

COMICS' BRONZE AGE AND BEYOND!

# BACK ISSUE!

TWO MONTHS  
October 2013  
No. 68  
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BATES ★ GIFFEN ★ GRELL ★ LEVITZ ★ LaROCQUE ★ LIGHTLE ★ AND MORE!



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SPECIAL LEGION IN THE '70s AND '80s ISSUE

Volume 1,  
Number 68  
October 2013

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

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# BACKISSUE

Comics' Bronze Age and Beyond!



# LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES

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The Bronze Age Legion in an Alex Ross painting for a 1999 limited edition print. TM & © DC Comics. All rights reserved.

# MOVE OVER, SUPERBOY! (AND TELL LEGION FANDOM THE NEWS!) THE RESURGENCE OF

# LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES™

## DURING THE BRONZE AGE OF COMICS

by Jim "Comics Boy"  
Kingman



To be a true fan of the Legion of Super-Heroes you must endure shock, dismay, and disappointment alongside unconditional love and loyalty for the young super-team of the 30th Century. I learned this as I gradually developed into a dedicated fan of the Legion beginning with "Curse of the Blood-Crystals!" in DC's *Superboy* #188 (July 1972). As the series progressed through the Bronze Age of Comics, it was often reinforced that *anything* could happen with the characters—good, bad, and tragic. *Anything* could disrupt the consistency of the creators involved, abruptly, albeit effectively. And *anything* could upend the Legion's tenancy in any given title they precariously called home: Would they stay or would they go or did they blow; with sometimes all of the above clashing simultaneously. I wasn't there for the first great shock to the system of Legion fans near the dawn of the Bronze Age, but it was indeed a jolt, the beginning of many to come. It's where this look back at the Legion from 1968 to 1979 will begin.

### FALL FROM GRACE

There was a transition period at the end of the Silver Age, a two-year juncture, 1968 to 1969, wherein dramatic changes at DC and Marvel set the stage for what is considered by many the official beginning of the Bronze Age with the publication of *Green Lantern* (co-starring Green Arrow) #76 in February of 1970. Artist Carmine Infantino settled into his new post as editorial director at National Periodicals Publications (now DC); Marvel Comics went with a different distribution company, no longer shackled in that respect to its biggest competitor, DC; editor Joe Orlando revamped *House of Mystery* and *House of Secrets*; Gardner Fox and John Broome, two of editor Julius Schwartz's long-standing writers, were dismissed; and Wonder Woman surrendered her powers and costume to become a more down-to-Earth, Emma Peel-style crimefighter.

As these and other comics-related events took shape during 1968, the Legion of Super-Heroes feature in *Adventure Comics* was at the tail end of a creative surge. The series, starring a powerful group of super-teens battling evil in the far-flung future of the 30th Century, and also featuring a time-traveling Superboy (Superman as a teen) from the 20th Century, had been going strong for many years, much to the delight of the Legion's loyal fans (the Legion debuted in *Adventure Comics* #247, Apr. 1958, and began their ongoing series in *Adventure* #300, Sept. 1962). The imaginative sparks were fading, however, as the year wore on. Furthermore, 1969 delivered a sudden, drastic change to the LSH, providing a severe letdown to followers of the team.

### The Artist Who Saved the Legion

A vocal fan base helped nudge a marginally interested editor toward the Legion's slow climb back into the limelight—but it was the art of Dave Cockrum that galvanized those fans and helped the LSH squeeze the Teen of Steel out of the title he had headlined since 1949.

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## The Lean Years

(right) A mere logo crawl was the only mention the LSH got as the *Action* backup. (left) Legion fans had to grin and bear it in the early '70s, but this Giant—*Adventure* #403 (Mar.–Apr. 1971), with a cover by Curt Swan and Murphy Anderson—was a reminder of better days.

TM & © DC Comics.

It was announced in the letters column of *Adventure Comics* #380 (May 1969) that the Legion would be moving to *Action Comics*, beginning with the June cover-dated issue. Along with this shift, Supergirl moved from the back of *Action* to the front of *Adventure*, with the Maid of Steel now promoted to full-length starring status. The Legion, with its membership and page count of 23 in *Adventure*, had in effect been demoted to ten to 12 pages per issue of *Action*.

"Sadly, the last handful of *Adventure* stories 'earned' that demotion," explains *BACK ISSUE* editor Michael Eury, and one-time editor of *Legion of Super-Heroes*. "By that point, editor Mort Weisinger was tired and marking time toward retirement, and the stories showed his fatigue. Win Mortimer wasn't a good artistic match for the Legion, although I fondly remember his Tornado Twins tale."

The Legion appeared in new adventures in *Action Comics* #378–387 and 389–392, with issues #377 and 388 containing LSH reprints from earlier issues of *Adventure Comics*. Writer Jim Shooter also shifted over from

*Adventure* to chronicle the Legion's exploits, then left the series with #384. E. Nelson Bridwell, Weisinger's assistant editor and Superman family historian supreme, came on board, while newcomer Cary Bates slipped in a few tales. Mortimer illustrated all the stories and Jack Abel provided the majority of the inks. As was common practice in Weisinger's books, no creator credits were provided. A complete list of credits appeared in the contents page of *Legion of Super-Heroes Archives* vol. 9 (DC Comics, 1999).

While the Legion shared a text banner with Superman above the *Action* logo heralding the group's interior appearances, the team never usurped from the Man of Steel his full cover-artwork status. To compensate for potential over-crowding in their own series, under-developed Legionnaires were spotlighted in tightly plotted skits, with the roll call ranging from three to five members.

Saturn Girl, a Legion founder, received a new look with a new costume in *Action* #392, a harbinger of a racier fashion blitz to come. Invisible Kid, one of the more popular members, saw no action in *Action*, an ominous harbinger in its own right.



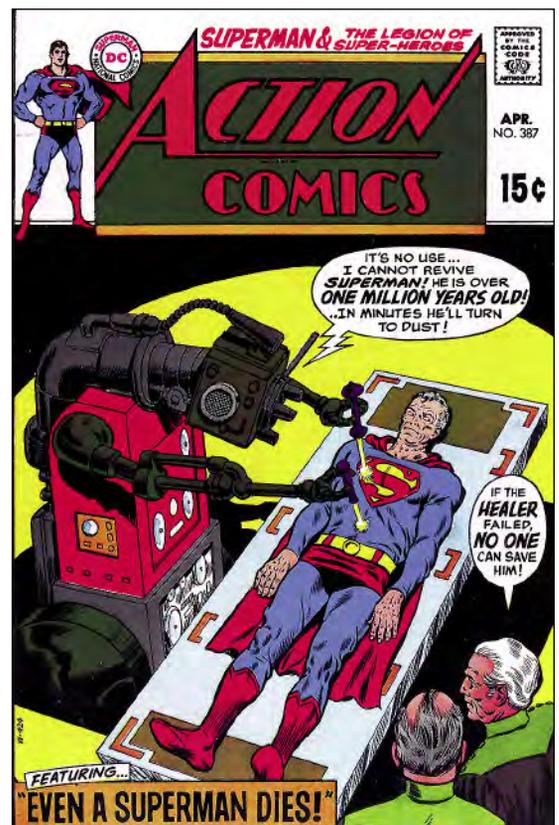
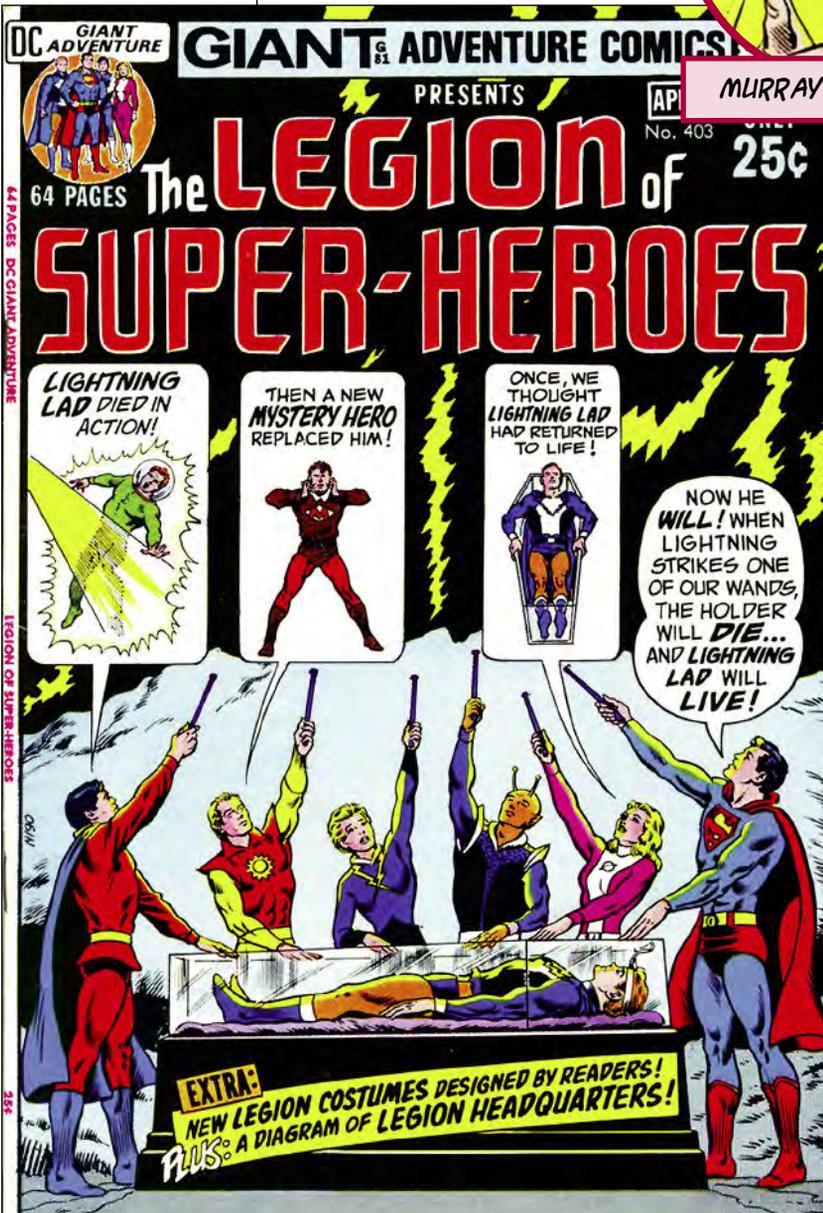
MURRAY BOLTINOFF

© DC Comics.

## A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

When Weisinger retired from DC in 1970, editor Murray Boltinoff took over *Action* and gave Superman the entire book. The Legion of Super-Heroes quietly entered comic-book limbo, much to the greater shock and dismay of the team's fans.

