

INCREDIBLE HULK IN THE BRONZE AGE!

BACKWASS

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HULK COMICS OF THE '70s & '80s • HULK AS A TEAM PLAYER • INSIDE HULK'S HEAD • ABOMINATION VILLAIN HISTORY • HULK ON TV & MORE!

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

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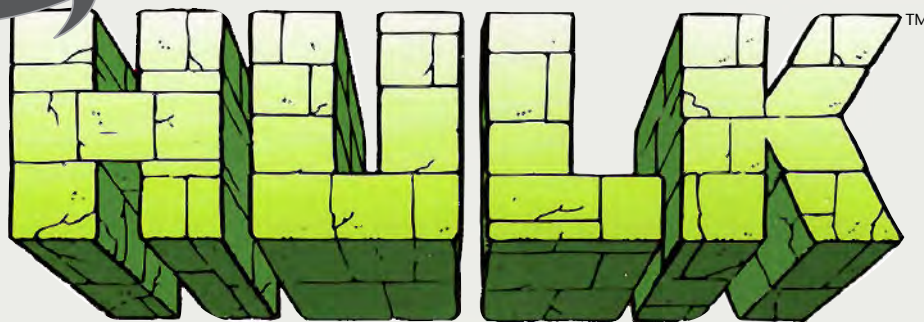
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Detail from the cover of the 1978 *The Incredible Hulk* trade paperback published by Fireside. Art by Bob Larkin. Hulk TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

HULK SMASH!

THE INCREDIBLE HULK IN THE 1970s

by Jarrod Buttery



HERB TRIMPE

Photo by Luigi Novi

HE'S HERE!
THE WORLD'S FIRST
AND GREATEST
CANADIAN
SUPER-
HERO!



AND THE SURVIVOR OF THEIR
EPIC BATTLE MUST FACE--
the WENDIGO!

It's one of comics' iconic origins: On a dare, teenager Rick Jones drives onto a military weapons-testing site. Spying on the teenager, Dr. Robert Bruce Banner races out, pushes Rick into a trench, but is himself caught in the detonation of the gamma bomb. That evening, as a nearby Geiger counter runs wild, Banner undergoes a strange transformation...

DOC BRUCE BANNER, BELTED BY GAMMA RAYS...

The Incredible Hulk #1, by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, debuted in March 1962, with a May cover date. Besides the Hulk, Bruce Banner, and Rick Jones, this first issue also introduced Betty Ross—the girl whom Banner loved (and vice-versa), and her father—General “Thunderbolt” Ross, who was to become the Hulk’s most implacable adversary. The first incarnation of the Hulk’s title lasted six bimonthly issues. Thereafter, the Hulk joined (and left) the Avengers, and also made guest appearances in *Fantastic Four*, *Amazing Spider-Man*, and the Giant-Man strip in *Tales to Astonish* #59 (Sept. 1964). This led to the Hulk’s second ongoing series, becoming that title’s co-feature in *TtA* #60 (Oct. 1964).

With issue #102 (Apr. 1968) the title changed to *The Incredible Hulk*. Herb Trimpe came on board as penciler with issue #106 (Aug. 1968) and stayed until issue #193 (Nov. 1975), missing only two issues in an incredible seven-year run.

Asked how he started at Marvel, and on *The Incredible Hulk*, Trimpe recalls, “In October of 1966, I’d just gotten back from Vietnam and had separated from the USAF. A friend of mine from art school days, John Verpoorten, was production chief at Marvel. He recommended me to Stan [Lee], and I worked in the production department for a while, as well as doing some freelance inking on Westerns. After six months or so, Stan popped his head into our cubicle and asked if I wanted to draw *The Hulk*. ‘Sure,’ said I. No big deal. Not like today.”

By 1968, Stan Lee was busy with an ever-expanding Marvel. Did he have time to provide detailed plots for his artists? “No detailed plots,” recalls Trimpe. “In fact,

The Great White North

Herb Trimpe (and John Romita) rocked the comics world with this iconic cover for Wolverine’s first appearance (excluding his cliffhanger cameo in the preceding issue, that is), *The Incredible Hulk* #181 (Nov. 1974). We’re thrilled to have Mr. Trimpe’s recreation of that masterpiece gracing this issue’s *BI* cover—abetted by the kind and talented Gerhard, who “Canada-ized” Herb’s illo.

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Follow the Leader

(right) Trimpe's cover to #123 (Jan. 1970).

(left) The new Hulk logo premiered here on issue #129 (July 1970), but "The Incredible" was added later. Original Trimpe cover art courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions.

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no plots at all. Just a brief conference, and I would compose the plot from our conversation—write down what I remembered and come up with 20 pages of story. Granted, it was mostly Stan's conversation, but he really knew what he was doing. I think this has proven itself out over the years."

RAMPAGING ROY

Roy Thomas took over the title almost exactly at the start of the '70s (calendrical correctness notwithstanding). Thomas' first full issue, *Incredible Hulk* #121 (Nov. 1969), had the Hulk facing a new adversary: the Glob. Thomas kindly shares his recollections with *BACK ISSUE*: "Stan gave me virtually no directions. The first character I made up with Herb was the Glob, using an old Lee name but basically an updating of the Heap, a character I liked from the 1940s and '50s. Herb and I just got together once



ROY THOMAS

a month and asked ourselves what kind of paces we should put Banner and the Hulk through that month. It usually didn't take us long to come up with an answer."

Herb Trimpe found the transition easy: "Roy was extremely easy to work with. The Stan Lee method of having the artist lay out the story filtered down to all the other writers at the time. I am a very good storyteller and the writers very rarely requested changes. Stan favored artists who could tell a story, because a comic book is primarily a picture medium. To be precise, working with writers the Stan Lee way made the job a dream."

In issues #122-123 (Dec. 1969-Jan. 1970), Reed Richards manages to "cure" Banner. However, due to input from Banner, the "cure" now enables Banner to control the change into the Hulk while retaining his own consciousness. Believing his curse ended, Banner renounces the transformations and proposes to Betty. Astonishingly, things don't go to plan. The Leader shows up to steal the military's "Murder Module" and is only thwarted when Banner becomes the Hulk. Vowing revenge, the Leader enlists the Rhino and the twosome attack while Bruce and Betty are at the altar!

Despite constantly pursuing the Hulk—when all he wants is to be left alone—the military repeatedly seeks his assistance when faced with a serious problem. A mysterious comet threatens the entire Earth in issue #125 (Mar. 1970), and only Banner can avert Armageddon. Piloting a rocket outfitted with a nuclear warhead Banner destroys the comet ... but picks up a hitchhiker as the Absorbing Man returns to Earth.



THE TELEVISED HULK



by Glenn Greenberg

The television landscape of the late 1970s was hardly an ideal place for the Incredible Hulk. This was a character routinely portrayed in comic books as being able to lift entire mountains and cover several miles in a single leap, able to battle the US Army without breaking a sweat. At that time, about the best that live-action TV had to offer when it came to that kind of fare was Lee Majors moving in slow motion accompanied by a "dit dit dit dit" sound effect. How could a concept like the Hulk possibly succeed in that environment?

But it did—and the impact of that success is still felt today.

THE COMING OF THE (TV) HULK

An acclaimed, highly rated two-hour TV movie starring Bill Bixby premiered on CBS on November 4, 1977, with a well-received sequel airing just 23 days later. That in turn led to a weekly series that launched on March 10, 1978, and would run for five seasons. It would be one of the first attempts to treat comic-book material in a serious manner, eschewing the campiness of the Adam West *Batman* series of the 1960s.

True, the Hulk of the TV series was not the character as portrayed in the comic books. The show was an adaptation in every sense of the word. The premise, the status quo, the character's strength level and abilities, and even the name of his alter ego were changed. No less an authority than the Hulk's co-creator says that these changes were key to making the concept work for television.

"The Hulk [TV series] was done intelligently," said Stan Lee in a June 26, 2000, interview with the website IGN.com. "It was beautifully done. [It was changed] quite a bit from the comic book, but every change ... made sense."

THE STRONGEST ONE THERE IS?

