

THIS ISSUE: HEROES OUT OF TIME

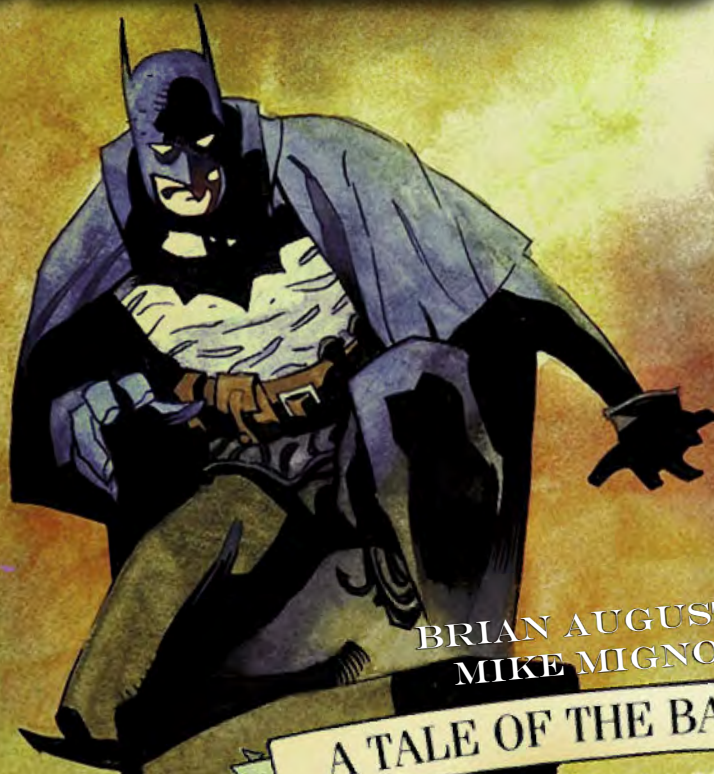
BACKISSUE!



September 2013

No. 67

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BRIAN AUGUSTYN &
MIKE MIGNOLA'S

A TALE OF THE BATMAN®

GOTHAM

by GASLIGHT

MIGNOLA

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Booster Gold • Kang • Karate Kid • X-Men: Days of Future Past and more
With Dan Jurgens • Bob Wayne & Lewis Shiner and an exclusive P. Craig Russell interview

Volume 1,
Number 67
September 2013

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

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BACKISSUE

Comics' Bronze Age and Beyond!

HEROES OUT OF

TIME!

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Gotham by Gaslight

The Creative Team Revisits This
Landmark "Tale of the Batman"

by *Bryan D. Stroud*



BRIAN AUGUSTYN

"In Elseworlds, heroes are taken from their usual settings and put into strange times and places—some that have existed, or might have existed, and others that can't, couldn't or shouldn't exist. The result is stories that make characters that are as familiar as yesterday seem as fresh as tomorrow."

Those words, coined by Denny O'Neil, are the charter for the Elseworlds imprint that was the direct descendant of the old "Imaginary Stories" that were staples in the Silver Age of DC Comics. Where did it all begin? Why, with "A Tale of the Batman" printed in prestige format in 1989 before the term "Elseworlds" had actually been conceived. It was called *Gotham by Gaslight*, and it was a groundbreaker with a terrific stable of talent guiding it.

ALTERNATE ORIGINS

Writer Brian Augustyn recalls how the project began: "It was actually accidental. We were both editors, [Mark] Waid and I, at the time; and thinking about the process, he was the editor of *Secret Origins* and he'd been given his first summer Annual. This was back before they told us what our [Annuals'] themes would be. We got to actually be creative by ourselves. Mark's big problem was that he had just finished doing *Secret Origins* for quite a number of big characters—the Batman cast, and I think he'd recently done something with the Superman family. In other words, all the stuff he might want to hang onto if he knew an Annual was coming.

"Being the budding, creative genius that he was, he had a sense that his Annual should be something special, something big. But again, how do you follow it when your recent issues have covered all the major characters? So he had in mind, I think, that he might do something like 'Alternate Origins,' for lack of a better way of putting it. Not just untold stories, but something along the order of how would these characters be different if they were placed in a different time or a different reality or whatever. He was having trouble, I think, articulating that and I think I said something like, 'What if Batman was in the Victorian era?' And he said, 'Yeah, yeah, okay.' So then I said, 'And he fought, um ... Jack the Ripper.' This was just top-of-the-head stuff. We were spitballing. So he kept talking for a moment and then went back and said, 'Wait a minute, wait a minute. Batman in the Victorian era?' I said, 'Sure, because he's a very gothic character and fits into the Victorian era in a way. Jack the Ripper fits historically.'

"So we talked about it back and forth for a few minutes," Augustyn continues, "and he said something along the lines of, 'We should see if we can come up with a story to go with that.' So I said, 'Sure, we should. For the Annual.' So by morning, I had it in, I think, a four-page presentation. I don't think it was

"What If Batman Was in the Victorian Era?"

A 1989 Mike Mignola commission featuring his *Gotham by Gaslight* version of Batman. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com).

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Versus Jack the Ripper

(below) Original promo art by Mignola. Courtesy of Heritage. (above) Mignola's moody cover for *Gotham by Gaslight*.

TM & © DC Comics.



MARK WAID



an official proposal, but it was the story as I envisioned it. He liked it a lot and said, 'Okay, this is what we're doing.' He also went off and started thinking about doing a one-off alternate Batman story and a one-off alternate Superman story, which as far as I can tell didn't come to be at that point because very quickly, as I said, this was an accident, we sort of tossed the idea down the hill and watched it turn into an avalanche. It just sort of took on a life of its own."

What a life it was, too, beginning with an inspired foreword by none other than Robert Bloch, highly esteemed science-fiction writer and the author of *Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper*. Mark Waid's memories of the evolution include a few additional anecdotes about how an idea comes to full fruition: "Here's how it went from a notion to a fully approved project in 18 hours: In 1988, I was the editor of DC's monthly *Secret Origins* anthology, and with an 80-Page Annual coming up on the schedule, I was idly pondering ideas for contents—which DC hero would be big enough to star in it, how I was ever going to get that much work out of one artist, etc. I was on the bus ride home that night when it suddenly occurred to me—why not do four 'imaginary stories'?"

Four alternate-history, could-have-been tales, one each for Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and Flash? What if Superman's rocket had landed in Russia instead of Smallville? What if ... what if ... okay, I couldn't come up with any other ones right off, but 'What if Superman's rocket had landed in Russia?' That was a winner. Surely three others would come just as easily!

"The moment I set foot in my apartment, I called up Brian Augustyn, fellow editor and best friend, and hit him with the idea so he could tell me if I'd lost my mind," Waid says. "Fortunately, he was not only in my corner, but he immediately tossed out the suggestion 'What if Batman had fought Jack the Ripper?' and we seized on it and began building on it. It was a brief conversation ... but the very next morning, Brian came in with the entire pitch for the story, pretty much full-blown, as I recall, and I was electrified. Forget burying this thing in an anthology Annual, I said—I'll just line up something else. We both sensed that this should be its own project, but how to sell it to the powers-that-be...?"

"Easy. Mike Mignola was around that morning, delivering pages of something or another to Mike Carlin, and suspecting Mig might be intrigued, Brian and I—still tweaking from enthusiasm—screamed the pitch at poor Mike like it was written in ALL CAPS, but we weren't even halfway through before he signed on. By the luckiest of breaks, we'd caught him between projects."