It may seem a little silly and nostalgic now, this loyalty to the Legion. Even as I write this, I'm having some trouble putting a proper perspective on it. Yet, there is something truly special about the Legion of Super-Heroes. In those days, they were a team of teens marketed to, mostly, adolescent boys who weren't quite teenagers



By *Superboy* #193, Bates and Cockrum had settled into their roles as the Legion's ongoing creative team. In that issue's "War Between the Nights and Days," in one seemingly uneventful panel wherein members of the LSH were seated and paying intense attention to Brainiac 5, the team suddenly graduated to older, hipper, gaudier, and just plain cool. Cockrum, via an unseen robo-sewing machine, introduced colorful new costumes for Karate Kid, Chameleon Boy, and Shrinking Violet. An unidentified Legionnaire that was actually a miscolored Matter-Eater Lad also appeared, in a red outfit (instead of green) that to this day I wish he had kept. A few panels later, Duo Damsel sported a downright sexy uniform, tailored specifically for the mission at hand (she kept it). The Legion no longer looked antiquated—they looked ahead of their time.

Meanwhile, DC introduced a reprint line in December 1972, part of now-publisher Infantino's initiative to glut the nation's comic-book spinner racks with as many titles as Marvel was then churning out. *Legion of Super-Heroes* #1 reprinted "The Lad Who Wrecked the Legion" from *Adventure Comics* and a Tommy Tomorrow feature from *Action Comics*, and also included a Legion Membership List (which was required every few years as new readers came on board and fans needed to catch up) and selected passages from the Legion Constitution, all behind a dramatic Nick Cardy cover, the first all-new cover artwork featuring the Legion since their last appearance in *Adventure Comics* in early 1968. A good year for the Legion, indeed.

### CATCHING ON LIKE ... WELL, YOU KNOW

It only got better for the team in 1973.

Okay, so the reprint book lasted only four issues and the Legion didn't appear in a new story until March, but the story that eventually appeared in the back of *Superboy* #195 (June 1973) was remarkably good. "The One-Shot Hero" introduced Legion fans to ERG (Energy Release Generator)-1, the newest Legion applicant. In his civilian identity of Drake Burroughs, he was involved in an industrial accident that transformed him into anti-energy. Scientists were able to contain the energy in a specially designed containment suit that was colorful enough to blend in with any new Legion uniform. ERG-1's power could easily duplicate any single Legionnaire's powers, but the only power he could call his own he swore not to use. For that he was disqualified as an applicant. He later stowed away on a Legion cruiser that had embarked on an important mission. ERG-1's power was heroically revealed but it cost him his life, punctuated by a dramatic last panel depicting his empty uniform.

There are also some nice subtle touches in this story. A young boy sports an original Captain Marvel costume. Chronos, the long-time Atom villain, can be seen walking the streets of Metropolis. A young gentleman appears to be clad in duds that bear some resemblance to a *Star Trek* or Thunderbirds uniform. The LSH headquarters' street

address is revealed to be 344 Clinton Street, where stood the apartment that Clark Kent resided in 1,000 years before.

The good times continued with the announcement of a full-length Legion tale to be published sometime during the summer. What I, and many Legion fans, didn't see coming was an abrupt, unexpected, and fantastic change to *Superboy* with #197 (Sept. 1973): The cover title became *Superboy starring the Legion of Super-Heroes*, and to herald this new beginning was another dramatic Nick Cardy cover, depicting Timber Wolf in battle with his fellow Legionnaires.

"After *Superboy/LSH* #197, I think I probably felt there wasn't anything left for Legion fandom to fight for," recalls Mike Flynn, whose newsletter *The Legion Fan Club*, first published in 1972, evolved into *The Legion Outpost*, the premier Legion fanzine of the 1970s. "Except maybe for respect. I know that the comics professionals of the early-to-mid-1970s looked at us like we were annoying younger siblings. I think individually, many of us continued fighting for better stories.

Boltinoff helped to fight for the Legion based on our whining, but wasn't a fan of continuity the way many of us were at the time."

*Superboy starring the Legion of Super-Heroes* #197–202 comprise the Legion stories I recall most fondly. In #197, a brainwashed Timber Wolf attempted to assassinate the president of Earth, but that was just a decoy—he was also programmed by a new villain, Tyr, to annihilate the Legion. In the



DAVE COCKRUM

Portrait by Michael Netzer.



### Fan Favorite Lad

Detail from the cover of *Legion of Super-Heroes Archives* vol. 11, featuring (left to right) Karate Kid, Princess Projectra, Wildfire, Timber Wolf, and Dream Girl. These and the images on page 3 (from *LSH Archives* vol. 10) were produced as single-character renderings by Dave Cockrum and used in print and licensing.

TM & © DC Comics.

Lad and Saturn Girl were married (ANCE #C-55). It was indeed a very happening year for the popular team, although Tyroc, not a Levitz favorite, only appeared in ANCE #C-55.

"I wanted to push away from the more *Star Trek*-influenced feeling that I got from Cary's stories," recalls Levitz. "Sherman is a very talented artist, heavily leaning to the illustrator side of the scale, with a great skill at subtle expressions much like Curt Swan, so I tried to play that."

Levitz, however, wasn't impressed by his own contributions. "I felt I did badly on my first run," he tells *BACK ISSUE*. "I was overcommitted, so there were way too many collaborative scripts or fill-ins; and unrelated to that, we never managed to keep the art assignments smooth. When I finished, I was definitely disappointed in myself. My favorite is probably the Infinite Man story. Sherman did a gorgeous on it."

Meanwhile, filling in those gaps were Gerry Conway, who wrote issues #227, 232, and 234, and Jim Starlin, who wrote and penciled #239. *Superboy/LSH* contained a reprint of *Adventure Comics* #459-460, highlighted by an outstanding Starlin wraparound cover.

While the Legion had plenty of exposure in 1977, pretty much every DC title and character peaked in 1977, because in 1978 the DC Explosion and Implosion occurred, dramatically altering and scaling back the company's publishing landscape. The year didn't start out that way, however, as the Legion remained on a creative roll.

*Superboy/LSH* #239 (May 1978) was a dramatic departure from all previous creative styles. There is intensity to writer/artist Starlin's style that meshed well with his brand of cosmic storytelling. It suited the Legion better than I anticipated. Starlin provided a murder mystery involving an accused Ultra Boy that set the stage for one of the wildest Legion revelations to be chronicled, though that was still several months down the road.

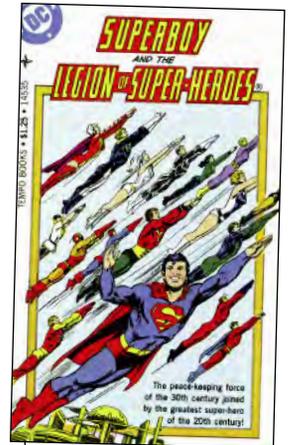
Levitz wound down his first tenure on the Legion with an outstanding epic "Earth War," that spanned five issues and effectively shifted from intriguing political overtones to a dramatic battle against Mordru the Merciless.

## UNSTABLE MOLECULES

Levitz's departure with #245 and the aftereffects of the DC Implosion forced the book into a seemingly directionless period. Al Milgrom, who had come on board as Legion editor in the middle of Levitz's run to replace O'Neil, was dismissed and replaced by Jack C. Harris. After Milgrom's departure, four different writers handled the Legion's adventures over six months. Len Wein came on board briefly, Levitz provided two backup tales, and then Conway was announced as ongoing writer. As 1979 commenced, Starlin returned as "Steve Apollo" (he wasn't happy with aspects of the finished product) to tie up loose ends from #239. This follow-up was originally slated as a *Legion Spectacular* under the official *DC Special Series* title, but was changed to consecutive issues of *Superboy/LSH*, #250-251. The DC Implosion caused a hiatus of *DC Special Series*. Starlin's tale was not destined for the shelf, however. It had shock value and repercussions to rattle even the most hardened Legion fan. It also had competition.

This was the year that very bad things happened to very good people in the DC Universe. Batwoman, Mr. Terrific of Earth-Two, and Iris Allen, the Flash's wife, were murdered. No Legionnaires died in Starlin's two-parter, but he took an equally disturbing route: Brainiac 5 was revealed as the mastermind behind Ultra Boy's murder rap. He had also gone quite insane, intent on destroying the universe, or ruling it. Legion headquarters was destroyed when Wildfire utilized his own energy in an attempt to destroy Brainy's creation, Omega, and then Matter-Eater Lad was driven mad when he ate the Miracle Machine, which wiped out Omega's existence.

Conway then took over as ongoing Legion writer. Most Legion fans are quick to ignore or bury his tenure on the book. "Conway," suspects Carlson, "ended up on the Legion because they needed a warm body for a month or three, and not because he had an inherent love for



### Spirit of '76

Neal Adams and Dick Giordano produced this pinup of the LSH for DC's 1976 calendar. (inset) The art was repurposed (with some character deletions) as the cover of this 1977 reprint paperback from Tempo Books.

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# MAKING THE TEEN (OF STEEL) SCENE:

## THE NEW ADVENTURES OF

# SUPERBOY™

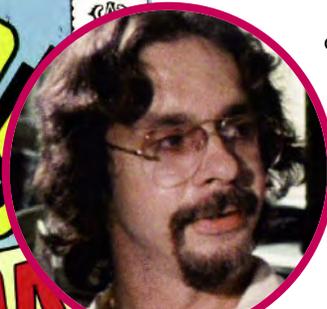
by Dan "Kid Flashback" Johnson

1<sup>ST</sup> ELECT

## THE NEW ADVENTURES OF

# SUPERBOY

# HAPPY 16<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY



CARY BATES



I can still remember seeing the ad that started appearing in the fall of 1979 in all the DC comic books. It featured Superboy holding up the covers for two upcoming books with a banner that proclaimed, "One mighty magazine is now two!" In his right hand, the Teen of Steel held the cover for *Legion of Super-Heroes* #259 (Jan. 1980) and in his left hand was the cover for his all-new solo book, *The New Adventures of Superboy* #1 (Jan. 1980). The ad announced to the world that Superboy was leaving his friends from the 30th Century behind, but more importantly, he was back in his own title again for the first time in nearly a decade. As a kid, I loved almost everything Superman, but I never really was that big of a fan of the Legion of Super-Heroes. As a child, I never really took to the idea of Superman working with a team that wasn't the Justice League of America (even in this case, when he was just a boy). Having enjoyed Superboy's recent solo stories in *Superman Family*, though, this news of Superboy being in his own comic book was exciting to me.

