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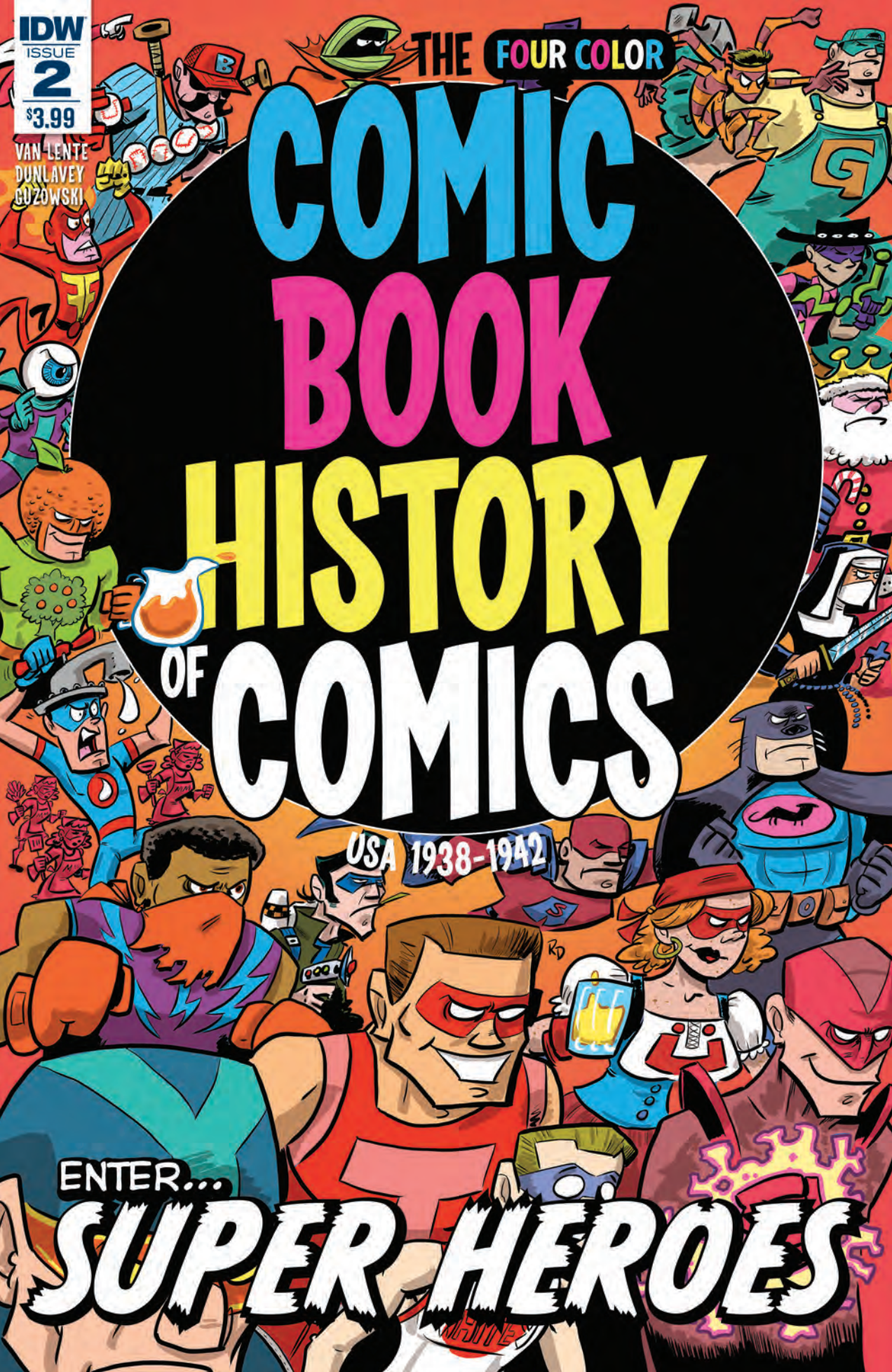
THE **FOUR COLOR**

COMIC BOOK HISTORY OF COMICS

USA 1938-1942

ENTER...

