

COMICS' BRONZE AGE AND BEYOND!

# BACK ISSUE!



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DAILY PLANE

BIZARRO  
#1

## SUPERMAN IN THE BRONZE AGE!

JULIUS SCHWARTZ SUPERMAN DYNASTY • PRIVATE LIFE OF CURT SWAN • SUPERMAN FAMILY • EARTH-TWO SUPERMAN • WORLD OF KRYPTON • MAN OF TOMORROW • ATOMIC SKULL & more!



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# SUPERMAN

## IN THE BRONZE AGE!

**SUPERMAN** created by **JERRY SIEGEL** and **JOE SHUSTER**

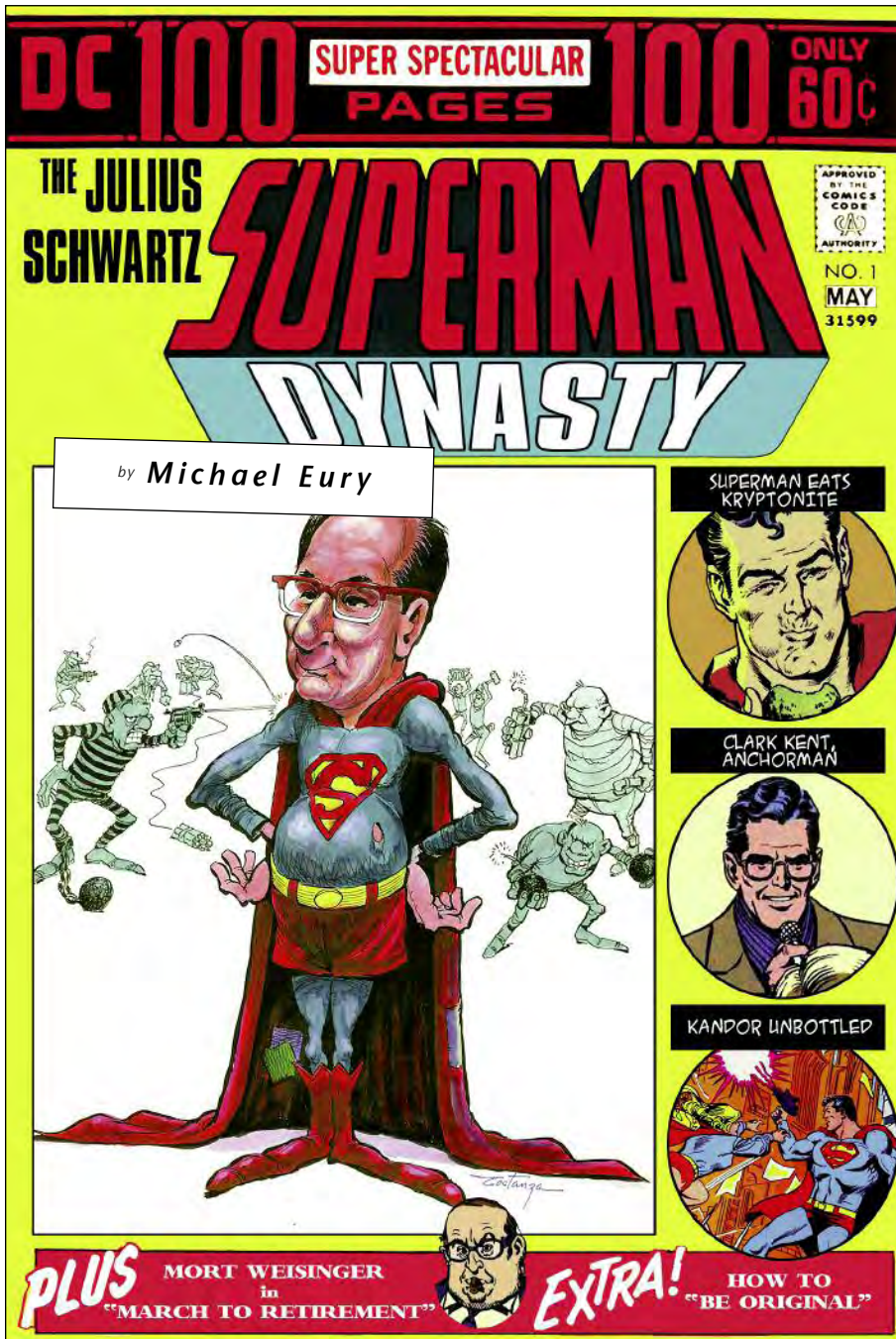
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The backside of the 1986 Superman double-sided poster, drawn by José Luis García-López and Dick Giordano. TM & © DC Comics.



It's easy to consider the Bronze Age of Comics to be the Julius Schwartz Age of Superman.

After all, DC Comics' celebrated editor controlled the Man of Steel's franchise through most of the 1970s and through half of the 1980s, up until the 1986 Superman reboot engineered by writer/artist John Byrne.

But you might not be aware that "Julie" Schwartz eased his way into that distinction, and that despite his lauded and deserved reputation, he wasn't responsible for all of the innovations sometimes attributed to him.

#### THE BRONZE AGE'S OTHER SUPER-EDITORS

Preceding Schwartz as the man behind the Man of Steel was editor Mort Weisinger, who had steered the Superman family's stories through the entirety of the Silver Age. In the 1960s, Weisinger's golden touch made *Superman* DC Comics' bestseller (except during the TV-inspired Batmania of the mid-'60s).

But as the decade was winding down, so was Mort, by some accounts marking time until his retirement. According to DC historian and frequent *BACK ISSUE* contributor John Wells, "As I understand it, Mort was very tired of the grind by the time he left. Even the art looked tired," a contention bolstered by the mismatched George Roussos inking Curt Swan on Weisinger's later *Action Comics* and *Superman* issues and Win Mortimer's unexciting pencils on the Legion of Super-Heroes' final stories in *Adventure Comics*.

Mort Weisinger retired in 1970 (although he was "im-Mort-alized" in Schwartz's Superman comics as a bust in Clark Kent's apartment which Clark would greet with an "Evening, Morty!" each night after work), and DC's flagship crimefighter's Super-titles were assigned not solely to Julie Schwartz but instead to a variety of editors.

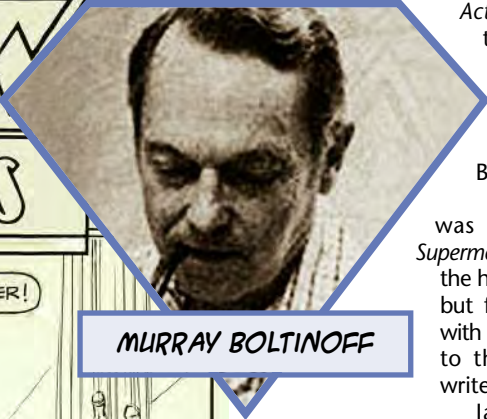
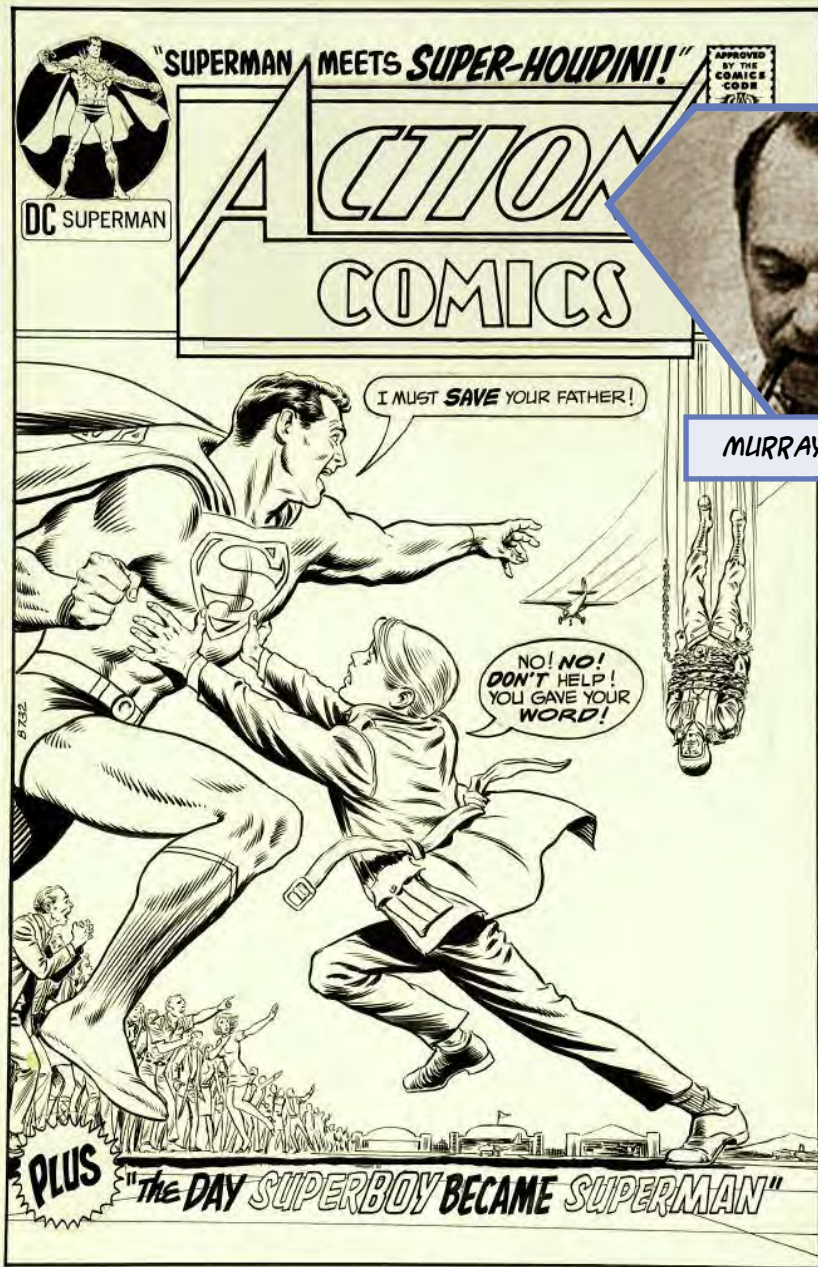
Super-editor #1 was Murray Boltinoff, that DC stalwart who was more reliable than the morning F train. He inherited *Action Comics* with #393 (Oct. 1970). With routine stories like that issue's "Superman Meets Super-Houdini," penned by Leo Dorfman, a carryover from Mort's stable of creators, one might assume that Boltinoff was merely mopping up inventoried scripts left behind by Weisinger. That was not the case. "Murray started fresh, assigning virtually every script to Leo Dorfman (who also used his 'Geoff Brown' pseudonym)," says Wells, who emphasizes that Boltinoff made a major contribution to the Superman titles: crystalizing the "Swanderson" art team. It was Mort who first paired penciler Curt Swan with inker Murphy Anderson, on a trio of Superman family covers released in late July 1969: *World's Finest Comics* #187, *Action Comics* #380, and *Adventure Comics* #384 (starring Supergirl), all cover-dated Sept. 1969. But it was Murray Boltinoff who reinvigorated *Action's* interiors by dumping Roussos and hiring Anderson to delineate Swan, thereby becoming the first editor to employ the Swanderson team *inside* the comics. (The editor would later further distinguish himself on *Action* through its back-ups, including untold tales from Clark Kent's past and a Metamorpho, the Element Man feature, the latter of which we'll examine in *BI* #64, our "Back-up Series" issue.)

Some two years before Weisinger's retirement, Boltinoff had already been fishing in Super-waters by assuming the editorship of *Superboy* with issue #149 (July 1968)—a series that, too, featured an occasional Swan/Anderson cover. While *Action* eventually landed with Julie with #419, Murray remained the *Superboy*

### Sixteen Years of Superman

We couldn't resist creating this tribute cover to Julius Schwartz, concocted and art directed by ye ed and assembled by designer Rich Fowlks! It cannibalizes the cover to *Superman Family* #164 and various Schwartz-edited Superman images. The main art of Super-Julie is by John Costanza, from a birthday card drawn in the early 1970s (courtesy of Heritage). The Mort Weisinger caricature at the bottom was done by Wayne Boring in 1973.

Superman TM & © DC Comics.



**MURRAY BOLTINOFF**

editor for years, being at the helm of the title when the Legion of Super-Heroes—who were unceremoniously dumped from their longtime berth in *Adventure* after issue #380 and shunted into *Action's* back pages—rose, like the proverbial phoenix, from a rotating back-up in *Superboy* to usurping the Teen of Steel's very title (a story we'll save for *BACK ISSUE* #68, our Bronze Age Legion issue).