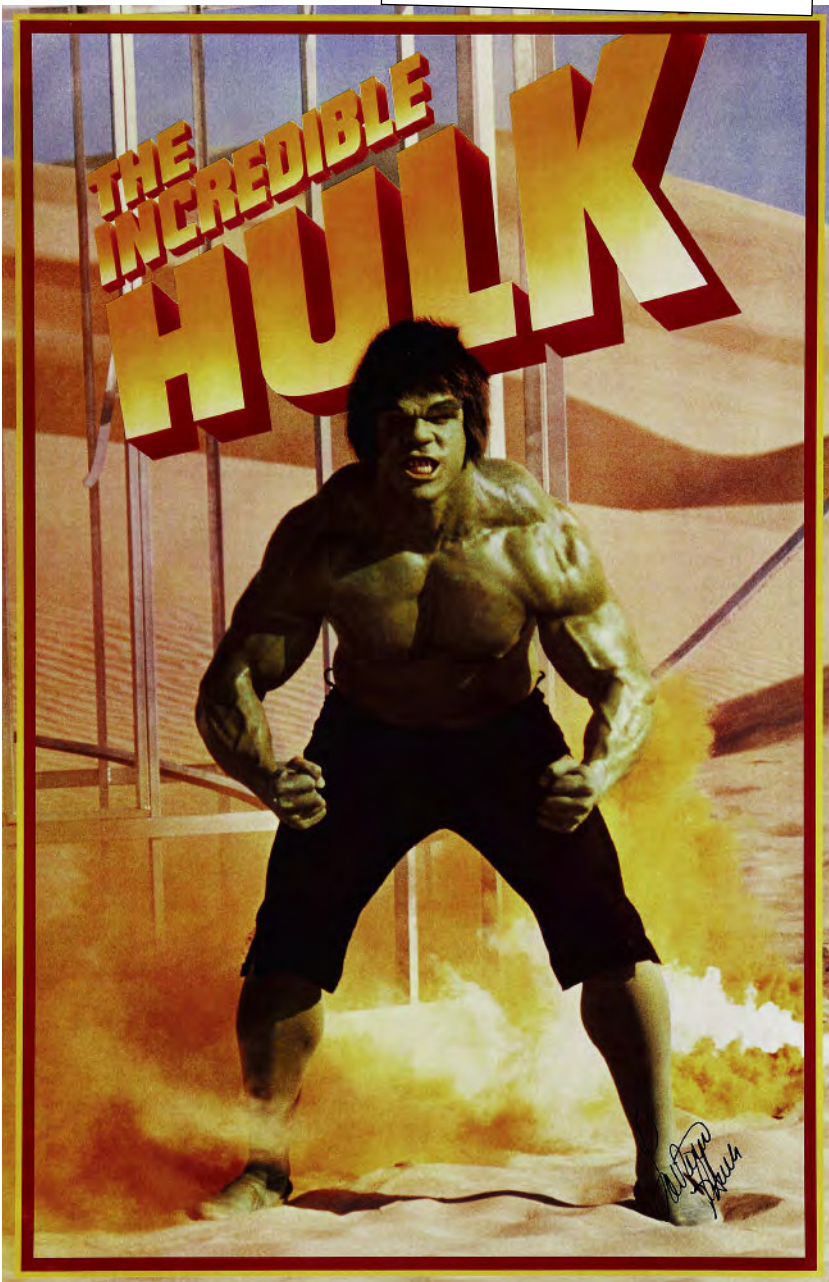
As noted above, the Hulk of the comics had near-limitless strength. The Hulk of the TV series could smash through brick walls, flip cars, leap several stories, knock down trees, and, if he was feeling really ambitious, tear apart a pressure chamber designed for deep-sea use. Most of the time, though, he just tossed around gangsters, thugs, and general troublemakers.

The TV Hulk's strength level was, of course, dictated by the show's limited budget, but also by what developer/

Now You've Made Him Angry— Don't Say You Weren't Warned...

Purportedly signed by the actor behind the green makeup, Lou Ferrigno, this 23" x 35" poster was released by Universal International in 1978. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com).

The Incredible Hulk TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.
Hulk TV show © 1978 Universal Pictures.





Making Contact

Kenneth Johnson with Bill Bixby during the filming of the original 1977 *Incredible Hulk* TV movie. Bixby is wearing the white contact lenses for the first time. Photograph from the archives of Kenneth Johnson.

Executive Producer Kenneth Johnson determined mass television audiences would accept. Johnson, who wrote and directed the original *Hulk* TV movie, had previously served as a writer, director, and producer on *The Six Million Dollar Man* and had created and executive-produced *The Bionic Woman*. So he certainly had a degree of expertise in this area. For both of those shows, Johnson had established certain ground rules, setting strict limits on what Steve Austin and Jaime Sommers could do with their bionic abilities.

"When you're dealing with the area of fantasy, if you say, 'Well, they're bionic so they can do whatever they want,' then it gets out of hand, so you've got to have really, really tight rules," Johnson tells *BACK ISSUE*.

"[Steve and Jaime] can jump up two stories but not three," he explains. "They can jump down three stories but not four. Jaime can't turn over a truck but she can turn over a car." Johnson says he applied the same kind of thinking to *The Incredible Hulk*.

"Clearly there were scenes where [the Hulk] seems to be stronger than the bionic pair, and I think that's probably legitimate," he says. But Johnson was adamant about not going too far—and he feels especially vindicated after seeing later portrayals of the character.

"My wife Susie and I were at the premiere of the *Ang Lee Hulk* movie ... and when [the Hulk] started bouncing from mountaintop to mountaintop, Susie leaned over to me and said, 'Hulk go boing boing!' It was ludicrous—my Hulk never went 'boing boing.'"

BUILDING A NEW BANNER

Johnson, definitely *not* an admirer of comic books, wanted to distance the show from its source material as much as possible. In developing the concept for television, he zeroed in on the Jekyll/Hyde aspect and the notion of a man struggling to contain the inner demon that he unwillingly sets free when he can't control his anger.

Thus nuclear physicist Dr. Robert Bruce Banner (commonly called Bruce) became research scientist Dr. David Bruce Banner (*never* called Bruce). Bruce was single at the time, having never been married, while David was recently widowed, his wife Laura having been killed in a car accident that David survived. Bruce became the Hulk after getting caught in the detonation

of his own invention, the gamma bomb, while rescuing a teenager who stumbled onto the site where the bomb was being tested. With David, it happened after he accidentally overdosed on gamma radiation while trying to determine the connection between the presence of gamma and amazing displays of strength from otherwise normal human beings.

Then there was the characterization of the Hulk himself. Throughout his history in the comics up to that point, the Hulk ranged from being somewhat eloquent ("I don't need you! I don't need anybody! With my strength—my power—the world is mine!") to extremely monosyllabic ("Hulk >urp< likes beans."). But one thing was always consistent: The big green guy *talked*. Not so in the TV series.

MUTING THE HULK

In his 2003 commentary for the DVD release of the original TV movie, Johnson explained, "In the comic book, he sort of had 'Hulk-speak,' a bit like the Frankenstein Monster, but I felt that it was just going to demean the project if we did that."

Stan Lee echoed this sentiment in a 2004 video interview for the Archive of American Television: "When we started the television show, Ken said to me, 'You know, Stan, I don't think the Hulk should talk.' The minute he said it, I knew he was right. [In the comics,] I had the Hulk talking like this: 'Hulk crush! Hulk get him!' I could get away with it in a comic, but that would have sounded so silly if he spoke that way in a television show."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

When it comes to the change of Dr. Banner's name from Bruce to David, however, Lee was not as supportive. Throughout the years, he has always maintained that he opposed the switch. He has also asserted that it was made because, at that time, the name Bruce was considered effeminate and associated primarily with homosexual men, so the Hollywood folks wanted it gone. (Apparently, the fact that Banner was depicted as having been married wasn't sufficient evidence of his heterosexuality.)

But Executive Producer Johnson has his own explanation for the change, and it's remained consistent for nearly 35 years.

"Alliterative names are comic-booky and silly, like 'Lois Lane' and 'Clark Kent,'" Johnson told writer Steven Swires in an interview published in *Marvel's The Hulk!* magazine #20 (Apr. 1980). "A name like 'Bruce' doesn't have the degree of adult intelligence that 'David' has. 'David Banner' is solid, different, non-alliterative, and *not* a comic book name."

In his 2003 DVD commentary, Johnson reiterated that explanation, and added that he specifically chose the name David because it was the name of his oldest son. He also noted that at the end of the original TV movie, with Banner believed to be dead, the scientist's gravestone is shown to bear the full name David Bruce Banner—a little gesture to ease Stan Lee's disappointment.

Still, Johnson's aversion to alliterative names is both ironic and amusing, given the name of his lead actor.

"I never even thought about that!" he says with a laugh when *BACK ISSUE* points out to him that the star of his show was named Bill Bixby—and the female guest star in the original TV movie was Susan Sullivan! "When you're right, you're right. I was stuck with Lois Lane, Lana Lang, and Clark Kent no matter where I went!"

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

episode guide

by **Glenn Greenberg**

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Developed for Television by Kenneth Johnson
Cast: Bill Bixby, Jack Colvin, Lou Ferrigno
Executive Producer: Kenneth Johnson

SEASON 1 (1977–1978)

Episode 1: "The Incredible Hulk"
(TV movie – Airdate: 11/4/77)

Synopsis: Dr. David Bruce Banner, hoping to tap into the hidden strength that all humans possess, receives an accidental overdose of gamma radiation and soon finds himself transforming into a super-powerful green-skinned creature whenever he becomes angry.

Guest-stars: Susan Sullivan, Charles Siebert, Lara Parker (uncredited)
Writer: Kenneth Johnson
Director: Kenneth Johnson

Episode 2: "Death in the Family"
(TV movie, also known as "The Return of the Incredible Hulk" – Airdate: 11/27/77)

Synopsis: While searching for a cure for his new condition, David Banner befriends a paralyzed young heiress and discovers that she is slowly being poisoned by her greedy, scheming stepmother.

