

IN THE DAYS OF THE GIANTS--HE WAS THE MIGHTIEST!

# ATLAS

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JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR FIFTY-SEVEN



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# THE NEW JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

ISSUE #57, SUMMER 2011

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Front cover inks: **D. BRUCE BERRY**  
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The Jack Kirby Collector, Vol. 18, No. 57, Summer 2011. Published quarterly (made it this time!) by and ©2011 TwoMorrows Publishing, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614, USA. 919-449-0344. John Morrow, Editor/Publisher. Single issues: \$14 postpaid (\$18 elsewhere). Four-issue subscriptions: \$50 US, \$65 Canada, \$72 elsewhere. Editorial package ©2011 TwoMorrows Publishing, a division of TwoMorrows Inc. All characters are trademarks of their respective companies. All artwork is ©2011 Jack Kirby Estate unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter is ©2011 the respective authors. First printing. PRINTED IN CANADA. ISSN 1932-6912



(above) From the mid-1970s sketchbook Kirby drew for his wife Roz, here's Atlas, a Kirby concept that never got fully realized beyond his one appearance in *First Issue Special* #1 (April 1975). Atlas TM & ©2011 DC Comics.

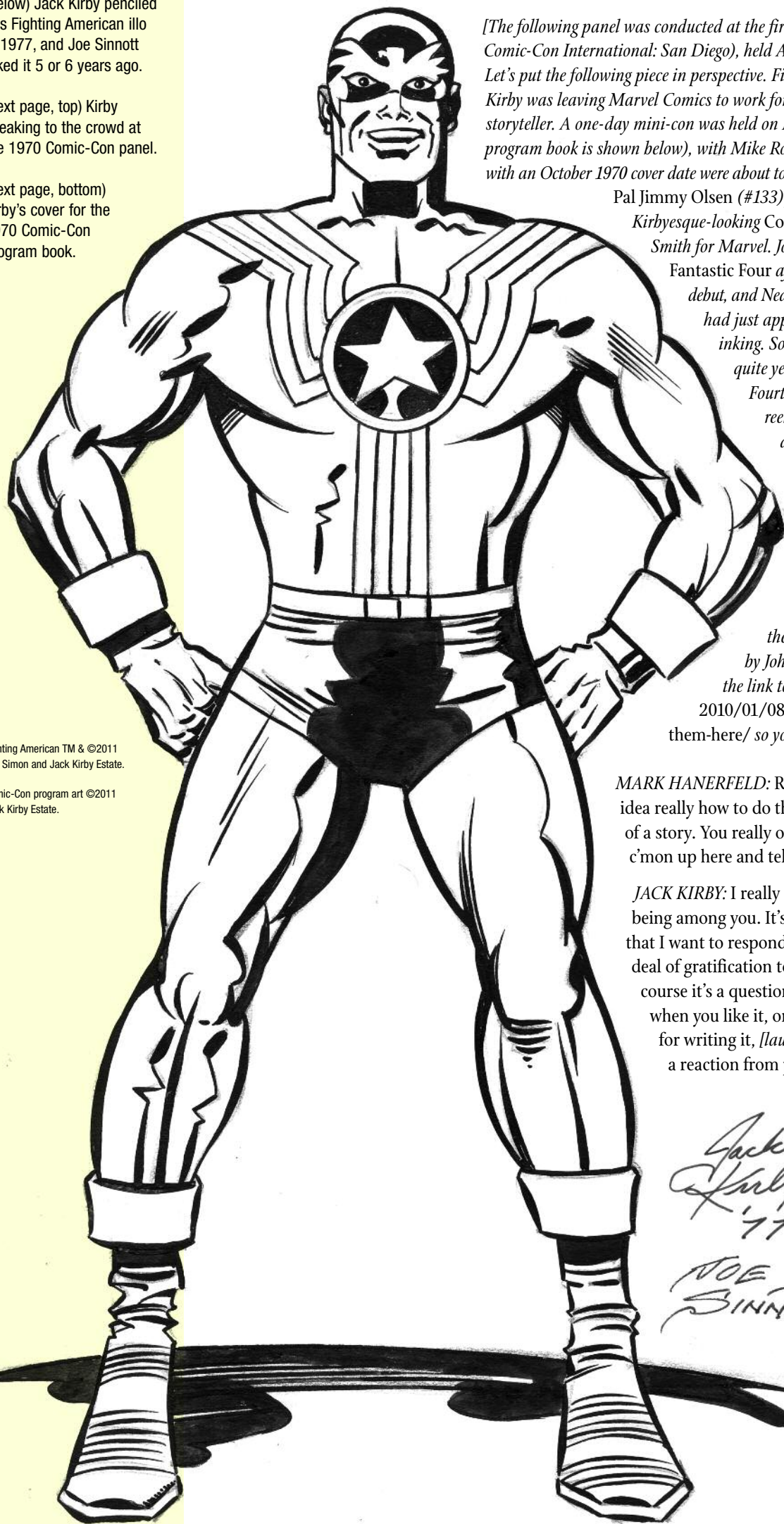
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# "IT'S NOT IN THE DRAFT

(below) Jack Kirby penciled this Fighting American illo in 1977, and Joe Sinnott inked it 5 or 6 years ago.

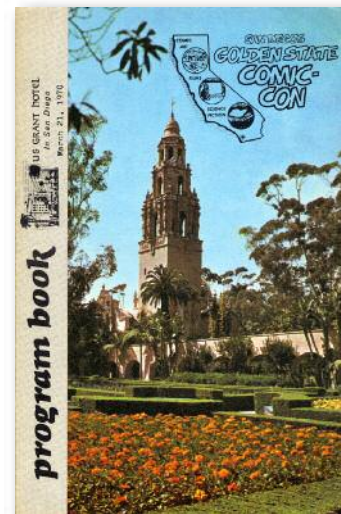
(next page, top) Kirby speaking to the crowd at the 1970 Comic-Con panel.

(next page, bottom) Kirby's cover for the 1970 Comic-Con program book.