Another of Weisinger's titles was also reassigned to Boltinoff: *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen*. Murray took the helm with issue #133 (Oct. 1970), but for only three issues. Beginning with #136, *Jimmy Olsen* was reassigned to the man who had become its writer and penciler with #133:

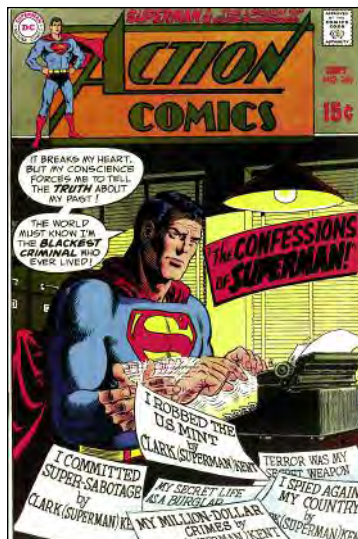
Jack Kirby, Super-editor #2. "There's a New Kind of Superman Coming!" trumpeted DC house ads in 1970, and the pulse of that post-Mort defibrillation was comics' own King. The bombastic Kirby seemed the perfect jolt for the tired blood of the ho-hum Superman line. But instead of unleashing the King unbridled, DC notoriously allowed Jack's art to be diluted via Al Plastino's and Murphy Anderson's facial re-drawings over Kirby's Superman, Clark Kent, and Jimmy, to rope them into the house style.

(John Wells reminds us that, according to E. Nelson Bridwell in *Lois Lane* #121, this house-style decision was

### The Swanderson Team

While Mort Weisinger first paired Curt Swan and Murphy Anderson on the three covers below, it was editor Murray Boltinoff—not Julie Schwartz—who assigned them to Superman interior stories, beginning with Murray's first issue of *Action Comics*, #393 (Oct. 1970). This original cover art, courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)), sold for over \$10,000!

TM & © DC Comics.





## Comics You Can Sink Your Teeth Into

(left) From Dorothy Woolfolk's short-lived, same ol'-same ol' editorship of *Lois Lane*, artist Bob Oksner's cover for #127 (Oct. 1972) features a toothy terror three years before Steven Spielberg's *Jaws*. This was a DC Super Pac, a three-issue bundle that's extremely rare in the collectors' market. (middle) Not long after Spielberg's 1975 film, DC couldn't resist diving into *Jaws*-infested waters with this Mike Grell-drawn cover for *Action* #456 (Feb. 1976). (right) Mike Sekowsky's *Supergirl*, as seen in *Adventure* #407 (June 1971).

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## SUPER-IDENTITY CRISIS

Having this many cooks in the Super-kitchen sometimes soured the recipe. Plots introduced in book A might affect book B, but with little or no coordination among editors glitches were bound to occur.

For example, Morgan Edge, known to readers of Schwartz's *Superman* as Clark Kent's boss at the Galaxy Broadcasting System, was characterized by Kirby to be heading the crime cartel Intergang. How could this be reconciled? Were Edge convicted of his crimes or otherwise eliminated, a prison (or death) sentence would remove a vital cast member from *Superman*. Luckily, Nelson Bridwell—a stickler for details large and small—assisting both Julie and Jack, helped smooth out some problems as a liaison. "Kirby, according to *Lois Lane* #122's letters column, tossed out the possibility of there being two Edges, one of them a clone from the Evil Factory," says John Wells. "Julie worked the subplot into a few issues of *Superman* while Bridwell allowed it to flower in *Lois Lane*."

And not all of the Super-editors were well versed in the Man of Steel's mythos. *Adventure Comics* #400's Supergirl tale by Mike Sekowsky featured major continuity gaffes, including villainess the Black Flame flying in a spaceship to the Phantom Zone "planet" and the writer/artist's misunderstanding of the properties of Gold Kryptonite. Those blatant disregards of Superman's continuity prompted Bridwell to step in with *Adventure* #405 onward to proofread Sekowsky's Supergirl scripts.

With this many floating variables, however, it came as no surprise that within a few years, the majority of the Superman titles had found their way onto Schwartz's desk—but before that happened, there were other blips along the way. In 1972, three other editors briefly took up residence in Metropolis and its related environs.



E. NELSON BRIDWELL

Joe Orlando replaced Mike Sekowsky as editor of *Adventure Comics*, and before long that title's star, Supergirl, zipped into her own title, with *Adventure* becoming an offbeat anthology. Orlando also claimed Jimmy Olsen from Jack Kirby once the King went on to create new DC series such as *The Demon* and *Kamandi, the Last Boy on Earth*.

Romance comics editor Dorothy Woolfolk became the new *Lois Lane* editor with #121 (Apr. 1972) in an effort to align that series more with female readers. She also launched Supergirl's solo series, which started with a Nov. 1972 cover date.

Woolfolk was replaced by editor Robert Kanigher after seven issues of *Lois Lane* and only one of *Supergirl*. Kanigher remained on board through the end of *Lois Lane's* and *Supergirl's* runs, which concluded with issues #137 and #10, respectively.

The editorial shakeups of 1972 did not end there: Toward the year's end, Murray Boltinoff took over *Jimmy Olsen* with #154 from Orlando, riding out that title even after it became *Superman Family* (see related article), and traded with Schwartz *World's Finest* for *Action*. The fanzine *The Comic Reader* reported at the time that the *Action/WFC* swap was "a move to solidify the continuity of the Superman stories." In *World's Finest*

#215, new editor Boltinoff introduced one of the Bronze Age's most infamous—but to many, warmly remembered—concepts, the Sons of Superman and Batman, courtesy of the typewriter of continuity-blind writer Bob Haney. Haney and Boltinoff staunchly contended that their Superman, Jr. and Batman, Jr. were a part of continuity (unlike the aforementioned Super-Sons, who appeared in *Imaginary Stories*), just an aspect of the heroes' lives we hadn't yet discovered! As ludicrous as this may sound to the contemporary reader, DC fans of the day bought it—did they ever, since *World's Finest's* sales spiked much higher than they'd been with Schwartz's Superman team-ups.



# THE PRIVATE LIFE OF CURT SWAN

Curt Swan (1920–1996) found a career in comic books beginning in the fall of 1945. Newly discharged from the military after World War II, he had successfully drawn maps, spot illustrations, and gag cartoons for the European Theater edition of the Army's *Stars and Stripes* newspaper. Looking for civilian employment, Curt realized that the Golden Age of magazine illustration was over. Thus, the 25-year-old had to channel his desire to work for *Collier's* and the *Saturday Evening Post* into something else. Believing comic books to be a fad that would likely end in a year or two, Swan would have been shocked to learn he'd still be prospecting that vein a half-century later.

Hobnobbing at various times with future Pulitzer winner John Fischetti, a charmingly grumpy journalist/*60 Minutes* commentator named Andy Rooney, and current Dean of American Newspaper Comic Strips Mort Walker, Swan was part of what has been dubbed "the Greatest Generation." He survived bombings in London to peacefully sketch by the Seine when transferred to Paris. One time, nearly "meeting [his] Maker" when a German V2 bomb "came roaring in and hit very close by, rattling everything to hell," he dealt with it in his own way. Though raised Presbyterian, it was while lying under the stars and philosophizing with his brother Lloyd at the age of 11 or 12 that Curt chose a less ritualized spiritual path ("Drawing Superman" by Curt Swan, from the book, *Superman at Fifty: The Persistence of a Legend*, Octavia Press, 1987).

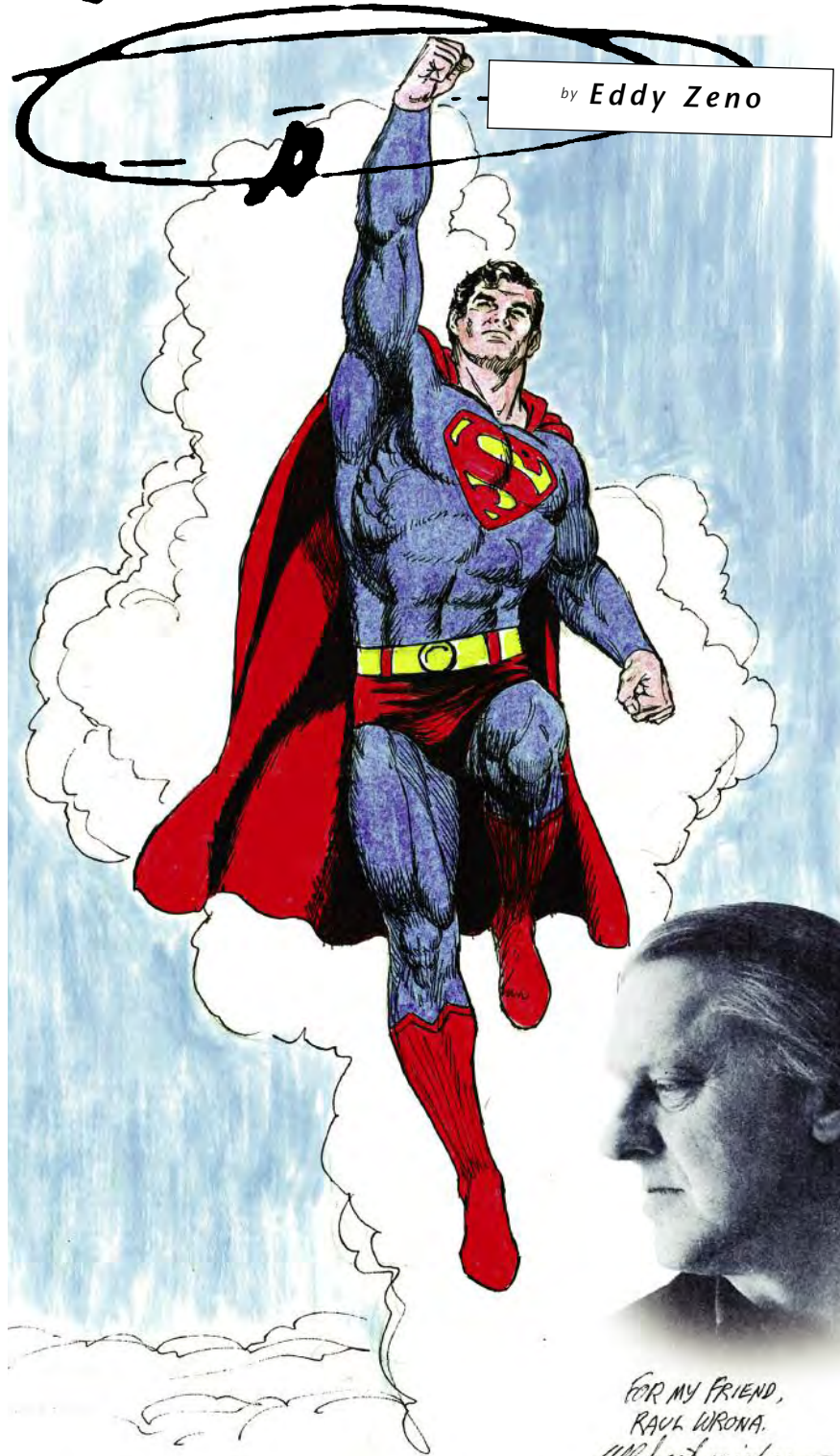
A Swan family joke recounts the time Curt was given a battle ribbon for traveling beyond Patton's Third Army and crossing the Maginot Line. Funny thing: The reason he did so was to visit his future wife Helene, who was already there, stationed with the US Army's 101st Airborne Paratroop Division after joining the Red Cross. Curt Swan and Helene Brickley were wed in Paris in April 1945. She became a realtor and co-owned a Westport, Connecticut, real-estate firm for many years. Helene and Curt were divorced after more than 35 years of marriage. At the age of 91 in January 2012, she passed away following a lengthy illness. The obituary stated, "Her greatest pleasures came from spending time with her children and grandchildren and traveling worldwide with them, wherever they wanted to go."

The Swan family name had been shortened from the original "Swanson." Though Curt called himself a "stupid Swede," his use of the vernacular, as when he invited comic-book writer Elliot S! Maggin to share a "libation," proved him to be anything but. He was thoughtful,

## Up, Up, and Away!

Even in a watercolor sketch, the artistry of Curt Swan (whom we've added in the clouds) is breathtaking. From the collection of Raúl Wrona, courtesy of Eddy Zeno.

Superman TM & © DC Comics.



by Eddy Zeno

FOR MY FRIEND,  
RAÚL WRONA,  
all best wishes  
Curt Swan 7/99

## A Crisis for Superman

Courtesy of Eddy Zeno, original art to page 21 of *Superman* #242 (Sept. 1971), powerfully rendered by Swan to reveal the Action Ace's humanity. Script by Denny O'Neil, inks by Murphy Anderson.

