

STAN GOLDBERG & GEORGE GLADIR INTERVIEWS!

# BACK ISSUE!

September 2018  
**No. 107**  
**\$8.95**



Dan DeCarlo '01

## FROM THE GROOVY '70S THROUGH THE BIG '80s, ARCHIE COMICS IN THE BRONZE AGE!



SABRINA



ARCHIE ON TV



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**BACK ISSUE**  
Comics' Bronze Age and Beyond!

# Archie™

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## FlashBack!

For the past few years, Archie has been undergoing something of a renaissance. High-profile storylines like the introduction of Kevin Keller (Riverdale's first openly gay teen), Archie's alternate-future marriage to Veronica, and even the title character's death have spawned such innovations as an entire horror line, a primetime television series, and a whole new approach to the core characters. This is unlike the 1970s and 1980s, when everything was predictable and formulaic in Riverdale.

Or was it?

As we shall see, Archie Comics was far more daring in the Bronze Age than most people credit!

### THE DECLINE AND FALL?

When the 1970s started, Archie Comic Publications, Inc. was riding high. The real-life pop group the Archies had two Top Ten hits in 1969, "Jingle Jangle" and "Sugar, Sugar," with the latter spending four weeks at Number One. The Archie animated franchise, which started in 1968, would expand to include *Josie* and *Sabrina* series in 1970 and 1971, respectively. One of the greatest demonstrations of Archie's reach occurred when the company went public in 1973; "A Share of Happening" in *Everything's Archie* #29 ran the gamut from merchandising to a chain of Archie's Restaurants. Unfortunately, many of the promised developments never appeared—no animated series for Li'l Jinx or That Wilkin Boy, and the restaurant chain never expanded beyond its flagship location in Joliet, Illinois.

In the realm of comics, the Archie title was selling about 560,000 copies in 1968. In 1970, that number had dropped to around 490,000. Sales on the title were about 400,000 in 1972 and under 300,000 in 1974; they were below 100,000 before the end of the decade. On paper, Archie appears to have been in a tremendous slump, but was such really the case?

John Jackson Miller, a *New York Times* bestselling author, also runs the *Comichron* research website. According to Miller, "1968 is the peak for the main title [*Archie*], but 1969 is the important year because in '69 it ends up beating every other title. *Archie* becomes number one in 1969, as a direct result of the TV show and the song "Sugar, Sugar." The drop-off in the early '70s is actually not that bad compared to [other titles]. *Archie* is still hanging in there in the early '70s relative to everybody else."



JOHN JACKSON MILLER

Average copies sold per issue of ARCHIE, 1960-2013



Source: U.S. Postal Service circulation statement filings, 1960-2013  
as collected by Comichron • <http://www.comichron.com>

### Circulation Figures

Courtesy of John Jackson Miller and Comichron, a chart tracking over four decades of sales for the title *Archie*.

# Archie COMICS in the 1970s and 1980s:

## There's More to It Than People Think!

by Jack Abramowitz

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Miller describes a series of price increases in 1969, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1984, 1986, and 1989. The first increase in this series took the cover price from 12 cents to 15 cents; the last took it from 75 cents to \$1.00. As Miller explains, "Archie is more price-sensitive than any publisher in comics, and that's why prices were so low for so long. Because who's buying the Archie comics and where are they being sold? At least until recently, they were all being sold at the newsstand, and it was parents buying them, so they cared [about the price]. Regular comics fans do not care about price."

Were sales really so terrible? Context is extremely important. While sales on *Archie* in 1974 were half what they were in 1968, look at the market. "Archie with 272,000 in '74 on the main title, my guess is that would be the #3 or #4 title in the business," Miller says. "It's higher than Charlton, it's higher than everything at DC except for *Superman*. *Superman* was 285,000. *Richie Rich* was at 210,000; that's the top Harvey book. *Amazing Spider-Man*, which was the #1 book in '74, was 288,000. The only thing that could be close is *FF [Fantastic Four]*, and that's 218,000." So *Archie*, even at a fraction of its sales just six years earlier, was still one of the top-selling books in the industry that year.

In truth, Archie Comics was doing surprisingly well given the state of the industry. "The story of the 1970s is the collapse of the distribution system plus inflation," Miller explains. "The '70s were a bloodbath. Comics nearly died. If it had not been for the direct market, we wouldn't be around. And the direct market helped Archie less than [it helped] anybody."

Why should the direct market treat Archie so poorly? Victor Gorelick, editor-in-chief of Archie Comics, explains:

"The [retailers] didn't want to handle [Archie]; they were only taking the Marvel, DC books, the books that came out with #1 issues every two weeks. ... A lot of the stores at that time in the direct market, they weren't interested in kids' books, which was a big mistake. *CBG [Comics Buyer's Guide]* did an article about that years later, that Archie comics—young readers' books like Harvey, Archie—we bring in young readers who eventually would go on to the other books. A lot of [the retailers] just wanted to take in what they wanted to read themselves. Now we're pretty solid in the direct market, but it took years to do that."

Despite the adversity of inflation and a direct market that didn't want them, Archie not only survived, it thrived. This was largely thanks to the innovation of digests.

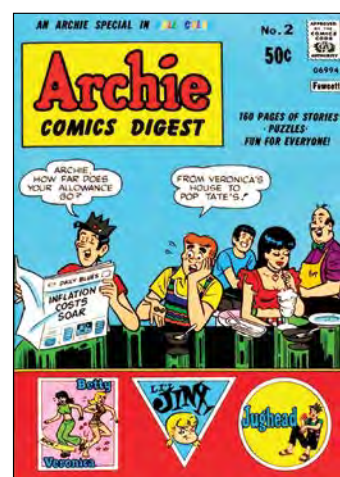
## AN EASILY DIGESTIBLE FORMAT

"Archie Digest starts in earnest in 1972 or '73," Miller says. "The first numbers appear in '74. *Archie Digest*—not *Double Digest* or anything, just the vanilla Archie book—[sold] 137,000 in '74, 145,000 in '75, 153,000 in '76, 158,000 in '77—it's going up while the rest of the business is going down. Why? Because those first four years, the digest is 128 pages, but it was 60 cents. Compare that with the regular comics of the time, which were 30 cents in '76, and that was for 32 pages. The digests also took advantage of the fact that, through the Comics Magazine Association of America, Archie had invented the supermarket counter dump. That's part of the reason Archie survived so long, doing so well on the newsstand."

Gorelick explains the origin of the digests. "John Goldwater, he was the head of the company—not the Jon who is the head now but his father, John L. Goldwater. They had been talking to our distributor. They came out with one digest to start with. They had discussed it with our distributor at the time and they wanted to do something a little different; they wanted another market. Because the fact is, the digests would have a lot of presence in supermarkets, at the check-out stands, and that was the place they wanted to get into. So they gave it a try and it worked. We came out with quite a few—*Jughead with Archie*, [*Archie's Girls*], *Betty and Veronica*, *Reggie*, too. They were doing so well that one of the people in the accounting department who was keeping track of the sales came in and said, 'Why don't you do a *Betty and Veronica* book?' We had a couple of these books and the regular *Betty and Veronica* book was doing very well. I was actually putting all those books together. At that time it was all reprint material. Now we have some new material in the digest books, but at that time it was all reprint and I had to start gathering material. It was a big job. The *Betty and Veronica* book took off—it was doing better than any of them. So we just kept expanding the line. We went to different sizes. The first ones that came out, I think were about 128 pages, then we went to Double Digests at 256 pages. It sold better than any of our other books. We had to pay for that [supermarket] space. It was expensive, but it paid off."

Just as the regular digests were a better page-to-price ratio than regular comics, the Double Digests were a still better bargain. According to Miller, the Double Digest format—launched in 1981 or 1982—"was triply outselling the standard 128-page digest" by the end of the decade.

Craig Boldman, an Archie writer since 1992, explains the broader impact of the Archie digests. "It was significant in light of the comics industry in general because, as the distribution system started changing, those digests were comics that were getting into regular people's hands continuously, as opposed to other comics, which started migrating to



## Check 'Em Out at the Checkout

(top) Here's an Archie rarity from 1970: the Archie: *Knack Yak* mini-comic, a giveaway distributed with double packs of Fairmont Potato Chips. (bottom) Archie's beloved digests have long been a staple at grocery store checkouts and other mass markets.

