

COMIC MAGAZINES OF THE '70s & '80s

BACKISSUE!

TWO MONTHS
May 2016
No. 88
\$8.95

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GOULD



Marvel's mags, from *Savage Tales* to *Epic Illustrated* • Kirby's "Speak-Out Series" Eisner's *The Spirit* magazine • The Unpublished Paul Gulacy • plus Atlas/Seaboard, Charlton, Skywald, & Warren mags • with Adams, Moench, Norem, Uslan, & more

Volume 1,
Number 88
May 2016

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Michael Eury

PUBLISHER
John Morrow

DESIGNER
Rich Fowlks

COVER ARTIST
Gray Morrow
(Cover painting originally
produced for *Marvel Preview*
#2, 1975. Original art scan
courtesy of Heritage
Comics Auctions.)

COVER DESIGNER
Michael Kronenberg

PROOFREADER
Rob Smentek

SPECIAL THANKS

Neal Adams
Richard J. Arndt
Michael Aushenker
John Bolton
Jerry Boyd
Frank Cirocco
Chris Claremont
Ben DuBay
Jo Duffy
Grand Comics
Database
Steven Grant
Robert Greenberger
Paul Gulacy
Heritage Comics
Auctions
Tony Isabella
John K. Kirk
Henry Kujawa
Evans Lee
Dave Lemieux
Alan Light
Marvel Comics



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BACK ISSUE™ is published 8 times a year by TwoMorrows Publishing, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614. Michael Eury, Editor-in-Chief. John Morrow, Publisher. Editorial Office: *BACK ISSUE*, c/o Michael Eury, Editor-in-Chief, 118 Edgewood Avenue NE, Concord, NC 28025. Email: euryman@gmail.com. Six-issue subscriptions: \$67 Standard US, \$85 Canada, \$104 Surface International. *Please send subscription orders and funds to TwoMorrows, NOT to the editorial office.* Cover art by Gray Morrow. The Punisher and related characters TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved. All characters are © their respective companies. All material © their creators unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter © 2016 Michael Eury and TwoMorrows Publishing. ISSN 1932-6904. Printed in China. FIRST PRINTING.

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DON'T BUY IT, JUST ASK: DC'S PITIFUL ATTEMPT TO MARKET KIRBY AND HIS "SPEAK-OUT SERIES"

by John Morrow



They Don't Know Jack
Two examples of DC's attempts to market Jack Kirby.
TM & © DC Comics.

My background is in advertising. Long before TwoMorrows Publishing was an entity, TwoMorrows Advertising was servicing local and regional clients in the Southeast US. My wife Pam and I met in design school, and our first joint advertising project was a very non-traditional wedding invitation. It must've been effective; we had a great turnout for our nuptials, and that product is still going strong 29 years later. (Take that, Madison Avenue!)

So it's only natural that I would turn a critical eye to any and all ads I see, whether they be for widgets, cogs, or comic books. And nothing drives me crazier than seeing one where the creative director chose to ignore the most important rule that got beamed into our brains in art school: "Form FOLLOWS Function." (For those unfamiliar with that phrase, it simply means that the look of something in advertising should ALWAYS be secondary to its sales purpose; i.e., never lose sight of the message you're trying to get across in the search for an eye-catching visual.)

Jack Kirby was the King of both comic books, and of comics cover blurbs. I'd dare say his infamous "Don't Ask, Just Buy It!" phrase from *Jimmy Olsen* #141 is probably as well remembered (and oft-repeated, even by those who don't know its source) as any comics concepts from his 1970s tenure at DC Comics. It's also the pinnacle of the lazy ad agency mentality of, "We don't know how to market this product, so we'll just toss something out there and see if it sticks."

This perfectly describes DC Comics' attitude toward Kirby's short-lived "Speak-Out Series" of black-and-white magazines from the early

1970s. DC editorial director Carmine Infantino had just successfully lured Kirby away from Marvel Comics, with promises of unprecedented creative freedom and top billing at DC. But a quick look at their ads promoting Jack shows the company was at a complete loss of how to effectively market Kirby as a product.

Take the psychedelic ad "The Great One is Coming!" that was sprinkled liberally throughout DC's Summer 1970 comics. While the copy sounds like something that would've sprung from Kirby's head, and the lettering is beautifully done, how would ANYONE have any idea what this was promoting? As a kid, I saw it, read it, and immediately turned the page, never giving it a second thought. It was a wasted opportunity by DC to crow that they just hooked their competition's biggest fish, and was completely ineffective.

While *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen* #133 (Kirby's first DC release) got a small full-color ad billing Jack's arrival, the dominant image was a Kirby Superman figure, with watered-down Vince Colletta inking and an Al Plastino face—not exactly a rousing endorsement of Jack and his work. The subsequent full-page "Magic of Kirby!" ad for Jack's Fourth World debut issues only merited black-and-white line art cover reprints, with a cropped-off *Mister Miracle* #1 cover to boot. How excited could fans get about these new series, when DC wouldn't put forth the effort to make the ad more effective with some color? (One wonders if the *Olsen* #133 cover only got color because of Superman's prominent appearance on it.)

Still, Infantino had the top creator in comics, so the obvious and wise choice was to put him to work on every genre Kirby had success



THE MIGHTY MARVEL MAGAZINE EXPLOSION OF THE 1970s

They were black and white and READ all over!

by Jerry Boyd

"Mighty Marvel is on the move again!!" This stirring proclamation became a mantra of the House of Ideas in the 1960s as "Merry" Martin Goodman's company moved from triumph to triumph. Costumed, mighty-muscled superheroes and their equally colorful enemies, whether done seriously, silly, or "camp" (for sophisticated adults who were mildly intrigued) became all the rage. In the 1940s, Superman could leap a tall building in a single bound. In the 1960s, he could fly to other star systems, and he and his DC brethren, as well as a slew of other mystery men and women from other companies, followed suit. In deeds, the superhero boom knew no bounds. Comic magazines of the four-color variety were "hip" and "happening." In the 1970s, the Marvel bigwigs would test those bounds again in the black-and-white arena in titles that would become some of the most memorable efforts in sequential-art history.

THE ORIGIN OF MARVEL COMICS (MAGAZINES, THAT IS...)

As with many things of the Marvel persuasion, there's an origin story. It all started in the late 1960s, when their wildly popular Wall-Crawler debuted in B&W in the magazine *The Spectacular Spider-Man* (July 1968). Spidey faced off against a deranged politician running for NYC mayor, whose hulking brute of an assistant was sent off to intimidate the candidate's opponents. *The Spectacular Spider-Man* #2 (Nov. 1968) saw the return of the equally deranged Norman Osborn, the original Green Goblin. The Goblin was "more dangerous than ever" as Stan Lee liked to put it. Since *The Amazing Spider-Man* #39 in '66, Osborn had figured out that Peter Parker and Spider-Man were one and the same. This was one of the Web-Spinner's tensest battles ever. A third issue was planned, but never came about. It was probably a tough sell. Even though the second issue was in full color, and put together with beautiful scripting by Lee, and artwork by John Romita, Sr., Jim Mooney, and John Buscema, it didn't find enough of a buying audience. J. Jonah Jameson might have asked this next question: "Why was Stan *even* interested in doing *The Spectacular Spider-Man* in the first place?" Roy Thomas graciously answers. "He wanted Marvel to escape the color comic book ghetto, the way it was then constructed ... not have to go through the [Comics] Code ... find ways to get more money for the work, too." At 35 cents a pop, *TSS* could've made for greater profits for all involved, but Omnipotent Odin willed it not to be. *TSS* appeared on magazine stands, away from the spinner racks that wild-eyed youngsters (like this fan) were used to ... and 35 cents was a bit daunting back then. And I'm sure that many fans probably reasoned that they could get almost THREE 12-centers for one Spidey mag, sooooo...

Fans had their own business sense going. Stan knew that new comic buyers were coming into the fold all the time, so Spidey's origin was retold in *TSS* #1. Another origin would have to take place for Marvel's next sojourn into B&W graphic excitement ... and that would take three more years to come about.

