

THE RETRO COMICS EXPERIENCE!

BACKISSUE!



April 2012
No. 55
\$8.95

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STAR WARS

at Dark Horse Comics!



LICENSED COMICS ISSUE: Indiana Jones • Edgar Rice Burroughs—Beyond Tarzan • Man from Atlantis
and an interview with Carol Serling, wife of "Twilight Zone" creator Rod Serling

Volume 1,
Number 55
April 2012

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

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BACKISSUE

The Retro Comics Experience!

LICENSED

COMICS ISSUE!

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BACK ISSUE™ is published 8 times a year by TwoMorrows Publishing, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614. Michael Eury, Editor. John Morrow, Publisher. Editorial Office: **BACK ISSUE**, c/o Michael Eury, Editor, 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 Brian Koschack. *Star Wars* © 2012 Lucasfilm Ltd. & ™. All rights reserved. Used under authorization. All characters are © their respective companies. All material © their creators unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter © 2012 Michael Eury and TwoMorrows Publishing. **BACK ISSUE** is a TM of TwoMorrows Publishing. ISSN 1932-6904. Printed in China. FIRST PRINTING.

Undated Indiana Jones painting by Dave Dorman, courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions. © 2012 Lucasfilm Ltd. & ™.

EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

FlashBack!

WEIRD WORLDS

by Jim Kingman



Terror at the Earth's Core

Cover detail from DC Comics' *Weird Worlds* #2 (Oct.–Nov. 1973), featuring David Innes, star of Burroughs' "Pellucidar" series. Cover art by Joe Orlando and Carmine Infantino.

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National Periodical Publications (DC Comics) acquired the rights from Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. in 1971 to publish the serialized comic-book exploits of the science-fiction/adventure writer's fictional characters. The more popular Tarzan and Korak (the ape-man's adopted son) received their own separate titles, debuting in in early 1972, and both books continued the numbering from their previous publisher, Gold Key. An added bonus—especially to devoted Burroughs fans—were all-new backup features starring many of

Burroughs' lesser-known adventurers. Unfortunately, weak to no product placement on the *Tarzan* and *Korak* covers kept the "lesser-known" aspect of these characters in place, although a Burroughs anthology book, *Weird Worlds*, allowed two of them more exposure. Still, to this day they all remain, with one notable exception, obscure and overlooked. That is a shame, because the four series—"John Carter of Mars," "Carson of Venus," "Pellucidar," and "Beyond the Farthest Star"—are very good.

Master of Adventure

(center) Edgar Rice Burroughs in a 1929 photographic portrait. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com).

**THE FIRST PHASE (1972-1974)
JOHN CARTER**

"John Carter, Warlord of Mars," the adventures of an ex-Confederate soldier mystically transported to the savagely inhabited, decaying red planet, made its first DC appearance as a backup feature in *Tarzan* #207 (Apr. 1972), edited by Joe Kubert. The series continued in issues #208 and 209, with no mention of its existence on any of the three covers (nice *Tarzan* illustrations by Kubert, though).

When DC dropped its then-52-page format and reverted to the standard 36-page size, which also dropped the story page count from 38 to 24, a new Burroughs book, *Weird Worlds*, edited by Denny O'Neil, was created to give John Carter a home, where he was awarded half the book and several cover appearances. The Warlord of Mars appeared in issues #1 through 7 (Aug.-Sept. 1972 through Sept.-Oct. 1973), for a total of ten

installments. The series was brought to an abrupt close when it was decided that a new feature, Howard Chaykin's "Iron Wolf," would take over *Weird Worlds* with issue #8.

Writer Marv Wolfman chronicled Carter's adventures from displaced alien to revered warrior, adapting Burroughs' *A Princess of Mars* and *The Gods of Mars*, although Wolfman was not credited for the first three installments of the series. Veteran comics artist Murphy Anderson illustrated episodes 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6, with Gray Morrow pinch-hitting in episode 2, and up-and-coming artist Sal Amendola taking over with episodes 7 through 10 when Anderson moved over to *Korak, Son of Tarzan* to draw its lead feature. Joe Orlando also provided inks on episode 7.

Wolfman discusses his experience writing John Carter for DC with *BACK ISSUE*:

"Joe was a really good editor with specific views of what he wanted. Denny rarely said anything and seemed to have no opinion of the material, but then, he was more of a realistic writer and maybe not into the space opera of Burroughs material. I would have loved to have worked closer with Murphy because he was a huge John Carter fan, but that wasn't the way things were done back then.

"The problem with DC's John Carter at the time [was], every time I'd start a story I was told the book was going to be canceled, so 'Wrap it right up.' Then we were told to do another one. Then, as I'm writing it, we were told the book was being canceled and 'Wrap it up.' The stories came out disjointed and subpar. I loved the character, but, sadly, only when I was at

Marvel did I feel any control over what I was doing. The DC run was fun to do, but didn't really work."

Despite the disjointedness of the series, it remains a thrilling read. John Carter went from being chased by Native-American Indians, to being somewhat inexplicably transported to Mars, to acquiring great strength due to Mars' lesser gravity, to being captured by Tharks (a four-armed, green-skinned race), to punching and killing Tharks with one punch (which worked for and against Carter's stature), to escaping the city with his immediate new love, the princess Dejah Thoris—all in the first five episodes.

In the final five chapters, having been purposely separated from Dejah, Carter and his new ally, the Tharkanian Tars Tarkas, encountered many diverse creatures, beasts, and civilizations on Mars, including the plant men of the Valley Dor; the Holy Therns; Thuvia, master of the lion-like Banths; the Black Pirates; and Issus, Goddess of Life and Death. When Carter finally reached Helium,



MARV WOLFMAN



FROM THE WEIRD WORLDS OF
EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS--

**John Carter
WARLORD OF MARS**

A Confederate Soldier in Tars Tarkas' Court

Artist Murphy Anderson's splash page to DC's first John Carter adventure, from *Tarzan* #207 (Apr. 1972). Script by Marv Wolfman.

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JOHN CARTER

LIVES!

MARVEL COMICS'

JOHN CARTER WARLORD OF MARS

by Eric Houston

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SAVAGE FURY FROM
THE CREATOR OF
Tarzan!

For many comic-book fans, Edgar Rice Burroughs' *John Carter* novels were as important to their adolescence as *Batman*, *Superman*, and *Spider-Man*. Before their young eyes, John Carter, gentleman from Virginia and ex-Confederate soldier, awoke to find himself transported to the fantastic, barbaric world of Mars. Known as Barsoom to the natives, the planet's lesser gravity made him strong, agile, and, like the Man of Steel, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. He rescued and married the beautiful princess Dejah Thoris, bested and befriended the fearsome, four-armed, eight-foot-tall green warrior Tars Tarkas, and won the love and respect of all Barsoom.

Sixty years after the first of the novels saw print, a group of likeminded fans turned professionals brought John Carter to the comics page in Marvel's 1977 series *John Carter, Warlord of Mars*. Combining amazing covers and breathtaking interiors by the likes of Dave Cockrum and Gil Kane with wholly original and stunningly faithful stories penned by Marv Wolfman and Chris Claremont, the series brought Carter and his world to life so successfully that these new tales rivaled those of Burroughs himself. Unfortunately, as is often the case with licensed properties, *Warlord of Mars* ended all too soon, fading from the memories of fans and becoming something of a forgotten classic. But now, with Disney's new *John Carter* film in theaters and the mighty Marvel comics finally back in print in a volume of Dark Horse Comics Archives, *BACK ISSUE* feels it is time to travel once more to the world of Barsoom to revisit these classic, little-known tales and to learn the fascinating behind the scenes story of John Carter's life and death at Marvel Comics.

THE MOONS OF MARS

It seems that Marv Wolfman was always destined to pen a John Carter comic, even if it took him three tries to write the one he wanted. A Burroughs fan since his early teens, Wolfman's first professional assignment was to write the John Carter adaptations in DC's short-lived Burroughs anthology *Weird Worlds*, the turbulent story of which can be found elsewhere in this magazine. Suffice to say, that series ended without sating Wolfman's desire to write John Carter. "DC's version had a number of problems," Wolfman recalls. "We were led to think every issue might be our last, so there was no forward momentum. When we were finally told it would continue, I started a big story and it was canceled."