TM & © DC Comics.

Superman-related title commencing that same year. For a short time he also illustrated the *Batman* and *Detective Comics* covers. The latter assignment ended in late 1959 and Swan relinquished the *Superman* dailies soon after.

On the cusp of becoming a professional comic-book writer, Elliot Maggin had an amazing letter printed in *Superman* #238 (June 1971) in which the Brandeis University student remembered his boyhood: "In the '50s, when comics were being blamed for juvenile delinquency and street violence and all manner of social ills, I picked up a *Superman* comic at a candy store in Brooklyn's East New York. From that magazine—that brief encounter—came my imagination—my own social conscience and reverence for human life—my own daring to dream." Perhaps that was the reason Swan became a primary Superman artist in the mid-20th century. The turbulent period may have sparked a



MURPHY ANDERSON

subconscious desire by Weisinger and others at DC to portray the Man of Steel as a stronger moral figure, one whose compassionate gaze could combat the things being said about him and all of the four-colored heroes who sprang from him in the first place. That was the Swan version of Superman readers came to adore.

### CLOSING THE ERA

The Silver Age was well under way by the early 1960s and Curt was cementing his place in comic-book history. With Mort Weisinger continuing to guide his creators to new story heights, copy was soon added to Swan's covers boasting that they were the "World's Best-Selling Comic Magazines!" Curt drew increasingly more interior stories as the decade progressed. The penciler's longtime inker Stan Kaye left, and Sheldon Moldoff substituted for a time. With the arrival of George Klein, Swan had perhaps his finest embellisher to date. In 1968 Klein left DC Comics and died shortly thereafter. Other finishers were assigned with less successful results until Weisinger borrowed longtime member Murphy Anderson from fellow editor Julius "Julie" Schwartz's stable of freelance artists.



### Masters of Comic-Book Art

From the collection of Eddy Zeno, the cover to the 1979 Comic Art Convention program, about which Eddy says, "Curt Swan and John Buscema: contenders for Michelangelos of the Comics."

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1979 COMIC ART CONVENTION \$3.00

BATMAN CONAN SUPERMAN

MARSHALL ROGERS JOHN BUSCEMA CURT SWAN

# SUPERMAN<sup>®</sup> CALLS FOR BACKUP!

## Back-ups on the Frontlines

A montage of cover blurbs promoting various back-up series in the pages of *Superman*, from issues: (top row) #357 and 360; (2nd row) #238 and 239; (3rd row) #267, 356, and 354; and (bottom) #358. Art for each is by Ross Andru and Dick Giordano, with the exception of the Krypton one on the third row, which was penciled by Rich Buckler and inked by Giordano.

TM & © DC Comics.

by Philip Schweier



We've all seen the cover. *Superman*, drawn by legend Neal Adams, shattering green chains, with the caption "Kryptonite Nevermore!" It's been a comic-book historical landmark practically from the day it hit the stands.

*Superman* #233 (Jan. 1971) is significant not only for its iconic cover, but also because it heralds the beginning of Julius Schwartz's tenure as editor of the *Superman* titles. As the architect of the DC Comics' Silver Age, no one was more qualified to take over *Superman* and reach out to new audiences.

"Julie was always looking to innovate," says longtime *Superman* writer Cary Bates, "especially when first taking over the reins of a book."

Toward this end, Schwartz opted to broaden the Man of Steel's supporting features. These back-up stories allowed a great deal of creative freedom for Schwartz's stable of writers, which included Bates, Elliot S! Maggin, and Bob Rozakis.

Rozakis, who served as Schwartz's assistant, explains that Schwartz had been doing back-ups in other titles, such as *Elongated Man* in *The Flash*. "I think he basically just wanted something a little different, rather than just another story with the same character," says Rozakis.

Maggin describes Schwartz as a "let's try this" kind of guy rather than a long-term planner. "When Mort Weisinger ran all of the *Superman* books he put a long-term strategy into play, consciously introducing a new major concept every six months and giving each one a good two years to cement itself into the legend," he explains.

Maggin goes on to say that Schwartz wanted to try out a few ideas related to *Superman* in the same way. So "The Private Life of

Clark Kent" and "The Fabulous World of Krypton" were meant to support and build on the overall mythology.

## THE FABULOUS WORLD OF KRYPTON

Schwartz had always been a fan of science fiction. He helped form one of the earliest science-fiction clubs with uber-fan Forrest J. Ackerman, and also served as Ray Bradbury's first literary agent. So it should come as no surprise that the first back-up feature to debut in *Superman* #233 was "The Fabulous World of Krypton," described as "Untold Stories of Superman's Native Planet."

E. Nelson Bridwell wrote the first "Fabulous World of Krypton" story, "Jor-El's Golden Folly," which chronicled the initial meeting between Superman's birth parents, Jor-El and Lara. Bridwell, who had been Weisinger's assistant editor on the *Superman* titles for many years, was a walking, talking encyclopedia of *Superman* lore.

"As anyone who knew Nelson would tell you, his photographic memory and the encyclopedia-level knowledge he had on a vast range of subjects was amazing," says Bates. "Of course, this expertise also extended to DC lore, so Julie and those of us writing could always count on him to answer any and all questions regarding *Superman* continuity."

Rozakis adds, "He was definitely valuable to Julie and the writers when there was something going on that referred to prior issues or something like that. Usually with Julie it came down to what made the better story, and if tying into old continuity didn't affect the story,



or helped it, he'd say, 'Sure, go ahead.' But if it was something that bogged down what he wanted to do, or what the writer had planned, he'd say, 'Forget it.'

Some of the "Fabulous World of Krypton" stories covered familiar ground, such as Jor-El and Lara, or the Phantom Zone. Others explored Kryptonian lore, such as the meaning behind the headbands worn by Kryptonian citizens. Most used a framing device, in which the tale is shared between two characters, such as Superman and Supergirl, or Lara and the infant Kal-El.

One story is not related to any Superman character but to the Guardians of the Universe. In "The Greatest Green Lantern of All" from *Superman* #257 (Oct. 1972), they explain to Green Lantern Tomar Re why Krypton's destruction was necessary, and his efforts to save the doomed planet were ignored. According to the story credits, the idea was conceived by Neal Adams, but fleshed out by writer Elliot S! Maggin. It is this story that Maggin first features the English translation of Kal-El: "star child."

"One advantage the Krypton stories had was the fact they were unique one-offs that allowed for more artistic freedom than most other stories," says Bates. "Thus the scripts could appeal to artists not normally associated with DC superhero books at the time (Kaluta and Morrow being two examples)."

Artist Gray Morrow collaborated with Bates on "A Name is Born" in *Superman* #238 (June 1971). The story explained how the planet had been claimed by two rival astronauts, a male named Kryp and a female named Ton.

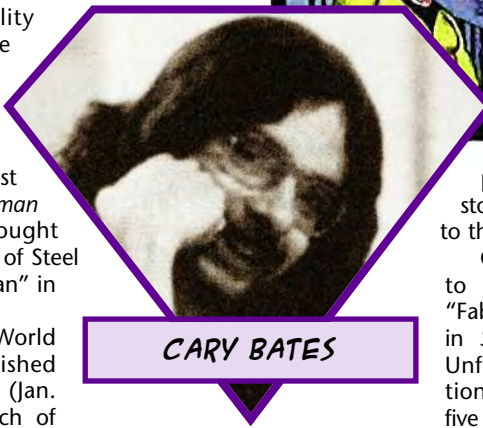
Michael Kaluta illustrated "The Man Who Cheated Time" in *Superman* #240. A scientist perfects time travel, using the technology to journey to Krypton's future, only to fatally discover the planet has no future.

Still, some ideas introduced earlier in Superman's timeline were developed later, as in the case of Nam-Ek, a Kryptonian scientist who broke the law by killing a rondor, a beast whose horn had miraculous healing properties. Nam-Ek hoped to use the horn to develop a panacea, but when he tested the serum on himself, it mutated him into an immortal half-rondor. His immortality enabled him to survive the destruction of Krypton, leaving him a shattered creature floating in space.

Writer Martin Pasko introduced Nam-Ek in "The Loneliest Man in the Universe" in *Superman* #282 (Dec. 1974), then brought him face to face with the Man of Steel in "Plague of the Antibiotic Man" in *Superman* #311 (May 1977).

A total of 21 Fabulous World of Krypton stories were published between *Superman* #233-286 (Jan. 1971-Apr. 1975). During much of this time, the average price of the book had skipped around, from 15 cents to 25 cents, then to 20 cents, but by *Superman* #300 (June 1976), the price had climbed to 30 cents. Page counts were juggled in order to give readers their best value. Many of the back-up features were eventually dropped from the pages of *Superman*. The next "Fabulous World of Krypton" story was "The Stranger" in *Superman Family* #182 (Mar.-Apr. 1977).

The price climbed once more to 40 cents, and when DC Comics raised its cover prices to 50 cents beginning with *Superman* #351 (Sept. 1980), the



CARY BATES

publisher added eight more story pages, in an effort to add value to the price increase.

Once again, the door was open to back-up features, and the "Fabulous World of Krypton" returned in *Superman* #352 (Oct. 1980). Unfortunately, Krypton's resurrection would be short-lived, lasting for five installments before ending with

"Last 'Scoop' on Krypton" by Bob Rozakis and Gil Kane in *Superman* #375 (Sept. 1982).

**THE PRIVATE LIFE OF CLARK KENT**

Another common back-up feature in the Superman titles was "The Private Life of Clark Kent." In these adventures, Superman took a back seat to his alter ego, reminding readers that in spite of his superpowers, Clark Kent could have adventures of his own.

"Julie was very strong in the areas of both plot and characterization," says Maggin. "He wanted to see that

**Good Golly, Jor's Folly**

Page 1 of the first "Fabulous World of Krypton" tale, from *Superman* #233 (Jan. 1971).

By E. Nelson Bridwell and Murphy Anderson.

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If you believe a man can fly, you'll believe that a boy and girl can fly, too. And maybe you'll buy spin-off comic books featuring them, and even a series starring the whole family. If you're DC Comics, you won't just smolder at the idea of rival Fawcett's success with Captain Marvel, Jr., Mary Marvel, and the united Marvel Family. You'll persist in lawsuits over Captain Marvel being a copy of Superman, reaching a settlement and driving Fawcett out of the superhero business in 1953. And then you'll start forming a Superman Family of your own.

Technically, the family had been forming since the mid-1940s when DC began chronicling Superman's childhood exploits in *More Fun Comics*, *Adventure Comics*, and *Superboy*. It began expanding in earnest once the *Adventures of Superman* TV series premiered in 1952 and made household names of *Daily Planet* editor Perry White and his best reporters. By 1954, there was a *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen* comic book, capitalizing on Jack Larson's portrayal of the teenage *Daily Planet* cub reporter. *Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane* wasn't far behind, with a pair of 1957 tryout issues (*Showcase* #9 and 10) preceding the comic book's 1958 debut.

Otto Binder, a major Fawcett writer on titles like *Marvel Family*, wrote both DC spin-offs almost exclusively and couldn't help but be amused when editor Mort Weisinger assigned him to develop a series starring Superman's female teenage cousin in 1959's *Action Comics* #252. Upon his arrival at DC a few years earlier, Binder told Martin Greim in *Comic Crusader* #15 (1974), "Mort kept pooh-poohing Captain Marvel, saying it was a bunch of junk. Mary Marvel was a crazy idea! So, a couple years went by and one day Mort said to me, 'I've got a great idea! ... Supergirl!' Of course, I didn't say, 'You don't mean Mary Marvel, do you, Mort?' To me, it was like reliving the past."

Weisinger's Super-titles of the late 1950s and early 1960s burst with creations and concepts that were nurtured and revisited as the decade wore on. Bizarro and, more successfully, the Legion of Super-Heroes each earned spin-off series in *Adventure Comics* while Krypto the Superdog and Superbaby starred in periodic tales in *Superboy*. By 1962's *Superman Annual* #5, the editor was referring to this extended group of players as the Superman Family and united the most prominent on a Curt Swan/George Klein-illustrated back cover for *Annual* #6.

By 1973, the Weisinger glory days were over by two years and his Superman Family estate was presently divided amidst multiple editors. DC had rushed into the decade with hopes of modernizing the franchise—whether scaling back the Man of Steel's powers in *Superman* or employing Marvel Comics superstar Jack Kirby to reenergize *Jimmy Olsen*—but seemed to get cold feet when sales didn't bear out their enthusiasm.

