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# CONTENTS

## KIRBY: OMEGA!


**OPENING SHOT** . . . . . .2
*(does Anti-Life add up?)*

**FOUNDATIONS** . . . . . .4
*(Kirby's dead ringer)*

**NEVERENDINGS** . . . . . .13
*(the Jack Kirby Museum panel at 2016's Silicon Valley Comic-Con)*

**KIRBY KINETICS** . . . . . .23
*(life, death, and identity)*

**SPIRITED** . . . . . .26
*(love of [anti-?] life)*

**GALLERY** . . . . . .31
*(dangling plot threads)*

**HAIR CLUB** . . . . . .42
*(Jack's blonds, from Angel to Esak)*

**KIRBY OBSCURA** . . . . . .44
*(giants, lost worlds, and sphinxes)*

**END IT ALL** . . . . . .46
*(endings that happened—or didn't)*

**KIRBY AS A GENRE** . . . . . .51
*(a Brazilian homage, and BUG!)*

**INCIDENTAL ICONOGRAPHY** . . . . .54
*(Darkseid, from alpha to omega)*

**INFLUENCEES** . . . . . .56
*(Walter Simonson talks Ragnarök)*

**TRIBUTE** . . . . . .62
*(San Diego Comic Fest's Kirby Cafe)*

**JACK F.A.Q.s** . . . . . .64
*(Mark Evanier moderates the 2017 Comic Fest Tribute Panel)*

**COLLECTOR COMMENTS** . . . . . .94

**PARTING SHOT** . . . . . .96
*(the true end of the Fourth World)*





# THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

ISSUE #71, SPRING 2017



*Cover inks:* ***WALTER SIMONSON*** *on an unused* ***New Gods*** *reprint cover*

*Cover color:* **TOM ZIUKO**

*In* Journey Into Mystery *#102 (March 1964), we learned how young Thor had to face death (in the form of Hela) to earn his hammer.*


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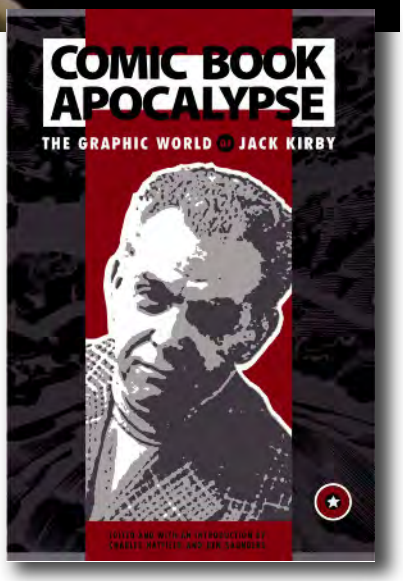
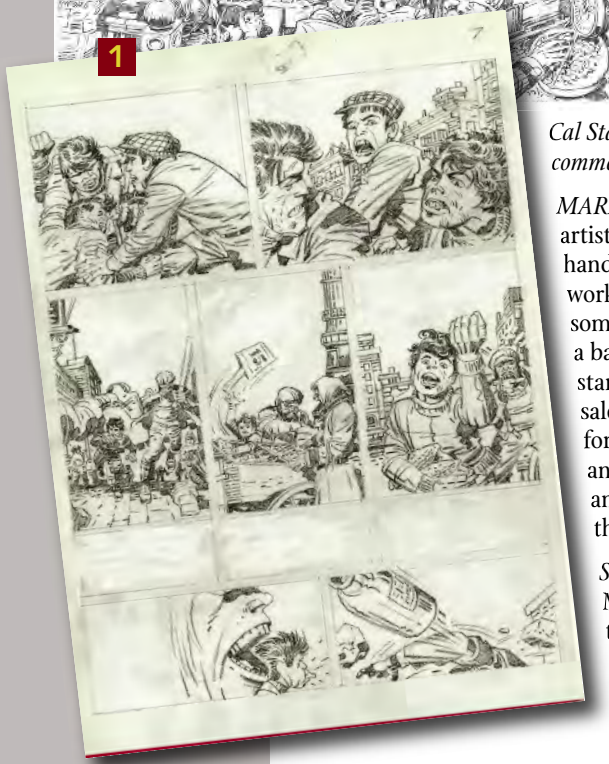
# SVCC KIRBY PANEL 2016


*Conducted at the Silicon Valley Comic Con, held at the San Jose Convention Center, March 18-20, 2016. Featuring (above, left to right) Bruce Simon, Mark Badger, and Steve Sherman. Transcribed by Steven Tice and edited by John Morrow.*




*[Editor's Note: We start this issue on endings with a new beginning. The Jack Kirby Museum sprang up as an entity a full decade after Jack passed away, but what a valuable resource it's become. Director Rand Hoppe has made it his life's work to archive, both physically and digitally, as many pieces of Kirby art as possible. So while Jack's no longer with us, thanks to the work of the Museum, a part of him will always be accessible for future generations to learn from. The following panel is an example of the kind of great work the Museum does, traveling around the world to put on discussions and exhibitions of Jack's work, to educate the populace about him. Hopefully you'll learn something you didn't know about Jack here as well. A variation of this presentation was put on at the* Kirby: Apocalypse *exhibit at Cal State University Northridge in 2015. To see the artwork larger, and accompanied by insightful commentaries, you can still order that exhibition's catalog at www.idwpublishing.com]*




*#1:"Street Code" was drawn circa 1983, but not published until* Argosy *V3#2 (Nov. 1990).*

*MARK BADGER:* Hi. This is the Jack Kirby Museum. I'm Mark Badger. I'm a comic book artist who worked at Marvel and DC, grew up reading Jack's comics, and I got to shake his hand at his 75th birthday in San Diego before he died and say, "Thank you for all your work." I admit that I'm fairly obsessed with Jack, enough that when I was a kid of twenty-something in Hoboken, New Jersey, and breaking into the business, I'd spend a lot of time in a bar talking about Jack Kirby with a guy named Rand Hoppe—who, about ten years ago, started the Jack Kirby Museum as a way to archive Jack's work digitally as it comes up for sale, so there's someplace where it's all originals at high resolutions for future publications, for editorials, or art historians to write about. It keeps all the xeroxes, the pencils archive, and keeps the name Jack out there because, as you all know, Stan Lee created Spider-Man and Fantastic Four and the Hulk and the Thing. *(laughter)* Does anybody believe that in this room? Okay, we don't have to go through that. Introduce yourselves, gentlemen.