[The following panel was conducted at the first, full San Diego Golden State Comic-Con (which is today's Comic-Con International: San Diego), held August 1-3, 1970 at the U.S. Grant Hotel in downtown San Diego. Let's put the following piece in perspective. Five months prior, in March 1970, it was made public that Jack Kirby was leaving Marvel Comics to work for DC Comics—an unprecedented move by the company's star storyteller. A one-day mini-con was held on March 21 as a warm-up for the big summer event (that show's program book is shown below), with Mike Royer as the only guest. At the time Jack is speaking here, comics with an October 1970 cover date were about to be released, which would include Kirby's first issue of Superman's

Pal Jimmy Olsen (#133) for DC, and the very Kirbysque-looking Conan #1 drawn by Barry Smith for Marvel. John Romita's first issue of Fantastic Four after Kirby was about to debut, and Neal Adams' first issue on Thor had just appeared, with Joe Sinnott's inking. So the comics world hadn't quite yet gotten to sample Kirby's Fourth World, Marvel was still reeling from Jack's departure and trying to make things look as "Kirby" as they could, and fans were wondering where the company would go without him there.



The tapes for this panel were given to Mike Towry by Shel Dorf's old friend Charlie Roberts, who had in turn received them from Shel's brother, Michael Dorf. The panel was transcribed by John Morrow, with the permission of Mike Towry. Mike has posted the link to the audio at <http://www.comicconmemories.com/2010/01/08/recordings-of-the-1970-san-diego-comic-con-1-listen-to-them-here/> so you can have the chance to actually hear Jack speaking.]

**MARK HANERFELD:** Right now I'm supposed to introduce Jack Kirby. I have no idea really how to do that, except to say he writes a hell of a story, and draws a hell of a story. You really ought to see the new stuff he's doing, 'cause it's terrific. Jack, c'mon up here and tell 'em more about it. [applause]

**JACK KIRBY:** I really appreciate being here. I really deeply feel that it's an honor being among you. It's one of the reasons I draw people like I do, because I feel that I want to respond to you in some way, and when I do, I find that it's a great deal of gratification to me. It's not a question of telling a good story; well, of course it's a question of telling a good story. The way I know it's a good story is when you like it, or you hate it, or when you hate me for writing it or like me for writing it, [laughter] because I get some kind of a reaction, see? When I get a reaction from people, even if it's bad, I feel that somebody's out there, and

I feel that people are living, and they're analyzing things, and that their minds are in motion, and that life is going on. It's the one time that I feel people; I don't feel cars, see? I don't feel buildings, I don't feel tanks, I don't feel guns, I have no respect for them, see? I have no respect for what they are; they're just not alive. That's why I ridicule cars, I ridicule guns. You'll never see me draw a gun the way you'll actually see a gun. Or you may not see me draw a car the way you'll actually see a car. It's my version of a car. I feel I can do anything I want with it. And I feel that's what we all should do with it. Just try to see the world our way. Those things are made for us. Cars are made for us, and all these immaterial non-living things are made for us to do what we want with. That's what I do; I try to make my version of it. I try to give a

*Jack Kirby '77*  
*JOE SINNOTT*

Fighting American TM & ©2011 Joe Simon and Jack Kirby Estate.

Comic-Con program art ©2011 Jack Kirby Estate.

# SMANSHIP. IT'S IN THE MAN."



larger than life version to a very mundane object. I feel I've made life a little richer for myself. And maybe in a way I've done it for you. If I get a question from you, or get some response from you, I feel that I've established some kind of a link with you, the people that I'm doing my work for. Somehow I've done it; somehow I've been quicker living than dying, [laughter] and one of these days I'm just not going to change quick enough, and I won't be quick enough, and somebody will replace me, and maybe keep telling the kinds of stories that get reactions from you. But right now I'm doing it, and I'm enjoying it, and certainly my best moments come when I can really see you in person, and talk to you face to face, and see that I've really understood you in some way. That's why I say it's a pleasure for me. It's a real source of gratification.

So if I can do anything better, I'm gonna try it.

And if I can do anything weirder, I'm gonna try it. If I can do anything more startling, I'm gonna try it. Or maybe something very, very outrageous, I don't know. You might clobber me for it, and that'll be great, because it'll be a new experience for me, and I'll enjoy every minute of it. I was once going out of a burlesque theater, and I had a heck of a good time being thrown out. [laughter] It was a great experience. I feel that's what life is; it's just a matter of reaction. Reacting to experiences. Sometimes they're very bad, sometimes they're traumatic, and sometimes they have a deep effect on us. But that's okay; I think we should take it, and weather it, we weather it stoically, and take the best thing out of it, and maybe

become real human beings from it. I think if we're able to react, we're alive. If we don't react to anything, I think we're in some kind of limbo. Those are just my thoughts on things, and that's the way I draw. That's what goes into my drawing. My God, I've analyzed myself for thirty years, [chuckles] and I think that's what's come out of it. So, that's my thing. I'm giving you my version of the world as I see it, whatever random thoughts come into my head. You're getting what I think about it. I don't know what you think about it, but that's what I think about it. I see it my own way. And I feel, in doing that, I become an individual.

If I played piano my own way, I'd be an individual, and I feel that I'd have some enriching quality. And I like that. I like to have some enriching quality. It makes me feel good. Some people don't like to have enriching qualities. And they just go about doing whatever they're doing, in business or something else, and they do well at it, and they accept it. But I don't accept that. In fact, I don't accept anything. I fight anything that comes along. I like to see it my way, and I like to do it my way. It makes me feel great. Whatever reaction comes my way, I love to handle it. I've handled all kinds of reaction, and I've had a great time at it, really. There have been times when it just scared the living daylights out of me, but having lived through those times, [chuckles] I can look back at them almost fondly. So you say, "Well, I've handled that," see? I've bloodied my axe