### Family Ties

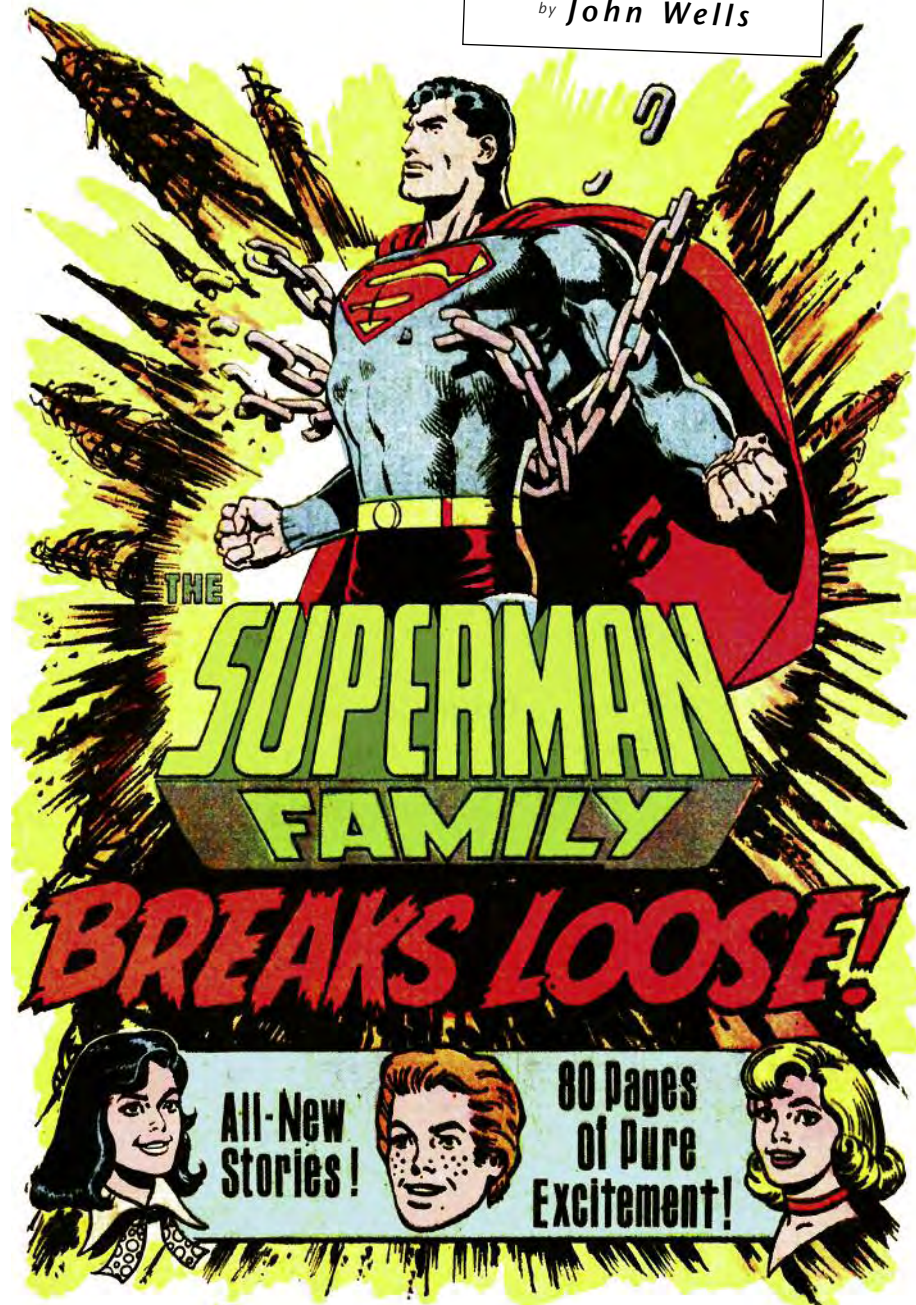
A merger of Neal Adams and Kurt Schaffenberger art for a late-1976 house ad trumpeting *Superman Family's* format change. Special thanks to John Wells for providing this article's illustrations.

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# SUPERMAN FAMILY

## PORTRAITS

by John Wells





### Cleaning House

(top trio) Lois, Jimmy, and Supergirl's respective last issues prepped readers for their new home in *SF* (*Supergirl* #10's Superlad was a clone of the Girl of Steel!). (bottom) A *Superman Family* staple was the next-issue blurb, like this one from #164.

TM & © DC Comics.

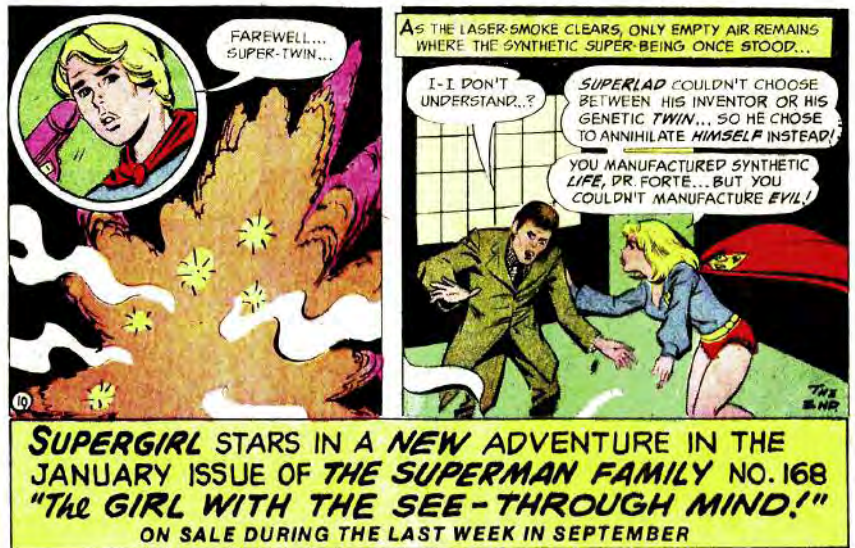
Consequently, most of the books dropped their Marvel-style subplots and serialization in favor of more episodic fare, albeit with a more serious tone than the preceding Weisinger era. Editor Julius Schwartz was managing the approach well in the core *Action Comics* and *Superman* titles, as was editor Murray Boltinoff in *Jimmy Olsen*. The prominent misstep was folding DC's three female adventure comic books (*Wonder Woman*, *Lois Lane*, and the new *Supergirl* title) into editor Robert Kanigher's dying romance line.

As the latter three books teetered on the edge of cancellation, Schwartz was assigned to revamp *Supergirl* (effective with issue #11) and *Wonder Woman* (with #212) while Boltinoff prepared to take over *Lois Lane* with issue #138. Meanwhile, having struck gold by reintroducing the Legion of Super-Heroes in *Superboy*, Boltinoff made the 30th-Century team the virtual stars of the book effective with issue #197 (Sept. 1973).

All of this played out as comic-book sales in general were struggling. Retailers were progressively balking at giving shelf space to insubstantial 32-page comic books that generated little profit. Among DC's responses to the dilemma were 100-Page Super-Spectaculars, thick, ad-free 50-cent comic books composed almost entirely of reprints that netted a higher ring for merchants.

### WE ARE FAMILY

After two years of trying out the format, publisher Carmine Infantino rolled the dice. At the start of 1974, a dozen ongoing DC titles were converted to Super-



WATCH FOR THE JULY ISSUE OF... **SUPERMAN FAMILY** #165 ON SALE THE LAST WEEK IN MARCH!

EVERY ISSUE FEATURES

**JIMMY OLSEN** ★ **LOIS LANE** ★ **SUPERGIRL**

PLUS...OTHER TOP SUPER-FEATURES! WHICH WILL YOU FIND NEXT TIME? KRYPTO? SUPERBABY? PERRY WHITE? LANA LANG? OR SOMEONE ELSE? BUY THE ISSUE AND FIND OUT! (AND WRITE AND TELL US YOUR FAVORITES!)

Specs—now priced at 60 cents and containing ads—with 20 new story pages (the same amount as in a standard comic) leading off a thick bloc of reprints. Virtually every comic book featuring Batman became a 100-pager, but DC resisted doing the same with Superman on a regular basis, perhaps fearing irreparable harm to their bestselling hero's sales if the experiment failed. Instead, a new/old ongoing comic book went on sale in January: *The Superman Family*.

It was the answer to a prayer. The Superman spin-off titles represented properties that DC considered too valuable to discontinue, but *Jimmy Olsen*, *Lois Lane*, and *Supergirl* were struggling to sell on their own.



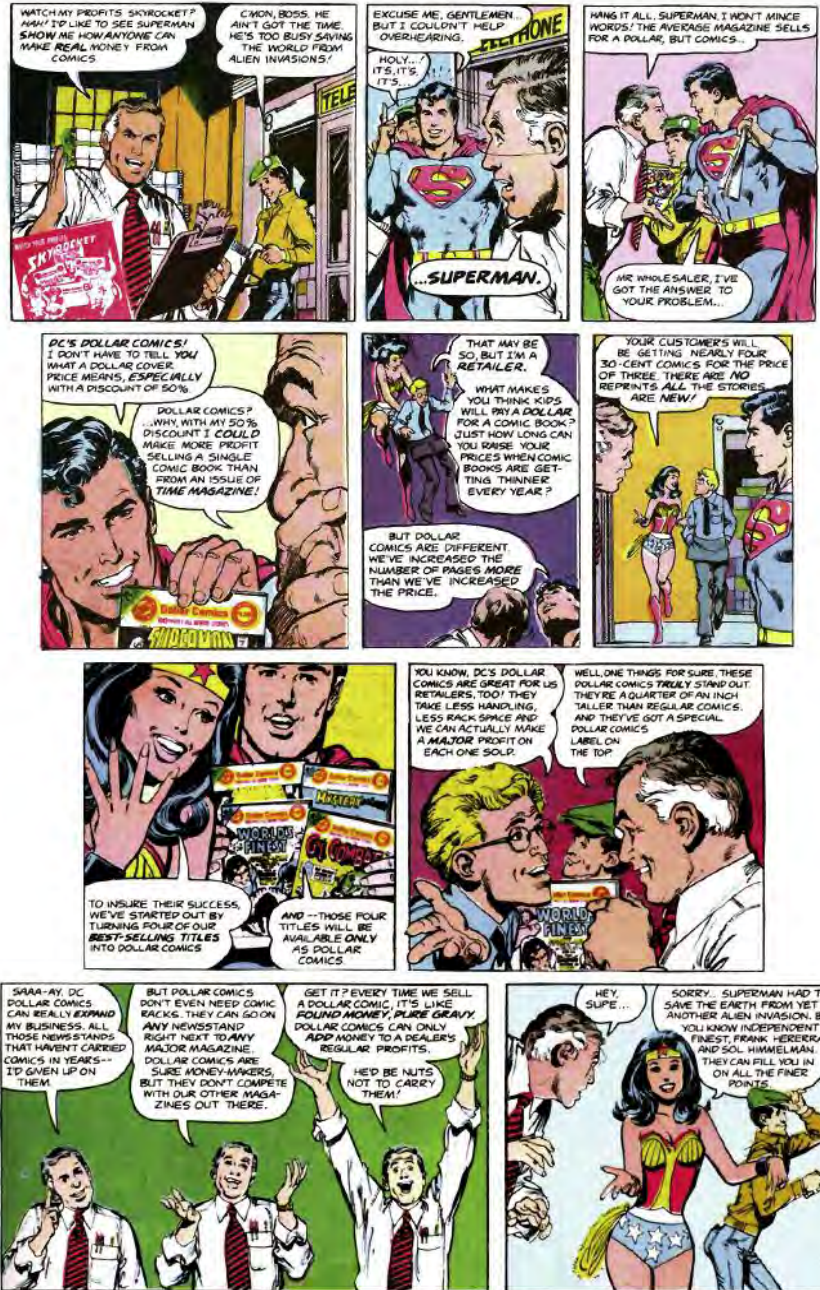
Jack C. Harris-scripted Supergirl adventure). The latter tucked in an in-joke that depicted Jenette Kahn and DC executives Jack Adler and Joe Orlando celebrating the touchdown of a spacecraft that doubled as their elation over the lift-off of the Dollar Comics line.

(In his tenure as Superman editor, incidentally, Julius Schwartz had previously built up a roster of prospective back-up series. They began with "Fabulous World of Krypton" and "The Private Life of Clark Kent" in the early 1970s and extended to a series of 1976-1977 shorts in *Action Comics* starring members of the supporting cast like Krypto, Morgan Edge, Lori Lemaris, Steve Lombard, Mr. Mxyzptlk, and Perry White. Once the O'Neil-edited Dollar Comic was up and running, Schwartz phased out the back-ups.)