*STEVE SHERMAN:* My name is Steve Sherman, and I met Jack in 1969. I was working at Marvelmania, which was putting out a lot of Marvel geegaws and stuff. This was the time when Jack had just left Marvel and he was going to work for DC. So he asked myself and Mark Evanier if we'd want to work with him to come up with different magazines and things that he had planned to do, so that's how I met him. I was his assistant

from 1970 to 1976, when he left DC and went back to Marvel. After that we worked on a couple of projects together. We wrote *Captain Victory* and *Silver Star* originally as screenplays, and then Jack took that and turned them into comic books. So I knew him up until the time he died in 1994.

*BRUCE SIMON:* I'm Bruce Simon. I'm an underground cartoonist. I also was working at Marvelmania with Steve. We've been friends for almost fifty years, and met Jack at the same time and got to know Jack and his family and hear his stories, and eat with him, and talk with him. We have a lot of stories—Mark can talk more to the art, I can talk about Jack the man as well as Steve. So I think we'll have some fun. Let's take a look at these slides.

1 *BADGER:* Okay. This is *Street Code,* which is the only autobiographical story he did about growing up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan when it was not Real Estate Central, but it was actually a ghetto or a slum. And there's photos that look almost identical like this, which of course we don't have. But at this point Jack had mastered drawing to the point where he can stick *everything* on the page. It doesn't stop.

*SIMON:* Can I just hit that real quick? This was one of the very last things that Jack actually drew for print. It might even be the last story. It's from, like, 1985. What's amazing about it is that with a drawing like this, you could say someone would have to do preliminary drawings and all of this research, but the drawing would just flow out of Jack.

*BADGER:* This is another page from *Street Code.* Jack was short. How tall was he?

*SHERMAN:* About 5' 5", 5' 6".

*BADGER:* He got in fights a lot. The Lower East Side was tough and it was street gang territory.

3


*SHERMAN:* However, his brother Dave was 6' 4", *(laughter)* so his brother would watch out for him.

*SIMON:* Right. If you ever saw the movie *Dead End* from 1937, which was kind of a precursor to the Bowery Boys—you know, we have street gangs now. Back then they had block gangs, and people would each have their own block, and if you went off the block, you were subject to beatings and all sorts of stuff like that. So it was really street-to-street fighting, and Jack joined something called the Boys' Brotherhood Republic, which was kind of like a boys' club, YMCA group to try and keep kids off the street and out of the gangs, and that's really where he first started to do comic strips, for the newsletter of the Boys' Brotherhood Republic.


4

2 *BADGER:* And this is Jack, older, doing what he does.

*SHERMAN:* He had that same drawing board for something like fifty years, so it was pretty creased and full of graphite. But, yeah, that's how he liked to draw. He would just sit down with a pipe in his mouth, grab a pencil, and start working away.

5

*BADGER:* And when he was probably not much older than the street gang, he was one of the artists that helped start comics.

3 *SIMON:* This is a post-war page. He was starting to do double-page spreads. He was doing double-page spreads even in 1941. We have a whole different slideshow of just his double-page spreads. But there's another one from...

4 *BADGER:* This is a Fifties' page.

*SIMON:* That's the bar fight from *Boys' Ranch*. But nobody else was doing things like this. To open up a comic and see a double-page spread like that was just a total knockout, just another one of his innovations.

*BADGER:* Somebody wrote, and I think it's in the catalog, a long article about how this parallels one of the pages in *Mister Miracle* where the Furies and Big Barda are fighting.

*BADGER:* After he invented Captain America in 1941, when he was drafted...?

*SIMON:* Steve, you know this, right?

5 *SHERMAN:* I guess, drafted, enlisted, you could say; whichever way he was going in. The thing about Jack is, you can kind of think of him today as sort of like a hip-hop artist or rap, because as a young kid he was in the ghetto, and he learned to draw, taught

# KIRBY KINETICS

## by Norris Burroughs

An ongoing examination of Kirby's art and compositional skills

## LIFE, DEATH & IDENTITY

Among other things, Jack Kirby was fascinated with the notion of personal identity and its relationship to life and death. Clearly, when it came to the notion of the super-hero, identity was crucial. What was a hero? What qualities constituted heroism? What was worth living for? Dying for? Kirby's talent was holistic. He crafted character with image in the story in one seamless process. His characters embodied archetypes that were clear in design and motive and served the story's structure as integral parts. Kirby often focused on issues related to free will and in particular the loss of volition. There was also the distinct feeling that death, the total loss of identity and free will, was a distinct possibility in his storylines.


One of the most powerful Kirby stories dealing with identity was that in *Fantastic Four* #8. At this point, the Thing is still struggling with his dual identity as a Man/Monster. On several occasions, he has reverted back to his human form, but only for brief minutes after which he returns to Thing-dom. Obviously, few people could stay sane under such circumstances. Ben Grimm manages to maintain some sort of equilibrium and fairly consistently functions as a team member. (A good analogy might be to imagine Jack Kirby being in the front lines in France in 1944, dealing with the fact that he, like any soldier must learn to become a killer, but also function as an efficient member of a battalion.)