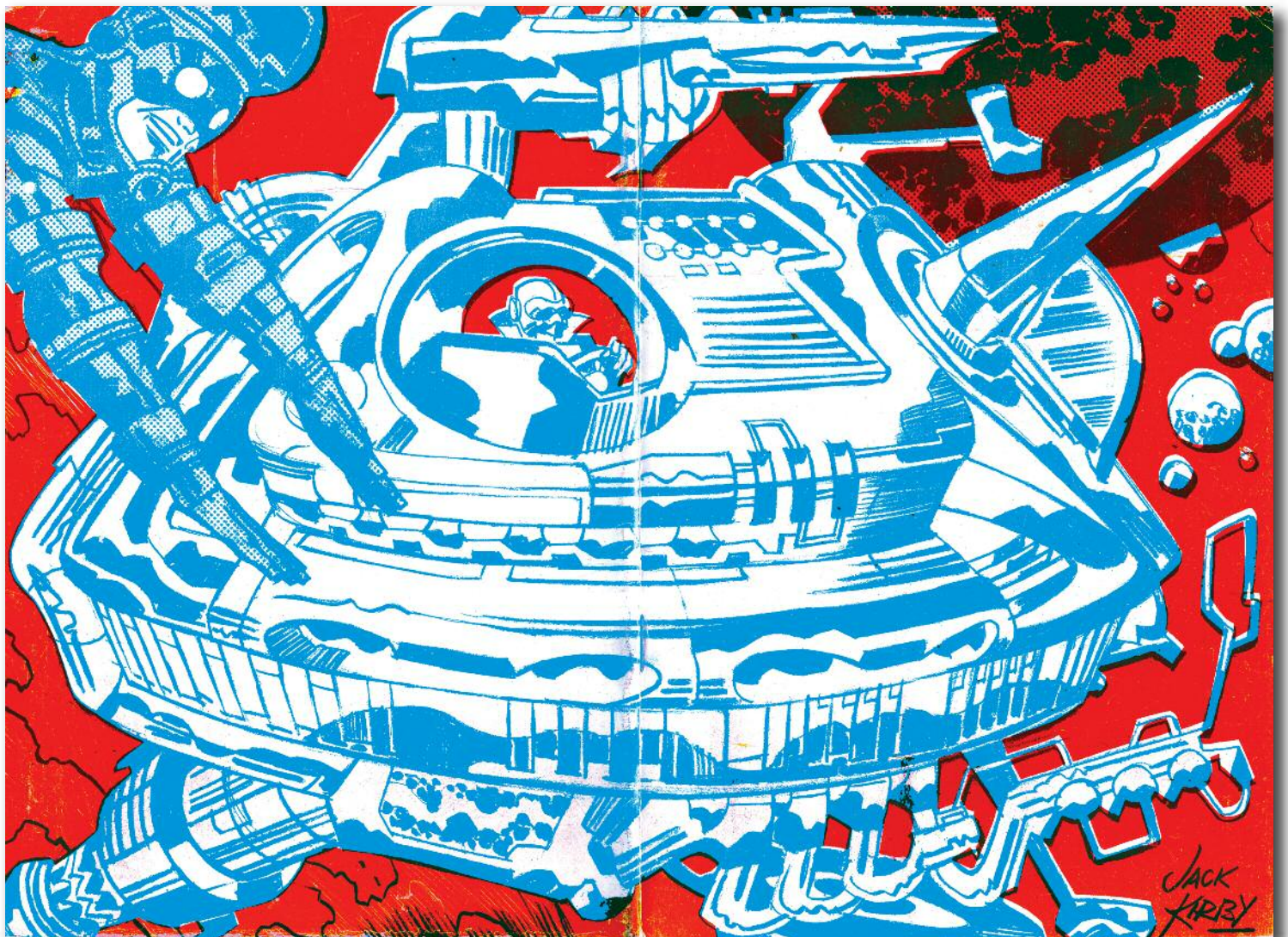
in some way, and I've handled it. So that's not so bad. Y'know, I don't know how it was resolved, but it was resolved in some way. I came away from it, the other guy came away from it in some way, but looking back on it, I had a great time, really. Even getting tossed by that bouncer, it was a great experience, because this guy looked like any character that Warner Brothers would dream up, y'know? The guy next to me was making a lot of noise, and being a loser, I was the one who got thrown out. But that was a great experience, although at the time, I couldn't understand it in its context, I feel that now I do. I really had a good time.

So, what I do is, take whatever I feel about all these things, and put it in my drawing, and maybe entertain you in some way. You have to tell me; I can't. I haven't got that much of an ego. You have to tell me. And of course, in a way, you do, because the books do well enough, [chuckles] and that's good enough. I get letters. I go along that way; I live that way. That's my—well, I suppose you call it a lifestyle. And I've never gotten out of the groove. So I'm content with it, and it just about sums me up.

If there's anything you'd like to ask me, possibly about the field itself, about the direction of comics—I can only give you my version of it, and you're welcome to it. So help yourselves.

AUDIENCE: Why did you quit the *Fantastic Four*?

KIRBY: Why'd I quit it? I can't tell you. [laughter]



## IMMORTAL PENCILING



In the late 1970s, Jack Kirby filled a sketchbook with pencil drawings of his characters, and gave it to his wife Roz as a Valentine's Day present. Presented here are some of the "immortal" characters from *Thor* included in that sketchbook, scanned directly from the original drawings. Enjoy!

## SERPENT IN THE GARDEN

(below) Jack's penchant for creating powerful female characters was in full force with Eev from *Devil Dinosaur* #6 (Sept. 1978). Though this series is not that highly regarded among Kirby fans, perhaps another look is in order?

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*Devil Dinosaur and the Satanic Imagination of Jack Kirby, by Jarret Keene*

Many of Jack Kirby's best concepts are inversions of legends, myths, folktales, and, in particular, stories from the *Bible*. His most obvious and resonant biblical turnaround is the conflict between the Silver Surfer and Galactus. (Surfer is the fallen angel who, rather than lead humans into temptation, protects them from Galactus, who is God, albeit a World-Eater instead of the Creator.) Late in his career, Kirby continued to tinker with ideas from the Old Testament, especially those in the book of Genesis. His most successful effort includes *Devil Dinosaur* #6 and #7, a two-part story that recasts Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise as a harrowing escape from a homicidal, computerized, alien intelligence.

I'm going to elaborate on this in three ways. First, I'm going to show that, through the character of Eev, Kirby recasts the biblical Eve as the less-passive, more Kirby-esque, tough woman Lilith. Second, I'll show that Kirby twists the Fall from a story of Adam and Eve's weakness into Adam and Eve's freedom from a vicious, technological god. Finally, I'll explore Kirby's relationship to technology as developed in this two-part Adam-and-Eve story in *Devil Dinosaur*.