SUPER-HEROES





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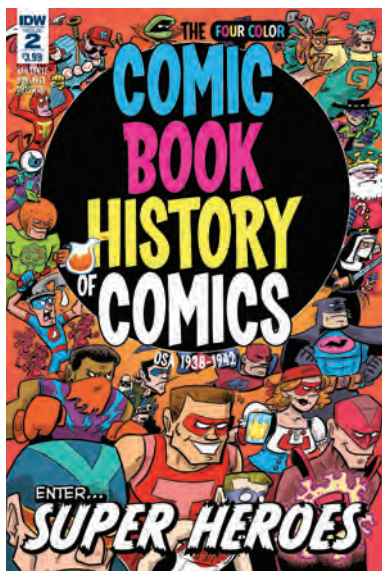
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NEW

ACTION FUNNIES

FOR OVER **THREE DECADES** AMERICAN CHILDREN HAD BEEN THROWING OUT EVERY **OTHER** SECTION OF THE NEWSPAPER TO GET THEIR HANDS ON THE **FUNNIES**.

BUT IT WASN'T UNTIL THE **DEPRESSION** THAT THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY FINALLY FIGURED OUT THE **BEST WAY** TO CUT OUT THE **REST** OF THE PAPER AND OFFER A **PERIODICAL** THAT WAS NOTHING **BUT FUNNIES** DIRECTLY TO CHILDREN.



IN 1929, GEORGE T. DELACORTE'S **DELL PUBLISHING** ATTEMPTED AN ALL-COMICS TITLE SIMPLY CALLED **THE FUNNIES**, BUT IT WAS NEARLY AS **BIG** AS A SUNDAY COLOR SECTION AND LOOKED LIKE AN **INCOMPLETE** NEWSPAPER SITTING ALONE ON THE STANDS. **THE FUNNIES'** REWARD FOR CONFUSING THE CONSUMER WAS A SWIFT DEMISE.

THEN IN 1933 THE **EASTERN COLOR PRINTING COMPANY** OF WATERBURY, CONNECTICUT, WHICH PRODUCED MOST OF THE **COLOR SUNDAY FUNNIES** FOR THE BIG NORTHEAST PAPERS...



...REPRINTED SOME POPULAR COMICS AS BROADSIDES FOR THE **PHILADELPHIA LEDGER** THAT HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN TO 7"x9"... ROUGHLY THE SIZE OF A TABLOID NEWSPAPER **FOLDED OVER**.

FISHER'S **MUTT & JEFF** HAD BEEN SELLING WELL IN COLLECTED **"COMIC STRIP BOOKS"** SINCE 1911 (AT STRIP DIMENSIONS -- THE BOOKS WERE 18" WIDE), AND EASTERN WAS CURIOUS TO SEE IF AN **ANTHOLOGY** OF MULTIPLE STRIP REPRINTS MIGHT **APPEAL** IN A MORE **MANAGEABLE** SIZE CLOSER TO THE LEDGER BROADSIDES.

EASTERN SALESMAN **MAXWELL C. "CHARLIE" GAINES** CONVINCED **PROCTER & GAMBLE** TO USE THIS EXPERIMENTAL **"COMIC BOOK," FUNNIES ON PARADE**, AS A **MAIL-IN GIVEAWAY**.

ITS **10,000-COPY** PRINT RUN WAS EXHAUSTED IN A MATTER OF **WEEKS**.



INTRIGUED, GAINES SLAPPED **10-CENT** STICKERS ON A COUPLE DOZEN INDIVIDUAL COPIES OF EASTERN'S **SECOND GIVEAWAY**, **FAMOUS FUNNIES: A CARNIVAL OF COMICS**, AND DROPPED THEM OFF AT VARIOUS **NEWSSTANDS** AROUND **NEW YORK** ONE FRIDAY.