In this Kirby/Lee story, the Thing meets Alicia, a blind woman who will become his girlfriend for the foreseeable future. She is the step-daughter of the Puppet Master, a villain who manipulates people using radioactive clay models, and she is also a sculptor with great sensitivity. Alicia is shown here impersonating Sue Storm, the Invisible Girl, who lies unconscious on the couch. The Puppet Master has taken over Ben Grimm's consciousness and will use him to infiltrate the FF's headquarters with Alicia pretending to be the Invisible Girl. Alicia is literally the puppet of her father, who manipulates her in the service of his plan. She seems to have no will of her own until she has separated from her father.

The Puppet Master's plan fails, when Mr. Fantastic uses a potion to momentarily turn the Thing back to human form. As Ben

SPIRITED

# LOVE OF ANTI-? LIFE

*Scientists, Mystics, The Metaphysical Nature Of Power And Spiritual Concepts In Kirby's Fourth World Epic, by John Misselhorn*

Kirby's Fourth World series of books (*New Gods, Forever People, Mister Miracle,* and *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen*) has been critically acclaimed because of its conceptual and intellectual sophistication and universal themes presented in a highly imaginative and unique context. It is considered by many to be the creative apex of Jack Kirby's career. Each book in the series represents a universal symbol or archetype within the human psyche. They speak to us each as individuals on an unconscious level.

*(below) Highfather condones the union of Scott and Barda, from* Mister Miracle *#18 (Feb. 1974).*


*(bottom) Jack's rendition of* Jacob & The Angel, *with color by Randy Sargent.*

*New Gods,* Kirby's ultimate fusion of science-fiction and mythological themes, symbolizes the universal and eternal struggle within all of us between the positive and negative forces in our own nature. New Genesis and Apokolips, Highfather and Darkseid, and most significantly, the battles constantly raging within Orion himself, are all reflections of our own internal struggles. *The Forever People,* Kirby's New Age book, symbolizes the individual's yearning for the ideals of peace and community, aspirations of the younger generation in a time of war. *Mister Miracle* symbolizes the individual's quest for freedom.

The entire Fourth World series represents the archetypal journey of self-discovery, self- realization and knowledge in the classic tradition of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey.* They all confront the most fundamental questions: Who am I? What is my nature? Where is my origin? What is my purpose? They chronicle the different aspects of the individual's evolution as a spiritual being.

*(next page) Pencils from the* Mister Miracle *#9 story "Himon" (July 1972).*

## The Merging Of Physical And Spiritual Realms

Perhaps the most fascinating and intriguing element in the Fourth World mythos is that Kirby postulated a touching or a merging of the physical and spiritual reality, and a meeting of scientific and religious ideals through both mystical and technological means. Science and faith, technology and religion, are concepts and disciplines that may seem mutually exclusive in our presently limited consciousness and comprehension of reality. Increasingly the advances of theoretical and experimental physics are rapidly approaching religious and spiritual precepts traditionally based on faith alone.

Kirby dealt with these apparently irreconcilable ideas over 35 years ago in his Fourth World Epic. For him they were not antithetical, rather they were merely aspects of each other; one an extension and creation of the other. They were related and interconnected, part of the same unity of being. Kirby envisioned an interconnectedness between the physical universe represented by New Genesis, Apokolips and Earth (the two former planets being in a different physical dimension from Earth, accessible only through an inter-dimensional door called the "Boom Tube," a kind of technological worm hole) and the eternal, spiritual realm, the fountainhead of all creation and life sustaining energy, which he called "The Source."

Kirby conceived of The Source as residing somewhere beyond the limited bounds of space-time, elements which are conceptions of a purely physical universe, but perhaps also encompassing and embracing the physical plane. The assumption underlying this writer's entire interpretation of Kirby's concept is that The Source is non-physical in essence, but is also the origin of all things physical. The essence of all living physical beings returns to The Source upon the death of its physical form, implying that each individual essence is itself immortal and eternal like The Source. The physical wall of The Source, located on the planet of New Genesis, is the communicative portal, the point of contact and fusion between two planes of existence which are part of one reality.

## Highfather The Mystic

Highfather possesses a direct mystical connection with The Source, symbolized by his Wonder Staff, previously a war staff—an instrument of death, now an instrument of peace, revelation and inspiration to his people. There is no suggestion of technology; his is a pure mystical relationship. Highfather is the spiritual master, the great teacher. Through The Source, he guides his followers. The Source speaks only through him. Highfather himself is but an instrument; he allows

# DANGLING PLOT THREADS

*Unresolved endings and future starting points for Kirby, as chosen by John Morrow*

*You can sometimes learn as much about Jack's thinking process by what he didn't put on the page, as what he did. Here's a look at some of the frustrating mysteries he left behind—often because he hadn't gotten to the point of figuring them out yet himself.*

*Since Jack left plenty of opportunities for others to pick up where he left off, let's explore some of the mysteries that remain from his own series, where he served as both writer and artist. I didn't follow all the post-Kirby material, so if I've missed something important to continuity a future creator did, my apologies…*


*Magnar from* Jimmy Olsen *#147* [right] *and Seagrin from* New Gods *#4* [above and below] *were two fascinating throwaway characters.*

*Orion obviously knew Seagrin. Wouldn't you have loved to see Jack draw a "Tales of the New Gods" story dealing with him, so we could've learned his backstory?*

*Meanwhile, Magnar showed that not everyone on New Genesis was immune to arrogance, and had a personality completely unlike any previous New God.*



*We at least got two short stories each of Fastbak and Lonar. Imagine what other fully-formed characters Jack could've created off-the-cuff, had he gotten another year on the Fourth World...*

HAIR CLUB

# ANGEL TO ESAK

*Did a hitherto unknown wartime tragedy haunt Jack Kirby's postwar comics work, inspiring the creation of Kirby's most moving and personal stories and multiple, longhaired blond heroes? Chris Beneke's wild hypothesis begins here!*

Jack Kirby's stock female heroine, like the zaftig Big Barda, had a known real-life inspiration, wife Roz, but the real-life source for his stock long-haired blond hero type remains a mystery. Surely, one joking colleague must have one day asked ever-busy, ever-drawing, ever-dreaming Jack, "Why do you keep making pretty boy heroes with long blond hair?"

