

COMICS' BRONZE AGE AND BEYOND!

TWO MONTHS
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BACKISSUE!

TM



ROBOTS ISSUE

METAL MEN • RED TORNADO • ROBOTMAN • VISION • JOCASTA • CYBORG • SHOGUN WARRIORS
MR. ATOM • BIG GUY & RUSTY • with ALLRED • SIMONSON • PÉREZ • TRIMPE and more!



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Volume 1,
Number 72
May 2014

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

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BACKISSUE

Comics' Bronze Age and Beyond!

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Detail from the cover of *The Avengers* #96 (Feb. 1972), featuring the Vision. Cover art by Neal Adams. TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

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FlashBack!

HEADY METAL

SILVER AGE CHARM TRANSMUTES TO
BRONZE AGE SERIOUSNESS FOR THE

METAL MEN™

by Jim Kingman



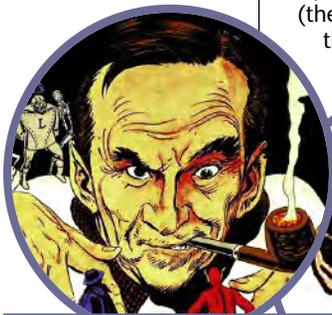
Bad Moon Rising

Eclipso casts a pall over the previously twinkling robotic adventures on Walter Simonson's cover to *Metal Men* #48 (Oct.–Nov. 1976).

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DC's *Metal Men*—Gold, Iron, Lead, Mercury, Tin, and Platinum (the sole female in the group, affectionately called "Tina")—debuted in *Showcase* #37 (Mar.–Apr. 1962) and appeared in three subsequent issues of the tryout title. Created by writer Robert Kanigher over a single weekend and illustrated by Ross Andru and Mike Esposito, the robotic band's exploits were a hit for DC (then National Comics), and the team graduated to their own magazine in 1963, beginning in February

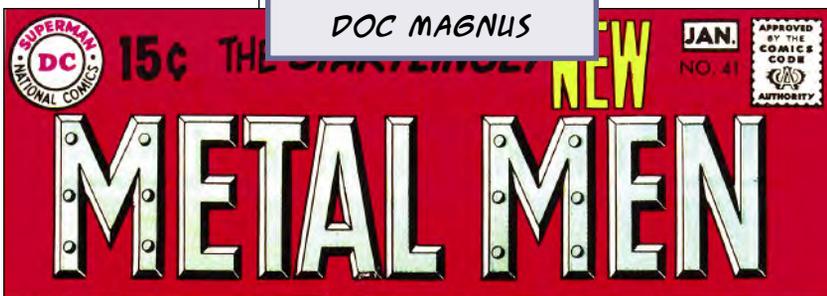
with an Apr.–May cover-dated first issue. But by 1968, as the Silver Age of Comics began to wane and the lengthy dawn of the Bronze Age began, the lighthearted charm of DC's *Metal Men* abruptly ended, and a new path of cynical seriousness was forged.



ROBERT KANIGHER



DOC MAGNUS



Gone were the adversaries that made *Metal Men* an outlandishly entertaining read for over six years: the Gas Gang, the Missile Men, Chemo, the Plastic Perils, and the Metal Mods; gone were robotics gone mad: robot Amazons, a robot Centaur, robot termites, a robot dinosaur, a robot skyscraper, and a deadly robot rollercoaster, to name a few; and gone was "Nameless," Tin's girlfriend, who never achieved a proper name. Most important of all, gone for good intent and constructive purpose was Dr. Will (Doc) Magnus, government-payrolled scientist and the robot band's inventor, whose sudden departure catapulted the *original* heavy metal band into more heady territory: faulty, outcast, hunted, and targeted for destruction. In an editorial effort to save them from cancellation due to declining sales, this "New, Hunted" *Metal Men* debuted in *Metal Men* #33 (Aug.–Sept. 1968), which sports one of the great dramatic covers of the late 1960s.

In this startling issue, written by Kanigher and illustrated by Mike Sekowsky, Magnus was electrified and experienced a cerebral hemorrhage that sent him into a coma. This was caused by the tremendous discharge of energy he generated to enhance the strength of the robots' "resposometers," the crucial computerized component that gave the team near-human intelligence and emotions. That strength proved more hindrance than helpful when the Metal Men attempted to save humans from a raging fire and foil a bank robbery. Unable to control their individually enhanced powers, the Metal Men inadvertently put lives into jeopardy, and the band was misunderstood by the police and hunted down. Col. David Magnus, Doc's brother, rescued the robots and took them to a safe, hidden military location where they were shut down until their creator, hopefully, emerged from his coma and could repair them. Meanwhile, giant flies from a doomed world invaded Earth for its food supply. When the government realized the US military could not defeat the giant flies, the Metal Men were reactivated to battle the invaders. Though successful, the Metal Men remained hunted by the police.

Despite how humans now saw them, the Metal Men at least remained true to themselves, albeit not for much longer: Gold, the noble leader, and malleable; Lead, a loyal follower and dimwitted (the perfect shield, though); Iron, the muscle man, and more thoughtful than given credit for; Mercury, a hothead, self-appointed leader, quite fluid as liquid metal, prone to exploding into globules; Tina, a platinum romantic, hopelessly in love with Doc; and Tin, a hard metal, meek in appearance, fraught with an inferiority complex, but always having your back, whether teammate or human.

They would remain hunted through *Metal Men* #36 (Feb.–Mar. 1969). A running theme was gigantic

Pipe Dreams

(left) Our favorite robots' happy days were distant memories on this Mike Sekowsky/Dick Giordano cover to *Metal Men* #41 (Dec. 1969–Jan. 1970), the final issue of the book's Silver Age run. (above) Notice a resemblance between the MM's two creators? Kanigher caricature by Joe Kubert, and Magnus headshot by Ross Andru and Esposito.

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had been out of the picture for several years. Upon Doc's completion of the Plutonium Man, Caspar felt a destructive weapon of such caliber should be scrapped, at which point Whittier revealed himself as an agent of Karnia. He revealed his country's plot to have Magnus back in the States to utilize the USA's world-power resources to build a weapon Karnia could use to achieve its own world-power status. Enter the Metal Men, who would battle a nuclear machine endowed with the hatred Magnus felt toward them.

This excellent story also has a running theme and nice twist at the end that, in typical Gerber fashion, gives depth to different levels of human behavior—in this case, how "evil" was perceived by others, particularly Iron in the aftermath of a hotel robbery—and Whittier's change of heart to protect the reputation of his country. The destruction of the Metal Men at the end also deeply affected Magnus, and began the process toward his recovery.

"The way I remember it," then-*Superman* writer Martin Pasko tells *BACK ISSUE*, "Walt was the regular artist of record, but the writing slot had had a revolving door, so to speak. I don't think that had been the intent. Gerry was supposed to be the regular writer, but got bogged down in a lot of editorial duties. He handed the book to Gerber, whose rep at that point was built largely on his *Howard the Duck*. Assigning Steve to it was, to me, at least, a strong indicator of the sort of tone Gerry was hoping to achieve with *Metal Men*. But Steve, too, got distracted with other commitments, or maybe his stuff was always intended to be a fill-in assignment."

Conway collaborated with Simonson for the next two issues, which featured the return of Chemo in #46 (June–July 1976) and the return of the Plutonium Man in #47 (Aug.–Sept. 1976). Both stories put some emphasis on getting Doc back into the swing of things mentally. Conway then recruited writer Pasko to co-script the Metal Men's exploits.

"Gerry recognized that I could do humor," continues Pasko. "Walt and I had already collaborated well for him on the Dr. Fate reboot for *1st Issue Special* #9; and at the point I took over *Metal Men*, I was apparently the writer in his stable who was most eager and grateful to accept Gerry's 'hand-me-downs.' I'd already performed that 'service' for him on *Man-Bat* and *Freedom Fighters*, so I guess that made me the guy who was best poised to 'catch' *Metal Men* when it rolled off Gerry's desk."

For *Metal Men* #48 (Oct.–Nov. 1976) and 49 (Dec. 1976–Jan. 1977), Pasko and Simonson created a history for the line of dark priests that ended with Mophir, who cut Dr. Bruce Gordon years before in *House of Secrets*, a wound that transformed him to Eclipso in the presence of any kind of eclipse. They also put a twist on the then-popular *Chariots of the Gods* premise, and provided a sound explanation for Stonehenge's existence!

THE PASKO/SIMONSON METHOD

"Walt and I worked together on the series more or less the same way we did the Fate job," explains Pasko. "Walt had an idea for what he wanted to do in terms of the villain, and I helped him hammer out a plot. I was a bit less 'hands-on' with the first two *MM* issues we did than I had been with Fate because, for one thing, *MM* wasn't a retcon, and Walt came to the table with more specific ideas, saying he wanted to use Eclipso and that he had this idea for doing a riff on H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos. At that time I wasn't terribly familiar with either of those things, so I decided to let him lead and I'd follow—meaning, he had a collection of set pieces in mind and I strung them together with a narrative through-line. He then broke down the plot and laid it out, and I dialogued it.

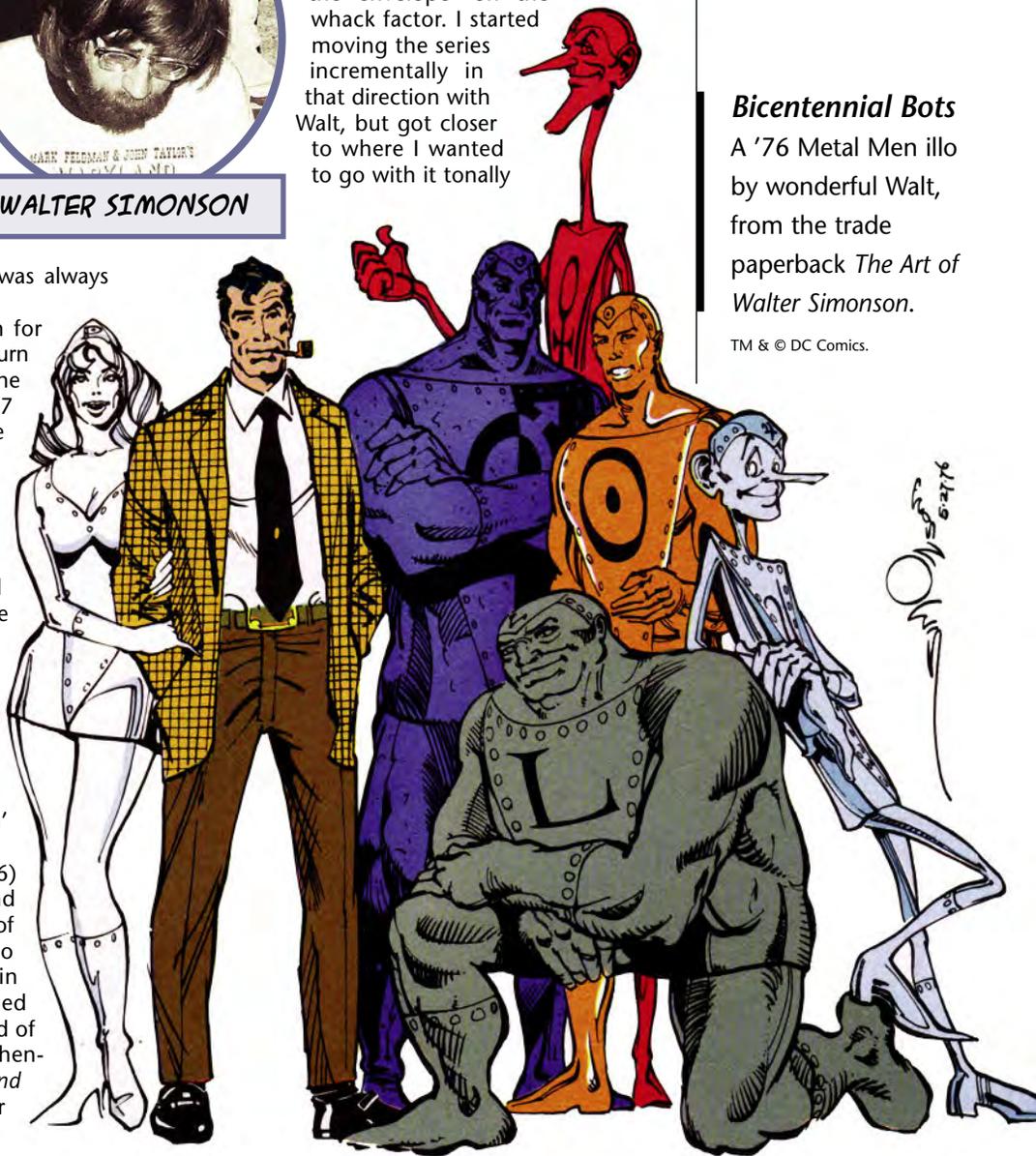
"I was jumping in midstream, and because of that I was more focused on the tone of the scripting and how quickly I could find ways to make the tone shifts I wanted to make than I was on the plotting. The series was too 'straight' or 'dramatic' for my taste, given the lunacy of the property I remembered from my childhood, and I wanted to 'push the envelope' on the whack factor. I started moving the series incrementally in that direction with Walt, but got closer to where I wanted to go with it tonally



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WALTER SIMONSON



Bicentennial Bots

A '76 Metal Men illo by wonderful Walt, from the trade paperback *The Art of Walter Simonson*.

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BEHOLD, THEIR VISION!

by Lex Suite



CREATORS FROM THE HOUSE OF IDEAS DISCUSS THE ANDROID AVENGER

One of the most endearing and enduring members of Marvel's Earth's Mightiest Heroes is the android, the Vision. Whether assembled or disassembled, the Vision has remained one of the more popular members of the team. He served as the corner-box icon for the *Avengers* title for almost eight years (1971–1979).