SAVAGE BLACK-AND-WHITE TALES

The Comics Code restrictions lessened to a degree in the late '60s/early '70s, and it's been reported that Jack Kirby mulled the possibility of a comic starring Dracula around that time. He wasn't the only one. Dracula was "alive and well," so to speak, in B&W stories outside of the Comics Code and in new movies. His old movies were staples of late-night TV-show horror-host fare from sea to shining sea. Stan Lee was promoted to Marvel publisher near the end of 1971, but he wasn't quite ready to pull the publishing trigger on Dracula ... not just yet. So, he pulled a sword. Conan the Cimmerian proved himself to be a sensation for the House of Ideas in 1970. A reaver, a slayer, a thief—a bloody-handed barbarian ... and Robert E. Howard's novel and short stories promised more to come—was an ideal choice for a B&W magazine. Conan's world was one of fear-fraught fantasies too wild, in some ways, for the Comics Code. Women were often scantily dressed, men killed and killed often (no Daredevil dragging the defeated Matador to the police here), and arcane spells and demonic monsters were the norm. Conan was a new deal. Somehow, in the waning days of "peace and love," a war-torn Vietnam, campus protests, and race riots, an indomitable

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Early Marvel Mags

(top) The *Spectacular Spider-Man* covers, sumptuously served up by “Jazzy” Johnny Romita. The second issue’s cover is still just too much! (bottom) John Buscema’s Conan was every bit as savage as Frazetta’s!

This Buscema painting for *Savage Tales* #1 (May 1971) spoke the proverbial thousand words...

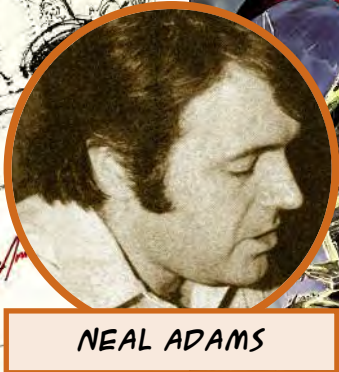
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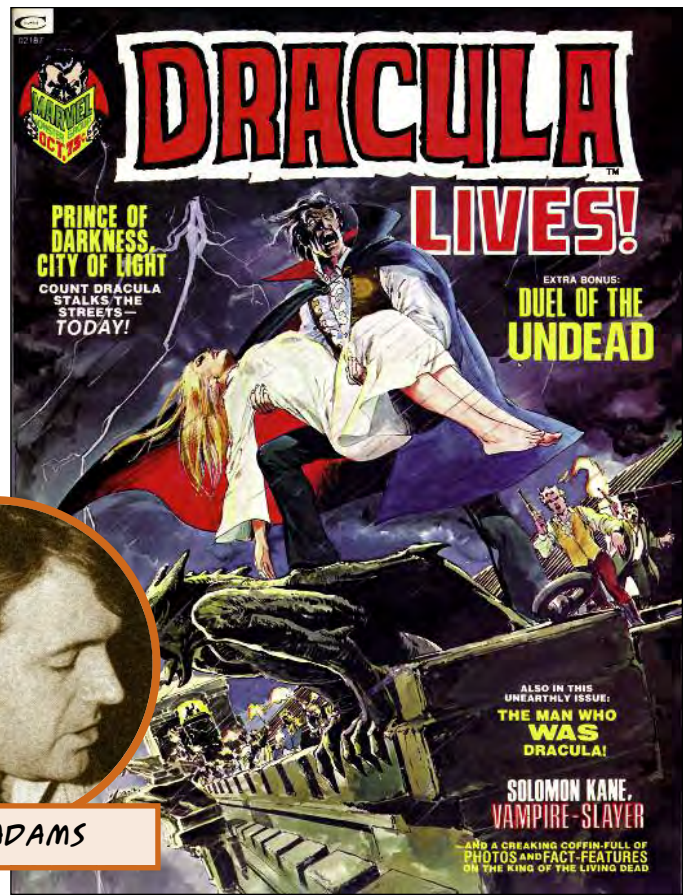
hill-man from “an age undreamed of” won the hearts and minds of fandom and hacked his way to big success in 1970. One Marvelite, writing in to the regular book, asked, “Is it real or fiction in the Baxter Building?” It didn’t matter. Conan was here. His title quickly went monthly.

Savage Tales #1 (May 1971) would be his magazine showcase—with a large “M” aimed at “the Mature Reader.” Inside the covers was the Thomas/Smith tour-de-force adaptation of Howard’s “The Frost Giant’s Daughter.” While Frank Frazetta was THE Conan artist on paperback covers, very few who read “Bashful” Barry Smith’s rendition of this short story were dissatisfied. Smith’s early style had rapidly matured, merging the pre-Raphaelite school of art with dashes of Erte and a few flourishes of his hero, Jack “King” Kirby. And Roy’s writing was up to the task, also. Truly, this was the beginning of something big, it seemed. And it wasn’t all Conan. “Black Brother,” by Dennis O’Neil (under a different name) and Gene Colan, gave us a look at racial struggles in a fictional African nation and its apartheid state. “Man-Thing” was executed by Gerry Conway and Gray Morrow, and the swamp came alive in the form of a muck-encrusted mess that lived after his human side was betrayed by his lover for the secret formula he’d been working on. Lee and Romita played to any feminist fans who may have taken a chance on *ST* with “The Femizons,” where warrior women ruled over men on a futuristic Earth. Mr. Romita wasn’t happy with there being no Femizons follow-up to *ST* #1. He told Roy in *Alter Ego Presents John Romita – All That Jazz* (2007), “That was supposed to be a 40-page epic, but we only published the first part. It was so long before *Savage Tales* [#2] came out that the momentum was lost. We even had a movie company interested in it at one point. It broke my heart not to be able to continue it.” Mr. Thomas’ assessment of *ST* #1 follows: “I think *Savage Tales* #1 was a good package, though my favorite stories were “Frost Giant’s Daughter” by Barry and me, and “Man-Thing,” which I co-plotted.”

However, this proud package didn’t do it for Marvel. Perhaps the “M” label scared as many kids away as it enticed older readers. There was partial nudity and the type of violence outside the regular stun-guns and blast rays of the 15- and 25-centers—maybe those factors had something to do with it. In any case, it’d be another two years before this title would make a savage return.



NEAL ADAMS



Neal and the Neck-Biter

(top) Neal Adams' preliminary (courtesy of Heritage) for the cover of *Dracula Lives!* #3 (Oct. 1973) and the published product. (bottom) Alan Weiss and the Crusty Bunkers served up the nightmarish atmosphere in this stupendous page from *DL* #3. Roy Thomas had Solomon Kane meet Dracula and the results were marvel-ous!

TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. Solomon Kane © REH.

even better. Robert E. Howard's Solomon Kane (!!) rides along the shadow-shrouded hills of Dracula's domain. He seeks a young girl, a friend's daughter who's vanished mysteriously, and believed to be in the present vicinity. But large, ravenous wolves are attacking the dour Puritan, and his energies are flagging. Dracula saves him and hurls the beasts away, astounding the senses of the hero. Kane is shown the surrounding areas by his champion and asks about the girl in question. Dracula states that he is unfamiliar with her. He's lying. She comes like a wraith with fangs to Kane's bed that evening. Kane manages to slay her, and sensing that Dracula has been her seducer, hurls a sword at the fiend's feet. A great battle sequence follows, and Kane pins the undead to the floor with silver coins, spared from theft by thieves in events told to Dracula before the wolves befell Kane. Dracula cleverly proclaims that Kane must spare him since Dracula saved his life! Kane leaves, amid mocking laughter, but comes back in a later issue to end the Transylvanian's unholy existence. Terrific job, Roy and Alan...

In later issues, Roy and Dick Giordano began the ambitious project of adapting the Stoker novel, but it wasn't finished until 2004, and then in the traditional comic format.

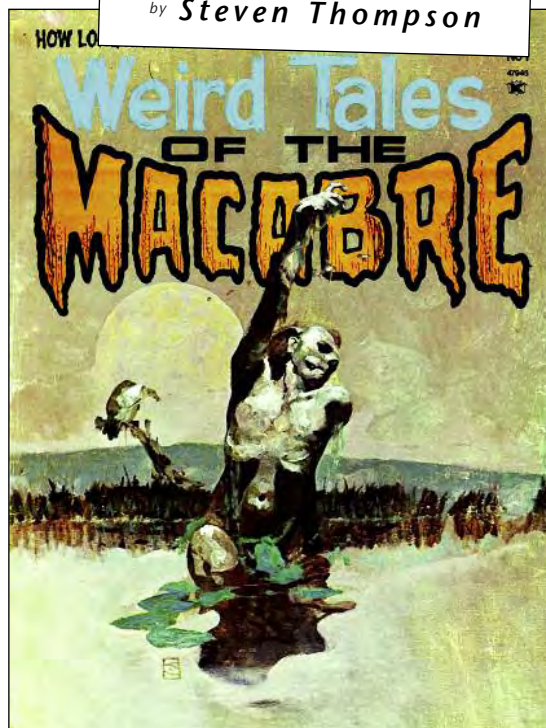
DL! was short-lived, also. Readers may have felt that *ToD* was enough for the long haul, and the last *DL!* issue was #13 (July 1975). However, *Dracula* was far from finished, magazine-wise...