Set in the Valley of Flame circa the Mesozoic Era, *Devil Dinosaur* is Kirby's stab at prehistoric fiction, a sub-genre of sci-fi. Like *Kamandi's* Earth A.D., the Valley of Flame is a vast, imaginative playground, minus the mutations. Instead, the terrain is overrun with terrible lizards (Thunder Horn, Iguanodon, Bone-Back) and brimming with various tribes of dawn-men (small-folk, hill-folk, killer-folk). No one enlivens genres like Kirby, and the Valley, though it's no Asgard, hosts a spectacular rogues gallery: Long-Legs (giant spider), the Swarmers (giant ants), "sky demons" (alien invaders), the Hag of the Pits, and the dino-riders. The title's extraordinary cast is matched by the ambitious underpinnings of Kirby's stories. For instance, issue #3 ("Giant") challenges the taboo-entrenched notion of childhood innocence. Indeed, Kirby's juvenile literature is never completely juvenile, and "Eev" (issue #6) and "Demon-Tree" (#7) confirm the King's position as a dramatic and thought-provoking comic-book auteur.

"Eev" begins with a quirky potentiality: "The greatest story ever told could have begun with dinosaurs, demons, and giant ants. Of course, there had to be a man... and a woman called Eev!" Having just sent the sky-demons packing, Stone-Hand (the "Adam" character), White-Hair (an elder dawn-man), and Devil encounter the eponymous character, a prehistoric pretty who is intent on bashing the Swarmers with a rock and piercing their skulls with a sharp instrument. She is not the passive "Eve" of the *Bible*. Eev is assertive, outspoken, an individual ("Stand clear! I don't fear these Swarmers!"). Stone-Hand, the story's Adam, calls her "arrogant" and "loud." As such, Eev resembles the Jewish archetype of Lilith, which requires elaboration.

The story of Lilith in Jewish folklore grew out of a single contradictory passage in the Old Testament: "Male and Female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). Since God's creation of Adam and Eve are sequential and distinct, rabbis—working under the assumption that every word in the *Bible* is true—resolved the contradiction. The rabbis interpreted the first passage as referring to the creation of Adam's first wife, whom they named Lilith. (Thus, many "literalists" consider Eve to be Adam's second wife.)

This interpretation led to the development of the legend of Lilith, whose name appears in the *Bible* only once: "Yea, Lilith shall repose there" (Isa. 34:14). In the Talmud, a post-biblical text, and in the apocryphal Testament of Solomon, Lilith is

Book *Gods*

Issue# 2

pg.#

9

When it comes to taking a concept and turning it on its head, nobody can touch Jack Kirby. Whether it's a fable, legend, biblical character, or a "new" god of some sort, he spun the kind of folklore that his readers will be passing on for generations. To wit:

**(this page)** Pencils from *Eternals* #2 (originally titled *Return of the Gods*), detailing an entire heretofore unknown race that once ruled Earth.

