



July 2013  
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# BACKISSUE!

BRONZE AGE B-TEAMS, FEATURING

## THE DEFENDERS

CHAMPIONS

DOOM PATROL

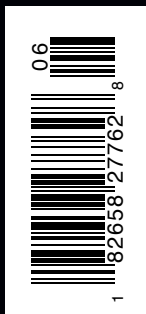
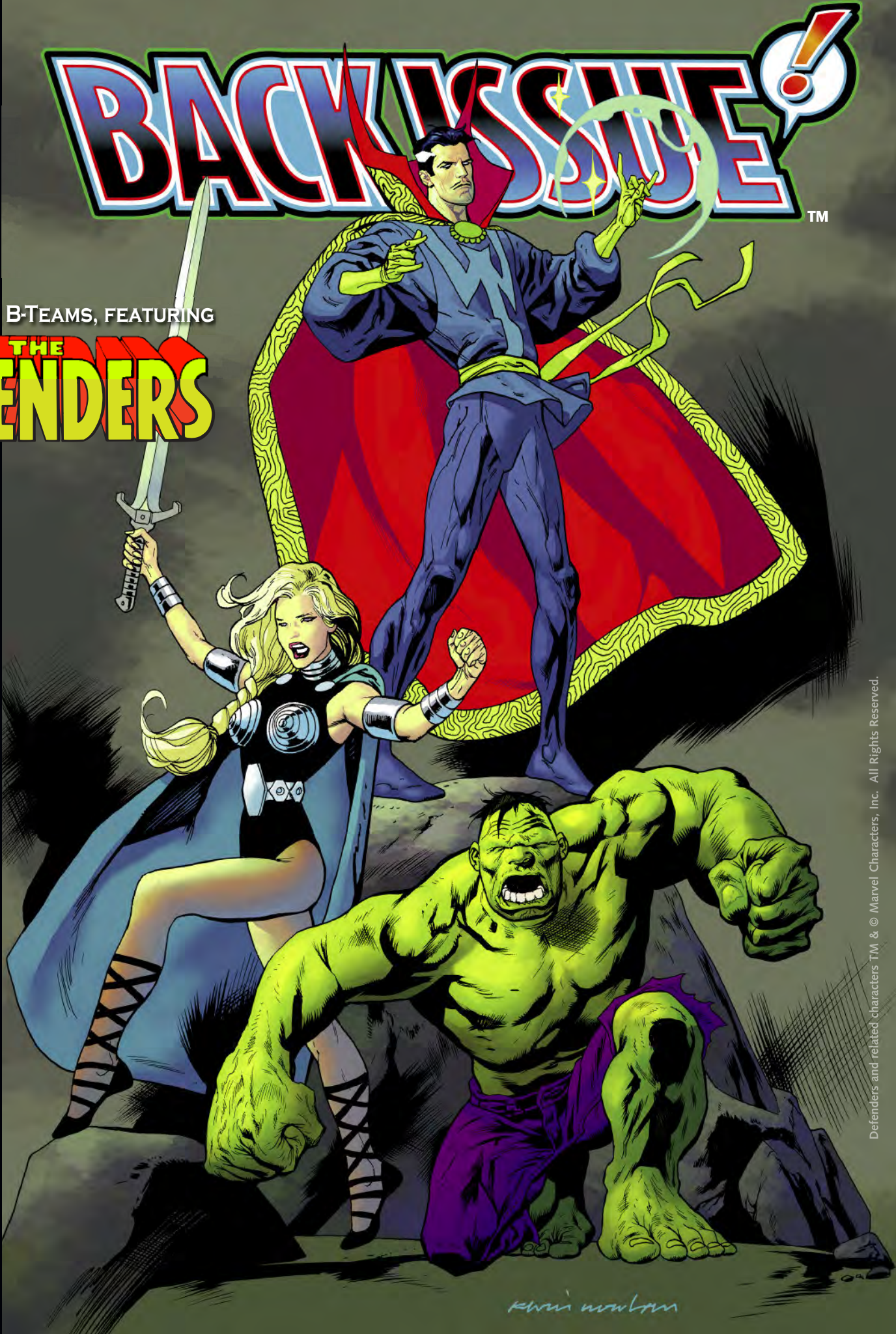
GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

INHUMANS

LEGION OF SUBSTITUTE HEROES

TEEN TITANS WEST

PETER DAVID'S X-FACTOR



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Volume 1,  
Number 65  
July 2013

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

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# THE NOT-READY-FOR-SUPER-TEAM PLAYERS A HISTORY OF THE DEFENDERS

by Daniel DeAngelo



ROY THOMAS

Long before there were multiple teams of Avengers, and their membership expanded to include such "loner" heroes as Namor the Sub-Mariner, Dr. Strange, Valkyrie, and (after his brief stint as a founding Avenger) the Hulk, these outsiders formed the crux of the Defenders: a loosely connected group with no official members, leaders, headquarters, or rules—"heroes called together only when the need arises ... to battle *menaces* that threaten the security ... or the very life ... of the planet Earth!"

## STRANGE ORIGINS

Although the Defenders first appear as a group in *Marvel Feature* #1 (Dec. 1971), their genesis goes back to a storyline that began with *Dr. Strange* #183 (Dec. 1969), written by Defenders creator Roy Thomas, in which Strange learns of "The Undying Ones"—an evil race of demons that once dominated Earth and now seeks to reclaim it. However, *Dr. Strange* was abruptly canceled, and Thomas was forced to continue the story in other books he wrote. Strange would seek help from Namor in *Sub-Mariner* #22 (Feb. 1970), and later the Hulk in *Incredible Hulk* #126 (Apr. 1970). When the threat of the Undying Ones is ended, Strange retires to a normal life.

Later, Thomas had Namor join forces with the Hulk and Silver Surfer as the "Titans Three" in *Sub-Mariner* #34–35 (Feb.–Mar. 1971) to prevent the United Nations from testing a weather-control station that may threaten all life on Earth. The U.N. calls in the Avengers and a battle ensues, until a flaw in the machine is discovered that could cause it to explode.

After the trio of outsiders parts ways, Namor contemplates: "An alliance of *three titans* that might have altered the course of *history*! But perhaps we shall meet *again* one day—perhaps!" Thomas began to consider the idea of making the "Titans" a regular team, but there would have to be some changes. At the time, Stan Lee had some exclusivity with the Silver Surfer and asked other writers not to use him. "Stan suggested Dr. Strange as a guy who could hold this group of

volatile personalities together," Thomas recalls. So Thomas brought Strange out of retirement in another story in *Marvel Feature* #1. It was also Lee who apparently coined the group's name. "The 'Defenders' is far too passive a name for my taste," Thomas claims. "I prefer more aggressive-sounding names like the 'Avengers' or the 'Invaders,' so Stan probably came up with that one."

## THE DAY OF THE DEFENDERS

Finally, the Defenders made their official debut in that same comic, written by Thomas with pencils by Ross Andru and inks by Namor's creator, Bill Everett—with

### Dysfunctional Dynamos

Writer Roy Thomas gathered Dr. Strange, the Hulk, and the Sub-Mariner as the Defenders in *Marvel Feature* #1 (Dec. 1971). Cover by Neal Adams.

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## Defenders "Assembled"

The roots of the Defenders, via Roy Thomas-written stories: (top left) The "Undying Ones" storyline from *Dr. Strange* #183 (Dec. 1969, cover by Gene Colan) was resumed in *Marvel Feature* #1.

(top right) Doc Strange crossed over into *Sub-Mariner* #22

(Feb. 1970, cover by Marie Severin and Frank Giacoia).

(bottom left) Two months later, the Master of the Mystic Arts guest-starred in *The Incredible Hulk* #126 (Apr. 1970, cover by Herb Trimpe), which featured the first appearance of Valkyrie-to-be Barbara Norriss.

(bottom right) Sal Buscema's cover to issue #34 (Feb. 1971) of Namor's title served as a prelude to the non-team which would officially premiere in a matter of months.

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Dr. Strange replacing the Silver Surfer (who appears briefly but is knocked unconscious while attempting to escape Galactus' barrier that traps him on Earth). Strange is summoned to the deathbed of his old foe, the alien scientist Yandroth, who reveals that he has created a doomsday device called the Omegatron. When Yandroth dies, it will activate and begin its final countdown. Strange enlists the aid of Namor and the Hulk again, who attempt to destroy the Omegatron by force, but the computer reveals that it had anticipated Strange's interference and intended to harness the power of his two allies to destroy Earth. With seconds left, Strange slows down the passage of time around the Omegatron, so that each moment becomes an eon.

Afterwards, Namor notes, "We all but caused the Earth's destruction—while we sought to be its valiant *defenders!*" and Strange exclaims, "*Defenders!* A fitting name for such a grouping as we—if ever we've need to meet again!"

And meet again they would in *Marvel Feature* #2 (Mar. 1972), also written by Thomas and penciled by Andru, with inks by future series penciler Sal Buscema. Worshipers of the Dread Dormammu plan to sacrifice Dr. Strange's body so Dormammu can possess it and enter Earth's dimension. Strange's disciple, Clea, summons Namor and Hulk to battle Dormammu's followers, as Strange's astral spirit drives Dormammu back to his own dimension. In *Marvel Feature* #3

# "WE'LL KEEP ON FIGHTING 'TIL THE END": THE STORY OF THE CHAMPIONS™

by Karen Walker

ONWARD, MY COMRADES!  
THE TIME HAS COME TO FACE  
OUR GREATEST FOES!



THIS IS IT!  
THE PULSE-POUNGING ORIGIN OF THE  
MOST SENSATIONAL NEW SUPER-GROUP OF ALL!

Sometimes you like a comic-book series and you can't really say why. Usually it's a book that is marginal, one that isn't doing too well. You know it has flaws, maybe major ones, but something about it draws you in.