The expanded lineup solidified with issue #183. Along with Lois, Jimmy, and Supergirl, each issue would include Krypto, Nightwing and Flamebird, and (since his name was in the title) a short story starring Superman himself, as of issue #184. Martin Pasko, then writing a highly regarded run on *Superman*, scripted the initial two Schaffenberg-illustrated shorts, using the space to respectively revive the Prankster and examine Lois Lane and Clark Kent's relationship in a particularly clever story. Gerry Conway succeeded Pasko with a two-parter that united Superman with his white-templed Earth-Two counterpart (#186-187).

### EXTENDED FAMILY

Among the new voices in *Superman Family* was Tom DeFalco, who wrote Jimmy Olsen, Lois Lane, and Superboy (beginning in issues #185 and 191, respectively). "I was writing for Archie Comics and had done some custom comic work for Joe Orlando and Paul Levitz," DeFalco tells *BACK ISSUE*. "Joe seemed to like my stuff and gave my name to Denny O'Neil, who was editing a love comic at the time. Denny gave me an



assignment [published in *Young Love* #126] and must have liked what I did because he soon offered me a chance to write Jimmy Olsen in *Superman Family*. I think he gave a two-week deadline for the first story.

"However, during the course of those two weeks, Denny decided to go freelance," DeFalco continues. "When I showed up with the story, I was informed that E. Nelson Bridwell was the new editor for *Superman Family*, and he already had a writer for Jimmy Olsen. However, since Denny had commissioned my story, Nelson agreed to read it. As soon as he finished it, he left me sitting in his office and went off to confer with Julie Schwartz. Nelson returned a few minutes later and informed me that I was now the regular writer for Jimmy Olsen." (The John Albano-scripted Olsen story originally commissioned by Bridwell, incidentally, appeared in issue #186, mistakenly credited to DeFalco.)

The writer's most memorable creation may have been the heroic Human Cannonball, introduced in issue #188. Egocentric and perennially cheerful, the man otherwise

### Super Chicken

(left) Schaffenberg's cover to *SF* #179 (Oct. 1976) featured a Kryptonian coward in its spotlighted Olsen tale. (right) Superman (and Wonder Woman) to the rescue of sagging comic-book profits in this Adams-illo'ed Dollar Comics ad.

TM & © DC Comics.

# THE ATOMIC SKULL



by Christopher Larochelle

Some DC Universe villains are motivated primarily by revenge against their most hated superfoes. Others are victims of fate or accidents, and this tends to make them into formidable foes. Some villains, like the Joker or Dr. Sivana, are just plain crazy.

The Atomic Skull is a character who is a combination of all of these different ingredients in the DC supervillain formula. He certainly wasn't an overused character, having appeared only a handful of times over the course of four years. If he wasn't a very serious problem for Superman or the other heroes he was up against to deal with every single time, he at least looked like he meant business with his ghastly skull mask and his destructive brain-blasts. The Atomic Skull is noteworthy for being a true threat to Superman on a few occasions, which isn't something that can be said about every baddie who has gone up against the Man of Steel.

## BEGINNINGS

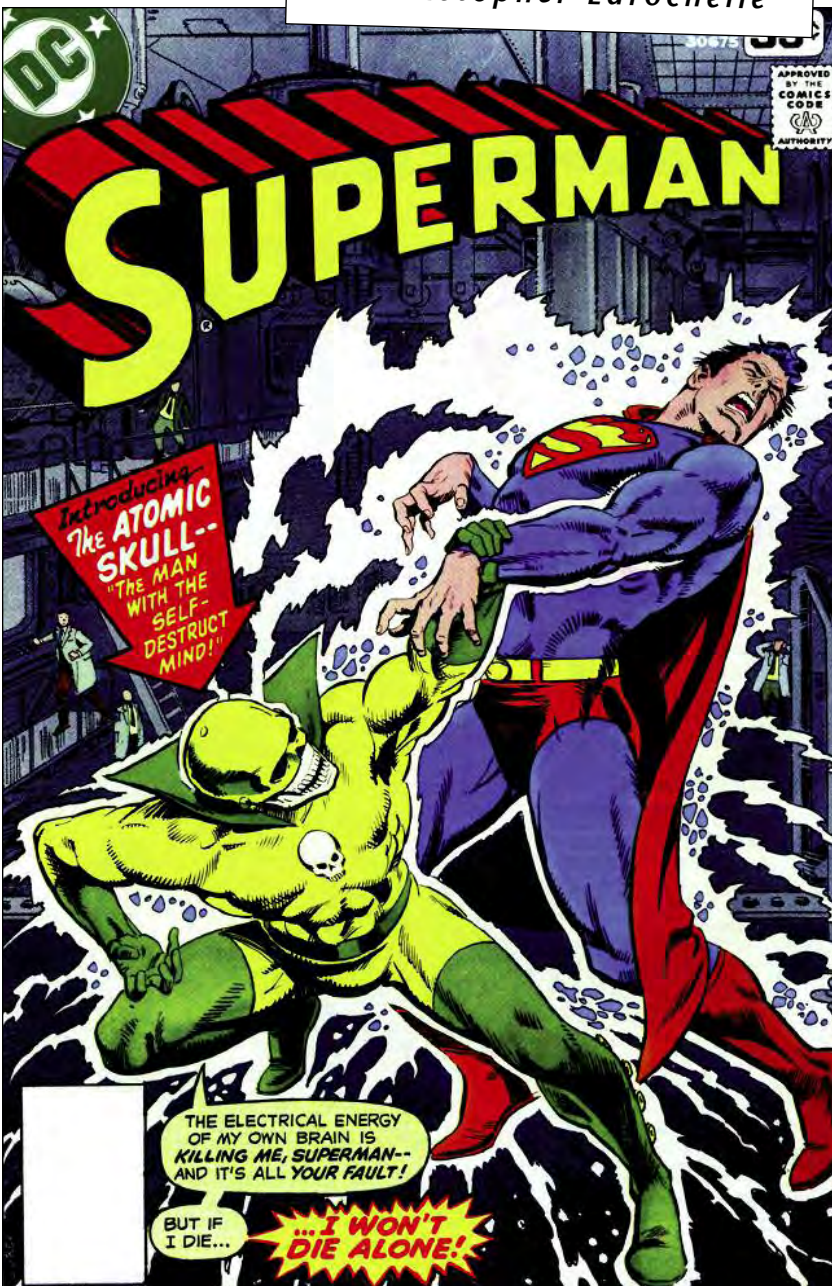
Before there was the Atomic Skull, there was a man named Dr. Albert Michaels. As director of S.T.A.R. Labs, Michaels was seen by Superman as a great scientist. Then came the twist of fate: Michaels acquired a seizure-inducing neurological disorder. Curiously, the only people who offered to help the poor doctor were members of the Skull organization. In exchange for supervising the construction of their mysterious Kryptonite Pipeline project, the Skulls promised to cure him of his ills as only they knew how. Being a double agent for both S.T.A.R. and Skull didn't work out especially well for Dr. Michaels, and he soon left the good guys in disgrace.

The Skull surgeons ran into some problems when they tried to implant a device made out of radium into Michaels' brain. His "neural pacemaker" compounded the problems when the seizures returned—now they also had a radioactive byproduct that mutated the doctor's brain, sending deadly energy bolts from his head!

Dr. Michaels vowed revenge on Superman after the hero had all of the Skull scientists locked up. With nobody to help him with his ailments, Michaels had only one thought—to get even. All of this set the stage perfectly for a new and dangerous supervillain to be set loose on Metropolis....

## ENTER THE ATOMIC SKULL

The Atomic Skull first appears in *Superman* #323 (May 1978) in a story by Martin Pasko, Curt Swan, and Dan Adkins, called "The Man with the Self-Destruct Mind!" The cover of the issue, by José Luis García-López, shows the full hazard involved in a battle with the "new and improved" Dr. Albert Michaels—the villain's ghoulish face is laughing at the sight of Superman



## Ain't That a Kick in the Head?

José Luis García-López's sizzling cover to *Superman* #323 (May 1978), introducing to the world the newest member of the Action Ace's rogues' gallery: the Atomic Skull!

TM & © DC Comics.

## The Atomic Skull, That's Who

Curt Swan/Murphy  
Anderson art for the  
Atomic Skull entry  
from *Who's Who: The  
Definitive Directory of  
the DC Universe #1*  
(Mar. 1985).

TM & © DC Comics.

getting the full force of an atomic brain-blast. There is no question about who has the upper hand in the battle depicted in this great cover.

Inside the comic, the Atomic Skull quickly gets to work on his schemes. He flies over Metropolis in a Skull-shaped ship and beams up an old acquaintance from S.T.A.R. Labs named Dr. Jenet Klyburn. The poor woman is condemned to torture because she was put in his place as director when his involvement with Skull was discovered. In the ship, Dr. Klyburn is led around by masked Skull agents until she is invited to meet the ship's "auxiliary power source," Dr. Albert Michaels himself. Dr. Klyburn is shocked to see her former colleague dressed in a putrid yellow-and-green suit, wearing a skull helmet, and hooked up to conduits that are powering the ship.

Dr. Klyburn is not the only person beamed aboard the Skull ship. Superman soon finds himself in the ship's passages when a skeleton-faced madman approaches him. The Skull taunts Supes and explains his plight before the hero is left to navigate his way to rescue Dr. Klyburn. As the Skull puts it, he suffers from a progressive form of rare neurological disorder which manifests itself as a kind of short-circuiting of the electrical impulses of the brain. But then he got that radium implant....

A brain-blast sends Superman to the ground. While every seizure-

blast brings the Atomic Skull closer to his own death, it can't be overlooked that the blast is actually powerful enough to knock Superman to the floor. By even hurting Supes in a small way the Atomic Skull has set himself apart from a host of other villains. Superman knows that the Skull poses a real threat.

The Skull leaves and Superman notices some very strange things that surround the passageway that will lead him to find Dr. Klyburn ... things that look like kryptonite dust. Superman has yet to uncover the secrets of the Kryptonite Pipeline project but he knows that he doesn't like what he sees.

After Dr. Klyburn is saved, hero and villain reunite. The Skull rants to Superman: "My life expectancy is shortened with every seizure! My own brain is literally destroying me! And because you jailed the only men who could possibly repair the implant ... you, Superman, have doomed me! But before I die, I'll see you dead too!" Superman perfectly played into the Skull's hands. Unbeknownst to him, everything he did led toward the launch of a rocket full of kryptonite. The rocket will explode in the ionosphere and create a ring of tiny "K" particles that will encircle the Earth and negate Superman's powers forever. The mystery of the Kryptonite Pipeline project revealed, the Atomic Skull sees fit to hurtle another brain-blast in the

Man of Steel's direction, leaving the hero prone on the ground. Before he scurries away the Skull lets another foe of Superman's into the fray: Titano, the Super-Ape.

Pasko and Swan continue the story in *Superman* #324 (June 1978). "Beware the Eyes that Paralyze!" begins with Superman coming to his senses and recognizing the threat posed by Titano. The giant ape's kryptonite eye-beams could quickly end the fight, but Superman responds with his own speed by wrapping some heavy-duty girders around the simian's head. The Atomic Skull returns, not altogether satisfied by how easily Superman defeated Titano. He feels the need to once again take matters into his own hands. One shortcoming of the Skull's brain-blasts is soon discovered as Superman finds that he is able to deflect the energy with his cape. It ricochets and blasts the Skull, who realizes that it is time to lay out his trump card: Titano is actually being thought-controlled by none other than the Man with the Self-Destruct Mind.

A second time the Titano plan doesn't really work out, and Superman pulls away with a speedy solution to the problem of the kryptonite-filled rocket that was launched. He takes a second rocket and lines it with lead and remotely triggers it. The two rockets explode together and the dreaded "K" ring is covered by lead so that Superman's powers will still work on Earth. Completely defeated, the Atomic Skull is taken away to jail.

### VS. THE FLASH AND FIRESTORM

In *Superman* #331 (Jan. 1979), we learn about where the Atomic Skull has been since Superman outwitted him in their first meeting. The story, called "Lockup at 20,000 Feet!," features the new prison for super-criminals developed by Carl Draper. Each cell is specialized to hold the individual locked within by neutralizing their powers. The Atomic Skull is shown rigged up to wires mounted in the wall. The effects of his seizures are



MARTIN PASKO



# WORLD OF KRYPTON

## Comics' FIRST Miniseries

by Tim Callahan



Take a quick glance at the comic-book stands these days and you're likely to see more than a few limited series mixed in with all the ongoing titles. Whether it's the season's big-event crossover book or just another X-Men or Batman spin-off series, seeing covers labeled "Issue #1 of 4" (or 6 or 8 or 12, or anything in between) is no surprise at all. As comic-book readers, we've grown accustomed to series with defined, limited runs. The idea of a comic-book miniseries is nothing new.

But it used to be.