How did this non-founding member, this non-human, this solar-powered creation, rise to such prominence? And what is the essence of his being? To find the answers to these questions, this article will rely on information from some of the prominent individuals that have written the character over the years.

MARVEL'S VISIONARIES

Legendary comics icon, writer/editor Roy Thomas, is the creator of the Vision. Most of the information about the Vision's origin, with multiple reflections from Roy, have been given extensive views in *Alter Ego* and *Marvel Masterworks*. It is important to mention that rather than create a new character, Thomas originally wanted to bring back the Golden Age Vision to his team of Avengers. Of course, the Golden Age Vision, the alien known as Aarkus, has nothing in common with the Silver Age version that Thomas created—other than the name. They both appear to have a green uniform motif, but the similarities end there.

Aarkus was created Jack Kirby and Joe Simon in 1940 (*Marvel Mystery Comics* #13, Nov. 1940). The original Vision was an alien from another planet who could teleport via smoky conducts. He had been sent to Earth to serve humanity and fight evildoers.

Thomas' later android Vision is, of course, a cerebral, solar-powered, red-skinned entity who can control his density.

In 1968, Thomas approached his editor, Stan Lee, about adding Aarkus to the Avengers team. Thomas recalls, "I, for one, wasn't happy with not being able to use Cap, Thor, and Iron Man every issue. I suggested we bring Aarkus Vision in. Stan said no. He wanted the new Avenger to be an android, though he never said why. I guess he reasoned that I'd figure out what to do with him or it. So, left to my own devices, I split the difference and called the android the Vision and adapted the old costume, but little else, for the new character."

Astute readers and comics historians recall that DC Comics' android the Red Tornado also debuted the very same summer the Vision did. Similarly, the Tornado was a big part of DC's super-team, the Justice League of America. Writer Steve Englehart muses, "I dunno how that happened, but it's interesting."

[Editor's note: The Red Tornado's "stormy return" occurred in *Justice League of America* #64, cover-dated Aug. 1968, going on sale on June 13, 1968. Readers' first chance to "behold" the Vision was in *The Avengers* #57, cover-dated Oct. 1968, with an on-sale date of August 6, 1968. Excuse the plug, but for those wishing

Not Quite Human

We borrow from the Silver Age for our opener: detail from John Buscema's iconic cover to *The Avengers* #57 (Oct. 1968).

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ROY THOMAS

Photo by Luigi Novi.

Vision 1
 (left) Jack Kirby and Joe Simon introduced Aarkus, the Golden Age Vision, in *Marvel Mystery Comics* #13 (Nov. 1940). Roy Thomas' desire to revive this character led to the creation of the new Vision in the pages of *Avengers*. (right) Roy brought back the first Vision—along with other Golden Age Marvel heroes—in *Avengers* #97 (Mar. 1972). MMC cover by Alex Schomburg; *Avengers* cover by Gil Kane and Bill Everett.

to explore this further, Roy Thomas is interviewed at length about this topic in my 2005 book, *Justice League Companion*, from TwoMorrows.]

It is also interesting to note that despite Stan Lee's rejection of Aarkus' return, the Golden Age Vision was able to eventually join the modern Marvel Universe. Aarkus originally debuted as a mental construct of Rick Jones and the Supreme Intelligence in Roy Thomas' *Avengers* #97 (Mar. 1972). However, decades later, in 1993, Roy Thomas was able to return the actual alien crimefighter to comics in another of his creations for Marvel: the Greatest Superheroes of World War II, the Invaders. In *Invaders* #3 (July 1993), the Golden Age Vision reappears to help this team, and has remained on friendly terms with Captain America, the Sub-Mariner, and the original Human Torch ever since. This time, Thomas met no resistance to bringing back the Golden Age character. He recalls, "All I can say about the '90s version was that the editor asked me to do the series, and I was delighted. Mike Rockwitz was the editor who assigned me that four-issue *Invaders* series. I had to generally okay the plotlines with Mike, but that was about it." Today, Aarkus continues to appear in the Marvel Universe, sometimes flashing back to retcons of his World War II-era adventures or assisting his still-active Golden Age Avengers allies in today's world.

Back in 1968, what did Stan Lee initially think of his company's new Vision creation? Roy Thomas remembers, "I don't think Stan liked the name 'Vision'

much. I seem to recall his saying as much once." Lee's reservations aside, Thomas also recalls, "the Vision instantly became the most interesting and popular of the Avengers besides Cap, Iron Man, and Thor ... whom we didn't want to use because they were in other magazines." The Vision also became an increased focus with the team's storylines as the writer "used the character to pursue what it means to be human."

INSIDE THE VISION

This journey took a sharper focus when Thomas teamed with noted artist Neal Adams in *Avengers* #93 (Nov. 1971). This issue is also visually groundbreaking as an "Avengers" team logo designed by Neal Adams debuts in this issue. Its distinctive style is still used today. This is also the first issue that a stoic image of the Vision becomes a character logo for the title. What caused the Vision to become the new face of the Avengers? Adams notes, "I had nothing to do with putting the Vision on the cover in the logo area. And to make the question even more confusing to me, that is a John Buscema drawing." John Buscema was the longtime artist on *Avengers* prior to Neal Adams' brief tenure. Adams continues, "I had no idea it would be there. My suspicion is that Roy took a cue from what I was doing with the evolving story, with, in fact, an emphasis on the Vision, and made the decision to put the Vision there."

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This emphasis on the Vision began with a new romance. The Vision had met his Avengers teammate, Wanda Maximoff, a.k.a. the Scarlet Witch, months earlier in *Avengers* #76 (May 1970). Sparks soon flew between the sorceress and the solar-powered synthezoid. When asked if this pairing was always his intention, Roy Thomas adds, "Yes, although I'd never thought about going so far as marriage. It's not that I might not have. I just didn't bother to think that far ahead. I'd let things develop."

This developing situation continued as Thomas and Adams looked more closely at the Vision's origin. Neal Adams wanted to explore the idea that the Vision was a recreated version of the original Golden Age Human Torch's android body. Thomas recalls the beginning of this concept: "Yes, it was a notion Neal told me about when we were doing his first *Avengers* issue. I liked the idea, though I never saw the Vision as being as mechanical inside as Neal made him."

In the previously mentioned *Avengers* #93, Henry Pym, as Ant-Man, voyages through the body of the unconscious Vision in an attempt to revive him. During the experience, the tiny Avenger made a discovery inside the Vision's body. Thomas notes, "I simply followed Neal's lead in saying Ant-Man saw 'something' inside the Vision, in one panel ... and I left the series a few issues later before I did any more."

The idea that the Vision was actually the original Human Torch was not fully revealed until years later in *Avengers* #135 (May 1975). Ironically, a letter published in *Avengers* #115 (Sept. 1973) by a future Marvel inker and editor, the late Duffy Vohland, appeared to spoil the suspense. Vohland claimed to have read this information in a fanzine. Several of his friends have noted he was heavily involved with this genre at this time. Through whatever medium, Vohland had been privy to future developments about the Vision's origin. It is also interesting to note that Vohland would go on to be an editor on Marvel's fanzine *FOOM* (Friends of Ol' Marvel) in the not-too-distant future. Nevertheless, this letter was inadvertently printed, but ignored by the editor, Roy Thomas, and writer Steve Englehart. Today, neither Thomas nor Englehart recall the letter being printed.



NEAL ADAMS

Photo by Luigi Novi.



PART TWO: A JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE ANDROID!



Up Close and Personal
 During the epic Kree/Skrull War, Thomas—with artists Neal Adams and Tom Palmer—took Ant-Man on a fantastic voyage inside the Vision! Cover (above) and interior spread (left) from *Avengers* #93 (Nov. 1971).

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THE LITTLE ANDROID THAT COULD: A HISTORY OF

REDDY™

by Rob Kelly



FlashBack!

Androids have a tough time in comics. Often as not, they are introduced into stories to serve as a contrast to their human creators; to make a grander point about how when mortal man plays God, it can go so horribly wrong. If things go really badly, the android is destroyed, reduced to a pile of crumpled metal and burnt-out circuitry, its very existence having taught us all a Lesson About Life. And no android has had it tougher than the Red Tornado.

"THE JUSTICE SOCIETY'S PET ANDROID"

Created by legendary writer Gardner Fox for his last story in the pages of *Justice League of America*, #64 (Aug. 1968), a being calling itself "Red Tornado" shows up unannounced in the headquarters of the Justice Society of America, claiming to be a longtime member. Despite having no memory of this, the JSAers take him along on a mission to stop some faceless crooks from robbing a museum. Red Tornado's troubles start here, just a few pages into his existence: In a desperate attempt to prove himself, he tries to use his tornado powers to stop the bad guys, only to get in the way and inadvertently put his erstwhile teammates in harm's way. After taking off in shame, he finds himself drawn to a remote hideaway, the home of his creator, T. O. Morrow!

Morrow, your prototypical comic-book mad scientist, created Red Tornado upon the instructions of his super-computer, which predicted that the only way to stop the JSA from defeating him was to add a new member to bring down the team from within. Turning on his creator like a Frankenstein Monster, Red Tornado attacks Morrow, just in time for the JSA to show up and forgive him for his earlier screw-up. The battle eventually spreads to Earth-One and includes (of course) the Justice League of America. By the end of *Justice League of America* #65, Red Tornado has helped the JLA stop Morrow once and for all, and is accepted as the JSA's newest member. While he is pleased with the turn of events, he professes he wants more than that, much more: "I want to be somebody! I want a face ... a identity I can call my own!"

A few issues later, Red Tornado shows up at the JLA's Secret Sanctuary. Trying too hard to sound confident, he ends up bursting through the floor, destroying the team's newly built statue to the recently departed Martian Manhunter. The JLAers mock poor Reddy to his still-featureless face, telling him to stay behind while they respond to an alarm signal from Hawkgirl. In fact, Reddy ends up being sidelined for over two weeks, sitting on his hands and waiting for the JLA to hear him out. When they finally deign to listen, the JLA learns that Earth-Two is under attack from a cosmic baddie named Aquarius, and that his plan has been advancing all this time. "I—I tried to make you listen!" Reddy pleads.

Reddy for Teamwork

Detail from Nick Cardy's cover to *Justice League of America* #106 (July–Aug. 1973), where writer Len Wein welcomes Red Tornado into the JLA—whether they want him there or not.

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Trying to Fit In
 (left) Red Tornado punches his way into the Justice Society in *JLA* #64 (Aug. 1968). Cover by Dick Dillin/Jack Abel. (right) "John Smith" stumbles into a life outside the League in this sequence from issue #106. By Len Wein/Dillin/Dick Giordano.

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Even though Aquarius is defeated (leading to the death of Larry Lance, husband of Dinah [Black Canary] Lance, and Black Canary leaving the JSA for the JLA), it left Red Tornado with an even greater feeling of insecurity, so much so that in *Justice League of America* #82, Reddy takes off for outer space (how his tornado powers work in airless space is something left to the imagination), where he is summarily captured by some aliens. They use his body as a conduit between Earth-One and Earth-Two, controlling events on both worlds (similar to an even bigger baddie would do 20 years later, but we're getting ahead of ourselves). Reddy is later discovered by the Earth-One Green Lantern ("Great Guardians! The Red Tornado ... the Justice Society's pet android!" he thinks to himself) and eventually freed when the aliens are beaten by the two teams. As of *Justice League of America* #100 (the first part of that year's JLA/JSA team-up), he was back with the Justice Society. But just when you think everything might be okay with the Red Tornado, he decides to go on a kamikaze mission, sacrificing his life by carrying an exploding Nebula Rod into space and the heart of a giant hand set to explode (don't ask). The rod goes off, destroying Reddy and the threat, leaving both teams to mourn their brave friend and admire his selflessness. So that was the end of the Red Tornado, right? Wrong!

REDDY FOR A COMEBACK

Reddy shocks everyone by returning at the end of #105, having saved the JLA's collective bacon in secret during a mission that was the Elongated Man's first with the team. The League grills Red Tornado, and they demand

to know how he survived. Reddy claims not to know, except for being found by a blind sculptor living in the mountains, who was kind enough to finally give the android a face. Unable to pierce the dimensional divide between the two worlds, Red Tornado is stranded on Earth-One. Superman nominates Reddy for membership, and he responds with, "I will accept—I have nowhere else to go!" Way to make lemons from lemonade, Reddy!



LEN WEIN

Len Wein took over writing *Justice League of America* with the aforementioned #100. When asked if the plan all along to bring Reddy back to life and eventually into the League, he says, "Absolutely. I always thought there was a lot of untapped potential in Red Tornado, and I wanted to play with that every month and not just once a year."

Unbeknownst to Reddy and the JLA, the android's Justice League membership is all another plot of

T. O. Morrow, who again is using his creation to destroy the team. When minions of Morrow's show up, the JLA grows suspicious that both Morrow and Reddy would reappear at the same time. Disgusted, Reddy storms off, landing in New York.

It's here that the story of Red Tornado really kicks into gear. In his human guise, he shows up at an employment agency, where he meets the young, beautiful Kathy Sutton. He is unprepared for the standard questions, and has to answer them on the fly. He gives his real name as "John Smith," and professes to feeling like "the oldest man alive." When he responds to Kathy's question about previous employment with "freelance law officer," she thinks this is all a joke. But when Kathy looks into his eyes, she sees ... something.

AAA A0A0T: MISTER ATOM MISBEHAVING IN THE BRONZE AGE

by P.C. Hamerlinck



LIVE BY THE ATOM, DIE BY THE ATOM

You can't keep an atomic power-driven robot that wants to rule the world down; sooner or later, as DC Comics did, you rebuild yourself a new one.