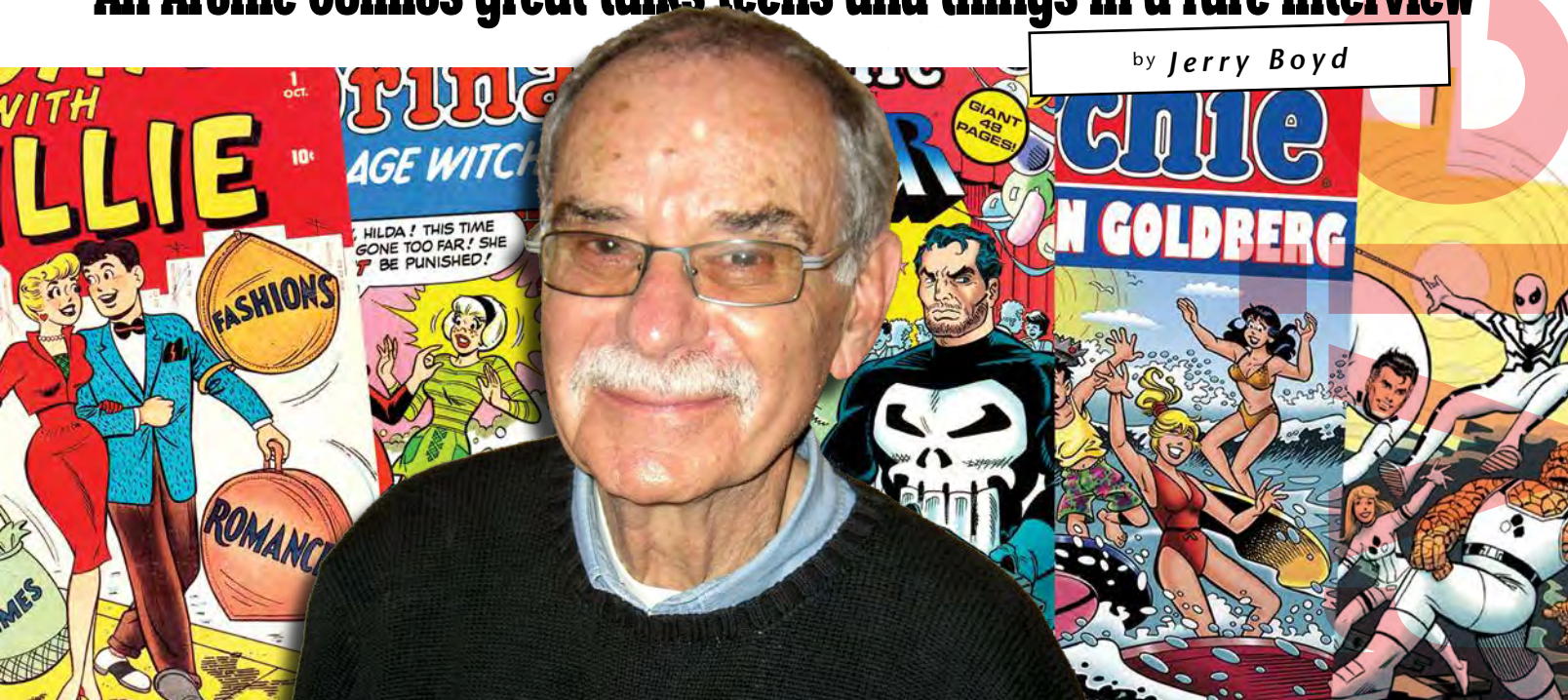
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# ARCHIE'S PAL, STAN GOLDBERG

An Archie Comics great talks teens and things in a rare interview

by Jerry Boyd



I bumped into Stan Goldberg (1932–2014), whom I had long admired, at a San Diego Comic-Con sometime in the '00s. He was seated near Larry Lieber and Sal Buscema on the main floor, and being near three of my Mighty Marvel heroes paralyzed me for a time. I wanted to get into the lines and get set up for some commissions, but a more urgent matter prevailed, and I decided to walk on and meet up with them later. The next time I went to that area, the three men were gone. However, I did make their guest panel and got comics signed by all three—a real delight.

I stayed in touch with all three men, and in August of 2011, I decided to do a phone interview with Mr. Goldberg about his Marvel Comics work, specifically Millie the Model. I came across Mad About Millie #2 in 1969 and became an instant fan-for-life then. Mr. Goldberg and I shifted the conversation to his work at Archie Comics (and I'm glad we did!), and here's that never-before-published interview....

— Jerry Boyd

**JERRY BOYD:** Mr. Goldberg, I first saw your exquisite coloring for Marvel, but I didn't know it was you! [laughter]

**STAN GOLDBERG:** No one did! [more laughter] Stan [Lee] was very good about giving credit to everyone involved with the comics, but somehow, the colorist didn't make the credits box until the 1970s!

**BOYD:** You colored a lot of the titles...

**GOLDBERG:** I colored them all, early on! Marie Severin came in at some point and we overlapped for a while. She worked at EC Comics in the 1950s and did superb coloring work, so all I had to teach her was the Marvel system of doing things.

**BOYD:** I don't know if any little boys ever told you anything like this, but growing up in my Washington, D.C., neighborhood from 1966–'68 meant reading Marvel superheroes was too cool, but reading Patsy Walker and Millie the Model titles were not cool! [laughter] But after that unwritten but rigid restraint, I moved into a new neighborhood a few years later, and actually made a few new friends at my school, guys and girls, who loved Millie. It was around that time I saw Mad About Millie #2 on a spinner rack and fell in love with your great cartooning style!

**GOLDBERG:** Did you want to read Millie or Patsy comics while you were living in D.C.?

**BOYD:** Actually, no. [laughter] I was in 7th Heaven with the superhero titles! But I did read Archie... Archie was fine and dandy with all concerned. We knew we'd all be heading to high school one day, and Archie was kind of a blueprint about how to handle yourself when you hit 16... at least that's what we thought! [laughter]

**GOLDBERG:** I was working on Archie material in 1967, along with coloring chores at Marvel. A lot of my stuff amounted to one-page gags in Archie's Mad House. I had a very fast style, which is what we all wanted. The more pages you produced, the bigger the check. So, like Jack Kirby, Mike Sekowsky, Jack Davis, and others, I developed a fast cartooning style that would give the impressions I wanted to convey.

In the late 1960s, this was a good deal for me—Stan Lee as editor, my Millie and Archie writers, and so on. It allowed me to get a lot done.

**BOYD:** Stan was writing the three Millie the Model titles around 1969, when I got there. Millie must've been

## The Other Stan the Man

Artist Stan Goldberg in a 2008 photograph by Luigi Novi, plus a sampling of the many, many, many covers he did for Marvel and Archie Comics.

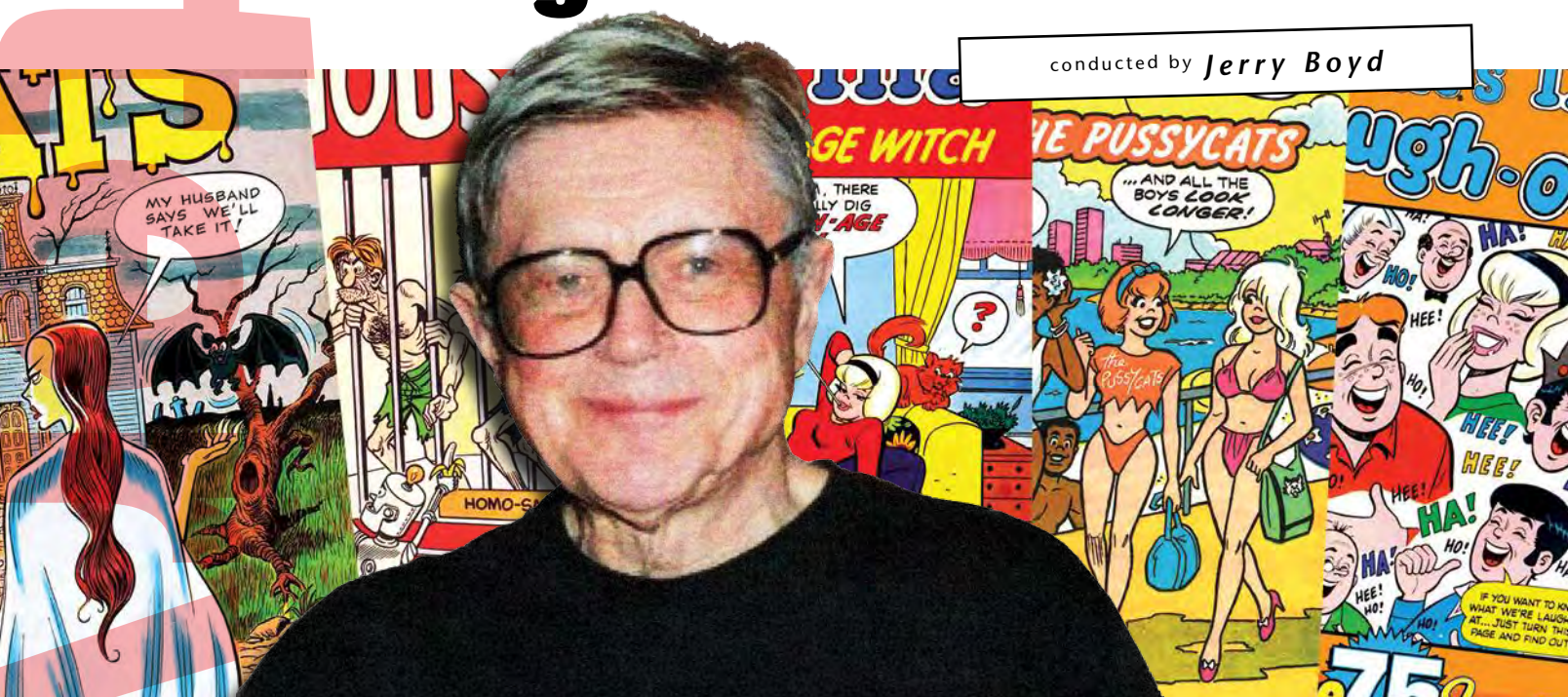
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# Archie<sup>TM</sup> AND GEORGE

## The George Gladir Interview

conducted by Jerry Boyd



### Archie's Mad House Man

Archie Comics writer/cartoonist

George Gladir in an undated photograph courtesy of Jerry Boyd, plus a sampling of covers from comics containing his stories.

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*One of the wonderful things about fanzines is that fans take it upon themselves to find out where their favorite creators live and sometimes bring them out to meet new audiences at conventions, or interview them, or get commissioned artwork from them. Because of their efforts and the graciousness of their creator friends, rarely seen or never-published interviews and artwork survive.*

*I had the good luck to run into George Gladir (1925–2013) at San Diego Comic-Con and after hitting it off, I asked him if I could someday interview him and he consented. Mr. Gladir (rhymes with “bladder”) had been one of the Archie gang’s chief writers for more than half a century.*

*While in his mid-teens, Gladir got off to an early start in the comics industry by submitting what became a winning entry in the Buffalo Bob cartoon contest. This was a part of Tip Top Comics, a Golden Age favorite.*

*Later, he worked briefly for the comics packaging shop of Eisner and Iger. When WWII came, he served as a combat infantryman in Europe.*

*After the war he enrolled in the Cartoonist and Illustrator’s School in New York City. For a number of years, he submitted gag cartoons to a variety of magazines. In George’s words, “I picked up invaluable experience in being able to tell a story in just one panel and understanding visual humor.”*

*In 1959, he heard Archie Comics was hiring writers. He began doing one-page gags for Archie’s Joke Book, and then branched out to the other titles with complete stories. Simultaneously, he scripted humor stories for Cracked Magazine, often working with the great John Severin.*

Mark Arnold, one of BACK ISSUE’s frequent contributors, used to publish The Harveyville Fun Times!, largely dedicated to the wonderful Harvey Comics lineup. After I interviewed George Gladir on the subject of one of his finest creations, Sabrina the Teenage Witch, for THFT #71, I felt I needed to do a follow-up chat with him to discuss the Archie comics he worked so well on in general terms and stretching over the years.