Wolfman got his second chance to write the character five years later when Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. contacted him to script a John Carter comic that they would self-publish and release in Europe. For this project, Wolfman teamed with Dave Cockrum, already a fan favorite thanks to his work on *X-Men* and DC's

In the Mighty Marvel Manner

Edgar Rice Burroughs' hero returns to comics at the House of Ideas. Cover to *John Carter, Warlord of Mars* #1 (June 1977), with minor graphics alterations for this article. Cover art by Gil Kane and Dave Cockrum.

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Star-Crossed Lovers

(center) An undated marker illo of John Carter and Dejah Thoris by Dave Cockrum, courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com). (below) *John Carter* #1, page 1.

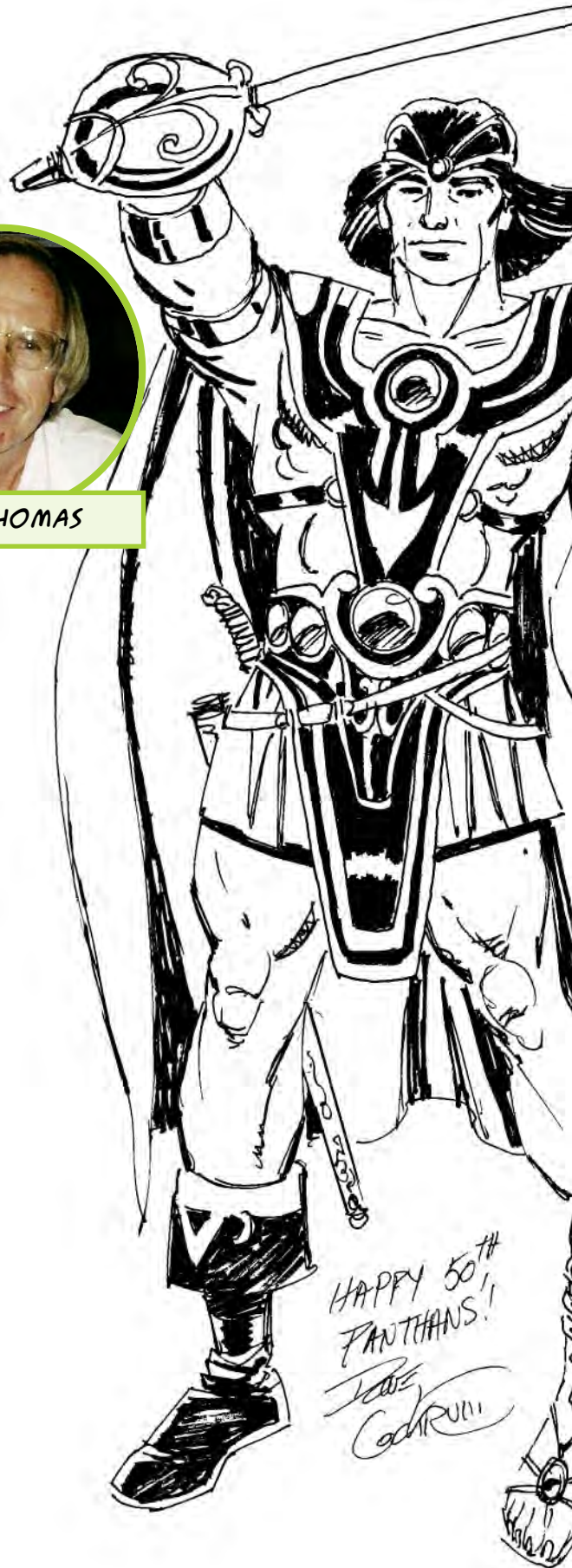
Characters © 2012 ERB, Inc.

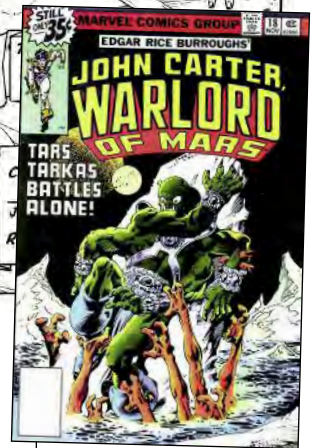
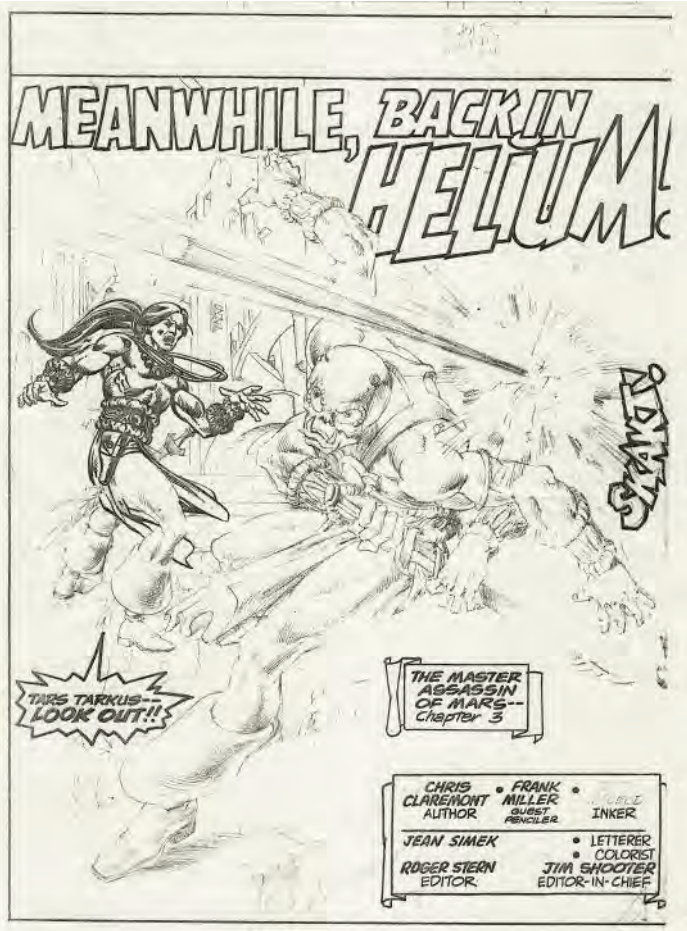
Superboy starring the Legion of Super-Heroes. Ultimately, Cockrum would only illustrate only three pages of that project before ERB, Inc. surprised both creators by announcing they were pulling the plug and giving the John Carter license to Marvel. To Wolfman, this felt like another missed opportunity, at least until he got some good news from Roy Thomas.

While Wolfman and Cockrum were hard at work at ERB, over at Marvel Comics, Stan Lee had tapped Thomas, Marvel's former editor-in-chief and a Burroughs enthusiast, to draft a proposal for ERB, Inc. Unaware of Wolfman's efforts, Thomas approached the pitch enthusiastically. "I suggested a whole line of comics," recalls Thomas, "including the Monster Men and Red Hawk and the Moon Men as well as the standard series, but, of course, Marvel only developed *Tarzan* and *John Carter, Warlord of Mars*." The license secured, Thomas himself planned to write both titles, but quickly realized that the demands of an additional two titles alongside his current workload would be much too strenuous. Ultimately, he decided to step back



ROY THOMAS





work pressure got to the point where something had to give, Marv knew I was interested," recalls Claremont, "much the same as Len [Wein] knew I was interested in *The X-Men*." Once the assignment was his, Claremont began planning out his epic, 11-part "Master Assassin of Mars." The writer says, "As it turned out, I had a year's arc essentially ready to go in my head. It was quite simple to hit the ground running."

Joining Claremont was editor Roger Stern, Claremont's editor on *X-Men* and *Ms. Marvel*, and artist Ernie Colón, who relished the chance to flex his artistic muscles. "Ernie wanted to show that he could draw something other than *Richie Rich*," recalls a bemused Stern. Unfortunately, while Colón's style fit the book beautifully, no regular inker was ever assigned, Rudy Nebres having left with issue #16. As such, Colón and later, penciler Mike Vosburg, were forced to work with a parade of inkers with vastly different styles. Ultimately, Colón and Stern took advantage of the lack of a regular inker to experiment with reproducing issue #20's art directly from Colón's pencils. "Ernie was experimenting with penciling on a special type of vellum, which a lot of inkers were finding hard to work on," recalls Stern. "Ernie's pencils were so clean and tight that someone suggested we try shooting an issue from the penciled art. When we were done, most people couldn't tell that the art hadn't been inked."