Guest-stars: Laurie Prange, Dorothy Tristan, William Daniels
Writer: Kenneth Johnson
Director: Alan J. Levi

Episode 3: "The Final Round"
(Series debut – Airdate: 03/10/78)

Synopsis: Banner befriends a down-on-his-luck boxer who's desperate for a big break and unwittingly involved with ruthless drug traffickers.

Guest-stars: Martin Kove, Al Ruscio, Fran Myers
Writer: Kenneth Johnson
Director: Kenneth Gilbert

Episode 4: "The Beast Within" (Airdate: 03/17/78)
Synopsis: Banner lands a job at a zoo working with a female scientist who is testing an anti-aggression serum on the animals—but a smuggling operation jeopardizes the experiments and places David and his new colleague in deadly danger.

Guest-stars: Caroline McWilliams, Dabbs Greer
Writers: Karen Harris and Jill Sherman
Director: Kenneth Gilbert

Episode 5: "Of Guilt, Models, and Murder"
(Airdate: 03/24/78)

Synopsis: Dazed and disoriented after his latest transformation, Banner fears that the Hulk is responsible for the death of a beautiful model and becomes the valet of the dead woman's boyfriend to get to the truth.

Guest-stars: Jeremy Brett, Loni Anderson, Deanna Lund
Writer: James D. Parriott
Director: Larry Stewart

Episode 6: "Terror in Times Square"
(Airdate: 03/31/78)

Synopsis: Banner ends up in New York City working at an arcade and befriending the owner and his beautiful daughter—but trouble ensues when the old man decides to stop paying protection money to the local crime boss.

Guest-stars: Robert Alda, Jack Kruschen, Pamela Shoop, Arny Freeman
Writer: William Schwartz
Director: Alan J. Levi

Episode 7: "747" (Airdate: 04/07/78)

Synopsis: Following a lead on a possible cure, Banner travels across the country on an airplane that happens to be carrying the treasures of King Tut—which the pilot and his flight attendant accomplice intend to steal.

Guest-stars: Brandon Cruz, Edward Power, Sondra Currie, Denise Galik
Writers: Thomas Szollosi and Richard Christian Matheson
Director: Sigmund Neufeld, Jr.

Episode 8: "The Hulk Breaks Las Vegas"
(Airdate: 04/21/78)

Synopsis: Working at a casino, Banner inadvertently gets pulled into a newspaper exposé on mob corruption and, as the Hulk, ends up having to save his own relentless pursuer, investigative reporter Jack McGee.

Guest-stars: Julie Gregg, Dean Santoro, John Crawford, Don Marshall
Writer: Justin Edgerton
Director: Larry Stewart

Episode 9: "Never Give a Trucker an Even Break"
(Airdate: 04/28/78)

Synopsis: Banner gets caught up in a young woman's scheme to steal back her father's truck from a group of hijackers.

Guest-stars: Jennifer Darling, Frank R. Christi, Grand L. Bush
Writer: Kenneth Johnson
Director: Kenneth Gilbert

Episode 10: "Life and Death" (Airdate: 05/12/78)

Synopsis: Banner befriends a pregnant woman who intends to put her baby up for adoption, but he becomes highly suspicious of the medical center where she is supposed to give birth.

Guest-stars: Diane Civita, Andrew Robinson, Julie Adams
Writer: James D. Parriott
Director: Jeffrey Hayden

Episode 11: "Earthquakes Happen"
(Airdate: 05/19/78)

Synopsis: Banner infiltrates a nuclear power plant to gain access to its gamma ray equipment in the hope of curing himself—but a powerful earthquake occurs, leaving the facility headed

toward a devastating meltdown.

Guest-stars: Sherry Jackson, Peter Brandon, Kene Holliday
Writers: Jim Tisdale and Migdia Varela
Director: Harvey Laidman

Episode 12: "The Waterfront Story"
(Airdate: 05/31/78)

Synopsis: Banner takes a job at a tavern working for a pretty young widow whose late husband had been head of the local dockworkers' union—but David soon discovers that the man's death was not an accident.

Guest-stars: Sheila Larken, James B. Sicking, Jack Kelly
Writers: Paul M. Belous and Robert Wolterstorff
Director: Reza S. Badiji

SEASON 2 (1978–1979)

Episode 13: "Married"
(TV Movie – Airdate: 09/22/78)

Synopsis: Seeking a cure in Hawaii, Banner falls in love and marries Dr. Caroline Fields, a terminally ill scientist.

Guest-stars: Mariette Hartley, Meeno Peluce
Writer: Kenneth Johnson
Director: Kenneth Johnson

Episode 14: "The Antowuk Horror"
(Airdate: 09/29/78)

Synopsis: After the Hulk appears in a small dying resort town, thus bringing a wave of media attention and an influx of tourists, the townspeople create their own "monster" to keep the hype going.

Guest-stars: Bill Lucking, Debbie Lytton
Writer: Nicholas Corea
Director: Sigmund Neufeld, Jr.

Episode 15: "Ricky" (Airdate: 10/06/78)

Synopsis: Working at a racecar track, Banner befriends a mentally challenged young man who dreams of becoming a driver and keeps ending up in life-threatening situations.

Guest-stars: Mickey Jones, Robin Mattson, James Daughton
Writer: Jaron Summers
Director: Frank Orsatti

Episode 16: "Rainbow's End" (Airdate: 10/13/78)

Synopsis: Banner enters the world of horse racing when he hears of a Native American trainer's great success with a special herbal compound created to calm a wild racing horse—but someone has marked that horse for death.

Guest-stars: Craig Stevens, Michelle Nichols, Ned Romero, Gene Evans
Writers: Karen Harris and Jill Sherman
Director: Kenneth Gilbert

PRINCE STREET NEWS HULK SMASH!

by Karl Heitmueller Jr.

OF ALL THE LIVE-ACTION TV SUPERHEROES OF THE BRONZE AGE, MOST WOULD AGREE THAT THE MOST SUCCESSFUL, BOTH CREATIVELY AND COMMERCIALY WAS THE INCREDIBLE HULK (WITH WONDER WOMAN A CLOSE SECOND).



FOR FIVE SEASONS, VIEWERS TUNED IN TO SEE IF DR. DAVID BANNER COULD FIND A WAY TO CONTROL THE RAGING SPIRIT THAT DWELLED WITHIN HIM, AS HE WANDERED THE COUNTRY, INEVITABLY MEETING OUT SOME MEAN GREEN JUSTICE ON VARIOUS FORMS OF NE'ER-DO-WELLS.



THE SHOW WASN'T PERFECT. THE PLOTS COULD BE REPETITIVE, THE SETS FLIMSY, AND LOU FERRIGNO'S FRIGHT WIG, PEDAL PUSHERS, FREQUENTLY SMUDGED MAKE-UP AND OFTEN-VISIBLE CANVAS SHOES THREW VERISIMILITUDE OUT THE WINDOW ON A FAIRLY REGULAR BASIS.



SOME COMICS FANS BEMOANED THE SMALL SCALE OF THE THREATS, AND WISHED THAT THE HULK POSSESSED THE VERBAL CAPACITY TO WARN THE PUNY HUMANS THAT HE WAS GOING TO SMASH!



BUT BILL BIXBY'S BANNER * WAS A PITCH-PERFECT PERFORMANCE, PAIRING PITIFUL PATHOS WITH PANACHE AND PERSONALITY. AND FERRIGNO'S HULK WAS THE MOST SYMPATHETIC MONSTER SINCE KARLOFF'S FRANKENSTEIN CREATURE.



MOST FANS KNOW THAT RICHARD 'JAWS' KIEL WAS ORIGINALLY CAST AS THE HULK, BUT DURING PRODUCTION, IT BECAME OBVIOUS THAT HIS NON-MUSCULAR PHYSIQUE WASN'T GOING TO WORK.



IMAGINE SOMEONE ELSE SLATHERED IN THE GREEN MAKEUP - LIKE ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER (WHO AUDITIONED, BUT WAS TOO SHORT)...



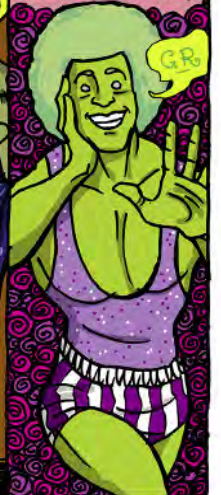
... OR TED CASSIDY, WHO DID PROVIDE THE HULK'S GROWLS...



... OR OVERSIZED PRO WRESTLER HAYSTACKS CALHOUN?



OR WHAT IF THEY HAD JUST GONE FOR A HULK WHO WAS REALLY FIT AND HIRED RICHARD SIMMONS?



*Everyone knows that Bruce was renamed David to avoid what Kenneth Johnson thought was silly comic book alliteration... one has to wonder how Bill Bixby felt about that...