For me, that book was *The Champions*. Debuting in 1975, *The Champions* was a team book with a seemingly arbitrary lineup and no real reason to exist. Yet as an 11-year-old comic nut, I was thrilled by this team and wanted more of them, so much more. It's not like any of the characters (Angel, Iceman, Hercules, Black Widow, and Ghost Rider) were favorites of mine. I was familiar with all of them, but none of them held the status in my mind of Spider-Man or Captain America or the Hulk. But the idea of a brand-new team was exciting. I hadn't been there when the Fantastic Four, Avengers, or X-Men debuted, and I only became aware of the Defenders after their first issue. So this was a chance to get in on the ground floor.

Of course, I loved team books. What kid didn't? Multiple superheroes in the same book? Even today that makes me a bit giddy. On top of that, unlike the rest of the Marvel Universe, with its heavy New York focus, this team was situated in Los Angeles, California. I was living just a two-hour drive from Los Angeles! This could be *my* team! It was almost like when baseball moved to the West Coast. *Finally!*

But the Champions never caught on. The title had a total of 17 issues to its name. That's it. Yet even today, when I mention the book to other fans, I'll get some nostalgic reactions, usually followed up with something along the lines of, "If only it had been better" or "If only it had lasted longer."

So, why did the Champions fail as both a title and a concept? In retrospect, it seems to me that they were actually *doomed* to fail. The reason for this can be boiled down to four factors:

1. Lack of a consistent creative team.
2. Lack of a consistent publication schedule.
3. Lack of an A-list character in the book.
4. Lack of team chemistry or a reason for the team to exist.

In the following article, each of these factors will be discussed as we examine the history of the book.

## CHAMPIONS OF THE COMMON MAN

In 1975, Marvel already had six regular team books. But each of these teams had their reason to exist: the Fantastic Four were a family of adventurers; the Avengers were the heavy hitters, there to take on "the foes no single hero could withstand"; the X-Men were united by their mutant status; the Inhumans were an

### The Ill-Fitting Five

Could there be a more mismatched super-team than the Champions? Still, for the Bronze Age Marvelite this offbeat group strikes a nostalgic chord. Cover to *The Champions* #1 (Oct. 1975) by Gil Kane and Dan Adkins.

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## Kneel Before Pluto!

(left) The God of Hell and hellions raise—oh, you know... in *Champions* #2 (Jan. 1976). Cover by Ron Wilson and Joe Sinnott. (right) Teammates turn against each other in issue #4 (Mar. 1976). Cover by Rich Buckler and Frank Giacoia.

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entire race of beings; the Invaders were fighting a war. And then there were the Defenders, whose shtick was that they had no reason to be together—they were the non-team!

*Champions* #1 (Oct. 1975) would premiere that summer, bringing yet another team into the Marvel Universe. One might well question, *Why another team book?* Marvel seemed glutted with them. There were also teams that did not have their own books, like the Guardians of the Galaxy, roaming around the edges. The original intention for the *Champions*, as it turns out, was not a traditional team book.

Although the letters page of issue #6 (June 1976) details the creation of the book, I went straight to the man who should know, creator Tony Isabella. When asked about his initial idea for the title, Isabella says, "The original concept was Angel and Iceman. *Route 66* with good-looking superheroes and a touch of *The Odd Couple*, what with Warren being wealthy and Bobby being middle class. I really wanted to write that book. Alas, then the editors got involved and things got wacky. My recollection is that both Len Wein and Marv Wolfman were in the room at the time.

"I was told superhero teams must have five members," Isabella continues. "This from the guy who was writing *Fantastic FOUR*. Once I knew I'd have to add more members, I also had to deep-six my heroes-on-the-highway concept. That's when I came up with the idea that the *Champions* would be heroes for the common man, a cool idea I never managed to pull off during my stint on the title.

"I was told, though I can't remember the order, that all superhero teams must have a strong guy and a woman. I always liked Hercules, he was sort of Thor as a frat boy, and I'd just written the Black Widow out of *Daredevil* so she was available. I didn't know how I would get them together, but it was around this point in the pitch meeting that I placed the new team in Los Angeles.

"The wackiness continued when I was told all superhero teams needed a member who had his own series as well," Isabella relates. "Luke Cage was suggested, but I thought that was a spectacularly bad

idea. Cage belonged in New York City. I offered Ghost Rider as the fifth member, since he was already in Los Angeles and I was writing his title.

"Black Goliath wasn't discussed during the meeting. However, in the back of my head, I figured I'd add both him and Tigra to the team in the future. I was scheduled to write both of their series and wanted to keep them out of the hands of other writers."

Isabella's initial idea was a novel one for Marvel at that time (the pairing of Luke Cage and Iron Fist was still years away). Asked if he was influenced at all by Neal Adams and Denny O'Neil's *Green Arrow/Green Lantern* series, Isabella responds, "I thought the GL/GA stuff that Denny and Neal did was outstanding.

I loved it a lot, even wrote a full-page article on the *Speedy* issues for *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* before I moved to New York to work for Marvel. But it wasn't an overt inspiration for my Angel/Iceman pitch. As you figured out, my intent was to do something more lighthearted that combined action and comedy."

So the *Champions* went from a fresh idea to a cookie-cutter super-team. It was as formulaic and conventional as could be. By issue #6, it's established that Angel's vision for the team is to look out for the Average Joe. But that concept never really came to fruition in a team that featured a demi-god and a Hell-spawned demon as members.



TONY ISABELLA

## A ROCKY START

In *Champions* #1, written by Isabella, penciled by Don Heck, and inked by Mike Esposito, the team comes together in the most incredible series of coincidences. All of our heroes just happen to be on the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) campus at the same time. Angel and Iceman are there as students, although neither is feeling content as such. Both miss the superhero life. Hercules has come to campus as a guest-lecturer (!) for a mythology class. The Black Widow and her constant companion, Ivan, are there because the Widow is applying for a job as a Russian instructor. (Yes, they've hit rock bottom.) The final member of our quintet, the Ghost Rider, in his human form of Johnny Blaze, is apparently just joy riding.

## Flash FORWARD!

Marvel Studios has announced that its *Guardians of the Galaxy* movie will be released in 2014. The movie will feature the most recent incarnation of the team, but the Guardians of the Galaxy have a long history ... and future!

### MARVEL SUPER-HEROES

In February 1966, Marvel published the first issue of the reprint series *Fantasy Masterpieces*. The title changed to *Marvel Super-Heroes* as Captain Mar-Vell debuted in issue #12 (Dec. 1967). Issue #18 (Jan. 1969) introduced the Guardians of the Galaxy.

In the 30th Century, Earth had colonized the solar system. Humans living in cloud cities in the skies of Jupiter had been genetically engineered—increasing their strength and mass—to withstand the Jovian gravity. Miners on Mercury could regulate their body temperature to compensate for the planet's heat. Colonists on Pluto were silicon-based humanoids, able to dispense heat or cold.

Opening in the year 3007, Charlie-27 returns to his native Jupiter after six months of solitary Space-Militia duty. After losing radio contact, Charlie is unaware that Jupiter had been invaded by the alien, lizard-like Badoon. Barely managing an emergency teleport, Charlie arrives on Pluto—only to find the same invasion forces. Meeting lone survivor Martinex, the two escape by teleporting to Earth.

Earth, too, has been conquered, and we meet Major Vance Astro and Yondu, the last Centaurian, in the clutches of Badoon captors (Centauri IV also falling to the Badoon). Vance is forced to relate his story: We learn that in 1988 Vance was the first human to be sent into deep space, cryogenically frozen for a millennium for his trip to Alpha Centauri, his entire body forever completely sheathed in foil, else he would age 1,000 years in a heartbeat. However, upon his arrival, Vance discovers Earth colonists waiting to greet him! Humanity had discovered faster-than-light travel *after* Vance left Earth. His sacrifices, his journey, were all for nothing.

During the voyage, Vance had developed mental powers, which he manifests as psychokinetic blasts. On Centauri IV, Vance formed a friendship with Yondu, a weapons-master, who favors the bow. His arrows were made of Yaka metal, which could be sonically controlled; Yondu achieving this by whistling. Vance and Yondu “coincidentally” (see below) meet Charlie and Marty, and the four escape together—vowing to rout the invaders and find Earth's lost colony!

This origin story was written by Arnold Drake with art by Gene Colan. In 1969, Stan Lee was still

### Final Frontiersmen

The sporadically seen Guardians of the Galaxy—Starhawk, Charlie-27, Yondu, Martinex, and Vance Astro—were launched into their own series by writer Steve Gerber in *Marvel Presents* #3 (Feb. 1976). Cover by John Romita, Sr., working from a sketch by interior artist Al Milgrom.

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# EXPLORE THE MARVEL UNIVERSE OF THE 31ST CENTURY WITH...

## THE GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY™

by Jarrod Buttery



editor-in-chief, with Roy Thomas his assistant. Thomas remembers, "'Guardians of the Galaxy' started out as an idea of mine: about super-guerrillas fighting against Russians and Red Chinese who had taken over and divided the USA. I got a sort of general approval out of Stan (I think), and gave the idea to Arnold Drake, since I had no time to write and research it. Arnold went in for a conference with Stan, and Stan (maybe Arnold, too) decided to change it to an interplanetary situation. All the characters and situations in *Guardians* were created by Arnold and/or Stan."

It is not inconceivable that Stan saw this as an opportunity for a follow-up to one of his own, recent stories. *Silver Surfer* #2 (Oct. 1968) featured an attempted invasion of Earth by the Badoon. Repelled by the Surfer, the Badoon vow to return. Thanks to Stan, Arnold, and Gene, the Badoon did indeed conquer the solar system—albeit 1,000 years later.

Despite a favorable response to the debut, it would be five years before a follow-up in scribe Steve Gerber's *Marvel Two-in-One* #4-5 (July-Sept. 1974). Therein, Captain America, Sharon Carter, and Ben Grimm travel to the year 3014 and meet the Guardians. This is a particular thrill for Vance Astro, who admits that Cap was his boyhood idol—the Guardians' ship is even named the *Captain America*. Together, the heroes free New York from the Badoon.