CHRIS CLAREMONT

THE PRINCESS AND THE THARK

From issue #16 onwards, Colón and Vosburg's pencils continue to offer a distinctly modern take on the characters and their world, while Claremont, whose skill in mimicking Burroughs' writing voice is comparable to Wolfman's, crafts a truly exciting story that sees Dejah Thoris pose as a member of the Martian Guild of Assassins in order to seek revenge for her fallen husband. What makes this particular story so enjoyable and unique, though, is its shift in focus from stories centered almost exclusively on John Carter. Beginning with the warlord's temporary death, Claremont saw an opportunity to shift the spotlight to a few characters who had traditionally received the short end of the stick: "It was an opportunity to showcase Dejah Thoris and Tars Tarkas, who, as wife and best friend, often don't get as much front-row screen time as they deserve," says Claremont.

Tars Tarkas finally receives his spotlight in issue #18 (Nov. 1978), a thrilling, barbaric issue-long battle between Tars Tarkas and a fellow green Martian for the right to rule their tribe. With all due respect to the talents of Colón and Vosburg, this issue is easily the high-water mark of the series' second half. Here, a savage fight between two four-armed, green Martians is realized for the first time in glorious, brutal detail by none other than industry legend Frank Miller. "One of the primal joys of writing *John Carter* was that one of the first issues I wrote was Frank

Up in Arms

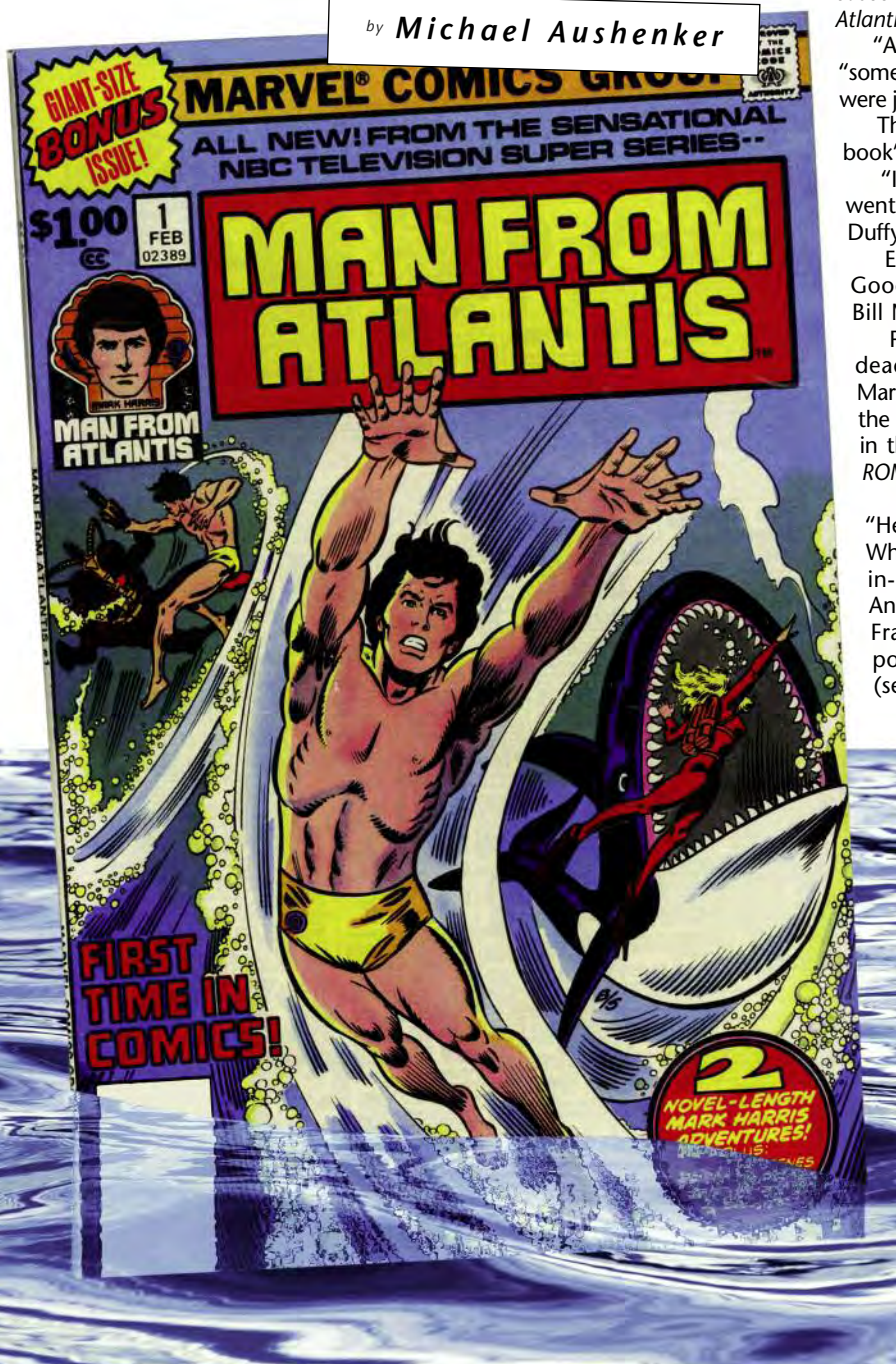
The unlikely duo of John Byrne and Rudy Nebres provided the cover (inset) to *Warlord of Mars* #18 (Nov. 1978), but the issue is best known as the home of one of Frank Miller's earliest Marvel jobs. Seen here, courtesy of inker Bob McLeod, are Miller's lettered pencils and McLeod's finished page.

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WHO SHOT DOWN MAN FROM ATLANTIS?

CONCURRENT TO THE HUMAN FLY,
THE MANTLO/ROBBINS/SPRINGER
TEAM PRODUCED ANOTHER
SHORT-LIVED LICENSED SERIES

by Michael Aushenker



Remember Patrick Duffy on the phenomenally popular TV show *Dallas*, the “Who shot J. R.?” cliffhanger, and all that jazz?

Shortly before Duffy joined the CBS prime-time soap, the actor’s biggest claim to fame was his breakout role as the titular character of a high-profile, yet short-lived, science-fiction series, *Man from Atlantis*.

Man from Atlantis (MFA), the comic-book series, originally “surfaced” as Marvel Comics Group’s tie-in to 13 episodes of the television show (1977–1978), which had followed four highly rated TV movies.

To some, a Marvel comic based on this fleeting program would seem improbable and, at best, redundant. Marvel already had an underwater character (the company’s very first character, in fact...) in the Sub-Mariner, whose own books had failed to “stay afloat.” Nevertheless, Marvel greenlighted a comic book based on this NBC series. Before the comic even launched, *Atlantis* already had fans internally at the company.

“As I recall,” Marvel editor/artist Al Milgrom tells *BACK ISSUE*, “some of the females in the office were big Patrick Duffy fans and were jazzed about the idea of doing a comic based on that show.”

The letters-column editorial in *MFA* #7 suggested that the book’s assistant editor, Jo Duffy, was one of those females.

“I was a big fan of that show,” the writer, who at the time went by Mary Jo Duffy, admits to *BACK ISSUE*. “Hey, Patrick Duffy in a bathing suit! Hello!”

Editor Archie Goodwin was assigned the *MFA* book, and Goodwin knew just the guy to write this puppy: the reliable Bill Mantlo.

For whatever reason, positive (he was quick and good with deadlines) or negative (his writing was reviled by some of Marvel’s editorial higher-ups), Bill Mantlo became something of the go-to licensed-character series scribe in his heyday at Marvel in the late 1970s–early 1980s, when he scripted such titles as *ROM: Spaceknight*, *Micronauts*, *Team America*, and *Transformers*.

“Mantlo wrote a lot of them,” Milgrom tells *BACK ISSUE*. “He was a real pro. He would say okay and he would do it. When I first came on [at Marvel] as an editor, [Marvel editor-in-chief] Jim Shooter was not a fan of Mantlo’s writing.” And so, in 1977–1978, Mantlo collaborated with the two Franks—Robbins and Springer—on a pair of high-octane, power-packed comic-book series: one was *The Human Fly* (see *BACK ISSUE* #20) ... the other was *Man from Atlantis*.