Made by man but far from content to be a slave to man, the spark of radioactive energy that gave life to Mr. Atom in turn ended the existence of his inventor (Dr. Charles Langley) as the nuclear reactor-charged megalomaniac robot trounced onward through a trilogy of timely terror-filled tales within *Captain Marvel Adventures* #78, 81, and 90 (Fawcett Publications, 1947–1948), commencing less than two years after the game-changing Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings.

As evident through occasional “cautionary” story subject matter, Fawcett’s editorial staff were open advocates of pacifism who were ready and willing to address weighty postwar worries over the dawning of the atomic age within the entertaining four-color pages of their ordinarily upbeat Captain Marvel stories ... but contemporary real-world realities of atomic power’s calamitous capabilities was something that even the mightiest of superheroes had difficulty containing. In the trilogy’s closing moments, the atomic energy that gave birth to Mr. Atom also poetically did him in. The robotic rogue was quickly forgotten as American hope and optimism rolled its way into the Fabulous Fifties.

Mr. Atom was shaped and bent by versatile writer William Woolfolk and Captain Marvel co-creator/chief artist, C. C. Beck. Throughout the Fawcett era, Woolfolk had added his fair share to the Marvel mythos (including the launch of another fierce foe, Captain Nazi); Beck’s masterful economy-of-line, smooth-contour illustrating capability lent itself well to Mr. Atom’s sharp, sleek, metallic aesthetics. Both of these exceptionally talented individuals from the Golden Age of Comics divulged to this author in their later years that they had generally favored working on the *World’s Mightiest Mortal*’s more lighthearted, whimsical escapades rather than grave-natured sagas analogous to their iniquitous robot creation.

CHARACTERIZATION CRISIS

Flash-forward 28 years later, and our changed world played out like its own alternate-Earth: No one was building bomb shelters in their backyard anymore ... Bing Crosby was gone and disco dominated the airwaves ... and Fawcett-owned properties were being published by their former courtroom adversaries, DC Comics.

Captain Marvel’s brutal, bull-horned antagonist, King Kull, was responsible for bringing Mr. Atom back to the 20th Century in order to lend a hand in his battle against Shazam’s Squadron of Justice and heroes from two other worlds in “Crisis in Tomorrow”

Atomic Rage

The Big Red Cheese and that disreputable robot rogue are at it again in this specialty piece by artist Jay Piscopo.

TM & © DC Comics.

That Blasted Bot!

(left) *Captain Marvel Adventures* #78 (Nov. 1947), marking the first appearance of Mr. Atom; cover by C. C. Beck, who also signed this copy from P.C. Hamerlinck's collection. (right) Beck talks shop and turns out a Mr. Atom drawing for fans at the 1972 Phoenix Con held at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. Also in attendance at the convention was future *Shazam!* artist Don Newton. Photo courtesy of Alex Jay.

TM & © DC Comics

(*Justice League of America* #137, Dec. 1976)—the grand finale of a three-part Earth-S “Crisis” plot (which also marked the first momentous clash between Captain Marvel and Superman).

With the help of Brainiac facilitating a force field around Mr. Atom, the robot immediately began leveling the Earth-One City of Tomorrow while overpowering the fearless yet futile endeavors made by the Golden and Silver Age Flashes and Green Lanterns, the god Mercury, and Ibis the Invincible. Mr. Atom attempted to use the latter hero’s “Ibistick” against “the turbaned one,” but if the mechanical monster had studied his old comic books, he would have known that the mystic stick worked against anyone using it to harm its true possessor—and consequently, Mr. Atom was chucked far away to a distant star.

Mr. Atom had changed considerably since his Golden Age upbringing. Artist Dick Dillin had built readers a cold, mostly mute, atomic killing machine whose persona and depiction bore little resemblance to Woolfolk and Beck’s distinctive creation. In what should have been a ten-foot-tall robot, Dillin erroneously illustrated the robot’s height to colossal proportions—an inaccuracy which has stuck as comics creators continue to follow the Dillin blueprint to this very day. Of course, the artist was just abiding by the script, and *JLA* editor Julie Schwartz, having absolutely no love for Fawcett lore, simply let such inconsistencies fly to the curb.

It is surprising, however, that E. Nelson Bridwell—the architect of the Earth-S storyline—was the person responsible in plotting Mr. Atom’s abrupt and ultimately anticlimactic return. Bridwell was DC’s office scholar of ... well, most everything, a virtual “human encyclopedia of comics history” (as artist Kurt Schaffenberger once described the man to me) ... the company’s go-to Shazam-specialist and one of the writers for the strip.

ENB was practically obsessive over continuity and a stickler for the most minuscule details involving comic-book characters and their times past. Yet there, in the pages of *JLA*, was the unheralded reemergence of the once-authoritative, inimitable Mr. Atom—now a reticent and aloof gargantuan mindlessly stomping around the city like Godzilla.

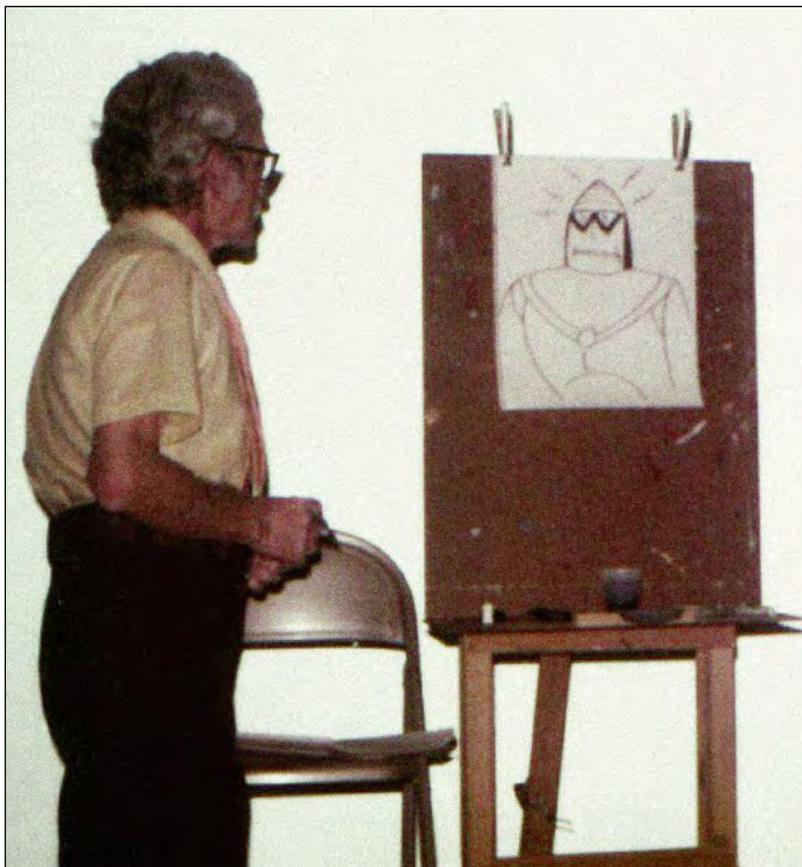
The entire Earth-S trilogy was dialogued by Martin Pasko, but the writer (best known for his work on Superman, Dr. Fate, Blackhawk, Plastic Man, and *Batman: The Animated Series*) imparted no love lost while ruminating over the tale after I dropped him a line in June 2013:

“That story was one of my least favorite experiences in comics, and I really only did it as a kind of favor to Julie [Schwartz] ... and ended up feeling a little roughed-up in return.”

Pasko recalls that Bridwell had been pining for some time to use the Fawcett characters in a *JLA* crossover, and the window of opportunity was finally opening:

“Nelson knew that Julie had kind of boxed himself into a corner by letting Len Wein open up the annual *JLA/JSA* crossover to character groups and teams that had been neglected by DC (such as the Seven Soldiers of Victory and characters that had been published by defunct companies whose libraries DC had acquired), by positing that they inhabited other, hitherto unknown parallel worlds. So Nelson had Julie over a barrel: After the Quality heroes had been used [*JLA* #107 and 108], Julie was hard-put to deny Nelson his request to write the Fawcett heroes into a crossover, as he’d had been pestering Julie to do for years, ever since he’d written for *Shazam!*”

“Nelson was the resident Fawcett expert, but Julie didn’t like Nelson’s approach to dialogue or pacing, so he reluctantly gave in to Nelson on the condition that he could only plot the story, but another writer would



JOCASTA™

THE BRIDE OF ULTRON

by Jarrod Buttery



Among the Avengers' greatest foes, Ultron has always held a prominent position. He's powerful, he's evil, and he's family. He also has no qualms about extending that family.

As recounted in *BACK ISSUE* #38 (Feb. 2010), Ultron-5 made his first appearance in *Avengers* #54 (July 1968). In a flashback in *Avengers* #58 (Nov. 1968), we—and Hank Pym—learn that Pym himself created Ultron. The robot immediately turned upon its "father," trying to kill Pym, who screams, "It's like a living, mechanized Oedipus Complex!" In Greek Mythology, Oedipus killed Laius and married Jocasta—unaware that they were his natural parents. Crudely put, an Oedipus Complex can be described as an urge to "kill your father and marry your mother."

THE BRIDE OF ULTRON

Unlike today, Ultron appeared rarely in the '60s and '70s. After a rollercoaster three-parter in *Avengers* #66–68 (July–Sept. 1969), where he first appropriated his adamantium body, Ultron disappeared until *Fantastic Four* #150 (Sept. 1974). His reappearance in *Avengers* #161 (July 1977) may be one of the most shocking Marvel comics of the late '70s.

Therein, Ultron seemingly kills half the team and kidnaps the Wasp. He brainwashes Hank Pym into helping him transfer Janet Pym's life-energy into a cybernetic woman, insisting it's to save Jan's life. In reality, the process will animate Ultron's "bride" by stealing the life-force of the Wasp—Hank's wife, Ultron's "mother." Ultron then relishes the thought of killing Hank—his father. However, sympathetic to Jan's plight, the cybernetic woman summons the Avengers.

It's an extraordinarily entertaining story, written by Jim Shooter at the peak of his game, and gorgeously illustrated by George Pérez. Ultron's creation doesn't even receive a name in this debut appearance, but she earns our sympathies due to her selfless sacrifice: By saving Jan she relinquishes her own chance at life. For now.

JOCASTA

The cover of *Avengers* #170 (Apr. 1978) proclaims: "Because You Demanded It! The Return of the Bride of Ultron!" Ultron's creation is transported to Avengers Mansion for safekeeping and study. However, she is activated by remote control; her first words: "He has awakened me! He calls!" There's little doubt to whom she refers, but when the Wasp hears her speak ... "Hank! That's m-my voice!" Indeed, the voice is cold and metallic, but it belongs to Jan.

It is in this issue that we discover the robot's capabilities. She's strong and fast, and can generate a force-field and impressive energy blasts from her eyes. It's likely that the Avengers would have subdued her, but Iron Man insists that she be allowed to escape:

A House Divided

Earth's Mightiest Heroes disagree over their newest member on the cover of *Avengers* #170 (Apr. 1978). Cover art by George Pérez and Terry Austin.

TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.



DAVID MICHELINIE

"We're going to give her a head start ... and she's going to lead us to ... Ultron!"

A secondary robot (disguised as a nun—Sister Eucalypta) transports Ultron's bride to his new hideout. After she recharges, Ultron beseeches her, "It is time, my love! Awaken! Arise, my Jocasta!" And so she is named, in *Avengers* #171 (May 1978), appropriately reinforcing Ultron's Oedipal Complex. Unfortunately for Ultron, her first words to him are, "I love you Ultron! I exist only to love you, to serve you, for so I was created ... and thus I must destroy you!" Jocasta continues: "I love you ... and yet I know what you are! I must end your evil despite my desires!" Ultron realizes that his bride is "infected" with the residual imprint of Jan's persona. Jocasta was created to love him, but the life force used to animate her finds him an anathema. Ultron suffers perhaps his most comprehensive defeat and Jocasta remains with the Avengers.

KORVAC

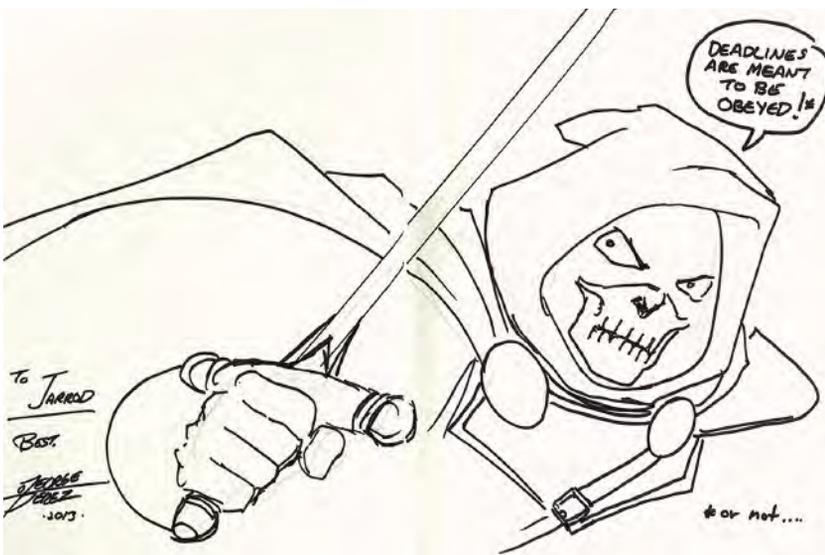
Jocasta's two-part return, in *Avengers* #170–171, fell in the middle of Jim Shooter's "Korvac Saga." Although Shooter plotted the ten-part story, he only scripted six issues. David Michelinie wrote *Avengers* #173 (July 1978) and #175–176 (Sept.–Oct. 1978).