The letters page in issue #4 credits Tony Isabella with suggesting that the Guardians appear in *MTIO*. "While I have no specific memory of Steve and me discussing the Guardians, I'm sure his letters-column comments are accurate," says Isabella. "Many of the Marvel writers of

that time used to sit around and talk about the comics we were writing and I recall most being very generous with their suggestions. I remember being excited about *Marvel Super-Heroes* in general and the Guardians of the Galaxy in particular. I was disappointed that Marvel only did the one GOTG story, [but] once I was on staff, it became easier to push for them."

Responding to numerous queries, the letters page in *MTIO* #7 (Jan. 1975) attempted to explain Vance's all-enclosing lifesuit: "He feeds intravenously. Martinex has invented a device by which the feed-tubes can be inserted utilizing a dimensional probe that passes through his metallic body-sheath without piercing it. His bladder is alleviated from stress in a similar fashion."

### DEFENDING THE EARTH— TODAY AND TOMORROW

Gerber obviously enjoyed working with the GotG, as the characters travelled back to our time in *Giant-Size Defenders* #5 (Aug. 1975). The story continued in *Defenders* #26-29 (Aug.-Nov. 1975) as the Defenders return with the Guardians to the year

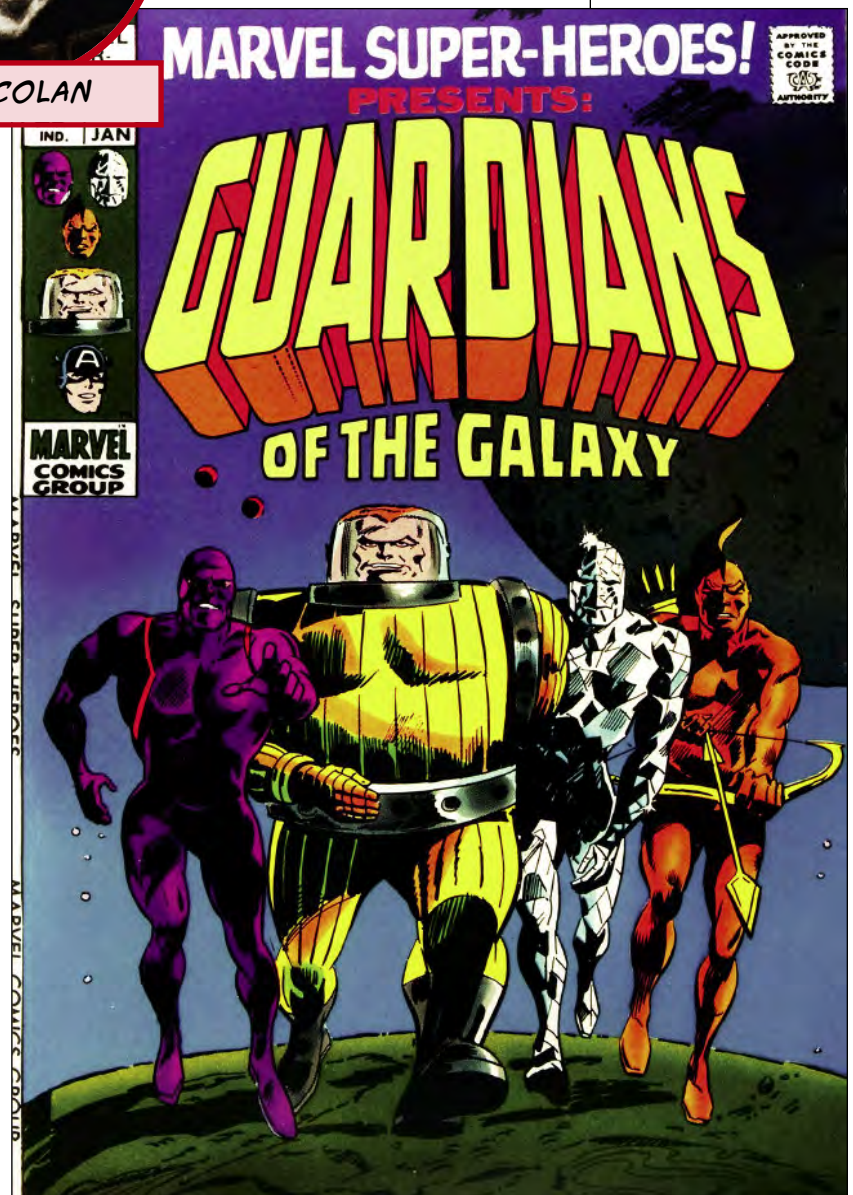


GENE COLAN

### Early Outings

(below) The Guardians as they appeared in their debut, in *Marvel Super-Heroes* #18 (Jan. 1969). Cover art by Gene Colan and Mike Esposito. (left) Back in action in *Giant-Size Defenders* #5 (July 1975), with a Ron Wilson/Al Milgrom cover.

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**Gone in 60 Seconds**

Readers of *The Doom Patrol* #122 (Sept.–Oct. 1968) were shocked to see the DP offer up their lives to save a handful of others'. Cover by Joe Orlando.

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# The **DOOM PATROL**

## Interviews: Arnold Drake



*In an interview done shortly before his death in 2007, Arnold Drake talked about the creation of the Doom Patrol and what he thought about the DPs that came after his. At the time of his death, he was working on an original Doom Patrol graphic novel that he wanted longtime collaborator Luis Dominguez to illustrate. Sadly, Drake died before he finished the graphic novel.*

– Michael Browning

**MICHAEL BROWNING:** *Talk to me about your work on the Doom Patrol.*

**ARNOLD DRAKE:** I created the Doom Patrol for [editor] Murray Boltinoff. I came in one morning, a Monday or Tuesday morning, and I'd brought some scripts with me and some plot ideas and Boltinoff said to me, "I've got a problem. *My Greatest Adventure* is dying and they're probably going to kill it, but I'd like one more shot at it. What I want is a new feature that might save it." So I said, "Okay, give me some time to come up with something."

I went home and came up with this notion of the man in a wheelchair and three superheroes and it was about making them more human, about there being warfare within the group, about being angry because of what they were, and how [being] a star isn't all the fun it's cracked up to be. Boltinoff was fascinated with the whole idea of the genius in the wheelchair. But when I brought it in, I only had Elasti-Girl and Robotman—who at that time was called Automaton. That name was pretty stupid. I've been responsible for a lot of stupid things, but that was one of the stupidest, so, within two issues, I figured that out and changed his name to Robotman.

So I sold it and [Boltinoff] said, "Go home and write it." I told him that I wanted one more character to make it a trio. He said he'd buy it the way it was, but he said to go home and write it because he wanted it by Tuesday. I left his office and bumped into [writer] Bob Haney in the hall. Bob was a real good friend of mine who I had worked closely with on a humdinger of a movie screen treatment that we weren't able to sell because it was too far ahead of its time. I've had that problem repeatedly, because it is as bad to be ahead of your time as it is to be behind the times. I asked him if he got an assignment from Bob Kanigher. He had this routine where he'd come up from Woodstock once a week and stay for two nights and get a couple of assignments from Kanigher and then go back home



and write them. He said he didn't get an assignment from Kanigher, and I told him that I had this assignment that I was about two-thirds through with, but I needed another character and maybe between us we could come up with something. We sat down and came up with this notion of a guy who has gone through a cloud of radioactivity and is bandaged from head to toe with these specially treated bandages that keep the radioactivity within him so he isn't injurious to others. The most novel aspect was Negative Man, the character who lives inside him who can only be outside of him for 60 seconds—and don't ask me why 60 seconds. I treated it as though it was a law of nature. If he didn't get back into Larry Trainor's body within 60 seconds, Larry dies.

So we got a pretty good idea of the storyline, so we typed it up quickly and tore it in half and he went up to Woodstock and wrote the second half, while I wrote the first half. We met back up in New York on Monday or Tuesday and we exchanged our halves and I sat down and integrated the two pieces, and that was the beginning of the Doom Patrol.

Bob remembered what followed that differently, and I'm pretty sure that he was wrong, but I'm also pretty sure he wasn't lying. I'm pretty sure he did not remember that it was only one character he worked on, and then, at the end of the book, I said, "Thank you, Bob, and I'll handle it from here on." He remembered working on the second or third book, which never happened. I wrote everything after that. It was the most comforting comics experience I ever had because I was able to write the beginning, the middle,

and the end, and because I was able to develop them and watch them grow and interplay and then expand by bringing in Beast Boy and Mento and having a lot of fun with the Brotherhood of Evil.

**BROWNING:** *You worked with a great artist on the series.*

**DRAKE:** Bruno Premiani was magnificent, and I lucked out. When Murray saw the script, he said it was great, but he didn't know who he could get to draw it. I mentioned the top guys, but he said they were too busy. He said, "I got a guy who does mostly romance books." I said, "Oh, my God, I don't need a romance-book artist [on a book that's] as active as this is. But," I said, "Well, do what you think is best." The following week, he showed me some sketches Premiani had done based on his reading of the first script. I said, "Oh, my God, Murray, we have lucked out. This guy is superb. He is so special, so



**MURRAY BOLTINOFF**

apart from everyone else in the field, that we now have a real image of our own. And it was just pure luck."

Bruno came up to New York about 1960, or something like that, from Italy by way of Argentina. Bruno's father had been an anarcho-sympatico-ist, as they were called at that time, and had fought to overthrow the king of Italy, and Bruno breathed that kind of radicalism from an early age. So by the time Bruno was 16 or 17, [he] was already a pretty prominent political cartoonist in Italy. Then came along Mussolini, and Mussolini wasn't about to put up with that. So Bruno packed his bags and moved to Argentina. He married a lovely Hungarian lady and they did a book together called *El Cabayo*, and it is the greatest treatise on the illustration of the horse. If you want to know how to draw bulls, you go to

## Coincidence??

Fans have long wondered if one of comics' offbeat hero teams with a leader in a wheelchair—DP and X-Men debuted less than two months apart—copied the other. Doom Patrol creator Arnold Drake opines on this subject in this interview. (left) The DP's first appearance, in *My Greatest Adventure* #80, went on sale April 11, 1963, while (right) Marvel's mutants made the scene in *The X-Men* #1, which hit newsstands on July 2, 1963. Covers by Bruno Premiani (DP) and Jack Kirby and Sol Brodsky (X-Men).