SKYWALD AND SEABOARD

THE OTHER BLACK-AND-WHITE MAGS OF THE '70S

by Steven Thompson



Creepy Magazines

(left) From editor Sol Brodsky, *Skywald's Nightmare* #1

(Dec. 1970). Cover art thought to be by Brendan Lynch, according to the Grand Comics Database (www.comics.org).

(right) A groovy, gruesome Jeff Jones cover highlights *Seaboard's Weird Tales of the Macabre* #1 (Jan. 1975), from editor Jeff Rovin.

© 1970 Skywald.

© 1975 Seaboard/Atlas.

When publisher James Warren premiered *Creepy* in 1964, it's doubtful that he was expecting the high-quality publication he actually got. He was most likely looking for another inexpensive way to exploit the monster-mania created by the release of the Universal horror films to television and fanned by his own *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine. Instead, with *Creepy* and its later companion magazines, *Eerie* and *Vampirella*, he almost literally got the second coming of EC Comics, the already legendary horror comics publisher that had gone out of business in the '50s when the Comics Code came in.

Success breeds competition, and Warren had no shortage of that. Former comic-book horror artist Myron Fass teamed up with Human Torch creator Carl Burgos to foist *Eerie* Publications on the market using a mixture of redrawn reprints and increasingly gory new artwork. Despite contributions from a few mainstream comics creators, Fass was to Warren as Herschell Gordon Lewis movies were to Hammer Films.

There were others, too, such as the short-lived cult classic, *Web of Horror*, but the closest thing to a serious Warren competitor was Israel Waldman.

SKYWALD

Israel Waldman was the man behind Skywald Publications. Previously, he had been the man behind the I.W./Super Comics reprints that were sold in the late '50s and early '60s. Since he had purchased a large number of printing plates, he apparently presumed he had the rights to publish Plastic Man, The Spirit, Phantom Lady, Blue Beetle, and many, many more characters and stories that were not his to legally publish. His comics were not Comics Code-approved and were distributed via different channels (grocery stores, dime stores, etc.) than regular comic books. After a run of nearly a decade, though, Waldman disappeared from the scene for a few years, only to return with Skywald.

When Skywald came out with its first black-and-white comics magazine, *Nightmare* #1 (Dec. 1970), it was an odd hybrid of redrawn reprints and

new material. The "Sky" in "Skywald" referred to Sol Brodsky, a man so instrumental to the early days of Marvel Comics that when Jack Kirby would later do "What if the Original Marvel Bullpen Had Become the Fantastic Four?", Brodsky would be the Human Torch. Thus, it was perhaps inevitable that the new work was from Marvel veterans like Syd Shores, Tom Palmer, Ross Andru, Bill Everett, and Don Heck. The reprints were seriously altered, with what appears to be Mike Esposito's hand in completely redrawing a Wally Wood story originally published 20 years earlier and Bill Everett's major retouching/reinking of a Vince Alascia story. For some reason, they even felt the need to mess with a Joe Kubert reprint!

Sol Brodsky had been a bit of an also-ran as a penciler in comic books beginning early in the World War II era and continuing on unspectacularly until the late 1950s. By that point, though, Sol had also tried his hand at publishing and was, in fact, one of the men behind *Cracked*, which would end up as the longest-running *MAD* imitator. Most of his time had been at Timely/Atlas, though, and Stan Lee put Brodsky on staff to be his "right-hand man" and production manager in the early 1960s just as Marvel began its rise to industry prominence.

Brodsky would continue to rise in the company—eventually being named a vice president—and is credited with a major role in its success, but it was during a relatively brief break from Marvel toward the end of the decade that he teamed with Israel Waldman to launch Skywald.

Having been the founding editor of *Cracked*, Sol Brodsky was no stranger to black-and-white mags. In fact, he had then most recently been heavily involved with Marvel's 1968 attempt to do a black-and-white Spider-Man comic magazine, *The Spectacular Spider-Man*. Still, it would take a while before Skywald really found its footing and, by then, Sol would be back at Marvel. In the end, the new company would last less than five years.

The cover of that first issue of *Nightmare* looked almost like a late '50s Atlas tale with its giant monster, but its pollution theme, its cyclist protagonist, and his semi-clad female companion looked like they'd

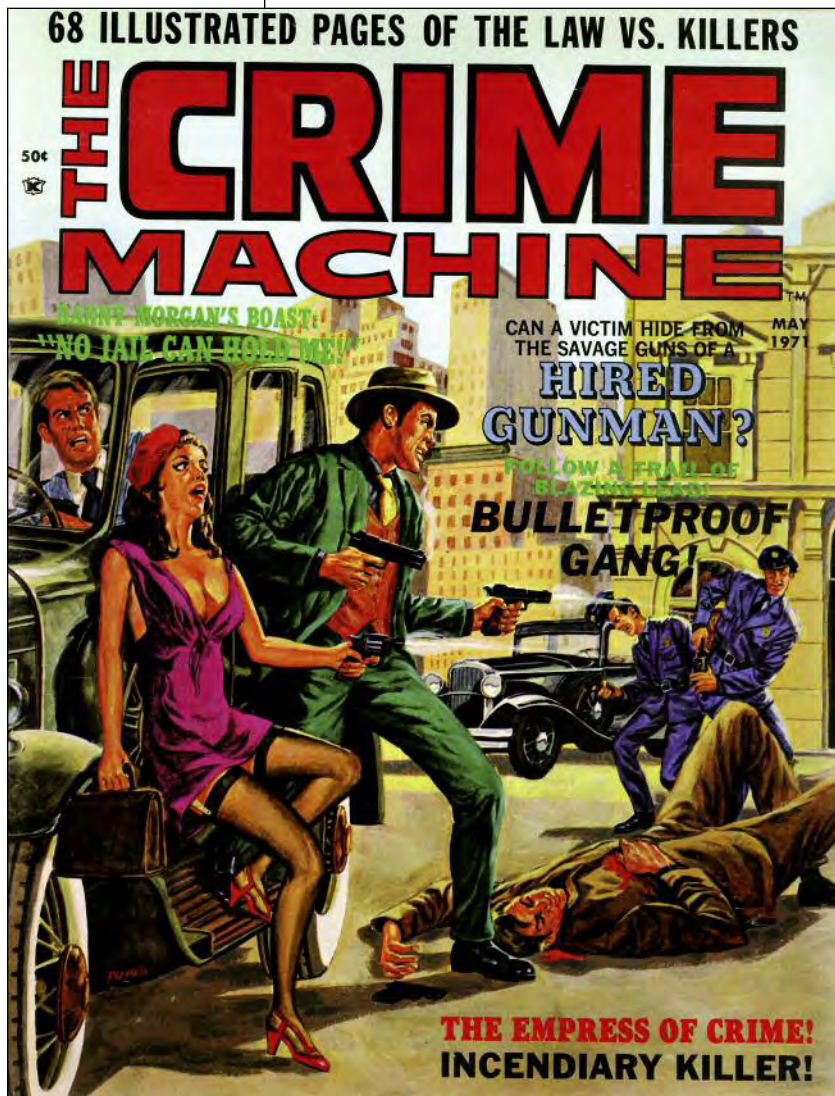
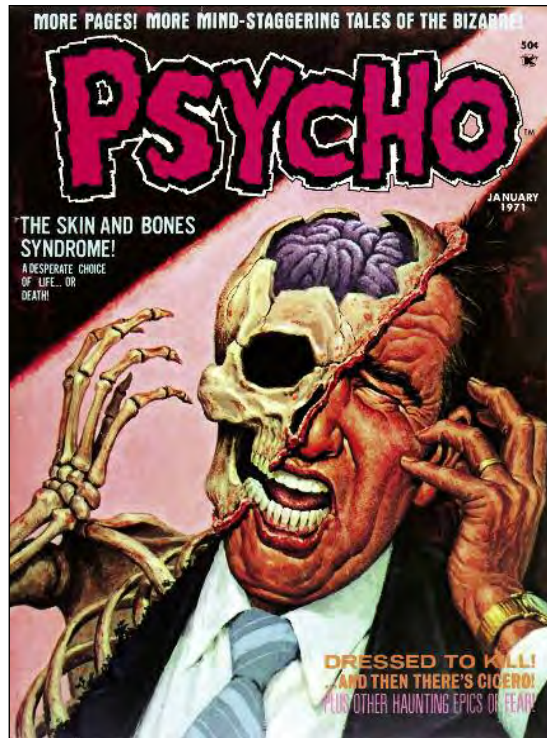
Excedrin

Headache #88

(top left) Brendan Lynch's head-splitting cover to Skywald's *Psycho* #1 (Jan. 1971). (top right) *Psycho* #2 (Mar. 1971) hoses off the Heap. Cover by Hector Varella. (bottom)

Tom Palmer's untouchably awesome shoot-'em-up cover to Skywald's short-lived gangster mag, *The Crime Machine*. Issue #2 (May 1971).