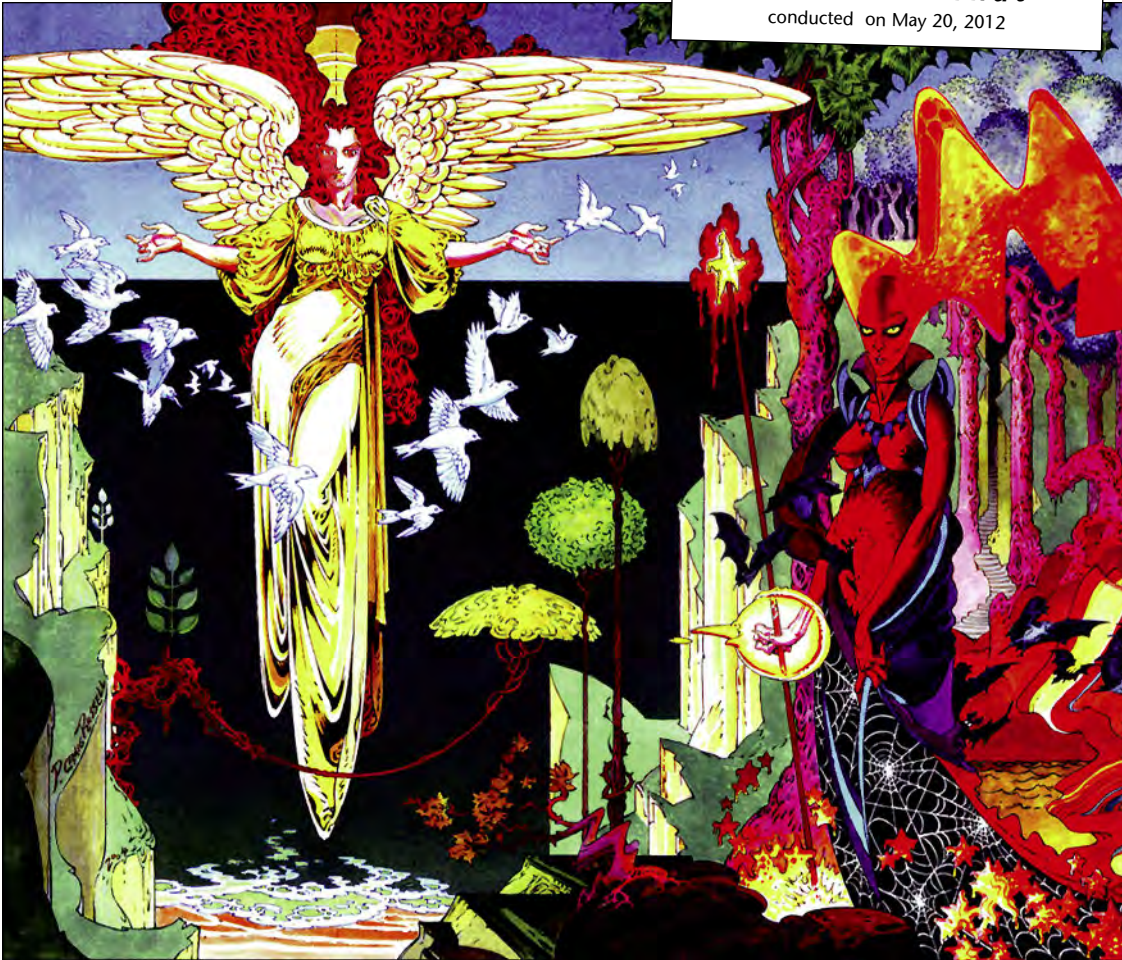
RISK-TAKING

Waid recalls, "As soon as Mike said 'yes,' I barreled into executive editor Dick Giordano's office and pitched him. (Dick was always great to me; he loved my energy and, as someone who was a celebrated risk-taker, he likewise got a routine kick out of my inability to self-differentiate between fearlessness and stupidity. Dick told me more than once that he loved watching me get behind something because—as he had been himself—I was always willing to walk way, way further out on the tightrope than any of the other editors my age.) I literally acted the whole thing out for Dick. It was a performance. I was jumping on furniture, I was gesturing, I was on fire. And Dick could barely contain his laughter, but I didn't mind because he wasn't laughing at me, he was excited for me. The

An INTERVIEW WITH

P. CRAIG RUSSELL

by *Richard Arndt*
conducted on May 20, 2012



Wonderfully Wicked

Detail from the cover of the book *The Art of P. Craig Russell* (Desperado Publishing Company, Inc., 2007).

© P. Craig Russell.

P. Craig Russell began his career in the early 1970s as an assistant to Dan Adkins. His first published credit was for a werewolf story in Marvel's Chamber of Chills #1 (Nov. 1972). Since then he's worked as a penciler and/or inker on Ant-Man, Conan, Master of Kung Fu, Morbius, Killraven, Dr. Strange, Batman, Robin, Sandman, Fables, and many other features. Other notable works include Michael Moorcock's fantasy character Etric, his own adaptations of opera, and adaptations of the works of Oscar Wilde and Neil Gaiman, as well as inking Mike Mignola on this issue's cover feature, Batman: Gotham by Gaslight.

— Richard Arndt

RICHARD ARNDT: *Can you give us a little information about your background and how you got into comics?*

P. CRAIG RUSSELL: Well, I'm from Ohio—Wellsville, Ohio, a little town on the Ohio River. I got involved in comics professionally through Dan Adkins. Dan was an inker at Marvel Comics and had also been Wally Wood's assistant for a number of years. He was living back in Ohio, in a town called East Liverpool, which was only about two miles from my hometown. I was going to the University of Cincinnati at the time and I went to meet him my sophomore year. I would have been about 19 years old, I guess. He told me if I would

work with him for six months he could get me into Marvel Comics. After a couple more semesters of college, that's what I did. I worked for him for six months and got my foot in the door.

ARNDT: *The first credit I found for you was a little six-page werewolf tale in the first issue of Chamber of Chills.*

RUSSELL: That was the very first published work that I had. Dan would have laid that out—I mean, he designed the storytelling. It was a six-page story that he inked and, frankly, I couldn't have had a better introduction to comics because his inks were so solid. He really worked me through it. Made me redraw stuff. Said, "This isn't good enough. Try it this way." Even so, I was already having my own ideas about storytelling. The werewolf from the story does his transformation on the last page and Dan had this happening in three panels and I changed it into six, so I was already starting to meddle around with the layout of the page, which has always been my biggest interest.

ARNDT: *You also worked on a Conan the Barbarian very early on. From Barry Smith layouts, if I remember right.*

RUSSELL: Right! They were having a hard time meeting deadlines on that book. Dan was the inker and he was very slow to begin with, and then Barry put a tremendous amount of work into each issue's pencils. So they did one issue where Barry did [just] the layouts and Dan's studio—



Portrait by Michael Netzer, from his *Portraits of the Creators Sketchbook*.

Beginnings:
Chamber of Chills #1 (Nov. 1972)

Milestones:
Ant-Man in *Marvel Feature* / *Conan the Barbarian* / *Killraven*/War of the Worlds in *Amazing Adventures* / *Parsifal* in *Star*Reach* / *Dr. Strange Annual* / *Eric* / *Night Music* / various *Batman* story arcs / *Batman: Gotham by Gaslight* / *Robin 3000* / *The Jungle Book* / *The Fairy Tales of Oscar Wilde* / *The Sandman* / multiple Eisner and Harvey Awards nominations and wins

Works in Progress:
P. Craig Russell's Guide to Graphic Storytelling / *The Graveyard Book*

Website:
www.artofpcraigrussell.com

P. CRAIG RUSSELL

which at the time consisted of Dan, myself, Val Mayerik, and a guy named Mark Kersey, who was there for a while—we were to do the finished art. My contribution was to simply draw the backgrounds, Val Mayerik was to draw a lot of the figure work, and Dan was to ink the entire thing to give it a consistent look. It was Val and I who were doing the finished pencil work. As usual, though, Dan got behind on his deadline and had Val and I and this Mark step in to do inking as well. It wasn't a good idea. [laughs] Neither Val nor I were trained enough to be good inkers, even of our own work. It got delivered very late and was colored over a weekend. If you look at the original book, everything is colored red, yellow, and blue. It was as barebones a coloring job as you could get. Nobody was happy with it—well, except for the splash page, which Barry had pretty much penciled himself and which Dan inked. That looked pretty good. It was all downhill after that.

ARNDT: *I remember looking at that comic for the first time and thinking the first three pages are pretty good and the rest pretty bad.*

RUSSELL: Yeah, Barry probably did more penciling on those first few pages, and then it really fell apart. [laughs]

ARNDT: *You went from there to Ant-Man in Marvel Feature, and you also penciled an issue of Dr. Strange in Marvel Premiere.*

RUSSELL: *Ant-Man* may have come first. I'm not sure where the *Conan* job was situated. It came in right during that period in the middle of everything.

ARNDT: *The Conan story came out the month before your first work on Ant-Man appeared.*

RUSSELL: Okay, I could have gone from the *Conan* to the *Ant-Man*, or the *Conan* may simply have appeared first. It was all around the exact same time, though. Again, Dan inked my first issue and it was all from his layouts, except for one page where Hank Pym is

throwing a match and I went Jim Steranko-crazy and put 30 panels on the page. That was my contribution to it.

Dan also got the *Dr. Strange* story for me, too. I was still working in his studio. He didn't ink that, though. Dave Hunt, Frank Giacoia, and Mike Esposito inked my work there. It must have been a late book or they wouldn't have had three inkers on it. It still looked a lot better than the *Ant-Man* stories. Obviously, that type of material, the *Dr. Strange* stuff, was more of my preferred subject matter. More fantasy and not so much the little guy running around in the grass.

ARNDT: *I remember kind of liking the Ant-Man feature. It had its limitations, but it was still kind of cool.*

RUSSELL: Yeah, 40 years later it's almost something I'd like to have another go at 'cause I think I have a few more ideas of how to play with the concept—the contrast between extremely large objects and an extremely small guy. I could have more fun with it now than what I did then.

ARNDT: *Was your first complete pencil/ink job the Master of Kung Fu story for Giant-Size Master of Kung Fu #1 (Sept. 1974)?*

RUSSELL: Yes, I think it was. In fact, I think it was the first time I ever inked anything by myself. I was still living out in Flatbush at the time and I inked that with a brush. I hadn't started on *Killraven* [in *Amazing Adventures*] yet. I'd done a fill-in on *Iron Man* and two issues of *Morbis* [in *Adventure into Fear*]. Actually, I did my first *Morbis* story, then my first *War of the Worlds* [*Killraven*] tale, then the second *Morbis*, and then continued on with *War of the Worlds* all the way.