Doom Patrol and *My Greatest Adventure* TM & © DC Comics. X-Men © 2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.



## The New DP Makes a Splash

The pasted-up indicia has been lost to time, but Robotman and his new teammates cut loose on page 1 of *Showcase* #94. Script by Paul Kupperberg, art by Joe Staton. Original art courtesy of Heritage ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)).

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# The DOOM PATROL

## Interviews: Paul Kupperberg



**MICHAEL BROWNING:** *How did you convince DC to let you bring back the Doom Patrol in Showcase #94-96? How did you pitch the series?*

**PAUL KUPPERBERG:** DC came to me to do the Doom Patrol ... actually, Paul Levitz came to me to do the Doom Patrol. We were both newbies in those days, but Paul had been given the job of lining up features for a revival of the venerated *Showcase* title, features that DC wanted to give three-issue test runs.

**BROWNING:** *Were you already a DP fan?*

**KUPPERBERG:** I was a big Doom Patrol fan. I discovered them through a kind of back-door way, in a crossover between the DP and the Challengers of the Unknown. I'd been picking up back issues of the *Challs* and found this other group and they quickly became some of my favorite characters. Arnold Drake was one of the very few writers at DC in those days to get what Stan Lee was doing over at Marvel and threw plenty of those same soap-opera elements into the DP.

**BROWNING:** *Why bring back the DP? I mean, their first series hadn't sold that well. What attracted you to these characters?*

**KUPPERBERG:** Well, in its day, the DP sold well enough to sustain a title for about 40 issues, a five-year run, so that's not so shabby, as I've had series that have lasted seven issues. But I really don't know why the DP was chosen for revival. All I cared about at the time was that I was being offered a three-issue run in my all-time favorite title, *Showcase*, featuring some of my favorite characters, being edited by a friend.

Whatever it sold, I always found the DP to be ahead of its time, at least at DC. Arnold Drake was playing with storylines and characterizations that other writers wouldn't be getting to at National [DC] for years. It reads a little clunky today, but 45+ years ago it was pretty radical. We weren't that far away from the old [Mort] Weisinger Superman-versus-crooks-in-suits and [Jack] Schiff Batman-versus-aliens, and I was happy to see some of the new Marvel sophistication make it to DC.

**BROWNING:** *Since the title had been canceled a few years earlier, did DC think that there would be enough interest in a new Doom Patrol to start a new series?*

**KUPPERBERG:** Must have, the poor, deluded fools. But that was the point behind *Showcase*, to give a trial run to new or revived features.

**BROWNING:** *How did you come up with the characters of Tempest, Negative Woman, and Celsius? Except for Valentina Vostok and her affliction with the Negative*

### Bad Dad

Kalki, father of Celsius and foe of the DP. Original art by Steve Lightle (note his telltale signature!) from *Who's Who* Update '87 #3.

Courtesy of Steve Lightle and Michael Browning.

TM & © DC Comics.

# THE DOOM PATROL!

## Interviews: Steve Lightle

**MICHAEL BROWNING:** *Your work on the Doom Patrol actually precedes you ever drawing it for DC. Paul Kupperberg had a Doom Patrol color drawing hanging on his wall for many years that you had sent in to DC as a sample of your work, and it helped land you work at the company back in 1983. Why did you draw the Doom Patrol, a group that had been killed off in the 1960s and brought back in the 1970s, but, at that time, wasn't being published by DC?*

**STEVE LIGHTLE:** That Doom Patrol drawing was originally done as one of a million samples I had sent to DC back in 1983. They were doing that *New Talent Showcase* at the time. I think Sal Amendola was [editing] that, and it quickly turned over to Karen Berger. Sal contacted me after seeing that and a few other samples and was really enthusiastic. I was a fan of the Doom Patrol, and *Teen Titans* was back with Changeling and I thought it was as good a time as any to remind people of his roots.

I always thought when I entered comics, rather than getting *Legion of Super-Heroes* right off the bat, which happened in the first year, I kind of thought I'd do backups in *Detective* for five years, earning my keep. I thought the best way to impress them was to take all these forgotten characters and show them what I could do with them.

**BROWNING:** *Your Doom Patrol designs took the characters back to their roots. A lot of artists have tried to update the characters to make them their own. Why didn't you redesign the characters?*

**LIGHTLE:** I like to pay tribute to what has gone before. I don't like this idea that you ignore everything, take the name and create something of your own. I think that's disrespectful in some way. You can tell from my *Doom Patrol* and *Legion* work that I was very much building on a foundation others had put down before me.

**BROWNING:** *I think your version of Robotman was as good as what Bruno Premiani had drawn in the original series.*

**LIGHTLE:** Well, thank you. That's very, very kind of you to say. Bruno, at his best, had some work you just couldn't beat. But he had a style that even when he wasn't at his very best still shined through. It was grounded in reality. Over at Marvel, Stan Lee made comics for a ten-year-old audience. The characters reacted the way children reacted, which is great salesmanship and great for merchandising. He captured that personality stuff. But [Arnold] Drake and Premiani were writing stories about adult characters, and maybe that is why it wasn't as successful. But their characters had the angst and concerns of adults, more so than most of Stan Lee's work.

**BROWNING:** *Arnold and I became phone friends just about a year before he died. He often talked to me about the Doom Patrol and he said he liked your artwork on the book. He also said Stan knew who his audience was and how to write for that audience.*

**LIGHTLE:** I figured he didn't even know who I was or was even aware of my work!

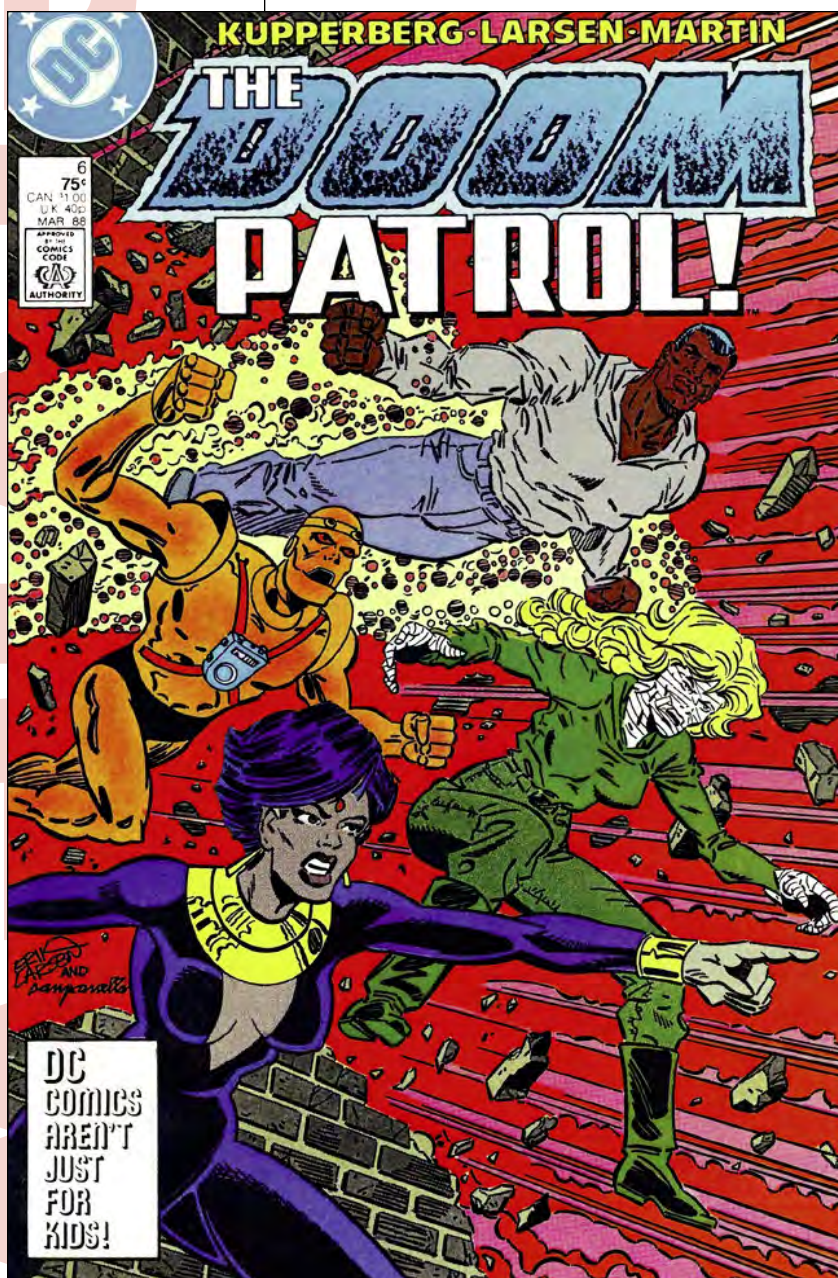


**Larsen Leaps In**  
 Cover to Erik Larsen's first foray into the world of the World's Strangest Heroes, *Doom Patrol* #6 (Mar. 1988). Cover inks by Robert Campanella.

TM & © DC Comics.

# THE DOOM PATROL!

## Interviews: Erik Larsen



**MICHAEL BROWNING:** *How did you get the job on *Doom Patrol*?*

**ERIK LARSEN:** I was looking for work at DC. I'd done a few things there and Mike Gold was looking out for me. When the book opened up he contacted me.