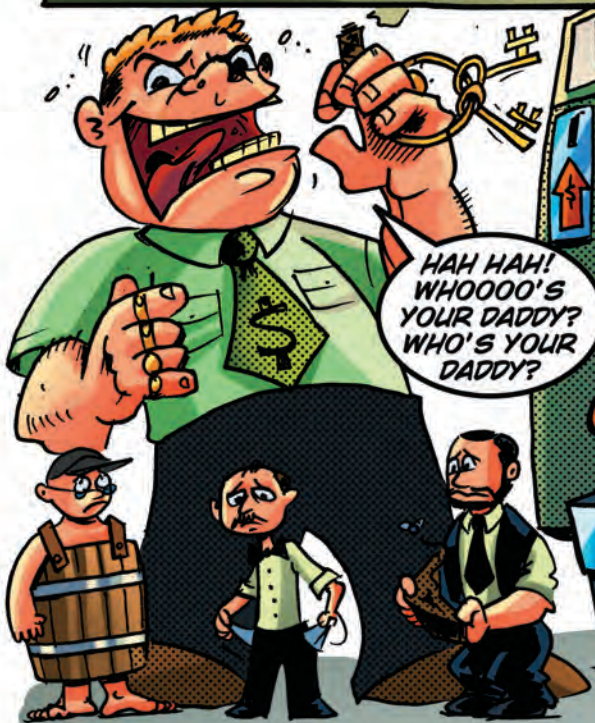


THEY ALL SOLD OUT BY THE FOLLOWING MONDAY!

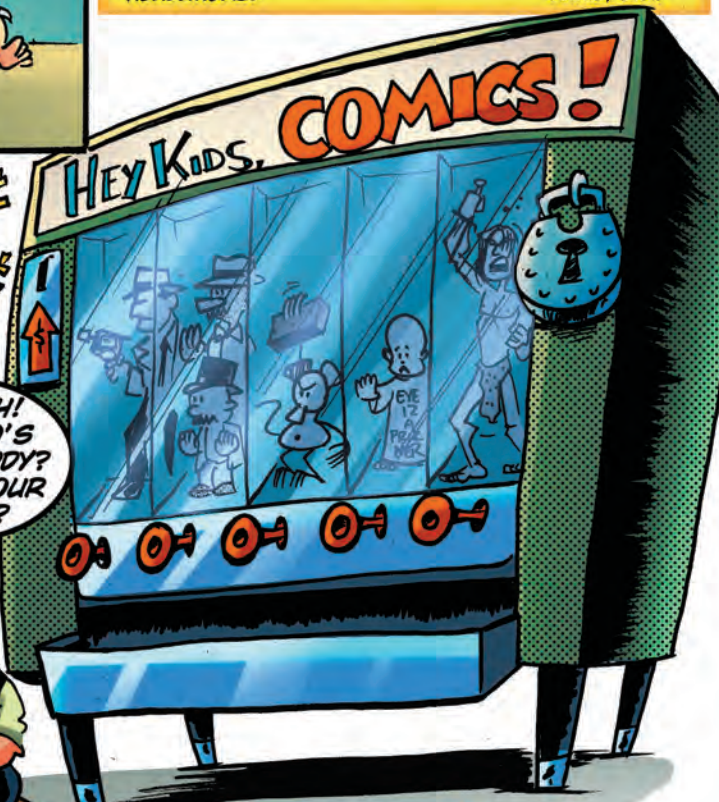
SMELLING SALES, EASTERN TEAMED WITH DELACORTE'S DELL TO PRODUCE A REGULAR FAMOUS FUNNIES SERIES BEGINNING IN 1934. FISHER'S MUTT & JEFF WOULD GRACE THE COVER, MAKING THEM THE FIRST-EVER COMIC BOOK HEADLINERS!

M & J'S REPRINT RIGHTS, ALONG WITH THE RIGHTS TO ALL THE OTHER POPULAR COMICS IN THE COUNTRY, WERE, OF COURSE, STILL HELD IN THE HANDS OF THE ALL-POWERFUL SYNDICATES.

AFTER DELL AND EASTERN WENT THEIR SEPARATE WAYS, DELL BEGAN POPULAR COMICS, A SERIES FEATURING MOSTLY STRIPS OWNED BY THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE SYNDICATE (DICK TRACY, THE GUMPS, LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE, ETC.)



HAH HAH! WHOOOO'S YOUR DADDY? WHO'S YOUR DADDY?



DELL, EASTERN AND OTHERS QUICKLY TIED UP THE COMIC BOOK RIGHTS TO ALL THE ESTABLISHED STRIPS!