Superboy's departure from the Legion of Super-Heroes was a logical conclusion for the "Psycho War" storyline that wrapped up in issue #259. As for getting his own, all-new title, that was an even more logical step on the part of DC considering the time when the first issue hit newsstands. "I can't say for sure," says Cary Bates, who was the first writer on *The New Adventures of Superboy*, "but if I had to guess it might have been a result of Superman's higher media profile after the resounding success of the first *Superman* film. As I recall, *Superman II* was about to be released around this time, so DC may have figured 1980 was a good year to relaunch Superboy in his own book."

### SIXTEEN IN THE '60s

When I finally saw an issue of *The New Adventures of Superboy*, which was issue #4 (Apr. 1980), I was excited to see quite a few of my favorite creators working on it. The book was edited of one of the Man of Steel's greatest caretakers, Julius Schwartz. It was Schwartz who brought Bates onto the book. "It just sort of fell into my lap," says Bates. "By that time I had been steadily writing various Superman family books since 1967. [That was] three years for Mort Weisinger and then about a decade with Julie Schwartz, so I suppose I was the logical choice. Back then, of course, I had no inkling the Superboy character was destined to play a much more pivotal role in my life later in the decade. In 1989 the Salkinds hired me to work on their syndicated *Superboy* TV series, which

### The Boy is Back in Town

Cover to *The New Adventures of Superboy* #1 (Jan. 1980). Art by Kurt Schaffenberger and Dick Giordano.

TM & © DC Comics.

## Fly Over

In addition to the house ad mentioned by Dan Johnson in his opening, this promo also appeared in DC titles in late 1979.

TM & © DC Comics.

kicked off a film and TV writing phase of my career that lasted a decade and a half."

Another reason I was excited about *The New Adventures of Superboy* was the artwork by Kurt Schaffenberger. I had become a fan of Schaffenberger after seeing his work in various Superman books and *Shazam!*, but I must admit that his work on *The New Adventures of Superboy* is my favorite series from his body of work.

Schaffenberger's artwork had an old-school feel to it that especially stood out against the gritty style that too many artists were trying to give their work as the '80s began. Being set 15 years in the past, Schaffenberger's artwork gave Superboy a retro feel that worked well in the book's favor. Except for a few instances, the most notable being when he was sidelined for a few months after a heart attack, Schaffenberger drew every one of the main Superboy stories, right up until the book's final issue. "Kurt was one of the old pros," says Paul Kupperberg. "He was a great artist, one of my favorites."

I got into the business in the mid-'70s and I grew up admiring and reading his work on *Lois Lane*. Kurt was a gentleman of the old school. He always showed up at the office wearing a blue blazer with a white turtleneck and gray slacks. He always came dressed up to the office. He was a sweet guy."

One of the first standout issues for the series was #5 (May 1980). The story, "Secret of the Super-Power Failures," concerns Superboy losing his powers for reasons that

no one can explain. Later on, Superboy learns that tomatoes Ma Kent has been growing in her garden have been contaminated with spores that were accidentally left behind by interplanetary farmers from a solar system with a red sun. As he has been eating the tomatoes, Superboy's powers were affected by the red solar radiation that had already been absorbed by the spores. If the story doesn't exactly sound Earth-shaking, what really matters is its final page as it led into, and was tied directly with, "The Miraculous Return of Jonathan Kent!," a story that appeared that same month in *Action Comics* #507. "Back then crossovers and tie-ins were the exception, not the rule," says Bates. "But Julie decided to take advantage of the fact I was writing both Superman and Superboy concurrently, so we came up with a two-tier storyline in which Jonathan Kent would help some alien visitors in the *Superboy* title, earning their gratitude, which they would show many years later by enabling Jonathan Kent to see for himself, even after death, exactly how his adopted son's life turned out as an adult. Though the initial *Superboy* story has long been forgotten, the subsequent *Action Comics* story has proven to be a favorite of many readers over the years."



KURT SCHAFFENBERGER

## Long-Haired Foe

Astralad tangles with the Teen of Steel in *NAOSuperboy* #4 (Apr. 1980). Cover by Schaffenberger and Dave Hunt.

TM & © DC Comics.



# LEGION FANTASY COVERS

by John Watson



[Editor's note: Artist John Watson is best known for his work, in oils, as a cover artist for both Marvel and DC Comics on such titles as *Hawkman*, *JSA*, *Son of M*, *Uncanny X-Men*, and *Silent War*. He has always been a massive fan of the Legion, *Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes* #258 being the first comic he ever bought. This gallery features a selection of fantasy Legion covers created by John as well as his recreations of pre-existing non-LSH covers, reimagined to feature the Legion while drawn in the style of their original artists. Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes and all characters depicted in this gallery are TM & © DC Comics.]

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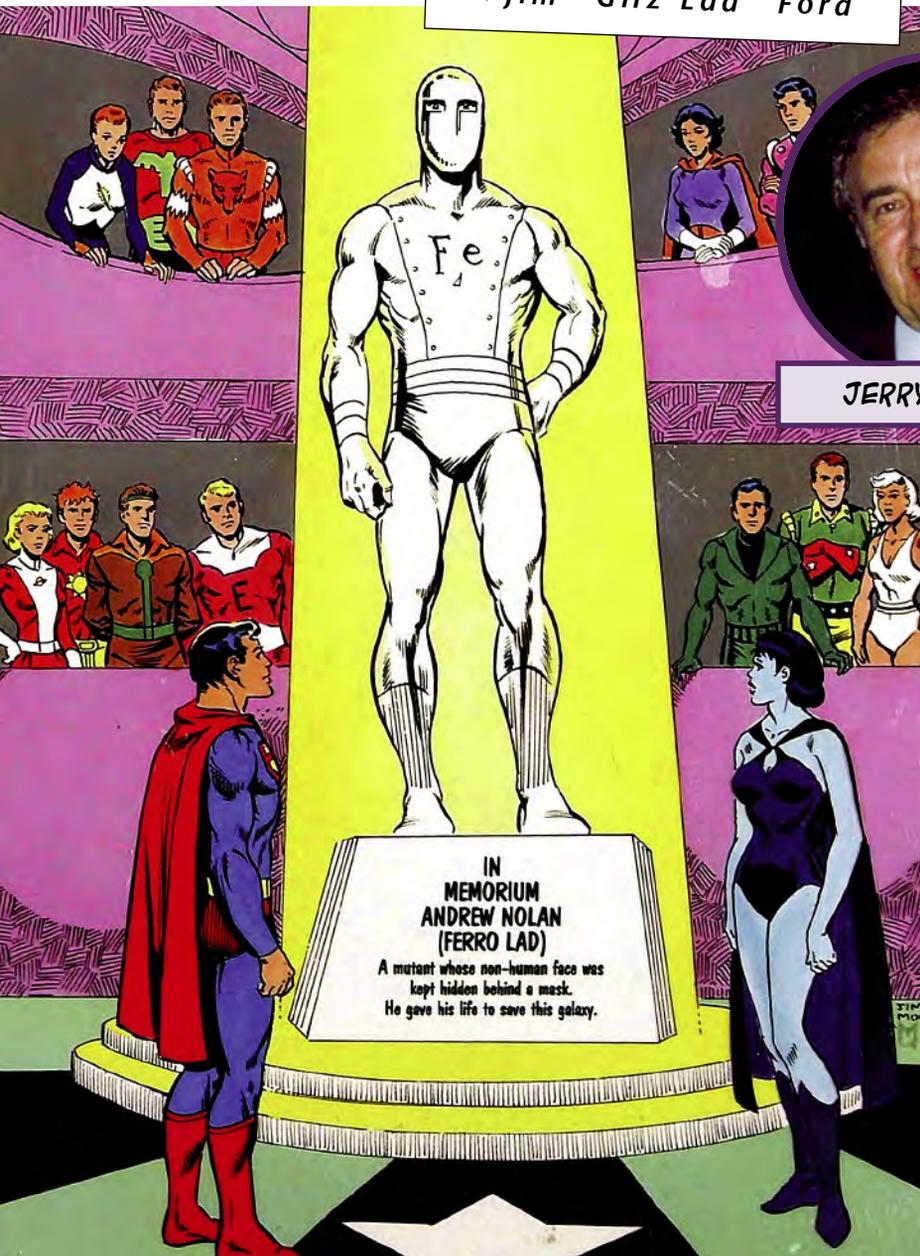
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# THE HONORED DEAD OF THE LEGION<sup>TM</sup> OF SUPER-HEROES

by Jim "GHZ Lad" Ford



*Lightning Lad, Triplicate Girl, Ferro Lad, Invisible Kid, Chemical King, Karate Kid, Kid Psycho, Supergirl, Superboy, Mon-El, Duo Damsel, and Magnetic Kid: the Roll Call of the Honored Dead of the Legion of Super-Heroes.*

*All died valiantly to protect time and space, save the galaxy, prevent a world war, or stop an alien invasion, but some of these heroes died because a creator did not like his superpower, or because someone had to die, or to make for a good cover, or to clean house, or perhaps to snub fandom. All the Honored Dead have their stories of nobility, but the creators behind those stories had agendas more pragmatic.*

This survey includes stories up until "The Magic Wars" in *Legion of Super-Heroes (LSH)* vol. 3 #63 (Aug. 1989). Take heart that each and every one of these heroes returned in an updated version. It's hard to keep a good idea, or fan nostalgia, down.

Lightning Lad was the first to die, struck down by a freeze-ray from the starship of Zaryan the Conqueror in *Adventure Comics* #304 (Jan. 1963). To Paul Levitz, former DC Comics president and publisher and longtime Legion writer, this story, written by Superman creator Jerry Siegel, was revolutionary. "To my mind, I think [the superhero genre] changes with the death of Lightning Lad," he explained at a convention panel at the New York Comic-Con on April 19, 2008. "I think that is the first incident where you have forward motion. Up until then, comics had really come out of the classic comic-strip tradition of freeze-frame. Everybody is going to be, whatever it is ... Charlie Brown will be in first grade or second grade until the end of time ... and the Legion, four issues into its own series, just said, 'Screw this stuff, we're going to start changing things. We're going to kill people. We'll change relationships, and we're going to start by killing one of the founding members in a group that had a tremendous amount of unformed characters, characters you hadn't had a chance to have a great amount of affection for.' This was as close as you were going to get to a stellar character and, he's just gone ... but they began the momentum of change, and that is where I really think the Legion declared its radical contribution to the business."