**BROWNING:** *What was the reaction from Paul Kupperberg, Mike Gold, and Robert Greenberger to your artwork, which was very different from Steve Lightle's art on the first five issues?*

**LARSEN:** I didn't get much feedback one way or the other. You'd have to ask them. I was happy to get the assignment.

**BROWNING:** *What were Paul's scripts like? Did you enjoy working with Paul?*

**LARSEN:** They were generally fine. At a couple points they got a bit far-fetched and I took some—in retrospect—serious liberties. I really stepped over the line, thinking back on it. I'd been in the business a short while and I really made some rather sweeping changes. It was pretty ballsy.

**BROWNING:** *What kind of deadlines were you working on? I know Lightle was behind on his work. Did you have trouble meeting deadlines or were you on time each month?*

**LARSEN:** It was a monthly book. I knew that going in and I turned around an issue every month on time. It wasn't outrageous.

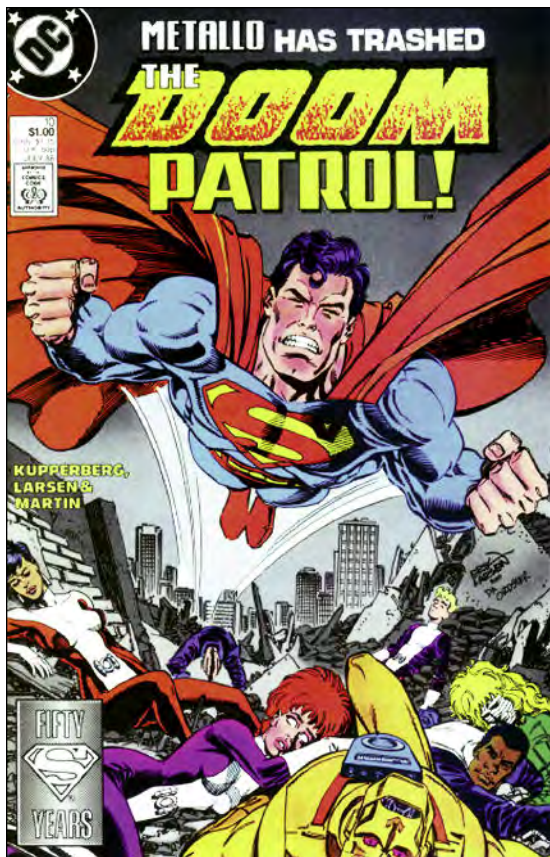
**BROWNING:** *What did you think of the fan reaction to your work? I know there were a lot of letters that didn't express a positive reaction to your work. How did you take those letters?*

**LARSEN:** I didn't expect them to love what I was doing. They bought into the series because of Steve Lightle and my style was an abrupt change. I really had little idea how fans reacted in general but if the mail was any indication—it was not well received. Years later, I learned from the experience and made more of an effort to ease the transition.

When I followed Todd McFarlane on [*Amazing Spider-Man*] I made more of an effort to ease into my style. It helped that Todd and I came from a similar stylistic camp. Steve and I had almost nothing in common [artistically].

**BROWNING:** *What did you think of Paul's storylines?*

**LARSEN:** It seemed really strange to me that he did what he did. Here was this book that he always wanted to do—his dream book—and his first few stories really utilized none of the classic *Doom Patrol*



villains. When I came on the book, I was able to slip in my own villain almost immediately. It just seemed like he was taking his sweet time getting to what he wanted to do and I thought it was a very risky thing to do. Again, I learned from this years later on *Nova the Human Rocket* and did all of the stories I most wanted to do right out of the gate.

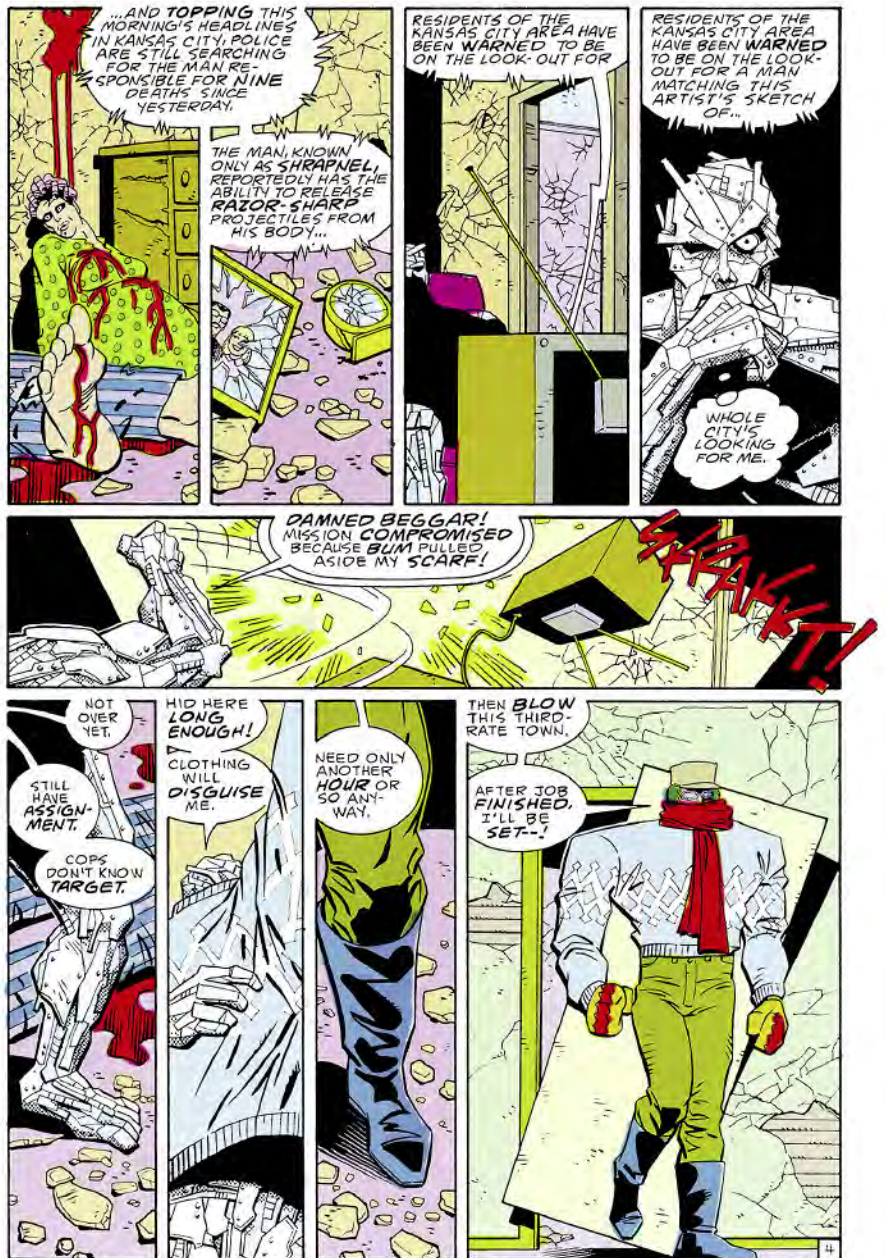
**BROWNING:** Which inkers did you like best on your pencils? Gary Martin, Pablo Marcos, Al Gordon, or Jim Sanders III?

**LARSEN:** Al Gordon was the top—followed by Sanders, Marcos, and Martin. I didn't think Gary and I worked very well together. It was an awkward fit. I pushed to get Al Gordon on the book—I wish he'd have stayed. Sanders did a decent job, though—he was my suggestion as well, I think. He'd inked me on a *Hulk* fill-in. I also pushed to get John Workman lettering it. For whatever reason, they listened to me.

**BROWNING:** Did you get a chance to plot or co-write any of the DP stories? Did Paul let you give input into the stories?

**LARSEN:** Yes, I did—pretty much from day one. The villain Shrapnel was entirely mine, and in later issues I was making huge revisions—I'd get to the same place—but I took a pretty different route going there. I remember in one issue, Paul had plotted it so that Robotman took over a spaceship with his brain in a tank, and I thought that was idiotic so I did something else entirely.

Again, I took some serious liberties, which I really had no business taking, but the editor was absolutely fine with it. He gave me tremendous leeway to do what I thought worked. At one point I drew most of an issue sideways because they went into some wacky dimension. A short time later, Rob Liefeld followed my



lead in an issue of *Hawk and Dove*, and the editor flipped his wig and had the issue redrawn. Rob didn't ask, he said—well, neither did I!

**BROWNING:** How did you come up with the ideas for the covers? The first three you drew were very explosive, iconic covers, but the rest were more story-driven. How did your covers evolve?

**LARSEN:** Not much of a story there. I just laid them out and they were approved. There was no rhyme or reason. I just pulled out images that seemed to go with the plots. Somebody up there must have liked what I was doing because they soon had me laying out covers for other DC books.

**BROWNING:** I thought you tried to make Rhea Jones a sexy character. Was it your intention to make her one of the lead characters by giving her sex appeal?

**LARSEN:** I was just doing what I could with the hand dealt to me.

**BROWNING:** How did you get such high-profile inkers on your covers (like Art Adams and Jerry Ordway)?

### Blowed Up Rееееее Good!

(right) Larsen added the explosive adversary Shrapnel to DP and DC lore. Page 4 of *Doom Patrol* #8 (May 1988), by Kupperberg/Larsen/Martin. (left) Jerry Ordway inked Erik on the cover for the Superman issue, #10.

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FlashBack!

# GO WEST, YOUNG HEROES: The TEEN TITANS IN LA-LA LAND

by Chris Franklin



## Beach Boys and Girls

Introducing: the Titans West! Detail from the cover to *Teen Titans* #50 (Oct. 1977) by Rich Buckler and Jack Abel.

TM & © DC Comics.

### California: land of surf, sand ... and forgotten sidekicks?

Admittedly, out-of-work teens in tights aren't one of the first things you think of when the Golden State comes to mind, but in the DC Universe, the West Coast has hosted several such heroes who banded together to form an ancillary arm of the East Coast Teen Titans.