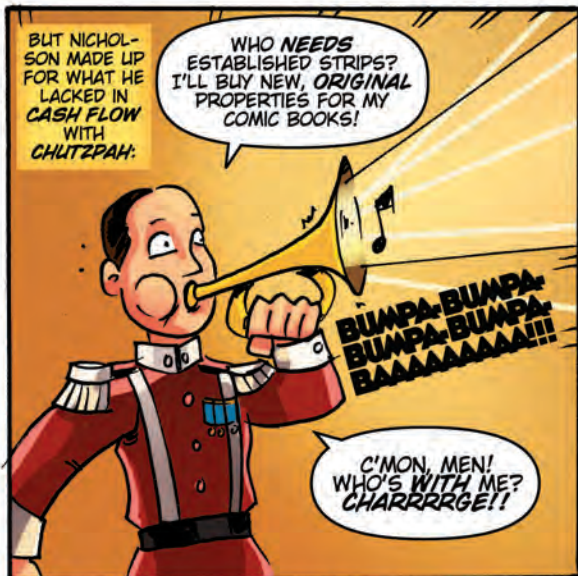
BUT ONE MAN HAD THE COURAGE TO STAND AGAINST THE MIGHTY SYNDICATES--A CAVALRY OFFICER WHO HAD BRAVED THE FIRE OF PANCHO VILLA'S BANDITOS IN MEXICO--
--A MAN WHO HAD BEEN COURT-MARTIALED FOR DENOUNCING NEPOTISM IN THE U.S. MILITARY -- WHO LATER SURVIVED AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT FOR EXPOSING THE SAME!

THAT MAN WAS MAJOR MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON! PULP AUTHOR ...LOVER...PUBLISHER... WITNESS TO THE THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES...



...AND PERPETUALLY BROKE!

NICHOLSON FOUNDED NATIONAL ALLIED PUBLISHING TO APE FAMOUS FUNNIES' SUCCESS AND SAVE HIS FORTUNES.

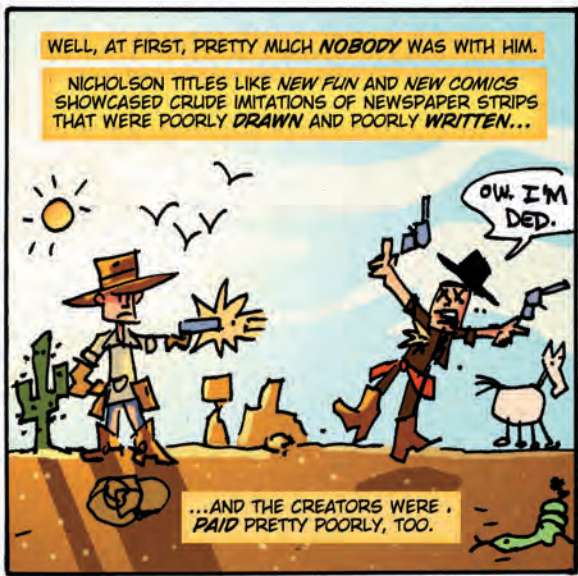


BUT NICHOLSON MADE UP FOR WHAT HE LACKED IN CASH FLOW WITH CHUTZPAH:

WHO NEEDS ESTABLISHED STRIPS? I'LL BUY NEW, ORIGINAL PROPERTIES FOR MY COMIC BOOKS!

BUMPA-BUMPA-BUMPA-BUMPA-BAAAAA!!!

C'MON, MEN! WHO'S WITH ME? CHARRRRGE!!

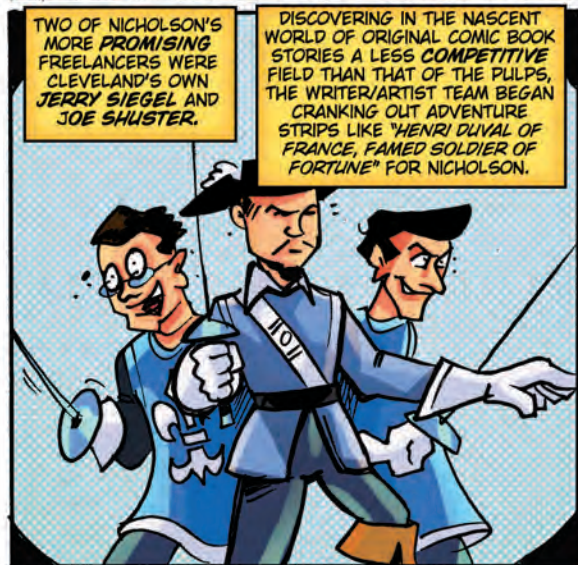


WELL, AT FIRST, PRETTY MUCH *NOBODY* WAS WITH HIM.