© 1971 Skywald.



motored over from the cover of an issue of *Stag* or *Male*. It wasn't a bad first issue cover, but the following issue offered an immediate upgrade with a cover by the soon-to-be omnipresent Boris Vallejo.

Nightmare #2 (Feb. 1971), though, was literally more of the same as the previous issue with doctored Avon reprints by A. C. Hollingsworth and Gene Fawcette awkwardly sharing space with new material by Dan Adkins, Bill Everett, Ross Andru, and Mike Esposito. At the end of the issue, though, is a letter from the editors stating that things were moving faster than expected and that the following issue would be much improved in quality and at a level that would continue on from that point. They weren't kidding.

Boris—aptly named for a horror magazine cover artist—was back with that next issue, too, covering a lot of sci-fi/fantasy ground with an overly muscled Neanderthal, a naked lady, alien monsters, and a spaceship.

Skywald had a plan right out of the gate. While *Nightmare* was a bimonthly, the publisher already had another magazine up its sleeve which would come out in the alternate months: *Psycho*. With Brodsky initially as editor of both periodicals, they were actually fairly interchangeable. The benefit of having two bimonthly mags rather than a sole monthly was that magazine retailers generally would keep an issue on the stands until the next issue came out. Thus, each issue of both *Nightmare* and *Psycho* would tend to get two months to sell rather than only one.

Psycho #1 (Jan. 1971) opens with a pulpy-looking Brendan Lynch cover strikingly similar to that of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* #29 (July 1964), which depicted the poster art from the movie, *The Flesh Eaters*. Here, we see the skull and the revealed brain of an unhappy-looking gentleman, a sort of scene from the book's first story, "The Skin and Bones Syndrome." This 1950s-style sci-fi story, expertly illustrated by Gray Morrow, sets a high standard that the rest of the magazine has trouble maintaining. Once again, the reader is given poorly doctored pre-Code material and just a couple of so-so new stories. At this point, Skywald was already looking like an also-ran.

WARREN PUBLICATIONS' Third Wave

by Richard J. Arndt



Warren Publications had three distinct waves of publication for its comic magazines. The initial wave of 1964–1966 saw the introduction of its flagship titles *Creepy*, *Blazing Combat*, and *Eerie*. The “comeback” wave of 1969, featuring *Vampirella*, highlighted Warren’s creative resurrection after a couple of very tough years that mostly featured good reprints mixed in with mediocre new stories. Then, finally there was the third wave that ran from 1974–1982, a wave which featured many new titles as Warren moved from being a publisher that created the next trend to a publisher looking for the next one.

WILL EISNER’S THE SPIRIT

This “third wave” began on a high note with the publication of Will Eisner’s *The Spirit*. Although largely a reprint title, Eisner’s 1940s work on the strip was so good that even 30 years later it looked like cutting-edge material.

Although the 1940s are called the Golden Age for a reason, the reality is that much of that period’s comic art and stories are, frankly, badly drawn and written. Those stories can be and often are exciting and fun to read, but even classics of the era rarely hold up as intelligent, thoughtful, beautifully illustrated adult stories, largely because they were never intended to be. The stories were aimed at children.

Eisner’s work on *The Spirit*, however, is all of those things an adult story should be and more. Even lesser *Spirit* tales loom over the best of the *Superman*, *Batman*, *Captain Marvel Adventures*, *Captain America*, etc. stories of the period. You’d have to go to such offbeat and wildly divergent efforts as

George Carlson’s *Jingle-Jangle Comics*, John Stanley’s *Little Lulu*, or Walt Kelly’s *Pogo* (the Dell comic book, not the later comic strip) to find similar examples of excellence.

Each week, from June 2, 1940 to October 5, 1952, Eisner delivered a weekly 16-page comic book for Sunday papers, featuring the lead character “Denny Colt as the Spirit,” as well as a number of backup features. He had assistants, some quite notable, but during the key pre-war years of 1940–1941 and the postwar years of 1945–1951, Eisner was the main writer and artist, overseeing everything. He did seven to eight pages of story and art every week, 52 times a year, for the better part of a decade!

And what art and stories! Hundreds of beautifully written and illustrated stories. Literally *hundreds* of them!

There’s a reason why the prestigious awards presented at the San Diego Comic-Con are named the Eisners. There are a lot of great comic artists and writers, but only a handful belong on comics’ Mt. Olympus, and head-and-shoulders above all the rest—including creators like Harvey Kurtzman, Jack Kirby, Stan Lee, Bill

Golden Age in Bronze

1973 poster promoting Will Eisner’s *The Spirit*, from Warren Publications. (inset) Eisner reinterpreted that image for the premier cover of *The Spirit* #1 (Apr. 1974).

The Spirit TM & © the Will Eisner Estate.

issues! Even continued stories would have gaps in continuance, often where a “back in Central City” story had been left out of an extended tale.

This haphazard way of scheduling the reprints had a wondrous and utterly unexpected effect on the reader. It created a *memory mosaic*, where the reader’s perception of the entire strip was colored by the knowledge that everything you’re reading points to a larger, more expansive, and, best of all, hidden history of the main character and his adventures. A history in which the reader was being given only bits and pieces of the whole story and left to wonder and speculate about the unexplained corners of the story’s universe. The reader had to put the bits and pieces together themselves, and what resulted was an enormous story, unfolding and stretching out in both time and space, which was created as much by the reader himself as by the actual writer or artist. What Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons (in the *Watchmen*) and Kurt Busiek and Brent Anderson (in *Astro City*) would later try to consciously create was happening entirely by accident in the pages of Warren’s *Spirit* magazine! The later 1980s comic-book reprintings of the *Spirit* tales in chronological order by Kitchen Sink Press were welcome indeed, but that method of reprinting completely obliterated the memory-mosaic style that had filled the Warren and Kitchen Sink comic magazine reprints.

As mentioned, *The Spirit* lasted only 16 issues and was cancelled by Warren with the October 1976 issue. The title and numbering was then picked up by Kitchen Sink Press, which had earlier run two underground-style reprint comics of the character in 1972–1973. They continued the stories-printed-out-of-continuance style of the Warren comic magazine for another 25 issues before canceling the magazine with #41 in 1981. Kitchen Sink then started the aforementioned comic-book version which reprinted the entirety of the postwar tales in order. It wasn’t until DC Comics launched its *Spirit Archives* in the mid-2000s that the pre-war stories by Eisner and the 1942–1945 wartime stories that were done by others while Eisner was in the service were reprinted in chronological order.

COMIX INTERNATIONAL

Warren’s next title, *Comix International*, also debuted in 1974, cover-dated July. *Comix International* was a reprint title, collecting Warren’s eight-page color stories which had started appearing in all the Warren comic titles in 1973. This magazine featured thick, heavy, glossy paper pages to accommodate the groundbreaking coloring process. This time-consuming process, largely developed by Richard Corben (although other coloring techniques were tried as well), was, in the pre-computer coloring days, labor intensive but looked spectacular, especially compared to the four-color process that had been used on nearly all comics since the

1930s. When printed correctly, the result often looked as good as the far more expensive “Little Annie Fanny” pages in *Playboy*. *Comix International* lasted for five issues, featuring eight to ten stories per issue, and was largely sold via mail order. They’re fairly hard to obtain but are great-looking magazines. The use of the underground spelling of “comix” in the title is a bit puzzling, as none of the Warren titles (with one exception) had any real connection to the underground movement or its sensibility at all.