### ALL THE LEAVES ARE BROWN...

After a near-four-year hiatus, the Teen Titans returned in their own title with issue #44 in 1976. The classic Titans lineup of Robin, Kid Flash, Wonder Girl, Speedy, and Aqualad was present, along with later edition Mal and newcomers Harlequin and Bumblebee. Editor Julius Schwartz and writer Bob Rozakis created a new headquarters for the Titans, this time not in a fictitious comic-book city but in the real-world locale of Farmingdale, Long Island, New York. This firmly established the TT's base of operations on the East Coast of the United States (at least in the DC Universe).

In their 50th anniversary issue, the Titans would face not only new foe Captain Calamity and his not-so-natural disasters, but also a whole new slew of sun-tanned Titans!

### CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

Comics readers who like lots of superheroes were sure to be pleased with Rich Buckler and Jack Abel's cover for *Teen Titans* #50 (Oct. 1977). Two groups of six heroes apiece confronting each other for a measly 35 cents! Robin and his East Coast pals were on the defensive as the newly minted Titans West charged toward them.

Nearly every member of Titans West had some connection to either the Titans team or one of its members. The character with the

deepest Titans roots was Lilith Clay, the fire-haired precognitive teen who served with the original Teen Titans from issue #25–43, during the years they spent under the tutelage of Mr. Jupiter.

Hawk and Dove (H&D) were also members during this period, although they didn't stick around nearly as long as Lilith. Hank and Don Hall were ideologically opposed brothers, granted superpowers by a mysterious voice. They headlined their own brief series before encountering the Teen Titans in issue #21. By issue #31, they were out of the series, and off to comic limbo.

Beast Boy had never been a Titan, but not from lack of trying. Green-skinned Garfield Logan possessed the ability to turn into any animal, but couldn't convince the young Teen Titans to admit this pre-teen to their group way back in issue *TT* #6. Beast Boy was considered the junior member of the Doom Patrol, and when the Doom Patrol heroically sacrificed their lives at the end of their series (*Doom Patrol* #121), Beast Boy faded from view until the Titans (and Hollywood!) called him.

Bat-Girl was not only mostly forgotten—she had been replaced! Betty (later Bette) Kane was not the more famous and popular Barbara Gordon/Batgirl, but instead the *original* Bat-Girl, niece of Kathy (Batwoman) Kane and potential love interest for Robin during the early '60s. At the time of the debut of Titans West, Batwoman had recently resurfaced in the Bob Rozakis-written *Batman Family* title, so her niece's return was almost inevitable.

The final West Coast Titan had no ties to the group, although he did fill the legacy hero role of Bat-Girl and most of the East Coast group. Charley Parker was a teen orphan who was granted flying abilities and a costume like his hero Hawkman by the Winged



Wonder's arch-foe, the Matter Master. After the two-part story in *Justice League of America* #116–117 (Mar.–Apr. 1975), Golden Eagle did not flap his wings again until *TT* #50.

Why revive these characters from comics limbo? Why put them out West? Why not ask the Answer-Man, Bob Rozakis?

Rozakis conceived the Titans West concept on his own, although their debut issue went across the desk of two editors, the outgoing Julius Schwartz and incoming Jack C. Harris. "I think I had come up with the idea of Titans West while Julie was still the editor and then Jack inherited the book, the plot, and me," Rozakis says. He combed the DC library for characters to fill his new teen team, essentially leaving no stone unturned. "I basically went for the rest of the teen characters from the '60s/early '70s that we had not included in the book before. I think I pretty much used everyone who was available.

"None of the characters was a particular favorite. In fact, I don't think I was ever much of a fan of Lilith." This detail is particularly surprising, as Lilith takes the lead role among the team in their first adventure together.

### GOOD VIBRATIONS

*Teen Titans* #50's (Oct. 1977) "The Coast-to-Coast Calamities" by Rozakis and artists Don Heck and Joe Giella begins with the East Coast team dealing with a runaway train and its tracks heading skyward. The Titans confront the villain responsible, a new foe named Captain Calamity, but he manages to escape.

The tale then shifts to the West Coast, or more specifically, the *U.S.S. Tippecanoe* aircraft carrier, where a tennis exhibition match is being held featuring Betty (Bat-Girl) Kane. Betty wins her match, and moments later the aircraft carrier goes airborne. The sight of a flying sea vessel is enough to catch anyone's eye, and it does attract the attention of two teen heroes: Gar (Beast Boy) Logan, while on the set of his TV series *Space Trek: 2022*; and Charley (Golden Eagle) Parker, who manages to lose his job as a gas-station attendant before chasing after the floating ship.

Aboard the *Tippecanoe*, Betty resumes her Bat-Girl career, while naval sailor Hank Hall changes into his fighting guise of the Hawk. An arriving Beast Boy manages to grab the ship's anchor and, morphing into an oversized elephant, pulls the ship back to the Pacific Ocean below. Upon seeing Hawk and Bat-Girl, Golden Eagle exclaims, "This place is beginning to look like a retirement home for leftover

### Silver Age First Appearances

Three premieres for Titans West members: (top) Bat-Girl, in *Batman* #139 (Apr. 1961, cover by Sheldon Moldoff), (center) Beast Boy, in *Doom Patrol* #99 (Nov. 1965, cover by Bob Brown), and (bottom) the Hawk and the Dove, in *Showcase* #75 (June 1968, cover by Steve Ditko).

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superheroes!" The heroes are then joined by Dove and Lilith, who believe their meeting is far from a coincidence.

The sequence above illustrates one of the most interesting aspects of the Titans West team: their day jobs. Removed from the hero game for years, these characters have chosen some rather unique professions among their peers beyond "college student."

Rozakis explains, "I wanted to show that the characters had all moved on in their everyday lives. It seemed logical that Betty would be involved in some kind of sports, since being Bat-Girl required a lot of athleticism. And Hank joining the armed forces seemed a natural move. But my favorite was making Beast Boy into an actor in a TV show, since his powers lent themselves to it and was a way the show could save money on special effects and makeup."

In issue #51 (Nov. 1977), Frank Chiarmonte applies the inks in a story entitled "Titans East! Titans West! And Never (?) the Teens Shall Meet!" Lilith tries to convince the others that she had premonitions of these unbelievable disasters and warns of another pending catastrophe: a rocketing skyscraper, due to launch in their very locale of Coast City.

Unbeknownst to the team, the villainous Mr. Esper, via his Super-Sonic Whisper helmet, observes their meeting. Esper (an old Batman foe not seen since *Batman* #209, Feb. 1969) has tapped into Lilith's precognitive powers and is using them to create the very disasters the Titans are trying to stop. Each time this happens, his control over Lilith's powers increases, and his own grows stronger.

Lilith's predictions again come true when the Ferris Building launches skyward. The newly minted Titans manage to bring the building back to terra firma, thanks mostly to a huge psychic push from Lilith.



BOB ROZAKIS



# INHUMAN

## NATURE: GENETICS, SOCIAL SCIENCE, AND SUPERHERO EVOLUTION

by Alex Boney

JACK KIRBY



Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's legendary *Fantastic Four* run was packed so full of original, mind-bending ideas that it was easy for characters and concepts to get lost in the crowd. When a book serves as a launching pad for concepts as impactful and enduring as Galactus, Silver Surfer, Dr. Doom, Black Panther, and the revived Sub-Mariner, other characters can easily fall through the cracks. When the Inhumans debuted in *Fantastic Four* #45 (Dec. 1965), they seemed to be just another group of colorfully costumed heroes introduced primarily to fight against (and then with) the title characters. It was an eclectic, eccentric group. The Inhumans were outsiders by choice and design. But during the ensuing decades, the Inhumans became some of the most complex and intriguing characters to inhabit the fringes of the Marvel Universe.

Marvel's fringe characters have always been woven in and out of mainstream Marvel continuity. Solid outskirts maintain a strong interior, and a group like the Inhumans provides a sharp contrast for heroes like Spider-Man, Daredevil, and the Hulk. Most of Marvel's flagship characters can be summarized pretty easily, but the Inhumans are much more complicated than many of their Marvel counterparts. At its core, the Inhumans story serves as a playground for mythology, scientific theory, and extraterrestrial speculation. It's a mini-universe that writers have used to explore issues as sensitive (and occasionally taboo) as social class, eugenics, genetic alteration, global politics, and miscegenation. This is not lightweight stuff.

But the Inhumans have also offered the potential to go beyond metaphor. These are distinct, individual characters, after all. Despite their title, the Inhumans have provided memorable and meaningful *human* drama over the years. It's a story that has expanded drastically since 1965 and spawned three maxiseries, several miniseries, and numerous one-shot stories. Over time, characters such as Black Bolt, Crystal, Gorgon, and Karnak have necessarily evolved and changed. But they have always retained the essential mystery and intrigue of their first *Fantastic Four* appearance. It's often said that Lee and Kirby were visionaries, but it's only when we take a close look at some of their under-the-radar creations that we really understand why they've earned that label.

### MARVEL'S OUTSIDERS

Although the core Inhumans royal family first debuted in *FF* #45, Medusa had debuted nine issues earlier (*FF* #36) as a member of the Frightful Four. Along with the Wizard, Sandman, and Paste-Pot

### Royal Family

Splash page to *The Inhumans* #1 (Oct. 1975). Completing the credits, the letterer is Annette Kaweck and the colorist is Diane Buscema.

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The possibility that human life originated somewhere beyond the Earth was not particularly new. Lee and Kirby had tapped into theories that had been circulating for millennia, but the idea of extraterrestrial origins (or paleo-contact) found a receptive mainstream audience in the 1960s. "The Inhumans were created before the Erich von Däniken craze," Moench recalls, "but it was not before others had raised that notion. In fact, in the ancient Sumerian religion, their gods were called the Anunnaki. I think this is probably where Kirby got this. I'm pretty sure it was Kirby's idea more than Stan's, because Kirby shows evidence of being into this stuff more than Stan was in the other concepts that he came up with. Like the New Gods. The ancient Sumerians' religion actually sounds much more like science fiction than fantasy. They actually said that beings came from another world out of the sky, in ships, and they created human beings to aid their workers. I was interested in all that kind of stuff—just the notion of the existence of aliens, and were they ever going to come to Earth. Why human beings are just another animal, and yet we're so different from the rest of Earth's creatures. Did we come from elsewhere? Was there some sort of genetic manipulation with early hominids that turned us into modern human beings seemingly overnight? It wasn't a long, slow, eventual evolution. It was like, BOOM! There are human beings. All of those things have always fascinated me, and there was Jack Kirby jumping on it."