Luckily, he was happy to answer more questions, and here they are. The queries were submitted by email on Oct. 19, 2009 and answered on Jan. 17, 2010. Mr. Gladir, who passed away on April 3, 2013, also provided most of the art that follows, along with Archie fan supreme Greg Beda.

– Jerry Boyd

**[Disclaimer:** Since this was done long ago for another fanzine, there is an emphasis on Mr. Gladir’s time at Archie that precedes the Bronze Age.]

**JERRY BOYD:** How did you initially come to write for comic books, Mr. Gladir?

**GEORGE GLADIR:** I finished two years of a gag cartoonist course at the School of Visual Arts (then called the Cartoonist and Illustrator’s School) and started submitting gag cartoons to various magazines as a freelancer. Some two years later, in 1959, a friend and fellow cartoonist, Orlando Busino, informed me that Archie was looking for writers.

Because of my experience as a gag cartoonist, I had no problem connecting with Archie, doing one-page



## Archie's Real-Life Pals 'n' Gals

(top) A San Diego Comic-Con photo (presumably late 1980s) featuring (front, left to right) *Jughead* and *Tippy Teen* cartoonist Samm Schwartz and Archie editor Victor Gorelick, and (back, left to right) an unidentified figure and George Gladir. (bottom) Dan DeCarlo's with his wife Josie on the left and George Gladir is with his wife on the right side. They're having a good time outside of a restaurant in the San Diego area following a day at SDCC in '02. Mr. Gladir provided both photos, shared with *BACK ISSUE* by Jerry Boyd.



gags and cover ideas. Soon, I expanded into writing cartoon articles for *Archie's Mad House* and doing occasional Archie stories. Within a couple of years, I branched out by writing simultaneously for *Cracked* Magazine, a *MAD*-type publication.

I credit my gag cartoonist experience for giving me the ability to do all of the above. As a gag cartoonist one learns how to convey as much as possible in just one panel. Also, by doing my writing in a rough storyboard format, I learned how to anticipate all the visual and verbal problems that a cartoonist might face.

**BOYD:** *Shortly after you got to Archie, they started up two way-out titles, [Tales Calculated to Drive You] Bats and Archie's Mad House. There were funny and semi-serious monsters stories, and ongoing characters like Lester Cool and Chester Square, Captain Sprocket, and so on. What do you recall about writing for those books and artists like Mr. Busino, who drew for both?*

**GLADIR:** Almost immediately after starting at Archie, I took to writing for *Archie's Mad House* and was writing much of it, creating all of the characters you mentioned as well as others. I introduced my friend Orlando Busino to Archie and *Archie's Mad House*, and together we created *Bats*. Orlando was one gifted artist and his amazing artwork was responsible for what success *Bats* enjoyed in its short run. Unfortunately, there were great demands on his time. He simultaneously had to do gag cartoons for many of the major magazines (at a much more lucrative rate than comic books could afford to pay). Also, the Comics Code Authority put some very inane restrictions on what we could do with monsters, even though all of our stories were humorous in nature.

**BOYD:** *Did you have a favorite Archie character to write? Was Jughead "easier" since he disliked girls, loved to eat, was lazy, etc., or were Betty and Veronica, Archie, or Reggie stories easier or more fun to concoct? Was it easier for you, being a man, to write material for the boys, than it was to write for Josie, B&V, and Sabrina?*

**GLADIR:** Initially, I preferred writing the *Jughead* stories because his stories tended to be wilder and more imaginative in nature. Also, I had no problem with Archie stories. While I had a somewhat more limited range with *Betty and Veronica*, I did like coming up with stories that fit their personalities. And since I created Sabrina, I had no difficulties in writing her stories.

**BOYD:** *There was a produced but unsold Archie TV pilot done in the early 1960s. The team that produced Leave It to Beaver put it out. I've seen it once. Did you ever see it, and if so, any recollections?*

**GLADIR:** No, I never saw it.

**BOYD:** *Archie titles followed the seasons very well. In summer, the beach and surfboard stories showed up, snowball fights and Christmas shopping in the winter followed suit, and spring meant prom dances and school sporting events like baseball and soccer. Did you have a preference when it came to seasonal stories?*

**GLADIR:** No preference.

**BOYD:** *When Samm Schwartz (who concentrated his art on the Jughead titles) went over to edit, write, and draw for Tower Comics' Tippy Teen titles in '65, did he ask you to join him?*

**GLADIR:** Yes, he did, and I did go to his office, but somehow we did not connect. Writing for both Archie and *Cracked* at the time, my schedule was pretty much filled up.

**BOYD:** *By the mid-'60s, superheroes were making noticeable inroads in American pop culture. The Archie gang became costumed crimefighters (except for Veronica). Did you like that transition?*

**GLADIR:** I had nothing to do with the Archie superheroes. I was already involved with Captain Sprocket, a *Mad House* superhero I had created back in 1963.

**BOYD:** *Archie followed the wildly popular spy craze, as well. Did you write the "Man from R.I.V.E.R.D.A.L.E.": stories, and were they enjoyable?*

**GLADIR:** No, I did not write any of the R.I.V.E.R.D.A.L.E. stories that I can recall. [Editor's note: Frank Doyle was the chief Man from R.I.V.E.R.D.A.L.E. writer during the 1960s.]

**BOYD:** *G. (I believe his first name was "Gerald") LeMoine became an Archie writer-artist in 1967 or so [his first name, or at least his nickname, was Gus—ed.]. He was an African-American, I believe, because in the late '70s he went to Fitzgerald Publications and did a "black Archie" knock-off (which I loved, by the way) called Fast Willie Jackson. At Archie he specialized in one-page jokes and did wonderful work on Reggie's Jokes, Archie's Joke Book, and Jughead's Jokes. Do you remember him at all?*

**GLADIR:** No, I regret to say I do not. Usually, the Archie writers and artists met only once a year at the Archie Christmas party, and by 1969 I had moved to California.

**BOYD:** *Suddenly, by '68-'69, the Riverdale kids were rockers. Even Little Archie (then done by Dexter Taylor) got morphed into the Little Archies! Did you get a kick out of hearing the Archies' hit singles on the radio? Did you ever get up on Saturday mornings and watch the cartoons?*

**GLADIR:** Yes, I did. Also, working at Filmation in 1969, the California studio where the Archie cartoon show was produced, gave me the opportunity to hear the Archies perform.



# BEWITCHED... BY

by Jerry Boyd

# Sabrina™

[This interview preceded what you just read and was modified for BI.]

**JERRY BOYD:** Mr. Gladir, when did you begin working for Archie Comics? What were your regular assignments?

**GEORGE GLADIR:** I started working for Archie in September 1959. Since my background before then had been doing gag cartoons for various magazines, I at first did one-page and half-page gags, and then the MAD-type cartoon articles in *Mad House*. Soon I was submitting cover ideas for the many Archie books, as well as an occasional five- or six-page story.

**BOYD:** Was it difficult for you to write about teenagers for teenagers? Were there younger people in your family or neighborhood who informed you about the lifestyles, slang, and idiosyncrasies of teens?

**GLADIR:** There was no problem at all. Even though I was in my 30s, I felt like an overgrown teenager at heart. As a teen, back in the '40s, I was into rhythm and blues, so that when rock made the scene in the mid-'50s I was very much in tune with the times.

**BOYD:** How did *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* come about? Did you pick Dan DeCarlo to draw the strip, or was that an editorial decision? If so, who made it?

**GLADIR:** The choice of using Dan DeCarlo as Sabrina's artist was strictly an editorial decision, and a smart one. Sabrina owes much of her success to Dan's brilliant artwork. I do not know who made the decision.

**BOYD:** Still, can you pinpoint it? Did an editor come up and say, "Let's do a teenage witch?"

**GLADIR:** The origin of Sabrina I can pinpoint back to *Bats* #2 earlier in 1962. This was the January issue. I still have that one. I had a narrator named Hilda, who was a typical elderly, ugly witch and she told a story about how "soft" young witches have it today. That story morphed into Sabrina's introductory story in the October 1962 *Mad House* issue. A nameless young witch in her 20s was in the original *Bats* story in a cartoon-type article called "Witchcraft Then and Now." [Editor's note: BACK ISSUE stirs our comics-history cauldron to reveal the full story Sabrina in an article elsewhere in this issue.]

**BOYD:** *Sabrina's* timing was appropriate for Halloween! Archie titles didn't have regular letters columns where the readers expressed approval/disapproval over the stories, art, and concepts. How did your company discover that *Sabrina* was a success and therefore worth continuing?

**GLADIR:** After Sabrina appeared in her first *Mad House* story, the then-editor Richard Goldwater told me they had received some favorable mail regarding the character and that I should do an occasional Sabrina story. At the time I was writing most of the *Mad House* book.

**BOYD:** Were you aware that American youngsters were caught up in the monster craze of that time? There were monster magazines, toys, games, TV shows, movies, etc....

**GLADIR:** I think the monster craze really started back in the '40s with famed New Yorker cartoonist Charles Addams. He had a tremendous influence on my work and inspired me to introduce monsters in *Archie's Mad House* in 1961, and in *Bats*, another Archie publication. The latter book was created by me and famed gag cartoonist Orlando Busino.