NICHOLSON TITLES LIKE *NEW FUN* AND *NEW COMICS* SHOWCASED CRUDE IMITATIONS OF NEWSPAPER STRIPS THAT WERE POORLY DRAWN AND POORLY WRITTEN...

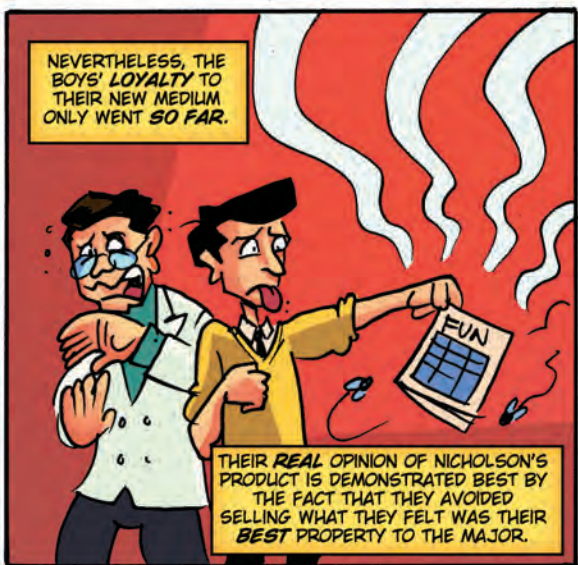
OW, I'M DED.

...AND THE CREATORS WERE PAID PRETTY POORLY, TOO.



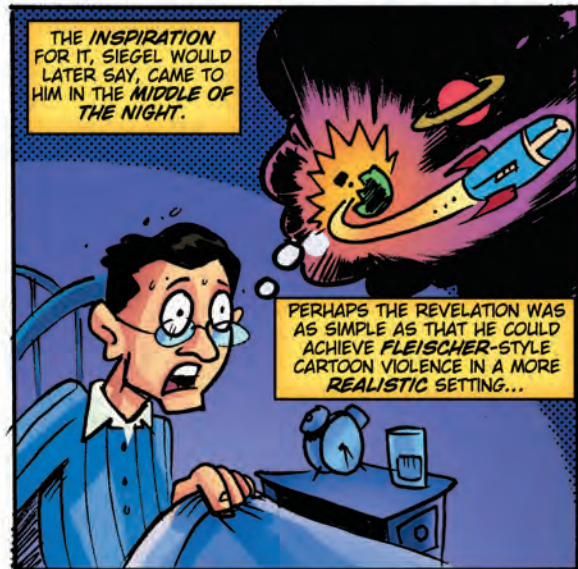
TWO OF NICHOLSON'S MORE PROMISING FREELANCERS WERE CLEVELAND'S OWN JERRY SIEGEL AND JOE SHUSTER.

DISCOVERING IN THE NASCENT WORLD OF ORIGINAL COMIC BOOK STORIES A LESS COMPETITIVE FIELD THAN THAT OF THE PULPS, THE WRITER/ARTIST TEAM BEGAN CRANKING OUT ADVENTURE STRIPS LIKE "HENRI DUVAL OF FRANCE, FAMED SOLDIER OF FORTUNE" FOR NICHOLSON.