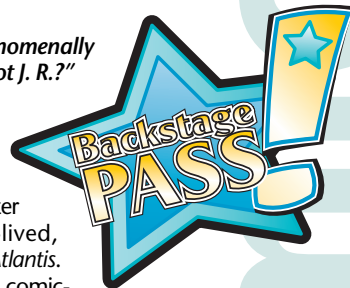
Loosely based on the show, *MFA* comics, chronicling the adventures of Mark Harris, an amnesiac merman taken in by a government-funded Foundation of Oceanic Research team for study, was, for a brief moment, flying high (or swimming high, as it may be). For seven colorful issues, this unlikely book shined on the strength of the Caniffian-derived art of Frank Robbins and Frank Springer.

Then things fell apart. The show was canceled. A final story, hinted at in the cliffhanger within issue #7, was never consummated. Marvel’s *Man from Atlantis* was no more.

That Sinking Feeling

While many amorous viewers would have gladly given mouth-to-mouth to TV star Patrick Duffy, nothing seemed to be able to resuscitate the short-lived *Man from Atlantis* Marvel Comic. Slightly submerged cover art to issue #1 (Feb. 1978) by John Buscema and Joe Sinnott.

Man from Atlantis TM & © Solow Production Company.



Sutton's Sudden Departure

(below) Splash to penciler Tom Sutton's sole MFA story, leading off issue #1. (right) The series' handsome star, from a text feature in the inaugural issue.

TM & © Solow Production Company.

A FISHY ENDING

So, what killed *Man from Atlantis*?

Was it poor sales? The source show's cancellation? Creative differences or office politics within Marvel's ranks?

Did Marvel pull the plug on the book? Did the producers of the TV show, Solow Productions, force its demise? Did Joe Barbera of Hanna-Barbera cartoons fame have something to do with it? (More on *that* later...)

Or, as my pal Rich Carradine suggested, did the US Government shut it down because the comic book came too close to the truth?

(Kidding.)

In the editorial page of the comic's finale (Aug. 1978), Mantlo, in his editorial soapbox, stated that he was reluctantly stopping work on MFA. After all, men such as him thrived on the challenge of fleshing out blank slates such as ROM, and creating a mythos, adding dimension and depth to their unspecified backstories.

In fact, the end of MFA #7 teased a surreal story next issue, involving a harlequin named Merry, only to be punctuated by a hastily added message that "a special announcement" awaited on the editorial page. As it turned out, there was nothing special about that announcement for fans of this book:

By now you know, if you read MAN FROM ATLANTIS #3, that this issue is Marvel's last to deal with the adventures of Mark Harris. We here at the Bullpen regret the decision to cancel as much as we're sure you do. It was a decision that was forced on us by circumstances, not sales, and we're still hoping that the success of the comic itself will be proven by an upsurge of letters from all of you concerned Atlantis-fans out there.

It's a funny thing, the demise of a book. Many of us put in quite a lot of time, energy and love to its creation. We borrowed the original stimulus from the TV show, to be sure, but we also invested much of our own concern in the mag ... and we think it showed.

MFA may be gone—then again it may not. Your mail can still change that, and so can sales figures which we've yet to receive on even MFA #1! Mark Harris may be gone from Marveldom, but undersea adventures are in the works on another great mag even as I write this ... what do we call it? ... eulogy. Be that as it may, there's still one thing that remains to be done, and that's to thank all the people who helped bring you MAN FROM ATLANTIS for the few short months of its existence. There are too many names to list them all, but we can certainly spare space to express our appreciation to Fearless Frank Robbins and Fun-loving Frank Springer. Then there's Janice Cohen, Archie Goodwin, Jim Shooter, Ralph Macchio. Last but not least we have to a word of thanks to Mary Jo Duffy, who cared so much that it hurt.

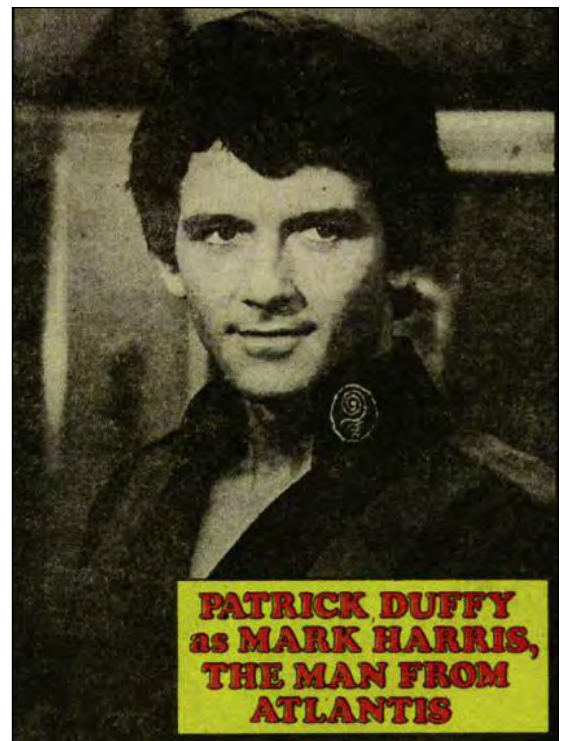
And we have to express our heartfelt gratitude to you, True Believers, who stuck with us, who wrote in, who plunked down your 35 cents to show us that we were doing good! Thanks, people! Thanks a million! Bill Mantlo

"Cared so much that it hurt...?" Really, Jo?

"He's being sincere," MFA assistant editor Duffy says today. "It killed me when they canceled that book. I don't think he was used to working with someone as enthusiastic as he was."

Ultimately, any fan campaign would have been futile.

"It was just sad," remembers Duffy. "Nothing was going to save the book. Bill made an impassioned appeal, but no number was going to be enough."



THE TWILIGHT SAGA

A CONVERSATION WITH CAROL SERLING

THE WIDOW OF TWILIGHT ZONE MASTERMIND AND PLANET OF THE APES SCREENWRITER ROD SERLING SHARES HER FOND MEMORIES

by **Michael Aushenker**

conducted February 2011



Those odd opening titles. Those haunting four notes, repeated ad nauseum into the infinite cosmos. That familiar logo. Those classic episodes...

The Twilight Zone—the black-and-white television series created by, written and produced by, and memorably hosted by the eternal Rod Serling—has left its indelible mark on our pop culture.

Likewise, the 1959–1964 TV sci-fi anthology has greatly influenced comics ... both figuratively and literally. Western Publishing, under its Dell Comics and Gold Key imprints, produced a comic book based on the TV show in the 1960s–1970s, while NOW published a version in 1990. Artists Mike Sekowsky, Lee Elias, Dan Spiegle, Jerry Robinson, Alex Toth, Reed Crandall, Frank Thorne, and Joe Orlando, along with writer Harlan Ellison, are among the talents who brought this offbeat concept to life in comics.

And yet, nobody has been closer to Serling's creative process than The Twilight Zone creator's wife, **Carol Serling**, who was by his side from the beginning—and before.

In a rare interview, the widow of the late screenwriter and producer reveals to BACK ISSUE writer Michael Aushenker that the de facto backyard of The Twilight Zone is Pacific Palisades, California, where Aushenker happens to reside, and Ithaca, New York, where Aushenker attended college...

...Weird, huh? Cue those four notes...

MICHAEL AUSHENKER: When were you and Rod married?

CAROL SERLING: 1948. We were both in college at Antioch College in Ohio. We got married and spent two more years in school for our bachelor degrees. In 1963, we returned to Antioch and he spent a few months as a professor in residency.

When [Rod] started, he just came back from World War II and started college right after the war. His major originally was physical education. He switched to literature and language. I was majoring in psychology.

AUSHENKER: Did you read those Twilight Zone scripts after he wrote them?

SERLING: Oh, yes. I was his harshest critic all through the years.

AUSHENKER: Where did he write the scripts for those great shows?

SERLING: He worked at home. When he finished a section, he'd run it into the house. He had a study in the back. We lived over in the Riviera [the eastern-most section of Pacific Palisades] at the time.