Triplicate Girl died next. She was ruthlessly murdered on the cover of *Adventure Comics* #340 (Jan. 1966) in the steely, tentacled grip of Computo the Conqueror. The image, drawn by Curt Swan and inked by



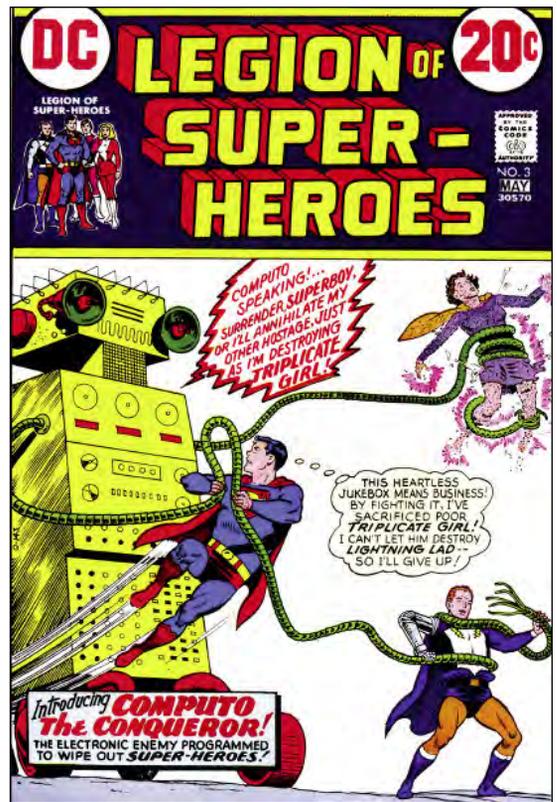
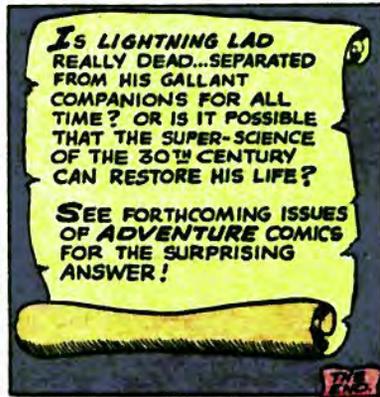
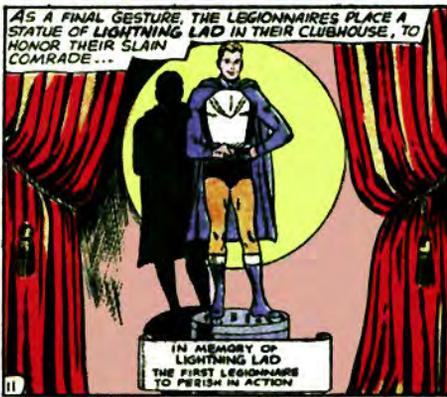
JERRY SIEGEL

photo by Alan Light

## R.I.P. Ferro Lad

Legionnaires honor the valiant Andrew Nolan on this Jim Mooney-drawn cover to 1987's *Legion of Super-Heroes Index* #4, published with DC Comics' permission by Independent Comics Group (through Eclipse Comics).

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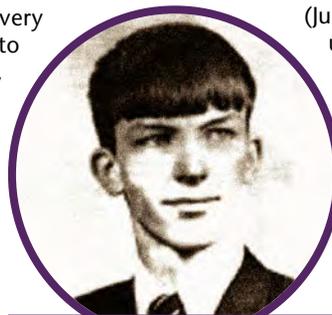
**First to Fall**  
Lightning Lad and Triplicate Girl were the first two Legionnaire deaths. (left) The Legion mourns one of its founders (who would soon return) in these concluding panels from *Adventure Comics* #304 (Jan. 1963), written by Jerry Siegel and drawn by John Forte. (right) The triplicating heroine would live on as Duo Damsel after the horrific murder of one of her bodies in *Adventure* #340, reprinted and cover-featured in the Bronze Age in *Legion of Super-Heroes* vol. 1 #3 (Apr.-May 1973).

TM & © DC Comics.

George Klein, is horrifying. A girl was disintegrated to dust while her killer loudly announced it in bolded cover copy. Her death, also written by Siegel, is in vivid contrast to that of Lightning Lad. His was not even announced in the story title, let alone the cover, and whereas his death (and resurrection) was told over multiple issues, her death was ignorable. She was an expendable character in every sense of the word. With her ability to split into three separate individuals, Siegel could kill her and still have two to spare. No Legionnaire is less traumatized by her death than Triplicate Girl herself, who casually rejoined her mournful group of teammates and simply announced she had a new name, Duo Damsel.

There is little doubt Triplicate Girl died to sell more comics, and indeed, that image has appeared on as many reprint titles as any other Legion cover, excluding their first. It was recently chosen as the cover of *Showcase Presents: LSH* vol. 2 (2008) out of 30 possible images. It must still sell comics.

Ferro Lad, who gave his life that the galaxy might live, died next in *Adventure Comics* #353 (Feb. 1967), destroying the Sun-Eater. Writer Jim Shooter described in an interview with Hassan Yusuf from fan magazine *Interluk 93 The Seven Year Itch* (1993), "Sometimes Mort [Weisinger, editor of *Adventure Comics*] would ask me to come up with something, and sometimes he would dictate to me, 'Do such and such.' He would never give me a plot, but he'd call me up and say, 'There's a movie on called *The Dirty Dozen*. Go see it, and write a story just like it.' I didn't go to see it, because it didn't sound interesting. So I read the ads for the movie, got the drift, and wrote the Fatal Five



**JIM SHOOTER**

Courtesy of Glen Cadigan.

story. So far as I know, it isn't much like the movie! "I thought, 'If this thing's such a menace that they have to bring in the bad guys to help them, it had better do some damage; somebody's gotta get hurt here!' So I killed one of my characters, who I really kind of liked—he was my black character," Shooter said. Ferro Lad was introduced in *Adventure Comics* #346 (July 1966), but his origin was not revealed until after his death in *Adventure Comics* #354 (Mar. 1967). He was born with the power to change his body to iron, but his face was grotesquely inhuman, so he wore a mask. Shooter explained, "Well, they wouldn't let me do a black character, so I had to put the guy in a mask, but he was my black character, even if nobody ever knew it but me."

Invisible Kid was crushed to death by the rampaging monster Validus in *Superboy* starring the Legion of Super-Heroes #203 (July-Aug. 1974), in a story written by Cary Bates. To many fans the death of Invisible Kid was a betrayal of their support by *Superboy* editor Murray Boltinoff. Invisible Kid was the best example of Shooter's efforts to bring individuality to minor characters, taking one whose very powers meant he faded into the background, and bringing him to the forefront as the Legion's leader in *Adventure Comics* #348 (Sept. 1966). Fans argued that at best, Boltinoff had no understanding of the history of the Legion. At worst, Boltinoff was deliberately working to get rid of Shooter's characters, having married off Bouncing Boy and Duo Damsel just a few issues previously.

"While Murray had no particular love for the Legion, there's no chance he was trying to 'get rid of Shooter's characters,'" Levitz tells *BACK ISSUE*.

# WELCOME TO THE 30<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ...THE 31<sup>ST</sup>, TOO

## AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL LEVITZ

by Michael "Editor Boy" Eury  
conducted Saturday, June 23, 2012 at HeroesCon in Charlotte, NC  
transcribed by Brian K. Morris

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES: THE GREAT DARKNESS SAGA  
THE DELUXE EDITION



While several writers have made significant marks upon Legion lore, none can match the contributions of THE Legion of Super-Heroes scribe, Paul Levitz. From realistic characterizations to gripping multi-part sagas to unmatched multiple records for consecutive issues, Levitz—among his myriad achievements in the comics industry—has become so identified with the Legion that one wonders if the team's "L" icon isn't actually their writer's monogram.

Significant changes have occurred since Paul and I sat down for this chat in late June 2012, most notably the return (albeit brief) of Keith Giffen to the title and the unfortunate cancellation of Legion from the New 52 lineup. That knowledge certainly should not affect your appreciation of Mr. Levitz's insight into the futuristic super-team provided on the pages that follow.

— Michael Eury

**MICHAEL EURY:** My name's Michael Eury. I'm the editor-in-chief of BACK ISSUE magazine from TwoMorrrows Publishing, and it's my great privilege today to welcome to North Carolina a gentleman who's here in our beautiful state for the first time. How many actual Tar Heels are there in the room? Not the college, but residents of the state? [audience chuckles, many raise their hands] Good... I want y'all to give Paul Levitz a big North Carolina welcome. [audience applauds]

**PAUL LEVITZ:** Thank you, Michael.

**EURY:** You're welcome.

Twenty years ago, I worked for this man. I edited a series you might have heard of called Legion of Super-Heroes. [applause]

But 30 years ago—and I bring this up because it's the 30th anniversary of this convention—I was buying comics here in Charlotte at Heroes Aren't Hard To Find, and 30 years ago this week, one of those comics was Legion of Super-Heroes #291. That was the issue where Mordru got his butt kicked [audience chuckles] during "The Great Darkness Saga."

And I would like to start this conversation, Paul, by talking about that. That is probably the greatest Legion story of all time, and it's one of the best comic stories of all time. So tell me how that idea came about to bring Jack Kirby's Darkseid into the Legion as an adversary. **LEVITZ:** Well, I think there's a couple of pieces to the puzzle. My memory on most of these things is pretty foggy, but one, I really liked—still do like—building stories that have a puzzle element to them. And one of my real regrets from my first run on the Legion in the mid-'70s—besides the fact that I regretted that I had overcommitted myself to too many different projects that it opened up to too many fill-ins—my other one was the Earthwar, which I thought was the best story

### Darkseid Lives!

One thousand years (continuity-wise) after plaguing the New Gods of New Genesis and the superheroes of Earth, creator Jack Kirby's despot Darkseid brought the Legion to its knees, courtesy of writer Paul Levitz. Cover to Legion of Super-Heroes: The Great Darkness Saga: The Deluxe Edition (2010). Cover art by Keith Giffen and Al Milgrom.

TM & © DC Comics.



I had plotted and designed to that point, ended up getting screwed up because it went through multiple artists. So it really just never, never held together as well as it should have as a story.

And in coming back to *The Legion*, it was sort of on the checklist that one of the sins to make up for from last time was, "There's not going to be one fill-in!" I don't care what I have to do, I'm doing every issue of this book 'til I'm done. I want to do another long story, I want to hold all the parts, and I'm doing it in a way that it can all be held together.

I was an enormous fan of Jack's *New Gods*. That was some of the first work that I got to see in progress when I was doing the early fanzines and was wandering around the DC office. Jack was always both an enormous favorite artist and somebody that I personally liked a great deal when I got to know him. He and [his wife] Roz were very, always very kind, not just to me, but really, to everyone.

And I'm a lousy villain creator. It's not one of my strengths as a writer—*Legion* has some really good villains, but not a great deck of them, the same way Batman has. So the idea that I could borrow, really, one of the great villains of all time and bring him into the 30th Century—because he could be in *any* century ... this was the god of evil, appealed to me in many ways.