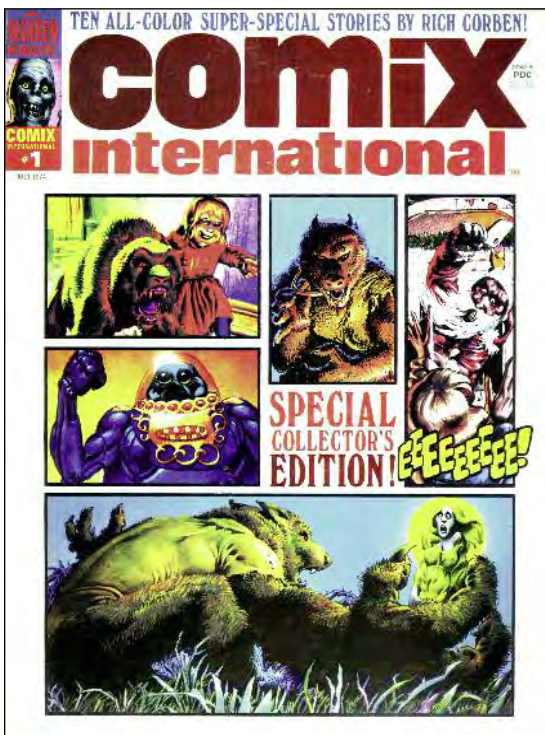
There were also a couple of one-shot specials that continued in the *Comix International* vein. The first—*The Spirit Special*—featured a collection of the color sections from *The Spirit* as well as the two color preview tales that had appeared in *Eerie*. The other—*The Vampirella Special*—featured Vampirella tales that had originally appeared in black and white and were colored especially for this title.

The only genuinely underground title that Warren published came next, in 1977. *The Odd World of Richard Corben* was an actual graphic collection that featured underground work by Corben from 1970–1976 that had not originally been published by Warren. Half of the book appeared in color. This was a distinct and rare oddity in the history of Warren Publications and, frankly, a pretty cool collection of Corben tales. It was described as an Adult Fantasy and sold only via mail order by Captain Company from the back pages in various Warren magazines. Captain Company was the Warren-owned mail-order company that sold back issues, horror and SF paperbacks, games, and various other items deemed to be of interest to Warren’s homegrown horror magazine readers.

WARREN PRESENTS

Warren Presents was the next regular title, and its history is a curious one. It started off in late 1977 as a series of four one-shot titles (called *UFO and Alien Comix*, *Future World Comix*, *Starquest Comix*, and *Galactic War Comix*). These four books all reprinted various SF stories that Warren had published over the years, and the titles were clearly influenced by the advent of the motion picture *Star Wars*, during a brief period in publishing when any comic book with a SF-sounding title sold like hotcakes. It was only in 1979, with #5, that the umbrella title of *Warren Presents* was debuted and the four earlier issues were declared to be part of a series.

Warren Presents continued reprinting mostly Warren’s science-fiction tales for the next three years, although two issues—#8 and 9—were largely composed of various film-related articles from *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. Three issues are rather noteworthy. Issue #6 featured the first collection of the Rook, a time-travel character that had been appearing in the pages of *Eerie* and which can be considered the prototype for the Rook’s later magazine. It featured an excellent original cover by Paul



Santa’s Got a Cleaver!

(left) *Comix International* #1 (July 1974), spotlighting horror-master Richard Corben. (right) Readers took their first look at the Rook in *Eerie* #82 (Mar. 1977). Cover by Luis Bermejo and Bill DuBay.

© 1974 Warren Publications. The Rook TM & © Time Castle Studios.



THE REVIVAL OF The ROOK™

by **Richard J. Arndt**
Information obtained both via email and
by phone interview, June 2015



[Editor's note: While publishing schedules did not allow this article to see print prior to the October 2015 revival of *The Rook*, we hope you'll enjoy the behind-the-scenes stories connected to this new version of the late Bill DuBay's durable creation.]

Only a day or so after I finished this issue's Warren magazines article, Ben DuBay contacted editor Michael Eury to let him know about the impending revival of his uncle Bill DuBay's time-traveling character, the Rook. The Rook and his cast of characters had been a mainstay of the late 1970s era of *Eerie* and had even headlined his own often-excellent magazine, *The Rook*, from 1979–1982. It's with considerable joy and interest that we join overseer Ben DuBay, writer Steven Grant, and artist Paul Gulacy to discuss the impending (at this writing) and accomplished (by the time this article appears) return of the Rook.

Ben DuBay is the manager of the holding company William B. DuBay LLC and production company Time Castle Studios, which hold the rights of Bill DuBay's estate interest in the character and has acquired the rights of Budd Lewis and negotiated with the others in the property. Before Bill DuBay's death in 2010, Bill left certain instructions for nephew Ben, and Ben has followed his uncle's instructions to the T. The Rook character is operated and guided under Time Castle Books, a company that was formed by Bill DuBay in the late 2000s to revive the character; unfortunately, Bill's health problems at the time interfered with Time Castle's original efforts to do so.

According to Ben, "Bill and Budd Lewis had gotten together in early 2009 to collect the original stories and maybe even create some new stories. They hadn't gotten around to publishing the new comics when Bill became ill in July—he found out July 2nd—and things changed rapidly as the disease took control. It was a very aggressive disease." Bill passed away the following April.

"People don't realize that the *Rook* magazine, because it was canceled with issue #14 or so, was actually Warren's bestselling magazine of the period," Ben says. "It outsold all the other Warren books: *Creepy*, *Eerie*, 1994, *Vampirella*, *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, all of them. When the Rook left *Eerie* for his own book, *Eerie* had a 17% decline of sales. By 1982 when *The Rook* was canceled, Uncle Bill, who was the editor and main writer, had gotten interested in doing animation and he'd been attending school for several years during that time period. His heart just wasn't in comics anymore. He was only editing the horror books intermittently at the time because Jim Warren literally had no one experienced enough to take over the daily grind. When he finally left all the various editor jobs in 1982, *The Rook* was outselling all the other Warren titles. He just didn't want that particular book to go on without him because he owned most of the character.

It's About Time!

Cover of *Dark Horse Presents* #14

(Sept. 2015), featuring the Rook's return.

Art by Paul Gulacy, colors by Jesus Aburto.

© Time Castle Studios.

Many of you probably wonder from time to time about the ratio of published vs. unpublished artwork from your favorite artist.

To be fair, it takes a true collector to identify all the published work from any artist (Ah! the pleasure of getting one's hands on an obscure drawing or fanzine we missed years ago!), and it takes a truly dedicated fan to thoroughly track the rarest and unpublished work from any artist.

A few years ago, I [Nicolas Waldmann] was fortunate enough to "e-meet" Dave Lemieux, a truly dedicated fan of Paul Gulacy and also a key contributor behind the Gulacy website (www.gulacy.com). Dave's research and our respective exchanges with Paul over the past few years, combined with online monitoring, form the basis of this article.

What follows is not exactly a checklist but rather references, stories, pictures, and anecdotes about the unpublished body of work from Paul Gulacy, world-renowned artist extraordinaire of *Batman*, *Master of Kung Fu*, and *Six from Sirius*, and co-creator of Marvel's *Coldblood*, among many others.

A few caveats, though: Firstly, we define "unpublished art" as work not published in the way or medium it was intended to be published in. As you will read, some of this unpublished artwork actually made it to print, but in a different format or publication. Secondly, "unpublished" may also mean that the concept or the art never actually came to life, so no visual is available.

THE 1970s: THE MASTER OF KUNG FU YEARS

Quick facts: Paul Gulacy's major contribution to the 1970s is dominated by his legendary run on *Master of Kung Fu*, and his early years horror stories published in *Dracula Lives!* and *Vampire Tales*.

Paul reports that he completed an unused horror story for Marvel in the 1970s that was written by Marv Wolfman that is probably in a file cabinet somewhere at Marvel.

An unused *Count Dracula* cover was produced by Paul for *Dracula Lives!* magazine by Marvel. The pencils to this cover were reproduced in *Marvel Preview* #24 in 1980.

In the mid-1970s, Paul completed a *Woman in Space* painting for *Now Magazine* (in the UK) that went unused, as it was deemed too sexy for the content material of the magazine.

Two pages were completed by Paul (in black and white) for a story called "Cupid" that was to have appeared in a Warren magazine. Page 1 of this delightful story is featured in this article.

In the late '70s, two pages were completed by Paul (in black and white) for a short story entitled "Circle of Life," intended for use in either *Epic Illustrated* or one of the Warren magazines. Due to its sexual content, we're unable to share that art in this magazine but wanted to mention it for the record.

The 1979 published cover painting to *Warren Presents* #2 by Gulacy, which features the Rook at the Alamo, eliminated all of the background details including the soldiers engaged in a fierce battle and the scene of the Alamo itself under siege. Only the Rook and his robot were featured in the published version by Warren. The entire painting was published, in color, in 2005 in the book *Spies, Vixens and Masters of Kung Fu: The Art of Paul Gulacy*.