Let's Get Small

From the very early days of Russell's career, a page from the first *Ant-Man* tale he penciled, which appeared in *Marvel Feature* #7 (Jan. 1973). Inks by Dan Adkins and Mark Kersey.

TM & © Marvel Comics.



The Chimera

A plate from *The Chimera Portfolio*, a "symbolist fantasy" composed by P. Craig Russell in 1974 and published in 1976 by Earhart Graphics. Courtesy of Heritage.

© 1976 P. Craig Russell.

RUSSELL: Well, we'd had that relationship. We'd talked together a few times, when I was in Cincinnati and then later when I was in New York, I guess. He just approached me. I don't remember exactly, but it was just some phone call and he told me what he was doing and asked if I was interested in being part of it.

Parsifal was run in *Star*Reach* in three parts, all in black and white and then later collected as a one-shot 32-page color comic book. The one-shot was the worst printing you've ever seen. Mike later reprinted it on the right paper and with the color corrected. The first printing, though, was yellow and brown and murky. It was just dreadful. I still have copies of it. When it came out it looked like a 40-year-old comic book. [laughs]

ARNDT: *I have both versions and you're right. The paper on the first edition is actually brown. It's not white at all.*

RUSSELL: Yeah! Where did they find brown paper?! It looks a bit like butcher paper! To Mike's credit, though, he had it redone and it was very nice, the final version.

ARNDT: *Mike told me the same story and he also mentioned that having to redo those issues, combined*

*with the sheer cost of color, was what killed Star*Reach and its sister magazine Imagine financially.*

RUSSELL: Yeah, I guess that could do it. It must have been expensive.

ARNDT: *And it wasn't just your book. Howard Chaykin's one-shot color book, Cody Starbuck, had the same problem. Those issues of Star*Reach and Imagine that first had the color segment in the middle of the book were also very murky and brown and had to be redone.*

RUSSELL: Yeah, Mike's first two color books, mine and Chaykin's, were just ... awful. When I did the color sections in *Imagine*, those turned out very nice, so by that time he'd licked the problem, whatever it was. I was very happy with the way my story "The Avatar and the Chimera" [*Imagine* #2 and 3] turned out.

ARNDT: *One thing I wanted to mention is that your work seems fully matured from Star*Reach on.*

RUSSELL: Yeah, my student years were over. I'd finally gotten my act together enough, so that by the *Star*Reach* stuff I was more in control of what I was doing ... and bringing in a lot of influences from outside of comics. The French symbolist painters of the 19th Century and early 20th Century, book illustrations—Dulac and Rackham and all those cats that influenced Charles Vess and Michael Kaluta and all those guys. That late 19th and early 20th Century artistic influence really had an impact on a lot of comic artists at that time.

ARNDT: *Especially among the "Young Turks" of the early 1970s.*

RUSSELL: Yeah! For some reason, and I don't know why with that generation, but we were all very much excited about that sort of thing and bringing it into our work.

ARNDT: *Perhaps because there was such a small number of young artists in comics at the time, and they tended to see each other a lot and share their influences?*

RUSSELL: Perhaps, but I didn't do that. I didn't hang out, and I don't really know why. Like I said, I was a shy, backwards kid. Windsor-Smith, I just realized, is only two years older than I am, although he was light years ahead of me in development at that age. I found those guys very intimidating, although Kaluta was the nicest of the bunch. Both he and Bernie Wrightson were very approachable. Just real, downhome guys to talk to. But I really didn't hang out with them. Or Charles Vess. My group of friends was Don McGregor and Dave Kraft and John David Warner. They're all writers! And that's who I kinda ran around with, professionally.

ARNDT: *This is something that's always rather puzzled me: Why was the last page of your story "Siegfried and the Dragon" replaced with a splash page?*

RUSSELL: I have no idea! For some reason, Mike Friedrich thought it was an ambiguous ending where Siegfried walked into the cave, so he took my cover for that issue and used it as the last page. It was his comic and I was still young and didn't put up much of a fight. Then it, the story itself, didn't appear in *Star*Reach*. It was sold to Marvel and appeared in *Epic Illustrated*.

ARNDT: *The original last page did appear as the back cover of Imagine #6, the last issue. It was actually printed a year before the story actually appeared. That made it a little confusing.*

RUSSELL: Yeah, I bet! It was on the last issue of *Star*Reach* or *Imagine*?

ARNDT: *Imagine. It was one of the issues that were printed magazine size.*

RUSSELL: Yeah, that story has never actually appeared as a complete piece in its intended six- or eight-page format. I don't know. [laughs]



Plate 1

KARATE KID I JUST WASN'T MADE FOR THESE TIMES

FlashBack!

by John Wells



Calendar Man

Karate Kid and the Legion vs. Toyman, by penciler James Sherman and inker Jack Abel, from the 1978 DC Calendar of Super-Spectacular Disasters. Courtesy of John Wells.

TM & © DC Comics.

Amidst teenagers who could fly and project bolts of force, Karate Kid seemed like an odd fit in the Legion of Super-Heroes. And that was, creator Jim Shooter declared, the point. "Karate Kid was my solution to the Legion's most glaring problem," the writer said in *Karate Kid* #2 (May-June 1976), "lack of action. Too many Legionnaires simply pointed their fingers to use their power. Karate Kid meant action."

In that first story from 1966 (*Adventure Comics* #346, inset above), the Legionnaires were frankly dubious that any martial artist—even one using steel-shattering "super-karate"—could survive in their midst, but Karate Kid called out Superboy himself to prove otherwise. Truthfully, the scrappy teenager wasn't *that* powerful, but he made an impressive showing and earned a spot on the team alongside three other newcomers. There was a wariness about the martial artist, though, that led to fears that he was an agent of the Khunds in issue #347's sequel before fellow newbie Nemesis Kid revealed himself as the true spy in the Legion's midst.

The two-parter helped make Karate Kid a favorite of future Legion writer Paul Levitz. "I really enjoyed his intro story by Jim," he tells *BACK ISSUE*. "The suspicion of him, the courage he showed taking on Superboy ... just an interesting personality, with his self-developed

powers among the Legionnaires."

"KK was what we in the biz call an 'effort character,'" writer Mike W. Barr observes, "a guy who had to earn his powers, rather than having them given to him by fortuitous pseudo-science. Batman is an effort character. Superman is not. The means of origin is almost never the most important factor in a character's appeal, but it can be used to establish personality and worldview."

With the betrayal of Nemesis Kid and the early death of Ferro Lad, *Adventure* #346's new recruits were reduced to a duo: Karate Kid and Princess Projectra, an illusion-caster from the medieval planet Orando who was literal royalty. When the LSH visited her homeworld in *Adventure* #362, the Kid kissed the young woman but immediately seemed to get cold feet. "I wanted to bring in all the royalty shtick, where she wasn't allowed to fool around with these commoners, and have a hostility there," Shooter explained in *The Legion Outpost* #8 (Summer 1974). Editor Mort Weisinger rejected the sequence, but the young writer kept the budding romance simmering in later stories. "I was sowing seeds there for future things between the Princess and Karate Kid," Shooter continued, "getting her parents and everybody interested in what was going on."

Enter the Black Dragon

(top) Val stands up for Jackie on Mike Grell's cover to *Superboy* starring the Legion of Super-Heroes #209 (June 1975). Grell and writer Jim Shooter told Karate Kid's origin in the next issue, from which the bottom page hails. Note KK's Bruce Lee-inspired visage.

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THE DEADLY HANDS OF VAL ARMORR

Returning to the Legion in 1975 after a five-year absence, Shooter was likely pleased that this element of class and status still informed the romance, figuring into a Cary Bates-scripted Princess Projectra story in *Superboy* #206. The young lovers were central to Shooter's first new story in *Superboy* #209 (June 1975), where the Kid was among those trying to prevent Projectra's death from the "Pain Plague."

More significant was a seven-page tale in *Superboy* #210, wherein Shooter wrote a full origin for his creation. In

Adventure #367 (Apr. 1968), he'd revealed that the foundation of the orphaned Val Armorr's "super-karate" lay in the training he received from the aged martial artist who raised him. The 1975 origin hinged on Karate Kid's discovery that his unknown father had been a Japanese super-criminal called the Black Dragon ... and that his beloved Sensei had slain him in combat. Learning that the villain had left behind a son and that the infant's American mother Valentina Armorr was dead, the Sensei resolved to raise the boy.

In Karate Kid's eyes, the revelation changed nothing. "The Black Dragon

gave me life ... but you gave me *more*—ideals and moral values," he told the Sensei. "You made me a force for good. That's more important than blood. You are my true father!"