["The Great Darkness Saga"] sort of came together very naturally. It may have been Keith's suggestion, too, because Keith [Giffen] was an enormous Kirby fan and he, even in those days, would always be popping his head [in my office] and going, "Why don't we do this?" "Why don't we do that?" About a third of Keith's suggestions, no one should ever listen to [audience chuckles], and about a third of them are really, really, really good ... the others, they're okay. You know, as good as anyone else's that day. But he has an extraordinarily fertile mind, and in those years, he didn't think of himself as a writer, but he already clearly showed that he was, and could be, and I'm so glad he's gone on to be a writer for many, many of the years since.

And that's how that happened. We certainly didn't realize that we were creating something anybody would talk about 30 years later. In looking back, I realize that it was the first time ever where DC had really—we talked about this at dinner the other night—only the second



**LEVITZ:** I think the combination of Marv and George were ahead of us, and some of it, yes, they had seven, we had about 70—way too many. But some of it is also both of them were really, really good at the small moments, the human, natural moments, and that really fleshes a character tremendously, and that was not nearly as much our strength over at *Legion*. But they were certainly more human when we were done with them than they were when we started, and I'm proud of that.

**EURY:** *Another parallel between Legion and Titans in the early '80s was the relationship between the writer and artist, because Keith Giffen evolved from being a penciler to a co-plotter, as George Pérez did on New Teen Titans.*

**LEVITZ:** Well, Keith's description of a lot of how he worked in that period is, he'd read my plot on the bus back to Jersey and crumple it up, and throw it out [audience chuckles] and draw the book. And often, Keith would draw ... mmm, mostly draw it as plotted, but he'd come back and he'd do a two- or three-page scene that was nothing whatsoever to do with what we'd plotted for. And then often I would dialogue and write something over it that was nothing to do with what he had in his margin notes. [audience chuckles] But we agreed enough on a sense of who the characters were and the tone of what we were going to do, that there was a natural chemistry to it. When you know who the characters are, then the rest can go in many, many directions and you feel pretty good then.

**EURY:** *What are good experiences you had with some of the artists that followed Keith?*

**LEVITZ:** It's so ridiculous, the talented guys I had gotten to come to do the books. Here's one with Gene Colan, here's one with Carmine, I got Joe Orlando to do an issue, so many greats that I grew up with.

All the jobs I got out of Curt Swan, who would say, "Oh, Paul, you've gotta give me *Legion* again?" [audience chuckles] "I swear, Curt. I'll only use three characters, not too many aliens, not too many spaceships." I mean, I grew up loving his work on the *Legion*. I'd always try to go ahead and schedule to get him to a fill-in.

Steve Lightle, who's back doing a little bit of *Legion* work. Now he's doing some covers for us, just the short-story format issues.

Greg LaRocque, who was on it for a long stretch, is looking at one of the fill-in issues.

I remember Erik Larsen drawing a story with me, so many great people who've gone onto other interesting things: Colleen Doran, that great Element Lad issue she did. If you haven't checked out *Gone to Amerikay*, the graphic novel that she did for Vertigo—it came out a little earlier this year—you should. Really strong art

and a good story, too.

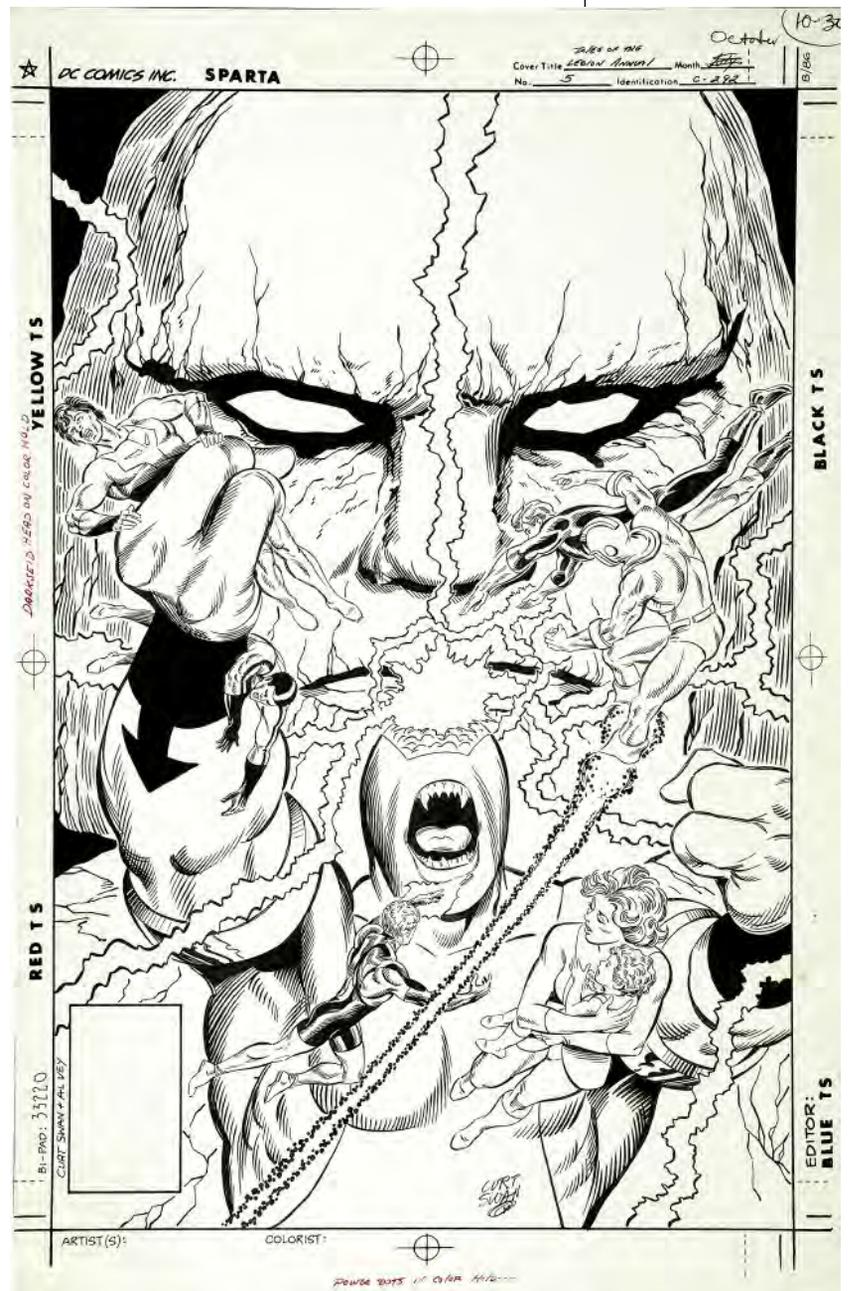
**EURY:** *In the late 1980s, you gave up writing Legion of Super-Heroes and devoted your time to your day job as DC's publisher, and ultimately, its president. But recently you retired from that position, and things have come full circle again.*

**LEVITZ:** You know, we got to the point where I'd been in the day job long enough and I was getting up from the big desk. And the Warner Bros. executives and I were in the process of working that out, and they said, "So, what do you want to do next?" I said, "Well, I'm going to write, I'm going to teach." And so the company was stuck with me writing a couple of books a month. And it happened to be exactly the moment when Geoff Johns had brought back the *Legion*, sort of recognizably as my *Legion*, because that was the [version] he'd grown up on. And they needed a new writer for it, which was almost perfect timing.

**EURY:** *And now you're writing the New 52 version of Legion of Super-Heroes.*



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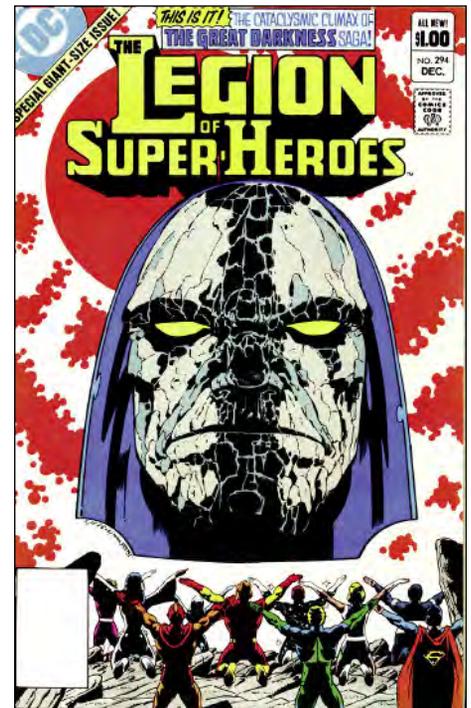
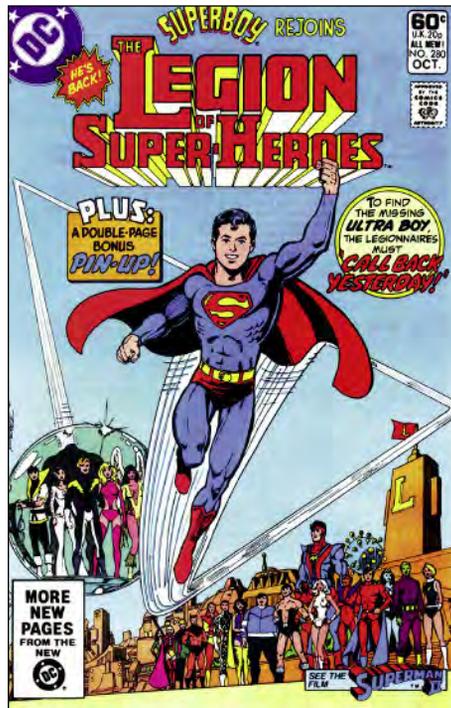
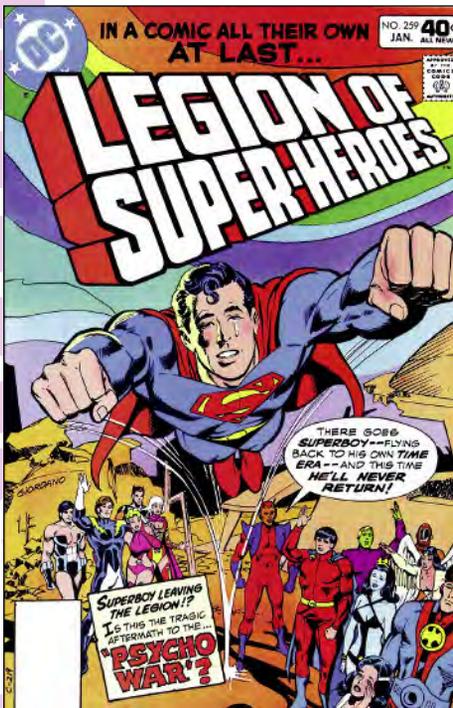


### A Promise to Curt

Each time Levitz persuaded legendary Superman and LSH artist Curt Swan to pencil a *Legion* issue, it came with Paul's pledge to feature an easier-to-draw truncated roll call. Original cover art by Swan and inker Al Vey to *Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes Annual #5* (1987), signed by Swan. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)).