With Thunderbolt Ross' troops fast approaching, the Jade Giant made his way behind the mountains to his hidden van. The powerful green-and-purple machine traversed the barren desert plains, until finally arriving atop a hidden plateau. There the Green Goliath took to the skies in his custom-built helicopter, scanning the ground far below for any unforeseen threats. At last he arrived at his destination, his secluded Hulk Hide-A-Way headquarters, where he would be safe ... for now.

What, you don't remember any of this?

You could search your long boxes and DVD tower and you won't find any such adventure of the Incredible Hulk. A story like this would have to be the product of a child's imagination ... combined with actual toys of the 1970s. Yes, Virginia, there really was a Hulk van, a Hulk helicopter, and a Hulk Hide-A-Way playset. From the sublime to the surreal, you name it, the Hulk was in on it during his Bronze Age merchandising heyday. Toys, clothing, lunchboxes—even toilet paper! When the *Hulk* TV show became a hit, manufacturers of all kinds saw green ... and lots of it!

GREEN WITH ENVY

The Hulk first graced retail shelves in the late '60s, riding the wave of merchandise released in the wake of the *Marvel Super Heroes* animated series, of which Hulk was a part. Hulk was mostly just riding the coattails of the more popular Spider-Man and Captain America, always the third or possibly fourth choice to be added to a product line. He continued to appear sporadically on products throughout the early '70s, always part of a larger Marvel line. He joined Meگو's World's Greatest Super-Heroes line of action figures in 1975, but was only a marginal seller for the company. It appeared that the Hulk was forever doomed to be an also-ran in the Marvel licensing firmament.

And then, millions of kids saw Bill Bixby get angry.

MARVEL'S TV SENSATION

The Incredible Hulk aired as a television movie on November 4, 1977. Adult audiences were instantly captivated by the tragic story of David Banner, with Bixby deftly portraying a haunted man on the run. Kids loved it when Bixby turned into the green-hued Lou Ferrigno, whose massive presence wasn't something regularly seen on TV. It didn't take long for CBS to order a series, and *The Incredible Hulk* debuted as a mid-season replacement in March of the following year.

Even though the TV series eschewed supervillains and military conflicts for smaller, human-interest stories, it didn't matter. Both kids and parents were hooked on the Hulk, and soon there was plenty of Hulk merchandise for said parents to spend their hard-earned green on.

Mego was in a great position to capitalize on Hulkmania, and quickly exploited the license while the

ALL ABOUT THE GREEN: HULK MERCHANDISE IN THE BACK ISSUE ERA

by Chris Franklin



Hulk Want to Play!

Pre-Bronze Age collectibles: Marvel's 1966 Hulk poster, Marx's 1967 Hulk figure, Tifton's 1966 Hulk 45 RPM record, and the Traits' 1969 "Nobody Loves the Hulk" record.

Incredible Hulk TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.



original 8" Mego figure became one of their top sellers. 12 1/2" and 3 3/4" Hulk action figures were released, and Mego included the Jade Giant in its collector-aimed 5" diecast figure line, putting him in the esteemed company of Spider-Man, Superman, and Batman.

Mego also produced a Hulk figure of a more dubious nature. Inspired by (or ripped off from) Kenner's popular Stretch Armstrong, Mego made its own line of corn-syrup-filled stretchable figures under the Elastic Super Heroes brand, and the Hulk was one of them, joining Spider-Man, Superman, and Batman ... but oddly enough, NOT Mr. Fantastic! [Editor's note: However, that line *did* include the first stretchable superhero, Plastic Man, then the star of his own Saturday morning cartoon.]

BANNER YEARS

With Mego Hulk figures selling like hotcakes, it was no surprise that savvy toymakers jumped on their coattails. Empire, famous for its ride-on toys and blow-molded holiday decorations, produced a series of licensed plastic vehicles, conveniently scaled to fit Mego's popular 8" size. Empire released helicopters and/or

vans for CHiPs, Batman, Spider-Man, and, strangely enough, the Incredible Hulk. Sure, the idea of an 8-foot-tall man-brute driving a van may seem strange to diehard fans, but to toymakers, it was just a matter of taking advantage of a hot property.

Empire wasn't the only manufacturer making licensed, but unofficial additions to Mego's line. Tara Toys, mostly known for their vinyl action-figure playcases, created the Hulk Hide-A-Way playset in 1979. The pyramid-like playcase appeared to be a mountain headquarters for the Hulk, who is shown on the vinyl-covered cardboard exterior. When the case is opened, the walls flatten out to become the floor of the high-tech Hide-A-Way. Cardboard computers are included, as well as a transmutation chamber, where children could transform the included flat, cardboard David (Bruce) Banner into the Hulk. Sears carried this playset as a catalog exclusive.

Long-running toy manufacturer Remco circumvented Mego's lock on superhero action figures by making non-articulated, electronic versions of Marvel and DC's biggest and brightest. Remco made Hulk in both its 12" Energized and 9" Powerized lines. Hulk was once again rubbing elbows with DC and Marvel's top

Mego and More

(clockwise from left)

The Mego Hulk in box, Hulk thermos and metal lunchbox, the Mego Hulk on blister card, and the Hulk Hide-A-Way playset.

Incredible Hulk TM & ©
Marvel Characters, Inc.

SMASHING INTO SYNDICATION: THE INCREDIBLE HULK NEWSPAPER STRIP

by Dewey Cassell



LARRY LIEBER



As with a lot of things at Marvel Comics, it all started with Stan Lee. The year was 1977 and Marvel had launched a syndicated newspaper strip based on *The Amazing Spider-Man*, with Lee scripting the stories and veteran Spider-Man comic-book artist John Romita, Sr. drawing the panels. The *Spider-Man* strip was a success, and soon Marvel began looking around for other characters to put in the funny papers. Next out of the gate was *Howard the Duck*, which debuted in June 1977, followed by *Conan the Barbarian*, which began its run in September of the following year.

Then, on Monday, October 30, 1978, *The Incredible Hulk* first appeared in newspapers. As with *Spider-Man*, *Howard the Duck*, and *Conan*, the *Hulk* strip was distributed by the Register and Tribune Syndicate, but while the other strips from Marvel featured supporting characters from the comic books, the *Hulk* strip did not, because at the time the *Hulk* strip began, there was a place the Jade Giant was even more widely recognized than in comic books—television.

With the success of the *Incredible Hulk* live-action television show, covered at length earlier in this issue, Stan Lee decided to use its *Fugitive*-inspired formula as the basis for the *Hulk* newspaper strip. Adults comprise the majority of newspaper readership, and they were more likely to have seen the show than to have read the comic books. However, the stories in the *Hulk* newspaper strip were unique—they didn't mirror the television show, although they utilized a similar premise. Furthermore, likenesses of the television actors was not used in the strip. Like the television show, though, the Hulk did not speak and he was not as strong or resilient as in the comic books.

The *Incredible Hulk* newspaper strip was initially written by Lee and penciled by his brother, Larry Lieber. Lieber had been writing and drawing comic books for Marvel since the 1950s. However, Lee soon found that he had too much on his plate and Lieber took over writing the strip as well, initially ghosting for Lee and later scripting with his name in the byline.

GOOD TIMES

Lieber enjoyed working on the *Hulk* strip: "It started out Stan was writing it and I was drawing it. But after a while, he gave up writing it and turned it over to me. He sort of left it in my hands. So I wrote it and drew it, and that I loved most of all. It was all mine when I wrote it. I felt more creative doing that. It is a story with pictures, but the main part of it is the story. I think that if you have wonderful pictures, but a poor story,

Buckle(r) Up for the Sunday Funnies

Courtesy of the strip's second artist, Rich Buckler, the *Incredible Hulk* installment for Sunday, October 14, 1979. Despite the byline, its writer was (the ghosting) Larry Lieber.

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Larry's Labors

Alan's, too! (center)

The very first Incredible Hulk daily, from Monday, October 1978.

(bottom) The first Sunday page, from November 5, 1978.

Note the "widescreen" stacked, vertical panels at the far right of the middle tier.

Both strips written by Stan Lee and drawn by Larry Lieber. (top)

Alan Kupperberg's character sheet for the Hulk cast, from 1979. Original art scans courtesy of Richard Morgan—thanks, Richard!

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you won't have a good strip. If you have a wonderful story, but poor pictures, you can still have a very good strip. I've always felt the story was the most important thing. Most readers are not art critics.

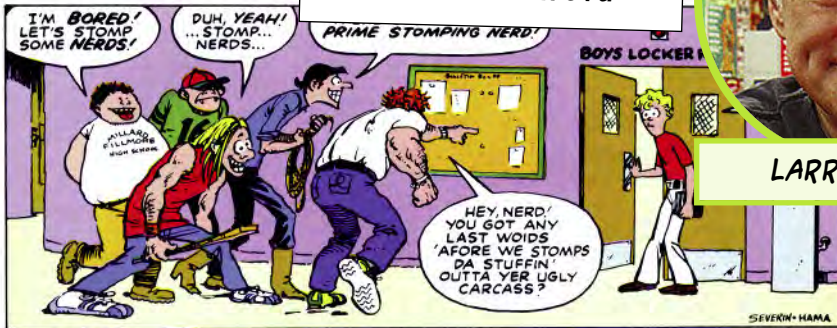
"The artist who drew better than anybody I ever saw was John Buscema," Lieber continues, "but I don't know if his work would have sold the best just because of the drawing. Dick Tracy didn't have great artwork, but it was a very popular strip. When I wrote the Hulk strip, I tried to make it almost as good as the movies that I had seen at the time that I enjoyed, as though I was writing an important screenplay."

