Bug? Yeah, you know Kupperberg didn't come up with that one. [Peacemaker] was one of the first characters to take the idea of the psycho-severe and run it off the rails.”

Bang Bang, Shoot Shoot

Tod Smith's cover to *Peacemaker* #1 (Jan. 1988).

TM & © DC Comics.

First Shots

(left) Peacemaker had two “tryouts” in two story arcs in *Vigilante*, making the Mike Grell-drawn cover of issue #36 (Dec. 1986).

(right) Writer Paul Kupperberg’s *Peacemaker* featured a level of realistic violence rarely seen in DC series of its time, as evidenced by this page from issue #1. Art by Tod Smith and Pablo Marcos, with colors by Gene D’Angelo.

TM & © DC Comics.

Characters that were struggling with reality were nothing new in comic books. What made Peacemaker different and dynamic, though, was the source of his madness. “The character had demons he was working through from his past,” says Kupperberg. “Especially regarding his father, who was a Nazi war criminal and who killed himself in front of his young son. We were looking for something horrendous. To my thinking, being Jewish, and being born in the 1950s, right after World War II—what was the worst thing a person could be? A concentration camp commander. It was still fresh in everyone’s mind. Everyone’s dad was a veteran. It remains the epitome of the most horrible thing people can be.”

Before the miniseries was published, Kupperberg and Smith used Peacemaker as a guest-star for six issues in the book they were working on at the time, *Vigilante* (in #36–38, Dec. 1986–Feb. 1987, and #41–43, May–July 1987). “The miniseries was a spin-off of that appearance,” says Tod Smith. “Paul and I had been working together for a while on that series, so for some reason it was decided to team us up again on the miniseries. Paul, being the originator of the storyline, may be able to shed further light on that and all related subjects.”



TOD SMITH

Not only did Peacemaker make his first major appearance in the DC Universe in *Vigilante*, it was also in that book that the more violent and brutal take on the character was cemented. “*Vigilante* was a total psycho-kitty comic book, and we brought Peacemaker in and just cut him loose,” says Kupperberg. “I don’t know why he was just laying around, but we were able to use him. I was a big fan of all the old Charlton characters. I loved that stuff and I was happy to be able to work with the character and he worked well with *Vigilante*.”

Anyone familiar with *Vigilante* should have known full well what kind of character Peacemaker was going to be when he showed up there. After all, the book already had a reputation for its violence and sexual content. “*Vigilante* had some of the earliest nudity for a mainstream comics title,” says Smith. “And I think I illustrated the first ‘hero drinking too much and puking his guts out in the toilet’ scene that DC ever published. That was a major milestone.”

When it came time to write the miniseries, Kupperberg came up with a story that involved a scheme by an old Batman villain, Dr. Tzin-Tzin, who plans to destabilize the Soviet Union and thus cause



Peter Cannon THUNDERBOLT™

by Ian Millsted



When DC Comics purchased the Charlton Action Heroes line of characters, Peter Cannon, alias Thunderbolt, was something of an odd man out. For a start, the character was owned by creator Pete Morisi (who had written and drawn the original Charlton series under the pseudonym PAM). Secondly, he was something of a reluctant hero type, so where other Action Heroes fit smoothly into the DC Universe, Peter Cannon waited on the sidelines.

The vehicle by which the Charlton Action Heroes were introduced into the DC Universe was the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* maxiseries by Marv Wolfman and George Pérez. Peter Cannon sneaks in with a one-panel appearance in issue #7 (Oct. 1985) alongside other Charlton characters. A more substantial appearance might have followed soon afterwards if Alan Moore had been able to persuade Dick Giordano to let him use the Charlton characters in the series that would become *Watchmen*. Instead, as is chronicled well elsewhere, Moore created analogs of the Charlton characters with Peter Cannon being the basis for Ozymandias, another character who stands apart from the other costumed “heroes”; and if anyone is unaware of how then go and get yourself a copy of *Watchmen*—now.

Having protected the characters he once edited from the finite role they would have had (or so everybody thought until a couple of years ago) in *Watchmen*, Dick Giordano encouraged their re-emergence in ongoing series. As documented elsewhere in this *BACK ISSUE*, the charge was led by *Blue Beetle* (from June 1986) followed by *The Question* (from Feb. 1987) and *Captain Atom* (from Mar. 1987). There were plans that *Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt* might have followed soon after. In his text piece in the first issue of the recent *Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt* revival from Dynamite, Mark Waid explained, “In 1988, I was an editor at DC working under Giordano, my friend and mentor. Dick liked Morisi a lot. And he loved Thunderbolt. He asked me to develop a new series with writer Robert Loren Fleming, a move Morisi blessed—if he were allowed to be involved creatively somehow. At age 60, he couldn’t handle full art on a monthly series, so Dick suggested Pete do a special ‘reintroduction’ story for my *Secret Origins* anthology series. It was in the DC offices that I met Pete, who looked and sounded for all the world like a Mickey Spillane character, and he graciously listened to me (the snot-nosed whelp) explain what I was looking for in a yarn. Pete was genial, good-natured, shook my hand, and a few weeks later made his deadline on the dot, handing in 19 completed pages, fully lettered and illustrated and ready to go.” Unfortunately, *Secret Origins* was canceled before Morisi’s work could see print, and the Fleming series did not happen.

The “Reluctant Hero”

Cover to DC’s *Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt* #1 (Sept. 1992), penciled by its writer, Mike Collins, and inked by Jose Marzan, Jr. The cover montage shows his Cannon’s primary supporting cast, Cairo de Frey and Tabu Singh.