**BOYD:** At the end of her first story, *Sabrina* explained that as a witch, she couldn't fall in love or she'd lose her powers/status in the witches' community. This was changed later. She got a steady boyfriend named Harvey by the late '60s and early '70s. Why was this switch made?

**GLADIR:** In the first story I had no idea Sabrina was going to be a regular feature in *Archie's Mad House*, so I gave her a slightly malevolent streak that later disappeared.

**BOYD:** In the earliest stories, *Sabrina* lived in a modest, typical suburban house with one ugly, (sometimes) green-skinned aunt/witch mentor, Hilda. Later on, a plump aunt, Zelda, was added, as was Uncle Ambrose, a warlock. Were these great character additions your ideas?

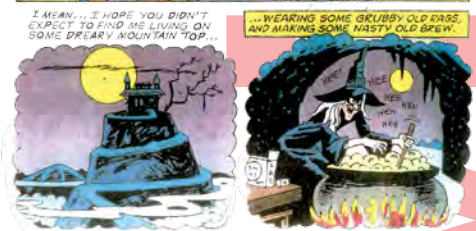
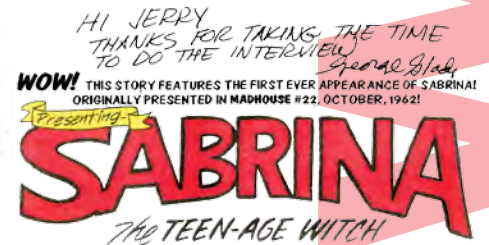
**GLADIR:** Hilda and Zelda as well as Salem [the cat] were all my creations. Uncle Ambrose was not.

**BOYD:** The Archie Show premiered in the fall of 1968 on Saturday morning on CBS-TV. It was a big hit! Was that a good time to be at the company? How did it impact the comics' creators?

**GLADIR:** 1968 was a nice year to be working at Archie... as were previous and subsequent years. I don't think the Archie TV show had much to do with it.

**BOYD:** Archie's Funhouse followed two seasons later. It was in the style on NBC-TV's wildly successful Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In. *Sabrina's* "family" moved to Riverdale and she became an extended member of the Archie gang. Did the decision to move her to Riverdale originate with the Filmation group or the Archie editors?

**GLADIR:** The decision to at first move Sabrina to Riverdale was probably made by Fred Silverman, the head of CBS children's programming. He was probably the first who recognized Sabrina could be adapted to other media.



## From the Boyd Archives

(top) Here's the first page from Sabrina's introduction story in *Archie's Mad House* #22, reprinted in *Mad House Annual* #3, and signed by Mr. Gladir, who was pleased with this interview. From the collection of Jerry Boyd.

(bottom) It all came together on this page from *Archie's TV Laugh-Out* #5 (Nov. 1970): the Archies celebrated their gold record for "Sugar, Sugar," Sabrina and family had moved to Riverdale, and Aunt Hilda was about to Bang-Shang-a-Lang those singing teens! Written by George Gladir, penciled by Bill Vigoda, inked by Chic Stone.

TM & © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.





(Cue music)  
Everything's Archie!  
Harvey's here,  
Vicki's here,  
And Chili is, too,  
Debbi's here,  
And here comes Binky,  
And Scooter, too!  
So, Everything's Arch—

# Everything's Archie™

## BRONZE AGE ARCHIE CLONES

by Steven Thompson

*Hey... wait a minute, gang! Those folks aren't the Archies! What's going on here?*

Well, there's a reason Archie Andrews was once known as the world's most popular teenager. Everyone wanted to be just like him. Even other comic-book teenagers and a few four-color 20-somethings!

Created as a humorous backup feature for MLJ's *Pep Comics* in late 1941, Archie Andrews became so popular so quickly in the World War II era that before long, the entire company had changed its name to Archie Comics and, with rare exception, stopped regularly publishing anything that wasn't at least in some way Archie-related.

This is, of course, similar to what had happened on a larger scale with DC's Superman just a few years earlier. After that character's unexpected mega-success in *Action Comics*, superhumans and mystery men were suddenly omnipresent in comic books. In a bizarre sort of immaculate conception, Superman begat everyone from Batman, Wonder Man, Wonder Woman, Captain America, and Bob Phantom to Kangaroo Man, Stardust, Phantom Lady, and Captain Flash.

After Archie hit big, the so-called "Mirth of the Nation" quickly began a long tradition of begetting clones of both sexes including Ginger, Suzie, Ezra, Howie, Chuck, Henry Brewster, Frankie, Dexter, Willie, Patsy Walker, Hap Hazard, Jeanie, Cindy, Georgie, Kathy, Rusty, Margie, Mitzi, Buzzy, Cookie, Jetta, Freddy, and Tippy Teen! Whew! And I'm serious when I say that's only a few of the Archiesque characters leading up to the Bronze Age!

There's no question that Stan Lee's Timely, a company that never saw a bandwagon it couldn't jump on, led the way in early Archie rip-offs. A lot of that company's teen titles of the 1940s and '50s were very well done, though, with likable characters, clever stories, and great art from the likes of Al Hartley, Stan Goldberg, and Dan DeCarlo, all of whom would later end up at Archie!

### MEET MILLIE

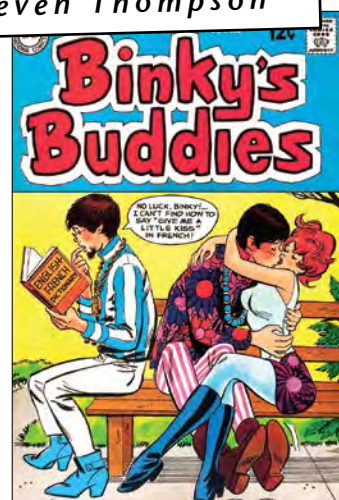
Perhaps it was this early success with teenage comics that led Stan to hang onto a handful of the characters such as Kathy ("The Teenage Tornado"), Millie the Model, Chili, Patsy Walker, and Hedy Wolfe well into Timely's Marvel era. *Kathy*, which Stan Goldberg told me in 2010 was his favorite comic to have worked on, stuck around until 1964.

The others had transformed into something more akin to romance comics with some soap opera mixed in. Patsy Walker ("The Girl Who Could Be You!") lost her own long-running title in '65, with *Patsy and Hedy* hanging on 'til the end of '66. Patsy and Hedy had even turned up at Reed and Sue's wedding in *Fantastic Four Annual* #3 (Oct. 1965), placing them squarely in the Marvel Universe, where Patsy would later be revived as Hellcat. [Editor's note: See *BACK ISSUE* #40 for Hellcat's story.]

Logically, it would seem there was no room for Millie the Model, herself perhaps inspired by Archie's fashion queen, Katy Keene, to keep hanging on at Marvel as things got increasingly cosmic... but then, in 1967, an odd thing happened. Millie and her friends got RE-Archiefied!

"Here's an announcement we never thought we'd make!" said an item in Marvel's Bullpen Bulletins. "We're gonna recommend that you take a peek at—of all things—the latest ish of *Millie the Model*! We've changed the mag around completely—new type of artwork and stories—and Honest to Aunt May, it's really kinda funny."

According to Roy Thomas, still relatively new at Marvel at that time, "Stan's idea... he wanted to see if he could make them sell. (And Millie had had a bit more of an Archie look years before.) They did sell for a while."

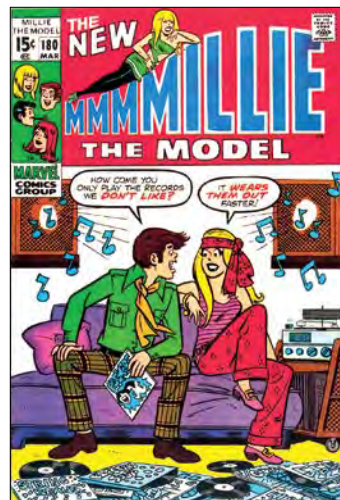


### Crisis on Earth-Riverdale

From the late Silver Age, a groovy quartet of DC's Archie doppelgangers: (top) *Binky* #63 (cover by Bob Oksner and Tex Blaisdell) and *Binky's Buddies* #1 (cover by Oksner), plus (bottom) *Date with Debbi* #1 (cover by Samm Schwartz), featuring its Archie-looking star, and *Swing with Scooter* #19 (cover by Henry Scarpelli).

TM & © DC Comics.





## Marvel's Model Citizens

The House of Ideas' longtime fashionista's Archie makeover! (top, left to right) The spinoff *Mad About Millie* #1 (Apr. 1969). The revamped *Millie the Model*, issue #180 (Mar. 1970). *Millie Annual* #12 (1975). (Note that the "Queen-Size" logo's font replicates Marvel's "Giant-Size" brand of the day.) The other Millie spinoff, *Chili*. Issue #13 (May 1970). All covers by Archie legend Stan Goldberg. (bottom) Familiar gags, albeit wonderfully drawn by Stan Goldberg, on the covers of Marvel's *Harvey* #1 (Oct. 1970) and 2 (Dec. 1970).

TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.



The other Stan, Stan G. (as he was called at Marvel), had stuck with Millie and friends through the years of more serious art and stories but told me that he was thrilled to go back to the cartoonier style.

As far as sales on the Milliverse titles, they sold well enough, in fact, for a second regular mag, *Mad About Millie* #1 (Apr. 1969), to come along, followed shortly thereafter by Millie's longtime redheaded rival finally getting her own title just a month later with *Chili* #1 (May 1969). There were also Queen-Size Specials!

Millie and her friends and beaux weren't teenagers, but they might as well have been. The new stories hit on the teenage tropes of jealousy, dates, dances, and cars. The new colorful fashions of the '60s and '70s were highlights of every issue. You could also find lots of long hair and references to rock music, protests, and the Generation Gap.