[Bill Mantlo wrote issue #174.] Michelinie remembers his Marvel debut: "The day I tendered my resignation from DC Comics I called Jim and asked if I could get any work from Marvel. His reply, and I believe I'm quoting this exactly, was, 'Would today be too soon?' Talk about flattering! I think I actually had to wait a little while for my contract with DC to legally expire, but very soon after I talked with Jim he sent me 17 pages of penciled artwork for *Avengers* #173 and asked me to dialogue them."

BACK ISSUE asked Michelinie about his contribution to the Korvac Saga: "There were no written plots for the issues I scripted. Jim was under tremendous deadline pressure trying to run Marvel and write stories at the same time, and he'd usually tell the artist the plot over the phone while the artist took notes. So that's pretty much how I got the plots as well. Though I believe on at least some issues I probably sat in Jim's office while he told me the plots. I'd never read *Avengers* before (I was a Spidey/Conan/Namor man), so it was a great introduction to the rest of the Marvel Universe. Jim had a solid take on all of the characters—how they talk, how they fight, even how they sit around a conference table—and I learned a hell of a lot from those plot discussions. I had no plot input as such, and didn't really need scripting flexibility since the characters were so clearly defined for me."

Despite a cast of dozens (including the Guardians of the Galaxy), Jocasta was not forgotten. In a desperate search for some trace of their enemy, Iron Man enlists the heightened senses of Moondragon, Captain Marvel, Ms. Marvel, and Starhawk, alongside his and Yellowjacket's scientific resources. Jocasta volunteers: "I wonder if I might be of some help? My cybernetic senses are quite advanced..." Indeed, Jocasta is able to sense "minute traces of ionic residue in the air," assisting in locating Korvac.

Sadly, Jocasta fared no better against their enemy than the rest of the heroes. As Korvac slaughters both the Avengers and the Guardians of the Galaxy in issue



Quick Draw

Quickie convention sketches of Jocasta and Taskmaster done by George Pérez in 2013 for this article's author. Writer David Michelinie brought Taskmaster into the pages of *Avengers* with issue #194.

TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

#177 (Nov. 1978), Jocasta selflessly joins the attack. With regret, Korvac destroys her, saying, "You, Jocasta, I pity, for you were created in the name of love. You have no stake in this conflict. You are merely loyal to those you think are friends. I am sorry it must be thus!" Through Shooter's script, it was a poignant affirmation from her creator.

Upon his defeat, and with his dying breath, Korvac restores all those he killed or destroyed—including Jocasta. Michelinie took over as regular *Avengers* scripter with issue #181 (Mar. 1979). "After the Korvac Saga, Jim faced the reality that he couldn't comfortably fit a regular series into his schedule while running a publishing company," Michelinie explains. "He asked me to take over the series and I said, 'Sure!' After all my discussions with Jim about the characters, I knew them fairly well by then, so the transition went pretty smoothly. I had no plots I was dying to write when I took over since I'd never thought about writing *Avengers* before."

ON THE MATTER OF HEROES

Avengers #181 (inset) is the infamous issue where the government—in the form of Henry Peter Gyrich—dictates the Avengers' membership, but it's also the beginning of the definitive origin for the Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver. As Wanda and Pietro's lifeforces are stolen by their Gypsy foster-father, it is Jocasta who singlehandedly traces the energy signature and finds the kidnapped Avengers, in issue #182 (Apr. 1979).

Wanda and Pietro leave for Europe in an attempt to uncover their ancestry. Wanda's husband, the Vision, remains at Avengers Mansion, allowing for some character development in *Avengers* #185 (July 1979). Jocasta finds it difficult to participate in human small talk and seeks out someone whom she believes to be a kindred spirit—another artificial being. However, while Jocasta is attempting to integrate into human society, the Vision appears to be withdrawing.

When things go wrong in the Balkans, the Avengers rush to assist Wanda and Pietro—but Jocasta is not among them. She appears briefly at the end of issue #189 (Nov. 1979), wearing a hat and trench coat, returning to Avengers Mansion. She ponders, "The Avengers. Am I capable of facing them again? I cannot bring myself to communicate with them..." the implication being that she had left the mansion to go soul-searching after her failed attempt to reach out to the Vision.

Again, Jocasta does not appear for several issues, until she features on the cover of *Avengers* #194 (Apr. 1980). Therein, she makes another attempt to bond with the Vision: "The other Avengers seem to have forgotten that I even exist. And maybe it's just the Janet Pym personality that Ultron programmed into me, but I can't help feeling ... lonely." Jocasta seems to be developing even more human traits while, simultaneously, the Vision seems to be becoming more robotic. "I think that pretty much nails it," confirms Michelinie. "Issue #194 was probably my favorite issue since it was almost all character stuff. The Jocasta/Vision scene was simply a result of my looking at the



characters and figuring out what might be going through their minds at this stage of their lives."

Issue #194 was also the first part of the Taskmaster trilogy. As originally envisaged, the Taskmaster ran training schools for the endless lackeys required by master villains. "I liked the character a lot, and George Pérez came up with a terrific visual design," comments Michelinie. "I thought Taskmaster, like Justin Hammer, filled a needed gap in the workings of the Marvel Universe, and I wish I'd had more time to develop him."

With his photographic reflexes, Taskmaster proved a formidable foe, able to perfectly mimic any non-powered ability simply by observing it. Being a master of all fighting styles, Taskmaster could instantly anticipate an opponent's attack and develop a counter-move—until he met someone of which he had no knowledge. Taskmaster's weapons have no effect on Jocasta's metallic body and—having never seen her before—he has no idea how she fights or how to counter her attacks. "I wanted to show that Taskmaster's weakness

Machine Men

A rare *Avengers* cover appearance for Jocasta in an issue where she further bonds with the Vision, #194 (Apr. 1980). Cover by Pérez and Joe Rubinstein.

TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

FlashBack!

It's not easy being brought back to life. You have to get your memory back up to speed, people keep asking you where you've been, and then there's the whole change thing ... you spend a couple years lying on the bottom of the ocean, and suddenly there's a bunch of strangers living in your house.

Paul Kupperberg, however, was not intimidated. He had been given the assignment to do a new version of the Doom Patrol for DC's newly revived title, *Showcase*, and the character of Cliff Steele—Robotman—was essential to that story. In fact, the entire history of the team was a key part of the equation. “*The Doom Patrol* was one of the books during the 1960s that I loved and collected,” says Kupperberg. “I don’t think I discovered the group until around the time it was canceled, around 1968 or so, but I collected the back issues and I loved the series. Looking back now, I think it was the closest thing DC had to a Marvel book. I was always a diehard DC fan and remain so to this day, but I was getting a little older and I was looking for a little more sophistication than the DC characters were giving me at that time. You could find that in *The Doom Patrol*. I loved Arnold Drake’s writing, and Bruno Premiani’s art was so different than anything else being done out there.”



PAUL KUPPERBERG

That 1960s series was not the first time that a character named Robotman premiered in a comic book, of course. More than 20 years before the debut of *The Doom Patrol*, a Robotman appeared in *Star Spangled Comics* #7 (Apr. 1942). Created by Jerry Siegel, the character went on to appear in various issues of *Star Spangled* and *Detective Comics* before being shelved by DC during the 1950s. Some 30 years later, writer Roy Thomas brought the character into the book *All-Star Squadron*, going as far as retelling the character’s origin in issue #63. In a 1998 interview conducted by this author, Doom Patrol creator Arnold Drake said that the 1940s Robotman and his Cliff Steele were two separate characters. “I wasn’t familiar with that earlier Robotman until [DC editor] Julie Schwartz brought it to my attention,” Drake stated, “and that was after the Doom Patrol had begun publication.”

But now it was 1977, and DC editor Paul Levitz had tapped Kupperberg to bring back the Doom Patrol because he knew of Kupperberg’s history with the characters. “He knew what a fan I was, because Paul and I had known each other since middle school,” says Kupperberg. The *Showcase* story arc encompassed three issues, #94, 95, and 96 (Sept. 1977, Nov. 1977, and Jan.

Holy (or Holey?) Robot!

Tough day on the job for Cliff Steele on Bob Brown’s cover for *Doom Patrol* #94 (Mar. 1965). In the foreground is Robotman in Bronze and Silver (Age forms, that is), from Jim Aparo’s *Showcase* #94 cover.

TM & © DC Comics.

BRONZE STEELE

It's been a long, strange trip for the Doom Patrol's ROBOTMAN

by Douglas R. Kelly



Golden Age Robotman

DC's first character to use the name "Robotman," as seen on this Jimmy Thompson-drawn splash to the hero's adventure in *Star Spangled Comics* #40 (Jan. 1945).

TM & © DC Comics.

1978, respectively). Kupperberg built the new team around Robotman, which meant coming up with a credible explanation for how Steele had survived the explosion that killed the original Doom Patrol back in 1968.

Robotman, not surprisingly, is made of metal. This includes his head, which houses his human brain. This was due to lifesaving "surgery" performed on Steele by Niles Caulder (also known as the Chief), founder of the Doom Patrol, following Steele's devastating racing accident. The crash had left only Steele's brain undamaged, so the Chief transplanted that brain into a metal body, thus creating a being possessing superhuman strength, along with abilities such as scaling metallic surfaces due to magnetic plates in his new body. Known now as Robotman (originally, Automaton), Steele and his teammates—Rita Farr, known as Elasti-Girl, and Larry Trainor, known as Negative Man—banded together as the Doom Patrol, a team seen by the rest of the world as a group of outcasts.

Following numerous missions as a part of the team, Robotman was with his teammates on the island that was blown up by Captain Zahl in the final issue of the original series (*The Doom Patrol* #121, Sept.–Oct.1968). Assumed to be dead along with the rest of the Doom Patrol, Cliff Steele wasn't heard from again until *Showcase* #94 hit the stands in 1977.

HITTING THE BEACH

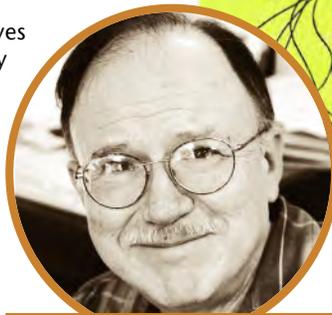
That issue's story is entitled "The Doom Patrol Lives Forever!," and in it we learn that Robotman's body was heavily damaged, but not completely destroyed, when Captain Zahl murdered the other team members. Robotman—or rather, what was left of him—washed up on a beach at the feet of Dr. Will Magnus, the creator of the Metal Men. We later learn that Magnus rebuilt Robotman, giving him a new metal body. It's in this new guise that Steele travels to Midway City, back to the old Doom Patrol headquarters, to regroup and consider what he wants to do next.

Anyone familiar with the 1960s version of Robotman would likely recognize this new Magnus-designed body, but it was very much updated for the 1970s. That was due, in large part, to the talents of artist Joe Staton. Like Kupperberg, Staton was a great fan of the original *Showcase*: "Oh, yeah, I go all the way back with *Showcase*. I bought Fireman Farrell [in *Showcase* #1] off the stands, so I had followed it since the beginning. I was totally thrilled to be working on the new version."

Although the covers of the three Doom Patrol *Showcase* issues were drawn by Jim Aparo, it was Staton's interior art on the series that came to define Robotman's new look. "The original Doom Patrol was in the 1960s," offers Staton. "The imagery still had a 1950s look about it, which is what you would expect a robot to look like from those days. By the 1970s, there was more flexibility in how you would think of robots."

Staton's work up to that point included a stint drawing another DC team, which had an impact on the way he approached the character of Robotman. "The only real direction I remember is that Paul Levitz told me that I had done the Metal Men recently, and robots are robots, so I should be able to draw [Robotman]."

It's also not hard to see the new Robotman's resemblance to another metal fellow. As Staton explains it, "If you [notice with the way] I drew Robotman, it was a straight ripoff of John Byrne's character, Rog-2000. It was pretty much of an in-joke—John and I would stick things into different titles at different times—and this was basically a takeoff on



JOE STATON

what John was doing. I probably should have given it more serious consideration, but that's what I did."

Robotman's new body was more streamlined and less blocky-looking than the one he sported in the 1960s series. "I wanted to make him look really flexible," says Staton, "and kind of loose.

In the original series, they kind of emphasized the mechanical nature of the machinery. I was trying to make him look metallic, but more fluid."

After bringing the reader up to speed on Steele's new lease on life, *Showcase* #94 shows him indulging in a bit of a pity party in the team's old headquarters. He thinks to himself, "It's not as if I got anybody waiting for me ... or anyplace to go! Face it, Smiley ... there just ain't nothing left for you! The Chief ... Larry ... Rita ... all gone! Everybody in the world who ever meant anything to me ... murdered!" This kind of negative thinking would be a part of Robotman's mental and emotional makeup going forward, but Kupperberg often tempered it by showing Steele's pragmatic "I have to face reality no matter what it brings" side, which enabled the character to be a functional and productive member of a team.

It is, in fact, this practical side to his personality that drives Steele to decide to seek out those who killed his teammates, a task that is interrupted when he unexpectedly runs straight into the new Doom Patrol. The three new members are Arani Caulder, known as Celsius; Joshua Clay, known as Tempest; and Valentina Vostok, known as Negative Woman. They have taken up residence in the old headquarters, believing Robotman to be dead along with the rest of the original team. Following misunderstandings and arguments all around, the new members convince Steele to help them take on General Immortus, who is after an immortality serum developed by the Chief before he died.

Expressive Automaton

(right) Artist Joe Staton gave fluidity to Robotman's face, which allowed the character to show a degree of expression. Panel from *Showcase* #96. (bottom) In that same issue, Arani saves Robotman's bacon by creating an ice chute that he uses to rejoin the fight with the Cossack.

TM & © DC Comics.