On the topic of the Rook, Paul also completed a 20-page story for the first issue of *The Rook* magazine, published by Warren in 1979. The story was written by Bill DuBay but was never used. It was later

Woman in Space

From the mid-1970s, a painting produced by Paul Gulacy for the UK's *Now Magazine* considered too risqué for publication. Most art in this article is courtesy of its writers.

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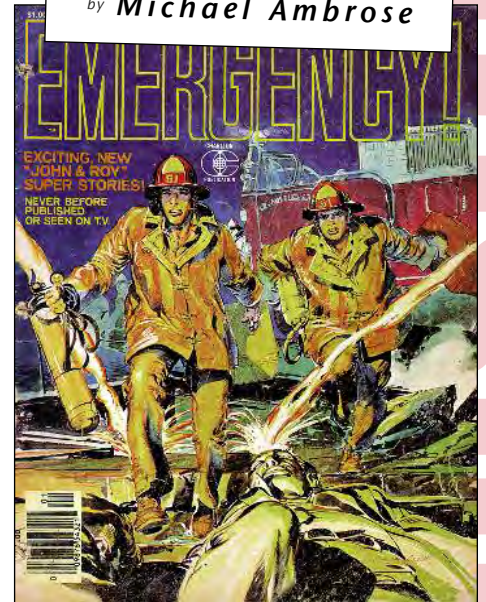
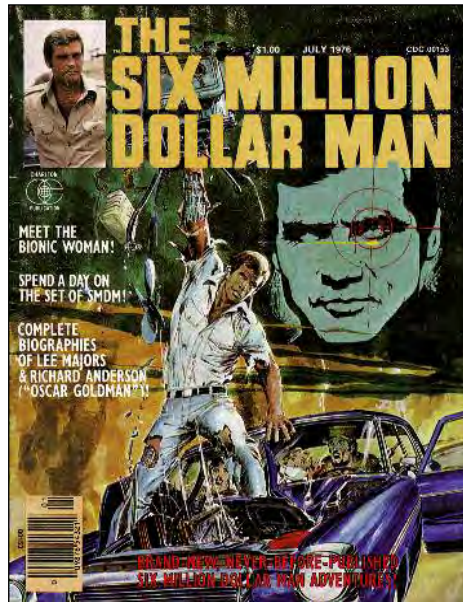
THE UNPUBLISHED PAUL GULACY

by **Dave Lemieux**
and **Nicolas Waldmann**



CHARLTON MAGAZINES OF THE 1970S

FlashBack!



by Michael Ambrose

When Marvel and DC launched full-size comics magazines in the 1970s to capture an important slice of the newsstand, second-tier publisher Charlton Comics was not about to be left behind. But Charlton was cautious. Its magazine line would consist of a mere three titles, all licensed from popular television series of the time: *Space: 1999*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, and *Emergency!*

Charlton was no stranger to magazine publishing. Founded in 1942 with the first "legitimate" issue of *Hit Parader*, Charlton Publications' main business was, first and last, magazines ("legitimate" because Charlton's cofounder, John Santangelo, had spent a year in jail for ignoring copyrights and publishing unsanctioned song-lyric magazines for years). A sampling of Charlton's 1970s magazine titles shows a wide range of popular interests served: alongside the venerable *Hit Parader* was such fare as *Real West*, *Official Karate*, *911 Detective*, *Country Song Roundup*, *Skyjack*, *Sick* (another *MAD* imitator), a bushel basketful of crossword puzzle and craft magazines, and much, much more—whatever was topical. Unique among comics publishers then and now, Charlton was entirely self-contained: content, editorial, production, printing, advertising, and distribution were all literally under one factory roof in small-town Derby, Connecticut.

Charlton's comic-book line, begun in 1944 and developed slowly and haphazardly over time, existed primarily to keep the presses running three full shifts. Nicola Cuti, Charlton assistant comics editor and staff writer in the early '70s, recalled this about the comics in his interview in *Charlton Spotlight* #8 (2014): "They were just fodder to keep the presses going. They only closed the presses twice a year to clean them, so they were running continuously, 24 hours a day, and they needed material." Magazines poured from those presses in a continuous flood for decades. Comic books filled unscheduled press time.

Over time the comics became a bigger concern and an important source of revenue, with worldwide licensing and distribution. By 1976, Charlton was publishing nearly 50 bimonthly comic titles, with per-issue print runs

in the hundreds of thousands. It held licenses from King Features, Hanna-Barbera, Jay Ward Productions, and others, alongside its own original titles in a variety of genres. The comics had always served a younger and perhaps less sophisticated comics audience, though by then discerning comics fans were following innovative, offbeat Charlton offerings like *E-Man*, *The Phantom*, and *Doomsday+1* by fresh young talents such as Cuti, Joe Staton, John Byrne, Mike Zeck, Paul Kupperberg, and Don Newton. Charlton didn't pay much, but it was friendly to up-and-comers, and to say the least it offered wide latitude to flex creative muscles on the comics page.

SPACE: 1999

So what could be more natural than to expand the regular comic-book line to a comics-magazine line? According to Cuti, as interviewed in *Comic Book Artist* #12 (Mar. 2001), the reasoning was "basically, to try and reach a more adult audience. ... The biggest buyers of comics were not the kids anymore, but college students." In mid-1975, executive editor George Wildman dispatched Cuti to New York to watch the premiere of an interesting new science-fiction TV show and report back on its potential for comics adaptation. "I'll never forget the time I sent Nick to New York, to see this new show coming up called *Space: 1999*," Wildman recalled in *Comic Book Artist* #12. "I said, 'When you get done, tell me if this is as good as—or equal to—*Star Trek*.' He comes back, 'Oh, man, it was off the wall. It was wonderful.'"

British science-fiction TV series *Space: 1999* ran for two seasons, originally airing from 1975 to 1977 with no regular network syndication, which often made it difficult to find in local TV programming, depending on where in the country (or the world) one lived. Created and developed by Gerry and Sylvia Anderson (known for such innovative "Supermarionation" series as *Fireball XLS*, *Supercar*, and *Thunderbirds* and the live-action show *UFO*), the series was coproduced with British ITV and Italian RAI and starred Martin Landau, Barbara Bain, and Barry Morse

Charlton's TV Magazines

Photorealistic painted covers grace these three premiere issues: *Space: 1999* #1 (Nov. 1975), cover by Gray Morrow; *The Six Million Dollar Man* #1 (July 1976), cover by Neal Adams; and *Emergency!* #1 (July 1976), cover by Adams. Unless otherwise noted, all scans for this article are courtesy of Michael Ambrose.

Space: 1999 TM & © ITV Studios.
Six Million Dollar Man
TM & © Universal Studios.
Emergency! TM & © Mark VII Ltd.
& Universal Studios.

ONCE THE MOST PEACEFUL SATELLITE IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM, THE EMBLEM OF PEACE AND LOVE TO ALL PEOPLES ON PLANET EARTH, NOW IT WAS 1999 AND THE MOON WAS CAREENING THROUGH SPACE, THE 311 INHABITANTS OF MOONBASE ALPHA DESPERATELY SEEKING A HOME... A PLACE LIKE EARTH WHERE THEY COULD BEGIN LIFE ANEW... WHERE HOMO SAPIENS COULD FALL IN LOVE, MARRY, HAVE HOMES... AND MAKE A NEW AND BETTER WORLD.