[*Writer's note:* Pacific Palisades is an affluent neighborhood north of Santa Monica and bordering the ocean on Los Angeles' Westside. Today, such entertainment figures as Steven Spielberg, Adam Sandler, and Tom Hanks live in the Palisades. The latter star in recent years has bought up a lot of real estate in the Riviera. Back in the 1950s, when Los Angeles was less developed, Pacific Palisades was sleeper and

Submitted for Your Approval

Amid our recreation of *The Twilight Zone's* opening credits are three vintage Serling family photos: (top) Carol and Rod, 1950; (center left) Jodi, Nan, Carol, and Rod, 1959; and (lower right) Rod and Carol in 1963.

Special thanks to Carol Serling.

The Twilight Zone © Cayuga Productions, Inc.



© Cayuga Productions, Inc.

considered somewhat remote from the other parts of Los Angeles. Some contemporaries of Serling living in the Palisades at the time included Peter Graves and his brother, James Arness, Jerry Lewis, Vivian Vance, Mel Blanc, Jack Barry, and a young Randy Newman. The widow Serling currently lives in the Highlands, an extensive Palisades neighborhood on the western end, bordering the Santa Inez Mountains and north of Sunset Boulevard.]

AUSHENKER: *You and Rod came out here from the East Coast. How did you settle on Pacific Palisades? Why that part of Los Angeles?*

SERLING: We moved to the Palisades in 1958 from Westport, Connecticut. We came out here because the television industry had changed. It was [originally] live and based in New York City and then everything moved out to California. We had come out during previous winters when Rod was working for MGM and rented a house in Beverly Hills. We did not like Beverly Hills at all.

We rented a house from an old-time movie actress Virginia Bruce on Amalfi [Drive, in the Riviera]. We rented it for about six months.

[*Writer's note:* Actress Bruce served as the first of many honorary mayors of Pacific Palisades in 1951. The Palisades' current honorary mayor is Sugar Ray Leonard.]

AUSHENKER: *I had heard that a young Randy Newman lived next door to you and would make a racket practicing music.*

SERLING: We didn't know the Newmans. They lived a few houses away, though. At the time, there were not so many people living here in the Palisades. People would say, 'Why are you going so far out? You're out at the end of the world.'

In the late '50s, Ralph Bellamy lived down the street, [and] Jerry West across the street.

AUSHENKER: *When The Twilight Zone aired, you and Rod had relocated to a house a couple of blocks away from Amalfi on Monaco Drive. Where on the Monaco property did Rod write?*

SERLING: Inside kind of a pool house that we used. We built it for him.

AUSHENKER: *What was his routine like during the Twilight Zone years?*

SERLING: He'd get up early in the morning, grab a cup of coffee, and start. He would type—two fingers—then begin to dictate. He used a Dictabell, an old-fashioned machine, and dictate to his secretary.

AUSHENKER: *What kind of creative control did he have on The Twilight Zone?*

SERLING: He had complete creative control with the program. During the *Twilight Zone* years, he'd go to Metro [-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios] for the shoot. Sometimes, he'd work in the evening.

AUSHENKER: *You and Rod had two daughters, Jodi and Nan [three years apart]. Did they grow up in the Palisades?*

SERLING: Yes. They went to all of the area schools: Canyon [Elementary], Paul Revere [Middle School], PaliHi [Pacific Palisades Charter High School].

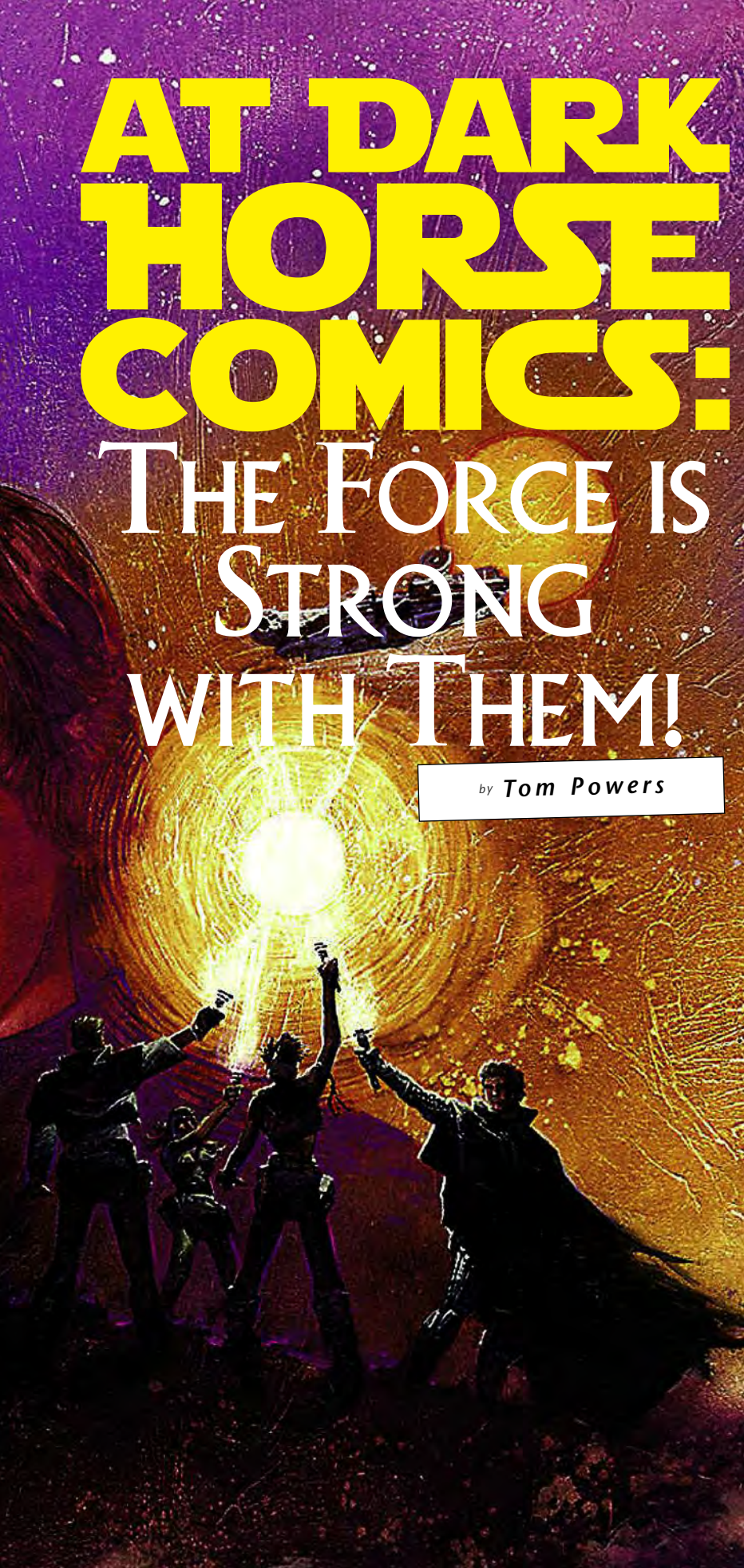
AUSHENKER: *I had also heard that Rod taught the kids writing at Canyon Elementary.*



Psychedelic Shack

(above) From 1959 through the 1970s, Rod Serling lived at 1490 Monaco Drive in Pacific Palisades, where he wrote the bulk of his *Twilight Zone* telescripts. Photo by Michael Aushenker. (left) Original cover painting to Gold Key Comics' *The Twilight Zone* #45 (Sept. 1972), by George Wilson.

The Twilight Zone © Cayuga Productions, Inc.



AT DARK HORSE COMICS: THE FORCE IS STRONG WITH THEM!

by Tom Powers

FlashBack!

The saga of Dark Horse Comics supplying the comic-art vision of the Star Wars franchise is one worthy of celebration indeed! Since December 1991, with the premiere of *Dark Empire*, a six-issue limited series, Dark Horse has been crafting classic comic-book tales taking place in creator George Lucas' galaxy far, far away to fan acclaim, and the publisher's sequential storytelling prowess is as skillful as ever. Spanning the time of the Old Republic, through *Episodes I–VI*, and into the New Republic era and the distant future of *Star Wars: Legacy*, Dark Horse has added an array of new characters and layers of epic storytelling integral to the entire *Star Wars* Extended Universe (EU).