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# BACK TO THE FUTURE:



## Welcome to the 1980s

Some of the many highlights in Legion lore published during the 1980s. (this page, left to right) Superboy says goodbye in *Legion of Super-Heroes* #259 (Jan. 1980; cover by Dick Giordano); Superboy returns in *Legion* #280 (Oct. 1981, cover by George Pérez); and Darkseid is revealed as the menace behind “The Great Darkness Saga” in *Legion* #294 (Dec. 1982, cover by Keith Giffen and Larry Mahlstedt). (opposite, left to right)

DC’s second bestselling title becomes two: the deluxe-format *Legion of Super-Heroes* #1 (Aug. 1984, cover by Giffen and Mahlstedt) and the standard-format *Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes* #314 (Aug. 1984, cover by Terry Shoemaker and Giordano); and *Legion* #38 (Sept. 1987, cover by Bill Sienkiewicz), featuring the conclusion of the “Pocket Universe” Superboy saga.

TM & © DC Comics.

The decade known as the 1980s began with a monumental event for Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes. The January 1980 issue (#259) of the long-running series was retitled *Legion of Super-Heroes*, displacing Superboy from the title in which he’d been starring since 1949.

The explanation was that too many trips to the future had eroded the post-hypnotic suggestion that prevented Superboy from remembering details of his future. As a result, the Legion was forced to expel Superboy from its ranks.

## THE GERRY CONWAY ERA

At the time of Superboy’s departure, the title was edited by Jack C. Harris and written by seasoned scribe Gerry Conway. “I had a fairly good relationship with Paul Levitz and Paul had been the Legion guy for a number of years,” Conway says, suggesting Levitz recommended him. After a handful of stories, Conway had become the regular writer beginning with *Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes* #252 (June 1979).

Conway had been writing *Justice League of America* for several years, so he seemed the logical choice to take on another team book. “From my point of view, I just enjoyed writing groups,” he says. “I enjoyed the natural potential for conflict and the drama a group book can offer.”

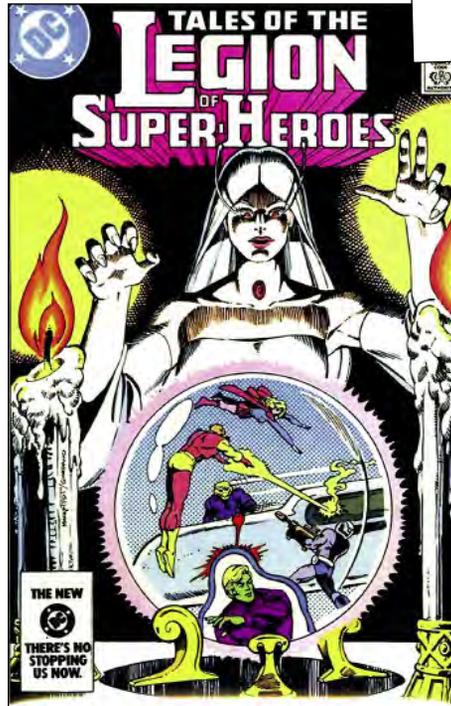
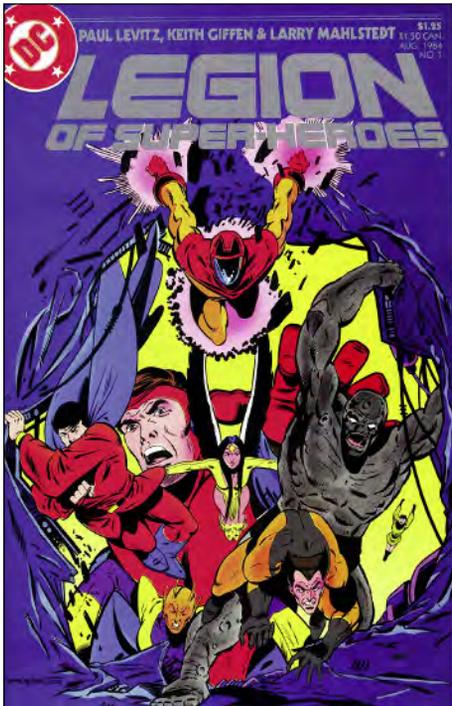
According to Conway, there’s almost an inherent conflict in having Superboy—a resident of DC’s past—appear side-by-side with a team of the 30th Century: “Superboy, whatever you want to say about his adventures in the Legion, when you come right down to it, he’s part of history rather than events that are occurring right now because he is from the past. Our past, but appearing in the future. So it’s kind of bizarre.”

The Conway-suggested Superboy departure from the Legion may have been a move to create a more unified DC Universe. “The notion was, they wanted to try to integrate these characters in a way that their stories were ongoing and there was some sense of consequence between events,” he says. “That becomes difficult when you’re writing a character who appears in more than one title and may even have his or her own series. So I think the notion was that we really wanted to focus on characters who were not appearing elsewhere or didn’t have stories that we already knew.”

The Boy of Steel would then relaunch his own title [see article beginning on page 17], featuring his adventures in 20th-Century Smallville, while the super-teens of the future embarked on a new series of adventures that would eventually make them one of the DC Comics’ bestselling titles of the 1980s.

# THE LEGION in THE 1980s

by Philip "Interview Lad" Schweier



## TEEN BEAT

Conway credits the Legion as an influence of his early career. Jim Shooter was a teenager when he began writing Legion stories for *Adventure Comics* in 1966. "Shooter is my age, maybe a few months older, maybe a year older at the most," says Conway. "He was writing Legion at the age of 13, and I remember reading in some letters column that this guy was writing these stories, and these were stories I was particularly excited by. Some pretty classic stuff he'd been doing, with some emotion and feeling. You never got that in a DC comic unless it was written by Bob Kanigher. But Shooter managed to get this sense that the story he was telling was about people whose lives were actually in danger, people you could care about. I really liked that."

To the teenage Conway, the Legionnaires were young people. "[It was] the only real teen book at the time, other than *The X-Men*, but you never got the sense that the X-Men were actually teenagers. They seemed more like young adults. The Legion seemed like kids, and that was because Shooter was a kid and he was writing the way a kid would write."

When Conway's tenure as Legion writer began, Joe Staton was the artist on deck. Staton was no stranger to the Legion, having inked several issues of the short-lived *Karate Kid* series published in the late 1970s.

"I loved working with Joe," says Conway. "He was one of these great cartoony artists that is able to convey emotion and drama. I always liked the way his stuff ended up looking; it looked great to me."

Conway believes there was a kind of division between artists whose work was more realistic, such as Neal Adams, and those whose work was more cartoonish, such as Staton or Steve Ditko, the latter of whom drew *Legion of Super-Heroes* #268, 272, 274, and 276 (Oct. 1980, Feb. 1981, Apr. 1981, and June 1981).



GERRY CONWAY

"While I always loved the Neal Adams stuff, I enjoyed working with the artists who were more cartoony," says Conway. "[Cartoony] is probably the wrong word to use because it implies humor, but it's a larger-than-life, detached-from-realism approach to storytelling, and I think that's what somebody like Joe Staton has. He brings that to the table and it's something I really enjoyed working on."

Jimmy Janes followed Staton as the regular artist beginning with *Legion of Super-Heroes* #263 (May 1980). However, juggling the many characters proved a challenge, especially with the three-issue miniseries *Secrets of the Legion of Super-Heroes* thrown into the mix, and the main *Legion* book eventually fell behind schedule.

A highpoint of Conway's run on the Legion was the Dark Man saga (*Legion of Super-Heroes* #270–273, Dec. 1980–Mar. 1981), in which a mysterious evil mastermind manipulates the villainous Fatal Five. "The idea of a mysterious figure in the background, the Dark Man, that's a trope that I used in a lot of stories over the years," says Conway. "It didn't necessarily mean I had something in mind when I started it."

Sometimes I would force myself into a crisis situation that I would ultimately have to deal with. I would create a mastermind behind the scenes, and that would allow me to build up some suspense or tension in the stories. And in the process, I would figure out who it was."

Conway says that when he started on the Legion, Levitz gave him a binder full of his notes about the characters and their storylines. "It was huge, at least 100 pages, maybe more, of very detailed material that Paul had extrapolated from the stories he had done, and that he intended to do himself in the future. It's wonderful as a writer to be coming onto a book and have that kind of material thrown in your lap. It's terrific."

## Superboy's Pal, Jimmy Janes

Janes' stint on *LSH* was short but sweet.

Original cover art to *Legion* #270 (Dec. 1980), penciled by Janes and inked by Dick Giordano, courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)).

TM & © DC Comics.

The Dark Man is later revealed to be Brainiac 5, his 30th-Century intellect turned to evil purposes, building on ideas from the Paul Levitz run. "Because Paul had given me that material, it played out naturally for it to be Brainiac 5, and that was the direction I went."

Conway adds, "Where you get the ideas almost doesn't matter as much as what you do with them. And hopefully I explored some of the ideas fairly well."

Beginning with *Legion of Super-Heroes* #277 (July 1981), Mike W. Barr took over editorship of the title. This issue would also mark Conway's final contribution to the Legion canon, the four-part Reflecto saga, in which he explored another mysterious figure whose roots lay in the Legion of the 1960s.

Reflecto first appeared in *Adventure Comics* #354 (Mar. 1967), in which he is seen as a memorial figure when Superman visited the adult Legion in the 30th Century. It wouldn't be until *Legion of Super-Heroes* #277 (July 1981) that Reflecto would make his Legion debut. Regretfully, the handwriting was already on the wall: Reflecto's days were numbered.

Conway's plot was fleshed out in script form by his longtime friend and collaborator, Roy Thomas. Throughout the story there were allusions that he might actually be Ultra Boy, whom the Legion believed to be dead at the time. In the end—*Legion of Super-Heroes* #279 (Sept. 1981)—Reflecto turned out to be Superboy.