Lieber was a fan of the Hulk television show, and it was reflected in his work on the newspaper strip. Lieber recalls, "I was influenced by it because they seemed like actual people in real settings. I tried to do the same kind of thing. I made up the characters myself. I can still remember some of those stories. I did one about a boxer and his daughter. She's a model and he's a boxer, and she hates him because he left her mother and all that. One story I had was with the Hulk and three women. One was a mud wrestler, one was a karate expert, and one was a gal from Texas who had a rich father she was running



Teen HULK

by Mark Arnold



LARRY HAMA

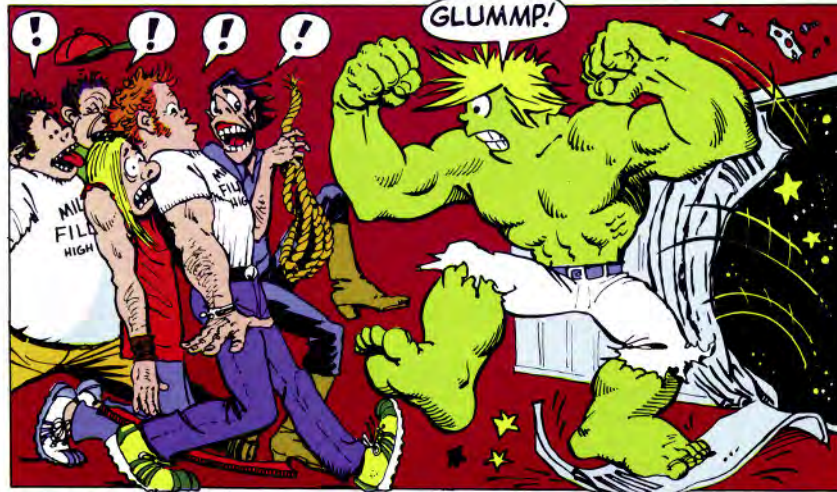
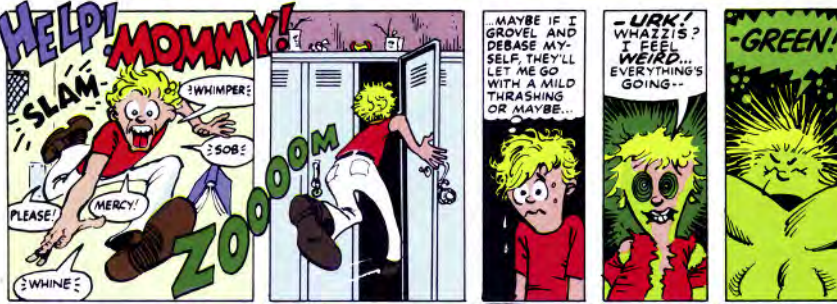
Photo by Luigi Novi.

including Marie Severin.

Then, with issue #59 (Feb. 1980), a strange thing happened. The inside back cover teased a new story written by Larry Hama and drawn by Marie Severin with a character named Teen Hulk. Obviously inspired by the recent Hulkmania of *The Incredible Hulk* TV show starring Bill Bixby and the *Savage She-Hulk* comic-book title, Teen Hulk loosely borrowed from what made Spider-Man so successful: an awkward teenager suddenly endowed with superpowers.

Since the preview was only a page and *Crazy* had been known to not always follow through on ideas, seeing a full seven-page story in issue #60 was somewhat of a surprise. The origin story reveals that Marie Severin and Larry Hama were behind this new creation. It is a take-off on the origins of the Amazing Spider-Man and the Incredible Hulk, where a teenager named Chester Weems is zapped by his dentist's new Gamma Ray Cavity Decoder. The Decoder's X-rays bombard Weems, and like the Incredible Hulk, Chester turns into Teen Hulk whenever he gets angry. As Teen Hulk, Weems beats up his Millard Fillmore High School bullies, and the initial story is left as a cliffhanger as Teen Hulk rides a skateboard on a collision course with a truck.

Hama remembers the origin of where Teen Hulk came from: "We needed a new feature for *Crazy*. Jim Owsley (Christopher Priest) came up with most of it. It was funnier and more visual than a Teen Thor or any other ideas."



TEEN-HULK IS COMING NEXT MONTH IN **CRAZY**
TM (NO OTHER MAG WILL HAVE 'IM.!)

Mean, Green Teen

From *Crazy* #59 (Feb. 1980), the Larry Hama/Marie Severin teaser for the mag's new Teen Hulk feature.

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THE ABOMINATION

DIARY OF A MAD MONSTER



by John "THE MEGO STRETCH HULK" Cimino



Madness: (*mad-nis*) *noun*

1. the quality state of being mad: as rage, insanity, extreme folly
2. extremely foolish behavior.

Madness: a word that best describes the Abomination, a villainous monstrosity that has been terrorizing the Marvel Universe for many years. His heated rivalry with the Incredible Hulk is legendary and has caused more collateral damage than the US Army cares to admit. By gaining immense size and strength through gamma-radiation poisoning, the Russian spy known as Emil Blonsky went from a quest to conquer the world to losing what was left of his sanity. Little did he know that this "transformation" would cause more pain and heartache in his life than he could have ever imagined. Not only would he lose the woman he loved, he would be constantly thwarted by the Hulk and repeatedly used and manipulated by villains for their nefarious schemes. Through it all, Emil would suffer from extreme emotional breakdowns and act so irrationally at times that no one, not even he himself, knew what he was going to do next.

So the question has always remained: Was it Emil's brush with gamma radiation that caused his descent into madness, or was his suppressed insanity already there?

"HE WAS MORE COMPLEX THAN OTHER VILLAINOUS BRUTES."

– Steve Englehart

WHO IS EMIL BRONSKY?

A vast majority of the Earth's population cannot survive exposure to gamma radiation. This powerful radiation causes sickness and, in almost every case, immediate death. However, for a select few, gamma radiation transforms or mutates a person's physical form based upon their subconscious image. In Emil's case, this unique transformation was something more. It seems to affect his mental stability. Bringing up the question, *Was Emil insane after the gamma radiation entered his physiology or was he always unstable from the very beginning?*, with each exciting appearance of this massive monster, one could almost chart his descent into the insane. Even from his first appearance there is a hint of what was in store for this much-maligned enemy of Ol' Greenskin.

Monster Mash-Up

The Incredible One versus the Abominable One in a dynamite 1979 painting by Rich Larson and Steve Fastner, produced for a Marvel portfolio issued in 1980 by SQP, Inc. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com).

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Hulk Hiatus

Emil Blonsky has blindsided other Marvel heroes in his abominable career, including (left) the Sentinel of the Spaceways in *Silver Surfer* #12 (Jan. 1970) and (right) the Thunder God in *Thor* #178 (July 1970). Both covers by "Big" John Buscema.

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"THE ABOMINATION WAS VERY FORMIDABLE AND VERY UGLY! ALMOST THE HULK'S EQUAL."

- Sal Buscema

Readers are introduced to the Abomination in the two-part Hulk adventure in *Tales to Astonish* #90 and 91 (Apr. and May 1967). In Emil's past life, he shared a tremendous love for his wife, Nadia Blonsky. They shared a final kiss before he was sent to the US to spy for the Russian government on the Gamma Base in New Mexico. This was a very important moment in his history because it shows that Emil did have the capacity to love and care for someone despite his own complicated psyche.

But going to Gamma Base wasn't the best of ideas on that day, because this leads us into the area where the Abomination is born. When Emil disguises himself as an MP and finds Bruce Banner inside on a mission to end his life with a deadly dose of Gamma Rays, Major Glenn Talbot and some soldiers soon grab Banner and drag him away. Emil, not savvy to this science, quickly finds himself bathed with extremely high doses of gamma radiation. Soon Emil Blonsky is no more, and a massively scaled and lizard-like brute known to the world as the Abomination rages forth and goes on a wild rampage. This attracts the Hulk when tensions get too high for Bruce Banner, and he changes into his greenskinned alter ego. Predictably, the two rampaging brutes slug it out in a nice tussle in which the Abomination proves to be the physically superior at this time, and the Abomination knocks the Hulk completely out (no small feat indeed). He then turns, scoops up Betty Ross, and leaps away into the sky (hey, why not?). We all know this will fuel the Hulk even more, and he eventually beats up our dastardly villain in the rematch. But the real winner is the cosmic being known as the Stranger, who takes Emil as a prisoner to use in his own grand designs (BOOM!).