**(pages 36-37)** Two-page spread from *Eternals* #3. The Space Gods have returned, and you better hope they're happy!

**(page 38)** Jimmy Olsen #143 brought back the iconic Frankenstein and Dracula characters, Kirby style...

**(page 39)** ...while Olsen #144 dredged up the Loch Ness Monster.

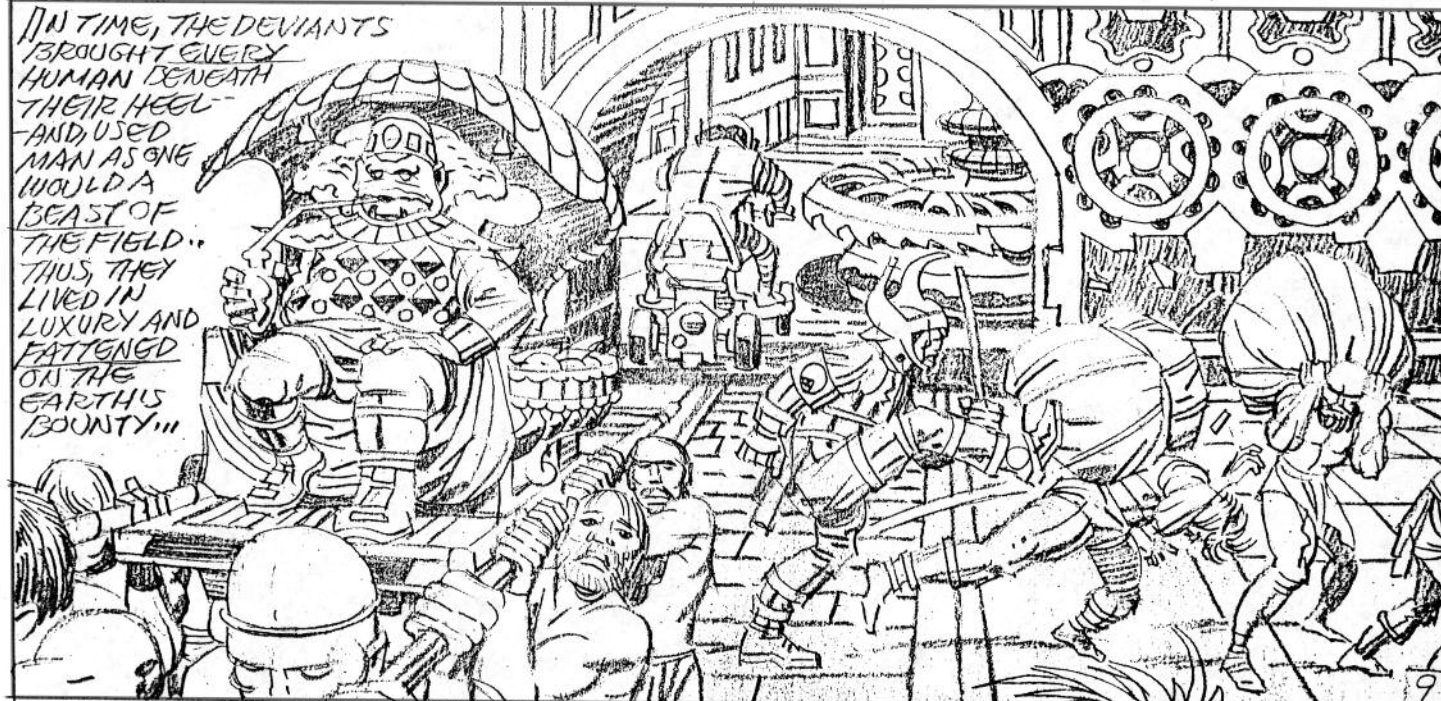
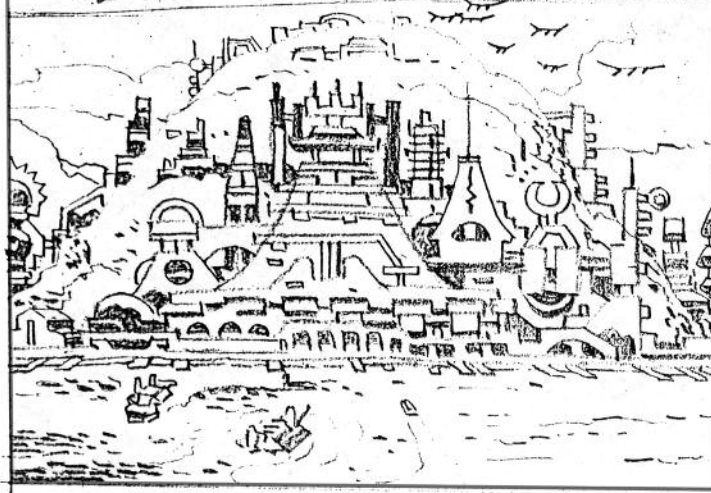
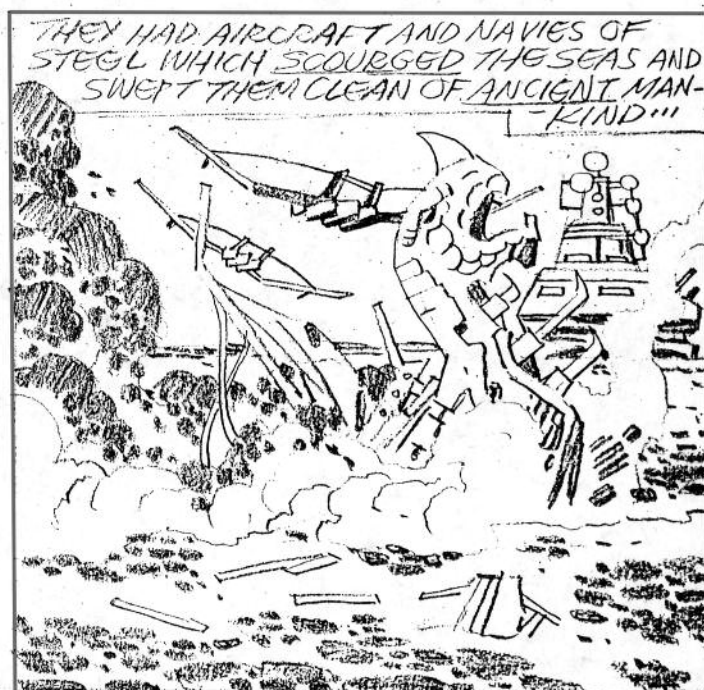
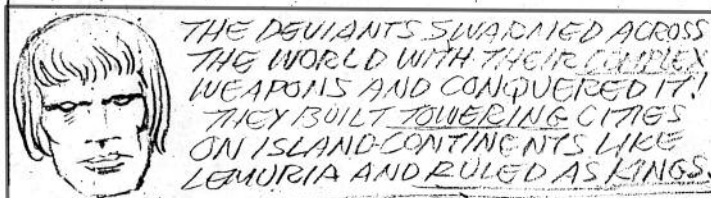
**(pages 40-41)** Kirby's "Jericho" drawing adds a new spin on the Old Testament story of Joshua, who brought the legendary city's walls tumbling down with sound waves.

**(pages 42-43)** Two pencil pages for *Atlas* #1, which eventually appeared in DC's *First Issue Special* #1.

**(pages 44-45)** The "Young Gods of Supertown" was a quick filler used when DC expanded *New Gods* to a lengthier format. Had the comic continued under Kirby, we'd likely have seen Fastbak in more than his two appearances.

**(pages 46-47)** *New Gods* #9 pages, as Lightray shines, and Orion unleashes his fury.

**(pages 48-49)** Merlin, King Arthur, and Morgaine LeFey served as the backdrop for these pages from *Demon* #1.



Eternals TM & ©2011 Marvel Characters, Inc. Jericho TM & ©2011 Jack Kirby Estate. Demon, Jimmy Olsen, Superman, Fastbak, New Gods, Atlas TM & ©2011 DC Comics.

# WE ALL LIVE IN HAPPYLAND

In Kirby's original splash for *New Gods* #1 (Feb. 1971, below), why didn't he leave room for the issue's indicia? On the opposite page, you can see the published version where the sword behind the goblin's head doesn't line up. Otherwise, it was a pretty clever patch-job by DC's production department.

New Gods TM & ©2011 DC Comics.

*Jack Kirby and the JFK Assassination, by Robert Guffey*

In the Summer 2006 issue of *The Jack Kirby Collector*, Jack Kirby biographer Mark Evanier reports an intriguing comment once made by Kirby that has far-reaching implications in regards to reassessing the real world influences Kirby brought to bear on his most challenging works of the 1970s.