The new/old art style by Goldberg was close enough to Archie art that a casual reader would probably assume them to be put out by the same company. (According to Mark Evanier, writing on his blog, later stories signed by Sol Brodsky were still actually drawn by Goldberg who, at that point, didn't want his new regular employer—Archie—to know he was still moonlighting at Marvel.)

Most important of all, the stories and one-page gags, generally signed by Stan Lee himself, tended to be actually funny! No longer just "comics for your sister," boys were now reading *Millie* and *Chili* issues as well, myself included!

Millie Collins and Chili Storm work for a modeling agency, which gives them a valid excuse to wear outrageous fashions all the time. Millie's boyfriend is photographer Clicker and their boss is Mr. Hanover. Her other friends include Toni, Daisy, and Marvin (who vaguely resembles a slightly hipper Jughead).



ROY THOMAS

© Luigi Novi / Wikimedia Commons.

As if there remained any doubt that this was all an attempt to tap into Archie's lucrative teenage market, there were also a number of stories showing Millie's adventures as a teenager, where her freckles made her look like a combination of Betty and Archie himself!

## HERE'S HARVEY

While Millie and her pals and gals were still cavorting around, along came *Harvey*. *Harvey* was one of the most Archie-like books of the Bronze Age non-Archies. It was also, in its time, an almost completely ignored title, and now an almost completely forgotten one.

When asked if he remembered anything about *Harvey*, Roy Thomas recalls, "Nope, don't know anything about *Harvey*, except that it was Stan's idea and concept. I doubt if even he'd recall much about *Harvey* in particular now." *Harvey* came and went in a mere six issues spread out over slightly more than a two-year period.

The first two issues of *Harvey* arrived in late 1970 with no fanfare whatsoever and presumably no sales, so the series was almost immediately abandoned. Just two years later, though, during the period when corporate Marvel was seemingly doing everything it could to drive the competition out of business by flooding the newsstand with product, *Harvey* made his unlikely comeback. Amidst the dozens of pointless

reprints of mostly subpar 1950s strips, the returned *Harvey* stood out from the crowd with all-new material. After all, he hadn't been around long enough to have anything to reprint yet!

Harvey Hooper—but for his red hair looking more like Archie's own in-house double, "That Wilkin Boy"—debuted in *Harvey* #1 (Oct. 1970) as the hip, handsome new student at Midvale High in another story signed only by Stan Lee the way he used to do it back in the 1950s.





One teenage girl, powers beyond that of mortals, high school hijinks... nothing could ever go wrong with that combination, right? Sabrina the Teenage Witch has been a consistently entertaining character since her debut on the comics page well over 50 years ago. When considering her longevity, though, it's apparent that Sabrina isn't just a comic-book character. For most of her history, Sabrina has enjoyed plenty of success in various incarnations on the "small screen." With a new Netflix original TV series (show creator Robert Aguirre-Sacasa's *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, starring Kiernan Shipka) around the corner at this writing, what better time than now to see where Sabrina has been so far both on the page and screen?

### BEWITCHING BOW

In 1962, Archie Comics introduced a new character that brought an entirely different dimension to the publisher's lineup. Taking up a mere five pages in *Archie's Mad House* #22 (Oct. 1962), writer George Gladir and artist Dan DeCarlo brought readers up to speed on what life is like as a "modern witch." It's not all about "living on some dreary mountain top... wearing some grubby old rags, and making some nasty old brew." Rather than any of that imagery, Sabrina purports that "we modern witches believe life should be a ball!" In this short story, readers are also treated to brief introductions of two important supporting characters in the Sabrina mythos: Salem, Sabrina's cat familiar; and Della, her "head witch." [Editor's note: According to the Grand Comics Database ([comics.org](http://comics.org)), this prototypical Sabrina tale drew inspiration from the 1958 film adaptation of the play *Bell, Book and Candle*, starring Kim Novak, and Gladir named the teenage witch after a woman he knew during his adolescence, later recalling that her name was actually Sabra, not Sabrina. Incidentally, pop culture's other popular spellcaster, Elizabeth Montgomery as Samantha Stephens on the long-running ABC-TV sitcom *Bewitched*, first rode her broom in the fall of 1964, some two years after Sabrina's debut.]

The early Sabrina comics of the '60s were not exactly numerous. Sabrina appeared in just a scattered few short stories per year. Bits and pieces of Sabrina's character came together in tales relegated to *Archie's Mad House*, and while there might not have been a lot, it's obvious that Gladir and DeCarlo were dedicated to letting the spotlight shine on their latest character. It's quickly established that the teenage witch has a hard time staying "undercover," living with her Aunt Hilda (a witch much more in keeping with the stereotypes that Sabrina railed against in her debut story). Sabrina just can't help herself and constantly gets into trouble when magic spells go wrong.

Some huge things happened to change Sabrina's course as a character as the decade of the '70s drew closer. The character's footprint on the comics page became magnified when a new series called *Archie's TV Laugh-Out* was launched. In the first issue of the series (cover-dated Dec. 1969), a major character was added to Sabrina's cast in Harvey Kinkle (the teenage witch's most prominent paramour). By the second issue of *TV Laugh-Out*, Sabrina had been fully integrated into the Archie microcosm, even joining the Archies on stage for a performance! What prompted the publication of a new Archie series entitled *Archie's TV Laugh-Out*? The behind-the-scenes reality is that Archie and the gang had all turned into Saturday morning cartoon characters, and Sabrina was along for the ride!

# Sabrina<sup>TM</sup> the Teenage Witch

by Christopher Larochelle



### Magical Multi-Tasker

Miss Spellman's a jill-of-all-trades on this Dan DeCarlo/Rudy Lapick-drawn cover to the first issue of her own series, *Sabrina the Teenage (Teen-Age) Witch* #1 (Apr. 1971).

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## AS SEEN ON TV

As detailed in Andy Mangels' "Backstage Pass" article following, in 1968 animation house Filmation Studios had gotten to work on a new Saturday morning cartoon for CBS entitled *The Archie Show*. The ball was rolling, and the animation studio would keep reformatting, reusing, and rerunning Archie cartoons for the next decade. The second incarnation, *The Archie Comedy Hour*, began airing in 1969 and brought Sabrina the Teenage Witch directly to the forefront. Sabrina was a new student at Riverdale High, and her adventures bookended those of Archie and company in each hour. With the beginning of *The Archie Comedy Hour*, Sabrina became not only a character that readers of comic books could enjoy—it brought her to an even bigger audience of fans who were sitting in front of their television sets.

This bigger audience of TV viewers enjoyed both rebroadcasts and new episodes of the *Sabrina* cartoon as Filmation and CBS tried different formats. Following *The Archie Comedy Hour*, 1970 saw the debut of *Sabrina and the Groovie Goolies*, a show that brought new characters to the mix. Aired alongside *Sabrina* reruns from the previous show, *The Groovie Goolies* regaled audiences with the adventures of several of Sabrina's friends. Drac (a Dracula stand-in, of course), Frankie (as in Frankenstein's monster), and Wolfie (a wolfman) were joined by plenty of other monsters. *The Groovie Goolies* show featured plenty of jokes, riddles, and musical numbers, but never seemed to garner the success that would be required to push the series past its initial run of 16 episodes (though in 1971 CBS did rebroadcast the episodes without the "backing support" of Sabrina's name on the title).

Returning to the Filmation *Sabrina* cartoons, 1971–1974 saw *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* broadcast on a regular schedule. Not surprisingly, this version of the Filmation cartoons included both reruns and new episodes to keep things fresh.

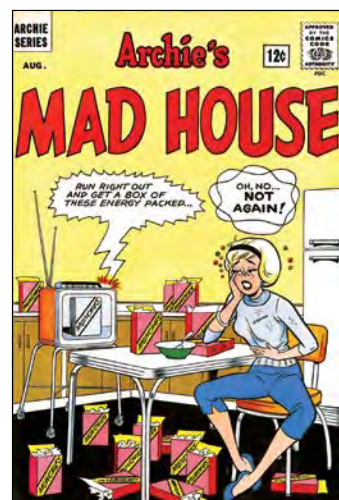
By this time, Sabrina had been on TV for five straight years. It was time for a break—one that would last for a few years. In 1977, *The New Archie and Sabrina Hour* debuted (notice the co-headlining credit there!), and while the *Archie* segments were reruns, *Sabrina* segments were all-new episodes. Filmation had experimented with formats and lengths in many ways throughout their years of producing *Archie* cartoons, and the hour-long format didn't seem to work as well as the studio might have hoped. After 12 episodes were broadcast, *The New Archie and Sabrina Hour* folded before 1978 arrived.

## SABRINA THE SOLO STAR

The editors at Archie Comics realized that Sabrina's success on the small screen meant that they had another tentpole character in their lineup. *Sabrina the Teen-Age Witch* #1 arrived with a cover date of April 1971 and served as Sabrina's home on the comics page throughout the '70s, ending in 1983 after 77 issues. The cover art for *Sabrina* #1 really does say a lot: Sabrina has now taken center stage as she lounges on a couch. Archie Andrews himself is performing a song on a hovering TV screen as the witch uses her magic powers to do several different things simultaneously. Algebra homework is getting finished, a history report is spitting out of a typewriter, and Sabrina is drinking from a straw (all hands-free!). "You know, Salem," Sabrina says to her puzzled cat familiar, "there are times I really dig being a teen-age witch!" With this Dan DeCarlo masterpiece, the tone for the entire series was set. While paying homage to his first illustration of Sabrina from *Archie's Mad House*, the cover of *Sabrina* #1 more clearly asserts the young witch as the star of her own show... she's a plucky kid who will push the limits of her powers and have to deal with the consequences thereof.