Once upon a time not so long ago, comic books weren't released in limited formats. You'd get your ongoing series and you'd like it, and if you didn't like it, or the publishers just wanted to try something new, your subscription to *All-Star Comics* might turn into a subscription to *All-Star Western* without notice. Your *Superboy* might turn into *The Legion of Super-Heroes*. And the numbering would continue on.

Somewhere along the way, someone decided to take a stand. It was the late 1970s. A new era was upon us. *World of Krypton*—three issues, and that's it—changed the comic-book landscape as we knew it.

Okay, it wasn't such a monumental deal at the time, but the fact remains that 1979's *World of Krypton*, a Superman spin-off, was the first miniseries in comic-book history. Other comics had been short-lived, but never had a comic book series been *designed* to be short-lived, and have a predetermined beginning, middle, and end.

It was an idea that was due—if it hadn't been *World of Krypton*, something from DC (Marvel was a few years behind the curve on this one) would have likely ended up as a limited series soon enough—but *World of Krypton*, written by Paul Kupperberg, with art by Howard Chaykin, Murphy Anderson, and Frank Chiarmonte, was the trendsetter, and we now know how popular the concept of comic-book miniseries (and maxiseries) would soon become.

Still, as pioneering as that creative team was, wrangled by editor E. Nelson Bridwell, they didn't originally set out to change the way comic books were released. They didn't even really know they were working on a self-contained miniseries when they began piecing together the backstory of Jor-El and Lara and what would become *World of Krypton*. They stumbled into their new invention, with some help from a round of bad luck.



PAUL KUPPERBERG

THE MOST TRAGIC STORY EVER TOLD--  
THE LAST DAYS OF THE ...

40¢  
ALL NEW!  
NO. 3  
SEPT.



### Blowed Up Reeeal Good!

The Ross Andru/Dick Giordano cover to the final issue of DC's three-issue miniseries *World of Krypton*, #3 (Sept. 1979), with baby Kal-El rocketing his way to Earth.

TM & © DC Comics.

## ACCIDENTALLY GIVING BIRTH TO A NEW FORMAT

The venerable *Showcase* series at DC, which had been revived in 1977 for Paul Kupperberg's "Doom Patrol" revamp, was a victim of the DC Implosion of 1978, when 20 series were swiftly axed because of troubled distribution and economic distress. Kupperberg had already finished writing a three-part "World of Krypton" serial for the abruptly cancelled *Showcase*. Not only that, but it had been drawn as well.

"At the time this revival of *Showcase* was canceled," explains Kupperberg, "the 'World of Krypton' arc was already completed. If I remember correctly—and there's no guarantee that I do; this was 34 years ago—it was originally scheduled to run in #104–106, to come out at the same time as the original planned release date of *Superman: The Movie*." Those issue numbers

might seem misaligned with the historical record, since we can clearly see that *Showcase* #104 was published without any "World of Krypton" story, and issues #105 and #106 look to have been prepared for later-printed "Deadman" and "Creep" stories, respectively, but Kupperberg explains that the delays on *Superman: The Movie* affected the planned release of their three-part Kryptonian backstory.

"The film kept getting pushed back," says Kupperberg, "so they took a bunch of Murray Boltinoff-edited war stories and put them together as a last minute replacement for issue #104, 'O.S.S.: Spies at War,' and then had a couple of single issues lined up to follow"

Kupperberg continues: "I vaguely recall that 'World of Krypton' had ultimately been rescheduled for *Showcase* #110–112, to coincide with the new release date of the movie, but there wasn't anything—that I remember—having been prepped for issues #107–109 since the cancellation had come early enough."

Thus, a miniseries was born, out of necessity. "The reason *World of Krypton* was published as a miniseries was, simply," says Kupperberg, "a need for Superman-related product to take advantage of the enormous amount of hype surrounding the movie. Due to some screwy legal problems with the Mario



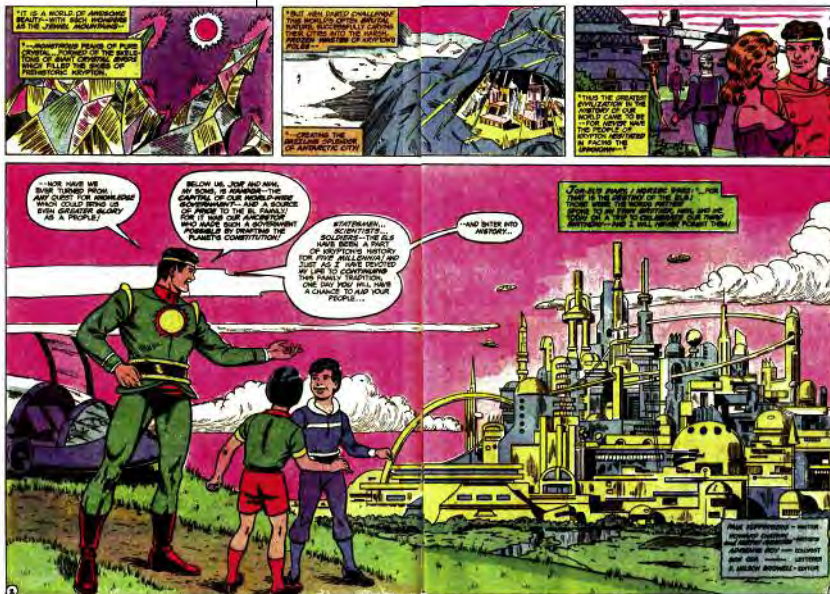
HOWARD CHAYKIN

## The Lore of Jor-El

(left) Pages 2 and 3 of *World of Krypton* #1 (July 1979).

Story and layouts by the Kupperberg brothers, pencils by Chaykin, and inks by Anderson. (right) The issue's Andru/Giordano cover.

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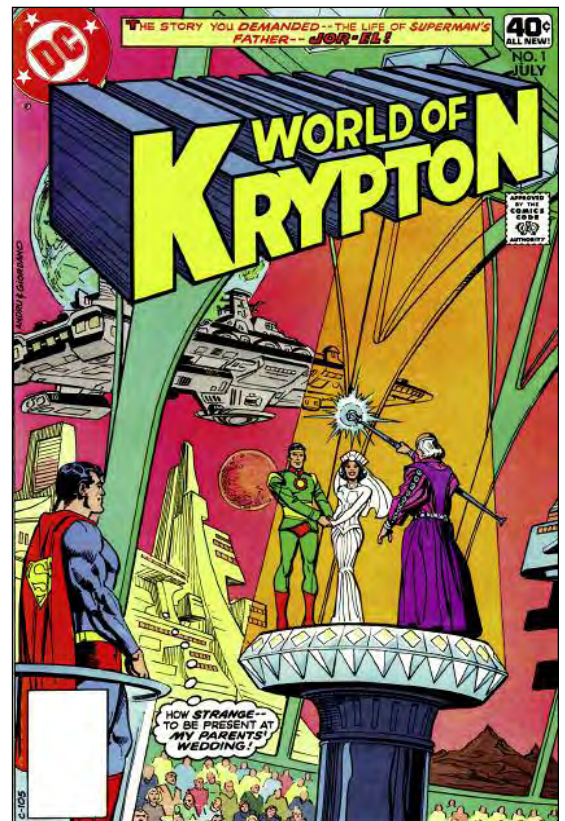
Puzo screenplay, DC couldn't do any direct adaptations of the film, so they had to go with original material based on the comic-book version—that's why the Elliot S. Maggin novel, *The Last Son of Krypton*, which bears the *Superman: The Movie* logo and photos of Christopher Reeve on the cover, has nothing to do with the movie itself."

Even though the backstory of Jor-El and Lara radically diverged from what was presented in the Richard Donner-directed motion picture, "*World of Krypton* was always intended to go hand-in-hand with the movie," says Kupperberg, "and since there was no umbrella title like *Showcase* to put it out under, DC decided to publish it as a stand-alone miniseries."

## WEAVING TOGETHER A FORGOTTEN PAST

*World of Krypton* isn't notable just because it happened to be the first miniseries, though. It was also, at the time, the definitive, canonical history of the El family, beginning with Jor-El as a child and outlining his growth to adulthood and following through right up until the moment he launched young Kal-El toward Earth. For the story, Kupperberg wove together bits of the "Fabulous World of Krypton" back-up features from the Bronze Age issues of the *Superman* series and other fragments of Kryptonian lore that had found their way into the main Superman comics over the years. But not every single piece of established Kryptonian history made sense for inclusion. As Kupperberg explains, "*World of Krypton* was, basically, the biography of Jor-El, so I'm sure there were previously published stories I didn't use because of space considerations or because they didn't fit into the overall narrative I was telling. The Weisinger Superman stories from the 1950s and early 1960s were overflowing with stories where Superman returned to Krypton, or finds some artifact floating in space, etc. There was just no way to fit it all into 66 pages and still tell a coherent story."

Editor E. Nelson Bridwell, famous for his love of comic-book minutiae, particularly with the Superman





## THE

## SUPERMOBILE

by Mike Pigott

In the late 1970s, Superman's amazing new vehicle, the Supermobile, first appeared in the pages of *Action Comics*. Sometime later, two diecast metal versions of it were produced by Corgi Toys.

So, what was the story behind the Supermobile, and where did it appear first—in the comics, or as a toy?

## SUPERMOBILE IN COMICS

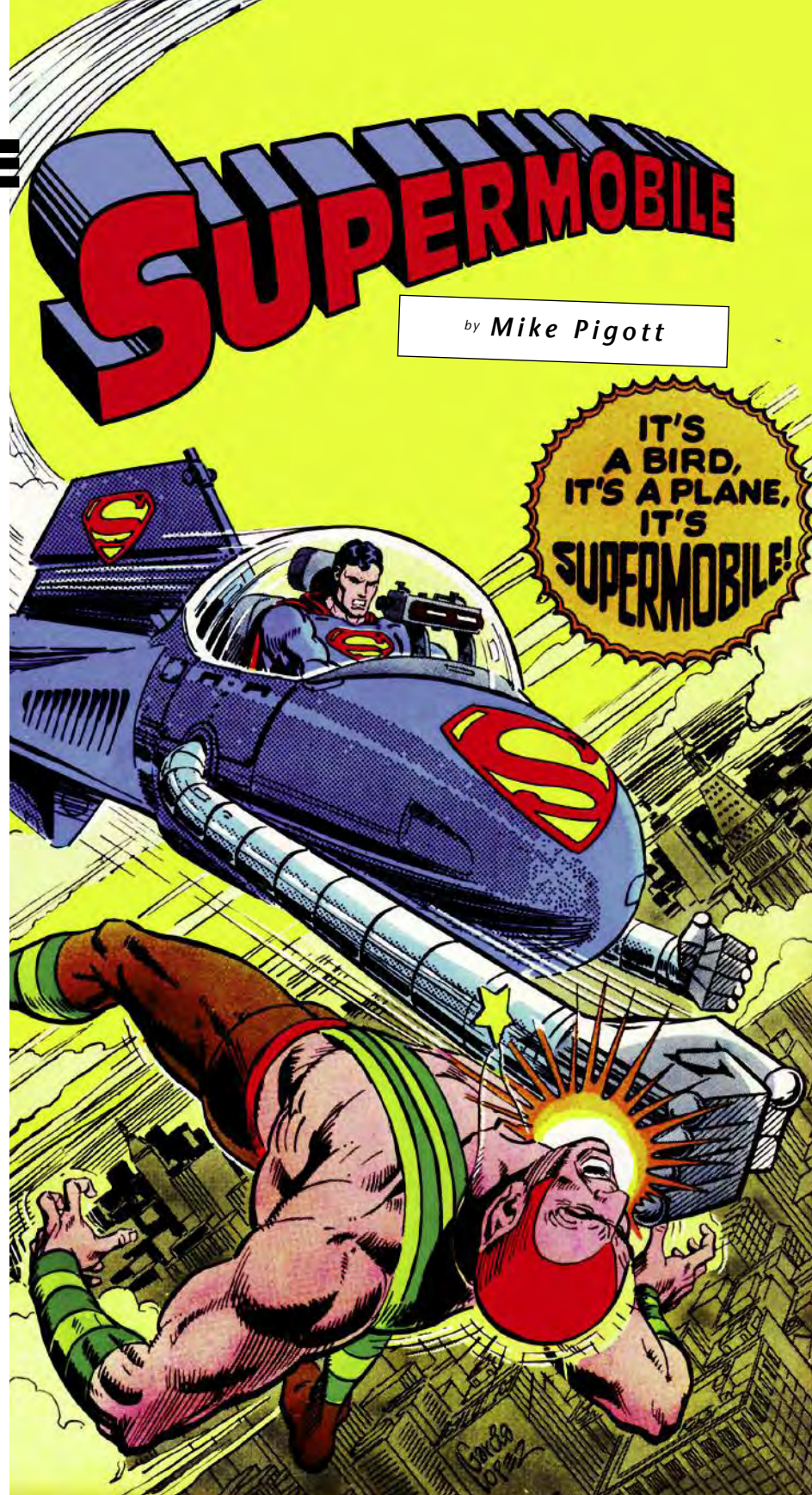
The first appearance of the Supermobile was in a four-part storyline beginning in *Action Comics* #480 (Feb. 1978), although it didn't make an appearance until the second installment. This unusually long storyline was written by regular *Action* scribe Cary Bates, penciled by veteran *Superman* artist Curt Swan, and inked by his regular collaborator at the time, Frank Chiaramonte.