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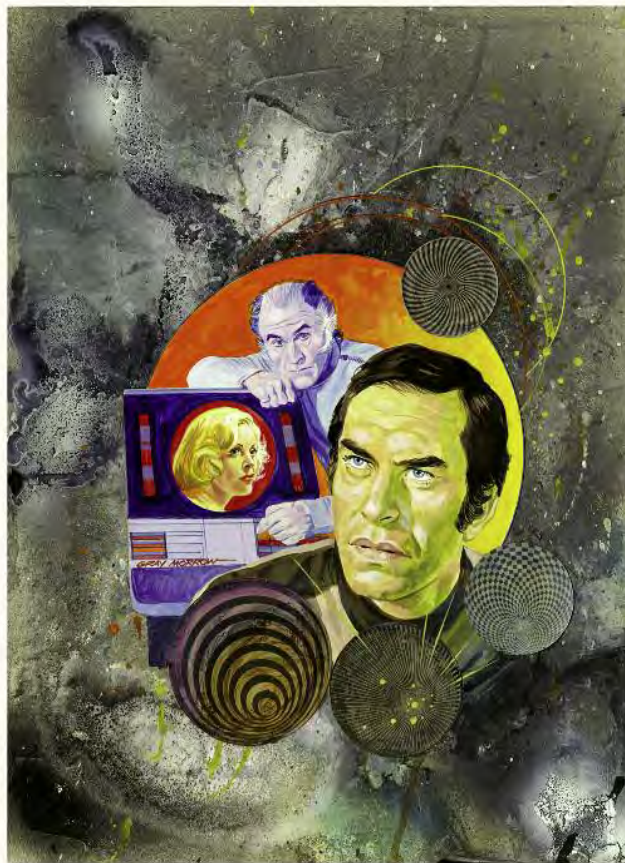


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D-7311

STORY: JOE GILL



struggling to survive on Moonbase Alpha after the Moon has been thrown out of orbit by an explosion and flung into deep space. Charlton secured the rights for both a regular comic book and a magazine version of the show. According to Cuti, "The way it worked was we had gotten the license from Hanna-Barbera, of all people—they were the go-betweens with ITC. ... We got the license through H-B, because we had been doing H-B comics."

The first magazine issue of *Space: 1999* was cover-dated November 1975, a painted cover by Gray Morrow fronting its 68 pages of full-length black-and-white comics stories and text features. "George and I were discussing who we'd like to get to be the artists on the [comic-book version]," Cuti recalled. Joe Staton, John Byrne, and Pat Boyette would handle art on the comic book, with scripts by Cuti and Byrne. "But for the magazine, we wanted someone who had more of an illustrator's style." Cuti recommended Gray Morrow. "I left Gray to do it all on his own, and whatever he couldn't handle himself, if there was too much work, he would hand it to some other artist." Morrow contributed a majority of the story art, including painted covers for its entire run, with Vicente Alcazar, Adolfo Buylla, Carlos Pino, Ed Davis, Dick Ayers, Carl Potts, Doug Beekman, and Jack Sparling handling the overflow. Scripts were by Cuti, Joe Gill, and Mike Pellowski. The magazine offered an entertaining mix of SF adventures with close illustrative likenesses of the show's stars, features on the show's premise and cast, and even science articles. *Space: 1999* would run eight issues from November 1975 to October 1976, bimonthly for the first four issues and monthly beginning with #5 (July 1976). The *Space: 1999* comic book ran for seven bimonthly issues from November 1975 to November 1976.

ONE CYBORG AND TWO RESCUE RANGERS

With *Space: 1999* an apparent sales success, Charlton looked toward two more hot TV properties to expand into its new comics magazine line: *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *Emergency! The Six Million Dollar Man*, based on the Martin Caidin novel *Cyborg*, was produced by Universal Television and aired on the ABC network for five highly popular seasons from 1974 to 1978. It starred Lee Majors as Col. Steve Austin, rebuilt as a cyborg with various bionic powers after a deadly test-plane crash, and Richard Anderson as his boss at superspy agency O.S.I. Midway in the series the Bionic Woman was introduced, played by Lindsay Wagner, who eventually received her own spinoff show. Both characters would feature in Charlton comics adaptations.

Emergency! was the brainchild of cop TV show giants Jack Webb and R. A. Cinader (*Dragnet*, *Adam-12*) and was a coproduction of Webb's Mark VII Limited and Universal Television. It starred Randolph Mantooth and Kevin Tighe as paramedics attached to a Los Angeles fire station, a new concept in both TV and reality at the time. It ran from 1972 to 1977 and, like *The Six Million Dollar Man*, had high audience ratings. Acquiring comics licenses for both series was a real coup for Charlton. Production for both the comic-book and magazine versions of the series would be handled, at least initially, by Neal Adams' and Dick Giordano's Continuity Associates.

Recollections differ on how Charlton and Continuity came together on the deal. Giordano and Wildman, in their interviews in *Comic Book Artist* #9 (Aug. 2000) and #12, respectively, said that Charlton approached Continuity; it was the other way around, according to Adams in his interview with Jerry Boyd elsewhere in this magazine and also according to Cuti in his *CBA* #12

Gonna Moonbase Like It's 1999

(top) From *Space: 1999* #1 (Nov. 1975), "Seeds of Doubt," page 1, art by Gray Morrow, script by Joe Gill. (bottom) Original painted cover art for *Space: 1999* #5 (July 1976) by Gray Morrow. Original art courtesy Heritage Auctions (www.ha.com). (opposite) A quartet of Charlton mag painted covers, in original art form from the Heritage archives: (top left) *The Six Million Dollar Man* (SMDM) #3 (Nov. 1976), cover by Jack Sparling; SMDM #4 (Jan. 1977), cover by Earl Norem; (bottom left) SMDM #5 (May 1977), cover by Norem; and (bottom right) *Emergency!* #4 (Jan. 1977), cover by Norem.

Space: 1999 TM & © ITV Studios. *Six Million Dollar Man* TM & © Universal Studios. *Emergency!* TM & © Mark VII Ltd. & Universal Studios.

Neal Adams

DISCUSSES CHARLTON, DICK GIORDANO, AND CONTINUITY STUDIOS

by Jerry Boyd



NEAL ADAMS

In the 1970s, Neal Adams was everywhere. He blew my mind and millions of others' with brilliant work on Batman, Green Lantern, Detective Comics, and The Avengers. Those were just the superheroes! He also made time for deliriously atmospheric mystery/horror tales that showed up in Tower of Shadows, House of Mystery, Dracula Lives!, and The Witching Hour, among others. Over at Warren Publishing, his work could be found in Creepy and Eerie Annals and new work in Vampirella.

By the mid-'70s, however, the comic world was sorely missing Neal. He'd gone into business with Dick Giordano, and the pair mentored a number of young talents at Continuity Studios. From there, Neal's Charlton Comics period began with work on The Six Million Dollar Man and Emergency! Both magazines were based on popular TV shows. Neal graciously consented to a phone interview conducted on July 31, 2013.

— Jerry Boyd

JERRY BOYD: Charlton paid the lowest rates for art.

NEAL ADAMS: Not for us! Not for us! [laughter]

BOYD: Why did you do Emergency! for them? Did you drive over to the Derby offices?

ADAMS: No, we didn't drive up for them. We contacted them by phone and they paid us well. We let them know it was a top priority job for us and that we'd please them with the project and the finished work. It was a lucrative project, probably because it was studio-generated. Charlton paid "double-normal." We got \$100 a

page for that magazine. I believe our artists got \$50 a page and \$50 went into the company. We had the two things—*Six Million Dollar Man* and *Emergency!* There were about 55 pages and we knocked our butts off to do a very good job. These were, as you know, hot properties.

BOYD: Did you ever watch the shows? If so, what were your impressions?

ADAMS: I would guess our family would watch them on and off. As an artist, we had to get the likenesses right. We had the photos the show provided, however, but no one ever asked, "Hey, did you see *The Six Million Dollar Man* or *Emergency!* last night?" We had notes on the shows, photos to work from, and written scripts. They weren't difficult to do.

BOYD: Did you want the Emergency! and Six Million Dollar Man projects to continue?

ADAMS: I thought they were good projects for the studio, our studio, but I don't know how profitable it was for Charlton. Our freelance assistant guys were making income beyond their regular projects. Art-wise, it was good for them. These were their first jobs and their samples, really. They could show copies of these finished pages around as their work, so from that standpoint, I was happy for them that they'd done these books.

BOYD: Any recollections of Pat Boyette, Steve Ditko, Tom Sutton, Sanho Kim, or others from Charlton?

ADAMS: No, those guys were essentially out of there by the time our studio was going strong. Steve Ditko came to DC, I believe...

Bionic Catfight

An impressive action cover prelim by Neal Adams for Charlton's *The Six Million Dollar Man* #2 (Sept. 1976).

Six Million Dollar Man TM & © Universal Studios.



epic ILLUSTRATED



by John K. Kirk

When thinking about Marvel's *Epic Illustrated* (1980–1986), what immediately comes to mind is the staggeringly innovative and daring art boasted by this magazine. While this phenomenal publication featured seasoned pros' and emerging artists' work, it included new writers, novel perspectives on existing characters from the Marvel stable, daring new story models, and topics that would have been impossible to cover under the restrictions of the Comics Code Authority.