Immortus attacks the team, subdues them, and takes them to his moon base. *Showcase* #95 opens with Immortus torturing Arani to get her to tell him where he can get his hands on Caulder's serum. His probing of Arani's mind reveals that she was the wife of Niles Caulder, and that she was the first recipient of the serum. The other three members of the Doom Patrol are forced to watch, but Tempest finally breaks free and they go after Immortus. It turns out to be too late, however, as Immortus has duplicated the formula for the serum, and the Doom Patrol sees him drink it. But he soon begins to age again, and Arani tells her teammates that Immortus is unaware that the serum must be adjusted to the individual's body chemistry, otherwise it has no effect.

The Doom Patrol escapes and Immortus appears to be killed in the explosions that result from the battle.

UNDERLYING BITTERNESS

Throughout these first two issues, Cliff Steele throws around his share of one-liners. After Arani uses her powers to plug the hole in the side of Immortus' building on the moon base in issue #95, thereby sealing it from the vacuum of space, Robotman tells her, "Baby, you're great! I wish I had lips so I could kiss you!"

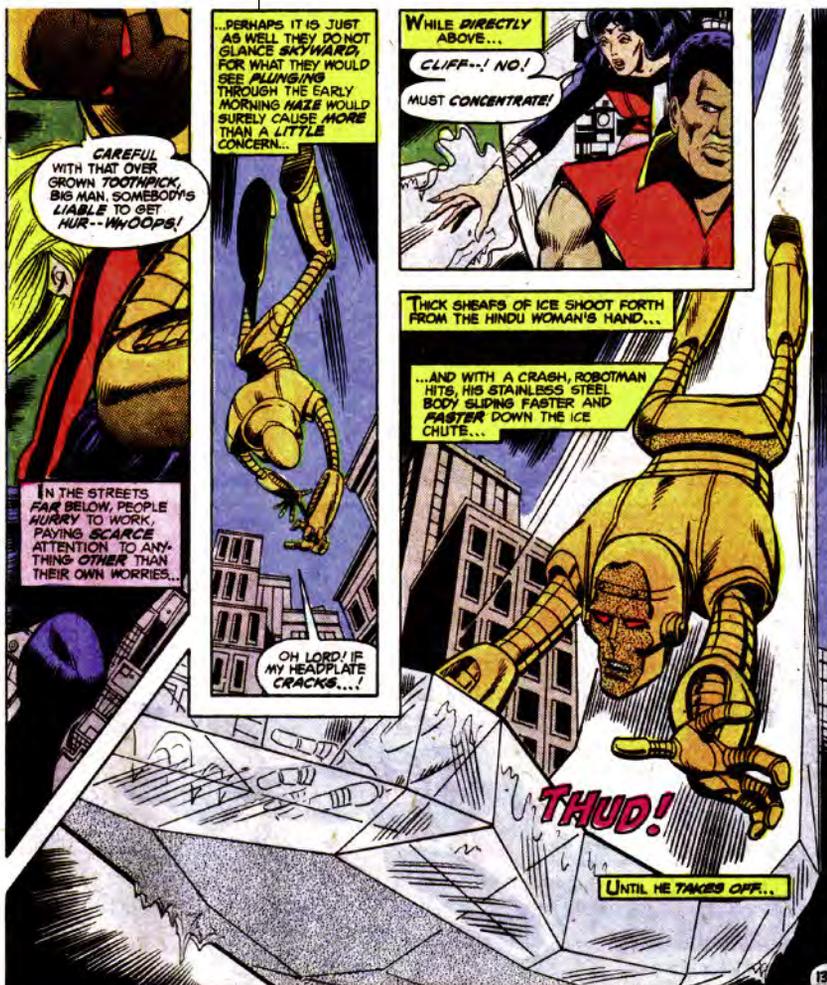
This kind of humor masks Steele's underlying bitterness about his physical condition. "I knew a guy who had no legs who used to threaten to kick me in the ass," says Kupperberg. "It's 'whistling past the graveyard,' and Cliff is all about that. My goal with him was to just try to keep him grounded as a human. Because it wouldn't be easy for a guy like him, who can't smell a rose, or feel a pretty girl's face ... no matter how sophisticated the robotics are. He was once human, and he knows what that feels like. And this can't feel like that. So he will always be this guy who is trapped and is trying to make the best of it. He's not a quitter—you don't jump off a bridge because life doesn't work the way you want it to. You do the best you can with what you've got. And what he's got is not that good, but he's going to keep going."

This approach aligns with the way Arnold Drake wrote the character in the original series. In the 1998 interview mentioned earlier, Drake was asked if he consciously wrote Cliff Steele as a man who was unable to feel anything due to being imprisoned inside a metal shell. "I think so," said Drake. "You'll find one or two speeches in the original series in which Robotman said to the others, in effect, 'You're lucky compared to me, because you can put your arms around someone and hug them,' that kind of thing."

The *Showcase* run concluded with issue #96, in which a US intelligence agent attempts to take Negative Woman into custody as a Russian defector. The team is forced to fight, and defeat, a Russian baddie by the name of the Cossack, who's bent on killing Negative Woman as payback for her defecting from the Soviet Union. After Valentina explains to her teammates why she left the Soviet Union, the four of them walk off arm-in-arm with Robotman, saying, "Let's go, team!" This willingness on his part to at least give these new members a chance is in contrast to Cliff's initial reluctance to work with them or even to believe anything they said.

Joe Staton's art shines in the battle scenes in these three issues. In issue #96, he serves up an outstanding sequence in which Robotman, falling from the sky, is saved by Celsius via her instant creation of an ice ramp. This winds up launching Robotman right back up at the Cossack, and the battle is on once again.

But Robotman presented another challenge to Staton. During the battle with the Cossack, Steele tells





SHOGUN WARRIORS

THE SKY-HIGH RISE AND ABRUPT FALL OF THREE GIANT ROBOTS IN COMICS

"Today, a warrior spawned in the dim past, created by science of the far future, shall fight his first battle, finding triumph in failure. Today is the day marked for the first of the mighty Shogun Warriors, he who is called ... Raydeen!"

The hero, standing several stories tall, is posed in defiance against a terrible beast of a similar, towering stature. Frightened city dwellers bolt from the conflict, with the monster's spiked appendage digging deep into the earth. The scene is set in Tokyo, Japan, a familiar territory for a battle of titans. In one page, readers were given everything they needed to know to get hooked on the so-called "Shogun Warriors." Giant robots were here to protect us from the forces of evil.

But it wasn't the mechanized protagonist itself that convinced scribe Doug Moench to tackle the *Shogun Warriors* comic book and write those opening words to the 20-issue series. It was a much smaller incarnation of Raydeen—as far as toys go, however, it was a monster.

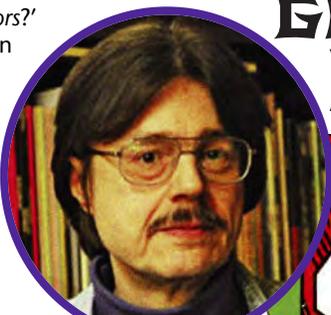
"I was familiar with Japanese robots," Moench says, relating his time on the book to *BACK ISSUE*. "I wasn't aware of [the Shogun Warriors'] names at time. I think actually Stan [Lee] asked me. He said, 'Hey, how would you like to do *Shogun Warriors*?' I was taken aback a little bit. A guy had come from Japan with a bunch of toys—I guess they were trying to seal the deal with Marvel. I thought, 'Wow, I could be real star with my kid.' One of them was a three-foot-tall Raydeen, a really tall thing, and I got to take them home! I was right; my kid was thrilled. All of his friends couldn't believe it."

Moench is partly known for his adult-themed material, from his famed *Batman* runs to *Moon Knight*, *Conan the Barbarian*, and several horror books for Marvel. The writer dreamed up some of the darker figures seen in mainstream books, with the likes of Bane, Deathlok, Black Mask, and Moon Knight among his co-creations. With a project like *Shogun Warriors*, Moench welcomed a change:

"I think they even said, 'Look, I know you're not known for this kinda stuff, but maybe that's what we need—a more adult take.' I said, 'I want to do the opposite. A real free-wheeling, fun thing specifically aimed at much younger readers, but I'll try to do it in a way older readers will enjoy it. This will help me keep up the workflow. As long as there's variety, it won't feel like there's just more work.' It was like a breath of fresh air to me."

It was 1979, and Mattel's *Shogun Warriors* toys, with their spring-loaded launchers and bright-colored armor, were a hit with the Saturday morning cartoon demographic. The toys were imported from popular anime programs in Japan, and the figures were available in varying sizes and detail, from about three inches to two feet in height. Though there were over ten *Shogun Warriors* featured in the US toy line, Moench was only given the keys to three for his series: Raydeen, Combatra, and Dangard Ace. The toys and cartoon series featuring the robots may have had their own narratives, but the scribe built an entirely new backdrop behind the robots and their purpose on Earth. "I remember I was told, 'Don't worry. Don't worry about it. It's okay if it's different,'" says Moench.

Even maintaining the same spelling of the robots' names between the toys and the comics didn't seem to be a top priority. Fans will



DOUG MOENCH

by Andy Smith



Before Transformers...

...Marvel Comics published *Shogun Warriors*. Cover to issue #1 (Feb. 1979) by Herb Trimpe and Al Milgrom.

Shogun Warriors TM & © 2014 Toynami Inc.

"Menace of the Mech Monster"

Jack Abel inks Trimpe on this original cover for issue #4 (May 1979). Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions.

Shogun Warriors TM & © 2014 Toynami Inc.

find multiple versions of the word "Combatra," sometimes as "Combattr," and "Raydeen," at times as "Raideen," adorning the boxes of some of the figures. "The toys' packaging had the Japanese alphabet, so they'd say, 'Oh, that's so and so.' I had no idea," Moench says, laughing.

WORKING OUT THE MECHANICS

The solicitations for the series were decidedly robot-centric, despite the fact that that human characters would become the focal point of the series. An advertisement told readers that "there should come a day when titans walk the Earth! Titans dedicated to protecting our world from the dark forces of evil! There shall come ... the SHOGUN WARRIORS," with Raydeen's Breaker Blade shown prominently as the trio of giant robots strike a pose above a nighttime cityscape.

With the first issue, Moench introduced three, never-before-seen human protagonists to control the colossal machines—and their origins spanned the globe. Genji Odashu, 22, was a Japanese pilot; Illongo Savage, 24, was an African marine biologist; and Richard Carson, 22, was an American stunt driver. The three were summoned by the Followers of Light, a group continuing to protect the Earth after it was first claimed for evil during the age of dinosaurs. The villainous ancestors of Maur-Kon, as well as the villain himself, were known as the Followers of the Dark. They battled the Followers of Light in the Chaos Wars, before being placed in suspended animation below a volcano. Dr. Tambura, now leader of the Followers of Light, relates the three 20-somethings' destinies as Earth's new protectors in the Shogun Sanctuary after the volcano erupts, releasing Maur-Kon and his evildoers.



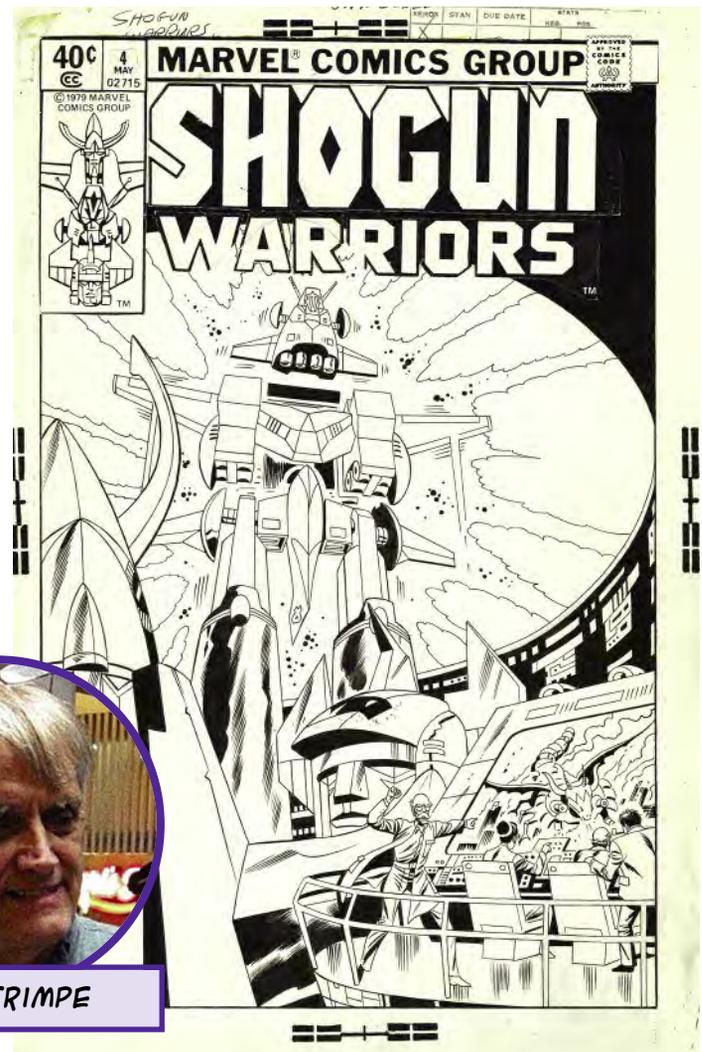
HERB TRIMPE

With a nonlinear approach for *Shogun Warriors* #1 (Feb. 1979), classically dubbed a "collector's item" on its cover, Moench depicted our *Homo sapiens* heroes transported out of their ordinary lives, learning to control the towering Raydeen, battling the beast Rok-Korr (appropriately pronounced "Rock-Core"), and eventually, meeting two more robots provided by the Followers of Light so that each pilot had his or her own Warrior. Moench had free reign over the story of the Shogun Warriors. But that wasn't the only reason the series was a joy for him: "Plus, I got to work with Herb."