*Action* #480 features a dynamic—but rather misleading—cover by José Luis García-López, showing Superman attempting to stop a flaming meteor from destroying Metropolis. The story opens with Superman relaxing during a quiet shift on monitor duty at the Justice League satellite, until he is knocked across the room from a punch from an enormous fist. Amazo, the JLA's giant android foe, has somehow been revived and has escaped from his glass cage in the trophy room. After a brief tussle, Amazo knocks Superman through the hull of the satellite and they continue their battle in airless space. The Man of Steel's blows have little effect on the android, which possesses the powers of the entire JLA. Suddenly feeling dizzy and weak, Superman is slammed with a white-hot meteoroid and knocked into the Pacific Ocean. When the rest of the League gather in the satellite to investigate, Amazo uses Green Lantern's power to trap them in an alternate dimension.

A de-powered Superman retreats to his Fortress of Solitude in the arctic, where he learns from his high-tech monitors that a cloud of red-sun radiation—from a supernova millions of years ago—has enveloped Earth's solar system. This was simultaneously the cause of Superman's weakness and Amazo's revitalization.

Surprisingly, Amazo is not happy about being revived; he was enjoying, as he puts it, "the tranquillity of his electronic dreams," and suspects his creator Professor Ivo of being responsible. Ivo, it turns out, has gone straight and is teaching astronomy at an Ivy League university under the pseudonym of Ives. Alerted to his creation's return, Ivo heads to Metropolis to track down Superman. He finds the Man of Steel, but so does Amazo, who uses heat vision to trap the two of them in melted tarmac, and demands that Ivo switch him off ... which the professor is unable to do, being unaware of how he was re-activated. The issue closes with the android about to pound Superman and Ivo into the ground with a two-handed punch.

The cover of *Action Comics* #481 by García-López shows the first peek the Supermobile, in an exciting image with Superman at the controls whacking Amazo in the chin. Inside the issue, Amazo slams Superman and Ivo into the ground with a mighty punch, leaving a large crater and no trace of the two men. However, the Man of Steel has instantly transported himself and Ivo to his Fortress using a miniature Kandorian teleportation device. Amazo isn't fooled for long, and soon ploughs through the roof of the arctic sanctuary. While distracting the robot with alien creatures from his private zoo,

*He Drives Me Crazy*

The Man of Steel's rollicking ride, cover featured on *Action Comics* #481 (Mar. 1978). Art by José Luis García-López.

TM & © DC Comics.

## Hot Wheels

(top) Did you (or do you) own any of these Supermobile variations? Photography by Nigel McMillan. (bottom) Courtesy of this article's writer, Mike Pigott (who kindly provided all the images seen on these four pages), an ad—with Neal Adams art!—featuring Corgi's Supermobile and other Super-vehicles.

Superman TM & © DC Comics.



Two were based on vehicles appearing in the movie: a red-and-white *Daily Planet* Helicopter and a City of Metropolis Police Car. These were not new castings, but modified versions of existing items. The third model was entirely Corgi's own creation: The SuperVan was a silver Chevrolet panel van with Superman graphics on the side and a printed card interior that supposedly represented his "mobile laboratory."

September 1979 saw the release of a fourth vehicle: the Supermobile. It was largely similar to its appearance in the comics, painted light blue with "S"-shield stickers on the nose and tail. The base was made of diecast metal and featured a tricycle wheel arrangement. The interior was visible through the bubble canopy, and featured a Superman figure in the cockpit. His face, hair, and costume were touched in with colored paints, and his view-scope was represented.

As with most large-scale Corgis, the Supermobile had working action features. The first was a "pushbutton striking fist action." When chrome buttons under each wing were pushed, the fists would alternatively strike and retract, giving a "one-two punch" effect. It could also fire two missiles from launchers in its nose. These were activated by pressing down on the vehicle's suspension. Four red plastic missiles were included in the box, although these were probably soon lost by most kids. The Supermobile came packaged in a colorful window box, with an illustration of Superman by Neal Adams on the header card.

## CORGI JUNIORS

Corgi also produced a range of miniature vehicles, similar in size to Hot Wheels and Matchbox toys. These were originally called Husky Toys, but were later renamed Corgi Juniors. While the large Corgi Toys were made to a nominal 1/36 scale, the Juniors were closer to 1/64. Most of the large models were duplicated in the smaller scale, including the Batmobile, Batboat, and 007 Aston Martin. Early releases were almost as well detailed as the larger models, but by 1979 quality had declined. The four large Superman items (Supermobile, SuperVan, *Daily Planet* Helicopter, and Metropolis Police Car) were all replicated in miniature, and were joined by a fifth Juniors-only release, a *Daily Planet* Delivery Truck.

The Junior Supermobile, while simplistic, was quite a charismatic little model. It had a striking fist action, but with a simpler mechanism than its larger counterpart. When the plastic tailpipe was pushed, both fists sprung out together. They then had to be popped back manually. There were no firing rockets. A Superman figure was in the cockpit, but only his face and hair were painted. His costume was left the same color as the red interior, which made him look more like Captain Marvel! The vehicle could roll along on three concealed wheels.

Early versions came on a special blister card that had a detailed Neal Adams drawing of the Supermobile on a yellow background. This picture highlighted the difference between the models and the comic versions. The robot arms didn't just come out of holes in the sides of the fuselage, they extended from silver sleeve-like pods.

Later versions were packaged on an orange blister card with a generic Adams illustration of Superman. However, by this time Corgi was cutting costs on the Juniors line. Late examples are in a darker shade of blue, and their rolling wheels are replaced by three bumps molded into the base. The striking fists were no longer chrome-plated, and the Superman figure and side pods were left unpainted.



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# GOLDEN STEEL

## IN THE BRONZE AGE:

# The SUPERMAN

# of Earth-Two

by Chris Franklin



Just imagine...

The Man of Steel married to Lois Lane!  
Clark Kent ... mild-mannered *editor* for a great metropolitan newspaper!

A Superman with gray hairs!

It wasn't a dream, a hoax, or an imaginary tale. By the early '70s, the DC Comics powers-that-were had declared that Superman would never age beyond his 30th birthday, but fans could find a more mature Man of Steel elsewhere. This was the Superman who had lifted that famous green car aloft in 1938, who fought social problems as often as mad scientists, who could initially only leap an eighth of a mile. This Golden Age Man of Steel allowed writers and artists the chance to examine the legendary character in ways his younger counterpart could not.

### THE AMAZING STORY OF SUPERMAN GOLD AND SUPERMAN SILVER

Unlike other Golden Age characters revived during the Silver Age, Superman had been continuously published since his inception. The idea of a Golden Age Superman existing as a separate character in the parallel universe of Earth-Two no doubt stemmed from the need to keep the annual Justice League/Justice Society of America crossovers fresh with newly unearthed characters from DC's past. Under editor Julius Schwartz, *Justice League of America* scribe Denny O'Neil penned the tale that showed us that there were indeed two Supermen in the DC Multiverse in *JLA* #74–75 (Aug.–Sept. 1969).

Artists Dick Dillin and Sid Greene illustrated the elder and younger Supermen exactly the same. In fact, without the word balloons and captions, it's impossible to tell which Superman is which. When the evil Aquarius brainwashes the JSA into fighting their friends, it's apparent the two Men of Steel are evenly matched.

In a *JSA* pinup in *JLA* #78, artist Murphy Anderson gave the older Kryptonian an "S" insignia harkening back to Golden Age covers drawn by artist Fred Ray. Although it would be several years before this innovation took hold, the distinct chest symbol would become one of the key visual differences between the two Supermen.

Writer Mike Friedrich made a significant contribution to the character in a single explanatory caption in *JLA* #91 (Aug. 1971). He described the Earth-Two Superman as "Superman (Clark Kent—editor of the *Metropolis Daily Star*). Readers now knew that *this* Clark Kent had made strides in his private life as well, not content to be a pair of glasses Superman hides behind. The *Daily Star* was one of many predecessors that Superman creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster named as Kent's employer before settling by the early 1940s on the now-world-famous *Daily Planet*. By citing the *Star* as Superman's paper of choice, Friedrich and editor Schwartz let it be known that Earth-Two was a parallel world not entirely beholden to established canon, but somewhat of a blank canvas for creators to explore facets of the characters long forgotten, or never before conceived.

### Mr. and Mrs. Superman

The cover to *Action Comics* #484 (June 1978), by José Luis García-López and Dick Giordano, featuring the wedding of the Earth-Two Superman and Lois Lane. This beautifully drawn cover is a bit sneaky—its composition hides Superman's "S" insignia and doesn't depict his graying temples, visual cues to the Golden Age character's identity, leading the uninitiated buyer to believe this is "their" (Earth-One's) Supie tying the knot (although Earth-Two's *Daily Star* is shown, for those looking beyond the main figures).

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## Love, Kryptonian Style

Kal-L takes Lois Lane to his Secret Citadel in this page from the landmark tale "Superman Takes a Wife," from *Action* #484. Script by Cary Bates, pencils by Curt Swan, and inks by Joe Giella.

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## Kryptonian Cousins

The Earth-Two Superman was featured briefly in the Justice Society/Super Squad series of the '70s, alongside his young cousin Power Girl. (left) Cover to *All-Star Comics* #65 (Mar.–Apr. 1977), sporting the spiffy art team of Keith Giffen and Wally Wood, whose Metropolis Marvel (inset) harkened back to Joe Shuster's Golden Age Superman.

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In *JLA* #107 and 108 (Sept.–Oct. and Nov.–Dec. 1973), Dick Dillin and inker Dick Giordano once again gave the Man of Tomorrow a retro "S" shield. An even more drastic change was initiated in this storyline—the ageless Kryptonian was given ... gray hairs! In the time-honored tradition of aging heroes like Jay Garrick and Reed Richards, the JSA's Superman was given gray (or white) temples. The distinguished look would be a permanent marker for artists to distance this Superman from his younger counterpart.

Writer Len Wein portrayed a more passionate and assertive Superman, as opposed to his saint-like Earth-One "brother." He clearly enjoyed another chance to destroy Nazi tanks on the parallel world of Earth-X. This portrayal recalled the earliest Superman tales, where he was shown to be a bit more forceful at times.

## KRYPTONIAN KITH AND KIN

The JSA returned home to a revived *All-Star Comics* #58 (Jan.–Feb. 1976), where writer Gerry Conway and artists Ric Estrada and Wally Wood introduced new recruit Power Girl. This Maid of Might happened to be the cousin of the JSA's Superman, effectively making her the Earth-Two equivalent of Supergirl. Unlike her Earth-One counterpart, Power Girl was a headstrong feminist with a chip on her shoulder, determined to prove anything a Superman could do, she could do better!

Superman returned to the JSA in a grand fashion in *All-Star* #62, courtesy of exiting writer Conway and co-writer Paul Levitz. Artists

Keith Giffen and Wood depicted a barrel-chested, squinty-eyed Superman reminiscent of Joe Shuster's version, making his famous costume change and leaping tall buildings on his way to JSA HQ.

When asked if this elaborate intro was Conway's idea the writer responds, "Probably mine, though it was really a no-brainer (and I've often been accused of having little or no brain). Using Superman as a way to pull in readers to a new DC title was as par for the course in the '60s and '70s as using Batman is today." And what of the Giffen/Wood retro Superman? "Loved it, and thought it was a great way to make clear that this wasn't the Superman we all knew from Earth-One."

Power Girl was less than thrilled to see her cousin. Clearly Conway and Levitz were exploring some new territory, examining the relationship between Superman and his protégé in a way the standard Earth-One universe would not allow. Had he not left the title, would Conway have continued to mine the strained relationship between these two super-kinfolks?

"Absolutely—what's the point of having strained relationships between your characters if you don't either explore or resolve them? And, of the two, exploring is much more fun and productive than resolving any day."

Confident his boots were filled admirably, Superman made only occasional appearances during the rest of the JSA revival. Levitz also penned the first origin story ever devised for the original super-team, in *DC Special Series* #29 (Aug.–Sept. 1977). At the tale's end, it was Superman himself who named the fabled team.