Let's begin by quoting Evanier's reportage in full:

*One time, we got to talking about the assassination of President Kennedy. That event had an impact on everyone who was around at the time, at least on their personal life, so I was not surprised to hear Jack say that it had a profound effect on him. My little eyebrows shot up, however, when he said that it had a major impact on his work.*

*That, I had never sensed... and I still am not sure what he meant by that. He was unable to cite an example. He was definitely not referring to the one short story he did for Esquire years later chronicling the*

*events in the life of Jack Ruby after Kennedy was shot.*

*With that in mind, I went back one time and reread everything Kirby had done around the time of the Kennedy assassination. The work that would have been on his drawing table around or after 11/22/63 included the Thing-Hulk battle in *Fantastic Four* #25-26 and the issues soon after, the coming of *The Cobra* and *Mr. Hyde* to the *Thor* strip, *X-Men* #5 or 6 and *The Avengers* #5 or 6.*

*Can you see anything in those stories to suggest one of the creators was deeply moved by the murder of John F. Kennedy? I can't. Even reading forward a year or two, I don't get a sense of the turmoil it brought to this nation. There are no storylines dwelling on [that] kind of upheaval. In *Fantastic Four*, Stan and Jack did a tale called "Death of a Hero" in which the father of Sue Storm was killed. It was a moving story but you'd have to stretch farther than *Mr. Fantastic Four* to connect it to the death of J.F.K. in any way.*

*And yet, Kirby said what he said and his grief at the death of our 35th president is undeniable. I'm sure he must have put it somewhere into his work. I just can't figure out where. If I ever do, that may turn out to be my favorite Jack Kirby work.*

I understand why Evanier's "little eyebrows" shot up upon hearing this comment. To get to the bottom of this mysterious statement, my initial instinct probably would have been to do what Evanier did: re-read the stories Kirby was working on at the time of the assassination. The fallacy in this approach, however, is to assume that an event as tragic as the assassination of John F. Kennedy would *immediately* manifest itself in someone's work. Artists are like anyone else. Sometimes it can take years to even acknowledge that a tragedy has occurred, much less express one's grief in a meaningful way.

Two examples, both referring specifically to the JFK assassination:

Richard Matheson, author of the classic novels *I Am Legend*, *The Shrinking Man*, and *What Dreams May Come*, among numerous others, once gave an interview in which he discussed the genesis of his classic short story "Duel." This suspense story, published in the April 1971 issue of *Playboy*, was subsequently adapted by Matheson into a screenplay that became Steven Spielberg's first film (and, some contend, one of his best). The film, like the story, is entitled *Duel*, features Dennis Weaver in his most challenging role, and premiered on ABC television in 1971 to great critical acclaim. Many critics contend it's one of the finest films ever made for television.





# MARTY PASKO INTERVIEW

(right) A recent portrait of Pasko by *Kobra* collaborator Michael Netzer (then "Nasser").

(below) Original art from *Kobra* #1 showing D. Bruce Berry's lettering of Kirby's original, unused dialogue, which got covered by pasted-up balloons (see next page). Note the redrawn face (by Pablo Marcos) and the unretouched Kirby face in the last panel.

(next page, bottom) Cover to *Kobra* #2.

*Kobra*, Dr. Fate TM & ©2011 DC Comics.

Conducted by Jon B. Cooke

[Martin Pasko was nicknamed "Pesky Pasko" by legendary DC Comics editor Julius Schwartz, for whom he wrote for many years. He is a veteran writer and/or story-editor in a diverse array of media, including non-fiction and television, working on such shows as *Roseanne* and cult favorites *Twilight Zone* and *Max Headroom*. He helped translate many comics to TV animation, including *The Tick*, *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs*, and *Batman: The Animated Series*, for which he won a 1993 Daytime Emmy® Award. He is also a co-writer of the animated feature *Batman: Mask of The Phantasm*. Pasko has worked for many comics publishers as well, writing "Superman" in several media, including TV animation, newspaper syndication, and webisodes as well as comics, and co-created the revamp of "Dr. Fate" (shown on next page, from First Issue Special #9) that is the basis of the character's current, long-lived incarnation. He also got the thankless task of taking over Kirby's *Kobra* comic after Kirby left DC, which is the main subject of this interview, which was conducted in May 2011. It was copyedited by Martin, who currently blogs about comics and the entertainment industry at <http://martinpasko.blogspot.com/>]



THE JACK KIRBY

COLLECTOR: When did you first encounter Kirby's work?

MARTY PASKO: I first read *The Fantastic Four* when I was really, really small, and, perhaps because my own family was a bit dysfunctional, the book really turned me off (all that bickering). I was used to the DC approach, which was all very benign, with friends who didn't argue with each other much. It was unrealistic, but benign. And seeing the *Fantastic Four*—this was in the first ten issues or so—at that young age... I reacted badly to it. I didn't like it at all. I really wasn't that aware of the art. At that age, it was always more a matter of the story to me. I think that's always been a bias of mine, being a writer. To some extent my attitude has always been 'a good story can always survive bad art' but it doesn't work the other way around. Until I was much older, I wasn't art literate enough to appreciate Jack's work—the dynamism and the ways in which he would take liberties with conventional anatomy but make it work.

It was also seeing his work in the period in which he was inked by Joe Sinnott that changed my mind. I really got hooked by the imagination at work in that stuff. That's when I reassessed *Fantastic Four*, in 1968, when Jack was doing most of the plotting, so it really was his fertile imagination at work that hooked me. A few years later, when he took over *Jimmy Olsen*, that's where my real exposure to Kirby as a comics reader (as opposed to writer) happened, because I was primarily a DC reader rather than a Marvel one.

TJKC: What was DC like in the mid-'70s?

MARTY: I worked primarily for editor Julie Schwartz but I also wrote for Murray Boltinoff, Joe Orlando, and Gerry Conway. I loved working with Gerry, especially on the *First Issue Special* revamp of *Dr. Fate* with Walt Simonson. Gerry had a deal that assumed he would write all the titles he edited, but he soon realized he had bitten off a little more than he could chew, I think. And he admitted as much. So that's why his office became a really great place for younger, less experienced writers to go looking for work: Gerry quickly evolved a system whereby he would do the first issue of something as a writer and then another writer would pick it up. His first issue would function like a "pilot" script. He did that with *Man-Bat*—he did the first issue with Steve Ditko and then handed it off to me with the second issue, with art by Pablo Marcos. He did that with *Freedom Fighters* and *Metal Men*, too. Except for *Metal Men*, where Walt Simonson stuck around for a few months, those second issues usually didn't have the same quality of art as they had in the first. Then-



# THE ETERNAL QUESTION

by Craig McNamara

In the hands of a lesser artist, an actionless debate over the worth of mankind would result in a pretty flat comics reading experience. Kirby, however, imbued such scenes (as in *Fantastic Four* #49, April 1966, below, or *Eternals* #6, Dec. 1976, next page) with a sense of spectacle and pageantry that kept readers riveted and engaged in the discussion.