Before I begin to discuss select highlights from this incredible collaborative journey, I would like to thank the many writers, artists, and editors who contributed to this special article. Their enthusiastic, detailed commentary truly tells the story of how and why Dark Horse has consistently maintained a fine level of excitement and quality with their *Star Wars* comics over the years.

DARK HORSE COMICS: A NEW HOPE FOR STAR WARS FANS

Starting with its six-issue adaptation of *A New Hope* (July–Dec. 1977), Marvel Comics depicted the comic-book adventures of Luke Skywalker and company for an impressive 107 issues, a four-issue adaptation of *Return of the Jedi*, and three annuals. [Editor's note: See *BACK ISSUE* #9.] Marvel even offered spin-off series under its Star Comics imprint with *Droids* #1–8 (Apr. 1986–June 1987) and *Ewoks* #1–14 (May 1985–July 1987). Unfortunately, when Marvel canceled its flagship *Star Wars* title with issue #107 (Sept. 1986), toys sales were on the wane, the promised prequels were not being produced in the immediate future, and fan interest in the *Star Wars* universe was apparently fading. Although Blackthorne later produced a trio of *Star Wars 3D* comics (Dec. 1987, June 1988, and Sept. 1988), there was not much industry movement in terms of publishing additional comic books for this beloved franchise. During this era, comparable to Han Solo's frozen tenure in carbonite, writer Tom Veitch and artist Cam Kennedy concocted an ambitious continuation of the post-*Jedi* timeline with their proposal for *Star Wars: Dark Empire*.

Veitch, reflecting upon the early days of this ambitious project, explains, "Cam Kennedy and I did a creator-owned series for Epic/Marvel called *The Light and Darkness War*. After the six issues were published, in 1989, we wrote a letter to George Lucas and asked if we could revive *Star Wars* as a comic book. We just knew there was more life in the series, and it was sitting there with no takers. In our letter, we offered to send Mr. Lucas the *L&D War* as samples of our work. Three days later, I got a phone call

Celebrating 20 Years of Star Wars Comics

Dave Dorman's wraparound cover painting for the trade paperback collecting *Star Wars: Dark Empire II*. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com).

Star Wars © 2012 Lucasfilm Ltd. & ™.

Bad Dad

(left) Detail from Brian Horton's cover to *Empire* #4 (Dec. 2002). (right) Brian Ching and Batt's cover to issue #5, and (inset) Killian Plunkett's cover to *Empire* #9.

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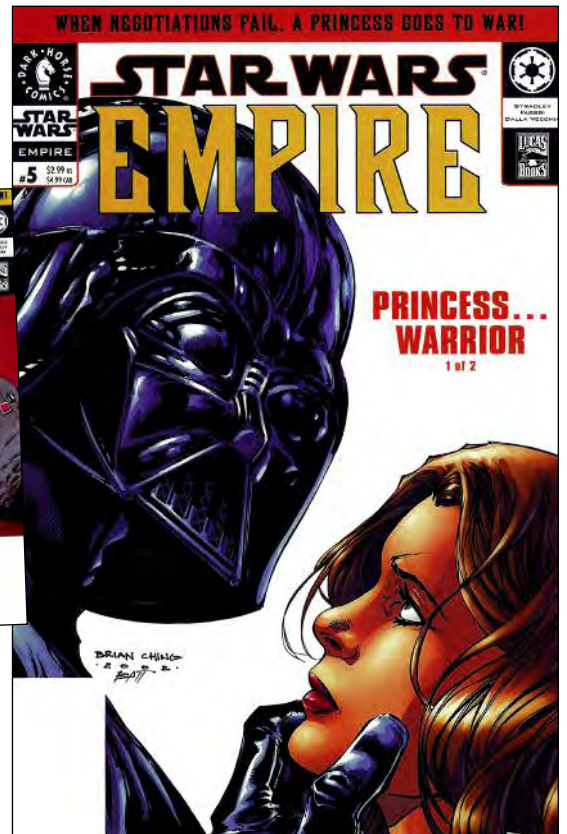
IMPERIALS VS. REBELS: DUAL PERSPECTIVES

In September 2002, as mentioned, Dark Horse Comics added a title to complement the renamed *Star Wars: Republic*—*Star Wars: Empire*, which was created to delineate stories occurring before *A New Hope* and between that film and *The Empire Strikes Back*. In the opening story arc of *Empire* #1–4, titled “Betrayal” (Sept.–Dec. 2002), writer Scott Allie offers the scenario of a rebellion fomented by several Imperial Moff's against the Emperor and Vader. For insight upon the genesis behind this story, Allie comments, “That one started with the idea for an image of Vader fighting Stormtroopers on Coruscant. I felt like that was a really compelling idea, on a really simple level. Then it came down to trying to come up with a story that would make such a scene make sense. I opened the story on that image, but as a cheat, a way where it didn't count, to fake readers out, so they'd think we used it up. But then the whole story is building to the real version of the scene.” Allie, moreover, when asked what this story allowed him to reveal about Darth Vader and his relationship with his master, replies, “I wanted to explore the idea of loyalty between real villains, truly evil guys and deal with the idea that, down deep, the Emperor is much more villainous than Vader.”

In *Empire* #5–6 (Jan.–Feb. 2003), Princess Leia takes the spotlight. For Randy Stradley, who had first written the character with “The Alderaan Factor” in issue #86 (Aug. 1984) of the Marvel series, telling Leia's story once more was a comfortable process. On this note, Stradley says, “For me, Leia has always been the easiest character to write. Maybe it's because she's the one who, right from the beginning, believed in something larger than herself. She didn't have

to be convinced that standing against the Empire was the right thing to do—she already knew it to the core of her being. So there's a lot of strength in her. But if you think about the life she must have led, and how new the Rebellion was, you realize that she's not drawing on a wealth of experience. So while she believes strongly that she's on the right path, you can still rub her nose in the realities of war and the actual flesh and blood sacrifices that she's calling on her followers to make. I think it's one thing to put yourself at risk, but there's a different toll to be paid for sending others into danger—especially when you know some of them won't survive.” He adds, “It's always interesting to force confident characters to confront doubts they didn't know they had.”

Writer Paul Chadwick and artist Doug Wheatley collaborate on their four-part “Darklighter” story arc in *Empire* #8–9, 12, and 15 (Apr., June, Sept., and Dec. 2003), which presents the much-needed backstory of a character who made a few brief but memorable appearances in *A New Hope*: Biggs Darklighter. Chadwick points out, “Biggs had a good scene with Luke in the beginning of the original script, and therefore his death meant something in the Battle of the Death Star. It had to be cut for whatever reason (although it's memorably restored in the radio-play version that was broadcast on NPR). Honestly, I felt terrible for the actor, Garrick Hagon. Handsome guy, could've been launched as a Hollywood leading man. He's done a million character roles since, so I guess he did okay. But acting in a spirit of compensation, I turned the established arc for the character—returning to the flight academy, then defecting to the Rebel Alliance—into spectacle-loaded drama and crisis of conscience that elevated him to hero status.” Chadwick adds, “The rub was that this had to happen in a couple of weeks, tops, since that's all the time that passes in