The story cemented a new look for Karate Kid that dated back to *Superboy* #193 (Feb. 1973). In that issue, artist Dave Cockrum had replaced the character's unadorned orange costume with a striking update consisting of a black leggings and a shirt that was mostly covered by a gold-trimmed white gi secured with the requisite black belt. Curiously, Cockrum remarked in *The Legion Outpost* #3 (1973), he immediately "regretted" his design and returned to the Shooter original following that one story. It fell to his artistic successor Mike Grell to bring it back. After the Kid had his original outfit destroyed in issue #209, he pulled out the redesign and never looked back.

"All credit for Karate Kid's costume goes to the late, great Dave Cockrum," Grell tells *BACK ISSUE*. "I was lucky enough to follow in his footsteps on the Legion of Super-Heroes and was given a folder containing copies of his costume sketches. I never would have made it through one issue without having that thing open on my desk."

It was Grell's idea, though, to use issue #210's origin as an opportunity to model the character's features after those of the late martial-arts film star Bruce Lee, who'd died in 1973. "It is altogether fitting and proper that the greatest karate champion of the 30th Century should be modeled after the greatest martial arts expert of this century ... the late, great *Bruce Lee*," the artist wrote in *Superboy* #213. "This is just a small tribute to a man who has provided many hours of great entertainment to moviegoers everywhere."

Val Armorr's Asian-American heritage was something that Jim Shooter had intended to be there from the beginning, but a combination of miscommunication and editorial discouragement had prevented it from taking place in the 1960s.

"THE TREND WAS OVER"

Bruce Lee had been the foremost example of the martial-arts craze that swept the United States in the 1970s. Indeed, Marvel Comics had three representatives in the form of *Master of Kung Fu*, *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu*, and *Marvel Premiere* (starring Iron Fist), while even often-overlooked Charlton was publishing *Yang*. By the time DC got into the act with *Richard Dragon*, *Kung-Fu Fighter*, the fad had definitely crested. Its first issue, in fact, appeared less than three months before the final new



JIM SHOOTER



NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE SECOND WEEK IN JUNE

THE END

The X-Men were dead. The year was 1970 and, for all intents and purposes, the X-Men died. Issue #66 (Mar. 1970) marked the last original story in *X-Men*. The comic book continued with reprints from better days and members of the X-Men made guest appearances in other comics, but they had essentially ceased to be a team and a regular part of the Marvel Universe, largely languishing in obscurity over the next five years—

—until August 1975, when writer Chris Claremont and artist Dave Cockrum breathed new life into the misspent mutants. Issue #94 of *X-Men* marked a new chapter, with the introduction of a new team. (Technically, the new team was introduced the month before in *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, written by Len Wein.) Cyclops was the only original member of the X-Men remaining, the rest of the team consisting of new recruits from across the globe, including a certain Canadian with claws who had first appeared in *The Incredible Hulk* #181. The “All New, All Different” X-Men were a hit.

Cockrum remained on *X-Men* until issue #107 (Oct. 1977), when he was succeeded by artist John Byrne. While Wein, Claremont, and Cockrum gave birth to the new X-Men, Byrne helped give depth and breadth to the characters and further expanded the mutant Marvel universe. Claremont and Byrne were a powerful combination and the X-Men flourished under their combined creative talents.

Chris Claremont comments on the strength of their collaboration: “When you’re working with someone like John, there’s no point in doing full scripts. It’s an inhibition to his creativity, to his imagination, and to his own ability to contribute to the story. That’s why a significant number of those issues labeled us as ‘co-plotters.’ The whole point was that we were a collaborative team, very much as Dave and I were before and were once again, when he came back following John’s departure. If I wrote out a plot, it was for the penciler so he’d have a reference of how the story was structured, but it was also for my benefit as well, because the notes I put in the plot were as much for me to write the script as it was for John or Dave to draw it. If you’re working with a brilliant collaborator, a brilliant partner, why short-change his contribution in any way at all? You want to give him every chance he can to tell the story as powerfully and evocatively as he knows how. And that, in turn, hopefully, will give me more visual inspiration to finish the job with words as effectively or more so.”

TRADING PLACES

So, having taken the X-Men to new heights, introducing new characters like Kitty Pryde and storylines like the Hellfire Club and the Phoenix Saga, what did Claremont and Byrne do? They killed the X-Men.

[**Spoiler alert:** If you have not read the *X-Men* story “Days of Future Past,” you owe it to yourself to do so. Stop now, and pick up a copy of the trade paperback or back issues before proceeding.]

No Mutants’ Land

Detail from the startling cover to *X-Men* #141 (Jan. 1981), part one of “Days of Future Past.” Art by John Byrne and Terry Austin; colors by Glynis Wein.

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THE FUTURE IS A PAST

by Dewey Cassell



Grave Matters

(top) Dead-hero headstones, from page 4, *X-Men*

#141. (bottom) The death of Franklin Richards.

Original Byrne/Austin art to page 19 of issue #141, courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com).

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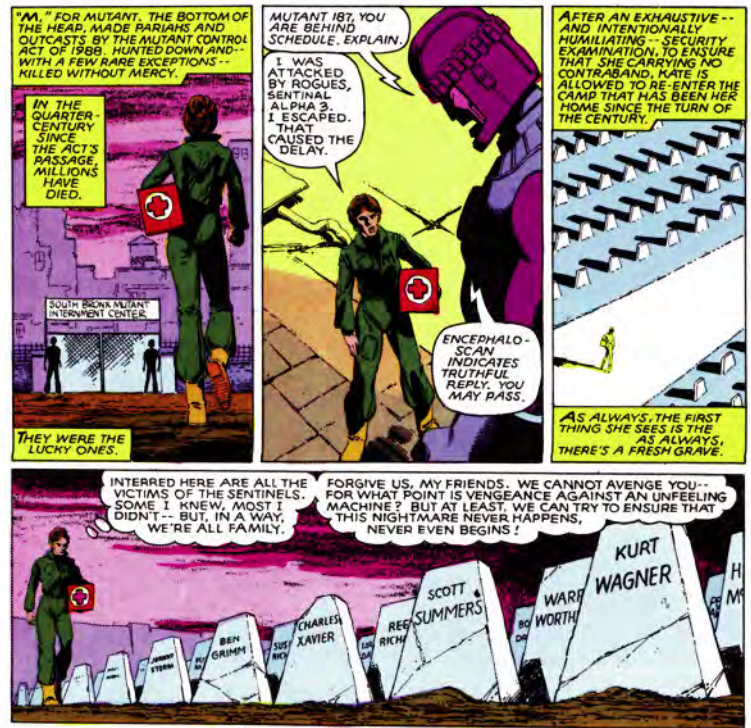
In issue #141 (Jan. 1981), the X-Men began a two-part story called "Days of Future Past," which told of how the consciousness of an adult Kate Pryde was sent back in time to trade places with her younger self, so that she might persuade the X-Men to prevent the assassination of Senator Robert Kelly by the new Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, led by Mystique. History noted that the murder of Senator Kelly led to the reactivation of the Sentinel program. (Sentinels were giant robots used to hunt mutants, first created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby in issue #14 of *X-Men*.) The Sentinels determined that the best way to protect the country was to take it over. They classified people into one of three categories—human (and therefore allowed to have children), anomalous (possessing mutant potential and therefore not allowed to have children), and mutant (hunted down and killed or interred and forced to wear collars that inhibited their mutant abilities). The mutant internment centers were reminiscent of World War II, reminding the reader at best of the Japanese internment camps in the US and at worst of the Nazi concentration camps.

One of the most chilling images from the story was of Kate walking through the mutant internment center and passing by a graveyard filled with tombstones marking the final resting place of some of the greatest heroes of the Marvel Universe—Professor X, Cyclops, Nightcrawler, Mr. Fantastic, Invisible Woman, the Thing, Human Torch, Iceman, Angel, Beast, and others. The Sentinels took the lives of countless heroes and villains, not all of whom were mutant, and they buried them in a place the survivors would see every day.

The story is told with great sensitivity and compassion, not dwelling on the precise means by which Kate is able to make the "timeswitch," but rather on its implications for the people at both ends of the spectrum. The transference is accomplished with the aid of a mutant Rachel, who is a telepath, later revealed (though not in this story) to be the daughter of Scott Summers and Jean Grey. When Kate regains consciousness in the body of Kitty Pryde, she tells her story with earnest to the X-Men, persuading them of her sincerity and reacting emotionally at seeing old friends alive again.

While Kate is accompanying the X-Men to Washington, D.C., to try to stop the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, the friends she left behind in the future are trying to prevent Armageddon. The Sentinels are on the threshold of expanding their dominance beyond North America, at which point the other nations of the world have vowed to retaliate with nuclear force. Wolverine, who has been helping the Canadian resistance, has freed the remaining members of the X-Men from their Bronx internment center, including Storm and Colossus (carrying the body of Kate, his wife, who remained unconscious while possessing the mind of Kitty), as well as Franklin Richards (son of Reed and Sue Richards) and Rachel. Magneto, confined to a wheelchair (in a twist of irony), remains behind to create a diversion, though it will mean his death. This motley mutant crew makes their way toward the Baxter Building, headquarters of the Sentinels, to attempt to destroy it.