The Abomination and his erratic actions come out in full effect during his time in space when he confronts the Silver Surfer (*Silver Surfer* #12, Jan. 1970) and then the Thunder God Thor (*Thor* #178, July 1970) when trying to escape from his prison. Both of these super-heavyweight heroes put a hurtin' on Emil and he suffers more bitter defeats and brain damage. During these adventures, Emil is shown to have the capacity to lose all sense of rational thought, even in the most dire of circumstances. For instance, he had a chance to escape after Thor set him free from his cell, but instead of just leaving, Emil decided to try and take over the Stranger's ship for his own purpose—bad move, big guy, because Thor was having none of that (KRAAKA-KOOM!).

NOT ONE TO LEARN HIS LESSON...

It is unknown how much the stress of being held captive by the Stranger damaged Emil's mind, but he clearly became much more vicious and seemed to focus that viciousness on the Hulk. It's highly likely that Emil blamed the Hulk for his recent predicaments (which ultimately consumed him). As seen in *The Incredible Hulk* #136 and 137 (Feb. and Mar. 1971), while fighting on a nameless asteroid and defeating a huge creature, the space sailor known as Xeron the Star-Slayer brings the Abomination on board his flying vessel to use his great strength as an oarsman. The Abomination, always looking to get ahead, challenges the first-mate of the ship to a death duel and kills him. Now with the mantle of first-mate, the Abomination stands above all on the ship except for Xeron and the leader, Captain Cybor. Both are on a fanatical mission to capture the giant energy beast known as Klaatu. This leads them to New York City, where they end up losing Klaatu in the chase, but they gain a new crew member in the Hulk. Naturally, when the Abomination confronts Jade Jaws they begin fighting, but both brutes are made to put aside their differences for the greater purpose in capturing Klaatu. Throughout the entire quest, the two brutes just want to tangle and ultimately end up forgetting about the mission entirely and fighting it out (sweet poetry). Drifting through space, the Abomination is eventually overwhelmed by the Hulk's increasing strength and endurance and is punched so hard that he is sent rocketing back toward Earth (Y-OUCH!!!).

Marvel Comics' *The Incredible Hulk of the 1980s* was a transformative period for the Green Goliath with two milestone runs, the Bill Mantlo and Peter David eras. These runs explored the many facets of Bruce Banner's fragmented psyche and subjected the Hulk to multiple physical and mental alterations. These groundbreaking stories challenged who the Hulk was and proved to be fertile ground that would inspire succeeding writers and artists.

ENTER: MANTLO

Bill Mantlo had been writing for Marvel Comics since the mid-1970s, and took over as the new regular writer from Roger Stern with *The Incredible Hulk* #245 (Mar. 1980). The Hulk enjoyed an increased popularity because of the character's TV series and proudly displayed "Marvel's TV Sensation" on its covers. However, Mantlo broke from the TV show's formula and took the book in his own direction.

"Mantlo was huge with the emotional stories and lives of the characters that he cared about so deeply," writer Greg Pak (*The Incredible Hulk*, 2006-2011) explains. "His Hulk work in particular was stunning in terms of the depth of his exploration of Bruce Banner and the Hulk. On an emotional level, Mantlo dug deep into those depths and looked at the Hulk and Banner in many different incarnations and found so many different ways to explore the character."

"Jarella" was the first word of Mantlo dialogue as the Hulk made his way across the New Mexico desert to the Gamma Base, searching for the remains of his love Jarella. Mantlo let us know from the start that his Hulk was an emotional being with a volatile anger, but also with love and compassion.

The Hulk found Jarella's body in the Gamma Base's morgue, and through a series of flashbacks Mantlo spotlighted their love, creating emotional ties with the reader. The Hulk's love for Jarella won over Captain Mar-Vell (Rick Jones' sometimes partner), who stopped fighting the Hulk and helped him return to Jarella's sub-atomic world with her body.

On Jarella's world (*Incredible Hulk* #247, May 1980), the Hulk battled through waves of threats to bury Jarella's body in the sacred Valley of Life. Readers palpably felt the levels of frustration building as the Hulk had to overcome these hurdles. All he wanted to



BILL MANTLO

HULK SMASH MORE!

THE INCREDIBLE HULK IN THE 1980s

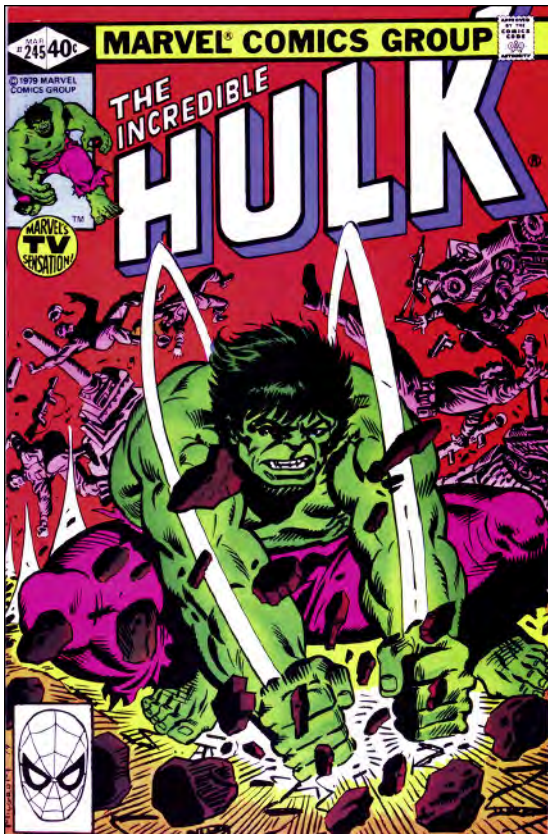
by Jason Shayer



Hulks Come in All Colors

A Hulk hallmark of the 1980s was writer Peter David's Gray Hulk, paving a path for the Red Hulk and other variations seen in more recent years. Detail from the cover of *The Incredible Hulk* #332 (June 1987). Art by Steve Geiger and Bob McLeod.

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do was to put Jarella to rest. His ordeal was accompanied by an underlying feeling of loss and sadness. The final obstacle was the Elder of the Universe called the Gardener. In a typical Mantlo moment, the Gardener learned a lesson in humility from the Hulk's love and allowed the Hulk to put Jarella to rest.

"Bill's approach to the Hulk was unique in the fact that he tried to humanize 'the beast,'" Bill's brother, Mike Mantlo, reminds us. "Bill took the green monster far beyond his simplistic 'HULK SMASH!' persona, giving him human emotions and flaws (like the rest of us)."

Mantlo hit the ground running thanks to Sal Buscema, with whom he had worked in the mid-1970s on *Marvel Team-Up*. "Here I was being taught how to write comic books by Sal Buscema, who would in essence take my overly convoluted plots and milk them down to what they should have been, which was good, solid stories," admitted Mantlo about their early work together in an interview in *Comics Feature* #17 (June 1982). "And I found as I wrote with Sal, that I was tailoring my stuff to fit his style, to the point where ninety percent of the time now, I think in terms of Sal Buscema when I'm plotting a story."

Over the next year, Mantlo and Buscema took the Hulk on a whirlwind tour of the world, visiting Israel, Egypt, Afghanistan, Russia, and Japan before returning to the US. While his stories felt driven by the TV series' "Fugitive formula," Mantlo tackled tough social justice issues such as the conflict in the Middle East and Russia's invasion of Afghanistan.

Editor Al Milgrom, in the letters page for issue #258 (Apr. 1981), stated: "Strong statements about society and injustice were ever Marvel trademarks (...) we are committed to speaking out whenever we see the need. That doesn't always mean that we'll be right, or that Marveldom assembled will agree with our stance, but taking a stand never means making sure it's fashionable first."



The Hulk didn't enjoy the comforts of home for long, being drafted into a motley crew of alien monsters tasked with defeating the cosmic threat known as the Galaxy Master (*Incredible Hulk* #269, Mar. 1982). In the next issue, the Hulk found himself on Halfworld, where he met Rocket Raccoon and helped him on his ongoing quest to keep the Gideon's Bible out of the paws of the evil mole known as Judson Jakes.

AMNESTY

In David Yurkovich's book, *Mantlo - A Life In Comics* (2007), Mantlo revealed how he struggled early on: "I did retreads of old Hulk stories to try and find a new direction, and just kept doing more and more repetition of what had already happened. Then Al Milgrom said, 'Well, don't accept this. If you want to make changes, make them. Take some risks.' That's when we decided to give Hulk Bruce Banner's intelligence. From that point on I felt as if I had finally had a direction and control over the character. So I guess I took a year and half or maybe two years to get to the point. I said I was going to write what I wanted to write. I just took off. I was having fun."

After a series of events that had overdosed him with gamma rays, Banner discovered in issue #272 (June 1982)

Banner Smash!

(left) *Hulk* #245 (Mar. 1980) cover by editor Al Milgrom. (right) Page 19 from *Incredible Hulk* #268 (Feb. 1982), penciled and inked by Sal Buscema. Bruce Banner seizes control of a situation where he sees an opportunity to free himself of the Hulk! From the collection of Joe Hollon.