Kirby, the short, dark-complected Jewish tough guy, had no qualms about modeling his other comics-hero type after himself. See the Boy Commandos' Brooklyn, the Newsboy Legion's Scrapper, and Ben Grimm for such examples. An idealization of otherness or wish fulfillment would hardly account for the insistent recurrence of these long-haired blonds.

I believe that this stock long-haired blond character, whose almost-pretty visage Kirby could not seemingly keep himself from drawing, may have been inspired by a tragic wartime encounter: On a scouting mission, Kirby met a young German boy, at the wrong place and the wrong time for both of them, and killed him, fearing the child's potential threat to raise an alarm, sacrificing the child to save both his own life and the lives of his fellow soldiers.

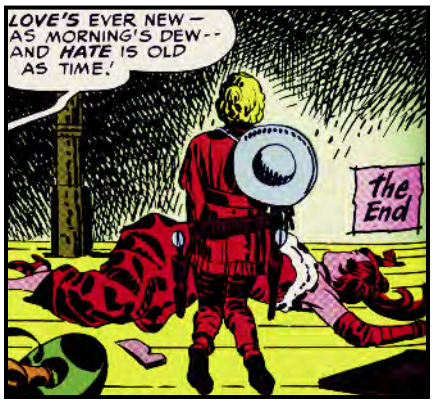
An account of such an incident does not exist*, not in his many told and retold war stories, not in his recurring nightmares of the war, which might have been shared only with Roz, if they were shared at all. Such a deed may have been too shameful to ever share. Kirby did not live as long as others of his Greatest Generation have, some of whom, only in their lingering final years, have been able to unburden themselves, clearly and straightforwardly, of similar horrors. But Kirby had pencil, paper, and an extraordinary power to transmute his experiences, his knowledge, and his beliefs through his drawing talents and his imagination into comics stories that endure. Two particularly powerful uses of this stock figure, one early and the other his last, support my theory.


## ANGEL

His early masterpiece with Joe Simon, "Mother Delilah" from *Boys' Ranch* #3 (Feb. 1951), stars Angel, the first and most aptly named of these long-haired blonds, though this name is also ironically intended, his girlish locks and pretty face belying a quick, bad temper. This story's title character is a mother-figure who is deemed unworthy of maternal pursuits because of her euphemistic evening vocation as a gambling queen.

But Delilah and Angel are drawn to each other and engage in a dangerous fantasy, pretending to be mother and son. Delilah disrupts Angel's fantasy and betrays him by cutting his hair, which, as in the Bible's story of Samson, destroys his strength. In the end, however, Delilah sacrifices herself for Angel, saving him and the others from an ambush.

Her death in Angel's arms is first revealed in a panel's background, with both faces in profile, with the fewest possible identifying details. The story's final panel shows the back of Angel kneeling before the prostate Delilah, with both faces unseen; their faces can only be imagined. The death and the grief are observed, by others, from a distance.




If my hypothesized original incident is infantryman Kirby, as parent-figure, betraying the unknown German boy, the innocent child-figure, and saving himself by sacrificing the child, then this *Boys' Ranch* story, created within a decade of the war, presents a precise reversal: The child-figure Angel is betrayed by the parent-figure Delilah, who then makes the ultimate sacrifice, her life for her child's.

## ESAK

Kirby's most creative decades kept the unknown dead German boy alive, even allowing him to grow into many imagined manhoods. These subsequent long-haired blonds are among Kirby's most popular characters—Thor, an immortal god, and Kamandi, an ultimate survivor, the last boy on Earth!

Captain Victory might chronologically be the last of these blond creations (he died and was replaced by a clone), but there is one other, Esak, who is a peripheral figure in the original Fourth World stories, but assumes a dominant and heartbreaking role in Kirby's ending for this most personal series.


Esak had appeared in two prologues—once as a young scholar sharing Metron's Mobius Chair, once scolding Highfather with giggles—and one three-page back-up story, where his life was saved by Fastbak in a life-or-death contest with the Black Racer. There, Esak seemed more amused than genuinely frightened. Esak is grotesquely transformed when he reappears in *The Hunger Dogs.*

* *[See* TJKC *#20, page 55 for a possible account involving a German bicyclist—Editor]*

END IT ALL

# RISKY BUSINESS

*Shane Foley remembers some BOLD and not-so-bold ENDINGS in Kirby comics! (and some that NEVER happened)*

## THE '60s

One of the most wonderful aspects of Marvel Comics in the early-to-mid '60s was that there were stories where there were real changes in the *status quo* of some of the books. I'm not talking about changes that were done to try to bolster sales on weaker sellers—such as changing Ant-Man to Giant-Man in *Tales to Astonish*, or upgrading Iron Man's armor in *Tales of Suspense*. I'm talking about taking steps to move away from what I would presume were 'safe' positions in top-selling strips. And Kirby was in the thick of some of these, and perhaps even the instigator.