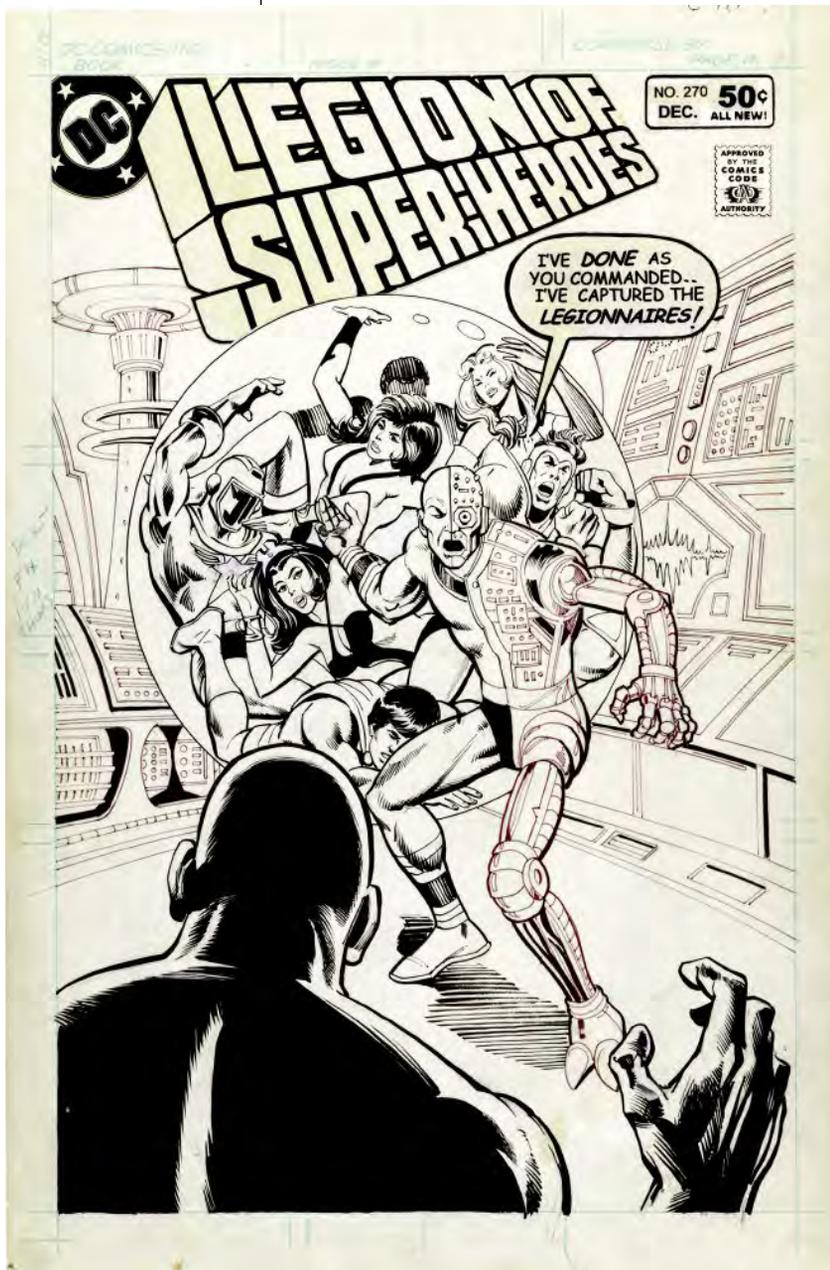
Conway left the Legion title officially as of *Legion of Super-Heroes* #278 (Aug. 1981). "At that time I was writing, like, five or six titles a month," he says. "Sometimes I was writing a couple of issues ahead, and you could never do the kind of stories we did back then today because everything is codified into a structural science for a year. That wasn't how we operated back then."

*The New Teen Titans*, launched in 1980, had become DC Comics' bestselling title, and had become the standard against which other team books were measured. "What made *Titans* so strong and so commercial was the core characterization of that team," says Conway, "that strong sense of continuity and the strong relationship of that team. I think that was what people at DC wanted to see happen with other teams. So it became something of an unspoken mantra—at least it was understood—that *that* was the template. And I agreed with that personally, that a team book should be about the relationships between the characters, otherwise, what are you actually writing? You're just plugging characters into a plot."

## A Rocky Start

Writer Gerry Conway brought soon-to-be-popular Legionnaire Blok into the series in *Legion* #272 (Feb. 1981). Cover by Janes and Giordano.

TM & © DC Comics.





Time travel was essential to the Legion of Super-Heroes from their first appearance in *Adventure Comics* #247 (Apr. 1958) when three teenagers, Cosmic Boy, Saturn Girl, and Lightning Lad, went back in time 1,000 years to meet Superboy. Their Time Bubble transported them effortlessly through both time and space, and with their Time Scanner, they knew every detail of Superboy's life. The Legionnaires made many more trips, but always into the past. The future was the domain of the Time Trapper.

The Time Trapper either plotted to bring about the destruction of the Legion or was the architect behind the team. He also did the impossible: He killed Superboy. He was a thief intent on stealing the most miraculous of devices, a thug who bullied the team from behind his "Iron Curtain of Time," a god who created his own universe, and stunningly was revealed to be the Legion's most treacherous member.

### THIEF. THUG.

The Time Trapper was introduced in a trilogy of stories written by science-fiction author Edmond Hamilton, beginning with *Adventure Comics* #317 (Feb. 1964) and continuing into the next issue. Superboy and Mon-El, Legionnaires able to travel through time under their own power, were stopped from chasing a scientific criminal by a mysterious barrier 30 days into the future. Superboy called it the "Iron Curtain of Time," a phrase Hamilton no doubt chose to strike a resonant chord with Cold War tensions. Returning in *Adventure Comics* #321 (June 1964), the criminal provoked them from behind his Iron Curtain as he contrived to steal the secret of the Legion's greatest weapon, the Concentrator. Disguised, the criminal subjected the team to ruthless physiological examinations, but was unmasked by Lightning Lad. In retaliation, he unleashed a barrage of dead, dark stars against the Legion, forcing them to build the Concentrator. Its power concentrated all the energy of the universe into an instantaneous blast.

He failed to kill the Legionnaires in *Adventure Comics* #338 (Nov. 1965), and inadvertently devolved them into children. The story was written by Jerry Siegel, who not only created Superman but also many of the Legionnaires. "Jerry was very proud of his Legion stuff," then-DC Comics president and publisher Paul Levitz said at a convention panel at the New York Comic-Con on April 19, 2008. "I think Jerry's contribution was the wit of the early Legion, and when you look at things like Matter-Eater Lad and Bouncing Boy, there's a direct link to that to some of the series he had done post-Superman with a lot of charm, less-successful stuff, but he saw what he was doing and he kept the tongue firmly in cheek and he was having fun with it." The Time Trapper became stranded on a distant planet, his craft eaten by the Super-Babies. The whimpering criminal struck a bargain with Brainiac 5, who trapped the villain in the force of his own barrier ring.

His pitiful display of weakness and ignominious defeat spoiled the Time Trapper as a respectable foe. He did not appear again for almost 15 years, except in an easily overlooked Superman story in *Action Comics* #385-387 (Feb.-Apr. 1970),

### Time Bandit

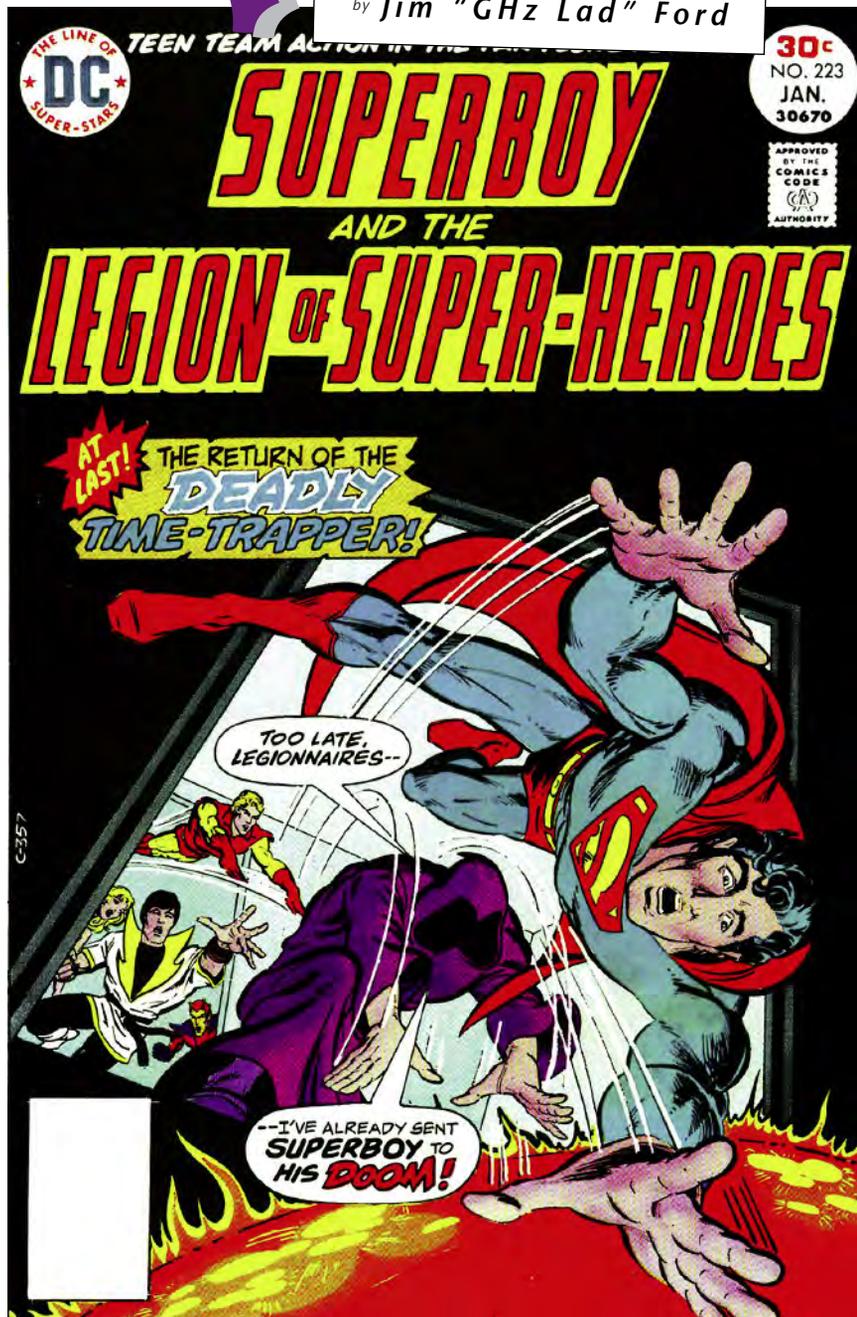
Chronal chaos-maker Time Trapper in a rare Bronze Age cover appearance, on Mike Grell's cover to *Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes* #223 (Jan. 1977).

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# TOO MUCH TIME ON MY HANDS: THE HISTORY OF THE

# TIME TRAPPER

by Jim "GHz Lad" Ford



# TALES OF THE LEGION of SUPER-HEROES



written by Cary Bates. There, the Time Trapper was more a plot device to keep a 100,000 year-old Superman trapped in the distant future than a character. As though the artist had no reference material on the obscure villain, the Time Trapper's face was concealed by a half-mask, reminiscent of Batman's cowl, rather than a full hood as he was first depicted.