Peter Cannon-Thunderbolt TM & © Peter A. Morisi estate. DC logo TM & © DC Comics.

DRAWING THE WATCHMEN

BACK ISSUE INTERVIEWS

DAVE GIBBONS

by Dan Johnson

One of the biggest events in the history of the comic-book industry was the publication of Watchmen, by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons. The 12-issue maxiseries provided a reality-based look at superheroes and explored how men and women in capes and masks shaped their world for both the good and the bad. The book was violent and groundbreaking, shocking and revolutionary, and the creative impact of its publication is still felt to this day.

Recently, I was privileged to speak with Dave Gibbons, the artist of Watchmen, and discuss this landmark series and its connection to this issue's stars, the Charlton Action Heroes.

– Dan Johnson

DAN JOHNSON: Tell us how Watchmen came about.

DAVE GIBBONS: I had known Alan Moore for two or three years and we had written some stories for 2000 AD. I had been recruited by DC Comics a little bit before Alan was, and I quite liked the scripts I had been given at DC, but I knew Alan wanted to work for them and I wanted to work with him. Then one night, I got a call from Len Wein, and he wanted to know if I could put him in touch with Alan because he had read the stuff he had been writing in *Warrior* on *Miracleman* and thought he might be able to do something with *Swamp Thing*, which he was obviously able to do.

I actually heard about *Watchmen* through a mutual friend of mine and Alan's, a guy named Mike Collins. I believe he was the one, although Mike and I are a little bit unsure. We think that was how the word got to me. I immediately phoned up Alan and said, "Hey, this sounds really interesting. Maybe this is the thing we can do together." And he said, "Yeah, that's fine." It just so happened that only a few weeks after that, I was going to a comic convention in Chicago where I was going to see a lot of DC people, and I clearly remember going up to

Dick Giordano at a party DC had and saying, "Hey, this new thing Alan is doing, I'd really like to draw it." Dick said, "Well, how does Alan feel about that?" I said, "He'd like me to draw it," and Dick said, "It's yours."

JOHNSON: Were you a fan of the Charlton Heroes before coming onto the project?

GIBBONS: I was kind of a fan of the Charlton Heroes. They were always a little second-rate, in the way that the books looked. [Charlton] didn't have the best production value. There were a lot of interesting artists working for them, people like Rocky Mastrosiero, Pat Boyette, Pete Morisi, [but Charlton] just didn't seem to have the budget and the stories were a little bit overwritten. I did particularly like Steve Ditko's Captain Atom, particularly the one that had the golden chainmail. I thought that was a really great character design. As always, Ditko added a lot of magic to the stories. We did pay a little bit of a tribute to that [uniform] when [the government] is trying to design a costume for Dr. Manhattan. At one point, he's got kind of a chainmail costume on and that was our nod to Steve Ditko's Captain Atom.

JOHNSON: What can you tell us about the decision to not use the Charlton Heroes in Watchmen?

GIBBONS: Dick had worked for Charlton and I think he bought the characters from Charlton to use in the DC Universe. [Editor's note: As stated earlier in this



DAVE GIBBONS

Watchmen TM & © DC Comics.

Questionable Tactics

(top) This "Rorschach's Journal" page from *Watchmen* #5 (Jan. 1987)

views events from the character's distorted perspective. Courtesy of

Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com). Steve Ditko's objectivist

forerunners to Rorschach were

(bottom left) Charlton's the Question and (bottom right) Ditko's creator-owned Mr. A.

Watchmen and the Question TM & © DC Comics. Mr. A TM & © Steve Ditko.

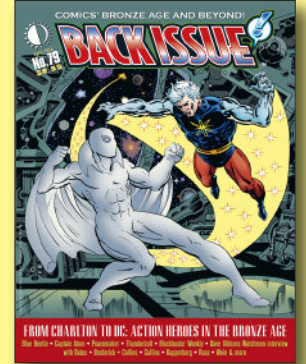


his disassociation from the world by his gradual reluctance to wear any kind of costume at all, you know, to fall in with any of society's ideas of propriety by eventually ending up butt-naked.

You know, the Charlton characters, in many ways, were archetypal comics characters. There was the detective, there was the nuclear superhero, there was the Batman/Blue Beetle playboy kind of character. So we were dealing with archetypes anyway, it was just my chance to fine-tune them into a specific look. For instance, the original 1940s

Nite Owl was very created when I w where the name c input there with the **JOHNSON: The id miniserries to a T Would the six-issue have been as muc heroes from the the chance to see characters came in GIBBONS: Well, them, because the essential to the pl and also to give th with only half the much larger part c could have gone a of the biographica**

IF YOU ENJOYED THIS PREVIEW, CLICK THE LINK TO ORDER THIS ISSUE IN PRINT OR DIGITAL FORMAT!



BACK ISSUE #79

"Charlton Action Heroes in the Bronze Age!" **DAVE GIBBONS** on Charlton's **WATCHMEN** connection, **LEN WEIN** and **PARIS CULLINS'** Blue Beetle, **CARY BATES** and **PAT BRODERICK'S** Captain Atom, **Peacemaker**, **Peter Cannon: Thunderbolt**, and a look at **Blockbuster Weekly!** Featuring **MIKE COLLINS**, **GIORDANO**, **KUPPERBERG**, **ALAN MOORE**, **PAT MORISI**, **ALEX ROSS**, and more. Cover by **AL MILGROM**.

(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$8.95
(Digital Edition) \$3.95

http://twomorrow.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=1177