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Green Controversy

Barry Windsor-Smith feels the concept of Banner's abusive father stemmed from an unrealized Hulk proposal he offered to Marvel Comics, as detailed in *Comic Book Artist Vol. 2, #1*.

Available now as a digital edition at www.twomorrow.com

Byrne Smash!

Two Hulk sketches by John Byrne, drawn before and after the writer/artist's stint on *The Incredible Hulk*: (left) 1978 character studies, courtesy of Heritage. (right) From the collection of Jim Hollon, a 2009 smashing illo.

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"I truly did see a theme in Bill's *Hulk* run," explains Mike Mantlo, "that being one of abandonment and abuse by those that Bruce Banner relied on for his growth and development. Bill introduced readers to the abuse Bruce Banner suffered at the hands of his father and the heart-wrenching loss of his true love, Jarella. Bill also introduced a sense of values and political involvements to the Hulk's world view."

BYRNED

With issue #314 (Dec. 1985), John Byrne took over the creative reins of *The Incredible Hulk* in the industry's first creative-team crossover: Bill Mantlo and Mike Mignola moved over to *Alpha Flight*, previously Byrne's stomping grounds, with issue #29.

Byrne approached the title with a "Back to Basics" formula he had found so successful with *Fantastic Four*. "I'm turning the clock back," Byrne told Jim Salicrup in *Comics Feature* #25 (1985). "My feeling is that Lee and Kirby really knew what they were doing. So I'm distilling it down to sort of a definitive Hulk, which they probably would have done if they'd had another few issues. We're trying to get back to that primal Bruce Banner becomes the Hulk; sometimes he's in control, sometimes he's not. The schism is left brain/right brain, rage versus reason."

In *Incredible Hulk* #315 (Jan. 1986), Dr. Leonard Samson physically split Bruce Banner from the Hulk. When S.H.I.E.L.D. learned what had happened, they stepped in and took over the project despite Samson's

objections. Fearing for the Hulk's safety, Doc Samson freed him, but didn't realize that without Banner's influence, the Hulk existed only to rampage.

Issue #316 (Feb. 1986) featured one of the most dramatic Hulk battles ever as the Avengers' big guns confronted the rampaging monster. Namor, Hercules, Iron Man, and Wonder Man pounded away at the Hulk, who seemed all but unstoppable. The guilt-ridden Samson interrupted the battle, pleading that he could deal with the Hulk himself. In the wake of the collateral damage of their battle, the Avengers weren't in any position to disagree.

Byrne brought in a new Hulkbuster supporting cast with issue #317 (Mar. 1986) to join Banner, who was still recovering from the traumatic separation, as he took on his new leadership role. The Hulk slipped into the background as Byrne focused on Banner, who was adjusting to his new life without the Hulk.

Betty moved into the spotlight in issue #319 (May 1986) as she and Bruce were finally married. Byrne had been weaving Betty into the storyline and she finally shone in this issue as the strong, willful character that Peter David would later make extensive use of. Byrne discussed his future plans for Betty, which unfortunately would never be realized, in *Comics Interview* #25 (1985): "...by about my eighth issue, we will be back in a situation where he will be the creature of the night and he will be locking himself in the little room under the lake and



JOHN BYRNE





THE INCREDIBLE HULK

1982 ANIMATED SERIES



by Christopher Larochelle

"Hi! This is Stan Lee!"

There's something reassuring about anything Marvel-related that starts off with a message like that. The first episode of the *Incredible Hulk* cartoon begins that way, and throughout the series Stan the Man is always there to provide commentary, making his enthusiasm something of an "added spice" to one of Marvel's earlier forays in television. Stan had every reason to be proud of 1982's newest creation from Marvel Productions. While it might have toned down a few aspects of the original source material, the final result was a cartoon that could be enjoyed by fans of all ages. [Editor's note: For a "Backstage Pass" history of Marvel Productions, Ltd., see BACK ISSUE #59.]

The Incredible Hulk debuted a year after the starting airdate for *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends*. Together the shows made a solid one-hour programming block of Marvel Productions cartoons every Saturday morning. While the show often is referred to casually as "The 1982 Hulk Cartoon," only nine of the show's 12 episodes were broadcast in that year. In fact, fans had to wait for almost a full year before the show's final four episodes were broadcast in the fall of 1983.

Sure, there are some curiosities in *The Incredible Hulk*. First off, why are the Hulk's pants red? While it is unusual, given how purple seems to be Bruce Banner's go-to color in the comics, the red pants make this version of the Hulk stand out among the countless visual interpretations that have come down the pike since the character's creation in the 1960s.

One delightful oddity in the *Incredible Hulk* cartoon is perhaps the show's most famous. While Marvel is guilty of pulling this trick many times in the Hulk

Green On Screen

(right) An *Incredible Hulk* animated cel, courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (www.ha.com).

(above) Two graphics and a gamma-blast shot, all courtesy of Andy Mangels.

© 1982 Marvel Productions, Ltd.

TEAMING UP WITH THE HULK

THE HULK AS A TEAM PLAYER IN THE DEFENDERS AND MARVEL TEAM-UP

by Daniel DeAngelo



FlashBack!

With the big-screen success of *The Avengers*, more attention has been given to the Hulk's membership in that team. The Hulk can now be seen with the Avengers in the comics and on TV (both titled *Avengers Assemble*). Since he was a founding member, newer fans probably assume that Hulk has had as long a history with the team as Iron Man or Thor and might just be surprised to learn that Hulk actually quit in *Avengers* #2 (Nov. 1963)! The Hulk, you see, was never much of a team player—a character trait that worked against him in the Avengers, but which made him a perfect candidate for Marvel's so-called “non-team,” the Defenders. As covered in *BACK ISSUE* #65, the Defenders are an inconsistent gathering of anti-heroes including Dr. Strange, Namor the Sub-Mariner, and the Silver Surfer, who occasionally join forces to defend the Earth from evil. For someone as antisocial as the Hulk, the Defenders were a much better fit than an organized unit like the Avengers.

HULK NOT LIKE GROUPS

When Dr. Strange first proposes the idea of joining forces with Hulk and Sub-Mariner as the “Defenders” in *Marvel Feature* #1 (Dec. 1971), Hulk responds, “Hulk never wants to get together again. Never! Hulk was in group once—called *Avengers*. Didn't like it.” But like it or not (and he often *didn't* like it), the Defenders would get together again, and the Hulk would usually be among them. “As in the first couple of issues,” says Defenders creator Roy Thomas, “I saw him as the ultimate I-don't-want-to-be-in-any-dumb-group guy who still (unknown to himself) kinda needs their companionship.” When Dr. Strange first seeks out the Hulk to join him and Namor, he appears in his astral form and goads the Hulk into following him. Once the Hulk reaches Strange's physical form and he explains their need, Hulk says, “If you want to be Hulk's friend—Hulk will go with you.” Writer Steve Englehart notes, “The Defenders weren't supposed to be a team, and the Hulk was easy to fit into that because he wasn't a team player. His thought process is pretty limited, but that worked for the Defenders, because all you had to do was point him in one direction, and if you can convince him to go, he'll go.” Sometimes, when things went wrong, Hulk would point out that he was opposed to the Defenders from the start. “Hulk thinks group is stupid idea!” he says in #54 (Dec. 1977). “Always has!”

Englehart adds, “The secret of writing Hulk stories is to have what other characters get out of him; he's going to give them the same thing in a very limited range. It's a question of how other people play off of him. He's the 500-pound elephant in the room, and the rest of you have to deal with him. Sub-Mariner didn't like dealing with indirection and would stand up to the Hulk. He was

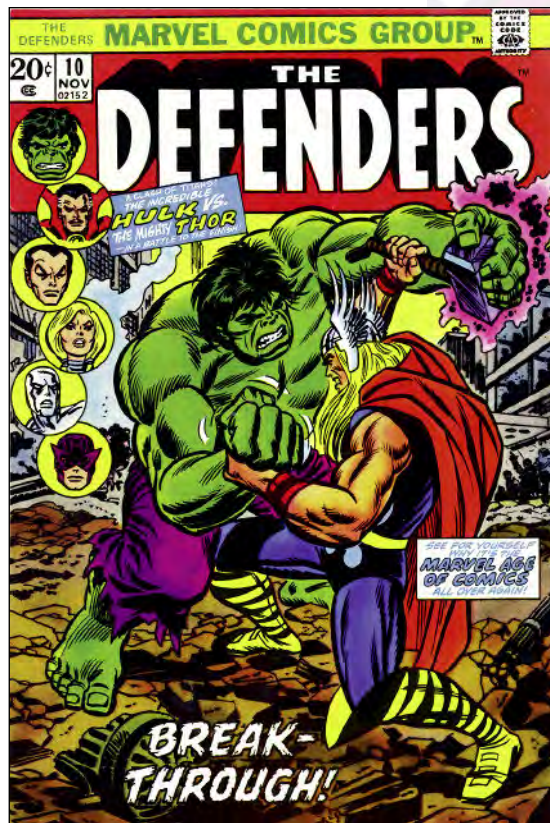
Really, Would You Want to Team Up with This Guy??