Herb Trimpe tackled penciling duties for the series, and Moench was thrilled to work once again with the legendary Marvel artist on a new project. Both fondly recall their working relationship, which included yet another popular series featuring giant monsters: *Godzilla* [see *BACK ISSUE* #18—*ed.*]. Mattel also had the license to produce toy versions of *Godzilla* at the time, and advertisements for toys drawn by Trimpe sometimes depicted the monster alongside Raydeen.

"I always enjoyed working with Herb Trimpe," says Moench. "I love his storytelling. You know, it's a different experience with every artist. Some of them, [they're] hard to write for, because the art isn't exactly what you thought of or it isn't a match for your writing style. With Herb, it already flows from image to image. So you don't have to put in exposition or dialogue or a caption so people can make sense with what they're trying to read, saying, 'Hey, I know the art doesn't show this, but...' I never had to worry about that with Trimpe."

Trimpe recalls a close working relationship with Moench, as well. "Doug and I got along great," he says. "Doug was fantastic. We had a whole lot of fun on it." Both recall Trimpe flying his biplane from his home in New York to Moench's home state of Pennsylvania for a visit. Trimpe even offered the writer a ride in the sky for himself. Trimpe is a known airplane enthusiast, and is particularly noted for his work with aircrafts in the comic-book form. Moench reportedly declined,



SHOGUN WARRIORS: ASSEMBLE!

RAYDEEN (top)

Pilot: Richard Carson, 22

Notable weapons:

Screamer-Hawks, Breaker Blade

Transformation: Firehawk

COMBATRA (center)

Pilot: Genji Odashu, 22

Notable weapons:

Laser cannon in chest

Transformation: Separation and Attack Mode—Delta-V One (head), Skyskater Two (chest and thorax), Earthmover Three (abdomen and lower torso), Turbostreaker Four (legs and pelvis), and Groundrover Five (feet)

DANGARD ACE (bottom)

Pilot: Illongo Savage, 24

Notable weapons:

Photon-Spheres, Rocket-Fist

Transformation: Dreadnought-Titan



All three could work together to use the Power Triangle Fist function, which would emit a powerful energy blast at a given target.

STONE AND STEEL: THE STORY OF CYBORG™



The concept of blending man and machine is nothing new to comic books, dating as far back as the original *Robotman* in 1942. But perhaps nowhere was it done more successfully than Victor Stone, a.k.a. Cyborg.

Yes, he is part machine, but throughout his evolution—or upgrades, if you prefer—the key element that has made Cyborg a mainstay of the DC Universe is his humanity. For without that humanity, he would be merely another piece of hardware, little different from the Batmobile.

Cyborg was introduced in a special insert published in *DC Comics Presents* #26 (Oct. 1980). This preview served as an introduction to the New Teen Titans, who debuted their own title a month later in *The New Teen Titans* #1 (Nov. 1980).

Though moderately successful in the past, this new version of the Teen Titans took the comic-book community by storm, soon becoming DC Comics' bestselling title. This is largely due to one of the most famous collaborations of that era, writer Marv Wolfman and artist George Pérez.

FORGING A HERO

To tell the genesis of Cyborg, it helps to know that of the New Teen Titans as well. At a 2006 convention panel, Wolfman and Pérez related how they came to collaborate on the book.

According to Wolfman, in the late 1970s, a number of Marvel staff members were unhappy and jumped ship to DC. Having been saddled with such titles as *Marvel Two-in-One*, featuring the Thing, and *Marvel Team-Up*, starring Spider-Man, Marv was eager to leave such team-up assignments behind.

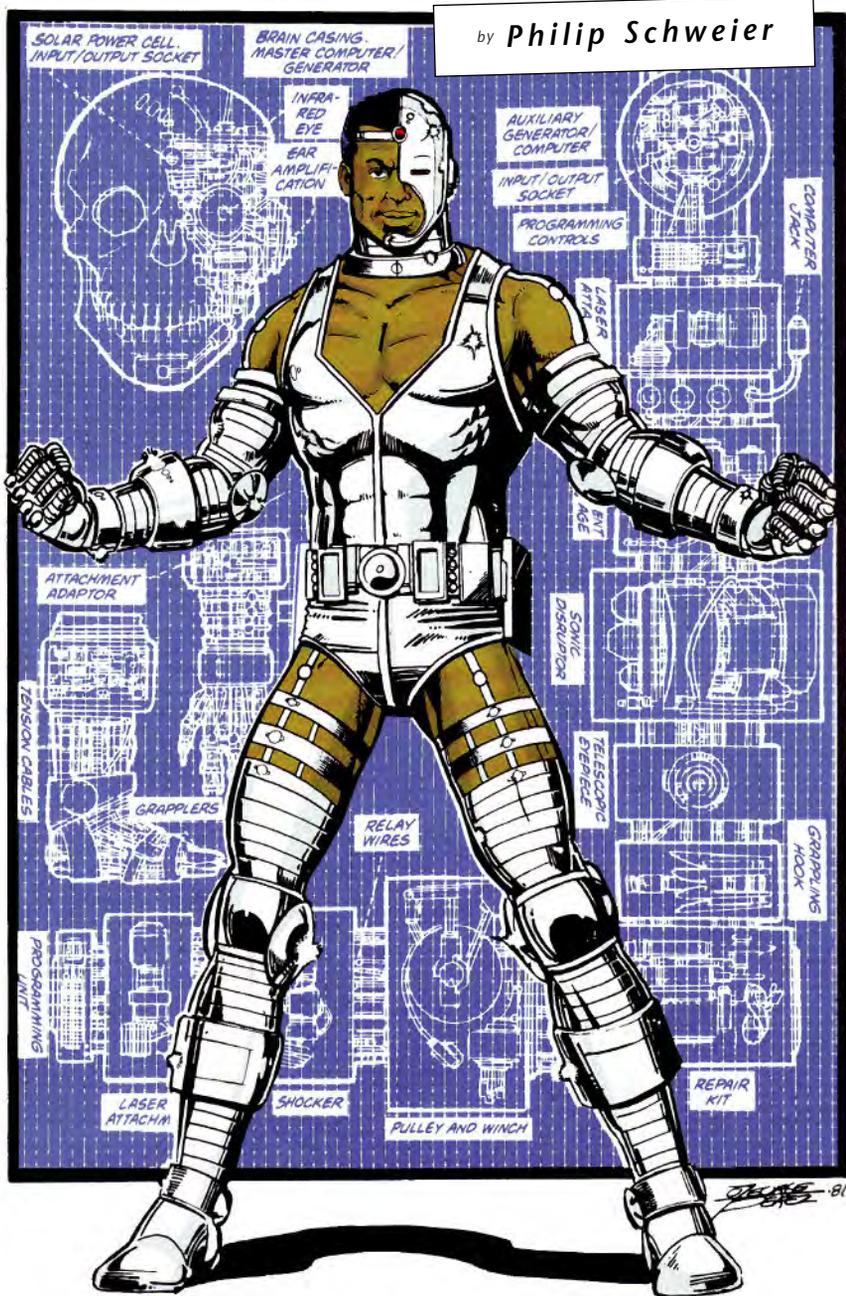
"When I left Marvel and got to DC, I had only one request, and that was no team-up books. And obviously, the word 'no' wasn't translatable in whatever language corporate was using, because I was put on [the team-up titles] *DC Comics Presents* and *Brave and the Bold*."

As a part of his effort to get off those titles, Wolfman, along with editor Len Wein, made the pitch for a new *Teen Titans* series to publisher Jenette Kahn. Though the most recent version of the Teen Titans (*Teen Titans* #44–53, Nov. 1976–Feb. 1978) was unsuccessful, Wein and Wolfman promised to "do it better."

Wolfman "recruited" longtime Titans Robin, Kid Flash, and Wonder Girl, as well as Gar Logan, known as Beast Boy during the previous incarnation of the team but now going by the name Changeling. He then began developing additional characters that would lend themselves to a variety of stories: Starfire, Raven, and Cyborg. Each member of the team was intended to be a conduit for stories of a specific nature.

Robin was the detective, and Wonder Girl allowed mythological stories, with Raven being the link to horror/

by Philip Schweier



Teen with a Sheen

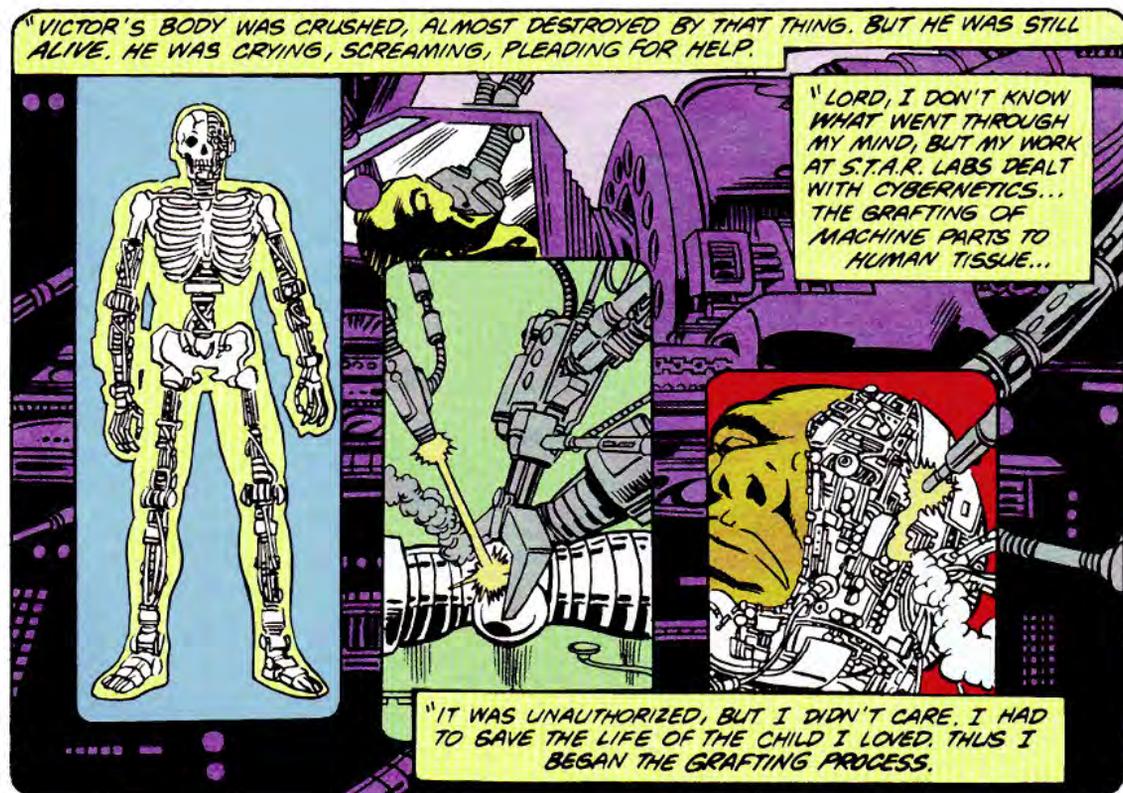
Way back in *New Teen Titans* #4 (Feb. 1981), George Pérez produced this pinup—with schematic—of Victor Stone, the Titan we know and love as Cyborg.

TM & © DC Comics.

We Can Rebuild Him...

A panel from Cyborg's origin, explaining the painful procedure which young Vic endured. From *New Teen Titans* #7 (May 1981).

TM & © DC Comics.



supernatural stories, and Starfire opening the door to space stories. "Vic [Cyborg] was the science-tech guy, with an entrance into street stories," said Wolfman when interviewed by *BACK ISSUE* last year. "That allowed us a slightly different kind of story than Robin would.

"I came up with the basics," said Wolfman, "and with George, we developed Vic, along with the other Titans."

Meanwhile, thanks to his apprenticeship with Rich Buckler, Pérez was working for Marvel, where he managed to land work on such high-profile titles as *The Avengers* and *The Fantastic Four*, but was looking to broaden his horizons.

"Marv, who I had worked with at Marvel, had already gone to DC, as had Len Wein," Pérez related at a Dragon Con panel in 2013. "I enjoyed my time on *The Avengers* and everything, but I actually applied to DC before I applied to Marvel. Rich Buckler was working at Marvel, so that's how I ended up there, but there were books at DC I was aiming for—*Justice League of America*, no surprise there."

When Wolfman approached Pérez about working on *The New Teen Titans*, he agreed in exchange for the opportunity to draw *Justice League*.

"I wanted to work with Marv some more," Pérez continued. "That was fine ... six issues, we'd be canceled. In the case of *JLA*, the one unfortunate thing that happened, that ended up being a bit of an unfortunate bonanza for me, was that the artist on *JLA* [Dick Dillin] died pretty much a week or so after I said I would do the *Titans*. So I was going to get the *JLA* as a regular gig now."

In an interview published in *Comics Scene* #7 (Jan. 1982), Pérez said he became more interested when he realized they would be creating new characters. "Marv, Len, and I went into the office and started talking out new characters and asking about my ideas, and I started giving them designs. I designed all the characters, one each, and they were all accepted."

During a 2013 interview, Wolfman said Pérez not only brought the design of Vic but his heart, as well as a much more basic understanding of city living: "I came from New York City as he did, but I lived in the suburbs and if I remember, he lived in the Bronx until he was an adult and moved to Queens."

Pérez grew up the South Bronx, which he described at Dragon Con in 2013 as a very violent neighborhood at the time: "Drawing was my escape from that ... I'd been reading comics since I was about four years old and it was a way for me to learn how to read

English—I came from a Spanish-speaking household."