All characters TM & ©2011 Marvel Characters, Inc.

**F**rom the beginning, Jack Kirby's *The Eternals* series (1976) was seen by comic fans and professionals alike as a kind of extension of his uncompleted Fourth World saga.

It was a new series, for a different company, and featured all-new characters, but by its very subject matter—gods walking among men—the comparisons were inevitable. That the series putative star, Ikaris, seemed to be an avatar of Orion only strengthened the feeling that this was indeed *The New Gods* revisited, copyrights be damned.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the cancellation of the Fourth World titles at DC, Marvel probably felt the concept was a better fit in their comic line, which already boasted a thunder god and a planet-devouring demi-god, among a host of other mythical and cosmic beings.

What Jack delivered, though, was as similar to *The New Gods* as the Hulk is to Superman. *The New Gods* told of the war between New Genesis and Apokolips, a near-biblical battle between good and evil. *The Eternals* also had their own diametrically opposed adversaries, the mutated Deviants, but after the first story arc,

they became a much more passive force in the series. With one exception in the later issues, they all but vanished as antagonists. Instead, Jack used *The Eternals* to explore the foundations of mythology and legend in the world's cultures. Using the visitation of strange beings from space as a catalyst, Jack delved into Incan legends, Greek and Roman gods and even biblical history, linking them together with surprising ease.

A recurring theme in both series was the human race's struggle with the idea of otherworldly races and the expanded view of the universe it engendered. But whereas most humans seen in the *New Gods* seemed more in awe than threatened by this realization, the humans of *The Eternals* reacted with the kind of fear, suspicion and apprehension that people in the real world would exhibit if suddenly faced with beings of such unimaginable power.

In fact, upon closer examination, *The Eternals* is less a *New Gods* or even a *Thor*/Asgard redux than a further exploration of themes first posited in Kirby and Stan Lee's Galactus stories, particularly in *Fantastic Four* #48-50 (1966).<sup>2</sup> Instead of a mere two- or three-episode arc to work with, here Kirby had an open-ended series which allowed him to delve more deeply into the responses of humanity prompted by an alien visitation.

Similarities occur strongest in three main areas: the premise of each story, the Celestials/Galactus connection, and the human reactions that the events provoked.



**L**  
*"My journey is ended! This planet shall sustain me until it has been drained of all elemental life!"*

Galactus, *Fantastic Four* #48

*"The mission of the gods is now clear. This is the hour of Earth's trial!"*  
 Ajak, *The Eternals* #3

Consider the cataclysmic event that sets each story line in motion:

A monolithic figure from space arrives to pass judgement on Earth, with extinction for the human race in the balance. In *The Eternals*, that presence was Arishem of the Celestials, extraterrestrial beings who (in Kirby's backstory) long-ago experimented on apes to create the human race (along with the god-like Eternals and the demonic Deviants).<sup>3</sup> Standing motionless upon twin pylons in the Andes Mountains, Arishem was to monitor the planet for fifty years before making his decision on the fate of our race.

The alien Galactus, in *Fantastic Four* #48-50<sup>4</sup> may seem like less of a judge than an indiscriminate hand of destruction. True, his initial pronouncement left no doubt of both his intentions and his utter disregard of Earth: "This planet shall sustain me until it has been drained of all elemental life." And over the next two issues, Galactus showed no interest in debating the worthiness of the race his actions would incidentally exterminate. But this arrival of an near-omnipotent figure from above coupled with Kirby's images of worldwide destruction gave the story biblical overtones, calling to mind nothing less than Judgement Day itself. The link becomes even more explicit when Galactus' actions are finally checked by the Fantastic Four, who force him to acknowledge humanity's claim to life. Consider how Galactus' final words were both a judgement and a caution: "At last I perceive the glint of glory within the race of man! Be ever worthy of glory, humans... be ever mindful of your promise of greatness... for it shall one day lift you beyond the stars... or bury you within the ruins of war!! The choice is yours!!"

The similarities continue. As the Silver Surfer played the role of Galactus's herald, so did Ikaris (and occasionally, other

# GODHOOD'S END (-INGS)

(below) Pluto unleashes his madness in this page from the "Mercury" story in *Red Raven Comics* #1 (Aug. 1940), Kirby's first work for Timely/Marvel.

(next page) A squad of good old American troops tackle Pluto's Mutates from the future, in these pencils from *Thor* #164 (May 1969). Go get 'em, fellas!

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Ragnarok, 'Last Battle', the Big One, and smaller wars analyzed in Kirby-esque context, by Jerry Boyd

For decades, we had "gods" in the field of sequential artwork. Like movie moguls or "film gods/goddesses" in old Hollywood, titans of incredible talent peopled the comic packaging companies of New York City.