*Sabrina* #1 wastes no time in making it perfectly clear that there is a new person in town to interact with Archie and the gang. Sabrina talks to Ethel and notices Harvey, now officially known as her boyfriend, walking into the Chok'lit Shoppe with another girl. Naturally, this peeves Sabrina and she decides to make Harvey jealous by casting a love hex on none other than Archie Andrews. Archie is suddenly magnetized to her. Archie fawning over Sabrina at the Chok'lit Shoppe doesn't immediately have the intended effect, however. Before Harvey notices a thing, Veronica Lodge

intercepts... and proceeds to chew out Archie for his diverted attention! Things just aren't going well for Sabrina, and the situation gets worse when Harvey comes by to explain himself. It turns out that Sabrina never had a thing to worry about, since the "new girl" is actually Harvey's cousin. This first story in the *Teenage Witch*'s first solo title would provide a thematic blueprint for many *Sabrina* tales that followed over the course of 77 issues. With 77 issues full of short comics stories, it would be impossible to discuss them all. Within these many stories, the wide-ranging cast of characters took turns in the spotlight.



## Winsome Witches, Before and After Sabrina

(top) Kim Novak enchanted moviegoers in the 1958 film comedy *Bell, Book and Candle*. Autographed lobby card courtesy of Heritage ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)). (bottom left) Elizabeth Montgomery starred in the long-running TV sitcom *Bewitched*—as well as this comic-book adaptation published by Dell Comics. (bottom right) Sabrina's first cover appearance: *Archie's Mad House* #27 (Aug. 1963)—but curiously, the teenage witch doesn't appear inside this issue!

*Bell, Book and Candle* © 1958 Columbia Pictures. *Bewitched* © Sony Pictures. TM & © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.



~~SEX, DRUGS, AND ROCK & ROLL~~

# Awkward Dancing, Sugar, Sugar, and Bubblegum Pop



by **Andy Mangels**



**He was America's favorite teenager.** Created in *Pep Comics* #22 (Dec. 1941) by publisher John Goldwater, artist Bob Montana, and writer Vic Bloom, redheaded Archie Andrews was the high schooler who could never choose between two gorgeous girls: blonde Betty Cooper or brunette Veronica Lodge. Along with best friend Jughead Jones and rival Reggie Mantle, the teens attended Riverdale High in a tremendously popular line of comic books that sold millions of copies.

Today, Archie is again a star in the CW's hit series *Riverdale*, a strange mixture of *Dawson's Creek* and *Twin Peaks*, with murders, incest, mob bosses, biker gangs, drugs, and beheaded statues, all with a sprinkling of pop music thrown in at the top. But even with all of its televised success, *Riverdale* has not yet achieved the kind of pop-culture prominence that Archie Andrews' first musically inclined incarnation did 50 years prior...

On September 14, 1968, the Archie Comics empire was given a seismic jolt into the contemporary scene when Filmation Studios' *The Archie Show* debuted on Saturday morning television. The CBS animated series soon became one of the highest-rated TV shows on the air, with its combination of comedy, teenage characters, music, and dancing. Music producer Don Kirshner created the musical sound of the Archies, utilizing singer Ron Dante, backed by Toni Wine. *The Archie Show* and its fictional band the Archies were soon everywhere—in magazines, comic books, toys, and even on cereal boxes!

*The Archie Show* would eventually lead to eight different animated series, as well as spin-offs such as *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* and *Groovie Goolies*, and gold records by the score! But how did an animated series based on a teen comic book become one of the highest-rated TV shows on the planet? How did the Archies sell millions of records? And what was the deal with groovy dances like "The Weatherbee" and "The Hamburger"? Let's find out as we return to the adventures of Hot Dog, the Chok'Lit Shoppe, bubblegum pop music, and all the fun at Riverdale High!

## STRIKING A CHORD

From the beginning, the Archie line embraced all the tropes of teenagers, but teenagers in the 1940s and 1950s were changing faster than culture could imagine. As technology rocketed forward, cars, fashion, entertainment, and music evolved to embrace youth and their ever-more rebellious attitude. Teens joined the workforce earlier, bought cars earlier, and chose their own styles of music and dance... no matter what the "square" adults thought.

Although the Archie comics attempted some diversity in storytelling tone—including a kid's version with *Little Archie*, a superhero version with Captain Pureheart, and a spy version with "The Man From R.I.V.E.R.D.A.L.E."—as popular music became more and more a part of the teenage experience, the Archie crew tried to find a way to incorporate it, even if the static elements of the comic page made it difficult to convey the actual sound of music. The teens listened

## Rockin' from Riverdale

Under the direction of Hot Dog, Filmation's Archies, Saturday morning superstars.

TM & © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.



## FILMATION ORIGINS

Founded in the early 1960s by Lou Scheimer, Norm Prescott, and Hal Sutherland, Filmation Associates was a scrappy young company that was changing the face of the nascent Saturday morning culture only a few years after they had broken out of studio animation jobs and formed their own company. Scheimer and Sutherland were both animators who had put in a few years in the trenches at Warner Bros., Hanna-Barbera, and Paramount. It was there that Scheimer met Prescott, who was looking to put together an animation crew for a sequel to *The Wizard of Oz*, for which he had assembled a star voice cast (a plan unheard of in animation at the time). Prescott had no animation background; he had been a popular syndicated radio disc jockey before moving onto music, merchandising, and post-production with Embassy Pictures.

In 1965, Filmation had bluffed their way into getting the job to animate and produce *The New Adventures of Superman* for National Periodical Publications—now known as DC Comics—for a CBS Saturday morning series. That show featured two *Superman* segments and a *Superboy* adventure; Filmation hired mostly radio actors to voice the characters, including previous *Archie* actor Bob Hastings, who played Superboy. When *Superman* was a massive success, Filmation began to expand into other animated fare for the new Saturday morning market.

Scheimer understood the value of “known” properties, and he and Prescott approached movie studios looking for properties that could be turned into new cartoon shows. A second National/DC series, *Aquaman*, expanded and was paired with the Kryptonian hero for *The Superman/Aquaman Hour of Adventure* in 1967, and *Journey to the Center of the Earth* debuted as well. Then, another comic-book inspiration struck.

“The concept was brought to us by Irv Wilson, who was our agent at the time,” said Scheimer in my interviews with him for the 2012 TwoMorrrows book, *Lou Scheimer: Creating The Filmation Generation*. “Irv had approached John Goldwater, who was one of the guys running Archie Comics, about licensing his books out for a TV show. Irv called me and said, ‘Do you want the rights to *Archie*?’ And I said, ‘What the hell is *Archie*? Is it something kids know?’ I had never seen the comic book, even though it had been around since 1942. I didn’t read comic books that kids were reading then, which was a mistake, and I didn’t know how successful a book it really was. He said, ‘Oh, God, Lou, every kid in the country knows what it is.’”

“I think I flew out to meet with John Goldwater, who was a very nice man. We made a deal, and it was a very legit deal. We both owned 50 percent of whatever shows we produced. We actually owned the negatives for the film as I recall. And it was an easy show to sell. The show existed in a way already; the comic book was there, the characters were there. So we presented it to [CBS programming executive] Freddie Silverman with a stack of comic books. It was the cheapest presentation we ever made and probably one of the most successful shows we ever produced. The reason I knew it was going to be successful was that Silverman started laughing and clapping, and he never did that at anything. This really hit him right where he understood it; he knew what would happen with those characters, and how they could be used.”

The Saturday morning scene, as Scheimer recalled, was “polluted with adventure shows, and there was nothing like *Archie* on the air. And then we got the idea to make music an integral part of the show.



That was not being done for children’s shows; it became the first time that a children’s show had a group created for them! The Beatles had been adapted, but it wasn’t something new; it was just taking their already existing music and using it.”

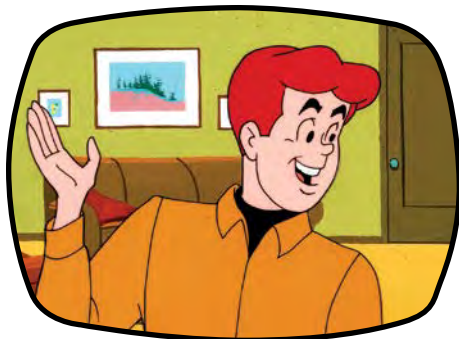
At about the same time in Spring 1967 that the Archies were introduced as a singing group in the comics—about six months before Filmation was offered the franchise to develop—music producer Don Kirshner was breaking up with the recording group he had been instrumental in turning into a hit: the Monkees. Filmation’s Norm Prescott saw an opportunity, and called Kirshner. If he wanted to create the musical success of the Monkees again, he could do it, free of them, Columbia Records... or even *real people*!

The new CBS series was titled *The Archie Show*. The series was developed to have two eight-minute stories, a three-minute musical segment, and other “how to dance” or short joke segments. The musical segment would feature the Archies as a band, singing a pop song. Because that music wasn’t specific to any of the plots, Kirshner and his team could work on their own, independent of the animation or storytelling process. And they wouldn’t have to deal with visibly recognizable singers whose success might go to their heads.

### Filmation’s Founders

(top) (left to right) Norm Prescott, Hal Sutherland, and Lou Scheimer in the 1960s. (bottom) The company’s logo, inside its office. Both courtesy of Andy Mangels, whose Scheimer bio [above] is now in its second printing.





## Archie's Here

From animation cels culled from the archives of Heritage, some of Archie's pals 'n' gals, as seen in Filmation cartoons.

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HOT DOG

© Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

## COME ON LET'S GO WITH THE ARCHIE SHOW!

Unlike the National/DC shows, Filmation didn't use any of the writers who actually worked on the *Archie* comics. Scheimer instead hired comedy writers for the series, many of whom had worked for radio or television comedy or variety shows. "For the most part, we took everything directly from the comics," recalled Scheimer. "The characters were warm, soft, and friendly, and kids could relate to them. We had Archie Andrews, his buddy Jughead Jones, his rival Reggie Mantle, and the two lovely girls that Archie and Reggie were after, Betty Cooper and Veronica Lodge. And then there were their various parents and teachers at Riverdale High."