In the end, they are not successful. They manage to destroy a number of Sentinels along the way, but at a high price. As the story draws to a close, only Rachel and an unconscious Kate remain, hiding outside the Baxter Building. One of the most shocking images in the closing pages of the story is of Wolverine being vaporized by a Sentinel, leaving behind only his adamantium-laced skeleton.



FlashBack!

The *New Mutants Special Edition #1 (1985)* could well be *THE comic book that captures the essence of the 1980s*. With writing and trademark characterization by legendary *X-Men* scribe Chris Claremont and lavish, detailed art by up-and-comer Arthur Adams, this 64-page special edition was an experience no comic-book fan could forget.

"Chris and I collaborated in the regular Marvel style," explains Art Adams. "He gave me his normal plot which had a lot of stuff in it, and the way I draw, I added my own things in there. The next time Chris and I worked together, he was aware of that and kept adding in more and more things for me to draw. It was a lot of fun."

Together, Claremont and Adams captured the look and feel of Asgard through its landscape and characters, relying heavily on *Thor* visionary Walter Simonson's revamp of this iconic setting. While the location made an interesting background, Claremont broke the *New Mutants* down to their core beings, challenged them, and changed them.

This issue propelled Arthur Adams into the realm of superstar artists of the 1980s. His rich and detailed penciled art was breathtaking, and Adams put his own unique and memorable take on these teen heroes. The veteran inking of Terry Austin gave Adams' penciled art much more depth and definition, creating some of comics' best art of the 1980s.

"I had spent time with Chris Claremont at various conventions," says Adams, "and he knew that I was wrapping up the *Longshot* limited series with Ann Nocenti, who was the editor on *The Uncanny X-Men* and *The New Mutants* at the time, and they both thought that this might be a fun project for me to do."

Of Adams' versatile art style, Claremont stated in the introduction to *Modern Masters* vol. 6: "He can give his writers the most majestic and outrageous of wide-screen spectacles, be they in space or the realms of fabled Asgard. And yet focus in on moments so individual and personal, they can't help but win your heart, or break it."

Along with *Uncanny X-Men Annual #9 (1985)*, this two-issue story was the 1985 summer crossover event later called "The Asgardian Wars." It was Claremont's clever idea to throw the *New Mutants* into Walt Simonson's Asgard. Underneath that epic fantasy storyline was genuine character growth and development and teen mutant angst. And Asgard provided a strange and fertile setting to foster that character development. Claremont was all about characters, and his characterization took center stage in this epic story.

"I had a good idea of who the *New Mutants* were before I started," recalls Adams. "Even though I was working the West Coast, I visited Marvel Comics semi-regularly in those days, so I was in the office at the beginning of the *New Mutants*. No one had been overly crazy about the name 'New Mutants,' but at that time, they didn't want another book called 'The X-Men.' Little did they know what the future held? Eventually, they're not new anymore."

Dripping with Detail

Cover to *New Mutants Special Edition #1 (1985)*.

Art by Arthur Adams and Terry Austin. Adams photo courtesy of Woolennium/Wikimedia Commons.

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THE ASGARDIAN WARS: THE NEW MUTANTS 1985 SUMMER VACATION

by Jason Shayer



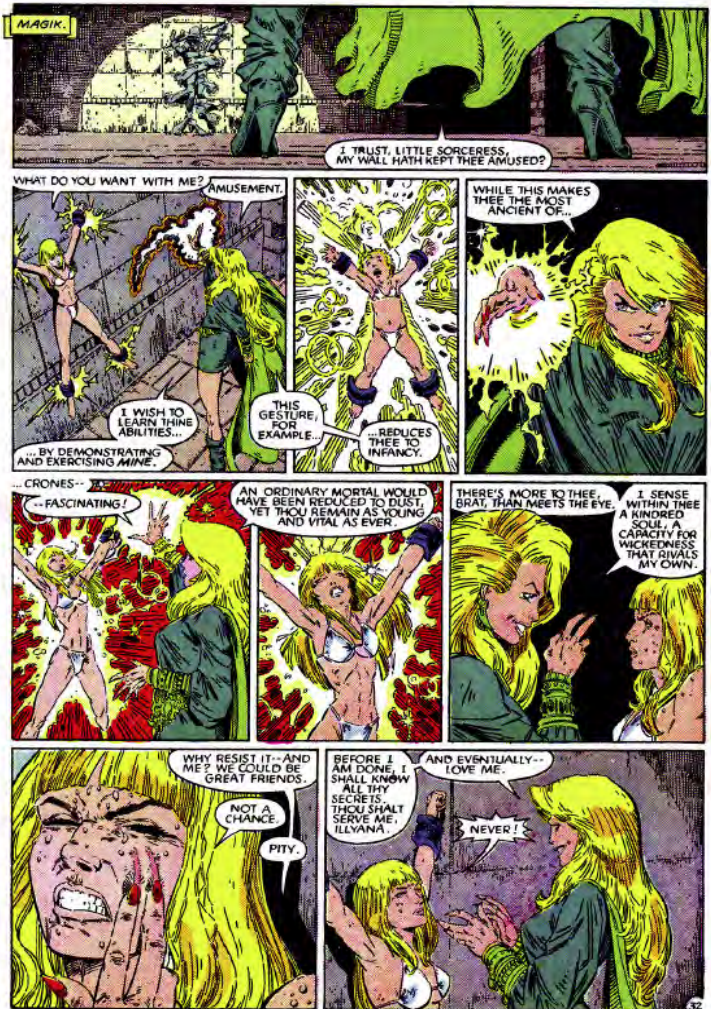
ARTHUR ADAMS



Mean Girls

The Enchantress tortures Magik on page 32 of the *Special Edition*. Words by Claremont, art by Adams and Austin, and colors by Christie Scheele.

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“HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS”: NEW MUTANTS SPECIAL EDITION #1

“The *New Mutants Special Edition* was originally meant to be a *New Mutants Annual*,” says Adams. “Then Chris handed in a script and I quickly thumbnailed it to figure out how long it was going to be, and talked about it with editor Ann Nocenti. We realized that it was going to be too big for the one *Annual*.”

After a humbling defeat in the *X-Men and Alpha Flight* miniseries, Loki’s pride demanded revenge, but he was bound by a vow not to harm the X-Men. Loki sidestepped his vow by dispatching the Enchantress to capture the X-Men: “Be inspired, Enchantress. I wish their agonies to be as long-lasting as they are exquisite.”

Loki plotted to strike against the X-Men through their leader, Storm, who had recently lost her mutant abilities, and to offer to restore her weather powers: “I wonder what price she would pay to them back ... to become a goddess in fact as well as name?”

You know the saying, “If you want something done right...” The twist here was that Storm was vacationing with the New Mutants. As the story turned to the New Mutants, they were enjoying a quiet moment on a beach in Greece and lamenting over their place in a world that hated mutants. “It’s too bad we can’t find ourselves another world,” said Doug Ramsey, the New Mutant known as Cypher.

As another saying goes, “Be careful what you wish for.” Cue the Enchantress and her demon warriors, who mistake the New Mutants for the X-Men. They defeated the New Mutants and dragged them back to Asgard. Ilyyana surprised an arrogant Enchantress and attempted to teleport the team, but the Enchantress disrupted her efforts and scattered the New Mutants throughout the nine realms of Asgard.

While their placements were contrived, it was more strategic as Claremont craftily put them into environments that would best test them and allow them to grow. These developed plot points were so successful that they would echoed throughout the history of these characters, in particular with Dani Moonstar and Rahne Sinclair.

Adams’ meticulously detailed art, complimented by the fine inking of Terry Austin, shined from the very beginning, particularly on the second page that depicted a contemplative and scheming Loki sitting upon Hlidskjalf, the High Seat of Asgard.

“Loki’s costume was based on Jack Kirby’s and John Buscema’s designs,” mentions Adams. “For whatever reason at that time, no one really liked the Enchantress’ costume—I drew a whole bunch of different versions, none of which I was really crazy about. It was fun stuff. I looked into a couple of Viking history and Norse Gods books, and, of course, I had all of Walt Simonson’s *Thor* at the time and all of the Kirby *Thor* run.”

KARMA

Xi’an Coy Manh, the New Mutant known as Karma, struggled with the after-effects of being mind-controlled by a psychic entity known as the Shadow King, who had left her body severely obese. She found herself in the middle of a desert, which only amplified her desire to end her life.

However, her self-loathing was put aside after rescuing a young girl who was also lost in the desert. Xi’an stayed alive to care for the girl, and that selfless act allowed her to regain her confidence and to take responsibility for not only the girl, but for herself. Interestingly, when Xi’an was rescued, the young girl suddenly disappeared, and all Xi’an was left with was a white string, the sign of the three Norns, the fates of Asgard who obviously had their own interests in keeping her alive.

WARLOCK

Both Adams and Claremont had a lot of fun playing with Warlock, using his alien abilities to change his shape and interact with the physical world around him in his unique and usually humorous way.