The Time Trapper returned in proper regalia in *Superboy* #223 (Jan. 1977) as writer Jim Shooter took a try at the character. The villain had calculated that five Legionnaires stood in the way of him ruling the universe. He stole those five, and in a complete reversal of type, fought the Legionnaires in hand-to-hand combat. As always, the villain was reliant on one of several time-trick devices. Once it was destroyed, the Legionnaires returned to their proper point in time.

Cary Bates had introduced the android Molecular Master in *Superboy* #201 (Apr. 1974). The android nearly succeeded in killing every Legionnaire and stealing the Miracle Machine, a construct that transformed thought into reality. The Legion did not learn until *The Legion of Super-Heroes (LSH)* #281 (Nov. 1981) that the Time Trapper had created the android in a story that took three writers. Paul Levitz wrote the dialogue over the plot provided by Roy Thomas. Thomas in turn was concluding a storyline developed by writer Gerry Conway, who had only just left the series.

Levitz was returning for his second tenure. His legacy on the Legion included the creation of the Infinite Man and the wedding of Saturn Girl to Lightning Lad. Rond Vidar, an expert in time travel rivaled only by Brainiac 5, invented the hyper-time drive in *Superboy and the LSH*

#233 (Nov. 1977) that shattered the Iron Curtain of Time. His discovery that time was circular had disastrous consequences when it drove a volunteer mad with the power to harness infinity. Using the hyper-time drive, the Legion attacked the Time Trapper directly in *All-New Collector's Edition* #C-55 (1978) after Superboy proved the villain had altered key events in the late 20th Century leading to global nuclear war. The Time Trapper ruled the new timeline from his citadel on a burnt-out husk of the Earth in the distant future—a world that would become increasingly familiar. [Editor's note: More on this tabloid-sized Legion edition can be discovered in *BACK ISSUE* #61.]

With the Legion at his mercy, the Time Trapper revealed himself to be one of the Controllers. "The Ferro Lad story arc, including the ghost story, blew me away when I was a kid," Levitz tells *BACK ISSUE*, and it was in the "Ghost of Ferro Lad" story from *Adventure Comics* #357 (June 1967) that writer Jim Shooter introduced that race of extra-dimensional beings. The Miracle Machine was their gift to the Legion in *Adventure Comics* #367 (Apr. 1968). The Time Trapper had stolen the Miracle Machine from its vault of impervious inertron secured inside Legion Headquarters during his transformation of the timeline. He would use its power to disorder time and destroy the galaxy, but first he would use it to destroy the Legion. It was only the combined force of their will directed against the Time Trapper that saved them from final annihilation.

Conway introduced Reflecto in *LSH* #277 (July 1981), one of the Adult Legion's Honored Dead from the cover of *Adventure Comics* #354 (Mar. 1967) whose memorial plaque read, "Killed in a Duel with the Molecule Master."

## "Infant-ry"??

(left) And you blamed Adam West's *Batman* for campy puns at DC. Splash to *Adventure* #338 (Nov. 1965). Script by Jerry Siegel, art by John Forte. (right) Bates and Cockrum's Molecular Master from *Superboy* #201 (Mar.-Apr. 1974) ultimately became part of Time Trapper's history. Original art courtesy of Heritage ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)).

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# COSMIC BOY™



by Mark "Mild-Mannered Lad" Ciemcioch



When the Legion of Super-Heroes title is popular, DC often expands the franchise with additional series, so when the Legion became one of the company's best-selling titles in the '80s, it made sense to have one of its founding members branch out into his own miniseries.

And if that series is tied into a line-wide event, which publishers recently discovered made them a lot of money, all the better.

The year was 1986. DC Comics had just completed the biggest and most ambitious event in its publishing history, *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. Now the company was in the process of revitalizing many of its main titles. John Byrne was set to revive Superman in the post-*Crisis* era, while Frank Miller was opening a new chapter in the Batman mythos with *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Batman: Year One*.

Beyond those individual efforts, the company was also devising a follow-up to the massive *Crisis* crossover event. Originally, DC was looking to publish *Crisis of the Soul*, a tale that saw a being named the Corruptor come to Earth, followed by a wave of evil. The new maxiseries was to be written by Legion scribe Paul Levitz, drawn by Jerry Ordway, and edited by Robert Greenberger, but for several reasons, DC decided to go in another direction for its *Crisis* follow-up [see the full story in *BACK ISSUE* #9].

The *Crisis* follow-up eventually morphed into *Legends* (Nov. 1986–Apr. 1987), a six-issue miniseries that featured Darkseid hatching a plan to turn American citizens against their superheroes. The creative team changed as well, with John Ostrander and Len Wein handling writing duties, John Byrne and Karl Kesel on art, and Mike Gold editing.

Luckily for Levitz, he wasn't left completely out in the cold, as he was tapped to write a miniseries featuring Cosmic Boy that would tie into the *Legends* series. The series would span throughout time and lead into another story that was arguably more memorable than *Legends* itself. Popular Legion artist Keith Giffen would share penciling duties with Ernie Colón, Bob Smith and Pablo Marcos would ink, and Steve Lightle would provide cover art.

Levitz has very little memory of the four-issue miniseries 25 years later. Using Cosmic Boy outside the Legion series was on his mind, as the character was part of the *Crisis of the Soul* pitch. He recalls DC trying to develop crossovers that would give the *Legends* event the same weight as *Crisis*. Fortunately, a potential story with weight fell into his lap thanks to what the company was doing with Superman.

At the same time he was working on *Legends*, Byrne was revising portions of Superman's origin, such as Ma and Pa Kent living well into Clark's adulthood and

## Magnetic Personality

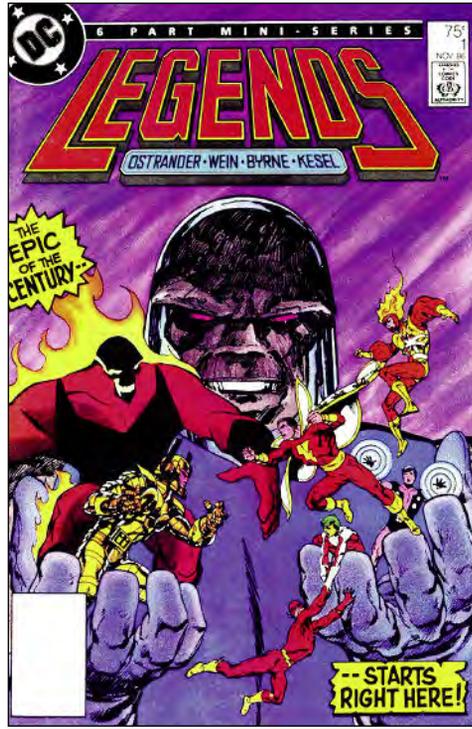
Spinning off from DC's *Legends* crossover event was a miniseries for *Cosmic Boy*! Detail from the issue #1 (Dec. 1986) cover by Steve Lightle, who drew the mini's four covers.

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**Earth Hates Heroes!**

Glorious Godfrey of Darkseid's elite misled America into regarding its superheroes as enemies in 1986's "Legends" crossover. (top) Look closely and you'll spot Cos on the John Byrne-drawn cover to *Legends* #1 (Nov. 1986). (below) Original art to the splash page of *Cosmic Boy* #1, courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)).

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downplaying Superman's powers from the Silver Age stories. Another change—Superman first debuted in costume as an adult in the post-Crisis universe. The adjustment impacted the Legion of Super-Heroes, as Superboy was instrumental in their origin.

"By spring, it was clear there was this nagging issue about how the reboot impacted Superboy and the Legion," says Greenberger, who, as an editor at DC, recalled much of the background. "After several heated dinners, it became clear something had to be done, and the entire Pocket Universe notion came up and would be addressed late in the first year of the reboot."

"We had to find some plausible way to deal with it," Levitz says.

Thanks to the time-spanning events of *Crisis*, it wasn't hard to include the Legion into that maxiseries and cross over into the main title. But since the main *Legends* series took place entirely in the present, creators needed to figure out how to organically include the Legion in to the crossover.

"We were trying to find a way to tie the Legion franchise into this 20th Century storyline," Greenberger says. "After all these years, I can't remember if it was Paul or someone else who realized a Legionnaire in the 20th Century, caught up in *Legends*, could be used to foreshadow the Pocket Universe storyline."

According to *Legends* editor Mike Gold, the *Cosmic Boy* miniseries was always set to start off in the main series, then spin off into his own story. As Gold wrote in the introduction of the *Legends* trade paperback, the tie-in books to were labeled either "spin-off" or "crossover" based on how closely the book influenced the main storyline. Books like *Justice League of America* and the new Superman line of titles wove in and out of the main series, so they were listed as crossovers, while *Cosmic Boy*, who walked out of *Legends* and never looked back, and *Secret Origins* were labeled spin-offs.

When asked what the goal of *Legends* was, Levitz replies, "To make a buck. It's not much more complicated than that."

Levitz enjoyed writing *Cosmic Boy* in the miniseries. The character had been moved to the sidelines during the then-current *Legion of Super-Heroes* series, as founders *Cosmic Boy*, *Lightning Lad*, and *Saturn Girl* stepped away from active duty, although they came together in the 1986 series *Legionnaires 3* to battle the Time Trapper. As the Legion's first leader, *Cosmic Boy* is a "responsible, overburdened character,"



**BOB GREENBERGER**

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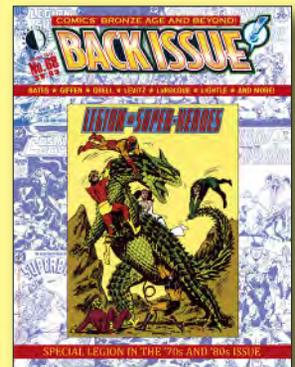
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"[The Time Trapper... beginning," Levitz says...

*Cosmic Boy's* role... when Darkseid sends... generator located in... Martin Stein being on... Raymond to become... rampage through Ma...

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**BACK ISSUE #68**

"1970s and '80s Legion of Super-Heroes!" LEVITZ interview, the Legion's Honored Dead, the *Cosmic Boy* miniseries, a Time Trapper history, the *New Adventures of Superboy*, Legion fantasy cover gallery by JOHN WATSON, plus BATES, COCKRUM, CONWAY, COLON, GIFFEN, GRELL, JAMES, KUPPERBERG, LaROCCO, LIGHTLE, SCHAFFENBERGER, SHERMAN, STATON, SWAN, WAID, & more! COCKRUM cover!

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