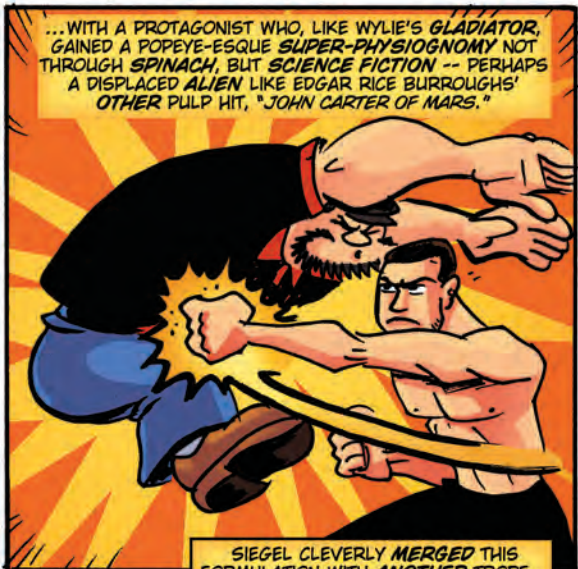
NEVERTHELESS, THE BOYS' LOYALTY TO THEIR NEW MEDIUM ONLY WENT SO FAR.

THEIR REAL OPINION OF NICHOLSON'S PRODUCT IS DEMONSTRATED BEST BY THE FACT THAT THEY AVOIDED SELLING WHAT THEY FELT WAS THEIR BEST PROPERTY TO THE MAJOR.



THE INSPIRATION FOR IT, SIEGEL WOULD LATER SAY, CAME TO HIM IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

PERHAPS THE REVELATION WAS AS SIMPLE AS THAT HE COULD ACHIEVE FLEISCHER-STYLE CARTOON VIOLENCE IN A MORE REALISTIC SETTING...



... WITH A PROTAGONIST WHO, LIKE WYLIE'S *GLADIATOR*, GAINED A POPEYE-ESQUE SUPER-PHYSIOGNOMY NOT THROUGH *SPINACH*, BUT *SCIENCE FICTION* -- PERHAPS A DISPLACED ALIEN LIKE EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS' OTHER PULP HIT, "JOHN CARTER OF MARS."

SIEGEL CLEVERLY MERGED THIS FORMULATION WITH ANOTHER TROPE...

...INTRODUCED BY ANGLO-HUNGARIAN AUTHOR **BARONESS ORCZY** IN HER 1903 PLAY **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL**.

THE MYSTERIOUS TITULAR FIGURE RESCUES ARISTOCRATS FROM THE FRENCH REVOLUTION'S **GUILLOTINE**, SPIRITING THEM TO SAFETY ACROSS THE ENGLISH CHANNEL WITH THE HELP OF HIS NETWORK OF **SECRET AGENTS** (COLLECTIVELY KNOWN AS "**THE LEAGUE OF THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL**").

HIS **NOM DE GUERRE** COMES FROM HIS **SYMBOL** --AN INNOCUOUS **WILDFLOWER**-- HE LEAVES IN NOTES **TAUNTING** THE REVOLUTIONARY AUTHORITIES.



NONE BUT HIS **LEAGUE** KNOWS THAT THE PIMPERNEL IS REALLY BRITISH ARISTOCRAT **SIR PERCY BLAKENEY**, WHO ADOPTS A **FOPPISH, FRIVOLOUS** PERSONA TO THROW PARISIAN PURSUERS OFF HIS SCENT.

"WE SEEK HIM **HERE**, WE SEEK HIM **THERE**, THOSE **FRENCHIES** SEEK HIM **EVERYWHERE**."

"IS HE IN **HEAVEN?** IS HE IN **HELL?**"

"THAT **DEMMED, ELLUSIVE PIMPERNEL!**"

THIS SEMINAL INSTANCE OF A "**SECRET IDENTITY**" IN LITERATURE SPAWNED NUMEROUS **IMITATORS...**



...NOTABLY PULP WRITER **JOHNSTON MCCULLLEY**, WHO, UPON MOVING TO THE **LOS ANGELES** AREA, BECAME FASCINATED BY **SPANISH ADOBE RUINS** NEAR HIS HOME.

"THEY ARE SAYING THAT **SR. ZORRO** HAS PAID A VISIT HERE... CAN YOU NOT TELL ME?"

"BUT I PRAY YOU MAKE NOT THE TALE TOO **BLOODY**. I CANNOT SEE WHY MEN MUST BE **VIOLENT!**"

HIS 1919 NOVELLA **THE CURSE OF CAPISTRANO** (ORIGINALLY SERIALIZED, LIKE **TARZAN**, IN MUNSEY'S **ALL-STORY**) INTRODUCES THE **BLAKENEY-ESQUE DON DIEGO VEGA**, A SPANISH NOBLEMAN IN 1810'S CALIFORNIA THAT APPEARS TO BE A **COWARDLY DANDY**.