“Warlock was always a lot of fun,” says Adams. “Bill Sienkiewicz, who had co-created Warlock, described to me that Warlock was made of the black-hole material from the old Warner Bros. cartoon. And for some reason what stuck in my head was Warner Bros. cartoon, so I just tried to make him fun and silly and very emotive because he’s supposed to be new to being alive and new to being on Earth; I wanted all his reactions to be big. Warlock was complicated to draw, especially the way that I drew him. His reactions had to be big so that you could see what was going on with him.” [Editor’s note: The cartoon referenced above is “The Hole Idea,” released in 1955.]

Warlock found himself in the realm of Hel, and faced with this perilous predicament he transformed himself in Ann Nocenti and Art Adams’ creation, *Longshot*. “I think that was probably my idea,” admits Adams, “and it’s one I kind of regret as it was a bit too silly, but it did help advertise our book.”

CYPHER

The teleportation spell dropped Doug Ramsey near an Asgardian mead hall, and he quickly found that his physical shortcomings were enlarged as the typical Asgardian was super-strong by comparison. “I’ll never be good to them in a fight!” said Doug earlier in the issue, whining over his mutant power to understand and speak languages. Doug struggled with confidence issues as his power was far too passive when compared to those of his teammates.

A defeated Doug was forced into a subservient role in the kitchen. Fortunately, Warlock, having escaped from Hel, found Doug and together they set out to find the others. Warlock joined with Doug by taking the form of a techno-organic exoskeleton that allowed Doug to take a more physical role in combat. Of course, that gave Doug a huge boost in confidence, allowing him to stand together with his teammates as one of them, and not from the sidelines.

KANG:

THE VILLAIN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF

(WITH A TIP O' THE HAT TO DAVID GERROLD)

by *Stephan Friedt*



Rama-Tut, Scarlet Centurion, Kang the Conqueror, Immortus, Nathaniel Richards, Living Pharaoh (?) ... villain or hero ... descendant of Reed Richards or Victor von Doom ... or another version of Dr. Doom himself. The character we know mostly as "Kang" has had all of those identities. Like Daniel Eakins, the subject of David Gerrold's 1973 Hugo and Nebula Awards-nominated book, *The Man Who Folded Himself*, Nathaniel Richards of the 30th Century shifted backward and forward frequently enough with his time machine to "fold himself" and exist in separate identities, sometimes in alternate timelines or realities, often in the same time period. He also became a "catch-all" for Marvel writers. If the character time-traveled, he stood a chance of becoming a part of the Kang history. If you wanted to complicate your plotline or get yourself out of a corner ... Kang was somehow connected.

Bear in mind that each of these stories is not a long, thought-out novel, nor were the authors afforded the time to equate them to a well-crafted screenplay, building and strengthening the characters until we know them intimately. Instead, these are down-and-dirty adventure stories, often written on the fly and by the seat of the pants ... rough ... sometimes presenting contradictory actions by the players or containing glaring omissions and errors. But if we study each of his appearances chronologically, look at his motives, weapons, powers, and interactions with other Marvel Universe figures, perhaps we can "unfold" the origami known as Kang.

SILVER AGE APPEARANCES

FIRST FOLD: As Rama-Tut: *Fantastic Four* #19 (Oct. 1963) – Stan Lee and Jack Kirby

"Prisoners of the Pharaoh"

The *Fantastic Four* encounter Rama-Tut in ancient Egypt during a search for a cure for blindness.

Motive: Boredom and desire for adventure

Weapons: Ultra-diode ray, time machine satellite globe

Reprinted in *Giant-Size Avengers* #2

This read more like Stan and Jack's attempt to give a Marvel Universe explanation for the origins of the Sphinx. Other than the mention of being a descendant of Doom, there are no hints that Rama-Tut would become a major player. Later writers would add to the backstory and complicated history.

As Rama-Tut: *Fantastic Four Annual* #2 (Sept. 1964) – Stan Lee and Jack Kirby

"The Final Victory of Doctor Doom"

Rama-Tut and Dr. Doom meet and discuss their kinship.

Motive: Orbiting Earth and plotting the defeat of the *Fantastic Four*

Weapons: Time machine, attractor ray

Reprinted in *Fantastic Four Annual* #7

A vignette inserted into the middle of a Dr. Doom story, this story solidified Rama-Tut's connections to Dr. Doom, but muddled the waters by inferring that Doom and Rama might be the same person rather than different members of the same lineage.

He'll Take 'Em On, Any Time

Kang threatening the early Avengers, in a 2000 painting by Alex Horley originally published as a lithograph by Dynamic Forces. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com).

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Weapons: Time machine/ship, thermo-shocks, magnetic retaining wall, spectrum inverter, master control panel, energy beams, molecule expander, spectro wave

This one had everything—tons of different weapons, a villain motivated by love, a defiant princess, and the Avengers trounced every time they fought Kang, which led to...

As Kang: Avengers #24 (Jan. 1966) – Stan Lee and Don Heck

“From the Ashes of Defeat!”

The story continues, and we learn more about Kang’s personality ... and Princess Ravonna’s fate.

Motive: To make Princess Ravonna his bride

Weapons: Trick armor, delta-ray launcher, force screen, time machine

Reprinted in Marvel Triple Action #18 (May 1974)

This was the second part of the two-part arc introducing Kang’s love, Princess Ravonna. It also established Stan Lee’s character development of Kang as a “villain with honor” and susceptible to love.

As Kang: Thor #140 (May 1967) – Stan Lee and Jack Kirby

“The Growing Man”

We are introduced to one of Kang’s favorite creations, the “stimuloid” known as the Growing Man.

Motive: Setting things in place to conquer his century

Weapons: Doom-style armor, time machine, de-energizer ray, stimuloid

Reprinted in Marvel Spectacular #11 (Nov. 1974)

This story provided Jack Kirby with some great battle panels, pitted Kang solo against Thor, and set up the premise that Kang may have hidden weapons throughout time.

FOURTH FOLD: As the Scarlet Centurion – Avengers Annual #2 (Sept. 1968) – Roy Thomas, Don Heck, and Werner Roth

“And Time, the Rushing River”

(Part 1), “The Avengers Must Die” (Part 2)

A two-part story that takes place in an alternate timeline caused by Kang.

Weapons: Super-scientific arsenal

Motive: Conquer mankind

Reprinted in part in Marvel Super Action #16 (Feb. 1980)

Reprinted complete in Marvel Masterworks: The Avengers #6 (2006)

With this story, Roy Thomas joins the squad of creators adding to Kang’s history, further cementing the connection between Rama-Tut, Dr. Doom, and Kang ... with this added fold of the Scarlet Centurion.

Kang UK

(right) Courtesy of Heritage, the original art to the Ron Wilson/Frank Giacoia cover of Marvel UK’s *The Avengers* #5, from 1973, recreating the classic US *Avengers* #8 cover (inset) by Kirby and Dick Ayers. (left) A page from “The Growing Man,” from *Thor* #140 (May 1967), by Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Vince Colletta.

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BOOSTER GOLD

CELEBRITY HERO

by Christopher Larochelle



DAN JURGENS

People just can't seem to get enough of celebrities. Magazines and TV shows try to unravel every detail of their lives, and often it's amazing that we care. From basketball stars toting the latest and greatest cell phone to the actress endorsing the newest beauty product, corporations know that these famous people will motivate others to spend their hard-earned cash. In a world with superheroes, wouldn't this be the role that the costumed crusaders would be filling?

Booster Gold is just that kind of hero. He is a hero who might not always be likable, but he sure knows how to play the game. He has his fingers in every pie he can see, with deals to make everything from movies to cars and sugar-filled breakfast cereals that bear his trademark. Like many celebrities, people seem to love him despite his many publicly revealed faults.

There is really only one person who can be credited with creating Booster Gold from the ground up: Dan Jurgens. Prior to breaking out with *Booster Gold*, Jurgens had just a few credits to his name at DC Comics. He had done some work on Mike Grell's *Warlord* before landing a gig on the *Sun Devils* maxiseries. Jurgens' work over the course of those 12 issues proved to be an invaluable stepping stone toward the existence of the *Booster Gold* series. Gerry Conway started the maxiseries as writer with Jurgens penciling, but by *Sun Devils'* midpoint, it was entirely Jurgens' project, writing and art. "After issue #6, I stepped in as writer," Jurgens says. "That became instrumental in me deciding that I could do this, both write and draw a series."

Booster has gone down in history as the first post-Crisis original character in the DC Universe. He certainly made his mark as a fresh and new face among the many characters populating DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths*-based relaunch of the mid-1980s. The fact that Booster was introduced at that particular time proved serendipitous for a young creator with his own idea. "The editors were looking for some new ideas and approaches in general," says Jurgens. "I was a guest at a convention in Dallas, and happened to have a breakfast meeting with [then-DC editorial director] Dick Giordano. We were discussing various books and projects I might move on to at DC. In the course of all this, I mentioned Booster. I said, 'Look, I have this idea, and here it is. This is how it can work, this is who it is, this is how it fits in with the DC Universe ... I can write it and draw it.' And Dick thought about it and said, 'Get me something on paper.' And it was a go!"