Moench's Inhumans story began as a traditional science-fiction adventure series. Several new recurring characters—Stallion, Centaurius, Avius, and Leon—are introduced, Maximus is plotting with the Kree again, and the Inhumans fight physical threats such as Blastaar and Shatterstar. Moench was given a degree of latitude with storytelling, but he was largely confined in how much he could change the fundamentals of the characters. "This is the usual thing I hate," Moench recalls, "and the only reason I hesitated taking the book. The Inhumans were an integral part of the Fantastic Four. I was given the instructions, 'Well, whatever you do, don't do anything

that would affect their future in the *Fantastic Four* or conflict with plans that the writer of the FF might have for the Inhumans in the future.' That's nothing new, but it's the kind of think I hate. The cross-pollination is great. But it really worked at its best when there were only six or eight Marvel books and they were all written by one guy—Stan Lee. As soon as it got big, and you had ten or 20 different writers or whatever, and all the characters are flitting all over the books, the writers of the books were hamstrung. 'Do these stories that are Inhumans stories, but don't really change the chronology or the trajectory of the Inhumans. And they have to stay in their base.

They can't really move or go to other planets, or if they do, you've got to get them back right away.'"

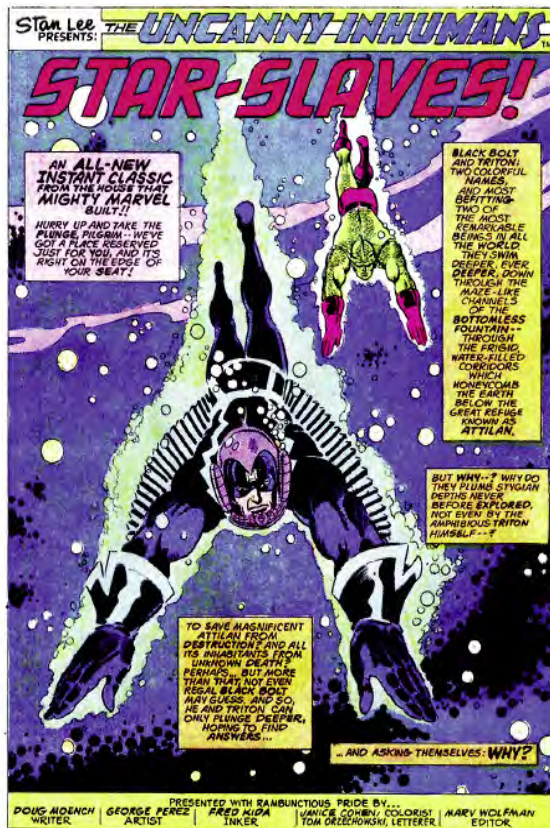
Despite these constraints, Moench still advanced the story of the Inhumans quite a bit. In *Inhumans* #6 (Aug. 1976), Black Bolt once again frees Attilan from the hold of Maximus. He destroys the city again, and the Inhumans reach a new low point in the aftermath of another Kree assault. Rejected by the Kree and isolated from humanity on Earth, the royal family decides to take the fight to the Kree. In #6–10, they travel into space and launch an assault on an asteroid-sized Kree space station. After they destroy it, they return to Earth. The *Inhumans* series came to an end with #12 (Aug. 1977) and was concluded in *Captain Marvel* #53 a few months later. During the War of the Three Galaxies, Black Bolt and Lockjaw team with

Captain Marvel to stop the Kree from using Earth as a battleground.

After the *Captain Marvel* story, it was several years before the Inhumans were featured again. Under the title "Untold Tales of the Marvel Universe," Peter Gillis and Ron Wilson created an Inhumans backup story for *What If?* #29–30 (Oct.–Dec. 1981) that explained why the Inhumans had relocated the Great Refuge from its original remote island location to the Himalayas. Years before the events of *FF* #45, humans had discovered Attilan and began harassing its inhabitants. With the help of Ikaris, the Eternals, and Attilan engineers, Black Bolt was able to detach the entire city from the island and move it in one piece to its new location.



GEORGE PÉREZ



**"Splash" Page**

(left) Black Bolt and Triton take a dive on page 1 of *Inhumans* #2 (Dec. 1975). (right) Rich Buckler and Dan Adkins' cover to the third issue of the Bronze Age series (Feb. 1976).

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# THE SUBSTITUTE HEROES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

by Timothy Callahan



*"There go the Super-Heroes on another great mission ... but they don't need our help! I guess we're just super-failures!"*

Such was the lament of Polar Boy, de facto leader of the Legion of Substitute Heroes, in the first panel of their first appearance in *Adventure Comics* #306 (Mar. 1963). This was the writer Edmund Hamilton/artist John Forte era of the Legion of Super-Heroes serial in *Adventure Comics*, when the cosmically absurd happened on a monthly basis, but everything was played with straight-faced sincerity. The members of the Legion of Substitute-Heroes, or Subs as they became affectionately known, were even more ridiculous than the future-teens who heroically saved the 30th Century from more than a few deranged menaces from their base of operations inside an upside-down rocket-ship clubhouse.

The Subs—third-stringers who didn't make the cut during Legion tryouts—didn't even have a clubhouse to call their own. The best they could do was dig into a hillside to build their own clubcave by the sixth page of their first appearance. Substitute Hero-living was not wrapped in glory. Or even dignity.

But who were these Subs? Who were the adolescents who would be so coldly rejected by a panel of Legionnaires, which included such oddballs-in-their-own-right as the antennae-sporting Chameleon Boy and the rotund and rubbery Bouncing Boy?

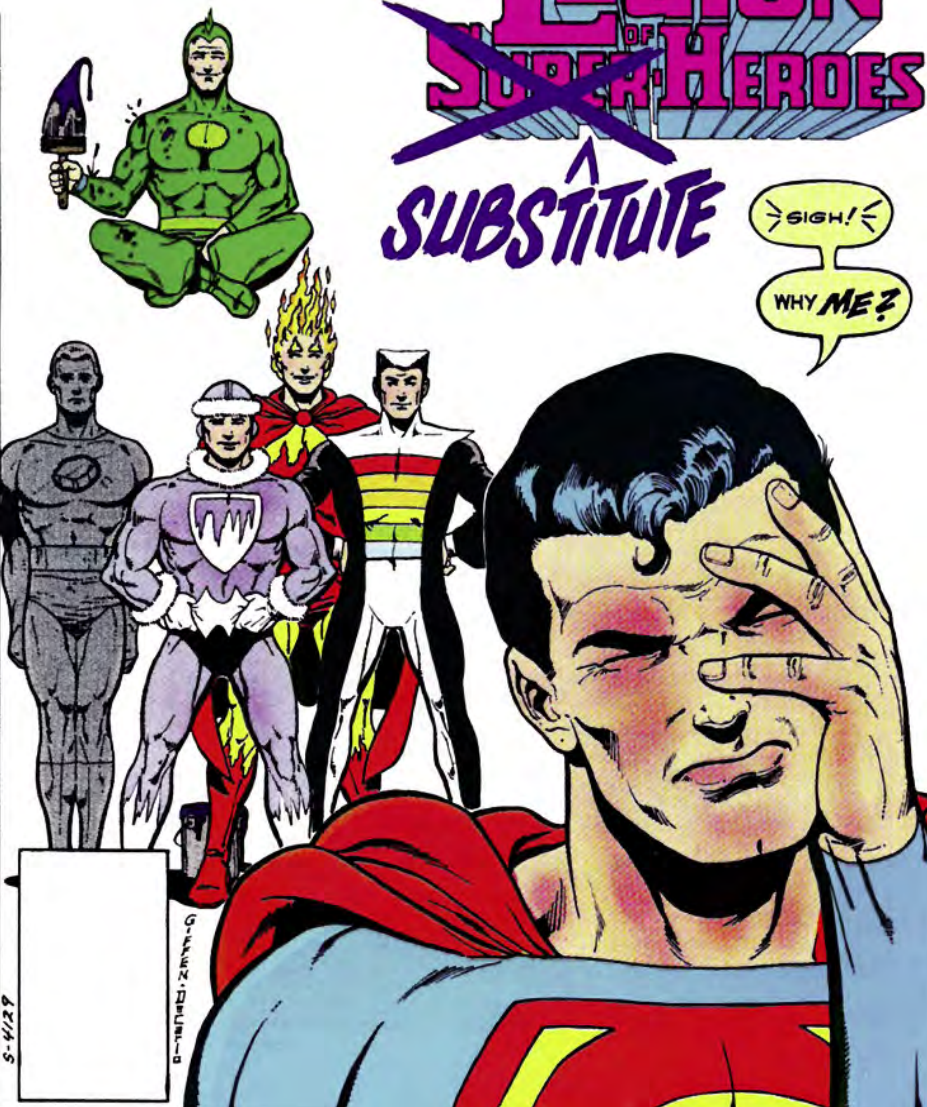
Well, Hamilton and Forte presented us with:

- **Polar Boy**, of course, the earmuff-and-fur-collar clad master of frigid temperatures;
- **Fire Lad**, a thin young man who could breathe flame like a dragon;
- **Night Girl**, who had strength on par with Superboy, but only after sunset;
- **Chlorophyll Kid**, who could make plants grow super-fast; and
- **Stone Boy**, who could turn to solid rock. But not move. Or do anything. Tough to be heroic when your power is to do nothing.