One significant change for the series was the creation of Hot Dog, a sheepdog who was Archie and Jughead's pet. "He literally became the voice of the characters upon occasion because you could hear him speaking through what he was thinking," said Scheimer. "It gave us a vehicle to talk about the kids and the show. He would talk to the audience, straight into the camera, breaking the 'fourth wall' with the viewers. And also it gave us an animal, which was sort of a nice thing to animate." Unlike other companies, Filmation hadn't done a lot of animals in their cartoons, but Hot Dog was a fun exception. Archie comics, in turn, introduced the character in *Pep Comics* #224 (Dec. 1968).

For the series' voice cast, Filmation tried to find the radio voices from the series, but was unable to find them; for some reason, even Bob Hastings, who had worked with Filmation, was unavailable. Scheimer and Prescott instead cast character actors from television. Archie and Hot Dog were played by Dallas McKennon, a scruffy, wild-bearded 49-year-old who had previously been the voice of Gummy. Hanna-Barbera regular Howard "Howie" Morris was Jughead, whom Scheimer considered to be the real star of the show. "Archie was always the good soul, doing things right, keeping people happy, and falling in love with two girls at the same time. But Jughead provided all the fun. He did everything wrong, and somehow he came out right all the time."

Filmation veteran Jane Webb handled both Betty and Veronica. Having started in radio as a teenager, Webb had done voices for the radio show *Tom Mix*,

which Scheimer had listened to growing up! John Erwin, who would later voice Filmation's biggest hit character He-Man, took his first job for the company with Reggie. Scheimer noted that Erwin was "very, very bashful. John was extraordinary, and he created a character for Reggie Mantle that you couldn't create just by drawing."

Filmation made a decision to add one more element to its show that was unusual: a laugh track. "It was the first Saturday morning show to use a laugh track," said Scheimer. "Why did we use a laugh track? Because it made the audience want to laugh with all the other people who were watching, and they felt like part of the show, more than just observers."

As for the tone of the show, Scheimer said that "we had a show that was really unlike anything else airing for kids. Most shows were really aimed at 12 and under, and there was nothing for young teenagers. Nobody was doing shows about dancing and singing and dating and high school and problems that youth have, and it was about time to do a show that could be appreciated by an older group of young people. The *Archie* cast were teenagers and wanted to do the things teenagers wanted to do, and they cared about love and money and food and fun. And they all liked music...."

## PUTTING THE BAND TOGETHER

While Scheimer worried about producing the animation, Norm Prescott worked with Don Kirshner on the songs. "When it came to the songs, we'd tell Kirshner what we wanted to do, what the attitude should be, and what kind of stories we were doing, and then he would produce the songs and deliver them to us whole," Scheimer said. As noted, the show needed three-minute catchy pop songs, as well as brief segments that would teach kids to dance. Scheimer recalled that the music scenes were "kind of like early music videos. We'd show the Archies playing their guitars and drums and singing, and there would be groovy effects behind them. We also taught a 'Dance of the Week' which were some very weird dances put together by a bunch of animators who were not teenagers... and probably not *dancers* either."

Kirshner worked with several songwriters—some of whom had worked with the Monkees—including Jeff



# WHO WAS That Wilkin Boy?

FlashBack!

Archie Comics' *That Wilkin Boy* ran for 52 issues, from 1969–1982. According to Jeff Branch's long-defunct fanzine *Riverdale Ramblings*, *That Wilkin Boy* was an offshoot or sequel series to *Wilbur*, which was published by Archie for 90 issues from Summer 1944 through October 1965 (cover dates). Even though the character of Wilbur seems derivative of Archie Andrews, *Wilbur* actually made its debut before Archie by first appearing in *Zip Comics* #18 (Sept. 1941)—a full three months before Archie's first appearance in *Pep Comics* #22 (Dec. 1941)—in a story entitled "Meet Wilbur," written by Harvey Willard and drawn by Lin Streeter.

Wilbur Wilkin is either the same character or is related to him. It has never been officially explained, although Bingo Wilkin's real first name in *That Wilkin Boy* is actually Woodrow. When *That Wilkin Boy* debuted in January 1969 (cover date), it seemed that the series was artist Dan DeCarlo's creation, but actually it was derivative of *Wilbur*. For the first 12 issues, the stories were solely drawn by DeCarlo.

DeCarlo (1919–2001) was the longtime Archie cartoonist who developed the "look" of Archie Comics with a style that lasted from the 1950s until 2015, when the line was revamped to a more realistic look. The DeCarlo style still regularly appears in Archie digests and in a modern series entitled *Your Pal Archie*, drawn by Dan Parent and written and inked by Ty Templeton.

Archie Comics editor-in-chief Victor Gorelick confirms the idea that Bingo was derived from Wilbur Wilkin. "The publisher wanted to revive one of our oldest characters, Wilbur," Gorelick says. "The idea was to hopefully interest Hollywood into producing another animated series for TV. Included in the storyline was a band called the Binges [That Wilkin Boy's first name was now Bingo]. Bingo's girlfriend, Samantha, has a father who's not too fond of Bingo. In fact, her father was sort of a toned-down Archie Bunker."

Gorelick has worked for Archie Comic Publications, Inc. for over 50 years in a wide variety of roles. After studying at the School of Industrial Arts, Gorelick joined Archie Comics at age 16 in 1958. He began in the publisher's art department, making corrections and learning how to color and ink. He eventually served as a production coordinator, art director, and now, editor-in-chief. He was honored with an Inkpot Award at the San Diego Comic-Con in 2008.

Regarding *That Wilkin Boy*'s roots, Dan Parent agrees with Gorelick: "I was told several times that the *That Wilkin Boy* series was a reboot of *Wilbur*."

## THAT WILKIN CAST

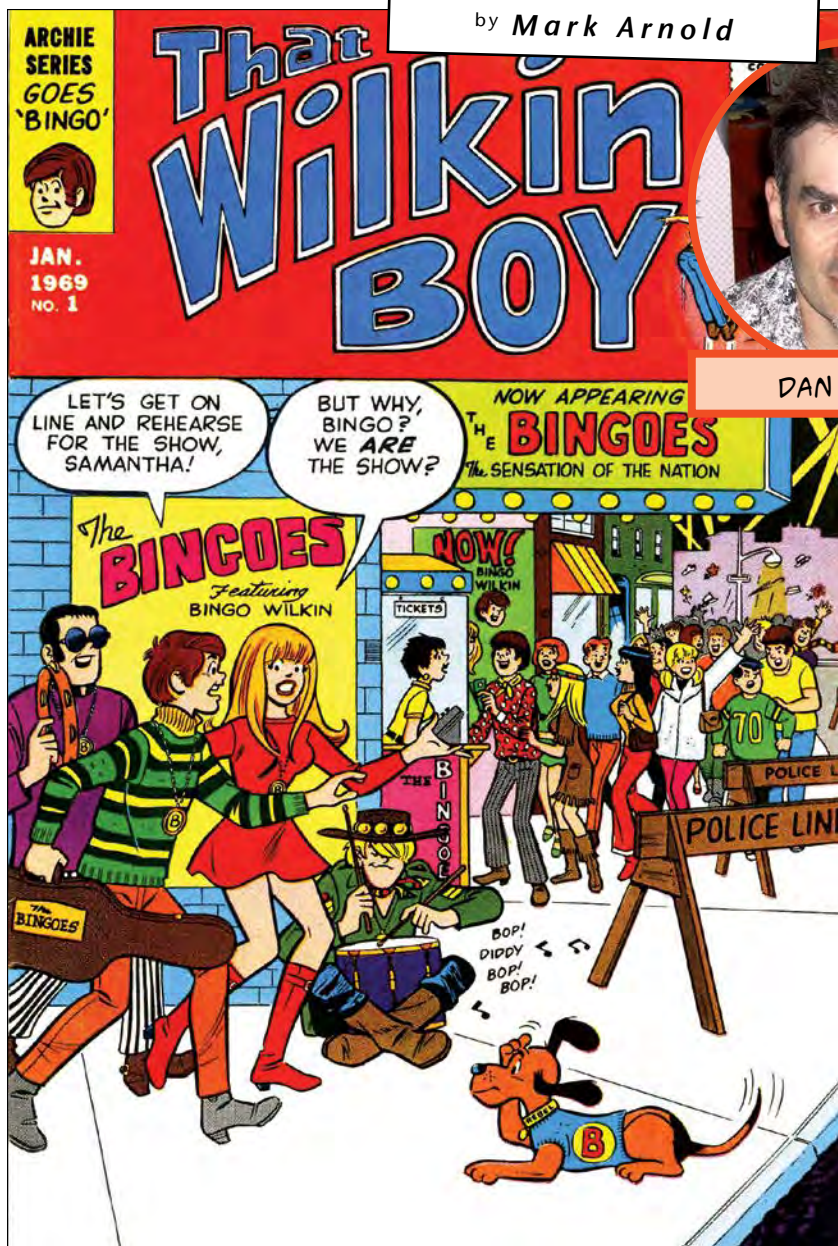
With Dan DeCarlo in charge, these characters premiered and were developed:

Bingo Wilkin, the star of the comic and of his own rock band, the Binges (similar to the Archies). He is obviously (as Wilbur became) patterned after Archie. Like Archie, he is clumsy and raises the temper of his girlfriend's father.

Gorelick confirms the initial setup: "Dan was the artist and Frank Doyle wrote the stories in the beginning. Later on, other writers and artists worked on the book."