BUT MCCULLLEY PUT AN **AMERICAN SPIN** ON THE PIMPERNEL'S CLASS ALLEGIANCES: **VEGA'S ALTER EGO, ZORRO** ("FOX" IN SPANISH), IS A **SAVIOR OF THE PEOPLE**, FOILING THE EVIL SCHEMES OF THE **CORRUPT COLONIAL ESTABLISHMENT**.

SILENT MOVIE STAR **DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS** SAW **CAPISTRANO** AS THE PERFECT VEHICLE FOR HIS SIGNATURE **ACROBATIC DERRING-DO**: **CO-WRITING** THE ADAPTATION **HIMSELF**, FAIRBANKS STARRED IN THE 1920 BOX OFFICE **SMASH THE MARK OF ZORRO**.



IT WAS **FAIRBANKS** WHO INTRODUCED SUCH VISUAL ELEMENTS TO THE **ZORRO** MYTHOS AS HIS DISTINCTIVE **COSTUME** AND THE **INITIAL** HE CARVES AS HIS CALLING CARD.

PULP WRITERS SWIFTLY **CANNIBALIZED** THE WORK OF ORCZY, MCCULLLEY AND FAIRBANKS **WHOLESALE**, ADAPTING THEIR **HISTORICAL** HEROES FOR **MODERN** TIMES.

CRIME-FIGHTING PULP AVENGERS LIKE **THE SHADOW** RIPPED OFF THE PIMPERNEL'S NETWORK OF **AGENTS** AND **RICH-GUY PERSONA**, AS WELL AS **ZORRO'S OUTFIT** AND FAIRBANKS' **ATHLETICISM**.

WHO KNOWS THAT **SISSY SWORDS** CANNOT STAND UP TO TWIN BLAZING **.45'S...**

THE SHADOW KNOWS...

JERRY SIEGEL WAS A **SHADOW FAN**. HE HAD A VERY **PERSONAL** REASON TO SYMPATHIZE WITH THE **VIOLENT HERO'S MERCILESS WAR ON CRIME...**

...HIS OWN **FATHER**, A **HABERDASHER**, HAD BEEN GUNNED DOWN IN A **ROBBERY** WHILE SIEGEL WAS STILL IN **SCHOOL**.

THE **KILLER** WAS **NEVER** FOUND.

WYLIE'S **PHYSICALLY PERFECT** MAN...

ZORRO'S **SINGLE-LETTER SYMBOL** AND **POPULIST CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS...**

A **SKIN-TIGHT JUMPSUIT** LIKE THE HEROES ON THE COVERS OF **GERNSBACK'S SCIENCE FICTION PULPS** WORE...

THE **SHADOW'S** CONTEMPT FOR **CRIMINALS...**

A **LOVE INTEREST** LIKE ORCZY'S **LADY BLAKENEY**, WHO **DESPISES** THE HERO'S **COWARDLY SECRET IDENTITY...**

FLEISCHER STUDIOS' **SUPER-HUMAN COMBAT...**

ALL THESE ELEMENTS INFORMED SIEGEL & SHUSTER'S "**SUPERMAN**," WHICH THEY INITIALLY CONCEIVED OF AS A **NEWSPAPER ADVENTURE STRIP**.

GOOD LUCK!
->SNIFF!->

THEY PRODUCED A FEW WEEKS' WORTH OF **SAMPLES** TO MAIL TO EVERY **SYNDICATE** IN NEW YORK.

SIEGEL WOULD LATER CLAIM IT TOOK HE AND JOE **SIX YEARS** TO **SELL SUPES**, PILING UP A **MOUNTAIN** OF **REJECTION SLIPS** ALONG THE WAY...

->LIGHT!->
WORSE THAN **KRYPTONITE!**

REJECT

...BUT THE GREAT THING ABOUT THE **ARTS** IS THAT YOU CAN PILE UP "**NO**" AFTER "**NO**" AFTER "**NO**" AFTER "**NO**"...