These not-so-legendary Substitute Heroes found themselves rejected by the Legion, and yet they mustered enough plucky spirit to counter an alien invasion ... and let the Legion of Super-Heroes take all the credit. On the final page of their 1963 first appearance, Polar Boy and the rest of the Subs stand on the sidelines during a heroic welcome-home parade for the Legion. No one knew the secret heroism of the Subs, but the always-optimistic Night Girl sees a day when things may change: "We've proved we can act as their standbys ... and someday maybe the world will know about us Substitute Heroes, too."

That hopeful prophecy would come true, and the Subs would appear over a dozen times in various Silver Age Legion stories, but though they gained a bit more

THE  
~~LEGION  
OF  
SUPER-HEROES~~  
SUBSTITUTE



## Not-Ready-for-Prime-Time LSH

Detail from the Keith Giffen/Mike

DeCarlo-drawn cover to *DC Comics Presents* #59 (July 1983).

TM & © DC Comics.

recognition and teamed up with their superhero idols many a time, they would remain third-stringers who weren't quite cool enough to hang out with their more famous peers. As the Silver Age gave way to the Bronze Age, the Subs were less and less likely to play any kind of role in a Legion story. They might appear in a cameo once in a while, and maybe, when the entire galaxy was threatened, they'd play a tiny supporting role, but they were too much of a relic of a more innocent bygone era to have any relevance even in the idealistic future where superpowered teenagers roamed the stars.

They might have stayed mostly irrelevant, too, if it weren't for Keith Giffen.

## THE SUBSTITUTE HEROES FINALLY GET TOP BILLING

Keith Giffen was no enormous fan of the Legion of Substitute-Heroes when he began the work that would put the Subs directly in the spotlight for the first time in their long but mostly ignored careers. But he certainly had some opinions about the Subs, and thought there might be something there he could use. That wasn't, however, his primary motivation. He had another goal in mind: He needed someone to pit against an iconoclastic quasi-villain trickster character he'd recently created at DC. He needed a group that would be appropriate in a story featuring Ambush Bug.

Ambush Bug, the zany character who would ultimately break down the fourth wall and star in several miniseries and one-shots drawn by Giffen, debuted in *DC Comics Presents* #52 (Mar. 1982), and he was due for an almost immediate comeback. Giffen describes the scenario matter-of-factly: "Julie [Schwartz, editor] wanted Ambush Bug to return. Apparently the response to him was pretty decent."



KEITH GIFFEN

When it came to thinking of an appropriate story in which to bring back the Bug, "It was like, 'What do you feel like doing,' and I'm not a big guy for the obvious heroes," says Giffen. "I don't care about the Big Seven [the Justice League]." Giffen adds a few details about his thought process at the time: "How could I put Ambush Bug up against characters who have even goofier backgrounds? ... and I thought: 'Let's do the Subs, because (a) nobody seems to care about the Subs, (b) they're kind of goofy and I like them, and (c) whatever I do to them, nobody's going to be offended.' And Julie was there to make sure I didn't dump on Superman too viciously. I'd like to say it was the beginning of my love affair with the Subs, but it wasn't. We were just looking for a place to put Ambush Bug for another appearance to see if it was lightning strikes once or if we really had something here."

Thus, *DC Comics Presents* #59 (July 1983) came to be, featuring a Keith Giffen and Mike DeCarlo cover, with Superman sighing "Why me?" as he puts his hand on his face, and a starring role for the Legion of Substitute Heroes. Though the interior story is titled "Ambush Bug II," probably in response to a certain movie sequel starring the Man of Steel that had come out a few years earlier, the Subs are prominently featured on the cover, and their makeshift logo appears alongside Superman's. For the first time in their career, they got to see their name on the marquee.

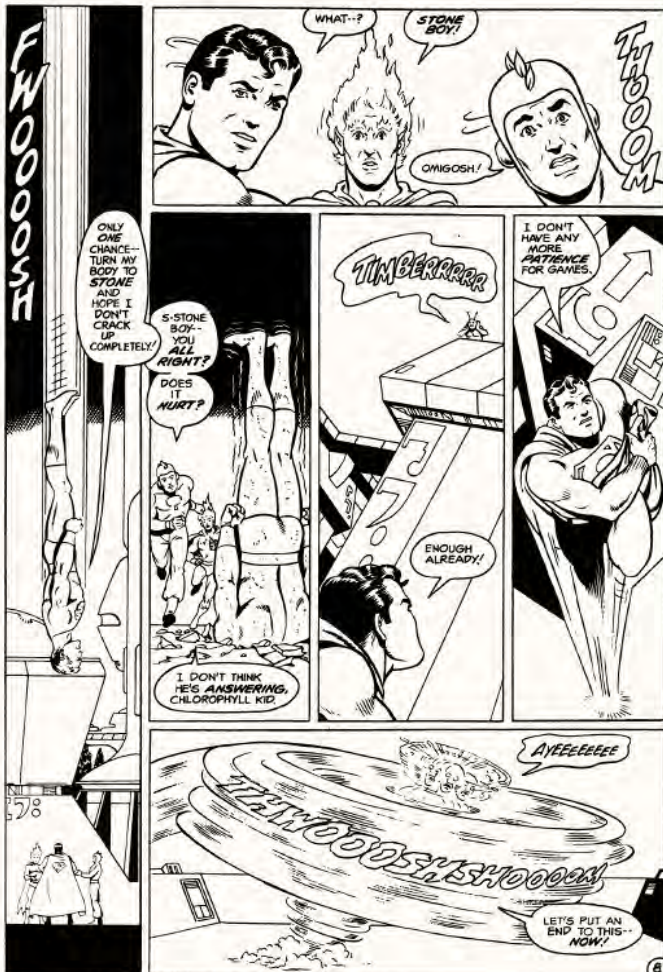
"I've always been fascinated that there even was a Legion of Substitute Heroes, and only half of them really had crappy-ass powers," says Giffen. "I mean, there's no reason Polar Boy should not have been a Legionnaire. There's no reason ... well, Night Girl I can kind of see, but she'd be effective in space. She'd be the perfect spacefaring hero. I just looked at it, and I thought: 'It doesn't make sense. How can I get it to make even less sense?' And when I mentioned it to Julie, he made me promise not to go too far, not to make too much fun of them. And I lied to him and promised I wouldn't, and so I did up this Subs story."

"Now it is a testament to Paul [Levitz], I think, because he was the Legion of Super-Heroes guy," Keith adds. "He's always been looked at as the definitive Legion of Super-Heroes writer. They were his kids and he was very protective of them. And he just cut me loose and let me do this."

Paul Levitz, who was at that time writing the *Legion of Super-Heroes* ongoing series and was credited with "additional dialogue" in *DC Comics Presents* #59, admits that he had very little to do with the project and that Giffen was the creative force behind the entire issue: "I was just a translator," Levitz says, "cleaning up and polishing dialogue, but the story was really all his."

Giffen claims that the combination of Ambush Bug and the Subs opened his eyes to other possibilities for future offbeat tales: "Once I realized I could get away with it, the story went through, and there was a place for those kind of characters in the 30th Century—I've always thought that comics books are much poorer for having kicked out the humor. After all, they're called comic books, not drama books. But with the Subs, it was just a place for me to have fun, not trying to do anything of import, not trying to get my message off, but have big, goofy fun. And by the end of that issue I knew I wanted to do something else with the Subs."

That "something else" turned out to be 1985's *Legion of Substitute-Heroes Special*, scheduled for release on—appropriately enough—April Fool's Day.



## Spanning Three Eras

In the Bronze Age DCCP team-up, which featured Ambush Bug, Giffen's Golden Age take on Supie was embellished by Silver Age *Lois Lane* artist Kurt Schaffenberger.

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# X-FACTOR vs. *X-FACTOR*: A LOOK AT THE ROLE OF IDENTITY IN PETER DAVID'S X-FACTOR

by Jonathan Rikard Brown



On September 1st, 2012, I found myself conversing with Peter David. We were at his table in the comic section of Atlanta's Dragon\*Con. Wizards, Doctors from outer space, videogame mutants, and other noteworthy characters created an interesting and entertaining atmosphere for our talk.

As fans occasionally stopped by to talk to Mr. David, we had a conversation about his *X-Factor* run from the '90s. Peter David took over the book in 1991, and began his run with issue #70. He would later leave the book in 1993, completing his yarn in issue #89. Our discussion went many places, but our first stop was the one I found most intriguing.



PETER DAVID

The first question off my lips was simply asking how he had come to *X-Factor*. He started his story as thus: "I would love to tell you there is some incredibly sexy story ... but the bottom line is, Bob Harras approached me and said, 'Hey, would you be interested in taking over *X-Factor*?'"

The story continued as Peter David expressed his joy and excitement on taking over the premiere team of X-Men, as the original X-Factor consisted of Cyclops, Jean Grey, Beast, Iceman, and Angel. He would soon learn his involvement on the title would involve a completely new team. The new X-Factor was part of a major overhaul Marvel Comics was doing on the entire X-Men line. Bob Harras, Marvel's editor-in-chief at that time, would come to inform him that the team he would be writing was a little different. After learning that *X-Factor* would have a new roster, David shared with me his first response to the news: "Oh, well, that kind of sucks."

Peter would then inquire as to who the new team would be. He had a wide range of thoughts as he discovered the team he would guide. The first members he told me about were Havok and Polaris. "Okay, fine, it's not Scott [Cyclops], but it's his brother [Havok], so that's not bad." Harras then told him that Guido would be a part of the team. "Who the hell is Guido?," David replied.

Harras mentioned the next of the team's characters: Multiple Man. David exclaimed, "Are you freaking kidding me? Originally we had Cyclops, Marvel Girl, the Beast, Iceman—and now you're giving me Guido, who I have never heard of, and Multiple Man, who I couldn't give a crap about!" He would also learn that Wolfsbane would be involved, and this pleased him. Still, "I had very little hope for that group."

## Not the Original X-Men

After playing cleanup in #70, Peter David's new *X-Factor* began with issue #71 (Oct. 1991). Cover by Larry Stroman and Al Milgrom.

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