The first *Booster Gold* ongoing series was something that went wherever Jurgens wanted it to go. "It was

GOOD GUYS NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD!

Bring out the Hero in your man!

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THE MAN BEHIND THE MASK
Page 7

DAILY PLANET
BOOSTER SAVES METROPOLIS

HE'S HOT... HE'S BOOSTER GOLD

GO FOR THE GOLD...

BOOSTER GOLD

An Exciting New Series by Dan Jurgens & Mike DeCarlo

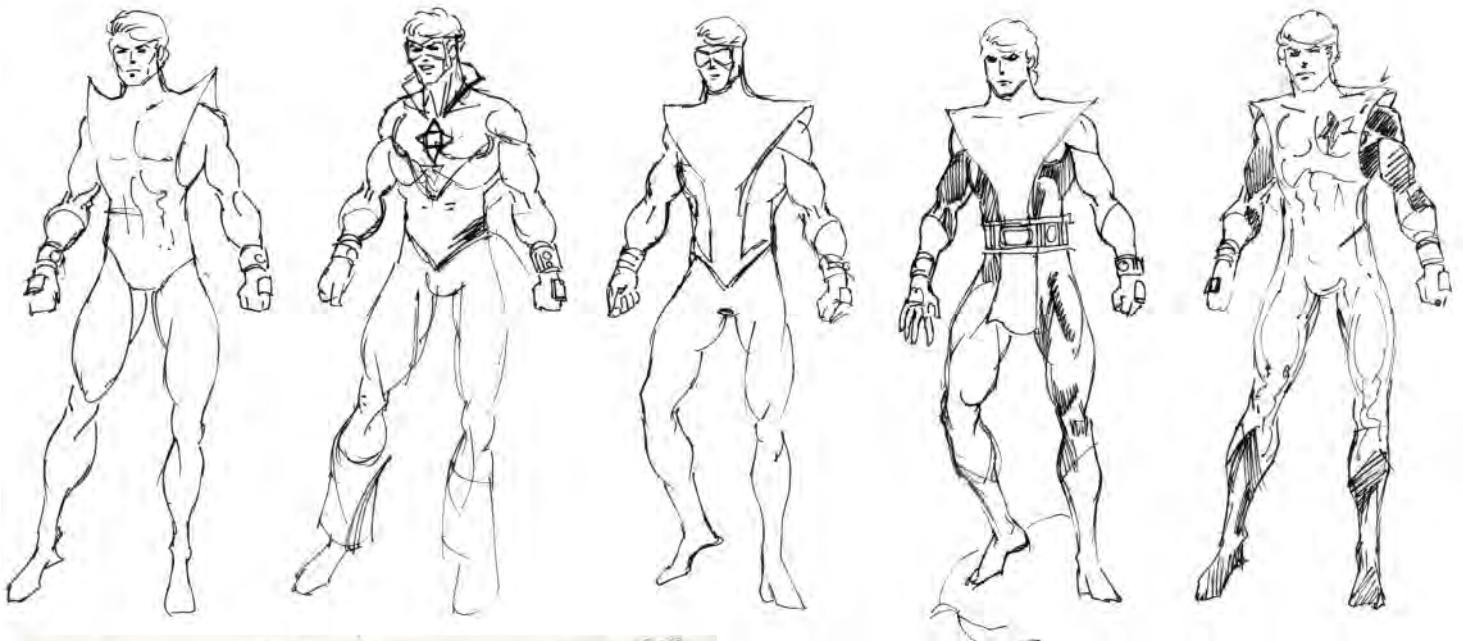
Where Legends Begin!

Get a FREE Booster Gold pin with your purchase! (while supplies last)

Booster Buzz

This DC house ad from late 1985 pitched a new kind of hero, Booster Gold. Art by Dan Jurgens and Mike DeCarlo.

TM & © DC Comics.



definitely born from the bottom up," says Jurgens. "Janice Race was assigned as editor and we just went from there." Creatively, the up-and-coming writer/artist was working things out as he went along. "I still have all the original art from the first issue and the amount of word balloons pasted over existing lettering is incredible," Jurgens remembers. "That's because we went through multiple rewrites even after the book was inked. Such is the fate of a new writer." Over the course of the series' 25 issues, the protagonist sees his public image get built up and knocked down, interacts with the larger DC Universe, and suffers injuries, losses, and betrayals. There is no shortage of material in this series that only lasted for two years.



Booster is surrounded by a fantastic supporting cast throughout the series. Dirk Davis and Trixie Collins are the two employees of Goldstar, Inc. who are constantly at his side. They work with Booster to help him with strengthening his public image and growing his company. They are also pretty much polar opposites. "The general idea was to place Booster in the middle, with a bit of a devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other," says Jurgens. "The devil, of course, was his agent, Dirk Davis. Dirk was there to appeal to Booster's commercial, less heroic side. Trixie was on the other side of the ledger. She represented the brighter, more heroic approach ... they were there to pull Booster in different directions."

When fans think of Booster Gold, they are probably also quick to remember Skeets, his hovering robot sidekick. Jurgens' explanation of Skeets shows that a lot of thought went into the mechanical companion: "Skeets was first conceived as a writer's tool. In other words, the problem of writing a character who's always in solitary action can be a bit of a struggle. Thought balloons? First-person captions? Nothing? If nothing else, sidekicks can be handy because their dialogue exchanges can solve those problems and cover the action. So, from a simple structure standpoint, Skeets was useful.

"Skeets was fun to write for obvious reasons," Dan continues. "Without being humorous, his presence added a sense of levity to book, as he was always available to reprimand Booster. But it became even more important to plug in some notion of guidance, which Skeets supplied. In many ways, he was the Jiminy Cricket to Booster's Pinocchio. Pinocchio wanted to be a boy, Booster wanted to be a hero."

Future Fighter

Jurgens' original cover art to *Booster Gold* #1 (courtesy of the artist), with the color, published version in the inset.

TM & © DC Comics.



It seemed like a good idea at the time. In the wake of Crisis on Infinite Earths, there would be consistent rules for how the DC Universe would work. And rather than tell, we'd show readers (and our peers) how things worked, starting with Time Masters, a miniseries that would make Rip Hunter, a B-list Silver Age hero, relevant once more.

The project came my way in part because I was the company's acknowledged continuity cop and because direct sales' Bob Wayne approached me with an enticing idea. He would partner with Lewis Shiner, a fellow author and Texan, and spin an exciting yarn. Both gents had done prose work, contributing to George R. R. Martin's Wild Cards series of anthology novels in addition to Lewis' own, cutting-edge prose work.

It also gave me a chance to further develop a young artist I had grown fond of, Art Thibert, who was just making a name for himself in the field.

Well, the best of intentions got us started, but it also quickly became apparent the rules lacked the support among the editors and writers so they were quickly ignored, relegating the series to obscurity. That is, until Rip Hunter became a key player in 52 and the waning days of the original DC Universe. Then the miniseries was collected for the first time, reminding everyone of its potential.

Now, the writers sat down at Lewis' North Carolina home and chatted amiably about what it was like once upon a time....

– Bob Greenberger

BOB GREENBERGER: Long before either of you began your professional careers, you read comics. What was your first encounter with Rip Hunter?

BOB WAYNE: One of the earliest issues in the monthly series, bought off the rack.

LEWIS SHINER: One of those first Showcase issues with the Joe Kubert art—I'm talking off the newsstand rack here, not second-hand.

GREENBERGER: What was the appeal of the character, or was it just that you liked time travel?

WAYNE: The time travel. My favorite SF books I read as a kid were all time-travel books.

SHINER: All of the above. I was already a sucker for time travel, and no doubt the Kubert art grabbed me hard. I also liked the fact that it was ordinary folks in plain clothes. When they got the green costumes, something went out of the experience for me.



Time is On My Side

Detail from Art Thibert's cover to *Time Masters* #1 (Feb. 1990). (inset) Bill Ely's cover to 1964's *Rip Hunter ... Time Master* #23 features George Washington gone bad.