Perhaps the willingness to step out like this was due to the belief that the whole comics industry wouldn't last much longer, so, "what the heck, let's try it." Or perhaps much of it came as a natural progression from the more "mature" new characterization that Lee, Kirby and Ditko had introduced into Marvel in the early '60s—a progression that increasing sales soon demanded be stemmed. (Roy Thomas relates in *Alter Ego* #70, page 15, a meeting with Stan Lee in the later '60s, where he and Gary Friedrich were told that generally, from that point on, there were to be no more radical changes.)


*(below)* Fantastic Four Annual *#3 (1965).*

*(next page, bottom)* Peter Parker attends college *in* Amazing Spider-Man *#31 (Dec. 1965), with art by Steve Ditko.*

Whatever the reasons and impetus for this, Kirby and Lee seemed to be in perfect sync in their early work, with major changes in their characters' *status quo* being initiated—requiring ending generally accepted staples in super-hero concepts—to move the characters forward and make them come alive!

Here are some examples:

### *FANTASTIC FOUR* #35 (FEB. 1965)

At story's end, Reed and Sue actually got engaged. They really did.

The subplot of the romantic triangle involving the Sub-Mariner was over and the strip's main man got his girl. Rarely did this sort of thing happen. Richard Kyle in a 1967 article, reprinted in *TJKC* #8, commented on the impact of this event. And the engagement wasn't terminated in a plot of super-heroic proportions. They married! Why did Kirby and Lee do this? It was risky, because this effectively removed Reed from being an available bachelor in any upcoming storyline, and any editor knows that doing this removes a lot of potential romantic tension. For young readers, marital problems just aren't the same! (Early Beatles PR even tried to hide the fact that John Lennon was married, to keep the girls more interested!) Maybe Kirby and Lee thought having Johnny and Ben still unmarried left potential enough in the group dynamics? I wonder whose idea this was?

Whoever—the creative pair were, at this time, in sync. The following month (*FF* #36) saw the official engagement, then *Annual* #3 (on sale the month of *FF* #43) featured the wedding. Truly, it was the end of an era and the ushering in of a new one. It seems a perfectly reasonable thing to do now, with the benefit of hindsight. But at the time, they and their publisher could not *know* it was a good thing to do. But they took the risk! The single life of two of the FF came to an end!

### *THOR* #124 (JAN. 1966)

Thor tells Jane Foster that he is Dr. Don Blake! He really does!

Did this happen very often—that the tension in the strip, and plot elements that result due to the problems of maintaining a secret identity, are dispensed with? I don't think so. And I sure didn't think so as a kid reading. But it was logical. It made sense. I always groaned that Tony Stark didn't confide more in Happy or someone, to make his Iron Man secret identity more work-

FROM ALPHA...

# INCIDENTAL ICONOGRAPHY

...TO OMEGA!

*An ongoing analysis of Kirby's visual shorthand, and how he inadvertently used it to develop his characters,*
*by Sean Kleefeld*

A lot has been written about Darkseid already, including in this magazine. You've no doubt read about the character and his quest for the Anti-Life Equation, and the symbolism and metaphors people have read into that. But what I haven't seen anyone do previously is take a look at how Jack Kirby evolved Darkseid's visuals over the time he worked on the character; and, fortunately, since that what my Incidental Iconography column is all about, I get to delve into that today.

I suspect that, even if you've read Jack's entire Fourth World saga all the way to *Hunger Dogs*, and gone through Jack's *Super Powers* titles, you're likely thinking that Darkseid didn't change under Jack's hand. That the character's simplistic design meant Jack


was able to keep a high degree of visual consistency with him over the years. While Jack was certainly more consistent in his drawings of Darkseid than most other characters, he still showed a surprising amount of variability.

Darkseid's first appearance is essentially a cameo in *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen* #134, where his face appears in a video monitor in a small panel that provides little detail. We get a slightly better view in #135, but it's not until *Forever People* #1 *(above)* that we see Darkseid in full. And there he stands, dressed as you know him with his blue tunic, thigh-high boots, gloves, open-faced helmet... but also a cape and slacks. The cape is most obvious, and doesn't detract much from the overall visual, but the slacks—clearly evident by the seams running down the sides of Darkseid's legs—seem a little too humanizing for such a grandiose character. As do the details of the spats on his boots. Fortunately, these all seem to be forgotten about by the next issue.

However, in that same issue, we see Jack add another detail: sleeves. Even though he'd already clearly established Darkseid went with bare arms, several panels in *Forever People* #2-4 depict him with either short sleeves or some kind of light shoulder armor. These are generally just colored the same as his arms in production, so it tends not to be overly evident, but there are clearly horizontal cuts drawn


just above the biceps multiple times *(left)*. I thought perhaps this may have been the result of a slight mis-interpretation on Jack's pencils on the part of inker Vince Colletta at first, but several of the instances where this occurs, I find it unlikely Colletta would have made that "mistake" repeatedly, over several issues, if Jack himself hadn't drawn that in.

The other thing that begins to crop up, and ultimately dogs Jack's renditions of Darkseid for pretty much the rest of his career, is whether the character should be drawn with a tunic or not. His earliest appearances show a short tunic coming below his belt with tight shorts underneath. But at the end of *Forever People* #2, the tunic disappears, leaving only the shorts. While Jack seems to prefer the tunic version, judging by the frequency he draws the tunic versus just a pair of shorts, he waffles back and forth on this point over the next couple of decades—sometimes within a single issue.

Another minor, but variable point, is how Jack depicts Darkseid's gloves. They're generally drawn very short, whether they're skin-tight, slightly flared, or so loose that they bunch up around his wrists. Interestingly, this is a detail that Jack seems to remain consistent with at least within the context of a single issue, and it's only in looking at his body of work collectively do many of these differences start to pop out.