In *BACK ISSUE* #8 (Feb. 2005), Wolfman said of Cyborg, "I remember we talked early on about him starting out more traditionally with comic-book dialogue, the angry young black kid, but then very quickly once he realized how his father sacrificed everything for him, changed him to what he was, educated, smart but suspicious. Education and being black were not and shouldn't be mutually exclusive. Other than being New York City-angry when the others generally weren't, we didn't want to emphasize Vic's color over his personality."

When interviewed, Wolfman said he came up with the basics and developed Cyborg, along with the other Titans, with artist Pérez: "In point of fact, since George lived a few blocks from me in Flushing, Queens, he and I would get together and work out the material. The first time the office ever saw the book was either when it went out for lettering or for inking."

SECRET ORIGINS

The preview insert featured in *DC Comics Presents* #26 served as an introduction to the new team, as Robin, in what perhaps can best be described as a waking dream, meets his future teammates. Together, the Titans send an interdimensional creature back to its source before it can change Earth's atmosphere to methane. The creature is revealed to be the product of an experiment by Professor Silas Stone, Victor's father.

Victor blames his father for the catastrophe that resulted in him becoming part machine, and the interdimensional creature (or one just like it) for the reason so much of his body was mutilated.

A month later, *New Teen Titans* #1 featured the actual union of the new Teen Titans as Raven appears to Dick (Robin) Grayson, urging him to form a new team to fight a coming crisis. She introduces them to Victor Stone, a young man whose dream of athletic glory has been taken since he was given the unfair advantage of mechanical enhancements. Together, the new team rescues Koriand'r—later christened Starfire—from the alien Gordanian slavers.

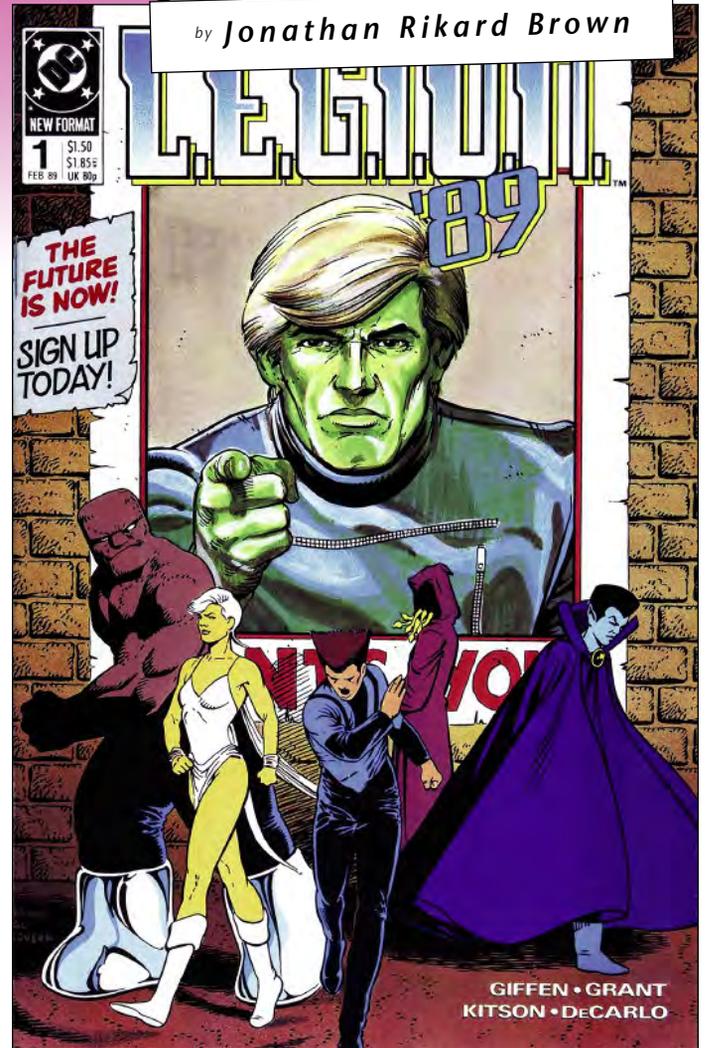
Cyborg's origin was revealed in *New Teen Titans* #7 (May 1981), serving as an epilogue to a story in which the Fearsome Five invade the Titans Tower, taking Cyborg's father hostage. Following Dr. Stone's rescue, Vic relates how his parents always disapproved of his interest in athletics. Instead, as scientists for S.T.A.R. Labs, they hoped he would follow a more intellectual path.

Bring on the
BAD GUYS!



THE LEGACY OF BRAINIAC

by Jonathan Rikard Brown



The Brainy Bunch

Who could've guessed back in 1958 that Superman's new foe Brainiac would beget offspring good and bad? Brainiac's peek-a-boo headshot (by Curt Swan and Stan Kaye) was taken from *Action Comics* #280 (Sept. 1961). Mike Grell's cover to *Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes* #227 (May 1977) shows Brainiac 5 in one of his darker moments, while Kevin Maguire and Al Gordon's cover to *L.E.G.I.O.N.* '89 #1 (Feb. 1989) places Brainiac 2 (Vril Dox) as the leader of an intergalactic team.

TM & © DC Comics.

Brainiac is coming! Actually, Brainiac has come ... and left quite an imprint on pop culture. This robotic conqueror not only left an impression on comic books, but has left his steely footprint on video games, cartoons, toys, and other media outlets. Fans continue to clamor for the villain to make an appearance in a live-action Superman film. This collector of miniaturized cities has left a legacy that dwarfs his own gigantic skull ship.

There is more to Brainiac's legacy than his shining place in the pop-culture pantheon—in his wake stand several descendants that all strove to make their impact on sequential-art history, most notably two standouts: Brainiac 5 and Brainiac 2. This article will look at how the "sons" of a robot overlord have been used to build upon their mighty ancestor's legacy and how they have forged onward in their own right. To examine this legacy, we will look at the cold robot's past and then examine how it leads to the creation of two strong protagonists. But first, for us to understand the legacy that is carried on by Brainiac 5 and 2, we have to look at the complex history of the original.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF BRAINIAC

Brainiac debuted in comic books in *Action Comics* #242 (July 1958) in a story entitled "The Super Duel in Space," written by Otto Binder and drawn by Al Plastino. We meet the character for the first time in space alongside Clark Kent and Lois Lane. The two *Daily Planet* reporters have just journeyed to space in Earth's first manned spaceship, the *Columbus*. Upon exiting Earth's atmosphere, the couple find a flying saucer belonging to a green, alien super-scientist, Brainiac. Clark decides it is time to exit the scene and leaves the *Columbus* in an "attempt" to space walk back to Earth, a ploy to cover his

disappearance since this is clearly a job for Superman. After he changes, our hero rushes the ship and finds that even with all of his super-strength he cannot penetrate its hull. It and Brainiac are protected by a super-strong force-field. (This device will become an important tool in the hands of Brainiac's descendants.)

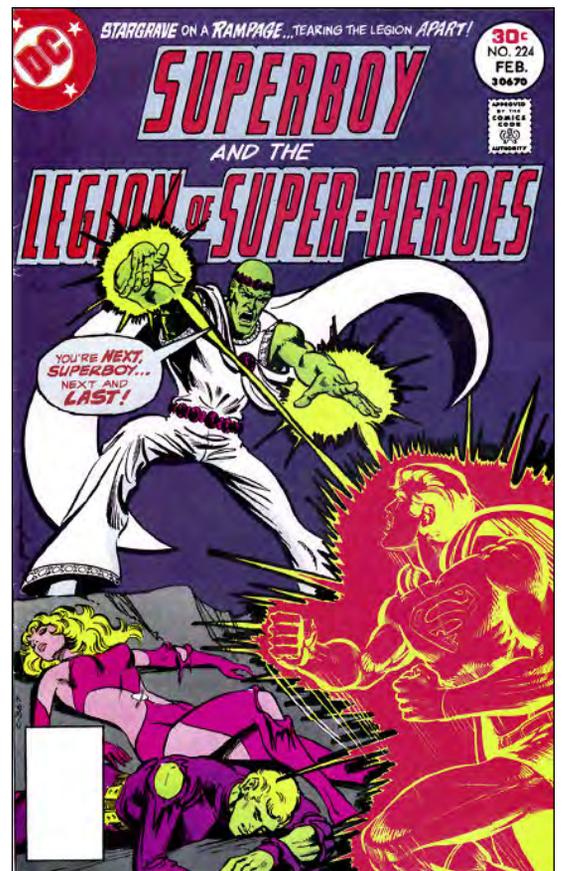
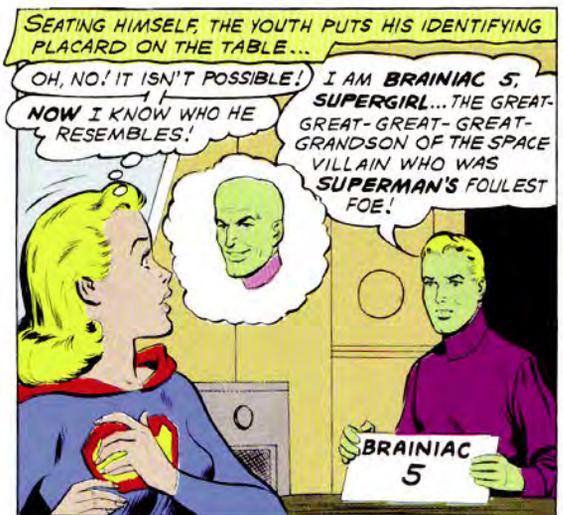
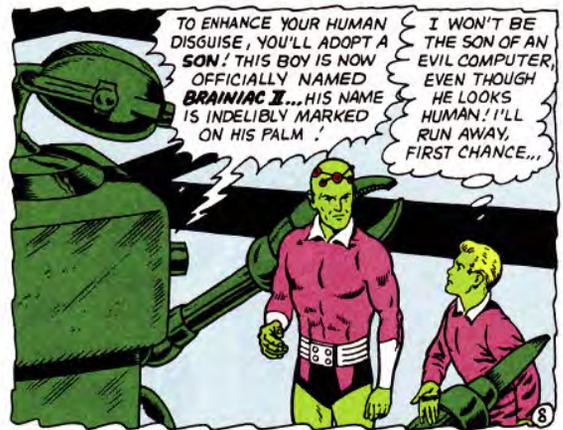
With Superman powerless against this threat, our villain begins to carry out his plans. Brainiac begins to shrink Earth's most important cities, as he is a collector of intergalactic societies. Unable to come up with a way into the flying fortress, Superman returns to Earth to concoct a plan to enter into Brainiac's vessel. He returns to Metropolis as it is shrunken by Brainiac and is taken into the craft. Superman escapes the bottle in which Metropolis has been placed, and now finding himself in Brainiac's lab, he is able to survey Brainiac's collection of shrunken cities. It is amongst these cities Superman makes an amazing discovery—Krypton's city of Kandor was collected by Brainiac, meaning there are other survivors of Superman's homeworld!

Entering the bottle that encloses Kandor, our hero meets Kimba, a Kryptonian scientist who provides Superman with tools to overcome their imprisonment. After leaving Kandor, Superman finds Brainiac in suspended animation as the menace prepares to return to his homeworld of Colu. Superman reverses the shrinking process and returns Earth's cities to their rightful places. However, the enlarging process has a limit of times it can be repeated, and this presents Superman with a dreadful decision: Should he restore Kandor, though it means he himself will remain shrunken? Being the upstanding guy that he is, Superman resolves to restore Kandor, but Kimba intervenes before he can do so. She notes that Earth cannot be left without its greatest protector. Superman restores himself to normal size, then takes the Bottle City of Kandor and places it within his Fortress of Solitude. This concludes the first meeting in a rivalry that would rage through the ages and through retoolings of both the Man of Steel and the Menace of Steel.

Writer/artist Keith Giffen, no stranger to a variety of Brainiacs, tells *BACK ISSUE*, "Brainiac is the guy who *should* be Superman's arch-foe. Brainiac should be powerful enough to give Superman a run for his money, because, let's face it, when Superman beats up on Lex Luthor, it looks like the most powerful guy in the world is beating up on the fat, bald guy. It comes across as bad. Superman has all of these incredible powers. Brainiac is almost the same. He is the flip side to the Superman coin. He is a very powerful being, but he is machine-like. He is what Superman would be without his conscience, what Superman would be like without Ma and Pa Kent's influence. He is just a heartless, soulless, thinking machine." Brainiac, like Superman, is a Man of Tomorrow, although his is a dark tomorrow where disconnected technology seeks to control organic life.

Another significant moment in Brainiac's history is *Superman* #167 (Feb. 1964), written by Edmond Hamilton (inspired by a plot from a young Cary Bates), penciled by Curt Swan, and inked by George Klein. The issue sees Brainiac team up with Lex Luthor to finish off Superman.

The story begins with Luthor escaping from prison, then launching what becomes an easily thwarted missile attack on Superman. Lex realizes that he needs help if he is ever going to best the Man of Steel, so he uses a machine to scan time and space to locate a worthy partner, the most brilliant mind in the known universe. He comes upon a race of yellow-haired, green-skinned scientists on the planet Colu. As Luthor peers into their history, he watches the scientists construct Master Computer One, the supreme intellect he has been searching for. He adjusts his scanner to look into the future, seeing that in the future Master Computer One has become tyrannical and enslaved the planet of Colu, with ambitions to conquer the galaxy. It creates a spy that can walk amongst humanoids and collect information on alien worlds—Brainiac. Luthor connects the dots and sees that this is the alien that Superman has previously fought. Before this origin tale ends, the reader is treated to the knowledge that the Master Computer One saw fit to give Brainiac an adopted son to disguise its creation as a living being. The child, named Brainiac II (herewith Brainiac 2), is resentful of his new father and seeks to escape. This brief glimpse of the child of Brainiac provides the foundation for future progeny and is a foundational moment in understanding the legacy of Brainiac.