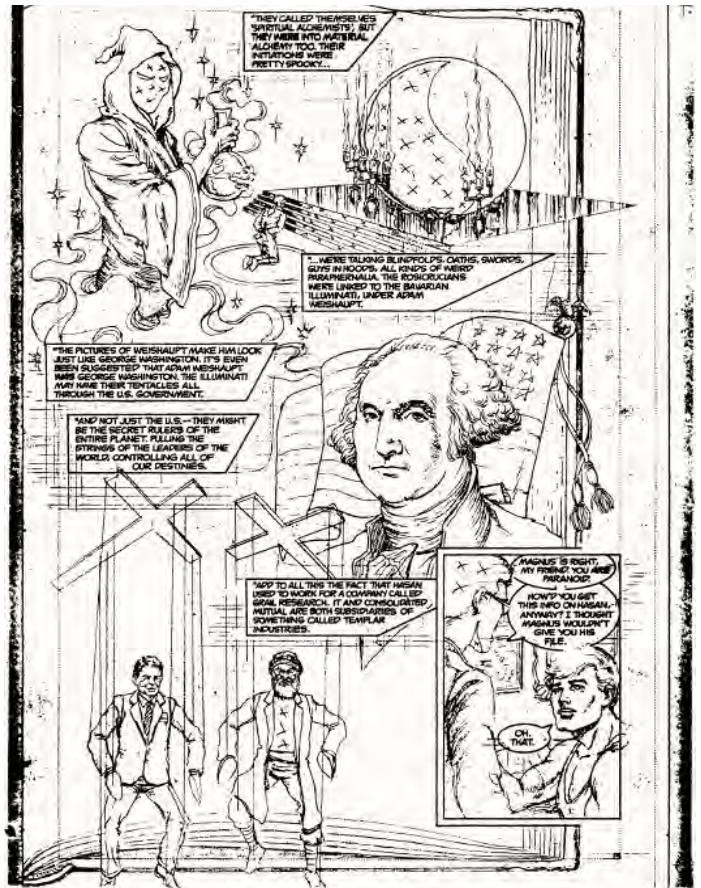
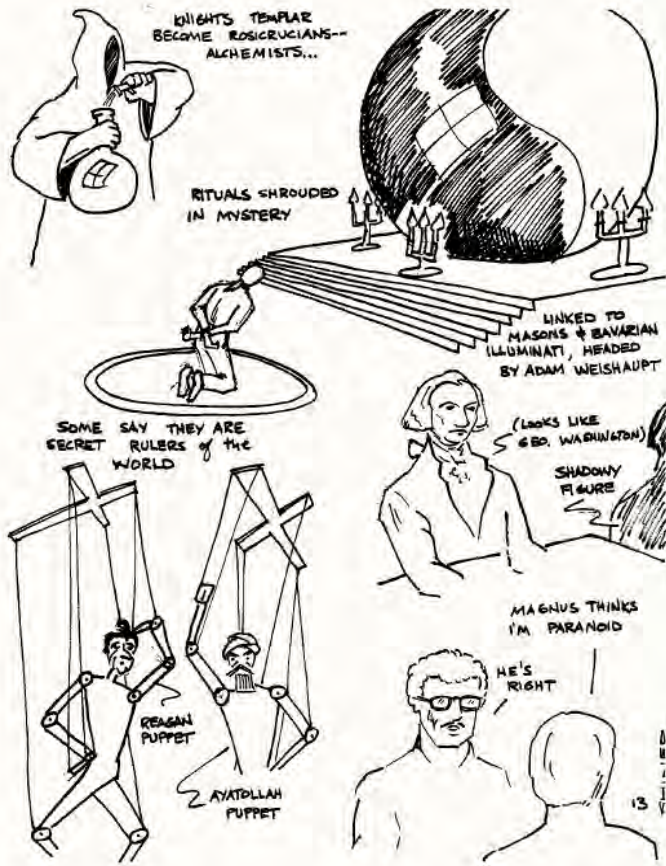
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TIME MASTERS™

BOB WAYNE AND LEWIS SHINER [AND ART THIBERT, TOO!] TALK WITH BOB GREENBERGER ABOUT THEIR WORK TOGETHER ON THE 1990s MINISERIES

by Robert Grenberger





GREENBERGER: I was late in discovering Rip, reading mostly the Julie Schwartz and Mort Weisinger books of the time. Jack Schiff, though, was off editing heroic, not superheroic, comics, first with *Challengers of the Unknown* and its thematic successors, *Rip* and *Cave Carson*. Was that of more interest to you?

WAYNE: I was more interested in the *Superman* titles as a kid, because of the television show. And the *Batman* titles, because I had the same last name and first initial as Batman. Never cared for Robin. I eventually moved on to any comics I could find, and that's when I added *Justice League*, *Flash*, *Green Lantern* ... and *Rip Hunter*.

SHINER: I have interrogated myself a lot about why I liked the stuff I liked as a kid. Mostly it was the non-powered characters—*Sea Devils* and *Rip Hunter* being at the top of the list, but also including *Challengers* and *Cave Carson*. But I also liked *Green Lantern* and *The Atom*, so some of it was clearly related to the art. But why, then, wouldn't I have gone for *Hawkman* as well? It's a mystery.

GREENBERGER: Now, *Time Masters* came about to show the new post-Crisis rules. As the dust was settling in having one universe, there was a series of editorial meetings that tried to define the new rules. Among them was a rule regarding restrictions on time travel, which in the early 1980s was used with regularity. Paul Levitz really wanted to make that far tougher. At what point, Bob, did you hear this and think, "There's a story to be told"?

WAYNE: The first time I heard the new time-travel rules, I knew there was a story to be told. It was only a matter of who told it first.

GREENBERGER: What happened next?

WAYNE: In 1986, I was considering leaving [comics] retail and taking a job in publishing. I set up some appointments in New York, and then I figured I might as well pitch for some freelance work as well. So I contacted Lewis...

GREENBERGER: Lewis, when did you first hear about this and get involved?

SHINER: It was a phone call from Bob. My memory is that he had a pretty good idea of what this would be before he pitched it to me, but as we're sitting talking about it here, he reminds me that he gently led me to it by asking, "What DC character that hasn't been redone yet would be you interested in my pitching while I'm in New York?" ...Knowing, of course, what I would say.

GREENBERGER: I recall at the time, you were living, I think, in New Jersey, but we dealt mainly by phone. I seem to remember a fair amount of enthusiasm and quick work on your collective part.

WAYNE: At the start, Lew and I were both living in Texas, just in two different cities. I was in Fort Worth where some of my retail stores were located, and Lew was in Austin. When I took the staff job at DC, I moved up to Connecticut, based in part on Dick Giordano's advice about the relative cost of living and state taxes!

SHINER: At that point I was doing part-time freelance programming from home, so I was able to move quickly. Bob, of course, has always been a human dynamo.

GREENBERGER: Who conceived of using the *Illuminati* conspiracy as a thread?



BOB WAYNE

A Little Help, Please

(left) Co-writer Lewis Shiner's breakdowns helped (right) then-newbie artist Art Thibert lay out *Time Masters'* stories. From issue #1, page 13—once again featuring George Washington! Courtesy of Bob Greenberger.

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Nearly 25 years ago, *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*, directed by Stephen Herek and co-created/co-written by Ed Solomon (*Men in Black*) and Chris Matheson (*Imagine That*), proved to be a totally awesome movie that made stars out of Alex Winter (*Bill*) and Keanu Reeves (*Ted*). A fan favorite and a box-office sleeper which cost nearly \$10,000,000 to make, it grossed nearly \$40,500,000 in 1989 dollars. But don't tell that to Evan Dorkin—he doesn't want to hear it.

To this day, Dorkin, who adapted the movie as an ongoing comic-book series for Marvel Comics Group, has never seen the cult hit.

"Some people on the Internet are unhappy about that," Dorkin, known for his frankness and unvarnished honesty, admits to *BACK ISSUE*.

Okay, Dorkin *does* cop to reading an advance copy of the script for (and eventually seeing) Peter Hewitt's 1991 sequel *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey*, which reunited Winter and Reeves and co-starred the Grim Reaper and an alien who made a feel-good catchphrase out of the word "Station." But Dorkin wrote and penciled *Bill & Ted's Excellent Comic Book* by the seat of his pants, often on short deadlines.

So, just how the alternative cartoonist, best known for his early '90s indie hit *Milk & Cheese*, wind up helming a Marvel Comics series, anyway? The answer, as *Excellent Adventure's* Socrates would say, is blowing in the wind ... but *BACK ISSUE* attempted to travel back through time and get to the bottom of it anyway.

SAN DIMAS HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL RULES!

Don't laugh, but the cult hit *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* turned out to be one of the most influential movies on comedies of the '90s and '00s. Frankly, there would be no *Wayne's World* movies, the *Harold & Kumar* franchise, *Dumb & Dumber*, *Dude, Where's My Car?*, *Pineapple Express*, and *30 Minutes or Less* (among myriad other buddy flicks) were it not for the sci-fi comedy. Released in 1989, *Excellent Adventure* arrived at the tail end of the metal decade, which started on a high note with California party bands such as Van Halen and Motley Crue. Although there were no explicit references to drugs, the reason millions of moviegoers connected with the *de facto* stoner comedy was because Winter and Reeves nailed the quintessential Cali stoner-dude ethos in their portrayal. To many attending Southern California public schools in the epoch, Bill and Ted were not so much caricatures as accurate representations of a certain surfer/skater type writ large on the silver screen.

Excellent Adventure saw its titular heroes led by Rufus (iconic counterculture comedian George Carlin),

...Station!

Evan Dorkin's dork duo, and Death, raising you-know-what. Detail from the cover of Slave Labor Graphics' *Bill & Ted* collection vol. 1.

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Bill & Ted and Evan's EXCELLENT Adventure

How a cartoonist (who, to this day, has never seen the original 1989 movie) had a totally awesome time working on Marvel's comic-book spin-off

by Michael Aushenker



EVAN DORKIN

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