# SIMONSON SEZ

**Walter Simonson interviewed by John Morrow on February 23, 2017**

*[Editor's Note: We interviewed Walter Simonson way back in* TJKC *#14 (Feb. 1997), and this one took place exactly 20 years later. Back then, Walter discussed his "Beta Ray Bill"* Thor *work for Marvel at length. In the two decades since, he has produced his remarkable* Orion *series, which I view as the finest post-Kirby take on the Fourth World, and further explored mythology with his current IDW series* Ragnarök. *This interview was conducted on February 23, 2017, edited and transcribed by John Morrow, and copy-edited by Walter Simonson.]*

*THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR:* First of all, thanks for inking this issue's Black Racer cover. Anytime you ink Jack's stuff, it's always a beautiful combination. That was a later Kirby pencil piece, and you prettied it up nicely.

*WALTER SIMONSON:* It was kind of all there. I've inked Jack maybe six or seven times now, and I feel the results have been mixed. I've done a couple I've been really happy with. The very first one I did is probably my favorite, but I like how the Black Racer came out. I did a Fighting American for Mitch Itkowitz for a Kirby portfolio *[Kirby Masterworks]*. That was inked on tracing vellum; I just had a large xerox to work off of. The only change that I made: There's a spacecraft or small flyer in the background, and it's behind Fighting American's right leg. And Jack had somehow drawn the two halves, so they didn't quite line up. One side was a little higher than the other, so I fudged that. *(laughter)*

*TJKC:* It's amazing you remember that from that long ago. I think that was from 1979.
*WALTER:* Well, I like that drawing. I thought that inking came out really nicely. I still remember doing that, 'cause mostly you're thinking, "Am I changing Jack Kirby? Nobody liked Vinnie Colletta for that, so maybe that would be a bad idea..." *(laughter)* The only one I actually inked professionally for mainstream comics during Jack's career was a *Devil Dinosaur* cover *[#8, Nov. 1978].* Apparently, Erik Larsen has it hanging on his wall now. He got it from Jack at some point. Curse you, Erik! *(laughter)*

*TJKC:* Starting with *Orion,* then going to your *Judas Coin* book and your more recent stuff, I feel like your work is reaching a career peak, sort of in the way Jack's did between 1968-1972.
*WALTER:* Well, I appreciate that. I am having a good time.

*TJKC:* Our theme this issue is Death and Endings in Jack's work. I thought it was particularly appropriate to interview you because of your current *Ragnarök* stories. Are you done with that series?
*WALTER:* Oh, no. I would like to be on it at least as long as I was on *Thor* at Marvel. What I've just finished is the second story arc, and I have another arc in mind after this, where Thor goes to Helheim. #12 just went out to the printer. I manage to get about four issues a year done. I put more lines in my stuff now than in the old days, which is ridiculous. You're supposed to simplify as you get older. *(laughter)* All I can really tell you is that Thor is no deader at the end of the twelfth issue than he was at the beginning.

*TJKC:* I've only read through issue #11 at this point, and I assumed it was a 12-issue mini-series. The way #11 ended, I figured the next issue was it, and it'd end with a big bang and Thor dying. You just ruined it for me! *(laughter)*
*WALTER:* Oh, sorry. *(laughter)*

*TJKC:* Correct me if I'm wrong, but it looked like the


*(below) Jack's unused pencils for the cover of the 1984* New Gods *reprint series.*

*(next page, bottom) Walter's* Ragnarök *#1 Variant Sketch Cover from 2014.*

# JACK F.A.Q.s

*A column of Frequently Asked Questions about Kirby*

## 2017 San Diego Comic Fest Panel

*Held Sunday, February 19, 2017, at 10am. Featuring Mark Evanier, Steve Sherman, and Mike Royer. Transcribed by Steven Tice, and edited by John Morrow and Mark Evanier.*

*MARK EVANIER:* Good morning! I'm Mark, that's Steve, that's Mike. This is very strange; they've scheduled two panels back-to-back with us, and one of them is "Jack Kirby: The Creator" and the other is "Jack Kirby: The Man." The first point we have to make is, you can't separate those two. There's no way, so we're going to just view this as a two-hour panel, on Jack the Creator, and we'll talk about all sorts of stuff. I hope you have lots of questions, because you will never have a better chance to get them answered.

I read last night on Facebook, someone was commenting how much they love this convention. And they said, "It reminds me of the great days of the El Cortez Hotel, when you could sit by the pool and talk about comics with Jack Kirby." Now, I haven't checked the pool here, *(laughter)* but I've got a hunch Jack ain't out there. At the original San Diego Cons, you could talk to Will Eisner, you could talk to Jack Kirby, you could talk to Burne Hogarth, you could talk to Ray Bradbury.

*(below) Comic-Con began as a one-day mini-con on March 21, 1970 at the U.S. Grant Hotel in downtown San Diego. It raised funds for the first full event: San Diego's Golden State Comic-Con on August 1-3, 1970, with Jack as guest. Here's Scott Shaw's flyer for the first full Con.*

*(bottom) Kirby signing at the 1986 Comic-Con, flanked by Roz Kirby.*


*(right) Neal Adams inked this* Jimmy Olsen *#141 cover, producing a unique blend of the two artists' styles.*

*MIKE ROYER:* You could sit at the pool and play movie trivia with Harlan Ellison.