First Encounters

(top) Look quick, or you'll miss Brainiac II (2) in *Superman* #167 (Feb. 1964). (center) Legionnaire Brainiac 5 has baggage, as shown in *Action* #276 (May 1961). (bottom) Though not included in this article, Legion baddie Pulsar Stargrave (shown on Mike Grell's *Superboy* #224 cover) claimed to be Brainiac 5's father!

TM & © DC Comics.

Maybe this isn't such a good idea...

This thought hardly seems to cross the minds of the scientists in Japan who are working on a project to artificially create life. As if to proclaim the woes of "taking science too far," the product of their efforts materializes as a horrifying Godzilla-like creature that begins to destroy everything that winds up in its path.

This is the introductory scene to the brief comic-book adventures of Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot. Their story is a short one, running for only two deluxe 32-page issues. "The End—For Now!" reads the tagline at the end of the second issue, leaving us all to surmise that the creators surely had at least a few more stories up their sleeves.

And about those creators—comics don't get a more power-packed lineup. *Big Guy and Rusty* marks the second collaboration of Frank Miller and Geof Darrow for Dark Horse Comics. Following the ambitious work that was *Hard Boiled* couldn't have been an easy feat. Miller's writing in *Big Guy and Rusty* is snappy and sensational, certainly peppered with a fair share of wit. Exclamation points are almost overused in the story and everything is spiced up to be noticed.

Darrow's art is among the most detailed in all of comics history. He is a skilled storyteller to be sure, but the first thing that people notice about his art is the insane level of minutiae layered into each panel. It's not enough to simply show the Tokyo street view. Every restaurant and store and piece of crumbling gravel is delineated by Darrow's pencil and ink.

RUSTY TRIES TO SAVE THE DAY!

With a sentient, giant-sized monster obliterating an entire city, the people in charge in Japan know that something unusual is going to have to be tried to stop the menace. The monster talks to people about how worthless they are and how humanity has usurped what should truly belong to itself. The monster converts people into other smaller monsters and shoots fire from its mouth ... something has to be able to stop it, and soon! What weapon does the Japanese government turn to when their military might simply isn't good enough? Japan's last line of defense is nothing more than a prototype of a child-sized robot. Though untested in battle, little Rusty promises to do his best and prove himself against the biggest threat that his country has ever faced.

Things don't go very well for Rusty. Within moments of finding the destructive creature he is squished between two of the beast's many hands, slapped right through a skyscraper by its tail, and stomped on by a gigantic foot. Rusty cries not in pain but in self-pity: "I'm just a joke! Just a dumb little toy! I'm just no darn good ... I'm just ... not big enough..."

CALL IN THE BIG GUY!

With their last attempt at homeland defense ending in failure, the Japanese bureaucrats have no choice but to call in a favor from the American government. A device that alerts the hero known only as Big Guy is swiftly answered, and the fight against the creature from before time can continue in earnest.

Big Guy's first tactic is to fly over the creature's head in a ship, dropping all sorts of bombs on it. This doesn't work. He launches missiles into the creature's nostrils. This works for only as long as takes for the creature's regenerative powers to kick in, and in the meantime Big Guy finds all kinds of use for his armaments against the monsters-who-used-to-be-

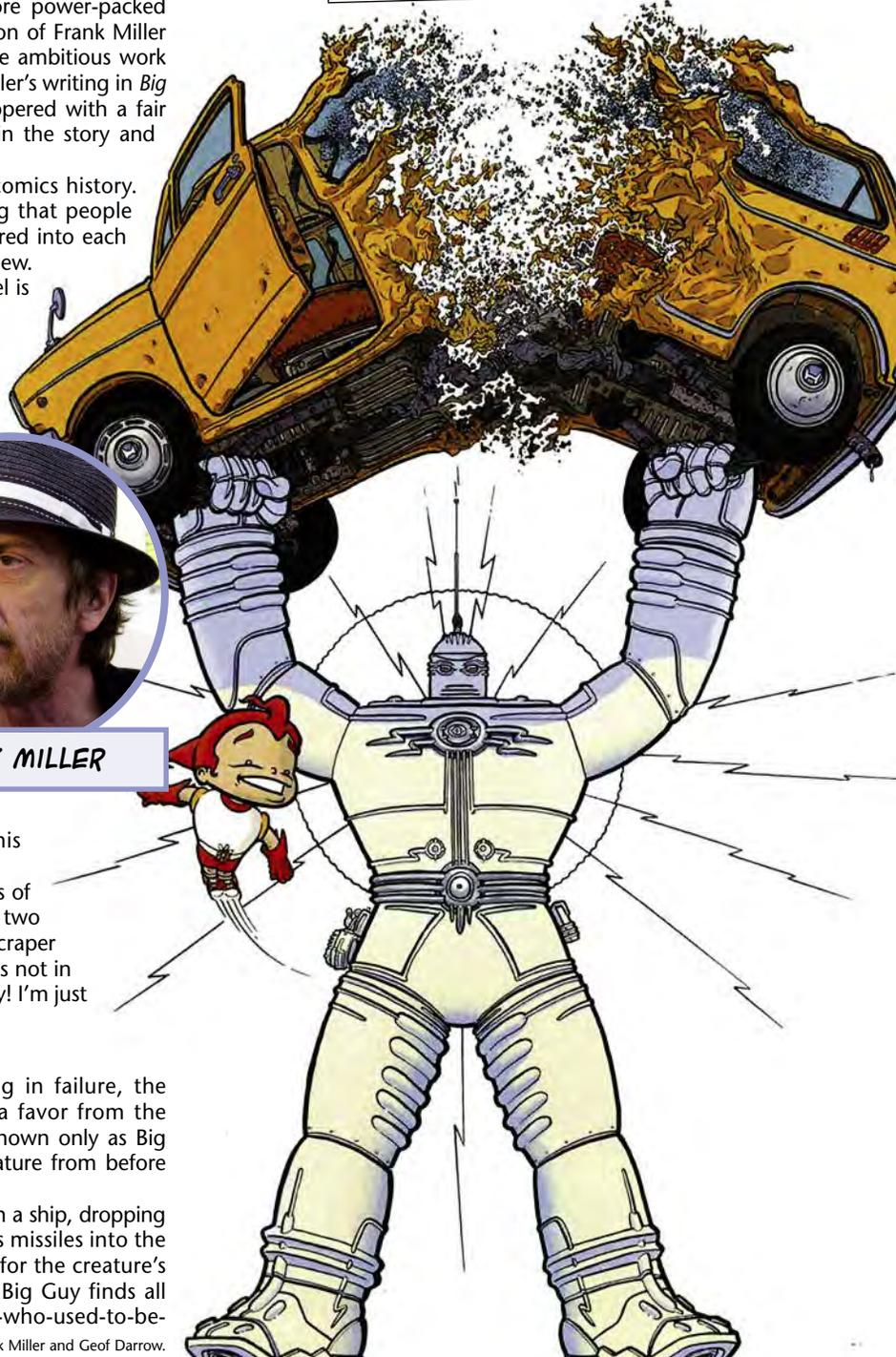
© Frank Miller and Geof Darrow.

BIG GUY™ AND RUSTY THE BOY ROBOT

by Christopher Larochelle



FRANK MILLER



people. The armor-clad man has some trouble cut out for him when creature's infection spreads onto his suit. Even after taking some heavy damage, Big Guy isn't ready to quit. He comes up with one last plan to stop the madness. Going underground, Big Guy yanks a subway train and ties it around the monster's neck. Blasting off into space, Big Guy launches his catch, sending it plummeting back to Earth. A nuclear missile locks on target and detonates as the creature hits the ocean. Nothing less than "the ultimate weapon of modern destruction" could be enough to end this threat.

It's curious that there are hardly any interactions between the two titular characters in this story. Rusty fights the monster, then Big Guy fights the monster when Rusty is out of commission. When they finally meet at the very end of the second issue, Rusty gets the sense that he is rejected by the internationally renowned Big Guy. Rusty vows to prove himself as a worthy kid sidekick, and a kid sidekick is hardly what a proven hero like Big Guy is looking for. The comics end without the two never even starting to act like a team. Clearly there were more stories to be told that never got their chance....

THE SOLO ADVENTURES OF BIG GUY

Big Guy's first appearance was actually in a comic that preceded the *Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot* series. Mike Allred's *Madman Comics* hosted his debut just a few short months before Miller and Darrow's books came out in 1995, in *Madman Comics* #6 and 7. "To this day, it's one of my single favorite stories that I've done," says Allred. Big Guy wound up in the pages of *Madman* because at that time the creators behind the "Legends" imprint at Dark Horse Comics (writers and artists such as Frank Miller, Mike Mignola, Art Adams, John Byrne, Allred, and more) were sharing their characters across each other's books. Allred couldn't pass up the chance to find a way to work Big Guy into his own comic: "Our mutual editor, Bob Schreck, had been showing me Geof Darrow's pages and they were stunning beyond belief. And they had a classic timeless vibe that I was immediately drawn to."

The result of discovering Darrow's work-in-progress led to Mike Allred's two-issue storyline co-starring Big Guy. The *Madman Comics* story is a really fun one that involved the direct collaboration of Big Guy's creators. Frank Miller contributed all of Big Guy's dialogue in the scripts. Geof Darrow jammed on the covers of the comics with Mike Allred and added his own illustrations for the back covers.

In the comic, Madman admires Big Guy and is awed to see Big Guy's unique aircraft flying above his hometown of Snap City. Madman saves a man on the highway and has to bring him to Snap City General Hospital. Much to his surprise, Big Guy's ship is parked right outside! Things get stranger when Madman sees his lifelong hero carting off Professor Boiffard, Madman's scientist pseudo-father. Madman has to figure out what is going on, and he stows aboard Big Guy's ship. Big Guy can't say a whole lot about what he is doing, and Madman gets used to hearing that everything is classified. Some

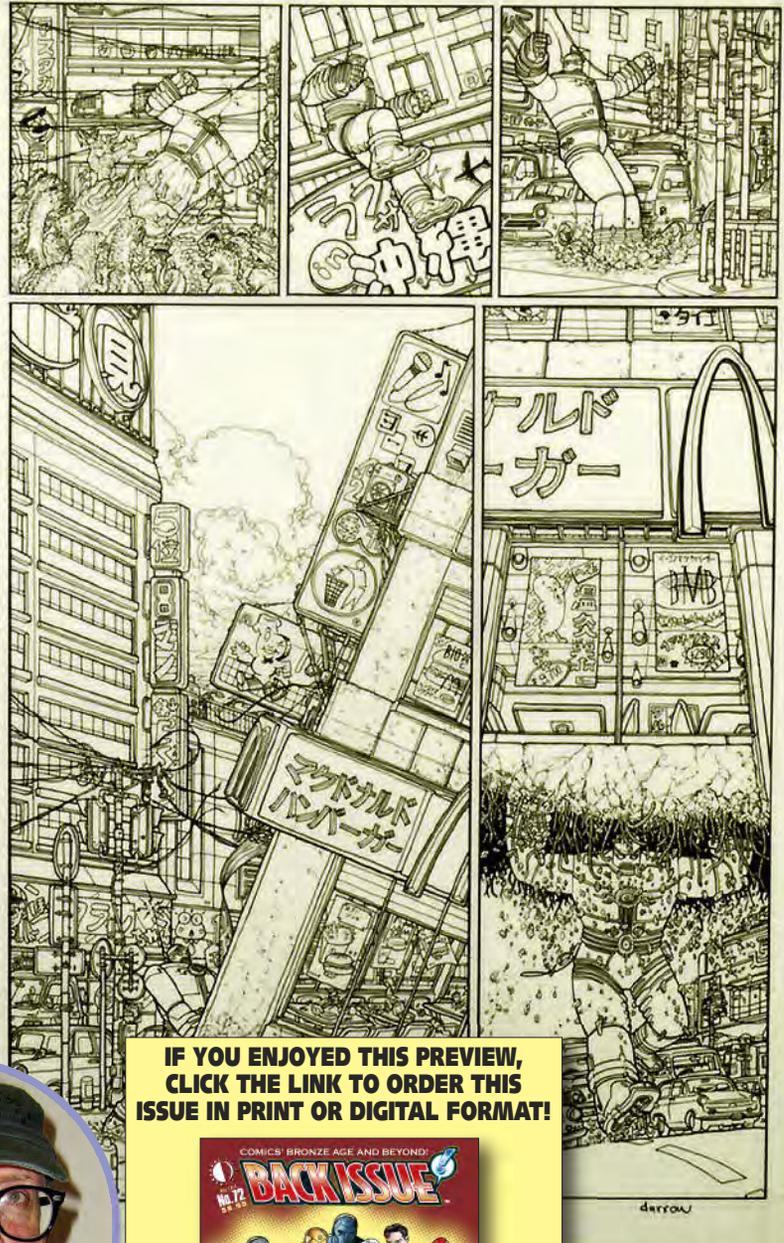


GEOF DARROW

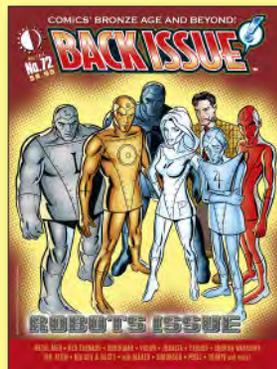
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and helpfulness. Snap City's hero gotta say good eye to eye."

Big Guy plays *Madman Comic* page count, is *Rusty* series itself the character of the Miller/Darrow a hero who is constant demand. But what Mike Allred shows in his own comic is the impact that this hero had on just one



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BACK ISSUE #72

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Big Mac Attack

Really, no one could ever accuse the gifted Geof Darrow of scrimping on detail. Big Guy in action, on this exquisitely illustrated original art page (page 17) from issue #2. Courtesy of Heritage Comic Auctions (www.ha.com).

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