Unlike Archie, Bingo only has one girlfriend, Samantha Smythe. Her father—Sampson Smythe—is a bodybuilder and is not very fond of Bingo, or Bingo's father, Willie Wilkin. Willie, in turn, is not very fond of Sampson and gets irritated that Sampson insists upon calling him Wilkins, with an "s." Both Sampson and Willie are married to Sheila and Wilma, respectively.

by Mark Arnold



DAN PARENT

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## And Bingo Was His Name-O

The Dan DeCarlo/Rudy Lapick cover to *That Wilkin Boy* #1 (Jan. 1969), premiering the book's cast (left to right): Teddy Tambourine, Bingo Wilkin, Samantha Smythe, Buddy Drumhead, and Rebel. Look closely and you'll spot a few other Archie-ites.

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compiled by **Jerry Boyd**

# Riverdale RARITIES

*I couldn't let this wonderful chance at getting as much Archie material as I could gather go by! Michael Eury (BI's resident Mr. Weatherbee) was nice enough to let me take over Rough Stuff for this issue. Special thanks to Bill Morrison, Greg Beda, and Mark Arnold for their help with this and other items for this special Archie issue of BI!*

All characters TM & © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

From the collection of *MAD* Magazine executive editor Bill Morrison, two pencil etchings by the great Dan DeCarlo: (inset) Archie's torn between Betty and Veronica (good thing Cheryl Blossom's not around). (right) The argument's settled, at least for now! Archie shares a super-milkshake with his two favorite girls.







Longtime industry veteran Mark Wheatley vividly recalls a meeting years ago with legendary comic creator Gray Morrow. Morrow was, of course, a phenomenal artist, but he was also a passionate fan. His walls were filled with his original art. One page stood out. Wheatley, who has worked as an artist, editor, and publisher, recognized this as a page from the short-lived '70s comic series helmed by Morrow, *Red Circle Sorcery*.

Morrow smiled and explained to Wheatley that he really loved that project because he was able to work with his friends. It didn't hurt that so many of his friends were the top artists in the industry.

He wasn't the only one who felt that way. "I loved the Red Circle revival in the 1970s," says J. David Spurlock, Vanguard publisher. "A lot of great work was done by Gray Morrow, Vincente Alcazar... surprise visits by Wally Wood, Steranko, Alex Toth, Doug Wildey, Neal Adams, etc. Just the kind of party that comics lovers relish."

The story of Red Circle's *Sorcery* line of comics is many things—a publisher's attempt at diversification, a bold effort at updating a well-worn genre, and a quintessential example of '70s comics at a crossroads. Like a teenager, this series was awkwardly striving to grow up and be recognized for casting aside childish ways. Red Circle *Sorcery* comics are an example of creators, at the top of their games, getting together and creating something, albeit fleeing, that was both impressive and memorable.

## ARCHIE GROWS UP

Archie Comics, originally known as MLJ Comics, has a long history of producing one particular genre of comic books really well, and always trying something new. Victor Gorelick is currently Archie Comics' co-president/editor-in-chief, but was there in the early '70s when the decision was made to launch a new line of comics that would focus on genres beyond teen humor. In retrospect, the launch plans for this Red Circle line were very simple. "The company was looking to become more diverse and expand our readership," Gorelick recalls.

Gorelick would soon recruit Gray Morrow to run the show. But before all that, it's important to understand the real beginning of the Red Circle *Sorcery* line, with what was essentially a two-issue false start.

## YOUR HOST, SABRINA

*Chilling Adventures in Sorcery as Told by Sabrina* #1 is kind of like a child "playing house." This 1972 comic lays the foundation for what would become the Red Circle *Sorcery* line, but there's a naivety and simpleness that may make older readers smile and nod patronizingly. All the traditional horror tropes are clearly exhibited on the cover: a moonlight scene, a creepy, brutish monster, a nebulous spirit and even a spooky narrator. But each element is scrubbed and sanitized for an all-ages audience.

"They didn't want to do something that would scare our readers away!" explains Gorelick. "They were horror stories but they were kind of low-key as far as the horror went. It wasn't with people biting heads off or killing or anything like that, nothing like what Warren was doing at that time."

Archie Comics' cute teenage witch, Sabrina, was enlisted as narrator, introducing each tale. Horror hosts had been a staple of ghost stories on radio and TV,

# RED CIRCLE SORCERY

by Ed Catto



## Sophisticated Suspense

Once "Demonic Delineator" Gray Morrow took over the formerly Sabrina-hosted *Chilling Adventures in Sorcery* with issue #3 (Oct. 1973), many of the field's top talents followed him. Cover art by Morrow.

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# RED CIRCLE *Superheroes*

by *Steven Wilber*



LOU MANNA

In the early '80s, the comic-book business was beginning to boom with the inception of direct-market sales, and it seemed everyone was taking notice. While well-known publishers Marvel and DC were riding high, new, smaller independent publishers began to crop up and create their own corners within the market.

Longtime publisher Archie Comics, known for its humor and teen titles, was no different. Archie editor Richard Goldwater decided to revive the company's line of "MLJ Superheroes," created in the 1940s and revived in the 1960s, which had proven to be popular nearly two decades before. Aside from a couple of one-shots in the late '70s—*Archie's Super Hero Special* (Jan. 1979) and *Archie's Super Hero Comic Digest Magazine* (Aug. 1979)—these characters hadn't been seen by audiences for some time.

Artist Lou Manna played a role in helping Archie Comics find its helmsman for its new imprint. "I had known Rich Buckler and helped him get an apartment in Staten Island," Manna tells *BACK ISSUE*. "I wasn't responsible for Rich getting the job, but I was responsible for recommending him to John [Carbonaro], who recommended him to Goldwater." With the assistance of John Carbonaro, who had brokered a deal with Archie beforehand to distribute his own JC Comics, Goldwater was able to lure popular artist Buckler, known for his extensive DC and Marvel work, to help reinvent characters like the Shield and the Fly for modern-day audiences. Buckler was a fan of the Archie-owned heroes, and was soon named managing editor of the new Red Circle Comics (RCC), Archie's new superhero imprint that reused the name of the publisher's former horror-comics brand (covered in the preceding article).

## RED CIRCLE'S SUPER-TEAM

Buckler himself would write, draw, and edit the first few issues of Red Circle's *The Mighty Crusaders*, which reunited the Shield, the Fly, Fly-Girl, Jaguar, and more. [Editor's note: In one of his final interviews, Rich Buckler (1949–2017) shared his recollections of overseeing *The Mighty Crusaders* revival in *BACK ISSUE* #94.] Remaining in MLJ continuity, these heroes had continued their own solo exploits since the '60s, but the team itself had separated some time ago. It would take a global threat to bring them together.

*The Mighty Crusaders* #1 (Mar. 1983) heralded the first strike of Eterno, ruler of risen Atlantis, and his would-be ally, the Brain Emperor, another former foe of the Crusaders. With an army of human-manned giant robots and mentally controlled clones of other MLJ heroes, Eterno nearly succeeded in destroying the Crusaders by the third issue. But undermined by the Emperor, who had his own plans for his enemies, and the timely intervention of new hero, Darkling—plus a second Shield, and the resurrection of a revitalized Comet (*phew!*)—Eterno was banished to the sun by the end of the first story arc. Their teamwork cemented, the Crusaders dedicated themselves to continue working as a unit.

*The Mighty Crusaders* moved ahead, and solo series emerged for various members. Red Circle's creative lineup grew as Buckler enlisted some of comicdom's finest talents. Rich Buckler said in *The MLJ Companion* (TwoMorrows Publishing, 2016), "My editorial approach was first to generate ideas, and then find the right writer and artist team for each book."

## Circle of Crusaders

Four from the Big '80s: (top) *Mighty Crusaders* #5 (Jaguar cover by Rich Buckler and Tony DeZuniga) and *The Fly* #2 (cover by Jim Steranko), plus (bottom) *Blue Ribbon Comics* #6 (Fox cover by Buckler and Rudy Nebres) and *The Original Shield* #1 (cover by Nebres).

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# Not a Third Wheel After All

**FlashBack!**

The  
Saga  
of

## Cheryl Blossom

by Jerry Smith

One day, a beautiful redhead with fire in her soul arrived in Riverdale on a mission to shake up the Archie Universe. She stayed. Meaner than Betty, more manipulative than Veronica, Cheryl Blossom is a wealthy and headstrong girl who liked Archie well enough, but had a way of letting her contemporaries know clearly and directly that she was a higher-quality person. One who always got her way. Who's going to tell her she can't have it? You?

### CHERYL BLOSSOMS

Sexy Cheryl (along with her twin brother Jason) made her debut in *Archie's Girls Betty and Veronica* #320. Cover-dated October 1982, the book was released in July of that year. From her first appearance it was clear that Cheryl knew how to make an entrance. In the story, Cheryl Blossom shocks Betty and Veronica, and everyone else on the beach, by showing up in a bikini that leaves little to the imagination. Cheryl then attempts to go topless, "like people do on European beaches." Meanwhile, Cheryl's brother Jason tries to smuggle a beer onto the beach. "To be honest with you, she was going a little too far in the books," says Archie co-president Victor Gorelick. Gorelick was editor-in-chief when Cheryl was created, and has guided her appearances for many years. "Nowadays it wouldn't really matter. I don't think we ever got any complaints from the Comics Code Authority, but we decided to scale



According to some long-overlooked Her debut story by Stan Goldberg and George Gladir and Doyle and Dan DeCarlo, and the Pussycat who helped set the scene. Regarding Cheryl and her very flirtatious twin brother Jason, Doyle and Veronica, Doyle and

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### BACK ISSUE #107

ARCHIE COMICS IN THE BRONZE AGE! STAN GOLDBERG and GEORGE GLADIR interviews, Archie knock-offs, Archie on TV, histories of Sabrina, That Wilkin Boy, Cheryl Blossom, and Red Circle Comics. With JACK ABEL, JON D'AGOSTINO, DAN DeCARLO, FRANK DOYLE, GRAY MORROW, DAN PARENT, HENRY SCARPELLI, ALEX SEGURA, LOU SCHEIMER, ALEX TOTH, and more! DAN DeCARLO cover.

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