*EVANIER:* That's right. At this convention, I believe the people who have been in comics the longest are us—*(laughter)* which startles me. At this convention, Bill Stout is in the Dealer's Room, Jackie Estrada is over there, and there's a fellow named Gene Henderson walking around—*(whispering)* there's a birthday party for Gene a little later—and I think the four of us, those three people and me, are the only people who've been to every San Diego Comic-Con in its existence. *(applause)* We're gonna put a picture of them on my blog in the next day or so, and say, "Anybody else want to claim the honor?" *[Note from Mark Evanier: Mega-dealer Bud Plant appears to be #5.]*

*ROYER:* In the old days that you're talking about, the year that I got an Inkpot *[Award],* I'm standing at 2:00 in the morning at an all-night party, and there's a hand on my shoulder that says, "Well, we got ours, kid," and I turn around and it's Burne Hogarth.

*EVANIER:* It's kind of amazing, to realize how long the conventions have been going, and how we have now metamorphosed into the "old pros" at them. I see conventions say, "We're going to have a lot of the founding members of comics like Joe Kubert and Mark Evanier." *(laughter)* And I'm like, "Wait a minute!"

People argue about the dividing line between the Golden Age and the Silver Age, and when did the Silver Age end? It's real simple. The Silver Age ended when I got into the business. *(laughter)* I was the line of demarcation. 1970, that was it. It's as good a dividing line as any, really, when you come right down to it. You can argue it's when Jack went to DC: 1970—or the first issue of *Conan* came out: 1970—or when the corporate takeovers of DC and Marvel were finally fully executed: 1970. There it is again, 1970. The business was over, and we didn't know it. *(laughter)*

We're going to answer every question we can during this time here, but let me start by saying, as an

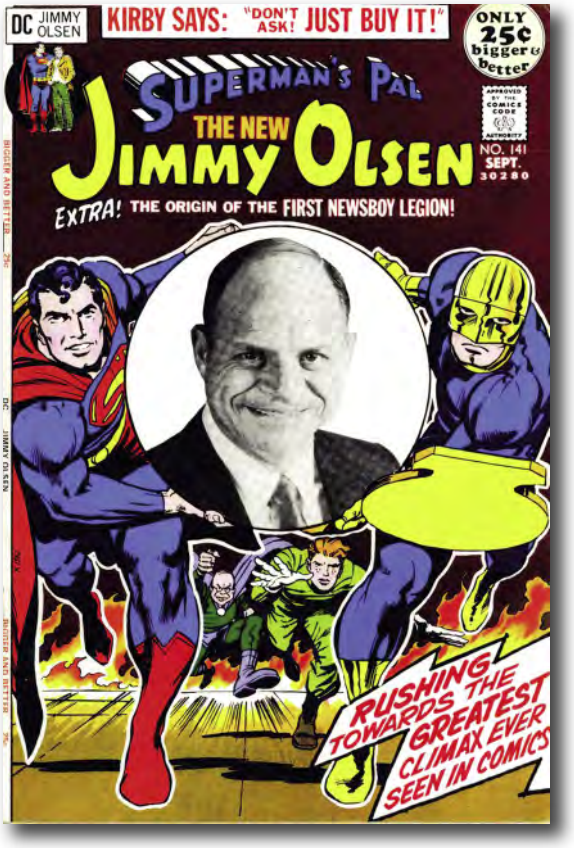


Photo by Peter Csanadi.

overview, the three of us are colored by personal affection for Jack and an enormous sense of gratitude. All of you owe Jack something. Anybody who's in comics owes Jack something. We have a little larger debt, because the man not only gave us inspiration, he gave us work. He transformed our lives, he taught us stuff. Roz made sandwiches for us. We swam in his pool. Jack had a great pool.

*ROYER:* We became—some more than others—extended Kirby family. 90% of the work I did was not for Marvel or DC. It was for *Jack.* I worked for Jack. He's who I wanted to please.

*EVANIER:* We all wanted to please him. For those of you who didn't hear the interview I did with Mike yesterday, I always want people to


understand that when Mike came aboard, working for Jack, it wasn't just that he was the best choice. He was the *only* choice. If Mike had not been interested in doing the job, or had been unavailable, the next choice was someone in New York. And no matter who that person was, that took away Jack's control. One of the many reasons that Jack loved Mike's work was that Jack was the editor of the books when Mike inked them, and Mike sent the pages to Jack when they were done, not to the office. Anybody in New York—if it hadn't been Vince Colletta, if it'd been Frank Giacoia—they would've turned the books in to Carmine *[Infantino]* or Sol Harrison in New York. Jack would not have seen them until they were printed and those people would have felt that they were working for Sol Harrison or Carmine or whoever it was back there, not for Jack. One of the 23 reasons why Vince Colletta was removed from the job, was that he was not willing to take editorial direction from Jack.

Mike was not only willing to take editorial direction from Jack, Mike's loyalties were to Jack and not to DC. Plus, the fact is, Jack wanted a guy who could do all of it. You and I can all name wonderful inkers who could not have inked as fast as Jack drew, and Jack needed someone to letter the books. Mike was a great letterer. The mere fact that the books were lettered and finished in Los Angeles was a major victory for Jack. When he finally convinced DC, "I want my own guy in Los Angeles; I want this guy Mike Royer to do it," the DC people kind of said, "Okay, fine, we'll let him try his guy. It'll get screwed up, and he'll come crawling back to us, and we'll have proved"—which was the DC theory at the time—"that we make the books. The editorial office makes the books." And there was a tendency at that point, when the material came in from the freelancers—when Curt Swan turned his work in, or Bob Brown or Irv Novick, any one of those guys—no matter even if they'd worked for DC for thirty years, the production department went, "Okay, we've gotta fix this somehow." They would do a little tampering with everybody's work. They did less of it with the guys who were in the office since when they'd tamper with Neal Adams' work, he'd come storming out in the hall and yell at them. Jack wasn't there, and the only person who was really an advocate for Jack was a fellow named Nelson Bridwell.