The Hulk “and” Power Man and Iron Fist, with guest-star Machine Man. Detail from the cover of *Marvel Team-Up Annual* #3 (1980). Art by Frank Miller and Joe Rubinstein.

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Old “Friends”
 (left) Two original Avengers meet—and clash—on the John Romita, Sr. cover to *The Defenders* #10 (Nov. 1973). (right) The Gil Kane/Frank Giacoia cover to *Marvel Team-Up* #18 (Feb. 1974). Looks more like “Marvel Mixing It Up” to us!

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more direct with the Hulk, more unwilling to bend, whereas Dr. Strange spends a lot of time in the ozone ... and he's seen so much that he's not subject to petty human prejudices. He's more willing to accept the Hulk as he is and work with him, whereas Namor is more used to giving orders. Silver Surfer had no problem with the Hulk; he, too, was so cosmic that he could see the Hulk for what he was and roll with it."

In *Defenders* #7 (June 1973), Hawkeye joins the group when Attuma captures Namor and orders the others to surrender. Used to the “all-for-one” mentality of the Avengers, Hawkeye agrees, but Hulk takes off rather than allow himself to be taken prisoner on Attuma’s underwater ship, since he hates the water. “Other characters would have complex thoughts, and they’d rationalize,” Englehart says, “but the Hulk was either ‘yes’ or ‘no’; he had a very binary thought process: ‘I’m either doing this or I’m not doing this, and if I’m not doing this, I’m outta here!’” This sort of thing happened often, with Hulk storming off for one reason or another, and then returning the next time Strange summoned him because his memory is so short that he would forget why he left in the first place.

HULK HAS NO FRIENDS

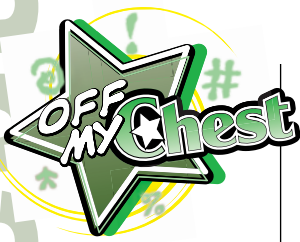
As the Hulk’s mortal identity, Bruce Banner interacted with the Defenders from time to time and appreciated their help and friendship. Although not always accustomed to heroics, Banner would try to help the group in any way possible. Often, this meant turning into the Hulk, but Banner’s scientific knowledge sometimes came in handy, such as when he had to prevent a gamma bomb from exploding in #19 (Jan. 1975), or when he had to cure the Defenders of radiation poisoning in #56 (Feb. 1978). In time, the Hulk also came to consider the Defenders as friends. In #12 (Feb. 1974), Strange and Valkyrie come to Hulk’s aid against Xemnu, causing him to realize, “If Dumb Magician comes all this way just to help Hulk—then Dumb Magician is Hulk’s friend.” Strange replies, “That, my overlarge and overly exuberant associate, is something I’ve been trying to drive into your emerald pate for quite some time now.”

That same month, Hulk joins forces with the Human Torch in *Marvel Team-Up* #18. A mad scientist uses gamma radiation to revive FF villain Blastaar, which draws the Hulk into the area. Learning that the Hulk is suffering from a buzzing sound in his head, the Torch tricks Hulk into following him by claiming that he can lead Hulk to the one causing the sound, not realizing that Blastaar actually is the source of the Hulk’s pain.

Hulk is weakened by Blastaar’s gamma-irradiated force-bolts, so the Torch instructs him to attack Blastaar from afar by throwing rubble at the villain. Since the Torch helped him, Hulk complies and squeezes the rubble into a ball, cutting off the gamma radiation and imprisoning Blastaar.

However, the Hulk’s mood can change quickly, such as when Valkyrie decides to leave the Defenders in #17 (Nov. 1974). Hulk is so upset over her departure that he turns on Strange and Nighthawk. “Magician says he is Hulk’s friend—but magician lies!” he rages. “If magician was really Hulk’s friend, magician would never have let girl leave!” So the Hulk leaps away and lands in *Marvel Team-Up* #27 that same month, where he encounters the Chameleon, who disguises himself as Hulk’s longtime friend, Rick Jones. “Rick” tricks Hulk into breaking Joe Cord—who had saved Chameleon’s life when they were children—out of prison. When Spider-Man removes Chameleon’s mask, Hulk becomes enraged, and the two criminals attempt to escape. A policeman opens fire, and Cord jumps in front of Chameleon to take the bullet. Chameleon asks the dying Cord why he sacrificed himself, and Cord says, “Why else? You were ... my ... friend...” Learning something about the meaning of friendship, Hulk overhears a radio report about the Defenders battling the Wrecking Crew and takes off to join the fight in *Defenders* #18 (Dec. 1974). “Hulk thought Magician and Bird-Nose had betrayed Hulk,” he says, “but Hulk now know Hulk was wrong!”

The Hulk meets Spider-Man again in *Marvel Team-Up* #53 (Jan. 1977), where the Web-Slinger finds the population of a New Mexico town dead while the Hulk battles another man-monster called Woodgod. Spidey comes across soldiers wearing radiation suits and tries to get answers from them, but Woodgod attacks him. Recalling previous battles with Spidey, Hulk decides to help Woodgod smash the Wall-Crawler instead. In next month’s issue, Hulk and Woodgod are captured by the military, but Spidey senses the soldiers are up to no good, so he frees them. Hulk immediately switches gears and decides, “Bug-Eyes is Hulk’s friend! Set Hulk free!” The military intend to shoot Woodgod into space on a rocket and pin the blame for the town’s destruction on the Hulk, but Spidey is accidentally launched in the rocket while Hulk and Woodgod battle the military. Unable to save Spider-Man, Hulk watches the rocket leave Earth and says, “Goodbye, Bug-Eyes! Goodbye—FRIEND!” (Don’t worry, Adam Warlock finds Spidey on the moon in the next issue.)



THREE MEN AND A LITTLE PSYCHE

How Mantlo, David, and Freud Redefined the Incredible Hulk

by *Ronnie Deen*

The True Monster Revealed

Scribe Bill Mantlo's tale "Monster" in *The Incredible Hulk* #312 (Oct. 1985) gave a new face to Bruce Banner's rage. (left) Cover art by Mike Mignola and Bill Sienkiewicz. (right) Interior flashback sequence penciled by Mignola, inked by Gerry Talaoc, and colored by Bob Sharen.

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There is a monster inside of Bruce Banner, but is it a monster created by science or by the mind? This is the question that two writers chose to explore within the pages of *The Incredible Hulk*.

Bill Mantlo addressed the creation and cause for the penultimate story within his storyline "Crossroads of Eternity" in *Incredible Hulk* #300-313 (Oct. 1984-Nov. 1985), where Bruce Banner as the victim of child abuse. ("The Crossroads of Eternity" was a 13-issue storyline that saw the Hulk banished to a limbo-like plane that led him to different dimensions at the end of each adventure saw the Hulk banished back to Earth. The end of each adventure saw the Hulk banished back to the beginning, at the Crossroads.)

Peter David followed up by exploring the psychology that the abuse had on Banner, resulting in the creation of different personalities.

Make no mistake about it—these developments were important to the character. When Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created the Hulk in 1962, they created a modern-day version of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde that served as a warning against science advancing beyond what humans could handle, the result being a monster that terrified the populace. However, by the 1980s that depiction was old. Establishing a history of child abuse and treating the Hulk as a manifestation of a mental disorder forever changed the character, taking him away from the Jekyll-and-Hyde and making him the physical embodiment of modern psychosis.

When Bill Mantlo became the *Hulk* writer in the early '80s, he knew that the character needed some major revising. The old day

showing up and "Hulk Smash!" had become passé. Mantlo was a writer with a unique view and one who always wanted to blaze his own path. As Mantlo biographer David Yurkovich told Greg Pak in an interview,

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BACK ISSUE #70

"Incredible Hulk in the Bronze Age!" Looks into Hulk's mind, his role as a team player, his TV show and cartoon, merchandising, Hulk newspaper strip, Teen Hulk, villain history of the Abomination, art and artifacts by SAL BUSCEMA, JOHN BYRNE, PETER DAVID, KENNETH JOHNSON, BILL MANTLO, AL MILGROM, EARL NOREM, ROGER STERN, HERB TRIMPE, LEN WEIN, new cover by TRIMPE and GERHARD!

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lucked the status quo. The Hulk evolved from a "monster" to a "primal" (*Pakbuzz.com*, Feb. 2007). Mantlo's Hulk was just a run-of-the-mill, meek character with no scientific achievement. The Hulk was a creature of atomic science that would show up and smash. Very little was given in the way of

show the Hulk as the personified inner monster, oppressed for reasons unknown. This was a new character. Before, the monster was an external stimulus was threatening him, but now that the Hulk was always there under the surface, he changed from an independent creature to a part of Banner.

In *Incredible Hulk* #312 (Oct. 1985), the cause of the "crossroads" storyline, that the cause of Bruce Banner's anger was revealed when it was shown that the abuse at the hands of his father, Brian Banner, in Bruce witnessing the murder of his

role cannot be overstated. The influences of the topic were common in the 1980s: Child abuse was a central issue in the United States by 1985,