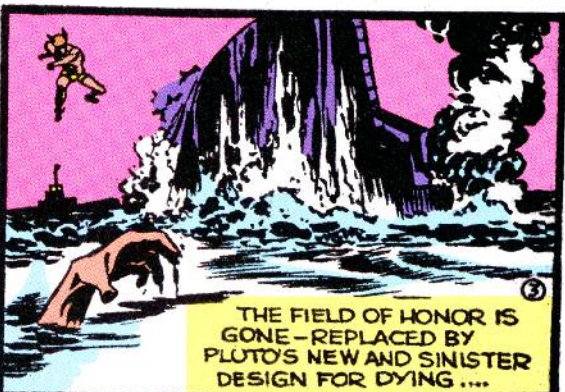
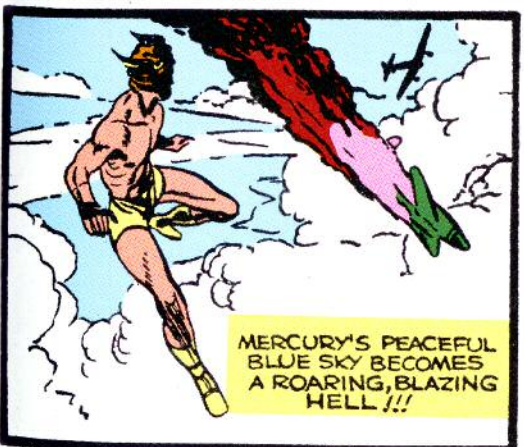
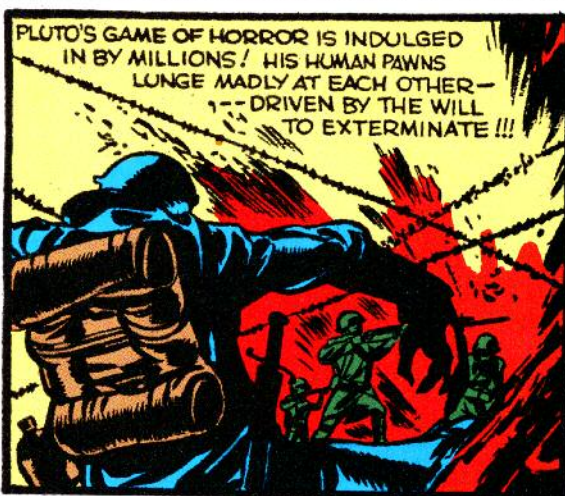
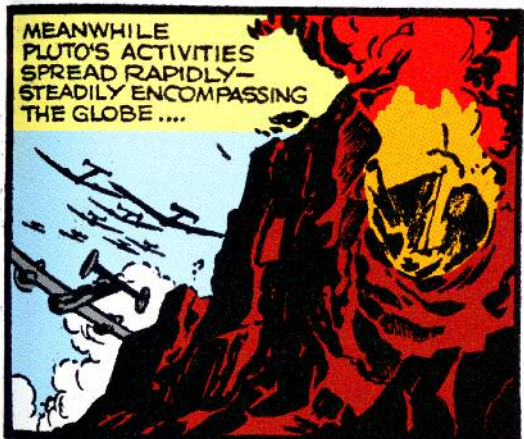
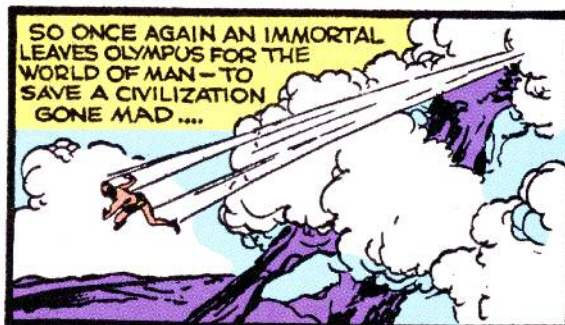
Graham Ingels, Bernie Wrightson, Gray Morrow, and Tom Sutton (among others) were masters of gothic horror. John Severin, Russ Heath, and Joe Kubert did war stories better than most. Dan DeCarlo, Harry Lucey, Samm Schwartz, Stan Goldberg, and Henry Scarpelli held court when it came to teen humor. Al Williamson, Wally Wood, and Al Feldstein beckoned us to the stars like no three others. But when it came to the gods, there's only one name—and that's Jack Kirby.

Many times the King professed to a lifelong interest in

mythology. He told an interviewer for *Comics Scene Spectacular* (#2, 1992), "Thor is an ancient myth—what I did was to make him saleable once again."

Scott Fresina, one of Jack's many friends, recalled that, "Kirby certainly read and studied the Germanic and Norse gods as he got along in years, but he told me that he first heard the myths from his Austrian-born grandmother when he was very young. He fell in love with these stories and some of them stayed with him forever."

In sundry myths, there were gods and goddesses of beauty, harvesting, and representatives of the oceans, sun, moon, and stars but (like a typical little boy) Jack was particularly fascinated by the power, grandeur, and supernatural weapons and abilities of the warrior gods. Their lives and triumphs, defeats, and ends would wind their way into his retooled but immensely entertaining modern mythologies.



## MERCURY... FIGHTS FOR EARTH!

Continuity wasn't a big deal in the Golden Age of Comics, but some Timely creators gave it a real shot. Bill Everett's early Sub-Mariner adventures were continuing cliffhangers akin to *Flash Gordon* serials, and Timely writers sometimes explained how the Red Skull and the Black Talon cheated death or escaped when they next resurfaced.

The ultimate real-life villain and comics villain at the time was a former Austrian corporal and frustrated artist named Adolf Hitler. Captain America and Bucky fought him under that name, but Mercury, son of Jupiter, knew the dictator as Rudolf Hendler—actually the evil god Pluto in human guise! Hendler was a S&K thing only—elsewhere in Timely Comics, Hitler was Hitler!



Mercury is given the task of upsetting Pluto's plans, and his fleet feet speed him across time and space to our besieged planet, where men and their great war machines collide in wide swaths of destruction. Pluto explains to his cousin Mercury (whose godly gaze easily penetrates his disguise) that he's "never had so much fun!"

An enraged Mercury strangles Hendler but the dictator's guards intervene. Their earthly weapons have no effect on the handsome young god, and he takes it upon himself to show the leaders and people of the warring nations the paths to peace, much to Pluto's consternation! (Mercury could've been a latter-day Supertowner with an inventive name change—Fastbak, maybe?—and a nifty new costume.)

Jack was never like his later commanding officer, Gen. George S. Patton, Jr. who thrived on combat and loved war. Though he'd never return to Mercury (later renamed Hurricane by other Timely stalwarts), Kirby and Simon's decision to make their fast-moving protagonist fight just as hard to secure a lasting peace as when he'd trade punches, reflects Jack's affectation for the reluctant but capable warrior, ready to extend the "olive branch of peace" but standing prepared to physically defend the rights and lives of others.

Moreover, Jack and Joe couldn't have allowed Mercury to destroy Pluto then and there. This villain's evil was eternal and World War II, in which S&K would soon participate as soldiers across France, Belgium, and Asia, had yet to engulf the majority of Americans. The end of the war could not be