If you are looking at the history of Jack at DC, make sure you include the name of Nelson Bridwell, who was the only guy in the New York office who had Jack's back, who was warning him of what they were doing to his stuff. Nelson was a very brilliant, clever man who was treated at DC exactly the same way Alan Brady treated Mel Cooley *[on the* Dick Van Dyke *Show]. (laughter)* They yelled at him, they called him names, they demeaned him, and did not recognize the fact that he was the smartest guy in the building, by far.

*ARLEN SCHUMER (from audience):* Did everybody treat him that way? Not just *[Mort]* Weisinger, but everybody?


*(left) Mike Sekowsky's two-page spread from* Inferior Five *#6 (Jan. 1968), with DC staffers identified. Photos shown here are Mort Weisinger (above), Bridwell and Sol Harrison (below). At left are caricatures of Jack Miller and Harrison abusing Bridwell in* Inferior Five *#6.*


*EVANIER:* Pretty much... well, other people treated him nicer, because they were nicer than Weisinger, but nobody recognized that this was a guy who, and I'm not exaggerating...

*SCHUMER:* He was an historian.

*EVANIER:* He was an associate editor. He was the reprint editor, and you could say to Nelson, "In what issue did Batman first put gas pellets in his utility belt?" and he could tell you the issue number and the exact panel. But here's the thing, and I'm not exaggerating. I had just read *Canterbury Tales* when I first met Nelson, and we started talking about *[author Geoffrey]* Chaucer, and he quoted me the entire first six pages of *Canterbury Tales.* He was that brilliant, and he had that kind of a memory. I have an aversion to using the word "nerd" to apply to those of us who know a lot about comics. I think it's kind of a stupid, self-deprecating, needless thing. In a world where the #1 movie is *Iron Man,* isn't everyone a nerd? *(laughter)* But Nelson looked kind of funny. He was an odd-shaped man. He had these strange noises that came out of him. He'd walk down the hall and you'd hear these strange noises, and you were trying to figure out what part of his body those noises came from. *(laughter)* He snorted and sniffled, but he was just this brilliant... if Jack had met Nelson a few years earlier, I would tell you that he based that Quasimodo character in *Fantastic Four* on him: The brilliant brain trapped in the monster body.


*MIKE CATRON (from audience):* Let me tell you about my friend Nelson. I worked for DC for about a year, and Nelson was across the hall from me. And you're right; he was the subject of derision and mocking, by just about everybody on the staff. I had a great affection for him, but he was a pretty private guy, so I can't say he was a really close friend. But he's everything you said he was. He was not just well-versed in comics, he was well-versed in literature and history, and he was some kind of savant, I think. He was never treated well, and I think we relied on him tremendously, but he was never appreciated. I always thought that was a tragedy.

There were people who recognized that. Paul Levitz *[understood]* what Nelson knew, and that sort of thing. He wasn't hated or anything like that, but there were certain people who seemed to go out of their way to treat him like that.

*EVANIER:* Nelson was Jack's spy in the office, and the one guy who understood what Jack was doing, and really appreciated it. He was always belittled by people. As Arlen *[Schumer]* mentioned, Mort Weisinger didn't treat him very well. Nelson was a very clever man—he wrote for *Mad Magazine.* He was the first fan to ever write for *Mad Magazine.* He had a great sense of humor. If you read the *Inferior Five,* there's an issue, I think it's #5 or #6, *[that takes place]* in the DC offices, and it's full of little digs that are sometimes too subtle for you to get them. He took the entire DC Comics staff apart—he roasted them in one of their own comics, and a lot of people did not get the jokes. When Weisinger


was "retired"/ousted, they had a farewell luncheon for him, a little roast. And Nelson got up—*(turns to Steve Sherman)* did you ever hear the tape of this? He turned into Don Rickles, ripping Mort Weisinger a new one. *(laughter)* Now that he was no longer working for him, he just ripped him to pieces. And it was brilliant, and hysterical.

*AUDIENCE MEMBER:* Is there a transcript of that?

*EVANIER:* Someone played me the audio of it. I'd love to get a copy. I don't have a copy of it; it was bad audio, but it was so clever.

*ROYER:* Can I interrupt, and go back to something you brought up? The people at DC were positive that I would fail, and what was interesting is I had been doing some stuff with Jack for Marvelmania, and he called me one day and says, "I'm going to New York. I can't tell you what it's about, but you're part of it." Two days later I got a call from Maggie Thompson saying, "What's this I hear that Jack's left Marvel and gone to DC?" and I go, "Beats me!" When Jack got back, I believe he called me from LAX airport, and said he had left Marvel, and gone to DC, that I was part of the package, but they wouldn't accept it. And it's so funny that I proved them wrong—to their chagri
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those, so they promised Bruce plenty of work. Jack was very conscientious about taking care of his inkers, and making sure they had work. Bruce Berry had ordered a wife; he'd made a deal for a wife from one of these firms that sends Russian women over to marry you.

*AUDIENCE MEMBER:* Oh, like Trump. *(laughter)*

*EVANIER:* Yeah, that's right! *(laughter)* There was no way Jack was going to abandon Bruce Berry when he was trying to build a family. So Marvel promised to give Bruce steady work, and then they didn't. They sent him a couple of brief jobs to be inked overnight, because you can't really... and Mike had this problem when he worked for them at one point. There was a period where he went to work for Marvel and they just kept saying, "We sending something out tomorrow, we're sending something out in a couple of days." Because the

*(below) D. Bruce Berry's inks for the final page of the 1985* Hunger Dogs *graphic novel. Berry never inked any of the original Fourth World books, but since Royer was unavailable, he got the nod to do* Hunger Dogs *based on his 1970s work on* Kamandi *and* OMAC.