when

ADVENTURE

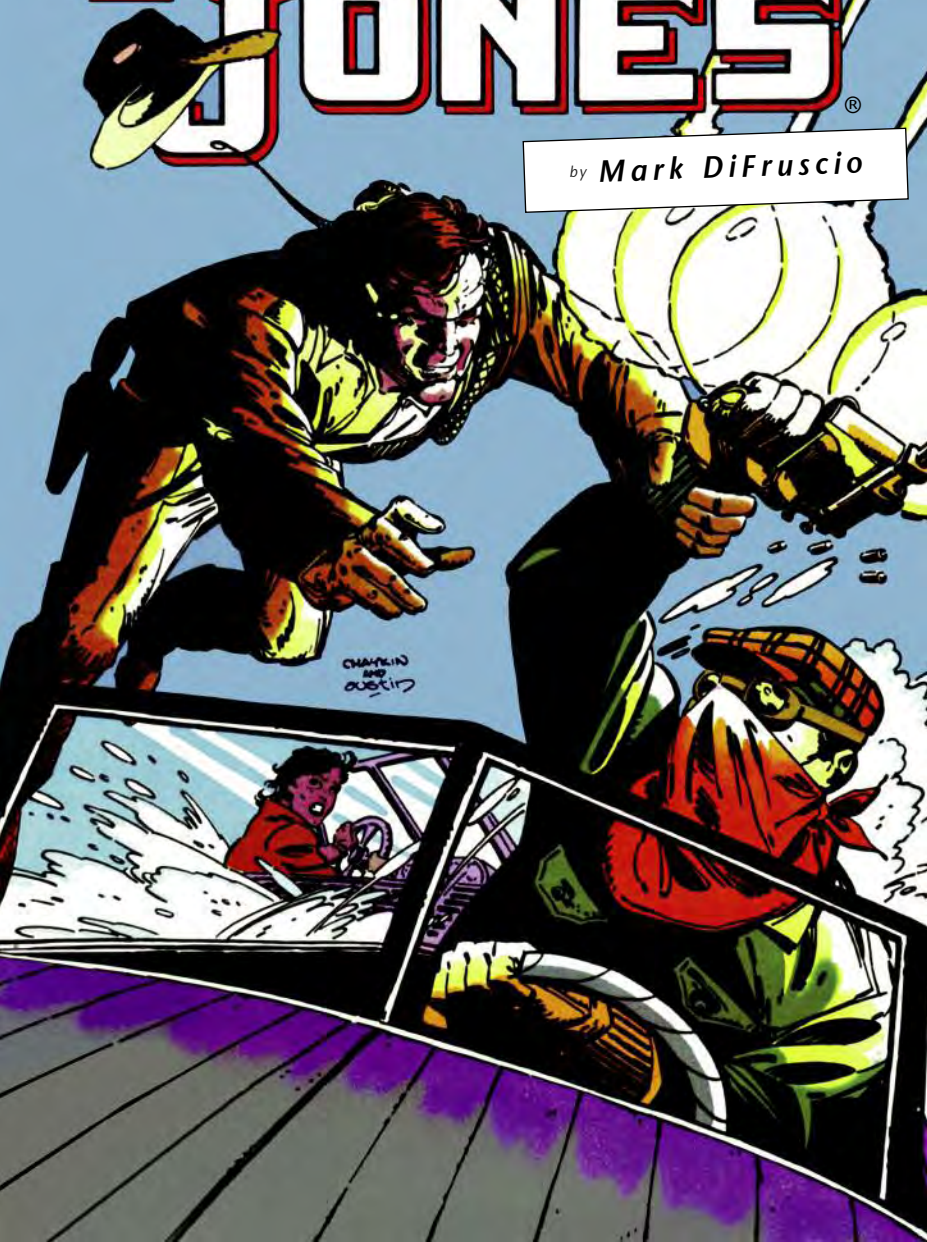
had a name:

EXPLORING MARVEL COMICS'

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF

INDIANA JONES

by **Mark DiFruscio**



FlashBack!

"Look at this. It's worthless—ten dollars from a vendor in the street. But I take it, I bury it in the sand for a thousand years, it becomes priceless."

— *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981)

Comic-book collectors, like archaeologists, tend to be inordinately preoccupied with the past. A very special form of patience and dedication is required to spend countless hours sifting through a sea of polybagged detritus and sepia-toned nostalgia in hopeful anticipation of rescuing some precious panelological artifact from its musty longbox tomb. Yet as any obtainer of rare of antiquities can surely attest, unearthing time's discarded fragments from the soil of neglect can become a life-long obsession. And no character in popular fiction more colorfully exemplifies this quixotic hunt for prized relics and lost treasures than that of archaeologist/adventurer Indiana Jones.

Myriad creative influences coalesced in the conception of Indiana Jones, first introduced in the 1981 film *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, including the Saturday matinee movie serials that so greatly inspired filmmakers George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, as well as pulp magazine proto-superheroes like Doc Savage, H. Rider Haggard's safari hunter Allan Quatermain, Ian Fleming's superspy James Bond, and even real-life adventurers such as Hiram Bingham and T. E. Lawrence. Of course, comic books—that close descendant of the pulps—also played an integral role in the creation of Indiana Jones, most directly in the form of legendary comics artist Jim Steranko, who illustrated the concept designs upon which the character's distinctive appearance was based.

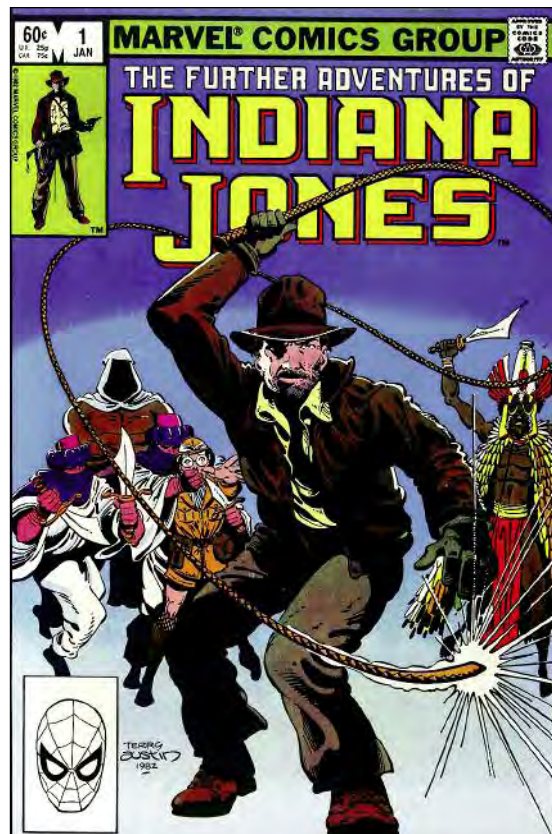
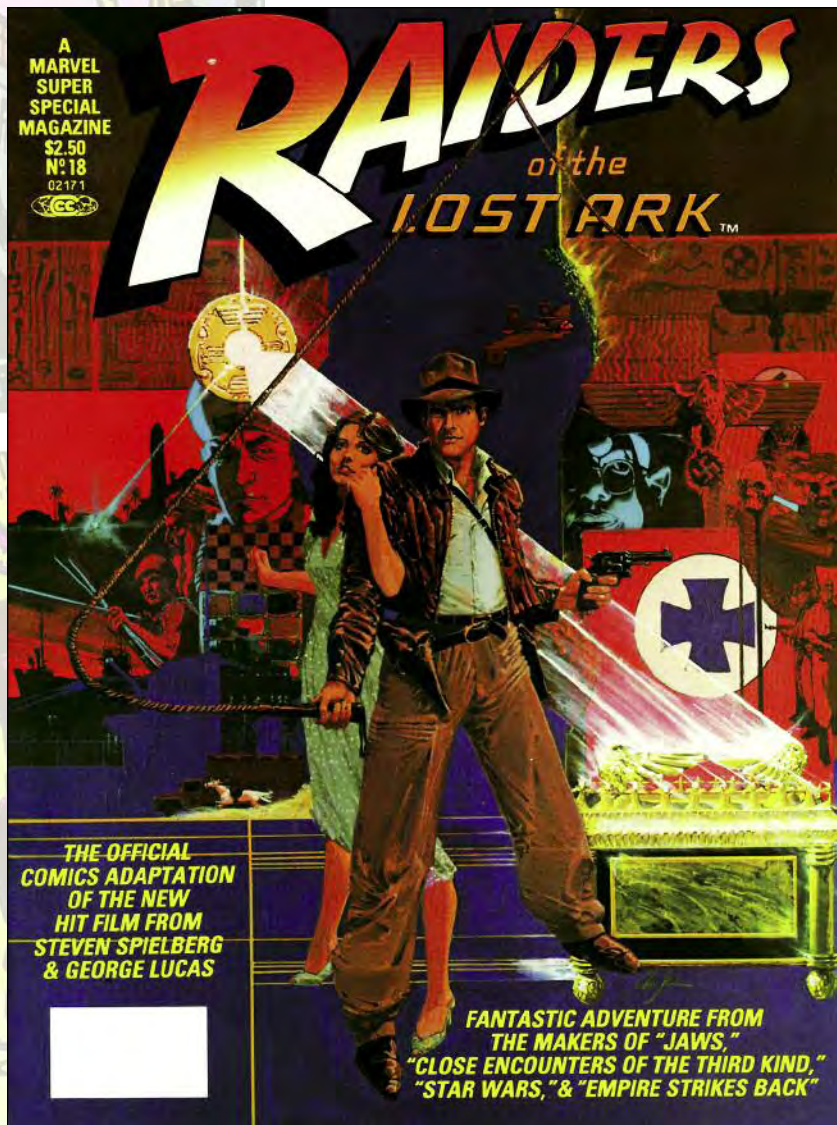
Befitting these ties to the medium, Indiana Jones promptly made his four-color debut in Marvel Comics' *Raiders of the Lost Ark* #1 (Sept. 1981). Written by Walter Simonson and penciled by the inestimable John Buscema, the three-issue limited series offered a faithful and entertaining graphic adaptation of the blockbuster film. Yet Simonson, an award-winning artist, was hardly an obvious choice for scripter considering his relative lack of solo-writing experience at the time, with just four issues of Marvel's *Battlestar Galactica* under his belt.