Epic was a novel approach to graphic storytelling that required immense vision and imaginative conceptual ability in a framework that was light-years ahead of its time. At the time, Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter entrusted the care of this magazine to the person who epitomized these attributes: Archie Goodwin (1937–1998). Looking at the formulation of this magazine lends not only insight into the creative abilities of this widely venerated editor and writer, but also into the wide range of fantastic talents that were at Marvel's disposal during



ARCHIE GOODWIN

this time in the publisher's history.

We need to visit each of these issues in order to gain a sense of the odyssey that Goodwin provided for *Epic's* readers, and in this article I will survey some of the high points from each issue. But first, we need to understand a bit of Archie Goodwin's vision.

In the March 1980 edition of *Comics Feature*, Goodwin was featured in an interview about *Epic Illustrated*. The first question involved how *Epic* would be different from the European graphic album *Heavy Metal*. Goodwin responded by pointing out how important it was that the stories reflected the same level of quality as the art. While Goodwin wanted *Epic* to be "visually spectacular," there was a mix of storytelling in the magazine that was either straightforward serial stories or stories that were "wilder, in terms of layout and page design." In short, *Epic* was designed to stand out from the competition and present a North American comic-reading audience with something that had never really been seen before in the marketplace.

AN EPIC FIRST ISSUE

Issue #1 (Spring 1980) certainly delivers with its sword-and-sorcery cover, by legendary artist Frank Frazetta, featuring a squadron of heavily armed and well-hewed Roman Legionnaires ready for combat. As an opening shot in the first salvo that was to be *Epic's* five-year barrage, Frazetta's cover completely captures the imaginations of fantasy readers in the comic-reading audience.

"The Answer," a tale of the Silver Surfer, is the first story we read in this issue, featuring art by John Buscema and story by Stan Lee himself, who also gives his endorsement of Marvel's new experiment in an

"A New Experience"

Epic Illustrated #1 (Spring 1980). Cover by Frank Frazetta. 'Nuff said!

Epic Illustrated TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.





Issue #11 sees "Run for the Stars," another episode of Ellison and Steacy's Earth-Kyba War. [Editor's note: Their collaboration was collected in the 1988 graphic novel *Night and the Enemy*, published by Comico the Comic Company.] *Weirdworld* continues, and Archie Goodwin provides a testimonial to the pioneering art of Wally Wood, remembering the trailblazing artist who had recently taken his own life. Robert Rodi's "Advice to a Barbarian" is a very entertaining short. Illustrated by Joe Jusko, this story puts a new twist on the typical strong-armed barbarian fantasy tale. All in all, not bad for the third anniversary issue of this astounding magazine.

Weirdworld continues in issue #12 (June 1982), as does *Marada*. However, this issue's installment of "Gameview" by Steven Grant talks about the rightwing attack on various aspects of fantasy and science fiction in American society. Grant cites Jerry Falwell's objections to various titles (though he doesn't list them) and the parent groups on the *Phil Donahue Show* that were dedicated to stamping out games like *Dungeons & Dragons*. It is a real time capsule of American societal reactions to sci-fi and fantasy literature in all its incarnations.

Now, to issue #13 (Aug. 1982): What made *Epic* so groundbreaking was its refusal to simply be an entertainment magazine. Not only did it include social topics (as in the "Gameview" article for the previous issue), but it also looked at relevant mainstream science fiction and fantasy. For example, Archie Goodwin's article in issue #13 on reviewing the comic adaptation of the cult favorite sci-fi film *Blade Runner* is not only informative and relevant, but also illustrates the breadth of Goodwin's talent. Not only was he a superb creator in his own right, but he also showed himself to be an adaptable editor and critic as well.

Chris Claremont recalls working with Goodwin:

"He was ... the best. He was the best. You know, one of the best people, the best writers, the best editors. Much like Stan, there was little he couldn't do that he couldn't do better than anybody. And he was a remarkably decent, nice guy. So you couldn't argue with him even when he was wrong, because nine times out of ten he wasn't, and he was so charming about it that you were just knocked off your feet."

Epic #14 (Oct. 1982) continues to present Rick Veitch's *Abraxas and the Earthman* saga. However, we also see Roy Thomas returning to *Elic*, illustrated by P. Craig Russell. Thomas adapts Moorcock's *While the Gods Laugh*, in which we see a despondent Elic mourning the loss of his cousin and love.

However, *Elic* is filled with a new vigor after the visit of a seductive supplicant to recover a lost sorcerous tome, pointing him toward some answers to his own questions. Russell's is a dynamic version of *Elic*.

What is really striking about this issue is its speculative coverage of the third installment of George Lucas' *Star Wars* film trilogy, with its anticipated title of *Revenge of the Jedi*. This is of historical significance, of course, as the title was changed to *Return of the Jedi*, but the preview article, despite only showing three pre-production images painted by Ralph McQuarrie, would have been enough to have had *Star Wars* fans slaving to get a hold of it.

The December 1982 issue (#15) is a real Christmas treat! Not only do we see the return of Jim Starlin's *Vanth Dreadstar* in a new adventure, but John Bolton and Graham Marks treat us to another tale of the underwater *Llehs*. We get an interview with legendary artist Boris Vallejo (who painted this issue's cover), but we also get

Tantalizing Treehouse

Original art (courtesy of Heritage) for a breathtaking double-page spread from writer Doug Moench's *Weirdworld* saga *The Dragonmaster of Klarn*: "A Game the Gods Play," from *Epic* #9. Art by John Buscema and Marie Severin. *Weirdworld* returned to Marvel Comics as part of 2015's *Secret Wars* storyline.

Weirdworld TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

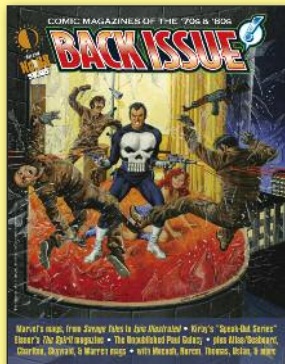


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by Robert Greenberger



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Growing up a comics fan in the early 1970s meant you could learn about the doings in the comics business by subscribing to Don and Maggie Thompson's *Newfangles* or Paul Levitz's *Etcetera* and *The Comic Reader*. All offered news and commentary and fueled endless discussions when two or more fans got together. In 1973, Levitz sold *TCR* to Jerry Sinkovec and Mike Tiefenbacher, while Alan Light's predominantly ad-based *The Buyers' Guide* added news and commentary of their own. After *Newfangles* faded away, the Thompsons moved their newsgathering to *TBG* under the headline *Beautiful Balloons* and in time wound up running the joint. They were soon after joined by Murray Bishoff's "What Now?" column until he was succeeded by cat yronwode, with issue #329 (Mar. 7, 1980), who retitled the column "Fit to Print." She was the Rich Johnston of her day.

Jim Steranko went beyond his two-volume history of the comics to introducing *Comixscene* in late 1972, widening its focus and changing its title a year later to *Mediascene*. He covered movies, television, books, and comics with an insider's knowledge, aided by reporters like Dave McDonnell (the former *TBG* news columnist who did "Media Report") and Steranko's right-hand man, Ken Bruzenak, before Ken became a premier letterer. In 1980, the publication was reimaged as a slick magazine, *Prevue*, but it limped along until it faded away for good in 1985.

Gary Groth went from producing the slick *Fantastic Fanzine* to owning *The Nostalgia Journal*, and in 1977 changed its title to *The Comics Journal*, launching the Fantagraphics publishing empire, aided by Kim Thompson and Michael Catron. The magazine's increasing sophistication and coverage went beyond the four-color titles from the major publishers to the point in 1981 where they created the spinoff *Amazing Heroes*, which served up superhero creator interviews, previews, and reviews to satisfy the most rabid reader.

With the advent of comic shops and direct-sale distribution, more publishers were arriving with regularity, which increased demand for knowledge about them and their wares. Distributor-turned-publisher Hal Schuster launched *Comics Feature* in 1980, initially edited by Carol Kalish and Richard Howell. Formatted like *TCJ* yet with a more fannish sensibility, it sputtered along, ending after 57 issues in mid-1987.

Various retail chains started up their own newsletters for their readership, the best of the lot being *Comics & Comix's The Telegraph Wire* handled by Diana Schutz, just before she began her august comics editorial career.

During this time, I, too, was in transition from fan to staffer at Starlog Press. Although hired to be *Fangoria's* managing editor, I was also contributing to *Starlog*, and both magazines covered comic books to a degree.

The Men from Marvel

Stan Lee and Jim Shooter, and friends, gather to celebrate the House of Ideas' birthday on the cover of *Comics Scene* #1 (Jan. 1982).

Scan courtesy of John Wells.

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