## TWO SUPERMEN IN ONE!

The aging hero had to face the mortality of his human companions courtesy of Conway and longtime Superman artist Curt Swan in *Superman Family* #186–187 (Dec. 1977–Feb. 1978). His pal Jimmy Olsen was dying, and only a healthy organ replicated from the Earth-One Jimmy could save him. Superman's journey to Earth-One accidentally unleashed an interdimensional warrior named Krogg on the younger Superman's world. The two Supermen were forced to merge into one giant being via the JLA's Transmatter device in order to stop Krogg from destroying the Earth. With two minds in one body, the Men of Steel quickly discerned their foe's one weakness, blasting him with a barrage of heat vision, and in a break with time-honored tradition, murdering the marauding alien. E-Two Superman departs with the E-One Jimmy,

# WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE MAN OF TOMORROW?

## AN IMAGINARY STORY

by Aidan M. Mohan

With its April 1985 cover date, *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #1 hit the stands and forever altered the face of the DC Universe. Eleven months later, *Crisis* ended and a new era was ushered in. Three months after *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #12 (Mar. 1986), *Man of Steel* #1 (July 1986) presented a brand-new origin for Superman.

While the post-*Crisis* Clark Kent's Kryptonian origins were revealed to him in *Man of Steel* #6 (Sept. 1986) the pre-*Crisis* Clark Kent died in *Superman* #423 (Sept. 1986). This death wasn't a stunt and there never was a resurrection. Kent's death was part of the innovative two-part Superman tale "Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?," appearing in *Superman* #423 and *Action Comics* #583 (both Sept. 1986).

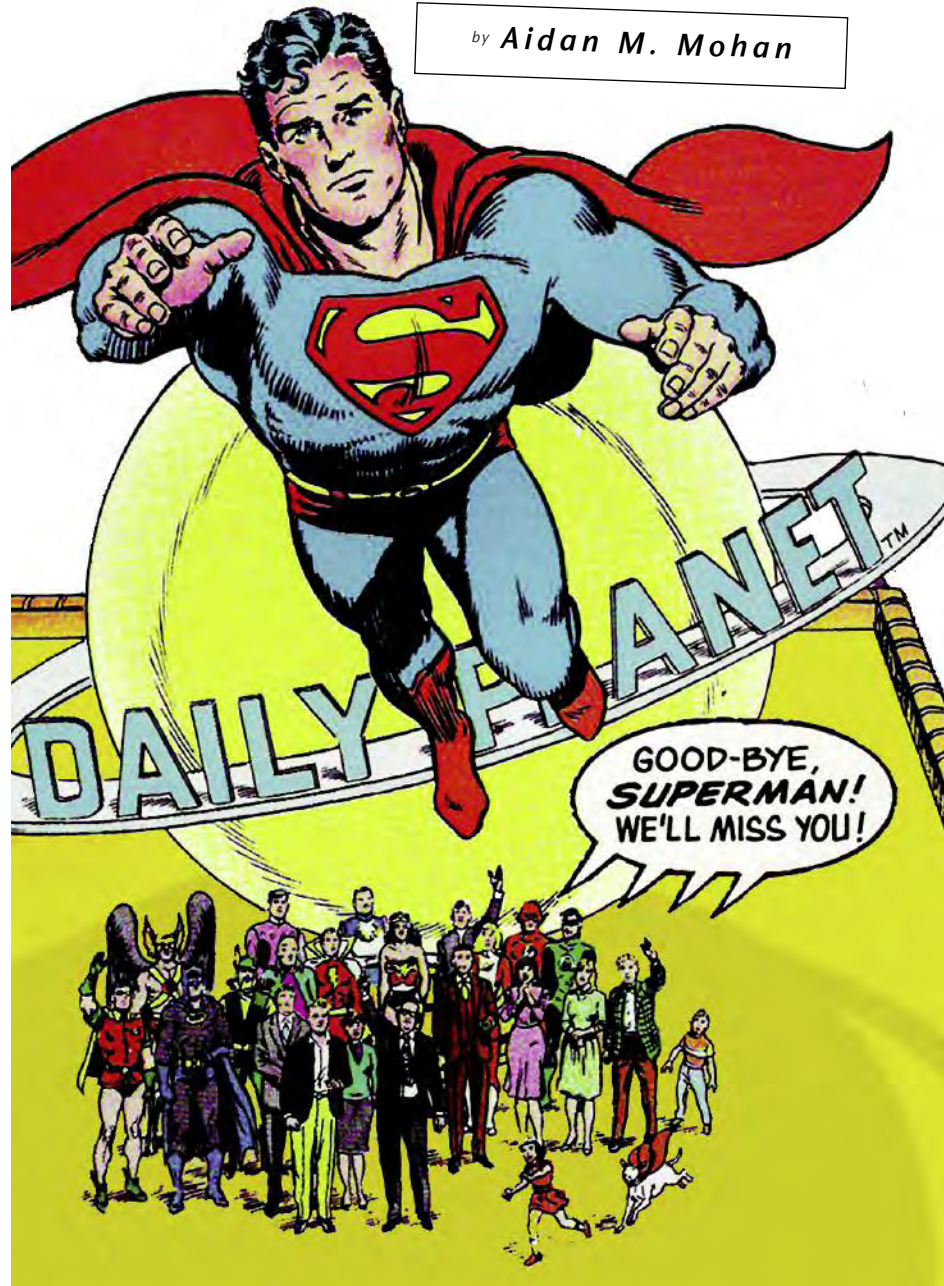
The story was intended to close the book on the Silver Age or pre-*Crisis* Superman, and whether or not it did depends on your interpretation.

### SAYING GOODBYE TO THE EARTH-ONE SUPERMAN

The Man of Tomorrow first appeared in *Action Comics* #1 (June 1938), which included an origin for the hero. The origin was later expanded in the first *Superman* newspaper strips. Eleven years later, when the Golden Age came to a close, Superman remained in publication and was never given a reboot like the Flash or Green Lantern. In *The Flash* #123 (Sept. 1961), the existence of Earths-One and -Two were revealed. Subsequent interactions between Earths-One and -Two explained that the Golden Age Superman continued to exist, alongside the Justice Society of America, on Earth-Two, while the Superman appearing in most of DC's titles existed on Earth-One. The Superman of Earth-One continued to be the primary Superman until the Multiverse was done away with in *Crisis*, and the post-*Crisis* Superman took over as the primary Superman. The Golden Age Superman hadn't gotten a goodbye story—he had simply continued to exist with a few gray hairs. That couldn't happen this time around. Superman of Earth-One was gone for good.

Editor Julius Schwartz was also going to be gone from the Superman books, and he wanted to end his era and his Superman's era with a bang. But he struggled with how to properly say goodbye to his Superman. In Paul Kupperberg's introduction to the 1997 trade paperback edition of *Whatever Happened*, Schwartz related the tale of how he thought up the conceit of the story and how Alan Moore became involved: "I would make believe that my last issues of *Superman* and *Action Comics* were actually going to be the last issues..." He decided to try to get Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel involved, but that fell through. Schwartz continued, "The next morning, still wondering what to do about it, I happened to be having breakfast with Alan Moore. So I told him about my difficulties. At that point, he rose out of his chair, and said, 'If you let anybody but me write that story, I'll kill you.'"

At this point in his career, Alan Moore was still working with DC. He had already penned most of his infamous *Swamp Thing* run and would continue to write the book for a year after "Whatever Happened" was published. He had previously written Superman in the classic story "For the Man Who Has Everything" only a year earlier in *Superman Annual* #11 (1985). Rumors had been circulating in fan circles for some



### Super Send-Off

Detail from the cover of *Action Comics* #583 (Sept. 1983), closing the book on the adventures of the Earth-One Superman. Note that the Swanderson cover includes the artists themselves, as well as DC's Julius Schwartz and Jenette Kahn, saying farewell to the Metropolis Marvel.

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## Time Travel Paradox

From *Superman* #423, the Man of Tomorrow is stunned to see a younger version of his cousin Kara, who had recently died in his arms in the landmark *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #7. (Ye ed ponders: Is it just me, or was it cruel for the Legion—who knows Superman's and Supergirl's fates as history—to toy with Kal-El's emotions by allowing a younger Girl of Steel to drop by at this trying time? Still, it's a touching scene expertly executed by Moore, Swan, and inker George Pérez.)

TM & © DC Comics.



time after that that Moore would be the writer on *Action Comics* after his stellar outing on the Annual. September of '86 was a great month for Moore and Moore's fans. It is astounding to think that both parts of "Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?" and the first issue of *Watchmen* was released in the same month.

In fact, this was a great time for all of the creative staff. George Pérez was still drawing the ever-popular *The New Teen Titans* and was hot off of *Crisis*. In that same introduction, Pérez revealed that "it was a dream come true for me to finally get to ink Curt Swan's pencils, especially on his last Superman story, and to work with Alan Moore." Curt Swan, who penciled both installments, was, like Julius Schwartz, saying goodbye to the books. His next Superman project wouldn't come until January of 1988 with the release of the one-shot *The Earth Stealers*. Finally, the great Kurt Schaffenberger, who inked Swan on the second chapter in *Action* #583, wasn't just saying goodbye to the Superman books with "Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?"—it was one of his last works in comics.

The title of the tale comes from the "Whatever Happened To...?" back-up series in *DC Comics Presents*, published continuously from issue #25 (Sept. 1980) to #40 (Dec. 1981) and then again in issues #42 (Feb. 1982), #47 (July 1982), and #48 (Aug. 1982). Each installment would put a nice caper to a Golden or Silver Age or a long-unseen character's career. [Editor's note: "Whatever Happened To..." will be featured two issues from now in *BI* #64, themed "Back-up Series."]



ALAN MOORE

## MENACING THE MAN OF TOMORROW

And so *Superman* #423 was released at the same time as *Man of Steel* #6 and *Watchmen* #1. Written, drawn, and edited by an all-star team all at high points in their careers, the issue begins with a framing sequence where *Daily Planet* reporter Tim Crane arrives to interview the *Planet's* former star reporter, Lois Lane-Elliott, now a married mother, in the then-future of August 16th, 1997.

Lois begins to tell the tale of the days leading up to Superman's death. She speaks of how Superman, returning from a space mission, found Metropolis ravaged by the attacking Bizarro. Bizarro thinks that he's not quite the perfect imperfect doppelganger of Superman. To make himself Superman's true opposite, he has blown up Bizarro World, like Krypton's explosion, and started to kill people as opposed to Superman's saving them. And to complete his transformation, Bizarro kills himself.

Superman and his colleagues are understandably horrified by the ordeal. Bizarro was formerly a goofy figure and now, in a matter of days, had massacred his whole planet and several Metropolitans, and killed himself.

Clark Kent arrives to work at WGBS-TV, where two unmarked packages have arrived for him. He opens the smaller of the two and dozens of little Superman action figures fly out of the box and begin attacking Clark with their heat vision. They burn off his clothes and reveal his Superman costume underneath. Two of the figures tell Superman

that they were sent by the Toyman and the Prankster, and invite him to open the large box. Superman complies, and the larger box is occupied by a dead Pete Ross. The two villains forced Pete to reveal Clark's secret identity and then killed him. Superman follows the radio waves from the Toyman and the Prankster's lair and captures the villains.

At Pete Ross' funeral, Superman expresses fear that some of his more murderous villains may come back in a similarly brutal fashion. At that time, in the frozen tundra, Lex Luthor happens upon the head of Brainiac. This was at a point where Brainiac was in his skeletal robot form, which had been destroyed by Superman. Luthor mistakenly believed that Brainiac was dead and planned to examine his alien physiology. Unfortunately for Luthor, Brainiac was indeed alive and took over Lex's body, thus forming the new Brainiac/Luthor team.

The *Daily Planet* building is attacked by a group of human beings who have been converted into Metallos. One of them attempts to exact revenge on Superman by killing Lois. But the damsel in distress is saved by Superman. Superman magnetizes the *Daily Planet* building's rooftop globe and captures the Metallos.

Concerned that another of his friends will die, Superman takes Perry and Alice White, Jimmy Olsen, Lana Lang, and Lois Lane to his Fortress of Solitude. When they arrive, so does Krypto the Superdog, returning from space and sensing danger ahead for Superman. Superman sends his guests to their quarters and is distressed to learn that the Whites are going through a rough patch in their marriage.

In Metropolis, a rampaging Kryptonite Man is captured by Brainiac/Luthor, operating from a rebuilt Brainiac skull ship. Back in the Fortress, a restless Superman wanders aimlessly. Suddenly, the Legion of Super-Heroes arrives in a time bubble, with Kara Zor-El Supergirl