As Simonson recounted in his interview with Roger Ash in *TwoMorrows' Modern Masters* vol. 8: "Archie [Goodwin] was supposed to write the adaptation. He was buried in work, as he often was. He stopped me in the hall one day and asked if I'd be interested in writing this adaptation of a new movie about to come out called *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, because he'd read the issues of *Battlestar Galactica* [written by Simonson] and he'd really liked them ... *Raiders* was writing over John Buscema. John is one of the two or three best storytellers and draftsmen comics have ever had... When I got the artwork back, it was like shooting fish in a barrel. It really was. I had the script, I had John Buscema's layouts; it was hard to go wrong. It was really a delight."

Adventure Comics

Detail to the cover of Marvel Comics' *The Further Adventures of Indiana Jones* #6 (June 1983). Art by Howard Chaykin and Terry Austin.

Indiana Jones © 2012 Lucasfilm Ltd. & ™.



Whip It!
 (left) A Howard Chaykin-illustrated montage graced the cover of the 1981 color magazine *Marvel Super Special* #18, collecting the Walt Simonson/John Buscema/Klaus Janson adaptation of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. (right) Terry Austin's snappy cover to the premiere issue of *Indiana Jones* (Jan. 1983).

Indiana Jones © 2012 Lucasfilm Ltd. & ™.

"SOMETHING'S GONE WRONG AGAIN!"

In sharp contrast to Simonson's delightful experience on the *Raiders* adaptation, creator John Byrne had a far more vexing time as writer and artist on *The Further Adventures of Indiana Jones* #1 (Jan. 1983), the first issue of Marvel's follow-up ongoing series. Although Byrne had previously established himself as a fan favorite at Marvel with popular runs on *Uncanny X-Men* and *Avengers*, his work on *The Further Adventures of Indiana Jones* has become something of a footnote in comics history due to his speedy exit from the title after just two issues. When contacted by *BACK ISSUE* for comment on his brief stint, Byrne's reply was fittingly curt, saying only, "I'd just as soon forget I ever worked on this! And on THAT you can quote me!"

To read a detailed explanation from Byrne himself, he does divulge the specific reasons for his departure on his website www.bynerobotics.com. However, as other sources have also described (such as Brian Cronin's long-running online column *Comic Book Legends Revealed*), the main conflict stemmed from Byrne's problematic dealings with Lucasfilm's licensing liaison, which seemed to have difficulty grasping the lead time required to publish a monthly comic book, as evidenced by a reported habit of demanding major changes after the artwork had already been finished and approved.

Nonetheless, it remains a tantalizing point of conjecture to theorize on just how differently the book might have fared had it continued under the direction of Byrne given his splendid success revitalizing *Fantastic Four* and *Superman* during these same years. In the wake of Byrne's resignation, contentious dealings with Lucasfilm would set the stage for a routine of instability and creative turnover on the book, eventually leading to its quiet demise at the House of Ideas with *The Further Adventures of Indiana Jones* #34 (Mar. 1986). Indeed, this final issue is rather apropos of the series itself given its title, "Something's Gone Wrong Again!"

In retrospect, *Further Adventures* can be characterized as a trouble-plagued expedition from the start, which ultimately failed to match the success of Marvel's other high-profile licensed properties like *Star Wars*, *Conan the Barbarian*, and *G.I. Joe*. Offering some insight into the reasons for this is Eliot R. Brown, who worked on the book for much of its history. After initially serving as an assistant to series editor Louise "Weezie" Simonson (nee Jones), Brown was promoted to series editor himself with *Further Adventures* #14 (Feb. 1984). Yet by Brown's own admission, it was a role he was ill prepared to assume, causing him to be fired off the book after just eight issues.

"MR. TECHNICAL"

Although longtime Marvel staffer Brown, a.k.a. "Mr. Technical," is primarily known for his technical drawings on encyclopedic guides such as the *Official Handbook to the Marvel Universe* and Iron Man's *Iron Manual*, he actually got his start at Marvel as a typesetter on regular features like "Bullpen Bulletins," a monthly column written by Marvel's then-editor-in-chief Jim Shooter. [*Editor's note: Learn more about Eliot by reading BACK ISSUE #32.*] In fact, the premiere issue of *The Further Adventures of Indiana Jones* included a "Bullpen Bulletins" wherein Shooter specifically singled out Brown for praise within the Marvel

BEYOND
Capes!

INDIANA JONES™

by Daniel DeAngelo

RIDING A DARK HORSE

"How fortunate our failure to kill you, Dr. Jones. You survive to be of service to us once again."

— *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (2008)

Having origins based in pulp magazines and action serials, it was inevitable that the adventures of Indiana Jones would find their way onto the comic-book page, starting with the Marvel adaptation of the first movie, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Sept.–Nov. 1981), and—perhaps fittingly—ending with its adaptation of the (then) last movie, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (Oct.–Nov. 1989). In between, Marvel published *The Further Adventures of Indiana Jones*, an ongoing monthly series that ran for 34 issues (Jan. 1983–Mar. 1986). For publishers like Marvel Comics in the 1980s, comics based on movies were a low priority, but in the 1990s, licensed properties found a new home in the stable of Dark Horse Comics.

Hitching a Ride

Artwork by Ethan Beevers, from Dark Horse Comics' *Indiana Jones Adventures* #1 (July 2008).

Indiana Jones © 2012 Lucasfilm Ltd. &™.

BACK IN THE SADDLE

"The major companies had their own characters they owned, so they put their best talent [on those books]," Dark Horse publisher Mike Richardson explains. "They weren't counting on the strength of a particular film property's box-office performance to account for their sales. We didn't look at it that way. We wanted to get the best talent that we possibly could get."

Dark Horse Comics started out in 1986, publishing comics like *Boris the Bear* and the anthology series *Dark Horse Presents*. "We received a lot of critical success on our early work, but we seemed to have reached a ceiling as far as how many books we could sell," Richardson recalls. "We realized that the bestselling books were about longstanding characters that readers were already familiar with, and it occurred to us that maybe taking on movie characters might help with that." The first Dark Horse licensed comic was a *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* one-shot (Aug. 1987), which turned out to be successful enough that DHC began looking for more movie properties to license, following with *Aliens*, *Predator*, and *Terminator*.

This continued string of successes gave Dark Horse the confidence to pursue a deal with Lucasfilm. Marvel still held the *Star Wars* license at that time, but Dark Horse shared with Lucasfilm its own vision and approach about *Star Wars*, which was very different from Marvel's. "At the time, Marvel wasn't putting out many *Star Wars* comics," Richardson says, "and I thought we could do a better job. We talked with [Lucasfilm representative] Lucy Wilson and we proposed exactly what we wanted to do, which turned out to be *Dark Empire*." This first six-issue *Star Wars* miniseries (Dec. 1991–Oct. 1992) proved to be another big hit for Dark Horse, so the obvious next step was to go for *Indiana Jones*. "*Raiders* has always been one of my very favorite films," says Richardson.

As with most of its licensed comics, Dark Horse chose to publish *Indiana Jones* as a series of four-issue story arcs rather than as an ongoing monthly, because it was more difficult to produce monthly comics with a property like *Indiana Jones*. "Almost every story has a similar type of plot," Richardson explains. "It's always Indy finding out about some sort of [artifact] or lost city, fighting against the Nazis, finding something that usually has unexpected consequences, overcoming whatever the situation is



